

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



20 December 2024

Our Ref Council 15 January 2025
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To: The Chair and Members of North Hertfordshire District Council

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD,
LETCHWORTH, HERTS, SG6 3JF**

on

WEDNESDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2025

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. 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.	
3. 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>Ecological Emergency</u> The Council has declared an ecological emergency and is committed to addressing the ecological emergency and nature recovery by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain whilst ensuring that development limits impact on existing habitats in its process. The Council has set out to do that by a) setting measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, in both species and quantities, seeking to increase community engagement, b) to work with our partners to establish a Local Nature Partnership for Hertfordshire and to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire and c) to investigate new approaches to nature recovery such as habitat banking that deliver biodiversity objectives and provide new investment opportunities.	

Declarations of Interest

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.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

5. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

5 - 8

To consider any items referred from other Committees.

5a) Referral from Extraordinary Cabinet – 26 November 2024 – East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Framework

6. EAST OF LUTON STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGER

9 - 170

This report asks Full Council to approve the Strategic Masterplan Framework for land to the east of Luton. This site is allocated for development in the Council's adopted Local Plan (Sites EL1, 2 & 3, Policy SP19) as a strategic site for approximately 2,100 homes and supporting infrastructure.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE REVIEW - DEFERRED FROM 28 NOVEMBER 2024 REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – LEGAL & COMMUNITY AND THE MONITORING OFFICER

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N.B. This item was deferred from the Council meeting of 28 November 2024.

This report presents a summary of the areas reviewed and any in principle recommendations of the Constitutional & Governance Working Group ('Working Group') in relation to the following:

- The Planning Control Committee meetings and Sub-Committees (including start times/ potential end times).
- Standards Committee – recommendation to review the Terms of Reference to include other meaningful areas of remit.
- Council Procedure Rules to be reviewed and amended in respect of Member Motions and Questions, (including agenda management, number, length of time on debate/ remit/ and Member speeches).

The report also covers areas considered but not recommended for change at this stage.

8.	APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT RESERVE INDEPENDENT PERSON	191 -
	REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR LEGAL AND COMMUNITY AND MONITORING OFFICER	198

This report seeks approval to appoint a replacement Reserve Independent Person ('IP') for a period of up to 4 years (as per the recommendation below), firstly 2 years and potential extension for a further 2 years up to the maximum period, such appointments to take effect from 16 January 2025, following the resignation of Stephen Tant from the role of Reserve IP.

9.	ELECTORAL SCALE OF FEES	199 -
	REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES	206

To agree the Scale of Fees for electoral events held during 2025/26.

10.	NOMINATION OF A REPRESENTATIVE ON PARKING AND TRAFFIC REGULATIONS OUTSIDE LONDON (PATROL) ADJUDICATION JOINT COMMITTEE	207 -
	REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER	210

To consider appointment of a Member Representative to the Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee (PATROL), following the resignation of the previous appointed Member.

11.	NOTICE OF MOTIONS - DEFERRED FROM 28 NOVEMBER 2024	211 -
	To consider a motion submitted under Standing Order 4.8.12, which was deferred from the meeting of Council on 28 November 2024.	214

An amendment to the motion received is included within this pack.

Item No	Referred from:	Cabinet
5a	Date:	26 November 2024
	Title of item:	Land East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Framework
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Agenda Item 6

The report considered by Cabinet at the meeting held on 26 November 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 26th November, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Strategic Masterplan Framework for the land East of Luton (Local Plan sites EL1, 2 & 3), attached at Appendix A, is approved and adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning decisions relating to the site.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To set an agreed design framework for the delivery of a strategic site within the Council's adopted Local Plan. To accord with policy requirements of the Local Plan.

Audio recording – 38 minutes 13 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport, presented the report entitled 'Land East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Framework' and advised that:

- This report asked Cabinet to refer to Full Council the approval of the Strategic Masterplan Framework for land to the east of Luton as a material planning consideration.
- Allocation of this site had already been agreed and was detailed in the Local Plan.
- This Masterplan detailed how the scheme would address the expectations and meet targets of the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- The land to the east of Luton had been identified to meet housing requirements in the area.
- There would be provision of two primary schools, a secondary school and a local centre.
- Details of changes made to the Masterplan could be found in the plan itself and the summary document at Appendix B.
- Officers would provide Members with a presentation of key plans prior to the debate at Full Council on 28 November. The developer team, Luton Council and Offley Council would also be in attendance for the Item.
- Members had been invited to attend a briefing session on the masterplan on 14 November which had been well attended.

The Chair advised that the Strategic Planning Manager would be addressing points raised in an email received from Offley Parish Council on 20 November 2024 when he answered any questions from Members.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Val Bryant

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Dave Winstanley

In response to questions the Strategic Planning Manager advised that:

- This Masterplan was just one stage in a number of processes required to happen before the scheme reached delivery stage.
- This Masterplan committed to delivering 40% affordable housing. The legal agreement(s) accompanying any application(s) would ensure needs in Luton were met.
- One of the key issues of this Masterplan was to ensure the three different land ownerships worked together to create a high level of unity between the sites.
- Detailed planning stages allowed for a mixed range of housing both across and within each of the three sites.
- Public discussions had been held with Offley Parish Council at Cockernhoe regarding the views of the villagers and feedback could be found on page 97 of the agenda pack.
- Housing needs in Luton had been considered in allocation of the site in the Local Plan. The planning application stage would be the stage when any subsequent changes to the housing needs in Luton could be addressed.
- Hertfordshire County Council had been involved in the whole Masterplan process and both Highways and Education were supportive.
- There were already bus links from Stevenage to Luton and Hertfordshire County Council were not planning to build any new roads in the area.

In response to questions the Associate Director of Hyas Associates advised that:

- The valuable characteristics of the area had been considered to ensure the villages were kept separate from the new development but also how to build cohesion between all the sites.
- Woodland and open spaces were valuable assets and would be preserved.
- Public consultation had been robust to ensure the best development of the area.

The following Members took part in a debate:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Mick Debenham

Points raised in a debate included:

- That Members acknowledged the concerns of Offley Parish Council and residents in the village of Cockernhoe.
- This Masterplan was a good plan and had been produced to a high-level design framework.
- The production of Masterplans should be supported as they ensured procedures were followed to ensure the best results for residents.

Councillor Amy Allen proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Strategic Masterplan Framework for the land East of Luton (Local Plan sites EL1, 2 & 3), attached at Appendix A, is approved and adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning decisions relating to the site.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To set an agreed design framework for the delivery of a strategic site within the Council's adopted Local Plan. To accord with policy requirements of the Local Plan.

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<p>EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL 15 JANUARY 2025 (from cancelled 9 December 2024 meeting)</p>

<p>PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</p>
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TITLE OF REPORT: LAND EAST OF LUTON (EL1, 2 & 3) STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

REPORT OF: NIGEL SMITH, STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR DANIEL ALLEN, LEADER & INTERIM EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORT

COUNCIL PRIORITIES: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report asks Full Council to approve the Strategic Masterplan Framework for land to the east of Luton. This site is allocated for development in the Council's adopted Local Plan (Sites EL1, 2 & 3, Policy SP19) as a strategic site for approximately 2,100 homes and supporting infrastructure.

The policies of the Local Plan require the preparation of a masterplan for this site. A masterplan has been produced by the landowner and applicant team working with Council officers and advisors. This has followed approved guidance and procedures. The draft masterplan was subject to public consultation and independent design review to inform the final version. The masterplan provides an appropriate framework for the future planning and development of this strategic site.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Strategic Masterplan Framework for the land East of Luton (Local Plan sites EL1, 2 & 3), attached at Appendix A, is approved and adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning decisions relating to the site.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To set an agreed design framework for the delivery of a strategic site within the Council's adopted Local Plan. To accord with policy requirements of the Local Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The Strategic Masterplan Framework (hereafter 'masterplan') has, in officers' view, been appropriately prepared in accordance with national and local policies, guidance and advice. It has been prepared under the Council's preferred approach; the Local Plan and associated guidance encourage the preparation of masterplans for strategic sites in advance of and separate to any planning applications or decisions. The Council is

currently behind schedule in delivering the homes required by the Local Plan. It is important that the strategic sites progress expediently through the planning system.

- 4.2. The alternative is to not adopt the masterplan. This is not recommended for same reasons as above. There would be planning, financial and reputational risks if Full Council decided not to proceed. These are explored in Section 11 of this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Preparation of this masterplan has been overseen by the Council's internal, informal Strategic Planning Project Board. This includes cross-party representation from all political groups recognising that the implementation of strategic sites are long-term projects which may span administrations of the Council. The Project Board is chaired by the Executive Member for Planning & Transport. Local ward members have been invited to participate in relevant meetings of the Board.
- 5.2. The draft masterplan was presented to the Project Board at its meeting of 22 January 2024. Offley Parish Council, Luton Borough Council and other stakeholders, including the general public, have been invited to comment on the masterplan through public consultation and focussed meetings.
- 5.3. All Councillors were invited to a briefing and 'Q&A' session on the Local Plan and the general principles of masterplanning and design on 8 July 2024.
- 5.4. In August 2024, Project Board advised upon amendments to the Project Board Terms of Reference. These included recommendations for the future reporting of masterplans to Councillors. The updated Terms of Reference were endorsed by Cabinet in September 2024 and have been followed in preparing and presenting this item. This includes the masterplan summary document prepared by officers and attached at Appendix B, additional Councillor representation on the Board and seeking Board feedback on any views from their wider groups.
- 5.5. The final masterplan was presented to and considered by the Project Board at its meeting of 14 November 2024. The Board agreed the officer recommendation that the masterplan should progress for formal approval via Cabinet and Full Council.
- 5.6. All Councillors were invited to an officer briefing and 'Q&A' session on this masterplan on 14 November 2024, ahead of consideration of this item by committees.
- 5.7. The masterplan was considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 26 November 2024. The referral from Cabinet will be reported to the meeting.

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. The Council's Local Plan (the Plan) was adopted by Full Council in November 2022. It forms part of both the Council's adopted Policy Framework and the statutory Development Plan for the District.

- 7.2. The Plan sets out the Council's strategy for meeting the development needs of North Hertfordshire over the period to 2031. The Plan makes provision for at least 13,000 new homes. This includes 1,950 to address housing needs arising from Luton. A significant proportion of the District's overall housing target are to be delivered on six Strategic Housing Sites – defined as sites of more than 500 homes – around the main towns in and adjoining the District. These are supplemented by a range of Local Housing Allocations which range in size up to approximately 300 homes within and around the District's towns and villages.
- 7.3. The Inspector examining the Local Plan was clear that deciding where and how housing needs should be met was an extremely complex issue. The arguments for, and the potential benefits of, new development were extensively scrutinised and carefully balanced against the inevitable harm that will arise from the release of this land.
- 7.4. All of the Strategic Housing Sites are greenfield locations. They contain agricultural land, leisure routes and Public Rights of Way enjoyed by residents as well as habitats of importance for flora and fauna. However, the examination concluded that the imperative to boost housing supply – in terms of both local evidence of acute housing need and national policy directions – meant these developments should proceed. Key paragraphs from the Inspector's conclusions are shown below for context:

487. Without impinging on the Green Belt, the consequences for sustainable development would be significant. This would involve either building new homes in considerably less sustainable locations – in all probability away from the areas where they are most needed – or not delivering them at all. The former would most likely lead to a significantly greater increase in use of the private car and could lead to the creation of communities that would be relatively isolated, particularly in terms of access to shops and services. The latter would deny many the opportunity to live in their own home close to their family, friends and work, and could stifle the local economy. To my mind, neither proposition would best, or even adequately, serve the achievement of sustainable development, particularly in respect of its economic and social dimensions.

...

492. On the one hand, it is clear to me that the development of most of the housing allocations proposed in this Plan would cause significant or moderate harm to the Green Belt, even with mitigation. That is a highly regrettable outcome and a very important factor. Indeed, I give substantial weight to it.

493. On the other hand, however, the need for housing both in North Hertfordshire and in Luton is acute. The proposed allocations would ensure that those needs are met where they arise in the most sustainable locations that are deliverable/developable. Rejecting these sites would delay meeting the pressing need for housing further, and not impinging on the Green Belt would mean accepting that those needs would not be met where they arise. Both would choke the local housing market. The home-making aspirations of many people, particularly those requiring affordable homes, would be shattered and the local economy would most likely suffer negative consequences. These too are matters of substantial weight.

494. In my judgement, on balance, the latter considerations outweigh the harm that would be caused to the Green Belt. Consequently, I consider that the exceptional circumstances necessary to alter the Green Belt boundaries to facilitate the allocation of the housing sites concerned do exist both in principle and in each individual case. This aspect, therefore, should not stand in the way of their allocation.

[North Hertfordshire Local Plan Inspector's Report, September 2022](#)

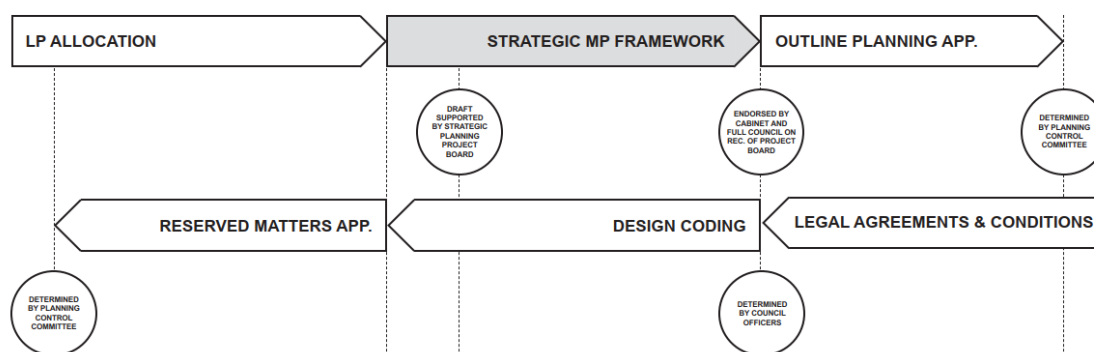
- 7.5. The Strategic Housing Sites are of a greater size and complexity than any developments that have taken place in the District over the last twenty years. They are critical to the overall strategy of the Plan. Their delivery is essential to increase the number of homes being built above historic averages and address the acute need for housing.
- 7.6. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan sets out the Council's approach to Design and Sustainability. This states the Council will require the production of Strategic Masterplans for Strategic Housing Sites and other significant development. Significant development generally comprises development of 100 homes or more.
- 7.7. Policy SP9 also sets out a series of design principles to be followed in masterplans and applications for development meeting these thresholds. It contains documentation requirements and sets out the approaches to approval. The Local Plan encourages the submission of masterplans for agreement before the submission of a planning application. Where applications have already been submitted, the Policy also allows for masterplans to be agreed with the Council prior to their determination.
- 7.8. Masterplans are a recognised 'good practice' tool as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Government Planning Practice Guidance explains a masterplan as follows:

What are masterplans?

Masterplans set the vision and implementation strategy for a development. They are distinct from local design guides by focusing on site specific proposals such as the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, transport and green infrastructure. Depending on the level of detail, the masterplan may indicate the intended arrangement of buildings, streets and the public realm. More specific parameters for the site's development may be set out in a [design code](#), which can accompany the overall masterplan.

A range of other plans and technical reports may be needed alongside a masterplan, to provide supporting evidence and set out related proposals, such as a local character study, landscape assessment, transport assessment and proposals for securing biodiversity net gain. An implementation strategy could also be included, especially where development is expected to be brought forward in a number of phases.

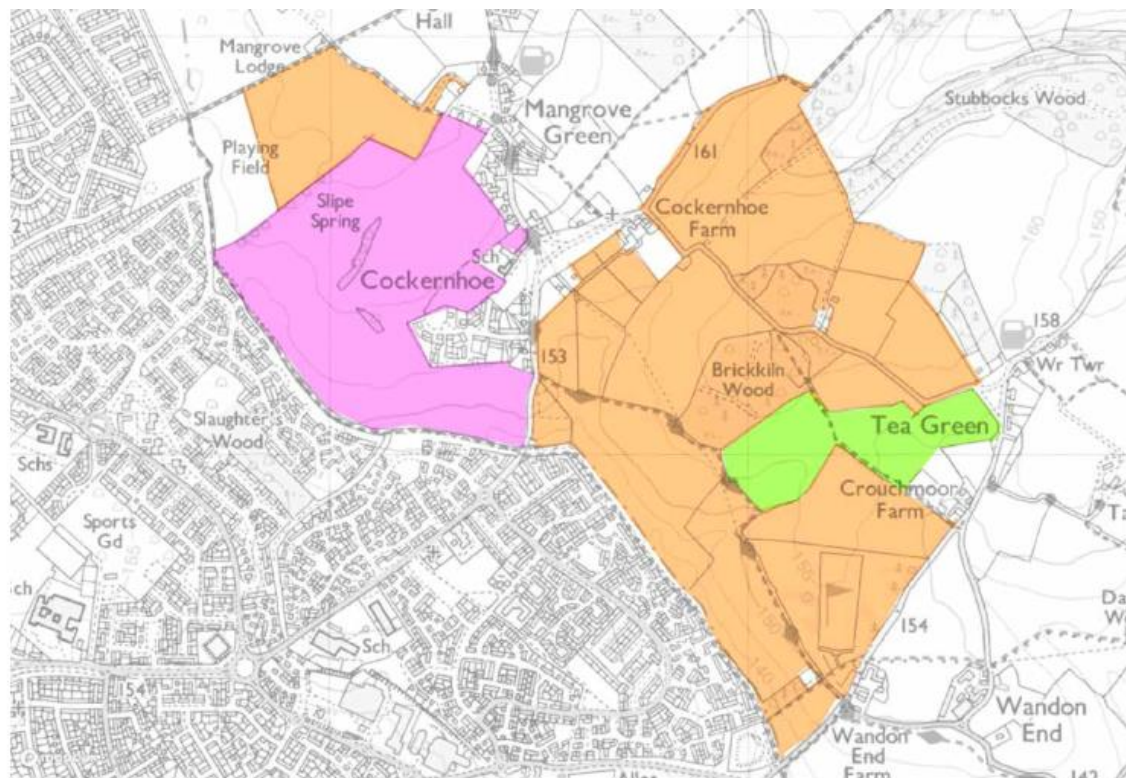
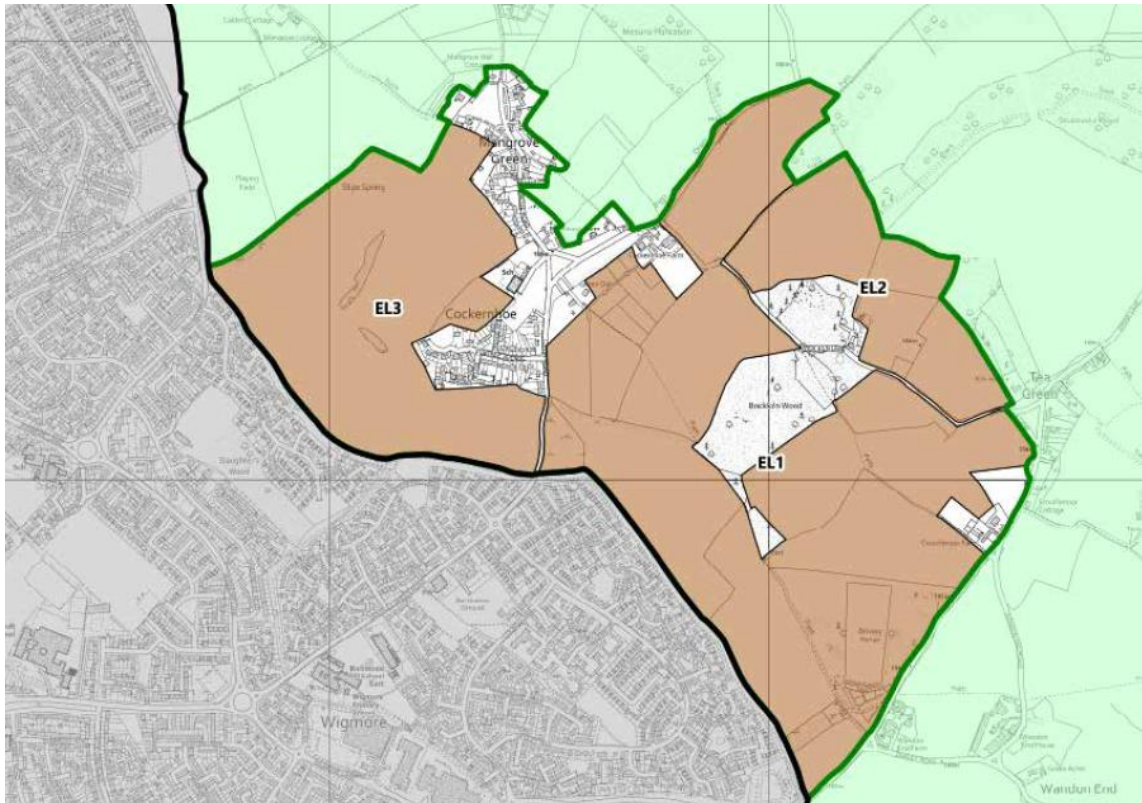
- 7.9. To support the Council's masterplanning approach, Cabinet agreed in March 2021 to establish an informal, internal Project Board to provide corporate oversight and strategic direction. This is not a formal committee or decision-making body. Through Project Board a range of associated procedural guidance has been produced and subsequently endorsed by Cabinet (see links in Section 18).
- 7.10. These say masterplans produced and approved before the submission of a planning application or prior to the determination of a planning application will follow the final approval process below (subject to a positive outcome at each step):
- Project Board recommendation to Service Director
 - Service Director recommendation to Cabinet
 - Cabinet recommendation to Full Council
 - Adoption by Full Council as a material consideration in the determination of any relevant planning applications
- 7.11. Consideration of the masterplan does not necessitate any further debate upon the general principles of whether the development should take place in the first instance. Neither should it lead to debate on the fact that, at a strategic level, the development will result in some harm to the local area or may lead to more congestion or delay on local roads. These matters have been considered through examination and adoption of the Local Plan. Some adverse impacts are 'priced in' as the cost of ensuring the needs of existing and future residents are appropriately met. Relevant policies in the Local Plan identify site-specific and general measures that should be included to mitigate the impacts of development. These matters will be subject to further technical consideration through detailed assessments at the formal planning stages.
- 7.12. In this context, officers are not asking Councillors to confer any greater or lesser weight to the idea of development on this site than already exists; the masterplan provides a high-level design framework against which any future planning applications for the site can be considered. The level of design detail will increase as proposals move through the planning process.
- 7.13. The masterplan is the second stage in a (broadly) six-step approach to securing the planning, regulation and delivery of a site through a combination of statutory and discretionary measures. This process should be viewed holistically as a means of collectively securing design quality, setting out the vision, community engagement, on-site infrastructure and off-site contributions for the successful planning and delivery of the project.




- 7.14. Formal regulatory approval(s) for the development will be secured through any subsequent planning permission(s). However, the masterplan has been guided by, and considered against, the key requirements of relevant policies in the Local Plan. Similarly, although it is not a formal planning decision in its own right, any concerns or objections to any masterplan should generally be framed against relevant policies and considerations or made on valid planning grounds.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The East of Luton sites consist of approximately 130 hectares of predominantly agricultural land sited on the westernmost edge of North Herts and immediately to the northeastern edge of adjacent Luton Borough (the Wigmore neighbourhood). The site falls within Offley Parish and extends from the administrative boundary and effectively surrounds the small villages of Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green. Putteridge Bury Registered Park and Garden is situated some 500m to the northwest of the site. Luton airport and adjacent employment area is situated some 3km to the south and Luton Town Centre, including the railway station, is situated approximately 3.5km from the site. Luton Parkway Station is approximately 4.5km from the site.
- 8.2. There is a range of existing services and facilities within the adjoining villages, including Cockernhoe primary school, and a range of amenities within the adjoining Wigmore suburb, including a primary school, church, health centre, supermarket, and local centre and Wigmore Park.
- 8.3. The site, which can be accessed from Luton Road, Darley Road, Stony Lane and Brick Kiln Lane, falls within the wider Breachwood Green Ridge Landscape Character Area which is characterised by a gently rolling plateau and ridge landscape with mainly arable fields with smaller pockets of grazing around settlements and scattered villages.
- 8.4. The site contains and is bordered by areas of established mature woodland, such as Slipe Spring, Bluebell Wood, Stubbocks Wood and Brick Kiln Wood, hedgerows and veteran/remnant trees. The proposed development will mark a new outer limit to the urban area of Luton. An extract of the Local Plan Policies Map is shown below.
- 8.5. The allocation is split between three main land ownerships or interests. To the east of Luton Road and Chalk Hill, Bloor Homes and A T Oliver (ATO Holdings Ltd) control approximately 66% and 9% of the allocation respectively. These ownerships together cover the parts of the allocation identified in the Local Plan as EL1 and EL2. To the west of Luton Road and the south-west of the villages of Mangrove Green and Cockernhoe, the land is owned by The Crown Estate – approximately 25% of the allocation. This is the part of the allocation identified by the Local Plan as EL3.
- 8.6. The site has been the subject of previous planning applications, with the two most recent applications being submitted in 2016 (Bloor Homes, for the majority of the land south of Luton Road, excluding the ATO Holdings land) and in 2017 (The Crown Estate, for land to the north of Luton Road) respectively. These planning applications are still 'live' and in the process of being updated. There are additional live applications for access points from Luton Road and Crawley Green Road. These predate the proposals discussed in the masterplan.



 The Crown Estate

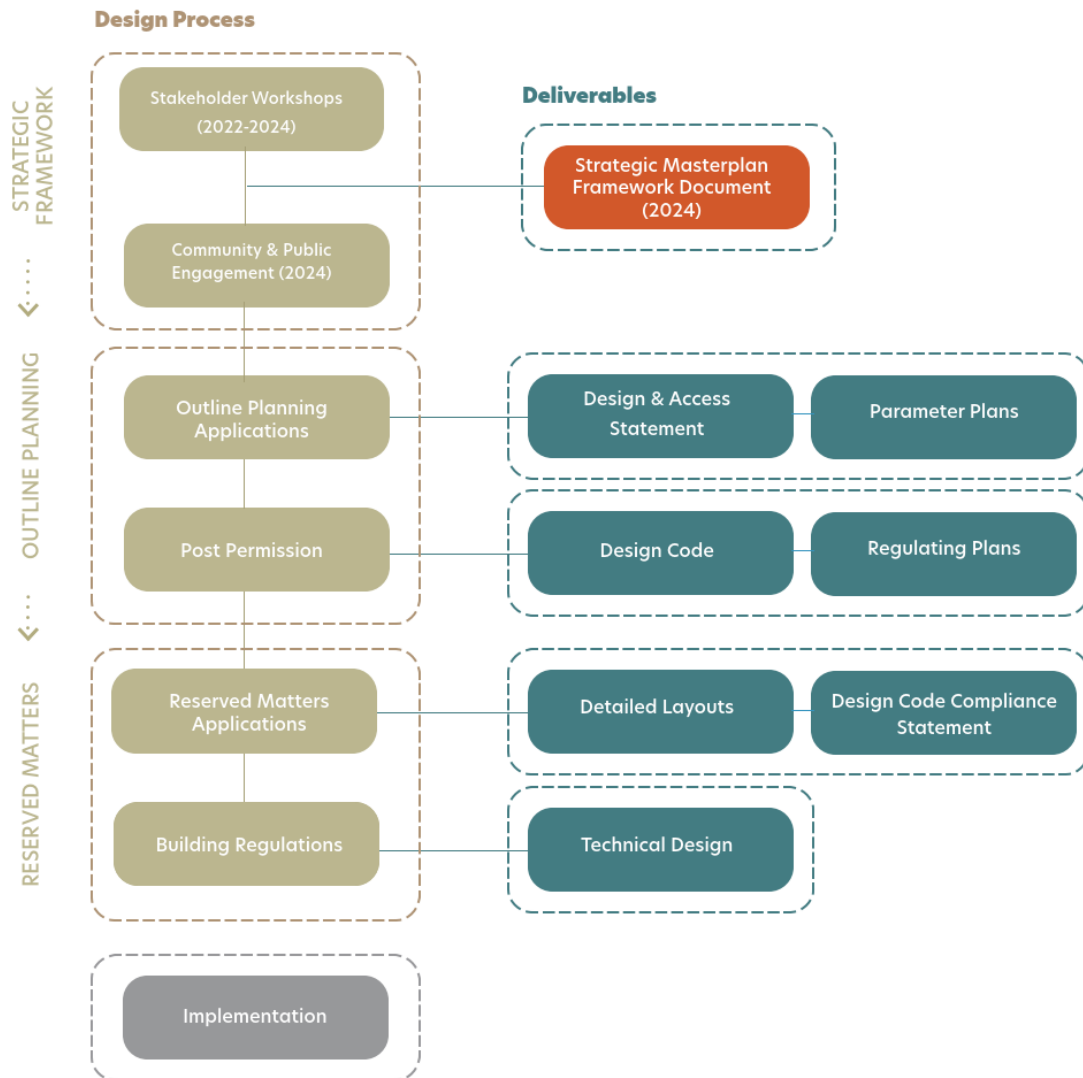
 Bloor

 AT Oliver

- 8.7. The masterplan for East of Luton has been produced by the Crown Estate and Bloor Homes. ATO Holdings have been involved in the workshops and meetings in relation to the masterplan and have input into the masterplan document.
- 8.8. Given the different land ownerships, there are varying potential routes to delivery of this site. It is Bloor Homes' present intention to directly deliver those parts of the site which they control as master developer / housebuilder. Dependent on market conditions, and given the size of their interest, officers consider it is possible they may in future seek to sell discrete parcels of serviced land to other parties. It is common for sites of this scale to have multiple outlets (housebuilders) on site. It is Crown Estate's intention to progress the site to at least outline planning stage before most likely seeking a development partner or disposal. The approach of ATO Holdings is currently unknown. However, as a private landowner, officers consider they would seek to option or sell the site either directly to a housebuilder or through an intermediate land agent or promoter.
- 8.9. In this context it is important that the masterplan sets an appropriate strategic framework to guide and co-ordinate development that might be brought forward and implemented at different times and by different parties. At some stage, it may be necessary for the Council to negotiate the details of the scheme with a developer or developers who are currently not involved in the project.
- 8.10. This has informed the level of detail that officers consider appropriate; the overall aim has been to establish a unifying set of framework plans and principles. This masterplan does not set out, for example, a detailed street network for the site. The blocks of development on the framework plans are generally drawn at a scale which means they may individually accommodate up to several hundred homes. The masterplan recognises that the formal planning processes allow for further development and refinement of its proposals. This should be borne in mind when considering the masterplan and the level of detail it contains; it is not an 'absolute fix' of the proposals. This is recognised within the masterplan document which shows how the design process will continue and evolve through to implementation in the diagram below.
- 8.11. Production of the masterplan has followed the key stages set out in the Council's approved masterplanning guidance. This has included
- Establishing an officer group with representatives from the District Council and Hertfordshire County Council supported by external capacity and expertise on key issues;
 - Agreement of a masterplan brief for the site setting out key issues
 - Preparation of a multi-disciplinary evidence base on matters such as ecology, landscape, heritage and transport & access to inform proposals
 - Consideration and / or testing of key spatial options for the masterplan including (but not limited to) options for the location and / or alignment of:
 - i. The two primary schools
 - ii. The local centre
 - iii. Access arrangements from Luton Road
 - iv. Play provision
 - v. The bus route(s)
 - Presentation to the Council's Project Board at draft masterplan stage

- Design review, in this case through a panel led by Hyas Associates who have supported the District Council throughout the process;
- Public consultation; and
- Refinement of proposals in response to the steps above to produce the final masterplan.

8.12. There have been some minor amendments to the version of the Masterplan presented to Cabinet. These include minor alterations in response to issues raised at that meeting and the preceding Project Board. These do not materially affect the content of the document, the broad spatial structure of the masterplan or the main issues debated at any of the preceding meetings. A schedule of these changes is attached as Appendix C.



8.13. The landowner team have worked with officers from the District and County Council (and their representatives) under a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) since September 2021 to develop the masterplan.

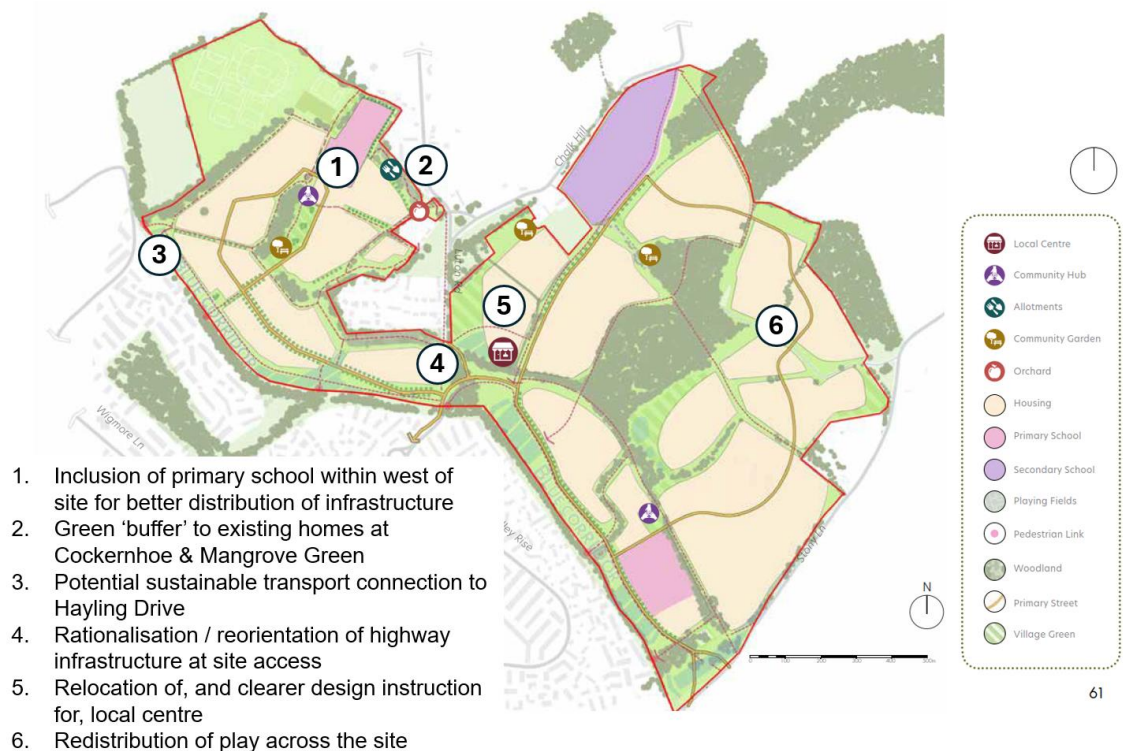
8.14. The draft masterplan was presented to the Council Project Board in January 2024. The Project Board endorsed the work undertaken to that date as an appropriate basis for

public consultation recognising that further refinement of the proposals would need to be undertaken.

- 8.15. Emerging material from the masterplan framework was previously subject to formal Design Review in July 2023, using a bespoke panel of experts familiar with the site, led by Hyas Associates.
- 8.16. Public consultation took place in February 2024 and invites were sent to local councillors, stakeholders and residents. Three in-person public events were held, as well as engagement and meetings with key stakeholders such as representatives from North Herts District Council, Luton Borough Council, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and Offley Parish Council. This was accompanied by a website (www.eastofluton.co.uk) and an online engagement tool/platform. The website and related information remains open for use.
- 8.17. Two events took place at Cockernhoe Memorial Hall and the third at Hilton Garden Inn, Luton North. The events were attended by 482 people across the three days, including members of the local community, ward councillors, parish councillors, and representatives from local organisations.
- 8.18. During the consultation period there were also approximately 2,800 individual visitors to the website. Further meetings have been held, arranged or offered by both the Council and the landowner team with key stakeholders including Offley Parish Council.
- 8.19. The Council project team provided detailed written feedback on the Consultation Draft Masterplan document in March, followed by further written feedback on a final Draft of the Masterplan in September 2024.
- 8.20. Between these iterations, the landowner team held a public, follow-up event in July 2024. This was a drop-in session in Cockernhoe which provided an update on changes made to the masterplan following the earlier round of consultation.
- 8.21. The proposed final masterplan was presented to the Project Board in November 2024 prior to its formal consideration by Cabinet.
- 8.22. Following Design Review and the public consultation, the developers/landowners and the Council have worked together to further refine the masterplan and address issues raised. Key changes and refinements to the masterplan, a number of which are shown on the plan extract below, include:
 - Local Centre – revised location and design approach
 - Location of Primary Schools
 - Landscape buffers/relationship with Cockernhoe/Mangrove Green – increasing the depth and set back between the proposed edge of development and existing properties; utilisation of the space as part of the green infrastructure framework
 - Access and connectivity – greater clarity on active travel connections, broad nature of key access from Luton Road and hierarchy of routes and streets
 - Potential Design Outcomes – adding further material to provide a clearer idea on 3 dimensional outcomes and qualities of place across the site
 - Identifying how future development might address the standards in the Council's recently adopted Sustainability SPD

- Amending and clarifying the framework plans, particularly those dealing with land uses, heights, access and movement and urban design framework.
- Clarifying the relationship between the masterplan and subsequent design development through the planning application process. This ensures future stages have sufficient space to develop upon the masterplan proposals.

4. Masterplan



8.23. The masterplan has focussed upon establishing an appropriate spatial framework for the site. This is demonstrated through a clear series of plans setting out proposed approaches to key matters. A summary document highlighting key plans and concepts from the masterplan document has been prepared by officers to aid Councillors' consideration and is attached to this report. The key plans in the masterplan are:

- Land Use (Fig 99, pp.105) – identifying the areas of the site to be used for residential, open space, primary schools, a secondary school and a local centre.
- Movement and Access (Figs 98, pp.101) – A framework plan showing active travel and transport connectivity, and an indicative plan showing a street hierarchy and active travel routes, tertiary and green streets., along with indicative street sections.
- Green and blue infrastructure (Figs 54, 56, 58 and 61 pp.71-81) – identifying a series of key spaces in and around the site with associated open space typologies and precedent images and an illustrative sustainable drainage strategy identifying indicative attenuation features, potential swales or cascades and wetland corridor incorporated into a comprehensive drainage network.
- Ecology & Biodiversity (Fig 60, pp.79) – identifying key assets to be retained and enhanced, including remnant trees, buffer zones around woodland blocks

within and bordering the site and proposed areas for additional woodland and hedgerow planting.

- Urban Design Framework (Fig 80, 81, pp.88-89) – identifying a high-level, site wide urban design framework setting out a structure for landmark buildings, markers, primary frontages and land uses, key vistas, key buildings and anticipated built frontages This forms the basis of a development structure and approach to establishing character areas which will be further developed as more detailed proposals progress.
- Heights and Densities (Fig 94, p.97) – showing indicative building heights across the site ranging from 2 to 3 storeys, with taller buildings located along primary streets and within the core of the development. Generally, lower building heights around sensitive edges.
- Illustrative Strategic Masterplan (Fig 44, p.61) – showing a high-level arrangement of key land uses, development areas, access, open spaces, key infrastructure and movement parameters combined across the site to provide a development framework.
- Illustrative landscape and planting strategy (Fig 54, 55, 56 pp.71-73) – demonstrating how the illustrative masterplan could be integrated into the landscape setting of the site, including woodland enhancement, parkland and buffers/edges.
- Proposed Phasing Strategy (Fig 103, p.119) – splitting the site into four key phases starting with the two key junctions/accesses into the site from Luton Road and Stony Hill Lane, with phases 2a and 2b along the northern and southern edges of the interface with Luton.

8.24. A summary assessment of the masterplan against the requirements of the relevant site-specific policy (Policy SP19) is set out below. Officers have prepared a short masterplan summary document containing an annotated set of key plans. Formal assessment of any schemes' compliance with relevant policies will be through any associated planning application(s).

- **A comprehensive and deliverable Strategic Masterplan for the entire allocation is to be prepared and agreed between the landowner/developer and the Council (where applications have already been submitted to the Council a Strategic Masterplan should be agreed prior to the or as part of the grant of planning permission)**

The masterplan is being presented to this meeting for consideration

- **A new mixed-use local centre/s to provide for a range of day-to-day local needs including additional neighbourhood-level provision of around 250m² (net) convenience retail provision and 850m² of comparison retail and food and beverage floorspace and other necessary social infrastructure;**

There have been significant changes in the retail environment since the Local Plan was prepared, not least during and since the Covid 19 pandemic. The Council's own evidence supporting the Town Centre Strategy which identifies a substantial drop in future retail floorspace requirements compared to the figures underpinning the Local Plan. However, it also recognises that retail provision should continue to be made in strategic developments which do not have ready access to existing facilities. There is no existing village store in Cockernhoe. The

Asda superstore and Wigmore Park District Centre is approximately 1-1.5 miles from the site.

Given this, and the scale of the site – which is 2-2.5 times the size of other masterplan sites considered by the Council to date, there is the necessary critical mass to support a new local centre located at the heart of the development and easily accessible from the main access to the site and from the village of Cockernhoe and new residential areas. The centre will have its own identity and space, and will seek to include a combination of:

The Masterplan identifies that approximately 0.5 ha the site will be developed for the local centre and includes provision for flexible commercial and community floorspace in the central part of the site, shown located close to the Luton Road access and close to the proposed secondary school (annotated extract below).



The masterplan identifies that detailed design and specification for the design of the local centre and related built form will be set at a later stage in the planning process. This is considered appropriate in principle. Whilst detailed proposals for this centre are to be further developed, they could include a range of potential uses such as retail, meeting spaces, childcare facilities, café and, should it prove feasible, a healthcare facility.

The planning system has a responsibility to ensure that sufficient, potential space for health services is made available to meet the needs arising from development either through the physical provision of on-site space or contributions towards the improvement of existing facilities. However, the planning system is not able to

take operational decisions on the delivery of these services, including whether space in new community facilities is ultimately taken up.

Service planning is co-ordinated by the local Integrated Care Board (ICB). ICBs are a statutory NHS organisation responsible for planning health services for the local population. The ICB for this area, and most of North Herts other than around Royston, is the Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB. The site / district / county boundary is also the operational boundary for the ICB with Luton covered by the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB. Council officers are in regular engagement with the Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB who have offered to facilitate engagement with their neighbouring Board as proposals progress. Both the previous and current MPs for the area have been supportive of securing a health facility on site.

- **Structural planting to create a sense of place, integration into the surrounding landscape and to reinforce a long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary to the east and mitigate landscape impacts;**

The existing woodlands, hedgerows and remnant trees within and adjoining the site have been identified as valuable assets and fundamental to the character and value of the site. The masterplan seeks to incorporate the valuable natural assets into the overall framework and includes buffers where required in accordance with national guidance and, in line with the Design Review Panel recommendations.

