

Chapter One

Introduction

The Purpose of the Plan

- 1.1 The Epping Forest District Local Plan sets out the strategy for meeting the District's needs from 2011 up to 2033. It is based on up to date evidence and the results of the previous consultations undertaken in 2010/11, 2012, and 2016. This Submission Plan is now published for representations on soundness prior to the submission of both the plan and those representations to the Secretary of State for examination by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.2 The Local Plan sets out the approach and detailed policies for the whole District for the period up to 2033. It sets out:
- the Council's vision and objectives for the District's development over the plan period;
 - policies to ensure that development delivers high quality and sustainable homes, built to a high quality of design and maintains our high quality built and natural environment;
 - the future distribution for housing growth and requirements for affordable housing;
 - policies to build a strong, competitive economy and set out the future distribution for new employment land space and thus new jobs;
 - policies to maintain and enhance the vibrancy and vitality of our town centres
 - policies to support a sustainable transport and road infrastructure network; and
 - proposals for delivery including an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to demonstrate the infrastructure requirements necessary to support the site allocations.
- 1.3 The Local Plan will shape how the District develops until 2033 attracting and guiding investment in the District from the private sector, the Council itself, and other public bodies. Such investment will include new homes, new offices and employment opportunities, colleges and schools, shops and leisure centres, GPs and clinics, as well as improvements to existing physical and green infrastructure. It will guide decision making on

planning applications to build or change the use of buildings and land. It will also provide the strategic policies that form the context for any Neighbourhood Plans produced in the District.

- 1.4 This Local Plan includes the policies that the Council considers to be in line with the most suitable way to develop the District in the future. Once adopted, the new Epping Forest District Local Plan will replace all of the surviving policies of the Local Plan 1998 and the 2006 Local Plan Alterations (see Appendix 2). Minerals and Waste Policy remains the responsibility of Essex County Council. The current Essex Minerals Local Plan was adopted in July 2014 and the Joint Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan was adopted in 2017. More information on which can be found on the Essex County Council website.

The Requirements of Plan Making

- 1.5 The Epping Forest District Local Plan has been prepared under the legislative provision of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and appropriate regulations including the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Local Plan has taken into account national planning policy, currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG, 2012), Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (DCLG, 2015) and the web based published Planning Practice Guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is the core aspect of national planning policy.
- 1.6 The Council's policies must be backed up by credible, robust and proportionate evidence that supports the approach taken and justifies what is being proposed. It is the Council's job to balance all of the evidence and find the most suitable way forward. The evidence base includes research on housing, employment, retail, health and wellbeing, the built and natural environment, accessibility and flooding as well as the views of local people, businesses, landowners and public agencies involved in the District.

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- 1.7 The Council must identify needs for development in an objective manner and seek to provide for the development need it identifies. As well as meeting the identified need the proposals in the Plan have to be economically viable for delivery by the market and be achievable.
- 1.8 In accordance with the 'Duty to Co-operate' set out in the Localism Act 2011 the Local Plan has been produced through close partnership working with the neighbouring authorities to ensure that sub-regional and cross boundary planning issues have been taken into account.
- 1.9 To ensure that the policies of the Local Plan are in line with the objective of sustainable development, a Sustainability Appraisal of the plan has been undertaken throughout preparation. The appraisal assesses the impact of planning policies in terms of their social, economic and environmental impacts. The Sustainability Appraisal addresses the requirements of the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (OJEC, 2001) and compliance with the Habitats Directive (OJEC, 1992). An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken alongside the Sustainability Appraisal. The Equality Impact Assessment has considered how the plan impacts upon matters relating to gender, age, ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, sexuality and low disposable income.

The Plan Making Process

- 1.10 The Council has consulted throughout the preparation of the Plan, and in particular through three formal consultations: Community Visioning in 2010/2011, Community Choices in 2012; and Epping Forest District Draft Local Plan Consultation 2016. There has been on-going consultation with Parish and Town Council's through a range of workshops and briefings. The results of the public consultations can be found on the Council's website at the following location: <http://www.efdclocalplan.org/>.
- 1.11 All of the comments received have been considered during the production of this Local Plan. Prior to submission of the Local Plan for

examination a full consultation statement will be prepared.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.12 Neighbourhood Plans were introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders. When made, following an examination and successful referendum, neighbourhood plans will become part of the development plan for the area. Locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plan policies must reflect the strategic policies of the Epping Forest District Local Plan.
- 1.13 There are Neighbourhood Plans in various stages of production across the District. The position on progress will change across the life of the Local Plan - details of the up to date position can be found on the Epping Forest District Council website.

