

17 Policy CS14 - Attractive and Vibrant Town Centres

Strategic Objective 14

Safeguard and strengthen the function of Walthamstow Town Centre, the District and Neighbourhood Centres capitalising on their respective roles for shopping, culture, leisure, tourism and employment etc, and ensuring they continue to develop as vibrant, attractive, distinctive, safe and welcoming places.

Introduction

17.1 The borough's town centres represent a key economic asset with the potential to generate considerable turnover and wealth. As our population grows, we need to ensure that there is a good choice of shopping and other town centre services and facilities for residents. This strategy seeks to manage growth and change to ensure that our town centres remain successful and attractive in the long term.

Policy CS14 - Attractive and Vibrant Town Centres

The Council will promote successful and vibrant centres throughout the borough to serve the needs of residents, workers, visitors by:

A) ensuring that new proposals for town centre uses including retail, leisure, office, entertainment, hotel, community, cultural and service uses etc are directed to the designated centres through the 'sequential test' ⁽⁸⁷⁾, whilst also ensuring that the scale of development proposed in a centre is appropriate to the role and character of the centre and its catchment;

B) promoting the dominant position of Walthamstow Town Centre as the main destination for comparison goods shopping in accordance with its role as a Major Centre in the London Plan. The majority of additional growth in retail and other town centre uses will be located in this centre.

C) consolidating the role of the District Centres of North Chingford, South Chingford, Highams Park, Wood Street, Bakers Arms, Leyton and Leytonstone as complimentary centres to Walthamstow Town Centre. Having regard to the level of capacity available in these centres, the provision of an appropriate range of retail and other town centre uses will be encouraged in these centres;

D) supporting the role of neighbourhood centres including Sewardstone Road, Chingford Hatch, Chingford Road, Forest Road, Markhouse Corner, Francis Road, Thatched House and Blackhorse Road as local activity hubs for retail and other town centre uses;

E) creating a sustainable pattern/distribution of town centre uses by:

- (i) consolidating retail activities within compact retail core areas of the designated centres and local retail parades;
- (ii) managing the proliferation of particular uses where their location and or grouping would be contrary to the Council's aspirations and priorities;
- (iii) encouraging and managing the development of appropriate clusters of complementary evening and night-time economy uses in town centres;

F) creating distinctive town centres by encouraging the development of complimentary roles, differentiation and specialisation between centres with regard to their 'offer' and place setting;

G) encouraging housing in appropriate locations in and around town centres as part of mixed use developments;

H) promoting the rejuvenation of town centre areas through the redevelopment of under used sites and premises; and

I) supporting the establishment and operation of Business Improvement Districts where appropriate to create an improved environment for business and secure improvements in town centre performance.

17.2 Healthy and vibrant centres are vital to the Waltham Forest economy. A vibrant centre contains two key elements: a mix and concentration of different uses which attract people and create a lively social environment, and the provision of attractive, inviting and safe public spaces that generate a sense of community ownership and commitment and make people want to visit. The Waltham Forest Sustainable Community Strategy identifies the need to improve the quality and variety of shopping provision within the borough. The borough's town centres are crucial to creating sustainable communities.

Accommodating Future Growth

17.3 In planning for future growth, a borough wide 'needs assessment' for retail and commercial leisure uses in Waltham Forest has been undertaken. The quantity of additional floorspace required by the market to the year 2026 is based on the findings of the Waltham Forest Retail & Leisure Study. ⁽⁸⁸⁾ From this study, projected growth in population and expenditure up to 2026 is expected to lead to an increase in retail floor space provision in the borough. Accordingly, the Core Strategy seeks to plan for an overall growth requirement of 11,800 sqm net additional convenience retail floorspace and 64,800 sqm net comparison retail floor space by 2026. The preferred location for retail development however will be carefully considered, particularly for major development which may have an extensive catchment area.

88 Waltham Forest Retail and Leisure Study 2009.

17.4 With regard to leisure and other town centre uses, Waltham Forest has a relatively poor range of commercial leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities. However residents have good access to facilities in neighbouring Boroughs and in Central London. Opportunities to improve the range and quality of commercial leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities will be supported. Overall, the Borough's main centres have a high provision of Class A3 to A5 uses, particularly A5 takeaways. Accordingly, there is no overriding need during the plan period for the Class A3 to A5 sector to expand in any centre. However opportunities to improve the quality of existing provision will be supported, especially restaurants and pubs in designated centres and parades.

17.5 The quantum of development to be encouraged in each centre will depend on site specific development opportunities and potential in individual centres and also the impact on the vitality and viability of other nearby centres. Subsidiary development plan documents including the Blackhorse Lane, Northern Olympic Fringe, Walthamstow Town Centre and Wood Street AAPs and the Site Specific Allocations Document will identify sites for accommodating additional growth in retail and other town centre uses.

Hierarchy of Centres

17.6 At the heart of the strategy for delivering growth is a hierarchy of town centres that forms the basis for determining the location of new proposals for shopping and other town centre related uses and activities (Figure 25). There is already a well established network of centres in the borough made up of Walthamstow (as Major Centre), District and Neighbourhood Centres. It is intended to reinforce the existing hierarchy of centres by steering new development proposals into the designated centres. These centres have developed over many years and will need to be improved to perform their respective roles in the provision of town centre services and facilities.

17.7 Walthamstow town centre is the primary retail centre in the borough. It is designated as a major centre. For many years it has been the focus for shopping and other main town centre uses. It is therefore at the top of the hierarchy within the borough. The Core Strategy proposes, in line with the London Plan, that this dominant position be protected and improved in terms of shopping, particularly higher order comparison goods. Accordingly, the majority of additional retail growth will be located in this centre. In the short to medium term, it will be important to allow Walthamstow Town Centre to consolidate its position as a major centre. However in addition, investment will be directed to other district and neighbourhood centres subject to available site specific capacity and impact considerations.