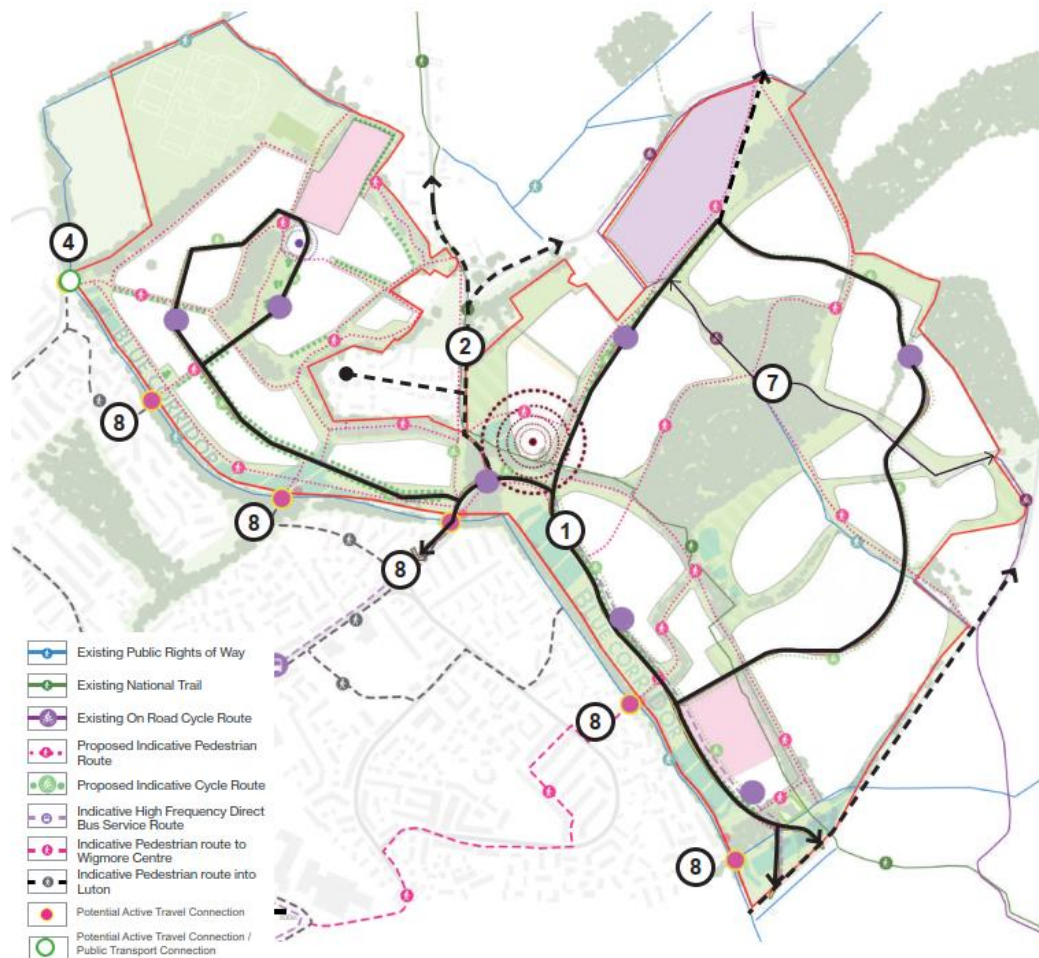
The potential for ecological connectivity through and beyond the site boundary is highlighted. The character assessment has identified the unique nature of existing open spaces and landscape within the locality, and these can be used to inform the provision of new public spaces and greens within the scheme. There will be a need for appropriate long-term management proposals for open space and woodland as the scheme progresses through the planning process.



The framework plan identifies the network of retained and enhanced open spaces and woodland across the whole site. These include retaining existing wood land blocks, hedgerows, trees etc and creating new areas of public open space throughout, including a linear park along the western boundary and providing a dedicated area for sport and recreation to the north.

- **Principal access to be taken from Luton Road and integrated into Luton's existing highway network via Crawley Green Road with:**
 - i. **provision for sustainable modes of transport;**
 - ii. **comprehensive integration into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks; and**
 - iii. **appropriate transport mitigation measures secured to address impacts on Luton;**

Access and connection points for the development are shown on the Strategic Masterplan (Fig.44), which denotes the primary street into and through the site, and the Active Travel and Public Transport Connectivity Framework (Fig.98) Movement and Access Framework Plan. Some of the key features are detailed in composite form in the summary document (see summary for description of numbered annotations):



Principal multi-modal access is shown from Luton Road, in accordance with the policy. As above, this has been reorientated and redesigned through the masterplan process to emphasise the NW to SE movement. There is provision for an internal bus loop and direct service into Luton with detailed specification and routing to be considered as part of the planning process. The option for a further public transport connection to Hayling Drive has been shown which might facilitate additional or alternate services or routings. The primary street will serve all parts of the site, including the local centre and the secondary school.

There is a site wide network of active travel routes and various points of connectivity to off – site routes and destinations. Existing rights of way have been retained, including Brick Kiln Lane, which will continue to provide local access.

The remaining access points will link to the Rights of Way networks and/or existing footpath routes providing connectivity to existing villages, opportunities for leisure trips into the wider countryside and/or facilities and services in Wigmore and beyond.

Further, detailed mitigations on the wider network will be identified as part of the planning application process and secured through legal obligations.

- **4FE of primary-age and 4FE of secondary-age education provision to ensure the needs arising from this allocation can be met within the site with**

any secondary education solution designed so as not to preclude the potential for future expansion



The location and areas for the new schools are shown on the framework plans meeting the policy requirements. It is proposed to introduce two new primary schools both of 2 forms of entry. One will be located in the northern part of the site, on the Crown Estate land, and one will be located in the southern part of the site controlled by Bloor Homes. This enables more sustainable and walkable neighbourhoods and, within the Bloor site, early delivery. The proposed secondary school, with potential to expand to 6 forms of entry, is located in a more central part of the site, north of the local centre where there is better opportunity for more level land and siting along with associated sports pitches/facilities. The secondary school will be accessed from the new primary route which will run north/south through the site, connecting with the primary east-west route.

Detailed issues regarding siting and design will continue to be considered through the planning application process and in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council and the education authority.

- **Appropriate mechanism(s) to ensure that all the affordable housing derived from the 1,950 homes for Luton's unmet needs address affordable housing needs from Luton Borough**

This will be addressed through the legal agreement at outline application stage.

- **Built development contained within the Breachwood Ridge and avoiding adverse impacts on the wider landscape of the Lilley Valley or the Chilterns AONB as informed by detailed landscape assessments**

The masterplan achieves this. The secondary school location, which was largely fixed through the Local Plan process, is sited so that the most sensitive and open part of the site on the edge of the valley will consist of playing fields.

Much of the north-eastern boundary of the site is contained by existing woodland blocks, notably Stubbocks Wood beyond the allocation boundary.

Analysis of the wider landscape setting has informed the consideration of potential character areas, a landscape led approach to the siting and nature of development areas, the retention of existing woodland, hedgerows, trees and green infrastructure and the potential to ensure ecological connectivity to off-site assets and the wider landscape setting.

Further updated studies of landscape setting and ecology along with overall environmental impacts will be provided and considered as part of the planning application process and which will enable more detailed assessment of the treatment of key vistas, edges, ecological corridors and biodiversity.

- **Integration of existing public rights of way within and adjoining the site to provide routes to the wider countryside including:**
 - Footpath Offley 001 as a route from south-east Luton to the rural area; and**
 - Footpaths Offley 039, Offley 002 and Offley 003 as potential north-west to south-east green corridors through the site;**

The Active Travel and Public Transport Connectivity Framework Plan (shown above) identifies that the existing rights of way will be retained and utilised within the site as part of the overall movement framework. There will be a hierarchy of routes, including footpaths and green ways and these routes have helped inform the structure of land uses and layout to ensure that connectivity to valuable off-site assets and destinations is retained and enhanced.

- **Address existing surface water flood risk issues, particularly along the south-western perimeter of the site, through SUDs or other appropriate solution;**

The masterplan includes an illustrative Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) framework plan. This shows how a network of drainage features will respond to the existing topography noting that the underlying ground conditions and levels will facilitate run off towards the lower part of the site along the southwestern boundary with Luton.

The masterplan identifies a linear park along this boundary within which various SUDs features (here and throughout the site) including attenuation basins, bio-swales and rain gardens to ensure there is a site wide approach to dealing sustainable urban drainage. This will be considered in further detail with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) as part of the detailed planning process.



- **Appropriate mitigation, compensation and / or enhancement of key features of biodiversity as informed by detailed assessments including:**
 - i. **the adjoining local wildlife sites at Stubbocks Wood; and**
 - ii. **priority deciduous woodland habitat at Brickkiln Wood**

This is best shown on the Proposed Habitats Plan. Planting forms an integral, structuring part of the site layout. Additional planting, or the reinforcement of existing planting is proposed around much of the site perimeters and to enhance existing green infrastructure framework within the site.

It is proposed to create extensive areas of new habitats and enhance existing green infrastructure features within the Site. The majority of existing trees, hedgerows and in particular woodland, including Stubbocks Wood and Brick Kiln Wood will be retained and enhanced to create green corridors. Appropriate buffers will be introduced to existing woodland areas and ecological corridors and valuable habitats will be retained.



- **Sensitive integration of existing settlements and heritage assets, including**
 - i. **minimising the visual impacts of development upon the historic parts of Cockernhoe, including relevant listed buildings;**
 - ii. **using the location of the Mangrove Green and Cockernhoe areas of archaeological significance to inform a site-wide green infrastructure strategy; and**
 - iii. **retaining an appropriate setting to the adjoining Putteridge Bury;**

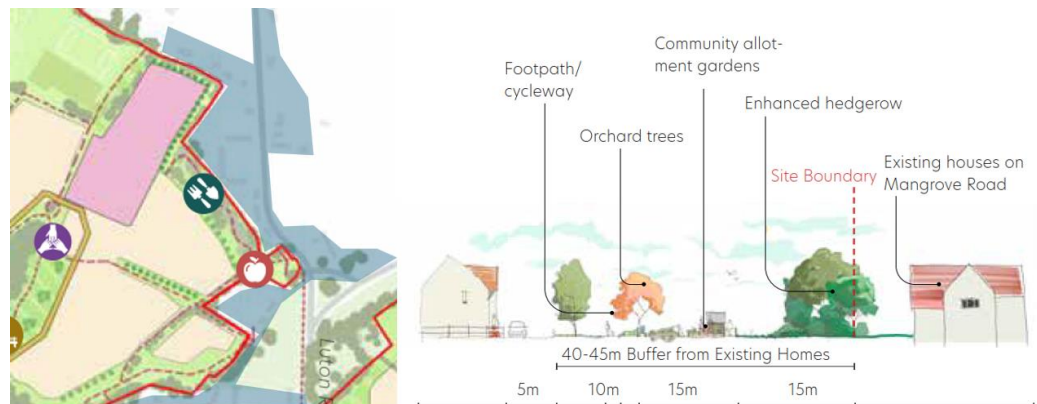
Addressing the relationship with Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green has been one of the key elements of the masterplan process, and the main area of change between consultation on the draft proposals in early 2024 and the version of the masterplan being presented for approval. This has included extensive liaison by both the landowners and Council officers with locally elected representatives of the Parish Council.



Proposals adjoining Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green at consultation stage

At draft masterplan stage, the area of the Crown Estate land (EL3) adjoining Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green, in particular, was envisaged as integrating into / with the villages by extending the existing green adjoining the school into the site. Potential residential development blocks were shown backing onto existing gardens.

This reflected the outcomes of the masterplan workshops and process to that point and an objective view that the scheme should seek to integrate existing and new. However, the clear feedback of the community and the Parish Council through consultation was that Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green should retain their distinct identities and be provided with clearer separation from the new development. Detailed discussions have been held with the Parish Council and within the masterplan project team on an appropriate 'buffer' in this area of the site while still retaining connectivity. The outcomes are shown below.



Officers retain some concerns over this approach in design and community integration terms. However, the 'buffer' has been designed to provide an area in which meaningful open space and community provision can be made rather than 'leftover space' with no clear purpose. It is considered this approach reflects an appropriate balance between professional and public opinion. Further design work will take place through Design Coding and eventually, the detailed reserved matters application(s) for these areas of the site.

The boundary of the allocated land is separated from Putteridge Bury by currently open land. Part of this adjoining the administrative boundary has recently been converted to a park to facilitate planning proposals within Luton Borough. The Council's evidence to the Local Plan examination recognised that land adjoining the Bury might also be used for playing fields associated with the new development. This is shown in the masterplan. It is important to note that this area remains within the Green Belt which provides appropriate controls over the extent of any associated facilities or infrastructure.

Sustainability

- 8.25. In September 2024, Cabinet approved the Council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which supports the local plan. This identifies a series of standards against key sustainability themes. The masterplan sets target levels of achievement against the SPD's key themes. These are shown below.

THEMES	STANDARD
Optimising Passive Design & Fabric Performance	Silver
Achieving Low Carbon Energy	Silver
Minimising Carbon Footprint	Silver at a minimum, but to be confirmed in detailed planning
Healthy Placemaking	Gold
Promoting Biodiversity (3 elements)	Silver at minimum, with Gold achieved on specific parts of the site
Sustainable Travel	Silver at minimum, with Gold achieved on specific parts of the site
Conserving Water	Silver at a minimum, but to be confirmed in detailed planning
Incorporating Sustainable Drainage	Silver at a minimum, but to be confirmed in detailed planning

- 8.26. These are targets and subject to more detailed design and viability. Ranges are also used where there are multiple components to certain themes and differing outcomes are anticipated.

Next steps

- 8.27. Subject to Full Council approval, the masterplan will be adopted as a material consideration for any future planning decisions relating to the site. Any existing or future applications will be assessed to ensure they broadly conform to and / or facilitate the implementation of the parameters and principles set out in this document. Any substantive deviation from the masterplan will need to be justified, for example if new information comes to light that isn't available at this stage in the process.
- 8.28. Through the joint work on the masterplan a series of actions and issues have been identified that will need to be addressed as the scheme progresses towards delivery. The masterplan provides appropriate 'hooks' to accommodate these matters. The most

appropriate place for these to be resolved and secured is through related planning applications and / or once the developer(s) of the site are known:

- Developing detailed proposals for:
 - The precise nature and specification of transport routes and hierarchy, including further consideration of lower-level street and block structures within the site;
 - Uses to be accommodated in the local centre; this is to include liaison with the NHS to ensure sufficient GP capacity is provided across the wider edge of Luton area having regard to existing provision and the cumulative impact of development proposals around the town
- Undertaking further design and feasibility work to establish the most appropriate location(s) and or solution(s) for the primary schools. For the western school, this will include further ongoing engagement with Cockernhoe CofE School, HCC and the Diocese. For the south-eastern school this will include detailed exploration of site feasibility and design to ensure the most appropriate site and layout can be delivered and is brought forward.
- Working with Luton Borough Council and Hertfordshire Council to ensure delivery of appropriate connections between the edge of the Crown Estate land ownership and the highway boundary of Hayling Drive in Luton;
- Liaison with HCC and bus operators to identify and secure the most appropriate route(s) and schedule(s) for bus service(s) to serve the site.
- Production of a Design Code(s) to refine character areas and / or detailed design instruction for reserved matters applications building on the broad design principles in the masterplan
- Determining detailed housing mix for individual phases
- Identifying specific projects for off-site contributions towards matters such as sports provision and sustainable travel improvements
- Ensuring the impacts of construction are appropriately managed and reduce impacts upon existing residents to the best of the development's ability; this is a detailed matter that will be dealt with by planning condition.
- Considering and securing the most appropriate management and stewardship model(s) for the social, green, blue [water] and transport infrastructure that will be provided

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 4.8.2(i) of the Constitution contains a general power for Full Council to receive and debate reports from Cabinet.
- 9.3. There is no statutorily set definition of a 'masterplan'. Unlike, for example, the Local Plan or any Supplementary Planning Documents, they are not formally defined or regulated through relevant planning acts or associated regulations – either in terms of content or process. This means there is discretion as to how, when and whether they are produced and / or approved on the part of both the applicant and the Council.

- 9.4. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan provides a clear policy definition within the Council's statutory Development Plan of what is expected within a masterplan and the design outcomes that should be achieved.
- 9.5. Terms of Reference for the Project Board and guidance on the approval processes for masterplans have been presented to and endorsed by Cabinet, most recently in September 2024 and published on the Council website.
- 9.6. These set out that Masterplans will be subject to formal approval by Cabinet and Full Council where a masterplan is to be adopted as a material consideration in advance of the determination of the relevant planning application(s).
- 9.7. Government Planning Practice Guidance states that a material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (e.g., whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission).
- 9.8. Formal, regulatory approval for any development of the site will be secured through any subsequent planning permission(s). These will be considered through established processes and legislation including presentation to Planning Control Committee.
- 9.9. Any approval of the Strategic Masterplan is without prejudice to the consideration and determination of any future planning application(s).
- 9.10. PPAs are made pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Acts 1972, 2000 and 2003 and under associated planning legislation and guidance, including but not limited to the 2008 Act. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 allows local planning authorities to charge for providing discretionary services and the legislation is clear that, where charges are made, they must not exceed the cost of providing the service.
- 9.11. At its meeting on 16 March 2021, Cabinet resolved (item 109) as part of the Local Plan Implementation report to approve the North Hertfordshire Masterplanning Principles. Within this document paragraph 2.11 states: The Council would normally expect a PPA to be used to support the preparation of Strategic Masterplans and significant development planning applications.
- 9.12. Under the Council's constitution, paragraph 14.6.4 (ii) authorises the Service Director Regulatory to enter into contracts for the supply of services, in this case the use of consultants to act on the Council's behalf. 14.6.4 (viii) authorises the setting of fees and charges, in this case to seek to recover these costs from the Developer.
- 9.13. The PPA states that "*Nothing in the [agreement] will restrict or inhibit HCC or NHDC from exercising their statutory functions and views about the development and nothing in this agreement shall predetermine the outcome of any planning application*".
- 9.14. Local authorities are under a statutory Duty to Cooperate on strategic planning matters that span administrative boundary when preparing their Local Plans. Plans which fail to comply with the Duty cannot pass examination. This Council's compliance with the Duty to Cooperate, including by making provision for unmet housing needs arising from Luton, was a key element of the Local Plan examination and an important factor in the plan

being found legally compliant and sound. This is extensively discussed in the Inspector's report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The Council resources for masterplanning and implementation work are drawn from existing staff, with additional support from specialist consultants as required. The PPA seeks to recover the costs of undertaking this work. The costs will be monitored to ensure on-going cost recovery.
- 10.2. For any activities that cannot be charged through the PPA, a ring-fenced Masterplanning reserve and / or approved budgets will be used.
- 10.3. The principle of setting of fees and charges for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) was agreed by the Service Director: Regulatory in consultation with the Service Director: Finance and the Executive Member for Planning & Transport in January 2022.
- 10.4. Funding was secured through a PPA to support the Council's input to this masterplan including the recovery of external consultancy costs. Additional resource was funded through the use of approximately £40,000 of Government grant specifically ringfenced for the delivery of sites of at least 2,000 homes. This included funding for Hyas Associates, who specialise in supporting local authorities on large site delivery, and who have provided consultancy advice and project management services to the Council for this masterplan.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. The Council previously monitored a specific Masterplanning risk. However, this was not carried forward in the 2024/25 Council Delivery Plan; progress is dependent on third parties and council activities are considered business-as-usual. Strategic oversight continues via the Project Board and reports to Cabinet and Full Council.
- 11.3. Notwithstanding, the key risks that were identified remain pertinent to consideration of individual reports and masterplans:
 - Risk of poor scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to local character and context
 - Risk that strategic sites do not maximise contribution to corporate objectives and priorities of climate change, environment, economy and place
 - Risk of delay to delivery of strategic sites if masterplan process is delayed or stalled or provides insufficient information to guide subsequent planning applications
 - Failure to secure funding to resource the process
 - Reduction in pre-application income and delay to income from planning applications
 - Failure to retain/recruit sufficiently experienced officers
 - Risk of adverse appeal findings on other/non-Local Plan sites if delivery is delayed or stalled

- 11.4. Positive decisions on officer and / or Project Board-supported masterplans mitigate against many of these factors by maintaining tangible progress on key sites that are essential to delivery of the Local Plan and securing an appropriate design framework against which future planning proposals can be assessed. Adverse decisions are likely to reduce developer confidence in the process, including negative reputational outcomes for the Council, and an increase in schemes which seek to meet the requirements of Policy SP9 directly through the Development Management process.

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. The site which is subject to this masterplan was allocated for development through the Council's adopted Local Plan. An Equality Impact Assessment was produced in 2017 assessing the plan's compliance with relevant legislation and requirements and submitted to Government as part of the plan's examination.
- 12.3. No issues with the Equality Impact Assessment were raised by the Inspector throughout the examination report. Paragraph 11 of their report on the plan, issued in 2022, concluded:

I [the Inspector] have had due regard to the aims expressed in S149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. This has included my consideration of several matters during the examination including the provision of traveller sites to meet need and accessible and adaptable housing.

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 allocation of the site in the Local Plan (and the Local Plan in general) was informed by a statutory Sustainability Appraisal which considered the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the Plan. This informed the mitigation measures contained in Policy SP9, the site-specific policy for the site and general policies on matters such as biodiversity and transport.
- 14.2. Any future outline planning application(s) for this site will be accompanied by a statutory Environmental Statement and impact assessments. These will inform the detailed mitigation measures that will be required as part of the scheme and will be secured through any permission(s) and associated legal agreement(s).

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 None

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Framework
Note: The appendices to the Masterplan Framework which form part of the document to be approved have not been uploaded as part of the committee agenda due to their size but are available through the Council website in the East of Luton Masterplan link listed in the background papers below
- 16.2 Appendix B – East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Framework - Officer summary document
- 16.3 Appendix C – Non material amendments to masterplan between Cabinet and Full Council

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Local Plan Implementation - report to Cabinet, March 2021](#) [including masterplanning principles and establishment of Project Board]
- 18.2 [Local Plan adoption – report to Cabinet and Full Council, November 2022](#)
- 18.3 [Strategic Planning Matters – report to Cabinet, September 2024](#) [including endorsement of current Project Board Terms of Reference]
- 18.4 [North Herts Council website – East of Luton Masterplan](#) [including masterplan appendices, statement of consultation and Design Review Panel report]

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November 2024



East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Framework

Design Parameters & Principles



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SAVILLS URBAN DESIGN STUDIO

Desk Top Publishing and Graphic Design by:
Savills Urban Design Studio



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- e) Land use framework

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6. Delivery

Appendices *(separate document)*

- A1 Local built form character appraisal
- A2 Character area outlines
- A3 Indicative street hierarchy





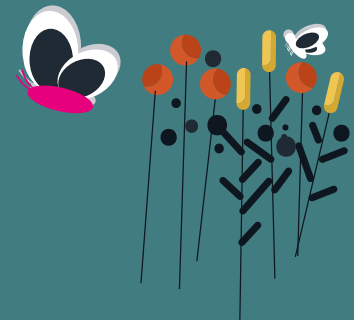


Executive Summary

Policies in the **North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031)**, supported by national policy and guidance, require and encourage the preparation of this Strategic Masterplan for the allocated site known as 'East of Luton'. The Strategic Masterplan will inform and provide the framework for subsequent decisions on applications for Outline Planning Permission, and the evolution of detailed design proposals through applications for the approval of Reserved Matters.

This Strategic Masterplan demonstrates how a **new community can be sensitively designed within the existing landscape**, in a manner which respects existing local character, produces a net gain in biodiversity and delivers wider benefits in the local area, via the provision of community infrastructure that will serve both new and existing residents, together with an enhanced movement and **greenspace network that will promote healthy lifestyles and facilitates active travel**.

The Masterplan has been informed by **significant engagement** with stakeholders and the public, including workshops, consultation events and one-to-one and ad hoc meetings. The involvement of the public and local representatives in particular, such as the Parish Council and its' sub-committees, has led to material changes to the draft proposals, **improving the interface** of the new community with the existing villages and integration with the edge of Luton, as well as the definition of village character.



Strategic Design Principles

1. Identify natural features



Identify the area's natural features that have influenced how new development can be accommodated on the Site.

2. Establish Green Infrastructure network



Shows how the development can incorporate a network of Green Infrastructure that comprises natural and semi-natural features including parks, streams woodlands, green corridors, ecosystems, street trees, private gardens and green roofs.

3. Integrate Blue Infrastructure



Show how the development can incorporate Blue Infrastructure: features related to water, such as ponds, streams and drainage systems.

4. Respond to townscape and heritage



5. Include greens corridors to mitigate impact on local communities



6. Deliver varied but harmonious character areas



Shows how development will respond to townscape and heritage, including highlighting valued buildings and features, and views into and out of the Site.

Show how the development will respect the existing settlements of Cockernhoe, Tea Green and Mangrove Green

Shows how the development will respond to existing conditions, the immediate context and the role that each area plays to create varied but harmonious character areas.

Strategic Design Principles

7. Establish a clear movement network



8. Deliver a structure of streets and spaces



9. Accommodate public transport



Shows the proposed movement network, showing the routes that will connect the new development to Luton and other local destinations. How the network is designed will help to walk and cycle rather than go by car.

Shows the proposed structure of streets and spaces, including building frontages, perimeter blocks, green spaces and various types of street.

Shows how the movement network will accommodate public transport, including where the bus stops will be and how far people need to walk to them.

10. Provide a mix of uses



Shows the mix of uses. In time a greater variety of uses will be possible: the scheme allows for these to be provided as the area evolves.

11. Create a legible place



Shows proposed features of the place that will help people to find their way around, including views, vistas and notable buildings.

12. Increase density in relation to accessibility



Shows how the parts of the area closest to active travel and public transport routes will have the highest density, to encourage and increase the use of sustainable modes of travel.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- Public Open Spaces
- Food growing
- Orchards
- Village greens
- Woodland edge
- Ecological links



BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Wetland Edge
- Cascade Pond
- Wet Ponds
- Bioswale



EDUCATION FACILITIES

- 2 Primary Schools
- 1 Secondary School
- Highly accessible with public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes
- Safe crossing points
- Landmarks



NEW CONNECTIONS

- Pedestrian permeability into Luton
- Primary Infrastructure
- Bus loop
- Pedestrian and cycle routes



NEW COMMUNITY

- Organic neighbourhood
- Woodland neighbourhood
- Active frontages
- High quality design
- Mix of housing typologies



LOCAL CENTRE

- Formal streets
- Formal public spaces
- Local shops
- Community Hub
- Multi-functional community spaces





The Strategic Masterplan Site: The Strategic Masterplan site is shown edged red. It is shown for indicative purposes only and should not be relied upon to be exact. It reflects comprises land, principally that comprising Local Plan site references EL1, EL2 and EL3, together with associated land required for infrastructure provision, within the control of Bloor Homes, AT Oliver and The Crown Estate, together with areas of adopted highway land. It is referred to throughout this Strategic Masterplan as 'the Site'.

- Local Centre
- Community Hub
- Allotments
- Community Garden
- Orchard
- Housing
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Playing Fields
- Pedestrian Link
- Woodland
- Primary Street
- Village Green

Masterplanning, planning and design process

This flow diagram outlines the current and future stages of the masterplanning, planning and design process for the delivery of the 'East of Luton' allocation (Local Plan site references EL1, EL2 and EL3). The stages involve three main phases:

1. Strategic Masterplan:

- **Stakeholder Workshops (2022 to 2024):** Conducting workshops with a wide variety of stakeholder to reappraise the baseline and define key parameters.
- **Public and Key Stakeholder Public Consultation (2024):** Engaging with the public and stakeholders to seek feedback on the draft Strategic Masterplan proposals.
- **Strategic Masterplan (2024):** Developing a comprehensive Strategic Masterplan for the Site.
- **Strategic Masterplan: Placemaking Addendum (2024):** Adding placemaking guidelines based on an assessment of local character.

2. Outline Planning Applications:

- **Parameter Plans:** Establishing key spatial and development parameters.
- **Design and Access Statement:** Setting out design principles and access strategies.
- **Illustrative Masterplan:** Creating a more detailed and realistic visual representation of the overall masterplan.

- **Outline Applications and Statutory Consultation:** Submitting applications for Outline Planning Permission to establish the key principles and parameters and overall layout of the development.

3. Reserved Matters Application:

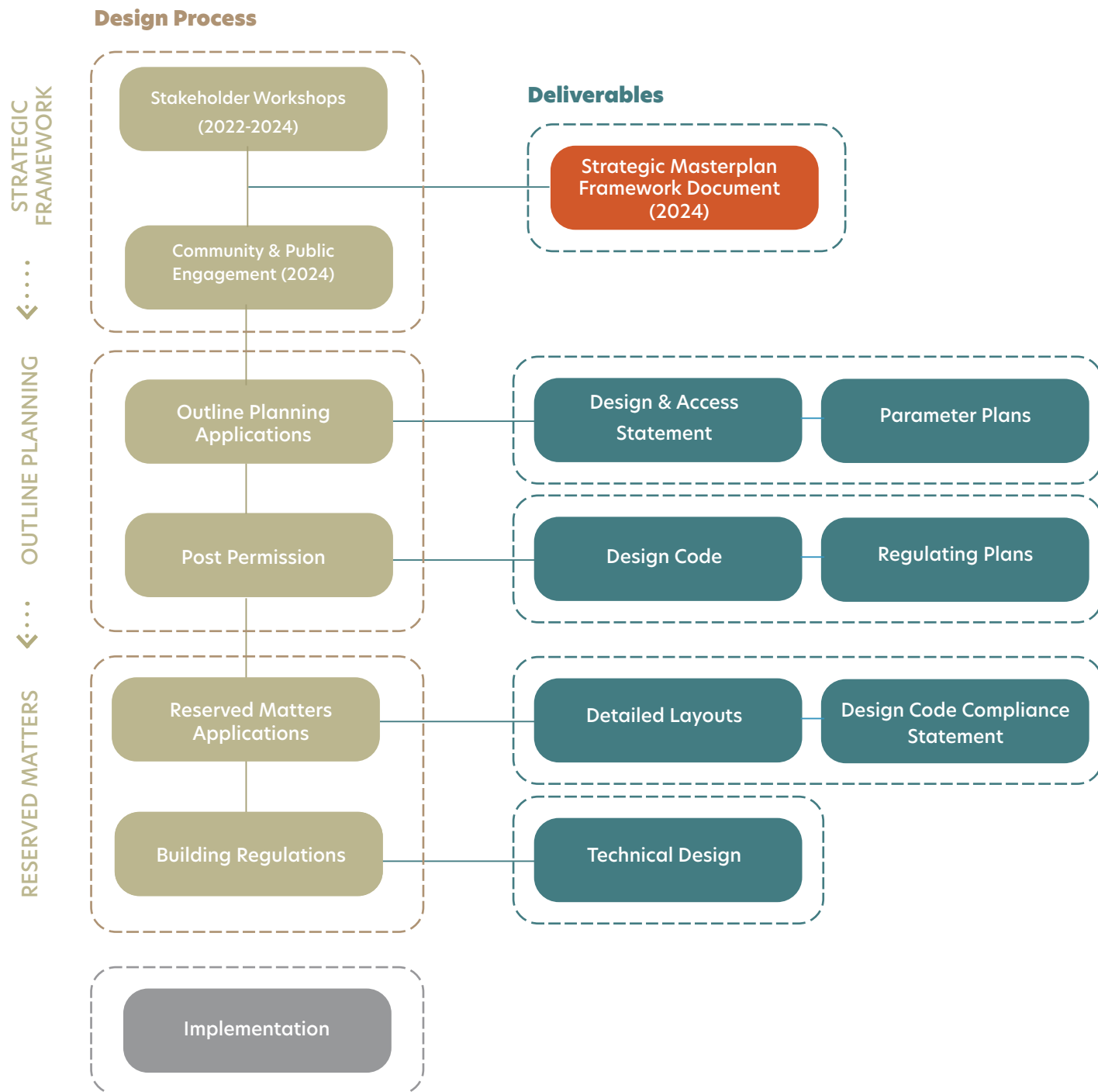
- **Design Code:** Defining detailed design standards.
- **Appointment of Development Partners:** Selecting partners for development.
- **Public and Stakeholder Consultation:** Continued engagement with stakeholders.
- **Preparation of Detailed Masterplans with Design Code Compliance Statements:** Creating detailed masterplans that comply with the design code.
- **Reserved Matters Submissions and Statutory Consultation:** Detailed Reserved Matters submissions (appearance, layout, scale, landscaping) for individual areas and parts of the development.

The purpose of this document:

Policy SP9 of the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan explains:

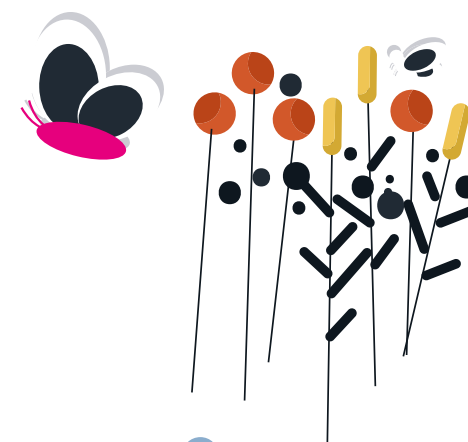
"Masterplans support comprehensive, integrated, well-planned and sustainable places in terms of the natural, built and historic environment. An effective masterplanning process helps to support a multi-disciplinary, integrated, inclusive and collaborative approach to securing quality design and delivery. It also assists with resolving and co-ordinating planning issues at an early stage in the process speeding up decision-making and driving forward delivery through a shared vision."

This Strategic Masterplan is the product of this objective.



1. Introduction

- 2. Context and opportunity
 - 3. Vision and objectives
 - 4. Masterplan
 - a) Masterplan framework
 - b) Landscape and open space framework
 - c) Urban design framework
 - d) Movement and connectivity framework
 - e) Land use framework
 - 5. Sustainability, energy, water & waste
 - 6. Delivery
- Appendices
- A1 Local built form character appraisal
 - A2 Character area outlines
 - A3 Indicative street hierarchy



Introduction



Figure 1. Aerial view of the site looking west

Introduction

The **North Hertfordshire Local Plan** 2011-2031 (adopted December 2022) (the Local Plan) allocates land parcels EL1, EL2 and EL3 (as identified on the Local Plan Policies Map), referred to collectively as ‘East of Luton’, for the development of approximately 2,100 homes, community facilities and associated infrastructure to meet the need for homes identified in North Hertfordshire and neighbouring Luton.

The allocation / Site (a total of approximately 130 ha), is controlled by three parties: to the east of Luton Road and Chalk Hill, Bloor Homes and A T Oliver (ATO Holdings Ltd) control approximately 66% and 9% of the allocation respectively (Local Plan refs. EL1 and EL2). To the west of Luton Road and the south-west of the villages of Mangrove Green and Cockernhoe, the land is owned by The Crown Estate – approximately 25% of the allocation (Local Plan ref. EL3).

The work undertaken in preparing the Masterplan has also built on over a decade of research, assessment, analysis, and discussions , and the more detailed work undertaken to support applications for planning permission.

The draft Masterplan was subject to consideration by an independent Design Review Panel in summer 2023 and then subject to an extensive and wide-ranging community and stakeholder engagement exercise in early 2024. A separate report on this engagement will be published alongside the final version of this Masterplan.

Format and Structure of this Strategic Masterplan

- The Masterplan begins (Section 2) by considering the site’s context and the opportunity presented, establishing **Strategic Design Principles 1 to 6**.
 - It then (Section 3) sets an overall Vision and twelve **Objectives** for the development.
 - The proposed **Masterplan** for the Site is then described (Section 4) in terms of:
 - the overall masterplan framework;
 - a landscape and open space framework, that also considers ecology and biodiversity net gain;
 - an urban design framework, that considers building typologies and density;
 - a movement and connectivity framework, that prioritises active travel; and
 - a land use framework, setting out the amount of different land uses and how these will be distributed;these leading to the identification of **Strategic Design Principles 7 to 12**.
 - Sustainability, energy, water and waste are then discussed (Section 5); as is
 - Delivery, including phasing and longer-term stewardship (Section 6).
- Appended to the Strategic Masterplan (Appendices A1 to A3):
- A detailed appraisal of local built form and its character;
 - Proposed character area outlines; and
 - An indicative street hierarchy.

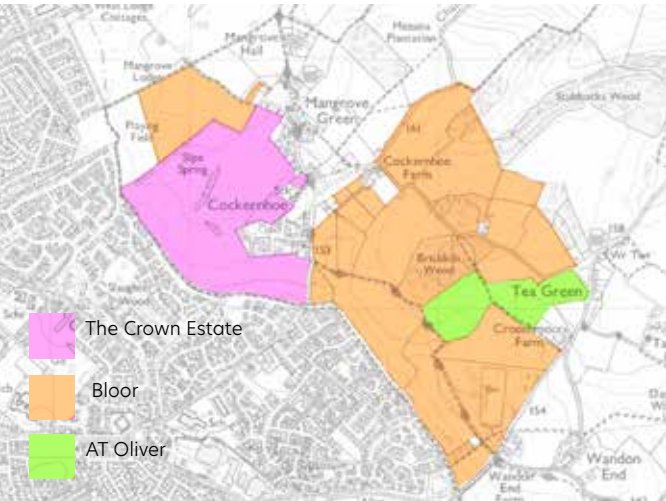


Figure 2. Ownership Plan



Figure 3. Context Plan

Policy context

The Strategic Masterplan is informed by the requirements of the Local Plan, particularly Policy SP19, which sets out specific requirements for development of the East of Luton Strategic Housing allocation. In addition to approximately 2,100 homes, the allocation is also required to provide:

- 4 forms of entry of both primary and secondary schools;
- Policy compliant provision of affordable homes (40%) - Policies SP8 and HS2;
- A new mixed-use Local Centre;
- Environmental enhancements such as new planting and protection and enhancement for Stubbs Wood and Brickkiln Wood; and Connectivity with existing Public Rights of Way (PRoWs), including the Chilterns Way.

Development around the existing settlements of Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green and the historic setting of Putteridge Bury is also a key issue to be considered.

The requirements of Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability, which sets out the District Council's approach towards masterplanning, has also been key to the preparation of the Strategic Masterplan. The suite of documents produced by the District Council to inform the masterplanning process - most notably North Hertfordshire Masterplanning Principles (March 2023) and Sustainability Principles (2023) - have also informed the preparation of the Strategic Masterplan. The former has provided a clear process by which the Strategic Masterplan has been produced, the latter guiding principles that have informed each element of the Masterplan.

As required by Policy SP9, this Strategic Masterplan:

- Is based on a multi-disciplinary integrated, inclusive and collaborative approach.
- Has been produced on a staged basis from site evaluation and technical evidence, to vision, place-making objectives, options and final masterplan.
- Sets out the quantum, scale, type, mix and distribution of land uses, housing and community facilities.
- Sets out a green and blue infrastructure framework including scale, distribution and type of spaces, habitats and sustainable drainage features.
- Sets out a movement framework including access points, street hierarchy and active travel linkages.
- Sets out an urban design framework and design principles that responds to local character.
- Sets out a sustainability and energy framework.
- Includes an illustrative masterplan, appropriate to the scale of the site.
- Proposes a delivery, phasing and management strategy that is flexible to changing circumstances.

Planning applications

Policies SP9 and SP19 set out that, where applications have already been submitted to the District Council, a Strategic Masterplan be agreed with the District Council prior to or as part of the grant of planning permission. The Strategic Masterplan will then provide certainty for subsequent planning decisions such as the approval of Reserved Matters.

This Strategic Masterplan has been produced within the context of four existing live applications: two applications for Outline Planning Permission; and two applications for full planning permission. The former two applications were submitted by Bloor Homes in relation to the land within its control (which forms parts of parcels EL1 and EL2 as identified in the Local Plan), and by The Crown Estate in relation to the within its ownership (which forms the whole of land parcel EL3). The latter two applications are for the proposed main access points into the development: one from Crawley Green Road / Luton Road (submitted by both Bloor Homes and The Crown Estate); and one from Eaton Green Road / Darley Road (submitted by Bloor Homes).

Ongoing engagement

Reflecting the work to date the Promoters will continue to work with stakeholders, public bodies, and local residents, as appropriate, through the preparation and consideration of the planning applications, and thereafter during the implementation and delivery of the development (see more on longer-term stewardship, management and maintenance in Section 6 of this Masterplan).

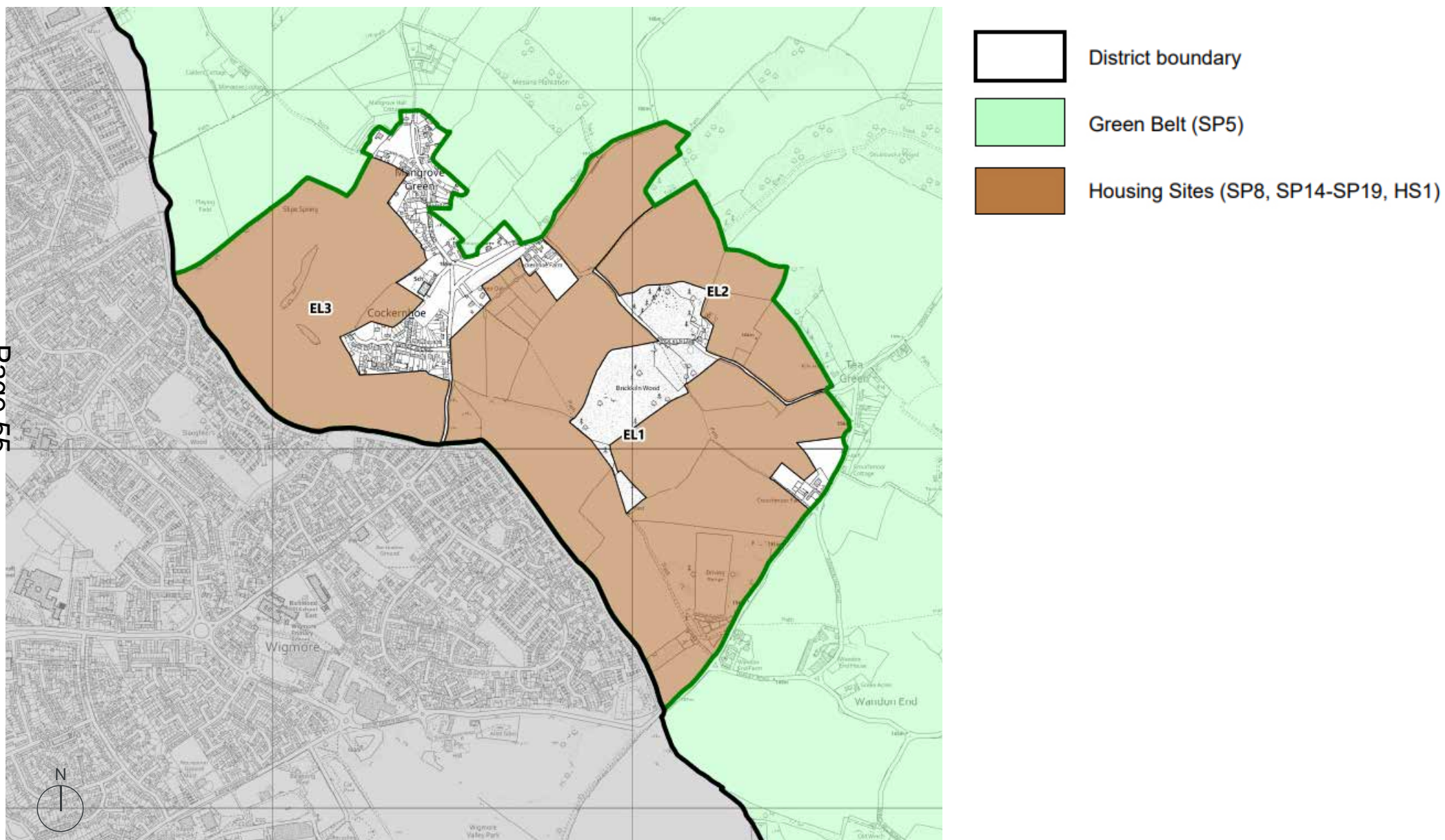


Figure 4. Local Plan extract showing the East of Luton allocation

Stakeholder and community engagement

The aim of the engagement exercise underlying the Strategic Masterplan has been twofold.

