

POLICIES FOR URBAN AREAS

HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

9.1 This chapter is about housing in the district. One of the main objectives of the District Plan is to provide a strategy for residential development to provide for the housing needs of the local community, including those in need of affordable and special needs housing. Social, demographic and economic changes continue to create increasing pressure for land to be released for housing in the district. The Green Belt coverage of the rural part of the district makes opportunities for providing housing development in the district more limited and as a consequence sites must be identified and found within the built up areas.

ISSUES

- 9.2 There are three main issues to be addressed in meeting the housing requirements in the district. Firstly, the identification of an adequate number of housing sites to meet the housing requirements for the district, identified in the Adopted Structure Plan. This must be achieved whilst maintaining a good environment and limiting residential development to the excluded settlements.
- 9.3 Secondly, to maximise the use of previously developed land in line with Government Guidance, to encourage urban regeneration and to limit the need for use of greenfield sites. The use of previously developed sites will ensure the concentration of development in the urban areas where opportunities should be taken for higher density development in more accessible areas to reduce car usage.
- 9.4 Whilst the strategic housing requirement sets down the number of units required, it does not specify for whom these are required. It is therefore an issue for the Plan to include policies to ensure that the needs of all members of the community are met, including those in need of affordable housing and those with special needs such as the elderly and disabled.

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

- 9.5 The District Council's Objectives for residential development in the district are:
- (a) To meet the Structure Plan housing requirements for the district of 5600 dwellings between 1991 and 2011 in the most sustainable way, in order to meet the district's housing needs;
 - (b) To maximise the use of previously-developed land for housing and achieve as a minimum the Government target for 60% of all new dwellings to be built on previously-developed land;
 - (c) To provide for housing for local people whether private, affordable or special needs housing and for all sectors of the community;
 - (d) To locate new housing development in the most accessible areas, to reduce the use of the private car and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

POLICIES

Housing Land

- 9.6 The Adopted Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1991 - 2011 (April 1998), gives the County of Hertfordshire dwelling requirement for the period from 1991 to 2011 as 65,000. The Structure Plan allocates this requirement between the ten districts, with the allocation for Welwyn Hatfield as 5,600.
- 9.7 As this allocation runs from 1991, there have obviously been some completions since the beginning of the plan period and there are some outstanding commitments in the form of planning permissions. The subtraction of these completions and commitments from the allocation provides the remaining housing requirement for the period to 2011. The housing land supply situation as at April 2004 is shown in Appendix 5. The dwelling requirement figure for the remaining period to 2011 is therefore 813.
- 9.8 This figure must be met from new development. In identifying sites to meet the housing requirement, the Council has followed government guidance contained in PPG3. This sets out a list of criteria which local authorities should use to assess the potential and suitability of sites for development in allocating housing sites in local plans:
- The availability of previously-developed sites and empty or under-used buildings, including their suitability for housing use;
 - The location and accessibility of potential development sites to services and facilities by modes other than the car and the potential for improving such accessibility;
 - The capacity of existing and potential infrastructure to absorb further development and the cost of adding further infrastructure (infrastructure includes public transport, water and sewerage, and social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals);
 - The ability to build communities to support new physical and social infrastructure and to provide demand to sustain such levels of services and infrastructure;
 - The physical and environmental constraints on development of land e.g. level of contamination, stability and flood risk.
- 9.9 PPG3 also states that in identifying sites to be allocated for residential use in plans, local authorities must follow a search sequence, starting with the use of previously developed land and buildings identified by the Urban Capacity Study. The Council carried out an urban capacity study in 1998-1999, in conjunction with Llewelyn Davies. The purpose of the study was to identify any potential for housing through redevelopment, development on vacant land and re-use of land or conversion of buildings to residential use within the district's towns and specified settlements.
- 9.10 The study identified a number of sites which were then assessed for feasibility and suitability for development based on a number of factors. These included location, ownership, back gardens, current uses, access, the suitability of the site for other uses and any other physical constraints such as contamination, topographical or geological features.

- 9.11 A list of 23 sites is identified in Policy H1 below to meet the housing requirements of the district to 2011. Of these, one is the Hatfield Aerodrome site, 15 are sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study and 7 are sites that have come forward during the preparation of the Plan, after the completion of the study. Together these are estimated to yield 3182 dwellings.
- 9.12 The major site is the former British Aerospace site at Hatfield (site HS1 in the list), now known as the Hatfield Aerodrome site. Although a previously developed site, it was not identified through the Urban Capacity Study, but was already identified following its designation in the District Plan Alterations No. 1 for a mixed-use redevelopment including housing, to be brought forward in the context of a Masterplan. The site is the subject of Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance and it is estimated the figure for housing on the site will be 1,700. All the residential development is expected to be completed by 2008, within the Plan period.
- 9.13 An allowance for 'windfall' of 25 units per year has been made for the district in the past and the Council considers that this is an achievable and realistic figure to include in the future. Therefore in the period to 2011, it is estimated that 175 units will be developed on 'windfall' sites.
- 9.14 The number of dwellings proposed from windfall sites and the sites allocated for housing development in Policy H1 (excluding completions, units under construction and outstanding permissions) is therefore 175 + 1,455, i.e. 1,630, which meets the housing allocation figure of 813 to 2011. Therefore, the Council considers that there is no need to release Green Belt land nor the land reserved as an Area of Special Restraint at Panshanger Aerodrome, to meet the district's housing requirement up to 2011.
- 9.15 Other suitable previously developed sites, which come forward for development after the publication of this Plan, will be treated as windfall sites and considered in accordance with guidance in PPG3 and other policies in this chapter.
- 9.16 PPG3 states that the Council should include policies which allow for the release of sites over the plan period to control the speed and pattern of urban growth, ensure that new infrastructure is co-ordinated with development and deliver the recycling target.
- 9.17 However the Council considers that phasing of sites allocated in Policy H1 will occur naturally as a number of the sites are subject to constraints such as land assembly and the relocation of existing occupiers. These sites are therefore more likely to come forward in the later stages of the Plan period. The Council will work with the landowners to try to overcome these constraints. The Council considers that any more phasing of allocated sites will lead to an arbitrary phasing of development. However in order to prevent an oversupply of sites and to ensure the development of previously developed land first, the rate of windfall development will be monitored and phased if necessary, in accordance with policy H2.
- 9.18 Government guidance has set national guidelines for the proportion of new homes to be built on previously developed land at 60% over the next 10 years. Of the sites identified in Policy H1, approximately 90% of the proposed

units are on previously developed land. These are all sites within the district's towns and specified settlements.

- 9.19 The Council will use the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach for housing land; it has allocated sites on which it will monitor progress and it will manage further site allocations through future reviews of the plan.

Policy H1 - New Housing Development

In accordance with the approach of using previously developed sites and sites identified from an urban capacity study, the following sites defined on the Proposals Map are allocated for development during the plan period.

No	Site	Area (Ha)	Estimated No of Units
HS1	Hatfield Aerodrome	44.4	1700
HS2	Creswick School Site, WGC	1.19	50
HS3	Land at Chequersfield, WGC	5.20	218
HS4a	Former Wellfield Works, Wellfield Road, Hatfield	1.50	60
HS4b	Adj. Factory Site, Wellfield Road, Hatfield	0.44	22
HS5	Peartree Redevelopment area, WGC	2.20	94
HS6	Godfrey Davis Garage Site, Welwyn	0.74	28
HS7	The Dairy, Homestead Lane, WGC	0.37	12
HS8	Garage and Depot , Lemsford Lane, WGC	0.45	24
HS9	Sea Cadet Hut, Lemsford Lane, WGC	0.46	22
HS10	Oaklands Campus, Lemsford Lane, WGC	0.43	23
HS11	SKB site, Ridgeway, WGC	3.07	128
HS12	Mount Pleasant Depot, Hatfield	2.72	73
HS13	Hilltop, High View, Hatfield*	1.87	75
HS14	Claregate, Great North Road, Little Heath	0.32	14
HS15	Howe Dell School, Hatfield	0	10
HS16	Former Allotments, Knella Road, WGC	0.67	22
HS17	Catomance Site, Bridge Road East, WGC	1.00	86
HS18	Knella Road Workshops, WGC	0.48	22
HS19	Hatfield Town Centre	3.80	165
HS20	The Forum, Hatfield Town Centre	0.74	84
HS21	Hatfield Aerodrome District Centre	6.0	200

HS22	Welwyn Garden City Town Centre	3.4	50
		81.45	3182

Note: Area (Ha) – this is the reasonable developable area

*** Site HS13 is allocated for a mixed-use development to include housing, retailing and services and community facilities.**

Phasing and Location of Windfall Residential Development

9.20 It is accepted that, whilst much of the housing allocation in the district will be met from the sites identified in Policy H1, there is an expectation that a small proportion of the dwelling numbers will come from windfall sites. Windfall sites are those sites which come forward which have not been identified in the Plan. They could be large, such as a factory closure site or small, such as a residential conversion or new flat over a shop. It is important that windfall sites on previously-developed land should be given priority over those on greenfield sites, except where the previously-developed site performs so poorly in relation to the following criteria, that it precludes the use of the site for housing before a greenfield site (see PPG3):

- The availability of previously-developed sites and/or buildings;
- The location and accessibility of the site to services and facilities by transport modes other than the car;
- The capacity of existing and potential infrastructure to absorb further development;
- The ability to build new communities to support infrastructure and provide demand for services and facilities;
- The physical and environmental constraints on development of land.

9.21 Whilst windfall applications for one dwelling may appear to have little impact on the infrastructure, the cumulative impact of a number of single dwellings may be significant. Similarly, larger windfall sites can have a significant impact and can help build new communities. There is a need to phase sites in order to ensure that development is co-ordinated with infrastructure improvements, to reserve sites for the later part of the plan period and to ensure the development of previously developed land.

9.22 At the same time there is a need to ensure that the approach adopted does not prevent suitable urban regeneration sites coming forward for development and does not conflict with the objectives of providing for affordable and other identified housing needs. The following policy will therefore be applied to windfall sites that come forward to ensure that there is not a significant oversupply of housing land within the district.

9.23 The Structure Plan requires 5600 additional homes in Welwyn Hatfield by 2011 (an annual average of 280 new homes). The Council considers that a situation of significant oversupply will have been reached when the district's dwelling requirement set by strategic guidance (allowing for demolitions) has been completed before the Plan period has expired.

- 9.24 In assessing whether a situation of significant oversupply has been reached, the Council will take into account the number and rate of dwellings that have been completed and are under construction, the state of the housing market, the number of outstanding permissions (allowing a contingency for non-implementation), and strategic and Government planning policy guidance.
- 9.25 Renewals of residential permissions should also be assessed against the criteria in the policy and those that do not meet the requirements should not be renewed.

Policy H2 - Location of Windfall Residential Development

All applications for windfall residential development will be assessed for potential and suitability against the following criteria:

- (i) The availability of previously developed sites and/or buildings;**
- (ii) The location and accessibility of the site to services and facilities by transport modes other than the car;**
- (iii) The capacity of existing and potential infrastructure to absorb further development;**
- (iv) The ability to reinforce existing communities, including providing a demand for services and facilities; and**
- (v) The physical and environmental constraints on development of land.**

The development of sites for over 10 units or 0.25 ha that are not listed in Policy H1 will not be permitted if they would result in a significant oversupply of housing in the district. Exceptions will be made in any of the following instances:

- (i) The development provides for local affordable housing needs or other clearly identified local housing needs;**
- (ii) The development would contribute to regeneration or the town centre strategies;**
- (iii) The development comprises the conversion of an existing building;**
- (iv) The development would achieve a clear environmental gain;**
- (v) The development would assist in the construction or provision of improved community facilities over and above those that would be required to support the development itself.**

Loss of Residential Accommodation

9.26 The district is under considerable pressure for new housing development to meet both local needs and general demand. The existing housing stock in the district represents a valuable resource which should be protected and enhanced. Therefore, the Council does not wish to see a net loss of dwellings in the district, unless there is a justifiable reason. This may include:

- (a) Where the design or location of the unit mean it is unsuitable for continued residential use, such as where it cannot provide adequate amenities or access; or
- (b) Where continued residential use would jeopardise the preservation of a Listed Building or a building in a Conservation Area.

Policy H3 - Loss of Residential Accommodation

Planning permission will not be granted for the redevelopment or change of use of premises which would result in a net reduction in the number of dwellings in the district unless:

- (i) The design or location of the residential unit means that it is wholly inappropriate for continued residential use; or**
- (ii) The loss of the residential unit would be necessary for the long term preservation of a listed building; or**
- (iii) The development is to meet an identified and proven community need, which cannot be met elsewhere.**

Conversion of Residential Accommodation

9.27 Because of the pressure for residential accommodation in the district, the Council wishes to make the best use of the existing stock. Where the size of dwellings makes them no longer viable for use as single dwellings or where applications are submitted for the conversion of large units to smaller units the Council will look favourably on conversion provided that the conversion can take place without a detrimental effect on the character of the area or on the amenity of the neighbours.

Policy H4 - Conversion of Residential Accommodation

In the towns and specified settlements the Council will grant planning permission for proposals for the conversion of large residential units to provide smaller self contained units, provided that:

- (i) It would not adversely affect the visual appearance and character of the area, nor the amenity of neighbouring residential properties by overlooking or loss of privacy;**
- (ii) It would not result in increased disturbance from extra vehicular movements and car parking;**
- (iii) It would preserve the architectural merits of the building; and**
- (iv) Adequate usable amenity space can be provided.**

Conversion of Commercial or Vacant Buildings to Residential Accommodation

- 9.28 Government guidance supports the conversion of commercial buildings and upper-floor space over shops to residential use particularly in town centres, where it will enhance the vitality and viability of the centre.
- 9.29 Where the proposal is in accordance with Policy EMP8, the Council will support the change of use of B1 offices outside the designated Employment Areas to residential use where the offices are no longer required, provided the conversion would not result in an over abundance of one land use type, i.e. the Council wishes to encourage mixed uses. Conversions will be supported in situations where the development is of a similar scale to existing activities, where it would not adversely affect residential amenity, and where safe and adequate parking, servicing and access is available.
- 9.30 The Council will also support the change of use of commercial buildings to residential use in existing residential areas where conversion would benefit the local area e.g. by the loss of a non-conforming use.
- 9.31 The Council will support and encourage initiatives for the residential use of upper floors of centrally located or accessible shops and offices. Whilst this will provide new residential units, it will also aid the vitality and viability of the towns. These initiatives are known as Living Over The Shop and Living Over The Office (see also Policies TCR8 and TCR18).

Policy H5 - Conversion of Commercial or Vacant Buildings to Residential Accommodation

The Council will support the change of use of B1 offices to residential in town and local centres.

Wherever possible a mix of uses should be retained.

For Class B1, B2 and B8 buildings not in town centres and outside designated employment areas, the Council will only grant planning permission for a conversion to residential where it can be shown that the development of the site for a “live-work” mixed use scheme would not be viable.

The Council will also support the change of use of other commercial and vacant buildings in existing residential areas where conversion would benefit the local community.

The Council will support the Living Over The Shop and Living Over The Office initiatives as set out in Policies TCR8 and TCR18.

Increasing Densities

- 9.32 Government guidance advises that local planning authorities should avoid the inefficient use of land. The level of land taken for residential use in the past has been historically very high with resultant low densities. Low density developments are less able to sustain facilities, services and public transport facilities. In line with the objectives of a sustainable plan, the Council wishes to see new developments built to make efficient use of the land. Density is related to the character of an area. Development of small terraced units may detract from the local distinctiveness of an area of predominately large

detached dwellings on detached plots; however, other forms of higher density development such as flats with similar massing to the large dwellings could be built without detracting from the character of the area. It is important that any residential developments close to town centres, or within an 800m walk-in catchment of the town centres, or sites that are accessible by modes of transport other than the car are built at a higher density to maximise the use of the land and help sustain vital services.

- 9.33 The average density of new housing development in the district between 1991 and 1998 was 35.46 dwellings per hectare. As part of the Urban Capacity Study, some of the sites identified had further work carried out to look at the possible densities if a design led approach to development were taken. The design led density solutions ranged from 20 to 75 dwellings per hectare, with most being between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare and within the most accessible sites densities of 50 dwellings per hectare and above were achieved. It should be noted that whilst lower density development often takes place in those parts of the district that are characterised by large dwellings on large plots (in the form of replacement dwellings, or 2 dwellings in place of 1) these are not densities which the Council wish to see replicated in other areas. The Council therefore supports the Government guidance of encouraging housing development which makes more efficient use of land i.e. with the density of development between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. The Council will expect these density standards in all residential developments of 5 dwellings or more unless it would result in a detrimental effect on the character of the area. Within an 800m walk-in catchment area of the town centres and of neighbourhood centres with a good range of services and public transport accessibility, higher densities close to or exceeding 50 dwellings per hectare (above the district average of 35.46 dwellings per hectare) will be expected.

Policy H6 - Densities

The Council will require all residential developments of 5 or more dwellings to be built at densities of 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare provided that the development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and can satisfy the design policies of the Plan.

In central areas and areas with good accessibility by modes of transport other than the car, residential development will be expected to be close to or exceed 50 dwellings per hectare provided that the development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and can satisfy the design policies of the Plan.

Affordable Housing

- 9.34 Housing costs in the district are amongst some of the highest in the country; this has resulted in an inability to find suitable and affordable accommodation for many residents in the district. Therefore within the towns and specified settlements the Council will expect all suitable proposals for residential development to contribute to meeting local housing needs.

- 9.35 Circular 6/98 on Planning and Affordable Housing defines affordable housing as both low-cost market and subsidised housing that will be available to people who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market, as both can play a part in providing for local needs. The Circular states that decisions on what types of affordable housing to build should reflect local housing need, as demonstrated by a housing needs assessment, and site suitability. In line with the Circular and PPG3 the Council commissioned a Housing Needs Survey of the district. The Survey found that the principal need was for subsidised rented accommodation as low cost market housing was beyond the reach of the majority of newly forming households and those in need. Less than 2% of newly forming households and concealed households expressed a preference for shared ownership.
- 9.36 It recommends that 30% of new dwellings on eligible sites should be subsidised. Whilst the Survey found that the scale of the need is far higher than 30%, it is considered that this is a realistic and achievable target to set for the provision of subsidised housing on eligible sites. RPG9 (2001) sets a higher target of 46-49% for affordable housing, however this figure includes provision for both subsidised rented and low cost market housing as defined by Circular 6/98 and PPG3.
- 9.37 Therefore with regard to new housing development the Council will expect a minimum of 30% of units on all eligible sites to be subsidised housing to meet local needs. This is a requirement on residential sites of 25 units or more, or on residential sites over 1ha in size. In assessing the suitability of proposed sites, the Council will have particular regard to the criteria set out in Section 10 of Circular 6/98. These criteria include the physical circumstances of the site, the prevailing and anticipated market conditions and whether the provision of affordable housing would prejudice the realisation of other planning objectives that need to be given priority in the development of the site.
- 9.38 Council will expect the affordable housing to incorporate a range of housing types and unit sizes to meet local need. For each eligible site, the Council will define a preferred mix for the affordable housing element. Shared ownership can help meet the needs of those who are unable to afford the whole cost of buying a property at that time, however the Housing Needs Survey identified that shared ownership only has a role to play for up to 100 households in the district. In addition the Survey demonstrates that there is a need in the district up to 2006, for 450 unsubsidised low cost market housing units to meet the needs of new forming households with income levels adequate to access the local market.
- 9.39 There is growing demand to make provision for key worker housing to ensure the delivery of essential public services and there is ongoing research to identify key workers and to quantify their need. The findings of the research will form the basis of a future Supplementary Planning Document. Sites that make provision for key worker housing in addition to the affordable housing requirement will be supported.
- 9.40 The management of affordable housing after development has taken place is generally expected to be carried out by transferring the affordable housing units to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). In order to facilitate this, it is

important that developers involve the RSL at an early stage to ensure that the affordable units are of a standard to meet their requirements.

- 9.41 All affordable housing will be secured for both initial and subsequent occupiers, either through the initial involvement of an RSL, or through a planning obligation under Section 46 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 restricting occupation.

Policy H7 - Affordable Housing

Within the towns and specified settlements, the Council will expect all proposals for residential development on sites of 1ha or more, or with 25 units or more, to include the provision of affordable housing to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford to occupy dwellings generally available on the open market. The Council will therefore seek through negotiation a proportion of affordable housing, which as a minimum should comprise 30% subsidised housing, on each suitable site. The proportion, type and mix of affordable housing will be based on information in the latest housing needs survey and the criteria in Section 10 of Circular 6/98.

Sites that make provision for key worker housing in addition to the affordable housing requirement will be supported.

Dwelling Type and Tenure

- 9.42 It is important that new residential development in the district responds to the needs of local people, whether those needs are for private, affordable or special needs housing and whether the occupants are old, young, single or in couples, families, students, those with disabilities or others.
- 9.43 With affordable housing, negotiation usually takes place with the Housing Associations to provide what is an identified need, however with private residential development, the developers build what they know they can sell, which has recently resulted in unimaginative estates of various styles of detached housing.
- 9.44 The need for new residential accommodation is largely as a result of changes in the composition of households. Family structure is changing and there are greater numbers of elderly and young people living independently. The majority of the projected growth will be in one-person households. These groups of people all have different requirements in terms of homes, whether they are private or rented, small flats or executive style houses. PPG3 states that plans should incorporate a mix of dwellings to meet the changing composition of households in the area in the light of likely assessed need. The Housing Needs Survey, which was carried out in 1999, confirmed that there is a demand within the district for flats, bedsits and one and two bedroom properties to meet current needs and address the shortage in the existing stock, which is predominantly new town 3 bedroom units. It is therefore important that developers incorporate different dwelling types and unit sizes into their schemes to meet the future requirements within the district. However the precise range of dwellings on a site could be affected by the size of the site, its location in terms of access to facilities in the area, and the nature and character of its surroundings.

- 9.45 Within larger residential developments the requirement for affordable housing will result in mixed-tenure development. Where this takes place the Council, in line with Government Guidance, will expect the areas to be fully integrated, with the affordable housing dispersed throughout the site, thereby securing a better social mix and avoiding the creation of large areas of housing of similar characteristics.

