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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

5 June 2026

Our Ref Cabinet Tuesday, 16 June 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 - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF

on

TUESDAY, 16TH JUNE, 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 - 14 APRIL 2026 (Pages 7 - 20)

To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 14 April 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. STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS REPORT (Pages 21 - 32)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – PLACE

This report identifies the latest position on key planning and transport issues affecting the Council.

8. DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SPD (Pages 33 - 138)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – PLACE

The Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) supports the Local Plan to secure the appropriate contributions arising from new development across the District.

9. NORTH HERTS DESIGN CODE SPD (Pages 139 - 356)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – PLACE

To present this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for adoption following public consultation and amendment.

10. WASTE VEHICLES FUEL ARRANGEMENTS (Pages 357 - 368)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – ENVIRONMENT

Approves use of a HVO mix for the Council's large waste vehicles, that limits the additional cost to the Council (of using HVO over diesel) to approximately £5,000 per month from 1 July 2026 to 31 March 2027. This would be subject to a minimum HVO use of 20%, unless it became impossible to obtain HVO fuel.

11. GA2 ACCESS LAND (Pages 369 - 382)

REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL ESTATES SURVEYOR

Site GA2 is a strategic housing site and lies to the north-east of Great Ashby and is allocated for a new neighbourhood of approximately 600 homes.

12. FUNDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR) (Pages 383 - 388)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

To seek agreement on how the LGR funding will be allocated, including decision making processes.

13. 2025-26 Q4 COUNCIL PLAN UPDATE (Pages 389 - 444)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

A year end update on progress against the Council Delivery Plan for 2025-26. Whilst this is a year end update it generally reflects progress as at the time the report was prepared (early May 2026).

14. 2025-26 YEAR END REPORT OF RISK MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE (Pages 445 - 464)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

This report provides an update on the effectiveness of the Risk Management governance arrangements at the Council.

15. REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2025/26 (FINAL) (Pages 465 - 488)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the summary position on revenue income and expenditure at the end of the financial year 2025/26.

16. TREASURY MANAGEMENT END OF YEAR REVIEW 2025/26 (Pages 489 - 512)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

The Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements throughout the year.

17. CAPITAL END OF YEAR REVIEW 2025/26 (Pages 513 - 526)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

To consider the Capital End of Year Outturn Review.

18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider passing the following resolution: That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

19. PART 2 MINUTES - 19 NOVEMBER 2025 527 - 530

To take as read and approve as a true record the Part 2 minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 19 November 2025.

20. CHURCHGATE REGENERATION PROJECT UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS - PART 2 531 - 534

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – ENTERPRISE

Since the previous update to Members, further work has been undertaken to assess the viability, deliverability and regeneration potential of the Churchgate site. This report provides an update on that work and seeks approval for the additional funding required to support the next phase of the project.

21. CHURCHGATE REGENERATION PROJECT UPDATE & NEXT STEPS - PART 1 (Pages 535 - 698)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – ENTERPRISE

Since the previous update to Members, further work has been undertaken to assess the viability, deliverability and regeneration potential of the Churchgate site. This report provides an update on that work and seeks approval for the additional funding required to support the next phase of the project.

22. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider passing the following resolution: That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

23. ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT - PART 2 699 - 700

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

The Council has received a multi-year funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting the Council in meeting its homelessness duties.

24. ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT - PART 1 (Pages 701 - 712)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

The Council has received a multi-year funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting the Council in meeting its homelessness duties.

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF ON TUESDAY, 14TH APRIL, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

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

In Attendance: *Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Steve Crowley (Director - Enterprise), Jo Doggett (Director - Regulatory), Jamie Graham (Democratic Services Apprentice), Frank Harrison (Environmental Health Manager), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), 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 Ralph Muncer was present as Chair of the Section 106 Task and Finish Group.

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

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 43 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Laura Williams and Sean Nolan.

33 MINUTES - 17 FEBRUARY 2026

Audio recording – 2 minutes

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 17 February 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

34 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 53 seconds

There was no other business notified.

35 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 57 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.

36 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 12 seconds

There was no public participation at the meeting.

37 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 4 minutes 17 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.

38 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 5 minutes 34 seconds

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

- This report detailed the latest position on key planning and transport issues affecting the Council since it was last updated in January 2026.
- The consultation by government on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) closed on 10 March and the response from the Council was detailed in Appendix A.
- A new layer of strategic plans, Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) had been consulted on as part of the new plan-making system and this proposal was supported by the Hertfordshire Growth Board.
- The regulations for the new plan-making system came into effect on 25 March 2026 which set the requirements for Local Plans to be prepared within a 30 month period.
- Further consultations were released in March 2026 in relation to the proposed National Scheme of Delegation for planning committees.
- Amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations would come into effect in March 2026 to ensure new homes were zero carbon in use.
- The Council would publish a formal notice of intention to review the Local Plan this month with the mandatory 4-month period ending in October 2026.
- An appeal would be heard in May 2026 seeking to overturn the proposed expansion of Luton Airport and subject to the outcome of this hearing, Luton Rising would seek to implement the proposed expansion later this year.

- The status of the six strategic sites in the Local Plan was summarised in paragraph 8.20 of the report.
- The Council maintained regular contact with the six neighbouring local authorities on the status of their Local Plans.
- The Town Centres Strategy was consulted on between 3 December 2025 and 30 January 2026 and officers were undertaking an analysis of the results. A final Town Centre Strategy would be presented to Cabinet for adoption in June/July 2026.

Councillor Donna Wright proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

***RESOLVED*:** That Cabinet*:*

(1) Noted the report on strategic planning matters.

(2) Endorsed the responses in Appendices A, B and C; and the proposed next steps in relation to the Local Plan review.

