

A photograph of Hitchin Town Centre, Hertfordshire, showing a market with striped awnings and a church spire in the background. The image is overlaid with a blue diagonal graphic.

Hitchin Town Centre, Hertfordshire

Churchgate Development Area Planning Brief
for North Hertfordshire District Council

November 2005

**Churchgate Development Area Planning Brief
Hitchin Town Centre**

REVISED BRIEF

A Revised Draft Report

by

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and

DTZ Peda Consulting

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES	1
2	INFORMATION ON THE BRIEFING PROCESS	3
3	SITE INFORMATION	5
4	POLICY CONTEXT	19
5	DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT AND POTENTIAL USES	21
6	URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDELINES	23
7	IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS	33
	APPENDICES	
Appendix A	Findings of Public Consultation	35
Appendix B	Relevant Planning Policy	37
Appendix C	Parking Standards	49



INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

- I.01** This planning brief has been prepared by John Thompson and Partners and DTZ Pleda Consulting on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council for the area known as the 'Churchgate development area' in Hitchin Town Centre. The purpose of the document is to set out planning principles and a robust urban design rationale to guide and allow for the high quality re-development of the site.
- I.02** The brief has been prepared in accordance with requirements set out in the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations 1996, which provides the local policy context for the area. The brief has also been informed by Hitchin Town Centre Strategy which provides the framework for guiding the overall development and growth of the town centre over the next 10 years.
- I.03** The objectives of the brief are to:
- provide relevant planning policy and urban design guidance against which proposals for the development of the site will be assessed;
 - provide details of the land use, design, layout and range of densities of the development;
 - provide details of and expectations for access to the site and circulation within the site for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic;
 - demonstrate how the site meets national and local policy guidance on sustainable development; and
 - most importantly, to encourage an innovative design response to the site that is built to the highest quality and will contribute to the historic character of the town.
- I.04** The structure of the brief is as follows:
- Section 2 provides information on the briefing and consultation process;
 - Section 3 provides an introduction and overview of the site;
 - Section 4 supplemented by Appendix B sets out the national, regional, sub-regional and local planning policies that need to be taken into account as part of any future development proposal;
 - Section 5 sets out a series of issues relating to preferred future land uses and development types;
 - Section 6 sets out key urban design principles and synthesises these into specific character area design guidance; and
 - Section 7 addresses a number of other important issues relating to the delivery and the implementation of the scheme.

community
planning
weekend



HITCHIN CHURCHGATE COMMUNITY PLANNING WEEKEND

It's your town!

It's your chance to have your say on its future!

Drop in to St Mary's Church, Hitchin Town Centre over the community planning weekend to get involved in the Churchgate Area Project

Session One: Friday 4 March 2005: 14:00 - 20:00
Session Two: Saturday 5 March 2005: 10:00 - 14:00

You are welcome at any time on either date for as long or as little as you wish to stay. See overleaf for the schedule of events.

CHURCHGATE SHOPPING CENTRE

JT

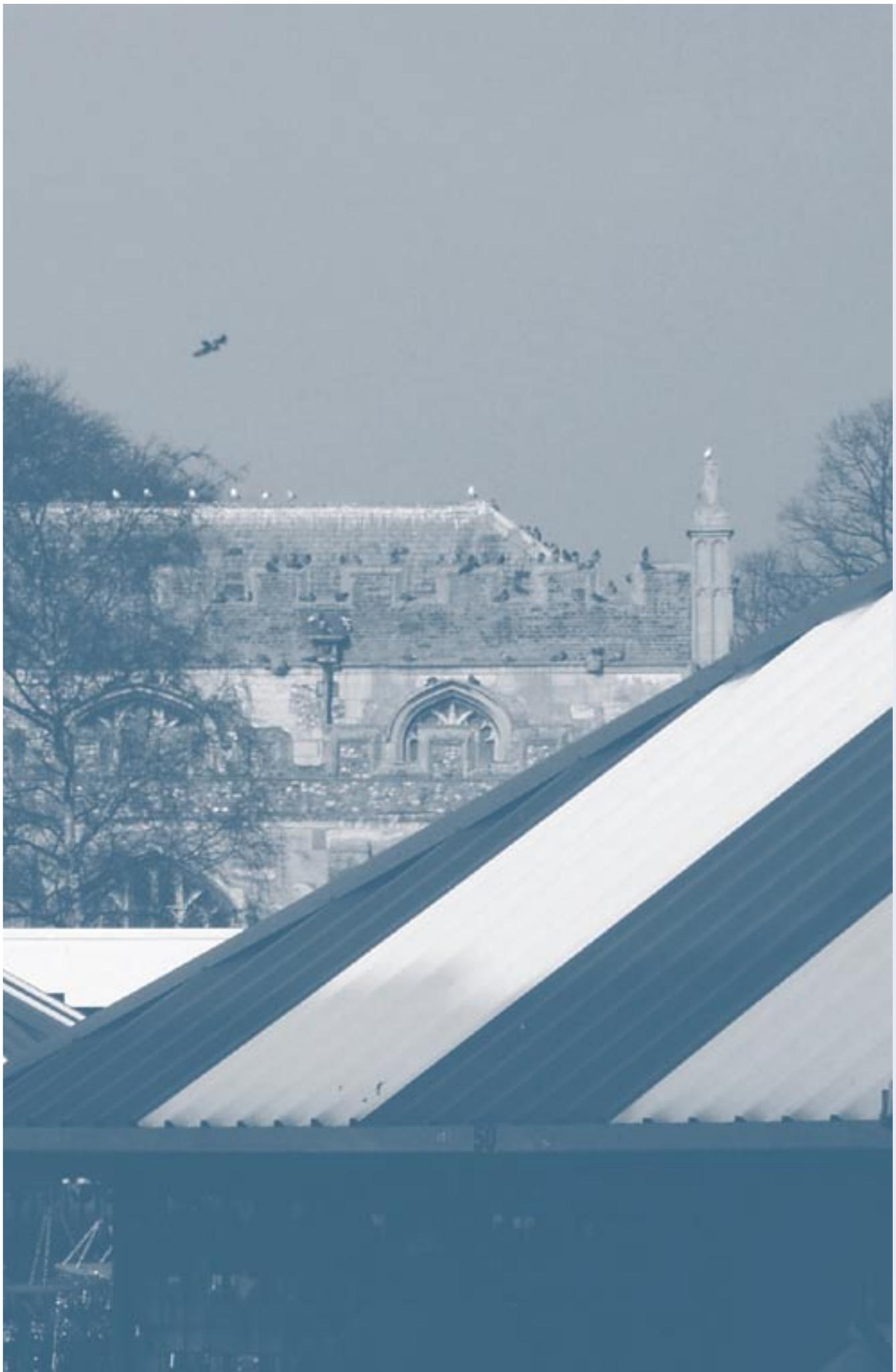
INFORMATION ON THE BRIEFING PROCESS

Revisiting the Churchgate Development Area

- 2.01** The Council previously prepared a draft planning brief for Churchgate and its surrounding area for public consultation in the autumn of 2003. The development area in the draft brief was much larger than that being considered by this brief and a considerable number of concerns were expressed by the public, Councillors and by private and voluntary sector organisations. The Council subsequently commissioned John Thompson and Partners (JTP) working with DTZ to revise the draft planning brief for the redefined Churchgate development area.

Churchgate Community Planning Weekend

- 2.02** JTP together with the Council organised a Churchgate Community Planning Weekend on Friday 4th March and Saturday 5th March at St. Mary's Church, Hitchin. Some 200 people attended the event to provide their views on the area and to work together with local organisations, businesses and residents on developing a vision for the site and its relationship with the rest of Hitchin town centre.
- 2.03** As part of this event residents were asked to participate in 'themed' workshops to discuss key issues including shopping and the market, living in the town centre, building and landscape design, getting around the town, and parking. Residents were also invited to walk around the development area with the architects and urban designers before returning to the church to work up ideas in 'hands-on' planning groups.
- 2.04** This provided the opportunity for residents to explore the physical implications of the ideas that had emerged through the Topic Workshops to develop ideas and principles for the town centre and explore a range of options for development. The use of large-scale maps enabled the groups to gather round and develop their ideas onto paper with the flexibility to consider options related to the area as a whole or some small part of it. This was followed by a report back session in which a spokesperson from each group was asked to explain their groups' ideas to everyone present.
- 2.05** A 'Report Back' Meeting on the outcomes from the Community Planning Weekend and suggestions on preliminary development options for the site which had evolved through the Community Planning process was given by the Consultants on Wednesday 6th April 2005 at 7:30pm at St. Mary's Church, Hitchin.
- 2.06** This brief has been informed by this consultation process. A summary of the findings of the consultation exercise has been produced and is enclosed in Appendix A of the brief. This refers to the key themes of the weekend and the consultant's Final Report that refers to the longer term vision. The brief was the subject of formal consultation in June/July 2005 in line with Government guidance. This revised Planning Brief has since been adopted as the Council's Statement of Policy by Full Council on 3 November 2005.



3 SITE INFORMATION

Location and Context

- 3.01** Hitchin is an historic market town with a strong and vibrant town centre offering a good mix of retail, business and leisure activities. Hitchin is one of the main shopping and commercial centres in North Hertfordshire, surrounded by many smaller towns and villages as well as the much larger towns of Stevenage to the east and Luton to the west. The town benefits from strong road and rail transport links, being only a few miles from junction 8 of the A1 motorway and the A6 (Figure 1). There is a frequent rail service from Hitchin Station to London Kings Cross, and easy access to Luton Airport.
- 3.02** Although Hitchin serves an affluent and essentially rural catchment, the 'Town Centre and Retail Study', 2004 indicates that there is significant expenditure leakage which is expected to continue in the future. This is the result of its proximity to a number of large competing towns including Stevenage, Luton, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Welwyn Garden City. Commuting to central London is also significant. Hitchin's role as a main centre in North Hertfordshire should be maintained. Appropriate Development proposals should, therefore, be identified and encouraged which seek to improve the town centre as an attractive place to visit and shop whilst at the same time protecting its historic character.

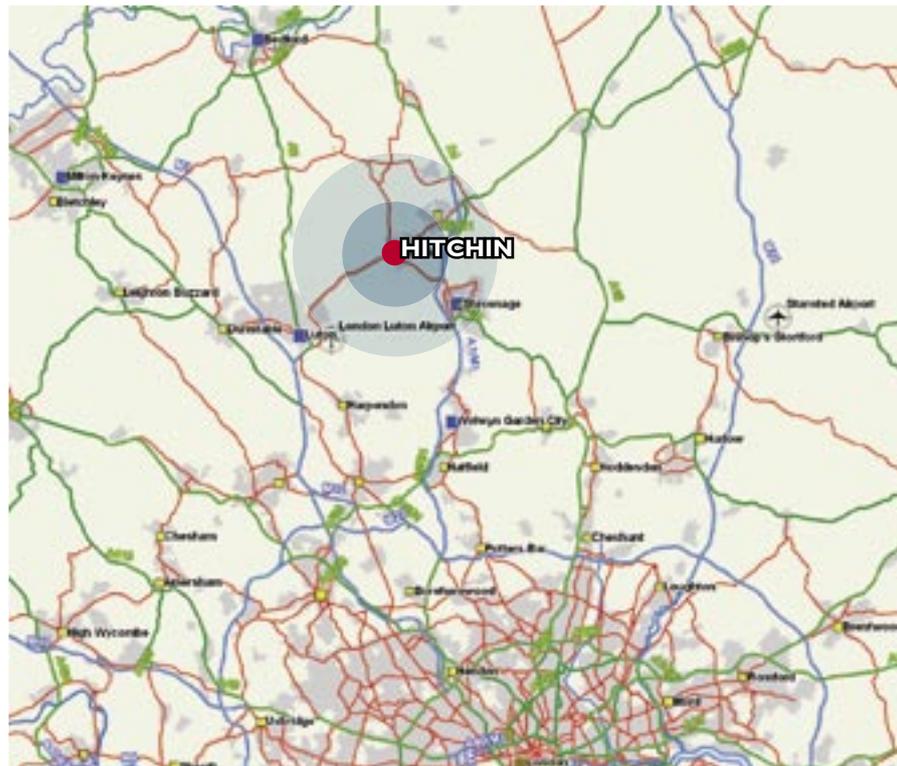


Figure 1: Location Plan

SITE INFORMATION

Hitchin Town Centre Strategy (2004)

3.03 'Hitchin Town Centre Strategy', 2004 provides the context for promoting changes and improvements in the town centre. An important element of this is guiding physical development and maximising the opportunities that will benefit the future viability and vitality of the town centre, whilst emphasising its historic character, its local distinctiveness and the needs of its local community.

