



HERTFORDSHIRE GUIDE TO GROWTH-2021 FIVE YEARS ON

JAMES HULME SUSAN PARHAM

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ATOC – Association of Train Operating Companies
- BRE – Building Research Establishment
- CABE – Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
- CPRE – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
- CRTB – Community Right to Build
- DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government
- DfT – Department for Transport
- HIPP – Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership
- HPG – Hertfordshire Planning Group
- LEP – Local Enterprise Partnership
- NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework
- NDO – Neighbourhood Development Order
- PINS – Planning Inspectorate
- RSS – Regional Spatial Strategy
- SEP – Strategic Economic Plan
- SPD – Supplementary Planning Document
- SSCI – Scottish Sustainable Communities Series
- TOD – Transport Oriented Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Five years ago the University of Hertfordshire and our Chancellor, Lord Salisbury, sponsored the Hertfordshire Charrette, which was guided by Andrés Duany with assistance from the BRE and Turnberry Consultants, and involved a wide range of stakeholders with interests in the future of the county. Unusually, the Charrette had a broad focus on placemaking across the county rather than looking at just one settlement. It offered Hertfordshire residents and professionals the opportunity to work directly with a design team developing sustainable growth strategies.

That process produced the excellent *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* (2008) which focused on six general ‘Scenarios’ by which the county might grow in the years until 2021, and an analysis of typical urban models, including a critique of the design of the New Town of Stevenage, and case studies, including village and hamlet extensions.

Since that time certain ‘structural’ things have changed. The county’s growth targets in the form of housing allocations put forward by the East of England Plan were abandoned, as was the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the new Localism and Decentralisation Act came into force. Yet similar issues for the county remain: how to deal sustainably with pressures and requirements for growth; how to improve resilience in relation to the environment, and the social and economic life of the county; and how to harness the benefits of development while minimising any cost to communities.

Against this backdrop it seemed timely to review where we have come from and consider directions for the future in relation to the county’s future development in the light of the ideas generated by the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*.

This intensive three-month research project has recently been completed and has produced this report: the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On*.

1.2 Aims of the research

The research aimed to do three things:

- To review where we have come from in the nearly five years since the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* was produced as a result of the Hertfordshire Charrette process;
- To consider directions for the future in relation to the county’s development in the light of the ideas generated for making Hertfordshire a better place to live; and
- To draw conclusions on the basis of the findings and analysis, for any further work to assist in the objective of making Hertfordshire a better place to live.

Specifically, in the light of the six scenarios and the case studies set out in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, the research explored the following questions:

- How has planning practice at county and national level influenced the nature of development in the county since 2008?

- How have issues of environmental sustainability been approached?
- How have transport and accessibility considerations been taken into account?
- How have the needs of business and retailing been considered and what outcomes have occurred?
- How have development proposals responded to these challenges?
- How have social and resource needs been taken into account?
- What specific design strategies have been employed to respond to the full range of sustainability and resilience requirements spanning economic, social and environmental factors at play in the county?
- Have the proposals in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* helped to guide the direction of development and planning in the county at strategic, settlement wide and neighbourhood level?
- Is there continued scope for using charrette methods to explore and address these considerations in a holistic way at strategic level and in local and regional practice?

1.3 Overview of the research process

The research for this report has been undertaken by Centre for Sustainable Communities Research Fellow, James Hulme, reporting to Dr Susan Parham, the Centre's Head of Urbanism, who defined the research topic and brief and co-wrote and edited the report. A planning and design team of Stephanie Grey, McKenzie O'Neill and Thomas Powell very kindly provided by Turnberry Consulting to support the project provided assistance with interviews and other research tasks.

The focus of the research has been both a review of the Core Strategy positions of the main local authorities that are planning growth in Hertfordshire, and an exploration of the views of major landowners in relation to the research questions.

Interviews were undertaken with staff (and sometimes with elected members) at nine of the ten local authorities in the county (one authority declined to take part); exploring their perspectives on growth, their responses to the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, and individual officer views on collaborative design focused planning in principle and practice. The authorities approached represent the main areas

of proposed growth – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, East Hertfordshire District Council, Dacorum Borough Council and Stevenage Borough Council.

Interviews have also been conducted with a number of landowners in the county who are intending or may in future seek to develop landholdings for urban development.

The research team was also fortunate to be able to spend a morning and conduct a detailed interview with Andrés Duany who led the original research for *The Guide to Growth*.

Once the primary research phase was completed high-level feedback was also sought from Local Authority elected members, to allow scope for their comment on the draft report.

1.4 Overview of the research methods

Based on the aims and research questions outlined above, this research used methods which are mainstream to social science to explore the relevant research questions. Initial desk research was augmented by twenty interviews and five group meetings with stakeholders. Semi-structured interview results were then transcribed and analysed.

Stage One comprised a detailed desktop study of written sources about planning, development and housing growth in Hertfordshire, also reviewing literature dealing with regional and national issues where appropriate. The focus was on the following questions:

- What has the Guide stimulated in terms of actions in Hertfordshire?
- How influential has the Charrette process been in Hertfordshire?
- What influence has there been on Local Development Frameworks and Core Strategy through emerging Hertfordshire Local Plans?
- What part do the Guide and Charrette process play in broader planning policy nationwide?
- How has the Guide progressed the work of thought leaders in this field?
- Have significant gains been made in terms of environmental, social and economic sustainability thinking in Hertfordshire and beyond?
- What more can be done by landowners, developers, local government and designers of the built environment in Hertfordshire and beyond?

Stage Two of the research process was primarily comprised of interviews and evidence gathering. This included:

- Desktop review of ten Core Strategies and Local Plans across Hertfordshire;
- Nine telephone-based and face-to-face questionnaire format interviews with planning officers and planning portfolio holders (elected members);
- Eleven interviews with landowners and promoters of sustainable development.

Stage Three comprised the analysis and structuring of findings as a themed report (as outlined at Stage One of the research process), revising this as necessary as the last of the primary data and review input was received.

This was followed by circulation to key contacts, including all those interviewed, with revisions as necessary.

2. THE PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN CONTEXT

2.1 National planning five years on

The landscape of both the UK housing market and planning policy for growth has changed considerably since the Hertfordshire Charrette took place in June 2008, with major impacts on both the direction and scale of new home delivery. The most influential factors on growth patterns in the intervening five years have been a depressed national and global economy, consistently low numbers of UK housing starts, a change of government in 2010 and subsequent revision of planning policy with the intention of deregulating and stimulating a moribund construction industry.

2.2 The economy and growth

From mid 2006 the withdrawal of confidence in the housing sector (triggered by the US sub-prime mortgage crisis) saw a steep reduction in credit available to house-builders and mortgage borrowers. This led to a drastic fall in housing starts, with UK numbers over the five year period 2007-2012 dropping to a quarterly average of 25,000, half that of the market's peak in Quarter One 2007. The total number of housing starts for 2012 remained under 100,000; continuing to reflect a weak market despite government incentives to new build on both demand and supply sides. These measures include the coalition government's New Homes Bonus (a grant aid scheme to local authorities rewarding growth), Get Britain Building (a time limited loan scheme for developers) and most recently, Help to Buy (government backed mortgage credit lending for buyers). This low annual supply figure contrasts sharply with a forecast

demand remaining at 250,000 homes per year based on long-term national household projections.

House prices for both new and previously built homes had, by mid 2013, recovered to their 2007 levels and continue to rise in the overheated markets of London and the South East. This trend is fuelled by the resurgence in confidence in the London economy, with an influx of foreign investment spending at the top of the market, which has led to a cascade effect in London and the South East diaspora, including Hertfordshire. Price levels have brought renewed buoyancy to the development sector, with housing starts calculated as six per cent greater by Summer 2013 than the figure at Quarter Two 2012. However, the UK housing market is still moving cautiously, with both mortgage borrowing and housing starts representing some fifty per cent of 2007 levels. Access to development finance also remains limited for builders of new homes.

Despite the stimulation of the mortgage market through the Help to Buy initiative, limited borrowing capacity remains the norm for many in the housing market, especially new entrants aspiring to home ownership. Compounded by the undersupply of new homes, this has two major implications – the reduction in owner occupation, a significant driver of the new homes market, and an emerging affordability crisis (especially for first time buyers) that has propelled housing and growth up the political agenda.

The expansion of the private rented sector is a significant influence on the direction of housing, with as yet unknown consequences for new home building. Currently, most activity in the rental sector is focused on the letting of previously built homes, with only limited discernible appetite for build to let. New incentives for take up of Build to Let by Government, as well as a shift in attitudes to residential rental by institutional investment, may promote the market for new build homes for rent in the near future.

2.3 National planning policy

The general election of May 2010 had been fought against a backdrop of global economic recession, the collapse of the banking sector in autumn 2008 and a depressed UK economy, particularly the construction sector. The new coalition government sought to stimulate housing growth as a priority, in particular through major reforms to planning policy guidance (the Planning Policy Guidance series of documents) issued by central government. Proposals were released in July 2011 to reduce thousands of pages of detailed guidance on housing layout and density, town centres, energy conservation, heritage, ecology, flood risk, and other aspects of the built environment to just fifty-two pages of mandatory policy called the National Planning Framework (NPPF).

Faced with a sustained campaign from the Conservative voter "heartland" revisions were made, before the National Planning Policy

Framework was adopted on 26th March 2013 and published on 27th March, 2012. At the heart of the Framework is the "presumption in favour of sustainable development". Simultaneously, the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) that determined housing growth targets nationally have been revoked, meaning local authorities are responsible for determining, and delivering, the scale of growth in their own Local Plan making. These plans must however be determined "sound" by independent examination, ensuring the provision of housing and other elements of land use are consistent with economic and social needs.

Detractors of the National Planning Policy Framework, including the National Trust, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, (which launched a campaign against the proposals) have suggested that the streamlined rules offer a mandate to developers to press their legal right to build at scale and in rural locations where Local Authority plans are incomplete or out of date. Campaigners also claimed the National Planning Policy Framework had weakened policy for the development of brownfield land first, as well as that which supported town centres as the location for major retail rather than out-of-town shopping centres. Certainly, the threat of challenges to indeterminate Local Plans by major developers hung over a good proportion of local authorities some months after the deadline for the production of plans set by the Secretary of State as April 2013.

The key innovations of the National Planning Policy Framework are:

The abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and their centrally determined housing targets.

The preparation of Local Plans by every Local Authority, assessed through independent examination.

The evidence based assessment of housing land provision within the Local Plan.

Plans will have to be compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and be realistic and deliverable in both housing targets and sites, in order to be found sound.

Local authorities have a duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities on cross boundary planning as geography, travel to work areas and prevalent housing markets require.

Local authorities without up to date Local Plans will have no mechanism to refuse development proposals.

Neighbourhood Plans, which must be compliant with the Local Plan, can be written as supplementary planning guidance for communities who want to implement specific amenity or aesthetic improvements (e.g. neighbourhood facilities, locally owned housing or design guidance).

There is a general presumption against inappropriate development of Green Belt land, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

2.4 Green belt land

The last point, concerning green belt, is of particular relevance to Hertfordshire's growth plans. The politically charged professional and public debate on National Planning Policy Framework saw both Secretary of State Eric Pickles and then Planning Minister Greg Clarke make unequivocal statements that green belt was protected under the new measures. There is a large amount of uncertainty in Hertfordshire as to the position in relation to green belt land, where a large proportion of the available land for development is currently thus designated.

Hertfordshire's location close to London, with quick commuter rail links at the heart of the acutely undersupplied South East housing market makes it both a focal point and test bed for the coalition's attempts to stimulate growth. Interview findings seem to suggest that differences exist between parliamentary policy direction and the views of the electorate and council leaders in this, a traditionally Conservative led area. Throughout this research, planners have pointed to the abolition of centrally established housing targets and perceived uncertainty on issues such as green belt as factors leading to uncertainty, and delay, in the county's growth plans.

2.5 Collaborative planning

Since 2008, the emergence of several new statutory instruments suggests that government ordinance for collaborative

planning, a movement that has been gaining force in the UK since the 1970s, has become a statutory stage in planning for growth. The publication of the Localism Bill (2011) included planning reform in a raft of measures designed to give local communities a stronger say in how they develop.

One of the main principles embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework proposals was the devolution of planning decision-making to a local level, involving local people. In line with this principle, several novel statutory mechanisms were introduced that grant local development powers; most notably the Neighbourhood Plan, Neighbourhood Development Orders and the Community Right to Build.

Consistent with these initiatives, local authorities have a duty to involve local people in the preparation of Local Development Documents. A consideration in the soundness of local plans is the early and thorough consultation with local people. This gives further weight to the principle of collaborative planning; both first principles and the development of specific sites.

2.6 Neighbourhood Planning and Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs)

Neighbourhood planning can be taken forward by two types of body - town and parish councils or neighbourhood forums. Neighbourhood forums are community groups that are designated to take forward neighbourhood planning

in areas without parishes. It is the role of the Local Planning Authority to determine the legitimacy of a representative neighbourhood forum proposed for any given neighbourhood. (www.planningportal.gov.uk)

Neighbourhood forums and parish councils can use new neighbourhood planning powers to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. These are described legally as neighbourhood development plans. In an important change to the planning system, communities can use neighbourhood planning to permit the development they want to see - in full or in outline - without the need for planning applications. These are called Neighbourhood Development Orders. (www.planningportal.gov.uk)

Proposed neighbourhood development plans or Orders need to gain the approval of a majority of voters of the neighbourhood to come into force. If proposals pass the referendum, the Local Planning Authority is under a legal duty to bring them into force (www.planningportal.gov.uk). They must however be in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, be compliant with the Local Plan and be compatible with EU obligations and human rights. The point of compliance means that NDPs cannot be used as a mechanism to inhibit development or growth determined in the local plan.

2.7 Community Right to Build (CRTB)

Even without a Neighbourhood Plan, a Community Right to Build is a type of

Neighbourhood Development Order that allows certain community organisations to bring forward smaller-scale development on a specific site, without the need for planning permission. This gives communities the freedom to develop small-scale housing schemes and other facilities that they want. (www.torridge.gov.uk)

Community right to build orders are subject to a limited number of exclusions, such as proposals needing to fall below certain thresholds so that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. Proposals are subject to testing by an independent person and a community referendum (Planning Portal. April 2013).

The emergence of these instruments posits the kind of local control and fine grain assessment of sites that would facilitate many of the design interventions (particularly infill sites) explored through the *Hertfordshire Guide To Growth*. Additionally, their adoption as policy and promotion by national government has led to a groundswell of new collaborative planning initiatives that are themselves a validation of the Charrette approach.

