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# LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

## VIRTUAL MEETING

### NOTICE AND AGENDA

For a meeting to be held on Thursday, 29 August 2024 at 7.00 pm in the Penn Chamber at Three Rivers House.

Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee:-

Councillors:

Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair)  
Christopher Alley  
Oliver Cooper  
Stephen Cox  
Steve Drury

Louise Price (Vice-Chair)  
Philip Hearn  
Chris Mitchell  
Sarah Nelmes  
Andrew Scarth

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*Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive  
Wednesday, 21 August 2024*

The meeting will start at 7.00pm and will be in-person.

The Council welcomes contributions from Members of the public to its discussion on agenda items at Planning Committee meetings. Contributions will be limited to one person speaking for and one against each item for not more than three minutes. Please note that in the event of registering your interest to speak on an agenda item but not taking up that right because the item is deferred, you will automatically be given the right to speak on the item at that next meeting of the Committee. Details of the procedure are provided below:

Members of the public wishing to speak will be entitled to register and identify which application(s) they wish to speak on from the published agenda for the remote meeting. Those who wish to register to speak must do so by notifying the Committee team by e-mail ([CommitteeTeam@threerivers.gov.uk](mailto:CommitteeTeam@threerivers.gov.uk)) 48 hours before the meeting. The first 2 people to register on any application (1 for and 1 against) will be sent a link so that they can join the meeting to exercise that right. This will also allow the Committee Team to prepare the speaker sheet in advance of the remote meeting to forward to the Chair of the meeting.

In accordance with The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 any matters considered under Part 1 business only of the meeting may be filmed, recorded, photographed, broadcast or reported via social media by any person.

Recording and reporting the Council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the

responsibility of those doing the recording and reporting to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act and the laws of libel and defamation.

## **The business of the meeting will be live streamed.**

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive any apologies for absence.

### **2. MINUTES**

(Pages 5  
- 10)

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 August 2024.

### **3. NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

Items of other business notified under Council Procedure Rule 30 to be announced, together with the special circumstances that justify their consideration as a matter of urgency. The Chairman to rule on the admission of such items.

### **4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

To receive any declaration of interests.

### **5. LOCAL PLAN: UPDATED DRAFT POLICIES FOR REGULATION 19**

(Pages  
11 - 92)

This report seeks member agreement of the updates to the draft Local Plan policies from the Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Part 1: Preferred Policy Options document in response to changes to national planning policy, comments received to the Regulation 18 consultation and consideration at Local Plan Sub-Committee meetings in 2022 and 2023

#### **Recommendation:**

**That the Local Plan Sub-Committee note the contents of this report, and recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the following policy updates:**

- **Green Belt Policy (Appendix 1)**
- **Development in the Green Belt Appendix (Appendix 2)**
- **Housing Density Policy (Appendix 3)**
- **Design Criteria (Appendix 4)**
- **Affordable Housing Policy (Appendix 5)**
- **First Homes Policy (Appendix 6)**
- **Employment and Economic Development Policy (Appendix 7)**
- **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Policy**

**(Appendix 8)**

- **Retail and Leisure Policy (Appendix 9)**
- **Open Space, Play Space, Sport and Recreation Policy (Appendix 10)**
- **Health and Wellbeing Policy (Appendix 11)**
- **Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy (Appendix 12)**
- **Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping Policy (Appendix 13)**
- **Waterways Policy (Appendix 14)**
- **Broadband and Electronic Communications Policy (Appendix 15)**
- **Sustainable Transport and Travel Policy (Appendix 16)**

**6. OTHER BUSINESS - If approved under item 3 above.**

**General Enquiries: Please contact the Committee Team at [committeeteam@threerivers.gov.uk](mailto:committeeteam@threerivers.gov.uk)**

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## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

**At a meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 8 August 2024 from 7.00 - 9.01 pm**

**Present:** Councillors Stephen Giles-Medhurst, ,

Oliver Cooper, Steve Drury, Philip Hearn, Chris Mitchell, Sarah Nelmes and Andrew Scarth

**Officers in Attendance:**

Marko Kalik  
Aaron Roberts  
Sharon Keenlyside

**External in Attendance:**

Jon Bishop, Three Rivers Joint Residents Association.

**LPSC29/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Christopher Alley, Stephen Cox, Louise Price.

**LPSC30/23 MINUTES**

It was confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024 were a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

**LPSC31/23 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

**LPSC32/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There was none.

**LPSC33/23 LOCAL PLAN: UPDATED POLICIES FOLLOWING REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION**

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation, presented the report and explained that the report was seeking Member agreement to the updates of Local Plan policies to be included in the Draft Regulation 19 Plan going to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Mr. Jon Bishop, Three Rivers Joint Residents Association, was invited to speak on the item. Mr. Bishop thanked officers for the quality of the report and spoke of the confidence the Association had in that the Regulation 19 consultation would be able to begin in September/October this year, as recently agreed by the Council. In regard to Appendix 1, the Association felt that it was vital that this small area was protected in the Three Rivers Local Plan (TRLP) and the policy wording should be tightened to make it explicit that planning permission would not be granted in the absence of a legally binding agreement for the required Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). For Appendix 3, it was felt that it would be better phrased in the negative rather than the positive. For Appendix 5, under policy point 16, there were concerns where the word "public" was inserted. The views from all of the conservation area are inherently part of the conservation area. It was suggested that the wording was changed to "permission will not be granted for development outside but near to a

conservation area, if it adversely affects the setting, character, appearance or views out of that conservation area and public views into that conservation area”.

### **Appendix 1 – Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC).**

The Head of Planning Policy & Conservation explained that this was a new policy resulting from Dacorum Borough Council’s Habitat’s Regulations Assessment (HRA) work. There were concerns about the accumulative impact of residential development on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC and the work identified a Zone of Influence that included part of Three Rivers. The policy was put together in consultation with Natural England. The main policy was that developments that fall into the Zone of Influence, with 100 dwellings or more, would be required to produce an HRA and provide suitable SANG.

After Members questions, the Head of Policy Planning and Conservation confirmed that planning permission would not be given unless a S106 agreement was in place. There was very specific criteria for a new SANG including a 2.5km circular walk, adequate parking for visitors and the area of land having to be of a certain size.

AGREED: that officers would check if the neighbouring authority’s policy had reference to “a legally binding agreement”, and if so, to mirror it in the TRDC policy.

### **Appendix 2 – Northwood headquarters Ministry of Defence (MOD) Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that it was a new policy following the original Regulation 18 Draft Plan based on the comments received from the MOD. There was one amendment to be added to the end of the third and last paragraph “unless the effect can be suitably mitigated against”.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation confirmed to the Sub-Committee that the mitigation was the responsibility of the developer, not the MOD.

Officers agreed to review the wording and circulate to Members.

AGREED: that the amendment would be added to the policy.

### **Appendix 3 – Residential Design and Layout Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained to the Sub-Committee that there had been a few minor changes and an additional section on tall buildings, as requested by Members at a previous meeting. It had been suggested that a tall building was defined as anything 10 metres or 4 storeys above ground level.

Members agreed that the wording of the policy would be better phrased in the negative rather than the positive.

A Member requested that policy limit “tall buildings” to strategic key centres and the principal town.

AGREED: that officers would:

- review restricting tall buildings to key centres and principal town,
- change the wording of the policy to be phrased in the negative rather than the positive,
- add in the reference to ‘above ground level’ and,
- add a reference to “secure by Design” if not referred to in other policies.

### **Appendix 4 – Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that the reference to neighbourhood plans had been added as requested at a previous meeting as well as the reference to the diverse architecture of the district.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy.

### **Appendix 5 – Heritage and Historic Environment Policy.**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that the word “public” had been added following discussion at previous meetings but if agreed by Members would be removed.

A Member suggested that the wording be changed to something similar to “in to, out of or within the Conservation Area”. As a minor change, the Head of Planning Policy and Conservation would review the wording and bring it back as part of the draft plan.

After discussion, it was agreed that in paragraph 14a, the wording would be changed to “character and appearance”.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy subject to the minor changes above.

### **Appendix 6 – Social and Community Uses Policy.**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that there had been no changes to the policy.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy.

### **Appendix 7 – Flood Risk and Water Resources Policy.**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that the 110 litre per person water resources requirement from the Climate Change Adaptation Policy had been moved into the Flood Risk and Water Resources Policy.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy.

### **Appendix 8 - Ground Conditions, Contamination and Pollution Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that the section on light pollution had been updated to include guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals and it had been added that the hours of illumination shall be controlled as suggested by Members.

A Member commented that not all the guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals was free and therefore the latest guidance may not be available to everyone.

A Member raised a concern about the wording in paragraph 8a “minimum required” and suggested that this should be changed to accommodate members of the public who may require more lighting for safety reasons. It was suggested that it should be changed to “proposed lighting schemes are at least the minimum required for public safety and security. Lighting should seek to improve public safety and decrease crime”. Something should also be added regarding the controls to be used to tackle pollution. Members discussed the wording around this and that there had to be a balance of what lighting is considered reasonable and light pollution.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said that some caveat writing could be added.

Members also felt that the wording of 8g may need reviewing.

Aaron Roberts, Senior Planning Officer explained that paragraph 8 policy doesn't relate solely to major development but also to lighting specific proposals, such as installation of floodlights etc.

A Member commented on paragraph 8e and asked that the wording makes clear that the standard would apply to adopted roads.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy subject to the changes above.

### **Appendix 9 - Waste Management and Recycling Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that there were no changes to what had previously been agreed.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy.

### **Appendix 10 - Landscape Character Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that there was only a minor change.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy.

### **Appendix 11 - Advertisements Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that he had spoken to Development Management and reviewed regulations regarding paragraph 5d “advertisements must contribute to a safe and attractive environment” and the regulations require the Council to consider the safety aspect and amenity. Some advertisements may require consent. A safety consideration is whether advertisements obscure or partially obscure road/traffic signs or security/surveillance.

Members suggested that the wording in 5d be changed to “does not impact safety” and that the wording was more expansive.

Members also suggested that the wording in paragraph 11.2 needed to be stronger regarding flashing illuminated signs as flashing lights could trigger epilepsy. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that the justification for this was explained in paragraph 5a. It was agreed that the wording “Flashing illuminated signs should be avoided, whether internal or external” would be deleted.

A Member raised the point that in some areas, advertisements were of a high quality, and they had a design brief and suggested that TRDC also had supplementary planning guidance drawn up. This could also include shop fronts.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation commented that another policy refers to shop fronts that he would investigate that. As far as supplementary guidance was concerned, it may be something for the future but would be difficult within the time constraints for a small team. Further detail could be added to the policy bullet points.

Members mentioned paragraph 1 and suggested that highways network was used rather than specifically mentioning Highways England (now National Highways). The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that National Highways had requested the wording. Members agreed that it should be made clear that both National Highways and the local Highways Authority would be consulted and suggested “appropriate Highway Authority”.

A Member commented that the Retail and Leisure Policy, the preferred option had removed the paragraph “shop fronts and displays should be appropriate to the character and function of the area” and the control of advertisements and shop fronts did not appear elsewhere in the Local Plan which was an oversight. It was requested that paragraph 9 was restored. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation would investigate this.



AGREED: that there would be a re-wording of Paragraph 1, 5d, 11.2 and an investigation into advertisement restraint as detailed above and the revised policy would be circulated.

## **Appendix 12 - Deliveries, Servicing and Construction Policy**

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that there were no changes to what had previously been agreed except for a minor word change.

A Member raised a concern about what paragraph 7 meant in practical terms. Officers agreed to add more supporting text regarding best practice.

A Member commented that collections had not been included in the policy and should be added throughout to be explicit. Officers agreed that collections could be included.

A Member suggested that Construction Impact Bonds be considered. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation agreed to investigate this.

A Member commented that the wording in paragraph 3 was “should demonstrate” when all other wording was “must”.

It was noted that Highways England needed to be changed to National Highways.

AGREED: to approve the updated policy subject to the changes above.

**RESOLVED: that the Local Plan Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report, and agreed to recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the following policy updates subject to the changes agreed at this meeting:**

- **Chilterns Beechwoods SAC Policy (Appendix 1)**
- **Northwood Headquarters MOD Policy (Appendix 2);**
- **Residential Design and Layout Policy (Appendix 3)**
- **Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping Policy (Appendix 4)**
- **Heritage and Historic Environment Policy (Appendix 5)**
- **Social and Community Uses Policy (Appendix 6)**
- **Flood Risk and Water Resources Policy (Appendix 7)**
- **Ground Conditions, Contamination and Pollution Policy (Appendix 8)**
- **Waste Management and Recycling Policy (Appendix 9)**
- **Landscape Character Policy (Appendix 10)**
- **Advertisements Policy (Appendix 11)**
- **Deliveries, Servicing and Construction Policy (Appendix 12)**

**CHAIRMAN**

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**LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE**  
**29 August 2024**  
**PART I**

**LOCAL PLAN: Updated Draft Policies for Regulation 19 (DCES)**

**1 Summary**

This report seeks member agreement of the updates to the draft Local Plan policies from the Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Part 1: Preferred Policy Options document in response to changes to national planning policy, comments received to the Regulation 18 consultation and consideration at Local Plan Sub-Committee meetings in 2022 and 2023.

**2 Details**

2.1 The Regulation 18 Part 1 Preferred Policy Options was consulted on from 11 June – 20 August 2021.

2.2 Following this round of Regulation 18 consultation the Local Plan Sub-Committee considered updates to the draft Local Plan policies in 2022 and 2023. At these Local Plan Sub-Committee meetings, Members were informed of any changes to national policy and considered representations made on the policies through the consultation.

2.3 These policies have now been further updated to include Member comments from these meetings and are proposed by officers for inclusion in the Regulation 19 Publication version of the Local Plan. It should be noted that any changes are fairly minor and in essence these policies have already been agreed by Members at previous Local Plan Sub-Committees.

2.4 This report will set out some background on each policy, the draft policies can be viewed in the appendices to the report.

Green Belt

2.5 As set out in national policy, the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence, and Green Belts serve five purposes:

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.6 Great importance is attached to the Green Belt in Three Rivers, and as highlighted by the National planning Policy Framework (NPPF), established Green Belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances and only when a Local Plan is being prepared or reviewed.

- 2.7 The main focus for development is making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land, and an exhaustive search of potential sites to accommodate development needs has been carried out as part of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment. The policies of the new Local Plan also promote a significant uplift in the density of development in the District, and in all cases, proposals will need to make efficient and effective use of land.
- 2.8 However, even with these actions, there is insufficient capacity to meet needs for growth within the District's existing urban area. The Council has also been in discussion with neighbouring authorities to establish whether some of the identified need for development could be accommodated within these areas. However, all of Three Rivers' neighbours are also Green Belt authorities and are unable to meet their own needs without developing in the Green Belt. As such, there are no neighbouring authorities who are able to accommodate any of Three Rivers identified need.
- 2.9 While the Council, and communities, attach significant weight to the Green Belt in the District, given the level of need for housing and the acute requirement for affordable housing in the area, the impacts for sustainable development of not planning to meet needs in the District are such that there are exceptional circumstances justifying alterations to the established Green Belt boundaries.
- 2.10 Detailed changes to the Green Belt boundary will be made in association with the allocations of sites in the new Local Plan to help provide for the needs of our communities and provide wider community benefit.
- 2.11 However, notwithstanding these changes which will be necessary, the remaining Green Belt in the District will continue to fulfil the purposes set out in the NPPF and will therefore need to be protected for the long term.
- 2.12 Paragraph 154 of the (NPPF) advises that the construction of new buildings is regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, although exceptions to this are:
- a) Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
  - b) The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
  - c) The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
  - d) The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
  - e) Limited infilling in villages;
  - f) Limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
  - g) Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) which would

- Not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than existing development; or
  - Not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt where development would re-use previously developed and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.
- 2.13 The policy has been shortened to remove most of the examples of exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It has been made clear in the policy that further details of possible exceptions are now located within the Development in the Green Belt appendix. We have also removed sections where we were simply repeating what is already stated in the NPPF.
- 2.14 The Draft Green Belt Policy (Appendix 1) and more detailed criteria for certain development that may be considered an exception to inappropriate Development in the Green Belt (Appendix 2) are proposed for inclusion in the Local Plan. This has been expanded compared to previous versions to include more detail.

#### Housing Density

- 2.15 The NPPF advises that plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible, and should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. These should seek a significant uplift in density in these areas unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate. Minimum density standards should also be considered for other parts of the plan area.
- 2.16 Given the constrained supply of available land to meet needs for growth in Three Rivers, it is particularly important that all new housing comes forward at a density which makes efficient use of land, and that the Local Plan secures an uplift in the average density of residential density where appropriate and in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan.
- 2.17 Monitoring data shows that past housing completions in Three Rivers have been delivered at a range of densities. Average densities have varied year to year depending on the nature of the schemes which have come forward within that year, with some years showing a high proportion of completions at less than 30 dwellings per hectare and other years showing a higher proportion of completions per hectare.
- 2.18 The existing built up areas of the District have a varied character, including as a consequence of the density of development. For example, within Rickmansworth Town Centre, residential densities are approximately 52 dwellings per hectare, while in Chorleywood densities are approximately 18 dwellings per hectare.
- 2.19 Members have previously agreed a minimum housing density of 50 dwellings per hectare to be set for the District with higher densities expected from areas well served by public transport, services and facilities. It is considered that this strikes an appropriate balance for the District between optimising the use of land and securing an uplift in appropriate locations while ensuring due regard for the character and amenities of the District and the quality of life of residents.
- 2.20 Whilst it is important to make more efficient use of land, particularly to reduce pressure on greenfield and/or Green Belt sites, this should not compromise the

quality of the environment and existing residential areas in Three Rivers, some of which may fall within areas of special historic or landscape value. The draft policy therefore states that where lower densities are proposed on the basis of the character or amenities of an area, the reasons for this should be explained as part of any application.

- 2.21 The proposed Draft Housing Density Policy (Appendix 3) sets out the minimum density standards. No changes have been made to this policy, and it remains as previously agreed by Members.