Policy H8 - Dwelling Type and Tenure

The Council will expect new residential developments to incorporate a range of dwelling types and sizes, where appropriate. The Council will expect a mix of dwelling types in developments to reflect the shortfall of flats, bedsits and one and two bedroom properties in the district. Dwellings of different tenure should be mixed on site to avoid the creation of large areas of housing with similar characteristics.

Special Needs Housing

- 9.46 There are also a number of households who, for a variety of reasons, will require more specialist accommodation, either in its construction or management. This type of accommodation may include accommodation for elderly persons, those with physical disabilities, those with mental health problems, those with learning difficulties and young people at risk. Whilst some of these people will be housed in open market housing, many specialist forms of accommodation will only be provided if there is some form of subsidy, i.e. they will be affordable units.
- 9.47 The needs of these groups are becoming more important with the current emphasis on care in the community, the closure of long stay units for people with disabilities and the increasing number of elderly people. The Council considers it important that special housing needs are met in locations close to community facilities and services and in types of housing to fit their requirements. Priority should be given to this type of development on suitable sites. The Housing Needs Survey identified 12.5% of households in the area with a special need.

Policy H9 - Special Needs Housing

The Council will grant permission for schemes which provide special needs accommodation particularly in town centres or in areas which are close to community facilities and services. Incorporation of special needs housing schemes in residential development in central areas will be encouraged.

Accessible Housing

- 9.48 The Housing Needs Survey identified that only 23% of the wheelchair users in the district live in adapted property and that only 7.6% of dwellings have been adapted for use by a disabled person (only 2.4% of owner occupied households), whereas 12.5% of households contained somebody with a special need. The largest identified disabled group was those with walking difficulties. There is clearly a shortfall of adapted dwellings for these people.
- 9.49 The Council supports the 'lifetime homes' concept. Lifetime homes are those which allow for the changing needs of occupants over time i.e. they can

accommodate the majority of adaptations with maximum ease at minimum costs, so enabling the occupants to stay in the same neighbourhood. They do not necessarily lead to under-occupation as people do not have to stay in them, but at the same time they do not have to move if they do not want to. Lifetime homes can accommodate people with moderate disabilities.

- 9.50 In relation to new dwellings, Part M of the Building Regulations requires reasonable provision to be made so that disabled people can reach the principal or a suitable alternative entrance to the dwelling from the point of access and can have access into and within the principal storey of the dwelling. It also requires that sanitary accommodation is available at no higher storey than the principal storey. These provisions should ensure access by disabled people into new homes.

Policy H10 - Accessible Housing

In all residential developments involving 5 or more dwellings the Council will seek to secure a proportion of dwellings to be built to lifetime homes standard. In each instance dwelling type, site location and topography will be taken into account.

Student Accommodation

- 9.51 Student housing is an issue in the district as it is home to the University of Hertfordshire and The Royal Veterinary College, both of which have students who require accommodation. There is also a need for accommodation for some students who attend Oaklands College. This has a knock-on effect for private rented accommodation in the district. However, it is not practical for all accommodation for students to be provided on campus. There is therefore a need to strike a balance in terms of specific provision for students.
- 9.52 Where practical, the Council will support proposals by the University of Hertfordshire to provide accommodation for their students on campus to help ease the pressures on the private rented sector in Hatfield, freeing up more accommodation for local people. However, the development of the student accommodation should not be at the expense of the overall environment of the Campus or the amenity of communities living adjacent to the Campus. As the Royal Veterinary College is a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt any proposals for student accommodation must be considered in the light of Policy RA7 Royal Veterinary College in Chapter 15 Rural Areas.

Policy H11 - Student Accommodation

The Council will approve proposals by the University of Hertfordshire to provide student accommodation on campus provided that the resulting development does not have an adverse effect on the environment of the campus or the amenity of adjacent communities.

Travelling Showpeople's Accommodation

- 9.53 Circular 22/91 requires Planning Authorities to consider the needs of travelling showpeople when preparing the Local Plan. Showpeople require sites for residential accommodation in the form of caravans and mobile homes, and for the storage of vehicles and fairground equipment. Whilst the sites have been traditionally used in the winter, there are some members of the group who will stay permanently e.g. older family members or children who are in full time education.
- 9.54 The circular urges local authorities to identify sites and include policies in the Plan for new sites if there is a need. There is one authorised travelling showpeople's site in the district at Welham Green, although this type of site would not normally be an appropriate use in the Green Belt.

Policy H12 - Travelling Showpeople's Quarters

The District Council will protect the existing established showpeople's site from other development proposals. Planning permission for new sites will only be allowed if it can be demonstrated that there is a local need and that all of the following criteria can be met:

- (i) The site has good, safe and convenient access to the road network;**
- (ii) The site is conveniently located for schools and other community facilities;**
- (iii) The site is not within the Green Belt;**
- (iv) The site will not visually encroach into the open countryside;**
- (v) The site should either have substantial natural screening or be landscaped and screened with new planting;**
- (vi) The use of the site should not adversely impact upon the amenities of the adjoining residents, by reason of noise, fumes or dust arising from vehicular movements and the maintenance and testing of equipment;**
- (vii) The requirements of the appropriate design policies and guidance should be met.**

Gypsy Sites and Accommodation

- 9.55 Gypsies are defined in Section 16 of the 1968 Act as 'persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin'. The term does not include members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such. Circular 1/94, states that local authorities should have regard to the accommodation needs of gypsies and identify suitable sites wherever possible; this is reinforced in PPG12, which states that the Plan should also identify current sites.
- 9.56 There is one County Council owned site in the district with 39 pitches, all of which are full, and one private site which has 9 pitches. There is no identified shortfall of pitches at present, however any application for a gypsy site must identify an unmet need. Whilst Circular 1/94 suggests that locations outside existing settlements may be considered for gypsy sites, they are inappropriate

uses for the Green Belt and therefore in this district applications for new gypsy sites should only be considered within the towns and specified settlements, in the light of the following policy.

Policy H13 - Gypsy Sites

Planning permission will be granted for small-scale gypsy sites where all of the following criteria can be met:

- (i) The proposed site is not within the Green Belt, unless special circumstances exist which might exceptionally make such development acceptable;**
- (ii) The site has good, safe and convenient access to the road network;**
- (iii) The site is conveniently located for schools and other community facilities;**
- (iv) The site will not visually encroach into the open countryside;**
- (v) The use would not detract from convenient, safe and enjoyable use of a public right of way;**
- (vi) The site should either have substantial natural screening or be landscaped and screened with new planting;**
- (vii) The requirements of the appropriate design policies and guidance can be met;**
- (viii) Hardstandings can be provided and the site is capable of being provided with basic facilities including electricity, water supplies, sewage disposal and waste collections;**
- (ix) The site will be situated so that it neither affects the visual amenity or character of the area or nearby residents, nor is it affected by any environmental hazards which may affect the residents' health or welfare.**

OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

- 10.1 It is vital that open space, which is important in creating a high quality of urban life, is protected from development pressures, which threaten the towns and settlements. Such areas may not necessarily be public nor need to be completely open. The importance of these areas is their undeveloped nature, which provides relief from the built form and assists in retaining a spacious and more open built urban structure. This land can take the form of parks, woodland, playing fields, landscaped and designed spaces and areas of wildlife or nature importance. In addition, it may not necessarily be a single, unbroken space but may be in the form of a series of smaller linked spaces. Furthermore, the size of the space does not necessarily define its importance within the built environment.
- 10.2 Government guidance, given in PPG17, supports the Council's view that there is a need to protect open space, which contributes to the natural and built heritage of an area, and recommends the inclusion of policies within local plans to achieve this. The guidance also recognises the valuable contribution urban open space makes to the quality of urban life and clarifies that the use of land as open space is of no lesser importance than any other use.

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

- 10.3 The Council recognises the inherent quality of Welwyn Hatfield's open space and the strong traditions of design and master planning which created it. The primary objective must therefore be to protect the essential elements for future generations and improve the quality of those areas in which there is a deficiency. The Council will aim to achieve this through the following strategy:
- (a) To identify and protect areas of open land within the towns and specified settlements that make an important contribution to the urban form;
 - (b) To identify and protect playing pitches within the district, for which there is sufficient demand;
 - (c) To ensure that new residential developments, over a certain size, will incorporate play space schemes, if the development's impact would create a deficiency in play space provision in the area;
 - (d) To protect school playing fields from development pressures, and only allow ancillary development which will complement or improve the quality of the existing recreational purposes;
 - (e) To identify and protect allotments within the towns and specified settlements, unless it can be demonstrated that demand for the site is non-existent or a suitable alternative site can be made available to cope with the demand.

POLICIES

Urban Open Land

10.4 In accordance with PPG17 and Hertfordshire County Council's Structure Plan, Policy 46, areas of urban open land, which are considered to be of such significance that they must not be developed other than for minor ancillary facilities, have been defined in the Council's Open Space Survey and are to be protected from development by Policy OS1. These areas have been identified as performing a key built environment function, in addition to any recreational, ecological, landscape or other amenity they provide, using the following criteria:

- (a) The land is vital to the form and character of the built-up areas; or
- (b) The land, in whole or part, provides an important visual and physical break within the built up area; or
- (c) The land contributes, in whole or part, to any wider green chain or open corridor; or
- (d) The land is important or could in future be important, in whole or part as a local amenity in terms of its landscape qualities, its wildlife or ecological value, or its use as an informal space for passive or active recreation; or
- (e) The land, in whole or part, is of notable wildlife significance; or
- (f) The land is already identified by the County Council as Common Land; or
- (g) The land is used as a formal space for active recreation.

Policy OS1 - Urban Open Land

The areas of land listed in Appendix 6 and defined on the Proposals Map are considered vital to the form, character and quality of the built-up areas of the district in terms of the urban open land criteria and are therefore defined as Urban Open Land. Planning permission for development within these areas will not be granted unless it would:

- (i) Assist in the maintenance or reinforcement of their function as essential open areas;**
- (ii) Be of a scale which did not compromise the value of the Urban Open Land or use of the open space as defined in terms of its criteria; and**
- (iii) Not result in the loss or reduction in size of any playing pitches, if the open land is used for formal recreation purposes, subject to the consideration set out in Policy OS2.**

Playing Pitch Provision

10.5 The District Council recognises the importance of maintaining its current level of outdoor sport provision and would wish to ensure that adequate and affordable provision is made in respect of new development. Standards for outdoor sport and children's play space are currently assessed against the

National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) guidelines, which recommend approximately 4 acres of outdoor facilities and 2 acres of children's play space per 1000 population; these are minimum standards. The District Council will also take into account evidence of local demand, accessibility to all user groups and the provision of 'all weather' surfaces that have a greater capacity than traditional turfed pitches. The requirement for outdoor sport provision is independent of the requirements for Open Space provision, although there may be some degree of overlap where provision will not significantly and adversely affect the character of the open space.

- 10.6 The Council's Leisure Strategy clearly identifies the positive impact that leisure activities can bring to an individual's quality of life and health. However, facilities must be accessible to all, affordable, and environmentally friendly. The Strategy sets out proposals for achieving these objectives.
- 10.7 In land use terms, the District Plan will seek to protect valuable facilities and ensure that new development makes an appropriate contribution to the provision of new facilities. A review of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy has been undertaken, which highlights the close balance between playing pitch provision and local demand for facilities. If in exceptional circumstances a playing pitch facility is to be lost and replaced elsewhere, alternative provision must be made available, prior to the commencement of the development that involves the loss of the existing playing pitches. Policy OS2 will ensure this.

Policy OS2 - Playing Pitch Provision

The Council will seek to maintain its current level of playing pitch provision. Proposals involving the loss of any playing pitches will not be granted planning permission unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- (i) The land does not meet the criteria set out for its designation as an area of Urban Open Land; or**
- (ii) There is no longer a current demand for such a facility or any real prospect of a demand arising within a realistic timescale; or**
- (iii) An alternative facility will be made available of equal or higher standard than the original. Any alternative provision must be made available before the commencement of development which involves the loss of the playing pitches and must be located in an appropriate location.**

In areas where there is a lack of playing pitch provision substantial new developments (0.4 hectares and above) will be expected to contribute towards provision of new facilities.

Play Space and Informal Open Space Provision

- 10.8 The location, content and design of children's play space should be appropriate to the needs of the local population. The NPFA recommends four different types of play space to cater for the needs of children of different ages. They are as follows:

- a) *Local Area for Play (LAP)*
Catering for the 4-6 age group, the LAP should ideally be within one minutes' walking time of home, and have an area of around 100 square metres.
- b) *Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)*
Catering for the 6-8 age group, the Leap should ideally be within five minutes' walking time of home, and have an area of 400 square metres.
- c) *Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)*
Catering for the 8-14 age group, the Neap should ideally be within 15 minutes walking time of home and have an area of 1000 square metres.
- d) *Other*
In addition to the equipped play areas, consideration should be given to the needs of older children in the design of public play spaces, for instance through the provision of meeting places.

- 10.9 The Council will monitor the provision of children's play areas. Where standards of provision fall below those set out by the NPFA, and there is an identifiable need for play areas, the Council will seek to identify suitable sites for play area development in consultation with local residents, and then bring forward appropriate sites for implementation.
- 10.10 The Council will endeavour to ensure that an appropriate amount and type of children's play space is incorporated into substantial new developments (of 0.4 hectares and above) comprising family housing. The Council, in considering planning applications, will determine the most appropriate type of provision for a particular area. For instance, in certain instances the Council may prefer the combined provision of facilities for all age groups, in the interests of good management. The provision will then be made by the developer as part of the housing scheme. However, in areas where a deficiency of play space for older children arises, or a shortfall in outdoor sport facilities, the Council may accept commuted sums from several developers to provide such facilities itself. The Council will also require appropriate sums for the maintenance and upkeep of new play areas, before it will adopt such facilities.
- 10.11 In addition to formal playing fields and equipped children's play areas, there is a need for informal open space within easy reach of any residential community. This is reflected within the NPFA guidelines. Such spaces can be used for informal team games, children's play, passive recreation and to give a landscaped structure to new development. Such space can be provided in conjunction with playing fields or more formal children's play facilities. It is critical however, that any provision of such open space is easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists and is designed to be a safe and secure environment for all people using or passing through the open space. Major new residential developments will be expected to provide such open space in line with the overall NPFA guideline figures.

Policy OS3 - Play Space and Informal Open Space Provision in New Residential Development

Substantial new residential development (of 0.4 hectares or above) will be expected to make a contribution to the provision of children's play space and informal open space, where the increased demands generated by the new households cannot be met by current levels of provision. The scale of any contribution will be in line with the number of new households in the development, and the type of facility to be provided will be based on meeting NPFA standards. Where new space is created it must be easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists, and be designed to be a safe and secure environment for all people using the facility. Contributions will take the form of the direct provision of facilities on site or, where appropriate, the payment of a commuted sum by the developer to facilitate the provision of a facility elsewhere.

Allotments

- 10.12 The cultivation of allotments remains important for many people as they form a valuable informal recreational resource, which can have significant health and economic benefits, in particular for low income households. Demand for allotments varies over time, depending on economic trends and fashion, and between sites depending on their proximity to residential areas and the facilities on site. In line with the Leisure Strategy, the Council will seek to maintain an adequate supply of allotment plots within the district to meet current and future demands.
- 10.13 Occasionally the situation arises where allotments are unused or under-used. However short-term down-turns in demand will not be accepted as justification for the loss of allotment land. In addition, Annex C to PPG3, clearly defines allotments as land which is not 'previously used' and therefore such sites should only be considered for development when all other viable development opportunities have been exhausted. If there is clearly no demand for an allotment site over a long period, alternative open space uses should be investigated in the first instance. In addition, where allotments remain under-used in the long term, it may be appropriate to rationalise the allotment site, in order to free up land for other uses, whilst securing the future of the remaining plots. In the event of the redevelopment proposals, the criteria in paragraph 10.4 should be applied to ensure that recreational, ecological, protected species, landscape or any other amenity are preserved for the benefit of the community.

Policy OS4 - Allotments

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals resulting in the loss of allotments in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of continuing long-term demand. Should any allotment site remain unused or under-used in the long term, alternative open space or community uses should be considered first. Should the land not be required to meet open space needs, disused allotment land will only be considered for development in the context of a full evaluation of development land in the district taking into account its wildlife potential. Where allotment

sites are under-used, rationalisation of the sites may be acceptable to secure the long term future of the used plots, provided the Council is satisfied that all reasonable measures have been taken to increase their usage.

COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND TOURISM

INTRODUCTION

- 11.1 Good quality and easily accessible community and leisure facilities are a vital element contributing to the quality of life for local residents. This is recognised in the Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, together with other Central Government strategies for the delivery of health and education services. These facilities are diverse in nature and are therefore provided and run by a number of different agencies, each with their own strategies for delivery and their own set of objectives.
- 11.2 The provision of these facilities is also directly related to the characteristics of the population and their changing expectations. Some of the key population changes in recent years have been the reduction in children of school age, the growth in the number of elderly people, the increased number of single person households, a general rise in disposable income and increasing awareness of the benefits of active leisure activities on health. Over the plan period, it is expected that the number of children of school age will increase slightly, but the other trends will continue.
- 11.3 The District Plan can only deal with the land use element of the provision of these facilities. However, in view of the pressure to use urban land efficiently, it is vital that a strategy is put in place to secure existing facilities where still required and reserve land for the future needs of local communities.

ISSUES

- 11.4 There are a number of diverse issues which the District Plan must take account of in developing a land use strategy for leisure, community and tourist facilities:
- The population of the district will continue to change over the Plan period, leading to changing demands for facilities;
 - The mechanisms for the delivery of many community facilities and services will be subject to change in the Plan period, with partnership arrangements and the most efficient use of buildings and facilities being a key element;
 - The provision of leisure, arts and cultural facilities will need to be dynamic to meet the changing needs and expectations of both local people and visitors to the district;
 - Changes in the way that health services will be delivered will need to be embraced, in particular the emphasis on primary care and the local delivery of services;
 - Changes in the school age population of the district will require the protection of educational facilities and guidelines for new development necessary to meet any shortfall;
 - The general growth in tourism must be met sustainably and, for the economic benefit of the district, by the provision of new facilities and the enhancement of existing attractions.

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

- 11.5 The key objectives for the District Plan in formulating policies for community, leisure and tourism facilities are as follows: -
- (a) To facilitate the sustainable provision of facilities to meet the needs of local communities;
 - (b) To ensure that existing leisure, community and tourism facilities for which there will be a continuing demand during the Plan period are protected;
 - (c) In line with the Council's Leisure Strategy, to encourage the provision of leisure, arts and cultural facilities that improve the health and quality of life of local people;
 - (d) Ensure that health facilities and in particular primary care facilities in the district are accessible to all and are good neighbours;
 - (e) To ensure that new education facilities respect the local environment and existing facilities are used effectively;
 - (f) Encourage the provision of new facilities to meet the needs of pre-school children;
 - (g) To ensure that new tourist facilities are delivered in sustainable locations, for the maximum benefit of local people.

POLICIES

Protection of Existing Leisure Facilities

- 11.6 Leisure and recreational facilities are an important element in the life of residents and bring vitality and attractiveness to the district. It is essential that existing indoor and outdoor facilities are safeguarded and that maximum benefit is derived from them. The Council recognises that it cannot prevent the closure of privately run or commercial facilities but is concerned to ensure the provision of an appropriate range of suitably sited leisure opportunities. To this end the Council wishes to encourage new venues as well as protect existing facilities from loss to a non-recreational/community use.
- 11.7 The Council is also aware that some recreational activities may occupy premises which no longer meet, nor can reasonably be adapted to meet, current safety or other operational standards and will be mindful of these issues when considering proposals for the redevelopment of these premises.

Policy CLT 1 - Protection of Existing Leisure Facilities

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving the loss of any existing outdoor or indoor recreational or leisure facility unless:

- (i) It can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a current demand for such a facility for either recreational, leisure or community use, or any real prospect of a demand arising within a realistic timescale; or**

(ii) It can be clearly demonstrated that an acceptable alternative means of meeting any such demand is or will become available, before the loss of the existing facility; or

(iii) The new development consists of, incorporates or provides, an appropriate alternative recreational or community facility.

Demand should be assessed according to the nature of the existing recreational facility in question.

New and Expanded Leisure Facilities

11.8 The Council recognises the growing demand for leisure facilities, and will encourage proposals to develop new facilities in the district to meet leisure and cultural needs of the community. Leisure facilities attract visitors, and are capable of generating significant amounts of traffic. Siting these facilities in town centres, which are readily accessible to public transport, can help to reduce reliance on the car and can contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres, in particular by supporting the economy. The preferred location, therefore, for these facilities in the district will be in the town centres. In addition, specific provision is proposed as part of the District Centre on the Hatfield Aerodrome Site.

11.9 Where there are no suitable sites in these locations the Council will be prepared to consider edge of centre sites, or at the very least, sites that are highly accessible by public transport, provided that such developments do not undermine the vitality and viability of the town centres and where a need for such a facility in the district has been established.

11.10 The Council will only permit the development of new, or the expansion of existing facilities, where there will be no harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area or amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses. In addition, development will only be permitted where it will not cause unacceptable nuisance in terms of noise and traffic generation and will not result in the loss of land protected or designated for other uses in the Plan. When considering development proposals for leisure facilities the Council will also have regard to the scale and nature of the proposal and the convenience of access to the site from likely sources of demand.

11.11 Concerns have been raised about the lack of swimming facilities in Welwyn Garden City, however, research by Sport England in 1998 and 2001 concluded that there was more than sufficient water space in Welwyn Hatfield to meet anticipated future demand for swimming in the district. The Council recognises, however, concerns which have been raised about the lack of public swimming pool facilities in Welwyn Garden City. In the light of these concerns, a Swimming Development Proposal for Welwyn Hatfield was prepared for the Council in March 2003 to help guide policies in all aspects of swimming. One of the objectives of the Swimming Development Proposal is "to ensure that all residents of Welwyn Hatfield have easy access to well managed swimming pools offering a range of casual and programmed activities, sited in locations convenient for users". At the Cabinet meeting of 5th June 2003, the Council agreed to work with the Welwyn Hatfield Leisure

Trust to assess provision levels in the district in line with the Swimming Development Proposal.