2.8 Collaborative planning in practice since 2008

Concurrent with the issue of the National Planning Policy Framework for consultation, the coalition government announced a Department for Communities and Local Government funded scheme *Supporting*

Communities In Planning that promoted good collaborative planning practice throughout England. The supporting groups who bid to offer collaborative planning advice were Planning Aid, Locality, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the Prince's Foundation for Building Community (PFBC). Using written guidance, advice portals (telephone, email and social media) and live demonstration projects with local communities, the scheme successfully introduced the new neighbourhood planning mechanisms, as well as the National Planning Policy Framework to a broad range of new participants in community planning activities.

In Scotland, government's active support for collaborative planning came through the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI). Launched in 2008 the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative aimed to raise standards and promote skills in sustainable housing led developments, and to reward exemplars of community development. Of particular note was the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative Charrette Series, a month-long programme in which the firms Duany Plater Zyberk (DPZ) and Turnberry, combining design and planning disciplines, conducted Charrettes on three sites across Scotland. The series, which took place in March 2010, considered growth strategies and proposed urban design solutions for Ladyfield (Dumfries), Lochgelly (Fife), and Grandhome (Aberdeen).

As well as government supported initiatives, the private sector has also actively promoted collaborative planning, usually through the

partnership of a landowner-promoter with an experienced practitioner in the field. The period in question for this research has been one of both financial restriction for developers and planning uncertainty, so collaborative planning practice has been focused on much longer-term timeframes; notable examples include Tornagrain, a new community in North East Scotland promoted by the Moray Estates. A Charrette approach was initiated by the Estates in February 2007, and successfully led by Duany Plater Zyberk. At the other end of the country, the Ashfield Estate in Hampshire has used collaborative planning to propose a new urban extension to Romsey, employing the Prince's Foundation for Building Community and using its *Enquiry by Design* methodology.

It is salutary that Hertfordshire has become a centre for good collaborative planning practice since the Charrette of 2008. Combining factors of large housing growth pressures and a scarcity of suitable sites has prompted the adoption of Charrette or similar processes in several boroughs. Worthy of mention, too, is the relatively high level of knowledge on planning issues in the local population, further stimulating an active debate on growth. All these factors have led to an ongoing programme of Charrette type engagements across the county. Some of these feature as case studies later in this report.

2.9 Sustainability policy

The energy performance of new homes in England and Wales has been under scrutiny since the timeline towards Zero Carbon Homes 2016

was established in 2006. The yardstick for delivery of low energy homes was the Code for Sustainable Homes, which established a stepped scale of performance levels from one to six, which could be adopted as targets by developers and local authorities. Code Level 6 represented a house with a "Zero Carbon" footprint, to be achieved through a combination of excellent thermal insulation for all fabric elements and on-site renewable energy provision.

Adoption of higher levels of the Code has, during a period of innovation, been either the decision of individual developers or included as a condition of planning permission at the discretion of local authorities. Additionally, certain funding regimes have stipulated a Code requirement, in particular the mandatory adoption of Code Level 3 by builders of affordable housing funded or part funded through the Government's Homes and Communities Agency. To date, achievement of the upper Code performance levels (4-6) has been generally confined to largely experimental or one-off high value homes, while the technologies needed to achieve these levels continue to develop for mainstream markets.

In general, the dialogue on energy performance for new homes continues to centre on debate about the validity of the Zero Carbon target. Relying on a high degree of technological dependency, zero carbon homes will remain expensive to both build and run, despite savings in energy

consumption. The legal framework for energy performance is Part L of the building regulations and is next due to be upgraded in 2014. The debate is now shifting to the efficacy of a “fabric first” approach to building, improving the thermal envelope of buildings to the highest possible standard. Meanwhile, policy changes in the energy generation sector such as widespread adoption of wind power and the re-emergence of nuclear sources are intended to decarbonise the supply chain for domestic heating and lighting.

At the scale of the neighbourhood or town, the retraction of town centre and brownfield planning policies at the national level leaves decision making about land use planning to local authorities. Early evidence suggests that this will be a move backward for low carbon policies focused on housing density and sustainable transport. Unfortunately, local authorities will be obliged to consider more peripheral housing sites brought forward for development by the private sector as easier and cheaper to develop than more central, previously developed land. The implication for Hertfordshire of this relaxation of the environmental policy framework is considered later in the report.

2.10 Innovations in architecture and urban design – some brief examples

Planning and designing for construction of course continued through the downturn, albeit at a reduced rate and focused on high value

market areas. The cautious state of the housing market has meant few new large schemes have been proposed and still fewer developed beyond the drawing board. The recession also dealt a significant blow to attempts to promote design quality. In particular the scaling back and merger of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) with the Design Council meant that very little new national guidance on urban design has been forthcoming.

Whilst this is consistent with the coalition government’s localism agenda and the strictures of the National Planning Policy Framework, further promotion of the new urban design and urbanist models that had gained such strong ground since the Urban Task Force report of 1998 seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. While examples of good current practice do exist, they remain the exception rather than the rule, and in the absence of any strong forum for debate, opportunities for sharing valuable lessons are likely to be lost.

The scope of this report does not permit a critique of poor urban design practice since 2008 although examples are plentiful. However, it is worth referring to some recently built developments or schemes in planning that demonstrate good UK urban and architectural practice that is consistent with the settlement models and design characteristics promoted in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*. Some examples are offered below.



Figure 1: The transect approach as a basis for shaping urban development at Tornagrain (Source: Turnberry Consulting)



Figure 2: Tornagrain development (Source: Ben Pentreath and Associates)

Tornagrain, Inverness-Nairn corridor

The Moray Estates scheme for nearly 5000 homes in a new community is an established component of the A96 (Inverness-Nairn) Corridor Growth Strategy. It is the largest new development planned by Duany Plater Zyberk to a “traverse” based settlement pattern (see illustration above) and urbanist principles of mixed use, walkable neighbourhoods and attractive architecture.

A decision notice on the outline application is expected to be issued shortly and, based on this timetable, the scheme is now in a detailed design phase, anticipating an application for the first homes in 2014, once developer commitment is in place. In addition to housing proposals, Moray Estates are advancing a detailed infrastructure scheme. Coordinating all aspects of funding and planning timetables, Moray anticipate being on site in the fourth quarter of 2014.



Figure 3: Queen Mother Square, Poundbury (Source: Duchy of Cornwall)

Poundbury, Dorchester

The Duchy of Cornwall has continued to develop Poundbury, Dorchester's urban extension, to a masterplan by Leon Krier. When completed Poundbury will have 2250 homes, a population of around 4500-5000 and around 2500-3000 people working there. With the establishment of distinct neighbourhood centres, walkable and pedestrian friendly street patterns, and a mix of uses and housing tenures, Poundbury arguably represents the most consistent urbanist development in the United Kingdom. The scheme has now reached a mature phase with the building of the South West Quadrant and the advanced status of the new retail and commercial centrepiece of the development, Queen Mother Square.



Figure 4: Knockroon town extension (Source: Image by Richard Ivey, courtesy of The Prince's Foundation for Building Community)

Knockroon, East Ayrshire

An urban extension to the East Ayrshire town of Cumnock was proposed as part of the revival of the Dumfries House Estate in East Ayrshire. Zero C and Hope Homes have been the lead developers of an urban extension that will eventually see the completion of 700 homes in distinct neighbourhoods. The first phase has been brought to market and contains a range of house types designed in a Scottish vernacular style.



Figure 5: New housing, Roussillon Park, Chichester (Source: Ben Pentreath and Associates)

Roussillon Park, Chichester

An infill development of contemporary urbanism by Zero C developments, Roussillon Park utilises a former military brownfield site close to the centre of Chichester. Designed around traditional street patterns, including garden squares, the scheme incorporates a range of houses and flats in a complementary architecture updating the city's Georgian character for contemporary living. Urban design features include active street frontages, hidden car parking, home zones, pedestrian safe streets and the retention of mature planting to enhance gardens and green spaces.



Figure 6: New housing at Accordia, Cambridge (Source: Wikicommons)

Accordia - Cambridge

Accordia is an infill scheme on previously developed land in Cambridge, built between 2003–2010 by Countryside Properties to a brief by Cambridge City Council. The development includes 378 dwellings (of which 166 are flats and 212 are houses); of these 30% are affordable housing. The site also accommodates new build offices, although not integrated with the homes. The developers appointed Feilden Clegg Bradley as main architects of Phase 1 with other elements by Maccreanor Lavington and Alison Brooks Architects. Although the design of phases differs, the scheme has a consistent urban character, with active street frontages, a predominance of terraced housing configurations, and the employment of a consistent palette of materials, principally local brick facings. Small gardens or roof terraces for each house are supplemented by larger areas of shared green space.

3. HERTFORDSHIRE'S GROWTH POSITION - KEY TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Overview of perspectives from local authorities

In this section we review findings from interviews with nine local authorities in Hertfordshire (one authority declined to take part in the research) and present conclusions about the influence of the *Guide for Growth* in relation to settlement patterns, sustainability, collaborative planning and Hertfordshire's Strategic Growth Position as of late 2013.

As discussed in Section 2, the national deadline for the submission of Local Plans for inspection was set by the Secretary of State for Planning at March 2013. In terms of process, independent planning inspectors must look at all local plan documents that local authorities in England prepare for an examination: the examination is the last stage of the process for producing a local plan (www.planningportal.gov.uk). The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) is the body responsible for examination of Local Plans, and maintains a national database of Plan progress – at September 2013 half of the planning authorities in England had an adopted Local Plan, although of these, only fifty-one had entered the examination process under the new National Planning Policy Framework.

In Hertfordshire, the percentage matches the national average with five out of ten planning authorities having a Local Plan. Of these, three Local Plans are approved, one is in the process of examination and one more has been withdrawn pending review.

3.2 Summary of local plans and housing growth in Hertfordshire

In this section we provide a summary of the status and content of Local Plans in Hertfordshire, which is based on all available data at September 2013. With several of the Hertfordshire Local Plans undetermined or in the examination process, the most up-to-date projection of housing numbers within the forthcoming plan period has been used from each Local Authority. Where a range exists, the upper figure has been adopted.

The planning changes reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework highlighted in the previous section of this report appear to have had a significant impact on the preparation of growth strategies across Hertfordshire. With the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategy housing targets in the East of England Plan, each Local Authority has had to determine its own evidence base for growth over a defined period.

The emergence of the National Planning Policy Framework has also prompted the need for Local Plans to be prepared for each Planning Authority – to date, three Hertfordshire districts have adopted plans, one is submitted for examination, one is in public consultation and five are at different stages of drafting. While each of the ten planning authorities have drawn

up statements about future growth, clear evidence that growth will continue at the same rate as that proposed in the revoked Regional Spatial Strategy of the East of England Plan is as yet incomplete (see Table 1). Since the Regional Spatial Strategy figures used by the *Hertfordshire Guide To Growth* were for a period ending in 2021, and the emerging plans run up to ten years later, the most straightforward way to compare the two is through averaging a figure for homes built per annum.

Of course, it is acknowledged that housing is only one aspect of growth, and can only be provided in the context of employment, services, transport infrastructure, education and health provision.

However, as with the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, the construction of new homes is a natural focal point for analysis, with household projections for South East England vastly outpacing predicted supply. Satisfying the demand for residential development will be the focus of construction in a recovering market, and new homes must therefore be the dominant signifier in any analysis of Hertfordshire's growth performance.

The data needs to be viewed in the context of half of Hertfordshire's districts having indeterminate Local Plans. The fact that the authorities without Local Plans are those with the highest posited

housing numbers means that these findings must be viewed as tentative. However, it is possible to identify some emergent patterns as follows:

- Housing commitments per year in adopted Local Plans match or even exceed Regional Spatial Strategy targets;
- There is certainty of delivery across the South and West of the county;
- There is considerable uncertainty in the centre and north of the county, and the North East corner;
- Urban districts, generally, have more advanced plans than rural ones;
- Many key variables in the projections rely on the resolution of cross boundary dialogue;
- Many strategic sites cannot be adopted without cross boundary working;
- Current forecasts show an undersupply of c250 homes per year across the county over the plan period, compared to the projections of the revoked Regional Spatial Strategy.

Table 1: Housing growth position by Local Authority area

As a note to the table, the numbers highlighted in green indicate that an Authority's housing projection per annum exceeds the previous Regional Spatial Strategy target, while those highlighted in red indicate that the new figure of houses per annum will be lower than that set by the (now abandoned) Regional Spatial Strategy. Please also note that the period covered by the RSS goes only until 2021 while individual Authority targets variously stretch to different end dates including 2026. One Authority noted that this could make comparing the figures misleading unless this was clearly emphasised.

Authority	CS Status	Relevant public document	Housing Target	Plan Length (years)	To Year	Homes built p/a	RSS Target 2001-2021	Projected housing units p/a
Broxbourne	Withdrawn 2011 after receiving recommendations of Inspector's examination	LDF Pre-Submission CS	3840 at submission	15	2026	256	5600	280
Dacorum	Found sound at pre submission, submitted 22/6/13	Draft CS 2010	10750	15	2031	430	12000	600
East Herts	Projected date of issue for public consultation, end 2013	Draft District Plan, Pt 1, preferred strategy	10-17,000 pending housing assessment	20	2031	850	12000	600
Hertsmere	Adopted Jan 2013	CS January 2013	3990	15	2027	266	5000	250
North Herts	Housing Options consultation Feb 2013	Housing Options Paper 2013	10,700	20	2031	535	6,200* or 15,800**	310/790
City and District St Albans	Pre-submission	Consultation Dec 2010	4,250 at consultation	17	2028	250	7,200	360***
Stevenage	LP issued for consultation June 2013	A Plan for Stevenage 2013	5,300	20	2031	265	6,400* or 16000**	320/800
Three Rivers	Adopted October 2011	Adopted CS 17/10/11	4,500+	15	2026	180	4000	200
Watford	Adopted January 2013	LP1 - CS	6,500	25	2031	260	5200	260
Welwyn Hatfield	Emerging CS under review	Emerging CS November 2012	7,200	18	2029	400	10000	500
Total projected houses per year across county CS						3812	Total Regional Spatial Strategy	4160****

* excluding potential extension of 9,600 homes N of Stevenage (in North Herts)

** including potential extension of 9,600 homes N of Stevenage (in North Herts)

***In Mar 2013, St Albans confirmed its commitment to target of 360 homes built per annum, until the determination of its CS

****North Stevenage proposed extension included once. This scheme is not currently regarded as deliverable by the Planning Inspectorate

+note that individual authority target refers to the period between 2001-2026 whereas the period covered by the RSS goes only until 2021.

