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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

6 February 2026

Our Ref	Cabinet Tuesday, 17 February 2026
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To: Members of the Cabinet:

Executive Members Councillors: Val Bryant (Chair) Sean Nolan (Vice Chair) Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Mick Debenham, Tamsin Thomas, Laura Williams and Donna Wright.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE CABINET

to be held in the

COUNCIL CHAMBER - DCO

on

TUESDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Isabelle Alajooz
Director – Governance

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

Agenda
Part I

Item **Page**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2026 (Pages 5 - 18)

To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 20 January 2026.

3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.

The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Climate Emergency

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.

Ecological Emergency

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.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

6. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

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

7. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FOLLOW UP (Pages 19 - 52)

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Council undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) between 4 and 7 November 2024, where we were visited by a peer team supported by the Local Government Association. The peer team produced a feedback report, which was reported to Cabinet on 14 January 2025. Subsequently an Action Plan was developed to respond to the recommendations and was approved by Cabinet on 23 March 2025, with an update on progress reported to Cabinet on 23 September 2025. The peer team undertook a one day follow up visit on 15 December 2025 and have issued a follow up report, which is attached at Appendix A.

8. BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2026 (Pages 53 - 64)

REPORT OF THE POLICY AND COMMUNITY MANAGER

In accordance with the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021), Local Authorities and Local Planning Authorities must publish a biodiversity report. The report documents the policies and actions the council has carried out to comply with the Biodiversity Duty.

9. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT ALLOCATIONS AND UPDATE (Pages 65 - 74)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

Demand for the Council's housing services remains high with the need to secure additional services for those threatened with, or experiencing homelessness.

10. NORTH HERTS COUNCIL STRAY DOGS POLICY (Pages 75 - 126)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

The purpose of this report is to provide the key information to enable North Herts Council (the Council) to adopt a Stray Dogs Policy to allow the Council to fulfil its statutory duties in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act, 1990 (the Act), in a consistent, appropriate and fair manner.

11. DESIGN CODE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION (Pages 127 - 440)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – PLACE

We are preparing a Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide additional detail and clarity to Local Plan Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) and other relevant policies in the Plan.

12. PROPOSED CAR PARKING TARIFFS FOR 2026/27 (Pages 441 - 462)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – PLACE

To implement an increase in car parking tariffs, season tickets and permits within resident parking zones in order to effectively manage their use and in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in MTFS.

13. BUDGET 2026/27 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS) (Pages 463 - 500)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

Cabinet recommends a budget for 2026/27 to Council for their consideration and approval.

14. INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026/27 (Pages 501 - 540)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

The Investment Strategy provides the following key information:

- Recommendations on the Prudential and other Treasury indicators that will be monitored and reported on during the year (2026/27).
- As the Council has identified a need to borrow for capital purposes, a borrowing and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.
- The scope of treasury investments where the Council will invest any surplus cash.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF ON TUESDAY, 20TH JANUARY, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Val Bryant (Chair), Ian Albert, Mick Debenham, Tamsin Thomas, Laura Williams and Donna Wright.*

In Attendance: *Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Frank Harrison (Environmental Health Manager), Sarah Kingsley (Director - Environment), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Anthony Roche (Chief Executive), Rachael Rooney (Interim Strategic Planning Manager) and Nigel Smith (Director - Place).*

Also Present: *There were no members of the public present.*

Councillor Claire Winchester was presented as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 59 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Daniel Allen and Amy Allen.

2 MINUTES - 19 NOVEMBER 2025

Audio recording – 2 minutes 14 seconds

Councillor Val Bryant, as Chair proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 November 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 6 seconds

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 11 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.

(2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.

(3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

(4) The Chair advised for the purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting.

(5) The Chair advised of a change in the order of the agenda. Agenda item 17 would be considered following agenda item 15.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording 4 minutes 27 seconds

There was no public participation at the meeting.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 4 minutes 36 seconds

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

7 GARDEN WASTE CHARGE 2026/27

Audio recording – 6 minutes 2 seconds

In the absence of the Executive Member for Environment, Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member of Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Garden Waste Charge 2026/27' and advised that:

- This report was asking Cabinet to approve the annual garden waste subscription charge from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.
- Unlike household waste and recycling, there was no legal requirement to collect garden waste unless householders opted into the service and agree to pay a collection fee.
- Currently approximately 30k households in North Herts were signed up to the garden waste collection service.
- The current charge was £55 for one bin to be collected, with a 50% concession offered to households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction.
- The current charges for Hertfordshire authorities were detailed in the table in paragraph 8.2 of the report.
- It was recommended to increase the garden waste charge to £57 to help cover inflation cost, as highlighted in paragraph 10.1 of the report.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the garden waste subscription charge for the period 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027, at £57.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Council's Garden Waste service is financially sustainable, in line with the priorities of the Council and of the Shared waste service.

8 LOCAL PLAN NEXT STEPS

Audio recording – 10 minutes 1 second

Councillor Donna Wright, as Executive Member for Place, presented the report entitled 'Local Plan Next Steps' and advised that:

- This report outlined the new local plan-making system and any required actions.
- A review of the Local Plan had been agreed back in January 2024 by Cabinet.
- A timetable was prepared to allow the Local Plan to be adopted by the end of 2027. However, progress had stalled awaiting new government guidelines.
- In November 2025 government guidelines were issued on how councils should prepare Local Plans.
- The new system proposed by government has a 30-month timetable, preceded by a mandatory 4 month 'Get Ready Period'.
- Examination and adoption of a revised Local Plan was expected within 1 month of the Inspector's report.
- The revised proposed Local Plan timetable was set out in Appendix A. This would allow completion by the end of 2028 but aiming to submit for examination prior to Local Government Reorganisation.
- The Strategic Planning Team were not fully staffed at present.
- The Local Plan timetable would be kept under review to keep in line with available resources and regular reports to the Strategic Planning Board.
- Cabinet were being asked to approve the general direction of travel for the Local and Plan and to approve delegated powers to publish a Local Plan timetable.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Ian Albert

In response to questions, Councillor Wright advised that:

- The government had made it clear that the 30-month deadline was mandatory.
- The Secretary of State had powers to intervene if authorities were not progressing satisfactorily within the deadline.
- Member workshops were already planned for February and March and public consultations would also be part of the process.

In response to a question, the Interim Strategic Planning Manager advised that:

- A series of Member workshops in February, March and throughout the summer were planned.
- The first 'scoping' stage of the Local Plan would happen during the 4 month 'Get Ready Period'.
- The new requirements meant that a Summary of Consultation would need to be published.

- A Communications Strategy would be developed to ensure communication with the wider community.

In response to a question, the Director – Place advised that:

- The Strategic Planning Team were currently looking to recruit permanent staff.
- The Local Plan timetable would be kept under review in line with resourcing availability.

Councillor Donna Wright proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Approved the broad 'direction of travel' for the Local Plan Review pending formal laying and enactment of the relevant legislation and regulations.

(2) Delegated authority to the Director: Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Place to, following the creation of a new planning system:
   a. Publish the formal notice of intention to undertake a review of the Local Plan; and
   b. Approve and publish a revised Local Plan timetable, attached as Appendix A, subject to any alterations necessary to ensure alignment of timings with the new statutory framework.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure the Council is well-positioned to progress preparation of the Local Plan as quickly as possible once the new plan-making system comes into effect. Cabinet previously first resolved, in principle, that a review of the Local Plan should take place in January 2024. However, the Council did not progress on the review which was held back due to the delays in the publication of the regulations and guidance on the new local plan system.

9 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 21 minutes 19 seconds

Councillor Donna Wright, as Executive Member for Place, presented the report entitled 'Strategic Planning Matters' and advised that:

- This report outlined recent government policy updates following consultations on reforming the statutory consultee system, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in November and December 2025.
- The Council was preparing a response to these consultations and Cabinet would be kept informed of progress.
- It was hoped to have a draft NPPF consultation ready by February 2026.
- Progress of the six strategic sites of the Local Plan were detailed in paragraph 8.14 of the report.
- Progress of the Local Plans of neighbouring local authorities were summarised in pages 45 and 46.
- Following changes in the plan-making system, Hertfordshire County Council would be responsible for preparing a spatial development strategy.
- A further legal appeal was being considering regarding the proposed expansion of Luton Airport.
- Consultation for the North Herts Draft Town Centres Strategy was currently underway.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Ian Albert

In response to a question, the Interim Strategic Planning Manager advised that as part of preparation of the Local Plan it was planned to hold a Member briefing to ensure viability of the plan and an optimum outcome.

In response to a question, Councillor Wright advised that the feedback received from Cabinet following the changes to the NPPF would be included in the consultation.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive advised that talks were being held with Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Futures to see if there might be any opportunities for the Council following the creation of Universal Studios in Bedfordshire. Any relevant information would be shared with Members.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas

Points raised during the debate included:

- The importance of ensuring Cabinet was kept up to date with relevant information.
- How good it was for the Council that its six strategic sites in the Local Plan were all progressing through the master planning process.

Councillor Donna Wright proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the report on strategic planning matters and appendices.

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

10 REVOCATION OF AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS IN HITCHIN

Audio recording 31 minutes 55 seconds

Councillor Mick Debenham, as Executive Member Regulatory, presented the report entitled 'Revocation of Air Quality Management Areas in Hitchin' and advised that:

- The Council had declared two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs).
- The declaration of the AQMAs required development of an Air Quality Action Plan to put measures in place to reduce air pollution objective levels.
- The impact of a combination of measures had resulted in the pollution levels in the two AQMAs falling below objective levels for 5 years or more.
- Air Quality Management Order No 1 in Stevenage Road, Hitchin was detailed in Appendix A.
- Air Quality Management Order No 2 in Payne's Park, Hitchin was detailed in Appendix B.
- The development of a Local Air Quality Strategy was highlighted in Appendices C1-3.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas

In response to questions, Councillor Debenham advised that:

- A health impact assessment was underway and air quality pollution levels were being monitored throughout the district, including in Grove Road.
- Where legislation required a Council to revoke an area, air quality pollutions levels would still be monitored.

In response to questions, the Environmental Health Manager advised that:

- The air quality in Grove Road was being monitored by diffusion tubes which monitor road vehicle pollutant levels.
- There were currently 42 diffusion tubes monitoring air quality levels around the district.
- An option where the Council could consider having a localised version of portable air quality monitoring devices was detailed in the report, but there would be cost implications.
- There had not been any feedback received regarding timescales for delivery of an Air Quality Strategy.
- The monitoring of air quality levels in roads that would be impacted by the expansion of Luton Airport was ongoing.
- It was a legal requirement where lower than air quality threshold limits for 5 years or more were recorded, a Council was required to revoke, but air quality pollution would still continue to be monitored throughout the district.

Councillor Mick Debenham proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the Revocation Orders (as appended to this report) for the following areas:

- The No1. AQMA Stevenage Road Hitchin,
- The No2. AQMA Payne's Park Hitchin.

REASON FOR DECISION: The reason for recommending the Revocation of the AQMAs is that there is no reasonable justification for retaining AQMAs where the air pollution levels can be shown to have significantly reduced below statutory air quality objectives as defined by HM Government within UK Air Quality Regulations.

11 COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26 (QUARTER 2 UPDATE)

Audio recording – 46 minutes 45 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Claire Winchester, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to present the referral on this item. Councillor Winchester advised that there had been discussions around:

- The good work that was happening in the district and that there was a clear narrative in the report for any delays or changes to milestones.
- The recommendations of the report were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The projects of the Council Delivery Plan were of great importance to the residents of North Hertfordshire.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Quarter 2 Update)' and advised that:

- This report outlined the most recent updates for the Council Delivery Plan.
- Information on the actions being taken for red performance indicators was detailed in paragraph 8.4 of the report.
- The new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which related to the Corporate Peer Challenge Report, aligned with the Council Delivery Plan were set out in paragraph 8.7 of the report.
- The development of Churchgate was part of the Enterprise Directorate report which would be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Work was ongoing regarding the split of missed bin collection data between North and East Hertfordshire.
- The impacts on resourcing needed to be considered when the budget was set.

In response to a question from Councillor Mick Debenham, the Director – Resources advised that targets would be set by Cabinet for KPIs, in consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Not all KPIs would have targets.

In response to a question from Councillor Mick Debenham, the Chief Executive advised that the Corporate Peer Challenge follow up report had been received and this would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in February 2026.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted progress against Council projects and performance indicators, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A), and approved new milestones and changes to milestones.

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

12 THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (EFFECTIVENESS AND PROPOSALS FOR 2026/27)

Audio recording – 1 hour 9 minutes 55 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Claire Winchester, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to present the referral on this item. Councillor Winchester advised that there had been discussions around:

- The age of residents who might be eligible for a reduction in Council Tax and how the awareness of the scheme may be raised.
- Appreciation of how well the scheme was working and of the consideration being given to families on low income or with a terminal illness.
- Residents were able to access information about Council services across many platforms and of the importance to ensure that any eligible residents were made aware of its existence.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Effectiveness and Proposals for 2026/27)' and advised that:

- The Council had introduced a new banded scheme (for working age applicants) from April 2023, as detailed in section 7 of the report.
- The regulations for Council Tax support for pensioners were set by the government.
- More information of the current working age scheme could be found in section 8 of the report, with details of disregards set out in paragraph 8.2.
- The Council continued to work with Marie Curie and were continuing to see how to implement providing Council Tax support to residents with a terminal illness
- It was important that an inflationary uplift to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme bands was made to ensure that households did not drop out of the scheme. A further update would be provided to Full Council on 29 January 2026.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Laura Williams
- Councillor Donna Wright

In response to questions, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- Every local authority had a Council Tax Reduction Scheme and many had also adopted the banded scheme.
- The Council had researched the best forms of communication to ensure residents were made aware of the scheme.
- The banded scheme had simplified matters, with access to more information on income meaning that fewer adjustments to entitlements needed to be made.

In response to questions, the Director – Resources advised that:

- More local authorities were moving over to using banded schemes.
- The aim of the inflationary split was to try and ensure that the number of residents benefiting from the Council Tax Reduction scheme remained about the same.
- There had been no issues reported with the new banded scheme, which was working well.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL: That it:

(1) Amend the Council Tax discretionary policy to include the support provided to residents with a terminal illness, with the wording detailed in paragraph 8.17.

(2) Approve changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme bands to reflect the impact of inflation.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To respond to the request from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to consider changes for next year.

13 SECOND QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REVIEW 2025/26

Audio recording – 1 hour 9 minutes 55 seconds

In the absence of the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, the Chair invited Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member of Finance and IT, to present the referral and report entitled 'Second Quarter Capital Budget Monitoring Review 2025/26'. Councillor Albert advised that:

- There had been discussion at Finance, Audit and Risk Committee about the timing of meetings and that by the time some reports were presented they had become relatively out of date.
- There had been discussion about how difficult it would be to get a vehicle to the upper floors of the Lairage Mult-Storey Car Park in Hitchin for resurfacing.
- This report summarised the progress with delivering the capital programme for 2025/26, which included the most recent updates.
- Following the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Museum Storage report, the forecast spend could be reduced to £3m which therefore required an amendment to the figure in recommendation 2.2 from £1.773M £0.773M.
- There was an additional £50K requested for the higher-than-expected demand and increased price of domestic bins.
- The forecast overspend in the Decarbonisation Project as detailed in Table 3 of the report, was set with a 5% tolerance in the budget.

In response to a question from Councillor Mick Debenham, Councillor Ian Albert advised that the timing of meetings needed to be looked at to try and ensure reports did not go out of date before they were presented to committees.

In response to a question from Councillor Mick Debenham, the Director – Resources advised that the timing of reports was based on the dates for the civic year which were set by Council.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed as amended and Councillor Donna Wright seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted the forecast expenditure of £26.416M in 2025/26 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.

(2) Approved the adjustments to the capital programme for 2026/27, as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2 and 3 and the update on the museum storage project, increasing the estimated spend by £0.773M.

(3) Noted the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.

14 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2025/26

Audio recording – 1 hour 16 minutes 35 seconds

In the absence of the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, the Chair invited Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member of Finance and IT, to present the referral and report entitled 'Second Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26'. Councillor Albert advised that:

- There was nothing to add from the referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- This report informed Cabinet of the summary position on revenue income and expenditure forecasts for the financial year 2025/26, as at the end of the second quarter.
- The projected ongoing spend increase which was detailed in Table 2 of the report had been incorporated in the draft budget report.
- There had been pay cost variances which were generally due to gaps in recruitment and temporary staff costs and a summary of significant variances were highlighted in Table 3 of the report.
- There had been several carry forward requests.
- Corporate financial health indicators which looked at the major income schemes for the Council, were highlighted in Table 4.
- There had been a slight reduction in the number of garden waste collection subscribers.
- The income generated from vehicle parking fees had increased.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted this report.

(2) Approved the changes to the 2025/26 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, an £846k decrease in net expenditure.

(3) Noted the changes to the 2026/27 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £555k increase in net expenditure. These will be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2026/27.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.

15 SECOND QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26

Audio recording – 1 hour 21 minutes 41 seconds

In the absence of the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, the Chair invited Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member of Finance and IT, to present the referral and report entitled 'Second Quarter Treasury Management Review 2025/26'. Councillor Albert advised that:

- There had been discussions at Finance, Audit and Risk regarding the over-investment of £1M in the period and that a further step had been added to the process to help ensure an over-investment did not happen again.
- There had also been a discussion around how local authority investments were secure even when a Council had been issued with a Section 114 notice, which meant that any investments with that Council had to be repaid.
- This report contained information regarding the investment of the surplus funds of the Council.

- It was positive that the forecast investment returns were higher than forecast.
- It had been highlighted at Finance, Audit and Risk that the estimates for 2026/27 would be reviewed as part of the budget setting process.
- Details of the total interest earned to date as well as the forecast to year end were outlined in paragraph 8.3 of the report.
- The percentages of investment split were set out paragraph 8.4 of the report.
- Full details of investments including the risk of default and credit rating details could be found in paragraph 8.5 of the report.
- Following a motion from Full Council and the end of 2025, a meeting had been arranged with the investment advisor to the Council to undertake a review of the Investment Strategy and the outcome would be reported back to Cabinet and Full Council as part of agreeing the Investment Strategy for 2026/27.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL: That it notes the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2025.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

16 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2026/27 ONWARDS

Audio recording – 1 hour 44 minutes 34 seconds

In the absence of the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, the Chair invited Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member of Finance and IT, to present the referral and report entitled 'Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27 Onwards'. Councillor Albert advised that:

- This critical paper had been examined in detail by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- There had been discussion around the new information received regarding the staff pension scheme, the level of General Fund reserves required for the Fair Funding Review and some questions over the Churchgate Project Manager role.
- It was welcomed that the Council had been given the new 3-year funding settlement from the government as this provided a level of funding certainty.
- When the Council had approved the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), there had been a level of uncertainty regarding future funding.
- The aims and results of the resident budget survey were detailed in Section 8 of the report.
- On 7 December 2025, the provisional settlement was provided by the government, which had been higher than expected.
- All assumptions were based on Council Tax being increased by 2.99%, which was the maximum allowed.
- Freezing Council Tax would result in a loss of funding of over £400k each year for the Council.
- The Council was looking at a balanced budget by 2028/29, which would mean a manageable use of reserves
- £1M was being set aside each year for costs associated with the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- It was hoped that the project to install a Learner Pool at the Royston Leisure Centre would be able to proceed.

- Churchgate would be reviewed to ensure that the appropriate resources were available for the next stage of the project.
- This budget sat alongside the Council Delivery Plan.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Ian Albert

Points raised during the debate included:

- The investment proposals were something for the Council to be proud of.
- Communication needed to be looked at to ensure awareness of the community.
- The need to ensure there was capacity in the budget to deliver prudently and with value for money to benefit the community.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Laura Williams seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted the Council's expected funding for 2026/27.

(2) Confirmed (in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy) that budget forecasts should be based on increasing Council Tax by 2.99% (the maximum amount allowable without a local referendum). Noting that Government have assumed Council Tax will increase by the maximum allowed in calculating Core Spending Power.

(3) Agreed which proposals (revenue and capital) should be taken forward as part of the budget-setting process for 2026/27.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a proposed budget and level of Council Tax for 2026/27, to be considered by Full Council on 26 February 2026.

17 RISK MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE (MID-YEAR UPDATE)

Audio recording – 1 hour 36 minutes 51 seconds

In the absence of the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, the Chair invited Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member of Finance and IT, to present the referral and report entitled 'Risk Management Governance (Mid-Year Update)'. Councillor Albert advised that:

- This report looked at the effectiveness of the Risk Management Governance arrangements at the Council.
- The risk score for the Local Plan had increased from 5 to 7.
- Cyber Risk was being addressed with training for all staff taking place.
- There had been some minor changes made to the Risk Management Framework which were detailed in paragraph 8.1.2 of the report.
- Some of the information contained in this report was duplicated in the Council Delivery Plan.
- There had been a review of the actions from the previous report and the progress in 2026/26 against these actions was highlighted in Section 12.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Val Bryant

In response to a question, the Director – Resources advised that:

- The Council had a Performance and Risk Officer who provided guidance and challenge in assessing risk.
- The Council had a Risk Performance Management Group and a Member from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended their meetings when possible. The Group reviewed all new and deleted risks.
- Members of Cabinet were welcome to attend a meeting of the Risk Performance Management Group if they would like to.

In response to a question from Councillor Val Bryant, Councillor Ian Albert advised that feedback was received from the mitigation measure taken in paragraph 8.2.6 of the report.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Laura Williams seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted the mid-year Risk Management Governance update.

(2) Approved the changes to the Risk Management Framework.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

(1) Cabinet has overall responsibility for ensuring the management of risk.

(2) Finance, Audit and Risk Committee have responsibility to monitor the effective development and operation of risk management.

The meeting closed at 9.41 pm

Chair

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CABINET

17 FEBRUARY 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FOLLOW UP

REPORT OF: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Council undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) between 4 and 7 November 2024, where we were visited by a peer team supported by the Local Government Association. The peer team produced a feedback report, which was reported to Cabinet on 14 January 2025. Subsequently an Action Plan was developed to respond to the recommendations and was approved by Cabinet on 23 March 2025, with an update on progress reported to Cabinet on 23 September 2025. The peer team undertook a one day follow up visit on 15 December 2025 and have issued a follow up report, which is attached at Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the findings of the CPC follow up report be noted.

2.2. That the progress against the CPC action plan be noted.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To ensure that the Council responds to the matters identified within the CPC follow up report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. The ‘do nothing’ option of not following up on the agreed action plan has been discounted, as the Council committed to undertake the CPC and should therefore seek to gain benefit from that process.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 A number of staff and councillors met with the peer team during the follow up visit on 15 December 2025. All those who took part were invited to attend the feedback session on the day. The Leader and the Leadership Team received the feedback report and had the opportunity to raise any questions or clarifications.

5.2 This report will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2026, prior to the Cabinet's consideration.

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 process for the CPC in November 2024 was set out in previous Cabinet reports and the LGA's CPC final report can be found on our website at Corporate Peer Challenge | North Herts Council. Progress Reviews are a core component of all CPCs and every council that has a CPC is required to have a Progress Review and publish the findings from this within 12 months of the CPC. The progress review at North Herts took place just outside of these timescales to avoid pressure in the run up to submission of LGR proposals in November 2025. The LGA will also publish the Progress Review report on their website.

7.2. The Progress Review provides space for a council's senior leadership to share with peers the progress made against the CPC recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive peer feedback on the implementation of the council's CPC RAG rated Action Plan. The peer challenge manager produces a short report following the Progress Review, including the peer team's key observations against each recommendation, and as outlined above, the council are required to publish this. In advance of the Progress Review, the council are required to provide a RAG rated CPC Action Plan (Appendix C) and short position statement (Appendix B) which clearly set out the progress made in relation to each of the CPC's recommendations. During the progress view, peers reviewed the Action Plan, and the progress made against each recommendation.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. It should be noted that the original CPC took place prior to the publication of the Devolution White Paper in December 2024, which significantly redrew the future landscape for local government including North Herts Council. The CPC follow up visit took place on 15 December 2025 during the short period of time that the Council had an Acting Leader, between the Full Council meetings of 4 December 2025 and 13 January 2026. This is referenced within the report.

8.2. Members will be aware that for the majority of 2025 a significant amount of senior leadership time was spent working on the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals. Despite these demands the position statement at Appendix B shows a wide range of achievements during this period across all of the Council's priorities. The Action Plan at Appendix C (updated since Cabinet last reviewed it in September 2025) also shows the progress made in responding to nine of the ten recommendations in the original report, with an explanation as to why recommendation three was not being pursued.

8.3. The CPC follow up visit on 15 December involved a number of meetings with staff and councillors, with sessions covering the themes in the original CPC report of strategic alignment and delivery, driving organisational growth and performance-led modernisation. Additionally there was a session discussing LGR and devolution, covering both the Hertfordshire experience and experiences of the peers in their areas. The peer team have provided a follow up report, attached at Appendix A, which recognises the good progress made since November 2024 and where work is still ongoing.

8.4. The follow up report is the end of the formal LGA led CPC process, but the Council will continue to progress the actions on the Action Plan whilst they remain relevant. Assuming LGR takes place on the timelines anticipated this will almost certainly be the last CPC that North Herts Council undertakes as they typically take place every five years or so. Any new Unitary Authority that replaces the Council will undertake CPCs (or its future equivalent) in due course.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference include at paragraph 5.7.13 "To consider the reports of external review bodies on key aspects of overall service delivery".

9.2 The CPC is a voluntary process and therefore there is no legal obligation to either host a CPC or act upon the recommendations. However, it is best practice to undertake a CPC every five years and having done so, to act upon the issues identified. By doing so, this process is recognised by the LGA as a way to assist councils in meeting their Best Value Duty. The Best Value Duty is a statutory requirement contained within Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999 for local authorities to "*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness*."

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The original CPC report identified a need to better align the financial strategy with organisational priorities, ensuring that there was a real balance between income and expenditure and that there was no longer a reliance on the use of reserves to produce a balanced budget. The CPC follow up report identified there had clearly been progress in aligning service plans with the corporate plan, budget and transformation objectives.

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 CPC process helps to reduce risk by providing a different perspective on the Council. All the five themes of the CPC process can support specific and strategic risk management.

11.3. The CPC report identified areas where we can utilise our performance management framework more effectively, which could help with risk mitigation. The follow up report recognised the progress made, but that there was more to do.

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. Where relevant the Council has (and will) consider the equalities implications of actions set out in the Action Plan.

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 were staffing resource implications within some of the recommendations in the original CPC feedback report, particularly organisational development and ways of working, which were considered in the development of the action plan. The CPC follow up report identified the good progress made in this respect and the ongoing work, including the emerging new workforce strategy.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report January 2026

16.2 Appendix B – Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Statement December 2025

16.3 Appendix C – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan December 2025 update

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 NHDC Peer Review Position Statement.

18.2 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report

18.3 Cabinet reports 14 January 2025, 23 March 2025, 23 September 2025

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

North Herts Council

15th December 2025

Feedback

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Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins **Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during November 2024 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC Action Plan.
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs.
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank North Herts Council for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at North Herts Council took place (onsite) on 15th December 2025.

The Progress Review focussed on each of the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge, under the following theme headings:

Strategic alignment and delivery

Recommendation 1 – Develop the golden thread: Engage all staff and partners in developing an annual delivery plan with clear priorities, outcomes and measurable KPIs – golden thread:

- Align the financial strategy with organisational priorities, ensuring that there is a real balance between income and expenditure and that there is no longer a reliance on the use of reserves to produce a balanced budget.

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- Align the digital transformation and capital projects with organisational priorities.
- Align service plans and staff objectives with the council plan.

Recommendation 2 – Prioritise: Collectively the political and officer leadership needs to be clear about what it wants to do and how the “one team” is going to do it. There may be things that have to take longer, be paused or stopped to free up resources to deliver the priorities.

Recommendation 3 – Place narrative: Promote the place narrative for North Herts that encapsulates its character and attributes. This narrative will serve to define and promote North Herts, giving a voice to its rural roots, and fostering a distinct identity for the area.

Recommendation 4 – Partnerships: Maximise collaborative opportunities to get the best outcomes for North Herts. There are willing partners ready to support delivery of shared ambitions.

Driving organisational growth

Recommendation 5 – Leadership: Build energetic and visible officer leadership, with more strategic impact. Create opportunities for more in-person communications and support senior officers with the skills and time to look “up and out” to develop strategic partnerships and strategy. Develop new ideas to get people excited about working for North Herts Council.

Recommendation 6 – Organisational Development: Create an organisational development plan that horizon scans for future challenges and sets out clear processes for learning and development, appraisals, succession planning, recruitment and retention.

Recommendation 7 – Ways of working: Reset expectations of behaviour regarding internal council relationships, ways of working and responsibility for presenting committee reports. This includes the behaviour and roles and responsibilities of councillors to councillors, councillors to officers, officers to councillors and officers to officers.

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Performance-led modernisation

Recommendation 8 – Performance management: Improve the rigour and transparency of performance management. Be clearer in explanations regarding corrective and preventive actions, set challenging targets and use the data to drive improvement.

Recommendation 9 – Modernisation: Capitalise on digitalisation skills and capacity to deliver a modernisation programme across the council.

Recommendation 10 – Project management: Strengthen project and programme management. Be clear on the skills and resources required and ensure the delivery framework which includes lessons learnt and benefits realisation is applied consistently across all projects.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Cllr James Dawson, Labour Leader of Erewash Borough Council (replaced Cllr Hugo Pound who was unable to rejoin the team)
- Cllr Sarah Bütikofer, LGA Liberal Democrat Regional Peer - North Norfolk District Council
- David Blake, Managing Director - Worcester City Council
- Kirsty Human - Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

3. Progress Review - Feedback

Out of the CPC's ten recommendations, the council's RAG rated action plan reports that 90 per cent are either completed or being progressed and 10 per cent have not yet been progressed.

Peers returned to North Herts Council (NHC) following an intense year of work which not only saw the council deliver some big projects and achievements but also co-produce and submit a proposal for local government reorganisation (LGR) in Hertfordshire to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on 28th November 2025.

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Following the LGR proposal submission, on 4th December 2025 a motion of no confidence was tabled against the leader over disagreements centred around which LGR option to submit. The motion passed, and on our visit, peers found NHC to be in political stalemate, with the deputy leader acting as leader until an extraordinary meeting, which is scheduled for 13th January 2026 to elect a new leader.

Despite the political challenges, peers discovered the council in a very optimistic position, having just drawn breath from the LGR proposal submission and in a state of reflection. There was no underestimating the collaborative work that has been delivered over the past year. Peers took time to congratulate all those who had contributed to this significant effort including the chief executive, leader and senior officers.

3.1. Strategic alignment and delivery

There has clearly been progress in aligning service plans with the corporate plan, budget and transformation objectives. Peers heard how the budget has aligned resources to key priority areas including those projected due to LGR, for example training and development and additional staffing. A draft budget has been prepared, and cross-party workshops have been held to develop this. The scenario planning suggests that depending on the outcome of the financial settlement, general fund reserves may be needed to plug a financial gap this year, but the budget will still be balanced, with the worst of the impact coming in 2027/28.

The council has delivered a substantial amount of work over the past year, this includes significant changes to the shared waste collection service, commencement of the £16.4m leisure centre decarbonisation and modernisation programme, second community governance review, acquisition of a building in Letchworth to house precious artefacts from North Herts Museum and increased and enhanced the approach to public consultation and engagement on issues such as the Women and Girls Safety Charter, Tenants Charter and Community Forums. All this has been achieved against the backdrop of LGR which has drawn heavily on the resources of the chief executive, leader and senior management team.

There is a recognition amongst officers that this pace of delivery cannot be maintained without sacrifice. Peers felt there was a need to revisit the prioritisation

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exercise completed earlier in the year to again rationalise the number of projects and at the very least rank them in order of political priority. We recognise that some councillors want to leave a legacy, however there is a limit to what can be achieved alongside the planning and implementation of LGR without adverse impact to staff. Political expectations need to be reevaluated against the resources available. If a compromise can't be found, then serious consideration needs to be given to finding and allocating additional budget and resources.

The recommendation around place narrative has not been progressed due to LGR. Peers understood the reasoning for this and were pleased to hear that despite this, North Herts, its towns and villages continue to be promoted through the new Economic Development Plan, Local Plan and Town Centre Strategies. It was acknowledged that continuing to elevate the importance of North Herts and its "places" is vital to ensuring continued investment and growth as new boundaries are drawn, political agendas change and funding from central government is directed to future mayoral combined authorities. The residents in this part of Hertfordshire must not lose out.

The chief executive and leader along with some directors and senior managers have been heavily involved in developing the LGR proposals and workstreams. Officers are providing key skills and knowledge to the programme in areas including information technology (IT), artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation. This has further strengthened partnership working across the county and positioned the council well for the future.

Opportunities for collaboration are also being explored with councils that may be within the same unitary. For example, discussions are ongoing with Stevenage Borough Council to draw on their ability to build council housing with the need in North Herts for more affordable housing. A shared venture of this nature has the potential to bring benefits to both councils and pave the way for further successful LGR outcomes.

3.2. Driving organisational growth

A senior leadership team restructure was agreed and implemented earlier in the year with the permanent appointment of the seventh service director, who had been on a

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fixed term contract. Following the retirement of two service directors a robust external recruitment process resulted in the appointment of two internal candidates to these roles. Peers commented on the positive example of this outcome, demonstrating to staff who want to progress and how NHC is actively growing its own talent.

The senior leadership team is now fully resourced and able to work together to deliver the council priorities alongside the LGR workstreams. Peers reflected on the positive change this has created. There is an improved distribution of work, increased capacity for reflection and strategic thinking and evidence of directors now looking up and taking an external perspective, out of the organisation. The reassignment of executive portfolios to match the directorates and more evenly distribute responsibilities has supported senior management capacity. Regular meetings, away days and a new learning and development programme can only serve to strengthen this new approach.

The council is producing a new workforce plan considering LGR timescales. Workstreams are looking at relaunching the organisational values, recruitment and retention, including what is needed now up to 2028, what is needed to put staff in the best position for what happens next along with a staff wellbeing theme to ensure staff are well supported through the next few years.

Recruitment and retention is currently in a good position but the council is not taking this for granted. There is recognition that uncertainty over future arrangements will for some cause anxiety and for others be seen as an exciting opportunity. Meeting the needs of all views is a challenge but NHC is already exploring opportunities for increased learning and development, future apprenticeships and maximising the potential of current/future graduates.

Every meeting discussed the increased and improved communications and engagement with staff. A new series of staff conferences were held in September led by the chief executive and leader, and staff are helping to shape future versions. The chief executive is providing regular updates on LGR, even if there is nothing much to say. The senior leadership team (SLT) are also taking turns in providing regular communications to all staff, along with virtual and in person staff briefings. This increase has been noted by staff who welcome it, but for some, there is still more to

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do. Peers were really pleased to see the progress on this recommendation and encourage the officer and political leadership to continue. Consider how SLT members could be even more visible at other council sites such as the depot and look for opportunities to drop into team meetings to introduce yourself.

Peers heard of progress being made on political accountability, with portfolio holders now presenting reports to committee supported by officers to answer technical questions. This is a recent change with work to do to ensure consistent implementation of the process.

There were mixed views on whether councillor and officer relationships have improved. Some officers reported still feeling “caught out” by councillors and others reported receiving advance notice of questions to be tabled, which meant they could prepare ahead of meetings. Some staff also reported feeling upset by the recent council meeting involving a vote of no confidence in the leader. They felt the behaviour displayed was not in line with NHC’s values and opened the council up to reputational risk.

Peers were keen to emphasise their role was not to comment on the meeting or how it was conducted but they did stress the need for stability. Staff are understandably worried about the political leadership and the impact this has on their work, priorities and LGR process.

The council meetings in January 2026 provide the opportunity to steady the ship and elect a leader who can steer NHC through the next period of work which will include setting and approving a balanced budget, continuing to progress the legacy projects and navigating the next phase of LGR including public consultation on the proposals ahead of the minded to decision from MHCLG.

3.3. Performance-led modernisation

Gradual progress is being made around performance with a clearer council delivery plan providing more explanation as to the direction of travel. The use of benchmarking data from LGInform is being used to support the development of more stretching targets and to allow councillors to compare the performance of NHC with others. And Overview and Scrutiny Committee are providing review and oversight of

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the data to drive improvement.

There is however more work to do, to fully embed a strong performance driven culture. Consistency in how performance indicators are selected, set and challenged needs to be prioritised. Along with ensuring they are aligned to the corporate plan, delivery plan, service plan and budget – the golden thread. Further benchmarking will also ensure the council is driven to be best in class. Officers felt there was more political direction needed to support progress in this area.

Churchgate remains the largest and potentially riskiest project on the council's agenda. Peers heard that resources were allocated to secure the appointment of a skilled project manager to oversee the project alongside the technical consultants. Councillors have recently discussed their plans for the site which include residential (private & affordable), market (indoor & outdoor space), car parking, community and leisure space, retail (inclusive of independent) and the possibility of a food store. Project Board are currently investigating the viability of these items and choosing the best option for developing the site. Councillors will receive an options appraisal report in early 2026 for decision on how to proceed. There is forward momentum on the project and NHC are committed to delivering the project, even if that means delivering an oven ready proposal to the new unitary, the residents of North Herts will still see the benefits.

Digital transformation continues to be a key component of the corporate plan, and it is helping the council to modernise. In view of LGR the council has been self-aware enough to stop some projects where LGR makes them less viable. However, where appropriate IT and AI are transforming services with positive results. Peers heard how the use of AI and bots within customer services is revolutionary, supporting effective and efficient delivery. Up to 50 percent of all calls relating to revenues and benefits are now being answered by AI, allowing staff in this area to work on other priorities.

In addition, the knowledge, skills and expertise within the teams at NHC are positively contributing to LGR across Hertfordshire with NH leading the Technology workstream. This is a key area of work which can make a huge impact on the transformation, savings and success of the new authority.

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4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank North Herts Council for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on several of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Rachel Litherland (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) and their e-mail address is Rachel.Litherland@local.gov.uk

Further information, support, and resources on LGR/Devolution, can be found on the LGA's devolution and LGR Hub website.

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North Herts Council

Corporate Peer Challenge

Progress Review Statement

November 2025

www.north-herts.gov.uk

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1.0 Welcome back to North Herts

We're pleased to welcome the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge team back to North Herts, one year on from your last visit in November 2024.

This past year has been one of significant progress and purposeful change. Building on the recommendations from your visit, we've worked hard to embed learning, strengthen our leadership capacity, and deliver meaningful improvements for our communities – all while navigating the challenges of financial constraint and preparing for Local Government Reorganisation.

From launching our Women and Girls Safety Charter to starting our ambitious £16.4 million project to decarbonise and modernise our leisure centres and changing our Waste and Recycling service, we've focused on delivering tangible outcomes that make a difference to our residents. We've also taken steps to improve how we engage with our communities – through in-person forums, design workshops, and our first-ever budget consultation – ensuring local voices shape local decisions.

This Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review statement provides a snapshot of our achievements since your last visit aligned with our key Council Priorities: **Thriving Communities, Accessible Services, Responsible Growth,** and **Sustainability**; and our action plan updates on the ten recommendations you gave us last year have been emailed over.

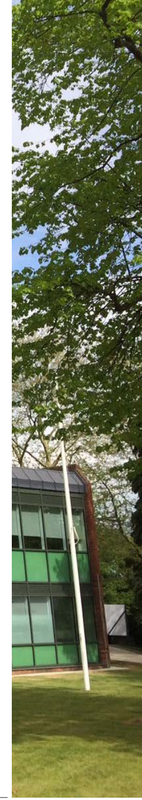
We hope this review statement demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and delivering for the people of North Herts. Thank you again for your support and challenge – we look forward to updating you on our progress.



Cllr. Daniel Allen,
Leader of the Council



Anthony Roche,
North Herts Council
Chief Executive



2.0 One year on

Thriving communities

Women and Girls Safety Charter launched

In response to growing concerns around safety in public spaces, we launched the Women and Girls Safety Charter in January 2025 – a district-wide initiative encouraging venues and organisations to take a stand against harassment and violence.

Developed in partnership with local stakeholders, the Charter sets out clear commitments around staff training, reporting procedures and safe spaces. Over 20 pubs from across the district have already signed up and we plan to promote the charter to other premises in the future.

The Charter has been promoted through our digital communications channels and featured in Outlook magazine, helping to raise awareness and drive engagement. It's a key part of our work to make North Herts safer and more inclusive for everyone.



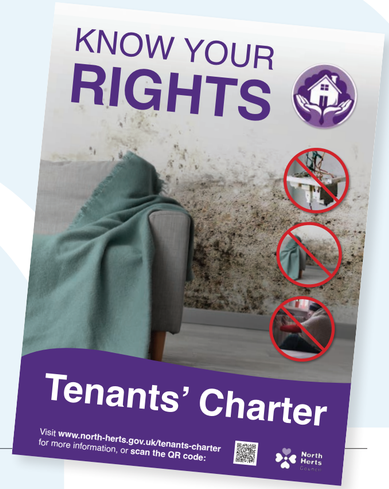
Tenants' Charter launched

We published a Tenants' Charter in February to provide guidance and support to both tenants and landlords in North Herts. This is a first for North Herts and sets out the rights and responsibilities for tenants, landlords and the council, to ensure rented homes in the district are safe, warm, and well maintained.

We felt it was important to not only create one comprehensive source of information, where tenants and landlords can find answers to any questions they have, but to also work together to create a community where everyone enjoys a comfortable and secure living environment.

Advice for tenants includes checking that the letting or managing agent is registered, that the agreement provided is a proper tenancy agreement, and how to stop mould becoming a problem. Advice for landlords includes checking that tenants have the right to rent your property, ensuring the property is free from hazards, and that gas and electrical inspections are carried out by qualified professionals.

1000 people have visited our Tenants' Charter webpages for advice and support, and we are currently in the process of taking flyers and posters to letting and managing agents, community centres, GP surgeries, and libraries to spread the word further about our Tenants' Charter.



Thriving communities

White Ribbon accreditation achieved

In December 2024, we were proud to achieve White Ribbon Accreditation – a national recognition of our commitment to ending male violence against women. The accreditation followed months of work across the council, including staff training, awareness campaigns, and policy reviews.

We marked the achievement with a public pledge event and have continued to promote the campaign through our channels, including Outlook magazine. White Ribbon aligns with our wider efforts around community safety and equality, and we're now working with partners to embed its principles across the district, starting with a Men's Panel on White Ribbon Day's 2025 theme of "We speak up" in November.

The accreditation is not just a badge – it's a statement of intent, and we're determined to keep the momentum going.

In-person resident liaison

Following on from the Churchgate regeneration in-person hubs in September 2024, we have started a programme of increased in-person resident engagement events, starting with a resident's design forum in June.

A diverse group of 22 North Herts residents were invited to explore and develop a vision for new development in the district and set the direction of travel for the emerging District Design Code. Residents were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of living in North Herts and to identify what makes neighbourhoods successful, inclusive and distinctive.

In September, residents were invited to join our Community Forums in-person to hear more about Local Government Reorganisation from our Leader and have their opportunity to ask questions. In total 73 residents joined us across our five Community Forums in Great Ashby, Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston. Their feedback has helped shape our response to Government. A second resident's design forum is planned for November.







Thriving communities

Community Governance Review

We undertook our second community governance review (CGR) consultation from the 14 March to the 9 May 2025, asking for feedback on proposed changes to parish arrangements such as changes to ward boundaries, that parish election dates be aligned to the district election cycle and the number of parish councillors, based on the feedback received in our first CGR consultation in 2024.

Householders in areas where a substantial change was proposed were sent targeted flyers detailing the specific changes. The consultation was shared directly with all district and North Hertfordshire County councillors, parish councils, MPs, PCC and to anyone who expressed an interested to hear more following the first consultation. It was also communicated on the homepage of our website, dedicated consultation webpage and through our E: Newsletter and social media channels. The consultation was also promoted via general flyers circulated for display in various community establishments, at Councillor Surgeries and announcements made at the various meetings such as at the Community Forums. Anyone who was unable to respond via the online consultation was assisted in any way that they needed, such as the provision of paper forms, accepting comments via email to ensure everyone could have their say.

We had a significant response of 2,253 completed surveys which were weighed against statutory criteria and used to form the recommendations which can be found at: www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-governance-review and will be implemented ahead of our 2026 local elections.





£4.5M Government funding secured for supported housing scheme

Following a successful funding bid to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government under its Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP), we were awarded £4.5m to deliver an accommodation-based service for homeless 18–24-year-olds, with support needs. The partners to the bid were One YMCA and Hertfordshire County Council, and the service – which is also run by One YMCA – launched in April 2025 and is based at their site in Hitchin.

The building has 24 self-contained rooms for the SHAP, and the aim of the service is to eventually resettle young people into their own independent accommodation. In addition to support from the Council and One YMCA, residents can also be referred to specialist partner agencies such as health services, social care, CGL (Change, Grow Live) and MIND.

Accessible services

Waste and recycling service change

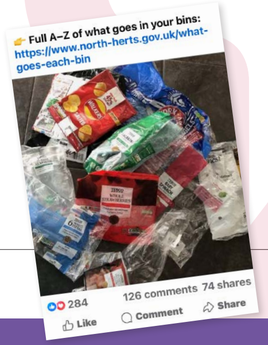
Following a public consultation in 2022 and a highly competitive and robust procurement process, our shared waste, recycling, and street cleansing service (with East Herts Council) was awarded to Veolia in May. This was followed by changes to our waste and recycling service in August, designed to make recycling easier and more efficient for residents, support our wider environmental goals of reducing carbon emissions and align with the Government's 'Simpler Recycling' environmental requirements.

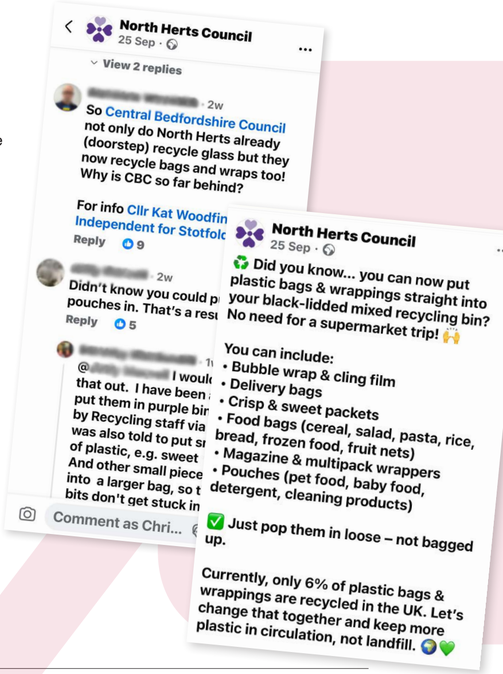
The key changes were:

- An increase to the range of materials that residents can recycle at home, including increased capacity for cardboard and paper, and the addition of plastic bags and wrapping recycling.
- Collection frequency changes -, with non-recyclable waste, mixed recycling and cardboard & paper bins moving to a new alternating three-week collection cycle.
- New collection days for some residents - to improve route efficiency.

Food waste continues to be collected weekly and garden waste continues to be collected fortnightly for subscribers. We have also launched a new council app that notifies residents in advance of each collection, letting them know exactly which bins to put out when. As of the 20 November, the app had been downloaded 7,224 times and been very positively received.

The contractor and service change were of course not without challenges, but we have already seen a 34% decrease in general waste tonnage in August (Vs July) and have received an overwhelming positive response to the fact that residents can now recycling plastic bags and wrapping at home, including residents of neighbouring councils asking them to do the same!





Accessible services

Progress on the Digital strategy

Over the past year, we have made substantial progress in delivering our Digital Strategy. Key achievements include using our digital platform ‘Connect’ to deliver a host of fully integrated online Waste services that includes a garden waste platform, reporting a missed bin, and booking a bulky waste collection. The team have also been busy developing an online bookings application, a Grants application and more. Views of our Customer Service webpages have increased by 46.58% YOY and views of our ‘Report a problem’ webpage have increased by 27.71%.

An intelligent chatbot service has been launched on the website to improve customer engagement and an AI telephony system is now in place on the Customer Service telephone line to handle the most common enquiries. Staff are also being upskilled in AI & Data through the apprenticeship programme. Work is ongoing to redesign processes, rationalise applications, and enhance efficiency across the Council.

Advancing Digital Inclusion

Prioritisation has been given to digital inclusion through the expansion of the ‘Staying Connected’ programme following a successful grant application, which will be delivered in partnership with North Herts CVS. This initiative aims to improve digital skills and access for residents most affected by digital exclusion, including older adults, those living in poverty, and people with disabilities. Plans include recruiting Digital Champions and upskilling Council staff, distributing secure devices to households in need, and running cybercrime awareness workshops with Hertfordshire Constabulary. The programme is expected to support over 300 residents by March 2026.

Looking ahead, our digital inclusion plans will be embedded within the mid-term review of the Digital Strategy, rather than developed as a standalone strategy. The Council will continue to signpost, connecting residents with external organisations such as Hertfordshire Steps to Skills and Barclays Digital Eagles. The Customer Service team will maintain their role in assisting residents with online tasks, ensuring that digital transformation remains inclusive and accessible to all.





Accessible services

People Advancements

Over the past year, we’ve made significant strides in strengthening our leadership team by ensuring appropriate resources and therefore enabling more time for strategic decision making. This includes an additional Director role, reorganisation of teams and reassignment of executive portfolios to match the directorates and more evenly distribute responsibilities.

We’ve also invested in staff engagement and development, including hosting three successful in-person staff conference events that fostered connection, celebrated achievements (see staff conference film shared on email), and supported our values. Feedback from the events showed that they were valued by staff and we have committed to making this an annual event. In addition, we are beginning a review of our Regular Performance Review process, and have started work on a refreshed People Strategy, which will consider our values and guide our approach to recruitment, retention, and development as we head towards Local Government Reorganisation.

Museum Collection Facility

We are proud to own North Herts Museum, the leading accredited museum in the district which houses a collection of great regional, academic, and scientific importance. Items in our collection include the world’s oldest football collection, records of our rare chalk stream habitats and Roman bones.

In March 2025, Cabinet agreed to acquire a new building in Letchworth to safeguard and preserve the estimated 1 million plus items in our museum collection by keeping them at a stable temperature and in a suitable environment all year round, something our current facility is unable to provide. As well as protecting the area’s history, art and heritage collection for years to come, the new building will also be able to accommodate visitors, including school children.

This project will also ensure that our North Herts Museum service retains accreditation which enables us to apply for grants and host national and international exhibitions such as The Snowman, Paddington, and Rembrandt. The redevelopment of the new premises is estimated to take two years to complete at a cost of around £3M.





Responsible growth





Local Plan review



Our Local Plan review has begun, focused on setting the stage for a refreshed vision for our district. We've commenced gathering studies and data about things like housing need, flood risk, the Green Belt and more, to make sure any updates to our Local Plan are based on robust data.

We're identifying land that could meet the district's future needs as part of our review – from housing and jobs to green spaces. We are in the process of assessing a range of sites and are gathering more detail on those with potential, such as transport and landscape information.

We have procured a new digital platform: Place Maker to ensure North Herts residents can sign up to have their say and receive regular updates on the progress of our Local Plan review, be the first to know about upcoming Planning Policy consultations and comment directly on planning policy documents.

Planning applications for East of Luton and Baldock (the single largest planning application we have received) have been received and validated and are currently being consulted on.
During November 2025, the Planning Officers' Society completed a focused review of the planning service. This is to help us continue delivering our current Local Plan while also responding to changes in national planning policy.

Churchgate regeneration approach approved

At Full Council in July 2025 approval was given for us to move forward with developing a regeneration encompassing Portmill East/West, Biggin Lane car parks, the Market and the shopping centre. This approval has enabled us to work on the financial viability of the scheme on a much more detailed level, which has included: car parking surveys/ analysis to determine if Hitchin can 'afford' to lose spacing/income, a market feasibility study that focuses on the ideal size/mix/location of the site, a public realm study that demonstrates how the river could be opened up etc and a community space feasibility study that reviews the need for this type of space in Hitchin. These work streams will provide us with that extra level of detail required to move forward in our programme and report back to the appropriate committee, in preparation for taking forward the process for bringing on board external development expertise in Spring 2026.

Economic development strategy

Our new Economic Development Strategy for the district was adopted in July 2025. The strategy is aligned with the Council's economic aspirations, priorities and economic vision. Our Council Plan (2024-2028) sets out the importance of 'Responsible Growth' with a clear commitment to support economic growth across the district, and to work closely with businesses and other partners to deliver on our key objectives. The strategy is supported by a comprehensive evidence base, that includes stakeholder engagement with a variety of local businesses and an in-depth analysis of economic data in North Herts (in relation to jobs, trending growth areas, industries, connectivity etc). The evidence base enabled the team to identify five action areas to focus on: 1) business and enterprise; 2) people and skills; 3) innovation and economic change; 4) site and premises and 5) investment, position and promotion. The strategy also celebrates our position geographically and maps out areas within the district (looking in) and outside (looking out) with both themes identifying opportunities available to the Council to achieve substantial economic growth. The strategy focuses on economic portraits of each town in North Herts, mapping out key opportunities in each of them.

Responsible growth



Town Centres strategy in progress

Our Town Centres strategy is in progress and will support development both in and surrounding our four town centres: Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Royston and Baldock.

The strategy incorporates advice on a range of changes in national policy and guidance and takes account of the updated evidence in the Town Centres and Retail Study (2024), setting out our vision and planning priorities for our town centres across the following themes: 1) land use and retail; 2) built environment; 3) transport, access and movement and 4) community. It will provide additional guidance to Local Plan Policies pending the approved review of the Local Plan which is due to progress during 2026 once new Government regulations and guidance are released.

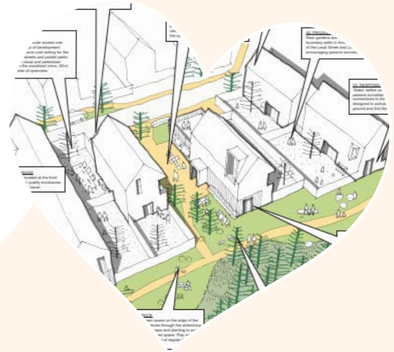
The draft Town Centres strategy was presented at the 19 November Cabinet meeting: Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 19th November, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council with public consultation planned for December 25 and January 26, including in-person engagement at our December Area Forums. Following consultation and adoption our Town Centres strategy will play a key part in the assessment and determination of planning applications in and surrounding our four town centres.

District Design Code in progress

Work has begun on our District Design Code, a multi-phased design policy document that aims to improve design quality of new development in North Herts, provide consistency to pre-application feedback and upskill planners.

One of only a handful of councils producing their own code in-house, the seven key place-making objectives within our code have been created using feedback from members, officers and the residents design forum mentioned earlier in this document and supported and reviewed by North Herts Council, County and industry expert working groups.

The first phase of our District Design Code will focus on new developments on settlement edges, covering topics such as open space, streets, built form and tenure neutrality, with public consultation planned for Spring 2026.



Sustainability

Decarbonising our Leisure Centres

Our ambitious £16.4 million project to decarbonise and modernise our leisure centres, making them more energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, and enjoyable for residents began in June.

The scheme, which is part-funded by £7.74 million from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is bringing significant upgrades to Royston Leisure Centre, Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, and North Herts Leisure Centre (Letchworth). The improvements will cut carbon emissions and enhance the experience for our leisure centre users.

As part of the project, all three centres are benefitting from decarbonisation measures including replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps, installing solar panels, upgrade of insulation, glazing and air handling systems and introducing energy-efficient technologies across all buildings. Royston Leisure Centre is also benefitting from a large gym extension with state-of-the-art equipment and refurbished changing rooms. North Herts Leisure Centre is getting a brand-new pool flume and swimming pool changing rooms and Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre will enjoy refurbished changing rooms and a new health suite.



This major investment marks an important step towards a greener, more sustainable future for North Herts and will be accompanied by energy efficiency improvements to other council-owned buildings in 2026-27 as we have also been further awarded over £1.17 million in government funding from Salix Finance. These future upgrades are expected to save around 100 tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

Our continuing commitment to sustainability

In August 2025, we launched our Sustainability Strategy, setting out our aims for how we'll work with communities to tackle climate change and protect our local environment. Developed with input from residents, councillors and officers, the strategy focuses on practical actions across energy, transport, biodiversity, waste and adapting to the changing climate.



To support grassroots efforts across North Herts, we also introduced the Sustainable Communities Grant – a pot of nearly £80,000 to help local community groups and businesses deliver sustainability projects. From renewable energy projects to increasing biodiversity and community engagement on sustainability education, the grant is supporting a range of initiatives that make a real difference.

Alongside this, we published our Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in September 2024, which provides detailed guidance to developers on how to embed sustainability into new developments. The SPD covers areas including energy efficiency, water conservation, and green infrastructure, ensuring our planning decisions support our climate goals.

Together, these actions, alongside our ambitious project to decarbonise our leisure centres, show how we are demonstrating leadership through actions to reduce our own environmental footprint and reflect our commitment to empowering communities and embedding sustainability in everything we do.

Sustainability



Budget consultation held

Over June and July, we asked residents to help us shape our future budget decision-making by sharing their thoughts on the services they value and their future priorities via our first-ever budget consultation.

The aim of the consultation was to gauge residents' views and use the findings to aid our decision-making rather than make any concrete decisions on future services. The consultation focused on those services which are paid for through our general funding rather than those that are fully covered by fees and charges.

559 residents responded who told us their top five services in terms of importance to them were:
1) Waste collection & recycling;
2) Parks & greenspaces; 3) Street cleaning;
4) Community safety & environmental crime; and
5) Environment health. In terms of their thoughts on balancing our future budgets, they told us that they would rather we find ways new ways to fund our existing services rather than reduce the frequency or quality of the services we provide. These findings will be used to help us set our 2026-27 budget, which will be agreed at our February 2026 Council meeting.

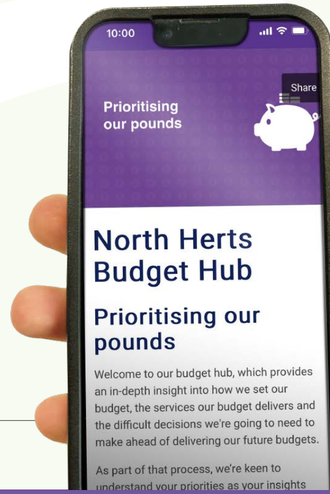
Royston Bee Corridor

Following a request from a Royston resident who wanted to introduce 'wild areas' within Royston, we expanded our award-winning Letchworth bee corridor initiative to Royston in March 2025 – creating a new pollinator-friendly route that connects green spaces across the town.

The project, involving the council but led by John O'Conner, our grounds maintenance contractor, includes wildflower planting, bee hotels and educational signage, designed to support biodiversity and raise awareness of the importance of pollinators. Local schools and community groups have been involved in planting days, which has helped create a sense of ownership and pride.

The project builds on our wider commitment to enhancing natural habitats and making our towns greener and more resilient. It's also a great example of how small-scale environmental interventions can have a big impact – both ecologically and socially.





3.0 Local Government Reorganisation

Following the formal invitation from central government in February to develop proposals for a single tier of local government in Hertfordshire, we have been working collaboratively with our 10 Hertfordshire council colleagues and the Police and Crime Commissioner to draft a single submission, with three options contained within it.

We have embraced the challenge and taken a leading role in the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme team, being on the Programme Management Board, leading the Technology & Systems workstream and co-leading the Service Design workstream, whilst being represented on all the other workstreams. Throughout our approach has been to embrace and explore the opportunities reorganisation could bring in terms of how services are delivered in Hertfordshire in the future.

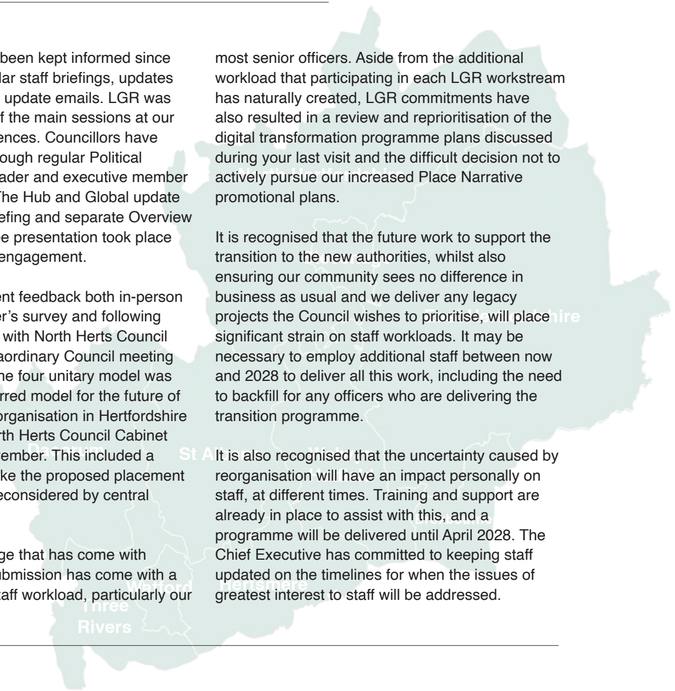
Key district partner organisations, including Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, our Business Improvement Districts and Veolia were involved in our first stage stakeholder engagement to ensure their voices were heard at an early stage. This was followed by a full month of both in-person and online stakeholder engagement in September with wider stakeholders, staff and councillors. Staff have been kept informed since February through regular staff briefings, updates onThe Hub and Global update emails. LGR was also the focus of one of the main sessions at our in-person Staff Conferences. Councillors have been kept informed through regular Political Liaison Board, party leader and executive member briefings, updates on The Hub and Global update emails. A councillor briefing and separate Overview and Scrutiny Committee presentation took place during the September engagement.

After listening to resident feedback both in-person and through September's survey and following discussion and debate with North Herts Council Councillors at the Extraordinary Council meeting on the 13 November, the four unitary model was confirmed as our preferred model for the future of Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire at a meeting of the North Herts Council Cabinet on Wednesday 19 November. This included a caveat that we would like the proposed placement of Arbury Ward to be reconsidered by central government.

Embracing the challenge that has come with developing the LGR submission has come with a significant impact on staff workload, particularly our most senior officers. Aside from the additional workload that participating in each LGR workstream has naturally created, LGR commitments have also resulted in a review and reprioritisation of the digital transformation programme plans discussed during your last visit and the difficult decision not to actively pursue our increased Place Narrative promotional plans.

It is recognised that the future work to support the transition to the new authorities, whilst also ensuring our community sees no difference in business as usual and we deliver any legacy projects the Council wishes to prioritise, will place significant strain on staff workloads. It may be necessary to employ additional staff between now and 2028 to deliver all this work, including the need to backfill for any officers who are delivering the transition programme.

It is also recognised that the uncertainty caused by reorganisation will have an impact personally on staff, at different times. Training and support are already in place to assist with this, and a programme will be delivered until April 2028. The Chief Executive has committed to keeping staff updated on the timelines for when the issues of greatest interest to staff will be addressed.



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North Herts Council Corporate Peer Challenge – November 2024
Action Plan adopted by Cabinet 18 March 2025

No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update (early September 2025)	
1	Develop the golden thread	We will use the Council Delivery Plan to continue to reflect the major projects that will support the delivery of our Council Plan. We will review our corporate KPIs (supported by an Internal Audit) to assess how they can be improved to reflect our priorities and also provide challenging targets that help to drive improvement	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Report to 24th June Cabinet/ 17th June O&S as part of the annual update of the Council Delivery Plan.	Report to PLB (July and August) on areas of Council Plan that could link to KPIs. Agreed that would look to add measures that link to Council Plan outcomes for the Q2 report (January)	
		Alongside the Council Delivery Plan, we will continue to use internal Service Plans to reflect the other key tasks in each Directorate. These will have a focus on supporting the Council Plan, but will also incorporate other statutory requirements. Where appropriate, we will use Service KPIs to support Service Managers and Directors to assess performance.	Executive Members and Directors	From start of new civic year	Service plans have been adopted using these principles	
		Leadership Team will review all the projects on the Council Delivery Plan and Service Plans on a quarterly basis. This will help manage the delivery of projects and also ensure that they continue to align with the Council Plan and priorities. Executive Members will also be kept informed of progress against Service Plans. Cabinet (through quarterly updates on the Council Delivery Plan) will have regular opportunities to determine any projects that should be included at that level, as well as assess delivery of existing projects, KPIs and risks.	Executive Members and Directors	From start of new civic year	To be circulated to Leadership Team when prepared for Risk and Performance Management Group. Took place for the Q1 report in August. Service Plans to capture projects that are not on the Council Delivery Plan.	

		We will carry out a budget consultation exercise during summer 2025 to help inform our budget setting process for 2026/27 onwards. We will use this alongside the 3-year settlement for 2026-29 to assess our funding priorities. This will inform the areas where we will make savings to achieve a balanced budget.	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Summer 2025	Budget consultation took place throughout June and July. Feedback has been captured and is being analysed.	
		The Digital Transformation oversight group will review what software and processes should be a transformation priority to maximise the organisational benefits. These could be direct financial benefits or through reducing effort that frees up Officer time.	Director – Customers	April 2025	The review is now considering the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and whether we need to speed up, slow down, or stop different elements of the programme (see rec 9).	
		We have carried out a review of the capital programme to assess the likely timing of delivery and any projects no longer needed. The budget setting process for 2025/26 has also provided an opportunity to assess new and existing proposals. We will add new capital projects (e.g. Churchgate) when we have a defined plan and a reliable estimate of timing and costs.	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Ongoing review	Council report July 2025 flags the capital implications of the Churchgate project, although it is still too early to attach figures to the project.	
		As staff regular performance reviews are carried out, the priorities within them will be linked to the priorities in the Council Plan, Council Delivery Plan and Service Plans.	All managers	Ongoing	Leadership Team will monitor completion of RPRs, as part of regular HR update	
2	Prioritise	We will use the Council Delivery Plan to track progress against our key corporate projects. As well as the formal discussion of this at Cabinet, we will also start to discuss it on a regular basis at Political	PLB	Ongoing	Initial prioritisation discussion at June PLB, followed by Executive Members and Directors reviewing priorities for their areas and feeding back to the Leader,	

		Liaison Board. We will agree which are the most important priorities for North Hertfordshire. This will allow earlier discussion of how the projects are helping to deliver our priorities and any blockages to delivery. Where blockages are caused by staffing resources we can assess where there may be opportunities to prioritise projects, based on the staff required (as usually requires specialist knowledge and skills) and relative importance of projects.			Deputy Leader and Chief Executive. Prioritisation considerations also need to include the resource requirements needed to support the LGR programme. This will be further considered during the upcoming budget cycle.	
3	Place Narrative	Subject to securing suitable funding, we will seek additional capacity to identify the opportunities available to promote our North Herts Place Narrative across the district. The most effective opportunities will then be included in a Marketing & Communications plan that the consultancy will be responsible for creating, executing, and measuring, with support from the North Herts Council communications and Economic Development teams.	Exec Members & Director - Customers, Director – Enterprise	Summer 2025	Due to local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire, it has been agreed not to actively pursue this work. We will continue to use the North Herts Place Narrative assets but will not commit resource to actively promoting it.	
4	Partnerships	We will continue to look for opportunities with partners, wherever interests can be aligned. We will continue to work closely with Herts Growth Board, HCCSP and others, taking leading roles where appropriate.	Cabinet and Leadership Team Cabinet and Leadership Team	Ongoing Ongoing	We are discussing with neighbouring councils potential opportunities through LGR eg housing, planning. CEx is on the LGR programme board, overseeing whole programme. CEx and Director Customers are strategic leads for two of the workstreams, with all other Directors (and some senior managers) also involved in	

					working groups. The Leader is taking an active role at Herts Leaders Group and is the new Chair of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership.	
		The new leadership team structure includes a strategic health lead, which seeks to work more closely with the NHS through the work of the ICB.	Director Regulatory	From 1 April 2025	We continue to try to engage with health to explore opportunities for greater co-operation, however the ICB is currently focussed on their own restructure.	
5	Leadership	A leadership team restructure has been agreed and will be in place from 1 April 2025. There will also be further changes in the leadership team during the course of 2025, with two retirements. We will put in place a learning and development programme to integrate new members to the Leadership Team, build relationships and explore ways to re-energise the organisation, with visible officer leadership and more strategic impact.	Chief Executive and Directors	From 1 April 2025	The new structure has been implemented and two new directors appointed. The Cabinet portfolios have been aligned to the director responsibilities, to streamline and simplify arrangements. The learning and development programme for LT is being designed, to take place in the autumn.	
		We will look to create opportunities for more in-person communications, for example an annual staff conference, attending different team meetings and visiting front line service areas.	Leadership Team	From 1 April 2025	The first staff conference was delivered, with three sessions taking place during September.	
6	Organisational Development	We will create a new HR strategy that reflects our priorities and how we develop existing staff and recruit new staff to deliver them. As we know that there will be some changes in the Leadership Team over the summer, we will do the majority of this work over the Autumn to ensure that it can capture the views of the new Directors.	Exec Member & Director - Resources	Autumn 2025	Still planned for Autumn, but now also considering impact of LGR. Shortens the timeframe for the strategy and therefore may be a different focus.	

		We will be clear on the importance of learning and development, even when there is a need to reduce our spend. We will use our new Learning Management System to help with accessing training. We will review how we carry out our Regular Performance Reviews (appraisal) to make it simple, effective and aligned to the golden thread. We will use workforce data to inform how we address succession planning, recruitment and retention, with appropriate plans in place.		In place and ongoing	Consider as part of HR strategy We will consider benefit of change as part of HR Strategy To include in HR Strategy work	
7	Ways of Working	We will relaunch our values with Officers and Councillors. This includes listening to and considering the views of each other, and work together and support each other to be the best organisation we can be. Executive members will present committee reports at meetings We will look at light touch staff surveys to check in with staff, which can also be used to reinforce expectations of behaviour. We will review our approach to whistleblowing training, in order to raise awareness across the organisation. We will consider adoption of any new model Code of conduct for Councillors	Member training champions and Leadership Team Cabinet Director - Resources Director - Governance Standards committee/	Summer 2025 Ongoing Summer 2025 and ongoing Start of new civic year When available	Considering ways to make our values more memorable as part of the HR strategy. This is the practice adopted We included wellbeing questions as part of a recent survey (during August) on LGR. Whistleblowing training has been delivered to Directors and representatives from each directorate. New code awaited. In the meantime, Council adopted the	

			Director - Governance		Code of Good Practice for Statutory Officers.	
8	Performance Management	We have updated the Council Delivery Plan to be clearer on any indicators that do not meet the green performance threshold. The report highlights the actions that will be taken to seek to improve performance, and we will continue to work on the explanations that Cabinet and O&S need. Internal Audit will benchmark our performance indicators to see how the measures and the target values compare to others. We will use that audit report to reflect on how we use the indicators to drive improvement We will also have an annual review of indicators that consistently achieve a green rating to assess how realistic it would be to set a more stretching target, and the benefits to residents that it would provide.	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Completed Report to 24th June Cabinet/ 17th June O&S as part of the annual update of the Council Delivery Plan. Ongoing	To consider KPIs that link to the Council Plan as part of Q2 report (January). Cabinet reviewed the KPI targets in the June report.	
9	Modernisation	The digital transformation initiative is a key component of our corporate plan, guided by an Oversight group that provides strategic direction and prioritisation. This programme encompasses the upskilling of staff across the Council and the provision of appropriate tools to support their roles. Several workstreams are currently underway, including a partnership with an apprenticeship provider to develop skills in business transformation, AI, and data insights.	Exec Member & Director - Customers	Ongoing	The programme is ongoing and has helped support the launch of the new waste contract. The programme is being reviewed and reprioritised in light of LGR, however appropriate transformation work continues. We have recently piloted an internal app using a Microsoft workspace and have introduced an AI telephony solution. This gives additional capability and aligns with the digital strategy	

		A significant aspect of the digital programme involves the review and redesign of Council processes to enhance efficiency. We have recruited a dedicated Digital Business Analyst (BA) for this purpose, and through this work, we anticipate the transfer and upskilling of BA skills. Ongoing engagement with staff and Councillors is planned, alongside the development of our rolling communications plan. Additionally, a controlled pilot of using AI (Microsoft Copilot) is underway to identify use cases and assess the potential efficiency impact across various areas within the Council.		Ongoing Ongoing	Currently considering the next potential cohort to undertake courses with the apprenticeship provider, this is likely to be in early 2026 once the current cohort have completed and can share the benefits / successes of the programme. We are also supporting digital inclusion and upskilling across the district by partnering with North Herts & Stevenage CVS to deliver a range of digital inclusion initiatives This work was temporarily paused as the lead on this changed role. Since October 25 there has been a new Lead for this project and so this work has re-started, initially exploring how Copilot can be used across the organisation alongside other tools such as Robotic Process Automation, or a digital solution built in Netcall or on MS Workspace	
10	Project Management	See response to recommendation 2, which covers resourcing of ongoing projects. For larger capital projects we will move towards incorporating project management into the capital cost, to reflect the required capacity and ensuring the total cost is considered as part of the overall project appraisal. We have a process for collecting lessons learnt from projects. By improving the	Exec Member & Director - Resources	Ongoing Ongoing	Churchgate report to July Council sought budget for the appointment of an experienced project manager, to help support the delivery of the project. This was approved and an individual recruited. Reports will come to LT when completed, or on an exception	

		project reporting to Leadership Team (included in the response to recommendation 1) we will have better understanding on when smaller projects have completed, so can work with those project managers to ensure that we collate lessons learnt. Having more lessons learnt, which may also be more relevant to a wider audience, will allow us to produce regular updates to share across the Council.			basis as required. Lessons learned exercise to be completed for the wasted contract procurement and service change roll out.	

CABINET

17th February 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2026

REPORT OF: *POLICY AND COMMUNITY MANAGER*

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: *CLLR DANIEL ALLEN, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE*

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 In accordance with the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021), Local Authorities and Local Planning Authorities must publish a biodiversity report. The report is expected to document the policies and actions the council has carried out to comply with the Biodiversity Duty.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet note the contents of the Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 at Appendix A, and approve its publication on the council's website.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To ensure the council is compliant with the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021) and its requirement to publish a biodiversity duty report within twelve weeks of the reporting period end date. The end date of the first reporting period must be no later than 1st January 2026.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. To not publish a Biodiversity Duty Report. This would mean the council becomes non-compliant with the Biodiversity Duty.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The strengthened Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021) requires public authorities to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Initial consideration was made through discussions with council officers from key areas including Greenspace, Planning, Estates, and Policy & Strategy. Once actions were drafted, they were proposed to be included in the council's new Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030, under a section on biodiversity. As such, the objective and actions which constitute our Biodiversity Duty considerations were consulted on as part of the broader development of the Sustainability Strategy. This included a workshop of key officers, Leadership Team, and senior colleagues who work in sustainability at Hertfordshire County Council.

It also included a consultation exercise which gave the public, staff, and councillors the opportunity to comment on proposed objectives and actions, as well as cross-party consultation with elected members, and review by Political Liaison Board (comprised of the Leadership Team and the Cabinet). The Executive Member was kept informed throughout, and the Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 was approved by Cabinet in June 2025. Progress updates on the actions for the Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 have been gathered through the usual Sustainability Strategy reporting and monitoring mechanisms, as well as through further discussion with officers responsible for delivering the actions.

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 Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened Biodiversity Duty for public authorities in England. This strengthened duty requires public authorities to actively consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity. They must agree policies and specific objectives based on this consideration, and act to deliver the policies and achieve the objectives. As a local authority and a local planning authority, North Herts Council is subject to this duty.

7.2. The council was required to complete the first consideration of what actions it can take for biodiversity by 1st January 2024, and to agree policies and objectives as soon as possible after this. The first consideration was made by the required deadline via discussion with key departments who are best placed to deliver action around biodiversity. This included Greenspace; Planning; Estates; and Policy & Strategy.

7.3. As the council were planning to develop a more holistic Sustainability Strategy to replace its Climate Change Strategy, it was proposed that objectives and actions around biodiversity be integrated here in recognition of the interconnections between biodiversity and other elements of sustainability, and to allow biodiversity actions to be monitored and evaluated alongside the council's wider environmental commitments. This is in line with government guidance on the Biodiversity Duty which indicates that actions can be recorded within existing environmental strategies or within a newly created document.

7.4. As such, the Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 was developed to include a specific section around biodiversity which satisfies the requirements of the Biodiversity Duty. The Strategy was developed, consulted on, and approved as per the process outlined at 5.1.

7.5. Under the Duty, the council is required to reconsider the actions it can take at least every five years, though more frequently may be appropriate.

7.6. The Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 at Appendix A documents the objectives and actions we have carried out to comply with the Biodiversity Duty. The end date of the reporting period it covers is 1st January 2026. The end date of each future reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. By law, the report must include a summary of action taken to comply with the biodiversity duty and how we plan to comply with the duty in the next reporting period. Suggested optional information includes details about the authority, and governance arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the actions. The government guidance is not prescriptive about how the report is structured or set out.

8.2. Reports from local planning authorities must also include specific information related to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This includes the actions the authority has carried out to meet BNG obligations; details of BNG resulting from, or expected to result from, biodiversity gain plans the authority has approved; and how the authority plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

8.3. If approved for publication, the Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 will be published on the 'Enhancing Biodiversity' webpage of the council's website. This page contains an explanation of the Biodiversity Duty and the requirement to publish reporting.

8.4. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) intends to include references to authorities' reports in future reviews of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

9.2. Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, requires the Council, as a local authority and local planning authority, to comply with the Biodiversity Duty. This includes publishing reporting within twelve weeks of the end of the reporting period. The end date of the council's first reporting period is 1st January 2026.

9.3. This recommendations of this report will enable the Council to discharge their duties in accordance with the legislative timetable in the Environment Act 2021 and fall within the Functions of Cabinet as set out in Section 5 of the Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no specific revenue implications, no specific capital implications, and no other 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.

11.2. There are no risk implications linked to the recommendation at 2.1., other than a failure to approve the Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 for publication would result in the Council being non-compliant with Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021) requirements.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2. There are no direct equality 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 that apply to the publishing of the Biodiversity Duty report. However, the publishing of the report ensures compliance with the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021) and enables transparency around the progress of actions the council is taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report. Officers from various teams are responsible for delivery of the actions highlighted in the report at Appendix A, and this is reflected in Service Plans and through the Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – Biodiversity Duty Report 2026

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. CONTRIBUTORS

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19. BACKGROUND PAPERS

19.1 Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030

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Biodiversity Duty Report 2026

1.0 Background to North Herts Council

North Herts Council is a district council covering the northernmost area of Hertfordshire. It is a predominantly rural district covering approximately 375 square kilometres of land, making it the second largest geographical district in Hertfordshire. There are four main urban areas: the historic market towns of Baldock, Hitchin, and Royston, and the world's first garden city – Letchworth Garden City. There are also smaller settlements within open countryside, making it a district which balances the urban and the rural. The ONS estimated a population of 135,761 in 2025.

Key functions of North Herts Council include: housing services; planning services, including strategic planning; waste collection; licensing; and greenspace management.

2.0 Biodiversity Duty consideration

In accordance with the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021), local authorities were required to make an initial consideration of what they could do to conserve and enhance biodiversity by 1st January 2024. This consideration was made through cross-department discussion where we identified the following areas as those where the council could make the most meaningful impact: greenspace management; the planning system; our estates portfolio; and partnership working and community engagement.

External strategies, and the aims and outputs of partnership groups of which we are a member, have also been considered in the development of our biodiversity work. This includes the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, and the North Chilterns Landscape Partnership.

3.0 Biodiversity within our governance framework

The Council Plan 2024-2027 lays out the Council's strategic priorities, including Sustainability. Our Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 was approved by Cabinet in June 2025, and details our specific objectives in this area and the actions we will take to further this priority. Each action is assigned to a relevant team for delivery, and progress on the actions is reviewed by the council's Climate and Sustainability Officer Group (CSOG) and reported to Political Liaison Board (comprised of Cabinet Members and our Leadership Team) on a quarterly basis.

Our Biodiversity Duty commitments are integrated into our Sustainability Strategy, with Biodiversity being one of the specific themes of the Strategy. This enables us to consolidate all sustainability actions, many of which are cross-cutting, into one framework for easier co-ordination, monitoring, and reporting.

4.0 Objectives and actions

We have established one overarching objective for biodiversity, as well as fourteen specific actions in key areas of influence. These are set out in our Sustainability Strategy. The table below lays out the biodiversity actions and progress made from the beginning of the reporting period (1st January 2024 – by which date local authorities were required to

complete an initial consideration of what they could do for biodiversity) up to the end date of the first reporting period (1st January 2026).

Our biodiversity objective is: *Increase Biodiversity in North Herts.*

Action Number	Action	Progress update
38	Work in partnership with the Wildlife Trust and others to make improvements to North Herts Council sites, and rivers and chalk streams.	• Greenspace Team are working in partnership with Countryside Management Service (CMS) at Hertfordshire County Council on meadow conservation at our sites. A recent example includes establishment of a perennial wildflower meadow at Walsworth Common. The works focused on appropriate ground preparation, species-rich seed mixes, and ongoing management to help improve floral diversity, support pollinators, and enhance overall ecological value of the site. • Continued engagement with 'Friends of' groups to make improvements to sites. • Greenspace Team currently preparing a project brief for river improvement work at Purwell to enable future funding bids.
39	Continually review opportunities to deliver the aspirational elements of site-specific Greenspace Action Plans; and review and consider additional aspirations as each plan comes up for renewal (e.g. using s106/BNG money to deliver)	• This work is ongoing. Recent examples include tree works at Great Ashby and Weston Hills which form part of a wider woodland management approach, combining selective works to improve woodland structure. This includes removing unsafe or declining ash, encouraging natural regeneration, and planning for future planting with a diverse mix of resilient species. This is to support long-term woodland health and biodiversity. • Achieved Green Flag Awards for five of our greenspaces in 2025. The criteria includes consideration of the environmental management of sites, as well as biodiversity, landscape, and heritage.
40	Review the success of implementing the greenspace wildling audit recommendations; and seek and implement further recommendations from Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW).	• Greenspace Team are currently working with 'Friends of' groups to establish volunteer groups to help monitor and record the benefits resulting from implementation of wilding audit recommendations at our conservation sites. Aiming to have volunteer groups in place for spring 2026.
41	Make it a priority for river projects to support suitable habitat for water voles; where possible, support the Wildlife Trust's aspiration to reintroduce water voles into Purwell.	• Work was undertaken to encourage water voles upstream on the River Purwell to move downstream. However, these efforts have so far been unsuccessful. Water vole decline is driven largely by the spread of mink and we are aware of mink eradication work being undertaken in the East of England. We will consider working with partners on this where opportunities arise.

42	Explore options to landscape an area of Wilbury Hills Cemetery and incorporate more biodiversity	• Wild areas including a wild meadow are now in place at Wilbury Hills Cemetery.
43	Review the impact of our reduced mowing regimes, and consider management amendments at the appropriate point in the Greenspace Management contract to help increase species diversity. - Provide communications to residents about the reasons for this and the impacts.	• Ongoing. • A 12-month communications plan has been developed to deliver communications on various aspects of biodiversity and greenspace management. This includes the benefits of reduced mowing regimes.
44	Engage with resident groups and provide information on the wider benefits of reduced mowing regimes in areas where this leads to complaints.	• A 12-month communications plan has been developed to deliver communications on various aspects of biodiversity and greenspace management, including the benefits of reduced mowing regimes; bulb and tree planting; and meadows. • The Greenspace Team will be working in partnership with John O'Conner to extend the bee corridor to Baldock in April 2026, following successful implementation in Letchworth and Royston in the preceding years. The extension will provide further opportunity to promote the benefits of reduced mowing. • The Climate Hive Engagement platform now has around 950 subscribers and includes communications and updates on our biodiversity work. This will include specific communication on reduced mowing regimes in 2026.
45	Identify opportunities to harness the power of volunteers to achieve shared goals around increasing nature	• We are currently reviewing work previously undertaken by volunteers around biodiversity, (specifically the work to create more wildflower areas in Royston), and looking to promote this more widely as part of a call for volunteers for similar work. Plan to use the Cabinet Panel on the Environment as well as our Climate Hive to promote. • Policy & Strategy are currently reviewing local biodiversity-related volunteering opportunities which could be promoted to staff, to enable volunteer leave to contribute to our biodiversity objectives.
46	Review the finalised version of the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to identify if there are opportunities to contribute to the priorities identified.	• The Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has now been published and we have promoted the launch event. • Officers reviewed the Strategy ahead of publication and will continue to look at how we can work with partners to further the strategies aims, as opportunities arise. • As a Local Planning Authority we must 'have regard' to the LNRS when making planning decisions.

47	Work with colleagues from social housing providers to find opportunities to incorporate nature-positive actions into ongoing work e.g. adding Swift bricks to houses which are being retrofitted.	• Yet to be commenced.
48	Make full consideration of Biodiversity within the Local Plan Review process including: - Exploring the possibility of a target above the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for development within North Herts. - Considering the allocation of nature networks. - Inviting landowners to put forward potential areas for open space and nature.	• While some authorities previously set BNG targets above 10%, the latest government guidance states that plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain, either on an area-wide basis or for specific allocations for development unless justified. In light of this, we will consider whether any justifications can be made in association with call for sites and LNRS focus areas. • The Local Plan review will take into consideration areas that the LNRS has highlighted as being key for nature recovery locally. • The first call for sites has gone out as part of the Local Plan review. A few sites have come forward for biodiversity.
49	Review council-owned land to ascertain whether we have sites which may be suitable for biodiversity projects including wildflower areas and rewilding and Biodiversity Net Gain offsetting from development.	• Significant progress has been made on this review and identifying potential sites for further more detailed review in consultation with the council's senior ecologist. We expect to complete the initial review by the end of April 2026, identifying those sites for more detailed review for suitability. We will report back with further detail in future reports.
50	Review the opportunity and feasibility of creating a habitat bank using council estate to sell biodiversity units to developers who need to offset required BNG.	• In June 2025, Cabinet gave approval to progress with plans to improve management of land at Radburn Way, Letchworth, with the intention of providing a habitat bank or similar. This work is progressing on schedule, and the Greenspace Team are working with Countryside Management Services (CMS) to look at what they may be able to do at the site. • Further potential sites may come forward from the action above (49).
51	Support prospective habitat banks which are in accordance with Local Nature Recovery Strategy aspirations in securing legal agreements to enable access to the biodiversity gain register.	• This work is ongoing. • Two privately-owned sites have come forward as potential habitat banks and the council is working to secure legal agreements with them.

4.1 Delivering actions for biodiversity in the next reporting period

The actions detailed above are planned for delivery through to 2030. Over the course of the next reporting period, the council will continue to work towards its biodiversity objective through further progressing these actions and commencing work on those which have not yet been started. The actions will continue to be monitored via the usual Sustainability

Strategy 2025-2030 monitoring mechanisms. This includes quarterly written updates from officers responsible for each action; evaluation of progress by the Climate and Sustainability Officer Group (CSOG); and quarterly reports to Political Liaison Board. The opportunity to amend and introduce further actions will be considered periodically throughout the Strategy's duration, in discussion with relevant officers and CSOG. The end date of the next reporting period will be no later than five years after the end of the first reporting period (1st January 2026).

5.0 Biodiversity Net Gain

As a Local Planning Authority, North Herts Council is also required to report on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG is an approach to development, made mandatory by the Environment Act 2021. It requires most new developments to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity, compared to the site's pre-development biodiversity value. Major developments have been subject to the requirement since February 2024, whilst smaller developments have been subject to the requirement since April 2024.

5.1 BNG Monitoring

No BNG monitoring has yet been undertaken. BNG became mandatory in February 2024 and since then the council has discharged 9 Biodiversity Gain Plans. Within these a total of 25.41 Habitat units & 2.6 Hedgerow units are expected to be delivered and maintained over 30 years. However, it is worth noting that 0.32 Habitat units are offsite, being sourced by the applicant in Lincolnshire due to the absence of biodiversity unit availability in Hertfordshire at the time.

24.77 Habitat units and 2.52 Hedgerow units are classed as significant and secured via Section 106 (s106) with a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

Monitoring of BNG will be undertaken on sites with HMMPs in place in due course. As of 1st January 2026 no HMMPs have commenced.

5.2 Supporting local BNG delivery

In this reporting period, North Herts Council have been approached by two potential habitat bank providers and are looking to enter s106 agreements with them to enable BNG delivery locally.

Cabinet also approved progressing with plans to improve management of land at Radburn Way, Letchworth. This is a traditional orchard habitat with the potential to provide biodiversity units for North Herts Council use or as a habitat bank. Officers from Greenspace, Estates, and other service areas work jointly to manage and deliver the project, reporting back to the Executive Members for Enterprise, Resources, and Environment.

5.3 Delivering BNG in the next reporting period

Over the next reporting period, we will continue working to deliver BNG. Upcoming action includes integrating reference to the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) within the new Local Plan currently being prepared; and procuring Mycelia software to enable ease of interrogation of Biodiversity Metric Data for BNG assessments.

6.0 Conclusion

During this reporting period, North Herts Council has made progress towards its biodiversity objective through delivery of a range of actions. This has included improvements to council-owned greenspaces; working in partnership with other organisations on projects such as the bee corridor to improve or link up habitats across our district; developing improved communications on biodiversity; and helping to enable local delivery of biodiversity net gain through support for habitat bank creation. The integration of biodiversity commitments into a broader Sustainability Strategy signals biodiversity as a key component of the council's sustainability ambitions. We will continue working to progress the biodiversity initiatives outlined in this report and monitor them alongside our wider environmental commitments.

CABINET
17 February 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT ALLOCATIONS AND UPDATE

REPORT OF: Director - Regulatory

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Mick Debenham, Executive Member for Regulatory

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Demand for the Council's housing services remains high with the need to secure additional services for those threatened with, or experiencing homelessness.

1.2. The Council has received ring-fenced grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to help it meet its legal housing duties and this report details proposals for the allocation of this funding for specialist homelessness services for local people.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the Cabinet approves the funding proposals for the allocation of the remainder of the 2025/26 award of homelessness grants as outlined in Table 3 in paragraph 8.2.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. There is a need to secure additional services for homeless households in the district. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need, which is also consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029).

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. Cabinet could decide against approving the proposed allocations of government funding, however the services highlighted in this report would not be delivered.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The Executive Member for Regulatory, Cllr Mick Debenham has been consulted and is supportive of the proposals contained in this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 19 December 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. As a local housing authority, the Council has legal duties to assist households who are homeless or who are threatened with homelessness, and to provide accommodation for homeless households in 'priority need' – primarily families and vulnerable individuals. The Council no longer owns or manages any housing stock, and it therefore works with housing providers (some with allied support services) to meet local needs.

7.2. Last year (2024/25), the Council owed a legal duty to 438 households to help prevent or relieve their homelessness and for the first three quarters of 2025/26, 261 households sought this assistance. The key reasons behind homelessness are consistently: ending of private rented sector tenancies (22% of cases in 2024/25); friends and family being unable or unwilling to accommodate (24%); ending of social rented tenancies (14%); and domestic abuse (11%). Ongoing cost of living challenges and scarcity of affordable housing in the district are underlying pressures as well. There is also increasing complexity of cases - in 24/25, 64% of households owed a prevention or relief duty had a support need and 39% had two or more support needs, including factors such as poor mental health, substance misuse and offending histories.

7.3 In addition to these prevention and relief duties, the Council also owed 138 'priority need' homeless households a main housing duty in 2024/25, meaning that we had a legal duty to provide suitable accommodation for these households – typically temporary accommodation until an offer of settled accommodation can be made. Table 1 below summarises these legal duties and Table 2 outlines temporary accommodation (TA) usage.

Table 1. Homelessness duties owed

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 Q1-3
Households owed a prevention duty	196	175	204	189	118
Households owed a relief duty	281	241	267	249	143
Households owed a main housing duty	128	123	130	138	90
of which, single households	53	43	43	67	43

Source: MHCLG published tables on homelessness (2025/26 from NHC in-year analysis)

Table 2. Households in temporary accommodation (snapshot at year end)

	31/3/22	31/3/23	31/3/24	31/3/25	31/12/25
Households in TA	104	97	105	99	89
Of which:					
single households	46	32	26	32	28
hotel placements	15	13	19	12	14

Source: NHC analysis of homelessness case data

7.4 In addition, the Council consistently receives over 1,000 approaches for homelessness and housing advice each year, which are resolved without legal duties being owed and therefore do not feature in Table 1.

7.5 The Council received £1,090k of funding for 2025/26 from MHCLG homelessness and rough sleeping grant funding programmes, ring-fenced to support delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness including amongst those sleeping rough and victims of domestic abuse. The funding comprised; £897k of Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) including a recent top-up; £157k of Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant; and £36k of Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant. Decisions on the allocation of the majority of this funding was made at Cabinet on 11 February 2025 and additionally on 19 November 2025. A total of £365k remains unallocated and this report contains proposals for the allocation of the remaining funding for 2025/26.

7.6 Homelessness and rough sleeping grants are being combined into a new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant for 2026/27 and going forwards. Provisional allocations for the next three financial years, 2026/27 to 2028/29, were announced in December 2025 with the Council provisionally allocated total funding of £2.7 million over the three years: £871,088 for 2026/27; £906,392 for 2027/28 and £937,275 for 2028/29. Grant continues to be ring-fenced for the delivery of homelessness and rough sleeping services, as well as for meeting councils' domestic abuse duties. As a condition of funding, this grant cannot be spent on costs directly related to temporary accommodation.

7.7 Funding for temporary accommodation has been separated out from the new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant, to end the current tension between councils having to choose between investment in prevention and meeting temporary accommodation costs. As a result, funding for temporary accommodation that was previously part of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is being rolled, un-ringfenced, into the Revenue Support Grant in the Local Government Finance Settlement from 2026/27 onwards and councils will not have a separate named allocation for temporary accommodation.

7.8 We will update Cabinet on grant allocations once they have been finalised and bring forward funding proposals.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 For 2025/26, a new ringfence has been introduced for the HPG, to maintain prevention activities during this period. At least 49% of HPG funding must be spent on prevention, relief and/or staffing activity and no more than 51% may be spent on temporary accommodation costs. The Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant remain ring-fenced to protect funding for rough sleeping services and LAs are being encouraged to prioritise delivery on prevention and targeting interventions depending on need, including focusing on support to long term and repeat rough sleepers.

8.2 Table 3, below, outlines proposals for the allocation of the remaining grant received for 2025/26.

Table 3. Proposals for homelessness grant allocations for 2025/26 onwards

Black squirrel credit union	The Black Squirrel credit union offers affordable loans to residents to help prevent and relieve homelessness in the district.	£100,000 for the next three years
Private rented sector officer	Dedicated support and assistance to help clients secure suitable tenancies in the private rented sector	Fixed Term Contract 36 months (including on-costs)

		£159,000
Temporary Accommodation costs – General Fund budget	This annual budget allocation covers the net cost of hotel placements	£60,000
Temporary Accommodation costs – overspend	The current projected overspend is around £11k, due to the volume of households placed into hotels and this is expected to increase further due to many more hotel placements being made over the winter months.	Up to £46,000
Total		**Up to £365,000**

8.3 The Black Squirrel Credit Union (BSCU) and the Council have worked in partnership since 2010, with the BSCU providing a valuable service that contributes to homelessness prevention and relief for Council clients. The BSCU provides affordable loans to those referred by the Council, which are typically used to fund tenancy deposits, rent in advance or to pay back rent arrears. In 2025, 33 loans were provided, totalling just over £40k. The funding proposal seeks to provide for any loans that are not repaid.

8.4 Sourcing local affordable accommodation for our clients remains extremely challenging, particularly for those who are unable to access social housing due to histories of debt or criminal behaviour, or for single people who do not have a priority housing need. The private rented sector offers an alternative solution for this cohort and the team's dedicated private rented sector officer has had considerable success in sourcing properties both locally and further afield – during 2025, they have been able to secure over 50 tenancies for Council clients. To build upon this success and continue to expand housing options for our clients, this report proposes that the team seeks to recruit an additional dedicated officer; this will also offer greater resilience to the team.

8.5 When temporary accommodation is fully occupied, some households are placed into hotels as a last resort. Hotel usage typically grows in periods of severe weather, especially during winter. Although housing benefit can be claimed for most placements, this only partially covers the cost, leaving the Council with a financial deficit, hence the proposal to allocate grant funding for this.

8.6 The Council agreed its latest Housing Strategy (2024-2029) in March 2024, and the proposals outlined in this report are consistent with the priorities highlighted in the Strategy.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Housing Act 1985 Section 1 (1) confirms that the District Council is the Local Housing Authority (LHA).

9.2 LHAs' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English local housing authorities to prevent homelessness.

9.3 LHAs have a legal duty to provide interim (also known as emergency) accommodation to homeless applicants, if, at any point during their enquiries, there is a reason to believe that an applicant may be:

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

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

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

9.6 In approving the funding proposals the Cabinet would therefore be acting in accordance with its statutory requirements and in accordance with the Council's constitution.

