

DESIGN SPD - DRAFT DOCUMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. This North Hertfordshire Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared as part of the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Development Framework.
2. The design SPD expands on the emerging policies in both the Core Strategy DPD and Development Policies DPD, specifically *Core Policy B: Design and Sustainability* and *Development Policy 5: Design, safety and sustainability*.
3. The SPD also builds on national policy in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development, and Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS1*. Both documents promote sustainable, well-designed development to achieve a high quality built and natural environment.
4. Achieving good design and sustainable development are the core principles underlying planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations.
5. It also relates to PPS5: *Planning for the Historic Built Environment*, taking into account the desirability of new development to make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. The consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.

1.1 URBAN DESIGN

6. Urban design is key to making places that are successful both, socially and economically, good to live in and attractive to visit. Urban design is essential in creating community identity (UDG website).
7. Urban Design is defined by the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE) in *By Design*:

*Urban design in the Planning System*¹ as ‘the art of making places for people. It includes the way places work and matters such as community safety, as well as how they look. It concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful villages, towns and cities.’

8. It goes on to state ‘Urban design is a key to creating sustainable developments and the conditions for a flourishing economic life, for the prudent use of natural resources and for social progress.’



Fig 1: Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City is a well used space

9. The idea of successful streets, spaces, villages, towns and cities are those which function well, look good and are likely to last. These types of successful developments tend to have characteristics in common. These factors have been analysed to produce principles or objectives of good urban design. They help to remind us what should be sought to create a successful place. There is considerable overlap between the objectives and they are mutually reinforcing.

¹ CABE (2000) *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System* towards better Practice

1.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

10. The North Hertfordshire district is predominantly rural, incorporating 375km² of attractive undulating countryside following the chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills and the East Anglian Heights. The district contains four main settlements; the historic market towns of Hitchin, Baldock and Royston and the world's first Garden City, Letchworth. There are also 33 villages varying in size from Knebworth, which contains in excess of 4,000 people to Caldecote with a population of roughly 20. There are also a number of hamlets and scattered dwellings throughout the rural area.



Fig 2 – A view of the rural edge of Royston

11. The character of the district's settlements is very different. There are some notable similarities but on the whole their formation, growth and modern day character differ significantly. This means that their urban make up and potential for future development is also very different and each needs to be assessed in its own unique way.
12. This document contains specific urban design guidance for each of the four towns and 21 of the larger villages. The listed villages correspond to Policy C of the Preferred Options Core Strategy (2007), in which they are identified as being allowed to take some development within their defined boundaries. There is also general guidance for the rural area.

13. This document takes account of and is in addition to, the Conservation Area Character Statements. These Statements provide a clear indication of the Council's approach to the preservation and enhancement of each individual Conservation Area. The Design SPD guidance is broader and takes account of a range of different issues not only conservation.
14. Regional Spatial Strategies continue to be a material consideration although the Government have announced their intention to revoke them at a later date.
15. The development of any new homes and other forms of development in North Hertfordshire presents the opportunity for the creation of well designed, functional, attractive places. This document seeks to guide and influence development ensuring that any future development achieves a distinctive character of high quality.

1.3 PURPOSE

16. This guide has been produced by NHDC to inspire, raise standards and influence the design of development to ensure that it respects and complements the existing built character and natural environment of the District. There are also various requirements being introduced in policy such as BREEAM, Code For Sustainable Homes, Building Futures, etc. that need to be incorporated in new proposals. This document seeks to rationalise and bring together all potential urban design policy in one place.
17. The Design SPD has been produced to:
- Provide advice for developers and applicants when submitting planning applications. When submitting planning applications applicants will be required to demonstrate how they have taken into account the guidance provided in the Design SPD.

- Provide a compendium of guidance for Planning Officers and Consultants.
- Provide further guidance and background evidence in respect of the Core Strategy and Development Policies. Provide links and references to further guidance provided elsewhere.
- Create not just high quality buildings but high quality buildings that contribute to and enhance the character of their surroundings and that are durable and long lasting.
- Prevent standard ‘anywhere’ designs

1.4 FORMAT

18. The document is set out in the following sections:

Section 2 - Policy Context
 Section 3 - Design Guidance
 Section 4 - Local Design Principles:
 Town design principles
 Village design principles
 Rural area design principles
 Appendix A – Relevant Guidance
 Appendix B - Checklist
 Appendix C – Glossary
 Appendix D – Village Maps

What the SPD guide includes/covers

19. The guide covers all development throughout the district regardless of scale or location. **Section 2** covers the relevant policy that is applicable, **Section 3** covers generic design guidance and standards while **Section 4** covers specific design guidance for each of the four towns, the villages and the rural areas.
20. Where guidance already exists the guide does not replicate but provides links to relevant sources of guidance and advice, however for climate change and sustainability specific detail is included as the issue is particularly current and extremely important.

21. This document also contains a **checklist in Appendix B**. This has numerous benefits:
- It enables any developer to ensure that they have met the various requirements detailed in this document. It does not state how each section should be completed and it is no way exhaustive. It should be interpreted as a series of prompts to improve schemes.
 - It will provide a means of recording the sustainability credentials of developments when applications are submitted;
 - It is a means of demonstrating how a scheme will achieve /attain a minimum rating of ‘Very Good’ under BREEAM assessment scheme or ‘Level 3’ under the Code for Sustainable Homes.

What the SPD guide does not include/cover.

22. CABE’s document *By Design* states on p14 “Good urban design is rarely brought about by a local authority prescribing physical solutions, or by setting rigid standard but by approaches which emphasise design objectives or principles.”
23. This document is therefore not prescriptive guidance but encourages designers to think about the context of the site and how the development should positively respond to and respect it. After using the prompts in this guide developers should have a better understanding of the wider context and the design requirements, providing an aid to understanding rather than a step by step guide to achieving good design.

1.5 CONSIDERATION OF DESIGN

24. The best way to promote successful and sustainable regeneration, conservation and place-making is to think about urban design from the start of the planning process. This can be viewed as imperative in the justification of applications. In

particular design can be incorporated at the following stages:

- Site identification and start of the Design and Access Statement (DAS).
 - Site and surrounding area appraisal identifying local character, context, linkages, urban and village form, constraints and opportunities.
 - Policy appraisal setting out national, regional and local policy for the scheme, including the consideration of any development briefs design codes, this and other design codes.
 - Preparation of concept design options showing how various options for the proposals site incorporates the design principles in this SPD.
 - Pre-application discussions with Council officers to discuss the design concept, possible options, policy consideration, local requirements and any further requirements to be taken forward as a preferred option.
 - Preparation of the preferred option and finalising the design and access statement, setting out how the appraisal, concept options, community/member involvement and pre-application discussions have informed this option.
 - Submission to North Hertfordshire District Council.
25. Applicants must be able to show how they have taken account of the need for good design in their development proposals taking into consideration form, layout, character and context, and that they have had regard to relevant development plan policies and supplementary design guidance referred to in this document. Completion of the checklist will enable this process to begin from the start.
26. The use of design specialists such as architects, landscape architects or urban designers early on the process

will also ensure that urban design issues are taken into account.

27. The Council provides pre-application advice service. This advice is provided on a “without prejudice” basis to enable the applicant to discuss through issues and potential designs.
28. A Design and Access Statement, referred to above (not usually required for householder applications unless within a Conservation area) must accompany applications for outline planning permission and full applications for planning permission. It will generally be required for all listed building consent applications.
29. A Design and Access Statement should cover:
- Planning context – policies, SPD, etc.
 - Strategic context – links to wider area and relationships to surrounding development including views in & out.
 - Local and immediate context – adjacent land uses and links to the area or site
 - Site and statistics – size, proportions, boundary definition.
 - Site and area characteristics – contours, ecology, landscape, hydrology, ground conditions, crime pattern analysis.
 - Site and area infrastructure - roads, utilities
 - Statutory constraints – Listed buildings, TPOs, etc.
 - Development feasibility
 - Key issue analysis (studies)
30. CABE have produced useful advice on preparing Design and Access Statements in *Design and Access Statements how to read, write and use them*².

² CABE (2007) Design and Access Statements – How to read , write and use them. Available from: <http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/design-and-access-statements>



Fig 3: CABI's Design and access statements guidance

31. What is clear is that an approach that starts at the broad scale, considering the wider impacts of a development first before looking at the detail, is an important building block for good design.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

32. The North Hertfordshire Local Development Framework³ is being produced in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). This design document is one of a number of Supplementary Planning Documents being produced by North Hertfordshire District Council to supplement policies in the overarching Development Plan Documents. It is being prepared at the same time as the Core Strategy and the Development Policies move through the preparation process. Below are the policies which are particularly relevant:

- i) Core Policy B: Design and Sustainability
- ii) Development Policy 5: Design, Safety and Sustainability

33. These policies are still subject to change following the preparation process and Examination in Public.

2.2 APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA)/ STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

34. Sustainability Appraisal is a systematic and iterative appraisal process, incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of strategies and policies in a Local Development Document from the outset of the preparation process.

35. This SPD provides further guidance on a number of policies in the Core

³ NHDC LDF Details available from: http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework.htm

Strategy and Development Policies DPDs, however, is more strongly linked to Core Policy B: Design and Sustainability and Development Policy 5: Design. Like all other policies in Development Plan Documents these policies will be subject to an independent SA/SEA. Therefore, this SPD does not require an additional SA/SEA.

36. Until Core Policy B and Development Policy 5 have been formally adopted and the associated SA/SEA process has been completed this SPD will be for guidance only. Only once the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPDs have been formally adopted will this SPD then become a material consideration in the decision of any application.

2.3 RELEVANT GUIDANCE

37. There is a wide range of advice available on the subject of design. A list of documents and associated policies are available in **Appendix A**.

2.4 CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

38. Although there is much policy on climate change (see appendix A), it warrants some explanation as it is potentially the greatest global challenge facing the world today. In short, increased carbon emissions and greenhouse gases resulting from human activities have brought about an increase in surface temperatures, a rise in sea levels, and changes in weather patterns meaning that the affects are being felt around the globe.

39. Although there is some scepticism around the climate change debate, the unsustainable use of natural resources is also a key element of the “green” agenda and push towards more sustainable development. Even if the issue of climate change is still being debated, a more prudent use of natural resources can be viewed as a necessity to ensure that the needs of future generations are not compromised.

40. The UK Climate Change Act of 2008 recommends reducing carbon emissions by at least 80% by 2050 and 34% by 2022. These targets are extremely challenging and unlikely to be achieved by current technologies, therefore the future of the green agenda is, to a degree, largely unknown and will be something that evolves over time.
41. At the local level the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2007, which amongst other things acknowledges the issue of climate change and commits the Council to work to reduce carbon emissions and prepare a Climate Change Strategy⁴.

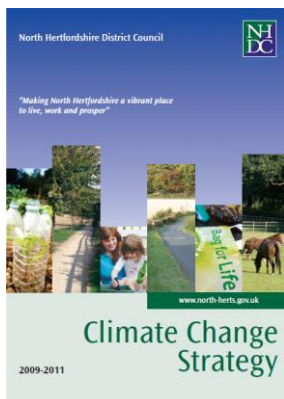


Fig 4: North Herts Climate Change Strategy

42. Planning plays a crucial role in tackling climate change. As PPS1 states “good planning ensures that we get the right development, in the right place and at the right time.” Planning therefore has a great deal of influence over locations and types of development that take place. PPS1 Supplement on Climate Change sets out how planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change and take into account the unavoidable consequences.
43. Sustainable development needs to be pursued in an integrated manner

⁴ North Hertfordshire District Council Climate Change Strategy (2009 -2011)

therefore, social, economic and environmental concerns need to be considered when making decisions, nevertheless, all new developments should incorporate methods for encouraging sustainable transport - reducing carbon emissions, maintain and enhance biodiversity, minimise resource usage and minimise the overall environmental impacts. As well as the obvious effect of reducing carbon, there are numerous additional benefits that originate from more sustainable development. Seeking more sustainable forms of movement such as walking and cycling in a development has the added benefit of increased health and wellbeing.

44. In adopting a green agenda, buildings that are seen to be more “green” are likely to be more attractive to potential buyers. With a more environmentally-conscious public, awareness of the need to limit their own effects towards climate change is important as a result there is a growing appetite amongst consumers for more sustainable products and services. With greater demand for homes that offer reduced environmental impact, lower running costs and features that enhance health and well-being, there is an increased need for home builders to demonstrate their capacity in sustainable home building, and to market the sustainability of their homes to homebuyers. More innovative, interesting designs also set the homes apart from the competition, making them potentially easier to sell.
45. Specific technologies associated with the green agenda and the reduction in carbon are likely to continually evolve, however their impact on issues such as the historic built environment will be a key balancing act. The historic environment needs to be protected for its own sake. If we are to reach the aspirational climate change targets difficult decisions will need to be taken in the future and an integrated approach is required to ensure that the decisions taken are the correct ones.

Code For Sustainable Homes

46. The Code is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. The Code aims to reduce our carbon emissions and create homes that are more sustainable.



Fig 5: Code for Sustainable Homes

47. The Code measures the sustainability of a new home against nine categories of sustainable design, rating the 'whole home' as a complete package. The criteria are:
- Energy and CO₂ emissions
 - Water
 - Materials
 - Surface Water Runoff
 - Waste
 - Pollution
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Management
 - Ecology
48. The Code uses a one to six star rating system to communicate the overall sustainability performance of a new home.
49. **Level 1 homes** will be 10% more energy efficient and 20% more water efficient than homes built under 2006 Building Regulations. They may also incorporate other features in the code such as providing secure cycle storage, home-working facilities or greater security features.
50. **Level 3 homes** will be 25% more energy efficient.

51. **Level 6 homes** will achieve carbon neutrality. They gain 90% of the points available by incorporating most of the sustainability features within the code.
52. The Code is closely linked to Building Regulations, which are the minimum building standards required by law. Minimum standards for Code compliance have been set above the requirements of Building Regulations. It is intended that the Code will signal the future direction of Building Regulations in relation to carbon emissions from, and energy use in, homes, providing greater regulatory certainty for the homebuilding industry.

