

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



8 September 2023

Our Ref Cabinet/19 September 2023
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To: Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis (Chair), Councillor Ian Albert, Councillor Amy Allen, Councillor Ruth Brown, Councillor Keith Hoskins MBE, Councillor Steve Jarvis, Councillor Sean Prendergast, Councillor Alistair Willoughby, Executive Member for Communities and Partnership

Deputy Executive Members: Councillor Matt Barnes, Councillor Mick Debenham, Councillor Dominic Griffiths, Councillor Ian Mantle, Councillor Tamsin Thomas, Councillor Tom Tyson and Councillor Dave Winstanley

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A
MEETING OF THE CABINET**

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNO
ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF**

on

TUESDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda **Part I**

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	MINUTES - 27 JUNE 2023 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 27 June 2023.	(Pages 5 - 20)
3.	NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS <u>Climate Emergency</u> The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to achieving a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030 and helping local people and businesses to reduce their own carbon emissions. A Cabinet Panel on the Environment has been established to engage with local people on matters relating to the climate emergency and advise the council on how to achieve these climate change objectives. A Climate Change Implementation group of councillors and council officers meets regularly to produce plans and monitor progress. Actions taken or currently underway include switching to green energy, incentives for low emission taxis, expanding tree planting and working to cut food waste. In addition the council is a member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, working with other councils across Hertfordshire to reduce the county's carbon emissions and climate impact. The Council's dedicated webpage on Climate Change includes details of the council's climate change strategy, the work of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment and a monthly briefing on progress. <u>Declarations of Interest</u> Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking	

Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

6. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Any Items referred from other committees will be circulated as soon as they are available.

7. DLUHC'S SINGLE HOMELESSNESS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME (Pages 21 - 26)
REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

To review the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to submit a bid to its Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.

8. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND HOME OFFICE FUNDING UPDATE (Pages 27 - 32)
REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

To update Cabinet on the current position regarding refugees and to provide a flexible approach to meeting increased housing demands whilst also ensuring appropriate support is provided to refugees.

9. PROPOSED OFF-STREET CAR PARKING TARIFFS FOR 2023/24 (Pages 33 - 54)
REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

To agree proposed car parking tariff increases for 2023-24 in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

10. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - ADOPTION (Pages 55 - 98)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

To consider the responses received on the draft of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) during public consultation and approve the subsequent amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement.

11. CHESFIELD CONSERVATION AREA (Pages 99 - 184)
REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

To consider the representations made in response to the consultation on the draft Chesfield Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and the proposed designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area.

12. HITCHIN, LETCHWORTH AND ROYSTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) RENEWALS (Pages 185 - 202)
REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

To obtain Cabinet's endorsement of proposals to progress to renewal ballots for the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston.

- 13. FIRST QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2023/24** (Pages 203 - 234)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES
- To update Cabinet on progress with delivering the capital and treasury strategy for 2023/24, as at the end of June 2023.
- 14. FIRST QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24** (Pages 235 - 246)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES
- To inform Cabinet of the summary position on revenue income and expenditure forecasts for the financial year 2023/24, as at the end of the first quarter.
- 15. Q1 23-24 UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN** (Pages 247 - 284)
REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES
- A report on the projects, risks and performance indicators supporting delivery of the Council Plan.
- 16. NEW FINANCIAL SYSTEM** (Pages 285 - 290)
REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES
- To inform Cabinet of the expected benefits and costs of the new finance software system.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2023 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Elizabeth Dennis (Chair), Ruth Brown (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Ruth Brown, Keith Hoskins, Steve Jarvis, Sean Prendergast, Alistair Willoughby and Dave Winstanley*

In Attendance:

Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Sarah Kingsley (Service Director - Place), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Louise Symes (Strategic Planning and Projects Manager), Deborah Coates (Principal Strategic Planning Officer), Christine Crofts (Communications Manager), Chloe Hipwood (Service Manager), Martin Lawrence (Strategic Housing Manager), Clare Skeels (Senior Planning Officer), Louise Randall (Leisure Manager), Callum Reeve (Business Administration Apprentice (Democratic Services)), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Eleanor Hopcraft (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 4 members of the public, including registered speakers.

Councillors Sean Nolan and David Levett were also present.

183 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2:56

There were no apologies for absence received.

184 MINUTES - 14 MARCH 2023

Audio recording – 3:08

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair proposed, and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 March 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

185 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3:48

There was no other business notified.

186 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3:50

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy this meeting was being audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recording would be available on the NHDC website and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and means that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District. More details were included on the agenda front sheet.
- (3) The Chair reminded Members to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.
- (4) The Chair advised for the purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting.
- (5) The Chair advised of a change in the order of the agenda and Item 16 'Ashwell Conservation Area', Item 9 'The Allocation of DLUHC's Homelessness Prevention Grant and Domestic Abuse Funding awards for 2023/24 and 2024/25' and Item 10 'Local Authority Housing Fund – Round Two' would be taken before Item 7 'Report and Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan'.

187 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 5:47

The Chair advised that Sarah Pateman from Survivors Against Domestic Abuse and Stevenage Borough Council was present to provide a presentation. This would be given before the presentation of Item 9 'The Allocation of DLUHC's Homelessness Prevention Grant and Domestic Abuse Funding awards for 2023/24 and 2024/25'.

The Chair advised that Mr David Cook was also present to provide a presentation for Members regarding Item 16 'Ashwell Conservation Area'.

188 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 6:11

The Chair advised that the items referred from the Overview and Scrutiny and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committees would be taken with the respective items on the agenda.

189 REPORT AND REFERRAL FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT & ACTION PLAN

Audio recording – 1:03:52

N.B. This item was considered after Agenda Items 16, 9 and 10.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis presented the report entitled 'Corporate Peer Challenge Report & Action Plan' and advised:

- The Local Government Association (LGA) had conducted Peer Review of the Overview and Scrutiny and Finance, Audit and Risk Committees.
- Due to the all-out elections in 2024, some of the recommendations would be given a longer timescale.
- As there were no timelines in the action plan, the Leader, Deputy Leader and Managing Director would manage those in consultation with the Committee Chairs.
- The recommendations in the report would help provide added value and effectiveness to the Committees.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair proposed, Councillor Ruth Brown seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the content of the CPC report was noted.
- (2) That the draft Action Plan at Appendix A was considered, and proposed action was recommended to Cabinet for approval (as per Appendix A or as amended, with relevant Overview & Scrutiny recommendation timescales).
- (3) That, in the absence of timescales, these be set by the Leader, Deputy Leader and Managing Director (in consultation with relevant Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council responds to the matters identified within the CPC report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.

190 REPORT AND REFERRAL FROM FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE: LGA REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Audio recording – 1:05:58

Councillor Sean Nolan, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, presented the referral on the 'LGA Review Action Plan' report and advised:

- The Committee was in agreement with the recommendations of the report and agreed that it was prudent to have long timelines for some actions due to the elections in 2024.
- The training provided to Members had been useful so far, as it was important to understand the role and purpose of the Committee, as well as the skills Members needed to have to sit on the Committee.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis commented that she was satisfied with the work that the LGA had provided, and the feedback would improve the way in which the Council worked.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet considered comments from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the draft Action Plan.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council responds to the matters identified within the peer support report, ensuring that the benefits of that process are realised.

191 THE ALLOCATION OF DLUHC'S HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT AND DOMESTIC ABUSE FUNDING AWARDS FOR 2023/24 AND 2024/25

Audio recording – 22:11

N.B. This item was considered ahead of Agenda Item 10.

Councillor Sean Prendergast declared an interest as a trustee of Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), and therefore left the room for the duration for the item and did not vote on the recommendations.

The Chair invited Sarah Pateman from SADA and Stevenage Borough Council to present.

N.B. A break in proceedings was taken from 19:55 to 20:00

Sarah Pateman gave a presentation with slides, and advised:

- SADA worked closely with North Hertfordshire District Council.
- Services that SADA offer include one to one sessions, agency referrals, safe houses and benefits advice and guidance.
- SADA had worked with private landlords to source safe spaces for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- Community Partnership meetings took place every 3 months and were themed.
- Due to the work being done to schools, more referrals have been made and families have been put in safe accommodation, and provided food and vouchers.
- SADA hoped to find an emergency safe space, extend the community deprivation project, provide more training with partners and continue virtual and in-person drop in sessions.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis commented that SADA provided an invaluable service, and was pleased that a Women's Centre had been set up in Letchworth.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Steve Jarvis

In response to the questions, Sarah Pateman advised:

- Everyone would be housed in a safe space the same, as well as receiving legal advice.
- SADA was collecting data and surveys on behalf of the Police. Deprivation could come in many forms.
- Councillors were welcome to come to Community Partnership meetings at Settle.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis commented that it did not matter on the circumstances, SADA would provide a safe space to survivors of domestic abuse. Services were available for everyone.

In the absence of Councillor Prendergast, Councillor Dave Winstanley presented the report entitled 'The Allocation of DLHUC's Homelessness Prevention Grant and Domestic Abuse Funding Awards for 2023/24 and 2024/25' and advised:

- The Homelessness Prevention Grant would total £746k for two years, and the Domestic Funding Awards totalled £71k over two years.
- The funding allocations would allow the organisations to keep providing services.

- The award to SADA was vital in supporting their work, as Domestic Abuse was a cause of homelessness.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Ruth Brown

In response to the questions, Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager, advised:

- The SADA service was embedded in the Housing Team at the Council.
- The current contract corresponded to the demand, but this would grow.
- The Managing Director had been made aware of £200k of extra provision, which could be used if needed.
- Finances had been looked at thoroughly and scrutinised by the Finance team.
- Fewer than 20 Ukrainian households had approached the Housing team for help. The funding towards that was welcome and the majority was likely to be used on general housing pressures and complex cases.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet approved the allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding as follows:
 - Keystage Housing (£134k in 2023/24, £151k in 2024/25)
 - OneYMCA (£172k in 2023/24, £172k in 2024/25)
 - SADA core housing service (£20k in 2024/25)
 - Rough sleeper outreach service (£35k in 2024/25)
- (2) That Cabinet approved the allocation of additional Homelessness Prevention Grant funding provided for domestic abuse duties as follows:
 - SADA Community Project (£35k in 2023/24 and £36k in 2024/25)
- (3) That Cabinet noted the recent DLUHC announcement of a Ukraine Homelessness Prevention Grant top-up for the Council for 2023/24.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) There is an urgent need to secure accommodation-based support services for single homeless people in the district. Adopting the recommendations at 2.1(A), 2.1(B) and 2.1(D) would secure the provision of existing, high quality, local services for the next two years, which is in line with the priorities set out in the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, contained within the Council's Housing Strategy 2019- 2024.
- (2) Domestic abuse remains a significant driver of homelessness. Adopting the recommendations at 2.1(C) and 2.2(A) would extend the core housing service that Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) provides the Council with for a further year and enable expansion of SADA services into the community. SADA is a local specialist provider of domestic abuse support and accommodation services.

192 LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND TWO

Audio recording – 1:00:22

N.B. This item was considered ahead of Agenda Item 7.

Anthony Roche, Managing Director, presented the report entitled 'Local Authority Housing Fund Round Two' and advised:

- Earlier this year, Cabinet agreed to work with settle in the first round of funding applications.
- The Council was currently working on an memorandum of understanding to see how money would be allocated.
- This funding round would be aimed at Afghans and temporary accommodation for general use.
- The Council reached out to six potential providers; four have expressed interest.
- Due to the short timescales, the recommendations would delegated the final decision to the Service Directors in consultation with the Executive Members.
- Once the expressions of interests had be evaluated, one provider would be chosen to work with.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Sean Prendergast seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the update on the Local Authority Housing Fund and wished to support round two of the scheme if it can.
- (2) That Cabinet delegated to the Service Director Regulatory and the Service Director Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health and Executive Member for Finance and IT, the final decision on submission of the validation form.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide as much time as possible to investigate whether the allocation from LAHF round two is able to be taken up.

193 LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP) UPDATE AND CONSULTATION REPORT

Audio recording – 1:08:38

Councillor Ruth Brown presented the report entitled 'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Update and Consultation Report' and advised:

- The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) went out for consultation at the Area Forums, Parish Councils, Town Councils and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).
- The consultation was extensive, however under 30s were underrepresented despite the consultation going into schools.
- The LCWIP was the daughter document to the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan, and agreed priorities on cycling and walking infrastructure.
- The main points were highlighted at paragraph 8.7 in the report.
- There was strong support for a safe cycling and walking route between Ashwell and Ashwell and Morden Station.
- There was lots of rejection to some proposals in Knebworth, and some proposals were altered and scaled back following responses received.
- There were concerns about the modal filters and one-way systems in Royston, which were scaled back.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis thanked Councillor Brown and the Officers involved in the project, and highlighted the changes made since consultation as being a positive part of the report.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Cabinet noted the attached LCWIP Consultation report at Appendix A.
- (2) That the Cabinet endorsed the proposed changes to the draft LCWIP, set out in the attached LCWIP Changes Summary Report.

REASON FOR DECISION: The LCWIP is a daughter document to Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan. Its adoption will guide and accelerate future investment in transport infrastructure that enables and encourages people to make more trips by active travel (walking, cycling, mobility scooter, and other legal low-speed mobility modes). This will help NHDC, HCC and the government deliver on their strategies for sustainable transport, public health and climate change; more specifically, to increase the modal share for active travel, and thereby to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions from motor vehicles.

194 ACTIVE NORTH HERTS STRATEGY

Audio recording – 1:12:47

N.B. Councillor Dave Winstanley left the Chamber at 20:43 and did not return.

Councillor Steve Jarvis presented the report entitled 'Active North Herts Strategy' and advised:

- The report covered the strategy of Activity and Leisure Provisions in North Hertfordshire.
- The Council would continue to provide facilities across the district to keep residents active and to increase the levels of those who are inactive.
- While North Hertfordshire did not have a significant deficiency in the activity of its residents, some groups were less active than others.
- The strategy would make better use of greenspace, and the Council would work more closely with partners across the voluntary sector, sports clubs and other providers to increase local opportunities.
- Some residents did not have facilities that were easily accessible for them, and the scope for more outreach activities would encourage participation.
- Provisions needed to be made to enable the delivery of an Active Communities Officer after 2025 in the new Leisure Contract. This position was currently funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet approved and adopted the Active North Herts Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (2) That Cabinet recommended to Council that a budget of £50k be approved from 2025/26 onwards, to enable the delivery of a new Active Communities programme run by the leisure operator.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Council and its stakeholder partners have a clear policy position on its approach to the future delivery of sport, leisure, physical activity and wellbeing services across the district.

195 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 1:16:34

Councillor Ruth Brown presented the report entitled 'Strategic Planning Matters' and advised:

- The report took into consideration the LCWIP and Conservation Areas.
- The proposed timetable for the remaining Strategic Planning Documents (SPDs) were detailed in the report, which were Sustainability, Biodiversity and Design Code.
- There were six large strategic sites. The first, Highover Farm was being presented to the Planning Control Committee on 6 July 2023.
- Paragraph 8.13 detailed the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Consultation, which would be reported on.
- Paragraph 8.16 detailed the Chesfield Consultation, which had lots of resident representation. However, further discussions would take place, as key stakeholders were not involved.
- Paragraphs 8.32 and 8.33 detailed the recommendation to approve £85k to respond to the Development Consent Order from London Luton Airport.
- The Council had made an in-principle objection, and the joint response would be made with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Dacorum Borough Council.
- Paragraph 8.42 detailed bus service improvement. HCC had been given a significant sum of money to go towards fare reduction and priority buses in Hitchin.
- Paragraph 8.52 detailed Electric Vehicle Charging Points, which was currently awaiting funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles.
- If funding was unsuccessful, there could be alternative funding from HCC through the Government Local Electric Vehicles Infrastructure (LEVI) capital fund programme.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on strategic planning matters was noted.
- (2) That the officer responses and Project Board procedures attached as Appendices A to G were noted and endorsed by Cabinet.
- (3) That Cabinet approved the use of £85k of reserve funding to respond to the London Luton Airport planning application being considered by the Planning Inspectorate.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments on strategic planning matters.

196 NORTH HERTS PLACE NARRATIVE

Audio recording – 1:21:45

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis presented the report entitled 'North Herts Place Narrative' and advised:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and referred this report. Overall the Committee was positive on the report and there was good feedback and scrutiny around the organisations that were involved in the Place Narrative.

- Royston BID did not feed into this report as they were unavailable, however the new manager would be consulted.
- Local councillors and representatives from arts and community groups in Royston also provided an input.
- The idea of having a Place Narrative came from an LGA Peer Review pre-Covid.
- Having a Place Narrative would make a place exist and sell the story of the area.
- The branding for the place narrative was strong and was without Council and political party colours.
- Partners were happy to work with the Council to sell the Place Narrative, and the Communications Team would lead on the work.

Councillor Ruth Brown advised a director from Royston BID did attend a focus group.

Councillor Keith Hoskins commented that the Place Narrative was a great piece of work.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the North Herts Place Narrative.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Despite being a district since 1974, North Hertfordshire has no clear identity and needs a point of differentiation within the county. This will help North Herts stand out as the place to invest, live, visit and work in Hertfordshire.
- (2) Currently, the Council and its partners are all telling different stories about North Herts which leads to fragmented communications. A joined up and coherent approach in the future will have greater impact, generate greater engagement and raise the profile of North Herts the place.

197 WASTE SHARED SERVICE: CLIENT TEAM AND CORPORATE SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Audio recording – 1:28:48

Councillor Amy Allen presented the report entitled 'Waste Shared Service: Client Team and Corporate Support Arrangements' and advised:

- The report was based on outcomes from the Member-led Joint Working Group between East Herts and North Herts Councils.
- Workshops held with Senior Managers identified and considered corporate support arrangements affecting waste contract administration and management.
- The changes made were to enhance the customer experience with transformation programmes and improved efficiency.
- The report followed from previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive reports regarding future waste management.

Councillor Amy Allen proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Agreed that each Council leads on their own customer service provision with one set of processes for customer interactions being developed and agreed with a focus on resolution at the first point of contact.

- (2) Noted the draft timeline for the transition for customer service provision outlined in 8.7
- (3) Agreed to the proposed updates and changes to financial management and governance arrangements and subsequent necessary changes to the Inter Authority Agreement outlined in Section 8.
- (4) Agreed the updated waste service policy statements contained in Appendix 2 to come into force from May 2025.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the shared waste service.

198 ASHWELL CONSERVATION AREA

Audio recording – 6:20

N.B. This item was considered ahead of Agenda Item 9.

Mr David Cook gave a verbal presentation and advised:

- The Parish Council had planted trees to strengthen the case for a Conservation Area.
- No residents who would be impacted by the proposed Conservation Area received a letter and had not been invited to comment.
- Future consultations should include individual letters to households affected by the proposals.
- Three properties included within the proposed Conservation Area did not add value to the proposed conservation area.

N.B. Councillor Amy Allen entered the Chamber at 19:41.

Councillor Dave Winstanley left the Chamber at 19:40 and re-entered at 19:41.

In response to the question from Councillor Ian Albert, Mr. Cook advised that he believed impacted households should receive letters on proposals such as these.

Councillor Ruth Brown presented the report entitled 'Ashwell Conservation Area' and advised:

- The proposed Conservation Area went out to consultation, and Cabinet was asked to approve and adopt.
- Paragraph 8.2 detailed that interested parties were contacted and Ashwell Parish Council advertised the consultation period to residents.
- All comments were duly considered and revisions were made.
- The Conservation Area boundaries surrounding properties had to be amended to follow property boundaries.
- The properties mentioned by Mr. Cook made a neutral contribution to the Conservation Area and framed the entrance to the village. By including them in the proposed Conservation Area, there was potential to enhance them.

Councillor Steve Jarvis commented that Mr. Cook made a good point and that it was important that the consultation reached impacted people.

In response to the questions from Councillor Jarvis, the Senior Planning Officer advised that Townsend Meadow did not make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, so was excluded. There were four character areas in Ashwell, with area four including post-War properties.

Councillor Ian Albert commented that it was important to pick up points from the consultation and the points that Mr Cook made.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Steve Jarvis seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the boundary changes to the Ashwell Conservation Area were approved and the new Ashwell conservation area was designated.
- (2) That the Ashwell CAAMP were approved and adopted.
- (3) That Officers were authorised to undertake the associated administrative tasks to finalise the designation of the Ashwell conservation area, outlined in paragraph 8.6.
- (4) That delegated authority was granted to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport to make any minor non-material corrections (including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations) to the CAAMP as considered necessary for the publication of the CAAMP.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that our Conservation Areas and historic assets within North Hertfordshire are appropriately assessed and designated to inform decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of neighbourhood plans and our Local Plan.

199 PIRTON CONSERVATION AREA

Audio recording – 1:30:46

Councillor Ruth Brown presented the report entitled 'Pirton Conservation Area' and advised:

- The report sought Cabinet approval for the new Conservation area in Pirton.
- Revisions had been made following the consultation.
- Appendix A detailed the consultation, and Appendix B detailed the proposed changes.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Sean Prendergast seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the boundary changes to the Pirton Conservation Area are approved in the new Pirton Conservation Area was designated.
- (2) That the Pirton CAAMP was approved and adopted.
- (3) That Officers were authorised to undertake the associated administrative tasks to finalise the designation of the Pirton Conservation Area, outlined in paragraph 8.6.
- (4) That the delegated authority was granted to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport to make any minor non-material corrections (including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations) to the CAAMP as considered necessary for the publication of the CAAMP.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that our Conservation Areas and historic assets within North Hertfordshire are appropriately assessed and designated to inform decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of neighbourhood plans and our Local Plan.

200 Q4 UPDATE ON PROGRESS AGAINST THE COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 22-23

Audio recording – 1:32:49

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled 'Q4 Update on the Progress Against the Council Delivery Plan 22-23' and advised:

- The discussions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee around this item were welcomed.
- The report brought together key projects that the Council planned to deliver.
- The end of year report included an update on the Local Government Boundary Review which was now complete.
- There was detail on the progress of continuing projects, completed projects, and upcoming projects.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked questions surrounding EV charging points, Royston Leisure Centre, Solar Panels and procurement and resourcing risks.
- There was discussion surrounding the prioritisation criteria of projects, which was usually done at Service Director level.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis commented that projects needed to be viewed as living documents, which would need to be looked at as budget decreases. Prioritisation of the delivery plan was needed.

Councillor Steve Jarvis commented on the solar panel issues at Royston Leisure Centre, and the need to think about potential project outcomes. The outcomes could be different from expectations, and different delivery routes and priorities should be explored.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including new milestones, deleted milestones, and changes to milestone dates and risks.
- (2) That Cabinet noted the deletion of projects outlined in 8.6, to be replaced by new projects in 2023-24.
- (3) That Cabinet noted the completion of the Museum and HTH recovery, Customer Portal, Full review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and Green Space Management Strategy Projects.
- (4) That Cabinet noted the reduction in the Town Centre Recovery risk score from a 3 to a risk score of 2.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Cabinet, with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks, or opportunities.

201 REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2022/23

Audio recording – 1:43:48

Councillor Sean Nolan, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee presented the referral and advised:

- The considerations around this item looked at a number of areas, but overall the report was seen positively as less was being spent.
- The Committee had questions surrounding items such as parking charge write-downs, which had a negative impact on the balance.
- There were questions over the way items were looked at previously and budgeted in.
- For example, the Management Fee for the Leisure Facilities was not quite back at pre-Covid Levels. This was due to the income from gyms and pools being down due to the pandemic, but the income is likely to return close to pre-Covid levels.
- The Committee discussed any future items and how the finance team could look at things going forward. As the Covid-19 pandemic would not have as much of an effect on items, how that would affect the ability to budget in future.
- There were questions around ensuring reality was reflected in smaller variance going forward.

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled 'Revenue Budget Outturn 2022/23' and advised:

- The report set out the position on Revenue Budget across the final quarter and the year overall.
- Appendix A summarised the budget movements across the year.
- The final budget had moved from £18.2million to a final spend of £16.7million. Some provisions set aside for Covid-19 were not required and the increase in investment interest income affected the final net spend.
- There would be additional investment income and inflation impacts on budgets going forward.
- The 23/24 budget provision for Covid-19 impacts had been decreased in the budget setting process and it was expected to be confirmed in the Q1 investment returns would be significantly above budget. In the longer term it was assumed that interest rates and inflation would decrease.
- Table 4 detailed spend movement in the last quarter, and Table 7 set out the expected year end general fund position, subject to audit.

Councillor Steve Jarvis commented that the income from Churchgate was significantly higher than budgeted.

In response to the question from Councillor Steve Jarvis, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis advised that the £10k carried over for the Boundary Review was a hold to cover objections or call-ins of the Boundary Review by Members of Parliament. This would be released as the deadline for call-in had passed.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted this report.
- (2) That Cabinet approved a decrease of £920k in the 2022/23 net General Fund expenditure, as identified in table 4 and paragraph 8.1, to a total of £15.818million.
- (3) That Cabinet approved the changes to the 2023/24 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.3, a total £47k decrease in net expenditure.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (4) That Council approves the net transfer from earmarked reserves, as identified in table 9, of £5.274million.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- (2) Changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

202 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) END OF YEAR REVIEW 2022/23

Audio recording – 1:50:43

Councillor Sean Nolan, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee presented the referral and advised:

- Discussion centred around on the positive and negative effects of interest rates and inflation on the Council and its residents.
- There were questions around Property Improvements, such as the project at the Royston Leisure Centre.
- There were comments surrounding the balance of cost against return, the Council's role and risks that should be considered.

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled 'Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) End of Year Review 2022/23' and advised:

- The report set out the position on Capital Budgets for the year up to 31 March 2023 and the Treasury Investment returns.
- Tables 2 and 3 set out the changes to the forecast spend during the final quarter, and paragraph 8.6 detailed the completed Capital Schemes.
- Paragraph 8.10 onwards, confirmed that the Council complied with the Investment Strategy during 2022/23 and its position on Investment Returns.

In response to the question from Councillor Ian Albert, the Service Director – Resources advised that the performance indicators in the report were for 22/23.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted expenditure of £6.923million in 2022/23 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the adjustments to the capital programme for 2023/24 as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2, increasing the estimated spend in by £1.222million.
- (3) That Cabinet noted the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.7 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.
- (4) That Cabinet approved the application of £6.300million of capital receipts/set aside towards the 2022/23 capital programme, paragraph 8.7 refers.

(5) Cabinet noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of March 2023.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (6) Cabinet was asked to recommend this report to Council and ask Council to:
- Approve the actual 2022/23 prudential and treasury indicators.
 - Note the annual Treasury Report for 2022/23.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- (2) To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

203 YEAR END REPORT ON RISK MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE

Audio recording – 1:54:19

Councillor Sean Nolan, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, presented the referral and advised:

- The discussion at the Committee focussed on managing risk and actions undertaken by the Council, being risk aware and understanding where risks were generated from.
- Discussion also looked at the role and inputs of the Shared Internal Audit Service and the Shared Anti-Fraud Service in Risk Management.

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled 'Year End Report on Risk Management Governance' and advised:

- The report set out Risk Management over the last year.
- Various corporate risks were included in the Council Delivery Plan, which gave a broader look at the Council's Risk Management Activities.
- Paragraph 8.7 detailed Risk Appetite and Horizon Scanning.
- The Council needed to consider being brave in relation to risk, but balance against the need to look after resident's money and provide services the provide value for money.
- The report promoted the role of the Performance and Risk Management Group, which Members of the Finance, Audit and Risk and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Executive could attend.

Councillor Steve Jarvis commented that he was concerned that there was nothing related to the risks of Climate Change on the Risk Register. There were serious risks to the Council and the ability to deliver services posed by Climate Change that needed to be highlighted and evaluated.

The Service Director – Resources advised that the corporate risks fed through from the Council Delivery Plan, which was made up of specific actions and the risks in relation to those. He advised that the next Council Delivery Plan would be updated to reflect the risk and actions that would be developed in relation to climate change.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed an additional recommendation that the risk associated with Climate Change should be recognised when the Council Delivery Plan is updated in Autumn.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, with additional recommendation and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the comments from FAR on the Annual Risk Management update.
- (2) That Cabinet noted the comments from FAR on the review of the Risk Management Framework.
- (3) That the risk associated with Climate Change should be recognised when the Council Delivery Plan is updated in the Autumn.

REFERRED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council consider the Annual Risk Management update, including comments provided by Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The responsibility for ensuring the management of risks is that of Cabinet.
- (2) This Committee has responsibility to monitor the effective development and operation of Risk Management.

The meeting closed at 9.33 pm

Chair

CABINET
19 September 2023

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

DLUHC'S SINGLE HOMELESSNESS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR SEAN PRENDERGAST

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. North Herts Council has been invited by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to submit a bid to its Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP).
- 1.2. The Council is co-producing a bid with Hertfordshire County Council to seek funding for a new accommodation-based support scheme in the district for vulnerable young people who are experiencing or are at risk of rough sleeping. OneYMCA has been selected, following a comprehensive selection process, as the delivery partner and, should the bid be successful, would be responsible for the build and management of the scheme.
- 1.3. At the time of writing, OneYMCA are pursuing potential site options for the proposed scheme. The deadline for bid submission is 10 November 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet notes the content of the report and subject to a site being identified approves the submission of a bid under the SHAP programme.
- 2.2. That Cabinet delegates to the Service Director Housing & Environmental Health the preparation and submission of the bid in consultation with the Executive Member.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. There is an urgent need for high quality, accommodation-based support services for single homeless people in the district. Adopting the recommendations at 2.1 and 2.2 would allow the Council to pursue a funding opportunity which if successful, would enable the delivery of a valuable additional resource for the district, benefiting vulnerable young people at risk of rough sleeping.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Cabinet could decide against submitting a bid to the SHAP. However, this is not recommended as there are no alternative provisions proposed to cater for young people who are, or are at risk, of rough sleeping.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Sean Prendergast and the Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Dave Winstanley, have both been consulted and are supportive of the proposals contained in this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 18 August 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) was announced at the end of 2022 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), as part of the government's commitment to end rough sleeping within this Parliament. The SHAP will provide a total of £200 million in funding for additional high-quality specialist accommodation with high levels of support for two specific target groups: the most entrenched rough sleepers and vulnerable young people who are experiencing or are at risk of rough sleeping. DLUHC funding potentially comprises both capital for the initial development and revenue, to help deliver the service, for up to three years.
- 7.2. North Herts Council is one of around 80 local authorities which has been invited by DLUHC to bid for SHAP funding, in our case to address identified gaps in homelessness provision for vulnerable young people aged 18-25. Currently, specialist provision for this age group is provided at Jubilee House in Hitchin but the scheme does not cater for those with high or complex needs or those with offending histories, and typically operates with a waiting list.
- 7.3. The Council has been working with Hertfordshire Growth Board (which is leading the county response to manage growth and has identified accommodation provision for vulnerable adults as a priority) to develop a co-produced bid for submission to the SHAP to meet a 10 November 2023 deadline, the final opportunity to bid for funding. If the bid is successful, the Growth Board hopes to use the North Herts scheme as a template by which to roll out additional schemes in other district/boroughs across the county. Work on the bid is also being supported by Homes England and local DLUHC advisors.
- 7.4. The bid group has recently selected OneYMCA as its delivery partner following a comprehensive selection process. OneYMCA will work with the group to finalise details of the proposed scheme to be submitted to the SHAP and, should the bid be successful, would take on the build and management of the new scheme including provision of 24/7 specialist support services. Site options in the district are currently being explored and although extremely limited, options are being brought forward and being progressed by both OneYMCA and Hertfordshire County Council.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There remains an ongoing need for high quality accommodation-based support services for single homeless people in the district. DLUHC has identified a specific need in North Herts, aligned to the SHAP target groups, for additional accommodation provision for vulnerable young people who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. The Council has been invited to bid for funding to address this identified local need. A Strategic Gap Analysis of the existing provision in the district estimates an additional need for 15-20 units of specialist provision for this target group. This would provide intensive accommodation-based support for young people with multiple disadvantages, many of whom have already experienced failed placements, particularly those with an

offending history and/or care leavers. Without additional provision, some of these young people would remain homeless. The Council also remains reliant on hotel placements where alternative accommodation cannot be immediately sourced or where applicants' support needs are too great for current services.

- 8.2 The SHAP provides a valuable opportunity to leverage both additional funding for a much needed service and, through joint-working with OneYMCA and Hertfordshire County Council, new sites for development which are extremely scarce locally. At the time of writing, both OneYMCA and Herts CC are continuing to explore a small number of avenues for potential sites, with final scheme costs and the size and shape of the SHAP bid obviously dependent upon the outcome. The Council is not under any obligations to submit a bid, should a site not be forthcoming.
- 8.3 OneYMCA are an experienced provider of specialist accommodation-based support based on Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) principles and operate successful schemes across the county including at 20 High Street, Baldock following their merger with Haven First. OneYMCA schemes are modelled on psychologically informed environments enabling those who have experienced significant trauma and multiple disadvantage to recover with appropriate intensive support and move on to independent living. Any proposed scheme that receives SHAP funding will be subject to the relevant regulatory requirements, including obtaining planning consent.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Housing Act 1985 Section 1 (1) confirms that the District Council is the Local Housing Authority (LHA).
- 9.2 LHAs' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English local housing authorities.
- 9.3 LHAs have a legal duty to provide interim (also known as emergency) accommodation to homeless applicants, if, at any point during their enquiries, there is a reason to believe that an applicant may be:
- homeless
 - eligible for assistance, and
 - in priority need

If an LHA fails to provide interim accommodation, or if the accommodation provided is unsuitable for the applicant, this can be challenged by way of judicial review.

- 9.4 The LHA also holds the 'Relief Duty' which applies when a council is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance; it requires the Council to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for the applicant's occupation for at least six months. This therefore requires the Council to work with the applicant to help them find and retain accommodation to meet this legal duty.
- 9.5 The Cabinet's Terms of Reference provides at paragraph 5.6.15; "To oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council".
- 9.6 The Council is not under any legal obligations to pursue a SHAP bid. Should a bid be successful, funding will be subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and DLUHC and a Funding Agreement will also be provided between the Council and OneYMCA. Any successful bid will also be dependant upon obtaining the necessary consents and permits, such as planning and building regulation approval.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council may be asked to contribute to the capital costs to deliver the new scheme, alongside DLUHC and potentially Herts CC and OneYMCA. This would be considered in line with other requests for commuted sums monies held by the Council in lieu of affordable housing that could not be delivered on previous development sites.
- 10.2 The revenue costs of the bid could be funded by DLUHC for a period of three years to enable the service to bed into existing local pathways and commissioning cycles. Beyond this, the service will be supported in line with local commissioning and funding opportunities provided by partners, including potentially the Council where appropriate, proportionate to evidenced benefit.
- 10.3 The Service Director Resources will be consulted prior to any submission to ascertain the financial implications of any bid to the Council.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Although DLUHC has invited the Council to bid for SHAP funding, there is still a risk that a bid will not be successful or that there are insufficient SHAP funds remaining after the previous rounds of bidding.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. Should the Council's bid be successful, the proposed scheme would specifically benefit vulnerable young people aged 18-25 as stipulated by the SHAP funding criteria, in order to meet existing gaps in provision. This cohort includes young people with multiple disadvantages including those leaving the care system, those with histories of repeated homelessness and unstable housing and those with mental and physical health needs.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.
- 13.2. However, should the bid be successful, the scheme would be delivered by OneYMCA, an existing local provider of services in the district.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the proposals in this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The process of considering and submitting the bid are being undertaken within existing resources.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Jo Doggett, Service Director Housing and Environmental Health, jo.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk ; ext 4470

17.2 Ian Fullstone, Director of Regulatory Services ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4480

17.3 Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4250

17.4 Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Commercial Team Manager and Deputy MO isabelle.alajooz@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4346

17.5 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Community Engagement Manager reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4212

17.6 Jodie Penfold, Group Accountant jodie.penfold@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4332

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 DLUHC Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme: prospectus and guidance (outside of Greater London) [Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/single-homelessness-accommodation-programme).

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CABINET 19 September 2023

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND HOME OFFICE FUNDING UPDATE

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR SEAN PRENDERGAST

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Council has successfully housed 70 refugees in direct response to government resettlement schemes over recent years. As the general demands from the public for housing assistance continue to grow, this includes refugees from places such as Afghanistan and Ukraine.
- 1.2. The Home Office has provided multi-year funding for local authorities for its direct resettlement schemes (where specific allocations were agreed) and it continues to do so to ensure the growing demands from refugees can be met.
- 1.3. This report seeks to update the Cabinet on the current position regarding refugees and to provide a flexible approach to meeting increased housing demands whilst also ensuring appropriate support is provided to refugees.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet notes the local position regarding the resettlement of refugees and it supports more focused resettlement efforts for this client group as part of the Council's wider housing role;
- 2.2. That Cabinet delegates to the Service Director – Housing and Environmental Health in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, the authority to decide the allocation of Home Office funding to support the resettlement of refugees (for matters that are not reserved for Cabinet).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. There is likely to be increased demand for housing services from refugees in the foreseeable future and the recommendations in this report seek to manage this efficiently, whilst ensuring appropriate support services are in place.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Cabinet could decide against the recommendations in this report, however due to a likely increased demand for housing services from refugees and the uncertainty over the full impact of evolving government policy in this area, this could lead to a more reactive response and a significant increase in temporary accommodation placements, including widespread hotel usage.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Sean Prendergast and the Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Dave Winstanley, have both been consulted and are supportive of the proposals contained in this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 26 May 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Although the resettlement of refugees typically requires a multi-agency response, this report has been produced in the context of the Council's role of local housing authority. The Council has resettled 70 refugees in the district over recent years (55 Syrian and 15 Afghan) under Home Office schemes following government requests for housing assistance. The resettlement schemes have been fully funded by the Home Office with multi-year funding in recognition of the mid/longer term process for integration and this typically funds important services, such as the crucial daily support provided by the Refugee Council.
- 7.2. There are currently no specific Home Office allocations for refugee resettlements and they are eligible to approach any local authority for housing assistance. To date, the Council has received around 30 approaches for housing assistance from Ukrainians who were due/have become homeless from their Homes for Ukraine placement or their Ukraine Family Scheme arrangements. Although there have been no approaches from Afghan families as yet, it is noted that the entire bridging hotel programme across the country closed on 31 August 2023 and as there were two bridging hotels in Hertfordshire there are likely to be some housing impacts across the county.
- 7.3. Although asylum seekers are ineligible for local authority housing services, if they are successful with their applications, they will be granted refugee status by the Home Office. The Home Office has secured two hotels in the district, with a total of almost 250 occupants (these are separate to the Afghan bridging hotels). Should refugee status be granted to any of the occupants they would be able to present to the Council as being in need of accommodation.
- 7.4. Registered Providers (RPs), especially settle and First Garden City Homes, have been very supportive with refugee resettlements to date and DLUHC's Local Authority Housing Fund will provide more affordable housing to help with these demands (three properties were funded in round one and there are another 20 potential units in round two). The support from RPs has provided housing stability for the refugees whilst also enabling cost effective resettlements. However, it is anticipated there will be more focus on the option of using the private rented sector for the resettlement of refugees going forward which will involve much higher costs (for example, significant payments for deposits and/or rent in advance).
- 7.5. A new member of staff has been recruited, based in the Council's housing team, in order to manage resettlement activity (the fixed term post of three years has been fully funded by the Home Office funding). Consideration will be given to extending this role beyond this term using available funding if required.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The current demand for housing services is high and is likely to grow further, primarily due to the cost-of-living crisis and housing market challenges. In addition, government policy regarding refugee resettlement and future demands are unknown, however it is highly likely refugee numbers will increase, and there is an opportunity to provide a more focused response to ensure their needs are met alongside those of the wider public.
- 8.2 The Home Office is procuring hotels across the country for the placement of asylum seekers due to high demand levels. They are also beginning a process whereby asylum seekers from certain countries can receive fast-tracked decisions, with the majority being positive. This means that refugee status can be granted in a shorter timescale and for those in hotels, they will be given 28 days-notice to vacate as their places are required for new asylum seekers. This process has already been initiated and there have already been instances of refugees arriving at Hertfordshire local authorities for housing assistance without the 28 days-notice and being placed into temporary accommodation. In addition, around 12 months ago, the Home Office also asked Hertfordshire to assist with the placement of 801 asylum seekers by December 2023, with North Herts' allocation being 97; further clarity is being sought on this extra demand bearing in mind the relatively recent procurement of the 12 hotels in Hertfordshire accommodating almost 1800 asylum seekers.
- 8.3 Some refugees require support in order to fully settle and integrate in the community and there are specialist services that are available, including those offering basic language skills and assistance with acclimatising to the new environment. As a result, the needs of refugees will be reviewed periodically to assess if a need exists for these types of support services for refugees living in the district.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Housing Act 1985 Section 1 (1) confirms that the District Council is the Local Housing Authority (LHA).
- 9.2 LHAs' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English local housing authorities.
- 9.3 LHAs have a legal duty to provide interim (also known as emergency) accommodation to homeless applicants, if, at any point during their enquiries, there is a reason to believe that an applicant may be:

- homeless
- eligible for assistance, and
- in priority need

If an LHA fails to provide interim accommodation, or if the accommodation provided is unsuitable for the applicant, this can be challenged by way of judicial review.

- 9.4 The LHA also holds the 'Relief Duty'¹ which applies when a council is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance; it requires the Council to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for the applicant's occupation for at least six months. This therefore requires the Council to work with the applicant to help them find and retain accommodation to meet this legal duty.

¹ s.189B(1) Housing Act 1996 as inserted by s.5(2) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- 9.5 The Cabinet's Terms of Reference provides at paragraph 5.7.15; "To oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council".

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There is a balance of £488k of Home Office funding currently unallocated, with expected income to 2027/28 of an additional £362k which is available for the resettlement of refugees.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There is likely increased demand for housing services from refugees and the uncertainty over the full impact of evolving government policy in this area could lead to a more reactive response and a significant increase in temporary accommodation placements, including widespread hotel usage.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 This resettlement scheme seeks to support vulnerable refugees into the district. As paragraph 8.3 notes, specific support is required to ensure effective integration and therefore the fostering of good relations between existing and new communities.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the proposals in this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 No impact.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Jo Doggett, Director of Housing and Environmental Health jo.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk ; ext 4470
- 17.2 Ian Fullstone, Director of Regulatory Services ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4480
- 17.3 Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4250
- 17.4 Jodie Penfold, Group Accountant Jodie.penfold@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4332

- 17.5 Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Commercial Team Manager and Deputy MO
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- 17.6 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Community Engagement Manager
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 None

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CABINET

19 September 2023

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: PROPOSED OFF-STREET CAR PARKING TARIFFS FOR 2023/24

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORT: COUNCILLOR RUTH BROWN

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report requests that Cabinet agrees:

- (i) the proposed car parking tariffs in North Hertfordshire Council's off street car parks in order to effectively manage their use, and in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- (ii) the policy proposal that visitors parking in electric vehicle parking bays should pay for their parking session.
- (iii) for officers to implement parking subsidy and incentive schemes on a break even approach on request.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to adopt the proposed off-street car park tariffs for 2023/24 as set out in Tables 1 to 5 at Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees not to increase the charges for Season Tickets for each of its long stay car parks or business permits for its car park at St. Martins Road in Knebworth for 2023/24
- 2.3 That Cabinet agrees not to increase the charges for resident permits, visitor permits, business permits or visitor tickets for resident permit zones for 2023/24.
- 2.4 That Cabinet agree that the proposed tariff changes, as recommended and approved in paragraphs 2.1 above, are implemented as soon as practicable, and that officers in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport proceed with the implementation as required.
- 2.5 That Cabinet agree to the policy of customers paying for parking sessions whilst parked within electric vehicle charging bays.
- 2.6 That Officers proceed with the necessary amendments to the Off-Street Parking Traffic Regulation Orders as required to implement changes recommended and approved above, and that officers in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport proceed with the implementation as required.

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| 2.7 | That Cabinet agrees for officers in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport to implement subsidy and incentive parking schemes on a break even approach on request. |
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3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To implement an increase in car parking tariffs in order to effectively manage their use and in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). To set car parking tariffs that support the achievement of modal shift away from private car use and to help support the vitality of town centres.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 See Section 8 of the report for proposed changes to car parking tariffs within the Council car parks and to introduce measures to charge for parking sessions in designated electric vehicle parking bays.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport has been involved in discussions and selection of tariffs and kept informed on these matters. The Executive Member for Finance has also been informed.
- 5.2 The Area Forums for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Southern Rural were formally consulted on the proposed tariff changes in June/July, requesting that all comments be received by the end of July/first week in August. The Executive Member, Deputy Member and Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manger attended the forum meetings to present the proposals and receive comments. Town Centre and BID Mangers for each of the towns, Royston Town Council and Knebworth Parish Council were also consulted and invited to offer their views on the proposed tariff changes.
- 5.3 A summary of the comments received from these organisations and the Area Forum meetings is attached at Appendix B. Separate Comments were also received from County Cllr Fiona Hill (see Appendix B). These have been considered and discussed with the Executive Member and Deputy and taken into account in finalising this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 21 April 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Council's approved Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2021-26, sets an annual budget assumption that the Council should increase parking fees and charges annually by 2%. It makes it clear that parking charge levels are mainly set to manage demand and are reflective of the cost of alternative parking locations. The budget estimates for 2023/24 include the expectation that income from parking will increase by 2%. Any variance from this would be reported through the budget monitoring process.

- 7.2 Paragraph 5.7.30 of the Council's Constitution, states '*it is for cabinet to determine charges for car parking*'. The proposals for car parking tariffs and season ticket increases are set out sections 8 and 9 below.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Car Park Tariff Proposals

- 8.1.1 Parking Tariffs were last increased by Cabinet in September 2022 for 2022/23, which were implemented on 1st November 2022.

- 8.1.2 The proposals for 2022/23 included:

- Achieving most of the target through applying a 10p increase to the one-hour tariff bands across all off-street car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Knebworth. (with the exception of Baldock, as Baldock only has a 3hr and all day tariff band)
- Retaining all other tariff bands as per the 2021/22 prices across all car parks.
- Not increasing the cost of Season Tickets or Business Permits due to a reduction in the take up of these permits with the change in employer habits with more people continuing to work from home and commuting into their office on certain days.
- Retaining the off-peak incentives after 3pm in Hitchin and Royston. In Hitchin this included a flat rate irrespective of whether visitors park for one or more hours after 3pm in the short stay and long stay car parks. In Royston the 'free after 3pm' incentive is currently subsidised by an annual contribution from Royston First BID, Royston Area Committee and County Councillor Hertfordshire Locality Budgets to the value of £11k on the total income estimate.

- 8.1.3 The proposed 2% inflationary uplift for 2023/24 is estimated to increase annual income by £39,500. The actual impact on income from the changes to tariffs will depend on the level of demand for parking. Transaction data over the 12-month period April 2022 to the end of March 2023 has been analysed to estimate the impact of adjusting individual tariffs. Two tariff options were considered:

- 8.1.4 Option One - To continue to support the economic vitality of the town centres by encouraging people to stay longer by closing the gap between the one hour and the next band, also retaining the off-peak incentive in Hitchin, by:

- (i) increasing the one-hour tariff band by a further 10p increase across all Council operated off-street car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston including the after 3pm one hour tariff band in all Hitchin car parks.
- (ii) Applying a 10p increase to the half hour and one hour tariff band in Knebworth and a 10p increase to the 3-hour tariff band in Baldock.
- (iii) Retaining the after 3pm off-peak incentive in all Hitchin and Royston car parks.
- (iv) Retaining all other tariff bands as per the 2021/22 prices (unaltered in 2022/23) across all car parks.

This option would just meet the inflationary increase with a 2.1% increase of around £1,200 additional income.

8.1.5 Option Two - includes the following rationale:

- Continuing to support the economic vitality of the town centres by encouraging people to stay longer by further reducing the gap between the one hour and two hour tariffs, and by retaining the after 3pm off-peak incentive in all Hitchin and Royston car parks.
- Reviewing and rationalizing the 5p tariffs across all car parks in response to complaints received from the public about the older machines not always accepting 5p coins. The replacement of the machines, which is due to commence later this financial year, will rectify this issue (see para 8.2.8).
- adopting a consistent approach across all car parks and harmonize tariffs where possible within each town whilst respecting their separate identities.

8.1.6 In summary these proposals include:

- (i) Applying a further 10p increase to the one-hour tariff bands across all Council operated off-street car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston including the after 3pm one hour tariff band in all Hitchin car parks.
- (ii) Increasing the 0-2 hour tariff in the Lairage MSCP by 5p – i.e. from £1.25 to £1.30 to align with the one-hour tariff band in the other long stay Hitchin car parks of Bancroft and Woodside.
- (iii) Increasing the half hour tariff by 10p in Knebworth from 30p to 40p but retaining the one-hour tariff.
- (iv) Rationalizing all the 5p tariffs across all car parks to facilitate usage of the machines, this will result in the majority of the tariffs increasing by 5p, with some reductions to the all day tariff in the Letchworth long stay car parks, the two and four hour tariff in the Letchworth Town Hall short stay car park, and to the three hour tariff in the Royston Princes Mews car park.
- (v) In Knebworth, given the smaller size of the high street and in seeking to encourage visitors to stay longer to support the local businesses, the 5p tariff has been removed, thereby reducing the two-, three- and four-hour tariffs by 5p.
- (vi) Retaining the off-peak incentive after 3pm in Royston, where the subsidised full ‘free after 3pm’ policy in all Royston car parks will be retained until such time as this policy is reviewed, such as in light of the Hertfordshire County Council Sustainable Travel Town Initiative¹.
- (vii) Retaining all other tariff bands as per the 2021/22 prices (unaltered in 2022/23) across all car parks.

8.1.7 Rounding the 5p tariffs up across all car parks in addition to the proposed 10p one hour tariff increase would increase the overall parking revenue by 2.4%. This is slightly more (equivalent to additional income of around £6,800) than the budget expectation of 2%, based on the current composition of demand for each tariff.

8.1.8 Both Options were discussed with Exec Member and Deputy, and it was agreed that the second Option should be consulted upon. These proposed Tariff changes are presented in Tables 1 to 5 at Appendix A.

¹ The HCC Sustainable Travel Town Initiative is a concept being promoted by HCC through their LTP4 which seeks to promote more active and sustainable modes of travel and includes implementing measures to reduce car travel.

8.2 Summary of comments and considerations

8.2.1 Comments were received from the Area Forum Meetings, Royston and Letchworth BIDs, Royston Town Council and Knebworth Parish Council. No comments have been received from Hitchin BID – despite being sent a reminder towards the end of the consultation period.

8.2.2 *The key comments are summarised as follows:*

- The rationale for the proposed tariff changes were noted taking into consideration the inflationary increases and the impacts across all sectors of the economy.
- Mixed views were received regarding the proposed 10p increase to the one-hour tariff bands, with concerns raised on the basis of the current economic hardship.
- Questioning the perceived gap between different tariff structures in the case of St. Martins Car Park in Knebworth compared to other car parks in Letchworth and Royston and suggesting that the 2-hour tariff at St. Martin's Road Car Park be reviewed from £1.50 to 80p to accord with the 10p differential between 1 and 2 hour tariffs in the Civic Centre Car Park in Royston.
- Welcoming the retention of the subsidised parking scheme in Hitchin and Royston, where:
 - in Hitchin specific comments were made suggesting that the flat rate after 3pm should not cost more than the 1-hour rate and to give consideration to freezing the tariffs post 3pm as per 2022/23 rate.
 - in Letchworth consideration could be given to other possible options
 - In Knebworth welcomed the option to subsidise the 30min parking as free parking
- Season tickets should not be increased.
- Blue Badge holders should not be charged.
- Reference was made to progressing with the alternative methods of payment project but not moving entirely to pay by phone and ensuring that sufficient time is given for people to either pay or register for their parking session once parked up.