Policy CLT 2 - New and Expanded Leisure Facilities

The preferred location for new leisure facilities is in the district's two town centres. Where there are no suitable sites in the town centres, but there is a clear need for the facility, the Council may consider proposals in edge of centre locations, at district or neighbourhood centres or in other areas with high accessibility by public transport. In all cases the Council will only permit proposals for new or expanded leisure facilities where all of the following criteria are met:

- (i) The facility would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the two town centres;**
- (ii) There is no harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;**
- (iii) It will not cause unacceptable nuisance in terms of noise or traffic generation;**
- (iv) The development is in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding buildings and area; and**
- (v) The site is easily accessible by passenger transport, walking and cycling.**

Stanborough Park

11.12 Stanborough Park performs an important role within the district as a provider of formal and informal recreation opportunities. At present, other than open space, the park offers recreation in the form of a boating lake, a watersports centre and yachting lake and a nature reserve at its southern end. The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the wildlife and nature qualities of the park, whilst promoting and improving its potential for recreation. The park is located within the Green Belt and therefore only development for essential small scale facilities for outdoor sport and recreation or for other uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt will be allowed. However, the park also contains the former Splashland Swimming Complex, which was an important built leisure facility for the district. It will therefore support proposals for the redevelopment of Splashland for new leisure facilities, provided they have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and do not occupy a greater footprint than or exceed the height of the existing buildings.

Policy CLT 3 - Stanborough Park

In Stanborough Park, as identified on the Proposals Map, the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the natural wildlife, whilst promoting and improving the recreational potential of the park. Development proposals will be considered against the policies in the Plan which define appropriate development in the Green Belt. In addition, the Council will grant planning permission for proposals for the redevelopment of the Splashland site, as separately identified on the Proposals Map, subject to the following criteria:

- (i) It should have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including this land within it than the development which existed on the site at the time of the closure of the swimming complex;
- (ii) Any new buildings should not exceed the height of the buildings which existed on the site at the time of the closure of the swimming complex; and
- (iii) New buildings should not occupy a greater footprint of the site than the buildings which existed on the site at the time of the closure of the swimming complex.

Arts and Cultural Facilities

11.13 Arts and cultural facilities cover a wide range of leisure activities, all of which play an important role in improving people's quality of life. In addition, they provide opportunities for lifelong learning, assist in reducing social and economic barriers, and support economic regeneration and prosperity. There are many organisations within the district providing valuable participation in these activities; the contribution of the voluntary sector is particularly important. However there is fierce competition from museums, theatres and other tourist attractions in London, St Albans and Stevenage. The Council recognises that there are gaps in the provision of art and culture and that there is a latent demand of people wanting to take up or do more arts related activities.

Policy CLT 4 - Arts and Cultural Facilities

The Council will grant planning permission for proposals which will increase or improve the provision of arts and cultural facilities in the district, provided that:

- (i) There is no harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;
- (ii) They will not cause unacceptable nuisance in terms of noise or traffic generation; and
- (iii) The site is easily accessible by passenger transport, walking and cycling.

Tourism Facilities

11.14 Welwyn Hatfield is well placed to develop tourism both in terms of its location, its heritage and the number of visitor attractions already within its boundary. Many of these attractions are within the rural areas of the district. However, the urban areas offer other attractions for tourists such as shopping facilities, sports centres, arts and cultural facilities. There is also considerable untapped potential in terms of the heritage of the Garden City and the aviation heritage of the Hatfield Aerodrome site.

11.14 Tourism is important as a source of employment and aid to economic regeneration. The Council wishes to promote the development of tourism in the district and will encourage proposals to provide new or improved tourist attractions and facilities to accommodate tourists and visitors in the district.

When assessing development proposals the Council will have regard to their effects on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses, the character and appearance of the surrounding area, traffic and noise generation, proximity to public transport, and accessibility for people with disabilities.

Policy CLT 5 - Tourist Facilities

The Council will permit development proposals for new and improved tourist attractions and facilities in the district provided that they:

- (i) Do not have a harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses, and the character of the surrounding area;**
- (ii) Do not create unacceptable nuisance in terms of traffic or noise generation; and**
- (iii) Are easily accessible by passenger transport, walking and cycling.**

Hotels

11.16 Whilst there are a number of hotels in the district, there is still a shortage of hotel bed-spaces, both to support business and tourist visitors. A site for a hotel has been identified in the master plan for the former Hatfield Aerodrome site. In addition, the Council will encourage the development of other hotels in the district, particularly where they are accessible by passenger transport. They should preferably be located in town centres, but where there are no suitable sites, edge of centre sites or other locations easily accessible by public transport may be considered. In all cases, proposals will be assessed against their impact on amenity, the environment and traffic generation.

Policy CLT 6 - Hotels

The Council will grant planning permission for proposals which increase and improve hotel accommodation within the district. The preferred locations for hotels are in the district's town centres and on the designated sites on the Hatfield aerodrome site. Where there are no suitable sites in the town centres, the Council may consider development proposals in edge of centre locations, at district or neighbourhood centres or in areas with high accessibility by public transport. In all cases the Council will only permit proposals for hotels where:

- (i) There is no harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses;**
- (ii) The development is in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding area; and**
- (iii) The development is easily accessible by passenger transport, walking and cycling.**

Community Use of Schools/Educational facilities

- 11.17 The Council recognises that educational facilities are a valuable community resource with potential for wider use for community purposes. The use of educational buildings and land to provide arts, entertainment and sports activities to the wider public can benefit the community, make more efficient use of resources, and help to strengthen links between educational establishments and the community they serve. The Council also recognises that the use of education playing fields by the wider public can be particularly beneficial in areas of open space deficiency. School buildings, playing fields and other school facilities are especially suited to multiple use, as they can be used in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays.
- 11.18 The Council will encourage the multiple use of educational facilities and seek to ensure that new facilities are designed and sited to allow potential for multiple use. The multiple use of facilities will only be appropriate where it would be ancillary to the main education use, would not interfere with the normal schooling or educational activities of the establishment, and would not have a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area and amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses.

Policy CLT 7 - Community Use of Education Facilities

The Council will grant planning permission for the multiple use of existing and new educational facilities for community or leisure activities. Where new dual use facilities are proposed, they should:

- (i) Be ancillary to the main use of the facility for education;**
- (ii) Not interfere with the delivery of the education service; and**
- (iii) Not have a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area or amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses.**

New Education Facilities

- 11.19 Many County Council maintained schools in the district have little spare capacity. In addition, the demand for nursery, primary, secondary and further education places is expected to increase over the Plan period as a result of natural population growth, the required increase in new housing development in the district, the statutory requirement for reduced class sizes and government targets for post 16 years education. Proposals for large new housing developments, which are likely to place pressure on existing local schools, will be expected to contribute to the provision of new school places and facilities where this is demonstrated by the Local Education Authority (LEA). Any such contribution would be covered through the use of a Section 106 agreement.
- 11.20 Schools also generate significant levels of traffic. Where new facilities or extensions to existing schools are being proposed, the Council will expect that sufficient long term parking and safe setting down and pick up areas should be provided. Where possible journeys by private motor vehicles will be discouraged, in line with the Safer Routes to School initiative in the Local Transport Plan. However, it is recognised that the nature of the current education system, which allows for choice between schools, may lead to traffic generation from outside the locality. PPG13 on Transport states that policies should encourage the location of facilities which need to be near their

clients in residential areas or local centres so that they are accessible on foot or by bicycle. Such facilities include schools. To minimise the impact of traffic, new schools should be situated close to passenger transport services, provide opportunities for shared journeys, for example using school buses, and provide secure facilities for the storage of bicycles for all using the school.

- 11.21 During the District Plan period, it is possible that schools and colleges may find it necessary to use temporary classrooms to cope with short-term fluctuations in pupil/student numbers. The Council accepts that these can solve short-term problems but feels that they should not be used to hide deficiencies in permanent accommodation. Temporary planning permission for such buildings will therefore not normally be renewed. The Council will actively support the education provider in identifying a solution to permanent education deficiencies where the additional accommodation is required to meet the educational needs of the district. The Council will take into account the siting and the visual impact of such buildings and will expect the structures to be removed when the temporary period of consent expires.

Policy CLT 8 - New and Extended Education Facilities

Proposals for new or extended facilities for schools or colleges will be granted planning permission provided:

- (i) They are situated close to centres of population and passenger transport services;**
- (ii) They provide opportunities for shared journeys, for example by school bus;**
- (iii) They provide facilities for the secure storage of bicycles for students and staff;**
- (iv) The proposal complies with the Council's current car parking standards and there would be no adverse impact on the highway network including highway safety;**
- (v) Provision is made for the safety of students whilst being dropped off or picked up;**
- (vi) There would be no harmful impact on the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses; and**
- (vii) There would be no significant impact on the character of the area.**

Developers of housing schemes will be expected to contribute to the provision of school places or facilities where such schemes will lead to overcrowding in local schools or children having to travel unacceptable distances to obtain school places.

The Council will accept temporary buildings on existing school sites to meet short-term education needs, subject to their appearance and impact on the surrounding area. Conditions will be attached to ensure the buildings are only retained for a temporary period.

Use of Redundant Educational Facilities

11.22 As such buildings are designed with the ability to accommodate large numbers of students, teachers and support staff, and they are often used by the community out of school hours, they are considered to be suitable, in principle, for occupation by community uses in general. Should an educational facility no longer be required for its original purpose, the Council will first review whether such facilities should be retained for community uses such as a community centre, arts centre or sports facility. Where the buildings are not suitable for community use, or where there is no identifiable need for community provision, other uses, such as housing, will be considered. Proposals for the reuse of part or all of a former school's playing field will be assessed against the open space policies of this Plan.

Policy CLT 9 - Use of Redundant Education Facilities

The Council will grant planning permission for the redevelopment or re-use of redundant educational establishments that are surplus to educational requirements, for community, leisure or recreation purposes. Where applicants can demonstrate that the buildings are unsuitable for re-use or there is no local need for community, leisure or recreation facilities, other suitable alternative uses such as housing will be considered.

Nurseries and Childcare Facilities

11.23 The LEA together with the Early Years Partnership (EYP) and through the Early Years Development Plan, has achieved universal provision of nursery places for 4 year olds throughout the county. The EYP is now developing policies which may lead to extended provision for 3 year olds. In addition, as more parents return to work, the demand for affordable childcare places is anticipated to rise. Pre-school childcare facilities are provided throughout Welwyn Hatfield by the public, private and voluntary sectors with playgrounds, full time nurseries, after school clubs and part time crèches all playing valuable roles. The scale of these uses can vary enormously, from using part of an existing residential property to a church hall or new building constructed specifically for the intended purpose. In the case of facilities being situated in residential buildings it is important that the scale of use remains subordinate to the residential character of the property, and the immediate area, and does not harm the amenities of residents. Conversion of a whole house will be resisted as will an over-concentration of nurseries, playgroups and other child care provision to prevent an unacceptable impact on the local area. Because of the young age of children attending these types of facilities, and the growing trend for parents to return to full or part-time employment, there tends to be a high level of car movements generated by these uses. It will therefore be important to ensure that safe setting down and picking up areas are provided, in addition to longer term parking for staff and parents.

Policy CLT 10 - Nurseries and Childcare Facilities

Proposals for nurseries or childcare facilities will be granted permission provided that:

- (i) **Proposals make adequate provision for car parking, safe dropping off and picking up areas and have no harmful impact on the highway network including highway safety;**
- (ii) **Proposals have no harmful impact on nearby residential properties and other uses or the character of the area;**
- (iii) **Proposals would not detract from the visual amenity of the area; and**
- (iv) **Where a proposal involves a residential property, the use remains subordinate to the main residential use of the dwelling.**

Developers of housing schemes will be expected to make a contribution to the provision of nurseries or childcare facilities, where the development would result in overcrowding of existing facilities or young children having to travel unacceptable distances to obtain a place in a facility.

Library Services

11.24 The County Council and the District Council have discussed the adequacy of existing libraries in the district and have identified particular deficiencies in Hatfield. A new library facility will be provided as part of the redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site. However, the main focus for improvements will be in Hatfield Town Centre, where it is proposed that a new library be provided as part of a joint facility with a new health centre and community space within the town centre redevelopment scheme. Where new development results in a need for improved library facilities elsewhere in the district an appropriate contribution will be required towards the provision of such a facility.

Policy CLT 11 - Library Services

The Council will support proposals to improve the library facilities in Hatfield town centre. All major developments which place additional demands on the existing library services and facilities will be required to make an appropriate contribution to the provision of new or enhanced libraries in the district.

New Community Facilities

11.25 Used by a wide spectrum of community groups and voluntary organisations, community centres and halls need to be located in areas close to the population they serve, and to be easily accessible by a range of transport options. Whilst community facilities are not universally operated or revenue funded by the Council, extensive investment has culminated in the provision of new and improved community facilities throughout the district.

11.26 The Council aims to encourage community facilities which serve a wide catchment to locate within central areas in towns, whilst provision geared to more local needs and demands is facilitated within local district centres and residential areas. This distribution is more efficient in terms of providing accessible community facilities, which can be reached by the use of public

transport and other alternatives to the private car, such as cycling and walking.

- 11.27 The Council is seeking to improve and enhance community facility provision and will therefore welcome applications, which it receives for such developments. The dual use of buildings for sustainable community provision is also to be encouraged, as this can extend the vitality of the local neighbourhoods into the evenings. In some instances the loss of residential accommodation may be negated by the need for a community facility, which genuinely requires a site in a particular locality. In such cases, applicants will need to demonstrate that, for example, a thorough search for alternative accommodation had proved unsuccessful, that there is a need for the facility in that area, and that the benefit of the facility would outweigh the loss of residential accommodation.

Policy CLT 12 - New Community Facilities

Development of community facilities, which meet the needs of local residents will be granted planning permission in the following locations:

- (i) Residential areas where the proposals would not harm the amenities of nearby residential properties;**
- (ii) New residential developments in areas where there is a deficiency, in terms of access to community facilities;**
- (iii) Where the demand for the facility in an area is sufficient for the catchment of the proposed facility.**

The loss of residential accommodation will only be permitted where it is essential for the facility to be situated in that locality and cannot be provided in non-residential accommodation.

Loss of Community Facilities

- 11.28 Given the finite amount of land available for development in the district it is possible that planning applications may be made which seek to replace community facilities with other forms of development. The District Council will not grant planning permission for any development which would result in the loss of any community facilities, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the building or site for any form of community use, or that there is an acceptable alternative means of meeting the demand, either within the new development or in another suitable location. If an alternative is suitable the Council may impose a condition on the planning permission or seek an obligation to be entered into, requiring that the new community facilities are completed and made available prior to the loss of the original facility. This also applies to redundant community buildings or sites, where planning permission will not be granted for any other use on the site unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the function the site previously performed.

Policy CLT 13 - Loss of Community Facilities

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving the loss of community facilities or the loss of land allocated for such purposes,

unless there is no longer a need for them, or there is an acceptable alternative means of meeting the need.

Places of Worship

11.29 The Council is aware of the growing number of religious groups who wish to meet, celebrate, and worship within suitable premises and sees multi-denominational buildings as the most effective solution. Sites which are large enough to accommodate new meeting halls and places of worship are rare. However, where opportunities arise, the Council will support such provision where it can be demonstrated that the use will serve a local community and not result in unacceptable levels of traffic nor disturbance to neighbouring properties. Sites should be accessible by a range of transport modes and should not lead to unacceptable levels of on-street parking.

Policy CLT 14 - Places of Worship

The provision of new or extensions to existing places of worship will be granted planning permission where it can be demonstrated that the use and choice of location will only serve a local community and the site would be easily accessible by a range of transport options. In addition, proposals should:

- (i) Make adequate provision for car parking and have no adverse impact on the highway network including highway safety;**
- (ii) Have no harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses; and**
- (iii) Not detract from the visual amenity of the area.**

Health Centres and Surgeries

11.30 The Council recognises that it is of great importance to patients if primary health care facilities such as doctors' surgeries are located near their homes. Where non-residential premises are unavailable, the general resistance to the loss of residential accommodation may be relaxed, provided that the service proposed genuinely requires such a location, and the proposal conforms with all other relevant policies in this Local Plan. One way of testing the need to locate on a residential site will be whether a substantial number of patients are within walking distance. If a service provides for a wider catchment area but would result in a net loss of residential accommodation or land then planning permission will not be granted.

Policy CLT 15 - Health Centres and Surgeries

The provision of new or extended surgeries and other medical or health services will be granted planning permission provided that:

- (i) There would be no loss of a satisfactory residential unit in accordance with relevant policies in this plan;**
- (ii) The applicant can demonstrate that the proposed development is essential for the delivery of a necessary local health service and that alternative premises are not available;**

- (iii) **The proposal complies with the Council's current car parking standards and there would be no adverse effect on the highway network including highway safety;**
- (iv) **There would be no harmful impact on the amenity of nearby residential properties and other uses;**
- (v) **There would be no significant impact on the character of the area; and**
- (vi) **The premises are well served by a range of transport alternatives.**

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital

11.31 The QE II Hospital in Welwyn Garden City is the major provider of emergency facilities, acute and chronic medical care in the district and indeed the eastern part of Hertfordshire. The Council wishes to see these services retained and enhanced within the district and will therefore support the future improvement of facilities at the hospital.

11.32 However, the hospital draws patients and visitors from throughout northern and eastern Hertfordshire, as well as employing a large number of staff who commute to the site daily. This has a significant impact on the surrounding residential areas in terms of traffic and car parking. The Council wishes to see a long-term strategy to manage this problem effectively and measures taken to encourage staff and visitors to use alternative modes of travel. The Council will therefore work with the East Hertfordshire NHS Trust to prepare a master plan for the hospital site, which should include future development requirements, a green travel plan and a car parking management strategy. Any future development proposals for the site must be brought forward in the context of this master plan and should seek to minimise impact on the surrounding area.

Policy CLT 16 - QE II Hospital

The Council will support the provision and expansion of health care services at the QEII hospital, subject to its impact on the surrounding area in terms of traffic, noise, pollution, car parking and visual appearance. Proposals for new development will only be considered in the context of an overall master plan for the site, which should be subject to public consultation before being agreed with the Council. The master plan should contain proposals to reduce car traffic and manage car parking as part of any future development on the site.

Care in the Community

11.33 The Health Authority, County Council Social Services Department and District Council are committed to providing community based health and welfare facilities and services. With the move away from long-stay community care facilities, new community facilities are required, particularly for residential care, allowing people to live within the community while still receiving the support and care they require.

11.34 Although the precise land use implications of this policy are as yet unclear, they could be quite considerable as more local sites and premises will need to

be developed or converted for residential nursing homes for the elderly, the ill and handicapped. It is the Health Authority's policy to disperse community homes within the area and avoid concentrations of such uses. However, community homes must also be located where they are accessible to essential facilities such as shops and health centres. The Council, whilst supporting the aims of care in the community, will therefore apply the following policy to safeguard the amenity of local residents.

Policy CLT 17 - Care in the Community

The Council will grant planning permission for the establishment or extension of residential homes falling within the relevant use class in existing residential areas, either by the development of vacant sites or by conversion of existing properties provided that:

- (i) The scale of the proposal will not be detrimental to the established character of the surrounding residential area, nor the amenity of adjoining occupiers;**
- (ii) The proposal includes acceptable access and car parking provision, including visitors' parking;**
- (iii) The proposal is located so that it is accessible to essential facilities; and**
- (iv) The proposal does not result in a concentration of such facilities resulting in an overload of local facilities or a change in character of the residential area in which it is located.**

EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 12.1 The purpose of this chapter of the Plan is to establish planning policies which will help to ensure the local economy remains buoyant and offers good employment opportunities for local people, and which will guide the main employment generating uses to the most appropriate locations. It deals with issues affecting the type of business and manufacturing employment-generating floorspace which the district needs to satisfy job needs in the future.
- 12.2 Retail uses also form a major source of employment in the district, principally in town, village and neighbourhood centres, outside of the Employment Areas identified in this Chapter. The scale of retail employment is closely related to the amount of retail floorspace and is therefore dealt with in the Town Centres and Retailing Chapter. Leisure, health and education are also an important employment sector in the district. Their land use and development requirements are dealt with in the Community, Leisure and Tourism chapter.
- 12.3 Maintaining economic growth and employment is one of the four key objectives of the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development. The availability of jobs, goods and services is fundamental to people's quality of life. In turn their availability is dependent on the prosperity of the national and local economy. At the same time, economic development must be sustainable. It is no longer right to accept economic growth and development at any cost. The Council wants to encourage development which stimulates employment and prosperity in the area, but it must be clearly related to the needs of the area and respect the environmental limits of the locality and the global environment.

ISSUES

- 12.4 The key role for the Plan in the development of the local economy is to manage the supply of land and floorspace for employment uses. The Structure Plan has established that there is already sufficient land and floorspace in the county to meet a predicted, continued growth in business and employment needs in Hertfordshire up to 2011, taking into account existing floorspace and land allocated in local plans for employment uses. This forecast trend applies at district level in Welwyn Hatfield. So the presumption is that there will not be a need to allocate any additional land for employment uses in the district, other than that already designated in the existing employment areas and on the Hatfield Aerodrome site. However, this balance between supply and demand for employment floorspace can only be maintained if pressure for other development such as housing, retail and leisure uses on employment land is resisted.
- 12.5 In terms of the quality of employment floorspace, research undertaken by Roger Tym & Partners in Hertfordshire in 1999 suggests that the three main areas where the current supply of floorspace is likely to fall short of demand are:
- (a) industrial space for relatively low technology operations;
 - (b) space for new and small businesses;
 - (c) development opportunities, in particular for offices in accessible locations.