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

39 RENTERS RIGHT ACT

Audio recording – 16 minutes 10 seconds

Councillor Mick Debenham, as Executive Member for Regulatory, presented the report entitled 'Renters Right Act' and advised that:

- The Renters Rights Act would be implemented by a phased approach and Part 1 of the Act would come into effect on 1 May 2026.
- This would abolish 'no fault' evictions, ending the ability of landlord to evict tenants without statutory grounds.
- There would be an automatic move to assured periodic tenancies.
- Any increases in rent would be limited to once every 12 months.
- The introduction of prohibitions on rental bidding and obtaining rent in advance of occupation.
- Strengthened protections against any discrimination of tenants.
- There was a new right for tenants to request pets, where landlords must consider these requests reasonably.
- New Burdens Funding had been awarded to local authorities by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to assist with the burden the changes in the Act would impose on them. North Herts Council had received £33K for 2025/26 and would receive £55K in 2026/26 and a further £26K in 2027/28.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas

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

- For clarification, Jigsaw was an organisation funding and supported by the government to promote the collaboration of Private Rented Sector regulatory teams to support the introduction of the Renters Right Act.
- Additional funding had been received by government and some of this funding could be used for the resourcing of additional staff if required.
- These policies were for adoption by all local authorities, so there would be no disparity in the Local Government Reorganisation.
- A Landlord Ombudsman would be established in 2027 to assist and provide support to private rented sector tenants
- The Act was introduced to rebalance the powers and protection afforded to tenants as it as felt by government that previous legislation had shifted the powers too much in favour of the landlord, although it was recognised that any effect could only been seen over time.

Councillor Mick Debenham proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Adopted the following policy amendments and new related policies, so as to enable the Council to enforce the requirements of the Act from 1 May 2026:
   i. Amendments to the Corporate Statement of Enforcement Policy (CSEP)
   ii. Amendments to the CSEP Appendix B: Environmental Health.
   iii. Amendments to the CSEP Appendix G: Access to Housing.
   iv. Adoption of The Housing Authority Enforcement Policy.
   v. Adoption of The Civil Penalties Policy for Proceedings under the Renters Rights Act 2025 and other Housing Legislation.

(2) Delegated and passed to the Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Regulatory, in accordance with the provisions of the Council, to make future amendments to:

   i. The CSEP, Appendix B: Environmental Health
   ii. The CSEP, Appendix G: Access to Housing
   iii. The Housing Authority Enforcement Policy
   iv. The Civil Penalties Policy for Proceedings under the Renters Rights Act 2025 and other Housing Legislation.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The recommendations ensure the Council can meet its statutory duties under Section 107 of the Renters Rights Act 2025 and permits the necessary amendments to existing Council policies and provisions. This will enable the Council to better protect those constituents living in the rented sector, provide clear foundation for those providing rented accommodation and mitigate the risk of legal challenges and reputational harm should the Council fail to fully adopt this new statute.

40 ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARRYING OUT PUBLIC HEALTH FUNERALS

Audio recording – 37 minutes 36 seconds

Councillor Mick Debenham, as Executive Member for Regulatory, presented the report entitled 'Arrangements for carrying out Public Health Funerals' and advised that:

- This report provided the key information to enable the Council to adopt the Policy to accommodate the key provision for carrying out Public Health Funerals in accordance with Section 46 of the Public Health Act 1984.
- Each local authority was responsible for making necessary funeral arrangements for anyone who died in their district where no other arrangements were being made.
- In North Hertfordshire, the funeral would be burial in a common grave at Wilbury Hills Cemetery, Letchworth.
- The burial would be a dignified service and the Council would provide a celebrant if a non-religious service was appropriate.
- The Council was not legally obliged to comply with the requests of a will but would consider a cremation if there were sufficient funds available in the estate to cover cost.

In response to a question from Councillor Daniel Allen, the Environmental Health Manager advised that if a resident had been rehoused outside of the district, the Council would still fund the burial.

Councillor Mick Debenham proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Adopted the Policy as presented. Please note that this format has been adopted as this document is made available to our residents to help them through the requirements necessary to arrange a funeral should they need to.

(2) Noted that under the provisions of section 46 of the Act, each local authority has the responsibility to make necessary funeral arrangements for anybody who dies in their district where no other suitable arrangements are being or are likely to be made. This policy sets out how the Council will deliver this duty and outlines the limitations of this obligation.

(3) Noted what measures will be followed to try to locate a will, identify relatives who may wish to arrange the funeral and identify anything of value to try to offset funeral costs. The policy also confirms that should the Council arrange the funeral, we will provide a simple but dignified service administered by a minister, a representative of another faith or a civil funeral celebrant as well as permitting friends and family to attend the service.

(4) Delegated 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.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: 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 reputation of the Council and the officers involved.

41 LEASE ON LETCHWORTH MULTI STOREY CAR PARK

Audio recording – 44 minutes 52 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:

- How this was a good opportunity to achieve better use of the car park at no cost to the Council.
- What might be lost by surrendering the lease, such as any influence on prices and opening hours.
- The importance of ensuring communication channels remained open with the new provider.

