



## Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society

### Draft Qualitative assessment of the impact of proposals in the SADC Draft Local Plan on Wheathampstead and district

	Aspects	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	Possible unintended consequences
<b>Economic</b>	New housing developments and house prices	New housing developments will support the growth in population in the St Albans District. Some of this growth is to be contributed to by developments in Wheathampstead.	Part of the rationale for new housing is to increase the supply in order to force prices down or to not rise further. Evidence (Note 1) is that house prices in Wheathampstead will continue to rise whichever growth scenario is adopted, including the addition of 200+ more dwellings in Wheathampstead proposed in the Draft Local Plan. This is regarded as a negative impact because of its impact on young people and families and their future access to homes.  New construction in the village attracts more vehicles, noise, dust and disruption.	
	Local enterprises	Local businesses are likely to see a marginal gain in trade from the proposed housing developments close to the village centre. New businesses may be attracted to the village increasing local revenue.		
	Employment opportunities	The Draft Local Plan supports provision of employment sites in Wheathampstead (there is one small Protected Employment Areas in the village in Station Road at Place Farm). The plan provides for commercial and industrial development, potentially leading to increased job opportunities within St Albans District.	Wheathampstead is categorised as a Tier 4 Large Village in the settlement hierarchy and most of the future employment opportunities will arise in the pre-eminent settlement which is St Albans. In addition, 55 ha of land is proposed for new commercial development in Hemel Hempstead. It would appear that commuting to these two employment centres from Wheathampstead will become even more	



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			important in the future. It is not clear how the plan will provide for further commercial space in the village. Unless anything is done to attract new businesses, employment may well occur outside of the village. The impact would be that Wheathampstead becomes even more of a dormitory village than now. This will be detrimental to the village and it will diminish the sense of community in the village.	
	Traffic volume economic impacts		Traffic volumes are already high on the B653 and B651 (which are narrow roads with accident black spots) and will substantially increase once the new housing developments South of Lower Luton Road and South of Codicote Road are completed. These developments and the unintended consequences of proposed developments outside of Wheathampstead will significantly increase congestion and delays. Increased delays measured by DoT Travel Time costs are likely to be appreciable for residents, businesses, and travellers.	Negative consequences of proposed developments in Wheathampstead and developments outside of the area including then proposed major development expansion at Batford (c.600 new dwellings) and London Luton Airport (18-19-32m passengers) (Note 2) will vastly increase traffic volumes including on these roads. There may well be spillover of traffic congestion into the village centre from these consequences.
	Economic sustainability		It is important that Wheathampstead is a sustainable village with a sustainable economy with most services and new employment opportunities located in the village. It is not clear how the plan will achieve this.	



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			Wheathampstead village centre already suffers grid lock at rush hour and at other times in the day. There is a considerable amount of North-South and East-West through traffic. With the range of proposed developments in the plan and declining public transport options, this through traffic and grid lock is very likely to worsen. This poses economic sustainability problems for the village and will be detrimental.	
	Public transport	Improved provision for cycling and walking should have positive health and environmental benefits.	Public transport provision in Wheathampstead has been in decline through the loss of key bus routes. It is not clear that the plan addresses this issue for Wheathampstead residents.  The proposed housing development site at The Slype/Blackmore End has no public transport provision whatsoever. Consequently, residents will be totally dependent on cars which is an unnecessary way of adding to road traffic volumes and related pollution.	
	Visitor economy/tourism	The plan's Sustainability Assessment states that support will be given to the role that the town, village and neighbourhood centres play at the heart of local communities, sustainable lifestyles and the visitor economy, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.  Wheathampstead is well-placed to take advantage of visitors and tourists because it	It is not clear in the plan what measures or initiatives will be taken increase the village's visitor economy. As explained above and below, through traffic volumes and congestion in the village centre is likely to grow. Although some visitors currently arrive on bicycles, others arrive in cars because public transport linkages are limited. It is important that the village's car park remains free to users, and it is crucial that the public toilets are well maintained and kept open.	Insufficient attention may be given to measures and initiatives designed in conjunction with the Parish Council and Wheathampstead Businesses.



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		is recognised as having an attractive, historic village centre adjacent to attractive riverside and country amenities including walks.		
<b>Social</b>	Traffic & leisure time impacts		Traffic volumes are bound to rise causing frustration and longer journeys (to and from work, to shops, and for businesses serving the area). This will have a negative impact on people's leisure times.	Health impacts of increased stress reduced leisure times.
	Sense of place and community		Sense of place is a dynamic concept which links the social life and characteristics of a community to a shared geographic place. Emotional sense of place and identity which are linked to well-being are overlooked in the SADC Draft Local Plan. Sense of place is threatened by significant changes with which villagers cannot identify and which change the character of the place.	Possible negative impacts on community and individual well-being and health.
	Affordable and starter homes	Some of the proposed affordable homes (for ownership or rent) may prove to be affordable to some.	Because even so-called affordable homes are unaffordable for many, the development proposals are unlikely to give access to the young and young families. Younger people and young families are dependent on developers to build the kind of low-priced homes that they want but developers tend not to provide these and prefer to build more costly homes. The proposed housing development site at The Slype/Blackmore End is a prime example. Some local authorities have developed ways of developing low-priced homes, but no such initiative is contained in the plan.	Low-cost homes in the village will be very limited. Possible negative well-being impacts.



