

A CONSIDERATION OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN BUNTINGFORD TO THE YEAR 2031

Prepared by Members of Buntingford Town Council, Buntingford Civic Society, BARD and Buntingford Chamber of Commerce

November 2013

*FINAL
VERSION*

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by members of the Buntingford Town Council, Buntingford Chamber of Commerce, BARD and Buntingford Civic Society and consultation regarding its contents has taken place with local residents.

This report was initially intended to provide a basis from which to form a united Buntingford response to the Draft East Herts District Plan Part 1, due to be issued in the latter half of 2013. Once it was announced that East Herts Council (EHC) were to consolidate parts 1 and 2 into a single District Plan for issue at the end of 2013, it was decided to circulate the draft of this report to members of EHC Development Management Committee and to relevant EHC Officers in advance of the public consultation period; this was with the aim of informing EHC thinking on the allocation of sites for development in the Buntingford area prior to the issue of the more detailed Draft District Plan.

The report proposes that the expansion of Buntingford in the period to 2031 should be limited to maintain its valley setting and that housing development be constrained to land previously occupied by the Sainsbury Distribution Depot and to land between Ermine Street and the bypass. If, in the now unlikely event that the Sainsbury site is to remain an employment centre, development should be limited to the land between Ermine Street and the bypass and on sites to the west of London Road, up to the bypass south of Baldock Road. It is pointed out that any increase in housing, especially affordable housing, over and above current local needs, should take local employment possibilities into account. The most appropriate areas for future employment are seen as the Sainsbury site (in part or, less likely, in full), the expansion of Park Farm and possibly the expansion of Buntingford Business Park.

Amenities and Infrastructure are briefly examined in the latter part of the report and it is concluded that, if the Government's requirement for sustainability is taken seriously, the expansion of housing in Buntingford over the period 2011 to 2031 should be limited to a figure in the region of 500 over and above the number of houses proposed in the Local Plan to 2011.

Following the consultation period, the only changes that have been made between the draft and this final version are to update this summary, to add a reference to infrastructure needs in Part A - Vision Statement and to add the appendix providing details of the consultation process and the results obtained.

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1. Introduction

The East Herts District Plan will set out the planning strategy to meet the needs of East Herts and its residents to 2031. It is expected to identify the principles of development and where new development will be located. Following issue, now expected to be towards the end of 2013, there will be a consultation period during which time Buntingford will make every effort to get its views on the draft Plan taken into account before the final version is produced. To be effective, a unified approach will be needed. In order to try to obtain this, a small group of representatives, one each from the Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, Civic Society and BARD was set up in October 2012. This report sets out the findings of this group to date; it is being made available for the residents of Buntingford to see in order to keep them informed and to seek their comments and views on the direction being taken in regard to planning the future evolution of Buntingford; it is being sent to East Herts Council to help inform their actions regarding housing allocation in the period to 2013.

The methodology that has been used has involved:

- agreeing a Vision Statement that sets the scene for the future development of Buntingford,
- studying the information already available in the District Plan Supporting Documents relating to the potential sites for development in and immediately around Buntingford,
- ranking these sites according to agreed criteria and
- an initial examination of those factors (employment possibilities, amenities/infrastructure and sustainability) that that will affect the scale of growth that is appropriate and can be accommodated sustainably within the plan period.

As we do not yet know the level of development that East Herts Council will propose for the Town, the degree of justification that will support the proposed figures or the level of detail that will be given to the allocation of sites, we have attempted to recommend areas for development according to the size of Town expansion that we consider could be accommodated whilst still meeting the requirement for sustainability of development.

The main body of this report reflects this methodology. It is formed of 3 parts. PART A (Section 2) proposes a vision statement. PART B (sections 3, 4 and 5) examines and assesses the sites for development; section 3 gives details of an initial assessment of possible sites for housing development, section 4 outlines a more detailed examination of these sites and section 5 examines the possibilities for employment sites. PART C of the report (sections 6,7,8 and 9) considers other factors that affect the size of development appropriate for Buntingford in the plan period; section 6 is concerned with urban form and the appropriateness of the built environment, section 7 with the subject of affordable housing, section 8 with amenities and infrastructure and section 9 with sustainability. The report ends with section 10 - the main conclusions.

PART A Vision Statement

2. A Vision of Buntingford in 2031

The vision of Buntingford that has been used in guiding our work is as follows:

Buntingford will function as a vibrant rural service centre and market town meeting the day to day needs of its residents and those living within the large rural hinterland of the northern part of East Herts.

The Conservation Area, Town Centre (especially its range of small shops) and Listed Buildings will have been protected and enhanced. The amount of open space will have been protected.

Additional housing will be well connected to the town and encourage walking and cycling; it will have been provided to help meet the needs of local people and families wishing to move to the town. Growth will have been accompanied by a corresponding growth in infrastructure and accommodated without compromising the setting of the town within the wider landscape and without reducing the sense of a friendly and vibrant community or feeling of security that currently exists.

New housing development will have provided a mix of housing densities and designs suiting the aspirations of a broad group of people. Sufficient environmentally enhancing green space will have been allowed between new and established housing to avoid overcrowding and to help with the integration of new arrivals and there will be sufficient green space for allotments and burials.

As will be seen later in this report, we have been particularly concerned to maintain the setting of the Town within the wider landscape and to retain the present accessibility of the surrounding countryside by avoiding uncontrollable sprawl.

PART B An Assessment of Possible Sites for Development

3 An Initial Assessment of Possible Sites for Future Housing Development

The approach taken was to review each of the sites around Buntingford that have come forward as a result of the East Herts Council's Call for sites in 2009. The list, obtained from the East Herts Council (EHC) website (Ref.7), is attached as annex 1. Plans showing the location of the sites were published on the EHC website (Ref 6.) and are attached hereto as annex 2. At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty over the future of site 02/007 (Sainsbury site). Early in 2013, outline permission was granted for the creation of a new distribution facility but it now appears that Sainsbury Ltd. have sold the site to house builders because little interest was expressed by others who might wish to use the site for distribution purposes. For this reason, we have included the site as providing a potentially suitable place for a mix of new housing and industrial use. In drawing preliminary conclusions (see Section 10) we have created two scenarios. In Scenario A (now regarded as by far the most likely scenario) it is assumed that the Sainsbury site will be available primarily for housing development; in Scenario B it is assumed that it will remain solely for industrial use as proposed in the outline planning permission already granted.

Each site has been examined using the locally relevant items taken from the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Criteria list published by EHC in November 2011 (Ref. 8), augmented by criteria relating to the impact on the Conservation area and the impact of traffic from any new developments. For this initial work, the EHC traffic light system for applying criteria was retained. Table A lists the criteria used and indicates the thresholds associated with the different traffic light colours. The aim was to obtain an initial assessment of the relative merits and demerits of the sites offered for development and estimate the number of dwellings they could reasonably support. The results of this analysis are shown in Table B.

Whilst Table B is useful in highlighting various aspects relevant to planning future housing development, a final assessment of the relative acceptability of the different sites requires a weighting of the different criteria. For the purposes of this report, we have given significant weight to those factors that are concerned with maintaining the Town's valley setting, avoiding sprawl into the surrounding countryside and minimising problems created by extra traffic associated with new development. The prevalence of Red relating to sites 02/001 (Land North of Hare Street Road) and 02/004 (Land south of Owles Lane) implies that these two sites have major disadvantages as potential development sites but the other sites cannot be so easily ranked.

4. A More Detailed Assessment of Possible Sites for Future Housing

4.1 Rejected Sites

After the initial assessment, four of the original ten sites were rejected from further consideration for the reasons given below:

Sites 02/003 and 02/010

These areas have already been granted outline planning consent for the construction of up to 26 and 3 houses respectively.

Site 02/001 - Land South of Owles Lane

As implied by the red areas in Table B, this site suffers from many disadvantages in terms of housing development. Any significantly sized development would be inconsistent with the valley setting of

Buntingford and would have a severely adverse impact on the local landscape. Once started, there is no natural boundary limiting eastward development in this area. There are currently no suitable access roads and so connectivity to the Town would be poor as would access to the A10. It is at a relatively long distance from the Town centre and access to public transport is not good. There could also be significant problems in disposing of waste water.

Site 02/004 - Land north of Hare Street Road

This site too has many red areas in Table B. Development here would be inconsistent with maintaining the valley setting of Buntingford and would have a significantly adverse effect on the local landscape. Furthermore, there is no real natural boundary limiting eastward development in this area. Access for traffic is also a major problem with the limited capacity of Hare Street Road reducing connectivity both into Town and to the outside world. Development in this area would also have a major adverse impact on the Buntingford Conservation Area, especially as the limited capacity of Hare Street Road would lead to a traffic rat run on to The Causeway at peak times - potentially causing safety problems for children travelling to and from Layston School. Significant development could also give rise to waste water disposal problems. A recent application for development on this site has already been refused on these and other more detailed grounds but at the time of writing (June 2013) is subject to appeal by the prospective developer.