The Detailed Comments are set out in Appendix B. Specific comments are addressed below:

8.2.3 *Freezing the post 3pm tariffs in Hitchin Car Parks (Hitchin and Southern Rural Area Forums)*

8.2.3.1 The suggestion of freezing the post 3pm tariffs and not increasing these above the one-hour rate is in effect the same point in retaining the flat rate fee as per 202/23 prices. This would result in a 1.8% increase which is below the 2% inflationary increase (i.e. with a shortfall of circa £3,500) and has therefore been dismissed as other tariffs and possibly Season Tickets (which have not recovered to pre-Covid levels) would have to be increased to meet the inflationary target. In addition, this option (i.e. option two) is considered reasonable as this permits visitors to park for up to 3 hours after 3pm for a flat fee of either £1.40 in the long stay car parks or £1.60 in the short stay car parks.

8.2.4 *Differential parking Charges in Knebworth compared to Letchworth and Royston (Knebworth PC and Southern Rural Area Forum)*

- 8.2.4.1 St. Martin's Road car park is a short stay car park, is well utilised and seeks to support the local businesses and visitors to ensure turnover of spaces. This car park therefore operates differently to the two Letchworth Car parks offering 2-hour free parking as these are out of centre car parks supporting visitors to the Norton Common recreation facilities. (Note there is no free parking offered in Hitchin and it is assumed that the PC meant Letchworth in their response).
- 8.3.4.2 The difference in the one- and two-hour tariff at St Martin's car park is compared to the Royston Civic Centre/Town Hall car park and it is suggested that this should be reduced from £1.50 to 80p to accord with the 10p difference between the 1 and 2 hour tariff in the Civic Centre car park.
- 8.3.4.3 Apart from the Civic Centre Car Park, the difference between the one- and two-hour rate ranges from £1.10 in Hitchin to 70p in Letchworth and 80p in Royston car parks. The lower two-hour tariff in the Royston Civic Centre car park seeks to address the underutilisation of this car park, being a long stay car park as well as being located on the edge of the town centre away from the core shopping area.
- 8.4.4.4 To reduce the 2-hour tariff as proposed in St. Martin's car park would increase the overall parking revenue by 2.3%. This is slightly less than the 2.4% preferred option (equivalent to additional income of around £4,820 i.e. a difference of circa £1,980) Given that St. Martin's Road car park operates as a short stay car park and at near capacity thereby ensuring turnover of spaces to support local businesses, it is recommended that this option is not supported.

8.2.5 *Season Tickets and Business Permits (Hitchin Area Forum)*

- 8.2.5.1 It is not proposed to increase Season Tickets prices in the Council's long stay car parks or to increase Business Permits in St. Martins Road car park in Knebworth for 2023/24. There has been a continued reduction in the take up of Business Permits given the change in employer habits over and since the pandemic with more people continuing to work from home and commuting less into their place of work. Officers will continue to monitor the uptake over the coming year and in consultation with the Exec Members for Finance and for Planning & Transport may consider reviewing its approach going forward including the requirement to adjust the overall budget.

8.2.6 *Off-peak parking incentives (Knebworth PC and Letchworth BID)*

- 8.2.6.1 As part of the Car Parking Tariff Report considered by Cabinet on 16 March 2021 the following recommendation was agreed:

"(7) That delegated powers be granted to the Service Directors – Regulatory and Resources in consultation with the Executive Members and Deputy for Planning and Transport and for Finance and IT to consider and agree requests for subsidised parking within the council operated car parks."

- 8.2.6.2 The request and agreement from Knebworth Parish Council to subsidise the 30-minute free parking to the value of circa £2,700 is supported by the Exec Member and Deputy. This will require an amendment to the current Off-street Parking TRO in order to be legally compliant. Knebworth PC has also agreed to contribute towards the cost of amending the TRO.
- 8.2.6.3 Equally officers and the Executive Member are open to discuss other subsidised parking incentives and options across Letchworth as suggested by the Letchworth BID.

8.2.7 *Blue Badge Holders (Letchworth and Royston & District Area Forums)*

- 8.2.7.1 It is not the Council's intention to charge for blue badge holders, at present blue badge holders can park for free in the Council car parks, providing they display their blue badge and do not exceed the maximum stay specified within the car park.

8.2.8 *Alternative Methods of Payment (Hitchin, Southern Rural and Letchworth Area Forums)*

- 8.2.8.1 It is the Council's intention to introduce alternative methods of payment that will enable visitors to stay longer (including moving towards more cashless payment options) to help support the vitality of town centres. This work has commenced and will be implemented over the next 18 months. Pay by Phone will continue to be an option for payment.

8.2.9 *Mixed Views to the proposed options (All Stakeholders consulted)*

- 8.2.9.1 Mixed views were received, some suggesting higher increases, or no comments were received at all. Comments regarding the increases were more aligned with impacts on local businesses. The rational for the proposed tariff changes is set out under Option Two at para 8.1.5 above.

8.3 *Resident Permits, Evening, Sunday and Bank Holiday Charging.*

- 8.3.1 Following discussion with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport there is no proposal to increase resident, business or visitor permits and visitor ticket books for each of the Council's resident permit parking zones across the District for 2023/24 or to introduce Evening, Sunday and Bank holiday charging at this point in time. The Council is currently breaking even and on target with its resident permit scheme. Officers are in the process of reviewing all types of parking permits offered, both on street and off street including the introduction of virtual permits. This will form a separate report to Cabinet later this financial year.

- 8.3.2 The introduction of Evening, Sunday and Bank holiday charging will need to form part of a wider policy review, in terms of managing the volume and type of off-street parking and on-street parking in surrounding streets, whilst encouraging people to use more active and sustainable forms of transport, as well as assessing any likely impact on the vitality and viability of the town centres.

8.4 *Parking Charges for Electric Vehicle Charging Bays*

- 8.4.1 There is an increasing demand in which to introduce more EVCP infrastructure across the district to meet the Governments targets and to Councils Climate Change Strategy.

- 8.4.2 There is an action within the Council's Climate change Action Plan which states:
'Exploring the possibility of making it cheaper for zero emission vehicles to use Council car parks',

- 8.4.3 At present visitors who use the EV bays can park without having to pay for a parking session within the Council's car parks, and it is being observed that visitors are charging their vehicle for a reduced period, with the cable still connected whilst taking advantage of the free parking session, as they can park for up to 3 hours within our car parks whilst charging their vehicle. This restricts the turnover of available EV bays for other visitors to our town centres.

- 8.4.4 The Council is looking to replace the existing 10 publicly available EVCP and install an additional 26 charge points across its car parks as part of the 1st phase of its EV Strategy,

and this number is expected to increase as more funding opportunities become available. This potentially will result in loss income to the Council and its future funding requirements in the on-going management and maintenance of its car parks.

- 8.4.5 It is therefore proposed that consideration is given to introducing charging for parking sessions in EV bays within the Council car parks during the chargeable hours. Charges would not apply to bays being used out of hours – i.e. in evenings, Sundays and Bank holidays. This will result in a requirement to amend the current off street traffic regulation orders.
- 8.4.6 It is suggested that other options could be considered as part of the permit parking project to offer discounts for EV vehicles which would accord with the Council's action at para 8.4.2.

8.5 Officer summary

- 8.5.1 This report to Cabinet is concerned with presenting a tariff structure that seeks to manage car park usage and reflect inflationary cost pressures as determined by the budget estimates for 2023/2024 and its implementation as soon as possible in this financial year. Following discussion with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport it is the officer recommendation that Cabinet consider and agree the tariff increases as proposed at *Option Two*. These proposed tariff increases are set out in Tables 1 to 5 for each town at Appendix A attached to this report.
- 8.5.2 This report also seeks to introduce car park charging sessions within EV Parking Bays within the Council operated car parks in order to address future demand and potential impacts on the Councils income stream in managing its car parks. Following discussion with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport it is the officer recommendation that Cabinet consider and agree this proposal.

9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, paragraph 5.7.30 of the Constitution states that the Cabinet should by way of resolution determine charges for car parking.
- 9.2 The proposed tariff changes will be required to be published as a Notice of Variation to the North Hertfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2014, and to the North Hertfordshire District Council (Off- Street) (Knebworth) (Amendment) Order 2012 in the local papers under Section 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in compliance with Section 25 of part V of the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Such Notice of Variation will give a minimum of 21 days notice of when the new parking tariffs will be implemented. Site notices will be displayed in all affected car parks.
- 9.3 The proposed inclusion of charging for a car parking session whilst parked and charging an EV within an EV parking bay will require an amendment to the North Hertfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2014, the North Hertfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Baldock) No.2 Order 2014 and to the North Hertfordshire District Council (Off- Street) (Knebworth) (Amendment) Order 2012 and any other North Hertfordshire Off Street Order considered relevant. Such amendments will accord with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The budget for 2023/24, approved by Full Council in February 2022, includes estimated additional income from inflation to the Council of £39,500 for parking tariffs.
- 10.2 The Council's policy with regard to parking fees and charges is that an inflationary increase of 2% will be applied annually. This is for modelling purposes and the actual increase is considered each year. For 2023/24 the forecast increase in income is £39.5k from pay-as-you-use income charges and £4.3k from the sale of car park season tickets.
- 10.3 The approach taken, and assumptions made in estimating the financial impact of the proposed pay-as-you-use tariff structure, as laid out in Tables 1 to 5 at Appendix A, are explained in the body of this report. While the actual impact on parking activity from the proposed tariff structure is unknown, particularly with the recovery from the pandemic and the impact of the increases in the overall cost of living on our car parks, the income estimates derived are based on the usage figures from April 2022 to March 2023 and have been adjusted to reflect the income expectation in relation to ad-hoc parking charges within the approved budget for 2023/24. A separate budget adjustment for the continuing impact from Covid-19 recovery will be made relating to the usage.
- 10.4 The intended retention of the full 'free after 3pm' policy in all Royston car parks is estimated to have an adverse impact of approximately £11k on the total income estimate, this will continue to be subsidised by an annual contribution from Royston First BID and County Councillor Hertfordshire Locality Budgets for this financial year. Royston Forum are yet to advise if they will be making a contribution this financial year. This budget will need to be reviewed for 2024/25. Once introduced Knebworth Parish Council will subsidise the 30min free parking tariff option at St. Mary's Car Park. This will be a contribution of £2,700 and will be reviewed annually together with inflationary increases and usage data.
- 10.5 There is a budget set-aside for the cost of implementing the proposed tariff increases including publishing the notices, advertising the increased car parking tariffs in the local press, amending tariff boards and making adjustments to the car park payment machines.
- 10.6 The work required to amend the Off-Street Traffic Regulation Order in relation to the introduction of a tariff structure for EV Bays and to accommodate the subsidised parking option within Knebworth will be funded from existing budgets and reserves. The Parish Council has agreed to contribute £300 towards amending the St.Martins Road Off-Street Traffic Regulation Order.
- 10.7 Work on progressing with the alternative methods of payment project and review of the Council's permit scheme will be undertaken by officers and where additional technical/consultant expertise is required will be funded from existing budgets and reserves.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The risks to car parking income have been considered as part of the assessment. The recommendations have been made whilst acknowledging that there is a financial risk that the review of tariff structure might not produce the estimated income and could result in downward trend in parking sales, as observed at the end of 2020/21 and 2021/22 as a result of the pandemic. In particular with regard to the sale of Season Tickets. Car parking usage and income is continually monitored throughout the year, including as part of the regular revenue monitoring reports.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 There are no direct equality issues arising from this report. There is a range of charging/payment options which will still remain available to cater for the widest needs of local car park users. The realignment of the tariffs seeks to improve turnover and usage throughout day thereby supporting the town centre businesses and benefit the economy of North Hertfordshire. Amidst the slight increases, season tickets in long stay car parks, resident permits, visitor permits, business permits or visitor tickets for resident permit zones remain the same and the after 3pm subsidy in Royston continues for their benefit.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at Paragraph 12.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The NHDC parking strategy seeks to minimise environmental impacts where possible in regard to Off-street parking. As noted at paragraph 8.1.6 there may be further reduction in car travel with the implementation of the Hertfordshire County Council Sustainable Travel Town Initiative in some areas.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report. Officers will be responsible for implementing the new tariffs, undertaking the necessary amendments to the Traffic Regulation Orders, preparing the business case for alternative methods of payment alongside appointed consultants as well as progressing with the permit review project.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A: Proposed 2023/2024 Parking Tariff Changes for NHC Off-Street Managed Car Parks
- 16.2 Appendix B: Summary of Comments from Key Stakeholders.

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy 2019 - 2031(adopted January 2019)
<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/parking/parking-strategy>
- 18.2 Cabinet Report 13 Sept 2022 – Proposed Increase in Car Parking Tariffs 2022-23 Item Ref: 117 [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 13th September, 2022, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)
- 18.3 Appendix A – North Herts Council Climate Change Strategy: Proposed Actions 2021-2026 (adopted March 2021) [NHDC-294 NHDC Climate change Strategy 21-26 Appendix A.pdf \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

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Proposed 2023/2024 Parking Tariffs for North Herts Council Off-Street Managed Car Parks

[Note: Purple font shows proposed tariff changes as set out in para 8.1.6 of the Attached Report:

Table 1 – Hitchin

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
Bancroft	Standard tariffs	1	£1.20	£1.30
		2	£2.40	£2.40
		3	£3.10	£3.10
		Over 3hrs	£5.15	£5.20
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat Rate	£1.30	£1.40
Biggin Lane	Standard tariffs	1	£1.40	£1.50
		2	£2.60	£2.60
		3	£4.15	£4.20
		4	£5.70	£5.70
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat Rate	£1.50	£1.60
Christchurch	Standard tariffs	1	£1.40	£1.50
		2	£2.60	£2.60
		3	£4.15	£4.20
		4	£5.70	£5.70
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat rate	£1.50	£1.60
Lairage MSCP		0-2	£1.25	£1.30
		3	£2.30	£2.30
		Over 3 Hrs	£4.55	£4.60
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat Rate	£1.30	£1.40

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
Portmill East	Standard tariffs	1	£1.40	£1.50
		2	£2.60	£2.60
		3	£4.15	£4.20
		4	£5.70	£5.70
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat Rate	£1.50	£1.60
Portmill West	Standard tariffs	1	£1.40	£1.50
		2	£2.60	£2.60
		3	£4.15	£4.20
		4	£5.70	£5.70
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat rate	£1.50	£1.60
St Mary's Square	Standard tariffs	1	£1.40	£1.50
		2	£2.60	£2.60
		3	£4.15	£4.20
		4	£5.70	£5.70
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat rate	£1.50	£1.60
Woodside	Standard tariffs	1	£1.20	£1.30
		2	£2.40	£2.40
		3	£3.10	£3.10
		Over 3hrs	£5.15	£5.20
	Post 3pm Tariffs	Flat Rate	£1.30	£1.40

Table 2 - Letchworth

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
Hillshott	Standard tariffs	1	£0.80	£0.90
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£2.50	£2.50
		Over 3hrs	£5.05	£5.00

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
Garden Square MSCP Short Stay	Standard tariffs	1	£0.80	£0.90
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£2.50	£2.50
		4	£4.55	£4.60
Garden Square MSCP Long Stay	Standard tariffs	1	£0.80	£0.90
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£2.50	£2.50
		Over 3hs	£5.05	£5.00
Norton Common Bowling Club	Standard tariffs	2	£0.00	£0.00
		4	£1.75	£1.80
		5	£4.85	£4.90
Norton Common Swimming Pool	Standard tariffs	2	£0.00	£0.00
		4	£1.75	£1.80
		5	£4.85	£4.90
Letchworth Town Hall	Standard tariffs	1	£1.20	£1.30
		2	£2.05	£2.00
		3	£3.30	£3.30
		4	£5.05	£5.00

Table 3 Royston

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
Angel Pavement	Standard tariffs	1	£0.70	£0.80
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£3.85	£3.90
	Post 3pm Tariffs	1	£0.00	£0.00
		2	£0.00	£0.00
		3	£0.00	£0.00

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
Civic Centre	Standard tariffs	1	£0.70	£0.80
		2	£0.85	£0.90
		3	£1.15	£1.20
		Over 3hrs	£3.50	£3.50
	Post 3pm Tariffs	1	£0.00	£0.00
		2	£0.00	£0.00
		3	£0.00	£0.00
Market Place	Standard tariffs	1	£0.70	£0.80
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£3.85	£3.90
	Post 3pm Tariffs	1	£0.00	£0.00
		2	£0.00	£0.00
		3	£0.00	£0.00
Princes Mews	Standard tariffs	1	£0.70	£0.80
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£5.05	£5.00
		Over 3hrs	£7.65	£7.70
	Post 3pm Tariffs	1	£0.00	£0.00
		2	£0.00	£0.00
		3	£0.00	£0.00
Priory Gardens	Standard tariffs	1	£0.70	£0.80
		2	£1.55	£1.60
		3	£3.85	£3.90
	Post 3pm Tariffs	1	£0.00	£0.00
		2	£0.00	£0.00
		3	£0.00	£0.00
The Warren	Standard tariffs	1	£0.70	£0.80
		2	£1.35	£1.40
		3	£1.85	£1.90
		3+	£3.95	£4.00
	Post 3pm Tariffs	1	£0.00	£0.00
		2	£0.00	£0.00
		3	£0.00	£0.00

Table 4 Baldock

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
The Twitchell	Standard tariffs	3	£1.25	£1.30
		3+	£1.65	£1.70

Table 5 Knebworth

Car Park		Duration / hours	2022/2023 Tariffs	2023/24 Proposed Tariff changes
St Martin's Road	Standard tariffs	30 mins	£0.35	£0.40
		1	£0.70	£0.70
		2	£1.55	£1.50
		3	£2.15	£2.10
		4	£4.35	£4.30

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2023/24 Proposed Parking Tariff Changes – Summary of Key Stakeholder Comments:

The Following Key Stakeholders/Organisations were consulted between 22 June and 1 August 2023:

- Southern Rural Area Forum
- Hitchin Area Forum
- Letchworth Area Forum
- Royston and district Area Forum
- Baldock & District Area Forum
- Hitchin BID
- Letchworth BID
- RoystonFirst BID
- Royston Town Council
- Knebworth Parish Council

Southern Rural Area Forum 22 June 2023 – Notes from Meeting

- Don't move entirely to pay by phone
- Hitchin flat rate after 3pm should not cost more than 1 hour rate
- Knebworth PC wish to pay for first half hour and are extremely frustrated at lack of progress on this
- Include data on car park usage in MIS

Hitchin Area Forum 4 July 2023 – Notes from Meeting

- Cllr Ian Albert – Proposed the idea of freezing prices post 3pm. Rather than put prices up. This would apply to all car parks across North Herts.
- Cllr Val Bryant – Spoke about how notorious Hitchin car parking is. That car parks across the town were varied and it is not always easy to pay. One example given was that a user was given too short a window to be able to purchase the parking ticket. A fine was given because they weren't quick enough when trying to purchase their ticket.
- Cllr Ian Albert – Also proposed that season tickets should not increase. This would apply to all car parks across North Herts.
- Cllr Keith Hoskins - When would this all be proposed to start? (Answer - November 2023). Cllr Keith Hoskins also said that there needs to be easier ways for people to pay. A tap in, tap out scheme works well in other areas.
- Cllr Nigel Mason – Would increase parking fees by 10p make a huge difference? What would be the impact?

Letchworth Area Forum 5 July 2023 – Notes from Meeting

- DL: I have a business in the town centre – this narrows the gap between the 1- and 2-hour parking which could encourage to dwell in the town centre.

- Cllr Mantle – NHC is looking at alternative systems for ANPR and Pay on exit. Private companies can look up numberplates, but local authorities can't
- Cllr Levett: Letchworth is unique within the district with 3 free hours at Morrisons Not in favour of increase in charges at this time of recession we should freeze the charges.
- Cllr Plater: everyone is affected by inflation – councils need to be able to raise funds for services.
- Toby Franklin: put the charges up more apart from blue badge holders to stop people driving into the Town Centre improved impact on the environment. Increase the charges by 50p
- TP balance between people being able to park and public transport. Comments will go back to Cabinet. NHC Councillor can lobby HCC re bus services.
- Joan: complained that she can't access online services, such as paying by phone, looking up bus timetables, other services. (Digital exclusion)
- IM people will still be able to pay by cash for parking.

Royston & District Area Forum – 14 July 2023 – Notes from Meeting

- Rural residents won't be able to cycle into the centre of Royston
- Price rises/eliminating free parking/losing spaces makes it harder for residents.
- Concerns about the area that the planters are currently blocking.
- What about people who are unable to get disabled badges and have issues walking from the nearest car park?
- Issues with car parking machines taking 50ps
- Interest in more on information about Sustainable Transport Town

Baldock Area Forum – 17 July 2023 – Notes from Meeting

- There were no comments from the members or public on the proposals.
- It only effects one car park in Baldock and the members seemed to think the increase of 5p was fine.

RoystonFirst BID – 1 Aug 2023

- Feedback from our board of directors.
“We are pleased to see the free after 3pm parking continue as this is critical to supporting our town centre businesses”
- No further comments received.

Royston Town Council – 31 July 2023

The Council met on 31 July where they discussed the proposals and agreed to respond as follows:

- Royston Town Council opposes the 10p increase to the one hour tariff band in

Royston. It is concerned about the effect on town centre businesses and the owners and workers who have no choice but to come by car, especially from the villages.

Separate Comments From County Cllr Fiona Hill – 4 Sept 2023

I would like to fully endorse the objection by Royston Town Council, in respect of another proposal to increase car parking charges in Royston. This will have a detrimental impact on businesses in the town centre plus owners, workers and residents that have no choice but to travel by car, especially those that live in the surrounding villages. Any increase also adds a further burden to residents currently struggling. I strongly object to any increases in parking, which I do not feel are appropriate, at this very difficult time, in the current climate of hardship for many residents.

Letchworth BID -1 August 2023

The BID Manager circulated the proposal for comment to all the businesses in the Letchworth BID where mixed views were received:

- A couple of businesses basically said that 10p was not a great deal of money and they didn't mind the increase.
- More asked why we are considering an increase when business is not exactly fantastic right now.
- A few suggested that we consider a different way of doing this with times when parking is free to drive up business in the town. It is believed that the outdoor pool car park in Letchworth does this already. Also note that the swimming pool car park in Hitchin people get the fee back with the entry ticket.
- Are there any plans to consider other options for parking. We could use the umbrella of the Town Centre Recovery plan to do so, if you think fit.

Knebworth Parish Council – 25 July 2023

- The Council notes the rationale for the proposed tariffs for 2023/24 are to support the economic viability of the town centres, by encouraging people to stay longer by increasing the one hour tariff band by a nominal 10p and to adopt a consistent approach across all car parks and harmonize tariffs.
- However, the four towns of Hitchin Letchworth, Baldock and Royston not only have larger retail centres but also have more car parks. Knebworth has a very small retail centre in comparison, therefore aligning the charges for St Martins Road Car Park with the four town car parks would appear unfair.
- The one hour charge at £0.70 for Knebworth is not the lowest across the district as two car parks in Hitchin are free for two hours. The two hour rate at £1.50 for Knebworth is more than double the one hour rate, which does not seem logical. It is also more than the Baldock charge for three hours at £1.30.
- NHC has suggested that the one hour and two hour rates should be closer in value to encourage shoppers to stay longer.

- Royston Civic centre's proposed rates have a £0.10 difference between one and two hours, one hour - £0.80, two hours - £0.90. Knebworth would benefit from a similar differential, which would reduce the two hour charge to £0.80.
- Finally I can confirm that Knebworth Parish Council would support 30 minutes free parking in St Martins Road Car Park and is prepared to contribute circa £2,700 towards the annual cost of the provision. It will also contribute £300 to amending the TRO. Please would you confirm the next steps and timescales to introduce this as the Parish Council confirmed its willingness to support this in 2018.

CABINET 19 SEPTEMBER 2023
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PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT : STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – ADOPTION

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: PLANNING AND TRANSPORT – RUTH BROWN

COUNCIL PRIORITY : PEOPLE FIRST / SUSTAINABILITY / A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To consider the responses received on the draft of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) during public consultation and approve the subsequent amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the consultation responses are noted.
- 2.2. That subject to recommendation 2.1, the amendments to the draft SCI are approved and that the SCI, attached as Appendix A is adopted.
- 2.3. That any minor amendments to the SCI, such as typographical errors, additional statutory consultees, legislation changes, are delegated to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the relevant Executive Members.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The SCI sets out how the Council consults with the local community in preparing, masterplans for the strategic sites, strategic planning documents and in determining planning applications. It also sets out guidelines for those communities involved in neighbourhood planning.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. To determine, following a review, that there is no requirement to revise and replace the Council's current SCI. This option is not recommended as the SCI needs to be updated to reflect current consultation methods.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members for Community Engagement and Planning and Transport were given the opportunity to comment on the draft revised SCI. No comments were received.

- 5.2. The draft SCI was approved for public consultation by Cabinet on 14 March 2023. Public consultation took place between 11 May and 27 June 2023. Local community groups, Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Planning Groups, developers and their agents were directly consulted on the proposed changes to the SCI.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a Key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 23 December 2022.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council will consult the local community in preparing masterplans for the strategic development sites, local planning documents, in undertaking relevant consultations for neighbourhood plans and in consultations for planning applications.
- 7.2. The SCI was last updated in 2020 and adopted by the Council on 21 July 2020. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 introduced a requirement that a review of an SCI must be completed every five years, starting from the date of adoption.
- 7.3. Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph reference [ID 61-071-20190315](#)) states that a local planning authority may review and update their SCI at the same time as reviewing and updating a plan to reflect what action is taken to involve the community in any change to the plan. It is considered that the change of focus towards the implementation of the Local Plan is an appropriate time to review the SCI.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. Following the adoption of the Local Plan in November 2022, officers reviewed the SCI and recommended to Cabinet that the SCI was revised to change its emphasis, away from local plan preparation to how we will engage the community in the implementation of the allocated strategic sites. The draft SCI for public consultation included a new section setting out how we might consult the community in the preparation of the masterplans for the strategic sites.
- 8.2. Thirteen responses were received to the consultation, which can be viewed on the [website](#). In response to the consultation, a number of amendments to the SCI are proposed:
- Minor amendments throughout the SCI to make it clear that the types of community organisations who are consulted for strategic planning consultations;
 - Include, as appendices, the lists of statutory consultees for both strategic planning and planning application consultations;
 - Delete the references to the Council's Area Committees and replace these with the details for the new Area Forums;
 - Minor amendments to accurately reflect the opening hours for the libraries; and
 - Additional text to refer back to the Council's Constitution for planning applications being considered by Planning Committee.

- 8.3. One of the representations made observations about our online consultation software and the format of the consultation documents. Whilst the SCI sets out how we consult rather than the format of the website and online consultation software, officers consider that these are valid issues for consideration and will work with our software suppliers to improve how people can access the consultation documents.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, [paragraph 5.7.18 of the Constitution](#) states that the Cabinet should “*exercise the Authority’s functions as Local Planning Authority and to receive reports on: strategic planning matters, applications for, approval/ designation, consultations/referendums revocation (or recommend revocation of) neighbourhood plans, Article 4 Directions and orders, (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Regulatory).*” The SCI does not form part of the Council’s Policy Framework as set out in Paragraph 4.2 of the Constitution.
- 9.2. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended, require that a review of a Statement of Community Involvement must be completed every five years.
- 9.3. Local planning authorities have discretion about how they inform communities and other interested parties about planning applications. [Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) sets out the mandatory statutory requirements for applications for publication of applications for planning permission.
- 9.4. [Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) (as amended) provides that local authorities must prepare a Statement of Community Involvement which must set out the local authority’s policies for involving interested parties in matters relating to development in their area.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Future consultations which will use the SCI will either be covered by existing budgets, or where they are site specific, they will be undertaken by the developer.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. There are no risk implications identified in this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix B. The SCI has identified a number of groups within the community which tend not to engage with local planning issues and consultations. These groups include working age people, people with disabilities, black and ethnic minority groups, young people and

gypsy and traveller communities. Work will continue with the Policy and Community Engagement Team to encourage these groups to participate in planning consultations.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Future consultations which are undertaken will also be undertaken within existing resources.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. Appendix A –Statement of Community Involvement – amended September 2023
- 16.2. Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment for the revised Statement of Community Involvement – March 2023

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Statement of Community Involvement – draft for consultation: Cabinet report – March 2023 Minute 176](#)
- 18.2 [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- 18.3. [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#)

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**North
Herts**
Council

**Statement of Community Involvement
Revised version for adoption
Cabinet September 2023**

Draft Statement of Community Involvement

September 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how North Herts Council will involve the community in the planning process.
- 1.2 The SCI explains how and with whom the Council will consult when carrying out its planning duties. This document relates only to the Council's planning functions, but it is intended to compliment the Council's wider approach to community engagement.
- 1.3 All Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare an SCI to comply with national legislation, policies and guidance¹. The Council first adopted an SCI in 2006 and it has been updated periodically since then.
- 1.4 The SCI must be reviewed every five years. This review follows the adoption of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 in November 2022. We have tried to reflect the changing priorities which we will need to address in the coming years. This includes explaining how you can be involved in the preparation of:
 - ❖ Supplementary planning document which will support the new Plan;
 - ❖ Neighbourhood plans;
 - ❖ Pre-application masterplans for the largest residential sites in North Hertfordshire;
 - ❖ Individual planning applications for development; and
 - ❖ The review of the Local Plan.
- 1.5 In addition, the SCI sets out the Council's expectations upon developers with regards to involving the community in their planning proposals which are not subject to the masterplanning process.
- 1.6 The Council has recently published a [Community Consultation Strategy](#) for 2022 – 2027. Whilst the SCI has been prepared with reference to the Consultation Strategy, it is specifically written for planning policy consultations and consultations associated with planning applications.
- 1.7 Temporary changes were introduced to the Regulations² in response to the COVID-19 pandemic concerning publicity and the physical inspection of planning documents. Given the uncertain nature of the pandemic and the potential for new variants to emerge, it is feasible that those temporary measures may be reintroduced in the future. If such circumstances arise again, any changes will be implemented locally and will replace the requirements set out in this updated SCI. This will avoid having to revise the SCI.
- 1.8 Where we are unable to meet some of the requirements set out in this document, but have made every reasonable effort to do so, we will consider that the conditions have been met.

¹ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012(as amended); Town and Country Planning (Development Management procedure) (England) Order 2015; National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance

² Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England)(Coronavirus) Amendment Regulations (2020)

2. Community Involvement in Strategic Planning

- 2.1. The Strategic Planning Team is directly responsible for preparing local planning policies and supplementary planning documents. We also work collaboratively alongside communities preparing their neighbourhood plans as well as landowners or promoters who are developing masterplans for strategic and significant sites.
- 2.2. We are committed to involving as many local people, groups and organisations from the North Herts community as possible in our strategic planning consultations. We have an extensive consultation database in place which includes the following types of organisations:
- ❖ Statutory consultees³consultees; (listed in Appendix 1)
 - ❖ Central government departments;
 - ❖ Town, Parish and Community Councils;
 - ❖ Neighbourhood Planning Steering Groups;
 - ❖ Parish Meetings;
 - ❖ Hertfordshire County Council;
 - ❖ Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils;
 - ❖ Neighbouring local authorities;
 - ❖ Neighbouring Parish Councils; Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation;
 - ❖ Local community groups and organisations (both location specific and topic based groups);
 - ❖ Black and minority ethnic groups;
 - ❖ Religious / faith groups;
 - ❖ Disabled persons organisations;
 - ❖ Developers, landowners and agents;
 - ❖ Businesses and business interest groups; and
 - ❖ Individual members of the public.
- This list is illustrative, not definitive.
- 2.3. When we consult on our planning documents, we will ensure that we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which aims to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and encourage good relations between different groups associated with age, disability, gender, race, religion and other protected characteristics. It is recognised that some parts of the community are not always adequately represented in planning consultations and in the planning process.
- 2.4. In North Hertfordshire, these groups are considered to be:
- ❖ People with disabilities;
 - ❖ Black and ethnic minority groups;
 - ❖ Working aged people;
 - ❖ Young people; and

³ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 defines “specific consultation bodies” and “general consultation bodies”

❖ Gypsy and traveller communities.

- 2.5. The council's Policy and Community Engagement Team has established some links with some of these "seldom heard groups" and continues to engage with these parts of the community. In preparing our planning documents we will work with the Policy and Community Engagement Team to further develop those links and try to encourage more involvement in the future.
- 2.6. Our consultation list for planning policy documents, masterplans for strategic sites and neighbourhood plans is always open to new consultees. If you would like to add your name to that list, the best way is by registering your contact details through our website: <https://north-herts.oc2.uk/register>. Registering your interest this way, allows you to decide which areas of local planning work you are interested in and amend your details when necessary.
- 2.7. You can also register your interest by contacting us, using these details:
- Strategic Planning Team
North Herts Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DW
Email : localplans@north-herts.gov.uk
Telephone : 01462 474000
- 2.8. To ensure that you receive all the information that you are interested in, we will need your name, organisation (where appropriate), either an email address or a postal address and an indication of the types of local planning issues you might be interested in. We will only contact you if you "opt-in" to receive details about particular types of local planning documents.
- 2.9. The [privacy notice](#) for the Regulatory Directorate sets out how your personal data will be used and by whom and is available on the Council's website. Where we are directly responsible for carrying out consultations, we will use our database to decide who we should contact. Where we are working with other organisations on planning matters – such as neighbourhood plans or masterplans – we may provide your details so they can contact you to find out your views; but we will only do this if you have told us this is ok.
- 2.10. We will review our local plan consultation list on a regular basis. We may contact you from time-to-time to ensure that your details are kept up to date and that you do not receive any information which you have not requested. Please do not ignore these emails and letters. If you do not respond we may have to delete your details from our database. This is because of changes in the law which say how we must protect your data and personal information.

3. Consultation Methods

- 3.1 Some of the methods we can use for community involvement are listed in the table below. The list is not definitive, but it includes those methods which we consider to be the most effective, practical and cost effective where we are directly responsible for producing planning documents. We will use a variety of these methods to engage and consult with the community as and where appropriate.
- 3.2 Where Parish Councils or developers are carrying out their own consultations on planning matters, we will encourage them to use an appropriate range of methods.

Table 1 : Methods of consultation for strategic and local planning consultations

Methods for notifying and consultation	Comments
Website	<p>It is a statutory requirement that some of our consultation documents are available to view on the council's website (www.north-herts.gov.uk). We will use both the planning pages of the website and the Council's consultation page for our consultation documents.</p> <p>The website will also include any background information and updates on all our consultation documents, including supplementary planning documents, masterplans and the local plan.</p> <p>We have an online consultation portal which you can use to make your comments during open consultation periods.</p>
Letters and email	<p>For some of our consultation documents, it is a statutory requirement that all statutory consultees are notified in writing (which maybe by email) when a document is published for consultation. In some circumstances a number of general consultees may also be notified in writing, where a document may be of particular interest.</p> <p>The council will encourage greater use of email in the future as this helps us to reduce our costs and paper usage.</p>
Social Media	<p>The council uses Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor and Twitter to inform the North Herts community about consultations for the local plan, supplementary planning documents, masterplans and neighbourhood plans.</p>

	<p>The use of social media will increase in importance as a method of raising awareness of the issues and documents being prepared for consultation as well as the publicising the methods of responding to a consultation. For example, the Council has a YouTube channel but there is only very limited content on it at present.</p> <p>At the moment, the Council is not using these social media outlets as a mechanism for collecting consultation responses, but we do use them to promote consultations and they include links to the relevant information. We will review our use of social media in the future, as it might be particularly helpful in the early stages of consultations.</p>
Council Offices and Libraries	<p>We will normally put paper copies of consultation documents which cover the whole District in the Council Offices and the local libraries during the consultation period. These will be available for inspection at the libraries during their normal opening times or by appointment at the Council Offices. As well as paper copies our reception provides access to a computer linked to the NHDC website for those who cannot access or easily use the internet at home.</p>
Local Media	<p>We prepare press releases at the start of consultations for planning documents to raise awareness. These can be supplemented during the consultation period where particular issues are raised or to further raise awareness.</p>
Town, Parish and Community Councils	<p>The council will consult the Town, Parish and Community Councils within the local authority area and in adjoining local authority areas where appropriate.</p> <p>The council will also encourage the Town and Parish Councils to use their own newsletters, magazines and notice boards to further publicise consultations for the local plan, supplementary planning documents (where relevant) and neighbourhood plans.</p>
Advertisements	<p>The council usually publicises all major consultations for the local plan in the local newspapers which are circulated in the District. This presently includes The Comet, The Royston Crow and the Luton Herald and Post. However, advertisements in local newspapers are not used for neighbourhood planning consultations as the newspapers are not necessarily available in these communities. The following types of planning applications are advertised in local newspapers; major planning applications; departures</p>

	from the development plan; listed building consents and conservation area consents.
Exhibitions	<p>In some circumstances the council may decide to hold exhibitions to help explain the content of a consultation document.</p> <p>However, exhibitions can be expensive to stage in terms of exhibition material, publicity, venue charges and staff time and we need to carefully balance the benefits of these events against the impact on relevant services.</p>
Focus Groups / Discussion Workshops	<p>Focus groups or discussion groups may be used by the council to explore selected issues with particular groups within the community. These groups can be expensive to run and require significant amounts of staff time, however participants can be recruited from the council's Citizens Panel database. They may provide an opportunity to explore issues in some depth and gain detailed and focussed comments.</p> <p>These types of events can also be held online and can be useful for small groups and can be more flexible for participants.</p>
Posters and Leaflets	<p>Posters and leaflets can be a useful and immediate way to draw attention to a local plan consultation.</p> <p>Posters can be particularly effective where there are community notice boards and large numbers of people passing them.</p> <p>There are however issues to be considered in producing leaflets as they can be relatively expensive if delivered to every household and business in the District.</p>
NHDC Outlook Magazine	<p>We have consistently used Outlook to inform residents and local businesses about local planning issues. However, the publication dates for the council's newsletter do not always coincide with consultation periods. We will continue to provide updates on local planning issues through Outlook when appropriate.</p>
Questionnaires and Surveys	<p>Questionnaires and surveys can be an effective way of gaining focussed views on a consultation document, particularly in the early stages of consultations.</p>

Use of existing partnerships, forums and panels	There are a number of organisations across the District which can provide representative views from a range of organisations and agencies as well as specific community groups. We will consult with these organisations where appropriate and continue to explore further opportunities.
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Making comments

3.3 Comments in response to a planning consultation document can be made by:

- ❖ Using the council's online consultation software:
- ❖ Email; or
- ❖ In writing.

Full details of how to make comments are included in all our consultation documents, on our website and in the advertisements that the council places in local newspapers.

3.4 Comments are sometimes submitted to councillors and other elected representatives by email, letter or by other methods. These comments will not be considered as formal representations, unless they are copied to the Strategic Planning team within the consultation period.

3.5 We do not accept responses to consultation documents by telephone.

What will we do with your comments?

3.6 The council will ensure that when consultation is undertaken, all appropriate comments will be used to inform the content of the planning documents. Inevitably there will be some conflict between the comments and representations, and it will not be possible for the council to amend the planning documents to suit everyone, but the council will consider all the comments carefully in preparing the local planning documents. The Council will not respond to all comments and representations individually.

3.7 At the end of a consultation period, the council will analyse all of the comments received and will prepare a summary of the comments. This summary will be presented to Cabinet or Full Council as a background paper to any recommendation for changes to the planning document. When the council submits a planning document to the Secretary of State it must be accompanied by a statement of consultation which sets out a summary of the representations received and the main issues raised. All of the comments and reports will be made available to view on the council's website and at the council's offices on request.

3.8 Any individual or organisation making comments on any local planning document, a supplementary planning document or a neighbourhood plan will be added as a consultee for that particular consultation document on our database.

3.9 Increasingly, comments and objections are posted onto social media web pages and on-line petitions. There are a wide variety of social media pages and groups which the council is not necessarily aware of, e.g. private Facebook groups and it does not have

the resources to monitor the activity on these sites. Comments and objections made in this way therefore will not be taken into account when formally considering all the representations made in response to a consultation document, unless they have been formally submitted to the council, in which case they will be recorded and considered in accordance with paragraph 6.3. Comments made on the council's own Twitter feed and Facebook page will be monitored but will not be taken as formal representations to a local planning consultation.

- 3.10 Please note that the council, in its absolute discretion, reserves the right not to consider or include comments which are inappropriate including:
- ❖ comments of a discriminatory nature (age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religious belief and sexual orientation) including racist and homophobic comments;
 - ❖ inflammatory or offensive comments (of a foul or abusive nature); or
 - ❖ any other comments of a similar nature that it deems inappropriate.
- 3.11 If a written response to a consultation is received which contains inappropriate content as listed above, this will be discarded from the consultation and, where there is a postal address, will be returned. In these circumstances the respondent will be given an opportunity to make their comments using more appropriate language so that they can be considered as part of the consultation process.
- 3.12 In some instances, the council receives hard copy petitions in response to consultation documents. For the purposes of recording representations made in this way, the subject of the petition will be noted as a representation and the person responsible for submitting the petition will be recorded and will be kept informed of the progress on the relevant consultation document. The signatories to the petition will not be recorded or added to our consultation database but the number of signatories will be recorded. The Council will treat on-line petitions in the same way.

4. Social Media

- 4.1 The Council does use Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor and Twitter to inform residents, local groups and organisations about Council activities. The Council will continue to make use of social media platforms to promote future consultations for the strategic site masterplans, supplementary planning documents, neighbourhood plans and the review of the local plan. The use of social media will increase in importance as a method of raising awareness of the issues and documents being prepared for consultation as well as the publicising the methods of responding to a consultation.
- 4.2 At the moment, the Council is not using these social media outlets as a mechanism for collecting formal consultation responses; however, any comments made will be reviewed and may be used to review consultation methods in the future.
- 4.3 As the use of mobile technology changes and increases, the Council will need to respond to these changes and will consider how to make future planning consultation documents and accompanying documentation, including digital mapping, as easy as possible to use. Most of our planning documents and maps are presently made available as PDF files. However, these can be large and lengthy and are not always easy to navigate, particularly if readers are interested in a single topic or a specific geographical area. They are a simple electronic copy of the physical document(s) we are consulting on. This approach doesn't necessarily fit well with modern preferences such as:
- ❖ receiving bite-size information;
 - ❖ 'swipe and tap' mobile technology such as tablets and smartphones; and
 - ❖ interactive and shareable content.
- 4.4 We need to strike an appropriate balance between responding to changing trends and technologies, producing the documents we are legally required to and the resources available to the Council.

5. Community Involvement in pre-application Masterplanning

- 5.1 Our new Local Plan allocates a number of strategic and significant sites for development in North Hertfordshire over the coming years. We normally define 'strategic' sites as those which will deliver 500 or more homes and 'significant' sites as those which will deliver 100 or more homes.
- 5.2 We recognise that large-scale developments will have a significant impact on the communities they are located in so it is important that the Council, communities and stakeholders are all involved in the masterplan process so they can meaningfully shape the planning and design outcomes.
- 5.3 We have a requirement ([Policy SP9 in the Local Plan](#)) that a masterplan will be prepared for these sites by the landowners / developers in collaboration with the Council and which will be subject to consultation and engagement with key stakeholders.
- 5.4 We strongly encourage landowners / developers to produce and agree masterplans *before* they apply for planning permission. Where this is the case, good quality public consultation will be a critical element of the project.
- 5.5 We have established a Project Management and Governance framework to effectively and pro-actively shape the masterplans for the strategic sites. We have produced a range of supporting guidance to help guide developers, landowners and communities through the process. Full details are set out in the dedicated [masterplanning](#) area of our website.
- 5.6 A consultation strategy will be developed as part of the pre-application Strategic Masterplan work. In terms of stakeholder and community engagement, the Council anticipates that key stakeholders will normally be engaged through at least one focused workshop event (or equivalent) as proposals are developed. The nature and timing of that engagement will be agreed on a project by-project basis to respond to the individual project needs. The Council will assist landowners to undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise to ensure that all relevant groups are consulted. These groups might include:
- ❖ District Councillors;
 - ❖ Hertfordshire County Councillors;
 - ❖ Adjoining local authorities (where appropriate);
 - ❖ Local and adjoining Parish Councils;
 - ❖ Neighbourhood planning groups (where appropriate);
 - ❖ Natural England;
 - ❖ Environment Agency
 - ❖ Historic England
 - ❖ Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust; and
 - ❖ Local residents and community groups.

- 5.7 At draft masterplan stage, a wider public consultation event should take place. This will normally be arranged and run by the landowner / developer and supported by the Council.
- 5.8 In terms of the ways in which the community consultations will take place, these will be based on the methods of consultation set out in Table 1 above. We will work with the landowners and developers to ensure that the most appropriate methods of community consultation are used for each masterplan. The public engagement event could take the form of an exhibition or drop-in or workshops supported by a dedicated website. We will make staff available to attend such events. The landowner will be responsible for the production of materials, staffing costs and venue hire.
- 5.9 We may share the contact details of individuals or groups where they have told us they have a particular interest in the area or site in question to make sure your views can be heard.
- 5.10 A feedback report from the consultation will be required to feed into the final Strategic Masterplan. This will clearly set out how consultation helped to positively shape and influence the proposals.
- 5.11 This is our preferred approach to producing masterplans for strategic and significant development. However, we cannot insist that this process is followed. We cannot require that a planning application is submitted at any particular time. A planning application for strategic or significant development without a pre-agreed masterplan might be submitted without having engaged with the pre-application process.
- 5.12 Policy SP9 therefore also allows for its requirements to be met by agreeing a Strategic Masterplan following the submission of a planning application and securing this either prior to or as part of the grant of planning permission.
- 5.13 Where this is the case, community involvement and engagement on any masterplan will take place as part of the Development Management process. More information on this is set out in the following section.

6. Supplementary Planning Documents and Planning Briefs

- 6.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide more detailed advice or guidance in respect of adopted local plan policies, however they cannot introduce new planning policies. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in respect of a planning decision but they do not form part of the development plan.
- 6.2 The Council has agreed that we will prepare SPDs on Sustainability, Biodiversity and Design. We will consult on the content of these documents, but they are not subject to examination by a Planning Inspector before they are adopted by the Council.
- 6.3 The following table sets out a summary of the consultation stages and methods of consultation which the Council may use in preparing an SPD or Planning Brief. For some consultations we may organise workshops or drop-in sessions where it is appropriate.

Table 2 : Supplementary Planning Documents – Stages of preparation and consultation methods

SPD Stage of Preparation	Consultation duration	Consultation methods
Research / Initial scoping	No minimum	❖ Written consultation, focussed surveys or meetings with key stakeholders where required
Draft SPD consultation	4 weeks (minimum)	❖ Written / email consultations with statutory consultees, relevant general consultees on our database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations who have expressed a wish to be consulted or have previously made comments on the document being considered; ❖ Consultation documents available for public inspection on the Council's website; ❖ Digital consultation using the Council's on-line consultation portal; ❖ Promotion of the SPD and advice on how to engage with its development through the Council's social media platforms; and ❖ Hard copies of the consultation document available at the Council Offices and at other places considered appropriate.
Final Draft SPD Consultation		

Adoption		<p>The adopted SPD, a statement of the representations received and the response to those representations and an adoption statement will be available to view on the Council's website.</p> <p>All those who made comments will be informed.</p>
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7. Neighbourhood Planning

- 7.1 Neighbourhood plans are Community-led documents, prepared by Parish Councils or a Neighbourhood Planning Forum. The District Council is committed to supporting local communities preparing neighbourhood plans and they form an important part of how the local community can be engaged in the planning system.
- 7.2 The [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#) (as amended) set out the statutory requirements for the preparation of neighbourhood plans. Consultation during the early stages of neighbourhood plan preparation is undertaken by the Parish Council or the neighbourhood forum and is not covered by the requirements of this Statement of Community Involvement. However, the SCI might still contain guidance which is useful to groups preparing neighbourhood plans.
- 7.3 When a neighbourhood plan is “made” it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the District, this means that there are a number of legal requirements that the neighbourhood plan must meet. These are known as the “Basic Conditions”. A neighbourhood plan must;
- ❖ have regard to national planning policy;
 - ❖ be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the saved Local Plan;
 - ❖ contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - ❖ be compatible with environmental obligations; and
 - ❖ be compatible with human rights requirements.
- 7.4 The table below sets out the key steps for neighbourhood planning and also outlines the level of support that can be expected from us, the District Council. Further information can be found on the Council’s [website](#).

Table 3 : Neighbourhood Plans – Stages of Preparation

Stage of Preparation	Commentary
Designation of a neighbourhood planning area	<p>In those areas of the District where there is a Parish or Town Council, the Parish or Town Council must apply for a neighbourhood planning area to be designated.</p> <p>If an application is received to designate the whole parish area, we are required to designate the whole area⁴.</p> <p>At this stage, we expect the Parish or Town Council to provide a formal request to designate the neighbourhood planning area and a map which shows the extent of the neighbourhood planning area.</p> <p>In those areas of the District where there is no Parish Council, a neighbourhood planning forum must be established in order to produce a neighbourhood plan.</p>

⁴ [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) and Development Management Procedure \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

	<p>Where we need to consult on designating a neighbourhood planning area, we will consult statutory consultees and those people and organisations on our database who have expressed an interest in that neighbourhood planning area. We will advertise the application through its website and social media and will ask the relevant qualifying body to assist in publicising the consultation through its own local mechanisms, for example through a community newsletter or local website</p>
Preparation of the first draft neighbourhood plan	<p>During this stage of plan preparation, we have a duty to support the preparation of neighbourhood plans. This could include advice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ possible themes and topics for your neighbourhood plan; ❖ useful evidence for your neighbourhood planning policies; ❖ the legal requirements that have to be met; ❖ ways to consult the local community; ❖ providing maps where appropriate; and ❖ providing advice on policy writing. <p>This list is not exhaustive; however assistance will be limited to the resources we have available at any given time. If you have a detailed project plan in place, it will be easier to identify when you might need assistance from the Council.</p> <p>At this stage in the neighbourhood planning process, the Strategic Planning Team will offer 30 hours of support for each neighbourhood planning group. Our GIS team can also provide some limited help with digital mapping. Beyond this allowance, further assistance can be provided but will be charged at a rate of £30 per hour to help cover the Council's costs.</p> <p>Whilst we have a duty to support neighbourhood planning, this does not extend to financial assistance. There are other sources of funding which might be available to neighbourhood planning groups. Further information is available through Locality: https://locality.org.uk/</p>
Pre-submission consultation on the neighbourhood plan	<p>Once a draft neighbourhood plan has been prepared it will need to be consulted on for six weeks. This consultation is carried out by the Parish Council or the Neighbourhood Forum.</p>

	<p>Whilst consultation at this stage should be focussed in the local community, we can help Parish Councils and qualifying bodies with the contact details for statutory consultees or other relevant organisations who might have an interest in the neighbourhood plan. Parish Councils and qualifying bodies are encouraged to consult with the wider community which might include community groups, landowners, businesses and developers. Some of the consultation techniques listed in Table 1 might be helpful to use in this early consultation for a neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>The consultation responses can be used to make any changes to the neighbourhood plan as a result of comments from the public in advance of submitting the plan.</p>
Submission of the neighbourhood plan to North Herts Council	<p>Once the neighbourhood plan has been prepared and the first stages of consultation have been completed, the plan will be submitted to NHC to publicise and consult on for six weeks.</p> <p>We will ensure that all of the documents submitted are correct and will arrange for consultation to take place. In most cases, delegated authority will be sought to start the consultation but there are exceptions to this where the neighbourhood planning area includes two or more electoral wards. In these circumstances, the consultation will be referred to Cabinet as a key decision. It maybe that the consultation will be undertaken with other local planning consultations to ensure the efficient use of resources.</p> <p>We will publicise the consultation through our website, news releases and through social media. Emails and letters will be sent to statutory consultees, any organisation referred to in the consultation statement, organisations in the local area and anyone who has “opted-in” to be notified of consultations for that particular neighbourhood planning area.</p> <p>We will work in collaboration with the qualifying body or neighbourhood planning forum to encourage the use of local media sources (e.g. newsletters, social media pages) to publicise the consultation.</p>

Independent examination of a neighbourhood plan	<p>We will source an independent examiner at the end of the consultation period, once all of the representations have been confirmed to request the details of a suitable and available examiner to undertake the examination of the plan. A decision to appoint an examiner will be made in collaboration with the Parish Council.</p> <p>We will ensure that the independent examiner receives all of the relevant documentation for the examination.</p> <p>It is normal for neighbourhood plan examinations to be conducted by written representations, however, if the examiner decides that an exploratory meeting or a hearing session is necessary, we will make the appropriate arrangements in consultation with the Qualifying Body and the examiner.</p>
Receipt of Examiner's report	The examiner will prepare a report which will recommend that the neighbourhood plan proceeds to a referendum with or without further modifications and that the referendum area is to be extended beyond the designated neighbourhood planning area.
Referendum	We will make the necessary arrangements for a neighbourhood plan referendum where the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions.
Making the neighbourhood plan	Once there has been a successful referendum, the neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the District and will be used in determining planning applications.