9.7 Should the Cabinet agree the proposals in this report, the partnership with the BSCU will be subject to the Council's Contract Procurement Rules.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council has received allocations of homelessness grant for 2025/26 comprising: £897k of Homelessness Prevention Grant (including a recent top-up of £80.5k); £157k of Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant; and £36k of Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant. Grant is ring-fenced to support delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness including amongst those sleeping rough and victims of domestic abuse

10.2 The proposals in this report seek to allocate the remaining amount of £365k for 2025/26. As the actual spend may be less than £365k as the position regarding temporary accommodation is not yet known, any unallocated grant for 2025/26 will be used for the housing service staffing costs incurred in 2025/26 and the resultant underspend on the salary budgets will be used to increase the homelessness reserve, so that the various homelessness schemes can be funded in future years. The funding for the private rented sector officer will follow this process and will also be placed in the homelessness reserve as it will not likely be utilised in the current financial year due to the recruitment lag and the partial funding of staff costs for 2025/26 ensures the MHCLG's grant conditions are met.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Homeless households approach the Council every day for help and in addition to its core service, the Council commissions specialist organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Herts Young Homeless and Survivors Against Domestic Abuse to support those in need and help reduce the risk of homelessness levels becoming unmanageable; the BSCU and private rented sector officer proposals in this report, will help to mitigate this further.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 1. The assessment notes the potential positive impacts this decision will have for some of the most vulnerable members of the community in North Hertfordshire.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report, however, the proposals contribute to social value by providing community benefits that would otherwise not be realised.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Should the proposal in this report be agreed, the Council's procedures for recruitment would be initiated without delay.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Jo Doggett, Director - Regulatory jo.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4470

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

17.3 Natasha Jindal, Interim Legal Services Manager natasha.jindal@north-herts.gov.uk

17.4 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy and Strategy Officer, ellie.hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4220

17.5 Luke Franklin, Service Accountant, luke.franklin@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4163

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 MHCLG's HPG 2025/26: Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

18.2 MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations: Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Annex A - Equality Analysis Template

1. Name of activity:	Ongoing provision of specialist homelessness services for North Herts residents (Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations)
2. Main purpose of activity:	Accommodation and support services for local homeless people; homelessness prevention
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	Pleace, N. (2015) *At what cost? An estimation of the financial costs of single homelessness in the UK*. London: Crisis. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government *Statutory homelessness live tables 2024-25* Office for National Statistics *Census 2021* North Herts Council (2024) *Review of Homelessness in North Hertfordshire* Stonewall (2024) *LGBT In Britain. Home and Communities*. London: Stonewall

4. Assessment

Characteristics	**Neutral** (x)	**Negative** (x)	**Positive** (x)	Describe the person you are assessing the impact on, including identifying: community member or employee, details of the characteristic if relevant, e.g. mobility problems/particular religion and why and how they might be **negatively or positively** affected. **Negative: What are the risks?** **Positive: What are the benefits?**
Community considerations (i.e. applying across communities or associated with rural living or Human Rights)	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** Homelessness has significant negative impacts upon communities as well as more obviously for the individual. Research estimates that the cost of a single person sleeping rough in the UK for 12 months is over £20,000 due in large part to costs to NHS services and the criminal justice system. The proposals contained in this report aim to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place and provide support and alternative accommodation in times of crisis.
A person living with a disability	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** Almost two-thirds of households owed a homelessness duty by the Council have a support need. These include support needs

				owing to poor mental health (35%), physical ill health and disability (28%) and learning disability (14%). The proposals in this report, especially support for those in temporary accommodation, will therefore likely benefit this group in particular.
A person of a particular race	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** In common with national data, data for North Herts district shows that a disproportionate number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds require homelessness assistance – making up 18% of those owed a duty whilst comprising 12% of the North Herts population.
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness. District level data suggests a very small number of LGBTQ+ people owed a homeless duty by the Council (3%), although a significant proportion – 20% - of applicants chose not to disclose information about their sexual orientation.
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** Households with dependent children including pregnancies and victims of domestic abuse (the vast majority of which are women) are two cohorts which automatically receive 'priority need' for homelessness assistance, which will usually involve the provision of emergency (temporary) accommodation. Typically, around 40% of households in temporary accommodation at any one time are single women (with or without children) compared to 20-30% being single men (based on available data for the past year).
A person of a particular religion or belief	x	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a particular age	☐	☐	x	**Negative**

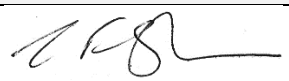
				Positive
				Young people facing homelessness are particularly vulnerable and early interventions to prevent homelessness or provide appropriate support are incredibly valuable for life outcomes, particularly if a first experience of homelessness or rough sleeping can be prevented. 16% of main applicants owed a homelessness duty in 2024/25 were aged under 25.
Transgender	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness however local data suggests a very small number of LGBTQ+ people owed a homeless duty by the Council (3%), although with a significant non-response rate.

5 Results

	Yes	No	
Were positive impacts identified?	x	☐	The proposals contained in this report will provide funding in support of existing prevention, support and accommodation services for local households facing homelessness as well as for extra resourcing for private rented sector assistance. These interventions will positively impact some of the most vulnerable households in the district including those with mental and physical ill health and disabilities, those suffering abuse and marginalised groups. Without assistance, many of these, and particularly those with multiple disadvantage, will continue to face ongoing barriers to positive life outcomes including repeated homelessness, poverty, ill health and lack of opportunity.
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.	x	☐	Interventions targeted at assisting homeless households, or those at risk of homelessness, will by their very nature disproportionately benefit those most likely to be at risk of homelessness ie those with support needs including disabilities, victims of abuse (who are more likely to be women) and minority groups.
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	☐	x	.

6. Consultation, decisions, and actions

If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?
n/a
Describe the decision on this activity
Continue with policy

List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively		
Action	Responsible person	Completion due date
Regular monitoring of all service provision (as per contractual requirements where relevant) to ensure key outcomes are met.	Service/contract managers	March 2027, and yearly thereafter.
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		
Monitoring and reporting in line with contractual arrangements and/or MHCLG funding requirements where relevant, otherwise internal monitoring will be undertaken.		
7. Signatures		
Assessor (Report Author)		
Name: Tiranan Straughan	Signature** 	
Validated by (relevant Senior Manager)		
Name: Martin Lawrence	Signature** Martin Lawrence	
Forward to the Policy & Strategy Team		
Signature** E A Hollingsworth		
Assessment date: **03/02/2026**	Review date: **03/02/2027, and yearly until 2029.**	

** **Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically. Please send to policy@north-herts.gov.uk for review by the team.**

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

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

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

CABINET MEETING

DATE: 17th February 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: North Herts Council Stray Dogs Policy

REPORT OF: Director - Regulatory

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Mick Debenham, Executive Member for Regulatory

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the key information to enable North Herts Council (the Council) to adopt a Stray Dogs Policy to allow the Council to fulfil its statutory duties in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act, 1990 (the Act), in a consistent, appropriate and fair manner.

The Act requires each Council to have in place suitable and sufficient means to collect stray dogs found in its district and to detain them for the statutory 7-days. After this period, if the dog is not collected by its owner, the dog shall be passed on to the owners of the boarding kennel who will become the new owner of the dog and seek to re-home the dog as best as practicable.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that Cabinet adopt the Policy as presented.

2.2. In considering this policy, the following should be noted.

a. The Policy, at point 1.2, states the accepted definition of a Stray Dog, which the Act does not provide.
b. The Act requires the appointment of a Responsible Officer for the purpose of discharging these duties and the Policy, at point 1.3 accommodates this.
c. The Policy sets out in section 2, the conditions whereupon a stray dog will and will not be collected or seized, as this is not fully defined in the Act.
d. The Policy also sets out at point 2.4 how the Council will manage stray dogs which are or are believed to be a Prohibited Breed, as defined under the Dangerous Dogs Act, 1991.
e. The Policy, in section 4, states the legal requirement under the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations, 2015, that all qualifying dogs be microchipped and how this will be accommodated.
f. The Act requires the Council to ensure the health and welfare of any collected stray dog during the 7-day retention period. The Policy states how the Council will accommodate this requirement, including the scope and limitations of this obligation at points 5.2 and 5.3.
g. The Policy, in section 6 states the conditions required for returning the collected stray dog to the owner, including at point 6.3 the requirement for all accrued costs

to be paid in full with no option of any instalments or discount (except that offered when micro-chipping unchipped stray dogs).

h. The Policy states, in section 7, states how the Council will dispose of the stray dog either at the end of the 7-day retention period or before in necessary for humane reasons. Part 7.5 outlines how dangerous dogs will controlled and should be considered in conjunction with point d, above.

i. The Policy, at section 9 seeks to delegate future amendments of this Policy to the Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Regulatory in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Constitution.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. The reason for recommending the approval of this Policy is to enable the Council to clearly state how it intends to meet its obligations under the Act, whilst putting in place limitations against the unreasonable use of public funds and to protect the Responsible Officer against undue criticism or challenges which could in turn risk the perception and reputation of the Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. The Council has the statutory duty to fulfil the obligations placed on it by sections 149 and 150 of the Act, but it is for the Council to decide how this is achieved. Rejecting this Policy will mean that the Council will continue to deliver this statutory duty via the sole control of the Responsible Officer, meaning that the protections and discretion afforded to the Council and the Responsible Officer by this Policy would not be secured.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. As this Policy states how the Council will meet its obligations under the necessary provisions of the Act, the scope for local interpretation as to how compliance is achieved is limited. As such, consultation was limited to key Elected Members, Senior and selected other Officers in the Council and the Council's existing contracted provider of the stray dog service.

5.2. Consultation took place between 16th January 2026 and the 1st February 2026.

5.3. The Consultees were:

Councillor Mick Debenham, Executive Member for Regulatory
Councillor Matt Barnes, Shadow Member for Regulatory
Councillor Michael Muir, Shadow Member for Regulatory
Councillor Tim Johnson
Anthony Roche, Chief Executive
Jo Doggett, Director – Regulatory
Isabelle Alajooz, Director – Governance
Johanne Dufficy, Director – Customers
Steve Crowley, Director – Enterprise
Nigel Smith, Director – Place
Ian Couper, Director – Resources
Sarah Kingsley, Director – Environment
Alan North, Service Manager, Green Space

Neil Fairey, Cemeteries and Area Monitoring Officer
Lucy Tucker, Team Manager – Environmental Protection and Housing
SDK Environmental, current Stray Dog Kennelling contractor

5.4. Responses to the consultation were received from:

Cllr Tim Johnson
Anthony Roche
Ian Couper
Isabelle Alajooz
SDK Environmental

5.5. All responses were considered and where appropriate, the Policy was amended to its current, presented form. A summary of the responses and their impact on the Policy is given in Appendix C.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 19th December 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. This report has been written to enable the Council to clearly set out how it will comply with the statutory duties stated in sections 149 and 150 of the Act which require the Council to collect and detain stray dogs from within its district.

7.2. The Act does not define what constitutes a stray dog. This Policy adopts the accepted standard thereby protecting the Council from possible claims of theft should an owner claim their dog was not straying at the time of collection, and by ensuring that the contracted service performing this duty adheres to this definition, the Council is able to mitigate any such accusation.

7.3. The Council has appointed its Responsible Officer to ensure compliance with the Act, but without any guidance, as presented by this Policy, it is for this Officer to decide how the duty is met. Whilst there is little scope for discretion within the provisions of the Act, how aspects of the service are delivered can be locally agreed. The more significant of these include whether or not we permit the treatment of dogs during the 7-day retention period if they are injured or unwell, and if so, to what extent, or whether we offer any discounts or staged payments of the costs associated with the seizing of the dogs. Without the constraints afforded by the Policy, the decisions of these would rest solely with the Responsible Officer.

7.4. The Policy seeks to delegate the decision for future amendments to the Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Regulatory, as this will offer a more effective and efficient process to accommodate future changes.

7.5. The numbers of dogs handled under the Council's stray dog contract are:

Year	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026 (up to Q3 only)
No. Dogs to Kennels	28	42	26
No. of dogs rehomed or returned	16	27	23
No. of dogs destroyed	5	4	3
No. of dogs seized by Police	0	0	0
No. of dogs died in kennels	0	0	0
Others (e.g., still seeking rehoming)	7	11	0

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The Council has a legal duty to collect and detain stray dogs found within its district, as set out in sections 149 and 150 of the Act. This Policy clearly sets out how this obligation will be delivered, whilst taking into consideration both the most appropriate use of public funds and mitigating the potential risks the Council could face if the Policy was not adopted.

8.2. Whilst the duty to collect and detain stray dogs found in the district is placed on the Council, there is no definition of a stray dog. This policy defines what the Council shall consider to be a stray dog thus mitigating any claim of theft should the owner of a seized dog challenge our assumption of a stray dog without the adoption of this definition.

8.3. The Policy also sets out the conditions when a stray dog will and will not be seized, as once again, this determination is not provided for in the Act. It is understood that a stray dog is likely to roam, sometimes over large areas, meaning that it would be almost impossible to collect and detain it if the dog was not controlled at the time of collection. By defining the conditions where and when seizure will be considered, this again protects the Council from potentially claims of failing to carry out its duties, if the dog is outside of these provisions.

8.4. The Policy highlights that a dog without a micro-chip identification implant or collar and identification tag is considered a stray, potentially even if it is with its owner or keeper, and as such, could be collected and detained. Whilst it would be unlikely to seize an attended dog, the Policy emphasises this provision makes available the option to the owner to have their dog micro-chipped prior to collection, including at a discounted price.

8.5. Although falling under the provisions of the Dangerous Dogs Act, 1991, where a dangerous or Prohibited Breed dog is found to be straying, the Policy sets out the means by with the Council will collect and detain such dogs but also makes provision the appropriate subsequent destruction of such dogs. Under the Dangerous Dogs Act, the lead enforcement agency is the Police, and it is only they who can determine whether a dog is a Prohibited Breed or not. Unfortunately, this provision is no longer available to Local Authorities, but as the Council still has the legal duty to collect and detain stray dogs, we still need to determine whether the dog is a dangerous or Prohibited Breed; the Policy provides for this requirement.

8.6. The Act requires the Council to make provision for the destruction of seized dogs which are too injured or unwell so as to put them out of their misery, including during the 7-day retention period if, upon the judgement of experts, keeping the dog alive is inhumane. In

accordance with this obligation, the Council has in place the provision to euthanise such dogs, albeit at a cost. The Policy sets out to additionally make available the same amount of money that would provide for the euthanasia for treatment of an injured or unwell seized dog. This provision is discretionary but is considered to be a reasonable use of this money, especially if the dog can be successfully treated, and made available for re-homing. However, as Veterinary treatment costs can be significant, the Policy caps this provision to the same amount as the current euthanasia cost. The Policy does not prevent additional funding for treatment from elsewhere but caps the amount the Council would offer to protect against the potential misuse of public funds should treatment costs exceed the legally permissible alternative.

8.7. The Act gives the Council the provision to recover all reasonable costs associated with collecting and detaining the stray dog, and the Policy reflects this. It also states that this cost shall be repaid to the Council in full before the return of the seized dog, and that no discount or instalments will be available as an alternative. By adopting this provision, it clearly sets out the requirement of the Council, and protects any officer involved in returning the dog should the owner refuse to pay in full.

8.8. The Policy also sets out how the Council will dispose of an unclaimed stray dog after the 7-day retention period. In accordance with the Act, if a stray dog is not collected during the retention period, the ownership transfers to the Council which enables the Council to dispose of the dog how it sees fit. In this capacity, ownership will automatically be transferred to the contracted stray dog and kennelling provider who will make every reasonable effort to re-home the dog, albeit with some limitation upon who could be considered. Unclaimed stray dogs which cannot be re-homed or are considered too injured or unwell, dangerous dogs or those considered to be a Prohibited Breed will be humanely euthanised by a Veterinary Surgeon and the Policy also makes provision for this.

8.9. It is recognised that Policies are likely to need to be amended over time and there is provision for this to be delegated down to the Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Regulatory. Permitting this delegation, which is permissible under the Council's constitution will improve the efficiency of the Council's democratic process whilst still adhering to correct due process.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Environmental Protection Act, 1990, sections 149 and 150 places a duty on North Herts Council to collect and detain stray dogs found within its district.

9.2. The above core obligation is enhanced by Regulation 2 of the Control of Dogs Order, 1982 imposes the requirement for every dog in a highway or in public to wear a collar displaying the details of the owner, and that any dog failing to bear such identification or carry an identification micro-chip may be seized and treated as a stray.

9.3. The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations, 2015 expands the provisions of the above Order and clarifies those owner's details which must be available to fully identify ownership, the absence of which could cause a dog to be considered a stray, potentially even if it is under the control of someone.

9.4. The Cabinet's Terms of Reference is provided under the Council's Constitution at paragraph 5.7.15; "To oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those

functions reserved to the Council", and paragraph 5.7.28; "To make a decision where a policy or strategy does not exist."

9.5. In considering delegating future decisions affecting this Policy, the Cabinet's Terms of Reference are provided in paragraph 14.6.2: "This scheme [of delegating powers to offices] operates under Section 101 of the Local Government Act, 1972 (council functions) and sections 9E Local Government Act, 200 (executive functions), as facilitated by paragraph 14.6.11(b)(iv).

9.6. In approving this Policy, the Cabinet would therefore be acting in accordance with its statutory requirements and in accordance with the Council's constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. This Policy sets out how the Council will fulfil its legal obligations under the Act but does not seek to challenge the funding already provided to deliver this service. As such, this Policy has no additional financial implications beyond those already in place for this service.

10.2. The provision in the Policy to offer a discount to micro-chip dogs which were not chipped when seized is a service currently being provided by the Council and was introduced to financially assist our residents when the legal requirement to chip dogs was introduced by the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations, 2015. The reduction is only on the recovery fee charged by the Council, and does not alter the cost for the chipping, the registration of the dog nor any other kennelling costs. Given that this legislation has been in place for more than 10-years, very few dogs seized where there is a likelihood that the owners will seek to recover them are now not chipped. As such, there is very little need for this service, but it should not be removed as it is recognised that some residents still face financial challenges and this highlights the Council's acknowledgement of this. In addition, given that the Council will seek to return a seized dog where the owner can be traced before it is taken to the holding kennels, continuing to offer this service saves the Council money if being able to trace the owner of a seized dog allows us to return it.

10.3. Attention should, however, be given to the additional discretionary service being made available by this Policy to enable the same degree of funding available to humanely destroy an injured or unwell dog within the 7-day retention period where it is not humane to allow it to remain alive to be made available for treatment if practicable. This provision is not required under the Act, but is currently made available, and is limited to the cost of the destruction, and only made available where the limited treatment would benefit the dog. The Policy does not change this limitation, and the cost would not exceed the amounts currently available to destroy the dog.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. The Council has a statutory duty under the Act to collect and detain stray dogs found within its district, and to appoint a Responsible Officer for the purposes of discharging its function under the Act. This is the position the Council has thus far adopted in meeting this duty. Whilst there is little scope for local consideration in how this duty is delivered, some do exist, and whilst the actions of the Responsible Officer have been appropriate, proportionate and correct, recent developments have highlighted the reliance by the Council on that Officer to make decisions beyond what was originally envisaged. These risks, including managing the detention of Prohibited Breeds, whether treatment should

be afforded to dogs during the 7-day retention period or whether discounts should be available in the payment of the costs incurred due to the collection and detention, have been highlighted, but all have the opportunity to pose risks to the Council.

11.2. By adopting this Policy, the degree of flexibility available to the Responsible Officer is defined, therefore limiting the potential risks posed to the Council should any decisions be made which, although legal and in accordance with the Act, are unpopular.

11.3. As well as providing the Council protection to these potential risks, these limitations also afford protection to the Responsible Officer, enabling them to act in accordance with the Council's adopted Policy, as well as the Act.

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. As this Policy only sets out how the Council will fulfil its legal obligations under the Act, there are no equalities implications associated with this.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. As the recommendations in this report apply only to how the Council will fulfil its obligations under the Act, the Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Whilst the Policy and this report outline how the Council will fulfil its obligations under the Act, by defining the provisions under which the Responsible Officer shall carry out these duties, it provides them with protection against any undue criticism or challenge against their decisions. Although there is little scope for variation in how the Council meets its obligations, those that have been adopted are sometimes challenged, and this Policy, once adopted enhances the protection available to officers.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A: The Environmental Protection Act, 1990, sections 149 and 150

16.2 Appendix B: The Dangerous Dogs Act, 1991, section 4

16.3 Appendix C: Summary of the responses to the Consultation with indication as to whether they led to any alteration of the draft Policy.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 All background papers are already provided as appendices and are available for consideration in due course

DRAFT

North Herts Council Stray Dog Policy – October 2025

1. Discharging the duty

1.1 Sections 149 and 150 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (The Act) places a duty on North Herts Council (the Council) to collect and detain stray dogs found within its district.

1.2 There is no statutory definition of a stray dog. However, any dog found on public or private land, or on premises where it should not be, without its owner or not under the control of its owner or another person, may be seized and detained as a stray dog by an authorised officer.

1.3 Section 149(1) of The Act requires the Council to appoint a Responsible Officer for the purpose of discharging its functions under the above sections. These functions can be delegated to other authorised officers, such as contractors, under Section 149(2), but the appointed Responsible Officer of the Council retains overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council discharges their dog functions correctly.

1.4 The Act requires all officers duly authorised under this legislation to be trained commensurate with their duties relating to stray dogs.

1.5 The Council is also required to publicise the adopted stray dog services so as to allow the public to report the presence of stray dogs in the manner required by the Council. Due to the urgency with which the service needs to respond to these complaints, the Council will also publicise a dedicated phone service for this response. This information is currently available on the Council's Stray and lost dogs website.

1.6 In addition to collecting stray dogs, the Council has a duty to provide an acceptance point where those who find a stray dog can take the dogs outside office hours. To meet this obligation, the Council, provides a collection service as the acceptance point where the public may take any stray dog they have in their possession.

2. Seizure of stray dogs

2.1 Although the Act does not define a stray dog, it does define other parts of the description of what is accepted as being a stray dog. Section 149(11)(i) of The Act defines a public place as 'any highway and any other place to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access'. For the purposes of The Act, private land is assumed as being land which is not public, and therefore owned by someone, even if the ownership of the land is not known.

2.2 Where an authorised officer finds a stray dog in a public place, they shall, where practicable, seize and detain the dog. Section 149(3) of The Act directs that if the dog is on private land or premises, the officer must obtain the permission of the owner or occupier of the land before the dog is seized. Regulation 2 of the Control of Dogs Order 1992 requires every dog 'while in a highway or a place of public resort shall wear a collar with the name and address of the owner inscribed or on a plate or badge attached to it.'

A dog not wearing a collar and identification tag or even a microchip implant with the owner's correct name and address may be seized and treated as a stray dog pursuant to Regulation 4 of Control of Dogs Order 1992.

2.3 The Council will only seize confined strays; for the purposes of The Act, "confined" means in a secure place or under the control of the person requesting the service, i.e., the finder of the stray dog. Stray dogs which are not confined will not be seized by the Council due to the cost implications and difficulties of sending an officer to search for a loose dog that is unlikely to be at the reported location when the officer arrives.

2.4 Where it is suspected that the confined stray dog is, or is believed to be a prohibited breed it will be seized by the Council and the contractor undertaking the work on the Councils behalf will deal with the dog in line with their dangerous dog procedure

3. Accepting stray dogs found by other persons

3.1 Section 150 of The Act provides the duty for those who find a stray dog to return it to its owner (if the owner can be identified) or arrange for the dog to be taken to the Responsible Officer in the district in which it was found.

3.2 The first point of contact for those who find a stray dog should always be the Council who will then make arrangements for collection of the dog. The dog will then be treated as though it had been seized by an authorised officer under section 149 of The Act.

3.3 The Council, through its appointed contractors, will provide a collection service for confined stray dogs.

3.4 People who find stray dogs may try to take them to police stations or to veterinary centres, neither of whom are obliged to accept them. However, if such organisations do accept the stray dogs, the Council, if subsequently called to collect the stray dogs, will treat such dogs as confined stray dogs and if the stray dog was originally found in the North Herts district will collect them from these premises, as long these premises are also within the district. We will treat the dog as though it had been seized by an authorised officer under section 149 of the Act acting within North Herts. Stray dogs taken to premises outside of North Herts will not be considered as stray dogs from within the district, and so will not be collected.

4. Microchip implants

4.1 The legislation applicable for the microchipping of dogs is the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 (MODER). Regulation 2 of MODER defines the owner of a dog as the keeper; this term shall be used under this section.

4.2 Upon seizing or taking possession of a stray dog, the authorised officers will scan the stray dogs at the earliest opportunity to identify keeper's details. Authorised officers will use microchip scanners compatible with as wide a range of microchip implants as possible, and all reasonable attempts will be made to locate and read the chip in the stray dog.

4.3 Regulation 3(a) of MODER states that all dogs older than eight weeks old should be microchipped. Certified working dogs (as defined) are exempt from this requirement as are dogs with a Veterinarian Surgeon's certificate to say they are too ill to be microchipped. Working dogs are those that also have a vet's certificate and are used for law enforcement, the armed forces, emergency rescue, lawful pest control or the lawful shooting of animals. Racing greyhounds are not classed as working dogs for this legislation and must have a microchip.

It is considered unlikely that working dogs would be encountered as strays due to their value to their keeper.

4.4 Regulation 5(1) of MODER sets out the information that needs to be kept on the microchip database, as follows:

a) The full name and current address of the keeper of the dog,

b) The sex of the dog,

c) The breed of the dog, or a description if it is a cross-breed,

d) The colour of the dog,

e) The most accurate estimate of the dog's date of birth,

f) The unique number of the microchip implanted in the dog.

4.5 It is a requirement under Regulation 8(1) MODER that the keeper's details are updated when dogs are transferred from one keeper to another. This responsibility rests with the new keeper, unless the previous keeper (the person who sold the dog) has previously done so.

4.6 Where a keeper sells or transfers ownership of a dog, it must be microchipped. It is an offence under Regulation 8(2) if this is not done.

4.7. Where a stray dog is found that is unchipped, but a keeper comes forward to collect the dog, they will be offered a reduced recovery fee if they allow the dog to be microchipped prior to collection. This reduced recovery fee is shown in the Environmental Health Fees and Charges published on the Council's webpages.

5. Detention of stray dogs

5.1 In accordance with The Act, the Council will detain any seized stray dogs for seven clear working days. This period will commence from the day of seizure or, if the owner's details are obtained, the day in which the notice of seizure was served under section 149(4) of the Act, whichever is the latter.

5.2 Any seized dogs that are injured or require treatment to keep them alive will be treated by a veterinarian or other suitably qualified and competent person, unless the costs of doing so is considered by the Council to be excessive, or if the dog's condition or health is such that it would be more humane to euthanise it. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Council's Responsible Officer in conjunction with a veterinary surgeon or other suitably qualified and competent person but will not exceed the reasonable amount.

5.2.1 For the purposes of this Policy, the amount deemed to be reasonable to accommodate treatment for illness or injury to a seized stray dog shall be comparable to the local fee typical for a Veterinary Surgeon to euthanise a dog, currently £300.00 (2025).

6. Return of stray dogs

6.1 Where the owner of a seized stray dog can be determined at the point of collection via its microchip or identification tag the authorised officer will attempt to contact the owner and where possible, return the dog without taking it to the kennel. A seized dog will only be returned to an address without prior kennelling if there is an adult willing and able to receive the dog. A dog will not be left at an unoccupied property, for example, if the owner is out. A dog seized on subsequent occasions, will not be taken to the owner's home, but will be taken to the holding kennels, thus incurring holding costs as well as the statutory fees and administration charges.

6.2 Where an owner of a seized dog seeks to have the dog returned to them, they must first prove that they are the most recent keeper of the dog. For example, by providing vets bills, pet passports and proof of their address. Before a dog is returned the owner must pay all the expenses incurred, as advertised on the Council's Fees and Charges web site, plus any vets' fees where treatment was required, in accordance with the provision under section 149 (5) of The Act.

6.3 All payments shall be made in full to the Council's approved contractor(s) prior to the return of the seized dog. No payment instalment or other arrangements shall be considered, and no discount for owners in receipt of income related benefits shall be offered. If an owner is unwilling or unable to pay the fee in full, the seized dog shall remain with the holding kennels for the remainder of the seven clear working days, or until payment in full is made.

6.4 At the conclusion of the seven clear days, if the fee in full has not been paid, the seized dog shall become the property of the holding kennel.

7. Disposal of stray dogs

7.1 If a seized stray is not reclaimed by the owner within the seven clear working days, or the ownership is willingly transferred by the owner within the seven clear days, the former owner of a seized stray dog shall have no legal claim on that dog, or for its return. At this point, ownership is transferred to the Council or the holding kennels.

7.2 Where the seized dog remains unclaimed after being detained for seven clear working days the Council will give the seized stray dog to the holding kennels of the approved contractor for re-homing.

7.3 The approved contractor will not rehome stray dogs within the North Hertfordshire area or to anyone living in the district.

7.4 As a last resort, a stray can be humanely euthanised by a veterinary surgeon if it cannot be re-homed, or for example, due to poor health, old age, injury, poor behavioural issues that make the dog unsuitable, etc., pursuant to Section 149 (6) and (7) of The Act.

7.5 The authorised officer may also seek to have the seized dog destroyed before the seven clear working days has elapsed in cases where the dog exhibits such aggressive behaviour that it would be unsafe for the authorised officer, or others acting on their behalf, to handle it. Such dogs would be examined by a veterinarian or other suitably qualified and competent person to confirm that the dog cannot safely be returned. Any decision to euthanise a dog due to aggression will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Council's Responsible Officer.

7.6 The authorised officer may also seek to have the seized dog destroyed before the seven clear working day period has elapsed if they are of the opinion that it must be done to avoid suffering. For example, if the dog is injured, or has an infectious disease that would put it and/or other dogs at risk, and the costs of treating the dog is likely to be considered excessive by the Council, see 5.2, above. Authorised officers must consult with and receive agreement from the Council's Responsible Officer and a veterinary surgeon prior to making such a decision. Euthanasia will only be affected by a competent veterinary surgeon.

8. Stray dog register

8.1 The Council will keep an up-to-date register of dogs seized and those known to be in the possession of finders or the holding kennel. The register will include:

a) A brief description of the dog, including breed (where possible), colour and any distinctive characteristics or markings, tattoos, or scars,

b) Any information contained on collar/tag or otherwise carried by the dog, including micro-chipping,

c) Date, time, and place of the seizure,

d) If a notice is served on the owner, details of when and where this was served.

8.2 The register will contain the name and address of the person to whom the dog was returned and the date of return, if collected by the owner, or if it was re-homed, the name and address of the new owner and the date of re-homing,

8.3 Where a seized dog is destroyed, the register will also contain the date and method of disposal.

8.4 The register will be made available for inspection by the public, upon request, free of charge at all reasonable times.

8.5 The Council will not keep records of dogs that have been reported lost by owners. Owners who contact the Council to report a lost dog will be directed to a relevant website where images of all stray dogs seized in North Herts are displayed.

9 Governance

This policy sets out how the Council meets its obligations under the Act. This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it fully meets the requirements of the law. Reviews will be undertaken by the senior officers of the Environmental Health Team and where amendments are required, and in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Constitution, the decision to authorize a revised policy will be delegated to the Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Regulatory, with the decision being recorded as a Delegated Decision in due course.



Environmental Protection Act 1990

1990 CHAPTER 43

PART VIII

MISCELLANEOUS

Other controls on substances, articles or waste

140 Power to prohibit or restrict the importation, use, supply or storage of injurious substances or articles.

(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations prohibit or restrict—

(a) the importation into and the landing and unloading in the United Kingdom,

(b) the use for any purpose,

(c) the supply for any purpose, and

(d) the storage,

of any specified substance or article if he considers it appropriate to do so for the purpose of preventing the substance or article from causing pollution of the environment or harm to human health or to the health of animals or plants.

(2) Any such prohibition or restriction may apply—

(a) in all, or only in specified, areas;

(b) in all, or only in specified, circumstances or if conditions imposed by the regulations are not complied with; and

(c) to all, or only to specified descriptions of, persons.

(3) Regulations under this section may—

(a) confer on the Secretary of State power to direct that any substance or article whose use, supply or storage is prohibited or restricted is to be treated as waste or controlled waste of any description and in relation to any such substance or article—

(i) to apply, with or without modification, specified provisions of Part II; or

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(ii) to direct that it be disposed of or treated in accordance with the direction;

(b) confer on the Secretary of State power, where a substance or article has been imported, landed or unloaded in contravention of a prohibition or restriction imposed under subsection (1)(a) above, to require that the substance or article be disposed of or treated in or removed from the United Kingdom;

(c) confer powers corresponding to those conferred by **[**F1section 108 of the Environment Act 1995**]** on persons authorised for any purpose of the regulations by the Secretary of State or any local or other authority; and

(d) include such other incidental and supplemental, and such transitional provisions, as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(4) The Secretary of State may, by regulations under this section, direct that, for the purposes of any power conferred on him under subsection (3)(b) above, any prohibition or restriction on the importation into or the landing and unloading in the United Kingdom imposed—

F2(a) . . . . . .

(b) by or under any enactment,

shall be treated as imposed under subsection (1)(a) above and any power conferred on him under subsection (3)(b) above shall be exercisable accordingly.

F3(5) . . . . . .

(6) Subject to subsection (7) below, it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State before he makes any regulations under this section other than regulations under subsection (4) above—

F4(a) . . . . . .

(b) F5... to publish in the London Gazette and, if the regulations apply in Scotland or Northern Ireland, the Edinburgh Gazette or, as the case may be, Belfast Gazette and in any other publication which he considers appropriate, a notice indicating the effect of the proposed regulations and specifying—

(i) the date on which it is proposed that the regulations will come into force;

(ii) a place where a draft of the proposed regulations may be inspected free of charge by members of the public during office hours; and

(iii) a period of not less than fourteen days, beginning with the date on which the notice is first published, during which representations in writing may be made to the Secretary of State about the proposed regulations; and

(c) to consider any representations which are made to him in accordance with the notice.

(7) The Secretary of State may make regulations under this section in relation to any substance or article without observing the requirements of subsection (6) above where it appears to him that there is an imminent risk, if those requirements are observed, that serious pollution of the environment will be caused.

(8) The Secretary of State may, after performing the duty imposed on him by subsection (6) above with respect to any proposed regulations, make the regulations either—

(a) in the form of the draft mentioned in subsection (6)(b) above, or

(b) in that form with such modifications as he considers appropriate;

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but the Secretary of State shall not make any regulations incorporating modifications unless he is of opinion that it is appropriate for the requirements of subsection (6) above to be disregarded.

(9) Regulations under this section may provide that a person who contravenes or fails to comply with a specified provision of the regulations or causes or permits another person to contravene or fail to comply with a specified provision of the regulations commits an offence and may prescribe the maximum penalty for the offence.

(10) No offence under the regulations shall be made punishable with imprisonment for more than two years or punishable on summary conviction with a fine exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (if not calculated on a daily basis) or, in the case of a continuing offence, **[**[F6]exceeding one-tenth of the level on the standard scale specified as the maximum penalty for the original offence.**][**[F6]—

(a) exceeding one-tenth of the level on the standard scale specified as the maximum penalty for the original offence, or

(b) if there is no maximum penalty for the original offence, exceeding one-tenth of the greater of £5,000 or level 4 on the standard scale.**]**

[[F7](10A) Regulations under this section may provide for an enforcement officer to give to a person whom the enforcement officer has reason to believe has committed an offence under the regulations a notice offering the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence by payment of a fixed penalty not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

(10B) In subsection (10A), an "enforcement officer" means a person referred to in subsection (3)(c).

(10C) Where provision under subsection (10A) is made in regulations under this section, the regulations may—

(a) provide for the amount of the fixed penalty to be different in different cases or descriptions of case,

(b) impose requirements on persons to whom a fixed notice is given to provide their name, address and date of birth,

(c) create offences for failure to comply with requirements mentioned in paragraph (b), subject to a maximum penalty, on summary conviction, of a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale,

(d) enable enforcement officers to give certificates as to proof of payment or non-payment of a fixed penalty and for such certificates to be evidence of the facts stated in them.

(10D) Where provision under subsection (10A) is made in regulations under this section, the regulations must require a fixed penalty notice—

(a) to set out the particulars of the circumstances alleged to constitute the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information about the offence,

(b) to set out the amount of the fixed penalty,

(c) if the amount of the fixed penalty may be discounted in certain circumstances, to set out those circumstances and the amount of the discount,

(d) to set out the period within which the fixed penalty is to be paid, the person to whom it is to be paid and the arrangements for doing so,

(e) to set out the effect of paying the fixed penalty within the payment period and the consequences of not paying the fixed penalty within that period.**]**

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(11) In this section—

[[F8]"enactment" includes an enactment comprised in, or in an instrument made under, an Act of the Scottish Parliament;**]**

"the environment" means the air, water and land, or any of those media, and the medium of air includes the air within buildings and the air within other natural or man-made structures above or below ground;

"specified" means specified in the regulations; and

"substance" means any natural or artificial substance, whether in solid or liquid form or in the form of a gas or vapour and it includes mixtures of substances.

Textual Amendments

F1 Words in s. 140(3)(c) substituted (E.W.S.) (6.5.1999) by S.I. 1999/1108, **reg. 2**

F2 S. 140(4)(a) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of The Environment (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/458), regs. 1(1), **2(6)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

F3 S. 140(5) repealed (22.7.2012) by The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances (Abolition) Order 2012 (S.I. 2012/1923), art. 1(2), **Sch.**

F4 S. 140(6)(a) repealed (22.7.2012) by The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances (Abolition) Order 2012 (S.I. 2012/1923), art. 1(2), **Sch.**

F5 Words in s. 140(6)(b) repealed (22.7.2012) by The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances (Abolition) Order 2012 (S.I. 2012/1923), art. 1(2), **Sch.**

F6 Words in s. 140(10) substituted (E.W.) (12.3.2015) by The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (Fines on Summary Conviction) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 2015/664), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 3 para. 16(2)** (with reg. 5(1))

F7 S. 140(10A)-(10D) inserted (S.) (4.2.2025) by Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 (asp 13), **ss. 21(2)**, 27(2); S.S.I. 2025/10, **reg. 2**

F8 Words in s. 140(11) inserted (S.) (30.6.2014) by Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (asp 3), s. 61(2), **sch. 3 para. 40(9)**; S.S.I. 2014/160, art. 2(1)(2), sch.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 S. 140 extended (with modifications) (19.2.1999) by S.I. 1999/396, **reg. 2**

141 Power to [F9regulate] the importation or exportation of waste [F10or the transit of waste for export].

[[F11](1) The Secretary of State may, by regulations, make provision for, about or connected with the regulation of the importation or exportation of waste or the transit of waste for export.

(1A) Provision that may be made in regulations under this section includes provision prohibiting or restricting—

(a) the importation of waste;

(b) the landing and unloading of waste in the United Kingdom;

(c) the exportation of waste;

(d) the loading of waste for exportation;

(e) the transit of waste for export.

(1B) The provision that may be made by virtue of subsection (1A) includes provision which relates to—

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(a) the intended final destination of waste, or

(b) the countries or territories it is intended to pass through before reaching that destination.**]**

(2) Regulations under this section may make different provision for different descriptions of waste or waste of any description in different circumstances.

[F12(3) Regulations under this section may confer functions on the Secretary of State or a waste regulation authority, including functions—

(a) involving the exercise of a discretion;

(b) relating to enforcement.**]**

F13(4) . . . . . .

(5) Regulations under this section may—

F14(a) . . . . . .

[F15(aa) provide for the Secretary of State to issue general directions as to the exercise by waste regulation authorities of their functions in connection with the regulation of the importation or exportation of waste or the transit of waste for export;**]**

(b) impose or provide for the imposition of prohibitions either absolutely or only if conditions or procedures F16... are not complied with;

[F17(ba) provide for the charging by waste regulation authorities of fees or charges payable by persons involved in the importation or exportation of waste or the transit of waste for export;

(bb) provide that such fees or charges may be used by waste regulation authorities to meet costs incurred in exercising their functions in connection with the regulation of those activities;**]**

(c) impose duties to be complied with before, on or after any importation or exportation of waste by persons who are, or are to be, consignors, consignees, carriers or holders of the waste or any waste derived from it;

(d) confer powers corresponding**[**F18, with or without modifications, to section 108(4) of the Environment Act 1995 (powers of entry and seizure) on persons authorised by the Secretary of State or a waste regulation authority;**]**

(e) provide for appeals to the Secretary of State from determinations made by **[**F19waste regulation authorities**]**;

(f) provide for the keeping by the Secretary of State, waste regulation authorities and waste collection authorities of public registers of information relating to the importation and exportation of waste and for the transmission of such information between any of those persons;

[F20(fa) make provision authorising the disclosure of information by Officers of Revenue and Customs to waste regulation authorities;

(fb) confer, on persons designated as general customs officials under section 3(1) of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, functions relating to the seizure and detention of waste that has arrived at, or entered into, the United Kingdom or is to leave the United Kingdom;**]**

(g) create offences, subject to the limitation that no offence shall be punishable with imprisonment for more than two years or punishable on summary conviction with imprisonment for more than **[**F21the prescribed term**]** or a fine exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (if not calculated on a daily basis) or, in the case of a continuing offence, **[**F22exceeding one-tenth of the

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level on the standard scale specified as the maximum penalty for the original offence.**][**F22—

(i) exceeding one-tenth of the level on the standard scale specified as the maximum penalty for the original offence, or

(ii) if there is no maximum penalty for the original offence, exceeding one-tenth of the greater of £5,000 or level 4 on the standard scale.**]**

[F23(h) make provision for, about or connected with the imposition of civil sanctions.**]**

[F24(5A) In subsection (5)(g), "the prescribed term" means—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, where the offence is a summary offence, 51 weeks;

(b) in relation to England and Wales, where the offence is triable either way, **[**F25the general limit in a magistrates' court**]**;

(c) in relation to Scotland and Northern Ireland, six months.**]**

[F26(5AA) Regulations under this section that—

(a) make provision for a summary offence under the law of England and Wales to be punishable with imprisonment for more than 6 months ("the relevant provision"), and

(b) are made—

(i) on or after 2 May 2022, but

(ii) before the day on which section 281(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 comes into force,

must also provide that, in relation to an offence committed before the day referred to in paragraph (b)(ii), any reference in the relevant provision to a term of imprisonment of more than 6 months is to be read as a reference to a term of imprisonment of 6 months.**]**

[F27(5B) For the purposes of this section "civil sanction" means a sanction of a kind for which provision may be made under Part 3 of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 (fixed monetary penalties, discretionary requirements, stop notices and enforcement undertakings).

(5C) The regulations may make provision for, about or connected with the imposition of a sanction of that kind whether or not—

(a) the conduct in respect of which the sanction is imposed constitutes an offence, or

(b) the person imposing it is a regulator for the purposes of Part 3 of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008.

(5D) Regulations under this section may make provision in relation to any area of sea or seabed or its subsoil within the seaward limits of—

(a) the area designated by Order in Council under section 1(7) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 (designation of continental shelf), or

(b) the area designated by Order in Council under section 41(3) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (designation of exclusive economic zone).

(5E) Regulations under this section may make consequential, supplementary, incidental, transitional or saving provision, including provision amending, repealing or revoking primary legislation or **[**F28assimilated direct**]** legislation.**]**

(6) In this section—

"the environment" means land, water and air or any of them;

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[[F29]"exportation", in relation to waste, means causing it to leave the United Kingdom;**]**

"harm" includes offence to any of man's senses;

[[F29]"importation", in relation to waste, means causing it to arrive at, or enter into, the United Kingdom;**]**

[[F29]"primary legislation" means—

(a) an Act of Parliament,

(b) a Measure or Act of Senedd Cymru,

(c) an Act of the Scottish Parliament, or

(d) Northern Ireland legislation;**]**

[[F29]"transit of waste for export" means the transportation or keeping of waste, that has arrived at, or has entered, the United Kingdom, for the purpose of facilitating its leaving the United Kingdom;**]**

"waste", "waste collection authority", and "waste regulation authority" have the same meaning as in Part II; and

"the United Kingdom" includes its territorial sea.

(7) In the application of this section to Northern Ireland and the territorial sea of the United Kingdom adjacent to Northern Ireland "waste regulation authority" means **[**[F30]the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland**]**.

Textual Amendments

F9 Word in s. 141 heading substituted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(2)(a)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F10 Words in s. 141 heading inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(2)(b)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F11 S. 141(1)-(1B) substituted for s. 141(1) (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(3)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F12 S. 141(3) substituted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(4)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F13 S. 141(4) omitted (24.1.2022) by virtue of Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(5)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F14 S. 141(5)(a) omitted (24.1.2022) by virtue of Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(a)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F15 S. 141(5)(aa) inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(b)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F16 Words in s. 141(5)(b) omitted (24.1.2022) by virtue of Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(c)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F17 S. 141(5)(ba)(bb) inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(d)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F18 Words in s. 141(5)(d) substituted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(e)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F19 Words in s. 141(5)(e) substituted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(f)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F20 S. 141(5)(fa)(fb) inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(g)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F21 Words in s. 141(5)(g) substituted (2.5.2022) by Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44), s. 336(3)(4), **Sch. 27 para. 6(2)** (with s. 283(7)); S.I. 2022/500, reg. 3(b)(ii)

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F22 Words in s. 141(5)(g) substituted (E.W.) (12.3.2015) by The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (Fines on Summary Conviction) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 2015/664), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 3 para. 16(3)** (with reg. 5(1))

F23 S. 141(5)(h) inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(6)(h)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F24 S. 141(5A) inserted (2.5.2022) by Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44), s. 336(3)(4), **Sch. 27 para. 6(3)** (with s. 283(7)); S.I. 2022/500, reg. 3(b)(ii)

F25 Words in s. 141(5A)(b) substituted (14.7.2022) by Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 (c. 35), s. 51(4), **Sch. 2 para. 17**; S.I. 2022/816, regs. 1(2), 3(d)

F26 S. 141(5AA) inserted (28.4.2022) by The Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Commencement No. 33) and Sentencing Act 2020 (Commencement No. 2) Regulations 2022 (S.I. 2022/500), regs. 1(2), **7(2)**

F27 S. 141(5B)-(5E) inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(7)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F28 Words in s. 141(5E) substituted (1.1.2024) by The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1424), reg. 1(2), **Sch. para. 29(7)**

F29 Words in s. 141(6) inserted (24.1.2022) by Environment Act 2021 (c. 30), **ss. 62(8)**, 147(3) (with s. 144); S.I. 2022/48, reg. 2(k)

F30 Words in s. 141(7) substituted (N.I.) (27.11.2003 save for specified purposes and otherwise in accordance with art. 3 of the commencing S.R.) by S.I. 1997/2778 (N.I. 19), art. 83(1), Sch. 5 para. 5; S.R. 2003/489, **art. 2**, Sch.

142 Powers to obtain information about potentially hazardous substances. E+W

(1) The Secretary of State may, for the purpose of assessing their potential for causing pollution of the environment or harm to human health, by regulations make provision for and in connection with the obtaining of relevant information relating to substances which may be specified by him by order for the purposes of this section.

(2) The Secretary of State shall not make an order under subsection (1) above specifying any substance—

(a) which was first supplied in any member State **[**F31or in the United Kingdom**]** on or after 18th September 1981; or

(b) in so far as it is a regulated substance for the purposes of any relevant enactment.

F32(3) . . . . . .

(4) Regulations under this section may—

(a) prescribe the descriptions of relevant information which are to be furnished under this section in relation to specified substances;

(b) impose requirements on manufacturers, importers or suppliers generally to furnish information prescribed under paragraph (a) above;

(c) provide for the imposition of requirements on manufacturers, importers or suppliers generally to furnish relevant information relating to products or articles containing specified substances in relation to which information has been furnished in pursuance of paragraph (b) above;

(d) provide for the imposition of requirements on particular manufacturers, importers or suppliers to furnish further information relating to specified substances in relation to which information has been furnished in pursuance of paragraph (b) above;

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(e) provide for the imposition of requirements on particular manufacturers or importers to carry out tests of specified substances and to furnish information of the results of the tests;

(f) authorise persons to comply with requirements to furnish information imposed on them by or under the regulations by means of representative persons or bodies;

(g) impose restrictions on the disclosure of information obtained under this section and provide for determining what information is, and what information is not, to be treated as furnished in confidence;

(h) create offences, subject to the limitation that no offence shall be punishable with imprisonment or punishable on summary conviction with a fine exceeding level 5 on the standard scale;

(i) make any public authority designated by the regulations responsible for the enforcement of the regulations to such extent as may be specified in the regulations;

(j) include such other incidental and supplemental, and such transitional, provisions as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(5) The Secretary of State shall have regard, in imposing or providing for the imposition of any requirement under subsection (4)(b), (c), (d) or (e) above, to the cost likely to be involved in complying with the requirement.

(6) In this section—

"the environment" means the air, water and land or any of them;

"relevant information", in relation to substances, products or articles, means information relating to their properties, production, distribution, importation or use or intended use and, in relation to products or articles, to their disposal as waste;

"substance" means any natural or artificial substance, whether in solid or liquid form or in the form of a gas or vapour and it includes mixtures of substances.

F33(7) The enactments which are relevant for the purposes of subsection (2)(b) above are the following—

[F34the Explosives Regulations 2014**]**;

[F35**[**F36the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/1154)**]** in relation to radioactive material or radioactive waste;**]**

[F37Parts 3 to 8 and 16 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012**]**;

Part IV of the M1Agriculture Act 1970;

the M2Misuse of Drugs Act 1971;

Part III of the M3Food and Environment Protection Act 1985; F38. . .

the M4Food Safety Act 1990;

[F39the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006;

and a substance is a regulated substance for the purposes of any such enactment in so far as any prohibition, restriction or requirement is imposed in relation to it by or under the enactment for the purposes of that enactment.**]**

Changes to legislation: *Environmental Protection Act 1990, Part VIII is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 28 January 2026. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes*

Extent Information

E1 This version of this provision extends to England and Wales only; a separate version has been created for Scotland and Northern Ireland only

Textual Amendments

F31 Words in s. 142(2)(a) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Environment (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/458), regs. 1(1), **2(7)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

F32 S. 142(3) repealed (22.7.2012) by The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances (Abolition) Order 2012 (S.I. 2012/1923), art. 1(2), **Sch.**

F33 By The Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (S.R. 2006/425), arts. 1, 27(1), **Sch. 6 para. 14(3)** (with reg. 26) it is provided that for the words "Explosive Substances Act 1875" in s. 142(7) there be substituted (N.I.) (1.12.2006) the words "Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006"

F34 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (E.W.S.) (1.10.2014) by The Explosives Regulations 2014 (S.I. 2014/1638), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 13 para. 6**

F35 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (E.W.) (6.4.2010) by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 2010/675), regs. 1(1)(b), 107, **Sch. 26 para. 5(12)** (with Sch. 4)

F36 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (E.W.) (1.1.2017) by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/1154), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 29 para. 6(7)** (with regs. 1(3), 77-79, Sch. 4)

F37 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (14.8.2012) by The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/1916), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 34 para. 41** (with Sch. 32)

F38 Word in s. 142(7) omitted (1.10.2006) by virtue of The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/2407), reg. 44(3), **Sch. 9 Pt. 1 para. 8(a)** (with reg. 3)

F39 Words in s. 142(7) added (1.10.2006) by The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/2407), reg. 44(3), **Sch. 9 Pt. 1 para. 8(b)** (with reg. 3)

Marginal Citations

M1 1970 c. 40.

M2 1971 c. 38.

M3 1985 c. 48.

M4 1990 c. 16.

142 Powers to obtain information about potentially hazardous substances. S+N.I.

(1) The Secretary of State may, for the purpose of assessing their potential for causing pollution of the environment or harm to human health, by regulations make provision for and in connection with the obtaining of relevant information relating to substances which may be specified by him by order for the purposes of this section.

(2) The Secretary of State shall not make an order under subsection (1) above specifying any substance—

(a) which was first supplied in any member State **[**F31or in the United Kingdom**]** on or after 18th September 1981; or

(b) in so far as it is a regulated substance for the purposes of any relevant enactment.

F32(3) . . . . . .

(4) Regulations under this section may—

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(a) prescribe the descriptions of relevant information which are to be furnished under this section in relation to specified substances;

(b) impose requirements on manufacturers, importers or suppliers generally to furnish information prescribed under paragraph (a) above;

(c) provide for the imposition of requirements on manufacturers, importers or suppliers generally to furnish relevant information relating to products or articles containing specified substances in relation to which information has been furnished in pursuance of paragraph (b) above;

(d) provide for the imposition of requirements on particular manufacturers, importers or suppliers to furnish further information relating to specified substances in relation to which information has been furnished in pursuance of paragraph (b) above;

(e) provide for the imposition of requirements on particular manufacturers or importers to carry out tests of specified substances and to furnish information of the results of the tests;

(f) authorise persons to comply with requirements to furnish information imposed on them by or under the regulations by means of representative persons or bodies;

(g) impose restrictions on the disclosure of information obtained under this section and provide for determining what information is, and what information is not, to be treated as furnished in confidence;

(h) create offences, subject to the limitation that no offence shall be punishable with imprisonment or punishable on summary conviction with a fine exceeding level 5 on the standard scale;

(i) make any public authority designated by the regulations responsible for the enforcement of the regulations to such extent as may be specified in the regulations;

(j) include such other incidental and supplemental, and such transitional, provisions as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(5) The Secretary of State shall have regard, in imposing or providing for the imposition of any requirement under subsection (4)(b), (c), (d) or (e) above, to the cost likely to be involved in complying with the requirement.

(6) In this section—

"the environment" means the air, water and land or any of them;

"relevant information", in relation to substances, products or articles, means information relating to their properties, production, distribution, importation or use or intended use and, in relation to products or articles, to their disposal as waste;

"substance" means any natural or artificial substance, whether in solid or liquid form or in the form of a gas or vapour and it includes mixtures of substances.

F33(7) The enactments which are relevant for the purposes of subsection (2)(b) above are the following—

[F34the Explosives Regulations 2014**]**;

[F96the M15**[**F97Radioactive Substances Act 1993**][**F97Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018**]]**;

[F37Parts 3 to 8 and 16 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012**]**;

Part IV of the M1Agriculture Act 1970;

***Changes to legislation:** Environmental Protection Act 1990, Part VIII is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 28 January 2026. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes*

the [M2]Misuse of Drugs Act 1971;
Part III of the [M3]Food and Environment Protection Act 1985; [F38]. . .
the [M4]Food Safety Act 1990;
[[F39]the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006;

and a substance is a regulated substance for the purposes of any such enactment in so far as any prohibition, restriction or requirement is imposed in relation to it by or under the enactment for the purposes of that enactment.**]**

Extent Information

E3 This version of this provision extends to Scotland and Northern Ireland only; a separate version has been created for England and Wales only

Textual Amendments

F31 Words in s. 142(2)(a) inserted (31.12.2020) by The Environment (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/458), regs. 1(1), **2(7)**; 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

F32 S. 142(3) repealed (22.7.2012) by The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances (Abolition) Order 2012 (S.I. 2012/1923), art. 1(2), **Sch.**

F33 By The Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (S.R. 2006/425), arts. 1, 27(1), **Sch. 6 para. 14(3)** (with reg. 26) it is provided that for the words "Explosive Substances Act 1875" in s. 142(7) there be substituted (N.I.) (1.12.2006) the words "Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006"

F34 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (E.W.S.) (1.10.2014) by The Explosives Regulations 2014 (S.I. 2014/1638), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 13 para. 6**

F37 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (14.8.2012) by The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/1916), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 34 para. 41** (with Sch. 32)

F38 Word in s. 142(7) omitted (1.10.2006) by virtue of The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/2407), reg. 44(3), **Sch. 9 Pt. 1 para. 8(a)** (with reg. 3)

F39 Words in s. 142(7) added (1.10.2006) by The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/2407), reg. 44(3), **Sch. 9 Pt. 1 para. 8(b)** (with reg. 3)

F96 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (27.8.1993) by 1993 c. 12, ss. 49(1), 51(2), **Sch. 4 para.8** (with ss. 42, 46)

F97 Words in s. 142(7) substituted (S.) (1.9.2018) by The Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018 (S.S.I. 2018/219), reg. 1, **sch. 6 para. 2(3)** (with reg. 78, sch. 5 para. 2)

Marginal Citations

M1 1970 c. 40.
M2 1971 c. 38.
M3 1985 c. 48.
M4 1990 c. 16.
M15 1993 C. 12.

[F40]143 . . . . . .

Textual Amendments

F40 S. 143 repealed (1.4.2000 for E., 14.7.2000 for S. and 15.9.2001 for W.) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1)(3), Sch. 22 para. 91, **Sch. 24** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 2000/340, **art. 2(b)(c)** (with art. 3); S.S.I. 2000/180, **art. 2(1)(b)** (with art. 3); S.I. 2001/3211, **art. 2(b)** (with saving in art. 3)

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144 Amendments of hazardous substances legislation.

Schedule 13 to this Act (which contains miscellaneous amendments to the legislation relating to hazardous substances) shall have effect.

Commencement Information

I1 S. 144 partly in force; s. 144 not in force at Royal Assent see s.164(3); s. 144 in force for certain purposes at 1.1.1992 by S.I. 1991/2829 art. 3; s. 144 in force at 18.2.1993 (insofar as it relates to paras. 11 and 12 of Schedule 13, Part II) and 1.5.1993 (insofar as it relates to para. 13 of Schedule 13, Part II) by S.I. 1993/274, **arts. 2(1)**, 3

F41 145 Penalties for offences of polluting controlled waters etc.

. . . . . .

Textual Amendments

F41 S. 145(1) repealed (1. 12. 1991) by Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1991 (c. 60, SIF 130), ss. 3(1), 4(2), **Sch. 3** (with Sch. 2 paras. 10, 14(1), 15)
S. 145 repealed (S.) (30.6.2014) by Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (asp 3), s. 61(2), **sch. 3 para. 23(d)**; S.S.I. 2014/160, art. 2(1)(2), sch.

Pollution at sea

146 Deposits of substances and articles in the sea, etc.

(1) Part II of the M5Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (under which licences are required for deposits by British vessels etc at sea anywhere or by foreign vessels etc in United Kingdom waters or, in certain circumstances, within British fishery limits) shall be amended as follows.

F42(2) . . . . . .

F42(3) . . . . . .

F42(4) . . . . . .

F42(5) . . . . . .

(6) In section 21 (penalties for offences)—

(a) in subsection (2), for the words "2(4) and 9(1)" there shall be substituted the words "and 2(4)"; and

(b) after that subsection, there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) A person guilty of an offence under section 9(1) shall be liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to a fine of an amount not exceeding £50,000; and

(b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both."

F43(7) . . . . . .

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(8) In Schedule 2 (powers in relation to vessels, aircraft, etc. for the purposes of Part I or Part II or both Parts of the Act), in paragraph 3(3) (removal to United Kingdom), after the words "Part I" there shall be inserted the words "or II".

Textual Amendments

F42 S. 146(2)-(5) repealed (6.4.2011) by Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (c. 23), s. 324(3), **Sch. 22 Pt. 2**; S.I. 2011/556, art. 3(2)(d)

F43 S. 146(7) repealed (6.4.2011) by Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (c. 23), s. 324(3), **Sch. 22 Pt. 2**; S.I. 2011/556, art. 3(2)(d)

Marginal Citations

M5 1985 c. 48.

147 Public registers relating to deposits in the sea and incineration at sea.

In Part II of the [M6]Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, for section 14 (registers of licences) there shall be substituted the following section—

"**14 Duty of licensing authority to keep public registers of information.**

(1) It shall be the duty of each licensing authority, as respects licences for which it is the licensing authority, to maintain, in accordance with regulations, a register containing prescribed particulars of or relating to—

(a) applications for licences made to that authority;

(b) the licences issued by that authority;

(c) variations of licences effected by that authority;

(d) revocations of licences effected by that authority;

(e) convictions for any offences under section 9 above;

(f) information obtained or furnished in pursuance of section 8(3), (4) or (5) above;

(g) the occasions on which either of the Ministers has carried out any operation under section 10 above; and

(h) such other matters relating to operations for which licences are needed under this Part of this Act as may be prescribed.

(2) No information shall be included in any register which, in the opinion of either of the Ministers, is such that its disclosure on the register—

(a) would be contrary to the interests of national security, or

(b) would prejudice to an unreasonable degree some person's commercial interests.

(3) Information excluded from a register by virtue of subsection (2)(b) above shall be treated as ceasing to prejudice a person's commercial interests at the expiry of the period of four years beginning with the date on which the Minister made his decision under that subsection; but, on the application of any person to whom it relates, the Minister shall decide whether the information should be included or continue to be excluded from the register.

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(4) Where information of any description is excluded from a register by virtue of subsection (2)(b) above, a statement shall be entered in the register indicating the existence of information of that description.

(5) It shall be the duty of each licensing authority—

(a) to secure that the register maintained by the authority under this section is available, at all reasonable times, for inspection by the public free of charge; and

(b) to afford to members of the public facilities for obtaining copies of entries, on payment of reasonable charges.

(6) Registers under this section may be kept in any form.

(7) In this section "prescribed" means prescribed in regulations.

(8) Either of the Ministers may exercise any power to make regulations under this section and any such power shall be exercisable by statutory instrument, subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

Commencement Information

I2 S. 147 wholly in force at 31.5.1991 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1991/1319, **art. 2**

Marginal Citations

M6 1985 c. 48.

F44148 . . . . . .

Textual Amendments

F44 S. 148 repealed (1.1.1996) by 1995 c. 21, ss. 314(1), 316(2), **Sch.12** (with savings in s. 312(1) and Sch. 14 para. 1)

Control of Dogs

149 Seizure of stray dogs.

(1) Every local authority shall appoint an officer (under whatever title the authority may determine) for the purpose of discharging the functions imposed or conferred by this section for dealing with stray dogs found in the area of the authority.

(2) The officer may delegate the discharge of his functions to another person but he shall remain responsible for securing that the functions are properly discharged.

(3) Where the officer has reason to believe that any dog found in a public place or on any other land or premises is a stray dog, he shall (if practicable) seize the dog and detain it, but, where he finds it on land or premises which is not a public place, only with the consent of the owner or occupier of the land or premises.

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(4) Where any dog seized under this section wears a collar having inscribed thereon or attached thereto the address of any person, or the owner of the dog is known, the officer shall serve on the person whose address is given on the collar, or on the owner, a notice in writing stating that the dog has been seized and where it is being kept and stating that the dog will be liable to be disposed of if it is not claimed within seven clear days after the service of the notice and the amounts for which he would be liable under subsection (5) below are not paid.

(5) A person claiming to be the owner of a dog seized under this section shall not be entitled to have the dog returned to him unless he pays all the expenses incurred by reason of its detention and such further amount as is for the time being prescribed.

(6) Where any dog seized under this section has been detained for seven clear days after the seizure or, where a notice has been served under subsection (4) above, the service of the notice and the owner has not claimed the dog and paid the amounts due under subsection (5) above the officer may dispose of the dog—

(a) by selling it or giving it to a person who will, in his opinion, care properly for the dog;

(b) by selling it or giving it to an establishment for the reception of stray dogs; or

(c) by destroying it in a manner to cause as little pain as possible;

but no dog seized under this section shall be sold or given for the purposes of vivisection.

(7) Where a dog is disposed of under subsection (6)(a) or (b) above to a person acting in good faith, the ownership of the dog shall be vested in the recipient.

(8) The officer shall keep a register containing the prescribed particulars of or relating to dogs seized under this section and the register shall be available, at all reasonable times, for inspection by the public free of charge.

(9) The officer shall cause any dog detained under this section to be properly fed and maintained.

(10) Notwithstanding anything in this section, the officer may cause a dog detained under this section to be destroyed before the expiration of the period mentioned in subsection (6) above where he is of the opinion that this should be done to avoid suffering.

(11) In this section—

"local authority", in relation to England [F45]. . ., means a district council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly **[**[F46]in relation to Wales, means a county council or a county borough council**]** and, in relation to Scotland, means **[**[F47]a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994**]**;

"officer" means an officer appointed under subsection (1) above;

"prescribed" means prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State; and

"public place" means—

(i) as respects England and Wales, any highway and any other place to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access;

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(ii) as respects Scotland, any road (within the meaning of the [M7]Roads (Scotland) Act 1984) and any other place to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access;

and, for the purposes of section 160 below in its application to this section, the proper address of the owner of a dog which wears a collar includes the address given on the collar.

Textual Amendments

F45 Words in s. 149(11) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, ss. 22(3), 66(8), Sch. 9 para. 17(13), **Sch.18** (with ss. 54(7), 66(7), Sch. 17 paras. 22, 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 3, **Sch.1**

F46 Words in s. 149(11) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, s. 22(3), **Sch. 9 para. 17(13)** (with ss. 54(7), 66(7), Sch. 17 paras. 22, 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 3, **Sch.1**

F47 Words in s. 149(11) substituted (S.) (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 180(1), **Sch. 13 para. 167(17)**; S.I. 1996/323, **art. 4(c)**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C2 S. 149 extended (1.4.1992) by S.I. 1992/901, **art. 4**.

Commencement Information

I3 S. 149 wholly in force; s. 149 not in force at Royal Assent see. s. 164(3); s. 149 in force for certain purposes at 14.2.1992 see S.I. 1992/266, art. 2; s. 149 in force in so far as not then already in force at 1.4.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 3**.

Marginal Citations

M7 1984 c. 54.

150 Delivery of stray dogs to [F48]. . . local authority officer. E+W

(1) Any person (in this section referred to as "the finder") who takes possession of a stray dog shall forthwith either—

(a) return the dog to its owner; or

(b) take the dog—

(i) to the officer of the local authority for the area in which the dog was found; [F49]. . .

(ii) [F49]. . . . . .

and shall inform the officer of the local authority [F50]. . . where the dog was found.

(2) Where a dog has been taken under subsection (1) above to the officer of a local authority, then—

(a) if the finder desires to keep the dog, he shall inform the officer of this fact and shall furnish his name and address and the officer shall, having complied with the procedure (if any) prescribed under subsection (6) below, allow the finder to remove the dog;

(b) if the finder does not desire to keep the dog, the officer shall, unless he has reason to believe it is not a stray, treat it as if it had been seized by him under section 149 above.

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(3) Where the finder of a dog keeps the dog by virtue of this section he must keep it for not less than one month.

(4) In Scotland a person who keeps a dog by virtue of this section for a period of two months without its being claimed by the person who has right to it shall at the end of that period become the owner of the dog.

(5) If the finder of a dog fails to comply with the requirements of subsection (1) or (3) above he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

(6) The Secretary of State may, by regulations, prescribe the procedure to be followed under subsection (2)(a) above.

(7) In this section "local authority" and "officer" have the same meaning as in section 149 above.

Extent Information

E2 This version of this provision extends to England and Wales only; a separate version has been created for Scotland only

Textual Amendments

F48 Words in s. 150 heading repealed (E.W.) (6.4.2008) by Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (c. 16), ss. 68(4), 107, 108, **Sch. 5 Pt. 6**; S.I. 2008/956, **art. 2(b)**

F49 S. 150(1)(b)(ii) and word repealed (E.W.) (6.4.2008) by Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (c. 16), ss. 68(3)(a), 107, 108, **Sch. 5 Pt. 6**; S.I. 2008/956, **art. 2(b)**

F50 Words in s. 150(1) repealed (E.W.) (6.4.2008) by Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (c. 16), ss. 68(3)(b), 107, 108, **Sch. 5 Pt. 6**; S.I. 2008/956, **art. 2(b)**

Commencement Information

I4 S. 150 wholly in force; s. 150 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 164(3); s. 150 in force for certain purposes at 14.2.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 2**; s. 150 in force in so far as not then already in force at 1.4.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 3**.

150 Delivery of stray dogs to police or local authority officer. S

(1) Any person (in this section referred to as "the finder") who takes possession of a stray dog shall forthwith either—

(a) return the dog to its owner; or

(b) take the dog—

(i) to the officer of the local authority for the area in which the dog was found; or

(ii) to the police station which is nearest to the place where the dog was found;

and shall inform the officer of the local authority or the police officer in charge of the police station, as the case may be, where the dog was found.

(2) Where a dog has been taken under subsection (1) above to the officer of a local authority, then—

(a) if the finder desires to keep the dog, he shall inform the officer of this fact and shall furnish his name and address and the officer shall, having complied

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with the procedure (if any) prescribed under subsection (6) below, allow the finder to remove the dog;

(b) if the finder does not desire to keep the dog, the officer shall, unless he has reason to believe it is not a stray, treat it as if it had been seized by him under section 149 above.

(3) Where the finder of a dog keeps the dog by virtue of this section he must keep it for not less than one month.

(4) In Scotland a person who keeps a dog by virtue of this section for a period of two months without its being claimed by the person who has right to it shall at the end of that period become the owner of the dog.

(5) If the finder of a dog fails to comply with the requirements of subsection (1) or (3) above he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

(6) The Secretary of State may, by regulations, prescribe the procedure to be followed under subsection (2)(a) above.

(7) In this section "local authority" and "officer" have the same meaning as in section 149 above.

Extent Information

E4 This version of this provision extends to Scotland only; a separate version has been created for England and Wales only

Commencement Information

I7 S. 150 wholly in force; s. 150 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 164(3); s. 150 in force for certain purposes at 14.2.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 2**; s. 150 in force in so far as not then already in force at 1.4.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 3**.

151 Enforcement of orders about collars and tags for dogs.

(1) Section 13 of the Animal Health Act 1981 (orders for control, etc. of dogs) shall be amended by the insertion, after subsection (2), of the following subsections—

"(3) An order under subsection (2)(a) above may include provision for the execution and enforcement of the order by the officers of local authorities (and not by the police force for any area).

(4) In subsection (3) above "local authority" and "officer" have the same meaning as in section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990."

(2) In section 50(1) of that Act (meaning of "local authority") at the end there shall be inserted the words "and to section 13(3) above".

(3) In section 60(1) of that Act (enforcement), at the end, there shall be inserted the words "but subject, in the case of orders under section 13, to any provision made under subsection (3) of that section."

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Commencement Information

I5 S. 151 wholly in force; s. 151 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 164(3); s. 151 in force for certain purposes at 14.2.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 2**; s. 151 in force in so far as not then aleardy in force at 1.4.1992 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1992/266, **art. 3**.

Straw and stubble burning

152 Burning of straw and stubble etc.

(1) The appropriate Minister may by regulations prohibit or restrict the burning of crop residues on agricultural land by persons engaged in agriculture and he may (by the same or other regulations) provide exemptions from any prohibition or restriction so imposed.

(2) Regulations providing an exemption from any prohibition or restriction may make the exemption applicable—

(a) in all, or only in specified, areas;

(b) to all, or only to specified, crop residues; or

(c) in all, or only in specified, circumstances.

(3) Any power to make regulations under this section includes power—

(a) to make different provision for different areas or circumstances;

(b) where burning of a crop residue is restricted, to impose requirements to be complied with before or after the burning;

(c) to create offences subject to the limitation that no offence shall be made punishable otherwise than on summary conviction and the fine prescribed for the offence shall not exceed level 5 on the standard scale; and

(d) to make such incidental, supplemental and transitional provision as the appropriate Minister considers appropriate.

(4) Where it appears to the appropriate Minister appropriate to do so in consequence of any regulations made under the foregoing provisions of this section, the appropriate Minister may, by order, repeal any byelaws of local authorities dealing with the burning of crop residues on agricultural land.

(5) In this section—

"agriculture" and "agricultural land" have, as respects England or as respects Wales, the same meaning as in the [M8]Agriculture Act 1947 and, as respects Scotland, the same meaning as in the [M9]Agriculture (Scotland) Act 1948;

"crop residue" means straw or stubble or any other crop residue;

"the appropriate Minister" means the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or the Secretary of State or both of them.

Commencement Information

I6 S. 152 wholly in force at 10.7.1991 see s. 164(3) and S.I. 1991/1577, **art. 2**

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Marginal Citations

M8 1947 c. 48.

M9 1948 c. 45.

Environmental expenditure

153 Financial assistance for environmental purposes.

(1) The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, give financial assistance to, or for the purposes of, any of the following—

[[F51](za) Cenex (Centre of Excellence for Low Carbon and Fuel Cell Technologies) in relation to its activities as respects England and Wales and Northern Ireland;**]**

[[F52](a) the United Nations Environment Programme;

(b) the European Environmental Bureau;

(c) the chemicals programme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

(d) the joint inter-Governmental panel on Climate Change of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organisation;

(e) the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources;

(f) the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;

(g) the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat;

(h) the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and any protocol to that Convention;

(i) the Convention and Protocol for the Protection of the Ozone Layer;

(j) the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals;

(k) the Groundwork Foundation and Trusts;

(l) the environmental protection technology scheme for research and development in the United Kingdom in relation to such technology;

(m) the programme known as the special grants programme so far as it relates to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment of, or of any part of, England and Wales;

(n) the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce so far as its activities relate to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment;

(o) the programme known as the Environment Wales programme so far as it relates to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment of, or of any part of, Wales;

(p) the programmes or schemes of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation;

(q) the programmes or schemes of the International Federation for Housing and Planning so far as they relate to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment;

(r) the programmes or schemes of the INTA.AIVN-International Urban Development Association so far as they relate to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment;

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(s) the scheme known as the Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species that provides support for the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources and habitats and for the furtherance of the aims of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(t) the programme known as the Promotion of Positive Environmental Management in Industry Programme;

(u) any national or international architectural award scheme or competition scheme relating to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment;

(v) the National Forest Company;

(w) the Energy Saving Trust Limited;

(x) the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(y) the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(z) the programme known as Radon Measurement and Support for Remedial Works Campaigns in England;

(aa) the Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link;

(bb) the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic;

(cc) the programme known as Pollution Emergency Response Services;

(dd) the programme known as the Waste and Resources Action Programme;

(ee) the Protocol on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects to the Energy Charter Treaty;

(ff) the programme known as the Waste Minimisation and Recycling Programme;

(gg) the Carbon Trust;

(hh) the International Sustainable Development Fund;

(ii) the scheme known as the Bio-energy Infrastructure Scheme;

(jj) the Zero Carbon Hub Limited;

(kk) the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership Limited, in relation to its activities as respects England and Wales;

(ll) Keep Britain Tidy;

(mm) the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972;

(nn) the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946.

[F94(oo) any scheme, programme or organisation for the purpose of preventing or reducing waste or litter in England, or of promoting resource efficiency in England;**]**

[F94(pp) any scheme, programme or organisation for the storage, transport, treatment or disposal of any material or product in England for the purpose of preventing or reducing environmental damage.**]]**

(2) Financial assistance may be given in respect of particular activities or generally in respect of all or some part of the activities carried on or supported by the recipient.

(3) Financial assistance shall be given in such form and on such terms as the Secretary of State may think fit and, in particular, assistance may be given by making grants (whether or not repayable), loans or guarantees to, or by incurring expenditure, or providing services, staff or equipment for the benefit of, the recipient.

(4) The Secretary of State may, by order, vary subsection (1) above by adding to or deleting from it any description of organisation, scheme, programme or

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international agreement whose purposes relate to the protection, improvement or better understanding of the environment.

F95(5) . . . . . .

Textual Amendments

F51 S. 153(1)(za) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (27.9.2021) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2021 (S.I. 2021/984), arts. 1(c), **2**

F52 S. 153(1)(a)-(nn) substituted for s. 153(1)(a)-(aaa) (E.W.) (1.4.2015) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (England and Wales) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/479), arts. 1(c), **2**

F53 S. 153(1) varied (S.) by the addition of s. 153(1)(n) (beginning "the programmes") by S.I. 1991/146, **art. 2** (made 26.1.1991 and coming into force 1.3.1991)

F54 S. 153(1)(n) (beginning "the Royal Society") added (15.4.1991) by S.I. 1992/682, **art. 2**.

F55 S. 153(1) varied (S.) by the addition of s. 153(1)(o) by S.I. 1991/1179, **art. 2**

F56 S. 153(1)(p) inserted (1.4.1992) by S.I. 1992/654, **art. 2**.

F57 S. 153(1)(q)-(u) added (12.5.1993) by S.I. 1993/1062, **art. 2**

F58 S. 153(1)(v) added (15.7.1993) by S.I. 1993/1518, **art. 2**

F59 S. 153(1)(w)(x) inserted (15.2.1995) by S.I. 1995/150, **art. 2**

F60 S. 153(1)(y) inserted (28.5.1995) by S.I. 1995/554, **art. 2**

F61 S. 153(1)(z)(aa) inserted (16.5.1995) by S.I. 1995/1085, **art. 2**

F62 S. 153(1)(bb) substituted (1.3.2000) by S.I. 2000/207, **art. 2**

F63 S. 153(1)(cc)(dd) added (1.4.1996) by S.I. 1996/505, **art. 2**

F64 S. 153(1)(ee) inserted (1.7.1996) by S.I. 1996/1431, **arts. 1**, 2

F65 S. 153(1)(ff) inserted (1.4.1997) by S.I. 1997/651, **art. 2**

F66 S. 153(1)(ff) omitted (S.) (1.4.2013) by virtue of The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2013 (S.S.I. 2013/74), arts. 1(1), **2(a)**

F67 S. 153(1)(gg) inserted (1.4.1998) by S.I. 1998/538, **art. 2**.

F68 S. 153(1)(hh) inserted (24.4.1998) by S.I. 1998/1001, **art. 2**.

F69 S. 153(1)(ii) inserted (27.1.1999) by S.I. 1998/3234, **art. 2**.

F70 S. 153(1)(jj)(kk)(ll) inserted (8.9.2000) by S.I. 2000/2211, **art. 2**

F71 S. 153(1)(mm) substituted (1.4.2013) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2013 (S.S.I. 2013/74), arts. 1(1), **2(b)**

F72 S. 153(1)(nn) added (S.) (26.3.2002) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2002 (S.S.I. 2002/83), **art. 2**

F73 Words in s. 153(1)(nn) inserted (S.) (1.4.2013) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2013 (S.S.I. 2013/74), arts. 1(1), **2(c)**

F74 S. 153(1)(oo)(pp) inserted (29.7.2002) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2002 (S.I. 2002/1686), **art. 2**

F75 S. 153(1)(qq) inserted (27.8.2002) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (No. 2) Order 2002 (S.I. 2002/2021), **art. 2**

F76 S. 153(1)(rr) (which was inserted by S.I. 2003/714, art. 2) repealed (1.1.2006) by Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (c. 16), s. 107, **Sch. 5 Pt. 8**; S.I. 2005/3439, **art. 2**

F77 S. 153(1)(rr)-(tt) added (S.) (1.4.2003) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2003 (S.S.I. 2003/173), **art. 2**

F78 S. 153(1)(rr) substituted (1.4.2013) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2013 (S.S.I. 2013/74), arts. 1(1), **2(d)**

F79 S. 153(1)(uu) added (S.) (1.7.2005) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2005 (S.S.I. 2005/324), **art. 2**

F80 S. 153(1)(uu) substituted (E.W.) (9.7.2007) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2007 (S.I. 2007/1671), **art. 3(a)**

F81 S. 153(1)(vv) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (29.7.2005) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2005 (S.I. 2005/1805), **art. 2**

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F82 S. 153(1)(ww) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (31.7.2006) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2006 (S.I. 2006/1735), **art. 2(a)**

F83 S. 153(1)(ww) repealed (E.W.N.I) (9.7.2007) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2007 (S.I. 2007/1671), **art. 3(b)**

F84 S. 153(1)(xx) inserted (E.W.) (31.7.2006) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes Order 2006 (S.I. 2006/1735), **art. 2(b)**

F85 S. 153(1)(yy) inserted (E.W.) (23.1.2009) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (England and Wales) Order 2008 (S.I. 2008/3243), **art. 2**

F86 S. 153(1)(zz) inserted (S.) (6.4.2009) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order (S.S.I. 2009/75), {art. 2}

F87 S. 153(1)(z1) added (S.) (27.6.2015) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2015 (S.S.I. 2015/210), arts. 1(1), **2**

F88 S. 153(1)(z2) added (S.) (1.2.2017) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2016 (S.S.I. 2016/406), arts. 1(1), **2**

F89 S. 153(1)(z3) inserted (S.) (28.1.2021) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2020 (S.S.I. 2020/409), arts. 1(1), **2**

F90 S. 153(1)(z4)-(z7) inserted (S.) (9.3.2022) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2022 (S.S.I. 2022/8), arts. 1(1), **2**

F91 S. 153(1)(z8)(z9) inserted (S.) (17.11.2022) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 2022 (S.S.I. 2022/278), arts. 1(1), **2**

F92 S. 153(1)(z10) inserted (S.) (6.2.2025) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Variation) (Scotland) Order 2024 (S.S.I. 2024/371), arts. 1(1), **2**

F93 S. 153(1)(aaa) added (E.W.) (15.7.2009) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (England and Wales) Order (S.I. 2009/1506), {art. 2}

F94 S. 153(1)(oo)(pp) inserted (E.W.) (30.3.2020) by The Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (England) Order 2020 (S.I. 2020/207), arts. 1(b), **2**

F95 S. 153(5) repealed (2.12.1999) by 1998 c. 47, s. 100(2), **Sch. 15** (with s. 95); S.I. 1999/3209, art. 2, **Sch.**

Marginal Citations

M10 1968 c.47 (**100:2**).

M11 1974 c.40 (**46:4**).

154 The Groundwork Foundation: superannuation.

Employment with the Groundwork Foundation shall be and shall be deemed always to have been included among the kinds of employment to which a superannuation scheme under section 1 of the [M12]Superannuation Act 1972 can apply, and accordingly in Schedule 1 to that Act (in which those kinds of employment are listed) the words "Groundwork Foundation" shall be inserted after the words "Gaming Board for Great Britain".

Marginal Citations

M12 1972 c. 11.

155 Remuneration of chairman of Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council.

In section 110 of the [M13]Transport Act [M14]1968 (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council) at the end there shall be inserted—

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"(7) The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, pay the chairman of the Council out of money provided by Parliament such remuneration as the Secretary of State may determine; and where the chairman is in receipt of such remuneration he shall not be paid any allowance under subsection (6) of this section in respect of loss of remunerative time."

Marginal Citations

M13 1968 c. 78.

M14 1968 c. 73.

Changes to legislation:
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View outstanding changes

Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 33(10A) inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 20(2)(a)
- s. 33ZB(10A) inserted by 2021 c. 30 s. 69(3)(b)
- s. 34(6A) inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 20(2)(b)
- s. 34ZB(8A) inserted by 2021 c. 30 s. 69(5)(b)
- s. 44ZA(2)(aa) inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 16(3)(c)
- s. 44ZZA inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 16(2)
- s. 47B inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 17(2)
- s. 161(2AA)(2AB) inserted by 2016 anaw 3 s. 69(4)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:
Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 33(10A) inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 20(2)(a)
- s. 33ZB(10A) inserted by 2021 c. 30 s. 69(3)(b)
- s. 34(6A) inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 20(2)(b)
- s. 34ZB(8A) inserted by 2021 c. 30 s. 69(5)(b)
- s. 44ZA(2)(aa) inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 16(3)(c)
- s. 44ZZA inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 16(2)
- s. 47B inserted by 2024 asp 13 s. 17(2)
- s. 161(2AA)(2AB) inserted by 2016 anaw 3 s. 69(4)

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

1991 CHAPTER 65

4 Destruction and disqualification orders. E+W

(1) Where a person is convicted of an offence under section 1 or 3(1) [F1]... above or of an offence under an order made under section 2 above the court—

(a) may order the destruction of any dog in respect of which the offence was committed and **[**[F2], subject to subsection (1A) below,**]**shall do so in the case of an offence under section 1 or an aggravated offence under section 3(1) [F1]... above; and

(b) may order the offender to be disqualified, for such period as the court thinks fit, for having custody of a dog.

[[F3](1A) Nothing in subsection (1)(a) above shall require the court to order the destruction of a dog if the court is satisfied—

(a) that the dog would not constitute a danger to public safety; and

(b) where the dog was born before 30th November 1991 and is subject to the prohibition in section 1(3) above, that there is a good reason why the dog has not been exempted from that prohibition.**]**

[[F4](1B) For the purposes of subsection (1A)(a), when deciding whether a dog would constitute a danger to public safety, the court—

(a) must consider—

(i) the temperament of the dog and its past behaviour, and

(ii) whether the owner of the dog, or the person for the time being in charge of it, is a fit and proper person to be in charge of the dog, and

(b) may consider any other relevant circumstances.**]**

(2) Where a court makes an order under subsection (1)(a) above for the destruction of a dog owned by a person other than the offender, [F5]..., the owner may appeal to the Crown Court against the order.

(3) A dog shall not be destroyed pursuant to an order under subsection (1)(a) above—

(a) until the end of the period for giving notice of appeal against the conviction or [F6]..., against the order; and

(b) if notice of appeal is given within that period, until the appeal is determined or withdrawn,

unless the offender and, in a case to which subsection (2) above applies, the owner of the dog give notice to the court that made the order that there is to be no appeal.

(4) Where a court makes an order under subsection (1)(a) above it may—

(a) appoint a person to undertake the destruction of the dog and require any person having custody of it to deliver it up for that purpose; and

(b) order the offender to pay such sum as the court may determine to be the reasonable expenses of destroying the dog and of keeping it pending its destruction.

(5) Any sum ordered to be paid under subsection (4)(b) above shall be treated for the purposes of enforcement as if it were a fine imposed on conviction.

(6) Any person who is disqualified for having custody of a dog by virtue of an order under subsection (1)(b) above may, at any time after the end of the period of one year beginning with the date of the order, apply to the court that made it (or a magistrates' court acting **[**F7in the same local justice**]** area as that court) for a direction terminating the disqualification.

(7) On an application under subsection (6) above the court may—

(a) having regard to the applicant's character, his conduct since the disqualification was imposed and any other circumstances of the case, grant or refuse the application; and

(b) order the applicant to pay all or any part of the costs of the application;

and where an application in respect of an order is refused no further application in respect of that order shall be entertained if made before the end of the period of one year beginning with the date of the refusal.

(8) Any person who—

(a) has custody of a dog in contravention of an order under subsection (1)(b) above; or

(b) fails to comply with a requirement imposed on him under subsection (4)(a) above,

is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(9) In the application of this section to Scotland—

(a) in subsection (2) for the words "Crown Court against the order" there shall be substituted the words "High Court of Justiciary against the order within the period of seven days beginning with the date of the order";

(b) for subsection (3)(a) there shall be substituted—

"(a) until the end of the period of seven days beginning with the date of the order"

(c) for subsection (5) there shall be substituted—

"(5) **[**F8section 221 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995**]** shall apply in relation to the recovery of sums ordered to be paid under subsection (4)(b) above as it applies to fines ordered to be recovered by civil diligence in pursuance of **[**F8Part XI**]** of that Act."; and

Status: *There are multiple versions of this provision on screen. These apply to different geographical extents.****Skip to:*** *E+W - England and Wales extentS - Scotland extent*
Changes to legislation: *There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Section 4. (See end of Document for details)*

(d) in subsection (6) the words "(or a magistrates' court acting **[**F9in the same local justice**]** area as that court)" shall be omitted.

Extent Information

E1 This version of this provision extends to England and Wales only; a separate version has been created for Scotland only

Textual Amendments

F1 Words in s. 4(1) omitted (E.W.) (13.5.2014) by virtue of Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), **ss. 106(3)**, 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 3, Sch. para. 6

F2 Words in s. 4(1)(a) inserted (8.6.1997) by 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(1)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F3 S. 4(1A) inserted (8.6.1997) by 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(2)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F4 S. 4(1B) inserted (13.5.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), **ss. 107(3)**, 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 3, Sch. para. 7

F5 Words in s. 4(2) repealed (8.6.1997) by 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(3)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F6 Words in s. 4(2)(a) ceased to have effect (8.6.1997) by virtue of 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(4)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F7 Words in s. 4(6) substituted (1.4.2005) by Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), s. 110(1), **Sch. 8 para. 353(a)**; S.I. 2005/910, art. 3(y)

F8 Words in s. 4(9)(c) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 40, s. 5, **Sch. 4 para. 81(a)(b)**

F9 Words in s. 4(9)(d) substituted (1.4.2005) by Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), s. 110(1), **Sch. 8 para. 353(b)**; S.I. 2005/910, art. 3(y)

Commencement Information

I1 S. 4 wholly in force at 12.8.1991, see s. 10(4) and S.I. 1991/1742, **art. 3**.

4 Destruction and disqualification orders. S

(1) Where a person is convicted of an offence under section 1 or 3(1) **[**F10**]**... above or of an offence under an order made under section 2 above the court—

(a) may order the destruction of any dog in respect of which the offence was committed and **[**F11, subject to subsection (1A) below,**]**shall do so in the case of an offence under section 1 or an aggravated offence under section 3(1) **[**F10**]**... above; and

(b) may order the offender to be disqualified, for such period as the court thinks fit, for having custody of a dog.

[F12(1A) Nothing in subsection (1)(a) above shall require the court to order the destruction of a dog if the court is satisfied—

(a) that the dog would not constitute a danger to public safety; and

(b) where the dog was born before 30th November 1991 and is subject to the prohibition in section 1(3) above, that there is a good reason why the dog has not been exempted from that prohibition.**]**

[F13(1B) For the purposes of subsection (1A)(a), when deciding whether a dog would constitute a danger to public safety, the court—

(a) must consider—

(i) the temperament of the dog and its past behaviour, and

(ii) whether the owner of the dog, or the person for the time being in charge of it, is a fit and proper person to be in charge of the dog, and

Status: *There are multiple versions of this provision on screen. These apply to different geographical extents.* ***Skip to:*** *E+W - England and Wales extentS - Scotland extent*
Changes to legislation: *There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Section 4. (See end of Document for details)*

(b) may consider any other relevant circumstances.**]**

(2) Where a court makes an order under subsection (1)(a) above for the destruction of a dog owned by a person other than the offender, [F14]..., the owner may appeal to the Crown Court against the order.

(3) A dog shall not be destroyed pursuant to an order under subsection (1)(a) above—

(a) until the end of the period for giving notice of appeal against the conviction or [F15]..., against the order; and

(b) if notice of appeal is given within that period, until the appeal is determined or withdrawn,

unless the offender and, in a case to which subsection (2) above applies, the owner of the dog give notice to the court that made the order that there is to be no appeal.

(4) Where a court makes an order under subsection (1)(a) above it may—

(a) appoint a person to undertake the destruction of the dog and require any person having custody of it to deliver it up for that purpose; and

(b) order the offender to pay such sum as the court may determine to be the reasonable expenses of destroying the dog and of keeping it pending its destruction.

(5) Any sum ordered to be paid under subsection (4)(b) above shall be treated for the purposes of enforcement as if it were a fine imposed on conviction.

(6) Any person who is disqualified for having custody of a dog by virtue of an order under subsection (1)(b) above may, at any time after the end of the period of one year beginning with the date of the order, apply to the court that made it (or a magistrates' court acting **[**[F16]in the same local justice**]** area as that court) for a direction terminating the disqualification.

(7) On an application under subsection (6) above the court may—

(a) having regard to the applicant's character, his conduct since the disqualification was imposed and any other circumstances of the case, grant or refuse the application; and

(b) order the applicant to pay all or any part of the costs of the application;

and where an application in respect of an order is refused no further application in respect of that order shall be entertained if made before the end of the period of one year beginning with the date of the refusal.

(8) Any person who—

(a) has custody of a dog in contravention of an order under subsection (1)(b) above; or

(b) fails to comply with a requirement imposed on him under subsection (4)(a) above,

is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(9) In the application of this section to Scotland—

(a) in subsection (2) for the words "Crown Court against the order" there shall be substituted the words "**[**[F17]appropriate Appeal Court**]** against the order within the period of seven days beginning with the date of the order";

[[F18](aa) In paragraph (a), "appropriate Appeal Court" means—

(i) in the case of an appeal against an order made following summary conviction, the Sheriff Appeal Court; and

(ii) in the case of an appeal against an order made following conviction on indictment, the High Court of Justiciary.**]**

(b) for subsection (3)(a) there shall be substituted—

"(a) until the end of the period of seven days beginning with the date of the order"

(c) for subsection (5) there shall be substituted—

"(5) **[**F19section 221 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995**]** shall apply in relation to the recovery of sums ordered to be paid under subsection (4)(b) above as it applies to fines ordered to be recovered by civil diligence in pursuance of **[**F19Part XI**]** of that Act."; and

(d) in subsection (6) the words "(or a magistrates' court acting **[**F20in the same local justice**]** area as that court)" shall be omitted.

Extent Information

E2 This version of this provision extends to Scotland only; a separate version has been created for England and Wales only

Textual Amendments

F10 Words in s. 4(1) repealed (S.) (26.2.2011) by Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 (asp 9), s. 18(2), **Sch. 1 para. 2(3)** (with s. 16)

F11 Words in s. 4(1)(a) inserted (8.6.1997) by 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(1)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F12 S. 4(1A) inserted (8.6.1997) by 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(2)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F13 S. 4(1B) inserted (13.5.2014) by Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (c. 12), **ss. 107(3)**, 185(1) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93); S.I. 2014/949, art. 3, Sch. para. 7

F14 Words in s. 4(2) repealed (8.6.1997) by 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(3)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F15 Words in s. 4(2)(a) ceased to have effect (8.6.1997) by virtue of 1997 c. 53, **s. 1(4)** (with s. 5(1)); S.I. 1997/1151, **art. 2**

F16 Words in s. 4(6) substituted (1.4.2005) by Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), s. 110(1), **Sch. 8 para. 353(a)**; S.I. 2005/910, art. 3(y)

F17 Words in s. 4(9)(a) substituted (S.) (22.9.2015) by The Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Provisions No. 2) Order 2015 (S.S.I. 2015/338), art. 1, **Sch. 2 para. 3(2)(a)** (with art. 4)

F18 S. 4(9)(aa) inserted (S.) (22.9.2015) by The Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Provisions No. 2) Order 2015 (S.S.I. 2015/338), art. 1, **Sch. 2 para. 3(2)(b)** (with art. 4)

F19 Words in s. 4(9)(c) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 40, s. 5, **Sch. 4 para. 81(a)(b)**

F20 Words in s. 4(9)(d) substituted (1.4.2005) by Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), s. 110(1), **Sch. 8 para. 353(b)**; S.I. 2005/910, art. 3(y)

Commencement Information

I2 S. 4 wholly in force at 12.8.1991, see s. 10(4) and S.I. 1991/1742, **art. 3**.

Status:
There are multiple versions of this provision on screen. These apply to different geographical extents.
Skip to:
– E+W - England and Wales extent
– S - Scotland extent

Changes to legislation:
There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Section 4.

APPENDIX C – SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION FOR THE STRAY DOG POLICY

Response to the Consultation for the arrangements to manage Stray Dogs in North Herts

As part of the consultation for the arrangements to manage Stray Dogs in North Herts, several responses were received; the points below are the answers to those responses.

- Can it be made clear how the Council will be publicising their responsibilities and the urgent contact number, as per section 1.5.
    - Section 1.5 has been reworded to make this information clearer. The information is present on the Council's dedicated webpage, and this is now linked-to in the e version of the policy.

- Can section 3.4 be clarified as to what provision the Council will consider when a stray dog is taken to another location by someone finding the dog. Should we accommodate collecting the dog from Stevenage Police Station, which although outside of our district, is one such likely location a dog may be taken.
    - Section 3.4 has been reworded to make it clearer, but the restriction to collecting stray dogs to only those locations within the district will remain.
    - The law requires the Council to collect and detain stray dogs found within its district. This has been moderated to limit stray dogs to being only those which are contained in a specific location, i.e., not free to roam at the time of, but is otherwise not controlled by the owner or a keeper. Where a dog is able to be moved to another location, it can be considered that the dog is under the control of a keeper, and as such is not a stray. By extending the scope of section 150 of the Environmental Protection Act, 1990 (the Act) to enable the finder of the dog to take it to another suitable location, e.g., a police station or veterinary establishment, the Council is willing to accept the dog is still a stray, albeit temporarily under the control of a third person.
    - The Council is unable to consider the collection of a stray dog from outside the district, even if the dog had reasonably been taken to a local facility., e.g., Stevenage Police Station, because by doing so, we both open the collection points arguably available to many, and even by restricting the location to only Stevenage Police Station, this would require the agreement of the Police, which we have already seen, we cannot rely on. Furthermore, and as mentioned above, a dog which is sufficiently controlled so as to be taken to a different location is not considered a stray dog, and so is not ordinarily covered by this policy.

- Status of the Police response to stray dogs suspected of being a Prohibited Breed
    - The issue of the Police failing to support the control of a stray Prohibited Breed dog still exists, although we do have a work round, this is at an additional cost to the current Stray Dogs contract.
    - The work round, as reflected by the Policy is for a stray dog, which is of a suspected or known Prohibited Breed to be considered a Dangerous Dog, as defined, and it will be controlled and housed in a more robust and isolated kennel with additional safety precautions, hence the additional costs. The dog is still held for the 7-day retention period, after which if not collected, ownership of the dog passes to the holding kennel, and they euthanise the dog.
    - If, during the 7-day retention period the owner does seek the return of their dog, we and the holding kennel would refuse to give the dog back, as required under the legislation. If we were challenged, it is likely that legal action would ensue, during which time the dog would be retained as a suspected Prohibited Breed, albeit at additional costs to ourselves.
    - This policy provides for a suspected Prohibited Breed dog to be considered a Dangerous Dog but does not cover the possible need to legally confirm the status of such a dog if the owner seeks to recover it within the 7-day period.
    - This response sought clarification so did not led to a change of the Policy.

- What is included in the £300.00 (animal treatment or euthanasia) provision.
    - The proposed £300.00 is to make provision for the euthanasia of a dog to put it out of undue suffering. This amount is based on the local veterinary costs for this work and is allowed for under the provisions available to the Council to manage Stray Dogs in our area. This amount does not cover any other incurred costs that may be associated with the holding of the dogs, e.g., fees, food, shelter, etc., and is solely for this medical intervention.
    - Similarly, if it is felt that the dog, upon the advice of a veterinary surgeon or other competent person could be treated to alleviate any suffering such that it would still probably have a reasonable quality of life, this amount would be made available solely for this purpose, up to the £300.00 limit. If the necessary treatment costs were likely to exceed this amount, the Council would not approve the treatment costs.
    - This response sought clarification so did not led to a change of the Policy.

- Can the euthanasia or treatment cost be included in our fees and charges and can we fix this amount.
    - Whilst the Council has to accommodate the necessity to euthanise an injured or unwell dog, this cost is not be recoverable. This amount is not a required fee or charge normally associated with the kennelling of a stray dog, but is an exceptional cost required of the holding Council in the extreme case of being required to euthanise [or treat] a dog. As such, it is a cost which cannot be passed on to an owner.
    - Even if there was such a provision in the Act to potentially recover the cost to euthanise a dog, it would still not be practicable because at the time of the destruction, no owner was identifiable from whom to claim such costs.
    - As the Council has the legal obligation to provide for the destruction of seized dogs in certain specified circumstances, this amount has to be accounted for. However, as the cost for this service is based solely on external factors, it is not possible to fix this amount for any protracted period of time, although the amount has remained stable for some time.
    - As this response sought only to clarify certain matters, it has not led to any change in the Policy.

- Incorrect numbering at point 5.2.1
    - Agreed. This will be renumbered as 5.3.
    - This response has led to the stated change in the Policy.

- Should the reduced fee for the collection of an unchipped dog if the dog is micro-chipped at collection be highlighted as being discretionary.
    - The reduction of the stray dog collection fee for an un-micro-chipped dog was introduced if the owner of the dog agreed to allow us to micro-chipping the animal, as an incentive to encourage to take-up of chipping. Over recent years, there has been little or no take up of this offer, as it is now understood and accepted by dog owners that all non-exempt dogs must be micro-chipped, and that honest dog owners look for this as part of the original dog purchase.
    - Although we do still seize dogs with either no chip, or the information attributed to the chip incorrect, these dogs tend not to be reclaimed.
    - However, as it is still possible for an un-chipped dog to be reclaimed, retaining this discount does help to promote our awareness of the impact of the financial status of our families, even though the request for this service has all but ceased.

- As such, and to clarify this provision it makes sense to include this in the Policy as a discretionary reduction, with an amendment clarifying the reduction to be for each dog, rather than per owner or limiting the number of dogs this would apply to. Being able to identify the owner of a stray dog does reduce our future costs, by potentially being able to return the dog directly, without the need to kennel it at least overnight.
- As mentioned, this response has led to an amendment of the Policy to clarify the discretionary nature of the discount, and to confirm reduction to be applicable to all dogs.

- Whether the reasonable amount for veterinary treatment costs during the 7-day retention period could include a discretionary additional amount based on veterinary advice.
    - It is the intention of the Policy to set an upper limit for the cost of any veterinary treatment that the Council would support, making it clear that any additional cost above this amount would not be funded. The Policy would not prevent any treatment being provided, just that the funding for this would have to come from elsewhere.
    - The amount identified is comparable to the cost of euthanising a dog, which locally currently costs £300.00. If the dog can therefore be treated for this amount, the policy permits this meaning the dog could be offered for rehoming in a healthy condition.
    - The limit is set to provide a cap on the potentially excessive Veterinary costs with could be spent to treat a dog, but which would have to be paid from public funds if no cap was set, and the dog was within the 7-day retention period. Having no cap, or one at the discretion of any officer exposes the Council to a possible claim of misuse of public funds and equally exposes the deciding officer to a claim of unfair or unreasonable treatment of the dog if they refuse to spend "*just a little bit more*". Equally, whilst the Act allows for the destruction of the seized dog for humane purposes, refusing to provide any funding for treatment risks exposing the Council to inhumane treatment of the animal. By permitting the amount the Council would have to spend for euthanasia for treatment in viewed as the most appropriate compromise.
    - Although this response was carefully considered, it has not led to a change in the Policy.