The Plan Area

- 1.14 Epping Forest District is in the south-west of Essex abutting both Greater London and Hertfordshire. The south-west of the District is served by the London Underground Central Line (both the main line and the 'Hainault via Newbury Park' loop). Epping Station is the most eastern terminus and there are 7 other stations in service in the District¹. There is one national railway station in the District at Roydon on the Liverpool Street to Stansted and Cambridge line, although other railway stations (Broxbourne, Sawbridgeworth, Harlow Town and Harlow Mill) are close to, and accessible from, the District. The Central Line previously ran further than Epping, through stations at North Weald and Blake Hall to the end of the line at Ongar. Blake Hall station closed in 1981 with the line closing in 1994. In recent years the 'Epping Ongar Railway' has been established as a heritage line along the former Central Line track. There is

¹ These are Theydon Bois, Debden, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill, together with the stations on the branch line at Roding Valley, Chigwell and Grange Hill.

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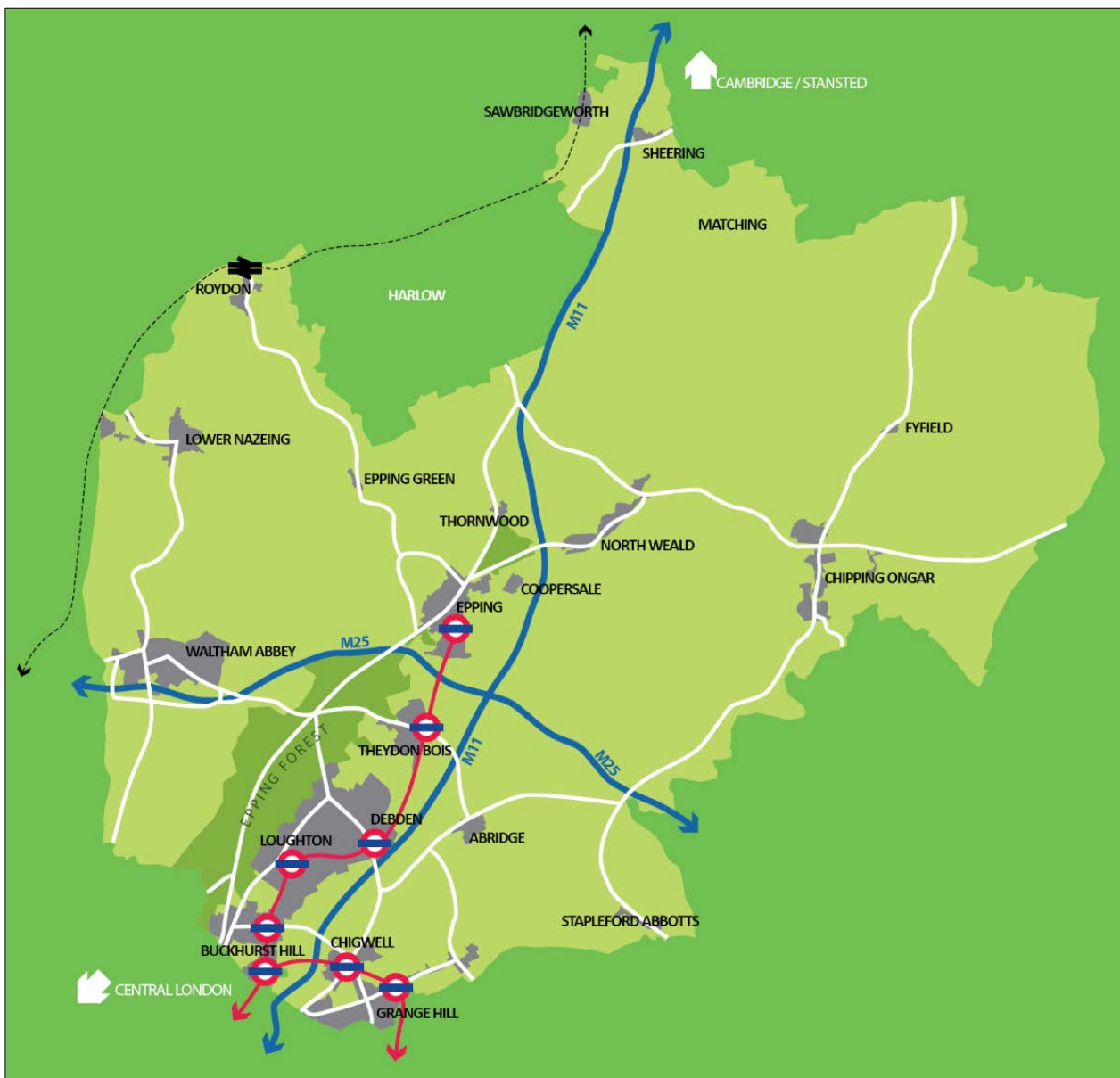
currently no operational rail connection between the heritage rail line and the Central Line track at Epping, but the 'Epping Ongar Railway' runs some shuttle bus services locally.