3.04 The Council considers an opportunity exists for development and enhancement of the area comprising the Churchgate Centre, the market and the car park at Biggin Lane.

This would include:

- the redevelopment or refurbishment of the Churchgate Centre for mixed-use development including a mix of retail, food and drink, leisure and residential uses; and
- a scheme that is built to the highest quality and will contribute to the historic character of the town.

3.05 In addition, the Council would like to see the overall enhancement of the areas outlined at Sites A2, A4 and A5 (Figure 2) to improve the eastern edge of the town centre by:

- improving and upgrading the market;
- opening up and enhancing the River Hiz;
- enhancing St Mary's Square car park with hard and soft landscaping to improve the setting of St Mary's Church; and
- enhancing Portmill Lane East and West car parks at site A5 with hard and soft landscaping. Improving the service areas to the rear of the Bancroft shops and improving the pedestrian links to the Garden of Rest, to Bancroft and to Hermitage Road. The provision of public conveniences in the general area will be considered as part of the Churchgate Planning Brief.



Aerial view of Hitchin Town Centre

SITE INFORMATION

The Site Boundary

- 3.06** The Council previously prepared a draft Planning Brief for Churchgate and its surrounding area for public consultation in the autumn of 2003. A considerable number of concerns were expressed about the extent of the redevelopment area included in the previous draft brief. As a result, the site subject of this planning brief has been redefined to include the Churchgate development area and two surface car parks as enhancement areas.

This is identified in Figure 2 and includes:

- 3.07** Development areas A1, A2 and A3 (1.7 ha) comprising:
- existing Churchgate Shopping Centre plus service area;
 - the market area and land between the River Hiz and St Mary's Square car park; and
 - the Biggin Lane car park.
- 3.08** Enhancement areas A4 and A5 (1.47ha) comprising:
- St Mary's Square car park; and
 - Portmill Lane West and East car parks including service yards of the retail units to the rear of Bancroft and the pedestrian linkages to Hermitage Road and Bancroft.

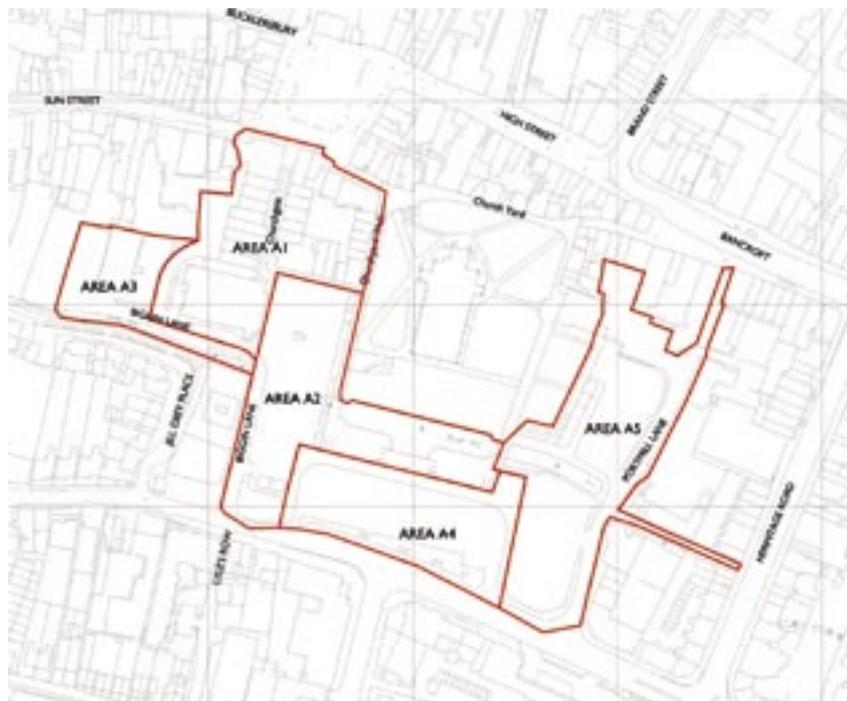


Figure 2

SITE INFORMATION

- 3.09** The site is located in the centre of Hitchin town centre, adjacent to the Market Place and wrapping around the historic parish Church of St Mary's and its churchyard. The site incorporates the Churchgate Shopping Centre, the market with permanent market stalls, four surface car parks and associated service yards. The site is bound to the north by Portmill Lane, to the east and south east by Queen Street and Biggin Lane. It wraps around the Churchgate Centre and associated service area to the south west, and follows the line of Churchyard Walk, the churchyard and the Garden of Rest to the west.
- 3.10** The site offers the potential to improve the eastern edge of the town centre and provide a more 'fitting' aspect to the Market Place. It also offers the opportunity to provide a better setting for the Grade I Listed church building and the market, as well as an opportunity to revitalise the river edge, and enhance the pedestrian linkages between the site and the rest of the town centre. In particular, the redevelopment of the Churchgate Centre offers a major opportunity to provide a better mix and size of retail unit to meet the needs of the larger retailers.



The Churchgate Centre from the Market Place



Portmill Lane car park



Blank façade of the Churchgate Centre onto Biggin Lane



Open-air market with permanent stalls

SITE INFORMATION

Site Description and Current Uses

- 3.11 Figure 3 provides a more detailed analysis of the current uses and activities across the site.
- 3.12 The Churchgate Centre provides the eastern façade to Hitchin's Market Place and provides frontage to Churchyard Walk. The shopping precinct was built in 1971 and included an area for the open-air market built over Hitchin's river, the Hiz. The development has been deeply unpopular with its 1960's brutalist architecture unsympathetic to the layout of the surrounding buildings in Market Place. The centre appears run down and is characterised by numerous empty and boarded-up units. Biggin Lane provides access to the market area, rear servicing of the Churchgate, a public car park and the Sun Hotel. The Churchgate centre presents a blank façade onto Biggin Lane and the river.
- 3.13 The traditional open-air market adjoins the eastern edge of the Churchgate centre, and expands into the area along the river frontage where plant stalls spill out along the river. The permanent market stalls are outdated and unattractive, but the market is seen as an important asset for Hitchin.
- 3.14 The River Hiz flows northwards through the area either within concrete embankments, covered or in a 'tank' with raised water level for amenity purposes opposite the church. The Council's aspirations for the River Hiz are defined in the 'River Hiz Development Guidelines', 1995 to create a walkway along the length of the river in the town centre.

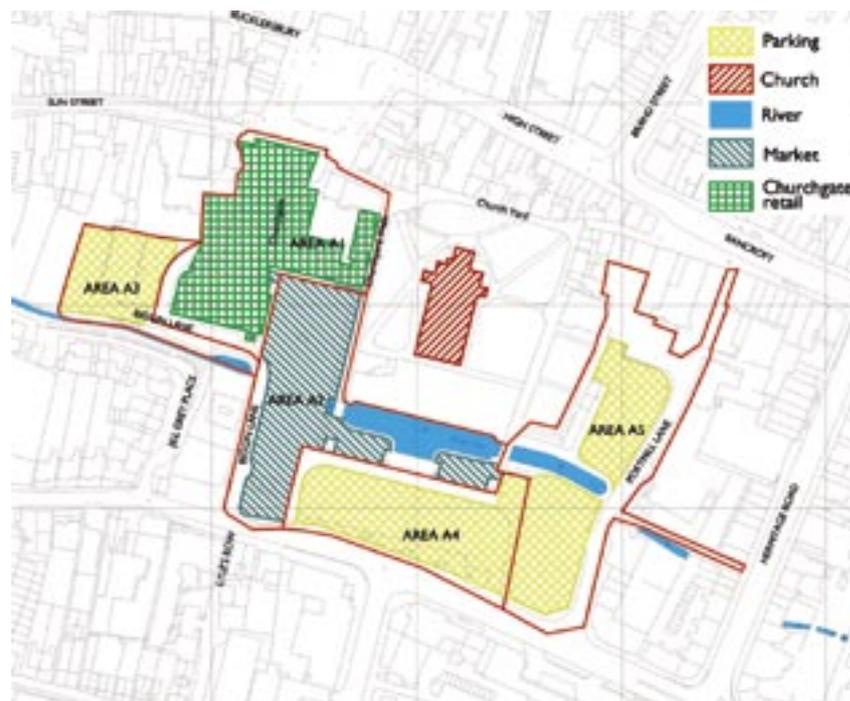


Figure 3

SITE INFORMATION

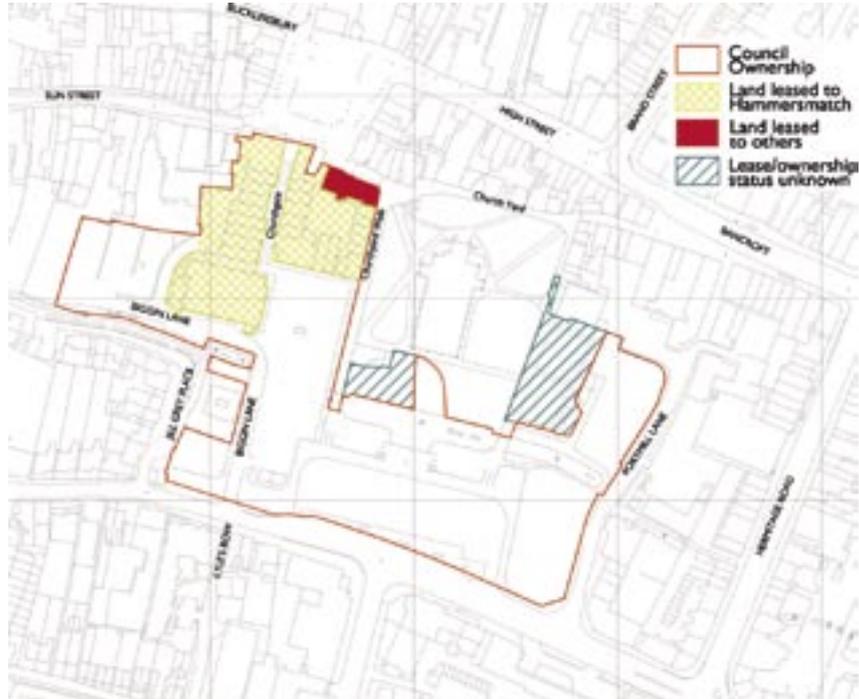


Figure 4



Figure 5

SITE INFORMATION

- 3.15 Portmill Lane is highway land and runs from west to east forming the northern boundary of the site. Portmill Lane provides vehicular access from Queen Street to the two surface car parks. The car parks are basic with unattractive surfaces, and views across them relieved only by the River Hiz and the backdrop of the church, open space and trees in the churchyard. The western part of the road provides a footpath for pedestrians only. A narrow pedestrian route also provides access to the Hermitage Road.
- 3.16 St Mary's Square is another surface car park at the Queen Street level. Queen Street is heavily trafficked and provides an important location for bus stops. Formal steps, with a balustrade which also adorns the western edge of the car park, descend to the river level. Pedestrians can then access the town centre core via footpaths either side of the churchyard. The car park is utilitarian and fails to provide an attractive foreground to the church.

Ownership

- 3.17 North Hertfordshire District Council owns the freehold to most of the site except for the highway land (roads and footpaths). The whole area of Churchyard Walk up to the frontage of the existing Churchgate centre shops and the existing closure of the market is consecrated ground. The Diocesan authorities would need to be consulted on the detail of any proposals affecting Churchyard Walk, as would Hertfordshire Highways on the detail of any proposals affecting highway land. The Churchgate Shopping Centre is under long-term lease by a private independent company. The existing ownerships are identified in Figure 4.

Site Opportunities and Constraints

- 3.18 Development of the Churchgate site must take full account of the factors that influence its form, extent and viability. Proposals should build upon existing site opportunities in a positive fashion. The main opportunities and constraints are identified in Figure 5.