3.3 Local Authority trends and perspectives

It is worth noting to introduce this subsection that all Hertfordshire planning authorities were approached for comment, but particular priority was given to those authorities with large housing growth projections in the former Regional Spatial Strategy. Respondents were either planning officers or planning portfolio holders (elected members) or both. All Hertfordshire planning authorities were approached but not all chose to participate in the research; with nine doing so. At the request of the majority of contributors, remarks have been anonymised. The high growth authorities are considered first, rather than the largest authorities in terms of spatiality or population.

3.4 Welwyn Hatfield

Welwyn Hatfield District Council officers and members participated in the Hertfordshire Charrette. In consequence the Authority are familiar with both the subsequent Guide and collaborative planning principles.

For Welwyn Hatfield District Council, the National Planning Policy Framework represents a significant change in the policy landscape since the production of the Guide, and this seriously affects the Guide's capacity to meaningfully influence both planning policy and growth strategy in Hertfordshire. The abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the withdrawal of statutory housing targets for the county has

impeded growth plans within the county and introduced elements of confusion for planners, elected members and consequently the wider community. The principal issues affecting Welwyn Hatfield District Council are also applicable to other authorities, especially those with a wide choice of potential growth sites. The issues affecting both Welwyn Hatfield District Council and other authorities are set out here in summary.

In the preparation of local plans, local authorities have to anticipate the potential both for plans being found unsound at the Examination stage if certain criteria are not met, as well as legal challenges from third parties to the validity of growth proposals.

Without a housing allocation target from the Regional Spatial Strategy, local authorities need to determine an objectively assessed number based on projected local demand as well as wider economic drivers. Facing significant problems with land supply, Welwyn Hatfield District Council, along with other local authorities nationally, are projecting lower numbers (anticipating the testing of deliverability) than the previous Regional Spatial Strategy figures – approximately 7200 in contrast to an Office of National Statistics growth forecast of around 16,000. The position that the Authority is in at present is that it is currently undertaking work to define their objectively assessed housing need. This, of course, takes into account the wider housing market and the impact of the needs which are potentially unmet from other neighbouring authorities. The challenge will

be to what extent the Authority can meet that objectively assessed need given the infrastructure requirements and the impact upon the green belt.

At Examination by the Planning Inspectorate, the identification of growth sites that do not meet deliverability requirements would cause the local plan to be found unsound. Where sites have many stakeholders and land owners, the level of complex co-operation required to make them developable is not realistic in terms of available resource. As a result sites such as this cannot be counted in housing site proposals or forecasts. In relation to Hatfield Town Centre, however, the area was in multiple ownership which meant for development to take place the council had to apply for a compulsory purchase order and then use that Order to acquire the various interests, which is what they have been doing and indeed Stage 1 of the redevelopment is nearing completion.

The Duty to Co-operate is a key criterion at Examination of draft Local Plans. As a result, the Local Authority needs to demonstrate that it has referred to neighbouring authorities in establishing growth plans. It is fair to say that the government clearly sees the Duty to Cooperate mechanism as replacing the previous strategic plans. It also clearly results in tensions when one authority is looking to another to meet its housing needs and does result in complex discussions and negotiations.

Charrettes or collaborative planning exercises are valuable tools in engaging the public who

may be uninformed about or hostile to planning issues. However, Charrettes should have a high degree of specificity and contain deliverable proposals both in terms of site ownership and economic viability. Examples cited within Welwyn Hatfield include the High View collaborative planning initiative (employing Urban Initiatives). This reached a consensus on key regeneration targets which will be taken forward subject to finding necessary funding.

Influence of the *Guide to Growth* in Welwyn Hatfield

For the reasons above, several of the Guide's design proposals are thought to be unfeasible within the Welwyn Hatfield District Council area. As well as allocating greenfield sites, brownfield and greyfield retrofit is Council policy, and retrofit of former council housing estates, originally planned at low densities, was an identified target of the Guide. In practice this may be compromised by the exercise of Right to Buy on a small number of homes on each site, making site assembly very difficult.

The viability of any infill scheme will depend upon the extent of the infrastructure to be provided. In relation to sites of between 1200–1500 dwellings, current thinking suggests that it is probably not economically sustainable to develop smaller sites if significant infrastructure to support a sustainable community is required e.g. shops and schools.

Urban Extensions are therefore the most likely of the Guide's settlement patterns to be put forward

for the significant amount of new housing proposed for Welwyn Hatfield District Council. Integrated, mixed-use solutions are desirable but a trend towards rising employment densities in Welwyn Hatfield is compromising the viability of these because of the onerous parking requirements of incoming tenants. Current expectations of households mean planning new homes without car parking spaces is also unrealistic at present, though the Authority anticipates the rising cost of motoring will be a more effective limitation of car ownership and use in the long term.

Positively, Welwyn Hatfield District Council recognise the value added to housing developments by design quality and a reference to local vernacular, but that design standards are able to be met where values justify them.

It is impossible for Welwyn Hatfield District Council to support significant housing growth without using the green belt. Central government perorations on protecting green belt land have put the Borough in a difficult position and made it hard to consult meaningfully on the Local Plan, since residents can object on the basis of this principle.

Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability in Welwyn Hatfield

On environmental sustainability, the rising performance standards of building regulations have been more significant than local initiatives and will surpass them in terms of

influence over time. Assessment tools are useful but standards and examples of good practice (from elsewhere) are more useful in planning terms.

On wider social and economic sustainability, consistency and viability are key to success. Welwyn Hatfield District Council offered the example of the Hatfield Community Initiative which was an effective force representing the new residents of the aerospace site through having paid staff as well as voluntary contributions by residents. Another example is the recent community growing and market garden initiative in central Welwyn Garden City, which has been a great success, initiated by the council with volunteer support.

Conclusions and recommendations from Welwyn Hatfield

The Hertfordshire Charrette and *Guide to Growth* have their value in promoting positive change and increasing awareness of councillors and the public on planning issues. Further initiatives of this type are welcome, brought forward on a site-by-site basis. (We note that this view is offered support by the success of the Charrettes led by Gascoyne Cecil Estates, within the Borough boundaries).

The buy-in of landowners is key and the viability of settlement plans can only be ensured by large single land ownerships maintained into the long term. Tempering growth ideas with a recognition of constraints and economic realities would make both Charrettes and Design Guides more effective

as tools for consistent planning. Future work of this type would also benefit from being more accessible to a wider audience and broader social mix.

Finally, for Hertfordshire to plan for sustainable growth, a cross-authority approach is needed. The former County Structure Plans were offered here as a suitable template for a regional model. Some cross boundary working has been embarked upon with the re-emergence of the Hertfordshire Heads of Planning Group (HIPP), which has the ability to overcome partisanship and project a broader countywide strategy.

3.5 Dacorum

Dacorum Borough Council has a draft Core Strategy which was submitted for Examination in Summer 2013. The requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework have been interpreted in the preparation of the Core Strategy.

None of the officers currently involved in plan preparation participated in the Hertfordshire Charrette. However, design guidance of this type is seen as a welcome tool in plan preparation, as well as good practice in collaborative planning. At the same time, the Authority saw itself as an assessor of design briefs or plans rather than able to define good practice in urban design themselves. This is mainly because of the ways in which sites are proposed for selection by private sector

landowners or developers. It is therefore difficult for the Authority to unilaterally promote best practice in urbanism. However, tools like the *Guide to Growth* offer a useful lexicon, especially for planners and members who are not trained urban designers.

Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework stipulates a requirement to cooperate, this is not so simple in practice – neighbouring local planning authorities will have their own priorities.

The premise of the Dacorum Core Strategy is the promotion of successful growth through an identifiable community area (with shops, schools and pubs) where a community can set down its roots and grow, so the principle of the urban village is attractive. Delivery is, however, subject to the right sites being brought forward, and the Authority does not have a free hand.

Notwithstanding this constraint, the recent Core Strategy Sustainable Development Strategy includes design principles and provides links to the *Hertfordshire Building Futures Guide* and the *Chilterns Design Guide*. An accompanying urban design guide is also important and the *Guide to Growth* fills this gap. Guidance such as the *Chilterns Design Guide* can outline suitable development without stipulating any particular architectural style. In the view of officers, good design will be appreciative of surrounding styles and vernacular but can still respond in a modern way.

Charrettes or collaborative planning processes are valued by the Authority as both planning and communication tools. With the Core Strategy at a satisfactory stage of development, Dacorum is in a position to consult on proposed development sites in a meaningful way. The first stage of an engagement programme with local residents took place in Spring and Summer of 2013 led by the Strategic Planning Team and Feria Urbanism backed by councillors (see Case Study – West Hemel). Charrettes have therefore been adopted by the Authority as a very useful tool, with the view that it is important to take people on the design journey, not impose top down views and ideals upon them. More often than not, people will understand the need for development and use such events as an occasion to influence development in a positive manner.

Influence of the *Guide to Growth* in Dacorum

In practical terms, infrastructure delivery and costs are the determining factor in site selection and therefore development patterns – all of the easy sites in the Borough have already been utilised. Most straightforward brownfield sites have been developed in Dacorum, and contamination issues make this a very expensive option. New Town and Garden City models are excellent in their mix of uses and community orientation, but stand-alone “new garden communities” are not practicable given the Borough’s lack of suitable sites. The only feasible settlement patterns are therefore designated extensions to existing towns, and the Core Strategy focuses on these.

As well as endorsing the principle of design guidance, Dacorum has tried to implement policy towards public transport orientated growth, despite the habitual reliance on the private car by most homeowners. Rail oriented development, such as the new Aylesbury Vale Parkway Station (in Buckinghamshire) and associated surrounding housing, is an exemplar to be aspired to in this respect but difficult to deliver.

Environmental, social and economic sustainability in Dacorum

Hertfordshire Building Futures is viewed as an excellent resource as it includes sustainable design and urban design principles. There is perhaps further potential for a guide focused on contractors. As the home of the Building Research Establishment, Hertfordshire has the potential to be at the forefront of national and international innovation in sustainable design.

Conclusions and Recommendations from Dacorum

If the Authority was truly in a position to provide a template for growth, initiatives such as the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* would be excellent, but unfortunately positive planning in this direction is compromised by the opportunistic presentation of sites by the private sector, which the Authority has a statutory obligation to consider. In common with other councils, Dacorum is forced to be reactive rather than proactive.

The premise of the Guide correctly assumes growth and assumes that the Local Planning Authority can define where it goes. Unfortunately without another New Town movement, while the urban principles underpinning such guidance are good, they carry little practical weight.

3.6 Stevenage

When interviewed, representatives from Stevenage Borough Council advocated the type of large scale spatial planning approaches represented by the Guide. Such initiatives, that attempted to consider the county as a whole, crossing political boundaries, should be encouraged. This perspective is rare in current planning practice across Hertfordshire because of the absence of a Unitary Authority or dominant town or city. Opinion in Stevenage was that both the Charrette and the Guide would have benefited from a wider perspective than just housing, and pointed out that the East of England Plan, from which the housing numbers were derived, was a strategy for economic growth. The East of England Development Agency (now disbanded) proposals for site-specific economic stimulus and the allocation of employment land would have made a better starting point and baseline for the both the Charrette and Guide's inquiry into growth issues. This observation is useful in the context of the emergent plans of the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership (the 'LEP').

Consistent with interviews held with other Hertfordshire planning officers, the Borough's planning issues and concerns can be summarised as:

- A shortfall of suitable housing land countywide;
- Reduction of housing numbers presented by borough councils and district councils in Local Plans;
- Failure or a gestural approach to the "Duty to Cooperate" between borough councils and district councils;
- Insufficient cross county strategic thinking;
- Green belt around urban areas, including Stevenage;
- Trenchant public hostility to housing growth; and
- Attendant lack of political will for new housing.

In the view of Stevenage's planning team, Hertfordshire, despite its key position close to London and excellent transport links, was likely to underperform in terms of economic growth and housing provision, based on the level of current housing provision included in emergent Local Plans within individual authorities. The absence of a unified strategy for the county, lacking as it does a large urban focus, means that authorities have determined numbers based on locally produced Housing Assessments that fail to optimise Hertfordshire's key strategic location and excellent transport links. This will lead to Hertfordshire's economic contribution to Gross

National Product declining in real terms over the course of the Plan period. Critically, the current settlement pattern of small to medium sized towns (below 60,000 population) means that the opportunity for more urban lifestyles and better facilities will be lost.

The Stevenage Core Strategy

Stevenage's Core Strategy was issued for consultation in June 2013. Stevenage can fulfil its housing needs to 2031 (as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework) within the current town boundaries. This is because the town currently experiences net outward migration. A figure of 5,300 new homes would fulfil the Borough's obligations of provision under the National Planning Policy Framework, but mean loss of some green belt land within the Borough boundary.

A more ambitious scenario of 6,600 has also been taken to consultation, but this requires cross boundary agreement for urban extensions to the North, West and East of Stevenage, which currently do not have the commitment of North or East Hertfordshire District Councils. Based on the responses to the consultation and current opportunities for cross-boundary cooperation, Stevenage is committed to the appropriate level of growth that supports the Borough's economy in the long term.

A larger figure of housing growth would allow Stevenage to reverse net outward migration from the town, with positive economic implications.

Influence of The Guide on Stevenage

Officers felt that the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* served as a useful primer for planning policy in general, but, as it did not address specific spatial and site issues, it fell short of offering any solutions to the very real problems of growth faced by planners across the county. In particular the Guide's assessment of Stevenage was based on assumptions about standard "New Town" spatial zoning models rather than actual research into the Borough.

Stevenage's preferred approach to settlement planning is the urban extension model of 1000+ homes contained within mixed-use neighbourhoods, creating the opportunity for sustainable living. This is evidenced in the town's most recent phase of growth, Great Ashby (since 1999), an urban extension of Stevenage located across the boundary in North Hertfordshire.

The designation of a green belt around Stevenage in 1979 has meant the debate on growth has often been emotive, with a degree of public misunderstanding over planning issues. Despite this, Stevenage has a track record of collaborative planning approaches to which it is still committed as policy. Officers cited the example of the Visioning Conferences on West Stevenage Growth back in 1989. The Core Strategy was released for public consultation in June 2013. When it has successfully completed its draft stage and has sites established, Stevenage will engage with local people on the settlement patterns guiding housing growth.

