

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



PAYNES PARK PLANNING BRIEF FEBRUARY 2005



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PLANNING SERVICES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Planning Brief is to provide planning guidance for the regeneration of the Paynes Park area of Hitchin Town Centre (See Plan 1).
- 1.2 The main objectives are as follows:
 - To improve the vitality and viability of Hitchin town centre through appropriate, sustainable development at Paynes Park, which enhances the balanced mix of uses in the town centre;
 - To promote development at Paynes Park which is attractive, interesting and beneficial to the community;
 - To improve the streetscene on Paynes Park and introduce a character and quality of development between Paynes Park and Market Place/High Street that will improve the appearance of this part of the town and enhance the overall character of the conservation area;
 - To promote an attractive, safe, and convenient pedestrian link between the Lairage multi-storey car park/Waitrose supermarket/library/museum, and Market Place/High Street, and promote movement along this link.
- 1.3 The Council wish this document to stimulate interest in the re-development of the area and to contribute towards the Council's following strategic priorities for 2004-2007:
 - creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable economic development
 - promoting sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic settlements
 - promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens
 - encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime.

Existing Design Brief

- 1.4 In 1987, the Council appointed consultants Conran Roche to prepare a Hitchin Town Centre Study. One of the recommendations of that report was strengthening the speciality shopping base of Hitchin through the identification of suitable sites, preparing a development framework, and approaching developers to stimulate interests.
- 1.5 As a result of that study, a Design Brief for Paynes Park was produced by the Council, and adopted in 1988. The purpose of the Brief was to 'promote interest in the opportunities for a very high quality, primarily shopping development, and to give strong guidance on the design approach'.
- 1.6 The original Design Brief is in need of revision, to take account of changing circumstances. The main change in circumstance since the 1987 Design

Brief was published, is the completion of the Safeway foodstore (now Waitrose) and the Lairage multi-storey car park, although the Brief did envisage this would take place. This has led to more pedestrian traffic moving from the foodstore and Lairage car park, across Paynes Park, to the heart of the town centre around Market Place.

Status

- 1.7 This Draft Planning Brief has been discussed with relevant stakeholders and put out for formal public consultation. It has been adopted as the Council's approved Planning Brief for Paynes Park. Any future planning applications on this site will be expected to be in accordance with the approved Planning Brief. Planning applications should also be in accordance with the development plan, which at present consist of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2011 and the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations. However, in the future this will become the East of England Plan and the North Hertfordshire Local Development Framework (see paragraphs 2.2 and 4.1 of Appendix A)

The Site

- 1.8 Historically Paynes Park was the livestock market area of the town, with a sheep and poultry market on the site of the existing Lairage car park and the cattle market directly behind The Cock Hotel. In addition the fire station was located opposite the rear of Woolworths. The site also contains two historic public rights of way: Coopers Alley and West Alley. It is likely that West Alley is the oldest path in the town. Market Place is the town centre core and is immediately to the south east of Paynes Park. Paynes Park is identified in the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy as a key development site.
- 1.9 Paynes Park, is a one way, two lane road and part of the circulatory system around the town centre. At present, Paynes Park, Bedford Road and Old Park Road, create an island, isolated by traffic, to the north west of the town centre, which includes the library, museum, Waitrose foodstore and the Lairage multi-storey car park, offices and some residential buildings.
- 1.10 The area the subject of this Brief, is bounded to the west by Paynes Park, to the north by the Paynes Park Social Club, to the east by the rear of premises on High Street/Market Place, such as Barclays, the Arcade and the Corn Exchange, and to the south by the rear of properties on Tilehouse Street (See Plan 1).
- 1.11 For the purposes of this Brief, the area can be split between the northern part and the southern part. The southern part includes Brookers yard, the Suzuki site, Peter Fish Commercial Vehicles, and the area granted planning permission for elderly persons' housing (McCarthy and Stone). The northern part includes, the Arcade car park, Paynes Park House, West Alley, Jackson's Yard car park, Woolworths' staff car park, the disabled car park, the Stonegate private car park, Stapletons and the entrance to the Lairage multi-storey car park. (See Plan 2).
- 1.12 The northern part of the site consists of a mixture of well established uses, while the southern part includes sites where re-development is underway (McCarthy & Stone) and where re-development is being actively pursued (Brookers, Suzuki & Peter Fish).