Topography and Visual Issues

- 3.19 The topography of the site and surrounding area is an important consideration for future changes within the site boundary. The site is located at the base of the valley of the River Hiz and slopes gently towards the river from the west and east. From the west the ground slopes more gently from the main part of the town centre (Market Place-High Street-Bancroft) to the river. To the east the slopes are steeper, with a level change of over two metres from Queen Street to the riverside.



Important view corridor of St Mary's Church and the River Hiz



Terraced area providing access from St Mary's Square car park

SITE INFORMATION

- 3.20** St Mary's Square car park is at the Queen Street level; the area is terraced with steps along the western edge of the car park to allow pedestrians to descend to the river. There are attractive views across the river of St Mary's Church seen from Queen Street and from higher up in Hollow Lane. Even the notable Corn Exchange in Market Place can be seen from Lyle's Row.
- 3.21** It is vital that new development complements and enhances the existing vistas, skylines and landmarks. In particular, the Church functions as an orientation marker and key landmark of the town centre; consideration should be given to safeguard important views to the church.

Access, Servicing and Parking

- 3.22** It is essential that strong pedestrian links are created within the new development and that these are linked into the existing pedestrian flows and circulation patterns of the wider town centre and surrounding area. People walk into the town centre; along Walsworth Road, possibly from the station or the Woodside Car Park as well as several residential areas; from Windmill Hill or Hollow Lane, or from Queen Street and areas to the south and east. It is important that there are safe, attractive and convenient routes from the surrounding areas into the site and that these are adequately signed.
- 3.23** Within the Planning Brief area the existing pedestrian network should be strengthened and closely linked in with bus stop provision within the town centre. There are opportunities to improve the existing routes through new and wider footpaths, clear sign-posting, and by encouraging active uses to open out onto adjacent footways to create safer, overlooked routes. It will also be important to establish direct links with Hermitage Road via enhanced walkways along the river, across the existing Portmill Lane West car park and over Portmill Lane.
- 3.24** A 'high priority' cycle route currently runs along Portmill Lane into Bancroft and north-south through the site along the river frontage and across Queen Street onto Lyle Row. A town cycle network has also been proposed along Queen Street. It is important that adequate cycle facilities are provided; cycle racks should be located where they are easy and convenient to use, overlooked and secure. The location of cycle parking should also be signed where appropriate. Provision for motorcycles should be provided in an area with lockable parking.

SITE INFORMATION

- 3.25** The existing road network is considered adequate for the servicing of potential developments and the market. Encouragement will be given to ensure servicing takes place on non-market days to minimise conflicts of lorries with pedestrians and cars at peak periods. A developer will need to demonstrate that servicing can be achieved adequately, including the needs of waste management and collection.
- 3.26** Car parking is a major issue in the town centre in terms of the quantum of provision, location, and quality. Arup's 'Hitchin Parking Study', 2003 revealed that whilst at present under normal circumstances current off-street car parking provision was well used and operated close to or at capacity in particular the short-term car parks close to the market on market days. The study identified that the long-stay car parks had spare capacity in Woodside car park and the Lairage multi-storey car park. There will therefore need to be a balance between existing parking provision on the site, the potential which may be lost through development and the amount required as a result of new development.
- 3.27** It is essential that the redevelopment addresses these issues and that any public parking lost is at the minimum replaced by additional provision from either developers or through additional public provision to ensure the continued economic viability of the town. Other important issues identified through the study include the need to improve signage in and around the town centre, to make sufficient, convenient and suitable parking provision for orange (blue) badge holders within the Council's car parks and on-street, as well as the requirement to improve the overall quality of car parks. The Council has an adopted 'Car Parking Strategy' (2004) which seeks to address some of these issues and should also be taken into consideration as part of the redevelopment of the site.
- 3.28** The Council has recently taken on the management and enforcement of on street parking across the district. Consideration should be given to the contribution that on street parking could make to overall short-term car parking capacity associated with this development. The existing town centre provision needs to be reviewed and revised in line with development proposals and the appropriate car parking strategy.

Services and Utilities

- 3.29** The location of known existing services and utilities in the vicinity of the site is available from the Council. Prior to the design of any scheme, developers will need to contact the relevant utility companies to discuss connections to existing services, as well as the following issues:
- capacity of the existing system to supply the new development and any requirements for upgrading;
 - specific requirements for the design of any new services;
 - requirements for diversions and wayleaves for access; and
 - potential measures that can be incorporated in the design of the new development to make more efficient use of resources.

SITE INFORMATION

Historical Development

- 3.30 This is a brief snapshot of Hitchin's history that focuses on the growth of the town around the Churchgate Area.
- 3.31 Looking at the Church of St Mary's, the remains of the Roman settlement can be glimpsed in the narrow Roman bricks reused in the church tower. These may have come from the Roman farmstead settlements along the River Hiz. Under the nave of St. Mary's lie the remains of a Saxon church, for in 792 King Offa of Mercia founded a Church for the Benedictine Community.
- 3.32 Hitchin Market dates from the time of the Normans where it was probably founded along the main street or was possibly a churchyard market. In 1086 the town was recorded in Domesday as being a Royal Manor of 600 inhabitants.
- 3.33 In the Medieval period the town prospered, particularly in 14th and 15th Centuries from the profits of wool. It is from this period that the visible structure of the church dates (although embedded within the walls is structure dating from 1200). In the 16th century the Reformation brought changes to Hitchin. The religious houses were dissolved; the existing Biggin Almshouses is on the site of the Gilbertine Priory. The church was renamed from St Andrew to St Mary and the rectory was given to Trinity College Cambridge who still pays for the maintenance of the chancel.
- 3.34 In 1632 the first school in Hitchin was built in Tilehouse Street which served a population of fewer than 2000 people by 1650. A map from 1690 shows the River Hiz flanked by meadows, orchards and plots that back onto tightly knit streets. Back Lane and Dead Lane are reminders that this was a town where the plague visited again in the 17th century.
- 3.35 In the 18th century road improvements and the stage coaches encouraged the growth of the coaching inns. Fine inns still remain in particular along Sun Street with stables backing onto the Churchgate and Biggin car park area. The town expanded and this was also increased by the rural labourers coming to the town after the land enclosures.
- 3.36 Up until this time, there had only been one bridge over the River Hiz in Portmill Lane. Then in 1784 a bridge was built in Bridge Street to connect to the Welwyn to Bedford Turnpike Road.

SITE INFORMATION

3.37 By 1801 there was a population of 3161 within 674 houses. An 1818 map shows development covering the meadows down from Back Lane. The Plots are in narrow strips and buildings are shown close to the east end of the church. There was no drainage of sewage until around 1850. Up to now the town's history had been visited by plagues, disease and especially in slum areas. In 1850 the Great Northern Railway came to Hitchin on the London to York line with a station one mile from the centre. A further big improvement was the building of St Andrew's School on the site of what is now Hitchin Market.

3.38 Hermitage Road was cut in 1875 to improve the road linkages however the buildings flanking it grew beside it much later in the 1920's. In the 19th Century the population had more than doubled by 1861, and had more than tripled to 10,000 by the turn of the 20th Century.

3.39 In the 20th Century, Hitchin and in particular, the Churchgate area was transformed by the motor car and the slum clearances. A map of 1923 shows the Queen Street area of demolition shaded over the intensely populated development on the east bank of the River Hiz. The clearance happened in 1924-1930 and St Mary's Square was constructed. The design was by Architects Bennett and Bidwell who were based in Letchworth and designed many buildings in the Garden City. The River Hiz was canalised and a raised terrace built. This was eventually to have led to a plaza surrounded by civic and commercial buildings, but this was never completed.

3.40 By 1931 the population had doubled again in 30 years to 20,000.

3.41 In March 1969 the Centre of Hitchin was made a Conservation area and this bounded the Churchgate Site. It was in the early 1970's that the Churchgate Centre was built and the market relocated from the Market Place to Biggin Lane.

3.42 The building of the Churchgate Centre and the car parks flanking the River were damaging to the centre of Hitchin. The characteristics that make Hitchin the unique and attractive place it is have been eroded in this area by the Churchgate buildings that turn their backs onto poor service areas, deaden the courtyard off the old Market Place and the areas behind the Sun Inn. This area has lost the sense of surprise and quality of the old Lanes and passages and the traditional rooflines; these were replaced with acres of cars and tarmac.



Historic Map of Churchgate Area, 1923



1950's St Mary's Square car park

SITE INFORMATION

Listed Buildings & Conservation Area

- 3.43 The site lies within the town centre conservation area and is adjacent to several listed buildings including the Grade II* building of The Biggin and the Grade I building of St Mary's Church. Any proposed development must, therefore, respect the character, proportions, scale and materials and preserve or positively enhance the character of the Conservation Area and the settings of these important Listed buildings (Local Plan Policy 20, PPG 15 and Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act).
- 3.44 The 'Conservation Area Character Statement for Hitchin' (1998) provides a more detailed review of the town's architectural and historical character. The study indicates opportunities for enhancements within the town centre including the Churchgate Centre currently forming a weak eastern elevation to the Market Place, with little respect for the footprint and massing of adjacent buildings, the River Hiz with the potential for greater visual importance and the market in need of a significant upgrade.

Archaeology

- 3.45 The 'Archaeological Evaluation Report', 2003 indicates the possible presence of archaeology from Roman periods within the site boundary, particularly at the western end of the site and around the riverside areas.
- 3.46 The evaluation also recognises that a significant proportion of the site has been subject to considerable modern development that will have damaged or destroyed many archaeological deposits present. This area includes Portmill Lane East car park and the central part of St Mary's car park. Much of this area is therefore of low archaeological potential.
- 3.47 The site is of local significance and elements of the archaeological sequence will contribute to regional research priorities. Truncation by post-medieval structures has left a fractured archaeological sequence that although demonstrating aspects of the development of the site does not necessarily warrant preservation in situ.
- 3.48 Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 makes it clear that there will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of nationally important archaeological remains, or sites of special local significance. If sites cannot be preserved in situ, an alternative is preservation by record (i.e. excavation and recording of the remains).

Ground Level Survey

- 3.49 A survey of the topography giving ground level heights is available from the District Council for information purposes. The Council, however, will not be responsible for any errors or misinterpretations that might result from the use of the survey.

SITE INFORMATION

Flood Risk

- 3.50 The majority of the site lies on a fluvial floodplain. The Environment Agency will require a flood risk assessment to be carried out in accordance with PPG25: Development and Flood Risk (July 2001) prior to any future redevelopment of the site. The Environment Agency states that 'there must be no increase in ground levels within the flood risk area.' Additionally 'any increase in the impermeable area will require on site attenuation and controlled discharge' of surface water to the River Hiz. Where possible it is recommended that Sustainable Drainage Systems should be incorporated. Any further development may also require a structural survey into any potential modifications of the existing river walls/culvert.

