

9 ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREAS OBJECTIVE

9.1 There are a number of areas within the town where comprehensive treatment by redevelopment or improvement is required, or the planning issues are such that they need to be dealt with separately from the previous chapters of the Plan.

9.2 PPG12 (Development plans) states that a local plan may designate any part of an authority's area as an 'action area'; that is an area selected for comprehensive treatment by public authorities or private enterprise. The prescribed period for Action Areas is ten years from the date on which the plan is deposited.

9.3 Seven action areas are designated in this Plan. These are:

- Central area
- Butterfield area
- Stockwood area
- Marsh Farm
- High Town
- London Luton Airport
- Kimpton Road (former Vauxhall car plant).

The objective of this chapter is:

- **Identifying areas of change and opportunity in Luton, and setting out the key priorities to guide future development.**

9.4 The areas listed each have their own characteristics and problems. The central area is the focal point for shopping and entertainment, and includes several areas in need of improvement. High Town and Marsh Farm are principally residential areas characterised by high levels of deprivation and crime. The Stockwood and Butterfield areas are undeveloped sites where there are significant opportunities for large scale new development. London Luton Airport is a major commercial airport, and it plays an important role in the economy of both Luton and the surrounding area. Kimpton Road (former Vauxhall car plant) is a previously developed site that represents a major redevelopment opportunity.

9.5 Within each of the seven Action Areas there are opportunities for renewal and regeneration, and as such they need to be looked at in an integrated and sustainable way in order to deliver a range of physical, social and environmental improvements.

CENTRAL AREA

Introduction

9.6 The central area of Luton performs a number of functions. It is the focal point of Luton for shopping and entertainment, containing the Arndale shopping centre and the Galaxy entertainment complex. It also provides many other functions ranging from transport interchanges to a major source of employment in the service and business sectors. It fulfils a major leisure, recreational and educational function. The area is thriving, but some parts remain in poor condition. Government planning policy and urban regeneration initiatives are now focused on the renaissance of town centres and new ways of ensuring that they remain prosperous.

Luton Town Centre Development Framework

9.7 In 2004, the Council, along with its partners English Partnership, East of England Development Agency and GO-East, appointed consultants to prepare a development plan for the central area of Luton. After extensive public consultation, the Luton Town Centre Development Framework was published in December 2004. The Town Centre Development Framework presents a vision and development strategy to guide the regeneration of the central area. It was prepared in the context of this Local Plan and the longer-term objectives of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-regional strategy. Although the Town Centre Development Framework is a non-statutory document, it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Work to progress the

document as a supplementary planning document will take place during 2005/2006.

Luton Town Centre Partnership

9.8 Luton Town Centre Partnership was formed to develop the vibrancy of the town centre. Its aims are to create a town centre that will:

- enhance the quality of life of Luton's residents and visitors by creating a centre that is alive and vibrant both in the daytime and at night;
- meet the needs of the diverse community and sustain quality shops, restaurants and entertainment facilities;
- provide a safer, more accessible and more attractive centre where people can walk about freely, meet together and enjoy its streets, malls, squares and open spaces;
- be known as a university town of commercial and cultural excellence.

Role of the Central Area

9.9 The central area should play a number of roles, and provide opportunities for a variety of uses to take place, including retail, residential, arts, entertainment and leisure. It should be an attractive place to visit, and be accessible. It should provide facilities for the whole community to enjoy, and key sites in the central area should be enhanced.

9.10 It is important that there is a balance and mix of uses in the central area in order to encourage vitality and activity throughout the day and evening. The central area remains

the main retail area of the town and is becoming more active in the evenings, as people make use of its leisure facilities, pubs and restaurants.

Parking and Accessibility

9.11 The Government is now seeking to promote more sustainable means of transport, such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The Borough Council welcomes this approach and is currently looking to relocate the bus station immediately adjacent to the railway station to allow easier interchange for train and bus travellers. Providing appropriate levels of car parking is always a complex balance. The reduction of car parking can only be made in conjunction with improved public transport, and park and ride. There is concern about the impact on the viability of the central area, and on local businesses if the provision of car parking is reduced. The Parking Strategy of the Local Transport Plan is seeking to move long-stay commuter car parking to edge of town locations at proposed park and ride sites.

9.12 The central area is well served by public transport during the day, but many people still choose to travel to it by car. The need to accommodate the car is reflected in the redevelopment of the Regent Street multi-storey car park. Short stay car parking is important to the vitality of the central area, but commuter traffic can cause congestion at peak times. The Borough Council's walking, cycling and bus strategies will address issues relating to improving access to the central area.

Policy CA1

Central Area

The Borough Council will permit developments in the central area provided that they at least maintain and, where possible, contribute to enhancing its:

- [A] role as an attractive focal point for the Borough and sub-region; and**
- [B] role as a mixed use area in which to live, work, shop and play; and**
- [C] attractiveness, convenience, user-friendliness, and safety for all members of the community at all times; and**
- [D] accessibility, especially by public transport; and**
- [E] efficient and effective operation as a sub-regional centre.**

Central Area Improvements

9.13 The sites identified for improvement or action within the central area are the gap site in St George's Square, the cultural quarter, central area open spaces, the Northern Gateway, and the railway and bus stations. Other central area issues such as housing, leisure, employment, retail, transport, parking and shopping are dealt with in the relevant parts of this Plan.