Councillor Tamsin Thomas as Executive Member for Enterprise, presented the report entitled 'Lease on Letchworth Multi Storey Car Park' and advised that:

- The report detailed the negotiations that have taken place regarding the proposed surrender of the lease of the Letchworth Multi Storey Car Park at the request of the Martin Group who currently hold the lease.
- The Martin Group were looking to undertake a regeneration of the Shopping Centre and as part of the pre-planning application stage have asked the Council to consider early surrender of the car park lease.
- The Martin Group would ensure that parking tariffs remained competitive with the other local car parks.
- The Martin Group would be introducing an automatic number plate recognition system, and this would maintain effective parking enforcement was in place.
- There would be an improvement to the current facilities with an extension in opening hours and the implementation of better security.
- Officers had estimated the additional capital and revenue costs associated with retention of the car park for the remainder of the lease, which could total £3.4 million.
- Cllr Thomas expressed her thanks to the Director – Enterprise and officers who had ensured every aspect had been considered and this was reflected in the report.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen

Points raised during the debate included:

- The importance of keeping discussions open with the Martin Group to ensure the proposals set out in paragraph 8.12 of the report were put in place.
- The extension in opening hours would be of benefit to the local community.
- From a financial aspect, the surrender of the lease was the right outcome for the Council.

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

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Approved the surrender of the lease for the Letchworth Multi Storey Car Park.

(2) Granted delegated authority to the Director of Enterprise in consultation with the Executive Member for Enterprise to negotiate and approve the details of any surrender in line with the broad principles in this report.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: After undertaking a review of the current operation and long-term needs of this car park, the surrender of this lease provides a positive outcome to the Council and the conditions that have been negotiated ensures there will be improvements to the car park which will benefit the public and economic vitality of the town centre.

42 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) UPDATE AND ANNUAL REVIEW

Audio recording – 56 minutes 5 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 was no challenge from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the recommended amendment to RIPA as this would ensure the Council kept in line with current legislation.

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Executive Member for Governance, presented the report entitled 'Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Update and Annual Review' and advised that:

- This report provided Cabinet with an update on RIPA and reported on the annual policy review.
- Although use of these powers was rare, the proposed amendments would ensure that the Council had an up-to-date RIPA framework which reflected current legislation and supported effective governance and assurance.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted the content of the report; and

(2) Resolved to adopt the amended RIPA Policy (Appendix A).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The Council is required to ensure it has an up-to-date, compliant and operationally usable RIPA framework that reflects current legislation and codes of practice and supports effective governance and assurance. 3.2. Approval of the updated policy reduces legal, regulatory and reputational risk, supports lawful enforcement activity where required, and strengthens transparency and democratic oversight.

43 SECTION 106 TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT 2026

Audio recording – 57 minutes 2 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:

- How the Council were unlikely to get another chance to undertake a Section 106 Task and Finish Group before the Local Government Reorganisation.
- How Section 106 contributions were spent was of great importance to the local community and the Council needed to ensure the right benefits were delivered to residents.
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that all eight recommendations in the report should be referred to Cabinet.

Councillor Ralph Muncer, as Chair of the Section 106 Task and Finish Group, presented the report entitled 'Section 106 Task and Finish Group Report 2026' and advised that:

- As a result of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and the subsequent increased housing supply, there would be a significant amount of development over the following decade which would result in many changes to the district.
- Without adequate infrastructure put in place, development of this increased housing supply was unsustainable.
- This inquiry had concluded was that if there was disconnect between the infrastructure priorities of the community and the infrastructure delivered through the Section 106 developer contributions, this could lead to detrimental impacts on communities.
- The 8 key recommendations in this report sought to close the gap between the communities and the councils that served them.
- As developers were looking to expedite housing developments with Section 106 contributions, it was crucial for the Council to obtain engagement as early as possible to ensure the funds were used where they were most needed.

The following Members asked questions:

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

In response to questions raised, Councillor Muncer advised that:

- Education and Highways were the two key departments allocated Section 106 contributions and recommendation 5 of the report was trying to improve local community infrastructure to ensure that local needs were prioritised.
- To ensure more engagement with the Hertfordshire County Council Infrastructure Prospectus, recommendation 6 would enable district councillors to identify priorities that affected local communities.
- Although there were not any recordings available from the discussions that had taken place with officers, their comments had been very useful, and changes had been made to the report following these consultations.
- Although the conversations that took place with Community Partnership Officers were informal, there had been agreement to try to obtain the best possible outcomes for local communities.
- Concerns raised with the Community Partnerships team were considered when the recommendations were drawn up.

- There had not been any engagement with the Leader of the Council or the Executive Member at the time of the report, as it had been felt it was of more importance to work with officers, as this report would eventually come to Cabinet.
- The deadline for this report had not allowed sufficient time for consultation with the Chairs of the Community Forums.
- A three to six-month consultation would be required to consult with the Community Forums, and the Terms of Reference may need to be updated to reflect this.
- The Council wanted to provide local people with the opportunity to raise their concerns and for councillors to then decide on what was a priority and what could be delivered.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas

Points raised during the debate included:

- This report was welcomed as there did need to be more clarity surrounding Section 106 contributions.
- The recommendations of the report were ambitious, and some were aspirational.
- It would be beneficial to look at what was being done by other local authorities.
- The Task and Finish Group had spent sixteen months working on this report, but there had been no communication with the Director for Governance or the Executive Member and only formal interviews with NHC Officers. No Chairs on Parish Town Councils were interviewed.
- The Chairs of the Community Forums should have been consulted.
- Training should be provided for Parish Councils and this need more consideration.
- The Task and Finish Group did not notify the Cabinet Member for Resources that there might be budget implications before the 2026/27 budget was agreed.
- Cabinet should note this report and further work and consultations should be undertaken on recommendations 1 – 8 before Cabinet were asked to consider them.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed an additional recommendation to request the Executive Member for Place and the Executive Member for Governance, alongside Directors, explore and develop the proposals further and consider implementation, with a report back to a future meeting of Cabinet. This was seconded by Councillor Donna Wright.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted the report.

(2) Tasked the Executive Member for Place and the Executive Member for Governance, together with relevant Officers, to further consider the recommendations and develop proposals for report to a future meeting of Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise the s106 Task and Finish Group report and recommendations.