Ecology

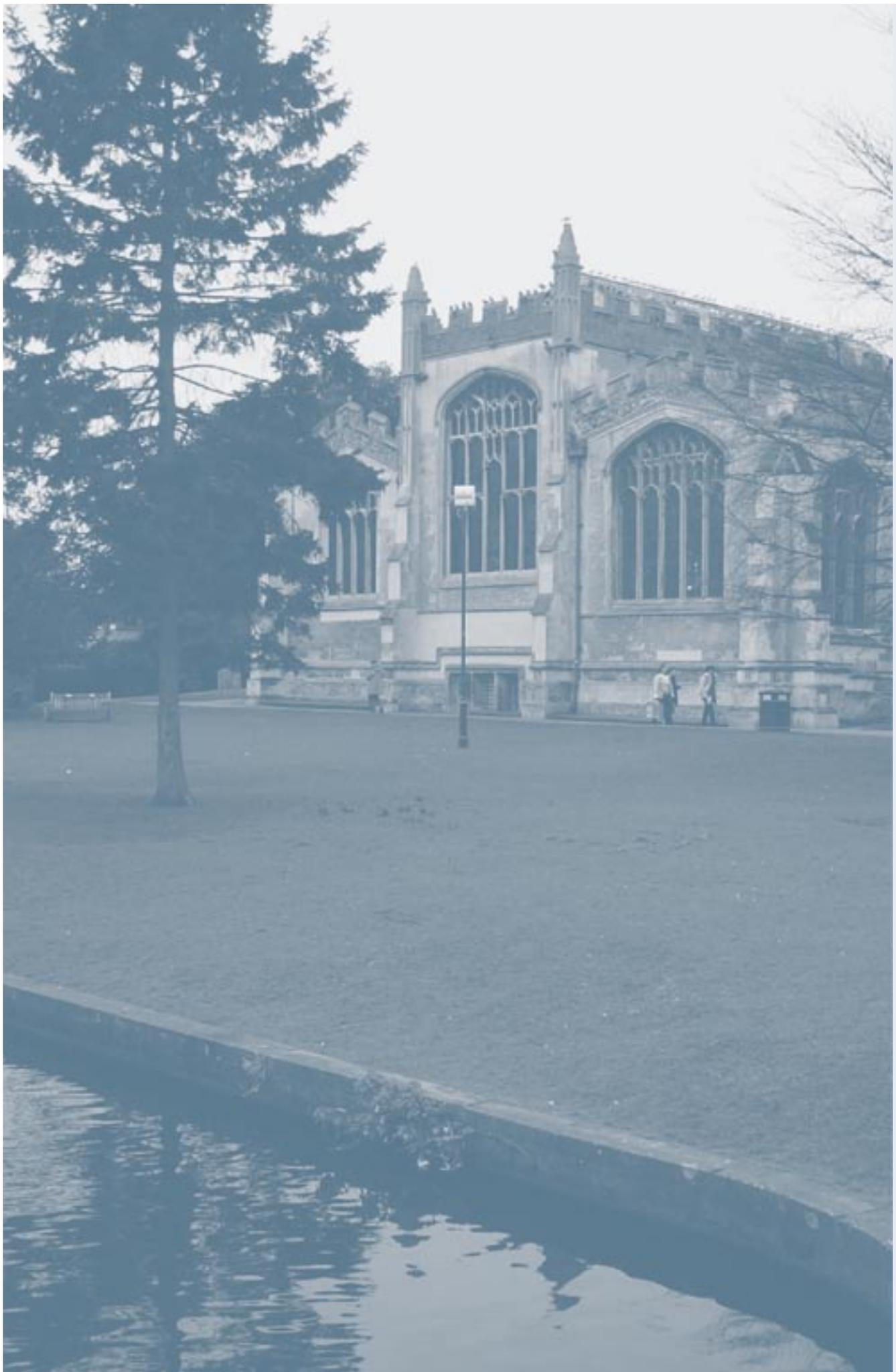
- 3.51 As the majority of the site is extensively hard surfaced, it is not envisaged that ecological issues would impede on future development. It is recommended that potential ecological enhancement of the area and in particular that of the River Hiz should be considered in liaison with the Environment Agency prior to any future development.

Site Contamination

- 3.52 Potential sources of contamination on the site have been identified in the 'Ground Conditions Desk Study Report', 2003 and it is considered the near surface soils beneath the site may also contain contaminants. The groundwater beneath the site may also contain contamination. It is considered that the high permeability of the soils is unlikely to restrict the migration of potential contaminants off or onto the site.

Asbestos Survey

- 3.53 It is recommended prior to the demolition of the Churchgate Centre that a survey is carried out to determine the presence of asbestos within the existing structures. This should enable the removal of any asbestos to be appropriately planned and budgeted for.



4 POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.01** The Planning Brief has been prepared in the context of National, Regional and Local Planning Policy. In addition, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council and other additional guidance prepared by other bodies have been evaluated.
- 4.02** The current Hertfordshire Structure Plan was adopted by the County Council in April 1998 and covers the period to 2011. The Structure Plan sets out the broad directions in which Hertfordshire should change and develop in the future.
- 4.03** All levels of policy and guidance need to be considered by developers to guide the future development of the site. The current adopted Local Plan for North Hertfordshire is the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations (1996). The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004 makes the provision for the replacement of Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The current adopted Local Plan will remain the statutory development plan for three years from the date of commencement of the PCPA 2004, or until the North Herts LDF is adopted. Appendix B highlights the most relevant policies and guidance, including a more detailed analysis of such policies.

CHURCHGATE



5 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT AND POTENTIAL USES

- 5.01** The vision and strategy for Hitchin Town Centre as set out in the Town Centre Strategy (2004) is 'to maintain the quality of the built environment based on its intrinsic historic character, and to develop an attractive, safe, accessible, vibrant and lively centre for the local community and visitor to shop, work and live in.'
- 5.02** The redevelopment of the Churchgate site must ensure that this aspiration is achieved. The site offers a unique opportunity to provide Hitchin with a truly mixed-use scheme and the holistic regeneration of a secondary shopping centre. It will seek to enhance and diversify the retail units that are currently available within the commercial property market, introduce new types of residential units and provide an enhanced setting for the town's market within a series of high quality linked spaces.
- 5.03** From a commercial perspective it is envisaged that the proposed commercial accommodation will seek to satisfy an identified gap in the market for modern larger sized units of between 200 – 500 sq. m (2150 – 5400 sq. ft). It is expected that commercial development will take the form of a flexible mix of ground floor units with the potential to incorporate double width units with unobstructed open floor plates. This format of design will appeal to both independent and multiple retailers who seek maximum frontage exposure and easily configured floor areas. The planning brief emphasises that any national multiple retail user proposed for this site should be complementary not only to the proposed residential element, but also to the character of Hitchin and should not impact on the vitality and viability of existing businesses in the town centre as a whole.
- 5.04** In order to make the new development a success, it will be important to ensure that strong pedestrian linkages are created within the scheme, to the retail, to the market and linked with the existing pedestrian flows and circulation patterns within the town centre. This also means that anchors need to be located within key parts of the development to draw people in and through the scheme.
- 5.05** It is envisaged that the scheme will also incorporate a residential element in the form of apartments above the retail units, with the possible inclusion of a proportion of town houses to provide diversity and contribute to a balanced community. The demand for housing in the district is high and house prices are continuing to rise, as a result market cost housing is increasingly out of reach for many households. Developers will be expected to take account of any identified market demand. This will determine the type and mix of residential units required.
- 5.06** Further, to achieve a successful and sustainable mixed-use development that is in accordance with planning policy, the incorporation of affordable housing that reflects the Local Authority's requirements and meets local housing need, is an essential component. Effective integration of affordable units is required which does not encourage social segregation or potential conflicts. However, there may be circumstances for the affordable housing element to be located off site.



URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

Urban Design Principles

- 6.01** Hitchin town centre is characterised by the curving streets, ginnels and alleyways, buildings and shops on the back edge of the pavement, the undulating and varied roofline, the rhythm and variety of proportion from the Victorian and Georgian shop fronts, the quality of joinery and details, the two to three storey heights, domestic scale and the creative use of materials such as brick and render. Such characteristics make up the historic environment of Hitchin and could be rediscovered and incorporated in the design proposals for the regeneration of this area. The existing Churchgate Shopping Centre does not fit in with the character of the town centre. Redevelopment of the Churchgate area represents a unique opportunity in an important market town to take the best ideas from the past, and combine them with the best ideas from the present for the economic, social and environmental benefit of the whole town. Such new development does not have to replicate local historic buildings, but should be of a high standard of design using good quality materials that respects the historic environment and adds to the architectural and local character of the town.

Sense of Place and Character

- 6.02** Importance is placed on building a distinct image and high quality 'sense of place' which respects and complements the surrounding areas. As such, new development should respect neighbouring buildings and respond positively to them. New buildings should enrich the surrounding fabric both visually and physically by careful attention to the scale and rhythms of adjacent buildings, local morphology, adjacent height, massing and local materials.

Building Heights and Density

- 6.03** The site must have a consistent, high density character although the height and massing should vary accordingly to integrate with surroundings. The existing height, roofscapes and proportions of surrounding buildings should determine the scale and massing of new development across the site. In some areas it may be necessary to moderate the mass of a building or group of buildings to step up or step down to its neighbour. This will also reflect the distinctive varied rooflines which characterize much of Hitchin Town Centre. Buildings of 2, 2.5 and 3 storeys are considered appropriate across the site.

Permeability and Accessibility

- 6.04** New development should integrate with the historic urban grain of Hitchin and provide a permeable and legible layout to draw people through the area and add to the network of streets and spaces. The pedestrian movement within the town centre is an essential component. Full consideration must be given to the movement needs of all sections of the community including those with impaired sight and mobility. The network should reinforce existing routes and further opportunities to link the development with the secondary retail areas along Sun Street and Hermitage Road.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

Flexible and Active Public Realm

- 6.05** The development should seek to improve and add to the public realm with a seamless connection of active streets, spaces and paths where compatible with the historic character of the town. In particular new development should seek to strengthen the link between Market Place, the River Hiz and onto St Mary's Square car park via the creation of new public realm of the highest quality. Routes into and through the new development should be aligned to provide visual connections to the town centre which will naturally lead pedestrians to and from Market Place. In addition signage and street furniture should be sited with care and designed to the highest standard.
- 6.06** New buildings should present a continuous active 'front' to this network of streets and spaces and this will be achieved in large part through predominantly retail uses. Opportunities exist to enhance the functionality and vitality of these areas by incorporating uses which can 'spill out' into the space (such as cafés, food/flower stalls).
- 6.07** The opportunity should be taken, in accordance with the River Hiz Development Guidelines, to enhance and 'soften' the River Hiz, open it up where it is presently culverted and establish a public river side walk as far as is possible for eventual linkage to Bridge Street and Hermitage Road.

Movement and Transport

- 6.08** Priority should be given to measures that promote the accessibility of the town centre amenities by public transport, bicycle and foot whilst acknowledging the need for vehicular traffic to support commercial, residential, market and retail uses in the neighbourhood. Secure cycle storage should be provided for residents and cycle hoops or racks should be located in well-overlooked spaces and integrated where possible into public spaces. Creating a pedestrian environment that encourages movement through the site and links to public transport is a vital element in the sustainability strategy and is also essential for the viability of the market and retail area.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

Safety and security

- 6.09** Maintaining a continuity of frontage and visual surveillance onto the street, areas of public realm and open space is a basic requirement of creating safe places. The ground floor of much of the development will be active during the day with shop frontages. Predominantly residential mixed uses on first floor and above will create activity and natural surveillance outside shop opening hours. Frequent entrance doors will help spread this activity through all parts of the development.
- 6.10** In areas with ground floor residential development making these frontages 'active' adds interest, life and vitality and can be achieved with careful attention to the following elements:
- setback distances should be minimised to increase the ability of a building to interact with the street;
 - frequent doors and windows, with few blank walls;
 - narrow frontage buildings, giving vertical rhythm to the street scene;
 - enlivening edges through the architectural detailing of the buildings to reflect existing lively and varied frontages. Hanging baskets and window boxes may also be used;
 - lively internal uses visible from outside, or spilling out onto the street; and
 - the use of transparent glass for windows, where privacy allows, rather than mirrored or frosted glass that only allows occupants to benefit from views out.

Quality of design and materials

- 6.11** High quality building design and detailing and the creation of attractive public realm are important to achieve a successful, robust and lasting scheme. The new development and landscaping should be built of the highest quality materials to contribute to the historic character of the town. Note and reference should be made to traditional typologies and details to give the scheme local character and enhance the setting of existing buildings and features in particular the Biggin, the River Hiz, St Mary's Church, Market Place and the Sun Hotel.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

Building in Sustainability

- 6.12 The Council places great importance on securing a sustainable pattern of development across the site and consideration should be given to the following issues:

Materials

- 6.13 Ensure the use of local and sustainable materials that are hardwearing and of quality craftsmanship. Materials should also be chosen for their low 'embodied energy' (the amount of energy expended to produce the material), the ease of maintenance and repair, and the ability to recycle and reuse the material.

Adaptability

- 6.14 Proposals need to be flexible and adaptable particularly in relation to the longevity of buildings both economically and physically and the ability to accommodate change over time.

Environment

- 6.15 Innovative technology should be used to provide an improved environment within buildings. This should encompass increases in natural lighting, improved acoustic separation, controlled ventilation and sustainable drainage and water consumption. Applicants should demonstrate in their submissions how they will achieve 'Excellent' ratings in the EcoHomes and BREEAM assessment methods.

Building Process

- 6.16 The Council will encourage a reduction in levels of material waste during the construction process and how changes in construction techniques can lead to improved performance.

Energy Efficiency

- 6.17 The Council will look for innovative approaches to energy generation, use and conservation. Alternative forms of energy generation, such as a district heating, cooling and power system, combined heat and power, and solar energy should be considered.