Gap Site

9.14 The gap site, fronting St George's Square, between the Central Library and the Thistle Hotel, is an important one within the street scene. Its development presents important opportunities in terms of both urban design and the nature of the uses on the site.

Policy CA2

Gap Site

The Borough Council will grant planning permission for the development of the gap site, between the Central Library and the Thistle Hotel, identified on the Proposals Map, for a scheme which:

- [A] incorporates a use or uses which is not likely to have an adverse impact upon the use and enjoyment of St. George's Square; and**
- [B] is of a scale and design which makes a significant impact upon, and enhances the townscape and skyline; and**
- [C] is well-related to, and complements:**
 - (i) other buildings fronting St. George's Square which are likely to be retained in the long term; and**
 - (ii) the proposed enhancement of St. George's Square (which is subject to Policy CA4).**

9.15 The site is, however, crossed by the River Lea, which runs in a culvert beneath the Central Library and the Thistle Hotel.

Cultural Quarter

9.16 Luton University in conjunction with the Borough Council is seeking to provide a 600-seat theatre venue, with associated car parking, within an area identified for cultural and educational activities. A number of temporary moves will need to take place to enable this to happen.

9.17 The building should be well-designed and provide a multi-purpose performance venue, which can be used by Luton University for educational purposes and by the wider community. Pedestrian routes from the central

area to the cultural quarter will need to be improved and well signposted, in particular along St Mary's Street, Church Street, Park Street and Gloucester Road to create an attractive walking environment. New parking and access arrangements will be needed as part of this proposal.

Policy CA3

Cultural quarter

Planning permission will be granted for redevelopment within the cultural quarter, identified on the Proposals Map, for the purposes of a theatre, cultural activities, education use, and associated facilities, provided that:

- [A] where appropriate, the setting of St Mary's Church is enhanced; and**
- [B] the design and environmental policies are met; and**
- [C] the facility is made available for the dual use of both Luton University and the wider community; and**
- [D] the scheme incorporates public open space in accordance with Policy CA4; and**
- [E] there are adequate vehicular access arrangements; and**
- [F] there are attractive and improved pedestrian routes from Luton central area.**

Open Spaces

9.18 A scheme to enhance St. Georges Square is proposed, and work is expected to begin early in 2006.

Policy CA4

Central area open spaces

The Borough Council will support:

- [A] the retention and enhancement of the existing open spaces in the central area; and**
- [B] the creation of new public open spaces at:**
 - (i) Luton Railway Station forecourt;**
 - (ii) Northern Gateway; and**
 - (iii) Cultural Quarter.**

Northern Gateway

9.19 Plaiters Lea is a Conservation Area, with some listed buildings. It is characterised as a mixed-use area of light industrial, commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses.

9.20 A development brief will be prepared for the redevelopment of the area. The overall aim of the redevelopment of this area is to make Plaiters Lea an attractive mixed-use destination in Luton central area, comprising retail, commercial, leisure and residential uses, which creates an attractive link between the Arndale Centre and the bus and railway stations.

Policy CA5

Northern Gateway

The Borough Council will facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive mixed-use scheme for the Northern Gateway to the town centre shopping area, as identified on the Proposals Map. Any such scheme will be required to:

Policy CA5 (cont)

- [A] accommodate the identified additional non-bulky goods retail floorspace requirement during the plan period; and**
- [B] retain and, where appropriate, enhance those buildings within the area that are of particular architectural merit or historic interest; and**
- [C] form an effective and functional extension of the town centre shopping area; and**
- [D] provide convenient and ready pedestrian linkages with:**
 - (i) the Arndale Centre at as many points as reasonably possible; and**
 - (ii) the bus and railway stations; and**
- [E] provide a safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian link between the bus/rail stations and the Arndale Centre; and**
- [F] enhance the appearance of the Arndale Centre when viewed from Bute Street; and**
- [G] utilise at least part of that section of the River Lea which crosses the site as an attractive feature of the development; and**
- [H] not introduce any risk of impeding either:**
 - (i) the subsequent design of an acceptable scheme for the entire site; or**
 - (ii) the successful implementation of the proposed comprehensive scheme.**

Bus and Railway Stations

9.21 There is a need to improve both the bus and railway stations, to provide an attractive gateway to Luton that encourages people to use public transport, and facilitate interchange between modes of travel.

Policy CA6

Improvement of bus and railway stations

The Borough Council will seek to secure through planning obligations:

- [A] the relocation of the Bus Station; and**
- [B] the refurbishment of Luton Railway Station.**

The Borough Council will require any such schemes to:

- [i] provide an attractive, safe, sheltered environment for travellers, visitors and staff; and**
- [ii] facilitate and provide a clear, direct, integrated, attractive, safe and, if necessary, sheltered link between High Town Road, the railway station, the bus station and Bute Street.**

Power Court

9.22 Power Court is the major redevelopment opportunity within Luton's Central Area. It has been the subject of enormous change over the years and is now in need of regeneration. It immediately adjoins St Mary's Church, the town's only Grade 1 Listed Building. The main objectives for Power Court are to maximise the redevelopment opportunity which it offers and ensure that it becomes an integral and valued part of the town centre. Establishing pedestrian links with other parts

of the town centre is therefore crucial. In order for Power Court to become part of the town centre it must be able to offer a mix of uses that are complementary to the town centre. It also requires development which significantly enhances the area architecturally and in terms of urban design. Any development must satisfactorily accommodate the River Lea, which currently flows through the site in a closed culvert.