- 1.15 The M25 runs east-west through the District, with a local road interchange at Waltham Abbey. The M11 runs north-south, with a full interchange (Junction 7) at Hastingwood just south of Harlow, and a northward -off/southward on interchange (Junction 5) at

Loughton. There is also a motorway only interchange with the M25 south-east of Epping (Junction 6). The A414 is a key east-west route and this crosses the District from Harlow to Ongar on the way to Chelmsford and the Essex coast.

- 1.16 The District has 20 parish council's and 4 town councils and covers an area of approximately 130 square miles.

Figure 1.1 Epping Forest District

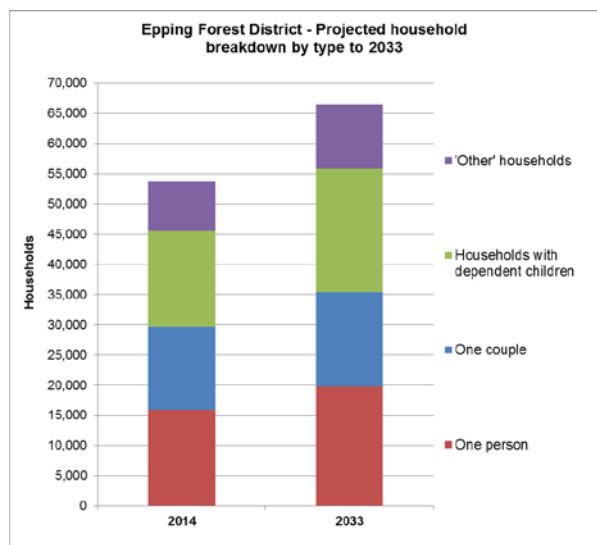


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Population Profile

- 1.17 The 2011 Census recorded a population of about 124,660 people making up 52,083 households.² In the 2016 projections these figures rise to 130,300 and 54,867 respectively.³ The population is therefore estimated to have increased by just over 5,000 since 2011.
- 1.18 Compared to the rest of England, the District had higher levels of people aged 45-64 and 65 and over in 2011 with the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the District projected to grow substantially by 2033. Alongside this increase, the number of 30-64 year olds is projected to drop, with the number of 15-29 year olds projected to drop slightly and the proportion of people aged 0 to 14 to rise a little.
- 1.19 The number of households is projected to rise to 66,460 by 2033. The numbers of households consisting of one person or a family with dependent children are expected to increase with fewer households consisting of one couple, as shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Projected household breakdown by type to 2033



- 1.20 Life expectancy both at birth and at age 65 in Epping Forest District in 2010-12 was higher than the national and Essex averages, and similar to the of the East of England region. The

² A household is defined as a single person who lives alone or a group of people who live together.

³ ONS population estimates and DCLG household projections

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District's life expectancy at birth has risen since 2000 from 76 to 79 for males and from 81 to 83 for females. Births and deaths have remained relatively steady since 2007. There have been more births than deaths, contributing to a rise in population.

- 1.21 The District's population is affected by three main types of population change:
- natural change (the net gain of births minus deaths, of District residents);
 - internal migration (the net gain of people moving to the District from elsewhere in the UK, or vice versa); and
 - international migration (the net gain of people moving to the District from outside the UK, or vice versa).
- 1.22 Internal migration is projected to be the largest contributor of population growth as a result of the District's proximity and connections to London. Natural change has had a smaller but positive impact on population growth. Whilst future migration trends may be affected by the UK leaving the EU; it is currently unclear what the likely implications might be for international migration. However current projections show this element only makes up a small proportion of population change. The ONS 2014-based population data does project that the net international migration is projected to decrease in the period from 2014-2015 to 2020-2021 by roughly 44%, so there is only a need to look at a decrease in housing provision if it exceeds this prediction.