Sustainable Technologies

53. The layout of any development is an important feature in the use of sustainable technologies. By ensuring the appropriate layout, use of sustainable technologies can be maximised, i.e. the use of southern facing facias to enable the use of solar panels.

Passive Solar Design

54. By influencing the orientation of buildings to intentionally use solar heat and light and natural ventilation dependence on polluting fuels can be minimised.
55. A selection of the specific technologies can include:

Absorption Cooling

56. Uses heat instead of electricity to produce a cooling effect. It is applicable mainly to commercial and industrial buildings and makes use of heat that would otherwise be wasted.

Biomass

57. This is an alternative to fossil fuel. There are many types of biomass technologies in use, the most popular of which is woody biomass which is applicable for both large scale heating boilers to individual room heaters to combined heat and power generation.

Combined Heat and Power (CHP)

58. This is the simultaneous generation of useable heat and power (usually electricity) in a single process. These technologies are becoming more common in premises which have simultaneous need for heating and electricity for long periods, such as hospitals and hotels.

Ground Cooling

59. This uses the relatively constant ground temperature to provide summertime cooling through ground heat exchangers. These heat exchangers could either be air to ground or water to ground.

Ground Source Heat Pumps / Geothermal energy

60. This uses pipes buried in the garden to extract heat from the ground. This is usually used to warm water for radiators or underfloor heating systems. It can also be used to pre-heat water before it goes into a more conventional boiler.

Solar (photovoltaics)

70. These technologies convert sunlight to electricity and can be integrated into buildings. They tend to have no moving parts and are silent. They can be incorporated into buildings in various ways on sloped roofs, atria and shading devices.



Fig 6: Use of photovoltaics on roofs in Freiberg, Germany (Alex Ely: CABE)

Solar water heating

71. These systems use solar panels, called collectors, fitted to the roof of a

building. These collect heat from the sun and use it to warm water which is stored in a hot water cylinder. This is a well established renewable system outside of the UK and is viewed as one of the most cost effective systems available.

Wind

72. This is a successful and fast spreading renewable energy technology in the UK with the growing number of individual and group installations of varying size, capacity and location.

Use of Materials

73. The type of materials in any development is very important to its energy efficiency and can influence how efficient it is. The rate of heat transfer in buildings is measured by a "U-value". The use of high thermal mass materials (such as concrete / stone / brick) can retain heat and improve energy efficiency. Insulation also has the same effect. The U-values listed in Building Regulations should be treated as a minimum requirement.

74. The use of locally sourced materials should be investigated to reduce the overall carbon footprint of developments, although the overall impact on design needs to be taken into account as local materials do not always fit with local character.

Waste Management

75. Developments should be designed with the future management of waste in mind and their layout should facilitate increased recycling. Sending waste to landfill should be viewed as the last resort and every effort should be made to reuse, reduce and recycle.

Energy Efficiency

76. The need to reduce the amount of energy used is tied into climate change and reduction of emissions. The more efficient something is the less resources it uses and the less waste is produced.

3. DESIGN STANDARDS

3.1 FOUNDATIONS FOR GOOD DESIGN:

77. There are key questions that can be asked about design to assess how successful it is, for example:
- Functionality: Does it work well?
 - Firmness: Will it last?
 - Delight: Does it look good?
78. These are by no means the only questions that can be asked to assess success, however they do enable the consideration of issues that are particularly important and what facilitates good design. In *World Class Places*⁵, the Government's strategy for improving the quality of our public realm, the four elements that shape the quality of place are described as:
- the range and mix of homes, services and amenities;
 - the design and upkeep of buildings and spaces;
 - the provision of green space and green infrastructure;
 - the treatment of historic buildings and places.
79. There is also a significant overlap between this and the criteria contained in "Building for Life", which sets out 20 questions to evaluate the quality of new developments however these are ordered within the headings:
- Environment and Community;
 - Character;
 - Streets, Parking and Pedestrianisation;
 - Design and Construction.
80. These elements can be seen as overlapping with what are the traditionally accepted principles on which design should be expressed and assessed. These seven key principles

(taken from DETR/CABE's *By Design*) form the basis for assessment and through detailed breakdown of issues will allow a greater understanding of local context. A number of these issues overlap, as they are complimentary. There are also two additional principles on the Quality of Private Space and on Sustainability. Sustainability has become an increasingly important issue and the justification for its addition is detailed in Section 2.

3.2 KEY URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

81. These principles are generic to all development throughout the district and help to focus the design process.
1. Character (sense of place and history)
 2. Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)
 3. Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)
 4. Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)
 5. Legibility (ease of understanding)
 6. Adaptability (ease of change)
 7. Diversity (ease of choice)
 8. Quality of Private Space (useability)
 9. Sustainability (reducing carbon and increasing efficiency)

1. Character (sense of place and history)

82. The way in which the design and layout of the scheme responds to, and reinforces, the sense of place is crucial. Character incorporates the majority of the built form issues as any new development should be responding to the existing character. There are many aspects to character and as well as the character that already exists, new development will have its own character and its value

⁵ World Class Places (2009) Communities and Local Government, Available from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/worldclassplaces>

and impacts should also be a consideration.

83. *Building Scale and Massing* – the height, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings will have an impact on the surrounding buildings and spaces.

84. Taller buildings can be used to emphasise corners or important buildings. Buildings can be grouped together to create terraces or a more dominate building. This can help with legibility and creating a hierarchy of building types. Key to the use of taller buildings is its context and the character of the surrounding area. Taller buildings are a more efficient use of land. The scale of buildings can be reduced through the use of materials and detailing for example a single building can be designed to looked look a group or terrace.

85. In North Hertfordshire the town centres include some larger buildings however the building heights do not change drastically, from the more suburban areas that surround them and any change is relatively gradual.

86. *Density* – national guidance on housing density was detailed in *PPS3: Housing*, however this section of the PPS was deleted by the Coalition Government so currently no national minimum standard exists. Design is viewed as particularly important in ensuring the efficient use of land. The quality of the environment should not be compromised and the local character should be respected. The density of the development should be informed by the local character and the constraints of the site.

87. Higher densities can support public transport and ensure developments are making an efficient use of land. This can be viewed as reducing the environmental impacts of a development. This can sometimes result in taller buildings, which should not dominate the street scene and

negatively affect the character of an area.



Fig 7: The William Ransom site in Hitchin was built at over 90 dwellings per hectare, making use of its town centre location and proximity to the railway station

88. *Appearance* – the materials and construction methods used will have a large bearing on the appearance of developments. Locally used materials can contribute to the distinctiveness of a development and ensure that it is acceptable in the local environment.

89. *Layout* – the layout of development is an important factor in defining the character of a development. The orientation of buildings and the street pattern are important features affecting numerous other features. As mentioned in Chapter 2 with regard to sustainability, layout can ensure good access to solar gain, daylight and passive cooling. This will allow developers to produce comfortable, energy-efficient buildings surrounded by pleasant outdoor spaces, within an urban context that minimizes energy consumption and the effects of pollution.

90. *Urban Grain* - the arrangement and size of areas streets, blocks of buildings and the pattern of junctions contributes to what is known as urban grain. Finer grain developments contain smaller building blocks and greater number of streets and junctions.

91. Areas with a coarser grain have larger blocks of development and less interconnecting streets and junctions.



Fig 8: Hitchin Town Centre has maintained a unique historic character

2. Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)

92. Ensuring that development defines streets and spaces and conforms with existing features such as building lines and enclosure will make places that are safe, welcoming and useable.
93. *Enclosure* – the relationship between building heights and street widths is important. Buildings of more than one storey can generally give an area a sense of protection through enclosure and natural surveillance however, tall buildings coupled with narrow streets can create dark, intimidating passageways. Allowing natural surveillance and creating light open spaces in a development will make it feel much more pleasant and safe to use.
94. Many of the key routes through Letchworth Garden City include lines of trees, verges and open green space between the path, the road and properties creating a pleasant, open environment that is light and attractive.

95. *Building lines* – in existing development there will be a common building line denoting how far back from a carriageway buildings are located. Where there is a strong building line this should be respected by new development to maintain existing character and to ensure that new buildings do not dominate the street scene or that continuity of the building line is lost.

96. The location of buildings fronting a carriageway can also add to the feeling of enclosure and character of the public realm.

97. *Active Frontages* – buildings that have active frontages create interest and add vitality and footfall at a ground level. Creating active frontages can be done through the use of windows and doors and the use that is permitted at ground level i.e. shops at ground floor level create constant activity during the daytime and their large windows allow natural surveillance onto the street. Fronts of buildings should face onto public spaces. Policy restrictions will, however, control the location of some uses.

98. Conversely blank frontages can create unwelcoming buildings and can encourage crime and antisocial behaviour. Where back gardens front onto areas of public realm such as open spaces, they will generally create dead, inactive frontage, this can give rise to a general unsafe feeling. By ensuring that back gardens back onto other back gardens in a “block pattern” this can be prevented.

3. Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)

99. The term “public realm” relates to any area of space available to the public to use, where no cost is involved. It includes open spaces (both green and hard surfaced) as well as streets and footways. The

design and quality of these areas of public realm has an impact on how well they function and how they are perceived by the people who use them. Public realm is an important issue in North Hertfordshire.

100. *Public open space/biodiversity* – open space should be useable and designed into development from the start, rather than an add on at the end. This prevents poorly located, unusable spaces being created.
101. Open space should be created to make the most of existing natural features such as rights of way, water channels and footpaths, which in turn can have the added effect of contributing to biodiversity.
102. PPS9 currently sets out the Government Policy for biodiversity and seeks to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geodiversity. Throughout North Hertfordshire there are many different types of green space, these are detailed in the Council's Green Space Strategy⁶.
103. *Street Furniture and Signage* – the amount and type of street furniture and signage can have an impact on the attractiveness and usability of the public realm. The long term maintenance and durability of street furniture and signage should be considered from the start as with time it could detract from the quality of an area.
104. The style of street furniture should also be in keeping with the character of the area.
105. Street furniture should not impact on accessibility. Public realm should be

enjoyable for all potential users and poorly located signs and furniture could impinge on the movement of wheelchair and pushchair users.



Fig 9: Well positioned, functional street furniture in Baldock

106. Signage is also important to inform and direct pedestrian and vehicular movements. To enhance public realm it is often advisable that any signage is mounted on existing street furniture such as posts or street lights or on boundary walls to reduce clutter.
107. *Planting* – can be useful for a number of purposes. It can create the character of the streetscene or public space. It can be used to create privacy, screen intrusive elements of a development or used as a border treatment to integrate a development with a surrounding area. It can also provide boundaries to open space and provide green corridors adding biodiversity value.
108. The types of planting used is critical as poorly designed planting schemes can create problems with security, lighting and movement.
109. Again, as with street furniture, the long term maintenance should be considered as planting that requires a high level of maintenance should be avoided. Use of native species can aid with this.
110. The requirements of local biodiversity and overall sustainability should also be a key consideration in

⁶ North Hertfordshire Green Space Study (2009) Available from: http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework/background_papers/green_space_study.htm

selection of plants. The character of a place should also influence the design of a planting scheme.

111. *Lighting* – the use of lighting in a development is particularly important for issues of safety and attractiveness. Places should be appropriately lit which will help legibility and movement between places.
112. The use of lighting that shines directly into neighbouring buildings and into the sky should be avoided as this constitutes light pollution.
113. The style and the type of lighting used should also be in keeping with the area, as detailed in the street furniture section. Lighting should also be energy efficient.
114. *Public Art* – public art can be a focal point within the public realm adding to its character, identity and quality. It can also provide a source of attraction and a sense of place contributing towards overall legibility.
115. There are many ways in which art can be added into a development, such as through use of specially designed seating, signage and even within the buildings themselves as well as sculpture or painting. Thought should be given at the start of the process as to how public art can contribute to a development.
116. *Landscape* – in North Hertfordshire the rural nature of the district means that the landscape is a particularly important feature. The rural setting of many of the districts villages is particularly important to their intrinsic value.
117. The Council's Landscape Character Assessment⁷ provides a very useful

⁷ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (2004) Available from: [http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/planning_policy](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/landscape_character_assessment.htm)

tool and will play an important role in providing guidance for the acceptability of proposals.

118. *Safety* – there are many elements of design that contribute to safety and can make spaces and places feel safe and secure. As previously discussed blank façades and isolated locations have the opposite effect. People generally feel most at ease when they can be seen and heard, therefore isolated spaces away from natural surveillance are not advised.
119. *Hard Surfacing Materials* – can be used for a number of reasons e.g. use, visually link a development with its surroundings, defining a development's boundaries, informing pedestrian/vehicular movement. But its importance in influencing the character of space is often overlooked. The enhancement work at Baldock has created a streetscene more in keeping with its character as a country town, where previously large areas of tarmac dominated the town centre.
120. The types of materials used should not only be considered with their appearance in mind, but also their ability to withstand the use that are being selected for. Their future maintenance and how they will look once weathered will also be key considerations.

4. Ease of movement (accessibility, connectivity and permeability)

121. The network of spaces and routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is a key component of any development. Places should be easy to get to and from and by all modes of transport. Safety is also particularly important. In traditional layouts vehicles and pedestrians should be appropriately separated,

[y_and_projects/landscape_character_assessment .htm](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/landscape_character_assessment.htm)

recognising that diversity of users provides natural surveillance. However, appropriately designed shared spaces, such as 'Home Zones' can also create safe, accessible places by reducing the impact of vehicles in the street and slowing vehicle speeds.

- 122. *Street Network* – the network of routes in an area enables people to move freely from one place to the next. Key locations within development should be easily accessible and routes to and from them should be direct.
- 123. New development should have good connections with the existing network, maintaining flows and maintain routes for travel. Cul-de-sacs offer the least amount of permeability. Straight line block development, although offering the greatest level of permeability and direct routes, can encourage higher speeds.