N.B. Following this item there was a break in proceedings and the meeting reconvened at 21:27.

44 COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26 (QUARTER 3 UPDATE)

Audio recording – 1 hour 55 minutes and 44 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 best way to monitor the number of complex projects and risks for the Council.
- The reassurance provided by this report that project timetables were being kept.
- How the effective management of the most complex projects would depend on staff capacity and retention.
- Overall, there was a lot of reassurance gained from the report, but the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue to monitor progress of the projects in between quarterly reports.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Quarter 3 Update)' and advised that:

- There were currently a number of key projects underway which were being monitored to ensure the right officer capacity was in place.
- A new project relating to the Museum Collection Facility and the associated risks had now been added to the Council Delivery Plan.
- Three projects had been completed, and the associated risks had been managed to target level.
- The improved budget position had enabled the setting of a budget which was widely supported across the Council.
- The first meeting of the Royston Learner Pool project had taken place, and this project would now be added to the Council Delivery Plan.
- The two projects with an amber status were detailed in paragraph 8.3 of the report.
- The actions being taken for the two red status performance indicators were detailed in paragraph 8.5 of the report.
- Information regarding the missed waste collections data was set out in paragraph 8.6 of the report.
- The addition of new KPIs linked to the Council Plan as the Council moved towards 2027/28 were highlighted in paragraph 8.9 of the report.
- There would be an update on the Churchgate project to Cabinet later this year.
- The Charnwood House renovation project remained a Council priority and Expressions of Interests (EOI) as part of the first stage of the tender process have been sent out to select a lead marketing agency.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen 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.

45 THIRD QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26

Audio recording – 2 hours 6 minutes 58 seconds

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

- A key point from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting was the small increase on investment returns over the year which was now up to £2million.
- The Finance, Audit and Risk Committed had noted that most investments of the Council were with other local authorities, which was in line with the new investment strategies.

In response to a question from Councillor Daniel Allen, the Director – Resources advised that following the Local Government Reorganisation, investments or loans would be transferred to the new authority for them to manage.

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

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of December 2025.

REASON FOR DECISION: 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.

46 THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REVIEW 2025/26

Audio recording – 2 hours 10 minutes 50 seconds

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

- There had not been many questions raised at the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and there had been a discussion around the replacement of the Priory Gardens Bandstand.
- The Independent Member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee had noticed a discrepancy between the two papers on the value of assets which had now been rectified.
- A revised timetable for the list of the schemes in the 2025/26 Capital Programme which would have an impact on the budget in 2026/27 was set out in Table 2 of the report.
- The underspend in the cost of the Fibre Waste Bins was detailed in Table 3 of the report.
- The £16 million required to fund the Capital Programme would be met from internal borrowing as set out in Table 4 of the report.
- The Priory Gardens Bandstand replacement project approved by Cabinet would require an increase in the budget to allow this project to proceed.
- Details of how the Council would fund the Capital Programme was detailed in paragraph 8.6 of the report.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Donna Wright

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

- After 1 April 2028 it would be for the new unitary authority to decide what projects would proceed.
- The current timescales for Oughtonhead Common Wier were still valid.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Daniel Allen

Points raised during the debate included:

- The replacement of the Priory Gardens Bandstand would be of benefit to the whole community of Royston as it was used for many different events.
- The new play equipment installed at the Howard Park Gardens in Letchworth was a great benefit to the local community.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(1) Noted the forecast expenditure of £23.350M 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, increasing the estimated spend by £3.011M.

(3) Approved a change of scope to the Priory Gardens Bandstand project from renovation to rebuild and an increase of the budget in 2026/27 by £0.025M.

(4) 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.

47 THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2025/26

Audio recording – 2 hours 21 minutes 23 seconds

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

- The focus of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee had been about understanding the overspends and underspends being declared.
- The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee looked at the financial risks regarding the Churchgate project and the funding that would be required.
- Explanations for all the significant variances in the 2025/26 Revenue Budget were detailed in Table 3 of the report.
- Details of the overspend variance related to the historical housing benefit subsidy which had to be paid back to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) were set out at the end of Table 3 in the report.

- Corporate financial health indicators were listed in Table 4 of the report.
- Indication of current activity levels of the corporate financial health indicators were set out in Table 5 of the report.
- The impact on the General Fund balance in Quarter Three was summarised in Table 7 of the report.
- Overall, the Council was in line with the Revenue Budget forecast.

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, a £902k decrease in net expenditure.

(3) Approved the changes to the 2026/27 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £201k increase in net expenditure.

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.

The meeting closed at 9.58 pm

Chair

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CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Strategic Planning Matters Report

REPORT OF: Director - Place

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Place

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Thriving Communities, Accessible Services, Responsible Growth, Sustainability

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This report identifies the latest position on key planning and transport issues affecting the Council.
2. RECOMMENDATIONS
2.1. That the report on strategic planning matters be noted 2.2. That the response in Appendix A
3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS 3.1. To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments on strategic planning matters.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Executive Member has been briefed on the relevant matters in this report. Where appropriate these have also been reported to the Council's internal, informal Strategic Planning Project Board. This includes cross-party representation from all political groups. The Project Board is chaired by the Executive Member for Place.

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. Members will be aware of, and familiar with, many of the issues surrounding strategic planning matters. This report is intended to provide Members with the current positions on the following key matters where there has been substantive change since the report to Cabinet in April 2026.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Government Changes

8.1. From 11 May 2026, Local Planning Authorities are required to consult the Secretary of State before refusing planning permission for housing schemes of 150 dwellings or more. This procedural step grants Ministers 21 days to decide whether to "call in" the application for central determination. This applies to all relevant applications that had not been determined prior to 11 May.