#### Design Criteria

- 2.22 The report to the 8 August Local Plan Sub-Committee included the policy on Residential Design and Layout. We have now updated the accompanying appendix on Design Criteria which sets out additional detail on design criteria.
- 2.23 We will prepare a design guide following adoption of the Local Plan, but these criteria will help bridge the gap between local plan adoption and completion of the design guide.
- 2.24 Here we have updated the diagrams from the existing Design Criteria showing boundary distances and the 45 degree rule. The paragraph on privacy has been rewritten for clarity. In the residential amenity space section, reference to the size of balconies and mitigation have been added. Other minor changes to wording and grammar have been made for clarity.
- 2.25 The Design Criteria are in Appendix 4 to this report.

#### Affordable Housing

- 2.26 Average house prices in Three Rivers are some of the highest in the country outside London. Housing affordability within the District continues to be a major concern for many residents, and many local people have difficulty in accessing housing on the open market. This particularly affects the young and those on lower incomes who are entering the housing market.
- 2.27 The updated Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA, 2024) is clear that there is a notable need for affordable housing in Three Rivers and across South West Hertfordshire. Improving the supply and standard of affordable housing is therefore one of the biggest priorities for the Council to address the needs of our community.
- 2.28 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) sets out at paragraph 64 that where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required, and expect it to be met on-site unless off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified; and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.
- 2.29 The LHNA demonstrates that the average house price in Three Rivers during 2022 was £560,000. This is above the Hertfordshire average of £512,940 and the England and Wales average of £328,000 during the same period. Monthly rents across all sizes of accommodation are similarly above Hertfordshire and England averages within Three Rivers.

- 2.30 Affordability ratios in Three Rivers and across the South West Hertfordshire area have deteriorated significantly since 1997 and lower quartile house prices in the District were 12.85 times higher than lower quartile incomes at February 2022. The affordability of housing therefore remains a critical issue in Three Rivers, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.
- 2.31 The LHNA considered needs for affordable housing in accordance with the methodology set out within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). This identifies an annual net need for affordable housing for rent in Three Rivers over the period 2024-2040 of 364 homes per year.
- 2.32 This in itself is above the overall housing figure of 270 dwellings per annum consulted on in Regulation 18 Part 4, and on this basis we should be seeking 100% affordable housing. Obviously, this would not be viable or achievable.
- 2.33 The need for affordable housing for rent is equivalent to 57% of the District's total housing requirement under the standard methodology, and given the significant and growing need for affordable housing the draft LHNA confirms that seeking the maximum amount of affordable housing for rent as is viably possible is justified.
- 2.34 The percentages sought in the draft policy will be subject to a Whole Plan Viability Assessment which the NPPF requires to test the policies within the Draft Local Plan to consider whether those policies maintain the viability of development. The assessment will include modelling of all policy requirements likely to impact on viability, such as affordable housing, carbon reduction requirements, environmental standards, space standards, open space requirements, Community Infrastructure Levy etc.
- 2.35 The Whole Plan Viability Assessment has not yet been completed. Should the Viability Assessment result in changes to the draft policy provided in Appendix 1, the Draft Affordable Housing Policy will be amended and brought back to this sub-committee for further consideration.
- 2.36 With the Government's introduction of First Homes to national planning policy the Council is required to provide 25% of affordable housing as First Homes. More detail on First Homes will be provided in the First Homes Policy section to this report.
- 2.37 With regard to the tenure of affordable housing for rent that is required, the greatest need in the District is for Social Rented housing, followed by Affordable Rent. Based purely on an analysis of affordability the LHNA recommends that we secure as much social rented housing as viably possible. The policy therefore seeks 70% social rented housing together with 25% First Homes. This allows the remaining 5% for affordable rented housing.
- 2.38 The Council acknowledge that requiring a higher proportion of affordable homes for rent, will impact on the overall level of affordable housing that may be delivered. However, these are the most urgent and pressing needs for housing in the District and the Council will therefore prioritise the delivery of a greater proportion of affordable housing for rent rather than a higher total level of affordable housing delivery through, for example, a higher proportion of affordable home ownership. A tenure mix in accordance with the LHNA will therefore be sought. This will be set out in the Housing Mix Policy.
- 2.39 On the basis of the types of housing that would best meet needs for housing, and

- 2.40 Paragraph 65 of the NPPF advises that affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas where policies may set a lower threshold of five units or fewer.
- 2.41 However, the local circumstances in Three Rivers are considered to justify an alternative approach to require all developments resulting in a net gain of housing to contribute to affordable housing provision. This is on the basis of the acute need for affordable housing in the District demonstrated by the LHNA, and the crucial role that smaller sites delivering fewer than 10 dwellings has played in delivering housing historically which is expected to continue in future.
- 2.42 These factors are considered to outweigh the guidance within the NPPF and justify the approach within the Affordable Housing Policy to require all sites resulting in a net gain of dwellings to contribute to affordable housing provision in the District, and this approach has been supported in recent appeal decisions in the District.
- 2.43 There are fewer opportunities to build new homes in the District's smaller villages surrounded by, or designated as Green Belt due to more restrictive policies on housing in countryside and particularly in the Green Belt.
- 2.44 However, an element of new development can help to support these communities and paragraph 154 of the NPPF therefore enables provision of limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan, including policies for rural exception sites.
- 2.45 In line with this potential exception, proposals for rural exception sites delivering 100% affordable housing<sup>1</sup> within and immediately adjacent to the village core areas of Bedmond and Sarratt<sup>2</sup> may be supported in the Green Belt where these are evidenced to provide affordable housing which would meet identified local community needs. The type and size of affordable housing provided on such sites must address identified needs in the individual village or the area it serves which is defined as the village or parish in which it is located.
- 2.46 Limited affordable housing provided on rural exception sites will be subject to a requirement to provide for people with a need to live in the locality. Any such schemes will therefore be subject to eligibility criteria limiting occupancy to people with a local connection (through past residence, employment or close family connection).
- 2.47 Affordable housing will generally be required to be provided on site as this will make the greatest contribution to meeting needs in the short term. However, for small sites delivering one to nine dwellings the Council will consider the use of commuted payments, in lieu of on-site provision where requested on the basis that it is unfeasible to make provision onsite. Commuted payments will be broadly equivalent in value to the on-site provision, taking into account the additional market housing that would be provided due to there being no on-site affordable units and further guidance will be provided through an update to the Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
- 2.48 Commuted payments for small sites and the trigger point for payment of the contribution will be secured through a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 which site owners will be required to enter into before

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<sup>1</sup> A minor degree of market housing to support the delivery of the affordable housing may be acceptable

<sup>2</sup> Subject to the villages of Bedmond and Sarratt remaining washed over by Green Belt



planning permission is issued. The contribution will generally be payable on commencement of the development.

- 2.49 Where affordable housing is to be provided on site, the timing of this is a key issue in securing mixed and balanced communities at all stages. Wherever possible, affordable housing should be delivered in tandem with the provision of market housing and planning conditions or legal agreements will be used to ensure that affordable housing is built out alongside, and proportionately, to the amount of market housing at any one time. The precise amount and timing of the affordable housing units required will be set out in the relevant condition or legal agreement. To create mixed and inclusive communities it is also vital that there is no distinction between the design and quality of market and affordable homes, and that affordable homes address all relevant objectives and design policies of the Local Plan. Affordable homes should also be distributed throughout developments within clusters appropriate to the scale and nature of the development to enable effective management while providing a balance of housing across the site.
- 2.50 The affordable housing requirements will be supported by detailed viability evidence demonstrating that these levels are viable and will not preclude development from coming forward. Given that viability assessment is undertaken in preparation of the Local Plan, the impact of policies on development viability will have been considered and will be regarded as realistic. The need for a viability assessment at planning application stage will therefore need clear justification by the applicant in line with paragraph 58 of the NPPF.
- 2.51 It is however recognised that on a limited number of sites, there may be genuine exceptional circumstances which necessitate provision of site-specific viability information to support an alternative approach. The council will consider this on a case-by-case basis but in line with national guidance, site specific factors such as the price paid for land are not exceptional reasons to justify provision of site-specific viability assessment.
- 2.52 Where viability evidence is provided, this should be undertaken in accordance with the recommended approach set out in national planning guidance, including standardised inputs and explanation of what factor(s) have changed since the viability assessment underpinning this Local Plan. Submitted viability evidence will be made publicly available and the council reserves the right to have any viability assessment independently assessed, the cost of which must be borne by the applicant.
- 2.53 Exceptional circumstances justifying deviation from the required level and mix of affordable housing will only exist where this is fully justified through a policy compliant viability assessment. In these situations, with regard to the evidence of housing need in the District and the priority to deliver rented affordable housing, the Council will seek to secure the preferred tenure split as a priority over a potentially higher percentage of affordable housing overall through the provision of more intermediate tenure dwellings for affordable home ownership which would not be consistent with meeting priority needs. Flexibility may be appropriate to move away from the preferred tenure of social rent to affordable rent, although it would need to be demonstrated that these homes would be affordable to those in need in the District.
- 2.54 Where it is accepted that there are exceptional circumstances to justify departure from the policy requirement for affordable housing, any permission will be subject to requirements for detailed review mechanisms to consider viability through the lifetime of development up to full completion to ensure policy compliance and optimal public

benefits through economic cycles and that the maximum reasonable level of affordable housing is provided in line with the Draft Affordable Housing Policy.

- 2.55 Review mechanisms are an important tool to seek compliance with relevant policies and will be provided through the legal agreement accompanying a permission. These will provide for review of viability to determine whether a development is capable of providing additional affordable housing (or meeting other unmet policy requirements) deemed unviable at application stage. Any additional obligations will be capped based on policies of the Local Plan with the aim of securing provision of policy requirements previously deemed not to be deliverable.
- 2.56 Viability reviews carried out at an early stage of a development or prior to the implementation of later phases have the benefit of increasing the likelihood that additional affordable housing can be provided on site, while viability reviews undertaken towards the end of a development will be based on up to date and accurate viability evidence and allow robust, up to date values and costs to be taken into account.
- 2.57 In general, viability reviews will therefore be required at an advanced stage of development for all schemes to ensure that viability is accurately assessed and up to date. This will generally be at a point of sale of 75% of market units to assist in meeting the Council's key priority of delivering genuinely affordable housing.
- 2.58 The updated Affordable Housing Policy takes account of updates from the updated Local Housing Needs Assessment. The thrust of the policy has not changed but information on the median housing price and affordability ration have been updated in the reasoned justification.
- 2.59 Minor wording has been added to criteria 5 of the policy "housing register" and para 4.49 "capped at local housing need allowance" as requested from the Housing Strategy Team.
- 2.60 The revised Affordable Housing Policy is in Appendix 5 to this report.

#### First Homes

- 2.61 On 24th May 2021, the Government published a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to set out the Government's plans for the delivery of First Homes defining the product and changes to planning policy. Following publication of the WMS, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was updated to reflect the WMS and now forms a material consideration in decision making. A Policy Position Statement<sup>3</sup> was published on the Council's web site that sets out the key information for First Homes and how it relates to the implementation of the existing Core Strategy Policy CP4 Affordable Housing.
- 2.62 The 2023 NPPF states that Written Ministerial Statements including the Written Ministerial Statement on Affordable Homes Update containing policy on First Homes are material when making plans.
- 2.63 The introduction of the First Homes policy means that 25% of affordable housing provision should be for First Homes, with 75% remaining for other tenures. The WMS and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) state that once a minimum of 25% First

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<sup>3</sup> First Homes Policy Position Statement <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/core-strategy>

Homes has been accounted for, social rent should be delivered in the same percentage as set in the Local Plan.

- 2.64 The First Homes policy remains unchanged except for minor editorial changes from the version that was approved.
- 2.65 It should be noted that the First Homes requirement is proposed to be deleted from the NPPF in the Government's current consultation.
- 2.66 The revised Affordable Housing Policy (Appendix 5) addresses the First Homes requirement, and the First Homes policy (Appendix 6) sets out the First Homes criteria.

#### Employment and Economic Development

- 2.67 In addition to providing a significant increase in the quantum of new housing delivered, the economic development of the District needs to be considered. This includes meeting the projected need for a range of employment uses including office uses, industry and warehousing uses, public and community uses, leisure and tourism uses and main town centre uses.
- 2.68 Three Rivers has a thriving economy which has been growing at a strong rate supported by falling levels unemployment. It has a strong creative industries sector (at Warner Brothers Studios and Langleybury) and a high concentration of knowledge-based industries, growth of these sectors should be encouraged.
- 2.69 The policy emphasises the need to retain the existing employment site allocations to counter the loss of employment land to residential use through permitted development rights. The Article 4 Directions protecting the allocated employment sites from conversion to residential use remain in place.
- 2.70 The South West Herts Economic Study (2019) identified a need of 30,100 sqm office floorspace, however this is being met by existing commitments at Croxley Park which will deliver 36,363 sqm so there will in fact be an oversupply of 6,263 sqm. The Economic Study update that is currently being finalised sets out that future demand for office space may be different to that of the conclusions of the 2019 South West Herts Economy Study. However, the report confirms that a significant proportion of demand could be met through the existing supply, meaning additional land would not be required.
- 2.71 Notwithstanding this, the South West Herts Economic Study recommends that any loss of employment space be resisted due to low vacancy rates and increasing labour supply.
- 2.72 It identifies a need for 211,800 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace need across SW Herts for the period up to 2040 equating to 59.5 ha of employment land. There are no specific local need figures identified for the individual authorities but the study concludes that there is a shortfall of roughly 9 ha land across SW Herts.
- 2.73 The policy includes support for proposals relating to creative industries and for expansion of Warner Brothers Studios, however a separate policy that has already been reported to the Local Plan Sub-Committee goes into more detail regarding the studios specifically.
- 2.74 The Draft Employment and Economic Development Policy is attached in Appendix 7.

### Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 2.75 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople have particular accommodation needs that require additional consideration. To ensure that members of these communities are able to access decent and appropriate housing with access to services including health and education, the Council must make provision for accommodation to meet identified needs.
- 2.76 The Council will seek to meet identified needs on suitable sites in sustainable locations and to maintain a five year supply of deliverable pitches/plots, taking into account the findings of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2024) and any subsequent updates. All the identified Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Sites within the District will be 'safeguarded' to ensure that the permitted use as a traveller site is not lost through the grant of any subsequent planning permission whilst there remains a need for sites.
- 2.77 Work on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2024) is ongoing and needs in terms of site allocations will be considered as part of this work. The evidence work is not expected to make any difference to policy wording.
- 2.78 The reasoned justification has been temporarily removed from the policy as this will need to be updated in line with the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment which is in the process of being updated. We do not expect any fundamental changes to the policy wording itself.
- 2.79 The proposed Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People policy is in Appendix 8.

### Retail and Leisure

- 2.80 The evidence base document underpinning the Retail and Leisure policy is the South West Hertfordshire Retail & Leisure Study (2018). It identifies key issues which the new Local Plan needs to address and proposes policy wording and site allocations to be contained within the draft Local Plan.
- 2.81 The study shows that Three Rivers has a relatively low market share across the South West Herts area. This reflects the findings of the previous studies undertaken in 2009 and 2012.
- 2.82 Three Rivers has a 5.7% market share of convenience<sup>4</sup> goods and a 1.3% share of comparison<sup>5</sup> goods. This is in contrast to Hemel Hempstead, Watford and St Albans which have more dominant market shares, reflective of centres in these areas being higher in the retail hierarchy. There is a high amount of leakage out of the District for convenience and comparison goods shopping, with leakage predominantly being directed to Watford. The study considers that the position is unlikely to change significantly and that existing market shares are likely to prevail.

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<sup>4</sup> Convenience goods - Food, alcoholic drink, tobacco products, newspapers and periodicals, non-durable household goods.

<sup>5</sup> Comparison goods - Clothing and footwear; household textiles and soft furnishings; Furniture and floor coverings; household appliances; audio visual equipment; hardware, DIY goods, decorating supplies, tools and garden products; chemist and medical goods, cosmetics and beauty products; books, jewellery, watches, china, glassware and kitchen utensils, recreational, personal and luxury goods.

- 2.83 The Study provides recommendations on the provision for new retail floorspace over the Local Plan period to 2036, based on the growth population scenario<sup>6</sup> of an additional 630 dwellings per year. The study identifies that there is likely to be a relatively small undersupply of convenience and comparison goods floorspace. With the lower growth approach now being taken by the Council it is unlikely that there would be any undersupply. The policy therefore focuses on safeguarding existing retail uses.
- 2.84 Reasoned justification added with details of 2018 Retail and Leisure Study. Policy criteria 2) has been reworded to provide clearer guidance to what should be allowed. Floorspace targets have been added to the reasoned justification. The policy has been changed to be more in line with the updated Use Class order and town centre uses. The policy focuses more on frontages at floor level – it is acceptable to have shops at ground floor level and accommodation above.
- 2.85 The proposed Retail and Leisure Policy is set out Appendix 9 to this report.

### Open Space, Sport & Recreation

- 2.86 Under paragraph 102 of the NPPF, it sets out that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies and surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.
- 2.87 The Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study (OSSR) was commissioned as a joint study with Dacorum, Hertsmere and St Albans. The OSSR determines the provision and quality of existing facilities, identifies any surplus or deficiencies of provision, establishes the likely future needs and assists with the setting of new provision standards in the new Local Plan.
- 2.88 The OSSR consists of:
- Open Space Assessment – provides detail with regards to what open space provision<sup>7</sup> exists in the area, its condition, distribution and overall quality. It also considers the future requirements for provision and direction on future provision of accessible and high-quality provision for open spaces
  - Indoor Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment – an assessment of need for sports halls, health and fitness and specialist facilities and looks at all indoor and built facilities<sup>8</sup> for sport and physical activities including community centres and village Halls. It identifies any deficiencies and/or surpluses of provision and identifies opportunities for new, enhanced and rationalised provision.