- Firstly, to raise awareness of the proposals and give all stakeholders an opportunity to be involved and influence the proposals.
- Secondly, to put the current phase of the masterplanning, planning and design process into context – showing that there is much more detail yet to come, and there will be more opportunities to engage.

To progress the Strategic Masterplan, Bloor Homes, A. Oliver, and The Crown Estate (the Promoters) entered into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with the District Council and Hertfordshire County Council (the County Council / HCC). The PPA drew to the table various stakeholders, consultants, and interested parties.

An Engagement Strategy was agreed with the District Council in to identify the technical consultees (e.g. highways, education, etc), stakeholders and parts of the community who would be consulted.

A series of four stakeholder workshops were held between November 2022 and November 2023, with landscape considerations and ecology baseline providing the starting layer given the significant existing natural features:

- Workshop 1: Landscape and biodiversity
- Workshop 2: Access and drainage
- Workshop 3: Placemaking, land use and built form

- Workshop 4: Sustainability, delivery/infrastructure and engagement

Following the workshops, a broad demographic a wide range of promotion activities were carried out, from the issue of physical flyers and posters, to digital advertising and local media slots.

To encourage comment, a diverse mix of ways to engage and provide feedback including in-person events across multiple days, interactive digital engagement, and opportunities for written and verbal feedback.

Of the 218 individuals who provided feedback on the consultation, 71 feedback forms were received in hard copy or digitally, with 59 sets of feedback via email, 4 people commented by phone, and 84 people left comments on the interactive consultation map on the website.

The most frequent comments included:

- A strong preference for new GP services on site;
- A preference from residents of local villages to incorporate green 'green corridors' in the plans;
- The importance of ensuring connectivity through the site and to existing networks into Luton and the countryside;
- The need to manage demand and traffic on the local road network;
- A desire for any new development to enhance biodiversity on site including protecting existing and creating new green spaces; and
- The need to carefully manage drainage and flooding risks.



Figure 5. Stakeholder workshop

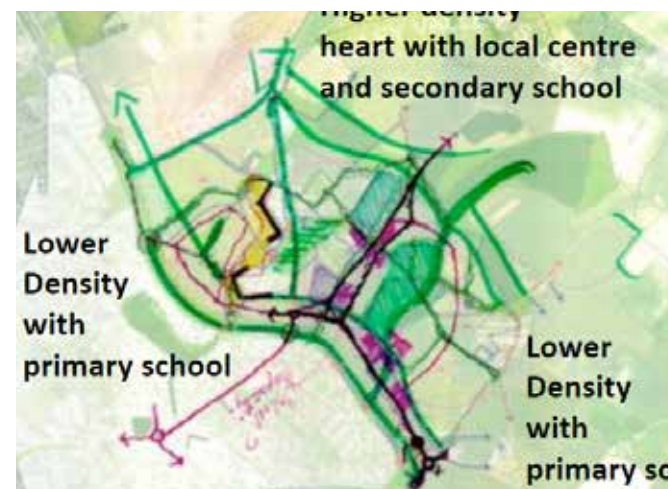


Figure 6. Workshop sketch plans



Figure 7. Engagement sessions montage

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Context and opportunity

Location, amenities and services

Located in North Hertfordshire but adjacent to the north-eastern edge of the town of Luton, the Site enjoys access to nearby towns and villages, beautiful open countryside and a good range of services nearby.

The Site is also adjacent to the small villages of Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green, which collectively include village greens, pubs, play areas and a school.

Cockernhoe and the wider area east of Luton are located within the Parish of Offley. In the south of the Parish, the Cockernhoe Ward covers the area between Luton and Lilley Bottom Road, and includes the three villages and the whole of the Site.

To the south-west of the Site, the Luton suburb of Wigmore includes a primary school, church, health centre, fitness club, supermarket, Wigmore Park and other shops and eating places.

Luton Town Centre is approximately 3.5 km from the Site and provides retail, employment, health, entertainment and leisure services and facilities. London Luton Airport is located around 3 km to the south and Luton Airport Parkway Station around 4.5 km from the Site.

Existing Green Space Audit

A desk-top audit has been carried out to identify parks, recreational areas and natural open spaces within a 5 km radius of the Site. This audit has identified a wide range of different types of open space, providing recreational, sports and community facilities, with which the proposal will be integrated.

Walking & Cycling

The Site is crossed by several PRoWs that offer the opportunity for the development to connect to the wider PRoW network. The Chiltern Way long distance walking route runs from Darley Road to the south-east, across the Site - alongside PRoW Offley 002 - through to Luton Road and Mangrove Road to the north. Two other PRoWs cross the Site - 'Offley 039' in the south-west and 'Kings Walden 010' in the south-east.

Public Transport

Several bus services operate within Wigmore and other areas of Luton close to the Site, with and one passing through the Site via Luton Road and Brick Kiln Lane. The most notable services are: These include:

- Service 88 (Luton to Hitchin), an east - west route passing through the Site, connecting Hitchin to Luton via Darley Road, Brick Kiln Lane and Luton Road. It serves Breachwood Green, Tea Green, Cockernhoe (Green), Wigmore Local Centre and Luton Town Centre. It operates five services per day, Monday to Friday, and four on a Saturday.

- 1 Primary School
- 2 Secondary School
- 3 Nursery School
- 4 Community Centres
- 5 Post Office
- 6 Local Shop
- 7 Supermarket
- 8 Pubs/Restaurants
- 9 Place of Worship
- 10 Medical Facilities
- 11 Library
- 12 Leisure Centre
- 13 Parks/Garden
- 14 Sports Pitches
- 15 Allotments
- 16 Luton Airport
- 17 Employment/Industry
- 18 New Century Park (proposed employment area)

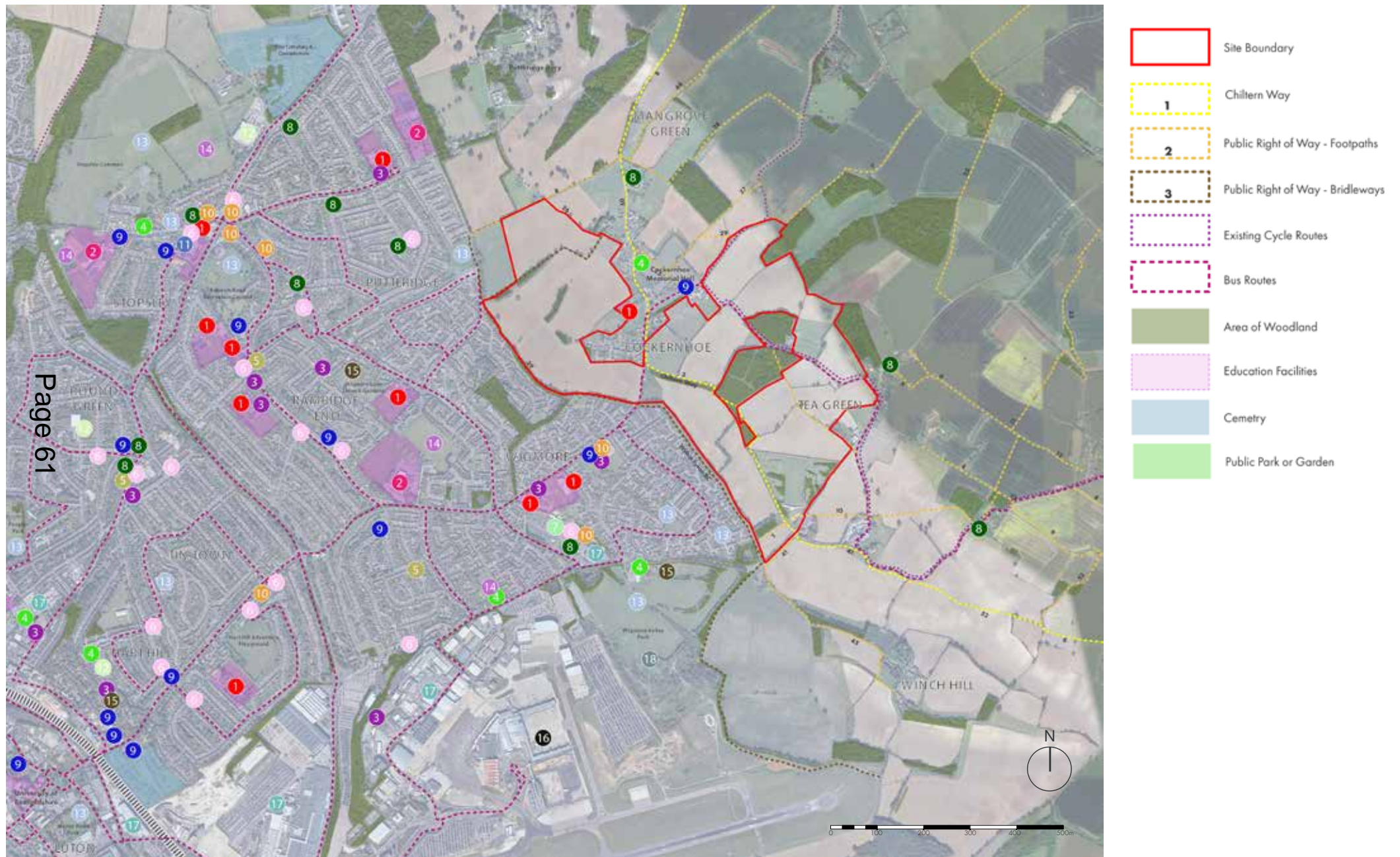


Figure 8. Site context plan showing key services, facilities and public open spaces

- Service 17/ 17A – provides a loop service from/to Luton town-centre, via Colwell Rise and Hedley Rise, coming within 200m of the boundary of the Site.

Highway Network

The Site includes / is adjacent to the following:

- Luton Road – a single carriageway road, passing through the centre of the Site connecting Crawley Green Road to the south-west to Chalk Hill to the north-east;
- Darley Road and Stony Lane – single carriageway roads adjacent to the southern edge of the Site, extending from Eaton Green Road within Luton to the south-west into the North Hertfordshire countryside.
- Chalk Hill – a single carriageway road extending north-eastwards from the Site into the countryside; the width of the road is characteristically narrow with ‘passing’ places;
- Brick Kiln Lane – a single carriageway road, passing through the Site and connecting Stony Lane to the south-east with Luton Road / Chalk Hill to the north-west.

The nature of these roads, including their widths and availability of other highway land, will influence the detailed design of connections between the Site and its surroundings.

Landscape and built form context

The following pages set out an assessment of the surrounding landscape, its topography, character – both more widely and with reference to more localised areas, ecological and arboricultural considerations.

Contextual analysis of the landscape within the site and surrounding area is described below and has shaped the evolution and eventual layout of the development.

The Site is also located immediately adjacent to three villages – Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green, as well as the urban edge of Luton. The local character of the built form within these settlements provides additional context.

Analysis of this context supports the creation of landscapes that not only meet ecological and recreational needs but also strengthen community identity and well-being through access to nature, and will provide a robust basis for a strategic landscape and open space framework.

Landscape and context

Aside from its significant natural capital, the site is located immediately adjacent to Luton, benefiting from a range of services as well as convenient access to nearby towns and villages. Contextual analysis of the site and surroundings is described below and has shaped the Masterplan Framework. A more detailed summary of the baseline material for all technical disciplines is included at Appendix A.

This section outlines the approach to strategic landscape analysis, highlighting methods for assessing ecological assets, visual quality, and functional needs. Through detailed character assessments, unique landscape attributes and opportunities for improvement are assessed, ensuring that green spaces are integrated thoughtfully and effectively into the urban fabric.

This analysis supports the creation of landscapes that not only meet ecological and recreational needs but also strengthen community identity and well-being.

The findings inform a strategic framework for landscape planning, offering insights into how thoughtful analysis and character assessments can guide the development of vibrant, sustainable new place for Luton.

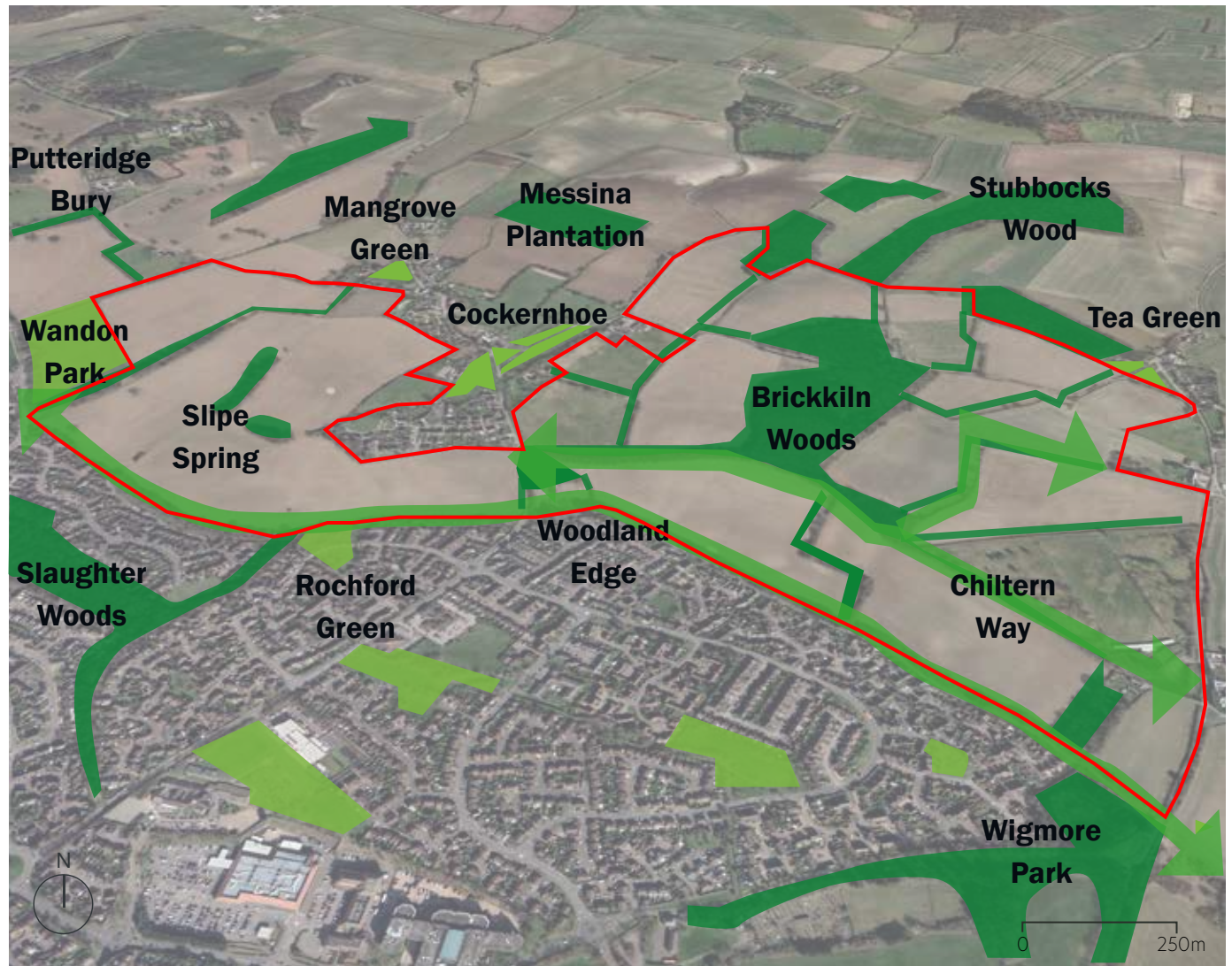


Figure 9. Landscape Context

Topography and drainage

The topography of the wider landscape is characterised by the ‘Breachwood Green Ridge’ located to the northeast of Luton. The Site lies on the lower southwest facing slopes of the ridge.

The Site slopes downhill from the north-eastern boundaries to the south-western boundaries along the Luton settlement edge. The 3-D terrain diagram below shows the high points located near Mangrove Green to the north-east and north of Cockernhoe at around 165m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). This forms part of a local ridge as shown on the previous plan.

Policy SP19 requires that the proposal will need to

incorporate a Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). SuDS are designed to manage surface water locally, as close to the source as possible, to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment.

The geology underlying the Site will affect the design of the SuDS proposed, further detail on which will be included with the planning applications that will follow this Strategic Masterplan.

The Site generally falls from the north-east to the south-west and south, meaning that the south-western periphery of the Site will likely form the most appropriate location for a major part of the SuDS.

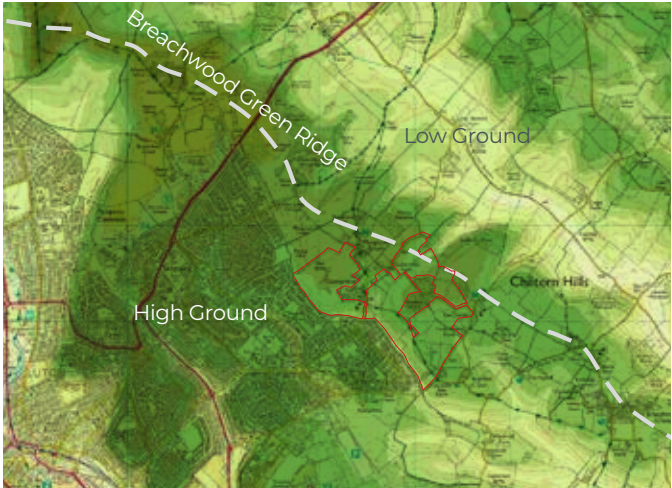


Figure 11. Topographic context



Figure 10. Site topography

Strategic Landscape Character

The Site and its immediate context are not located within a national or local quality landscape designation. The Site forms a very small part of the extensive Chilterns National Character Area (NCA). A small part of the Breachwood Green Ridge Landscape Character Area (LCA) as identified within the North Herts Landscape Study.

The Site lies within the Breachwood Green Ridge LCA, which features a gently rolling plateau ridge landscape, mainly large arable fields with smaller pockets of grazing around settlements and occasional scattered dwellings, with a field pattern degraded. A strong cultural pattern remains based on the layout of lanes and older woodlands.

The Site is split into three parcels separated by Luton Road running north to south and Brick Kiln Lane running west to east. The main features defining its character are:

- Adjacent villages of Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green, farmsteads and individual properties
- Countryside, Stubbocks Wood and the ridgeline defining Lilley valley to the north-east
- A landscape of arable fields with native hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees
- Distinctive woodland blocks, such as Brickkiln Wood and Slipe Spring
- A gently rolling plateau towards Luton
- Three PRoWs, including the Chiltern Way, crossing the area, including a heavily treed walkway running along the southern side of the Site
- The urban edge of Wigmore
- Local roads and lanes – Luton Road, Darley Road, Chalk Hill, Brick Kiln Lane, Stony Lane

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling plateau landform
- Large scale arable fields with scattered farmsteads and dwellings
- Mature remnant trees and remaining hedgerows of diverse species, with mixed woodland of old deciduous and established plantations
- Water tower at Tea Green
- Telecommunications mast at Hoo Park
- Parkland at Putteridge Bury

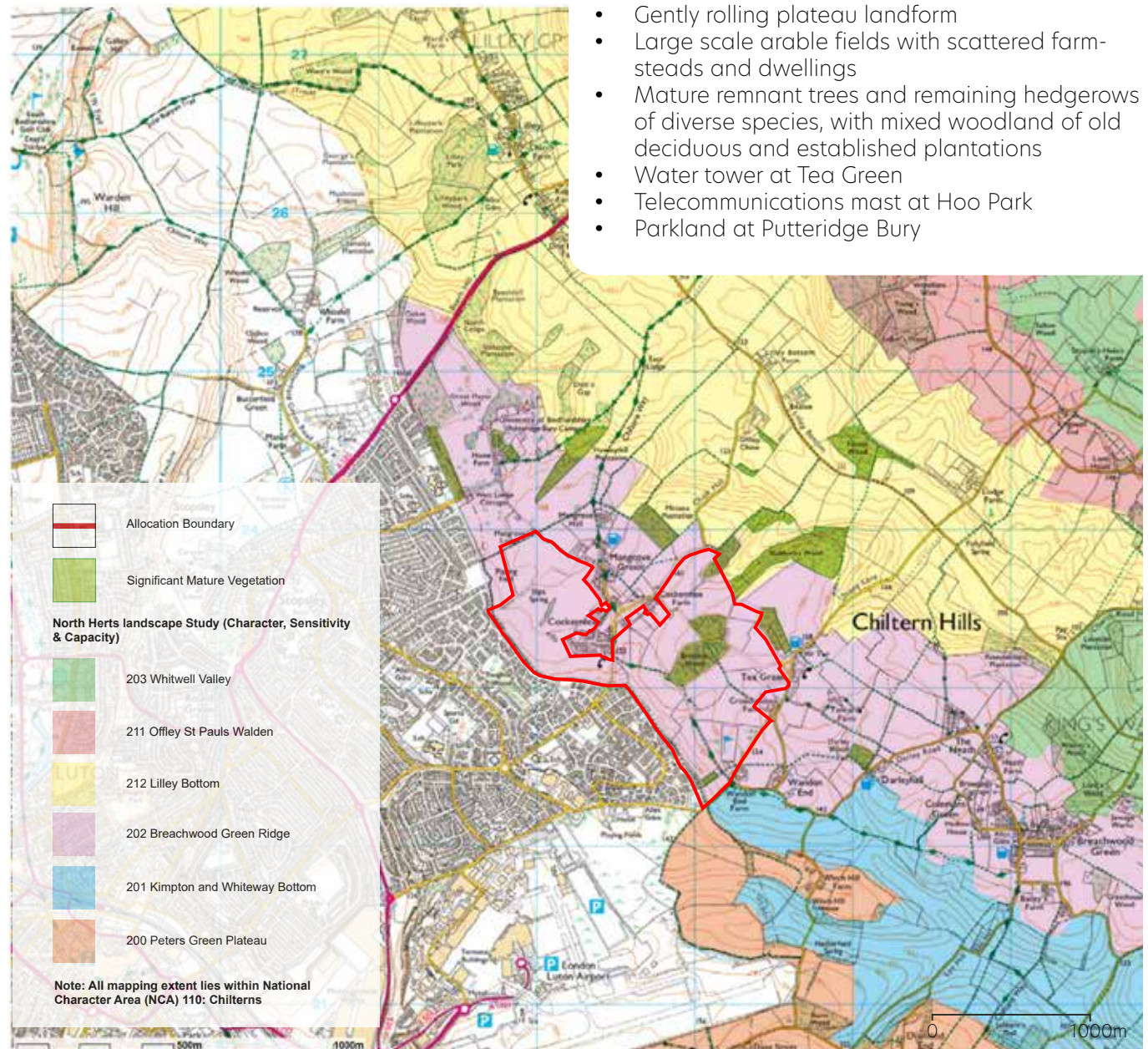


Figure 12. National and District Landscape Character

Visual Appraisal Summary

Due to the landscape form and topography, visibility of the Site is minimal overall, resulting in an inextensive visual envelope. It is not visible from the wider Lilley Valley to the north. Views into the Site are generally limited to those from residential properties which border it; PRoWs crossing the Site – 'Offley 039' to the south-west and 'Kings Walden 010' to the south-east ; Luton Road; Brick Kiln Lane; Chalk Hill and Lower Road.

There are more distant limited view from locations to the south-east, i.e. residential properties at The Heath and Colemans Green, Public Footpath 'Kings Walden 009 013', and Darley Road.

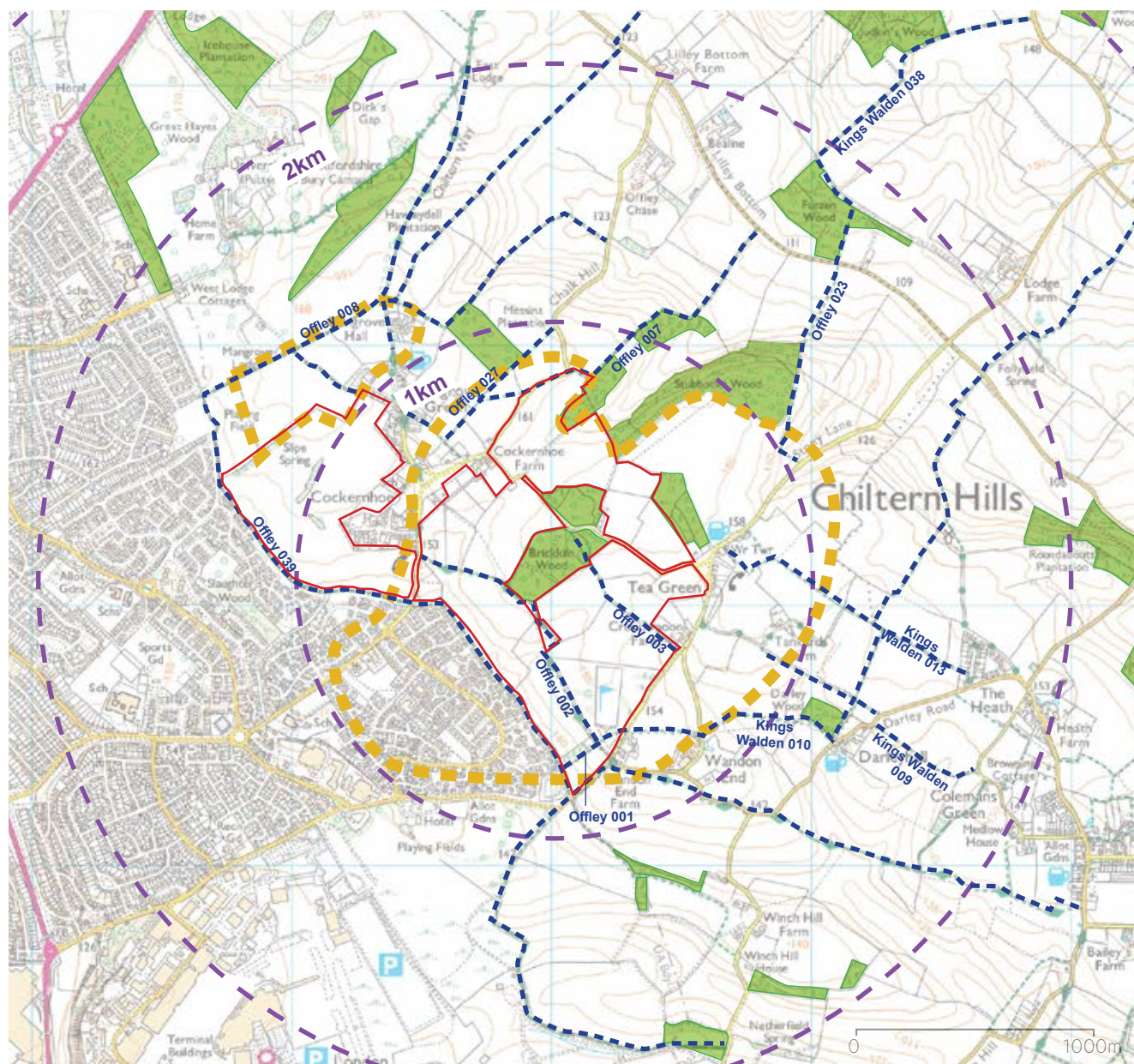
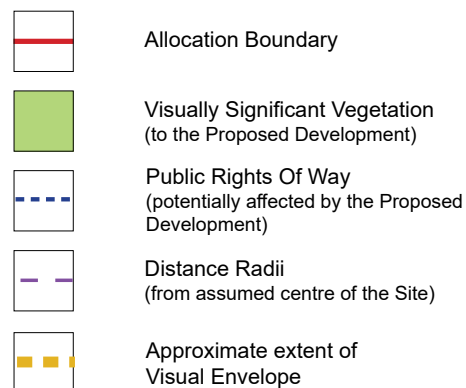


Figure 13. Visual Appraisal

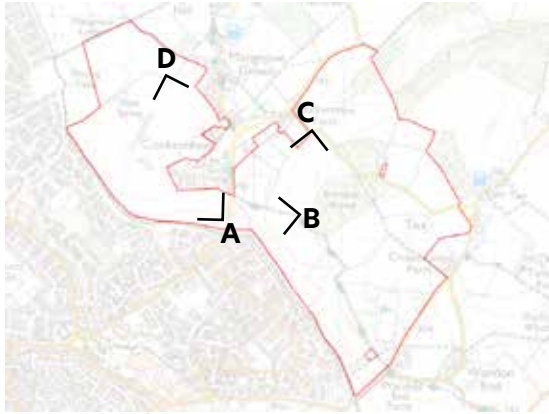


Figure 14. Photoviewpoints



Photoviewpoint A showing view from Luton Road looking north-west



Photoviewpoint B showing view from Public Right of Way



Photoviewpoint C showing view south from Brick Kiln Lane



Photoviewpoint D showing view from Public Right of Way

Local Landscape Character Areas

The local landscape character at the site-scale is varied and multi-faceted as is to be expected for a site of this scale. Landscape character is influenced to varying degrees across the site by the adjacent land use context including the Luton urban fringe, existing villages, countryside and Putteridge Bury. The site's topography, combined with the existing network of woodlands and hedgerows are the fundamental ingredients forming the site's identity.

These natural features also serve to separate different parcels of land of a similar character.

A Green Infrastructure workshop was carried out to agree how these character influences could form a cohesive network of Green Infrastructure across the site and inform the vision for the future development. The identified landscape character areas are set out below and a set of design principles/objectives associated with each.

A: Putteridge Bury Edge

- Mangrove Green Integration and adjacency to Registered Park and Garden;
- Create attractively landscaped edges to sports fields area;

B: Cockernhoe West/Slip Spring

- Respect amenity of neighbouring residents and character of villages;
- Provide multi-functional green corridors to village edges, to include allotment gardens, orchards, sensitive planting and
- Provide new village greens within the development influenced by Cockernhoe/ Mangrove Green;

- Opportunity for Civic/Community space
- Slip Spring woodland will be protected and enhanced with eco-tone planting buffer; and
- Create opportunities for homes to face positively onto the woodland edge;

C: Luton Interface

- Topographically, the land slopes down towards Luton, providing a relatively consistent landscape character along the entire edge;
- Mature wooded backdrop along southern boundary creates sense of enclosure;
- Sense of arrival and gateway to development; and
- Provide a blue corridor with SuDS features set within wildflower meadow and scattered parkland.

D: Cockernhoe East/ Brickkiln Wood

- Respect amenity of neighbouring residents and character of villages;
- Provide connectivity to Chiltern Way and Brick Kiln Lane;
- Respond to topography of ridge to create sense of place at Local Centre;
- Brickkiln Wood forms central characteristic feature;
- Provide suitable stand-off's and transition planting (ecotone) to protect and enhance the woodland; and
- Create opportunities for homes to face positively onto the woodland edge.

E: Lilley View

- Plateau of land straddling ridge;
- Opportunities for views north-east from edge of Site;
- Consider views with massing and form of school.

F: Tea Green Edge

- Respect amenity of neighbouring residents and character of Tea Green;
- Consider Listed Buildings; Crouchmoor Farm;
- Views from PRow to the east.
- Building height / form to respect existing properties.

G: Wandon End

- Relationship with open countryside;
- Semi-rural settlement edge, with proximity to Wigmore Park and Luton Airport;
- Chiltern Way interface – create connection;
- Allow for glimpsed views out of the development.



Figure 15. Local Landscape Character Areas

Key Landscape Character Influences

As described, there are various landscape character influences that provide opportunities and inspirations for the design of the proposed development.

Inspiration can be taken from the villages of Tea Green, Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green which lie adjacent to the Site and are mostly traditional in character. They comprise cottages and buildings clustered around village greens. There is some post-war development, some of which takes reference from the local vernacular.

The village greens have a distinctive character, with triangular geometries, large specimen trees and lanes passing around the perimeters being common characteristics to all three. Each village green has its own separate character with Cockernhoe having a more linear form, Mangrove Green being an enclosed space and Tea Green a smaller and more loosely enclosed space.

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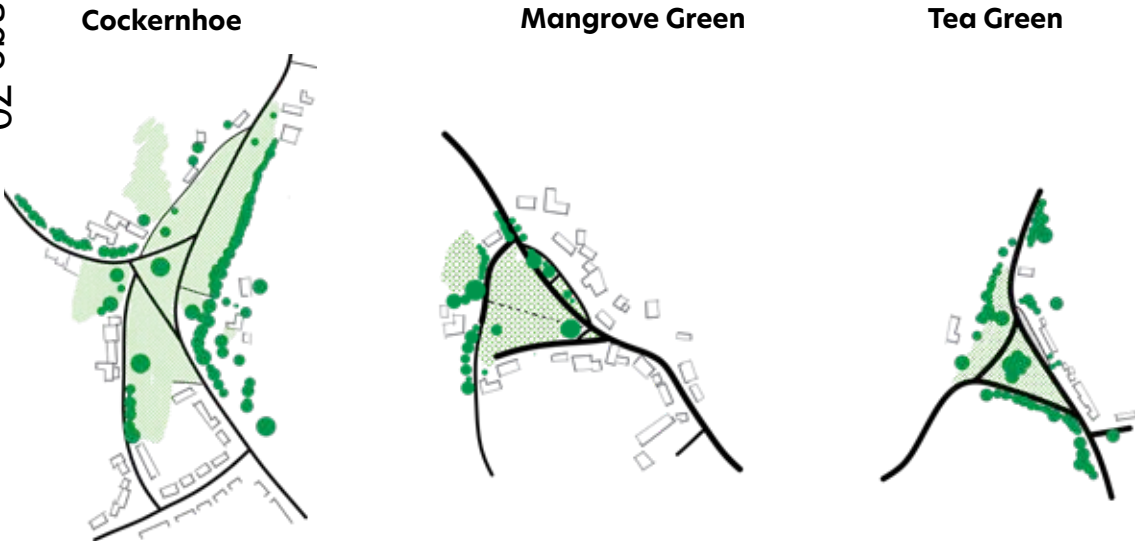


Figure 16. Village Green Character

Village Character - Village Greens



- Triangular village greens are a distinctive feature in the local area
- Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green each have their own character, with certain similar features

Topography - The Breachwood Green Ridge



- Informed by the topography of the Site forming a distinct ridge between Luton and the Hertfordshire countryside
- Woodland Blocks, strong hedgerows
- Chiltern Way long distance footpath

Natural Capital - Woodlands and Hedgerows



- The Site is strongly characterised by the existing network of woodlands and hedgerows
- Slipe Spring and Brickkiln Wood are old copses, forming key important ecological features

Cultural Heritage - Putteridge Bury



- Elizabethan House and formal gardens designed by Lutyens and Jekyll;
- Formal gardens and Pleasure Grounds within the core area around the house;
- Parkland encircles the house and gardens, consisting of scattered clumps of trees, single specimens and C19 blocks of woodland.

Ecology: Baseline Habitats

Surveys of the East of Luton Site have been undertaken within the land controlled by Bloor Homes Ltd and The Crown Estate. The baseline habitat survey will be updated to reflect the latest statutory metric's guidance (2024), these will take place in 2024 and these results will be available within additional supporting documents and are illustrated opposite.

- **Arable (Cereal Crop):** The majority of the Site is dominated by arable (cereal crop) fields;

Modified Grassland: Several areas of modified grassland are present across the Site, comprising fields used for continuous grazing, field margins and fields likely part of crop rotation;

- **Other Neutral Grassland:** The field margin along the western boundary of the Site comprises other neutral grassland, owing to the higher number of species present within the sward;

- **Woodland:** Blocks of mixed and broadleaved woodland are present across the Site, some of which qualify as Priority Habitats:

- **Scrub:** Small blocks of mixed scrub, hawthorn scrub and bramble scrub are present in the west of the Site;

- **Tall Forbs and Ruderal/Ephemeral:** Patches of tall forbs and ruderal/ephemeral are dispersed across the Site, indicating areas of higher nutrient inputs;

- **Pond (Non-Priority Habitat):** A pond is located within the golf course to the south, as well as a number of ephemeral ponds present in Brickkiln Wood;
- **Hedgerows:** The majority of the hedgerows on the Site contained 80% native species, making them Priority Habitats, these bound the field compartments providing ecological linkages across and around the Site; and
- **Individual Trees:** Existing rural trees are located across the Site, with several of the trees in the west being large veteran trees, and smaller specimens present within the golf course to the east.

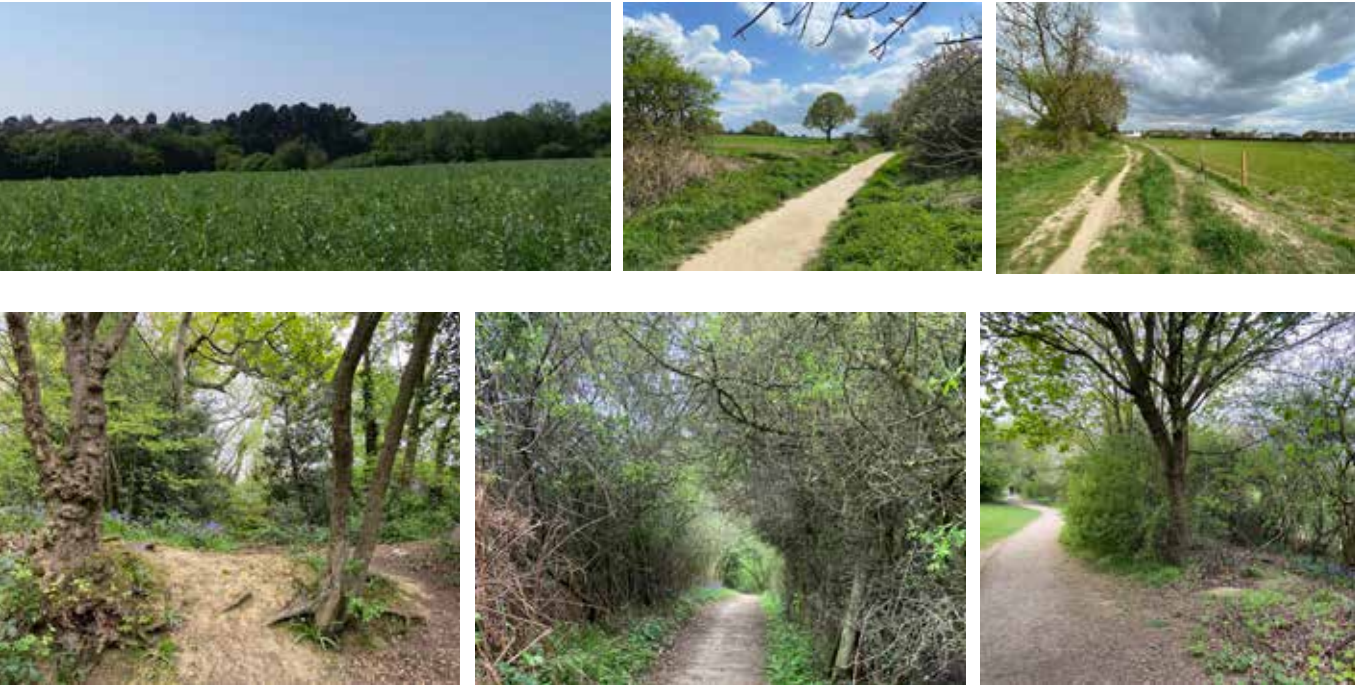
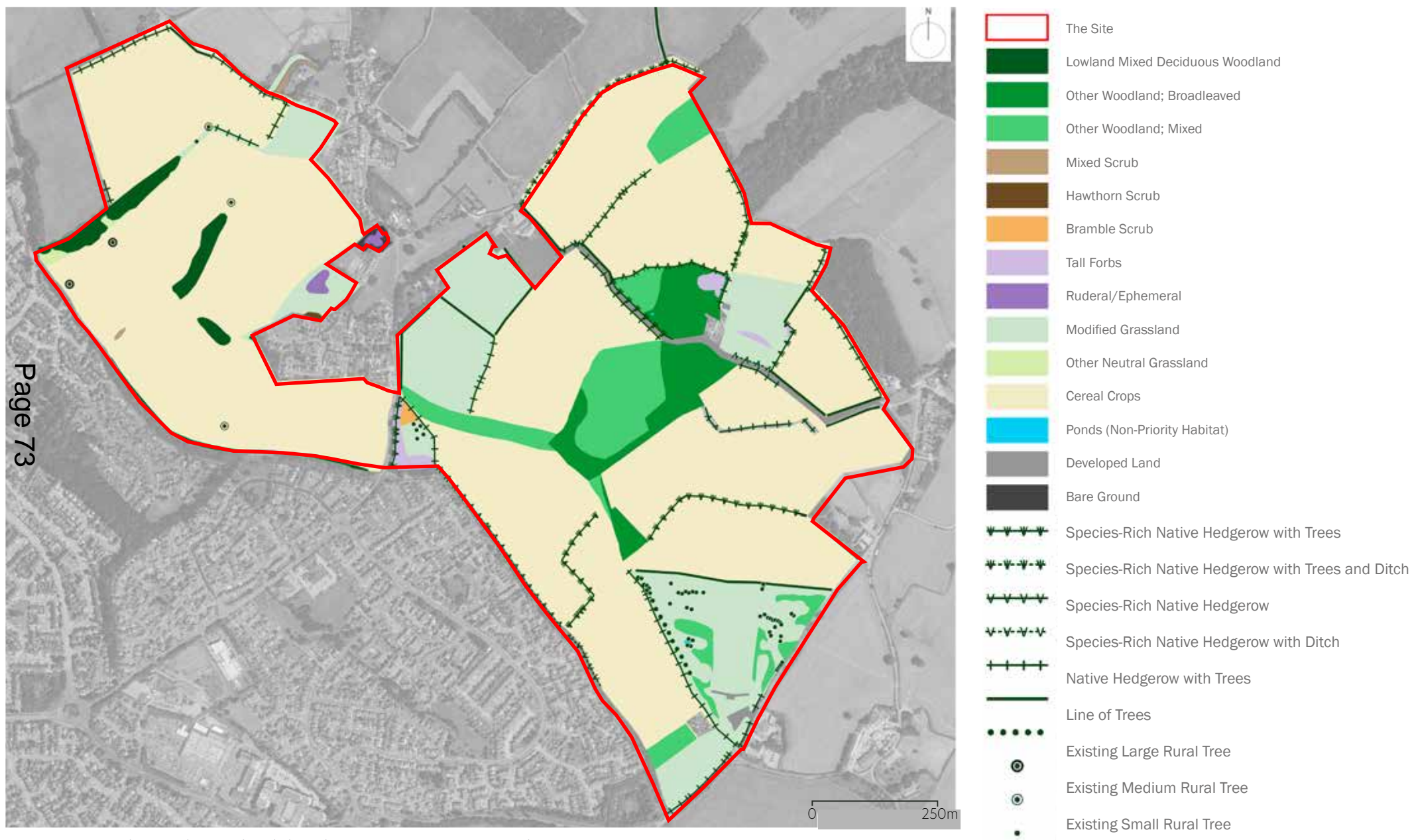
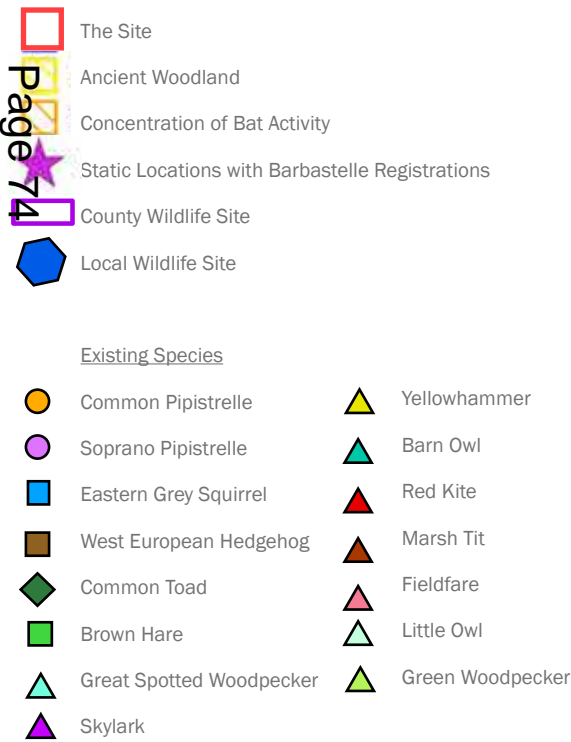


Figure 18. On-site habitats



Ecological and Arboricultural Considerations

Much of the site is free from ecological designations and protected species. Bat activity corridors are identified, which will be protected and enhanced. A number of species are noted, the bulk of which are outside of the site bounds. Stubbocks Wood, outside the site to the north, is an Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Site.