Water Conservation

- 6.18 The Council will look for developments to incorporate water conservation techniques, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Transport Measures

- 6.19 Proposals should also demonstrate the benefits of improving and encouraging pedestrian and cycle linkages within the site area and to wider passenger transport facilities in terms of sustainable transport improvements.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

Phasing

- 6.20 The phasing of construction will be particularly important in this busy town centre location where the continuing viability and functioning of town centre is of prime importance, in particular the retail sector including Hitchin Market. Applicants will need to demonstrate a creative and rigorous approach to the efficient management of the construction process while ensuring minimal disruption to the environmental quality and amenity value of the town centre, minimal disruption to access and transport operations within the town centre and the continued operation of Hitchin Market. Regular consultation with appropriate stakeholders to ensure the continuity and improvement of the Market must be seen as an integral part of the construction process.

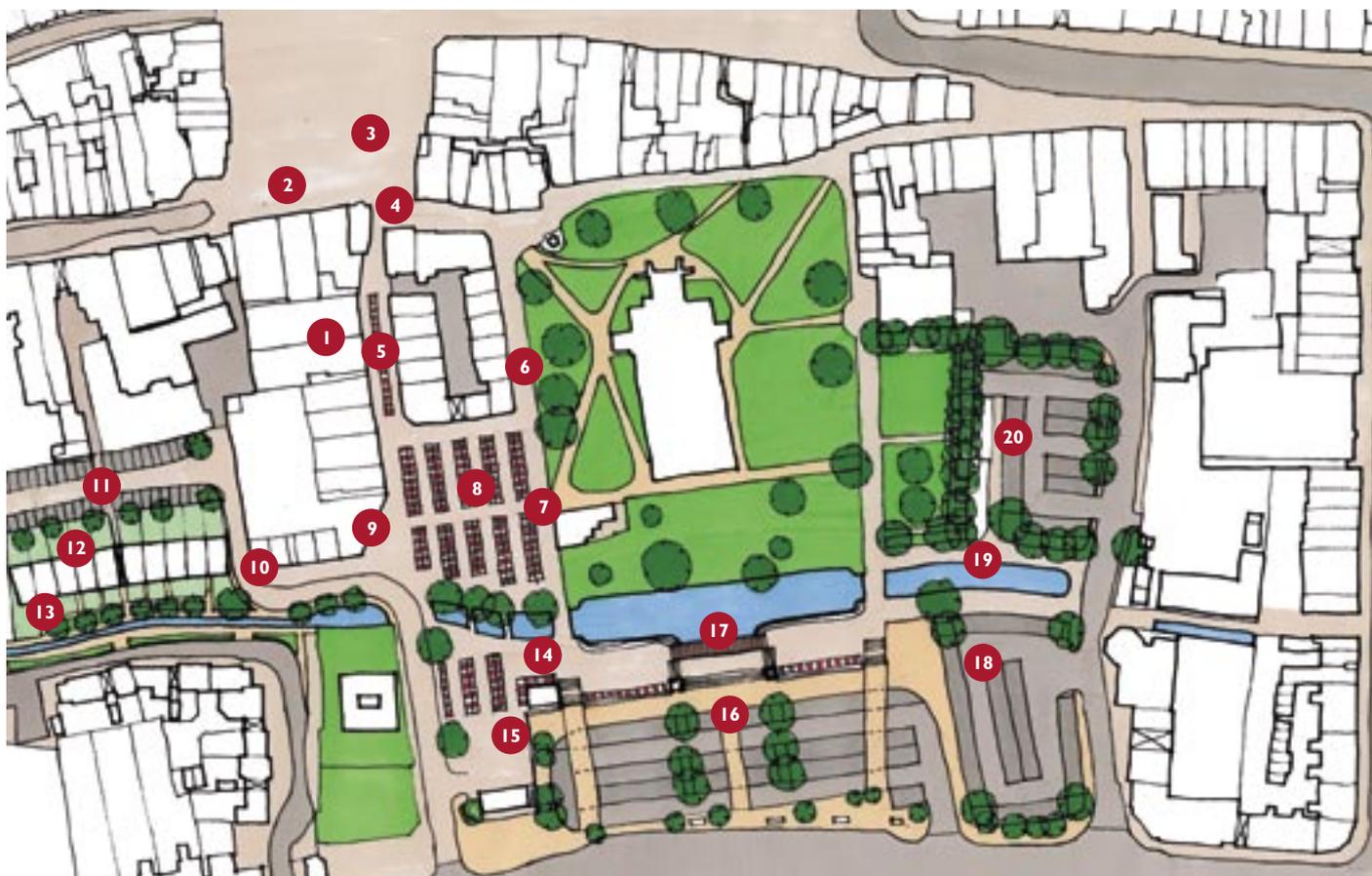
Character Area Guidance

- 6.21 This Character Area Guidance builds on the Urban Design guidelines to provide specific information on the development and enhancement of areas A1 to A5.
- 6.22 The redevelopment of the Churchgate area represents a unique opportunity in an important market town to take the best ideas from the past, and combine them with the best ideas from the present for the economic, social and environmental benefit of the town. A viability assessment undertaken as part of the preparation work for this Planning Brief has indicated that at the time of writing redevelopment is likely to be deliverable.

Site A1: Redevelopment of Churchgate Shopping Centre

- 6.23 The Churchgate Shopping Centre should be redeveloped to enhance significantly this part of the town centre, by respecting the character and scale of St Mary's Church, the buildings around it in Churchyard, the space and buildings in Market Place and the Hitchin Market area. It should also extend the traditional street pattern to connect Market Place to the River Hiz drawing people through to the Market area and revealing glimpsed views in particular to the Biggin. The new development should be mixed use with predominantly shopping on the ground floor and residential at first floor and above. The retail provision should add to the range of shop unit sizes currently available in the town centre.
- 6.24 The redevelopment of Churchgate should re-establish and reinforce the historic shape and character of Market Place and adjoin the Rose and Crown to create a continuous eastern frontage to the square, with shops on the ground floor and predominantly residential at first floor and above overlooking the square. The first floor and above frontage should be pulled back in line with the ground floor. The new buildings should be sensitively articulated, in scale and proportion with the neighbouring buildings and use high quality materials appropriate to its historic location.
- 6.25 The redevelopment should create a new street connecting Market Place on the north side of the Rose and Crown and running east towards the River Hiz. This new street should respond to the scale and character of existing streets in the historic town centre, such as Sun Street and Bucklersbury, and should be able to accommodate market stalls to provide a strong link between Market Place and the market particularly on market days. This new street should also be able to accommodate the front servicing of the ground floor shops. The applicant must demonstrate how servicing requirements can be accommodated on-site to minimise conflicts with pedestrians, potential market stalls and other traffic movements through the town centre. This new street is to have pedestrian priority.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE



INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN

- 1 Redevelop Churchgate as mixed use development with residential over ground floor retail. Indicative sub-division of retail units shown.
- 2 New frontage onto Market Place in keeping with scale and character of existing buildings.
- 3 Market Place used for Farmers' Markets and special events.
- 4 New link through Churchgate formed between pub and listed buildings to replicate traditional street pattern.
- 5 Frontages along new street designed in scale with traditional frontages and with variety of treatment.
- 6 A mixture of retail and residential along Churchyard Walk to bring variety of use around the Church.
- 7 Enclosure to market removed to allow it to address and enliven Churchyard Walk on market days.
- 8 Market located in similar position to existing market but with links along new street to Market Place. Surfacing materials of high quality and design to provide visual amenity when market is not operating.
- 9 Possible layout of anchor store addressing Market area.
- 10 Shared access to residential parking and loading area in similar materials to market area with subtle delineation of vehicle route.
- 11 Pedestrian route created from Sun Street through to river walk.
- 12 New townhouses on former Biggin Lane car park with pedestrian only access to fronts addressing River Hiz.
- 13 River walk enhanced and complemented by lawns in front of townhouses.
- 14 New section of River Hiz opened up with light bridges over to ensure easy accessibility with smaller market area.
- 15 Market area to be used for trading from vans or as a car park.
- 16 & 18 Car parking improved with undercroft parking provided at St. Mary's Square and possibly Portmill Lane East car parks together with improved pedestrian routes, changes of materials and new planting where appropriate at street level. Vehicular access to be gained from Portmill Lane.
- 17 Market along water frontage retained and enhanced by boardwalk link past steps to give better accessibility.
- 19 River walk on both sides of the river improved by realignment of edges new planting.
- 20 Car park improved through changes of materials and new planting and used for occasional craft markets.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

- 6.26** The redevelopment should provide enclosure to the south and west side of Hitchin Market area. These frontages should be predominantly retail at the ground floor, residential flats on the first floor and above looking down onto the Market area. Along Churchyard Walk the development should reflect the height, materials, scale and proportions of the existing historic buildings and may comprise a combination of retail units with residential.
- 6.27** The River Hiz frontage of the new development should provide active frontages and may incorporate an element of live work accommodation.
- 6.28** The redevelopment should also provide for the rear servicing from Biggin Lane of the retail units within the southern block and ensure adequate provision for the turning and parking of delivery vehicles. The development of the site A1 adjacent to site A3 the Biggin Lane car park should not impede potential new development on the car park.

A2 - Hitchin Market

- 6.29** Hitchin Market should remain in its present location to be framed by the new Churchgate development which should create attractive and active frontages overlooking this space. The market space should be redesigned and resurfaced to a high quality using appropriate materials whilst providing for the efficient servicing and functioning of the market. The resurfacing should ensure that it meets the accessibility requirements of all sections of the community including those with sight and mobility impairment. The works should also allow for improvements to the Queen Street frontage of the market and for the enhancement of the River Hiz including opening up of the culverted section of the river Hiz in line with the aspirations of the River Hiz Development Guidelines.
- 6.30** The market should not be less than 70% of linear footage of stalls of the current market. The market area should be laid out to accommodate a mix of permanent, demountable and temporary pitches in a proportion and total length to be determined by NHDC in liaison with the market traders. The stalls should be laid out in straight rows running east to west and for operational purposes. Permanent stalls should also be sited to the west of the market area and against the St Mary's Square terrace wall parallel to the River Hiz. An area for van trading accessible from Biggin Lane should be set aside. Provision should be made for the retention of public conveniences at their present location.



URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

A3 - Biggin Lane

- 6.31** This site provides the opportunity for two and three storey residential townhouses along the River Hiz, reflecting the general character of Jill Grey Place on the opposite eastern bank, with provision of car parking spaces behind, adjacent to the Sun Hotel car park. Such development should also take careful account of the rear elevations and settings of the historic buildings lining Sun Street, particularly the Sun Hotel (Grade II* listed building). The development should allow for the creation of part of the western side River Hiz walkway, along environmentally enhanced River Hiz banks, which will eventually link through to Bridge Street. The new townhouses should have front doors and front gardens accessing directly onto this walkway. A pedestrian ginnel or alleyway should be created through the townhouses to link the River Hiz walkway with Sun Street.
- 6.32** This work should be undertaken in accordance with the aspirations set out in the River Hiz Development Guidelines.
- 6.33** Development of this site will result in the loss of public car parking and the displacement of market traders' vehicles on market days. Provision shall be made to replace public car parking at St. Mary's Square/ Portmill Lane East car parks as part of the overall development scheme. The Council and any potential developer will need to work with the market traders in providing appropriate parking arrangements for market traders' vehicles.

A4 - St Mary's Square Car Park and A5 - Portmill Lane East Car Park

- 6.34** The potential loss of public car parking at Site A3 – Biggin Lane car park will be replaced as part of the overall development scheme by providing either an undercroft car park at St. Mary's Square Car Park or a continual undercroft car park at St. Mary's Square and Portmill Lane East car parks. The detailed design of either option will be subject to further discussion with agreement by the Council. The proposed design will maximise the number of parking spaces provided at street and river levels, with some opportunity for environmental improvements including hard landscaping and planting as appropriate.
- 6.35** The detailed design of the car parks shall be of high quality and take full account of vehicular access requirements, community safety and pedestrian accessibility requirements, including those with sight and mobility impairment. The development of the car parks should allow for enhancement of the River Hiz in line with the aspirations of the River Hiz Development Guidelines and where possible incorporate the existing stairs and balustrade, which adorns the western edge of the St. Mary's car park in the detailed design. The areas should be capable of being used for other activities, which may include the town wide music festival and other cultural events
- 6.36** The structure of the car park shall be designed to allow for the realisation of the longer-term vision, i.e. for building over the ground floor of Portmill Lane East Car Park, should that option be chosen.

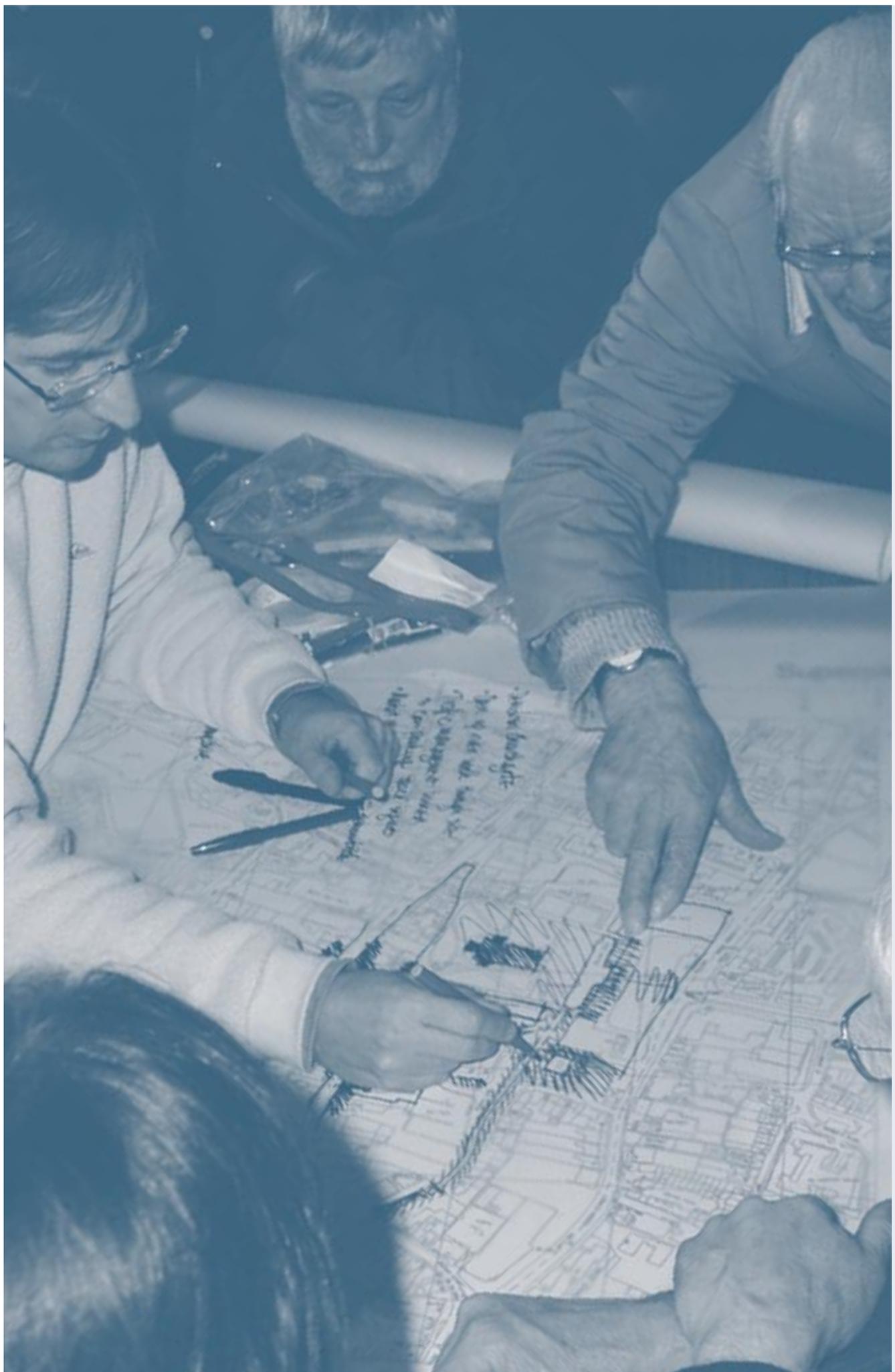
URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTER AREA GUIDANCE

A5 - Portmill Lane west car park including servicing yards behind Bancroft and pedestrian linkage to Hermitage Road

- 6.37 Improvement of these areas will provide for environmental enhancement, including enhanced hard landscaping and planting as appropriate, and taking full account of community safety and accessibility. The links to Bancroft and Hermitage Road should be enhanced with appropriate materials and good lighting. The works should be designed with due regard for the future potential redevelopment of the Post Office site.
- 6.38 The car parking area should be capable of being used for other activities which may include the town wide music festival and other events. Enhancement of the River Hiz where it passes through this Area 5 should be undertaken in accordance with the aspirations set out in the River Hiz Development Guidelines.



Artist impression showing a redeveloped Churchgate area with enhanced Market Area and Car parks



IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Planning Application Requirements

- 7.01** The site lies within a Conservation Area therefore planning applications should be submitted in detail to incorporate existing and proposed elevations, sections and floor plans and should also show the proposed buildings in relation to existing properties as well as including details of proposed materials. Conservation Area consent will be required for the demolition of buildings. Plans should indicate where new tree planting and landscaping is proposed, and should be accompanied by an environmental management plan. The sensitive nature of the site will require work to be carried out in relation to archaeology.
- 7.02** An Environmental Statement supported by a Transport Assessment will also be required as part of the planning application. This will need to be prepared in the context of the requirements for major urban development projects as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999.
- 7.03** Given the complex nature of the site and the degree of information required, any applicant is advised to contact the Council at an early stage in the evolution of their proposals with a view to arranging a meeting with the relevant Officers and the relevant consultees.

Planning Benefits and Infrastructure Provision

- 7.04** North Hertfordshire District Council will encourage early discussions (usually at the pre-application stage) with applicants regarding negotiation of planning obligation. The Council will seek to have a draft Section 106 Agreement settled by the time the planning application reaches the Planning Committee.
- 7.05** The policy basis for seeking a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act is set out in Hertfordshire Structure Plan (Policy 2) and the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan (Policy 51). In relation to this site, the Council is likely to seek contributions to the provision and maintenance of works, amenity areas and facilities or services needed as a result which could include:
- affordable housing;
 - community facilities, including community safety schemes, and facilities for young people;
 - provision of a new public square;
 - public art;
 - landscape enhancements;
 - streetscape enhancements;
 - improved linkages and access to the station;
 - sustainable transport improvements (including passenger transport facilities);
 - appropriate highway improvements and traffic management schemes;
 - cycle routes and cycle parking facilities; and
 - education, library, youth and child care, fire hydrants.

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Phasing

- 7.06** The Churchgate Development Planning Brief encompasses a significant area of land with the freehold interest held by North Hertfordshire District Council and a long leasehold held by a third party.
- 7.07** To allow for a holistic and sensitive development of the sites, attention should be given to the phasing of any proposed development. Developers will need to work with existing retailers, the Council and Hitchin Town Centre Initiative to manage the displacement of existing retailers and businesses as well as the market. It may be possible for the market to trade temporarily from Market Place, St Mary's Square or another suitable alternative location during the construction period.
- 7.08** Demolition and construction of the new centre and the car parks at St. Mary's Square and Portmill Lane East should endeavour to take place with the minimum disturbance to the existing town centre.

Funding and Delivery

- 7.09** It is envisaged that all interests will need to be aligned, including the freehold held by North Hertfordshire District Council, the long leasehold held by Hammersmatch Ltd and other third party interests to bring about a holistic development. The parties will also need to investigate a range of delivery and funding options including the possibility of a joint venture partnership arrangement with a preferred private sector developer to progress a scheme and bear an element of the risks involved. External funding for the public realm should also be explored.
- 7.10** As freeholder, North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to improving this area of the Churchgate Shopping Centre with the possibility of incorporating the enhancement areas as part of a holistic regeneration of that part of the town centre (subject to submission of a suitable scheme). Included in this scheme will be the replacement of public parking lost through redevelopment of the site at St. Mary's Square/Portmill Lane East car parks.

Contact

- 7.11** The relevant contact at the Council:

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Projects Manager
Planning Policy & Projects
North Hertfordshire District Council
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - FINDINGS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Findings of Public Consultation

Introduction

The following key themes represent a summary of the outcomes from the Spring 2005 Community Planning Process which has led to the development of the Churchgate Area Development Options. A more detailed report of the process and outcomes called "Churchgate Area Project Final Report May 2005" is available from North Hertfordshire District Council.

Key themes from the weekend

Retain character and feel of historic market town

"We don't want to become any other town – we are Hitchin".

Whilst some would like to see the Churchgate Centre refurbished most people would like to see it redeveloped in a contextual way with mixed uses

"Recognise that change is positive and can be harnessed for the benefit of all the different stakeholders."

"Anyone considering demolishing Churchgate should go and visit every shop. It's very, very nice!"

"Demolition of Churchgate is essential; refurbishment is a step backwards"

"If Churchgate is redeveloped, where will existing businesses go?"

There was consensus that Hitchin Market should be supported. Some thought it should relocate to Market Place and some thought demountable stalls should be used.

"Make the market stalls more attractive or collapsible or have more markets so it's busy more often."

Value and support independent retailers whilst creating a balance to ensure Hitchin's future vitality as thriving retail centre

"How do we sustain local businesses against incoming multiples?"

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - FINDINGS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Use town centre land efficiently – provide flexible public spaces and build on car parks with undercroft parking and include Post office site in the vision

“Car parking occupies too much of the heart of the town.”

Extend pedestrianisation in centre and better utilise the River Hiz and create a high quality town centre circuit

“There must be a balance between passing trade and pedestrianisation.”

“Make the river a place that people know and will remember.”

Retain key views while enhancing the setting of the church

“The view of St Mary’s is a huge asset to the town.”

Concept of town centre living supported

“When you get older you can’t drive a car – where do you live? it has to be the town centre.”

Enhance community facilities including for young people

*“Where are children from ages 13 to 16 going to go to?
The market is used a lot for social activities.”*

More balance to evening economy

“The town centre is becoming a no-go area at night unless you are pissed out of your mind!”

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Relevant Planning Policy

National Policy Guidance

National guidance is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's) prepared on specific issues. PPG's are gradually being replaced with Planning Policy Statements (PPS's). The relevant guidance notes are set out below. The key issues for the Churchgate development area are identified in the table.

- PPG1, General Policies and Principles (February 1997)
- PPS1, Creating Sustainable Communities (2005)
- PPG3, Housing (March 2000)
- PPS6, Planning for Town Centres (March 2005)
- PPG13, Transport (March 2001)
- PPG15, Planning and the Historic Environment (September 1994)
- PPG16, Archaeology and Planning (November 1990)

Regional Planning Guidance

South East Regional Guidance RPG9 (2001)

Regional Planning Guidance for North Hertfordshire is provided by the South East Regional Guidance (RPG9), which was adopted in August 2001. The Guidance sets out current Government Policy for the South East and provides the regional planning framework for the next fifteen years. The primary purpose of the guidance is to provide a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans. The key development principles and policies of relevance to the site within RPG9, are set out in the table.

East of England Plan - Draft revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England (Deposit Nov 2004)

The Government is in the process of developing regional strategies. North Hertfordshire now forms part of the East of England Region and the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for East of England will provide relevant regional guidance when it is adopted. The RSS sets out a strategy to guide planning and development in the East of England to the year 2021. It covers economic development, housing, the environment, transport, waste management, culture, sport and recreation, mineral extraction and implementation. It aims to improve the quality of life, and sets out proposals which will influence where people choose to work and live and how people move about the region. It also seeks to address issues such as social exclusion, the need for regeneration and the impact of climate change. Developers are to be aware of the emerging policies in the East of England Plan when considering the future development of the site.