17.8 The sequential approach, as required by government policy (PPS4) indicates that town, district and local centres are the preferred locations for the main town centre uses. The sequential approach indicates that first preference for new developments should be within centres followed by edge-of-centre locations. Out-of-centre locations should be the last in the order of preference. In applying the sequential test, the key issues are the nature and scale of retail/leisure development proposed and the catchment area the development seeks to serve. Walthamstow is the largest centre. Therefore large scale development which serves a significant part, if not all, of the Borough should be concentrated within this centre.

17.9 District centres are reasonably well distributed throughout the borough. These include North Chingford, South Chingford, Wood Street, Bakers Arms, Leyton, and Leytonstone. These centres should provide for main and bulk convenience food shopping, a good range of comparison shopping facilities, and other town centre related services and facilities. Highams Park is identified as a Neighbourhood Centre in the currently adopted Unitary Development Plan. However during the plan period, proposals granted for a new foodstore at the edge of this centre (involving 5223 sq m gross floorspace) is expected to be implemented. This will have the effect of elevating this centre to that of district status.

17.10 District Centres have a more localised role and are intended to complement Walthamstow by providing reasonably sized facilities for main and bulk convenience food shopping and a reasonable range of comparison shopping facilities. These centres have some small to medium or large food store anchors together with some comparison shopping. The Core Strategy seeks to reinforce their role by ensuring the provision of appropriate local shopping, leisure and community facilities to make them the hub of everyday life for the communities they serve.

17.11 District Centres will progressively develop as mixed use centres. Subsequent development plan policies/town centre strategies to be prepared will guide the form of future development so that they evolve into fully functioning mixed-use and higher density urban centres with greatly enhanced public transport, access and appropriate parking facilities. A range of supporting town centre uses and activities including office and other commercial, cultural, health, housing and community facilities will be located in these centres.

17.12 Neighbourhood centres are the next level in the hierarchy. These include Sewardstone Road, Chingford Hatch, Chingford Mount Road, Forest Road, Blackhorse Lane, Markhouse Corner, Francis Road and Thatched House. Neighbourhood centres will provide local convenience shopping facilities for local residents within walking distance of their homes. They will be the hub for other facilities provided in and around them such as small office and service uses, schools, doctor's surgeries, community centres and open space. These centres will be expected to provide neighbourhood centre type facilities commensurate with their scale. Planned housing growth in the Blackhorse Lane area is expected to increase the demand for supporting retail facilities in this area. Accordingly this strategy makes provision for a new neighbourhood centre in this area.

17.13 Below neighbourhood centres are a number of local retail parades. These represent clusters of retail and town centre uses located along road corridors including Lea Bridge Road, Forest Road, Hoe Street, Leytonstone High Road, Leyton High Road, Billet Road, Chingford Road, Higham Hill Road, Queen Road etc. Typically, they should generally accommodate small shops (under 200 sq m). They comprise a small grouping of shops within one or two parades including the newsagent, a general grocery store, a post office and occasionally a pharmacy, hairdresser or other small shops of local nature. These parades serve immediate local needs only and provide primarily convenience goods within residential, commercial or mixed-use areas. To create more sustainable development forms, local retail parades will be carefully managed to encourage the development of an appropriate grouping of local shops and facilities.

17.14 During the plan period, it is expected that the development of local retail parades will evolve in response to changing market conditions and the demands of the new households moving into neighbourhood areas. In managing changes of use, protection will be given to existing retail shops in areas deficient in essential local shops. The precise boundaries of these designated local retail parades will be further defined and reviewed in the Development Management Policies Document and in Supplementary Planning Documents.

Achieving a Sustainable Pattern/Distribution of Town Centre Uses

17.15 In creating a sustainable pattern/distribution of town centre uses, the Council will ensure an appropriate grouping of uses. The Council considers that it is an important planning objective to focus retail activities in well-defined areas to safeguard residents' access to local shops. The pattern of retailing in the borough is characterised by a proliferation of commercial activities stretching in long lengths along the main road



corridors such as Lea Bridge Road, Hoe Street, Leytonstone High Road and Leyton High Road. Consolidating retail uses within the designated centres would create a cohesive retail base in town centres.

17.16 By safeguarding retail premises in primary frontages, the Council hopes that in time there would be a gradual process of relocation of shops from some declining/marginal trading locations into the heart of these centres where they could cluster and thrive. Grouping shops conveniently together attracts shoppers and if the shopping frontage is broken or diluted by uses not directly related to a shopping trip, this leads to a loss of attractiveness. The Council intends to ensure that a cohesive grouping of retailing and local services is formed in the most appropriate locations. The designation of primary and secondary frontages will be defined in the Development Management Policies Document.

17.17 In ensuring an appropriate mix of uses, one area of control relates to the proliferation of hot food takeaway uses. The prevalence of such uses offering menus filled with nutritionally deficient food and the lack of healthy alternatives justifies the need for planning intervention to address health issues. It will be necessary to control their proliferation in particular locations to protect communities. Details of the range of policy mechanisms to be applied will be included in the Development Management Policies Document and Supplementary Planning Documents.

17.18 Walthamstow Town Centre has the potential for the development of an appropriate cluster of evening economy activities. In supporting evening economy activities however, it will be important to ensure that uses are well managed individually or collectively to avoid adverse cumulative impacts arising from excessive concentration. For example, while local pubs can add to the vibrancy of neighbourhoods, an over-concentration of drinking

establishments and night clubs could cause environmental problems or unacceptable harm to residential amenity or the town centre in general by creating or adding to significant problems of community safety, litter and disturbance. Where necessary, planning obligations may be sought to contribute towards the cost of creating and managing the evening and night time economy. Further guidance in implementing this policy will be provided through the preparation of town centre strategies.