Nature Recovery Network

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for protecting and improving the environment through the establishment of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN).

NRN's follow the 'Lawton Principle' of creating habitats that are 'bigger, better and more joined up'. The masterplanning approach for the Site is underpinned by the creation of an NRN that protects and enhances the existing natural capital on-site, especially priority habitats. It will then extend and connect these habitats to create ecological corridors that are rich in biodiversity.

This approach follows the 'mitigation hierarchy', that seeks first avoid harm or loss of existing important habitats, but if this is unavoidable that adequate mitigation and compensation is provided.

The 'Bedfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy' is a policy document being developed by Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council and the Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership. To demonstrate a coherent approach at the site-level to the wider strategic ambitions across the county.

The Promoters have engaged with the preparation of the Strategy and reviewed others under preparation. The Strategic Masterplan proposals have been developed in this context and will be kept under review as the Strategy is progressed.

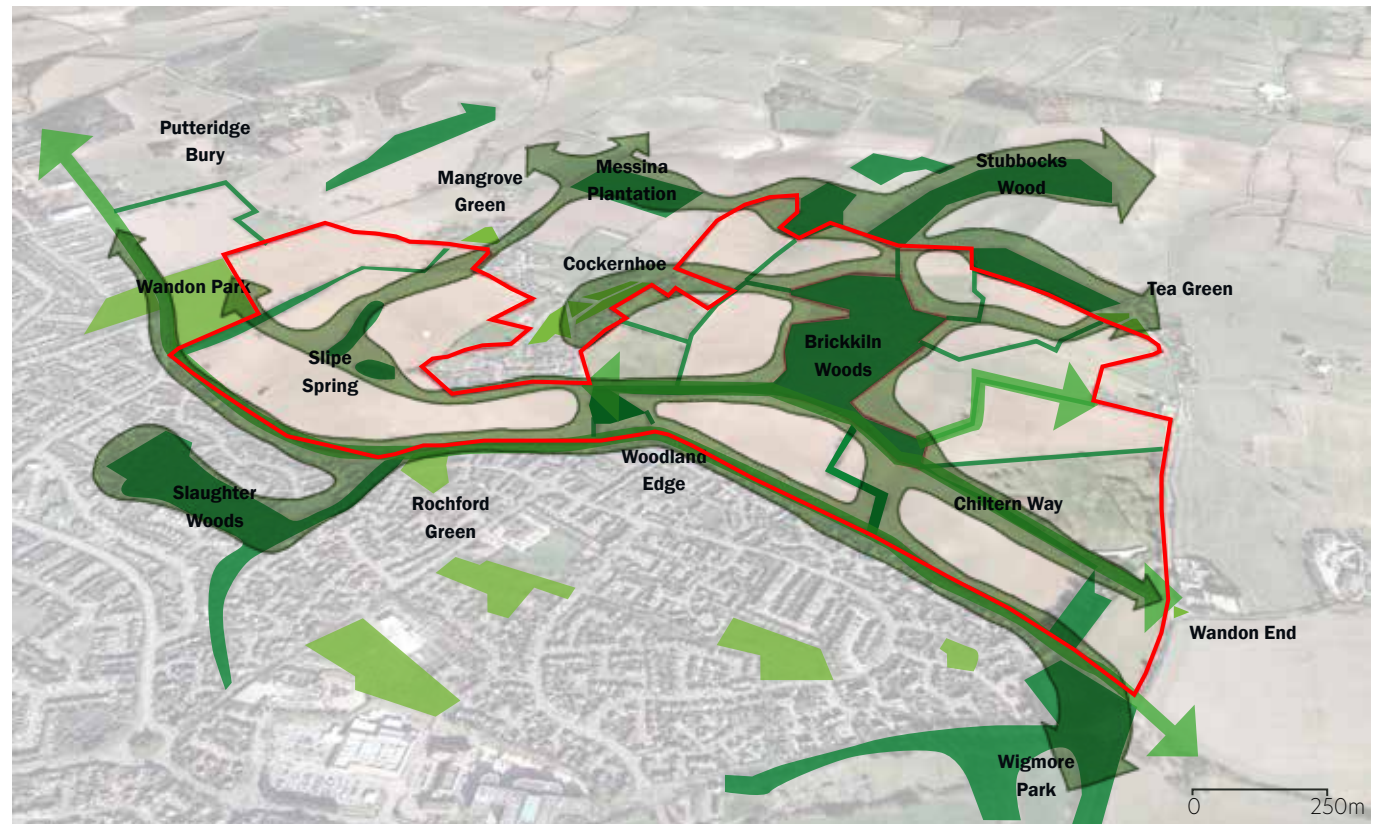
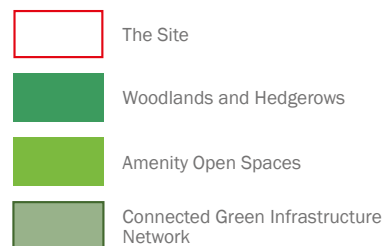


Figure 21. Existing Natural Capital and Indicative Nature Recovery Network



Local built form character

An appraisal of character in the area of North Hertfordshire and Luton, specifically focusing on villages the nearby villages and the best of historic development in Luton. This analysis provides valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and architectural character of the region.

By examining the architectural features, materials used, and design principles prevalent in these villages, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the area's identity and heritage. The full assessment is included at Appendix A1 to this Masterplan, the following is a summary.

Additional building styles in Hertfordshire

Pevsner's "The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire" provides a detailed examination of the county's vernacular architecture, highlighting the diversity and historical significance of local building styles. Vernacular buildings in Hertfordshire reflect a strong connection to regional materials and traditional construction methods.

Key characteristics include:

- Materials and Techniques: The prevalent use of local materials such as timber, brick, and flint is notable. Timber framing is a common feature in older buildings, with many structures showcasing elaborate carpentry and wattle-and-daub infill. Brick became more common in later periods, often with decorative brickwork.

- Rural and Urban Differences: There is a clear distinction between rural and urban architecture. In rural areas, farmhouses and cottages often feature steeply pitched roofs, thatching, and large chimneys. Villages like Ayot St Lawrence and Much Hadham are prime examples of picturesque rural settings with well-preserved vernacular buildings.
- Historical Continuity: Many vernacular buildings have medieval origins, with subsequent additions and renovations reflecting changes in architectural styles over centuries. For instance, numerous medieval timber-framed houses were updated in the Georgian and Victorian eras, blending styles harmoniously.
- Influence of Major Estates: The presence of large estates influenced local architecture, with estate villages often featuring uniform designs. For example, the Rothschild estates around Tring display a distinctive use of decorative brickwork and uniform design principles across multiple buildings.
- Adaptation and Innovation: Vernacular buildings in Hertfordshire often exhibit adaptive reuse and innovation. Barn conversions and the integration of modern amenities into historical structures are common, preserving the historical essence while ensuring contemporary functionality.

Overall, Hertfordshire's vernacular buildings encapsulate a rich architectural heritage, characterised by the use of local materials, traditional construction methods, and the seamless integration of historical

styles with modern adaptations (Yale University Press London) (Yale University Press London) .

Local building character and styles

Appendix 1 of this document provides an appraisal focuses on the character of North Hertfordshire and Luton, emphasizing historical and architectural elements. Key villages like Cockernhoe, Tea Green, and Lilley are highlighted for their traditional vernacular styles, use of local materials, and unique architectural features. Cockernhoe has historic buildings like St. Hugh's Cottage, and Tea Green and Lilley feature picturesque settings and vernacular brick cottages. In Luton, the London Road area is notable for its elegant Victorian villas, spacious plots, and grand facades. This analysis aims to inform strategic development in East Luton by incorporating traditional materials, pedestrian-friendly designs, and community amenities, thereby respecting and enhancing the region's heritage and identity.

Local Density

The residential areas around the site show a variety of characters and densities, from rural building groupings to high-density tower blocks. The highest densities, up to 38 dwellings per hectare (dph), are found in mid-20th century housing areas in eastern Luton. Detached houses from the late 1980s and early 1990s have densities of 30-35dph Villages like Mangrove Green and Tea Green have lower densities, at 15dph and 12dph, respectively, while early 20th century developments like Elm Tree Avenue in Cockernhoe are higher at 28dph.



Figure 22. Cockernhoe Green



Figure 23. Cockernhoe Green



Figure 24. Elmtree Avenue



Figure 25. Listed building on Mangrove Rd



Figure 26. Agricultural buildings, Cockernhoe



Figure 27. Cottages at Lilley



Figure 28. Villa at Mangrove Green



Figure 29. Green Lane housing



Figure 30. Detached house, Lilley



Figure 31. Paddock View listed buildings



Figure 32. Cockernhoe Green



Figure 33. Mangrove Green



Figure 34. Cockernhoe Green

Cultural heritage and archaeology

Located to the north-west is the Putteridge Bury Estate, part of Bedfordshire University campus and a Registered Park and Garden. While there are no Listed Buildings within the Allocation itself, the Site is adjacent to three Listed Buildings, which have been considered as part of the visual assessment of the surrounding area:

- Cassels Cottage (list entry: 1175118)
- 79-80, The Green (list entry: 1103204)
- Crouchmoor Farmhouse (list entry: 1347106)

These designated heritage assets, and other non-designated areas of historic interest, have been carefully taken into account in the evolution of the development proposals set out in this Strategic Masterplan.

The Mangrove Green and Cockernhoe areas of archaeological significance have also informed the evolution of the proposals and in particular the location and design of the site-wide green infrastructure strategy.

The Environmental Impact Assessments that will accompany the planning applications subsequent to this Strategic Masterplan will consider the potential for impacts on both above-ground cultural heritage assets and below-ground archaeological heritage assets in further detail. Where necessary further investigations of potential areas of archaeological interest will be required through the consideration of planning applications.









-  Interface with settlement
-  Putteridge Bury Estate
-  Public Open Space
-  Listed Building
-  Key view
-  Overhead power line

Figure 35. Cultural Heritage Assets

Summary of key influences














The plan opposite summarises the key influences on the site that will need to be carefully considered and addressed to ensure a successful and sustainable outcome.

Retention and Enhancement of Existing Woodland Groups and Tree Belts: The presence of mature woodland groups and tree belts throughout the Site requires thoughtful planning to retain and integrate these natural features into the development while safeguarding their ecological value and visual appeal.

Valley-Like Topography: The Site’s valley-like topography, alongside the existing edge of Luton, poses challenges in terms of stormwater management. This linear catchment will be carefully managed to mitigate potential flooding risks and enhance biodiversity.

Interface with Surrounding Settlements: Creating a suitable interface with neighbouring communities such as Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green, and Tea Green.. This requires sensitive design approaches that respect the existing character of these settlements while accommodating new development.

Interface with Lilley Valley and the Putteridge Bury Estate: Along the northern edge of the Site area lies the Lilley Valley, an interface that respects the landscape will be needed.. A similar but more integrated approach will need to be implemented along the north western edge of the Site that is closest to the Putteridge Bury Estate.

-  Views to Luton airport
-  Interface with Luton
-  Interface with adjacent rural communities
-  Slope along Luton edge
-  Key view
-  Overhead power line
-  Putteridge Bury Estate
-  Public Open Space
-  Listed Building
-  Overhead power line
-  Topography
-  Woodland
-  Ancient Woodland

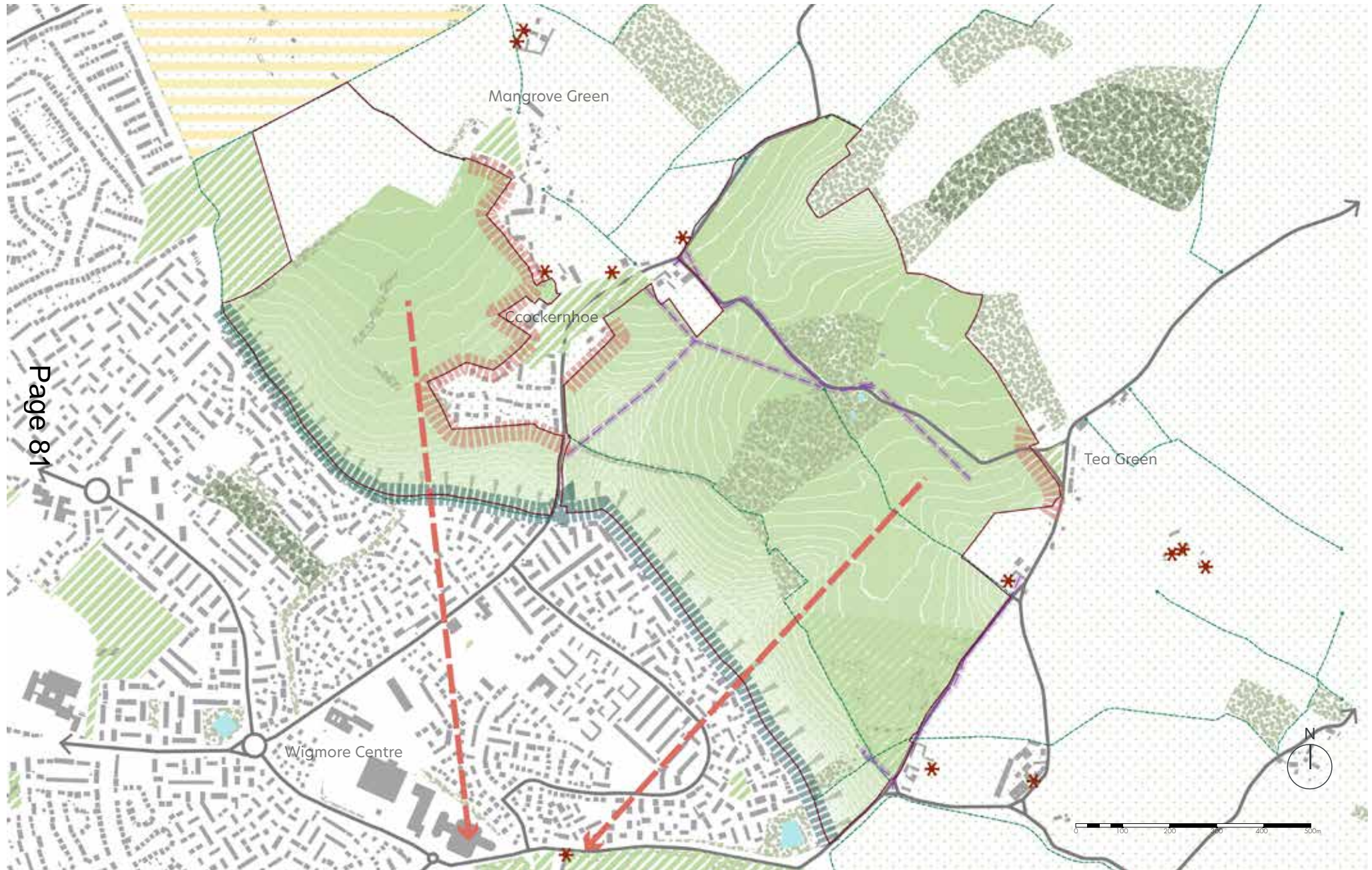


Figure 36. Strategic constraints plan



Figure 37. Slipe Spring woodland



Figure 38. Cockernhoe Green

©GoogleEarth+Partners

The Opportunity

The Strategic Masterplan presents an opportunity to establish a robust Green Infrastructure network that integrates key natural features into the landscape. This integration aims to enhance ecological resilience and provide recreational amenities while fostering connectivity with the wider North Hertfordshire countryside.

Woodland network

West of Cockernhoe, the presence of mature tree belts offers potential for the development of continuous green corridors. Such green corridors can serve both ecological and aesthetic purposes, enhancing biodiversity and adding visual appeal. To the south-east of Cockernhoe, Luton's edge with Brickklin Wood and Stubbocks Wood presents an opportunity to create further green linkages. These linkages would facilitate movement through the landscape while providing managed recreational access and enhancing biodiversity.

Extending green linkages

Integration with the existing footpath network is essential to maximize the accessibility and usability of green linkages. By extending these corridors into the wider North Hertfordshire countryside, opportunities for recreational activities and ecological connectivity can be further realized.

Integration of new village greens

A significant aspect of the design concept involves the integration of new "village greens" into the fabric of the community. These spaces will serve as focal points for relaxation, recreation, and social

interaction, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion.

In most cases, these new village greens will be strategically co-located with education or community facilities. This intentional pairing aims to create a places and spaces where residents can gather for various purposes. By combining green spaces with educational and community amenities, these village greens will not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the neighbourhoods.

Pedestrian integration with villages and Luton

The Masterplan encourages the establishment of pedestrian-friendly linkages between new housing areas and existing settlements such as Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green, and Tea Green, but also Luton. These linkages, primarily in the form of footpaths, but also cycleways, will facilitate access from the existing settlements to proposed facilities, including two new primary schools, a secondary school, a local centre, and playing fields in the northwest. The Masterplan seeks to promote sustainable modes of transportation, reduce reliance on cars, and encourage active lifestyles and social interaction.

Connection with Existing Green Infrastructure Network

The layout of the development will link to and connect with the existing Green Infrastructure network of Luton. By aligning with established green corridors and open spaces, the new development will enhance the overall connectivity of the area.

Integration with footpath and road network

Every effort will be made to ensure that the footpath, cycle and road network within the new development aligns with existing network in Luton, facilitating efficient public transport access to and from the town centre. Additionally, dedicated cycle lanes and pedestrian pathways will be incorporated into the road design to prioritize non-motorized modes of transportation and promote active mobility.

Access to existing facilities

One of the priorities for the masterplan is to facilitate access to existing facilities, including those within Luton, such as The Wigmore Centre. Pedestrian and cycle routes will be strategically planned to directly connect the new development with these facilities, ensuring convenient access for residents while reducing reliance on cars.

Gateway

At the pivotal point where Crawley Green Road becomes Luton Road there is the opportunity to create a new gateway space between the existing edge of Luton and the new development. This can be achieved through the careful placement of proposed buildings, new planting, swales and pedestrian and cycle paths.

Summary

Connections to Luton is a key aspect of the masterplan, aimed at fostering connectivity, promoting sustainable transportation, and enhancing access to existing amenities. .



Figure 39. Brickkiln wood and its associated tree belts



Figure 40. The Wigmore Centre and other key services are within walking distance of the new housing

Strategic Design Principles

1. Identify natural features



Identify the area's natural features that have influenced how new development can be accommodated on the Site.

2. Establish Green Infrastructure network



Shows how the development can incorporate a network of Green Infrastructure that comprises natural and semi-natural features including parks, streams woodlands, green corridors, ecosystems, street trees, private gardens and green roofs.

3. Integrate Blue Infrastructure



Show how the development can incorporate Blue Infrastructure: features related to water, such as ponds, streams and drainage systems.

4. Respond to townscape and heritage



5. Include green corridors to mitigate impact on local communities



6. Deliver varied but harmonious character areas



Shows how development will respond to townscape and heritage, including highlighting valued buildings and features, and views into and out of the Site.

Show how the development will respect the existing settlements of Cockernhoe, Tea Green and Mangrove Green

Shows how the development will respond to existing conditions, the immediate context and the role that each area plays to create varied but harmonious character areas.

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Context and opportunity
- 3. Vision and objectives**
- 4. Masterplan
 - a) Masterplan framework
 - b) Landscape and open space framework
 - c) Urban design framework
 - d) Movement and connectivity framework
 - e) Land use framework
- 5. Sustainability, energy, water & waste
- 6. Delivery
- Appendices
 - A1 Local built form character appraisal
 - A2 Character area outlines
 - A3 Indicative street hierarchy



Vision and objectives

A NEW WOODLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD IN NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

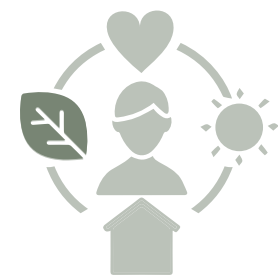
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“Our vision for the site is a new neighbourhood set within the existing landscape framework with a distinctive identity, sensitively designed and providing much-needed housing for families. The quality of the place created will make it a great place to live”



Figure 41. Woodland neighbourhood



LANDSCAPE LED DESIGN



Objective 1: To create a place for people to live, which incorporates existing and new natural areas, including woodland copses, hedgerows, parklands, gardens, wetlands and wildflower meadows.



Objective 2: To respect the cultural landscape heritage of Putteridge Bury Park and the local villages.



Objective 3: To connect new areas of homes, shops, community buildings and schools by an extensive network of green corridors.

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WALKABLE & HEALTHY COMMUNITY



Objective 4: To provide outdoor space for active enjoyment and access to nature.



Objective 5: To encourage integration of health and well-being within day-to-day life, with a range of community, leisure, sport, play, allotments and other outdoor recreational opportunities, as well as active travel modes and public transport.



Objective 6: To make it easy to travel to, from, and within the development by walking, cycling and public transport via a network of safe, attractive and well-designed connections. Walking and cycling routes will give access to and from existing communities and the surrounding countryside, linking with the Chiltern Way and the Hitchin to Chilterns Cycle Route 16.





A DISTINCTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD



Objective 7: Deliver well-designed and comfortable homes, space to live and play in, with good access to new and existing amenities and facilities.



Objective 8: Create a series of character areas within the new neighbourhood to instil a sense of place, drawing inspiration from the existing mature landscape and the local area to achieve distinctiveness and quality.



Objective 9: Deliver a net gain of at least 10% in ecological habitats, including new tree planting, hedgerows, areas of grassland and wetland.

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CLIMATE RESILIENCE



Objective 10: Ensure homes are energy efficient, incorporating renewable and low-carbon energy generation, in-step with and future-proofing to accommodate the evolution of technology and regulation change.



Objective 11: Provide infrastructure to support and encourage the use of walking and cycling, and other low or zero-carbon modes of transport.



Objective 12: Use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to control and manage surface water and increase biodiversity.



1.	Introduction
2.	Context and opportunity
3.	Vision and objectives
4.	Masterplan
	a) Masterplan framework
	b) Landscape and open space framework
	c) Urban design framework
	d) Movement and connectivity framework
	e) Land use framework
5.	Sustainability, energy, water & waste
6.	Delivery
	Appendices
A1	Local built form character appraisal
A2	Character area outlines
A3	Indicative street hierarchy





Figure 42. A vibrant community focus



Figure 43. Woodland walks

Overall Concept

In developing the Objectives and Strategic Design Principles for the new community, the primary focus of the design team has been on integrating the proposed development within the surrounding wooded landscape.

As framed in the Vision, the overall concept for the proposal is to seek to capture a thoughtful response to the local context, the existing natural elements, and the evolving needs of future residents in an era of climate change.

The new housing will be set within a network of public open spaces, educational institutions, and local amenities. At the heart of the new community, a Local Centre will serve as a nucleus for social interactions and daily conveniences.

Distinctive features of the development will be traditional village greens theme, which will take their cues from the central spaces in Cockernhoe and Tea Green, and the existing woodland blocks. This approach will help to blend the urban and the rural, creating an environment where residents can connect with both nature and each other.

Education provision includes two primary schools and a secondary school. These institutions will not only serve as centres of learning but will also contribute to the creation of a close-knit community, fostering relationships among families and neighbours. The north-western part of the Site provides recreational spaces for residents of all ages. This commitment to greenery and open spaces is essential in promoting physical well-being and fostering a sense of community. In recognition of the diverse needs of the future residents, the development will provide a wide range of housing types, spanning from apartments to larger family homes. This diversity in hous-

ing will accommodate varying lifestyles and preferences, ensuring that the community is inclusive and welcoming to all.

An integral part of the internal primary street network, planned to facilitate a high-quality active travel and public transport network. The provision of new bus services aligns with the commitment to sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles and enhancing travel choices for the community.

Recent national design guidance

The previous Government set out its proposals to raise the standards of design and quality of new development. The plan-making section of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explicitly promotes the “use of masterplans and design codes to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes”. The Government has also published a final version of the National Model Design Code, Chapter 12 of which: ‘Achieving well-designed and beautiful places’, emphasises the need for good design.

The NPPF explains (para. 139):

“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to: a) development which reflects



Figure 44. Strategic Masterplan



Figure 45. High quality education provision

local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."

Design guidance context

The Illustrative masterplan has been developed with reference to the following national design guidance.

National Guidance

- Urban Design Compendium – English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation (2007)
- Building for a Healthy Life – Homes England (2020)
- Manual for Streets – Department for Transport, and Community and Local Government (2007)
- Manual for Streets 2 – Department of Transport (2010)
- Technical housing standards – Nationally described space standard, Department for Communities and Local Government (2015)
- Living with Beauty – Building Better Building Beautiful Commission (2020)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (December 2023)
- National Design Guide – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021)
- National Model Design Code – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021)

National Design Guide

This Strategic Masterplan has been prepared has been developed with reference to the recently produced National Design Guide (NDG). The design work addresses the 10 key themes of the NDG in the following manner:

Context - consideration and response to key constraints and opportunities around the Site;

Identity - appraisal of local character features such as materials and architectural styles;

Built form - perimeter block form reflecting historic and 20th century form found in the area

Movement - permeable deformed grid with non-vehicular connections on all sides;

Nature - retained tree belts and hedgerows with enhanced woodland and wildflower planting throughout the scheme;

Public space - new village greens, and interconnected network of green spaces and active travel routes together with pedestrian friendly streets

Uses - opportunity for a community building which can meet the needs of the public

Homes and buildings - a wide range and mix of new homes

Resources - use of sustainable building materials where required by legislation; and

Lifespan - a carefully planned community which will be loved and well maintained by its future residents.



Figure 46. National Design Guide



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Figure 47. NEAP play area



Figure 48. Woodland play

The twelve **Objectives** identified in Section 3 provide the foundation for a development that aspires not only to meet the immediate needs of its own community, but to stand the test of time as a beacon of thoughtful, sustainable living.

The twelve Objectives have led to the creation of a multi-layered Masterplan Framework comprising:

- A **landscape and open space framework**, covering all elements of Green and Blue Infrastructure;
- An **urban design framework**; and
- A **movement and connectivity framework**.

In support of these further detail is included in:

- **Appendix A1:** Local built form character appraisal
- **Appendix A2:** Character area outlines
- **Appendix A3:** Indicative street hierarchy

Landscape led design

Creating a strong green network of accessible, multi-functional, and connected green spaces and greenways throughout the development and to key destinations will support active design, physical activity, community cohesion, sustainable drainage, biodiversity net gain, and access to nature. Strong landscape-led design will be realized through carefully embedding the development into the landscape character, extensive tree planting, and landscaping to green spaces, streets, and plot design, providing an attractive landscape setting to new development (see further detail in Section 4b).

The strategic masterplan will be 'landscape-led', with all the key features, such as Brickkiln Wood, the established hedgerow network, hedgerow trees, and copses being utilized to subdivide individual development neighbourhoods, helping to create a unique setting. These retained features will be reinforced and interconnected by a comprehensive framework of open space with new parks, woodlands, and greenways ensuring delivery of an all-encompassing multi-functional Green Infrastructure as a focus for interaction, recreation, and biodiversity, accounting for approximately 55% of the total site area.

The Chiltern Way, together with other PROWs, will be retained, protected, and enhanced as they pass through the Site. It will be utilized as the spine for a substantially expanded network of traffic-free footpaths, cycleways, and bridleways reinforcing and connecting with the current PROWs, including the Chiltern Way and the Hitchin to the Chilterns cycle route, to ensure strong integration with the existing community.

A new footpath route will be provided through Brickkiln Wood, linking into existing routes across Lilley valley and up into the Chilterns and the Icknield Way. The interaction of topography and existing mature vegetation will result in the proposed development being visually self-contained.

Existing assets of acknowledged importance within the wider area include the Chilterns AONB, Putteridge Bury RPG, and the Lilley Bottom valley. These will all be protected from any potential detrimental effects by the iterative environmental master planning approach adopted.



Figure 49. A woodland setting will define the new place



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Figure 50. Local centre

A robust framework of existing woodland blocks (Brickkiln, Stubbocks, Furzen, and Messina) will be reinforced by new woodland planting to ensure enduring effective screening of the new development in views from the wider countryside.

At a local level, the Site will have much to offer as a canvas for the creation of the new community; Luton Road, Brickkiln Wood, Brick Kiln Lane, the Chiltern Way, and the radiating network of hedgerows and tree belts will create instantly recognizable subdividing features that help to establish new neighbourhood character zones. The existing green infrastructure network will be reinforced and expanded by new distinctive spaces and an interconnecting network of greenways and woodland belts around the development perimeter.

Distinctive Character Areas

The Masterplan will be defined by a series of character areas (see further in Section 4c and Appendix A2) that respond to the existing features. Building design will take references and design cues from the local vernacular in North Hertfordshire and Luton in the detailed development of building typologies, architectural design, materials, landscaping, boundary treatments, and integration of parking utilizing contemporary and innovative design where appropriate.

The setting of Mangrove Green, Cockernhoe, and Tea Green villages, as well as the edge of Wigmore, will be protected by the creation of new accessible open green space together with further broadleaved woodland planting and individual trees. The dispersed organic character of the adjacent villages has intrinsic appeal. The locally distinctive theme is carried through into the masterplan; discrete

residential neighbourhoods of varying scale and character are proposed, all within easy walking and cycling distance of the Community Hub and each with a high degree of accessible green space on their doorstep.

The development will combine the benefits of convenient living with a sustainable all-encompassing biodiversity framework and ensure a fully integrated Masterplan.

A community heart

A new Local Centre will provide facilities for the new community. A new neighbourhood play area and high-quality public realm in the form of a new square would anchor the Local Centre. The hub will provide a focus for community activity, be accessible by public transport, include safe routes to school, encourage linked trips, and form a focal point within the development accessible to all users. The architectural character of the non-residential buildings will focus on design grounded in locally distinctive North Hertfordshire materials and detailing to create a striking sense of arrival in the new neighbourhood.

New village greens

The western and eastern flanks of the scheme will be defined by contemporary versions of the traditional village greens. These will be signature spaces which will integrate with the villages of Cockernhoe and Tea Green and be characterised by their informal landscape design and where possible, car-free frontages.



Figure 51. Active travel

Sustainable movement

New traffic routes will be designed as tree-lined avenues, forming the principal vehicular and public transport link through the development. The primary movement network proposed in the Masterplan will remove through traffic from Cockernhoe village.

The Chiltern Way will be crossed at only two locations to minimize disruption to walkers who will have priority crossings at these points. Each neighbourhood will then be served by a descending hierarchy of side streets, mews, and green lanes, which in turn will connect to the traffic-free footpath and cycleway network.

Each neighbourhood will then be served by a descending hierarchy of side streets, mews, and green lanes, which in turn will connect to the traffic-free footpath and cycleway network.

Public transport will be readily accessible to all, providing new bus services as well as enhancing access to facilities in Luton for existing and new residents. The setting of Mangrove Green, Cockernhoe, and Tea Green villages, as well as the edge of Wigmore, will be protected by the creation of new accessible open green space together with further broadleaved woodland planting and individual trees.

A walkable community

Creating an environment which supports active design through a network of direct, legible, and integrated pedestrian and cycle routes between key destinations and green spaces. This will encourage physical activity and pedestrian and cycle movement

within the development and to key destinations in Luton. Homes, schools, community facilities, workspace, green space, and sports facilities will be within easy reach of each other. Pedestrian and cycle movement will be prioritised over other modes of transport through 20 mph speed limits, reduced parking at local facilities, reduced road widths, and traffic management measures.



Figure 52. Streets will be pedestrian friendly

4b Landscape & Open Space

Landscape and open space strategy

A landscape-led approach to the layout for East of Luton creates a multi-functional and interconnected framework of Green and Blue Infrastructure encompassing woodland, hedgerows, grassland, wetland habitats, wildlife areas, open space and sports pitches, equipped children's play, PRowWs, walking and cycling routes as well as a series of trails, street trees and private gardens.

Objectives

- Create a landscape for people and nature
- Adopt a landscape-led masterplanning approach
- Retain, protect and enhance important existing features, i.e. Brickkiln Wood, Slipe Spring and strong hedgerows, the Chiltern Way and other PRowWs which combine to provide a unique landscape framework
- Take inspiration from existing features as well as those nearby i.e. cultural landscape heritage of Putteridge Bury and local village greens. Maximise connectivity to increase wildlife habitat and overall biodiversity
- Deliver nature recovery networks and significant tree coverage to encourage climate resilience
- Multi-functional Green Infrastructure to promote health and wellbeing; active outdoor spaces and community facilities
- Ensure sufficient provision of usable public open space for new residents



Figure 53. Green Infrastructure Matrix

Multi-functional Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy

The Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) design approach taken at Luton East seeks to create a multi-functional and connected landscape. This means that it will perform several functions. For example, a play space might also be natural space that helps deliver biodiversity benefits or could also include a sustainable drainage function. In this way the provision of amenity spaces for new residents is balanced with the requirement to enhance and protect nature.

To address the crises of climate change, biodiversity decline and community wellbeing, the types of landscape proposed for the Site have a strong focus on the creation of natural character. A range of new habitats will be created to form a natural character whilst allowing for recreation and community facilities within key open spaces.

The Green Infrastructure Matrix diagram illustrates the multi-functional design approach taken. It contains a spectrum of different landscape typologies and functions to be included in the masterplan that will address the needs of new and existing residents. These landscape typologies are explored in the following sections of this document in more detail.

The Green and Blue Infrastructure will deliver the following:

- Connected strong green corridors and spaces radiating from Brickkiln Wood and Slipe Spring to create a robust framework for the built development. These woodland assets will be offset with generous open space to enable woodland ecotones to be created.
- The proposed sports pitches will provide a linear park serving as the interface with the established residential neighbourhood at Wigmore. The emphasis here is on biodiversity enhancement together with the creation of a sustainable drainage network of ponds and wetlands.
- Mangrove Fields is an active sporting focus for existing and new residents combined with new structural planting to strengthen and reinforce the localised landscape character.
- New parks of species-rich grassland, shrub planting and specimen trees provide a transition between the new development and the existing villages of Cockernhoe and Tea Green for the enjoyment of existing and new residents. These greens complement and directly link to the existing village greens as well as protecting the setting of the villages.
- Equipped children's play will likely include 2 NEAP's and 4 LEAP's. These will be located at convenient and accessible locations such as in close proximity to the Local Centre and schools.
- Pockets of allotment gardens, located near to properties as well as the Local Centre and schools for easy, walkable access, yet positioned discreetly within the overall framework.
- SuDS features will be located as necessary within parcels EL1 and EL2, their design will be ecology driven whilst being sympathetic to the local landscape to appear naturally integrated.
- An extensive network of new footways and cycleways integrated with the existing PROWs that cross the Site will provide recreational routes, promoting active and healthy living.
- Avenue trees will be planted along the primary road network with a change in species for navigation - recognising leaving one character area and entering another.
- Attractive, appropriately landscaped gateways from both Luton Road and Darley Road.

Primary Open Space Typologies

The Primary Open Space Typologies Plan opposite illustrates the broad distribution of open space types across the site. These include:

- **Community greens** - Amenity green space is located at central areas, modelled on the character of the local village greens with large feature trees and open lawns. These greens will be well defined by development fronting onto them and designed for flexible usage eg community events and informal play/exercise.
- **Woodlands and hedgerows** - Existing woodlands and hedgerows will be managed appropriately for conservation. Enhancement planting is proposed adjacent, consisting of more native trees, scrub and meadow species to protect the existing features and to extend and connect habitats, forming a nature recovery network.
- **Wildflower meadow** - Extensive areas of wildflower meadow will be created, with nature trails running through them. Widespread tree planting will also be included in these areas, to form a naturalistic scattered parkland character.
- **Seasonally wet meadows and ponds** - The south-eastern edge of the site contains most of the sustainable drainage features, comprising a mixture of wet and dry ponds allowing for a diverse meadow mosaic to be formed of seasonally wet, permanently wet and damp areas to enhance biodiversity and create an attractive edge to the new community.



Pocket parks integrated within natural areas, making use of the topography to form pleasant relaxation spaces



Meadow grasslands



Orchards can also be community spaces for relaxation, picnics and informal recreation



Accessible and inclusive network of pathways and spaces

- **Playing fields and playgrounds** - The formal sports provision is focussed in the northern part of the site and provides the opportunity for a range of pitch sizes. Play spaces will be well integrated within the landscape fabric and have a range of different characters depending on location.
- **Allotments and community gardens** - Spaces for food growing have been well integrated within the new neighbourhoods to encourage social interaction.

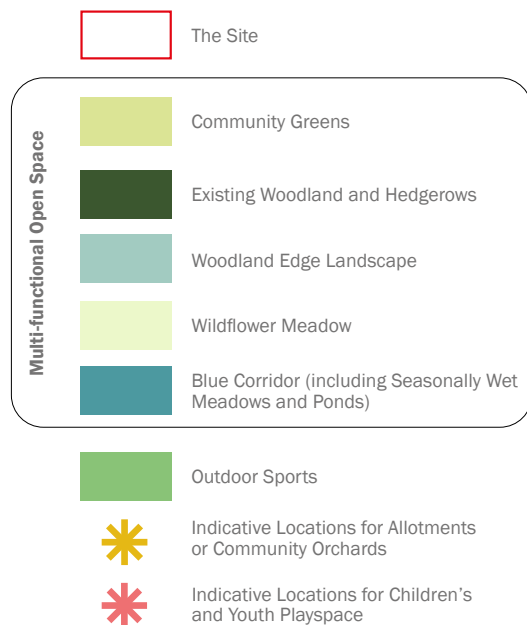


Figure 54. Primary Open Space Typologies

Planting Strategy:

- **Woodland** - The existing woodlands at Stubbocks Wood, Brickkiln Wood and Slipe Spring will require a woodland restoration plan prepared and enhancement works.
- **Woodland Edge** - The primary function of such spaces is to conserve and enhance the existing woodlands by planting a mixture of deciduous trees, pockets of scrub and meadow fringes. This will form a transitional or edge habitat that provides biodiversity benefits.

Open Space Planting - Along the southern edge of the Site and around the development edges, scattered tree planting will provide a more open landscape, with larger specimen trees planted to boost biodiversity and amenity value. Wildflower meadows and wetland features will be integrated within the space to create a diverse patchwork of habitats. A mixture of

species will be employed to ensure climate resilience and de-risk impacts from pests and diseases.

- **Street Tree Planting** - Street planting will take a more organic and informal approach with a diversity of tree species used in streets.
- **Feature Trees** - Structural planting of large individual specimen trees will help to create a sense of place, echoing the character of village greens. In other open space areas feature trees located at key nodes or forming a visual termination feature might judiciously use ornamental, non-native species as markers to add colour or visual interest to neighbourhoods, provide climate resilience and nectar sources for local biodiversity.