- 1.13 The main topographical feature of the area is the slope of the land in an easterly direction from Paynes Park, down to Market Place.
- 1.14 Any development at Paynes Park must take account of the relevant national, strategic, and local planning policies (See Appendix A). There are also other documents which are of relevance to this Planning Brief, including the adopted Hitchin Town Centre Strategy (2004) which provides a framework for guiding development within the town centre(See Appendix B). Any development proposals in the Paynes Park area will be expected to be in accordance with the policies as set out in the adopted Hitchin Town Centre Strategy. Any development proposals will need to make provision to improve the infrastructure and local amenities (see Appendix C)

Planning History

- 1.15 The Leon Howman site has been granted planning permission for sheltered housing for the elderly, and is currently being developed by McCarthy and Stone. The other sites in the southern part of the area (Brookers yard, Suzuki and Peter Fish), are now owned by a private housebuilder, who has recently submitted planning applications for residential development on the site. The area of Jackson's Yard car park was granted planning permission a number of years ago for an office development. That planning permission is still 'live' by virtue of an access being created, and could be fully implemented. However, no other development has taken place on this site for a number of years.

2. CURRENT LAND USES

- 2.1 The site is currently a mixture of land uses, including car parks, retail and commercial.

Car Parks

- 2.2 A large part of this area is currently being used for both publicly available and private car parking. This includes parking for staff at the rear of Woolworths, publicly available commercial parking such as The Arcade, disabled parking at West Alley, and private parking such as Stonegate's car park. The Arcade and Jacksons' Yard car parks consist of 106 parking spaces in total.

Retail/Commercial

- 2.3 There are a small number of speciality retail units in West Alley, including a shoe repair place and a gift shop. The shops on West Alley are a continuation of The Arcade, which links through to Market Place. West Alley and Arcade Walk contain very small retail units in the region of 20-50 sq. m. . Adjacent to shops in The Arcade there is a public toilet. The southern part of the site includes a builders merchants (Brookers), and car sales places (Suzuki, Peter Fish). Paynes Park House consists of offices for various voluntary/charitable organisations. Directly opposite Paynes Park House there is a tyre service (Stapletons). The former Leon Howman car sales site is now being developed by McCarthy and Stone.

3. FUTURE LAND USES

3.1 The Council considers that there is potential in the Paynes Park area for redevelopment in order to make better use of the land, improve the physical environment, and contribute towards sustainable development and the Council's strategic priorities for 2004-2007. This Brief will give broad guidelines on what kinds of development would be acceptable, thereby providing a reasonable opportunity for development of the area to come forward by 2011. Appendix C gives details of planning obligations and other requirements which will be expected of developers.

Southern Area

- 3.2 The southern area of Paynes Park could be developed for a mix of residential with some retail and community uses. The site is extremely central, very convenient for town centre facilities, and is a sustainable location for housing. Any proposals for residential development should contribute towards the Council's strategic priority of providing adequate affordable housing. (See Appendix A, paragraph 5.8 of the Brief)
- 3.3 The Council wish to see the southern part of the site developed comprehensively, rather than in a piecemeal fashion. However, should the Suzuki site and/or the Peter Fish site be developed separately from Brookers, developments should be complementary in visual terms to its surroundings.
- 3.4 Within the Brookers site there is a Locally Listed Building called the Carling Building. At present the ground floor is being used for retail purposes. In any redevelopment proposal the Council wish to see this Locally Listed Building retained. Because of its proximity to the Market Place, the Council wish to see the retail element on the ground floor of this building retained.

Northern Area

- 3.5 The northern area of Paynes Park should be a mixed use development. The following uses will be considered appropriate:
- Retail
 - Leisure
 - Community facilities
 - Residential development at upper floors
 - Office development at upper floors

Although the Council does not wish to be overly prescriptive about future uses in the area, it is considered that retail and community uses should be the predominant features in this part of the site.

- 3.6 On behalf of the Council, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) has produced a Town Centre and Retail Study (2004), which includes Hitchin town centre. The study found that up to 2011, for the whole District, there will be a requirement for 13,500 sq. m. gross of high street comparison floorspace and 6,700 sq. m. gross of large format/retail warehousing floorspace. This is based on increases in population and available expenditure. As the main

shopping centre in the District, based on the number of retail units, Hitchin will be expected to accommodate some of this development.

