

Watling Chase Community Forest

**A Guide for
Landowners,
Developers
and Users**

Introduction

The Watling Chase Community Forest is one of 12 Community Forests around England. It covers an area of approximately 18,840 hectares (72 square miles) of land in Hertfordshire and the northern fringe of London, which includes several sizeable settlements but is predominantly rural.

The majority of the Forest is within the area covered by Hertsmere Borough Council, with other parts within the areas of St Albans City and District, Welwyn Hatfield District, Watford Borough and Three Rivers District Councils and the London Boroughs of Barnet and Harrow.

Implementing the aims of the Watling Chase Community Forest will increase the quality of the environment and the desirability of being located in the area.

Watling Chase Community Forest



Watling Chase Community Forest - A Guide for Landowners, Developers and Users

Introduction

- 1.1** The aim of this Guide is to highlight the importance of the Watling Chase Community Forest and to explain how development proposals within it can help achieve its objectives.
- 1.2** This Guide acts as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), which is to be taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Secretary of State will give substantial weight to SPG in making decisions where the SPG derives out of, and is consistent with, any relevant national or regional guidance and the development plan, and has been prepared in a proper manner. This guidance supplements policies of the Hertsmere Local Plan 2003 which are set out in Appendix 3.
- 1.3** Central Government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 (PPG12) advises that Supplementary Planning Guidance should be reviewed on a regular basis alongside reviews of development plan policies to which it relates. SPG does not form part of a Local Plan but it may supplement specific policies in a Plan. SPG should be issued separately from the Plan, made publicly available and its status made clear.
- 1.4** Sections 1 to 5 of this SPG provide background information relating to the Forest and this SPG, whilst section 6 onwards focuses on how development proposals can contribute towards the Forest.

Watling Chase Community Forest

- 2.1** The Watling Chase Community Forest is one of 12 Community Forests around England. It covers an area of approximately 18,840 hectares (72 square miles) of land in Hertfordshire and the northern fringe of London, which includes several sizeable settlements but is predominantly rural. The majority of the Forest is within the area covered by Hertsmere Borough Council, with other parts within the areas of St Albans City and District, Welwyn Hatfield District, Watford Borough and Three Rivers District Councils and the London Boroughs of Barnet and Harrow.
- 2.2** Community Forests are not continuous areas of closely grown trees but are instead intended to be 'a rich mosaic of landscape, within which land uses include farmland, woodland, villages, leisure enterprises, nature areas and public open space.' (Watling Chase Community Forest Plan Review 2001, p5). Their establishment, development and maintenance should increase environmental quality and the desirability to be located in the area. The map in Appendix 1 shows the extent of the Watling Chase Community Forest and the boundaries of the local authorities in the area. The map in Appendix 2 shows the location of some of the main non-motorised access routes through the Forest, namely the Timberland Trail, Alban Way, London LOOP, Hertfordshire Way, London Orbital Bridleroute (H25) and Great North Cycle Route.

Planning Policies and Guidance

- 3.1** Development proposals must be assessed in relation to National and Regional Planning Guidance and County and District Council level planning policies. National Planning Policy Guidance and Regional Planning Guidance in relation to the Watling Chase Community Forest are outlined below. County and District Council level planning policies are set out in Appendix 3.

National Planning Policy Guidance

- 3.2** Several Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) contain specific references to the Community Forests. These are:

- **PPG2:** Green Belts
- **PPG7:** The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development
- **PPG12:** Development Plans
- **PPG17:** Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation.

- 3.3** The most extensive reference to Community Forests is contained within PPG7, Annex D. This guidance explains that each Community Forest is to have a non-statutory Community Forest Plan which describes how the Forest Team and its partners propose to create the Forest. It advises that '[a]lthough an approved Community Forest Plan might be a material consideration in deciding a planning application within a Forest, policies and proposals that are likely to provide the basis for deciding such applications or determining conditions to be attached to relevant planning permissions should be set out in the development plan, which is subject to statutory procedures.'

- 3.4** National Planning Policy Guidance (in PPG7) relating to Community Forests explains that development plans should facilitate the establishment of the Community Forests and ensure that development proposals within them respect the woodland setting. It states that Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. It should be noted that much of the Watling Chase Community Forest is within the Green Belt and, as such, normal Green Belt policies apply.

- 3.5** Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 (PPG9): Nature Conservation sets out the Government's objectives for nature conservation and how these are to be reflected in land use planning. The UK Biodiversity Action Plans are also important documents covering a range of wildlife and habitat issues.