Existing woodlands to be enhanced with a woodland management plan in place



Ecotone edges alongside woodlands provide a natural enhancement



Existing trees to be integrated as markers in the landscape



Native structural landscaping to enhance, extend and connect existing woodlands and hedgerows

Figure 55. Proposed Habitats

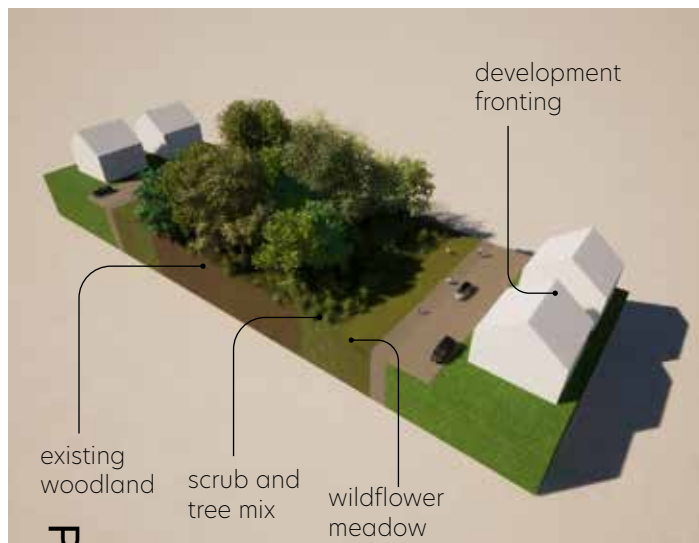








Figure 57. Indicative section showing ecotone planting approach to development edge adjacent to existing woodland

-  Allocation Boundary
-  Woodland Enhancement
-  Woodland Ecotone
-  Scattered Parkland
-  Primary Street Tree Planting
-  Indicative Locations for Feature Trees

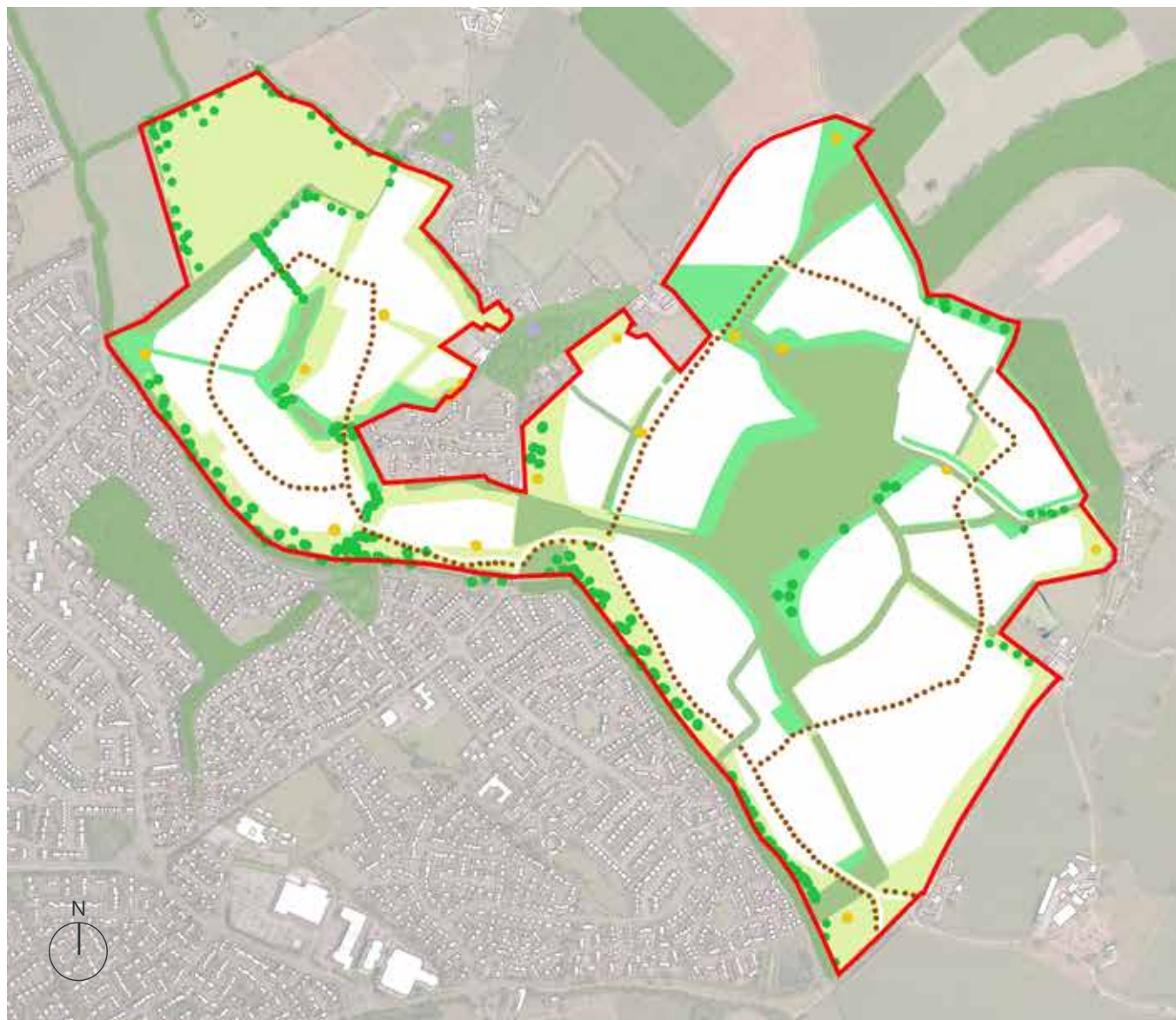


Figure 56. Planting Strategy

Sports and Play Strategy:

- Page 110
- **Natural play, play-on-the-way and play trails** – A playable landscape will be created that makes all of the open spaces suitable and safe for children, to encourage imaginative and explorative play. This concept uses informal and natural features in the environment such as logs, boulders and mounds.
 - **Equipped children’s play** – is shown on the plan opposite, comprising 2 NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play) and 4 LEAPs (Local Equipped Areas of Play). These are located in central green spaces as well as more subtly integrated within natural spaces. They will be easily accessed by new footpaths and cycleways, and well overlooked;
Local play – 4 LEAPs are provided and are distributed across the development. LEAPs are located generally within a 5 minute walk from the majority of the housing areas, and are located near to the schools. LEAPs typically provide for younger children, allowing easy access for families so that younger children can have somewhere safe and close by to play. These paces include up to 5 pieces of play equipment, seating and may need to be enclosed to avoid dogs accessing the active zone.
 - **Destination play** – The concept of destination play is to consolidate formal play provision in a central area, with different zones within the play space providing for children of different ages. Surrounding the active zones, more passive and flexible open areas are provided for informal kick-about, seating or picnic benches for parents to relax and supervise and areas of planting and public art opportunities.
 - **Hard surface play** – NEAPs will be well integrated and not impact other natural spaces or residential areas through noise or unattractive fencing.
 - **Making space for girls** – Provision will be made specifically for teenage girls within destination play spaces. Recent research has shown that for teens, the facilities typically on offer (such as fenced off hard pitches, MUGAs (Multi-Use Games Areas), skate parks and BMX courses) become dominated by teenage boys which can make teenage girls feel unwelcome or unsafe. To create a more inclusive space the needs of girls will be addressed through provision of specifically designed features such as social seating and shelter, swings, outdoor gyms, and toilet facilities.
 - **Natural play spaces** – The development will provide several play spaces, having different functions and levels of equipment as set out on the previous page. An overarching theme will be to provide play opportunities that are integrated within the natural spaces of the development, using natural features such as logs, boulders and mounds.
 - **Trim trails** – The development offers opportunities for waymarked exercise routes with fitness stations, outdoor gym equipment and play features placed along key recreational paths. The Green Infrastructure framework allows for a 5 km route, connecting the key park spaces where more formal facilities are located with the quieter natural spaces.
 - **Sports hub** – Sports pitches are consolidated in a location to the west of the development adjacent to Putteridge Bury. This location allows for the efficient management of the pitches, which could include a mixture of different sports layouts, plus a parking area and changing room facilities.



Surfaced pathways provide for active travel and recreation



NEAPs will include areas of surfaced play











Equipped play (NEAPs and LEAPs) integrated within planted areas



Informal natural play features within biodiversity areas



Trim trails or doorstep play

-  The Site
-  1 Village Green NEAP
-  2 Linear Park LEAP
-  3 Brickkiln Woods North LEAP
-  4 Local Centre NEAP
-  5 Chiltern Way LEAP
-  6 Green Edge LEAP
-  7 Wandon Park LEAP (Delivered by Others)

LEAP = Local Equipped Area of Play. An active zone of 400sqm with separation to development of 20m.

NEAP = Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play. An active zone of 1000sqm with separation to development of 30m.

Play locations shown indicatively and have potential to change location subject to LPA agreement through outline planning process.

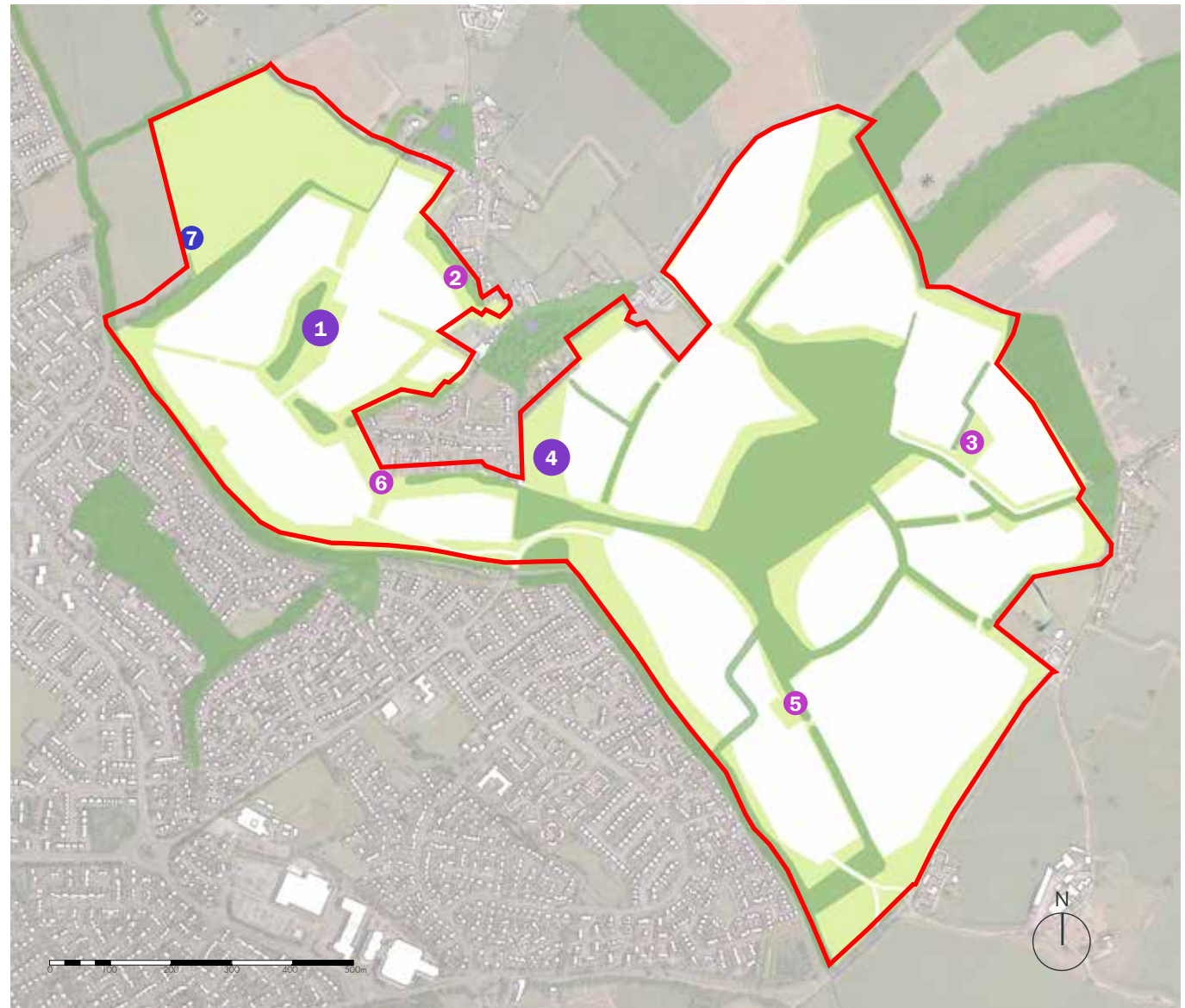


Figure 58. Play Strategy

Primary Open Space Typologies

The Primary Open Space Typologies Plan illustrates the broad distribution of open space types across the site. These include several types of open space that together make up the Multi-Functional Open Space and the Parks and Gardens open space categories required by the Luton Open Space Standards (2016).

Multi-Functional Open Space and Parks and Gardens comprise:

- Community greens - Amenity green space is located at central areas, modelled on the character of the local village greens with large feature trees and open lawns. These greens will be well defined by development fronting onto them and designed for flexible usage eg community events and informal play/exercise.
- Woodlands and hedgerows - Existing woodlands and hedgerows will be managed appropriately for conservation. Buffer planting is proposed adjacent, consisting of more native trees, scrub and meadow species to protect the existing features and to extend and connect habitats, forming a nature recovery network.
- Wildflower meadow - Extensive areas of wildflower meadow will be created, with nature trails running through them. Widespread tree planting will also be included in these areas, to form a naturalistic scattered parkland character.

- Seasonally wet meadows and ponds - The south-eastern edge of the site contains most of the sustainable drainage features, comprising a mixture of wet and dry ponds allowing for a diverse meadow mosaic to be formed of seasonally wet, permanently wet and damp areas to enhance biodiversity and create an attractive edge to the new community.

Children and Young People - Play spaces will be well integrated within the landscape fabric and have a range of different characters depending on location. Further detail provided on pages 72-73.

Outdoor Sports - The formal sports provision is focussed in the northern part of the site and provides the opportunity for a range of pitch sizes. Use of the secondary school pitches out of hours will be sought.

Allotments - allotments and community gardens will be distributed across the development. Spaces for food growing have been well integrated within the new neighbourhoods to encourage social interaction.

POS Category	Minimum Standard (ha / 1,000 popula- tion)	Minimum Requirement * (ha)	Area Provided (ha)	Area + / - Minimum Requirement (ha)
Multi-Functional Open Space	2	10.08	36.86 **	29.52
Children and Young People	0.57	2.87	2.98 ***	0.11
Outdoor Sports	1.6	8.06	10	1.94
Allotments	0.25	1.26	1.26	0
Parks and Gardens	****	5	5	0
Total POS:		27.27	56.1	28.83

* 2,100 homes equates to approx. 5,040 people at an average of on 2.4 people per home

** Includes existing woodland and vegetation.

*** Includes equipped play space and required buffers (4 x LEAP with 20m buffer, and 2 x NEAP with 30m buffer) – to comprise informal amenity / play space for games, picnics, etc. adjacent to and associated with the formal equipped play spaces.

**** The development would generate an additional requirement of five hectares or more open space provision of the Parks and Gardens category which only applies to strategic sites (2016 POS Standards, Para 3.2).

Figure 59. Public Open Space Provision (POS)

Biodiversity Strategy:

The Biodiversity Strategy is underpinned by the retention of existing habitats. The biodiversity value of the Site and restoration and enhancements will be part of the net gain in biodiversity that the Masterplan development will provide.

It is proposed to create extensive areas of new habitats and enhance existing Green Infrastructure features within the Site.

The Strategy illustrates an approach to delivering a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% across the Site, the proposed habitats comprising:

- The majority of existing trees, hedgerows and woodland will be retained where possible and enhanced to create green corridors across the Site for the movement of wildlife;
- All woodland parcels will be separated from the development footprint with a range of habitat types that will include woodland edge planting (scrub, shrubs and trees), modified and other neutral grassland, as appropriate;
- Mixed scrub planting will be provided in blocks to strengthen the boundaries of the Site and provide a corridor linking the east and west of the Site. Smaller pockets of scrub will also be planted along the southern boundary of the Site;
- The sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and bioswales will be created along the southern and western boundaries of the Site (a bioswale is a dry swale (ditch) in which water is stored underground within a gravel layer and wet swale is where water is stored above ground creating a potentially permanently wet area). . Where appropriate, basins will be planted with grassland and pockets of scrub to enhance their value for biodiversity;
- As many existing ponds will be retained as possible, with additional ponds created to provide aquatic habitat for a range of biodiversity within the Site;
- Public open spaces will include village greens to reflect the local area, allotments and orchards, which will incorporate features for biodiversity;
- The provision of additional tree planting within areas of open space and along proposed streets will provide additional forage and refuge opportunities for wildlife within the Site;
- New development will maximise the usage of native species in plot boundaries, streets and spaces to ensure species and vegetation diversity.
- All new development will utilise domestic scale features to support wildlife such as integral bird and bat boxes.
- The integration of green corridors through the scheme will ensure that there are natural interactions between the habitats and new residents, which will promote better wellbeing but also an appreciation of the wildlife importance locally.
- Where hedgerow, tree and woodland losses are necessary, these have been located to limit the impacts on sensitive habitats elsewhere. New diverse native hedgerow and tree planting will provide foraging and refuge resources year-round, with differing fruiting and flowering bodies, making them a valuable resource for a range of species.

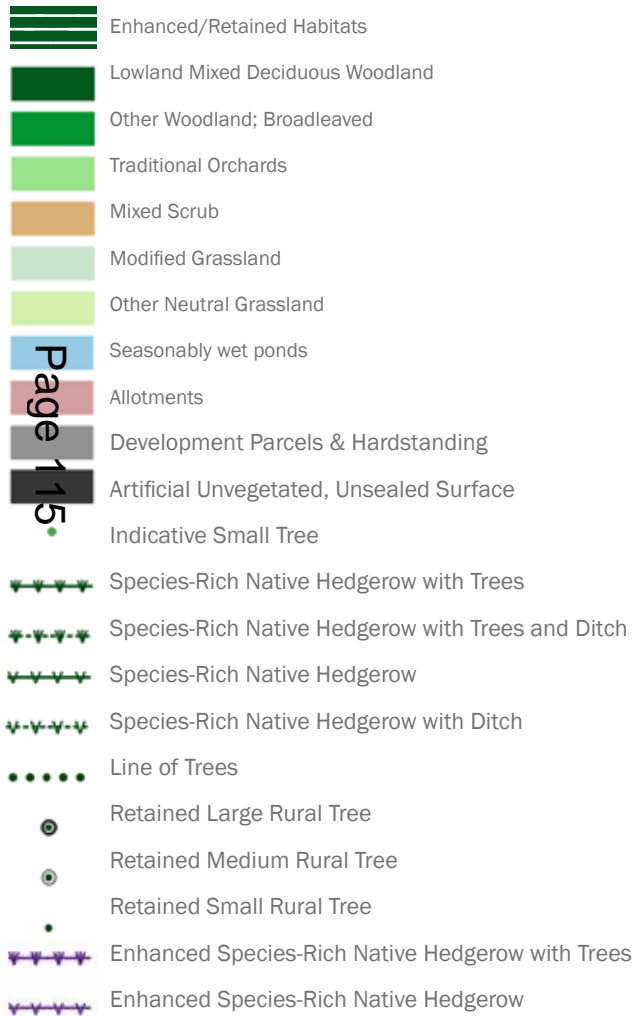


Figure 60. Proposed Habitats

Sustainable Drainage Strategy

- **Meadows with seasonally wet attenuation basins** – Shallow profile basins along the southern edge of the Site will allow for seasonal inundation, and for peak rainwater storage to allow for the slower infiltration rates constrained by borehole outflow. It is intended that these areas have wildflower meadow established with wetter and dryer seed mixes creating a diverse tapestry of grassland and scattered trees be integrated throughout to form a parkland, or meadow pasture character.

• **Permanently wet attenuation basins** – can be used in key locations such as entrance green spaces and the local centre. These ponds will be designed to maximise biodiversity with terraced edges to provide diverse growing conditions for marginal and aquatic plant species.
- **Bio-Swales** – An integrated, multi-stage SuDS approach could be provided, including a variety of surface features integrated within the development zones and the green spaces. Swales will be used alongside development parcels to help filter pollutants and deal with runoff at source and convey it to larger attenuation features in the landscape, helping to avoid a ‘pipe-to-pond’ approach.

• **Cascading bioswale** – In sloping areas swales can form a ‘cascade’ where swales and ponds sequentially flow from one to the next, using check dams to control the flow and creating an attractive stepping water feature.
- **Rain gardens** – Within development parcels, street verges can be utilised as ‘rain gardens’, a green strip adjacent to the carriageway that acts as a bio-filtration system for rainwater runoff. Rain gardens allow for planting of shrubs, wildflower mixes or perennials as well as trees to create a rich and biodiverse natural streetscape.



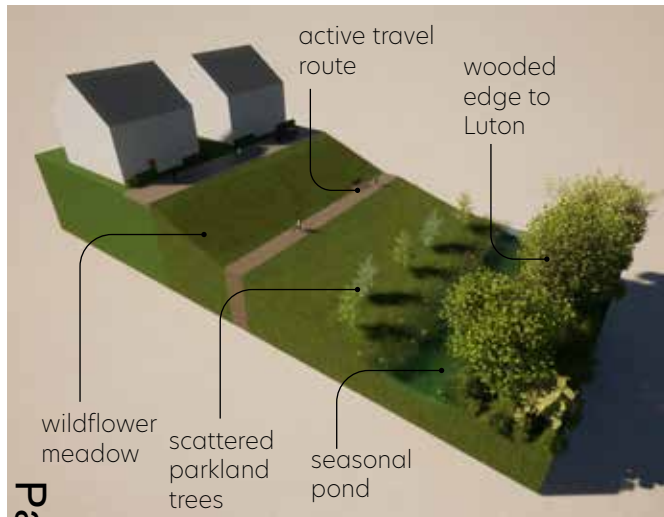
The majority of the southern edge will comprise seasonally wet meadows (detention ponds) with a shallow edge profile



Permanently wet water bodies will be included at key locations such as gateways to the site.



Rain Gardens can be integrated within streets and spaces to provide water quality improvements trees



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Figure 62. Indicative section showing wetland corridor edge

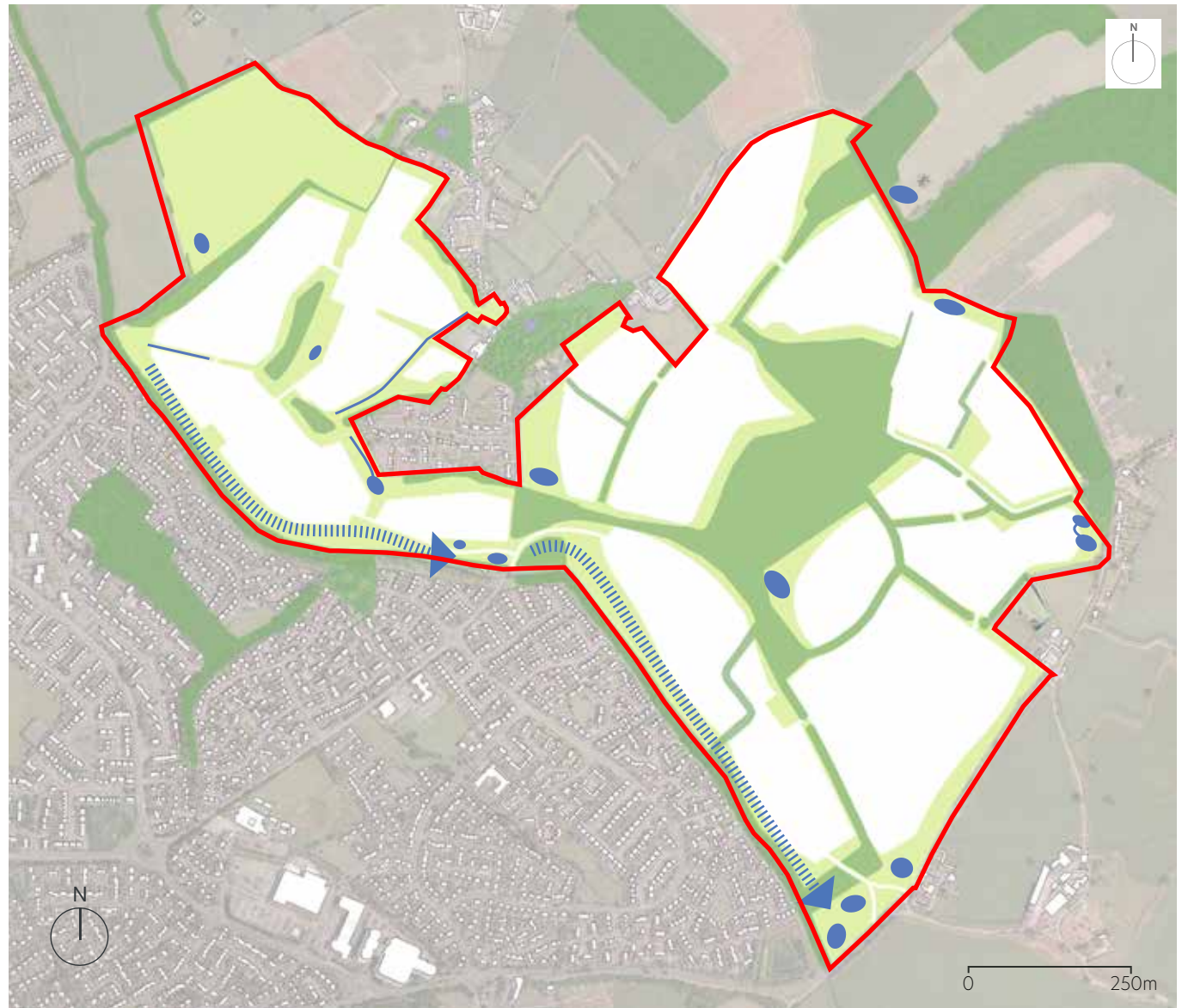
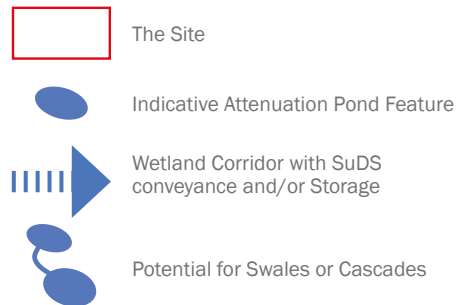


Figure 61. Sustainable Drainage Strategy

Landscape Cross-sections

The sections opposite show a range of landscape typologies addressing different edge conditions and open spaces across the site.

The section drawings shown indicate typical dimensions. These dimensions could vary depending on site-specific layout considerations.

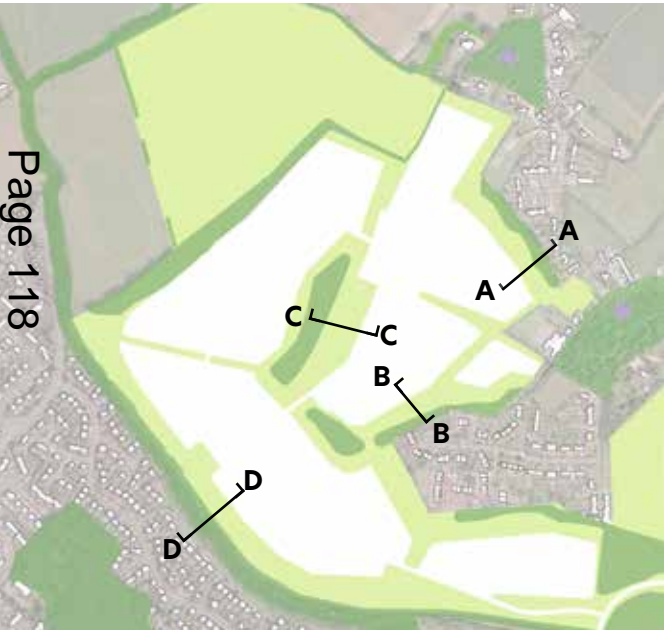


Figure 65. Section Key Plan

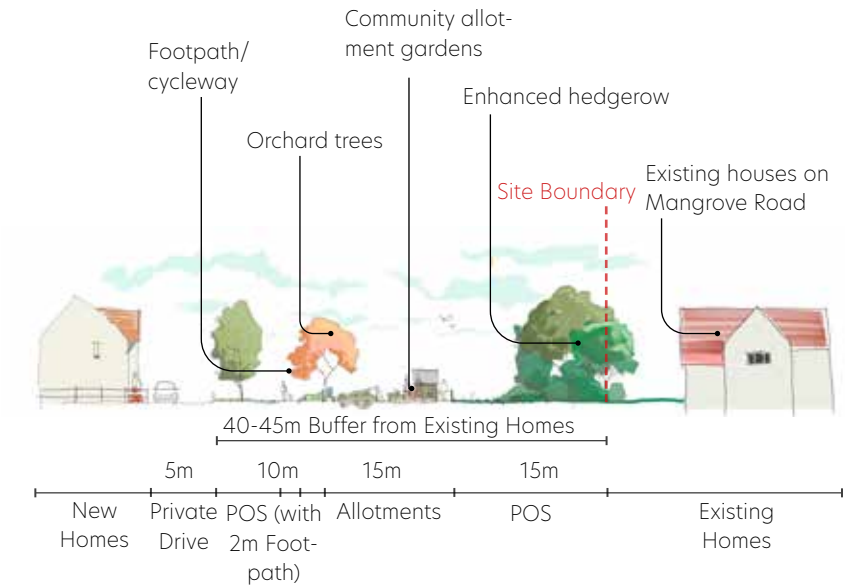


Figure 63. Section A-A - Northern Buffer - Community Gardens

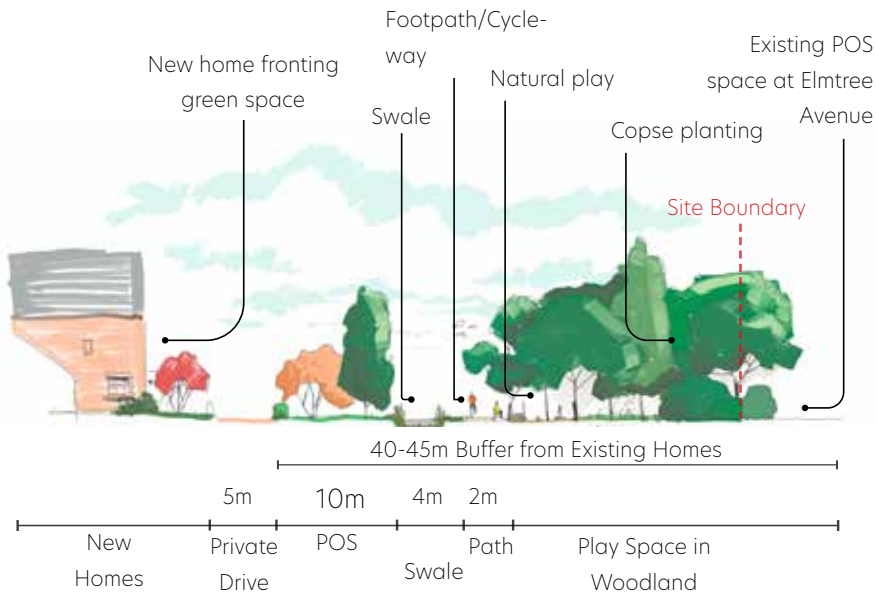


Figure 64. Section B-B - Woodland Corridor

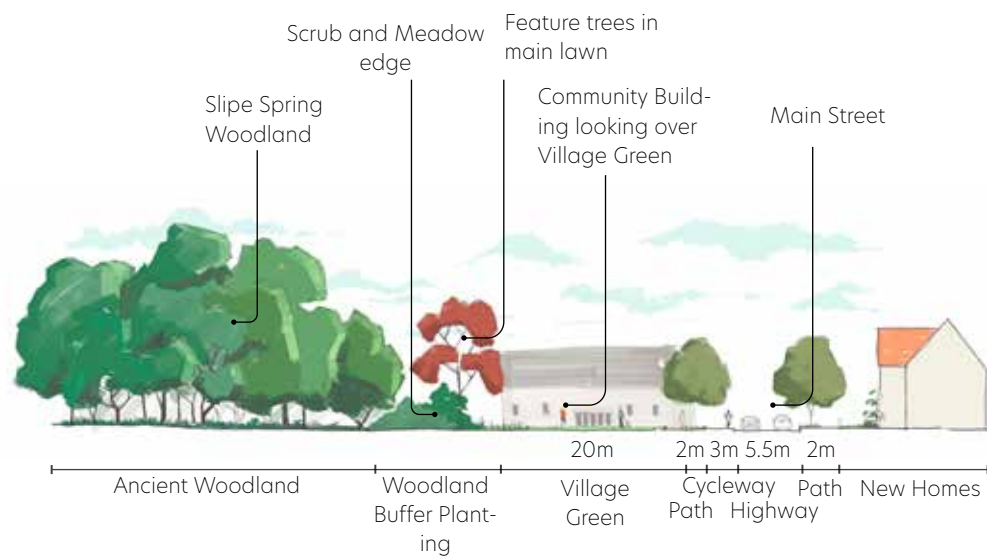


Figure 67. Section C-C - Village Green

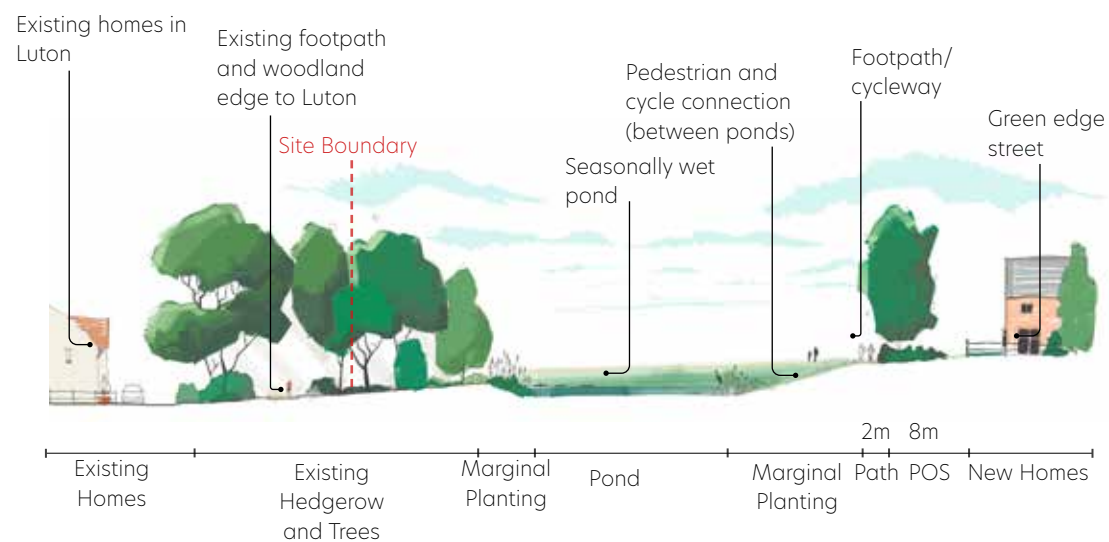


Figure 66. Section D-D - Wetland Corridor

Figure 68. Section E-E - Green Oaks Interface - North

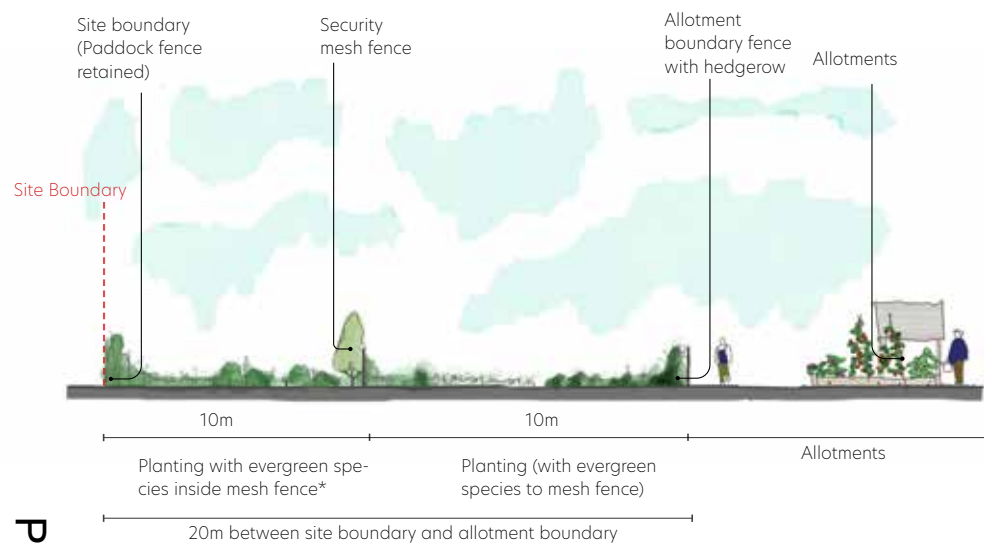


Figure 71. Section Key Plan

Figure 69. Section F-F - Green Oaks Interface - East

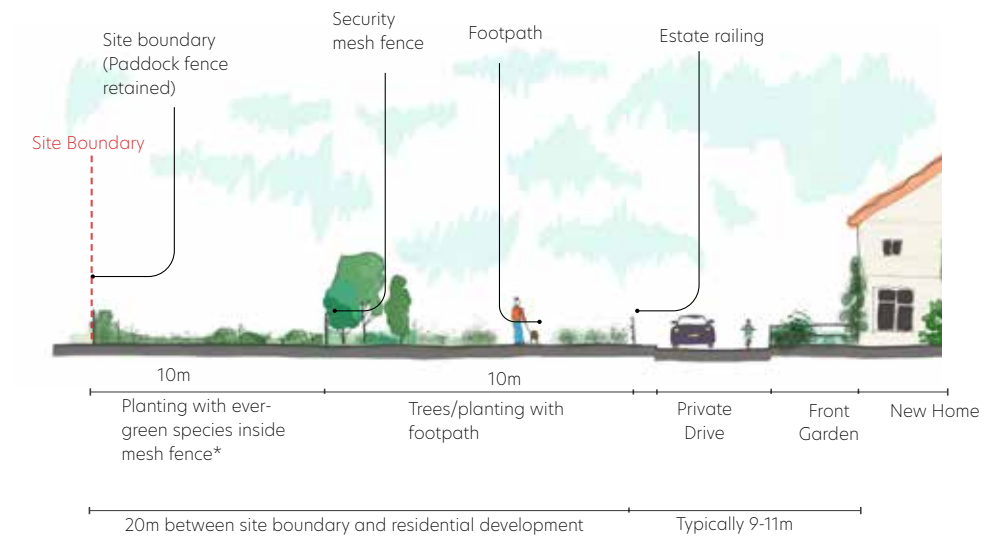
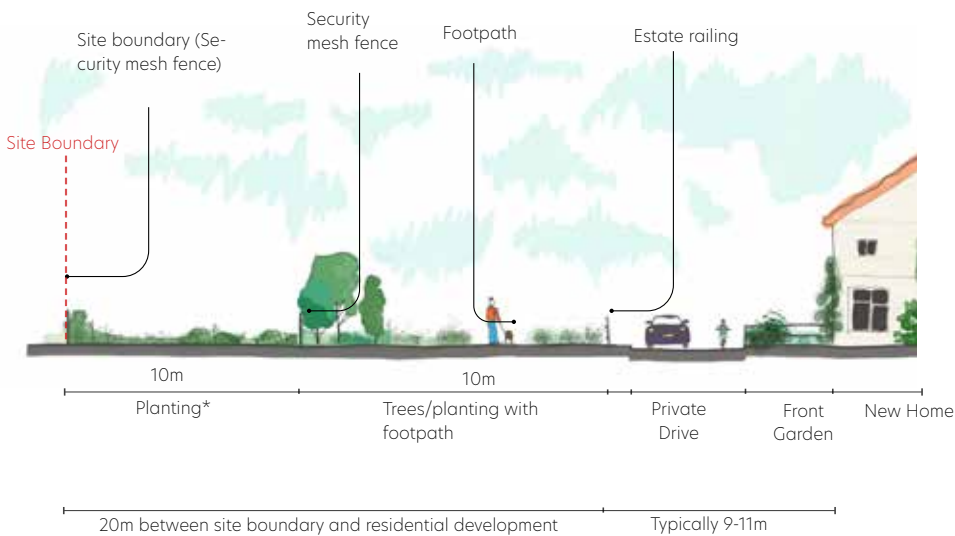


Figure 70. Section G-G - Dancote Interface - East



* Restricted access/suitable planting

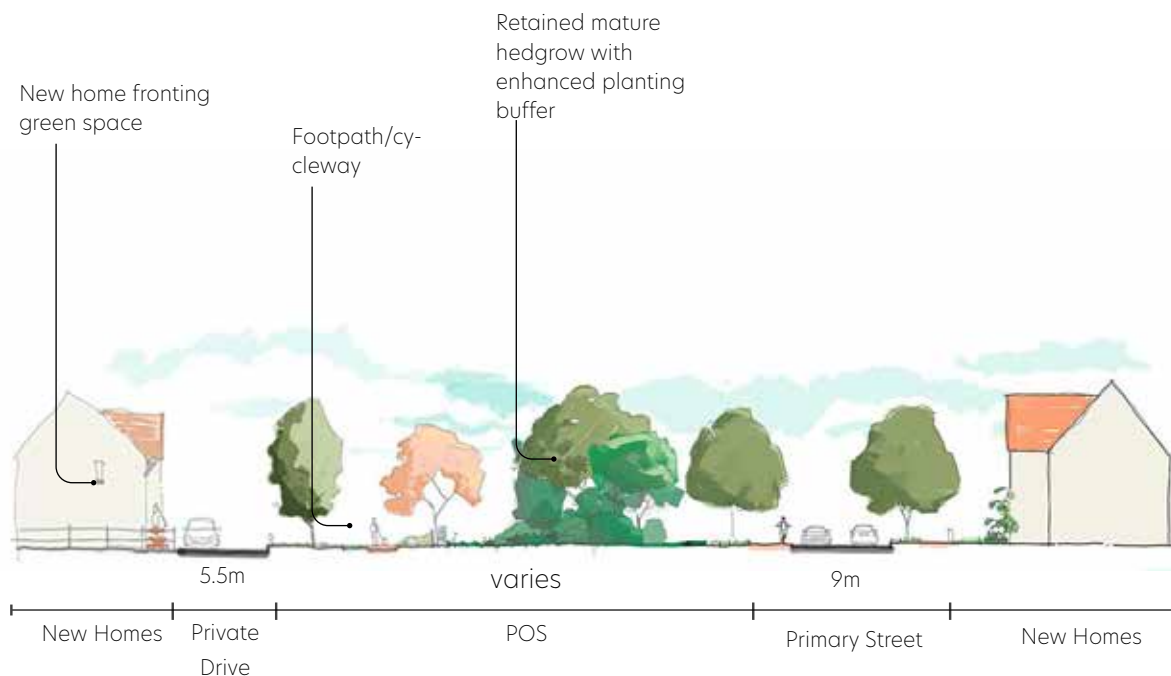


Figure 73. Section H-H -Primary Street and Green Corridor



Figure 72. Section Key Plan

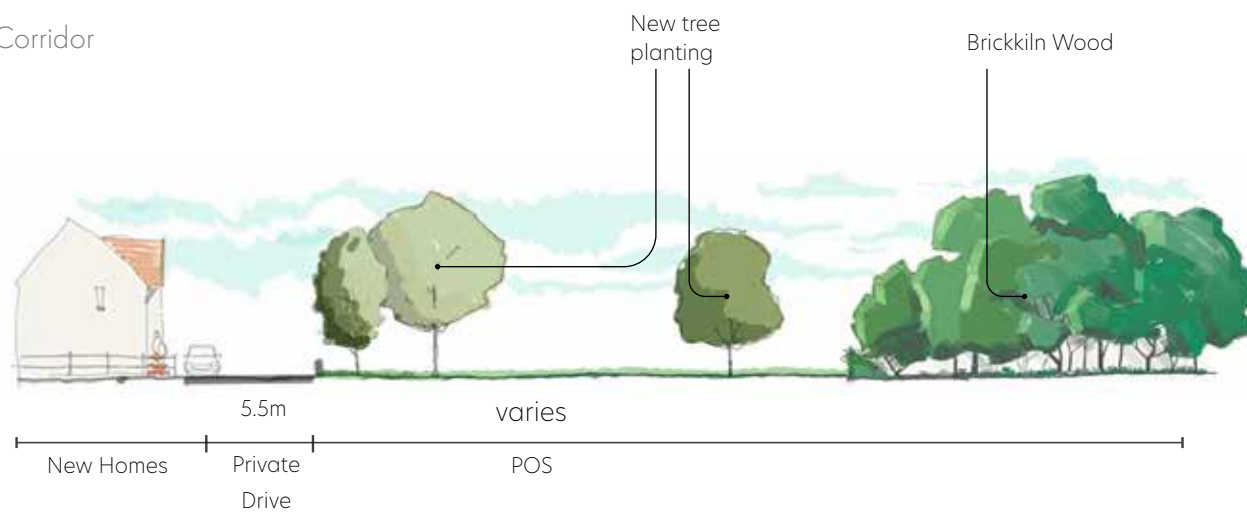


Figure 74. Section I-I - Woodland Edge



Figure 75. Section Key Plan

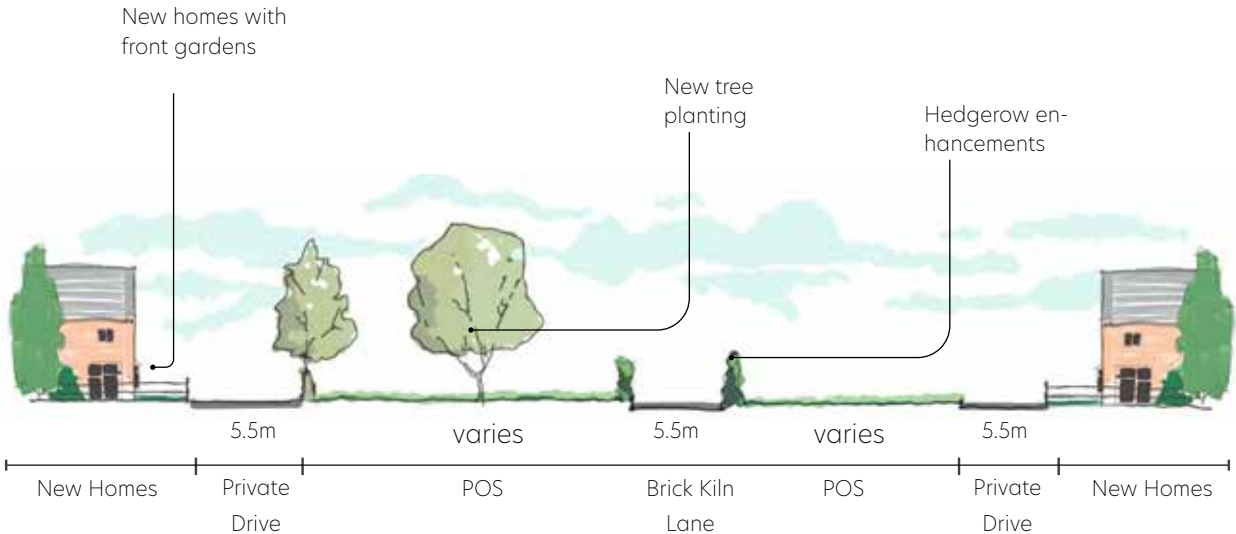


Figure 76. Section J-J - Green Corridor

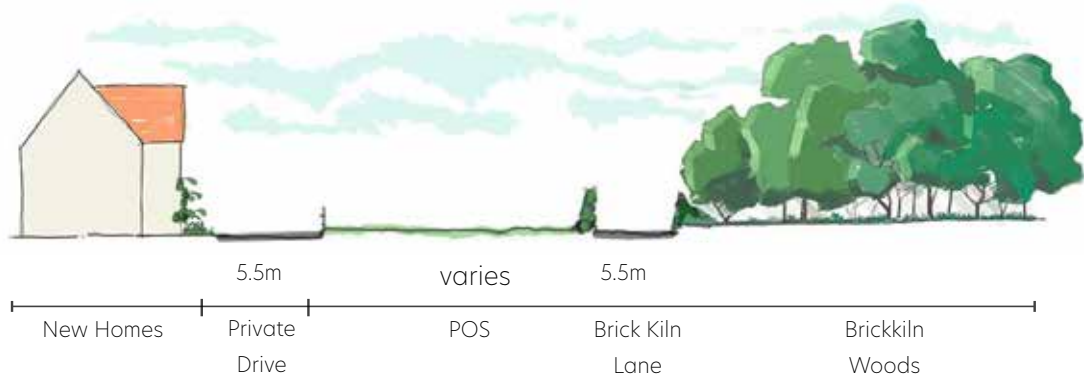


Figure 77. Section K-K - Brick Kiln Lane and Woodland Interface



Figure 78. Section Key Plan

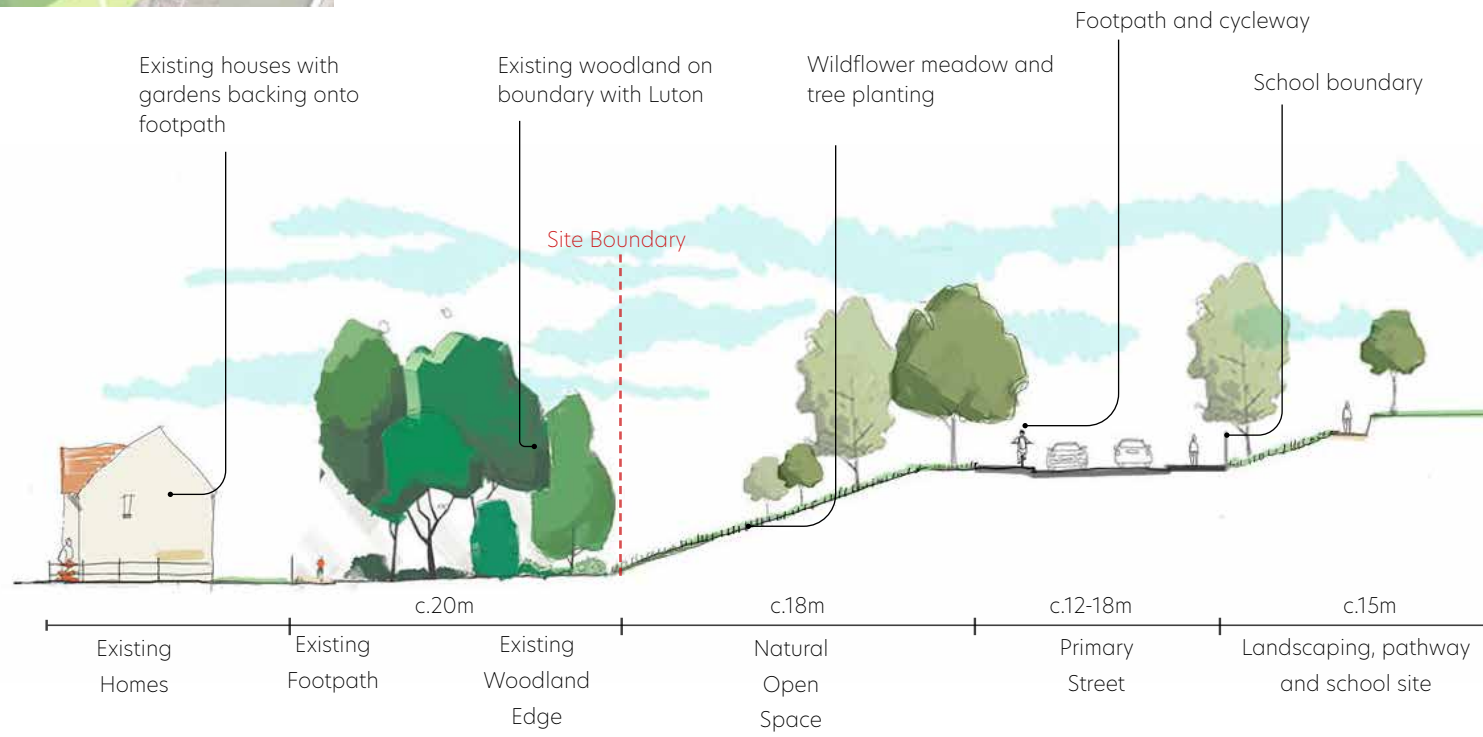


Figure 79. Section L-L - Primary School Luton Edge

4c Urban design framework

The urban design framework has been developed from the detailed assessment of local built form character as included at **Appendix A1** to this Masterplan. It will:

- Build on the points of agreement established in the Workshop and during the wider engagement exercise;
- Establish a long-term vision for the Site and a design-led framework;
- Ensure overall co-ordination and consistency between development parcels;
- Provide a level of certainty for the Promoters, the District and County Councils, other stakeholders, and the local community;
- Provide a clear guide for the developer working on individual plots; and
- Set the context and baseline for subsequent more detailed design work.