The Plan is subject of a Public Examination in late 2005 early 2006 and is thus at a relatively early stage. The East of England Regional Assembly have suspended their support for the Plan.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Hertfordshire Structure Plan (1998)

The current Hertfordshire Structure Plan was adopted by the County Council in April 1998 and covers the period to 2011. The County Council has undertaken technical work to decide what changes were needed to roll the plan forward another five years to 2016 these were formally approved in the draft Structure Plan alterations in 2003. The Structure Plan sets out the broad directions in which Hertfordshire should change and develop in the future. There is a strong emphasis on achieving sustainable development which permeates all aspects of the document. In relation to the Churchgate site, the policies of relevance in 1998 Structure Plan are set out in the table:

Local Planning Guidance

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan (1996)

The local planning policy framework is provided within the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations (1996). The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004 makes the provision for the replacement of Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The current adopted Local Plan will remain the statutory development plan for three years from the date of commencement of the PCPA 2004, or until the North Herts LDF is adopted. Applications for development within the Churchgate development area must reflect the relevant policies in Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations whilst it remains valid. The Churchgate development area falls within the Town Centre shopping area, whereby Policy HS and HTC1/2a are relevant. The site is also in the Town Centre Conservation Area and thus Policy 20 is relevant. These policies, together with other relevant policies are summarised in the table.

Car Parking Requirements

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Policy 25: Car Parking - Supplementary Planning Guidance: Parking Provision at New Development

In March 2001, Hertfordshire County Council published new supplementary guidance on car parking provision in new developments. These standards, or such amendments as may be brought forward in the future, will have a significant impact upon transport provision and urban design within the development. The standards seek restraint upon the private car by defining the maximum allowable provision for each land use, and then applying reductions calculated by a matrix approach reflecting the nature and accessibility of the town and the development. In general the standards seek to meet the demand for residential parking by applying no reduction factor. With respect to other uses on the site, and in particular the employment areas, parking is likely to be restrained to encourage alternative modes of transport.

This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) adopted by the County Council in December 2000 sets out recommended maximum car parking standards as outlined in Appendix C. Residential development will generally be expected to accommodate all parking demand on site, although reduced provision may be acceptable for high density residential development proposals in appropriate locations. 'Car-free' residential development may also be a possible solution in highly accessible locations.

It will remain appropriate for employment parking to be restricted in town centre locations where there are opportunities to walk to shops and other services and the work location is in acceptable walking distance of a range of passenger transport facilities.

Retail developments in town centres will be expected to maximise shared use of public parking provision and thus be subject to previous charges and time limits; where there is a shortfall in short-stay public

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

parking, greater (shared) provision may be required beyond that identified in the zonal approach. The onus is on the developer to present a convincing case if so called 'operational parking' is sought, particularly in the case of staff parking. The genuine need for operational parking in such instances should be minimised through the use of a travel plan.

NHDC Parking Strategy 2004-2009 (Adopted July 2004)

The Council supports the zonal approach in principle as referred to and set out in the above Herts County Council SPG on Parking Provision in New Developments. The Council is seeking to adopt the zonal approach as Supplementary Planning Document to complement Policy 55 in its current Local Plan in the near future. The zonal approach is calculated by applying the maximum number of car parking spaces required by the scheme in accordance with current County Council Standards as outlined in SPG25 (see Appendix C), to the zone in which it is located. The core town centre area is anticipated to be within zone type 2 with an allowable car parking provision of 25-50% of the County Council maximum parking standard. The appropriate standards to be applied must be agreed with the Council.

Where development is likely to cause 'overspill' parking the zonal parking restrictions may be reduced or the developer will be asked to contribute towards enhanced enforcement of parking controls nearby. Minimum standards for disabled car parking will be required as per paragraph 52 of PPG13, and as set out in DETR Advisory Leaflet/95 Parking for Disabled People

Generally, the Council will require major regeneration schemes in town centres to provide on site car parking to meet the needs of the new development as well as replacing any public parking lost as a result of the development. The opportunities for shared use parking and car free developments will also be encouraged.

Developer's Contribution

Developers will be expected to pay 'accessibility' payments to increase access to their site by modes of transport other than the private car to contribute to for example pedestrian facilities, a new pedestrian crossing, cycle infrastructure, public transport facilities, park and ride etc.

Additional Policy Documents for Consideration

Additional policy documents for consideration are listed below, a more detailed analysis of the documents as they relate to the site is provided in the table.

- Hitchin Town Centre Strategy (2004)
- Town Centre and Retail Study (2004)
- River Hiz Development Guidelines (1995)
- Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire (2003)
- North Hertfordshire Housing Needs Survey (2002)
- Hitchin Transportation Plan (1998)
- Hitchin Parking Study (2003)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	POLICY TITLE	DESCRIPTION
NATIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE		
PPG1	General Policies and Principles (February 1997)	<p>PPG 1 reaffirms the role of the planning system to enable the provision of homes, buildings, investment and jobs, in a way that is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. The guidance promotes the re-use of previously developed land and developments which minimise the need to travel.</p> <p>The guidance states that within town centres, mixed-use development can help to create vitality and diversity and reduce the need to travel. It can be more sustainable than development consisting of a single use. PPG 1 states that Local Planning Authorities should include policies in their development plans to promote and retain mixed uses, particularly in town centres.</p>
PPS1	Creating Sustainable Communities (2005)	<p>PPS 1 puts sustainable development at the heart of planning principles and policy. The four aims of sustainable development (should be integrated to help create Sustainable Communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High and stable levels of employment and economic growth; Social inclusion; Environmental protection; and Prudent use of resources. <p>PPS1 also highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing the historic environment, the importance of high quality urban design and the need to focus on long-term objectives. The main objectives for sustainable development and Sustainable Communities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to promote urban and rural regeneration; to promote sub-regional and local economies; to create healthy, inclusive and safe communities; to focus development which attracts large numbers of people in town centres; to make the most efficient use of land; and to reduce the need to travel.
PPG3	Housing (March 2000)	<p>PPG 3 puts emphasis on sustainable residential development via the most effective use of previously developed land within existing urban areas. The guidance encourages Local Authorities to facilitate mixed-use development by constructing more housing, including affordable housing, in town centres. The conversion of space above shops and the use of vacant commercial buildings should be promoted.</p>
PPS6	Planning for Town Centres (April 2005)	<p>PPS6 reaffirms the Government's 'town centre first' message. It reinforces the need for Local Authorities (LPAs) to positively plan for sustainable and inclusive town centres. It also emphasises the importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring access for all to a wide range of everyday goods and services; promoting more sustainable patterns of development by reducing reliance on the car and providing a range of transport means; high-density, mixed-use development; good design; quality public open spaces; protecting and enhancing the architectural and historic heritage of centres; the potential for economic growth, investment and employment opportunities; and town centre management and partnerships to improve and manage urban areas. <p>LPAs are encouraged to identify sites within and adjoining existing town centres for growth.</p>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	POLICY TITLE	DESCRIPTION
NATIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE		
PPG 13	Transport (March 2001)	PPG 13 seeks to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional and local level to promote sustainable transport for jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services and to discourage the use of the private car. The guidance also promotes a mix of uses in central locations, where one trip can serve several purposes, and it encourages higher density development around transport nodes.
PPG 15	Planning and the Historic Environment (September 1994)	PPG 15 provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, Conservation Areas and other elements of the historic environment. The Guidance advocates early consultation with Local Planning Authorities and English Heritage during the design of a proposed development in such areas.

SOUTH EAST REGIONAL GUIDANCE (RPG9), ADOPTED IN AUGUST 2001		
POLICY Q1, Q2, Q3		Policy Q1 states that urban areas should be the prime focus for new development and redevelopment. Policy Q2 aims to raise the quality of life in urban areas by making them more attractive places to live, work, shop, spend leisure time and invest, in order to reduce dispersed patterns of residence and travel. Policy Q3 states that new development and in particular residential development should make more efficient use of land.
POLICY HI		Policy HI states that during the period 2001-2006, provision should be made for an average of 39,000 net additional dwellings per year in the South East. In Hertfordshire, the guidance suggests that 3,280 net additional dwellings should be provided.
POLICY TI		<p>Policy TI states that new development should minimise the distance which people need to travel whilst enhancing choice and ensuring ease of access for all users. In order to ensure that new development is consistent with the overall spatial, social, economic and environmental strategy for the region, regard should be had to the following criteria:</p> <p>New development should be planned holistically to minimise the need for vehicular movement and to facilitate and encourage safe movement by foot, cycle and public transport;</p> <p>Development that generates a large number of passenger movements (e.g. cultural facilities or places of employment) should be located at or close to sites which provide, or have the potential to provide, ready and convenient access by foot, cycle and public transport;</p> <p>Development should make the best use of existing transportation networks and have regard to strategic priorities; and</p> <p>Development should be planned to enhance the viability of new and existing public transport services.</p>
POLICY EN2		Proposed alterations relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy aim to promote a more sustainable pattern of energy use whilst ensuring that development does not harm the Region's environment. Policy EN2 states that Development Plans should encourage the incorporation of high standards of energy efficiency in all development.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	POLICY TITLE	DESCRIPTION
HERTFORDSHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN (1998)		
POLICY 1	Sustainable Development	Development should be consistent with the principles of sustainable development.
POLICY 2	Design and Provisions of Development	Development will be required to make provision for environmental works, infrastructure and community facilities, services and other needs that are directly related to it and necessary to the grant of planning permission. Local plans will provide an indication of the requirements after consultation between the County and District Councils, other service providers and other relevant bodies, such as the regulatory authorities. Developers will be required to provide or to finance the cost of all such provision which is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development, including off-site impacts. Planning obligations will be sought prior to the issue of planning permission. Provisions will cover those necessary to serve the development, to mitigate its impact or to offset the loss of or impact on an existing resource, or otherwise are necessary in the interests of comprehensive planning and sustainable development.
POLICY 4	Town Centres	<p>Town centres should be the preferred locations for developments that attract many trips. Their vitality and viability will be maintained and strengthened and the priorities will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) secure an appropriate range of shopping and service facilities; ii) improve accessibility to those facilities, recognising the particular role that passenger transport can make with the centre as a hub; iii) improve security and safety; iv) encourage housing and mixed-use development; v) provide for a range of cultural, leisure and social facilities; vi) provide a high quality environment. <p>Appropriate uses which provide for a diverse range of activities throughout the day and evening will be encouraged, subject to other policies of this Plan. Measures to mitigate the impact of traffic will be encouraged.</p>
POLICY 16	Retailing	Provision will be made for retail development through local plans in accordance with PPG6, and in particular the sequential approach indicated there. Local plans will seek to maintain and enhance the identified roles of the various town and local centres in the hierarchy set out below. Proposals should be considered in relation to potential effects on the vitality and viability of any other centres; Hitchin minor sub-regional centre.
POLICY 17	Location of new Retail Development	Planning permission will be granted for retail development which sustains and enhances the vitality and viability of the County's town and local centres as identified within the retail hierarchy. The preferred location for retail development will be town centre sites, where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	POLICY TITLE	DESCRIPTION
HERTFORDSHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN (1998)		
POLICY 25	Car Parking	<p>Development proposals with potentially significant car parking demand will only be permitted where the applicant has agreed to take measures to address the problems (of traffic generation, congestion, and on-street parking pressure) likely to arise from the parking demands generated by the development.</p> <p>Non-Residential Development - the main emphasis shall be on maximum standards, on minimum provision to meet operational and customer requirements, and on catering for the travel needs of employees either by public transport or, to the extent that car usage is necessary, by provision shared with other users.</p> <p>Residential Development - full parking needs should be met on site except in suitable town centre and other locations with good access to passenger transport, where reduced provision may be sought associated with commuted payments as appropriate. Car free residential development may also be considered in suitable locations, subject to satisfactory site covenants, on-street parking controls and provision of alternative means of transport.</p>
POLICY 38	Environmental Assets	Policy 38 seeks to protect important environmental assets which would be lost or damaged due to development. These include listed buildings and their settings, other buildings of architectural, archaeological or historical merit and conservation areas.
POLICY 39	Water Environment	Indicates that development will be required to take full account of the need to protect and enhance the water environment to include the water corridors, flora and fauna, and ground and surface water quality.
POLICY 46	Open Space in Towns	Open spaces which are necessary and appropriate to the character or operation of the town will be protected and managed to ensure their continuing value. The overall stock of open space within a town will be maintained or increased, taking account of urban form and neighbourhood needs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	POLICY TITLE	DESCRIPTION
LOCAL PLANNING POLICY		
NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN NO. 2 WITH ALTERATIONS (1996)		
POLICY 16	Areas of Archaeological Significance	Requires archaeological assessments of sites as appropriate.
POLICY 20	Conservation Areas	The site lies within a designated Conservation Area; the Council will apply a 'conservation' approach so that new development is in sympathy with the character of the area and positively enhances the environment.
POLICY 22	Urban Environment	Promotes the maintenance of existing character within the urban areas and seeks environmental improvements as part of development proposals.
POLICY 29A	Affordable Housing for Urban Local Needs	The Council aims to maximise affordable housing for local needs from new developments. Policy 29A states that on sites for 20 or more dwellings the Council will seek at least 25% of the units to be affordable. In considering the proportion for individual sites, regard will be had to the housing needs of the local area, the economics of provision, and individual site and market considerations.
POLICY 43	Shopping Frontages	The retail frontage of the Churchgate Centre is covered by policy 43 where only retail uses (A1 Use Class) will be permitted. Exceptionally, the addition of a restaurant or similar use (A3 Use Class) within this core may add to its attractiveness. However, if permitted, the Council will add a condition to prevent a change to a service use (A2 Use Class) to maintain the continuity of shopping frontages.
POLICY 51	Development Effects and Planning Gain	Identifies that where the effects of the development relate to wider issues relevant to planning, the Council will seek significant financial contributions towards related works.
POLICY 55	Car Parking Standards	Queen Street along the eastern boundary of the site is within a parking control area, the Council considers that normally payments are preferable to parking provision for each development in these town centre locations. These funds will help achieve the programme of car parking improvements adopted by the Council. The possibility of public spaces being provided by the developer will be considered. The policy does however state that due regard will also be taken of any existing up-to-date guidance that is available. The Herts County Council Supplementary Planning Guidance on Parking Provision at New Development (2001) provides such guidance.
HS	Shopping Areas in Town Centres	This relates specifically to the Churchgate Centre and the Market within the site boundary, it is anticipated that additional floorspace could be supported by the local population, and could add to the variety of shopping in the town. The Council will expect proposals to contribute to the continued vitality and viability of the town centre by maintaining its relative attractiveness. Additional shopping provision will be expected to add to the range and types of existing shops, and the Council will expect that the scale and form of development proposed will integrate well with the existing town centre and its facilities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER	POLICY TITLE	DESCRIPTION
LOCAL PLANNING POLICY		
NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN NO. 2 WITH ALTERATIONS (1996)		
HTCI	Town Centre Core	<p>The site lies within the town centre core where the following priorities are relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote shopping as the only activity at ground floor level, and to prevent the loss of shops in the main shopping frontages. • To provide an environment for people or pedestrians rather than for traffic, whilst keeping essential routes and areas for traffic and servicing. • To examine ways of improving the market including possible ideas for using Market Place or part of it, to support the vitality and viability of the market town of Hitchin.
HTCI / 2a	Churchgate / Biggin Lane	<p>More specifically within the area development proposals will be expected to improve pedestrian links between existing and proposed parking areas, and the town centre shopping area and to provide for the River Hiz walkway along both banks of the river. A comprehensive environmental enhancement of this area will be sought to provide for mixed retail, commercial and other appropriate town centre uses, subject to increased car parking provision (including St Mary's Square) and improved vehicular access. Planning permission will not normally be given for development which would exacerbate existing access, traffic, parking or environmental problems or which would be contrary to Conservation Area objectives.</p>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