4.2 Sites for Further Consideration

Site 02/002 - Land to the east of Snells Mead

This site shows up in Table 3 as the site for further consideration that has most Green areas. It is relatively well connected to the Town and access to the limited public transport is quite good; some development here could be reasonably well integrated into the existing built up area. However, any significant development would push the extent of the Town eastwards and would have an adverse effect on the local landscape. Once the existing Town boundary is relaxed to allow housing in this area, there is no satisfactory natural boundary to limit further growth. The tree belt, planted some years ago to provide a boundary, is too far to the east to ensure that development respects the valley setting of Buntingford. Developing the whole area here would require more than one access point and would lead to traffic congestion on London Road. Access from Hare Street Road would result in several of the same problems as listed in the preceding discussion on site 02/004. An application for outline planning for approximately 100 dwellings on the north west of this site has recently been submitted by a developer who owns the whole site and who has aspirations to eventually develop the whole site. East Herts Council rejected this application in May 2013 and the developer has now (end June 2013) gone to appeal.

Site 02/005 - Land to the west of Monks Walk and the Bovis estate within the Bypass

This site with its area of 21 Hectares initially appears to offer the prospect of development of some 350 dwellings (see Table B) even allowing for the fact that land near to the sewage works is not suitable for development and that with any significant local growth the treatment works will need extension. However, access is a problem. The recent granting of outline planning permission for sites 02/003 and 02/010 has all but closed off the possibility of being able to access this site from Baldock Road. This leaves Luynes Rise as the only practicable vehicular access, unless a new access is to be allowed from the A10 bypass.

Reliance on accessing this site solely by way of Luynes Rise is likely to limit its development potential. Virtually all vehicles to and from the site will have to use the junction between London Road and Aspenden Road, at the point where new housing is currently being built and is already causing traffic problems due to reduced junction visibility and on-road parking. Apart from this safety issue, a sizable development on site 02/005 will lead to commuter and other vehicles adding significantly to the London Road traffic and congestion could be a real problem at busy times, especially if development is allowed elsewhere in the Town.

If new access to the A10 bypass were to be allowed, for example in the vicinity of the sewage works, then access to areas outside Buntingford would be improved and the capacity of the site could be realised.

Whichever solution is adopted, the site suffers from limited vehicular connectivity with the rest of Buntingford and poor access to the limited local public transport; the distance by car to the Town centre will be greater than for development on Site 02/009 (land west of Ermine Street).

Pedestrian connectivity to the Town centre can be regarded as being reasonable from the northern end of the site if effective use is made of the footpath connecting Buntingford and Aspenden that crosses this land.

Respect for the valley setting also requires that building height on this site be limited to be in line with the dwellings already existing on the Monks Walk and Bovis estates.

Site 02/006 - Land East of Aspenden Road

Part of this land is subject to flood risk and its close proximity to the bypass means that noise can be a problem. East Herts Council have suggested that this site between Aspenden Rd and the disused railway could form part of a green wedge helping to ensure continued separation between Aspenden and Buntingford.

Should housing development occur on this site, access would be a significant problem because of the limited width of Aspenden Road. However, if this site were to be linked with site 02/008, access could be obtained from London Road. Any reasonable development would respect the valley setting of the Town

Site 02/007 - The Former Sainsbury Depot

Although at some distance from the Town Centre and local services, this site lies within the current Town boundary and is classed as a Brownfield site. Placing dwellings on this site would be consistent with maintaining the north-south axis of the Town and, so long as building height is appropriately restricted, the valley setting of the Town would not be further disadvantaged. Removal of the Sainsbury Depot buildings and replacement by suitably designed housing and some appropriately positioned light industrial units holds out the prospect of slight improvement to the setting of the Town within the wider landscape.

Whilst access from the London Road roundabout already exists, it is envisaged that another access onto London Road would also be required if the development is to provide suitable connectivity (vehicular and pedestrian) to the Town centre and the rest of Buntingford.

Due to its location relative to the Town's main services, Table B shows fewer green areas for this site than similarly sized sites 02/002 or 02/005. However it does not suffer any of the significant

disadvantages that they do. In particular, access to and from the site for those working outside of the Town is far less of a problem, both for those living on the site and for other road users in the Town. There are no Red areas in Table B for this site.

The current Town Boundary provides a limit to any proposed development here. Any proposed extension would need to be into site 02/001 and should be strongly resisted for reasons already outlined in section 4.1.

The site includes 'The Bury' the home of Buntingford Town Football Club and it is assumed that any approved development will allow for its continuation and possible enhancement.

All in all, this site offers one of the best prospects for future housing development with fewer adverse impacts on those already living within the Town than those presented by most of the other sites reviewed here.

Site 02/008 - Land west of London Road

Although at some distance from the Town centre, development here would respect the historical north-south axis of the Town. The relatively high ground in this area already contains significant building and so the valley nature of the Town is unlikely to be significantly affected by further development on this plot of limited size. Access could be gained by a new road off London Road to the south of the Barratt estate but any new car access to the Sainsbury site may limit the possibilities here.

Site 02/009 - Land west of Ermine Street

To quote from an East Herts Council document (ref.9) 'Although the northern extremity of this area is some distance from the Town centre, and development here represents an elongation of the Town, it is within the valley setting that is the defining feature of Buntingford. As such it would enhance local distinctiveness by ensuring that Buntingford is contained within its landscape context.' The same article goes on to question the extent to which the bypass, although providing a boundary to development, forms an effective visual buffer to the landscape beyond. For this reason we propose that any building in this area should be limited in height to that of normal two storey housing.

Waste water from this site will need further examination. It may necessitate digging up the High Street, for a gravity based system, or pumping along a bypass route – both costly operations which would only be justified by a development of significant size (200 dwellings +?). There are other possibilities for dealing with waste water but these have not yet been evaluated.

Given the number of dwellings here that would justify development, it would be important to find some way of ensuring that the traffic generated does not adversely affect the High Street. Opening up a connection to the bypass should, therefore, be a condition of allowing any significant development of this site. Traffic from development could access the bypass by opening up the former road to Throcking from Ermine Street, for example. Opening up such a link could have other advantages in respect of traffic in Buntingford High Street and could aid the diversion of bus routes to serve any new development. In addition, there is a possibility of making a connection onto Bowling Green Lane which might be capable of easing some of the congestion experienced at school arrival/leaving times.

Pedestrian access to the Town along an existing Ermine Street footpath poses few problems and senior and middle schools are reasonably close by.

Note that, at the time of writing (August 2013), the majority of this site is in the parish of Cottered.

Site 02/011 - Land off Aspenden Road adjacent to Fairfield

There are access problems for this site. There are significant development possibilities if the site could be considered along with sites 02/006 and 02/008 to form a coherent whole with the main access being off London Road.

East Herts Council have suggested that the land between Aspenden Rd and the disused railway could form part of a green wedge helping to ensure continued separation between Aspenden and Buntingford.

5. Employment Sites

With the lack of effective public transport likely to continue, any large scale increase in housing numbers, above the level required by those already living or working in the Buntingford area, will fail to meet normal sustainability criteria unless there is a corresponding increase in suitable employment opportunities. Whilst the group has not yet fully examined the sites listed in Annexe 1 from the point of view of providing employment land, many of the points discussed in relation to housing development on these sites apply to their use for employment. This leads to the conclusion that, whilst partial use of site 02/009 to the north of the Town is possible, and it might also be possible to use some of the southern part of site 02/005 if a new access onto the bypass could be provided to the north of the sewage works, the most appropriate and probably the most cost effective way to expand employment opportunities would be to further develop some of the existing employment sites. These are the Sainsbury site, Park Farm, Buntingford Business Park and Watermill Estate. Reference 10 states that Buntingford is not a strategic employment location, because of its distance from rail and motorway links, and that it will not attract large scale employers but that it could attract smaller, essentially local employers, either with strong local connections or those who regard it as a good central location to service customers in the ring of towns all located around 10-15 miles of Buntingford. Such employers may well be attracted to the sites listed as 5.1 to 5.4 below. However, the lack of high speed broadband internet connection reduces this attractiveness. There is also the distinct possibility that some employers already operating in the town will consider moving their businesses elsewhere for this very reason.

5.1 The Sainsbury Site

An outline planning application for the development of a distribution centre was approved by East Herts Council early in 2013. It is claimed that this site will provide a significant number (up to 500?) of new employment opportunities, although it is not clear at this time whether the occupier of the site will transfer employees from an already existing site or will wish to recruit locally. More recently we have been informed that, because there is little interest being expressed in the use of the site for distribution purposes, Sainsbury have been in discussion with house builders regarding the use of the site for a mix of housing and light industrial units and have now sold the site to them for this purpose. If this is to be the future of the site, the employment prospects it offers will be much more limited in scale.

5.2 Park Farm

This site is quite well located for small scale businesses such as those already there and it has potential for expansion to the north. This site could also be linked with the southern end of site 02/009 to give even further scope for development. Opening up the old Throcking Road connection between Ermine Street and the A10 bypass would also enhance the prospects of further employment opportunities on this site.

5.3 Buntingford Business Park

Located at the junction of the A10 and A507, this site has relatively good accessibility. Land on the north side of the site is available for expansion, services are in place and extension of the Business Park would be more cost effective than creating a new site elsewhere in the immediate vicinity of Buntingford. However, expansion of the Buntingford Business Park does involve further incursion into open countryside which is contrary to both National and Local Planning Policy.