The urban design framework plan provides a single drawing that illustrates the overall design strategy. This should be read in conjunction with rest of this Masterplan.

The main elements are broken into the following detailed design principles:

- Key vistas
- Community focal spaces
- Landmark buildings
- Marker buildings
- Primary frontages
- Secondary frontages

Taken together, these elements will create a new community which is based on a layout with strong:

- Legibility
- Permeability, and
- Responsive design.

Character Areas

These will then be delivered in different ways as set out in the Character Area Outlines at **Appendix A2** to this Masterplan.



Figure 80. Character Areas Framework



Figure 81. Urban Design Framework

Buildings, Streets and Spaces

- Primary building frontage will generally be aligned parallel in order to address the street or public space
- Within higher density areas, buildings will be positioned close to the footpath
- Primary entrances to buildings will be visible to promote natural surveillance and provide active frontage



Figure 82. Building line defining space

Building Line

- Building lines will be consistent along streets and within Identity Areas to aid legibility.
- Variations in building line will be limited to lower order streets and within specific Identity Areas.
- Within areas of intimate enclosure, buildings will be located at the back edge of the footpath, rear access parking in some instances



Figure 83. Consistent building line

Landmark buildings

- Landmark buildings will be used at the termination of some internal vistas.
 - Landmark buildings can also be used to define key gateways.
 - The placement of buildings along the vista will be considered in order to emphasise key view corridors.
 - Landmark buildings will integrate into existing street scenes and address amenity of existing dwellings.
 - Landmark buildings need not necessarily require a change in architectural style-- difference in height can also suffice or a change of status for example a detached form where surroundings are terraces.
- Window sizes and designs on key landmark buildings will be subject to detailed agreement with Planning officers

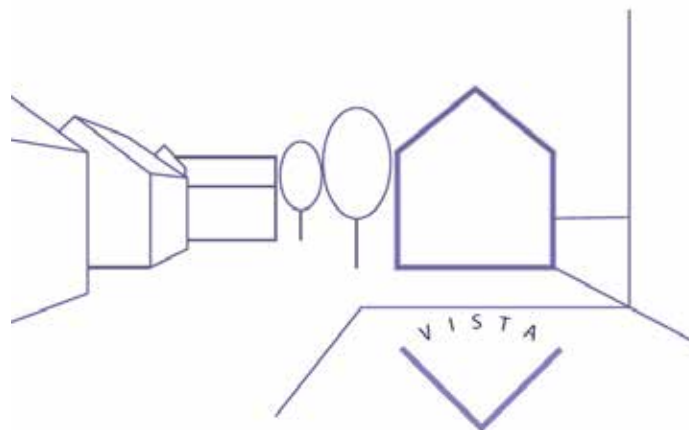


Figure 84. Landmark building terminates vista

Marker Buildings

- Corner plots will address both streets with habitable rooms.
- Bay windows or other window detailing could be used to achieve this.
- Primary building frontage will front the highest order street.
- Corner buildings will be identifiable through increase in height or a change in form (such as roof line).



Figure 85. Marker building

Key Building Groups

- Groupings of building types will be used to define public spaces, with their function reflecting the characteristics of the identity area they are sited within.
- Groupings can take the form of a cluster of buildings around a public space or through the formal arrangement of buildings, in order to define the street or space.



Figure 86. Building group encloses space

Permeability

- New pedestrian and cycle routes will connect through the new proposals to the existing residential streets.
- In locations where vehicular routes result in a dead end, pedestrian routes must continue to link with the nearest road or public space.
- Street arrangements will complement the Identity Area which they are sited in.



Figure 87. Permeable link between internal streets and parkland edge

Vista

- Internal street vistas will terminate at a landmark, key building or public open space;
- When a building forms the terminus of a vista, it will be directed towards the primary elevation; and
- Key buildings within the development will be used to frame key views along the vistas.



Figure 88. Vista to existing mature tree group

Enclosure

A sense of enclosure will be created by:

- Creating blocks of dwellings within terraces.
- Using covered drive-through accesses to rear parking facilities.
- Careful placement of detached units with corners that overlap at right angles.
- Downplaying the prominence of parked cars within the streetscene.
- Consistent building lines



Figure 89. Buildings enclose pedestrian street

Primary frontage

- Building frontages at highly visible or important locations within the design will be considered as a group.
- A change in frontage design will create a focal point and aid legibility
- Massing (dependent on character area and constraints) should be used to distinguish the prominence of the frontage



Figure 90. Primary frontage

Secondary frontage

- Building frontages at moderately visible or important locations within the design will be considered as a group.
- A change in frontage design will create a focal point and aid legibility.
- Materials, boundary treatments and architectural style will be used to establish the role as secondary frontage



Figure 91. Secondary frontage

Community focal space

- Buildings arranged around a space which is designed to promote social interaction
- Within close proximity to mixed use building
- Massing (dependent on character area and constraints) should be used to create enclosure



Figure 92. Community focal space



Figure 93. Examples of suitable building heights

Height, Massing and Density

The urban design framework has been designed to respond to local built character. The plan opposite shows an indicative building height framework that can be used to guide the more detailed design proposals.

Predominantly 2 and 2.5 storey development to reflect surrounding residential land use within Luton, to ensure that the development knits in to the surrounding area.

The various Character Areas provide opportunities for the strategic placing of taller development to aid legibility by signposting key green spaces and destinations, provide enclosure and overlooking to key routes and green spaces, and add variety and interest.

As a result of density being a product of height, massing, housing mix (and thus population) and character (more smaller homes in an area can equate to a higher density in dwellings / hectare despite no increase in building volume, or taller buildings can equate to a greater building volume despite no increase in density in dwellings / hectare), this Masterplan does not include a 'density plan'.

There will be variations in density across the Site, responding to the nature of the Character Area and role and context of the location. Lower density development on the periphery of the Site to reflect the rural setting and proximity to Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green and Tea Green. The Local Centre provides opportunities for higher density development, to emphasise this area as the heart to the development, and to provide strong overlooking and enclosure to key routes and green spaces.



Figure 94. Indicative Building Height Framework Plan

4d Movement and connectivity framework



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Figure 95. Existing cycle routes



Figure 96. Proposed active travel corridors

The Site is sustainably located, close to a range of potential destinations, including:

- Luton town centre;
- Two railway stations;
- Extensive and varied employment opportunities within Luton;
- A major convenience store; and
- Various other retail, medical and recreational services and facilities.

The development will also itself provide additional services and facilities to supplement the existing in the form of a new local centre, located centrally, providing local retail and community, and primary and secondary schools that are easy to access. The key to the movement and connectivity framework will be to ensure that all of these services and facilities, whether on or off-site, are easily accessible by the most sustainable modes of travel.

Active travel priority

The primary movement and connectivity objective is to prioritise and maximise safe, direct and easy-to-use opportunities to make day-to-day journeys by Active Travel modes (walking and cycling) and public transport.

This objective applies equally to journeys being made within the Site as it does to journeys starting or ending beyond its boundary. It also equally applies to the full range of journey purposes, whether recreation, education, retail, medical or short and long-distance commuting.

Links will be provided in such a way that active travel will be prioritised, whether this is in terms of less direct vehicular routing or highway infrastructure design, so that short journeys are made more convenient leaving the car at home.

The prioritisation of active travel will be realised through:

- Creation of a legible and safe movement network / street hierarchy.
- An extensive, permeable and direct network of off-street footpaths / cyclepaths and on-street footways / cycleways across the Site supplementing the existing PRoWs both within and on the edge of the Site.
- Sufficient and convenient active travel routes and links to the on-site facilities (i.e. local centre, primary and secondary schools).
- Sufficient and convenient linkages to the wider active travel network beyond the Site boundary (i.e. into Luton and wider countryside).
- Comprehensive active travel provision at the entry points into the Site.
- Provision of an accessible, high quality bus service.
- Typical street widths being varied throughout the Site to reflect their anticipated level of use and ensure that active travel is safe and prioritised.
- Design of a low traffic speed environment with 20mph vehicular speed limits.
- Having areas around the schools will be characterised by wider footways and / or further speed reduction characteristics.



Figure 97. Active travel priority

Movement Network

The proposed movement network is illustrated opposite. Key elements of this comprise:

- The vehicular access strategy for the Site including:
 - A multi-modal gateway (pedestrian, cyclists, bus and general traffic) access on Luton Road.
 - An general traffic access on Darley Road with active travel (pedestrian and cycle) separately provided for via additional links, avoiding topographical constraints.
 - Access via / from Brick Kiln Lane, which is very lightly trafficked and, whilst narrow, is a designated cycle route (Hitchin to Chilterns Cycle Route 16). The proposed movement network will further reduce vehicular use by design, enhancing the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - A general traffic access on Chalk Hill, from a realigned road within the Site
 - If feasible, enable a bus / active travel access from Hayling Drive, crossing the existing Public Right of Way.
 - Links to the existing network of off-site active travel routes to local services and facilities within Luton.
- Connections to the enhanced Luton cycle network as proposed (at the time of writing) by Luton Borough Council (LBC) within Luton (ref. LBC's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2023-2033) including segregated cycleways on Luton

Road / Crawley Green Road, Eaton Green Road, Wigmore Lane and Vauxhall Way.

- A comprehensive on-site active travel network of direct, legible, and integrated pedestrian and cycle routes providing connectivity to on-site facilities from all parts of the Site.
- The important role of the existing PRowS retained and enhanced, and accessibility to the network improved.
- An improved bus service for the Site, the details of which will be determined through the planning application process subsequent to this Strategic Masterplan.
- A primary road network providing access to the secondary school and the local centre connecting the accesses into the site, for most of its length including wide off-carriageway footways and cycleways.
- Integration of modes, with opportunities taken to provide for crossover and interchange between means of travel such as walking, cycling, electric scooters, and ,public transport, with facilities provided to encourage and maximise sustainable travel.
- Residential, school and local centre cycle and car parking provision will comply with prevailing local standards.



Figure 98. Active Travel and Public Transport Connectivity

Street Hierarchy

The layout will incorporate a safe and legible street hierarchy, based on an accessible and permeable movement network. Typical street widths will vary throughout the development to reflect their anticipated level of use and the character of the area. The plan opposite indicates the key elements of the street hierarchy. This includes:

- Primary Streets - These tree-lined avenues will be the main and most heavily trafficked elements of the movement network:
 - Junctions with secondary streets will be designed to reduce traffic speeds through material specification and raised table designs.
 - School Areas to be designed to reduce traffic speeds and to facilitate pedestrian crossing to green space through material specification and designs.
- Secondary Streets - These will act as the main circulation routes within the development areas, have a residential character, and be designed for lower traffic speeds.
- Tertiary Streets - These will act to maximise connectivity through the new development, where traffic speeds are minimised and active travel modes and landscaping intermixed to naturally calm traffic, will be considered.
- Green Streets - These streets are less urban with continuous landscaping and trees. They will act as visual and functional connectors between key spaces and routes. The landscaping of these routes will take priority over the built form which will be set back.

- An attractive active travel - A network of direct, legible, and integrated pedestrian and cycle routes through the Site - both built areas and public open green spaces, designed and laid out to maximise active travel connectivity and encourage sustainable travel, connecting into the surrounding areas - both Luton and the wider countryside.

Included at **Appendix 3** are a series of indicative cross-sections and principles for the street hierarchy. They are not the final street configurations and are provided in this Masterplan for indicative purposes only.

These cross-sections be used to inform further development of the street typologies as the scheme progresses. This will include further consideration of the site-wide parking strategy and street-scale approaches to drainage, utilities and landscape. Detailed requirements for the different types of street will be agreed and secured in a subsequent Design Code or Codes for the site which has regard to the street characteristics and hierarchies set out in the National Model Design Code, the Hertfordshire Place & Movement Design Guide and other relevant guidance including any design guidance produced by Luton Borough Council.

4e Land use framework

The new homes and community facilities will be nestled in an extensive network of green space comprising a diversity of different and connected spaces, and supported by a mix of other uses, including additional open and green space-- for both biodiversity and public access-- retail, community, sport and recreation and primary and secondary education.

Overall, the Site measures approximately 130 hectares (ha).

Policy SP19

Local Plan policy SP19 provides the quantitative context for the proposed land uses, requiring:

- Approximately 2,100 homes, including:
 - 40% affordable homes;
- A local centre/s providing for a range of day-to-day needs, including:
 - 250 sqm (net) of convenience retail floorspace;
 - 850 sqm (net) of comparison retail and/or food / beverage retail floorspace; and
 - other social infrastructure; together with
- 4 forms of entry of both primary and secondary schools.

Housing

As required by the Local Plan, the Site will deliver approximately 2,100 homes, 40% of which (840 homes) will be affordable housing.

The mix of homes to be provided will respond to the identified need that informed the allocation within the North Herts Local Plan, and was considered

during the Examination of the submission plan. A full range of homes from 1 to 5 bedrooms will be provided and it is anticipated that the highest proportion of the homes will be for families comprising of 3 to 4+ bedroom dwellings.

The exact type and size of housing (detached, semi-detached, terraced, bungalows, flats, etc.) will be determined through the Outline Planning Applications and detailed design, both subsequent to this Strategic Masterplan.

This Strategic Masterplan identifies that approximately 62.6 ha of the site will be developed for housing, this area including streets, footpaths, cycleways, local areas of green and blue infrastructure including planting, homes, gardens and parking.

Local centre and community hubs

Located at the heart of the development and easily accessible from the main access to the site and from the village of Cockernhoe and new residential areas, the Local Centre will have its own identity and space, and will include a combination of:

- Convenience and comparison retail;
- Community space;
- Either a GP surgery or other healthcare accommodation, subject to input from the relevant providers;
- Employment / co-working facilities; and
- An active travel hub.

This Strategic Masterplan identifies that approximately 0.5 ha the site will be developed for the local centre, this area including streets, footpaths, cycleways, local areas of green and

blue infrastructure including planting, the retail, community and other buildings, gardens, public spaces and parking.

In addition, to create a sense of place and community two Community Hubs are proposed:

- To the west of Cockernhoe, fronting the proposed village green; and
- In the south-east area of the site, in front of the proposed primary school.
- The Community Hubs will respond to the local community need and could include:
 - Community space/café/workshop area;
 - Additional play space;
 - Market stalls; and
 - Community orchard or food growing opportunities.

The size and extent of the Community Hub will be determined at detailed design stage.

Education

The development will be supported by a range of education facilities located at key points in the scheme, easily accessible by walking and cycling from the residential areas around them. These include the following:

- Primary School (Western) (2.20 ha)
- Primary School (Eastern) (2.20 ha); and
- Secondary School (5.50 ha).

Schools play an important role in the life of a development, providing life and vitality during the day when many residents are absent, and can also act as a focal point for community life outside school hours.



Figure 99. Land Use Framework

The location for each of the three proposed school sites has been discussed with stakeholders, representatives of the local community, and the Local Education Authority, and influenced by a range of factors including:

- Relationship and proximity to other land uses – for example:
 - The secondary school is located broadly in the centre of the development, in relative close proximity to the Local Centre;
 - The Western Primary School is located broadly in the centre of the western part of the site, close to the centre of Cockernhoe*, and adjacent to the playing fields; and
 - The Eastern Primary School is located so as to facilitate early delivery and thus education provision for new residents;
- Topography and an absence of other physical constraints;
- Landscape and visual impact considerations; and
- Long-term viability **.

Discussions on the exact location and specification of the school sites including detailed work on feasibility and deliverability will continue as part of the planning application processes and in due course serviced sites will be provided to the County for subsequent development.

* The location of the Western Primary School has also carefully considered the longer-term relationship with the existing Cockernhoe Primary School, a Church of England supported school located outside the Local Plan allocation / Strategic Masterplan boundary. A variety of future scenarios are possible and the Promoters will continue to work closely with representatives of the Diocese, school, Local

Education Authority and local residents to ensure the most appropriate long-term solution.

** Pupil generation from housing is not static – it varies over time. In order for schools to remain viable entities, they need to be able to respond to varying levels of pupil generation. The Eastern Primary School is located closer to the existing urban area of Luton to maximise the collective longer-term viability of the education facilities delivered across the development.

Sports, recreation and play

This Strategic Masterplan identifies a substantial area for the provision of formal playing fields and associated facilities. The clustering of these facilities in one location responds to best practice in terms of both design, operation and maintenance. This Strategic Masterplan identifies that approximately 10 ha of the site will be developed for outdoor sports facilities, including formal pitches, surrounding informal grassed areas, play areas, footpaths, cycleways, areas of green and blue infrastructure including planting, supporting infrastructure and buildings, public spaces and parking. (see Fig 59 on p. 77).

In contrast, children’s play areas and informal recreation provision will be delivered set out in the

Masterplan across the Site, providing ease of daily access to all new residents.

Other Green and Blue Infrastructure

The landscape-led approach to the layout of spaces within the Site creates a substantial multi-functional and interconnected framework of green and blue infrastructure encompassing existing woodland and hedgerows with new habitats, including grassland, wetland habitats, wildlife areas, open space and sports pitches, equipped children’s play, PRowS, other walking and cycling routes as well as a series of trails, orchard, street trees and private gardens. This Strategic Masterplan estimates that approximately 56.1 ha of the site will be given over to the green and blue infrastructure network (including outdoor sports and other play - see Fig 59 on p. 77 for breakdown).

Strategic Design Principles

7. Establish a clear movement network



8. Deliver a structure of streets and spaces



9. Accommodate public transport



Shows the proposed movement network, showing the routes that will connect the new development to Luton and other local destinations. How the network is designed will help to walk and cycle rather than go by car.

Shows the proposed structure of streets and spaces, including building frontages, perimeter blocks, green spaces and various types of street.

Shows how the movement network will accommodate public transport, including where the bus stops will be and how far people need to walk to them.

10. Provide a mix of uses



11. Create a legible place



12. Increase density in relation to accessibility



Shows the mix of uses. In time a greater variety of uses will be possible: the scheme allows for these to be provided as the area evolves.

Shows proposed features of the place that will help people to find their way around, including views, vistas and notable buildings.

Shows how the parts of the area closest to active travel and public transport routes will have the highest density, to encourage and increase the use of sustainable modes of travel.

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Sustainability, Energy, Water & Waste



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Figure 100. Solar panels



Figure 101. Public EV charging

Introduction

This Sustainability and Energy Framework sets out the objectives for the development under the following topics:

- Energy Consumption;
- Energy Production;
- Carbon Emissions;
- Water; and
- Waste.

For each of these topics, this Framework outlines the measures that will could be adopted to ensure the development is sustainable, mindful that requirements and technologies will change over the life of the development, and thus the detail of how the measures will be incorporated into the development will be set out in the planning applications that will follow this Strategic Masterplan, and controlled through planning conditions and legal obligations.

In each case, future detailed design and planning applications will respond to the standards and best practice applicable at the time.

Those applications will be assessed against the eight 'themes' set out in the recently-adopted North Herts Sustainability SPD – see opposite page.

Sustainability – Achieving Higher Standards

The North Herts Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) refers to eight built environment sustainability themes relevant to the allocation to ensure a holistic approach to sustainability. For each theme, a checklist is provided setting out three standards:

- Bronze – baseline
- Silver – enhanced
- Gold – exemplar

The SPD requires the achievement of bronze-level performance across all the relevant themes, and then higher levels of achievement on selected themes depending on site context, type and scale of development.

As a minimum, we are targeting the Silver (enhanced) standard on all themes. However, given the outline stage of the proposals and the nature of the Strategic Masterplan it is not possible at this stage to be certain as to which of these themes could achieve the higher standard.

In addition, the opportunities to achieve higher standards will vary across the allocation site due to site context.

Based on the strategic Masterplan, we expect that the following standards to be achievable in relation to the themes in the SPD:

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THEMES	STANDARD
Optimising Passive Design & Fabric Performance	Silver
Achieving Low Carbon Energy	Silver
Minimising Carbon Footprint	Silver at a minimum, but to be confirmed in detailed planning
Healthy Placemaking	Gold
Promoting Biodiversity (3 elements)	Silver at minimum, with Gold achieved on specific parts of the site
Sustainable Travel	Silver at minimum, with Gold achieved on specific parts of the site
Conserving Water	Silver at a minimum, but to be confirmed in detailed planning
Incorporating Sustainable Drainage	Silver at a minimum, but to be confirmed in detailed planning

Outline planning applications and Reserved Matters submissions, as well as conditions associated with construction activities will provide the appropriate details to demonstrate the standards sought are achieved.



Figure 102. North Herts Sustainability SPD

Energy consumption

To reduce energy consumption, the energy hierarchy principles will be adhered to, which comprise the following, in order of preference:

- Reduce energy demand;
- Improve energy efficiency;
- Use renewable energy sources;
- Use low-carbon energy sources; and
- Use conventional energy sources.

A ‘fabric first’ approach will be taken towards reducing energy demand and associated carbon dioxide emissions.

The first stage of this approach is to increase the energy efficiency of the building fabric beyond the minimum requirements of the Building Regulations. It is considered to be a more preferable approach than the incorporation of renewable and low carbon technologies, as these only reduce energy demand from fossil fuels, rather than total energy demand. Further improvements to the energy efficiency of the buildings could be achieved through the use of technologies such as: LED lighting, smart thermostats and efficient appliances.

There are likely to be updates to Part L of the Building Regulations during the construction phase that will need to be addressed through building design and these updates were set out in the Government’s response to its consultation on the Future Homes Standard.

Since 15 June 2022 Part L requires that all new homes must produce 31% less carbon emissions than previously accepted under Part L 2013. The

Future Homes Standard, which is set to be delivered through an update to Part L in 2025, will result in a 75 – 80% reduction compared to Part L 2013. The Government has also stated that from 2025, gas boilers will not be allowed in the construction of new homes.

In preparation for this, it is proposed that space and water heating within the new homes will be designed to be able to be fuelled by electricity, subject to further announcements by the Government.

Energy production

In accordance with the principles of the energy hierarchy, renewable and low-carbon energy sources could be used to reduce the demand for energy from the National Grid.

Examples of renewable and low-carbon energy sources could include:

- Solar photovoltaic panels
- Air source heat pumps
- Air to water heat pumps
- Ground source heat pumps

Details of the renewable and low-carbon energy sources to be used will be set out in the planning applications that will follow this Strategic Masterplan.

Carbon emissions

The development will incorporate measures to reduce energy consumption and associated / other carbon dioxide emissions.

Transport, in particular the use of private vehicles, is a major source of carbon emissions. The development will reduce the need for residents to travel by including a new Local Centre, two Primary Schools and Secondary School on site.

The needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport services will be prioritised, with good levels of footpath and cycleway connectivity provided both within the Site and to nearby locations. Further details of these measures will be set out in future reserved matters applications and could include:

Page 151 Enhancements to existing PROWs.
New footpaths and cycleways.
Bus stops, ideally within a 400m walk of all dwellings.
A well-connected internal road layout to allow for bus priority measures and connect to the existing local bus network.

Further to this, the development will provide infrastructure for electric vehicle charging points and will include the implementation of a Travel Plan to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Water

All new buildings will comply with prevailing Building Regulations Part G: Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency.

Water consumption will be reduced through the incorporation of the following measures as appropriate:

- Low-flow showerheads
- Dual flush toilets

- Aerators on sinks
- Water butts
- Water-efficient white goods

The Surface Water Management Strategy for the development utilises deep-bored soakaways in addition to attenuation basins. The deep-bored soakaways will replicate natural drainage patterns, including the recharge of groundwater, so that base flows are maintained. The attenuation basins will provide a level of protection to groundwater through the inclusion of a treatment train, as well as providing an opportunity to enhance biodiversity by introducing wetland and aquatic habitat.

Waste

The development will include measures to minimise the creation of waste and maximise the use of recycled materials in accordance with the DEFRA Waste Management Plan for England (2021)

- Assist the collection, separation, sorting, recycling and recovery of waste arising from the development
- Balance cut and fill on site
- Re-use all stripped topsoil appropriately within soft landscaping areas as far as practicable, any surplus topsoil will be re-used off-site with no need to consider waste disposal facilities
- Carry out a waste audit of the operational phases
- Provision of a Waste Management Strategy; minimise – re-use – recycle – encourage composting as appropriate
- Raise awareness – provision of information to educate and secure participation of both residents and commercial occupiers

- Provide adequate storage facilities for each home to ensure sufficient, discrete provision for bins to facilitate a high quality, comprehensive and frequent household waste collection service, to allow easy and convenient access by service vehicles
- Provide dedicated areas for recyclables to encourage minimal residual waste

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Delivery

Approach

The overall approach to the implementation, phasing and delivery of the Site will be focussed on achieving a viable new community as soon as possible, connected to services and facilities, both those to be provided new within the development, and those already existing within Luton.

Where possible, infrastructure necessary to ensure an active, healthy and sustainable lifestyle will be delivered ahead of the new homes, including public open space and active travel routes, and new bus routes.

Outline applications

Applications for outline planning permission for the development have been revised in response to this Strategic Masterplan. Revisions will be made to the applications, and consulted upon. Associated with the determination of the outline applications, planning obligations between the Promoters and the District Council will be agreed to provide the legal framework for the delivery of infrastructure.

Design coding and detailed design

Building on the site context, the twelve **Objectives**, and twelve **Strategic Design Principles** and **Urban Design Framework** established in this Strategic Masterplan, together with the detailed **Local Built Form Character** Appraisal at Appendix A1, **Character Area Outlines** at Appendix A1, and **Indicative Street Hierarchy** at Appendix A3, the Promoters will prepare a Design Code that will guide the detailed design of the individual areas /phases of the development.

The purpose of the Design Code is to provide further detail than this Strategic Masterplan, and to ensure a consistently high level of detailed design,

specification and delivery across the Site.

Infrastructure delivery & Phasing

A condition on the grant of outline planning permission will require the preparation of a detailed site-wide phasing and delivery plan for the Site. This will set out the overall approach to phasing, and details relating to the delivery of individual items of infrastructure.

Early highways and drainage infrastructure

The initial area(s) of development will be associated with the access points to the Site from Crawley Green Road / Luton Road, and/or Darley Road / Stony Lane. Early delivery of some drainage infrastructure will also be required, particularly along the south-western edge of the Site.

Education

The three schools proposed – two 2-form entry primary schools and one 4-form entry secondary school, will be delivered by way of serviced sites that are transferred to the Local Education Authority (LEA) – Hertfordshire County Council, which will then obtained Reserved Matters approval and arrange for construction.

In determining the phasing of the schools, the LEA will have due regard to any lack of or excess capacity in nearby schools, both within North Hertfordshire and neighbouring Luton, with a view to maintaining both short and long-term viability.

The phasing of these schools will be agreed between the Promoters (or their successors), the District and County Councils through the Outline Planning Application process.

Notwithstanding this, the indicative phasing plan below provides for the early delivery of a primary school in 2028/29.

Community use of school facilities

Subject to future discussions with school operators, it is hoped that the school facilities, including sports pitches, be made available for public use outside of school hours. This can arranged using a Community Use Agreement (CUA), guidance on which is provided by Sport England.

Construction Management

The outline planning permissions will include conditions requiring the submission of construction management plans, which will address matters such as construction traffic routing, environmental impacts, etc.

Stewardship, Management and Maintenance

Arrangements for the long-term stewardship, management and maintenance of the development will be formalised during the approval of the planning applications that will follow this Strategic Masterplan. These arrangements will be secured through a combination of planning conditions and legal obligations.

Continuing the approach to engagement adopted in the preparation of this Masterplan, the Promoters will work with stakeholders, public bodies, and local residents as appropriate.

Individual buildings and associated spaces will be managed and maintained by their respective

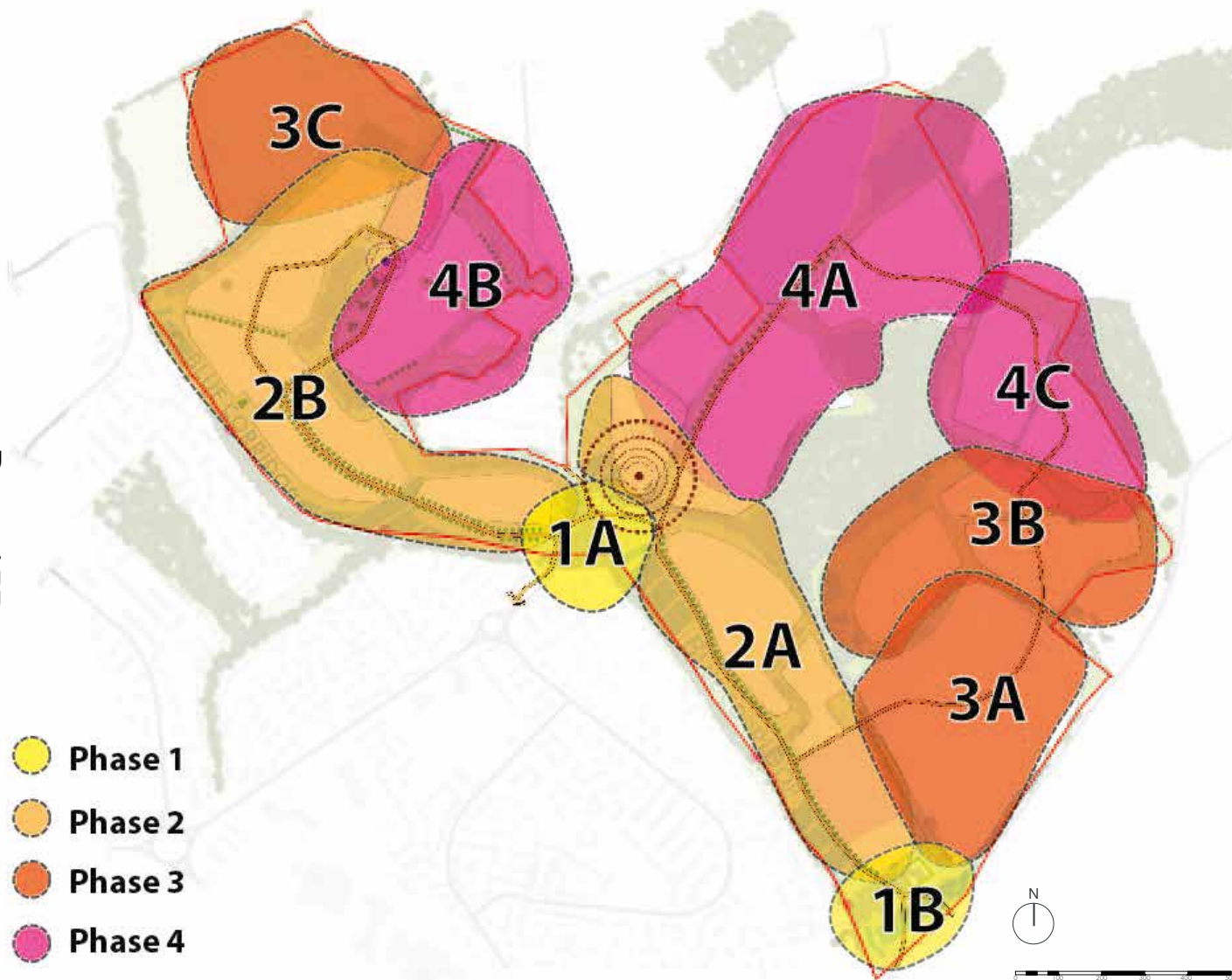


Figure 103. Indicative phasing plan

owners. The infrastructure serving the new community will then be adopted / managed and maintained by one of several bodies / organisations that will ensure the objectives of this Strategic Masterplan and other requirements are met in the longer-term.

Highway and drainage infrastructure

Most streets and some footpaths / cycleways within the development will be constructed to adoptable standards and offered for adoption by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) – Hertfordshire County Council, with some elements of the Sustainable Drainage System (the SuDS), being adopted by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) – also Hertfordshire County Council. Exactly which streets, paths and elements of the SuDS will be adopted will be determined following detailed design (see below).

Streets and elements of the SuDS not adopted by the LHA or LLFA will be managed alongside the green and blue infrastructure (see below).

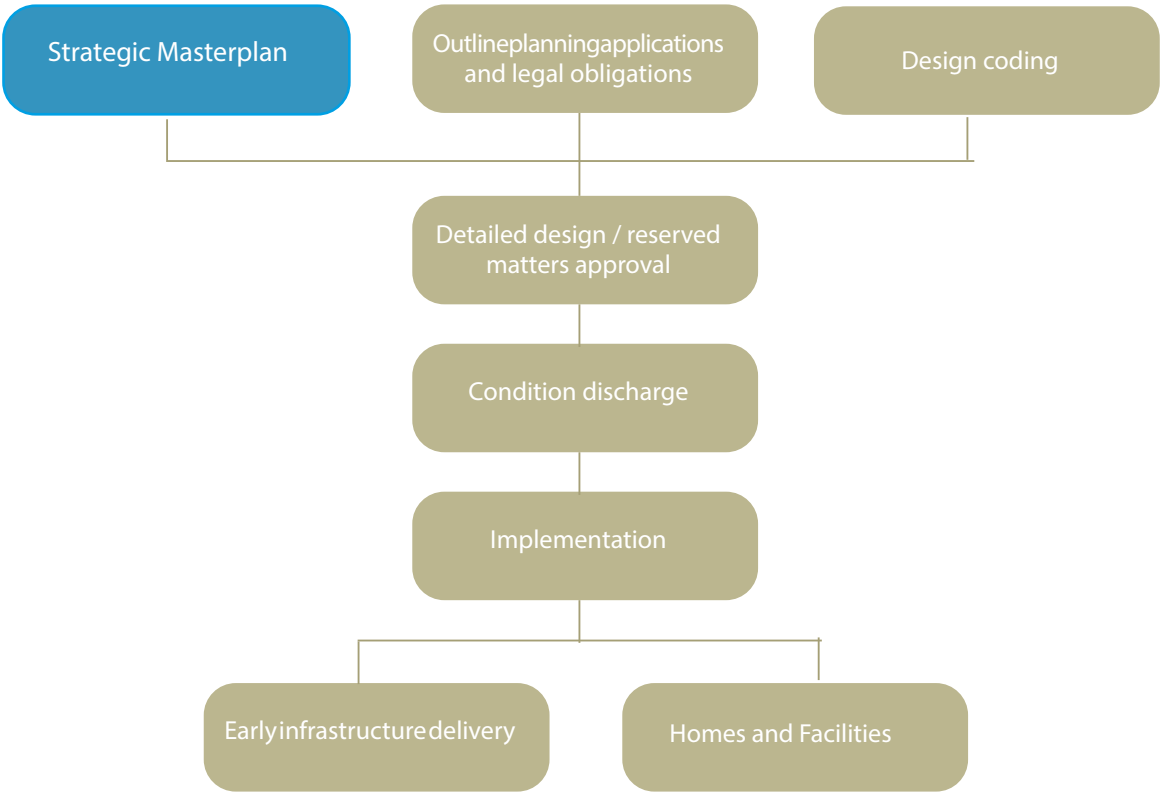


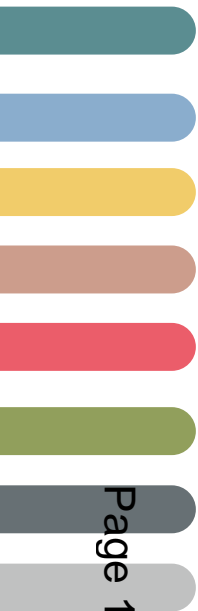
Figure 104. Planning, phasing and delivery process

Community stewardship

There are several options for the ongoing stewardship, management and maintenance of the unadopted wider Green and Blue Infrastructure network, including:

- Adoption by the LPA
- Involvement of a Management Company or Trust
- Adoption by and/ or involvement of the Woodland/ Wildlife Trusts

Given the varied nature of the Green and Blue Infrastructure, along with local preferences, it could be that a combination of management options are taken forward, and further detail will be provided as the designs progress at the next stages.





EL1,2,3 EAST OF LUTON

Strategic Masterplan Briefing

This report has been prepared by the Strategic Policy Urban Design Team as a summary of the East of Luton Strategic Masterplan Report. Circulation is intended for North Herts Councillors. The full report (prepared by the Crown Estate and Bloor Homes) is appended to the Cabinet Report.

KEY INFORMATION

LP Allocation	EL1 EL2 EL3
Total Site Area	(circa)130ha
Open Space	56ha
No. of Homes	circa. 2100 homes
Density	(2,100/62.6) 33-34 dph
Non-Resi Uses	10.4ha (5.5ha Secondary School + 4.4ha 2FE Primary School + 0.5ha local centre)

LP Allocation	Yes
Strategic Master-plan Framework	To be considered by Project Board, Cabinet and Full Council Nov-Dec 2024
Outline Planning Application	Four applications pending decision, PPA ongoing
Legal Agreements and Conditions	Ongoing
Design Coding	TBC
Reserved Matters Applications	None

The masterplan sets out how the development will seek to champion sustainability, organised around the themes in the Sustainability SPD. It is important to note that the following are targets and subject to more detailed design and viability. Ranges are also used where there are multiple components to certain themes.