- 3.7 Any proposal which involves the provision of retail development should be accompanied by an assessment of quantitative and qualitative needs. Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is a need for the type of retail development proposed in the town centre.
- 3.8 One of the strengths of Hitchin is the independent retailers in the town. The independent retailers tend to be located in smaller retail units. The Council's Town Centre and Retail Study (2004) identified that for a town the size of Hitchin, it should have more medium sized and large retail units.
- 3.9 The published retailer's requirements for Hitchin at March 2004, included a mixture of unit sizes sought by occupiers. However, the vast majority were small and medium sized units (101-200 sq. m. and 201-500 sq. m.). In considering any proposals for retail units, the Council would wish to see unit sizes which complement the existing mixture of units in the town.
- 3.10 The Council is currently interested in finding a suitable site for a community facility, particularly for young people, which is accessible to all. Views have also been expressed that the town centre would benefit from an arts/cultural centre. Any such facilities should contribute towards the Council's strategic objectives of promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities.
- 3.11 Paynes Park may be a convenient and suitable location for such uses. However, should this not be the case, developers will be expected to contribute towards new or enhanced existing community facilities in the town centre. This will be subject to negotiations with potential developers.
- 3.12 It may be that in order to make a scheme viable in the northern part of the area, it is necessary to include some residential development, at upper floor level. The Council would only wish residential to be a limited part of a development scheme in the northern part of Paynes Park.
- 3.13 Office accommodation at first floor level would be acceptable if there is a demand for it, but the Council would not wish the whole site to be developed for offices.
- 3.14 The building which now accommodates the Stapletons tyre service is one which would benefit from environmental improvement, or from re-development to a different use. Residential or a mixture of office and residential use would be the most appropriate on that site. Any re-development must take account of its prominent location on this corner site.

4. DESIGN AND CONSERVATION

- 4.1 The area of Paynes Park, particularly along the road frontage on the east side, is generally unsightly. Views along Paynes Park, from the top of Brand Street, are unattractive, and do not contribute to the visual character of the town centre. The main reason for this is the gap in the frontage at the Jackson's Yard and Arcade car parks, and the poor quality buildings, such as Leon Howman Cars and Peter Fish car sales. The buildings on the Leon Howman Cars site, will be replaced when the McCarthy and Stone scheme, involving sheltered apartments for the elderly, is completed. Any future development in the area, must improve the visual character of Paynes Park, make a positive contribution to Hitchin town centre, and promote the Council's strategic priority of protecting the environment and conserving the heritage of the District's settlements.

Conservation Area

- 4.2 The Hitchin Conservation Area was among the first in Hertfordshire to be designated, in 1969. The most up to date Character Statement for the Hitchin Conservation Area was produced in 1998. Much of Hitchin Town Centre is included in the Conservation Area, and most of the area which is the subject of this Brief is included (See Plan 3). The only areas outside the Conservation Area are west of Paynes Park, i.e. currently Stapletons Tyre Centre, and the entrance to the Lairage car park.
- 4.3 The character of the Paynes Park part of the Conservation Area is set out in the Conservation Area Statement. Any development in the area must maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the Hitchin Conservation Area, taking account of the surviving characteristics of historic structures and layout to be found within the area.

Listed Buildings

- 4.4 The only listed building within the boundary of this Brief is Paynes Park House, which is Grade II listed. Hitchin Museum, opposite the site, is also a Listed Building (See Plan 3). Development should have no adverse impact on these Listed Buildings. The inclusion of Paynes Park House within the development schemes will be an opportunity to improve its setting.
- 4.5 Within the site, there is one building on the Register of Important Buildings for Hitchin. This is the 'Carling Building' in Exchange Yard. Number 29 Market Place and The Arcade, which abuts the Arcade Car Park, are also on the list (see Plan 3). As such, special consideration should be given to how development would impact on these buildings.

Buildings and Spaces

- 4.6 One of the weaknesses of the area in design terms is the lack of frontage development along Paynes Park. The only frontage development from Paynes Park Social Club to the roundabout at Paynes Park, Old Park Road, Park Way and Upper Tilehouse Street, is Paynes Park House. The Council wish to see frontage development along most of Paynes Park, from the Paynes Park Social Club to the roundabout. This would help to visually

improve this gateway at Park Way into the town centre, which is an area identified for improvement in the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy.