5.4 Watermill Estate

Compared to the other sites considered above, this site has poor accessibility and there are greater constraints on its possible expansion. Therefore, this site is likely to offer only limited further employment opportunities.

PART C Factors Affecting the Size and Nature of Buntingford Expansion

6. Urban Form

The National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF (ref. 1) states in para. 56 that “The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people”. It goes on in para. 61 to state “planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment”. Reference 9 states in para. 5.3.2 that “Coherent urban form is one of a number of contributory factors making up ‘sense of place’ and will be an important consideration of area specific visions”. Additionally, East Herts have stated that they wish to develop ‘places for living’ and not just ‘houses for targets’. Taking together these concerns with:

- making places better for people
- sense of place
- places for living

means that as well as location and housing numbers, housing types and styles need to be given serious consideration as does the need for the expansion of community and leisure facilities to match an increasing population.

Recent developments, by Barratt on the southern end of Buntingford and Leach to the west of Greenways, have incorporated blocks of flats and tall buildings of a ‘Town House’ nature which are out of keeping with their setting on the edge of what is a small rural Town and have certainly not ‘made places better’ for those people who were living in the area before the developments took place. Compatibility with the structure and layout of the surrounding area and the need to relate well to the massing and height of adjacent buildings has, by and large, been ignored. Future development should not be allowed to follow this trend which is certainly not providing coherent urban form nor is it in keeping with the ‘sense of place’ and does not help with blending the Town into the wider landscape. Such developments may be appropriate to larger towns but development in Buntingford needs to respect its size and setting.

Reference 9 also makes the point that Buntingford ‘has a comparatively older population than the other towns in the District’. This suggests that there is a different emphasis on the housing requirements for Buntingford compared to other larger towns of the East Herts District. Recent developments have not shown any awareness of this, with builders such as Barratt putting up the same type of dwelling here as in other developments of theirs in places like Slough. Such modern developments, characterised by lack of gardens and suitable parking space, a greater proportion of three storey housing and no provision of bungalows, are hardly suited to a ‘comparatively older’ population or to the ‘sense of place’.

In making a response to the forthcoming consultation on Part 1 of the East Herts Development Plan we need to ensure that, as required by the NPPF, “the planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment”. In other words, we need to ensure that Buntingford’s ‘sense of place’ and its ‘comparatively older’ population is taken into account.

7. Affordable Housing

This is another area in which planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places, availability of employment and the integration of new development.

Currently, East Herts Council is looking for 40% affordable housing to be supplied on all significant (more than 15 dwellings) new developments. This is normally divided between 'rented' and 'intermediate market' housing on something like a 75% rented to 25% intermediate market basis. This blanket requirement is based on East Herts Council housing list figures for the whole of the district. However, the number of people in and around Buntingford on that housing list is relatively small - currently less than 25. When affordable housing becomes available it is allocated to those on the East Herts housing list on the basis of their assessed need for housing rather than on their place of work or current residence.

Many of those requiring affordable housing are also likely to be those who can least afford to commute significant distances to work, especially when one takes into account the ever increasing rise in commuting costs and the paucity of public transport in this area. It is interesting to note that this point was highlighted in a consultant's report to East Herts Council (see ref. 10) which states in para 7.26 "Given relatively high prices of housing in a rural market town, residential development is likely to attract higher skill, mid-career families, who can afford the cost of travelling to work. There could be issues, however, if a significant amount of affordable housing were secured as part of development, in terms of residents finding it difficult to access work, and limited opportunities being available in the town itself".

The growth of employment opportunities in and around Buntingford is limited by comparison to other areas closer to the main motorways (A1 and M11 corridors) or to rail links.

The two factors, of limited employment opportunity and ever increasing commuting cost, lead one to suggest that the amount of affordable housing to be built should be related to the local need and the growth in local employment opportunities and not, as at present, be just a fixed proportion of the number of new dwellings built. The current 40% figure (with 75% of that being rented accommodation) may well be appropriate if a relatively small number of houses were to be built in the period to 2031 but a smaller proportion of rented affordable accommodation should be demanded if there is to be a greater level of development. To do otherwise will result in people on the East Herts housing list being allocated accommodation in a location in which they cannot find work or, in many cases, are unlikely to be able to afford to travel to a source of work.

There is another aspect to the need for affordable housing. There are younger people not on any housing list who are unable to afford to buy open market housing. These people could benefit from some form of assisted purchase or intermediate market scheme. This leads to the suggestion that, for future significant developments around Buntingford, as well as examining the need for a fixed 40% affordable housing, it would be appropriate to change the ratio of rented to intermediate market housing in favour of the latter.

8. Provision of Amenities/Infrastructure

In deciding on the scale of new development, account should be taken of the existence of appropriate infrastructure and amenities or the capacity to provide them in a timely manner. The sections below outline the result of a brief examination of the areas of main concern.

8.1 Transport.

Buntingford has no rail transport. Although public bus transport has improved somewhat in recent times, it is still far from providing a viable system for the majority of those who commute to work outside of the town. With limited possibilities for the expansion of employment within Buntingford, any expansion of the town will result in an increase in the level of out-commuting. Past experience has shown that it is not practicable/cost effective to compensate for this by provision of extra bus services and so Buntingford is not a sustainable location for significant expansion. The transport

service that could be provided by S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money will never convince the majority to abandon their cars unless it can offer a frequent and reliable service within a 20 mile radius for those arriving at different times at the nearest train stations (Stevenage, Ware, Hertford, Royston) or those leaving work at different times from the main centres of employment (Cambridge, Stevenage, Harlow, Bishops Stortford, Hertford, Ware, Welwyn Garden City, London etc.). It is worth pointing out that in the Buntingford section of the Scott Wilson Sustainability Appraisal Report (see reference 3, pp 50 to 55) these factors were recognised and it was proposed in mitigation *'that the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure should be in place prior to the arrival of new residents' !*

The road infrastructure connecting Buntingford to main centres of employment and the main railway stations (apart from Cambridge and Royston) also has its shortcomings, particularly for commuter traffic. Stevenage is reached by way of narrow country roads, Hertford and Welwyn Garden City by way of the A414 into Hertford, Bishops Stortford by way of the A120/ Little Hadham lights and the A10 just south of Buntingford has been something of an accident black-spot in relatively recent times. Getting to work will prove to be a problem if Buntingford is to expand by more than the figures recommended in this report .

8.2 Water Supply and Sewage.

The continuing provision of clean water, primarily from the aquifer, is of concern for the whole of the district and it is well documented that East Herts is already under serious water stress (Reference 2). The same reference points out that East Herts has been identified as both over-abstracted (meaning existing abstraction is causing unacceptable damage to the environment at periods of low flows) and over-licensed (meaning that no water is available at times of low flow). These factors need to be taken into account in viewing the sustainability of development in the District as a whole.

The disposal of waste water and sewage whilst also of concern to the district as a whole, is of particular concern to residents of Buntingford if there is to be further expansion. Whilst the Sewage treatment works off Aspenden Road may have room for expansion to cater for further development, the pipework feeding it is already working at its limit at certain times, with occasional overflow of sewage into the river Rib. Reference 2 notes that the river Rib has relatively poor ecological quality and that the Environment Agency's classification for the general area is as a major aquifer. Major aquifers are very sensitive to pollution. We would recommend therefore that, before there is significant further development in and around Buntingford, work should be completed to ensure that the sewage infrastructure required is in place. Reference 5 also repeats this concern over sewage treatment at Buntingford.

8.3 High Speed Broadband Facilities.

At the time of writing, Buntingford is not on the list for the installation of High Speed Broadband Facilities within the foreseeable future. This makes the Town less attractive as an employment area both for small businesses and for home workers and will, unless this prospect is reversed, make expansion of the town's population less sustainable.

8.4 Town Centre Parking.

This is currently a contentious issue and is likely to remain so. With an increase in population on the sites indicated as suitable for development in the earlier sections of this document, there will be an increasing need for short-term town centre parking if the High Street is to continue to be successful.

There are no obvious sites that could provide extra car parking, especially if one considers the probable need to expand the Middle School at Edwinstree. Measures will also be need to be taken to alleviate traffic congestion in the Town if there is significant housing expansion.

8.5 School Expansion.

At the present time, infant school space is reported to be close to or at its limit. Space for infant school expansion needs to be allowed in any future development proposals. The middle school probably does have the land to allow some limited expansion. Freman College could also cope with expansion by restricting admission to those from outside Buntingford and surrounding villages, as this group does take up a significant number of places at present.

8.6 Health Services.

The Doctors' Surgeries and the Dental Clinics claim to have some spare capacity at the present time and say that they could be expanded to a limited extent if the need arose. The nearest main hospitals are some distance away at Stevenage, Harlow, Welwyn Garden City and Cambridge with limited (Stevenage) or very limited public transport access.

8.7 Care Facilities.

The supporting papers leading up to the East Herts Plan for the period to 2031 claim that the population of Buntingford is of greater age than is average for the towns of the area. This suggests that any new developments should give due consideration to the provision of care facilities. At present, Buntingford has such facilities at Ashfords, Carters Close, Dixon Place and Nevetts.