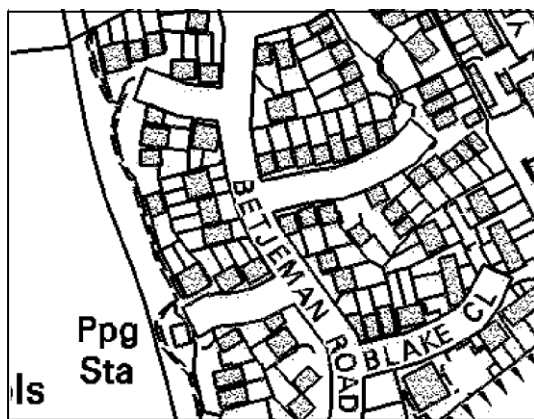


Fig 10: Example of use of cul-de-sacs in Royston, which restrict pedestrian and vehicular movement

- 124. New developments need to consider the access routes of emergency and delivery vehicles to ensure that parking and layout does not hinder their movement and ability to function. However, the design of new development should ensure that it is not dominated by the road layout. The context of the site and its existing features such as

vegetation, views, topography should inform the layout.

- 125. *Streets as public places* – streets should be designed as places for people as well as serving their function for vehicles. In town centres the use of streets is likely to be much different to that of a residential area. The potential use of streets should be factored into design seeking to optimise their use as places but taking into account safety and everyday use.



Fig 11: Market taking place in Baldock High Street

- 126. *Walking and cycling* – routes for these uses should be favoured when designing a development. Routes should be well lit and overlooked to provide natural surveillance. Links to services and facilities are particularly important, appropriate distances are set out in the *Urban Design Compendium*⁸ and *PPG13:Transport*. Proximity to services is an important consideration and the location of facilities to serve developments will be a crucial sustainability consideration. Whether a route is attractive and feels safe will also add to the frequency of its use.

⁸ Urban Design Compendium (2007) CABE, Available from <http://www.urbandesigncompendium.co.uk/orderacopy.aspx?pointerid=323c7606503e49dd91d6a7defecbd95e>

127. The use of pedestrian and cycle routes in developments can reduce vehicle usage. Their design should ensure that the route is safe, well lit and direct.
128. *Traffic calming* – although the engineering of the road network is the responsibility of Hertfordshire Highways, design can play a role in reducing speed through the layout of the development. While maintaining clear sightlines a curving road, which reduces visibility, will mean drivers exercise more caution and slow down.
129. *Parking provision* – guidance on the provision of parking in new developments is currently being prepared for the Councils Parking SPD.
130. Parking should be overlooked to ensure security. In residential developments at least one window should overlook parking spaces. Long lines of continuous parking should be avoided, especially on streets as it can dominate the streetscape, however parking should not be completely restricted on roads as it provides activity, natural surveillance and traffic calming, slowing vehicles down.
131. Parking on paths is antisocial, impinges on access and can create obstacles for pedestrians. Developments should seek to discourage this through appropriate design of parking spaces, planting and use of street furniture.
132. The parking SPD also provides guidance for cycle parking. This encourages the use of more sustainable patterns of movement and a reduction in private vehicle usage.
133. Large amounts of surface level parking should be resisted as this does not provide a particularly efficient use of land. In large developments where high levels of parking are needed more innovative methods of parking should be investigated including basement / below ground floor level. This should still allow active frontages and not prevent natural surveillance.
134. *Travel Plans* – travel plans present an opportunity to reduce the need for private vehicles. Encouragement of more sustainable methods of transport and reducing the need to travel as advocated above can be drawn together in one place to reduce carbon emissions. Account needs to be taken of the type, location and scale of development and whether it is part of a mixed use development when assessing what is required and deliverable. Travel Plans are a useful way of overcoming issues raised by a transport assessment.
- 5. Legibility (recognisable routes and landmarks)**
135. The idea of legibility concerns the general understanding of a place and how easy it is to 'read'. This can cover issues such as the ability to recognise where the main entrance for both pedestrians and vehicles is, or how someone within a development can find their way about.
136. The use of tall buildings and landmarks can act as signposts drawing the eye from one place to the next and enabling an understanding of place. It is generally important to emphasise corners and gateways to enable understanding of movement between places. Places that are memorable and that draw people in will add to legibility as will the appropriate use of signage.
- 6. Adaptability (ability to respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions)**

137. Places and buildings should be capable of being used for a variety of activities and uses and by all members of the community. Buildings designed to be flexible in their use can allow for changes in the future. This could occur through internal alterations or a building being extended and modified to suit changing circumstances i.e. through conversion of roof-space or extension added to the rear of a property.

138. Reusing and converting older buildings can be perceived as problematic. However the principle of re-use, rather than demolition and new build, is sustainable and with imagination, sensitivity and good design it can be possible to keep them in use. PPS5 supports flexibility and changes to support the retention of long term use of heritage buildings.

139. Adaptability can also apply to open space and public realm, whereby it can be used for a number of different uses i.e. markets, functions, events.

140. *Lifetime homes* – the Lifetime Homes Standard is a set of 16 design criteria that provide a model for building accessible and adaptable homes. They encourage flexible design and developments that are accessible to all members of the community. These types of development should be encouraged on large sites and on a site by site basis where applicable.

141. *Accessible development for everyone* – in addition to lifetime homes development in general should be accessible to everyone including those with visual, hearing or mobility difficulties. This has implications for the design of many aspects of the public realm including the design of footways, crossings, parking spaces and access to buildings. Dropped kerbs and raised

crossings are examples of enabling development suitable for all.

7. Diversity (variety and choice)

142. Mixing the uses in a development can add interest and life to a development. Vertical diversity can be shown through use of a shop on the ground floor with office and or residential uses above. This has the added benefit of allowing natural surveillance through variety of operation and usage times.

Horizontal diversity can be shown through different uses being located next to each other, normally at a ground floor level such as shops, offices, hairdressers, etc.

143. *Mix of residents* - Diversity can also apply to the mix of residents. This can be facilitated by including a mix of private and social housing in an area.

8. Quality of Private Space (usability)

144. *Internal Space* – dwellings and other buildings should provide adequate internal space that can be used efficiently by the occupants. Room size should be able to accommodate furniture and modern technology associated with today's living standards. Rooms should be designed so that they have adequate natural lighting to minimise the need for artificial lighting and adequate natural ventilation to minimise the requirement for heating or cooling.

145. *External space* – private dwellings should have adequate private space to meet the needs of the occupants. The Council encourages a mix of garden sizes. Houses should have gardens which meet the needs of the occupants outdoor living requirements such as children's play, patio for entertaining, lawn/shrub area for leisure and recreation, recycling bins and storage facilities. Flats and

apartments should have outdoor space such as balconies or roof gardens to meet the need for useable outdoor space.

146. Gardens can also provide the space required for extensions when the building needs to be enlarged to accommodate growth or aspirations for bigger dwellings.
147. *Off-street parking* – the inclusion of space for off-street parking should be a key consideration within the design of any development.

9. Sustainability (reducing carbon and increasing efficiency)

148. Sustainable buildings and sustainable technologies are becoming increasingly more commonplace. Design can play a very big part in the development of more energy efficient buildings and places through the use of emerging and developing technologies and materials. These will enable adaptability to climate change and reduce the use of carbon in both the construction and future maintenance of development. Energy efficiency, renewable resources, water conservation, reducing the need to travel and solar shading are all covered by the sustainability agenda.
149. Various different types of technologies will be employed as the Code For Sustainable home is implemented through the Building Regulations.



Fig 12: Recently built eco-home at Holly Lodge Farm, Wallington, includes solar panels, passive solar gain, a sedum roof and efficient hot water / heating system.

150. *Sustainable Technologies* - such as the use of solar panels and wind turbines should be located to have least visual impact. This may be done through using photovoltaic panels that look like tiles or landscaping to screen or minimise the visual impact of additional features. Some of this development is classified as permitted development, however in conservation areas and on listed buildings advice must be sought as poorly designed and positioned technologies can harm the character of an area.
151. *Water efficiency* – water should be conserved through the use of water butts / grey water recycling / SUDS / dual flushing toilets, etc. All these type of technologies will contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of the development and minimise consumption of resources.
152. *Materials* – developments should make the most of any local materials and local construction companies to reduce the carbon footprint of developments. Minimising the distance materials need to travel will contribute to the overall “greenness” of a development.
153. The re-use of materials within a development should also be considered.

154. Sustainable types of materials such as timber and water-based paint could be used as long as it does not detract from the quality of the development and does not negatively impact on the existing character.
155. *Recycling space* – the need for space for recycling has been iterated in “quality of private space” above. Making allowance for this type of space within all developments, particularly residential, is important as recycling and waste is becoming increasingly more important.
156. If space for recycling bins is not included within developments they are likely to litter the streets and make it look untidy. They can also cause access problems and contribute to street clutter.
157. The need to separate out different waste materials is a issue that is likely to continue in the future, therefore adaptable places that make provision for this will be more pleasant, attractive and less cluttered.

4. DESIGN PRINCIPLES – TOWNS

4.1 BALDOCK

History

158. Baldock is one of five towns listed by the Council for British Archaeology as being of national importance having been occupied as an undefended Iron age and Roman British fort from the 1st century BC to the 6th century AD. Baldock is located on the former Great North Road hence its legacy as a coaching town.

Current Situation

159. Baldock has retained its traditional market town character with the historic core containing fine architecture from the medieval and Georgian periods. St Mary's Church, a Grade I Listed Building lies in the northern part of the town centre and is surrounded by historic and more recent residential areas. The town centre is designated a conservation area and contains a mix of uses with town houses, inns and commercial buildings.
160. In 2008 enhancement works were carried out to the public realm in the town centre. The enhancements rationalised the car parking, created new public realm spaces using high quality materials to give the centre a large village character.



Fig 13: Baldock's wide High Street

161. The following documents should be taken into account when preparing development proposals in Baldock.

- Urban Design Assessment for Baldock.
- Baldock Town Centre Strategy.
- Baldock Conservation Area Character Statement.

Sense of Place

162. The Design SPD aims to ensure a high standard of design is maintained in keeping with the character and sense of place of Baldock. The Design Principles encourage various aspects of design to be considered in particular detail when considering development in Baldock. Design principles are to be used throughout the whole town, not just the town centre, to ensure that development in residential and employment areas are also given the same consideration needs to be given to particular character and sense of place.

Design Principles (town centre)

163. Development proposals in Baldock should clearly show how the following design principals have been taken into account.
164. For development outside the town centre also refer to the guidance contained within the Urban Design Assessment for Baldock.

Layout

165. Baldock Town centre is characterised by wide main streets enclosed by continuous frontages and narrow side streets. The streets widen towards the High Street/Whitehorse Street/Hitchin Street junction. This widening of the streets creates spaces for the public realm and community use. The historic layout should be preserved and the width of the streets should be retained. The town's pedestrian permeability, achieved through a network of footpaths, should be protected and enhanced.

Design

166. The historic fabric of the town centre is one of Baldock's most important features and contributes to the character of the settlement. New buildings should enhance the existing fabric through the use of similar materials and sympathetic designs, scale, height, massing and proportions.
167. There are a large number of town houses which are built on burgage plots creating continuous frontages which should dictate the scale and typology of new development in the town centre. High density is acceptable with a mix of commercial on the ground floor with residential above.
168. Coach arches are common within the town centre and these often open out into small courtyards. These could accommodate mews type development, small commercial units and conversions. Rear walled gardens are important to retain.

Views

169. Views along the historic streets are important. The High Street has long views towards Weston Hills to the south of the town. Views of the spire of St Mary's Church are important and should be respected. This should remain the dominant landmark within the town centre.

Streetscene

170. The town centre is characterised by active street frontages therefore new frontages should be directed towards the street. Buildings are two, three or four storeys with some consistency in height.

Public Realm

171. The public realm is a sensitive area for new architecture and enhancements because of the quality of the historic buildings. Any enhancements to the public realm or new buildings should ensure that the character and high quality of the

historic fabric is maintained and be thematically linked to the town centre enhancements.

172. Further information on Baldock, including maps, can be found in the Urban Design Assessment for Baldock at http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/urban_design_assessment.htm

4.2 HITCHIN

History

173. Hitchin is listed by the Council for British archaeology as being of national importance. Hitchin's origins have been traced back to pre-Roman times as an important crossing point on the River Hiz. Hitchin developed as a market town and the layout of the town centre has evolved partly from the temporary market stalls becoming permanent. The street plan was largely unchanged until the 19th century and the arrival of the railway which brought a rapid expansion of the town.

Current Situation

174. The historic layout of narrow streets clustered around Market Place adjoining St Mary's church still exists. Historically these are a mix of town houses built on narrow burgage plots and commercial activities. The town centre has evolved over time and will continue to do so but any changes should respect the overall historic character of Hitchin. The town centre is totally included within the Conservation Area. A few modern buildings detract from the character of the historic environment.



Fig 14: The Churchyard area of Hitchin

175. The following documents should be taken into account when preparing development proposals in Hitchin.

- Urban Design Assessment for Hitchin.

- Hitchin Town Centre Strategy.
- Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement.
- Paynes Park Development Brief
- Churchgate Development Brief

Sense of Place

176. Hitchin town centre's historic layout and architecture centred around Market Place give it a distinct character. The continuous frontages within the town centre create attractive streets and spaces, which include a mix of styles and ages of buildings.

177. The green open spaces of Bancroft Recreation Ground, Windmill Hill, Butts Close and the Priory surround the town centre.

178. The Design SPD aims to ensure a high standard of design is maintained in keeping with the character and sense of place of Hitchin.

Design Principles (town centre)

179. Development proposals in Hitchin should clearly show how the following design principals have been taken into account.

180. For development outside the town centre also refer to the guidance contained within the Urban Design Assessment for Hitchin and Conservation Area Character Statements.

Layout

181. Hitchin town centre has a strong urban structure resulting in an informal grid of routes. Some of these routes are for both vehicles and pedestrians but there are a number which are just for pedestrians making Hitchin town centre very permeable for people accessing the town centre on foot. These pedestrian links should be protected enhanced and increased where possible as they are part of Hitchin's character and success.

- Design**
182. The scale and typology of new buildings should be dictated by the scale and typology of historic buildings. Architecture of new developments should complement rather than necessarily copy or compete with historic styles. New designs should use materials that compliment historic styles. There should be scope for innovation allowing the town centre to evolve.
183. Building heights are generally three storeys although there is a mix of two and three storey buildings which creates interest and variety. Flat roofs are inappropriate in the town centre where roofscapes are varied in pitch and style.
184. High densities are appropriate within the town centre as are a mix of uses including residential, retail and commercial.