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<sup>6</sup> Forecasts are based on a scenario of an additional 630 dwellings in the District per year

<sup>7</sup> Open Space includes parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural greenspaces, amenity green space, provision for children and young people and allotments.

<sup>8</sup> Indoor Sports facilities include sports halls (including school sports halls), swimming pools, health and fitness suites, dance studios, gymnastics provision, indoor bowls, squash courts, village/community halls.

- Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment – is a supply and demand assessment of playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities<sup>9</sup> in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance and Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance.

- 2.89 These studies and accompanying strategies and action plans recommend numerous priority projects for Three Rivers that the Leisure Team will consider and will be subject of future reports to the Leisure Committee. Specific projects will be identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan that will accompany the Local Plan.
- 2.90 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will set out the additional infrastructure required to support growth within the District up to 2041. It will include a review of existing provision for social infrastructure, (such as health and education facilities), physical infrastructure, (such as transport and utilities) and green infrastructure, (such as parks and open spaces).
- 2.91 The words “in exceptional circumstances” have been added to criteria 1) as requested by Members. Specific mention of allotment space added to criteria 4). Clarification for criteria 4)ii) that Developments should seek to explore opportunities to enhance/expand equipment range at existing sites to raise quality standards where there is suitable space to do so. Play space provision standards have been updated. Open space provided on site will be expected to be accessible to all added to criteria 7). As per comments from the Leisure Team, wording stating that elderly housing can be excluded from provision of open space has been removed. Following comments from Sport England, wording in criteria 1 has been changed to be more in line with the NPPF.
- 2.92 It is important that the current levels of provision are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure provision now and in the future. The proposed Draft Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities and Children’s Play Space is set out in Appendix 10 to this report.

#### Health and Wellbeing

- 2.93 The NPPF requires planners to consider health in a range of different ways. The framework’s presumption in favour of sustainable development highlights the importance of achieving social, economic and environmental objectives (health and wellbeing encompasses all three).
- 2.94 The way that we plan and design places has a significant influence over whether communities are able to live healthy lives. This is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 96 and 109, consequently local plan policies should support population health by using public health evidence to inform policies to ensure that new development proposals support improvements to the health of the population.
- 2.95 Three Rivers incorporates 546 hectares of the Chilterns National Landscape consisting largely of chalk stream, river, valley and adjacent hillsides and woods. As there will be increasing pressure for development across the District, it is important that all landscape, including the Chilterns National Landscape, is conserved and enhanced. The policy ensures that the design of development proposals is sensitive

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<sup>9</sup> Outdoor sports facilities include football, rugby union, rugby league, hockey, cricket, bowls, tennis, athletics (including road running), netball, golf, water sports facilities, archery, cycling

enough to ensure that schemes make a positive contribution to the landscape. National Landscapes are designated for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, which includes its flora, fauna, and geological and natural physical features.

- 2.96 The Draft Local Plan policies already considered/ to be considered by the Local Plan Sub Committee (for example, Residential Design & Layout and Accessible & Adaptable Buildings, Open Space, Sport and Recreation, Social and Community Facilities, Employment and Economic Development, Green Infrastructure Network, Sustainable Transport and Travel) encapsulate the requirements set out in paragraph 96 of the NPPF and the Hertfordshire County Councils Health and Wellbeing Strategy and therefore do not need to be repeated in a separate Health and Wellbeing policy. However, it will be important to ensure that the principles of health and wellbeing are considered by developers at an early stage.
- 2.97 In order to ensure that major development proposals consider health and wellbeing as part of the design process the Draft Health and Wellbeing Policy requires that proposals for developments of 100 dwellings or more will need to submit a Health Impact Assessment with the planning application and proposals for non-residential development will need to undertake a screening exercise in consultation with Herts Public Health to determine the HIA requirements.
- 2.98 Officers have been consulting with statutory bodies in relation to the preparation of the Local Plan to consider the likely health infrastructure needed in relation to the planned growth. Details of the health infrastructure requirements will be set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will state what is needed, when it will be delivered and who is responsible for delivery and associated costs.
- 2.99 The Draft Health and Wellbeing Policy (Appendix 11) provides additional requirements relating to the sustainable location of new health facilities.

#### Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 2.100 Green Infrastructure is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a “network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities”. Green infrastructure includes a range of spaces and assets including, but not limited to, parks and gardens, playing fields, woodlands, wildlife habitats, street trees, amenity greenspace and other open spaces. Green infrastructure networks also include ‘blue infrastructure’ features, such as ponds, rivers, canals and other water bodies<sup>10</sup>. Although ‘blue infrastructure’ is included in the definition of Green Infrastructure, we have added reference to ‘blue infrastructure’ in the policy as Officers feel this adds emphasis to an important side of Green Infrastructure for the District.
- 2.101 Green Infrastructure provides for multi-functional uses, including: the promotion of health and wellbeing through opportunities for recreation, exercise and social interaction; mitigation against climate change and flooding through the migration of species to more suitable habitats, the protection of water quality and the provision of sustainable drainage systems; the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through better ecological connectivity and the facilitation of biodiversity net gain and

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<sup>10</sup> NPPG Natural Environment, Paragraph 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20190721

the enhancement of local landscape character and economic growth through the creation high-quality environments.

- 2.102 The NPPF requires that plans take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing Green Infrastructure. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out that strategic policies should make sufficient provision for conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including green infrastructure. The NPPF goes on to recognise the role of green infrastructure in enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles and requires that planning policies ensure this, also stating that green infrastructure should be safe and accessible (Paragraph 96). Green Infrastructure also has role in planning for climate change and the NPPF states that new development should be planned for in ways that avoids the increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change, including through the planning of Green Infrastructure (Paragraph 159).
- 2.103 The key Green Infrastructure assets in Three Rivers include:
- the corridors of the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade and the Grand Union Canal;
  - the Chilterns National Landscape;
  - the District's Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, key biodiversity areas<sup>11</sup> and priority habitats and species identified by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan; and
  - the Colne Valley Park.
- 2.104 Whilst these are particularly important assets to be conserved and enhanced, they also connect to adjoining spaces within the Green Infrastructure network which should also be conserved and enhanced. New areas of open space may be provided through new housing allocations which will form part of the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure in the future.
- 2.105 Given the level of growth identified for Three Rivers and the surrounding area, and the multi-functional benefits which the networks provide, there is a strong need to conserve and enhance green infrastructure. In order to provide for green infrastructure for Three Rivers in the future, a net gain in the quality and quantity of green infrastructure in the District should be sought through the protection and enhancement of assets and provision of new green spaces.
- 2.106 In order to ensure that Green and Blue Infrastructure in the District is extended and enhanced, the Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy requires that development makes provision for green infrastructure which is accessible and safe and prevents the fragmentation of and damage to the network as a result of development. The Draft Policy also seeks to maximise the social and environmental benefits of Green Infrastructure through the protection and improvement of walking and cycling routes between spaces in the Green Infrastructure network.
- 2.107 Specific projects to enhance of Green and Blue Infrastructure in the District will be identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

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<sup>11</sup> The three key biodiversity areas are: the Mid-Colne Valley (wetlands and grasslands), Whippendell Woods and surrounds (woodlands, grassland and wetlands) and the River Chess Valley (wetlands, grasslands, woodland and heath).



- 2.108 Reference to Blue Infrastructure has been added back into the policy. Officers feel this helps emphasise the importance of our watercourses in Three Rivers. We have also updated the text to reflect the latest NPPF definition of Green Infrastructure. The reference to the 20m buffer for public rights of way has been added back in to the policy as requested by Members. Reference to Hertfordshire County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been added.
- 2.109 Appendix 12 contains the Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy which aims to support the conservation and enhancement of the District's Green Infrastructure.

#### Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping

- 2.110 The Biodiversity, Trees and Woodland policy has been separated into two separate policies for clarity. The biodiversity policy will come to a future Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting as there have been some proposed amendments received from Herts Ecology. So, this policy is focusing on the Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping elements of the previous policy only.
- 2.111 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are important contributors to biodiversity and may be protected by wildlife or conservation designations, Tree Preservation Orders or the Hedgerow Regulations. It is important that those not covered by designations are retained, protected and wherever possible, added to, since pressure for development will increasingly threaten trees, woodlands, hedgerows and their surrounding habitat.
- 2.112 Landscaping of new development should be considered as an integral part of the design process. Landscaping refers to both soft landscaping (planting and/or retention of trees, shrubs and other plants and earth contouring) and hard landscaping (paths, walls, seats, planters, kerbing etc.).
- 2.113 The Draft Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping Policy is attached in Appendix 13.

#### Waterways

- 2.114 Waterways are important to both the natural environment and human activities. The three rivers that give the District its name (the Rivers Colne, Gade and Chess) and The Grand Union Canal are important resources for the District in terms of landscape, biodiversity and access to open space and form the basis of the District's Green Infrastructure network.
- 2.115 The Grand Union Canal runs the length of the District and provides a significant Green Infrastructure resource and supports transport, biodiversity, recreation, drainage, water supply and in managing flood risk. It is also an important visual amenity and there are a number of heritage assets on or associated with the Canal.
- 2.116 As well as these functions, the Canal is used by many houseboats and leisure craft. Concentrations of houseboats exist at Batchworth Lock, Rickmansworth and to a lesser extent at Cassiobury in Croxley Green.
- 2.117 It is essential that the Canal is protected as an important resource for the District providing multiple benefits and that these benefits are recognised and enhanced.
- 2.118 Houseboats are a lifestyle choice for some residents, and they contribute to increasing diversity of homes within the District.

- 2.119 A residential mooring<sup>12</sup> is a long-term mooring which may need planning permission for the moored boat to be used as the occupant's sole or primary residence. Such moorings require planning permission as they may constitute a material change of use. Residential moorings are therefore treated by local planning authorities as residential development and are subject to national and local planning policy.
- 2.120 Residential moorings are offered around the country by a mix of private operators and navigation authorities and are becoming increasingly popular.
- 2.121 Officers have added in the definition of waterways to the introductory text for clarification. We have added reference to Green Belt and the need to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances if proposals for moorings and marinas fall within the Green Belt.
- 2.122 The proposed Draft Waterways Policy (Appendix 14) aims to ensure that potential residents of houseboats benefit from the same level of access to services and facilities as those living in traditional housing as well as encouraging the provision of new moorings and facilities for water-based leisure and recreation as part of development proposals.

#### Broadband and Electronic Communications

- 2.123 Access to broadband is vital for growing a sustainable local economy, for education and home working and is now widely accepted as an essential utility, important to homes and businesses alike. At a local level, the availability, reliability and speed of broadband provision is now a key consideration for house buyers and a key concern for the business sector.
- 2.124 People are increasingly accessing a wide range of online services (catch-up TV, video on demand, streaming, social media services, podcasts, audio streaming) through different smart devices – such as smart TVs and mobile phones. In addition, web-based messaging through platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp is also increasing.
- 2.125 The NPPF makes it clear that planning policies should support the expansion of electronic communications networks and full fibre broadband connections.
- 2.126 In order to ensure that future residents and businesses within Three Rivers are able to access superfast broadband and mobile technology the new Local Plan will need to contain a policy which support the expansion of electronic communications network and full fibre connections for all new development.
- 2.127 Electronic communications includes items such as antennae for mobile phone signals, masts, cabinets, cables, ducts, telegraph poles, satellite dishes etc.
- 2.128 Most forms of development by or on behalf of an electronic communications operator for the purpose of the operator's electronic communications network are 'permitted development' and only subject to 'prior approval'.<sup>13</sup> The prior approval procedure

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<sup>12</sup> A residential mooring is generally an official mooring provided by a marina or landowner with the approval of the local authority for continuous occupation of the boat whilst on the mooring.

<sup>13</sup> Schedule 2, part 16 of The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) order 2015 (As amended)

means that the principle of development is not an issue. The local planning authority can only consider the siting and appearance of the proposal.

- 2.129 It will be important for all new residential, employment and commercial developments to provide the means to enable connection to be made to fibre optic broadband infrastructure as the main technology for delivering superfast connections. This should be designed and installed as an integral part of development to avoid the visual impact and future disturbance caused by retrofitting. It is recognised that the availability of broadband infrastructure will vary across the District.
- 2.130 The expectation is that where such infrastructure is not readily available nearby, provision is made for ducting and cabinets to enable easy connection at a later date.
- 2.131 The aim of the draft policy is also to ensure that electronic communication apparatus is kept to a minimum through encouraging the sharing of equipment where this is technically possible. The impact of electronic communications can be minimised through careful design, colouring and landscaping to minimise visual intrusion which can help protect the character and appearance of an area.
- 2.132 We have added reference to 'full-fibre' as per comments from HCC Growth and Infrastructure. We have also updated reference to the government's minimum superfast broadband speed.
- 2.133 The proposed Draft Broadband and Electronic Communications Policy is in Appendix 15 to this report.

#### Sustainable Transport and Travel

- 2.134 Car usage within the District is high and is forecast to grow a further 15.6% by 2031. Increased congestion and car use could undermine the economic growth of the District and harm the quality of the environment and social well-being. Promoting sustainable transport modes will help re-balance the focus to those modes that have lower emissions and contribute to creating a higher quality environment across the District.
- 2.135 The NPPF requires that developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. Sustainable modes of travel are defined within the NPPF as any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.
- 2.136 The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council, the Highways Agency and other transport providers to provide a co-ordinated and enhanced transport system which improves connectivity and transport services.
- 2.137 Hertfordshire County Council have produced a Growth and Transport Plan (GTP) for South West Hertfordshire, which aims to identify the transport interventions that will be needed to support and help facilitate sustainable development within the South West Hertfordshire area, including in Three Rivers.
- 2.138 The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan will identify specific transport schemes that will contribute to meeting transport needs and the sustainability of the District, including transport infrastructure necessary to deliver the levels of growth required in the District.

- 2.139 There is a need for all individual proposals for development to maximise opportunities to support and integrate sustainable travel and to manage and mitigate transport impacts to ensure that safe and suitable access will be provided for all users and that significant impacts of development will be limited.
- 2.140 New development proposals should incorporate the Transport User Hierarchy as set out in Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan into the design of any scheme. The development of any transport strategy should consider in the following order:
- Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel
  - Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists)
  - Passenger transport user needs
  - Powered two wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs
  - Other motor vehicle user needs
- 2.141 Supporting a safe and pleasant walking environment requires prioritisation of pedestrians at the top of the road user hierarchy and improvements to pedestrian safety in existing areas. Developments must incorporate high quality pedestrian routes that promote walking as an attractive, convenient, safe and pleasant mode of transport and that connect in networks and to the surrounding area taking into account existing and likely desire lines.
- 2.142 Cycling is also an essential component of sustainability and the support of healthy lifestyles, as well as providing an affordable means of access to local destinations and opportunity for leisure and recreation. To encourage and support cycling, developments should connect to, and further develop and enhance the existing network of cycle routes of different types (on-road and off-road), including improvements to crossing facilities as well as the routes themselves.
- 2.143 New development must make provision for public transport where this is appropriate taking into account of the scale and nature of a development, including for example through layouts which enable access for buses and provision of covered waiting facilities.
- 2.144 In addition to supporting sustainable modes of travel, where new development comes forward, it must ensure that access arrangements are safe and do not result in danger or inconvenience to other users of the highway, including as a consequence of traffic generation on both the local road network and the Strategic Road Network.
- 2.145 Some changes have been made following comments from the County Council, including adding point 1 to require that new development should be located in areas where there is realistic opportunity for sustainable transport modes, adding point 5(b) to include reference to reducing private motor vehicle journeys and maximising use of more sustainable modes of transport, and other minor changes to wording in point 5 to strengthen the policy. Comments from Development Management have also been taken into account, but only minor adjustments have been made. Reference to '20 minute neighbourhoods' has been added to point 12.14 following comments at the LPSC on 07/12/2022.

2.146 The proposed Draft Sustainable Transport and Travel Policy is in Appendix 16 to this report.

- **Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

**Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

None specific.

- **Recommendation**

That the Local Plan Sub-Committee note the contents of this report, and recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the following policy updates:

- Green Belt Policy (Appendix 1)
- Development in the Green Belt Appendix (Appendix 2)
- Housing Density Policy (Appendix 3)
- Design Criteria (Appendix 4)
- Affordable Housing Policy (Appendix 5)
- First Homes Policy (Appendix 6)
- Employment and Economic Development Policy (Appendix 7)
- Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Policy (Appendix 8)
- Retail and Leisure Policy (Appendix 9)
- Open Space, Play Space, Sport and Recreation Policy (Appendix 10)
- Health and Wellbeing Policy (Appendix 11)
- Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy (Appendix 12)
- Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping Policy (Appendix 13)
- Waterways Policy (Appendix 14)
- Broadband and Electronic Communications Policy (Appendix 15)
- Sustainable Transport and Travel Policy (Appendix 16)

- **Background Papers**

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

Planning Practice Guidance (2023)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011)  
Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)  
Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (2020,2023)  
South West Hertfordshire Local Housing Needs Assessment (2020, 2023)  
South West Herts Economic Study (2019)  
South West Hertfordshire Retail & Leisure Study (2018)  
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2017)  
Open Space Sport & Recreation Study (2019)

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Green Belt Policy  
Appendix 2 Development in the Green Belt Appendix  
Appendix 3 Housing Density Policy  
Appendix 4 Design Criteria  
Appendix 5 Affordable Housing Policy  
Appendix 6 First Homes Policy  
Appendix 7 Employment and Economic Development Policy  
Appendix 8 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Policy  
Appendix 9 Retail and Leisure Policy  
Appendix 10 Open Space, Play Space, Sport and Recreation Policy  
Appendix 11 Health and Wellbeing Policy  
Appendix 12 Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy  
Appendix 13 Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping Policy  
Appendix 14 Waterways Policy  
Appendix 15 Broadband and Electronic Communications Policy  
Appendix 16 Sustainable Transport and Travel Policy

## Appendix 1 - Green Belt

1.1 Green Belt designation covers approximately 77% of the area of Three Rivers. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl and coalescence of settlements by keeping land permanently open. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

1.2 Within the Green Belt, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development which should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

1.3 Protection of the Green Belt and open countryside is a key objective of the Three Rivers Local Plan. However, the Green Belt boundary is tightly drawn around urban areas, and local evidence (including the Urban Capacity Study 2020) has demonstrated that future development needs cannot be accommodated entirely within the urban area. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF sets out that once established, there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated. Authorities may choose to review and alter Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, in which case proposals for changes should be made only through the plan-making process. The Council has considered alternative options for meeting its identified housing need through prioritising development on suitable brownfield sites, optimising the density of development and through discussions with neighbouring authorities in accordance with Paragraph 146 of the NPPF. As such, the council considers that the exceptional circumstances for alterations to Green Belt boundaries have been met.