Policy CA7

Power Court

The Borough Council will grant planning permission for the redevelopment of Power Court, identified on the Proposals Map, for a mixed-use development that:

- [A] comprises:**
 - (i) significant non-bulky goods retail floorspace, subject to Policy S1;**
 - (ii) residential uses in accordance with Policy H4;**
 - (iii) B1 office uses and/or hotel and/or community uses; and**
 - (iv) public open space; and**
- [B] enhances the setting of St Mary's Church; and**
- [C] provides adequate, safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian linkages with the Arndale Centre and other parts of the Central Area; and**
- [D] provides appropriate treatment for the River Lea, in accordance with Policy ENV14[E].**

BUTTERFIELD AREA

9.23 The Butterfield area was the subject of a policy in the previous Local Plan (Policy BA1). The policy is retained largely unchanged in this Local Plan as the development has not yet been implemented. The Borough Council granted outline planning permission in March 2003. It is subject to the approval of detailed reserved matters, the discharge of relevant planning conditions and a legal agreement.

9.24 The Borough Council previously concluded that the best use of land at Butterfield, in the interest of the whole town, is for a combination of University campus, innovation centre and technology village - which can benefit from a close relationship to the University and vice-versa, an hotel, a park-and-ride facility and an extension to the Vale Cemetery.

9.25 Government guidance is that employment uses should be located where they can benefit from the main road network and be accessible to public transport. The movement of employment uses from the inner part of the Borough to Butterfield could have the following advantages:

- (a) the economic base of the town could be modernised, so aiding regeneration;
- (b) there could be enhancement of the environment of the area currently in employment use;
- (c) there could be an easing of traffic congestion in the area vacated by employment uses.

9.26 The nature of future employment uses in this area will be conditioned by the location of Butterfield on the urban fringe and the close

proximity to the Vale Cemetery and Crematorium. To retain the open landscape character of the area there is a need for space about buildings; a 'breathing space' to allow a green environment to develop. The Borough Council therefore considers that development comprising a high quality of building design in extensively landscaped settings, as seen in the best science parks, should be promoted. Other forms of employment development could lead to the risk of an unacceptable environmental impact.

9.27 The primary purpose of development of the Butterfield area is to provide for the needs of emerging and high technology businesses, which will assist significantly in promoting the regeneration of the town's employment base, in accordance with regional guidance.

9.28 The first requirement is for an 'Innovation Centre' where other firms can locate with the University in order to share facilities and develop new ideas.

9.29 When a firm develops beyond the accommodation available in the Innovation Centre it will move to premises nearby, in a 'technology village'. It will essentially comprise small and medium sized firms combining research, small-scale production and shared administration. The Technology Village will respond to demand arising from the Innovation Centre, but will also attract other firms wishing to benefit from shared services and the exchange of ideas.

9.30 Luton University has a requirement for a new campus primarily to provide teaching and related accommodation. This is in addition to the Park Square campus and Putteridge Bury,

and is not intended as a replacement for either. The accommodation specified by the University in preliminary studies, identifies the need for a site of about 6 hectares. Communications with the University's other sites will be primarily in the form of IT links.

9.31 Development of a hotel will help to meet the need for hotel accommodation in Luton generally and will also benefit the Innovation Centre, Technology Village and Putteridge Bury conference facilities. The incorporation of a 'leisure centre' into the hotel would provide further facilities of benefit to occupiers of the development and to local residents. The hotel is independent of other developments in the Butterfield area and so can proceed in response to demand.

9.32 The Butterfield area represents the only opportunity to provide a park and ride facility on the A505 gateway into Luton. The policy therefore safeguards land required, considered to be 2 hectares, having regard to preliminary studies on the implementation of park and ride in Luton. To provide access to all the proposed land uses, public transport will be given a high priority. Appropriate public transport facilities must be incorporated into the detailed development proposals.

9.33 The importance of safeguarding land for further extension to the Vale Cemetery is recognised by the allocation of 4 hectares adjacent to the crematorium. This will have the added benefit of providing an undeveloped 'buffer' around the crematorium.

9.34 It was acknowledged by the Inspector, at the Public Inquiry into the North East Luton Local Plan in 1986, that the environment of the Butterfield area is not exceptional, although he recognised the need to provide substantial landscaping around the development to protect the urban fringe. The Butterfield area is essentially farmland with mature hedgerows. A key principle for the development is the retention and strengthening of existing

hedgerows and other natural features such as the ponds. The need for substantial additional tree planting at the boundaries of the area, and within it, has been accepted since the land was first suggested for development. This provides the opportunity to create new landscape features and wildlife habitats. The detailed landscaping proposals for each built element will be required to further enhance the environment of the area.