17.19 This plan also positively encourages the development of appropriate cultural and community facilities. These include the provision of performance spaces for arts and cultural activities in accordance with the Waltham Forest Cultural Strategy.⁽⁸⁹⁾

Creating Distinctive Town Centres

17.20 Most importantly, this strategy also seeks to create distinctive centres - each with a unique 'offer' in terms of their place setting. A greater degree of differentiation and specialisation between centres will be encouraged in all centres. Walthamstow Market is the longest (though not the largest) daily outdoor market in Europe. The street market dates from 1885 and presently sits in the centre of Walthamstow, with the main rail and tube station, bus station, post office and Central Library, and most of the commercial development and activity located around the High Street. Over the plan period, it is expected that the market will continue to play its unique role in the borough.

17.21 In other centres, the development of clusters of creative industries will be important. Also, evening economy activities could be more important in some centres than others. Some centres could take advantage in developing local niche retail markets. This strategy seeks to encourage the development of niche markets where this is possible. The preparation of Town Centre Strategies for individual centres



will be key in promoting the distinctive role of individual centres. However good urban design will also be necessary to support the creation of an attractive urban realm unique to each setting. The Council and its partners will be working to make individual centres much more distinctive in the types and range of activities they provide.

17.22 To support and encourage town centre regeneration, the Council is developing a robust strategy for the high streets and shopfronts in the borough.⁽⁹⁰⁾ The High Street Life Strategy will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Document and will improve the mix of uses in town centres as well as the streetscape and environment of the borough.

⁸⁹ Taking Our Place in London, Waltham Forest's Culture Strategy 2010 - 2030

⁹⁰ High Street Life in Waltham Forest, 2010.

Housing in Town Centres

17.23 Residential development in town centres can complement new and existing retail and commercial uses. The Council considers that there is a resource of vacant and underused capacity of land and premises including the upper floors of shops and other commercial buildings in town centres. Their refurbishment can make a significant contribution to the number of new dwellings needed in the borough and to the regeneration of town centres. Accordingly, such new housing will be encouraged as part of mixed use developments with retail and other commercial uses. Such schemes will help bring town centres back to life in the evenings and weekends.

17.24 Evidence from a study commissioned by Design For London,⁽⁹¹⁾ shows that the transformation of town centres and their edges can deliver a significant contribution to the provision of homes. This study also demonstrates how the provision of good quality homes (in terms of architecture, response to urban context, environmental performance and residential amenity) can be made possible through good urban design. Town centre housing proposals will be planned for and delivered in the key growth areas of Blackhorse Lane, Northern Olympic Fringe, Walthamstow Town Centre and Wood Street. Other town centre sites will be identified in the Site Allocations Document.

Implementation

17.25 There are a variety of approaches and scales of intervention that may be used to improve the borough's town centres. These range from formal planning, through management approaches and partnerships such as town centre management and the establishment of Business Improvement Districts, to a myriad of local smaller initiatives and schemes. Through the preparation of town centre strategies specific actions appropriate to each centre will be identified.

17.26 In partnership with local businesses, the Council has established a Business Improvement District (BID) in Leytonstone District Centre and has plans to extend this to other centres. The BID project aims to empower businesses through small investments and a variety of strategies to help address key challenges in the town centre. Through partnership working, the Council will ensure an integrated approach to the management, marketing, development and operation of town centres. These will be detailed in town centre strategies/marketing plans.

17.27 Working with key partners, the Council will use its planning powers to control the proliferation of particular uses such as estate agents and betting shops where this could lead to the deterioration of retailing in the designated centres and parades or where there are wider negative impacts caused by dominance. In managing changes of use, the Council will seek to ensure policy integration with key partners to tackle wider issues associated with deprivation, education, health and community safety. Supplementary Planning Documents will set out the detailed management approach to be applied.