1.4 While the main focus for development in the District will be the main urban areas, there is also a need for some minor adjustments to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate growth in the most sustainable locations on the edge of existing settlements. Boundary changes are expected to provide land for housing and employment development and may also provide land for school sites.

<b>Green Belt</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) The revised Green Belt Boundary is shown on the Policies Map.</li><li>2) The Council will seek to protect the Three Rivers' Metropolitan Green Belt against inappropriate development, as defined by national policy.</li></ul>

- 3) Inappropriate development will not be permitted in the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances are demonstrated to outweigh the potential harm, including harm to the openness of the Green Belt and any other harm and the purposes of including land within it.
- 4) Development proposals, including those involving previously developed land and buildings in the Green Belt, will be considered in accordance with relevant national planning policy and more detailed provisions below.
- 5) Measures to improve public access to the Green Belt, and to enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity will be encouraged.
- 6) Exceptions to the definition of inappropriate development are set out in national policy and those further exceptions set out in Appendix X will be permitted where they comply with other relevant policies in this plan.
- 7) Guidance on the factors that will be considered in assessing applications for agricultural or forestry dwellings in the Green Belt is contained in Appendix X.

**Reasoned Justification:**

1.5 The Metropolitan Green Belt is a long-standing instrument of national and regional planning policy. Whilst much guidance is provided in national policy, Policy X and Appendix X supplements this with other relevant local criteria and seek to provide the context for protecting the Green Belt in Three Rivers and ensures that development does not harm the Green Belt.



## Appendix 2 – Development in the Green Belt

### Agricultural and Forestry Dwellings

2.1 The NPPF sets out that buildings for agriculture or forestry may be an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, it is important that any such buildings, and in particular dwellings, are demonstrably required **for** the purposes of agriculture or forestry.

2.2 There may be occasion where new residential development can be justified when accommodation is required to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full-time workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work. It will often be as convenient and more sustainable for such workers to live in nearby towns or villages, or suitable existing dwellings, so avoiding new and potentially intrusive development in the Green Belt. However, there will be some cases where the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. Whether this is essential in any particular case will depend on the needs of the enterprise concerned and not on the personal preferences or circumstances of any of the individuals involved.

2.3 It is essential that all applications for planning permission for new dwellings in the Green Belt are scrutinised thoroughly with the aim of detecting attempts to abuse (e.g. through speculative proposals) the planning system. In particular, it will be important to establish whether the stated intentions to engage in farming, forestry or any other rural-based enterprise, are genuine, are reasonably likely to materialise and are capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time. It will also be important to establish that the needs of the intended enterprise require one or more of the people engaged in it to live nearby.

### Permanent Agricultural Dwellings

2.4 New permanent dwellings will only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units, providing:

- a) There is a clearly established existing functional need;
- b) The need relates to a full-time worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to a part-time requirement;
- c) The unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;

- d) The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and
- e) Other planning requirements, e.g. in relation to access, or impact on the countryside, are satisfied.

2.5 A functional test is necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day and night:

- In case animals or agricultural processes require essential care at short notice;
- To deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products, for example, by frost damage or the failure of automatic systems.

2.6 In cases where we are particularly concerned about possible abuse, we will investigate the history of the holding to establish the recent pattern of use of land and buildings and whether, for example, any dwellings, or buildings suitable for conversion to dwellings, have recently been sold separately from the farmland concerned. Such a sale could constitute evidence of lack of agricultural need.

2.7 The protection of livestock from theft or injury by intruders may contribute on animal welfare grounds to the need for a new agricultural dwelling, although it will not by itself be sufficient to justify one. Requirements arising from food processing, as opposed to agriculture, cannot be used to justify an agricultural dwelling. Nor can agricultural needs justify the provision of isolated new dwellings as retirement homes for farmers.

2.8 If a functional requirement is established, it will then be necessary to consider the number of workers needed to meet it, for which the scale and nature of the enterprise will be relevant.

2.9 New permanent accommodation cannot be justified on agricultural grounds unless the farming enterprise is economically viable. A financial test is necessary for this purpose, and to provide evidence of the size of dwelling which the unit can sustain. In applying this test, we will take a realistic approach to the level of profitability, taking account of the nature of the enterprise concerned. Some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (e.g. in managing attractive landscapes or wildlife habitats), can be sustained on relatively low financial returns.

2.10 Agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement. Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the agricultural needs of the unit, or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long-term, will not be permitted. It is the requirements of the enterprise, rather than those of the owner or occupier, that are relevant in determining the size of dwelling that is appropriate to a particular holding.

2.11 We will consider making planning permissions subject to conditions removing some of the permitted development rights under Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for development within the curtilage of a dwelling house. For example, proposed extensions could result in a dwelling whose size exceeded what could be justified by the functional requirement, and affect the continued viability of maintaining the property for its intended use, given the income that the agricultural unit can sustain.

2.12 Agricultural dwellings should be sited so as to meet the identified functional need and to be well-related to existing farm buildings, or other dwellings.

#### Temporary Agricultural Dwellings

2.13 If a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming activity, whether on a newly-created agricultural unit or an established one, it should normally, for the first three years, be provided by a caravan, a wooden structure which can be easily dismantled, or other temporary accommodation. It should satisfy the following criteria:

- a) Clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned (significant investment in new farm buildings is often a good indication of intentions);
- b) Functional need;
- c) Clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;
- d) The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and
- e) Other normal planning requirements, e.g. on siting and access, are satisfied.

2.14 If permission for temporary accommodation is granted, permission for a permanent dwelling will not subsequently be given unless the criteria in **paragraph x** above are met. We will make clear the period for which the temporary permission is granted, the fact that the temporary dwelling will have to be removed, and the requirements that will have to be met if a permanent permission is to be granted. We will not normally grant successive

extensions to a temporary permission over a period of more than three years, nor give temporary permissions in locations where we would not permit a permanent dwelling.

### Forestry Dwellings

2.15 The Council will apply the same criteria to applications for forestry dwellings as to those for agricultural dwellings. The other principles in the advice on agricultural dwellings are equally relevant to forestry dwellings. Under conventional methods of forestry management, which can involve the use of a peripatetic workforce, new forestry dwellings may not always be justified, except perhaps to service intensive nursery production of trees.

### Occupancy Conditions

2.16 Where the need to provide accommodation to enable farm, forestry or other workers to live at or near their place of work has been accepted as providing the special justification required for new, isolated residential development in the Green Belt it will be necessary to ensure that the dwellings are kept available for meeting this need for as long as it exists. For this purpose, planning permission will be made subject to appropriate occupancy conditions.

### **Extensions and Alterations to Buildings in the Green Belt**

2.17 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt. However exceptions to this include:

- The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building; and
- The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.

2.18 The NPPF does not define the terms ‘disproportionate’ or ‘materially larger’. However, ‘original building’ is defined as:

*A building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.*

2.19 Further guidance on what will be considered ‘disproportionate’ (in the case of extensions) or ‘materially larger’ (in the case of replacement buildings) and how the impact of such development on the openness of the Green Belt will be considered is set out below.

### Extensions to Buildings

2.20 Applications for extensions or alterations to buildings in the Green Belt will normally be unacceptable where this would result in disproportionate additions over the size of the original building, or harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Applications for residential extensions in the Metropolitan Green Belt will normally be unacceptable unless both the openness of Green Belt and percentage increase in original floorspace criteria (as set out below) are satisfied and are in accordance with the guidance noted in **Appendix X**.

#### *Disproportionate Additions*

2.21 Extension or alterations resulting in a cumulative increase in floorspace (measured externally) of more than 40% over the original building will normally be considered disproportionate with the following exceptions:

- a) Dormer windows (where proportionate to the existing building)
- b) Ground floor extensions of modest size compared to the building and site.
- c) 'In-fill' extensions which do not increase the apparent bulk of the building.

2.22 The bulk and massing of an extension or alteration, including the roof form, will also be considered against the scale of the original building.

2.23 When determining the floorspace increase, all previous additions to the original building (defined in the NPPF as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally) including outbuildings within close proximity of a building will be taken into account, regardless of whether these were implemented by the current owner or through the exercise of permitted development rights. The cumulative total of floorspace increase will therefore take into account previous extensions and alterations.

2.24 For the purposes of Green Belt policy, a residential outbuilding will be classed as an extension providing it is located within close proximity of the main dwellinghouse on the site. In these circumstances the outbuilding will count towards the total floorspace of the dwelling and any proposed extension or alteration must not result in an increase in the floorspace of more than 40% of the original building. Similarly, the floorspace of existing outbuildings within the curtilage of a dwelling that may be proposed to be removed will not be taken into account in assessing the percentage increase in floorspace unless they were built at the same time as the original dwelling and are within close proximity of the dwelling.

2.25 Proposals to demolish redundant formerly non-residential outbuildings now lying within a defined residential curtilage which detract from the appearance of the area will be

treated on their own merits. It will not normally be acceptable for the floorspace of extensions or alterations to the host building to approach the level of the outbuilding(s) to be removed, and permitted development rights for future outbuildings will generally be removed.

2.26 Small dwellings (defined as 110sqm floorspace measured externally or less) with limited basic amenities may be allowed larger extensions to allow upgrading to contemporary living standards.

2.27 Applications for basement extensions will be subject to the same criteria as above ground extensions.

#### *Openness of Green Belt*

2.28 Side extensions should not significantly extend the width of the original building or in any other way make the building more prominent by virtue of its bulk and/or design. Rear extensions will normally be viewed more favourably than side extensions.

2.29 Dormer windows proportionate to the existing building will not normally be viewed as adversely affecting the openness of the Green Belt.

2.30 Increases in ridge height, apparent bulk of roof and/or replacement of a storey at least partially contained in the existing roof, by a full storey will normally be considered to adversely affect the openness of the Green Belt.

#### **Replacement Buildings**

2.31 Applications for replacement buildings in the Green Belt will normally be unacceptable where the replacement would be materially larger than the existing building on the site or would result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

#### *Material Increase*

2.32 When considering whether a replacement building is materially larger than the one it replaces, the baseline will be the existing building.

2.33 The floorspace of existing outbuildings within the curtilage of a building will not be taken into account in assessing the size of the existing building unless they are located within close proximity to the building.

2.34 The assessment of whether a replacement building is materially larger than the one it replaces will be by reference to size. The physical dimension most relevant for the purposes of assessing relative size of buildings will depend on the circumstances of the case.

2.35 Depending on the facts of the case the assessment of whether a replacement building is materially larger may take into account measures including floorspace, volume, footprint, height, width and depth and will include consideration of any proposed basement levels.

2.36 Where an existing dwelling has a floor area (measured externally) of less than 110sqm then the replacement dwelling may be of a total floorspace (excluding garage) of 110sqm.

#### *Openness of Green Belt*

2.37 The impact of replacement buildings on the openness of the Green Belt will be considered in relation to the design, siting within the plot and general location of the proposed building.

2.38 If a replacement building is proposed in a different location to the existing, it will be necessary to demonstrate that there is no increase in the overall visual impact of the building in the landscape. A scheme of remediation of the original house site will also be required and will be linked by condition or legal agreement to any replacement building.

2.39 Permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings may be removed from replacement buildings in the Green Belt to prevent future additions that may cumulatively impact on openness of the Green Belt.

#### **Re-Use and conversion of Buildings in the Green Belt**

2.40 The re-use and conversion of buildings in the Green Belt will only be supported where this would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, and where:

- a) The building is of permanent and substantial construction and is suitable for reuse/conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding and or extension;
- b) The form, scale and general design of the building is in keeping with the surroundings and the proposals would not have a significant adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt or appear excessively prominent, including as a consequence of any alterations/extensions;
- c) Any change of use of associated land does not include open or agricultural land to provide new gardens/amenity space or include doors giving access from buildings directly onto such land. Any associated parking/turning areas or modifications to access or landscaping would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

### **Ancillary Buildings**

2.41 The Council will only support the provision of ancillary buildings in the Green Belt where it can be demonstrated that the development would:

- i) have an ancillary function
- ii) be of a scale and design clearly subordinate to the primary building on site and of a height and bulk such that the building would not have an adverse effect on the visual openness of the Green Belt.
- iii) be sited in an appropriate location that would not be prominent in the landscape and would not result in the spread of urbanising development.
- iv) avoid features normally associated with the use of a building as a dwelling such as dormer windows.

### **Change of Use of Land and Extensions to Residential Curtilage**

2.42 Material changes in the use of land will only be supported where this would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

2.43 The Council will safeguard the Green Belt from encroachment, therefore proposals which include the extension of the curtilage of a property into the Green Belt which result in a net reduction in open Green Belt land will not be supported.

### **Other Development**

2.44 Any enclosure (including gates, walls, fences etc), hardstanding and new accesses should be appropriate to its location in terms of scale, siting, design and materials and where necessary to be supplemented by soft landscaping.



### Appendix 3 - Housing Density

3.1 The NPPF highlights that plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. Given the constrained supply of available land to meet needs for growth in Three Rivers, it is particularly important that all new housing comes forward at a density which makes efficient use of land, and that the Local Plan secures an uplift in the average density of residential density where appropriate in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan.

<b>Housing Density</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Council will promote high quality residential development that respects the character of the District and caters for a range of housing needs. Development should make the most efficient use of land, without compromising the quality of the environment or existing residential areas.</li> <li>2) New housing should be provided at a target density responding to the site, its context and the housing need with densities generally of at least 50 dwellings per hectare. In areas well served by public transport, services and facilities higher densities will be expected.</li> <li>3) There may be occasions where a lower density of development would be appropriate with regard to a site and its context; for example within an area of special historic or landscape value, or specialist forms of accommodation. Any proposals for development at a density below the target levels above should include supporting information to justify the proposed approach.</li> </ol>



### Reasoned Justification

3.2 Monitoring data shows that past housing completions in Three Rivers have been delivered at a range of densities. Average densities have varied year to year depending on the nature of the schemes which have come forward within that year, with some years showing a high proportion of completions at less than 30 dwellings per hectare and other years showing a high proportion of completions of 30-50 or over 50 dwellings per hectare.

3.3 The existing built up areas of the District have a varied character, including as a consequence of the density of development. For example, within Rickmansworth Town Centre, residential densities are approximately 52 dwellings per hectare, while in Chorleywood densities are approximately 18 dwellings per hectare.

3.4 Whilst it is important to make more efficient use of land, particularly to reduce pressure on greenfield and/or Green Belt sites, this should not compromise the quality of the environment and existing residential areas in Three Rivers, some of which may fall within areas of special historic or landscape value.

3.5 As such, it is considered that guideline densities of a minimum of 50 dwellings per hectare should be set for the District with higher densities expected from areas well served by public transport, services and facilities. It is considered that this will strike an appropriate balance for the District between optimising the use of land and securing an uplift in appropriate locations while ensuring due regard for the character and amenities of the District and the quality of life of residents.

3.6 Higher densities of development are not precluded, but should be delivered through high quality designs which ensure that all impacts on surroundings and future occupiers are fully considered.

3.7 Where lower densities are proposed on the basis of the character or amenities of an area, the reasons for this should be explained as part of any application.

## **Appendix 4 – Design Criteria**

4.1 Buildings, streets and spaces should be of the highest quality. In addition to the policies of the Local Plan, development proposals should satisfy the following more detailed criteria to ensure that new development creates a positive sense of place, does not lead to a gradual deterioration in the quality of the built environment, and that landscaping, the need for privacy and amenity space and the creation of identity in new development are taken into account.

4.2 It is important to note that whilst a development may be in accordance with the guidance contained in this document, in some cases it may still not be considered acceptable based on site circumstances. Likewise, certain developments may not comply with all guidance but could still be considered acceptable, particularly in Town and District Centres and other locations where high density development is considered appropriate and a relaxation of standards may be justified to enable efficient and effective use of land. All applications will be assessed and determined on their own merits.

4.3 The following criteria provide more detailed guidance for all new residential development including new dwellings, replacement dwellings, and extensions or alterations to existing dwellings.

4.4 For the purpose of these guidelines, the Town and Country Planning Act defines the term ‘habitable rooms’ as rooms used or intended for the use of sleeping or living which are not solely used for cooking purposes. This would exclude bath or toilet facilities, service rooms, corridors, laundry rooms, hallways or utility rooms. Habitable rooms are considered to be living rooms, dining rooms, shared kitchen-living spaces, studies and bedrooms.

4.5 Non-residential space is not given the same degree of protection as residential properties. However, proposals should still ensure that development provides for suitable standards of amenity for existing and proposed non-residential space to maintain these as attractive spaces contributing to the economy of the District, and that commercial development including new buildings, replacement buildings and extensions or alterations to existing buildings do not adversely affect the character or amenities of the District.

### **Privacy**

4.6 All developments are expected to maintain acceptable standards of privacy for both new and existing residential buildings. The degree of overlooking and privacy inherent in a development will depend on density, layout, distances and angles between buildings, internal layout, positioning of windows, relative levels and, to some extent, the presence of trees, hedges or other landscape features.

4.7 In the interests of privacy and to prevent unacceptable levels of overlooking:

- a) Distances between buildings should be sufficient so as to prevent unacceptable levels of overlooking, particularly from upper floors. Areas of particular sensitivity are habitable rooms, the first 3m of private space behind a rear elevation and balconies or terraces which are the sole source of private outside

space for a home. As an indicative figure, 22m is considered a reasonable separation distance to ensure privacy levels are protected. Distances should be at least 24m between buildings if they include external balconies or are in excess of three storeys (especially dwellings/flats) with elevations which directly face one another or in situations where there are site level differences involved. However, the characteristics of the site may allow some degree of variation, for example where there is a difference in ground level between buildings, where buildings face each other at an angle and where impact on privacy levels can be satisfactorily mitigated, including sites within an urban environment. Mitigating circumstances such as careful layout and orientation, screening and window positions may allow a reduction of distances between elevations.

- b) A proportion of each garden should be a private zone abutting or close to the dwelling that is not visible from the gardens or ground floor habitable rooms of adjoining properties. This should be of a minimum distance of 3 metres from a wall of the dwelling and be permanently screened by walls or fences.
- c) Development should not incorporate balconies, raised platforms and patios or first floor conservatories which unacceptably overlook neighbouring properties and will only be acceptable where there is no perceived or direct overlooking. Raised platforms and patios that require privacy screens which visually impact neighbours will not be supported.
- d) Trees and hedges (either existing or planted as part of the development) are crucial in planning as they can provide an effective screen and additional privacy, and they should be safeguarded throughout construction and lifetime of the development. To ensure privacy, trees and hedges ~~but~~ should not be solely relied upon due to the potential loss of leaves in winter or the possibility of storm damage and disease etc. Where trees are relied on in any development, a tree management plan is required to ensure their future protection.
- e) Windows of habitable rooms at first floor level should generally not be located in flank elevations where they will result in unacceptable levels of overlooking or result in an un-neighbourly relationship. Flank windows of other rooms should be non-opening, below 1.7m (from internal floor level) and fitted with purpose made obscure glazing. High level windows with a sill height of 1.7 metres or more may be acceptable where a secondary light source is necessary.
- f) Ground floor windows should be located away from flank boundaries. Where flank windows to ground floor habitable rooms have to be incorporated, the boundary must be satisfactorily screened by a fence, wall or evergreen hedge.
- g) Reliance should not be placed on high screening fences or walls (2 metres and above) where these would form a dominant and oppressive feature.

### **Prospect**

4.8 Developments which rely on outlook over garage courts, extensive parking areas, railway lines etc. will be discouraged where this can be avoided. All residential units where possible should have an outlook over a public or private highway, garden or other open space.

4.9 Where the rear of a building looks onto the side of another (for instance at a corner in a housing layout), the distance between them must be sufficient to avoid the flank wall having an overbearing effect.

### **Daylight, Sunlight and Outlook**

4.10 Development should ensure a good level of daylight, sunlight and outlook, throughout the day and the year and minimise impact on surrounding properties and spaces.

4.11 The design of all development is required to maximise natural light into the room (subject to passive heating and cooling considerations). All dwellings should provide for direct sunlight to enter the main habitable rooms for a reasonable period of the day. Living rooms, dining rooms and open living or dining kitchen spaces should preferably receive direct sunlight.

### **Aspect**

4.12 All new residential units should be dual aspect, unless provision of dual aspect is demonstrated to be impossible or unfavourable. Where such circumstances are demonstrated, all single aspect units must:

- a) Provide a good level of daylight for each habitable room, and optimise opportunity for direct sunlight;
- b) Ensure that the aspect is not predominantly north-facing and does not face onto main roads or other significant sources of air pollution and/or noise and vibration, which would preclude opening windows;
- c) Provide a good level of natural ventilation throughout the dwelling via passive/nonmechanical design measures; and
- d) Ensure that future occupiers have a good level of privacy and do not experience adverse impacts from overlooking.

### **Flatted Developments**

4.13 Proposals for flatted development or involving the conversion of residential unit(s) into a larger number of units must provide for a good standard of amenity for all occupiers and consider the effect of development on the amenity of adjacent properties, and put in place measures to address any adverse impacts raised. This will include (but is not limited to) the following considerations:

- a) Internal communal corridors should be a minimum of 1.5m wide and should ideally have windows which open to promote cross ventilation and maximise daylight;
- b) Common/shared entrances should lead to a hall large enough for people to manoeuvre with shopping and/or baby buggies, and in wheelchairs, with ease;
- c) Access cores must provide an access control system, with entry phones in all dwellings linked to a main front door with remote electronic lock release;
- d) Internal layouts, including the relationship of rooms on different floors within the scheme, and the position of entrances, extensions and fire escapes should ensure

utility for all occupiers. If internal layouts are unable to maintain room relationships, details of acoustic insulation will be required.

### **Residential Amenity Space**

4.14 This section refers to provision of private and semi-private communal amenity space to serve individual dwellings rather than requirements for public open space (which are set out in Policy X).

4.15 New residential development should provide private outdoor amenity space within the curtilage of the development in accordance with the following indicative minimum levels:

- a) Houses
  - 2 bed house – 45sqm;
  - 3 bed house – 60sqm;
  - 4 bed house - 75sqm;
  - Additional bedrooms – 15sqm each.
- b) Flats (space may be allocated specifically to each flat or provided communally)
  - 1 bed flat - 15sqm;
  - 2 or more bed flat – 25sqm.
  - The minimum depth and width of balconies and other private external spaces should be 1.5m. If required, mitigation such as privacy screens should be incorporated to avoid unacceptable levels of overlooking.
- c) Specialist and Supported Housing for older people:
  - 15sqm per bedspace to be provided communally.

4.16 Developers are encouraged to exceed these standards where applicable. Where developments are not able to meet the standards, such as where existing buildings in town centres are converted to residential use, the Council may consider lower levels (of amenity space) being provided if the standard of living for future residents is not compromised.

4.17 Amenity space provided should be of practical shape and usable, with care taken to ensure the space offers a good standard of amenity. Where privacy is achieved by means such as careful layout, screening, or differing levels, rear gardens may be of varied lengths. However, where rear garden length alone is relied on to provide privacy the minimum length should be 11 metres.

4.18 Depending on the character of the development, the amenity space provided may be in the form of private gardens or in part, may contribute to formal spaces/settings for groups of buildings or existing mature trees. In the latter case this can help avoid problems which can arise from the proximity of large trees to houses.

4.19 Communal space for flats should be well screened from highways and casual passers-by but should benefit from good levels of natural surveillance. Amenity space that lacks clear landscape proposals and consists of simple grassed or hard surfaced areas will not be acceptable.

4.20 Where space in the front of a dwelling is assigned to that particular property, it should be defensible space in the sense of being enclosed as part of the original layout.

4.21 Purely visual amenity space plays a different role; it should be prominent and may well include mature trees and key areas of planting and serve as a visual asset to the development without necessarily being heavily used by the occupants.

### **Built Form**

4.22 All proposals should be in keeping with the prevailing landscape and streetscape, reflecting the variety of local building types by using complementary building materials and designs, and should not result in overdevelopment or unacceptable intensification by reason of scale, form, bulk, height, spacing, density and design.

4.23 New development, including extensions to existing properties should take into consideration impacts on neighbouring properties, both within and surrounding the development, and visual impacts generally. Oversized, unattractive and poorly sited development can result in loss of light and outlook for neighbours and detract from the character and appearance of the street scene, or original property in the case of extensions.

4.24 Few properties are designed to incorporate future extensions, therefore any additions built need to take into consideration their effect on neighbouring properties and their visual impact generally.

4.25 Where planning permission is required, planning applications will be assessed on their individual merits. New development and extensions or alterations to existing properties must:

- a) Not be excessively prominent in relation to adjacent properties or to the general street scene.
- b) Have the appropriate number of car parking spaces and/or garages in accordance with the Council's parking standards.
- c) Respect the character of the property/street scene particularly with regard to the spacing of properties, roof form, positioning and style of windows and doors, and materials.
- d) Not result in significant loss of light to the windows of neighbouring properties nor allow unacceptable levels of overlooking.

### **Single Storey Extensions**

4.26 Side extensions: proximity to the flank boundary will be individually assessed.

4.27 Rear extensions: generally, the maximum depth should be 3.6m, or 4m in the case of detached dwellings. This distance may be reduced if the extension would adversely affect the amenities of occupants of adjoining properties or be unduly prominent.

4.28 Front extensions: applications will be assessed on their individual merits but should not result in significant loss of light to windows of a neighbouring property nor be excessively prominent in the street scene.

## Two Storey Extensions

4.29 Side extensions: in order to prevent a terracing effect and maintain an appropriate spacing between properties in character with the locality:

- First floor extensions (i.e. over a garage or previous ground floor extension) shall be a minimum of 1.2m from the flank boundary.
- Two storey extensions may be positioned on the flank boundary provided that the first floor element is set in by a minimum of 1.2m. This distance must be increased in low density areas or where the extension would have an adverse effect on an adjoining property. In high density areas an absolute minimum of 1m will be considered.

4.30 See Figure A.1 for illustrative examples.

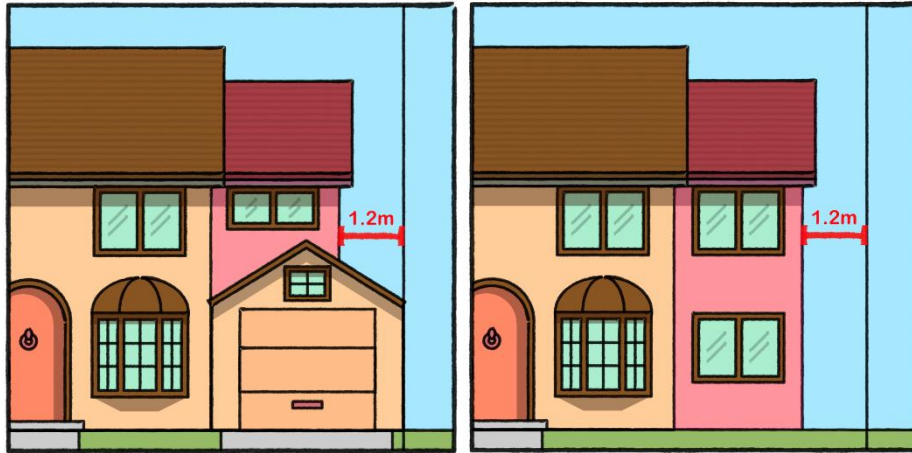
4.31 Rear extensions: in terms of design, mass and volume, each application will be assessed on its individual merits according to the characteristics of the particular property.

4.32 Front extensions: applications will be assessed on their individual merits but should not result in loss of light to windows of a neighbouring property nor be excessively prominent in the street scene.

4.33 Two storey development should not intrude into a 45 degree splay line drawn from the corner of an adjacent residential property. This principle is dependent on the spacing and relative positions of the dwellings and consideration will also be given to the juxtaposition of properties, land levels and the position of windows and extensions on neighbouring properties. Figure A.2 provides illustrative examples.

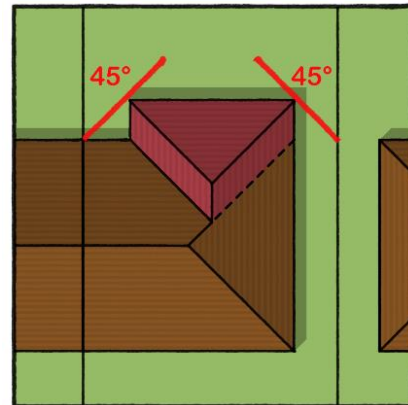
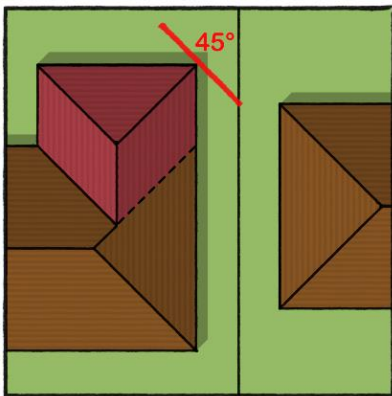


Figure A.1 Single and Two Storey Side Extensions and New Development – Flank to Boundary Distances

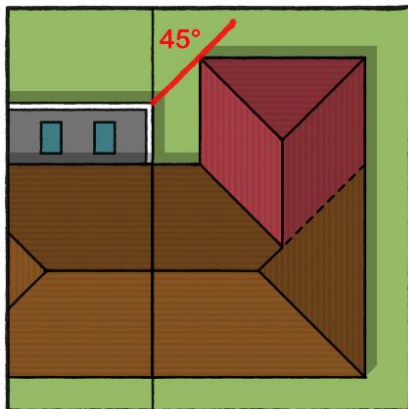


The first floor element of two storey development must be set in from the boundary. The ground floor element may be built up to the boundary

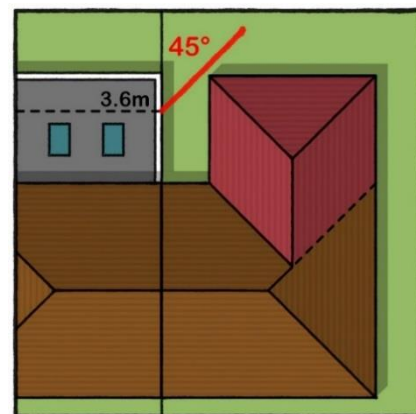
Figure A.2 Two Storey Rear Extensions and New Development – Examples of the 45 degree rule



Rear extensions should not intrude into a 45 degree splay line drawn across the rear garden from a point on the joint boundary, level with the rear wall of the adjacent property.



Staggered layouts: Greater depth may be possible but indefinite 'leapfrogging' by successive extensions will not be permitted



If the neighbour's extension is deeper than policy compliant guidance (i.e either 3.6m or 4m depending on dwelling type), then the 45 degree splay line is taken from the policy compliant depth from a point on the joint boundary

### **New Development**

4.34 Development at first floor level and above should be set in from flank boundaries by a minimum of 1.2m. This distance may be increased in low density areas or where development would have an adverse effect on an adjoining property. In high density areas, an absolute minimum of 1m will be considered. See Figure A.2 for illustrative examples.

### **Dormer Windows**

4.35 Dormer windows should always be subordinate to the main roof. They should be set below the existing ridge level, set in from either end of the roof and set back from the plane of the front or rear wall. The roof form should respect the character of the house if possible.

4.36 Front dormers may not always be appropriate in the street scene.

4.37 Multiple dormers should be proportionate in scale and number to the host roof.

4.38 The fenestration of any dormer window should respect the fenestration of the floors below.

### **Roof Structures**

4.39 Crown roofs as the main roof structure can exacerbate the depth of properties and often result in an inappropriate bulk and massing. As such, they are generally discouraged and more traditional pitched roofs are generally favoured.

4.40 Increases to ridge height will be assessed on their own merits at the time of a planning application, and a street scene plan will be required as part of any application. Where roof forms are of a uniform style/height and appearance, it is unlikely that an increase in ridge height will be supported by the Council.

4.41 Hip to Gable and Dutch Gable roof structures are discouraged in the case of semi-detached houses where they would unbalance the pair and result in a loss of symmetry. In some cases, roof forms in a street may be uniform and therefore this type of alteration may erode the group value of the street and will not be supported by the Council.

### **Servicing and Ancillary Facilities**

4.42 Careful consideration should be given to services for dwellings, bin and bike storage, access to meter boxes, space for clothes drying, places for deliveries and EV charging points where relevant. These should be designed to ensure that they are discreet and can easily be used in a safe way and should be designed as part of the building envelope wherever possible.

4.43 In all cases facilities should be designed to minimise visual impact on the street scene and ensure the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

4.44 Provision of sufficient and accessible external storage space for the accommodation of containers for refuse and recycling is particularly important and must be carefully designed and located to be accessible to the occupiers of developments and waste operatives and to minimise impacts on the character and amenities of an area.

4.45 The layout and location of parking areas are key features affecting the overall quality of residential and commercial schemes. There are many different approaches that can support successful outcomes, such as on-street parking, in-curtilage parking and basement parking.

4.46 The provision, location and type of car parking and service areas will be considered in context to ensure the most successful outcome can be delivered in each case, with consideration for factors including:

- a) Safety and security, including suitable levels of natural surveillance for parked cars;
- b) Degree of impact of parking on the street scene and public realm;
- c) Suitable and safe access for all users, including from the highway and between parking and buildings;
- d) Landscaping and materials.

## Appendix 5 - Affordable Housing

5.1 Average house prices in Three Rivers are some of the highest in the country outside London. Housing affordability within the District continues to be a major concern for many residents, and many local people have difficulty in accessing housing on the open market. This particularly affects the young and those on lower incomes who are entering the housing market.

5.2 The LHNA is clear that there is a notable need for affordable housing in Three Rivers and across South West Hertfordshire. Improving the supply and standard of affordable housing is therefore one of the biggest priorities for the Council to address the needs of our community.

### Affordable Housing

#### Requirements and Thresholds

- (1) Delivery of affordable housing is a key priority of the Local Plan. In view of the identified pressing need for affordable housing in the District seek an overall provision of 40% of all new housing as affordable housing incorporating a mix of tenures. All new development resulting in a net gain of one or more dwellings will be expected to contribute to the provision of affordable housing through providing at least:
  - a) A minimum of 25% of affordable housing as First Homes (refer to First Homes Policy). First Homes must be delivered, sold and let in accordance with the Council's First Homes policy
  - b) 70% of affordable housing to be for social rent (by net additional unit), *and* 10% of affordable housing meeting the Building Regulations M4(3) standard (wheelchair user dwellings) as per the requirements of PPO 6 on Accessible and Adaptable dwellings.
- (2) In calculating the percentage of affordable units to be provided as part of a development scheme, the affordable housing requirement will normally be 'rounded up' to the nearest whole number.
- (3) Where development would affect existing affordable dwellings, permission will only be granted where this would not result in a net loss of affordable housing, and where the proposed tenure mix would meet affordable housing needs of the community.

### **Rural Exception Sites**

- (4) Small-scale proposals delivering 100% affordable housing in perpetuity within and immediately adjacent to the village core areas of Bedmond and Sarratt may be supported within the Green Belt where these are evidenced to provide affordable housing to meet identified local community needs. A minor degree of market housing may be acceptable where it is required to support the delivery of affordable housing on the site.
- (5) Affordable housing should reflect the mix of sizes and types required in the District as identified through Policy xx Housing Mix and the Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) and subsequent updates as well as Housing Register.

### **Mode of Affordable Housing Provision**

- (6) In most cases, affordable housing provision should be made on site, however on small sites delivering between one and nine dwellings, contribution to affordable housing may be made through commuted payments. Such payments will be broadly equivalent in value to on-site provision of affordable housing for rent, but may vary depending on site circumstances and viability. Payments will fund the development of affordable housing on other sites within the District.
- (7) To ensure community cohesion and good design, affordable homes must be fully integrated in the design of the overall scheme, being physically and visually indistinguishable from market units and dispersed across the site in clusters appropriate to the size and scale of the development. Designs resulting in high maintenance or service charges should be avoided.

### **Delivery**

- (8) Affordable housing requirements that have been determined on the basis of viability and site-specific viability information seeking to justify an alternative level or mix of affordable housing will therefore only be accepted in exceptional cases. Viability assessments should be undertaken in accordance with the recommended approach set out in national planning guidance, including standardised inputs, and will be made publicly available.
- (9) Where a reduction in affordable housing is justified, the Council will seek to secure the preferred tenure split as a priority over a potentially higher total percentage of

affordable housing which would not be consistent with meeting priority needs. Such proposals will also be subject to detailed review mechanisms throughout the period up to full completion of the development, including an advanced stage review mechanism.

- (10) Where developments would trigger affordable housing requirements, application of the Vacant Building Credit will only be appropriate in demonstrated exceptional circumstances, and where a proposal would meet all of the following criteria:
- a) It is clearly demonstrated that the site would otherwise not come forward for any form of redevelopment at any point over the medium to long-term;
  - b) All buildings within the site boundary are vacant at the time the application is submitted;
  - c) There are no extant or recently expired permissions on the site for any proposed use class;
  - d) The proposal does not involve the loss of any capacity to meet other development needs from a site allocated for non-housing development; and
  - e) The building has not been made vacant for the sole purpose of redevelopment, evidenced by provision of marketing and vacancy evidence for a continuous period of five years (up to the point of submission of an application).

### **Reasoned Justification**

5.3 Paragraph 65 of the NPPF advises that affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas where policies may set a lower threshold of five units or fewer.

5.4 However, the local circumstances in Three Rivers are considered to justify an alternative approach to require all developments resulting in a net gain of housing to contribute to affordable housing provision. This is on the basis of the acute need for affordable housing in the District demonstrated by the LHNA, and the crucial role that smaller sites delivering fewer than 10 dwellings has played in delivering housing historically which is expected to continue in future.

5.5 These factors are considered to outweigh the guidance within the NPPF and justify the approach within the Affordable Housing Policy to require all sites resulting in a net gain of dwellings to contribute to affordable housing provision in the District, and this approach has been supported in recent appeal decisions in the District.

5.6 The LHNA demonstrates that the median house price in Three Rivers during 2022 was £560,000. This is significantly above the Hertfordshire average of £512, 940 and the East of England average of £328,000 during the same period. Monthly rents across all sizes of accommodation are similarly above Hertfordshire and England averages within Three Rivers.

5.8 Affordability ratios in Three Rivers and across the South West Hertfordshire area have deteriorated significantly since 1997 and lower quartile house prices in the District were 12.85 times higher than lower quartile incomes at February 2022. The affordability of housing therefore remains a critical issue in Three Rivers, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

5.9 The LHNA considered needs for affordable housing in accordance with the methodology set out within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). This identifies an annual net need for affordable housing for rent in Three Rivers over the period 2024-2040 of 364 homes per year.

5.10 The need for affordable housing for rent is equivalent to 57% of the District's total housing requirement under the standard methodology, and given the significant and growing need for affordable housing the LHNA confirms that seeking the maximum amount of affordable housing for rent as is viably possible is justified

5.11 With regard to the tenure of affordable housing for rent that is required, the greatest need in the District is for Social Rented housing, followed by Affordable Rent. Based purely on an analysis of affordability the LHNA recommends a tenure mix of 80% as Social Rent and 20% Affordable Rent capped at local housing allowance.

5.12 However, when benefits are taken into account, the LHNA notes that for households claiming Household Benefit, an affordable rent may be appropriate as long as the Housing Benefit is able to cover all of the rent, whilst for households with an income that would allow them to afford an affordable rent it is arguable that a social rent would be more appropriate as the housing costs would be less of a strain on household finances.

5.13 The LHNA also indicates that in addition to the requirement for affordable housing for rent, seeking 10% of housing on larger sites as affordable home ownership in line with the NPPF would be reasonable. However, given that the main analysis demonstrates that the most significant need is for households who cannot afford anything in the market without subsidy, there would be no basis to increase provision of affordable home ownership above this baseline 10% figure.

5.14 The Council acknowledge that requiring a higher proportion of affordable homes for rent, will impact on the overall level of affordable housing that may be delivered. However, these are the most urgent and pressing needs for housing in the District and the Council will therefore prioritise the delivery of a greater proportion of affordable housing for rent rather than a higher total level of affordable housing delivery through, for example, a higher proportion of affordable home ownership. A tenure mix in accordance with the draft LHNA will therefore be sought

5.15 Given the substantial need for affordable housing in the District, it is also essential that development does not lead to a reduction in the overall supply of affordable housing, or to changes to the tenure of affordable housing which is provided so that it is less well suited to meet demonstrated local needs. Such proposals would undermine the overall approach to the supply of affordable housing in the District and will be resisted.



5.16 There are fewer opportunities to build new homes in the District's smaller villages surrounded by, or designated as Green Belt due to more restrictive policies on housing in countryside and particularly in the Green Belt.

5.17 However, an element of new development can help to support these communities and paragraph 154 of the NPPF therefore enables provision of limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan, including policies for rural exception sites.

5.18 In line with this potential exception, proposals for rural exception sites delivering 100% affordable housing within and immediately adjacent to the village core areas of Sarratt (may be supported in the Green Belt) where these are evidenced to provide affordable housing which would meet identified local community needs. The type and size of affordable housing provided on such sites must address identified needs in the individual village or the area it serves which is defined as the village or parish in which it is located.

5.19 First Homes are a specific type of discounted market sale housing and meets the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. Government policy requires that a minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes. Policy xxx First Homes sets out the policy requirements.

5.20 In relation to extra care housing, it is recognised that provision of affordable housing may be particularly difficult to achieve. In such circumstances, the policy will be implemented on a case-by-case basis, and the individual viability assessment will be used to demonstrate an appropriate affordable housing contribution.

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**Appendix 6 – First Homes**

<b>First Homes</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minimum Requirements</b></p> <p>(1) A minimum of 25% of affordable homes provided either on-site or off-site or as a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision in line with the Council's adopted affordable housing requirements are required to be First Homes.</p> <p>(2) First Homes are required to be sold at a minimum discount of at least 30% of the market value of homes available for sale locally which are of the same size and type as those proposed. The minimum discount will be secured in perpetuity.</p> <p>(3) Where the affordable housing contribution for a proposed development comprises a mixture of homes and financial contributions towards affordable housing, First Homes are required to form 25% of the overall monetary value of affordable housing contributions.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>First Home Exception Sites</b></p> <p>4) Residential development proposals on qualifying small sites comprising primarily First Homes will be permitted where they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) adjacent to existing settlements; and</li> <li>b) proportionate in size to them.</li> </ul> <p>5) To ensure the delivery and viability of a First Homes site without grant funding, planning permission on sites with the minimum number of market homes will be granted where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) an applicant demonstrates that the scheme would be unviable without the inclusion of market housing;</li> <li>b) inclusion of market housing does not inflate the threshold land value; and</li> <li>c) any market housing is suitably integrated into the First Homes development</li> </ul> <p>6) Small quantities of other forms of affordable housing may also be permitted on a First Homes exception site where the applicant demonstrates evidence of significant local need for that type of housing.</p>

**Reasoned Justification**

6.1 First Homes are a specific form of discounted market sale housing which are discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value and are sold to first-time buyers meeting the eligibility criteria set out in the PPG. On their first sale, First Homes have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure the discount is passed on at each subsequent title transfer. The initial sale after the discount has been applied must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (outside Greater London). First Homes are considered to meet the Government's definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes.

6.2 The minimum discount for First Homes should help to make home ownership more affordable for a greater number of first-time buyers than other affordable housing products such as Discounted Market Sales (OMS) and shared ownership, which are both required to be sold at a minimum of just 20% below market value.

6.3 The high cost of homes in expensive areas such as Three Rivers means that OMS and shared ownership properties are likely to remain beyond the reach of many residents/prospective buyers with this level of market discount, however the price cap of £250,000 for a First Home will ensure that this tenure of home is likely to be a realistically affordable option for many potential first-time buyers in the District.

6.4 The discount for First Homes is also required to be applied in perpetuity each time a First Home is resold (subject to certain specific exclusions) and should ensure that the discounted cost built into this tenure is retained in the value of the property in perpetuity. This will be secured by means of a planning obligation in line with national guidance.

### **First Home Exception Sites**

6.5 National planning guidance also makes provision for the development of First Homes 'exception sites' (on land which is not already allocated for housing) adjacent to existing settlements and proportionate in size to them. First Homes Exception Sites are not permitted within the Green Belt or in a designated rural area, where rural exception sites are the only type of exception sites that may be permissible. A small proportion of market housing or other types of affordable housing may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of First Homes without grant funding.

6.6 To ensure applicants take account of the criteria under paragraph (5) (a) and (b) of the policy, where it is proposed that a scheme requires market housing to be included to make an exception site viable, a development appraisal will be required to be submitted to demonstrate that this is the case.

6.7 In considering the land value, the threshold land value of the site will be limited to no more than ten times the agricultural land value at the time of application submission. Where agreement cannot be reached, external consultants will be appointed at the applicant's cost to provide an independent assessment of the scheme's viability.

6.8 Paragraph (6) of the policy is in line with the PPG, which allows the proportion of affordable housing on a First Homes exception site to be altered to include small quantities of other affordable housing products. The evidence that applicants will be required to provide will need to be in the form of a Local Housing Needs Assessment, local authority Housing Register, or other sufficiently rigorous local evidence.

## Appendix 7 - Employment and Economic Development

### Employment and Economic Development

#### Strategic approach to employment land

- 1) The Council will seek to facilitate the growth and forecasted change of business development over the plan period by promoting the supply of office and industrial space across the District to meet the any identified shortfall. A range of types and sizes of employment sites and premises will be encouraged throughout the District to meet the needs of the local economy. Proposals for business development should be of a high-quality design and in keeping with the surrounding environment.

#### Designated Employment Areas

- 2) Within designated Employment Areas, as defined on the policies map, the Council will support the delivery of additional Industrial floorspace and the intensification of office and industrial uses within these locations, subject to there being no unacceptable impact on the surrounding highway network or local amenity.
- 3) Proposals for non-employment uses on designated employment areas should only be permitted where:
  - a) There would be no unacceptable impact on amenity;
  - b) There would be no hindrance to the site's operation as a key employment area.
- 4) Sites allocated as having potential for mixed use development may provide for mixed use development including, but not limited to business, industrial and storage or distribution; residential or community uses.

#### Outside Designated Employment Areas

- 5) Outside the Designated Employment Areas, office and industrial development will be supported where:
  - a) The type, scale and intensity of the proposed business activity is appropriate to the locality and accessibility of the site.
  - b) The proposed use would not harm the amenity or operation of neighbouring uses.
- 6) Outside the Designated Employment Areas, the redevelopment of employment land to other uses will be supported where the site has been allocated for an alternative use or where it can be demonstrated that:
  - a) There is no reasonable prospect of the site remaining in employment use;
  - b) Opportunities to reconfigure or reuse the site to retain its current use have been exhausted;

- c) The site has been actively but unsuccessfully been marketed at a realistic rate for a 12-month period; and where there is up-to-date evidence demonstrating there is no longer a need for the employment use;
- d) The proposed alternative use would not adversely affect the efficient operation or economic function of other employment uses or businesses in the locality;
- e) The proposal does not substantially prejudice the overall supply of employment land over the plan period; and

7) Proposals for creative industries and the expansion of Leavesden Studios will be supported where they are in accordance with local and national policy. Policy Option X provides the policy for Warner Bros. Studios.

### **Reasoned Justification**

7.1 In order to maintain and improve the economic performance of the District, it is important to make provision for future employment and economic development alongside housing growth and protection of the environment. To provide a balance between homes and jobs, economic growth should be in broad alignment with housing development.

7.2 Economic development includes development within the office uses, industry and warehousing uses, public and community uses, leisure and tourism uses and main town centre uses. It also includes any other development which provides employment opportunities, generates wealth or produces or generates an economic output or product. It does not include housing development

7.3 The majority of responses to the Issues & Options consultation in 2017, which was undertaken before the South West Herts Economic Study Update (20) was completed, and responses to Reg 18 consultation in 2021 the suggested safeguarding the existing allocated employment sites and allocating additional land for employment use as well as allowing mixed use schemes (mix of employment, residential, retail, leisure uses).

7.4 The economy of the south west Hertfordshire functional economic market area (Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers and Watford) is highly dependent on professional services as well as construction, retail and hospitality. These sectors provide the greatest opportunity for economic growth in the future. Three Rivers specifically has a strong TV and Film sector (at Leavesden Studios and Langleybury) and a high concentration of knowledge-based industries, growth of these sectors should be encouraged. The significant concentration of small businesses in professional services and ICT suggest a need for flexible and affordable workspace to support the growth of these businesses.

7.5 The influence of surrounding areas on the economy of Three Rivers is significant. This is demonstrated for example by the high levels of out-commuting from the District, reflecting proximity to the London job market and to other larger centres such as Watford and Hemel Hempstead.

7.6 Employment in the area has continued to grow at a strong rate and there has been a large fall in unemployment in recent years. This combined with the high levels of out-commuting from the District could limit the labour supply. The growth levels planned for in the Local Plan will provide a significant boost to the labour supply.

7.7 Three Rivers has a predominantly office based economy with 55% of jobs being office based. The main employment locations offer very high quality office space in large floorplates. This, together with the highly skilled workforce in Three Rivers, has attracted a number of large headquarters to the District. The majority of this office floorspace is spread across the existing allocated employment sites which should be retained to ensure that Three Rivers remains an attractive destination for businesses and to keep a check on the existing high levels of out-commuting by Three Rivers' residents.

7.8 Three Rivers is the home of Leavesden Studios which is a key asset for the District and the wider south west Herts area. As such, it is key to the growth of creative industries across the functional economic market area. There is still significant growth potential at the site and there will likely be a significant growth in demand for studio space over the next 15 years. The South West Herts Economic Study (2019) recommended that land should be safeguarded for the expansion of Leavesden Studios.

7.9 The Study also indicated that on the basis of projected growth within the area, Three Rivers cannot afford to lose any more employment floorspace. It also identified

- a demand of 30,100 sqm office space for the period to 2036. This is expected to be met by existing commitments at Croxley Park which will deliver 36,363 sqm resulting in a 6,263 sqm oversupply in the period and
- a requirement for 28,800 sqm industrial and warehousing floorspace over the period to 2036. equating to a requirement of 5.5ha employment land which will need to be planned for over the period to 2036.

7.10 The South West Herts Economic Study update (2024) that is currently underway however confirms that future demand is substantially different to that of the conclusions of the 2019 South West Herts Economy Study especially on the industrial and floorspace needs for the plan period. The Study identifies a need for 211,800 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace need across SW Herts for the period up to 2040 equating to 59.5 ha of employment land. There are no local need figures identified for individual authorities. The study concludes that there is a shortfall of roughly 9 ha land across SW Herts however there are no suitable sites identified in Three Rivers to address that shortfall. In terms of office space need, the Study recommends that any loss of employment space be resisted due to low vacancy rates and increasing labour supply.

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## Appendix 8 - Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

8.1 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople have particular accommodation needs that require additional consideration. To ensure that members of these communities are able to access decent and appropriate housing with access to services including health and education, the Council must make provision for accommodation to meet identified needs.

8.2 The Council will seek to meet identified needs on suitable sites in sustainable locations and to maintain a five year supply of deliverable pitches/plots taking into account the findings of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2024) and any subsequent updates. All the identified Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Sites within the District will be 'safeguarded' to ensure that the permitted use as a traveller site is not lost through the grant of any subsequent planning permission whilst there remains a need for sites.

### Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 1) When allocating sites or considering planning applications for sites for Gypsies and Travellers or Travelling Showpeople, a criteria based approach will be used. The following criteria will be taken into account:
  - a) Avoid areas at risk from all sources of flooding
  - b) Avoid causing an adverse impact on areas of recognised wildlife, heritage or landscape importance, and on the openness of the Green Belt;
  - c) Be in or near existing settlements with access by foot and/ or public transport to local services, including shops, schools and healthcare;
  - d) Be well located to the highway network, with safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian access to the site;
  - e) Provide adequate on-site facilities for parking, storage, play and residential amenity;
  - f) Provide adequate levels of privacy and residential amenities for occupiers and not be detrimental to the amenities of adjacent occupiers; and
  - g) The circumstances of the applicant and their need for pitches on the application site.
- 2) Existing Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites will be safeguarded unless there is robust and justified evidence that there is no longer a need for their retention.