- That the wording for point 3.1, which refers to section 150 of the Act and allows for the finder to retain the dog is somewhat misleading in the presentation of the provision.
    - Section 150 of the Act requires anyone finding, and taking possession of a stray dog, i.e., the Finder, to either return it to the owner, or if this is not practicable, to take it to the Local Authority for the area where the dog was found. Under this provision, the Finder must confirm whether they wish to keep the dog, in which case due process to consider this option has to be followed, or to not keep the dog, in which case the dog will be treated as a stray seized by the Council.
    - Whilst section 3.1 does reflect this provision, the wording will be considered to see if it can be made clearer. Any alterations will be made to the draft Policy and submitted to Cabinet in due course.

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CABINET

17 FEBRUARY 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: DESIGN CODE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REPORT OF NIGEL SMITH, DIRECTOR – PLACE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLACE: CLLR DONNA WRIGHT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 We are preparing a Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide additional detail and clarity to Local Plan Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) and other relevant policies in the Plan.

1.2 The SPD will provide information as to our design expectations and requirements for development in North Herts and offer good practice guidance to developers when developing proposals and policy advice to decision-makers when determining planning applications.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the scope, structure and detailed codes drafted to date for the draft Design Code SPD, attached as Appendix A be endorsed for the purpose of the consultation only.

2.2. That the draft Design Code SPD be approved for a period of public consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

2.3. That delegated authority is granted to the Director: Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Place to finalise the consultation draft, including the approval of any outstanding technical, illustrative or presentational elements, provided that no changes are made which would materially alter the policy intent, scope or effect of the draft SPD endorsed by Cabinet.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To allow the draft Design Code SPD to be progressed to public consultation so that it may be developed and eventually adopted to support the Local Plan and decisions on planning applications.

3.2. To support a common standard for design quality across North Herts.

3.3. To reinforce and deliver the Council's pledges and ambitions as set out in the Climate and Ecological Emergency declarations through design.

3.4. To ensure the best prospects of the Design Code SPD being finalised and approved before the Government's recently announced 'cut off' date of 30 June 2026 for planning documents of this nature to be adopted.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. To not update current guidance and rely on the existing Design SPD (2011) and / or national policy. This is not recommended. The current Design SPD is now 15 years old and does not reflect current approaches to the preparation of design guidance. It was prepared prior to the current Local Plan.

4.2. To not prepare the Design Code SPD within the current system and instead prepare it as a Supplementary Plan upon commencement of the new plan-making system and / or incorporate elements of it into the Local Plan review. This is not recommended. This would involve a substantial delay to completion of the project with additional stages and costs including public examination. This would delay the Council's ability to apply locally-specific guidance in the assessment of new development in the District. The Strategic Planning Matters Report of March 2024 recognised that, notwithstanding the likely requirements of the new planning system, the Design Code SPD should still be developed as an SPD in support of relevant policies in the adopted Local Plan, but with the additional aim of incorporating any work into the review of the Local Plan.

4.3. To wait for the next meeting of Cabinet in April 2026 to present a full draft of the Design Code SPD for approval. This is not recommended. This would delay the end of any consultation period until June 2026 and would not allow sufficient time to consider responses, update the document and re-present a final version to Cabinet for approval.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Executive Member for Place and the cross-party Strategic Planning Project Board have been briefed on the proposed content of the Design Code SPD and the programme for consultation on the draft SPD.

5.2. Internal and external consultation with relevant officers and Members across Council departments, and residents, has taken place in developing the draft SPD for consultation, including

- Member Workshops and Site Visits
- Specialist Working Groups (with external consultants, officers and HCC officers)
- Residents Design Forum

A statement explaining how the draft SPD has been informed by stakeholder engagement will be published alongside any consultation. While extensive informal engagement has informed the preparation of the draft SPD, this does not replace the statutory public consultation process. All representations received during the statutory consultation period will be conscientiously considered and may result in further amendments to the SPD prior to it being presented to Cabinet for adoption.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 19 September 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Guidance defines Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) as documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the statutory Development Plan and cannot introduce new planning policies. SPDs are not subject to an independent examination but are required to undergo public consultation.

7.2. In March 2021, Members considered a comprehensive report on implementation of the Local Plan. They resolved, among other matters, to support the production of a Design Code SPD with a broad scope that would consider design quality across the District for new developments and Masterplans.

7.3. The Local Plan, adopted in November 2022, contains policies with implications for design. The main policy 'hooks' that link to the ability for the Council to seek quality design in developments is in Local Plan Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability and Policy D1: Sustainable design.

7.4. Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability contains an overarching aspiration for new development to be well designed and located and to respond positively to its local context. Criterion c) contains a suite of broad design principles for significant development, based on national policy guidance. Policy D1: Sustainable design, builds upon the intentions of Policy SP9 in terms of design quality and sets out similar (but simpler) aspirations applicable to all development, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme.

7.5. This 'principles-based' approach does not provide detailed technical requirements or fully reflect the aspirations of the present day and the direction of travel that the Council and Government are taking in terms of design quality and standards.

7.6. Prior to Christmas, the Government provided further detail on their proposed roll-out of a new plan-making system. These were reported to Cabinet in January 2026. Importantly, in this context, the Government proposals include a 'cut-off' date of 30 June 2026 for the adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents under current legislation and regulations. This has required work on the Design Code SPD to be accelerated to ensure that consultation, consideration of responses and re-presentation to Cabinet for approval might be accommodated within this timeframe.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. This is the draft stage of the SPD and incorporates advice on a range of changes in national policy and guidance relating to design, in particular taking account of the National Design Guide, the National Model Design Code advice published by Government and the draft Place and Design Planning Practice Guidance (published last week).

8.2. The SPD addresses the policy criteria identified above by providing more robust guidance for developers to ensure that North Herts can achieve an improved level of design quality in its developments. The SPD will ensure that these matters are addressed effectively in new developments and, following any future adoption, will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. For the avoidance of doubt, the Design Code SPD does not introduce new planning policy. It provides detailed guidance to support and amplify existing adopted Local Plan policies, in particular Policies SP9 (Design and Sustainability) and D1 (Sustainable Design). The SPD will be applied as guidance and as a material consideration in decision-making, consistent with national planning policy and guidance.

8.3. The draft Design Code SPD adopts a 'comply or justify' approach which requires developers to fully justify their decisions should a design element be considered undeliverable, putting the onus on the developer.

8.4. The SPD adopts seven main place objectives for design across the District. These have been informed by extensive engagement with the Council's professional planners, key stakeholders (including Hertfordshire County Council), elected Councillors and a representative Residents' Design Forum. The objectives reflect the key design priorities for North Herts identified through these workstreams:

- Exceptional Open Space
- Sociable Streets
- Equitable Neighbourhoods
- Well-Integrated Development
- Contextual Buildings
- Convivial Communities
- Efficient Use of Land

8.5. The draft SPD is structured to set out its overall purpose, summarise how it has been informed by community engagement, establish the place objectives and set out detailed design code requirements. Forty elements of code have been identified for inclusion. This includes detailed technical guidance on matters such as street hierarchy, open spaces in new developments and parking provision.

8.6. The significant majority of these have been completed and are included in the working draft document attached as Appendix A giving Cabinet a clear picture of the direction of travel and intended approach. Work to finalise the remaining codes, diagrams and reference imagery is ongoing and a verbal update will be provided. Delegated authority is requested for final approval of any outstanding matters prior to consultation.

8.7. This approach is necessary to provide the best opportunity to complete the project ahead of the recently announced June 2026 'cut-off' (see 4.2 above).

8.8. As written, the codes in the draft SPD focus upon matters which are mainly applicable to major development. The Council intends to increase the breadth of advice for differing scales of development in time. But it is considered that it is most important to deal with major development given the scale of development that is coming forward in the District.

8.9. The working draft SPD is attached at Appendix A and the accompanying SEA Screening Determination at Appendix B (see Environmental Implications section below). The draft SPD will be updated, as appropriate, following consultation responses and other relevant matters prior to its adoption.

8.10. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the draft SPD will be made available for public consultation for a period of four weeks commencing early March 2026. The intention is that any comments received will inform a final version of the SPD which would then be re-presented to Cabinet for approval and adoption in advance of the 30 June 2026 deadline.

8.11. Should the Council not adopt the SPD by 30 June 2026, the legislation changes and this would mean that we would have to re-draft the document as a Supplementary Plan. The details of the requirements for the content and approval process for Supplementary Plans, however, remain unknown including the requirement for possible examination of the document and the ultimate delays that this would involve.

8.12. Cabinet had previously resolved (September 2024) to support the production of a Transport & Parking SPD. The Design Code SPD has been scoped to include proposed codes and requirements relating to road layouts and parking (both for cars and cycles). The impending changes to the plan-making process mean it is no longer possible to pursue a standalone SPD on this subject. The requirement for further guidance on these matters will be kept under review.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, paragraph 5.7.18 states that the Cabinet should exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Place. This includes the preparation and adoption of SPDs which do not form part of the Council Policy Framework.

9.2. The statutory basis for Supplementary Planning Documents and their preparation is set out by a range of acts and associated regulations including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Localism Act 2011. Detailed requirements for the preparation of SPDs, including requirements for consultation, are stipulated in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

9.3. The regulations make provisions for consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents, including that this should be for a minimum period of four weeks.

9.4. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent in November 2023. Once relevant provisions are enacted, SPDs will be abolished and replaced by Supplementary Plans which will be required to go through a more formal process of preparation and examination. The intent is to complete this SPD under the current regulatory regime and ahead of the 'cut-off' of 30 June 2026.

9.5. The approval sought at this stage is limited to endorsement of the draft SPD for public consultation. No decision is being taken at this meeting to adopt the SPD. Following consultation, any material amendments and the final SPD will be reported back to Cabinet for consideration and decision in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The general costs of preparing Supplementary Planning Documents are met through existing staff resources and specific revenue budgets. In January 2026, Cabinet approved a carry forward of the projected remaining revenue balance of £83k into the next financial year as part of the Q2 Revenue Monitoring report. This includes the balance of funding for a current, fixed-term post and finalisation of the project as a web-based resource by Summer 2026.

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 risks associated with not preparing a Design Code SPD include:

- lack of clarity and uncertainty to case officers and applicants when negotiating and determining planning applications;
- lack of consistency with the emerging Local Plan as well as national planning policy and guidance; and
- a risk of not securing the maximum range of design quality in development for the District.

11.3. The Design Code SPD will 'pave the way' for design guidance associated with the forthcoming Local Plan Review. The risk entry for this project, reported as part of the Council Delivery Plan, includes:

- Inadequate guidance leads to scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to, or contribute towards, corporate objectives and priorities of climate change, environment, economy and place; and
- Poor scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to local character and context.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and concludes that there are positive impacts to our communities as a result of the work of the SPD. The assessment is attached at Appendix E.

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. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) must be ‘screened’ to determine whether statutory environmental assessment is required which would consider the social, economic and environmental implications of proposed policies and allocations. A screening opinion is attached at Appendix B and concludes that the Design Code SPD is not likely to have ‘significant environmental effects’ beyond the adopted Local Plan policies which have been subject to an SA and SEA.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no new human resource implications arising from this report. Work on the Design Code SPD is supported by establishment staff supplemented by a fixed-term post funded from the project revenue budget.

16. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Working Draft Design Code SPD

Appendix B: SEA Screening Opinion

Appendix C: Stage 1 Summary Report

Appendix D: Stage 2 Summary Report

Appendix E: Equalities Impact Assessment Report

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Report to Cabinet March 2021 – Local Plan Implementation

18.2 Report to Cabinet March 2024 – Strategic Planning Matters

18.3 Report to Cabinet September 2024 – Sustainability SPD

18.4 Report to Cabinet January 2026 – Local Plan next steps

NORTH HERTS DESIGN CODE

V.01 2026

NORTH HERTS DESIGN CODE

V.01 2026

Compiled by
North Herts Council Urban
Design Team

INTRODUCTION

North Hertfordshire has a long tradition of planning innovation, shaped by its rich heritage of ancient and historic buildings, medieval market towns and the globally significant Garden City movement. This legacy provides both an inspiration and a responsibility to maintain high standards of design as the district continues to grow and change.

The North Herts Design Code sets out a shared vision for the future of development in the district, ensuring that growth is shaped by strong place-making principles and consistent design standards. It seeks to deliver development that is sustainable, inclusive and locally distinctive, where people feel safe, connected and proud of the places they live.

Research by Professor Matthew Carmona in Tackling Inequality in Housing Design Quality: Routes to Success (2021) demonstrates that good design is not simply an aesthetic consideration but a social one. Design quality is closely linked to mental health, well-being, community cohesion and perceptions of safety. Poorly designed housing disproportionately affects more vulnerable groups, reinforcing inequality and limiting opportunities for thriving and resilient communities.

The North Herts Design Code seeks to put place-making and people at the heart of the planning process, ensuring the places we deliver now leave a positive lasting legacy for future generations.



Visioning Workshop, Residents Design Forum, June 2025.

Scope and Purpose

A design code is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as a set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. It serves as a tool to ensure high-quality, consistent design, building upon a clear design vision.

With this in mind, the North Herts Design Code is made up of two main sections; the Place Objectives which form the underlying vision for the document, and the Code which covers the technical design requirements.

Together, these sections seek to:
- Set clear design expectations for applicants at the outset of the development process;
- Translate the strategic objectives of the Local Plan and Council Plan into clear design requirements;
- Embed place-making as a core consideration in all residential-led development.

Status and Adoption

This Design Code is currently published in draft form for public consultation. Following consultation and refinement, it will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in summer 2026.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated guidance defines SPDs as documents which support and supplement Local Plan and National Planning Policy, adding further detail to the high-level principles set out in these documents. As such, the main function of the North Herts Design Code is to set out design expectations in relation to policies in the North Herts Local Plan (adopted November 2022) and DP3 in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025). It particularly supports Local Plan Policies SP9 and D1 which set out overarching design expectations, but is also relevant to policies on matters such as transport and open space.

It has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012 and has undergone consultation with local groups and national organisations in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). It has also been subject to screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment.

Once adopted, the North Herts Design Code will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for residential-led development across the district. The SPD will provide a platform for further design guidance which the Council will be required to provide as Government reforms are enacted.

Use and Application

This document is intended for use by anyone involved in the development process including landowners, developers, agents, designers, town and parish councils and other interested parties commenting on proposals such as local residents. The document will

also be used by Decision Makers in assessing compliance with the Design Code and issuing of pre-application advice.

The North Herts Design Code applies to residential-led development of more than 2 homes. This ensures that place-making and design quality are given appropriate weight in decision-making at all scales of development. Codes will be applied proportionately on a case-by-case basis, informed by the types of development and application being considered.

At this draft stage, we will continue to informally test the North Herts Design Code against a range of schemes to best understand how and when its different requirements apply. Based on our findings, we may provide further guidance in the final version.

ENGAGEMENT

The North Herts Design Code has been developed over a two-year period through extensive engagement with five key strands of stakeholders including local residents through a Residents Design Forum, Councillors, expert consultants and council officers through three key stages of work outlined below.

Stage 1 – Identifying Issues

The first stage of work focussed on assessing current development practices through a series of place reviews undertaken across the district. Development Management, Strategic Planning and Urban Design officers together with Councillors took part in a series of site visits that assessed a range of development sites against national good design criteria. This identified strengths and weaknesses in recently completed development and helped to establish a clear set of priorities for the Design Code, recognising that it could not address every issue in every location.

Stage 2 – Visioning

The second phase focussed on developing an ambitious vision for future development in North Herts through a series of collaborative workshops with Councillors and senior officers. A Residents Design Forum was also set up which brought together 22 North Herts residents,



Site visit day with Councillors, Fairfield Park, Stotfold.



Visioning Workshop, Residents Design Forum, June 2025.

specifically selected to represent a range of voices within the community, reflecting a diversity in background, age, gender, social circumstances and lived experience, including both urban and rural perspectives and those with and without disabilities. The workshops resulted in the seven North Herts Place Objectives which underpin the entire Design Code.

Stage 3 – Coding

The last phase of work brought together findings from the first two stages using the problems identified in Stage 1 and the Place Objectives developed in Stage 2, to shape a set of design codes covering a range of disciplines and specialisms. Three thematic Working Groups were set up during this stage, each bringing together a combination of external industry specialists from the private sector with North Herts officers and County Council colleagues. Held at critical stages in the code's development, these discussions provided an opportunity to critique ideas, refine technical details, and shape the overall content of the code. Acting as 'critical friends', participants helped ensure the code is usable, relevant and aligned with best practice nationally.

PLACE OBJECTIVES

The Place Objectives set out what new development must achieve across North Herts. They have been shaped and refined through multiple workshops with key stakeholders to reflect local priorities and shared ambitions for the future of the district.

The seven Place Objectives provide clear ambitions for creating high-quality, well-designed places, in line with the draft National Planning Policy Framework, the draft Place and Design Planning Practice Guidance, Building for a Healthy Life (2020) and the North Herts Local Plan (2011-2031). They are included on the following pages in the order of priority identified by the Residents Design Forum.

The symbols represent the seven key objectives and will be used throughout this document to clarify which items of code relate to the Place Objectives.

The background to the seven Place Objectives are the visioning collages produced by local residents at the first Residents Design Forum.

EXCEPTIONAL OPEN SPACE

SOCIABLE STREETS

WELL-INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

CONVIVIAL COMMUNITIES

EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

EQUITABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

CONTEXTUAL BUILDINGS



EXCEPTIONAL OPEN SPACE

Development must create a connected network of green spaces that celebrates the area's natural assets and strengthens the district's landscape character.

Water-management elements such as swales, SuDS, and rain gardens must be designed as attractive, functional parts of the landscape, not hidden engineering, so they enrich these spaces and support nature.

Open spaces should be designed with intention and purpose; places that support everyday wellbeing through play, recreation, active travel, nature and community life. Each space should work hard, complementing others to form a rich, multifunctional environment that incorporates blue infrastructure and that welcomes people of all ages and abilities.

Unplanned, leftover 'grassy patches' with no clear use, identity, or value to the community will not be permitted.



SOCIABLE STREETS

Development must create streets that are enjoyable places to be, not just routes to travel through. Streets should support everyday social life, help people find their way intuitively and make walking and cycling the easiest, safest, and most attractive choice. Vehicles must be accommodated in a way that respects the needs of people first.

Streets should be designed as complete environments where buildings, planting, street trees, lighting and movement infrastructure work together to create characterful, comfortable and inclusive spaces. Parking should be sensitively integrated so it neither dominates nor undermines the quality and feel of these important shared spaces.

Car-dominated streets, where parking overwhelms the street scene, limits planting opportunities, or creates poor pedestrian experiences, will not be permitted.



WELL-INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

Development must be seamlessly integrated into its surroundings, responding positively to the site's edges and reinforcing clear, legible patterns of settlement. New places should feel like a natural extension of the district's towns and villages, not disconnected enclaves.

New neighbourhoods should maximise opportunities to connect with existing routes, facilities, landscapes and communities. Where development edges meet open land or areas identified for potential future growth, layouts must be designed to safeguard these edges and allow for logical, well-connected expansion over time.

Layouts that pull away from the site boundary to create isolated 'islands' of homes, cut off from their surroundings and offering limited future connection, will not be permitted.



CONVIVIAL COMMUNITIES

New development must foster a strong sense of community with places designed to support neighbourliness, everyday interaction and collective stewardship.

Communal solutions, such as shared bike stores, shared bin stores, shared courtyards, community gardens and informal meeting spaces should be prioritised wherever practical. These shared elements help bring people together in their daily routines and contribute to safer, more sociable and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Designs that isolate homes, disperse facilities unnecessarily, or remove opportunities for casual social interaction will not be permitted.



EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

New development should make the most of the land available, creating neighbourhoods that feel welcoming, well-designed and easy to get around. Good design and thoughtful building types can help create places that feel lively and connected without wasting space.

Neighbourhoods should be arranged so that everyday trips, getting to school, visiting friends, popping to the shops etc. can be done comfortably on foot, by bike, or by public transport. Walkable, compact places not only use land more efficiently but also help support a stronger sense of community and healthier lifestyles.

Layouts that put cars first, using too much land for wide roads, scattered parking, or disconnected cul-de-sacs, will not be permitted.



EQUITABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Development must create neighbourhoods that are fair, inclusive and welcoming to everyone, regardless of tenure or socio-economic background. All homes and public spaces should be designed to the same high standards, ensuring that every resident experiences a sense of pride and belonging.

Across a neighbourhood, affordable and market homes must be indistinguishable in their external appearance. This means providing equal access to well-designed public realm, consistent parking strategies, shared materials and architectural quality and the same proximity to amenities, play and green spaces.

Designs that reveal or segregate tenures, whether through lower-quality materials, separate entrances, poorer landscaping, or isolated clusters, will not be permitted.



CONTEXTUAL BUILDINGS

Development must deliver buildings with a strong sense of character and identity, shaped by a clear understanding of the site's setting and the distinctive qualities of the surrounding area. New buildings should feel rooted in their context while contributing positively to the future character of the neighbourhood.

Material choices, building form, height, and architectural detailing must all be guided by a thoughtful design rationale grounded in local character and landscape cues. This approach should create distinctive and memorable streets and neighbourhoods that support wayfinding and foster a sense of civic pride.

Poor-quality or poorly considered development, whether existing or nearby, must never be used as justification for repeating the same approach. Designs that fail to respond to their context, or that rely on generic forms, will not be permitted.


NOVELTY
COMMUNITY
OPEN VIEW
SHOPS

INTRODUCTION TO CODES

The North Herts Design Code is built around a set of 40 individual design codes that establish the requirements new development must meet across North Herts. These codes translate the seven Place Objectives into clear, practical and measurable expectations for applicants, decision-makers, and design teams.

For ease of use, the codes are grouped into chapters that reflect the key components of good place-making:
SS – Settlement Structure
OS – Open Space
ST – Streets
PA – Parking
BF – Built Form

Referencing

Each code is given a unique reference number (eg. OS-02 Informal Play), making it simple to navigate the document and assess compliance. Each code is then broken down further into a series of sub-codes which set out more detailed requirements. A compliance checklist is provided at the end of the document, allowing applicants to review proposals quickly and consistently before submission.

The Comply or Justify Approach

The Design Code has been created to be both clear in its requirements and flexible enough to support innovative design. Each code must either be complied with or justified. Where an alternative design solution is proposed, the applicant must demonstrate that the proposal still meets the relevant Place Objectives. This approach ensures the Code does not stifle creativity, while still maintaining high and consistent standards for development across the district.

How the Codes Relate to the Place Objectives

To support clarity, each code includes symbols showing which Place Objectives it directly contributes to. These must be met in all cases of non-compliance. This ensures that even when flexibility is used, the development remains aligned with the district's core principles for great places.

A Menu of Context-Responsive Solutions

Many codes are structured as a menu of permitted options, allowing applicants to select the most appropriate response for the site context. This approach encourages thoughtful design and avoids a one-size-fits-all model, while still ensuring consistency and quality across the district.

CODE INDEX

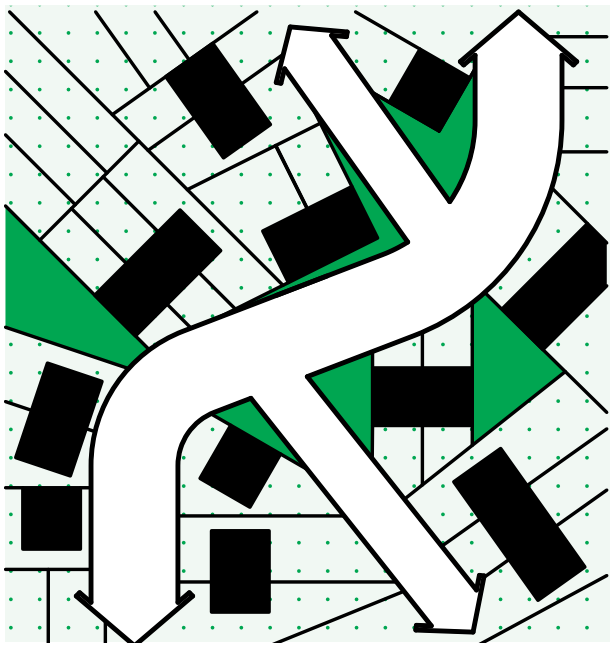
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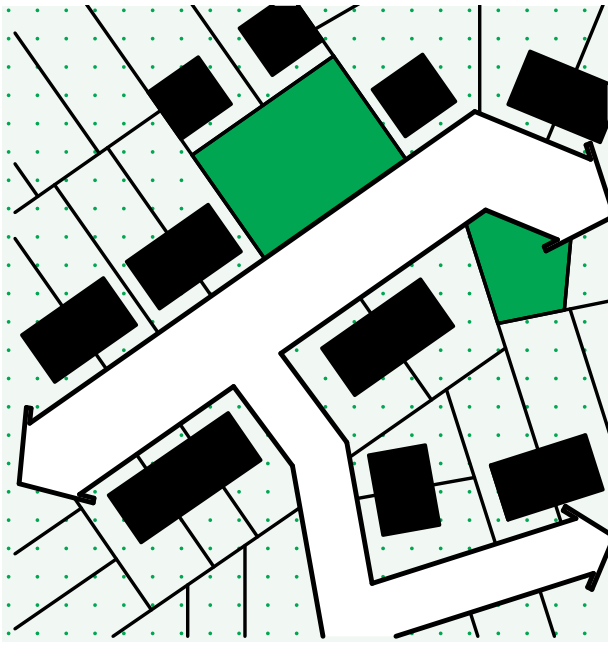
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RATIONAL STREET AND PLOT LAYOUTS

SS01.01

Plot, block and street geometries must be efficient with a clear delineation between the public, private and communal realm. Oddly shaped plots are inefficient as they result in undefined patches of green space which are difficult to maintain and have no clear ownership. Such block geometries also result in illegible and disconnected neighbourhoods. A grid is the most efficient block geometry and applicants must use this as a starting point that distorts to respond to the existing context including topography, views, landscape, etc.

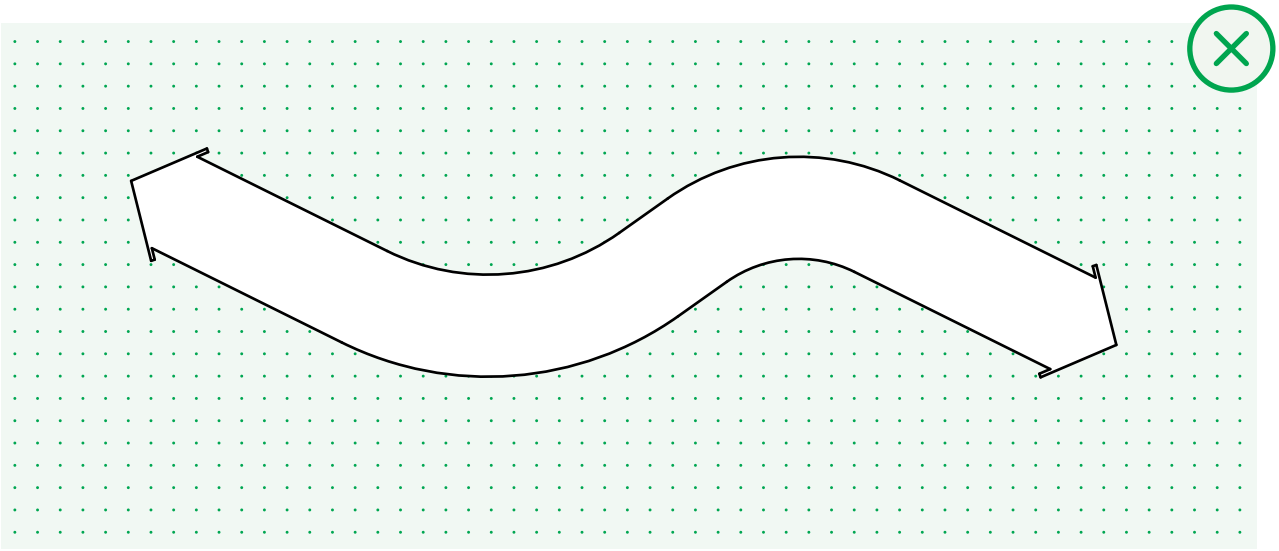


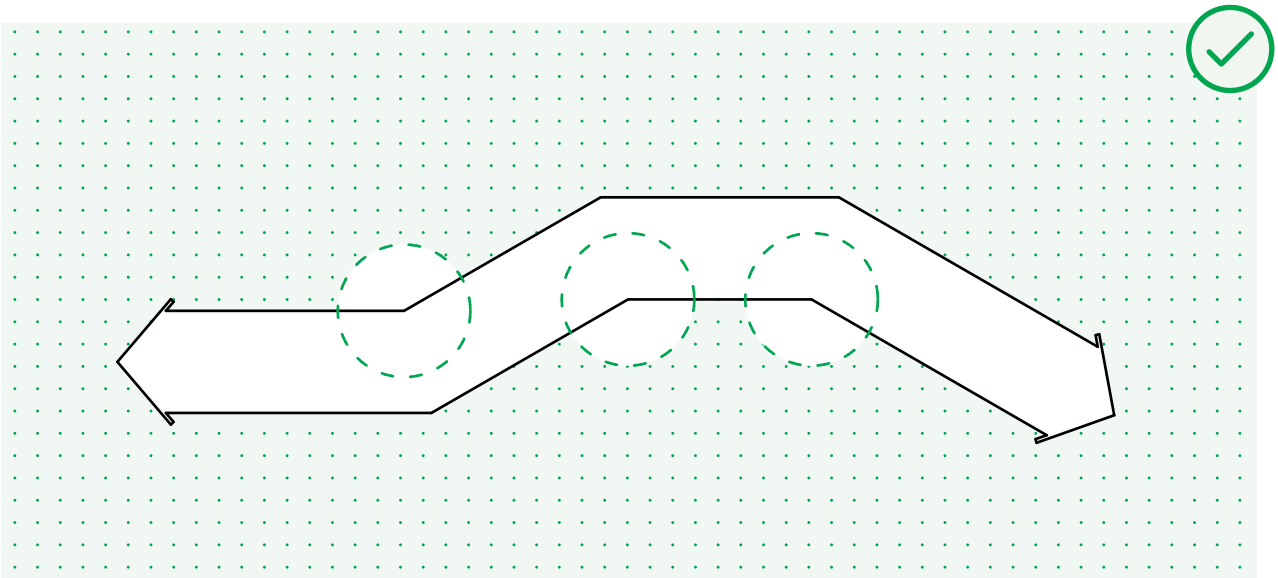


SS01.02

Where the topography requires a curving street geometry, the street must be made up of straight sections as per the diagram below with ‘events’ at the points of direction change. Constant radii geometries will not be permitted.

Events are defined as areas that foreground place-making features such as a focal building, tree, seating, play or non-residential use.





OPTIMISING LAND USE

SS02.01

In town and urban locations (including settlement extensions), the number of detached houses must be kept to under 30% of the total number of dwellings. This applies to development in and adjoining Letchworth Garden City, Baldock, Hitchin, Royston, Stevenage and Luton.

In all other locations, the number of detached houses must be kept to under 50% of the total number of dwellings.

Semi-detached example in rural context (XXXX), More info →

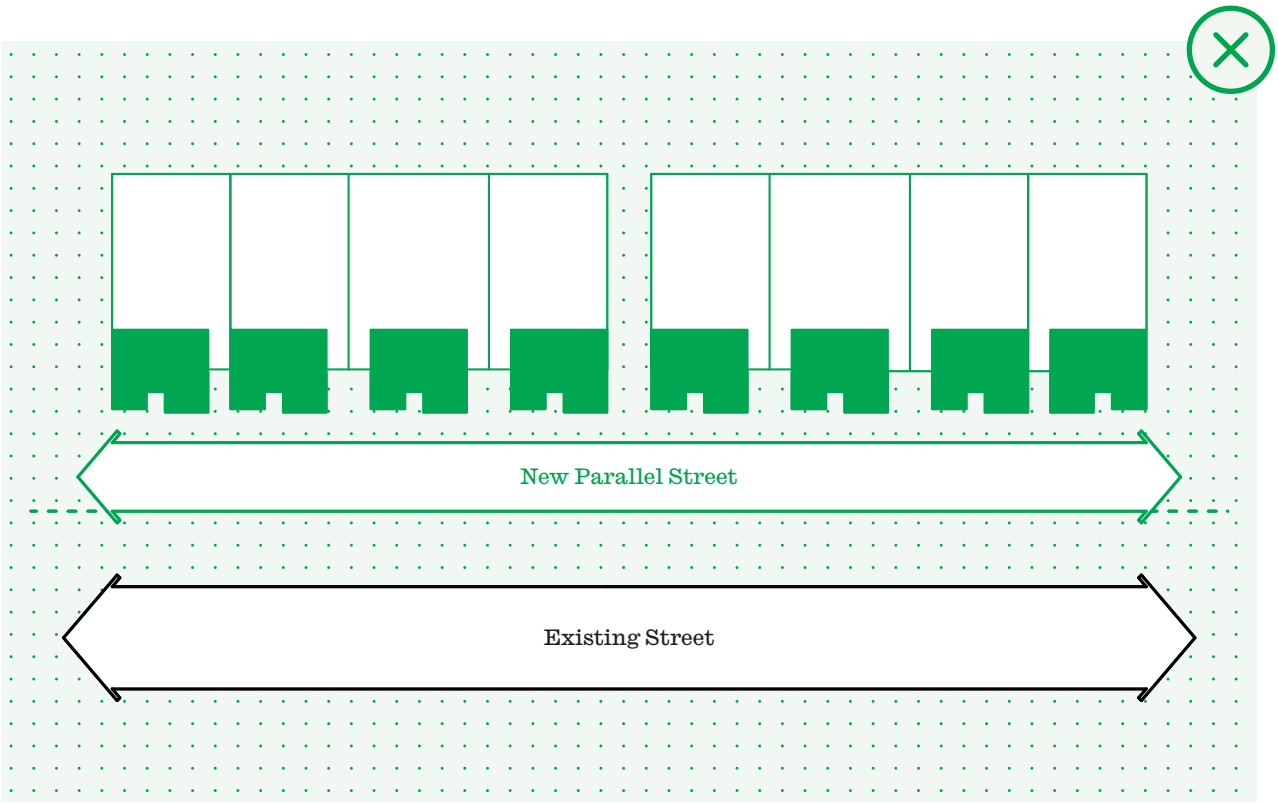
RESPONDING TO EDGES

The way in which development addresses the site's edge conditions is integral in delivering legible settlement patterns and connected communities. 'Islands' of housing that pull back from site boundaries must be avoided in favour of developments that positively address the edges as a starting point for design.

SS03.01-03 set out high-level requirements that must be adhered to when developing proposals for edges. SS03.04 -07 cover requirements when dealing with specific and commonly occurring edge conditions such as significant ecological assets and existing streets.

SS03.01

Movement corridors such as streets and routes must not be repeated over red line boundaries. For example, a new road that runs parallel to an existing road must be designed out through alternative vehicular access for homes fronting the existing road.

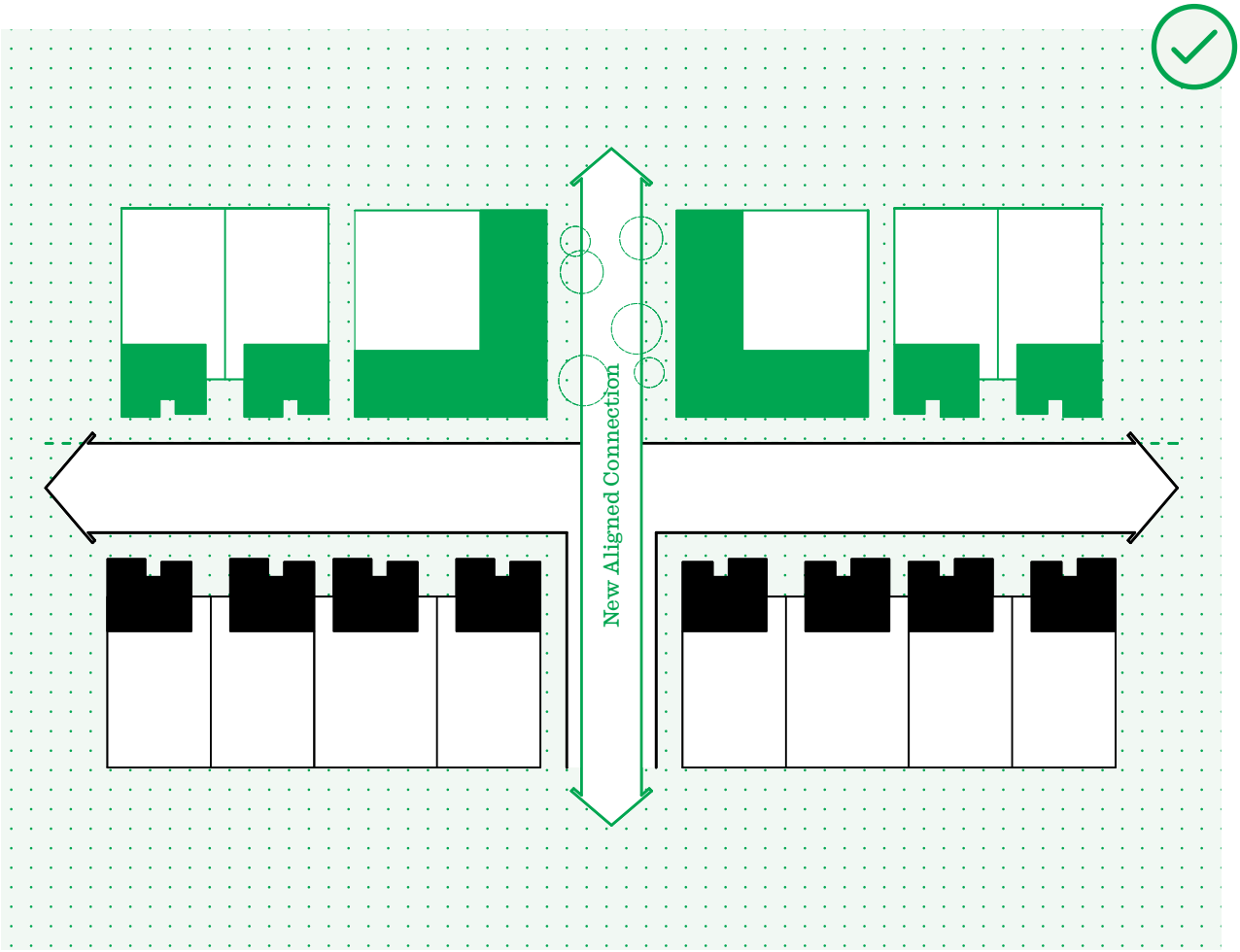


SS03.02

Built form conditions must be mirrored across red line boundaries to create legible settlement patterns. For example, backs must always face backs, whilst fronts must always face fronts. ‘Back to front’ built form conditions will not be permitted.

SS03.03

When a new development adjoins an existing neighbourhood, connections must align with existing desire lines.

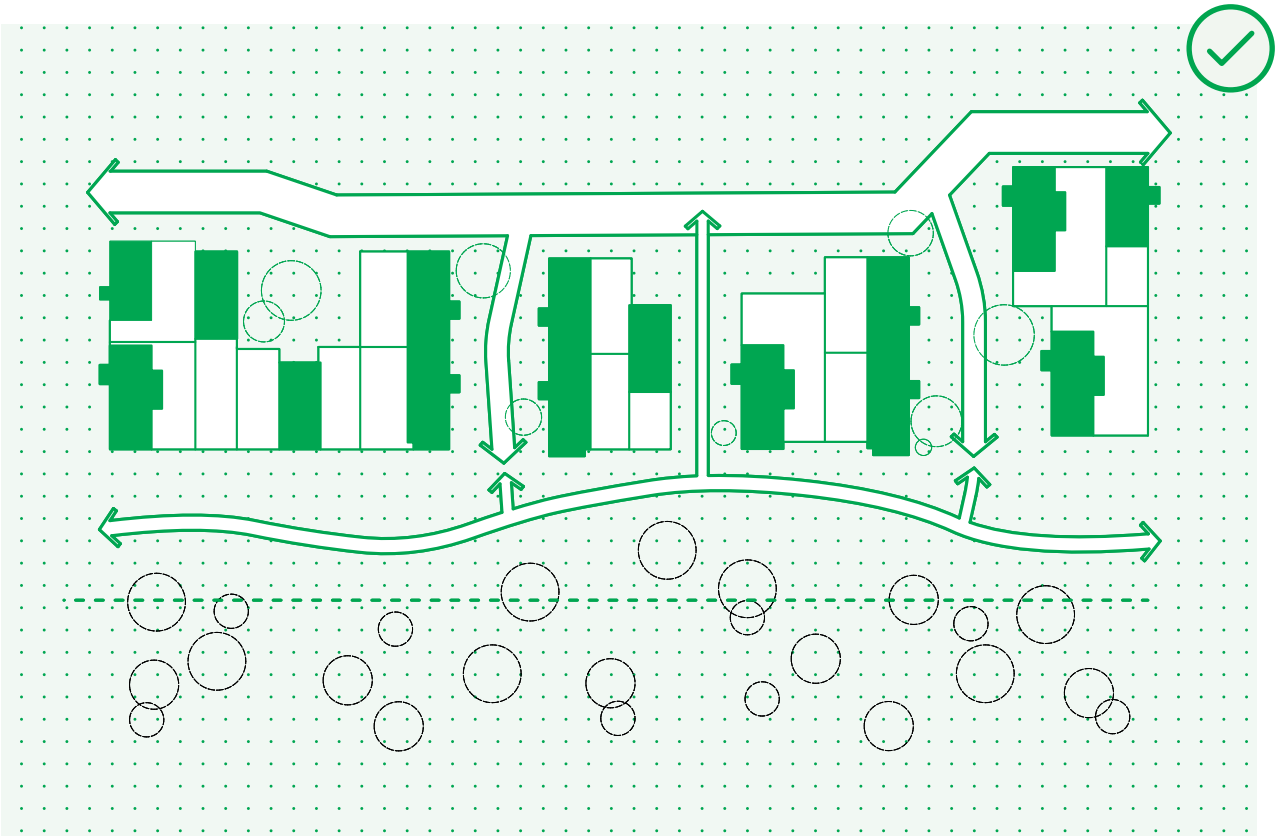


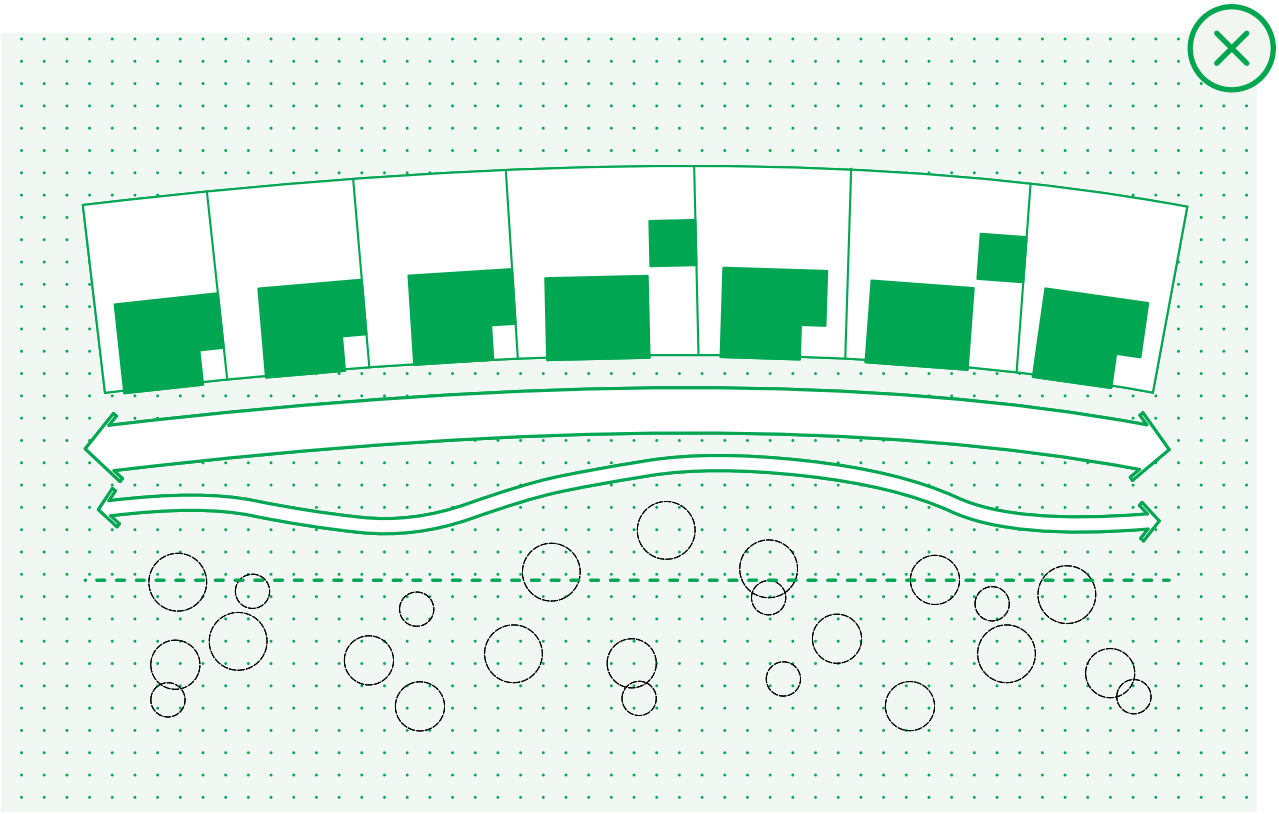
SS03.04 Significant Ecological Assets

When responding to significant ecological assets such as Important Hedgerows and ancient woodlands, proposals must be in accordance with the code below as illustrated in Figure SS03.04.

1.1A Public Realm	Proposals must incorporate a linear open space with a wild and natural character to form a buffer between the edge of built form and significant ecological asset.
1.1B Ecology	The linear open space must incorporate complimentary planting to support the biodiversity of the significant ecological asset. Refer to OS11 for appropriate species. Boundary treatments must consider the use of hedgehog holes to ensure permeability for such species on natural edges.
1.1C Built Form Frontage	Built form must be arranged to frame regular views out to the landscape from the development within connections to the linear open space every 25-50m. The linear open space must be defined primarily by sides of homes that must include fenestration to habitable rooms to achieve passive surveillance. Proposals must incorporate robust private amenity boundary treatments such as walls. Fencing is not permitted for any boundaries defining the linear open space.
1.1D Movement	Vehicular movement must be limited to Spur Streets and a main access street set back by one plot to create a car-free edge to the significant ecological asset and supporting linear open space. A recreational route must be incorporated into the linear open space with regular connections every 25-50m to the street network.
1.1E Parking	Parking fronting the linear open space and significant ecological asset will not be permitted.

Figure SS03.04:







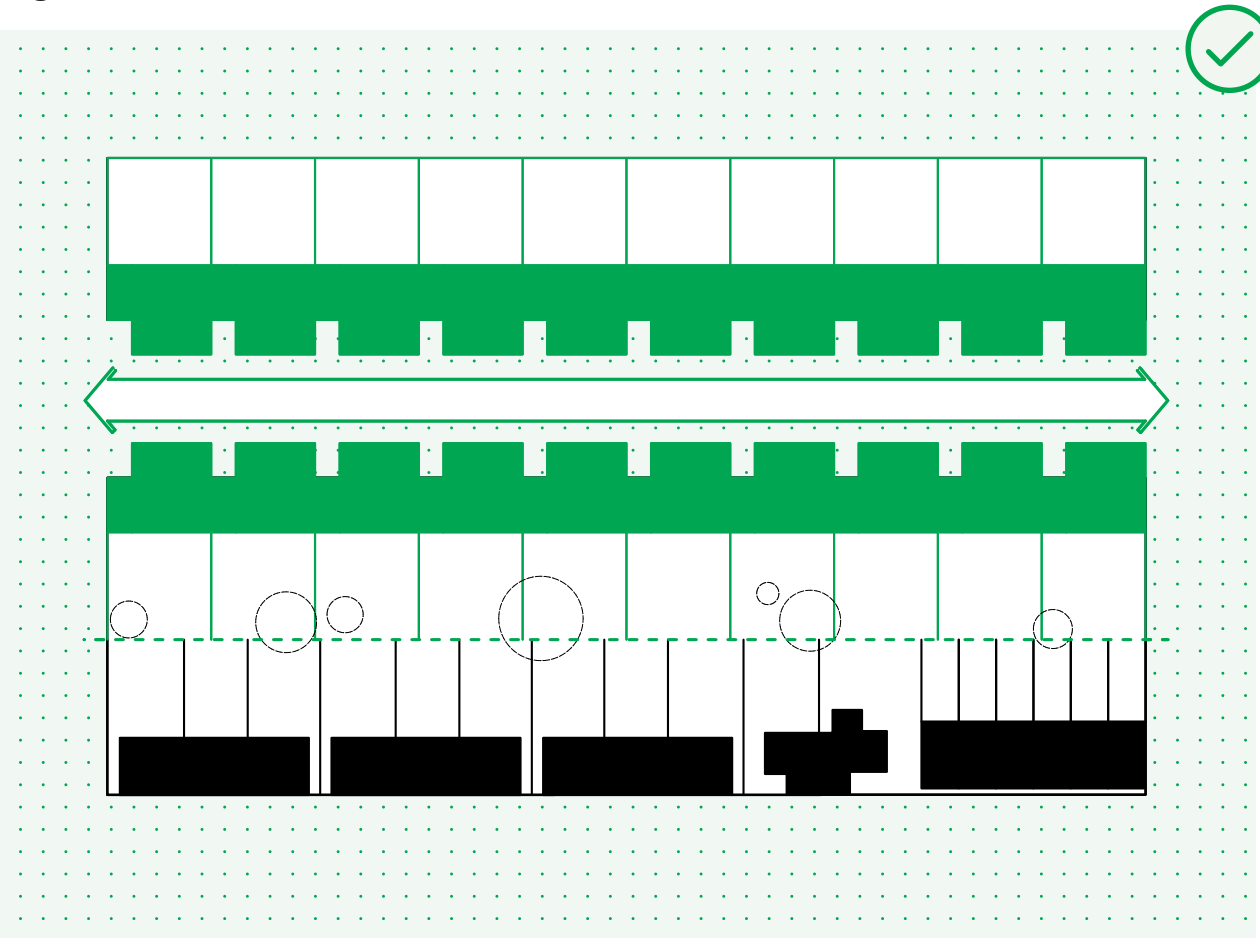
Abode, Great Kneighton, Proctor and Matthews (2019), More info →

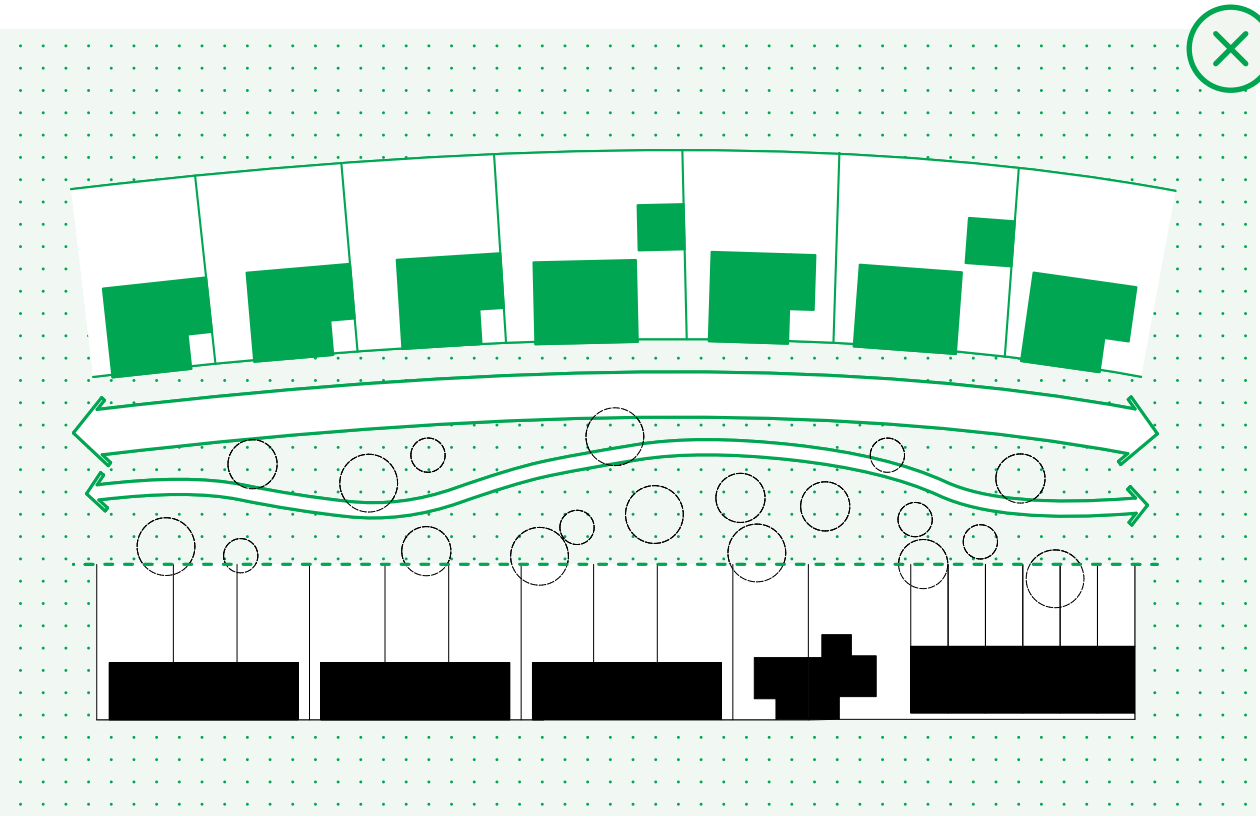
SS03.05 Rear Gardens

When responding to existing rear fences or walls, such as rear gardens, proposals must be in accordance with the code below as illustrated in Figure SS03.05.

1.1F Public Realm	Proposals must not incorporate public realm between rear gardens as such spaces will be poorly overlooked and difficult to maintain.
1.1G Ecology	Existing trees must be integrated into proposed rear gardens to provide screening and privacy.
1.1H Built Form Frontage	The existing rear garden condition must be mirrored across the site boundary.
1.1I Movement	A rear servicing alley for the movement of bikes and bins may be incorporated to the back of rear gardens if required.
1.1J Parking	Terrace parking courts, farmstead parking courts, rear parking courts and rear parking drives are permitted along this edge.

Figure SS03.05:



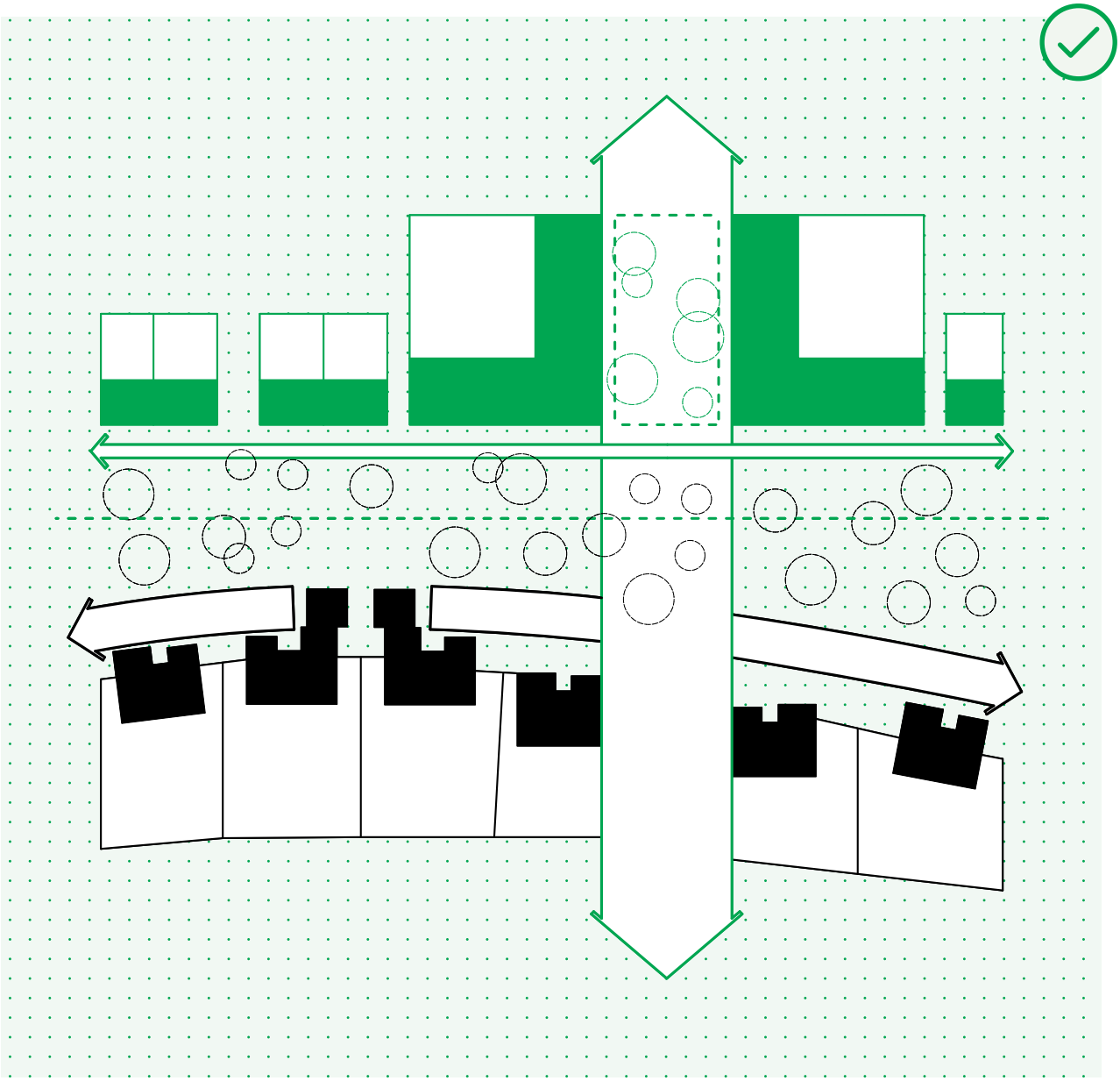


SS03.06 Private Drives and Edge Lanes

When responding to existing built form frontage arranged along private drives and/or edge lanes, proposals must be in accordance with the code below as illustrated in Figure SS03.06.

1.1K Public Realm	Proposals must incorporate a public space at the connection point that is at least the width of the existing built form to safeguard clear sight lines from existing to new neighbourhoods.
1.1L Ecology	Ecological assets must be retained where possible, but removed around connection points to create clear sight lines. Where there is a requirement to retain connectivity for flying species, 'hop overs' must be incorporated.
1.1M Built Form Frontage	Connection points must be emphasized through a change in built form typology, massing and/or materiality.
1.1N Movement	The connection point must be aligned to routes into the existing context to create direct and legible connections over the site boundary. Edge Lanes are permitted if the distance between built form frontages between new and existing exceeds 25m. If the distance between built form frontages between new and existing is less than 25m, then the proposal must incorporate a car free frontage to the site boundary, with rear vehicular access.
1.1O Parking	Accommodated on the Edge Lane (if permitted).

Figure SS03.06:

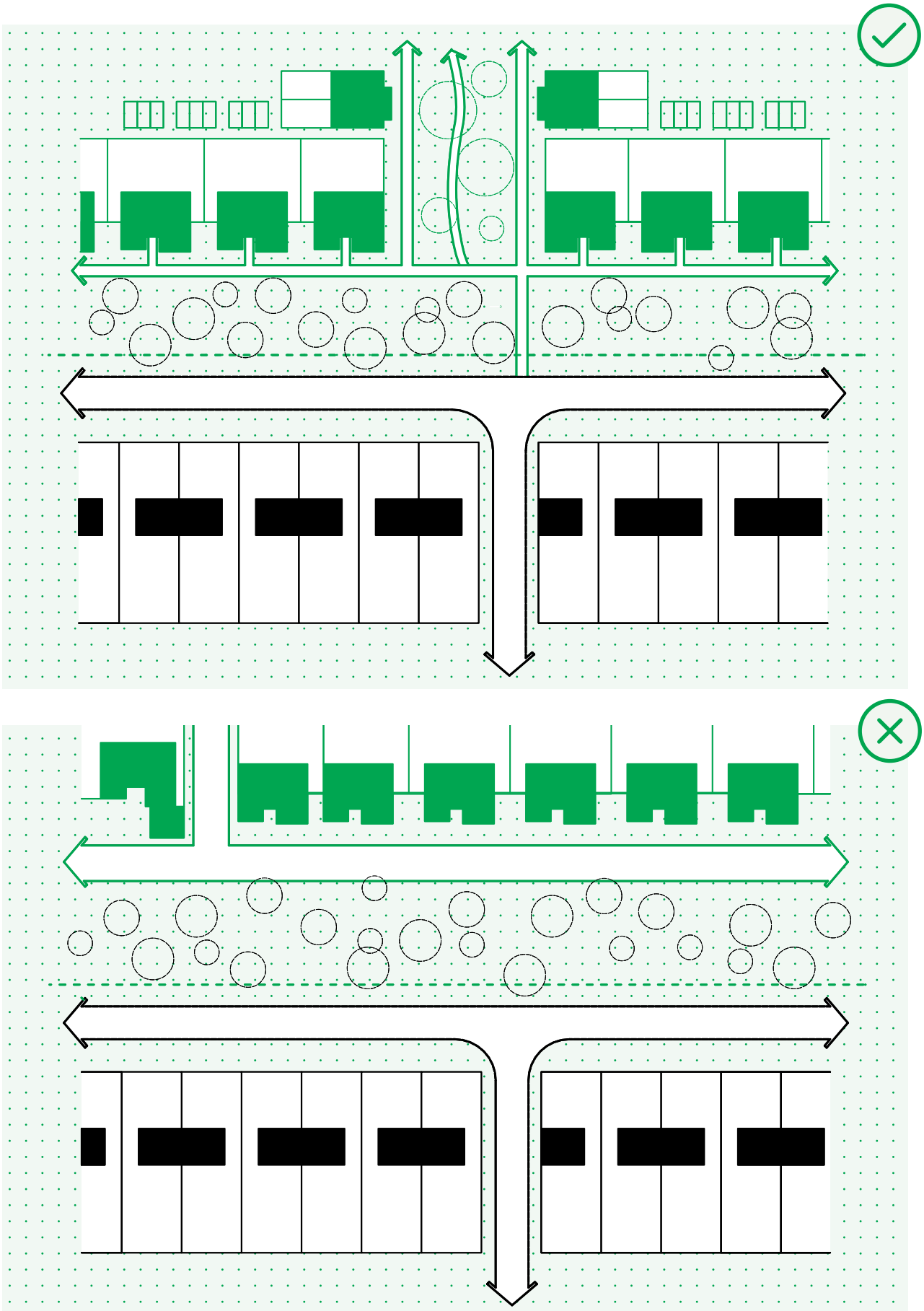


SS03.07 Existing Streets

When responding to existing streets, proposals must be in accordance with the code below as illustrated in Figure SS03.07. Using one half of ST03 Avenues is appropriate for these edge conditions.

1.1P Public Realm	Civic squares must be provided at key connection points to emphasize important routes into the new development.
1.1Q Ecology	Ecological assets along this boundary must be retained where possible and incorporated into a planted verge or generous front gardens.
1.1R Built Form Frontage	Proposed built form must mirror the existing condition in terms of frontage and front garden depth to create a balanced two-sided street.
1.1S Movement	Provision of a new street running parallel to the existing will not be permitted. If frontage access from the existing street is not possible, then homes along this edge must be serviced from the rear.
1.1T Parking	Accommodated to the interior of the plot through rear access streets or courts (if permitted).

Figure SS03.07:



WELL-INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

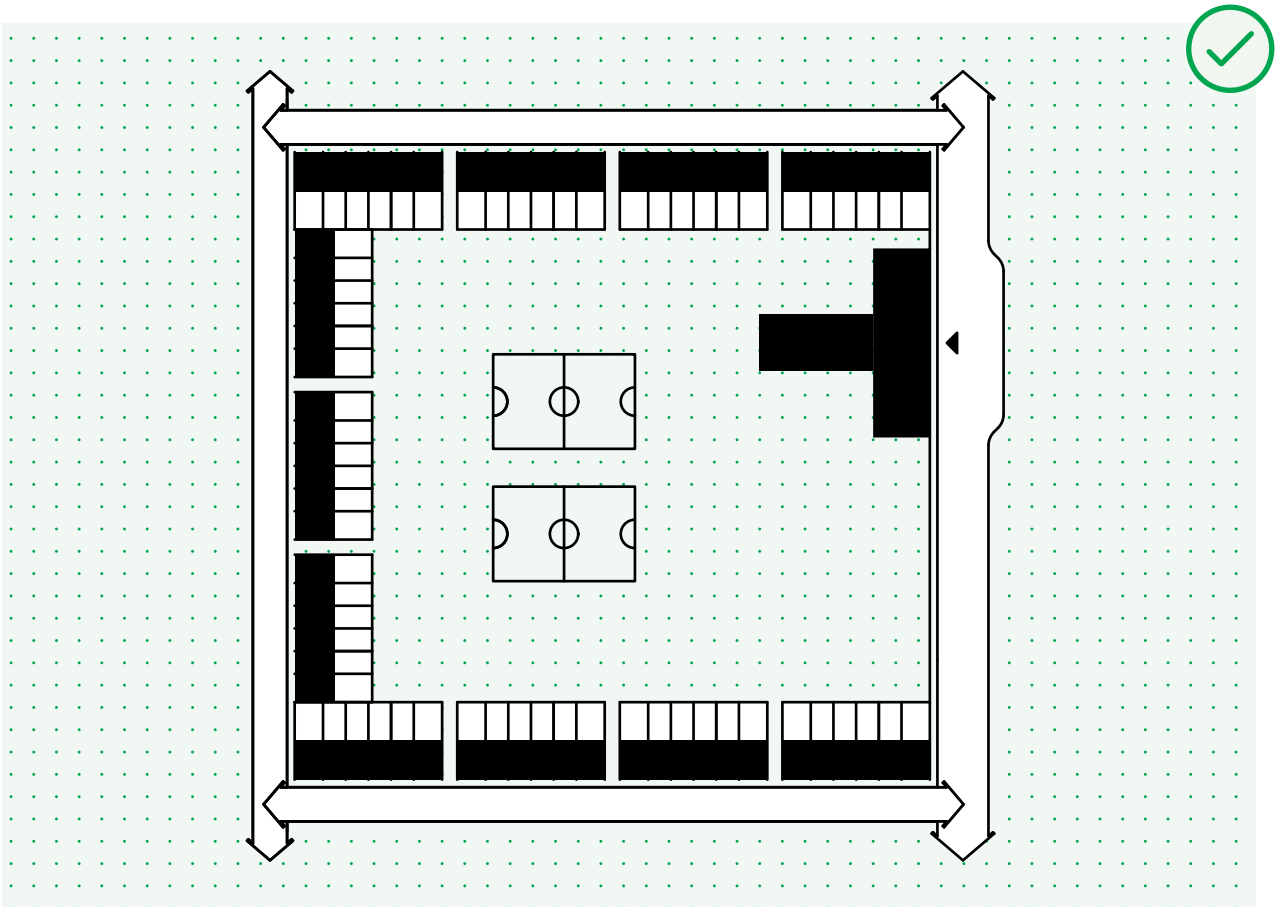
SS04.01

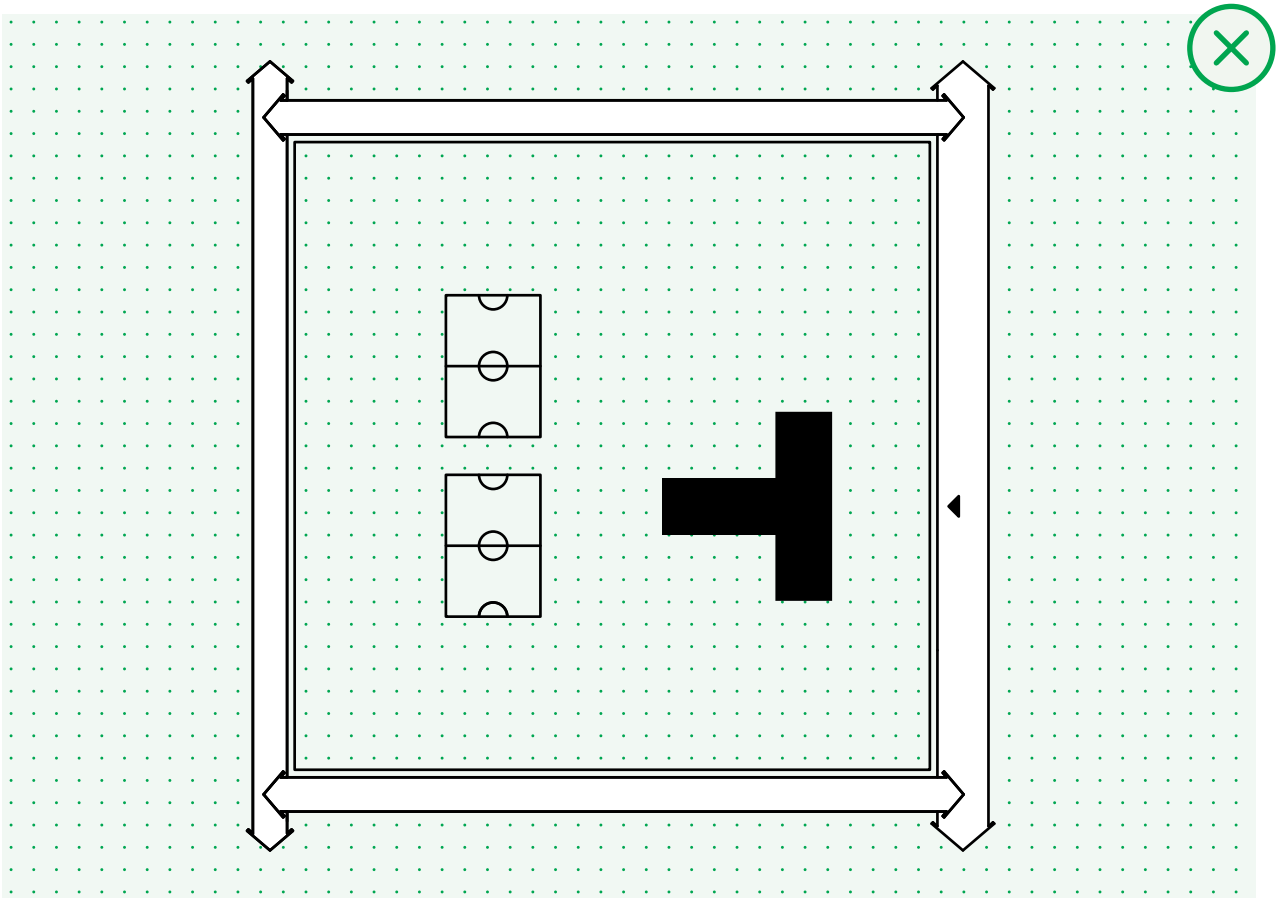
Schools must maximise active edges and contribute positively to street life by completing the urban block and addressing the building line.

SS04.02

Fencing around schools must be minimised by placing school buildings at the edges of the plot and ‘wrapping’ remaining edges with residential properties as shown opposite.

Schools placed at the centre of plots with fencing to the perimeter will not be permitted.





LEGIBLE FOCAL POINTS

SS05.01

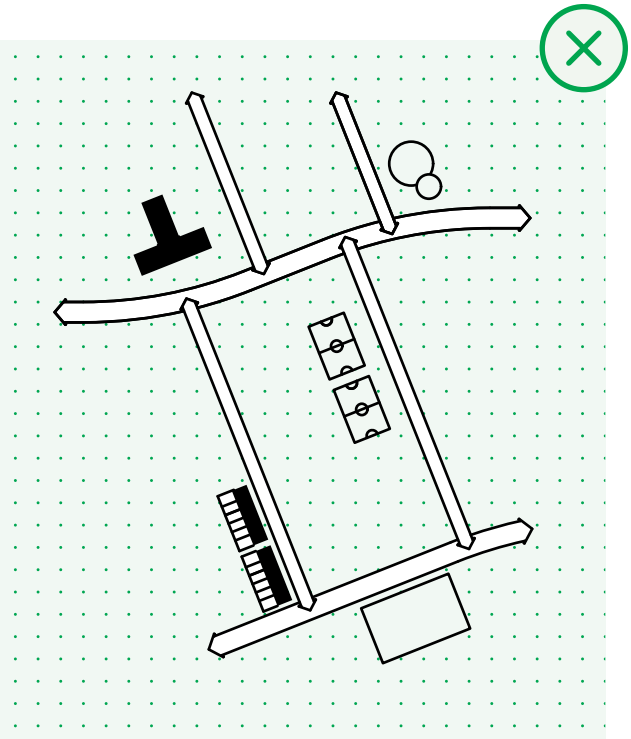
All developments must be designed with focal points and key destinations in mind. In smaller developments, proposals must be designed to encourage safe and sustainable routes to key destinations that are likely to be delivered outside the site boundary or exist already.

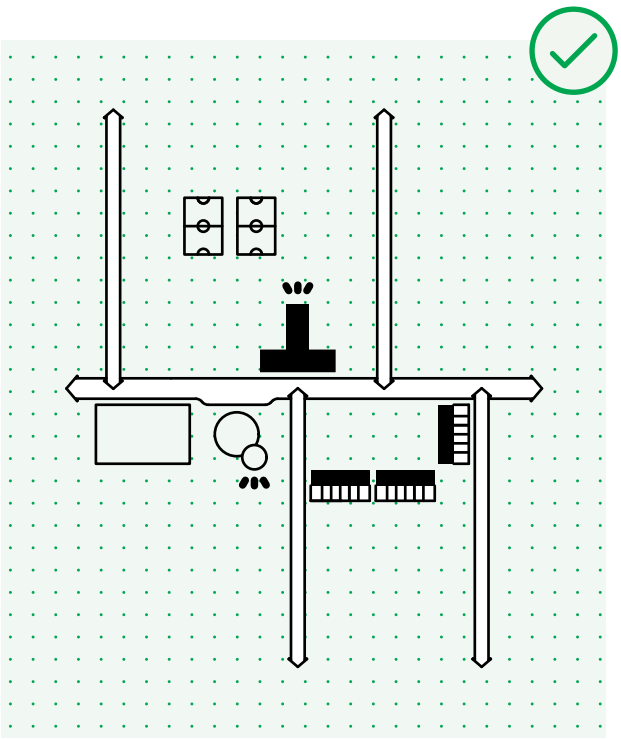
In larger developments (100+ homes), proposals must be designed around focal points that co-locate key social infrastructure such as open spaces, play, schools, shops, pubs, community spaces and allotments to attract a range of users and foster community cohesion.

Dispersed social infrastructure creates illegible neighbourhoods and will not be permitted.

SS05.02

Schools must be co-located with at least one other element of social infrastructure, as illustrated opposite.





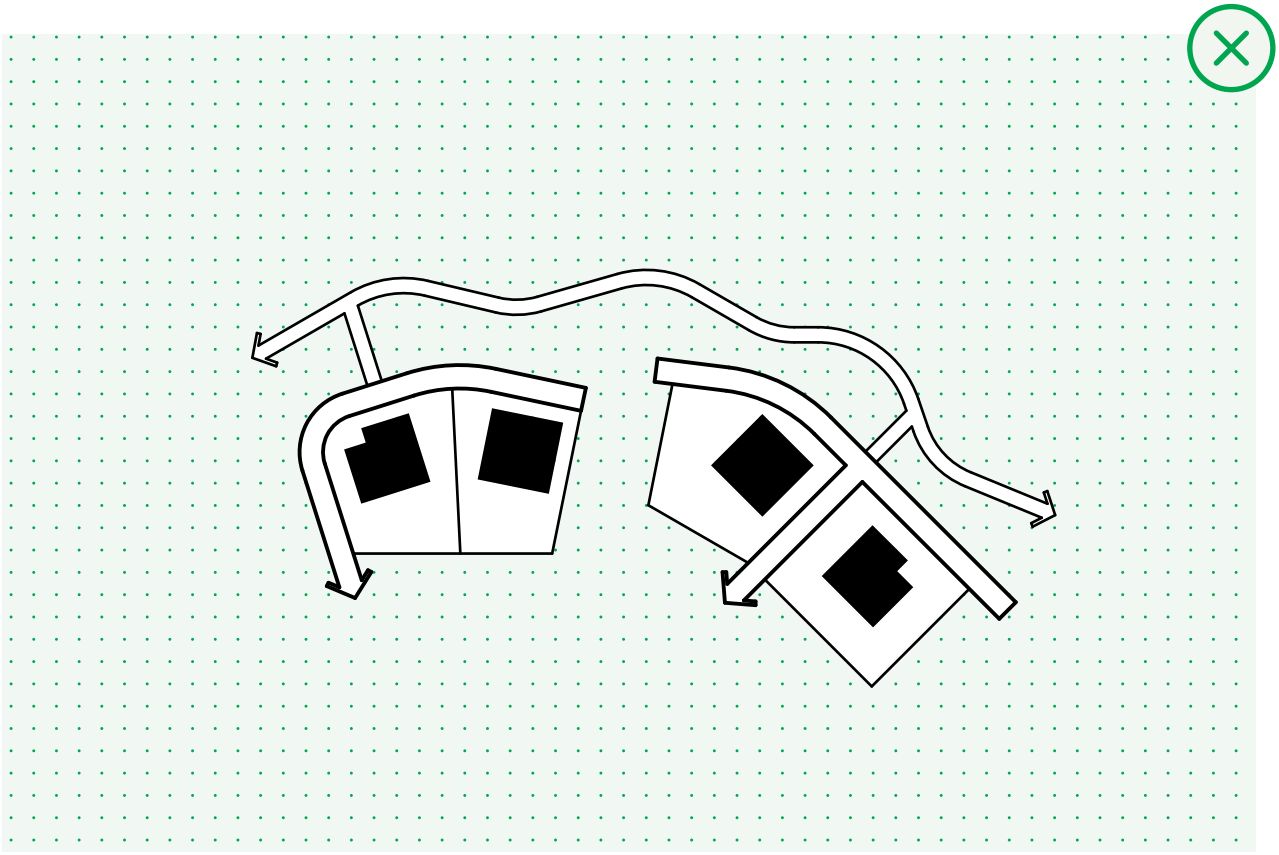
PRIVATE DRIVES AND CUL DE SACS

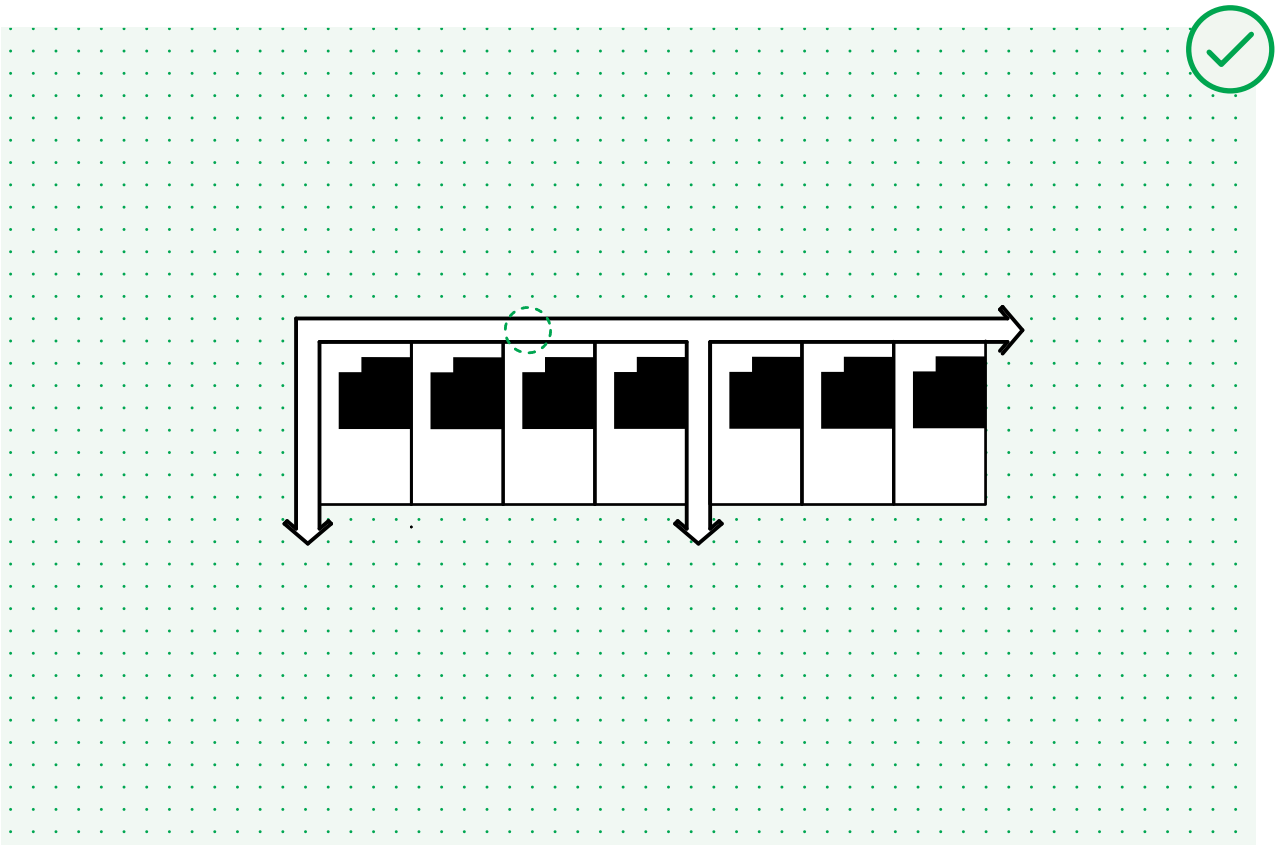
SS06.01

Private drives and cul-de-sac based street patterns will not be permitted.

Private drives are defined as pedestrian 'dead ends' usually at the edges of development that frustrate pedestrian and active travel permeability. Private drives also do not support tenure neutral communities and create privatised areas within the public realm.

Cul-de-sacs with no pedestrian routes through must be designed out through the use of Edge Lanes (see ST10) as illustrated in the diagram opposite.





OPEN SPACE PROVISION

OS01.01 – Quantum

All development must provide open space as per the Developer Contributions SPD and FiT 2024 guidance as outlined in the table below.

Category	Sub-Category	Quantum Required (sqm per person)
Open Space	Park and Gardens	8
	Amenity Green Space	6
	Natural/Semi-Natural	18
Play Space	Equipped Designated Play Areas	25
	Informal Play Provision	3
Total Open Space and Play Quantum:		60

OS01.02 – Location and Size

Open space and play must be provided within the target distances and tiers as outlined in the table opposite.

Tier	Walking Distance from Homes (m)	Area (Ha)
1	100	0.03-0.5
2	400	0.5-2
3	1000	2-5
4	1200	5-10

OS01.03 – Play Provision

As a minimum, LAPs must be provided in Tier 1 spaces, LEAPs in Tier 2 spaces and NEAPs in Tier 3 spaces. Informal play provision can be accommodated in any tier of open space or along streets.

OS01.04 – FiT Sub-Categories

All tiers of open space should accommodate a mixture of landscape categories (parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural/semi-natural) to create mixed and multi-functional open spaces.

OS01.05 – Access

Access to a higher tier open space does not negate the need for access to a lower tier as all homes must be within the target distance of all tiers of open space.

OS01.06 – Thresholds

The below table (from FiT 2024) is used to determine how much play needs to be provided based on the number of homes. The table must also be used to determine which tiers of open space must be delivered on developments of different scales.

Homes	Informal Play	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
2-20	x	-	-	-	-
21-100	x	x	-	-	-
101-500	x	x	x	-	-
501-1000	x	x	x	x	-
1000+	x	x	x	x	x

The following pages include design requirements for each of the categories described. OS03-06 covers requirements for Tier 1-4 Open Spaces, organised around key parameters, access, nature, uses, seating, materiality and facilities.
OS07-09 covers requirements for the three different types of formalised play organised around key parameters, access, nature, play, seating, materiality and facilities.

INFORMAL PLAY

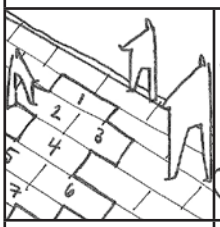
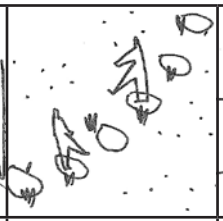
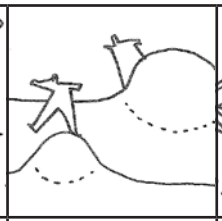
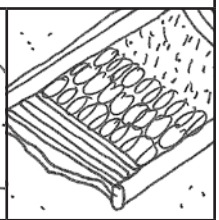
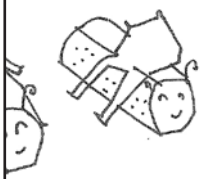
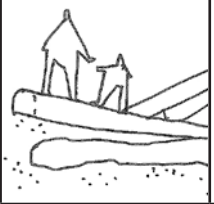
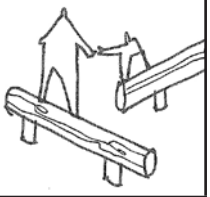
Informal play is required on developments of all scales to ensure development is child-friendly and caters to a range of users. There are three main categories of informal play as described in the Fields In Trust Standards 2024; natural play on the way, social areas for teenagers and active play.

In developments of 2-20 homes, informal play provision is likely to be delivered as natural play on the way. In developments of 21-100 homes, informal play provision is likely to be delivered as a combination of natural play on the way and social areas for teenagers. In developments of more than 100 homes, informal play provision is likely to be delivered as a combination of all three types.

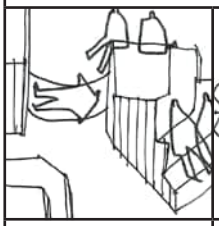
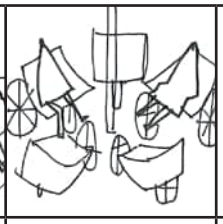
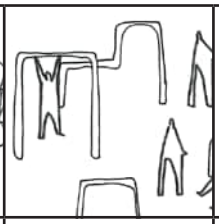
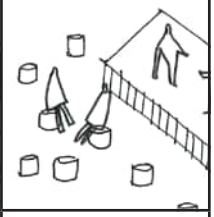
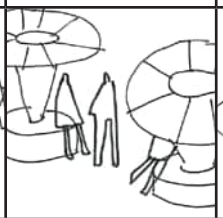
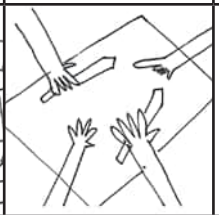
Any provision that does not comply with the below requirements will not be counted towards a site's informal play provision.

Play on the Way Example (XXXX), More info →

OS02.01 – Natural Play on the Way

<table>
<tr><td>02.06A Access</td><td colspan="4">Must not be enclosed by any formal barriers such as fencing or gates.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">02.06B Location</td><td colspan="4">Suitable locations include along formal and leisure routes in Tier 2,3 and 4 Open Spaces that are outside any formal play provision. They can also be incorporated in social spaces on streets, in dry attenuation basins (see OS11) and Green Streets (see ST03).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Local Areas for Play are distinct from Informal Play provision and must not be double counted.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">02.06C Features</td><td colspan="4">Natural play on the way clusters must incorporate one or more of the following natural features.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Hopscotch stones</td><td>Stepping stones and boulders</td><td>Ground modelling (hills and mounds)</td><td>Barefoot trail (minimum 5 textures)</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Wooden sculptures with seating</td><td>Tree stump trail</td><td>Log piles</td><td>Log balancing beams</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Boardwalk and timber crossings</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

OS02.02 – Social Spaces for Teenagers

<table>
<tr><td>02.01A Access</td><td colspan="4">Must not be enclosed by any formal barriers such as fencing or gates.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">02.01B Location</td><td colspan="4">Suitable locations include along formal and leisure routes in Tier 2,3 and 4 Open Spaces that are outside any formal play provision. They can also be incorporated in civic squares and plazas - especially encouraged in public realm areas outside secondary schools.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Social spaces for teenagers are mandatory in Tier 2 and 3 Open Spaces (see OS04, OS05) and will count towards informal play provision.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">02.01C Features</td><td colspan="4">Social spaces for teenagers must incorporate one or more of the following features.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Multi-level seating and climbing unit</td><td>Social exercise space</td><td>Hanging and leaning bar installat-ion</td><td>Stage with informal seating</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Social swings and hammock area</td><td>Sculptured sheltered area with seating</td><td>Any other feature co-designed with focus group</td><td></td></tr>
</table>



Frizon Arstidernas Park, Umea, Sweden, Tyrens Architects with Kerstin Bergendal (2016), More info →

Gender inclusive skatepark example (XXXX), More info →

OS02.03 – Active Play

02.03A Access	MUGAs and Ball Courts must not have fencing on more then 50% of the perimeter. Where fencing is required, all fences must be below 1.2m and visually permeable. MUGAs and Ball Courts must have entrances on two or more sides.
	Pump tracks, skateparks, skate areas, bouldering walls and parkour elements must not be enclosed by fencing. If barriers are required, landscaping solutions must be incorporated.
02.03B Location	All elements of active play must be co-located with a sociable space for teenagers feature to encourage a gender-inclusive public realm.
02.03C Features	Pump tracks, skateparks and skate areas must provide progression routes that cater to beginner, intermediate and advanced levels to appeal to wide range of users.

TIER I OPEN SPACES

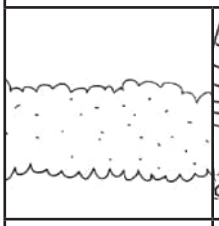
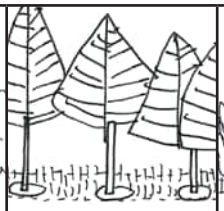
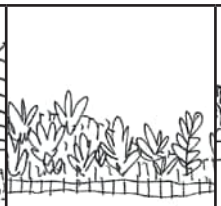
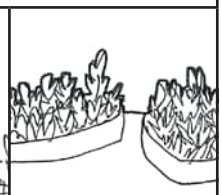
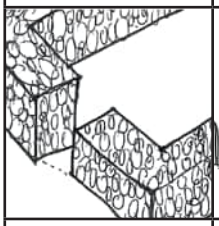
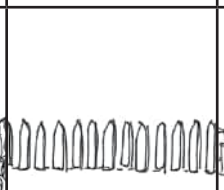
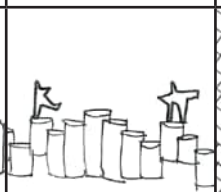
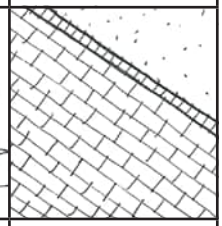
Tier 1 Open Spaces are small greens located close to homes, offering easy access to nature as part of daily life. They provide informal places for neighbours to meet, safe play opportunities for very young children, and simple spots for quiet rest. These spaces help create a welcoming, community-focused residential environment.

OS03.01– Key Parameters

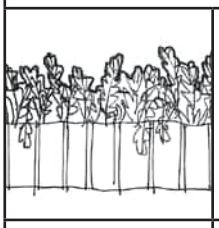
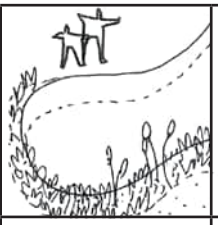
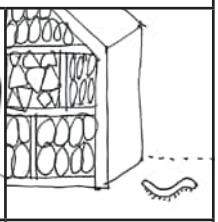
03.01A Distance	All homes must be within 100m of a Tier 1 Open Space.
03.01B Size	Must be between 0.03-0.5 hectares in size.
03.01C Critical Dimensions	Must not be less than 10m in width at any point for linear spaces.
03.01D Offset	No minimum offset.
03.01E Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 50% of their edges. Directly surrounding streets must not be classified as M3 or above (as per HCC PMPDG).
03.01F Community Co-design	Required if delivered as part of a wider engagement strategy on larger sites.
03.01G Public Art	Not required unless part of a wider strategy on larger sites.

North Herts Tier 1 Open Space Example (XXXX), More info →

OS03.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

<table>
<tr><td>03.01H Access</td><td colspan="4">Must be open for public use at all times of the day with no gates or lockable barriers.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">03.01I Boundary Treatments</td><td colspan="4">Must be selected from one of the below options - combinations are permitted.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Hedge (maximum height 1.5m)</td><td>Row of trees</td><td>Planting</td><td>Planters</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Low brick or gabion wall (maximum height 1.5m)</td><td>Low timber posts</td><td>Sculptural play elements</td><td>Surface materiality change</td></tr>
<tr><td>03.01J Routes Through</td><td colspan="4">No coded requirements.</td></tr>
<tr><td>03.01K Accessibility</td><td colspan="4">All Tier 1 Open Spaces must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the Open Space and gradients no steeper than 1/20.</td></tr>
</table>

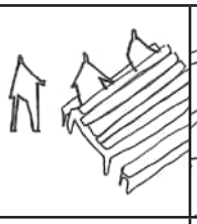
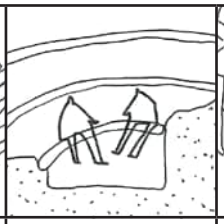
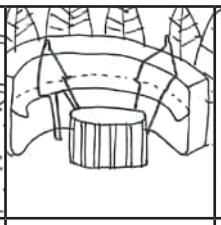
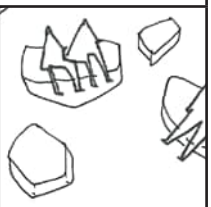
OS03.03 – Nature and Ecology

03.02A Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 30% of the total area at maturity.			
03.02B Soft Landscaping	Must contribute to ecological enhancements and climate resilience.			
03.02C Priority Planting	No coded requirements.			
03.02D Ecological Features	Must include a minimum of one of the following ecological features.			
				
	Nectar rich planting	Permanent water body	Focal tree in Heavy Standard Size	Bug hotel
03.02E Productive Landscape	No coded requirements.			

OS03.04 – Use(s)

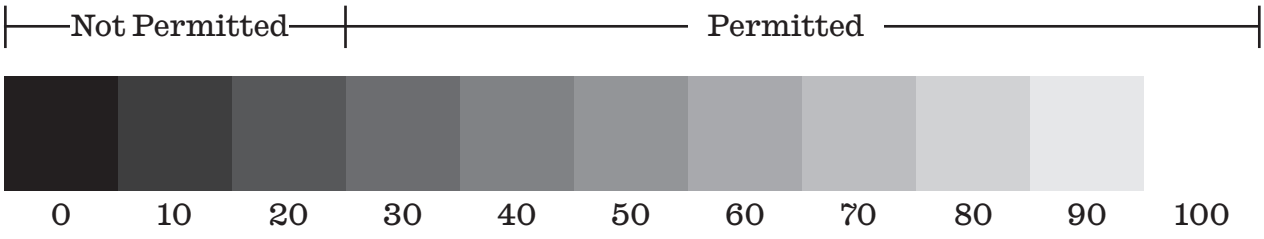
03.03A Play	Must incorporate a Local Area for Play (LAP).
03.03B Sport	Must not incorporate any formal sporting provision due to the proximity to homes.
03.03C Community and Social	Sociable seating is the main form of encouraging community interaction.

OS03.05 – Seating and Rest

03.05A Sociable Seating	Must provide at least one of the following sociable seating types from the list below at 3 heights as per BS8300-1:2018. One seating area must be provided per 0.3Ha of Open Space.			
				
	Picnic bench(es)	Raked audience seating	Seating booth	Natural seating cluster
03.05B Rest Spots	No coded requirements.			

OS03.06 – Materiality

03.06A Surfacing	Hardstanding must not exceed 50% of the total area.
03.06B Materials	Hard surfacing must be selected from one or more of the following options; permeable block paving, cobblestones, large format pavers and resin-bound gravel.
	Softer surfacing materials must be used around play. Permitted materials include wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip.
03.06C Colour and Tone	All hard surfacing materials must have a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of at least 35. Materials with an LRV below 35, including black, charcoal, graphite and similar dark tones will not be permitted.



Best practice linear Tier 1 Open Space Example (XXXX), More info →

OS03.07 – Facilities

03.07A Cycle Parking	May be accommodated near or in Tier 1 Open Spaces.
03.07B Vehicular Parking	May be co-located with parking (see PA02).
03.07C Waste Bins	Not required.
03.07D Public Toilets	Not required.
03.07E Drinking Fountains	Not required.
03.07F Medical Equipment	Not required.

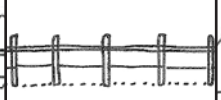
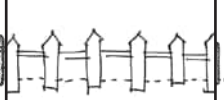
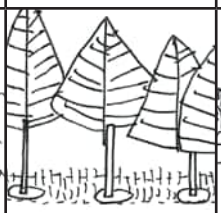
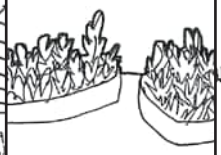
TIER 2 OPEN SPACES

Tier 2 Open Spaces are larger local greens that provide a convenient mix of nature, recreation and play within a short walk of homes. They support a variety of activities, from play to relaxed leisure and casual use of open grassed areas. These spaces also include features that create welcoming opportunities for older children.

OS04.01– Key Parameters

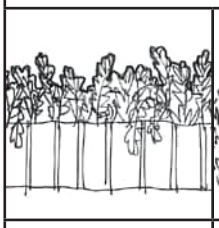
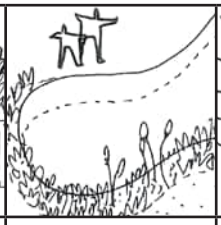
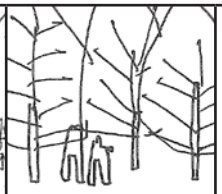
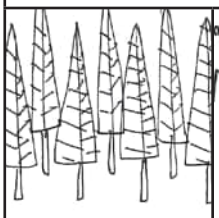
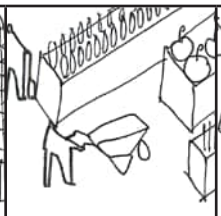
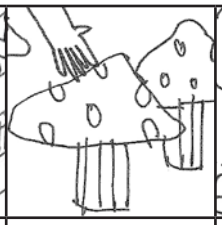
04.01A Distance	All homes must be within 400m of a Tier 2 Open Space.
04.01B Size	Must be between 0.5-2 hectares in size.
04.01C Critical Dimensions	No coded requirements.
04.01D Offset	No minimum offset.
04.01E Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 75% of their edges. Directly surrounding streets must not be classified as M3 or above (as per HCC PMPDG).
04.01F Community Co-design	Required if Tier 2 Open Space is the highest tier of open space required. A minimum of one focussed workshop as part of the design process required to involve the community.
04.01G Public Art	No coded requirements.