Conclusions and Recommendations from Stevenage

In terms of joint approaches, the work of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Panel (HIPP) and the Hertfordshire Planning Group (HPG), represents a collective approach by planning officers and portfolio holders across the county. The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Panel members have committed to a Memorandum of Understanding leading to a joint local strategic statement of agreement on Hertfordshire's growth. This is designed to fulfil the Duty to Co-operate required by the Planning Inspectorate, although it is likely to represent a minimum level of housing requirement for most borough and district councils. It is not attempting cross boundary approaches to settlement planning at any scale of ambition. The strategic statement will have to account for the likely housing under-provision across the county, compared with the projections of the former East of England Plan.

It was the view of officers that there was an opportunity for the University of Hertfordshire to take a leading role in planning a sustainable future for the county, which would bring all stakeholders together in positive dialogue. The University could act as "honest broker" on many issues currently subject to fragmented approaches.

3.7 East Hertfordshire

The future development of East Hertfordshire is still subject to a large number of variables, including housing numbers and site selection.

The District Council has indicated that a preferred strategy for the new Local Plan is likely to be published for consultation towards the end of 2013 (early 2014 once approved by Members). The range of projected new housing numbers is dependent on a forthcoming assessment, but could be anything between 10,000 to 17,000 homes. The Council recognise that having an objective assessment of the number of new homes needed will be a critical factor in the Local Plan being found sound at Examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

Most of the sites under consideration represent urban extensions to existing towns, with one of the largest proposals being that for an extension to the north of Harlow (actually in Essex). This significant urban scheme is currently under review.

With the Local Plan still in preparation, there is little scope to judge the influence of a document like the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*. However, it can be argued that the scale of projected growth in East Herts means that it is one of the areas in which the determinants of better urban settlement patterns will have most impact.

Influence of The Guide in East Hertfordshire

Officers in East Hertfordshire were aware of the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, and considered it could be relevant both locally and nationally and has the potential to be a tool promoting best practice in urban settlement, not only limited to Hertfordshire. It was felt that while the Guide addresses fairly high-level design concerns, factors such as infrastructure delivery, financing, the economy, social and political dimensions were also important, with impacts upon how growth is achieved.

In terms of settlement pattern, East Herts is already working at the moment on a series of large planning applications which follow the 'urban extension' model. In developing these, the Authority has adopted principles of urbanism including density, the prioritisation of car free travel and mixed use in its policies.

Interestingly, the idea of a stand-alone Garden City within the county was not ruled out as a solution to the scale of growth anticipated. Such a solution would overcome the pressures new growth would put on the services and character of existing local towns.

In terms of guiding development style, the Authority feels there is definitely a role for modern architecture and it is important to generate new architectural styles, as a monotonous approach is not always healthy (Poundbury was cited negatively in this regard). New styles and new development must complement the existing fabric but develop

new models. However, the Guide's approach to robust block-based urbanism was preferred to the looser patterns of Stevenage or Harlow New Towns, which represented a patchwork of urban spaces not particularly worked up into an urban pattern.

Because the Council has not yet agreed on the principles of development in particular locations Charrette processes have not been widely adopted to date. However the Authority has used workshops as a means to scope out locations etc. at a higher level.

For collaborative planning to be effective, it was considered important to agree on the principle of growth in a particular location first and then look at design. If Charrette processes were seen to help to break down some of the resistance to new development, they were likely to be widely adopted by the Authority in future.

Sustainability perspectives

East Herts is currently undertaking a review of local standards and once that is done they will have a better purchase on energy performance measures for individual homes. They currently promote Hertfordshire Building Futures as a useful tool, with local specificity.

Conclusions and Recommendations from East Herts

Although Hertfordshire has a long, illustrious history in terms of the Garden Cities and New Towns, these movements were progressed

and backed by central government. Local movements don't receive the same backing so cannot currently carry the same weight or influence. The urban ideals of these movements are really something that Authorities should aspire to, but we are operating in a different landscape than the past. However, the *Guide to Growth* is a good tool to help identify and explain the different options and therefore helpful in the discussion.

3.8 North Hertfordshire

North Hertfordshire are in the process of preparing their Local Plan, combining the Core Strategy, Development Policies and Land Allocations documents. In progressing this, they consulted on a Housing Options document (February 2013) and a Housing Additional Location Options (July 2013). The Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified a number of possible housing targets, while the recent Housing Options document identified a potential housing target of 10,700 as a figure to investigate in more detail. However, this has no formal agreement.

A number of strategic sites (1000 houses+) have been submitted to the Council including south west of Hitchin, north of Letchworth, east of Luton, Rush Green, west of Stevenage, north of Stevenage, north east of Stevenage, and north of Baldock.

No decisions regarding which sites will be taken forward have yet been made. However, in locations which straddle the boundary,

North Herts will need to work with adjoining authorities for delivery and it is very likely that these sites will have to be master-planned. Based on all sites that have been submitted to the Council, at least one of the strategic sites will be required and all are located in the green belt. North Herts holds regular meetings with Stevenage Borough Council and have met most neighbouring Authority colleagues under the Duty to Cooperate.

The scale of development proposed means that North Hertfordshire is another location in which guidance on settlement patterns and urban characterisation will be of great importance once the site selection/Local Plan process is complete. The North Hertfordshire's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on design is currently important in influencing all development in the district.

3.9 Watford and the London fringe

Watford has a high population figure, close to that of Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead, but with its tightly constrained boundaries, well-connected transport links and easy access to London, is the most clearly defined "urban" environment in the county of Hertfordshire.

Watford has aligned its Local Plan with those of neighbouring authorities, Three Rivers and Hertsmere, as well as having regard to the London Plan. The influence of the London conurbation has long been felt in this part of Hertfordshire.

Watford grew steadily over one hundred years from a small historic market town centre, due to its mainline railway and Underground transport links to central London. The arrival of the M1 motorway and ancillary roads into Watford led to extensive car dependent suburbs, a trend current planning policies are trying to manage and reverse.

Watford's growth plans reflect its potential to be a higher density urban area with a focus on brownfield regeneration and both house and flat based residential schemes oriented to public transport. With strong leadership from an elected mayor, Watford is embracing growth proposals robustly.

Watford adopted its Core Strategy (now called the Local Plan Part 1) in January 2013 and is now progressing Local Plan Part 2, which will contain development management policies and proposed site allocations. This went to consultation at the end of 2013.

In Local Plan Part 1, six special policy areas are based along the revived Croxley Rail Link, a former heavy rail alignment that will be reinstated and extended to meet the end of the Metropolitan Line, Watford Branch. The branch will be diverted over the new line to run to Watford Junction and the old Metropolitan terminus at Watford West will be closed. The new route promotes better east-west links in Watford and to neighbouring Three Rivers. Two new

stations, Ascot Road and Watford Hospital, will make it possible to bring 2700 additional households within 800 metres of a railway station in the Borough. The stations will also provide access to the hospital and a new Health Campus, which will include 600 new residential units. The new line is funded through a partnership of Network Rail, Hertfordshire County Council and the local authorities.

The specific area proposals are:

- Special Policy Area 1 - Town Centre - provides a more balanced provision of town centre facilities and infrastructure, including retail, entertainment and other town centre uses as well as access improvements. As well as public realm improvements, a failing shopping precinct (Charter Place) will be replaced by new retail floor space, restaurant uses and a cinema;
- Special Policy Area 2 – Watford Junction - a high density mixed-use scheme using former railway land and the site of a retail park for the upgrade of a major transport interchange, 1,500 new homes, employment, retail, leisure and social and community infrastructure, including a primary school in the area. (This site is adjacent to the West Coast Main Line from London to North West England as well as major roads – a further transport proposal, the Abbey Flyer link to St Albans, would increase its location efficiency still further but is currently stalled at the funding stage);

- Special Policy Area 3 – Watford Health Campus, a joint venture with Kier that incorporates retail, office, industrial and housing along with a new hospital replacing Watford General. New parkland and a lake will extend the existing Colne Valley green space, and a district heating system will be incorporated;
- Special Policy Area 4 – Lower High Street, an existing retail and mixed-use area in need of physical and environmental improvement, suitable for a variety of land uses;
- Special Policy Area 5 – Dome Roundabout – an existing out-of-town retail area needing physical and environmental improvement and diversification of land uses, which could include some additional residential use;
- Special Policy Area 6 – Western Gateway - focused on Watford Business Park, an underperforming employment area. The mix of uses will be widened to include a supermarket, a primary school and 300 homes in sustainable locations close to the proposed new Croxley Rail Link station and the road interchange at Ascot Road;
- Special Policy Areas 1-3 and 6 are predicated on higher density residential development patterns at these locations, close to rail stations, while in the rest of the Borough the focus will be on low to medium density residential development,

with a preference for family housing with gardens.

- All Special Policy Areas feature the broadening of current planning ‘use classes’ to encourage more diverse urban patterns. Local Plan 1 plans for over 6000 homes between 2009-2031 in line with the previous (now abandoned) Regional Spatial Strategy target. Watford’s available capacity will be exhausted after this point and it will look to partnership working with neighbouring Hertsmere and Three Rivers for further expansion. Both these authorities have committed to the early review of their Local Plans.

In design terms, Watford is committed to the promotion of a better sense of place and has drawn up Supplementary Planning Guides including a Residential Design Guide (2008 – due to be revised) and the Watford Character of Area Study (2011). These guides determine the characteristic features of existing parts of town in order to guide new proposals within them. The Watford Character of Area Study makes an especially detailed analysis of the urban grain, identifying thirty-eight different character areas, their strengths, weaknesses and capacity for change from limited to significant.

Watford is familiar with Charrette-based and collaborative planning processes. A Charrette was held for the Junction site (although these design proposals now need revisiting) and there is a commitment to collaborative

planning on the Special Policy Areas, beginning with the Health Campus, where facilitation is scheduled to be undertaken by Shape East. Watford Borough Council is currently progressing plans for Borough wide computer-generated fly-through imagery of future proposals as a public engagement tool.

3.10 Broxbourne

The timetable for the preparation of the Broxbourne Local Plan was published in September 2013. It schedules consultation on a draft Plan for February 2014, pre-submission publication for Autumn 2014 and adoption by the end of 2015. A previous draft plan was withdrawn in 2011 after receiving the recommendations of the Planning Inspector’s examination. This set a target of 3,840 homes, which was significantly lower than the previous Regional Spatial Strategy estimate of a capacity for 5600 new homes in the Borough.

Broxbourne’s planning team advise that they will pursue a number of options to deliver future housing growth – higher density urban sites, medium density edge-of-urban sites and lower-density urban extensions and garden suburbs. Any site allocation and green belt release decisions that are made will need to relate to and be justified by local geography, transport, sustainability and deliverability issues.

Officers in Broxbourne were not involved in the original Hertfordshire Charrette and

thus knew little of the Guide prior to this research being undertaken. They are, however, broadly supportive of the type of design solutions outlined in the Guide which align strongly with Broxbourne's emergent growth strategy. In particular, Broxbourne is currently grappling with the application of attractive and traditional Garden City principles at a level of fine grain analysis, going beyond the accepted principles of density, walkability and green spaces to interrogate how a series of small sites added incrementally to a town can be developed in a coordinated fashion, with ancillary services and shops arriving at the right time. Equally, without the benefit of a clean slate, and central planning function, can new development achieve the Garden City ideal of minimal car dependency and the optimisation of high quality public transport? Finally, the Borough is keen to assess what modern features of sustainable living – such as reduced water usage, lower domestic energy loads and better recycling – can be incorporated into the Garden City paradigm?

In resolving these questions, Broxbourne hope to arrive at criteria against which they will assess sites proposed for development and programme these into the emergent core strategy. In this light, urban design remains a priority for the Borough; one officer suggested that the cogent planning formulae of the *Guide to Growth* could be incorporated into the good practice guidance managed and promoted by Hertfordshire Building Futures.

3.11 Hertsmerere

Hertsmerere Borough Council's local plan was adopted in January 2013. It anticipates the development of an additional 3,990 homes over the fifteen-year plan period, or 266 new dwellings per year. Hertsmerere has committed to an early review of the plan in three years, including its objectively assessed housing needs. It has also committed to joint working in plan review with neighbouring Watford and Three Rivers Councils whose local plans are also in place.

The Borough currently has a seven-year land supply for new housing. With approximately eighty per cent of the Borough being statutory green belt, the plan anticipates most of the new development taking place on brownfield land, and this is key to their Core Strategy. Additionally, most of this new development will be in urban areas with access to public transport, and the Core Strategy is closely aligned to future transport planning. There is little or no opportunity for urban extensions, Garden Villages or New Towns.

The Borough has a Planning and Design Guide that aims to promote higher standards of design and layout in Hertsmerere by setting out the key principles that they expect to be applied to new development. First written in 2006 and revised in June 2013, it has been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document

(SPD), which means that the standards and policies are used in the assessment of planning applications. It covers the layout and appearance of domestic extensions and new house building, as well as commercial development, including changes to shop fronts.

Officers from Hertsmerere contributed to the Hertfordshire Charrette, and their Planning and Design Guide is closely aligned to the principles of the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, particularly in respect of urban planning of large developments and good placemaking.

In reviewing the Hertsmerere Local Plan, the constraints placed by the extent of green belt in the borough will make it necessary to ensure a high degree of cross boundary dialogue with neighbouring authorities to optimise otherwise difficult sites. The Duty to Cooperate (now a legal requirement) will therefore be a critical tool in long term planning in this part of the county.

3.12 Three Rivers

Three Rivers District Council Core Strategy was adopted in October 2011 and runs to 2026. With approximately seventy-seven per cent of the Borough designated statutorily as green belt it focuses on redevelopment of brownfield sites close to or in urban centres. By maintaining a policy target of at least sixty per cent of new development using brownfield sites,

the Borough plans to avoid encroachment on rural sites or green belt. Furthermore, through its planning policies the Core Strategy commits the Council to maintaining and enhancing the viability, vitality and variety of shops and services within the principal town and key centres, ensuring they retain their viable retail and community offer.

By establishing a settlement hierarchy for Three Rivers the plan distributes new growth appropriately so that seventy-five per cent of new homes will be located in the principal settlement (Rickmansworth) or the key centres of Abbots Langley, Chorleywood, Croxley Green, South Oxhey, Mill End, Leavesden and Garston.

Several of these centres already have strong public transport links, and Croxley Green will benefit from the Metropolitan Line extension described in the summary of Watford's local plan (see p.22). Proposals for the Abbey Flyer light rail, if implemented, would similarly benefit Garston.

Three Rivers have committed to an early review of their local plan, working in partnership with Watford and Hertsmerere.