8.2. The Government issued its response on Planning Committee Reform on 2 June 2026. A new National Scheme of Delegation will come into force in Autumn 2026. It mandates which planning applications local councils must delegate to planning officers and which can be referred to committee.

8.3. Schedule 1 (Mandatory Delegation) will apply to applications that must be determined by planning officers. These include minor or technical proposals, including householder applications, minor residential developments (fewer than 10 dwellings), and certificates of lawfulness. Schedule 1 also includes reserved matters applications for schemes of less than 500 homes Schedule 2 (Presumed Delegation) are larger or more complex schemes. These are also presumed to be delegated to officers unless they meet certain criteria (such as specific major infrastructure or substantial local conflict with the Local Plan) that justify referral to the planning committee; or made on behalf of the Local Authority/ officer or member of the Authority and the nominated officer and nominated member of the planning committee agree that it should be referred to the planning committee for determination.

8.4. The key changes since the proposals were consulted upon are:

a. A one-month delay in the proposed implementation date to 31 October 2026
b. To include reserved matters for schemes of more than 500 homes in Schedule 2 (the original proposal was fall *all* reserved matters to fall in Schedule 1)
c. To include a Section 73 application (applications to vary a condition on an existing planning application) in the same category as the original application
d. A requirement for the Secretary of State to assess the effectiveness of the new regulations within 12 months of implementation

8.5. The regulations will also place a statutory limit on the size of the planning committee at 13 members. Councils should consider whether a smaller number of members would be more appropriate in their area. North Herts' Planning Control Committee currently has 12 members.

8.6. The new Local Plan system / regulations came into force on 25 March 2026. Since, the Government have been releasing further guidance on different procedural elements of the new system.

8.7. The Government launched a further consultation on planning fees which ended on 18 May 2026. This seeks views on the following:

- establishing a new national default fee schedule, based on 90% of estimated costs, to bring planning fees to a level closer to cost recovery and act as a baseline from which a new local fee setting model will operate;
- introducing new fees and restructure existing fee categories in order to reduce complexity for users;
- implementing a surcharge on planning fees for statutory consultees
- establishing key principles behind local fee setting, as well as seek views on the potential to implement a cap on locally set fees
- reviewing the future role of discretionary services such as Planning Performance Agreements and pre-application advice in light of proposed increases to default fees and the introduction of the local variation model

North Herts Local Plan

8.8. Following the new plan-making system coming into effect on 25 March 2026, the Council published a formal Notice of its intention to review the Local Plan and a revised timetable based on the new regulations on 24th April 2026.

8.9. The Council also published its scoping document for consultation. This runs between 11 May and 28 June 2026. The scoping document asks for views on:

- A vision and what issues the new Local Plan should include
- And how people would like to be involved through-out the new process.

8.10. It is intentionally light touch, with Government recommending a 3 week consultation period – although North Herts will be consulting for a period of 7 weeks to ensure that all community forums are able to meet during this period.

8.11. The scoping consultation is a new requirement in the new plan-making system, intended to scope initial ideas and form the basis of a revised consultation and engagement strategy which will replace the authorities' Statement of Community Involvement. The more substantial consultations will be as part of the content and evidence base document consultation and draft Local Plan later in 2026 and 2027.

8.12. Further details on the new system, timetable and scoping document consultation can be found here.

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Proposed Expansion of Luton Airport

8.13. In May 2026, the Court of Appeal refused an application by The Luton And District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise (LADACAN) to appeal the November 2025 High Court ruling in favour of the SoS's (Secretary of State) decision to permit the Luton Rising's DCO application for the expansion of London Luton Airport. The Court also refused to grant leave for that ruling to be appealed.

8.14. Luton Rising are seeking to progress with implementation of the DCO later in 2026. Early considerations will include the proposed replacement Country Park that will be located within North Herts along with establishing the monitoring and review groups required by the consent. Following the Court of Appeal ruling, officers are liaising with the other Hertfordshire host authorities (Hertfordshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council) and will be contacting Luton Rising to ascertain their next steps.

Strategic Sites

8.15. The Strategic Planning Project Board continues to meet regularly. The status of work on the six, largest Strategic Sites in the Local Plan is summarised below:

Policy SP14: North of Baldock	The masterplan for this site was adopted as a material consideration for any future planning applications by Full Council in June 2025. An outline application was submitted in October 2025 (application reference 25/02571/OP) and remains under consideration. Additional information has been submitted and public consultation on this is underway.
SP15: North of Letchworth	The masterplan for this site was adopted as a material consideration for any future planning applications by Full Council in July 2024. The applicant is currently in the process of procuring a development partner.
SP16: North of Stevenage	The masterplan for this site was adopted as a material consideration for any future planning applications by Full Council in November 2024. Members resolved to approve the outline planning application (23/01935/OP) in March 2025 subject to completion of the s106 agreement. This legal agreement is being prepared.
SP17: Highover Farm, Hitchin	Outline planning permission for this site was granted in November 2024 on completion of the s106 legal agreement following a resolution to grant permission by the Planning Committee in October 2023. Reserved matters for infrastructure have been approved following committee resolution in October 2025 alongside a number of conditions including a Design Code for the site. The application for the first phases of new homes was received in November 2025 (25/02794/RM) and was approved at Planning Control Committee in April 2026 subject to conditions.