8.8 Open/ Green Spaces. East Herts Council maintain that there is poor provision of accessible natural green space in Buntingford and state that this statement is founded in the Green Infrastructure Plan for East Herts. East Herts has also regularly approved infill building within the town. If this issue is to be properly addressed, green buffer zones will need to be created between existing and new developments and proper arrangements for their upkeep/maintenance will need to be specified and agreed.

8.9 Sports Facilities.

Buntingford is reasonably well equipped with outdoor sports facilities at present. However, any significant expansion of the population will require more, especially if Buntingford is to maintain its position as a vibrant rural service centre. To be fully economically effective this will require a good relationship between the Town and School operated assets. If this can be arranged, it should prove possible to use S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy CIL funds to provide sports facilities that would benefit all in the community.

8.10 Allotments.

Currently there is a waiting list for allotments in the town. Significant new development is likely to increase the demand and so prospective developers should be asked to show how they would meet this need.

8.11 Cemetery Space.

There is Glebe land adjacent to the current cemetery at Layston which the diocese would make available at a cost to the local council. Burial space is becoming very limited even with the present population and something needs to be done in the near future. S106 or CIL money from future development might be a solution to the problem. At the time of writing, further work needs to be undertaken to check on the suitability of this land from the point of view of the protection of water sources.

9. Sustainability

The National Planning Policy Framework places importance on Sustainability in development. To quote from paragraph 7 of reference 1 (highlighting some relevant points in italics):

“There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and *by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being*; and
- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting *and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment*; and, *as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*“

The same document also requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the local development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The above would suggest therefore that the development of Buntingford should reflect local needs (rather than broader demands or requirements) and support the transition to a low carbon future

Reference 10 points out that the majority of those who are in work and who live in Buntingford commute out of the town. With the lack of effective public transport likely to continue, any large scale increase in housing numbers above those required by existing Buntingford residents will fail to meet normal sustainability criteria unless there is a corresponding increase in suitable employment opportunities. However, as Reference 9 states, in section 5.2.44, Buntingford itself is not well located for the majority of business types that rely on access to major transport networks such as motorways or rail connections. Reference 10 draws attention to the fact that Buntingford is not a strategic employment location and will not attract large scale employers but that it could attract smaller, essentially local employers, either with strong local connections or those who regard it as a good central location to service customers in the ring of towns all located around 10-15 miles of Buntingford. The lack of high speed broadband facilities will limit the attractiveness even to this group of possible employers, as well as to those who wish to engage in home working. Thus one is led to conclude that any large scale growth in housing provision in and around Buntingford does not meet normal sustainability criteria nor is it justified by local housing need.

The justification for future housing requirement is often based on the number of people on the East Herts Housing List. As pointed out earlier in section 7, the current local (to Buntingford) requirement for affordable housing is limited and creating more affordable housing in Buntingford than the local requirement justifies does not help to meet the 'transition to a low carbon future' and is therefore hardly in accordance with the principle of sustainability unless perhaps the term 'affordable housing' is interpreted primarily as some form of assisted purchase housing.

10. Preliminary Conclusions

Because of the wish to retain the rural nature of this area, the spread of the Town eastwards should be strongly resisted and any development should be kept within the existing natural boundaries to the west.

Table C on page 37 brings together the main points made in Part B of this report; it illustrates the relative suitability of the different sites that have been put forward for development. The sites are listed in the table in decreasing order of suitability taking into account the factors listed in the left hand column – i.e. the least suitable sites are to the right of the table. On the basis of the considerations discussed in Part B, one is led to the conclusions set out below in sections 10.1 and 10.2 regarding the allocation of sites for housing development.

At the time of writing, it appears almost certain that site 02/007 (Sainsbury Site) will be made available for housing development together with the provision of a number of light industrial units. However, planning permission for conversion of the use of this site for housing has not yet been granted. For this reason, two scenarios are considered below. Scenario A (thought to be the most likely situation at the time of writing) envisages that site 02/007 will be developed for housing with a limited area being made available for new light industrial units; Scenario B assumes that the site 02/007 will be occupied by a distribution centre in accord with outline planning permission already granted.

10.1 Assuming Scenario A - Sainsbury site available for housing development

Significant new housing development (more than 20 dwellings) should be contained within sites 02/007, 02/009, 02/008 and 02/005 - in that order of preference. Of these only sites 02/005, 02/007 and 02/009 have the capability of accommodating 200+ new dwellings each. Because there is currently insufficient access capability, the free land within the bypass to the west, site 02/005, cannot be expected to take as much housing as the area would suggest (e.g. as in Table B) unless a new entrance is made from the A10 bypass. In addition, its vehicular connectivity with the town is limited and it is some distance from bus services. Sites 02/006, 02/008 and 02/011 taken together, and with access off London Road, might be able to accommodate up to 120 dwellings but lack of common ownership is likely to prove a problem in this respect.

Any new housing development in Buntingford will lead to an increase in out-commuting as the local opportunities for employment are very limited and the scope for increasing these opportunities is even less in the case of Scenario A than in the case of Scenario B. Thus one is led to conclude that future development should take place on those sites that give reasonable access to the local road network for commuters without causing undue traffic problems within the main body of the Town and which do not greatly affect the amenity of existing residents in other respects. This can be accomplished for a future development level of between 200 and 500 new dwellings by developing sites 02/007 and 02/009 (so long as a traffic connection can be opened up directly between the site and the A10) and possibly allowing some low levels of housing development on the other sites listed in the preceding paragraph.

10.2 Assuming Scenario B - Sainsbury Site remains in use as a Distribution Depot

New housing development should be contained within sites 02/009, 02/008 and 02/005 - in that order of preference. Of these sites, only sites 02/005 and 02/009 have the capability of accommodating 200+ new dwellings.

Because there is currently insufficient access capability, the free land within the bypass to the west, site 02/005, cannot be expected to take as much housing as the area would suggest (e.g. as in Table B) unless a new entrance is made from the A10 bypass. In addition, its vehicular connectivity with the town is limited and it is some distance from bus services. Sites 02/006, 008 and 011 taken together, and with access off London Road, might be able to accommodate up to 120 dwellings but lack of common ownership is likely to prove a problem in this respect. The creation of a new employee entrance to the Sainsbury site may also limit the attractiveness of developing this combined area. Development of all areas other than 02/009 will lead to increased traffic on London Road with longer rush hour waits at the Sainsbury roundabout. All in all, the total capacity of these sites (other than 02/009) is unlikely to exceed 300 dwellings without creating significant problems for the Town.

Thus one is led to conclude that if Buntingford is required to find the space for up to a further 200 dwellings and some employment sites, in the period to 2031, they could mainly be accommodated with least inconvenience to existing residents by developing the land west of Ermine Street (site 02/009) but only so long as a traffic connection from the site onto the A10 is opened up. If the requirement is for a figure significantly greater than this, the exploitation of site 02/005 (with a new access onto the bypass) should be considered.

10.3 Overall Housing Requirement and Sustainability

Any requirement to provide for more than 500 houses in the period to 2031 should be robustly opposed on the grounds that it would not satisfy normal sustainability criteria and that local infrastructure is not in place nor planned to be so.

If Buntingford is to take more than 200 dwellings in the period to 2031 (over and above those currently approved), the requirement to provide 40% affordable housing should be revisited, either in terms of reducing the level of requirement or in terms of increasing the proportion of affordable housing that is intermediate market housing. Providing a significantly larger number of affordable homes than required by the local Buntingford and District Community would result in many being occupied by people not currently employed in Buntingford and for whom there would be only limited employment opportunities. With the lack of effective public transport likely to continue and with the increasing cost of commuting, any large scale increase in housing numbers will thus fail to meet normal sustainability criteria (particularly in the case of scenario A), including requirements to minimise carbon footprint. It should be noted that planning approval has already been given for some 190 dwellings over and above those proposed in the East Herts Plan to 2011 and details are given in Annex 3 to this document.