- 4.7 The existing buildings along Paynes Park such as Paynes Park House and the offices opposite Woolworths car park, are mostly two storey brick buildings. The office at No. 7 Paynes Park, next to the entrance to The Lairage, is three storeys. The frontage of the McCarthy and Stone development currently being developed will be three storeys.
- 4.8 Careful consideration will need to be given to the heights of buildings along the Paynes Park frontage. No buildings along this frontage should dominate adjacent ones. However, in order to create an attractive and interesting streetscape, variations in the height of buildings will be encouraged.
- 4.9 Particular care will have to be given to buildings either side of Paynes Park House. If the northern area of Paynes Park is to be developed comprehensively, development will have to ‘wrap around’ Paynes Park House. Therefore, development will need to be sensitive to the design, scale and height of this listed building.
- 4.10 The height and scale of buildings within the site should also respect the historic layout and existing character of the area, as stated in Policy 2 of the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy. Use could be made of the gradient of the site, falling from Paynes Park towards the Market Place.
- 4.11 Developers will be required to consider carefully the relationship between new development within the site, and existing buildings and features adjacent to the site. Of particular importance is the existing buildings in The Arcade. Particular care will need to be given to the roofscape. The Arcade is identified on the Register of Important Local Buildings for Hitchin.
- 4.12 Other features outside the site area which new development should respect and have no adverse impact on include the rear of properties on Tilehouse Street, and the Reginald Hine Memorial Garden at the top of Tilehouse Street.
- 4.13 One feature of the area is the survival of the medieval burgage plots. This is an important part of the grain of the centre of Hitchin. Any development proposal should be in harmony with the historic medieval grain and scale of the area.

Materials

- 4.14 Much of the buildings in the area use a distinctive orange/red brick. This gives the area some visual coherence. Proposed developments should use materials which complement the existing materials in the area.

Roofs

- 4.15 One aspect of Hitchin is the variation in roof styles. Any proposals must include quality roofscapes which should be sympathetic to the surrounding area.

Landscape

- 4.16 There is currently no soft landscaping within the boundary of the Brief area. Although it is unlikely that the site will have space for a significant soft landscape scheme, consideration should be given to appropriate hard and soft landscaping, the use of street furniture, and public art.

Public Space

- 4.17 The Council wish to see the creation of public spaces within new developments. Within the northern part of the site, there may be the potential to create a small square as part of the development scheme. There may also be the potential for a townscape feature at the apex of the Peter Fish site.

Levels

- 4.18 The main topographical feature of the area is the change in levels from the high point in the west to the lower eastern part of the area. Any development should make use of this change in levels to its best advantage. Notwithstanding the change in levels, proposals should not lead to the site being difficult for people with mobility problems to move through. Developers will be expected to consider designs which retain some views from the west of local features such as St Mary's Church spire, the Corn Exchange cupola and Windmill Hill.

Safety and security

- 4.19 Within the design of any proposals, account should be taken of safety and security. Proposals should take account of the Police document 'Secured by Design' in order to contribute to the Council's strategic priorities of creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime. However, no gated communities should be created.

5. MOVEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- 5.1 The site is an important linkage between Market Place and the area which includes the library, museum, Waitrose and the Lairage multi-storey car park. However, at present, the Paynes Park road creates a physical barrier between these two areas.

Road Network and Traffic Circulation

- 5.2 Paynes Park is currently one way, involving two lanes. It is part of the circulatory system to take through traffic around the town centre and is part of the A505. Policy 32 of the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy deals with reducing the amount of traffic in the area. It states that NHDC will work with Hertfordshire County Council in seeking funding to commission consultants to undertake a feasibility study of the circulatory around Paynes Park, Old Park Road and Bedford Road, with the possibility of two way traffic along Bedford Road and Old Park Road. This will be sought through developer contributions or other means.
- 5.3 North Hertfordshire District Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council to consider ways of making the crossing of Paynes Park easier and safer.

Vehicular Access

- 5.4 All the current land uses within the site are accessed from Paynes Park. Any re-development scheme would also be accessed from Paynes Park. Any development should, as a minimum, retain the service access to existing shops, and seek improvements to servicing arrangements for commercial premises fronting the High Street.

Car Parking

- 5.5 The Council has adopted a Car Parking Strategy covering the period 2004-2009. The parking strategy states that, 'Generally the Council will require major regeneration schemes in the 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'.
- 5.6 Much of the northern part of the site is currently used for surface car parking, managed by private organisations. In order to re-develop the site, publicly available parking will need to be at least replaced. Replacement parking will have to be done in a way which provides an acceptable design solution. Designs must, i) respect the historic character of the town centre ii) be of a high quality which will significantly improve the area and iii) be safe and secure, to 'Secured by Design' standards.
- 5.7 There are some vacant buildings on the northern part of the site which would need to be demolished to re-develop the site. It would be possible to use this extra space and rationalise the parking on the site, to create extra parking bays if appropriate. The existing disabled parking bays should be replaced on or near to the site and should have improved access to the town centre core.