8. The Local Plan Review

- 8.1 The Local Plan was adopted on 8 November 2022 and we have a statutory duty to keep the local plan under review. At a minimum, plans must be reviewed every five years. There is a commitment in our Local Plan to conduct a review of the whole plan by the end of 2023, which will determine whether the Plan needs to be updated either in whole or part.
- 8.2 The timetable for preparing the Local Plan is set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS is kept under review and is available to view on our [website](#). A new LDS will be produced once the Council has made a decision on whether and how the Local Plan needs to be updated.
- 8.3 Under the current planning system, there are a number of stages involved in the preparation of a local plan and there are opportunities for you to be involved in that preparation, particularly in the early stages. The key stages of local plan preparation are set out in the table below, along with the approaches we might use if this system remains in place.
- 8.4 However, the Government is currently considering how and whether to change the planning system in the future. New laws are currently being considered by Parliament. Updated versions of national policy are expected. The detailed regulations, which set out what we must do at different stages, may change. There may be specific expectations around the use of digital or on-line methods.
- 8.5 We will continue to monitor these changes. We will decide if we need to update this Statement of Community Involvement again to reflect the latest rules and guidance when we begin work on the next version of the Local Plan.

Table 4 : Key stages of Local Plan preparation

Stage	Description
Research and Issues Phase	<p>During this early stage, we will gather information and evidence about the area so that we can assess and identify the issues facing the District.</p> <p>Consultation during these early stages may include detailed stakeholder consultations or wider more extensive consultations.</p> <p>The Council will also assess the requirements of government guidance, other corporate strategies and technical information in order to put a draft document together.</p>
Draft Plan or proposals (Regulation 18)	<p>We may publish a draft plan or document to get some feedback from both the community and stakeholders. Any draft document would be made available for public</p>

	<p>consultation for a minimum period of six weeks, allowing written representations to be made.</p> <p>In addition to inviting written comments, we may also use workshops, exhibitions or online drop-in sessions to engage with different groups of the community.</p> <p>We will use any comments and feedback in the preparation and revision of the local plan before moving onto the next stages. The comments will be made available on the website.</p> <p>At this stage the draft local plan will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and further technical work maybe commissioned.</p>
Publication (Regulation 19)	<p>The proposed local plan will be published for a formal consultation period. We will ask you for written comments on the content of the documents subject to consultation.</p> <p>We will advertise the consultation period as widely as possible through our website and where appropriate in local newspapers. We will send emails or letters to statutory consultees, local organisations and others listed on our consultation database. The consultation documents will be available on our website, at the Council Offices and in local libraries.</p> <p>Comments and representations received at this stage in the preparation of the Local Plan will be made available on the website and will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate. Summaries of the representations may be prepared to assist the Inspectors.</p>
Submission (Regulation 22)	<p>Once the consultation has been completed, the document will be submitted to the Secretary of State (represented by the Planning Inspectorate) for independent examination. All of the supporting background evidence, the SEA/SA and a statement of public involvement in the process will also be submitted as part of the examination and will be made available on the council's website.</p>
Examination (Regulation 24)	<p>An examination will be held by an Inspector, appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. The Inspector will examine the documents submitted and will identify the matters and issues for discussion at a public hearing. A timetable and guidance notes for participants will be prepared. Hearing sessions will be arranged with six weeks' notice and if the Inspector considers it necessary, they will ask participants</p>

	<p>and the Council for additional information on specific issues.</p> <p>The Council will appoint a Programme Officer who will be the single point of contact with the Planning Inspector and their details will be published on the council's website.</p> <p>Only those people who submitted representations at the publication stage (Regulation 19) are entitled to be heard at the examination, although third parties can be invited by the Inspector at their discretion.</p> <p>The Inspector will assess the "soundness" of the plan and will prepare a report for the Council. That report will set out the Inspector's recommendations to the Council. The Council must then consider the report and the recommendations.</p>
Adoption (Regulation 26)	<p>The Council will adopt the local plan as soon as practicable following consideration of the Inspector's report. The local plan will then become part of the statutory development plan for the District.</p> <p>The documents will be published on the Council's website and all of those people who made representations will be informed.</p> <p>Paper copies will be available to view at the Council Offices.</p>

9. Community Involvement in the Development Management

- 9.1 Many people only interact with the planning system when they wish to make a planning application of their own or make comments on an application which affects them directly.
- 9.2 Development management is the process by which the council determines whether a proposal for development should be granted planning permission. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan (the Local Plan, an adopted neighbourhood plan where appropriate, the Minerals Local Plan and the Waste Local Plan) unless material considerations (such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) suggest otherwise.
- 9.3 Planning applications can be determined in one of two ways:
- ❖ determination by Councillors on the Planning Control Committee; or
 - ❖ determination by development management officers under the delegated decision making procedure.

Further information is given on our website: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-advice-and-guidance/planning-applications-decision-making-process>.

Pre-application Consultation

- 9.4 We provide an informal general enquiry system for initial queries about planning applications. There is a planning duty officer phone service between 9am and 12 noon each weekday.
- 9.5 Anyone considering making an application for planning permission can also approach the council for informal views prior to submitting a formal application, using our pre-application advice service. Any advice given at this stage is not binding, but it can help to save the applicant's time and money in pursuing schemes which may need radical alteration to be acceptable. There are no statutory requirements for pre-application discussions. The council does make a charge for pre-application advice for certain types of development proposal including:
- ❖ Significant or major proposals – Large scale, complex developments, including masterplans;
 - ❖ Category “A” Proposals – Large scale, complex development – including schemes of between 100 – 499 dwellings;
 - ❖ Category “B” – including schemes of between 25 and 99 residential units, 2000sq m or more of commercial floorspace, mixed use development on a site of more than 1 hectare (ha) or development requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
 - ❖ Category “C” Proposals – Other major development – including schemes of between 10 and 24 residential units, provision of 1000sq m – 1999sq m of commercial floorspace, mixed use development on a site between 0.5 and 1ha or change of use proposals for buildings on land exceeding 500sq m;
 - ❖ Category “D” Proposals – including proposals of up to 9 dwellings, advertisements, provision of up to 999sq m of non residential floorspace or change of use of buildings on land exceeding 499sq m; and

❖ Category “E” Proposals – Householder and listed buildings.

- 9.6 Full details of our current charges can be found on our website: [Do I need planning permission? | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)
- 9.7 The council cannot insist on pre-application discussions with applicants but they are recommended. Where major schemes are proposed, the council will encourage developers to engage with the local interest groups and residents. However, it is important that councillors observe the council’s Planning Code of Good Practice.
- 9.8 Not all planning proposals are discussed with the council before an application is made. However, an applicant may consult at the pre-application stage, where this is appropriate, whether they are significant or more minor applications. The tables below set out how an applicant may choose to consult on their proposals.

Table 5 : Public consultation at the pre-application stage for planning applications
(This includes all applications made under the Town and Country Planning Act and associated legislation.)

Pre-Application Stage : Major Applications (see Appendix 2)		
Consultation Methods	Suggested Course of Action	By Whom
Letters to inform local residents / interest groups of the planning application site	Send letters / emails to local residents / interest groups / relevant statutory consultees	Planning applicant / agent
Public exhibition or public meeting	Publicise & prepare proposals for public consultation.	Planning applicant / agent
Pre – Application Stage – Other Applications		
Inform neighbours in the immediate vicinity	Verbal consultation	Planning applicant / agent

- 9.9 Local residents often express concern regarding construction management and in particular construction vehicle access routes to development sites. Developers are strongly advised to consider construction management issues at the earliest possible stage of the planning process. It is best practice to consider sensitive and well thought out construction management plans at the pre-application stage (as part of engagement with Hertfordshire County Council Highways and the District Council) and to seek the views of the local community before planning applications are submitted. The feedback from any public consultation on construction management (including

construction vehicle access routes) should then be incorporated into the formal submission of a planning application.

- 9.10 For strategic site development proposals or schemes of significant scale and local interest, developers may also consider making presentations to the relevant Area Forum. The [Council's Constitution \(May 2023\)](#) states that Area Forums can receive presentations from developers for schemes for 100 dwellings or more. This threshold may change over the lifetime of this SCI. Whilst Member input into these discussions must be limited in order to avoid pre-determination by Members of the Planning Control Committee and their substitutes, the Area Forums would welcome early engagement for large scale development proposals and will provide comments accordingly.

Public consultation for planning applications

- 9.11 When a planning application is submitted, the council will publicise it in accordance with the legislative requirements. Where required by the legislation, this will include the following:
- ❖ Notices published in local newspapers;
 - ❖ Application details published on the website for inspection;
 - ❖ Site notices;
 - ❖ Letters sent to adjoining properties;
 - ❖ Consultation with statutory consultees (see Appendix 3)
 - ❖ Details of all planning, listed building and conservation area consent applications are sent to Councillors and the Parish or Town Councils weekly.
- 9.12 The council aims to determine all planning applications within a statutory time period, therefore all consultations that take place once a planning application has been submitted must also take place within these time limits. However, bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.
- 9.13 The tables below set out how the council will consult at the application stage for planning proposals in the District, whether they are significant or more minor applications.

Table 6 : Consultation for Planning Applications

Planning Application Stage		
Consultation Methods	Requirements	By Whom
Copies of planning applications available at the libraries during normal opening hours and the Council Offices (either during	Prepare information	NHC Officers

normal opening hours or by appointment) via the NHDC website		
Site notice	Prepare site notices. Site notices are emailed to the applicant or agent for displaying on site. Planning officers are responsible for displaying site notices where the applicant or agent is out of the district and the property is empty.	NHC Officers Applicants and / or agent
Neighbour notification letters	Prepare & send out letters	NHC Officers
Invite representations from statutory & non statutory consultees	Prepare & send out letters	NHC Officers
Public notice in local paper	Prepare advertisement	NHC Officers
Further consultations by way of exhibitions / public meetings for major applications	This would depend on the types of consultation that have taken place beforehand	Planning Applicant / Agent NHC Officers

- 9.14 In some cases, there may be significant amendments to the submitted plans, in which case the council will advise those people who have previously made comments on an application. If there is a change to an application which is material or affects the description of the development, then we will re-consult, but applicants will be encouraged to undertake additional consultation where appropriate. Where representations and comments are received, they will be taken into account in the determination of applications insofar as they are material to the application. Some things are not material planning considerations, such as the impact of a scheme on property values, and therefore cannot be taken into account.
- 9.15 Local planning authorities are required to make a statement on each planning decision notice as to how they have acted pro-actively in their dealings with applicants. Even if a proposal is fundamentally unacceptable the council will handle the application in a pro-active way. This requirement in no way suggests that the application will not be assessed objectively weighing up any concerns expressed by consultees against the planning merits of the case.
- 9.16 Decisions on planning applications will either be made by the relevant Committee or under powers delegated to the Development and Conservation Manager, Principal

Planning Officer (Major Projects) and Principal Planning Officer (Development Management). In addition, decisions for some minor applications, discharge of planning conditions and applications in respect of tree works are delegated to Senior Planning Officers. Any councillor can request that an application is decided by Committee instead of being determined under delegated powers, where they have a contrary view to the officer as to the probable decision or consider it raises issues of wider public interest, as set out in [Section 8 of the Council's Constitution](#) (Regulatory Committees).

- 9.17 In the case of those applications which will be reported to the Committees for decision, there is the opportunity for individuals to address the Committee to express their support or objection to the proposals. Anyone who has submitted representations will be informed if an application will be brought before committee for decision.

Post decision information

- 9.18 Once a decision has been made, the details of the decision are published online. Planning files will remain open for inspection once decisions have been made (the Part 2 register). A register of associated legal agreements (Section 106 and Section 278 agreements) will also be available for inspection.
- 9.19 The table below sets out how the council will inform the community of the decisions made on all planning applications.

Table 7 : Public Involvement – Post Decisions

Post Application Stage		
Consultation Methods	Requirements	By Whom
Update web site	Ensure that latest information is on the website	NHC Officers
Press release for major applications	Prepare information	NHC Officers

10. NHC Resource Availability

- 10.1 The SCI is based on a realistic assessment of the likely resources available to the council in the foreseeable future. The council does not have either the staff or the financial resources to undertake large scale community and stakeholder events without impacting upon our ability to deliver important day-to-day services. The SCI sets out how the council will undertake a programme of consultation which is achievable and realistic but which will not raise expectations. In order to make the best uses of resources, the council will endeavour to combine local plan consultations with other consultations for council initiatives where this is appropriate and timely.
- 10.2 The council will be responsible for making the appropriate resources available to implement the consultation methods set out in this SCI. It is envisaged that the proposed consultation measures can be met in house.
- 10.3 The Service Director – Regulatory will be responsible for managing the overall consultation process and its implementation will be the responsibility of the Strategic Planning or the Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Teams.
- 10.4 Public consultation in relation to planning applications will be the responsibility of the council's Planning Control and Conservation Manager.

11. Reviewing the SCI

- 11.1 As required by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, the SCI will be reviewed no later than five years after adoption.
- 11.2 However, as explained in paragraphs 7.4 and 7.5, there may be changes in national legislation, regulations or policies on the preparation of the masterplans, SPDs, neighbourhood plans and the local plan review. These will be monitored and if there are any significant changes, the SCI might be subject to a more immediate review.
- 11.3 The SCI will also need to be compliant with any legal requirements for the processing of data or changes to anti-discrimination laws and changes in NHDC policy.
- 11.4 The database of people and organisations will be kept up to date to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 : Specific and General Consultation Bodies

The specific and general consultation bodies for Local Planning are defined in the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\)\(England\) Regulations 2012](#), as shown in the extract below:

In the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 “general consultation bodies” means the following

- a) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority’s area,
- b) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority’s area,
- c) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority’s area,
- d) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority’s area,
- e) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority’s area;

“specific consultation bodies” means the following:

- (a) the Coal Authority,
- (b) the Environment Agency,
- (c) the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (known as English Heritage)⁵,
- (d) the Marine Management Organisation,
- (e) Natural England,
- (f) Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587),
- (g) the Highways Agency⁶,
- (h) a relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority’s area,
- (i) any person—
- (i) to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and

⁵ Known as Historic England

⁶ Known as National Highways

- (ii) who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the local planning authority's area,
- (j) if it exercises functions in any part of the local planning authority's area—
- (i) a Primary Care Trust established under section 18 of the National Health Service Act 2006 or continued in existence by virtue of that section;
- (ii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989;
- (iii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986;
- (iv) a sewerage undertaker; and
- (v) a water undertaker;
- (k) the Homes and Communities Agency; and
- (l) where the local planning authority are a London borough council, the Mayor of London;

Appendix 2 : Definition of Major Development

The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended)

“Major development” means development involving any one or more of the following:

- (a) the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits;
- (b) waste development;
- (c) the provision of dwellinghouses where -
 - (i) the number of dwellinghouses to be provided is 10 or more; or
 - (ii) the development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectare or more and it is not known whether the development falls within paragraph (c)(i);
- (d) the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or
- (e) development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more.

Appendix 3 : Statutory Consultees for Planning Applications

Statutory consultee	Type of development
Canal and River Trust	Schedule 4(za) Development Management Procedure Order
Coal Authority	Article 26 and Schedule 4(o) Development Management Procedure Order
Control of major-accident hazards competent authority (COMAH)	Schedule 4(zb) Development Management Procedure Order
County Planning Authorities	Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Article 21 Development Management Procedure Order and Schedule 4(b)(c) Development Management Procedure Order
Crown Estates Commissioners	Article 26 Development Management Procedure Order
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Article 26 Development Management Procedure Order
Designated Neighbourhood Forum	Paragraph 8A inserted into Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Article 25A and paragraph (d) of Schedule 4 of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015
Environment Agency	Schedule 4(p)(t)(u) (v)(zc)(zd) Development Management Procedure Order
Forestry Commission	Paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990
The Gardens Trust	Schedule 4(s) Development Management Procedure Order and see also guidance on conserving and enhancing the historic environment
Greater London Authority	Mayor of London Order 2008 (as amended)
Health and Safety Executive	Schedule 4(e) and (in relation to applications for planning permission made on or after 1 August 2020 (zg) Development Management Procedure Order, see also guidance on hazardous substances and advice for local planning authorities on consulting Health and Safety Executive on planning applications; and paragraph 113 of guidance on minerals

Statutory consultee	Type of development
[Relevant]Highways Authority (including Highways England)	Schedule 4(g)(h)(i) Development Management Procedure Order
Historic England	Schedule 4(g)(r)(s) Development Management Procedure Order and see also guidance on conserving and enhancing the historic environment
Lead local flood authority	Schedule 4(ze) Development Management Procedure Order
Local Planning Authorities	Schedule 4(b)(c), Article 19 and Article 24 Development Management Procedure Order, Paragraph 4(2) Schedule 1 and Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Paragraph 3(b) of Schedule 4 to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
National Parks Authorities	Schedule 4(a) Development Management Procedure Order
Natural England	Schedule 4(w)(y)(zb) Development Management Procedure Order and Paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Office for Nuclear Regulation	Schedule 4(f) Development Management Procedure Order and see also deciding planning applications around hazardous installations guidance
Oil and Gas Authority	Article 26 Development Management Procedure Order
Parish Councils	Article 25 Development Management Procedure Order and Schedule 4(d) Development Management Procedure Order
Rail Infrastructure Managers	Article 16 Development Management Procedure Order
Rail Network Operators	Schedule 4(j) Development Management Procedure Order and see also guidance on transport
Sport England	Schedule 4(z) Development Management Procedure Order and see also guidance on open space, sports and recreation facilities
Theatres Trust	Schedule 4(x) Development Management Procedure Order
Toll Road Concessionaries	Schedule 4(m) Development Management Procedure Order

Statutory consultee	Type of development
Water and sewerage undertakers	Schedule 4(zf) Development Management Procedure Order

Source: Planning Practice Guidance – [Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 15-030-20190722](#)

Equality Analysis Template – Statement of Community Involvement for the Planning Service

1. Name of activity:	Planning consultations			
2. Main purpose of activity:	The Statement of Community Involvement for Planning (SCI) sets out how consultations will be conducted during the preparation of masterplans for the allocated strategic sites, supplementary planning documents, the review of the local plan or in determining planning applications. It also sets out how the Council will conduct public consultation for those stages in neighbourhood planning for which it is responsible.			
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	<p>The preparation of the SCI is required in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and there is a requirement to review the SCI every 5 years starting from the date of adoption. The latest version of the SCI was adopted on 21 July 2020.</p> <p>The 2023 consultation version of the SCI has been prepared following the adoption of the Local Plan in November 2022. There will be a change in focus in the SCI away from Local Plan preparation to masterplanning for the allocated strategic sites and preparing additional guidance in the form of supplementary planning documents.</p>			
4. Assessment				
Characteristics	Neutral (x)	Negative (x)	Positive (x)	<p>Describe the person you are assessing the impact on, including identifying: community member or employee, details of the characteristic if relevant, e.g. mobility problems/particular religion and why and how they might be negatively or positively affected.</p> <p>Negative: What are the risks?</p> <p>Positive: What are the benefits?</p>
Community considerations (i.e. applying across communities or associated with rural living or Human Rights)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive The SCI includes details about the types of community groups which will be consulted and recognises that there are particular groups whose voices are less often heard or who may engage to a lesser degree in planning consultations. These groups include: People with disabilities; Black and ethnic minority groups; Working age people; Young people; and Gypsy and traveller communities. The SCI also sets out steps to help capture feedback and engage with these groups, including working with the Policy and Community Partnerships Team who have already developed links and networks with a number of these communities.
A person living with a disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive
A person of a particular race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative

				Positive
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive
A person of a particular religion or belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive
A person of a particular age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive
Transgender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive

5 Results

	Yes	No	
Were positive impacts identified?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consideration is being paid to reaching and engaging with a wide and diverse section of the North Herts community. This will be done by working with the Policy and Community Partnerships team who have established links with diverse communities.
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

6. Consultation, decisions and actions

If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?

Once public consultation for supplementary planning or local plan documents, neighbourhood plans and planning applications has been completed, officers consider all the responses and make recommendations as to how a consultation document should be amended or a decision is made in the case of a planning application.

In terms of consultations on the strategic site masterplans, officers will expect the developer, landowner or their representatives to consider all of the responses and make recommendations as how those masterplans may be amended before a planning application is submitted to the local planning authority.		
Describe the decision on this activity		
A report is prepared for Members to consider and either approve or reject an officer recommendation, through Cabinet or the Planning Control Committee.		
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively		
Action	Responsible person	Completion due date
The SCI sets out how consultations will take place & it has identified a number of groups which have been "seldom heard" in previous consultations. The use of different consultation techniques will be considered to try and broaden the groups who participate in the consultations. The use of monitoring forms will be considered to assess the effectiveness of future consultations reaching all areas of the community.	Nigel Smith	31 Dec 2023
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		
The Strategic Planning and the Strategic Infrastructure and Projects teams will review future public consultations after each consultation period and consider whether all groups within the community have been represented.		
7. Signatures		
Assessor		
Name: Clare Skeels	Signature** <i>Clare Skeels</i>	
Validated by		
Name: Nigel Smith	Signature** <i>Nigel Smith</i>	
Forward to the Corporate Policy Team		
Signature** G R CHAPMAN		
Assessment date: 25/08/23	Review date: 05/01/24	

**** Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically.**

A copy of this form should be forwarded to the corporate policy team and duplicate filed on the council's report system alongside any report proposing a decision on policy or service change.

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CABINET

19 September 2023

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: CHESFIELD CONSERVATION AREA

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND TRANSPORT – RUTH BROWN

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the representations made in response to the consultation on the draft Chesfield Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and the proposed designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the proposed boundaries for the Chesfield Conservation Area are approved and Officers authorised to undertake the necessary administrative tasks to designate the conservation area boundary.
- 2.2. That the Chesfield CAAMP is approved and adopted.
- 2.3. That delegated authority is granted to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport to make any minor non-material corrections (including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations) to the CAAMP as considered necessary for the publication of the CAAMP.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that our Conservation Areas and historic assets within North Hertfordshire are appropriately assessed and designated to inform decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of neighbourhood plans and our Local Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The Council could refrain from undertaking any further work on conservation areas or local heritage assets, but this would not reflect national policy or legislation which requires local authorities to review and monitor conservation areas from time to time and conserve local and designated assets.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Executive Members and Deputies have been briefed on the relevant matters in this report.
- 5.2. Public consultation took place on the proposed designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area boundary and the draft CAAMP between November 2022 and February 2023. A summary of the responses is attached as Appendix A. Those responses have been used in finalising the proposed boundary and the CAAMP.
- 5.3. Details of the responses received to the consultation are available on the Council's website.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Conservation areas are designated by the Council in its role as Local Planning Authority. They exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place. Local planning authorities have a duty to review designations from time to time to determine if any further parts of the District should be included within a conservation areas.
- 7.2 Policy SP13 : Historic Environment in the Local Plan states that the Council will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and publication of detailed guidance. In paragraph 4.178 of the supporting text of that Policy it states that:

Over the lifetime of this Plan, we will carry out a programme of work relating to our Conservation Areas with priority for locations with potential development pressures and where there have been significant changes since the designation was first made. The reviews will include the production of character statements and will provide opportunities to consider amending boundaries.

- 7.3 In 2016, a heritage assessment for the proposed strategic housing allocation North of Stevenage (NS1) was commissioned, and included the recommendation that:

North Hertfordshire District Council should consider designating a conservation area based upon Chesfield Park and Chesfield Church to adjoin the St Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area in Stevenage and preserve the significance of Chesfield Park.

Details of this recommendation are set out in para 8.14 of Cabinet report : [Conservation Area Summary Report and Next Steps, 26 January 2021.](#)

- 7.4 The Council commissioned consultants to undertake a preliminary assessment to establish whether the Chesfield area is of sufficient special or historic interest to designate as a conservation area. The work concluded that the area was of sufficient interest to prepare a draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Chesfield with a view to recommending a new Conservation Area be designated.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. Cabinet approved the draft CAAMP and the proposed boundaries for a conservation area at Chesfield for public consultation in [September 2022](#) with public consultation taking place between November 2022 and February 2023.
- 8.2. The consultation documents were placed on the Council's website, interested parties were contacted and an online consultation event was held with the consultants available to discuss the proposals and answer questions.
- 8.3. The draft CAAMP set out a proposed boundary for the Chesfield conservation area and a number of representations were received in response to the proposals, from local residents and interest groups and a number of statutory consultees. Local residents who made comments on the proposals expressed their personal objections to the proposals which included:
 - the opinion that few buildings of sufficient historic interest to warrant statutory protection;
 - the opinion that the gardens of Chesfield Park have not been judged to be of sufficient interest to include in the Register of Parks and Gardens;
 - that the consultants had not gained access to Chesfield Park to make a detailed assessment of the area;
 - the opinion that additional traffic from new developments in the surrounding area has changed the character of the area;
 - the opinion that more visitors will be attracted to the area, where there is no car parking or footpaths;
 - inconvenience of applying for permission to erect sheds, fences and tree maintenance;
 - Chesfield Park is private property with no footpaths or public rights of way;
 - the opinion that boundary issues with Great Ashby require woodland and fencing management which needs to be undertaken daily without asking for permission through a management scheme; and
 - the opinion that inflated prices for specific conservation items to repair or improve houses.
- 8.4. All of the representations are available to view on the [website](#) and a summary of the representations and the consultants responses are attached as Appendix A.
- 8.5. Following the consultation, the consultants have undertaken further work discussing the proposals to designate a conservation area at Chesfield with Historic England, Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and Stevenage Borough Council. A full response from Stevenage Borough Council is attached as Appendix D. Both the consultants and ourselves have attempted to contact the owners of Chesfield Park to arrange for the consultants to gain access to Chesfield Park, although to date, it has not been possible to arrange this access to the Park. The owners have responded and suggested that a site visit should take place in the winter so that the surrounding area can be seen, rather than when the trees are in full leaf. However, the decision to designate a conservation area should be based on the planning and the historic merits of the proposals; the consultants consider that there is sufficient evidence from site visits and desk based research to designate the Chesfield Conservation Area.

- 8.6. Designating a new conservation area at Chesfield will provide a continuation of the St Nicholas / Rectory Lane conservation areas in Stevenage, as illustrated in Appendix C. The conservation areas will provide a buffer between the adjoining allocated sites and will ensure that the historic parts of the landscape are retained in the future.
- 8.7. As a result of the consultation and further discussions, the consultants have recommended that some changes are made to the CAAMP and that the boundaries to the proposed conservation area are confirmed, as attached as Appendix B.
- 8.8. The CAAMP sets out the background information about the legislative and policy context for designating conservation areas, includes a description of the history of Chesfield, explains the reasons for the Conservation Area boundaries and describes the assessment of significance for the Conservation Area. There is also a section in the CAAMP which sets out the potential opportunities for enhancement and proposals for the management of the Conservation Area.
- 8.9. If Cabinet agree that the Chesfield Conservation Area should be designated, we must notify the Secretary of State and Historic England and are required to publicise the designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area with a notice placed in the London Gazette and a local newspaper, in accordance with [section 70\(8\) of the Planning \(Listed Building and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#). The Local Land Charges register will also be updated with the details of the new boundary.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, the Constitution states that it may exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority and receive reports on strategic planning matters, (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Regulatory).
- 9.2. Section 69 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to designate areas which they consider possess architectural or historic interest worthy of preservation or enhancement as Conservation Areas. As part of this, section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas, such as in the form of an appraisal document. It is also the Local Authority's duty to ensure that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area when making planning decisions, as per section 72 of the Act.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The costs for the work on the Chesfield CAAMP and boundary review has been met from within the planning fees reserve. £120k has been earmarked for conservation work over an anticipated three years. So far £19k has been spent in 2021/22 and £10.4k in 2022/23, so there is £90,553 left to fund conservation work. Each CAAMP cost around £10-12k.
- 10.2. If Cabinet approve the designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area, there will be some revenue costs associated with advertising the proposed changes in the London Gazette and a local newspaper, which will be fully funded from the earmarked reserve.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Sustainable Development of the District is identified as a Corporate Risk. The preparation of the CAAMP for the Chesfield Conservation Area will assist in promoting sustainable development in the future.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. The designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area and the adoption of the CAAMP will assist in the management of the historic environment.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Report on the Public Consultation Process for the Chesfield Conservation Area.
- 16.2 Appendix B – Chesfield Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, September 2023.
- 16.3 Appendix C – Map of the Chesfield Conservation Area in the context of the neighbouring area.
- 16.4 Appendix D – Response from Stevenage Borough Council.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management, Historic England Advice Note 1, 2019](#)
- 18.2 [Cabinet report : Conservation Area Summary Report and Next Steps, 26 January 2021, Agenda Item 10](#)
- 18.3 [Cabinet report : Conservation Area Reviews, 21 June 2021](#)
- 18.4 [St Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document, July 2012](#)

Chesfield Conservation Area – Summary of Consultation Responses

Respondent Name/ Organisation	General Comments	Response	Action
Mr Roger Tester	It would be good if the conservation area had some improved public access. The PRow are currently all at the edge of the proposed area and it would be a pity if the public on non-mechanised transport are unable to see much of any conserved area. It seems to rather defeat the purpose of conservation.	Whilst noted by North Herts District Council (NHDC), this does not form part of the remit of a Conservation Area designation as stipulated by national guidance and policy.	
	I did spot an error; section 2.1 page 12 refers to FP Graveley 101. This should be 010.		Amend document accordingly.
Mr and Mrs Alderson	We don't think 1 and 2 Manor Cottages (1930s houses which are not listed or have historical importance) should be within the proposed consultation area.	Whilst 1 and 2 Manor Cottages are not of any special architectural or historic interest, their scale, design, and materiality responds to, and reinforces, the local character and distinctiveness.	Amend document accordingly.
	As regards other properties in Chesfield we don't think one listed property, one church ruin (with no plans to stop it deteriorating) and a garden wall warrants a conservation area.	The quantity of historic structures is low, however the significance of the proposed conservation area is not derived solely from the architectural interest of the buildings and structures but also from its historic interest,	

		archaeological interest, the landscape, and its rural character and appearance.	
	We don't understand how Chesfield can be considered a conservation area with the additional traffic (especially from new residents in Roundwood using Back Lane to get to the A1) and pollution that will arise due to the decisions to grant planning permission for many properties on the Forster Way and Roundwood.	Whilst noted the draft CAAMP can only assess the existing situation and baseline as per national guidance and policy.	
	If Chesfield does become a conservation area more visitors will be attracted and there is no car parking available or footpaths (by roads) for walkers. The additional cars discussed in 3) would be a danger to horse riders, walkers and cyclists in the area.	Whilst noted the draft CAAMP can only assess the existing situation and baseline as per national guidance and policy.	
	If both councils continue to build housing estates around Chesfield and we decide to sell up, we would prefer to sell our house and land under the green belt regulations.	Noted.	
	We don't want the inconvenience and cost of applying for planning permission to erect sheds, greenhouses, fences hedges and tree maintenance.		Include explanation on PD changes in Management Plan
	All Chesfield residents are opposed to your proposal.	Noted.	
	Instead of spending money on a report to justify Chesfield becoming a conservation area surely tax payers money would have been better spent on a report to understand how the area's infrastructure is		

	going to deal with significant increase in population. Even before the new houses are built around Chesfield we are dealing with speeding cars, rush hour traffic and fly tipping.		
	At the recent consultation meeting the Councilor said “the residents of Chesfield need to move on from the decisions to grant planning permission on Forster way and Roundwood – that ship has sailed”. Unfortunately that ship will never sail for the residents of Chesfield as we have to live with the Council’s decisions destroy the countryside around our small village. Given the sensitivities around recent planning permissions we think the residents of Chesfield should have been consulted much sooner and in a face to face meeting.		
Mr Hugh Napier	Firstly, the landowners of the whole area were not consulted before this exercise began and we collectively object to this infringement of our autonomy.		
	As private land this is not North Herts decision to make and we strongly object to the manner in which this process has been initiated.		
	This new Conservation Area was not requested by us.	Noted.	
	Chesfield Park is private property with no footpaths or public rights-of-way. There are no listed buildings within Chesfield Park and several outbuildings and garden walls are already in a state of disrepair.		Arrange access to Chesfield Park

	We have significant boundary issues with Great Ashby which require constant woodland and fencing management, therefore maintenance needs to happen daily without asking for permission from an intrusive management scheme.		Liaise with NHDC Arb. Team re: management of woodland.
	There are several major new housing developments set to engulf the whole area compounding the above issues as new developments will border the Parkland and woodland.		Liaise with NHDC Arb. Team re: management of woodland.
	St Etheldra's ruined church is already protected as a Grade 2 Heritage Asset.	Noted.	
	Increased traffic caused by the expansion of Great Ashby in recent years has already changed the area beyond recognition and this proposal is simply too little too late, especially considering North Herts council has approved NS1 for the building of 900 new homes on our doorstep.	Noted.	
Ms Elaine Southern	The report is misleading, views that are used to create the ambience of the area will not exist after NS1 and Roundwood are built.	Whilst noted the draft CAAMP can only assess the existing situation and baseline as per national guidance and policy.	
	Manor Cottages are < 100 year old farm worker cottages the 1 HER marker is in the wood undated unspecific, why they are included.	Whilst 1 and 2 Manor Cottages are not of any special architectural or historic interest, their scale, design, and materiality responds to, and reinforces,	Amend document accordingly.

		the local character and distinctiveness.	
	Why should we pay inflated prices for specific conservation items to repair and improve our houses.	Like-for-like repairs will not require planning permission.	Expand section on PD rights and reference materials, etc.
	The report has been a waste and has not been delivered to residents in a timely manor.		
Ramblers Association	The FP from near the manor east towards Gt Ashby is FP10 not 101 has number 10. When searching HCC webpages one does need three digits so they are 008, 009 & 010.		Amend document accordingly.
	There is a T in Etheldreda; it is correct later in the document.		Amend document accordingly.
National Highways	National Highways therefore maintain our previous position that, considering the limited level of growth proposed across the Chesfield Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan, we do not expect that there will be any significant impacts on the operation of the SRN in the area.	N/A	N/A
The Coal Authority	No comments.	N/A	N/A
Environment Agency	No comments.	N/A	N/A
Natural England	No comments.	N/A	N/A

Mr Edward Seebohm	From my point of view I have found the way the Council have carried out this project deeply disturbing.		
	There is a suspicion the establishment of a Conservation Area is mainly a device to protect land from further development, which lessens the value of the nature of a Conservation Area rather than Chesfield being seen as a special area of historical interest, which it is not.		
	It a odd that approximately 200 acres or so of land and woodland is considered of such historic importance when there are only two listed buildings included. On the south side we have the Park with uncertain historic links, on the north side two listed buildings, modern buildings and no land of any historic interest at all.	Special interest described in draft CAAMP (historic maps and archaeology)	
	Then there is the question of the road. The road divides the proposed area in half and is a major negative factor. The Council have largely ignored the impact of the road, possibly because it is controlled by a different authority. However, it can't really be ignored as it runs right through Chesfield and sadly has a growing detrimental effect on the area.		Address in CAAMP – can this form part of the management plan?
	Chesfield will not remain the same Conservation Area or no Conservation area. It requires farming, woodland management and property management of commercial buildings. Viability of some of the buildings are questionable right now, and as the horse riding declines because of the dangerous road and reduced off road riding because of new houses, the		Could potential changes be part of opportunities for enhancement?

	buildings will need to be repurposed. Possibly industrial units or even more residential. Pasture fields may even be ploughed up to make way for different crops.		
	The report doesn't make any reference to woodland management and we are in the process of establishing management plans for all our woodlands with the Forestry Commission. Such plans will include some necessary felling under felling licences granted by the Forestry Commission. A Conservation Area cannot interfere with such plans.		Liaise with NHDC Arb. Team re: management of woodland.
	It is unclear whether fencing and hedges will be controlled by a Conservation Area. We cannot have planners interfering with our normal management of our land.		Expand PD section. Can these remain as PD?
	Another major negative factor ignored in the report is the already encroaching housing around the boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area. The woodland suffers from regular trespass and antisocial behaviour. In particular Round Wood has seen fires, small trees cut down, bicycles and motor bicycles ridden in the wood. The inevitable result is the driving out of wildlife and destruction of flora including bluebells. So much for conservation.	Whilst noted the draft CAAMP can only assess the existing situation and baseline as per national guidance and policy.	
Peter Seebohm	Lack of clarity on the impact on land management.		Liaise with North Herts Arb. Team re: management of woodland.
	Character descriptions have been misleading.		Arrange access to Chesfield Park

	The purpose of the livery and agricultural buildings (1950s concrete) will, similar to all farms and enterprises, have a requirement to evolve and adapt to its environment etc. Any future development would have to go through the usual planning and be subject to Greenbelt rules, existing planning rules in proximity to listed buildings. Adding a Conservation Area designation feels unnecessary.		PD explanation? To be expanded in draft CAAMP.
	Potential funding opportunities (p.49) is simply wishful thinking, any work that gets carried out on St. Etheldreda's Church will have to continue to be privately financed and I am not convinced the Conservation Area will have any impact.		Review this section but retain Section 106 funding.
Dr Hilary Napier	The proposed conservation area regulations will impose extra cost and time which significantly adds to the stresses of farming my land and maintaining the trees. Chesfield Park is actively farmed with livestock and designated arable land.		Liaise with NHDC Arb Team re: management of woodland.
	I do not believe either the setting or the existing buildings merit conservation area status. If they did then there are many thousands of equally "historically important" areas of land in the UK. All land has historical background whether preserved or not.	There are over 10, 000 conservation areas across the UK.	
	The land is protected by Green Belt designation and the historically significant buildings of Manor Farm and St Ethelreda's ruined church are already protected as Grade 2 and heritage assets respectively. The so-called unaltered historic landscaped country park is		Arrange access to Chesfield Park. Is there a confusion in terminology? Check with historic landscape team?

	partly arable, overshadowed by pylons and has housing estates visible in many directions.		
	The proposed conservation area has already been impacted by housing development on the eastern side, but that is dwarfed in comparison when one considers that a further 1800 houses are to be built adjacent to the area to be conserved. The rural feel to the area has been decimated by development with concomitant increases of traffic on Back Lane.		Check with North Herts about the likely impact of new development.
	It seems disingenuous to include a photo of unspoilt views towards Chesfield Park showing the “quality of the well-preserved surrounding rural landscape which makes an important contribution to the historic setting and significance of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area (Figure 37)” when this is soon to be covered in housing. “The uninterrupted view across open fields and meadows towards Graveley is particularly important given that historically Chesfield and Graveley have been related so closely in manorial and ecclesiastical affairs (Figure 37). “That view is not going to be recognised once NS1 is built.	Whilst noted the draft CAAMP can only assess the existing situation and baseline as per national guidance and policy.	Check status of NS1. Is there an LVIA?
Bidwells – representing Dr and Mr Hilary and Henry Napier and Seebohm	Within the area, only a limited number of structures are considered to be of sufficient architectural or historic interest to warrant statutory protection and these are all located to the north of Back Lane. To the south, the house at Chesfield Park is a 1950s replacement and whilst its gardens and former park appear to be of historic origin, this has not been judged to be of sufficient interest to include the gardens on the Register of Parks and Gardens. If it		Arrange access to Chesfield Park. Has the parkland ever been assessed by HE?

	were, then the combination of designated assets, including a Registered Park, might meet the threshold for designation as a Conservation Area for the overall group value. Without such recognition of merit, the test of specialness is not satisfied.		
	At the public consultation event, Cllr Brown made reference to the purpose of the Conservation Area proposal at Chesfield was to help “prevent” development. If this is the aim, then existing green belt, heritage and other land use policies already provide more than sufficient protection for this land. The designation of a Conservation Area would not be justified and would, contrary to policy 191 of the NPPF, de-value the intent of such designations.		
	It is our clients’ opinion, therefore, that the proposed designation area does not have a sufficiently ‘special’ character or appearance to justify its designation as a Conservation Area. Furthermore, we find that certain assessment made within the Place Services document which is intended to define the character and appearance are not correct.		Arrange access to Chesfield Park
Hertfordshire County Council – Environment and Infrastructure Department	No comments.	N/A	N/A
Anne Conchie	This is an interim response; there may be more after our committee have discussed it. I am writing personally as the website editor and committee		

<p>(Friends of the Forster Country)</p>	<p>member with a further interest specified later. Please give us a deadline for final comments for the draft before it becomes final.</p> <p>You are correct that we should show an interest as this is arguably in Forster Country and if not, then adjacent to it. But at the moment our main concern is the recent planning permission for several hundred houses within Stevenage just south of Chesfield, including some in a Conservation Area. Historic England were not happy with the proposed designs but that did not stop the granting of planning permission.</p> <p>The application for a park or meadow (both terms were used in the local plan) i.e. the open space near Chesfield Park, shown in your fig 37 was referred back to Stevenage planners at a meeting recently. FoFC argued strongly against a carpark with toilets, larger than in any other in Stevenage park, along with many hard surface routes needed for maintenance; not the open meadow suggested in the Local Plan. But the main concern for Chesfield in the original application was for a mound containing all the spoil from the building works. This would be very near the Stevenage/Graveley border, on land I think shown in fig 37.</p> <p>Another factor not mentioned in the draft consultation document is the recently approved Local Plan for North Herts which allows many more hundreds of houses between Graveley FP9 and Graveley village</p>		
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	and North Road B197 spoiling the view shown in fig.32. No details are publicly available yet.		
Hertfordshire Gardens Trust (Kate Harwood)	<p>A minor query on p.17. where the history of Chesfield Park house is outlined. It states that the architraves were of painted stone or cement. I find this quite surprising. In the late 18/early 19 century houses were sometimes covered with a patent cement /stucco render, especially round here as stone was in short supply. But I have not heard of any brick building with only cement architraves - stone where they could afford it, but not cement. Would it be possible for you to let me know the source for this information?</p> <p>Chesfield Park itself is on the Herts Gardens Trust Local List for NHDC. We have done local parks and gardens lists for all the LPAs in Hertfordshire, some have been adopted and we've helped with polygons, brief resumes of info etc. NHDC has not asked us to supply information so we hold it here in a fairly raw form. Chesfield Park is an interesting late 18/early 19 century park which seems to have developed out of the very large garden (given as 150 acres in Prince 2008) depicted in the Dury & Andrews map (which I always take with a pinch of salt) and is first shown on the 1820/21 Bryant map of Hertfordshire. The sculpted edges to the shelter belts, the views southwest across the landscape to St Nicholas church spire at Stevenage and beyond, and the sinuous approach drive snaking across the parkland, visible on the LiDAR are fairly typical of the period and there is much still there. I don't know if you are required to flag up the Local importance of Chesfield Park as a heritage asset but it would be very welcome if you could.</p>		

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Proposed Chesfield Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Client:
North Herts Council

Date:
September 2023

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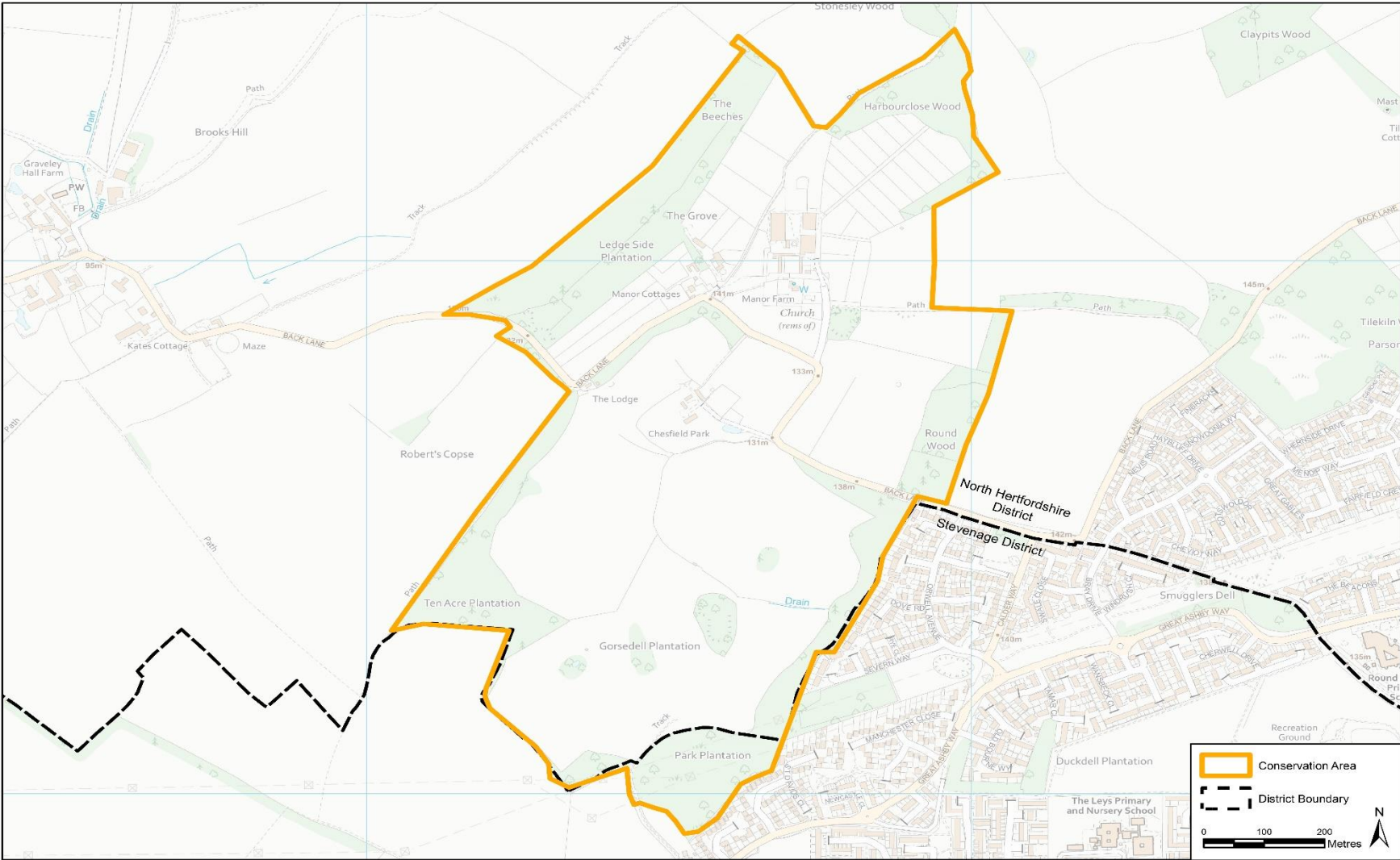


Figure 1: Location Plan showing proposed Chesfield Conservation Area boundary and district boundary

1. Introduction

1.1. Summary

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan provides an overview of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area, outlining its suitability for designation, proposed boundary, and description of its special interest. The appraisal will also consider buildings, landscapes, and features which contribute to the proposed Conservation Area's character and appearance.

Conservation Area designation provides broader protection than the listing of individual buildings as it recognises all features within the area which form part of its character and appearance and ensures that planning decisions take the enhancement and preservation of the area into consideration.

The proposed Chesfield Conservation Area comprises the landscaped country park of Chesfield including the central house and garden (Chesfield Park), and a farmstead complex, including the former manor house, and ruined church to the north (Chesfield Manor). The proposed Conservation Area is bounded on each side by substantial treelines and, with the exception of its south-eastern edge, arable fields (Figure 1).

The significance of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area chiefly derives from its rural character, the historic interest of the former manorial site and church and the unaltered, historic landscaped country park.



Figure 2: The ruins of St. Etheldreda's Church

1.2. Purpose of Appraisal

This document is to be used as a baseline to inform future change, development, and design with regard to the sensitivities of the historic environment and its unique character.

The appraisal recognises designated and non-designated heritage assets within the area which contribute to its special interest, along with their setting. It will consider how different Character Areas within the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area came to be developed, their building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities will be used to assess the key characteristics of each area, highlighting potential impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character of Chesfield. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and analysis of the proposed conservation area.

This appraisal will enhance understanding of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area and its development, informing future design. Applications that demonstrate an understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce appropriate design and positive outcomes for agents and their clients.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance outlined in the bibliography.

1.3. Frequently Asked Questions

A selection of frequently asked questions is outlined below. If you require further advice, please contact North Herts Council's planning department.

What is a conservation area?

Conservation areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority as areas of special architectural and historic interest. There are many different types of conservation area, which vary in size and character, and range from historic town centres to country houses set in historic parks. Conservation area designation introduces additional planning controls and considerations, which exist to protect an area's special character and appearance and the features that make it unique and distinctive. Although designation introduces controls over the way that owners can develop their properties, it is generally considered that these controls are beneficial as they sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework regards conservations areas as 'designated heritage assets'.

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act specifies the general duty of Local Authorities, in the exercise of planning functions (Section 72). The 1990 Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

How are conservation areas designated and managed?

The designation process includes detailed analysis of the proposed conservation area and adoption by the local planning authority. A review process should be periodically undertaken, and the Conservation Area assessed to safeguard that it retains special architectural or historic interest. Threats can be identified, and the boundary reviewed, to ensure it is still relevant and appropriate.

This Conservation Area is supported by an appraisal and management plan. The appraisal describes the importance of an area in terms of its character, architecture, history, development form and landscaping. The management plan, included within the appraisal, sets out various positive proposals to improve, enhance and protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

How can I find out if I live in a conservation area?

Boundary maps of all conservation areas in the district can be found on North Herts Council's website. The council also has an online interactive map search function, which allows you to search for a specific property. Full details, including contact details for the local authority, can be accessed via the link below. (<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/conservation-areas>)

What are the Council's duties regarding development in conservation areas?

The Local Authority must follow the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These set out in clear terms how development proposals within Conservation Areas should be considered on the basis of whether they preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Applications which fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area are likely to be refused as a result. An authorities Local Plan also typically includes a specific policy on Conservation Areas.

Do I need permission to change a property in a conservation area?

Permitted development rights are not the same within a conservation area as they are elsewhere. This means things that normally would not require planning permission will require consent within a conservation area's boundary. For example, side extensions, two storey rear extensions, roof extensions and the cladding of buildings, which normally would class as permitted development, require planning permission if the building affected is in a conservation area.