Cllr Eunice Woods, Planning Committee, Buntingford Town Council

Mrs Jill Jones, Town Clerk, Buntingford Town Council

Mr Graham Bonner, Buntingford Chamber of Commerce

Mr Neil Greig, BARD

Mr Bob Jackson, Buntingford Civic Society

11. References

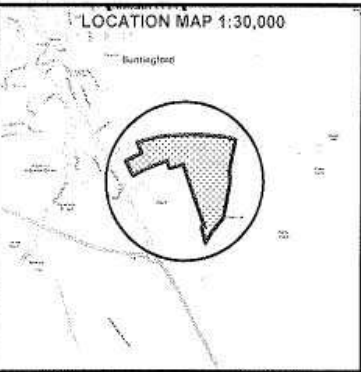
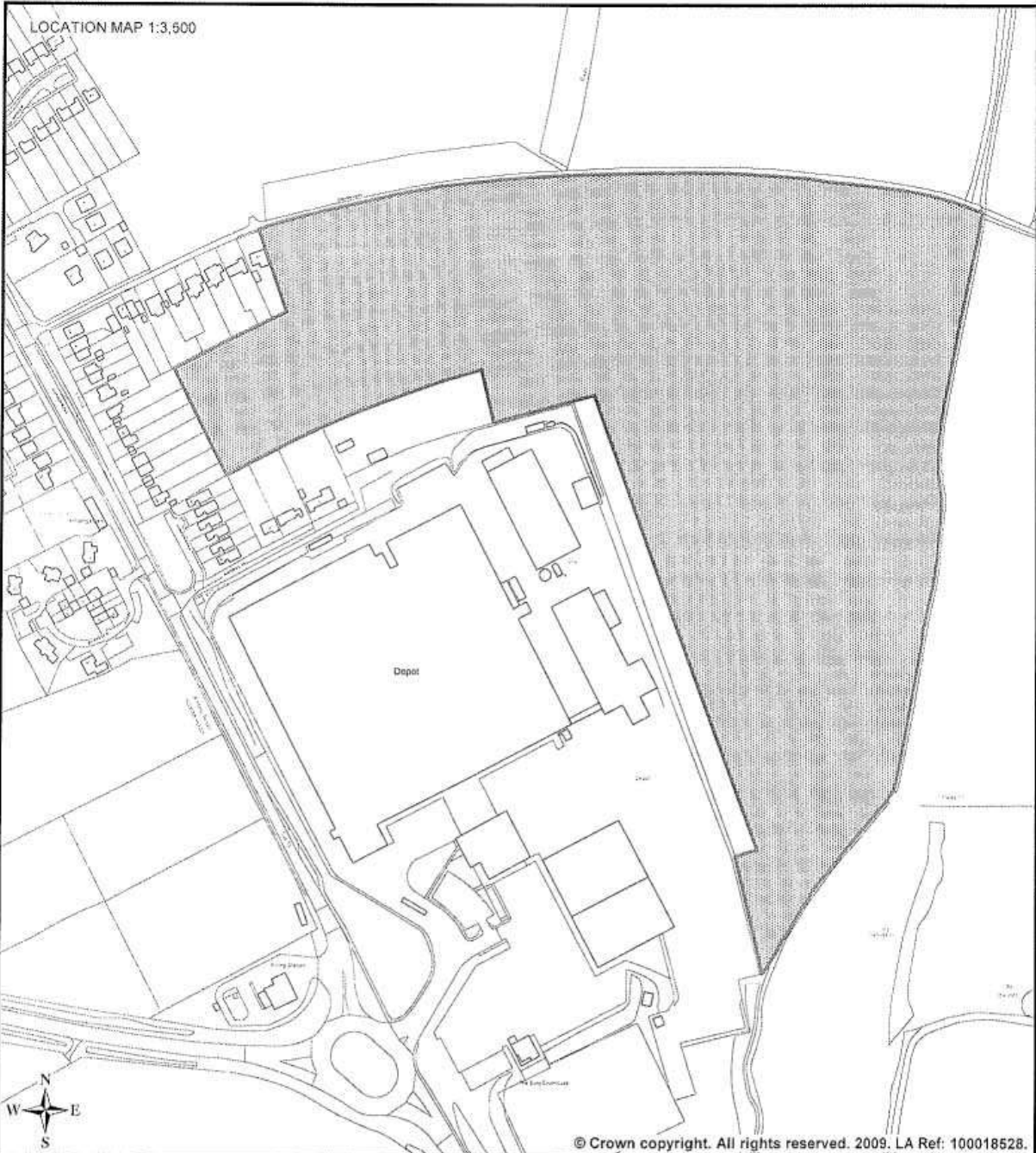
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10. East Hertfordshire Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice -Final Report by DTZ.
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Annex 1 – List of Potential Buntingford Sites from East Herts Call for Sites

02 Buntingford					
02/001	Land south of Owles Lane	Owles Lane	Buntingford	Area 12.24 Ha.	Residential, Affordable Housing, Specialist Residential, Community Facility, Leisure/ Recreation, Retail, Employment, Renewable Energy, Mixed Use
02/002	Land to the rear of Snells Mead	Station Road	Buntingford	18.22 Ha.	Residential, Leisure/ Recreation
02/003	Land off Longmead	Longmead	Buntingford	1.18 Ha.	Residential
02/004	Land east of Buntingford (south of the Causeway & north of Hare Street Road)	The Causeway	Buntingford	11.73 Ha.	Residential, Affordable Housing, Leisure/ Recreation, Other – Open Space, Children’s Play Area, Car Parking, Forest Planting
02/005	Land west of Buntingford (between Monks Walk & A10)	Monks Walk	Buntingford	21.25 Ha.	Residential, Affordable Housing
02/006	Aspenden Bridge (opposite Watermill Industrial Estate)	Aspenden Road	Buntingford	2.78 Ha.	Residential, Affordable Housing
02/007	Former Sainsbury’s Depot	London Road	Buntingford	10.93 Ha.	Residential
02/008	Land west of London Road	London Road	Buntingford	2.14 Ha.	Residential
02/009	Land west of Ermine Street	Ermine Street	Buntingford	17.39 Ha.	Residential, Affordable Housing, Specialist Residential
02/010	Land to the rear of How Green Meadow	Baldock Road	Buntingford	0.27 Ha.	Residential
02/011	Land at Aspenden Road	Aspenden Road	Buntingford	0.73 Ha.	Residential

Annex 2

Maps Showing the Sites Listed in Annex 1



East Herts Council

East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ
Tel: 01279 655261

CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION
 Site Ref: 02/001
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land south of Owles Lane,
 Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 11.57
 Suggested Use: Residential, Mixed Use
 Grid Reference: 37102861

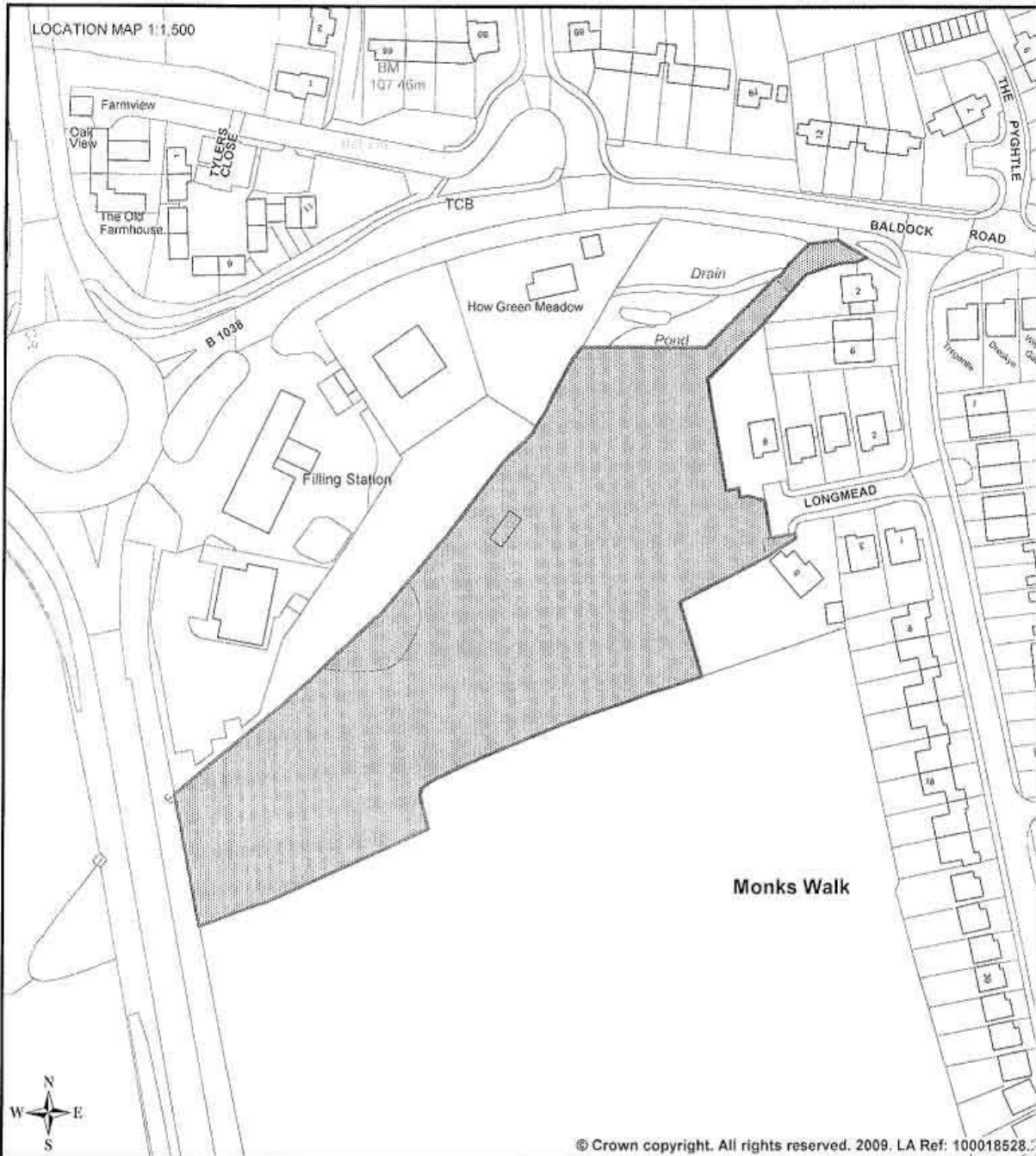


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 Hertford
 SG13 8EQ
 Tel: 01279 655261

CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION

Site Ref: 02/002
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land to the rear of Snells Mead,
 Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 16.35
 Suggested Use: Residential, Leisure/Recreation
 Grid Reference: 36752912