Views

185. Due to the gently curving streets vistas are restricted which creates a sense of anticipation and interest. The setting and views of St Mary's Church are important and should be enhanced.

Streetscene

186. Continuous frontages create strong building lines and therefore enclosure. Continuous frontages made up of narrow building plots should be retained in any new development, including larger buildings which should reflect plot sizes in their detailing. Building frontage should face the street to create active facades and ensure surveillance of the public realm. Blank walls should be modified to create interest in the elevation.

Public Realm

187. The quality of the public realm should be maintained and enhanced by ensuring the use of similar, high quality materials throughout for

surfacing and ensuring consistency in street furniture, colours and signage.

188. The town centre contains important public spaces which should be protected and enhanced. The hard character of Market Place contrasts with the soft landscaping in to the east of St Mary's church along the banks of the River Hiz. The River Hiz is an important element in the character of Hitchin town centre and its potential for a riverside walk should be fulfilled. Any public realm improvements should use high quality materials and be sensitively designed.
189. Further information on Hitchin, including maps, can be found in the Urban Design Assessment for Hitchin at http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning_policy_and_projects/urban_design_assessment.htm

4.3 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

History

190. The unique environment of Letchworth Garden City is a result of its origins as a planned town, based upon a masterplan. This ensured substantial landscaped areas of open space and amenity value as well as detailed attention to the layout and design of development. Moreover, the earlier buildings were often designed by prominent architects of the time or as part of competitions, which tended to attract innovation in materials and high professional standards.
191. The term 'Garden City' is equated with open residential development, characteristically low density, individually designed houses set within a generous landscape of mature trees and hedges. This is only partly true. Many of the finest early 'Garden City' layouts depended on a successful corporate design for the scheme as a whole, in addition to the individual features mentioned above. The key to success in the best examples is the appreciation of the way in which buildings are grouped to form a sequence of outdoor spaces related to each other and to their overall setting.

Current Situation

192. Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation have produced Residential Design Standards for Letchworth Garden City, which together with these design principles should ensure quality of design in Letchworth Garden City.
193. The following documents should be taken into account when preparing development proposals in Letchworth Garden City.
- The Urban Design Assessment for Letchworth Garden City.
 - Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy.
- Letchworth Garden City Conservation Area.
 - Letchworth Garden City residential design standards. (LGCHF)

Sense of place

194. The Design SPD aims to ensure a high standard of design is maintained in keeping with the character and sense of place of Letchworth Garden City. The Garden City Design Principles have been consistently applied for many years. They encourage various aspects of design to be considered in particular detail when considering development in Letchworth Garden City. The design principles may also be used to good effect in other places although consideration needs to be given to particular character and sense of place.



Fig 15: Leys Avenue, Letchworth Garden City

195. In his book, *Town Planning in Practice*, published in 1909, Raymond Unwin stressed the importance of the architect and planner using 'the main building lines and masses, placing any important features in his design, such as terminal feature at the end of a road, or any buildings required to limit the size and give a sense of frame to the street picture'. Unwin recognised the difficulty with predominately detached houses, with a statement of design principles as relevant today as 90 years ago. 'With the square plot and the detached house in the centre of it the garden is necessarily cut up into several pieces of little

practical value while the main garden has no single dimension large enough to develop any vista one of the greatest difficulties to be contended with is the constant multiplication of buildings too small in scale to produce individually any effect in the road even where it is not possible to avoid much repetition of semi-detached or detached houses, they should be arranged to give some sense of grouping. The setting back of three or four pairs of houses in the arrangement of a continuous green in front of them, with the proper treatment of the houses at each end which are set forward against the building line, could of itself produce some grouping hardly anything is more monotonous than the repetition of detached and semi-detached houses and this monotony is little relieved by variety in the individual houses the variety is, as it were, unrelieved variety’.

196. The detailed, forms and materials used in Letchworth are also worthy of study. In 1904, First Garden City Ltd stated in its Garden City regulations that ‘the high standard of beauty which we desire to attain in the Garden City can only result from simple, straight-forward building, and from the use of good and harmonious materials. They desire as far as possible to discourage useless ornamentation and secure that buildings shall be suitably designed for their purpose and position’. As a result of this, such materials as rough cast brickwork and rich red tile roofs became almost standardised, particularly for grouped housing whilst the use of slate as a roofing material was prohibited. Design features such as dormer windows and gables were accented with tile-hanging or dark stained boarding. Shortly before the First World War when the Georgian style became fashionable, dark red stock brick was effectively used with white painted wooden sash

windows. The adoption of steep roof pitch for most of the early houses and the variety and ingenuity of the handling of the gables, hips and dormers resulted in an overall variety without sacrificing the basic unit proved by the material.

197. Once again Unwin provided guidance of continued relevance. He urged architects to ‘apportion materials with a view to some colour scheme. He will avoid monotony, but not by an irregular jumble of materials and colours, but by a sufficient though unobtrusive variation in the different buildings, leading up to some more definite breaks in colour in certain parts; treating differently different roads or parts of roads, and so producing interest and variety on his estate, which will be greatly helped by the sense of unity maintained in each individual part, and of harmony over the whole’.

198. The landscaped setting, particularly tree planting, was regarded as an essential element of Garden City design and layout principles. The landscaping and greenswards of the housing areas became a unifying element and in particular the hedges of the house plots and the trees, shrubs, and verges, carefully considered in relation to the highway, gave the whole town a park like appearance, benefiting the name of Garden City.

Design Principles

199. Development proposals in Letchworth Garden City should clearly show how the following Letchworth Garden City Design Principles have been taken into account.

200. For development outside the town centre also refer to the guidance contained within the Urban Design Assessment for Letchworth Garden City.

Layout

201. The overall layout should, as far as practicable, reflect 'Garden City' layout and design principles. Creative reinterpretation of the principles in the light of modern requirements will be sought, and knowledge of the quality and variety of early residential development in the Garden City is a pre-requisite to the success of any proposals.

Design

202. The design of buildings should respect the detailing, materials and use of colour that characterises the Letchworth Garden City style.

Views

203. The vista has a formal quality exemplified by the broad tree-lined swathe which projects the main axis of the town across Norton Common, and was very effectively handled in the section between the Broadway Gardens and the Sollershott's where a double avenue of lime trees was planted. Other principal approach roads of the town were treated in this manner, for example Norton Way South and Pixmore Way. In the latter, the articulated building lines of the early Letchworth UDC Council housing were notably successful.

Streetscene

204. Accents were often created by variations in the building line. For example the splayed arrangement of the three blocks of Silver Birch Cottages in Station Road added visual interest to an otherwise monotonous road. Greens were used to create a corporate sense of design, such as at Westholm, Ridge Road and in the section of Lytton Avenue between Gernon Road and Pixmore Way.
205. The principle of closure represents the breaking down of the streetscene into sequences by means of closing the view at key points, particularly at road junctions. Notable examples are the view southwards into Rushby

Mead from Hillshott; the Crescent between Pixmore Way and Baldock Road where a series of spaces is created along a curved road; or more formally, in Jackmans Place around the triple road junction within the estate where a focal block is set across the view line. The use of an informal design approach should not be at the expense of purposeful design of spaces framed by buildings. This aspect was always emphasised by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, who were the consultant architects for the original Letchworth Plan of 1904 and much of the subsequent detailed layout of housing.

206. Group design can be used as a means of giving identity to the various roads within the Garden City. For example, a residential cul-de-sac or the linking together of blocks to form street corners, as at the junction of Lytton Avenue and South View. Occasionally, corners would be treated as blocks of striking design, for example the twin 'L' blocks which frame the North side of the junction between Sollershott East and Field Lane, or the block boldly set diagonally across the acute angled junction between Sollershott East and South View.

Public Realm

207. Improvements to the public realm should enhance the character of the Garden City style.
208. Further information on Letchworth Garden City, including maps, can be found in the Urban Design Assessment for Letchworth Garden City at http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/urban_design_assessment.htm

4.4 ROYSTON

History

209. Royston lies in a shallow bowl on the border of the Cambridgeshire plains and the East Anglian Heights chalk escarpment. Development of the town has been informed by the busy roads running through and around the town and the Cambridge to London railway line which dissects the town.
210. Royston lies at the intersection of Ermine Street, a Roman road and Icknield Way, which is a pre-Roman road. These roads date back over 2000 years. Ermine Street provided a link between London, Lincoln and York and as a result it was viewed as one of the most important roads in the country. Icknield Way was also of great importance creating a link from Salisbury Plain to East Anglia along the chalk hills.

Current Situation

211. Royston's town centre retains a medieval layout centred on the Royston Cross. There are four narrow streets running north-south in the centre with a few short streets linking between them creating a tight-knit character. This layout results in a busy network of streets with pedestrians and vehicles competing for space. There are many historic buildings within the town centre however some newer buildings detract from the medieval character. There is limited open space within Royston both within the town centre and throughout the town however Priory Gardens provides a green lung to the east of the town centre and Therfield Heath SSSI provides a natural green space to the west of the town.
212. Royston as a whole suffers from a lack of cohesion which is partly the result of the town's historic development. Newer development surrounds the historic core but links between the historic core and its

neighbouring areas are limited. This is due to development taking place in discrete plots separated by busy through routes or the railway line. This has resulted in a great number of cul-de-sacs which has limited the permeability of the town. In fact the town centre itself is dissected by Melbourn Street which runs east-west and restricts pedestrian and vehicular north-south movement.

213. There are several Grade I Listed Buildings and a number of buildings of local interest. St John's Church is an important landmark.
214. The following documents should be taken into account when preparing development proposals in Royston.
- Urban Design Assessment for Royston.
 - Royston Town Centre Strategy.
 - Royston Conservation Area Statement.

Sense of Place

215. Royston has a distinctive character both in layout and materials. The creamy-yellow gault bricks are more characteristic of Cambridgeshire than Hertfordshire. However, Royston's location on the boundary between the two counties means it is influenced by both. The very narrow streets within the town centre create an elongated grid pattern allowing access north-south but limited permeability east-west. The historic town centre contrasts with the rest of the town which has been developed mainly since the 1960's.

Design Principles (town centre)

216. Development proposals in Royston should clearly show how the following Royston design principals have been taken into account.
217. For development outside the town centre also refer to the guidance contained within the Urban Design Assessment for Royston.

Layout

218. The historic layout of Royston town centre resulting in a tight-knit structure of narrow streets forming a loose grid pattern should be retained. The streets are formed by terraced town houses, larger coach houses, inns and hotels creating continuous frontages often with no or narrow pavements. The narrow streets mean that vehicles and pedestrians are in close proximity. New development should be terraced frontages except in the northern part of Kneesworth Street where detached buildings are more prevalent.

219. Pedestrian routes within the town centre are good but should be improved. Pedestrian linkages into the town centre should also be enhanced in any new development.

220. The topography of Royston means that most of the town centre is on a north facing slope while the part to the north of Melbourn Street is on more level ground.

Design

221. The historic architecture in the town centre is one of Royston's main assets. New development should be sympathetic to the largely domestic scale of the historic buildings which are mainly two storey with some three storey.

222. The whole of the town centre is within Royston Conservation Area therefore the design and detailing of new developments is very important. New buildings should use similar materials that compliment historic styles.

223. Higher densities are suitable within the town centre accommodating a mix of commercial use, at ground floor and residential above.



Fig 16: High Street, Royston

Views

224. The Views of the Grade I Listed St John's Church should be protected and where possible enhanced.

Streetscene

225. Enclosure, created by the continuous frontages is important to the character of Royston town centre. Continuous frontages on narrow plots should be a feature of new development. Frontages should overlook the street and blank walls should be discouraged.

226. The mix of timber frame cottages and grander Georgian and Victorian buildings are united through their adherence to the continuous building line.

227. Gateways into Royston are important in particular the ones into the town centre at the junction of Melbourn Street and Melbourn Road, the junction of London Road and High Street and on Baldock Road.

Public Realm

228. High quality materials should be used for public realm enhancements.

229. Further information on Royston, including maps, can be found in the Urban Design Assessment for Royston at http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/urban_design_assessment.htm

5. LOCAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES – VILLAGES (Village maps located in Appendix D)

5.1 ASHWELL

History

230. Ashwell was a planned Saxon town and during the 11th century was regarded as one of the most important settlements in the area as it was a borough and a market town. The building of St Mary's church dates back to the 14th century. This building is one of only two churches in the whole of Hertfordshire entirely built in stone.
231. During the medieval period the village stagnated and although during the 17th century there was some additional building, including the first brick building in the village (Merchant Taylors' School), little else was built until the 19th century, which saw the growth of brewing, coprolite digging and straw plaiting industries and as a result population growth. This also coincided with improved transport links. The lack of building in this period has meant that many of the historic buildings are still visible today and there are 106 listed buildings in Ashwell, most constructed for residential purposes.
232. From the 1920s until the 1970s most of the new houses were built by the local authority. Since then a number of developments have taken place in Woodforde Close, Angell's Meadow, The Rickyard, Fordham's Close, Bacon's Yard Colborn Close, John Sales Close and Westbury.

Built Form and Layout

233. Ashwell is a large village set in open countryside in the north of the district at the foot of the scarp slope of the chalk ridge. The village provides services and facilities, for the surrounding rural areas as well as its own residents. Trees are more prominent to the north of the village

as to the south agricultural practices since prehistoric times have meant that the landscape has changed significantly from the natural vegetation.

234. The conservation area covers the majority of the village and some of the open land to the north. The older buildings to the north are entirely covered by this designation. A number of distinct areas within Ashwell can be identified such as West End, Station Road, Angell's Meadow and Woodforde Close.

Landmarks and Views

235. Ashwell contains 5 Visual Character Areas as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007):
- The "Church and Environs" preserves the open nature of the church and surrounding farmsteads and meadows to the North of the village.
 - The "Eastern Area" protects the ribbon development east of the recreation area and treats it as part of the countryside.
 - Dixies Meadow / West End protects farmstead buildings and extensive views of the countryside fields.
 - The "South West Area" protects against further extension of the village in this area, which would appear to be visually sensitive and located on rising ground.
 - The "Southern Edge" protects the low density, ribbon development from further consolidation.

Massing and Materials

236. Many of the older buildings are timber framed and rendered fronting directly onto the street. The density is high in the older village core as open spaces have generally been in-filled.

