

21. Berkhamsted Place Strategy

21.1. Berkhamsted is an attractive valley town, with a rich archaeological heritage, surrounded by the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is the second largest settlement in the borough with a population of just over 18,500. The town is linear in character with the A4251, West Coast mainline, River Bulbourne and the Grand Union Canal running along the valley floor. Historically, development has spread along and up the valley sides. The historic core is large, densely built-up and contains many high quality and listed properties. The settlement is served by a town centre that provides an important district and service centre role and supports a thriving evening economy. A variety of businesses can be found in the town centre and in the employment areas around Billet Lane. Northchurch lies at the western end of the settlement. It retains a strong village character centred on St Mary's Church, and is served by a small local centre.

The Vision

Berkhamsted is a sustainable and vibrant market town, where travel by non car use is promoted. It has accommodated new housing to meet the needs of local people, particularly more affordable housing and family homes, whilst maintaining the strong valley and linear character of the settlement, and protecting key historic and environmental assets such as the Grand Union Canal and the River Bulbourne. The castle is protected and enjoyed. Open space is protected and more space has been provided. There are quality schools in both the public and private sectors. New development respects and protects the built and natural heritage of the town, the canalside environment, and the character of neighbourhoods. The town centre is an attractive commercial, cultural and social focal point of the settlement with a strong district shopping and service centre role. It has been maintained and enhanced together with the neighbourhood role of Northchurch local centre. Businesses are attracted and supported. Employment areas around Billet Lane provide local job opportunities and offer an attractive location for small to medium sized firms.

Local objectives

- Provide around 1,180 new homes between 2006 and 2031.
- Bring forward the strategic site at Durrants Lane/Shootersway (Egerton Rothesay School) to deliver new homes, improvements to the school and informal leisure space for the community.
- Accommodate the change from a three tier state school system to two tiers.
- Provide additional school places in line with demand, including primary schools.
- Support the British Film Institute to consolidate on their site.
- Maintain the current level of employment provision.

Delivering the Vision

- 21.2. Around 1,180 homes will be provided over the period 2006 – 2031, chiefly within the town boundary. A key priority will be maximising opportunities for affordable homes and family sized accommodation, especially in larger developments.
- 21.3. A significant amount of the future housing (around 180 homes) will be delivered through the strategic site at Durrants Lane/Shootersway (Egerton Rothesay). However, not all of the housing required can be achieved within the urban areas of the town and a local allocation has been identified at Hanburys, Shootersway.
- 21.4. State schools in Berkhamsted will be restructured into two tiers – i.e. primary and secondary schools. Two new primary schools are expected. There is also a requirement to increase places at secondary level. The broad zones in the north-west and south east of the town, to which new provision will be directed, are illustrated in Figure 23.
- 21.5. There is also a need for further school capacity and facilities on existing sites in the town. This applies to state and private schools. Planning policy needs to be applied sensibly to allow for on-going investment and improvements to school capacity to take place and to ensure that the wider interests of the town are met.
- 21.6. New development must respect and maintain the distinctive physical and historic character of the town and its valley setting, including the landscape setting of the castle. It will not be supported where it has an adverse impact on the sensitive open valley sides and ridge top locations. The green swathe between the town and the A41 will be maintained. Views across the valley and along the valley floor will be safeguarded. A cautious approach will be taken to flood risk for development close to the canal embankment and any proposals will be subject to a flood risk assessment, and any necessary mitigation measures.
- 21.7. Open space and designated Open Land, particularly the river and canal corridor, will be protected and enhanced because of their contribution to the character of the town, for outdoor recreation, and as a biodiversity resource. The strategic site at Durrants Lane/Shootersway (Egerton Rothesay School) will secure additional informal open space and playing fields. The contribution from other smaller open areas (such as the remnants of hedgerows in the low-density residential neighbourhoods) will be protected to provide opportunities for a network of wildspace linking the centre to the edge of the town.
- 21.8. Opportunities to de-culvert the river and to enhance the chalk stream environment will be taken where appropriate. The canal is important in its own right and its character, history and built heritage, particularly in respect of wharfage, need to be protected.
- 21.9. The key district shopping and service role of the town centre will be maintained. The proposed redevelopment of the High Street / Water Lane site will deliver high quality buildings, a new supermarket and small shop units, and improved public car parking.
- 21.10. A baseline of around 7,700 jobs in the B-Class uses will be maintained to ensure an adequate supply of employment land that contributes towards the town's local economy, and maintains a reasonable balance between local homes and jobs.