- 5.8 Developers would need to convince the Council that their proposals would provide acceptable replacement car parking. Replacement parking may be acceptable off-site and would be subject to negotiation. Parking standards for development will be assessed in line with the Council's adopted Car Parking Strategy and Hertfordshire County Council Parking Standards.

Public Transport

- 5.9 There are a number of buses which travel along Paynes Park. However, there are no bus stops at Paynes Park. The closest bus stops to Paynes Park are on Bancroft, Bedford Road and Old Park Road. The Council will seek contributions towards sustainable transport initiatives which may include real time information at nearby bus stops. The Council will also consider the possibility of promoting a bus stop on Paynes Park, subject to the findings of the traffic feasibility study.

Pedestrians, Cyclists and Mobility Impaired

- 5.10 At the time of producing the previous Design Brief, the Lairage multi-storey car park and the Safeway (now Waitrose) foodstore had not been developed, although the Brief did acknowledge that redevelopment of that area was likely. Therefore, pedestrian movement through Paynes Park was limited to people going to and from the library/museum and those who lived in the area to the west of Paynes Park. However, since the opening of the foodstore and the multi-storey car park, the level of pedestrian movement has increased significantly, as shown by the installation of the Pelican crossing.
- 5.11 There are a number of existing pedestrian routes through the site, two of which are public rights of way. There is a public right of way down West Alley which comes out onto the High Street between Nos 2-3 High Street. The other public right of way is Coopers Alley, which goes from Paynes Park next to the Peter Fish site, and comes out on Tilehouse Street, between Nos. 75-77 (See Plan 3). Both public rights of way are important as pedestrian routes in themselves, and in historical terms. The Council oppose any development which involves the stopping up or re-routing of these public rights of way, or impeding them in any other way.
- 5.12 One of the aims of this Brief is to promote movement from the Lairage/Waitrose to the Market Place/High Street, and make movement through the northern area more pleasant and attractive. As such the Council would like to see a clearly defined, well signed route through the northern part of the site, which begins at the present Pelican crossing on Paynes Park, and ends at the entrance to The Arcade on Market Place. The Council wish to promote pedestrian movement through The Arcade, thus increasing footfall and potential business for these units.
- 5.13 At present there is little within Paynes Park which attracts people and makes them want to walk through, it simply happens to be en route between Market Place and the Lairage/Waitrose and the library/museum. The Council wish to promote ground floor uses which make the area more attractive to people, and so increase footfall. The route through the area should be direct, attractive and of a high quality in terms of design and materials.
- 5.14 Within the southern part of the site, the Council will wish to see a pedestrian linkage retained from the site through to the Market Place

- 5.15 Any additional routes through the area which are proposed as part of a development scheme, or upgraded existing routes, should be accessible to people who are mobility impaired and should be clearly sign-posted. The development of the northern part of the site should not result in the area being closed off at the end of the day. It must remain an open, safe and secure route, twenty four hours a day.
- 5.16 The Council, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council, will consider how the Paynes Park area can become more safe and convenient for cyclists.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

- 6.1 Paynes Park is identified in the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy as an area which would benefit from environmental improvements. This is particularly the case along the Paynes Park frontage.
- 6.2 In line with Policy 6 of the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy, the Council will promote opportunities for environmental enhancement of the Paynes Park area, which promotes a high quality, attractive and well used environment. Such improvement could come about as part of particular developments, or as individual environmental improvement projects.
- 6.3 The Hitchin Town Centre Strategy has identified the roundabout at Park Way, Upper Tilehouse Street, Old Park Road and Paynes Park Rd as an important Gateway. The Council will seek contributions from developers to enhance this gateway.
- 6.4 The entrance to the Lairage multi-storey car park involves a covered walkway and seating area. There may be some scope to improve this entrance, whilst maintaining the existing features.
- 6.5 The kind of environmental improvements which will be appropriate will vary depending on the part of the site in question, and the type of development coming forward. However, the Council will promote the following types of improvement where appropriate: new surfacing, hard and soft landscaping, tree planting, improved signage, quality street furniture, and public art.