OS04.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

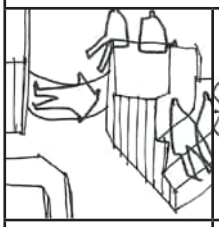
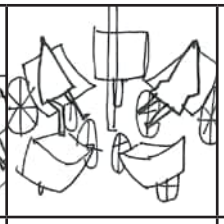
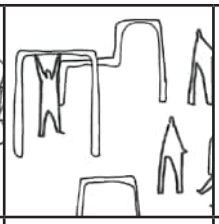
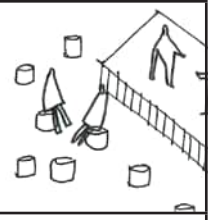
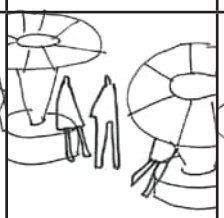
<table>
<tr><td>04.01H Access</td><td colspan="4">Must have a minimum of four entrance points which are well-signed and well-placed to align with connections beyond the Open Space boundary.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">All areas of the open space must be accessible to the public. Managed access via defined routes are not permitted to count towards the total area at this tier.</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.01I Boundary Treatments</td><td colspan="4">Must be selected from one of the below options (combinations are permitted). Formalised boundary treatments (shown on the top row) must be minimised and are only permitted when in close proximity to a road to prevent vehicle access. Natural boundary treatments (second row) must be prioritised.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Estate fencing with low hedge</td><td>Estate fencing</td><td>Timber knee rail</td><td>Timber posts</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Hedge (maximum 1.5m height)</td><td>Row of trees</td><td>Planters</td><td>Swale</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.01J Routes Through</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate surfaced routes that are direct and align with entrance points to provide access to key destinations within the Open Space.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a circular/peripheral leisure route (unsurfaced) to accommodate dog walkers and recreational users.</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.01K Accessibility</td><td colspan="4">Must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the Open Space and gradients no steeper than 1/20.</td></tr>
</table>

North Herts Tier 2 Open Space Example (XXXX), More info →

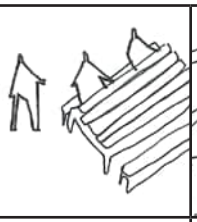
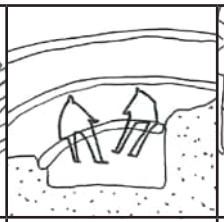
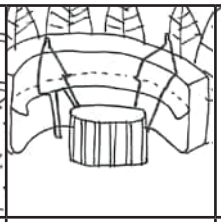
OS04.03 – Nature and Ecology

<table>
<tr><td>04.02A Canopy Cover</td><td colspan="4">Must have a minimum canopy cover of 30% of the total area at maturity.</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.02B Soft Landscaping</td><td colspan="4">Must contribute to ecological enhancements and climate resilience.</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.02C Priority Planting</td><td colspan="4">No coded requirements.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">04.02D Ecological Features</td><td colspan="4">Must include a minimum of two of the following ecological features.</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
Nectar rich planting</td><td> 
Permanent water body</td><td> 
Cluster of 3 focal trees in Heavy Standard Size</td><td>Trail of 3 bug hotels</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">04.02E Productive Landscape</td><td colspan="4">Must include a minimum of one of the following productive landscape features.</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
Orchard</td><td> 
Commu-nity garden with composting</td><td> 
Foraging space</td><td> 
Edible trail (along route)</td></tr>
</table>

OS04.04 – Use(s)

<table>
<tr><td>04.04A Play</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). May also incorporate LAPs and Informal Play.</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.04B Sport</td><td colspan="4">As per Tier 3 Open Space Sports Requirements.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">1.1A Community and Social</td><td colspan="4">Must include a kickabout area (part-shaded on the periphery) for picnic and leisure use that is proportional to the size of the open space.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Must include a minimum of one of the below features for teenagers and young adults. The features must be located along a key route, be independent of any formalised play for young children and be well-overlooked to discourage anti-social behaviour. Refer to Make Space for Girls ‘What does better look like?’ for further information.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Multi-level seating and climbing unit</td><td>Social exercise space</td><td>Hanging and leaning bar installat-ion</td><td>Stage with informal seating</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Social swings and hammock area</td><td>Sculptured sheltered area with seating</td><td>Any other feature co-designed with focus group</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

OS04.05 – Seating and Rest

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">04.05A Sociable Seating</td><td colspan="4">Must provide a minimum of two typologies of sociable seating selected from the list below. Quantum will be determined by Open Space size. In smaller Tier 2 Open Spaces (<1Ha), sociable seating requirements may be combined with requirements for teenagers and young adults.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Picnic bench(es)</td><td>Raked audience seating</td><td>Seating booth</td><td>Natural seating cluster</td></tr>
<tr><td>04.05B Rest Spots</td><td colspan="4">Must be provided every 50m along both formal and leisure routes. Rest spots may be single benches and need not be social.</td></tr>
</table>

OS04.06 – Materiality

04.06A Surfacing	No coded requirements.
04.06B Materials	Formalised paths must be surfaced in an unbounded resin material.
	Leisure paths may be surfaced with one the following options; mown path, self-binding gravel or crushed gravel.
04.06C Colour and Tone	As per Tier 1 Open Space requirements.

OS04.07 – Facilities

04.07A Cycle Parking	Must be provided at entrances and near destinations (such as play spaces and sporting facilities). Sheffield stands must a minimum of 1m apart.
04.07B Vehicular Parking	Parking provision must be carefully integrated into the design of the Open Space through tree planting, permeable surfacing and sensitive placement (ideally on the periphery near access streets). If more than 20 parking spaces are being provided, the parking area must be designed as a dual purpose space that can be used flexibly for community events (such as markets).
04.07C Waste Bins	Must be provided at entrances.
04.07D Public Toilets	If sports pavilions or buildings are being provided, then a publicly accessible toilet must be delivered as part of the provision.
04.07E Drinking Fountains	No coded requirements.
04.07F Medical Equipment	No coded requirements.

TIER 3 OPEN SPACES

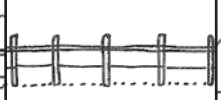
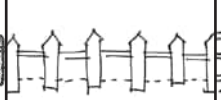
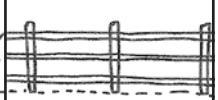
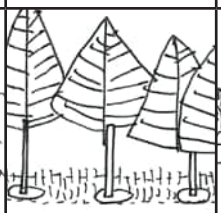
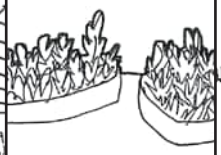
Tier 3 Open Spaces are large neighbourhood spaces that act as destinations, offering a broad mix of recreation, play and leisure for all ages. Designed to support community life, these spaces also accommodate events and gatherings through focal structures and supporting infrastructure. They are significant community assets that help shape neighbourhood identity.

OS05.01– Key Parameters

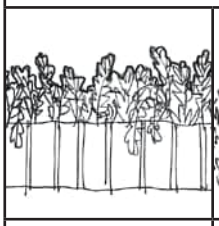
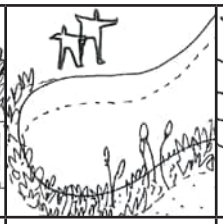
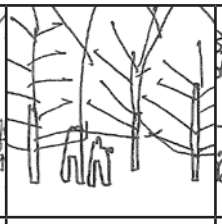
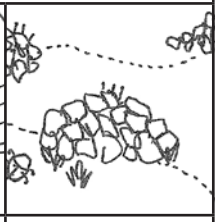
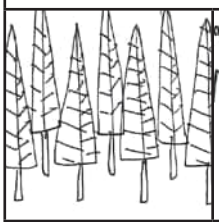
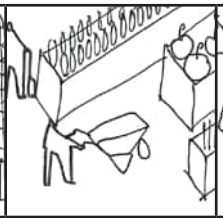
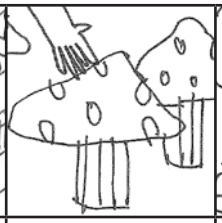
05.01A Distance	All homes must be within 1000m of a Tier 3 Open Space.
05.01B Size	Must be between 2-5 hectares in size.
05.01C Critical Dimensions	No coded requirements.
05.01D Offset	No minimum offset.
05.01E Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 75% of their edges.
05.01F Community Co-design	Community engagement with a range of age groups and users must be undertaken as part of the design process through focussed co-design workshops allowing the community to shape the character, design, function and users of the Open Space.
05.01G Public Art	Must incorporate a Public Art commission.

North Herts Tier 3 Open Space Example (XXXX), More info →

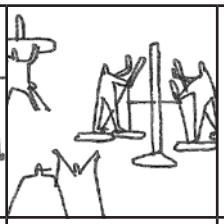
OS05.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

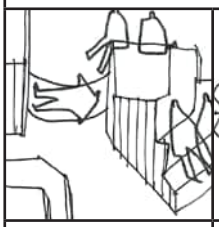
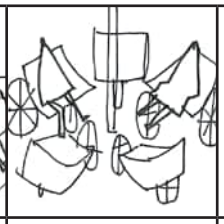
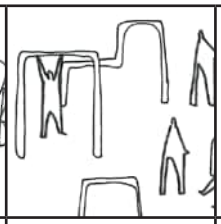
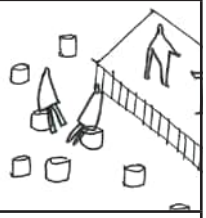
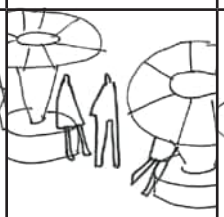
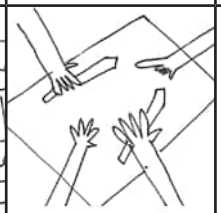
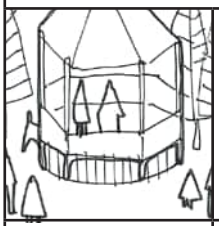
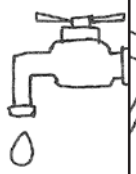
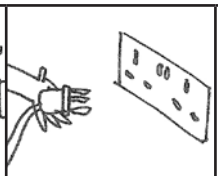
<table>
<tr><td>05.01H Access</td><td colspan="4">Must have a minimum of four entrance points which are well-signed and well-placed to align with connections beyond the Open Space boundary.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">All areas of the open space must be accessible to the public. Managed access via defined routes are not permitted to count towards the total area at this tier.</td></tr>
<tr><td>05.01I Boundary Treatments</td><td colspan="4">Must be selected from one of the below options (combinations are permitted). Formalised boundary treatments (shown on the top row) must be minimised and are only permitted when in close proximity to a road to prevent vehicle access. Natural boundary treatments (second row) must be prioritised.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Estate fencing with low hedge</td><td>Estate fencing</td><td>Timber knee rail</td><td>Post and rail fencing</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Hedge (maximum 1.5m height)</td><td>Row of trees</td><td>Planters</td><td>Swale</td></tr>
<tr><td>05.01J Routes Through</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate surfaced routes that are direct and align with entrance points to provide access to key destinations within the Open Space.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a circular/peripheral leisure route (unsurfaced) to accommodate dog walkers and recreational users.</td></tr>
<tr><td>05.01K Accessibility</td><td colspan="4">Must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the Open Space and gradients no steeper than 1/20.</td></tr>
</table>

OS05.03 – Nature and Ecology

<table>
<tr><td>05.02A Canopy Cover</td><td colspan="4">Must have a minimum canopy cover of 20% of the total area at maturity.</td></tr>
<tr><td>05.02B Soft Landscaping</td><td colspan="4">Must contribute to ecological enhancements and climate resilience.</td></tr>
<tr><td>05.02C Priority Planting</td><td colspan="4">Must have a minimum of 5% of the total area dedicated to meadow planting.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">05.02D Ecological Features</td><td colspan="4">Must include a minimum of three of the following ecological features.</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
Nectar rich planting</td><td> 
Permanent water body</td><td> 
Cluster of 3 focal trees in Heavy Standard Size</td><td> 
Hiberna-cula trail (minimum 5 features)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">05.02E Productive Landscape</td><td colspan="4">Must include a minimum of one of the following productive landscape features.</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
Orchard</td><td> 
Commu-nity garden with composting</td><td> 
Foraging space</td><td> 
Edible trail (along route)</td></tr>
</table>

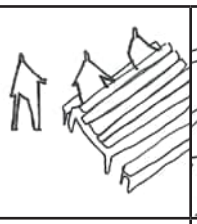
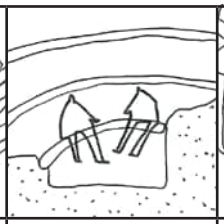
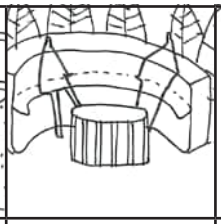
OS05.04 – Use(s)

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<tr><td>05.04A Play</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP). May also incorporate LAPs, LEAPs and Informal Play.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">05.04B Sport</td><td colspan="4">Provision to be determined through community engagement, the North Herts Playing Pitch Strategy and consultation with Sport England.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Sports facilities must be placed along key routes and co-located with other uses to create clear destinations and focal points within the Open Space.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Sports facilities must minimise light and noise pollution to homes and sensitive ecological assets through careful placement and sensitive design.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Sports buildings must maximise active frontages with a clear back that accommodates servicing and plant if required. Entrances to buildings must be open and welcoming in a design whilst incorporating an external canopy.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Fencing around formalised sport must be minimised and rationalised - double fencing with narrow strips of leftover land in between will not be permitted.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">All Tier 3 Open Spaces must incorporate one of the following fitness features to facilitate informal exercise and active lifestyles.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Trim trail with distance markers (minimum 5 stations)</td><td>Outdoor gym area (minimum 6 pieces of equipment)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="6">05.04C Community and Social</td><td colspan="4">Must include a minimum of two of the below features for teenagers and young adults. The features must be located along a key route, be independent of any formalised play for young children and be well-overlooked to discourage anti-social behaviour. Refer to Make Space for Girls ‘What does better look like?’ for further information.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Multi-level seating and climbing unit</td><td>Social exercise space</td><td>Hanging and leaning bar installat-ion</td><td>Stage with informal seating</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Social swings and hammock area</td><td>Sculptured sheltered area with seating</td><td>Any other feature co-designed with focus group</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Must facilitate community events and large gatherings by providing all of the following components.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>A sheltered focal feature (eg. a bandstand)</td><td>Water supply</td><td>Electricity supply</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

North Herts Tier 3 Open Space Example (XXXX), More info →

OS05.05 – Seating and Rest

05.05A Sociable Seating	Must provide a minimum of two typologies of sociable seating selected from the list below. Quantum will be determined by Open Space size.			
				
	Picnic bench(es)	Raked audience seating	Seating booth	Natural seating cluster
05.05B Rest Spots	As per Tier 2 Open Space requirements.			

OS05.06 – Materiality

05.06A Surfacing	No coded requirements.
05.06B Materials	As per Tier 2 Open Space requirements.
05.06C Colour and Tone	As per Tier 1 Open Space requirements.

OS05.07 – Facilities

05.07A Cycle Parking	As per Tier 2 Open Space requirements.
05.07B Vehicular Parking	As per Tier 2 Open Space requirements.
05.07C Waste Bins	As per Tier 2 Open Space requirements.
05.07D Public Toilets	Must provide a publicly accessible toilet as a standalone facility or as part of another building.
05.07E Drinking Fountains	Must provided a minimum of 2no. drinking fountains to support use in hot weather.
05.07F Medical Equipment	Must provide access to a defibrillation case in case of medical emergencies.

TIER 4 OPEN SPACES

Tier 4 Open Spaces are strategic open spaces that serve whole communities, often delivered across large developments and in partnership with multiple landowners. As key destinations within North Herts, they play a vital role in defining the character and identity of the district, providing inclusive, long-term assets for residents and visitors alike.

Their design and character will vary greatly depending on the context and setting with some more focussed on wild and natural landscapes and others with a stronger sport and leisure focus. As such, code requirements have been kept to a minimum on the expectation that designs for these strategic open spaces will be developed collaboratively with the LPA and local community.

North Herts Tier 4 Open Space Example (XXXX), More info →

OS06.01 – Key Parameters

06.07A Distance	All homes must be within 1200m of a Tier 4 Open Space.
06.07B Size	Must be between 5-10 hectares in size.
06.07C Community Co-design	Community engagement with a range of age groups and users must be undertaken as part of the design process through focussed co-design workshops allowing the community to shape the character, design, function and users of the Open Space.
06.07D Public Art	Must incorporate at least one Public Art commission.
06.07E Accessibility	Must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the open space and gradients no steeper than 1/20. All areas of the open space must be accessible to the public. Ecologically sensitive areas such as woodlands are permitted to count towards the total area at this tier provided they allow for managed access via a network of defined routes, allowing users to experience the landscape.
06.07F Strategic Function	Must function as key nodes in the wider Green Infrastructure network, connecting to Public Rights of Way, active travel routes and ecological corridors.
06.07G Informal Play	Must incorporate an element of Informal Play that is appropriate to the context and informed by community co-design.
06.07H Sport	Same as Tier 3 Open Space requirements.
06.07I Facilities	Same as Tier 3 Open Space requirements.

Open Space Co-Design Example, Ebbsfleet (XXXX), More info →

LOCAL AREAS FOR PLAY

Local Areas for Play (LAPs) are small, close-to-home spaces for the youngest children, providing safe, engaging environments with natural and sensory elements. Located within Tier 1 Open Spaces, they support early exploration and everyday outdoor play within sight of home. LAPs are integral features within the public realm, helping to link nearby homes with larger play destinations.

OS07.01 – Key Parameters

07.01A Distance	All homes must be within 100m of a Local Area for Play (LAP)
07.01B Size	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.01C Location	LAPs must be incorporated into all Tier 1 Open Spaces.
07.01D Typology	On developments where more than 1no. LAP is being delivered, LAPs must demonstrate sufficient variation from eachother to create a diversity of experiences.
07.01E Offset	No minimum offset from nearby dwellings.
07.01F Setting	The entirety of the Tier 1 Open Space must be designed and designated for play. A gated LAP within a Tier 1 Open Space will not be permitted.

LAP Example (XXXX), More info →

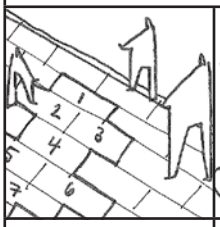
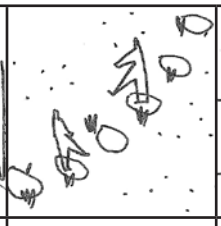
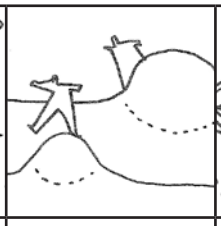
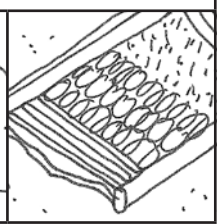
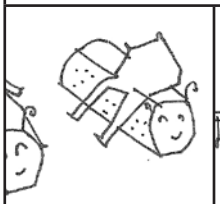
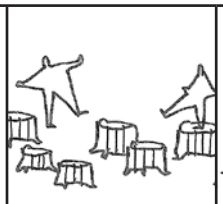
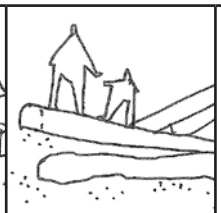
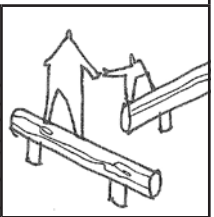
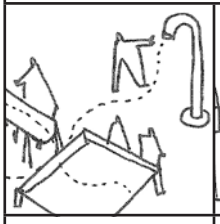
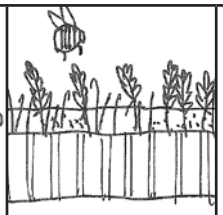
OS07.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

07.01G Access	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.01H Boundary Treatment	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

OS07.03 – Nature and Ecology

07.02A Quantum of Trees	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.02B Focal Trees	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.02C Sensory Planting	Refer to Sensory Experiences requirements.

OS07.04 – Play Experiences

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="5">07.03A Physical Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate one floor-based feature as a minimum from the options below to allow children to identify the space as their own.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Hopscotch stones</td><td>Stepping stones and boulders (min 7)</td><td>Ground modelling (mounds and hills)</td><td>Barefoot Trail (min 5 textures)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Must incorporate one of the below natural play elements to encourage low level climbing and balancing.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Wooden seating sculptures (min 3)</td><td>Tree stump trail (min 5m length)</td><td>Log pile (min 3)</td><td>Log balancing beam (two levels)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">07.03B Sensory Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must include at least one multi-sensory play feature from the list below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Water play (fountain, jet, trickle trail, tap)</td><td>Sensory planting (see OS11)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>07.03C Social and Creative Experiences</td><td colspan="4">All features in LAPs must be open-ended and ambiguous encouraging creative and imaginative play alongside physical and sensory experiences.</td></tr>
<tr><td>07.03D Play Equipment</td><td colspan="4">All features must be natural, low maintenance and durable - requiring inspection only once a year.</td></tr>
</table>

OS07.05 – Seating and Rest

07.04A Sociable Seating	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

OS07.06 – Materiality

07.05A Soft Landscaping	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.05B Surfacing	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.05C Colour and Tone	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

OS07.07 – Facilities

07.06A Cycle Parking	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
07.06B Waste Bins	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

LOCAL EQUIPPED AREAS FOR PLAY

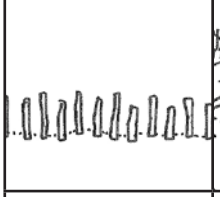
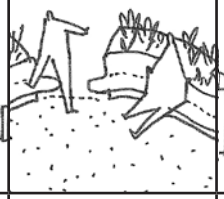
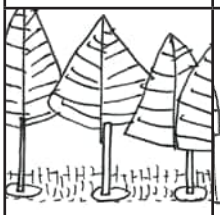
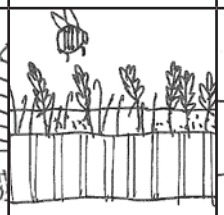
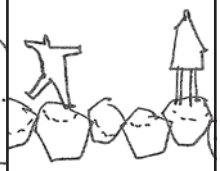
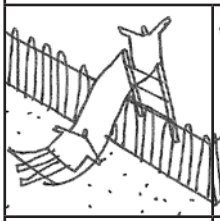
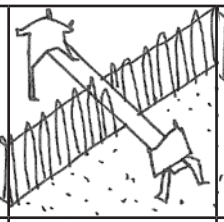
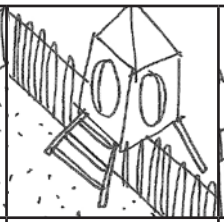
Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) are defined play spaces for young children, offering a clear and safe destination with age-appropriate equipment and places to sit and rest. They form an important mid-level play facility that encourages longer visits and varied types of exploration and sensory experiences.

OS07.08 – Key Parameters

07.08A Distance	All homes must be within 400m of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
07.08B Size	Must have a minimum area of 400sqm.
07.08C Location	Must be incorporated into all Tier 2 Open Spaces. They may also be incorporated into other tiers.
07.08D Typology	May be configured as dispersed or nucleated spaces. Dispersed play spaces are arranged around clusters of experiences that are integrated within the host Open Space. Nucleated play spaces incorporate all the equipment into a single cluster that is distinctive to the host Open Space.
07.08E Offset	Must not be closer than 10m to the nearest habitable room facade of surrounding dwellings.
07.08F Setting	Must be positioned along a formal route or near main entrances for passive surveillance.

LEAP Example (XXXX), More info →

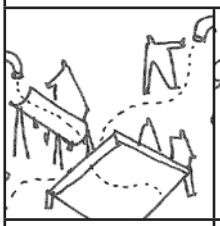
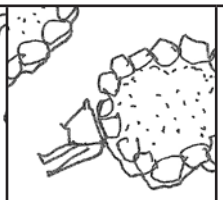
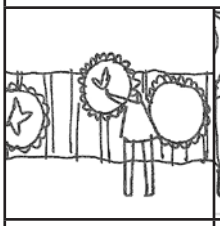
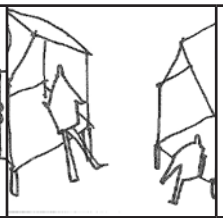
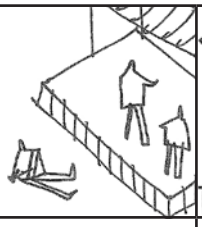
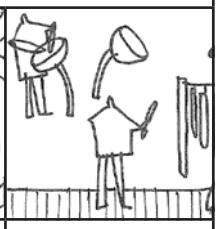
OS08.01 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

<table>
<tr><td>08.08A Access</td><td colspan="4">Nucleated LEAPs must incorporate a minimum of 2no. entrances.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="9">08.08B Boundary Treatment</td><td colspan="4">No boundary treatments required for dispersed typologies.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Nucleated typologies must select boundary treatments from the below options. Fenced boundaries and barriers (first row) must be minimised in favour of natural edges (second row).</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Timber posts and stumps</td><td>Raised planters with seating</td><td>Bowtop fencing</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Trees</td><td>Sensory planting</td><td>Ground modelling</td><td>Low playable boulders</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">If bowtop fencing is used, a minimum 1m strip of sensory planting must be incorporated on both sides of the fence to soften the boundary.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">If bowtop fencing is used, a minimum of one of the below play features must be incorporated to encourage creativity and inventiveness.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Slide</td><td>See-saw</td><td>Elevated play house</td><td>Climbing feature</td></tr>
</table>

OS08.02 – Nature and Ecology

08.01A Quantum of Trees	One tree per piece of equipment must be incorporated to provide shading for users.
08.01B Focal Trees	Must incorporate at least one Focal Tree in a Heavy Standard Size (see OS10 for suitable species).
08.01C Sensory Planting	Must include an area of sensory planting.

OS08.03 – Play Experiences

<table>
<tr><td>08.02A Physical Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a minimum of 8 pieces of equipment that conform to EN1176. Equipment must facilitate each of the following physical experiences; balancing, rocking, climbing, agility, sliding, rotating, swinging, jumping and crawling.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">08.02B Sensory Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must include at least one multi-sensory play feature from the list below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Water play (fountain, jet, trickle trail, tap)</td><td>Sand play (pit, table, box)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">08.02C Social and Creative Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must include at least one creative play experience from the list below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Chalk-board</td><td>Play house or shelter</td><td>Stage, plinth or bandstand</td><td>Cluster of instru-ments (shakers, xylophone, wind-chimes)</td></tr>
<tr><td>08.02D Play Equipment</td><td colspan="4">All features must maximise natural materials with excessive plastic equipment not permitted. Colourways within the play area must be co-ordinated to ensure a holistic identity within the space.</td></tr>
</table>

OS08.04 – Seating and Rest

08.03A Sociable Seating	TBC
08.03B Benches	TBC

OS08.05 – Materiality

<table>
<tr><td>08.04A Soft Landscaping</td><td colspan="4">In nucleated typologies, a minimum of 30% of the total area must be soft landscaping.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">08.04B Surfacing</td><td colspan="4">Must contain a mixture of materials from the options below. Impact absorbing materials that comply with EN1177 (top row) must be used around play equipment and features with a risk of falling.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Wet pour rubber (tiles not permitted)</td><td>Rubber mulch</td><td>Wood chip</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Resin bound gravel</td><td>Grass (with/ without planting)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">In nucleated typologies, a uniform material across the whole space is not permitted. One material can make up a maximum of 50% of the total area.</td></tr>
<tr><td>08.04C Colour and Tone</td><td colspan="4">All surfacing materials must have an LRV of at least 35.</td></tr>
</table>

OS08.06 – Facilities

08.05A Cycle Parking	TBC
08.05B Waste Bins	1no. waste bin must be provided.

NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUIPPED AREAS FOR PLAY

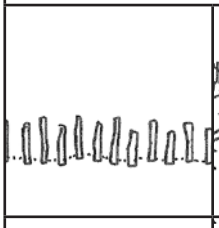
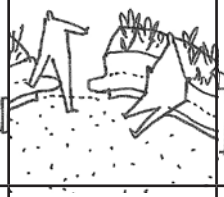
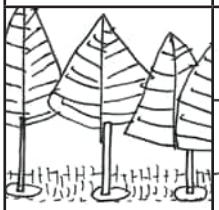
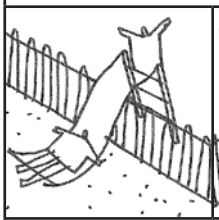
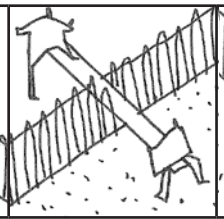
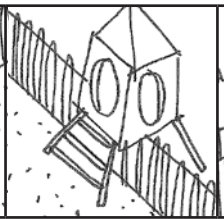
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) are larger, destination play spaces that serve a wider area and cater for a broad age range. They combine equipped play for younger children with more challenging features for older children and teenagers, supported by surrounding informal play opportunities. NEAPs act as key recreational anchors within neighbourhoods, offering space for extended visits, active play and social gathering.

OS09.01 – Key Parameters

09.01A Distance	All homes must be within 1000m of a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)
09.01B Size	Must have a minimum area of 1000sqm, incorporating a hard surface area of at least 465sqm for games and informal sport.
09.01C Location	Must be incorporated into all Tier 3 Open Spaces. They may also be incorporated into other tiers.
09.01D Typology	Must be configured as nucleated play spaces forming a key destination within the host Open Space.
09.01E Offset	Must not be closer than 30m to the nearest habitable room facade of surrounding dwellings.
09.01F Setting	Must be positioned along a formal route or near main entrances for passive surveillance.

NEAP Example (XXXX), More info →

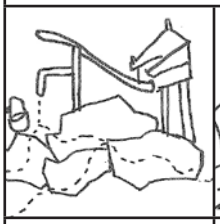
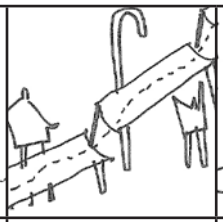
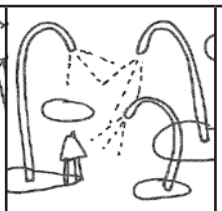
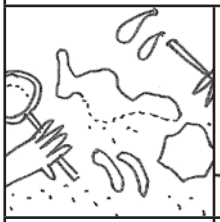
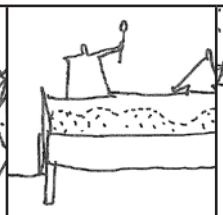
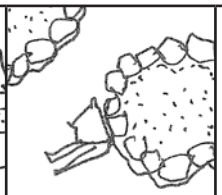
OS09.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

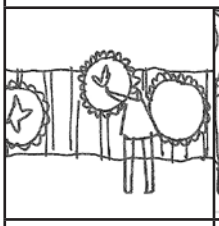
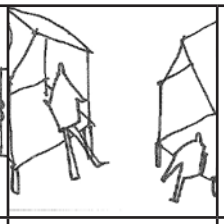
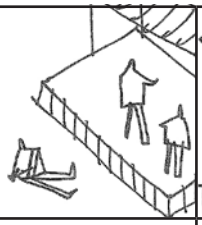
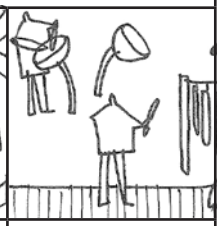
<table>
<tr><td>09.01G Access</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a minimum of 2no. entrances.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8"></td><td colspan="4">Must be a combination of at least two types of boundary treatments from the below options. Fenced boundaries and barriers (first row) must be minimised in favour of natural edges (second row).</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Timber posts and stumps</td><td>Raised planters with seating</td><td>Bowtop fencing</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Trees</td><td>Ground modelling</td><td>Sculptural play elements</td><td>Amphith-eatre style seating</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">If bowtop fencing is used, a minimum 1m strip of sensory planting must be incorporated on both sides of the fence to soften the boundary.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">If bowtop fencing is used, a minimum of one of the below play features must be incorporated to encourage creativity and inventiveness.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Slide</td><td>See-saw</td><td>Elevated play house</td><td>Climbing feature</td></tr>
</table>

OS09.03 – Nature and Ecology

09.02A Quantum of Trees	One tree per piece of equipment must be incorporated to provide shading for users.
09.02B Focal Trees	Must incorporate at least three Focal Trees in a Heavy Standard Size (see OS10 for suitable species).
09.02C Sensory Planting	Must include an area of sensory planting.

OS09.04 – Play Experiences

<table>
<tr><td>09.03A Physical Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a minimum of 9 pieces of equipment comprising; at least 4 items to facilitate rocking, sliding, swinging or moderate climbing among younger children and at least 5 items to encourage more adventurous climbing, single point swinging, balancing, rotating or gliding. At least 3 of the items should be individual play items rather than part of a combination multi-play unit.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">09.03B Sensory Experiences</td><td colspan="4">Must include at least one element of water play selected from the options below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Tap with natural trickle trail</td><td>Tap with trough (minimum two levels)</td><td>Splash jets and fountains</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Must include an element of sand play selected from the options below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Fossil discovery</td><td>Raised sand box</td><td>Ground level sand pit</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

09.03C Social and Creative Experiences	Must include at least one creative play experience from the list below.			
				
	Chalk-board	Play house or shelter	Stage, plinth or bandstand	Cluster of instru-ments (shakers, xylophone, wind-chimes)
09.03D Play Equipment	All features must maximise natural materials with excessive plastic equipment not permitted. Colourways within the play area must be co-ordinated to ensure a holistic identity within the space.			

OS09.05 – Seating and Rest

09.04A Sociable Seating	TBC
09.04B Benches	TBC

OS09.06 – Materiality

<table>
<tr><td>09.05A Soft Landscaping</td><td colspan="4">A minimum of 30% of the total area must be soft landscaping. These areas must be interspersed among play equipment and used to subtly demarcate zones for age appropriateness.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">09.05B Surfacing</td><td colspan="4">Must contain a mixture of materials from the options below. Impact absorbing materials that comply with EN1177 (top row) must be used around play equipments and features with a risk of falling.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Wet pour rubber (tiles not permitted)</td><td>Rubber mulch</td><td>Wood chip</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Resin bound gravel</td><td>Grass (with/ without planting)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">In nucleated typologies, a uniform material across the whole space is not permitted. One material can make up a maximum of 50% of the total area.</td></tr>
<tr><td>09.05C Colour and Tone</td><td colspan="4">All surfacing materials must have an LRV of at least 35.</td></tr>
</table>

OS09.07 – Facilities

09.06A Cycle Parking	TBC
09.06B Waste Bins	2no. waste bins must be provided.

NEAP Example (XXXX), More info →

PLANTING PALETTE

OS10.01 – Pest Resilience

To reduce the risk of catastrophic tree loss due to pests, developments must not plant more than 10% of any one species, 20% of any one genus or 30% of any one family.

OS10.02 – Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Planting strategies must be informed by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with particular reference to focus areas and priorities.

OS 10.04 – Permitted Species

Planting species must be selected from the following tables. Alternative species to those listed will be permitted provided the applicant can justify their use and appropriateness for the proposed context.
Tags are indicative rather than definitive and final suitability will be context specific.

Species are organised into 5 categories; bulbs, herbaceous perennials, medium canopy trees, large canopy trees and shrubs.

Bulbs

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife
Onion Allium spp.	x		x			x		x		x
Daffodil Narcissus	x		x			x		x		
Snow crocus Crocus tommasinianus	x		x		x		x	x		x
Bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta	x			x			x			x
Snake's-head fritillary Fritillaria meleagris	x		x	x	x		x			x
Ramsons (wild garlic) Allium ursinum		x		x			x		x	x
Native daffodil Narcissus pseudonarcissus		x	x	x			x	x		x
Wild hyacinth Camassia leichtlinii		x	x		x		x			x
Bearded iris Iris germanica		x	x					x		x
Drooping star of Bethleham Ornithogalum nutans		x		x			x			x
Snowdrop Galanthus nivalis	x	x	x	x	x		x			x

Herbaceous Perennials

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife
English lavendar Lavandula angustifolia			x					x		x
Wild sage Salvia nemorosa			x					x		x
Garden sage Salvia officinalis			x					x	x	x
Catmint Nepeta x faassenii			x			x		x		x
Yarrow Achillea millefolium			x			x		x	x	x
Sedum Hylotelephium spp.			x			x		x		x
Coneflower Echinacea purpurea			x			x		x	x	x
Purpletop vervain Verbena bonariensis			x		x	x		x		x
Cupid's dart Catananche caerulea			x					x		x
Marjoram (ornamental) Origanum			x					x		x
Wild marjoram Origanum vulgare			x			x		x	x	x

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife
Feather grass Stipa tenuissima			x					x		
Golden oats Stipa gigantea			x					x		x
Sea holly Eryngium sp.			x					x		x

Medium Canopy Trees

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Focal tree	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Ornamental pear Pyrus calleryana (selected cultivars)	x		x		x	x		x				x
Juneberry Amelanchier lamarckii	x		x		x		x		x	x	x	x
Cherry plum Prunus cerasifera	x		x		x	x			x	x	x	x
New Horizon Ulmus	x	x	x			x	x				x	x
Whitebeam Sorbus aria	x	x	x			x		x		x	x	x
Conference pear Pyrus communis	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x
Common hawthorn Crataegus monogyna	x	x	x	x		x	x	x			x	
Crab apple Malus sylvestris	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x
Field maple Acer campestre	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Focal tree	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Rowan Sorbus aucuparia	x	x	x				x		x		x	x
Hazel Corylus avellana	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	
Hitchin pippin Malus domestica	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x
Young's pinello Malus domestica	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x
Redcoat grieve Malus domestica	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x
Crimson newton wonder Malus domestica	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x

Large Canopy Trees

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Focal tree	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Holly oak Quercus ilex	x		x			x	x	x			x	x
Downy oak Quercus pubescens	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x
Pedunculate oak Quercus robur	x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x
Field maple Acer campestre	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x
Norway maple Acer platanoides	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x
Hornbeam Carpinus betulus	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Silver lime Tilia tomentosa	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x
Common lime Tilia x europaea	x	x	x		x	x			x		x	x

Shrubs

Species	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Rock rose Cistus spp.			x			x		x		x	
Californian lilac Ceanothus (compact varieties)			x					x		x	
Rosemary Rosmarinus officinalis			x					x	x	x	
Smoke tree Cotinus coggygria			x					x		x	x
Sea buckthorn Hippophae rhamnoides			x					x	x	x	
Japanese spirea Spiraea japonica			x			x		x		x	
Jerusalem sage Phlomis fruticosa			x					x		x	
Wayfaring tree Viburnum lantana			x			x	x	x		x	
Holly olive Osmanthus sp			x	x				x		x	

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ATTENUATION BASINS

OS11.01 – Capacity

The area and capacity of attenuation basins must be minimised through prioritising source control features upstream.

OS11.02 – National Guidance

Attenuation basins must be designed in accordance with the National Standards for Sustainable Urban Drainage.

OS11.03 – Technical Design

Inlet and outlet features must be natural in their design to maintain the character of the open space. Designers must prioritise ways of avoiding the construction of headwalls. For example, by running a perforated pipe and french drain beneath attenuation basins and allowing water to surcharge from the pipe into the basin above as water backs up behind the flow control.

If this is not possible and headwalls are required, they must be designed to be as small as possible and integrated into the landscape design.

OS11.04 – Multi-functionality

Attenuation basins must be multi-functional and maximise amenity for local residents and nature. Basins designed to be dry for the majority of the time must incorporate informal play as a secondary use and accord with the requirements set out in OS11.05. Basins designed to permanently hold water, must provide ecological benefits and visual amenity for residents, in accordance with the requirements set out in OS11.06.

The following codes for wet and dry basins have been organised around requirements for human use, natural features, edge gradients and boundary treatments.

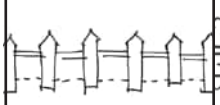
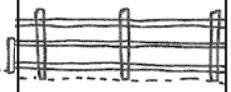
OS11.05 – Dry Attenuation Basins

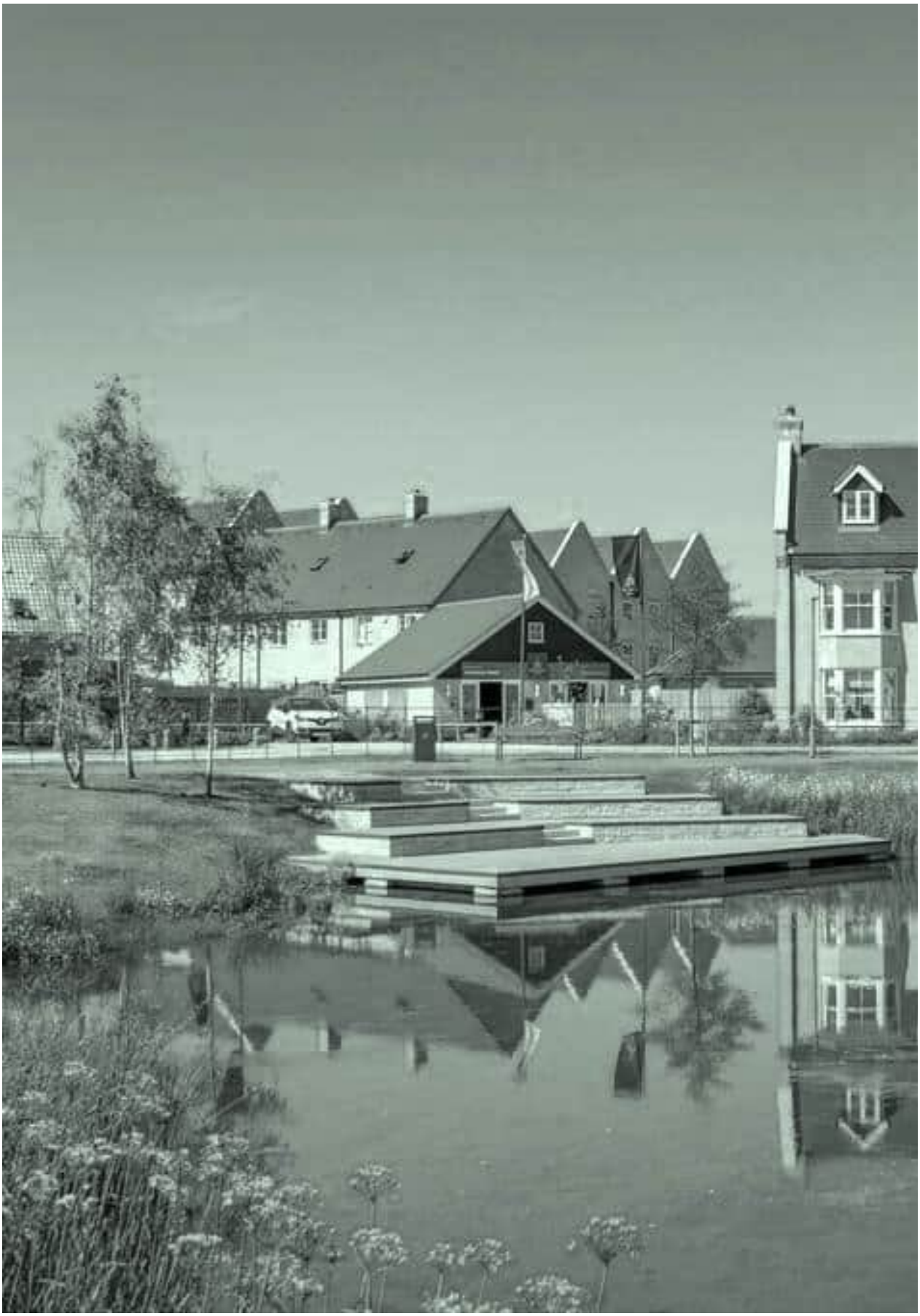
11.05A Human Use	Must incorporate a range of informal play features to encourage use by children and their carers. A minimum of one feature per 100sqm must be incorporated into dry attenuation basins. Permitted features must be selected from OS02.01 - Natural Play on the Way.
	Informal play features must be arranged along a trail or route to encourage exploration and make best use of the topography.
11.05B Natural Features	No coded requirements.
11.05C Edge Gradients	Must not exceed 1/3.
11.05D Boundary Treatment	Fencing or any barriers to access will not be permitted.



Cooks Lane Housing, Solihull, Birmingham, DSA Environment and Design (XXXX), More info →

OS11.06 – Wet Attenuation Basins

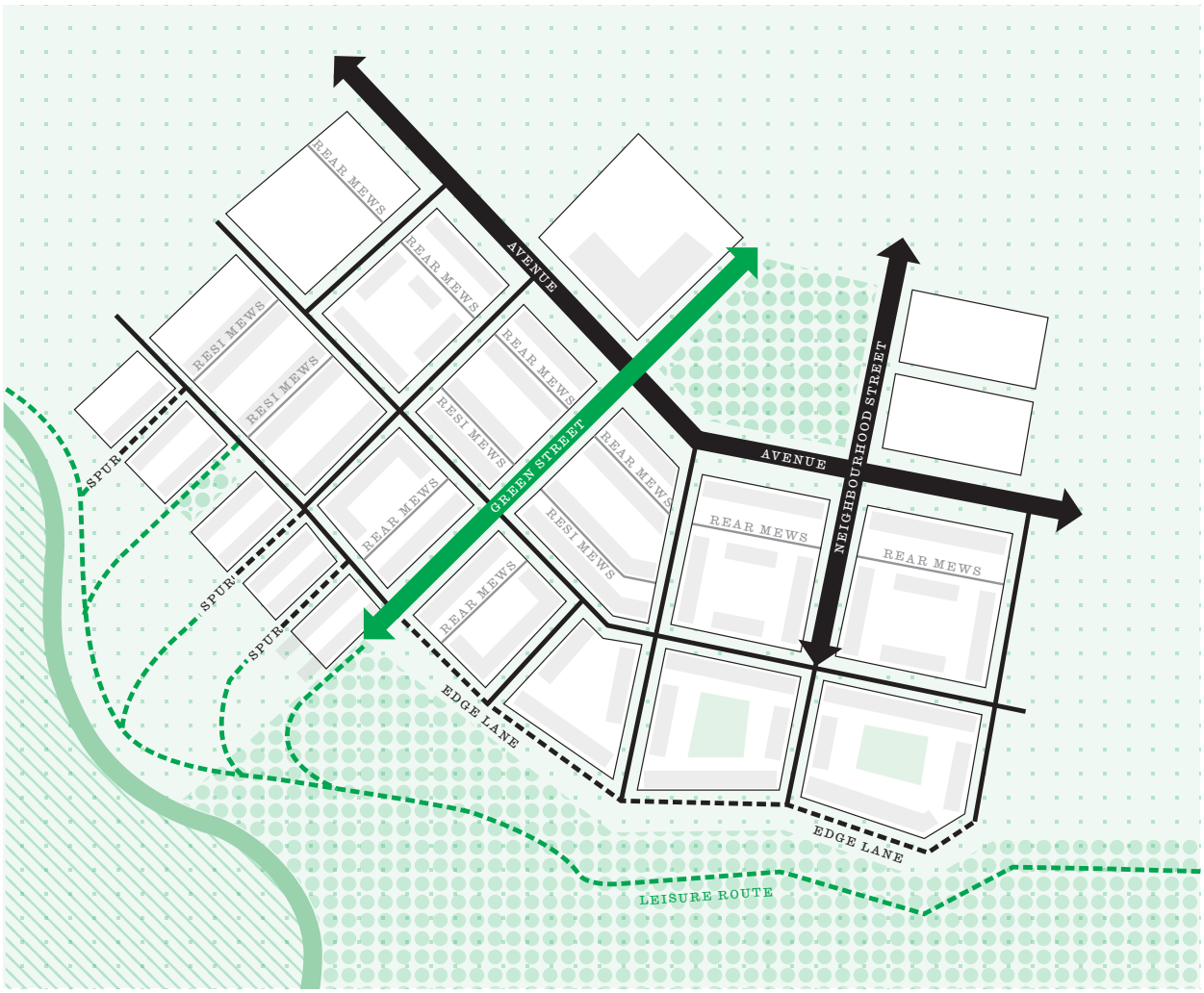
<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">11.06A Human Use</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a minimum of one seating/viewing platform from the options below to allow residents to enjoy the visual amenity of the basin.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Stepped water access</td><td>Pier</td><td>Seating platform</td><td>Timber bridge</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.06B Natural Features</td><td colspan="4">Must incorporate a series of planted shelves that support a variety of planting and contribute to ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain (see OS10 for appropriate species). Mono-cultural grass banks will not be permitted.</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.06C Edge Gradients</td><td colspan="4">Edge gradients steeper than 1/3 will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate this supports ecological function and visual containment thus requiring reduced access.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">11.06D Boundary Treatment</td><td colspan="4">Fencing must be minimised to retain the natural character of the open space. Where fencing is required and landscape solutions are not feasible, boundary treatments must be selected from one of the options below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Timber knee rail</td><td>Estate fencing with hedge</td><td>Timber posts or stumps</td><td>Post and rail fencing</td></tr>
</table>



Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire, Bradley Murphy Design (XXXX), More info →

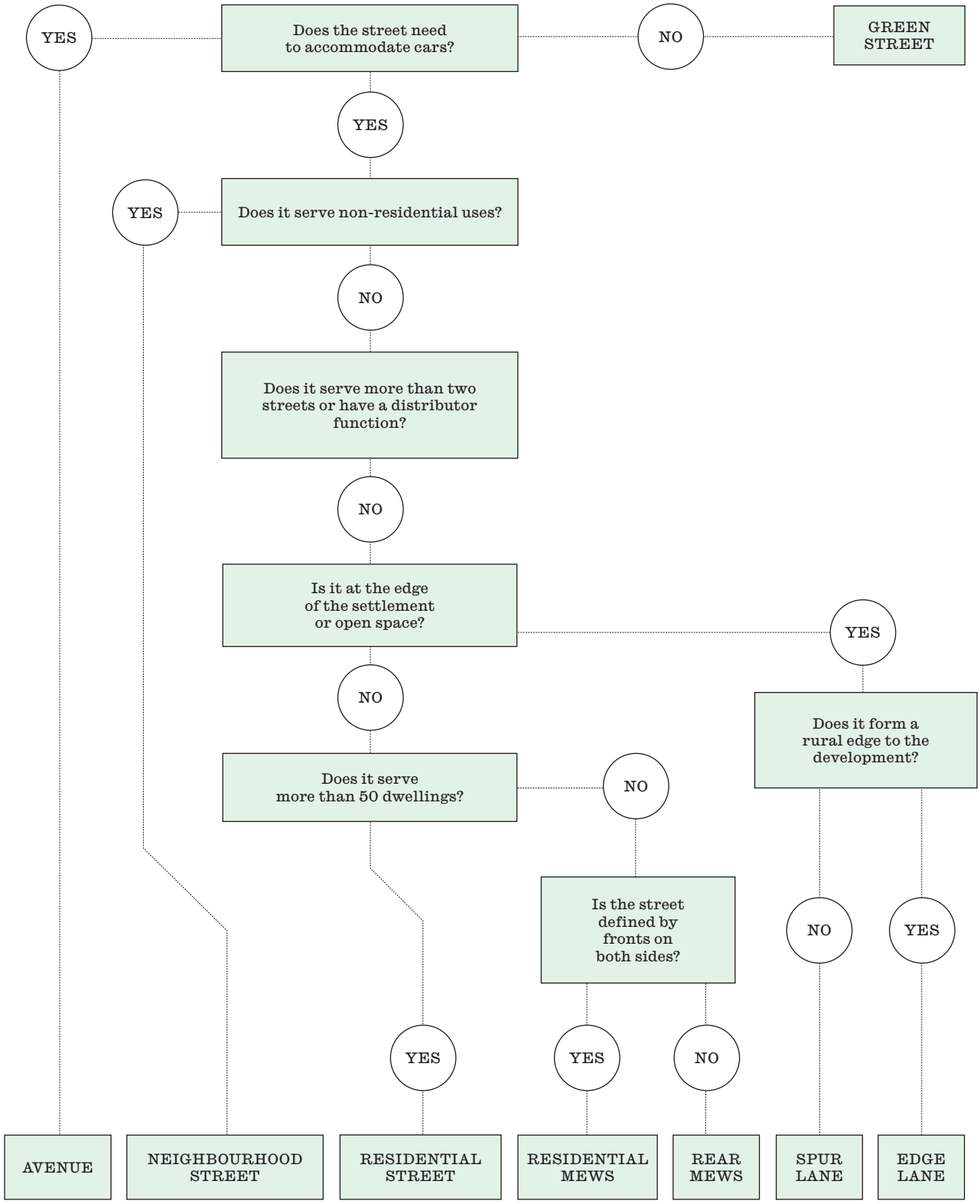
SELECTING STREET TYPES

The character of streets are central to creating legible neighbourhoods. The code sets out eight street types that must be used together to create a connected network of routes. Larger development sites are likely to require more of the eight street types than smaller sites which may only need one or two.



ST01.01

The selection of street types within a development must be in accordance with the diagram below which sets out the decision-making process.



STREET DESIGN

The following codes apply to all eight street types and must be read in conjunction with the street-specific codes on the next pages which are organised by place, movement, parking and technical requirements.

STO2.01 – HCC PMPDG Status

Street designs must be based on Hertfordshire County Council's Place and Movement Planning Design Guide (HCC PMPDG) which is a material consideration in determining applications and will be used by the Highways Development Management Implementation Team in assessing proposals.

STO2.02 – Adoption

The adoption of streets is done on a case by case basis and determined by Hertfordshire County Council's Highways Team. Avenues and Neighbourhood Streets are likely to be adopted whilst lower order street types will, if they incorporate a strategic active travel link. Regardless, all roads must be designed to adoptable standards to future-proof adoption.

ST02.03 – Social Spaces

Must be at least 2m wide, have a minimum area of 12sqm, include seating at 3 heights as per BS8300-1:2018 and incorporate at least one tree for shading.

ST02.04 – Verges and Landscape Areas

Must incorporate street trees and planting that contribute to ecological enhancements. Mono-cultural grass verges and landscape areas will not be permitted.

ST02.05 – Street Trees

A minimum of two street tree species are required per streets for climate and disease resilience. Street trees may be incorporated in clusters or in a formal row arrangement depending on the context.

ST02.06 – Visitor Cycle Parking Space

Must be provided within 50m of every residential front door.

ST02.07 – Junction Radii

Junction radii on all streets must be minimised based on service vehicle tracking which must be carried out on the assumption that vehicles will swing out over the centreline when turning. If junction radii are required to be greater than 4m, an overrun strip in stone setts or cobblestones must be incorporated.

ST02.08 – Illegal Parking

Must be designed out on all street types. Street designs that rely on enforcement to limit illegal and anti-social parking will not be permitted. There are a number of ways this can be achieved including planting, landscaping and minimising carriageway widths.

ST02.09 – Road Signs and Marking

Must be minimised to avoid street clutter.

ST02.10 – Materials and Surfacing

Materials for each street type must be selected from the table opposite. The table below includes the abbreviations and any requirements per material type. On streets that require carriageway edging, the edging must be in a different material and/or tone to the main carriageway to give the appearance of narrowing.

BI	Bituminous
LBI	Bituminous that must be non-black with an LRV >30.
EnBI	Enhanced bituminous surfacing that must incorporate crushed aggregates.
BP	Block paving that must be non-black with an LRV >30.
PP	Permeable paving that must be non-black with an LRV >30.
SS	Stone setts including cobblestones, granite, sandstone and limestone.
SL	Soft landscaping

	Carriageway	Carriageway Edging	Footways	Cycle Lanes	Social Spaces	On Street Parking Bays	On Plot Parking Spaces
Green Street	n/a	n/a	BP PP SS	tbc	BP PP SL	n/a	n/a
Avenue	BI	n/a	BI	tbc	BP SS SL	BP EnBI LBi	n/a
Neighbourhood Street	BI	n/a	LBi	n/a	BP SS SL PP	BP LBi	BP PP SS
Residential Street	BI	n/a	LBi EnBi	n/a	BP SS SL PP	BP LBi	BP PP SS
Residential Mews	BP PP SS	BP PP SS	n/a	n/a	n/a	BP PP SS	n/a
Rear Mews	BP PP SS EnBi LBi	BP PP SS	n/a	n/a	n/a	BP PP SS	BP PP SS
Spur Lane	BP SS PP	n/a	n/a	n/a	BP PP SL SS	BP PP SS	BP SS PP
Edge Lane	LBi EnBi BP SS PP	SS	n/a	n/a	n/a	LBi EnBi BP SS PP	BP SS PP

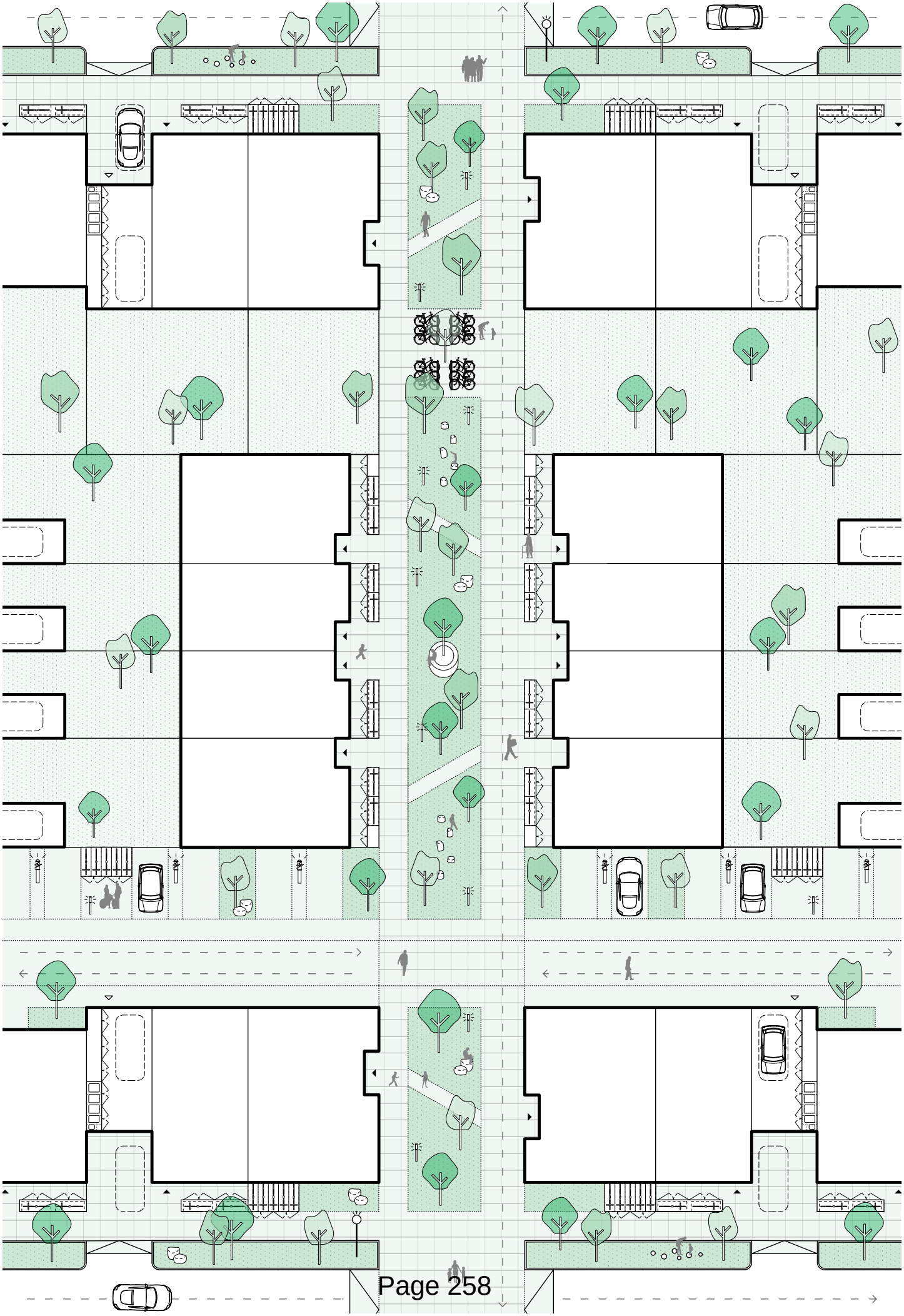
GREEN STREETS

Green Streets are non-motorised routes that prioritise sustainable travel and should be used to create direct routes to and between key green spaces and social infrastructure such as schools. The character of the open space will be determined by the site context and may incorporate a number of functions such as play, attenuation and nature.

ST03.01– Place Requirements

03.01A Maximum Width	No maximum width. Must be at least 10m between private thresholds.
03.01B Social Spaces	Must be provided at least every 50m.
03.01C Views and Vistas	No coded requirements.
03.01D Landscape Zone	Must incorporate a central landscaped zone with a minimum width of 5m.
03.01E Junctions	No coded requirements.
03.01F Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per dwelling.
03.01G Dwellings Served	No maximum limit.
03.01H Frontage	Must be defined by fronts or sides. Rear elevations onto Green Streets will not be permitted.

North Herts Green Streets Example (XXXX), More info →



ST03.02 – Movement Requirements

03.02A Pedestrians	Footways on both sides must have a minimum width of 2m and no steps.
03.02B Pedestrian Crossings	Surfaced crossings (appropriate for wheelchair and pram use) must be provided over the central landscape zone at least every 25m.
03.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
03.02D Cyclists	Pavement width on one side will vary between 2-3.5m depending on capacity required for cycling.
03.02E Vehicular Lanes	Not permitted.
03.02F Carriageway	n/a
03.02G Through Traffic	n/a
03.02H Passing Points	n/a
03.02I Service Vehicles	n/a
03.02J Vehicular Speed	n/a
03.02K Junction Forms	n/a
03.02L Junction Spacing	n/a
03.02M Bus Stops	n/a

ST03.03 – Parking Requirements

03.03A On Street Parallel Parking	n/a
03.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	n/a
03.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Pedestrian access to all communal parking typologies permitted.
03.03D On Plot Parking	n/a
03.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape zone.

ST03.04 – Technical Requirements

03.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M1 L2 Sustainable Travel Links
03.04B Street Drainage	Drainage must be attenuated through SUDs such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
03.04C Lighting	Lighting must be incorporated on built form surfaces or in the landscape zone to keep footway widths unobstructed.
03.04D Car Charging	n/a
03.04E Road Signs and Marking	Formal signage only required if route is used as a Strategic Active Travel Link.
03.04F Forward Visibility	Forward visibility and visibility splays at junctions must be considered for cycling.
03.04G Speed Restraints	n/a



Tilbury Gardens, St Chads, Thurrock, Bell Phillips (2017), More info →

AVENUES

Avenues are the highest order of street types that will be delivered within developments sites in North Herts. They accommodate non-residential uses, active travel routes and public transport, serving as a key connector within the street network.

ST04.01– Place Requirements

04.01A Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 18.5m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
04.01B Social Spaces	Must be provided at least every 50m on both sides.
04.01C Views and Vistas	Car parking must not terminate the vista at the end of streets that connect on to Avenue streets.
04.01D Landscape Zone	Must have landscape zones on both sides with a minimum width of 2m, accommodating verges, parking, social spaces and street furniture.
04.01E Junctions	No coded requirements.
04.01F Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per two homes.
04.01G Homes Served	No maximum limit.
04.01H Frontage	Both sides must be defined by frontage. Gables are permitted on corners at junctions with other streets.

Parkway, Welwyn
Pixmore Way, Letchworth

North Herts Avenue Example (XXXX), More info →

ST04.02 – Movement Requirements

04.02A Pedestrians	Continuous kerbed footways must be provided on both sides. Footway width on cycle lane side must be 2m, width on opposite side must be 3m. Vehicle crossovers will not be permitted. Pedestrian crossing points must be provided at least every 50m.
04.02B Pedestrian Crossings	Zebra and parallel crossings. Copenhagen crossings to lower order streets.
04.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
04.02D Cyclists	Cycle lanes must be continuous, two-way and separated from vehicular movement with a minimum width of 3m. There must be a minimum 0.6m buffer between cycle lanes and parking bays to ensure the safety of cyclists against opening doors.
04.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not comprise more than two vehicular lanes at any point.
04.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 6.5m. No centre-line markings permitted.
04.02G Through Traffic	Yes.
04.02H Passing Points	Not required.
04.02I Service Vehicles	Yes.
04.02J Vehicular Speed	20mph
04.02K Junction Forms	Continental/compact roundabouts, signal junctions and priority junctions permitted.
04.02L Junction Spacing	Minimum 20m opposite, 45m adjacent.
04.02M Bus Stops	Bus stops must be on the carriageway. Shelters must be provided without impinging on footway/ cycleway widths with a minimum footway depth of 2.5m at bus stops.

ST04.03 – Parking Requirements

04.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - must be accommodated within the landscape zone with no more than two bays (length 10m) before a landscape section (minimum length 5m). Bays must not be demarcated to facilitate additional spaces for smaller cars.
04.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Clusters permitted around focal points (such as Local Centres) but never on opposite sides of the street.
04.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Parking Squares. Access to all other communal parking typologies must be from lower order streets.
04.03D On Plot Parking	Not permitted.
04.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be located around focal points such as schools, shops and open spaces and incorporated within the landscape zone.

ST04.04 – Technical Requirements

04.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M2 L2 Local Access
04.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through SUDs such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
04.04C Lighting	Lighting must be on columns and located within landscape zones. Part night lighting can be used to ensure safety in rural or ecologically sensitive areas.
04.04D Car Charging	Car chargers must be placed within with landscape zones or within the adjacent buffer so that cycleway and footway widths are not reduced.
04.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
04.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
04.04G Speed Restraints	Maximum 80m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points, raised tables and chicanes.



Eddington Avenue, Cambridge, Pollard Thomas Edwards (XXXX), More info →

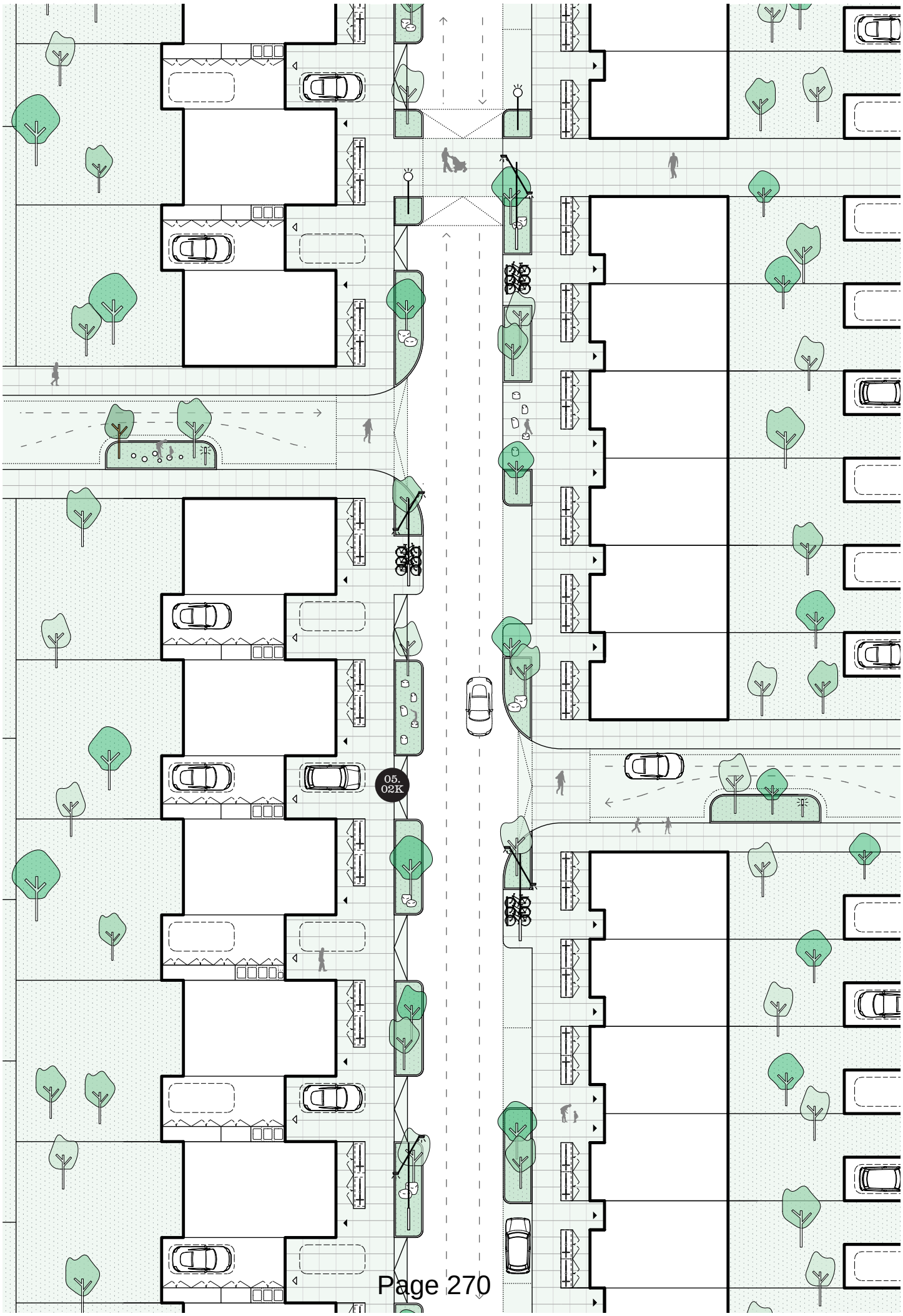
NEIGHBOURHOOD STREETS

Neighbourhood Streets are well-planted with generous landscaped areas on both sides that also integrate street furniture, trees and parking. Neighbourhood Streets will form part of the active travel network, accommodating cycling on the carriageway or on shared use footways.

ST05.01– Place Requirements

05.01A Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 13.5m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
05.01B Social Spaces	Must be provided at every junction with another street.
05.01C Views and Vistas	Car parking must not terminate the vista at the end of streets that connect on to Neighbourhood Streets.
05.01D Landscape Zones	Must have landscape zones on both sides with a minimum width of 2m, accommodating verges, parking, social spaces and street furniture.
05.01E Junctions	Refer to 05.01B Social Spaces.
05.01F Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per two homes.
05.01G Homes Served	No maximum limit.
05.01H Frontage	Both sides must be defined by frontage. Gables are permitted on corners at junctions with other streets.

North Herts Neighbourhood Street Example (XXXX), More info →


05.
02K

ST05.02 – Movement Requirements

05.02A Pedestrians	Continuous kerbed footways must be provided on at least one side of the street where vehicle crossovers are not permitted. Footways must have a minimum unobstructed width of 2m.
05.02B Pedestrian Crossings	TBC
05.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
05.02D Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway if volumes and speeds of vehicular traffic are low enough in line with LTN 1/20 Table 4.1. If not, footways must be 3m in width to accommodate shared use.
05.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not comprise more than two vehicular lanes at any point.
05.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 5.5m. No centre-line markings permitted.
05.02G Through Traffic	Yes.
05.02H Passing Points	Not required.
05.02I Service Vehicles	Yes.
05.02J Vehicular Speed	20mph
05.02K Junction Forms	Continental and priority junctions permitted.
05.02L Junction Spacing	Minimum 20m opposite, 45m adjacent.
05.02M Bus Stops	May be accommodated within landscape zone.

ST05.03 – Parking Requirements

05.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - must be accommodated within landscape zone with no more than three bays before a landscape section (minimum length 5m). Bays must not be demarcated to facilitate additional spaces for smaller cars.
05.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Clusters permitted but never on opposite sides of the street. Clusters must not accommodate more than 12 parking spaces, must not have more than 4 bays before a landscape section (minimum dimensions 2x6m) and must be a minimum of 50m apart to prevent the over-dominance of perpendicular parking.
05.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Parking Squares permitted. Access to other communal parking typologies permitted unless on continuous footway side of the street.
05.03D On Plot Parking	Permitted on one side of the street.
05.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape zone or social spaces.

ST05.04 – Technical Requirements

05.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M2 L2 Local Access
05.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through SUDs such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
05.04C Lighting	Lighting must be on columns and located within landscape zones.
05.04D Car Charging	TBC
05.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
05.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
05.04G Speed Restraints	Maximum 80m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points, raised tables and chicanes.



Consort Avenue, Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge, Allies and Morrison with Liz Lake Associates, BHSLA and Capita Symonds (2014), More info →

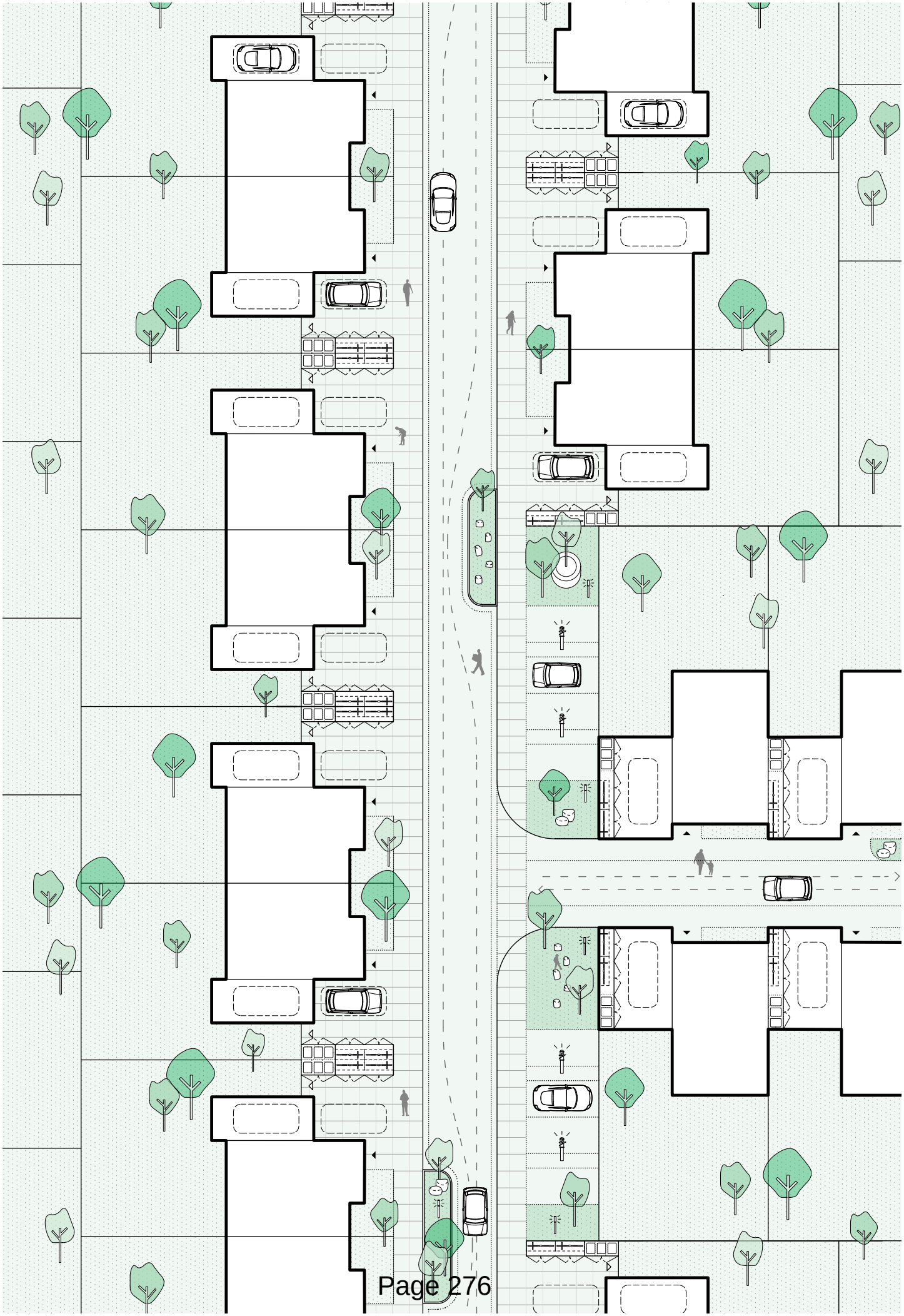
RESIDENTIAL STREETS

Residential streets are likely to make up the majority of the street network within development sites in North Herts. They are less formal than Neighbourhood Streets with level footways and pinch points to reduce vehicle speeds.

ST06.01– Place Requirements

06.01A Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 9.1m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
06.01B Social Spaces	Must be provided at every junction with another street.
06.01C Views and Vistas	Car parking must not terminate the vista at the end of streets that connect on to Residential Streets.
06.01D Landscape Zones	A landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m) must be provided every 35m.
06.01E Junctions	Refer to 06.01B Social Spaces.
06.01F Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per two homes.
06.01G Homes Served	Maximum 300 homes per km.
06.01H Frontage	At least one side must be defined by frontage. Gables are acceptable if Residential Street is providing access to Spur Streets.

North Herts Residential Street Example (XXXX), More info →



ST06.02 – Movement Requirements

06.02A Pedestrians	Level surface footways with a contrasting strip between the footway and carriageway. Half height kerbs are also permitted. Must have a minimum unobstructed width of 2m.
06.02B Pedestrian Crossings	TBC
06.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
06.02D Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway if volumes and speeds of vehicular traffic are low enough in line with LTN 1/20 Table 4.1. If not, footways must be 3m in width to accommodate shared use.
06.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not comprise more than two vehicular lanes at any point.
06.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 5.5m. No centre-line markings permitted.
06.02G Through Traffic	Through traffic and filtered permeability permitted.
06.02H Passing Points	Not required.
06.02I Service Vehicles	Yes.
06.02J Vehicular Speed	15mph
06.02K Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
06.02L Junction Spacing	Minimum 20m opposite, 33m adjacent.
06.02M Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST06.03 – Parking Requirements

06.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted for unallocated visitor spaces. No more than two bays before a landscape section (minimum dimensions 2x6m). Bays must not be demarcated to facilitate additional spaces for smaller cars.
06.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Permitted for unallocated visitor spaces. Clusters must not accommodate more than 8 parking spaces, must not have more than 4 bays before a landscape section (minimum dimensions 2x6m) and must be a minimum of 50m apart to prevent the over-dominance of perpendicular parking.
06.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Parking Squares permitted. Access to other communal parking typologies permitted unless on continuous footway side of the street.
06.03D On Plot Parking	Permitted on both sides of the street.
06.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or social spaces.

ST06.04 – Technical Requirements

06.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M1 L2 Local Access
06.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through SUDs such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
06.04C Lighting	Lighting must be on columns and located within landscape areas.
06.04D Car Charging	TBC
06.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
06.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 33m
06.04G Speed Restraints	Maximum 70m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points, raised tables and chicanes.



Royal Way, Abode, Great Kneighton, Proctor and Matthews (2019), More info →

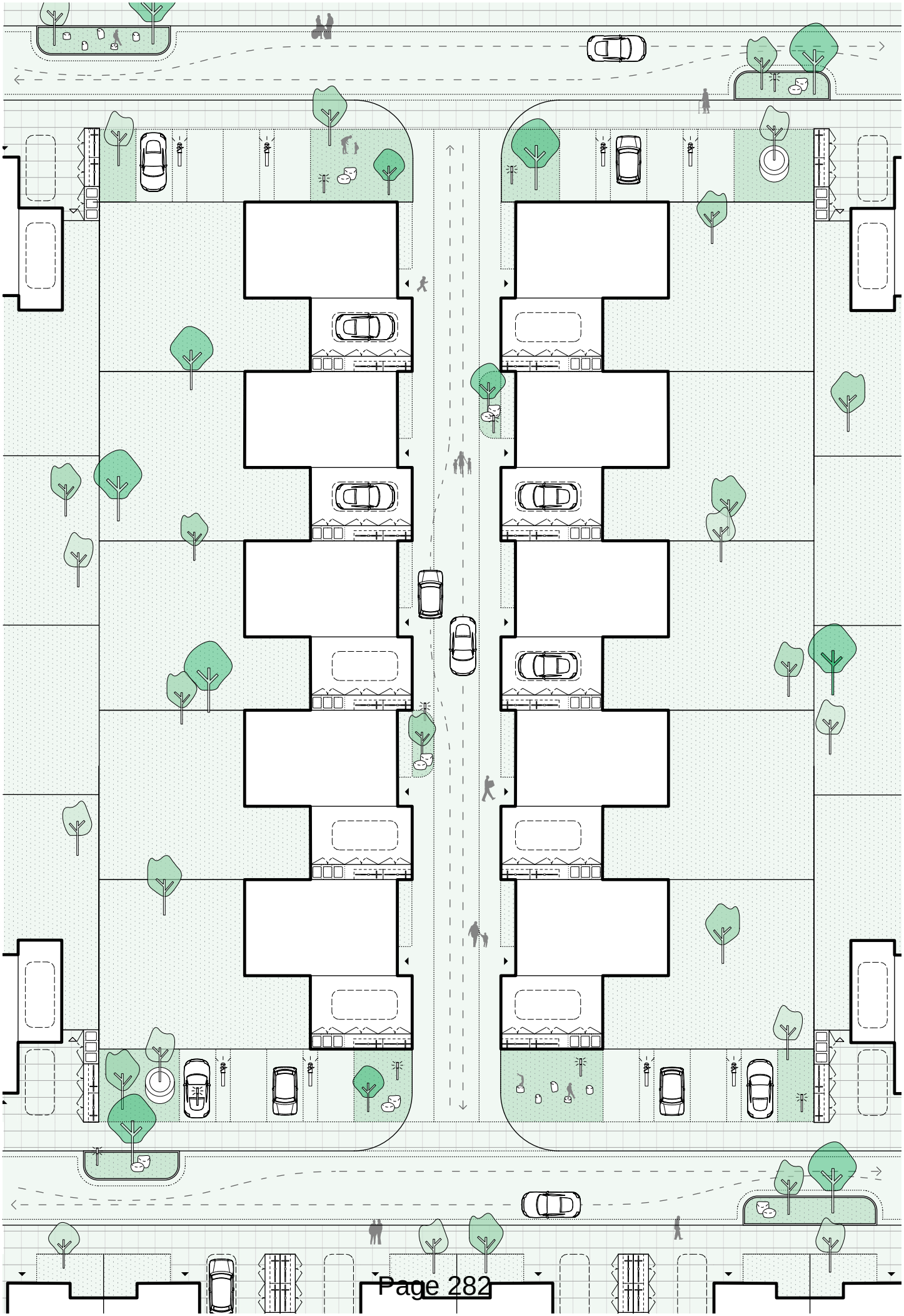
RESIDENTIAL MEWS

Residential mews are well-enclosed short runs of streets, appropriate in more urban locations. They rely on integral parking and linked built form typologies to create the intimate character of the street. Surfaces are shared as vehicular movements are very low.

ST07.01– Place Requirements

07.01A Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 6m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
07.01B Social Spaces	Must be provided at access points.
07.01C Views and Vistas	No coded requirements.
07.01D Landscape Zones	Landscaped areas (minimum dimensions TBC) must be used as a traffic calming measure. Each area must contain at least one tree.
07.01E Junctions	Refer to 07.01B Social Spaces.
07.01F Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per three homes.
07.01G Homes Served	Maximum 50 dwellings with through route and 25 dwellings without.
07.01H Frontage	Must be defined on both sides by continuous built form on ground floor. Must be defined by frontage - gables only permitted at access points.

North Herts Residential Mews Example (XXXX), More info →



ST07.02 – Movement Requirements

07.02A Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
07.02B Pedestrian Crossings	Copenhagen crossings at junctions with Avenues and Neighbourhood Streets.
07.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
07.02D Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
07.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point.
07.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 6m and must include 1.5m edging on both sides. Carriageway must narrow to 4.5m to slow vehicles.
07.02G Through Traffic	Through traffic and filtered permeability permitted. Turning heads (if required) must be carefully integrated and provide public realm benefits.
07.02H Passing Points	Not required.
07.02I Service Vehicles	Yes.
07.02J Vehicular Speed	10mph
07.02K Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
07.02L Junction Spacing	n/a
07.02M Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST07.03 – Parking Requirements

07.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Not permitted.
07.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Not permitted.
07.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Parking squares permitted. Access to Rear Parking Drives, Rear Parking Courts and Farmstead Parking Courts permitted.
07.03D On Plot Parking	Permitted - must be accommodated within garages or car ports to ensure continuous built form on ground floor on both sides.
07.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or at access junctions.

ST07.04 – Technical Requirements

07.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Mews Streets
07.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through permeable paving or a flush channel at the carriageway edge.
07.04C Lighting	Lighting must be on columns or bollards within landscape areas or surface mounted on built form.
07.04D Car Charging	TBC
07.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
07.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
07.04G Speed Restraints	Maximum 70m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points and chicanes.



Henslow Mews, Accordia, Cambridge, Maccreanor Lavington (2009), More info →

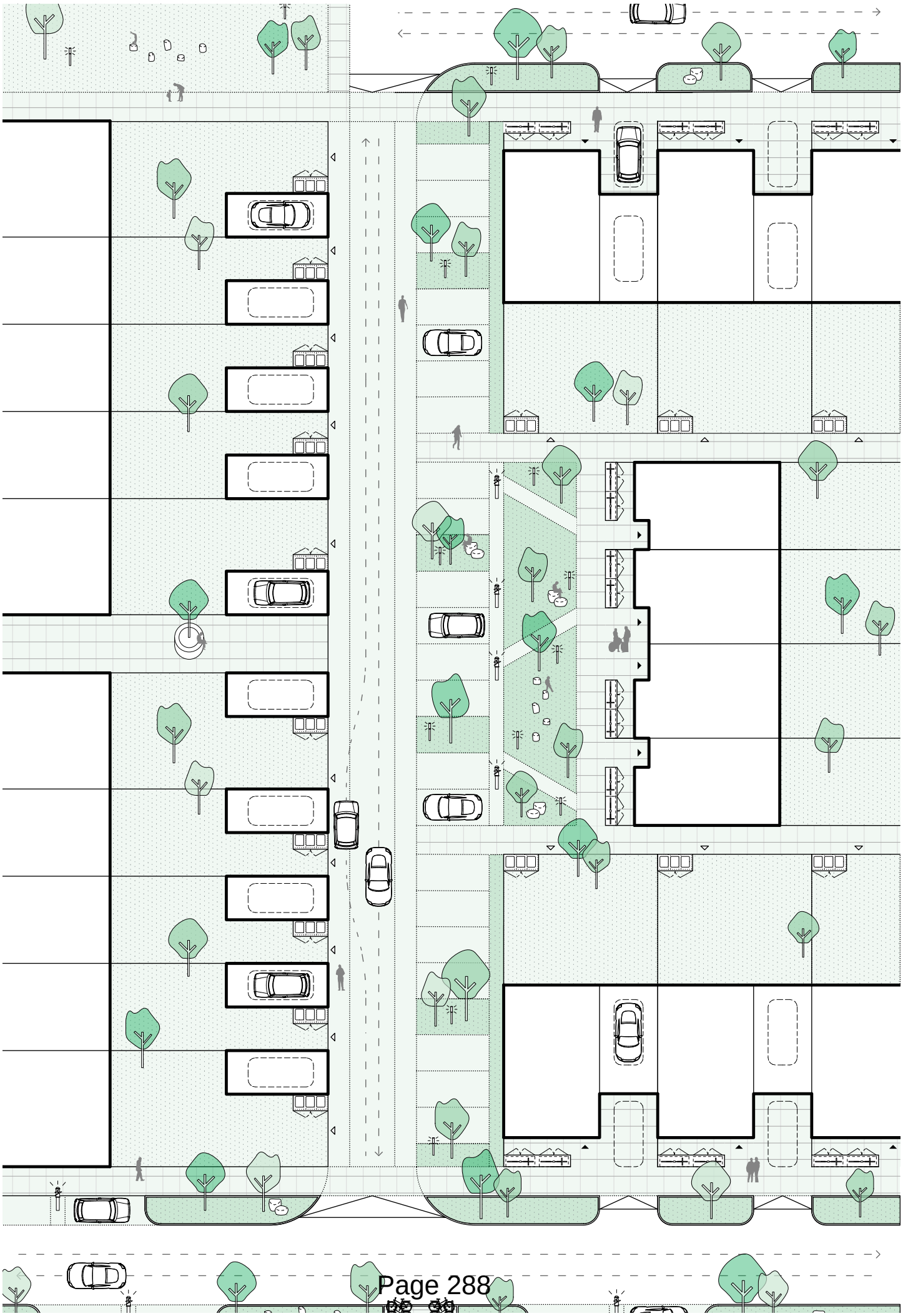
REAR MEWS

Rear Mews will typically be found to the rear of Avenues, Green Streets and Neighbourhood Streets to accommodate vehicular access for properties fronting these routes. They are well-enclosed and can accommodate small pocket green spaces.

ST08.01– Place Requirements

08.01A Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 6m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
08.01B Social Spaces	Not required.
08.01C Views and Vistas	All views into Rear Mews must be terminated by landscaping and/or a tree. Views terminated by parking will not be permitted.
08.01D Landscape Zones	No coded requirements.
08.01E Junctions	Vehicular entry points must be softened by a tree on at least one side of the junction.
08.01F Street Trees	TBC
08.01G Homes Served	Maximum 50 dwellings.
08.01H Frontage	Must be fronted by a minimum of four dwellings.

North Herts Rear Mews Example (XXXX), More info →



ST08.02 – Movement Requirements

08.02A Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
08.02B Pedestrian Crossings	n/a
08.02C Pedestrian Access	Must incorporate a minimum of three pedestrian access points. Access routes must be at least 2m wide and directly overlooks by at least two windows at ground floor level.
08.02D Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
08.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point.
08.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 6m and must include 1.5m edging on both sides.
08.02G Through Traffic	Yes - turning heads not permitted.
08.02H Passing Points	Not required.
08.02I Service Vehicles	Yes - through a one-way system.
08.02J Vehicular Speed	10mph
08.02K Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
08.02L Junction Spacing	n/a
08.02M Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST08.03 – Parking Requirements

08.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - no more than 3 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m).
08.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Permitted - no more than 4 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m). Bays must never be opposite eachother on both sides of the street.
08.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Parking squares permitted. Access to Rear Parking Drives, Rear Parking Courts and Farmstead Parking Courts permitted.
08.03D On Plot Parking	Permitted.
08.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or at access junctions.

ST08.04 – Technical Requirements

08.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Mews Streets
08.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through permeable paving or a flush channel at the carriageway edge.
08.04C Lighting	Lighting must be on columns or bollards within landscape areas or surface mounted on built form.
08.04D Car Charging	TBC
08.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
08.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
08.04G Speed Restraints	Maximum 70m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points and chicanes.



Kriflakplantsoen, Langerak, Utrecht, KCAP Architects (1995), More info →

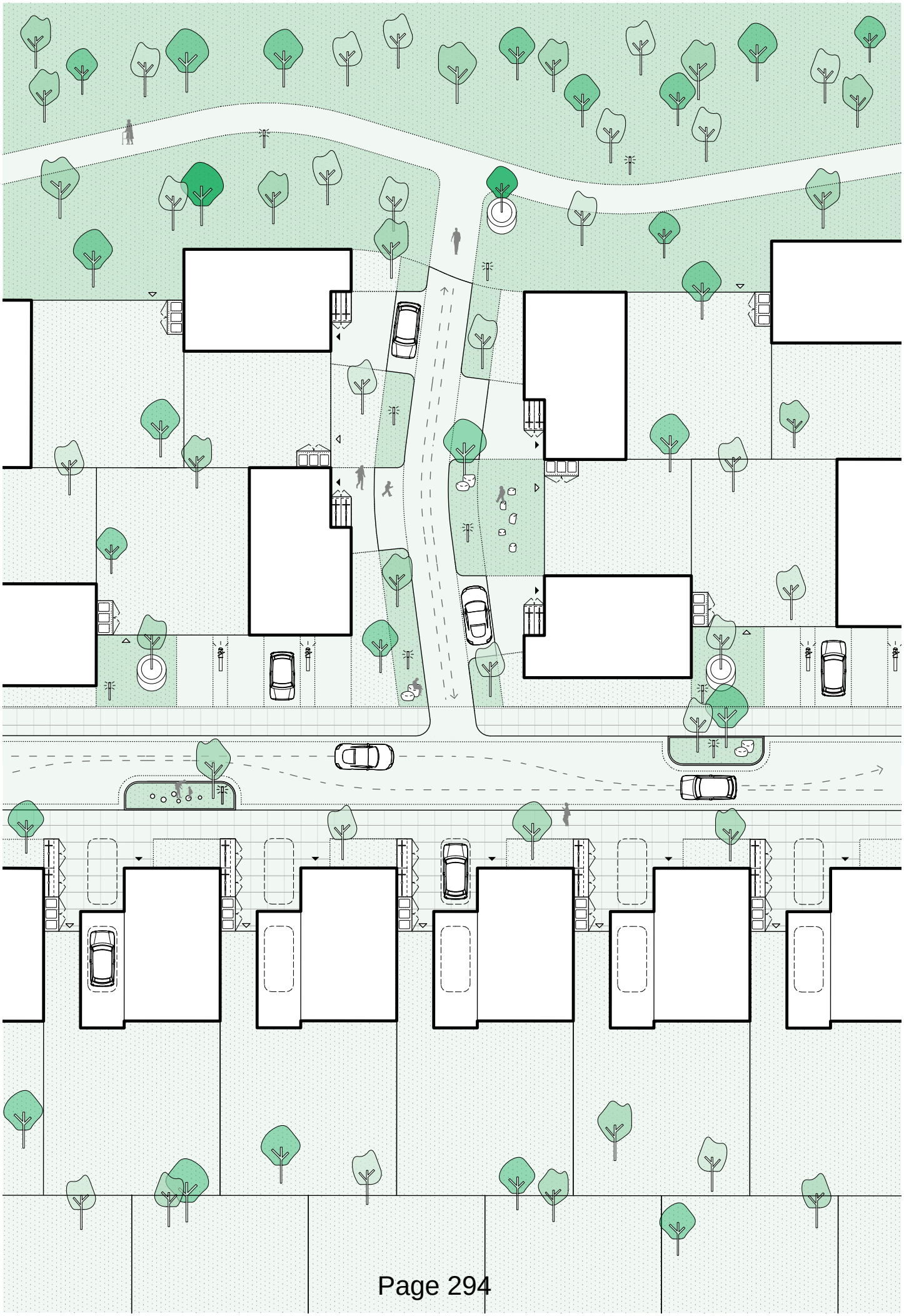
SPUR LANES

Spur Lanes are short streets that define 4-5 dwellings that run perpendicular to the edge of the site. They are most appropriate when responding to ecologically sensitive edges or rural contexts due to the informal arrangement of buildings.

ST09.01– Place Requirements

09.01A Maximum Width	No coded requirements.
09.01B Social Spaces	Must accommodate at least one Social Space.
09.01C Views and Vistas	Must frame views out into the landscape. Spur Lanes terminated by built form will not be permitted.
09.01D Landscape Zones	No coded requirements.
09.01E Junctions	No coded requirements.
09.01F Street Trees	One street tree per home.
09.01G Homes Served	Maximum 5 dwellings.
09.01H Frontage	Must be fronted by a minimum of three dwellings.

North Herts Spur Lane Example (XXXX), More info →



ST09.02 – Movement Requirements

09.02A Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
09.02B Pedestrian Crossings	n/a
09.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
09.02D Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
09.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point.
09.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 3m.
09.02G Through Traffic	No.
09.02H Passing Points	Not required.
09.02I Service Vehicles	No - length of Spur Street is limited to 30m due to maximum resident drag distances (see BF10).
09.02J Vehicular Speed	10mph
09.02K Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
09.02L Junction Spacing	n/a
09.02M Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST09.03 – Parking Requirements

09.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - no more than 3 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m).
09.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Permitted - no more than 4 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m).
09.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Parking squares permitted. Access to all other communal parking typologies not permitted.
09.03D On Plot Parking	Permitted.
09.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or at access junctions.

ST09.04 – Technical Requirements

09.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Informal Streets
09.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through rain gardens, permeable paving or a flush channel at the centre of the carriageway.
09.04C Lighting	Lighting must be on columns or bollards within landscape areas or surface mounted on built form.
09.04D Car Charging	TBC
09.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
09.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 11m
09.04G Speed Restraints	Not required.



Spur Edge, Abode, Great Kneighton, Proctor and Matthews (2019), More info →

EDGE LANES

Edge Lanes are most appropriate at the edges of development and run parallel to the boundary. These streets are most appropriate when they front open spaces creating passive surveillance. It is important they provide pedestrian permeability.

ST10.01– Place Requirements

10.01A Maximum Width	No coded requirements.
10.01B Social Spaces	No coded requirements.
10.01C Views and Vistas	Access points into Edge Lanes must frame views out into the landscape. Views terminated by built form will not be permitted.
10.01D Landscape Zones	No coded requirements.
10.01E Junctions	Junctions into Edge Lanes must be framed by a tree on each side of the street.
10.01F Street Trees	No coded requirements - trees to be incorporated into adjoining open space.
10.01G Homes Served	Maximum 50 dwellings.
10.01H Frontage	The majority of built form (>50%) must front the Edge Lane. Sides and rears fronting the Edge Lane will be permitted to add variety in rural locations.

North Herts Edge Lane Example (XXXX), More info →

ST10.02 – Movement Requirements

10.02A Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
10.02B Pedestrian Crossings	n/a
10.02C Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
10.02D Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
10.02E Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point (apart from at passing points).
10.02F Carriageway	Width must not exceed 3m. Geometry of the carriageway edge must be gentle to reflect the rural character - hammerheads and constant radius curves will not be permitted.
10.02G Through Traffic	Typically no - permitted modal filters include raised planters and trees. Garages as modal filters will not be permitted as they do not provide visual connectivity for pedestrians.
10.02H Passing Points	Required if Edge Lane is longer than 11m. Passing point must be provided halfway through gentle widening of carriageway.
10.02I Service Vehicles	If required, turning heads will not be permitted and must be designed out through one-way servicing route.
10.02J Vehicular Speed	10mph
10.02K Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
10.02L Junction Spacing	n/a
10.02M Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST10.03 – Parking Requirements

10.03A On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - no more than two bays (length 10m).
10.03B On Street Perpendicular Parking	Not permitted.
10.03C Permitted Communal Parking Typologies	Access to Rear Parking Drives and Courts permitted from the built form side of the Edge Lane. Farmstead Parking permitted (and encouraged).
10.03D On Plot Parking	Permitted - widening of carriageway to incorporate reversing distances will not be permitted. Must be designed out through widening bays or providing generous front gardens.
10.03E Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within open space or at access junctions.

ST10.04 – Technical Requirements

10.04A HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Mews
10.04B Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through permeable paving or a flush channel at the centre of the carriageway.
10.04C Lighting	Lighting must be surface mounted on built form or on low-level bollards to the open space side.
10.04D Car Charging	Accommodated on plot.
10.04E Road Signs and Marking	TBC
10.04F Forward Visibility	Minimum 11m
10.04G Speed Restraints	Not required.



Dukes Parade, Poundbury (2001), More info →

PARKING HIERARCHY

PA01.01

Development sites must integrate parking provision as per the hierarchy set out in the table below. Tier 1 is most appropriate in Town Centre locations.

Tier	Description
1	Low car development with provision of blue badge spaces only.
2	Low car development with all residential parking provision provided communally in a multi-storey, underground car park or peripheral parking clusters.
3	Primary parking space provided on plot. Secondary parking space provided in a communal parking typology (unallocated).
4	Both parking spaces provided on plot (upto a maximum of two spaces). Any additional spaces provided in a communal parking typology (unallocated).

PA01.02

Tier 4 parking solutions are only permitted when servicing homes with 4 or more bedrooms.

PA01.03

Off plot parking spaces must be within 100m of residents' front doors.