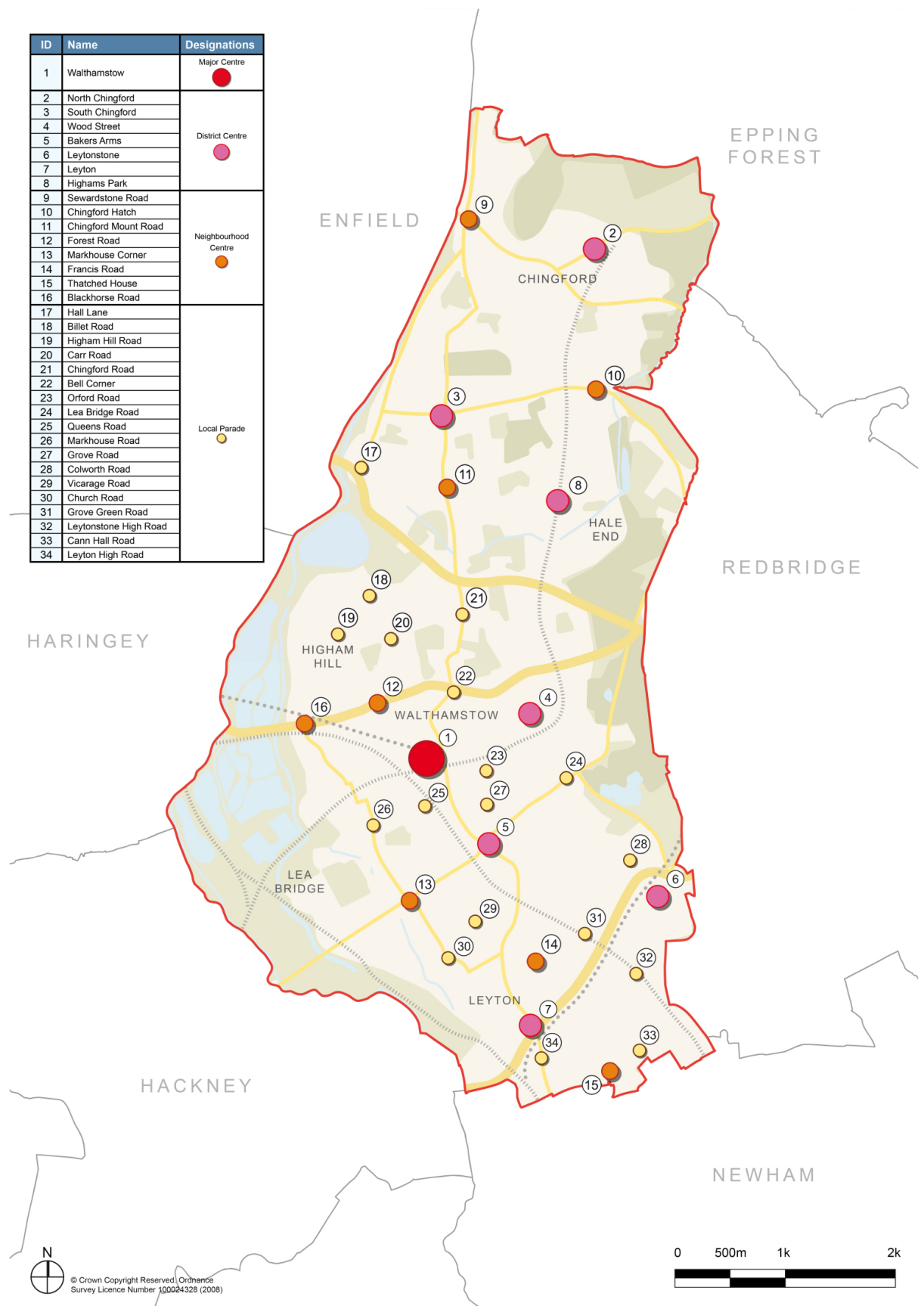
91 Urhahn Urban Design in association with Urban Progress Studio and GVA Grimley - SEVEN Housing Intensification in seven south London town centres, 2010,

17.28 This policy will be implemented in conjunction with other policies in the plan, through the determination of planning applications for retail, leisure and community uses etc and the preparation of Development Management Policies DPD, Site Allocations DPD and the Walthamstow Area Action Plan. Town Centre Strategies to be prepared for individual centres will set out further detailed proposals.

17.29 The Proposals Map DPD will define the precise boundaries of the designated primary and secondary frontages. Town centre strategies/SPDs will establish the relevant retail/non-retail thresholds applicable in particular centres.

17.30 The Council will use its statutory powers where appropriate to maximise the contribution town centres make to the prosperity of the borough. The preparation of masterplans, town centre strategies and actions plans and the preparation of development schemes will be key to the delivery of this policy. These will be taken into consideration where relevant at the planning application stage.

Figure 25 Hierarchy of Centres



18 Policy CS15 - Well Designed Buildings, Places and Spaces

Strategic Objective 15

Create positive, responsive and inclusive environments including buildings and spaces of high quality that contribute to the distinctiveness of Waltham Forest's neighbourhoods.

Introduction

18.1 In this chapter we set how we wish to encourage the enhancement and transformation of our built environment (including buildings and spaces) through design intervention. The places where people live and work have a profound effect on their quality of life and life chances. Good design has an important role to play within this context and has been shown to provide economic and social value, promote civic pride, encourage safer and more active places, and result in more sustainable environments. Good design is not therefore just about appearance. It is also about the way places function – enabling and encouraging people to live healthy lifestyles, reducing opportunities for crime, creating accessible environments which are inclusive for all sectors of society, increasing opportunities for social interaction and allowing easy cleansing and maintenance.

18.2 The quality of life in the borough can be enhanced by more careful thought being given to the places we create. In Waltham Forest, we want to raise the standard of design in the borough and improve the public realm. We also want to strengthen and protect what we already have and influence the creation of more distinctive places through urban design intervention. New development provides the opportunity to create surroundings that future generations will cherish.

Policy CS15 - Well Designed Buildings, Places and Spaces

New development proposals will be expected to:

A) ensure the highest quality architecture and urban design, both in terms of providing attractive and functional developments. New development should respond positively to the local context and character, improve the way places function and promote distinctiveness and sense of place;

B) give strong recognition to local distinctiveness and spatial context within the borough's neighbourhoods in Chingford, Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone and the unique characteristics they present as defined by the combination of common elements such as block structure, urban grain, building typology, street pattern and public realm, building density/height, richness, private and public space and the presence of street trees;

C) address issues of height and scale sensitively. Subject to detailed analysis of their impact on local context, tall buildings may only be appropriate in some limited locations. The Council will work with partners to identify areas sensitive to tall buildings;

D) reinforce and, where appropriate, create new distinctive and legible areas/spaces based on a design-led approach to redevelopment, particularly in the identified key growth areas; and

E) incorporate high quality and inclusive design measures to create an attractive, safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable environment throughout Waltham Forest.

18.3 Our buildings, places and spaces set the scene for our living and work and help to create positive environments that nurture and inspire individuals and the community as a whole. Good design can help to support the local economy and provide a strong visual identity and sustainable future. Re-imaging parts of the borough's townscape could attract investment and act as a catalyst for economic rejuvenation. Equally permitting poor quality developments can deter the type of businesses and developers we want from coming to the Borough.