237. Away from the centre density is less and the height of buildings reduce. Some red and white brick buildings represent building from the 19th century. More modern developments have used a wider range of materials and colours

Sense of Place

238. Ashwell has a mixture of dwelling types and ages. The church is visible from all routes to and from the village, providing a sense of legibility and understanding. Many of the older properties have great architectural merit and along the High Street there are a number of timber framed buildings with over-hanging upper storeys. The winding route of the High Street has been determined by the route of the Ashwell Spring, which to a degree has been a key defining factor in the overall layout of the whole village.



Fig 17: Ashwell Spring

239. The visual character areas have helped protect the village from inappropriate development and maintained its historical form. On street parking through the High Street does create problems with the local traffic.

240. Further information can be found in the Ashwell Village Design Statement.

241. The design principles for Ashwell are:

- The environment and setting of the village are particularly important to its future protection. The more historic areas also need to be protected for their own sake.
- Protect the historic core and historic environment from inappropriate development that could detrimental to the village's character.
- Seek to protect open spaces maintaining the existing village character.

Design Principles

5.2 BARKWAY

History

242. Many properties in the village date back to the 17th and 18th century although there are also a number from the 16th century and even some from the 15th century. The High Street has an historic character with the oldest properties displaying thatched roofs. Barkway has had a village church for over 1000 years, however, the current flint and stone church dates back to the 13th century.

Built Form and Layout

243. The village has grown in a linear form along the High Street, with very little back-land development. The High Street was part of the London to Cambridge coaching route explaining its historic development. The character of this historic street has been retained through sensitive development. The more recent development is located to the north west of the village, away from the High Street. This has caused a degree of polarisation, meaning more recent development is separated from the historic core.
244. Barkway village is situated on a south facing slope. A garage, pub and golf course lie to the south of the village. The school is located centrally on the High Street. There are also a soft furnishing / upholstery shop to the north of the village. This spread of local facilities does not create an obvious village centre.
245. The east of the district is relatively sparsely populated and villages are few and far between. Reed and Barley are located some way from Barkway and the village feels very rural once you leave the built up area. The approach roads, especially from the north, are green and tree-lined owing to the location of historic parks and gardens of Cokenach and Newsells.

246. The conservation area covers the High Street and Church Street but not the newer development to the north of the village.

Landmarks and Views

247. The village is not prominent from the approach roads as the rolling nature of the landscape hides its location.
248. On the western side of the High Street there is a Visual Character Area as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007).
- 'West of High Street' contains open spaces which should be retained to integrate the edge of the village into the countryside.

Massing and Materials

249. The historic core contains many 17th, 18th and 19th Century houses constructed mainly of red brick with some dwellings rendered and some have extensive pargetting.

Sense of Place

250. The historic feeling dominates the sense of place in the centre of Barkway. The buildings that front onto the High Street provide a sense of enclosure, however, they are not so tall as to dominate the streetscene. The mix of building types and variations in materials also provides a sense of interest. The village is not high density as the plots are quite large but proximity of the buildings provides a generally terraced effect, with only a few spaces providing views to the countryside and gardens behind. The High Street is a very attractive area and is the prominent feature in the village giving Barkway its identity. The more recent development appears to have been added onto the village to the north, giving a feeling of almost two separate communities.



Fig 18: Historic Buildings along Barkway High Street

Design Principles

251. The design principles for Barkway are:

- Any future development will have to be sympathetic to the existing development
- Backland development along the High Street has generally been resisted. Continuing this approach would protect the linear nature of the village, but could further contribute to polarisation of communities
- The open areas of the village should generally be protected to maintain existing character

5.3 BARLEY

History

252. Barley has grown slowly but more or less continually over recent centuries and so the buildings are of a variety of construction types and methods. Buildings currently standing in the village date from approximately the start of the 17th century, however the St Margaret of Antioch Church contains a 12th century Norman tower, although it was rebuilt in the 1800s.
253. The village has developed either side of several roads and lanes, meaning that the pattern of development is sporadic with areas of open space in between clusters of houses.

Built Form and Layout

254. Barley is largely surrounded by open undulating countryside, used for farming. It is not prominent in the landscape due to the rolling landscape and location of trees and tree-belts in and around the village edge. The conservation area covers most of the built up area. The village core would appear to be located at the corner of London Road / High Street / Church End. The majority of services and facilities are located along Church End which is a quieter and slower road, giving what would be described as the village centre a more tranquil feeling.

Landmarks and Views

255. There are six Visual Character Areas as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007):
- The “Playstow” area protects the general layout of the village and the large area of open space located in the village centre.
 - The “High Street” protects the open spaces between buildings and the High Street.
 - “Western Edge” protects the western edge of the village

and seeks enhancement with additional tree planting to integrate the village into the countryside.

- “Church End” protects the character of the large buildings and open spaces at the edge of the village along this route.
- “Southern Edge” protects the hedges and the open nature of the existing dwellings, maintaining an undeveloped character.
- “London Road” protects the vista, particularly the high banks and trees as it presents an attractive gateway into the village from the south.

Massing and Materials

256. The earliest buildings, particularly along High Street, Church End and Smith’s End Lane are mostly timber framed with thatched roofs. None are particularly large suggesting that the majority were built for farm workers before the 19th century. During the 19th and early part of the 20th century brick buildings with slate roofs were the main building materials either for smaller terraces or large farm buildings. Some have been rendered and undergone forms of weather protection.
257. Since the 1920s the materials and design of buildings have generally not conformed. There have been brick and rendered buildings with clay and concrete tiles. Bungalows, chalet bungalows and two storey buildings. Agricultural buildings have also varied in terms of construction materials including mixes of brick, flint, corrugated iron or steel.

Sense of Place

258. Barley has a unique sense of identity as development has occurred sporadically on the edges of the village over time, creating an open feel. Infill has largely been resisted, meaning that areas such as Smith’s End Lane and Pudding Lane have

retained a rural feeling even though they are part of the village. It is the sense of intimacy associated with these area which, when linked together form the character of Barley.

259. There has been some more recent infill and cul-de-sac development within the village core but the defining features have largely been respected and development has been sympathetic to the local character.



Fig 19: A more recent development along Church End, Barley.

260. The sporadic nature of some of the groups of properties and the numerous routes in and out of the village does create issues of legibility, however, this is a key defining feature of the villages character.

Design Principles

261. The design principles for Barley are:

- Infill that detracts from the open nature of the village should be resisted
- Views and gateways in and out of the village are an important feature and should be maintained and enhanced

5.4 BREACHWOOD GREEN

History

262. Breachwood Green lies in the parish of Kings Walden. The original Saxon settlement of King's Walden most likely consisted of a Manor House, the church and a few cottages. Several hamlets developed around the Manor, the largest of which is Breachwood Green.
263. Many of the cottages and farm houses in Breachwood Green date back to the 17th and 18th centuries or earlier including a number of Listed farmhouses. During the 18th and 19th centuries the small terraced cottages in Lower Road and along The Heath were built to house farm employees and workers on the King's Walden estate.

Built Form and Layout

264. Breachwood Green is situated on a plateau within a gently rolling landscape.
265. The village has a central core with outlying areas of development to the north and south. One of these is the older development along The Heath and the other is the more recent development around Mill Way. The village has spread out east and west from its central core to accommodate newer housing and wrap around the green open space behind the chapel.

Landmarks and Views

266. Views out from the village across the countryside.

Massing and Materials

267. The dispersed nature of the village has resulted in an open, well landscaped character. Buildings are grouped according to age and often set back from the road allowing for front gardens.

Sense of Place

268. Breachwood Green feels slightly isolated from surrounding settlements. The dispersed nature of the settlement and the facilities within it means that it does not have a defined village centre.

Design Principles

269. The design principles for Breachwood Green are:
- Retain the rural character of the village.
 - Strengthen the village core.



Fig 20: Heath Road, Breachwood Green

5.5 CODICOTE

History

270. Codicote lies along the old coaching road between London and Bedford. The High Street became a turnpike road in 1763 and many coaching inns set up along this road. The former George and Dragon pub was the oldest recorded licensed house in the county.
271. Codicote was originally centred around the church of St Giles but migrated westwards resulting in the church now being located on the eastern edge of the village. The church was mostly rebuilt in 1853 but retains some of its 13th century origins. The manor house, known as the Bury, is a tall, square, red-brick house is from the 17th century and is located near the church.
272. The open space opposite the George and Dragon was the site of the weekly market and annual fair.
273. The conservation area lies to the west of the village covering the High Street, Heath Lane and Old School Close.



Fig 21: High Street, Codicote

Built Form and Layout

274. The village has expanded either side of the main road with newer development filling in between the road and the church in the east part of the village and between Heath Lane and St Albans Road in the west. Although the historic core of

the village is at the junction of the High Street/Heath Lane/St Albans Road the older part of the village stretches out north and south along the High Street and Newtown.

Landmarks and Views

275. The meandering nature of the High Street which runs the length of the village provides changing views of the centre of the village.

Massing and Materials

276. Codicote has a number of fine houses including timber-framed and chequered brick houses with the 18th century Pond House and the half-timbered George and Dragon Inn.

Sense of Place

277. The village centre contains a variety of shops, pubs and businesses and the nature of the built form creates a strong character. The central green space creates a heart to the village. The entrances into the village are important gateways and tend to have a 'greener' character due to the mature hedge and garden plants and wildflowers alongside the road.

Design Principles

278. The design principles of Codicote are:
- Strong building lines within the village centre along the High Street should be retained.
 - Green character along the northern end of High Street should be retained.
 - Enhance the public realm through streetscape improvements.

Fig 22: Greenspace and offstreet parking in more recent development to the west of Graveley

5.6 GRAVELEY

History

279. Graveley is located between junctions 8 and 9 of the A1, in between Hitchin and Stevenage. The High Street forms part of the Great North Road (an old coaching route) linking London with York and Edinburgh. Hence the location and name of two of Graveley's public houses the Waggon and Horses and the Highwayman at Jacks Hill.
280. Within the village there are a number of attractive buildings, including the Grange and Gothic House and the George and Dragon pub, which both date to the 18th century. St Mary's Church, located to the east of the village, dates back to the 12th century, and is the oldest building in the village. In more recent times there appears to have been several parcels of housing developed in the 20th century which are noticeable additions.

Built Form and Layout

281. There is a mixture of types of housing in Graveley. The more modern developments are located in parcels to the west of the village, towards the A1, which forms a natural barrier to any future development.



282. As the High Street provides a route into Stevenage to the south and also a link to junction 9 of the A1 to the north, there is a significant amount of traffic that passes along it. The village is therefore not quiet and tranquil but it never has been owing to its location on this route. Planting associated with the Waggon and Horses and George and Dragon pubs creates a green character. There is also a duck pond situated just off the High Street to the west of the village centre.
283. The conservation area in Graveley covers the majority of the historic area of the village including Church Lane, High Street and Pondsides. It does not include the post-war developments that have occurred to the west of the village.

Landmarks and Views

284. Jacks Hill is located to the north of Graveley and contains a caravan park, employment, a golf course and pick your own fruit farm. It is a slight anomaly in that it is located in open countryside but would not appear to be within walking distance up the slope to the north of Graveley. To the south the village then slopes towards Stevenage.
285. In the centre of the village the feeling of openness dominates as a result of the wide high street. To the west the A1 is a visible influence and to the east the rural landscape influences views to and from the village.

Massing and Materials

286. The properties to the east of the village (along Church Lane) are set in large plots and feel quite rural in nature, whereas the houses fronting the High Street are of much higher density as are the newer housing

developments located to the west of the village.

Sense of place

287. The width and importance of the High Street gives the village a sense of openness, and also a feeling of separation.
288. The village would appear to have developed in stages, which is clear from the different pockets and types of development that have occurred. The sense of history is retained along the High Street and to the west of the village, however the rest would appear to be a mixture of building types and designs.

Design principles

289. The design principles for Graveley are:
- New development should be integrated into the existing development.
 - Any development fronting the High Street should respect the historic character of the existing buildings and building line to maintain the important vista.
 - Potential enhancement of entrance of the village to improve village identity

5.7 HEXTON

History

290. Hexton is located west of Hitchin in well wooded and hilly country adjacent to the Bedfordshire border. The church is mediaeval with heavy 19th century restoration. Far older is the Iron Age camp of Ravensburgh Castle which straddles the hilltop. Built about 400BC and refortified in 1 BC, it has two entrances, covers 22 acres, and is surrounded by a ditch.

Built Form and Layout

291. The village is a linear settlement with little expansion beyond the main street. The village is split into two by the location of Hexton Manor and The Grange. The church and school are situated on the B655 Hitchin Road in the southern part. The main part of the settlement, including the pub and shop are on a minor road off the B655 which runs through Hexton, but which does not have a name.
292. The conservation area covers the built extent of the village and extends further south to include additional land beyond the Police Station.
293. Local commercial activity is well integrated into the village which is still largely an estate village.



Fig 23: Mill Lane, Hexton

Landmarks and Views

294. Hexton lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

(AONB). This gives the village and its setting special value.

Massing and Materials

295. As Hexton is an estate village which has a strong influence on the continuity and look of the buildings. They take the form of characteristic terraces and pairs of timber-framed cottages.

Sense of Place

296. Its isolated location on the north-west boundary of the district, off the B655 Hitchin Road, between Hitchin and Barton-Le-Clay, gives it a special rural character. The unified character of Hexton stems from the influence of the Manor.

Design Principles

297. The design principles for Hexton are:
- Retain the rural character of the main street running through the village.
 - Ensure any new development respects the form of the village.
 - The Chilterns AONB Building Design Guide should be referred to.

5.8 ICKLEFORD

History

298. Ickleford originally grew up along the banks of the River Hiz around two greens and the church. Further development eventually linked these and consolidated the village into one settlement. 20th century development has extended the village westwards across the Bedford Road and also to the north and south around the junction with Turnpike Lane.
299. At the centre of the village is the church and a triangular green called the Upper Green. Lower Green lies at the northern end of the village.
300. Ickleford, which has seen considerable modern residential development, is Hitchin's northern neighbour, lying on the west bank of the River Hiz. The church, set amid cedar trees, dates from the 12th century.
301. The conservation area covers the central area of the village including the areas at the convergence of Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane.