PA01.04

Car ports, garages and integral garages must be appropriately dimensioned to park a car and incorporate any additional items (such as refuse and cycle storage) and will be counted as a parking space if provided. Refer to PA03 for critical dimensions.

PA01.05

In any circumstance, providing more than two on plot parking spaces will not be permitted.

PA01.06

Part M4(3) Wheelchair accessible homes are exempt from the parking hierarchy requirements with residents requiring all parking spaces on plot.

COMMUNAL PARKING TYPOLOGIES

The communal parking typologies outlined on the following pages offer a variety of ways of integrating parking within the public realm to ensure cars are well-surveilled and do not dominate the street scene. It is important that the appropriate typology is selected based on the site context and intended character.

Requirements for each communal parking typology have been organised around location, access, frontage, surveillance, maximum limits, landscaping and materiality.

The following codes apply to all communal parking typologies and must be read in conjunction with the type specific requirements.

ST10.05– Allocation of Spaces

The allocation of spaces within communal parking typologies will depend on whether parking spaces provided are primary or secondary. As outlined in PA01, primary spaces must be allocated to ensure residents have guaranteed access to a space in close proximity to the home. Secondary and additional spaces must be unallocated.

ST10.06– Demarcation of Bays

Parking bays must be delineated subtly through hard surfacing treatments (such as edging or a change in tone) or discs set into the hardstanding. Painted lines and numbers will not be permitted.

ST10.07– Boundary Treatments

Rear garden fencing visible from the public realm will not be permitted in any communal parking typology. Any boundary treatments around communal parking typologies must be walls.

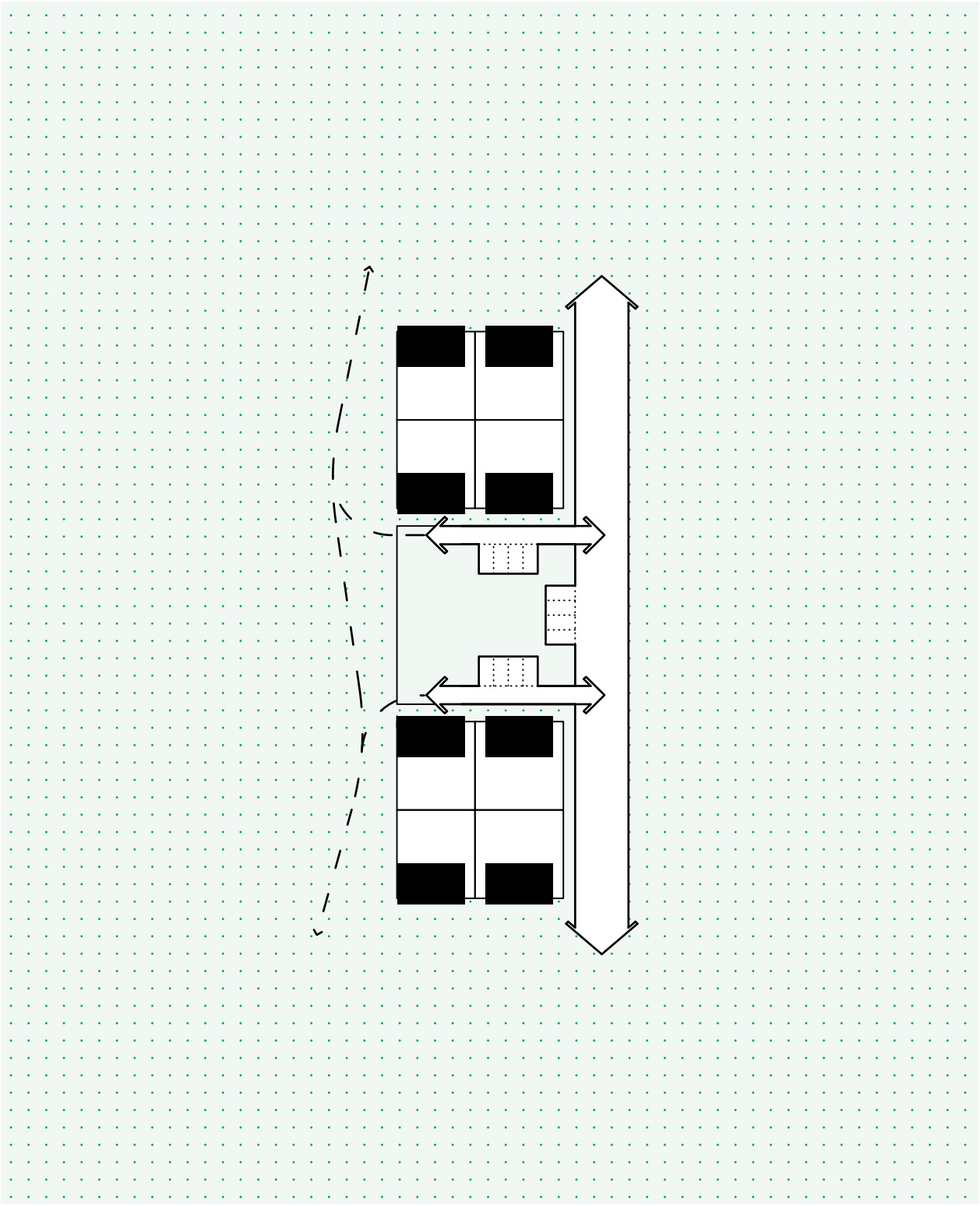
PA02.01 – Parking Squares

Parking squares are landscape-led spaces that prioritise public realm benefits, with parking as a secondary function. They are framed by active frontages such as residential entrances, ensuring strong passive surveillance and overlooking. In the long term, parking spaces can be converted to open space if parking demand reduces.

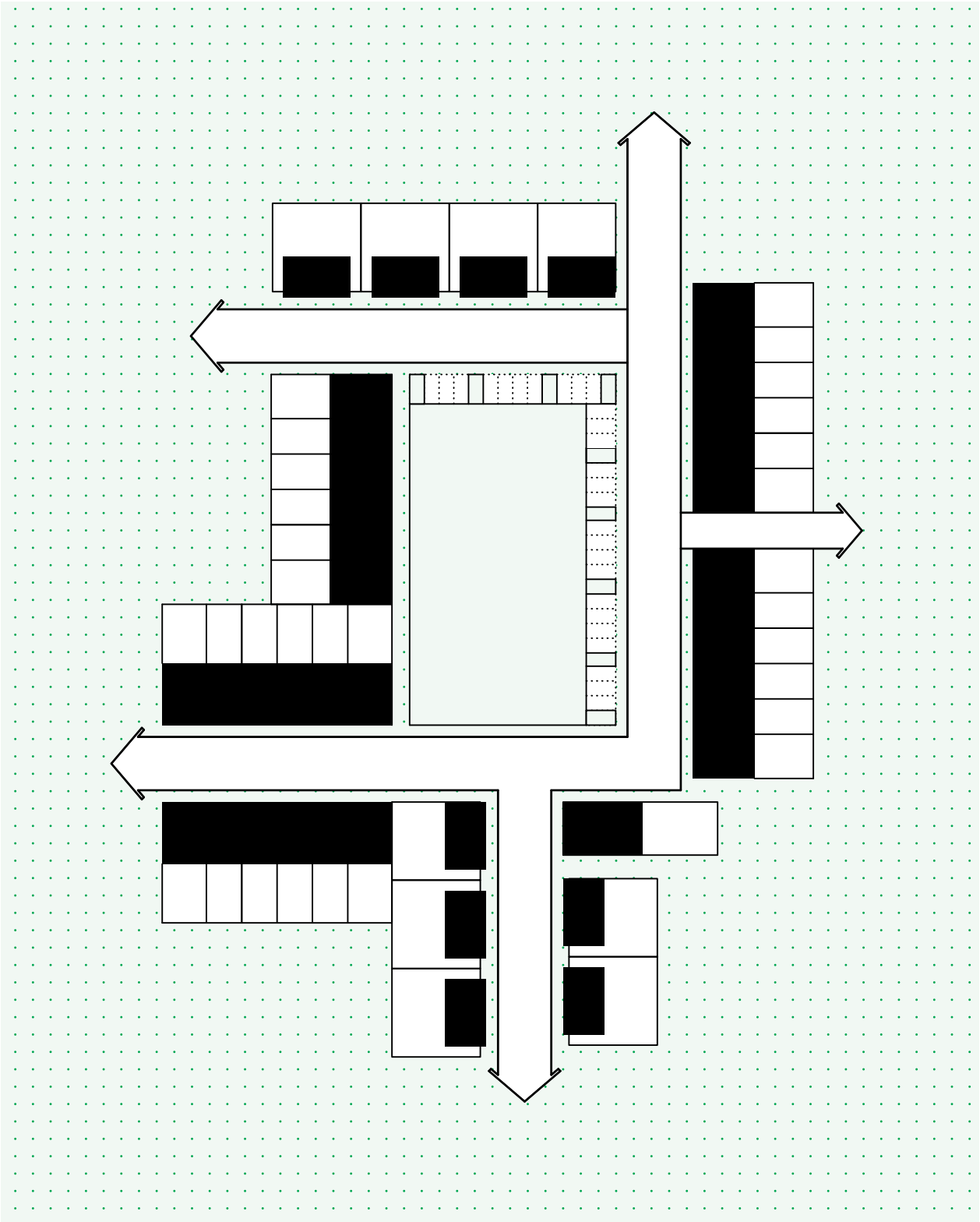
The worked examples show how parking squares can be incorporated at a variety of scales and contexts. In all instances, parking is arranged along the edge of the open space, accessed directly from the neighbouring streets.

02.01A Location	Varied, can be internal or external to plots.
02.01B Access	Access permitted from Neighbourhood Streets, Residential Streets, Residential Mews, Rear Mews and Spur Lanes. Parking bays are accessed directly from surrounding streets.
02.01C Frontage and Surveillance	Parking Squares must be directly fronted by at least 4 homes to ensure passive surveillance and overlooking.
02.01D Maximum Limits	Co-located Open Space must not be lined with parking for more than 50% of its perimeter.
02.01E Landscaping	Must be combined with a Tier 1 Open Space as a minimum. No more than 4 bays before a landscaped section (minimum dimensions 2.x6m).
02.01F Materiality	As per requirements for parking bays in appropriate Street Type code.

Small parking squares can be accommodated within the plot with access from a Rear or Residential Mews (see ST07,ST08) or on the edges of development combined with a Spur Street layout as illustrated below.



Larger parking squares accessed from more prominent streets can be combined with larger open spaces accommodating both residential and non-residential parking as illustrated below.



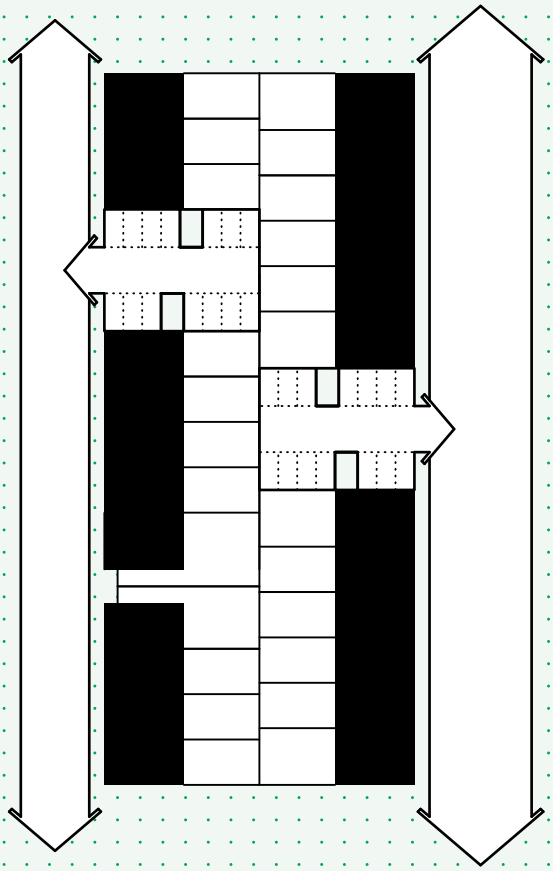
Parking Square Reference Image (XXXX), More info →

PA02.02 – Terrace Parking Courts

Terrace parking courts are small clusters of perpendicular parking integrated within breaks in the built form along street frontages. They are accessed from a single point off an appropriate street and are typically defined by gable ends and rear garden walls.

To encourage active use and passive surveillance, they may incorporate ancillary functions such as communal cycle and refuse storage or shared hobby spaces, as illustrated opposite.

02.02A Location	In between built form frontage along a street.
02.02B Access	Singular entry and exit point from the adjoining street. Access to Terrace Parking Courts permitted from Neighbourhood Streets, Residential Streets and Edge Lanes.
02.02C Frontage and Surveillance	Gables on either side must incorporate a minimum of one window each to provide passive surveillance over the court.
02.02D Maximum Limits	Must not accommodate more than 12 parking bays.
02.02E Landscaping	Must incorporate a strip of landscaping along the length of the front boundary to the street with a minimum depth of 2m.
02.02F Materiality	As per requirements of adjoining Street Type.

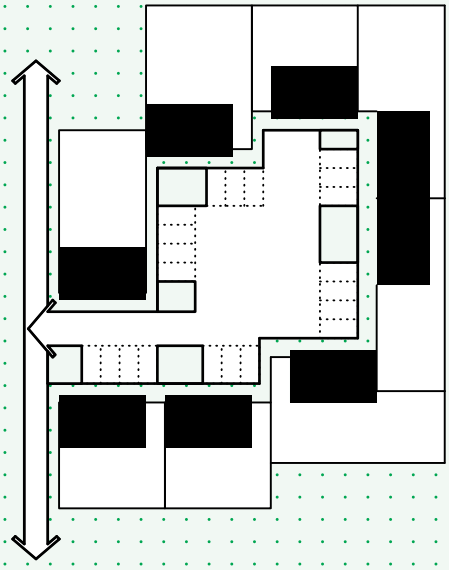


PA02.03 – Farmstead Parking Courts

Farmstead parking courts reference the built form structure of a collection of farm buildings that work together to create an internal courtyard. This typology is appropriate for more rural and suburban contexts that require a looser urban grain.

It is important that these courts are small in scale, serving a maximum of eight homes to ensure they accurately reflect their historic reference. In addition to accommodating parking, they also offer an informal space for children to play and can accommodate landscaping depending on their location and management strategy.

02.03A Location	At the centre of 5-8 homes arranged around a court, as illustrated in the diagram opposite.
02.03B Access	Singular vehicular entry and exit point from the adjoining street. Access to Farmstead Parking Courts is permitted from Neighbourhood Streets, Residential Streets and Residential Mews, Rear Mews, Spur Lanes and Edge Lanes.
02.03C Frontage and Surveillance	Must be activated by a minimum of five homes that front directly onto the Farmstead Parking Court.
02.03D Maximum Limits	Must not service more than 8 homes.
02.03E Landscaping	Access point must be softened by a tree at the junction.
02.03F Materiality	See adjoining street type for appropriate materials.

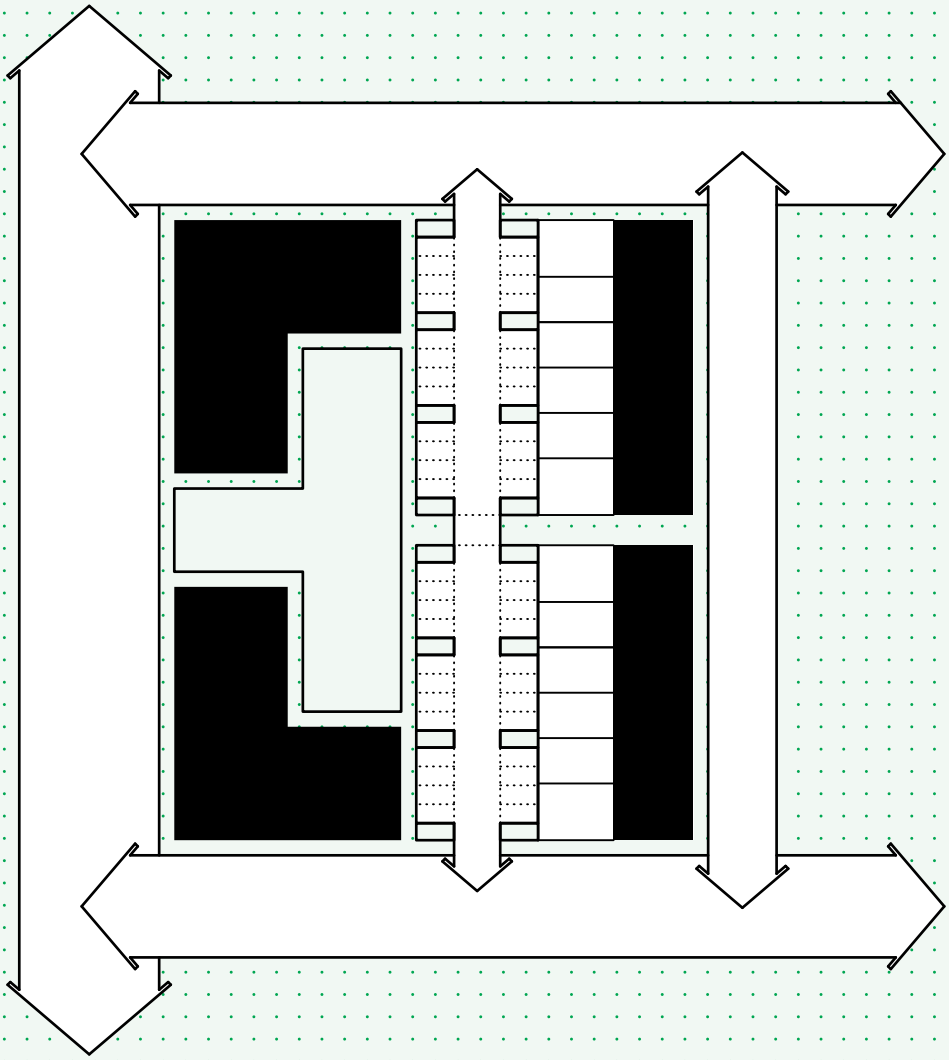


PA02.04 – Rear Parking Drives

Rear parking drives are only suitable when accommodating parking for higher density housing types such as apartments as they must be well-overlooked.

Drives are permeable linear parking features located to the rear of apartment blocks and are utilitarian spaces whose primary function is to maximise parking.

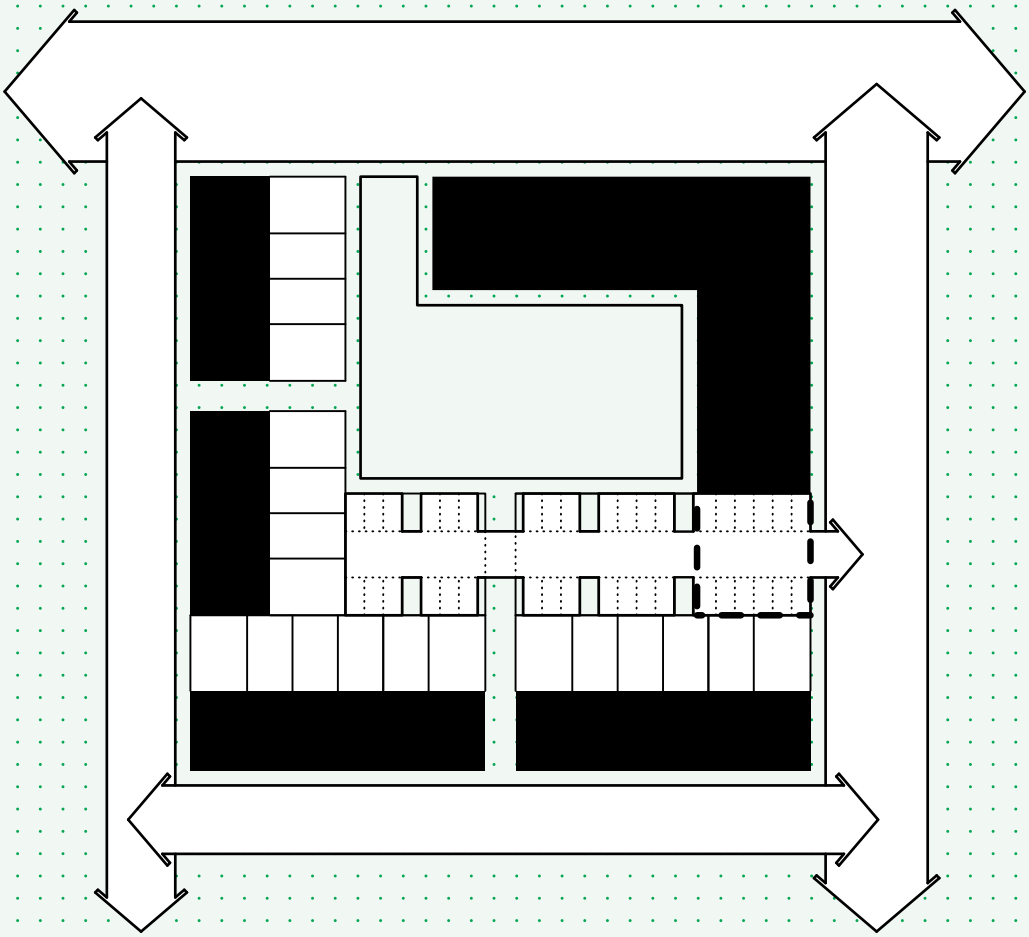
02.04A Location	To the rear of apartment buildings, as illustrated in the figure opposite.
02.04B Access	Must incorporate two vehicular points of access to create a through route.
02.04C Frontage and Surveillance	Entry and exit points must be visible from eachother - curved or kinked geometries are therefore not permitted.
02.04D Maximum Limits	Rear Parking Drives only permitted when servicing multiple apartment buildings. Must not service more than 24 dwellings.
02.04E Landscaping	Must have at least one tree at each access point to soften entrance areas and a landscaped area (minimum dimensions 2x6m) every 4 parking bays.
02.04F Materiality	TBC



PA02.05 – Rear Parking Courts

The use of rear parking courts in any development should be minimised in favour of other more permeable parking typologies and street types. Rear Parking Courts offer secure rear parking for higher density housing typologies and must be used sparingly.

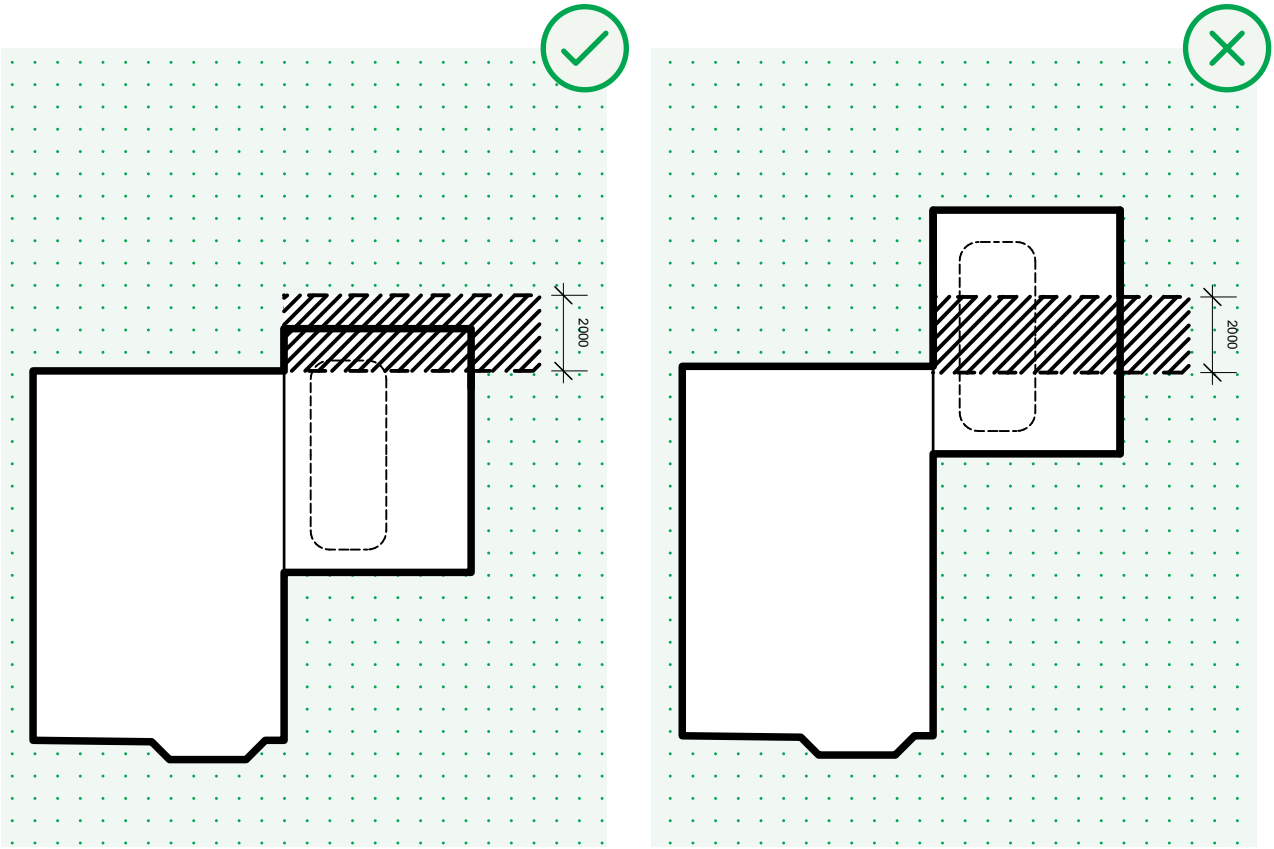
02.05A Location	To the rear of apartment buildings, as illustrated in the diagram opposite.
02.05B Access	Singular vehicular entry and exit point from the adjoining street. Access to Rear Parking Courts permitted from Neighbourhood Streets, Residential Streets, Residential Mews, Rear Mews and Edge Lanes. Vehicular access point must be secure and gated with a digital access facilities to limit use to residents only. Undercroft entry points are only permitted if >4m wide and 3.7m high. Entry sequence for residents from a Rear Parking Court must go through a landscaped communal amenity space to a communal entrance.
02.05C Frontage and Surveillance	No coded requirements.
02.05D Maximum Limits	Must not serve more than 12 dwellings.
02.05E Landscaping	Must have at least one tree at access point to soften entrance area and a landscaped area (minimum dimensions 2x6m) every 4 parking bays.
02.05F Materiality	TBC.



ON PLOT PARKING

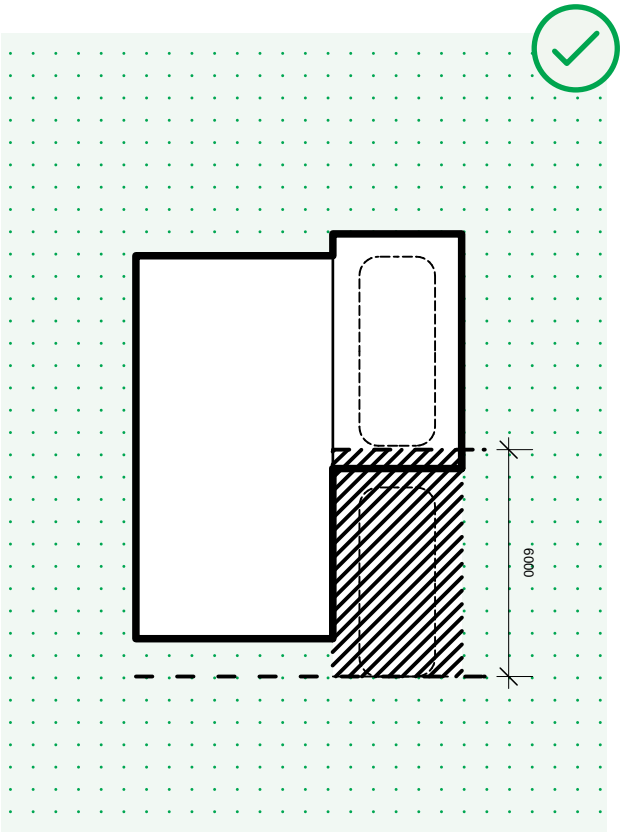
PA03.01

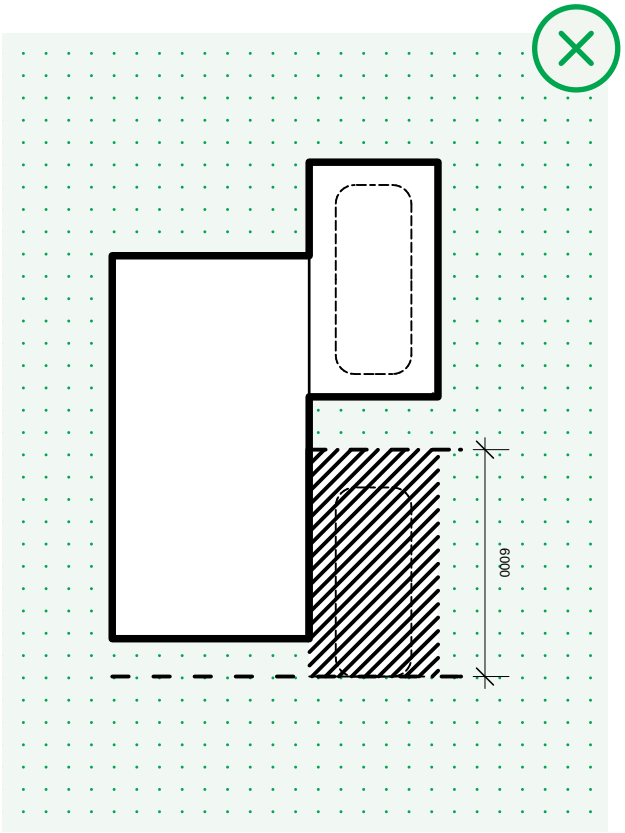
Garages and car ports on the side of the dwellings must not negatively impact rear private amenity for houses. The rear face of a garage or car port must not extend into the rear garden by more than 2m from the rear elevation of the home as illustrated below.



PA03.02

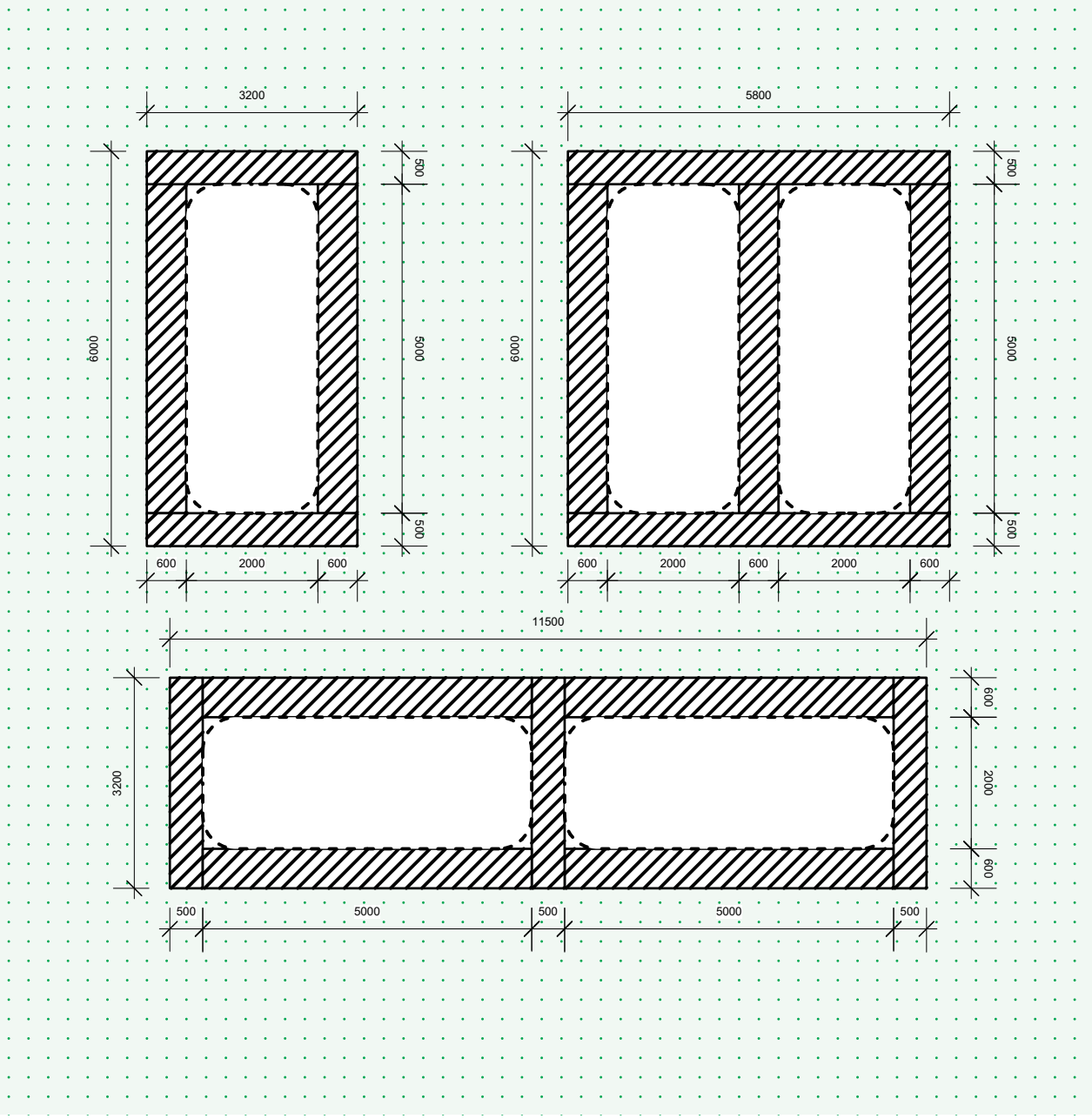
The placement of garages and car ports must not create additional parking spaces over what is permitted. When one parking space is permitted in front of a car port or garage, the front face must not be more than 6m behind the front boundary of the dwelling, as illustrated below.





PA03.03

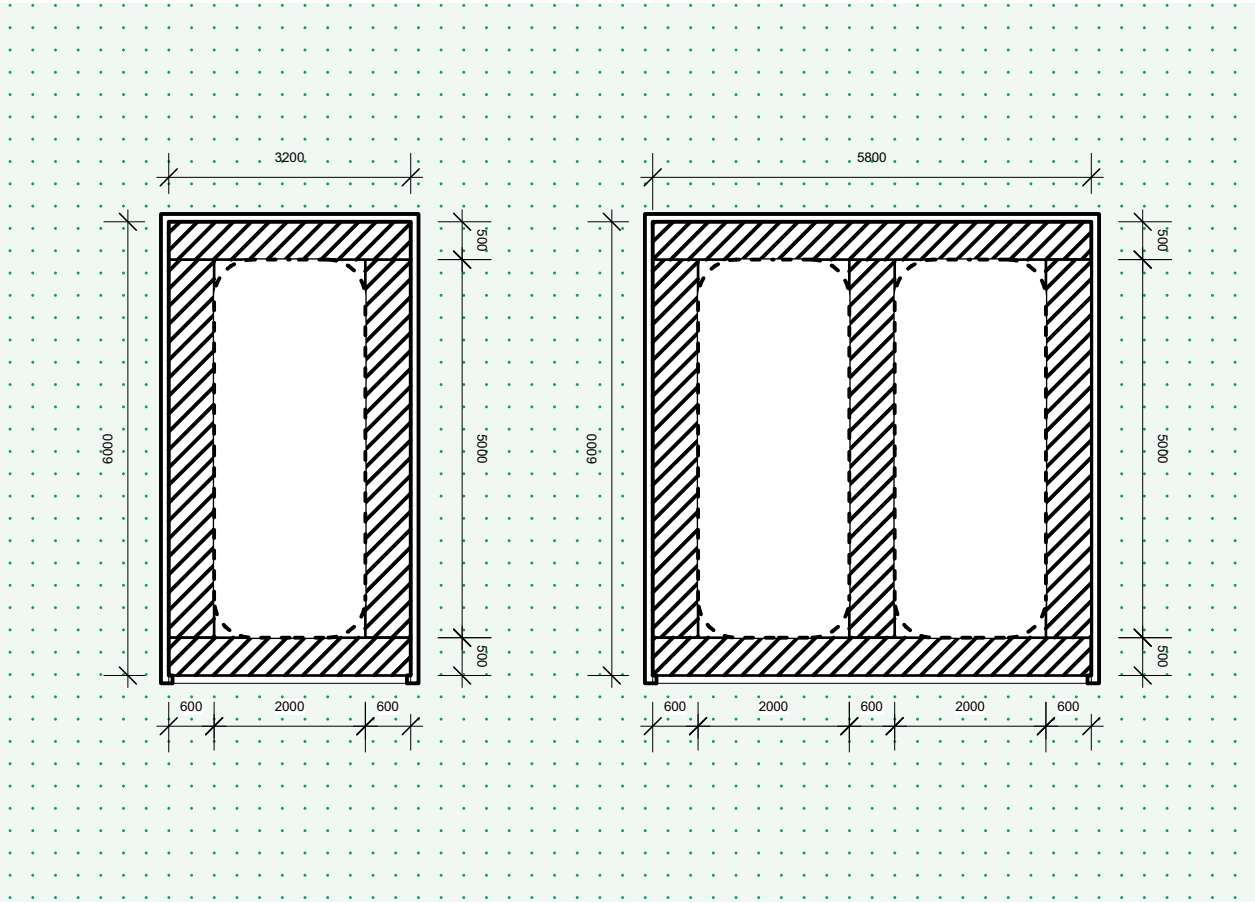
On plot parking bays for houses must be designed in accordance with the diagrams below setting out minimum dimensions and clearances for one and two vehicles.



Layouts for single and double garages and car ports.

PA03.04

Garages and car ports for houses must be designed in accordance with the diagrams below setting out minimum dimensions and clearances for one and two vehicles.



Layouts for single and double garages and car ports.

PA03.05

All garages must incorporate a minimum of 2sqm of storage space with a minimum depth of 650mm and a clear access width of 750mm in front.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DISTRIBUTION

BF01.01 – Cluster Size

Affordable housing must be grouped in clusters as set out in the table below.

Development size for an outline planning application is determined by the number of homes per Reserved Matters application.

In affordable housing clusters larger than 18 dwellings, 50% or more of the cluster must be allocated in apartments.

Development Size	Minimum Cluster Size	Maximum Cluster Size
10-50 homes	6	8
51-500 homes	6	18
500+ homes	6	26

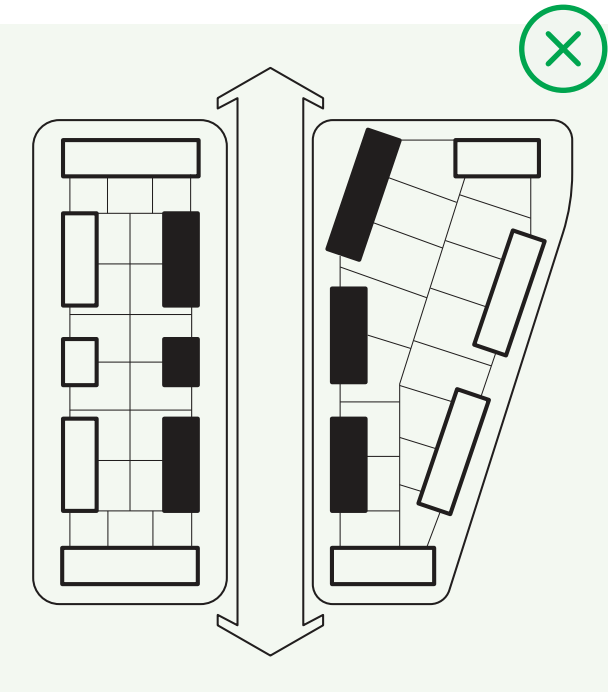
BF01.02 – Distribution

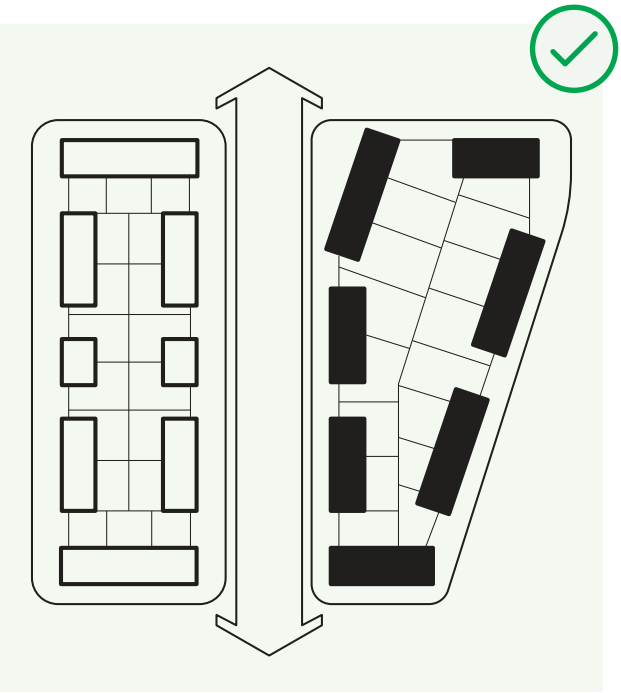
Affordable housing clusters must be distributed evenly across the site with equal access to open space, amenities and public transport.

Proposals that place affordable housing in the least desirable parts of the site (for example along railway tracks) will not be permitted.

BF01.03 – Streets

All streets must be mixed tenure. Affordable homes must never be located opposite eachother on the same street. As such, affordable homes must be clustered by block rather than by street as illustrated in the figure below.





TENURE NEUTRAL TYPOLOGIES

BF02.01

The quantum of private terraced units on a site must, as a minimum, match the number of affordable terraced units provided.

For example, if a site of 100 homes proposed 30 affordable tenure terraced units, the site must also deliver a minimum of 30 private tenure terraces.

The number of bedrooms per terrace does not need to match and larger terraces will be permitted. The main aim of this policy is to deliver a higher number of terraced typologies per site.

It is important to consider this requirement alongside SS01 that places a cap on the number of detached properties that can be delivered per site.

BALANCING VARIETY AND CONSISTENCY

BF03.01

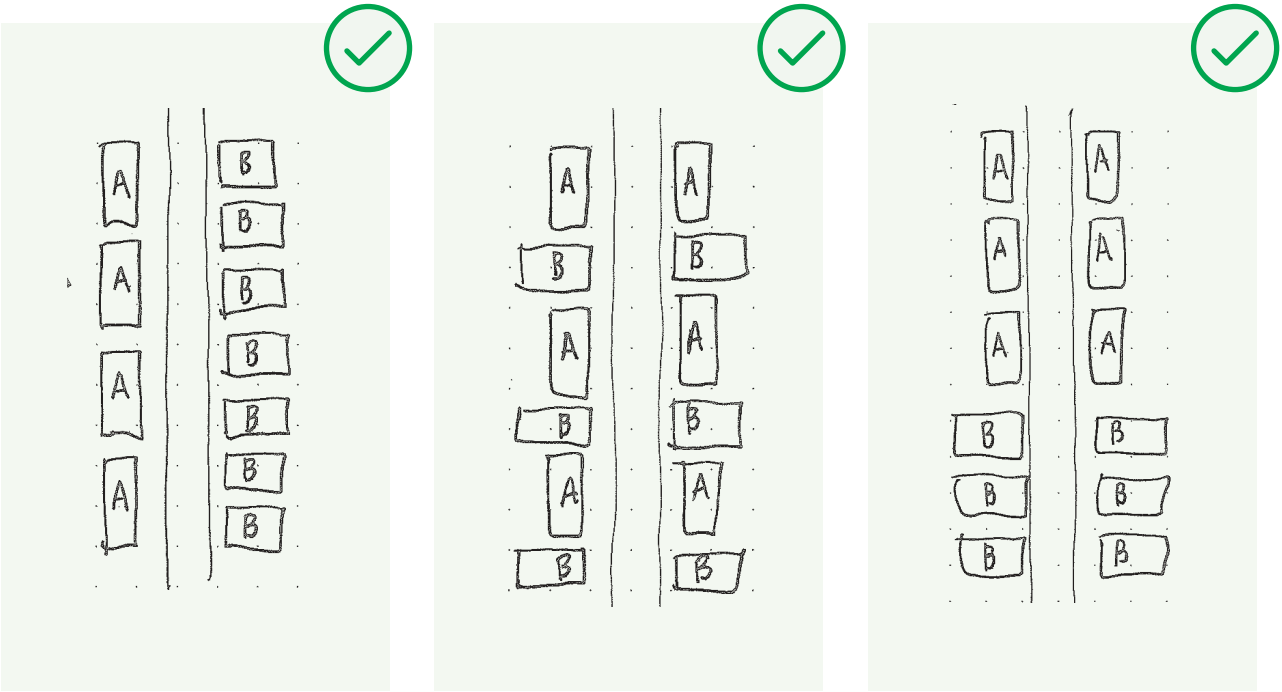
Materiality, massing, type and form of buildings on a street must work together to create a network of legible routes that each have their own character and are discernible from eachother.

Successful streets vary either materiality, form or none. Streets that include a variety of house types in multiple primary materials are overwhelming and will not be permitted. With this is mind, built form on streets must be designed in accordance with one of the categories included on the next pages.

Type A streets have consistent materiality and form, Type B streets vary form whilst Type C streets vary materiality.

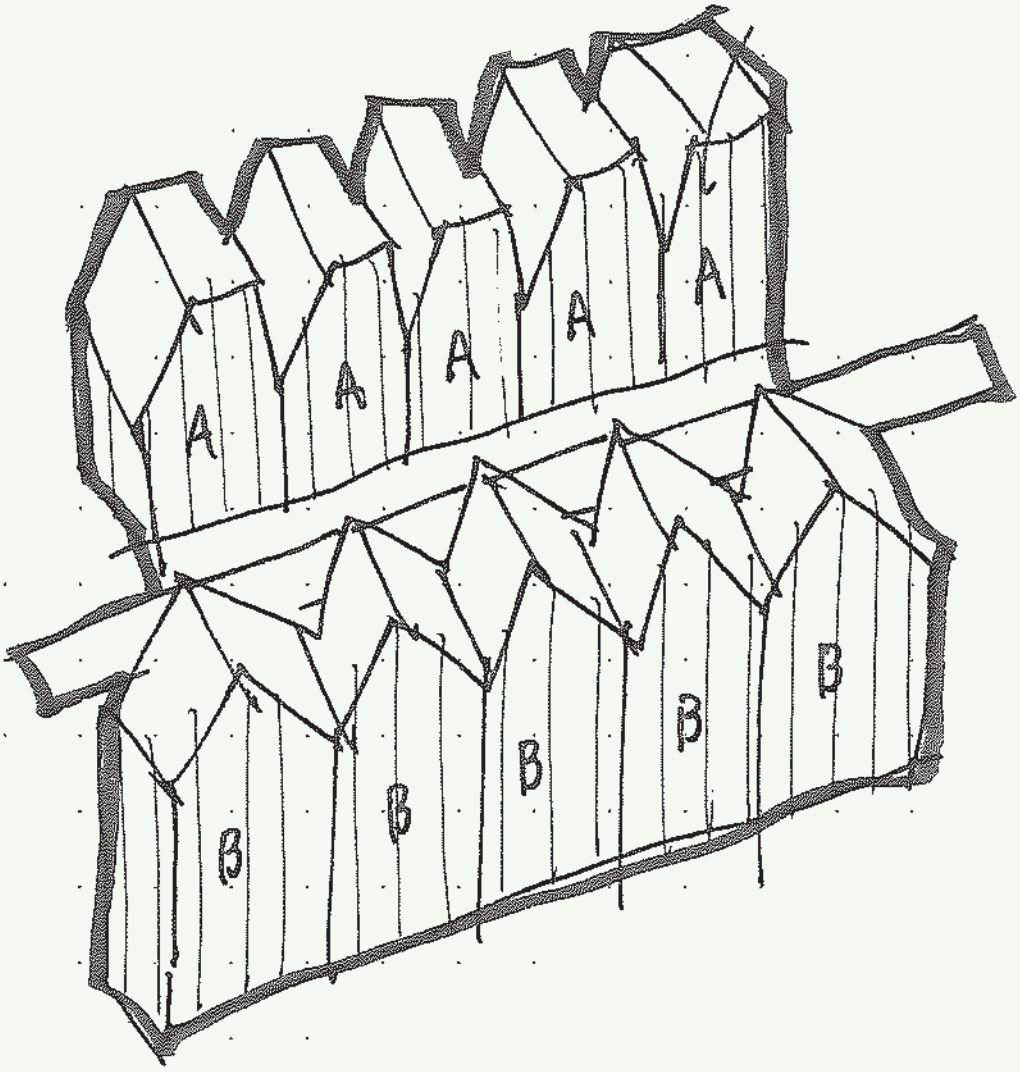
BF03.02 – Consistent Materiality and Form (Type A)

03.01A Location and Use	Suitable for short runs of residential streets that must not exceed 150m in length and are appropriate for both rural and urban settings. May be used to frame views to focal points as their consistency emphasizes changes in materiality and tone of the building terminating the vista.
03.01B Materiality	Consistent materiality on this street type is defined as all buildings on the street having the same primary material.
03.01C Form	Consistent form on this street type is defined as a maximum of two house types that must be arranged rationally as illustrated in the diagrams below.



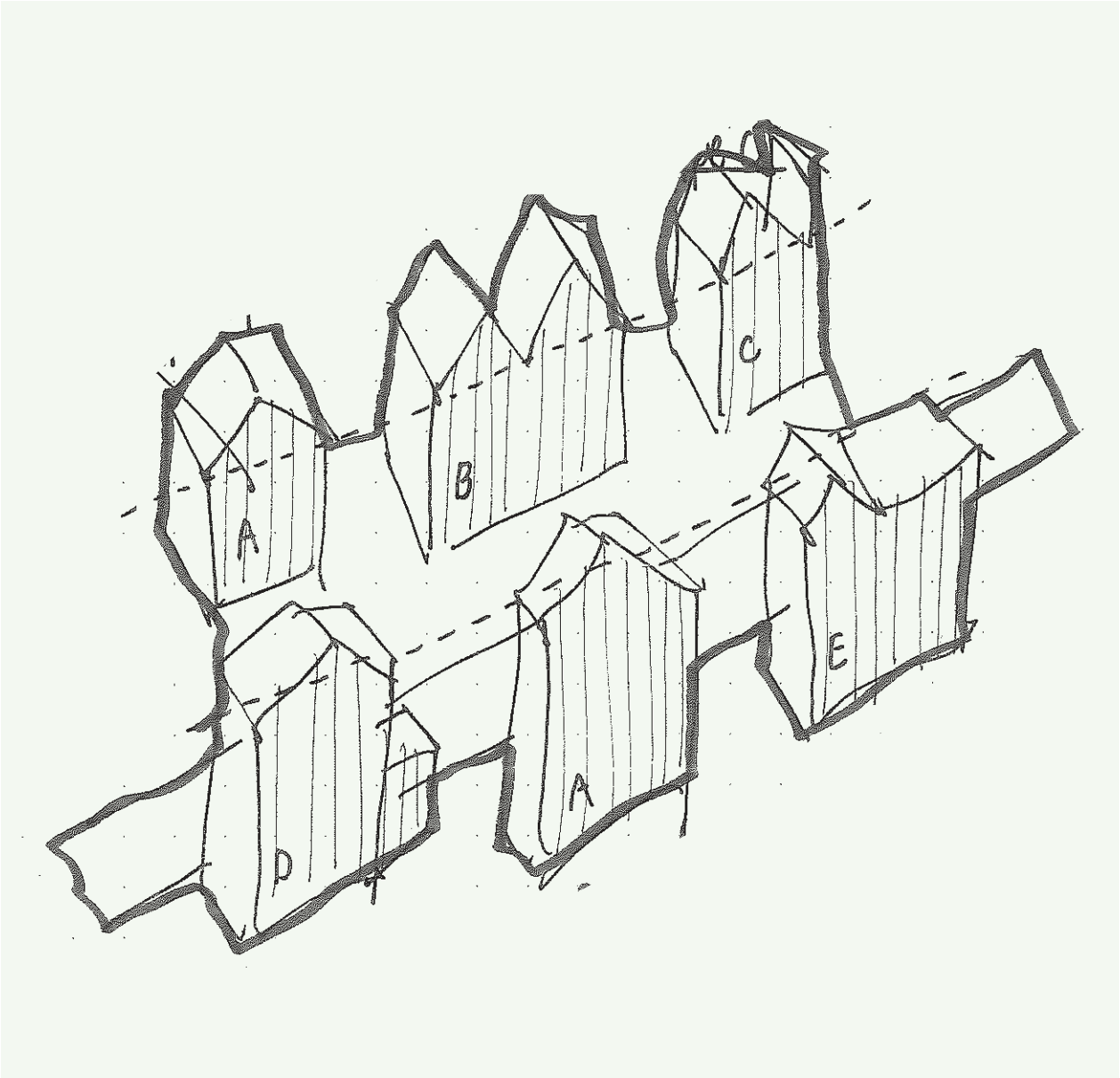
Type A Street Local Example (XXXX), More info →

Type A Street National Example (XXXX), More info →


A
A
A
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BF03.03 – Consistent Materiality and Varied Form (Type B)

03.03A Location and Use	Suitable for longer streets and are appropriate for both rural and urban settings.
03.03B Materiality	Consistent materiality on this street type is defined as all buildings on the street having the same primary material. Slight tonal variations will be permitted.
03.03C Form	Varied form on this street type is defined as a maximum of ten house types that must have a consistent ridge height.





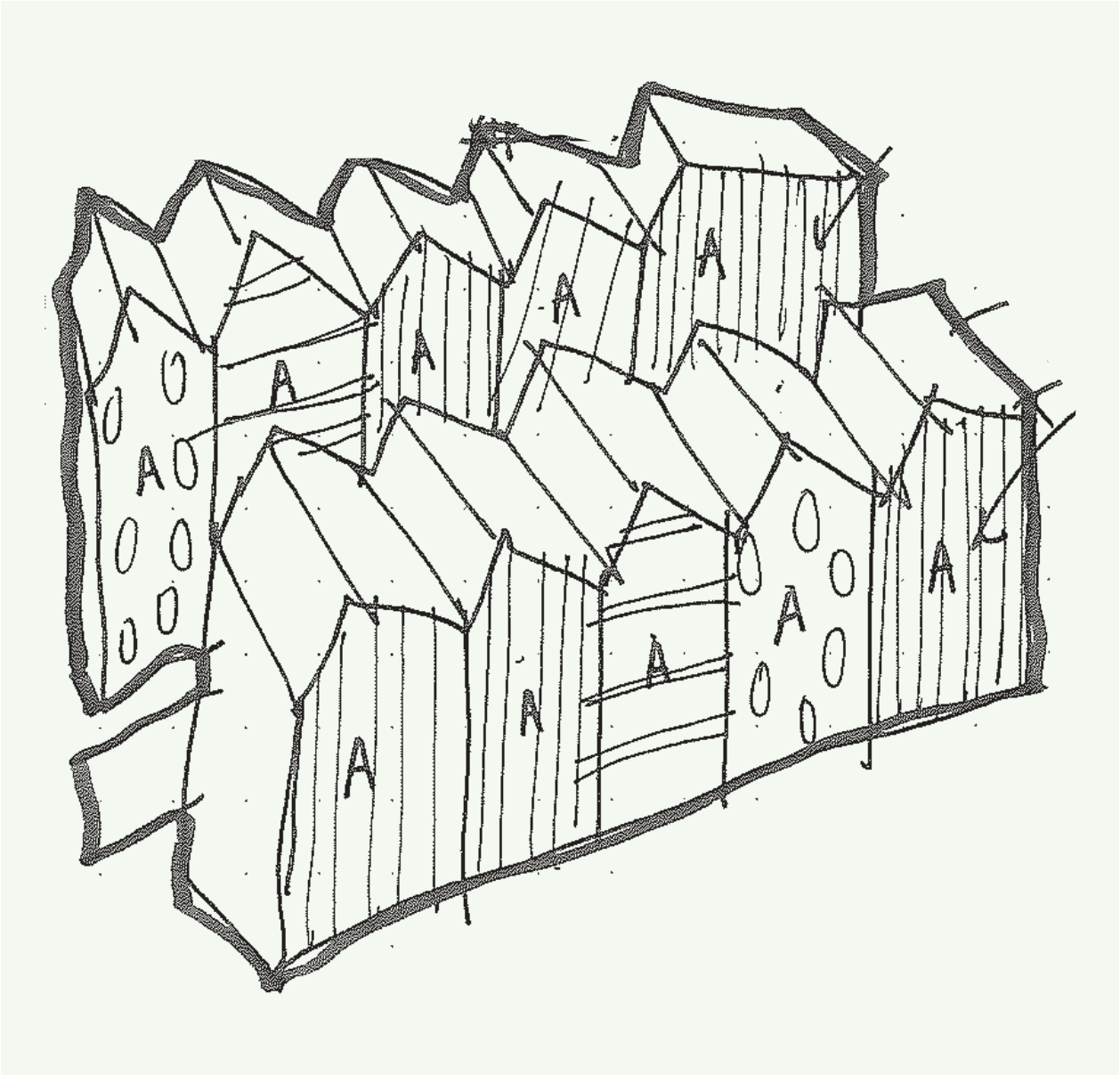
Hillshott, Letchworth Garden City (1913), More info →



Marleigh Housing, Cambridge, Pollard Thomas Edwards (2012), More info →

BF03.04 – Varied Materiality and Consistent Form (Type C)

03.04A Location and Use	Suitable for short runs of residential streets that must not exceed 150m in length and are appropriate for both rural and urban settings.
03.04B Materiality	Varied materiality on this street type is defined as a maximum of four primary materials. At least half the houses on the street must be in the same primary material.
03.04C Form	Consistent form on this street type is defined as a maximum of one house type.



ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH

PRIVATE AMENITY FOR APARTMENTS

BF05.01

Private outdoor space must be provided for all apartments in accordance with the table below.

Number of bed spaces	Minimum depth and width	Minimum area
1	1.5m	5 sqm
2	1.5m	5 sqm
3	1.5m	6 sqm
4	1.5m	7 sqm
5	1.5m	8 sqm
6	1.5m	9 sqm

BF05.02

Private amenity space for all apartments (including maisonette typologies) must be directly accessible from the principal living area of the dwelling. Maisonettes with detached rear gardens will not be permitted.

COMMUNAL AMENITY FOR APARTMENTS

BF06.01

A minimum of 50sqm of communal amenity space must be provided for apartment buildings with an additional 5sqm per unit over 5 units.

For example, an apartment building with 12 dwellings must provide a communal amenity space of at least 85sqm.

BF06.02

Communal amenity space can be delivered as a communal garden or roof terrace.

BF06.03

All apartments must have direct access to the communal amenity space via a communal entrance or lobby. Communal gardens must directly adjoin the apartment building it serves.

BF06.04

Communal gardens must have a minimum of 50% soft landscaping and a minimum of one tree per unit.

For example, an apartment building with 12 dwellings must provide a communal amenity space incorporating a minimum of 12 trees.

BF06.05

Communal gardens must be enclosed by walls or buildings with no public access or visibility from the public realm. Fencing as boundary treatments will not be permitted.

BF06.06

Ground floor units that face onto the communal amenity space must incorporate a minimum defensible space of 1.5m to ensure adequate privacy for residents.

PRIVATE AMENITY FOR HOUSES

BF07.01 – Quantum

Rear gardens must meet the minimum area and depth requirements as set out in the table below.

Number of bedrooms	Minimum area of rear garden	Minimum depth (m)
1	50 sqm	10*
2	50 sqm	10*
3+ in urban locations	60 sqm	7
3+ in rural locations	80 sqm	7

Urban locations are defined as development in and adjoining Letchworth Garden City, Baldock, Hitchin, Royston, Stevenage and Luton.

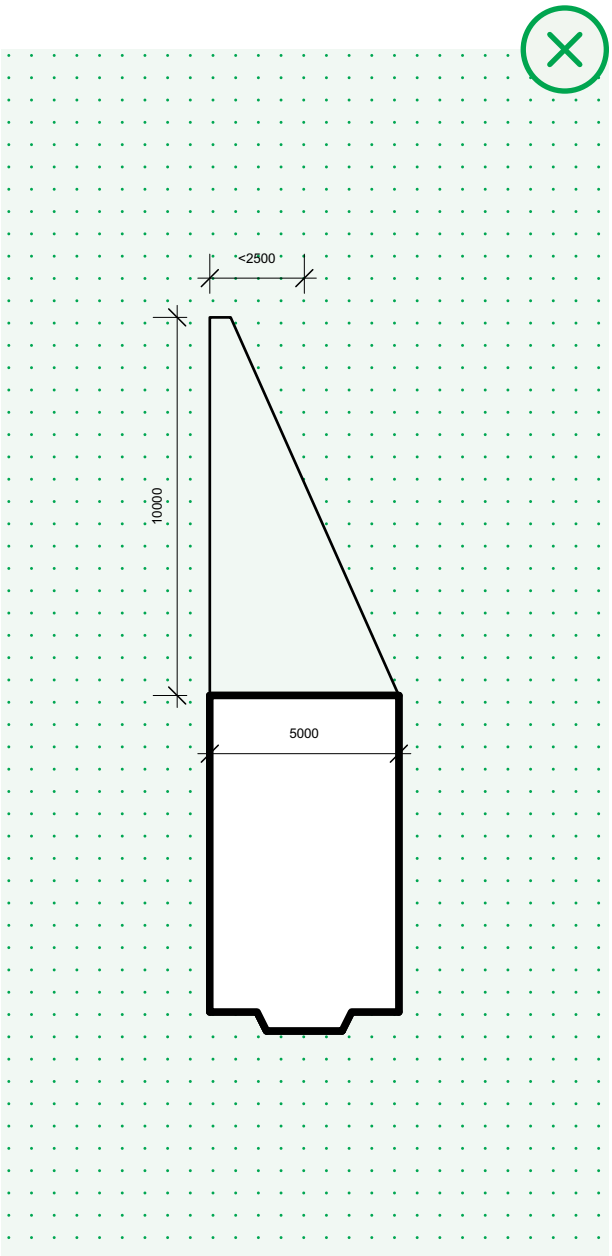
All other locations are defined as rural for the purposes of the table above.

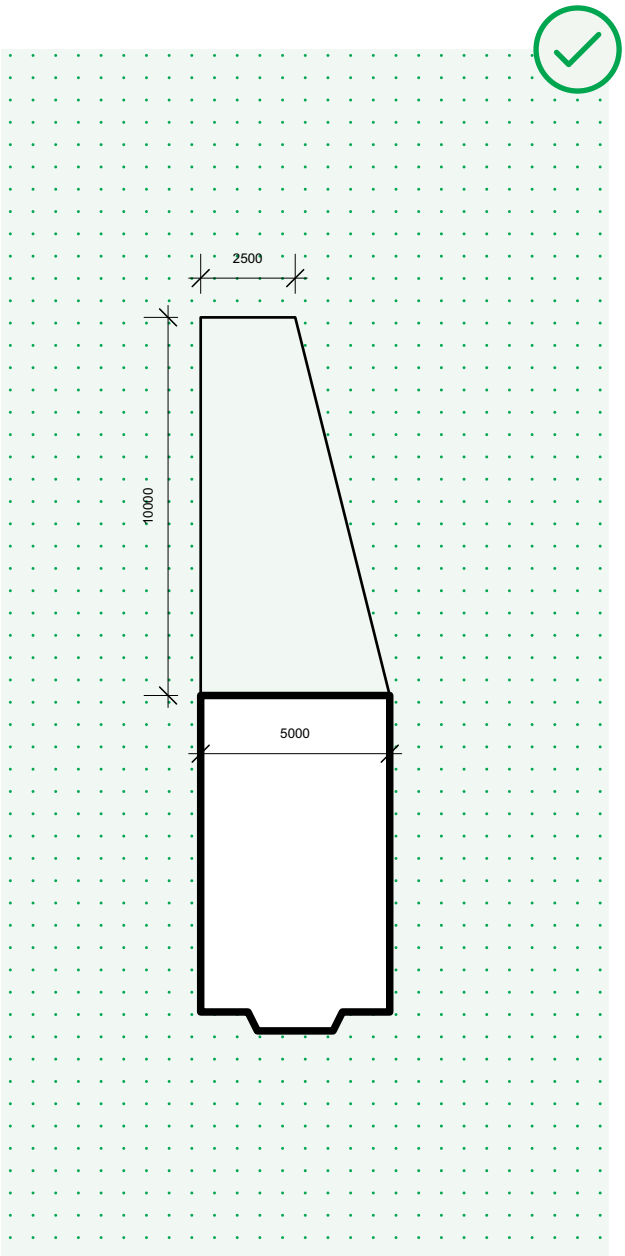
*If substantial front gardens (depth >2m) or first floor amenity is provided, the minimum rear garden depth for one and two bedroom properties may be reduced to 7m.

BF07.02 – Layout

Rear gardens must be regularly shaped. Tapered or oddly shaped gardens that reduce to more than half the plot width will not be permitted. Rear gardens to the side of dwellings are excluded from this requirement.

For example, a rear garden for a terraced dwelling on a 5m wide plot must maintain a minimum width of 2.5m.



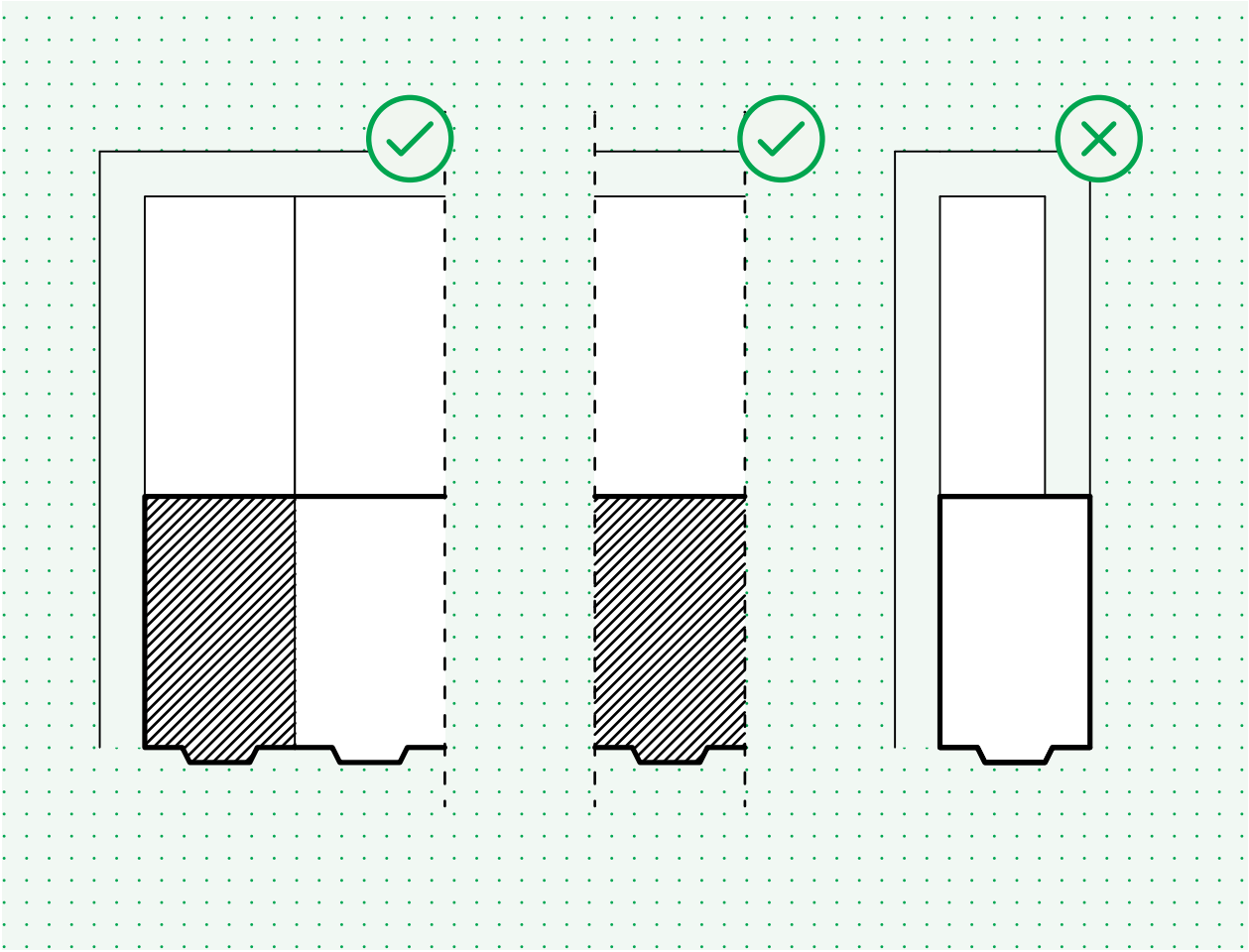


BF07.03 – Levels

A minimum of 50% of rear gardens must be at the same level to ensure usability by residents.

BF07.04 – Boundaries

Rear gardens must not be surrounded by access alleyways on more than one side with the exception of end of terrace plots which may incorporate access alleyways on two sides as illustrated below. In any circumstance, rear gardens surrounded by access alleyways on three sides will not be permitted.



BF07.05

Front gardens and defensible space at the front of homes must incorporate a minimum depth of 0.9m to the footway or carriageway to ensure adequate privacy for residents.

BF07.06

Front gardens and defensible space at the front of homes must not exceed 3.5m to prevent the loss of gardens to frontage parking.

Local Front Garden Example (XXXX), More info →

COMMUNAL AMENITY FOR HOUSES

BF08.01

In some contexts, providing communal amenity for a small group of houses may be more appropriate then Tier 1 Open Spaces that are publicly accessible. The council are open to exploring this approach and would support the provision of such spaces provided they are well-overlooked and internal to the plot layout for a sense of intimacy. It would be assumed that any communal amenity space for houses would replace Tier 1 Open Space provision for homes within the target walking distance.

Letchworth Internal Plot Green Space Example (XXXX), More info →

CYCLE PARKING AND STORAGE

BF09.01 – Quantum

Secure cycle parking must be provided in line with the table below.

Number of Bedrooms	Minimum Secure On Plot Spaces (Primary)	Additional On Plot (Secondary)	Additional Communal (Secondary)
1	1	1	0.25
2	2	1	0.25
3	2	2	0.75
4+	2	3	1.25

Primary spaces (in the second column) refer to the minimum number of secure on plot spaces that must be provided for all homes. These spaces must comply with codes BF09.02-09.

Secondary spaces (in the third and fourth columns) refer to the additional spaces required which can either be accommodated elsewhere on the plot (in a rear garden shed for example) or in a communal cycle store.

On Plot Cycle Parking

BF09.02— Location

Primary cycle parking for homes must be accommodated in one of the following locations to promote sustainable short journeys; at the front of homes in a secure cycle store that is holistically integrated with the defensible space boundary or at the side of homes in a secure cycle store, car port or garage. Accommodating primary spaces in rear gardens and coach houses is only permitted if direct access to the street (for example to a Rear Mews) from the rear garden is provided.

BF09.03— Accessibility

Primary secure cycle parking must not require cycles to be stored upright or in double-stacked racks.

BF09.04— Minimum Clearance

A passageway of 1200mm must be kept clear to manoeuvre cycles from the secure store to the street.

BF09.05— Design

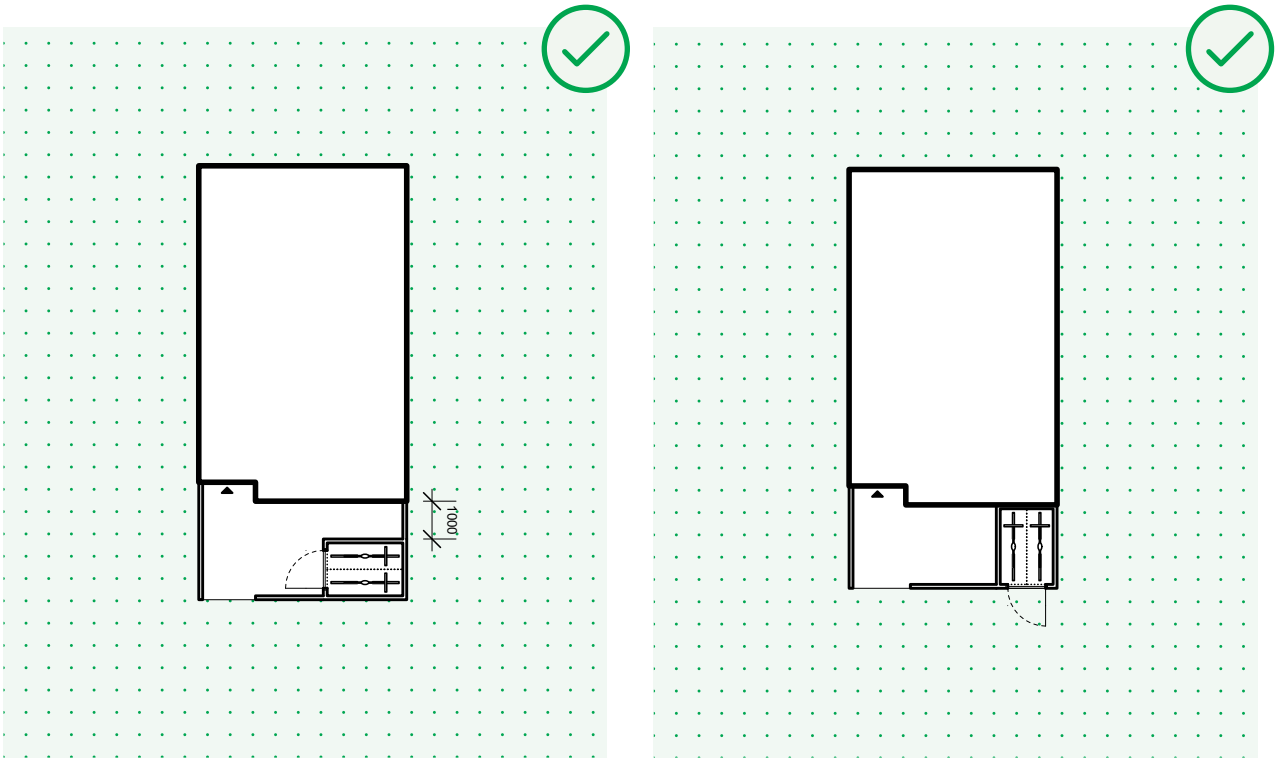
Secure cycle storage at the front of the dwelling must be holistically integrated into the boundary treatment for defensible space. Disjointed elements in different materials will not be permitted.

BF09.06 – Materiality

Secure cycle storage at the front of homes must be constructed from the same materials as the main structure. For example, a brick home will require brick cycle storage built from the same product.

BF09.07 – Habitable Rooms

If secure cycle stores run parallel to the front elevation of the dwelling, then a minimum corridor of 1000mm must be provided between the back of the store and front elevation of the dwelling to maintain a positive outlook from habitable room windows.

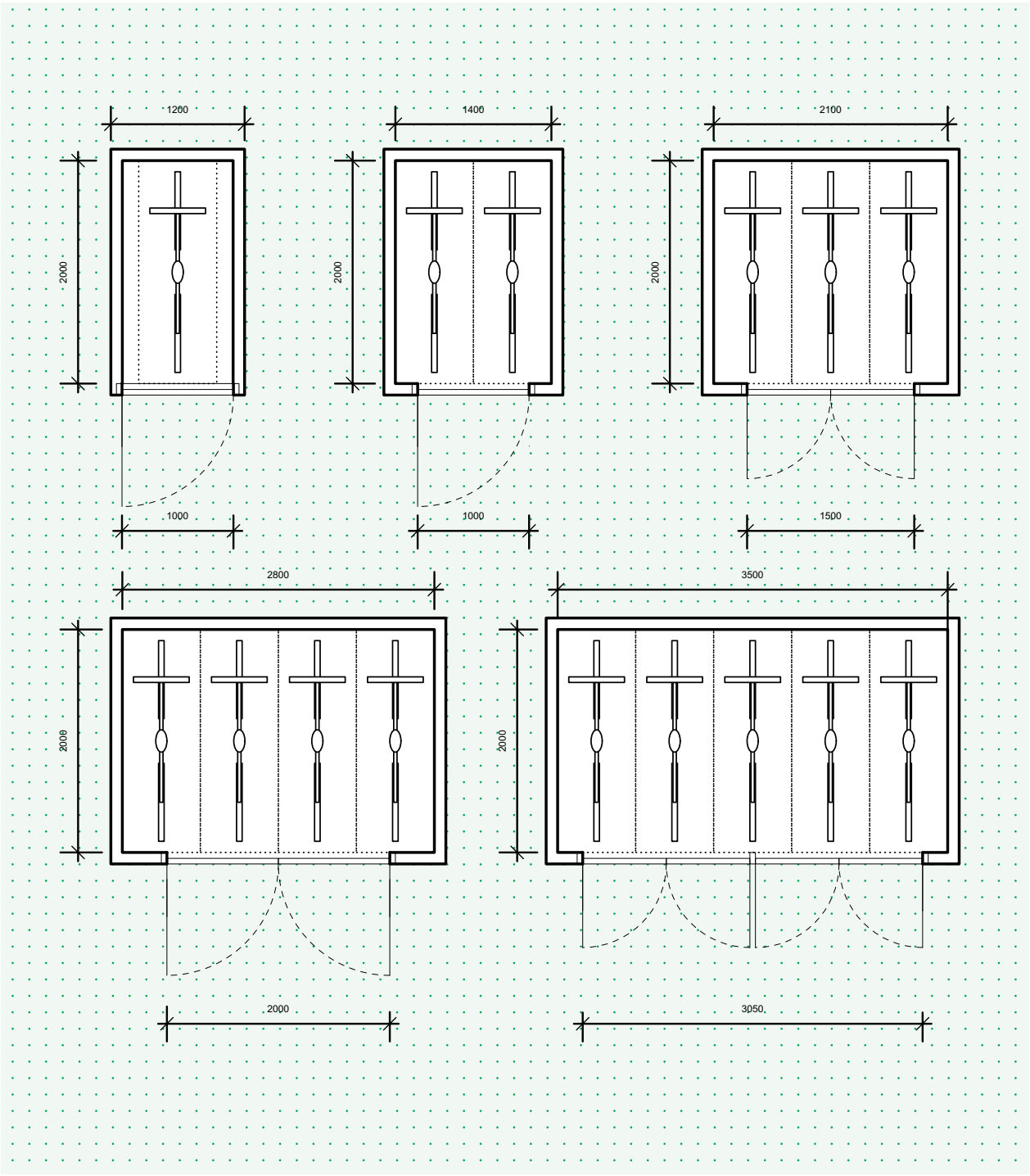


BF09.08 – Garage Access

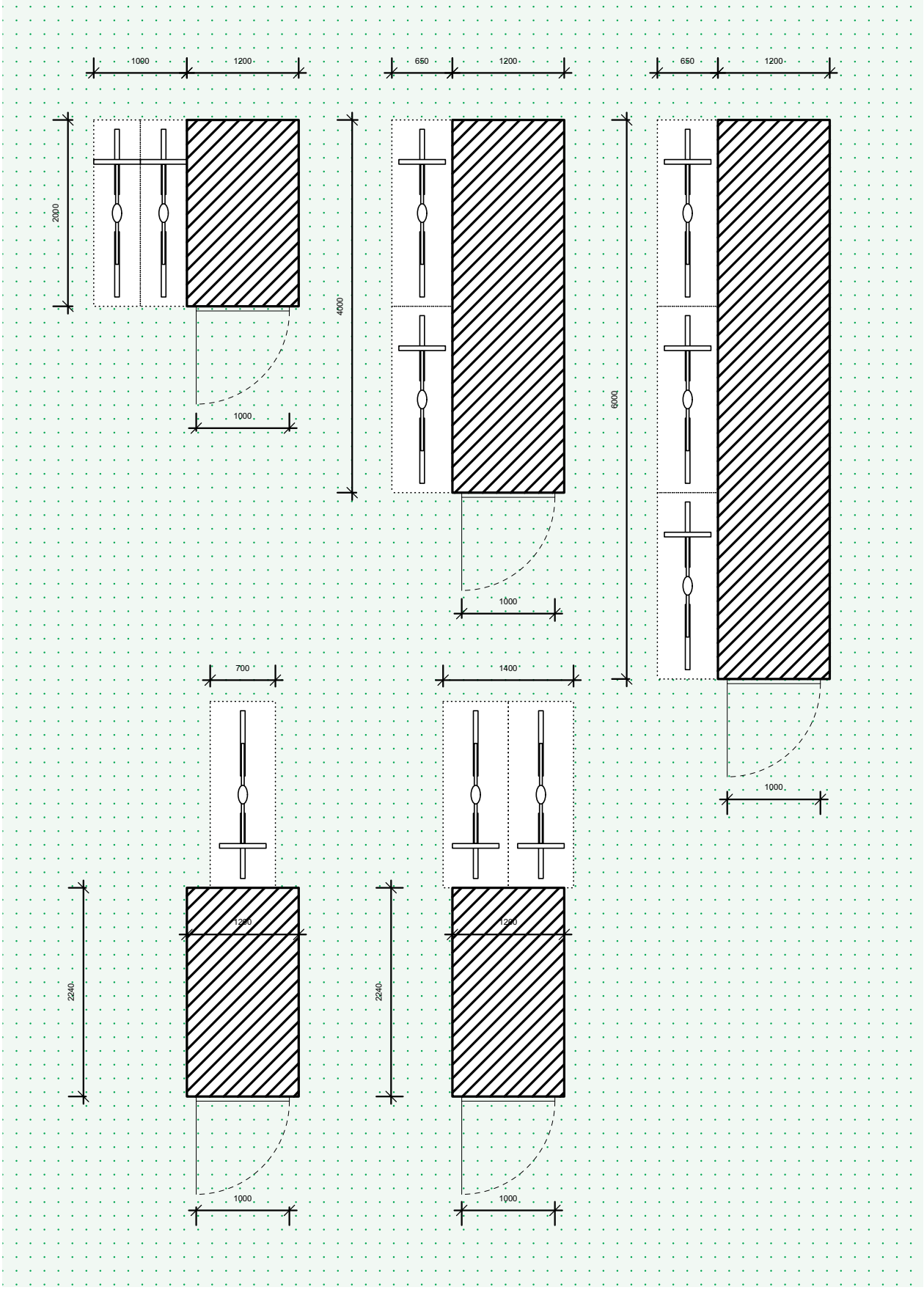
Any garages accommodating cycle storage must provide a pass door with a minimum clear width of 1000mm.

BF09.09 – Critical Dimensions

All secure on-plot cycle parking spaces (primary and secondary) must be designed in accordance with the diagrams below to ensure adequate space and ease of access for users.



Freestanding secure cycle stores for 1-5 bikes.



Critical dimensions required for 1-3 cycles incorporated into built structures (such as garages or coach houses).

Communal Cycle Parking

Communal cycle parking may be accommodated in on-street bike hangars or within purpose-built structures that can be combined with other uses such as community rooms or refuse storage. Communal cycle stores work well with terrace parking courts (PA02) as they bring activity and footfall to these public realm areas. BF09.11-15 do not apply to on-street bike hangars which are supported and encouraged.

BF09.10 – Location

Communal cycle stores must be within 100m of residents' front doors.

BF09.11 – Accessibility

Cycle parking in communal stores must not require cycles to be stored upright or in double-stacked racks.

BF09.12 – Design

Communal cycle stores must be located in well-surveilled areas with a minimum of one front door directly overlooking the entry point.

BF09.13 – Materiality

Communal cycle stores must be built from high quality materials with detailing equivalent to the surrounding homes.

BF09.14 – Access Aisles

All access aisles in communal cycle stores must be a minimum of 1.2m to manoeuvre bikes in and out of the space.

BF09.15 – Fenestration

Communal cycle stores must include a minimum of one window (glazing on access door not counted) to provide natural daylight to the cycle space and a sense of safety to users.

Communal Cycle Store Example (XXXX), More info →

WASTE AND REFUSE STORAGE

BF10.01

Waste and refuse storage solutions on new developments must comply with 'East and North Herts Shared Waste Services Waste Storage and Collection Guidance for Developers' requirements.

BF10.02

Residents must not have to move bins more than 30m from their secure storage area to the collection point.

BF10.03

A passageway of 1100mm must be provided to manoeuvre wheelie bins from the storage area to the refuse collection point.

BF10.04

If bin storage is accommodated in a garage, the space must be naturally ventilated. Permitted solutions include perforated doors and metal gates to ensure adequate odour control and fire safety.

BF10.05

Secure bin storage if provided at the front of homes must be constructed from the same materials as the main structure.

BF10.06

Secure bin storage at the front of the dwelling must be holistically integrated into the boundary treatment for defensible space. Disjointed elements in different materials will not be permitted.

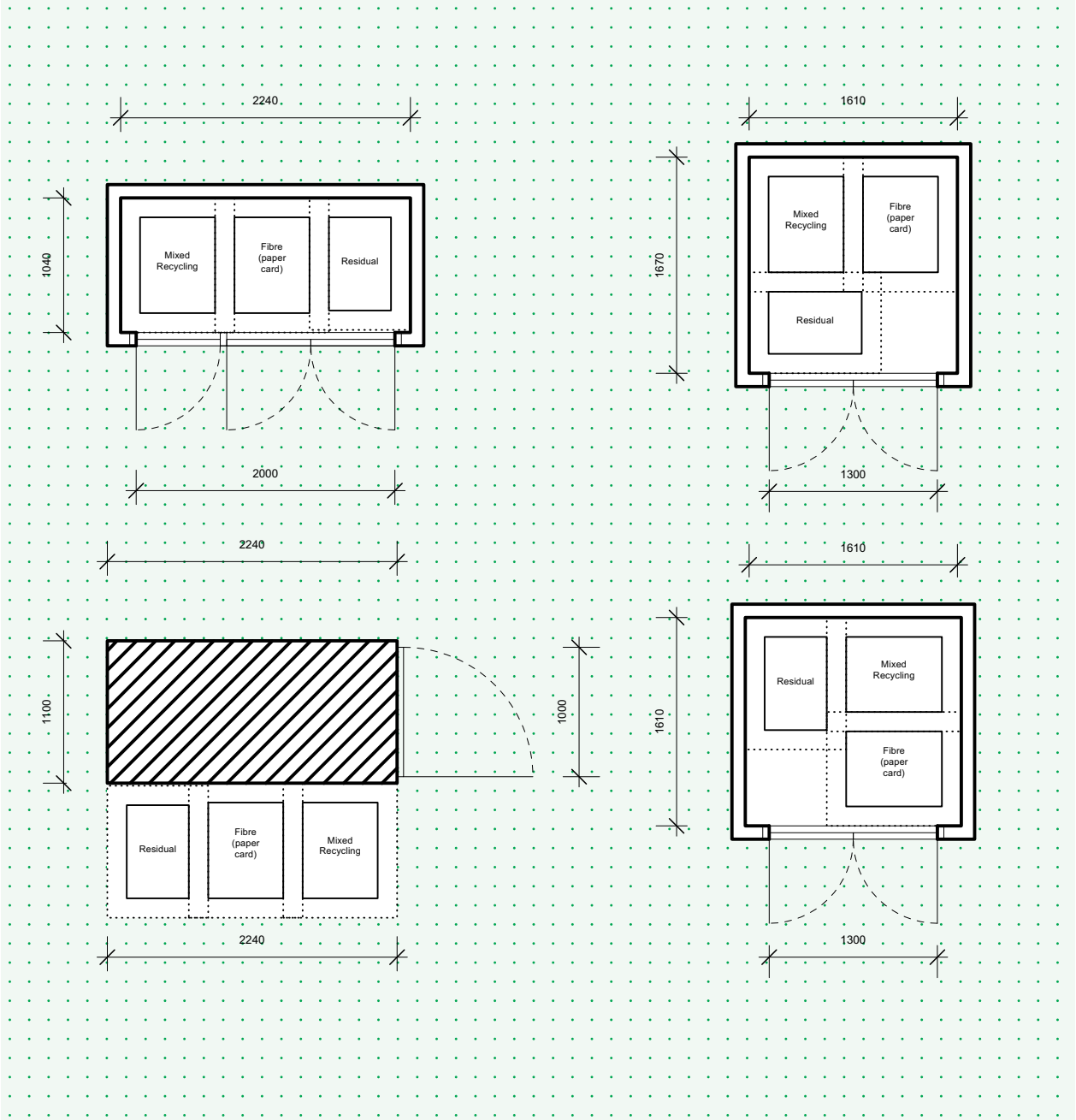
BF10.07

All bin storage for houses must accommodate 1no. 180L and 2no. 240L bins as a minimum as per the dimensions outlined in the table below. Larger homes may also provide space for 1no. 240L garden waste bin.

Capacity	Dimensions (mm)	Material
180L	480(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Residual Waste
240L	580(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Fibre, Paper and Card
240L	580(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Mixed Dry Recycling
240L	580(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Garden Waste

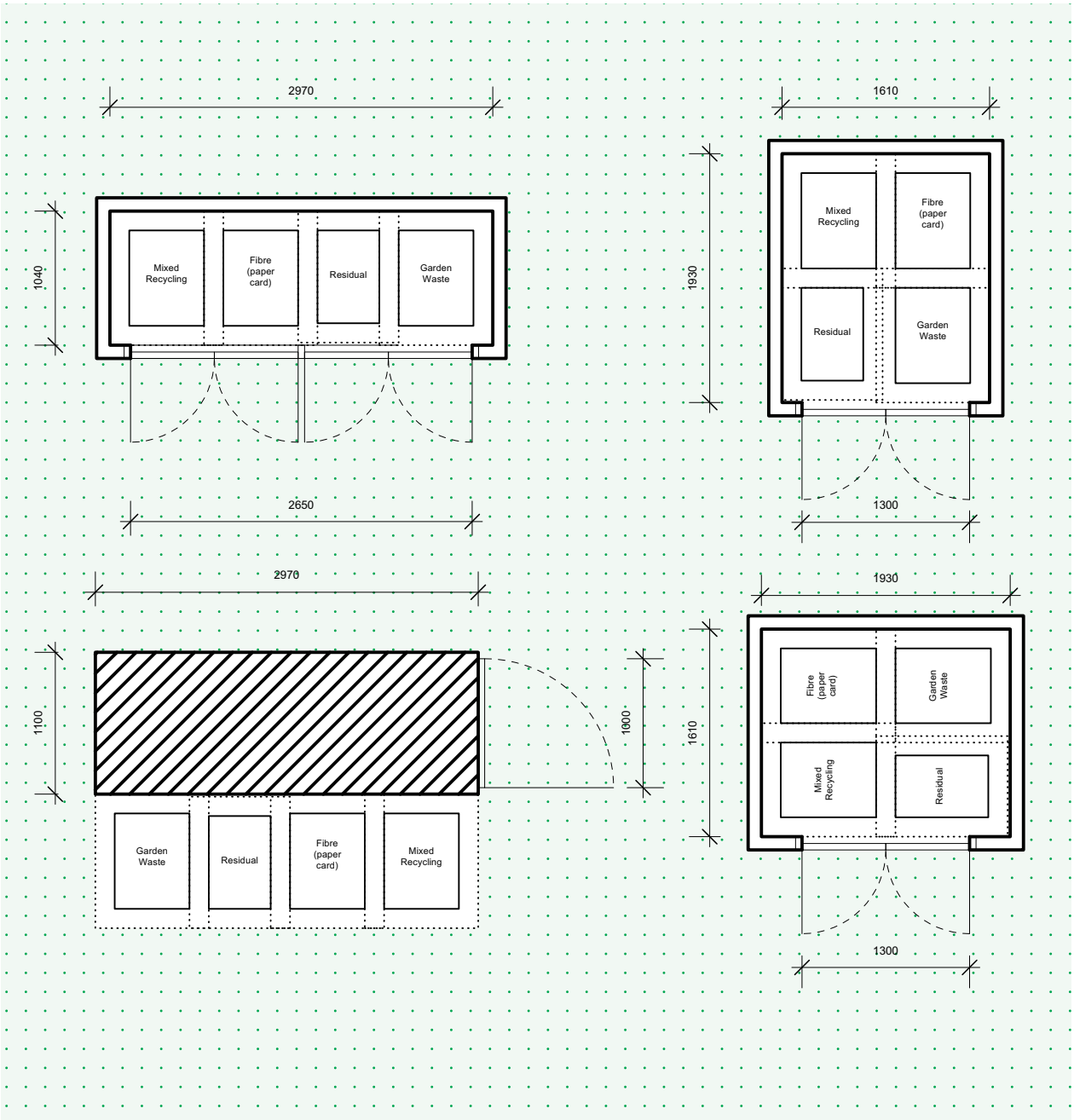
BF10.08

Refuse storage for houses must be designed in accordance with the figure below setting out critical dimensions for freestanding and integral refuse stores for three bins.



Refuse storage layouts for three bins.

Refuse stores that accommodate additional space for the garden waste bin must be designed in accordance with the figure below.



Refuse storage layouts for four bins.

GLOSSARY

Accessibility
How easy a place is for people to reach, move around, and use, including those with limited mobility or other needs. It covers both physical accessibility, such as step-free routes and clear paths, and perceived accessibility, meaning places that feel easy, safe, and straightforward to navigate. Good accessibility ensures streets, buildings, and open spaces can be comfortably used by everyone.

Active Frontage
Refers to building edges that face the street with doors, windows, or shop-fronts that create activity and interest. They make streets feel safer and more welcoming by allowing people to see in and out, encouraging walking and everyday interaction.

Active Travel
Getting around using physical movement rather than motor vehicles, mainly walking, wheeling, and cycling. Active Travel focuses on safe, direct, and enjoyable routes that make it easy for people to choose healthier, low-carbon ways of travelling in everyday life.

Aesthetic
Aesthetic refers to the overall look and visual qualities of a building, street, or place, including its style, materials, colours, and proportions. It is about how something appears and the impression it creates. In urban design, good aesthetics help make places attractive, coherent, and enjoyable to experience, while fitting well with their surroundings.

Affordable Housing
Refers to homes provided at prices or rents that are lower than the usual market level, so that people who cannot afford full-price homes still have access to a suitable place to live. In the UK this can include a range of tenures such as social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, and homes sold at a reduced market price. The aim is to ensure that local people, including lower-income households, key workers, and those in housing need, can live within their community.

Amenity
The features of a place that make it pleasant, comfortable, and enjoyable to live in. This can include things like good natural light, privacy, attractive views, quiet spaces, access to greenery, and places to sit or spend time outdoors. In urban design, amenity is about ensuring that homes, streets, and open spaces provide a good quality of life for the people who use them.

Appearance
How buildings, streets, and spaces look, including their materials, colours, form, and architectural style. Appearance covers the visual qualities that shape the character of a place and how well elements fit together.

Back-to-Back Housing
Refers to homes where the rear garden or amenity space directly adjoins the rear garden of another property. This arrangement means two homes face outward onto different streets or spaces, but their private rear areas sit directly against each other.

Baseline Studies
The research and surveys carried out at the start of a project to understand the existing conditions of a site and its surroundings. They gather information about things like landscape, ecology, movement, heritage, local character, drainage, noise, and community needs. This creates a clear picture of what is already there, helping designers make informed decisions and ensuring the design responds properly to the site.

Biodiversity Net Gain
Making sure that new development leaves nature in a better state than before the development of the site. It requires developers to protect existing habitats and then create or restore additional natural areas so that the overall biodiversity metric (a way of measuring how ecologically diverse a site is) increases rather than decreases. This can include new planting, wildlife habitats, trees, wetlands, or changes to land management. The aim is for development to improve local ecology and support more plants, animals, and natural features over the long term.

Blocks
Groups of buildings and the spaces around them that are enclosed by streets. They help shape the structure of a neighbourhood by defining where homes, shops, and other uses sit, and how people move through an area. The size and layout of blocks affect things like walkability, access, sunlight, privacy, and how active or quiet different streets feel.

Blue Infrastructure
The water-based features within a place, such as rivers, ponds, streams, wetlands, swales, and sustainable drainage systems. These elements help manage rainfall and reduce flooding, support wildlife, and create attractive spaces for people to enjoy. In urban design, blue infrastructure works alongside green infrastructure to make neighbourhoods more resilient, healthier, and better connected to natural systems.

Boundary Treatment
The way the edges of a property or space are defined, often through the use of fences, walls, hedges, railings, or planting. They help create privacy, security, and a clear distinction between public and private areas.

Buffer Zone
A strip of land kept free from new built-form to protect valuable features such as historic or wildlife-rich hedgerows/ woodland. It is usually planted or managed as grassland, creating space that enhances the asset's ecological value, improves its health, and provides a clear break between the asset and nearby development. In design terms, the buffer maintains separation, reduces disturbance, and helps new schemes sit more sensitively within their setting.

Building Line
The point where buildings are positioned in relation to the street or space in front of them. A consistent

building line means that all the buildings come forward to roughly the same point, creating a neat, continuous street edge. A varied building line means some buildings are set further back than others, which can add interest and create small spaces or changes in rhythm along the street.

Building Massing

Refers to the overall size, shape, and arrangement of a building, including its height, width, and general form. It is about how big a building feels from the street and how it sits alongside its neighbours.

Car-Dominated

Car-dominated streets are streets where the movement and storage of vehicles takes priority over people. They often have wide carriageways, large turning areas, frequent driveways/pavement crossovers, and limited space for walking, cycling, or greenery. These streets can feel unsafe, unpleasant, and difficult to navigate for anyone not in a car, reducing social activity and discouraging sustainable travel. Good urban design aims to avoid car-dominated layouts by creating streets that put people, safety, and everyday use first.

Circular Economy

An approach where materials, products, and resources are kept in use for as long as possible, rather than being thrown away after a single use. It encourages designing buildings and places so that materials can be reused, repaired, or recycled, reducing waste and lowering environmental impact. In urban design, this can mean using durable materials, planning for easy maintenance, and creating systems that minimise resource use over the lifetime of a development.

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate change adaptation means designing buildings, streets, and open spaces so they can cope with the effects of a changing climate. This includes planning for hotter summers, heavier rainfall, more frequent flooding, and stronger weather events. In urban design it involves using measures such as shade, cooling through trees and green spaces, sustainable drainage, and durable materials. The aim is to make places safer, more comfortable, and more resilient for the long term.

Climate Change Mitigation

Climate change mitigation means reducing the amount of greenhouse gases we produce, so we limit further warming of the planet. In urban design this includes things like creating energy-efficient buildings, supporting walking and cycling, using renewable energy, increasing tree cover, and designing places that require less carbon to build and run. The aim is to cut emissions and help create low-carbon, environmentally responsible developments.

Compact Development

Compact development means creating neighbourhoods where homes, services, green spaces, and public transport are located close together and linked by safe, convenient walking and cycling routes. This approach reduces the need for long car journeys, supports local centres, and makes everyday activities easier to reach. It also helps create lively, efficient places that use land efficiently and encourage healthier, low-carbon ways of living.

Community Cohesion

How well people in a neighbourhood get along, feel connected, and feel part of the same community. It is about creating places where residents of different ages, backgrounds, and tenures can meet, interact, and feel safe and supported. Good urban design encourages community cohesion by providing shared spaces, walkable streets, and environments that help people mix naturally as part of everyday life.