4. THE INFLUENCE OF THE *HERTFORDSHIRE GUIDE TO GROWTH*

In this and subsequent sections we review the various ways that the *Herts Guide to Growth* has influenced planning, design and development within the county and beyond in the five years since its first publication. This section covers areas including settlement patterns, sustainability and collaborative planning, while subsequent sections reflect on case studies of good practice which we argue in a number of respects reflect the Guide's principles.

4.1 Settlement patterns

Most new growth in Hertfordshire is following the models of infilling and retrofitting of existing urban space, where viable and deliverable, or urban extension for large strategic sites. While among those interviewed, the concept of the stand alone Garden Village or larger Garden City is recognised as the opportunity for a "clean slate" approach to transport and services provision, few see much prospect of a real site being found for this within the county.

Limitations on large-scale infrastructure delivery, including transport, mean that few transit or transport oriented developments (known as 'TODs') are envisaged at this time, though one authority, Watford, has embraced such transport oriented developments as its principal settlement model where the opportunity for reusing rail infrastructure exists, while another scheme with transport orientation elements, at Hatfield, is discussed under Case Studies.

In the north and east of the county, where large-scale housing growth is predicated, one large urban extension, effectively a new town, at Harlow North is under consideration, while a stand alone 'Garden Village' is tentatively proposed for Rush Green in North Herts.

4.2 Sustainability

The principles of environmental sustainability have been embraced in the adoption of housing standards across the county, and building regulations are still seen as the principal lever for improving energy performance. The reduction of car dependency by better settlement planning is regarded as a desirable goal but Authorities generally have little confidence that concomitant infrastructure provision is deliverable, particularly public transport and specifically rail.

That said, aside from the examples of transport oriented developments offered above, there is no certainty that even existing public transport provision across the county will be optimised by new development. Plans for other sustainable features of new development, including district heating, are emergent in some urban locations.

4.3 Collaborative planning

It is positive to note that all authorities within the county recognise the value of collaborative planning, and that some are already dedicating resource to effectively programmed consultation on sites brought

forward for development (see Case Studies). In several cases these are direct outcomes of the Hertfordshire Charrette and the *Guide to Growth*. Most authorities are embarking on collaborative planning initiatives with an independent consultant, offering various delivery models across the county but working to the same principles of engagement and transparency. Authorities who have yet to determine development sites are committed to consultation on their Local Plans and further site-specific collaborative planning policies downstream of Plan adoption.

5. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE - SUSTAINABLE URBAN DESIGN

The next two sections of the report give examples of good practice in design, collaborative planning, and sustainability initiatives across Hertfordshire that are either direct outcomes of the Hertfordshire Charrette or otherwise align with the recommendations of the *Guide to Growth* (2008). This section also includes a review of initiatives within Hertfordshire that promote sustainable planning and building more broadly.

5.1 Reviewing the Guide's 'urban village' model

Much of the current good practice within the county can be seen to owe a debt to the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth's* urban village model. As the Guide stated at the time:

"All the proposals generated by the design team are intended to offer an alternative to the continuation of the generally unsatisfactory growth patterns which have been delivered by the post-war planning process within Hertfordshire. These patterns can be seen to prioritise three aims: the free and rapid flow of traffic, the provision of high quantities of parking and the segregation of building clusters by their purpose. The result is that traffic and

the consequential pavement become the central, unavoidable focuses of public life.

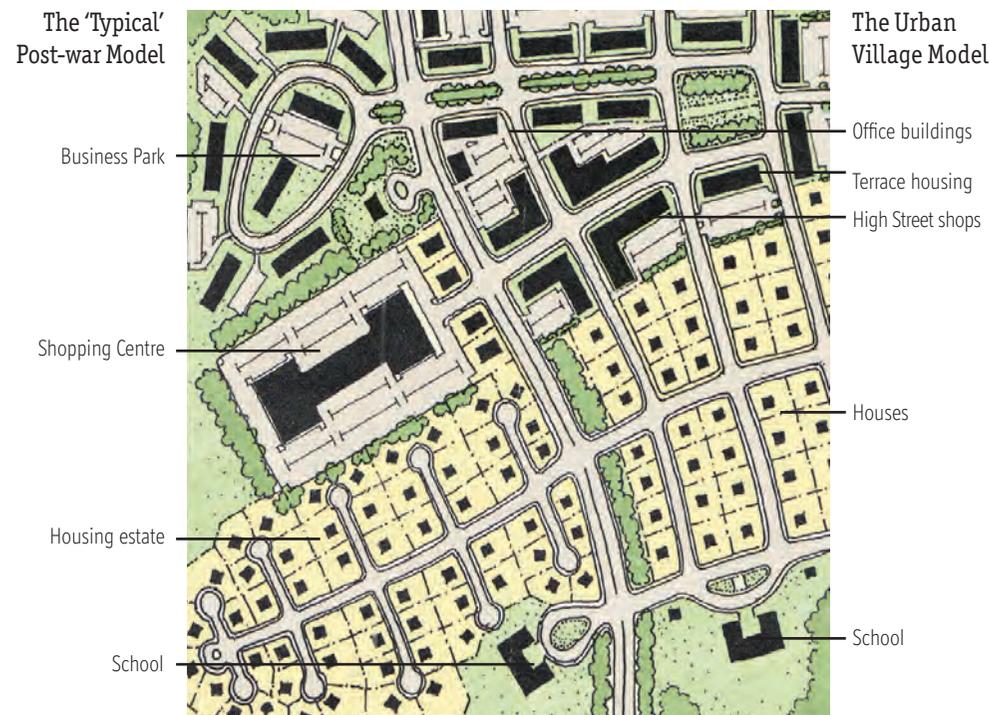
The Charrette's proposals instead return to the traditional pattern of pedestrian and transport oriented Urban Villages – an approach which has been inadvertently sidelined in the post-war years. These villages can be built as stand-alone settlements, or can be clustered, to create larger developments.

Although urban villages can be easily identified within Hertfordshire – in places like St Albans, Hertford and Standon – this sort of outcome is not typically envisioned in the planning process, placing architects and developers in a peculiar position of being unable to emulate the County's most admired, and indeed environmentally sustainable, historic patterns" (2008: 8).

The Guide also offered a list of urban village attributes that formed the basis for shaping new development, as follows:

- *The urban village is a comprehensive planning increment: when clustered with others, it becomes a town; when standing free in the landscape, it becomes a village. The urban village varies in population and density to accommodate local conditions.*
- *The urban village is limited in area so that a majority of the population is within a pedestrian shed of a five-minute walking distance of its centre (this distance is referred to as a pedestrian shed). The basic needs of daily life are ideally available within this area. This centre provides the location for a bus stop or railway station, convenience stores, work places, community events, and leisure activities.*
- *The streets are laid out in a network so that there are alternate routes to most destinations. This disperses traffic, permitting most streets to be smaller and slower and, as a result, able to support parking, trees, pavements, and buildings without buffers or setbacks. They are equitable for both vehicles and pedestrians.*
- *The streets and other public spaces are spatially defined by building frontages along the pavements in a disciplined manner, uninterrupted by car parks.*

Figure 7: Urban Village Model (Source: *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, 2008)



- *The buildings are diverse in function, but compatible in size and in disposition on their plots. This allows for a harmonious mixture of houses (large and small), terrace houses, small apartment buildings, shops, restaurants, and offices.*
- *Community buildings (schools, community halls, theatres, churches, clubs) are often placed on squares or at the termination of street vistas. By being built at important locations, these buildings serve as landmarks.*
- *Open space is provided in the form of specialised squares, playgrounds, and parks and green belts.*
- *It is important to recognise that particular care is required with certain special cases such as hospitals or universities, and that the urban village model may differ slightly in these cases (2008: 8).*

This approach offers an important design context and reference point for the case studies noted here.

5.2 Overview of good practice developments in Hertfordshire

Earlier in this research report, a snapshot was given of new schemes around the United Kingdom demonstrating approaches to growth and development that reflect similar placemaking principles to the urban village model (see pp.13-15). This included designs of

appreciable scale around the United Kingdom that were completed, on site or in planning. These examples reflect the core principles espoused in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, and by advocates of urbanism in the UK, Europe, North America and elsewhere.

The examples also chime with principles advocated by the New Urbanism movement, which is itself a response to the zoning presumption in post war planning, as evidenced in the layout of both New Towns and other urban development of the late 20th century. Movements such as New Urbanism are attempting to reverse this trend, by demonstrating the environmental, economic and social sustainability inherent in traditional settlement patterns, in particular before car use became universal.

Because of the effects of the recession, there has been very limited building activity in Hertfordshire since the publication of the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* in 2008, and most large schemes have stalled. However, there are some exemplars of good practice represented by smaller schemes as well as some more ambitious proposals for strategic sites.

5.3 Design work by Gascoyne Cecil Estates

Gascoyne Cecil Estates is one of the largest landowners in Hertfordshire, and a significant stakeholder in the development of several Local Plans, most notably those of Welwyn Hatfield and East Hertfordshire.



Figure 8: Small infill redevelopment in Old Hatfield (Source: Gascoyne Cecil)

As an historic estate able to take a long-term view, Gascoyne Cecil Estates will not partner in conventional housing development as practiced currently in the mainstream. It is committed to the principles of urbanism outlined in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*; thus it will promote development with the type of land use mix, demographic range, income and tenure diversity that are typical of historic towns rather than housing estates.

The Estate takes an approach of long-term stewardship to the development of new sites, and the Estate Department cites the example of the Poundbury development, by the Duchy of Cornwall in Dorset, as instructive in this respect.

It is also the Estate's policy to work up small infill sites in the same way, taking a collaborative planning approach in the development of sites around Old Hatfield (see p.33). This approach also has the potential to influence the regeneration of Hatfield New Town, especially its neighbourhood centres, which face similar issues to Old Hatfield village, of poor or absent identity or sense of place.

While Gascoyne Cecil Estates has little direct influence in Hatfield New Town, save some restrictive covenants, it can by example offer models of retrofitting that have the potential to redefine Hatfield and, over time, broaden its residential offer, the ultimate aim being to raise both perceptions and values in the area.

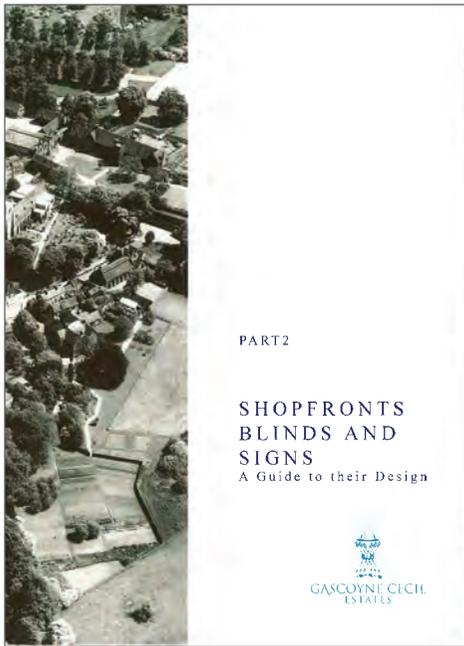


Figure 9: Hertfordshire Building Code (Source: Gascoyne Cecil)

5.4 The Hertfordshire Building Code

The Gascoyne Cecil Estates team has produced written design guidance, the Hertfordshire Building Code, in direct response to the principles for effective architecture laid out in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*. The guidance has been written not only to assist the design of future buildings on the Estate itself, but any future development in Hatfield and surrounding villages.

The Code takes an elemental approach to the design of individual construction elements, with specific recommendations for walls, roofs, chimneys, windows, doors, gardens, landscaping and other features. It is recommended for all forms of development including commercial buildings, and Part 2 deals specifically with shop

fronts, blinds and signs and their impact on the public realm.

The Code aims generally to promote traditional or contextual architecture for the county, but includes recommendations for where a contemporary architectural language may be more appropriate. It will inform the ongoing regeneration of Old Hatfield, supporting the proposals of the Old Hatfield Charrette mentioned below.

5.5 Regeneration of Old Hatfield

Dunham's Yard Development

The regeneration of Old Hatfield has been undertaken through a range of design and development interventions. Dunham's Yard is the first in a series of infill schemes for Old Hatfield on defunct or underused sites in the village, in this case former garages. The site, on either side of the viaduct access bridge to Hatfield House, has been rebuilt as fifteen new houses and 4500ft of commercial space, expressed in a vernacular architecture and a strong streetscape along a newly created road, Arm and Sword Lane.

The courtyard and mews, completed in Autumn 2013, are the pilot scheme in the wider regeneration of Old Hatfield that will eventually include new buildings for Hatfield Station, Church Lane and Salisbury Square. Dunham's Yard also represents the successful adoption of design principles laid out in the Hertfordshire Building Code (see above).



Figure 10: New infill housing development on Arm and Sword Lane (Source: Gascoyne Cecil)

Hatfield Station

One of the main urban planning problems identified by the Old Hatfield Charrette (see p.33) was the relative weakness of the railway station as a major local transport hub. Despite having a fast, high frequency service to Central London and being intensively used by local people, the station is unwelcoming, has no amenities, poor access for pedestrians and constrained arrangements for buses, taxis and parking.

The Old Hatfield Charrette proposed a range of station enhancements to reconnect it to both Old Hatfield and improve its design quality for users. The work done through the Charrette process meant that when

funding became possible for station renewal, the funding bid was able to reflect a well thought-through proposal for redeveloping the station, based on urbanist principles.

Station redevelopment elements include improved access (especially for pedestrians crossing the busy A1000 and bus users), road speed calming outside the station, a large new multi-storey car park, electric vehicle charging points, greatly improved bicycle storage, and a remodelling of the station building with two retail units and a clearer entrance frontage with a well landscaped plaza. Both station and car park have been sympathetically designed to reflect their proximity to the entrance gates of Hatfield House directly opposite. As noted on the First Capital Connect website:

First Capital Connect and Hertfordshire County Council, with support from Gascoyne Cecil Estates, have been successful in their bid for £6m of funding to redevelop Hatfield Station. The project provides a well designed, safer, and step free accessible transport interchange to reduce the congestion from the various modes of transport entering the station. In addition to the £6m fund from Network Rail, the DfT, and ATOC, there is a supplementary £3m of Network Rail and Herts County Council funds that were already allocated for the station under the government's Access for All scheme for the installation of a new footbridge and new lifts, making it easier and safer for passengers to move around the station. (www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk)



Figure 11: Hatfield station redevelopment (Source: Hertfordshire County Council)

With this funding in place, work began on the station redevelopment and car park in October 2013. In 2014 Hertfordshire County Council will begin work to create a new bus and taxi interchange as part of the station improvement. This will occupy the site currently taken by the southern car park, replacing it with new bus stands and shelters and a taxi rank. A new drop-off area will be built in front of the station, which will improve customer safety by keeping private cars, taxis and buses in separate areas of the station forecourt. Short stay spaces are to be provided in the new car park.