18.4 In seeking to improve the design of buildings, places and spaces the Council also recognises the need to create safe environments (see Policy CS16). Furthermore the choices we make today around the way we plan, design and build our places and communities will have significant repercussions for the future. Design has an important role to play towards lessening the impact of climate change. The overall design of buildings can help determine the amount of lighting, heating, and cooling a building will require. Accordingly this policy should be cross referenced to Policy CS5 on Climate Change.

Local Distinctiveness

18.5 The borough has a diversity of typologies and character areas.⁽⁹²⁾ The majority of the borough is formed of distinct and relatively large neighbourhoods including Chingford, Walthamstow and Leyton/Leytonstone. Each neighbourhood is characterised by specific typologies developed over the years and undertaken through both private and public sector development. For example, the extensive neighbourhoods of Leyton and Leytonstone are dominated by regular Victorian and Edwardian terraces. The inter-war residential streets in Chingford are also distinctive in being typical of the inter-war suburban development. In general, the main typologies could be described as Victorian, Edwardian, Warner, Garden City, Inter-War, Post-war and Modern. The distinctive character of the borough is also formed by the open spaces which continue to influence and interact with the built environment. (Figure 26)

18.6 The Characterisation Study identifies a number of individual character areas. Some as small as a few houses, others as large as several blocks or entire neighbourhoods. As well as reflecting the overall architectural style and appearance from the street, the identification of these areas capture elements such as the building configuration, plot size and urban grain which have a significant impact on the overall design. All of these are unique on their own merits and make up the local distinctiveness of the borough. In

92 Waltham Forest Characterisation Study, July 2009

managing changes to the built environment, development proposals will be expected to give recognition to the unique characteristics of the local context as defined by the combination of the common elements present.

Public Realm

18.7 In Waltham Forest, the streets, roads and spaces that connect buildings are just as important as the buildings themselves. Streets make up an important element of the overall public realm, and have a significant influence on how people experience local character. Beyond the streets themselves, the public spaces, parks and civic squares that provide gathering points and respite have a substantial impact on local character. As our climate changes, public spaces will play an increasingly important role in supporting adaptation to the changes in the climate. In particular, it is necessary to ensure that spaces are designed to provide protection (when needed) from the elements of the weather and also enhance biodiversity (Policy CS6).

18.8 A particularly notable feature of the borough's character is the large number of trees which populate the streets. Trees are an essential element of the urban environment and a central feature in the character and quality of the Borough. Whilst these inevitably can create maintenance liabilities, their presence contributes to amenity and is an important feature of the borough's forest history. With our changing climate, street trees also play a positive role by providing shade and by improving air quality. Accordingly, the Council will seek to ensure that the provision of street trees contribute to the enhancement of character and appearance of the borough. The Council's Tree Strategy provides a framework for the planning, management and promotion of trees and woodlands in the Borough.

Density

18.9 Over the plan period, there will be pressures for development in the borough and its neighbourhoods which will require careful management. To accommodate the pressures for growth, high density developments will be encouraged at appropriate locations in the borough. However, the issue of density is complex and successful high density housing will demand careful consideration given to the overall quality of design and place-making. Accordingly, the density of new development will be carefully managed through the design process. As a guide, this strategy seeks to apply the residential density ranges as in the London Plan.

18.10 Waltham Forest is often perceived as a low-rise Borough, dominated by two storey buildings. There are however, many instances across the Borough that exceed this height. Achieving higher density does not however automatically mean taller buildings. Many compact forms such as the Victorian terrace or the Warner half house achieve relatively high densities without the need to build higher than two storeys. However, beyond the density threshold of more than a 100 dwellings per hectare, more medium rise forms of development will become more appropriate.

18.11 In managing the pressure for high density developments, the existing transport nodes with high accessibility ratings will provide the best development opportunities. Linking transport, services, jobs and people through higher density development can help create sustainable communities. People can easily access the services they need by public transport, along with eradicating the need for trips across town to access other services.

For example, Walthamstow Town Centre provides opportunity for such development. This centre is a positive location for higher density given the existence of a major transport interchange, its location on higher ground and also the finer grain nature of the centre. In the centres of Leyton and Leytonstone, the proximity to transport networks and the nearby Stratford City and the Olympics developments could also support a more efficient use of land through higher density developments.

Tall Buildings

18.12 The London Plan mentions that boroughs may wish to identify defined areas of specific character that could be sensitive to tall buildings within their DPDs. Although this Core Strategy seeks to encourage high density development in appropriate locations, this does not necessarily equate to a need for tall buildings. Other configurations of a building's mass, scale and form can generate greater floor capacity and densities. However, in the right locations, tall buildings can contribute to good place-making, provide important urban landmarks and create distinctive skylines.

18.13 This policy includes a commitment to work with partners to identify particular areas where tall buildings may be appropriate or inappropriate. With regard to the key growth areas, the Council will develop more specific area-based policies on tall buildings supported by evidence. This will be undertaken as part of the proposed Area Action Plans for Blackhorse Lane, Northern Olympic Fringe, Walthamstow Town Centre and Wood Street.

18.14 The built context of Waltham Forest is essentially one of 2-3 storey development and therefore the appropriateness of taller buildings must be managed sensitively against this backdrop. Accordingly, proposals for tall buildings will only be supported where there are no harmful implications on their surroundings. Subject to detailed analysis of their impact on local context, tall buildings may be appropriate in some limited locations in Waltham Forest. For example, in some central locations such as town centres and the identified key growth areas. However detailed assessment will need to be undertaken to justify proposals at site specific locations. In assessing proposals for tall buildings, the Council will take account of the criteria set out in CABE/English Heritage guidance (July 2007).