Built Form and Layout

302. Traditional and 20th century buildings line the main roads. Local amenities such as the church, school, pubs and shops are located in the centre of the village. The village has gateways at the north (the railway bridge) and at the south (bridge over the River Oughton on Old Hale Way). To the east of the church newer development has tended to be located in short cul-de-sacs off the main road. To the west of the church newer development has more of an estate character with cul-de-sacs leading off loop roads.



Fig 24: Green Man public house, Arlesey Road, Ickleford

Landmarks and Views

303. The church is the focal point within the village. Its central position allows views of it from various locations. Its setting is also important in providing green open space in the centre of the village.

Massing and Materials

304. The village is spread out along the main street with buildings set back from the road. This creates a more open character for the village. In contrast the more recent developments in the late 20th century have a higher density and create a more enclosed character particularly in the cul-de-sacs.

Sense of Place

305. The grounds of the church contain large mature cedar trees which play an important role in the character of the village and the setting of the church. The village green also contributes to the traditional character of the centre of the village.

Design Principles

306. The design principles for Ickleford are:
- Protect the trees through the centre of the village.
 - Gateways in to the village should be strengthened.
 - Village centre should be strengthened.

5.9 KIMPTON

History

307. Kimpton village lies in a dry valley in the southern part of the district. The oldest part of the village is located around the Church and the village green. The village green is hidden from the High Street and is accessed along a narrow lane. It is in this area and the eastern end of the High Street where most of the listed buildings are located and this historic part of the village is a designated conservation area. There is a second conservation area at Kimpton Bottom at the western end of the village.
308. It is a linear village with a spacious flint-built parish church in the unusual transitional style between Norman and Early English. The parish contains several hamlets and isolated farmhouses reached by narrow, high-banked, winding roads.
309. The main street is about a mile long, including the hamlet of Kimpton Bottom. It has several 17th-century houses and cottages which retain many of their ancient features.

Built From and Layout

310. There have been three periods of rapid growth. In the 1930's when the local authority development took place along the western end of the High Street; during the 1950's and 60's with local development along Claggy Road and Common Lane; and in the 1970's with the private development of Dacre Crescent and Parkfield Crescent.
311. The main street runs through the length of the village with the majority of development on the north side of the valley. This includes industrial as well as residential. The southern side of the main road is mainly single depth apart from Lloyd Way and Coopers Close.

Landmarks and Views

312. There are views out across Kimpton from the valley slopes both north and south.

Massing and Materials

313. The terraced form of many of the buildings along the main street create a strong building line and enclosed character to the centre of the village. Many of the older buildings are brick with the newer developments tending to be a variety of brick and cladding.

Sense of Place

314. As the village lies either side of a road that runs along the valley bottom the village's impact on the landscape is reduced. Wooded areas beyond the village restrict long views out of the village to the north and south.



Fig 25: High Street, Kimpton

Design Principles

315. The design principles for Kimpton are:
- Protect the historic core and historic environment from inappropriate development.
 - Strengthen village gateways.

5.10 KNEBWORTH

History

- 316 Knebworth is situated on the former Great North Road. Initially the village was centred around Knebworth House and the parish church (Old Knebworth). The arrival of the railway in 1884/5 created a new settlement which grew up around the station. The settlement was further developed in the early part of the 20th century by plans to create a Garden Village. Only part of these plans were fulfilled, with housing at Watton Road, however other developments took place at Stockens Green and Deards End Lane. There was further residential development in the second half of the 20th century which in filled between the established areas of housing.

Built From and Layout

- 317 London Road which runs north-south through the centre of Knebworth is a busy route for traffic. The village centre has an important local convenience and service provision role. There are a number of business uses adjacent to the station and within the backland areas behind London Road and Station Road. The village centre extends along London Road and into the junction with Station Road. Part of Station Road on the western side of the railway line contains the station, Village Hall, Church and pub and should be considered part of the village centre. The development of Knebworth has resulted in larger areas of similar style housing interspersed with newer smaller housing developments. The village centre has evolved at a domestic scale.

Landmarks and Views

- 318 Although the village centre itself is not a designated conservation area it contains St Martin's Church, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, which is listed and there are two

Conservation Areas within the village, Deards End Lane Conservation Area and Stockens Green Conservation Area which cover residential areas.

- 319 The stone milestone marker at the junction of London Road and Station Road is also listed.

Massing and Materials

- 320 Main building materials are brick and render.

Sense of Place

321. Knebworth is a large village with a unique character as it has mainly development in the late 19th and early 20th century. Station Road, the other principal road within the village centre is characterised by individual buildings.
322. Buildings should provide continuity of frontage directly to the pavement along London Road to provide good enclosure to the street.
323. Opportunities to create new public spaces within the centre should be explored such as to the rear of the street frontage (Lowe's yard) and within the setback along Station Road.



Fig 26: London Road, Knebworth

324. The following documents should be read for further details on both the village centre and the rest of the

village. All the documents are available on the Council's website.

- Urban Design Assessment for Knebworth.
- Deards End Lane Conservation Area.
- Stockens Green Conservation Area.

Design Principles

325. The design principles for Knebworth are:

- New development should enhance the appearance of the village centre.
- Fronts of buildings should face the street with entrances accessible from the pavement.
- Development within the village centre should be predominantly two storeys. There is opportunity to increase heights at key junctions and within corner plots. Plots should be kept small and narrow to generate more active frontage and to protect the human scale.
- New development should reflect the terraced type of buildings along London Road facing directly onto the street.
- The views of St Martin's church should be protected and enhanced.
- The relatively dense character of the centre should be maintained.
- Pavements along Station Road should be clearly defined with setbacks given over to more active public realm uses seating, 'spill out' space, etc.
- The milestone should be retained and its setting enhanced through streetscape improvements.

5.11 LITTLE WYMONDLEY

History

326. Little Wymondley is located along the former main road between Hitchin and Stevenage and abutting the East Coast Main Line railway. This has now been bypassed by the A602 dual carriageway.
327. Little Wymondley has many old and interesting houses. The Buck's Head Inn is an early 17th century timber and rendered house and the Plume of Feathers on the opposite side of Stevenage Road is an old red brick house.

Built Form and Layout

328. Most of Little Wymondley is located between the Stevenage Road and the railway line. The original settlement developed along the Stevenage Road with later infilling between this and the railway line. More recent residential development has taken place around the school which is located on the north-west edge of the village.

Landmarks and Views

329. The location of Little Wymondley within a shallow valley limits views in and out of the village.

Massing and Materials

330. The buildings in Little Wymondley are of a variety of materials and types. Along the main road they tend to be of a loose arrangement along the main street rather than the tight knit of terraced buildings which tends to be more common.

Sense of Place

331. Little Wymondley is a well contained small village with the public houses located near the junction of Stevenage Road and Priory Lane. Stevenage Road contains a diversity of building styles and ages which are linked by the mature hedge and tree planting within front gardens giving a green character to the road.



Fig 27: Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley

Design Principles

332. The design principles for Little Wymondley are:
- Retain trees and shrubs along Stevenage Road to protect green character of the streetscene.
 - New development along Stevenage Road should reinforce the green character.
 - Gateways into the village should be retained and strengthened.

5.12 OFFLEY

History

333. Offley was formerly a street village on the ridge of Offley Hill. It originally developed around the crossing of an east- west route along the northern edge of Offley Place and the High Street. In the 18th and 19th centuries the centre of the village migrated northwards to the turnpike road which is now the Luton Road. In the 20th century the importance of this road as the main route between Luton and Hitchin was superseded by the A505 which bypasses the village in a cutting to the north. The village centre is split between some facilities on the High Street and others along Luton Road. The High Street, which leads into Kings Walden Road, forms the oldest part of the village.

334. The church of St Mary Magdalene and Offley Place are located together on King's Walden Road and they, together with the houses to the south probably form the site of the original settlement. The development along Luton Road is of a later date. The Green Man Inn is a 16th century house of timber and rough-cast. Offley Place, a Grade II listed building set in its own grounds, is a three-storey, brick building dating back to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Built Form and Layout

335. The High Street is the historic core of the village. It contains a diverse range of buildings styles and ages interspersed by larger properties such as the church, Offley Place and The Lawns. Offley Place plays an important role in the character of the High Street/ Kings Walden Road. This is largely representative of the extent of the conservation area. The northern edge of the village abuts the dual carriage-way between Hitchin and Luton where School Lane bridges the A505 at high level.

336. The majority of the more recent development is located on the western side of the Kings Walden Road. This is more open development which includes grass verges and street trees.

Landmarks and Views

337. There are two visual character areas as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007):

- "Luton Road" protects the character of the village entrance.
- "Southern end" protects the loose-knit character of development at the edge of the village.

Massing and Materials

338. In the village there are several timber and render cottages with tiled roofs of the 16th and 17th centuries and some later brick buildings.



Fig 28: High Street, Offley

Sense of Place

339. Offley has a strong linear character centered on the cross-roads of High Street, Luton Road and School Lane. The northern part contains the school but is mainly residential and has a close-knit character. The southern part contains the public houses and commercial centre of the village. It is quite densely built up towards the cross-roads but becomes more open further south. This is partly because dwellings are only on the western side of King's Walden Road opposite Offley Place and the Church and partly because the form of the village becomes more

open as it grades out at the southern end.

Design Principles

340. The design principles for Offley are:

- The historic and rural character of King's Walden Road should be protected.
- The character of streetscene along School Lane should be retained.
- Views into and out of the village should be maintained.
- Gateways into the village should be strengthened.

5.13 PIRTON

History

341. Pirton developed around Toot Hill and the Bury which was the ancient core of the village. It has a triangular plan created by three boundary routes at the edge of the village: West Lane; Walnut Tree Road; and Priors Hill. Pirton contains a large area of open space. The village has developed around this but mainly to the north.
342. Pirton is a picturesque village standing to the north-west of Hitchin. The church, rebuilt in 1877, but still with some remains of its 12th century tower, is built within the bailey of a former castle. Pirton Grange, which was remodelled in the 18th century in the north of the parish, is a particularly interesting, moated Elizabethan house with a timber framed gatehouse. Hammonds Farm and Rectory Farm, with its tithe barn, are also Elizabethan.

Built Form and Layout

343. Pirton abuts the eastern boundary of the Chilterns AONB and lies on the Icknield Way. It lies within a large scale open flat lowland area. Much of the village is contained within the conservation area. Pirton has a rich heritage of historic buildings many listed buildings and an archaeological monument which contribute significantly to the character of the village.

Landmarks and Views

344. There are four visual character areas as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007):
- “Toot Hill” is an historically important, large open area essential to the character of the village.
 - “Western Edge” protects the transitional character between the countryside and built-up area of the village.

- “Eastern edge” protects development spreading outwards to the open countryside.
- “Rear of Fox public house” protects the open character of this large undeveloped area within the village and safeguards views.



Fig 29: Village pond and the High Street, Pirton

Massing and Materials

345. There are many forms of buildings in Pirton including timber-framed, red brick, rendering and Arlesey white brick.

Sense of Place

346. Pirton has a strong identity and village community. Although the village is spread out into different character areas the sense of place is strong due to the network of green open spaces through the settlement and the good pedestrian routes linking the various parts of the village. It also has an strong village centre containing a variety of local facilities and the village pond. There is good integration of the older part of the village and newer development as they blend well together.
347. There is an abundance of mature vegetation and green open space interlinked with a strong pattern of footpaths. The village pond has a central location in the heart of the village.
348. Further information can be found in the Pirton Village Design Statement.

Design Principles

349 The design principles for Pirton are:

- Retain the strong pattern of footways.
- Views out northward from West Lane should be protected.
- Views of the church from Hitchin Road should be protected.
- Retain network of green open spaces.
- Refer to The Chilterns AONB Building Design Guide.

5.14 PRESTON

History

340. Preston is a small, picturesque village adjoining the grounds of Princess Helena College. A characteristic feature of the village is the number of tree-lined and hedged lanes which restrict views and add to its rural character.
341. Preston, located in wooded country south of Hitchin, is spread amongst winding lanes loosely based on a figure '8'. The church is a modern building erected in 1900 with a steep roof and pebbledash exterior. Of particular note is Temple Dinsley, a Georgian House standing on the site of a preceptory of the Knights Templar, and extended by Lutyens so that his work is now predominant.

Built Form and Layout

342. Some of the character of Preston has been preserved by its old buildings particularly around Preston Green which forms the heart of the village. The school is located away from the centre on the western edge of the village. The church lies closer to the centre on Church Lane. The centre of the village, where the pub and village green are situated, is on the eastern edge overlooking the grounds of Princess Helena College. The village pond is on the opposite side of Preston Road to the village green. The conservation area covers all these features, incorporating most areas to the north, south and east of the village.



Fig 30: The Green, Preston

Landmarks and Views

343. There are limited views in and out of the village due to the abundance of trees and garden vegetation. The village green is an important feature within the village.

Massing and Materials

344. Many detached buildings mainly brick, set back from the road within gardens. Buildings grouped around the village green otherwise buildings spread out.

Sense of Place

345. Preston has a unique sense of place. The amount and quality of the tree and hedge lined lanes within the village create a strong rural character. The contained nature of the settlement also adds to its rural character.

Design Principles

347. The design principles for Preston are:
- Encourage and maintain the boundary trees and shrubs lining the village lanes.
 - Maintain Preston Green as the village centre and encourage closer ties with the village pond.

5.15 REED

History

348. Reed is situated to the east of the A10, roughly three miles south of Royston. The village's origins can be traced back 2000 years but in more recent times it was a farmstead and as a result contained only a few buildings. It is believed to be a Saxon settlement and there is a 16th Century Inn, which is currently the local pub / restaurant. The village church contains a 14th century tower and chancel. It contains a characteristic "long and short" work at the nave angles, which is reputed to be the only undoubted piece of Saxon work in the district.
349. There would appear to be a strong influence of the late 19th Century in the village although roughly a third of the houses in the village have been constructed since 1950.



Fig 31: More modern development in Reed includes hedgerows, front gardens and additional verges plus on-street and off-street parking

Built Form and Layout

350. Reed is a unique village as it has an open settlement form around a square pattern of roads and lanes. There is no central core and the buildings are in small scattered groups. It is set in rolling countryside typical of the eastern part of the district and as a result the hedges and trees make a valuable contribution to the character of the village and surrounding rural area.