- 12.6 Another known employment floorspace demand in the district is for uses such as car showrooms, 'on the spot' car repair garages (e.g. tyre and exhaust centres) and trade wholesalers, which combine a retail element with a predominantly business, industrial or storage use. These businesses represent a growing service market. However, given the planned nature of the two main settlements in the district, these uses often have difficulties finding appropriate locations.
- 12.7 There is a range of good quality sites within the district, notably at Shire Park and other sites within the Welwyn Garden City employment area, which offer further opportunities for new business floorspace. However, it is important that the district can continue to offer a range of opportunities for expansion of existing firms or new businesses.
- 12.8 The Hatfield Aerodrome site provides by far the largest opportunity for meeting the district's future business and employment needs. It is likely to provide the majority of new floorspace supply over the plan period. Due to the emphasis on the high quality of the development and its resultant rental levels, it is likely to attract employment uses with higher land values, such as financial and business services, software and IT, telecommunications, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. The development will be required to provide some space for small businesses, but there will be sectors, particularly from lower-tech manufacturing and small businesses, for which the site may not provide space. Therefore, it is important that the existing Employment Areas in the district are retained, in order to maintain a supply of premises for the full range of business and industrial uses.
- 12.9 One of the key sustainability aims of the Plan is to encourage more balanced and self-contained communities, in order to reduce commuting and the need to travel. This requires maintaining a balance between housing and jobs. Travel-to-work figures show that almost half of the district's residents who are employed, work outside Welwyn Hatfield and that more people travel into the district to work than those commuting out. The right policy approach is required to ensure that these problems of in-commuting are not exacerbated by the development of the Hatfield Aerodrome site, where there is a significant amount of new employment floorspace proposed.
- 12.10 A range of planning, transport and economic development measures will be put in place to influence this. For example, on the Hatfield Aerodrome site over 1600 new dwellings are proposed, to give the opportunity for people gaining jobs on the site to live there and vice versa. Other measures include encouraging self employment and business start up through the availability of incubator space and related business support services; requiring incoming employers to run local recruitment campaigns, targeted at commuters; encouraging 'live-work' units in new housing or mixed-use developments to enable people to work or run businesses from home. These latter measures may provide opportunities for and encouragement to commuters to review their employment situation and consider working locally.
- 12.11 Another important factor in encouraging more people to live and work locally is to seek to match the jobs available with the skills of the local workforce. There are signs of possible skill mismatches in the district, evidenced by recruitment problems amongst local employers and the high levels of commuting into the district. However, it is likely that the high house prices or the lower rates of female participation in the labour force are also causes of

these problems. The Council's economic development policies are aimed at attracting firms to the district which can offer the type of employment required by local people. The District Plan supports this by the type of floorspace it allows and by encouraging the occupiers of new employment developments to recruit locally, offer skills training and provide childcare facilities. In doing so the Council will continue to work with its partners, including Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council, the University of Hertfordshire and Oaklands College.

- 12.12 The local community has expressed its concerns about the loss of major companies and the desire to avoid this in the future. The Council cannot control the commercial decisions of individual companies. However, through economic development and planning policies the Council can help to maintain the diversity of the local economy, to reduce its dependence on any one company or sector, so that the closure or contraction of large companies has less overall impact.
- 12.13 Whilst the economy is now more balanced, the Plan seeks to encourage it to continue to diversify. It can do this by influencing the type of business units developed, ensuring a range of unit sizes are provided in new developments or that flexible units are provided which can be used for a range of company types and sizes. It can also encourage diversification by supporting the development of small businesses through the provision of incubator units and small business accommodation.
- 12.14 In the light of the rapidly changing nature of the economy, the Council will continue to monitor changes in labour market skills, the sectoral composition of the industrial base, business and industrial floorspace requirements and other features of the economy.
- 12.15 The key employment issues that the policies in this chapter seek to address can be summarised as:
- The supply of employment land and floorspace;
 - The quality of employment floorspace;
 - The range of employment uses;
 - Achieving a better balance between jobs and housing;
 - The need to match skills to jobs;
 - Encouraging a diverse economy.

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

- 12.16 The Council's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) provides a key local policy context for the District Plan. It is important for the Plan to be consistent with this strategy. The overall aim of the EDS is to promote sustainable economic development and to encourage the creation of a thriving local business community. Wealth creation is a means of enhancing quality of life in Welwyn Hatfield and of tackling social exclusion. Its aims and objectives for the district's economy form the basis of the objectives of the Plan for employment which are to:
- (a) ensure that there continues to be enough employment land and floorspace available in the district, in the right locations and of the right quality, to provide jobs for local people, maintain a diversity of

employment uses and accommodate the requirements of local businesses and firms seeking to locate in the area;

- (b) to bring about a better balance between the levels and types of housing and jobs in the district and between the skills of the local workforce and the skill requirements of the jobs created, in order to help in reducing commuting flows into and out of the district and thereby reduce the need to travel;
- (c) to encourage the development of small businesses, in order to stimulate more stable, indigenous economic development and increase the potential for living and working locally;
- (d) to maximise the opportunity for a range of business and employment opportunities on the former BAe site at Hatfield, and throughout the district, to meet local job needs.

POLICIES

Employment Land

- 12.17 There is adequate capacity to meet the district's current and future job requirements without the need to allocate any new land for employment use. This is supported by the Structure Plan Review. However, there remains pressure to release further employment land for housing or other uses. Policy H1 identifies a site on the edge of the Welwyn Garden City Industrial Area for residential development to assist in meeting the district's housing requirement. However, further release of land within the Employment Areas for other uses must be resisted if an adequate level of employment land is to be retained to meet business needs. Therefore, the Plan continues to designate the main Employment Areas in the district. In addition, the former Dynamics and Sports Ground Employment Areas on the Hatfield Aerodrome Site have been extended and amalgamated to form the Hatfield Business Park Employment Area, including the area of land identified for a business park in the master plan for the site.
- 12.18 Minor amendments have been made to the boundary of the Burrowfields Employment Area (EA2), in Welwyn Garden City, to incorporate the electricity transformer station. This means that should it become redundant, the electricity transformer station could be redeveloped for suitable employment uses, which would be appropriate in this location.

Policy EMP1 - Employment Areas

The following areas of land as shown on the Proposals Map are designated as Employment Areas:

	<u>Area (ha)</u>
EA1 Welwyn Garden City Industrial Area	149
EA2 Burrowfields, Welwyn Garden City	15.6
EA3 Great North Road, Hatfield	3.9
EA4 Beaconsfield Road, Hatfield	5.3

EA5 Fiddlebridge Lane, Hatfield	1.6
EA6 Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield	85
EA7 Bishops Square, Hatfield	8
EA8 Travellers Lane, Welham Green	32.6
EA9 Sopers Road, Cuffley	3.8

Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas

- 12.19 Employment land is a very valuable resource. Policy 14 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 seeks to foster economic growth in existing employment areas through planned regeneration. It provides for the re-use of existing employment land and buildings for Class B uses. With regard to non-Class B uses, these will only be allowed where existing employment land and buildings are no longer required to meet future employment requirements and business and community needs. This is important in the context of the restraint arising from the location of the district within the Green Belt, which limits the amount of land available for employment. Accordingly, a cautious approach has been adopted by the Council, which generally resists uses other than those within Class B in designated Employment Areas.
- 12.20 In the context of this cautious approach, it is important to keep employment development in balance with potential housing supply and the available infrastructure. Employment development on a large scale may increase pressure for additional housing to be built within the district in order to attract an inflow of labour; there may also be circumstances where the scale of employment generated will, instead of attracting workers from the local area, attract commuters in to the district, resulting in an unsustainable increase in traffic and subsequent congestion.
- 12.21 The approach set out in paragraph 12.19 above provides clarity for existing occupiers and potential investors and thereby facilitates continued investment and the regeneration of the older parts of the Employment Areas, through the upgrading of existing building and facilities and through redevelopment. The Council will give favourable consideration to proposals for the redevelopment of existing employment sites, in the designated Employment Areas, which would update and improve the quality of the employment stock in the district.

Other Employment Generating Uses in Employment Areas

- 12.22 Whilst the Council seeks to retain designated Employment Areas for uses within Class B, it is recognised that there is a need for some flexibility to meet the needs of uses such as tyre and exhaust centres, trade wholesalers, vehicle hire, plant hire and taxi vehicle depots, which are composite uses, combining a retail element with a predominately business, industrial or storage use, but which do not readily fit within Use Class B. Due to the planned nature of the district's two main towns, it is difficult to find suitable locations for these uses outside of the designated Employment Areas. Vehicles sales showrooms are a sui generis use and are dealt with separately in Policy EMP4.
- 12.23 In situations where it can be clearly demonstrated that existing land or premises are no longer required to meet future employment requirements and

business and community needs, the Council may grant planning permission for other, non-Class B, uses. In considering proposals for non-Class B uses in Employment Areas, the Council will also pay particular attention to the resultant employment density of the proposed development, the impact on the vitality and viability of the district's town centres, the effect on local transport infrastructure and the general impact on the environment of the area. Proposals for retail and leisure uses in the designated Employment Areas will also need to demonstrate that they accord with the sequential approach set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 6: Town Centres and Retail Developments or its successor.

Policy EMP2 - Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas

In the designated employment areas, proposals for development within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 will be permitted, subject to the following criteria:

- (i) The proposal would not, due to the scale of employment generated, have an unacceptable impact on the demand for housing in the travel to work area;**
- (ii) The proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the local and/or strategic transport infrastructure;**
- (iii) The proposal would not harm the amenities of any nearby residential properties;**
- (iv) The development would provide adequate parking, servicing and access;**
- (v) Any retail element of the development would clearly be ancillary to the main business use.**

Proposals for Class B8 development should also be well located in relation to the primary road network.

Proposals for any other uses in the designated employment areas should generally be resisted and will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the existing land or premises are no longer required to meet future employment requirements and business and community needs. All such proposals will also be required to satisfy criteria (i) to (v) above and other relevant policies of the Plan relating to the use proposed.

In all cases, the proposed development must comply with the design policies contained in the Plan.

Broadwater Road West

12.24 This area of land is defined on the Proposals Map. It is part of the Welwyn Garden City Industrial Area (EA1) and, as such, is subject to the provisions of Policy EMP2. A significant portion of this highly accessible site, which is close to Welwyn Garden City town centre, has become disused. In the light of this, the site presents opportunities for planned regeneration for a mix of uses comprising primarily employment, housing, leisure and rail-related uses. To guide the future development of the site, a development brief will be prepared.

Policy EMP3 – Mixed Use Development Site at Broadwater Road West
The site within Employment Area EA1 (as defined on the Proposals Map) is identified as an opportunity area of planned regeneration for mixed use development comprising primarily employment, housing, leisure and rail-related uses. Development of the site shall be in accordance with the criteria in Policy EMP2 and other relevant policies of the Plan relating to the uses proposed. Development shall also comply with a Development Brief to be approved by the Council as a supplementary planning document. The Development Brief shall include the minimum quantum of Class B floorspace to be provided on the site.

Car Sales and Showrooms

- 12.25 The Council recognises that there is a demand for sites for car sales/showrooms within the district. The sale of motor vehicles is a *sui generis* use, that is, it does not fall within any specific use class, and as such, it is difficult to find suitable locations for such uses. In terms of the environmental impact of car sales/showrooms, in many ways, industrial areas are the most suitable location for them, as they are liable to generate significant levels of traffic and associated noise, for example, from delivery vehicles, repairs etc.
- 12.26 The Council seeks to protect the availability of and maximise the use of employment generating land within the district. Car sales showrooms tend to provide employment at the lower range of employment density and it is therefore necessary to restrict the amount of floorspace used for car sales within the Employment Areas. Therefore, on larger developments with a gross floorspace in excess of 235m², the Council will limit the amount of car sales floorspace and ancillary office and/or storage space to 49% of the gross external floorspace. The remaining floorspace should be used for Class B uses, such as vehicle servicing and repairs.

Policy EMP4 - Car Sales and Showrooms

Car sales/showrooms will only be permitted in the designated Employment Areas. They will not be permitted in residential areas or in the town centres. Planning permission will only be granted for development which meets all of the following criteria:

- (i) The proposal would not have any adverse impact on the amenity of residential areas;**
- (ii) The proposal would not adversely affect the highway network, including highway safety;**
- (iii) It would have adequate servicing facilities;**
- (iv) It would not have an adverse effect on the provision of employment land, in terms of the cumulative impact of similar uses in the locality.**

In the case of any proposed development which has a gross external floorspace in excess of 235m², no more than 49% of the floorspace shall be used for the sale and display of motor vehicles, and the sale and display of motor vehicle parts and accessories, including office or

storage floorspace ancillary to such sale or display. The remaining floorspace should be used for Class B uses such as vehicle servicing and repairs.

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town And Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 1995, any grant of planning permission will be subject to the removal of permitted development rights in order to prevent the change of use of the building to Class A1 (shops).

Mix of Unit Sizes and Small Business Accommodation

- 12.27 The Council seeks to encourage small and medium sized enterprise (SMEs) to establish within the district, in order to broaden the employment base and to provide a more balanced and stable local economy. In this way, the Council can maintain the diversity of the local economy, in order to reduce its dependence on any one large company or sector, so that the closure or contraction of large companies will have less overall impact.
- 12.28 There is a requirement for the provision of additional small and medium sized business/industrial units within the district. This is supported by the findings of the report "Employment Needs in Hertfordshire" by Roger Tym and Partners in 1999 and by business enquiries handled by the Council's Economic Development Unit.
- 12.29 Expanding companies who have outgrown their small scale starter-units have reported difficulties in finding suitable medium sized units to move to within the district and are therefore having to remain in their existing premises, which is exacerbating the lack of availability of small starter units. Whilst the Weltech Centre in Welwyn Garden City provides serviced office accommodation for start-up business, there is no comparable provision for small, starter industrial units.
- 12.30 Small businesses are rarely able to be in a position to develop their own business units and the commercial property market rarely provides affordable units for small businesses because they may not be economically viable. Therefore, large employment sites over 2 ha will be required to provide a mix of unit sizes, including specific provision of small units. An exception will be made in the case of existing companies who are developing a large site for their own expansion, as the Council does not consider that it would be a reasonable requirement in this case.
- 12.31 The Council will also encourage the provision of small business/industrial units through the conversion of larger industrial premises. In addition, the Council will pursue initiatives such as the "Fledgling Business Scheme", which encourages larger firms with under-used floorspace, to let it out to small businesses seeking premises.
- 12.32 For the purposes of this policy, small units are defined as those up to 235m²; medium units are between 236m² and 1000m²; and large units as those over 1000m².

Policy EMP5 - Mix of Unit Sizes

In the designated employment areas a mix of unit sizes will be required. On development sites over two hectares in area, there will be a requirement for a minimum of 10% of the net floorspace area within the site to be developed for small and/or medium sized units for business or industrial uses within use Class B. This policy will not apply in the case of existing companies, which are developing large sites for their own expansion.

Policy EMP6 - Small Business Units

The provision of small business/industrial unit accommodation will be encouraged by the Council through measures such as:

- (i) The conversion or sub-division of larger buildings to form small units, provided that adequate servicing and access arrangements are provided; and
- (ii) The promotion of premises sharing through the 'fledgling business scheme'.

Bad Neighbour or 'Dirty User' Industries

- 12.33 There are some industries which due to the particularly adverse environmental impacts of their activities are considered to be bad neighbour or 'dirty user' industries, for example, scrap yards, car body workshops, recycling facilities and other uses which are considered to be offensive, hazardous or potentially polluting. Many of these uses previously came under the Special Industrial Groups B3-B7, which have now been abolished. Whilst these uses now come under either Class B2, General Industry, or are *sui generis* uses, they are also controlled under other legislation including the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act, 1989 and the Planning (Hazardous Substances Act), 1990.
- 12.34 Planning applications for recycling facilities may be 'County Matters' and any proposals for these would therefore be determined by the County Council as the Waste Planning Authority. In addition, the identification of new sites for waste management facilities would also be dealt with by the County Council, through the review of the Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan.
- 12.35 The Council recognises that these uses may have an important function in the local economy and that in some cases they can contribute towards the aims of sustainable development, for example, when they involve recycling. However, because of the adverse environmental impacts of such uses, the Council does not wish them to be scattered throughout the Employment Areas or located on inappropriate sites. The Mater Dei site, Chequersfield, Welwyn Garden City, is located within a designated Employment Area. The Council considers that the Mater Dei site is a suitable site for bad neighbour industries, and will therefore require provision to be made for such industries on the site, when it is developed.

Policy EMP7 - Provision for 'Dirty User' Industries

The Council considers that the Mater Dei Site, Chequersfield, Welwyn Garden City, is a suitable site for the location of bad neighbour/dirty user industries. The Council will expect the site to be developed in

accordance with a development brief, to be agreed by the Council. The development brief for the site will require part of the site to be allocated for bad neighbour/dirty users.

Employment Development Outside of Employment Areas

- 12.36 There is adequate capacity to meet the district's current and future job requirements without the need to allocate any new land for employment use. However, whilst new employment uses outside of the designated Employment Areas are generally inappropriate, the Council recognises that there are other existing employment sites scattered throughout the district, many of which are occupied by small businesses who provide valuable local services. These sites provide employment and services for local residents, which reduces their need to travel and thereby contributes to the aims of sustainable development. In addition, these sites provide a variety of affordable units. It is therefore important that these sites remain in employment use, unless they are causing particular environmental problems.
- 12.37 Careful control will need to be exercised over the extent of new development to be permitted on these sites, to safeguard environmental interests, such as residential amenity and traffic generation.
- 12.38 It is also recognised that some employment sites are inappropriately located because their scale or use has an adverse impact on the local environment or residential amenity or on highway safety through traffic generation, noise and general disturbance.
- 12.39 On employment sites that are inappropriately located, planning permission will be granted for live-work development schemes, in accordance with Policy EMP14. Only where it can be shown that the redevelopment of the site for live-work units would not be viable, will planning permission be granted for residential development.

Policy EMP8 - Employment Sites Outside of Employment Areas

On existing employment sites outside the designated employment areas, as shown on the Proposals Map, proposals for new employment development or redevelopment will only be permitted where all of the following criteria are met:

- (i) The development would be of a similar scale to the existing activities on the site;**
- (ii) The development would not have any adverse effects on the residential amenities of any nearby properties;**
- (iii) The development would provide adequate parking, servicing and access arrangements and would not have an adverse impact on the highway network, including highway safety.**

Only grant planning permission for residential development on employment sites where it can be shown that the development of the site for a 'live-work' mixed use scheme would not be viable.

On sites that are not currently used for employment purposes and outside the designated Employment Areas and town centres, as defined

on the Proposals Map, planning permission will not be granted for development for Class B uses, unless the development would form part of a 'live-work' mixed use scheme.

Training

- 12.40 One of the overall objectives of the Plan is the need to achieve a better balance between housing and jobs in the district, in order to reduce the need for people to commute out of the district to work. An important factor in encouraging more people to live and work in the district is to seek to match the jobs available with the skills of the local workforce. There are signs of possible skill mismatches in the district evidenced by local employers experiencing recruitment difficulties and the high level of commuting into the district. The Council will actively encourage developments which would provide training to help to alleviate this mismatch between jobs and skills.
- 12.41 The relatively low female economic activity rate in the district suggests that there is some scope for generating higher levels of participation in the labour market by encouraging women returners, for example, re-training for potential women returners to update their skills and the provision of childcare facilities.
- 12.42 Training falls within Class D1 of the Use Classes Order 1987; however, it is recognised that in certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the support and development of certain types of high-tech or knowledge based industries that require a suitably trained workforce, to allow the development of education/training facilities within the designated Employment Areas.
- 12.43 The Council will work with the Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council, the local College of Further Education and the University of Hertfordshire, to provide training initiatives within the district to address identified local skill shortages in the labour market.

Policy EMP9 - Training

The Council will actively encourage the provision of employment training. Within the designated Employment Areas the Council will permit development or change of use that would provide employment training within Class D1(c) use, only where it is to address a specific skill requirement of the local workforce.

Childcare Facilities

- 12.44 The provision of childcare facilities is considered important in order to ensure that those with childcare responsibilities who wish to or need to find employment are not prevented from doing so. A major theme in Government policy is the encouragement of practices that facilitate the combination of employment with family responsibilities. The provision of childcare can also be beneficial to employers themselves by helping them to attract and retain staff, to reduce absenteeism, to overcome staff/skill shortages and to promote the public image of the company as a good employer. The Council will therefore seek the provision of childcare facilities as part of any large-scale employment development, through the use of Section 106 Planning Obligations, where appropriate. In addition, the Council will permit the

provision of childcare facilities within the designated Employment Areas, if a local need for such facilities can be demonstrated. Proposals for new childcare facilities must comply with Policy CLT10 in the Community, Leisure and Tourism chapter of the Plan.

Policy EMP10 - Childcare Facilities

The Council will seek to ensure that any large-scale employment generating development provides childcare facilities for its employees, either within the development, or in the form of the support for the provision of childcare provision elsewhere. The Council will require developers to enter into Section 106 Planning Obligations to secure this aim, where necessary.

Within the designated Employment Areas, the Council will permit development or change of use to provide childcare facilities, only where it can be shown that these facilities would support the local workforce.

Local Recruitment

12.45 Nearly half of the district's population of working age and in employment work outside the Welwyn Hatfield District. There may be opportunities to encourage a proportion of those who currently commute out of the district to seek local employment, for example, the Council will encourage major employers moving into the district or existing employers that are expanding to run local recruitment campaigns, targeted at commuters.

Policy EMP11 - Local Recruitment

The Council will seek to ensure that any large-scale employment generating development runs effective programmes to recruit local people. This should include the provision of:

- (i) On-site recruitment and/or training facilities;**
- (ii) Targeting recruitment on the local unemployed;**
- (iii) Targeting recruitment on local commuters.**

The Council will enter into Section 106 Planning Obligations to secure programmes of local recruitment, where appropriate.

University of Hertfordshire

12.46 The University of Hertfordshire represents a major employer within the district and is a major asset. The Council wishes to encourage the continued success of the university, which is seen as being a critical resource for the development of a 'knowledge based' economy and is already a major direct contributor to the local economy.

12.47 The university plans to eventually relocate nearly all of its facilities across the county within Hatfield by 2003. The site allocated for the university will contain two new academic facilities and a Learning Resource Centre. There is the potential for a further faculty and the university's administration block to be accommodated on the site. This development will increase the number of university employees in the district from 1,500 to 1,800 and the number of students will increase from 9,000 to 13,000.

- 12.48 Students are increasingly becoming a component of local labour markets as they seek part-time employment to fund their studies. The increasing number of students may be a means of addressing some of the recruitment difficulties arising from the low unemployment levels within the district.
- 12.49 The Council recognises that the university needs to rationalise and update its existing facilities and buildings on the College Lane site. The Council also recognises the university's aspirations to utilise part of Angerland Common for car parking. However any further development will need to be treated with sensitivity to the amenities of nearby residential properties and the issue of parking and reflect the location of Angerland Common in the Green Belt. It is therefore proposed that a Masterplan be prepared, in partnership with the university, to guide future development.