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## Appendix 9 - Retail and Leisure

### Retail and Leisure

- 1) Rickmansworth town centre and the district centres of South Oxhey, Chorleywood and Abbots Langley will remain the focus for retail, leisure activity and other town centre uses.
  - i) Within the primary frontages at ground floor level, as defined on the Policies Map, development will normally be permitted where:
    - Uses retain active frontages at ground floor level and demonstrate a positive contribution to the vitality, viability, balance of services and/or evening economy of the centre within which it is proposed
    - Development is of a scale, type and format that reflects and enhances the role and function of the centre within which it is proposed
  - ii) Within the primary and secondary frontages, the use of upper floors for residential use is supported in principle across all parts of the town centre hierarchy subject to other local planning policies.
  - iii) Within the secondary frontages at ground level, development within Use Class E, Sui Generis uses suited to a town centre, Class F1 and Class F2(b) will normally be permitted.
  - iv) Redevelopment proposals providing managed workspace, flexible workspace accommodation will be encouraged to support small businesses within the defined retail hierarchy.
  - v) The intensification of town centres to provide additional floorspace for main town centre uses is supported in principle subject to impacts on townscape and heritage.
- 2) Local and Neighbourhood Centres, as defined within Appendix X should provide commercial and community uses to meet residents' day to day shopping needs, provide local employment opportunities, and support opportunities for community interaction.
- 3) Retail impact assessments will only be required for proposals of more than 2,500 sq m of (gross) new retail floorspace outside the town centre hierarchy, including proposals for Class E (commercial, business and service) uses that would enable at least 2,500 sq m of (gross) floorspace to be occupied by retail use.

### Reasoned Justification

9.1 The NPPF states that policy should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities. Local Plans must define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to economic changes. The policy defines these centres and supports their economic viability.

9.2 The South West Hertfordshire Retail and Leisure Study 2018 sets out an objective assessment of retail and leisure development needs. The study finds a need for an improvement in the evening economy and the standard of shop frontages in Rickmansworth Town Centre. The policy allows for the creation and retaining of active frontages at ground floor level which demonstrate a positive contribution to the vitality, viability, balance of services and/or evening economy of the town centre.

9.3 With regard to convenience (food) floorspace, this equates to a net gain of around 2,400-3,100 square metres by 2036. The target provision over forthcoming five year periods will be broadly as follows:

- a) 1,000-1,300 square metres by 2026
- b) 700-800 square metres from 2026 to 2031
- c) 700-1,000 square metres from 2031 to 2036

9.4 With regard to comparison (non-food) floorspace, the provision of additional floorspace equates to the net gain of around 1,900-2,600 square meters by 2036. This is broadly set out over forthcoming five year periods below:

- a) 300-400 square meters by 2026
- b) 800-1,000 square meters from 2026 to 2031
- c) 800-1,200 square meters from 2031 to 2036

9.5 With regard to the development of restaurants, cafés and bars, the provision of net additional floorspace equates to a net gain of:

- a) 327 square meters by 2036 in Rickmansworth Town Centre
- b) 402 square meters by 2036 in the District and Local Centres

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

## Appendix 10 - Open Space, Play Space, Sport and Recreation

### Open Space, Play Space, Sport and Recreation

#### 1) Protection of designated open spaces

The existing provision of designated open spaces will be safeguarded from development unless in exceptional circumstances it can be demonstrated that:

- i) The open space is no longer required and;
- ii) Alternative provision of equivalent or better quality open space would be provided in close proximity; and
- iii) A deficiency of open space is not created through or exacerbated by its loss, now or over the plan period.

In all cases, an assessment will be required setting out as to whether the land in question makes a positive contribution to the character, environmental quality and amenity of the surrounding area.

#### 2) Loss of Sport and Recreation facilities

Development proposals which result in the whole or partial loss of existing sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:

- i) The proposed development includes provision for alternative sports and recreation facilities of sufficient benefit to sport and recreation provision to clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use; or
- ii) Alternative provision of equivalent or better quantity and quality is made for the catchment area served by the sport and recreation facilities in an accessible location served by sustainable modes of transport; or
- iii) The proposal is ancillary to an existing leisure use and does not adversely affect the sport or recreation facility; or
- iv) An assessment is undertaken which clearly shows that a deficiency of ~~open space~~, sport and recreation facilities is not created through or exacerbated by its loss, now or over the plan period.

#### 3) Loss of children's play space

Development proposals which result in the loss of, or prejudice the use of, any existing children's play space will only be permitted where:

- i) The play space that would be lost would be replaced by a facility of equivalent or higher standard in the existing area or
- ii) A partial reduction in the open space land on a site is justified by the need to provide essential community infrastructure.

#### 4) New and improved Provision for Sport and Recreation Facilities

- i) Proposals for new or improved sport and recreation provision (including allotment space) will be supported where an identified need can be demonstrated. If new provision cannot be provided on site:
- ii) Developments should seek to explore opportunities to enhance/expand equipment range at existing sites to raise quality standards where there is suitable space to do so; and

- iii) Dual and multiple use of sports facilities will be encouraged, particularly involving public use. In appropriate circumstances the Council may grant planning permission subject to conditions or seek to enter into a planning obligation with the developer to ensure dual or multiple use of facilities are maintained over a long term period.
- iv) New/enhanced sport and recreation facilities will be expected to be designed in accordance with Sport England and sports governing body design guidance.

#### **6) New open space provision in residential developments**

Where open space is provided onsite, the Council will seek to ensure the proper maintenance of the space. Where the council is in charge of maintenance a Section 106 or other legal agreement may be required to cover the costs of such maintenance.

In order to ensure that new residential developments do not exacerbate deficiencies in open space and children's play space, new residential development will be expected to provide for amenity and children's play space.

- iii) Developments of 25 or more dwellings or 0.6ha (whichever is greater) should make provision on site for open space and play space in areas of deficiency and in accordance with the British Standards for play: BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177;
- iv) Where the development is likely to be occupied by families with children, the open space area should provide formal equipped play facilities, in accordance with Fields in Trust standards.
- v) Open space provided on site will be expected to be accessible to all and not be used only by those who reside on the development.

Variations of these standards may be appropriate where the Council considers:

- i) That on site provision of open space would not be an appropriate use of the land taking into account local need and the character of the locality, or
- ii) That the development is already fully served by existing open space within 300m or children's play space within 720m of the proposed development.

#### **7) Design of Open Spaces**

Proposals for new or existing open space should be designed to be multifunctional, to a high standard and should have regard to the relationship between the open space and its surroundings and seek to minimise the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour. It should also take into consideration the need to maintain a variety and balance of different forms of open space and the need to maintain and enhance existing nature conservation interests and the benefits of creating new habitats.

### **Reasoned Justification**

10.1 The Open Space Assessment Report 2019 assessed open space provision in the area, its condition, distribution and overall quality. Open Spaces assessed include parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural greenspaces, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards.

10.2 The NPPF states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Open spaces can also deliver environmental benefits in terms of supporting nature and efforts to address climate change.

10.3 Public Health recommend that planning authorities include a policy in the Local Plan that ensures that existing green space/green infrastructure are preserved. Developers are expected to set out the provision of open space and green infrastructure at an early stage of development to encourage healthy and sustainable behaviours from the outset. The policy supports the provision of amenity and children's play space in residential developments and developments over 25 dwellings must provide on site open space and play space as per Natural England Angst standards.

10.4 Public engagement is encouraged with regards to creation of new recreation or sports facilities.

10.5 Open space should be designed in accordance with Sport England's Active Design to encourage physical activity.

10.6 The Council's Open Space Assessment Report (2019) identified a need for allotment space within the district as per the standard set by The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG). In order to meet the standard, there would need to be 23 hectares of allotment provision across the district. It is therefore important to safeguard existing allotment plots and be favourable to future allocations in order to meet current and future demand. There are currently 17 allotment sites within the district.

10.7 Local food production provides advantages in terms of community involvement, sustainability and mental and physical health. It also supports our climate and carbon emission policies (x) through reducing the carbon footprint of food production by minimising CO2 emissions from transportation of food and through carbon sequestration.

10.8 The Council's Open Space Assessment Report (2019) further identifies the sustainability, health and social benefits of allotment and open space provision. The policy aims to safeguard existing allotment sites and to encourage additional provision where viable.

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## Appendix 11 – Health and Wellbeing

### Health and Wellbeing

- 1) All development shall be designed to maximise the impact it can make to promoting healthy communities and reducing health inequalities. In particular, regard shall be had to providing the necessary infrastructure to encourage physical exercise and health, including accessible open space, vegetation and landscaping, sport and recreation facilities, cultural facilities and safe, well promoted, walking and cycling routes.
- 2) Where new health facilities are planned these should be located where there is a choice of sustainable transport options and should be accessible to all members of the community.
- 3) Supporting healthy eating through the protection of community assets, such as allotments, community orchards and planting of fruit trees on open spaces. Opportunities for food growing should be maximised within new developments.
- 4) Health Impacts Assessments are required for proposals that may have an adverse impact on the immediate area and affect people living in the development and close by. More specifically, Health Impacts Assessments should be provided as part of a planning application submitted for major residential proposals of 100 units or more, non-residential applications of 1000spm or more, and any other locally or nationally significant infrastructure project. Assessments should be prepared in accordance with Hertfordshire Public Health's Position Statement on HIAs. Where a Health Impact Assessment has identified an issue that may have a significant adverse impact, the applicant should set out how this has been addressed and mitigated.

### Reasoned Justification

11.1 The Health and Wellbeing Partnership have set out in their Health and Wellbeing Strategy the social determinants of health, these factors include:

1. Housing and living environment
2. Work environment
3. Transport
4. Access to health and social care services
5. Unemployment and welfare
6. Education

11.2 All of the above have particular links with planning. Many of the health issues relating to the above can be overcome by well-designed developments with consideration of the location, density and mix of land uses and the 'designing in' of health and wellbeing as an essential part of the development. Emphasis should also be placed on active travel, multi-

functional open space and high quality urban environments to ensure that the setting of the housing and development within the neighbourhood area also contribute to the health and wellbeing of individuals.

11.3 HCC Public Health Department have produced a Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Planning Guidance Document (2017) to aid local authorities and developers in the delivery of healthy development and communities and focusses on the principle of designing in health and wellbeing as an essential part of the planning process. The document sets out the key principles and aspirations of the Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health Department and builds on the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and focusses on seven key areas:

- Air Quality
- Food and healthy choices
- Movement and access
- Neighbourhood spaces
- Housing and development design
- Local economy and employment
- Quality open space, play and recreation

11.4 Further guidance on design is also available in Sport England's 'Active Design Guidance' available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

11.5 To ensure that Health and Wellbeing is considered in proposals for development we will require that Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are submitted with planning applications for major residential developments of 100 or more dwellings and for non-residential developments of 1000sqm or more in accordance with the Hertfordshire Public Health's Position Statement on HIAs, available at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/public-health/health/hia-position-statement.pdf>

## APPENDIX 12 - GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

12.1 Green Infrastructure is defined by national policy as a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

12.2 The high-level green and blue infrastructure network for Three Rivers includes key landscape features, strategic wildlife corridors and areas of high biodiversity. Key elements are chalk streams and river valleys, wetland and grazed pastures, dry chalk valleys and chalk landforms, woodlands and ancient woodlands, historic parklands and designed landscapes and farmland. The District has a number of strategically significant and historic green infrastructure assets, such as the corridors along the River Chess, Colne and Gade, and the Grand Union Canal. It also has a network of public access routes enabling people to reach these areas. Safeguarding and enhancing the highly attractive and diverse environment is therefore a key objective.

12.3 Agriculture, horticulture and forestry are traditional, land-based businesses which are still present in the District and continue to contribute to its rural economy. Appropriate and well-designed farming and forestry development (e.g. grazing, coppicing, nature reserves) supports farming and countryside practices that enhance wider biodiversity and landscape quality by supporting economically and socially valuable activities. This ensures that the District’s existing land-based business sector continues to flourish, while simultaneously ensuring that the District’s landscape is protected.

12.4 This policy demonstrates the Council’s commitment to conserve and enhance the District’s Green and Blue Infrastructure, which will help to improve the District’s Green and Blue Infrastructure network and ensure its multi-functional benefits are achieved. The conservation and enhancement of the Green and Blue Infrastructure network will help to enhance biodiversity resources, support healthy lifestyles, minimise flood risk and mitigate against pollution.

Green and Blue Infrastructure
<p>1) The Council will seek a net gain in the quality and quantity of Green and blue Infrastructure, through the protection and enhancement of assets and the provision of new green spaces:</p> <p>2) Where land is provided or identified for Green and Blue Infrastructure purposes as part of a development proposal:</p> <p>a) Applicants will be required to provide appropriate land management and maintenance plans.</p> <p>b) Stewardship plans and funding arrangements will also be required on major developments or ecologically sensitive sites (where appropriate).</p>

- 3) Priorities for Green and Blue Infrastructure focus on conserving and enhancing the following key assets and the linkages between them:
  - a) the corridors of the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade and the Grand Union Canal;
  - b) the Chilterns National Landscape
  - c) the Colne Valley Regional Park;
  - d) the District's Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, key biodiversity habitats, species and areas identified in the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and heritage assets and landscape character within areas of Green Infrastructure.
- 4) The Council will require new development to contribute to the delivery of new Green and Blue Infrastructure, that is safe and accessible where appropriate, and to the management of a linked network of new and enhanced open spaces and corridors, addressing deficiencies in quantity, quality and access across the District.
- 5) Development proposals should improve connectivity between key assets in the Green and Blue Infrastructure network through the establishment of linked and coherent networks and corridors of green spaces. The Council will work with developers and other partners to facilitate the delivery of projects and programmes set out in the Hertfordshire County Council Green Infrastructure Strategy and other relevant strategies (taking account of the priorities identified in the latest audits and future management/maintenance arrangements).
- 6) Public Rights of Way and other sustainable transport links between spaces in the Green Infrastructure network should be protected and enhanced through development proposals, where appropriate buffers of at least 20m around Rights of Way should be incorporated into masterplans. Diversions of Public Rights of Way will only be appropriate where an alternative route of equal or improved character, amenity, safety, directness and convenience is provided.
- 7) Development will not compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network, by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of Green Infrastructure assets including natural habitats and species.

## Reasoned Justification

12.5 Green and Blue Infrastructure is essential to the success of the District, given its multi-functional benefits, including the promotion of health and wellbeing through opportunities for recreation, exercise and social interaction, mitigation against climate change and flooding, enables natural flood control; and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity enables land management and connectivity between sites and facilitates biodiversity net gain.

12.6 The key Green and Blue Infrastructure assets in Three Rivers include:

- the corridors of the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade and the Grand Union Canal;
- the Chilterns National Landscape;
- the District's Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, key biodiversity areas and priority habitats and species identified by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (once published); and
- The Colne Valley Regional Park.

12.7 These form the strategic Green Infrastructure assets within the District into which other assets link through the identified Green Infrastructure corridors, however, these are not the only important elements for Green Infrastructure within and around the District. Open spaces, woodlands, parks and gardens, allotments, amenity greenspace and other spaces may also be important. Green and Blue Infrastructure should seek contribute to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (where appropriate).

12.8 Public Rights of Way provide valuable footpath, cycle and bridleway routes within the urban area and out into the countryside. During the 2020/21 coronavirus pandemic the value of Rights of Way became even more important, providing an extensive network for access and recreation within the countryside. Any new development should take into account the importance of the Public Rights of Way running through the site and development should incorporate an appropriate buffer to enhance the existing Rights of Way. Given its importance to the District, it will be vital that all new developments protect existing and incorporate new green infrastructure wherever possible.

12.9 Green Infrastructure provision should be made safe and accessible (where appropriate) and new or improved active travel routes which connect people to green infrastructure should also be provided where possible in accordance with the Sustainable Transport Policy. These measures will help to ensure that the multi-functional uses of green and blue infrastructure are maximised and that that all parts of the District benefit from high quality and accessible green infrastructure.

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**Appendix 13 - Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping**

13.1 This policy demonstrates the Council’s commitment to meet the relevant national requirements to conserve and protect trees and woodlands and promote appropriate landscaping.

13.2 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are important contributors to biodiversity, contribute to carbon sequestration, reduce noise and pollution, provide shade and reduce extremes of heat and wind. Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows may be protected by wildlife or conservation designations, Tree Preservation Orders or the Hedgerow Regulations. It is important that those not covered by designations are retained, protected and wherever possible added to, since pressure for development will increasingly threaten trees woodlands and hedgerows.

**Trees, Woodlands and Landscaping**

Trees, Woodland and Landscaping

- 1) Proposals for new development should be submitted with landscaping proposals which seek to retain trees and other important landscape and nature conservation features. Landscaping proposals should also include new trees and other planting, create tree lined streets and enhance the landscape and habitats of the site and its surroundings as appropriate.
- 2) Development proposals on sites which contain existing trees and hedgerows will be expected to retain as many trees and hedgerows as possible, particularly those of local amenity or nature conservation value or hedgerows considered to meet the criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.
- 3) Development proposals should demonstrate that existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands will be safeguarded and managed during and after development in accordance with the relevant British Standards.
- 4) Development should be designed in such a way as to allow trees and hedgerows to grow to maturity without causing undue problems of visibility, shading or damage. Development likely to result in future requests for significant topping, lopping or felling will be refused.
- 5) Planning permission will be refused for any development resulting in the loss or deterioration to protected woodland (including ancient woodland), protected trees (including aged or veteran trees) and hedgerows, unless conditions can be imposed to secure their protection.
- 6) Where the felling of a tree or removal of a hedgerow is permitted, a replacement tree or hedge of an appropriate number, species, size and in a suitable location will be required, taking account of issues such as landscape and biodiversity.

- 7) Areas forming part of development proposals which are to be transferred to the local authority for maintenance should be designed for ease of access and low cost maintenance overheads and management regimes.

### **Reasoned Justification**

13.3 Woodland, trees and hedgerows are important contributors to biodiversity and vital to moderating our climate, and may be protected by wildlife or conservation designations, Tree Preservation Orders or the Hedgerow Regulations. The NPPF ensures that they remain a planning consideration in all development proposals. Further, ancient woodland and trees are considered '*irreplaceable*' and the Natural England/Forestry Commission [Standing Advice](#) makes clear the loss of ancient trees/woodlands is not permitted unless there are '*wholly exceptional reasons*' and that '*a suitable compensation strategy is in place*'.

13.4 Whilst reiterating the nature conservation importance of ancient trees and woodlands, their cultural and societal benefits are also set out Defra's [Keepers of Time](#) policy.