North Herts Council's planning team can provide further information on whether alterations require planning permission. Full details of permitted development rights are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2020.

Additionally, further information on the need for planning permission may be found on the Planning Portal. (<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission>)

Further consideration may also need to be given to the setting of listed buildings, which many conservation areas are likely to contain.

What is a non-designated heritage asset?

All buildings, features and planned landscapes within a Conservation Area make a contribution to its significance. These can be measured on a sliding scale of positive, to neutral, to negative contributors.

Heritage assets are defined in the NPPF as ‘*A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.*’

Not all heritage assets are designated. Although a building may not be included on the national list, this does not always mean it is of no heritage value. Buildings and other smaller features of the built environment such as fountains, railings, signs and landscaping can make a positive contribution to the appreciation of an area’s historic interest and its general appearance.

Local listing is an important tool for local planning authorities to identify non-listed buildings and heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the locality. North Hertfordshire District Council currently has Registers of Buildings of Local Interest for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Newnham, Knebworth (parish) and Royston.

Do I need to make an application for routine maintenance work?

If routine maintenance works are to be carried out using authentic materials and traditional craft techniques, on a like-for-like basis, it is unlikely that you will need to apply for permission from the local authority. However, it is strongly recommended that you contact the local planning authority for clarification before commencing any works. The use of a contractor with the necessary skills and experience of working on historic buildings is essential. Inappropriate maintenance works and the use of the wrong materials will cause damage to the fabric of a historic building.

What is an Article 4 Direction?

Some conservation areas are covered by an Article 4 Direction, which brings certain types of development back under the control of a local planning authority. This is in addition to the exemptions outlined in the Permitted Development Order Act and, where in place, an Article 4 direction allows potentially harmful proposals to be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications. Article 4 Directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area and a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Historic England provides information on Article 4 Directions on their website. (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/article4directions>)

Can I demolish a building in a conservation area?

Demolition, or substantial removal of part of a building within a conservation area, will usually require permission from the local planning authority. It is important to speak to them before beginning any demolition works, to clarify if permission is required. This includes the demolition of boundary walls.

Will I need to apply for permission for a new or replacement garage, fence, boundary wall or garden structure?

Any demolition, development or construction in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. A replacement boundary, garage, outlodge or greenhouse will need to be designed with the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area in mind. North Herts Council will provide advice as to how to proceed with an application.

Can I remove a tree within a conservation area?

If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work, the local planning authority must be notified 6 weeks before any work begins. This enables the authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and, if necessary, create a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it. Consent will be required for any works to trees that are protected. Further information on TPOs can be found on Historic England's website (see below).

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/tree/>)
website.

How can I find out more?

Historic England's website has information on conservation areas and their designation. Further information on the importance of conservation areas, and what it means to live in one, can also be accessed via their website (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/conservation-areas/>).

Historic England has also published an advice note called Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management which sets out advice on the appraisal of conservation areas and managing change in conservation areas (Figure 3). (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/>)

In addition, North Herts District Council has information on the conservation areas within its boundary available on its websites. This includes information pertaining to when the conservation area was designated, how far it extends and the reason for its designation. This can be accessed via the link below. (<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/conservation-areas>)

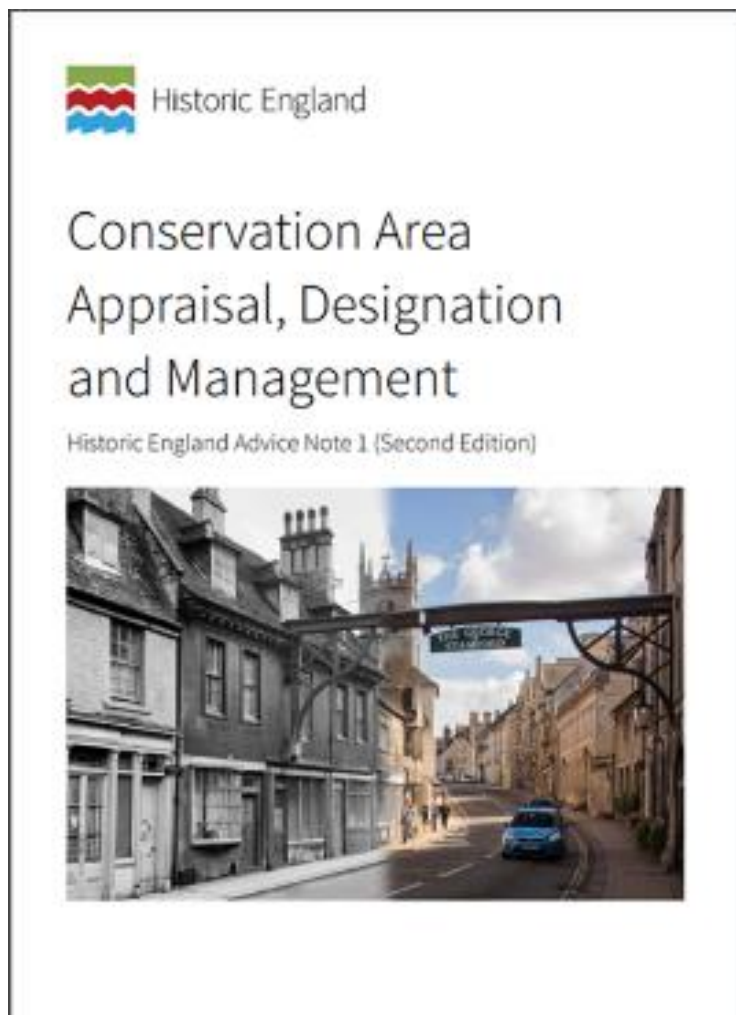


Figure 2 Cover Page, *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management*, Historic England

1.4. Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policies

The national legislative framework for the creation, conservation and enhancement of conservation areas and listed buildings is set out Part II of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (HMSO 1990).

Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider possess architectural or historic interest worthy of preservation or enhancement as Conservation Areas. As part of this, section 71 of the Act requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas, such as in the form of an appraisal document. It is also the Local Authority's duty to ensure that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the conservation when making planning decisions, as per section 72 of the Act.

National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in the Government's *National Planning Policy Framework*, or NPPF (2021). Chapter 16 of the NPPF relates specifically to the historic environment, with Annex 2: Glossary providing a definition of heritage terms, some of which are reproduced in Appendix **Error! Reference source not found.** of this document.

Within the NPPF, the importance of heritage assets is outlined, with emphasis placed upon the contribution they make to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Local Planning Authorities should seek to preserve or enhance the historic environment, developing strategies which consider the wider benefits that the conservation of heritage assets can bring, and draw upon the contribution made by the historic environment to local character and distinctiveness.

A further national planning policy which applies is The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2020.

Careful consideration must be given to the Permitted Development Order by the Local Planning Authority, Residents and other Interested Parties, as many permitted development rights are removed in Conservation Areas.

Local planning policies

North Hertfordshire Draft Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Policies:

SP13: Historic Environment

Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk

Policy HE3: Non-designated heritage assets

Policy HE4: Archaeology

1.5. Designation of the Conservation Area

In 2021, a report was commissioned from Place Services by North Hertfordshire District Council to assess the suitability of an area to the north of Stevenage known as Chesfield for conservation area designation.

To ascertain the boundary for the study area, documentary research was carried out utilising a number of primary and secondary sources including local history publications, maps, original plans and historic photographs held by the Hertfordshire Archives. A desk based archaeological assessment has also been conducted, considering the Chesfield area in the context of the wider landscape. Partial site walkovers were also undertaken in September 2021 and July 2022.

Whilst a site walkover of Chesfield Park was not undertaken prior to the preparation of the proposed CAAMP due to it being in private ownership, it is considered that the views of the area from the public realm along with documentary and photographic evidence was sufficient to understand its special historic interest. Should additional evidence come to further inform this assessment, amendments to the boundary may be required.

Through both the site visit and desk-based research, it was determined that as a combination of a well-preserved landscaped estate and agricultural land with archaeological potential, Chesfield has a distinct character and appearance, which contributes to the understanding of the historic use and development of the Chesfield area over time.

2. Chesfield

2.1. General Character

Chesfield is of an unspoilt rural character and is composed of a managed rural landscape, with woodland, coppices, meadows, and lanes (Figure 4).

The proposed Conservation Area has a central house and garden (Chesfield Park), and a farmstead complex including the former manor house to the north (Chesfield Manor). To the eastern edge of the proposed Conservation Area are areas of modern housing development. Elsewhere, the proposed Conservation Area is bounded by an agrarian landscape comprising large open arable fields; these fields lack a sense of enclosure, are sparsely populated with pockets of woodland and coppices, and hedgerow is widely dispersed.

Back Lane forms the main public route through the proposed Conservation Area and runs roughly west to east, with a branch of the lane forming a circuitous route to the north. There is limited development within the proposed Conservation Area, with the main focus of built structures being around Chesfield Manor and the ruined Church of St Etheldreda in the north of the area. The house at Chesfield Park is secluded, within a walled garden plot, and screened by trees. Aside from Back Lane, there are two public footpaths (Graveley 010 and 009) and a bridleway (Graveley 008), which are publicly accessible routes through the proposed Conservation Area. The majority of the southern section of the area has no direct public access and is the private parkland of Chesfield Park.



Figure 4: Aerial view of proposed Chesfield Conservation Area

2.2. Setting and Context

Chesfield is located in North Hertfordshire, approximately one mile east of the village of Graveley. It is within the boundary of North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). Stevenage, within the boundary of Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), borders the area to the south and east.

Although Stevenage has Saxon origins, the town is characterised by its New Town development, having been the first designated New Town as part of the 1946 New Towns Act. The New Town absorbed small hamlets, farmsteads and settlements surrounding the pre-existing High Street, expanding Stevenage rapidly in the post war years.

St Nicholas/Rectory Road Conservation Area and the proposed Chesfield Conservation share a boundary (Figure 5). The St Nicholas/Rectory Road Conservation Area encapsulates an area surrounding St Nicholas' Church, which is the earliest recorded part of the town and now forms the outer, north-western section of Stevenage. Part of the church tower dates from the twelfth century however a wooden structure may have previously occupied the site.

The St Nicholas/Rectory Road Conservation Area was designated in 1982, extended in 1984 and revised again in 2007. It is within the jurisdiction of Stevenage Borough Council, who have a published an appraisal and management plan for the Conservation Area which is available for download on their website.



Figure 5: Aerial view of Chesfield (edged in red) showing the St Nicholas/Rectory Road Conservation Area boundary to south-west (edged in green)

2.3. Origin and Evolution

The following section provides an overview of the history and development of the proposed Conservation Area. Hertfordshire's Historic Environment Record (HHER) has been used as a reference point for this history. Where appropriate HHER references are included within the text. A full list of HHER results within the study area is reproduced in **Appendix 5.5**.

The Place Name

The historiography of Chesfield has proffered numerous theories as to the origin of the place name of Chesfield. The most convincing view on the subject came from Robert Clutterbuck, in his history of 1821. His theory is that 'Chesfield' is a contraction of Chellsfield, Chells being the name of a small adjoining lordship. Chells Manor lies approximately two miles south-east of Chesfield. Harold A. Roberts, writing in 1952 endorsed this theory because '*Chells and Chesfield were called either Escelveia or Scelva in Domesday Book, Chells being the larger of the two, and from the manor of Chells itself was created the manor of Chesfield.*'¹ This appears to have happened during the reign of Edward I, as in 1274 both were called Scelva, whereas in 1294 one was called Chelse (the manorial name for the family of William de Chelsen), now Chells, and the other change to Chevesfeld. Chesfield, the present name altered from Chisfield, seems but a contraction of Chevesfeld.

Prehistoric Period (500,000 BC to 43 AD)

No sites of a prehistoric date are recorded within the proposed Conservation Area, however archaeological finds dating from the late bronze to the late iron age have been found in a number of locations close to the proposed boundary, particularly in the immediate vicinity of Round Wood (HHER 12655, 16655, 16656). Several of these finds indicate domestic use.

Roman Period (43 AD to 410 AD)

A series of earthworks within woodland to the west of the Chesfield Manor farmstead (annotated HHER 9801 on Figure 19) have been interpreted as evidence of cultivation terraces. At least two lynchets (a ridge or ledge) are present within the woodland, with possibly a third visible in grassland to the south. The age of these earthworks is uncertain, but a Roman or Medieval or date seems most likely.

First century Roman coins have also been found in the immediate vicinity of Harbourclose Wood which is located to the north of the proposed Conservation Area (HHER 11399).

¹ Roberts, Harold, A., *Chesfield: The History of an Ancient Hertfordshire Parish*, (1952) p.6

Anglo-Saxon (410 AD to 1066 AD)

St Etheldreda (636–679 AD) was an Anglo-Saxon, East Anglian princess and Abbess of Ely. This dedication of the church suggests the Anglo-Saxon origins of a manorial and church complex at Chesfield.

Medieval (1066 AD to 1540 AD)

The oldest structure in the proposed Conservation Area is the remains of a ruined thirteenth -century church dedicated to St Etheldreda (NHLE no: 1102564). The existing church appears in records during the reign of Edward 1, when it was rated in the ecclesiastical commission made by order of Pope Nicholas IV and therefore it is known that the church was standing in 1291. There is documentary evidence of a church on the site in 1216 which may have preceded the existing structure. The ruins are Grade II* listed and comprise a single cell chancel, nave and south-east chapel (Figure 17). The church remained in use until 1731, and in 1750 it was partially demolished in order to provide materials for the repair of St Mary's Church in Gravely (1.2km to the west). There are accounts that along with building materials, pews, furniture and other items were also removed to the church at Gravely.

Aside from the ruins of the twelfth-century Church of St Etheldreda (HHER 35), the HHER records no sites of a Medieval date within the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area. It has been suggested that the remains of a deserted Medieval village lie at Chesfield, but this does not appear to be the case. Presumably, however, there would have been a Medieval predecessor to the current Chesfield Manor Farmhouse, associated with the church. However, it is unknown whether the earlier

dwelling was in the same location as the current farmhouse, or elsewhere in the complex.

In the mid-fifteenth century Edward Barrington, in possession of the manor of Chesfield, purchased the manor of Graveley from Ralph de Monte Cavisio. From this point until the mid-nineteenth century, the descent of Graveley manor and Chesfield manor are notably similar.

Post-medieval and Modern (1540 AD to present)

The seventeenth century Chesfield Manor Farmhouse (detailed in Section 2.4) is also recorded in the HHER (2895). The HHER suggests that there is no evidence for the partial demolition of the building (as postulated in the listing entry), and that this manor house presumably became a farmhouse when Chesfield Park was laid out in c.1680 and its associated dwelling constructed.

The majority of the proposed Conservation Area is occupied by Chesfield Park, a large, landscaped park with an associated house and garden (HHER 9567). The park is first recorded on the 1766 Drury and Andrew map of Hertfordshire (Figure 6) but has earlier origins. Whilst the Drury and Andrew map is relatively stylized and cannot be wholly relied upon in terms of both scale and orientation, it clearly shows both Chesfield Park and Chesfield Manor, although at the time of the map's survey they were referred to as "Chisefield Lodge". Visible detail includes the walled garden to the north of the Chesfield Park house, a regular-shaped water feature within the park, and the church, which is incorrectly shown to the north of the manor complex and is depicted as

intact. This suggests some artistic license as it is known that the church fell out of use in 1731 with materials removed from the site in 1750.

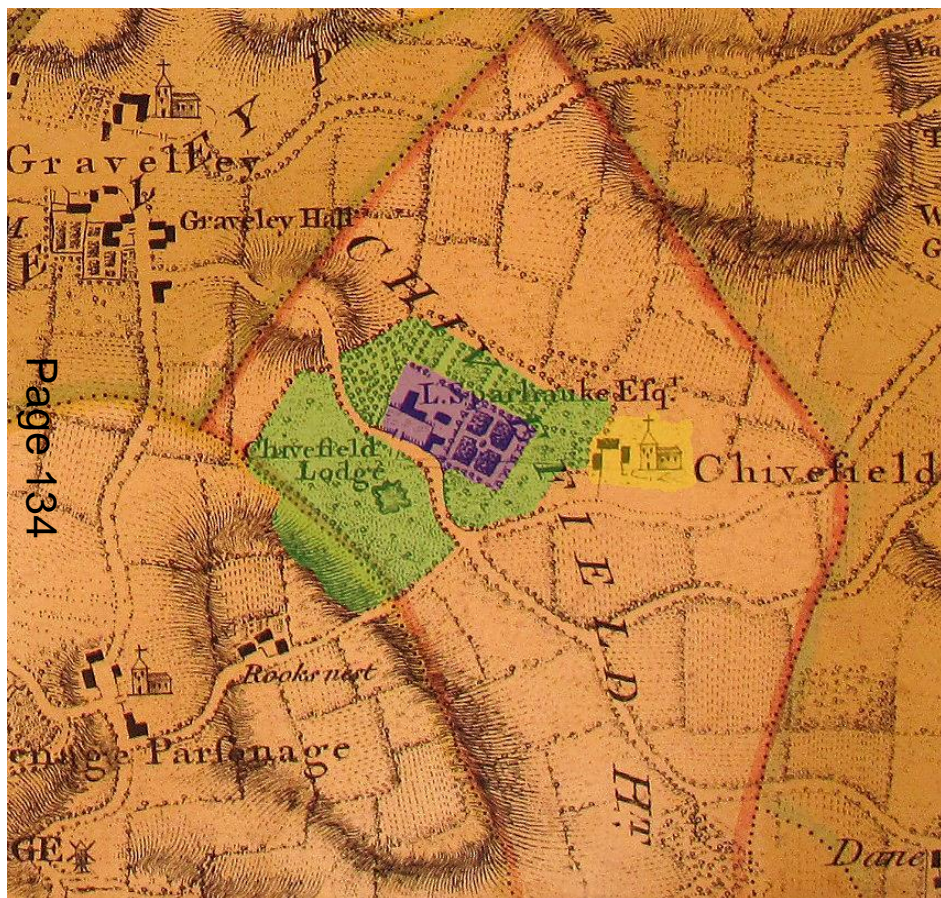


Figure 6: 1766 Drury and Andrew Map of Hertfordshire. Chesfield Park is highlighted in green, with the house and walled garden in blue. Chesfield Manor complex, including the church, are in yellow. North is to the top right

Immediately to the north of the farmhouse and ruined church are the earthwork remains (HHER 1104) of post-medieval farm buildings that were demolished in the nineteenth century. It was initially presumed that these earthworks represented the remains of the aforementioned deserted medieval village, but more research suggests otherwise (Cocroft W. D. 1990). Upon comparison of the 1839 Tithe Map (on which the earlier farm buildings are still extant; Figure 9) with the location of the earthworks (visible to the northwest of the farmstead in Figure 19), this conclusion appears sound.

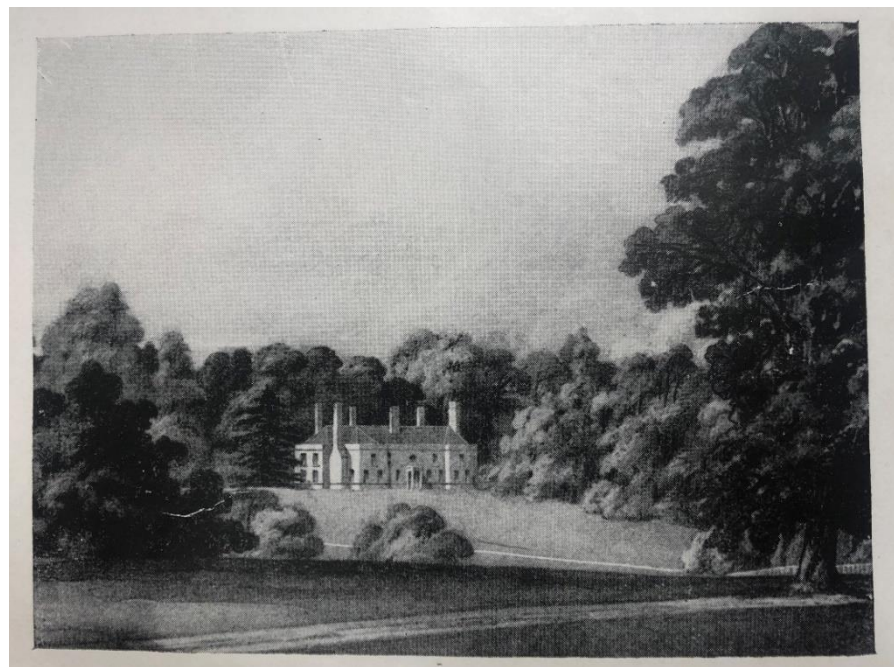


Figure 7: Chesfield Park in 1850, taken from an old print (Harold A. Roberts)

The house at Chesfield Park, erected about 1680, fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1950 by the new owner of the estate who rebuilt a smaller house on the site of the old. The previous building is recorded as being plain, with very little architectural pretension, the front being of brickwork, with painted stone or cement architraves around the windows. Historic prints show a portico to the principal entrance (Figure 7). A feature of particular note is the surviving walled garden to the north of the house, which is visible on the 1766 mapping and is of historic interest.

In 1750, St Etheldreda's Church was demolished under a licence granted by the Bishop of Lincoln, in whose diocese the church then was. Its materials have been used from time to time to repair the Church at Graveley.

The tithe maps are much more accurate than the earlier mapping and serve to show the area in considerable detail for the first time (Figures 8 and 9). Of note is that the large water feature visible on the 1766 map is still present to the south of Chesfield Park (shown as Chisfield Lodge), and that Chesfield Manor contains several farm buildings that have since been demolished. The woodland to the west of Chesfield Manor (the location of cultivation terraces; HHER 9801) is not extant at this point, suggesting the area was still being used as farmland. The accompanying tithe apportionment to these maps shows that the entire area is owned by an "Edward Parkins" (descendant of Edward Barrington) who was also owner of the Manor of Graveley.



Figure 8: Graveley Tithe map (1839). Chesfield Park house and walled garden are highlighted in blue with Chesfield Manor house and ruined church in yellow

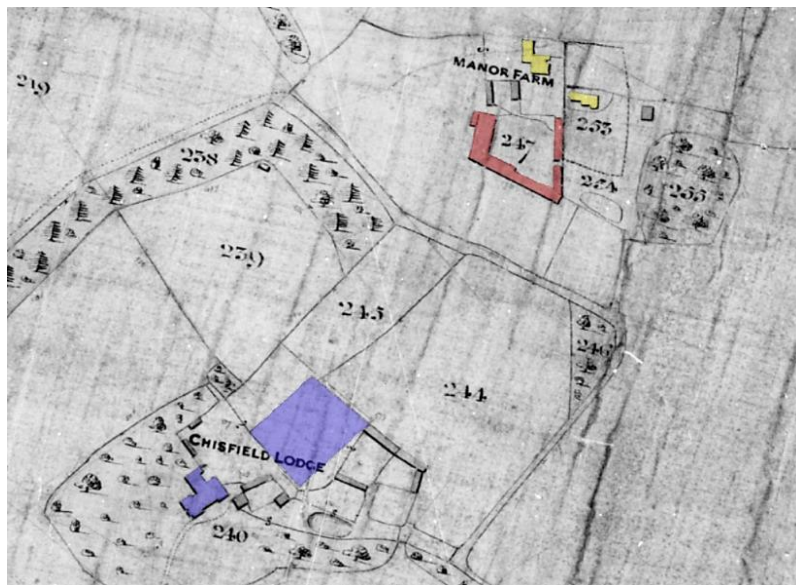


Figure 9: Detail of Figure 8 showing buildings in Chesfield Park and Chesfield Manor, from Graveley Tithe map (1839). Chesfield Park house and walled garden highlighted in blue, Chesfield Manor house and ruined church in yellow. Farm buildings in red.

The farmstead complex to the north of the farmhouse (HHER 9342) is of a typical mid-nineteenth century model farm layout, with three north-south ranges and a fourth perpendicular range at the northern end (Figure 12). Many of the buildings have since been rebuilt, yet several original nineteenth-century buildings survive. The easternmost of the north-south ranges was converted into residential use in 2004, and the work was preceded by a historic building survey (Sammelmann K. 2004). Several large, modern farm buildings were constructed to the north of this complex in the latter half of the twentieth century. A

programme of archaeological monitoring was carried out to the north of this complex in 1997 during the construction of a riding arena, but only modern remains were encountered (Turner C. 1997).

John Edwin Cussans, a Hertfordshire historian, writing in 1874, stated that the church had become a complete ruin.

The six-inch OS map of 1878-1881 (Figure 10) shows many of the same features as the preceding tithe maps, but with some notable changes. A model farm complex in Chesfield Manor has been constructed, with the earlier farm buildings having been demolished. Details of the model farm (HHER ref: 9342) can be found in **Appendix 5.4**.

The woodland containing the cultivation terraces (HHER 9801) to the west is beginning to form, although is still significantly smaller in extent than that of today. The woodland to the south-west ('Ten Acres Plantation') has also expanded slightly. Conversely, the woodland to the far north of the area (labelled as 'Habourclose Wood') has reduced in size, perhaps suggest some deliberate clearance.

The following pages show OS maps from 1896 onwards (Figures 11-15). Very little change occurs between 1896 and 1946. The first encroachment of modern Stevenage towards Chesfield occurred in the late 1990s/early 2000s, with the building of houses along the south-eastern edge of the area.

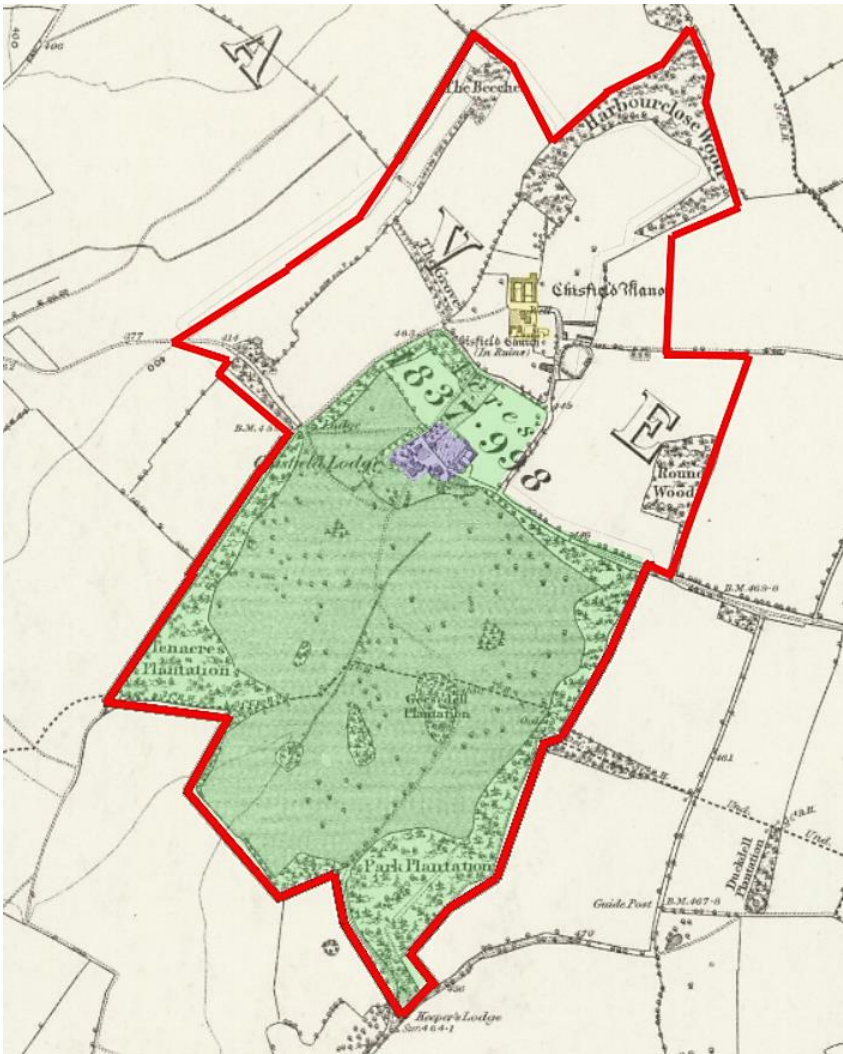


Figure 10: First edition six-inch OS map (1878-1881). Extent of Chesfield Park highlighted in green, with house and garden in blue. Chesfield Manor complex, including church, in yellow

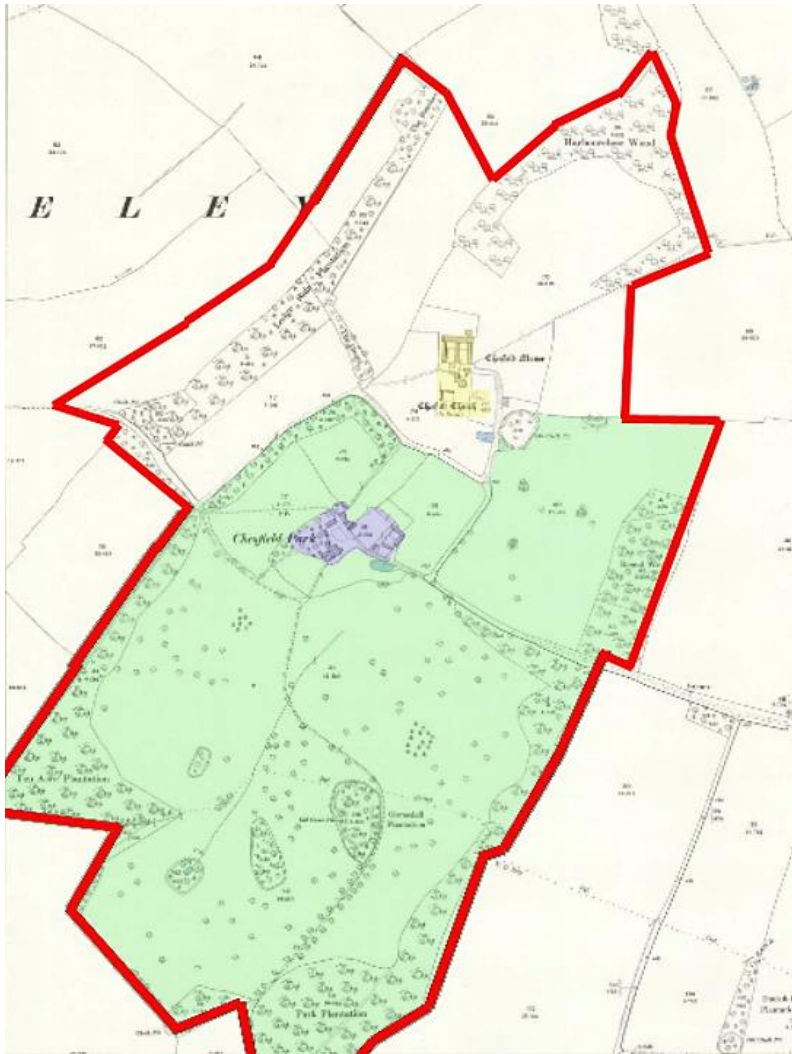


Figure 11: 1896 OS twenty-five-inch map. Extent of Chesfield Park highlighted in green, with house and garden in blue. Chesfield Manor complex, including church, in yellow

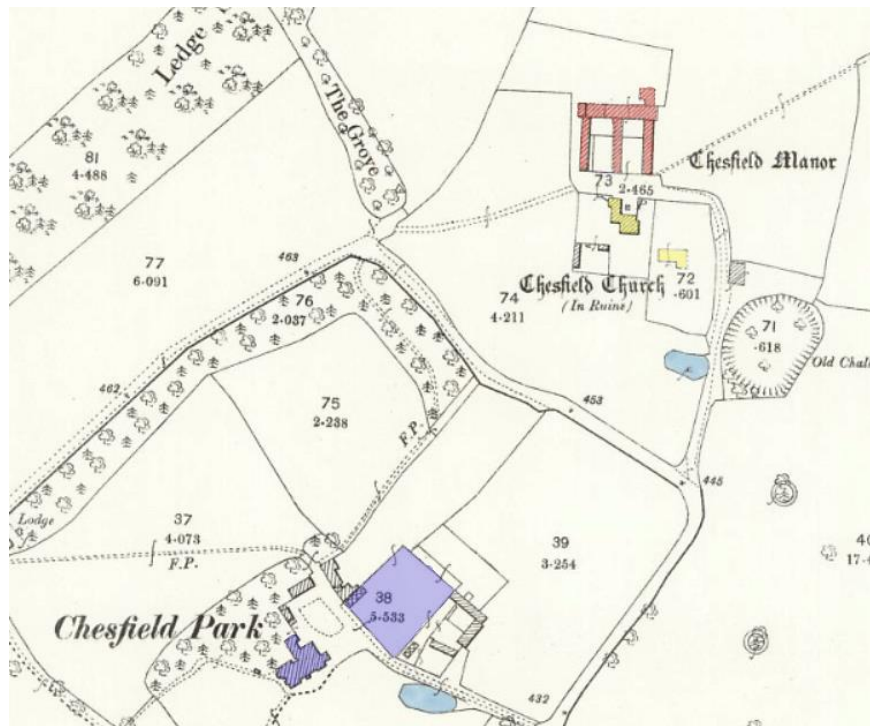


Figure 12: Detail of Figure 11, showing buildings in the area. Chesfield Park house and walled garden highlighted in blue, Chesfield Manor house and ruined church in yellow. Buildings highlighted in red are farm buildings associated with Chesfield Manor

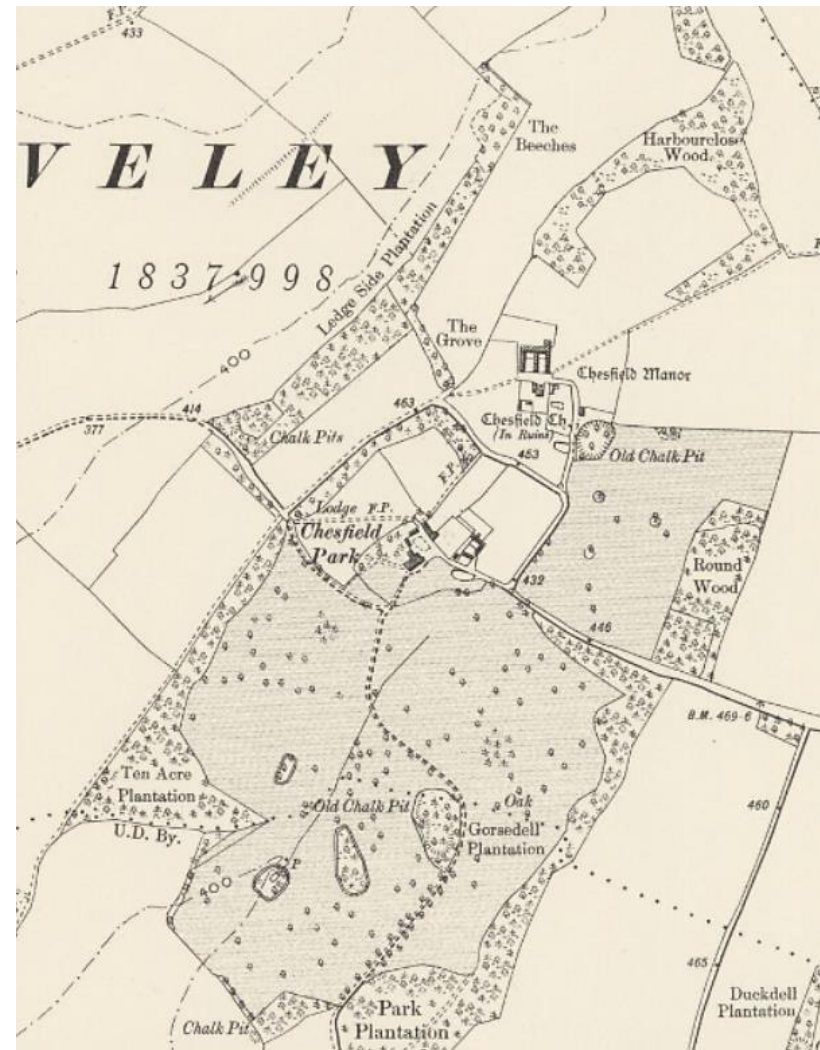


Figure 13: The six-inch 1896 OS map

There is evidence of historic quarrying to the southeast of the Church of St Etheldreda. The Ordnance Survey (OS) maps of the late-nineteenth century label some features as “old chalk pit”. One of these same landscape features appears to be visible on the 1766 Drury and Andrew map (to the south of Chesfield Lodge). Therefore, quarrying at Chesfield is likely to have occurred in the eighteenth century or earlier.

The OS map of 1896 (Figure 10) shows the area referred to as “Chesfield” for the first time. A continuing growth of the woodland to the west of the area is also visible and is labelled as “*Ledge Side Plantation*”. The woodland on the eastern extent of the site (Round Wood) has also increased in size. The large water feature in the south of the park, as well as some others around the periphery of the area (such as one to the east of the farm complex) are now labelled as “Old Chalk Pits”. Given some of these have been present from the earliest mapping, their age is uncertain, but are presumably Medieval or Post-Medieval in origin. It certainly appears they predate the landscaping of the park and have been incorporated into its design subsequently.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Chesfield Park has expanded in size by the date of this map, with the field to the north-east having been incorporated into it no longer in arable use. This is visible most clearly on the smaller scale six-inch OS map of 1896, on which the park’s extents are shaded (Figure 13).

Figure 14 shows the 25” OS map (surveyed 1922). This map shows essentially no change from the 1896 OS map.

Figure 15 shows the six-inch OS map surveyed 1946. As with the previous map, little has changed by the time of this map’s survey. In the interim between this map and the current layout of the area, the

woodland to the west has grown in size, while the one to the north has reduced further. The remainder of the woodlands surrounding the site have remained largely identical in extent (Figure 2). As mentioned previously, several large modern farm buildings have been constructed to the north of Chesfield Manor, but apart from this the area has remained undeveloped.

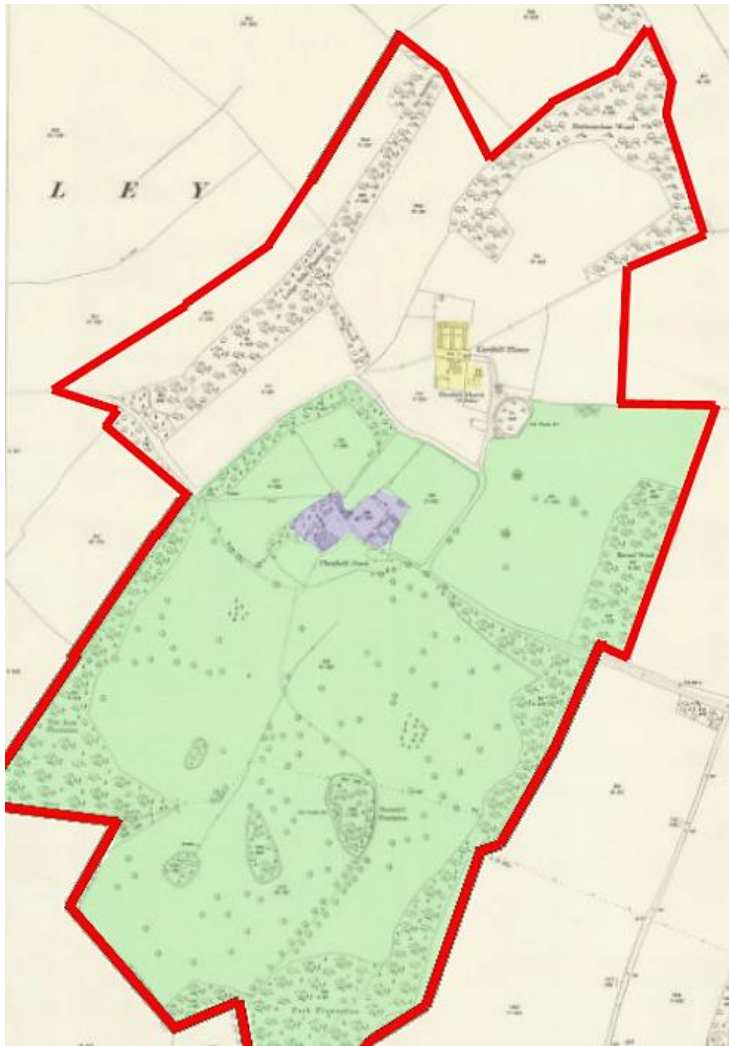


Figure 14: The twenty-five-inch OS map (1922) shows little change in the early twentieth century.

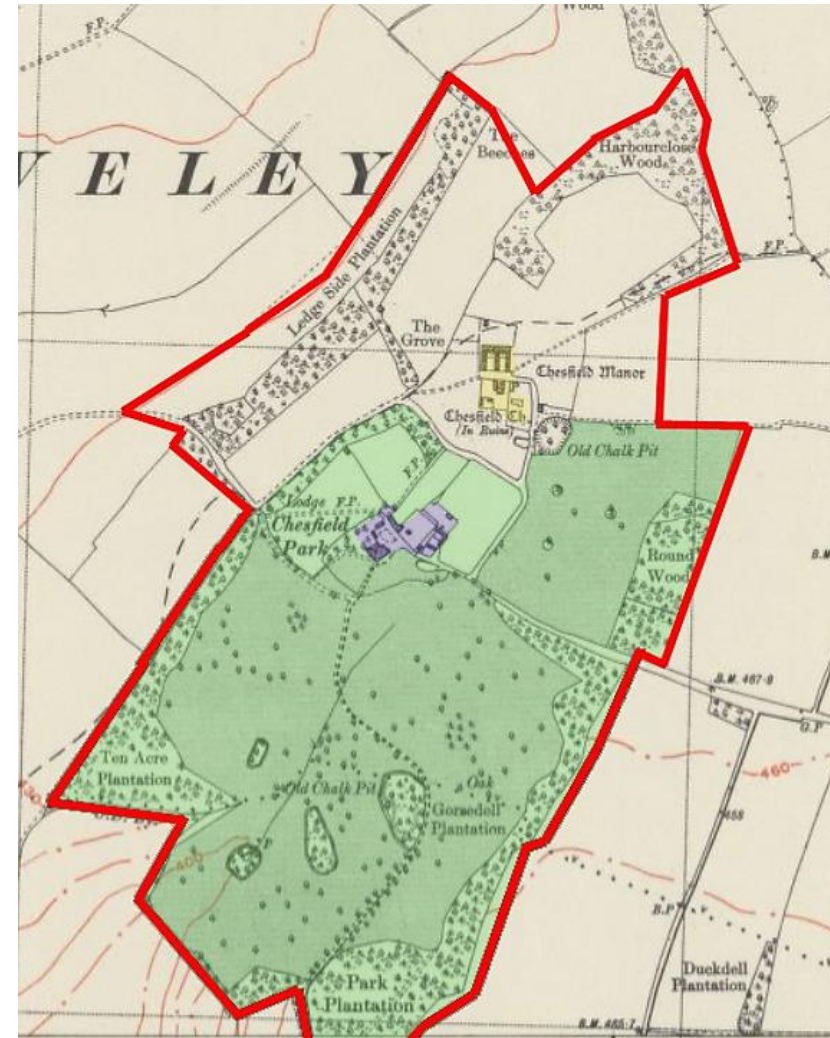


Figure 15: The six-inch OS map (1946). The extent of Chesfield Park has been highlighted in green, with house and garden in blue. Chesfield Manor complex, including church, is in yellow.

In the 1950s a small group of volunteers undertook a programme of site clearance, removing the ivy, other vegetation and trees (Figure 16). Following this, repairs and restoration of the walls were completed.



Figure 16: Chesfield Manor and St Eltheldreda's Church (1951). The church is ruinous and covered with a thick vegetation (*Harold A. Roberts*)

2.4. Designated Heritage Assets

Within the proposed Conservation Area are three Listed Buildings and one Scheduled Monument (Figure 19).

Listed Buildings

All three of the listed buildings are located in the north of the proposed area, within the farmstead complex of Chesfield Manor.

The oldest is the remains of the ruined thirteenth-century church dedicated to St Etheldreda (NHLE no: 1102564) (Figure 17).

The ruins of St Etheldreda were consolidated in the 1950s and again in the 1980s. The structure consists of flint rubble walls with clunch dressings. The structure is unroofed, perhaps due to it being robbed of materials in the eighteenth century. Plastering remains on some walls and some areas of internal plaster have traces of painting to simulate masonry.



Figure 17: The ruins of Grade II* Listed and Scheduled St Etheldreda Church

Immediately to the north-west of the ruined church lies the grade II listed Chesfield Manor Farmhouse (NHLE no: 1102563) (Figure 18). Constructed in the late seventeenth century, the listing entry describes it as being partially demolished before being converted into a farmhouse in the c.1770s. However, the HHER (see Appendix 5.4) disputes this account. Regardless, the building was renovated and had rear extensions added in the nineteenth century.

Manor House is a two-storey red-brick, hipped roof farmhouse, now house, with red-brick chimney stacks, gabled nineteenth-century entrance, and a varied fenestration.

The final statutorily listed structure in the area is the Grade II listed boundary wall and gate piers to the south-west of the farmhouse (NHLE no: 1347400), added to the site in the eighteenth century. It is constructed of red brick in Flemish-bond and approximately three metres in height, with square gate piers.

Scheduled Monument

The grounds of the ruined church are a scheduled monument (NHLE: 1003542). Due to its poor condition, it is on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register.



Figure 18: The rear of the Grade II Listed Chesfield Manor Farmhouse

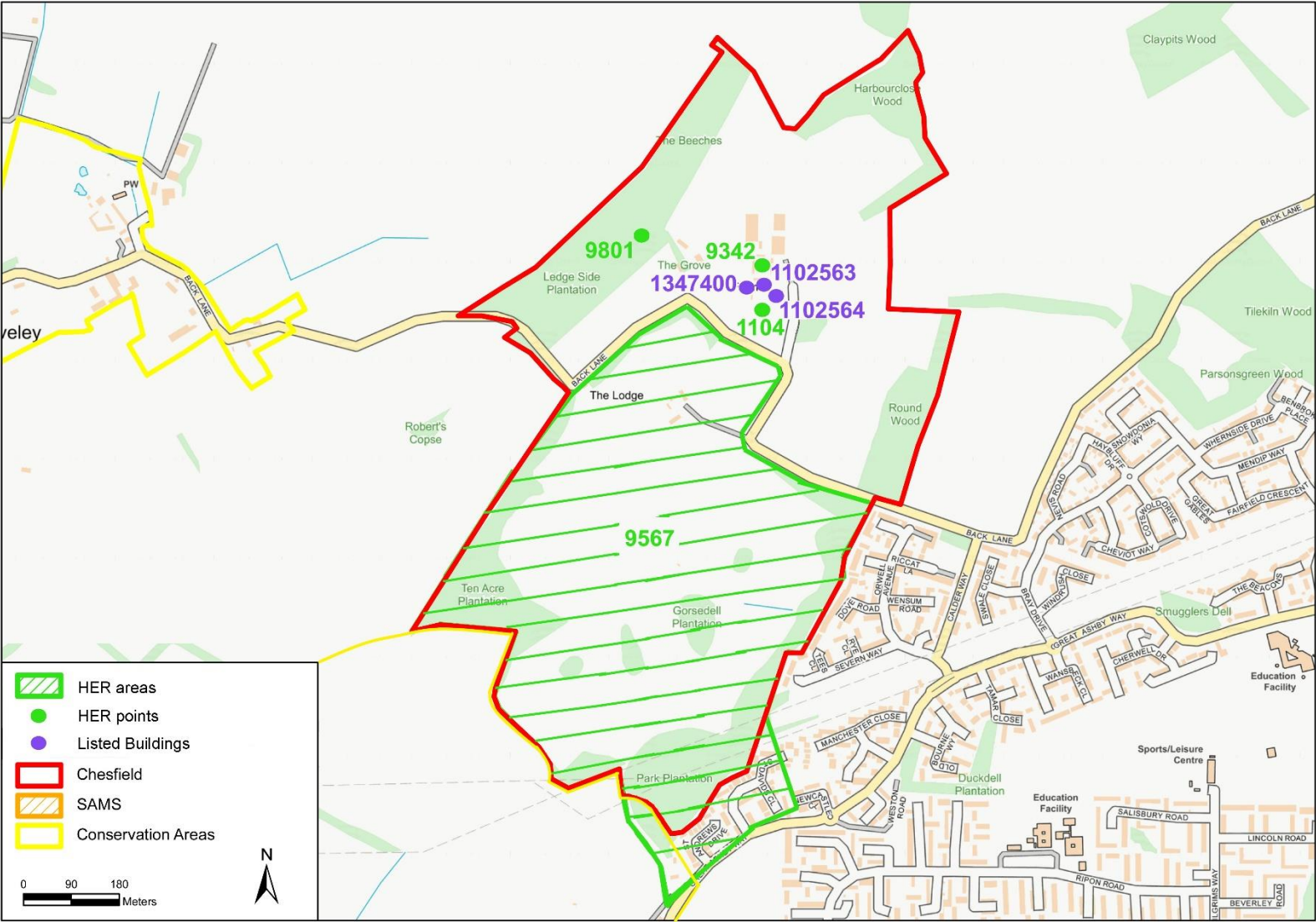


Figure 19: A map of the proposed Conservation Area showing designated heritage assets and HHER features

2.5. Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Chesfield Park house and garden wall are set back from Back Lane, although views of them can be attained from the public realm on Back Lane. The garden boundary wall surrounding Chesfield Park House is an unlisted structure that is likely to be contemporary with the earlier seventeenth to eighteenth-century building on the site that was demolished in the 1950s, when the house was rebuilt (Figure 20). The wall should be considered as a non-designated heritage asset due to its historic and architectural interest.



Figure 20: The garden wall at Chesfield Park

2.6. Heritage at Risk

The ruins of the Church of St Etheldreda are both a Grade II* Listed structure and a Scheduled Monument. The Heritage at Risk Register from Historic England includes an entry for the Scheduled Monument. The list entry is based on a survey carried out in 2017 and describes the structure as being in poor condition, with slow decay and no solution agreed as to its future conservation (Figure 21). The building is in private ownership, being within the grounds of Chesfield Manor. Being a roofless ruin, the conservation of the heritage asset would be limited to the upkeep of the masonry structure and the reduction of invasive plants and the prevention of root damage. It is constructed of consolidated flint rubble and the Heritage at Risk Register notes that the wall facing is being lost. Stone arches, quoins and dressings around openings are also deteriorating and part of the structure is propped up internally with scaffolding.



Figure 21: Scaffold shoring within the ruins of the Church of St Etheldreda

2.7. Archaeological Potential

Archaeological remains of a post-Medieval date are by far the most likely to survive on the site and there is high potential for archaeological finds within the study area from this period. Evidence may survive within the country park relating to since-removed landscape features such as ponds or gardens, and occupation evidence of this date will survive around both the Chesfield Park house complex and Chesfield Manor farmstead. Indeed, the earthworks to the south of the farmstead have already been established to be the remains of post-medieval farm buildings (Section 2.3).

Earlier, medieval remains are likely to be focused to the north of the area, around the thirteenth/fourteenth century church. Amongst these are probably the remains of an earlier dwelling contemporary with the church, although, as postulated previously, this may lie beneath the current seventeenth century house. Even though the presence of a deserted medieval village has been discounted, the site appears to represent a manorial/church complex, a form of settlement that is prominent in the early Medieval period. The presence of other remains, including buildings relating to this complex seems likely.

Based on the evidence provided by the HHER and NHLE, the potential of archaeological remains of a prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon origin within the proposed Conservation Area is low. A small selection of Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age pottery sherds was found immediately to the east during a trial-trenching evaluation (HHER 16655, 16656) but the small scale of the associated remains suggest they may not project into the area.