9.35 The Borough Council recognises that the environment of the area is a factor, which must continue to be considered. The Butterfield area adjoins the Oaket Wood County Wildlife Site, as well as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Therefore it is important that the potential impacts of the development on these sites are taken into account. As a recreation resource, the area is essentially one of trees and hedgerows that pedestrians pass through in order to get to Warden and Galley Hills or onto the public rights of way to the north east of Luton. Development must, therefore, respect this present role of the area. Accordingly, built development should be at a low density, in order to retain the essentially open nature of the area, with no more than 30% of the area occupied by buildings. Regard will be given to the relative visibility of the site on the urban fringe, and buildings will in general be restricted to a height of two storeys. This may be increased to 3 storeys where use can be made of roof space utilising skylights or dormer windows, but the emphasis is to be clearly on a low-rise development. This will also assist the provision of a water supply in particular.

9.36 The combination of extensive landscaping and low density and low-rise buildings has the potential to create a new landscape in which natural elements will dominate.

9.37 All vehicular access will be taken from Hitchin Road utilising a new junction between

the Borough boundary and the Vale Cemetery. Public transport provision and facilities will receive a high priority and early access should be provided into car parks serving the hotel and park and ride facility. This will minimise the amount of traffic needing to enter the University/Technology Village.

9.38 Access to the extension to the Vale Cemetery will be taken from within the existing cemetery.

Policy BA1

Butterfield area

Within the Butterfield area, as shown on the Proposals Map, support will be given to development of the area for a university campus, an innovation centre and technology village. Support will also be given to the provision of a park and ride facility, a hotel and a 4 hectare extension to the Vale Cemetery.

Developments will be expected:

- [A] to retain existing landscape features such as hedgerows and ponds and include substantial landscaping on or adjacent to the boundary and within the area to screen and break up the development area and to protect the amenities of adjoining properties;**
- [B] to be at a low density with the footprint of buildings occupying no more than 30% of the gross area, with space for significant landscaping between buildings / uses;**
- [C] to take vehicular access from Hitchin Road and to give a high priority to the early introduction of appropriate public transport facilities;**
- [D] to safeguard existing rights of way and to provide additional public routes within well landscaped corridors and away from traffic routes.**

STOCKWOOD AREA

9.39 The Stockwood area consists of some 22 hectares of land lying on the Borough's southern boundary. It is made up of two parcels of farmland separated by Newlands Road.

9.40 Luton Town Football Club needs to be relocated within a new stadium, and it is considered that the Stockwood area is a suitable location for this facility. Other sporting facilities for which there is an identified need may also be appropriate in this area.

9.41 As it is extremely doubtful whether high capital cost facilities could be provided without some form of subsidy, it follows that their provision may well require associated or enabling development. This virtually ensures that relatively large scale development is necessary and this, in turn, ensures that suitable sites will need to be large. It is this criterion which resulted in the Borough Council allocating the Stockwood area to provide sports facilities in the previous Local Plan. Little has changed in the intervening period.

9.42 The development of the site is constrained by the land sloping down towards Newlands Road from both north-east and south-west. London Road and the M1 motorway are therefore clearly seen by all those using the important southern vehicular access into the town. Furthermore, proposals for widening the M1 motorway require part of the site to be safeguarded for such purposes (see policy T12). The section of the M1 motorway adjacent to the Stockwood area site, from Junction 10 northbound to the B4540 (Church Road) underpass, is due to be widened as part of the M1 Junction 6A to 10 widening

scheme. This scheme is programmed to commence in 2006 and to be completed in 2008. Therefore, work on the Stockwood area development should not proceed until the improvements to the adjacent section of the M1 motorway have started. This will allow the two schemes to be co-ordinated, thereby avoiding unnecessary duplication and disruption.

9.43 Development will also be constrained because adjoining land forms part of the Green Belt, an Area of Great Landscape Value and a County Wildlife Site. The larger parcel of land, despite being farmland, is a site of nature conservation interest. Additionally, both parcels of land are crossed by overhead electricity lines having either a 133kv or 33kv capacity, and an underground high pressure gas pipeline follows the south side of Newlands Road. A public footpath also runs down the south-eastern edge of the site and, while the land lies outside the Public Safety Zone, it nevertheless lies under the flight path to and from the airport. Policy S1 requires that enabling development should not threaten the vitality and viability of a shopping policy area and, therefore, the regeneration of the central area.

9.44 Developments of the type proposed will generate large volumes of traffic within relatively short periods of time and developers will need to ensure that their proposals will not compromise the safety or convenience of other road users. As a statutory consultee, the Highways Agency will be consulted upon development proposals and has the power to issue a direction to refuse planning permission where impact upon the motorway is considered unacceptable.

9.45 The height of the development will need to be carefully considered both for aircraft safety reasons and to avoid unacceptable visual dominance which would detract from the amenity of the adjoining areas. The rights of utility companies and the general public will also have to be protected, as well as those attributes which led to part of the site being identified as a site of nature conservation interest. No use of the site should threaten the regeneration of the central area.