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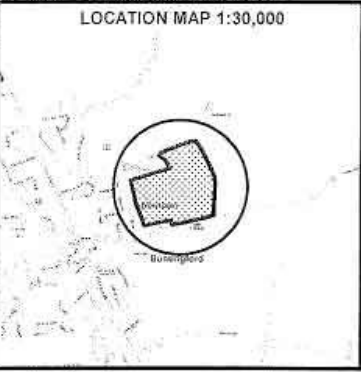
CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION

Site Ref: 02/003
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land to the rear of Longmead,
 Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 1.2
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 35672935



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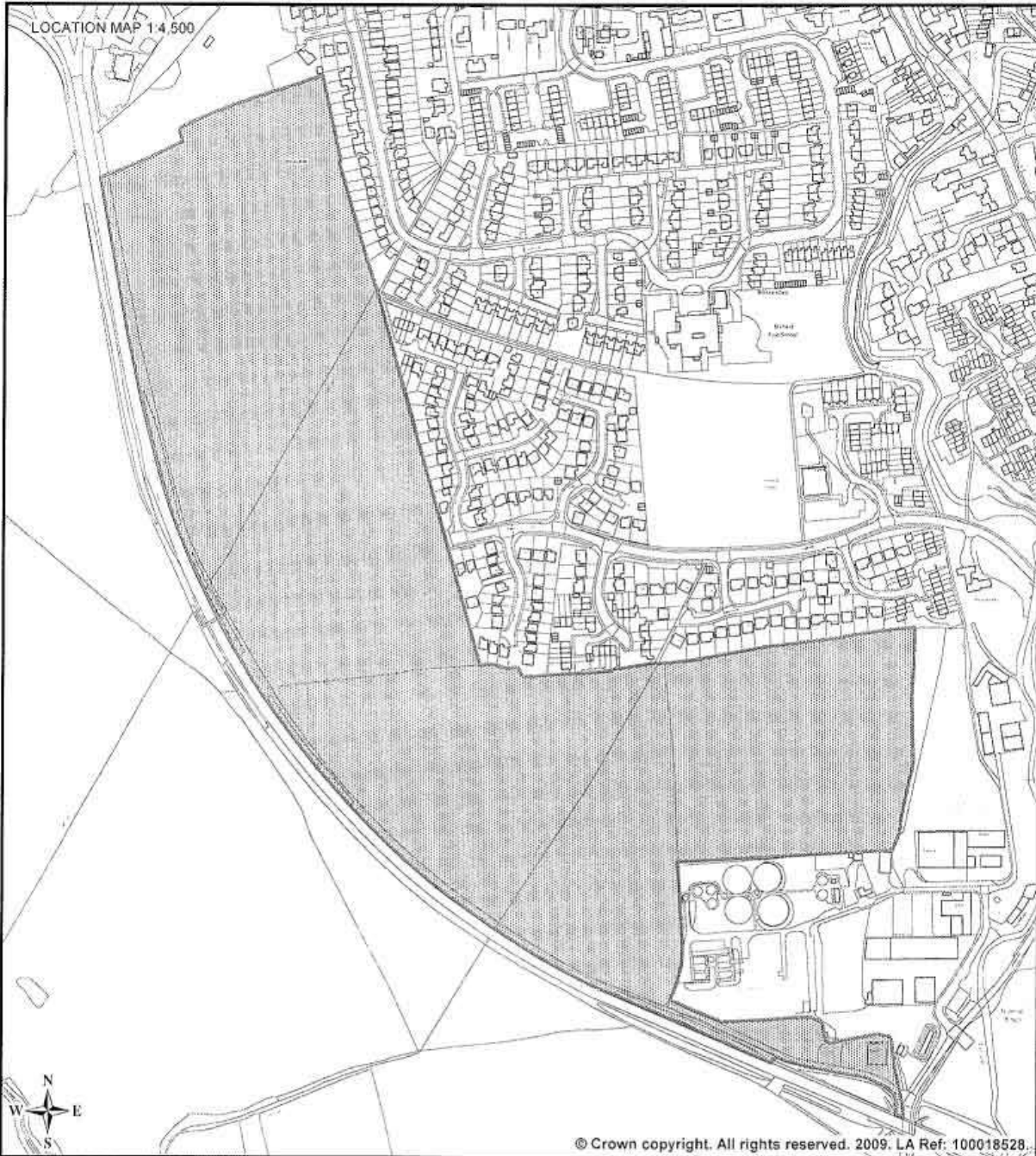


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 Tel: 01279 655261

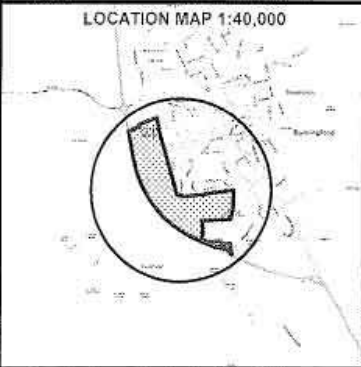
CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION

Site Ref: 02/004
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land to the east of Buntingford
 (between B1038 and The Causeway).
 Site Area (Hectares): 11.64
 Suggested Use: Residential, Leisure/Recreation
 Grid Reference: 36762962



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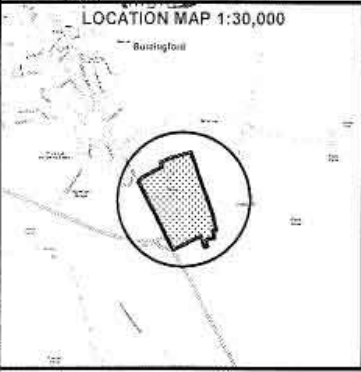
East Herts Council
 Wallfields
 Pegs Lane
 Hertford
 SG13 8EQ
 Tel: 01279 655261

CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION
 Site Ref: 02/005
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land to the west of Buntingford
 (between Monks Walk & A10).
 Site Area (Hectares): 21
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 35772890



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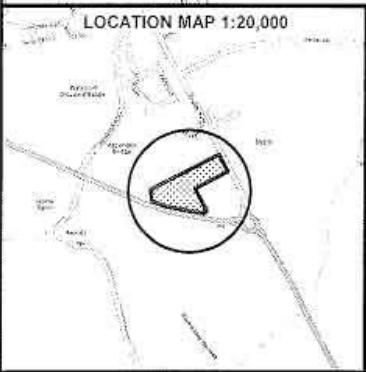
East Herts Council
 Wallfields
 Pegs Lane
 Hertford
 SG13 8EQ
 Tel: 01279 655261

CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION
 Site Ref: 02/007
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Former Sainsbury's Depot, London Road, Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 11
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 36912844



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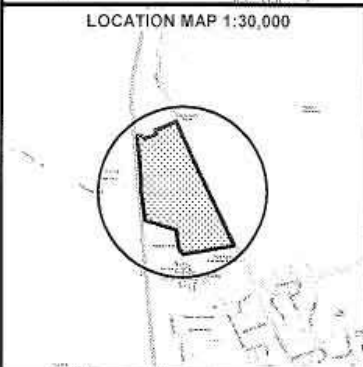


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 Pegs Lane
 Hertford
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CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

SITE INFORMATION

Site Ref: 02/008
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land west of London Road,
 Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 2.15
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 36622841