Regional Planning Guidance

- 3.6** RPG9: Regional Planning Guidance for the South East covers the majority of the area within the Watling Chase Community Forest. Policy E5 of RPG9 states that development plans should, 'promote the retention, protection and extension of woodland and forest habitats, particularly ancient and semi-natural woodlands and also Community Forests'. However, boundaries for RPG were adjusted in 2000. The new RPG which is currently being prepared for the East of England includes Hertfordshire and five other counties. RPG14 for the East of England will cover the period to at least 2021 and it is anticipated that this will be issued by the Government in late 2004 or 2005.

- 3.7** Small sections of the Forest fall within the London Boroughs of Barnet and Harrow which are covered by RPG3: Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities. RPG3 outlines the purpose of the Community Forest programme and states that the London Boroughs should, 'draw up policies which facilitate the establishment of the Thames Chase and Watling Chase Community Forests and include proposals for associated recreational facilities'.

Other Relevant Policies and Strategies

Watling Chase Community Forest Plan

- 4.1** The first Watling Chase Community Forest Plan was adopted in 1995, and a review was produced in 2001, which serves as a supplement to the 1995 Plan. These Plans aim to provide the 'blueprint' for the creation of the Forest as a well-wooded landscape for work, wildlife, education and recreation. They set out policies and strategies needed to achieve the Community Forest. The Plans identify landscape zones of different characters in which different types of strategy will be appropriate. They also set targets and outline how their vision can be implemented, by identifying funding sources and those who can get involved in a variety of ways.
- 4.2** The main objectives of the Community Forest include:
- creating a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment
 - regenerating the environment of the Green Belt and similar areas
 - protecting sites of nature conservation value and creating new opportunities for nature conservation
 - protecting areas of high quality landscape
 - increasing opportunities for sport and recreation and improving access to the countryside
 - providing new opportunities for the educational use of the area
 - protecting the best agricultural land and increasing opportunities for farm diversification
 - establishing a supply of timber and other woodland products
 - increasing community commitment to the Community Forest concept and involvement in its implementation
 - encouraging the private sector to implement the Forest's aims and invest in the area
 - creating jobs in the woodland and leisure industries

- 4.3** The Forest Plan is a non-statutory document and as such, none of its policies, strategies or proposals override statutory development plans. However, when it is backed up by statutory planning policies such as local plan policies, it can have a strong and positive influence over the quality and use of the landscape. The document aims to encourage sustainable development, in line with county, regional and national guidance on sustainability.

Watling Chase Greenways Strategy

- 4.4** The Watling Chase Greenways Strategy is supported by a community partnership whose vision is to develop an accessible network for non-motorised journeys in the town and countryside. The partnership consists of representatives from Countryside Management Service, Hertsmere Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and various local user groups and organisations. The focus is on providing a network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders of all abilities to encourage sustainable commuting to school and work and to provide opportunities for leisure.
- 4.5** The Strategy covers the Community Forest (although the focus has predominantly been within Hertsmere) and was chosen in 1998 to be a Countryside Agency national pilot for Greenways partly because of this. It was felt that Watling Chase Greenways could help the Community Forest achieve its potential (particularly in terms of sustainable access) and vice versa. Contact details for Watling Chase Greenways are given in the 'Other Key Contacts' section.

Welwyn Hatfield Cycleway Strategy

- 4.6** Welwyn Hatfield Council published this strategy in 1998. The aim of the strategy is to create a comprehensive network of cycle routes and facilities in the district. This will involve extending the existing network, improving linkages to and from key areas and improving facilities for cyclists throughout the network.

Benefits of the Watling Chase Community Forest

- 5.1** There are a wide variety of benefits for those living, working and running businesses in the Community Forest, some of which are outlined below:
- an appealing environment with good, accessible tourist, sports and recreational facilities benefits local residents, attracts visitors to the area and helps support the local economy.
 - a network of routes for non-motorised users can provide opportunities for sustainable commuting and for leisure.
 - a pleasant environmental setting for business can assist in recruiting and retaining staff, give a positive image to customers and help attract inward investment to the area.
 - trees improve air quality in the locality and help offset the polluting effects of development.
 - a high quality natural environment has benefits for individuals' health and wellbeing.
 - woodland can provide screening, act as a windbreak and reduce the costs of heating buildings.
 - environmental benefits incorporated into a development scheme can improve the quality of the scheme, help overcome potential planning objections and promote good public relations.
 - an attractive, wooded setting for development can increase the value of land and property. Woodland may be established on the parts of an already developed site which are unsuitable for built development.
- 5.2** The range of benefits of the Forest have been highlighted above. It should be noted that landowners could contribute towards the establishment and aims of the Forest regardless of whether any development is planned for their land. This might be achieved through schemes run by the Forestry Commission, Defra or similar organisations (see section 11.1). Occupiers of land are advised to discuss their plans with the landowner at an early stage. Watling Chase Community Forest objectives might be achieved in any of the ways listed in section 7.