Policy SA1

Stockwood area

Within the Stockwood area identified on the Proposals Map, support will be given to the development of:

- [A] a new stadium for the use of Luton Town Football Club; and**
- [B] sports facilities for which there is an identified need**

subject to the following:

- (i) the development shall not be occupied until the proposed widening of the M1 Motorway, Junctions 6A-10, has been completed, unless the Highways Agency is satisfied that the use did not have an unacceptable impact on the motorway, and shall not compromise the safety of road users;**
- (ii) planning permission will not be granted unless public transport services are secured to meet the expected demand arising from the development, and provision is made for a 'park and ride' facility;**
- (iii) car parking provision will not exceed the maximum standard specified in Appendix 4, and will not detract from the appearance of its surroundings;**

Policy SA1 (cont)

- (iv) the development will not dominate or detract from the appearance of the adjoining Green Belt, Area of Great Landscape Value or County Wildlife Site;**
- (v) the development will not be of a height that compromises the safety of those using London Luton Airport;**
- (vi) the development will protect features of nature conservation interest;**
- (vii) public rights of way and the rights of public utility providers will be safeguarded;**
- (viii) enabling development will not be to a scale that exceeds that of the related sports facilities, or adversely affects the regeneration of the central area.**

MARSH FARM

9.46 Marsh Farm is located on the northern outskirts of Luton adjacent to Bramingham Wood County Wildlife site. The estate was primarily local authority built in the late 1960's/early 1970's, comprising approximately 4,000 dwellings and a population of 9,000. Approximately half of the dwellings are currently in private ownership.

9.47 Community facilities within Marsh Farm are currently limited, but include schools, a neighbourhood centre, a recreation/leisure centre, health centre and a community enterprise and resource centre temporarily located in the former Coulter building. The neighbourhood centre, the Purley Centre, is in the centre of Marsh Farm and includes local shops, market area, library, community centre, residential properties and housing office.

9.48 Marsh Farm is characterised by severe problems of multiple deprivation, including unemployment, poverty, lack of skills, poor educational achievement, and poor health. In recognition of the multi-faceted nature and severity of problems, Marsh Farm was designated a New Deal for Communities (NDC) neighbourhood in 2000. Funding totalling £48 million has been awarded to support the comprehensive regeneration of the estate over the next 10 years. The Marsh Farm Community Development Trust (MFCDT) administers the programme.

9.49 The MFCDT vision is:
'To achieve a pioneering, forward looking, sustainable and capable community which is able to work and enjoy a quality of life that is full of opportunity and optimism'.

9.50 The MFCDT NDC 10 year delivery plan highlights the main areas of physical regeneration, namely the provision of a permanent community enterprise and resource centre, the refurbishment or redevelopment of the Purley Centre, and the physical condition and occupation within the three tower blocks adjacent to Wauluds Bank.

9.51 A master plan will be prepared for the estate. The key objectives of the exercise will be to establish a development and delivery plan to create a strong urban village centre that will meet the aspirations of the community, Council and other service providers together with creating a framework within which various projects/initiatives can be developed.

Policy MF1

Marsh Farm

Within the Marsh Farm Action Area (identified as such on the Proposals Map) the council will grant planning permission for:

- [A] developments in the Central Area (identified as such on the Proposals Map) which comprise:**
- (i) retail, community, recreational, employment or educational facilities which meet the needs of local residents; and**
 - (ii) the provision of residential units which complement the proposed function and character of the area; and**

Policy MF1 (cont)

- (iii) infrastructure provision which allows the area to function efficiently and effectively as a local centre; and**
- (iv) open space provision which complements and enhances its role as a local centre; and**
- (v) the loss of buildings, or the relocation of uses, which inhibit the proposed function and character of the area;**

and

[B] developments in the Residential Area (identified as such on the Proposals Map) which comprise:

- (i) the provision of residential units which complement the proposed function and character of the area; and**
- (ii) commercial, recreational, educational and community uses which complement the function and character of the area; and**
- (iii) infrastructure provision which allows the area to function efficiently and effectively; and**
- (iv) open space provision of sufficient quantity and quality to enable the area to function efficiently and effectively.**

HIGH TOWN

9.52 High Town is one of the older areas of the town and is situated immediately north of Luton central area. It is an area with its own character, physically separated from the central area by the Midland Mainline Railway. High Town can be separated into the following areas:

- an area of local authority housing redeveloped in the 1970's
- an area of older terraced housing
- the High Town Road Conservation Area, comprising mainly small shops with a high vacancy rate, and
- older industrial buildings and vacant land.

9.53 As an inner ward, High Town experiences many of the problems of deprivation, with issues such as poor housing condition, high levels of unemployment, high crime rates and an ageing population. The older housing areas have been targeted over a number of years through a programme called 'Housing Plus'. This provides grants for renovation works and has also included environmental enhancement work.

9.54 Government funding through the Single Regeneration Budget and European funding through Objective 2 has also targeted the High Town area. The High Town Action Trust (HAT) has been set up to identify and deliver new facilities and services for the community and to assist the process of regeneration. A programme of activity is currently being implemented which includes the provision of a multi-purpose community, sports and arts centre, which will regenerate a long-term vacant site. The scheme will also include a

new learning centre for Barnfield College to replace their existing building in Charles Street.

9.55 A key feature of the regeneration programme is work to enhance the High Town Road shopping area through the provision of grants for building refurbishment and an environmental and traffic management scheme. The projects selected for funding were part of a Renewal Plan for High Town prepared by the local community in consultation with key agencies such as the Council.