Although the potential for archaeological remains pre-dating the Medieval period on the site appears low, it should be noted that previous archaeological investigations in the area have been extremely limited. With this in mind, the possibility of prehistoric, Roman, or Anglo-Saxon remains surviving within the proposed Conservation Area should not be entirely discounted. In particular, the extensive landscaping undertaken during the construction of the country park in the post-medieval period may have masked evidence of earlier landscape uses and settlement activity.

A search of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record within the study area identified six known heritage assets and two areas of previous archaeological work. A map of these assets is included on the previous page on Figure 19; the HHER records are almost exclusively mapped in the areas of the study area in which built form is present. The exception to this is record 9801, which is recorded as earthworks providing evidence of cultivation terraces within the woodland

2.8. Landscape

The South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area covers the four counties of Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It stretches from Bury St Edmunds in the north-west to Ipswich in the north-east, roughly following the line of the A14 trunk road through the Gipping Valley. It then embraces the Colchester hinterland before encompassing the urban areas of Braintree and Chelmsford in the south and stretching to Bishop's Stortford and Stevenage in the west.

It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the twentieth century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character. Gravel and sand deposits under the clay are important geological features, often exposed during mineral extraction, which contribute to our understanding of ice-age environmental change.

The area's rich archaeology provides evidence of a long history of settlement and significant past wealth and importance, including Palaeolithic finds, Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles, isolated moated farmsteads, barns and a number of large country houses.

3. Assessment of Significance

3.1. Summary

The significance of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area derives from its special architectural and historic interest.

Architecturally, the proposed Conservation Area contains a rich variety of building types and ages illustrating the development of the area, whilst also contributing aesthetically to the variety of building materials, styles, design, and detailing. The building stock can be easily appreciated within the historic landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.

The historic functions of the buildings and their settings contribute to an understanding of the development of the area and its historic land use.

The landscape of the proposed Conservation Area which includes the unaltered designed parkland of Chesfield Park, the agrarian fields, and dense woodland permit also make a positive contribution to the rural character and appearance of Chesfield.

3.2. Character Areas

For the purpose of this appraisal, the proposed Conservation Area is divided into two unified Character Areas, loosely defined as:

- Character Area One: Chesfield Manor
- Character Area Two: Chesfield Park

The areas have been determined by building typology, historical development, land use and appearance. Many of the defining characteristics of each Character Area are present and repeated in both sections of the proposed Conservation Area, which emphasises the local character and appearance of the proposed Conservation Area. The following descriptions are not exhaustive, aiming instead to provide an accessible account of each Character Area which will allow for an informed understanding of the special interest and defining features of the proposed Conservation Area.

Key buildings, prevailing architectural styles, building materials, spatial planning, landscaping and boundary materials are detailed in the description of each Character Area to highlight the special architectural and historic interest of the two zones. Photographs are included to aid the descriptions, providing examples of where appropriate.

Key views have been identified within each Character Area, and views from outside the proposed Conservation Area from which its special

interest can be recognised are also highlighted where appropriate. There may, nevertheless, be other views of significance within or beyond the proposed Conservation Area's boundary which contribute to how it is appreciated and understood. Any proposals for development within the proposed Conservation Area, or its environs, should thus not only consider the views identified within this document but also any others which are relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.

3.2.1. Character Area One: Chesfield Manor

Summary

Character Area One has an unspoilt, enduring rustic character and encompasses the northern section of the proposed Conservation Area (Figure 22). The Character Area is centred on the site of Chesfield Manor, and is bounded to the east, north, and west by woodland. The historic attributes and features within this area can be easily appreciated within its rural setting, the more prominent of these being the three designated heritage assets which include Chesfield Manor, the boundary wall, and the ruinous church of St Ethledreda.

From Back Lane along the public footpaths, the arable fields within the Character Area can be easily viewed permitting a sense of openness despite the sections of dense woodland which partially enclose the Character Area.

The well-maintained path, lined by mature trees, hedgerows, and timber post-and-rail fencing provide a tranquil means by which to experience the Character Area, enhancing the rural character.

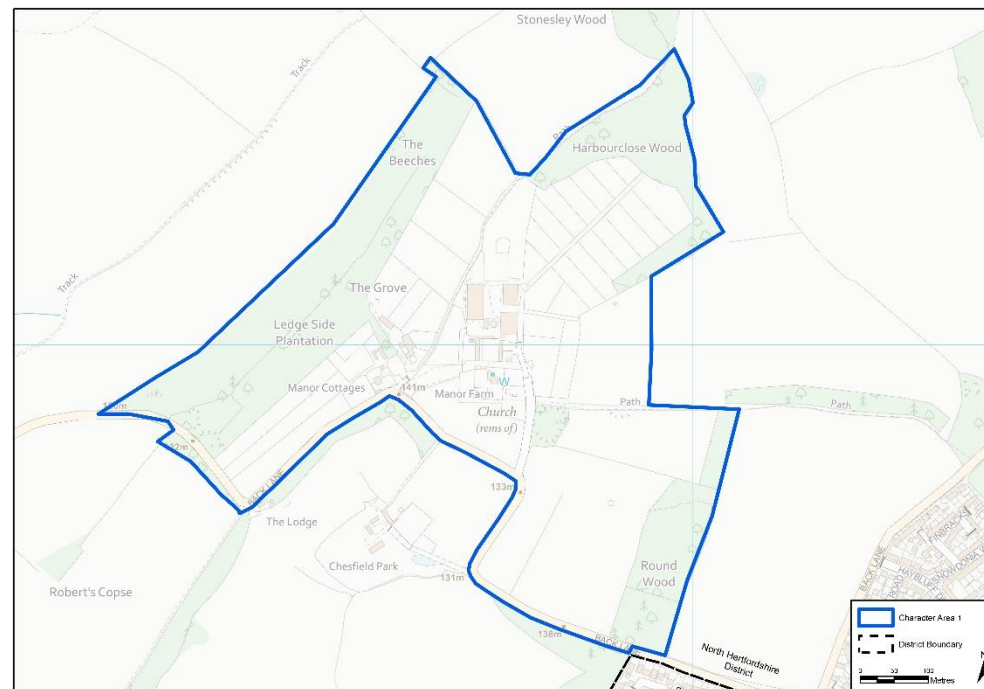


Figure 22: Map showing Character Area One edged in blue

Layout and Land Usage

The land usage is predominantly pastoral, although the area has not recently been used for intensive modern farming or arable agriculture. The fields and meadows are primarily used for pasture while paddocks for horses are also common to the north and east. Within this Character Area buildings are almost exclusively farm buildings associated with Chesfield Manor, with some residential uses.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

By virtue of the principal land usage, Character Area One features swathes of open space which makes a significant contribution to the character of the area. Mature trees are plentiful within the Character Area, particularly along Back Lane on the approach northwards to Chesfield Manor adding to its rural character and appearance (Figure 25). Small, landscaped gardens, associated with Chesfield Manor and the residential buildings, can occasionally be glimpsed from Back Lane.

Traditional and Local Building Materials

Although limited, much of the built form within the proposed Conservation Area falls within the boundary of Character Area One. Many of the buildings have been constructed using traditional, natural materials.

Roofs

The roof coverings of the farmstead buildings around Chesfield Manor and the house itself are predominantly clay plain tiles, whilst the more recent twentieth-century dwelling to the east has utilised a pantile roof covering. Some of the more modern agricultural buildings and stables to the north of the farm buildings have used cementitious tiles which have a comparatively flat appearance. The red-brick chimneystacks to the residential dwellings, particularly Chesfield Manor, are an attractive and prominent feature of the roofscape.

Rooflights are not a common feature within the Character Area and, where present, detract from the traditional and vernacular appearance of the roofscape.

Walls

Red brick and timber weatherboarding are common walling materials and typify the Hertfordshire vernacular, while the twentieth-century dwelling is of rendered masonry.

Flint, along with clunch, was used in the construction of St Etheldreda's Church, the remnants of which remain. Both flint and clunch are common materials in East Anglia, with the former being especially utilised in higher status buildings.



Figure 23: (Above): Red-brick chimneystack at Chesfield Manor

Figure 24: (Below): The remains of a flint wall at St Etheldreda's Church

Boundary Treatments

Hedgerow and low-lying wooden fences are the dominant boundary type which responds to and reinforces the rural character and appearance of the Character Area (Figure 25). The only exception is the boundary wall to the south-west of Chesfield Manor which is a more formal eighteenth-century brick wall with square gate piers featuring stone capping, listed at Grade II (Figure 33).



Figure 25: Hedgerows and fencing are common boundary treatments

Public Realm

There are very few areas of public realm, which is largely confined to the thoroughfare of Back Lane, and public footpaths.

Lined with mature trees, hedgerows, and post-and-rail fencing, these public areas make a positive contribution to the rural and rustic character of the area (Figure 26).

Street furniture is minimal, which adds to the naturalistic character of the area, and is almost exclusively confined to signposts indicating public footpaths (Figure 27).

Key Buildings

Designated

All three listed buildings within the Conservation Area are located within Character Area One:

- The Grade II* listed Church of St Etheldreda (the grounds of which are a Scheduled Monument)
- The Grade II listed Manor Farmhouse
- The Grade II listed Boundary Wall and Gate Piers to Garden on South West and West of Manor Farmhouse

These buildings are described in Section 2.4 of this document.



Figure 26: Mature trees along Black Lane on the approach to Chesfield Manor



Figure 27: Signpost indicating public footpath 009 and post-and-rail fencing

Negative and Neutral Contributors

A number of the more modern agricultural buildings to the north of Chesfield Manor are of an industrial character with modern materials used in their construction, such as corrugated cementitious cladding (Figure 28).

However, whilst these structures have a negative impact on the character and appearance of Character Area One and the setting of the designated heritage assets located at Chesfield Manor, they are typical of modern agricultural buildings and are therefore not at odds with the pastoral character of the proposed Conservation Area.

Whilst 1 and 2 Manor Cottages are not considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, their scale, design, and materiality responds to, and reinforces, the local character and distinctiveness. They do not detract from the area and are considered to make a neutral contribution to the character area.

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Figure 28: Modern buildings behind Chesfield Manor with corrugated cladding

3.2.2. Character Area Two: Chesfield Park

Summary

Character Area Two comprises the unaltered, historic landscaped parkland of Chesfield Park including house and walled garden, encompassing the southern section of the proposed Conservation Area (Figure 29). Whilst views of the park are limited from public vantage points, the open spaces, and historic features and attributes make a significant contribution to its character.

The dense woodland which surrounds the Character Area allows for a strong sense of enclosure which is a key characteristic and enhances the understanding of the park's original intended use.

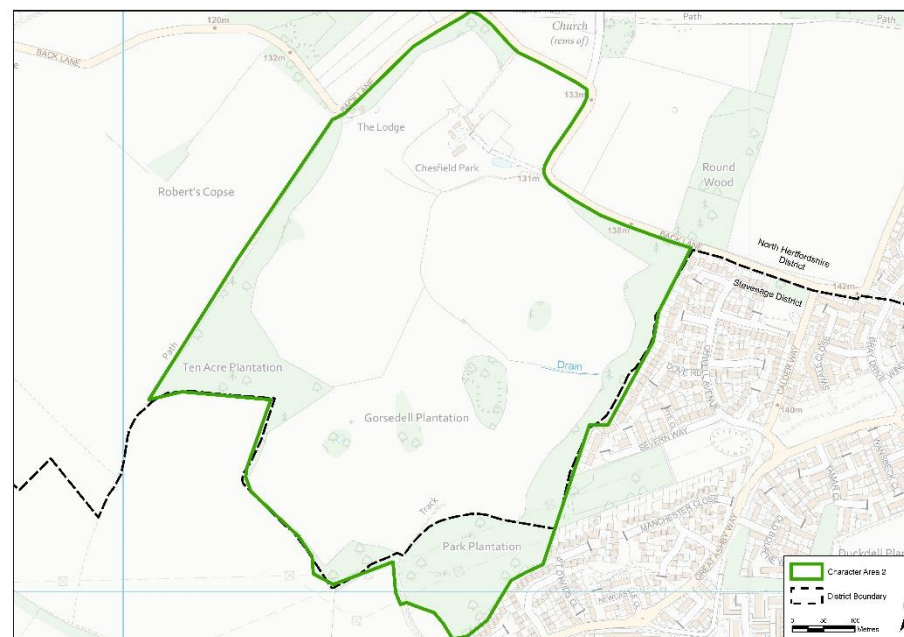


Figure 29: Map showing Character Area Two edged in green

Layout and Land Usage

Chesfield Park comprises elements of a designed landscape, fields and meadows, and pockets of dense woodland (Figure 30). The land use is predominantly pastoral and is in private ownership.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

The woodland that surrounds the Chesfield area provides a physical barrier, between the parkland and the agrarian fields beyond, which helps retain the individual character of the parkland. The landscaped park can be seen from limited areas, as public access is restricted. However, overall, the open spaces of the area make a significant contribution to its character and its significance is not hindered by a lack of public access.

Traditional and Local Building Materials

Red brick and clay plain tiles are the dominant materials in the Character Area with boundary treatments including hedgerows and low-lying timber fencing (Figure 31).

Non-traditional materials, such as UPVC windows, have been introduced to the Character Area as part of twentieth-century development; this is an incongruent feature within the area.



Figure 30: A view south from Back Lane across the landscaped parkland of Chesfield Park



Figure 31: Red-brick dwelling with clay plain tiles, bounded by hedgerow and timber post-and-rail fencing



Figure 32: Bridleway looking south with the enclosed park to the east

Public Realm

The majority of Character Area Two is in private ownership with the public realm being confined to the public Bridleway (Graveley 008). The Bridleway is bounded to the east by the woodland enclosing the park overlooks an open arable landscape to the west enhancing the isolated and enclosed character of the area (Figure 32).

Key Buildings

Non-designated

The garden boundary wall surrounding Chesfield Park House is likely to be contemporaneous with the earlier seventeenth-century building which was demolished in the 1950s when the existing house was partially rebuilt. The red brick wall and piers with decorative stone caps can be seen from Back Lane on the eastern approach into the Conservation Area (Figure 33).

Negative Contributors

Character Area Two has been intersected by electricity pylons, which are prominent in some views of the parkland, and make a negative contribution to the character of the area.



Figure 33: Garden boundary wall surrounding Chesfield Park House

3.3. Views

Key viewpoints within the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area are identified on Figure 34. The views included in this assessment are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there may be numerous other views of significance. Any proposals for development within the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area, or its environs, should consider these views and any others which may be relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.

Key views are largely those from which the designated and non-designated heritage assets can be appreciated within their rural environs, those out across the wider agrarian landscape, and those which enhance the sense of enclosure to the parkland.

View 1: This view allows for an appreciation of the non-designated garden wall surrounding Chesfield Park House, with the chimneystack of the house visible just above the treeline (Figure 35).

Views 2 and 3: Views of Chesfield Manor, including the farmhouse and ruined Church of St Etheldreda, can be seen from Back Lane. (Figure 36).

View 4: This view permits unobstructed views across arable fields bounded by woodland (Figure 36).

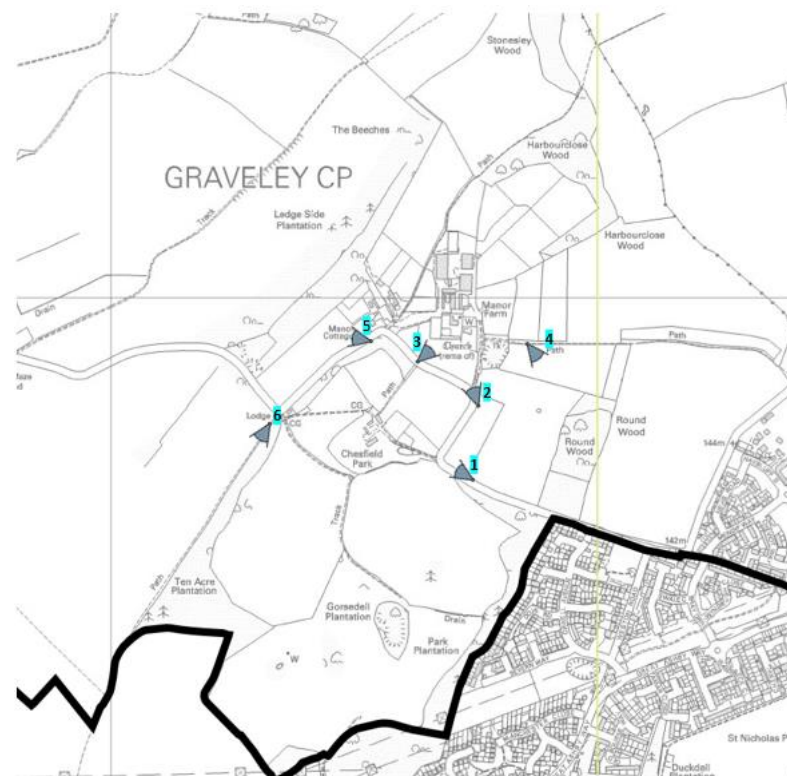


Figure 34: Map of key views within proposed Chesfield Conservation Area

View 5: This view also permits an important view across arable fields bounded by woodland (Figure 36).

View 6: This is an important view that allows for an appreciation of sense of enclosure of the parkland (Figure 32)



Figure 35: View 1



Figure 36: Clockwise from top left: View 2; View 3; View 4, View 5

3.4. Setting of the Conservation Area

The NPPF describes the setting of a heritage asset as:

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Historic England Good Practice Advice 3: Setting of Heritage Assets (2017) indicates that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which the asset is experienced. It goes on to note ‘Where that experience is capable of being affected by a proposed development (in any way) then the proposed development can be said to affect the setting of that asset’.²

Historic England provides detailed guidance on the setting of heritage assets, stating that all heritage assets have a setting, whether they are designated or not, irrespective of the form in which they survive. In the analysis of setting, the important contribution of views to the significance of heritage assets and the ability to appreciate that significance is often a primary consideration. Yet the contribution a setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset, such as the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area, is not limited to views alone. Setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses. The detrimental alteration of

the character of a setting may reduce our ability to understand the historic relationship between places. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access, view or experience that setting.³ Therefore, any application for development within the setting of a heritage asset is subject to constraints.

The NPPF states that for any development within the setting of a heritage asset, a thorough assessment of the impact on the setting is required. This should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it (NPPF, paragraph 194).

In addition, paragraph 206 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets (including the setting of Conservation Areas), to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably. Therefore, the favourable treatment of proposals that retain the open, agrarian character of the proposed Conservation Area’s setting is an important consideration.

When assessing an application for development which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities should also consider the implications of cumulative change and incremental harm.

² Historic England. 2017 *The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3* (Second Edition)

³ *Ibid.*

New developments and changes can not only detract from a heritage asset's significance in the short-term but may also damage its significance and economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its on-going conservation.

Surrounding Landscape

The proposed Chesfield Conservation Area draws significance from the surrounding open, largely undeveloped, rural landscape. The proposed Conservation Area's setting within a historically agrarian landscape permits an understanding and appreciation of historic development of Chesfield, as an isolated rural manor and settlement.

The quality of the well-preserved surrounding rural landscape therefore makes an important contribution to the historic setting and significance of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area (Figure 37).

The uninterrupted view across open fields and meadows towards Chesfield Park is particularly important given that historically Chesfield and Chesfield Park have been related so closely in manorial and ecclesiastical affairs (Figure 37).

The approach towards Chesfield from the north, west, and south is characterised by open fields bounded by woodland. The eastern approach into is characterised by a tree-lined throughfare with glimpses of modern residential development to the south.



Figure 37: The view looking northeast from outside the area towards Chesfield Park. The extensive arable field in the foreground forms the setting of Chesfield, which lies beyond the treeline

4. Opportunities for Enhancement

4.1. Maintenance

Maintenance, and the lack of it, can detract from the quality of the proposed Conservation Area. In general, Chesfield is well maintained however the risk of decay is most common on privately owned land, and there is scope for better engagement with landowners to maintain and improve the appearance of properties and landscapes. Regular maintenance, including painting, cleaning and the clearance of vegetation should be promoted as a key component of preserving the quality of the Conservation Area.

4.2. Neutral Contributors

A small number of buildings are considered to make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the proposed Conservation Area. The buildings that fall within the category still contribute to the area's character and appearance, and their contribution should not be considered negative. The majority of these buildings have the potential to make a positive contribution to the area's

character but due to the introduction of non-traditional materials and features are considered neutral. Small scale improvements such as the replacement of non-traditional roof covering and windows with more appropriate materials would enhance these buildings, potentially allowing their positive contribution to be realised.

4.3. Public Realm

Although limited, the signposts indicating the public footpaths and bridleways are a notable feature. Some have moved from their upright positions and bowed over time and should be repaired and maintained to ensure the overall sense of a well-managed public realm.

4.4. Trees and Planting

Appropriate levels of maintenance need to be ensured and, where required, opportunities for enhancement sought to maintain and manage the trees within the proposed Conservation Area.

5. Management Proposals

5.1. Positive Management

There are a wide range of issues facing conservation areas, some of which are relevant to Chesfield. This chapter aims to recommend management proposals which addresses these issues in both the short and the long term.

General Maintenance: Public Realm

Through the agreement of a standard good practice within the proposed Conservation Area between relevant Local Authority teams, short-term goals can be set to ensure the repair or, where appropriate, the replacement of the existing fences, streetlamps and signposts.

Heritage Statements, Heritage Impact Assessments and Archaeological Assessments

In accordance with the NPPF (Paragraph 194), applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

North Herts Council's requirements are as follows.

Heritage statements must be provided if the development affects a listed building.

Design and Access statements need to be provided for:

- Major development
- One of more new houses within a conservation area
- Applications where floorspace created is more than 100m² and any part of the development is within a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Applications within the Conservation Area and immediate setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, trees or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the proposed Conservation Area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with *Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017). Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated.

Local Heritage List

A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. A Local List may be beneficial to ensure the upkeep of buildings which are significant to the history and character of Chesfield. The exercise would also facilitate a greater understanding of the area and could be utilised as a public engagement strategy to improve awareness and understanding. The

garden boundary wall surrounding Chesfield Park House is of sufficient quality to be considered for local list status, as highlighted in Section 2.6.

Neutral Elements

There are some twentieth century buildings which make a neutral or negative impact on the character of the proposed Conservation Area. There is scope to enhance these sites and buildings through a considered design approach which can guide future improvements. Should opportunities for redevelopment arise in the future, high quality design should be pursued and encouraged through design guidance.

New Development

There are limited opportunities within Chesfield and its setting for development which makes a positive contribution to the proposed Conservation Area. To be successful, any future development needs to be mindful of the local character and distinctiveness of the proposed Conservation Area and its setting, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability.

Successful new development will:

- Relate to the geography, topography and history of the place;
- Sit sympathetically in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths);
- Respect important views;

- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings; and
- Use traditional materials and building methods which are as high in quality of those used in existing buildings.

North Herts Council should guide development in a positive manner by:

- Engaging with developers at an early stage through the Pre-Application Process to ensure modern development is high quality in design, detail and materials.
- Ensuring large scale development schemes within the Proposed Conservation Area and its setting are referred to a Design Review Panel (or similar) to ensure that new buildings, additions and alterations are designed to be in sympathy with the established character of the area. The choice of materials and the detailed design of building features are important in making sure its appropriate to a conservation area; and
- Seeking opportunities for developed to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

Public resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a

property within a conservation area. In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their property in an appropriate manner. Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and the loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Chesfield's built heritage.

Tree Management

In line with the Town and Country Planning Act, all trees in conservation areas are afforded the same protection as a Tree Preservation Order. Trees which have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm, at a height of 1.5m from the ground, may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks written notice has been given to the Council. Six weeks' notice has to be given to the council under S211 of the Act.

It is also considered that any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the proposed Conservation Area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. This will ensure the symmetry along tree lined streets and visual rhythm, as well as maintain the green character of the area. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be reviewed from time to time to monitor change and inform management proposals.

Conservation Area Boundary

The proposed Conservation Area boundary has been identified within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2021) and Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2018).

The boundary should be assessed as part of future reviews of the Management Plan to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.

5.2. Funding Opportunities

Section 106 Agreements

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon the proposed Conservation Area. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site-specific improvements.

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is a programme run by Historic England to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. As the name suggests, the scheme forms partnerships with local authorities (along with any additional funding partners) to facilitate the regeneration of an area through the conservation of its built heritage. The scheme makes funds available to individuals to enable them to carry out repairs or improvement works to their property to enhance the area. This would

be suitable to preserve and enhance the architectural detailing throughout the proposed Conservation Area.

6. Appendices

6.1. Heritage Assets

Designated Heritage Assets

List Entry Number	Name of Heritage Asset	Grade
1102564	<u>Church of St Etheldreda</u>	II*
1102563	<u>Manor Farmhouse</u>	II
1347400	<u>Boundary Wall and Gate Piers to Garden on South West and West of Manor Farmhouse</u>	II
1003542	<u>Chesfield Church</u>	N/A

6.2. Bibliography

Publications

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Historic England. *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management*. Advice Note 1 (Second Edition)

Historic England *The Setting of Heritage Assets*. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (Second Edition)

Semmelmann, K. 2004 Manor Farm Barn, Chesfield: historic building record, Report No 240, The Heritage Network

Roberts, Harold A. 1952 Chesfield Near Stevenage: The History of an Ancient Parish

Turner C. 1997 Outdoor Riding Arena, Manor Farm, Chesfield, Herts: archaeological observation report

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British History Online. Parishes: Graveley Pages 85-90 A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 3. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1912 <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3/pp85-90> (accessed 2 August 2022)

6.3. Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Results Within the Study Area

HER	Site	Type	Monument	Summary	Date
35	Ruins of Church of St Etheldreda	Building	Church	Ruins of medieval parish church.	Medieval
1004	Post-medieval farmstead earthworks	Monument	Farmstead	Earthwork remains of a farmstead demolished in the 19th century.	Post-medieval
2895	Chesfield Manor House	Building	Farmhouse, Manor House	Late 17th century manor house of unusual form, which became a farmhouse in the late 18th century.	Post-medieval
342	Chesfield Manor Farm	Building	Farmstead, Model Farm	Farmstead with 19th century planned layout, associated with earlier manor house.	Post-medieval
9567	Chesfield Park	Landscape	Country House, Landscape Park, Pump	Post-medieval country house replaced in 1950; in its original park.	Post-medieval
9801	Cultivation Terraces, Side Plantation Ledge	Monument	Lynchet	Earthworks of cultivation terraces within woodland.	Unknown
11399 <i>note: outside proposed</i>	Roman Coins	Find Spot	Findspot	1st century and later Roman coins.	Roman

<i>conservation area</i>					
12655 <i>note: outside proposed conservation area</i>	Probable late Iron Age features	Monument		A small pit and possible post hole and a gully slightly to the east were found in evaluation.	Late Iron Age
16655 <i>note: outside proposed conservation area</i>	Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ditch	Monument	Ditch	Small ditch containing flint-tempered pottery	Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age
16656 <i>note: outside proposed conservation area</i>	Middle Iron Age pits	Monument	Pit, Post Hole	Pit and post hole containing probably middle Iron Age pottery	Middle Iron Age

6.4. Legislation, Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (2021) DLUGH	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2014) DLUGH	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets	
National Guidance	Historic England. Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management. Advice	

	Note 1 (Second Edition) February 2019
National Guidance	English Heritage (2019) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance
North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011 - 2031	Policy SP13: Historic environment Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets Policy HE2: Heritage at risk Policy HE3: Local heritage. Policy HE4: Archaeology Section 4 Communities: Graveley and North of Stevenage (Page 155) Policy SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage

6.5. Glossary

Term	Description
Archaeological interest	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
Conservation (for heritage policy)	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
Designated heritage asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic environment record	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
Lynchets	A ridge or ledge formed along the downhill side of a plot by ploughing in ancient times.

Setting of a heritage asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

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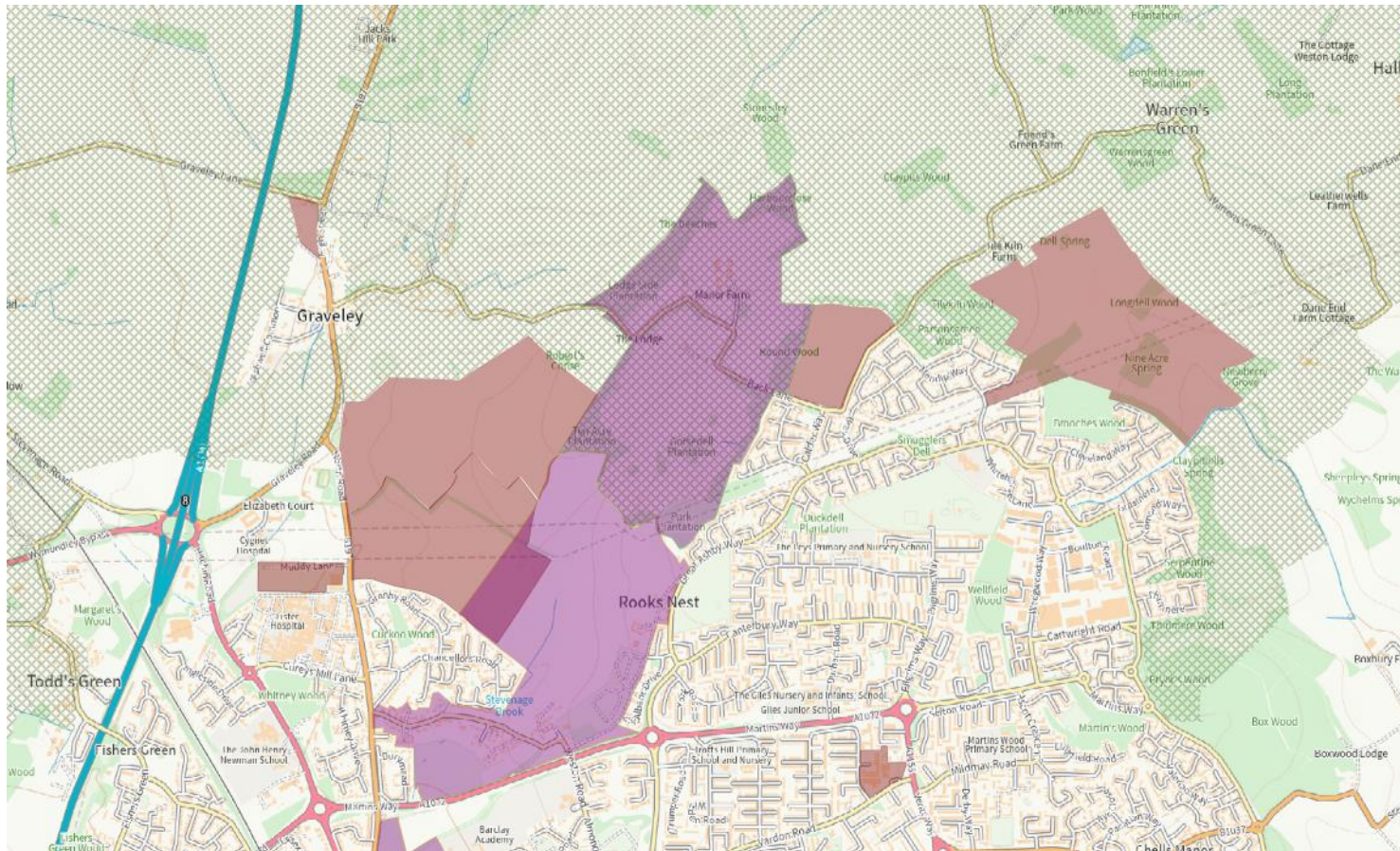
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Appendix C : Map of the Chesfield Conservation Area in the context of the neighbouring area



The proposed conservation area is shown with the purple hatched shading

Housing allocations in both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Borough area shown in red

Green belt is shown with green hatched shading

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Debbie Coates
Principal Strategic Planning Officer
North Herts Council
Council Office
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

Our Ref: NHDC CONSULT – CHESFIELD CA
Contact: Zayd Al-Jawad

Direct Line:

Email: zayd.al-jawad@stevenage.gov.uk

Date: 1 September 2023

Dear Debbie,

Proposal: Chesfield Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Thank you for consulting Stevenage Borough Council on the proposed designation of the Chesfield Conservation Area. It is noted that the proposed Conservation is to cover an area of Chesfield, which is an area to the north of Stevenage and east Graveley. There conservation area appears to be divided into two 'character areas which are as follows:

Character Area 1 – Including the Manor Farmhouse (grade II listed), boundary walls and gate piers to the south and south-west of Manor Farmhouse along with the Church of St. Ethelreda (grade II* listed and a Monument). It also includes farm buildings to the north of Manor Farmhouse and extends out to the surrounding woodland and its uneven southern boundary is the road – Back Lane.

Character Area 2 – Comprises Chesfield Park, which includes the mid-20th century property (Chesfield Park), a rebuilding of an earlier house, walls to its walled garden, and an area of parkland which extends to the south, down to the northern boundary of the St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area including the Park Plantation (within SBC boundary).

Looking at the character areas individually, whilst Character Area 1 covers a small area and includes buildings that are already protected by listing / scheduling, the creation of a Conservation Area in which covers this character area appears to be appropriated. With regards to Character Area 2, it is appreciated there is the quality of parkland which appears to be high, with the exception of the pylons. In addition, it is noted the area is of historic interest as Chesfield. However, we consider there is little architectural merit within this character area (with the exception of the boundary walls). Further to this, how much of the historic character of Chesfield Park has been retained due to the level of management of maintenance of the park. It is also noted its immediate setting has been eroded through the presence of modern development within Great Ashby along with the presence of the electricity pylons. So the reason for designating Chesfield Park as a conservation area needs to be sound.

From a policy / strategy perspective, the form and position of the Conservation Area (CA) would be advantageous for green infrastructure links and encouraging walking and cycling. The cycle networks are already in place within Stevenage with more improvements underway (North Road). The potential links through North Stevenage and the Country Park, will also provide good linkages within old and new housing. Route 2 in the Stevenage LCWIP currently states improvements to

areas of connectivity for Back Lane as well as Weston Road, which will link close to the proposed Chelsfield CA. Again, the North Herts sites, GA1 and GA2 will hopefully help connectivity in this part of the town and encourage new residents to explore the heritage of the area on foot or by bicycle. There are also publicly accessible routes through the proposed CA, such as Graveley 101, 009 and 008 bridleways, which can link up with the cycle networks.

Therefore, the proposed CA could assist with a wider strategic vision to improve connectivity, heritage and conservation within new housing sites and potentially help with green infrastructure links in the future. This could also help encourage use of the new country park, through new heritage trails to the new CA.

With regards to the proposed boundary of the Conservation Area, it appears that it would cover the Park Plantation which falls within the administrative boundary of Stevenage Borough Council (see figure 1).

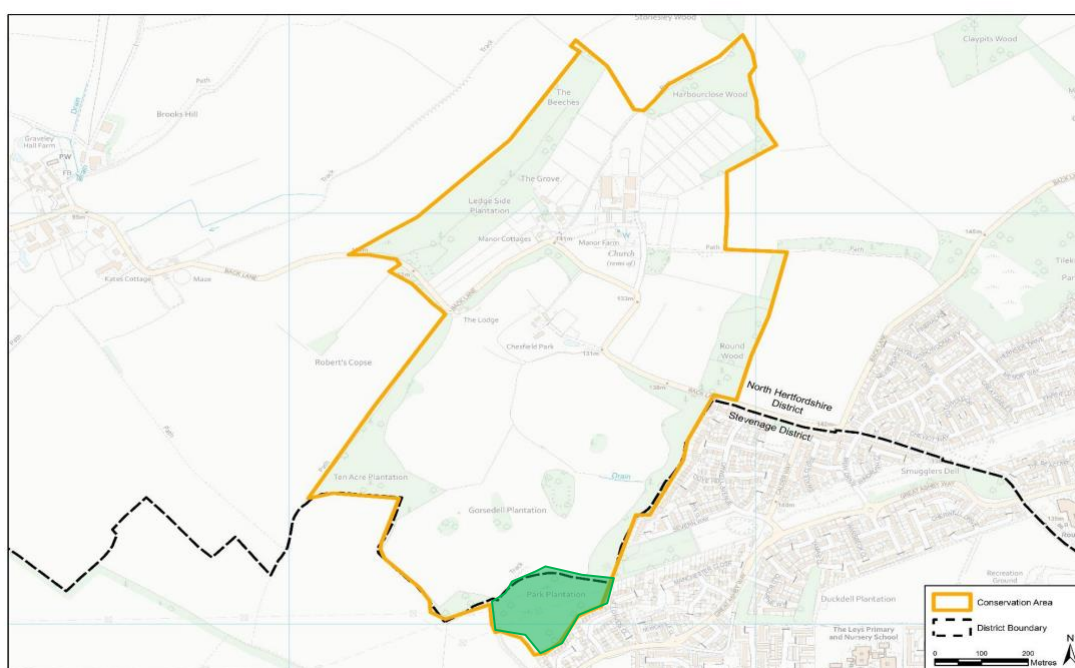


Figure 1: Location Plan showing proposed Chesfield Conservation Area boundary and district boundary

Figure 1: Snapshot of Location Plan with the plantation shown in green which falls within the boundary of Stevenage.

Taking the above into consideration, it needs to be flagged that this area is not identified as a Conservation Area in either the Proposals Map associated with the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted May 2019) or the plan contained within the St. Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012). Therefore, this part of the proposed Chesfield Park Conservation Area will be offered no weight when it comes to assessing applications which fall within the district boundary of Stevenage. Consequently, we strongly recommend the boundary plan is amended so it completely falls within the administrative boundary of North Herts Council.

With regards to the Plant Plantation area itself which falls within the administrative boundary of Stevenage, it is noted that this small area sits just to the north of the St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. Therefore, if the need and evidence suggest (subject to us going through the relevant statutory processes) this area requires protection on an historical basis, then this could potentially be incorporated and form part of the St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. This, as set out above, could help to improve green infrastructure links between the two authorities

and help to enhance wider connectivity for walking and cycling through the historic areas of St. Nicholas and Rectory Lane through to Chesfield.

Separately, North Herts Council are aware that Stevenage Borough Council granted outline permission in 2022 for North Stevenage. Taking this into consideration, if the conservation area is formally adopted, we do have some concerns that this could be used as a tool to frustrate the current reserved matters application relating to the Country Park (as it will border the southern boundary of the proposed conservation area / it is a highly contentious aspect of the North Stevenage development scheme) and this has been the subject of lengthy negotiations by officers.

Further to the above, we have already had extensive negotiations with the consortium in relation to Phase 2 which covers the north parcels of the development site. Therefore, our concern is that North Herts could potentially object to the plans on the basis of impact on the setting of the Conservation Area which was not in place when the outline application was first determined by Stevenage Borough Council. Therefore, we want to ensure there is a continued collaborative approach between both authorities and appreciation of the advanced position of the North Stevenage development.

Thank you for taking the time for taking our comments into consideration, however, please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any of the points raised in my letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Zayd Al-Jawad', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Zayd Al-Jawad MRTPI
Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation

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CABINET 19 SEPTEMBER 2023
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PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Hitchin, Letchworth, and Royston Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) Renewal

REPORT OF: The Economic Development Officer

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Tamsin Thomas – Deputy Executive Member for Enterprise and Arts

COUNCIL PRIORITY: A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To obtain Cabinet's endorsement of proposals to progress to renewal ballots for the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 2.1. Consider the BID renewal proposals for Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston, appended in A, B and C and instructs the Returning Officer to hold the BID renewal Ballots;
- 2.2. Delegate the Council's voting rights in the BID renewal process to the Service Director – Customers.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Council is under a legal duty to comply with the BID arrangements under section 44 of the Local Government Act 2003 ("the Act"). This includes compliance with the Act and The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended) ("the Regulations") in respect of receipt of any BID renewal.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Given the legal requirements to consider BID proposals under the Regulations, none is considered appropriate.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Consultation has been undertaken by the respective BID Managers, steering groups and their member bodies, business representatives and town centre retailers.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains recommendations on a key decision which was added to the Forward Plan on 10th June 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The concept of BIDS was introduced through Part IV of the Act and is further governed by The Regulations 2004/2443. The legislation provides for BID proposals to be made to a relevant Billing authority and, subject to meeting certain Regulation requirements¹, for this to be put to a ballot of relevant non-domestic ratepayers to be liable for the BID levy described in the BID proposals on the establishment or renewal of a BID, within a defined business area.
- 7.2. The BID, once established or renewed, has the power to levy an additional charge on Business Rate Payers within that BID area for the purpose of funding projects within the BID area. The purpose of the funding must be set out in the BID Proposal, which is to include a 'business plan', consultation (with those who are liable to the proposed BID levy), the financial management arrangements for the BID body, and arrangements for periodically providing the relevant billing authority with information on the finances of the BID.
- 7.3. For the purposes of BID proposals (including renewals) Members are asked to note that there are three relevant organisations/people that are required to fulfil certain roles and responsibilities in relation to the BID application. These organisations/people are as follows:
1. The BID Proposer;
 2. The Billing Authority;
 3. The Ballot Holder.
- 7.4. The BID Proposer is obliged to draw up the BID proposal, the Billing Authority is obliged to consider the proposal and determine whether the BID proposal is in conflict with any of its policies and the Ballot Holder is (subject to compliance with Regulation requirements) obliged to run a ballot process in which all of the business ratepayers within the BID proposal area (as at the date the notice of ballot is published) are entitled vote.
- 7.5. Within the attached 2023 proposals for Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston BID renewals, the current BID companies are the BID Proposer, the Council is the Billing Authority and the Council's Returning Officer in respect of elections is the Ballot Holder.
- 7.6. The Authority's support in helping to sustain and continue BIDs within its towns is seen as very positive and whilst it increases costs to businesses marginally, the benefits to the local business community are immeasurable. The ongoing work and support of the BIDs have also contributed significantly to an increase in footfall within the towns and provide a wealth of events that boost social value within the District.

¹ Regulations 4, 5 & Schedule 1 Proposal sent to the relevant Billing Authority (consultation, business plan and financial management arrangements, and notice in writing requesting the Billing Authority to instruct the Ballot Holder to hold the BID ballot, evidence of sufficiency of funds

- 7.7. The Council, as the Billing Authority, must be satisfied that the projects detailed in each of the BID proposals are not in conflict with its own adopted objectives or existing strategies, rather than to carry out a detailed analysis of the whole 'business plan' document. Earlier sample and draft versions of the proposal documents appended at A, B and C were received by the Council from the Royston BID on 16th July 2023 and forwarded onto the relevant Service Directors and Managers. The Letchworth and Hitchin BID Outline Proposals were received on the 17th and 14th August 2023 respectively and subsequently circulated. Therefore, it is important to note that there has been limited time to consider these latter proposals. Cabinet will be updated with any comments at the meeting, where applicable.
- 7.8. Officers from all relevant services have reviewed and provided comment in regard to the alignment of aspirations to existing strategies and for future proposals.
- 7.9. Where a Billing Authority is of the view that the BID renewal proposals conflict with a policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the Authority, it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving the proposals, notify the BID proposer or BID body in writing explaining the nature of that conflict². There is also a potential ability for the Billing Authority to veto any proposal but only under specific statutory circumstances set out in the Act and Regulations.
- 7.10. There is general agreement that the proposals and business plans attached as Appendices A, B and C are in accordance with both existing and known planned works for all three towns.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Council is required to demonstrate a significant degree of involvement in this process, and across a range of its services, with the following responsibilities:
- a. Each BID Proposal that complies with the Regulations must be considered by the Billing Authority to ensure that it is not in direct conflict with any of the Council's own adopted policies.
 - b. The BID Proposals are to be self-funding, i.e. paid for from the levy as collected, and may include paying for enhancements (the 'additionality' element) to services already provided by the Council.
 - c. Government Guidance³ suggests that the most successful BIDs were those who have established close and positive engagement with the local authority, and the Government appears to encourage this using Service Level or Baseline Agreements between the Council and the BID Organisations (although at this stage it is not mandatory). Such Agreements, if formalised, would also recognise and monitor the 'additionality' the BID funding brings over the five year BID term. Baseline Agreements are currently being considered by the NHC Legal Department.
 - d. The Billing Authority is required to instruct the Returning Officer to conduct the ballot, with one vote assigned per business rate payer unit, subject to any exemptions that the BID companies agree, within the defined area of their BIDs.

² Regulation 4(4) of the Regulations

³ DCLG Business Improvement Districts Guidance And Best Practice March 2015 DCLG Business Improvement Districts Guidance And Best Practice March 2015

- e. The Billing Authority has the right of Veto under s51 of the Act and Regulation 12 after the ballot if it conflicts with Policy adopted by the Authority; or would bring significant disproportionate financial burden.
- f. If the BID proposals are approved by the relevant business rates payers (see below and legal implications), the Billing Authority must bill, collect, enforce, and account for the BID Levy. Under the Regulations, the Council can charge for elements of this service but has opted not to do so for the existing BIDs; the same principles will apply to this renewal. (See financial implications below).
- g. The only entities exempt from the BID Levy are public libraries, religious organisations, public toilets, magistrates' courts, individual single parking spaces, communication masts, advertising hoardings and Police/fire/ambulance stations.
- h. For the Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, and Royston BID renewals, NHC is of course entitled to vote and would continue to pay additional charges for its own car parks; for property which the Council leases out within each of the BID boundaries, it is for lessees to pay the additional charge.
- i. Charitable organisations will not be exempt from the BID Levy, unless they can demonstrate that their presence in each town is by way of 'head office' or direct delivery, i.e. the giving of information or physical support, rather than as a 'trading' or commercial entity – such as a charity shop.

8.2. The Bid ballot can only succeed if it can meet two tests (a and b) which are;

- a. A simple majority of those who vote must register a 'Yes' AND
- b. The aggregate of the rateable value of those that vote 'Yes' must be greater than that of those that vote 'No'

These are not exclusive since both tests must be achieved. The system is intended to ensure that there is a degree of parity in a town centre populated by larger multi-nationals and smaller, specialist shops.

The BID ballot is statutory and binding and will apply to all businesses inside the BID areas regardless of whether they intend to vote and how they might vote. The ballot is a postal ballot and this time the whole process has been outsourced to an external company, Civica.

8.3. The Council's Revenues Team has reviewed the proposed BID areas contained within the business plans and has been able to identify the commercial properties which lie within each of the respective the BID area, and their rateable value. A review of the contact for each business has also been undertaken by the BIDs to ascertain the appropriate person to whom the ballot paper will be addressed, and the vote cast on behalf of their company, as many businesses have changed hands during the past five years.

8.4. Maps denoting the BID areas are included within the proposals documents as Appendices A, B and C to this report.

8.5. The BIDs renewal proposal and business plans are attached at Appendices A, B and C.

8.6. Hitchin BID Renewal – Summary of Vision and Objectives

“VIBRANT

SUMMER DISPLAYS

We will organise a wide variety of floral displays across the town centre and erect the bunting during the summer season in various locations.

WINTER DISPLAYS

We will organise the town centre festive lighting displays and Christmas tree in the Market Place. The 25 static floral displays will be replanted and maintained over the winter months.

TOWN CENTRE EVENTS

We will enhance and adapt the town centre annual events programme. Focusing on business support and footfall to maximise the benefit to the local business community.

TRAILS AND ACTIVITIES

Looking at the wider town centre, we will deliver a number of trails and family friendly activities to spread footfall and highlight businesses on the periphery of the Hitchin BID area.

CLEAN AND SAFE

THE DAY RANGER TEAM

The Rangers undertake vital work behind the scenes to ensure the town centre remains a clean and safe environment for businesses and visitors to enjoy. They operate 6 days a week working with a wide variety of local businesses. The Rangers are one of the most valued assets which we will be continuing into the new 5-year BID term.

NIGHT RANGERS

The BID will continue to fund the Night Rangers on Friday and Saturday nights from 10pm to 3am. They play an important role in public realm security as well as assisting the public and reporting issues.

OUR CLEANER TOWN

We will continue to remove graffiti using specialist equipment as well as taking down flyposting. There will be chewing gum and deep cleaning carried out in the main streets in the town centre and new initiatives introduced such as the cigarette ballot bins.

CRIME REDUCTION

The BID will continue to work alongside the Police and Councils to reduce crime. We will facilitate PubWatch, the ShopWatch WhatsApp group and continue to offer businesses radio links. Our extended CCTV and the anti-shoplifting measures undertaken by the BID will ensure Hitchin remains a safe place for the day and evening economy.

PROMOTED

HITCHIN INFORMATION

The Information Centre is a valued asset in our community. It provides a place for local residents to obtain information, Hitchin gifts and tickets. The BID will work alongside Hitchin Initiative to jointly fund its existence.

TOWN TOURISM

Using the newly developed Destination Management Plan, the BID will continue to strategically promote Hitchin as a destination. We will work on raising the profile of the town and develop the experience economy.

PUBLICATIONS & PROMOTIONS

The BID will continue to produce publications to promote the town centre, its businesses and attractions. We will maintain the lamppost banner flags and work on new promotions activities.

ONLINE PROMOTION

We will continue to develop the towns online presence through the new VisitHitchin website, online advertising and social media activities.

BUSINESS SUPPORT

CARDBOARD & COFFEE RECYCLING SCHEME

We will continue to provide all businesses with free cardboard, paper and coffee grounds recycling using our dedicated Recycling Ranger team. Our Rangers collect from over 200 businesses per week and recycle over 300 tons of cardboard and coffee per year.

H-TOWN POUNDS

The BID will continue to support the H-Town Pounds scheme which is aimed at promoting local spend in over 80 independent businesses.

BUSINESS REPRESENTATION

We will remain the collective business voice on key issues. The BID will lobby for and represent business ensuring Hitchin gets the investment and backing it needs.

HITCHIN REGENERATION

The BID will form a new group to look at short and long-term projects in the town as well as new income streams. This will allow an expansion of the projects we deliver as well as new investment opportunities and improvements.

TRAINING OUR TOWN

The BID will deliver a series of statutory and marketing training to equip businesses with the skills and knowledge to thrive and prosper.

8.7 Letchworth GC BID Renewal – Summary of Vision and Objectives

Aims and Objectives – 2024 – 2029.

The proposal is to keep the 3 broad objectives for the next 5 years, with different underpinning aims. The main focus of the aims is to concentrate on those that the BID has direct responsibility for but also some that the BID can influence by working with partners.

The 3 objectives are:

- **Lively and well promoted.** – *To create a place which is lively and has a strong sense of identity and awareness.*
- **Welcoming, attractive and accessible.** – *To provide a welcoming, attractive and easily accessible environment for customers, visitors, workers and residents to explore and enjoy.*
- **Businesses working together.** – *To represent the collective voice of businesses in the town centre to ensure that it continues to develop into a great place to do business and meets the needs of those who visit, live, work or do business in Letchworth.*

Objective 1 – Lively and Well promoted.

- Annual calendar of events.
- Regular campaigns and street entertainment.
- Develop shop local promotional opportunities and loyalty schemes.
- Increase awareness of Letchworth as a business destination, including events, shopping experience and visitor attractions.
- Work with others to define and promote the brands of Letchworth and Love Letchworth.
- Work with others to develop the night-time economy.

Performance Indicators.

- *Footfall data.*
- *Regular surveys.*
- *Social media feedback.*
- *Event attendance numbers and feedback.*
- *Website analytics.*
- *Number of businesses actively involved in BID activity.*
- *Loyalty scheme sign ups.*
- *Car park statistics.*

Objective 2 – Welcoming, attractive, and accessible.

- Ensure that the BID planters are of the highest quality.
- Lead a partnership group responsibility for the remaining town centre planters.
- Lead on a town centre crime and anti-social behaviour group.
- Be a central partner in the Town Centre Recovery group and associated planning group to improve signage, car parking opportunities and shop fronts.
- Work with landlords and their agents to improve the shop fronts and reduce shop vacancies.