13.5 In addition, all woodlands contribute to carbon sequestration, reduce noise and pollution, provide shade, reduce extremes of heat and wind, provide places to relax and reduce flood risk. Further, new or existing woodlands can play an important role in Green Infrastructure networks and the Local Nature Recovery Network

13.6 Whilst the protection of the most important woodlands may be achieved via the biodiversity policies elsewhere in this Plan, it is important that all woodlands are suitably protected, retained (where possible), managed for the long term and wherever appropriate, added to, since pressure for development will increasingly threaten trees, woodlands, hedgerows and their surrounding habitat.

13.7 In addition, mature trees on development sites can make a major contribution to the quality of finished development, provided they are given the space and protection they need.

13.8 Developers should have regard to the potential impact of development proposals trees and woodlands from the outset. Applications should be accompanied by sufficient information to assess the impact of the proposed development on any trees or woodlands. Arboricultural reports, Impact Assessments and Tree Protection Method Statements submitted in support of applications should comply with guidance set out in the British Standard BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations' and any future editions of the standard.

13.9 For sites with significant tree cover, and which include trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order or located within a Conservation Area, a planning application should be accompanied by a Tree Survey and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The advice of an arboriculturalist should be sought to identify all relevant trees to be included in a Tree Survey.



13.10 Landscaping of new development should be considered as an integral part of the design process. Landscaping refers to both soft landscaping (planting and/or retention of trees, shrubs and other plants and earth contouring) and hard landscaping (paths, walls, seats, planters, kerbing etc.).

13.11 Landscaping proposals should address:

- The incorporation of visually obtrusive elements of development such as car parks, bank elevations and electricity sub-stations
- The setting of buildings within the site, and the setting of the site within the locality
- The creation of views into and out of buildings and the site as a whole and the creation and enhancement of visual focal points
- The conservation of existing local landscape character and enhance natural features.

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## Appendix 14 Waterways

14.1 A waterway is a navigable body of water and can include rivers and canals. They are important to both the natural environment and human activities. The Grand Union Canal runs the length of the District and provides a significant Green and Blue Infrastructure resource and supports transport, biodiversity, recreation, drainage, water supply and in managing flood risk. It is also an important visual amenity and there are a number of heritage assets on or associated with the Canal.

14.2 The three rivers that give the District its name (the Rivers Colne, Gade and Chess) are important resources for the District in terms of landscape, biodiversity and access to open space, and form the basis of the District's Green Infrastructure network.

14.3 As well as these functions, the Canal is used by many houseboats and leisure craft. Concentrations of houseboats exist at Batchworth Lock, Rickmansworth and to a lesser extent at Cassiobury in Croxley Green.

<b>Waterways</b>	
1)	Development in the vicinity of waterways must protect and enhance waterway infrastructure and should enable water-dependent uses where appropriate.
2)	Proposals for permanent moorings and marinas (including any associated ancillary works and infrastructure) will only be permitted on the canal/waterways where adjacent to the existing built-up area and where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Not compromise the ability of leisure boat users to access moorings;</li> <li>b) Have no adverse effect on the nature conservation value of the canal/waterway or nearby land;</li> <li>c) Include sufficient space for essential facilities and landscaping;</li> <li>d) Provide adequate pedestrian and service vehicle access;</li> <li>e) Cause no harm to the historic or visual character of the canal/waterway;</li> <li>f) Not increase flood risk;</li> <li>g) Provide safe access and egress during a flood;</li> <li>h) Not impede navigation and/or the use of the towpath;</li> <li>i) Where proposals are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and are considered to be inappropriate development, they must demonstrate 'very special circumstances' sufficient to outweigh harm to the Green Belt,</li> </ul>
3)	Major development schemes adjacent to waterways should consider the provision of new moorings, or facilities for water-based leisure and recreation

as part of development proposals. Opportunities to use the canal for transport, including freight during the construction process, or as a renewable energy resource should also be considered.

### **Reasoned Justification**

14.4 It is essential that the Canal and other waterways are protected as an important resource for the District and area providing multiple benefits, and that these benefits are recognised and enhanced.

14.5 Making use of the Canal and other waterways, including residing on houseboats are a lifestyle choice for some residents, and they contribute to increasing diversity of homes within the District. Residents can also provide valuable assistance to leisure boat users and aid security along the canal.

14.6 The new Local Plan aims to deliver new development in sustainable locations and so the same principle will be applied to proposals for residential and other moorings. The policy aims to ensure that potential residents of houseboats benefit from the same level of access to services and facilities as those living in traditional housing.

14.7 As moorings are not recognised as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt by national policy, applications for residential and other moorings outside of the urban areas will have to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' sufficient to outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

14.8 Major development schemes adjacent to waterways offer an opportunity to consider the provision of new moorings or facilities for water-based leisure and recreation as an integrated part of proposals. Any such proposals will be supported where they address the requirements of all other Policies within the Local Plan.

14.9 Development proposals are also encouraged to consider opportunities to use the Canal for transport, including for the transport of freight during construction, or as a renewable energy resource for heating and cooling.

## Appendix 15 – Broadband and Electronic Communications

### Broadband and Electronic Communication

- 1) Proposals for the installation of electronic communications equipment should:
  - a) Have no significant adverse effect on the external appearance of the building on which, or space in which, they are to be located
  - b) Fully explore the possibility of sharing facilities, such as masts, cabinet boxes and satellite dishes, and erecting antennae on existing buildings or other structures
  - c) Fully explore technologies to miniaturise and camouflage any electronic communications apparatus
  - d) Be appropriately designed, coloured and landscaped to take account of their setting;
- 2) All residential, employment and commercial developments should be served by or be capable of being served by super-fast full-fibre broadband through the integration of appropriate measures such as open access ducting to industry standards.

### Reasoned Justification

15.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's policy on full fibre broadband connections and electronic communications networks which include next generation mobile technology (such as 5G). It recognises that high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being.

15.2 The Council recognises that electronic communications networks and the availability, reliability and speed of broadband provision is essential to the development of the local economy and for the benefit of the local community. The Council supports the expansion of electronic communications network and full fibre broadband connections for all new development.

15.3 With regards to electronic communications equipment (including satellite dishes, microwave antennae, radio masts, public call boxes, cabinets and other types of telecommunication equipment) the aim is to ensure that these are kept to a minimum through encouraging the sharing of equipment where this is technically possible. The impact of telecommunications can be minimised through careful design, colouring and landscaping to minimise visual intrusion which can help to protect the character and appearance of an area. When considering applications the Council shall have regard to the legal requirements placed upon electronic communications operators to provide an adequate service and any technical and operational obligations that the operator is required to undertake.

15.4 It will be important for all new residential, employment and commercial developments to provide the means to enable connection to be made to fibre optic broadband infrastructure as the main technology for delivering superfast connections. This should be designed and installed as an integral part of development to avoid the visual impact and

future disturbance caused by retrofitting. It is recognised that the availability of broadband infrastructure will vary across the District.

15.5 The expectation is that where such infrastructure is not readily available nearby, provision is made for ducting and cabinets to enable easy connection at a later date. In 2021 the Government defined superfast broadband as being at least 30 Mbps download speed, therefore this is the minimum level of service that is considered acceptable.

## **APPENDIX 16 – Sustainable Transport and Travel**

- 16.0 High quality transport connections, both physical by road, rail, bus, walking, cycling; or digital are vital to the District's future sustainability, economic prosperity and social inclusiveness. These connections provide access to education, health centre, employment, business, retail and leisure opportunities and can support sustainable lifestyles and opportunities.
- 16.1 The Local Plan sets out to make sure that new development is located in the right places to benefit from access by a variety of sustainable transport modes. However, facilitating sustainable economic growth and supporting the growth needed in the District also requires development of sustainable transport networks and connections to ensure that they provide an effective, efficient and high quality network with efficient public transport, attractive and suitable routes and choices for pedestrians and cyclists, a safe road network and modern digital infrastructure.

### **Sustainable Transport and Travel**

- 16.2 Three Rivers is well served by communication links. However, car ownership levels are high and car usage increasingly dominates patterns of movement in the District. Traffic levels in the District are forecast to grow by 15.6% by 2031 and there are existing local congestion problems. Increased congestion and car use could undermine the economic growth of the District and harm the quality of the environment and social well-being.

### **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy**

- 16.3 An efficient, comprehensive and sustainable transport system is an essential element in supporting the District's economic competitiveness, meeting targets for reducing CO2 emissions and enabling the delivery of sustainable development. Promoting sustainable transport modes will help re-balance the focus to those modes that have lower emissions and contribute to creating a higher quality environment across the District.
- 16.4 Hertfordshire County Council has produced a Growth and Transport Plan (GTP) for South West Hertfordshire, which identifies some of the transport interventions that will be needed to support and help facilitate sustainable development within the South West Hertfordshire area, including in Three Rivers.
- 16.5 While Three Rivers District is not responsible for the transport network, the location of new development may have a significant impact on transport and travel and the travel choices made.
- 16.6 The Spatial Strategy seeks to direct development to the areas with greatest access to public transport, services and facilities, which should contribute to reducing the need to travel and journey lengths, and prioritise the use of public transport, walking and cycling as realistic alternatives to the car.
- 16.7 The Council is also working with Hertfordshire County Council, National Highways and other transport providers to provide a co-ordinated and enhanced transport system which improves connectivity and transport services to and between settlements within Three Rivers, to key destinations in surrounding areas, and to London.

**Sustainable Transport and Travel**

- 1) New development will be located in areas where the opportunity to be made sustainable is realistic
- 2) New development must contribute to the delivery of an integrated, accessible and safe transport system, maximising the use of the sustainable transport modes of walking, cycling and the use of public transport including the provision of Mobi-Hubs where appropriate in line with the current version of the Local Transport Plan.
- 3) Proposals for development will need to have regard to the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule and any subsequent updates which identify the key infrastructure requirements on which the delivery of the Plan depends. Provision of suitable access and transport infrastructure and services will be achieved through direct improvements and/or schemes funded through Section 106 contributions or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to address impacts of new development.
- 4) The transfer of road freight to railways and canals in the District will be supported in principle, subject to the provision of a full Transport Assessment and compliance with other relevant local, regional or national policies, including an assessment of impacts on the environment and amenity- and prior discussion with the Canal and River Trust and Network Rail.

**Development Proposals**

- 5) New development should integrate means of travel and minimise the impacts of travel by private motor vehicle on the District by maximising:
  - a. The provision of high-quality, safe and direct walking and cycling routes within a permeable site layout, with priority over vehicular traffic, that facilitates and encourages short distance trips by walking and cycling;
  - b. The provision of sufficient secure, accessible and convenient cycle parking;
  - c. Delivery of new and enhanced cycle and walking routes in the area to schools, local facilities, services, bus stops and railway stations, as well as to the towpath and access including links to and from the Grand Union Canal towpath, or other key destinations identified;
  - d. The provision and improvement of public transport access including layouts to enable convenient access for buses, ~~and provision of covered waiting facilities where appropriate~~ bus priority where possible and accessible bus stops with high quality infrastructure;
  - e. Opportunities for new taxi ranks where there is a demonstrated need arising from new developments including transport hubs where demand would be high, such as station forecourts, and town centres.
- 6) Development proposals should demonstrate that:
  - a. It provides a safe and adequate means of access for each mode;
  - b. opportunities for routes to key destinations by sustainable modes are maximised to reduce reliance on private vehicles for short journeys;
  - c. It will maintain the safe operation and the performance of the local road networks and the Strategic Road Network;



- d. It is appropriate in scale to existing transport infrastructure, including public transport and, where necessary, infrastructure can be improved with provision for public transport as part of a scheme, and/or through off-site delivery and contributions;
  - e. It is integrated with the wider network of transport routes, including public rights of way and cycle paths where appropriate;
  - f. It makes adequate provision for all users, including car and other vehicle parking, giving priority to people with mobility difficulties, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, and to low and ultra-low emission vehicles; including making provisions for roads that provide sufficient width to allow vehicles to maintain the separation required by the Highway Code.
- 7) Development generating a significant amount of movement must be supported by a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement and a Travel Plan for prospective residents, employees or users in accordance with the Local Validation Checklist. The Assessment/Statement should fully assess the impact of the proposal on transport taking into account the cumulative impacts of permitted developments and allocated sites, and detail any measures to be taken to mitigate adverse impacts taking into consideration relevant guidance available from the County Council.

### **Reasoned Justification**

- 16.10 Transport has a range of impacts on the environment. As well as the land take for provision of transport infrastructure, it is a major source of carbon dioxide and of emissions affecting air quality in the District, with consequences for the health and quality of life of communities.
- 16.11 The NPPF requires that developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. It also states that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.
- 16.12 Sustainable modes of travel are defined within the NPPF as any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

### **Reducing the need to travel**

- 16.13 The Spatial Strategy seeks to focus growth to locations which are or can be made sustainable to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. Complementing this, there is a need for all individual proposals for development to maximise opportunities to support and integrate sustainable travel and to manage and mitigate transport impacts to ensure that safe and suitable access will be provided for all users and that significant impacts of development will be limited. In doing so, we seek to create environments that make it easier to be physically active, enhance opportunities for walking and cycling safely, create high quality public spaces and public realm, improve

connectivity and accessibility for all, and focus on supporting the high streets, and centres as destinations that people want to go to and use to 'live locally'.

- 16.14 The Council requires proposals for every development and all major developments to promote the concept of enjoyable / liveable / 20-minute neighbourhoods. Creating neighbourhoods where everything a resident needs can be reached within 20 minutes by foot or bike will not only improve quality of life but will also bring the multiple benefits of healthier lifestyles, cleaner air, stronger local economies and above all, better resilience against climate change. Proposals for new development must evidence exactly how more sustainable travel will be prioritised (through walking and cycling, travel planning and design to reduce the need for both essential and non-essential journeys).
- 16.15 All opportunities to minimise the impacts of transport on the environment through reducing the need to travel and promoting and encouraging the use of alternative more sustainable modes of transport must be taken as part of proposals for development. ~~unless there is robust justification as to why this is not possible.~~
- 16.16 Developers are encouraged to explore the opportunity to integrate new development to existing Mobi Hubs and/or create new multi-modal hubs providing electric vehicle charge points, e-bikes, car clubs, and information on local transportation for businesses, the general public, communities and visitors. They will be designed with respect to their compatibility with future mobility technologies, ensuring infrastructure that is compatible with developments such as automotive vehicles, vehicle to grid charging and battery storage.

### **Walking & Cycling**

- 16.17 New development proposals should incorporate the Transport User Hierarchy as set out in the current Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan ~~2018 – 2031~~ into the design of any scheme. The development of any transport strategy should ~~consider~~ provide for travel needs in the following order:
- Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel
  - Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists)
  - Passenger transport user needs
  - Powered two-wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs
  - Other motor vehicle user needs
- 16.18 Supporting a safe and pleasant walking environment ~~requires~~ places prioritisation of pedestrians at the top of the road user hierarchy and improvements to pedestrian safety in existing areas. The District Council is developing its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan in line with Government guidance. More information is available at [www.threerivers.gov.uk/lcwip2021](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/lcwip2021). Developments must incorporate high quality pedestrian routes that promote walking as an attractive, convenient, safe and pleasant mode of transport and that connect in networks and to the surrounding area taking into account existing and likely desire lines. Adequate wayfinding is also important to help to incentivise walking.

16.19 Cycling is also an essential component of sustainability and the support of healthy lifestyles, as well as providing an affordable means of access to local destinations and opportunity for leisure and recreation. To encourage and support cycling, developments should connect to, and further develop and enhance the existing network of cycle routes of different types (on-road and off-road) helping to deliver the local cycling and walking strategies. ~~including~~ This will include improvements to ~~crossing facilities~~ junctions as well as the routes themselves. Developments should adhere to Highway Code in implementing a risk-based ‘hierarchy of road users’, which places more responsibility on the drivers of larger vehicles to look after more vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians. Providing sufficient, convenient and secure cycle parking, with a particular priority at key destinations such as town centres and railway stations is also important, as well as end-of-trip facilities for cyclists.

### **Travel Planning**

16.20 The Council will also require Travel Plans for every major development and will work with the Local Transport, Traffic and Highway Authority to require, monitor and enforce the effectiveness of Travel Plans. Local guidance sets out criteria for production of Travel Plans and can be viewed with the following link: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/travelplans](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/travelplans).

16.21 ~~The Council will also support~~ This can include initiatives to increase access to bicycles through cycle loan and hire opportunities subject to consideration of any associated facilities against other policies and objectives of the Local Plan.

16.22 Training and/or travel behaviour initiatives to support the take up of cycling will also be supported.

16.23 The Council will work with partners including Hertfordshire County Council and bus and rail operators to implement measures to give buses priority over other vehicles; to create and enhance the public realm around rail stations to improve the user experience and interchange; to develop the network to meet travel needs in the area; and to ensure that bus stops and bus stopping areas are well located and that they are designed to be accessible and comfortable for all. New development must also make provision for public transport where this is appropriate taking into account of the scale and nature of a development, including for example through layouts which enable access for buses and provision of covered waiting facilities and accessible bus stops with high quality infrastructure. Relevant guidance is available in HCC’s Intalink Bus Strategy and the Rail Strategy.

16.24 Land within the designated HS2 safeguarding area will be protected ~~in accordance with advice from HS2 Ltd.~~

16.25 In addition to supporting sustainable modes of travel, where new development comes forward, it must ensure that access arrangements are safe and do not result in danger or inconvenience to other users of the highway, including as a consequence of traffic generation on both the local road network and the Strategic Road Network which comprises the motorways and some A roads. Any impacts on the SRN will need to be identified and mitigated as far as reasonably possible. Appropriate provision for parking should also be

made in accordance with the preferred policy on parking standards and the Place and Movement Design Guide.

- 16.26 The Council will work in partnership with Canal and River Trust in relation to integrating the canal corridor into adjacent development and creating / strengthening links to other areas of open space. This could include improvements to the existing towpath, improving signage and creating circular walks or heritage trails. Canal Trust will be consulted as particular working practices and frequency required, costs, management would be key to determining overall suitability of any proposals for freight on the waterway.