The subway that currently links to Old Hatfield will be removed and pedestrian facilities will be provided at ground level instead. This will be part of the signalled junctions and well designed crossing points that will help to manage traffic accessing the new bus interchange (a major recommendation of the Old Hatfield Charrette). All works are expected to be complete by late 2014.

Salisbury Square

This scheme is central to the regeneration of Old Hatfield, bringing its principal square back to life and improving connections between the village and railway station. Salisbury Square is to be opened up to traffic again and its large but inflexible public space replaced by a free flowing market place in the style of a traditional Hertfordshire town. The current south facing block of shops and flats will be rebuilt in a more traditional style and moved forward to accommodate much needed parking on two levels, hidden behind. On its other side, as noted above, a terrace of traditional homes has been constructed on Arm and Sword Lane, and this will hide the rear of the car park. A major proposal to emerge from the Old Hatfield Charrette, this scheme now has planning consent, with work scheduled to start in 2015. (oldhatfieldcommunityforum.com)



Figure 12: Salisbury Square, Old Hatfield, redevelopment visualisation (Source: Gascoyne Cecil)



Figure 13: Plan of proposed Birchall Garden Suburb, Welwyn (Source: David Lock Associates)

5.6 Birchall Garden Suburb proposal

Working on behalf of the site's landowners, Lafarge Tarmac, David Lock Associates has been studying the development potential for creating a new 'Garden Suburb' on land owned by Lafarge Tarmac as a potentially appropriate way of extending Welwyn Garden City. The scheme requires co-ordination of the local plans of both Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and East Hertfordshire District Council, and does not currently appear in the Welwyn Hatfield District Council draft Core Strategy. However, David Lock Associates has produced a Visioning Statement and illustrative master plan for a new Birchall Garden Suburb to help inform their plan-making processes. (www.davidlock.com)

In keeping with the design principles of the Garden City movement (respecting the ideas of not only Ebenezer Howard and his investors, but also of the approach taken by their chosen Canadian master planner and architect Louis de Soissons), up to 2,500 family homes with gardens surrounding an extensive area of landscaped open space would make up the proposed Birchall Garden Suburb. It is intended that the new development will be created within the canon of English architecture that reflects the local context and building traditions, while using modern materials and applying the highest possible standards of energy efficiency.

Within a green frame, Birchall Garden Suburb is planned to deliver tree-lined streets, wildlife corridors and increased biodiversity, transforming a previously landfilled area into a community asset including a new central park. Direct links by public transport and for cycling to the town centre would also connect the new suburb directly to the life, culture and economy of Welwyn Garden City. (www.davidlock.com)

5.7 Hatfield Food 'Retrofit' Guide

In 2012-13, the University of Hertfordshire's Centre for Sustainable Communities conducted research into the potential for an innovative food 'retrofitting' strategy for Hatfield New Town and village. This focused on the role placemaking can have in making more sustainable food spaces along the food chain from production to consumption. The project explored aspects of the relationship between food and sustainable urbanism in Hatfield at a number of scales and sites. It considered food's role, both positive and negative, in climate change mitigation and adaptation, using an approach which explored the role of food production, distribution, retailing, consumption and waste in shaping Hatfield.

Focusing on a number of sites in and around Hatfield through case study work, the project asked how Hatfield could support current good practice, and it included work to develop specific 'retrofitting' proposals to help with food security, and the sustainability, healthfulness, conviviality and economic vibrancy of the town's centre, urban areas and suburbs in food terms.

This case study work also focused on initiatives aimed at cutting the community's carbon footprint in relation to food, and identifying and proposing ways to achieve local production, distribution, retailing, consumption and waste patterns well matched with sustainable place making. An illustrated Guide based on the work will be published in Summer 2014.



Figure 14: Food 'retrofit' visualisation in a new town setting (Source: illustration prepared by Ben McCabe)

5.8 Watford – transport oriented development

Watford's Core Strategy was adopted in January 2013. In terms of growth proposals for Hertfordshire, it is significant in that the plan is strongly oriented to an enhanced public transport network for the district. Its six Special Policy Areas, including large amounts of housing, commercial accommodation and a new Health Campus, are located along a reinstated rail alignment that will become an extension of the Metropolitan Line from its current terminus into Watford Junction. The new route will form a high quality public transport loop around the town, linking all new development to the National Rail Network, the London Overground, and the Tube. With work on the Croxley Rail Link expected to start in 2014, Watford is set to grow as the most sophisticated example of transport oriented development in the UK. A second rail link, the Abbey Flyer, is under consideration and would upgrade the existing railway to St Albans as a high frequency tramway.

5.9 The Natural House at the BRE Innovation Park

The Natural House is located at the Building Research Establishment at Watford and demonstrates a simple, low-tech and easy-to-build way for volume house builders to meet increasingly stringent low carbon targets for new homes. Built by the Prince's Foundation for Building Community, the house is a highly energy-efficient structure that still reflects many people's preference for traditionally designed buildings.

The Natural House is constructed from natural materials including aerated clay block for the walls, lime based renders and plasters, and insulation using compressed wood fibre and sheep's wool. The thermally coherent shell, which delivers energy efficiency and good indoor air quality, is simple and quick to build and is designed to appeal to an increasingly eco-aware homebuyer. The use of natural, non-toxic materials provides a healthy environment, promoting air movement without mechanical air-conditioning.

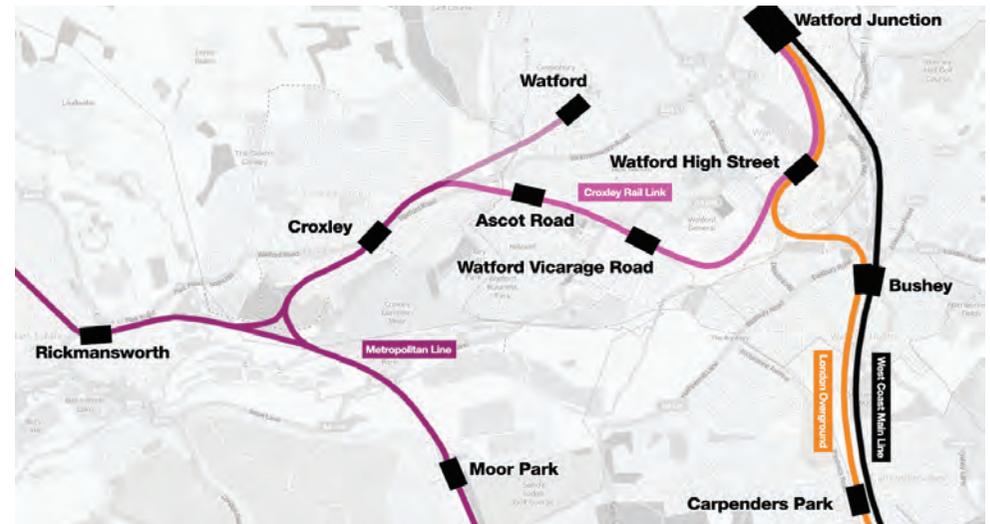


Figure 15: Croxley Rail Link plan (Source: Open Source image)



Figure 16: Prince's Foundation Natural House (Source: Open Source image)

Designed to integrate well into urban streetscapes, in new or existing communities, it can be constructed in a range of architectural forms including paired dwellings, squares and

terraces. It can be subdivided to configure as a family home, maisonette or smaller flat, reflecting changing demographics and people's needs over the long term. (www.bre.co.uk)

6. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE - COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESSES

As has already been noted, Hertfordshire has become a centre for good collaborative planning practice since the Hertfordshire Charrette of 2008. Combining factors of large housing growth pressures and a scarcity of suitable sites has prompted the adoption of Charrette based or similar processes in several boroughs.

6.1 Current status of collaborative planning

The research team met Andrés Duany (of Duany Plater Zyberk), leader of the original Hertfordshire Charrette, in May 2013 to explore his thoughts on collaborative planning and Charrette processes, how practice in this field may have changed, and the influence of the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* in the years since 2008. These observations offer a number of proposals for good practice in collaborative planning in the region in future. In discussion, Andrés identified the following as the primary functions of a successful Charrette planning process.

Andrés noted that the Charrette has an educational purpose beyond the design outcomes. A good charrette leaves all participants better informed, and asks them to bring to the process a willingness to learn about planning and growth issues. Significantly, a Charrette does not repeat basic lessons as it

goes along, and new entrants to later stages are brought up to speed by other participants or literature made available to them. In this way, a good Charrette retains the expertise of the best-informed participants who do not disengage because of repetition or loss of direction. In this way, the Charrette keeps momentum.

A Charrette is not a political campaign. It tests design propositions by the early presentation of 'sacrificial' solutions which are debated in session. It works best when the keenest adversaries to a growth proposal are in the room to argue the merits and demerits of drawn solutions. It does not do the work of a politician, but can rehearse arguments on growth issues and, at best, inoculate proposals against future opposition.

While the Charrette has been closely associated with New Urbanist solutions, a Charrette process is 'solution-neutral' rather than ideological or moralistic. Ideological positions impose presupposed solutions in line with the Charrette leader's views on density, walkability, mixed use, ecology or any other germane issue. The only context a Charrette leader needs to provide is the focus on the long term. On the issue of building style, for instance, the long term arguments for an "adaptive traditional" approach are going to be made by the buildings themselves, with functional stylistic features retained or revived. No polemic on this issue is necessary from the Charrette leader.

A Charrette creates a space for debate and articulates views from across the spectrum of

opinion. The outcomes are decided by the participants and the argument is framed through drawn proposals. A good Charrette will record mutually agreed objectives (e.g. affordable housing, a new school) and remind participants what has been agreed to at subsequent stages of the process. Finally, the most powerful attribute a Charrette leader can have is a demonstrable willingness to be persuaded by an argument and change their mind.

Successfully identifying the scope of a Charrette is important. Many Charrette processes are swamped in their early stages by "wish lists" which represent the sum of a community's, individual's or household's wants alongside wider collective aspirations. When these are recorded and parsed by the facilitator, only a certain range will fall within the reasonable control of planning, local governance and the capacity of development finance.

While participants' wishes will span all political levels, the facilitation process should draw up a matrix of issues and their appropriate levels of governance, to identify that range of issues on which local government can make meaningful decisions. This process is based upon the theory of subsidiarity, which proposes issues ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralised authority capable of addressing that matter effectively.

Andrés Duany notes there exists a cultural dissonance or resistance in the United Kingdom to employing the sort of regulating plans or

design codes that organise and give direction to the follow-through of Charrette design outcomes. This is borne out by the poor take up of design coding or design leadership at any meaningful level in UK urban planning, highlighted in studies by CABE, the Prince's Foundation and other organisations. Andrés sees tools such as codes, which can apply to both new build and regeneration scenarios, as important in reducing the bureaucracy of regulation that attends a broad range of planning and construction issues. He gave the example of a "green light code" written for an urban regeneration scenario in the US, which has speeded up take up of redundant industrial buildings for new employment and residential uses.

In conclusion, Andrés Duany was candid about the limited influence of the Charrette process unless its recommendations can be implemented through consistent governance within the life of a building project and into the long term. Good Charrette practice identified above represents the foundations of a robust local plan for growth.

Whilst guidance documents and scenario planning represented in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* are valuable educational tools, regulating plans and design codes are the routes to consistency through the fifty year projected influence of a Charrette study. With regard to the longevity of plans, the continuing failure of almost all collaborative planning practitioners to engage the youth demographic of a community represents a serious flaw in current practice; this is a worldwide phenomenon.

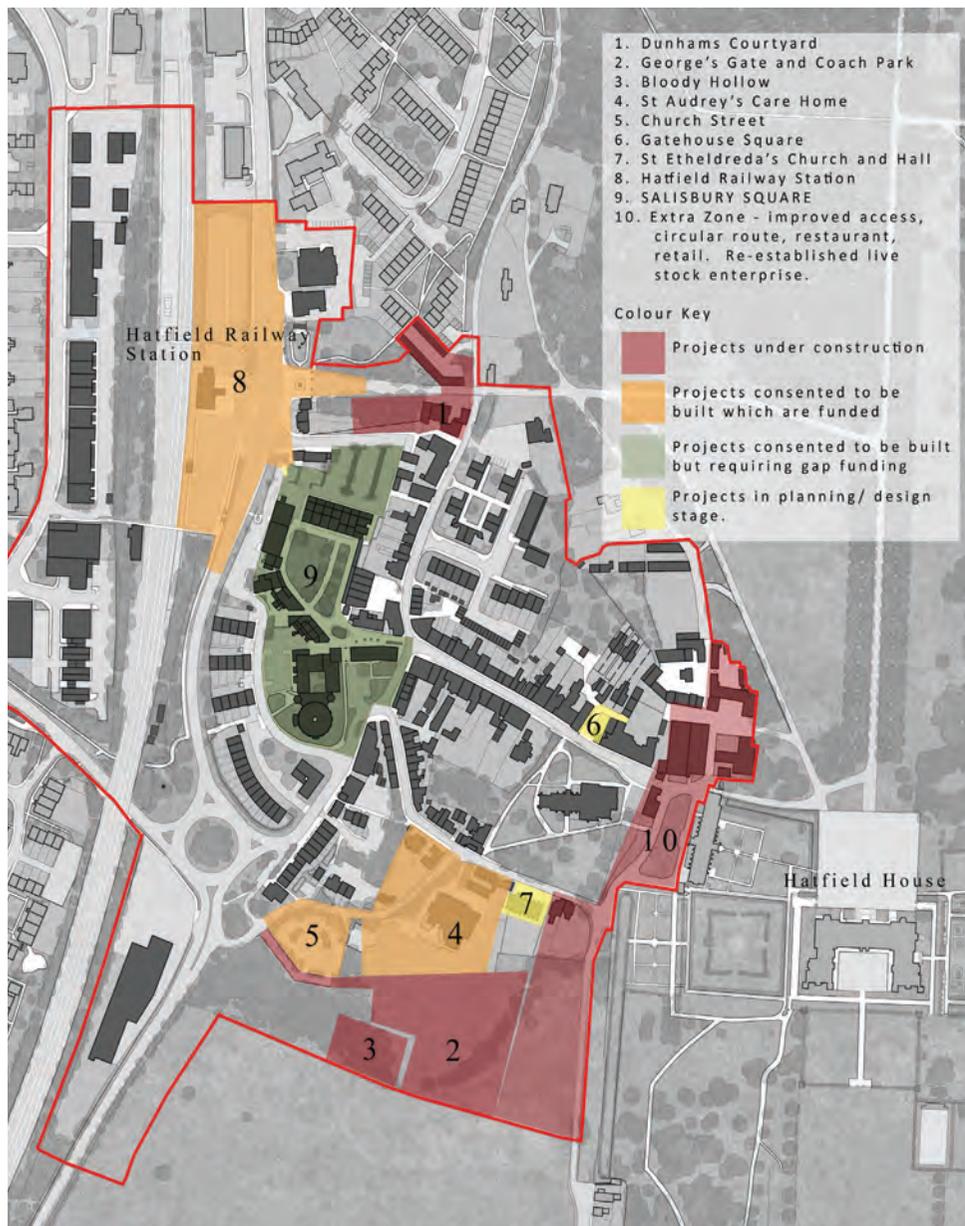


Figure 17: Old Hatfield Charrette masterplanning outcomes (Source: Gascoyne Cecil)

6.2 The Old Hatfield Charrette

Gascoyne Cecil Estates have adopted Charrette processes as a standard part of growth planning and change management in respect of the Estate, its occupants, neighbours, resident businesses and other interests. Gascoyne Cecil has been an active promoter of Charettes to the local authorities with whom they work: Welwyn Hatfield, Hertsmere and East Herts.