Development Proposals and the Community Forest

- 6.1** Development proposals must comply with relevant planning policies, and guidance, if they are to be acceptable within the Community Forest. Proposals within or close to the Community Forest which are considered acceptable can contribute to its vision and aims and prevent harm to the Forest in a wide variety of ways. In considering development proposals, the following steps should be taken:
- the appropriate level of provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities and so on necessary to meet planning policy requirements should be established (the Council's SPG on recreation provision for residential development provides further guidance).
 - measures to ensure that a development proposal has overall a beneficial impact on the Forest, for example by compensating for any loss of amenity caused, should be built into the development scheme.
 - other benefits to the Forest which could be achieved, for example improving public access or public enjoyment of the Forest, and which are relevant to the development proposal, should be considered.
 - an assessment should be made as to whether on-site or off-site provision of open space, planting etc. would be better, depending on the nature and scale of the development and the location and proximity of sites available for off-site provision.
 - provision for the long term management of open space, planting etc. should be planned.
 - these requirements should either be built into the proposed development scheme, attached to a planning consent as conditions or included within a legal agreement as planning obligations.
- Planning Conditions and Planning Obligations**
- 6.2** When planning permission is granted, it is usually subject to conditions and sometimes to a planning obligation. These must be relevant to the proposed development and the way in which it relates to the Community Forest. Benefits cannot be offered as a way of obtaining planning permission for unacceptable development which is contrary to planning policies. Government Circular 1/97 'Planning Obligations' provides further information.

Contributions by Development Proposals towards the Forest

7.1 Contributions towards the Forest may relate to land either within the development site itself or in the local area, in both rural and urban settings. Examples are given below:

7.2 Wildlife/habitat creation and maintenance

- a) creating new woodland or extending or forming links to existing woodland
- b) helping to maintain and enhance existing woodland areas and other wildlife habitats, including rivers and ponds
- c) creating new wildlife habitats, including hedgerows, grasslands and other priority habitats (as defined by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan)
- d) making a commitment to protect and enhance a local nature conservation site, eg. through a long term management agreement

7.3 Improving access

- a) providing and improving access routes from the development site to woodland, open space, the countryside and housing areas, whilst minimising any likely impact on wildlife of increased visitor numbers
- b) providing and improving access routes that allow shared use by different non-motorised users including users who have a disability
- c) linking up new and existing footpaths, cyclepaths and bridleways with the existing network in the area and with other forms of transport, such as buses and trains
- d) providing and improving facilities around the network such as cycle storage, signage, crossings etc.

7.4 Promoting the use and enjoyment of the Forest

- a) providing information boards and on-site interpretation aids to enhance a local nature facility and promote understanding of the wildlife resource
- b) improving signage to and within a local nature facility
- c) providing appropriate outdoor recreation and sports facilities and informal open space or enhancing existing facilities

d) increasing public awareness of the Forest, its aims and importance, especially amongst those who at present do not actively use the Forest

e) fostering a greater sense of community and improving community links

7.5 Ensuring that development has an acceptable impact

- a) ensuring an acceptable visual impact of a proposal through the appropriate planting and retention of trees and woodland
- b) protecting existing trees, habitats and species from the construction process
- c) undertaking to plant and manage an appropriate number of trees within the Forest to help mitigate against the polluting effects of new development
- d) providing informal open space within the development site, or making a contribution towards off-site provision
- e) where there is a potential loss of amenity in an area, provision may be made to compensate the loss by providing open space, planting trees, improving access arrangements etc.

7.6 It may not always be possible or appropriate for development proposals on certain sites to comply fully with standards set out in Local Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to open space provision, landscaping etc. Where the development is acceptable in all other regards, there may be an opportunity for a contribution to be made to the Community Forest, which could be physical or, in certain circumstances, financial. The Council, in association with its Community Forest partners, will seek to identify priorities for action for different areas within the Forest. Financial contributions could be used, with the agreement of the local planning authority, to fund works close to the development site, which are relevant to the development and the Community Forest. Such works should directly contribute towards the aims of the Forest in an appropriate timescale. Off-site contributions may allow the development to proceed and at the same time contribute to the aims of the Forest. This approach is particularly relevant to urban development sites, which are as much a part of the Community Forest as rural sites are.