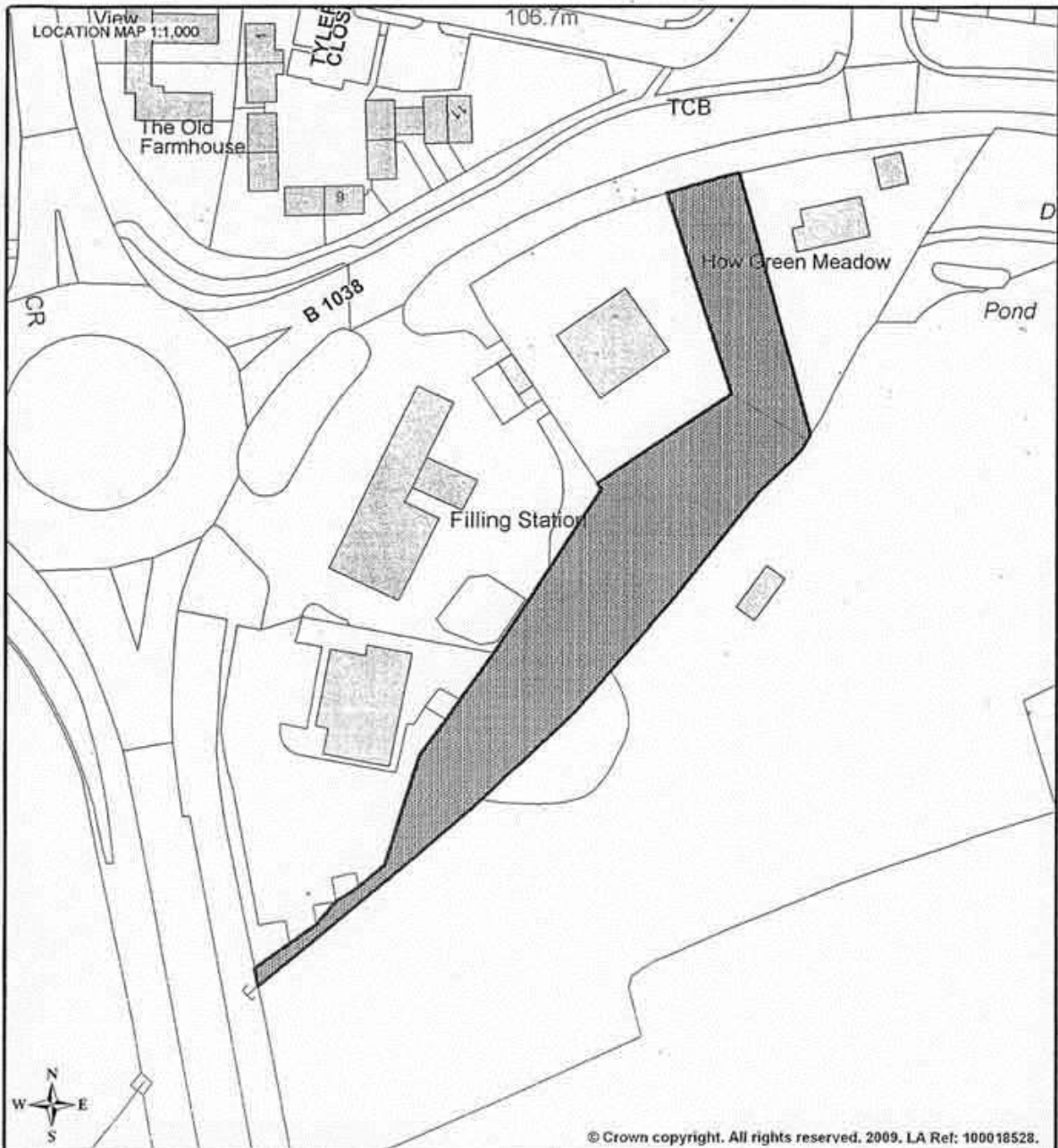


CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2009

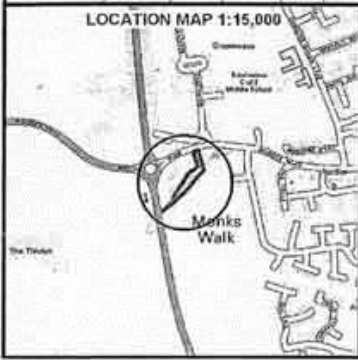
East Herts Council

East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ
Tel: 01279 655261

SITE INFORMATION
 Site Ref: 02/009
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land west of Ermine Street,
 Corneybury Farm, Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 17.15
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 35693039



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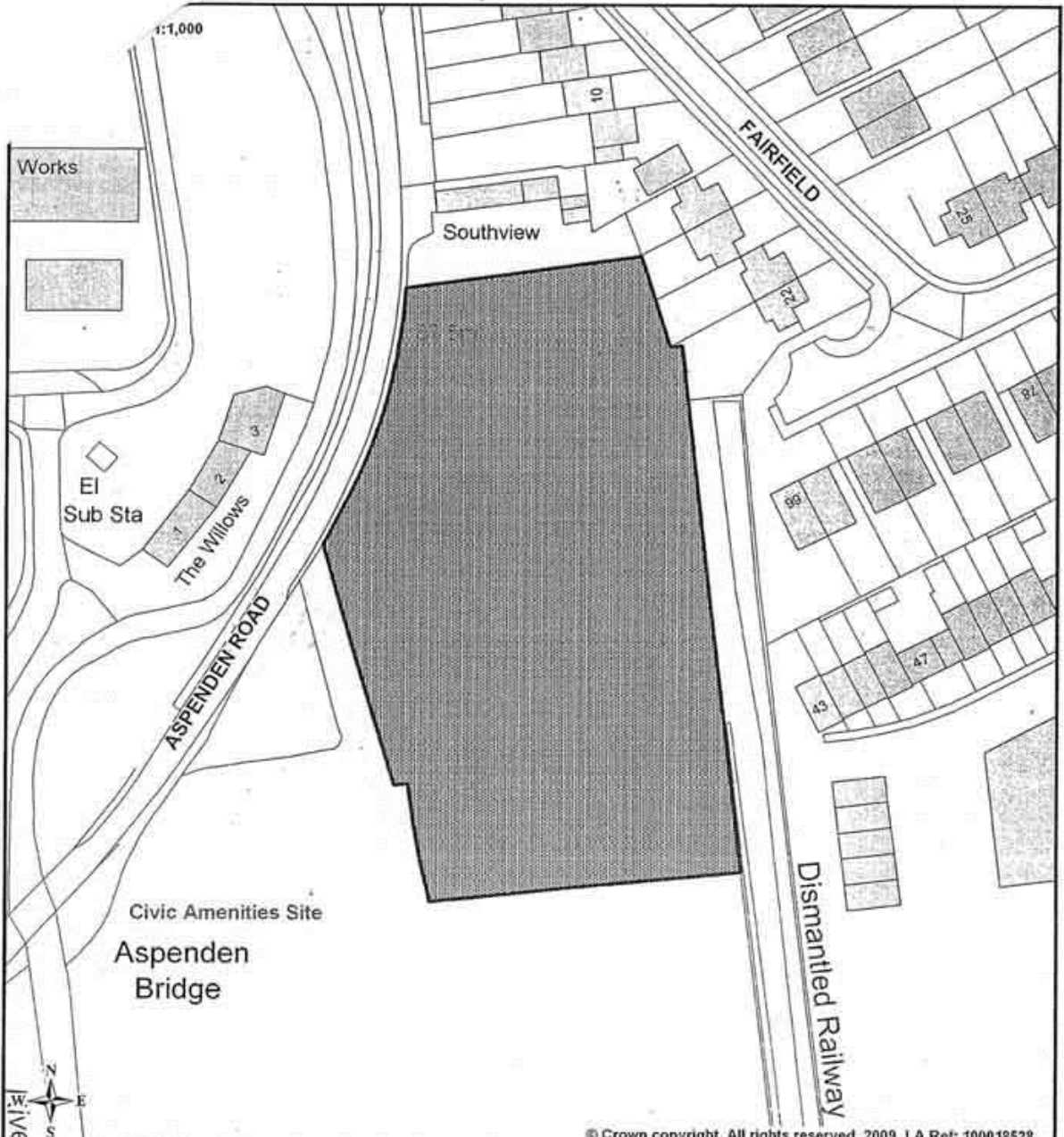


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CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2010

SITE INFORMATION

Site Ref: 02/010
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land to the rear of How Green Meadow, Baldock Road, Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 0.27
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 35642936



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CALL FOR SITES RESPONSES 2011

SITE INFORMATION

Site Ref: 02/011
 Parish: Buntingford
 Address: Land at Aspenden Road, Buntingford.
 Site Area (Hectares): 0.73
 Suggested Use: Residential
 Grid Reference: 36432861

Annex 3 - List of Planning Approvals given for dwellings over and above those allocated for the period to 2011 in the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007

No of Dwellings	Location	Details
1	Bowlers Mead	Additional bungalow
3	Rear of 59, High Street	
1	Plashes Drive	
1	Bridewell House	Additional dwelling in grounds
1	r/o 12, High Street	Additional dwelling in grounds
67	Olvega Drive/Crouch Gardens	82 in Local Plan 149 built
50	Skipps Meadow	
26	Longmead	Reserved Matters pending
3	Howe Green	OP Granted
8	Railway PH development	Loss of amenity/employment
15	Station Yard Development	
2	76, High Street	Additional dwellings in grounds
3	The Red House	
5	The Red House	Offices converted to flats loss of employment
3	Old Dairy Mews	
1	7-9, Hare Street Road	3 dwellings replacing 2
Total 190		

Note that there is currently (July 2013) an application pending for a further 13 houses on the Park Farm site