9.56 As well as the shopping area, there are many derelict and underused former industrial sites between High Town Road and Hitchin Road. Whilst the external funding has tackled some of the key issues affecting High Town, the longer-term future of the area needs to be considered in a comprehensive way. High Town has, therefore, been identified as an Action Area.

9.57 A masterplan is being prepared for the High Town Action Area, to help identify the community's requirements with regard to the provision of community and other facilities and housing.

Policy HT1

High Town

The central area of High Town, identified on the Proposals Map, is allocated as an Action Area within which development will be permitted which:

- [A] meets the identified requirements of local residents with regard to housing, employment, retail, community and recreational facilities; and**
- [B] serves effectively as a centre for the community; and**
- [C] incorporates other uses necessary to meet local need; and**
- [D] incorporates development necessary to fund that which is required by this policy; and**
- [E] will enhance the character, appearance and function of the area.**

LONDON LUTON AIRPORT

Introduction

9.58 The freehold interest of London Luton Airport is vested in London Luton Airport Ltd, a private company wholly owned by Luton Borough Council, who have granted a concession and overriding lease to a private consortium London Luton Airport Operations Limited (LLAOL). TBI Plc is the majority shareholder in LLAOL. LLAOL is the licensed operator of the Airport, responsible for its management and development.

9.59 London Luton Airport is a major commercial airport serving London, the South East, the Midlands and the East of England. The Airport has grown principally as a holiday charter airport, but has now established itself as a base for low cost, general aviation for the business market, providing a major gateway to Scotland, Ireland and the rest of Europe, and has increased its range of scheduled services to many international destinations.

9.60 Freight transport is an important part of the Airport's business. The current cargo centre was opened in 1993 to rationalise and expand freight handling facilities.

9.61 London Luton Airport has an international reputation as both a business aviation and aircraft maintenance centre.

Airport Policy Context

9.62 London Luton Airport is subject to National, Regional, County and local aviation planning policies. These consider the Airport in terms of its capacity for passengers and all identify London Luton Airport as being able, in policy terms, to provide capacity for up to 10

million passengers per annum (mppa), subject to environmental constraints related to aircraft noise and road traffic generation. An Annual Monitoring Report is produced jointly by the Borough Council and LLAOL in respect of these matters.

9.63 PPG 24 (Planning and Noise) has been prepared by the Government to give guidance to local authorities on how to minimise the adverse impact of noise. It:

- outlines the considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications, both for noise-sensitive developments and for those activities which will generate noise;
- introduces the concept of noise exposure categories for residential development, encourages their use, and recommends appropriate levels for exposure to different sources of noise; and
- advises on the use of conditions to minimise the impact of noise.

9.64 PPG 24 is therefore a material consideration in assessing development proposals at London Luton Airport, and noise matters will need to be addressed in any Environmental Impact Assessment.

Planning control

9.65 In 1995, the Government introduced the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order. This has the effect of increasing the range of development that could take place at London Luton Airport without planning consent, subject to certain criteria. The General Permitted

Development Order requires that consultation with the Borough Council takes place for such development.

9.66 In respect of all applications relating to London Luton Airport, the Borough Council, as local planning authority, is committed to the widest possible consultation. Where such applications have the potential to significantly increase the capacity of the airport, the Borough Council will require LLAOL to submit an environmental statement in accordance with relevant legislation.

Future Development

9.67 A Development Brief, produced by LLAOL, was adopted by the Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in September 2001. This sets out future developments at London Luton Airport, and includes taxiway links to allow better management of air traffic around the airport taxiways.

9.68 The Government produced a White Paper in December 2003 'The Future of Air Transport' to provide a national strategy for air transport provision. It is anticipated that London Luton Airport will play an important part in providing runway capacity in the South East. Whilst London Luton Airport is still identified as a one-runway airport, the options show a longer runway (3000m), which potentially gives the Airport the capacity of around 31 mppa by 2030. Airport operators were required to produce Master Plans by December 2005, setting out how the White Paper's proposals will be implemented.

9.69 As part of the long-term strategy for expansion, LLAOL is encouraging the 'modal shift' from private motor vehicles to public transport and produces an annual Surface Access Strategy, which sets out targets for sustainable travel for employees and passengers of the airport. For a period in 2002, the LLAOL reported that 30% of passengers travelled by public transport.

LLAOL is working to increase the proportion of passengers travelling to and from the airport by public transport, for example, by improving the speed and frequency of the shuttle service to Luton Airport Parkway Station.

Planning Considerations

9.70 The prospect of increased employment at London Luton Airport is an important consideration. A successful airport can make an important contribution to the regeneration and economic viability of Luton.

9.71 The Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis conurbation is identified in RPG9 as a Priority Area for Economic Regeneration. An opinion expressed in background papers to SERAS, indicates that each 1mppa generates approximately 1,000 jobs, although it is generally accepted that the additional jobs would benefit a much wider area than the conurbation, and would be a significant boost to the regeneration of the local economy.

9.72 Expansion is, however, only acceptable if subject to environmental constraints, to ensure that the environment of Luton and the surrounding area of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire is not significantly affected. This includes environmental scrutiny of any proposed development.