Development Opportunities in Rural Areas

8.1 All of the rural areas within the Community Forest are designated as Green Belt and proposals within these areas must comply with national Green Belt policy as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2): 'Green Belts'. Certain types of development which are in accordance with the aims of the Community Forests can also play a role in delivering the objectives of Green Belt land. Development proposals which may be acceptable in rural areas, subject to other local plan policies and their impact on the Green

Belt, include:

- commercial forestry
- farm diversification
- re-use of existing rural buildings
- outdoor sport, recreation and leisure facilities
- education centres/learning facilities related to the Forest
- public access/Greenways proposals
- mineral extraction

Gateway Sites

9.1 The Forest Plan approved in 1995 proposes Forest Gateway sites which are intended to provide principal points of entry to the network of paths and routes through the Forest and to be a focus for information provision, and appropriate activities and visitor attractions close to the urban fringe. These are shown on the maps in Appendices 1 and 2.

9.2 It is important that these sites maintain their rural character and that any development contributes to, or enhances, the landscape and rural or woodland character of the area. However, there may be opportunity to take

pressure off other parts of the countryside by concentrating facilities at these sites where access is good and there are suitable areas for temporary structures and for events to take place without having an unacceptable impact on the appearance of the countryside. In considering development proposals for these sites, it may be appropriate to require measures to be taken to improve their accessibility by passenger transport.

9.3 Further information on Gateway sites is contained within Appendix 3.

Good Practice

Design

10.1 Well planned woodland and other habitats can help to enhance or restore the character and identity of an area, which can make it more attractive for the community and businesses alike. If good planning and design are used to promote access to the Forest, including through the provision of Gateway sites, this will encourage people to use and care for the Forest and will help raise awareness of it within the community. Developers and their design teams should explore how their development might contribute to achieving the Forest objectives, and they are encouraged to approach the planning authority concerned to discuss proposals at an early stage. Examples of good design and practice might include:

- planting native, locally present species of trees and other vegetation in the vicinity of ancient semi-natural woodland and important broadleaved settings

- ensuring a diversity of species and ages within woodlands
- creating a balance of woodland and open space, including wildlife-rich grassland
- ensuring that new woodland habitat is not created at the expense of existing habitat that is valuable to wildlife such as coarse grassland, tall herb and scrub
- ensuring the scale of woodland reflects the scale of the landscape
- maintaining, framing or enhancing views to and from significant viewpoints
- not planting trees where archaeological heritage will be compromised
- ensuring any newly planted trees or newly created habitats become established by planning and implementing a maintenance programme

- discouraging development which diminishes the quality of the Forest environment such as the fragmentation of rural landscapes by fencing and other measures
- taking into account landscape character assessments
- incorporating 'planning out crime' features which will help increase community safety and reduce and prevent crime and disorder, for example in the creation of new routes

Community links

- 10.2** One of the aims of the Watling Chase Community Forest is to promote links between the urban, rural, farming and business communities. Establishing community links can increase community support for new development and improve relationships between different communities. Involving the community in planning for and implementing new planting, woodland management and greenspace can also help raise awareness of the Forest and may help prevent future problems such as neglect and vandalism.

Funding Opportunities

- 11.1** The Community Forest is based on a partnership between the private, public and voluntary sectors and the local community, and is financed from a number of sources. The Countryside Management Service can provide advice regarding funding opportunities available. The main source of public funding is the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme which can help with the costs of establishing new woodlands and improving the management of existing woodlands. Funding may also be available from the Department of

the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) through agri-environment schemes. Contact details are included at the end of this guidance.

- 11.2** Many benefits to the Forest will be achieved through planning conditions and planning obligations associated with planning permissions, which will be funded by developers. Paragraph 6.2 discusses this in further detail.

Recent Examples of Good Practice

- 12.1** Set out below are recent examples of good practice within the Community Forest, most of which are also located within the Green Belt. It should be noted that although contributions towards the Community Forest formed a key part of these schemes, in most cases developers otherwise demonstrated 'very special circumstances' for development in the Green Belt. Once the principle of development had been determined to be appropriate or acceptable in light of the very special circumstances demonstrated, the local planning authority sought to secure a proportionate contribution towards Forest objectives.

12.2 International University, The Avenue, Bushey (Hertsmere Borough)

Planning permission was granted in 2001 for a major development involving the provision of 307 new residential units, offices and associated works on a 26 hectare site. Extensive new landscaping and tree planting within the site was incorporated into the scheme. In addition, a new public open space is to be provided on land adjacent to the main

site with three public access points. The transfer of the land and payment by the developer of a one-off sum for its maintenance, are to be secured by a legal agreement, and a trust will be formed to implement and manage the open spaces.

12.3 Crossoaks Farm, Well End, Herts (Hertsmere Borough)

Planning permission was granted in 2002 for a new grain and general storage barn at the above site within the Green Belt and a Landscape Conservation Area. A condition of the planning consent required the submission and approval of a scheme of enhancement and management of woodlands and wildlife at the farm, including new tree planting, landscaping and screening in the vicinity of the new building. The Countryside Management Service (CMS) worked with the applicants in preparing a suitable scheme involving the planting of new trees, shrubs and mixed native hedging, designed to provide an appropriate landscaped context and effective screening for the new development.