The Old Hatfield Charrette was a successor to the Hertfordshire Charrette and took place in October 2008, building on the goodwill and levels of engagement generated by the earlier event (the Herts Charrette). Supported by Gascoyne Cecil Estates, the Old Hatfield Charrette was an opportunity to apply some of the general principles of the Hertfordshire Charrette to a specific location and see them tested in practice. The Charrette's purpose was to give the residents of Old Hatfield the chance to discuss the problems this small town faces, including lack of parking, poor quality shopping, ill-thought-out open space, poor connections to the railway station and other planning issues.

The week-long event was led by Andrés Duany and a team from Duany Plater Zyberk. Local residents attended general meetings during the course of the week, while smaller groups comprising business owners, planners, councillors and environment and other specialists tested specific aspects of

the emergent plans. At a final presentation six specific proposals were shown to a public meeting and met with broad approval.

The Charrette was a great success and the spatial solutions were then tested in further detail for both viability and practicality. Of these, some, like the new entrance to Hatfield House, are now completed, whilst others are in planning or on site (see case studies section, p.27). Additionally, the formation of an Old Hatfield Community Forum means there is a delivery body to see plans to implementation. The consultation strategy continues with regular open meetings and exhibitions to inform residents of the progress of different proposals, as well as a dedicated online presence for the Forum.

6.3 The Mill Green Charrette

Gascoyne Cecil Estates undertook a Charrette for the small village of Mill Green, at the periphery of the Hatfield Estate, in September 2011. Issues faced by the village include heavily trafficked roads on two sides, the loss of the local pub and consequent lack of a community meeting place, poor street lighting and untidy, overgrown green space. There is also a museum in the centre of the village with long term funding issues.

The infilling of a number of under-utilised spaces with small amounts of new housing was proposed as a way to support the viability of village amenities (including



Figure 18: Mill Green Charrette area visualisation (Source: Gascoyne Cecil)

the pub if reopened) and endorse the visual character of the area with sympathetic architecture. The Charrette was a great success, with a large amount of local buy-in, and design solutions that drew upon the Gascoyne Cecil Estates Hertfordshire Building Code.

6.4 Look! St Albans

The Prince's Foundation For Building Community was invited by the St Albans City Centre Steering Group to facilitate a community planning and design event, with a focus on the key areas of change identified in the city vision report December 2009 for the City Centre of St Albans. The large amount of proposed new building replacing the 1960's Civic Centre will profoundly alter the visual character of the

central area, and this group of local residents and business leaders took the view a design code or general design guidelines would be appropriate for these areas.

The Foundation was able to conduct a collaborative planning event through funding by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), with additional support and in kind contributions by a great number of local organisations, individuals and institutions, including St Albans City and District Council.

Over the course of a three day community planning event in 2012, participants set out to identify a range of architectural and urban design characteristics that the community, landowners, officers and elected members agreed represented

an acceptable direction for contemporary design within the historic context of St Albans. The study areas under consideration were the Civic Centre, Drovers Way, the Coupers Garage Site (Catherine Street) and the Cathedral Quarter and their respective environs, together with any other significant development sites within the city centre of St Albans area.

While conforming to the emerging Civic Centre Opportunity Site Development Brief being prepared by the St Albans City and District Council, the planning event sought to identify how new building could integrate with the historic townscape of the central area, which has Roman origins and buildings representing most periods up to and including the 20th century. Issues considered included the design of new streets and pedestrian routes; their width, building heights and setbacks; and architectural materials and details.

The outputs were reported back at a public open meeting in March 2013. Since then, the original action group has been formalised as 'Look! St Albans - Our Community Voice on Design'. The group produced its draft constitution in late summer 2013, identifying the following aims which we reproduce here:

- Work for a broadly-supported consensus in designing buildings and surrounding open spaces at the outline and full planning application stage (pre-application consultation).

- Become the preferred community and stakeholder consultation convenor for significant city centre developments for developers, the Local Planning Authority, and the Highways Authority.
- Collaborate with significant city centre developers and their planning and design teams through a structured facilitated public design Charrette (per site), using generally the following format:-
Design briefing session: evening
Hands-on focused design: daytime Charrette
Results and feedback session: evening.
- Hold no more than two separate design Charrettes and associated meetings per year.
- Obtain part funding from the developer for each series of facilitated Charrettes and associated meetings.
- Look! St Albans to give their time to the process free of charge.
- Bring to the table the community-endorsed draft design codes – an excellent blend of local knowledge and widely connected interests.
- Provide to each developer and their planning and design team unprecedented access to local knowledge and widely connected interests in an independently facilitated open, collaborative, transparent and creative process with a view to producing hand-drawn illustrations, a



Figure 19: Look! St. Albans design engagement process (Source: Look! St. Albans)

- list of the codes applied, and the relevant supporting text - available to all, and summarised in a short presentation.
- Provide to each developer, the Local Planning Authority, the Highways Authority and widely accessible local news channels a letter of recommendation for the jointly-created designs, supported by Look! St Albans.
- Continue to learn about good place making and architectural detail. This could include hosting and visiting other groups involved in Neighbourhood Planning and informally organised and self-financed half- or full-day study trips to exemplar city centre developments. This would result in informal presentations and discussions.

- Establish a website to increase public awareness of Look! St Albans and for the posting of information regarding its activities.

The group has explained that to achieve its aims Look! St Albans will encourage the goodwill and involvement of the wider community in taking part in design briefing sessions, Charrettes and feedback sessions, with a view to improving St Albans City Centre for the benefit of the inhabitants of the St Albans District and to fostering community spirit and encouraging civic pride. The team has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with St Albans City and District Council that establishes working arrangements between Look! St Albans and the Planning Authority. (Look! St. Albans)

6.5 Dacorum collaborative planning workshops

The Strategic Planning and Regeneration team of Dacorum Borough Council initiated a series of collaborative planning workshops for local residents and business leaders to start a dialogue on the pattern of new growth, the quantum and location of which have been established by the Core Strategy and forthcoming Site Allocations Document. The workshops took place between the 14th and 16th of May 2013 and were facilitated by Richard Eastham and team from Feria Urbanism.

Representatives of the major developers and agents with site options and ownerships were present to actively engage with local people. Over three days the Feria Urbanism team led afternoon workshops looking at three sites:

- Site LA1 Marchmont Farm
- Site LA3 West Hemel
- Site LA5 Tring

The West Hemel workshop was well attended by a group of more than sixty local residents, businesses and amenity society members. The workshop process made it clear that the adopted Core Strategy was in place, responding to a wider national mandate for growth, and the decision to select the West Hemel site for up to nine hundred new homes had already been taken. The direction of the workshop was thus largely a positive discussion about settlement pattern, access arrangements and the requirement for new facilities.

While of necessarily short duration each workshop took a Charrette model, with analysis taking place through group exercises under spatial planning headings. These moved from general principles to particular detail in four successive design exercises, employing map and other site data. These were themed as follows:

- Uses and Activities
- Access and Movement
- Streets and Spaces
- Form and Detail

The outcomes were summarised in a formal report to the Strategic Planning and Regeneration service. Design proposals for the site were exhibited for public comment in Summer 2013, and a representative body of local people, the West Hemel Action Group, has been formed to respond to the plans for the largest site. As well as publication of the workshop outputs, a public exhibition was held at Warners End Community Centre on 22nd July 2013 to seek feedback on proposals for new housing development at West Hemel Hempstead. Council officers and landowner representatives were available to answer questions.

The workshop participants' main concern was that the debate must reach the widest local audience possible, with future events well publicised in order to maintain a high standard of communication over growth plans.



Figure 20: Dacorun collaborative planning workshops process (Source: www.feria-urbanism.eu)

The Dacorun workshops evidenced several positive aspects of growth planning in the District, namely:

- A commitment to collaborative planning by an active Local Authority;
- A well informed and participative “lay” stakeholder group;
- The participation of developers in direct engagement with local people on growth; and
- A Charrette style workshop process with outcomes debated and presented in spatial terms.

6.6 Letchworth town debate

In late 2013, the University of Hertfordshire’s Centre for Sustainable Communities (CSC) was asked by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation to undertake the facilitation, analysis and reporting of a two-week consultation with Letchworth residents on the question – “Should more homes be built in Letchworth?” It was thought that as a neutral organisation with expertise in consultation process and analysis the University could act as an ‘honest broker’, providing useful input both to facilitate the process and report on its results.

The Letchworth Heritage Foundation explained why they were consulting and how to make

views known – including through letter drops to households, information in local news media, through social media including Facebook and Twitter, and through information prominently located on their website.

The CSC deployed expert engagement staff throughout the two-week exhibition opening hours at Letchworth’s Community Hub (weekdays, some early evenings, and weekends) to facilitate visitors’ consideration of the issues at hand and help ensure their views were recorded on ‘comments cards’ available for this purpose. 673 people visited the Exhibition and 157 filled out comments cards.

At the consultation venue this facilitation work was supported by a series of information boards developed by the Foundation, explaining different aspects including the town’s development principles, reasons for posing the question “Should more homes be built in Letchworth?”, the timeline of planning work to date on these issues, and exploration of the implications of any decision to build more houses. These boards were supported by a series of technical reports which covered findings on issues including socio economics, biodiversity, flooding and hydrology and transport. Both information boards and

technical reports were also downloadable from the Foundation’s website. The facilitators took part in a number of ‘surgeries’ at the Hub where key issues were discussed with expert consultants.

A considerable number of people decided to make their comments by email, through Facebook or on the Heritage Foundation’s website. There were ninety-seven emails – many with detailed comments, fifty-eight online comments, 136 Facebook comments on the Foundation’s website and five letters sent to the Foundation.

At the close of the consultative period, the CSC undertook a detailed review and analysis covering consultation responses from the Community Hub, email, letters, Facebook and website forum comments. Results from an online questionnaire run by AudienceNet and consultative data from an online consultative process (both area-based and reflecting Letchworth’s demographic profile) that had been separately commissioned by the Heritage Foundation were also viewed as contextual material. The various work and information strands informed a detailed presentation given to the Letchworth Garden City Governors on the evening of 4th December 2013, and also provided the basis for a publicly available consultation report.



6.7 Panshanger mini Charrette process

In July 2013, the Centre for Sustainable Communities designed and facilitated two 'mini Charrette' workshops about the future of Panshanger as a country park, at the invitation of Lafarge Tarmac, the owners of the Panshanger Park site. After the first workshop a write-up was produced for information for the second workshop. Now that both workshops have been completed this detailed write-up has been produced for circulation to participants and any other interested parties.

These techniques share principles with 'full Charrettes' but their use in this kind of stakeholder workshop does not constitute a full Charrette process (which would be undertaken over many months). However, shared principles include:

- Baseline information about key facts is shared by everyone taking part
- Issues from any sector are aired, explored and tested – "live"
- There is parallel, not serial, engagement – those contributing hear multiple perspectives
- All inputs are recorded, how they are processed is auditable



The purpose of the mini Charrette process was to explore the future of the Panshanger area as a country park, involving stakeholders and listening to and documenting their views. The mini Charrette used techniques derived from Charrettes in a stakeholder workshop format. These techniques include:

- A collaborative process including brainstorming and potentially some design related activity
- Intensive, interactive discussion between representative interests in the future of the site/place in question
- Use of feedback loops to develop, present and refine ideas and proposals as these are explored in an intensive workshop context.

The process and views expressed at the mini Charrette workshops were encapsulated in a final report by the CSC and the Panshanger Charrette process was judged a success by both the site's owners and stakeholders who attended, in helping develop understanding about opportunities and threats and a vision for the future of Panshanger Park.

Figure 21: Panshanger mini Charrette process (Source: Centre for Sustainable Communities, University of Hertfordshire)



Figure 22: Hertfordshire Charrette process (Source: *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*)

6.8 Building Research Establishment (BRE) input into the Hertfordshire Charrette

As the Building Research Establishment (BRE) has indicated on its website, it was closely involved

in the delivery of the Hertfordshire Charrette in 2008. It notes that the BRE provided sustainability expertise, and explains that

“The Charrette was unique in that it was funded through private and public funding whilst concentrating on sub regional

issues. It enabled the general public the opportunity to work with design professionals and statutory bodies to look at the social and environmental issues around development, and shape models that respond to Hertfordshire’s character and landscape.

The use of the Charrette process produced dialogue between statutory organisations, businesses, voluntary groups and specialists about potential forms of development in the County and enabled the establishment of some guiding principles. It provided a means to upskill the participants, whilst also ensuring that local knowledge was incorporated”. (www.bre.co.uk)

7. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE - SUSTAINABILITY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Hertfordshire has two major promoters of good sustainability practice in the built environment and these are described below. Again, the principles espoused in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* are apparent in both these examples.

7.1 Hertfordshire Building Futures

As described on its website, Building Futures is an “evolving web-based guide, designed to provide practical, user-friendly and up-to-date guidance for planning officers, developers and the general public on how to make development in Hertfordshire more sustainable and of a higher quality in design terms.”