7. LAND OWNERSHIP, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- 7.1 The area consists of a number of land ownerships. These are mostly private land ownerships, although the District Council does own some of the area (the car park dedicated to disabled parking and the public toilet at the end of The Arcade).
- 7.2 The District Council only owns a very small part of the land in the Paynes Park area. Development in this area will be carried out by the private sector. The Council will actively encourage and work together with land owners, developers and other interested parties to try and stimulate development at Paynes Park. All development in the area should be appropriate to the surroundings and make a positive contribution to the area.
- 7.3 Development is already underway on the southern part of the site. Should no development have taken place on the northern part of the site, within five years of adopting the Brief, the Council will review the Brief to see if any amendments should be made in light of changing circumstances, and the review of the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy.

APPENDIX A – PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1. Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs)

1.1 There are a number of PPGs which are relevant to development at Paynes Park:

- PPG6 Town Centre and Retail Development (1996) encourages local authorities to provide a positive framework for promoting investment in town centres through a variety of means, including preparation of town centre strategies, facilitating site assembly, allocating sites for development, encouraging mixed-use developments and new housing development, promotion of town centre management and making more efficient use of town centre car parking.
- PPG3 Housing (2000) also adds impetus to residential development within town centres through the emphasis on brownfield sites being preferred development locations, as well as encouraging the reuse and conversion of floor space in vacant commercial properties and on upper floors above shops for residential purposes.
- PPG13 Transport (2001) encourages local authorities to actively manage the pattern of urban growth to make full use of public transport by focusing major travel generating development in town centres and near to public transport interchanges, and to plan for increased intensity of development at locations that are highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.
- PPG15 (1994) Planning and the Historic Environment contains a statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment. It explains the role played by the planning system in their protection. The guidance urges local authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to the stewardship of the historic environment.

1.2 Earlier this year, the government published a draft revision to PPG6 entitled Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) Planning for Town Centres. The Government wishes to promote vital and viable town centres, by promoting appropriate development in centres to strengthen and regenerate them, where appropriate. Local Planning authorities should:

- actively manage change by planning for the growth or, where appropriate, the decline of centres;
- define a network of centres with a more even distribution of functions, and a hierarchy of centres each performing their appropriate role to meet the needs of their catchments;
- adopt a proactive, plan-led approach to planning town centres, through regional, sub-regional and local planning;
- use tools such as town centre strategies, to address the transport, land assembly, crime prevention, planning and design issues associated with the growth and management of their centres; and
- consult with the community, including the public and private sectors, to ensure that their needs are reflected and that proposed allocations are realistic and viable.

2. *Regional Planning Guidance*

2.1 The advice in Government policy at the national level is complemented by Regional Planning Guidance for the Southeast (RPG9) and the adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1998. The regional guidance was published in April 2001 and sets out various key principles to govern the continuing development of the region, of which the following are pertinent to this Brief:

- Urban areas should become the main focus for development through making them more attractive, accessible and better able to attract investment;
- The pattern of development should be less dispersed and more sustainable patterns of activity, allowing home, work, leisure, green spaces, cultural facilities and community services to be in closer proximity;
- Access to jobs, services, leisure and cultural facilities should be less dependent on longer distance movement and there should be increased ability to meet normal travel needs through say walking, cycling and public transport with reduced reliance on the car.

2.2 Hertfordshire now forms part of the East of England Region and the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS 14) will provide relevant regional guidance when it is adopted. A draft is on deposit from December 2004.

3. *Hertfordshire Structure Plan*

3.1 The Hertfordshire Structure Plan reinforces the role of the planning system by seeking to provide a positive framework in encouraging appropriate investment in town centres, and identifies the role of local planning authorities in promoting town centre strategies. The Structure Plan identifies priorities by which the vitality and viability of town centres should be maintained and strengthened. It also states that local authorities should identify sites in town centres for key town centre uses and prepare development briefs for such sites. Once RSS14 is adopted, it will supersede the Structure Plan.

4. *Adopted Local Plan*

4.1 The current Adopted Local Plan for North Hertfordshire is the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations. This was adopted by the Council in 1996. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004 makes provision for the replacement of Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The preparation of an LDF will begin in the near future. However, the adopted Local Plan will remain the statutory development plan for three years from the date of commencement of the PCPA 2004, or until the LDF is adopted. As such, any proposals at Paynes Park must reflect the relevant policies in the Adopted Local Plan, whilst it remains valid.

5. *Relevant Structure and Local Plan Policies*

5.1 **Water Conservation:** Proposals for the development of the site should incorporate suitable measures to conserve water resources, (Structure Plan Policy 1).

5.2 **Energy Efficiency:** Proposals for the development of the site should

incorporate suitable measures to conserve energy resources, (Structure Plan Policy 1).