Connectivity

Connectivity refers to how easily people can move between different places within a neighbourhood. It is about having direct, well-linked routes for walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport, so everyday destinations are simple and convenient to reach. Good connectivity creates places that feel joined-up, easy to navigate, and supportive of active and sustainable travel.

Context

Refers to everything around a site that helps shape how new development should look and feel. It can mean the immediate setting, such as the neighbouring buildings, streets, and landscape features directly next to a site. It also includes the wider district setting, which covers the broader character of the town or village, local patterns of movement, and important community landmarks. Context also takes into account the historical setting, including heritage assets, long-standing street patterns, and the stories or uses that have shaped the area over time. In this part of the country, context also relates to the local architectural typology, from rural farmsteads and village forms to more urban terraces and traditional town centres. Understanding context helps ensure new development fits comfortably into its surroundings and strengthens the identity of the place.

Contextual Design

Contextual design means shaping new development so it responds positively to the character and qualities of its surroundings. It does not mean copying nearby buildings or recreating historic styles. Instead, it involves understanding what works well in the area, such as proportions, materials, roof forms, landscape features, or patterns of streets and spaces, and interpreting these in a modern, thoughtful, and contemporary way. True contextual design fits comfortably within its setting while still allowing for creativity and high-quality, up-to-date architecture, rather than producing pastiche.

Convivial

Places that feel friendly, welcoming, and enjoyable to spend time in. A convivial street or space encourages people to meet, talk, and take part in everyday social life. In urban design, convivial environments are comfortable, safe, and active, helping communities feel connected and making public spaces pleasant to use.

Cul-de-Sac

A short street with only one way in and out, ending in a dead-end rather than connecting to other routes. Although they can feel quiet, they often make neighbourhoods harder to move through, reduce walking and cycling options, and can lead to confusing or disconnected layouts. Because they

limit choice of routes and weaken overall street legibility, cul-de-sacs are generally discouraged in favour of more connected street patterns that support safer, clearer, and more accessible movement for everyone.

Defensible Space

Refers to the parts of a home or building's surroundings that are clearly private and feel 'owned' by residents, such as small front gardens, porches, or well-defined thresholds. When these spaces are easy to see from inside the home and are separated from public areas, they help people feel safer and more in control of their environment. Good defensible space reduces the chance of antisocial behaviour by making boundaries clear and encouraging natural overlooking from nearby homes.

Density

Refers to how many homes, buildings, or people are contained within a given area of land. In urban design it helps describe the intensity of development, which can influence how a neighbourhood feels and functions. Higher densities can support better public transport, more local services, and lively streets, while lower densities create more spacious layouts but may lead to greater car dependence. Good design focuses on the quality of how density is arranged, ensuring places feel comfortable, well-proportioned, and supported by the right amount of open space and infrastructure.

Design Code

A strict set of rules that new development must follow. It sets out clear, measurable requirements for how buildings, streets, open spaces, and landscapes are designed, leaving little room for interpretation. Unlike general guidance, a design code focuses on mandatory standards that ensure development is consistently high quality and fits well within its context. It provides certainty for developers and the community by making expectations unambiguous from the outset.

Design Concept

The main idea that guides how a development is planned and shaped. It sets out the core thinking behind the layout, buildings, landscape, and movement, showing how the proposal responds to the site and the rules of the design code. It provides a simple, coherent vision that informs all later design decisions.

Design Quality

How well a place is planned, built, and experienced. It includes things like the usefulness of spaces, the comfort and safety they provide, the way buildings and streets look, and how well the development works for everyday life. High design quality means creating places that are attractive, durable, accessible, and enjoyable for the people who live in and use them.

Development Parcel

A clearly defined piece of land within a larger site that is planned and built as a single phase or block of development. It usually contains a group of streets, homes, or buildings that form a coherent part of the overall masterplan. Parcels help organise large sites into manageable sections, ensuring each area has a clear structure, identity, and connection to surrounding spaces.

Dual Aspect
Refers to a home or room that has windows on two different external walls, allowing light, fresh air, and views from more than one direction. This improves natural ventilation, brings in more daylight, and gives residents greater comfort and flexibility in how they use the space. Dual aspect homes are generally considered higher quality because they feel brighter, airier, and better connected to their surroundings.

Edge Condition
How a development meets or borders the spaces around it, such as open countryside, existing neighbourhoods, main roads, or parks. It describes the character and quality of this boundary, including how buildings, landscaping, and streets are arranged where the development meets something different.

Edge of Settlement
The edge of settlement is the boundary where a town or village meets open countryside or undeveloped land. It marks the transition between built areas and rural landscapes and therefore needs careful design to avoid a poor edge condition. In some locations, the edge of settlement can be planned in a way that allows for future growth, helping any later expansion to integrate more naturally with the surroundings. A well-designed edge might strategically create a sensitive relationship with the countryside while also futureproofing the settlement so that development can evolve in a coherent and sustainable way.

Enclaves
Small areas of development that are cut off from their surroundings, often with limited access points and few connections to nearby streets or communities. They tend to face inward rather than engaging with the wider neighbourhood, which can lead to isolated layouts, poor movement routes, and a lack of natural activity or surveillance

Enclosure
Enclosure refers to the way buildings, walls, trees, or other features create a sense of a defined, contained space along a street or within a public area. It describes how much a space feels 'held together' by the height and arrangement of the surrounding edges. Good enclosure helps streets feel comfortable, legible, and safe, with a clear sense of shape and purpose. Too little enclosure can make spaces feel open and exposed, while too much can feel cramped or overpowering.

Engagement
The process of involving local people, stakeholders, and community groups in the planning and design of new development or council policy-making. It gives residents the chance to share their views, local knowledge, and priorities so that proposals can better reflect community needs. Good engagement is open, early, and meaningful, helping build trust and ensuring that development or decision-making is shaped with the people who will live in/use it.

External Amenity Space
External amenity space refers to the outdoor areas that residents can use for relaxation, play, and everyday activities. This includes private gardens, balconies, terraces, shared

courtyards, and communal green spaces within a development. These spaces provide fresh air, natural light, and opportunities for socialising or quiet enjoyment. Good external amenity space improves quality of life by giving residents comfortable, usable areas outside their homes.

Form

The overall shape and structure of a building, including its height, roof profile, proportions, and the way its different parts fit together. It describes the three-dimensional outline of a building and how it appears from the street. In urban design, good form helps buildings relate well to their neighbours, create attractive street scenes, and contribute positively to the character of a place.

Frontage

Frontage refers to the side of a building that faces the street or public space. It includes the main entrance, windows, and any features that meet the public realm. Frontages shape how a street looks and feels, influencing activity, safety, and character. Well-designed frontages create welcoming, attractive streets by ensuring buildings face outward and positively engage with their surroundings.

Grain (Urban Grain)

Urban grain describes the pattern and spacing of streets, plots, and buildings in an area. It shows how closely buildings sit together, how frequently streets occur, and how small or large the development blocks are. Understanding urban grain helps ensure new development matches the scale and structure of its surroundings and supports a clear, walkable layout.

Green Corridor

A green corridor is a continuous strip of natural or planted space that connects parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, and key walking or cycling routes. It provides safe, pleasant pathways for people while also allowing plants and animals to move between different areas. Green corridors help link neighbourhoods with nature, support biodiversity, and make it easier for residents to travel through attractive, green surroundings.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure refers to the network of natural and landscaped spaces in an area, such as parks, trees, gardens, green corridors, wetlands, and sustainable drainage features. Together, these spaces support wildlife, help manage water, improve air quality, and create pleasant places for people to enjoy. In urban design, green infrastructure is planned as an interconnected system that benefits both the environment and the community, making neighbourhoods healthier, more resilient, and more attractive.

Human Scale

The design of buildings and spaces so they feel comfortable and relatable for people, rather than large or overwhelming. It focuses on proportions, details, and street widths that make places pleasant to walk through and easy to understand.

Inclusive Design

Inclusive design means creating buildings, streets, and spaces that everyone can use comfortably, regardless of age, disability, or personal needs. It focuses on removing barriers,

providing clear and accessible routes, and making places intuitive and welcoming for all users. The aim is to ensure that the built environment works well for the widest range of people without requiring special adaptations.

Inward Looking Development

Inward looking development refers to layouts where homes or buildings face internally towards private drives or courtyards, rather than addressing the surrounding streets and public spaces. This often results in blank backs or high fences facing the public realm, reducing street activity, natural surveillance, and overall connectivity. In urban design, inward looking layouts are usually discouraged because they can create inactive, disconnected, and poorly overlooked streets that feel less safe and less welcoming.

Landscape

All the natural and designed outdoor elements within a place, including trees, planting, grassed areas, water features, and the overall shape of the land. It also includes how these elements are arranged to create attractive, functional spaces for people to enjoy. In urban design, landscape plays a key role in shaping character, supporting wildlife, managing water, and providing pleasant areas for recreation and everyday use.

Landscape-Led Design

Planning new development around the natural features of a site from the very start. It prioritises things like existing trees, hedgerows, topography, water features, views, and habitats, and uses them to shape the layout of streets, buildings, and open spaces. This approach ensures that nature, character, and green-blue infrastructure guide the design, resulting in places that feel more sustainable, distinctive, and well-integrated with their surroundings.

Landmark

A landmark is a building, feature, or space that stands out in its surroundings and helps people find their way around. It might be a distinctive building, a tower, a public square, a piece of public art, or a notable landscape feature. Landmarks create points of interest, strengthen local identity, and make neighbourhoods easier to navigate by giving people memorable reference points.

Layout

The way streets, buildings, open spaces, and routes are arranged within a development. It sets out how different parts of a place fit together, including where homes sit, how people move around, and how public and private spaces are organised. A well-designed layout creates a clear structure that feels easy to navigate, supports walking and cycling, and helps new development function well as part of its surroundings.

Legibility

How easy a place is to understand and navigate. A legible neighbourhood has clear routes, visible landmarks, and well-defined spaces that help people find their way without confusion. Good legibility makes streets intuitive to follow, improves safety, and helps residents and visitors feel confident moving around.

Material Consideration

A material consideration is any factor that must be taken into account when deciding a planning application because it is relevant to the use and development of land. This can include things like design quality, impact on neighbours, highway safety, heritage, ecology, local policies, and national planning guidance. If an issue relates directly to how the proposal affects the area or the people living in it, it is likely to be a material consideration. Personal circumstances or opinions that do not affect land use are generally not material.

Mixed-Use Development

Development that combines different types of buildings and activities within the same area, such as homes, shops, workplaces, community facilities, and leisure spaces. By bringing uses closer together, it creates lively neighbourhoods where people can meet daily needs without long journeys. Well-designed mixed-use areas support walking, cycling, public transport, and a stronger sense of community by keeping places active throughout the day and evening.

Movement Network

The connected routes that people use to travel around an area, including streets, footpaths, cycleways, and public transport links. They show how different parts of a place are joined together and how easy it is to move between them. Well-designed movement networks prioritise safe, direct routes for walking, wheeling, and cycling, while ensuring vehicles, buses, and emergency access are properly accommodated. A strong movement network makes neighbourhoods easy to navigate and supports sustainable travel.

Natural Surveillance

The design of streets, paths, and open spaces so that they are easily overlooked by nearby homes, windows, and regular activity. When people can naturally see what is happening outside, places feel safer, antisocial behaviour is discouraged, and residents feel more comfortable using public spaces. Good natural surveillance comes from buildings facing the street, active frontages, and well-used routes, rather than relying on cameras or security measures.

Open Space

The outdoor areas within a development that are free from buildings and available for people to use and enjoy. This can include parks, play areas, green spaces, public squares, community gardens, and natural landscapes. Open spaces provide places for recreation, relaxation, socialising, and contact with nature, and they play an important role in creating healthy, attractive, and well-balanced neighbourhoods.

Parameters

Fixed rules or limits that guide how a development must be designed. They set out the key requirements for things like building heights, block layouts, street positions, open space locations, and movement routes.

Permeability

How easily people can move through an area using a choice of safe, direct, and connected routes. A permeable layout makes it simple to walk, wheel, or cycle between homes, streets, parks, and

local facilities without long detours or dead ends. Good permeability creates places that feel more accessible, legible, and well-connected, while reducing reliance on cars.

Place-Making

The process of designing and shaping buildings, streets, and spaces to create enjoyable, distinctive, and well-used places. It focuses on how people experience an area, making sure it feels welcoming, attractive, and easy to move around. Good placemaking brings together design, community needs, local character, and everyday activity to create places that support social interaction, health, and a strong sense of identity.

Plot

A single piece of land within a development that is set aside for one building or group of buildings, along with its private outdoor space. It includes the area for the home or building footprint, garden, parking, and any boundaries. Plots help organise how buildings sit within a street and ensure each property has a clear, usable space of its own.

Publicly Accessible Private Space

Land that is privately owned but open for the public to use and move through. Examples include privately managed courtyards, squares, or landscaped areas within a development that function like public spaces but are maintained by a landowner or management company. These spaces often look and feel public, but access can be controlled, and rules for use are set by the owner. Good design ensures they remain welcoming, inclusive, and easy for people to navigate.

Public Realm

The public realm refers to all the outdoor places that everyone can use and enjoy, such as streets, squares, parks, pavements, and other shared spaces. It includes everything between buildings that is publicly accessible and forms the setting for daily life.

Rationale

The explanation of the reasoning behind a design decision. It sets out why something has been planned or arranged in a certain way and shows how the choice responds to the site, local context, and the requirements of the design code. A clear rationale helps demonstrate that design decisions are well-thought-out, justified, and based on sound planning and urban design principles.

Setback

All the outdoor places that everyone can use and enjoy, such as streets, squares, parks, pavements, and other shared spaces. It includes everything between buildings that is publicly accessible and forms the setting for daily life.

Streetscape

The overall look, feel, and design of a street, including its buildings, pavements, lighting, trees, planting, street furniture, and materials. It is everything you see and experience when moving along a street.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Features designed to manage rainwater in a natural and sustainable way. Instead of sending all water straight into drains and sewers, SuDS slow it down, store it, and allow it to soak into the ground where possible. This helps

reduce flooding, improve water quality, and create attractive green and blue infrastructure for people and wildlife. Examples include swales, rain gardens, wetlands, permeable paving, and retention basins. Good SuDS design turns water management into a visible, positive and interactive part of the landscape.

Sustainable Transport Modes

Ways of travelling that have a low environmental impact and reduce reliance on private cars. They include walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport, shared mobility options, and other low-carbon travel choices. Supporting sustainable transport helps cut emissions, improve air quality, reduce congestion, and create healthier, more active neighbourhoods. Well-designed places make these modes safe, convenient, and attractive for everyday journeys.

Tenure Neutrality

Designing homes so that properties of different tenures, such as private sale, shared ownership, or affordable housing, look the same from the outside and are integrated throughout a development. It avoids creating noticeable differences between tenure types, helping to reduce stigma and support mixed, inclusive communities. Good tenure-neutral design ensures all homes meet the same standards of quality, appearance, and layout, regardless of who lives in them.

Threshold Space

Small area between a building and the public street or path, such as a front garden, porch, step, or shared entrance space. It creates a gentle transition from public to private areas, giving residents a sense of ownership and providing a welcoming, clearly defined entrance. Well-designed threshold spaces improve privacy, support natural surveillance, and help buildings engage positively with the street.

Typology

Refers to the common types or categories of buildings, streets, or spaces that share similar features. It helps describe patterns such as terraced houses, apartment blocks, village greens, high streets, or rural lanes. In urban design, understanding typology makes it easier to choose forms that suit the character of an area and to design new development that fits well with its surroundings while still allowing for modern interpretation.

Wayfinding

The process of helping people find their way around a place easily. It includes the features that make routes clear and intuitive, such as landmarks, signage, building frontages, lighting, and the overall layout of streets and paths. Good wayfinding means people can navigate without confusion, understand where they are, and move confidently through a neighbourhood.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination Statement for North Hertfordshire District Council Design Supplementary Planning Document

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out a Screening Determination for the North Hertfordshire District Council Design Supplementary Planning Document (hereafter Design SPD), and has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Design SPD will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). More detail is given in the following sections on SEA (section 2), Supplementary Planning Documents (section 3) and the Design SPD specifically (section 4).

1.2 The assessment of the Design SPD and the Determination is included in sections 5, 6 and 7.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment Context

2.1. European Union Directive 2001/42/EC requires SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have significant environmental effects. The Directive has been transposed into law for England and Wales in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to promote sustainable development through assessing the extent to which the plan will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

2.2. Under Regulation 9 of the Regulations, the responsible body (local parish or town council or neighbourhood forum) is required to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore whether SEA is required. This process is called screening. It is undertaken using a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in a Screening Determination (this document), which must be publicly available.

2.3. Before the responsible body makes a formal determination, there is a requirement to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required. This consultation will take place alongside consultation on the draft SPD.

3. Supplementary Planning Documents and Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.1. Planning Practice Guidance states that:

3.1.1. Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan.

3.1.2. A strategic environmental assessment is unlikely to be required where a supplementary planning document deals only with a small area at a local level (see regulation 5(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004), unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects.

3.1.3. Before deciding whether significant environment effects are likely, the local planning authority should take into account the criteria specified in schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and consult the consultation bodies[1].

3.2. This Screening Determination has taken account of this Guidance in reaching its conclusions.

4. Design SPD

4.1. The Design SPD sets out the aspirations for North Hertfordshire, setting out the local context in terms of landscape and built environment and what measures can be taken to create high quality development in a sustainable way which addresses climate changes. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF identifies visual tools such as design guides to provide clarity about design expectations.

4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[2] defines Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) as documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the statutory Development Plan.

4.3. SPDs do not have the same status as the policies within the Development Plan (in North Hertfordshire's case, the Local Plan) and are not subject to an independent Examination. However, SPDs must undergo public consultation and are considered as material considerations when determining planning applications.

4.4. A review of the Council's current planning guidance was undertaken in 2017. This identified that the Council's Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) dating from 2011 should be prioritised for updating. This review of current Council planning guidance, and the identification of documents to be produced in the future, was considered and approved by Cabinet on 25th July 2017.

4.5. The Council has previously considered whether some contributions from new development might instead be secured by introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL effectively operates as a flat-rate 'tax' levied upon qualifying development based on the amount of floorspace being provided. It is collected on an authority-wide basis. CIL can be spent on any matters or projects defined by the Council on its 'Regulation 123' list. However, unlike site-specific legal agreements, there is no guarantee at the point of determining applications that monies will be spent on any particular matter or project.

[1] Planning Practice Guidance: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal, Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 11-008-20140306, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal

[2] Annex 2: Glossary

4.6. In December 2018, Cabinet reaffirmed its resolution of 30th July 2013: "That a Community Infrastructure Levy for North Hertfordshire be not pursued for the time being", and that developer contributions would continue to be collected using Section 106 legal agreements. In the Cabinet report it was also recommended that work would be expedited on the review and adoption of a revised Planning Obligations SPD to reflect the Governments' recent strengthening of viability matters in Planning Practice Guidance; and, to address the full range of potential contributions that might be sought through s106 in the absence of CIL.

4.7. Subsequent to that Cabinet decision, the Government laid draft regulations confirming that all pooling restrictions are to be lifted so that multiple Section 106 agreements can be collected towards a single piece of infrastructure. This restriction has been in place since 2015 and presently means that no more than five Section 106 contributions may be made towards any single infrastructure scheme. This has been a notable barrier to the funding and delivery of infrastructure, particularly for larger projects.

4.8. In June 2019, the Cabinet approved the Council's Housing Delivery Test Action Plan for publication. This contains a range of measures to boost the delivery of new homes in the District. The Action Plan reiterates this Council's intention to prepare a Developer Contributions SPD to be adopted alongside, or shortly after, any adoption of the new Local Plan.

5. Screening Assessment

5.1. As noted above, the Regulations specify a set of criteria which must be used to assess whether any plan covered by the Regulation is likely to have a significant environmental effect and therefore require a SEA. The table below considers each of these criteria in turn.

Table 1: Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	**Likely to have significant effects?**	**Justification for assessment**
1 (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	No	The SPD provides greater detail on the policy and principles established in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The emerging Plan has been subject to a comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The purpose of the SPD is to provide guidance on the design of development policies (principally Policy SP9 and Policy D1

		which has been subject to SA / SEA through the process above).
1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	The SPD is intended to supplement Local Plan policies and sits below the Local Plan in terms of the planning hierarchy. The SPD must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The SPD is highly relevant in terms of promoting sustainable development as it seeks to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of the design and sustainability policies. The aim of these policies is to ensure that development proposals create high quality sustainable development.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	There are no environmental problems relevant to the SPD. The policies within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan that the SPD supplement are not expected to have any significant effects on the environment.
1 (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	No	The SPD is not relevant to the implementation of EC legislation such as waste management or water protection.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	The anticipated effects on the sustainability of North Hertfordshire are expected to be positive by providing guidance to support policies designed to create sustainable, high quality new development.

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		The duration of the effects is difficult to define; the effects will be linked to a planning permission which is (usually) permanent unless superseded by a subsequent permission on the same site.
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	The District Plan SA/SEA expects overall positive benefits to arise from the specific policies related to design of development that the SPD relates to.
2 (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	Design implications will be local to North Hertfordshire district and only indirect effects are expected cross-boundary, for example, where sites straddle a boundary or are located adjoining another authority.
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	No significant effects have been identified.
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	The SPD will be applied to all planning applications in the district, regardless of scale.
2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards (iii) intensive land-use	No	The SPD is not be able to set policy related to specific land uses. The SPD will only affect the way in which the development is designed and functions.
2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	No	None identified. Any applications for development will be required to satisfy the relevant policies for protection of the character of the area before permission is granted.

6. Consultation Responses

6.1. This screening determination has been produced alongside the consultation on the draft Design Supplementary Planning Document. The Council will consult the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required. An updated version of this statement will be produced prior to any future adoption of the SPD. This will report any responses received from the three statutory consultees.

7. Screening Determination

7.1. In summary, it is the Council's opinion that at this time the Design SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this opinion are that:

- The development plan policies supplemented by this SPD have themselves been subjected to SA and SEA. The SA conclusion on Policy SP9 states that the policy should help to ensure that the Plan delivers against a number of the SA framework objectives and is particularly important given the new scale of development proposed by the Plan. The appraisal of proposed main modifications to the emerging Local Plan did not indicate any change to this.
- The SPD is only entitled to provide guidance to existing policies, it is not expected that they would alter the conclusions reached in the District Plan SA/SEA. The SPD cannot set new policy. It has been prepared to build upon the District Plan policies and provide guidance to applicants regarding infrastructure provision (in accordance with the NPPF).

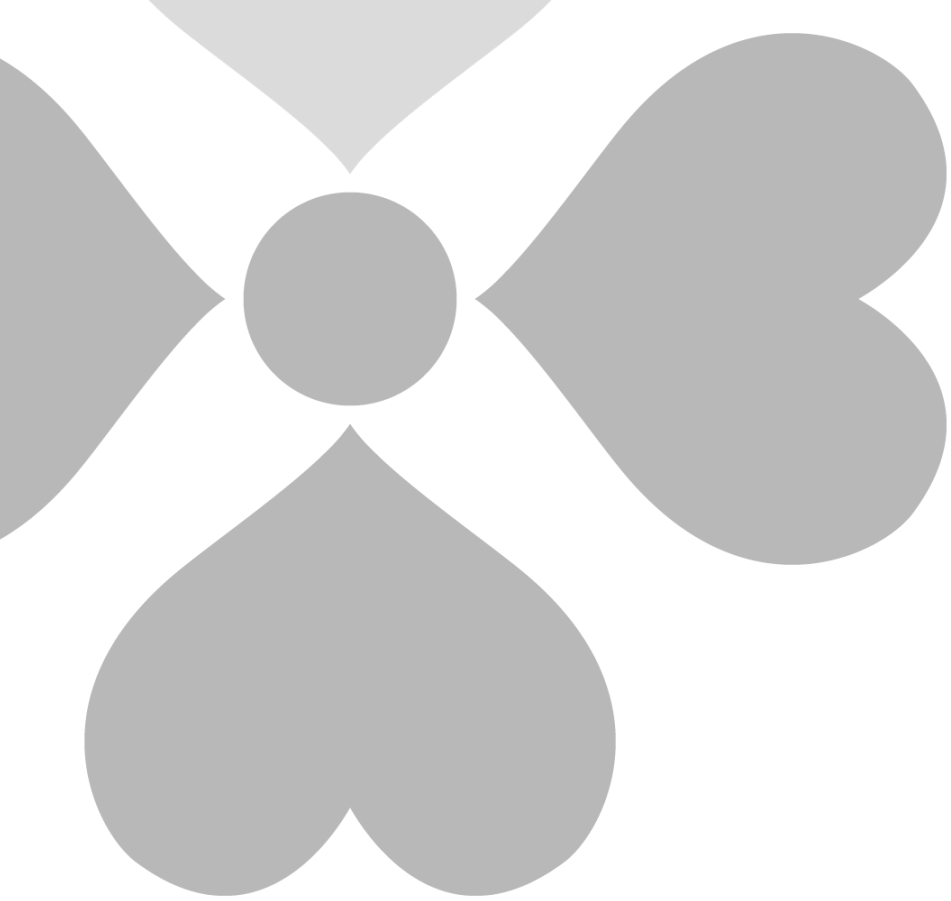
7.2. On the basis of the above, and considering the SE/SEA undertaken at a higher level through the preparation of the District Plan, and the effects expected, North Hertfordshire District Council concludes that the Design Supplementary Planning Document does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

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IDENTIFY ISSUES

NORTH HERTS DISTRICT DESIGN CODE
STAGE 1 SUMMARY REPORT



The following report summarises work undertaken by the North Herts Urban Design team during Stage 1 of the District Design Code (between June and May 2024). The main focus for Stage 1 ‘Identify Issues’ was to conduct a place review of sites within the district in order to identify focus areas that the code needs to address. This report is intended for internal North Herts circulation only.

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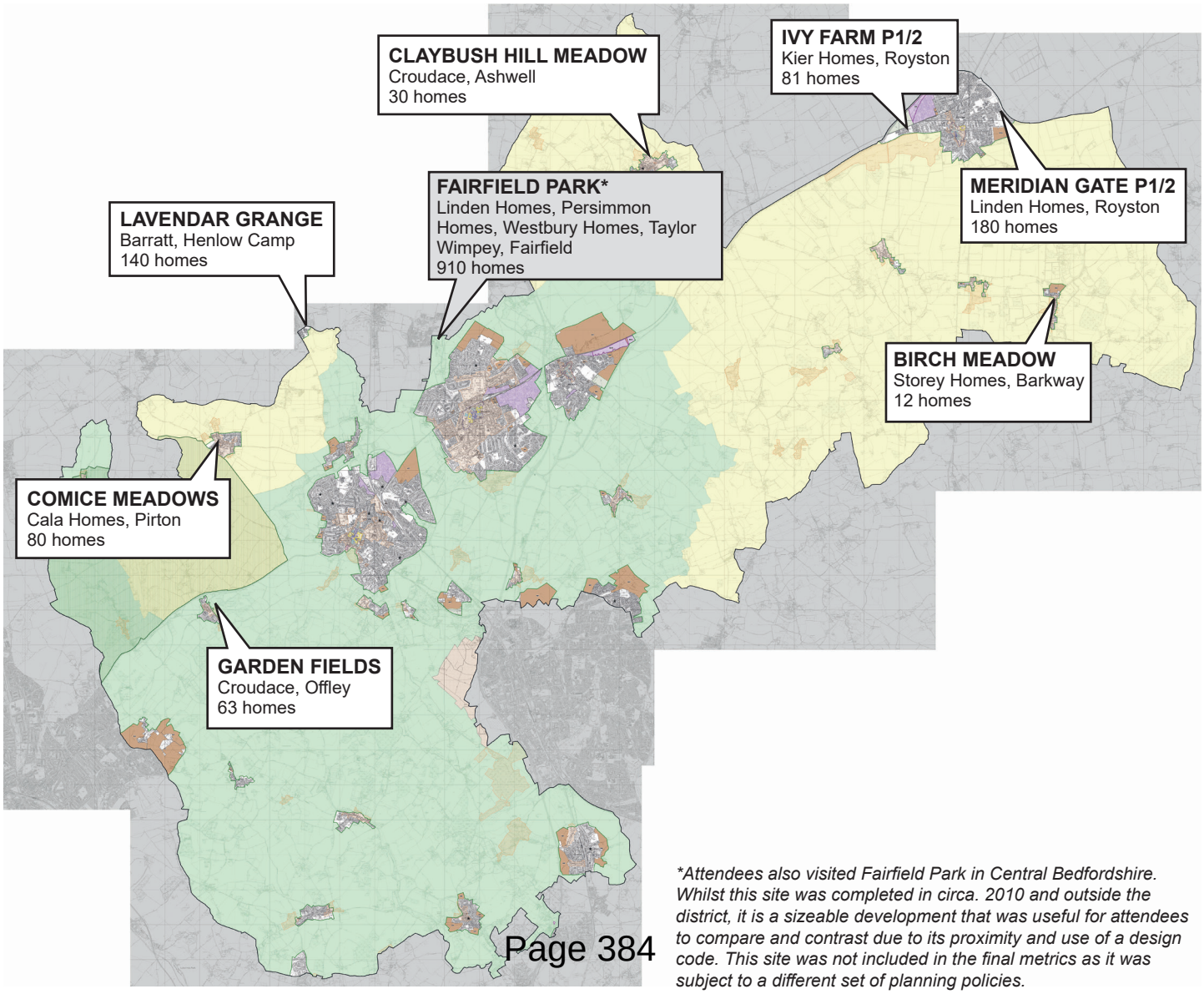
STAGE 1 KEY CONCLUSIONS

STAGE 1
KEY INFORMATION

In order to shape the strategic direction and focus for the Design Code, the Urban Design team held a series of guided site visits with officers and members to understand what development in North Herts was doing well and what could be improved. This process mirrors national methodology conducted by the Place Alliance, their most recent publication being 'A Housing Design Audit for England' which assessed 142 large-scale housing led developments across the country against good practice criteria.

In North Herts, attendees visited a total of 8 recently completed developments across the district (shown on the map below) of varying scale, character and location over a total of 4 days. At each site, attendees were ask to complete a design questionnaire during that assessed various aspects of urban design across six key categories. Criteria (shown opposite) were based on Buildings For A Healthy Life Guidance (2020), the National Model Design Guide and Place Alliance criteria. The form asked attendees to rate each site against a statement from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. To look at the data, this was then translated into a score which allowed the team to rank the highest and lowest scoring statements. Key objectives from the visits were:

1. To facilitate discussions around what good and bad development looks and feels like.
2. To develop an understanding of what development in North Herts is doing well.
3. To develop an understanding of what development in North Herts is doing less well and needs to be improved.
4. To gather numerical data which will inform priority areas for the code moving forwards.



**Attendees also visited Fairfield Park in Central Bedfordshire. Whilst this site was completed in circa. 2010 and outside the district, it is a sizeable development that was useful for attendees to compare and contrast due to its proximity and use of a design code. This site was not included in the final metrics as it was subject to a different set of planning policies.*

SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

The development is legible - as a place it is easy to understand and navigate through as a visitor.

There is a clear hierarchy of routes - for example a primary street feels different to a tertiary one.

The blocks and plots in the development fit in with the settlement structure of the surrounding area and reflect local character.

The development is tenure-blind - moving around, I cannot tell which homes are affordable and which ones are private.

The development is stitched into its surroundings - I cannot tell where this development starts and the existing context begins.

NATURE, OPEN SPACE AND ECOLOGY

It feels like there is a good balance of open space and buildings in this development.

Open spaces feel inclusive, safe, well used and accessible.

Green spaces have a clear purpose or function - they are not 'grassy patches' that could be used for anything.

Green spaces feel distinctive to the local area in their character, design and planting - I don't feel like I could be anywhere.

Attenuation ponds and swales are well-integrated into the landscape and add to a sense of place.

MOVEMENT, CONNECTIVITY AND PARKING

The development feels like it is designed for pedestrians and cars come second place.

Streets feel safe to use, well-lit and well-overlooked.

Streets feel like places - there are places to rest and linger in the shade and pavements are a suitable width.

Routes, roads and paths are well-connected - there are no dead ends or impermeable private driveways.

Parking spaces are well integrated into the design of the street - they do not dominate the public realm and are contained to dedicated areas.

Streets are designed as places for nature with high quality planting, trees and swales.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

Non-residential uses are appropriately placed within developments to ensure they are accessible and well-used.

Non-residential uses are of a high design quality to instil a sense of civic pride within communities.

There seems to be an appropriate offer of non-residential uses in the development - not too much or too little.

Walking and wheeling routes to schools and nurseries are clear, pleasant and pedestrian-friendly.

CHARACTER, TYPOLOGY AND BUILT FORM

Streets feel well-defined with consistent frontages and regular front doors - it is not haphazard and defined by a range of fronts, gables, fences and backs.

The homes feel distinctive and celebratory of the area's local architecture - I don't feel like I could be anywhere.

Across the development, building heights are appropriate.

Building materials are of a high quality and sensitive to the local context.

Variety in the built form works well - there is enough difference and distinction between homes to create a sense of place.

DELIVERY, MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Public open spaces (such as parks and playgrounds) are well maintained and clean with thriving planting.

Front gardens, hedges and railings in front of homes are well maintained by residents - there is a clear sense of pride.

Streets (including verges, parking bays and street trees) are well maintained and clean.

'Leftover' space where management responsibility is unclear as been designed out.

OFFICER PLACE REVIEW RESULTS

North Herts officers from teams across the Place Directorate were invited to take part in the Place Review site visit days held in June and July 2024. Attendees covered a wide range of specialisms (planning, urban design, ecology, transport, strategic policy, infrastructure) ensuring the results captured a range of views.

In total, 74 officer response forms were tabulated across 7 sites over three days of site visits. Below is a summary of each of the three days including sites visited.

Site Visits Day #1
Attendees: Strategic Planning, Transport, Urban Design
Date: 19/06/24
Sites Visited: Claybush Hill Meadows (Ashwell), Meridian Gate (Royston) and Birch Meadow (Barkway).

Site Visits Day #2
Attendees: Strategic Planning, Transport, Urban Design
Date: 17/07/24
Sites Visited: Comice Meadows (Pirton), Garden Fields (Offley) and Lavendar Grange (Lower Stondon).

Site Visits Day #3
Attendees: Development Management, Urban Design
Date: 31/07/24
Sites Visited: Birch Meadow (Barkway), Meridian Gate (Royston), Ivy Farm (Royston) and Claybush Hill Meadow (Ashwell).



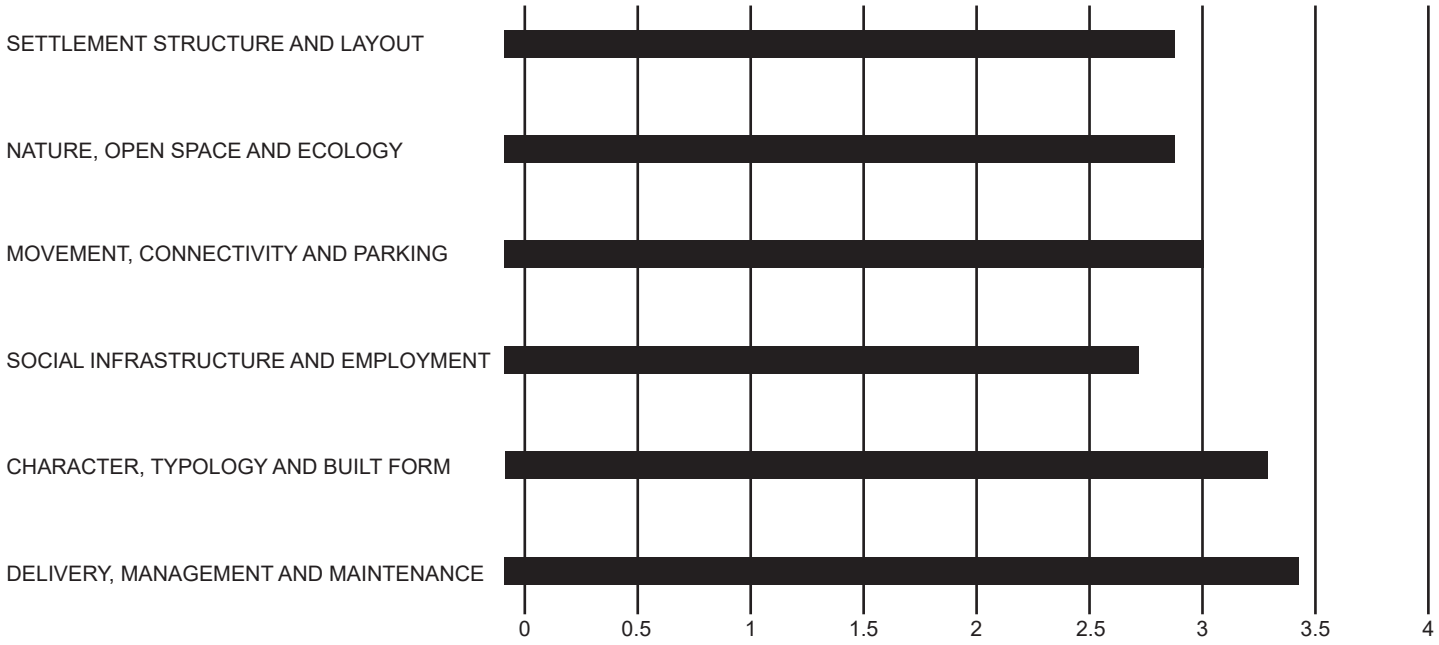
Results from all three days were tabulated and studied to understand what sites were delivering successfully and areas that needed improvement. Looking generally at each of the categories, there was not much discrepancy with all scoring between 2.5 and 3.5 - suggesting that the code will need to cover all areas as there are elements of each category that are doing well and aspects that must be addressed.

Looking more specifically at the individual statements, building heights across all sites were regarded as appropriate. In addition, front gardens were generally well-maintained suggesting a high-level of civic pride with residents taking care of their private spaces where provided. Lastly, streets were regarded as safe with appropriate levels of lighting and passive surveillance - although it must be noted that all assessments were completed during the day.

Areas that were highlighted as needing improvement were the functionality of green spaces. Whilst many sites were reported as providing enough green space, it was the use, planting and identity of the open space itself that was scored very low, with many reports of poorly maintained ‘grassy patches’ that were not well-used and could be anywhere.

Another key challenge highlighted was the integration of sites into the existing context with many reports of poor connections across the site boundary, a lack of visual permeability and a lack of co-ordination between adjacent development sites, illustrated through mismatched active travel corridors and a duplication of play spaces with a lack of interconnectedness.

Tenure-neutrality was also a major concern with affordable and social housing homes easy to spot due to a change in public realm, an over-dominance of car parking, a lack of defensible space to the street (front gardens) and a lack of varied building typologies with the majority of affordable and social housing tenures delivered as terraces. Their placement on the site also meant a lack of parity in access to open space, with many social homes located in less desirable areas of the site such as near railways and/or major roads as noise attenuation features shielding the rest of the site.



Graph showing average scores per topic area across all sites visited

HIGHEST SCORING CRITERIA

Across the development, building heights are appropriate.

Streets feel safe to use, well-lit and overlooked.

Front gardens, hedges and railings in front of homes are well maintained by residents - there is a clear sense of pride.

LOWEST SCORING CRITERIA

Green spaces have a clear purpose or function - they are not ‘grassy patches’ that could be used for anything.

The development is stitched into its surroundings - I cannot tell where this development starts and the existing context begins.

The development is tenure-blind - moving around, I cannot tell which homes are affordable and which ones are private.

MEMBERS PLACE REVIEW RESULTS

All North Herts members were invited to take part in the Members Place Review day in October 2024. The day was structured around guided site visits led by the Urban Design Team, to support on-site discussions. At each location, members completed a structured survey to evaluate aspects of the development, followed by a lunch session, reflective group discussion and two further site visits in the afternoon.

A total of 11 members attended from a range of portfolios and wards with 12 member response forms tabulated and analysed below.

In the morning, members visited Merdian Gate in Royston followed by Fairfield Park in Central Bedfordshire before returning to the District Council Offices for lunch. In the afternoon, members visited Lavendar Grange in Lower Stondon and Comice Meadows in Pirton.

The day was an invaluable opportunity for the urban design team to engage with members on what good design means in practice with many useful discussions and debates taking place whilst travelling around the district.



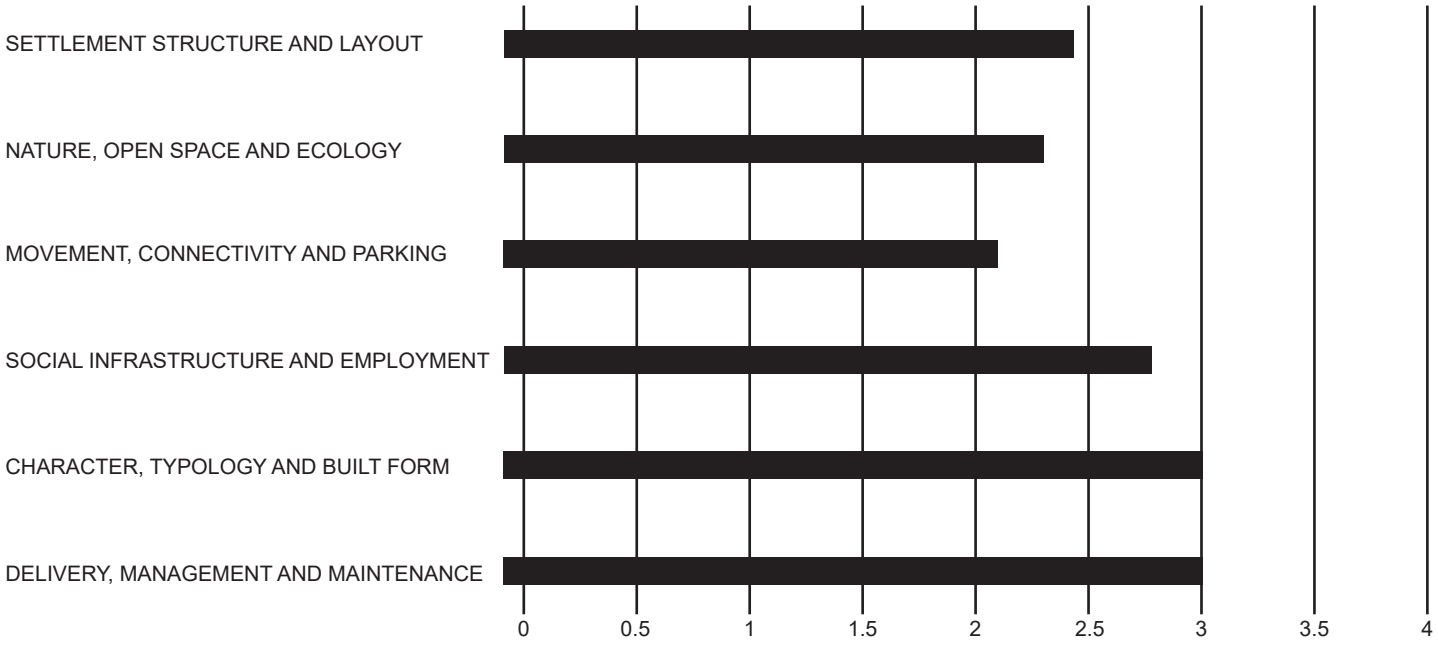
Similar to the officers, average scores across each category were fairly consistent with all categories scoring between 2 and 3 points - suggesting there are elements of each category that need improvement rather than one stand out theme that the Design Code would need to address.

Looking at high-scoring individual statements, there were many similarities with the officer results in that the most sites were reported as having appropriate building heights, well-maintained front gardens and well-defined streets.

A challenge the members picked up on both through the scoring and through discussions on site were spaces on streets where the management responsibility was unclear. In many cases, members pointed out grassy patches on the sides of roads that were not big enough to be mown or provide meaningful visual amenity, not in the private realm and therefore unkempt.

Another important issue that emerged from the day were discussions around built form identity and the challenge of creating a sense of place when the prominent model for delivery is housebuilders with set housing types. Attendees discussed use of local materials and how the design code could help create a sense of identity within these developments.

The design of streets was also a key concern amongst members, with many feeling that they were designed for vehicles rather than pedestrians with a distinct lack of planting, priority at key junctions and places to rest.



Graph showing average scores per topic area across all sites visited

HIGHEST SCORING CRITERIA

Across the development, building heights are appropriate.

Front gardens, hedges and railings in front of homes are well maintained by residents - there is a clear sense of pride.

Streets feel well-defined with consistent frontages and regular front doors – it is not haphazard and defined by a range of fronts, gables, fences, and backs.

Streets (including verges, parking bays and street trees) are well maintained and clean.

LOWEST SCORING CRITERIA

‘Leftover’ space where management responsibility is unclear as been designed out.

The homes feel distinctive and celebratory of the area’s local architecture - I don’t feel like I could be anywhere.

The development feels like it is designed for pedestrians and cars come second place.

STAGE 1
KEY CONCLUSIONS

The results from both the officer and member site visits have been summarised below with the lowest ranking statement presented first. These statements will form the basis of future visioning work in Stage 2, setting a clear focus for areas that need the most attention through the District Design Code.

1

DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BE STITCHED INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS WHERE ONE CANNOT PERCEIVE SITE BOUNDARIES.

Feedback showed that this was the lowest scoring statement with many respondants feeling that new development sites were not well-integrated into their surroundings. Buildings pulled away from site edges with little or no connections through creating disconnected and fragemented communities on either side.

5

STREETS SHOULD BE DESIGNED AS PLACES FOR NATURE WITH HIGH QUALITY PLANTING, TREES AND SWALES.

Both officers and members highlighted a distinct lack of planting and street trees on many of the development sites - drastically lowering the quality of the street and making them unwelcoming for pedestrian use - especially true on a hot sunny day. There was much discussion around the importance of greenery on streets, particularly within the North Herts garden city context where nature and planting should be a major factor in place-making and identity.

6

GREEN SPACES SHOULD FEEL DISTINCTIVE TO THE LOCAL AREA IN THEIR CHARACTER, DESIGN AND PLANTING - NOT LIKE THEY COULD BE ANYWHERE.

Whilst both officers and members agreed that the quantum of open space being delivered on most sites was sufficient, concerns were raised about their design, with a reported lack of funtionality or programming. Many open spaces lacked imaginative play and were mono-cultural, not contributing to biodiversity or visual amenity.

7

STREET SHOULD FEEL LIKE PLACES WITH PLACES TO REST AND LINGER IN THE SHADE AND SUITABLE PAVEMENTS.

Feedback showed that this was the lowest scoring statement with many respondants feeling that new development sites were not well-integrated into their surroundings. Buildings pulled away from site edges with little or no connections through creating disconnected and fragemented communities on either side.

2

‘LEFTOVER’ SPACE WHERE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY IS UNCLEAR SHOULD BE DESIGNED OUT.

Feedback highlighted concerns around ambiguity of management responsibility especially around streets and front gardens. The delineation between private and public realm in many cases was not clear, leaving some space unkempt and poorly maintained. In addition, feedback reported a preference for the meaningful provision of green space on streets with planting and trees rather than ‘slivers’ and ‘grassy patches’ which could not be mown and did not provided any ecological or amenity benefits to users.

3

THE HOMES SHOULD FEEL DISTINCTIVE AND CELEBRATORY OF THE AREA’S LOCAL ARCHITECTURE - NOT LIKE THEY COULD BE ANYWHERE.

Many forms highlighted a lack of identity and differentiation between and within the sites with each site recognisable by the developer rather than the host town or village they were a part of. Both members and officers expressed a need for homes and buildings to reflect and respond to the local context, with some discussion and debate around the appropriateness of contemporary architectural approaches.

4

ROUTES, ROADS AND PATHS SHOULD BE WELL-CONNECTED - NO DEAD ENDS OR IMPERMEABLE PRIVATE DRIVEWAYS.

Private driveways particularly at the edges of sites were highlighted as a key issue for officers who felt that they frustrated pedestrian movement and created disconnected and illegible routes, often next to linear green spaces that could be used more successfully as leisure spaces. In addition, dead ends and convoluted street patterns within developments were reported as confusing for visitors and undesirable.

8

GREEN SPACES SHOULD HAVE A CLEAR PURPOSE OR FUNCTION - NOT ‘GRASSY PATCHES’ THAT COULD BE USED FOR ANYTHING.

Feedback showed that undefined green areas often became underused and neglected, offering little benefit to residents or ecology. Well-planned multi-functional green spaces were seen as opportunities to bring people together and add long-term value to communities, while poorly considered ‘grassy patches’ were felt to create a sense of leftover land rather than meaningful public realm.

9

DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE TENURE-BLIND - MOVING AROUND ONE SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO TELL WHICH HOMES ARE AFFORDABLE AND WHICH ONES ARE PRIVATE.

Feedback stressed that visible differences between affordable and private housing created stigma and division. Respondents valued schemes where tenure was indistinguishable, with shared design, materials, and landscaping. A tenure-blind approach was seen as key to fairness and inclusivity, helping communities feel cohesive.

10

DEVELOPMENT SHOULD FEEL LIKE IT IS DESIGNED FOR PEDESTRIANS FIRST AND CARS SECOND.

Feedback showed that many new developments prioritised car access over pedestrian comfort, creating environments dominated by parking. Respondents highlighted that safe, attractive walking routes, active frontages, and human-scaled streets were key to fostering healthier, more social neighbourhoods. Designing streets with pedestrians in mind was seen as essential for encouraging walking and cycling, reducing car dependency, and creating welcoming, people-focused places.

APPENDIX I OFFICERS RESULTS (FULL)

RANK	STATEMENT
1	Across the development, building heights are appropriate.
	Front gardens, hedges, and railings in front of homes are well maintained by residents - there is a clear sense of pride.
2	Streets feel safe to use, well-lit and well-overlooked.
3	Streets (including verges, parking bays and street trees) are well maintained and clean.
4	Streets feel well-defined with consistent frontagtes and regular front doors - it is not haphazard and defined by a range of fronts, gables, fences and backs.
5	Variety in the built form works well - there is enough difference and distinction between homes to create a sense of place.
6	There is a clear hierarchy of routes - for example a primary street feels different to a tertiary one.
	The development feels like it is designed for pedestrians and cars come second place.
7	It feels like there is a good balance of open space and buildings in this development.
	Building materials are of a high quality and sensitive to the local context.
	Public open spaces (such as parks and playgrounds) are well maintained and clean with thriving planting.
8	The development is legible - as a place it is easy to understand and navigate through as a visitor.
	The blocks and plots in the development fit in with the settlement structure of the surrounding area and reflect local character.
	Parking spaces are well integrated into the design of the street - they do not dominate the public realm and are contained to dedicated areas.
	‘Leftover’ space where management responsibility is unclear as been designed out.
	Open spaces feel inclusive, safe, well used and accessible.
9	Non-residential uses are appropriately placed within developments to ensure they are accessible and well-used.
	Non-residential uses are of a high design quality to instil a sense of civic pride within communities.
	Walking and wheeling routes to schools and nurseries are clear, pleasant, and pedestrian-friendly.
10	Street feel like places - there are places to rest and linger in the shade and pavement are suitable width.
11	There seems to be an appropriate offer of non-residential uses in the development - not too much of too little.
	The homes feel distinctive and celebratory of the area’s local architecture - I don’t feel like I could be anywhere.
12	Green spaces feel distinctive to the local area in their character, design, and planting - I don’t feel like I could be anywhere.
	Attenuation ponds and swales are well-integrated into the landscape and add a sense of place.
	Streets are designed as places for nature with high quality planting, trees, and swales.
13	Routes, roads and paths are well-connected - there are no dead ends or impermeable private driveways.
14	The Development is tenure-blind - moving around, I cannot tell which homes affordable and which ones are private.
	The development is stitched into its surroundings - I cannot tell where this development starts and the existing context begins.
	Green spaces have a clear purpose or function, they are not ‘grassy patches’ that could be used for anything.

APPENDIX II MEMBERS RESULTS (FULL)

RANK	STATEMENT
1	Across the development, building heights are appropriate.
2	Streets feel well-defined with consistent frontages and regular front doors - it is not haphazard and defined by a range of fronts, gables, fences and backs.
3	Front gardens, hedges, and railings in front of homes are well maintained by residents - there is a clear sense of pride.
	Streets (including verges, parking bays and street trees) are well maintained and clean.
4	Streets feel safe to use, well-lit and well-overlooked.
5	Open spaces feel well-used and accessible.
6	There is a clear hierarchy of routes – for example a primary street feels different to a tertiary one.
7	The development is legible - as a place it is easy to understand and navigate through as a visitor.
8	Public open spaces (such as parks and playgrounds) are well maintained and clean with thriving planting.
9	It feels like there is a good balance of open space and buildings in this development.
10	The blocks and plots in the development fit in with the settlement structure of the surrounding area and reflect local character
11	The development is tenure-blind – moving around, I cannot tell which homes are affordable and which ones are private.
12	Building materials are of high quality and sensitive to the local context.
13	Variety in the built form works well – there is enough difference and distinction between homes to create a sense of place.
	Green space have a clear purpose or function – they are not ‘grassy patches’ that could be used for anything
14	Parking spaces are well integrated into the design of the street – they do not dominate the public realm and are contained to dedicated areas.
15	Routes, roads and paths are well-connected - there are no dead ends or impermeable private driveways.
16	Streets feel like places – there are places to rest and linger in the shade and pavement are suitable widths.
17	Attenuation ponds and swales are well-integrated into the landscape and add a sense of place.
18	Green spaces feel distinctive to the local area in their character, design and planting – I don’t feel like I could be anywhere.
19	The development is stitched into its surroundings – I cannot tell where this development starts and the existing context begins.
20	Streets are designed as places for nature with high quality planting, trees and swales
21	The development feels like it is designed for pedestrians and cars come second place.
22	The homes feel distinctive and celebratory of the area’s local architecture – I don’t feel like I could be anywhere
23	Leftover space where management responsibility is unclear has been designed out.

APPENDIX III SITE INFORMATION CARDS

LAVENDER GRANGE
Ickleford

***Developer** // Barratt Homes*
***Completed** // 2023*
***Number of Homes** // 140*



POI

- Start - The Cuttings playground heading south.
- 1 Placemaking/ materiality
- 2 Landscape buffer, ecology and perimeter paths.
- 3 Attenuation basin and open green spaces.
- 4 Retained hedgerows/woodlands.
- 5 Parking/private driveways.
- End - The Cuttings.

NHDC Strategic Planning Dept - Urban Design **Development Site Information Card**

MERIDIAN GATE
Royston

***Developer** //* Linden Homes
***Completed** //* 2023 (Phases 1 & 2 - Phase 3 ongoing)
***Number of Homes** // 180*



POI

- Start - Lambert Way playground.
- 1 Edge-lane typology, hedgerow buffer, swale and connectivity.
- 2 Parking and pushed back garages.
- 3 Attenuation basin and landscape integration.
- 4 Boundary treatment.
- 5 Legibility of routes and connectivitiy.
- 6 Roadway features.
- End - Lambert Way playground

NHDC Strategic Planning Dept - Urban Design **Development Site Information Card**

COMICE MEADOWS
Pirton

***Developer** // Cala Homes*
***Completed** // 2022*
***Number of Homes** // 80*



POI

- Start - Holwell Rd/Drovers Way intersection.
- 1 Houses in parking courts.
- 2 Private/Public verges & greenspaces, maintenance and upkeep.
- 3 Characterful/purposeful greenspaces.
- 4 Connection to existing settlements. Legibility and ease of access.
- 5 Attenuation basins and play. Consider boundary treatments.
- 6 Buffers and countryside edges.
- End - Holwell Rd/Drovers Way intersection.

NHDC Strategic Planning Dept - Urban Design **Development Site Information Card**

FAIRFIELD PARK
Stotfold

***Developers** //* Bellway, Bovis, Bryant, Fairclough, Stamford/Linden, Twigden & Wimpey.
***Completed** //* Circa 2010
***Number of Homes** //* 910 Homes (+273 apartments in the grade 2 listed hospital)



POI

- Start - Dickens Blvd (nr Tesco Express) heading West.
- 1 Active Travel/ pedestrian route with houses facing onto it.
- 2 Street trees, boundary treatment and landscape/play integration.
- 3 Pedestrian street with parking behind.
- 4 Parking court.
- End - Tesco Express.

NHDC Strategic Planning Dept - Urban Design **Development Site Information Card**

APPENDIX IV PLACE REVIEW FORM

DISTRICT DESIGN CODE

Site Visits and Observations Pro-Forma

North Herts Council

Name:
Organisation and Job Title:
Date:

Study Location/Project Name:
Number of Homes:
Date Completed:

SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The development is legible - as a place it is easy to understand and navigate through as a visitor.					
There is a clear hierarchy of routes - for example a primary street feels different to a tertiary one.					
The blocks and plots in the development fit in with the settlement structure of the surrounding area and reflect local character.					
The development is tenure-blind - moving around, I cannot tell which homes are affordable and which ones are private.					
The development is stitched into its surroundings - I cannot tell where this development starts and the existing context begins.					

Additional comments on the statements above including ideas for improvement or what is being done well:

NATURE, OPEN SPACE AND ECOLOGY	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
It feels like there is a good balance of open space and buildings in this development.					
Open spaces feel inclusive, safe, well used and accessible.					
Green spaces have a clear purpose or function - they are not ‘grassy patches’ that could be used for anything.					
Green spaces feel distinctive to the local area in their character, design and planting - I don’t feel like I could be anywhere.					
Attenuation ponds and swales are well-integrated into the landscape and add to a sense of place.					

Additional comments on the statements above including ideas for improvement or what is being done well:

MOVEMENT, CONNECTIVITY AND PARKING	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The development feels like it is designed for pedestrians and cars come second place.					
Streets feel safe to use, well-lit and well-overlooked.					
Streets feel like places - there are places to rest and linger in the shade and pavements are a suitable width.					
Routes, roads and paths are well-connected - there are no dead ends or impermeable private driveways.					
Parking spaces are well integrated into the design of the street - they do not dominate the public realm and are contained to dedicated areas.					
Streets are designed as places for nature with high quality planting, trees and swales.					

Additional comments on the statements above including ideas for improvement or what is being done well:

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND EMPLOYMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Non-residential uses are appropriately placed within developments to ensure they are accessible and well-used.					
Non-residential uses are of a high design quality to instil a sense of civic pride within communities.					
There seems to be an appropriate offer of non-residential uses in the development - not too much or too little.					
Walking and wheeling routes to schools and nurseries are clear, pleasant and pedestrian-friendly.					

Additional comments on the statements above including ideas for improvement or what is being done well:

DISTRICT DESIGN CODE

Site Visits and Observations Pro-Forma

North Herts Council

CHARACTER, TYPOLOGY AND BUILT FORM	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Streets feel well-defined with consistent frontages and regular front doors - it is not haphazard and defined by a range of fronts, gables, fences and backs.					
The homes feel distinctive and celebratory of the area's local architecture - I don't feel like I could be anywhere.					
Across the development, building heights are appropriate.					
Building materials are of a high quality and sensitive to the local context.					
Variety in the built form works well - there is enough difference and distinction between homes to create a sense of place.					

Additional comments on the statements above including ideas for improvement or what is being done well:

DELIVERY, MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Public open spaces (such as parks and playgrounds) are well maintained and clean with thriving planting.					
Front gardens, hedges and railings in front of homes are well maintained by residents - there is a clear sense of pride.					
Streets (including verges, parking bays and street trees) are well maintained and clean.					
'Leftover' space where management responsibility is unclear as been designed out.					

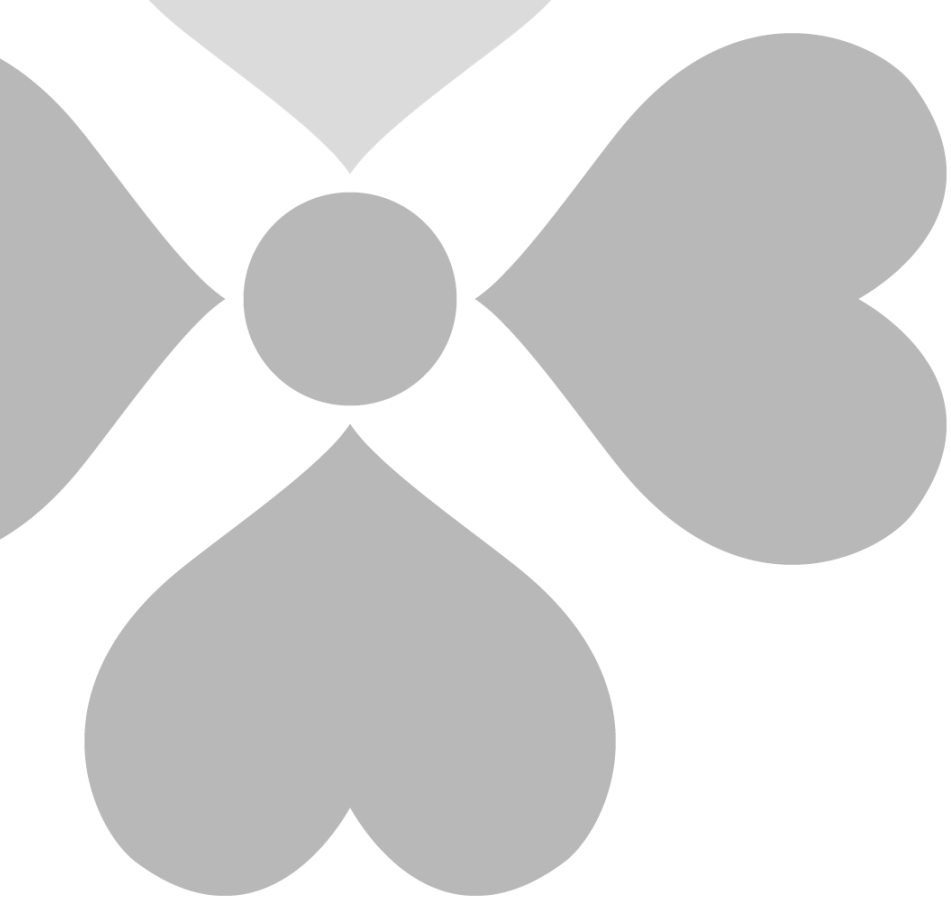
Additional comments on the statements above including ideas for improvement or what is being done well:



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DEVELOP VISION

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT DESIGN CODE
STAGE 2 SUMMARY REPORT



The following report summarises work undertaken by the North Herts Urban Design team during Stage 2 of the District Design Code (between February and July 2024). The main focus for Stage 2 ‘Develop Vision’ was to develop a set of North Herts-specific place-making objectives that will form the basis for the District Design Code and design policies in the new Local Plan (currently being reviewed). This report is intended for internal North Herts circulation only.

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ACTIVITY 1 - LIVING IN NORTH HERTS

ACTIVITY 2 - VISIONING COLLAGE

RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1 - SUMMARY

STAGE 2 SUMMARY

COUNCIL VISIONING DAY KEY INFORMATION

The District Design Code Visioning Workshop brought together councillors and senior officers to shape the strategic direction of the emerging authority-wide design code. The day was facilitated by Esther Kurland and colleagues at Urban Design Learning (UDL) and was structured around three key activities that were designed to facilitate discussions at a strategic scale down to the granular. Attendees discussed and debated what good development is and explored how the emerging Design Code could reflect and deliver on the Council's four key priorities - thriving communities, accessible services, responsible growth and sustainability.

Key objectives from the event were:

1. To facilitate discussions around what good and bad development looks and feels like.
2. To understand what the council priorities mean in the context of the code.
3. To develop a set of place characteristics.
4. To prioritise which place characteristics and problems the code should focus on addressing.
5. To explore the golden thread between priorities, place characteristics and code.

Attendees: North Herts Councillors (proportionately represented) and Senior North Herts Officers
Time: Friday 7 March 12 midday to 5:30pm
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth



ATTENDEES	ROLE
Cllr Daniel Allen (Labour/Co-operative)	Letchworth Norton Leader of the Council and Labour and Co-operative Group Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport
Cllr Alistair Willoughby (Labour/Co-operative)	Baldock West Chair of Licensing and Regulation Committee Chair of Standards Committee Chair of Baldock and District Community Forum
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis (Labour/Co-operative)	Hitchin Walsworth Chair of Planning Control Committee
Cllr Val Bryant (Labour/Co-operative)	Hitchin Bearton Deputy Leader of the Council Executive Member for Community and Partnership
Cllr Vijaiya Poopalasingam (Labour/Co-operative)	Great Ashby
Cllr Tom Tyson (Liberal Democrats)	Arbury
Cllr Paul Ward (Liberal Democrats)	Knebworth
Cllr Clair Strong (Conservative)	Offa
Ian Fullstone	Service Director - Regulatory
Jo Doggett	Service Director - Housing and Environmental Health
Reuben Ayavoo	Policy and Community Manager
Georgina Chapman	Policy and Strategy Team Leader
Nigel Smith	Service Director - Place
Deborah Coates	Principal Planning Officer

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
12:00-12:20	Registration, tea and coffee
12:20-13:20	Actvity 1 - The Cool Wall - What do good places look like?
13:20-13:30	UDL Introduction
13:30-13:50	Tea and coffee break
13:50-14:20	North Herts Design Code Introduction
14:20-15:30	Activity 2 - Identifying and prioritising place characteristics
15:30-15:50	Break with afternoon tea, sandwiches and snacks
15:50-16:10	How coding can deliver - presentation
16:1--17:00	Activity 3 - How coding can deliver
17:00-17:10	Short break
17:10-17:30	Wrap up and next steps

ACTIVITY 1
THE COOL WALL

In the first activity, participants took part in a ‘Cool Wall’ exercise using a broad selection of images to discuss and debate what good and bad development looks and feels like. Images presented were a mixture of those provided by attendees, UDL and the Urban Design team, covering local and national projects. After discussion and debate, attendees placed the image on the wall, locating it somewhere on the scale from ‘cool’ to ‘uncool.’













































The activity encouraged open discussion about what makes places successful (or unsuccessful). Conversations explored elements such as layout, architectural quality, materials, greenery, walkability, the presence of community infrastructure, when buildings should stand out, parking and many other elements.

As the wall filled up, patterns began to emerge and the group began to identify recurring characteristics of successful and usuccessful places. Common positive attributes of 'cool' development included plenty of planting/street trees, playable landscapes, strong built form identity and character, communal space, activated public realm and a human scale. Conversely, common negative attributes of 'uncool' places included excessive hardstanding, undefined and unclaimed spaces, poorly overlooked routes, bland streets that could be anywhere and disconnected networks. Images placed in the middle were debated within the group and tended to have a mixture of positive and negative characteristics. More detailed notes on the discussions are arranged into themes on the next page.

The wall has been recreated below with common characteristics highlighted.






Cool


Cool

NATURE AND OPEN SPACE

WELL PLANTED

MULTI-FUNCTIONALITY

PLAYABLE LANDSCAPE

Attendees unanimously agreed that high quality green spaces, plenty of planting and nature were integral to delivering successful places. In particular, attendees picked up on multi-functional open spaces that balanced ecology, amenity, play and active travel, creating activated and well-used spaces. An image of a playable attenuation basin in Solihull with children jumping on boulders and tree stumps was chosen as the 'most cool' for its dual function.

Attendees also highlighted that maintenance of green spaces was a key issue - an example of a poorly maintained attenuation basin attracted a lot of criticism for its lack of function and poor quality planting.

BADLY MAINTAINED

PUBLIC REALM

INTEGRATED PARKING

ACTIVATED

COMMUNAL

STREET TREES

Public realm made up a significant part of the discussion with attendees agreeing that successful places tended to have activated streets with plenty of trees and areas for residents to gather. Parking was a key issue and the group debated how best to integrate parking to ensure cars did not dominate the public realm. Whilst there was no consensus, options such as integral garages, on street parking and parking courts were all dicussed with general agreement that ad-hoc parking on verges and pavements was undesirable.

Unsuccessful examples were harsh, hard and unwelcoming with a lack of planting and excessive hardstanding. Safety and walkability were also discussed and it was generally agreed that routes, streets and paths should be well-verlooked to create a sense of safety for pedestrians.

The group also discussed a lack of legibility and connectivity through one such example of development in Whitwell where peripheral routes were disconnected and the development did not integrate with the surrounding village.

NOT OVERLOOKED

EXCESSIVE HARDSTANDING

AWKWARD FENCING

LACK OF GREEN

UNWELCOMING

UNDEFINED SPACES

DISCONNECTED

BUILT FORM

CHARACTERFUL

HUMAN SCALE

CIVIC LANDMARKS

STRONG IDENTITY

Built form characteristics created the most debate with some attendees expressing a preference for more contemporary examples whilst others preferring traditional architectural approaches. Architectural style aside, in all examples the group agreed that characterful buildings with a strong identity driven by their context were the most successful.

Conversely, places with standard housing types that could be anywhere and lacked any identity were agreed to be unsuccessful. Scale was also discussed with the group identifying clunky transitions between building heights as undesirable.

INACTIVE FRONTAGE

COULD BE ANYWHERE

MONOTONOUS

BLAND

ACTIVITY 2
PLACE CHARACTERISTICS

In this activity, attendees were divided into two groups; members and officers. Using the key challenges identified during the site visits, attendees in each group worked together to prioritise characteristics they felt the code needed to address. There was also an opportunity to add or amend characteristics based on Activity 1. At the end of the activity, UDL facilitated a discussion bringing together both lists, looking for common threads and discussing differing priorities.

Across both groups, several place characteristics consistently emerged as top priorities:

- Streets as places: Both groups agreed that streets that function as social, walkable and nature-integrated spaces were foundational elements of successful places.
- Tenure-neutral design: Both groups strongly supported tenure neutral neighbourhoods where affordable tenures could not be differentiated from private/market tenures.
- Connectivity and integration: Both groups felt that well-integrated development was an important aspect of creating connected communities with access to local services and amenities.
- High-quality green spaces: Officers felt high quality green spaces with well integrated attenuation basins should be a top priority for the code.
- Distinctiveness: Members felt that the code should push for distinctive neighbourhoods that have a sense of local identity and character, moving away from developments that could be anywhere.
- Structure first, detail second: When presenting the lists, both teams highlighted the important of getting the structure and networks right which would in turn ‘take care’ of the more granular or detailed elements - such as designing out unmanaged spaces on streets, etc.



OFFICERS

1: HIGH QUALITY GREEN SPACES

- High quality green spaces that have a clear function.
- Well-integrated attenuation basins that contribute to place-making.

2: STREETS THAT FEEL LIKE PLACES

- Streets that feel like places and encourage walking.
- Advocating for collectiveness, sharing and chance encounters - important for ~~an ageing population~~ everyone.
- Streets designed as places for nature with high quality planting and trees.

3: TENURE NEUTRAL AND MIXED

- Tenure neutral, equitable and mixed neighbourhoods.

4: CONNECTED

- Well connected routes, roads and paths - no impermeable edges.
- Future-proofing edges of proposals with growth in mind to ensure connections are possible.
- Developments that are stiched into their surroundings.

- Planning for reduced car ownership to ensure infrastructure is flexible and can be adapted back into public use.
- Reduce car reliance with hub, employment and public transport.
- *Compact settlements/walkable neighbourhoods that use land efficiently ~~to reduce pressure to release Green Belt.~~*
- Green spaces that are distinctive to the local area.
- Distinctive homes that celebrate the area's local character.
- Well-integrated schools that create legible focal points within neighbourhoods - not just large fenced off sites.
- Alternative approaches to non-residential uses that support community networking and do not compete with the high street.
- Streets with a clear delineation of managed and private spaces - ambiguous 'grassy patches' are designed out.

MEMBERS

1: TENURE NEUTRAL AND MIXED

- Tenure neutral, equitable and mixed neighbourhoods.

2: STREETS THAT FEEL LIKE PLACES

- Streets that feel like places and encourage walking.

3: CONNECTED AND INTEGRATED

- Developments that are stiched into their surroundings.
- Should feel organic.
- *~~Alternative approaches to~~ non-residential uses that promotes community use and networking ~~do not rely on large space-take and high footfall.~~*

4: DISTINCTIVE

- Distinctive homes that celebrate the area's local character.
- Look and continuity of theme.

- Future-proofing edges of proposals with growth in mind to ensure connections are possible.
- Well connected routes, roads and paths - no impermeable edges.
- High quality green spaces that have a clear function.
- Green spaces that are distinctive to the local area.
- Streets designed as places for nature with high quality planting and trees.
- Well-integrated schools that create legible focal points within neighbourhoods - not just large fenced off sites.
- Well-integrated attenuation basins that contribute to place-making.
- Streets with a clear delineation of managed and private spaces - ambiguous 'grassy patches' are designed out.
- Compact settlements that use land efficiently to reduce pressure on release of additional green belt (and promote sustainable journeys).
- Advocating for collectiveness, sharing and chance encounters - important for an ageing population.
- Planning for reduced car ownership to ensure infrastructure is flexible and can be adapted back into public use.

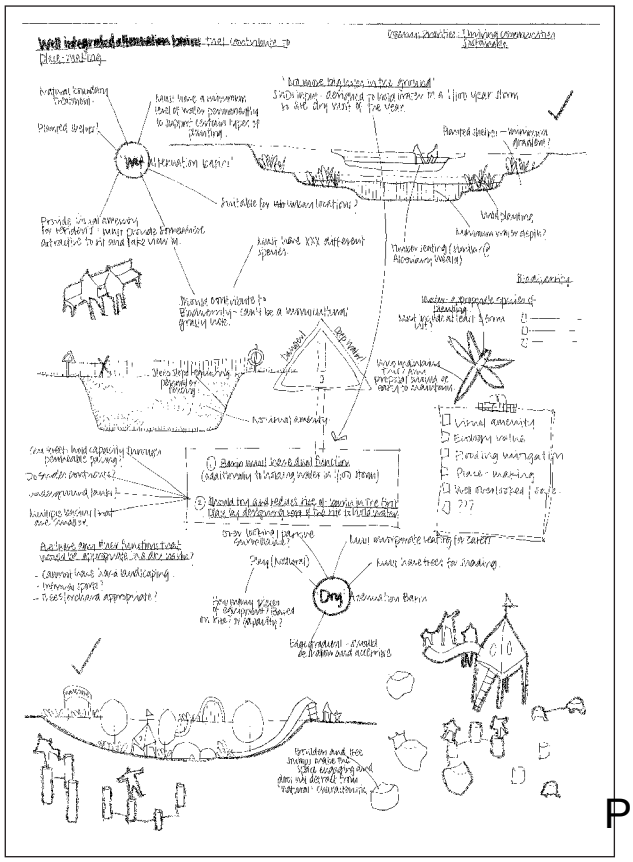
ACTIVITY 3
TESTING CODE

The final session of the workshop began with an introductory presentation around how coding can be used to deliver on the place charcteristics and priorities identified in the previous two activities. The presentation explored the golden thread between setting an ambition such as ‘Thriving Communities’ (Council Plan Priority), translating this into a spatial characteristics such as ‘Developments that are stitched into their surroundings’ and finally turning this into code covering spatial requirements, process requirements, etc.

Participants were divided into three groups mixing officers with members to focus on one key place characteristic. Group 1 focussed on integrating attenuation basins, Group 2 looked at emdedding tenure neutrality and Group 3 discussed stitching developments into their surroundings. The objective of this activity was to encourage members to explore key requirements that would deliver on the previously identified ambitions and to gain a better understanding of how code is written.



GROUP 1
WELL INTEGRATED ATTENUATION BASINS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PLACE-MAKING



Nature-based over engineered solutions that contribute to the natural character of the green spaces they sit within

Code the process

Must be multi-use integrating play or biodiversity rich planting

Deal with water at the source - minimising water transported

Nature-based solutions for road run-off

No holes in the ground - code edges

Need code for other types of SUDs such as swales and rain gardens



GROUP 2
TENURE NEUTRAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

Parking is the biggest giveaway - usually right up to front doors of terraced blocks.

Parking amenities such as EV charging

Parity of public realm

Private tenures have garages, affordable tenures don't

Code for distance in front of homes

Consider management

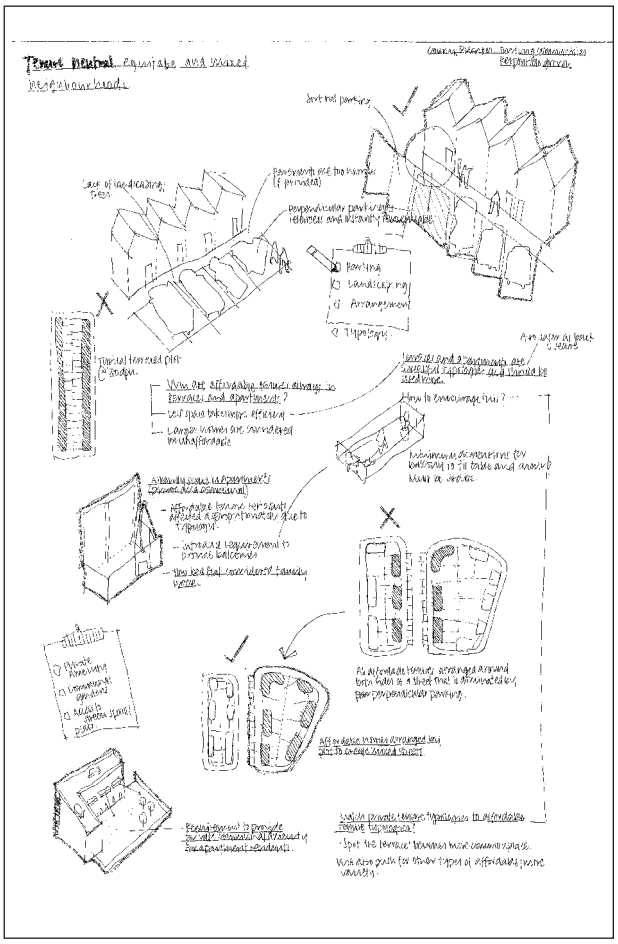
Code for flexible parking space - dual use

Mix of blocks and building types

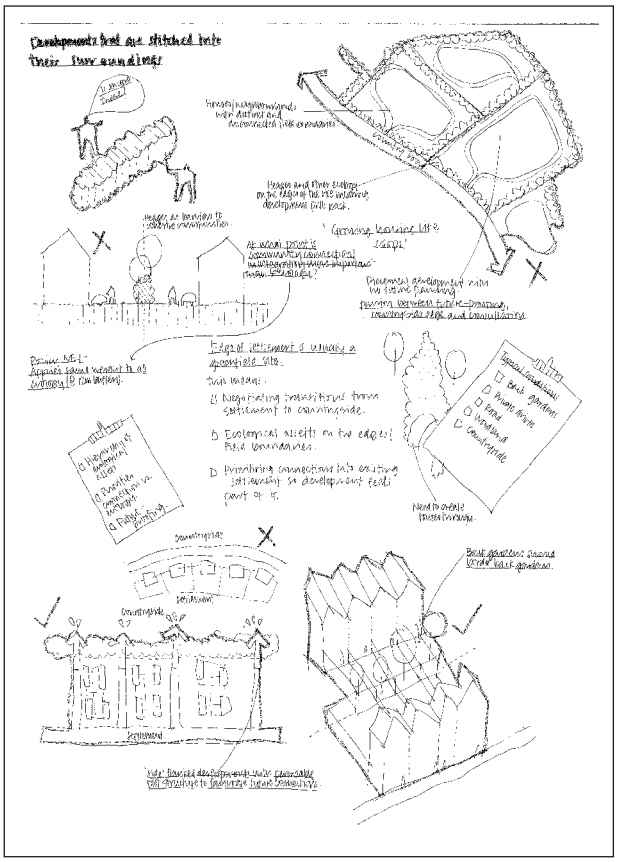
Location and access to playspace is important

Consider letterbox provision and design





GROUP 3
DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE STITCHED INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS



Consider tiers of ecological assets and how you could work with what's there

Require BNG on site

Include responses to each tier of ecological asset

Guidance or templates showing developers what to do for eg. ancient woodland

Access and highways important

Additional active travel access for connectivity

Code for what you want as well as what you don't want



RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1 KEY INFORMATION

The first Residents Design Forum brought together a diverse group of 22 North Herts residents to explore and develop a vision for new development in the district and set the direction of travel for the emerging District Design Code*. The session lasted 2.5 hours and was made up of two main activities. In the first, attendees were asked to reflect, individually and then as a group, about their experience of living in North Herts. In the second session, attendees created a vision board in groups, that captured their priorities and ambitions for new development in the district.

Key objectives from the event were:

1. To foster a sense of collaborative spirit between forum members.
2. To gain an understanding of residents' experiences of living in North Herts including both positive and negative aspects.
3. To facilitate discussions around what good and bad development looks and feels like.
4. To develop a vision for new development in the district, including aspects that should be prioritised.

Attendees: North Herts Residents**
Facilitators: North Herts Urban Design Team
Time: Wednesday 29 June 6:00-8:30pm
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth

**A design code is a set of clear, detailed, and often visual rules and guidelines that specify how development should be designed and built in a particular area. They aim to ensure high-quality, context-sensitive, and coherent urban development by providing specific parameters for building forms, materials, street layouts, public spaces and landscaping. They are used to guide developers, planners, and architects in creating proposals that align with a shared vision for the area.*

***Forum members were recruited by an external organisation (Field Locker) and advertised to the North Herts Citizens Panel. The council team set strict quotas around age, ethnicity, social grade, location and gender to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds were represented.*

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
18:00-18:10	Registration, Tea and Coffee
18:10-18:30	Activity 1 - Ice Breaker 'Living in North Herts'
18:30-19:10	Dinner and Introductory Presentation
19:10-19:50	Activity 2 - Visioning Collages
19:50-20:10	Feedback Session
20:10-20:30	Wrap Up and Next Steps



ACTIVITY 1
LIVING IN NORTH HERTS

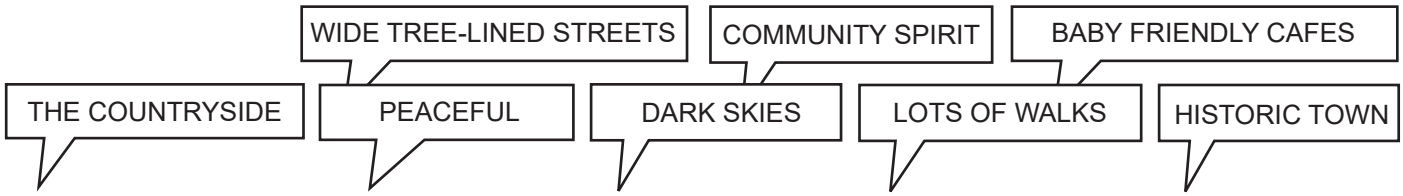
The first activity, designed as an ice breaker for the group, asked participants to reflect on their experiences of living in North Herts through a series of questions. Attendees were seated in groups with others that lived close by, first reflecting individually, then in pairs and finally as a whole table. Opposite is a summary of responses and discussion points that were raised.



WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?



The majority of responses for this question centred around green spaces and access to them. Attendees expressed the value of being close to green space as a key positive attribute of living in North Herts across the district, with quietness, long walks and natural spaces bringing a wealth of health and well-being benefits to residents.

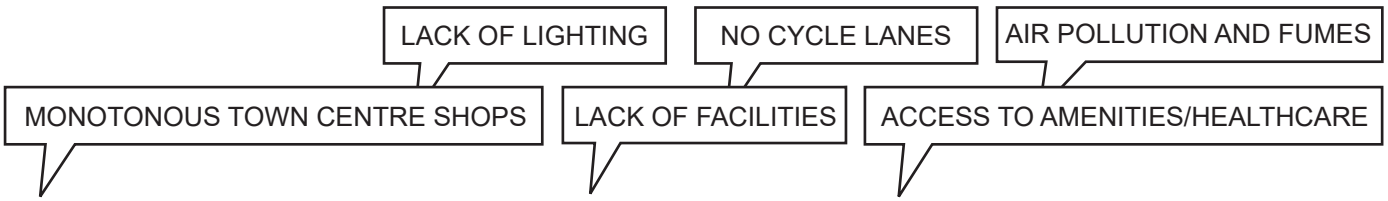


WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?



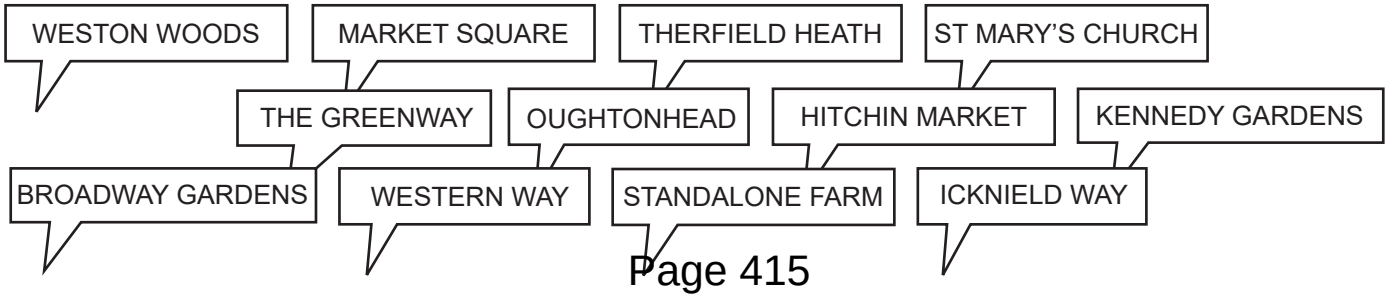
Much of the discussion around negative aspects about living in North Herts centred around vehicular traffic on the roads, a lack of parking and congestion which led to concerns around air quality and fumes along major roads. Attendees highlighted the frustration around trying to get around the district in a car and also a lack of viable alternatives such as cycle paths and/or regular bus services. There was discussion around the placement of cycle tracks which tend to be delivered along major roads - undesirable with more natural routes preferred.

This led to a discussion around over-development and general agreement that new development was not delivering an appropriate level of infrastructure to service the homes, putting pressure on existing facilities (such as healthcare).



IS THERE A PLACE IN THE DISTRICT THAT FEELS SPECIAL OR MEANINGFUL TO YOU?

The most cherished places in the district were mainly open spaces, linking back to the responses for the first question where attendees valued green spaces in the district as a key positive of living in North Herts. Well-planned and multi-functional green spaces that appealed to a variety of users were most loved with some debate around safety and lighting. Whilst some attendees claimed they felt safe out in most green spaces, others felt the opposite citing a lack of lighting as a key issue. Cherished green spaces were a mixture of historic routes such as the Icknield Way and planned parks such as Broadway Gardens.



ACTIVITY 2
VISIONING COLLAGES

In this activity, groups were asked to produce a visual representation of their ambitions for future development in North Herts. Each group (of 5-6 attendees) was provided a set of printed references that showcased a wide range of recently completed developments both in the district and further afield. As a group, attendees looked through the examples, debating and discussing their perceived successes and failures before selecting desirable examples to stick on the board. Where the discussion focused on aspects that were not displayed in the reference images, attendees were encouraged to write or draw things to illustrate the point.

At the end of the session, a nominated member presented the completed vision board to the wider group - some chose to also highlight undesirable images that needed to be coded against.



GROUP 1

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES AND FACILITIES

MIXED BUILDING MATERIALS - NO MONOCULTURES

TRAFFIC CALMING

CONTEMPORARY

CYCLE STORAGE



SUSTAINABLE

WILDING AND WILD FLOWERS

SHOPS ON GREENS

ACCESS TO TRANSPORT

SEGREGATED CYCLE PATHS

PAVEMENTS

COMMUNITY

OPEN VIEWS TO LANDSCAPE



KEY PRIORITIES

1: Green ecological neighbourhoods that include allotments, community gardens and connections to nature for residents and visitors.

2: Neighbourhoods that enable active travel with walkable routes and reduced reliance on/dominance of cars.

3: Characterful and distinctive places - there was a strong rejection of monotonous and bland neighbourhoods that lacked character and sociability.

4: Built form that is contextual with some support for more contemporary architectural approaches.

5: Tenure-blind social housing where affordable homes are fully integrated and indistinguishable in quality and appearance.

GROUP 2

QUIRKY BUILDINGS IN KEY LOCATIONS

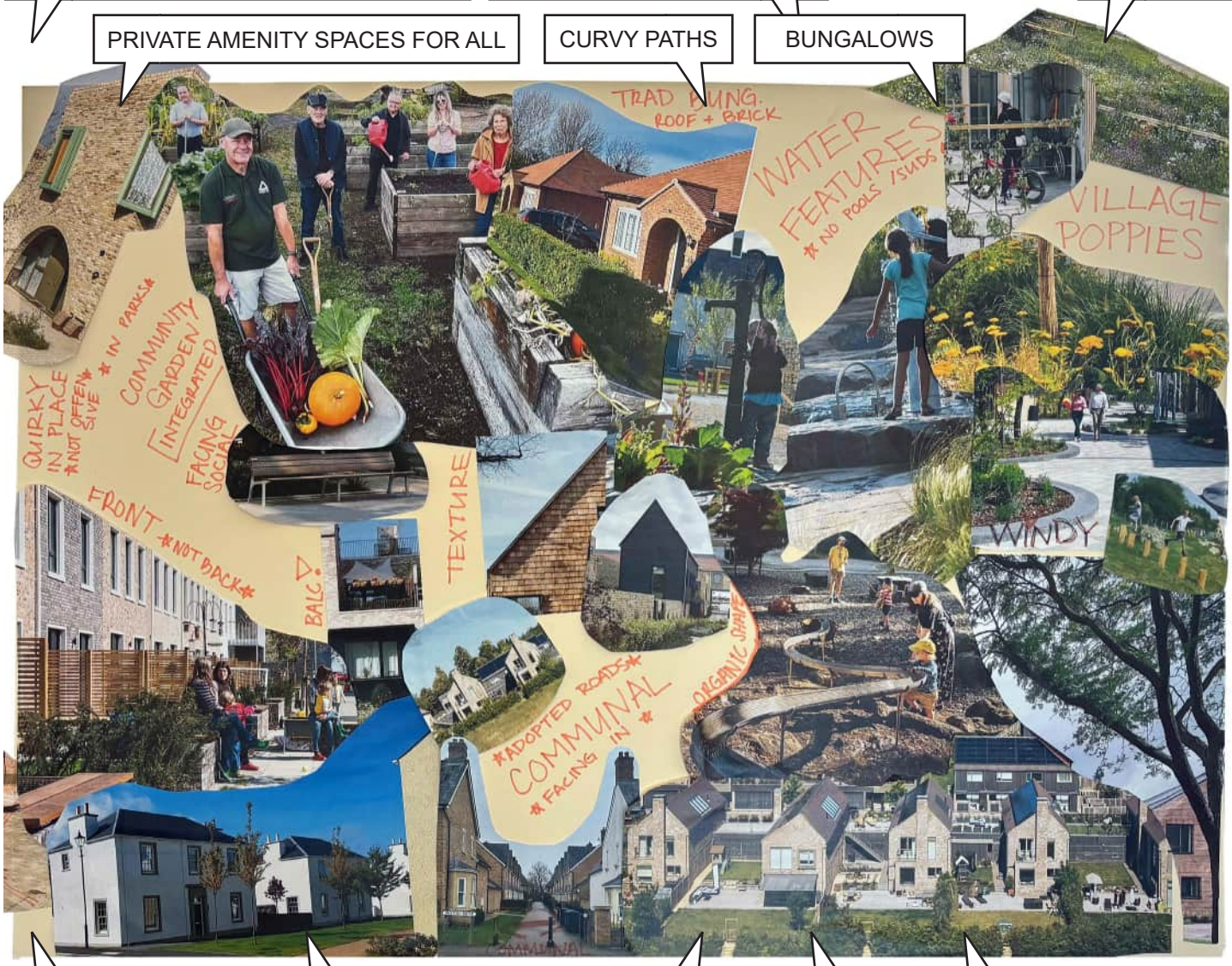
BALCONIES AND TERRACES

COMMUNAL

PRIVATE AMENITY SPACES FOR ALL

CURVY PATHS

BUNGALOWS



NO DOG TOILETS

ADOPTED ROADS

NATURAL PLAY

ORGANIC

WINDY AND CURVING

CLEAR PEDESTRIAN ZONES ON STREETS

DESIGNING FOR COMMUNITY

CYCLE PARKING



KEY PRIORITIES

1: Intentional provision of green spaces that are functional and not just something to look at with a preference for smaller scale sociable doorstep green spaces over expansive parks.

2: Curvy/windy streets and paths with incidental views were preferred over straight vistas which are perceived as too formal.

3: Sense of community should be achieved through design. Provision of communal spaces directly visible from windows was supported and thought to increase sense of ownership and community thus reducing anti-social behaviour. In addition, homes accessed off pedestrians streets encourage neighbourliness/community interaction.

4: Unsupportive of shared surface streets - clear demarcation of sidewalks and roads that feel safer for pedestrians, especially children.

5: Provision of private outdoor space for all homes, particularly shared buildings, through balconies and terraces.

GROUP 3

FRONT GARDENS FOR ALL

DOWNWARD LIGHTING

CONTEXTUAL BUILDINGS

TREES ON STREETS

EASY TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC SPACE

LOCAL SHOPS

GREEN SPACES

PEOPLE OVER CARS



SOCIABLE BENCHES

HONEST BUILDINGS

EFFICIENT LAND USE

CYCLE-FRIENDLY STREETS

CYCLE STORAGE

WALKING ROUTES TO SCHOOL

WILD PLANTING

STREET FURNITURE



KEY PRIORITIES

1: Front gardens for all house types as a space to grow plants, chat with neighbours and create high quality frontage to the street.

2: Safer streets that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over cars. Prompted by the image of the cyclist without a helmet, the group felt that streets should be a welcoming place for people that is not dominated by cars.

3: Resting spots in the public realm to encourage social interaction and walking especially for older residents who may need to stop frequently. A mixture of informal and formal seating should be used.

4: High quality green spaces at the centre of the community with growing spaces, allotments, wild planting and play.

5: Buildings that reflect the local character and are authentic to their setting. Residents expressed dislike for contemporary homes that 'pretended' to be historic.

GROUP 4

BUILD UP NOT OUT

GREEN AT THE HEART

VARIED ROOFLINES

NO US VS THEM

LOCAL SHOPS

TERRACES OVER GARAGES



ACCESSIBLE HOMES

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL GREEN SPACE

CAR CLUBS

NEIGHBOURLY INTERACTION

HIGH DENSITY IN TOWN CENTRES

CURVES IN THE LANDSCAPE

DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY SPIRIT



KEY PRIORITIES

1: Using land efficiently and building up rather than out to protect green space in the district. To take this further, space above garages should not be wasted - group was supportive of terraces and integral solutions.

2: Built form should be contemporary with a nod to the context and history of the site. Authenticity is important with ‘fake’ chimneys cited as an example of inauthentic design. Built form and rooflines needed to be varied to avoid monotonous and bland estates.

3: Communal spaces that belong to a small number of residents was supported and is something generally considered lacking on new estates.

4: Green spaces should not just be a piece of grass. Instead they need to engender community spirit by encouraging interaction through play, raked seating, benches, etc.

5: SUDs should be designed like the example in Solihull incorporating low maintenance nature play.

RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1 SUMMARY

The Urban Design Team at North Herts will use the feedback from the first Residents Design Forum, along with insights from the Council Members Visioning Day (held in March), to help shape a vision for the new District Design Code. This Design Code is expected to be structured around six or seven core principles, turning the ideas and priorities discussed during these events into clear, practical design policies that can help us guide future development in the district.

Residents at the meeting expressed that they would like a joint session with local councillors and forum members to discuss and debate tricky issues and collaboratively review the emerging design code. This request has been noted and will be explored over the coming months.

We (the North Herts urban design team) thank all the Resident Design Forum members for their invaluable contributions and for working in a collaboratively and respectful way with fellow residents. The next workshop will be scheduled for Autumn 2025 where we will present the draft guiding principles and emerging code.



RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #2 KEY INFORMATION

The second Residents Design Forum brought together the same group of North Herts residents from the first event, joined by Councillors, to continue collaborative work on shaping the emerging District Design Code*. The session focused on presenting the journey to the seven North Herts Place Objectives that sit at the heart of the Design Code and a collaborative workshop to further refine them.

Key objectives from the event were:

1. To present the stakeholder engagement undertaken so far to define the seven North Herts Place Objectives.
2. To review and refine the emerging Place Objectives.
3. To facilitate open dialogue between Councillors and Design Forum Residents about the future of development in the district.
4. To informally present examples of emerging code that deliver on the draft Place Objectives.
5. To present the programme to adoption and upcoming opportunities for Councillor and Resident input.

Attendees: North Herts Residents** and Councillors
Facilitators: North Herts Urban Design Team
Time: Wednesday 27 November 6:00-8:30pm
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth

**A design code is a set of clear, detailed, and often visual rules and guidelines that specify how development should be designed and built in a particular area. They aim to ensure high-quality, context-sensitive, and coherent urban development by providing specific parameters for building forms, materials, street layouts, public spaces and landscaping. They are used to guide developers, planners, and architects in creating proposals that align with a shared vision for the area.*

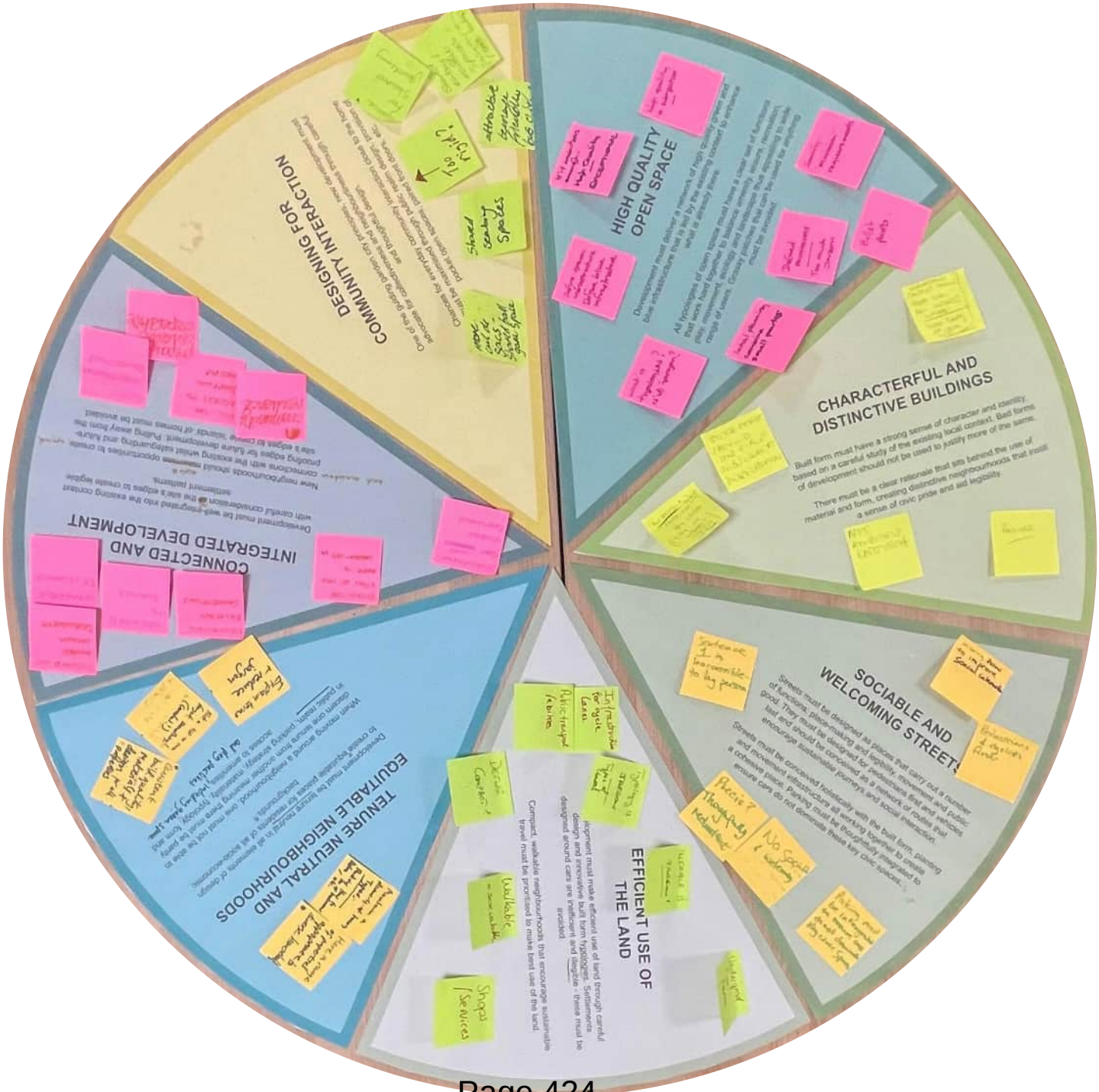
***Forum members were recruited by an external organisation (Field Locker) and advertised to the North Herts Citizens Panel. The council team set strict quotas around age, ethnicity, social grade, location and gender to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds were represented.*

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
17:45-18:00	Arrival, Tea and Coffee
18:00-18:30	Introductory Presentation
18:30-18:45	Review of Place Objectives
18:45-19:00	Dinner Served
19:00-20:00	Dinner and Group Feedback Discussion
20:00-20:15	Next Steps
20:15-20:30	Opportunity to chat with Councillors


VISIONING

PLACE OBJECTIVES COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP

Attendees were split into 7 groups that combined Councillors and Residents, each with 4-5 participants. Each group was assigned one Place Objective and asked to collectively assess its clarity, intentions and level of ambition. Groups annotated the objectives with written comments, suggested ammendments and key discussion points, considering how each objective could better reflect local character, community priorities and deliverable outcomes. The groups then presented their ideas back to the wide group for a wider discussion.