21.11. The British Film Institute will be allowed to consolidate activities on their site. The designation of the site as a major developed site in the Green Belt will enable some modest opportunities for infilling to take place. Better links will be sought between the Institute and the town to enable the film heritage and work of the Institute to be more readily appreciated locally.

21.12. Berkhamsted contains the remains of a late Saxon/medieval town. Its archaeological interest is potentially of national importance and will be a constraint on the extent and layout of new development. The castle was the site of the surrender of the Anglo-Saxon army to William the Conqueror in 1066. The castle is an important landmark and significant historical asset, whose position and heritage will be protected. Visitors to the site will be encouraged to make use of public transport access.

21.13. The careful location of new development and promoting opportunities for sustainable travel, including improved cycle routes and facilities (for example at the train station), will in part help tackle a number of parking and traffic issues in the town. An additional deck at the railway station car park and the development of the Water Lane / High Street site will also provide for a modest increase in spaces. Road improvements at the junction of Shootersway/Kingshill Way will be linked to new housing development.

21.14 Hertfordshire County Council has concluded that the New Road / Springfield Road link proposal aimed at relieving traffic through Northchurch would be expensive, with no overriding benefits to warrant its inclusion in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme. It will therefore not be funded by the highway authority. The County Council's preferred approach is to drop completion of the link road and instead address highway safety issues around St Mary's school and at the junction of New Road and High Street. This will be resolved through the Berkhamsted Urban Transport Plan and improvements implemented as funding opportunities arise. These highway safety improvements should help alleviate existing air quality issues in this part of Northchurch.

Strategic Site

Site reference	Proposal SS1
Site location	Land at Durrants Lane/Shootersway, Berkhamsted (Egerton Rothesay School)
Area (Ha)	14.3
Proposals	<p>Mixed use scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 180 new homes • Remodelling and extension of existing school • Dual use playing fields and community playing fields • Informal leisure space
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a mix of two storey housing including around 40% affordable homes, and informal open space. • A contribution must be made towards educational and community facilities. • The layout, design, density and landscaping must safeguard the amenities of nearby housing and create a soft edge with the proposed leisure space and adjoining

	<p>countryside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of the scheme on the local road network must be mitigated by supporting sustainable transport options, providing pedestrian/cycle links through the site and funding improvements to appropriate junctions nearby, in particular the Shootersway/Kingshill Way and Durrants Lane/ High Street junctions. • The main access will be taken from Shootersway, with a secondary access possible from Durrants Lane. • The impact of school traffic must be tackled by providing new drop off facilities for pupils and through implementing a Green Travel Plan. • Grim's Ditch will be retained as a feature of the site. An archaeological assessment must set out measures to mitigate the impact of the development on it and consider the need to preserve remains in situ. • The development must be planned to enable the refurbishment of the school on its existing site. • The scheme must secure additional areas of informal and formal leisure space and ensure their long term management. All formal leisure space should be made available for public use.
<i>Delivery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive planning framework is needed to link the three main land uses and their timing i.e. housing, school with playing fields and new leisure space. • Development will be programmed in order to enable the completion of 180 homes and other uses by 2014/15 • The priority is to deliver the school playing fields, i.e. before the refurbishment of the school. Housing will be phased to allow the playing fields to be relocated first. • A master plan will provide a detailed planning framework, sufficient to take the scheme forward to a planning application. • The planning application will be progressed under a Planning Performance Agreement. • Joint working with the landowners will ensure delivery of the scheme, secure necessary developer contributions and ensure that long term management of all open spaces, including Cox Dell and The Plantation, is in place. • The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council to identify the level and type of contributions required towards sustainable transport measures, local highway works and additional educational and community facilities.

Local Allocation

Location reference	Proposal LA4
Site location	Land at and to the rear of Hanburys, Shootersway, Berkhamsted.
Proposals	Around 60 new homes
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mix of two storey housing including around 40% affordable homes. • A contribution must be made towards educational and community facilities. • The layout, design, density and landscaping must create a soft edge with the adjoining countryside and secure a long term Green Belt boundary. Development must respect the setting of the adjoining British Film Institute site. • The impact on the local road network will be mitigated by supporting sustainable transport measures and improvements to the Shootersway/Kingshill Way junction. • The main access taken from Shootersway. • Access to the rear of Hanburys to be considered to allow for allotments and other possible uses.
Delivery	The proposal will be delivered as an allocation in the Site Allocations DPD where detailed planning requirements will be established.