Key Characteristics

- 1.23 The District is largely rural and over 92% of the land is currently designated as being in the Metropolitan Green Belt. Agriculture is mainly arable, particularly in the north east of the District. There is a significant amount of horse keeping in parts of the south and glasshouse horticulture is a prominent land use in parts of the Lea Valley especially in Roydon and Nazeing. The District has two town centres and four district centres – Loughton/Loughton Broadway and Buckhurst Hill in the south, Waltham Abbey to the west, Epping in the centre of the District, and Ongar towards the east. Epping, Ongar and

Waltham Abbey are market towns of medieval origin. Villages and smaller settlements are dispersed throughout the rest of the District. Several of these villages are also designated as conservation areas. There is a significant concentration of population in the south of the District.

1.24 The countryside of the District is gently undulating, dissected by two river valleys (the Lea and the Roding) and their tributaries. The District has an abundance of areas of importance for conservation and leisure for both the local and London's population. Epping Forest, which is owned and managed by the City of London Corporation is a key natural feature of the District. The main part of the Forest runs from Wanstead (in London) along the north-west boundary of Buckhurst Hill, Loughton and Theydon Bois and extends to the southern end of Epping. A separate area (The Lower Forest) abuts Epping on its north-eastern edge.

1.25 The whole of Epping Forest south of Epping is a 'Special Area of Conservation', designated in 2005, and has special protection under the European Habitats Directive (designed to protect a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats). The Lower Forest is also one of 8 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest' in the District which also affords a significant degree of protection. Nearby, the Turnford and Cheshunt pits in the Lee Valley are a 'Special Protection Area' which falls partly within the District. Special Protection Areas are internationally important for birdlife, and in this instance for wetland birds. There is also a designated Lee Valley 'Ramsar' site (a wetland of international importance), covering the part of the Turnford and Cheshunt pits within Epping Forest District.

1.26 Nine local nature reserves have been designated and the Essex Wildlife Trust has identified over 220 local wildlife sites. In addition to Epping Forest there are several other ancient woodlands in the District, including remnants of Hainault Forest, together with a significant number of ancient and veteran trees⁴, including hedgerow pollards.

1.27 Most of the western edge of the District (excluding the built-up areas of Waltham Abbey and Nazeing) is included in the Lee Valley Regional Park (LVRP). This is managed by the LVRP Authority as a place for leisure, recreation, sport and nature conservation.

1.28 Built and natural heritage features are an important part of the character of the District. 25 conservation areas have been designated and there are over 1,300 statutorily listed buildings. There are currently a further 300 "locally listed" buildings. In addition, there are over 30 scheduled monuments ranging from the earthworks of a Norman castle, to a Second World War fortification. There are also several registered parks and gardens.

1.29 Construction from the mid to the late 19th century of what is now part of the London Underground Central Line, and the proximity to London, have greatly influenced the scale and location of development in the District. Significant growth of Buckhurst Hill and Loughton/Loughton Broadway and, to a lesser extent, Chigwell, Epping and Theydon Bois, followed the development of the railway. The post-World War II London overspill estates led to considerable expansion of Waltham Abbey and Loughton Broadway (also known as Debden).

1.30 The District's two town centres: Epping and Loughton High Road and four small district centres: Loughton Broadway, Ongar, Buckhurst Hill and Waltham Abbey are the main retail/service centres. These centres are all fairly small compared with much larger centres nearby - notably Brookfield Shopping Park (in Broxbourne Borough), Chelmsford, Harlow Town, Romford and Westfield Stratford City; this causes significant and growing competition. In common with all other main retail/service centres, the growth of internet shopping is also an increasing threat to the viability and vitality of the District's retail/service centres.

⁴ "An ancient tree is in its third or final stage of life...A veteran tree is usually in its second or mature stage of its

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life". (The Woodland Trust, <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/ancient-treehunt/what-are-ancient-trees/>).