351. The village contains a pub / restaurant, primary/junior school, village green and a cricket club. A bus service also passes through the village.
352. Reed Conservation Area covers the majority of the village but not the more modern development nearer the A10.

Massing and Materials

353. The older buildings are predominantly a mixture of red brick, some Cambridge Gault clay and timber frame with either render or timber cladding. Roofing materials are mostly red tile and slate with a few thatched buildings. Many of the barns are clad in dark stained timber, traditional material for North Hertfordshire.

Landmarks and Views

354. Views across the central square are particularly unique and important.

Sense of place

355. The rural setting and the open nature of the village dominates the sense of place. The older part of the village is located on a southern facing slope of the chalk hills. The post-war and more modern properties with a more regular layout are located towards the A10. Some more modern farm building conversions are located to the north of the village although development around the square has largely been resisted retaining the unique character.



Fig 32: Central square in Reed is a mix of paddocks and scattered dwellings

356. The majority of properties, even the newer post-war housing, are set back from the roads and routes through the village. The lack of a village core means there is no high street where traditionally you might find higher density development. This adds to the open feel of the village but makes it more difficult to find your way around. Nevertheless, the open feel and the straight routes around the central square allow an understanding of place.

Design principles

357. The design principles for Reed are:
- The open nature of the village and particularly the central square should be protected from any future infill. It provides the village with its unique character, and so should not be eroded.
 - Views along Jackson's Lane, Crow Lane, Driftway, High Street and Church Lane should be maintained and protected, as should views across the central square from these routes.
 - Developments should maintain the characteristic of being set-back from existing routes to maintain an open feel.

5.16 SANDON

History

358. Sandon is a small village set around a few streets. Roe Green to the south contains much larger properties set around large amounts of open space with long drives.
359. The older buildings in Sandon are located to the east of village, around the All Saints Church which itself dates back to the 14th century. The church's chancel contains a 15th century screen and a Jacobean pulpit, which was partially restored in 1875.
360. The majority of the housing has been built since the 1930's. There is predominantly ex-local authority development around the triangle area between Dark Lane, Payne End and Rushden Road. The centre of the triangle area contains mostly "Garden City" Style housing.



Fig 33: Garden City style development in Sandon

Built Form and Layout

361. There is a village green at the centre of the village located between the triangular shaped more recent development and the older development to the east of the village.
362. The village centre contains a school and village hall and a farm shop to the south. The village green is open with few defining features but does provide a form of separation

between the older and newer development.

Landmarks and Views

363. There are a number of listed buildings within the village, largely located within the historic area, situated on the slightly higher ground to the east of the village by All Saints Church. This area is covered by both a conservation area and two Village Character Areas as defined in Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007).
- The open spaces in the 'Church End Green' area should be retained as essential to the village character.
 - The 'Southern Edge' of the village should maintain the open and rural feel of the entrance into the village.
364. The conservation area extends to cover the northern part of Payne End and south to Danyells Farm.

Massing and Materials

365. Plot size is generally quite large in Sandon. There is a mix of redbrick and garden city style buildings in the more recent development, with a number of time-framed thatched cottages in the older parts.

Sense of Place

366. Although the village of Sandon is quite small the location and size of the green in the middle makes it feel quite open. Its small size adds to its sense of place and it does not stretch out along radial routes in a linear pattern. There is a natural circulation along the internal routes which aids with legibility and understanding of place.
367. Roe Green to the south is much more open, the houses are set along way back from the road and in-between the properties is open space.

Design Principles

368. The design principles for Sandon are:

- The older buildings, located to the east of the village, largely contained within the conservation area should be protected.
- The entrance to the village along Rushden Road is an important feature of the village that should be enhanced .

5.17 ST IPPOLYTS AND GOSMORE

History

369. St Ippolyts lies on the southern edge of Hitchin. Its name, although spelled in a variety of ways, is derived from St. Ippolyts, to whom the church was dedicated when built in the 11th century. In a beautiful setting on the hillside above the houses the church was rebuilt in 1878 carefully using old materials. Features of the village are a 17th century gabled house, the timber-framed house formerly the Olive Branch Inn, and a 16th century house built around an even older timbered and aisled hall-house.

370. Gosmore is located on the west side of the B656, one of the radial routes out to the south from Hitchin.

371. The two villages have a close relationship and share facilities.

Built Form and Layout

372. St Ippolyts is located within the Wymondley and Titmore Green Landscape Character area characterised by rolling landscape. The older part of St Ippolyts is located on the ridge overlooking Hitchin to the north and the small valley to the west which contains Ippolitts Brook and the B656 London Road. The newer part of St Ippolyts abutts Gosmore on the western side of the B656.

373. The village has a radial pattern of roads centring on the church and spreading eastwards along the ridge. The primary school and oldest buildings covered by the conservation area are nearest the church with later development spreading out along the aerial roads eastwards. The Church and school form the centre of the village although they are located on the western edge. There are views out

to the west and to north. There are views of the church from the London Road, B656.

374. Gosmore has a formal, rectangular pattern of roads around the recreation ground which is hidden behind the housing. Gosmore is centred on High Street/Maydencroft Lane and part of Waterdell Lane where the village green is located with later development spreading north along Hitchin Road and eastwards. More recent housing has been infill plots. The Parish Hall and shop are located in a location central to both settlements..



Fig 34: The Crescent, St Ippolyts

Landmarks and Views

375. The church and school are the focal point of St Ippolyts village. There are also views out across countryside and north to Hitchin.

376. Views in and out of Gosmore are limited but the narrow junction of roads emerging at the village green are characteristic of the older part of Gosmore.

Massing and Materials

377. Materials tend to be characteristic of a buildings age. In St Ippolyts there is variety in materials and types of buildings throughout the village. In Gosmore buildings tend to be grouped together in the along High Street but in a more open layout in surrounding areas.

Sense of Place

378. The hill top location of St Ippolyts and position of the church on the ridge allows good views of the church from the main road the B656 London Road and other view points.



Fig 35: View of the Church of St Ippolyts

379. Gosmore has a more closely knit character than St Ippolyts and is not constrained by its topography. The facilities, shop and pubs are distributed around the settlement and not concentrated in one location.

Design Principles

380. The design principles for St Ippolyts and Gosmore are:
- Protect views into and out of the village, particularly those of the church.
 - Any new development should enhance the character of the historic buildings and respect the village setting.
 - Enhance gateways into Gosmore.
 - Retain the strong landscape character to roads.

5.18 THERFIELD

History

381. Therfield is a visually attractive village with many properties dating back before the start of the 19th Century. Tuthill Manor is possibly the oldest property currently standing in the village, which dates back to the Middle Ages. The rectory and the church are also of particular note although the church is thought to have been rebuilt three times. The village has remained fairly small in size with very little development occurring in recent years.
382. Therfield Heath, the large area of greenspace located south west of Royston, is located a mile to the North of Therfield. This is a SSSI and one of the largest examples of Chalk Grassland in the East of England.

Built Form and Layout

383. Set below the ridge south of the Heath, the buildings in Therfield line Pedlars Lane, The Causeway and Police Row to meet at the centrally located green. Surrounding the green is a pub and a school. The Church of St Mary is located just to the west of the village centre, which is surrounded by some of the oldest properties in the village.
384. The small settlement of Hay Green is located to the south of Therfield. This includes a substantial development of “Garden City” type semi-detached properties, but is separated from Therfield by the cricket pitch.
385. Many properties in Therfield are older than 19th Century, however there has been some more modern infill in recent times which has not detracted from the existing character as design would appear to have been an important characteristic. Therfield Conservation Area covers the majority of the built area of the

village adding protection to the character of the settlement.

Landmarks and Views

386. There are four visual character areas in Therfield as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007);
- “Tuthill Manor / Church” protects the open nature and mature trees to the west of the village;
 - “Village Meadow” as it suggests protects the large open meadow to the north of the village.
 - “Village Centre” protects the area which includes open space, greens and trees and
 - “Eastern Edge” protects the trees, large gardens and agricultural buildings at the village edge which provide an important setting to the village.

Massing and Materials

387. The oldest buildings in the village are character-type properties with generally thatched or red tiled roofs, set in large plots away from the road. There are also groups of 19th Century cottages, built with yellow brick and grey slate roofs set slightly back from the road.



Fig 36: Character Cottages in Therfield

Sense of Place

388. The village is relatively small and the older properties are generally quite large. The character of the village has been maintained as development would appear to have

been largely resisted and that which has occurred has been sensitively accommodated. Some development has occurred through conversion of older, larger buildings into several smaller properties and conversely some smaller properties have been combined to make larger properties.

389. Through use of open space and the convergence of the three main routes the village centre is well defined. The location of the pub and the school reinforce this central location providing a sense of legibility and understanding.

Design Principles

390. The design principles for Therfield are:
- Development south of Therfield should be resisted as this will cause coalescence with Hay Green.
 - The open nature of the village centre should be maintained.
 - The historic character of Therfield should be protected, especially the development to the south and south west of the village where the older buildings are located.

5.19 WESTON

History

391. Weston is located 3 miles south-east of Baldock, 4 miles north-east from Stevenage, and 6 miles from Hitchin. It has developed around a number of road junctions creating a triangle core with linear development on roads out of village. The pattern of development is less dense on the routes out of the village and so provides a more rural feel. This is more apparent to the North and West, where “semi rural zones” would appear to have developed. The Holy Trinity Church, Weston dates back to the 12th Century.

Built Form and Layout

392. In Weston there is a mixture of dwelling types from large, detached character properties to small, terraced cottages. It has a triangular street pattern with a small green in one corner. Many listed buildings are located along two of the main streets: Fore Street and Maiden Street. This would denote the older central part of Weston, which along with the area around Church End have been designated a conservation area.
393. There is a mixture of dwelling types and ages with the majority of the newer houses being found along Damask Green Road, Maiden Street and Mill Lane. The newer development occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s and was inserted into the formerly open pattern of the village. The layout is an open street pattern, with a mixture of buildings of differing ages and styles.
394. Close to the historic core there is a pub and a shop, and a tennis club. There is also an employment area in converted farm buildings. The school is located to the east of the village along Maiden Street.

Landmarks and Views

The village core is well defined. It is set close to a small area of open space containing the village pond and also at the junction of the main routes into the village.

Massing and Materials

395. Many of the properties are large and detached however, some of the of the newer development is higher density. The predominant materials are red brick or timber framed with render finish. Some of the older buildings have thatched roofs.

Sense of Place

396. Weston lies on the top of a ridge providing attractive long views out to the surrounding open countryside. The centre of the village still feels historic, however as you move away from the central area newer development begins to influence the character. There is a mix of property types, a large percentage of which are large and detached.



Fig 37: The central green space in Weston

Design Principles

397. The design principles for Weston are:
- The character of the historical centre should be protected, especially the areas along Fore Street and Hitchin Road.
 - Views in and out of the village along Maiden Street are particularly important, the rural, historic feel of this road should be protected.

5.20 WHITWELL

History

398. Whitwell lies in the valley of the River Mimram. To the north of the village is the estate of St Paul's Walden Bury and to the south are rolling hills. The floodplain of the River Mimram is an important feature of the village and creates the right conditions for the watercress beds that are associated with Whitwell. The original village developed along the valley floor and was based on agriculture. Gradually development was established southwards up the hill towards Kimpton and infilling has occurred in the late 20th century along Bradway.

Built Form and Layout

399. The first half of the 20th century saw a marked increase in the size of the village.
400. Whitwell has retained a number of different facilities that are located along the High Street to create a strong village centre.

Landmarks and Views

401. There are four visual character areas as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007):
- "River Valley" retains unspoilt valley as open and attractive fringe to village.
 - "Bradway" identifies the need for landscape measures to integrate village into surrounding countryside.
 - "Tower View" identifies requirement to enhance village entrance.
 - "St Paul's Walden JMI" protects and enhances the landscape character of village entrance.
402. The water tower at the southern entrance to the village and the watercress beds of Nine Wells Farm are important landmark features.

Massing and Materials

403. There is a mix of building types and styles incorporating yellow brick, red brick, timber framing. Houses with partial white render is a distinctive feature of the centre of the village.

Sense of Place

404. The historic character of the High Street, the main road running through the village, is important in creating the quality and charm associated with the village, this is largely representative of the conservation area. The gently meandering road with its varying width combined with the numerous historic buildings in a diverse range of styles work together to create the unique character of Whitwell. The existence of the watercress beds also tie the village into its past.
405. As Whitwell nestles in the valley it affords views out across the countryside.
406. Further information can be found in the Whitwell Village Design Statement.



Fig 38: High Street, Whitwell

Design Principles

407. The design principles for Whitwell are:
- The historic character of the High Street should be protected.
 - Retain diversity of building styles along the High Street and the variety of building lines.

- Long views out over the village are important.
- Watercress beds at west end of village bring the working countryside into village.

6.0 GUIDELINES FOR THE RURAL AREA

408. About 85% of North Hertfordshire is rural in nature. The district contains four main towns and 33 rural parishes containing a number of villages, hamlets, scattered dwellings and farms.

Landscape

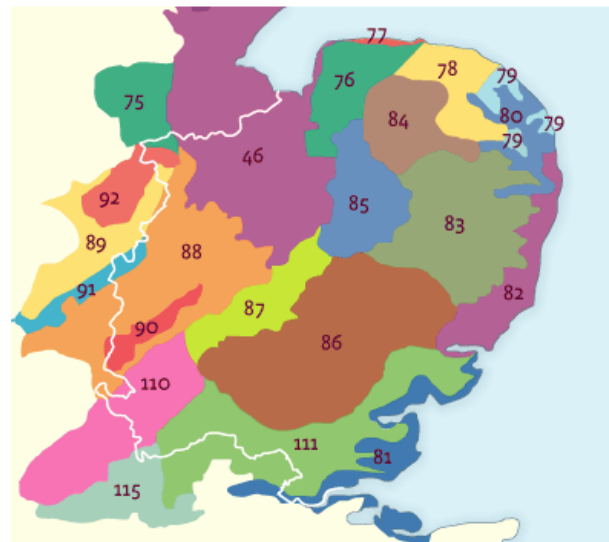
409. The landscape is a particularly important feature influencing the historical and current use of the rural area in North Hertfordshire. It also has an influence over the built development, particularly at the urban boundaries. In the rural area it is most prominent and as a result this is where its influence is greatest.
410. The underlying geology, topography and soil-type are of particular relevance as the district occupies the upland area of the Chilterns. This chalk geology which continues under the southeast of England, extends from the western boundary of the district, north of Luton running east to Royston and continuing eastwards beyond the district boundary. A particular characteristic of the chalk landscape is the number of dry valleys, some of which have been deeply incised and resulting in a locally undulating landform. Woodlands also influence the landscape as their physical structure, form and seasonal variety contribute greatly to the overall character and attractiveness of the North Hertfordshire rural area

411. A [Landscape Character Assessment](#)⁹ (LCA) was undertaken for the district in 2005. This tool identifies what makes a place unique and provides an objective method of

⁹ North Hertfordshire District Council Landscape Character Assessment, Available from: http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/landscape_character_assessment.htm

assessing how capable a landscape is of accommodating change and also guide the type and form the change might take.