9.73 Controlling aircraft noise is particularly important at Luton as the airport is situated close to residential areas. The Government proposes that Local Planning Authorities adopt policies which will benefit people living in the area, without imposing unreasonable constraints on operations. At the Luton Local Plan Inquiry in 2004, the Inspector recommended that a policy was adopted that would enable expansion, subject to noise impact that is below 1999 levels. The Inspector referred to the controls set out in the 1998 planning consent for the extension to the terminal building, which related to the predicted contours produced as part of the

Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application. Aircraft noise has previously been monitored annually against 1984 levels, using noise contours produced for the Council by LLAOL, as part of the Annual Monitoring Report. The regime under which the airport currently operates refers to noise contours for 1999 from the 1997 Environmental Statement; applications for further development will also be assessed against a 1999 benchmark. Future editions of the Annual Monitoring Report will monitor levels against the predicted 1999 levels. Policy LLA1 will provide the basis for an effective and implementable control on aircraft noise, whilst allowing LLAOL the flexibility to determine how operations are to be modified to achieve noise control.

9.74 The term 'airport related' in Policy LLA1 refers to 'developments that have a demonstrable need to be located at or in close proximity to the airport'.

9.75 London Luton Airport is located close to the national road and rail network, but its transport infrastructure is at present inadequate to cope with major expansion of the scale envisaged in the White Paper. Options for London Luton Airport outlined in this document identify the need for various improvements including: the implementation and extension of the Translink guided busway or other integrated public transport system to the airport, the construction of a Luton North-Eastern bypass linking the A505, London Luton Airport and the A1081, and the widening of the A1081, Airport Way. It is recognised that further measures will be required to relieve congestion between the M1 junctions 9 and 13 by 2030. Further details of these schemes are given in the Transportation Section.

Policy LLA1

Development at London Luton Airport

The Borough Council will grant planning permission for development at London Luton Airport (identified as such on the Proposals Map) provided that it:

- (i) is airport related; and**
- (ii) is not in conflict with national or regional government aviation policies; and**
- (iii) is in accordance with the most recent airport development brief agreed jointly by Luton Borough Council and London Luton Airport Operations Limited; and**
- (iv) results in an aircraft noise impact that is below the 1999 level; and**
- (v) incorporates sustainable transportation measures that will be likely to make an appropriate contribution to the achievement of the targets for the modal shift of passengers, visitors and staff travelling to the airport as set out in the most recent Surface Access Strategy; and**
- (vi) provides car parking facilities that comply with the most recent Surface Access Strategy with regard to:**
 - (a) the number and size of spaces; and**
 - (b) the location and management of the car parks.**

9.76 Car parking demand is directly related to a growth in passenger throughput. Increased on-site car parking could provide additional capacity. Studies have shown that major expansion may require additional off-site car parking, even if there is a switch in emphasis from road to rail access. It is essential that such off-site facilities are located close to the strategic road network and away from residential areas to avoid the creation of traffic congestion and damage to the physical environment.

Policy LLA2

Airport-related car parking

The Borough Council will not grant planning permission for airport-related car parking that is not at London Luton Airport (identified as such on the Proposals Map) unless it can be demonstrated that:

- [A] there is a long-term need for the development that cannot be met on the airport; and**
- [B] it is in accordance with the most recent Surface Access Strategy; and**
- [C] it is well-related to the existing road network; and**
- [D] there will be no unacceptable impact upon residential amenity; and**
- [E] it will not exacerbate traffic congestion.**

9.77 Expansion of London Luton Airport will bring new employment opportunities for the people of Luton. Major expansion proposals may encourage in-migration of people. This would bring new pressures for housing and other built development to the area. Luton has a limited capacity to accommodate further development without detriment to the environment and is surrounded by Green Belt,

to be protected from such forms of development. It is therefore important that the likely physical effects of expansion upon the local area are taken into consideration when determining applications to ensure unsustainable development is avoided.

9.78 London Luton Airport can be seen from a variety of locations in Luton, South Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. New build development and road works will have a visual impact upon the local area. To mitigate the adverse effects on visual amenity, development applications will be required to contain details of proposed landscaping, including appropriate tree planting.

9.79 London Luton Airport is located above the chalk aquifer, which provides Luton with its drinking water. Care therefore has to be taken with the disposal of surface water from the Airport, in particular, run-off from runway and apron areas, which can contain de-icing chemicals and aviation fuel and therefore have the potential to seriously pollute. Treatment and disposal of surface water needs to be addressed fully in future proposals in the interests of protecting the water environment.

9.80 There is concern within local communities regarding kerosene odour and other forms of air pollution, which could increase as a result of increased air traffic. National and local studies suggest that indirect air pollution from increased road traffic may be of more concern than direct pollution from aircraft. LLAOL and the Borough Council carry out air quality monitoring. Any proposals for expansion would need to address the monitoring and management of air quality in any environmental statement.

Airport Safeguarding

9.81 Developments within the vicinity of airports need to be considered for any implications that they may have on airport operations. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Department for Transport (DfT) publish safeguarding maps for airports showing the area in which matters such as building height, interference with electronic and visual navigation aids, and bird attraction must be considered.

9.82 Advice notes have been produced jointly by the CAA, General Aviation Awareness Council (GAAC) and the Airport Operators Association (AOA) covering safeguarding, lighting near aerodromes, potential bird hazards from amenity landscaping and building design, cranes and other construction issues, and potential bird hazards from landfill sites. Copies of these notes are available from the CAA Safety Regulation Group.