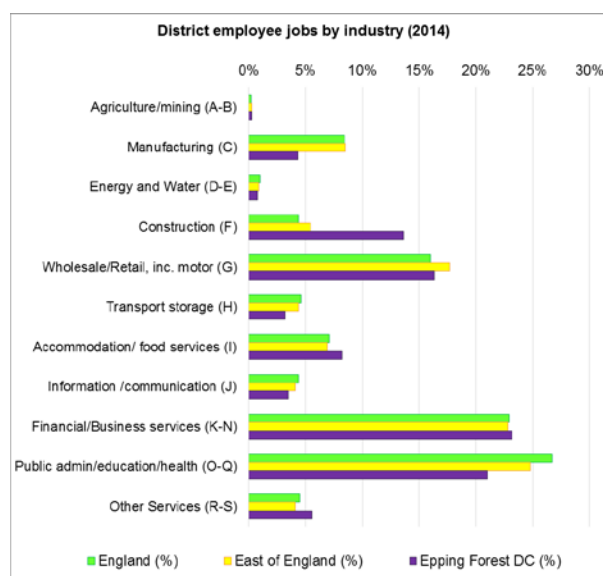
Economic Profile

- 1.31 Economic activity rates in the District are high for both men and women, with 78.5% of 16-64 year olds in employment which is similar to the average for England (78%) and slightly lower than the East of England average (80.2%)⁵. Within this, male employment (81%) is higher than female employment (76.1%). At 17%, self-employment makes up a significant proportion of overall employment and is higher than the East of England and England averages.
- 1.32 There is a large proportion of ‘micro’⁶ and ‘small’⁷ businesses in the District in comparison to the averages for Essex, East of England and whole of England, which shows their importance to the District economy. There is also a high level of business start-ups in the District and this number rose by 11.7% from 2009 to 2014, which is higher than the Essex (7.6%), East of England (6.45%) and England (9.57%) increase over the same time period. In comparison to the East of England, there are more ‘higher’ classification jobs such as managers and professional occupations in the District.
- 1.33 The horticultural glasshouse industry has a long-standing and visible presence in Epping Forest District, as the larger part of a concentration of activity in the Lea Valley that produce significant crops for the London and UK markets.
- 1.34 In 2015, the proportion of the District’s residents with no qualifications was lower than the average for the East of England and for England as a whole; the level of District residents with NVQ4 and above was higher than the regional and national averages; however qualifications from NVQ1 and above to NVQ3 and above were lower than the averages.
- 1.35 In addition to the main retail/service centres, the main employment sites within the District are in Loughton Broadway, Epping, Nazeing, North Weald Bassett (including the Airfield) and

Waltham Abbey, where the larger industrial estates are located. Around half of the District’s working residents commute out of the District for work, with the largest proportion travelling to London. There is evidence of proportionally high levels of working from home in the District⁸.

- 1.36 The majority of people who commute into the District come from Harlow and the London Borough of Redbridge, and the greatest number of District residents commuting out go to Westminster. In 2014 there were 44,100 employee jobs based in the District, of which approximately 64.8% were full-time and 35.2% part-time. The construction, accommodation and food services and financial and business services are the most common in the district, as shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 District employee jobs by industry



- 1.37 Large employers in the District include: Kier and Higgins (with headquarters in Loughton Broadway); Sainsbury’s (with a distribution centre in Waltham Abbey and stores in Loughton, Loughton Broadway and Ongar), Tesco in Waltham Abbey, Epping Forest District Council, Sports and Leisure Management (Places for People, which manages the Epping Forest District Council’s leisure centres), Essex County

⁵ NOMIS, Labour Market Profile for Epping Forest District, downloaded November 2017, data relating to the period of July 2016-July 2017

⁶ 0 to 9 employees – one person who is self-employed and has no employees counts as zero

⁷ 11- 49 employees

⁸ 4.05% of employed residents, 2011 Census

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Council, the National Health Service, the Bank of England Printing Works, Epping Forest College and the working glasshouses which form the Epping Forest District part of the Lea Valley glasshouse industry.

1.38 District residents most commonly travel to work using a car or van (or taxi), following the pattern for Essex, the East of England and England as a whole. However, there is far higher use of ‘Underground, metro, light rail or tram’ public transport for commuting from the District than any of those other three areas, due to the proximity of London and the presence of many London Underground Central Line stations in the District.

1.39 Using the Government’s Indices of Deprivation (2015), the majority of the District experiences less ‘deprivation’ than the rest of the country. However, there are pockets of deprivation within the District when looking at factors including access to housing and services, and adult skills. Similarly, when considering health measures overall the indicators are good however there is variation at a more localised level. For instance life expectancy is higher than the national average when considering the district level; however it varies significantly in different areas within the District – the difference can be up to 5.3 years lower (males) and 4.6 years lower (females) in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas in the district.