Design Standards

18.15 In promoting high quality standards, the Council will apply the Building for Life Criteria.⁽⁹³⁾ This provides a useful guide for developers on the standards that are now expected and what factors are considered when assessing design. The criteria are not exhaustive nor meant to be regarded as providing a ceiling to innovation. Rather they are seen as helping to provide a framework for assessment. They embody a vision of functional, attractive and sustainable housing. New housing developments are scored against the criteria to assess the quality of their design. Further guidance on CABE/HBF Building for Life Criteria will be included in subsidiary planning documents.

18.16 Additional guidance on inclusive design will be provided in Supplementary Planning Documents. These documents will set out the principles and standards that will be applied in ensuring that the built environment, public spaces, pedestrian and transport linkages are well designed and inclusive. Integrating inclusive design principles in all new

93 Building for Life is the national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods - see <http://www.buildingforlife.org/criteria>

developments will promote social equality by creating a sustainable community that everyone can live, work, learn and participate in without being confronted by barriers that prevent them from doing so.

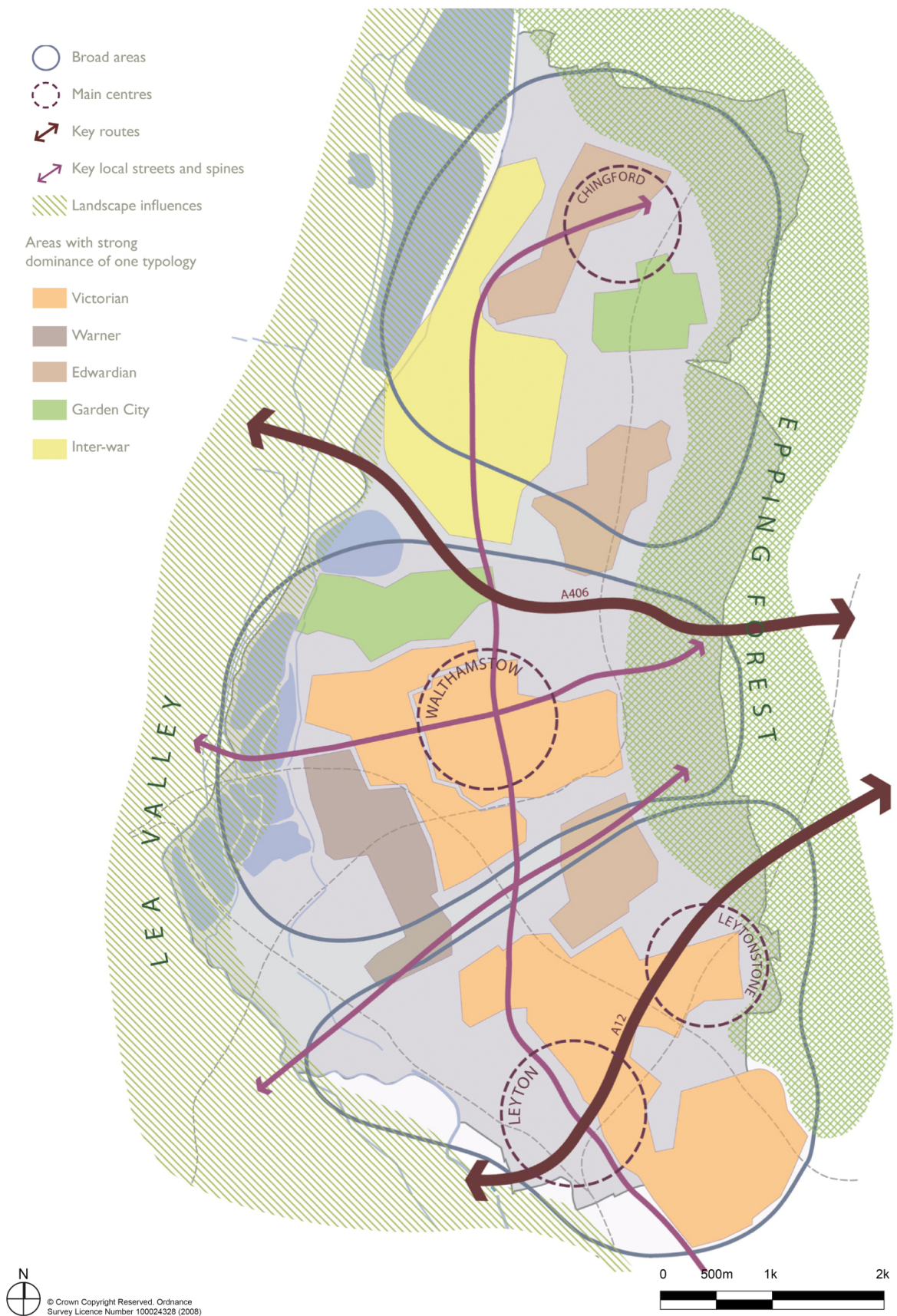
Implementation

18.17 Maintaining and improving the quality of the built environment is not solely the responsibility of the Council. Owners and occupiers have a responsibility to maintain their buildings and spaces. Developers and designers have a responsibility to ensure that alterations and new development is sustainable and of an appropriate quality that recognises the local context.

18.18 This policy will be implemented through the development management process. Detailed policy guidance will be provided in the Development Management DPD and Supplementary Planning Documents. To guide improvements to the public realm, the Council will prepare a Public Realm Strategy.