12.4 Arsenal Football Club Training Ground, Bell Lane, London Colney (Hertsmere Borough)

Planning permission was granted in 1998 for a training ground for the Football Club incorporating training pitches, a new building, car parking, an access road and extensive landscaping. A section 106 legal agreement was put in place and a financial contribution of £40,000 was secured to improve rights of way in the area around the training ground. This included improving sections of the Timberland Trail, a 17 km route through the Community Forest which caters mainly for walkers but with some multi-use sections, and which opened in May 2002. In addition, a 3.5 km stretch of the Hawkshead link was established which links the Great North Cycle Route to the Timberland Trail near London Colney. A new bridleway was also provided as a link in the H25 London Orbital Bridleway Route.

12.5 Hatfield Aerodrome site, Hatfield (Welwyn Hatfield District and St Albans City and District)

The majority of this 322 hectare site of redundant industrial land lies within Welwyn Hatfield District, but 56 hectares falls within St Albans City and District. A masterplan was adopted in 1999 for the development of the site for mixed uses including employment, housing, education, leisure and social and community uses. As part of the development of the site, it is intended to create areas of woodland, interspersed with grassland and watercourses and to extend existing hedgerows and woodlands.

12.6 The Highfield Development, St Albans (St Albans City and District)

Outline planning permission was granted in 1996 for the redevelopment of 2 former hospital sites in the Green Belt for residential, retail, business and community uses. Over 700 dwellings will be built on the site. Benefits to the countryside of the scheme include the creation of a 24 hectare park with substantial new tree planting, the provision of new public access, the creation of play areas and external recreation facilities, and provision for the long term management of the park.

12.7 Cuckmans Farm, Ragged Hall Lane, Chiswell Green (St Albans City and District)

In 2003, the Council granted planning permission for the part demolition and part conversion of farm buildings and the erection of three dwellings. The floorspace of the proposed dwellings was less than that of the existing buildings. The Council concluded that very special circumstances existed that justified permitting this 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, because the application proposed a major contribution to the Community Forest, covered by a Section 106 Legal Agreement. This included planting a 4 hectare woodland, planting a number of orchards in the surrounding area, re-establishing a pond and providing additional public footpath routes.

12.8 Examples of Typical Contributions

Examples of typical contributions towards the Community Forest which could be expected for different types of development are set out in Appendix 4.

What Should You Do Now?

13.1 From an early stage, you should consider the implications of your development proposal alongside the objectives of the Community Forest. Follow the steps below:

- Consider what positive contribution your proposal could make towards the Community Forest (see section 7).

- Think about whether your proposal could harm any of the objectives of the Forest and, if so, what steps could be taken to mitigate against such harm.
- Take into account the contents of this SPG.
- Contact the local planning authority early on to discuss your proposals and seek advice from other relevant contacts.

Local Authority Contacts

- Planning, Transport and Building Control Unit, Hertsmere Borough Council, Civic Offices, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1WA. Tel: 020 8207 2277, Fax: 020 8207 7444. Or e-mail planning@hertsmere.gov.uk
- Planning Department, London Borough of Barnet, Barnet House, 1255 High Road, Whetstone, London, N20 0EJ, Tel: 020 8359 4623, Fax: 020 8359 4616.
- Planning Department, London Borough of Harrow, Department of Environmental Services, Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2UY, Tel: 020 8424 1457, Fax: 020 8424 1551
- Planning Department, St Albans City and District Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3JE. Tel: 01727 866100.
- Department of Planning and Leisure, Three Rivers District Council, Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 1RL, Tel: 01923 776611, Fax: 01923 896119, www.threerivers.gov.uk
- Town Planning: Strategy, Watford Council, Town Hall, Watford, Herts, WD17 3EX, Tel: 01923 226400, Fax: 01923 278562, Email: strategy@watford.gov.uk
- Planning Department, Welwyn Hatfield District Council, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE. Tel: 01707 357000.
- Forward Planning Unit, Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN. Tel: 01992 556297. (*Structure Plan enquiries*)
- County Development Unit, Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN. Tel: 01992 556229. (*Minerals Local Plan enquiries*)
- County Development Unit, Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN. Tel: 01992 556229. (*Waste Local Plan enquiries*)
- Rights of Way Unit, Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN. Tel: 01992 555262, Fax: 01992 555251 (*Rights of Way enquiries*)

Other Key Contacts

- Architectural Liaison Service, County Community Safety and Partnership Unit, Hertfordshire Constabulary, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AF, Tel: 01707 638033.
- Watling Chase Greenways Officer, Hertsmere Borough Council, Civic Offices, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1WA. Tel: 020 8207 7566.
- Countryside Management Service, Barnet Countryside Centre, Byng Road, Barnet, Herts, EN5 4NP, Tel: 020 8447 5466, Fax: 020 8447 5465, email: south.cms@hertscc.gov.uk.
- The Countryside Agency, East of England Region, City House, 2nd Floor, 126-128 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 1PT, Tel: 01223 354462.