1.40 Figure 1.4 gives an overview of the 78 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the District and how they fall into the national categories of deprivation. None of the areas within the District ranked within the 10% most deprived nationally (also known as the 1st decile). Parts of Loughton Alderton and Waltham Abbey Paternoster wards were ranked within the 20% most deprived (2nd decile), with parts of Grange Hill, Waltham Abbey North East and Waltham Abbey High Beach wards in the 30% most deprived (3rd decile). The District’s pockets of deprivation are found both in urban and rural areas. The rural areas often (but not exclusively) score worse on the Index of Multi Deprivation solely due to sub rankings relating to the

distance to specific local services and access to affordable housing.

Figure 1.4 Rankings of areas within the district by Indices of Deprivation

Category of deprivation	Number of the District’s Lower Super Output Areas in this category
1st decile (10% most deprived nationally)	0
2nd decile	2
3rd decile	3
4th decile	15
5th decile	10
6th decile	8
7th decile	9
8th decile	12
9th decile	14
10th decile (10% least deprived nationally)	5
Total	78

1.41 Housing affordability in the District has been a significant problem in more recent times. This is the same for similar areas situated on the border of Greater London, which are attractive to city commuters.

1.42 The Council’s own housing waiting list stood at 1,360 households in August 2016. It has in previous years been significantly higher, but it dropped in 2013 when a revised Housing Allocations Scheme was applied, requiring applicants to have lived within the Epping Forest District for at least 3 years (or 2.5 for current residents).

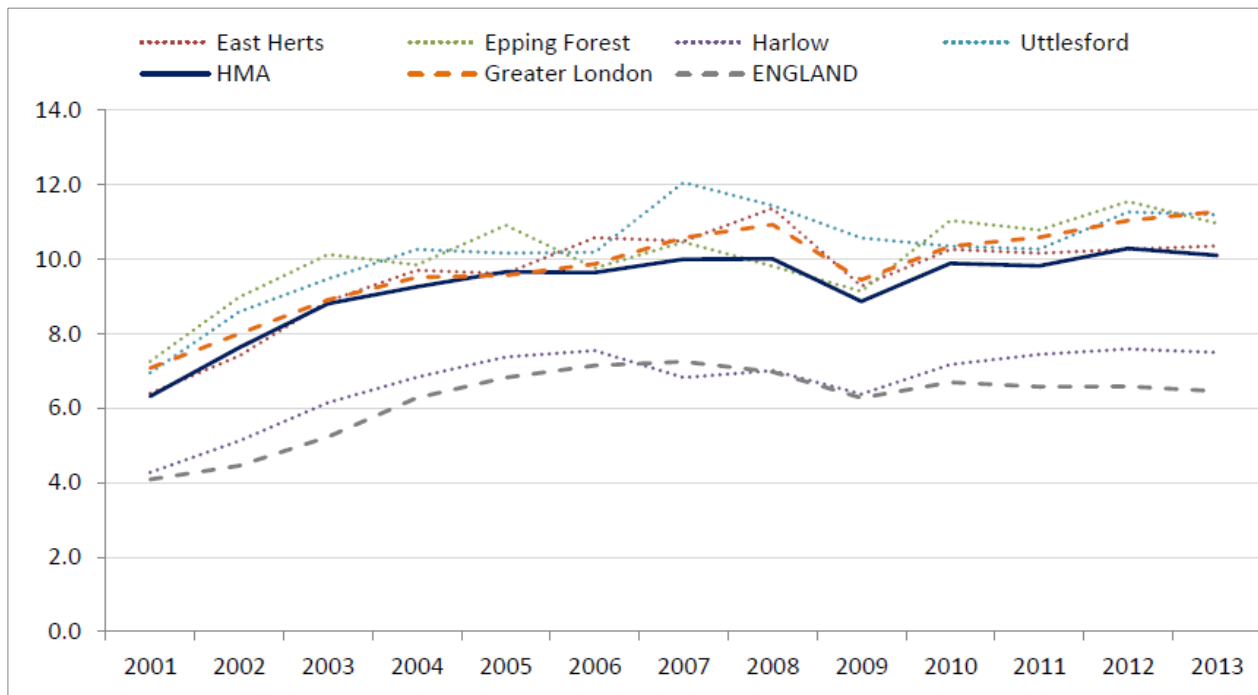
1.43 Figure 1.5 shows the projected need for affordable housing (measured in households) in the District (and in East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford Districts) from 2011-2033. These numbers take into account current unmet need for affordable housing and starter homes, projected future need arising from new households which will form in the future, and

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also the number of existing households which are likely to fall into need in future. Further breakdowns of need by, for example size of

dwelling, are shown in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015).