18.19 In promoting good design, the Council will work with its partners - including GLA/Design for London, English Heritage and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in seeking the highest standards in architecture and design. The Council will apply good practice design standards – in particular the CABE/HBF Building for Life criteria for residential developments.

Figure 26 Character Area Typology



19 Policy CS16 - Making Waltham Forest Safer

Strategic Objective 16

Ensure that Waltham Forest is a safer, more accessible and inclusive place where people want to live, work and visit, and where anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime no longer reduces the quality of people's lives.

Introduction

19.1 Crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour are major concerns for local residents in Waltham Forest. The Environmental Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Survey 2009 found that 47% of residents feel unsafe in their neighbourhood or local town centre. Reported levels of crime vary considerably across the borough, with distinct divides between the north, the centre and the south of the borough. From May 2009 to April 2010, 27% of all crime in the borough occurred in 3 wards; High Street, Leyton, and Lea Bridge wards.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Over the same time period the majority of anti-social behaviour dispatch calls were focused in the centre and south of the borough, with notable clusters around Walthamstow Central, Cann Hall, and Cathall wards. Figure 27 shows the spatial distribution of crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough.

19.2 Anti-social behaviour does not just make life unpleasant; it prevents a peaceful community life and degrades the environment, and can have a big impact on resident's mental health and wellbeing. It is a matter of significant importance to Waltham Forest residents; with 59% of residents citing it as a very big or fairly big problem in the Environmental Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Survey 2009. Concern with gang related crime also features heavily in public opinion.

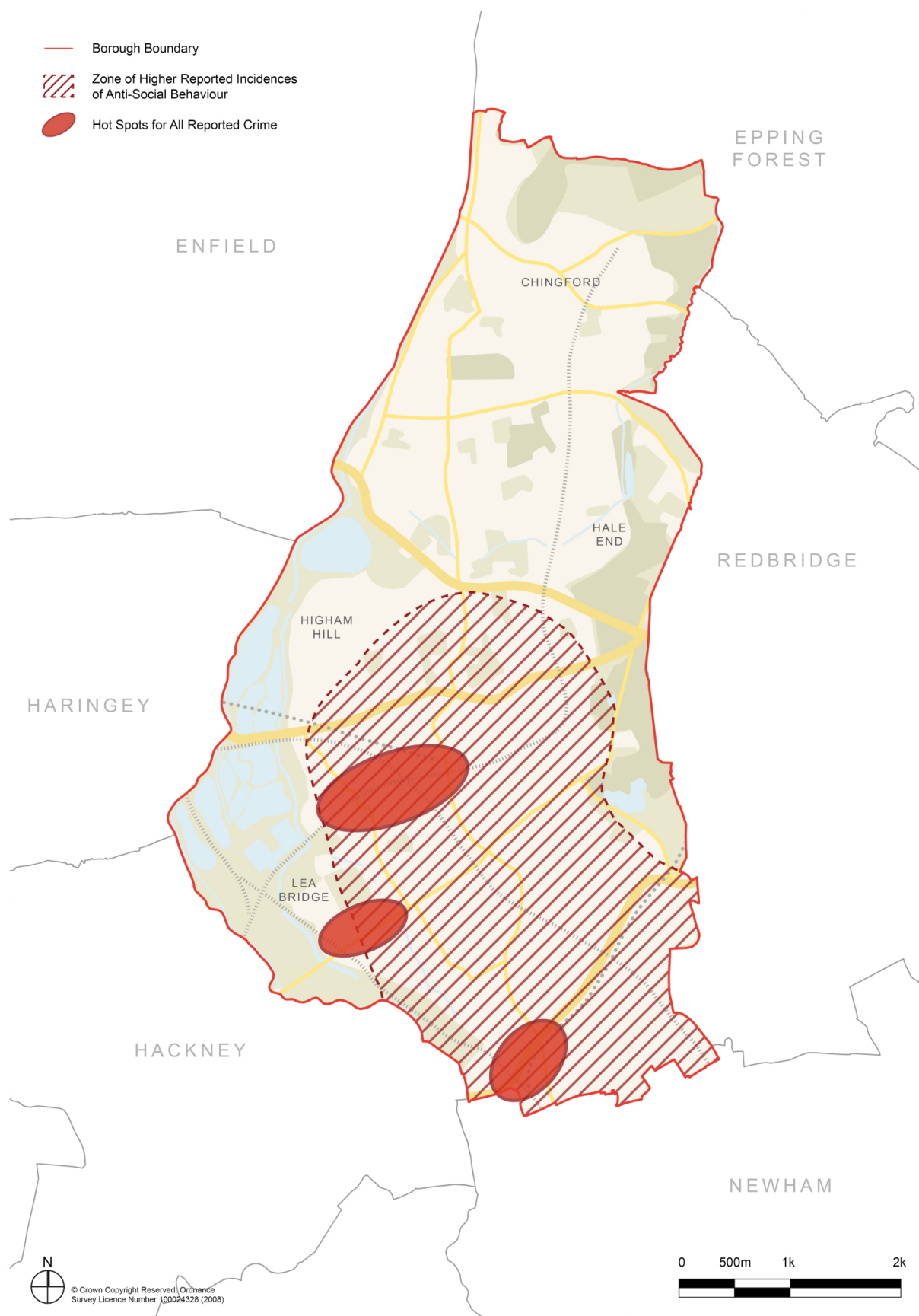
19.3 Improving community safety and reducing anti-social behaviour are key commitments of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy; in the interests of retaining more wealth in the borough. Tackling crime and the perception of crime is vital for economic regeneration, since the creation of safe and sustainable communities will help make the borough a more attractive place for people to come to live, work and visit.