Performance Indicators.

- *Survey and general feedback for planters and the general street scene.*
- *Monthly crime and ASB data.*
- *Survey data and statistics from car parking data.*

Objective 3 – Businesses working together.

- Development of the web site and social media outlets to promote Letchworth and the BID businesses.
- To run regular shop local campaigns and events to improve the business opportunities.
- Develop further communication opportunities with and between businesses e.g. social media, newsletters, networking meetings.
- Offer a wide selection of courses for BID businesses to improve their business capabilities.
- Develop and manage projects to reduce business overheads and promote sustainability. E.g. cardboard recycling.
- Encourage and support 3rd party events and campaigns managed by BID businesses.
- Work with landlords to encourage and influence them to maintain and improve shop fronts and fill vacant premises.

Performance Indicators.

- *Website and social media analytics.*
- *Footfall data.*
- *Shop vacancy levels.*
- *Business and customer surveys.*
- *Networking meeting attendance figures.*

8.8 Royston BID Renewal – Summary of Vision and Objectives

The Royston BID Plans to continue their activities such as :

- Free after 3 parking,
- Christmas and other street decorations
- Street Deep Cleaning and pigeon proofing of streets

And augment them with:

- More Summer decorations and events
- Digital Signage with free advertising for local businesses
- Footfall and other localised statistics to help businesses make decisions
- Signage in the Industrial Area
- Shop Safe App for consumers
- Youth Employment Scheme
- Training programmes for business
- Police Partnership
- Quarterly Member Networking Events
- Sponsorship of local organisations and events
- Royston First Business Awards Scheme

8.9 The BID proposals in their current format have been agreed by the respective BID Steering groups, and therefore the intention is that they will ultimately form the document on which votes will be sought.

8.10 Each BID has proposed the geographic area it wishes the BID to cover for the next 5-year term:

8.10.1. Hitchin BID have proposed an expansion of the BID area to cover the current BID geography and the areas of Butts Close and Walsworth Road to the Verulam Rd / Highbury Rd Roundabout.

8.10.2. Letchworth Garden City BID wish retain the current BID geography.

8.10.3. Royston BID propose to retain the existing BID geography less the area to the north-east of Melbourn St and Kneesworth St/Lower King St.

8.10.4. Each BID Proposal must define the percentage of rateable value to be used to calculate the BID Levy.

8.10.5. Hitchin's existing BID levy is currently set at 1.85% plus inflation. It is proposed that as of 1st April 2024, the levy will increase to 2.2%. Businesses newly incorporated in the BID area will be on 1.5% and 1 business on Queen Street will remain on 1.2% which equates to an annual amount of £260k.

8.10.6. Letchworth's existing BID levy is currently set at 2.0% plus inflation. It is proposed that the levy remains at 2% plus inflation for the next 5-year period. This equates to annual income of £204k in Year 1 of the next 5-year period.

8.10.7. Royston's existing BID levy is currently set at 1.5% plus inflation. It is proposed that the levy will increase to 1.75% for the next 5-year period which equates to an annual amount of £229k.

9 **TIMETABLE FOR BID RENEWAL** - The Regulations underpinning the development of Business Improvements (statutory instrument – Business Improvement Districts 2004 – No 244) lay down a very specific timetable for progressing to ballot.

9.1. At least 84 days before the Day of Ballot - Notice given in writing, by the BID proposer to the billing authority (NHDC) and the Secretary of State of the intention to request a ballot.

9.2. NHDC Cabinet to consider progress to Ballot.

- 9.3. Publication of Notice of Ballot (At least 42 days before day of ballot). This will be posted on NHDC's website and mailed to all eligible voters by Civica.
- 9.4. Eligible voters will also be sent a request to confirm their voter details and an application form to appoint a proxy if they wish.
- 9.5. Ballot packs issued to hereditaments entitled 28 days prior to day of Ballot.
- 9.6. Last date for proxy appointment 10 days prior to day of Ballot.
- 9.7. Issue of replacements after 5pm on 4th day before day of Ballot.
- 9.8. Day of ballot (day 28 of the ballot period)
- 9.9. Any last-minute sealed votes not posted to Civica by day of ballot can be handed in at the Council Offices, North Hertfordshire District Council, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 3JF up until 5.00pm on the third last working day before the relevant Ballot Day. These will be verified and sent onto Civica for inclusion.
- 9.10. Declaration and Results Announced the working day after Ballot Day.
- 9.11. Exact timetables of each BID can be found within the attached Appendix D.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 BID arrangements are not to come into force unless proposals for the arrangements are approved by a ballot of the non-domestic ratepayers in the proposed BID are that are subject to the levy, having followed the provisions in the Regulations, as per section 49, and section 54 of the Act. The BID approvals are then not regarded as approved by a ballot unless (1) the majority of persons voting in the ballot have voted in favour of the BID proposals; and (2) the aggregate of the rateable values of each hereditament in respect of which a person voting in the ballot has voted in favour of the BID proposals exceed those in the same positing voting against the proposal; as per section 50 of the Act.
- 10.2 The Billing Authority is required by law to conduct the renewal Ballot and to administer the BID billing, collection, enforcement and accounting if the ballot is successful, in accordance with Part IV of the Local Government Act 2003 (The Act). This is further governed by the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 (The Regulations).
- 10.3 Regulations 4, 5 and Schedule 1 set out what a BID proposal must include. The Regulations state that a valid BID proposal, including renewal, must contain the following information:-
 - 10.3.1 a statement of the works or services to be provided, the name of who will provide them (the name of the BID body) and the type of body the provider is (whether a local authority, a company under the control of the authority, a limited company or a partnership);
 - 10.3.2 a statement of the existing baseline services (if any) provided by the relevant billing authority or other public authority;

- 10.3.3 a description of the geographical area (including a map showing that area) in which the proposed BID arrangements are to have effect;
 - 10.3.4 a statement of whether all non-domestic ratepayers in the geographical area or specified class of them are to be liable to the BID levy, an explanation of how the amount of the BID levy to be levied is to be calculated and an explanation of whether any of the costs incurred in developing the BID proposals, holding of the ballot or implementing the BID are to be recovered through the BID levy;
 - 10.3.5 a statement of the specified class of non-domestic ratepayer (if any) for which and the level at which any relief from the BID levy is to apply;
 - 10.3.6 a statement of whether the BID arrangements may be altered without an alteration ballot and, if so, which aspects of the BID arrangements may be altered in this way;
 - 10.3.7 a statement of the duration of the BID arrangements; and a statement of the commencement date of the BID arrangements.
- 10.4 As indicated in the report, the Act and Regulations also require a Billing Authority, to determine whether BID proposals conflict with a policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the authority (whether or not the authority is under a statutory duty to prepare such document).
- 10.5 The Council, as Billing Authority, may in prescribed circumstances, veto the proposals within such period from the date of the ballot, and must give notice to those entitled to vote in the ballot, detailing reasons and right of the appeal (and sent a copy of the notice to the Secretary of State), as per the requirements of section 51 of the Act. The Billing Authority can only do so, having considered a number of factors (including although not limited to level of support in the ballot), if the BID arrangements are likely to:
- 10.5.1 (a) to conflict to a material extent with any policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the authority (whether or not the authority is under a statutory duty to prepare such document); or
 - 10.5.2 (b) to be a significantly disproportionate financial burden on any person or class of persons (as compared to the other non-domestic ratepayers in the geographical area of the BID) and–
 - 10.5.3 (i) that burden is caused by the manipulation of the geographical area of the BID or by the structure of the BID levy; and
 - 10.5.4 (ii) that burden is inequitable.
- 10.6 The Council is entitled to vote in the ballot relating to the attached BIDs renewals proposal. In the past this was the previous Service Director for Customers, and it is recommended that this delegation be renewed as per recommendation 2.3.
- 10.7 Otherwise, the legal requirements are contained within the body of the report.

11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council's additional financial responsibilities fall into four categories;
- The cost of running / outsourcing the ballot
 - Administration costs
 - The cost of the council's own BID levy on its town centre premises and land holdings
 - Any additional costs incurred by agreed additional works of the Authority in regard to events and car parking etc.

11.2 All expenditure incurred by the Returning Officer in relation to holding the BID ballots are funded by the Council as the relevant billing authority.

11.3 Where the number of persons voting in the ballot who have voted in favour of the ballot is less than 20% of the number of persons entitled to vote and:

- the proposals are not approved in the ballot; or
- the Secretary of State issues a notice declaring the ballot void

The Council may require the BID proposer or the BID body to pay the costs for arranging and holding the ballot (this includes the expenses properly incurred by the Returning Officer). The Council may recover this amount as a civil debt due to it.

11.4 The Returning Officer may appoint by writing one or more persons to discharge all or any of their functions relating to the running of a BID election. It is common for the delivery of BID ballots to be sub-contracted to an external supplier with suitable expertise rather than delivered through the local authority's Electoral Services Team.

11.5 Civica Election Services (CES) have been given delegated authority to discharge functions connected with the BID ballots and have quoted the following (excluding VAT): Hitchin (£5,660), Letchworth (£3,920) and Royston (£2,735). This is not the definite amount as there are variables that will affect the final costs which are not yet known such as the number of eligible hereditaments to be balloted, the number of ballots returned (as this is a postal ballot only), outgoing postage impacted by the size/weight of the BID document, set up costs for the design of the BID documents.

11.6 In addition, were either of the Ballots to vote for rejection, where the turnout is less than 20%. In this instance, the Council can seek to recover its costs from the BID organisation. The BID Board have been made aware of this small risk and understand that sufficient budget will be set aside as a contingency were this to be the case.

11.7 The annual administrative costs per property are de-minimus as this is largely an automated process, which is already being carried out for the three existing BID areas.

11.8 As the Council itself pays business rates, it will also have a liability to pay the BID Levy for those properties in which it is in rateable occupation, as it does now. Under the current BID arrangements this equates to:

- £6,961 pa re Hitchin BID
- £6,545 pa re Letchworth BID
- £1,905 pa re Royston BID

The Council's liability under the renewal proposals will be advised at the meeting.

11.9 The BID Business Plans refer to the respective BID activities / proposals which if progressed during the new BID term will be in addition to the existing services provided by NHC, not a replacement. The Council also needs to satisfy itself that the BID activities as proposed do not rely in any part on additional services or contributions from NHC (other than the BID levy) over and above resources already committed.

12. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Should the recommendations be approved, as the Council bears no additional financial responsibility for any debts, and the final decision to progress to ballot is that of the BID organisation, the main risk remaining for the authority is that it may be perceived this is an additional sum levied by and retained by the Council, especially so in times of austerity. It must therefore be explicit in promotional material that whilst the Council is responsible for collection, it is not responsible for spending and that all of the money collected passes to the BID company.
- 12.2 Each year, Officers review the risks relating to the Council's involvement in all three BIDs, via the Risk Register. Currently, Officers have assessed the BIDs as being low risk in respect of both impact and likelihood.

13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 13.2 The areas over which the BID companies seek to levy this additional rate is determined by them in consultation with local businesses, and does include all sizes and types of businesses, from multi-nationals to sole traders. The exclusion of certain premises, including those used for faith purposes, removes any additional burden which could be incurred by them, especially as it is questionable what additional benefits they could secure by additional footfall or use of the town in the evening. The BID initiatives seek to indirectly support the aim to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those that do not.

14. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the activities of this report.

16. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 Relevant service areas have been made aware of the intention for all three BIDs of to seek renewal of their existing BID arrangements and have made relevant arrangements to resource review of the business plans, and for outsource the running of the postal ballot itself, as not to conflict with other work commitments.

17. APPENDICES

17.1 This report contains the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Hitchin BID Renewal Business Plan 2024 - 2029
- Appendix B – Letchworth BID Renewal Proposal & Business Plan 2024 – 2029
- Appendix C – Royston BID Renewal Proposal & Business Plan 2024 - 2029

18. CONTACT OFFICERS

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19. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 19.1 The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 & DCLG Business Improvement Districts Guidance And Best Practice March 2015
[Business Improvement Districts: guidance and best practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/business-improvement-districts-guidance-and-best-practice)

Appendices

A Hitchin BID Draft Prospectus



Business Plan
2024-29 - Final Aug 2

B Letchworth Garden City BID Draft Prospectus



Business Plan 2023
V2.0.pdf

C Royston BID Draft prospectus



Royston First
Business Plan 2023 6.

D Election Timetable

Royston have chosen 2nd November – 30th November 2023 as their Ballot Period. The timetables is as follows:

Day	Action	Date
44	Suggested Despatch of Notification of Ballot	Tuesday 17 October 2023
42	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Notification of Ballot</i>	<i>Thursday 19 October 2023</i>
30	Suggested Despatch of ballot papers	Tuesday 31 October 2023
28	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Despatch of Ballot Papers</i>	<i>Thursday 2 November 2023</i>
10	Latest Date to Appoint Proxy	Monday 20 November 2023
5	Latest Date to Cancel Proxy	Saturday 25 November 2023
4	Issue Of Replacements	Friday 24 November 2023
0	Close of Ballot	Thursday 30 November 2023
-1	Issue of Result by 5pm	Friday 1 December 2023

Hitchin and Letchworth have chosen 9th November - 7th December 2023 as their Ballot Period. The timetables are as follows:

Day	Action	Date
44	Suggested Despatch of Notification of Ballot	Tuesday 24 October 2023
42	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Notification of Ballot</i>	<i>Thursday 26 October 2023</i>
30	Suggested Despatch of ballot papers	Tuesday 7 November 2023
28	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Despatch of Ballot Papers</i>	<i>Thursday 9 November 2023</i>
10	Latest Date to Appoint Proxy	Monday 27 November 2023

5	Latest Date to Cancel Proxy	Saturday 2 December 2023
4	Issue Of Replacements	Friday 1 December 2023
0	Close of Ballot	Thursday 7 December 2023
-1	Issue of Result by 5pm	Friday 8 December 2023

CABINET
19 September 2023

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: FIRST QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2023/24

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND I.T. – IAN ALBERT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress with delivering the capital and treasury strategy for 2023/24, as at the end of June 2023.
- 1.2 To update Cabinet on the impact upon the approved capital programme for 2023/24 – 2032/33. The current estimate is a decrease in spend in 2023/24 of £0.853M and an increase in spend in 2024/25 of £0.686M and £0.585M in the following years of the capital programme. The most significant individual changes to the spend in 2023/24 relate to an increase of £0.385M funding for addition social housing and decreases of £0.385M Property Improvements, £0.315M Grounds Maintenance Vehicles & Machinery and £0.300M Walsworth Common Pavilion which have been reprofiled into 2024/25 and beyond.
- 1.3 To inform Cabinet of the Treasury Management activities in the first three months of 2023/24. The current forecast is that the amount of investment interest expected to be generated during the year is £2.602M. This is an increase of £1.0M on the original estimate.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the forecast expenditure of £10.438M in 2023/24 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the adjustments to the capital programme for 2023/24 onwards, as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2 and 3, increasing the overall estimated spend in 2024/25 and beyond by £1.271M.
- 2.3 That Cabinet notes the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.
- 2.4 Cabinet is asked to note the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of June 2023.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- 3.2 To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Options for capital investment are considered as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- 4.2 The primary principles governing the Council's investment criteria are the security of its investments (ensuring that it gets the capital invested back) and liquidity of investments (being able to get the funds back when needed). After this the return (or yield) is then considered, which provides an income source for the Council. In relation to this the Council could take a different view on its appetite for risk, which would be reflected in the Investment Strategy. In general, greater returns can be achieved by taking on greater risk. Once the Strategy has been set for the year, there is limited scope for alternative options as Officers will seek the best return that is in accordance with the Investment Strategy.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation on the capital expenditure report is not required. Members will be aware that consultation is incorporated into project plans of individual capital schemes as they are progressed.
- 5.2 There are regular updates and meetings with Treasury advisors (Link).

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 18th August 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 In February 2023, Council approved the Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2023/24 to 2032/33. To be consistent with the strategy, the monitoring reports for Capital and Treasury are also integrated.
- 7.2 The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023 to 2028 confirmed that the Council will seek opportunities to utilise capital funding (including set aside receipts) for 'invest to save' schemes and proposals that generate higher rates of return than standard treasury investments. This is one way the Council will allocate resources to support organisational transformation that will reduce revenue expenditure.

- 7.3 Link Asset Services Ltd are contracted to provide Treasury advice. The service includes:
- Regular updates on economic and political changes which may impact on the Council's borrowing and investment strategies
 - Information on investment counterparty creditworthiness
 - Technical updates
 - Access to a Technical Advisory Group

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has £125.0M of capital assets that it currently owns. The Investment Strategy set out the reasons for owning assets that are not for service delivery, including an assessment of Security, Liquidity, Yield and Fair Value. There have been no significant changes in relation to these since the Strategy was set. The main changes will be sales of surplus land for capital receipts as referenced in table 4.

Capital Programme 2023/24

- 8.2 The full capital programme is detailed in Appendix A and shows the revised costs to date, together with the expected spend from 2023/24 to 2032/33 and the funding source for each capital scheme.
- 8.3 Capital expenditure for 2023/24 is estimated to be **£10.438M**. This is a decrease of **£0.853M** on the forecast in the 2022/23 Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) End of Year Review report (presented to Cabinet on 27th June 2023). The decrease in spend in 2023/24 is largely due to the reprofiling of projects into 2024/25 and beyond. Table 1 below details changes to capital programme.

Table 1- Current Capital Estimates

	2023/24 £M	2024/25 £M	2025/26 to 2032/33 £M
Original Estimates approved by Full Council February 2023	8.516	7.427	15.624
Changes approved by Cabinet in 3rd Qrt 2022/23	1.554	0	0
Changes approved by Cabinet in 2022/23 Capital Outturn report	1.221	0	0
Revised Capital estimates at start of 2022/23	11.291	7.427	15.624
Changes at Q1	-0.853	0.686	0.585
Current Capital Estimates	10.438	8.113	16.209

- 8.4 Table 2 lists the schemes in the 2023/24 Capital Programme that will now start or continue in 2024/25 and onwards:

Table 2: Scheme Timetable Revision:

(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2023/24 Working Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2024/25 onwards £'000
Property Improvements	485	100	-385	Some works identified by previous surveys as being required in the future have found not to be necessary by our Building Surveyor and a variety of works that were previously funded from this capital budget do not meet the criteria to be capitalised and consequently are funded through the revenue budget. In addition a number of premises are in a state of flux awaiting longer term strategic decisions from Estates on their future. Our Building Surveyor plans to complete an estimated £100K of re-roofing works during this financial year.	385
Grounds Maintenance Vehicles & Machinery	315	0	-315	IFRS16 accounting standard requires operating leases for all material assets with a duration of more than one year to be recorded on the Council's Balance Sheet. Implementation has however been deferred to 24/25	315
Leased Vehicles	141	0	-141		141
Walsworth Common Pavilion	300	0	-300	As the development of the pavilion is in part due to be funded from S106 contributions associated with Highover Farm, this project has been delayed pending commencement of the Highover Farm development.	300
Lairage Stairwells Windows/Doors	75	0	-75	Due to more pressing projects our Building Surveyor will not been able to deliver this project during this financial year.	75

Scheme	2023/24 Working Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2024/25 onwards £'000
Bancroft Lighting	45	0	-45	Due to the renovation of the play area and introduction of the kiosk at Bancroft Recreation Ground it was felt prudent to wait until these projects are complete and to allow time to identify the key areas of activity to inform the position of the lighting in the future.	45
Other minor changes			-10		10
Total Revision to Budget Profile			-1,271		1,271

8.5 There are also changes to the overall costs of schemes in 2023/24. These changes total a net increase of £0.418million and are detailed in Table 3

Table 3: Changes to Capital Schemes Commencing in 2023/24:

(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2023/24 Working Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
S106 Projects	0	31	+31	To date a total of £31K of S106 funds have been released for community schemes.
S016 Funding for additional social housing	0	385	+385	This is using commuted sums held/ received in lieu of affordable housing provision that could not be delivered on site by the developer. This contribution will enable the delivery of a 100% affordable housing scheme (on the Foundation House site in Letchworth) including 34 additional affordable homes on top of the 23 homes to meet the council's policy requirements. The scheme (and therefore this allocation) will also be dependent on Homes England grant funding.
North Herts Leisure Centre Soft Play	86	113	+27	Increased construction costs due to additional lighting and fire alarm alterations, soft play signage and internal branding. The overall variance is against a total budget for this scheme of £288k.

Scheme	2023/24 Working Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
Back up Diesel 40 KVA Generator	25	0	-25	Following further consultation with the Landlord for Unit 3, we were unable to obtain permission to locate a diesel generator to serve the premises. We have a UPS Battery back-up system currently in place and are looking at green alternatives that fit within the acceptable conditions defined by the Landlord.
Solar PV and Solar Thermal projects at Leisure Centres	788	788	0	A bid is being developed for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF). The bid will be supported by consultants, which are being fully funded from a separate grant fund. Subject to advice from the consultants we will include any relevant solar projects, as well as any other viable decarbonisation schemes. Match funding will be required, and some of this budget may be put forward to form that match funding. Overall, if we can achieve a successful PSDF bid then we will be able to achieve more decarbonisation projects with the same (or less) use of Council funding. The precise changes to the capital programme will be detailed in a future report.
Other minor changes			0	
Total revision to scheme spend			+418	

8.6 Table 4 below shows how the Council will fund the 2023/24 capital programme.

Table 4: Funding the Capital Programme:

	2023/24 Balance at start of year £M	2023/24 Forecast Additions £M	2023/24 Forecast Funding Used £M	2023/24 Balance at end of year £M
Useable Capital Receipts and Set-aside Receipts	5.552	9.579	(8.070)	7.061
S106 receipts			(0.786)	
Other third party grants and contributions			(1.582)	
IT Reserve / Revenue			0	
Planned Borrowing			0	
Total			(10.438)	

8.7 The availability of third-party contributions and grants to fund capital investment is continuously sought in order to reduce pressure on the Council's available capital

receipts and allow for further investment. Additional capital receipts are dependent on selling surplus land and buildings. Ensuring that the Council gets best value from the disposal of land and buildings can take a long time and therefore the amounts that might be received could be subject to change.

- 8.8 The Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2023 was negative £2.72M. Based on current forecasts it will remain negative during 2023/24.

Treasury Management 2023/24

- 8.9 The Council invests its surplus cash in accordance with the Investment Strategy (see paragraph 4.2). This surplus cash is made up of capital funding balances, revenue general fund balance, revenue reserve and provision balances and variations in cash due to the timing of receipts and payments. During the first three months of 2023/24, the Council had an average investment balance of £53.4M and invested this in accordance with the treasury and prudential indicators as set out in the Integrated Capital and Treasury Management Strategy and in compliance with the Treasury Management Practices.
- 8.10 The Council generated £0.595M of interest during the first three months of 2023/24. The average interest rate on all outstanding investments at the 30th June was 4.47%. (31st March it was 4.19%). Interest rates have continued to rise and are expected to increase further during the year. Based on current investments and forecasts of interest rates and cash balances for the remainder of the year, it is forecast that the Council will generate £2.602M of interest over the whole of 2023/24.
- 8.11 As at 30th June 2023, the split of investments was as shown in the table below.

Banks	36%
Building Societies	12%
Government	16%
Local Authorities	36%

- 8.12 The level of risk of any investment will be affected by the riskiness of the institution where it is invested and the period that it is invested for. Where an institution has a credit rating this can be used to measure its riskiness. This can be combined with the period remaining on the investment to give a historic risk of default percentage measure. The table below shows the Historic Risk of Default for outstanding investments at 30th June 2023. The most risky investment has a historic risk of default of 0.034%. It should also be noted that in general the interest rate received is correlated to the risk, so the interest income received would be less if the Council took on less risk.

Borrower	Principal Invested £M	Interest Rate %	Credit Rating	Days to Maturity at 31 Dec	Historic Risk of Default %
DMO (Government)	2.0	4.88	AA-	19	0.001
Nat West	2.0	4.15	A+	20	0.002
North Lanarkshire Council	2.0	3.99	AA-	31	0.002
Sterling Council	1.0	3.95	AA-	31	0.002
Leeds Building Society	3.0	4.00	A-	38	0.005
Worthing Borough Council	5.0	3.9	AA-	48	0.003
DMO (Government)	3.0	4.765	AA-	52	0.003
Lloyds	1.0	4.55	A+	56	0.007
Dorset Council	2.0	4.5	AA-	68	0.004
Lloyds	1.0	4.28	A+	77	0.010
London Borough of Newham	2.0	3.4	AA-	77	0.005
DMO (Government)	2.0	4.77	AA-	80	0.005
Blackpool Council	2.0	5.0	AA-	84	0.005
DMO (Government)	1.0	4.75	AA-	110	0.007
Yorkshire Building Society	2.0	4.33	A-	111	0.014
Yorkshire Building Society	1.0	4.6	A-	137	0.017
Santander UK	2.0	4.46	A	139	0.017
Nat West	2.0	4.4	A+	143	0.018
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	2.0	4.4	AA-	153	0.009
Santander UK	1.0	4.74	A	164	0.020
Nat West	1.0	4.42	A+	168	0.020
Australia & New Zealand Bank	1.0	4.58	A+	171	0.021
Oxford City Council	2.0	4.65	AA-	171	0.011
Santander UK	1.0	5.13	A	174	0.022
Lloyds	1.0	4.84	A+	237	0.029
Australia & New Zealand Bank	2.0	5.02	A+	262	0.032
Australia & New Zealand Bank	2.0	4.4	A+	264	0.033
Lloyds	1.0	4.4	A+	271	0.034
	50.0	4.47			

DMO credit rating is the UK credit rating.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference under 5.6.7 specifically includes "to monitor expenditure on the capital programme and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework". The Cabinet also has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council. By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet is able to make informed recommendations on the budget to Council. The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget.

- 9.2 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that:
“every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs.”
- 9.3 Asset disposals must be handled in accordance with the Council’s Contract Procurement Rules.
- 9.4 The Prudential Indicators comply with the Local Government Act 2003.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The main financial implications are covered in section 8 of the report.
- 10.2 The Council operates a tolerance limit on capital projects that depends on the value of the scheme and on this basis over the next ten-year programme it should be anticipated that the total spend over the period could be around £3.8M higher than the budgeted £34.8M. Indeed the current high inflation rates may make this situation worse than the tolerance limit of around 10%, particularly with the specific inflationary pressures on construction costs.
- 10.3 The capital programme will need to remain under close review due to the limited availability of capital resources and the affordability in the general fund of the cost of using the Council’s capital receipts. When capital receipts are used and not replaced the availability of cash for investment reduces. Consequently interest income from investments reduces. £1.0M currently earns the Authority approximately £50k per year in interest. The general fund estimates are routinely updated to reflect changes in income from investments. When the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) reaches zero the Council will need to start charging a minimum revenue provision to the general fund for the cost of capital and will need to consider external borrowing for further capital spend. The CFR at the 31 March 2023 was negative £2.72M.
- 10.4 The Council also aims to ensure that the level of planned capital spending in any one year matches the capacity of the organisation to deliver the schemes to ensure that the impact on the revenue budget of loss of cash-flow investment income is minimised.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The inherent risks in undertaking a capital project are managed by the project manager of each individual scheme. These are recorded on a project risk log which will be considered by the Project Board (if applicable). The key risks arising from the project may be recorded on Pentana (the Council’s Performance & Risk management software).
- 11.2 Risks associated with treasury management and procedures to minimise risk are outlined in the Treasury Management Practices document, TMP1, which was adopted by Cabinet in July 2003 and is revisited annually as part of the Treasury Strategy review. The risk on the General Fund of a fall of investment interest below the budgeted level is dependent on banks and building societies need for borrowing.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are no direct equalities implications directly arising from the adoption of the Capital Programme for 2023/24 onwards. For any individual new capital investment proposal of £50k or more, or affecting more than two wards, an equality analysis is required to be carried out. This will take place following agreement of the investment proposal.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to recommendations of this report. The projects at section 8.4 may have impacts that contribute to an adverse impact. As these projects go forward, an assessment will be made where necessary.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. Appendix A, Capital Programme Detail including Funding 2023/24 onwards.
- 16.2. Appendix B, Treasury Management Update.

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1. Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy)

<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21271/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20INTEGRATED%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY.pdf>
[Uploaded Appendix A- Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy.docx.pdf \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

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								Funding				
		2023/24 Funding £	2024/25 Funding £	2025/26 Funding £	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 - 2032/33 Funding £					
Project	Service Directorate							Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set- aside receipts/ Borrowing
Howard Park Letchworth Path Resurfacing	Place	10,000	10,000	0	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Icknield Way Cemetery Letchworth Road and Path Resurfacing	Place	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Infrastructure Hardware	Customers	28,000	314,000	0	18,000	18,000	190,000	0	0	0	0	568,000
Installation of trial on-street charging (GAF)	Regulatory	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	0
Ivel Springs Footpaths	Place	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
John Barker Place, Hitchin	Regulatory	1,096,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	270,400	0	825,600
Lairage Multi-Storey Car Par - Structural wall repairs	Resources	113,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	113,900
Laptops - Refresh Programme	Customers	43,700	40,000	319,000	49,000	35,000	483,000	0	0	0	0	969,700
Leased Cars	Resources	0	141,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	141,000
Leisure Condition Survey Enhancements	Place	58,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,800
Letchworth Multi-storey Car Park - parapet walls, soffit & decoration	Resources	129,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	129,000
Local Authority Housing Fund	Resources	543,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	543,000	0	0	0
Match funding for Electric Vehicle charging	Regulatory	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Members Laptops Refresh Programme	Customers	30,000	0	0	30,000	0	60,000	0	0	0	0	120,000
Microsoft Enterprise Software Assurance	Customers	0	0	679,000	0	0	1,494,000	0	0	0	0	2,173,000
Mrs Howard Hall Replacement Boiler & Windows	Resources	63,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63,000
Museum Storage Facility	Enterprise	2,000,000	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,000,000
Newmarket Road Royston Skatepark & Access	Place	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	0	0
NH Museum & Community Facility	Enterprise	48,300	0	0	0	0	0	48,300	0	0	0	0
NHLC Boiler Replacement	Place	0	200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000
NHLC Gym toilets and accessible toilet refurbishment	Place	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
NHLC Interactive Water Feature	Place	0	0	0	0	120,000	0	0	0	0	0	120,000
NHLC Pool Flume Replacement	Place	0	0	0	0	0	150,000	0	0	0	0	150,000
NHLC reconfiguration of reception area	Place	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
NHLC Soft Play	Place	112,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	112,500
Northern Transfer Station	Place	0	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000,000
Norton Common Footpaths	Place	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Norton Common Letchworth Tennis Courts	Place	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
Off Street Car Parks resurfacing and enhancement	Resources	209,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	209,400
Oughtonhead Common Footpaths	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Oughtonhead Common Hitchin Weir	Place	400,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	400,000
Oughtonhead Common Signage and Interpretation	Place	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Parking Charging, Payments & Management	Regulatory	235,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	235,000
Parking Machines Replacement	Regulatory	150,000	150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	300,000
Parking Machines Upgrade - Contactless Payment Facility Installation	Regulatory	56,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	42,000	0	0	14,000
PC's - Refresh Programme	Customers	16,300	13,000	7,000	8,000	5,000	21,000	0	0	0	0	70,300
Playground Renovation District Wide	Place	262,500	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	900,000	0	0	0	0	1,882,500
Private Sector Grants	Regulatory	148,100	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	180,000	0	0	0	0	568,100
Provide housing at market rents.	Enterprise	2,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,500
Ransoms Rec Footpaths, Gates and Railing	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Refurbishment and improvement of community facilities	Legal and Community	93,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93,800

Project	Service Directorate							Funding				
		2023/24 Funding £	2024/25 Funding £	2025/26 Funding £	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 - 2032/33 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set-aside receipts/ Borrowing
Refuse and Recycling Bins	Place	135,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	360,000	0	0	0	0	855,000
Remote testing equipment - Emergency Lights and Water Temperature Monitoring	Resources	0	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,000
Renovate play area Howard Park, Letchworth	Place	4,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,600
Renovate skate park at KGV Hitchin	Place	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250,000
Replacement of Newark Close, Royston	Enterprise	65,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65,000
Replacement of the timber access bridge at Norton Common	Place	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75,000
Resurface Lairage Car Park	Resources	346,300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	346,300
Riverside walkway, Biggin Lane	Place	53,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53,000
RLC change village refurbishment – replacement of cubicles, lockers, vanity area and group change.	Place	0	150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	150,000
RLC swim showers and change village toilet refurbishment	Place	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75,000
Royston Leisure Centre Boiler Replacement	Place	0	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Royston Leisure Centre Dry Side Toilet Refurbishment	Place	0	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Royston Leisure Centre extension	Place	0	0	1,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	168,000	0	832,000
Royston Leisure Centre Fitness Equipment Replacement	Place	0	0	0	150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	150,000
Royston Leisure Centre Fitness Facility Refurbishment	Place	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	50,000
Royston Leisure Centre Members Changing Refurbishment	Place	0	150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	150,000
Royston Leisure Centre Solar Thermal Installation	Place	67,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	67,400
S106 Projects	Various	31,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31,000	0	0
S016 Funding for additional social housing	Regulatory	385,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	385,000	0	0
Security - Firewalls	Customers	7,600	16,000	0	18,000	0	18,000	0	0	0	0	59,600
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Intervention: Community Engagement Schemes	Enterprise	0	163,000	0	0	0	0	0	163,000	0	0	0
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Intervention: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Enterprise	20,000	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	120,000	0	0	0
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Intervention: Local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues	Resources	100,000	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	200,000	0	0	0
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Interventions	Resources	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	60,000	0	0	0
Solar PV installation at Hitchin Swim Centre	Place	142,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	142,000
Solar PV installation at North Herts Leisure Centre	Place	338,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	338,000
Solar PV installation at Royston Leisure Centre	Place	241,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	241,000
St Johns Cemetery Footpath	Place	0	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Swinburne Recreation Ground Hitchin	Place	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Tablets - Android Devices	Customers	26,700	10,000	10,000	10,000	4,000	16,000	0	0	0	0	76,700
Telephony system	Customers	3,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,200
Thomas Bellamy House, Hitchin	Enterprise	64,300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64,300
Transport Plans implementation (GAF)	Regulatory	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	0	0

								Funding				
Project	Service Directorate	2023/24 Funding £	2024/25 Funding £	2025/26 Funding £	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 - 2032/33 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set- aside receipts/ Borrowing
Walsworth Common Pavilion - contribution to scheme	Place	0	0	300,000	0	0	0	250,000	0	37,000	0	13,000
Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicles	Place	0	0	4,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,200,000	800,000
Weston Hills Baldock	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Weston Hills LNR Footpath Renovation	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
WiFi Upgrade	Customers	0	0	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Wilbury Hills Cemetery Footpaths	Place	15,300	10,000	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,300
		10,437,600	8,113,000	10,184,000	1,411,000	707,000	3,907,000	303,400	1,891,000	991,400	3,200,200	28,373,600

Treasury Management Update

Quarterly report
30th June 2023

This report is intended for the use and assistance of customers of Link Group. It should not be regarded as a substitute for the exercise by the recipient of its own judgement. Link Group exists to provide its clients with advice primarily on borrowing and investment. We are not legal experts and we have not obtained legal advice in giving our opinions and interpretations in this paper. Clients are advised to seek expert legal advice before taking action as a result of any advice given in this paper. Whilst Link Group makes every effort to ensure that all information provided by it is accurate and complete, it does not guarantee the correctness or the due receipt of such information and will not be held responsible for any errors therein or omissions arising there from. Furthermore, Link Group shall not be held liable in contract, tort or otherwise for any loss or damage (whether direct, or indirect or consequential) resulting from negligence, delay or failure on the part of Link Group or its officers, employees or agents in procuring, presenting, communicating or otherwise providing information or advice whether sustained by Link Group customer or any third party directly or indirectly making use of such information or advice, including but not limited to any loss or damage resulting as a consequence of inaccuracy or errors in such information or advice. All information supplied by Link Group should only be used as a factor to assist in the making of a business decision and should not be used as a sole basis for any decision.

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Treasury Management Update

Quarter Ended 30th June 2023

The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management 2021 recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities at least quarterly. This report, therefore, ensures this Council is implementing best practice in accordance with the Code.

1. Economics update

- The first quarter of 2023/24 saw:
 - A 0.2% m/m rise in real GDP in April, partly due to fewer strikes;
 - CPI inflation falling from 10.1% to 8.7% in April, before remaining at 8.7% in May. This was the highest reading in the G7;
 - Core CPI inflation rise in both April and May, reaching a new 31-year high of 7.1%;
 - A tighter labour market in April, as the 3myy growth of average earnings rose from 6.1% to 6.5%;
 - Interest rates rise by a further 75bps over the quarter, taking Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.00%;
 - 10-year gilt yields nearing the “mini-Budget” peaks, as inflation surprised to the upside.
- The economy has weathered the drag from higher inflation better than was widely expected. The 0.2% m/m rise in real GDP in April, following March’s 0.3% m/m contraction will further raise hopes that the economy will escape a recession this year. Some of the strength in April was due to fewer strikes by train workers and teachers in that month. Moreover, some of the falls in activity in other areas in April were probably temporary too. Strikes by junior doctors and civil servants contributed to the fall in health output (0.9% m/m) and the meagre 0.1% m/m increase in public administration.
- The fall in the composite Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) from 54.0 in May to a three-month low of 52.8 in June (>50 points to expansion in the economy, <50 points to contraction) was worse than the consensus forecast of 53.6. Both the services and manufacturing PMIs fell. The decline in the services PMI was bigger (from 55.2 to 53.7), but it remains consistent with services activity expanding by an annualised 2%. The fall in the manufacturing PMI was smaller (from 47.1 to 46.2), but it is consistent with the annual rate of manufacturing output falling from -0.8% in April to around -5.0%. At face value, the composite PMI points to the 0.1% q/q rise in GDP in Q1 2023 being followed by a 0.2% q/q gain in Q2 2023.
- Meanwhile, the 0.3% m/m rise in retail sales volumes in May was far better than the consensus forecast of a 0.2% m/m decline and followed the robust 0.5% m/m rise in April. Some of the rise was due to the warmer weather. Indeed, the largest move was a 2.7% m/m jump in non-store sales, due to people stocking up on outdoor-related goods. But department stores also managed to squeeze out a 0.6% m/m rise in sales and the household goods sub-sector enjoyed a reasonable performance too. Overall, the figures were far better than analysts had expected. In addition, the GfK measure of consumer confidence rebounded from -27 to a 17-month high of -24 in June.
- The recent resilience of the economy has been due to a confluence of factors including the continued rebound in activity after the pandemic, households spending some of their pandemic savings, and the tight labour market and government handouts both supporting household incomes. That said, as government support fades, real household incomes are unlikely to grow rapidly. Furthermore, higher interest rates will mean GDP is likely to contract later this year. Our central assumption is that inflation will drop to the 2.0% target only if the Bank triggers a recession by raising rates from 5.00% now to at least 5.5% and keeps rates there until at least mid-2024. Our colleagues at Capital Economics estimate that around 60% of the drag on real activity from the rise in rates has yet to bite, and the drag on the quarterly rate of real GDP growth over the next year may be about 0.2ppts bigger than over the past year.
- The labour market became tighter over the quarter and wage growth reaccelerated. Labour demand was stronger than the consensus had expected. The three-month change in employment rose from +182,000 in March to +250,000 in April. Meanwhile, labour supply continued to recover as the size of the labour force grew by 303,000 in the three months to April. That was supported by a further 140,000 decline in inactivity as people returned to work from retirement and caring responsibilities (while inactivity due to long-term sick

continued to rise). But it was not enough to offset the big rise in employment, which meant the unemployment rate fell from 3.9% to 3.8%

- The tighter labour market supported wage growth in April, although the 9.7% rise in the National Living Wage on 1st April (compared to the 6.6% increase in April last year) probably had a lot to do with it too. The 3myy rate of average earnings growth reaccelerated from 6.1% to 6.5% (consensus 6.1%) and UK wage growth remains much faster than in the US and the Euro-zone. In addition, regular private sector wage growth increased from 7.1% 3myy to 7.6%, which left it well above the Bank's forecast for it to fall below 7.0%. Overall, the loosening in the labour market appears to have stalled in April and regular private sector wage growth was well above the Bank's forecast.
- CPI inflation stayed at 8.7% in May (consensus 8.4%) and, perhaps more worryingly, core CPI inflation rose again, from 6.8% to a new 31-year high of 7.1%. The rise in core inflation built on the leap from 6.2% in March to 6.8% and means it is accelerating in the UK while it is slowing in the US and the Euro-zone (both fell to 5.3%). A further decline in fuel inflation, from -8.9% to -13.1%, and the second fall in food inflation in as many months, from 19.3% to 18.7%, explained why overall CPI inflation didn't rise. And the scheduled fall in the average annual utility price from £2,500 to £2,074 on 1st July means overall CPI inflation will probably ease in the coming months. But the problem is that the recent surge in core inflation and the reacceleration in wage growth shows that domestic inflationary pressures are still strengthening.
- This suggests the Bank may have more work to do than the Fed or ECB. Indeed, the Bank of England sounded somewhat hawkish in the June meeting. This came through most in the MPC's decision to step up the pace of hiking from the 25bps at the previous two meetings. The 7-2 vote, with only two members voting to leave rates unchanged at 4.50%, revealed support for stepping up the fight against high inflation.
- That said, the Bank has not committed to raising rates again or suggested that 50bps rises are now the norm. What it did say was that "the scale of the recent upside surprises in official estimates of wage growth and services CPI inflation suggested a 0.5 percentage point increase in interest rates was required at this particular meeting". Moreover, the Committee did not strengthen its forward guidance that any further rate hikes would be conditional on the data. However, it looks highly probable, given the on-going strength of inflation and employment data, that the Bank will need to raise rates to at least 5.5% and to keep rates at their peak until the mid-point of 2024. We still think it is only a matter of time before the rise in rates weakens the economy sufficiently to push it into recession. That is why instead of rising to between 6.00%-6.25%, as is currently priced in by markets, we think rates are more likely to peak between 5.50-6.00%. Our forecast is also for rates to be cut in the second half of 2024, and we expect rates to then fall further than markets are pricing in.
- Growing evidence that UK price pressures are becoming increasingly domestically generated has driven up market interest rate expectations and at one point pushed the 10-year gilt yield up to 4.49% in late June, very close to its peak seen after the "mini-budget". Yields have since fallen slightly back to 4.38%. But growing expectations that rates in the UK will remain higher for longer than in the US mean they are still more than 70 bps above US yields. While higher interest rates are priced into the markets, the likely dent to the real economy from the high level of interest rates is not. That's why we think there is scope for market rate expectations to fall back in 2024 and why we expect the 10-year PWLB Certainty Rate to drop back from c5.20% to 5.00% by the end of this year and to 4.20% by the end of 2024.
- The pound strengthened from \$1.24 at the start of April to a one-year high at \$1.26 in early May, which was partly due to the risks from the global banking issues being seen as a bigger problem for the US than the UK. The pound then fell back to \$1.23 at the end of May, before rising again to \$1.28 in the middle of June as the strong core CPI inflation data released in June suggested the Bank of England was going to have to raise rates more than the Fed or ECB in order to tame domestic inflation. However, sterling's strong run may falter because more hikes in the near term to combat high inflation are likely to weaken growth (and, hopefully, at some point inflation too) to such a degree that the policy rate will probably be brought back down, potentially quite quickly, as the economic cycle trends downwards decisively. This suggests that additional rate hikes are unlikely to do much to boost the pound.
- In early April, investors turned more optimistic about global GDP growth, pushing up UK equity prices. But this period of optimism appears to have been short-lived. The FTSE 100 has fallen by 4.8% since 21st April, from around 7,914 to 7,553, reversing part of the 7.9% rise since 17th March. Despite the recent resilience of economic activity, expectations for equity earnings have become a bit more downbeat. Nonetheless, further down the track, more rate cuts than markets anticipate should help the FTSE 100 rally.

MPC meetings 11th May and 22nd June 2023

- On 11th May, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) increased Bank Rate by 25 basis points to 4.50%, and on 22nd June moved rates up a further 50 basis points to 5.00%. Both increases reflected a split vote – seven members voting for an increase and two for none.
- Nonetheless, with UK inflation significantly higher than in other G7 countries, the MPC will have a difficult task in convincing investors that they will be able to dampen inflation pressures anytime soon. Talk of the Bank's inflation models being "broken" is perhaps another reason why gilt investors are demanding a premium relative to US and Euro-zone bonds, for example.
- Of course, what happens outside of the UK is also critical to movement in gilt yields. The US FOMC has already hiked short-term rates to a range of 5.00%-5.25%, but a further increase is pencilled in for July, whilst the ECB looks likely to raise its Deposit rate at least once more to a peak of 3.75%, with upside risk of higher to come.

2. Interest rate forecasts

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast, made on 26th June, sets out a view that both short and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy, against a backdrop of a stubbornly robust economy and a tight labour market.

You will note that our forecasts have steadily increased during the quarter as the data continued to spring upside surprises, and the Bank of England continued to under-estimate how prevalent inflation is, and how tight the labour market is. The Government has also noted that despite immigration increasing markedly, high levels of ill-health amongst the workforce has led to wage demands remaining strong until such time as there is a loosening in demand for business services.

Our current and previous PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate.

Link Group Interest Rate View 26.06.23													
	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26
BANK RATE	5.00	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25	4.75	4.25	3.75	3.25	2.75	2.75	2.50	2.50
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.60	5.50	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.70	2.60	2.50	2.50
6 month ave earnings	5.80	5.90	5.70	5.50	5.10	4.60	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.70	2.60	2.60	2.60
12 month ave earnings	6.30	6.20	6.00	5.70	5.30	4.80	4.10	3.60	3.10	2.80	2.70	2.70	2.70
5 yr PWLB	5.50	5.60	5.30	5.10	4.80	4.50	4.20	3.90	3.60	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.20
10 yr PWLB	5.10	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.40
25 yr PWLB	5.30	5.40	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.70
50 yr PWLB	5.00	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.00	3.80	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50

Link Group Interest Rate View 24.05.23													
	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26
BANK RATE	4.75	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	2.75	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
3 month ave earnings	4.80	5.00	5.00	4.80	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	2.80	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
6 month ave earnings	5.10	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.50	3.90	3.40	3.20	2.90	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60
12 month ave earnings	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.00	4.50	3.90	3.40	3.20	2.90	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70
5 yr PWLB	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.80	4.50	4.10	3.70	3.50	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.10	3.10
10 yr PWLB	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.80	4.40	4.10	3.80	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.30
25 yr PWLB	5.30	5.30	5.20	5.10	4.80	4.50	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.60
50 yr PWLB	5.10	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.60	4.30	4.00	3.80	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.40

Link Group Interest Rate View	27.03.23											
	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26
BANK RATE	4.50	4.50	4.25	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.50	2.50	2.50
3 month ave earnings	4.50	4.50	4.30	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.50	2.50	2.50
6 month ave earnings	4.50	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.40	3.20	2.90	2.80	2.80	2.60	2.60	2.60
12 month ave earnings	4.50	4.40	4.20	3.80	3.30	3.10	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70
5 yr PWLB	4.10	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.10
10 yr PWLB	4.20	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.20
25 yr PWLB	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.40
50 yr PWLB	4.30	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.10

- LIBOR and LIBID rates ceased at the end of 2021. In a continuation of previous views, money market yield forecasts are based on expected average earnings by local authorities for 3 to 12 months.
- The Link forecast for average earnings are averages i.e., rates offered by individual banks may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their different needs for borrowing short-term cash at any one point in time.

A SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE FUTURE PATH OF BANK RATE

- Our central forecast for interest rates was previously updated on 25th May and reflected a view that the MPC would be keen to further demonstrate its anti-inflation credentials by delivering a succession of rate increases. This has happened to a degree, especially as it moved to a more aggressive 0.5% hike in June but, with inflation remaining elevated, we anticipate that Bank Rate will need to increase to at least 5.5%, if not higher, to sufficiently slow the UK economy and loosen the labour market.
- Moreover, we also still anticipate the Bank of England will be keen to loosen monetary policy when the worst of the inflationary pressures are behind us – but timing on this will remain one of fine judgment: cut too soon, and inflationary pressures may well build up further; cut too late and any downturn or recession may be prolonged. Our current judgment is that rates will have to increase and stay at their peak until the second quarter of 2024 as a minimum.
- In the upcoming months, our forecasts will be guided not only by economic data releases and clarifications from the MPC over its monetary policies and the Government over its fiscal policies, but also international factors such as policy development in the US and Europe, the provision of fresh support packages to support the faltering recovery in China as well as the on-going conflict between Russia and Ukraine and whether there are any further implications for Russia itself following the recent aborted mutiny by the Wagner group.
- On the positive side, consumers are still estimated to be sitting on excess savings left over from the pandemic, which could cushion some of the impact of the above challenges and may be the reason why the economy is performing somewhat better at this stage of the economic cycle than may have been expected. However, most of those excess savings are held by more affluent people whereas lower income families already spend nearly all their income on essentials such as food, energy and rent/mortgage payments.

PWLB RATES

- Gilt yield curve movements have shifted upwards, especially at the shorter end of the yield curve since our previous forecast but remain relatively volatile. PWLB 5 to 50 years Certainty Rates are, generally, in the range of 4.90% to 5.60%.
- We view the markets as having built in, already, nearly all the effects on gilt yields of the likely increases in Bank Rate and the elevated inflation outlook.

The balance of risks to the UK economy: -

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is to the downside.

Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates include: -

- **Labour and supply shortages** prove more enduring and disruptive and depress economic activity (accepting that in the near-term this is also an upside risk to inflation and, thus, the rising gilt yields we have seen of late).
- **The Bank of England** increases Bank Rate too fast and too far over the coming months, and subsequently brings about a deeper and longer UK recession than we currently anticipate.
- **UK / EU trade arrangements** – if there was a major impact on trade flows and financial services due to complications or lack of co-operation in sorting out significant remaining issues.
- **Geopolitical risks**, for example in Ukraine/Russia, China/Taiwan/US, Iran, North Korea and Middle Eastern countries, which could lead to increasing safe-haven flows.
- **A broadening of banking sector fragilities**, which have been successfully addressed in the near-term by central banks and the market generally, but which may require further intervention if short-term interest rates stay elevated for longer than is anticipated.

Upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates: -

- Despite the recent tightening by 0.5%, the **Bank of England proves too timid** in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to remain elevated for a longer period within the UK economy, which then necessitates Bank Rate staying higher for longer than we currently project.
- **The pound weakens** because of a lack of confidence in the UK Government's fiscal policies, resulting in investors pricing in a risk premium for holding UK sovereign debt.
- Longer-term **US treasury yields** rise strongly if inflation remains more stubborn than the market currently anticipates, pulling gilt yields up higher consequently.
- Projected **gilt issuance, inclusive of natural maturities and QT**, could be too much for the markets to comfortably digest without higher yields compensating.

3. Annual Investment Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on **23/02/23**. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity, aligned with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, over and above keeping investments short-term to cover cash flow needs, there is a benefit to seek out value available in periods up to 24 months.

As shown by the interest rate forecasts in section 2, investment rates have improved dramatically during the first quarter of 2023/24 and are expected to improve further as Bank Rate continues to increase over the next few months.

Creditworthiness.

There have been few changes to credit ratings over the quarter under review. However, officers continue to closely monitor these, and other measures of creditworthiness to ensure that only appropriate counterparties are considered for investment purposes.