DOCUMENT TITLE	DESCRIPTION
ADDITIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION	
Hitchin Town Centre Strategy (2004)	<p>'Hitchin Town Centre Strategy', 2004 provides a context for promoting changes and improvements in the town centre. An important element of this is guiding physical development and maximising the opportunities that will benefit the future viability and vitality of the town centre, whilst emphasising its historic character, its local distinctiveness and the needs of its local community.</p> <p>The Council considers an opportunity exists for development and enhancement of the area comprising the Churchgate Centre, the market and the car park at Biggin Lane. This could include the redevelopment or refurbishment of the Churchgate Centre for mixed-use development including a mix of retail, food and drink, leisure and residential uses. It will be important to promote a scheme that is built to the highest quality and contributes to the historic character of the town.</p> <p>In addition, the Council would like to see the overall enhancement of the areas outlined at Sites A3, A4 and A5 (Figure 2) to improve the eastern edge of the town centre by:</p> <p>Improving and upgrading the market;</p> <p>Opening up and enhancing the River Hiz; and</p> <p>Enhancing St Mary's Square car park with hard and soft landscaping to improve the setting of St Mary's Church;</p> <p>Enhance the overall character and appearance of sites A1, A2 and A3 through refurbishment/redevelopment proposals, enhancing Portmill Lane East and West car parks at site A5 with hard and soft landscaping. Improving the service areas to the rear of the Bancroft shops and improving the pedestrian links to the Garden of Rest, to Bancroft and to Hermitage Road. The provision of public conveniences in the general area will be considered as part of the Churchgate Planning Brief.</p>
River Hiz Development Guidelines (1995)	<p>This Council's aims to create a publicly accessible corridor along the river is key to maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of Hitchin Town Centre for shopping, business, recreational and residential purposes is outlined in these guidelines.</p> <p>As the site is located within the vicinity of the river any proposals will be assessed against the general aims and objectives of the guidelines. These have been broken down into specific areas of which area 1 to 5 are of relevance:</p> <p>Area 1: Biggin Lane The Council will seek the provision of a continuous walkway on both sides of the river from Bridge Street northwards to Biggin Lane. The banks should also be improved with landscaping works. Development/redevelopment of the large shop units and service areas of Churchgate should seek to provide a more attractive way of accommodating these unsightly features in the street scene with the introduction of better enclosed/screened areas.</p> <p>Area 2: The Market Market needs to be improved in terms of its physical appearance. Any redevelopment of the area must make sure that the River Hiz walkway is maintained to include signage. If a large scale development/enhancement programme is to take place then the possibility of opening up the river should be considered. Any development in the area should positively relate to the river.</p> <p>Area 3: St Mary's Square and car park Importance of the open views of St Mary's Church from the car park. The design of any enhancement/development proposals should accord with the historic grain and nature of the town centre. In St Mary's Square there are considerable opportunities for improving the environment around the river especially the quality of paving.</p> <p>May be appropriate to provide more seating on the eastern side of the river opposite the Church. Opportunity to improve the accessibility of the area for people with mobility difficulties. May be necessary to consider the appropriateness of the location of stalls in this area and make better provision for them.</p> <p>Area 4: Portmill Lane Car parks Improve the appearance and quality of the area with soft landscaping, providing more space to the river edge and making a stronger feature of the weir.</p> <p>Area 5: Portmill Lane – Hermitage Road Important pedestrian link between Portmill Lane and Hermitage Road widely used by people parking in the area and walking into the town centre and as a short cut for those coming from further afield. Opportunity to enhance the pedestrian links and incorporate sign-posting.</p>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

DOCUMENT TITLE	DESCRIPTION
ADDITIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION	
Town Centre and Retail Study (2004)	<p>Hitchin's role in North Hertfordshire should be maintained therefore appropriate development proposals should be identified and encouraged in the town centre, which seek to improve the town centre as an attractive place to visit and shop.</p> <p>Identifies Hitchin town centre as the main opportunity to improve further the High Street comparison shopping in the District. Identifies that there is development opportunity and demand for space from occupiers.</p> <p>High Street Comparison Floor Space - broad guidance is given for comparison floorspace projections: By 2007: 2,400 sq. m (net) High Street comparison floor space, by 2011: 4,800 sq. m (net).</p> <p>Commercial Leisure Development – the combined population of Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock is capable of supporting many commercial leisure facilities if suitable developments are found. There is scope for the following uses in the short/medium term: bingo hall, themed restaurants and bars, small nightclubs or large pubs and private health club.</p> <p>Future town centre development should provide additional floorspace for class A3 uses over and above the High Street comparison retail floorspace projections: By 2011: 1,400-2,100-sq. m (gross).</p>
Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire (2003)	<p>The Strategy commits the resources and expertise of numerous local organisations to addressing issues that local people feel will improve their quality of life. The strategy sets out action plans for the 5 local areas in North Herts; including Hitchin, and highlights issues and actions in area visioning plans to be/being taken by relevant organisations.</p> <p>Priority issues for Hitchin include:</p> <p>Review of car parking provision including charges; Encourage cycling by developing a cycle network and providing associated facilities such as parking facilities; More affordable housing; and Tackling anti-social behaviour (CCTV, increased police presence, review licensing laws).</p>
Hitchin Town Centre and Churchgate Visitor Survey (1998)	<p>This survey encompassed both a street survey and postal survey. The results of which highlighted that: Shops, banks and the post office were the biggest draw for people from inside and outside Hitchin.</p> <p>The market was an important draw Pubs and restaurants were important in encouraging shoppers into the town centre for long periods and contributing to the evening economy.</p> <p>More shops, and better quality shops would attract people into the town centre more often.</p>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

DOCUMENT TITLE	DESCRIPTION
ADDITIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION	
North Hertfordshire Housing Needs Survey (2002)	<p>This survey suggests negotiation with prospective developers towards achieving 35% subsidised affordable homes from the total of all suitable sites coming forward for planning consent over the period of the Local Plan. Although, sites will be assessed in an individual basis.</p> <p>Agreement for affordable housing and any other provision should be clearly drafted in a Section 106 agreement so that delivery is controlled and guaranteed.</p>
Hitchin Transportation Plan (1998)	<p>The overall aim of the Hitchin Transportation Plan is to enable the town to develop in a manner which is environmentally sustainable, without damaging the heart of historic Hitchin. Priorities in the plan include an ongoing programme to improve cycling facilities, introduction of traffic calming and controlled parking.</p>
Hitchin Parking Study (2003)	<p>This study prepared by Arup revealed that whilst at present under normal circumstances present parking provision is just sufficient for the needs of the town, there is little or no spare capacity in the short term car parks on market days and availability is not necessary located where users would wish.</p> <p>It is therefore essential that any redevelopment addresses these issues and that any public parking lost is at the minimum replaced by additional provision from either developers or through additional public provision to ensure the continued economic viability of the town.</p> <p>Other issues identified included the need for improved signage and an improvement in the quality of car parks.</p>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX C - PARKING STANDARDS

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT (PLANNING USE CLASS)	EXAMPLE	ZONE 2 LEVEL PROPOSED FOR HITCHIN (the figure in brackets is the maximum HCC standards)
Retail (A1)	Small food/other shops Food/other supermarkets Major food/other superstore	1 space per 60-120m ² gfa (1 per 30m ²) 1 space per 36-72m ² gfa (18m ²) 1 space per 30-60m ² gfa (15m ²)
Financial & Professional Services (A2)	Banks, building societies, estate agencies and betting shops	1 space per 60-120m ² gfa (30m ²)
Food & Drink (A3)	Restaurant or café Public House or bars Hot food takeaway (not drive through)	1 space per 10-20m ² of floorspace dining area plus 0.75-1.5 spaces per 4 employees (5m ² of floorspace, 3 spaces per 4 employees) 1 space per 6-12m ² of floorspace dining area plus 0.75-1.5 spaces per 4 employees (3m ² of floorspace, 3 spaces per 4 employees) 1 space per 6-12m ² of floorspace dining area plus 0.75-1.5 spaces per 4 employees (3m ² of floorspace, 3 spaces per 4 employees)
Business (B1)	Offices	1 space per 60-120m ² gfa (30m ²)
Residential (C3)	One bedroom dwelling Two bedroom dwelling Three bedroom dwelling Four or more bedroom dwelling Elderly persons retirement dwellings Sheltered dwellings	0.4-0.9 spaces per dwelling (1.75) 0.5-1 spaces per dwelling (2) 0.7-1.4 spaces per dwelling (2.75) 0.9-1.9 spaces per dwelling (3.75) 0.4-0.75 spaces per unit including 0.06-0.13 visitor spaces per unit (1.5, 0.25) 0.19-0.38 spaces per unit including 0.06-0.13 visitor spaces per unit (0.75, 0.25)
Non-Residential Institutions (D1)	Surgeries and clinics	0.75-1.5 spaces per consulting room plus 0.25-0.5 spaces per employee other than consulting doctors/dentists/vets (3,1)
Assembly and Leisure (D2)	Assorted places of entertainment/ leisure (where the final use is known) Cinemas	1 space per 30-60m ² of gfa (shared parking) (15m ²) 1 space per 6-12 seats (3)
Market (no planning use class)		Decided on the individual merits of the scheme

Source: Standards adapted from Supplementary Planning Guidance Policy 25: Parking Provision at New Development.