Policy CS16 - Making Waltham Forest Safer

The Council will aim to improve community safety and cohesion by working with partners to:

- A) minimise opportunities for criminal behaviour by requiring all forms of new development to incorporate principles of 'designing out crime';
- B) co-ordinate land uses to minimise the likelihood of an increase in crime and disorder;
- C) promote safer streets and public realm improvements throughout the borough.

Figure 27 Areas of higher incidence of crime and antisocial behaviour



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19.4 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities to do all they can to reasonably prevent crime and disorder in their area. Reducing crime is therefore not solely the responsibility of the Police.

19.5 It is widely understood that a lot of crime is opportunistic. As such, the planning process can minimise opportunities for such behaviour through the design of new developments. By taking opportunities to maximise 'natural surveillance', and making clear distinctions between public and private space, the opportunities for criminal or anti-social behaviour can be reduced. Because of this, the London Plan advocates the incorporation of 'Secured by Design' into new developments.

19.6 From May 2009 - May 2010 there were 27,512 criminal offences reported across Waltham Forest. This represents an increase of 1,239 criminal offences on the previous 12 months Metropolitan Police Latest Crime Figure for Waltham Forest. ⁽⁹⁵⁾ The main criminal offences reported were violence against the person, motor vehicle crime, burglary, and robbery. ⁽⁹⁶⁾ Notably this includes crimes that often fall under the 'opportunistic' category.

19.7 The design and layout of the physical environment is key to creating safe environments and reducing crime and disorder. 'Designing out crime' and designing in community safety should be core principles in planning any new development, town centres, public spaces, transport hubs and streets. The Council will expect development proposals to reflect the guidance found in *Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention; ODPM; 2004* and *Secured by Design; ACPO; 2009*. This will be particularly important in the borough's crime hotspots and measures should reflect any crime and anti-social behaviour problems specific to the local area that are identified in the latest Waltham Forest Borough Safety Net Strategic Assessment.

19.8 The England Place Survey 2008 found Waltham Forest to be within the top five boroughs in the country most concerned about anti-social behaviour; with 36.5% of residents claiming it is a problem.

19.9 Links between excessive alcohol consumption and crime and disorder have been widely documented at a national level in recent years. The government has subsequently sought to reduce binge drinking through measures such as public health advertisements and allowing for the staggering of closing times of public houses and bars. Research ⁽⁹⁷⁾ also indicates gambling to be another problematic activity; which adversely affects many determinants of health and influence criminal activity; for example to pay off debt or continue gambling.

19.10 The Council receives regular bulletins from the Police of crime and disorder at licensed premises in the borough, including public houses, bars, and betting shops. These bulletins provide a strong indication that such uses can be magnets for disorder. Furthermore, hot food takeaways are also recognised as potential hot spots in ODPM guidance on Planning and Crime Prevention, as set out in the excerpt below:

95 <http://www.met.police.uk/crimefigures>

96 Metropolitan Police Latest Crime Figures for Waltham Forest

97 Where's well in Sandwell: Gambling and the nations health, 2006

'Crime and antisocial behaviour are more likely to occur if potential offenders and/or victims are concentrated in the same place at the same time, such as bus stops, taxi ranks or fast food outlets after pubs close'⁽⁹⁸⁾

19.11 In the interests of community safety, the Council will therefore seek to avoid a proliferation of uses that is likely to result in an increase in crime and disorder. Advice from the Police in this respect will be important in helping inform decisions on individual planning applications. These concerns will need to be balanced against the need to provide a range of amenities for residents, and potential benefits some public houses may bring in terms of social opportunities and community harmony.

19.12 Much anti-social behaviour can be attributed to a lack of positive activities to engage in, particularly amongst young people. The provision of 'diversionary activities' such as additional facilities for sport, recreation, leisure and cultural and community based activities should therefore be supported. Engaging young people in such activities can help foster strong neighbourhoods and communities, a key requirement of the London Plan.

19.13 Developing a network of safe walking and cycling routes through the borough is a key objective in making Waltham Forest a more attractive place for people to live, work and visit. The creation of well-designed, legible pedestrian and cycling routes with adequate levels of street lighting and natural surveillance will be a particular focus in regeneration areas of Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow Central, Wood Street and the Northern Olympic Fringe area. Enhanced routes are also needed across the borough to link homes with town centres, employment areas, recreation/ leisure facilities and open space. This will also have additional benefits in terms of residents health, reducing car use and congestion, and improving air quality. It will also be consistent with the requirement of Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development to promote 'safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion'.

Implementation

19.14 This policy will be implemented in conjunction with future Development Management Policies and other elements of the Local Development Framework when determining planning applications, and will be especially important in areas of the borough which experience proportionally higher levels of crime. Design policies relating to community safety are set out in detail in the Council's Urban Design SPD, and site specific guidance responding to local circumstances will be provided in the Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow Town Centre, Wood Street, and Northern Olympic Fringe Area Action Plans. Crime and disorder implications are also acknowledged in the borough's Hot Food Take-Aways SPD.

19.15 The Council will ensure that community safety measures are implemented in the borough by ensuring that planning applications for new developments demonstrate how a development will incorporate the principles of '*Secured by Design*' and '*Designing out Crime*'. Such measures could be highlighted through a supporting planning statement or design and access statement. These considerations will be particularly important in new

98 Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention, ODPM, April 2004

schemes coming forward in the central and southern areas of the borough due to the higher instances of criminal activity in these areas, as evidenced by the Waltham Forest Safety Net Strategic Assessment, 2010.

19.16 Any proposals for 'diversionary activities' will be subject to a period of public consultation. To ensure they are fit for purpose, effort will be made to engage with their intended audience and understand their needs; e.g. teenagers.