Policy EMP12 - University of Hertfordshire

The university is developing a new campus facility on a 12 hectare site at Hatfield Aerodrome. Any development by the university must accord with the approved supplementary planning guidance for the aerodrome site.

Any further proposals for development on the university's sites in College Lane and Angerland Common shall accord with a Masterplan to be approved by the Council for those sites.

Design Criteria for Employment Development

- 12.50 Good design is an integral part of sustainable development. The Council's aim is to raise the quality of design for all new development and therefore all employment generating proposals will be expected to be built to a high standard of design, including landscaping, to have adequate servicing and manoeuvring space and appropriate levels of car parking provision. Employment development has a potential to cause greater harm to the environment than residential development, if poorly designed, due to the larger building masses usually involved and the inherent problems of nuisance caused by heavy traffic movements and the processes carried out, e.g. noise, fumes and vibration. The Council will therefore carefully consider the environmental impact of any proposals, and will seek to ensure that proposals do not harm the environment or local infrastructure.
- 12.51 In many parts of the designated Employment Areas, there are a wide variety of architectural designs, with no overall defined character. These areas provide an opportunity for employment development of an innovative, modern, sustainable design that may be more difficult to readily assimilate in the street scene elsewhere.
- 12.52 The Council will seek to minimise the level of car traffic generated by employment development and will seek opportunities to promote alternative modes of transport other than private motor vehicles. Further guidance is contained in the Movement chapter of the Plan.
- 12.53 The Use Classes Order 1987 permits certain changes of use within the B Use Classes. B1 and B8 uses are interchangeable when no more than 235m² is involved. B2 uses are free to change to B1, or to B8 where no more than

235m² is involved. The Council considers that in order for companies to be able to take advantage of the flexibility offered by the B1 use class, and to be able to respond to changes in the local and national economy, buildings within the B1 use class should be designed with a flexible internal layout and external elevations that would allow the building to be readily adapted for differing purposes within the B1 use class.

Policy EMP13 - Design Criteria for Employment Development

The Council will expect all proposals for development within Classes B1, B2 and B8 to reach a high standard of design and site layout. The scale, massing and height of the proposed development should relate to that of adjoining buildings, the topography of the area, the general pattern of heights in the area and to public views, vistas and any landmarks.

Attention should be paid to the use of detailing and materials as part of the integral design of the building. Landscaping should be part of the fundamental design of the scheme. Buildings for proposed development within Class B1 should be designed with a flexible internal layout and external elevations that would allow the building to be readily adapted for differing purposes within Class B1, unless it can be demonstrated that such flexibility would be impracticable in the particular circumstances of the development proposed. All proposals for employment development should be designed to:

- (i) Incorporate the principles of sustainable development, including energy efficiency and waste minimisation;**
- (ii) Promote alternative modes of transport other than the private motor vehicle;**
- (iii) Provide adequate servicing and access arrangements; and**
- (iv) Not harm the amenities of any nearby residential properties.**

Live-Work Schemes

- 12.54 The planned nature of the two new towns in the district has traditionally resulted in separate areas being 'zoned' for employment and residential use, on the basis that this was the best way to promote good conditions for living, working and recreation. Whilst this approach may have been justified in the past when business uses consisted largely of manufacturing and heavy industry, which were incompatible with residential uses, modern business uses are often compatible with residential use and can be permitted in mixed use 'live-work' schemes.
- 12.55 Such schemes can contribute towards the aims of sustainable development. They provide local employment and thus reduce the need to travel, provide increased activity and hence natural surveillance, thereby improving safety and security. They also provide a variety of different building types which can create visual interest in the street scene.
- 12.56 A live-work scheme can either be in the form of a mixed use development, incorporating residential development and employment development on the same site or it can take the form of the mixed use of buildings themselves,

such as studio/office homes, which incorporate an office/studio/workshop on the ground floor and domestic accommodation on the floor/s above. These units can be built clustered in yards or mews style developments. The type of employment activity will require careful control in order to ensure that there is no harm to residential amenity caused by extra parking, noise, fumes, external storage or refuse. The Council will therefore remove permitted developments rights if necessary to ensure this.

- 12.57 The Council will encourage the development of live-work schemes on suitable sites. These sites are likely to be on existing employment sites outside of the designated Employment Areas or on sites which abut both residential areas and designated Employment Areas and which are readily accessible by means other than the private motor vehicle.

Policy EMP14 - Live-Work Schemes

The Council will grant planning permission for the development of live-work schemes on suitable sites. Live-work schemes would be most appropriately located on existing employment sites that are situated outside of the designated Employment Areas, or on sites which abut both residential and designated Employment Areas.

Live-work schemes should be developed in locations that are readily accessible by means other than the private motor vehicle.

The Council will remove permitted development rights, as necessary, to control the uses on such developments.

RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRES

INTRODUCTION

- 13.1 Welwyn Hatfield experienced considerable changes in its shopping patterns during the period of the last District Plan. Since the mid-1980s a large amount of new shopping floorspace has been built in the district, both at new out-of-town locations and within existing centres. Developments at Oldings Corner and The Galleria on the edge of Hatfield and The Howard Centre in Welwyn Garden City have all extended the range and choice of shopping available in the district. However, at the same time older town centres like Hatfield have suffered decline.
- 13.2 These changes have been the result of national trends, particularly increasing consumer expenditure and the growth in car travel, but government policy has also been a major influence. During the 1980s and 1990s national planning policies allowed out-of-town shopping as part of the drive to increase market competition. However, guidance has now changed. The revised PPG6 recognises the important role that town centres play in sustaining communities and the need to give them priority in the location of new retail and leisure development.
- 13.3 During the life of this Plan there are likely to be further changes in retailing and associated services. It is important that the district's town and local centres are able to accommodate these changes, if they are to remain viable and sustainable in the face of competition from out-of-centre shopping and other shopping centres in this part of Hertfordshire. This chapter provides the policy framework to enable the district's centres to manage this change and continue to meet the needs of their communities. It is mainly concerned therefore with those uses falling within Classes A1 (Retail), A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and A3 (Food and Drink) of the Use Classes Order, but it also deals with other uses where they occur within the town and local centres.

ISSUES

- 13.4 Welwyn Hatfield has a wide range of shopping and service facilities. Welwyn Garden City town centre is the main centre in the district and serves as a minor sub-regional centre for Hertfordshire. Hatfield town centre, despite its problems, still provides important shopping and community facilities for Hatfield and supports the district's two markets. There are 22 established village and neighbourhood centres in the district which provide for the everyday shopping and service needs of local residents. The district also has two large out-of-town facilities, which provide different forms of retailing to complement the role of the town centres - the retail park at Oldings Corner provides a large food superstore and the main 'bulky goods' shopping facilities in the district; and The Galleria provides for 'factory outlet' shopping, as well as leisure. These are supplemented by two free-standing, out-of-centre units - Safeway and B & Q in Welwyn Garden City - that broaden the district's retail offer further.
- 13.5 Despite this range of provision, during the Plan period forecasts suggest that there is likely to be a need for additional retail floorspace in the district as

consumer expenditure increases. If the district's two town centres are to survive, it is vital that where there are development opportunities, additional retail floorspace is concentrated there, to prevent the leakage of trade to out-of-centre facilities or other nearby centres.

13.6 Other trends in the retail market are occurring, which are likely to require changes in the mix of uses within the district's town and local centres:

- Shopping is increasingly being seen as a leisure activity and the most successful centres are those which can offer a diversity of uses, such as cafes, pubs, restaurants and other leisure or 'tourist' attractions, combined with longer hours of opening, to broaden the leisure 'experience' and increase their attractiveness;
- As a result of this and the revisions to PPG6, town centres are taking on greater importance in the provision of leisure facilities, such as cinemas, night clubs and health & fitness;
- Banks and building societies, which traditionally have been an important complementary activity in town centres, are reducing their number of high street outlets - a trend that is likely to continue with the restructuring in financial services and the growth of electronic banking.

13.7 At the same time the district's centres each have their own particular needs:

- (a) Hatfield town centre has experienced decline and, as one of the first new town centres, has an ageing physical infrastructure. Despite recent investment in a new Asda store, it requires more comprehensive redevelopment to provide new shopping and community facilities for Hatfield;
- (b) Welwyn Garden City has a broad 'retail offer', but has gaps in its provision both for comparison and convenience shopping, which must be addressed if it is to remain competitive. In addition, given its role as the main centre in the district, it is lacking in cafes, restaurants, pubs and other leisure facilities;
- (c) The district's village and neighbourhood centres provide vital local shopping and community facilities, which are easily accessible for everyday needs. These must be protected, particularly their core retail activities, in the face of competition from out-of-town shopping.

13.8 With regard to the district's out-of-town and out-of-centre shopping facilities referred to in paragraph 13.4 above, it is recognised that these are important in providing different forms of retail outlets, which complement the services available in the town and local centres, and help to broaden the district's overall retail offer. Whilst these facilities will also continue to need to compete and remain viable, it is important that they are not permitted to expand at the expense of town and local centres.

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

13.9 The overarching strategy of the Plan is to provide for sustainable development in the district. In terms of retailing and services, the key to achieving this will be in maintaining and enhancing the role of the district's existing town, local and village centres, which act as the focal point for their

communities. Therefore, the purpose of the policies in this section of the Plan will be to provide opportunities for the development of new retailing and services within the district's existing centres, in a way which enables them to be more competitive but maintains their community focus. Therefore, the main objectives for retailing and services in the district are:

1. To concentrate new retail development within the district's town centres, village centres and neighbourhood centres, in order to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability and thereby the sustainability of the communities they serve.
2. To enable the comprehensive redevelopment of Hatfield town centre for new shopping, community, leisure, residential and other uses, as part of the strategy for the regeneration of Hatfield.
3. To enhance the vitality and competitiveness of Welwyn Garden City town centre, as the district's main shopping centre, through opportunities for new retail development, by increasing the diversity of uses, particularly for the early evening economy, and by improving the pedestrian environment.
4. To protect and enhance the local shopping and service functions of the district's neighbourhood and village centres.

POLICIES

Hierarchy of Shopping Centres

13.10 The district has a hierarchy of shopping and service centres each of which perform different functions as follows:

Minor Sub-Regional Centre

Welwyn Garden City - defined as a minor sub-regional centre in the Structure Plan, it provides the main centre for comparison goods shopping facilities in the district, serving a catchment area beyond the district boundaries, and contains the district's main cultural, community and civic facilities.

Town Centre

Hatfield - defined as a town centre in the Structure Plan, it provides both convenience and comparison shopping plus community and leisure facilities, serving Hatfield in the main.

Neighbourhood Centres

These are local centres situated in residential areas throughout Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, which complement the district and townwide role of the two main centres by providing a range of convenience shopping and service outlets to meet people's day-to-day needs, near to where they live so reducing the need to travel. The larger centres also contain local community facilities such as surgeries, community halls and places of worship. They are divided into large and small centres:

Large Neighbourhood Centres

Welwyn Garden City - *Haldens* Hatfield - *Highview*
Hall Grove
Moors Walk
Woodhall

Small Neighbourhood Centres

Welwyn Garden City - *Handside* Hatfield - *Birchwood*
Hollybush *Crawford Road*
Peartree Lane *Harpsfield Broadway*
Shoplands *Manor Parade*
Roe Green
St. Albans Rd East
The Common

Village Centres

These are local centres based in the district's main villages (specified settlements), which complement the district-wide role of two main centres by providing shops, services and, in the case of the larger centres, community facilities to meet the day-to-day needs of people living in the district's villages and the surrounding rural communities. Again they are divided into large and small centres:

Large Village Centres

Brookmans Park
Cuffley
Welham Green
Welwyn

Small Village Centres

Digswell
Oaklands and Mardley Heath
Woolmer Green

- 13.11 The role of these centres may change over time as development takes place, but the Council will resist changes which would result in a centre decreasing in size and range of services and moving down the hierarchy.
- 13.12 During the Plan period the hierarchy will be added to by the creation of a new local centre on the Hatfield Aerodrome site. This will provide a range of shopping and leisure facilities (described in chapter 14), but in terms of its size and position in the retail hierarchy, it will function as a large neighbourhood centre primarily to serve the residential areas to be provided as part of the redevelopment. The aim is to ensure that it complements and links with the higher order shopping and leisure facilities in Hatfield Town Centre and The Galleria.

Need for Additional Retail Floorspace

- 13.13 Whilst the district already has a broad range of shopping facilities, PPG6 requires the Council in reviewing the Plan to consider the need for additional retail floorspace over the lifetime of the Plan. Need, although not fully defined in government guidance, is likely to arise as a result of both 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' factors. Quantitative factors may include the availability of consumer expenditure within the district as a result of growing income or population levels and the requirements of retailers to meet this demand. Qualitative factors may include identified gaps in the range and type of retail outlets represented in the district or a need for additional shopping facilities in

a particular location which may be deficient or may require strengthening, such as a town, village or neighbourhood centre.

- 13.14 In preparing the Plan, the Council commissioned an assessment of the need for additional retail floorspace in the district likely to arise over the period of the Plan (Assessment of Retail Floorspace Requirements 2001-2011, by Vincent and Gorbing 2002). In overall quantitative terms, purely as a result of forecast growth in population and consumer expenditure up to 2011, the study estimated that there will be a need for an additional 14,900 square metres gross of retail floorspace, broken down as follows:

Convenience goods (eg food)	300m ²
Bulky comparison goods (eg DIY, electrical, furniture)	7,300m ²
Non-bulky comparison goods (eg clothes, shoes)	7,300m ²

A full re-assessment of the quantitative need for additional retail floorspace in the district will be carried out as part of an early review of the Plan.

- 13.15 The Council has also commissioned studies of both Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City town centres, which have made a 'market' assessment of the demand and opportunities for new and additional retail floorspace within the two centres. The studies involved consultation with residents, the main property owners and retailers in the two town centres and the local community, and have confirmed that:

- (a) Both town centres have gaps in their retail offer, representing qualitative and quantitative needs for comparison and convenience goods floorspace, which need to be addressed if they are to be competitive in the future. These are set out in more detail in paragraphs 13.28, 13.43, and 13.44;
- (b) There are retailer requirements to satisfy the need for additional comparison goods retail floorspace and convenience goods retail floorspace within the two town centres;
- (c) There are development sites where these requirements can be satisfied.

- 13.16 In addition, as part of the planning of the redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site, the Council has identified a specific requirement for up to 1,670 sq.metres of retail floorspace as part of the proposed local centre to meet the day-to-day shopping needs of the future residents of the site.

- 13.17 Together, the Council considers that these studies provide a clear assessment of the quantitative and qualitative need for additional retail floorspace within the district over the Plan period. At this stage no other specific retail needs have been identified, although it is possible that others could arise during the Plan period as trends change. It is expected that all proposals for retail development will be compared against this assessment of need.

The Location of New Retail Development

- 13.18 In identifying locations for this additional retail floorspace, government planning guidance makes it clear that the Council should adopt a sequential

approach as set out in PPG6. This states that the first preference should be for town centre sites, where suitable sites are available, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres, and only then out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport.

- 13.19 In preparing the Plan the Council has followed this sequential approach. This is reflected in the strategy which seeks to concentrate new retail development into the district's town centres, village and neighbourhood centres in order to maintain their vitality and viability.
- 13.20 The studies undertaken for Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City town centres assessed the realistic potential of sites within the two town centres for retail development. As a result the following two sites have been identified for retail development, to accommodate the main need in the district for additional comparison goods retail floorspace and to address particular needs within the two town centres:
- (a) *Land at eastern end of Hatfield town centre* - bounded by Robin Hood Lane, The Common, Wellfield Road, Queensway and The Arcade.
 - (b) *Land on the north side of Welwyn Garden City town centre* - between John Lewis and The Howard Centre, bounded by Wigmores North, Bridge Road, Stonehills, Osborn Way and Stonebank.
- 13.21 In addition, two sites have been identified in Welwyn Garden City town centre which provide opportunities for additional convenience goods retail floorspace, to address the needs of the centre for an improved quality of food retail offer, which is outlined in more detail in paragraph 13.28;
- (a) *Land at Campus East in Welwyn Garden City town centre* - on the north side of Bridge Road, incorporating the existing Waitrose supermarket and the car parks to the rear.
 - (b) *Land at the southern side of the town centre* – between Church Road and Parkway, incorporating the existing Sainsbury's supermarket and car park.
- 13.22 The sites are identified on the Town Centre Insets on the Proposals Map and in Policies TCR4, TCR5, TCR6 and TCR14. It is the Council's view that these sites provide adequate capacity and opportunities to accommodate the retail floorspace needs of the district identified in paragraphs 13.14 and 13.15 above. They will help to maintain the future vitality and viability of the two town centres and are accessible by a choice of means of transport. Therefore, the Council will promote schemes for retail development here to meet the district's needs within the Plan period and any speculative retail development proposals will be directed towards these sites. Further information justifying their selection and guidance on the process for implementation and the form of development considered appropriate on these sites, including the mix of uses and design, is given in the policies and paragraphs on Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City town centres below.
- 13.23 In addition, there is a specific need for up to 1,670 sq.metres of retail floorspace as part of the local centre on the Hatfield Aerodrome site, to meet the requirements of that site. Therefore, a site has been identified to satisfy

this need in the master plan for the aerodrome site, as defined in Policy HATAER4 and shown on the Hatfield Aerodrome Inset Map 3.

- 13.24 The Council will also support proposals for retail development within the district's existing village or neighbourhood centres, which are appropriate to those centres in terms of their size and scale and help to maintain their viability and enhance their local shopping and service function.
- 13.25 Proposals for retail development elsewhere in the district will be expected to demonstrate the following:
- a need for the additional retail floorspace over and above that set out in paragraphs 13.14 & 13.15 above;
 - that the sequential approach has been applied in selecting the site and the floorspace cannot be accommodated within the district's town, village or neighbourhood centres;
 - that it would not harm the vitality and viability of these existing centres, either on its own or cumulatively; and
 - that it would not harm the development plan strategy, particularly for the town centres.
- 13.26 In applying the sequential approach the Council expects developers to be flexible about the format, design and scale of proposed retail development. The fact that available sites or premises within existing centres may not suit precisely the format and scale of the operation required by the applicant, should not necessarily mean that the floorspace could not be provided satisfactorily in another format.

Policy TCR1 - Retail Development in Town Centres and Edge of Town Centres

New retail development must be located in accordance with the sequential approach set out in government guidance on retailing and town centres.

The preferred location for retail development is within the district's town centres on the sites identified in Policies TCR4, TCR5, TCR6 and TCR14. Other locations within the primary retail cores of the two town centres will be considered where this accords with the town centre strategies.

Retail development on sites on the edge of the two town centres will be considered where there is a clear need, where no sites within the primary retail cores are suitable, and where it would not conflict with the town centre strategies and specifically not harm the vitality and viability of the primary retail cores.

Policy TCR2 - Retail Development in Village and Neighbourhood Centres

Proposals for retail development will be permitted within the district's village and neighbourhood centres, where they would meet all of the following criteria:

- (i) Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre;**
- (ii) Enhance the centre's local shopping and service function;**
- (iii) Be in scale with the size of the centre and its surroundings;**
- (iv) Not harm the vitality and viability of other nearby centres; and**
- (v) Not give rise to any significant harmful environmental impacts, such as unacceptable traffic generation.**

Policy TCR3 - Out Of Centre Retail Development

Proposals for new retail development in out-of-centre locations, including the extension of existing retail stores, will not be granted unless all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

- (i) There is a need for the additional retail floorspace which cannot be met within any of the district's town, village or neighbourhood centres;**
- (ii) The sequential approach has been applied in selecting the site;**
- (iii) It would not harm the vitality and viability of the district's town, village or neighbourhood centres, either on its own or cumulatively taken with other recent similar developments;**
- (iv) It would be accessible by a choice of means of transport;**
- (v) It would not generate unacceptable levels of car traffic nor prejudice road safety;**
- (vi) It would not have an adverse environmental impact on its surroundings;**
- (vii) It would not take land which is designated for other uses in the Plan; and**
- (viii) It would not harm the strategy of the District Plan, in particular the strategies for the town centres.**

Welwyn Garden City Town Centre

Town Centre Strategy

13.27 Welwyn Garden City town centre is the main shopping and service centre for the district with over 62,000 sq. metres of retail floorspace. It acts as a minor sub-regional centre for Hertfordshire, drawing customers from a wide catchment area, and provides a number of important civic, cultural, leisure and community facilities for the district. It is well served by bus and rail, making it a very accessible location.

13.28 Its strength is in its primary shopping function, particularly for comparison goods, and in the quality of its environment. However, it does have a number

of weaknesses. There are gaps in the quality and range of its retail 'offer', which have been identified through research and consultation with retailers and the public. In particular, the range of fashion and lifestyle retailers is limited in comparison to the quality of its main anchor retailers. Currently, this is persuading people to shop in centres outside of the district, resulting in leakage of expenditure from the town centre. This loss of potential trade is not limited to the fashion sector. Visits to other centres for clothes shopping will often lead to other purchases which might otherwise have been made in Welwyn Garden City. Therefore a better selection of such unit shops is required if the town centre is to remain competitive and maintain its position in the retail hierarchy. In terms of its convenience goods offer, whilst the town centre has a number of small supermarkets, it does not possess a foodstore which is large enough to offer the range of goods necessary, to compete effectively in the food retail market and with superstores in out-of-centre locations. Extensions to both the existing Waitrose and Sainsbury's foodstores in the town centre would address this weakness and would increase the vitality and viability of the town centre, enabling it to attract more linked shopping trips. In addition, the centre is lacking in cafes, restaurants, pubs and other leisure activities, which would complement its shopping function and extend the life of the centre into the early evening. Although the town centre is accessible by a number of modes of transport, there are conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular movements within the centre, which need to be resolved. Despite the quality of its landscape, some of the town centre's public spaces require improvement and restructuring to generate more activity and to make them more usable.