Investment counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

CDS prices

For UK banks, these have retreated from the spikes caused by the Truss / Kwarteng policy approach in September. Prices are not misaligned with other creditworthiness indicators, such as credit ratings. **Nevertheless, it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances.**

Investment balances

The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the quarter was **£53.4m**. These funds were available on a temporary basis, and the level of funds available was mainly dependent on the timing of precept payments, receipt of grants and progress on the capital programme. The Council holds **£20m** core cash balances for investment purposes (i.e., funds available for more than one year).

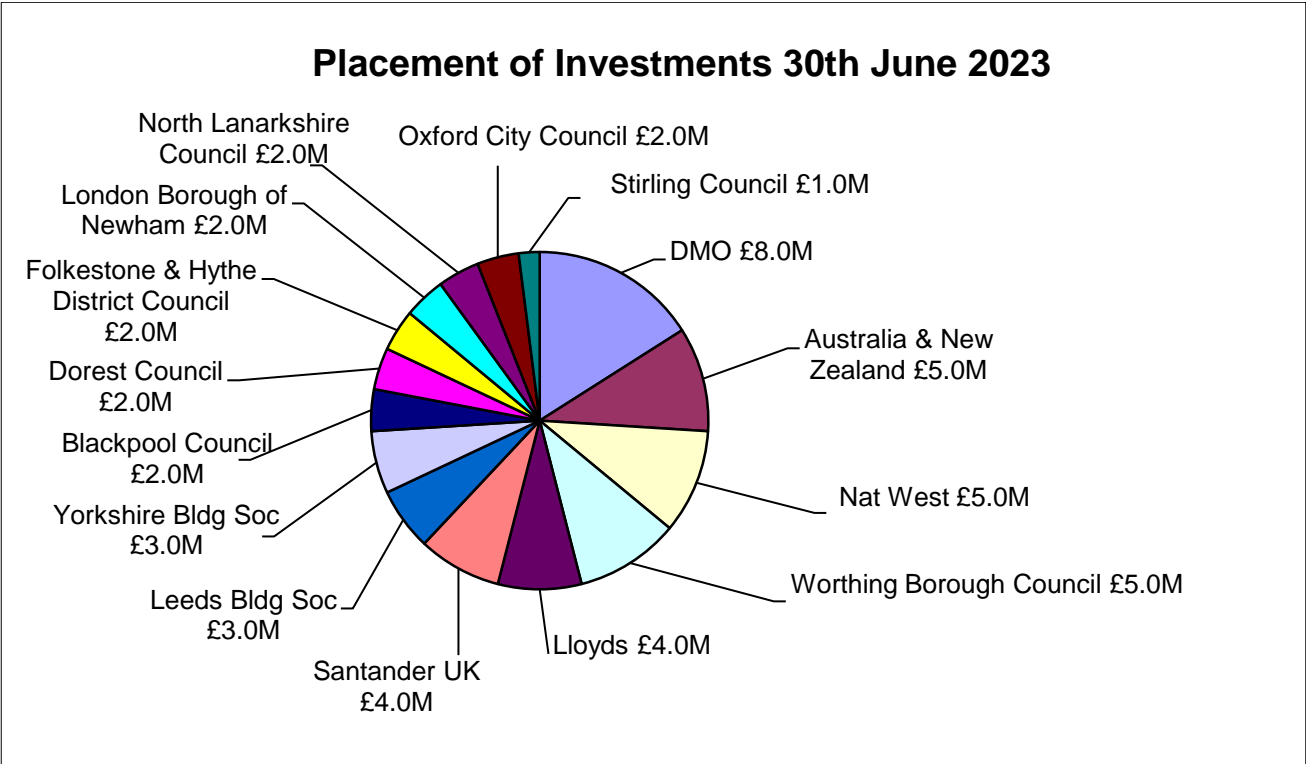
	Amount	Average
	£	Interest Rate %
Managed By NHC		
Banks	18,000,000	4.64
Building Societies	6,000,000	4.21
Local Authorities	18,000,000	4.29
Government	8,000,000	4.77
Total	50, 000,000	4.47

In percentage terms, this equates to:

	Percentage
Government	16
Banks	36
Local Authorities	36
Building Societies	12

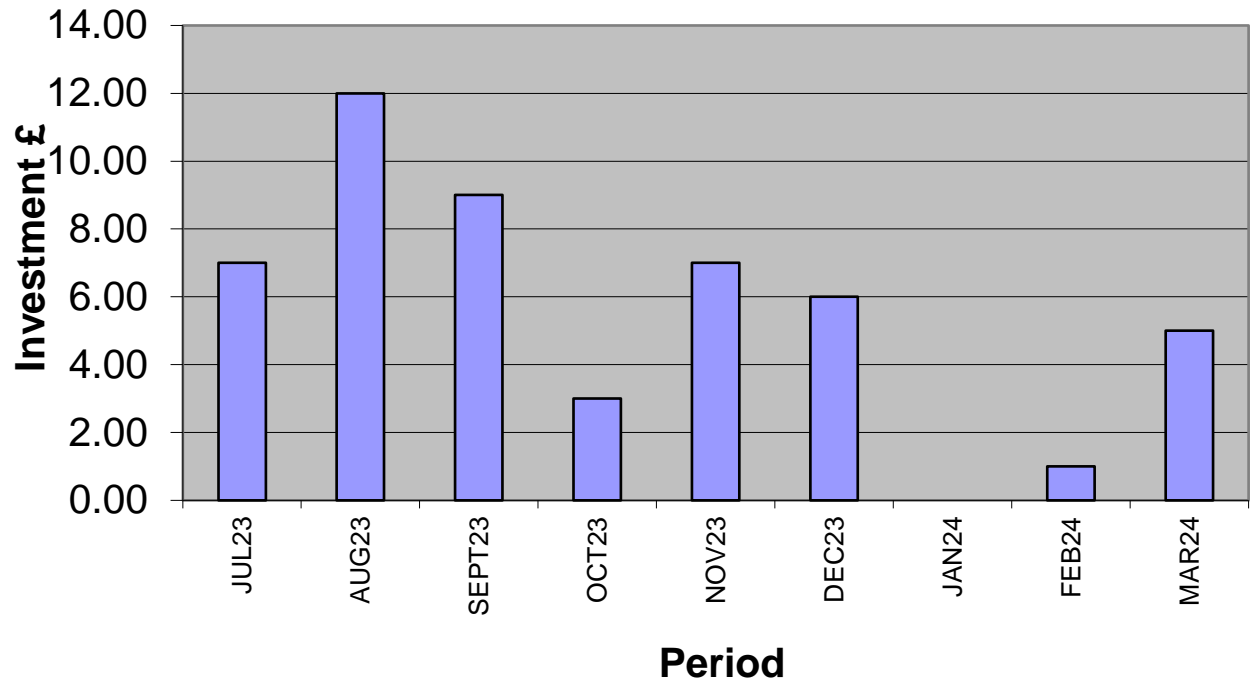
The approved 23/24 strategy is that no more than 60% of investments should be placed with Building Societies and Property Funds with a maximum value of £25M. The value at 30 June was £6.0M.

The pie chart below shows the spread of investment balances as at 30 June 2023. This is a snapshot in time that demonstrates the diversification of investments.

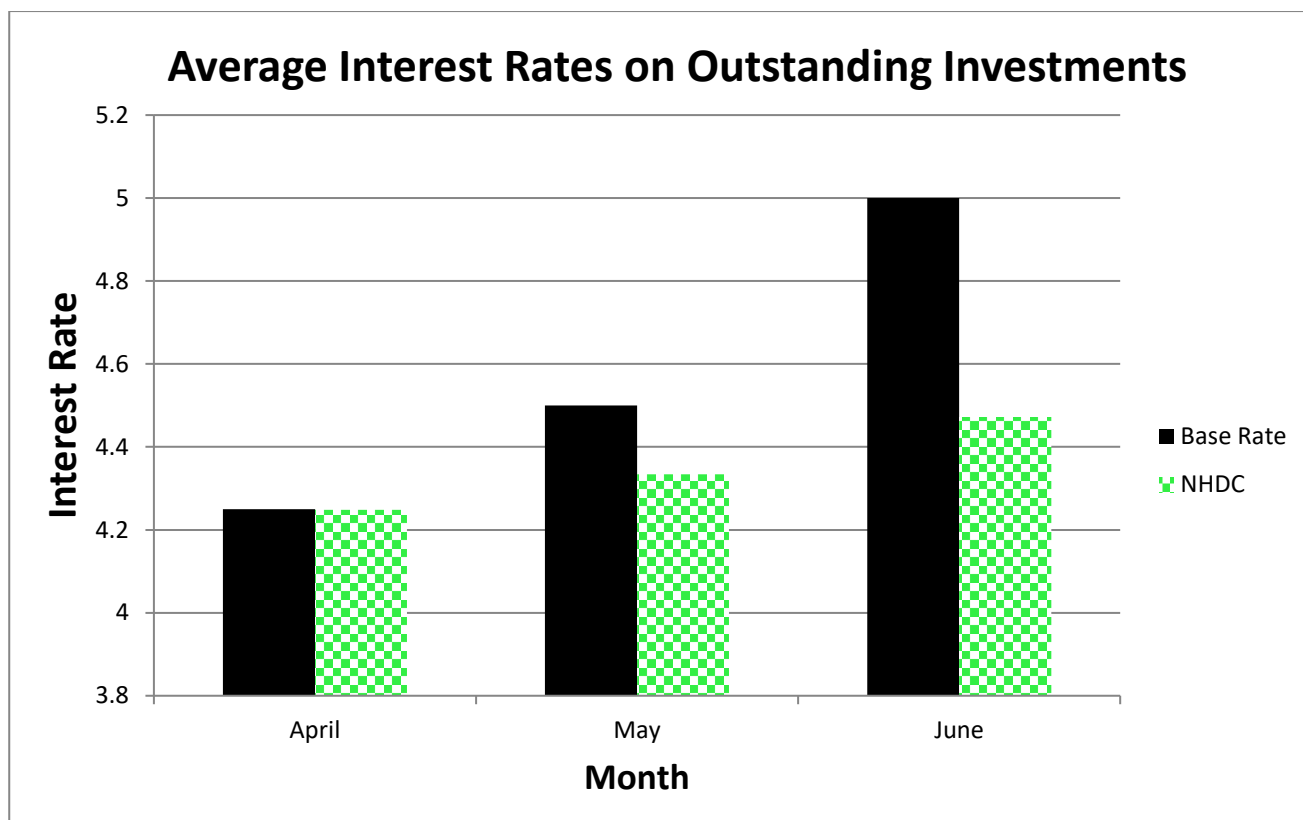


The chart below shows the Council's investment maturity profile.

Investment Maturity 30th June 2023



The graph below shows the average rate of interest on outstanding investments at 30 June.



Approved limits

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the quarter ended 30th June 2023.

4. Borrowing

No borrowing was undertaken during the quarter ended 30th June 2023.

It is anticipated that further borrowing will not be undertaken during this financial year but this is dependant on the profiled spend in the Capital Programme and incoming Capital receipts. Borrowing is forecast next year but again, will be dependant on spend on the Capital Programme.

Loans Outstanding at 30 June 2023:

	Amount	Average Interest Rate
	£	%
Public Works Loans Board	£367k	10.28

Estimated outstanding debt:

Year	Forecast Borrowing £m	Forecast other long-term liabilities £m	Less: Internal Borrowing £m	Forecast Total External Debt £m	Operational Boundary £m	Authorised Limit £m
31 st March 2024 (Forecast)	0.347	0.224	0	0.571	2.0	7.0
31 st March 2025 (Forecast)	1.015	0.106	0.689	0.432	2.0	7.0
31 st March 2026 (Forecast)	7.524	4.100	7.218	4.406	13.0	18.0
31 st March 2027 (Forecast)	8.920	3.592	8.629	3.883	14.0	19.0
31 st March 2028 (Forecast)	9.612	3.082	9.336	3.358	14.0	19.0

* Comprises the finance lease relating to Letchworth Multi-storey car park and impact of the finance lease for waste vehicles.

The external borrowing forecast can be used to give an indication of the borrowing that may be required, which is combined with outstanding existing borrowing. The Council will also borrow for short-term cash-flow needs if required. The actual borrowing that is taken out will depend on the latest forecasts and the offers that are available at the time that it is required. There will also be a consideration of when any other borrowing becomes due, with the aim of achieving a spread of these dates. This is to try and avoid refinancing risk. The Council is required to set indicators for the maturity structure of its borrowing. Given the low level of borrowing that the Council currently has and is forecast to have, it is considered appropriate to maintain full flexibility as to the exact duration of any borrowing undertaken.

To manage refinancing risk, the Council sets limits on the maturity structure of its borrowing. However, these indicators are set relatively high to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to opportunities to repay or take out new debt (if it was required), while remaining within the parameters set by the indicators.

Maturity Period	Lower %	Upper %
Under 12 months	0	100
12 months to 2 years	0	100
2 years to 5 years	0	100
5 years to 10 years	0	100
10 years to 20 years	0	100
20 years and above	0	100

The Prudential Indicator below considers the cost of borrowing as a % of the net revenue budget of the Council.

Year	Estimated cost of borrowing £m	Forecast net revenue budget £m	Estimated cost of borrowing as a % of net revenue budget
2023/24	0.037	17.842	0.207
2024/25	0.067	18.678	0.359
2025/26	0.360	18.545	1.940
2026/27	0.421	18.464	2.282
2027/28	0.452	18.491	2.445

The Council is required to set a prudential indicator that estimates financing costs (cost of borrowing less income from investments) as a percentage of its net revenue budget.

Year	Estimated cost of borrowing £m	Less: Forecast of interest earned £m	Net Financing Costs £m	Forecast net revenue budget £m	Estimated cost of borrowing as a % of net revenue budget
2023/24	0.037	2.602	-2.565	17.842	-14.376
2024/25	0.067	1.021	-0.954	18.678	-5.108
2025/26	0.360	0.533	-0.173	18.545	-0.934
2026/27	0.421	0.490	-0.069	18.464	-0.372
2027/28	0.452	0.471	-0.019	18.491	-0.102

5. Debt rescheduling

No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the quarter.

6. Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

The prudential and treasury Indicators are shown in Appendix 1.

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the *quarter ended* 30th June 2023, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24. The Service Director: Resources reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

APPENDIX 1: Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2023-24 as of 30th June 2023

Treasury Indicators	2023/24 Budget £'000	31.03.23 Actual £'000
Authorised limit for external debt	7,000	367
Operational boundary for external debt	2,000	367
Gross external debt	367	367
Investments	40,700	50,000
Net borrowing	40,333	49,633

Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing - upper and lower limits		
Under 12 months	21	21
12 months to 2 years	21	21
2 years to 5 years	50	50
5 years to 10 years	25	25
Upper limit for principal sums invested over 365 days	17,000 Max	0

Prudential Indicators	2023/24 Budget £'000	31.06.23 Actual £'000
Capital expenditure *	11,291	191
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) *	-1,469	-2,664
In year borrowing requirement	0	0
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	-8.442%	-2.67%

CABINET 19 September 2023
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PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: FIRST QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24

REPORT OF: THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND IT – IAN ALBERT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the summary position on revenue income and expenditure forecasts for the financial year 2023/24, as at the end of the first quarter. The forecast variance is a £1.119million decrease in the net working budget of £18.998million, with an ongoing impact in future years of a £260k increase, and a request to carry forward £10k of unspent budget to fund a specific project in 2024/25. The forecast decrease in spend in the current year is mainly due to the anticipated interest returns from treasury investments this year exceeding the assumption in the original budget estimate. Further detail on this, and explanations for all other budget areas with more significant variances, is included in table 3.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet note this report.
- 2.2. That Cabinet approves the changes to the 2023/24 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £1.119million decrease in net expenditure.
- 2.3. That Cabinet notes the changes to the 2024/25 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £270k increase in net expenditure. These will be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2024/25.
- 2.4. That Cabinet delegates to the Service Director: Resources (in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT) authority to enter into a Business Rate Pooling arrangement (if available) if it is estimated that it will be in the financial interests of the Council

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Budget holders have considered the options to manage within the existing budget but consider the variances reported here necessary and appropriate.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Consultation on the budget monitoring report is not required. Members will be aware that there is wider consultation on budget estimates during the corporate business planning process each year.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1. The report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 18 August 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Council approved the revenue budget for 2023/24 of £18.496million in February 2023. As at the end of Quarter One, the working budget has increased to £18.998million. Table 1 below details the approved changes to this budget to get to the current working budget:

Table 1 - Current Working Budget

	£k
Original Revenue Budget for 2023/24 approved by Full Council	18,496
Quarter 3 2022/23 Revenue Budget Monitoring report – 2023/24 budget changes approved by Cabinet (March 2023)	549
2022/23 Revenue Budget Outturn Report – 2023/24 budget changes approved by Cabinet (June 2023)	(47)
Current Working Budget	18,998

- 7.2. The Council is managed under Service Directorates. Table 2 below confirms the current net direct resource allocation of each Service Directorate and how this has changed from the original budget allocations approved by Council in February 2023.

Table 2 – Service Directorate Budget Allocations

	Original Budget 2023/24	Changes approved at Q3 2022/23	Changes approved at Outturn 2022/23	Other Budget Transfers	Current Net Direct Working Budget
Service Directorate	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k
Managing Director	490	400	97	(213)	774
Customers	4,298	(5)	(205)	25	4,113
Enterprise	(87)	16	25	48	2
Legal & Community	2,658	0	22	80	2,760
Place	6,132	57	(1)	13	6,201
Regulatory Services	2,079	53	15	0	2,147
Resources	2,926	28	0	47	3,001
TOTAL	18,496	549	(47)	0	18,998

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. Service Managers are responsible for monitoring their expenditure and income against their working budget. Table 3 below highlights those areas where there are forecast to be differences. An explanation is provided for each of the most significant variances, which are generally more than £25k. The final columns detail if there is expected to be an impact on next year's (2024/25) budget:

Table 3 - Summary of significant variances

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Forecast Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2024/25 £k
Treasury Investments Interest Income	(1,602)	(2,602)	(1,000)	Increase in estimated interest income receivable is primarily due to the increases to the Bank of England base rate, and the consequent increase in the interest returns available on the investment of surplus cash balances, since the preparation of the income budget estimate in January 2023. Estimates for future years will be updated when the Investment Strategy for 2024 – 2034 is finalised in January 2024.	0	0
Covid-19 Impacts central expenditure provision	450	160	(290)	Release of provision to mitigate the relevant adverse variances forecast at Quarter One, as highlighted below in this table, as well as the release of those provision amounts not required, as detailed in table 6 of this report. The remaining provision relates to car parking income from pay as you go users and the sale of car park season tickets. The forecast for these income streams will be reviewed again at Quarter 2 when more sales data will be available and the outlook for 2023/24 better known.	0	0
Staffing Cost Budgets - Staff Pay Award 2023/24	630	888	+258	The estimated additional cost of the pay award for 2023/24 is based on the agreed chief officer pay award of 3.5% and the proposed employer offer of an increase of £1,925 to every pay point below £49,950, with an increase of 3.88% for all other pay points covered by the Green Book pay and conditions. The assumption in the original budget for 2023/24 was a pay offer of 4% across all grades. While the employer offer has been rejected by the Trade Unions, it is highly unlikely that any further changes to the proposed award will reduce the cost to the Council. The final cost could be higher, but the employers have firmly stated that the offer on the table is a final offer.	0	258
Careline Clients with Complex Needs Equipment Installation and Maintenance Spend	52	0	(52)	The installation and maintenance of equipment service for clients with complex needs was brought in-house during the middle of the last financial year and has since been delivered by the Careline Caretech team. An ongoing annual saving of £51k against the previous contract spend budget of £103k was captured as an efficiency proposal in the preparation of the budget estimates for 2023/24. As no related cost pressures have materialised since the transition to the in-house service, the budget remaining is forecast to be unspent in this year and not required going forward.	0	(52)

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Forecast Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2024/25 £k
Expenditure on Business Rates Consultants	0	50	+50	Consultants have been appointed to review the Council's business rates tax base and identify where businesses may have been missed or where circumstances have changed that would result in increased business rates income. The cost to the Council will be 10% of the increase in rateable value resulting directly from the consultants' findings. As such, while there is a cost to the General Fund from undertaking the review, the corresponding financial benefit to the Council will be realised through increased business rates income charged to the Collection Fund.	0	0
Councillor Allowances Expenditure	343	361	+18	The Members Allowance Scheme for 2023/24 was approved by Council in January and was effective from 1st April. The slightly lower cost impact in the current year, compared to the estimated ongoing impact, reflects the vacant Councillor posts prior to the May 2023 election.	0	21
Democratic Services Consultants Spend	10	0	(10)	This budget was carried forward for potential further work relating to the boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The Commission have since concluded their Review and have published the new ward boundaries, so no further work was required. The Council will however need to commence a Community Governance Review after the May 2024 elections and therefore a carry forward of the unspent budget is requested to contribute to the cost of this Review in the next financial year.	10	0
Leisure Centre Management Contract Fee Income	(599)	(533)	+66	<p>Considering the continuing recovery in Leisure following the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevailing steep increases in the general cost of living for users of the facilities, the annual indexation of the leisure contract for 23/24 was agreed at 4% (the management fee is linked to price increases for customers). The budget assumption was an increase of 12.6%, which was the RPI inflation measure as of September 2022, in accordance with the terms of the leisure contracts.</p> <p>A shortfall in Leisure Centre management fee income was identified as an ongoing impact of Covid-19 in 2023/24. The forecast variance is mitigated by the release of a corresponding amount from the central Covid-19 impacts provision.</p>	0	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Forecast Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2024/25 £k
Leisure Contract Procurement – Consultants Expenditure	42	76	+34	The new leisure contract requires a lease agreement to be in place between the operator and the Council for each of the leisure facilities. Due to limited Legal officer capacity internally, legal consultants have been appointed to support the Council with this work, resulting in a forecast overspend.	0	0
Waste & Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract Expenditure	6,589	6,212	(377)	Underspend variance follows the calculation of the contract inflation for 2023/24. The budget for 23/24 assumed a contract inflation of 10%, based on the respective contractual indices at that time. Mainly due to subsequent decreases in the fuel price index, the final calculation has resulted in an increase to contract prices of 3.5%. The outcome of the procurement of a new waste contract, which is currently in progress, will determine the annual resource required ongoing.	0	0
Waste Awareness and Minimisation – AFM Income from Herts County Council	(395)	(278)	+117	<p>The AFM income value is impacted by recycling performance across the County. The receipt of £278k this year compares to £125k received last year, with a relative reduction in overall waste tonnages helping to increase the total allocation made available by Herts County Council. The shortfall is due to the generally greater levels of waste generated across Hertfordshire since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which have increased the overall costs of disposal incurred by HCC and therefore reduced the total AFM amount shared with collection authorities. In addition, while North Herts has maintained a similar level of recycling performance for several years, other Councils have made more recent service changes to improve their recycling performance, which has contributed to reducing the North Herts share of the total allocation.</p> <p>AFM payments will cease from 2024/25 onwards and this is already reflected in the ongoing budget.</p> <p>Reduction in AFM income was identified as an ongoing impact of Covid-19 in 2023/24. The forecast variance is offset by the release of a corresponding amount from the central Covid-19 impacts provision.</p>	0	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Forecast Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2024/25 £k
Baldock Fire Recovery	0	2	+2	The Council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to support the recovery from the Baldock Industrial Estate fire. To date, irrecoverable costs have related to a structural survey and air quality monitoring. These costs have been shared with Herts County Council. The expectation is that other costs should be met by other parties, but there is a risk that there will be costs that fall on us.	0	0
Total of explained variances	5,520	4,336	(1,184)		10	227
Other minor balances	13,478	13,543	+65		0	33
Overall Total	18,998	17,879	(1,119)		10	260

- 8.2. Cabinet are asked to approve the differences highlighted in the table above (a £1.119m decrease in spend), as an adjustment to the working budget (recommendation 2.2). Cabinet are also asked to note the estimated impact on the 2023/24 budget, a £270k increase in budget that includes the request to carry forward £10k of unspent budget for a specific project next year, which will be incorporated in to the 2023/24 budget setting process (recommendation 2.3).
- 8.3. The original approved budget for 2023/24 (and therefore working budget) included efficiencies totalling £1.521million, which were agreed by Council in February 2023. Any under or over delivery of efficiencies will be picked up by any budget variances (table 3 above). However, there can be off-setting variances which mean that it is unclear whether the efficiency has been delivered. Where this is the case, this will be highlighted. The current forecast at the end of Quarter One is a net overachievement of £1.044million. This comprises:
- Forecast interest income from investment of surplus cash balances being greater than identified in the efficiency proposal, which was based on the Investment Strategy 2023 - 2033, as highlighted and explained in table three above. £1million overachievement.
 - The saving from bringing the Careline equipment maintenance for clients with complex needs in-house, as itemised in table three above. £52k overachievement.
 - The additional six months of rental income from a full year of letting Harkness Court will not be achieved, with the property now expected to be marketed in autumn this year. £8k underachievement.
- 8.4. The working budget for 2023/24 includes budgets totalling £1.107million that were carried forward from the previous year. These are generally carried forward so that they can be spent for a particular purpose that had been due to happen in 2022/23 but was delayed into 2023/24. At Quarter One, it is forecast that £10k of the budget carried forward will not be spent in this year. This relates to the budget carried forward for consultant costs in respect of the district ward boundary proposals, as noted in table 3.
- 8.5. Six corporate 'financial health' indicators have been identified in relation to key sources of income for the Council in 2023/24. Table 4 below shows the performance for the year. A comparison is made to the original budget to give the complete picture for the year. Each indicator is given a status of red, amber, or green. A green indicator means that they are forecast to match or exceed the budgeted level of income. An amber indicator means that there is a risk that they will not meet the budgeted level of income. A red indicator means that they will not meet the budgeted level of income.





- 8.6. At the end of Quarter One, four of the indicators are green, one indicator is amber, and one of the indicators is red. Explanation for the red indicator in respect of Leisure is included in table 3 above and, as shown in table 6, the forecast shortfall is within the corresponding provision amount included in the budget to recognise that a variance in this income stream was more likely due to the ongoing recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic. The amber indicator for income from car parking fees reflects that income recorded in the First Quarter was lower than anticipated in the budget. A higher level of activity in the remainder of the year may mean that the budgeted expectation is ultimately met, but there is a risk that the budget will not be achieved.

Table 4 - Corporate financial health indicators

Indicator	Status	Original Budget £k	Actual to Date £k	Projected Outturn £k	Variance £k
Leisure Centres Management Fee Income	Red	(599)	(200)	(533)	66
Garden Waste Collection Service Subscriptions	Green	(1,140)	(608)	(1,140)	0
Commercial Refuse & Recycling Service Income	Green	(1,269)	(407)	(1,269)	0
Planning Application Fees (including fees for pre-application advice)	Green	(1,008)	(765)	(1,008)	0
Car Parking Fees	Amber	(2,026)	(421)	(2,026)	0
Parking Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)	Green	(573)	(205)	(573)	0

- 8.7. Table 5 below indicates current activity levels, where these drive financial performance, and how these compare to the prior year to indicate the direction of current trends. As performance against the planning applications fee income budget is generally determined by the number of large applications resolved in the year (rather than the total number of applications received), and this distinction is not captured in the data available, this indicator is omitted from table 5.

Table 5 - Corporate financial health indicators – activity drivers

Indicator	Activity Measure	Performance Q1 2023/24	Performance Q1 2022/23	Percentage Movement	Direction of Trend
Leisure Centres Management Fee	Number of Leisure Centre visits in quarter	391,666	312,679	+25.3%	
Garden Waste Collection Service	Number of bin subscriptions at end of quarter	TBC	30,392	TBC	TBC
Commercial Refuse & Recycling Service	Number of customers at end of quarter	923	965	-4.4%	
Car Parking Fees	Car park tickets sold / average ticket price sold during quarter	278,064 / £1.66	269,341 / £1.61	+3.2% / +3.1%	
Parking Penalty Charge Notices	Number of PCNs issued during quarter	3,789	3,121	+21.4%	

FUNDING, RISK AND GENERAL FUND BALANCE

- 8.8. The Council's revenue budget is funded primarily from Council Tax and Retained Business Rates income. The Council was notified by Central Government in February 2022 of the amount of New Homes Bonus, Lower Tier Services Grant and Services Grant it could expect to receive in 2022/23 and planned accordingly.
- 8.9. Council Tax and Business Rates are accounted for in the Collection Fund rather than directly in our accounts, as we also collect them on behalf of other bodies. Each organisation has a share of the balance on the Collection Fund account. The Council will receive in this year its share of the Council Tax and Business Rates Collection Fund surpluses for the prior year, as estimated in January 2022. As reported previously, this means contributions to the General Fund of £138k from the Council Tax Collection Fund and £452k from the Business Rates Collection Fund. While the Council Tax surplus amount of £138k is included in the funding total in table 7, the business rates surplus will be transferred to reserve and used to mitigate the impact of deficits recorded, and/or changes to the rates retention scheme, in future years. The final totals recorded at the end of the last financial year was a surplus of £116k in respect of Council Tax and a business rate surplus of £1.729m. The difference between the January estimates and the final position will affect the calculation of the surplus / deficit for 2023/24 and hence funding available in 2024/25.
- 8.10. The Council is also subject to a business rates levy from Central Government as it collects more in business rates than the baseline need determined by Central Government. The current forecast for 2023/24 is a business rates levy liability of around £1million at the end of the financial year. The final amount payable however will depend on the actual level of business rates income collected during the year. In any case, the business rates levy payable for 2023/24 will be funded from grant held in reserve and as such will have a net zero impact on the General Fund balance at the end of the year.
- 8.11. In previous years, the Council has been part of a Business Rate Pool. Being part of a Pool can reduce the levy that the Council needs to pay. For 2023/24 it was determined that it was too risky to form a Business Rate Pool in Hertfordshire. On 5 September, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities wrote to Local Authority Chief Finance Officers to invite applications to be part of a Pool in 2024/25. The deadline for applying is 10 October 2023. It is likely that the factors that made a Pool too risky for 2023/24 will no longer apply and it is possible that the Council would form part of an optimum Pool. An optimum pool would be comprised of the County Council and up to 5 District/ Borough Councils. The County Council have engaged some specialist consultants to determine the optimum membership of the Pool and the risks of pooling. Recommendation 2.4 therefore seeks that the final decision is delegated to the Service Director: Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT.
- 8.12. The Council receives compensation in the form of a grant from Central Government for business rate reliefs introduced, which goes into our funds rather than the Collection Fund. The final amount of grant the Council can retain depends on the actual level of reliefs applied during the year. The Council currently expects to receive a total grant allocation of £4.617m for reliefs in 2023/24, which includes an amount of £482k received as compensation for the Government's previous decisions to cap the increases in the business rates multiplier. The multiplier compensation is included in the funding total in table 7 below. The rest of the grant received is held in reserve. Some of the amount held in reserve will be used to fund the business rates levy payable for this year, while a further £2million will be used to top up the business rates income charged to the General Fund in 2023/24 to the baseline funding amount anticipated when the budget was set. In addition, as shown in table 7 below, there will be the planned release of £1.144million from the reserve to the General Fund in 2023/24 to bridge the funding gap anticipated when the budget was set, as explained originally in the MTFS 2023-2033.

- 8.13. The Council does not expect to receive non-ringfenced emergency grant funding from government in 2023/24 to help mitigate the ongoing financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. As detailed in the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Report presented to Full Council in February, a central provision of £450k was included in the budget for 2023/24. As explained in table 3, £290k of the allocation has been released based on the forecasts detailed at Quarter one, with the remaining £160k of the provision in respect of car parking income streams not yet allocated. As shown in table 6 below, forecast adverse variances reported at quarter one totalling £158k in 2023/24 have been mitigated by the central provision, with a further £132k of the budget provision forecast to be unused and therefore can be released to the General Fund.

Table 6 – Ongoing Covid-19 Impacts in 2023/24

Identified Ongoing Financial Impacts from Covid-19	Original Budget Provision	Forecast variance at Q1	Provision applied at Q1	(Shortfall in original provision) / provision amount unused
	£k	£k	£k	£k
Leisure Centre management fee income	80	+41	41	39
AFM income	210	+117	117	93
Total at Q1	290	158	158	132
Pay as you use car parking income	100			
Car park season tickets income	60			
TOTAL	450			

- 8.14. Table 7 below summarises the impact on the General Fund balance of the position at Quarter One detailed in this report.

Table 7 – General Fund impact

	Working Budget	Projected Outturn	Difference
	£k	£k	£k
Brought Forward balance (1st April 2023)	(11,990)	(11,990)	-
Net Expenditure	18,998	17,879	(1,119)
Funding (Council Tax, Business Rates, NHB, Services Grant)	(17,394)	(17,394)	0
Funding from Reserves (including Business Rate Relief Grant)	(1,144)	(1,144)	0
Carried Forward balance (31st March 2024)	(11,530)	(12,649)	(1,119)

- 8.15. The minimum level of General Fund balance is determined based on known and unknown risks. Known risks are those things that we think could happen and we can forecast both a potential cost if they happen, and percentage likelihood. The notional amount is based on multiplying the cost by the potential likelihood. The notional amount for unknown risks is based on 5% of net expenditure. There is not an actual budget set aside for either of these risk types so, when they occur, they are reflected as budget variances (see table 3). We monitor the level of known risks that actually happen, as it highlights whether there might be further variances. This would be likely if a number of risks come to fruition during the early part of the year. We also use this monitoring to inform the assessment of risks in future years. The notional amount calculated at the start of the year for known risks was £1,215k, and at the end of the first quarter a total of £34k has come to fruition. The identified risk realised in the first quarter relates to:

- Legal team resources. Additional external expertise for assistance with the Leisure contract procurement (as highlighted in table 3 above) - £34k.

Table 8 – Known financial risks

	£'000
Original allowance for known financial risks	1,215
Known financial risks realised in Quarter 1	(34)
Remaining allowance for known financial risks	1,181

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Cabinet has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council. Specifically, 5.6.8 of Cabinet's terms of reference state that it has remit "*to monitor quarterly revenue expenditure and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework*". By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet is able to make informed recommendations on the budget to Council. The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget and to maintain a prudent balance of reserves.
- 9.2. The recommendations contained within this report are to comply with the council's financial regulations with attention drawn to significant budget variances as part of good financial planning to ensure the council remains financially viable over the current fiscal year and into the future. Local authorities are required by law to set a balanced budget for each financial year. During the year, there is an ongoing responsibility to monitor spending and ensure the finances continue to be sound. This means there must be frequent reviews of spending and obligation trends so that timely intervention can be made ensuring the annual budgeting targets are met

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Members have been advised of any variations from the budgets in the body of this report and of any action taken by officers.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. As outlined in the body of the report. The process of quarterly monitoring to Cabinet is a control mechanism to help to mitigate the risk of unplanned overspending of the overall Council budget.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. For any individual new revenue investment proposal of £50k or more, or affecting more than two wards, a brief equality analysis is required to be carried out to demonstrate that the authority has taken full account of any negative, or positive, equalities implications; this will take place following agreement of the investment.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. Although there are no direct human resource implications at this stage, care is taken to ensure that where efficiency proposals or service reviews may affect staff, appropriate communication and consultation is provided in line with HR policy.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1. None.

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CABINET 19 SEPTEMBER 2023
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PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24 (QUARTER 1 UPDATE)

REPORT OF: REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND IT – IAN ALBERT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST, SUSTAINABILITY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents progress on delivering the Council Delivery Plan for 23-24 at the end of Quarter 1, which includes:

- Progress against the completion of Council projects and milestones
- Requests to change milestone dates.
- Commentary on progress made and any new issues, risks, or opportunities.
- The addition of new projects
- The setting of key Council projects

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet notes the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including changes to milestones, performance indicators and risks.
- 2.2. That Cabinet comments on the presentation of the report for future meetings, especially in relation to milestones and project status.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Cabinet with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks or opportunities.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. In developing the CDP, it was agreed that Cabinet would receive quarterly updates. The updates are also provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that they can provide additional oversight and support to Cabinet.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Service Directors and Service Managers have provided updates on progress and will have made Executive Members (and Deputies) aware of progress made.
- 5.2. A draft of the Quarter 1 update was provided to Performance and Risk Management Group (PRMG) in August. The Group has a standing invite to the Executive Member for Finance and IT (has responsibility for performance monitoring), the Deputy Executive Member for Finance and IT, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) and the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR). Other members of O&S and FAR are also encouraged to attend when they are able to. PRMG were asked to comment on the content and format of the CDP Q1 update.
- 5.3. The CDP is reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and they are asked to provide comments and recommendations to Cabinet.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision first notified on the Forward Plan on the 26 May 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The CDP brings together projects, risks and performance indicators together in one document. It was implemented in Spring 2022.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Appendix A provides an update on the progress made in delivering the Council Delivery Plan. Whilst it is labelled as a Quarter 1 update, it generally reflects the latest position at the time that the report was written (mid-August).
- 8.2 Proposed changes to plan milestone dates (23), the addition of new milestones (6) and new performance indicators (4) are highlighted in yellow.
- 8.3 The project completion percentage reflects the number of milestones that have been completed against the number of milestones that have been set. In general, the number of milestones that have been set will cover what is expected to be achieved in the current financial year (up to 31st March), but (for longer projects) will not be all the milestones up to ultimate completion.
- 8.4 The overall completion status of a project is measured against the current target completion date for current milestones. It does not reflect the ultimate completion date,

and it is also updated as there are changes in milestone dates. For example, a project could have had an initial completion date of April 2023. Through changes to milestones that target completion date has now been agreed to be December 2023. The current status would therefore be a green arrow, even though the original target date had been missed. This was raised as something to be considered at PRMG, and it will be considered how to incorporate the original target date to aid transparency, without having to go back through previous reports to see the agreed changes to milestone dates that have taken place.

- 8.5 At the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June, there was a discussion about whether there should be prioritisation within the Council Delivery Plan. This conversation was then continued at the PRMG meeting in August. This was linked to the resourcing risk (see below) and that there had been slippage in a number of milestone dates. Whilst there are reasons for changes in milestone dates and the project is still expected to be achieved, if any projects were a higher priority, then there should be an expectation that milestone dates should not move as much. Also, there are a large number of projects on the plan (with the potential for more to be added) so there should be a consideration of which ones are genuinely a priority, so that resources can be prioritised accordingly. Informal discussions with Cabinet members have started on this, and it is intended that this will be considered and presented alongside the Quarter 2 update (in December/January).
- 8.6 The Council Delivery Plan currently shows all the milestones for all the projects (unless a project has been completed/ removed). This was reasonable last year as it was the first year of the CDP. However, it now means that some projects now have a reasonably long list of completed milestones. Over time this will add to the length of the CDP report and eventually make it completely unwieldy. For current projects it is proposed that all milestones are retained on Pentana (the Council's Risk and Performance system that all Councillors can access), but that these are manually removed from the report after they have been presented as having been completed. This will help the readability of the overall CDP but does cause a minor issue with completion percentages. Currently it is easy to see the link between the completion percentages and the milestones. If there are 10 milestones and 6 have been completed, then it will show as 60% complete. If (for example) the 6 completed milestones are manually removed, then the report will show 4 incomplete milestones, but the completion percentage will still be 60%. This is why Cabinet (and Overview and Scrutiny) are asked to comment on this proposal.
- 8.7 At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June, it was requested that more detail was provided on the Resourcing risk. There has been a slight change to the risk in the CDP, but that has deliberately kept at a summary level. The following paragraphs provides a more detailed update.
- 8.8 The resourcing risk is made up of two parts. The first part is the number of projects in the Council Delivery Plan, and other work that sits outside the Council Delivery Plan. This makes up the demand on staff resources. The second part is the availability of staff to complete that workload, i.e., the supply.

8.9 The factors which affect the demand side are:

- New work/ projects (Member directed)- If Councillors are requesting new work to be completed then the resource implications of that need to be fully considered.
- New work/ projects (Externally created). In general, this will be outside our control and require action to be taken. The main recent example is the response and recovery work relating to the Baldock Industrial Estate fire (note: a project/ risk is being created in relation to this). This can also arise from things like changes in legislation and regulatory requirements (e.g., planning appeals).
- Removal of work/ projects, extending the target dates. This links to paragraph 8.5 above. At the moment this is being done on a reactionary basis. More formal work on prioritisation could help ensure that any reactionary changes are focused on the right work/ projects.

8.10 The factors that affect the supply side are:

- Staff retention- when staff leave it inevitably creates a gap in staff resource available to complete work.
- Staff recruitment- when a vacancy arises, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill posts. This particularly applies to roles such as legal, planning, environmental health and estates.
- Note that the above should be considered in relation to the lead service area, and also any support services that are required to deliver the project.
- The Council has been putting in place measures to make the Council a more attractive place to work, as well as looking at ways of widening our job advertising to attract more applicants to roles.
- During the Covid pandemic response and recovery (as well as in response to the delivery of previous key projects), services have been delivered by staff not taking all their leave and being given flexibility to take it over a longer period. This has resulted in large leave balances, and these need to be brought back to normal levels. But this requires a reduction in current workload to allow that leave to be taken.
- The staffing carry-forward (£300k) from last year has helped to create some additional short-term capacity. However, this does not work in areas where recruitment to roles is not actually possible.
- Agency staff and consultants can be used to fill posts in areas where full-time recruitment is not possible, but this comes at a high cost.
- Agency staff and consultants could (in theory) be used to create additional capacity, but this is unaffordable.

8.11 The intention is that the CDP reports provide an overview, as providing all the details on projects and risks would lead to a report that was too long. Requests can be made (especially by O&S) to look at individual projects in more detail (as per paragraphs 8.9 and 8.10 above). Any such request would be incorporated into the next monitoring report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The constitution determines the role of Cabinet as including: “To take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders and partners in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council. To monitor performance and risk in respect of the delivery of those policies and priorities” (paragraph 5.7.3) .
- 9.2 The constitution determines the role of Overview and Scrutiny as including: “To review performance against the Council’s agreed objectives/ priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/ or service area. To consider risks to the achievement of those objectives/ priorities. To make recommendations to Cabinet” (paragraph 6.2.7 (s)).
- 9.3 There are no specific legal implications arising from the CDP as a whole. However, there may be individual legal implications for some of the projects outlined. Any commissioning of work on new and existing projects will follow the standard legal requirements and those required by the Council’s internal standing orders, contained within the Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Where projects are linked to efficiencies or investments then these are included in the budget proposals and monitored through the quarterly finance reports.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council Delivery Plan aims to support the risk management process by directly linking the risks to projects being undertaken. The aim of these proposals is to strengthen the link between performance and risk and make risks more current. This should provide an improved perspective of the risks that the Council faces.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 Performance reporting provides a means to monitor whether the Council is meeting the stated outcomes of the district priorities, its targets or delivering accessible and appropriated services to the Community to meet different people’s needs.
- 12.3 As projects progress, Equality Implications will be considered, and Equality Impact Assessments conducted where relevant.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There will continue to be a need to align Council and Service objectives with available people resources to be able to achieve them. The Council Delivery Plan will help to make that link clearer, but as referenced above there is a need to prioritise to make that achievable.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. However, a number of the projects to be monitored throughout the year are related to key environmental issues.
- 15.2 As projects progress, Environmental Implications will be considered, and Environmental Impact Assessments conducted where relevant.

16. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Council Delivery Plan 23-24 Q1 monitoring report.
















17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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- 17.6 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Communities Manager. Reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk, ext. 4212

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Council Delivery Plan – Status Key

Status	Description									
Projects										
	The project (and all recorded milestones) has been completed.									
	All ongoing milestones have not reached their due dates (or do not have due dates).									
	There is at least one ongoing milestone that has not been completed by the due date, but the overall project due date has not passed. Proposals to change milestone due dates will be made, which may also lead to a proposed change to the overall project due date.									
	Overall project due date has passed and there is at least one milestone that has not been completed. Proposals to change project due date and milestone due dates will be made.									
<div><div></div>33%</div>	The progress bar is based on the number of completed milestones compared with the total number of milestones e.g., two completed out of a total of six would be 33%. Therefore, 0% reflects that no milestones have been completed yet, rather than there has been no progress at all.									
Risks										
	Assessed as a low risk.									
	Assessed as a medium risk.									
	Assessed as a high risk.									
<div><table><tr><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>5</td><td>8</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>6</td></tr></table></div>		4	7	9	2	5	8	1	3	6
4	7	9								
2	5	8								
1	3	6								
PIs										
	Data value has met or exceeded the target figure.									
	Data value has not achieved the target figure, but it is within the agreed tolerance range.									
	Data value has not achieved the target figure and it is outside the agreed tolerance range.									
	Pentana cannot calculate a status, as officers have not entered a target figure for the period on to the system.									
	Data value has improved compared with the same time last year.									
	Data value has deteriorated compared with the same time last year.									
	Data value has not changed compared with the same time last year.									
	Pentana cannot calculate a direction of travel, as previous data is not available for comparison.									

2023/24 Council Delivery Plan

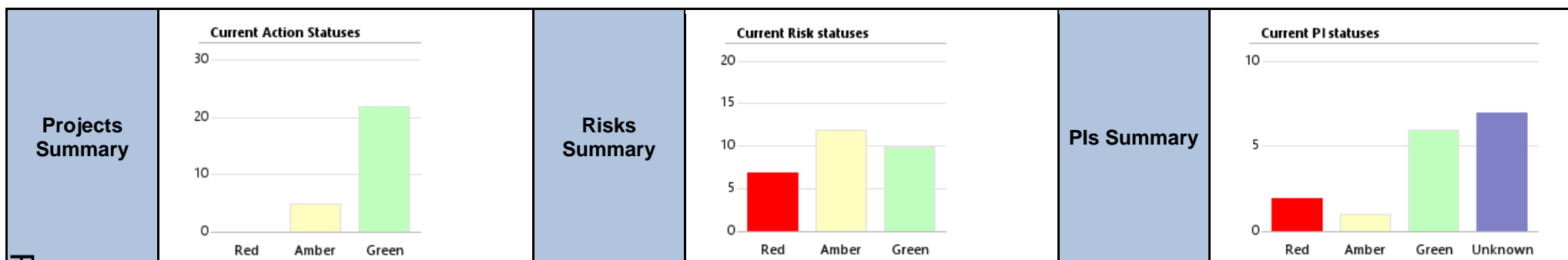
Generated on: 21 August 2023



Project	Status
Churchgate	
New Ways of Delivering Housing on Council Land	
Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks	
Royston Leisure Centre Solar Thermal	
Town Centre Strategies	
Charnwood House	
Create and Communicate a Place Narrative for North Herts	
Cycling Network	
Empty Homes Strategy	
Finalise Pay on Exit Parking Review	
Financial Sustainability/Balancing our Budget	
Health Inequalities	
Leisure Contract Procurement	
Local Authority Housing Fund	
Master Planning	
Museum Storage	
Oughtonhead Common Weir	
Playground Renovation Programme	
Pursue commercial leasing opportunity for Royston Town Hall Annexe	
Shared Prosperity Fund	
Solar PV on Leisure Centres	
Town Centre Recovery	
Waste and Street Cleansing Contract Procurement	
Work with relevant partners to prevent and relieve homelessness whenever possible	
Enterprise Strategy	
Local Plan Delivery and Review	
Waste Depots	

Status Summaries

Generated on: 21 August 2023



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2023/24 Council Delivery Plan

Generated on: 21 August 2023







	Churchgate	Progress	<div><div>66%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024
Project Summary	Identifying, consulting on, and delivering long-term regeneration of the shopping centre and surrounding areas.				
Latest Update	28-Jul-2023 Overview of Phase 1 public consultation findings shared via the Summer 2023 edition of Outlook. Further communication is planned and will continue throughout the project lifecycle. We have progressed the procurement and appointment of a consultant to develop a viable regeneration project and we are just waiting for the contract to be finalised. Work on an in-person hub to provide the local community with an opportunity to engage with us has commenced and we are currently waiting for Estates to confirm that we can go ahead at the preferred location. Work has also commenced on the provision of a digital hub, but the training requirements associated with this have caused a delay. We now anticipate both the in-person and digital hubs being up and running by the end of September 2023. Further milestones to be added once the consultant has been appointed, which will reflect the agreed work programme to drive the project forward. Risk level still assessed as high, although the likelihood score has been reduced to reflect that the project is expected to regenerate the area, although at this early stage we have yet to determine the best way to achieve this.				