Additional Contacts

- The Arboricultural Association, Ampfield House, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 9PA, Tel: 01794 368717, Fax: 01794 368978, www.trees.org.uk, email: admin@trees.org.uk. (Website provides lists of tree consultants and surgeons and other useful information).
- Biodiversity Policy Unit, Zone 110B, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB, Tel: 0117 3728974, Fax: 0117 3728182, Email: ukbg@jncc.gov.uk
- British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI), Landscape House, Stoneleigh Park, National Agricultural Centre, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG, Tel: 02476 690333, Fax: 02476 690077, www.bali.org.uk.
- Defra Helpline, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Ergon House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR, Tel: 0845 9335577, Fax: 020 7238 3329.
- English Nature, Essex, Hertfordshire and London Team, Harbour House, Hythe Quay, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JF, Tel: 01206 796666, Fax: 01206 794466, Email: essex.herts@english-nature.org.uk, www.english-nature.org.uk (Essex and Hertfordshire)
- English Nature, Essex, Hertfordshire and London Team, Devon House, 12-15 Dartmouth Street, Queen Anne's Gate, St James's, London, SW1H 9BL, Tel: 020 7340 4870, Fax: 020 7340 4880, Email: london@english-nature.org.uk, www.english-nature.org.uk (London)
- Environment Agency, Apollo Court, 2 Bishops Square Business Park, St Albans Road West, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9EX, Tel: 01707 632300, Fax: 01707 632498
- The Forestry Commission, East of England Conservancy, Santon Downham, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 0TJ, Tel: 01842 815544, www.forestry.gov.uk.
- Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA, Tel: 020 7983 4100, www.london.gov.uk
- Mayor of London and London Assembly, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA, Tel: 020 7983 4000, Fax: 020 7983 4057, Email: mayor@london.gov.uk, www.london.gov.uk
- Groundwork Hertfordshire, Mill Green, Hatfield, Herts, AL9 5PE, Tel: 01707 260129, Fax: 01707 270867.
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, St Michaels Street, St Albans, Herts, AL3 4SN, Tel: 01727 858901, Fax: 01727 854542.
- Herts Biological Records Centre (HBRC), c/o Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DN, Tel: 01992 555220, Fax: 01992 556152, Email: biorec.info@hertscc.gov.uk.
- London Wildlife Trust, Harling House, 47-51 Great Suffolk Street, London, SE1 0BS, Tel: 020 7261 0447, Fax: 020 7261 0538, Email: enquiries@wildlondon.org.uk, www.wildlifetrusts.org
- National Farmers' Union, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, WC2H 8HL, Tel: 020 7331 7200, Fax: 020 7331 7313.

Further Funding Information

Further information on funding available through the Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) Countryside Stewardship Scheme and

the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme is available on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk. Further contact details are shown above.

Relevant Policy Documents and Guidance

- Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. RPG3: Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities, 1996.
- Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice, 1998.
- Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom, 1999.
- Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: PPG2 Green Belts, 1995.
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- The Forestry Commission, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Government Office for the Eastern Region, Countryside Commission, et al, England Forestry Strategy - A New Focus for England's Woodlands: Strategic Priorities and Programmes, 1998.
- Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way Unit. Good Practice Guide: Operational Procedures and Standards for Rights of Way in Hertfordshire, 2001.
- Hertsmere Borough Council. Supplementary Planning Guidance: Recreational Provision For Residential Development, 2001.
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. RPG9: Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, 2001.
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Planning Policy Guidance Note 9: PPG 9 Nature Conservation, 2002.
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002.
- The Watling Chase Team. Watling Chase Community Forest – Forest Plan, 1995.
- The Watling Chase Team. Watling Chase Community Forest Plan Review, 2001.
- The Watling Chase Team. Watling Chase Community Forest Landscape Supplement, 2001.

Note: On 12 June 2003 the Council's Regulatory Committee resolved to adopt this guidance with immediate effect. The Council's Statement of Consultation and the Schedule of responses to public consultation can be obtained separately from the Council.

[Appendix 1: Map](#) (To view the map, please click on the link)

[Appendix 2: Map](#) (To view the map, please click on the link)

APPENDIX 3 Development Plan Policies

Each Borough or District Council within Hertfordshire has a Local Plan which covers their individual area. The Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011, the Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016 and the Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995-2005 cover the whole of Hertfordshire. For each of the local Councils, the policies in their Local Plan and in the Hertfordshire County Council Plans are used in the determination of planning applications. In determining planning applications within the London Boroughs, decisions will be made in accordance with each Borough's Unitary Development Plan and the draft London Plan of the Mayor of London.

The policies from the Hertfordshire County Council Plans, the Local Plans and the Unitary Development Plans most relevant to the Watling Chase Community Forest are set out below. Other policies within these plans will also be relevant to particular proposals, and advice can be sought from the local planning authorities.

■ Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011

Policy 5: Green Belt

"...Throughout the Green Belt priorities for the use of land are to:

- i) provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- ii) provide opportunities for outdoor sport, and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- iii) retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes near to where people live;
- iv) improve damaged and derelict land;
- v) secure the nature conservation interest;
- vi) retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses; and
- vii) support the objectives of Watling Chase Community Forest

Development which is permitted in the Green Belt, and management of land and activities within it, should aim to contribute to these priorities."

Policy 51: Watling Chase Community Forest

"The creation of Watling Chase Community Forest will be supported in the south of the County, in the area shown on the Key Diagram, for the purposes of landscape improvement, recreation, nature conservation, forestry and farming.

Relevant local plans should show the boundary of Watling Chase on proposals maps, and take the approved Forest Plan into account in the formulation of policies and proposals for development and the use of land in the Forest area."

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Alterations 2001-2016

The deposit draft of this document was published in February 2003.

Policy 51: Watling Chase Community Forest

"The objectives of the Watling Chase Community Forest (WCCF) will be supported in the area indicated on the Key Diagram, for the purposes of landscape improvement, recreation, nature conservation, forestry and farming.

Relevant local plans should show the boundary of WCCF on proposals maps, and take the approved WCCF Forest Plan into account in the formulation of policies and proposals for development and the use of land in the Forest area".

*Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016
(First Deposit Draft, September 2002)*

Minerals Policy 8 – Contribution to Bio-Diversity

“Proposals for mineral development should, where appropriate, provide opportunities to contribute to the delivery of the UK, Eastern Region and local biodiversity action plan targets. Additionally, proposals that prejudice the delivery of these targets or would result in the loss of, or damage to habitats, and/or species will not be supported. Where appropriate, the minerals planning authority will seek long-term overall enhancement to local biodiversity through restoration or by other means such as by the attachment of conditions or planning obligations.”

Supplementary Planning Guidance for Mineral Extraction in Hertfordshire, First Deposit Draft, September 2002 also contains relevant guidance.

Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995-2005

Various policies within this plan are relevant, particularly policies 33, 34 and 35. These policies aim to ensure that proposals for waste disposal, transfer, processing and recycling operations have an acceptable impact on significant landscape features, the landscape in general and nature conservation sites. The policies encourage landscaping, tree planting and other measures to protect and enhance the important features of sites, where appropriate.

■ **Hertsmere Borough Council**

Hertsmere Local Plan 2003

Policy C7 – Watling Chase Community Forest

“The Watling Chase Community Forest Plan and any supplementary planning guidance to develop its themes will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the Forest area when the principal aims of the Forest Plan will be taken into account. It will also provide the framework for formulating and implementing projects in partnership with other organisations such as the Countryside Management Service and Groundwork Hertfordshire.”

Policy C8 – Watling Chase Community Forest Gateway Sites

“At the sites noted on the Proposals Map as Gateway sites the provision of facilities for those arriving by passenger transport, cycle, horse and

on foot and appropriately surfaced and screened car parking will be permitted. Recreation / information facilities may be developed at an appropriate scale all in accordance with a site brief which has been agreed by the appropriate authorities after public consultation.

Note: At South Mimms (Bignell’s Corner), no events are anticipated but this is included as a Gateway Site since it provides information and interpretation of the Community Forest, allows use of the existing natural area at Wash Lane Common and is a rest and refreshment facility for those using non-motorised transport on the adjacent off-road network.”

Four Gateway sites are identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map:

- 1 Aldenham Country Park
- 2 The Willows (previously known as Bowmansgreen Open Farm)
- 3 Shenley Park
- 4 Bignell’s Corner, South Mimms

■ **Welwyn Hatfield District Council**

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations No. 1 – adopted 2 March 1998

Policy CR7 – Community Forest

“Within the boundary of the Community Forest defined on the Proposals Map the establishment of the Forest for purposes of landscape conservation, recreation, wildlife conservation and timber production will be encouraged.”