- 13.29 In consultation with local residents, retailers and landowners, the Council has developed a strategy for Welwyn Garden City town centre to address these concerns, for which the policies in this Plan are a key to its implementation. The overall aim of the strategy is to maintain and enhance the commercial, social and environmental success of the town centre. Specifically, the objectives for the town centre are to:
- (a) Provide opportunities for new retail development in the town centre and other associated uses, to increase its offer and commercial viability and maintain its role as a minor sub-regional shopping centre;
 - (b) Increase the diversity of uses in the centre, in particular cafés, restaurants and pubs, but also residential, offices and leisure, so enhancing its attractiveness as a centre, extending its life into the early evening and providing a broader range of services to local people;
 - (c) Revitalise the southern side of the town centre through opportunities for new development and a greater mix of uses;
 - (d) Maintain the centre's important civic, cultural and community functions, which should remain focused in The Campus area;
 - (e) Improve movement and access within the centre, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists;
 - (f) Enhance the quality of its environment, its open spaces and public realm as part of the strategy to improve its attractiveness as a centre.

Town Centre Boundary and Sub-Areas

13.30 The town centre comprises a retail core, surrounded by areas of mixed commercial, cultural, community and civic uses, which act as a transition zone to adjoining residential areas. The overall boundary of the town centre is defined on Inset Map 2. Within this boundary there are a number of sub-areas, each of which contains a different range of uses and serves a particular function within the town centre:

1. Primary Retail Core - bounded by Church Road, Parkway, the railway line and Bridge Road (but including the Waitrose building and associated car parks immediately to the north of Bridge Road). This is the core of the town centre, the main function of which is for shopping. However, it is also important for a number of complementary uses, including restaurants, cafes and pubs, banks, building societies and other financial and professional services and, at first floor level, Class B1 offices and residential uses which help to support the shopping function. It is also the hub for the town's passenger transport services, including the railway station, bus station and taxi rank. This area is the preferred location for retail uses, but other uses within Classes A2, A3, B1(a) and C3 will be acceptable in line with the policies below. The area is defined on Inset Map 2.
2. The Campus - the area surrounding The Campus on its north and east side contains the main civic, cultural and community buildings and uses in the town, including the Council Offices, Oaklands College campus, Campus West theatre and library complex. It also contains a number of car parks which serve the town centre as a whole, particularly for long stay parking. This mix of uses functions well on the edge of the town centre, close to the shopping core and to the bus and railway stations, allowing linked trips to be made. The Council wishes to see this area retained for civic, cultural and community uses. Therefore, should any existing uses become redundant, the Council would allow change of use or redevelopment involving a mix of offices, leisure, food & drink, cultural, community, education and residential uses (Classes A3, B1(a), C3, D1 and D2). The only exception to this is on the Campus East site, where, in accordance with the sequential approach, the Council has identified an opportunity for mixed use development, including convenience retail uses to assist in meeting the qualitative need to improve the quality of the convenience goods (food) retail offer in the town centre for a food superstore. To this end, the existing Waitrose foodstore, which is located within the primary retail core, should be extended to meet this need. The reasons for this are set out in paragraph 13.31(b).
3. Parkway - properties on the western side of Parkway, including Rosanne House and 8-22 (evens) Parkway. These contain office and surgery uses, which function well on the edge of the town centre adjacent to the residential area further to the west. They are important buildings fronting Parkway and within the Conservation Area. Therefore, the Council will support conversion or change of use for uses falling within Classes D1 and B1(a).
4. Church Road - properties on the southern side of Church Road, including a church, public house and offices. Again this is a transition zone

between the retail core of the town centre and residential areas on the south side of the centre and the buildings are important within the Conservation Area. The Council will therefore support conversions or changes of use to uses within Classes D1 and B1(a).

Town Centre Development

13.31 Paragraphs 13.20 and 13.21 allocate three sites in the town centre for new retail development to improve the viability and competitiveness of the town centre and help meet the future retail floorspace needs of the district. Each of these sites satisfies the sequential test to site selection set out in PPG6 and subject to satisfying the criteria in Policies TCR4, TCR5 and TCR6 the Council supports retail development on all three sites. The sites are identified on the Town Centre Inset Maps as follows:

- (a) *Land at Town Centre North* - this is the preferred site for additional comparison goods floorspace, given its location within the primary retail core of the town centre and the potential for linkages with the Howard Centre and John Lewis. It has the capacity to accommodate up to 9,300 sq.metres (100,000 sq.feet) of additional retail floorspace. It is possible that a larger site could be assembled, but any scheme at a larger scale would need to be considered in terms of its impact on the town centre and its infrastructure.
- (b) *Land at Campus East* - this is one of two locations for additional convenience goods retail floorspace in the town centre. The site has good pedestrian linkages, is close to the bus station and contains a number of car parks serving the town centre as a whole. It contains an established supermarket, which could either be extended or redeveloped to provide a larger store which would help to address the need to improve the quality of the convenience goods retail provision in the town centre explained in paragraph 13.28. Its location on the edge of the main civic/cultural/leisure area of the town centre means that it is in a strong position to generate linked trips which would, in the Council's view, make it suitable for a mixed-use development, including residential and office uses, which could enhance the sustainability and vitality of the centre.
- (c) *Land at the southern side of the town centre* – the other opportunity for additional convenience goods floorspace, which has emerged following consultation on the first deposit version of the Plan. It includes an established food store, which could be extended to provide a larger store to help address the need to improve the quality of the convenience goods retail provision in the town centre. It may also provide for a mix of other uses including cafés and restaurants and its development would assist in anchoring and revitalising the end of the town centre, in accordance with the town centre strategy.

13.32 All sites require careful treatment in terms of their design, access, and servicing and should ensure appropriate car parking provision is made. In terms of design, the sites identified are located in the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area, at a prominent entrance to the town centre and would as such need to preserve and enhance the appearance of the area. The

development of the Anniversary Gardens site would need to ensure the provision of new public space within the site. In terms of access and servicing, any schemes would need to provide good pedestrian links with the rest of the town centre, make provision for public transport and provide for any necessary alterations to the surrounding highway network to maintain vehicular movement around the town centre. Developments would need to provide for additional parking commensurate with the scale of additional retail floorspace and other accommodation, which is easily accessible and in accordance with adopted parking standards. The Campus East site must also continue to provide strategic car parking requirements for the town centre as a whole. Planning briefs will be required for the Campus East and Town Centre North sites, and may be required for the site identified by TCR6, dependent on the scale and nature of the development proposed, to address these issues and provide more detailed guidance on the form of development and precise mix of uses. These will be subject to public consultation and be adopted by the Council as supplementary planning guidance. The Council will seek to bring forward these sites during the Plan period.

Policy TCR4 - Town Centre North Development Site

Land at Town Centre North in Welwyn Garden City, as defined on Inset Map 2, is identified for a major retail development scheme, in particular for comparison goods. Development should only be carried out in accordance with a Planning Brief for the site, to be subject to public consultation and approved by the Council as supplementary planning guidance, which will give detailed guidance on matters such as the quantity of floorspace, design, access and servicing, landscaping and open space.

Should a larger development opportunity come forward in this location, the Council will consider its suitability in the light of the need for the additional floorspace and the ability of the transport infrastructure in the town centre to accommodate the increased number of trips.

The Council will require any development to be designed to a high standard to:

- (i) Preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area;**
- (ii) Create a new entrance to the town centre on its north side;**
- (iii) Enhance the public realm and landscape within the town centre and achieve a strong visual linkage between the town centre and the Campus East Development Site;**
- (iv) Achieve good pedestrian access and linkage with the rest of the town centre;**
- (v) Ensure efficient vehicle movement on surrounding roads;**
- (vi) Provide adequate car parking to meet the needs of the development;**
- (vii) Seek to improve passenger transport provision in the town centre; and**

- (viii) Provide a range of retail units, which should enhance the quality of the retail provision in the town.

Policy TCR5 - Campus East Development Site

Land at Campus East in Welwyn Garden City, as defined on Inset Map 2, is identified for a mixed use development comprising retail, office and residential uses. The retail element shall be for convenience goods floorspace only, to address the qualitative requirement for convenience goods floorspace in the town centre identified in the plan. The site will be developed in a comprehensive manner, according to a Planning Brief to be subject to public consultation and approved by the Council as supplementary planning guidance.

The Council will require any development to be designed to a high standard to:

- (i) Preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area, in particular to preserve the mature trees within and around the site;
- (ii) Achieve good pedestrian access and linkage with the rest of the town centre;
- (iii) Seek to improve passenger transport provision in the town centre;
- (iv) Maintain efficient vehicle movement on surrounding roads; and
- (v) Provide adequate parking to meet the needs of the development and the strategic parking needs of the town centre as a whole.

Policy TCR6 - Land at the Southern Side of the Town Centre

Land fronting Church Road at the southern side of Welwyn Garden City town centre, as defined on Inset Map 2, is identified as an opportunity for development, including additional convenience goods retailing, together with cafés and restaurants and other uses in accordance with the town centre strategy.

The Council will require any development to be designed to a high standard to:

- (i) Preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area;
- (ii) Enhance the public realm and landscape within the town centre;
- (iii) Achieve good pedestrian access and linkage with the rest of the town centre;
- (iv) Ensure efficient vehicle movement on surrounding roads; and
- (v) Provide adequate car parking to meet the needs of the development.

Acceptable Uses within the Primary Retail Core

13.33 The strategy for Welwyn Garden City town centre seeks to increase the diversity of uses in the town centre, in order to strengthen its role as a shopping centre and improve its potential for leisure. Whilst it is important that

the primary retail function of the town centre is not compromised, the centre requires more restaurants, cafés, pubs and other leisure activities, which would complement its shopping function, increase its vitality throughout the day and extend the range of services available to local people. At the same time, there are residential areas close to the centre and any changes in the use of the centre must respect the residential amenities of residents living nearby.

- 13.34 In August 2001 floorspace at ground floor level within the primary retail core of the town centre comprised 72% Class A1 Retail use, 15.6% Class A2 Financial and Professional Services and 9.5% Class A3 Food and Drink. There is therefore some scope to allow further non-retail uses in the primary retail core, without prejudicing its essential retail function. The town centre also has limited leisure, arts, and cultural activities, which are mainly located at Campus West. These uses may also be appropriate within the retail core.
- 13.35 Some non-retail uses such as banks and building societies provide services which are frequently used by shoppers. They generate high levels of pedestrian activity and therefore do not detract from the vitality of the centre, and in some cases can enhance it. All day uses, such as coffee shops, cafes and restaurants are more beneficial in maintaining the vitality of the town centre throughout the day and into the evening. Other uses, such as estate agents provide a more specialised service and generate less pedestrian activity than most retail uses. Similarly some hot food takeaway shops only open in the evenings and present an effectively 'dead' frontage during the daytime, when the rest of the shops are open. Therefore, whilst these latter types of use are appropriate in the town centre, their numbers need to be controlled, to ensure that the vitality and viability of the town centre is not harmed.
- 13.36 In determining any proposals for new development and/or changes of use of ground floor premises within the retail core, the Council will take into account the degree of customer attraction to the proposed use and the hours of opening, in assessing its impact on the vitality of the centre. In cases where the vitality of the town centre would be harmed by the granting of planning permission for change of use of a unit to a Class A3 use that would remain closed during normal shopping hours, planning conditions may be imposed controlling the hours of opening and type of A3 use, where this is necessary to avoid refusing permission.
- 13.37 The principal function of the retail core is to enable the retail trade to serve customers with a wide range of goods. However, no town centre is complete without a variety of service uses catering for other needs of shoppers and town centre workers, such as banks and cafés. Whilst these add interest and vitality to the town centre, a proliferation can result in 'dead' frontages, and can harm the essential retail function of the town centre. The Council therefore needs to strike a balance between the protection of the predominant retail function of the primary retail core and the need to encourage a lively mix of other uses. Two types of ground floor frontage have therefore been designated within the primary retail core:
- (a) Retail Frontages - where the predominant use is Class A1 Retail and planning permission for changes of use to non-retail uses will be more

strictly controlled. To maintain their predominant retail function, a minimum of 70% of these frontages (as a proportion of the length of frontage) must remain in Class A1 use. These frontages are:

30-50 & 52-66 (evens) and 31-49 & 51-63 (odds) Howardsgate;
26-36 (evens) and 7-13 & 21-33 (odds) Stonehills;
21-37 (odds) Wigmores North;
4-42 (evens) Church Road;
2-44 (evens) and 37-51 (odds) Fretherne Road;
John Lewis, Bridge Road;

- (b) *Mixed Use Frontages* - which, due to their location within the retail core, are more suitable for a mixture of uses, and where greater flexibility for non-retail uses will be allowed. Whilst retail will still be their predominate use, 50% of the frontage (as a proportion of the length of the frontage) should remain within Class A1 use and other non-retail uses will also be permitted, including leisure and cultural facilities, providing that they do not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre nor the amenities of surrounding residential areas. These frontages are:

2-24 (evens) and 1-19 (odds) Howardsgate;
3-5 (odds) Stonehills;
34-54 (evens) and 41-53 (odds) Wigmores North;
4-16 (evens) and 7-17 (odds) Wigmores South.

Policy TCR7 - Retail Frontages in Welwyn Garden City Town Centre

Within the designated Retail Frontages in the primary retail core of Welwyn Garden City town centre, as defined on Inset Map 2, a minimum of 70% of any one linear frontage must remain in Class A1 Retail use. Therefore, planning permission will be granted for changes of use from Class A1 to Class A2 or A3 uses up to a maximum of 30% of any one linear frontage.

In Retail Frontages where already less than 70% of the linear frontage is in Class A1 use, planning permission will not be granted for change of use to non-retail uses. The only exceptions to this will be if the proposal is for a Class A3 use which would provide an 'eat-in' restaurant or café facility for shoppers, which would:

- (i) Contribute to the overall attractiveness of the town centre; and**
- (ii) Not undermine the retail function of the frontage.**

For changes of use to Class A3, the Council may grant planning permission for a specific use within Class A3 or impose other conditions to control the use of the premises, where planning permission would otherwise be refused.

Planning permission will only be granted where the proposal would not harm the amenities of nearby residential properties.

Policy TCR8 - Mixed Use Frontages in Welwyn Garden City Town Centre

Within the designated Mixed Use Frontages in the primary retail core of Welwyn Garden City town centre, as defined on Inset Map 2, planning permission will be granted for changes of use to Class A1, A2 and A3 uses and for uses which provide community, leisure and cultural facilities. A minimum of 50% of any one linear frontage must remain in Class A1 retail use and a minimum of 80% in uses within Class A.

In a Mixed Use Frontage where less than 50% of the linear frontage is in Class A1 Retail use, planning permission will not be granted for change of use to non-retail uses.

For changes of use to Class A3, the Council may grant planning permission for a specific use within Class A3 or impose other conditions to control the use of the premises, where planning permission would otherwise be refused.

Planning permission will only be granted where the proposal would not harm the amenities of nearby residential properties.

- 13.38 The vitality and viability of town centres depends upon securing a mixture of uses, which can reinforce each other through their complementary nature. Welwyn Garden City town centre contains a variety of uses at first floor level in the form of offices, residential and ancillary storage for the retail units. The residential and office accommodation is important in maintaining activity in the town centre throughout the day. Office workers and residents will use the shops and services in the town centre and so will add to its vitality. Residential accommodation in town centres has been promoted through the national initiative 'Living Over The Shop'. Not only does it help to maintain the life of the town centre after shop and office hours, but also it is compatible with the aims of sustainable development, reducing the need to travel. It is also an important part of the district's overall housing stock. For these reasons, the Council wishes to encourage the retention of both office and residential uses at first floor level within the primary retail core of the town centre.

Policy TCR9 - First Floor Uses in Welwyn Garden City Town Centre
Within the primary retail core in Welwyn Garden City town centre, as defined on Inset Map 2, the Council will support the retention of existing office floorspace and residential accommodation. Proposals for change of use of first floor accommodation to residential will be permitted, provided that it would accord with the housing and design policies elsewhere in the Plan.

Acceptable Uses outside of the Primary Retail Core

- 13.39 Outside of the primary retail core are areas of mixed commercial, leisure, cultural, community and civic uses, defined in paragraph 13.30 as The Campus, Parkway and Church Road. These serve to reinforce the vitality and viability of the town centre, complement its shopping function and help to reduce the need to travel by enabling linked trips and providing important facilities where they are accessible. They also act as a buffer between the retail core and the residential areas which adjoin the town centre, helping to reduce noise and disturbance for nearby residents. For these reasons, it is

important that these sub-areas and the mix of uses within them are retained. Therefore the following policies will apply.

Policy TCR10 - Acceptable Uses outside of the Primary Retail Core (The Campus)

In The Campus area of Welwyn Garden City town centre, outside of the primary retail core as defined on Inset Map 2, the Council will encourage the retention of existing civic, cultural, community and leisure uses. Where an existing use is no longer required, the Council will permit conversion and change of use or redevelopment for mixed use schemes involving offices, leisure, cultural, community, education and residential uses (Use Classes B1(a), C3, D1 and D2), provided that the proposal would:

- (i) Enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre;**
- (ii) Preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area;**
- (iii) Not harm the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential areas;**
- (iv) Be properly integrated into the retail core of the town centre, including the provision of good pedestrian linkages; and**
- (v) Provide adequate highway access and servicing arrangements and would not be detrimental to the highway network, including highway safety.**

Where the site currently provides car parking which serves the needs of the town centre as a whole, this must be replaced within any redevelopment.

Policy TCR11 - Acceptable Uses outside of the Primary Retail Core (Parkway and Church Road)

In the Parkway and Church Road areas of Welwyn Garden City town centre, outside of the primary retail core as defined on Inset Map 2, the Council will allow proposals for the conversion and change of use of buildings for office, community, cultural and residential uses (Use Classes B1(a), C3 and D1), provided that the proposal would:

- (i) Preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area; and**
- (ii) Not harm the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential areas.**

Proposals for the redevelopment of existing buildings in these areas will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the new building would enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

Accessibility to the Town Centre

- 13.40 One of the objectives of the town centre strategy is to improve access and movement within the town centre, giving priority to pedestrians. This is important to increase its attractiveness as a shopping and leisure destination.

Currently access by car, bus and train into the centre is very good and this must be maintained. However, there are conflicts in particular locations between vehicular and pedestrian movement. The Council and the Town Centre Forum will identify measures which can be taken to resolve these conflicts and give priority to pedestrians. In addition, access for disabled people needs to be enhanced. Development schemes will be expected to contribute to such measures and significantly enhance the pedestrian environment.

- 13.41 The town centre has a good level of parking provision which is conveniently located and accessible to the main shopping areas, particularly for short-stay visitors. The town centre is also very accessible by public transport. In order to maintain the town centre's attractiveness to shoppers and visitors, all new development will be required to provide additional parking, in line with Policy M14 in the Movement chapter and the car parking standards. In addition, all new development will be expected to make a contribution to passenger transport provision, in accordance with Circular 1/97 (Planning Obligations) and Policy IM2. The Council will produce a parking strategy for the town centre which will identify measures to manage parking and co-ordinate it with the use of passenger transport.

Policy TCR12 - Transport Infrastructure in Welwyn Garden City Town Centre

The Council will require development proposals in Welwyn Garden City town centre to contribute to improving the infrastructure and services for pedestrian, cycle and passenger transport access to and within the town centre in accordance with Circular 1/97 (Planning Obligations) and Policy IM2 of the Plan and to accord with the Council's Car Parking Strategy.

Quality of the Environment

- 13.42 One of the strengths of Welwyn Garden City town centre is the quality of its environment. The formal design of its buildings and landscape give the town centre a unique character, recognised by its designation as a Conservation Area. It should be noted however, that some elements of the town centre, such as street furniture, are not the sole responsibility of the Council. Those who are responsible for the maintenance of the town centre must ensure that its appearance is not harmed by inappropriate street furniture. Whilst the town centre must change to compete and maintain its viability, this should not be at the expense of its environment. Rather all development will be expected to respect the architectural style and characteristics of the town centre and wherever possible enhance the quality of the public realm, both its buildings and landscape. The design of shop fronts and advertisements can have a particularly harmful impact if not carefully designed. These will be subject to the specific guidelines in the Design Chapter and Supplementary Design Guidance. As part of the town centre strategy the Council will also take measures to enhance the environment.

Policy TCR13 - Environment of Welwyn Garden City Town Centre

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the unique architectural character of, and the quality of the environment in, Welwyn Garden City town centre. All new development must be designed to respect the architectural style of the town centre and enhance the public realm. The design of shopfronts and adverts must accord with the policies in the Design chapter and Supplementary Design Guidance.

Hatfield Town Centre

Strategy and Vision

- 13.43 Hatfield Town Centre has, over the years, experienced significant decline in its fortunes. It has suffered competition from new shopping developments in nearby towns and from out-of-town food stores and retail warehouses, which have diverted trade and resulted in vacant units. It has also suffered from problems with its physical environment, in particular its ageing infrastructure and an 'inward-looking' design which gives it a poor presence and raises security and safety fears.
- 13.44 Despite these problems, the town centre remains as an important focus for the community of Hatfield. It provides 'essential' shops and services for the needs of its residents and a range of community and leisure facilities. It also supports the district's two markets, both a regular weekly market and the monthly farmers market. The Council has invested in improvements to the environment of the town centre in the past, but recognises that the centre now requires comprehensive redevelopment, investment in its infrastructure, a stronger retail offer and a greater diversity of other uses, if it is to maintain its role as the main centre for Hatfield. The 'market' assessment study of Hatfield has identified opportunities where this can occur and a strategy for bringing it forward.
- 13.45 At the same time, any future plans for the town centre must address its relationship with The Galleria and the proposed local centre on the Hatfield Aerodrome site on the edge of Hatfield. The Galleria currently provides factory outlet retailing and leisure facilities, which serve Hatfield but also draw on a catchment beyond the district boundaries. The new local centre will provide local convenience retailing and some leisure facilities to serve the residential development on the Hatfield Aerodrome site. The town centre along with The Galleria will provide the higher order shopping and leisure facilities to serve the aerodrome development. The future vision is that the three centres should work together to serve Hatfield. Therefore, it is important that their services complement each other and that they are well linked by transport.
- 13.46 In partnership with the local community, retailers and other agencies, the Council has developed a strategy for the regeneration of Hatfield town centre, the aim of which is to re-establish it as the focus for the local community. The objectives of the strategy are to:
- (a) Secure new shopping development in the town centre, in order to enhance the quality of retail provision;
 - (b) Encourage a greater mix and diversity of uses in the town centre, including leisure, restaurants/pubs/cafes and residential;

- (c) Provide new community facilities, such as for health and library services;
- (d) Improve access for pedestrians and cyclists within and to the centre;
- (e) Integrate public transport facilities within the town centre;
- (f) Enhance the environment of the centre;
- (g) Create dedicated transport links with The Galleria and new district centre on the Hatfield Aerodrome site and enable the three centres to work together in providing services for Hatfield.