Figure 1.5 Overall affordable housing need (in households) 2011-2033



This Figure measures affordability through the ratio of the lowest (25th) percentile of house prices in the area to the lowest (25th) percentile of earnings in the area (shown on the Y axis). The 25th percentile is the value quarter of the way through the range when ordered from the lowest to the highest. The year is shown on the X axis.

Key Issues for the Plan to Address

1.44 There are several important issues that the Plan must address. More detail about them is found in Chapters 2-6. They include:

- ensuring that sustainable development is achieved, and that climate change is considered in the policies and proposals of the Plan;
- how to manage and accommodate the needs of the current and future population and the future economic needs of the District, which is indicated by the evidence to be approximately 11,400 new homes and the creation of 10,000 new jobs over the

Plan period (2011-2033). This will need to be supported by necessary infrastructure;

- there is very little land remaining in the District within the settlements that is not already developed - in order to plan properly for the future, a District-wide review of the Green Belt has been undertaken to identify the potential for future development;
- the continued protection of the remaining Green Belt, and in particular preventing the merging of settlements and checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- a recognised need for significant regeneration of Harlow, which will be supported by the development of the

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- Harlow Enterprise Zone, together with significant growth in new homes;
- the need to ensure a housing stock that matches the needs of the population, including catering for an ageing population and more single person households, providing affordable housing and starter homes for those who cannot afford market prices and providing for the Traveller communities;
- providing the right type of sites for jobs in the right locations;
- establishing which existing employment sites, if any, should be released for other purposes;
- encouraging new uses and activities to ensure the survival, vitality and viability of the District's six town and small district centres, in response to growing competition;
- protecting local services in the District's rural areas and facilities in villages;
- providing for future rural retail and commercial development, rural employment and supporting agriculture and horticulture whilst ensuring that unused horticultural and other agricultural buildings are reused;
- addressing the transport needs of current and future populations for both rural and urban populations along with many other infrastructure needs such as health, education, community spaces and places, faith, culture, sport and leisure opportunities;
- the management of congestion, HGVs on local roads and provision of opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport, in addition to the management of commuter parking around London Underground stations;
- protecting and improving the impressive range and quality of places for enjoyment of the outdoors, sport and nature conservation in the District; and

- protecting and enhancing historical artefacts and buildings, protected trees, hedgerows and landscape.

1.45 The Council has produced this Plan in close cooperation with partner organisations such as Essex County Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England, SHMA partners and adjoining authorities. The successful implementation of the Plan depends upon a range of agencies and organisation as well as the private sector and developers. The Epping Forest District Local Plan will provide the future framework for the District up until 2033.

Finding Your Way Around This Document

1.46 The document is structured as follows:

- Chapter Two explains the broader context of the Local Plan, and the overall vision and objectives for the Local Plan together with the draft strategic policies which set out:
 - how much development is to be planned for;
 - where that development should be located together with major transport infrastructure;
 - Policies for the Garden Town and allocations for Garden Town communities;
 - Green Belt boundaries and Policy; and
 - Green and Blue networks.
- Chapter Three contains policies on housing, employment and transport;
- Chapter Four contains development management policies including natural environment, historic environment, design and environmental policies;
- Chapter Five contains policies that apply to specific places and has a section on each of the main settlements and town centres;
- Chapter Six sets out the infrastructure policies and approach for seeking contributions from developers as well as how the Plan will be delivered and monitored;

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- the Appendices include a range of key supporting information:
 - Appendix 1: Acronyms and Glossary
 - Appendix 2: List of Plan Policies replacing all policies of the Epping Forest District Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006)
 - Appendix 3: List of measures to monitor the effectiveness of policies in the Local Plan
 - Appendix 4: List of Policy Designations
 - Appendix 5: Housing, Employment and Traveller Trajectories
 - Appendix 6: Site specific requirements for site allocations (this is included as a separate document)

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