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	Downsizing homes	The plan proposes building more 'downsizing' homes so that the elderly can move from large dwellings to more manageable and suitable smaller homes, and younger families can move into larger homes i.e. upsizing.	Like the SADC area, Wheathampstead has an aging population and a higher proportion of elderly residents than many other parts of the District. The plan is not at all clear about how and where suitable downsizing homes, which will be an attractive proposition for those wishing to downsize, will be provided in Wheathampstead and where they might be provided.	Downsizing and upsizing opportunities will remain very limited in the village.
	Sports and leisure facilities	Improvements to the quality of the Marford Road sports field facilities (improved quality of football pitches and more facilities) will benefit the village, its residents and visiting teams if they are implemented. The same is the case for the proposals to improve the quality of the outfield of the Nomansland cricket pitch.	There is likely to be a shortage of pitches serving Wheathampstead in the future.  More play areas are needed within the village. The District Council should work with the Parish Council to ensure the right balance of facilities for all age groups.	Possible positive well-being and health impacts.
	Education	The Draft Local Plan lays great emphasis on the need to provide sufficient primary and secondary school places as the SADC area develops according to its proposals. It recognises that, at the moment, there is a surplus of primary school places but that there may well be a deficit of both primary and secondary school places in the future. The Infrastructure Schedule clearly indicates where new schools will be required. However, it is not possible from the data provided in the plan to drill down to the position as it will affect Wheathampstead, although no new schools are proposed. (Note 4)		



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	Health	Accessibility to green spaces and recreational areas will impact positively upon opportunities for physical activity and should have positive health outcomes.	The Village Surgery in Wheathampstead now serves approximately 5,700 patients and in Harpenden it serves approximately 9,700 patients. The Wheathampstead surgery used to have a Google rating above 4 but this has fallen in the last few years to just 2.9. Residents widely report some difficulties in getting what they consider to be timely appointments. The surgery has come under increasing pressure from GP turnover and as more services have been taken from secondary healthcare settings to primary ones. At the same time the population of Wheathampstead has been steadily rising and is proposed to rise further over the next ten years or so. However, there are no future primary health care investment projects listed for Wheathampstead in the Infrastructure Schedule appended to the Draft Local Plan. (Note 5). This could lead to existing pressures not being eased and for increased pressures not to be considered. More Wheathampstead residents will need to travel to Harpenden for appointments.	Increasing dissatisfaction among residents with GP surgery provision for appointments (but certainly not with GPs and reception staff who are appreciated for doing their best under increasingly trying circumstances).
	Disability	The Draft Local Plan and the supporting Equality Impact Assessment focus mainly upon providing specialist and adaptable housing for those with learning and physical disabilities.	The Draft Local Plan does not appear to make proposals for better access to pathways in and around Wheathampstead for those relying upon mobility scooters or motorised wheelchairs. Some existing pathways have rough sections which present difficulties for mobility vehicles and their users can only dream of accessing routes such as the Ayot Greenway. Disability vehicle users are	Inequality.





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			therefore disadvantaged compared with more able residents and visitors.	
<b>Environmental</b>	Climate change resilience	The plan outlines an approach to sustainable construction and transportation which should aid mitigation and adaptation to climate change. In particular, decarbonisation and greenhouse gas reduction policies are included.	<p>Further housing, commercial and industrial development together with increased traffic volumes (including the outside of the area potential expansion of London Luton Airport) will add to the carbon footprint of the SADC area. Similarly, greenhouse existing levels of greenhouse gas emissions will be increased.</p> <p>New houses have recently been built in Wheathampstead (e.g. Melbourne Mews) without solar panels. Rainwater harvesting measures are rarely promoted for houses. Planning consent conditions do not appear to include these measures which are obvious ones for reducing environmental impacts.</p>	The net impact of the plans proposals on climate is very unclear and the fear is that it could be at best neutral or at worst negative.
	Character of the village		The village's prevailing character and rural setting, which is already under strain, may be in danger of being further diluted by adding significantly more dwellings and the creation of significantly more traffic attempting to pass through its centre.	With further incremental growth the village may be on the tipping point to become more like a town than a village so that it's character will change. Many residents will be against this happening.
	Traffic noise and pollution		With the increase in traffic volumes from the sources referred to above, traffic noise and air pollution will increase in and around the village.	Negative health impacts may occur especially among children, the vulnerable and the elderly.
	Air quality		Air quality as reported by Plume Labs (on a daily and hourly basis) in and around the village is often only 'moderate' and sometimes 'poor' whereas on occasions it is 'good'. However,	Negative health impacts may occur especially among children, the vulnerable and the elderly.



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			despite the trend towards vehicle electrification, the large increase in road traffic volumes from sources referred to above is likely to cause periodic further deteriorations in air quality.	
	Aircraft noise		Aircraft noise is already an issue within the village with concerns being expressed by villagers at local meetings and through complaints to London Luton Airport. Noise is mentioned in the Draft Local Plan but in relation to aircraft movements over Wheathampstead.	Potential negative well-being and health impacts from proposed expansion just to the North of the area of the village.
	Green belt land and green space	Promoting green infrastructure will support biodiversity and recreational activities.	Any loss of green belt land is going to be a negative impact. These incremental negative impacts are cumulative over time. Apparently, the loss of green belt land associated with proposed developments around Wheathampstead is considered in the Plan to be less significant to the integrity of the green belt as a whole than other areas of green belt.  Any new housing developments for Wheathampstead should have green spaces included within them.	Risk over time of cumulative loss of green belt land and lack of green spaces in the village.
	Public gardens		There are no proposals in the Draft Local Plan for any works to maintain or improve Wheathampstead's public gardens which are an asset to the community. (Note 3)	
	River health, the sewerage system and SWT capacity	In the plan, Thames Water is reported as recognising that the sewerage network is in danger of compliance failure and pollution, and at lower risk of hydraulic internal sewer	The ecological status of the River Lea at Wheathampstead is currently classed as moderate rather than good. The Lea currently already receives legal sewage discharges from	





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		flooding, storm overflow performance and sewer collapses and will need remedial work. The Draft Local Plan recognises that going forward STWs capacity will be inadequate, and that capacity will need to be increased.	the Harpenden and East Hyde STWs which limits the health of the river. The plan does not indicate that there are proposals to significantly reduce these existing sewage discharges and to restore the health of the river even though the plan states that an overall aim is to enhance the natural environment. This is regarded as negative and potentially contradictory.	
	Flood risk	The plan recognises the need to reduce flood risk in the St Albans district: presumably this applies equally to Wheathampstead.	<p>Climate change is leading to increased flood peaks and more frequent fluvial flooding in England. Local planning authorities have been advised to allow for a 20% increase in flood volumes when considering new housing development proposals. Limited parts of Wheathampstead are at risk of flooding from the River Lea. For example, the area immediately to the North of the main road bridge over the Lea in the centre of the village currently benefits from a flood defence known as the Wheathampstead Wall. However, currently this defence has significant defects, and its condition is rated only a Grade 4 – Poor. This is reported in the Draft Local Plan supporting documents and recognised in the SW Hertfordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Unless this flood defence is significantly upgraded in the near future there is at risk of failure leading to flooding.</p> <p>A number of proposed development sites encroach into existing flood zones. SADC's Sustainability Appraisal supporting document</p>	Ill-health effects of worry about flooding are now a well-researched and documented. Ill-health effects of flooding are now also well-researched and recognised.



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			<p>identifies this as an issue requiring attention in order to meet the objective of reducing flood risk. The proposed housing development site which is South of the Lower Luton Road is noted by SADC (in the Site Allocations appendix) as partly in Flood Zone 2 and it is stated that proposals must take account of the western side being within Flood Zone 2. If 'taking account of' means raising the ground levels within Flood Zone 2 then compensatory flood plain should be provided otherwise such a development will increase peak flood flows and flood risk.</p>	
	Waste		<p>Existing waste management sites used by Wheathampstead residents are at Porter's Wood, St Albans and in Harpenden are already heavily used and queuing is particularly noticeable along the inadequately narrow road leading directly to the Porter's Wood site. These sites have weekdays when only one is open. The developments proposed in the Draft Local Plan will increase waste volumes and using these existing sites will become more congested. There appear to be no proposals in the Infrastructure Schedule to address these issues affecting Wheathampstead.</p>	<p>Fly tipping is already a problem affecting Wheathampstead. This could well become worse.</p>



## Notes

1. Whitehead C. et al (2015) Understanding the Local Impact of New Residential Development: a Pilot Study, Final Report April 2015
2. The Draft Local Plan barely mentions the proposed major expansion at London Luton Airport and its likely road traffic increase consequences. All the plan says is as follows under section 2.7: "There are cross-boundary issues with Luton to consider, particularly with regard to Luton Airport".
3. The Draft Local Plan Supporting Documents list the number of parks and public gardens in each community in the SADC area but when it comes to Wheathampstead the tabulation is blank i.e. they are so far unrecognised in the plan.
4. State school places currently available for Wheathampstead are: primary – St Helen's School 282, Beech Hyde School 178; secondary - Katherine Warrington 537
5. The Draft Local Plan supporting document on Infrastructure Development states that there are no nationally mandated standards by which the capacities of GP surgeries are measured but the Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB uses a metric of between 1,800 and 2,000 patients per GP.