SP18: North-east of Great Ashby	The masterplan for this site was adopted as a material consideration for any future planning applications by Full Council in November 2024. An outline application was submitted in January 2026 (25/03080/HYA) and remains under consideration.
SP19: East of Luton	The masterplan for this site was adopted as a material consideration for any future planning applications by Full Council in January 2025. Amendments to the two, separate outline planning applications were submitted November 2025 and are under consideration (Council application references 17/00830/1 and 16/02014/1). There are separate applications for the main access points into the sites (22/02904/FP, 22/02905/FP).

8.16. Other masterplans for significant sites are being progressed through a variety of PPAs, pre-application discussions and current planning applications lodged with the Council (Masterplans in current applications | North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk)).

Other Local Authorities' Local Plans

8.17. We are neighboured by eight other Local Authorities who are all at differing stages of their Local Plans. We maintain regular contact with regard to the status of their Local Plans and input to consultations as appropriate. Details of the most recent positions of our neighbours is set out below.

8.18. The regulations under the new plan-making system still require authorities to collaborate on strategic issues. Whilst the legal duty has been removed, inspectors will still consider how authorities have collaborated as Local Plans are examined.

8.19. There are no further updates since the April Cabinet report of the Local Plans for St Albans City and District Council, Uttlesford District Council, Stevenage Borough Council, East Hertfordshire, Welwyn Hatfield District Council and South Cambridgeshire.

Luton Borough Council

8.20. Luton Borough Council is consulting on its Scoping Document which ends on 25 July 2026. It is more extensive than other authorities that have issued scoping consultations. Officers will be providing a response.

8.21. More details can be found on Luton Borough website.

Central Bedfordshire Council

8.22. Central Bedfordshire consulted on its Scoping Document which ended on 3rd June 2026. It was light touch focusing on asking stakeholders to priorities a defined list of issues.

8.23. More details can be found on Central Bedfordshire's website

Neighbourhood Plans

8.24. There are currently no Neighbourhoods Plans in preparation. Under planning reforms, local communities will be able to prepare 'Neighbourhood Priorities Statements' (NPS). These are a lighter-touch alternate to Neighbourhood Plans. The (potential) role of NPS will be explored with parish and town councils as part of the scoping consultation in the preparatory stages of the new Local Plan.

Other matters

North Herts Council's Draft Town Centres Strategy

8.25. The Town Centres Strategy was consulted on between 3 December 2025 and 30 January 2026. Residents, businesses, community groups and partner organisations on our Local Plan database were invited to participate in the consultation. The final Town Centre Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for adoption in September 2026. A supporting Delivery Plan will be prepared during the winter 2026 in collaboration with the Economic Development team.

Chalk Streams

8.26. A resolution was passed at Full Council in April 2026 expressing support for a proposed Parliamentary Bill to make all UK chalk streams a serial UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Executive Member has written to Pippa Heylings MP and Chris Hinchliffe MP on this matter. The letter is attached as Appendix A.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Under (Section 5, paragraph 5.7.18) of the Council's Constitution (the Terms of Reference for Cabinet), the Constitution states that Cabinet may exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority and receive reports on strategic planning matters, applications for, approval/designation, consultation/referendums revocations (or recommend revocation) of neighbourhood plans and orders, (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Place).

9.2. The preparation of statutory plans and supporting documents is guided by a range of acts and associated regulations including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended, the PCPA) and the Localism Act 2011.

9.3. Under the Council's Constitution (14.6.10 (b) iv B) all functions relating to National Infrastructure Planning including co-ordination of the Council's response to any consultation, examination or other any other matter concerned with major infrastructure projects, is delegated to the Service Director Place.

9.4. New regulatory requirements have been issued for the preparation of local plans. This includes enacting various amendments to the PCPA. The planned annual review of the Council's Constitution in Summer 2026 will be used to ensure that relevant requirements and delegations align with the requirements and language of the new plan-making system.

9.5. Draft regulations for the National Scheme of Delegation have been published. The accompanying statutory guidance states local authorities will need to amend their constitutions to align with the national scheme. Officers will begin preparing for this, and any accompanying and complementary changes to officer delegations and call-in procedures. The expected implementation date for the National Scheme of Delegation is 31 October 2026.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The general costs of activities identified in this report - including the additional, temporary posts identified in Section 15 below - are met through existing revenue budgets, reserves or benefit from external funding or other arrangements to recover costs.

10.2. £20k has been set aside in the budget for any additional work associated with the London Luton Airport DCO application following the conclusion of the Examination from the SoS,(Secretary of State) and following the outcome of the Judicial Review and any ongoing work arising from a positive decision, such as implementing monitoring levels and the enforcement of the approved scheme.

10.3. A bid for MHCLG funding was submitting in January 2026 to support the preparation of Local Plan as part of the new plan making system. We received £108,474 on 27 March 2026. This will support staff capacity and evidence base preparation and augment the currently identified revenue budget for this corporate priority project. The funding is based on the commitment to publish a Notice to commence the Plan by 30 June 2026 and publish Gateway 1 assessment by 31 October 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. Delays to the publishing of regulations relating to Local Plans has meant the Local Plan timetable has needed to be revised to ensure compliance with the new regulations. While the Local Plan can still be prepared within the new 30-month timetable, it is unlikely that the Council will be able to submit the Plan for examination before Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in March 2028. However, key decisions will be taken ahead of this.

11.3. As neighbouring authorities advance their own Local Plans, it is essential to maintain alignment on strategic matters, particularly with those authorities that may be integrated with us through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Officers continue to hold regular meetings with neighbouring authorities to support constructive and collaborative

working relationships. This includes ongoing work through the NEC group, as well as preparatory work for the future Strategic Development Strategy (SDS) and its relationship with the Local Plan.

11.4. A substantial number of Government consultations affecting the planning system—both plan-making and decision-taking—have recently been undertaken. Officers will continue to monitor these developments closely and assess their implications for ongoing and future work at North Herts.