412. The district's LCA looked in more detail at the landscape in North Hertfordshire, building on the work at a national scale by the then Countryside Commission (now part of Natural England) which identified 181 National Character Areas across England. North Hertfordshire can be seen to straddle five of these main character areas namely:
- 110 Chilterns and part of the 111 North Thames Basin in the west of the district;
 - 87 East Anglian Chalk and part of the 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland in the east of the district;
 - 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands is a small area in the north.
413. These areas are shown below on the map of the East of England.



Source: Natural England
Fig 39: National Character Areas in the east of England

414. The transition between the east and west areas occurs along the line running broadly between Letchworth Garden City and Stevenage following the valley through the

Chiltern escarpment commonly referred to as the “Stevenage Gap”. This is approximately the route of the A1(M).

415. The LCA split the National Character Areas into more detailed individual Landscape Character Areas for a more local level assessment. Each LCA area has its own guidelines and these individual units can be viewed by looking at the [Landscape Character Assessment](#). Each section provides a useful guide to what is appropriate.

Physical characteristics and History

416. There is evidence of Stone Age / Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements in the district. However, North Hertfordshire has been largely influenced by Roman settlements and the development of Roman roads, which created important links to and from the developing settlements. Icknield Way, a pre-roman road created an east-west route and Ermine Street is a route running north-south. Icknield Way, which has followed the scarp edge is split and fragmented but still evidenced today, following various routes such as the Upper Icknield Way and the Lower Icknield Way.

Landscape and Related Designations

417. There are a number of important designations within North Hertfordshire.
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Chilterns AONB)
 - Historic Parks and Gardens (on the English Heritage Register)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Therfield Heath SSSI)
 - Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
 - Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)

Sense of Place

418. Rural North Hertfordshire varies significantly in both look and feel

mainly due to the topography. In the east is a broad rolling landscape. Outside of the small, sporadically located villages the area is largely arable. Field size tends to increase as you move away from settlements, creating large open, rolling fields which draw the eye-line to the horizon.

419. In the west and south-west of the district the system of narrow valleys running northwest to southeast creates a more intimate landscape. Settlements either nestle in valley floors or have plateau positions. This area is generally more wooded and roads are often lined with hedgerows, resulting in more restricted views across the countryside.

Policy Influence

420. Green belt covers the majority of the western side of the district. PPG2¹⁰ and Policy 2 of the Saved Local Plan, which contains green belt policy, have therefore largely influenced the development of settlements within this area of the district over the late 20th Century.
421. To the east of the district, where green belt is not designated, Policy 6 of the Saved Local Plan: “Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt” has maintained the existing countryside and villages and their character, limiting development outside selected villages and the district’s towns to that of agriculture, forestry or community activities that cannot be realistically located within the urban settlements. This is similar to the provisions contained within both PPS4: Planning for Sustainable

¹⁰ Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belt, Available from:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicyguidancegreenbelts/>

Economic Growth and PPS7:
Sustainable Development in Rural
Areas.

Guidelines

422. The guidelines for the rural area are:

- Protect the rural area of North Hertfordshire from inappropriate development
- Development within the green belt area will continue to be controlled in line with the requirements of PPG2.
- Development in areas beyond the green belt will continue to be controlled in line with Policy 6 of the saved local plan and PPS4 and PPS7.

217 River Oughton and Purwell
Valleys
218 Pirton Lowlands
219 Baldock Gap
220 Weston Park
221 Upper Beane Valley Tributaries
222 Weston – Green End Plateau
223 Wallington Scarp Slopes
224 North Baldock Chalk Uplands
225 Hinxworth Lowlands
226 Steeple Morden
227 Odsey – Royston
228 Scarp Slopes South of Royston
229 Therfield – Reed plateau
230 Barkway Plateau
231 Nuthampstead
232 Barley Scarp Slopes

North Hertfordshire Landscape Character Areas

423. Specific guidelines for the rural area within these Landscape Character Areas can be found in the relevant section of the LCA. Some of these character areas extend into neighbouring districts within Hertfordshire or cross county boundaries into Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Essex.

34 Blackmore end Plateau
37 Datchworth Settled Slopes
39 Middle Bean Valley
132 Codicote Bottom Arable Valley
133 Denesbury – Rabley Heath
144 Buckland Plateau
145 Upper Quin Valley
200 Peters Green Plateau
201 Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom
202 Breachwood Green Ridge
203 Whitwell Valley
204 River Mimram
205 Codicote Plateau
208 Knebworth
209 Almshoe Plateau
210 Langley Scarp
211 Offley – St Paul's Walden
212 Lilley Bottom
213 Chiltern Scarp
214 Langley Valley
215 Wymondley and Titmore green
216 Arlesey – Great Wymondley

Appendix A: Relevant Guidance

<u>Government Policy / Guidance</u>	Available from:
PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps1/
PPS1: Supplementary Guidance on Climate Change	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicystatements/ppsclimatechange/
PPS3: Housing	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing
PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicystatements/pps4/
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicystatements/pps7/
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/historicenvironment/pps9/
PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5
PPS22: Renewable Energy	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps22/
PPG24: Planning and Noise	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppg24
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps25floodrisk

North Herts Planning Guidance

North Herts District Council LDF Policies

Core Policy A: Environmental Protection
 Core Policy B: Design and sustainability
 Core Policy C: Settlement hierarchy
 Core Policy F: Provision and distribution of new housing
 Core Policy G: Affordable housing
 Core Policy H: Transport
 Core Policy I: Healthier Communities
 Core Policy ?: Green Infrastructure

Preferred Options Core Strategy (2007) Available from: http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/local_development_framework/core_strategy.htm

North Herts District Council LDF Policies

Development Policy 1: Landscape
 Development Policy 2: Biodiversity
 Development Policy 3: Heritage
 Development Policy 4: Protecting amenity
 Development Policy 5: Design, safety and sustainability

Development Policy 6: Renewable energy development
 Development Policy 7: Embedded renewable energy
 Development Policy 13: Rural buildings
 Development Policy 14: Density and mix of dwellings and mixed uses
 Development Policy 18: Transport hierarchy of users
 Development Policy 19: Parking
 Development Policy 20: Community, leisure, recreation and cultural facilities
 Development Policy 21: Open space

Development Policies Available from: http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/local_development_framework/core_strategy.htm

<u>Other North Herts Guidance</u>	Available from:
Sustainable Community Strategy	http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/community_and_living/future_plans_for_your_area/sustainable_community_strategy.htm
Green Infrastructure Plan	http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework/background_papers/green_infrastructure.htm
Green Space Strategy	http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework/background_papers/green_space_study.htm
Landscape Character Assessment	http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/landscape_character_assessment.htm
Open Space Standards	http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/green_space_standards_august_2009.pdf

<u>CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)</u>	Available from:
By Design: Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice	http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/by-design
Better Places to Live by Design: a companion guide to PPG3	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/betterplaces
Delivering Great Places to Live: building for life	http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/delivering-great-places-to-live
Sustainable Design, Climate Change and the built environment	http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/sustainable-design-and-climate-change

<u>Sustainability</u>	Available from
Code for Sustainable Homes (residential)	http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/buildingregulations/legislation/codesustainable/
BREEAM (non-residential)	http://www.breeam.org/page.jsp?id=14
Building for Life – the 20 Building for Life Criteria (series of questions used to evaluate the quality of new housing).	http://www.buildingforlife.org/criteria
Building Futures (Herts County Council)	http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures/
Sustainable Urban Drainage (PPS25)	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps25guideupdate
Planning for Passive Solar Design (BRE / Carbon Trust 1998)	http://www.greenspec.co.uk/html/design/lowcarbonsunspace.html

<u>Designing out crime</u>	Available from
Safer Places: The Planning system and Crime Prevention	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/saferplaces
Secured By Design	http://www.securedbydesign.com/professionals/guides.aspx

<u>Other</u>	Available from
BS5837: Trees in relation to construction	http://shop.bsigroup.com/en/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030139494
Letchworth Garden City – residential design standards	http://designstandards.lgchf.com/
English Heritage Guidance	http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19702

<u>Village Design Statements & Parish Plans</u>	Available from
Ashwell Village Design Statement	www.ashwell.gov.uk
Pirton Village Design Statement	www.pirtonparishcouncil.org

Whitwell Village Design Statement	
Ashwell Parish Plan	www.ashwell.gov.uk
The Ickleford Parish Plan	www.icklefordpc.com
Knebworth Parish Plan	www.knebworth.org.uk
St. Ippolyts Parish Plan	www.st.ippolyts-parishcouncil.org.uk
St Paul's Walden Parish Plan	
Codicote Parish Plan	www.codicoteparish.net

Appendix B: Check List

Criteria	Tick
Has a Design and Access Statement been completed?	
Have the criteria for Building for Life been addressed?	
1 Character (sense of place and history)	
Does the development respect the existing character and setting (including building size scale, building lines...etc)	
Where little character can be demonstrated, does the new development seek to create a new distinctive character of high quality and how does it do this?	
2 Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)	
Does the development address the street with a continuous building line, set by the existing building line with active frontages?	
3 Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)	
Is the public space clean, attractive well designed with suitable management and cleaning arrangements?	
Does the development provide street, squares and public spaces that are well connected, vibrant, attractive and easy to move through and within?	
Is the public space clear of obstruction and clutter, and incorporate the principles of accessible environments for all people	
Has the guidance in BS5837: Trees in Relation to Construction been addressed (if applicable)?	
Does the development take account of potential protected species/ environments. Has a survey been conducted?	
4 Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)	
Are services and facilities easily accessible through safe routes and appropriate distances?	
Is the development integrated into the existing network maintaining existing the pattern of routes.	
Does the development facilitate movement, through well-connected streets and spaces	
Is the number of parking spaces appropriate with regards to the Council's parking SPD?	
Is parking well integrated into the development	
5 Legibility (ease of understanding)	
Do buildings and layouts make it easy to find your way to, through and around the development	
6 Adaptability (ease of change)	
Are the buildings easily adaptable to enable flexibility in the future	
Have the criteria for Lifetime homes been addressed?	
7 Diversity (ease of choice)	
Does the development support a mix of land uses, tenure, styles ?	

8 Quality of Private Space	
Do internal spaces maximise natural lighting and ventilation?	
Are rooms of adequate size and shape to be useable?	
Have gardens been designed for flexibility of use and to accommodate possible extension?	
Is there adequate space for the provision of storage facilities and recycling bins?	
9 Sustainability	
Does the development contribute to environmental sustainability, through renewable energy, energy efficiency, water conservation and protection of biodiversity?	
Has the development been designed to mitigate any impact of climate change including future temperature extremes, flooding and drought?	
Have the criteria for the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM been addressed?	
Have measures been taken to reduce roof and surface water runoff? Are these measures adequate?	
Will the development reduce the need to travel and encourage use of transport other than the private car?	
Has the use of sustainable materials been addressed?	

Appendix C: Glossary and List of Acronyms

Accessibility	The ability of people to move round an area and to reach places.
Active frontage	An elevation which incorporates doors and/or windows to allow interaction between the occupants and the space beyond.
Building line	The line formed by the frontages of buildings along a street.
Built form	Classification encompassing buildings and built elements
Character	The definition of a place through its various elements.
Context	The setting of a site or area including factors such as traffic, activities and land uses as well as landscape and built form.
Density	No of dwellings or floorspace per hectare
Footprint	Area and shape of a building on the ground.
Gateway	Identifiable entrance into a settlement
Horizontal Diversity	Variety in buildings, usually involving different uses at a ground floor level, creating interest
Landmark	A building or structure that stands out from its background by virtue of its height, size or other aspect of design.
Layout	The way buildings, routes and open spaces are placed in relation to each other.
Legibility	The degree to which a place can be easily understood and traversed.
Local Distinctiveness	The positive features of a place and its communities which contribute to its special character and sense of place.
Massing	The combined effect of height, bulk and silhouette of a building or group of buildings.
Natural surveillance	The presence of passers-by or ability to be seen by occupants of buildings.
Pargetting	Use of patterns and shapes to decorate the exterior of buildings
Permeability	The degree to which an area has a variety of pleasant, convenient and safe routes through it.
Public realm	The parts of a village, town or city (either publicly or privately owned) that are available, without charge, for everyone to use or see.
Scale	The impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings.
Streetscape	All the elements that make up the physical environment of a street and define its character. This includes trees, paths, building type, style, etc.
Sustainable development	Development which meets of the present without compromising the needs of future generations
Sustainable technologies	Technologies that reduce the environmental harm of economic activities, improve resource ability or lower

	carbon emissions
Townscape	Character and appearance of spaces and buildings in an identified area of a town
Typology	The taxonomic classification of (usually physical) characteristics commonly found in buildings and urban places, according to their association with different categories
Urban Design	The art of making places. Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes.
Urban Grain	The pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in a settlement.
Vertical Diversity	Variety in buildings, usually involving different uses at ground floor, 1 st floor, 2 nd floor...etc, creating interest.
Vista	Another word for a particular view.

Acronyms:

BRE	Building Research Establishment
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CHP	Combined Heat and Power
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
DPD	Development Plan Document
LDF	Local Development Framework
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
TPO	Tree Preservation Order

Appendix D: Village Maps