Optimising Passive Design and Fabric Performance	Silver
Achieving Low Carbon Energy	Silver
Minimising Carbon Footprint	Silver
Enhancing Open Space/Integrating Health into Placemaking	Gold
Promoting Biodiversity	Silver to Gold
Sustainable Travel	Silver to Gold
Conserving Water	Silver
Incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage	Silver



DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

The draft strategic masterplan for East of Luton was reviewed in July 2023 using a bespoke panel of experts familiar with the site. The panel was put together by Hyas Associates, who have supported the Council through the masterplan process. Key amendments to the design following the session and masterplan process include:

- 1. Inclusion of a primary school within the west of the site for better distribution of infrastructure.
- 2. Increased 'buffer' to existing homes at Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green with allotments to create active edge between new and existing residents.
- 3. Addition of a potential sustainable transport connection to Hayling Drive.
- 4. Rationalisation and reorientation of highway infrastructure at site access point.
- 5. Relocation of, and refined design for local centre.
- 6. Redistribution of play across the site to create secondary focal points within indicative character areas.

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Movement Framework Plan presented to DRP with access roundabout between east and west sites.



SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

- 1. Two settlement structures (east and west of Luton Road) reflecting land ownerships and differing site characteristics.
- 2. Local Centre centrally located within the allocation to encourage active travel and use by both east and west neighbourhoods as well as existing residents in Luton - critical to ensure commercial success.
- 3. Primary schools located to ensure accessibility from the different neighbourhoods and to facilitate early delivery of school in the south-east.
- 4. Secondary school location (broadly fixed through LP process) places built form at the south of the site and playing fields to the north to respond sensitively to valley edge.
- 5. Existing Cockernhoe Primary School - potential to combine with proposed offer however this is subject to further engagement.
- 6. Luton interface characterised by urban parkland along the valley bottom (and site boundary) to connect both sides through shared open space and amenity.
- 7. Village style development near Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green to integrate with existing settlements.
- 8. Development blocks around the Ancient Woodland at Brick Kiln Woods frame the landscape asset and provide unique place-making opportunities to live adjacent to nature.



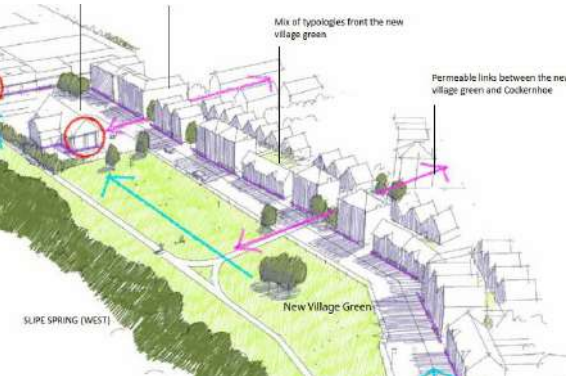
Woodland landscape edge - illustrative sketch



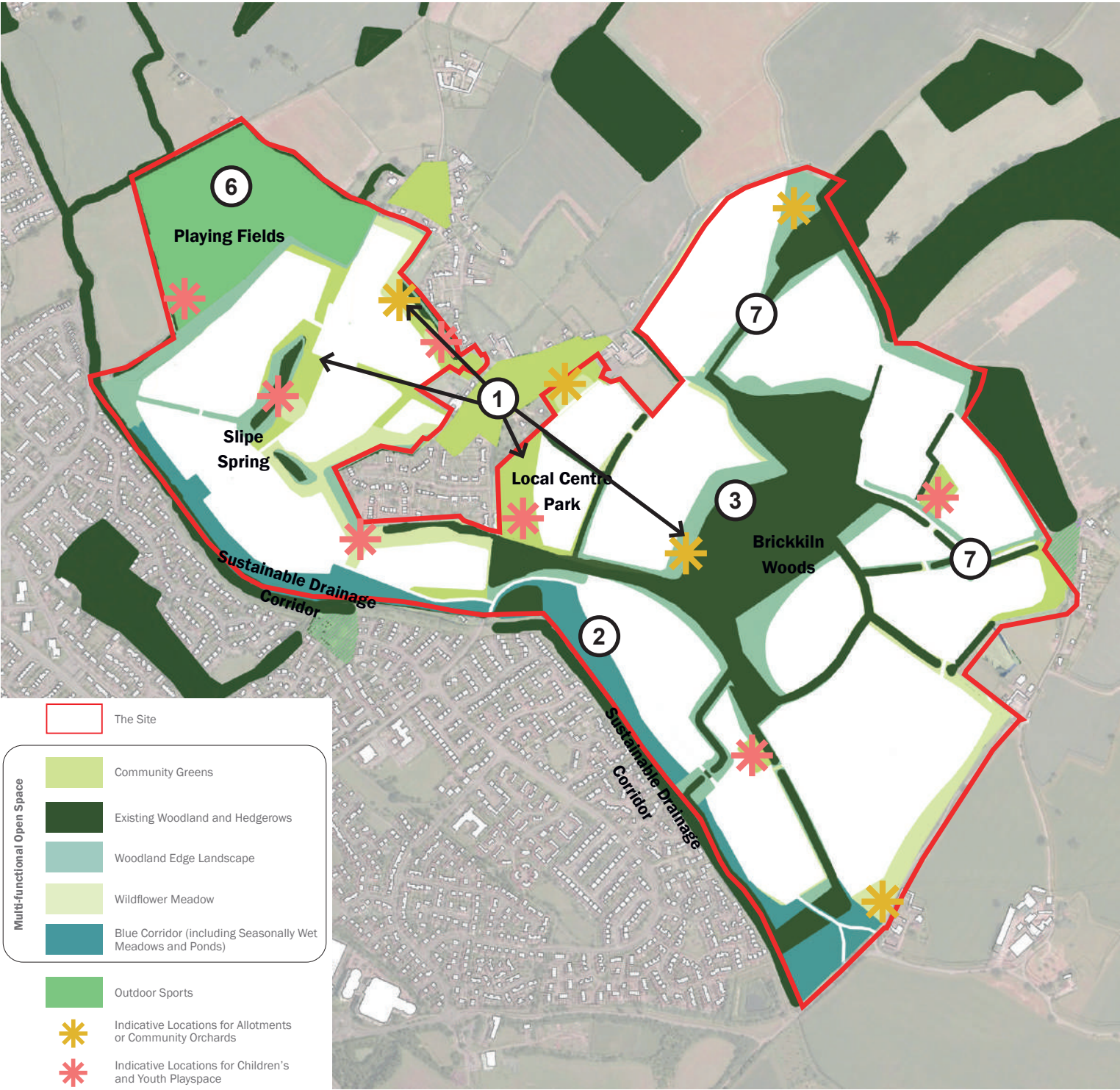
Figure 99. Land Use F

NATURE, OPEN SPACE AND ECOLOGY

1. Open spaces adjoining Cockernhoe and Tea Green are based on a village green typology reflecting their central role in existing settlements as focal points. They are connecting and form part of the wider open space network.
2. Linear park along the administrative boundary unifies the two communities through a shared amenity with a place-making focus on blue infrastructure and a chain of seasonably wet ponds.
3. Woodland edges will include complementary habitat through appropriate planing and opportunities for more informal recreation - negotiating the transition from built form to nature.
4. Allotments and community growing is distributed across the site to bring activity and footfall to different areas.
5. A mixture of formal and informal/natural play areas are distributed across the site - exact locations and provisions will be finalised through detail design.
6. Playing fields link into the new Wandon Park and form a buffer to Putteridge Bury - Green Belt designations retain control over extent of built structures.
7. Retained hedgerows provide the basis for a series of 'green fingers' permeating through the development and providing connectivity between key areas of habitat.
8. The development is on target to achieve at least 10% biodiversity gain on site.

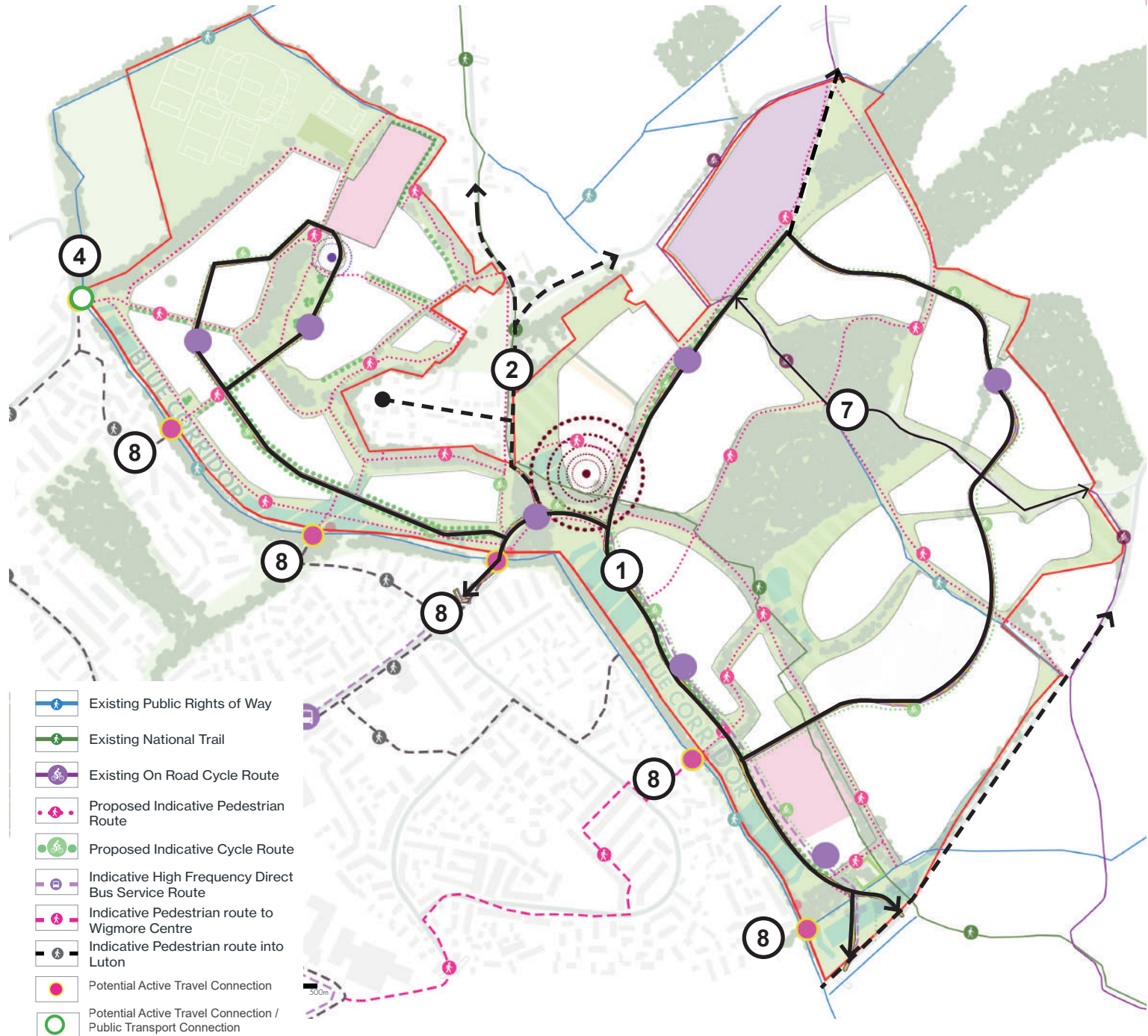


New village green at Slipe Spring - illustrative sketch.



MOVEMENT, ACCESS AND PARKING

1. Main multi-model access route is based on a remodelled Luton Road emphasising NW-SE movement (shown in black).
2. Access to Elmtree Avenue, Mangrove Road and Chalk Hill (shown in black dotted line) remains as existing.
3. Provision for an internal bus loop where every home is a maximum of 400m from a stop (shown in purple). Detailed route specification to be finalised through planning.
4. Safeguarded potential bus access to Hayling Drive (currently proposed as a pedestrian connection).
5. Masterplan focusses on primary access street through the site - showing varying character as it moves through the different parts of the site.
6. Lower order street hierarchy (plots within development blocks) will be established through further planning and design work.
7. Broad Kiln Lane and existing Rights of Way for pedestrian and cycle journeys are retained and enhanced by additional routes.
8. Six points of connection across the linear park/blue corridor into Wigmores, Luton.



Primary street along park edge - illustrative sketch.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND COHESION

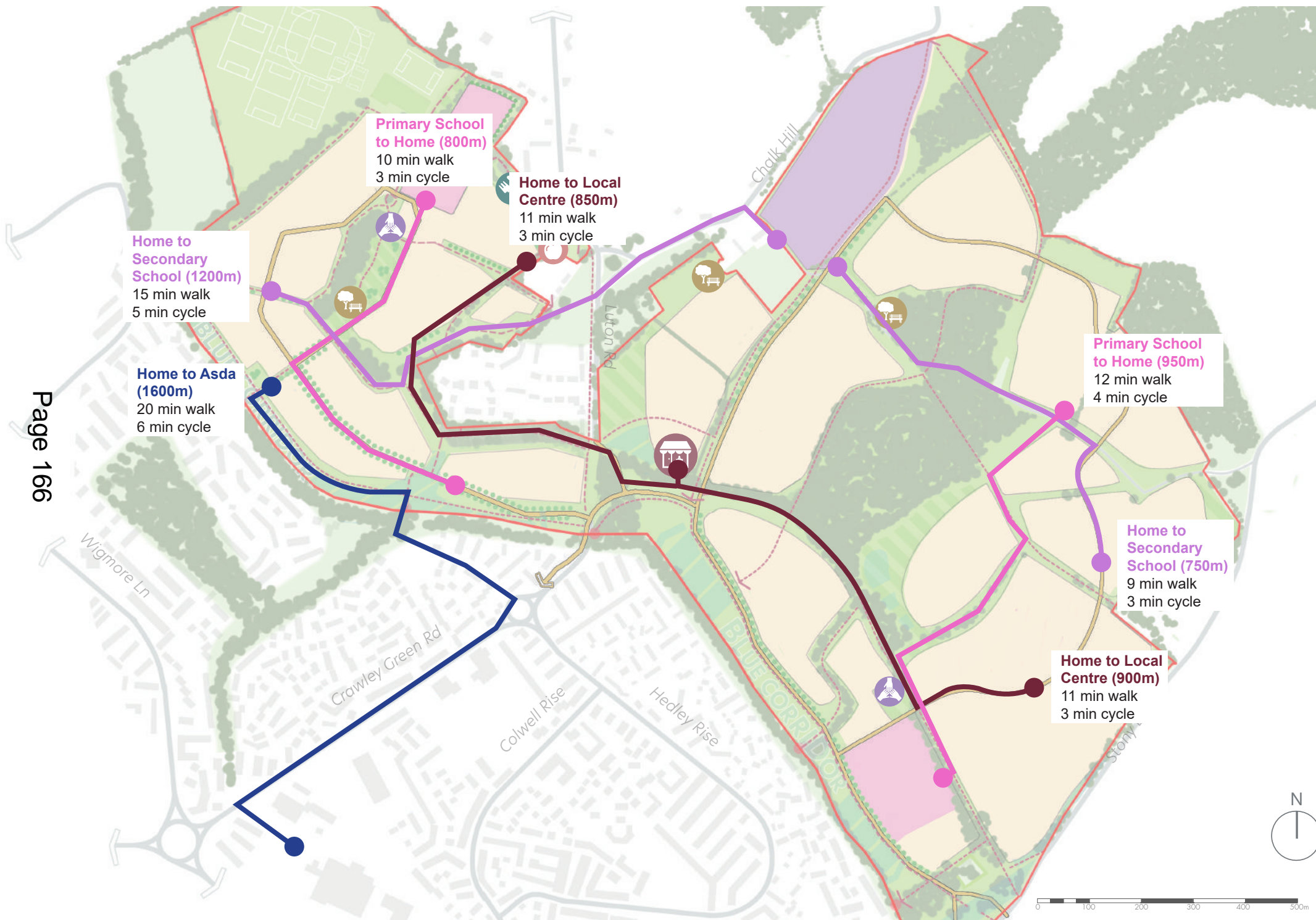
1. Social infrastructure, community facilities and education have been arranged and co-ordinated across both sites to ensure the offer is distinctive and not in competition with eachother.
2. The location of key facilities help drive circulation of residents around the site, activating key routes and spaces with play and growing along the way.
3. The Local Centre is centrally located within the allocation to maximise accessibility from both the development and existing communities. It also provides a focal point for direct public transport connections to key destinations in Luton.
4. Primary schools to the north-west and south east ensure a distribution of provision across the development.
5. Smaller focal points are located around the primary schools with play provision, open space and the opportunity to deliver a community space or cafe.
6. The secondary school provides a focal point at the north of the primary street loop and helps activate the central avenue to the community hub. The secondary school's proximity to Brick Kiln Lane (which will become a sustainable corridor) supports independant active travel to and from school.
7. The Local Centre (following feedback from DRP) has been designed to address a series of landscaped spaces and civic squares to form a lively focal point for the community.



Indicative sketch of the Local Centre.



Figure 99. Land Use F



CHARACTER, TYPOLOGY AND BUILT FORM

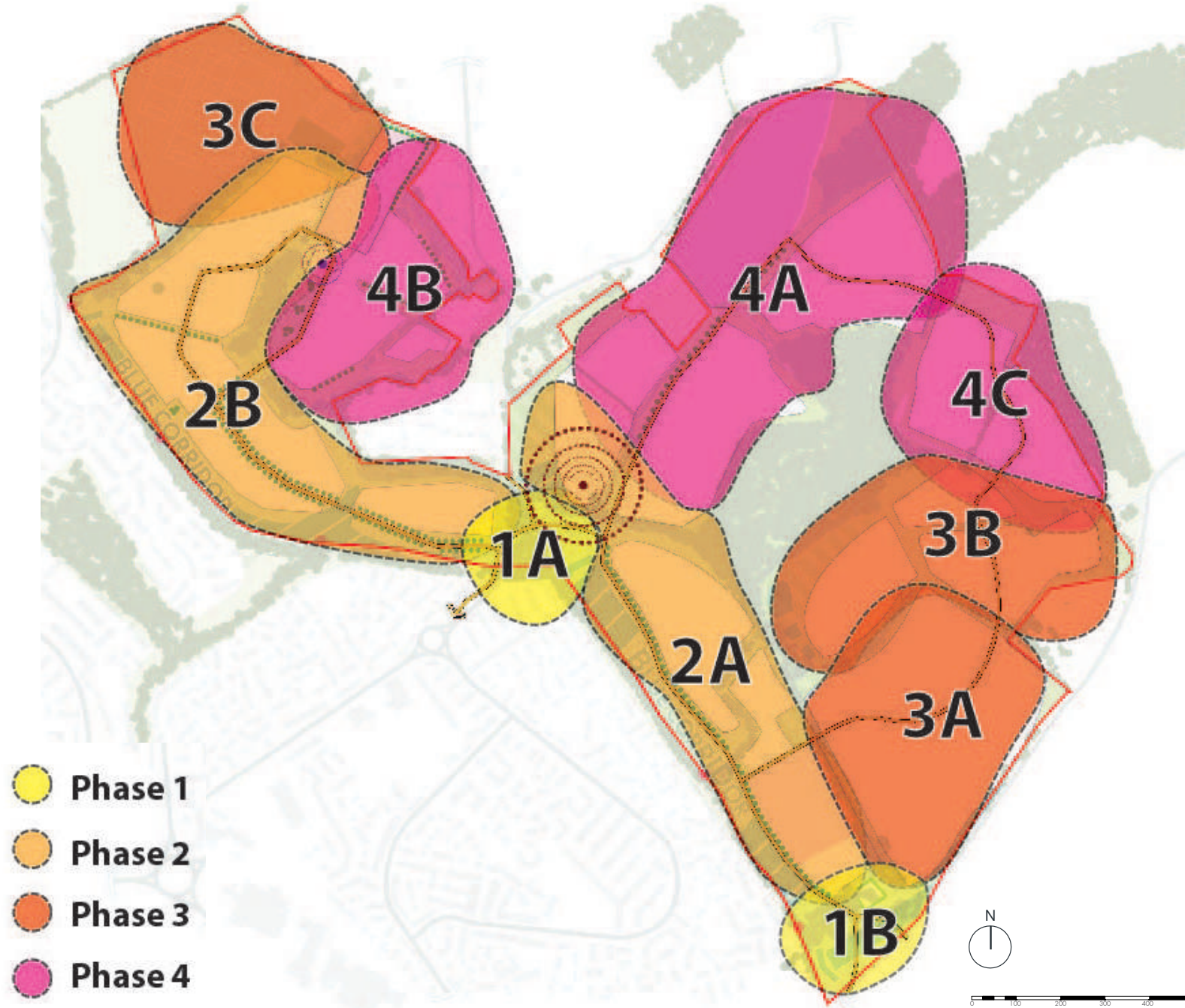
1. Development blocks are identified at a strategic scale. Plots within the development blocks have not been designed but the document states that they will be arranged in a perimeter block structure to create well-defined streets and clear public/private realm.
2. Primary frontages (dark pink) define the avenue between the local centre and secondary school and buildings around the neighbourhood centres.
3. Secondary frontages (yellow) define other areas of the primary street and around open spaces - their approach will be defined through the design coding process.
4. Key buildings (red stars) are secured through the plan opposite. These building mark entrances and terminate vistas. As such, it is important these buildings stand out - either through materiality, massing, form, distinctive architectural features or a combination.
5. A series of character areas are identified with initial design guidance contained in the technical appendices. These will be refined through the planning and design code process.
6. Building heights are shown at 2-3 storeys across the site with the lowest intensity development in areas closest to Cockernhoe and Tea Green.



Woodland neighbourhood - illustrative sketch

DELIVERY, MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- 1. The masterplan includes an indicative phasing strategy, recognising that this may be subject to change given separate land ownerships.
- 2. It envisages commencing with the key access points to the development (yellow) from Luton Road and Darley Hall Road and working outwards from the administrative boundary with Luton.
- 3. The first substantive phase is expected within the Bloor site (2A in orange) between the two access points and including the primary school and Local Centre.
- 4. The outline planning application and legal agreement negotiations will secure triggers for when the transport, open space and education infrastructure are to be delivered. The council will endeavour to secure amenity open space, affordable housing and active travel connections in each phase.
- 5. No firm decisions have yet to been taken on management and stewardship. This is an area the masterplan recognises will be subject to further development and that a combination of management options may be taken forward.



APPENDIX C: EAST OF LUTON STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN

FINAL AMENDMENTS FROM VERSION PRESENTED TO CABINET

Last updated: 27/11/24

Page / Para / Fig	Amendment
P8 / Infogram 9	Bus route: South-easterly arm deleted (included in error). Amendment replicated on P108.
P9 / Infogram 10	Bus route removed (duplication of Fig 9). Amendment replicated on P109.
P89 / Fig 81	Key vistas and marker buildings removed from key as not shown on plan. Colour of primary and secondary frontages amended to be clearer on plan.
P101 / Fig 98	Bus route: South-easterly arm deleted (included in error).
P104 / Col 2 / Para 4	Amended as follows: ... the Local Centre will have its own identity and space, and will include a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenience and comparison retail; • Community space; • Either a GP surgery or other healthcare accommodation, subject to input from the relevant providers; • Employment / co-working facilities; and • An active travel hub.
P106 / Col 2 / Para 2	Amend as follows: This Strategic Masterplan identifies that approximately 4.35 10 ha of the site will be developed for the formal outdoor sports facilities, this area including the formal pitches, surrounding informal grassed areas, play areas, footpaths, cycleways, areas of green and blue infrastructure including planting, supporting infrastructure and buildings, public spaces and parking (see Fig 59 on p. 77).
P106 / Col 3 / Para 1	Amend as follows: This Strategic Masterplan estimates that approximately 54.6 56.1 ha of the site will be given over to the wider green and blue infrastructure network (plus 4.7 including outdoor of sports and other play – see Fig 59 on p. 77 for breakdown pitches).
P119 / Col 3	Prior to 'Stewardship, Management and Maintenance', the following has been added: Construction Management The outline planning permissions will include conditions requiring the submission of construction management plans, which will address matters such as construction traffic routing, environmental impacts, etc.
P195	Amended as follows: BUILDING HEIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly 3 storeys • Up to 4 storeys in key locations • A mix of 2.5 and 3 storeys

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COUNCIL
15 January 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: CONSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

REPORT OF: THE SERVICE DIRECTOR LEGAL AND COMMUNITY & MONITORING OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL: CLLR DANIEL ALLEN

COUNCIL PRIORITY: **Thriving Communities/Accessible Services/Responsible Growth/Sustainability**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a summary of the areas reviewed and any in principle recommendations of the Constitutional & Governance Working Group ('Working Group') in relation to the following:
- *The Planning Control Committee meetings and Sub-Committees (including start times/potential end times).*
 - *Standards Committee – recommendation to review the Terms of Reference to include other meaningful areas of remit.*
 - *Council Procedure Rules to be reviewed and amended in respect of Member Motions and Questions, (including agenda management, number, length of time on debate/ remit/ and Member speeches).*

The report also covers areas considered but not recommended for change at this stage.

[Members should note that further recommendations may need to be considered on the same or similar areas, post the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Review Report, within 6 months of this report and for that reason this should not require a motion under Council Procedure Rule 14.8.15(b)].

To note, that since the original version of this report was published for the meeting of 28 November, and then 9 December, a request for a further amendment and possible referral are covered by recommendations 2.9 and 2.10.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council approves:

- 2.1. *The removal of the Planning Control Committee Sub-Committee meetings from the 2025 calendar.*
- 2.2. *That Planning Control Committee meetings commence at 7pm, from:*
2.2.1 January 2025; (or if the vote on this is lost)
2.2.2 May 2025.

- 2.3. A Planning Control Committee Council Procedure Rule, that any item under the consideration of the Committee, at 10.30 pm, will be the concluding item of the meeting, with any remaining business to be considered at the next available meeting. Such amendment to take effect from:
 2.3.1 January 2025; **(or if the vote on this is lost)**
 2.3.2 May 2025.
- [Note this is not a guillotine provision to end the meeting at 10.30pm]**
- 2.4. The Standards Committee's Terms of Reference be amended to include remit to consider and adopt, or recommend adoption to the relevant decision-making body of relevant Ethical Standards Codes, or Protocols; and undertake any annual review of sections 1-18 of the Constitution (with the Monitoring Officer), prior to recommended change to Full Council.
- 2.5. The proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules ('CPR') on Member Motions, Member Questions and Rules of Debate, as follows:
- 2.5.1. CPR 4.8.2 (f) and (g) order of business be move to the end of the meeting.
- 2.5.2. CPR 4.8.12 (a) Motions on Notice – to be amended to one Motion per Political Group, to be accepted in the order that they are received.
- 2.5.3. CPR 4.8.12 (c) Motions on Notice – Scope, to be amended to areas the Council has responsibility for and are relevant to, or specifically affect the District.
- 2.5.4. CPR 4.8.12 (d) Motions on Notice - Debate to be up to 15 minutes per Motion, **[and if recommendation 2.5.2 is lost, the maximum time for all Motions in total, one hour – guillotine for Members Motion]**.
- 2.5.5. CPR 4.8.12 – Motions on Notice – order of Motions shall be debated in rotation commencing with the largest opposition group, followed by the remaining opposition groups in descending order of group size and the administration group ending the round **[and in the event recommendation 2.5.2 is lost, this order would be repeated until any time expired – as under 2.5.4/ or if 2.5.4 lost until all Motions have been considered]**.
- 2.5.6 CPR 4.8.14 (e) Content and Length of Speeches – to be reduced per Councillor to three minutes.
- 2.6 The delegation to the Monitoring Officer to finalise any amendments relating to recommendations 2.3-2.5, as approved, in consultation with the Constitutional & Governance Working Group, and thereafter to be reported to Councillors via the Member Information Service.
- 2.7 The increase of the Non-Executive Delegated Decision financial/ contractual threshold reporting limit to £75K (from £50K), and instructs the Service Director Resources and Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations (and relevant Guidance documentation) accordingly¹.

¹ NB Individual Executive Decisions are prescribed decisions and all require a Delegated Decision.

- 2.8 *(as the non-Decision-making body by vote of assent), that the Leader will exercise his Executive function, to change the names of the following Community Forums:*
- 2.8.1 *Baldock and District – to become Baldock and Villages Community Forum;*
- 2.8.2 *Royston and District – to become Royston and Villages Community Forum.*
- 2.9 *To amend section 14.6.11(b)(iv)A as detailed in paragraph 8.*
- 2.10 *To consider any recommendations from Cabinet (if made) from 14 January 2025, on the amendment to 14.6.5 (a)(xiii) and 14.6.13.*

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure the arrangements are up-to date and fit for purpose.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. A number of issues were considered by the Working Group, and not taken forward. These are detailed below. The recommendations put forward by the Councillors on the Working Group, are those that they were predisposed towards, and considered worth Full Council debate and determination.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. In the 2023/24 municipal year, it was indicated that the Constitutional & Governance review would be undertaken, post all-out elections. The Council approved the principle of establishment of a Member (Group Leaders/ nominated Sub) Officer (Managing Director, Service Director Resources/ section 151, Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager and Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Working Group, in its calendar of meetings in May 2024. The purpose was to review the Constitutional and decision-making arrangements, such work, and recommendations to be made during 2024. The Working Group has met twice (August and October) to consider the matters detailed in this report and has made the recommendations - based on those that the Members within the Group, considered should be taken forward for formal consideration.
- 5.2. There was consultation in April 2024 with the then Chairs/ Vice Chairs of the Community Forums. Their feedback was considered by the Working Group.
- 5.3. There has been consultation with the Members of the Planning Control Committee by the Chair of that Committee, on how to improve its effectiveness. Following this, further District Councillor consultations on the Planning Control Committee/ Sub-Committees review options were undertaken (whether to have Sub-Committees, timing of meetings and any 'guillotine' cut off for meeting items). These consultations were considered and form the basis for recommendations (although are included for information purposes as Appendices A-B).

- 5.4. The Members, Reserve Members, Co-optees, Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards and Finance, Audit and Risk ('FAR') Committees were also consulted on potential changes and / or merge of the Standards Committee with an Audit-type Committee, such as FAR. The potential review of arrangements was also discussed at the Standards Committee on 23 October and a recommendation made at that meeting to the Working Group. The consultation response is Appendix C and the recommendation repeated in this report.

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 The Working Group considered several issues during its two meetings, which are summarised as follows (with some additional background on key themes starting at 7.2):

7.1.1. **PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE:** the length, timing and arrangements for the meetings were considered in the light of current issues and previous Corporate Peer recommendations. ***Further background below under 7.2.***

7.1.2. **FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE: PREVIOUS LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) PEER REVIEWS:** should the scrutiny/ review of Financial reports be dealt with by Overview & Scrutiny, rather than FAR, or a separate scrutiny committee. ***Further background below under 7.5.***

7.1.3. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE:** should this be combined with another Committee, or the Terms of Reference be reviewed, or status quo. ***Further background below under 7.11.***

7.1.4. **CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT:** was it as effective as it could be, could it be improved, or should it be removed. *The discussion confirmed retaining and improving the arrangements.*

7.1.5. **DELEGATED DECISION – FINANCIAL LIMITS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS –** ***further background information below under 7.18.***

7.1.6. **MEMBER MOTIONS / QUESTIONS –** the order of business in the meetings, remit, timing, number was considered. There were also discussions on the length of the speaking time for Members. and how to ensure that the Council better manages and has a more effective meeting agenda. ***This is covered by sub-numbered recommendations under 2.5.***

7.1.7. **COMMUNITY FORUMS –** the Working Group considered the April 2024 Chair and Vice Chair feedback consultation and the possibility of making these Forums more effective. There were discussions concerning a central District Panel Grant allocation approach as well as considering the renaming of two of the Forums. *The discussions confirmed that there would be no District Panel Grant approach recommendation. Renaming two of the Forums has been covered in recommendation 2.8.*

- 7.1.8. *Whether any further Constitutional & Governance changes may be required, after the Corporate Peer Review 2024. There is no recommendation at this juncture– as this would be covered by any subsequent action plan, following the Peer Report.*

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE:

- 7.2 The effectiveness of this Committee/ workloads and decision making has long been an issue and the subject of a previous LGA Corporate Peer Challenge review (2020). This continues to be a concern with some recent meetings finishing very late in the evening/ or in the early hours. It was recommended in 2020 by the LGA Peers that the Council should plan and be ready for the future increased planning applications (post Local Plan adoption), and that it:

“Consider starting meetings earlier. Members and officers are not performing at their best at late night meetings after a full day’s work and there is an increased risk of challenge from applicants if it was perceived that an application had been rushed because of a long meeting.”

“The finish time of planning committees should also be reviewed.”

- 7.3 The Membership at the time did not agree with earlier meetings nor guillotine provisions. Current Membership survey responses relating to the Planning Control Committee are appended at A and B. The Comments of the Chair relating to the former were also considered by the Working Group, who advised, amongst other issues, that there was scope for earlier Committee meetings, however, a further survey was advisable (*which was undertaken*). Additional Planning Control Committee Members comments are included in Appendix B. The survey responses indicated a greater willingness to consider slightly earlier meetings, and a ‘cut-off’ guillotine provision, together with better informal management of the agendas, and public speaking arrangements. ***Recommendations 2.2-2.3 cover these issues.***
- 7.4 The Group Leader/ Subs on the Working Group did not support the use of Planning Sub-Committee to consider Masterplans or Design Codes, therefore ***Recommendation 2.1 has been made to remove the current meetings listed from January 2025.***

FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE:

- 7.5 In 2020 the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge undertook a review, the review report and Action Plan were considered and agreed through Cabinet on 24 March 2020 and 23 June 2020, respectively.
- 7.6 A follow up review was undertaken by (a different) LGA Corporate Peers during 2022 and a further LGA Peer report was issued in January 2023 (*see Appendix A to that 2022 report*). This concentrated on Overview & Scrutiny, and Finance, Audit and Risk (‘FAR’) Committees and several further recommendations were made. These were separated out into the Action Plan with responses and proposed actions for the Committees consideration and recommendations to Cabinet. This was then considered by Overview & Scrutiny and FAR in June 2023. Initial Action plan link ([CLICK HERE](#)).

- 7.7 Two recommendations related to the current FAR Committee's remit:

“Split finance scrutiny from audit and risk. The scrutiny of finance should sit with a scrutiny committee rather than in the audit and risk committee.”

“After the audit and risk function had been split from the finance (scrutiny) role, the new audit committee should focus on understanding their audit role and undertake a self-assessment of the role of an effective audit committee.”

- 7.8 As part of the Action Plan put forward (to listed recommendations nos' 24 and 25, see link in 7.6 above) was to:

“The reasons behind the recommendation are understood but considered premature. Given the various recommendations that need to be implemented in respect of Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is perhaps not the best time to be giving the committee additional work. Equally the introduction of an independent member and the various recommendations that need to be implemented in respect of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, should improve, and enhance that Committee. This recommendation will therefore be revisited in 18 months as part of a wider review of structures post 2024 election.”

- 7.9 The role of an 'Audit' Committee is to carry out a set statutory function, to audit and seek assurance for certain Council's financial reporting, internal controls, governance, and risk management functions. As CIPFA has set out:

“Local government bodies are expected to meet high standards of governance and accountability. An audit committee provides a specialist forum to support and monitor the authority in the areas of governance, risk management, external audit, internal audit, financial reporting, and other related areas. There are a number of statutory duties, regulations, and standards relating to financial reporting, governance, and audit that the authority must comply with, and an audit committee is best placed to oversee these.”

- 7.10 Whilst this was considered by the Working Group (as per the Action Plan response), given the subsequent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge was arranged and ongoing at the time of *this* report, there is no Working Group recommendation on this issue. *However, there was an ongoing LGA Corporate Peer Challenge at the time of preparing this report; it has been mooted that a similar recommendation is likely to be made (expected in February 2025). This will be for a later Council meeting once an action plan response is agreed. There is also a potential SIAS review regarding the effectiveness of FAR, which will be reported through the Committee process in due course, which will require consideration prior to any changes.*

STANDARDS COMMITTEE:

- 7.11 There is no legal requirement to have such a Committee, however, this Council chose to continue with one following changes to the regime in or around 2011. Furthermore, a principal Council must have 'arrangements' in place to consider complaints against Councillors (in North Herts case, District and Local Parish, Town, and Community Councillors within the District), as per the requirements under the Localism Act 2011.

- 7.12 The current Committee has remit to consider ethical standards matters, promote those, review the Councillor Complaints Handling Procedure and complaints, consider appeals against the Monitoring Officer's refusal to grant a dispensation, consider any political restriction (as relevant) and, most significantly if it arises, Councillor complaints via a Sub-Committee. The membership is 12 District Councillors, up to 4 Co-opted Parish Councillors and the Independent and Reserve Independent Persons are invited to attend the meetings (they are not members of the Committee).
- 7.13 The Committee generally meets twice a year. However, the agendas are limited, often to the Standards Matters report (which includes complaints received/ general ethical standards issues), and one other report covering e.g., a Code or Complaints Handling Procedure Review. Locally most within Hertfordshire have retained a Standards Committee, although not all appear to have scheduled meetings. This is largely reflective of the national picture, albeit that some councils have incorporated the statutory ambit of the Standards Committee within an Audit Committee that deals with audit / financial monitoring / assurances.
- 7.14 To gauge views, an email with survey was therefore sent to the 34 Standards Committee and Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Members (and any reserves), co-optees and Independent and Reserve Independent Persons to seek their thoughts on potential changes. 8 responses were received: 4 District Councillors (full Members of the Standards Committee), one of the Parish Co-optee and the Independent Person and, the then, Reserve Independent Persons responded. None were received from FAR Committee, their reserves, or their Independent Member.
- 7.15 The survey responses relating to Standards Committee merge is appended at C. The Standards Committee considered and debated the matter on 23 October. They were not in favour of a merge with another Committee. They recommended (item 6) that:
- “(3) That the Committee recommended that the working party be urged to retain and strengthen this Committee in consultation with the recommendations and comments from the Independent Person.”***
- 7.16 The Working Group considered and accepted this principle. ***It is reflected in recommendation 2.4.***
- 7.17 *As an additional point, it is worth noting that post the Standards Committee meeting on 23 October, the Deputy Prime Minister indicated that there will be a review of the local government standards framework – with proposals to allow for suspension of members who have breached their Code of Conduct. That is likely to mean that the current Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee would have to be reviewed in due course, in any event, if such changes are enacted.*

DELEGATED DECISION – FINANCIAL LIMITS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS:

- 7.18 Members and Officers may have a general delegation or be given a specific one to come to a decision. Some of those general and specific decisions will be Executive in nature or Non-Executive. In terms of Executive decisions, these can be taken by both a Member of the Executive/ the Leader, or by an Officer. All Executive decisions are subject to Delegated Decision reporting requirements under relevant legislation 2012² (irrespective of financial level). Regarding *individual* Non-Executive decisions, these can only be taken by Officers; Regulations were introduced in 2014³ that placed requirements to produce a written record for Non-Executive Decisions, and for financial matters these relate to award a contract or when the Council will incur expenditure which, in either case, materially affects the Council's financial position. 'Materially affects' is not defined in legislation – it is something for local determination and the current limit was set in 2015 of £50K. ***This has been covered in recommendation 2.7.***

RECOMMENDATION 2.9

- 7.19 A request for this amendment was made by the Service Director: Regulatory.

RECOMMENDATION 2.10

- 7.20 Cabinet will be considering a report relating to a Local Government Ombudsman report on 14 January 2025. This amendment will only be considered if such a recommendation is made to Full Council.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE:

- 8.1. For the reasons set out in the report (including earlier LGA Corporate Peer Challenge proposals and current workload), some amendments to arrangements are recommended. The survey results are supportive of an earlier commencement of meetings and a form of guillotine (stop) provision. The latter proposed is not a 'hard' stop, but one that allows some flexibility to conclude a matter that is under consideration at 10.30pm (as the last item of business, although the meeting may continue beyond that time). The timing of 10.30pm should also ensure that, if items then need to be carried forward to a later meeting, the number of items are likely to be limited in number. Agenda management will also be key to this and ensuring that those items with higher public interest are dealt with earlier on in the meeting where possible. The Working Group also felt that improvements could be made to the *reasonably new* Public Speaking Scheme to assist with the timing of each item, and this can be amended by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair/ Vice Chair of Committee and Group Leaders.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE, FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE, PANELS & FORUMS

- 8.2. Nothing further to add.

² Regulation 13 2012 No. 2089

³ 2014 No. 2095 The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

MEMBER MOTIONS / QUESTIONS/ DEBATE

- 8.3. Member Motions and Questions were historically dealt with at the end of Full Council meetings, and were changed in the last few years to earlier on in the agenda/ the meetings. That has resulted in the 'main' decision making items not being considered until later in the evening (9/9.30pm or e.g. at the last meeting 10.30pm).
- 8.4. Currently the wide scope of any Motion has also meant, in recent times that more generic Motions are presented to Full Council, that the Council has no direct responsibility for, nor power to do more than debate and write to relevant Ministers/ parties. As many of the other Reports and referral items that are presented to Council concern important local decision making issues, it was considered appropriate to review the order of business for Member Motions and Questions, the number and timing spent on the debate. The recommendations under 2.5 reflect pertinent proposals for change.

DELEGATED DECISION – FINANCIAL LIMITS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

- 8.5. The level of Decisions that “materially affects the Council’s financial position” was set at North Herts Council at/ or above £50k, in 2015. It is therefore suggested that this be increased as per recommendation 2.7. with consequential amendments to relevant Procedure Rules, Regulations and Guidance.

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 14.6.11(b)(iv) A – SERVICE DIRECTOR: REGULATORY

- 8.6. The Council has responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021 and Biodiversity Duty. This includes securing and / or facilitating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). There are two ways in which BNG may be secured through a s106 legal agreement:
- 8.6.1 In association a planning application for development where significant-on site habitat is to be provided to satisfy BNG requirements, so this would follow the ‘normal’ application process; or
- 8.6.2 through a ‘Habitat Bank’ where units are provided for sale by a provider to developers who cannot (fully) meet BNG requirements on their own site.
- 8.7 Where 8.6.2 occurs, the preference is for North Herts Council planning applications to utilise local Habitat Banks. BNG Habitat Banks generally do not require planning permission as they fall within permitted development rights relating to the management of land (i.e. they will involve the growing of grassland, planting of trees or other habitat creation on agricultural or otherwise undeveloped land). Such matters are a LPA function that normally falls to the relevant Service Director. It is therefore proposed that this can be covered by the following amendment to the above delegation under 14.6.11(b)(iv) A:

“all functions of the Local Planning Authority primarily Planning Policy and Development Control (including enforcement functions, authorising expenditure of planning obligation monies, Biodiversity Net Gain, ~~and~~ Environmental Impact Assessment functions, and Tree Preservation Orders), other than matters reserved to the Planning Control Committee”

- 8.8 The above amendment should ensure that this issue is covered.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Full Council's terms of reference include "approving or adopting the Policy Framework." The Policy Framework includes the Constitution.
- 9.2. Section 37 Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to have in place a Constitution and to keep that under review. The Local Government Act 2000 section 9P sets out the requirements of a local authority's Constitution, including the requirements to prepare it and keep it up to date and the requirement to make it available for public inspection.
- 9.3. In respect of recommendation 2.3, there is a possible risk of increased appeals for non-determination of an application, should the application be considered outside of the statutory or agreed time limit. The statutory time limits for applications for planning permission are set out in article 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015 (as amended). They are 13 weeks for applications for major development, 10 weeks for applications for technical details consent, and (from 1 August 2021) applications for public service infrastructure development, and 8 weeks for all other types of development (unless an application is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, in which case a 16 week limit applies). Where a planning application takes longer than the statutory period to decide, and an extended period has not been agreed with the applicant, the policy is that the decision should be made within 26 weeks for major applications and 16 weeks for non-major applications (as defined by article 34(2)(b) of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015) to comply with the 'planning guarantee'. Failure to meet these timeframes leads to a refund of the applications fees. The Development Control Manager will seek to manage the risks through advanced planning of the agenda, although additional meetings may be required.
- 9.4. In respect of recommendation 2.7, it should be reiterated that all Executive Decisions made by individuals must be recorded, include prescribed information and made available for inspection under the requirements of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Therefore no financial exemptions for financial decisions apply. All should be recorded and unless they include exempt information, reported in the normal manner (MIS/ on the Council's Delegated Decision page).
- 9.5. The Council, as the Local Planning Authority, has a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under the Environment Act 2021, otherwise known as the 'biodiversity duty'.
- 9.6. Otherwise, the legislation is as stated above.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None identified in relation to the report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

- 11.2 Ensuring the Council has appropriate governance arrangements in place is an important risk mitigation measure. The Council's Constitution is a fundamental part of those governance arrangements.