HIGH QUALITY OPEN SPACE

Group Members
Cllr Bryony May
3no. Residents Design Forum Members

Development must deliver a network of high quality green and blue infrastructure that is led by the existing context to enhance what is already there.
All typologies of open space must have a clear set of functions that work hard together to balance amenity, leisure, recreation, play, movement, ecology and landscape thus appealing to a wide range of users. Grassy patches that can be used for anything must be avoided.



Is this objective ambitious enough? Perhaps we should be aiming for exceptional and not just high quality.

High quality is subjective - is there another way of communicating this?

Consider bullet points to break down the text and make it easier to read.

There is too much jargon - green/blue infrastructure and typology need to be defined.

The code must specify minimum requirements for open space on new developments.

Small parks should have a function or they are better off being combined to create larger ones.



CONNECTED AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

Group Members
Cllr Sean Nolan
Cllr Emma Fernandes
1no. Residents Design Forum Member

Development must be well-integrated into the existing context with careful consideration of the site's edges to create legible settlement patterns.
New neighbourhoods should maximise opportunities to create connections with the existing whilst safeguarding and future-proofing edges for future development.
Pulling away from the site's edges to create 'islands' of homes must be avoided.



Development needs to be outward looking, not inward looking and permeable.

Objective should include safe access to schools, and non-car access to shopping areas.

Maximise is too weak, we should be exploiting opportunities to create, upgrade and maintain existing connections.

Objective should include visually integrating with the existing settlement and maintaining the ethos of the area.

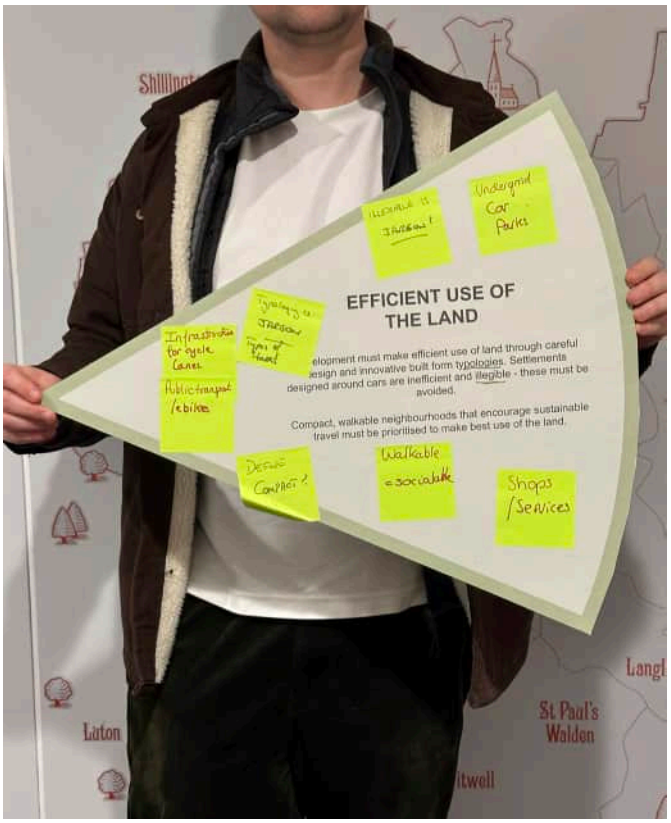
More focus on green infrastructure connections.



EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

Group Members
Cllr Albert
2no. Residents Design Forum Members

Development must make efficient use of land through careful design and innovative built form typologies. Settlements designed around cars are inefficient and illegible - these must be avoided.
Compact, walkable neighbourhoods that encourage sustainable travel must be prioritised to make best use of land.



Consider using clear, everyday language for objectives - illegible and typology are jargon.

Safe and continuous infrastructure for cycling is important in this objective.

Walkable is sociable - need to link these two terms in the objectives.

Consider use of underground car parks to make sites more efficient.

Is development designed at a compact scale that makes efficient use of land while remaining comfortable and usable?

Parking solutions are key in delivering efficient sites.



DESIGNING FOR COMMUNITY INTERACTION

Group Members
Cllr Stewart Willoughby
Cllr Nigel Mason
2no. Residents Design Forum Member

One of the guiding garden city principles, new development must advocate for collectiveness and neighbourliness through careful and thoughtful design. Chances for everyday community interaction close to the home must be maximised through public realm design, provision of pocket spaces, paired front doors, etc.



Paired front doors seems to rigid, consider other areas for social interaction.

Shared gardening or growing spaces, informal spaces for shared eating, markets and community activity are important.

Bus shelters are important for social interaction - should be attractive and friendly.

Policy should include safe, shared spaces for informal play and activities close to homes.

Seating as a key part of social interaction in communities.



TENURE NEUTRAL AND EQUITABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Group Members
Cllr Winchester
Cllr Donna Wright
3no. Residents Design Forum Members

Development must be tenure neutral in all elements of design to create equitable places for residents of all socio-economic backgrounds.
When moving around a neighbourhood, one must not be able to discern one tenure from another meaning there must be parity in public realm, parking strategy, materiality, typology, form and access to amenities.



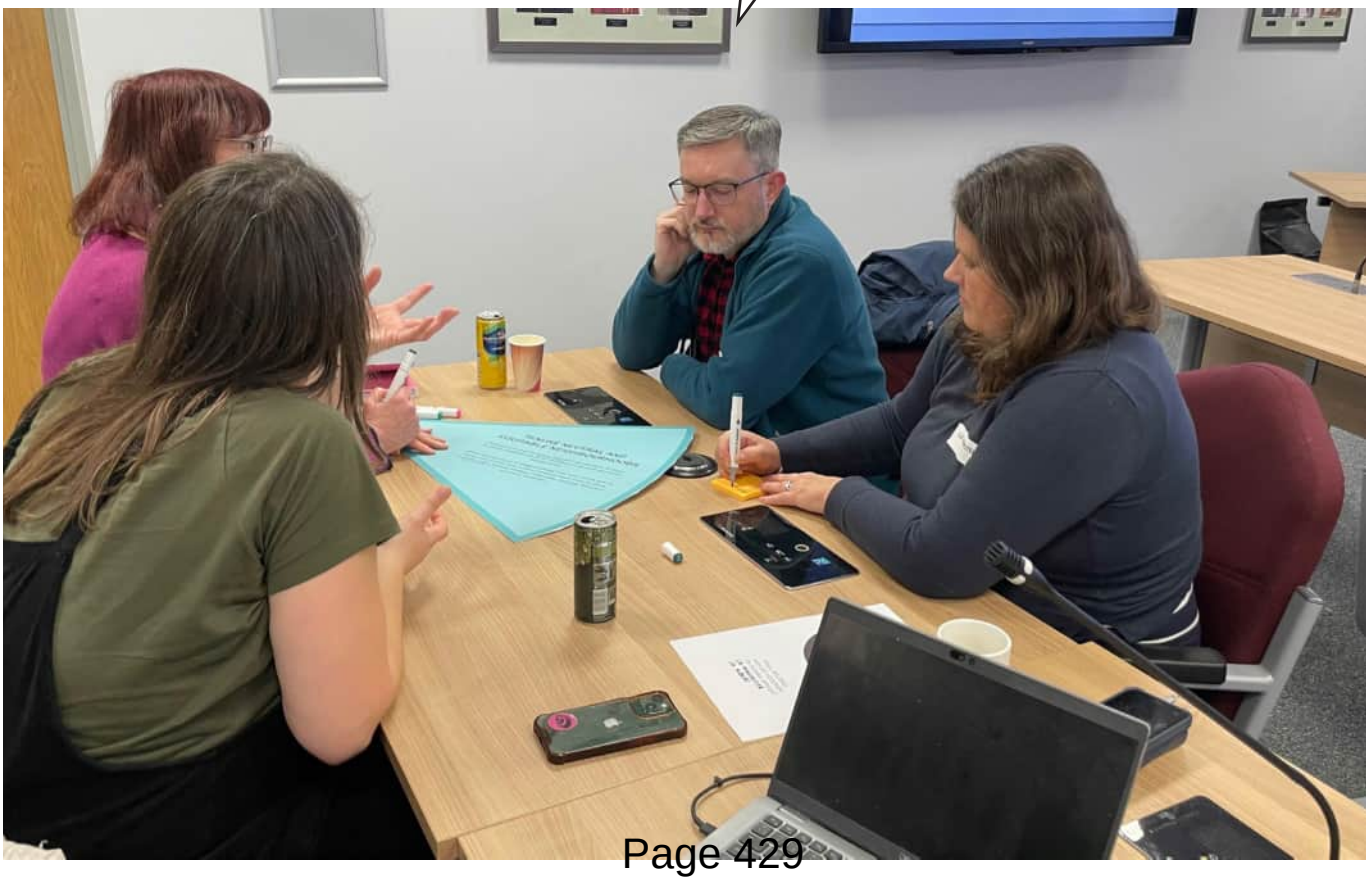
Included requirement for consistent build quality, materials and design on all properties.

It is also important to have a range of properties to cater to diverse households.

Terms such as tenure neutral and public realm should be clearly explained and unneccessary jargon avoided.

Consider how to deal with parking - linked to number of bedrooms?

List at the end needs to include green space and play facilities. Need to be careful of wording as this is not an exhaustive list.



SOCIABLE AND WELCOMING STREETS

Group Members
Cllr Allen
3no. Residents Design Forum Member



Streets must be designed as places that carry out a number of functions; place-making and legibility, movement and public good. They must be designed for pedestrians first and vehicles last and should be conceived as a network of routes that encourage sustainable journeys and community interaction.
Streets must be conceived holistically with the built form, planting and movement infrastructure all working together to create a cohesive place. Parking must be thoughtfully integrated to ensure cars do not dominate these key civic spaces.

Objective misses out how to improve social interaction - such as benches, community spaces,etc.

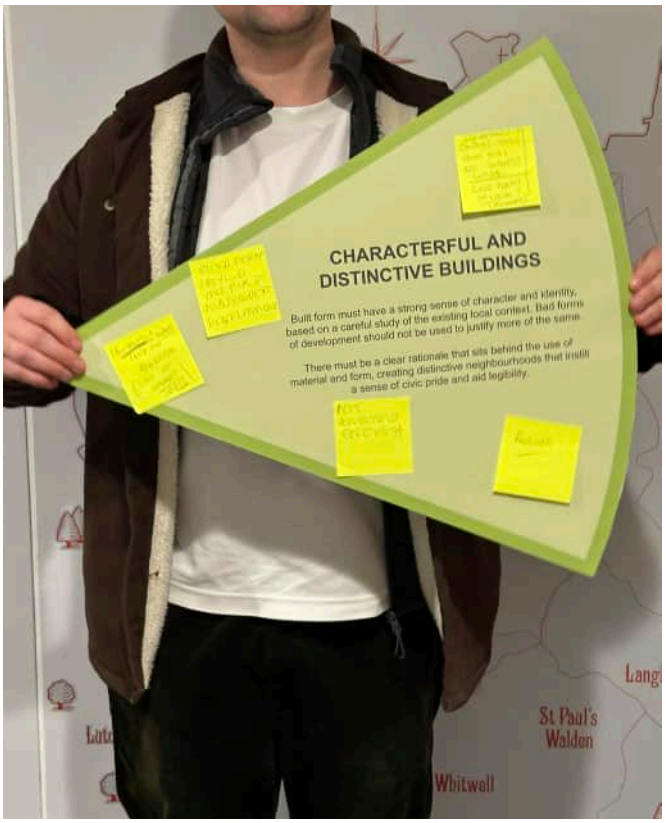
Important that pedestrians and cyclists are put first.

The first sentence is inaccessible to a layperson - consider rewording this or shortening.



CHARACTERFUL AND DISTINCTIVE BUILDINGS

Group Members
Cllr Mick Debenham
3no. Residents Design Forum Members



Built form must have a strong sense of character and identity, based on a careful study of the existing local context. Bad forms of development should not be used to justify more of the same.
There must be a clear rationale that sits behind the use of material and form, creating distinctive and neighbourhoods that instill a sense of civic pride and aid legibility.

This objective is not ambitious enough.

Make more positive - good forms of development should inspire subsequent development.

Local landmarks are important sources of inspiration for buildings.

Should include reference to an area's cultural, historical and contextual influences.

Should include a requirement for development to set a high-quality benchmark that can positively influence future development.

Designs should be ambitious and distinctive, rather than generic or risk-averse.



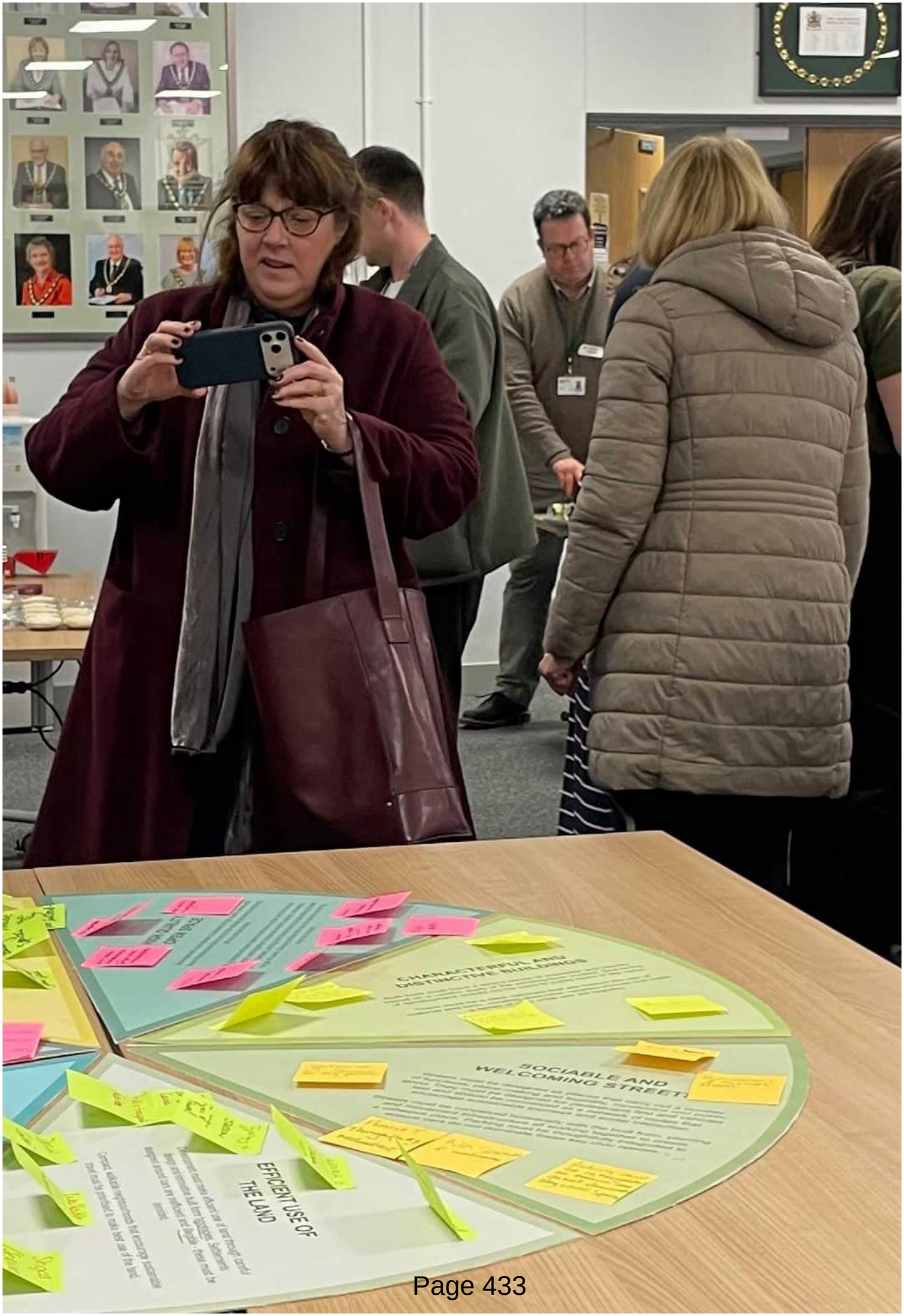
RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #2 SUMMARY

The Urban Design Team will use the feedback from this second Residents Design Forum to refine the emerging Place Objectives that form the foundation of the North Herts Design Code. The detailed comments and suggested amendments gathered during the collaborative workshop will be used to ensure the objectives are ambitious, clear and reflective of local priorities, translating shared community values into accessible and deliverable requirements for future development in the district.

The session marked a positive step forward by bringing residents and members together to jointly review, discuss and shape the vision for the Design Code. Participants expressed strong support for the collaborative approach and the opportunity to directly influence policy as it develops.

The North Herts Urban Design Team thanks all forum members and councillors for their valuable contributions and constructive engagement. Further workshops will be scheduled as the Design Code evolves, including future a third Residents Design Forum to present the draft Design Code ahead of public consultation.




CHARACTERFUL AND DISTINCTIVE BUILDINGS
SOCIABLE AND WELCOMING STREET
EFFICIENT USE OF THE LAND



Urban Design Team North Herts Council
Council Offices Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City SG6 3JF
E: urban.design@north-herts.gov.uk
T: 01462 474000

Annex A - Equality Analysis Template

1. Name of activity:	North Hertfordshire Draft Design Code (Supplementary Planning Document)
2. Main purpose of activity:	The purpose of the North Herts Design Code is to provide clear, consistent and locally specific design guidance to support the delivery of high-quality, inclusive and sustainable development across North Hertfordshire. The Design Code will guide applicants, decision-makers and communities on matters such as layouts, streets, buildings, green infrastructure, accessibility and public realm, helping to improve design quality and outcomes for all residents.
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	1. Residents Design Forum (2024-2025), including feedback from local residents and elected Members 2. Council Member Visioning sessions 3. Existing Local Plan policies and adopted Supplementary Planning Documents 4. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 5. National Model Design Code 6. Relevant best practice and precedent examples 7. Ongoing engagement with internal specialist officers (e.g. highways, landscape, housing, sustainability) 8. Equality Act 2010 guidance and Public Sector Equality Duty

4. Assessment				
Characteristics	**Neutral** (x)	**Negative** (x)	**Positive** (x)	Describe the person you are assessing the impact on, including identifying: community member or employee, details of the characteristic if relevant, e.g. mobility problems/particular religion and why and how they might be **negatively or positively** affected. **Negative: What are the risks?** **Positive: What are the benefits?**
Community considerations (i.e. applying across communities or associated with rural living or Human Rights)			X	**Negative** None identified. **Positive** The Design Code seeks to improve the quality of places across the district, supporting inclusive, well-designed neighbourhoods. By promoting accessible streets, usable public spaces and legible layouts, it has the potential to positively benefit communities, including those in rural

				areas, without disadvantaging any particular group. Legible layouts are neighbourhoods that are intuitive to navigate with streets that are distinct from one another. This is particularly important when designing for neurodivergent residents and those with dementia who need to be able to identify and differentiate places from one another.
A person living with a disability			X	**Negative**
				None identified.
				Positive
				The Design Code promotes inclusive design principles, including accessible streets, clear wayfinding, legible layouts and well-designed public realm. It also encourages public open spaces and routes to be designed in accordance with relevant accessibility standards, including appropriate gradients, to support step-free and inclusive movement. This has the potential to positively support people living with disabilities by encouraging environments that are safer, more accessible and easier to navigate for all users.
A person of a particular race	X			**Negative**
				None identified.
				Positive
				The Design Code applies equally to all communities and seeks to promote inclusive, welcoming environments. There are no elements of the Design Code that would disadvantage people of a particular race, and its focus on shared public spaces and community cohesion may support positive social interaction.
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	X			**Negative**
				None identified.
				Positive

				The Design Code does not differentiate between individuals based on sexual orientation. Its focus on inclusive public spaces and neighbourhood design applies equally to all residents.
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity			X	**Negative** None identified. **Positive** The Design Code promotes walkable neighbourhoods, accessible public spaces and well-designed streets, which may positively support people with caring responsibilities, including parents, pregnant women and those with young children.
A person of a particular religion or belief	X			**Negative** None identified. **Positive** The Design Code is neutral in relation to religion or belief. It does not restrict cultural or religious expression and promotes inclusive environments that can be used by people of all beliefs.
A person of a particular age			X	**Negative** None identified. **Positive** By promoting safe, walkable neighbourhoods, accessible public spaces and opportunities for social interaction, the Design Code has the potential to positively support people of different ages, including children, young people and older residents. The emphasis on inclusive public realm design – including the provision of regular resting points, seating at a variety of heights, and comfortable, well-connected pedestrian routes – can help ensure that streets and spaces are usable, welcoming and supportive for people at different life stages and with varying levels of mobility.

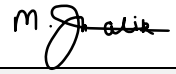
				The Design Code also makes provision for children's play and social spaces for teenagers within open spaces, supporting these ages to feel comfortable and a sense of ownership in the public realm.
Transgender	X			**Negative** None identified. **Positive** The District Design Code applies equally to all residents and does not differentiate on the basis of gender identity. Its emphasis on inclusive, safe and welcoming public spaces has the potential to support the wellbeing of all users, including transgender people, by encouraging environments that feel accessible and inclusive.

5 Results

	Yes	No	
Were positive impacts identified?	X		The Design Code promotes inclusive, accessible and well-designed places which are intended to benefit a wide range of users across the district, including protected groups.
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.		X	The Design Code applies district-wide and is intended to provide consistent guidance for all development. While different groups may experience benefits in different ways, no group is expected to benefit disproportionately.
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)		X	No negative or adverse impacts on protected characteristics have been identified. As a result, no mitigation actions are required.

6. Consultation, decisions, and actions

If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?
Not applicable
Describe the decision on this activity
It has been concluded that the Design Code does not give rise to adverse or disproportionate impacts on any protected characteristics. The Equality Impact Assessment demonstrates that the Design Code is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and supports inclusive outcomes.

List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively		
Action	Responsible person	Completion due date
Ensure inclusive design principles continue to be embedded within the Design Code and referenced in decision-making.	Urban Design Team	
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		
The impacts of the Design Code will be monitored through its implementation in planning decision-making and reviewed as part of future updates to the Design Code or related planning policy documents.		
7. Signatures		
Assessor (Report Author)		
Name: Millie Malik	Signature** 	
Validated by (relevant Senior Manager)		
Name: Debbie Coates	Signature** 	
Forward to the Policy & Strategy Team		
Signature: Daisy Harris		
Assessment date: 04/02/2026	Review date: 04/02/2027	

** **Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically. Please send to policy@north-herts.gov.uk for review by the team.**

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

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CABINET

17 February 2026

***PART 1** – **PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: PROPOSED PARKING TARIFFS FOR 2026/27

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - PLACE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORT: COUNCILLOR DONNA WRIGHT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report requests that Cabinet agrees:

(i) the proposed car parking tariffs in North Hertfordshire Council's off street car parks across the district and on-street charging bays in Royston town centre in order to effectively manage their use, and in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS);

(ii) the proposal to increase the charges for season tickets in the Council's long stay car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston and business permits in St. Martins Road, Knebworth car park in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) given these were last increased in 2021; and

(iii) the proposal to increase the charges for resident permits, visitor permits, business permits and visitor tickets for resident parking zones in accordance with the Counci's fees and charges policy as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

1.2 Subject to approval of the recommendations, discussions will continue with relevant parties to further consider and agree any subsidy and incentive schemes for 2026/27 in the Council car parks on a break-even approach on request in accordance with the policy proposal agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 September 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To adopt the proposed off-street and on-street car park tariff increases for 2026/27 referred to as Option 3 in paragraphs 8.2.14 of this Report and as set out in:

(i) Tables 1, 2 and 4 for Hitchin, Letchworth and Knebworth at Appendix A, and

(ii) Tables 5a for Royston off-street car parks and 6a for Royson on-street parking bays in Market Hill at Appendix B

2.2 To increase the proposed charges for season tickets for each of its long stay car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston and business permits at St. Martins Road car park in Knebworth for 2026/27 as set out in Tables 7 and 8 at Appendix A.

2.3 To increase the charges for resident permits, visitor permits, business permits and visitor tickets for resident parking zones for 2026/27 as set out in Section 8.4 of this report.

2.4 That Cabinet delegate to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport all decisions necessary to give effect to the recommendations including the issuing of the Notice of Variation to the 2024 Off-Street Parking Traffic Regulation Orders and the 2023 On-Street Consolidation Order.

2.5 That Cabinet notes the 'direction of travel' with regard possible subsidy schemes arising from the proposed programme of tariffs and charges.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 See Section 8 of the report for:

- proposed changes to car parking tariffs within the Council car parks and on-street;
- proposed increases to season tickets in Council long stay car parks: and
- proposed increases to resident permits, visitor permits, business permits and visitor tickets for resident parking zones;

.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The Executive Member for Planning and Transport has been involved in discussions regarding the selection of tariffs, including proposals to increase season tickets in long stay car parks and permits within resident parking zones and kept informed on these matters. The Executive Member for Finance has also been kept informed.

5.2 The Community Forums for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Southern Rural were informed on the proposed tariff changes in December by way of information notes and asked for their views. The Executive Member, and Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manger attended the Forum meetings to present the proposals and receive comments. The Town Centre and BID Managers for each of the towns, Royston Town Council and Knebworth Parish Council were also consulted and invited to offer their views and comments on the proposed tariff changes.

5.3 A summary of the comments received from these organisations, the Community Forum meetings, are summarised at Section 8.2. All comments have been considered and discussed with the Executive Member and taken into account in finalising this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 21 November 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 The Council's approved Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets an annual budget assumption that the Council should increase parking fees and charges annually by 2%. It makes it clear that parking charge levels are mainly set to manage demand and are reflective of the cost of alternative parking locations. The last tariff increases were approved by Cabinet in March 2025 and implemented in June 2025 for 2025/26. This included a 4% inflationary increase across all tariff bands as the Council had not increased tariffs since 2023/24, enabling time for businesses to recover from the pandemic and to address subsequent economic pressures.

7.2 It is proposed to implement the new parking tariffs in line with the Council's budget setting process for the start of the financial year. The budget estimates for 2026/27 include the expectation that income from parking will increase by 2%. Any variance from this would be reported through the budget monitoring process.

7.3 Consideration has also been given in this report to increasing the cost of:

(i) season tickets in the long stay car parks and business permits in the Knebworth car park by 2% inflation. The last increase was in 2021. See Section 8.3 below; and

(ii) permits, visitor permits, business permits and visitor tickets in resident parking zones by 2% inflation. See section 8.4 below.

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

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 <u>Car Park Tariff Proposals</u>

8.1.1 The parking tariff proposals that were last increased by Cabinet in June 2025 included:

- An inflationary uplift of all tariffs in Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Knebworth and Royston car parks, including the on-street parking bays in Market Hill in Royston, by 4% rounded to the nearest 10p, except for the free 0-2 hour tariff at Norton Common car parks.
- Retaining the after 3pm off-peak incentive in all Hitchin car parks increased by 4% and the after 3pm incentive in Royston with the introduction of a flat rate tariff of 50p. This post 3pm scheme in Royston was subsequently agreed to be subsided by the Royston Town Council and the Royston BID as free parking.
- Introducing a similar off-peak incentive in Letchworth, by proposing a flat rate tariff after 3 pm. This has been well received and has resulted in some increase in footfall into the town centre.
- A subsidy agreement was also reached with the Knebworth Parish Council in subsidising the 30 min tariff band as free on a break even basis in accordance with the Council's agreed policy to consider and agree requests for subsidised parking within the council operated car parks. (Cabinet Decision 19 September 2023).

8.1.2 A 2% uplift for 2026/27 is estimated to increase annual income by £39.1k. This is the baseline position against which tariff options have been considered. This 2% increase is below the general level of inflation, as the Council is aware of the increase in the cost of living on residents and seeks to support local businesses and visitors to its town centres and to Knebworth where possible. The actual impact on income from the changes to tariffs will depend on the level of demand for parking. Transaction data from September 2024 to August 2025 has been analysed to estimate the impact of adjusting individual tariffs.

8.1.3 Two proposed tariff options were initially considered and are summarised below, with a third proposed Option developed following discussion with the Royston Town Council and Royston BID.

8.1.4 In developing options, the broad aims are:

- to be consistent across all car parks,
- to harmonize tariffs where possible within each town whilst respecting their separate identities
- to consider and agree applications from any organisation wishing to implement subsidised and / or incentive parking schemes in any of the Council's car parks across the District
- to be practical and enforceable in operational terms (see, in particular, Option 2 / paragraph 8.1.12 below), and
- to set car parking tariffs that support the achievement of modal shift away from private car use in seeking to reduce carbon emissions and supporting more sustainable initiatives as set out in the Council's Sustainability Strategy (2025-30

8.1.5 The Council also introduced alternative methods of payment with the implementation of new parking machines across all its car parks in 2025 which enables visitors to stay longer to help support the vitality of the town centres.

8.1.6 Option 1 – this included:

(i) Applying a 2 % inflationary increase to all tariffs across all council operated car parks in Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Knebworth rounded up to the nearest 10p with the exception of the free 0-2 hour tariff at the Norton Common car parks in Letchworth to facilitate users of the common and being out of centre car parks, and

(ii) retaining the after 3pm off-peak incentive tariff in all Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston car parks increased by 2%.

8.1.7 This resulted in some of the 2hr, 3hr, 4hr and 4hr+ tariff bands across some car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Knebworth increasing by 10p and all other tariffs including the post 3pm flat rate tariffs remaining unaltered with no tariff increases in Baldock.

8.1.8 The tariffs in the Twitchell car park in Baldock will remail unaltered given the low tariff structure within the long stay car park.

8.1.9 This option falls short of the budgeted estimated 2% overall inflationary increase for 2026/27 by around £6,500.

8.1.10 Option 2 – This included:

(i) As per Option 1 above *plus* proposing to increase the post 3pm flat rate tariff in Royston from 50p to £1.00 (including the on-street parking bays in Market Hill in Royston).

8.1.11 As stated in para 8.1.1, the Royston BID and Royston Town Council (RTC) presently subsidises the post 3pm, 50p tariff as free parking, this was in agreement with the Royston BID through a 'lump sum' and the RTC on an 'up to' basis subject to monitoring data demonstrating actual usage, whereby members of the public would be required to register their parking sessions after 3pm at the new machines. A subsidy contribution of £35k was agreed for 2025/26.

8.1.12 This arrangement has led to a number of operational challenges. Registration of post 3pm parking sessions is effectively voluntary, as enforcement for failing to register (or 'pay') a nil tariff cannot be reasonably pursued. This likely leads to significant under-registration of actual sessions, meaning the current subsidy arrangement cannot be effectively monitored or charged for. Officer's view was that a nominal transaction fee is required *after* application of any subsidy to enable more accurate monitoring and effective enforcement to take place.

8.1.13 Overall, this Option 2 could result in a slight surplus against the 2% benchmark of around £7,800.

8.1.14 Both Options were discussed with the Exec Members for Planning & Transport and for Finance, and it was agreed to discount the first option given its shortfall in not meeting the inflationary forecast for 2026/27, and to proceed with consulting on the second option (Option 2). The Community Forums, the Town Centre BID Mangers, Royston Town Council and Kenworth Parish Council were all consulted on this proposed option as outlined in Tables 1 to 6 at Appendix A. See summary of comments and considerations as section 8.2 below.

8.1.15 Option 3 – is a third option proposed at paragraphs 8.2.9 to 8.2.14 following consideration of the comments received and ongoing discussion with the RTC and Royston BID as summarised in section 8.2.

8.2 Summary of comments and considerations

8.2.1 The Proposed Parking Tariff Increases were presented at each Community Forum meetings during December, where:

(i) *Baldock and Villages Community Forum* - noted the proposals with little discussion, given there were no proposed changes to the parking tariffs in the Twitchell car park 2026/27.

(ii) *Hitchin Community Forum* - noted the proposals where the Chair asked for member views by 9 January, no further comments or views from members have been received.

(iii) *Southern Rural Community Forum* - noted the proposals commenting that Southern Rural residents are more likely to use car parks than those living closer to town centres and that increases in parking charges would directly affect rural communities travelling into town centres.

(iv) *Letchworth Community Forum* – noted the proposals and the need to increase cost of parking, no further comments or views from members have been received. .

(v) *Royston and Villages Community Forum* – noted the proposals and discussed the following points:

- Expressing concerns about removing *'free after 3pm parking'* risks undermining efforts to bring people into town. While raising current costs may be acceptable, the free element is vital and business could lose custom after removing free parking.
- Businesses are already burdened with rising rates. Removing *'free after 3pm parking'* would further impact them.
- People visit the town from surrounding villages and by removing *'free after 3pm parking'* could result in people going elsewhere.
- Warning of unintended consequences where without *'free after 3pm parking'*, people may park in residential roads
- The rationale with 3-hour stays increasing, shorter stays remaining unchanged, and season tickets rising with £15 increase as proposed.
- Private offers are cheaper, yet the aim is to encourage longer stays.
- The *'free after 3pm parking'* could be considered more about convenience rather than money, and while the BID and RTC subsidise the scheme, this does not cover lost income and that people may not realise the true cost of the scheme.
- The Deputy Chief Officer of Royston Town Council explained that discussions between RTC, BID, and NHC have been open and constructive in reviewing the proposed tariffs and considering other options.

Notes from each of the Community Forum Meetings are available of the Councils Website via the hyperlinks created in this report at 8.2.1 (i) to (v) above.

8.2.2 *Knebworth Parish Council* – were consulted and have made no comments on the proposed tariff increases at the time of writing this report.

The proposed tariff increases in Knebworth will result in the 4hr tariff increasing from £4.40 to £4.50. All other tariffs will remain unaltered. (See **Table 4** in Appendix A.) Officers have asked if the Parish wish to continue with subsidising the 30 minute parking tariff as free parking in the St. Martins Road Car Park for 2026/27, on a break-even basis in accordance with the Council's agreed policy. Any further update will be given at the meeting.

8.2.3 *Letchworth BID* – The tariff options were discussed with the BID manager and while the BID would rather not have the tariff increases, they understand the budget pressures within the Council and consider 10p to be a modest increase if this were to be implemented.

In Letchworth the proposed tariff increases are affecting the 3hr and post 3hr tariffs in the short and long stay car parks, all other tariffs and the flat rate tariff post 3pm will remain unaltered. These proposals are shown in **Table 2** in Appendix A.

8.2.4 *Hitchin Bid* – while they have expressed their concern that tariff increases are never easy and have not commented as such on the proposed tariffs, they have requested if the Council could consider the following items as listed below in seeking to improve the usage of the Lairage multi-storey car park (MSCP).

- ***Electronic signage*** - Signage is desperately needed and at the September NHDC Hitchin Community Forum meeting it was reiterated that this would be coming soon, where electronic signage seemed like the best option.

- ***Name change*** – considering changing the name of the multi-story carpark to something more relatable such as **Hitchin Multi-Storey Car Park**. The BID think that would make a difference but do understand the historic significance of the word 'Lairage' relating to the past.
- ***Cleaning the walkway canopies and general tidy up/cleaning*** of the whole Multi Story Car park as it looks very run down and tired in some areas.

8.2.5 While these are outside the remit of this report, officers recognise the need to promote and encourage better use of the Lairage car park and are in discussion with the Bid and considering various budget options as a means of addressing these requests.

8.2.6 For Hitchin, the proposed increases will result in the 2hr, 3hr and 4hr tariffs in the short stay car parks and the 2hr, 3hr and all-day parking tariffs in the long stay car parks increasing by a modest 10p, with the exception of the Lairage MSCP where only the all day tariff will increase by 10p. All the 1hr and the flat rate tariffs after 3pm will remain unaltered across all car parks. These proposals are shown in **Table 1** in Appendix A.

8.2.7 *Royston BID and Royston Town Council* expressed strong concerns about the proposals, in particular to the increase in the post 3pm tariff from 50p to £1:00 and the negative perceived impact this could have on visitors to the town center and on local businesses. In light of the concerns raised and those comments made at the Royston Community Forum meeting, Officers and the Exec Member have held several discussions with the RTC and the BID in exploring other possible tariff options for the Royston car parks where the Council can continue to seek to meet its overall inflationary forecast for 2026/27, resolve the current operational challenges and continue to support any further subsidy options for 2026/27. It was agreed for the RTC and the BID to review the tariffs and to propose an option for officers to consider with the Exec Member and for officers to include their proposal in the report to Cabinet for their awareness and potential consideration.

8.2.8 The proposal is outlined at 8.2.9 below and shown in Appendix B for Royston Car Parks. It was agreed that both the RTC and the BID proceed with seeking agreement to their proposals at their respective committee and board meetings. (These being the RTC at their Town Council Meeting on 19 January and the Royston First BID Board Meeting on 28 January 2026)

8.2.9 The proposal includes:

(i) altering the current 1hr, 2hr, 3hr and all day tariffs by increasing the 1hr tariff by 10p and reducing the 2hr, 3hr and all day tariffs, thereby largely harmonising the charging regime to £1, £1.50, £2.50, for the 1hr, 2hr and 3hr tariffs across all car parks and on-street at Market Hill, with the exception of the Civic Centre car park , and reducing the all-day parking at the long stay car parks to £4.00 respectively, thereby offering a clearer tariff structure for visitors;

(ii) proposing a flat rate tariff of £1 for up to 3hrs parking at the Civic centre to facilitate use of the car park for the surgery and town hall activities and provide greater opportunities for 'linked trips' with the town centre;

(iii) retaining the proposed £1 post 3pm flat rate tariff; and

(iii) giving consideration to alternative subsidy options.

8.2.10 The RTC and BID are not likely to continue to subsidise a free or reduced rate for parking after 3pm, given the likely increase in parking session registrations once there is a charge and do not consider an ongoing subsidy would be sustainable in the long term in meeting the Council policy of a tariff needing to be set in order to implement subsidy and incentive parking schemes on a break-even approach. Their preference is to pivot their subsidy offer to instead consider subsidising free parking for the month of December across all car parks to support local businesses in the lead up to the Christmas period.

8.2.11 Both organisations have informed the Council of the outcome of their meetings where:

- *The Royston Town Council* draft minute (103/26) states: '*The council RESOLVED to provide the following comments for response to NHDC: The council confirms that they prefer the tariff structure proposed by the RTC officers but that they remain unhappy about losing the free after 3 scheme. They also note that they are willing to continue exploring the suggestion from Royston BID of a December subsidy at a total subsidy cost of approximately £30k, pending further discussion'.*
- *Royston BID* – advised that the board agreed to the new charges at their meeting on 28 January, and with regards to a subsidy for Q4, they would like to propose this is from November 20th to 23rd December subject to RTC and NHC agreement.

8.2.12 Officers are supportive of this suggested option for Royston as it:

- largely harmonises the charging regime in accordance with the Councils approach as outlined in para 8.1.4 above, and rationalises the tariff structure to round pounds or 50p values across all car parks making it easier for the customer and could help to encourage more even footfall through the day in supporting local businesses by reducing the 2hr and 3hr tariffs;
- includes the £1 after 3pm flat rate tariff as originally proposed in Option 2 resolving the operational challenges outline in paragraph 8.1.12; and
- the proposed £1 flat rate tariff for up to three hours parking at the Civic Centre will continue to facilitate use of that car park for the surgery and town hall/community activities, potentially encourage linked trips with the town centre; and has some precedent elsewhere in the District where tariffs bridge across time bands (e.g. at Lairage MSCP for the 1- & 2-hour charge).

8.2.13 Overall, this suggested parking tariff option for Royston together with the Option 2 proposed tariff increases for Hitchin, Letchworth and Knebworth could result in a further surplus against the MTFS benchmark over Option 2 of approximately £6,000.

8.2.14 It is the officer recommendation that Cabinet approves Option 3 – which provides for a proposed tariff increase as outlined in **Tables 1, 2 and 4** for Hitchin, Letchworth and Knebworth respectively as per Appendix A (Option 2) and with Tables 5 and 6 being amended as shown in **Tables 5a and 6a** to reflect the RTC and BID proposals at Appendix B.

8.2.15 To this end, the Council will continue discussions with the BID and the RTC regarding a preferred subsidy option for 2026/27 i.e. possibly for the month of December as requested. Initial calculations on both sides suggest (without prejudice) this is likely to be affordable / acceptable.

8.3 Season Tickets

8.3.1 The Council had previously chosen not to increase the cost of Season Tickets or Business Permits since 2021 due to the reduction in the take up of these permits with the change in employer habits since the pandemic with more people continuing to work from home and commuting into their office on certain days as well as a means of supporting local businesses.

8.3.2 This trend has continued and has reduced more significantly in the last financial year. Following discussion with the Executive Members for Planning & Transport and for Finance, it is proposed to increase season tickets in the Council's long stay car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston and business permits in St. Martins Road car park in Knebworth for 2026/27 by 2% in accordance with the Council's MTFS. These proposals would equate to:

- £2 increase on a 1-month up to £15 increase on a 12-month season ticket in the long stay car parks; and
- £3 increase on a 6-month and £5 increase on a 12-month business permit in Knebworth car park.

8.3.3 Overall this 2% inflationary increase could achieve circa £2.9k in additional Season Ticket income. Business permits in Knebworth have remained fairly constant and have recently been increased from 8 to 10 permit places. This proposed increase would increase income from season tickets and business permits by approximately £3k for 2026/27, assuming demand remains unchanged. This proposed price increase is expected to maintain the use of the long-stay car parks by season ticket holders, as they will still be receiving a reasonable discount over full day pay-as-you-use charging.

8.3.4 The above proposed increases are set out in **Tables 7 and 8** in Appendix A.

8.4 Resident Parking Zones

8.4.1 Following discussion with the Executive Members for Planning & Transport and for Finance, it is proposed to increase resident, business or visitor permits and visitor ticket books for each of the Council's resident permit parking zones across the district for 2026/27 by 2% in accordance with the Council's MTFS. This is to align with other inflationary costs associated with administering the resident permit scheme; operating the Parking Enforcement Service; and the ongoing maintenance costs associated with respective on-street regulations, i.e. refreshing road markings and replacing signs. The proposed increases are set in the Table at 8.4.2 below rounded to the nearest £1.

8.4.2 Resident Permit Parking Zones: Proposed increases for 2026/27

Permit Type	**Current Permit Prices in 2025/26**		***Proposed Permit Prices for 2026/27***	
	6 months	**12 months**	**6 months**	**12 months**
Resident Permit	£43	£86	***£44***	***£88***
Visitor Permit	£43	£86	***£44***	***£88***
Business Permit	£43	£86	***£44***	***£88***
Visitor Tickets	£12.50 per book		***£13.00 per book***	

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, paragraph 5.7.30 of the Council's Constitution states that the Cabinet should by way of resolution determine charges for car parking.

9.2 The proposed tariff changes and proposed increase in season tickets and business permits in the off street car parks, the resident, visitor and business permits and visitor tickets in residential parking zones will be required to be published as a Notice of Variation to the respective North Hertfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Orders and to the North Hertfordshire District Council 2023 On-street Consolidate Order in the local papers in compliance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Such Notice of Variation will give a minimum of 21 days' notice of when the new parking tariffs and permit increases for the resident permit zones will be implemented. Site notices will be displayed in all affected car parks and on street. Section 14.6.10(b)(v) of the constitution delegates authority to the Director: Place for the creation of on and off street parking orders.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The budget forecast for 2026/27, includes estimated additional income from inflation to the Council of £39.1k for pay-as-you-use tariffs and £3k for season tickets.

10.2 The approach taken, and assumptions made in estimating the financial impact of the proposed pay-as-you-use tariff structure, as laid out in Tables 1 to 6 at Appendix A and revised Tables 5a and 6a for Royston Car parks at Appendix B, are explained in the body of this report. While the actual impact on parking activity from the proposed tariff structure is unknown, given the impact of the increases in the overall cost of living on our car parks, the income estimates derived are based on the usage figures from September 2024 to August 2025, including the voluntary post 3 pm vehicle registration figures at Royston car parks have been adjusted to reflect the income expectation in relation to parking charges within the approved budget for 2026/27.

10.3 The proposed 2% inflationary increase across all tariffs rounded to the nearest 10p, together with the 50p to £1 increase in the Royston post 3pm flat rate tariff could result in a further income stream of circa £7.8k under Option 2 (as set out in Appendix A) or circa £13.9k under Option 3 with the suggested tariff options for Royston car parks as set out in Appendix B (both on top of the assumed inflation, i.e. 2.4% vs 2.7%). Both Royston First BID and Royston Town Council and Knebworth Parish Council have expressed an interest in continuing subsidising parking tariffs within their areas.

10.4 The Royston Town Council and Royston BID have suggested subsiding free parking for the month of December across all car parks in Royston and have suggested a £30k subsidy in principle towards subsidising a free parking scheme in December 2026 based 2025 usage figures. This is subject to further discussions between all three parties and is an option the Council would consider under it's agreed policy to implement subsidy and incentive parking schemes on a break-even approach.

10.5 The proposed tariff increases will not impact on the current subsidy agreement with Knebworth Parish Council should they wish to continue with subsidising the 30min free parking tariff option at St. Martins Road Car Park for 2026/27. This will be a contribution of circa £2,750 and will continue to be reviewed annually together with inflationary increases and usage data as visitors will be required to register their parking session.

10.6 There is a budget set-aside for the cost of implementing the proposed tariff increases including publishing the notices, advertising the increased car parking tariffs in the local press, amending tariff boards and making adjustments to the car park payment machines.

10.7 If approved, income from the amended tariff and charging structures will be monitored from actual transactions on an ongoing basis. Any significant variances will be reported through the Quarterly Budget Updates to Cabinet. The extent to which the 2% assumption in the MTFS is / isn't being achieved will feed into consideration of any further amendments to tariffs and charges for 2027/28.

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 risks to car parking income have been considered as part of the assessment. The recommendations have been made whilst acknowledging that there is a financial risk that the review of tariff structure might not produce the estimated income and could result in downward trend in parking sales. The off-peak parking incentive will be monitored through the number of parking session registered under the alternative payment options available with the new parking machines, thereby providing the Council with a more reliable data base.

11.3 Car parking usage and income and the sale of Season tickets and permits within resident parking zones is continually monitored throughout the year, including as part of the regular revenue monitoring reports.

11.4 There is also a risk that there may be a negative public reaction to the agreed recommendations, which should be managed by the timely communication of any changes and the reasoning behind them.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2 There are no direct equality issues arising from this report. With the introduction of the new parking machines in 2025, there is a range of charging/payment options available to cater for the widest needs of local car park users, (such as cashless. Coin and post-payment options) together with the continued option for organisations to subsidise tariffs to support local businesses and visitors to the town centre. The realignment of the tariffs seeks to improve turnover and usage throughout the day thereby supporting the town centre businesses and benefit the economy of North Hertfordshire. The proposed increases for Season tickets in long stay car parks and resident permits, visitor permits, business permits or visitor tickets for resident parking zones is a nominal increase and allows for the ongoing management of such permit schemes and maintenance of resident permit zones.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The NHDC parking strategy seeks to minimise environmental impacts where possible in regard to on-street and off-street parking. As noted at paragraph 8.1.4 there may be further reduction in car travel to some of the towns with the implementation of the parking tariffs thereby encouraging people to use other forms of sustainable travel into the town centres, such as by walking, cycling and using public transport.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report. Officers will be responsible for implementing the new tariffs, undertaking the necessary amendments to the Traffic Regulation Orders, and monitoring the potential impacts of the subsidy incentive schemes.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A: Option 2 - Proposed Parking Tariffs for 2026/27 in NHC car parks and on – street at Market Hill in Royston

16.2 Appendix B: Proposed Parking Tariffs in Royston for 2026/27 in NHC car parks and on– street at Market Hill in Royston

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy 2019 - 2031(adopted January 2019) Parking strategy | North Herts Council

18.2 Cabinet Report 19 Sept 2023 – Proposed Off-Street Parking Tariffs for 2023/24 Item Ref: 212

18.3 North Herts Council Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 Sustainability strategy | North Herts Council

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Appendix A: Proposed Parking Tariff Increases for 2026/27

(Option 2)

NOTE: Proposed Tariff band increases highlighted and shown in ***bold italics.***

TABLE 1: HITCHIN CAR PARKS

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Bancroft (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.40	£1.40
		2	£2.50	***£2.60***
		3	£3.20	***£3.30***
		All Day	£5.30	***£5.40***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.50	£1.50
		2	£1.50	£1.50
		3	£1.50	£1.50
Biggin Lane (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.60	£1.60
		2	£2.70	***£2.80***
		3	£4.30	***£4.40***
		4	£5.80	***£5.90***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.70	£1.70
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£1.70	£1.70
Christchurch (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.60	£1.60
		2	£2.70	***£2.80***
		3	£4.30	***£4.40***
		4	£5.80	***£5.90***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.70	£1.70
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£1.70	£1.70
Lairage MSCP (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.40	£1.40
		2	£1.40	£1.40
		3	£2.40	£2.40
		All Day	£4.70	***£4.80***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.50	£1.50
		2	£1.50	£1.50
		3	£1.50	£1.50

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Portmill East (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.60	£1.60
		2	£2.70	***£2.80***
		3	£4.30	***£4.40***
		4	£5.80	***£5.90***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.70	£1.70
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£1.70	£1.70
Portmill West (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.60	£1.60
		2	£2.70	***£2.80***
		3	£4.30	***£4.40***
		4	£5.80	***£5.90***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.70	£1.70
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£1.70	£1.70
St Mary's Square (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.60	£1.60
		2	£2.70	***£2.80***
		3	£4.30	***£4.40***
		4	£5.80	***£5.90***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.70	£1.70
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£1.70	£1.70
Woodside (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.40	£1.40
		2	£2.50	***£2.60***
		3	£3.20	***£3.30***
		All Day	£5.30	***£5.40***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.50	£1.50
		2	£1.50	£1.50
		3	£1.50	£1.50

TABLE 2: LETCHWORTH CAR PARKS

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Hillshott (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.00	£1.00
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£2.60	***£2.70***
		All Day	£5.10	***£5.20***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.10	£1.10
		2	£1.10	£1.10
		3	£1.10	£1.10
LMSCP Short Stay	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.00	£1.00
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£2.60	***£2.70***
		4	£4.70	***£4.80***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.10	£1.10
		2	£1.10	£1.10
		3	£1.10	£1.10
		4	£1.10	£1.10
LMSCP Long Stay	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.00	£1.00
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£2.60	***£2.70***
		All Day	£5.10	***£5.20***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.10	£1.10
		2	£1.10	£1.10
		3	£1.10	£1.10
Letchworth Town Hall (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£1.40	£1.40
		2	£2.10	£2.10
		3	£3.40	***£3.50***
		4	£5.10	***£5.20***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£1.50	£1.50
		2	£1.50	£1.50
		3	£1.50	£1.50
		4	£1.50	£1.50

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Norton Common Bowling Club	**Standard Tariff**	2	£0.00	£0.00
		4	£1.90	£1.90
		Max stay 5	£5.00	***£5.10***
Norton Common Swimming Pool	**Standard Tariff**	2	£0.00	£0.00
		4	£1.90	£1.90
		Max stay 5	£5.00	***£5.10***

TABLE 3: BALDOCK CAR PARK

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
The Twitchell (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	3	£1.40	£1.40
		All Day	£1.80	£1.80

TABLE 4: KNEBWORTH CAR PARK

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
St Martin's Road (short stay except business permit holders)	**Standard Tariff**	30 Mins	£0.50	£0.50
		1	£0.80	£0.80
		2	£1.60	£1.60
		3	£2.20	£2.20
		Max Stay 4	£4.40	***£4.50***

TABLE 5: ROYSTON CAR PARKS

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Angel Pavement (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	£0.90
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£4.00	***£4.10***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
Civic Centre (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	£0.90
		2	£1.00	£1.00
		3	£1.30	£1.30
		All Day	£3.60	***£3.70***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
Market Place (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	£0.90
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£4.00	***£4.10***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
Priory Gardens (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	£0.90
		2	£1.70	£1.70
		3	£4.00	***£4.10***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
The Warren (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	£0.90
		2	£1.50	£1.50
		3	£2.00	£2.00
		All Day	£4.10	***£4.20***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***

TABLE 6: ROYSTON ON-STREET PARKING CHARGES

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Market Hill (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	£0.90
		2	£1.10	£1.10
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***

TABLE 7 SEASON TICKETS

All Long Stay Car Parks (Hitchin, Letchworth & Royston)	Current Prices 2025/26	Proposed increased Prices 2026/27
1 month	£87.00	***£89.00***
3 months	£215.00	***£219.00***
6 months	£399.00	***£407.00***
12 months	£740.00	***£755.00***

TABLE 8: BUSINESS PERMITS – ST. MARTINS ROAD CAR PARK

St. Martins Road Car Park, Knebworth	Current Prices 2025/26	Proposed increased Prices 2026/27
Six months	£156.00	***£159.00***
Twelve months	£260.00	***£265.00***

Appendix B: Proposed Parking Tariffs in Royston Car Park for 2026/27

As suggested and agreed by Royston Town Council (RTC Full Council Meeting 19 January 2026) and Royston First BID (Board Meeting 28 January 2026)

NOTE: Proposed Tariff changes shown in ***bold italics.***

TABLE 5a: ROYSTON CAR PARKS

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Angel Pavement (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	***£1.00***
		2	£1.70	***£1.50***
		3	£4.00	***£2.50***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
Civic Centre (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	***£1.00***
		2	£1.00	***£1.00***
		3	£1.30	***£1.00***
		All Day	£3.60	***£4.00***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
Market Place (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	***£1.00***
		2	£1.70	***£1.50***
		3	£4.00	***£2.50***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***
Priory Gardens (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	***£1,00***
		2	£1.70	***£1.50***
		3	£4.00	***£2.50***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
The Warren (long stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	***£1.00***
		2	£1.50	***£1.50***
		3	£2.00	***£2.50***
		All Day	£4.10	***£4.00***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***

TABLE 6a: ROYSTON ON-STREET PARKING CHARGES

Car Park		Duration / hours	Current Tariff 2025/26	Proposed Tariff 2026/27
Market Hill (short stay)	**Standard Tariff**	1	£0.90	***£1,00***
		2	£1.10	***£1.50***
	Post 3pm Tariff	1	£0.50	***£1.00***
		2	£0.50	***£1.00***
		3	£0.50	***£1.00***

CABINET
17 February 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: BUDGET 2026/27 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS)

REPORT OF: THE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Cabinet recommends a budget for 2026/27 to Council for their consideration and approval. The budget considers the following:

- The funding that the Council should expect to receive in 2026/27 and an estimate of future years funding.
- The forecast net spend required to enable the continued delivery of the Council services in 2026/27 and beyond.
- Choices on spend that are aligned to the Council Plan.
- Capital budget proposals and the revenue costs of capital of those proposals.
- The risks in relation to the budget (e.g. higher spend or lower income) and providing reasonable financial protection against those risks.
- The implications of all the above on future years and ensuring that actions are in place to deliver a balanced budget in the medium term.
- The availability of General Fund reserves and the opportunities that provides.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet recommend to Council that:

2.1. Notes the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded.

2.2. Notes the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £3.5 million is recommended.

2.3. Notes the Chief Finance Officer's section 25 report (Appendix D) which provides a commentary on the risks and reliability of estimates contained in the budget.

2.4. Approves the revenue savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B.

2.5. Approves the capital programme as detailed in Appendix C.

2.6. Approves a net expenditure budget of £27.323m, as detailed in Appendix E.

2.7. Approves a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which is in line with the provisions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

2.8. Approves bringing forward the capital budget for pool covers at the outdoor pools to 2025/26.

2.9. Notes that a Council Tax premium on Second Homes will be implemented from 1st April 2026, which is adopting the decision taken by Council on 29 February 2024

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a budget (revenue and capital) and Council Tax level for 2026/27. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2024-28 as set out in the Council Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. The proposed budget includes some use of revenue reserves to fund one-off revenue spend and capital projects. This reflects that revenue reserves are significantly above the recommended minimum level and is an option to invest in the district. The Council could choose to retain those reserves.

4.2. The proposed budget includes setting aside a specific reserve for the cost of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Council could look to capitalise some of the spend on LGR, which would be any spend that is directly related to the design of new operating models and the transition towards them being implemented. This capitalisation option is discounted due to the available General Fund reserve and helping to put a new Unitary Council in a better financial position. The Council could also choose to not incur costs to help create capacity to support LGR and/or not support training and development of staff. This is discounted as LGR is a massive period of change and people are our most important asset.

4.3. Cabinet and Council can recommend changes to the revenue savings, revenue investments (both Appendix B) and capital proposals (Appendix C) as long as any changes consider the overall affordability.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. All Councillors were given an opportunity to review the revenue savings, revenue investment and capital proposals (as they were at the time) at the informal budget workshops in early November.

5.2. Over the summer, when the position in relation to future funding was much less certain, residents were consulted on their service and spend priorities. They were also asked to set out their preferred approach to achieving a balanced budget. The detail of this consultation is included at Appendix F.

5.3. Business Ratepayers will be consulted on the proposals within this report before the budget is discussed at Full Council on 26 February. Any feedback will be made available at the Council meeting. This is the only statutory consultation that is required. This consultation will be via the website/ e-mail, which is the method that has now been established.

5.4. If any saving proposal is anticipated to have a particular impact on a specific area (or areas) then it would be referred to the relevant Community Forum(s).

5.5. The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee review this budget report which allows them to comment on the governance of the budget setting process, the risks within the budget and the robustness of estimates and assumptions.

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 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which provides the financial background for the Corporate Business Planning Process, was approved by Council in November following recommendation by Cabinet (and review by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee). The budget estimates within the MTFS included several assumptions. These have been updated as better information has become available. This final budget still contains some assumptions, hence monitoring reports are provided to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Decisions made to deliver Council services and priorities

8.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set a general approach to achieving a balanced budget that reflected the high uncertainty over future funding and costs. This reflected that there would not be sufficient time between the provisional Local Government settlement (mid-December) and setting the 2026/27 budget (end of February) to have a full set of savings proposals (if they were required). Therefore, there was no specific savings target for 2026/27, and the focus was on having an implementable plan for the 2027/28 budget, and to use General Fund reserves to address the expected 2026/27 funding shortfall.

8.2 At its meeting in January, Cabinet considered the outcomes of the provisional Local Government settlement and reviewed the revenue and capital budget proposals. In that meeting the following additions to the revenue and capital budgets were proposed. These have been incorporated into the relevant appendices for revenue (Appendix B) and capital (Appendix C) proposals, and into the overall forecasts.

- Learner Pool in Royston. Capital funded from a revenue contribution.
- Digital and other signage for car parks in Hitchin, to promote better use of car parks. Capital funded from a revenue contribution.
- Additional water play features at North Herts Leisure Centre. Capital funded from a revenue contribution.
- If required, Churchgate project consultancy costs to get to the point of setting a capital budget. Some costs will be funded from existing specific reserves and surplus lettings income. Revenue cost.
- Planting at Broadway Gardens, Letchworth. Revenue cost.
- Feasibility work on remodelling of Grange Recreation Ground in Letchworth. Revenue cost.
- Work to determine feasibility for additional allotment provision in Great Ashby. Initially a revenue cost to determine the scope of the work required.
- One-off additional funding for Community Forums.
- Consider additional funding for organisations receiving funding via Memoranda of Understanding.
- Outreach work in relation to the museum storage project. Revenue funding to carry out some work on this if a grant bid is unsuccessful.
- Marketing support for Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum.

8.3. Additional costs have also been added in for an early estimate of the Business Rates amounts that the Council will need to pay. This is due to the new ratings list, but is subject to change depending on eligibility for any reliefs or if the Council decides to appeal any ratings valuations. As detailed in table 3 there is also likely to be an additional allocation for Herts Futures to support county-wide economic development.

General Funding

8.4. Government published their funding policy statement on 20 November 2025. This included several updates on how Fair Funding 2 would be calculated. This started to narrow the expected Government funding that the Council would receive.

8.5. On 4 November 2025, the estimated amount of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payments that the Council would receive in 2026/27 was provided. This was £1.787m, which is higher than the 2025/26 amount of £1.435m. In the MTFS the assumption was that the income from EPR would drop by 20% per year to try and reflect the impact of producers reducing the amount and costs of collection and disposal of packaging. It still seems prudent to assume a drop-off in future years, which will be retained at 20%. For 2025/26 the EPR payments were guaranteed, but this is not the case for 2026/27 onwards.

8.6. On 17 December, Government released the Local Government provisional settlement. The relevant factors from this were:

- As expected, the Fair Funding 2 formula has been used to set how much funding Councils need. This covers the period from 2026/27 through to 2028/29, although the amounts for 2027/28 and 2028/29 are indicative.
- The Fair Funding formula calculates total funding need and then deducts an assumed amount that will be received from Council Tax. The Council Tax amount assumes that rates will be increased in line with referendum principles and sets an assumed increase for growth in tax base. Councils retain Council Tax income above the assumed level and equally have to make up any shortfall.
- The funding from Government is split between Government Grant (around 55%) and retained Business Rates (around 45%) and overall is referred to as baseline funding. The Government Grant element will increase by inflation each year. The retained Business Rates element gives the potential for higher growth, but also has some risk.
- The potential for Business Rate growth is still constrained by a levy being applied to growth, but this is now more generous at higher levels of growth. Growth will also be less likely as Councils will have just gone through a reset. Councils can retain 10% of any growth in baseline funding that is up to 10%. For growth up to an extra 100% of baseline funding, then 30% can be retained. For growth above an extra 100%, then 45% can be retained. Based on previous experience, North Herts is unlikely to see the higher rates of growth.
- The potential for Business Rates losses is still constrained by a safety net. In 2026/27 this safety net is set at 100%, so there will be no losses below the baseline funding level. In 2027/28 it will move to 97%, so losses of up to 3% are possible. From 2028/29 it will move to 92.5% and then stay at that level. This means losses of up to 7.5% are possible, and this is the amount that it has previously been set at. We will continue to set our budget based on the baseline level.
- District Councils will be able to increase Council Tax by up to 2.99% without the requirement for a local referendum.
- New burdens (e.g. costs of weekly food waste collections) are included within Fair Funding 2, and there will not be any additional allocations.

- Homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse grants now form part of Core Spending Power (the headline funding for Councils) although it still subject to restrictions on how it is spent. The funding available has increased. This is shown as part of our general funding, with an off-setting pressure for the matching spend.

8.7. The final Local Government settlement is due late January/ early February, so was not available at the time of writing this report. Estimates are therefore based on the provisional settlement.

8.8. The position on our general funding is detailed in the tables below. Homelessness and rough sleeping prevention funding has previously been provided as a ring-fenced specific grant. It now forms part of core spending power and is notionally within general funding. However, it still has funding conditions, so to enable fair comparisons it has been excluded from the table below. It has been included in the detailed funding table in Appendix E, and is off-set by a spending pressure within the revenue budget proposals in Appendix B.

Table 1 – Estimated General Funding comparison (2026/27 with 2025/26)

£000 Funding	2025/26 Budget £'000	2026/27 Latest Forecast £'000	Comments
Council Tax	13,613	14,211	Increase in rate (2.99%) and increase in base of 1.36% (number of properties)
Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus/ (Deficit)	144	251	
Business Rates and General Grant funding	4,900	6,728	Based on Fair Funding allocation, including New Burdens and inflationary growth
Extended Producer Responsibility funding	1,435	1,787	Based on notification of estimated amount.
Less: Council Tax support to Parishes	(39)	(39)	Maintained at previous levels.
	20,053	**22,938**	

Table 2 –General Funding forecasts for 2027/28 and 2028/29

£000 Funding	2027/28	2028/29	Comments
Council Tax	14,709	15,225	Assumed 2.99% increase in rate. Net 0.5% increase in tax base
Other funding	6,680	6,613	Based on Fair Funding totals. Whilst this is a multi-year settlement, the amounts in years 2 and 3 are not guaranteed.
Extended Producer Responsibility funding	1,430	1,144	Assumes a reduction of 20% per year based on producers being incentivised to reduce packaging
Less: Council Tax support to Parishes	(39)	(39)	Retained at same amount.
	22,780	**22,943**	

Specific Funding

8.8 The Council also receives grants and contributions for specific purposes. Generally, these are built into service budgets and have therefore already been taken into account when determining spend forecasts, so cannot be used towards funding the base budget. These amounts can be uncertain, and reductions in the amount can result in spending pressures that would need to be met from the General Fund. Those grants that are ongoing (or have previously been ongoing) have been reviewed and the main risks and

opportunities are detailed in table 3 below. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and does not include any short-term grants or grants in their first year:

Table 3 – Forecasts in relation to grants and other contributions

Grant/ Contribution	Amount expected in 2026/27 (£000)	Risk/ Opportunity
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)	0	Expecting that the 2025/26 allocation will be the last year of UK SPF funding. It has mostly been used for one-off/ time limited projects as known that it would come to an end. It has also been used to fund Herts Futures to provide county-wide economic development. This is identified as an investment proposal for 2026/27 (amount TBC).
Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Grant	0	As detailed in paragraph 8.5, now within general funding. Paragraph 8.7 details how it is reflected in the budget. Allocated each year to meeting priorities. Does not create any spend pressures.
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant	0	Was included in general funding last year. A budget pressure was created last year to reflect the spend on an ongoing basis. Does not create any further spend pressures.
Biodiversity Net Gain Grant	0	This is now part of general funding having previously been a specific grant (£27k in 2025/26). There will be projects that would have been covered by this grant funding, so likely to be some budget pressures identified in the future, but none at this time.
Housing Benefit Administration Grant	253	In line with current year allocations, so no budget pressure created.

Business Rates and Council Tax Collection Funds

8.9 The Council is required to maintain a Collection Fund to account for the income received and costs of collection for Council Tax and Business Rates. Estimates of the net income are made at the start of the year and based on this money is transferred out of the Collection Fund to our General Fund and other precepting bodies. The Fund is required to break even over time and any surplus or deficit is transferred to our General Fund and to the other precepting bodies. For Council Tax an accumulated surplus of £251k can be transferred in to the General Fund and is included in table 1 above. For Business Rates, most of the deficits relate to reliefs introduced by Government. The Council receives funding for these which it holds in a specific reserve. This reserve is then released back to the General Fund as required. The available balances in this reserve are detailed in table 4 below.

Review of balances and reserves

8.10 In setting its budget, the Council needs to consider the level of its reserves. This determines the extent to which the current budget can be supported by the use of reserves or requires a budget to be set that includes an allowance for increasing reserves. In addition to the General Fund balance, the Council has specific reserves and provisions. Specific reserves are amounts that are set aside for a determined purpose. This purpose can arise from a choice made by the Council, or where it is felt that there is an obligation. Provisions are where there is a requirement on the Council to meet future expenditure, and a reasonable estimate can be made of the amount and timing. In determining the risks that may need to be met from the General Fund, it is important to know which risks will already be covered by amounts that are set aside as a specific reserve or provision.

8.11 The table below (table 4) shows the reasons why reserves are being held, as well as forecasts of future balances (where they can be estimated). Apart from the Business Rates Grants reserve, all the balances are held for a specific purpose. The result of this analysis is that there is more likely to be additional funding available, rather than any shortfalls that need to be addressed.

Table 4 – Specific Reserves

Name of Reserve	Purpose of Reserve	Balance at 1 April 2025	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2026	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2027
Children's Services Reserve	Had been used to help fund Active Communities projects in the district funded from grant income and/or external contributions. Remaining services are now funded from base budget.	1	0	0
Churchgate Development Reserve	Additional income above the treasury income that would have been generated from the capital used to purchase the shopping centre freehold. Intention was that those funds will be set aside in to support the planning and delivery of Churchgate regeneration project. The money will contribute towards necessary professional advice via consultants, until we get to the stage of setting a capital budget. Expected now to be used in the year that the income is received and may require additional revenue funding.	11	0	0
Climate Change Grant Reserve	Grants awarded to help combat the effect of climate change. Being used for the additional costs (above available establishment) of employing a Trainee Policy Officer working on Climate Strategy.	20	15	10
Council Tax Hardship Grant Reserve	Money received from Government to fund the costs of a localised Council Tax support scheme to help low-income and vulnerable households. Our Council Tax Reduction Scheme has not required use of this funding. There is no condition on the grant received that requires unspent funding to be returned but should be used for the intended purpose. To look at fair ways to use this but maybe over a few years. May be called upon to support what we have put in place to support the Marie Curie initiative to avoid dying in poverty/	269	269	TBC
Elections Admin Grant	Holds funding provided from government to support the delivery of the policies of the Elections Act 2022, which focused on the introduction of voter ID and improvements to accessibility for disabled voters. The reserve will be used to fund anticipated additional expenditure associated with the Act in administering future elections. May be added to by additional awards of New Burdens funding.	121	93	Unknown
Environmental Health Grants Reserve	Holds funding amounts received for specific initiatives relating to the Council's Environmental Health service, such as air quality and housing checks. The reserve is used to finance the undertaking of the relevant initiatives and to help manage staffing and workload pressures within the service. The increase is due to additional New Burdens funding for Renters Reform Act, which will not all be spent in this year.	15	24	Unknown
Growth Area Fund Reserve	Holds the revenue grant awarded. With the Local Plan now in place, this reserve is anticipated to be drawn down to fund relevant projects and activities.	24	24	Unknown
Homelessness Grants Reserve	To help prevent homelessness in the district. The grant is earmarked for different homelessness projects or resources. The Fair Funding review provided some greater certainty over homelessness funding, which should help with planning how grants are spent.	275	148	Unknown
Housing & Planning Delivery	Hold unspent Housing & Planning Delivery grant to fund Cabinet approved spending plans in subsequent years. The Authority has also made a commitment to the Local Development Framework and funds are held in this reserve for this purpose. This has also been previously added to by additional income from 20% increase in statutory planning fees.	832	784	595

Name of Reserve	Purpose of Reserve	Balance at 1 April 2025	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2026	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2027
Insurance Reserve	Used to finance potential claims for risks that are not covered by external policies together with higher excesses currently being borne by the Authority. It is good financial management practice to have an insurance reserve. The future balances will depend on the claims received and the level of relevant insurance.	34	Unknown	Unknown
Land Charges Reserve	Reserve originally established to help meet the potential cost should the financial risk of the repayment of personal search fees occur. In recent years some of this has been used for additional administration costs and software upgrades.	12	12	Unknown
Leased Assets Reserve	Changes to accounting rules in 2024, affected how the Council treated lease vehicles. They are now treated as assets. The saving on the revenue account from these arrangements will be transferred to this reserve and ultimately used to finance the capital costs of replacement vehicles.	63	55	Unknown
Leisure Management Maintenance Reserve	To help cover the cost of any future significant repair liabilities on the leisure facilities. The Leisure Contract requires a contribution from the Council for maintenance items over £15k, so therefore if funds are not available in the reserve then this would impact on the general fund. Use of the reserve depends on what arises and is therefore unknown.	33	33	Unknown
MHCLG Grants Reserve	Balance of unapplied Section 31 business rate relief grants and pooling gains. Used to fund NNDR Collection Fund deficit contributions and levy payments in future years. £3.5m will be released into the General Fund in 2026/27 as part of investing in the District. In 2026/27 the Council will receive the funding from previous Business Rate surpluses of £2.2m. This will be released in to General Fund (as part of investing in the District) in 2027/28. This is included in Appendix E. The remaining balances reflect the expected amounts needed for deficit contributions, levy payments and a risk allowance.	6,227	4,893	3,200
Museum Exhibits Reserve	Funds the purchase of museum exhibits and is funded from donations. Use of reserve will depend on donations and opportunities for acquisitions.	14	14	Unknown
Neighbourhood Plan Reserve	Funds received from Government to support neighbourhood planning have been transferred to reserve. The funding will be needed in future years as neighbourhood plans are developed and public examinations and public referendums are required.	121	115	Unknown
Paintings Conservation Reserve	Used to help restore paintings. This is funded through donations and publication income. To be used against a list of items that require conservation.	11	11	Unknown
Street Name Plates	To fund Street Name Plates as and when required.	16	16	Unknown
Syrian Refugee Project	The Council has agreed to house Syrian Refugees under the government's resettlement scheme. The scheme is fully funded by the government based on expected costs and by using Registered Provider housing, the costs incurred are less than the grants awarded. The Council will look to use some of this funding to support linked housing pressures (around £100k per year). To also try and identify other uses for the funding that are compliant with the grant conditions.	758	782	Unknown
Taxi Reserve	Any surplus from the taxi service will be transferred to the earmarked reserve where it can be used to offset any future deficit or to fund investment in the taxi service.	11	11	Unknown
Town Centre Maintenance	For the implementation of the Town Wide Reviews and ad hoc town centre maintenance.	93	101	Unknown
Traffic Regulation Orders	An audit was done to identify TRO work to be carried out in the district. Amounts will be drawn down as and when the work is done.	367	359	349
Waste Reserve	Alternative Financial Model (AFM, funding from HCC to encourage increases in recycling) were previously transferred to help mitigate any potential risk to the waste service and support future service developments. Has been being spent on various projects, including the waste contract procurement. Future spend may be required for options around a new waste depot.	836	836	Unknown

Name of Reserve	Purpose of Reserve	Balance at 1 April 2025	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2026	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2027
Waste Vehicles Reserve	As repayment of the finance lease principal embedded within the waste contract is funded from the Council's cash reserves, the saving on the revenue account is transferred to this reserve to fund the purchase of new vehicles. The Council capital funded new vehicles in 2025/26 in line with the new contract.	3,178	0	0
Welfare Reform Grants Reserve	Awarded to the Authority for different initiatives or changes relating to Housing & Council Tax benefit scheme, and more recently the Business Support and self-isolation grant schemes developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The balance in reserve will be used to develop the service and drawn down when the initiatives or changes are carried out, and therefore the exact timing of usage is unknown.	358	245	214

8.12 As at the 31 March 2025 there was a total of £732k held as long-term provisions. These are comprised of:

- Business Rates appeals - £704k - the Council's estimated share of outstanding business rates appeals. This has reduced significantly as fewer appeals were received than expected.
- Insurance - £28k - covers the uninsured aspect of outstanding insurance claims.

8.13 We do not want to be in a position where we are holding provisions in relation to Business Rates appeals, but it reflects the number of outstanding appeals which need to be dealt with by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). Until those appeals are resolved, the Council cannot use these amounts for another purpose, nor can they go back to businesses.

8.14 North Herts Council operates with a reserve balance for General Fund activities in order to provide a cushion against unexpected increases in costs, reductions in revenues and expenditure requirements. Guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) suggests that the revenue balances should be set at no less than 5% of net revenue expenditure, having taken account of the risks faced by the Authority in any particular year. As net expenditure is anticipated to be around £27.3 million, this means a minimum balance of about £1.37million. The Council's budget is also reliant on generating income to set a balanced budget, so an additional 3% of budgeted income (excluding Housing Benefit, grants and other contributions) is included in determining the minimum level. Income from fees, charges, interest and rentals is forecast to be around £14.3m and therefore an additional allowance of around £430k is added.

8.15 An assessment of the risks has been compiled for the coming year based on risks identified by each Service Director and cross-referenced to the risk register. The identified areas are where the financial impact is not wholly known, but an estimate can be made. The amount allocated is based on the forecast likelihood of occurrence. Where there is a high likelihood, 50% of the estimated financial impact is allowed for. For medium likelihood, it is 25%. For low likelihood, it is 0%. Table 5 summarises the risks, the forecast impact and the risk allowance to be made. A full list of these risks is shown in Appendix A.

Table 5- Budget Risks in 2026/27

Category	Number of Risks	Forecast Value of Impact (£000)	Risk Allowance (£000)
Low	15	2,184	0
Medium	13	1,178	295
High	14	2,775	1,387
Total	**42**	**6,137**	**1,682**

8.16 Combining the risk allowance for specific risks and unknown risks means that a General Fund balance of at least £3.5 million should be maintained. This is what is recommended by the s151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer).

Expenditure Forecasts

8.17 The starting point for forecasting net expenditure for future years is the previous year's budget, as set in February 2025. This is then adjusted (where necessary) through the Quarterly budget monitoring reports, which highlight both in-year and ongoing impacts. An additional budget review is carried out during December for any additional significant ongoing variances. As the Quarter 2 monitoring report were considered by Cabinet in January (and included information known about after the end of Quarter 2), no further ongoing variances have been identified.

8.18 Budget proposals were put forward for discussion at Group workshops in November. These have been subject to amendment as better estimates or information has become available. The budget report considered by Cabinet in January highlighted the improved pension fund position, which has allowed large decreases in the amounts the Council needs to contribute each year. This combined with the positive outcome from Fair Funding has allowed a balanced budget to be forecast without a significant savings requirement. This gives the Council the opportunity to invest some of the reserves in the district. The proposals in relation to this are detailed in paragraph 8.2.

8.19 The draft budget report considered by Cabinet in January forecast a medium-term (in 2028/29) small budget surplus of £88k. This is now forecast to be a surplus of £242k. One of the main reasons for the increase in the surplus is a reduction in estimated revenue costs of capital, and it is still expected that those costs will increase in the longer term.

Capital Programme and the revenue effects of capital

8.20 Due to capital spend in 2025/26, the Council now has a Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This means that we will incur greater revenue costs in relation to funding our capital programme, through a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charge. This is why the greater linkage between capital expenditure and revenue costs; means it is sensible to consider the two together.

8.21 The proposed capital programme is attached at Appendix C, with further details on new proposals in Appendix G. This mainly reflects the items considered by the budget workshops. It has been updated for the changes referenced in paragraph 8.2. These additional capital items are being funded from a revenue contribution. As with any capital expenditure that is immediately funded (e.g. funded from grants, capital receipts or s106 contributions), these items do not increase the Capital Financing Requirement and therefore do not add to the MRP charge.

8.22 When capital budgets are set (same also applies to new revenue budgets) then they can only be spent in the year that they are allocated. For new proposals the allocation is for the following year (i.e. 2026/27) or later. Two of the new proposals relate to new pool covers for the outdoor pools. It is requested (see recommendation 2.8) that Council approve this spend being brought forward into the current year (2025/26) as this then allows the covers to be replaced in advance of the outdoor pool season starting.

8.23 The Council incurs some interest costs in relation to historic borrowing for capital purposes. The small cost of this is reflected in budget estimates.

8.24 Capital spend can be funded from sources which include grants, capital receipts and revenue. It can also be funded from borrowing. This borrowing can be external (e.g. from government or banks) or internal (i.e. against available cash reserves). In line with the Prudential Code (and as set out in the Investment Strategy), the Council plan to borrow internally against revenue balances first, and only when those balances are insufficient would we borrow externally. Borrowing internally is generally cheaper as the interest cost is the lost interest that would have been earned, rather than the external borrowing cost. Where the Council has a need to borrow (either internally or externally, as measured by its Capital Financing Requirement) then it must make a charge to the revenue budget called Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

8.25 The MRP aims to spread the cost of capital that is funded from borrowing over the expected life of the asset. This means the taxpayers that are getting the benefit of the asset are paying a contribution towards its cost. MRP is charged from the year after an asset is purchased or completed (where it is constructed).

8.26 The changes to the revenue costs of capital are included in Appendix B.

Reliability of estimates

8.27 As part of the budget setting process, the Chief Finance Officer is required to comment on budget risks, the reliability of the estimates made and levels of Council reserves. This is known as a section 25 report. Note that this report is required alongside the budget every year, and is very different to a section 114 report. Although failure to take action on any risks highlighted in a section 25 could ultimately end in the need for a section 114 report. Therefore, Council should note the contents of the section 25 report which is attached at Appendix D.

Cumulative impact

8.28 The cumulative impact of all the estimates described in the previous sections is provided at Appendix E. This shows a forecast of funding and net expenditure for the next three years, including the impact on the General Fund balance. A three-year medium-term period is used as this covers the period of the multi-year settlement. On current Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timescales, it also covers the first year of the new Unitary Councils. This is deemed a more realistic planning horizon than the usual five-year period.

8.29 There are no additional unidentified savings that need to be delivered to achieve a medium-term balanced budget. There are risks (as identified in the section 25 report) to this, and there is a need for ongoing budget monitoring and re-forecasting. To enable investment in LGR work there is a budget shortfall in 2026/27 and 2027/28. This will require a use of reserves, but this is affordable with the level of reserves that the Council has. There is an ongoing assumption that the Council will continue to increase Council Tax at the maximum level permitted without the need for a referendum. Any increase in Council Tax below this level has an ongoing (and increasing) impact on this Council and any successor Unitary Council. For example, a Council tax freeze for just one year would affect funding by just over £410k in the first year, and that would increase to over £470k after 5 years. Future Government funding is linked to the assumption that Council's will increase Council Tax by the maximum allowed (without a referendum).

Council Tax Second Home Premium

8.30 At the meeting of Council on 29 February 2024, it was agreed that second home premiums would be introduced (alongside an increase in empty home premiums). The initial implementation date was April 2025 (giving the required minimum 12 months' notice) but has been delayed to April 2026 to ensure that all affected properties could be identified and receive full details of the change. That decision in February 2024 considered relevant factors, including the number of properties affected and providing sufficient notice to property owners. Following that decision, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published further guidance on the implementation of the premiums. The guidance for Second Homes has been reviewed, and all the factors that are relevant to North Herts had been considered. The charges for Second Homes will also be subject to our policy which reflects statutory and discretionary exceptions contained within the legislation and guidance. Due to the time since this decision was taken, Council are asked in recommendation 2.9 to note its implementation.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Cabinet has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council.

9.2 Cabinet's terms of reference at 5.7.39 include recommending to Council the annual budget, including the capital and revenue budgets and the level of council tax and the council tax base. They also recommend a treasury management strategy statement (Constitution 5.7.40). Council's terms of reference at 4.4.1 (b) and 4.3 state that the Full Council's responsibilities include approving or adopting the budget recommended by the Cabinet. Full Council can also approve the treasury management strategy statement (Constitution 4.4.1 (cc)).

9.3 Finance, Audit and Risk Committee's terms of reference at 10.1.5 (d) include assisting the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its Budget and Policy Framework process by in-depth analysis of policy issues pertaining to finance, audit and risk. They will also consider the Council's policy in relation to Treasury Management and make recommendations on the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, and Treasury Management Code of Practice (Constitution 10.1.5 (c)).

9.4 Members are reminded of the duty in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget and to maintain prudent general fund and reserve balances.

9.5 Local authorities are required by virtue of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to calculate as part of their overall budget what amounts are appropriate for contingencies and reserves. The Council must ensure sufficient flexibility to avoid going into deficit at any point during the financial year.

9.6 The provisions of section 25 Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the Chief Finance Officer (s.151 officer) as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 These are generally covered in the body of the report.

10.2 We need to differentiate between revenue and capital spend, as they generally have different sources of funding. Revenue relates to ongoing costs, and any physical item that is purchased would have an expected life of less than one year. Low value items are also treated as revenue spend. Capital relates to the purchase or improvement of assets, which have a useful life of more than one year. Capital funding (including borrowing) **cannot** be used for revenue expenditure. Revenue funding can be used for capital.

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 budget setting process includes a detailed assessment of financial risks, so these are covered in section 8, appendix A and appendix D.

11.3 The risks in relation to future funding have significantly reduced with the Fair Funding outcome and three-year settlement. There is an over-arching financial risk in the Council Delivery Plan, which will be reduced as part of the next update.

11.4 Capital investment is sometimes needed to mitigate against a risk to the Council. This is detailed to Members when a new investment comes forward. The risk implications of each individual scheme are considered in project plans as the schemes are progressed. The capital programme assumes a level of third party contributions and grants towards the cost of the schemes. There is a risk that not all the contributions are forthcoming.

12 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2 For any individual proposal comprising either £50k growth or efficiency, or affecting more than two wards, an equality analysis is required to be carried out; this has either taken place or will take place following agreement of efficiencies or growth.

12.3 The inclusion of banks on our counter-party list will consider the Country that they are in and an objective analysis of the approach to equalities in that Country. This will be in addition to any sovereign (Country) and institution credit rating.

13 SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Some of the budget proposals identified in Appendix B and Appendix C are put forward to have a positive influence on the Council's environmental impact (e.g. additional climate change resource, new pool covers). There will also be the continuation of previous proposals that will have a positive environmental impact (e.g. decarbonisation projects, use of HVO fuel). For other proposals there may be a low level of indirect negative implications (e.g. recruiting additional staff could require increased travel), and for these the impacts will be managed as much as possible. Overall, the Council still plans to deliver the commitments contained within its Climate Change Strategy. Some of the specific actions contained within the Climate Strategy will be dependent on opportunities and funding being available. They may not therefore be in this budget but could be incorporated in future years.

15 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Some of the investments relate to additional staffing resource. Depending on the level of additional work that these entail, these may have a positive impact on staffing capacity. Additional HR support will be needed to help recruit to these posts, but this can be absorbed within the existing team.

15.2 The funding set aside for LGR is intended to help manage the impact of the additional work it creates. However, as highlighted in the Council Delivery Plan, there is still expected to be a negative impact on overall resources and will increase pressure on staff.