9.83 The DfT map incorporates a Public Safety Zone (PSZ) at each threshold to the runway. The PSZ is the area within which development is restricted in order to control the number of people on the ground at risk of death or injury in the event of an aircraft accident on take-off or landing.

9.84 Within the PSZ, it is Government policy to advise against the granting of planning permission for any development likely to increase the number of people living, working or congregating in it. DfT Circular 1/2002 (Control of development in airport public safety zones) provides further guidance on constraints within these areas.

9.85 The Development Control Group of the Borough Council can give general advice on obtaining the above information, and developers are strongly recommended to discuss proposals and craneage prior to submission of schemes in the vicinity of London Luton Airport.

Policy LLA3

Development within Public Safety Zones

Within the Public Safety Zones (as identified on the Proposals Map) planning permission will not be granted for:

- [A] any development, including extensions and changes of use, which is likely to result in more people:**
 - (i) living in the property, unless it is for the purpose of enlarging or improving the living accommodation for the benefit of existing residents;**
 - or**
 - (ii) working or congregating at the property or site; or**
- [B] short-stay car parking (where the maximum stay is expected to be less than six hours); or**
- [C] distribution depots, sorting depots or retail warehouses; or**
- [D] children's playgrounds, playing fields or sports grounds; or**
- [E] sports clubhouses; or**
- [F] any other development likely to result in significant numbers of people being present at a site on a regular basis.**

9.86 Luton lies within an airport safeguarded area. Certain planning applications will be the subject of consultation with LLAOL and there may be restrictions on the height or detailed design of buildings, or on development which could create a bird hazard as described in ODPM Circular 1/2003 (Safeguarding aerodromes, technical sites and military explosives storage areas: The Town and Country Planning Direction 20024).

Policy LLA4

Airport Safeguarding

The Borough Council will not grant planning permission for development that would have adverse implications for the safe operation of London Luton Airport.

KIMPTON ROAD AREA (FORMER VAUXHALL CAR PLANT)

9.87 The Kimpton Road Action Area is designated in recognition of the major development opportunity presented by the former Vauxhall car plant. The site totals 23 hectares (57 acres), plus an area of 3.4 hectares (8.5 acres), which is to be retained as a Vehicle Release Facility (VRF) associated with the adjoining IBC plant.

9.88 The key aim of the Borough Council with regard to this site, is to deliver jobs, especially skilled jobs, which are considered to be particularly important in order to strengthen the economy. Accordingly, particular weight is placed on delivering business and industrial employment uses as a key component of the development. Jobs created in association with other land uses will also be taken into consideration, particularly where they involve skilled positions.

9.89 The former car plant has a number of constraints. There are substantial costs associated with its redevelopment, including the need to relocate existing operations from the site, decontamination, demolition, servicing and the creation of sufficient level areas, bearing in mind the fall of approximately 140 feet from one side of the site to the other.

Policy KR1

Redevelopment at Kimpton Road

Planning permission will be granted for the comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment and/or re-use of the former Vauxhall car plant provided that:

Policy KR1 (cont)

- [A] the various areas of the site as defined on the Proposals Map are developed for the following uses:**
- (1) B1 or residential, or residential and associated community facilities;**
 - (2) residential and associated community and/or leisure and/or retail facilities to meet the needs of the immediate locality, and/or B1 and/or hotel and/or car showroom;**
 - (3) B1 and/or B2 and/or hotel and/or car showroom, or, if the site is not redeveloped, the retention of the vehicle release facility to serve the adjacent vehicle manufacturing plant;**
 - (4) B1 and/or B2 and;**
 - (a) up to a maximum of 20% of this area for B8 uses and/or a bulky-goods outlet which is in accordance with the retail strategy in Policy S1; and/or**
 - (b) up to a maximum of 20% of this area for long-stay airport-related car parking which is in accordance with Policy LLA2; and/or**
 - (c) up to a maximum of 20% of this area for a hotel;**
 - (5) B1 and/or B2 and up to a maximum of 30% of this area for B8 uses, or, if Area 3 is redeveloped, Area 5 to comprise a replacement vehicle release facility to serve the adjacent vehicle manufacturing plant; and**

Policy KR1 (cont)

[B] the design of any proposed redevelopment will enhance the character and appearance of the site when viewed from the surrounding area.

9.90 The B1, B2 and B8 uses referred to in this policy relate to the Use Classes Order and are Business, General Industry and Warehousing/Distribution respectively.

9.91 The Council's objectives for the future of this site are:

- (1) to maximise both the quantity and quality of job opportunities;
- (2) to maximise the opportunity presented by this major previously-developed site;
- (3) to ensure that any proposed development does not have an adverse effect upon the operation or amenity of neighbouring uses;
- (4) to enhance the overall appearance of the site to the maximum possible effect;
- (5) to seek to ensure development within a reasonable period of time; and
- (6) to ensure that any development does not have any adverse effect upon the vitality or viability of the town centre.

Given the Council's objectives for the future of this site, any development proposals which are not in accordance with the policy will need to demonstrate how all of these objectives will be successfully achieved.