It goes on to say, “*The intention of the eleven local authorities of Hertfordshire has been to create a guide which is relevant to the Hertfordshire context, rather than metropolitan locations, which most central government guidance tends to focus on.*”

It is an important document for everyone involved in the preparation of development proposals, for local authorities and other agencies in assessing those proposals and for individuals with an interest in development



Figure 23: Hertfordshire Building Futures (Source: Building Futures website)

in the county. The guide has been developed in alignment with existing policies, environmental initiatives and assessment procedures.”

The guidance offered is divided into ten online modules, each of which covers a sustainable building topic area as follows:

- Air
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Design
- Energy and Climate Change
- Landscape and Biodiversity
- Materials
- Noise
- Safety
- Waste
- Water

As noted, “although each module addresses a particular topic, they should not be read independently of one another. All topic areas interrelate and a holistic approach is needed to achieve the sustainable design and construction of new development. Modules were recently updated to reflect emerging policy requirements, legislative changes and current best practice. Jointly produced by the local authorities of Hertfordshire, Building Futures is run from the Hertfordshire County Council Environment Department” (<http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures/common/headerlinks/about/>).

7.2 Building Research Establishment (BRE)

Working from its Watford base, the Building Research Establishment helps government, industry and business to meet the challenges of the built environment, including to combat climate change, and the significant economic and social issues faced in the UK and overseas.

The BRE is an independent and impartial research-based consultancy, testing and training organisation, offering expertise in every aspect of the built environment and associated industries. The BRE promotes better, safer and more sustainable products, buildings, communities and businesses – and the innovation needed to achieve these.

BRE GreenPrint

The BRE GreenPrint environmental assessment method is described by the BRE as for use in gauging sustainability. The methodology was trialled at the Hertfordshire Charrette, and helps developers, design teams and other interested parties to produce the best possible masterplans and site designs. Using GreenPrint, a full understanding of the site and its strengths and weaknesses is gained (often used in tandem with Charrettes to facilitate public participation), objectives for key sustainability issues are set, and the plan’s ability to deliver them are assessed. (www.bre.co.uk)

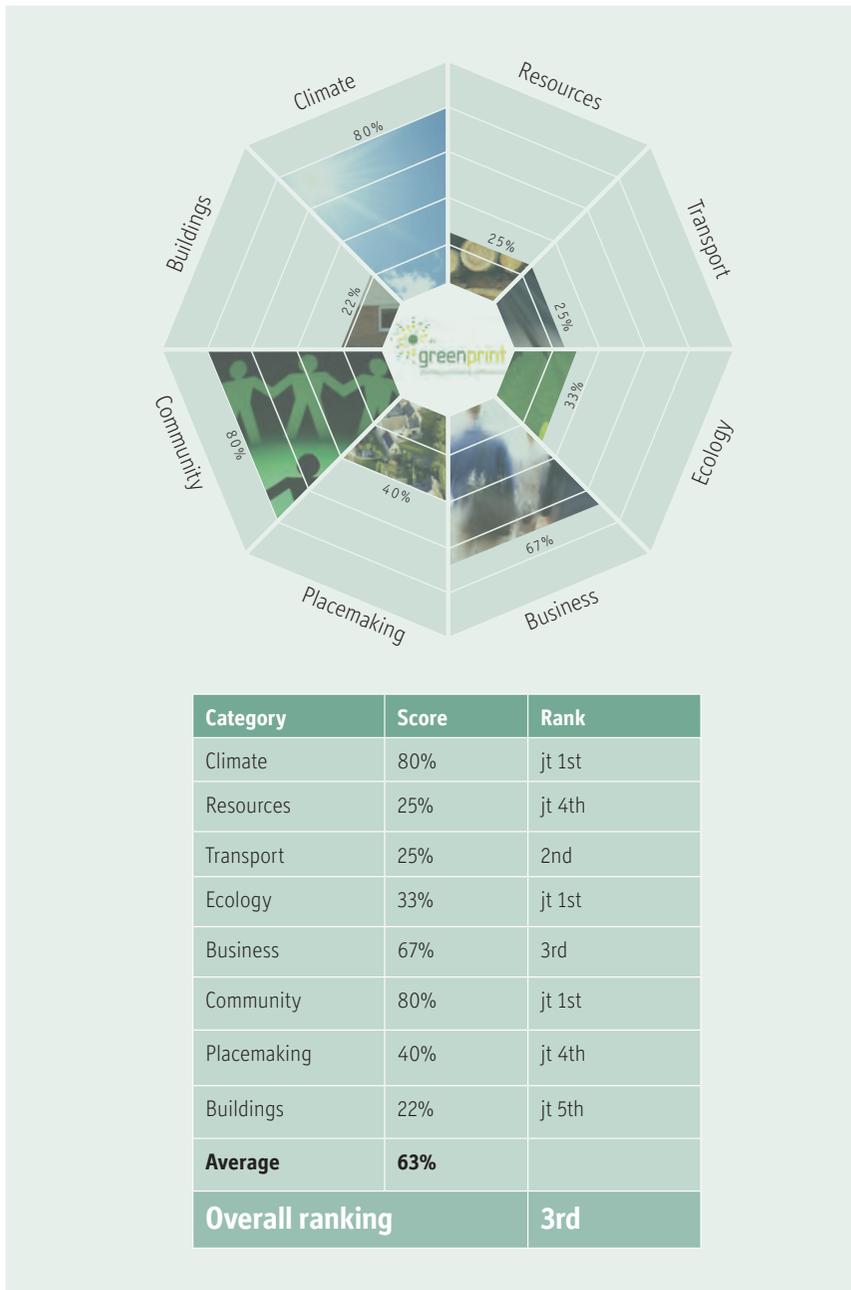


Figure 24: BRE's GreenPrint method in Herts Guide to Growth (Source: Hertfordshire Guide to Growth)



Figure 25: BRE Innovation Park, Watford (Source: Peter White, BRE)

The method was described in the *Guide to Growth* (2008: 48) as “GreenPrint: A sustainability performance test conceived and developed by the Building Research Establishment and undertaken at the Charrette in relation to each of the six Scenarios. Developments are assessed in terms of their provisions relating to climate change, resources, transport, ecology, business, community, placemaking and buildings.”

BRE Innovation Park

The BRE Innovation Park at Watford is a collection of low and zero energy buildings, predominantly housing, available for viewing alongside innovations in materials, construction processes and building technology. The BRE (2008: 48) partnered with a series of developers, product manufacturers and environmental advocacy agencies to test their technologies and capabilities in a collaborative, live environment that also allows them to showcase their work to the wider industry and the public.” (<https://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=1798>).

8. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

In this final section of the report we discuss the main conclusions drawn from the findings and analysis of research into the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On*.

8.1 Planning and housing assumptions

The foregoing analysis suggests that the assumptions of the revoked Regional Spatial Strategy about the scale and timing of growth in Hertfordshire have changed in light of both the housing recession since 2008 and the reshaping of planning policy through the National Planning Policy Framework. With fifty percent of Local Plans in Hertfordshire still undetermined, it is too early to say whether the total number of dwellings (along with supporting social and economic infrastructure) will be greater or fewer than that determined in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The evidence of the Local Plans completed by local authorities to date, and those in draft, suggests that the high numbers of new homes will be maintained, albeit over a longer timeframe than previously supposed. This view is supported by cases in other parts of the UK in which plans submitted by other local authorities have been challenged or are deemed unsound at Examination by the Planning Inspectorate because they significantly downscale housing targets. In determining their housing numbers, those Authorities in Hertfordshire that have yet to make their Local Plan will be alert to the fact that the housing-needs assessment informing their decision must be robust and up to date.

8.2 Cross boundary sites and working – need for a new structure plan?

Equally, in assembling a picture of the county as a whole, it is becoming increasingly clear that plans will not be found sound if they do not demonstrate the enactment of the Duty to Cooperate. The Localism Act (2011) places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation relating to strategic cross boundary matters. This is particularly important in the case of Hertfordshire, with many large strategic sites only viable if the scheme crosses local authority boundaries. This problem is widely recognised by officers and committee members across the county and has led, in some cases, to the opinion that an equivalent of the former County Structure Plan should be revived in some form.

8.3 Role of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership

The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) meets approximately six times a year and is comprised of senior Councillors, usually the Planning Portfolio Holders or Leaders, from Hertfordshire's District and Borough Councils and the County Council. It is supported by an officer group, the Hertfordshire Planning Group (HPG), which is made up of the Heads of Planning of each local authority. The HPG acts as the implementation arm of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership and is in turn supported by a number of sub groups, task and finish groups and associated

partnerships. A Co-ordinator is co-funded by the local authorities.

The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) works closely with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and an officer representative of the Enterprise Partnership regularly attends the HIPP and other HPG meetings. With the agreement of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the HIPP have been leading on the development of a Hertfordshire Spatial Plan and an initial draft has been produced.

The HIPP recognises that it needs to address the wider issues relating to the Duty to Cooperate and the challenge of meeting objectively assessed housing needs across the county. With this in mind, the group agreed in September 2013 to organise a workshop session to discuss the options for the work to develop a longer term version of the Hertfordshire Spatial Plan/Local Strategic Statement and in particular to enable the Partnership to address recent concerns expressed by the Department for Communities and Local Government about co-operation on housing issues across the county.

At the Objectives of Duty to Cooperate Workshop (January 2014) the Partnership explored ways to:

- Enable the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership to collectively move forward on identifying and responding to strategic spatial planning issues in relation to economic development, housing and infrastructure across the county and also across county boundaries;

- Enable the HIPP to address the Department for Communities and Local Government's concerns regarding Hertfordshire's ability to meet objectively assessed housing needs;
- Provide an opportunity for the HIPP to discuss the options for this work and set an agreed work programme.

In preparing a Local Strategic Statement and potentially a Hertfordshire Spatial Plan, the HIPP has the opportunity to resolve issues preventing cross border development sites, potentially allowing for more strategic decision-making and better spatial planning. In progressing this joint working, the HIPP is taking into account not only the housing assessment outcomes of individual authorities (numeric housing targets) but also the wider future planning work of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. A first draft of the Hertfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was presented the Local Enterprise Partnership Board in December 2013, and the final version was due to be submitted to Government by the end of March 2014.

In addition to the specific opportunities identified by the workshop in January 2014, the HIPP maintains a schedule of current Duty to Cooperate activity with contributions by each Hertfordshire Local Authority as well as Hertfordshire County Council. This schedule not only identifies Duty to Cooperate activity within Hertfordshire but also outside the boundary with other district authorities and County Councils as appropriate e.g. Bedford, Luton, Aylesbury Vale, the London Borough of Enfield and Essex County Council.

8.4 Urban and architectural design – active promotion of design solutions

The work programme undertaken by the HIPP does much to address concerns about the promotion of cross boundary working and the optimisation of strategic sites through better spatial planning. There is no suggestion currently that the outcome of the HIPP's assessment might be a new Garden City or New Town (as was explored as one perhaps optimal outcome in the *Guide to Growth*). However, many of the design scenarios proposed by the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* remain relevant design solutions for the extension and regeneration of urban centres across the county. There is scope for the urban typologies explored in the Guide to contribute greatly to environmental performance, social cohesion and economic vitality as the county grows.

In practice, several local authorities already have embedded design principles in their planning processes in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance – the North Hertfordshire Design Supplementary Planning Document, the Stevenage Design Guide and the Watford Residential Design Guide (draft) are just three examples. Additionally, in designated historic or landscape areas, characterisation statements are widely used in the assessment of new design (e.g. for St Albans City Centre, Chiltern Buildings Design Guide etc). At the county level, the Highway Design Guide, Roads in Hertfordshire, informs the planning of new infrastructure by Hertfordshire County Council, and is highly influential on the design of new public realm.

Whilst this tiered approach to design standards is very appropriate to the nuanced and remarkably varied historic and landscape character across the county, it is largely concerned with new building in existing contexts, especially where these are sensitive. In the course of researching the influence of the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*, there was very limited evidence of the active promotion of high quality urban design (in the Guide's definition) at the scale of a new neighbourhood or urban quarter. This is an important omission given that the scope of anticipated development in the county means many schemes of this size coming forward in future. Aside from the efforts of a few private sector promoters (see previous case studies) there is, furthermore, little evidence that exemplars in good neighbourhood design were being actively promoted by the public sector, even where sound urban design principles were embedded in local policy.

It is not evident that the Local Plan system as currently evolving allows for the prioritisation of a unified approach to urban design at local level (either in Hertfordshire or elsewhere). Certainly the adoption of a single design tool such as the *Guide to Growth* does not appear to be a priority given the weight of burdens faced during the plan making process as already described.

8.5 Active promotion of design solutions – possible role of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership

Given the findings above, consideration could be given to ways in which the HIPP, as the convening

body for strategic spatial planning across the county, could incorporate and express the principles of good urban design in its promotion of new neighbourhoods, as well as revived urban centres and suburbs .

It is hoped that the HIPP will also support this through its continued development of a Hertfordshire Spatial Plan by which it optimises opportunities for cohesive community and neighbourhood planning, including cross boundary working and utilisation of shared infrastructure (e.g. new public transport).

The HIPP may wish to give thought to whether the suggestion of formalising spatial needs into a "County Structure Plan" or modern equivalent is an appropriate measure - and what status this would have in planning terms.

It would also seem sensible for the HPG (in support of the HIPP) to review the principles of good urban design and appropriate architectural form already adopted by local authorities across the county, using these alongside private sector exemplars to inform the development of a Hertfordshire Spatial Plan and the Local Strategic Statement, as well as those local plans in the county that have yet to be determined.

Additionally, the HPG could consider a review of exemplars in urban design both within and beyond Hertfordshire with the potential of producing best practice guidance. Such guidance might be adopted by the HIPP, and be promoted by Hertfordshire Building Futures, the Building Research Establishment, and other appropriate organisations and structures.

Finally, it would seem useful that an ongoing review of strategic infrastructure across Hertfordshire includes an updated assessment of the benefits of new public transport schemes in the light of projected housing growth in different locations. This work stream could support the findings of the Hertfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and underpin its recommendations e.g. the future development of the "Green Triangle" economic zone centred in St Albans.

8.6 Active promotion of design solutions – Charrettes and related process

One of the strands that has emerged strongly from this work is that, in terms of the *Guide to Growth* itself and since then, Charrette type processes have been effective techniques for engaging in complex settlement design and planning issues. This has been the case both through the private sector, as shown in the case studies, and those examples where Local Authorities have sponsored Charrette style engagement processes. Given the strength of such processes for working through and obtaining the best (rather than lowest common denominator) solutions for a range of settlement scenarios, it would seem important at both county strategic and local authority level to give more attention to developing Charrette capacity alongside design, planning, infrastructure and economic development promotion and integration efforts.

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