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. Otherwise, no specific equality issues identified.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this decision as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 None identified, albeit additional impacts may be identified with the requirement for any additional meetings or Committees. There are some positive staff and Member wellbeing issues regarding any changes to the lateness of meetings. This could, however, be offset if more meetings are required.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 None identified in respect of the specific amendments proposed.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Survey of Planning Control Committee Members by Chair of the Planning Control Committee;
- 16.2 Appendix B – Survey of all District Councillors on Planning Control Committee Arrangements.
- 16.3 Appendix C – Standards Committee Survey Comments.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Author:

- 17.1. Jeanette Thompson, Service Director Legal and Community, Monitoring Officer, email jeanette.thompson@north-herts.gov.uk

Consultees:

- 17.2. Anthony Roche, Managing Director.
- 17.3. Ian Couper, Service Director Resources.
- 17.4. Melanie Stimpson, Democratic Services Manager.

17.5. James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager.

17.6. Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Communities Manager

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Constitution see webpage <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-constitution>

APPENDIX A

Following the Council meeting of 11 July, the Chair of the Planning Control Committee canvassed the Committee Members, on how to make the arrangements more effective. The Committee feedback provided by the Chair on 30 July, was collated in excel and reproduced below. The numbering system reflects '1' who was in favour of a particular approach (1111 = 4):

Meeting Time	Papers	Training/Member Support	Community Engagement	Additional notes
18:00	1111 Publish earlier	111111 Site visits	1 Let members of the public know what to expect at committee	1 Members feel committees should end by either 10pm or 10:30pm at the latest
18:30	1111 Reduce items at each committee to a 'managable' level	1111	Don't keep residents waiting late into the night	11 Structure agendas with the most complex applications first
19:00	111111 Publish all reports and papers ahead of the meeting - if there is a missing representation do not send the mater to committee until everything is received	1		
Daytime	1111			
Adhoc (evening)	1111			
Gilloutine & Deferral System	11			
Bespoke Single Item Meetings	1111			

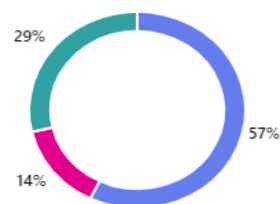
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APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS

1. Question: if you are a current Member on the Planning Control Committee, *would you be willing to start earlier th...*

[More details](#)

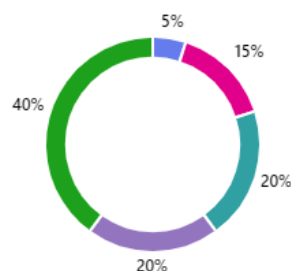
● Yes - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 2	8
● No - MOVE TO QUESTION 5	2
● Maybe - it depends on the time PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 2	4



2. Question: if you are a Member of the Planning Control Committee and answered **YES** or **MAYBE** to question 1 above, w...

[More details](#)

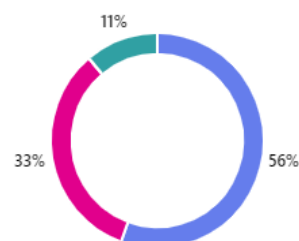
● Option 1: 5pm start	1
● Option 2: 5.30pm start	3
● Option 3: 6pm start	4
● Option 4: 6.30pm start	4
● Option 5: 7pm start	8



3. Question: if you are **NOT** a current Member on the Planning Control Committee, *would you be in favour of starting ...*

[More details](#)

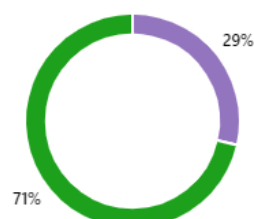
● Yes - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 4	5
● No- MOVE TO QUESTION 5	3
● Maybe - it depends on the time - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 4	1



4. Question: if you are **NOT** a Member of the Planning Control Committee and answered **YES** or **MAYBE** to question 3 abo...

[More details](#)

● Option 1: 5pm start	0
● Option 2: 5.30pm start	0
● Option 3: 6pm start	0
● Option 4: 6.30pm start	2
● Option 5: 7pm start	5

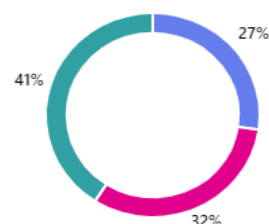


APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS

5. Question: **Would you support changing the current rules on finish of meetings?** eg if the Planning Control Committee ...

[More details](#)

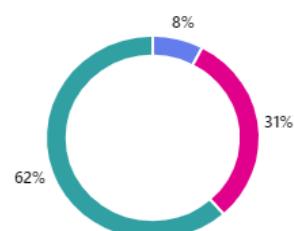
- Yes - ANSWER QUESTION 6 6
- No - MOVE TO QUESTION 7 7
- Maybe - it depends on the time proposed a- ANSWER QUESTION 6 9



6. Question: If you answered **YES** or **MAYBE** to a guillotine provision, **what time do you think is reasonable?**

[More details](#)

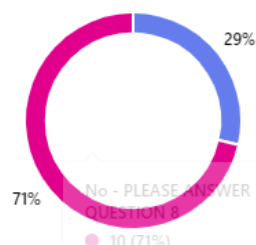
- Option 1: Finish at 9:30pm - or after the item being considered at 9:30pm? 1
- Option 2: Finish at 10.00pm - or after the item being considered at 10.00pm? 4
- Option 3: Finish at 10.30pm - or after the item being considered at 10.30pm? 8



7. Question: Council approved some Planning Control Committee Sub-Committee meetings, at its meeting in May, dates sta...

[More details](#)

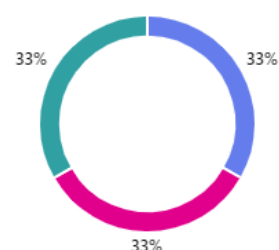
- Yes 4
- No - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 8 10



8. Question: if you are NOT in favour of the approved Sub-Committee 2pm start, **would you consider earlier meetings?**

[More details](#)

- Yes - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 9 3
- No 3
- Maybe - if you answer this, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 9 3



APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS



Some members also wished to provide additional comments re the consultation, which were as follows:

PCC Member	<p><i>As a member of PCC I share the concerns. We have had a number of meetings in the last year or so that have had too many agenda items and finished too late. After 10.30pm we have been going for three hours plus and I sometimes worry about the standard of decision making when people are tired. And of course, many of us will also have had a full working day as a prelude the PCC.</i></p> <p><i>However, I am unsure what the solution are:</i></p> <p><i>* More meeting? We have already stepped up to two a month, that would seem to me the most you can reasonably expect PCC members to commit to as it stands;</i></p> <p><i>* Earlier starts? Perhaps, but for PCC members working full time, that is a real challenge as most of us want to finish work and eat before the Planning meeting, particularly given the long meetings. Also, for me it is the length of the meeting, not the late finish that is the worst thing. But I go to bed late anyway. Some members commute to London and elsewhere to work, for them, earlier starts are a non runner;</i></p> <p><i>* A cut off? Perhaps this makes sense, but it would need to be quite late. No items commencing after 10.30pm doesn't seem unreasonable. However, that would no doubt be unpopular with applicants and opponents who are cut off. We would need to ensure that applications with members of the public present were heard before the guillotine;</i></p> <p><i>* Day time meeting? Ask me when I'm retired! For those members working full-time, or for some working part-time or with other commitments, very problematic. I took annual leave to attend the Highover Farm site visit as a one off, but my leave is a finite resource. Of course, some employers offer paid time off for Council duties, perhaps it is worth polling members as to how common that is. Otherwise, if you want members to regularly attend during the day, a responsibility allowance would perhaps be justified, but I worry about the optics of an SRA for Planning.</i></p>
PCC Member	<p><i>Earlier meetings would work for some but depends on how early those would be. I for example would be able to meet at 6pm at the earliest.</i></p> <p><i>Having a cut off would work but I think this would need to be subject on how far we have got with an agender item. For example if the particular agender is almost complete I would say we should finish that then arrange to complete the rest another date.</i></p>

APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS

	<p><i>Sub committees again would work if maybe they can be remote I for one would not be able to be at the chamber due to work and childcare arrangements.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, I think anything we do will work for some but might not work for all.</i></p> <p><i>[NB note the recently published consultation on remote/ hybrid or potential proxy voting commenced last week]. Therefore in the future more flexibility may be available.</i></p>
--	--

District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<i>"I think that it is important to keep Standards as a distinct committee to ensure that there is a high quality of work done by a membership that cares about what they are doing. Mixing standards in with the work of FAR (as an example) would risk fewer members wanting to be involved in Standards because there are different levels of interest for getting involved with financial audit and risk vs Standards issues."</i>
District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<i>"I believe that this move would be welcome, as standards could easily be folded into FAR and save some time on another meeting."</i>
District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<i>"I think it makes sense to discontinue the Standards committee in its current form and am happy with your proposal."</i>
District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<p><i>"On balance I would broadly be in favour of this change.</i></p> <p><i>Currently standards meetings are very short and involve a lot of Cllrs. This change would save time and money and most importantly improve efficiency.</i></p> <p><i>If this were to happen, it is my understanding that there would be no need to increase the number of Cllrs who currently sit on FAR?"</i></p>
Parish Councillor Standards Committee co-optee	<i>"As a Parish Council representative my input is that I believe the PC reps offer a 2 way window into upholding Standards in our councils. Having representation from Parishes both helps Parish Councillors appreciate that there is a Standards process fully recognised by the Council and Parish Councillors are in turn providing transparency to a wider audience . Given national issues currently being discussed and also noting issues recently in the news closed to home in Dacorum Council I believe it important to have as much transparency as possible and the presence of Parish Councillors is a beneficial part of the process."</i>
Independent Person	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. I have reminded myself of the present Standards Committee's terms of reference and note the first: ...to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority. The words are a direct lift from s27 of the Localism Act. They are an unambiguous obligation.</i> <i>2. As I see it, North Herts Council has delegated that major responsibility to the Standards Committee whose role then is to ensure, on behalf of the Council, that its members do, indeed, behave properly; that they observe the Nolan principles, as reflected in the adopted code of conduct.</i> <i>3. I suggest, therefore, that the working group's review should not focus solely on rationalising the numbers of committees and their meeting frequency, relevant though such matters are in the interests of administrative efficiency. It ought to</i>

	<p>take into account, also, the significance and importance to the Council of each committee.</p> <p>4. In that context and uniquely, in my view, the Standards Committee has a purpose that sits above the others. It is the body that sets the tone for all members' activities as elected representatives; and it oversees how a tone, thus set, is applied.</p> <p>5. I suggest that this major responsibly would fit uneasily as an adjunct to another committee - Finance, Audit and Risk - in which location it could give the impression of being subordinate to that body. In my view its status is the opposite: its role as tone-setter eclipses other Council functions.</p> <p>6. In my view, also, to merge it with Finance, Audit and Risk could give the electorate the understandable impression that oversight of members' adherence to their conduct obligations had become less important. Such a position would do little to promote the electorate's confidence in their local government. More than that: it would be undesirable, I suggest.</p> <p>7. Therefore, rather than giving the impression of diluting the importance of standards by implementing the contemplated merger, the working group would do well to consider inviting the Standards Committee to review its present terms of reference to ensure that they enable it fully to fulfil its role. In particular, '...7.5.8 to assist Councillors and Co-Opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;' would bear detailed consideration of how it might be given practical expression.</p> <p>8. A final thought: an understandable driver for the review might be to save officers' time and Council resources. From the explanation in the invitation to comment of how a revised standards arrangements might work, I'm not convinced that it would make a substantial difference to justify the notion on that ground alone.</p> <p>9. In short, for the reasons set out above, I suggest that an amalgamation is inappropriate and that the existing Standards Committee should be retained with an enhanced brief.</p> <p>10. I would be happy to discuss this topic with the working party if its members felt that that would be helpful."</p>
(then) Reserve Independent Person	<p>"The promotion and maintenance of high standards ought to be central features of good governance. Having a "standalone" Standards Committee helps to keep standards matters in the minds of elected members and of the wider body public. Councillors are busy people with full agendas so it is perhaps understandable if from time to time ethical considerations, particularly in nuanced circumstances, become somewhat</p>

	<p><i>blurred. Having a specific committee on which councillors themselves sit provides a regular reminder of the importance of standards. Similarly having executive members involved adds to the importance attached to standards matters. It would be a pity if any new organisational configuration meant that our standards regime lost its particular identity with the risk of becoming an afterthought.</i></p> <p><i>I have found our "inner sanctum" made up of Councillors, Mo, dep Mos, IP and RIPS particularly useful. From our annual IP meetings with Paul Hoey it is apparent that such an arrangement is not widespread. It has proved an efficient and effective way of keeping our standards regime in good health. I would hope that this would not be lost in any re-organisation."</i></p>
(then) Reserve Independent Person	<p><i>"I do want standards to be given as central a place in the structures as possible, so I have a slight hesitation about merging the committee that keeps an eye on these with another that has a different agenda. If however those of you who know a lot more than me are content that standards will retain a central place in the new structures, then that's fine by me."</i></p>

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**FULL COUNCIL
15 JANUARY 2025**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT RESERVE INDEPENDENT PERSON

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR LEGAL AND COMMUNITY AND MONITORING OFFICER
EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE – Cllr Alistair Willoughby

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to appoint a replacement Reserve Independent Person ('IP') for a period of up to 4 years (as per the recommendation below), firstly 2 years and potential extension for a further 2 years up to the maximum period, such appointments to take effect from 16 January 2025, following the resignation of Stephen Tant from the role of Reserve IP.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council:

2.1. Appoints Ms Wai Bing Hui as Reserve Independent Person;

such appointments/ confirmation of continuing appointments under 2.1 be for a fixed term of up to 4 years from 16 January 2025, based on 2-years, with delegation to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Standards Committee¹ to extend for a further 2-years².

2.2. Delegates to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Standards Committee³, the decision (if the current Independent Person decides within term to resign/ unable to act/ no longer qualifies), to appoint one of the existing Reserve Independent Persons as the Independent Person and/ or to undertake any further recruitment, as may be required.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To ensure that the Council's Standards processes can operate in accordance with legislative requirements if one or both IP and Reserve IPs are unable to advise on a matter. This should also allow for a degree of succession planning/ training whilst experienced persons are in place.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None considered appropriate.

¹ or such replacement Committee as the case may be

² Subject to the legal ability to do so/ legislative prohibition to on extension and continuing to qualify as per the legal requirements under the Localism Act 2011.

³ or such replacement Committee as the case may be

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. No external organisations have been consulted as such, although the original recruitment was advertised in the Royston Crow and the Comet (and on the Council's website/ circulated via Social Media).
- 5.2. The Chair and Vice Chair of Standards Committee were fully involved in the recruitment exercise (all applications reviewed; shortlisted the candidates and interviewed) with the Monitoring Officer. The recommendations are made to Council by those Members and the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer (who also interviewed on this occasion) to appoint.
- 5.3. Group Leaders were notified of the recommendations prior to the report being finalised. No objections were received.

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. Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 requires Councils to appoint at least one Independent Person for the purposes of processing complaints against Members (albeit that subsequently two are required whether internally/ externally for the constitution of the Employment Panel and for conflict situations in any event under relevant legislation⁴).
- 7.2. A recruitment exercise and interviews were previously undertaken during June-July, with eight candidates selected for interview. Some were unable to attend. Three of the interviewees were then recommended and approved for appointment by Full Council on 19 September (such appointments being Mr Nicholas Moss OBE as IP, Patrick Hodson and Stephen Tant as Reserve IPs).
- 7.3. Mr Tant resigned from the role from 27 October and following this, two candidates who had been unable to attend interview on the last occasion were contacted, and then invited for interview.
- 7.4. The candidate set out under 2.1 is recommended by the interview Panel for appointment. Following the interview, it was subject to the normal requirements of reference, confirming the recommendation to Group Leaders, and is subject to continuing to meet the necessary legal and special requirements (as set out below). The selection criteria for the role is at Appendix A.
- 7.5. There are legal exclusions to such appointments, and the application/ appointment is subject to special conditions, namely that candidates (and subsequently appointees) cannot be appointed, or continue in that appointment, as an IP or Reserve IP if they:
 - Legal conditions*
 - i) are a Councillor, co-opted Councillor or officer of North Herts Council or a Parish, Town, or Community Councillor within the North Hertfordshire District Council area;

⁴ The Local Authorities (Standing Orders (England) Regulations 2001 as amended 2015.

- ii) are related to, or be a close friend of (i) above;
- iii) have been a Councillor or co-opted Councillor or officer of North Herts Council or a Parish, Town, or Community Councillor within the North Hertfordshire District Council area at any time during the last 5 years;

Special conditions

- iv) have any significant business dealings with North Herts Council.
- v) are an active member of a political party;
- vi) *[whilst not a Councillor] fail, following the recommendation to Council to appoint, to sign an undertaking to comply with the requirements of the North Herts Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, effective from appointed.*
- vii) *[whilst not a Councillor] fail to disclose Interests within 28 days of the appointment, or update those within 28 days of change of Interest. [NB These are akin to those disclosed by Councillors to the Monitoring Officer];*
- viii) have within the last 12 months, or are party to: any grievance, complaint, or legal action against the Council, Councillors, or Officers. *[NB if appointed there is an ongoing requirement to disclose to the Monitoring Officer if this situation arises].*

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Interview Panel concluded that Ms Wai Bing Hui met the requirements and criteria for the role. In terms of her background and life experience:

Ms Hui is a Cabin Service Supervisor who has worked for over 20 years with a well-known Airline. She is a member of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, and accredited with the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society. In addition to her Supervisor's role, Ms Hui is a Therapeutic Counsellor, previously working as a volunteer with The Road Victims Trust (for those who have been involved in serious road collisions – resulting in trauma and bereavement) and has also provided counselling services to survivors of domestic abuse and young people in a secondary school setting. Ms Hui now provides Therapeutic Counselling at a clinic in Cambridge and acts as a Training Co-ordinator at Women's Aid in Luton. Ms Hui informed the interview panel that she believes in public service and is involved locally in the community, including with school PTA events and fundraising. In her various roles Ms Hui has dealt with and continues to deal with sensitive, challenging, complex and confidential issues – which are key elements of Councillor complaints.

- 8.2 It is anticipated by the Monitoring Officer, that the candidate's life experience and background will bring a unique blend of skills to the Reserve IP role, including empathy and active listening, problem solving and effective communications.
- 8.3 In terms of involvement in standards matters the IP will be consulted on complaints, prior to an initial assessment, after any investigation and before the Standards Sub-Committee makes a decision on the complaint and any sanctions (if this progresses to that stage). The IP and Reserve IPs will be consulted on other matters, and the ResIP can be contacted by an elected Councillor that is subject to a complaint for procedural advice. The Council receives around on average around 10-20 formal complaints per year, although on some occasions these have been more than 50, which can place a burden on one IP.

8.4 To assist with training/ knowledge and resilience, and cover in the event of conflict, it is anticipated, therefore, that each Reserve IP will rotate on each complaint, *to support the IP* and Monitoring Officer (or Deputy). One Reserve IP will act each time as a potential liaison for procedural matters to the Councillor subject to the complaint.

8.5 Note that Joint Negotiation Committee/ Conditions training would also be required (for attendance at the Employment Panel if the need arises).

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Section 28(6) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to have in place arrangements under which decisions on allegations against Councillors can be made and section 28(7) that a Council appoint one or more Independent Persons. There is no specific reference/ or distinction of levels of IP/ ResIP.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The IPs and Reserve IPs also receive an annual allowance, currently set for April 2024-May 25 as follows:

- Reserve IP of £648 (this covers potentially having to act as the main IP on occasion);
- reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses and reasonable role related training costs.

Whilst this does not legally fall within the remit of an Independent Remuneration Panel, who consider Councillors allowances, they are requested to review and recommend on such payments. It is expected that these costs can be met from within the existing Councillors' Allowances budget.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

11.2 This new appointment would reduce the risk of conflicts of interest, potentially provide for succession planning and greater resilience of approved arrangements.

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, however, no direct implications arising from this report.

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 Other than adding the new Reserve IPs to the payroll system and the potential the IP and Reserve IPs role in any Employment Panel, none.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A - Selection Criteria.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Jeanette Thompson, Service Director: Legal and Community, & Monitoring Officer-
jeanette.thompson@northherts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.

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APPENDIX A

INDEPENDENT PERSON/ RESERVE INDEPENDENT PERSON ('IP') **SELECTION CRITERIA** **SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES**

The IP will have:

- a keen interest in standards in public life.
- a wish to serve the local community and uphold local democracy.
- the ability to be objective, independent, and impartial.
- sound decision making skills.
- leadership qualities, particularly in respect of exercising sound judgement.

The IP should be able to demonstrate:

Essential criteria

- be a person in whose impartiality and integrity the public can have confidence.
- understand and comply with confidentiality requirements.
- have a demonstrable interest in local issues.
- have an awareness of the importance of ethical behaviours.
- have a credible and authoritative personal style.
- have strong oral and written communication skills.

The IP would ideally also meet the following desirable additional criteria:

- working knowledge and/or experience of local government or other public service and/or of large complex organisations
- experience or knowledge of public sector governance.
- awareness of and sensitivity to the political process.
- Understanding the pressures and constraints of elected or co-opted Councillors operating in a democratically accountable public body.
- knowledge and understanding of judicial/quasi-judicial or complaints processes.
- experience of managing or advising on misconduct matters (possibly in the context of employment, a professional body, or the voluntary sector).

[NOTE Applicants were required to demonstrate in their application how they met the above criteria. Assessment overall was by application and in person interview].

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COUNCIL
15 JANUARY 2025 (from cancelled 9 December 2024 meeting)

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ELECTORAL SERVICES – SCALE OF FEES 2025/26

REPORT OF: Service Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Scale of Fees – Non-Executive function.
(Electoral Services: Community & Partnerships)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. To agree the Scale of Fees for electoral events held during 2025/26.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the Council agree the Scale of Fees for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To enable the Council to remunerate the Returning Officer and the staff employed to carry out tasks during electoral events and to be open and transparent regarding other payments.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. For the scales of fees to remain at the 2024/25 rates or to increase some areas for reasons explained within the report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), formerly known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), is responsible for central government elections and last year introduced indicative fees for all election roles at polls which they fund.

5.2. MHCLG's indicative fees for elections roles, which apply to any UK Parliamentary or Police and Crime Commission elections, provides the blueprint used for our overall scale of fees.

- 5.3. Following the elections held in May 2024 and July 2024 respectively, post-election staff surveys were undertaken to gauge feedback on, amongst other areas of the election, the rates of pay for elections staff. The responses received were generally in support of the rates, with some suggestions for an increase to the fees paid for polling station staff.
- 5.4. The Electoral Services teams within Hertfordshire formed a Hertfordshire County Group and the scale of fees paid by these Authorities, in particular by our neighbouring councils have been considered whilst suggesting the attached scale of fees.

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. Each Local Authority is required to appoint a Returning Officer (RO). The RO is appointed in an independent capacity by the Council to organise and run elections free from the political structure of the authority. Councils must provide their RO with the resources they need to run elections. This includes the cost of recruiting and paying staff to act as Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks, along with any other ancillary staff necessary for the success of a poll.
- 7.2. For national polls the government issues a Fees and Charges schedule which identifies for each authority a “maximum recoverable amount” along with a fee which may be claimed by the appointed RO for the rendering of their services. The RO will pay their appointed staff from the monies provided by government and will account for their expenditure by way of a return to the Election Claims Unit (ECU) at the Cabinet Office.
- 7.3. As explained in paragraph 5.1, MHCLG introduced indicative fees for all elections roles at polls which they fund. This sets pay bands of the amount that should be paid to elections staff at UK Parliamentary elections, Police and Crime Commissioner elections and national referenda.
- 7.4. For all such national elections, the RO will be expected to adhere to the range proposed for each role by the MHCLG. To pay outside of this range will require special agreement from the ECU or risk the ECU refusing to reimburse the difference where roles exceed their expected amounts.
- 7.5. No such formal structure exists for local elections, which is why a local scale of election fees is required to cover staff costs associated with the administration of elections and other electoral events, e.g., County Council elections, District Council elections, Town and Parish elections, Neighbourhood Planning Referendums or Town/Parish Poll.
- 7.6. Although local elections are not formally subject to the same fees as national elections, in practice the scale of fees should be uniform across all election types as having separate fees for local and national elections would cause confusion and major issues with staffing elections which pay different amounts to those held either at the same time or in other years.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 In the May 2024 elections, the RO appointed more than 500 temporary roles to deliver the polls for the Police and Crime Commissioner and all out District Council elections.
- 8.2 In May 2025, a similar number of staff will be required for the Hertfordshire County Council elections.
- 8.3 The proposed Scale of Fees has been influenced by the indicative fees by MHCLG. As explained, local elections are not formally subject to the same fees as national elections. However, providing uniformity across all election types will prevent confusion and major issues with staffing elections.
- 8.4 In addition to the scheduled local elections in May 2025, there is always the possibility of by-elections or other unscheduled polls to be called for all election types in the life of this scale of fees, one having already been administered only five months following the District Council elections in May. In the event a by-election was triggered for a national election type, our fees would be subject to the indicative fees set by MHCLG. If the Council opted to pay staff more than the fees listed in Appendix A, the additional costs would likely be rejected by the ECU and the Council would be liable for the financial difference.
- 8.5 It is necessary to ensure that roles continue to be paid at least the National Living Wage. The government has announced that the National Living Wage for those over 21 will increase from £11.44 to £12.21 per hour as of 1 April 2025.
- 8.6 As per our previous fees, some roles were to be negatively affected by this increase in the National Living Wage if they were not uplifted. Namely, Poll Clerk, Count Assistant, Postal Vote Opening Assistant, Porter and Clerical Assistance roles. These rates have been uplifted in line with the table in Appendix A to reflect the National Living Wage.
- 8.7 Furthermore, during the 2024 UK Parliamentary General Election, it became apparent that our fees for the Presiding Officer role were low in comparison to our neighbouring authorities that we shared cross boundary arrangements with (i.e. East Herts and Central Bedfordshire).
- 8.8 This meant that we experienced significant difficulties in recruiting staff to Presiding Officer roles, which are crucial in the delivery of an election. We have therefore reflected this with an increase in fees for polling station staff to alleviate these recruitment issues
- 8.9 Neighbouring authorities also pay mileage to Presiding Officers, hence we have also added this according to the HMRC recommended rates for the journeys detailed in Appendix A.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Representation of The People Act 1983 (RPA) s. 35(1) requires a district council to appoint a RO to conduct elections on its behalf.
- 9.2 RPA ss 31(1) and (1a) provide that every district council must appoint an officer of the council to be the RO for any parish council elections within its area. This can be the same

person as the RO for district council elections, though it does not have to be. In accordance with the statutory provisions referred to above and as per section 14.6.13 of the Constitution the Democratic Services Manager has been appointed as RO for District Council and Parish Council elections.

- 9.3 RPA s. 36(4) provides that the cost of local elections is met from a local authority's budget. As referred to in paragraph 7.5 above the Council needs to agree the fees paid to the RO to conduct local elections by establishing a scale of fees. There is no specific delegation to set fees for elections. The RO has responsibility for elections, although setting their own fees is not recommended. An officer may under s.14.6.2(e) of the Constitution "...always refer a delegated decision to the Cabinet or Council or any of their respective Committees rather than make the decision"; s.14.5.1 further provides "All those functions relating to elections" falls to the Council as an effective default.
- 9.4 With regard to the RO's expenses RPA s. 36(5) provides that all expenditure properly incurred by the RO in relation to the holding of a parish council election shall be paid by the district council in which the parish is located, providing that such expenditure does not exceed a fixed scale. Any expenditure incurred shall be repaid by the parish council to the district council if required. RPA s. 36(6) provides that before an election of a district or parish councillor, the council shall at the request of the RO advance any reasonable sum in respect of expenses as may be required.
- 9.5 The canvass, along with other statutory functions including maintaining the Register of Electors is the responsibility of the Electoral Registration Officer and is contained within RPA sections 52 – 54.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The fees for elections are considered in the budget setting process. The scheduled elections in May 2025 are for Hertfordshire County Council, who are recharged for the costs of running these elections either full or in part depending on if the election is shared with another election.
- 10.2. The Electoral Commission recommends ratios when allocating electors and staff to Polling Stations which dictates that each Polling Station requires a Presiding Officer and between 1 and 3 Poll Clerks. For a district wide election, such as those taking place in May 2025, there are currently 77 Polling Stations across North Hertfordshire, each requiring a Presiding Officer.
- 10.3. The increase in Presiding Officer fee equates to an extra £44.08 for each staff member, therefore across 77 Polling Stations this would mean an additional £3,394.16 to the total cost.
- 10.4. Equally, an estimated 131 poll clerks (based on the number appointed for all out elections in 2024) would cost £2,347.52 more than the previous rates.
- 10.5. In 2024, Postal Vote Openers worked a collective 342 hours. As such, the increase to the hourly rate would equate to an additional cost of £150.48 overall, although the number of hours to be worked is likely to be less due to there being fewer combinations of elections taking place in 2025.

- 10.6. During the recent parliamentary elections, mileage payments were authorised to be paid to Presiding Officers as per the same terms detailed in Appendix A. Across the polling stations covering the North Hertfordshire district area (i.e. the area across which elections will take place in May 2025), the total cost for Presiding Officer's mileage was £1,189.35.
- 10.7. As per paragraph 10.1, the costs for scheduled elections taking place in May 2025 are to be borne by Hertfordshire County Council, who are responsible for funding their elections.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. The Council needs to ensure it complies with statutory requirements. One element of this is to ensure that it has sufficient staff required to operate an election. Staffing of polling station roles continues to present one of the biggest challenges in the running of elections. Whilst other factors such as the hours of work and working environment contribute to this, feedback from staff in previous years has suggested that pay is a major factor as to why people are hesitant to work. If the Council does not pay a competitive rate, it will become increasingly difficult to staff elections because of fees.
- 11.3. The impact of the Elections Act has also increased the complexity in the administration for polling station staff (Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Polling station Inspectors), who are now expected to, amongst other reforms, verify the identity of every voter before a ballot paper is issued.
- 11.4. Furthermore, The Electoral Registration Officer has a statutory duty to maintain the Electoral Register, which includes conducting an annual canvass. The recruitment of efficient Canvassers is difficult and if they are not paid a competitive rate, it will become increasingly difficult to conduct an annual canvass.
- 11.5. The Scale of Fees must be balanced against setting a rate that is fair, to ensure that suitable staff are able to be recruited and does not risk any rate falling below the National Living Wage.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. There are no equalities implications - 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. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no human resource implications, other than those set out.
- 15.2 Recruiting staff is highly resource intensive and is organised solely by the Electoral Services Team who contact individuals for their availability to work informing them of the fees the role will incur.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A Electoral Services Scale of Fees 2025/26.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Melanie Stimpson, Democratic Services Manager (and Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer)
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- 17.2 Jeanette Thompson, Service Director: Legal and Community (and Monitoring Officer/Deputy Returning Officer)
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- 17.3 Ian Couper, Service Director: Resources
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- 17.4 Tim Everitt, Performance and Risk Officer
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- 17.5 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Communities Manager
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- 17.6 Tom Marsh, Electoral Services Manager
Thomas.marsh@north-herts.gov.uk

ELECTORAL SERVICES - SCALE OF FEES	2025/2026 RATE	2025/2026 RATE	NIGHT TIME AND SATURDAY RATE	NIGHT TIME AND SATURDAY RATE	SUNDAY AND BANK HOLIDAY	SUNDAY AND BANK HOLIDAY
	(All Fees To Be Paid Hourly Rates)	(All Fees To Be Paid Hourly Rates)	(Payable at 1.5 Times Normal Rate) (Minimum 4 Hours Applicable to Count Roles)	(Payable at 1.5 Times Normal Rate) (Minimum 4 Hours Applicable to Count Roles)	(Payable at 2 Times Normal Rate) (Minimum 4 Hours – Applicable to Count Roles)	(Payable at 2 Times Normal Rate) (Minimum 4 Hours – Applicable to Count Roles)
	Excluding Holiday Fee	Including Holiday Fee	Excluding Holiday Fee	Including Holiday Fee	Excluding Holiday Fee	Including Holiday Fee
1. Polling staff						
Presiding Officer	£16.35	£18.32	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Presiding Officer (covering two stations – additional payment)		£100.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Poll Clerk	£12.44	£13.94	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. Counting staff						
Count Manager / Senior Count Supervisor	£23.20	£26.00	£34.80	£39.00	£46.40	£52.00
Count supervisor (including ballot box receipt and Central Team)	£16.40	£18.38	£24.60	£27.57	£32.80	£36.76
Counting Assistant	£12.44	£13.94	£18.66	£20.91	£24.88	£27.88
Count Media & Comms Manager	£15.62	£17.50	£23.43	£26.25	£31.24	£35.00
Control of Entry / Councillor Liaison / Reception Duty	£12.44	£13.94	£18.66	£20.91	£24.88	£27.88
Elections Porter	£12.44	£13.94	£18.66	£20.91	£24.88	£27.88
3. Postal voting staff						
Postal Vote Opening Manager	£22.31	£25.00	£33.47	£37.50	£44.62	£50.00
Postal Vote Supervisor	£15.62	£17.50	£23.43	£26.25	£31.24	£35.00
Postal Votes Assistant	£12.44	£13.94	£18.66	£20.91	£24.88	£27.88
Postal Vote Quality Control	£13.39	£15.00	£20.09	£22.50	£26.78	£30.00
Car Parking fees for Garden Square Multi Storey	As per parking charges					
4. Polling Station Inspector staff						
Polling Station Inspector	£19.85	£22.25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5. Clerical Assistance/Ballot Box Preparation						
Administration	£12.44	£13.94	£18.66	£20.91	£24.88	£27.88
6. Returning Officer's fees						
(a) For each contested ward parish:	£300.00					
(b) For each un-contested ward/parish	£35.00					

7. Training						
Presiding Officer						£30.00
Poll Clerk						£30.00
Senior/Polling Station Inspector						£30.00
8. Travel for Polling Station Inspectors / Presiding Officers / Canvassers (Returns) / Postal Vote Issue / Postal Vote Drive						
<p>Mileage payable at the recommended HMRC approved amount of 45 pence per mile for cars for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence per mile thereafter and 20 pence per mile for bicycles.</p> <p>Mileage payable to Presiding Officers for the following journeys as part of their role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Home to District Council offices for Ballot Box collection session (& return) -Home to Polling Stations on morning of poll -Polling Station to count venue to deliver Ballot Box -Count Venue to home 						
9. Canvasser – Canvass Forms and Invitation to Register Forms (RETURNS)						
Canvassing	£12.44	£13.94	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10. Poll Card Delivery and Canvass Form (DELIVERY)						
Poll Card Delivery (per card)						£0.20
Canvass Form Delivery (per form)						£0.20
11. Uncontested Elections (including the Returning Officer uncontested fee)						
Up to and including 5 seats						£250.00
Between 6 and up to and including 10 seats						£450.00
Over 10 seats						£650.00
12. Holiday Pay				12.07% (as listed above)		

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL
9 DECEMBER 2024**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVES ON PARKING AND TRAFFIC REGULATIONS OUTSIDE LONDON ADJUDICATION JOINT COMMITTEE (PATROL)

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider appointment of a Member Representative to the Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee (PATROL), following the resignation of the previous appointed Member.

NB If a Member is nominated to or is on an outside body, they have an Interest under the Code of Conduct, they must comply with the Code requirements Section 17, Appendix B – Constitution [\[page click here\]](#). If unclear, seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Council nominate a Member to the outside organisation the Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee (PATROL).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To comply with the provision of Standing Order 4.8.2(j) of the Council's Constitution.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 None.

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. At Annual Council on 23 May 2024, former Councillor Chris Hinchliff was nominated as representative on the Outside Organisation, the Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee (PATROL).
- 7.2. Following the resignation of Chris Hinchliff on 4 September 2024, the position has been vacant awaiting reappointment at Council.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The appointment cannot wait until Annual Council as the Council is required to appoint a Member on the Joint Committee as representative for the Council and to ensure the Council is represented on the body.
- 8.2 A review of Outside Organisations will take place during 2024/25 Civic Year, during which Members and Organisations will be contacted to ensure the correct number of appointments are made and that Member involvement is still of value. Details of this review will be included in the report to Annual Council in May 2025.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The legal and constitutional requirements are set out in the main body of this report.
- 9.2 Whilst Annual Council delegated that Political Group Leaders notify the Democratic Services Manager of nominations to the remaining vacancies or any changes to the existing representatives on outside organisations, in the interests of openness and transparency Council is being requested to agree and nominate a District Councillor representative.
- 9.3 Members are required to include any appointments to Outside Organisations or Bodies on their Register of Interests within 28 days of the appointment.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered. Each year the Council undertakes a review of outside bodies, including whether Members are insured, or indemnity provided by the outside body. This is a relevant consideration when nominating any Member to an external organisation.

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 arising from this report. However, equalities implications from the individual recommendations will continue to be considered and assessed during the decision-making process.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report as it is not a procurement.

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 are no human resource implications.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager
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- 17.2 Melanie Stimpson, Democratic Services Manager
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- 17.3 Georgina Chapman, Policy & Strategy Team Leader
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Reports and Minutes from Annual Council meeting on 23 May 2024.](#)

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COUNCIL 28 NOVEMBER 2024

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The following Motion has been submitted, due notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12. **This motion was deferred from the meeting of Council on Thursday 28 November 2024.**

To be moved by Councillor Ralph Muncer and seconded by Councillor David Barnard.

Impact of Family Farm Tax on Rural Communities in North Hertfordshire

In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced reforms to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) from inheritance tax.

Currently, APR and BPR are available at a rate of 100% or 50% (based on eligibility criteria) with no cap to the total amount of relief. However, from April 2026 as a result of the Labour Government's policy, inheritance tax relief for business and for agricultural assets will be capped at £1 million, with a tax rate of 20% being charged above that.

HM Treasury has said that 73% of APR claims are below £1 million and so would be unaffected by this policy however, the National Farmers Union have highlighted figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs indicating that the true percentage of farms affected by the APR changes will be 66%.

North Hertfordshire is a rural district with 76% of land classed as agricultural, and with farming providing jobs for more than 2,500 people in Hertfordshire and contributing more than £160m to the economy of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, this policy will undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on the economy of rural communities across the district.

Not only does this policy present an existential threat to the families who have farmed the land in our communities for generations, and who had hoped to pass on their farm to the next generation, but with about 54% of food on the plates of people in North Hertfordshire being produced in the UK, this decision will significantly increase the cost of producing food, leading to higher food prices, as well as reduce British Food Security.

Therefore, Council resolves:

- 1. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at this decision and calls on the Government to stop the Family Farm Tax.**
- 2. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Member of Parliament for Hitchin, the Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire and the Member of Parliament for Stevenage, urging them support farmers and rural communities in North Hertfordshire by calling on the Government to reverse the Family Farm Tax.**

3. That the Executive Member for Community and Partnerships engages with local farmers and representatives from rural communities on what Council can do to support them.
4. To instruct Officers who are writing the North Hertfordshire Economic Development Strategy to work to identify potential opportunities to strengthen and grow the economies of rural communities in North Hertfordshire.

Proposed by: Cllr Ralph Muncer

Seconded by: Cllr David Barnard

COUNCIL

28 NOVEMBER 2024

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 4.8.12

The following amendment to a motion has been submitted.

Impact of Family Farm Tax on Rural Communities in North Hertfordshire

In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced reforms to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) from inheritance tax.

Currently, APR and BPR are available at a rate of 100% or 50% (based on eligibility criteria) with no cap to the total amount of relief. However, from April 2026 as a result of the Labour Government's policy, inheritance tax relief for business and for agricultural assets will be capped at £1 million, with a tax rate of 20% being charged above that.

HM Treasury has said that 73% of APR claims are below £1 million and so would be unaffected by this policy however, the National Farmers Union have highlighted figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs indicating that the true percentage of commercial family farms affected by the APR changes will be 66% – may be up to 75%. The NFU's analysis suggests that the "majority of estates protected by the £1m threshold are too small to be viable commercial family farms", and that the resulting payments would be "unmanageably large relative to the economic returns they earn."¹

North Hertfordshire is a rural district with 76% of land classed as agricultural, and with farming providing jobs for more than 2,500 people in Hertfordshire and contributing more than £160m to the economy of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, this policy will undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on the economy of rural communities across the district – communities already impacted by a 20% drop in farm subsidies since 2015², a botched Brexit deal which has imposed new barriers to agricultural exports to the EU making it harder to do business³, and a flawed trade agreement with Australia which even the Conservative DEFRA Secretary later admitted "gave away far too much".⁴

Faced with the disastrous economic inheritance left by the previous Government, Labour rightly wants wealthy landowners to pay their fair share – particularly those who are abusing the system. But they must also champion farmers as allies – vital partners in delivering food security, tackling climate change, and enhancing animal welfare and nature recovery.

¹ <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/an-impact-analysis-of-apr-reforms-on-commercial-family-farms/>

² https://www.farminguk.com/news/farmers-hit-by-20-real-terms-cut-to-subsidies-figures-show_65660.html

³ <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/explainers/veterinary-agreements/>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-63627801>

Moreover, the Government must deliver on its promise of a new veterinary agreement with the EU, removing unnecessary barriers to trade.⁵

By setting the threshold for this tax below the value of an average farm in our district, the Government risks damaging this vital partnership with farmers, and puts the future viability of many local farms at risk.

~~Not only does this policy present an existential threat to the families who have farmed the land in our communities for generations, and who had hoped to pass on their farm to the next generation, but with about 54% of food on the plates of people in North Hertfordshire being produced in the UK, this decision will significantly increase the cost of producing food, leading to higher food prices, as well as reduce British Food Security.~~

Therefore, Council resolves:

1. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at the situation facing local farmers after years of Conservative neglect, whilst calling this decision and calls on the Government to stop the Family Farm Tax and bring forward further measures to support our local farming communities.
2. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Member of Parliament for Hitchin, the Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire and the Member of Parliament for Stevenage, recognising the challenges faced by urging them support farmers and rural communities in North Hertfordshire by calling on and urging them to call on the Government to reverse the Family Farm Tax and bring forward further measures to support these communities.
3. That the Executive Member for Community and Partnerships engages with local farmers and representatives from rural communities on what Council can do to support them.
4. To instruct Officers who are writing the North Hertfordshire Economic Development Strategy to work to identify potential opportunities to strengthen and grow the economies of rural communities in North Hertfordshire.

Proposed by Cllr Ruth Brown

Seconded by Cllr Matt Barnes

⁵ <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Change-Labour-Party-Manifesto-2024-large-print.pdf>