16 APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – Financial Risks 2026/27

16.2 Appendix B – Revenue Budget Savings and Investments

16.3 Appendix C – Capital Programme 2026-36

16.4 Appendix D - Section 25 report

16.5 Appendix E - Budget Summary 2026/27– 2028/29

16.6 Appendix F- Budget consultation results

16.7 Appendix G- Additional detail on new capital proposals

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18 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s29462/Appendix%20A-%20Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy%202026-30.pdf

18.2 Decision on second home Council Tax premiums https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24362/Council%20Tax%20Premiums%20Empty%20Properties%20and%20Second%20Homes.pdf

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Financial Risks 2026/27

Risk	High/ Medium/ Low	Risk Value £	%	Total Risk Assessment £
Fines for breaches of the EU General Data Protection Regulation by the Council or by NHDC outsourced providers when handling and storing data originally collected by NHDC	L	500,000	0%	0
Ransomware attack results in the write-off of some IT hardware and infrastructure.	L	200,000	0%	0
Failure to meet projected Careline sales income as a result of the loss of a corporate client or fall in the number of private clients.	M	50,000	25%	12,500
Adverse possession of land/buildings (litigation costs). Protection of "Village Greens". Signs/fences need to be constructed to avoid residents claiming ownership rights.	L	35,000	0%	0
Increases in construction inflation increase the cost of property repairs and maintenance required.	H	20,000	50%	10,000
Reduction in income from Churchgate means that funds are not available for the external spend required to progress the regeneration project. Project spend is funded from excess income (above the cost of capital) being achieved since the purchase of the head leasehold interest.	M	100,000	25%	25,000
Leisure centre running cost increases due to exposure to movement in electricity prices and uncertainty of impact of decarbonisation measures e.g. air source heat pumps.	M	70,000	25%	17,500
Fuel costs increase for waste vehicles as a result of fluctuating prices for diesel and / or hydro-treated vegetable oil.	M	60,000	25%	15,000
Increase in the net cost of recycling services due to either or all of ; adverse changes in the market prices for commodities; a reduction in the volume of recyclates collected; a change in the material composition of the recyclates collected	H	500,000	50%	250,000
Reduction in funding from third party agency agreements for contracted grounds and/or tree maintenance works.	L	50,000	0%	0
Costs resulting from a localised flooding event that is associated with water courses within the responsibility of NHDC to maintain.	L	50,000	0%	0
Cost of felling and destroying trees as a result of pests and tree disease.	L	50,000	0%	0

Risk	High/ Medium/ Low	Risk Value £	%	Total Risk Assessment £
Income from Trade Refuse is adversely affected by economic downturn.	M	300,000	25%	75,000
District by-election	M	8,000	25%	2,000
Legal team resources - requirement due to recruitment/retention issues to use temp. staff or outsource work. Additional external expertise for assistance with the delivery of key Corporate projects or Governance issues	H	150,000	50%	75,000
Legal expertise related to employment cases	H	50,000	50%	25,000
The Council is required to meet the cost of any award from new or ongoing judicial reviews.	M	100,000	25%	25,000
Possible procurement challenge. Legal costs and costs of re-tendering if necessary.	L	100,000	0%	0
Costs incurred from an increased number of prosecutions pursued in court, for example due to persistent flytipping.	M	50,000	25%	12,500
Domestic Homicide Review – requirement for additional resources to respond	H	15,000	50%	7,500
Dangerous structures - where the Council is unable to recover either or both of; the costs incurred in making the structures safe because, for example, the owner of the property is not known or the land/building is unregistered; the costs involved in seeking to recover the expenditure incurred.	L	50,000	0%	0
Specialist advice required with regard to planning applications, both submitted to the local authority and to the planning inspectorate, e.g. town centre schemes, specialist areas such as solar farms, other energy infrastructure and speculative applications and where the Council cannot reasonably recover the costs (e.g. through a Planning Performance Agreement)	M	100,000	25%	25,000
Costs associated with a challenge to a forthcoming decision of the Council or one that has been made and any associated outcome costs, for example: legal challenges, tribunals, contracts, grant schemes, purchase notices, an appeal against a planning decision, judicial review or threat in advance of a planning decision, Secretary of State call in or holding direction etc..	H	1,000,000	50%	500,000
New duties and obligations associated with government policy, projects etc.. leads to requiring additional training or additional and/or specialist staff or consultancy support etc.. to deliver.	L	50,000	0%	0

Risk	High/ Medium/ Low	Risk Value £	%	Total Risk Assessment £
Theft of, or damage to, parking pay & display equipment	M	20,000	25%	5,000
Lack of resilience in delivering key statutory services when staff absence occurs (other than normal leave) e.g. medium/long term sickness, staff resignations, redeployment to other duties and projects etc, increases expenditure on agency staff and / or consultancy advice or other method to maintain service provision.	H	150,000	50%	75,000
Increase in net cost of measures to address homelessness/rough sleeping and meeting obligations/projects as a result of for example: absence of government funding / reduced government funding, national and local situations etc.	M	150,000	25%	37,500
Enforcement – costs in relation to enforcement for example: investigations to enable consideration of enforcement action, specialist legal or other advice, direct action / appeal processes, recovery of illegal earnings.	M	100,000	25%	25,000
Cost of unexpected Unauthorised Encampments including the cost of baliffs to remove the encampment and grounds maintenance to repair and clean-up damage/litter etc	H	30,000	50%	15,000
Disabled Adaptations: Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency fail to recover sufficient fees, based upon application throughput, resulting in additional payment requested by HCC to cover costs. Increased level of fee exempt Building Control applications for which the Council must reimburse the fee to Hertfordshire Building Control.	H	15,000	50%	7,500
Assumed vacancy saving within staffing payroll budgets does not materialise as a slim staffing structure, and / or an increase in the level of demand for services, reduces the capacity to hold posts vacant for any significant period of time.	L	470,000	0%	0
Breach of partial-exemption calculation for VAT	L	300,000	0%	0
Increases in construction inflation increase the cost of property repairs and maintenance required.	H	20,000	50%	10,000
Localisation of Business Rates – The council is directly exposed to a range of risks including; business rates levy, safety net.	L	0 in 2026/27 only	0%	
Member/Officer Indemnity Agreement is called upon	L	100,000	0%	0
Further payments are required under MMI scheme of arrangement	L	20,000	0%	0

Risk	High/ Medium/ Low	Risk Value £	%	Total Risk Assessment £
Reduced staffing capacity means that the delivery of Council projects is delayed and / or additional staffing resource must be hired externally at a cost premium to the Council.	H	250,000	50%	125,000
Relates to an environmental warranty that was provided to North Herts Homes on the transfer of the Housing stock.	L	209,000	0%	0
Increase to the annual external audit fee negotiated between the Council's External Auditor and Public Sector Audit Appointments exceeds the amount of additional related grant funding received from government.	H	50,000	50%	25,000
Contribution to housing benefit overpayments bad debt provision may need to increase as the migration of working age housing benefit clients to Universal Credit has made the recovery of outstanding overpayments debt from those clients more difficult to achieve.	M	70,000	25%	17,500
Loss of housing benefit subsidy where there is a lack of evidence to support housing benefit rates applied. The current Housing Benefit audit backlog has increased the risk value in this year.	H	500,000	50%	250,000
Cost of annual Housing Benefit Subsidy Certification is higher than budgeted due to additional audit fieldwork required.	H	25,000	50%	12,500
		6,137,000		**1,682,000**

REVENUE BUDGET SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS

New Revenue Efficiency Proposals and Savings Identified

Reference	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
E1	Customers	Careline service income. Estimated additional income associated with proposals (below) to increase spend on Careline marketing activity, with the appointment of an additional Marketing Officer and use of Google advertising. Efficiency estimate based on an average of 300 new clients per year.	(79)	(151)	(223)	(295)	(367)
E2	Place	Place Directorate staffing costs. Deletion of permanent PA to Director: Place post. Previous postholder retired in August 2025 and some responsibilities have transferred to the Regulatory directorate. A revenue investment bid for an additional full-time post to provide service-wide administrative support was approved by Council in setting the 2024/25 budget. This post is currently out to advert and will absorb the residual duties of the PA post.	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)
E3	Place	Planning applications income. Householder Planning Fee increases. Fees are presently set nationally and householder application fees were increased by Government in April 2025. Estimated permanent increase in income based upon activity in preceding years.	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
E4	Place	Planning Pre-applications income. Pre-application charges were reviewed in 2025. This, alongside a revision to the Council's pre-application protocol and changes to Government rules around resubmissions of applications, have led to an increase in income which is expected to be sustained in future years.	(60)	(60)	(60)	(60)	(60)
E7	Enterprise	Additional Estates income. Forecast that the capacity created by the additional Surveyor post below will generate annual income at least equal to the cost of the post. This will be kept under review and it is expected that income achieved will be greater.	(70)	(70)	(70)	(70)	(70)
E8	All	Annual contribution to the Pension Fund. The provisional results of the latest triennial revaluation of the Pension Fund, as at 31 March 2025, has indicated an improvement in the position of the Pension Fund since the previous revaluation. As such, the scheme's Actuary has recommended a minimum marginal contribution rate for the next three financial years from 2026/27 at 16.9% of pensionable pay. This compares to the current level of contribution for 2025/26 of both a marginal contribution rate of 19.5% and a lump sum contribution of £1.028million.	(1,410)	(1,410)	(1,410)	(1,410)	(1,410)
E9	Customers	District Wide Survey Expenditure. The successful adoption of the free Microsoft Forms web-based software tool to conduct online surveys has removed the need to separately procure a digital survey platform from which to run the biannual district wide survey.	-	(18)	-	(18)	-
Total Net Budget Reduction from new efficiency proposals			**(1,839)**	**(1,929)**	**(1,983)**	**(2,073)**	**(2,127)**

New Revenue Pressures and Investment Proposals

Ref No	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
R1	Chief Executive	Transfer to a specific earmarked reserve to support the process and impacts of Local Government Reorganisation.	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
R3	Customers	Careline Service marketing. Creation of a permanent Marketing Assistant post. Increase in marketing capacity will help to sustain current growth in customers and revenue (as indicated by efficiency proposal above) through enhanced marketing output. Investment value is an estimate as new role would be subject to job evaluation.	43	43	43	43	43
R4	Customers	Careline Service marketing. Permanent budget provision for spend on Google advertising. Families seeking support for vulnerable loved ones, and professionals looking to make referrals, increasingly begin their search online. At present, Careline's visibility on Google is limited, with larger national providers dominating results through higher advertising spend. Increase in budget will allow Careline to maintain consistent daily visibility on Google, strengthening Careline's ability to reach families at the exact point of need, while improving financial sustainability through higher customer acquisition. Estimated corresponding increase in revenue income is included in the efficiency above.	5	5	5	5	5
R5	Customers	Careline Service staffing costs. Increase in management capacity through the creation of two Team Leader positions. The new posts would replace existing Senior Administrative Support Officer roles. The investment will increase service resilience and reduce operational risk, while increasing strategic capacity.	6	6	6	6	6
R7	Customers	Careline Service staffing costs. Temporary additional administrative staffing support (65 weekly hours of bank staff) to manage spike in demand for installations while clients transition to new digital assistive technology equipment. This will involve more than 5,500 installer installation bookings over the next 18-24 months, with current administrative capacity unable to absorb the associated additional workload.	70	70	-	-	-

Reference	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
R8	Customers	Communications staffing. Budget is requested to retain the capacity that has been created by having a Communications Apprentice. This would be a two-year fixed-term full-time contract as a Communications Assistant from June 2026 until June 2028. Role is required with the increased workload associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), increased filming requests, our Newsflash redevelopment project and the Museum Storage Project.	29	36	8	-	-
R9	Customers	Process mapping tool. A process mapping tool is required for the Digital Business Analyst and wider team to use to map processes, and to enhance efficiencies across the Council. The tool will be used to create a library of process maps ahead of LGR. The tool will go towards identifying time saving across the organisation.	13	13	-	-	-
R10	Customers	IT Services staffing costs. Due to the significant increase in workload, rapid technology advancements, heightened importance of cybersecurity, and the transition from a virtual environment to laptop end user devices, it is essential to make the current temporary Developer role a permanent position within the IT department. This change will ensure continuity, maintain service quality, and support the department's ability to meet ongoing and future operational demands as well as effective preparedness for the transition to a new unitary authority.	61	61	61	61	61
R11	Enterprise	Recruitment of an additional Estates Surveyor on a fixed term two year contract. There remains a backlog of case work (rent reviews and lease renewals) which require actioning and will deliver back rent and increased revenue going forwards. The proposed role will assist with this and free up existing team members to progress a number of capital projects which require increased resource to progress (including Riverside Walk, Charnwood House, Thomas Bellamy House, former WC building at Royston and bringing forward development sites). This is in addition to overseeing the day to day management of Churchgate Shopping Centre to ensure it is appropriately managed and delivering net income pending the planned re-development, and supporting the Local Government Reorganisation estates workstream across the Hertfordshire authorities.	67	67	-	-	-
R12	Enterprise	Churchgate Project Manager Role. The extension of the dedicated Project Manager to focus on the preparation and delivery of the next phases of the Churchgate Shopping Centre regeneration beyond that approved by Full Council in July 2025.	130	-	-	-	-
R13	Enterprise	Shared Economic Development Officer role. This role is a shared agreement with East Herts to deliver economic development activity across the two Districts. In the next financial year this role will be focusing on both the monitoring of continuing Shared Prosperity Fund projects and delivering elements of the newly adopted Economic Development Strategy such as business partnerships and growth, which is critical to establishing economic development in North Herts.	30	-	-	-	-
R14	Enterprise	Enterprise Team staffing expenditure. The new Economic Development Strategy was approved at Cabinet in September 2025. The strategy sets out the need for a much greater economic footprint within North Herts - more than the current 0.5 ED Officer currently delivers. Cabinet recognised the importance of having a strong Economic Development presence across the Council, and are committed to delivering a large portfolio of projects that will address the following: 1) business and enterprise; 2) people and skills; 3) innovation and economic change; 4) site and premises and 5) investment, position and promotion. Therefore, the Enterprise Team (supported by the Executive Member) will be proposing a team restructure in the coming months to deliver the strategy and its action plan. The team have worked with a consultant to map out the 'most effective' way to structure the team - utilising the current staffing budget (which has been significantly underspent for the past three years) and requesting some financial growth (50K) ongoing. This will ensure the team are experienced and strong, and are set up correctly to deliver on both the Enterprise and Economic Development Strategies. The full restructure proposal will be taken to SLT, Executive Members, Cabinet and Full Council.	50	50	50	50	50
R15	Environment	Creation of fixed term Climate Project Apprentice post to support the delivery of Sustainability Strategy actions and outcomes related to the Climate Emergency. There are 29 actions in the strategy related to reducing emissions for both the council's own operations and the wider district. The officer would help with delivery of these actions, which could have wider benefits for residents around health related to warmer homes, reduced air pollution related to transition to cleaner vehicles / machinery, and potentially saved costs from energy efficiency measures in council buildings. Investment value is an estimate with the new role subject to job evaluation. Being funded from the apprentice budget for the first 18 months.	-	16	-	-	-
R16	Environment	Tree maintenance expenditure. Increase to cemetery tree budget to ensure adequate provision for essential tree works. In recent years the budget has either been exceeded or important works deferred.	12	12	12	12	12
R17	Environment	Planting borders at Bancroft, Hitchin and Priory Memorial Gardens, Royston. This will enhance biodiversity, seasonal interest visitor enjoyment, and a sense of care, while directly supporting our Green Space Management Strategy for town parks. We will look to use these borders for plants that are sustainable, interesting, colourful, wildlife friendly, drought tolerant and low maintenance. They will be a great example to our residents of sustainable planting and will boost the presentation of the park hugely.	57	-	-	-	-
R18	Environment	Renovations and repairs of paths at Walsworth Common, as outlined in the Greenspace Action Plan for the site.	10	-	-	-	-

Reference	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
R19	Environment	Ash Dieback removal. An increase in the incidence of Ash Die back has occurred over the last few years in the District. In particular, Weston Hills and Norton Common are both sites where a programmed schedule of works over the next 3 years has been planned. Working with Hertfordshire County Council / Countryside Management Service in following the Greenspace Action Plan.	15	15	15	-	-
R20	Environment	Permanent budget provision for the Community Wellbeing Officer at 32 hours a week. This post has been funded for the past two years through external grants to develop and deliver community wellbeing interventions across the district. From April 2026, the external grants are reduced and are sufficient to fund the service delivery but not the coordinating officer role, without which the services will not be delivered. The post will ensure the delivery of; social isolation projects & falls prevention, creative wellbeing for mental health and food poverty interventions district wide. They will also maintain the Community Wellbeing website, social channels and monthly newsletter. The Community Wellbeing team also have funding from Herts County Council to deliver the North Herts Healthy Hub (alongside none other district and borough hubs) with a funded Healthy Hub Coordinator. This post needs a wellbeing colleague to support safe working practices when working with vulnerable individuals, as well as holiday and other absence cover. This post, alongside the Community Wellbeing Team Leader, will ensure continuity of cover for the Healthy Hub. They will also support the Community Wellbeing Team Leader to identify and apply for sources of external funding to tackle health inequalities in North Herts.	42	42	42	42	42
R21	Governance	Recruitment to a fixed-term Policy and Strategy Officer post until March 2028. The team, currently comprising a Team Leader, officer, and apprentice (contract ending early 2026), supports the Policy & Strategy Service Action Plan and various Council and service priorities across multiple directorates. This new role will expand the team's capacity to deliver good governance, transparent decision-making, equality and environmental impact assessments, and administration of Assets of Community Value, while also absorbing increased workload from Local Government Reorganisation. Additionally, the officer will be responsible for leading external grants identification, application, monitoring, and impact reporting in support of Council objectives. The post is career graded, with the investment value representing the maximum cost of the appointment.	46	46	-	-	-
R22	Governance	Increase of hours for the Safeguarding Team Leader from 30 hours to 37 hours per week. The increase in hours is crucial given the growing complexity of safeguarding demands across the Council. The expanded role will provide ongoing support and expertise to officers and councillors, ensuring that safeguarding is fully embedded into Council culture and practice. Key responsibilities will now include delivering bespoke inhouse safeguarding training, hence reducing reliance on external trainers and reducing pressure on corporate training budgets, while ensuring staff are confident and prepared to address safeguarding concerns. The Team Leader must also ensure compliance with new legislation, county-wide protocols, and recommendations from County Boards and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs).	12	12	12	12	12
R23	Place	Planning Control staffing. Permanent budget to increase two part-time posts, including the Team Leader role, to full-time positions to meet both flexible working requests from employees and capacity requirements in this area of the service.	17	17	17	17	17
R24	Place	Creation of a new Conservation Assistant permanent post within Planning Control. North Herts has more than 1,700 Listed Buildings and 400 Conservation Areas. There are presently only two professional Conservation Officers to provide advice on relevant schemes & enforcement activities affecting these historic assets. This post would support professional officers with research required for individual schemes or applications, provide additional capacity to support project work (e.g. undesignated heritage assets, new listings, listed buildings at risk, reviews of conservation area boundaries etc.) and resilience / future-proofing of the service by potentially providing a gateway to the professional posts. The investment value is estimated with the new role subject to job evaluation.	49	49	49	49	49
R25	Place	Planning Technical Support staffing. Improvement of service resilience with the enhancement of the existing Technical Support Officer (TSO) post and the recruitment to a new, dedicated permanent TSO post for planning appeals. Increasing capacity at the start of the process and providing dedicated TSO support for planning appeals should enable quicker processing of applications, facilitating the timely consideration of applications in line with Government targets.	36	36	36	36	36
R26	Place	Planning Services management. Additional budget is requested to finance additional management capacity and alleviate pressure on service managers through the uplifting of one existing post to a supervisory role. The proposed investment budget will be used in conjunction with the previous ongoing investment of £9k approved by Council for 2025/26 to review management and team arrangements across the Planning Service.	13	13	13	13	13
R29	Place	Planning IT software expenditure. Software to assist with the statutory assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and reporting requirements of the Biodiversity Duty. Consideration to be given to compatibility with potential IT setups leading into and following Local Government Reorganisation. Anticipated introduction from January 2026 with first years' costs funded by residual Government grant for BNG activities.	3	10	10	10	10
R30	Place	Digital Traffic Regulation Orders. Budget to support new statutory requirement for existing and new Traffic Regulation Orders to be produced and made available digitally. Hertfordshire County Council are currently leading an exercise to investigate IT-based solutions and funding on behalf of all authorities. Further information on potential costs anticipated October / November and will be added once known.	8	8	8	-	-

Reference	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
R32	Regulatory	Expenditure on Community Safety projects and initiatives. Increase ongoing Community Safety budget from £10k to £20k. The budget for the current year will be fully spent, while there are so many more initiatives we can deliver to reduce crime and tackle fly-tipping.	10	10	10	10	10
R33	Environment	Radburn Way Habitat Bank. Improve management of the land and provide a habitat bank with improved public access as appropriate. The site to be a potential source of income as a BNG habitat bank. Long term management likely by CMS.	15	-	-	-	-
R34	Environment	Annual software costs for new burial management system.	21	21	21	21	21
R35	Customers	Extend the trial of Co-pilot (AI) to around 50 users (currently 20 licenses). By increasing to 50 users we get the benefit of additional analytics. The licenses will be targeted based on what has been learnt from the initial trial.	8	-	-	-	-
R36	Customers	Business rates expenditure for Council properties. Increase in business rates liability following the 2026 revaluation. At this stage the investment value represents the maximum additional cost to the Council, before the impact of any mitigating eligible relief or business rates appeals (if applicable).	130	130	130	130	130
R37	Regulatory	Expenditure on homelessness and rough sleeping prevention. Funded from government grant as announced in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. Amount matches grant funding.	835	870	901	919	937
R38	Enterprise	Additional marketing support for Town Hall and Museum.	34	34	13	13	13
R39	Enterprise	Churchgate project consultancy costs. To progress to being able to set a capital budget.	100	-	-	-	-
R40	Enterprise	Outreach work in relation to museum storage project. Grant bid has been submitted for this initiative, investment value is in lieu of grant income funding this expenditure.	82	43	-	-	-
R41	Enterprise	Riverside walk in Hitchin, additional decoartive features.	10	-	-	-	-
R42	Enterprise	Support for Herts Futures (26/27 only) to provide county-wide Econmic Development activities.	TBC	-	-	-	-
R43	Environment	Feasibility work on remodelling of Grange Recreation Ground in Letchworth.	150	-	-	-	-
R44	Environment	To reinvigorate the planting and overall presentation of Broadway Gardens. Some existing planting has begun to decline and areas now require attention to ensure they remain visually appealing, resilient, and fit for the future. The funding will support the introduction of sustain-able and drought tolerant planting that enhances biodiversity while providing vibrant colour and seasonal interest throughout the year.	-	18	-	-	-
R45	Governance	Additional ongoing funding for Community Groups with MOU arrangements.	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
R46	Governance	Additional one-off support for Community Forums (26/27 only).	30	-	-	-	-
R47	Chief Executive	Other strategic priorities: initial funding for early work and feasibility reviews for other existing and emerging priorities, including Great Ashby allotments.	20	-	-	-	-
R48	Chief Executive	Direct revenue financing of three capital projects: - Provision of learner pool in Royston (total £4.750million) - Digital and other signage for car parks in Hitchin (£0.2million) - Water play feature at North Herts Leisure Centre (£0.2million)	2,420	2,730	-	-	-
R49	Chief Executive	Update to estimated interest income return from treasury investments, based on proposed Capital Programme and Treasury Investment Strategy 2026-2036.	(198)	(58)	22	37	131

Reference	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
R50	Chief Executive	Revenue cost of internal borrowing required to finance the capital programme. Update to existing budget estimates based on the financing of the proposed capital programme for 2026-2036. Value only reflects estimated Minimum Revenue Provision, as additional impact of lost interest income is included in the interest income projection.	(393)	(294)	(208)	272	442

Total Net Budget Increase from new pressures and investment proposals	**5,098**	**5,131**	**1,276**	**1,758**	**2,040**

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								Funding				
Project	Service Directorate	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 Funding £	2029/30 Funding £	2030/31 Funding £	2031/32 - 2035/36 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set-aside receipts/ Borrowing
An alternative set of 25 machines that are outside of the Windows Environment for Disaster Recovery	Customers	0	0	15,000	0	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	45,000
Baldock Road Recreation Ground Letchworth	Environment	0	30,000	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Bancroft Lighting	Environment	0	45,000	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	45,000
Broadway Gardens Resurfacing	Environment	250,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	250,000
CCTV at DCO & Hitchin Town Hall	Customers	11,800	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	11,800
CCTV Control Room Upgrade	Resources	0	0	0	0	45,000	0	0	0	0	0	45,000
Charnwood House	Enterprise	300,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	300,000
Council property improvements following condition surveys	Enterprise	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	250,000	0	0	0	0	500,000
Digital and other signage for car parks in Hitchin, to promote better use of car parks	Growth	200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000	0
DR Hardware Refresh Inc UPS Battery Pk (unit 3)	Customers	0	0	16,000	0	0	32,000	0	0	0	0	48,000
Hitchin Lairage car park - cosmetic coating to four stairwells and replacement windows and doors	Enterprise	69,100	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	69,100
Hitchin Swim Centre: Changing Village Refurbishment	Environment	0	225,000	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	225,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Pool Cover Replacement	Environment	58,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Pool Seating Replacement	Environment	73,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	73,000
Hitchin Town Hall Kitchen Enhancement	Enterprise	25,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	25,000
Howard Park Letchworth Path Resurfacing	Environment	10,000	10,000	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Infrastructure Hardware	Customers	18,000	18,000	190,000	0		0	0	0	0	0	226,000
Installation of trial on-street charging (GAF)	Growth	50,000	0	0	0		0	0	50,000	0	0	0
Ivel Springs Footpaths	Environment	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
King George V Muga Hitchin	Environment	0	55,000	0	0		0	0	0	55,000	0	0
Laptops - Refresh Programme	Customers	49,000	35,000	40,000	349,000	47,000	234,000	0	0	0	0	754,000
Members Laptops Refresh Programme	Customers	30,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Microsoft Enterprise Software Assurance	Customers	0	0	747,000	0		1,494,000	0	0	0	0	2,241,000
Museum Storage Facility	Enterprise	2,600,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	2,600,000
New Burials Management System	Environment	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,000
NHLC Pool Cover Replacement	Environment	58,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	58,000
NHLC Water Play Feature	Environment	200,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	200,000	0
Northern Transfer Station	Environment	0	0	3,000,000	3,000,000		0	0	0	0	0	6,000,000
Off Street Car Parks resurfacing and enhancement	Enterprise	43,000	77,000	70,000	60,000		0	0	0	0	0	250,000
Oughtonhead Common Signage and Interpretation	Environment	10,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Parking Charging, Payments & Management	Growth	235,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	235,000
PC's - Refresh Programme	Customers	8,000	5,000	8,000	5,000	8,000	0	0	0	0	0	34,000
Playground Renovation District Wide	Environment	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	900,000	0	0	0	0	1,800,000
Private Sector Grants	Regulatory	260,600	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	300,000	0	0	0	0	800,600
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Phase 2	Environment	2,001,000	423,000	0	0		0	0	1,172,000	0	0	1,252,000
Ransoms Rec Footpaths, Gates and Railing	Environment	20,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Refuse and Recycling Bins	Environment	150,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	450,000	0	0	0	0	960,000
Resurface Lairage Car Park	Enterprise	346,300	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	346,300
Royston Leisure Centre Learner Pool	Environment	750,000	4,002,000	0	0		0	0	0	0	4,752,000	0
Security - Firewalls	Customers	18,000	0	18,000	0	18,000	36,000	0	0	0	0	90,000

								Funding				
Project	Service Directorate	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 Funding £	2029/30 Funding £	2030/31 Funding £	2031/32 - 2035/36 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set-aside receipts/ Borrowing
Swinburne Recration Ground Hitchin	Environment	30,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Tablets - Android Devices	Customers	10,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	0	0	0	0	30,000
Walsworth Common Pavilion - contribution to scheme	Environment	300,000	0	0	0		0	250,000	0	37,000	0	13,000
Warm Homes	Environment	478,100	478,100	0	0		0	0	956,200	0	0	0
Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicles	Environment	0	0	0	0	0	5,500,000	0	0	0	0	5,500,000
WiFi Upgrade	Customers	40,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Wilbury Hills Cemetery Improvements	Environment	120,000	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	120,000
		9,131,900	**5,787,100**	**4,488,000**	**3,798,000**	**502,000**	**9,230,000**	**250,000**	**2,178,200**	**92,000**	**5,152,000**	**25,264,800**

Appendix D- Chief Finance Officer's section 25 report

As part of this report, under section 25 of the Local Government Act, the Council's Chief Finance Officer is required to comment on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves.

Future funding

Previously, future funding has been the biggest uncertainty facing the Council. That seems to have been resolved by now having a three-year settlement, although noting that the allocations in years 2 and 3 are not guaranteed. It is even more positive that the Fair Funding formula provides the Council with more funding that had been estimated might be the case.

The funding estimates treat Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) monies as part of base funding. This is a reasonable position to take as the money is to fund the collection and disposal of packaging. These costs are already part of the Council's base budget and saw a significant increase between the previous and current contract, even with a competitive tendering process and decisions to help mitigate the increases in costs. However, this funding is not guaranteed, and the aim is that it will reduce packaging volumes. The current assumption is that the funding will reduce by 20% each year. This will need to be kept under review, as collection costs are linked to number of properties rather than volumes.

The Council was already incurring the costs associated with Simpler Recycling., e.g. separate weekly food waste collection. The New Burdens funding for this, now that it is a mandated, has been incorporated into the total pot that is allocated via Fair Funding.

As part of funding reforms, the Business Rates system has been reset. The Council has been used to being above the baseline funding level, which meant that there was minimal risk in relation to Business Rate income, and the opportunity for some gains. The reset will create some risk, depending on the level of Business Rate income that is collected compared to the baseline. As there is a 0% safety net in 2026/27 there is no risk next year. But the risk increases as the system moves back towards a 7.5% safety net. The risk could be around £240k.

Impact of inflation

Each year, budgets are increased to reflect forecasts of contract inflation and pay inflation. Contract inflation is usually linked to specific indicators and published economic forecasts are used to predict what these will be.

Overall inflation is remaining above the Bank of England target of 2%. Forecasts from the Monetary Policy Committee are that it will remain above target until 2027. This may put further pressure on contract budgets as the medium-term inflation assumptions may prove to be insufficient.

As part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy update, pay inflation forecasts were increased to 3% for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Even with this increase, this may not be sufficient, particularly for 2026/27. Economic data is showing that pay inflation in other parts of the public sector are higher than these levels. The outcome will be subject to the ongoing pay negotiations between the Joint Negotiating Committee employers and the Unions.

There is still some uncertainty on the waste and street cleansing contract for 2025/26 (and therefore future years) as waiting for confirmation of the effect of the pay award to be applied from April 2025.

Capital budgets are set over a 10-year time horizon, and therefore estimates are susceptible to inflation between when they are added to the programme and when the expenditure is ultimately incurred. For more discretionary capital spend, this can have an impact on viability when estimates are updated. The estimates will need to be reviewed as we get closer to the need and opportunity to deliver affected projects.

Some of the Grounds Maintenance forecasts do not get adjusted (e.g. the play area refurbishment allocations), although the extent of some of these can be adjusted to fit the budget available.

There are some revenue budgets that do not get inflated each year, i.e. budgets that do not relate to pay or where known contract inflation can be applied. These are generally low value budgets that pay for ad-hoc items, but it is acknowledged that the spending power of those budgets is being eroded. In the quarterly budget monitoring process, we have not seen any pattern of overspend against these budgets. Although staff training is one of these budget types, we have generally found creative ways to get the most out of these budgets (e.g. use of our apprentice levy, use of other organisations unused levy). Although this will be kept under review, as it vital that the Council values staff training. Some of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) reserve budget is also intended to be used for staff training.

The inflation that is applied to fees and charges budgets is done in accordance with the assumptions agreed in the MTFS. In some areas this acts as a clear plan for how the level of fees and charges will be adjusted, although there is still uncertainty over the level of demand for those services. For car parking charges there is an additional level of risk over the total income that will be received. The MTFS assumption acts as a budget forecasting estimate only, and there is a subsequent report to Cabinet to consider the actual changes to parking tariffs. That report will need to consider the wider implications and justification for any tariff changes. Whilst the percentage increase is moderate (2%), the total impact equates to around £50k. Garden waste charging increases come with some risk due to the overall income generated, although the increase agreed for 2026/27 is a relatively small percentage increase. The risk is partly mitigated by a reduction in the amounts paid to Veolia for collection costs. Also other Councils have higher charges, and have not reported a drop-off in demand.

Demand pressures and grant funding

Housing is the main service area where we see demand pressures, which usually result in an increase in the need to use hotel and B&B placements. The excess cost of these placements is currently being covered through specific housing grants, and there has been an increase in specific grants. There is also an increase in the availability of accommodation for those that require greater support. But it remains an area to keep a focus on through quarterly monitoring, including the impact of subsidy loss (where the Housing Benefit that can be reclaimed from the Department of Work and Pensions is less than what has been paid to the provider).

As detailed in the main budget report, the risks in relation to other specific grant funding have also been considered. These risks are declining as there are now fewer specific grants.

Spend estimates

The reduction in pension costs is a significant contributing factor towards the improved financial position of the Council. The actuary has based this on the usual long-term funding time horizon. It also reflects the high levels of past-service contributions the Council has made and improved

investment performance over a sustained period. However, it is worth noting that there is some risk that the next triennial valuation could see an increase in contribution rates. However that would not apply until 2029/30.

Capital spend, capital funding and debt

Capital spend comes with a revenue cost, which ranges from lost treasury income through to external interest charges and Minimum Revenue Provision. There is therefore a need to ensure that capital spend forecasts continue to be realistic, both in terms of cost forecasts for items that are progressing, as well as being prepared to remove those items that are no longer deliverable.

The impact of inflation on capital spend forecasts is considered above. The need to fund capital spend from borrowing comes with an increased revenue cost, compared with being able to fund it from capital receipts. It is therefore necessary to consider the assumptions made in relation to generating new capital receipts. These have been updated as part of this update. They are more focused on smaller disposals (rather than larger site disposals) which helps to reduce the risk.

As it currently stands, the Council has a small amount of historic external debt that it is not economic to repay. In the short-term there is the option to borrow internally against revenue reserves and delay any further external borrowing as long as possible. This is both a more prudent approach, and likely to reduce longer term costs as it is likely that the cost of borrowing will reduce in the medium term (although not to the exceptionally low levels seen from 2008-2022).

Savings requirement

Based on current forecasts there are no unidentified savings required. There was also not a savings target in place when the proposals were put forward. The proposals are based on genuine estimates of what is achievable and have been supported by the Finance team. It is noted that the income from increased Careline marketing is projected to grow by a large amount (£367k by 2030/31). However this is based on a relatively modest growth in customer numbers each year, and reflects the structure that is already in place. Achievement against the targets will be kept under review to see if the forecasts need amending.

Council Reserves and the CIPFA Resilience Index

At the start of 2026/27 we expect our General Fund reserves to be £14.4m and we also have £6.5m of previous Business Rate gains and grants held in reserve that will be transferred in to the General Fund. As detailed in the budget report this is substantially above the recommended Minimum General Fund reserve levels. This gap helps to provide further comfort against the risks and concerns that are highlighted in this section 25 report.

The Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) produce a Resilience Index for Councils. CIPFA recommend that Chief Finance Officers consider the results from the index in compiling their section 25 reports.

The index is published on the CIPFA website (https://www.cipfa.org/services/financial-resilience-index).

The Resilience Index includes some important measures in relation to level of reserves and how quickly they are being used. However, as it is based on data from the previous financial year-end, it obviously is not current data. Any key messages that are highlighted by the Resilience Index, would usually have been being flagged by the Council's Chief Finance Officer long before they show up on the Resilience Index. However, the Index can help as a wake-up call to reiterate the need for action.

The Index is based on comparisons, both with others and over time. This can help with highlighting with where the Council may be different to other Councils and not just rely on the fact that it is difficult for everyone.

When compared with our nearest neighbours the two measures which are showing as higher risk are: level of reserves and fees and charges to service expenditure ratio. In both cases they are only slightly below the mid-point risk level when compared with the Council's (statistical) Nearest Neighbours. When compared with all non-metropolitan districts, only the fees and charges indicator is above average in terms of risk.

The reserves indicator shows that the Council has usable reserves that are 170% of net expenditure. Whilst this lower than a high proportion of the comparators, it is not too low in general terms. Indeed, as stated in the main report, there is scope to use some of our usable reserves for investment in the district.

The Council's fees and charges as a proportion of service revenue expenditure are just under 23%. That is against a Nearest Neighbour comparator range of around 15% to 55%. CIPFA take the view that having a higher proportion of costs covered by fees and charges, makes a Council less dependent on other funding sources. There was an exception to this during the Covid pandemic where fees and charges were badly affected, and increased risk. Although some losses were covered through Government compensation. Having lower fees and charges may also give scope to increase them, and a way to generate more income.

Conclusion

Overall, I consider that the budget is proposed based on robust estimates. I have highlighted where I feel that there are elements of higher risk, but I am satisfied that there are mechanisms in place to be able to respond to these if required.

Appendix E - Budget Summary 2026/27 to 2028/29

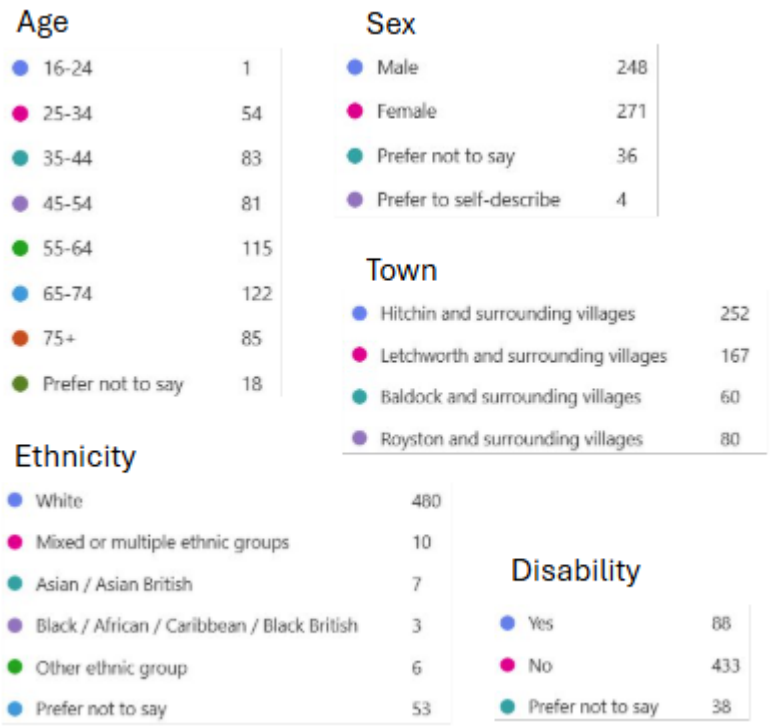
All amounts £000	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Net expenditure brought forward	21,063	27,323	27,337
Planned delivery of savings previously identified	-734	-212	-357
Planned Investments previously approved	1,638	53	-86
Other previously identified adjustments in future years	-19	17	-19
Savings and Cost Reductions reported in year	-761	0	28
Investments and Pressures reported in year	936	0	0
New savings proposals	-1,839	-90	-54
New investment proposals	5,167	22	-3,841
Net pay increments	98	100	50
Pay inflation	597	600	400
Pension contribution inflation	0	0	0
Forecast Contractual Inflation	832	488	325
Forecast Income Inflation	-439	-180	-123
2025/26 Budgets Carried Forward	783	-783	0
Further savings tbc	0	0	0
Total Net Expenditure	**27,323**	**27,337**	**23,661**
Council Tax Income	-14,211	-14,709	-15,225
Council Tax Collection Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	-251	0	0
Business Rates	-3,027	-3,088	-3,150
General Funding	-3,701	-3,592	-3,463
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant	-871	-906	-937
Extended Producer Responsibility funding	-1,787	-1,430	-1,144
Council Tax Support to Parishes	39	39	39
Total Funding	**-23,809**	**-23,686**	**-23,880**
Net funding position (use of reserves)	**3,514**	**3,651**	**-219**

General Fund b/f	15,643	15,643	14,228
MHCLG Grants Transfer	-3,514	-2,237	0
General Fund c/f	15,643	14,228	14,448

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Appendix A: Results from budget consultation survey

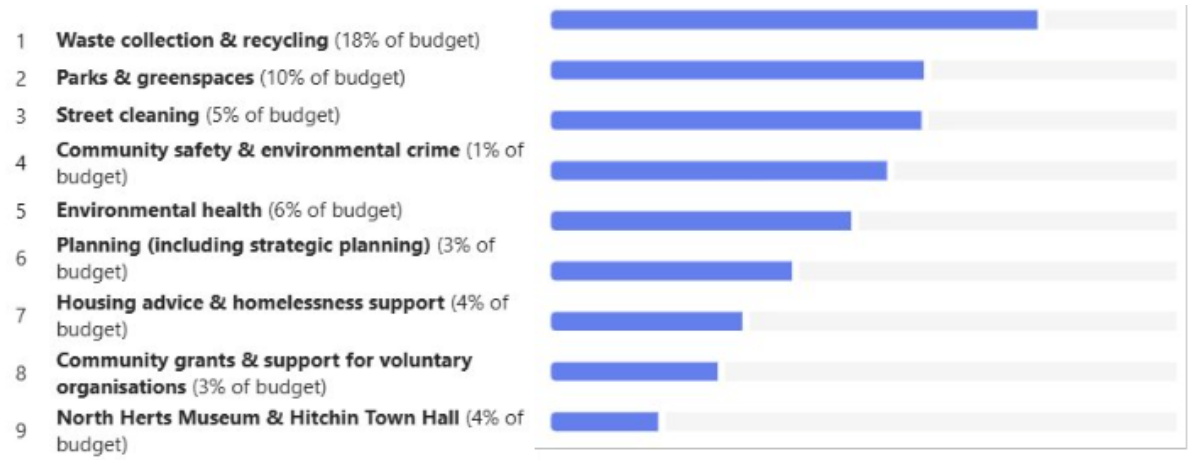
Who responded?



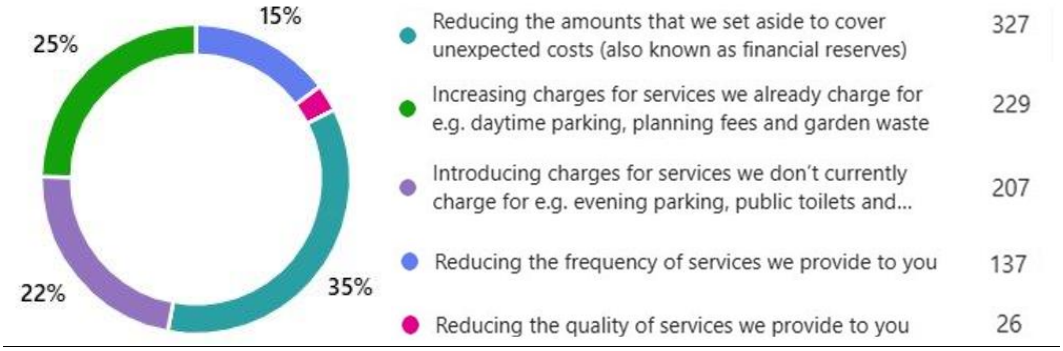
Which services you are aware of and which services you and your household have used in the past year?



Rank the services we support you with in terms of their importance to you. 1 = most important and 9 = least important



Which approach would you take to balance our budget?



Responsible Directorate	Description of Proposal	Total Project Investment 2026/27 onwards	Total Anticipated Funding from Grants or Other Contributions	Proposed Investment in 2026/27	Proposed Investment in 2027/28	Proposed Investment in 2028/29	Proposed Investment in 2029/30	Proposed Investment in 2030/31	Proposed Investment 2031 - 2036	Anticipated Impact of Proposal
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
NEW CAPITAL PROPOSALS										
Environment	**Wilbury Hills cemetery improvements**	**120**	**0**	**120**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	To complete the infrastructure to the far end of the site to link up the existing road and to incorporate further footpaths to segregate new areas with drop down kerbs and incorporated drainage from the road etc. Also, to add ring style soak aways, piping all hard landscaping and soft landscaping to reinstate following the works.
Environment	**Ivel Springs footpaths**	**25**	**0**	**25**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	Pathworks and interpretation as outlined in the Greenspace Action Plan for the site.
Environment	**New Burials Management System**	**55**	**0**	**55**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	Burials management system for NHC burials to provide interactive digital mapping, enables online booking, plot sales, financial management and simplifes task and accurate recording as used by Stevenage, Welwyn etc
Environment	**HSC: Pool Cover Replacement**	**58**	**0**	**58**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	The pool cover at Hitchin Lido is over 20 years old, delapidated, and requires replacement to ensure it remains efficient at reducing energy consumption and costs.
Environment	**HSC: Pool Hall Seating Replacement**	**73**	**0**	**73**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	The existing tiered seating system, located on poolside, requires full replacement. The existing structure is in poor condition with heavy corrosion and beyond repair.
Environment	**NHLC: Pool Cover Replacement**	**58**	**0**	**58**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	The pool cover at Letchworth Lido is over 20 years old, delapidated, and requires replacement to ensure it remains efficient at reducing energy consumption and costs.
Environment	**Royston Leisure Cenrtre Learner Pool**	**4752**	**0**	**750**	**4002**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	Build a teaching pool for Royston leisure centre to meet demand for swimming lessons and enable more people to be physically active, also providing opportunities for quieter sessions for children and adults with SEND, neurodivergence and/or other long-term health conditions. The pool will be built to net zero carbon standards, in line with our sustainability priority.
Environment	**North Herts Leisure Centre Interactive water play**	**200**	**0**	**200**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	Transform the pool into a highly interactive water play area for children of all ages and ability groups. Provide a range of water play features aimed at increasing water confidence and encouraging children and families to participate in physical activity.
Enterprise	**Car Park interactive/digital Signage**	**200**	**0**	**200**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	To introduce interactive/digital parking signage in Hitchin, which should help visitors know which car parks are full and which have capacity. This has been identified as part of the Churchgate Regeneration project

Responsible Directorate	Description of Proposal	Total Project Investment 2026/27 onwards	Total Anticipated Funding from Grants or Other Contributions	Proposed Investment in 2026/27	Proposed Investment in 2027/28	Proposed Investment in 2028/29	Proposed Investment in 2029/30	Proposed Investment in 2030/31	Proposed Investment 2031 - 2036	Anticipated Impact of Proposal
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
CHANGES TO EXISTING PROPOSALS (PROPOSALS AGREED IN PREVIOUS YEARS)										
Environment	**Refuse and Recycling bins**	**960**	**0**	**150**	**90**	**90**	**90**	**90**	**450**	Wheeled bins are considered to have on average a 10-12 year life. The bin replacement cycle for the purple residual waste bins means we are likely to see increased bin purchases over the coming years. UPDATE: Increase the 2026/27 allocation from £90k to £150k. Additional £20k in 2026/27 to support the implementation of Simpler Recycling for commercial customers. This will include providing smaller bins for the different mix of materials and new bin lid colours. Also an extra £40k to reflect ongoing demand for new domestic waste bins. This might be required in further years, but to wait and assess the 2026/27 impact before adding on an ongoing basis. Some of the increase reflects price inflation of new bin costs.
Enterprise	**Off Street Car Parks resurfacing and enhancement**	**250**	**0**	**43**	**77**	**70**	**60**	**0**	**0**	Condition surveys have identified the need for a proactive programme of resurfacing for the council's off street car parking. Resurfacing, re-lining and enhancing the lighting enables the car parks to be used safely, reducing insurance claims for trips and falls, and allows the continued enforcement of the relevant traffic regulation orders. A. Planned maintenance programme should enable reduction in reactive repairs. B. No programme of repairs will require additional revenue maintenance funds for responsive repairs, and loss of income as Traffic regulation orders will become unenforceable. UPDATE CBP 2026/27: Additional budget of £130k requested to extend scheme of works to 2029/30. £70k requested in 2028/29 for overlay and resurfacing works at The Warren car park in Royston and £60k requested in 2029/30 for the resurfacing of St Faiths Church Car Park on Woolgrove Road in Hitchin.
Environment	**HSC: Change Village Refurbishment**	**225**	**0**	**0**	**225**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	The Change village was last refurbished in 2014. To ensure customer satisfaction is maintained, refurbishment is programmed to take place on a 10-15 year cycle. UPDATE CBP 2026/27: Earmarked investment in 2026/27 deferred to 2027/28. To review during 2026/27 to see if it can be pushed back another year, and/or whether it could be a partial refurbishment.
		6,976	**-**	**1,732**	**4,394**	**160**	**150**	**90**	**450**	

CABINET
17 February 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026/27

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: RESOURCES

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILTY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Investment Strategy provides the following key information:

- Recommendations on the Prudential and other Treasury indicators that will be monitored and reported on during the year (2026/27)
- As the Council has identified a need to borrow for capital purposes, a borrowing and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.
- The scope of treasury investments where the Council will invest any surplus cash.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet recommends to Council that they:

2.1. Approve the adoption of the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A).

2.2. That Council approve the adoption of the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in paragraphs 8.10 to 8.16).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from Government, and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security and liquidity of its investments. After this the return (or yield) is then considered, which provides an income source for the Council. In general, greater returns can be achieved by taking on greater risk.

4.2 The Investment Strategy makes recommendations to reflect the Council Motion passed in December in relation to responsible investment. As the motion was not proscriptive, there could be other ways of reflecting it.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 There is ongoing dialogue with the Authority's Treasury advisors (MUFG). Their specific advice was sought on ways the Council could reflect the Council motion on responsible investment.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision, as the decision is made by Full Council.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 The Investment Strategy for 2025/26 was approved by Council in February 2025. A mid year review of the Treasury Strategy is provided to Council in January 2026. There have been no changes made to the Strategy during the course of 2025/26.

7.2 In December 2025, Council passed a motion in relation to responsible investment. It mainly related to pension fund investments. The relevant parts to this Investment Strategy are that:

- Concern about investments that benefit from shareholdings or funds that have underlying shareholdings, in companies that profit from conflict through the manufacturing of weaponry, and military technology and are alleged to be used in atrocities internationally today.
- Concern about investments in corporate entities which according to an International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling and subsequent United Nations opinion, are associated with human rights violations and international crimes.
- Residents expect councils to invest public funds in ways that are ethical, responsible and transparent.
- Withdrawal of any links - through investments - to supporting war, weapons manufacturing, military technology, or any other business activities that breach international law.
- At the next scheduled review of North Hertfordshire District Council's own Investment Strategy; the review specifically considers how to align with the above investment principles.'

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The proposed Investment Strategy is attached at Appendix A. Council is asked to approve this strategy, which covers borrowing and investment forecasts and limits, including prudential indicators. The Strategy includes details of the Council's capital programme and forecast revenue position. These will be subject to approval by Council in a separate report.

8.2 The format of the Investment Strategy is described in the introduction section (pages 2 and 3). The following sections highlight the significant considerations in relation to this version of the Strategy.

8.5 Table 10 (on page 15) provides a forecast of the capital receipts that the Council will generate over the next few years. Capital receipts are received from the sale of surplus assets that the Council owns. The preceding paragraph provides a description of the factors that will affect the timing and amount of expected capital receipts. Any significant changes would require a change to the Investment Strategy and would also affect the revenue budget in the medium-term.

8.6 As detailed in table 11 (on page 15) the Council has a need to borrow to fund the capital programme. As at the end of 2025/26 the borrowing requirement is forecast to be £18.76m. Estimates are that a further £3.17m of borrowing will be required in 2026/27, an additional £1.08m in 2027/28, and a further £17.02m between 2028-2036. As detailed on page 16, the Council can consider whether to borrow internally or externally. However as detailed on page 17, the Prudential Code requires Councils to initially consider internal borrowing as it is considered to be cheaper and lower risk. Therefore, it is assumed that the Council will continue to borrow internally. Internal borrowing means that we use our cash reserves, rather than getting money in by borrowing from third parties. This is different to using our reserves to directly fund capital. The implication of internal borrowing (versus external borrowing) is that the cost is in lost interest income, rather than incurring external interest charges. This should be lower cost and lower risk.

8.7 Where the Council has a need to borrow then it incurs a revenue charge known as a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). On page 23 of the Strategy it is detailed that the Council will charge MRP on an equal instalment basis. This reflects that the majority of capital spend is related to service provision and therefore the assets are expected to provide consistent benefits over their life. MRP is calculated by dividing capital spend (on those schemes that the Council needs to fund from a borrowing requirement) and dividing that by the expected useful life of the asset. There is not a MRP charge until the year after the spend is incurred.

8.8 Table 17 on page 27 of the Strategy details where the Council can invest its surplus cash. This sets limits to ensure appropriate diversification. There have been changes to this (from last year) to reflect the Council motion on responsible investment as detailed in paragraph 7.2. There have also been changes for other reasons, as detailed in the table below. The table does not include changes where the same percentage (as last year) has been applied to the overall average investment balance to determine the appropriate limits.

Investment Type	Change	Reason for change
Banks	Remove reference to part-nationalised banks	The UK Government has now sold off its bank investments
Banks	To only invest in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investments	To reflect the Council motion, as there is uncertainty in how banks will use their general investment balances.
Local Authorities	To increase the individual counter-party limit to £5m	An increasing number of Local Authorities are only interested in investments at £5m. With the limit on bank investments, the Council should make sure that it can maximise the availability of other investments.
Unrated Building Societies	Combined the categories of assets over £300m and over £1bn.	With all limits subject to a £1m minimum, they both ended up having the same limits.
Money Market Funds	To only invest in funds with an ESG policy	To reflect the Council motion and seeking to invest in funds that have a responsible approach to investment.
Property Fund	Removed from the strategy	These are a long term investment and looking to limit long-term investments due to LGR timelines.
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Fund	Removed from the strategy	Not been used so no value in having in the strategy
Multi-asset funds	Removed from the strategy	Not been used so no value in having in the strategy. Also could include investments that went against the Council motion.
Investments of more than 2 years	Removed from the strategy, previously allowed if specifically approved by the Chief Finance Officer.	These are a long term investment and looking to limit long-term investments due to LGR timelines

8.9 The Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires that a report be submitted to Full Council setting out four clauses which should be formally passed in order to approve adoption of the code. The four clauses are detailed below, including how they are met by the Council. As recommended by CIPFA, where appropriate these are included within the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.

8.10 Clause 1 relates to creating and maintaining a Policy and practices as a cornerstone for effective treasury management.

8.11 Full Council are asked to approve the adoption of the following Treasury Management Policy Statement, which is the same as in previous years:

- This organisation defines its treasury management activities as: "The management of the authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks".

- This organisation regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation.
- This organisation acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving best value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

8.12 The Council has adopted Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) which set out how the Council will carry out, manage and control the achievement of the policy above in practice. The TMPs follow the recommendations contained within the Code, subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect the particular circumstances of the Council. Such amendments are minor and do not result in any material deviation from the Code's key principles. The TMPs are operationally focused and therefore the themes covered are detailed below, rather than providing the full document. Where relevant the detail is already covered in the Investment Strategy (e.g. approved instruments):

- TMP1- Risk Management (Changed to include Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations)
- TMP2- Performance Measurement
- TMP3- Decision making and analysis
- TMP4- Approved instruments, methods and techniques
- TMP5- Organisation, clarity and segregation of responsibilities, and dealing arrangements
- TMP6- Reporting requirements and management information arrangements
- TMP7- Budgeting accounting and audit arrangements
- TMP8- Cash and cash-flow management
- TMP9- Money laundering
- TMP10- Staff training and qualifications
- TMP11- Use of external service providers
- TMP12- Corporate Governance

8.13 Clause 2 relates to the reporting on treasury activities. These are set out in the Investment Strategy on page 3.

8.14 Clause 3 relates to the delegation of responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its treasury management policies. The Council delegates responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices to Cabinet (Constitution 5.7.9) and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Service Director: Resources (Constitution 14.6.12 (b) (iv) and Financial Regulations section 13) who will act in accordance with the Council's policy statement and treasury management practices and the CIPFA Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

8.15 Clause 4 relates to the scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies. The Council nominates the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and policies (Constitution 10.1.5 (c)).

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Section 4, Paragraph 4.4.1 (cc) of the Constitution provides that Full Council will approve the treasury management strategy statement.

9.2 Part 5.7.40 confirms that the treasury management strategy (as may be incorporated in an integrated investment strategy); will be recommended by Cabinet to Full Council

9.3 The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee will consider the Council's policy in relation to Treasury Management and make recommendations on the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, and Treasury Management Code of Practice (Constitution 10.1.5 (c)).

9.4 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that: "every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs." That officer is the Director- Resources.

9.5 The proposed Prudential Indicators contained within the Investment Strategy comply with the Local Government Act 2003. The Investment Strategy has been developed to comply with the statutory guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the CIPFA Prudential Code.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The financial implications of capital spend and treasury investment returns are included in the budget report (also on the agenda of this meeting).

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 Investment risks in relation to treasury management are covered in this report and the Investment Strategy. The TMPs (see 8.13) and Financial Regulations provide controls to manage other risks

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 changes made to the investment strategy in relation to the Council motion on responsible investment may also have a positive impact in promoting equalities.

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 changes made to the investment strategy in relation to the Council motion on responsible investment may also promote investments which have a positive environmental impact.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A- Investment Strategy

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None

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Appendix F

Investment Strategy
(Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy)

Part 1- Overview

Introduction

The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, providing adequate security and liquidity initially before considering investment returns.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending plans. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) define treasury management as:

> *"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."*

This strategy provides an integrated view of capital spend and income, alongside treasury management. This is because long-term Treasury management is inextricably linked to the funding of the capital programme. There is also a requirement to apply treasury management principles to any capital spend that is not related to service provision.

The format of this strategy is as follows:

Part 2- Capital Spend

- A summary of the Council's current capital assets. For those assets that are not held for service provision, an assessment against the principles of Security, Liquidity and Yield.
- Forecasts of the capital and revenue spend required to maintain those assets.
- Planned spend on new capital assets, with the additional assessment of risk, security, liquidity and yield for those assets that are not being acquired for service provision.
- This part of the strategy therefore gives a complete picture of forecast capital spend.

Part 3- Capital balances, receipts and the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

- Forecasts of expected receipts from the sale of surplus capital assets.
- Comparing capital spend forecasts with capital reserve balances and forecast future receipts gives the Capital Financing Requirement, which is the Council's need to borrow.

Part 4- Borrowing Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

- This leads to the setting of a borrowing strategy which sets out how to borrow, when to borrow and for how long.
- Where the Council has a borrowing requirement, then it is required to set a policy on Minimum Revenue Provision.

Part 5- Investment Strategy

- This is then all combined to determine the levels of cash that the Council will have available for investment. This leads to an investment strategy that determines where to invest any balances, including limits on types of investments.

Part 6- Overall Risk considerations

- To consider the cumulative risks that the Council faces that arise from the totality of this strategy.

Part 7- Glossary of terms

- To explain the various terms used in this strategy.

The strategy sets a number of prudential and treasury indicators. A prudential indicator is one which is required by statutory guidance, whereas a treasury indicator is one that is set locally to provide information on performance.

Reporting requirements

Full Council will receive and approve three reports during the year:

- The Integrated Capital and Treasury strategy (this report)
- A mid-year review
- An annual report on the performance of the treasury management function, on the effects of the decisions taken and the transactions executed in the past year, and on any circumstances of non-compliance with the organisation's treasury management strategy.

Each of these reports will be reviewed by the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee and Cabinet. The FAR Committee and Cabinet will also receive reports on the position as at the end of the first (to end of June) and third (to end of December) quarters. The FAR Committee undertakes an oversight role.

These reports will provide relevant updates on performance against the prudential and treasury indicators.

Basis of Estimates

The estimates contained within this strategy are based on the best information that can reasonably be obtained. For forecasts of spend on assets (revenue maintenance, capital maintenance and capital acquisitions) this is based on a combination of previous experience, indicative quotes, condition surveys and professional advice. The estimates of capital receipts are provided by the Council's Estates Team and are prudent estimates based on expected use, type of sale, market conditions and (where applicable) the status of negotiations to date.

The Council has experienced cost increases on capital projects in the past. These have generally arisen from delays in the start of the project and subsequent inflation, rather than incorrect estimates. Budget Holders have been asked to be as realistic as they can be about the timing of projects and ensure that forecast costs are aligned to the expected timing. There will also be

external factors that affect estimates, particularly current economic conditions and the impact of inflation. For capital projects, there is some flexibility to the extent to which they can overspend without further approval (ranging from 5% to 20% dependant on value) and this is considered in setting this overall strategy and in the quarterly monitoring.

Treasury Management Policy and Treasury Management Practices

In line with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Council sets the following treasury management policy:

1. This Council defines its treasury management activities as: The management of the organisation's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.
2. The Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
3. The Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

The Council also has treasury management practices (TMPs) which set out how the Council will carry out, manage and control the achievement of the policy above in practice. These TMPs follow the recommendations contained within the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (published by CIPFA), subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect the particular circumstances of the Council. Such amendments are minor and do not result in any material deviation from the Code's key principles. The TMPs cover the following areas:

- TMP1- Risk Management
- TMP2- Performance Measurement
- TMP3- Decision making and analysis
- TMP4- Approved instruments, methods and techniques
- TMP5- Organisation, clarity and segregation of responsibilities, and dealing arrangements
- TMP6- Reporting requirements and management information arrangements
- TMP7- Budgeting accounting and audit arrangements
- TMP8- Cash and cash-flow management
- TMP9- Money laundering
- TMP10- Staff training and qualifications
- TMP11- Use of external service providers
- TMP12- Corporate Governance

Treasury Consultant

The Council undertook a tender to provide treasury management advice for a three year period. The contract was awarded to Link Asset Services to provide treasury management advice for the three year period April 2023 –March 2026 with the option to extend for a further two years. Link have since been taken over by MUFG Pension and Market Services ("MUFG"). It is recognised that the responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the Council at all times and the Council will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon MUFG. However, there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented.

The performance of the treasury consultant is assessed through regular meetings and the justifications for the advice provided.

Skills and culture

It is important that decision makers are given the information that they need to make those decisions. Given that treasury and risk management can be a complex area; this should be accompanied by the availability of appropriate training. To address the availability of information, all Council, Cabinet and Committee reports include sections on both financial and risk implications. Where a decision is more financial in nature then these considerations will be detailed throughout the report. Table 1 details the key groups in relation to decision making and the training that has been made available. This strategy is required to disclose the steps that have been taken to provide training, and it is up to individual members of those groups to ensure that they take advantage of the opportunities offered.

Table 1

Group	Reason for training	Training that has been made available
Full Council (All Councillors)	Required to formally adopt this Strategy. Required to approve any capital purchases over £2.5m.	Training that introduces Local Authority funding and accounting was provided in June 2024 (following the all-out elections in May 2024). All Councillors were invited to attend, with a particular focus on new Members, Cabinet members and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee members.
Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee	To review the Council's policies on Treasury, Capital and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management.	There is a standing item for future agenda items, which includes training ideas. This allows the targeting of specific training. This has enabled a number of training sessions to take place in advance of the regular FAR meetings. Where relevant (particularly early in the civic year) the presenter of reports provides a more detailed introduction to ensure the key information and context is fully understood. Regular reporting to the Committee on Capital, Risk and Treasury provides the opportunity to ask questions.
Chief Finance Officer and Finance Team	Responsibility for the financial management of the Council (under s151 of Local Government Act, 1972), including capital and treasury management. Provide advice to Budget Holders in respect of financial management. Responsible for reviewing and amending the financial implications sections of reports.	Ongoing Continuing Professional Development for all qualified members of the finance team, including focused training for specific areas of responsibility.
Leadership Team (LT)	Individual Service Directors will be responsible for putting forward proposals. Proposals will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team prior to taking through the Committee process. Members of SMT are likely to be involved in negotiating commercial deals.	Regular updates on the Council's funding and finances, including significant changes in regulations. Ongoing advice and support from the finance team.

Part 2- Capital Spend

Current Capital Assets

As at 31st March 2025, a summary of the capital assets owned by the Council is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2

Asset Type	Asset	Reason for ownership	Value (£000)
Investment Properties	Various	Retained to generate income	31,313
Surplus Land and buildings	Various	Held for future sale or development	7,904
Offices and Storage	Offices	Staff offices, customer service centre and democratic facilities	3,711
Offices and Storage	Unit 3 / Depots	Off-site storage, back-up IT and emergency planning	573
Leisure Facilities	Hitchin Swim Centre / Archers	Service use	8,727
Leisure Facilities	Letchworth Outdoor Pool	Service use	3,205
Leisure Facilities	North Herts Leisure Centre	Service use	13,388
Leisure Facilities	Royston Leisure Centre	Service use	8,350
Leisure Facilities	Pavilions / Bandstands	Service use	2,015
Leisure Facilities	Recreation Grounds / Play Areas / Outdoor Gym Equipment / Gardens/Allotments	Service use	5,876
Leisure Facilities	Decarbonisation Project	Service Use	6,458
Community Centres and Halls	Various	Community facilities, generally operated by third parties	12,260
Markets	Hitchin Market	To provide a market	149
Museums and Arts	Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum	District-wide museum and community facility	6,844
Museums and Arts	Letchworth and Hitchin museums, Burymead store	Museum storage	1,681
Cemeteries	Various	Service use	1,545
Community Safety	Various CCTV cameras	Service use	183
IT	Various computer equipment and software	To enable the delivery of other services	177
Parking	Various car parks	Service use	11,198
Waste Collection	Bins	Service use	361
Public Conveniences	Various	Subject to leases/ management arrangements	544
Other	Various	Various	787
Total			**127,249**

Table 3 shows the capital expenditure that has been incurred during the year, or is forecast to be spent in the remainder of the year:

Table 3

Asset Type	Asset	Reason for purchase/ expenditure	Value (£000)
CCTV	Various	CCTV Replacement	41
Cemeteries	Wilbury Hills	Path Enhancement	30
Council Buildings	Various	Decarbonisation Project	852
Grants	Various	Private Sector Housing Grants	26
Grants	Various	S106 Grants (REFCUS)	333
Grants	Various	Various	56
Grants	Various	Warmer Homes Scheme	319
Hitchin Town Hall	Hitchin Town Hall	Air conditioning	100
IT	Various computer equipment and software	To maintain IT service and provision of equipment	1,624
Leisure Facilities	Hitchin Swim Centre / Fitness	Enhancements	300
Leisure Facilities	North Herts Leisure Centre	Enhancements	390
Leisure Facilities	Recreation Grounds / Play Areas / Gardens / Allotments	Refurbishment of play areas.	1,293
Leisure Facilities	Royston Leisure Centre	Enhancements	1,014
Leisure Facilities	Various	Decarbonisation Project	9,829
Leisure Facilities	Various	Remote testing equipment - Emergency Lights and Water Temperature Monitoring	13
Museums	Museums	Museum and Commercial Storage	1,528
Parking	Off Street	Match Funding for Electric Vehicle Charging	100
Parking	Off Street	Upgrade pay and display machines and resurfacing	225
REFCUS	Cycle Strategy / Transport Plans / Green Infrastructure	Cycle Strategy / Transport Plans / Green Infrastructure	713
Various	Various	Capital maintenance of Council buildings/land	446
Waste	Bins	Service Use	1,260
Waste	Bury Mead Road Transfer Facility	Service Use	130
Waste	Vehicle Purchases	Service Use	5,270
Total			**25,892**

Capitalisation Policy:

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, for rental to others, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classed as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Expenditure, above the de-minimis level, on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) or is below the de-minimis level, is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

The Authority's de-minimis level is £20,000 for property and £10,000 for vehicles, plant and equipment. Lower limits may be applied where it relates to grant funding

The Council will provide grants that fund works on assets that it does not own. This expenditure can be treated as capital expenditure, even though it does not create an asset that the Council would then own or recognise. This is known as revenue expenditure allowed to be funded by capital under statute (or REFCUS).

For the assets that the Council owns (or plans to purchase in the year) that are **not** for service delivery, the security, liquidity and yield in relation to these have been considered. For these assets it is up to the Council to determine how it balances these, and this will depend on its risk appetite. This analysis is shown in Table 4. In most cases, assets are grouped together by type. Assets that are held for income generation purposes are revalued annually. This valuation is on a fair value basis. Unless detailed below the asset is considered to provide sufficient security.

Definitions:

Security- In traditional treasury terms, this is the possibility that other parties fail to pay amounts due to the Authority. For commercial investments it relates to how susceptible they are to changes in value and market conditions.

Liquidity- This is the possibility that the Authority may not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments. In general it relates to how easy it is to sell an asset.

Yield- The income return on an investment or asset, such as the interest received or rental income from holding a particular investment or asset.

Table 4

Asset (or type of asset)	Security	Liquidity	Yield
Ground leases- mainly of commercial premises in Royston, Letchworth and Hitchin (£25.7m by value)	Generally subject to long leases where the land has been built on. The building would become owned by the Council if there was a default on the lease agreement. Therefore, high security.	It is possible that the Council could try and sell to the leaseholder. Otherwise low liquidity in common with commercial premises.	The assets have been owned for a number of years. Valuations are based on the yield generated.
Letchworth Town Hall (value £0.8m)	25 year lease (from 2012) where the tenant has provided significant investment.	Very low liquidity as would require someone to be interested in this type of building. Listed so would limit redevelopment.	Valuations are based on the yield generated.
Beverley Close Store, Royston (value £0.2m)	15 year lease from 2017	Low liquidity in common with commercial premises.	Valuations are based on the yield generated. Previously used as a Council store and a decision was made to retain for rental income.
Residential housing (Harkness Court) (value £0.6m)	The property is on a long lease to Broadwater Hundred. The property would ultimately revert to the Council if the company did not pay the rent due. The demand for housing is high (shown by how quickly the properties were let) and so the security is considered to be high.	High demand should mean the property has high liquidity if the Council and company agreed to sell the property. The liquidity is lowered as currently leased to the company.	Generating a yield from the lease to Broadwater Hundred.
Other assets valued at less than £0.1m (£0.5m in total)	Not fully assessed	Not fully assessed	Not fully assessed

Definitions:

Fair Value: The price that would be received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

For each of the assets in table 4, there is also a requirement to carry out a fair value assessment that demonstrates that the underlying assets provide security for the capital invested. There is a further requirement to carry out an assessment of the risk of loss. This assessment generally relates to investments in commercial activities so includes items that may be less relevant to the majority of our assets. In total the risk assessment covers:

- Assessment of the market that competing in, including nature and level of competition, market and customer needs including how these will evolve over time, barriers to entry and exit, and ongoing investment required.

- Use of external advisers and how the quality of these is monitored
- Whether credit ratings are used and how these are monitored
- Any other sources of information that are used

The assessments described above are shown in table 5. In most cases the assets are grouped together by type.

Table 5

Asset (or type of asset)	Fair value assessment	Assessment of the risk of loss
Ground leases- mainly of commercial premises in Royston, Letchworth and Hitchin (£25.7m by value)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	Subject to competition from other sites within the same industrial areas and other locations. Difficult (uneconomic) for current lessees to exit due to lease terms and investment in the site. Any maintenance is the responsibility of the leaseholder.
Letchworth Town Hall (value £0.8m)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	The building has some unique features in relation to its prominence and location. However, overall, there currently is an over-supply of office accommodation in Letchworth. Difficult (uneconomic) for current lessees to exit due to lease terms and investment in the building. Any maintenance during the lease term is the responsibility of the leaseholder.
Beverley Close Store, Royston (value £0.2m)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	Subject to competition from other sites within the same industrial areas and other locations. Currently let to a company with significant property interest nearby. Might be difficult to re-let.
Residential housing (Harkness Court) (value £0.6m)	Valued on market value	Due to national (and local) housing shortage, there is high demand. The risk of loss is low, and will generally only be due to short-term voids.
Other assets valued at less than £0.1m (£0.5m in total)	Not fully assessed	Not fully assessed

Under the 'Use of Capital Receipts Direction', the Council can treat certain specified revenue spend as capital. Further details of the direction are shown below. Where this direction is used, the spend is included in the capital forecasts in tables 3, 6 and 7.

Use of Capital Receipts Direction:

The Capital Receipts direction was last used to fund the decommissioning of pavilions and play areas in 2018/19. There are no plans to make further use of the Direction in the period 2026/27– 2030/31. This is because the Council has high revenue reserves and low available capital receipts.

For all assets the future capital cost of maintaining those assets has been considered, and gives the following future capital spend requirements (table 6). For some of the elements of some items (marked with an asterisk) the spend could be included in table 7 but is included here to make the tables shorter.

Table 6

Asset	Description of future capital expenditure	Forecast Capital Expenditure (£000)					
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32 to 2035/36
Existing Capital Programme-schemes 2026/27 onwards							
Various	Capital maintenance based on condition surveys	50	50	50	50	50	250
CCTV	CCTV	12	0	0	0	0	0
Computer Software & Equipment	To maintain IT services	173	62	1,023	358	77	1,800
Hitchin Swim Centre*	Refurbishment of the Changing Village	0	225	0	0	0	0
North Herts Museum & Community Facility	Town Hall Kitchen Enhancement	25	0	0	0	0	0
Various	Private sector housing grants (REFCUS)	261	60	60	60	60	300
Various Off-Street Car Parks	Resurfacing / Enhancements	458	77	70	60	0	0
Various Parks and Playgrounds	Enhancements	250	320	180	180	180	900
Waste and Recycling	Bin replacements	150	90	90	90	90	450
New Capital Programme							
Cemeteries	Wilbury Hills cemetery improvements	120	0	0	0	0	0
Royston Leisure Centre	Learner Pool	750	4,002	0	0	0	0
Parking	Digital and other signage for car parks in Hitchin, to promote better use of car parks	200	0	0	0	0	0
North Herts Leisure Centre	Water play feature	200	0	0	0	0	0
Various Parks and Playgrounds	Ivel Springs footpaths	25	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**2,674**	**4,886**	**1,473**	**798**	**457**	**3,700**

The totals for 2031/32 to 2035/36 are estimates only and could be subject change. These should be treated as early indications only, and formal approval of these amounts is not required.

The revenue maintenance of these assets has also been considered. The Council has chosen to allocate a central budget of £323k in 26/27 and £273k in subsequent years for this purpose.

<u>New Capital Assets</u>

There are also proposals for the following capital expenditure on new capital assets and expenditure on existing assets that is not related to capital maintenance (table 7).

Table 7

Asset	Reason for capital expenditure	Forecast Capital Expenditure (£000)					
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32 to 2035/36
Existing Capital Programme-schemes 2026/27 onwards							
CCTV Control Room	Upgrade Control Room	0	0	0	0	45	0
Charnwood House	Refurbish and update the building for community use.	300	0	0	0	0	0
Computer Software & Equipment	An alternative set of 25 machines that are outside of the Windows Environment for Disaster Recovery	0	0	15	0	0	30
NH Museum and Community Facility	Museum Storage Solution / Replace Chiller	2,600	0	0	0	0	0
Public Sector Decarbonisation Project phase 2	Public Sector Decarbonisation Project	2,001	423	0	0	0	0
Various off-street parking	Charging, Payments & Management System	235	0	0	0	0	0
Various on-street parking	Installation of trial on-street charging	50	0	0	0	0	0
Various Parks and Playgrounds	Broadway Gardens Resurfacing	250	0	0	0	0	0
Walsworth Common Pavilion	New pavilion	300	0	0	0	0	0
Warm Homes		478	478	0	0	0	0
Waste and Recycling	Vehicles and Northern Transfer Station	0	0	3,000	3,000	0	5,500
New Capital Programme							
Cemeteries	New Burials Management System	55	0	0	0	0	0
Hitchin Swim Centre	Pool Hall Seating Replacement / Pool Cover	131	0	0	0	0	0
NH Lesiure Centre	Pool Cover	58	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**6,458**	**901**	**3,015**	**3,000**	**45**	**5,530**

Below is an estimate of the total capital expenditure to be incurred in the years 2026/27 to 2030/31. This is based on tables 6 and 7. This is a Prudential Indicator and the Council is required to set a target for it and monitor against it during the year.

Prudential Indicator 1: Estimate of total capital expenditure to be incurred in years 2025/26 to 2029/30

Year	£m
2026/27	9.132
2027/28	5.787
2028/29	4.488
2029/30	3.798
2030/31	0.502

Where this proposed expenditure does not relate to service delivery, the security, liquidity and yield in relation to this spend has to be considered. The capital allocations do not include any spend that is not linked to service delivery, but the Council will continue to consider opportunities in relation to other investments where they support regeneration or support Council priorities. If these opportunities arise then they will be brought to Council for consideration, alongside an updated Investment Strategy. The table below (table 8) provides an analysis of security, liquidity and yield in relation to these types of investment.

Table 8

Asset (or type of asset)	Security	Liquidity	Yield
Other investments	The primary reason for any other investment would be to enable regeneration and/ or to support the delivery of Council priorities. But given overall Council finances, the security of investments will be given a high weighting in determining whether to take any forward. However there will always be some risk relating to both general market conditions and specific factors relevant to individual properties.	Property is a medium to long-term asset due to the costs of buying and selling, and that property markets can be cyclical in nature.	To reflect the risk of property investment a net surplus of 1% (above revenue costs of capital, administration and acquisition costs) should be targeted as a minimum. Any target surplus will be commensurate with the level of risk.

For these assets, table 9, also details an assessment of the risk of loss. This covers the same factors that have been detailed previously. Where relevant, assets have been grouped together.

Table 9

Asset (or type of asset)	Assessment of the risk of loss
Other investments	This will be fully assessed as part of the business case for the acquisition or development of any properties.

Part 3- Capital balances, receipts and the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

Capital Funding

The Council forecasts the following additions to its capital receipts (table 10). All the planned disposals are surplus land that is being sold to generate capital receipts. The disposals will also reduce the risks and costs of holding the land. Due to the potential impact on negotiations over

disposal values, individual values are not detailed. The valuations used are prudent for selling with limited restrictions and assuming that planning permission can be obtained. If the Council requires enhanced conditions in relation to affordable housing provision, then that could result in a reduced capital receipt. An allowance has been incorporated for higher environmental standards for new disposals, but the impact is uncertain as it will be affected by the cost of those enhanced standards (which is expected to fall over time) and any premium that the end purchaser of the property is prepared to pay. If there were changes in the receipts that could be achieved, then it may be necessary to revise the Investment Strategy. That would increase the borrowing requirement, increase borrowing costs and therefore have a greater revenue impact (due to revenue costs of capital). The Council has other limited surplus land that may have a value but is not included in the forecasts below as the amount and/or timing of the receipt is too uncertain.

Table 10

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Balance B/Fwd	1,273	0	0	0	0	0
Used in Year	1,273	3,000	0	1,000	0	0
Forecast Receipts (£000)	0	3,000	0	1,000	Tbc (0)	Tbc (0)
Balance C/Fwd	0	0	0	0	0	0

The above timing and values are an estimate only. Actual timings will depend on market conditions and time taken for planning permission to be granted (where sales values are subject to planning). The Council will seek to get the best value it can from land sales.

As a result of planned expenditure in 2026/27 and future years, the Council forecasts the following use of funding for capital (table 11).

Table 11

Funding Source	Brought forward (at 31/3/25)	Forecast expenditure and funding sources (£000)						
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32 to 2035/36
Capital Expenditure		26,416	9,132	5,787	4,488	3,798	502	9,230
Less: Set-aside receipts used	587	587	0	0	0	0	0	0
Less: Capital receipts used	685	685	3,000	0	1,000	0	0	0
Less: Grant funding used		2,745	1,524	654	0	0	0	0
Less: IT Reserve used		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Less: S106 receipts used		361	37	55	0	0	0	0
Less: Funding from revenue		3,230	1,150	4,002	0	0	0	0
Less: Other Capital Contributions		48	250	0	0	0	0	0
Borrowing requirement		**18,760**	**3,171**	**1,076**	**3,488**	**3,798**	**502**	**9,230**

Cumulative borrowing requirement		**18,760**	**21,931**	**23,007**	**26,495**	**30,293**	**30,795**	**40,025**

Definitions:

Capital receipts- money received from the sale of surplus assets.

Set-aside receipts- previously money generated from the sale of surplus assets was not defined as capital receipt. The residual funding that the Council has (which is mainly from the sale of its housing stock to North Herts Homes) is treated as a set-aside receipt. In essence these are treated in the same way as capital receipts.

Revenue funding- Capital can be funded from revenue (but capital funding can not be used for revenue). The availability of reserves has provided scope for some revenue funding of capital.

The borrowing requirement is the balancing item. It is also known as the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This is a Prudential Indicator and the Council is required to set a target for it and monitor against it during the year.

Prudential Indicator 2: Capital Financing Requirement

Year	£m
As at 31st March 2025 (actual)	-0.6
As at 31st March 2026 (forecast)	18.8
As at 31st March 2027 (forecast)	21.9
As at 31st March 2028 (forecast)	23.0
As at 31st March 2029 (forecast)	26.5
As at 31st March 2030 (forecast)	30.3

Where the Council has a Capital Financing Requirement (i.e. the borrowing requirement is positive) then it:

- Must make a charge to revenue for a Minimum Revenue Provision.
- Can choose whether to borrow internally or externally.

Part 4- Borrowing Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

Borrowing strategy

Definitions:

Internal Borrowing- Even when the Council has no capital reserves, it can borrow internally against its revenue balances and reserves. This uses the cash that is available and is different to funding capital from revenue. The Council is still required to have a Minimum Revenue Provision but does not incur any external interest costs. Interest income from investing the revenue balances and reserves would be lost.

External Borrowing- Borrowing from a third party (e.g. Public Works Loans Board, a Local Authority or a financial institution). Interest costs would be incurred, as well as having to make a Minimum Revenue Provision.

Based on Prudential Indicator 2 above the Council has a Capital Financing Requirement from 2025/26 onwards and therefore does have a need to borrow.

If the Council had a borrowing requirement, then in order to determine whether to borrow internally or externally, it must consider the level of revenue reserves and provisions that it has, and when it expects that these will be spent. Forecasts of the revenue budget give the following estimates (table 12). These totals are also used in determining the cash that it has available for investment.

Table 12

Revenue balance	Brought forward (at 31/3/25)	Forecast balance at year end					
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
General Fund[1]	16,081	15,643	15,643	14,273	14,516	14,051	13,007
Add back MRP	0	0	1,448	1,540	1,427	1,690	1,860
Revenue Reserves[2]	13,700	7,639	6,433	4,194	4,194	4,194	4,194
S106 balances	5,139	4,779	4,742	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687
Provisions	915	915	915	915	915	915	915
Outstanding Debt	325	305	290	275	265	257	250
Total	**36,160**	**29,281**	**29,471**	**25,884**	**26,004**	**25,794**	**24,913**

1 Based on General Fund forecasts from Appendix E.
2 Revenue Reserve balance as at 31/3/25. Incorporates use of Business Rate reserve and waste vehicle reserve. For simplicity this ignores some of the fluctuations in reserve balances, as these do not have a material impact.

MRP is added back as it is not an outflow of cash and can be used for internal borrowing. The cash outflow happens when the borrowing is repaid. The Revenue budget (as required by accounting rules) includes forecasts of the MRP charge.

The Prudential Code (published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) provides a framework for Councils to develop investment plans that are affordable, prudent and sustainable. This details that an expectation that Councils will use cash reserves (i.e. borrow internally) before they borrow externally. The reason for this is that it reduces costs as not paying external interest. However, in the longer term it will introduce financing risk, as there will come a time when the Council will have diminished its cash reserves (except amounts held for cashflow purposes) and will need to borrow externally. This will need to be planned so that borrowing can be achieved at a reasonable rate.

Current forecasts (see tables 11 and 12) are that the Council will have revenue reserves in excess of its borrowing requirement. Therefore all borrowing (except any cashflow borrowing) will be internal over the period of the Investment Strategy.

Table 13

	Brought forward (at 31/3/25)	Forecast amount of borrowing in year (£000)							Carried forward (at 31/3/36)
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32 to 2035/36	
Total borrowing requirement	325	18,760	3,171	1,076	3,488	3,798	502	9,230	
Made up of:									
Internal borrowing	0	18,760	3,171	1,076	3,488	3,798	502	9,230	40,025
External borrowing	325	(20)	(15)	(15)	(10)	(8)	(7)		250

The brought forward borrowing total is made up of historic borrowing that it is not cost effective to pay off. This is because the interest that would be payable over the course of the remaining loan has to be paid upfront instead. The reduction is due to these being loans that are repaid in instalments.

Definitions:

Operational Boundary: This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. Set as £1m (rounded to the nearest £0.1m) above the forecast external debt.

Authorised Limit: This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable or required in the longer term. This is set at £5m above the operational boundary.

Prudential Indicator 3: External Debt

Year	Forecast Borrowing £m	Forecast other long-term liabilities[1] £m	Less: Internal Borrowing £m	Forecast Total External Debt £m	Operational Boundary £m	Authorised Limit £m
As at 31st March 2025 (actual)	0.325	0.210	0	0.535	2.0	7.0
As at 31st March 2026 (forecast)	19.065	5.782	(18.760)	6.087	26.0	31.0
As at 31st March 2027 (forecast)	22.221	4.962	(21.931)	5.252	29.0	34.0
As at 31st March 2028 (forecast)	23.282	4.142	(23.007)	4.417	29.0	34.0
As at 31st March 2029 (forecast)	26.760	3.321	(26.495)	3.586	32.0	37.0
As at 31st March 2030 (forecast)	30.550	2.500	(30.293)	2.757	35.0	40.0
As at 31st March 2031 (forecast)	31.045	1.637	(30.795)	1.887	34.0	39.0

1 Comprises the finance lease relating to Letchworth Multi-storey car park and Leased Vehicles.

The external borrowing forecast can be used to give an indication of the borrowing that may be required, which is combined with outstanding existing borrowing (table 14). The Council will also borrow for short-term cash-flow needs if required. The actual borrowing that is taken out will depend on the latest forecasts and the offers that are available at the time that it is required. There will also be a consideration of when any other borrowing becomes due, with the aim of achieving a spread of these dates. This is to try and avoid refinancing risk. The Council is required to set indicators for the maturity structure of its borrowing. Given the low level of borrowing that the Council currently has and is forecast to have, it is considered appropriate to maintain full flexibility as to the exact duration of any borrowing undertaken. This is reflected in the indicators set out as Treasury Indicator 4 below.

Table 14

Loan Type	Start date	Duration (years)	Maturity date	Amount Borrowed (£)	Balance Outstanding 31/03/26 (£)	Interest Rate (actual or forecast) (%)	Current Annual interest cost (£)
	16/09/49	80	Jul 2029	380	17	3.0	1
	12/11/48	80	Jul 2028	13,885	1,097	3.0	42
	02/08/66	60	Jul 2026	50,000	1,499	6.0	220
	18/03/68	60	Jan 2028	40,000	5,464	7.375	539
	03/01/69	60	Jul 2028	53,027	9,654	8.125	990
	06/03/70	60	Jan 2030	20,100	5,863	8.75	591
	24/11/70	60	Jul 2030	18,714	6,413	9.5	688
	26/01/71	60	Jan 2031	25,000	9,497	9.75	1,030
	05/03/71	60	Jan 2031	12,500	4,564	9.25	470
	05/03/71	60	Jan 2031	25,000	9,132	9.25	941
	28/02/47	80	Jan 2027	5,832	166	2.5	7
	18/10/46	80	Jul 2026	1,527	22	2.5	1
	20/02/48	80	Jan 2028	14,952	952	3.0	39
	22/09/50	80	Jul 2030	654	90	3.0	3
	27/08/82	60	Jul 2042	250,000	250,000	11.5	28,750
	16/09/49	80	Sep 2029	640	70	3.0	3
	20/03/53	80	Mar 2033	1,020	266	4.125	12
	23/10/53	80	Sep 2033	750	199	4.0	9
	20/11/53	80	Sep 2033	420	112	4.0	5
	25/04/52	80	Mar 2032	480	110	4.25	5
	30/01/48	80	Sep 2027	1,560	75	3.0	3
Total					**305,262**		

Definitions:
Refinancing Risk (or Maturity Risk): The risk that if all borrowing becomes due for repayment at the same time that this will be at a time when the costs for taking out new borrowing (refinancing) are very high.

To manage refinancing risk, the Council sets limits on the maturity structure of its borrowing. However, these indicators are set at a high level to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to opportunities to repay or take out new debt (if it was required), while remaining within the parameters set by the indicators. Due to the low level of existing borrowing, all the limits have a broad range. This is particularly necessary for the 'under 12 months' limit, to allow for cash-flow borrowing (if it was required).

Treasury Indicator 4: Maturity Structure of Fixed Interest Rate Borrowing

Maturity period	Lower %	Upper %
Under 12 months	0	100
12 months to 2 years	0	100
2 years to 5 years	0	100
5 years to 10 years	0	100
10 years to 20 years	0	100

The Council does not place any restrictions on where it can borrow from. This is because the Council will hold the money and therefore there is not a risk around the security of the funds. In practice any borrowing is likely to come from the Public Works Loan Board, UK banks, UK building societies and other Local Authorities. All borrowing will be denominated in GBP Sterling. The decision on any borrowing will be made by the Chief Finance Officer and reflect the advice of the Council's treasury advisers.

The Council can enter in to borrowing arrangements at both fixed and variable rates. Variable rate borrowing has a greater risk and so therefore Treasury Indicator 5 limits the amount of borrowing that can be at a variable rate. To aid administration and monitoring, the limits are shown as £ values but are based on percentages of the Operational Boundary. Borrowing at fixed rates can be up to 100% (inclusive) of the Boundary, and variable rate borrowing can be up to 30% of the Boundary.

Definitions:

Fixed Rate: The rate of interest is set at the point the borrowing is taken out and remains at the same percentage rate for the full term of the loan.

Variable Rate: The rate of interest varies during the term of the loan and usually tracks prescribed indicator rate (e.g. Bank of England base rate)

Treasury Indicator 5: Fixed and Variable Borrowing Rate Exposure

Year	Operational Boundary relating to borrowing excluding long term liabilities £m	Limit on Fixed Rate borrowing £m	Limit on Variable Rate borrowing £m
2025/26	20.2	20.2	6.1
2026/27	24.0	24.0	7.2
2027/28	24.9	24.9	7.5
2028/29	28.7	28.7	8.6
2029/30	32.5	32.5	9.8
2030/31	32.4	32.4	9.7

There is a requirement for the Council to consider the proportionality of the income that it generates from its non-service (investment) assets and how this compares to any borrowing that is linked to those assets. Current and planned investment assets were detailed in table 3 and table 8. Treasury indicator 6 shows the capital value and expected income from these assets, alongside any borrowing that is attached to those assets and the expected cost of that borrowing.

The totals below are based on existing investment assets and estimates of the income that they are expected to generate. As there is no borrowing linked to investment assets, the expected annual borrowing costs are shown as zero.

Treasury Indicator 6: Income from investment assets and the costs of associated borrowing

Year	Capital value of investment assets £m	Expected annual income from investment assets £m	Total borrowing linked to investment assets £m	Expected annual borrowing costs for loans linked to investment assets £m
2026/27	31.700	1.544	0	0
2027/28	31.700	1.544	0	0
2028/29	31.700	1.547	0	0
2029/30	31.700	1.549	0	0
2030/31	31.700	1.549	0	0

Borrowing in advance of need

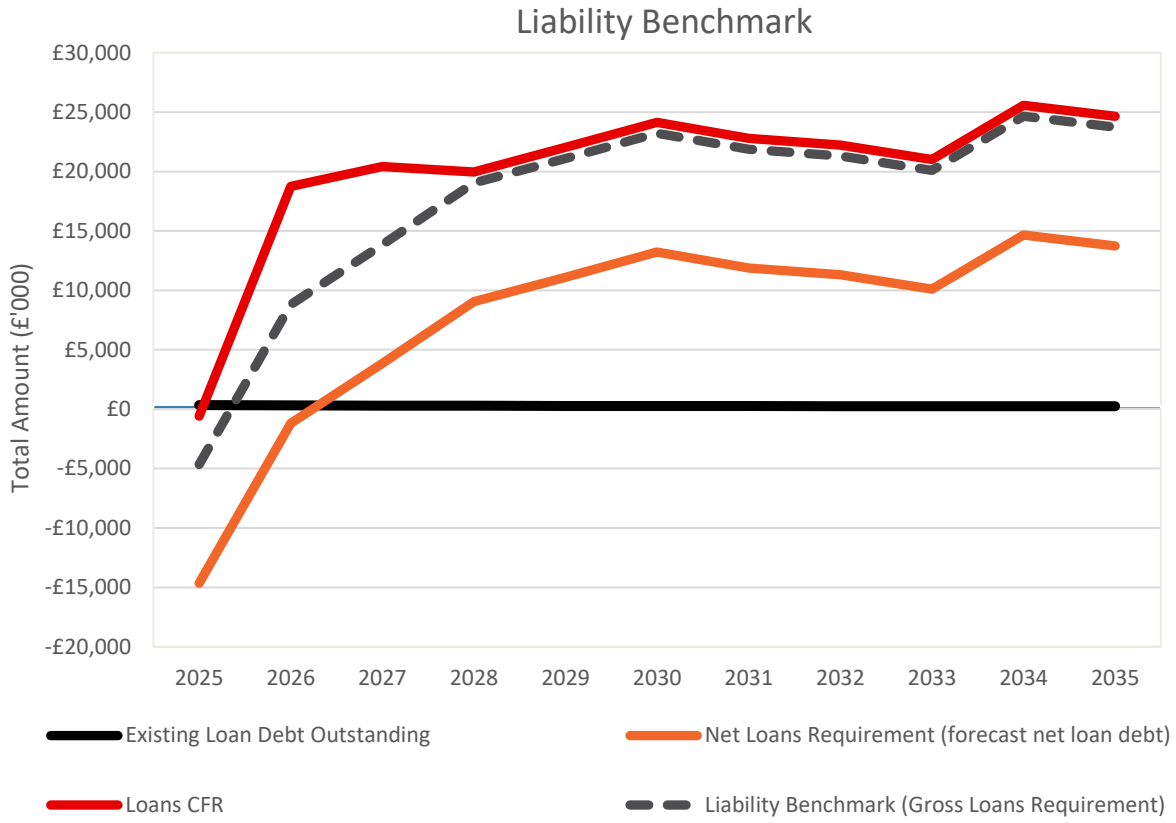
The Council would not borrow money in advance of need or at a low rate to try and reinvest that money to earn a higher interest rate, and profit from the margin between the two rates.

The extended definition of borrowing in advance of need now covers borrowing for capital investments where they are acquired purely to generate profit. The change to the PWLB rules also means that this borrowing cannot be accessed if there is any capital spend that is primarily to generate income, even if that spend was intended to be financed from reserves. The capital programme has been reviewed and there are no investments which have a primary purpose of generating income.

As part of the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code, Councils are required to adopt a Liability Benchmark (LB) treasury indicator to support the financing risk management of the capital financing requirement. The Authority is required to estimate and measure the LB for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.

There are four components to the LB: -

1. **Existing loan debt outstanding**: the Authority's existing loans and their repayment over time (black line).
2. **Loans CFR:** this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on forecast capital spend and MRP charges (light blue line).
3. **Net loans requirement:** this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.
4. **Liability benchmark** (or gross loans requirement): this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.



The Liability Benchmark is effectively the Net Borrowing Requirement of a local authority plus a liquidity allowance. In its simplest form, it is calculated by deducting the amount of investable resources available on the balance sheet (reserves, cash flow balances) from the amount of outstanding external debt and then adding the minimum level of investments required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

The purpose of this indicator is to compare the authority's existing loans outstanding (the black line) against its future need for loan debt, or liability benchmark (the doted line). If the black line is below the orange line (as above), the existing portfolio outstanding is less than the loan debt required, and the authority will need to borrow to meet the shortfall. If the black line is above the orange line, the authority will (based on current plans) have more debt than it needs, and the excess will have to be invested. The chart therefore tells an authority how much it needs to borrow and when. It therefore shows that the Council does need to take out further borrowing.

Minimum Revenue Provision

When the Council has a Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) it is required to make a charge to the General Fund (revenue budget) called a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Subject to guidelines, the Council sets its MRP policy, which is detailed below:

Minimum Revenue Provision:

The Council is required to have a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy, and when required make charges to revenue in accordance with that policy.

The Council will use the asset life method. The MRP amount will be spread over the estimated life of the assets with no charge levied in the first year, in accordance with the regulations. The Council will apply one of the two approaches below based on the project(s) that the borrowing is used for and the benefits derived from the project(s).

- Equal instalments – The principal repayment made is the same each year.

Or

- Annuity – the principal repayments increase over the life of the asset. This has the advantage of linking MRP to the benefits arising from capital expenditure, where these benefits are expected to increase over the life of the asset.

The Council has a need to borrow in 2025/26 if the Capital programme is fully spent (as at Q2 forecast there will be a borrowing need) and will therefore need to apply a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The current capital programme is mainly spent on service provision. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to adopt an equal instalment MRP policy.

There is a prudential indicator that compares the net cost of financing (i.e. borrowing costs less income generated from investments) with the net revenue budget of the Council. This will be looked at later in this document after considering investments and their forecast returns. However, the indicator below considers the cost of borrowing as a % of the net revenue budget of the Council.

Treasury Indicator 7: Cost of borrowing (interest and MRP) as a % of the net revenue budget 2025/26 to 2030/31

Year	Estimated cost of borrowing (£m)	Forecast net revenue budget (£m)	Estimated cost of borrowing as a % of net revenue budget (%)
2025/26	0.034	23.650	0.1
2026/27	1.481	27.321	5.4
2027/28	1.572	26.287	6.0
2028/29	1.458	21.978	6.6
2029/30	1.720	22.260	7.7
2030/31	1.889	22.470	8.4

Part 5- Investment Strategy

Based on the assumptions above the following available investment balances are assumed. This includes a forecast of revenue reserves, capital reserves, capital financing requirement and external borrowing (table 15).

Table 15

Balances	Brought forward (at 31/3/25)	Forecast balance at year end (£000)			
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Revenue balances (including MRP added back)	36,160	29,281	29,471	25,884	26,004
Capital Receipts	685	0	0	0	0
Capital Grants Unapplied	881	168	168	168	168
Add: Long-term liabilities[1]	316	5,782	4,962	4,142	3,321
Less: Capital Financing Requirement	-588	18,760	21,931	23,007	26,495
Less: Borrowing repayments	21	20	15	15	10
Total forecast of available for investment	**38,609**	**16,451**	**12,655**	**7,172**	**2,988**

1 The net position of money owed by the Council or to the Council can lead to increased or decreased cash available for investment.

The Council needs to consider the following in determining how long it will invest any surplus cash for:

- The period that any particular cash balance is available for. If a balance is expected to be available over a long period then it is possible to invest it over a long period.
- How much might be required to cover short term variations in cash. For example, it could be forecast that the cash at the start and end of the month will be the same. But if there is a need to pay out half that cash at the start of the month before getting an equivalent amount just before the end, then there is a need to plan.
- The risk of investing for longer periods as it increases the chance that the counterparty could have financial problems and therefore not pay back the principal invested and/ or the interest due.
- The risk of investing for longer periods as it could lead to a lost opportunity. If the investment is at a fixed rate and then there is a general rise in rates available (e.g. due to an unexpected Bank of England base rate rise) then it would not be possible to take advantage of the new improved rates until the investment matures.

Before considering where the Council will invest any surplus cash in treasury investments, it firstly needs to consider any loans that it may want to make for other purposes. A local authority can choose to make loans to local enterprises, local charities, wholly owned companies and joint ventures. These loans can relate to service provision or to promote local economic growth. These loans may not seem prudent when considered purely in relation to security and liquidity. Table 16 details current and planned loans and shows the reasons for these loans, how their value is proportionate, the risk of loss and credit control arrangements that are in place.

Table 16

Loan	Amount	Reason for Loan	Proportionality of value	Expected Credit Loss model and credit control
Building Control	Currently £107k, provision for it to increase up to £172k	To support the formation of the company. The Council is also a shareholder in the company, owning 1/8th of the shares.	Insignificant in the context of overall cash balances.	Regular monitoring of financial forecasts and business plans. The continuation of the company to provide Building Control services is more significant than the value of the loan.
Wholly owned Property Company	Up to £50k, current loan £20k	The loan is used for cashflow purposes to enable the company to become established.	As above.	As the loan is just for cashflow purposes it is unsecured. The Council receives regular reports on lettings performance which is the key indicator of company performance.
Stevenage Leisure Ltd	£308K	Was to purchase Technogym Equipment, which enables the provision of fitness activities at the Leisure Centres.	As above.	The Covid-19 pandemic affected the financial performance of SLL, and a repayment holiday was agreed. Whilst SLL returned to paying a full management fee during 2023/24, they have not been able to make loan repayments. As at the end of the contract in March 2024 the loan remained unpaid and SLL went in to liquidation in July 2024. The liquidation is still in progress. As at 31st March 2025 there was a full bad debt provision in place. There are other transactions and accrued amounts (both positive and negative) that need to be resolved through the liquidation process, which is still ongoing.

When the Council invests its surplus cash, it seeks to find reliable counterparties to ensure that the amount invested (and the interest earned) is returned. The Council has decided that it is prepared to take on a higher level of risk than recommended by its treasury advisers in relation to unrated Building Societies and the duration of its investments. This risk is mitigated by reviewing published information in relation to unrated Building Societies (i.e. "Pillar 3" reports).

The following criteria are used to determine the list of counterparties:

- UK Local Authorities- as they are able to raise additional funds from taxation
- UK Government- Debt Management Office provides highly liquid investments at the lowest risk as backed by the UK Government
- ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investments from UK Banks with a Fitch Credit rating of BBB (long-term)/ F3 (short-term) or greater- as they have been subject to UK 'stress tests' and also have a high credit rating
- Rated Building Societies with a Fitch Credit rating of BBB (long-term)/ F3 (short-term) or greater- as they have been subject to UK 'stress tests' and also have a high credit rating

- The Council's own banker (Lloyds) that it uses for transactional purposes. Although if its credit rating falls below BBB then any balances will be kept to a minimum (i.e. for cashflow purposes only). Includes a linked call account, as that maximises liquidity whilst also paying a higher level of interest.
- ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investments from non-UK banks with a UK subsidiary that have a Fitch Credit rating of BBB (long-term)/ F3 (short-term) or greater and are subject to the same stress tests as UK banks.
- ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investments from non-UK banks where the Country has a AA- rating and the institution has an A+ and above rating.
- Unrated UK Building Societies- as organisations have to pay to obtain a rating; most Building Societies do not get one. They do produce annual reports known as Pillar 3 reports, and these will be used to assess their credit worthiness. Furthermore, the Council will only invest in Building Societies that have assets of at least £300m, which limits the potential exposure.
- Money Market funds that are AAA rated and have an ESG policy.

All investments will be denominated in Sterling. There may not be ESG investments currently available in all the categories detailed above but included in the strategy in case they become available.

The Council will seek to appropriately diversify its investments across a range of types and counterparties. This means that if there were any security or liquidity issues with a particular type of investment or counterparty, the Council would still have access to the majority of its funds. The limits are initially based on a percentage of total funds but are converted to actual values to make the administration of investments more efficient. The values are calculated by applying the percentages to the expected average balance during the year (2026/27)* and then rounded up to the nearest £1m. If these limits are set too low then it limits the investment opportunities available and also increases the administration as there is then a need to find more places to invest available funds.

The limit to be placed with each Local Authority counter-party has been increased to £5m (25%). This reflects that (1) an increasing number of Local Authorities borrowers are only interested in deals at £5m or above, and (2) the limiting of bank investments to ESG only means that the Council will need to maximise other investment options. Other Local Authorities are the best option to achieve increased options whilst also managing risk.

Previously there have been separate categories for investments with Building Societies based on their asset level (above £300m and above £1bn). These have now been combined due to the policy of having a £1m minimum investment value.

All other percentage limits have been kept the same as last year. The limits are shown in table 17 below.

* This is the balance taken from table 15 above, of the average closing balance for 25/26 and 26/27, which is £16.6m.

Table 17

Investment Type	Max. amount in type of investment (£m)	Maximum amount in group (£m)	Maximum amount with any individual counterparty (£m)	Rationale and details
Debt Management Office (UK Government)	No limit			Short-term investment with UK Government that is therefore the lowest possible risk
UK Local Authorities	No limit	n/a	5	£5m limit with any one counterparty, no limit on total with Local Authorities due to tax raising powers
UK Banks and UK subsidiaries of foreign banks that are subject to the same stress tests as UK banks (excluding Lloyds current account)- includes Deposits and Certificates of Deposit (ESG investments only)	9	3	2	Rating F3 or above (short-term) or BBB or above (long-term) and part nationalised banks. 10% with any one counterparty, 15% with institutions in the same banking group, 50% with banks in total
Non-UK banks- includes deposits and Certificates of deposit (ESG investments only)		3	2	AA- or above Country rating and A+ or above institution rating. Maximum of 10% with any one counterparty. Maximum of 15% in non-UK banks.
Combined Lloyds Current Account and Call Account	n/a	n/a	5	Used for cashflow purposes
UK Building Societies (unrated)- with assets over £300m only	9	n/a	1	Review of Pillar 3 reports and KPMG report on comparative profits. Up to £1m with any one counterparty. Maximum of 50% with UK Building Societies.
Rated UK Building Societies			2	Rating F3 or above (short-term) or BBB or above (long-term). 10% with any one counterparty.
Money Market Funds with an ESG policy	2	n/a	1	AAA rated. Maximum of 10% in MMFs and 5% with any one fund.

The Council will primarily limit its liquidity risk by only investing money until it thinks it will next need it. On top of this it will also have a general limit on investments that are greater than 1 year (365 days). This limit is based on 25% of total investments but is again reflected as an absolute value of **£5m**, which is based on 25% of the expected average level of balances during the year (rounded up to nearest £1m). Due to Local Government Reorganisation timelines, there will be no investments with a set term of greater than 2 years

Money market funds do not have a set term and funds can be requested to be withdrawn at any time. Investment balances will be kept under review to ensure that they do not exceed the maximum amount set by this or subsequent treasury strategies. However, there is no time limit on the period that funds can be held invested for.

Where the Council makes use of credit ratings these will be assessed immediately prior to placing an investment. The Council then receives alerts whenever ratings change and will monitor these alerts

to see if an investment has fallen below the minimum criteria. For fixed term investments, it generally will not be possible to do anything in relation to a rating change. Although for a significant drop, enquiries will be made as to the exit costs involved. If these are not significant then the Council will end the investment early. For open term investments, the Council will seek to disinvest, although it will consider any exit costs.

There is a link between the interest rates that the Council can expect to achieve on its investments and the Bank of England base rate. Our treasury advisors (MUFG) have provided the following forecasts of base rates over the next 3 years. Using this and the investment limits above, we have estimated an average interest rate that the Council will achieve on its investments in each year.

Table 18

Year	Forecast of Bank of England Base Rate as at end of the year (%)	Forecast of average interest earned on investments (%)
2026/27	3.25	3.375
2027/28	3.25	3.25
2028/29	3.25	3.25

The 2028/29 rate is then used for investments in subsequent years.

Combining these average interest rates with expected balances, gives a forecast of the interest that will be earned in each year. Although the Council has retained the option to invest in longer term Property and Multi-asset funds, these type of investments are unlikely to happen so have not been assumed in calculating the forecast interest returns.

Table 19

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Forecast of average balance available for investment (£m)- short to medium term	14.6	9.9	5.1
Forecast of interest earned (£m)	0.493	0.321	0.166
Current interest assumed in the revenue budget.	0.362	0.322	0.259

The Council is required to set a prudential indicator that estimates financing costs (cost of borrowing less income from investments) as a percentage of its net revenue budget.

Prudential Indicator 8: Forecast of Financing Costs as a percentage of net revenue budget

Year	Cost of borrowing £m	Less: Forecast of interest earned £m	Net Financing costs £m	Net Revenue Budget £m	Financing Costs as a % of Net Revenue Budget £m
2025/26	0.034	1.980	-1.946	23.650	-8.2
2026/27	1.481	0.560	0.921	27.321	3.4
2027/28	1.572	0.380	1.192	26.287	4.5
2028/29	1.458	0.237	1.221	21.978	5.6
2029/30	1.720	0.107	1.613	22.260	7.2
2030/31	1.889	0.013	1.876	22.470	8.3

Part 6- Overall Risk Considerations

The risk exposures for each of the elements of this strategy are generally independent, and therefore can be considered in isolation.

Part 7- Glossary

A number of definitions are included in the strategy when they are first referenced. These are not duplicated here. This part provides a list of other terms used in this report, as well as those used in the statutory guidance.

Borrowing- a written or oral agreement where the Council temporarily receives cash from a third party (e.g. a Bank, the Public Works Loan Board or another Local Authority) and promises to return it according to the terms of the agreement, normally with interest.

Investment: This covers all of the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets that the Council holds primarily or partially to generate a profit; for example, investment property portfolios. This will include investments that are not managed as part of normal treasury management processes or under treasury management delegations. Furthermore, it also covers loans made by the Council to one of its wholly-owned companies or associates, to a joint venture, or to a third party. The term does not include pension funds or trust fund investments, which are subject to separate regulatory regimes.

Within this strategy, the term investment is used in the following contexts:

- Capital investment- expenditure to acquire or improve a capital asset.
- Investment properties- assets that are held for the purpose of generating an income.
- Cash/ treasury investments- the cash that the Council has, which is made up of revenue reserves, capital reserves and the effects of cashflow timings. These amounts are invested to manage the risks of holding cash and to generate investment income.

Financial investments: These are made up of Cash/ Treasury investments and loans. This term is defined within the statutory guidance (as specified investments, loans and unspecified investments) but has not been directly used in this strategy. Part 5 of the Strategy is focused on these investments.

Specified Investment: These are essentially short-term Cash/ Treasury investments. To be a specified investment, it needs to meet the following criteria:

- The investment is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in the respect of the investment are payable only in sterling.
- The investment is not a long term investment. This means that the local authority has contractual right to repayment within 12 months, either because that is the expiry term of the investment or through a non-conditional option.
- It is not capital expenditure.
- The investment is considered to be high quality or is with the UK Government, another Local Authority or a Parish/ Community Council.

High Quality investment: These are investments (specified and non-specified) which are assessed on the priority basis of security, liquidity and yield. Where relevant they make use of relevant additional information, such as credit ratings. The investments set out in part 5 are considered by the Council to be 'high quality'.

- The investment is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in the respect of the investment are payable only in sterling.
- The investment is a long term investment. This means that the local authority has contractual right to repayment in greater than 12 months.
- It is not capital expenditure.

- The investment is considered to be high quality or is with the UK Government, another Local Authority or a Parish/ Community Council.

Unspecified investment: In the statutory guidance, these are financial assets that are not specified investments or loans. This creates a circular definition. The Council considers that they meet the following definition:

Loan: a written or oral agreement where the Council temporarily transfers cash to a third party, joint venture, subsidiary or associate who promises to return it according to the terms of the agreement, normally with interest. This definition does not include a loan to another local authority, which is classified as a specified investment. The Council will meet the following conditions when providing such loans:

- Total financial exposure to these type of loans is proportionate;
- An allowed “expected credit loss” model has been used as set out in Accounting Standards
- Appropriate credit control arrangements are in place to recover overdue repayments; and
- The total level of loans by type is in accordance with the limits set out in this Strategy.