11.5. Resourcing issues across the planning profession remain a concern. The inability to recruit or retain experienced officers poses a risk to delivering the required programme of work for the Local Plan.

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 not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report. Future individual schemes or considerations may well be subject to appropriate review to ensure they comply with latest equality legislative need. Any risks and opportunities identified will also be subject to assessment for impact on those that share a protected characteristic.

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. Several of the schemes noted at section 8 will have considerable impact on the environment as they come to fruition. Many of these will be subject to their own statutory requirements for environmental assessment such as Sustainability Appraisal or Environmental Impact Assessment. The need for further assessment, for example where there is no statutory requirement, is considered on a case-by-case basis.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 No new implications arising directly from this report. Staffing and capacity within the planning service is monitored and managed on an on-going basis.

15.2 There are presently no permanent vacancies in the Development Management service following internal and external recruitment. A fixed-term post to provide additional capacity has been filled in the Major Projects team. Interim arrangements have also been put in place in this area following the departure of a contract planner.

15.3 Two permanent posts within the Strategic Planning Service have been filled. There is currently a vacancy for a fixed term post which will be advertised shortly. The strategic planning manager post is currently filled on an interim basis and is expected to be advertised in the 2026. There is also an agency staff post to support the call for sites work.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A: Letter to Pippa Heylings MP and Chris Hinchliffe MP on Council Motion on Chalk Streams.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Rachael Rooney	Interim Strategic Planning Manager,	rachael.rooney@north-herts.gov.uk,

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None

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North Herts Council

Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Contact: Cllr Donna Wright
E-mail: Donna.Wright@north-herts.gov.uk

Pippa Heylings MP
Chris Hinchliffe MP

By email

13 May 2026

Dear Pippa and Chris,

Chalk Streams (UNESCO Natural World Heritage Bill)

North Hertfordshire is located across the watershed of the Thames and Anglian river basin districts and contains the headwaters of streams and rivers that feed both north and south to the Great Ouse and Thames. Our District contains many chalk streams including the Rivers Ivel, Mimram and Oughton. They are a key feature of many of our towns and villages, as well as the countryside between them, acting both as important ecological corridors and places greatly enjoyed by residents for leisure and recreation. As you are aware, as well as being highly valued local assets, our chalk streams are also an internationally rare and distinct habitat.

Our adopted Council Plan for the period to 2028 identifies Sustainability as one of our four key priorities. This includes a commitment to support efforts to protect our chalk streams.

In this context, we were excited to learn earlier this year of your campaign to strengthen protection for the UK's chalk streams and the introduction of Pippa's private member's Bill to seek UNESCO World Heritage Status.

This matter was debated by elected Councillors at our Full Council meeting of April 2026 where it was resolved to write to yourselves to express this Council's support for the Bill to make all UK chalk streams a serial UNESCO World Heritage Site.

I understand that the Bill as originally tabled has timed out following the end of the Parliamentary session. However, it remains your intention to reintroduce the Bill following the King's Speech through the Private Members' Bill Ballot or re-tabling as a presentation bill during the summer.

We wish you every success with your efforts to secure Parliamentary time to progress your campaign in the new session and would be interested to learn more about how this Council can support your efforts to secure the inclusion of chalk streams on the next iteration of the UK's UNESCO tentative list.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Donna Wright,
Executive Member for Place, North Herts Council

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CABINET

TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - ADOPTION

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. The Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) supports the Local Plan to secure the appropriate contributions arising from new development across the District. A review of the SPD was necessary to update it and public consultation has taken place. The report outlines the results of that public consultation, the proposed amendments to the SPD and seeks approval to adopt the SPD to be used in determining planning proposals.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the Developer Contribution SPD, attached as Appendix 1 be adopted.

2.2. That the 2023 Developer Contributions SPD be revoked.

2.3. That delegated authority is granted to the Director – Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Place, to make any minor non-material corrections (including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations) to the adopted Developer Contributions SPD as considered necessary for publication and publicity in accordance with the relevant regulations.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To allow the updated Developer Contributions SPD to be adopted to support delivery of the policies in the adopted Local Plan and ensure that developer contributions for development schemes are secured appropriately where they are necessary.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None. Consultation has taken place on the Developer Contributions SPD, amendments have been made in response to the representations made and is ready for adoption in accordance with the relevant regulations.

4.2. Following the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No.11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026,

supplementary planning documents in preparation must be adopted no later than 30 June 2026.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Executive Member for Place has been briefed on the progress of the Developer Contributions SPD.

5.2. Internal consultation with relevant officers across Council departments has taken place.

5.3. Public consultation on the draft SPD was undertaken between 6 November 2025 and 16 January 2026. A summary of the comments made in response to the draft SPD has been prepared and is attached as Appendix 2.

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 December 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. Developer contributions can be used to make a development acceptable but should only be used where unacceptable impacts cannot be dealt with by planning conditions. Legal tests must be applied to any planning obligations sought, and this is outlined in Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and in paragraph 58 of the NPPF. Any contributions must be: a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; b) directly related to the development; and c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

7.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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. SPDs are not subject to an independent examination but are required to undergo public consultation.

7.3. The Developer Contributions SPD supports the implementation of policies in the Local Plan, particularly:
Policy SP7: Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions;
Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters;
Policy HS2: Affordable housing; and
Policy NE6: New and improved open space

7.4. Following a resolution by Cabinet in September 2025, public consultation on the draft Developer Contributions SPD took place between 6 November 2025 and 16 January 2026.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The draft Developer Contributions SPD included a number of proposed changes to update the document. These included:

- Deleting references throughout the document to developer contributions requested by Hertfordshire County Council;

- Updating and providing additional details with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Updating the open space standards to reflect the new guidance published by Fields in Trust and introducing a tiered approach to open space provision incorporating the Fields in Trust standards; and
- General updating of relevant strategies and guidance where those have been updated or new guidance has been published.