- 5.3 **Special Housing Needs**: A proportion of affordable housing developed within the site should comprise special needs housing, as supported by Structure Plan Policy 11.
- 5.4 **Waste and Recycling**: Proposals for the development of the site should incorporate suitable measures to minimise waste and facilitate recycling, (Structure Plan Policy 55).
- 5.5 **Light Pollution**: Any street lights that may be introduced as part of the development of the site should minimise glare and light spillage, (Structure Plan Policy 57).
- 5.6 **Pattern and Character of Development**: Policy 1 of the adopted Local Plan states that development should enhance the character of existing land uses and be of the highest standards of layout and design.
- 5.7 **Conservation Areas**: The Council will only permit proposals which maintain or enhance the character of the conservation area (Local Plan Policy 20).
- 5.8 **Affordable Housing for Local Needs**: 25% of dwellings within the site should comprise affordable housing to meet local needs, in accordance with the Council's most up to date Housing Needs Survey, Local Plan Policy 29A and Circular 6/98: Planning and Affordable Housing. Should the Council's policy change on this matter, then development will be required to comply with the new policy. The provision of affordable housing and its future occupation will be secured by a S106 Agreement. The Council operates a Housing Association Charter. The Housing Liaison Officer should be contacted for details.
- 5.9 **Designing out Crime**: A safe and accessible environment should be created through the development of the site, in accordance with Local Plan Policy 57 Guideline 2. The Council will expect the proposals for the site to take account of crime prevention and safety measures through the design, layout and landscaping as described in the Police document 'Secured by Design'. The developers are advised to consult early in the design stage, preferably before a planning application has been submitted. This should be with the Hertfordshire Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer at Police Headquarters, Welwyn Garden City, Herts.
- 5.10 **Transport and Land Use Planning Principles**: The design of development proposals for the site should facilitate movement on foot, by bicycle and by passenger transport, both within the development and to destinations outside of it. (Local Plan Policy 57 Guideline 3).
- 5.11 **Pedestrians**: Safe, convenient and direct pedestrian routes should be provided within the site in association with its development, in accordance with Local Plan Policy 57 Guideline 3.
- 5.12 **Dwelling Mix**: A range of dwelling sizes and types should be incorporated, in accordance with PPG3 and Local Plan Policy 57 Guideline 4.

- 5.13 Shopping Areas: The eastern part of the Brookers site, which includes the Carling Building, is identified in the adopted Local Plan as a Shopping Area. The policy states that the Council will permit proposals for A1 or A3 on the ground floor or for other uses if it can be shown that the proposal will not disrupt the shopping pattern and will attract people to the centre or it is above ground floor level and does not mean a loss of a dwelling.
- 5.14 Hitchin Town Centre Environmental Areas and Proposals: The majority of the 'Northern Area' of the Brief is identified in the adopted Local Plan as proposal area HTC2/1. The main priorities for area HTC2/1 are: to promote development to link Paynes Park to the High Street for the benefit of pedestrians and to improve the environment of Paynes Park, particularly the service yards at the rear of High Street premises.

APPENDIX B – RELEVANT COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

Hertfordshire County Structure Plan: 2001 – 2016 - Deposit Draft February 2003

Hertfordshire County Structure Plan: Adopted 1998

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations (1996)

Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan – 2001/02 to 2005/06 (2000)

Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan (HCC, 2004)

Hitchin Transportation Plan (1998)

Leisure and Cultural Strategy for North Hertfordshire 2001 – 2005 (2000)

Community Safety Strategy for North Hertfordshire 2002 – 2005 (2002)

Report for North Hertfordshire District Council in Relation to Hitchin Market -
Prepared by Michael Felton Associates in October 2001

NHDC Town Centre and Retail Study (June 2004) prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners

Conservation Area Character Statement for Hitchin (1998)

River Hiz Development Guidelines (1994)

North Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy (2000)

North Hertfordshire Towns Cycle Route Network (2000)

Hitchin Car Parking Study: Report by ARUP (Oct 2002)

Hitchin Car Parking Strategy: Report by ARUP (April 2003)

North Hertfordshire District Council Car Parking Strategy 2004-2009 (June 2004)

Hertfordshire County Council: Supplementary Planning Guidance on Parking Provision at New Development: (Adopted December 2000)

Community Strategy (November 2003)

Visioning Action Plan 2004 onwards

Hitchin Town Centre Strategy – Final Version (November 2004)

