

4 Policies – Development Strategy

4.1 Introduction

Knebworth is a large village, not a town, with its own special historic character as one of the early garden villages. The context of Knebworth's historic character is explained on the website [Herts Memories](http://HertsMemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/towns-and-villages/knebworth/knebworth-garden-village) (Hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/towns-and-villages/knebworth/knebworth-garden-village, n.d.).

The following objective relates to the Development Strategy policies:

- A. **Maintain the distinctiveness and separation of Knebworth from nearby towns and villages**

4.2 Policy KBDS01 Retention of Separation Between Settlements

KBDS01 Retention of Separation Between Settlements

Any proposed development to the north of Knebworth that would reduce the strategic gap and width of the Green Belt between Knebworth and Stevenage, to the south that would reduce the width of the Green Belt between Knebworth and Woolmer Green and to the east that would reduce the width of the Green Belt between Knebworth and Bragbury End will not be supported.

The village is surrounded by Green Belt and sits astride the B197 road with the small village of Woolmer Green to the south and the much larger town of Stevenage to the north. The NPPF paragraph 134 states the 5 purposes of the Green Belt, including 134. b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging (coalescence) and 134. d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

The North Hertfordshire Green Belt Review Update 2018 (NHDC, 2018) was prepared by NHDC as an update to the Green Belt Review submitted alongside the North Hertfordshire Local Plan in June 2017. A review was undertaken to ensure that a significant Court of Appeal decision (*Samuel Smith Old brewery –v-North Yorkshire County Council [2018] EWCA Civ 489*) had been taken account of. This decision established that an assessment of potential development on the openness of the Green Belt should include the consideration of the impact upon the visual dimension of openness as well as the spatial dimension of openness.

Green Belt land around Knebworth was labelled, in the review, as parcels 8a – 8d. The three Green Belt releases for development proposed by NHDC were in the following parcels; KB1 in 8a, KB2 in 8d and KB4 in 8b and 8c. The review found that parcel 8d was more significant in terms of its importance in safeguarding the countryside, than previously thought. The parcel was assessed as being of significant importance rather than moderate importance in the original Green Belt Review. However, in the overall comparative analysis of these four parcels of land, it was confirmed that they all made a significant overall contribution to Green Belt purposes.

The village community feel that avoiding coalescence or avoiding merging with adjacent communities is considered important to retain its essential character and independence. In particular, ensuring the existence of the strategic gap between Knebworth and Stevenage is paramount (see Figure 8 Strategic gap between Knebworth and Stevenage). The parcels

considered to play the largest contribution to the prevention of merging were those to the north and east of Knebworth, 8b and 8c)



Figure 8 Strategic gap between Knebworth and Stevenage (left) and Bragbury End (right)

4.3 Policy KBDS02 Density of Housing Development

KBDS02 Density of Housing Development

Density of new development should have regard to guidance in the NHDCLP and refer to the Knebworth Neighbourhood Masterplanning and Design Guidelines 2019. The report refers to guidelines for dph and estimated housing numbers for development sites allocated in the NHDCLP Policies KB1, KB2 and KB4. Any proposed development that has an inappropriately high housing density for its location will not be supported.

The NHDC Local Plan states that given the design-led approach to development set out in the plan, district-wide density standards have not been prescribed. Development on the periphery of settlements should generally be at a lower density to mark the transition to the rural area beyond. In town centres and close to the railway stations higher densities will be considered appropriate in principle but will require particular care in the design with respect to avoiding the sense of overcrowding or congestion. That principle is carried forward into the Neighbourhood Plan.

However, in order to guide development in Knebworth, which has its own special character, a report titled Knebworth Neighbourhood Masterplanning and Design Guidelines 2019 was produced by AECOM for Knebworth Parish Council (AECOM, Feb 2019). This document can be accessed separately on Knebworth Parish Council's website. The Knebworth Masterplanning and Design Guidelines 2019 forms a statutory part of Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan.