

4. Objectives, Strategy and Performance Indicators

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4.1 The Council is looking to produce, in accordance with its targets, a practical and realistic land use and development plan for the District which takes appropriate account of the District's current planning context, the Council's Environmental Charter and Strategies and which, as far as possible, meets the needs and aspirations of local residents and businesses.

Objectives

4.2 This chapter sets out what the Plan is trying to achieve and how it will do it. It does so by specifying, first of all, the Plan's strategic objectives. There are broad statements of intent derived primarily from the Council's Corporate Plan. They represent what the Council considers to be the principles of importance when considering how the District should change in the future:-

- (1) To safeguard and, where possible, enhance the health, safety, welfare and living standards of all persons residing in, working in, or visiting the District.
- (2) To maintain and, where possible, enhance the quality and nature of the environment in both urban and rural areas.
- (3) To conserve and, where possible, enhance those features of heritage or nature conservation significance which are worthy of retention.
- (4) To ensure that the Plan has due regard to global environmental issues.
- (5) To ensure that the District's economic development meets the needs of local residents and workers, whilst respecting the essential character of the area.
- (6) To meet the District's housing and community service needs, so far as possible.
- (7) To provide activities, facilities and opportunities to enable the public to derive the maximum enjoyment and benefit from their leisure time.
- (8) To ensure that the transport infrastructure provides a convenient, safe and clean means of travel for all users, respecting the essential character of the area.
- (9) To take account of Government planning guidance, regional planning advice and the Essex Structure Plan, but striking an acceptable balance between local character and development needs and recognising the

opportunities presented by change and enabling development.

4.3 From these a set of more detailed aims has been drawn-up. These are intended to:-

- provide a tangible framework within which to formulate the Plan policies or strategies; and
- represent the targets against which the success of policies can be assessed via performance indicators.

4.4 They are set out on pages 24 and 25. It will be apparent that the aims usually stem from several objectives. They are categorised according to whether they are social, economic or environmental. The environmental aims are further subdivided according to whether they relate to aspects of amenity or conservation.

4.5 Some of the aims are conflicting. Where this occurs, the policies either resolve this conflict by compromise or reflect the relative importance of the particular aims.

4.6 The objectives and aims also enable an overall strategy for the Plan to be identified. This gives a broad indication of the general approach to development within the District, where it might be permitted, and what the Plan may expect to achieve in practice. Sustainable development should result from the achievement of the Plan's stated aims and objectives.

The Strategy

4.7 Strategic development 'needs' identified in the Structure Plan are relatively modest and result primarily from the limited availability of land rather than the true 'demand', which is high. This limit on the amount of development stems from the area being one of restraint, in view of its situation in the Green Belt. The strategy to emerge is therefore one of protecting and enhancing those features which are of merit in the District, which include its character and appearance.

4.8 The built development that does take place will therefore be concentrated in the urban areas rather than the countryside. This is in order to achieve the key environmental aims of protecting the Green Belt from inappropriate development which could threaten its character and undermine its functions. However, this does not preclude appropriate developments which would enhance both the appearance and role of the Green Belt.

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Aims

		Relevant Objective(s)
SOCIAL		
(i)	To promote and secure the optimum type and distribution of educational, health and social facilities to meet the needs of the District's residents both now and in the future.	1, 7, 8
(ii)	To facilitate modern-day living requirements.	1, 7, 8
(iii)	To accommodate, where possible, the special needs of the disadvantaged	1, 6, 7, 8
(iv)	To meet the needs of disabled people who live, or work, in the District or who visit it.	1, 6, 8
(v)	To meet the shopping needs of residents, workers and other visitors.	1, 8
(vi)	To ensure, as much as possible, that new housing meets the needs of residents.	1, 6
(vii)	To retain the existing housing stock.	6
(viii)	To identify and meet the leisure needs of residents, particularly in the south of the District.	7
(ix)	To increase the scope of appropriate recreational activities in the countryside.	2, 7
(x)	To secure an appropriate standard of public transport provision.	1, 4, 8
(xi)	To secure the reuse of the former Epping-Chipping Ongar branch line.	1, 4, 8
ECONOMIC		
(xii)	To facilitate the establishment of employment opportunities which match the needs of residents seeking work locally.	1, 5
(xiii)	To provide sufficient land for employment-generating uses.	5, 9
(xiv)	To provide a range of sites for employment-generating uses in terms of size and location.	5, 9
(xv)	To provide sufficient land for new housing.	6, 9
(xvi)	To ensure a continuing supply of land for new housing.	9
(xvii)	To maintain the retail function of the existing town centres.	1, 2, 8
(xviii)	To ensure that new development has adequate infrastructure.	1
(xix)	To attract visitors to appropriate recreational/tourist facilities in the District.	2, 7, 8

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ENVIRONMENTAL (AMENITY)

(xx)	To ensure that any new development does not have an unacceptable impact both in environmental terms and in the provision of local facilities.	1, 2, 3, 4, 8
(xxi)	To protect and, where possible, enhance the environmental qualities of existing residential areas.	1, 2, 4
(xxii)	To secure a high standard of design in all new development.	1, 2, 4
(xxiii)	To protect and, where possible, enhance the character and environmental qualities of the countryside.	2, 3, 4, 7
(xxiv)	To secure the optimum use of available road space.	1, 2, 4, 8
(xxv)	To reduce traffic congestion, where possible.	1, 2, 4, 8
(xxvi)	To secure the provision of adequate, appropriately-located car parking facilities.	2, 8
(xxvii)	To minimise on-street parking in residential areas.	1, 2
(xxviii)	To reduce the impact of, but make adequate provision for, heavy goods vehicles with business in the District.	2, 4, 5, 8
(xxix)	To undertake appropriate action against breaches of planning control.	1, 2

ENVIRONMENTAL (Conservation)

(xxx)	To protect the Green Belt from development which is unnecessary or undesirable.	2, 9
(xxxii)	To safeguard and, where possible, enhance the District's historical and archaeological heritage.	2, 3, 4
(xxxiii)	To safeguard and, where possible, enhance the landscape.	3, 4
(xxxiv)	To safeguard and, where possible, enhance the District's tree cover, flora and wildlife.	2, 3, 4
(xxxv)	To make the most efficient use of land and buildings wherever practicable.	1, 4
(xxxvi)	To promote the efficient use of natural resources.	4
(xxxvii)	To minimise all forms of pollution, where possible.	1, 4
(xxxviii)	To integrate public and private transport facilities to secure optimum use of both.	1, 4, 8
(xxxix)	To enable the continued implementation of the Council's Environmental Charter.	2, 3, 4, 8
(xxxix)	To enable the implementation of the Council's Recycling Plan.	8

4.9 The continued protection of the Green Belt does not mean, however, that all urban sites will automatically be considered suitable for development. The need to maintain and enhance the character of these sites (particularly sensitive ones such as residential and Conservation Areas) is equally important. It is a key environmental objective with tangible implications for urban sites and may well result in existing open spaces being retained as such, and their appearance and function improved accordingly.

4.10 Overall, the strategy is therefore one of restraining development but recognising local needs and ensuring that the development that does take place (be it new build, landscaping, change of use or extension) results, either directly or indirectly, in a better environment.

4.11 Implementation of the Plan will be by both public and, more particularly, private sector schemes, in combination with appropriate controls over development. It is acknowledged, however, that schemes may be slow in reaching fruition due to continuing tight financial constraints. This applies to both private and public sector schemes. Whilst the Government may be able to fund major capital schemes (e.g. motorway improvements), local authority schemes are currently subject to severe spending constraints (be they new roads, car parking provision, or paving schemes) which may well result in their being deferred. Should this situation change then the Council will take the opportunity to undertake appropriate schemes which will improve the local environment as soon as practicable.

Performance Indicators

4.12 The performance indicators against which the Plan will be assessed are as follows:-

- the extent to which its objectives and aims are being met;
- the impact of the policies on identified environmental criteria;
- whether the policies are being properly applied in determining planning applications;
- whether planning applications are determined in a reasonable manner in the opinion of Councillors and the general public;
- whether planning decisions are being upheld at appeal;
- whether planning decisions are being "called-in" by the Secretary of State; and

- the extent to which the Plan remains up-to-date and therefore relevant in the determination of planning applications during the Plan period.

4.13 This assessment will take place on a regular (probably annual) basis. It will be undertaken through monitoring not just of the Plan policies but also of the guidance and policies with which it must comply, new planning issues and the appropriateness of the objectives and aims of the Plan (see also Chapter 19 'Monitoring and Review').

4.14 This monitoring will, in turn, lead to a further assessment of whether there is a need for:-

- existing policies to be amended or deleted;
- further policies to address new issues;
- modification of the objectives and/or aims of the Plan.