Table A - Criteria Used In Assessing Possible Development Sites

Topic	Criterion	Comment	Assessment
Biodiversity	Affected Wildlife Site?	East Herts Policy ENV4 prevents adverse development	Onsite - Red Offsite with potential impact - Amber No impact - Green
Enviromental	Flood Risk?		Zone 3 - Red Zone 2 - Amber Zone 1 - Green
Enviromental	Noise Problems?	Any Existing Noise Sources	Yes - Amber No - Green
Enviromental	Air Quality	Nearby source of Poor Air Quality?	Yes - Amber No - Green
Landscape Character	Adverse Impact on Landscape Setting of Town	Does Development Impact on Surrounding Countryside	Significantly - Red Partially - Amber No - Green
Urban Sprawl	Are There Natural Boundaries to Limit Development?		No - Red Limited Boundaries - Amber Yes - Green
Town Character	Can Site fit in well with Existing Development		Poorly - Red Subject to landscaping/ mitigation - Amber Well - Green
Buses	Site Accessible to Bus Stop?	Within 400m?	No - Red Yes but low service - Amber Yes - Green
Education	Primary Sch Accessibility	Lower Threshold 15mins Upper Threshold 30mins	Outside Thresholds - Red Between Thresholds- Amber Below Lower Threshold - Green
Education	Middle School Accessibility	Lower Threshold 15mins Upper threshold 30mins	Outside Thresholds - Red Between Thresholds- Amber Below Lower Threshold - Green
Education	Senior School Accessibility	Lower Threshold 20mins Upper Threshold 40mins	Outside Thresholds - Red Between Thresholds- Amber Below Lower Threshold - Green
Health	GP accessibility	Lower Threshold 15mins Upper Threshold 30mins	Outside Thresholds - Red Between Thresholds- Amber Below Lower Threshold - Green
Retail Site Accessibility	Accessibility to District and Town Locations by Public Transport	Lower Threshold 15mins Upper Threshold 30mins	Outside Thresholds - Red Between Thresholds- Amber Below Lower Threshold - Green
Access	Is there Direct Access to Site?	Require Access to existing Road Network	No Direct Access - Red Access on to classified Road - Amber Direct Access - Green
Access	Does Access affect Site Development?	Access must meet current Highway Standards	Does not Meet Standards - Red Requires Highway Work - Amber Access Acceptable - Green
Access	Does Site Form Access to other Areas?	Is site needed for access to other sites	Yes - Red Yes but could be developed in tandem - Amber No - Green
Waste Water Impact	Treatment Works Upgrade Required		Works upgrade and pumping needed - Red Works Upgrade alone - Amber No Works Needed - Green
Conservation Area Impact	Is there a likely to be a significant impact onthe Conservation Area?	Will resulting traffic cause problems in the Conservation area?	Significant - Red Moderate - Amber Light - Green
Traffic Impact	Will extra traffic have a significant impact on roads to and from the development?	Will extra traffic require major/minor highway works?	Major - Red Some/Minor - Amber None - Green
Traffic Impact	Will extra traffic have a significant impact on other roads in the Town?	Will the amenity of other inhabitants be affected?	Significantly - Red Moderately - Amber Little - Green

Table B. – Housing Site Assessment based on Criteria of Table A

TOPIC	CRITERION	02/001 Area 9 S. of Oakes La.	02/002 Area 9 Rear of Shells Mead	02/003 Area 6 B Rear of Longmead	02/004 Area 8 B Hare St Road/Causeway	02/005 Area 6 B Bypass Infill	02/006 Area 6 C A Spenden Rd/Bridge	02/007 Area 5 Sainsbury Site	02/008 Area 6 C West of London Rd	02/009 Area 7 A West of Emma St.	02/010 Area 6 B Rear of How Grn	02/011 Area 6 C Aspenden Rd.	See Note No.
Location	Area of Search												
Biodiversity	Local WLS affected?												
Environmental	Flood Risk?												
	Noise												1
	Air Quality					6							2
Landscape Character	Impact on Countryside		5		5	5		5					
Urban Sprawl	Natural Boundaries?												
Town Character	Fit in with Existing Dev?				5	5							
Buses	Accessible?												
Education	Accessible to Primary Sch?												3
	Accessible to Middle Sch?												3
	Accessible to Senior Sch?												3
Health	GP Access by Pub Trans?												3
Retail Centres	Accessible by Pub Trans?												3
Access	Direct Access to Site?												
	Does Access Affect Dev?						8					8	
	Affect Access to Other Sites?												
Waste Water Impact	Upgrades Required?												
Conservation Area Impact	Road works required?						8	9				8	
Traffic Impact	Others' amenity affected						8					8	
Area (Ha)		11.57	16.35	1.2	11.64	21	2.9	10.93	2.15	17.15	0.27	0.73	
Poss. Dwelling Numbers		300	400	26	300	350	70	300	60	430	3	20	4
STATUS		available	available	O.P. Agreed 2011	available	available	available	available	available	available	O.P. Agreed 2011	available	
SUMMARY		5G, 8A, 7R	13G, 7A, 0R	15G, 5A, 0R	11G, 2A, 7R	11G, 8A, 1R	10G, 9A, 1R	8G, 12A, 0R	11G, 9A, 0R	11G, 8A, 1R	18G, 2A, 0R	11G, 9A, 0R	
		Note 1. Noise from Traffic and Distribution Site											
		Note 2. Relates to problems of Sewage Works Smells											
		Note 3. Includes Walking as there is no effective in-town bus service											
		Note 4. Initial estimates based on previous applications and making allowance for effects of neighbouring use											
		Note 5. Need to limit height of housing to reduce impact on Countryside setting											
		Note 6. Green applies only if the area close to the Sewage works is not developed for housing											
		Note 7. Assumes that bus routes will be modified if development takes place											
		Note 8. Could have access from London Rd via 02/008											
		Note 9. Assumes access will be required onto London Road as well as A10 Roundabout											

TABLE C - Potential Housing Sites in Reducing Order of Suitability

for Housing Development									
Attribute	Site 02/007	Site 02/009	Site 02/ 008	Site 02/005	Site 02/006	Site 02/011	Site 02/002	Site 02/004	Site 02/001
	Sainsbury Site	W. of Ermine St.	W. of London Rd.	Bypass Infil	Aspenden Br.	Off Aspenden Rd	E. of Snells Mead	N. of Hare St. Rd.	S. of Owles Lane
Consistent with Valley Setting of Town	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Brownfield Site	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Effective Boundaries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Constrain Urban Sprawl	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Good Accessibility to Local Services	No	Yes	No	Limited	Limited	Yes	Yes	Limited	No
Good Accessibility to Available Local Transport	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	Limited	Yes	Yes	Limited	No
Good Access to Out of Town Road Network	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Yes*	No	No	No	No	No
Minimum Impact on Local Road System	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Limited*	No	No	No	No	No
Minimum Impact on Conservation Area	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Area of Site (Hectares)	11	17.15	2.15	21	2.9	0.73	16.35	11.64	11.57

* Assumes that a direct access to A10 will be made available from the site

APPENDIX - Public Consultation Details and Results

1 Introduction

In order to find out whether the content of this report had wider local support, a six-week period of public consultation was launched on 7th September 2013. This involved publication of the Draft Report and an associated questionnaire. The main event was a public exhibition at the Council Chamber, The Manor House, Buntingford on Saturday 21st September from 10 am to 3pm. At this event, in addition to having copies of the report available, display boards were set out with one each providing the report content relating to each of the questions in the questionnaire. For those that could not get to the Manor House on 21st September, the report and copies of the questionnaire were available to pick up at the Council Offices, at the local Library and on the Town Council website. The consultation was widely advertised:

- by a leaflet drop to all houses within the Town of Buntingford,
- on the Town Council website,
- in several separate entries in the September issue of The Buntingford Journal ,
- by having a Town Council sponsored manned display table at the Buntingford Classic Car Show on Saturday, 7th September with copies of the report available
- by having a similar manned table within the Co-op Supermarket on Saturday, 14th September
- by an entry in the Hertfordshire Mercury of Thursday 19th September with copies of the report available

The Buntingford public were asked to complete a questionnaire indicating whether or not they supported the main points made in this report and were given space to make comments and observations.

2. The Questions

The questionnaire asked the following fourteen questions:

1. Do you agree with the view of the future of Buntingford expressed in the Vision Statement?
2. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/001 - Land South of Owles Lane?
3. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/002 - Land East of Snells Mead?
4. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/004 - Land North of Hare Street Road?
5. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/005 - Land between the Bypass and Monks Walk and the Bovis Estate?
6. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/006 - Land East of Aspenden Road - Aspenden Bridge?
7. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/007 - The Former Sainsbury Depot?
8. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/008 - Land West of London Road?
9. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/009 - Land Between Ermine Street and the A10 Bypass?
10. Do you agree with the comments made in respect of site 02/011 - Land off Aspenden Road adjacent to Fairfield?
11. Do you agree with the Order of Suitability presented in Table C?
12. Do you agree with the comments made in section 7 of the report (page 12/13) regarding the requirement for 40% affordable housing?
13. Do you agree that in Buntingford the majority of affordable housing should be of the assisted purchase or intermediate market type rather than for rent (see report page 13)?

14. Do you agree with the arguments for limiting the increase of the number of houses to the region of 500 in the period to 2031?

3. Summary of Results

The brief summary of the answers received is as follows:

Question No.	Yes	No
Question 1	93%	7%
Question 2	97%	3%
Question 3	95%	5%
Question 4	97%	3%
Question 5	95%	5%
Question 6	95%	5%
Question 7	94%	6%
Question 8	97%	3%
Question 9	96%	4%
Question 10	96%	4%
Question 11	94%	6%
Question 12	93%	7%
Question 13	91%	9%
Question 14	95%	5%

From this it can be seen that the overall response was in favour of the findings of the report.

Many comments were received in relation to each of the questions asked. These related mainly to concerns regarding the many aspects of infrastructure and amenity, the desire for affordable housing to be prioritised for local people and the need to provide the right type of housing to match local requirements.

A complete list of comments made is to be found in Reference A1.

4. Conclusions

We have been encouraged by the public feedback to issue this report more formally without the DRAFT label. In doing so the only changes we have made are to reflect that the consultation process has taken place and to add a reference to infrastructure needs in Part A - Vision Statement.

The many useful comments made (see below) will be analysed more thoroughly and will form an input to the work now about to start on the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Reference

- A1. Consultation on the Draft Report "A Consideration of Housing Development in Buntingford to the Year 2031" - An Unedited List of Comments Received November 2013
Available from Buntingford Town Council