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review – Revised Deposit Version – June 2002

Policy RA12 – Watling Chase Community Forest

“The Watling Chase Community Forest is defined on the Proposals Map. Within the boundaries of the forest, the Council will seek to achieve the objectives of the Forest Plan in terms of planting, leisure and landscape improvement, where this accords with Green Belt policies. The Council will treat the Forest Plan as a material consideration in determining planning applications within its boundaries. Proposals for the provision of improved access to the forest and appropriate outdoor leisure and small scale recreational facilities will be permitted and will be required to be accompanied by substantial landscaping, including, where appropriate, woodland planting.”

■ St Albans City and District Council

St Albans City and District Local Plan Review 1994

Policy I43A: Watling Chase Community Forest

"The District Council will support the establishment of the Watling Chase Community Forest in the general location indicated on Figure 21A. Within the Community Forest, the Council will welcome detailed proposals for the purposes of landscape conservation, recreation, nature conservation and timber production. Proposals should be consistent with Green Belt policy (Policy I) and the other policies in this Plan, particularly Policies 91, 96, 103 and 106."

St Albans City and District Local Plan Second Review

The Council has published a preliminary document called "What Issues Should Be Considered In The Review?" which includes two issues relating to the Community Forest. The pre-deposit consultation document on the Second Review is due to be published in September 2003, followed by the Deposit Draft in September 2004.

■ Watford Borough Council

Watford District Local Plan 1993

Policy SE4: Green Belt Character/Use

"The Council will seek to protect and enhance the character and improve the use of land within the Green Belt by:-

- c) encouraging the establishment of Watling Chase Community Forest as identified on the Proposals Map whilst seeking adequate public access and nature conservation measures."

Watford District Plan 2000 Proposed Modifications

The Proposed Modifications to the Watford District Plan 2000 were placed on deposit August to September 2003, with the adoption of the Plan due late 2003. As such, the content of this policy may be slightly amended prior to adoption.

Policy SE27: Watling Chase Community Forest

"Within the defined area of the Watling Chase Community Forest, as shown on the Proposals Map, development proposals should contribute to the objectives of the Forest Plan."

■ Three Rivers District Council

Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011 (adopted 2002)

Paragraph 2.77: Watling Chase Community Forest

"The Watling Chase Community Forest borders on the extreme south-east of the District. Although the decision has been taken not to extend the Forest into this District, this Council supports the concept and principles of the Community Forest, and will encourage the development of pedestrian and cyclist links to the Forest."

■ London Borough of Barnet

Unitary Development Plan for the Borough of Barnet (adopted 1991)

No reference to Watling Chase Community Forest

Barnet Unitary Development Plan - Revised Deposit 2001

A public enquiry for this plan is currently scheduled for early 2004.

Policy O18

"The council will require that development proposals in the Watling Community Forest Area have regard to the objectives of the forest plan"

■ London Borough of Harrow

Harrow Unitary Development Plan (adopted 1994)

No reference to Watling Chase Community Forest

Harrow Unitary Development Plan - Revised Deposit Draft 2002

A public enquiry took place in April 2003. The Council expect to adopt the Plan in early 2004.

Policy EP41A: Watling Chase Community Forest

"The Council supports the aims of the Watling Chase Community Forest and will encourage proposals that secure its effective implementation, provided they are consistent with Green Belt objectives and Areas of Special Character."

APPENDIX 4 Contributions towards the Community Forest

Set out below are hypothetical examples designed to indicate what type of contributions towards the Community Forest could be expected for different types of development. It should be noted that each development proposal will be assessed on its own merits. Sometimes, contributions towards the Forest can be used directly to overcome related planning objections to development proposals, to make proposals acceptable in planning terms. Benefits cannot be offered as a way of obtaining planning

permission for development which is contrary to planning policies, where planning objections cannot be overcome by contributions being made towards the Forest.

Developers are advised to contact the local planning authority at an early stage to discuss appropriate contributions. The Countryside Management Service may be asked to advise on contributions for major schemes.

Development	Typical contribution which could be secured	Means of securing contributions
Demolition of one house and replacement with a larger house involving loss of one mature tree and three small trees.	Planting of two semi-mature trees and six small trees within grounds of house, appropriate to the site.	Planning condition requiring submission, approval and implementation of landscaping scheme.
Demolition of three redundant commercial buildings and erection of eight detached houses.	Planting of row of ten appropriate trees to screen development from adjacent highway. Forming public footpath through development to form link between public footpath to front of site and park to rear of site.	Tree planting secured through planning condition. Public path formation secured through section 106 agreement and/or highway agreement.
Demolition of two pairs of semi-detached houses and erection of two blocks of twelve flats.	£40,000 to create new wildlife habitat on local authority owned open space opposite site including signage, interpretation board and contribution towards long-term management costs.	Section 106 agreement.
Major extension to hotel and restaurant.	Establishment of 2 hectare extension to existing woodland adjacent to site and £20,000 contribution towards improving public rights of way in the vicinity of the site.	Section 106 agreement.