Definition of Town Centre Boundary and Sub-Areas

13.47 Hatfield Town Centre comprises several areas - a retail core focused around its pedestrianised precinct, and on its edge some areas of mixed office, residential, community and leisure uses. Together these provide a broad range of services and facilities and fulfil a function as a focus for the community. The overall boundary of the town centre is defined on Inset Map 1. Within this boundary the sub-areas are defined as follows:

1. Primary Retail Core - the area bounded by Queensway, Wellfield Road, The Common and Lemsford Road. This is the core of the town centre, the main role of which is for shopping. It also supports a mixture of other services, including restaurants, takeaways, a pub, banks and building societies, which support the retail function, and, at first floor level and above, offices and residential accommodation. The centre also provides important community facilities serving the whole town, including a library and health centre. This area is the preferred location in the town centre for retail uses, but other uses within Classes A2, A3, B1(a), C3, D1 and D2 will be acceptable in line with the policies below. The area is defined on Inset Map 1.
2. Lemsford Road - the area on the western side of Lemsford Road has traditionally been an important location in Hatfield for leisure and cultural facilities, containing the swimming pool and the site of the former Forum theatre. Such uses are important for the future vitality and viability of the town centre and function well on the edge of the town centre, complementing its retail function by bringing people into the centre and generating linked trips. The Council will therefore continue to support leisure, cultural and community uses within this area, subject to Policy TCR19. On the Forum site it will support redevelopment for uses within this range.
3. The Common - the area on the northern side of The Common contains a mixture of offices, flats, surgeries and community buildings. These function well in this location, acting as a buffer between the retail core and the residential area to the north and helping to support the retail function of the town centre by bringing people into the centre and generating linked trips. Therefore, the Council will support the continuation of these uses, plus hotel uses which are considered appropriate in this area, in line with Policy TCR20. Located at the western end of The Common, at the junction with Lemsford Road, is a parade of shop units in a mixture of A1, A2 and A3 uses, with a bingo hall - nos. 38-54 (evens) The Commons. This serves as a local shopping centre for the residential areas to the west and north and

is designated in the Plan as a small neighbourhood centre, where future uses will be considered against Policy TCR27.

Redevelopment within the Primary Retail Core

- 13.48 In line with the strategy for the town centre, the Council will encourage the redevelopment of land within the primary retail core to provide new retail floorspace, but also for other uses appropriate to the town centre and which can complement the main shopping function of this area, such as food and drink, leisure, community, office and residential uses.
- 13.49 The major opportunity for redevelopment is the land at the eastern end of the town centre, including White Lion Square and Kennelwood car park, bounded by Robin Hood Lane, The Common, Wellfield Road, Queensway and The Arcade. This area of the town centre contains the majority of the vacant property and development here would act as a counterbalance to the Asda store at the western end. Therefore, the Council wishes to see this site brought forward as the priority.
- 13.50 The Council wishes to see the site developed as a whole, in a comprehensive manner, in order to secure a major scheme in the region of 11,000 sq.metres (120,000 sq.feet) of retail floorspace (a net increase of 65,000 sq.feet), which can attract new retailers into the town and anchor this end of the town centre. The Council would not wish to see this site developed in a piecemeal way for a number of smaller schemes, since it does not consider this would create the 'critical mass' to regenerate the town centre.
- 13.51 The land for this site is currently owned by a number of different interests, including the Council and English Partnerships. It is the Council's intention, in conjunction with English Partnerships and a private sector development partner, to bring the site forward for redevelopment. To achieve this it intends to publish a development brief setting out the detailed requirements for the site and select a development partner to develop the scheme. In order to assemble the site it is the Council's intention, in conjunction with English Partnerships and the chosen development partner to negotiate with owners for the purchase of their interests.
- 13.52 The precise mix of uses and the form of the development will be defined in the development brief which will be published as supplementary planning guidance. In broad terms, it is expected that the scheme will be predominantly for retail floorspace, but include provision for residential, leisure and community uses.
- 13.53 The scheme must be designed to a high standard to enhance this end of the town centre. It must also give priority to access for pedestrians, cyclists and buses and satisfy car parking requirements.
- 13.54 Proposals for the redevelopment or refurbishment of other areas of the primary retail core will also be encouraged. Whilst retail uses should predominate, it is important that the town centre provides a diversity of other uses both to serve the needs of the local community and to create life and activity outside of shopping hours. Therefore, food and drink, offices, residential, leisure and cultural uses will also be permitted.

Policy TCR14 - Redevelopment of Land at Eastern End of Hatfield Town Centre

Land at the eastern end of Hatfield town centre, as defined on Inset Map 1, is identified for comprehensive redevelopment for a mixed-use retail-led scheme. Development should only be carried out in accordance with the adopted planning brief for the site approved by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance, which provides detailed guidance on the amount of floorspace, mix of uses, design, access and servicing.

Policy TCR15 - Redevelopment elsewhere in the Primary Retail Core of Hatfield Town Centre

The Council will encourage proposals for the redevelopment or refurbishment of other buildings or sites within the primary retail core of Hatfield town centre, as defined on Inset Map 1, for retail, food and drink, office, residential, community, cultural and leisure uses.

Acceptable Uses within the Primary Retail Core

- 13.55 It is important to continue to maintain and enhance Hatfield Town Centre's role as a shopping centre, during the interim period before the comprehensive redevelopment scheme proposed for the town centre takes place. The primary function of the retail core is to enable the retail trade to serve customers with a wide range of goods, but one of the objectives of the strategy for the town centre is to encourage a greater mix and diversity of uses. No town centre is complete without a variety of service uses catering for other needs of shoppers and town centre workers such as banks, post office facilities and cafés. Whilst these add interest and vitality to the town centre, a proliferation of non-retail uses can result in 'dead' frontages and harm the essential retail function of the town centre. The Council therefore seeks a balance between the protection of the predominant shopping function of the retail core and the need to encourage a lively mix of other uses.
- 13.56 There are a number of issues affecting Hatfield Town Centre that need to be addressed. The relative decline of the town centre as a shopping centre has led to high levels of vacant shops in some frontages within the retail core. In these frontages, the Council will exercise a flexible approach in permitting non-retail uses, whilst still seeking to retain the retail character of the centre as a whole. The Council has therefore designated Mixed Use Frontages, where although retailing will still be the predominant use, other non-retail uses will also be permitted, provided that they do not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole.
- 13.57 Hatfield Town Centre continues to experience pressures for change of use of shop units to non-retail uses, particularly to Class A3 hot food takeaways. Whilst a degree of flexibility is needed, PPG6 recognises that over-concentrations of single uses, such as hot food takeaways, can have cumulative effects that cause local problems. The balance and mixture of uses that is necessary for a healthy and vibrant town centre can thus be undermined. On the other hand, the town centre lacks the provision of cafés and coffee shops that are open during shopping hours. These would be welcomed by shoppers and would enhance the town centre's attraction as a

shopping destination. Therefore, within the primary retail core, the Council will consider granting planning permission for specific uses within Class A3, such as for 'sit-down' cafés/coffee shops or imposing other planning conditions to control the use of the premises, where planning permission would otherwise be refused. In addition, the Council will place a time limit condition of only one year for implementation on any A3 planning permissions granted. This will prevent a 'backlog' of unimplemented planning permissions occurring in the town centre and will enable a much better planned and controlled provision of A3 uses. Benefiting the applicant (in terms of improved clarity of situation) and the Council (in terms of its management and control of uses in the town centre).

- 13.58 The vitality and viability of the individual shopping frontages varies greatly within the retail core. Asda provides a key focal point at the western end of what is effectively the 'High Street' and the main shopping frontages are located in the area between Asda and White Lion Square. These frontages form an important gateway to the rest of the town centre. Similarly, the market and the retail units surrounding it form an important retailing area which acts as an 'advertisement' for the rest of the town centre that, due to its 'inward looking' design, is not visible to passing traffic from the road. Together with The Arcade, these frontages are the hub of the town centre's retail core and form the main shopping axis. The Council will therefore seek to retain the predominant retail function of these frontages.
- 13.59 The designation of Retail and Mixed Use frontages within the retail core is as follows:
- (a) *Retail Frontages* - where to maintain their retail function, a minimum of 70% of the frontage (as a proportion of the length of the frontage) must remain in Class A1 use:
- 68 - 88 (evens) and 19 - 47 (odds) Town Centre;
 - 1 - 35 (odds) Market Place (ground floor);
 - 2 - 14 (evens) and 1 - 21 (odds) The Arcade;
 - Asda, Queensway.
- (b) *Mixed Use Frontages* - the remaining frontages within the primary retail core are designated as Mixed Use Frontages where only 50% of the frontage (as a proportion of the length of the frontage) must remain in Class A1 use and other non-retail uses will also be allowed, including leisure, social and cultural uses:
- 10-66 (evens) Town Square;
 - 1-17 (odds) Town Centre;
 - 2-34 (evens) Market Place (first floor)

Policy TCR16 - Retail Frontages in Hatfield Town Centre

Within the designated Retail Frontages in the primary retail core of Hatfield town centre, as defined on Inset Map 1, a minimum of 70% of any one linear frontage must remain in Class A1 retail use. Therefore, planning permission will be granted for changes of use from Class A1 to Class A2 or A3 uses up to a maximum of 30% of any one linear frontage.

In Retail Frontages where already less than 70% of the linear frontage is in Class A1 use, planning permission will not be granted for change of use to non-retail uses. The only exceptions to this will be if the proposal is for a Class A3 use which would provide an 'eat-in' restaurant or café facility for shoppers, which would:

- (i) Contribute to the overall attractiveness of the town centre; and**
- (ii) Not undermine the retail function of the frontage.**

For changes of use to Class A3, the Council may grant planning permission for a specific use within Class A3 or impose other conditions to control the use of the premises, where planning permission would otherwise be refused.

Planning permission will only be granted where the proposal would not harm the amenities of nearby residential properties.

Proposals for change of use which are acceptable in terms of the policy will be granted permission subject to a one year time limit for implementation.

Within the redevelopment area proposals for changes of use will only be permitted where it would not prejudice the aims and objectives of policy TCR14.

Policy TCR17 - Mixed Use Frontages in Hatfield Town Centre

Within the designated Mixed Use Frontages in the primary retail core of Hatfield town centre, as defined on Inset Map 1, planning permission will be granted for changes of use to Class A1, A2 and A3 uses and for uses which provide community, leisure and cultural facilities. A minimum of 50% of any one linear frontage must remain in Class A1 Retail use and a minimum of 80% in uses within Class A.

In a Mixed Use Frontage where less than 50% of the linear frontage is in Class A1 Retail use, planning permission will not be granted for change of use to non-retail uses.

For changes of use to Class A3, the Council may grant planning permission for a specific use within Class A3 or impose other planning conditions to control the use of the premises, where planning permission would otherwise be refused.

Planning permission will only be granted where the proposal will not harm the amenities of nearby residential properties.

Proposals for change of use which are acceptable in terms of the policy will be granted permission subject to a one year time limit for implementation.

Within the redevelopment area proposals for changes of use will only be permitted where it would not prejudice the aims and objectives of policy TCR14.

13.60 At first floor level and above within the primary retail core, there are also a significant number of offices and residential units. These make an important contribution to the vitality and viability of the town centre, by bringing people into the centre, both during the daytime and evening. Both are also compatible with the Plan's overall aims for sustainable development, helping to bring uses closer together and reduce the need to travel. The Council will therefore continue to support residential and office uses at first floor level in the retail core of the town centre. The only exception to this are the units at first floor level in Market Place (nos. 2-34) which are designated as a Mixed Use frontage and serve an important function for A1, A2 and A3 uses.

Policy TCR18 - First Floor Uses in Hatfield Town Centre

Within the primary retail core of Hatfield town centre, as defined on Inset Map 1, apart from the units at 2-34 Market Place, the Council will grant planning permission for conversion and change of use of buildings at first floor level and above to B1 offices (except where this would result in the loss of residential accommodation) and residential uses.

Within the redevelopment area proposals for changes of use will only be permitted where it would not prejudice the aims and objectives of policy TCR14.

Acceptable Uses outside of the Primary Retail Area

13.61 Outside of the primary retail core, there are two sub-areas which function as part of the town centre, but provide a range of leisure, community, office and residential uses. These are defined in paragraph 13.47 as on the western side of Lemsford Road and on the northern side of The Common. These areas function together with the primary retail core to maintain the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole, by providing a greater diversity of uses and bringing more people into the town centre. In addition, they contribute to a more sustainable pattern of development by providing facilities close to each other, where they are more easily accessible, enabling linked trips to be made and reducing the need to travel. There are also residential areas adjacent to these sub-areas, which would be sensitive to any increase in the intensity of use and activity there. For these reasons it is important that the mix of uses in the Lemsford Road and The Common sub-areas of the town centre are retained.

13.62 Within the Lemsford Road sub-area, the Forum site has potential for redevelopment. This formerly contained a theatre, which due to structural problems in the building is being demolished. The site is currently designated for temporary office and community uses, but the Council wishes to see its redevelopment for a permanent new facility for community, cultural or leisure uses, which will help the regeneration of the town centre. This site fronts onto the strategic link between the town centre and The Galleria and Hatfield Aerodrome site, via St. Albans Road West. It is vital that any redevelopment of the site maintains and enhances that link.

Policy TCR19 - Acceptable Uses outside of the Primary Retail Core (Lemsford Road)

Within Hatfield town centre, on the western side of Lemsford Road, outside of the primary retail core, as defined on Inset Map 1, the Council will support proposals to enhance existing and provide new leisure, cultural and community facilities (for uses within Classes D1 and D2), which will assist the regeneration of the town centre and not harm the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential areas. Consideration will also be given to hotel, office and residential uses as part of any development scheme where these will help to provide leisure, cultural or community facilities.

Any proposals for the redevelopment of the Forum site in this area must maintain and contribute to the strategic link between the town centre and The Galleria and Hatfield Aerodrome site.

Policy TCR20 - Acceptable Uses outside of the Primary Retail Core (The Common)

Within Hatfield town centre, on the northern side of The Common (except for nos. 38-54 (evens) The Common), outside of the primary retail core, as defined on Inset Map 1, the Council will allow proposals for changes of use or redevelopment for office, residential, hotel and community uses (falling within Use Classes B1(a), C1, C3 and D1), subject to the following criteria. They will:

- (i) Assist the regeneration of the town centre and enhance its vitality and viability;**
- (ii) Not harm the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential areas.**

Transport Infrastructure

13.63 The strategy for the town centre aims to make it more accessible by bus, walking and cycling. This includes both access from surrounding residential areas in Hatfield and the links between the town centre, The Galleria and the new local centre on the Hatfield Aerodrome site. Proposals include new pedestrian crossings over the 'ring road' which surrounds the town centre, enhancing the footpath and cycleway routes to The Galleria and providing a bus interchange within the town centre so there is a single drop-off and pick-up point. The redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site will make a major contribution to this infrastructure, but the Council will expect that redevelopment schemes within the town centre should also contribute to these proposals. The centre is already very accessible by car, with a number of free surface level car parks. However, new development will require the introduction of a new parking management strategy, linked to public transport improvements including the provision of a new bus interchange, to avoid parking overspilling into surrounding residential areas.

Policy TCR21 - Transport Infrastructure in Hatfield Town Centre

The Council will require development proposals in Hatfield town centre to contribute, in accordance with Policy IM2, to improving the infrastructure and services for pedestrian, cycle and passenger transport access to and within the town centre and to accord with the Council's Car Parking Strategy.

Town Centre Environment

- 13.64 As a first generation new town, Hatfield town centre has an ageing infrastructure which in many places requires renewal and enhancement. The 'inward-looking' design of the town centre also gives it a poor presence and raises safety and security fears. The proposal to redevelop the eastern end of the town centre presents an opportunity to radically improve the appearance of this part of the centre and accordingly the Council will expect the new buildings to be of a high quality design. This also applies to any redevelopment schemes elsewhere in the town centre.
- 13.65 However, there are also opportunities to improve the public realm elsewhere in the town centre, including landscaping, enhancements to key squares and buildings and new street furniture. The Council will seek to secure public and private sector funds to implement these improvements, but development schemes within the town centre will also be expected to contribute to these schemes and the improvement of the wider public realm.

Policy TCR22 - Town Centre Environment

The Council will seek to enhance and renew the environment of Hatfield town centre through the design of new buildings and environmental improvement schemes. It will require new development to be of good quality design in accordance with the design policies in the plan and to contribute to schemes to improve the wider public realm in the town centre.

Hatfield Market and Farmers' Market

- 13.66 Hatfield Market and the Farmers' Market are considerable assets to the town centre and make an important contribution to the life and viability of the centre, drawing trade from a wider area. The Council wishes to see the markets retained and enhanced. As part of any redevelopment scheme, consideration will be given to the best possible location for the two markets.

Town Centre Strategies

- 13.67 The Council supports the principle of town centre management and recognises that a co-ordinated approach can also benefit smaller shopping centres, such as the large village centres. Many town centres have appointed a full-time town centre manager to promote their town, to assist visitors and act as a point of contact for local businesses and the community. However, the resources of the Council are limited, and benefits can still be obtained by the Council having an enabling role in the co-ordination of private and public sector partnerships.
- 13.68 The Council will therefore work with and co-ordinate the activities of the relevant groups and agencies to develop strategies for the district's town centres and other shopping centres. In preparing such strategies, the Council will seek to actively involve local businesses and the community. These strategies will be reviewed regularly and will provide supporting supplementary guidance to the District Plan.

13.69 The Council has already set up the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Forum, and the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Strategy has been an important element in shaping the planning policies in the District Plan.

Neighbourhood Shopping Centres

- 13.70 The Neighbourhood Centres are local centres situated in residential areas of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. They vary in terms of their size, function and the range of shops and services that they provide. The hierarchy of centres in paragraph 13.10 above defines two broad categories - Large Neighbourhood Centres and Small Neighbourhood Centres.
- 13.71 These centres play an important role in local shopping provision within the district's two main towns. They provide for a range of convenience shopping and service outlets, which meet people's day-to-day needs, complementing the district-wide role of the two town centres. They are closer to where people live and so are more easily accessible, in particular for the less mobile, including elderly people, parents with young children, people with disabilities and people who do not have access to a car. In terms of sustainability, they make a very positive contribution in reducing the need to travel. These centres are large enough to provide a good range of everyday shopping facilities, but are under increasing pressure from service and specialist uses. Whilst it is important that they provide a mix of shopping, services and community facilities, their future viability depends on a predominance of shopping. Therefore, the Council wishes to retain the provision of shopping in these locations, but recognises that it may be appropriate to accommodate some non-retail uses in these centres.
- 13.72 In considering proposals for non-retail uses, the Council will take into account the degree of customer attraction to the proposed use, and the hours of opening, in assessing their impact on the vitality of the centre. For instance, in terms of Class A3 uses, hot food takeaway shops often open only in the evenings, and present an effectively 'dead' frontage during the daytime, when the rest of the shopping parade is open. All day A3 uses, such as cafes are therefore more beneficial in terms of maintaining the vitality of local shopping parades. In cases where the vitality of a shopping centre would be harmed by the granting of planning permission for change of use of a unit to a use that would remain closed during the day, a planning condition may be imposed controlling the hours of opening or the type of A3, where this is necessary to avoid refusing permission. Similarly, the customer attraction of Class A2 uses varies and, where appropriate, the Council will impose conditions to ensure that an A2 use provides a service directly related to a shopping trip, such as a bank or building society. Other non-retail uses, such as surgeries or other community and leisure uses may be considered if it can be demonstrated that they would meet a local community need.
- 13.73 It is recognised that some of the neighbourhood shopping centres may require updating in the future and that this may involve their comprehensive redevelopment. Proposals for the redevelopment of any of the neighbourhood shopping centres should be carried out in accordance with a development brief for the site, which has been subject to public consultation and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The development brief must ensure

that the primary retail function of the centre is retained in any new development.

Large Neighbourhood Centres

13.74 The following centres are identified in the retail hierarchy as Large Neighbourhood Centres - Woodhall, Hall Grove, Haldens and Moors Walk in Welwyn Garden City and Highview in Hatfield. These provide a range of everyday convenience shopping and service facilities for local people which the Council will seek to retain. In order to maintain their predominant function for shopping, a minimum of 60% of the frontage (as a proportion of the number of units) should remain in Class A1 uses.

Policy TCR23 - Large Neighbourhood Centres

In the Neighbourhood Centres of Moors Walk (ground floor level), Woodhall, Hall Grove, and Haldens in Welwyn Garden City and in Highview, Hatfield, the Council will seek to retain the provision of a range of everyday convenience shopping and service facilities for local people. A minimum of 60% of the total frontage of the parade should remain in Retail Class A1 use. Where less than 60% of the frontage of the parade is in retail use, planning permission will not be granted for further loss of retail units.

In addition, proposals for changes of use from Retail Class A1 use, to non-retail, Class A2 or A3 use will only be permitted if all of the following criteria are met:

- (i) The proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of the centre;**
- (ii) Together with existing uses and extant planning permissions for change of use to non-retail, it would not lead to an over-concentration of non-retail uses in any parade;**
- (iii) The presence of vacant units indicates a lack of demand for retail use;**
- (iv) The proposal would not harm the amenities of any nearby residential properties;**
- (v) The proposal would not be detrimental to the highway network including highway safety.**

Other non-retail uses may be permitted, subject to the above criteria, where it can be demonstrated the use would meet a particular local community need.

The Council may grant planning permission for a specific use within Classes A2 or A3, or for a specific leisure, social or cultural use, or may impose conditions to control the use of the premises where planning permission would otherwise be refused.

Old Hatfield

13.75 Old Hatfield has a unique retail function. Whilst retaining some of the characteristics of a Large Village Centre, it does not perform exactly the same functions because it serves the local business community, as well as local residents, and as such displays a mix of specialist and service uses. These

uses are not located in one frontage, but are dispersed within the centre, being based both in and around Salisbury Square. The Council recognises that Old Hatfield has suffered from pressures for change of use from convenience retail uses to either specialist retailing uses, or non-retail uses, such as service and hot food outlets, and that this has eroded the provision of local, convenience shopping. It is therefore considered important to maintain and, if possible, improve the provision of convenience retail uses. Old Hatfield also acts as a local centre for office employment and therefore proposals for B1 office uses may be considered subject to the criteria in Policy TCR26.