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Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note						
Set up project board.			30-Sep-2022	Yes	Completed.						
Produce project plan, including communications plan.			31-Oct-2022	Yes	Project plan in place and in line with NHC's Project Management Framework.						
Report back to Council setting out short, medium and long-term approach with draft project plan.			31-Jan-2023	Yes	Completed.						
Conduct public consultation (Phase 1).			28-Feb-2023	Yes	Phase 1 survey closed 5 February 2023 and data analysed with Zensity.						
Project Board approve specification for consultant appointment.			31-May-2023	Yes	Completed.						
Procure and appoint consultant to develop viable regeneration project, and contract signed.			30-Jun-2023	No	Due date to change to 31 August 2023. Contract currently being finalised.						
Digital hub goes live.			31-Jul-2023	No	Due date to change to 30 September 2023. Work to provide this has commenced.						
Open in-person project hub.			31-Jul-2023	No	Due date to change to 30 September 2023. Awaiting confirmation from Estates that we can go ahead at the preferred location.						
Sharing results, by releasing top level information to the community via Comms.			31-Jul-2023	Yes	Overview of Phase 1 public consultation findings shared via the Summer 2023 edition of Outlook. Further communication will continue throughout the project lifecycle using the various channels defined in the Comms Plan.						
Risks		Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. The regeneration will not meet expectations of stakeholders. 2. Regeneration of the Centre and surrounding area is not cost effective/not affordable. Including impacts of high inflation and likely recession.			9	8	6						



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	New Ways of Delivering Housing on Council Land				Progress	<div>40%</div>		Due Date	31-Mar-2024		
Project Summary	Alternative ways to deliver housing on surplus Council land (other than sale to a developer) to provide a greater financial return to the Council.										
Latest Update	19-Jul-2023 Estates is currently working with the external Chartered Surveyor to refine and verify the draft market research report and a draft report was received at the end of July 2023. The final report is delayed due to Estates having to attend to higher priorities. A review of the final report findings/recommendations is expected to take one month, at which time we will be able to report on the preferred options. Once there is clarity regarding the options available, further milestones will be added to the Council Delivery Plan monitoring report. Risk level still assessed as medium, although this will be re-assessed once we have considered the final report.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Determine a way forward/partnership agreement with current provider.				31-Mar-2022	Yes	Establishing a way forward with the current provider was unsuccessful.					
Start to consider other options for delivery.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Following advice from Procurement, external Chartered Surveyor undertook a market research exercise with a cross-section of the development market regarding options for joint ventures. Draft report received.					
Final market research report received from Chartered Surveyor.				31-May-2023	No	Due date to change from 31 May 2023 to 31 July 2023.					
Review report findings/recommendations.				30-Jun-2023	No	Due date to change from 30 June 2023 to 31 August 2023.					
Dependent on market research findings, develop milestones/timings to report and make a formal decision on the preferred way forward.				31-Jul-2023	No	Due date to change from 31 July 2023 to 30 September 2023.					
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Being able to develop a viable project. 2. Ensuring Contract Procurement Rules are adhered to. 3. Housing development subject to planning. 4. Working with the right supplier(s) for the Council. 5. Lack of demand and absorption rate for tenure and build type.				5	5	5					



	Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks				Progress	<div><div></div></div> 28%	Due Date	31-Mar-2024			
Project Summary	Submit grant application to Office for Zero Emission Vehicles for funding. Further actions dependent on funding awarded.										
Latest Update	24-Jul-2023 Following submission of our grant application, OZEV asked for further clarifications. Working with our partner, we then submitted a revised application to OZEV. We are still awaiting the outcome and have not been told the timescale for a decision. Currently, hope to receive a decision by the end of August 2023. Timescales for further milestones depend on when we find out if our application has been successful. No change to assessed risk level, as we are still in a position similar to the previous update.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Establish detailed costings for grant application.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Detailed costings finalised and application submitted to OZEV by 31 March 2023.					
Submit grant application to OZEV for 60% (originally 75%) of cost, with private partner providing the remaining 40% (originally 25%).				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Submitted to OZEV by 31 March 2023.					
Decision on grant application received.				30-Jun-2023	No	Due date to change to 31 August 2023. We are awaiting a decision on our revised grant application. Hope to hear from OZEV by end of August 2023. Delivery of future project milestones dependent on grant funding being awarded.					
Identify private sector partner to assist with grant application and to provide 40% (originally 25%) of funding not met by grant as well as being responsible for ongoing maintenance and future proofing.				30-Jun-2023	No	Due date to change to 31 August 2023. Private sector partner identified and revised grant application submitted. Contract with partner subject to receiving grant and will be completed once we have a decision from OZEV.					
Complete relevant leases with contractor for the length of the contract.				31-Jul-2023	No	Due date to change to 30 September 2023. Still to be confirmed, as dependent on the OZEV decision date.					
Contractor to commence works and NHC to start promoting project.				01-Aug-2023	No	Due date to change to 1 October 2023. Still to be confirmed, as dependent on the OZEV decision date.					
Installation of all new EV charging points completed.				31-Mar-2024	No						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Not successful in obtaining grant funding. 2. Unable to identify/procure a private sector partner. 3. Unable to agree relevant lease arrangements with contractor.				5	5	1					

	Royston Leisure Centre Solar Thermal					Progress	<div><div>60%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024				
Project Summary	Installation of Solar Thermal technology at Royston Leisure Centre.												
Latest Update	20-Jul-2023 Feasibility report received. Decision on whether to proceed with the installation of Solar Thermal technology at Royston Leisure Centre now expected to be made by December 2023. By this time, we will have progressed work on the Solar PV project (see Council Delivery Plan project 'Solar PV on Leisure Centres') and will have a better understanding of the viability of incorporating both technologies at the same site.												
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note							
Design specification.				31-May-2022	Yes								
Complete procurement and appoint contractor.				16-Dec-2022	Yes	Second procurement exercise closed on 31 January 2023. This was unsuccessful.							
Feasibility report received from consultant.				31-May-2023	Yes	Report received in June 2023.							
Review report findings and decision on project viability.				30-Jun-2023	No	Due date to change from 30 June 2023 to 31 December 2023.							
If project proceeds, further milestones to be developed or incorporated into the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan project "Solar PV on Leisure Centres".				31-Jul-2023	No	Due date to change from 31 July 2023 to 31 December 2023, as further action is dependent on a decision on project viability.							
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
Solar Thermal not viable alongside installation of Solar PV. Tender returns over budget. Delays to procurement/project delivery.					5	5	5						



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	Town Centre Strategies				Progress	<div><div></div>20%</div>	Due Date	30-Jun-2024					
Project Summary	Progress development of overarching Town Centre Strategy and individual Town Centre Strategic Masterplans.												
Latest Update	24-Jul-2023 Resource issues continue to hamper progress, as our recruitment exercises were unsuccessful. Now plan to recruit Project Officer using Public Practice. In view of delays, now anticipate appointing consultant to prepare evidence base for overarching Town Centre Strategy by the end of October 2023. In turn, due dates for subsequent milestones are now expected to be completed later than previously reported. Work with stakeholders to progress options for the Letchworth Town Centre strategic masterplan has commenced. Risk level still assessed as medium, as without approved strategy/masterplans, speculative development could undermine the function of our town centres.												
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note							
Consultants appointed to prepare High Level Town Centre Recovery Action Plans for each town centre.				30-Apr-2022	Yes	Consultants appointed and draft plans have now been received.							
Appoint consultant to prepare evidence base for overarching Town Centre Strategy.				31-Jul-2023	No	Due date to change to 31 October 2023.							
Undertake work to complete evidence base and prepare draft Strategy.				31-Jan-2024	No	Due date to change to 31 March 2024.							
Cabinet report presenting draft Strategy and scoping report to agree overall project and governance arrangements for progressing individual Town Centre strategic masterplans.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to change to 30 June 2024.							
Progress work on Letchworth Town Centre strategic masterplan, confirming/commencing detailed work following presentation of the Cabinet report.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to change to 30 June 2024. Aligns with Cabinet report milestone.							
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Lack of available resource to produce and deliver identified strategies. 2. Lack of strategic direction leads to speculative development that undermines function of town centres.					5	5	1						



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	Charnwood House				Progress	<div><div>60%</div></div>	Due Date	30-Apr-2024			
Project Summary	Leasing the property as a Community Hub.										
Latest Update	19-Jul-2023 Aitchison Raffety was formally instructed on 1 July 2023 to market Charnwood House for leasing out. Estates furnished Aitchison Raffety with draft marketing particulars and draft lease heads of terms. Marketing went live at the end of July 2023. Aitchison Raffety recommend a minimum marketing period of three months so anticipate marketing will complete 31 October 2023. Results of marketing will be reviewed in November 2023. Marketing may be extended dependent on the review. Depending on the range and number of responses, evaluation of the options is expected to take a further four months. A report on the preferred options is now expected to be presented to Cabinet by end of April 2024, prior to finalising arrangements i.e., negotiate Heads of Terms with selected tenant, seek further Cabinet decision, complete lease. Risk level still assessed as medium, although this could decrease, depending on the results of the marketing exercise and the tenant selected.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Market site (informally) for leasing as community hub, on non-committal basis.				29-Jul-2022	Yes	Meeting with interested parties held on 29 July 2022 to galvanise interest.					
Asbestos removed and air testing completed.				12-Oct-2022	Yes	Completed.					
Updated survey and costings for refurbishment works received.				08-Dec-2022	Yes	Completed.					
Options report received.				11-Jan-2023	Yes	Completed.					
Appraise options report and the remedial works/costings highlighted in the updated survey.				23-Feb-2023	Yes	Completed.					
Council decision on project budget.				23-Feb-2023	Yes	Completed.					
Undertake formal marketing exercise.				31-Oct-2023	No	Expected to go live by the end of July 2023 and it will last at least three months.					
Following marketing exercise, evaluate options.				29-Feb-2024	No	Due date to change from 29 February 2024 to 31 March 2024.					
Present report to Cabinet on the preferred options.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to change from 31 March 2024 to 30 April 2024.					
When Cabinet report presented, finalise arrangements i.e., negotiate Heads of Terms with selected tenant, seek further Cabinet decision, complete lease.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to change from 31 March 2024 to 30 April 2024, although actual dates still to be confirmed. Actions likely to be completed in 2024/25 and will be split into individual milestones at the appropriate time.					
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Covenant restriction on use. 2. Statute restriction on use. 3. Viability of Listed Building consent conditions. 4. Demand for community hub. 5. Delays due to Asset of Community Value (ACV) listing.				5	5	3					



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	Create and Communicate a Place Narrative for North Herts					Progress	<div><div>50%</div></div>	Due Date	30-Sep-2023		
Project Summary	To create and communicate a clear and consistent story of our district, which will be incorporated in future Council communications and used to attract funding and visitors to our district through inclusion in our 2023 Enterprise Strategy.										
Latest Update	02-Aug-2023 Cabinet agreed to a September 2023 launch for our North Herts Place Narrative communications. Development of launch plans and related communications is progressing.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Stage One: Develop our Core Place Narrative and rollout plans (February - April 2023).				30-Apr-2023	Yes	This stage involved meetings with district partners and was completed by the end of April 2023.					
Stage Two: Take Core Place Narrative and rollout plans to Leadership, PLB, O&S and Cabinet meetings for feedback/approval (April - June 2023).				27-Jun-2023	Yes	Leadership Team – 24 April 2023 (Completed) PLB – 16 May 2023 (Completed) O&S – 20 June 2023 (Completed) Cabinet – 27 June 2023 (Completed)					
Stage Three: Develop launch plans and related communications (July - August 2023).				31-Aug-2023	No	In progress - Officers agreed a September 2023 launch for our North Herts Place Narrative comms with Cabinet.					
Stage Four: Go live (August 2023).				30-Sep-2023	No						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risk: Other unplanned urgent communication workload/projects take priority. Leading to: - Target project stage dates being missed/need to be moved and our Core Place Narrative going live later than expected.				1	1	1					



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	Cycling Network				Progress	<div><div>60%</div></div>		Due Date	30-Nov-2023		
Project Summary	Working with HCC as they develop a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Use to inform a North Herts cycle strategy.										
Latest Update	24-Jul-2023 Report presented to Cabinet on 27 June 2023. Still anticipate adoption of LCWIP by HCC by end of October 2023. Its adoption will guide and accelerate future investment in transport infrastructure that enables and encourages people to make more trips by active travel, including cycling. Adoption of NHC Sustainability SPD (expected January 2024) will cover active travel and enable the progression of identified cycle schemes, which are likely to be high-cost projects. Following adoption of LCWIP, further milestones will be developed to reflect the activities NHC plan to undertake to enhance the district's cycling network.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Working with HCC on the production of a draft Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - for formal consultation.				26-Sep-2022	Yes	Completed.					
HCC/NHC finalise review of consultation findings.				09-Jun-2023	Yes						
Report to NHC Cabinet for comment and recommendations on the LCWIP.				27-Jun-2023	Yes						
Adoption of LCWIP by HCC Highways Transport Panel/Cabinet.				31-Oct-2023	No						
Further milestones dependent on adoption of LCWIP.				30-Nov-2023	No	Further milestones relating to the development of a NHC Cycle Strategy to be considered/commenced at this time.					
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Resourcing for NHC and HCC. 2. Timing and adoption of LCWIP by HCC Transport Panel/Cabinet. 3. Limits to what can be achieved in the short-term.				3	2	1					

	Empty Homes Strategy				Progress	<div><div>25%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Dec-2023			
Project Summary	Develop and start to implement a strategy to reduce numbers of empty homes.										
Latest Update	06-Jul-2023 Empty Homes Strategy to be updated to consider latest housing requirements and currently plan to submit it to Cabinet in September 2023. Role requirements and criteria for the new Housing Improvement Officer role approved by Full Council on 23 February 2023 to be developed with the intention of advertising and filling the post by December 2023. Current focus of the CDP remains on the development and approval of a strategic approach to bringing empty properties back into use. Once Strategy is adopted, this will be reviewed and updated to reflect key implementation stages and risks to the successful achievement of stated objectives. Risks relating to Strategy adoption continue to be assessed as low, although the implementation risk level will be dependent on the chosen strategic approach.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Development of Strategy and staff resources.				23-Feb-2023	Yes	Draft Strategy produced, but this still needs to be approved. Staff resource to enable delivery of the final Strategy approved by Full Council on 23 February 2023 (as part of a new Housing Improvement Officer role).					
Adoption of Strategy by Cabinet.				19-Sep-2023	No						
Commence implementation of adopted Strategy, including securing the budget required to deliver the preferred approach.				20-Sep-2023	No	Milestone for Pentana purposes, with the date simply reflecting that implementation of the Strategy will commence following its adoption by Cabinet.					
New Milestone - Recruit to new Housing Improvement Officer role, created to help deliver approved Strategy.				31-Dec-2023	No						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Development of Strategy Risks: - Staff shortages/competing priorities limit progress with developing Strategy. - Potential political/reputational risk associated with not having an agreed strategic approach in place. - Resource implications/limitations relating to the different options available. Implementation of Adopted Strategy Risks (dependent on the agreed approach): - Securing the resources required to deliver the Strategy and achieve objectives. - Limited number of empty homes that we can actually take forward under the Strategy. - Cost to Council of maintaining empty properties that we acquire. - Political/reputational risk associated with a perceived lack of progress and/or cost/benefit analysis of our approach.				4	2	1					

	Finalise Pay on Exit Parking Review				Progress	<div>37%</div>		Due Date	31-Mar-2024			
Project Summary	Procure suppliers and start replacing all existing parking machines in early 2024.											
Latest Update	24-Jul-2023 Project to replace all existing parking machines progressing and we will now be appointing contractors via Direct Award. Still anticipate trials/works commencing in January 2024, with all works to be completed by 31 March 2025 using allocated Capital budget. Prior to commencement, we will seek Cabinet approval of revised tariffs and post-payment options, complete procurement of suppliers, and update TROs. Risk level still assessed as low, although there is uncertainty about public reaction to the changes and any associated disruption.											
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note							
Consultants appointed to produce Feasibility Study to be reported to Exec Member & Deputy.			31-Jul-2022	Yes								
Report to PLB to get a steer on proceeding to a pay on exit trial.			01-Nov-2022	Yes	PLB agreed that officers should proceed with the necessary work in progressing a trial in two of the Council's car parks and report back within this financial year.							
The Cabinet report determines further milestones.			31-Mar-2023	Yes	Report to Cabinet not required. Following PLB decision in February 2023 to progress revised project and agreement to bring forward related Capital budget to 2023/24, project to replace all existing parking machines is now underway.							
Report presented to Cabinet to agree revised tariffs and post-payment options.			30-Sep-2023	No								
Procure supplier by Direct Award to replace existing parking machines.			30-Nov-2023	No								
Procure supplier to replace tariff boards.			30-Nov-2023	No								
Update TROs.			31-Dec-2023	No								
Contractor to commence works (works to be undertaken during 2023/24 and 2024/25).			31-Jan-2024	No								
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Budget implications of selected scheme. 2. Inability to procure suppliers within approved budget. 3. Negative public reaction to changes and disruption during works. 4. Loss of income during associated works.				1	1	1						

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	Health Inequalities				Progress	<div><div>57%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024			
Project Summary	Deliver projects to address health inequalities using approved funding for 2023/24. Assess options for 2024/25 and beyond when HCC confirm future funding arrangements.										
Latest Update	07-Jul-2023 The three projects funded by HCC, and referenced in the milestones, are ongoing. Funding is in place to the end of March 2024. We anticipate HCC confirming future funding arrangements in November 2023. North Herts Healthy Hub continues to provide support services to residents. Future HCC funding for this service is also expected to be confirmed in November 2023. Whilst the risk level associated with delivering projects/services throughout 2023/24 is low, there is less certainty relating to the provision of support to residents in future years due to the potential for funding levels to reduce and sufficient NHC budget not being available.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Secure Tranche 1 funding (Health and Wellbeing led projects).				31-May-2022	Yes	Completed.					
Develop an action plan for Tranche 1 (based on Public Health Strategy, Health Inequalities Framework and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).				31-Dec-2022	Yes	Health inequalities identified and agreed. Developed associated intervention plan. HCC approved plan on 14 December 2022.					
Deliver Tranche 1 projects (as planned for 2022/23).				31-Mar-2023	Yes	The three projects included in the intervention plan all commenced by 31 March 2023, meeting funding requirements. Delivery to continue throughout 2023/24.					
Royston Men's Club - June 2023 course.				30-Jun-2023	Yes						
Royston Men's Club - September 2023 course.				30-Sep-2023	No						
Letchworth Horticultural Therapy.				31-Mar-2024	No	Budget of £5K to deliver individual placements of 12/24 weeks during 2023/24.					
Royston Emotional Wellbeing project.				31-Mar-2024	No	Two groups meeting every week throughout 2023/24.					
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks - Inability to achieve funding for future years. - Delays in achieving funding. - Restrictive funding terms. - Staff shortages/competing priorities. Leading to: - Cessation of current projects/services. - Delays in achieving outcomes. - Limited scope of projects. - Limited progress with pursuing funding opportunities/delivering projects.				7	3	3					



	Leisure Contract Procurement				Progress	<div><div>46%</div></div>		Due Date	01-Apr-2024			
Project Summary	Procurement of leisure management contracts. Current contracts end on 31 March 2024. Includes development of strategies and procurement processes.											
Latest Update	21-Aug-2023 Procurement progressing in line with project plan. Closing date for initial tender submissions from bidders was 17 August 2023. We will now commence the evaluation stage. Risk level still assessed as medium, as currently, there remains uncertainty regarding the value of bids and our ability to mobilise the new contract by April 2024.											
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note							
Develop pre-procurement strategy.			20-Mar-2023	Yes								
Issue contract notice.			24-Apr-2023	Yes								
Market Interest Day.			03-May-2023	Yes								
Selected candidates invited to submit Initial Tender.			12-Jun-2023	Yes								
Develop Active North Herts Strategy and present to Cabinet for adoption.			27-Jun-2023	Yes	Strategy adopted by Cabinet on 27 June 2023.							
Closing date for Initial Tender submissions.			17-Aug-2023	Yes								
Deadline for revised tender submissions (if required).			17-Nov-2023	No								
Evaluation of tenders.			31-Dec-2023	No								
Present report to Council (due date to be confirmed).			11-Jan-2024	No								
Notification of outcome to bidders.			15-Jan-2024	No								
Finalise Contract Award.			31-Jan-2024	No								
Mobilisation period - 1 February 2024 to 31 March 2024.			31-Mar-2024	No								
Start of new contract.			01-Apr-2024	No								
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks: - In-house staff capacity to deliver procurement on time.				5	5	3						

- Limited flexibility in project plan leaves little room for manoeuvre if key milestone dates are not met.
- Poor quality specification will impact contract delivery.
- Lack of responses to tender.
- Low value bids from respondents.
- Awarding contract to new supplier could lead to mobilisation/operational issues at handover.



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	Local Authority Housing Fund				Progress	<div><div></div>28%</div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024			
Project Summary	Delivery of additional housing through Registered Providers.										
Latest Update	02-Aug-2023 The proposal for settle to deliver one larger home (bridging element) and two smaller homes (main element) via the first round of LAHF was accepted by the DLUHC. Following Cabinet on 27 June 2023, we submitted our validation form for round two of the scheme and are currently waiting for DLUHC to confirm our allocation. Risk level assessed as low.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Report to Cabinet on Round Two allocation.				27-Jun-2023	Yes						
Submission of Round Two validation form to Government.				05-Jul-2023	Yes						
Agree Memorandum of Understanding with Registered Provider(s) to deliver housing via Round Two allocated funding.				31-Aug-2023	No	Will be completed once allocation confirmed by DLUHC.					
Agree Memorandum of Understanding with settle relating to Round One allocated funding.				31-Aug-2023	No						
Assess Expressions of Interest from Registered Providers relating to Round Two allocation and select preferred partner(s).				31-Aug-2023	No	Will be completed once allocation confirmed by DLUHC.					
Delivery of housing by settle via Round One allocated funding.				31-Dec-2023	No						
Delivery of housing by Registered Provider(s) via Round Two allocated funding.				31-Mar-2024	No						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
<div>Risks: - Reputational risk of not being able to use funding made available by Government, as it is not enough to make delivery viable. - Terms of the funding are not flexible enough to allow the partial delivery against our allocation. - Uncertainty relating to grant conditions leads to an inability to recover all expected costs. - Low risk associated with signing expression of interest or subsequent Memorandum of Understanding, as the grant allows withdrawal at any time.</div>			<div></div>	8	2	1	Local Authority Housing Fund - Number of main element (smaller) homes delivered via Round One allocation	<div></div>	<div></div>	To be reported at year-end	2
							Local Authority Housing Fund - Number of bridging element (larger) homes delivered via Round One allocation	<div></div>	<div></div>	To be reported at year-end	1

	Master Planning				Progress	<div><div>33%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024			
Project Summary	Secure funding for Master Plans. Develop Master Plans and seek adoption. Focus is on 6 Strategic sites (approximately 8,500 homes in total) that account for the majority of homes, although there are 12 other sites (approximately 2,500 additional homes) presently captured by masterplan policy requirements.										
Latest Update	11-Jul-2023 Progress remains ongoing on these strategic site projects. The prospective developer for the NS1 site undertook public consultation on the draft masterplan for their site in July 2023. Design Review Panels are to be held for the emerging proposals for the Baldock sites and East of Luton in July 2023. A decision on the outline planning application for Highover Farm, Hitchin was deferred at the request of the Planning Control Committee to allow further work to be undertaken on transport matters, and a further milestone has been added to reflect this. A new milestone has been added reflecting a revised and updated timetable for the preparation of the East of Luton masterplan.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Liaise with developers and identify the Council's expectations with regard master planning.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Masterplan briefs have been issued for five of the six sites. For the sixth site (Highover Farm), a masterplan has been prepared as part of an existing outline planning application lodged with the Council which has been informed by Council officer feedback.					
Secure funding for master planning through the development of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) to seek to cover NHC and HCC costs as far as is practicable.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	PPAs have been agreed for five of the six sites that are preparing masterplans. For the sixth site (Highover Farm), a masterplan has been prepared as part of an existing outline application lodged with the Council.					
Consideration of Highover Farm masterplan by Planning Committee (18/01154/OP, Local Plan Policy SP17).				30-Jun-2023	Yes	Application presented to Planning Control Committee on 6 July 2023. Decision deferred for further work to be undertaken on transport assessment and mitigation.					
Approval of pre-application Strategic Masterplan for GA2 North-east of Great Ashby (Local Plan Policy SP18).				31-Dec-2023	No						
Approval of pre-application Strategic Masterplan for NS1 North of Stevenage (Local Plan Policy SP16).				31-Dec-2023	No						
New milestone - Further consideration of Highover Farm masterplan by Planning Committee (18/01154/OP, Local Plan Policy SP17).				31-Dec-2023	No	Application to be re-presented at a date to be determined following completion of additional work on transport assessment and mitigation.					
Approval of pre-application Strategic Masterplan for Baldock sites (Local Plan Policies SP14, BA2, BA3 & BA10).				31-Mar-2024	No						
Approval of pre-application Strategic Masterplan for LG1 North of Letchworth (Local Plan Policy SP15).				31-Mar-2024	No						
New milestone - Approval of Strategic Masterplan for EL123 East of Luton (Local Plan Policy SP19).				31-Mar-2024	No						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Risk of poor scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to local character and context. 2. Risk that strategic sites do not maximise contribution to corporate objectives and priorities of climate change, environment, economy and place. 3. Risk of delay to delivery of strategic sites if masterplan process is delayed or stalled or provides insufficient information to guide subsequent planning applications. 4. Failure to secure funding to resource the process.				5	5	3					



5. Reduction in pre-application income and delay to income from planning applications. 6. Failure to recruit sufficiently experienced officers. 7. Risk of adverse appeal findings on other/non-Local Plan sites if delivery is delayed or stalled.									
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	Museum Storage				Progress	<div><div>57%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024				
Project Summary	Assess feasibility of constructing a new fit-for-purpose museum storage facility and including a commercial storage facility as part of the project. Decide the preferred way forward and if required, proceed to the next project phase.											
Latest Update	21-Jul-2023 Report on options for including a commercial storage facility as part of any re-development received. Reviewed findings of both the museum storage feasibility report and commercial report to assess options and viability. Now anticipate presenting a report to Cabinet on 19 September 2023 seeking a decision on the preferred way forward and possible changes to current Capital budget allocation. The existing Bury Mead site has not been cleared. We are considering the best way to deal with currently stored items should we proceed with the preferred option, so that there are no unnecessary delays following the Cabinet decision. Until the Cabinet decision, there remains uncertainty regarding if/how the project proceeds, and the risk of damage to items stored at the current facility remains, so the risk level is still assessed as medium.											
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note						
Appoint contractor to conduct an initial feasibility report on the project.				28-Feb-2023	Yes							
Receive initial feasibility report.				18-Apr-2023	Yes							
Receive report on options for including a commercial storage facility as part of the re-development.				19-May-2023	Yes							
Review findings of feasibility/commercial reports, including assessing finance options with Accounts.				30-Jun-2023	Yes							
Consider the best way to deal with currently stored items should the project progress.				19-Sep-2023	No	Existing site not cleared. The need to do this will depend on the Cabinet decision. Therefore due date aligns with the Cabinet date, as this will need to have been considered by then to avoid unnecessary delays should we proceed with the preferred option.						
Report presented to Leadership Team, PLB and Cabinet seeking a decision on the preferred way forward.				19-Sep-2023	No	Now anticipate presenting a report to Cabinet on 19 September 2023.						
Develop further milestones to reflect Cabinet decision e.g., appoint Project Manager/Quantity Surveyor, finalise Business Case and detailed specifications.				30-Sep-2023	No							
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Funding the project. 2. Unforeseen issues with the development. 3. Lower utilisation of the commercial storage opportunity than expected. 4. Until the project is completed, risk of damage to items stored at the current facility (mainly reputational, but potentially financial).				5	5	3						

	Oughtonhead Common Weir				Progress	<div><div>57%</div></div>	Due Date	30-Sep-2024				
Project Summary	Replace the collapsed weir.											
Latest Update	26-Jul-2023 We did not receive any responses to the closed tender process relating to detailed design work. We have now moved to an open tender process. The deadline for responses is early September 2023 and we anticipate appointing the preferred supplier by the end of September 2023, although this is dependent on a successful tender process. It is uncertain if works will be completed by September 2024, although this will become clearer once we have received the tender responses. Prior to the replacement of the partially collapsed weir, any further deterioration is unlikely to result in a significant impact. Risk level still assessed as low.											
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note						
Options appraisal completed.				31-Dec-2022	Yes							
Capital budget approved (£400K) to implement preferred option.				31-Mar-2023	Yes							
Commence contract with CMS to manage delivery of the project.				01-Apr-2023	Yes							
CMS to confirm delivery plan for the development of detailed specification and completion of works phases.				31-May-2023	Yes							
Return of tenders for the development of the detailed design and specification for the preferred option.				11-Sep-2023	No	No responses to closed tender process. Now commenced an open tender process.						
Evaluation of tenders for the development of the detailed design and specification for the preferred option, and appointment of supplier.				30-Sep-2023	No							
Produce further milestones following the outcome of the tender process for the development of the detailed design and specification for the preferred option.				31-Oct-2023	No	Initial expectation is to produce a tender with a detailed design and tender sometime in early 2024. Works will hopefully commence in late spring/early summer 2024 when water levels are low.						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
<p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- External funding from HCC, EA and residents is not available.- Limited availability of consultants to undertake the detailed designs required for this project.- Existing situation deteriorates quickly prior to any works being undertaken. <p>Leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Full allocated Capital budget being used.- Planned timeline for delivery not being achieved.- Further urgent temporary solutions being required to manage an immediate changing situation.				4	2	1						





	Playground Renovation Programme				Progress	<div><div>33%</div></div>		Due Date	31-Mar-2024	
Project Summary	Progress playground renovation projects, as per the Greenspace Strategy. Two identified projects for 2023/24 (budget £180K).									
Latest Update	26-Jul-2023 Groundwork progressing the two projects, although both are still in the early stages. Still anticipate completing works in line with the milestone due dates. Risk level continues to be assessed as low.									
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note					
2023/24 work programme received from Groundwork.			31-Mar-2023	Yes						
Complete replacement of one piece of equipment and associated surfacing at Serby Avenue Recreation Ground.			31-Dec-2023	No	Timeline from the March 2023 programme - June to December 2023.					
Complete renovation of the playground at Bancroft Recreation Ground.			31-Mar-2024	No	Timeline from the March 2023 programme - April 2023 to March 2024.					
Risks		Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks: Budget insufficient to deliver project following appropriate public consultation. Supply issues linked to materials/equipment. Leading to: Planned playground renovations being revised/delayed.			3	1	1					



Project 275



	Pursue commercial leasing opportunity for Royston Town Hall Annexe				Progress	<div>40%</div>	Due Date	30-Jun-2024			
Project Summary	In this year, to progress negotiations with HCC regarding the acquisition of vehicular access rights over their land and to maintain ongoing dialogue with interested party whilst seeking to acquire access rights.										
Latest Update	19-Jul-2023 Despite numerous attempts to engage with HCC regarding the acquisition of rights over their land from the public highway, they have so far not responded to our requests. Without acquiring these vehicular access rights, the project cannot move forward in any meaningful way. The current expectation is that it could take a further 12 months to commence negotiations and if successful, to formalise arrangements. NHC has attempted to maintain communication with the interested party during the first half of 2023, but the speed and regularity of replies have significantly waned compared to 2022, suggesting an increased risk that they may withdraw their interest if resolution of the rights issue is continually delayed. Risk level still assessed as medium, as progress is not completely in our control and there remains a possibility that the current project does not proceed.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
Exploring options following unsolicited solid interest in site.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Initial discussions held with interested party regarding formalising use of NHC's land. This included the drafting of lease heads of terms. Not able to proceed in any meaningful way without acquiring vehicular access rights to our site.					
Ascertain, acquire, and address rights and restrictions on the site.				31-May-2023	Yes	No access rights to serve NHC's site are documented. So far, HCC have been unwilling to engage with us regarding acquiring rights. The proposal is to now monitor this via two new milestones. No restrictions on title apparent from investigation. Property included in the project is not Listed, although it is in a Conservation Area. This needs to be factored into the design of any scheme to repurpose the site but for now, there is no further action to take.					
Commencement of negotiations with HCC regarding the acquisition of vehicular access rights over their land from the public highway.				30-Sep-2023	No	Due date to change from 30 September 2023 to 15 December 2023.					
Completion of negotiations with HCC regarding the acquisition of vehicular access rights over their land and arrangements formalised.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to change from 31 March 2024 to 30 June 2024.					
Maintain ongoing dialogue with interested party whilst seeking to acquire access rights from HCC.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to change from 31 March 2024 to 30 June 2024.					
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Lack of engagement from HCC restricts our ability to acquire access rights. 2. Cost and time in acquiring rights or addressing restrictions are prohibitive. 3. Planning permission refused or subject to unviable conditions. 4. Desire to retain partial community use impinges on viability. 5. Build cost inflation impinges on viability.				5	5	3					

	Shared Prosperity Fund				Progress	<div><div>66%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024				
Project Summary	Deliver projects to support the aims of the Shared Prosperity Fund, as agreed with Government.											
Latest Update	21-Aug-2023 Allocated 2022/23 Shared Prosperity Fund (Town Centre Tranche) funding to enable improvements to town centres and high streets. Royston Outdoor Gym opened 17 August 2023. Outdoor fitness classes had already previously commenced, with more to be delivered following the opening of the Royston Outdoor Gym.											
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note						
Submit Investment Plan.				28-Jul-2022	Yes	Completed.						
Work with Government on approval of Investment Plan.				31-Dec-2022	Yes	Completed.						
Deliver projects: Continue community wealth fund.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Partly completed in 2022/23. Some elements rolled forward to 2023/24 and milestone now replaced with new milestones for 2023/24.						
Deliver projects: Recruit sports development officer. Deliver outdoor fitness classes and first set of new outdoor exercise equipment.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Partly completed in 2022/23. Some elements rolled forward to 2023/24 and milestone now replaced with new milestones for 2023/24.						
Deliver projects: Town Centre regeneration plans and initial activities.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Partly completed in 2022/23. Some elements rolled forward to 2023/24 and milestone now replaced with new milestones for 2023/24.						
New Milestone - Allocate 2022/23 Shared Prosperity Fund (Town Centre Tranche) funding to enable improvements to town centres and high streets.				29-Jun-2023	Yes	Completed.						
Installation of outdoor fitness equipment in Royston.				31-Aug-2023	Yes	Completion date was 12 August 2023 with an official opening date of 17 August 2023.						
Recruit fitness project manager, and commence fitness classes based on GP referrals.				31-Aug-2023	Yes	Recruited Active Communities Officer (started 1 June) and Active Communities Assistant (started 1 August) who sit contractor side. Rebranded exercise referral scheme launched. Outdoor fitness classes have commenced. The focus will then be on outdoor fitness classes at the Royston Outdoor Gym once this has been opened.						
Approve BIDs (and other town centre stakeholder groups) programmes for use of town centre improvement funding.				31-Mar-2024	No							
Installation of outdoor fitness equipment in Hitchin.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to be confirmed. Still in the planning stages. Groundworks (who are leading the project) due to send project plan for the works shortly. Expect to complete works this financial year.						
Installation of outdoor fitness equipment in Letchworth.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date to be confirmed. Still in the planning stages. Groundworks (who are leading the project) due to send project plan for the works shortly. Expect to complete works this financial year.						
Provide 2023/24 allocation of funding for town centre improvements.				31-Mar-2024	No							
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. Lack of general resources to deliver these projects as they are on top of core Council activities.				5	5	3						





2. Failure to spend the money by the end of the grant period. 3. Lack of expertise in providing the required returns to Government on use of the grant. 4. Long lead times for capital elements means that items are unavailable until beyond the end of the funding period.									
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	Solar PV on Leisure Centres				Progress	<div><div></div>20%</div>		Due Date	31-Mar-2024		
Project Summary	Appoint specialist to complete design specification, manage procurement of contractor and oversee subsequent installation of solar PV at the three main leisure facilities.										
Latest Update	26-Jul-2023 Installation of solar thermal technology at RLC will not be incorporated into this project. Feasibility study completed. Currently exploring options to appoint a specialist to complete the design specification, manage the procurement of the contractor and oversee completion of installation works. We anticipate appointing the specialist by the end of September 2023 and details of further milestones/due dates will be confirmed after the appointment. At this early stage, there remains uncertainty about progressing the project and how long it might take to complete, so the risk level is assessed as medium.										
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note					
1. Feasibility study.				31-May-2023	Yes	Completed.					
2. Appoint specialist to complete design specification and manage procurement of contractor and subsequent installation.				29-Sep-2023	No						
3. Design specification completed.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date will be confirmed following appointment of specialist.					
4. Procurement of contractor to undertake installation works.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date will be confirmed following appointment of specialist.					
5. Complete installation of Solar PV.				31-Mar-2024	No	Due date will be confirmed following appointment of specialist.					
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks: - Design specification identifies significant issues. - Tender returns over budget. - Delays to project plan.				5	5	3	Units of electricity generated by Solar PV on leisure centres			Data will commence once project completed	

	Town Centre Recovery				Progress	<div><div>83%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024				
Project Summary	Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders in Hitchin and Royston town centres to be made permanent. Facilitate work with key stakeholders to develop and implement formal recovery/improvement programmes for each town utilising available Shared Prosperity Fund funding.											
Latest Update	31-Jul-2023 Based on the studies and evidence base of need developed under the Welcome Back Fund, 2022/23 Shared Prosperity Fund (Town Centre Tranche) funding has now been allocated, enabling the towns to deliver the initial recovery projects they said they would. We are also enabling towns to develop detailed programmes for projects over the next couple of years. Although further Shared Prosperity Fund funding will be available to help deliver proposed projects, towns should also be exploring options for other public/private funding sources. In addition, Save the High Streets (an organisation contracted by Herts Growth Board) is progressing a project to look at the feasibility and set up of a Trade Association of Town Centre Businesses in Baldock.											
Milestone				Due Date	Complete	Note						
Completion of Welcome Back Fund town centre recovery plans for the four towns.				31-Mar-2023	Yes	Plans finalised and signed-off by the Executive Members for Enterprise and Planning and posted on website.						
Following on from Welcome Back Fund work, People & Places re-engaged to work with key stakeholders to facilitate development of detailed town centre programmes.				30-Apr-2023	Yes							
New Milestone - Allocate 2022/23 Shared Prosperity Fund (Town Centre Tranche) funding to enable improvements to town centres and high streets.				29-Jun-2023	Yes							
Performance Indicators	Development of permit scheme for experimental traffic orders in Hitchin Town Centre, sub-delegate to appropriate body, enforcement to be with NHC.			31-Jul-2023	Yes	Permanent with effect from 17 August 2023: The Hertfordshire (Hitchin Town Centre) (Restricted Parking Zone) Order 2023 The Hertfordshire (High Street, Market Place and Churchyard, Hitchin) (Pedestrian Zone) Order 2023						
	Advice with HCC and other key stakeholders with regard the experimental traffic orders for Hitchin and Royston town centres.			31-Jul-2023	Yes	Permanent with effect from 18 August 2023: The Hertfordshire (Royston Town Centre) (Restricted Parking Zone) Order 2023						
	Detailed town centre programmes produced by each of the four towns and received by NHC.			31-Mar-2024	No							
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators		Status	Trend	Value	Target
- Limited budget available via the Shared Prosperity Fund. - Town Centre Programmes for each town not yet in place. - Reputational damage if improvements/initiatives are not progressed or delayed.				3	2	1						



	Waste and Street Cleansing Contract Procurement				Progress	<div><div>14%</div></div>	Due Date	01-Apr-2024			
Project Summary	Procurement of the Waste and Street Cleansing contract.										
Latest Update	04-Aug-2023 Currently on target to meet the specified milestones. Three bidders taken forward through the first stage of dialogue. Evaluation of detailed solutions is underway. Key risks remain with staff capacity and Letchworth depot not yet being secured for 2025. Lease on Buntingford Depot has also not been secured past 2028. Government still hasn't released updates following the consultation on consistency of collections and therefore this risk also remains. Risk of contract going over budget is still high, due to historic issues such as Covid and Brexit previously adversely affecting contractors negatively.										
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note						
Evaluation of SQ and issue of decision letters to applicants.			31-May-2023	Yes	Invitations to participate sent.						
Invitation to submit detailed solutions, evaluation of submissions, and issue of letters to successful bidders.			05-Oct-2023	No	On target – evaluation of detailed solutions underway.						
Invitation to submit final tenders and receipt of ISFT responses.			18-Jan-2024	No							
Evaluation of final tenders and production of Evaluation Report.			29-Feb-2024	No							
Project Board sign off of Evaluation Report and award recommendation.			07-Mar-2024	No							
Executive and Cabinet approval.			19-Mar-2024	No							
Contract award.			01-Apr-2024	No							
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks: - Unable to secure interested bidders (although this risk is unlikely to materialise). - Capacity of key staff. - Depots not fit for purpose/available. - Governments Resources & Waste Strategy differs from specification (outcomes of new Strategy not yet finalised). - Costs are over budget.				9	9	6					



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	Work with relevant partners to prevent and relieve homelessness whenever possible				Progress	<div><div>16%</div></div>	Due Date	31-Mar-2024			
Project Summary	Work with relevant partners to prevent homelessness at the earliest stage and develop additional accommodation options that help to relieve homelessness whenever possible.										
Latest Update	02-Aug-2023 Beam private rented access/employment scheme launched in May 2023. Currently plan to complete the other recorded milestones in line with the due dates specified. The risk level associated with increased levels of homelessness continues to be assessed as high.										
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note						
Launch Beam private rented access/employment scheme.			31-May-2023	Yes	On 31 January 2023, Cabinet approved the allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding of £80k for the Beam service to deliver 40 lettings.						
Develop Single Homeless Pathway Plan.			31-Aug-2023	No	This project identifies the keys actions required to stabilise and supplement the accommodation and support services for single homeless people.						
Develop temporary accommodation forecasting model.			30-Sep-2023	No	Develop temporary accommodation forecasting model to help manage demand from homeless households in conjunction with Herts CC.						
Develop funding bid for DLUHC's Supported Housing Accommodation Programme (SHAP).			10-Nov-2023	No	DLUHC has invited the Council to bid under its SHAP. Options being developed with partners, including Herts CC, DLUHC, Homes England and accommodation/support providers.						
Develop and adopt new five-year Housing Strategy.			31-Mar-2024	No	Housing Strategy to include Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, as well as the Tenancy Strategy. Action also identified in April 2023 through Temporary Accommodation audit.						
Update Common Housing Allocation Scheme.			31-Mar-2024	No	The allocation scheme review will identify required amendments.						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
1. An excessive demand from the public for housing services. 2. A lack of alternative housing options. 3. An increase in the levels of homelessness. 4. An increased use of hotel accommodation for homeless households. 5. Major difficulties for some members of the public to access the private rented sector. 6. High levels of support are required for some clients/families.				8	8	5	Number of households living in temporary accommodation			96	N/A Data Only


	Enterprise Strategy				Progress	<div>0%</div>		Due Date	16-Jan-2024		
Project Summary	Development and approval of an Enterprise Strategy, incorporating Commercial, Economic Development and Tourism.										
Latest Update	27-Jul-2023 Due to the Enterprise Team having to prioritise other actions, we now expect to take the Enterprise Strategy to Cabinet for adoption in January 2024. A first draft of the Strategy will be produced in October 2023 and Overview & Scrutiny Committee have been advised of this. Officers continue to provide monthly updates to the Executive Member. This project continues to be assessed as low risk.										
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note						
Detailed Strategy scope agreed by Exec Members.			30-Sep-2023	No							
First draft prepared for comment – Leadership Team/Exec Members.			31-Oct-2023	No							
Present Strategy to Leadership Team/PLB.			30-Nov-2023	No							
Present Strategy to Cabinet for adoption.			16-Jan-2024	No							
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks: - Delay in procuring consultants, if required. - Shortage of resource and staff capacity within the Enterprise team. Leading to: - A delay in developing/approving the Strategy and associated resourcing.				2	2	1					


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
	Local Plan Delivery and Review				Progress	<div>0%</div>		Due Date	31-Mar-2024		
Project Summary	To undertake and complete various projects relating to the implementation of the Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022) and to progress work associated with the early review required by Policy IMR2 of the Plan.										
Latest Update	21-Aug-2023 New project includes milestones to monitor progress on subsidiary documents associated with the Local Plan and that are required to ensure successful implementation and co-ordination with Council priorities relating to the declared Climate Change Emergency and new statutory obligations relating to Biodiversity Net Gain. As the new Service Director - Housing and Environmental Health has started on an 18-month secondment, the Service Director – Regulatory will now be focussing on the strategic planning issues we face and successful implementation of the Local Plan.										
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note						
Approval of draft Sustainability SPD for consultation.			30-Sep-2023	No							
Approval of draft Biodiversity SPD for consultation.			31-Dec-2023	No							
Publication of initial recommendations in relation to the review of the Local Plan as required by Policy IMR2.			31-Dec-2023	No							
Adoption of Sustainability SPD.			31-Jan-2024	No							
Approval of draft Design Guide SPD for consultation.			31-Jan-2024	No							
Adoption of Biodiversity SPD.			31-Mar-2024	No							
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Risks: - Inadequate guidance leads to scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to, or contribute towards, corporate objectives and priorities of climate change, environment, economy and place. - Poor scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to local character and context. - Failure to recruit sufficiently experienced officers to implement required programme of work. - Failure to secure funding to resource the process. - Adverse appeal findings on other/non-Local Plan sites if progress on the Local Plan Review is delayed or stalled. - Government intervention if inadequate progress is made upon Local Plan Review.				5	5	3					

	Waste Depots				Progress	<div>0%</div>	Due Date	01-May-2025			
Project Summary	Securing fit for purpose depot solutions for the future of waste and street cleansing services.										
Latest Update	Awaiting confirmation of project milestones.										
Milestone			Due Date	Complete	Note						
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score	Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
<div>Risks:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Existing depot not fit for purpose.- Unable to secure existing depots in short/medium-term.- Funding not available for EV charging.- Fuel tank not fit for purpose/available for HVO.- Planning permission refused for Buntingford depot, shared space impacts leading to depot not being fit for purpose.- EA change permitting requirements making Buntingford not fit for purpose.- Capital works money not available.- Business case and planning permission not approved for new depot.</div>			<div></div>	9	9	5					

Risks and PIs Not Linked to Specific Projects

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Vital additional actions require resources (e.g., staff and financial) to be redirected to enable them to be provided, which affects the delivery of other projects within the Council Delivery Plan. The cost-of-living crisis is leading to Government providing targeted support to individuals/households, some of which requires our support to administer. The fire in Baldock requires us to take a lead on recovery. The shortage of staff and other resources may affect our ability to respond, even if money is available. Significant difficulties in being able to recruit to roles in some key areas.		8	9	2

<p>Risk: Prolonged widespread disruption to/failure of IT infrastructure/systems.</p> <p>Possible causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliberate and unauthorised breaches of security e.g., ransomware, denial of service. - Unintentional/accidental breaches of security e.g., action of individual staff/Members. - Weakness/failure of essential IT infrastructure e.g., loss of internet access. - Evolving risk appetite/profile associated with IT systems, as we pursue increased use of hosted systems and associated risks to individual systems are transferred to suppliers. <p>Leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inability to deliver services/projects. - Unbudgeted costs to enable recovery. - Reputational damage. 		8	8	8
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Performance Indicators	Status	Trend	Value	Target
Percentage of NNDR collected in year			42.6%	34.5%
Percentage of council tax collected in year			42.54%	34.5%
Museum general admittance visitor numbers			6,422	6,500
Miles driven by NHC full electric vehicles			21,126	13,750
Witchin Town Hall income			£64,591	N/A Data Only
Value of sales at Bancroft Cafe Kiosk			£12,345	N/A Data Only
Percentage of raised sales invoices due for payment that have been paid			92.74%	97%
% of payments received that were paid by electronic methods			99.24%	99.3%
Kg residual waste per household			79kg	89kg
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting			62%	59%
Electricity and gas energy consumption (kWh) - 100% of reported energy consumption is from green energy sources			432,590	525,420
Percentage of Social Value committed on the Social Value Portal that has been delivered			No data currently available	N/A Data Only

CABINET 19 September 2023
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PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: FINANCIAL SYSTEM BUDGET

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND IT – IAN ALBERT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has specialist software to enable it to record and manage payments, income and other financial transactions. This includes meeting statutory duties to ensure proper administration of financial affairs and making payments to suppliers within required timescales. The main elements of this are currently covered by two sets of software. Over Spring/ Summer this year, the Council has sought tenders for a more integrated solution. The most economically advantageous tender costs more than the currently available budget, and this report seeks approval for capital spend and the additional revenue budget. It is expected that the new software system will allow increased automation that will enable savings that will more than off-set the additional cost.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet notes the expected benefits from the new finance software system.

That Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- 2.2. That Council approve a capital budget allocation in 2023/24 of £200k for the initial work to develop and implement the new finance software system.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. A new finance system is expected to lead to more efficient processes and a better customer experience. A new finance system will incur up-front installation and development costs. These costs can be charged to capital but require a capital budget. Additions to the capital programme above £50k require approval by Full Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. We could have looked to extend contracts for the current software that we have. However, it had become clear that they were not offering the levels of automation that we were after, even after carrying out upgrades to their latest versions. It had also become clear that there would be significant cost increases from continuing with one of

the current pieces of software, as the current contract was let 10 years ago and did not have any inflationary increases over that time.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Executive Member for Finance and IT has been consulted on this decision.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 The award of the contract (due to the overall value of the contract) is a key executive decision (although it is delegated to Officers) and this was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 26/05/2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Council has two main pieces of software that make up the overall system that enables it to record and manage payments, income and other financial transactions. These are:
- Integra Financials (Centros)- a financial management system that records transactions to enable payments, budget-setting, budget management and financial reporting.
 - Civica Pay- for the collection and management of payments. This includes enabling customers to make payments on our website and over the phone.
- 7.2. The Council has had various iterations of the Integra software since 1998 and Civica since 2013. All of the transactions within Civica need to be integrated into Integra. There are currently a number of processes in place to enable this. This provided a driver to look for a solution that was either one piece of software or separate software that had complete integration. Market research had also identified that alternative options would offer other advantages in relation to user experience, customer experience, other process automation and improved reporting (see section 8 for more details).
- 7.3. Integra is hosted on-site and has its own on-site server. This comes with infrastructure and IT staff time costs. The IT strategy states that we should be aiming to move to cloud hosted software.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. As a result of the drivers for change identified in section 7, we started a procurement project in April 2023. At that time the expected costs were unknown (especially the split between revenue and capital costs), so were not incorporated in to the 2023/24 budget.
- 8.2. The tendering process resulted in bids from 3 suppliers, and all 3 suppliers were invited to provide full demonstrations of their products. The scoring of the contract was based on 60% quality (including 10% for the demonstrations), 30% price and 10% social value. There was a requirement for all suppliers to meet a minimum threshold score across all of the various sub-components of the software.
- 8.3. The winning bidder achieved a score of 87.25 (out of 100). The other two bidders achieved scores of 70.17 and 61.47.

- 8.4. The chosen solution is expected to offer the following benefits (over the current software):
- Better integration across the various elements of the overall software reducing the number of integrations required and ensuring that data has reconciled correctly.
 - All cloud hosted which will reduce the server space required and there is expected to be no dependency on IT to support the system.
 - Upgrades included within the package reducing the cost and effort involved in carrying out those upgrades.
 - Asset management module included which will allow the move away from using spreadsheets.
 - Supplier self service module allows suppliers to submit invoices online and see when they will be paid.
 - Improved reports for budget management and reporting.
- 8.5. The winning solution will have a small increase in the current revenue (annual) cost. This can be covered with staff savings that have already been identified. As it is a new system it will require up-front development work. It is estimated that this will be around £200k, but will depend on the number of hours work required. This cost can be capitalised. The initial contract period is 10 years, so even writing off over that period would equate to an equivalent annual cost of £20k. It is fully expected that further cashable savings will be delivered which will off-set this amount (e.g., in IT infrastructure costs and staff time when vacancies occur). There will also be non-cashable savings from other process efficiencies that reduce the time spent on current tasks. It also avoids increases in the cost of the current software.
- 8.6. As a result, Council is asked to approve the allocation of a capital budget of £200k.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Paragraph 5.7 of the Council's Financial Regulations provides a delegation to the Executive Member for Finance and IT to agree new capital programme items up to £50k. It further allows urgency provisions to be used, but that is not the case here. For non-urgent new capital items, these should initially be agreed by Cabinet and then referred to Council.
- 9.2. If approved by Cabinet, once the contract is awarded, legal will assist in preparing a contract and a Delegated Decision Notice will be published detailing the award of the Contract under the Officers Scheme of Delegation.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As detailed in the report the revenue (annual) cost of the new software contract is slightly higher than the current software contract costs and budget. However, it is likely that there would have been a cost increase from extending the contracts with the existing suppliers. The increase can be covered by already identified savings that arise from process efficiencies.
- 10.2. There is an implementation cost that is estimated at £200k. This cost can be capitalised, and permission is sought from Council to add this to the capital programme. The short-term cost of adding this to the capital programme, is the lost interest from investment returns of around 5% (i.e. £10k per year). The longer-term cost would be an increase in the Council's overall borrowing requirement. At the point where this requires external

borrowing then cost will be external borrowing costs and a requirement to charge a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The MRP will be calculated across all Council borrowing and is likely to use an overall asset life of 40 years, which equates to a 2.5% per year charge. Assuming interest rates of 5% (likely to be lower by the time there is a need to borrow) would give an overall cost of capital of 7.5%. That would therefore be a revenue cost (based on £200k) of £15k. As set out in section 8, it is expected that further savings will be implemented that will off-set that cost.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The implementation of a new finance system is a significant piece of work. The provider will be required to carry out all the technical work, but it will still require significant input from relevant officers. There is a risk that there will be complications with the implementation, but these are mitigated by the positive references that we have received. The implementation of the new software will be over a period of 12 months up to Autumn 2024.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are no known equalities implications relating to this decision.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The recommendations in the report are linked to a contract above £50,000. Social Value was incorporated in to the contract with an assessment weighting of 10%. The winning provider has agreed to provide the following Social Value:
- 10 hours per annum of free IT/ Financial advice provided to the voluntary sector and small businesses, with a focus on supported disadvantaged young people.
 - Donated equipment up to the value of 5% of the Annual SaaS Fee per annum. utilising their purchasing power to buy and donate equipment to the voluntary sector within North Herts.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There will be some staffing efficiencies that will be enabled following the full implementation. Some of the efficiencies that will be delivered as part of this decision are expected to be a reduction in staff hours. These are generally expected to be managed through not filling vacancies when they arise, but, if necessary, the Council's reorganisation policy will be applied. There are also expected to be small time savings for other Officers that then give more time to complete other tasks.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 *None*

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 *None*

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