APPENDIX C – PLANNING OBLIGATIONS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- 1 Environmental Gains and Losses: Proposals for the development of the site should be accompanied by a concise statement of its positive and negative impacts on the environment.
- 2 General Pollution: Proposals for the development of the site should be accompanied by a ground investigation report to ascertain whether contamination is present, and the extent of remediation required.
- 3 Education: The development may be required to meet the costs of additional educational facilities needed to meet the demands arising from the development. Details will need to be agreed with the County Council as local education authority and a financial contribution will be secured through a S106 Agreement.
- 4 Community Facilities: Any developer of the site will be required to contribute towards community facilities within the area.
- 5 Cycling: Proposals for the development of the site should take account of the District Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance No.19 in respect of its proposed cycle route network for Hitchin. The Council will seek the provision of, or contributions towards safe and secure cycle parking and links to the town's cycle network.
- 6 Quality and Design of Development: Proposals for residential development should be in accordance PPG3 (March 2000) and By Design (DETR) and as detailed in Section 3. All development proposals should take account PPG1 (August 2001) which states that the aim of all those involved in the development process should be the promotion of good design.
- 7 Archaeology: A detailed archaeological assessment will be required in accordance with advice in PPG15. Developers should also take account of previous archaeological work done in the area, such as that by Gil Burleigh in 1988, copies of which can be provided by North Hertfordshire District Council.
- 8 Children's Play Space Provision in New Residential Developments: Any developer of the site will be expected to contribute towards children's' play space/open space within the area in lieu of provision on site.
- 9 Informal Open Space Provision in New Residential Developments: Any developer of the site will be expected to contribute towards informal open space within the area in lieu of provision on site.
- 10 Accessibility and commuted payments: It may be appropriate to seek payments from developers for alternative parking measures elsewhere in the town, and payment will be sought towards more sustainable modes of transport.

- 11 Traffic Feasibility Study: The Council will seek contributions towards commissioning consultants to undertake a feasibility study of the circulatory system around Paynes Park, Old Park Road, and Bedford Road.
- 12 Topography: A topographical survey will be required with any planning applications.
- 13 Parking Standards: Proposals for the development of the site should take account of guidance on car parking standards in accordance with PPG3 (March 2000) with overall provision related to residential, not exceeding 1.5 spaces per dwelling on average. In addition Hertfordshire County Council's 'Parking Provision at New Development' (December 2000) has also been adopted by HCC as Supplementary Planning Guidance. North Hertfordshire District Council has recently adopted a Car Parking Strategy, against which development will be assessed.
- 14 Conservation Area: Most of the site is within the Hitchin Conservation Area. Any development proposals will be expected to take account of the Conservation Area – Character Statement for Hitchin.
- 15 Housing Density: The density of any housing on the site should be in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – Housing (PPG3).
- 16 Disability Discrimination Act: Proposals for new development should meet the relevant requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part III, with particular reference to access to premises.

GLOSSARY

Burgage plots - Long narrow mediaeval property boundaries with narrow frontages comprising the trading part of the burgess - (merchants or traders allowed to make profits) - facing onto the street.

Environmental improvements/enhancements – Physical improvements to an area which could include, amongst other things: new surfacing, hard and soft landscaping, tree planting, improved signage, quality street furniture, public art.

Footfall – The number of people counted walking past a particular point within a shopping area, and taken to assess the level of potential customers for shops in the area.

Gross floorspace/floor area – Total external floorspace of a building, measured to the outside of all the walls.

Comparison goods – Non-food goods such as clothes and electrical equipment, for which the consumer generally expects to invest time and effort into visiting a range of shops before making a choice.

Grain - The pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in a settlement; and the degree to which an area's pattern of street-blocks and street junctions is respectively small and frequent, or large and infrequent.

Independent retailers – Retailers who are not national or regional ‘chain stores’.

Planning obligations – A flexible method available to the local planning authority and landowners or developers to solve any problems a development proposal might have which is not otherwise capable of being dealt with by planning conditions. It binds the parties entering into it and the specified land, and is enforceable by the local planning authority.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) – A series of notes that set out the Government’s policy guidance on planning issues, such as housing, shopping, the countryside etc.

‘Secured by Design’ – A police initiative to encourage the building industry to adopt crime prevention measures in development design to assist in reducing the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime, creating a safer and more secure environment.

Streetscape - The appearance and relationship of a group of buildings and street furniture which stand in the same street.

Quantitative and qualitative need – Demand for future retail development based on forecasts population and expenditure (quantitative). The range and distribution of shopping facilities in an area (quantitative).