Policy TCR24 - Old Hatfield

Within Old Hatfield the council will permit proposals for Class A1 uses, particularly for convenience goods shopping. Proposals for change of use to Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and Class A3 (Food and Drink) will only be permitted where this would not result in the loss of a Class A1 retail unit.

Proposals for change of use to Class B1 Business use will be permitted provided that:

- (i) The proposal would be at first floor level or higher; and**
- (ii) It would not lead to the loss of a Class A1, A2 or A3 use; and**
- (iii) It would not involve the loss of residential accommodation.**

Small Neighbourhood Centres

13.76 The following centres are defined in the retail hierarchy as Small Neighbourhood Centres - Shoplands, Hollybush, Peartree Lane and Handside in Welwyn Garden City and St.Albans Road East, Crawford Road, Roe Green, Manor Parade, Harpsfield Broadway, Birchwood and The Common in Hatfield. Within these centres, there are fewer units and it is therefore essential that they provide a range of local functions and are not allowed to change to non-retail uses that would be more appropriately located in a larger centre and would encourage travel. Local functions include everyday convenience shopping and in some instances services related to a shopping trip such as banks and cafés.

Policy TCR25 - Small Neighbourhood Centres

In the Small Neighbourhood Centres, changes of use from Class A1 Retail use to Class A2 or A3 will not be permitted unless all of the following criteria can be met:

- (i) The loss of the shop would not seriously diminish the provision of local shopping facilities;**
- (ii) The proposed use would add to the vitality and viability of the centre;**
- (iii) The centre would remain predominately in Class A1 Retail use;**
- (iv) It can be demonstrated that the unit has remained vacant for over a year and documentary evidence has been provided that all reasonable attempts to sell or let the premises for continued use as**

a shop have failed, and/or the presence of vacant units in the parade indicates a lack of demand for retail use;

- (v) The proposal would provide adequate highway access and servicing arrangements and would not be detrimental to the highway network, including highway safety.

Other non-retail uses may be allowed, subject to the above criteria, where it can be demonstrated it would address a particular local need.

Village Shops and Services Centres

Large Village Centres

13.77 The Large Village Centres in the district are defined in the retail hierarchy as - Welwyn, Welham Green, Brookmans Park and Cuffley. They are important in that they meet the needs of local residents living both in the settlements in which they are located and in the surrounding rural communities, providing a focus for the community and reducing the need for people to travel. These centres are large enough to provide a good range of everyday shopping facilities, but are under increasing pressure from service and specialist uses. Whilst it is important that they provide a mix of shopping, services and community facilities, their future viability depends on a predominance of shopping. Therefore, the Council wishes to retain the provision of shopping in these locations, but recognises that it may be appropriate to accommodate some non-retail uses in these centres. A minimum of 60% of the frontages of these centres (as a proportion of the number of units) should remain in Class A1 uses.

Policy TCR26 - Large Village Centres

In the Large Village Centres of Welwyn, Welham Green, Brookmans Park and Cuffley, the Council will seek to retain the provision of a range of everyday convenience shopping and service facilities for local people. A minimum of 60% of the total frontage within each centre should remain in Retail Class A1 use. Where less than 60% of the frontage is in retail use, planning permission will not be granted for further loss of retail units.

In addition, proposals for changes of use from Retail Class A1 use, to non-retail, Class A2 or A3 use will only be permitted if all of the following criteria are met:

- (i) The proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of the centre;
- (ii) Together with existing uses and extant planning permissions for change of use to non-retail, it would not lead to an over-concentration of non-retail uses in any parade;
- (iii) The presence of vacant units indicates a lack of demand for retail use;
- (iv) The proposal would not harm the amenities of any nearby residential properties;
- (v) The proposal would not be detrimental to the highway network, including highway safety.

Other non-retail uses may be permitted, subject to the above criteria, where it can be demonstrated the use would meet a particular local community need.

The Council may grant planning permission for a specific use within Classes A2 or A3, or for a specific leisure, social or cultural use, or may impose conditions to control the use of the premises where planning permission would otherwise be refused.

Small Village Centres

13.78 The following centres are defined in the retail hierarchy as Small Village Centres - Woolmer Green, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Digswell. These have a limited number of local shops and services. However, like the Large Village Centres they are important in serving the needs of both their surrounding urban and rural communities. Therefore, the Council wishes to protect these facilities, and, given the already limited provision of local shops and services in these locations, does not consider that further loss of local shops and services should be permitted.

Policy TCR27 - Small Village Centres

In the Small Village Centres of Woolmer Green, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Digswell, changes of use from Class A1 Retail to Class A2 or A3 uses will not be permitted unless all the following criteria are met:

- (i) **The loss of the retail shop would not seriously diminish the provision of local shopping facilities;**
- (ii) **The proposed use would add to the vitality and viability of the parade;**
- (iii) **It can be demonstrated that the unit has remained vacant for over a year and documentary evidence has been provided that all reasonable attempts to sell or let the premises for its existing use have failed and/or the presence of long-term vacant units in the parade indicates a lack of demand for retail use;**
- (iv) **The proposal would provide adequate highway access and servicing arrangements and would not be detrimental to highway safety.**

Other non-retail uses may be allowed, subject to the above criteria, where it can be demonstrated it would address a particular local need.

Individual Shops

13.79 The change of use of individual shops, not located in a parade, to non-retail use, will only be permitted where suitable alternative shopping facilities are available in the immediate locality.

Policy TCR28 - Loss of Individual Local Shops

The loss of individual local shops in Class A1 Retail use will not be permitted unless all the following criteria are met:

- (i) **There is another shop of a similar use available for customers within a convenient walking distance; and**

- (ii) **The alternative use would complement the character and function of the area.**

In the absence of such an alternative, the Council may permit a change of use to non-retail provided that it can be demonstrated that the unit has remained vacant for over a year and documentary evidence has been provided that all reasonable attempts to sell or let the premises for continued use as a shop have failed.

Markets

- 13.80 Markets are a popular form of retailing and there are two represented in the district - the twice-weekly general market and the monthly Farmers' and Craft Market, both held in Hatfield Town Centre. The Farmers' Market has been a great success since its launch in September 1999. It has brought people into Hatfield who would not otherwise shop there and has also reintroduced local people to the town centre. It has assisted small businesses as well as town centre regeneration.
- 13.81 Whilst markets can be held up to 14 times in any one calendar year, without requiring planning permission, there has been some pressure to allow an additional regular market within the district, which would require planning permission.
- 13.82 The environmental consequences of markets taking place in unsuitable locations can be harmful, in terms of the impact of traffic generation, parking problems and disturbance to local residents. Moreover, an additional market may harm the existing general market and Farmers' Market held in Hatfield, and thus undermine the vitality and viability of Hatfield Town Centre itself. Therefore, in considering proposals for new markets, the following policy will be applied.

Policy TCR29 - Markets

Planning permission for a market will only be granted where all of the following criteria can be met:

- (i) It would not harm the vitality and viability of existing markets and retail centres in the district;**
- (ii) It would not harm the residential amenities of any nearby properties, in terms of noise and disturbance;**
- (iii) The proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety;**
- (iv) It would provide adequate access and parking for market traders.**

Car Boot Sales and Other Forms of Temporary Sales

- 13.83 Car boot sales and other temporary forms of sales can also be held for up to 14 days in any one calendar year, provided that the land in question is not within the curtilage of a building. In many cases, car boot sales offer a valuable form of fund raising for local schools and charities, where from time to time the public can sell surplus second hand items. However, they may sometimes be of a different, more commercial nature, attracting professional traders together with hot food and drink stands. By their very nature, car boot

sales attract high levels of car-borne traffic and as a result can cause traffic congestion, high levels of on-street parking, noise and general disturbance to nearby residents. Car boot sales which are located in the Green Belt can have a harmful effect on the landscape and the character of the area.

Policy TCR30 - Car Boot Sales and Other Temporary Sales

Proposals for car boot sales and other forms of temporary sales will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- (i) The proposal would not have an adverse impact on the local transport infrastructure, due to the level of traffic generation, congestion, on-street parking and unauthorised parking that would result;**
- (ii) The vitality and viability of nearby markets and shopping centres would not be harmed;**
- (iii) The proposal would not harm the residential amenities of any nearby properties;**
- (iv) The proposal would not harm the visual amenity of the area; and**
- (v) The proposal would not harm the ecology of the site.**

Within the Green Belt and on Urban Open Land, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will not be granted for such proposals, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated that warrant an exception.

Amusement Centres

- 13.84 Amusement centres and games arcades are a *sui generis* use and will therefore require planning permission. Depending on the type of facility proposed and the likely customers, amusement centres may cause noise and disturbance, and be of concern because of their impact on the amenity of the local area.
- 13.85 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6, "Town Centres and Retail Developments" (HMSO, 1996) provides guidance on the planning considerations to be taken into account in determining applications for amusement centres. It states that they are unlikely to be acceptable in primary shopping areas, close to housing, or near schools, churches, hospitals and hotels. In the light of this advice, the Council considers that they are not acceptable in the retail frontages of Welwyn Garden City or Hatfield town centres.
- 13.86 Amusement centres often generate public concerns regarding possible 'anti-social' behaviour of their customers. Whilst questions of social disorder are matters for the police to deal with, the issue of noise and disturbance that may result is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application for an amusement centre.
- 13.87 If granting planning permission, the Council will give careful consideration to the nature and extent of any planning conditions that may be needed, in order to mitigate any adverse effects of the proposal. These may include conditions limiting opening hours and conditions to limit noise, for example noise attenuation measures such as insulation, self-closing doors, the enclosure of the front of the premises and the prohibition of external loudspeakers.

Policy TCR31 - Amusement Centres

Amusement centres will not be permitted in the retail frontages in Welwyn Garden City or Hatfield town centres.

Elsewhere, proposals for amusement centres will not be permitted where the proposed use would:

- (i) Harm the amenities of nearby residential properties, by reason of noise and disturbance; or**
- (ii) Be located near schools, places of worship, hospitals or hotels; or**
- (iii) Harm the established character or the visual amenity of the area.**

In all cases, applicants will be required to provide details of any proposed new shopfront with an application for change of use, in order to enable the Council to consider whether noise attenuation measures would be possible, and to assess the impact of the proposal on the character and visual amenity of the area.

Petrol Filling Stations

- 13.88 Most proposals for new petrol filling stations include the provision of a building for retail sales. These can provide a wide variety of goods, either directly related to the use as a petrol filling station, such as vehicle accessories, or general retail goods, such as groceries and newspapers. In rural areas, some fulfil the function of a local shop, or small supermarket. Whilst the important

role of these shops is recognised, they should clearly remain ancillary to the main use as a petrol filling station.

- 13.89 New foodstores, small supermarket or fast-food outlets are sometimes proposed as part of the redevelopment of a petrol filling station. Such developments will only be approved where they would not undermine the shopping role of nearby centres or local village shops. Development that is of a scale that is likely to adversely affect other shopping facilities will not be permitted.
- 13.90 Petrol filling stations can be visually intrusive because of their dominant canopies and tendency to brash, corporate advertising. Care must therefore be taken in their design, in order to avoid them appearing visually intrusive in the street scene and harming the established character of the area.
- 13.91 Considerations of traffic safety are fundamental for a use that generates a very large number of vehicle movements. One problem that can arise is that of vehicles obstructing the highway while waiting to be served, which may occur at peak times.
- 13.92 Petrol filling stations can cause harm to the amenities of nearby residents by reason of noise and disturbance. The Council will therefore impose planning conditions to control the hours of opening, when this is necessary to protect residential amenity.

Policy TCR32 - Petrol Filling Stations

Planning permission will only be granted for new petrol filling stations or extensions to existing petrol filling stations where all the following criteria are met:

- (i) The proposal would not harm the residential amenities of nearby properties;**
- (ii) It would provide adequate servicing and access arrangements and would not be detrimental to highway safety;**
- (iii) It would not appear visually intrusive in the street scene nor harm the established character of the area;**
- (iv) Any retailing element would be ancillary to the main use as a petrol filling station and would not harm the vitality and viability of any nearby shopping centres.**

Shop Design – Advertisements, Shopfronts and Accessibility.

- 13.93 The Council wishes to promote good quality design in new shopfronts, including easy and dignified access for the disabled and mobility impaired. Proposals for advertisements and new shopfronts must therefore comply with the Supplementary Design Guidance.

HATFIELD AERODROME SITE

INTRODUCTION

- 14.1 The Hatfield Aerodrome site is the biggest area of redundant industrial land in Hertfordshire. Following the closure of the British Aerospace aircraft manufacturing plant in 1993 and the closure of the associated runway in 1994, the future use of the site has been determined through the Local Plan process and then in more detail through a masterplanning exercise.
- 14.2 A masterplan for the site was adopted by Welwyn Hatfield Council in November 1999. This masterplan, and any subsequently adopted revisions, will provide the detailed guidance for determining planning applications for the redevelopment of the site in future years.
- 14.3 This section of the Plan sets out the key principles for the site's development, lays down the primary matters to be covered by any masterplan for the site, and confirms the current land use allocations for the site, as defined on Inset Map 3 of the Proposals Map.

BACKGROUND

- 14.4 The Hatfield Aerodrome site extends to some 322 hectares (800 acres). Located on the western edge of Hatfield, the majority of the site lies within Welwyn Hatfield District. However, at the southern end of the site, some 56 hectares (140 acres) falls within St.Albans District. This Plan therefore excludes those proposals of the masterplan which are within St.Albans District. In addition the Green Belt boundary effectively divides the site, with 188 hectares of the site being designated as Green Belt, as shown on Inset Map 3.
- 14.5 The site is generally flat and due to the presence of the former runway has few significant areas of trees apart from the southern boundary of the site and Home Covert, which is an area of Ancient Woodland found in the Green Belt part of the site.
- 14.6 The recently developed areas of the Hatfield Business Park and Bishops Square border the site to the north west and south east respectively. The land to the north of Hatfield Avenue was used for industrial purposes, and associated sports ground and informal open space. The land to the south of Hatfield Avenue was the location for the aircraft manufacturing plant and associated runway. In overall terms the Inset area, excluding the Green Belt, is considered to be previously developed land.
- 14.7 There are a number of Listed Buildings on the site. Within Welwyn Hatfield District these comprise: -
- The Flight Test Hanger – Grade 2*
 - The Administration Building, Canteen and Gatehouse – Grade 2
 - Astwick Manor – Grade 2
- 14.8 The majority of the area of the Masterplan site within the Green Belt is identified within the Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan as a Preferred Area for Mineral Extraction. The site is identified in the Hertfordshire County Council

Waste Local Plan as an Area of Search for the siting of permanent facilities for materials recovery. An opportunity for a Material Recovery Facility is identified within the Business Area on the Hatfield Aerodrome site in the Section 106 Agreement accompanying the outline planning permission. It is also part of the Watling Chase Community Forest as defined within the District Plan and the Community Forest Plan.

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

14.9 The objectives for the development of the site have evolved over many years. These reflect local concerns which have been identified through public consultation on both the District Plan and the masterplan. They also reflect national, regional and other strategic planning policy as it applies generally to new development and the specific considerations of development in this location. The list of objectives is as follows:

1. The development should be sustainable.
2. The site should provide employment including an element to meet local needs.
3. The site should provide land for housing including an element to meet local needs.
4. The site should provide scope for the presence of the University of Hertfordshire.
5. The development should be well integrated with Hatfield and surrounding towns, with good pedestrian, cycle and public transport links.
6. The development should contain an aero-based heritage facility.
7. The development should provide high standards of environment, open space and leisure facilities.
8. The retention and provision of social and community facilities should be achieved.
9. The Green Belt should be enhanced and made more accessible. The Green Belt boundary will remain fixed.

POLICIES

Sustainable Development of the Site

- 14.10 Within the context of Central Government Policy, regional policy and the policies of the approved County Structure Plan, the redevelopment of such an important and large site such as the Hatfield Aerodrome, must be led by principles of sustainability. This should apply to all aspects of the development, starting from the overall mix of uses, through the construction processes, to the detailed layout and design of individual buildings and parcels of open land and landscaping.
- 14.11 Sustainability principles have been used to guide the preparation of the currently adopted masterplan for the site. The masterplan was subject to a

Sustainability Appraisal during its preparation. It is critical that in any subsequent revision of the masterplan the same principles apply.

- 14.12 The principles and sustainability tests established during that process were subsequently incorporated into the masterplan, and will be used in order to assess whether individual planning applications for development of the site meet those sustainability objectives.

Policy HATAER1 - Sustainable Development of the Site

The development of the whole of the Inset Area will be based on the principles of sustainability. This will apply to all aspects of the development including layout, mix of uses, orientation and design of buildings, energy efficiency and the need to provide an integrated transport system. The sustainability tests and principles which were developed to assess the content of the Hatfield Aerodrome masterplan, will be used to assess whether individual planning applications are in conformity with this policy.

Mixed Use

- 14.13 One of the key principles of sustainable land use planning is the juxtaposition of housing with employment and community services, in order to afford the maximum opportunity for trips to be made on foot, bicycle or on public transport. This objective of creating mixed-use developments is emphasised in particular in PPG1 and PPG13, together with other Government Guidance on sustainable development.
- 14.14 The Hatfield Aerodrome site is of a scale where it is possible to achieve a true mix of development, notwithstanding the site's strategic role for employment development. Creating a mixed-use development is therefore a primary objective for the site.
- 14.15 One of the components of the mixed-use development of the site is the new campus for the University of Hertfordshire. The university is a major factor in the local economy, and the new campus has enabled the university to consolidate in Hatfield, whilst also meeting some of the deficiencies of the existing campus in terms of facilities and residential accommodation.
- 14.16 However, given the site's location on the western edge of Hatfield, and the need to protect and enhance the vitality of the existing Town Centre and the Galleria shopping complex, this site is not considered suitable for retail development, other than that to meet the local needs of people living or working on the site.

Policy HATAER2 – Mixed Use

The redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome Inset Site, outside the Green Belt, should provide for a variety of land uses. The principal uses of the site will be for employment, housing and educational purposes, in the form of a new university campus. Other uses and proposals, including aviation heritage, community facilities, leisure and sports facilities, public open space and securing public access to the Green Belt, will also form an integral part of the development. Any retail and

leisure development shall be located within the local centre for the site and will be limited in scale to that necessary to meeting local needs.

Requirement for a Masterplan

- 14.17 Given the scale and complexity of the redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site, there is a need for both detailed guidance in terms of what development will be acceptable, how development and the provision of facilities and infrastructure will be co-ordinated, and specific design guidance to ensure a high quality environment is achieved. In a development of this scale there is also a need to clearly set out the basis for establishing the range and content of planning obligations. It is not the role of the District Plan to provide such detailed guidance. The role of the District Plan should be to set out the guiding principles that will govern the development of the site, both during and beyond this Plan period.
- 14.18 The more detailed level of guidance required is best provided in the form of a masterplan for the site. In order to give weight to the masterplan and to ensure that there is a clear and consistent approach taken to individual planning applications for development of the site, it will be a requirement of the District Plan that the masterplan for the site be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, as set out in PPG12.
- 14.19 In order to be effective the guidance should:
- (a) Set out in detail the sustainable principles and tests which will be used to assess all development on the site;
 - (b) Clarify the quantum of development and use of each part of the site;
 - (c) Identify the infrastructure required to service the specified quantum of development;
 - (d) Ensure that the site is designed in a cohesive and comprehensive manner;
 - (e) Identify key elements of phasing of the development of the site;
 - (f) Set out the key design principles which set the overall quality of design;
 - (g) Give specific guidance on the form development will take within each sub-area of the site;
 - (h) Identify clearly those matters for which development contributions will be sought.
- 14.20 As PPG12 sets out, in order for the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance to be achieved, any guidance must be subject to public consultation. The masterplan will also be prepared jointly by the relevant landowners and the Local Planning Authorities.
- 14.21 Whilst the first masterplan for the site has been prepared and was adopted by the Local Planning Authorities in November 1999, it is recognised that there will be a need to keep the masterplan up to date and review it formally. Whilst the masterplan should be sufficiently flexible to deal with minor changes, should there be a significant change of circumstances of relevance to the development of the site, for instance as the result of changes in national,

regional or structure planning guidance, there will be a need to carry out a formal review of the masterplan.

Policy HATAER3 - Requirement for a Masterplan

The development of the Hatfield Aerodrome site should be in accordance with the adopted masterplan which expands on the objectives, policies and proposals of the District Plan. The masterplan has been prepared jointly by the Local Planning Authority and the relevant landowners.

Any subsequent reviews of the masterplan will be subject to public consultation prior to adoption by the Council.

Alterations to the masterplan of a minor nature will only be allowed at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority.

Land Use Proposals

- 14.22 The Masterplan, which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in November 1999, sets out the amount and disposition of each major land use proposed for the site. The Land Use Plan which sets out this disposition of uses has been incorporated into the District Plan, and can be seen in the Hatfield Aerodrome Inset of the Proposals Map.
- 14.23 It is appropriate that the major land use areas are set out in the District Plan, together with an indication of likely floorspace.

Policy HATAER4 – Land Use Proposals for the Hatfield Aerodrome Site

The land use proposals for the development of the Hatfield Aerodrome site are set out in Inset Map 3 of the Proposals Map.

The land use proposals are as follows: (see over for table)

Land Use Proposals for the Hatfield Aerodrome Site

Land Use	Area (Acres)	Area (Hectares)	Quantum
Residential Area (north)	45.1	18.3	
Residential Area (south)	57.6	23.3	
Residential Area (adjacent to District Centre)	7.0	2.8	
Employment	115.0	46.5	191,000m²
Local Centre	24.1	9.8	
Primary School	6.0	2.4	
University	30.0	12.1	
Budget Hotel	2.0	0.8	
Business Hotel	6.0	2.4	
Aviation Heritage Centre	2.55	1.0	
Infrastructure and strategic landscaping	25.9	10.5	
Green Belt (north)	18.5	7.5	
Green Belt (south)	304.0	123.7	Remaining area within St.Albans District
Bishop Square (existing employment)	15.8	6.4	
Total	800.0	323.8	