8.2. As a result of the public consultation, 55 individual responses were received from residents, the County Council, the Central East Integrated Care Board, landowners and developers. A summary of the representations and responses is attached as Appendix 2.

8.3. In response to the representations, a number of further amendments have been made to the SPD:

- There was support to replace the references for HCC developer contributions with a link to the guide that the County Council have published;
- A number of representations were made in respect of the delivery of infrastructure ahead of planned development. A minor change was made to reference 'expected timescales' that funding would apply to, however the overarching principle within the SPD remains unchanged; it is considered to be reasonable for large or multiple developments to pay for infrastructure that has been forward funded, enabling it to be delivered at the same time or ahead of development it supports. Statutory planning obligation tests will still apply.
- A number of amendments were made to the section Vacant Building Credit to simplify the text;
- Significant updates have been made to Section 7: Healthy Communities as the information and costs for healthcare facilities have been updated by the Central East Integrated Care Board;
- Some further amendments have been made to update the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements;
- A new section has been added to the SPD, "Open Space, Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities". This amendment has been made to ensure that all the relevant guidance is in one section of the SPD;
- There were objections which related to the proposed introduction of open space provision in different scales of development, or "tiers". The objections stated that these changes made the SPD complicated. It is agreed that these changes should not be made in the Developer Contributions SPD as the District Design Code SPD can include the details of how open space is provided in new development; and
- There were no objections to updating the Fields in Trust open space standards in the SPD.

8.4. A Section 106 Task and Finish Group was set up to review the processes around developer contributions more generally. There are no recommendations made in the Section 106 Task and Finish Report which need to be included in the Developer Contributions SPD.

8.5. The SPD has been updated taking into account representations received through the consultation process, internal discussions with development management and HCC. The SPD is attached at Appendix 1. The SEA Screening Determination is attached at Appendix 3.

8.6. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the SPD will be adopted and will be a material consideration in planning decisions.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, paragraph 5.7.18 of the Constitution states that the Cabinet should exercise the 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 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). These same documents make provision for local planning authorities to revoke any Supplementary Planning Document. There are no specific powers to "amend" an existing SPD in the acts or regulations, so it is common practice for an authority to adopt an updated SPD and simultaneously revoke the previous version for the avoidance of doubt.

9.3. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No.11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026 ; Schedule 1 – Plan Making Saving and Transitional Provisions states that local planning authority may prepare and make arrangements for the adoption of a proposed supplementary planning document, provided that the document is adopted no later than 30 June 2026.

9.4. The provisions for planning obligations are set out under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The general costs of preparing Supplementary Planning Documents are met through existing staff resources and revenue budgets.

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 new risk implications arising from this report.

11.3. The risks associated with not preparing a Developer Contributions SPD include:

- lack of clarity and uncertainty to case officers and applicants when negotiating and determining planning applications;
- lack of consistency with the Local Plan as well as national planning policy and guidance; and
- a risk of not securing the maximum range and / or amount of contributions possible within the parameters of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations.

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 not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report. Future individual schemes or considerations may well be subject to appropriate review to ensure they comply with latest equality legislative need. Any risks and opportunities identified will also be subject to assessment for impact on those that share a protected characteristic.

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 SPD includes information on Biodiversity Net Gain, an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Amendments to the relevant section of the SPD have been made to provide up to date guidance for developers and there are continuing environmental benefits.

14.2. Government regulations require that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are 'screened' to determine whether statutory environmental assessment (SEA) is required which would consider the social, economic and environmental implications of proposed policies and allocations.

14.3 A screening opinion was completed for the 2023 SPD and has been reviewed in light of the consultation. This is attached at Appendix 3 and concludes that the Developer Contributions 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.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 : Developer Contributions SPD

16.2 Appendix 2 : Statement of Consultation

16.3 Appendix 3 : SEA Screening Determination

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Clare Skeels	Senior Planning Officer,	clare.skeels@north-herts.gov.uk,

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Developer Contributions SPD – Draft for Consultation : Cabinet 23 September 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS SECTION

If you are unsure of the environmental implications of your decision/report/recommendations/policy, please speak to a member of the Policy & Strategy team at the earliest opportunity.
Please email: policy@north-herts.gov.uk

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.0 What is meant by Environmental Implications?

In May 2019, North Herts Council declared a Climate Emergency. As part of that motion it was agreed that '***officers would ensure that, as the Council's policies are routinely reviewed, specific consideration is given to how policies and our related decisions and actions, affect our contribution to climate change, and where necessary, update these policies to reduce our impact wherever possible.***'

In July 2023, we declared an Ecological Emergency, setting out our commitment to nature recovery, biodiversity net gain and habitat restoration through strategic priorities and planning and development. It shows that the council understands the seriousness of the biodiversity crisis and acknowledges the need to take urgent action to support nature.

The aims of the Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 are:

- **Achieve Net Zero by 2030 for the council's own operations**.
- **Achieve a Net Zero North Herts district by 2040.**
- **Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change.**
- **Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.**
- **Increase biodiversity in North Herts.**

This guidance provides a means to undertake this specific consideration when reviewing policies and any related decisions and actions.

The revised report template will carry this additional section for completion by officers:

"ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. All recommendations/actions of the council, and those identified in this report strive for positive impacts on the environment as per the Council's Sustainability priority. This report/actions/recommendations supports the following aims of the Sustainability Strategy [include all that apply]:.

☐ ***Achieve Net Zero by 2030 for the council's own operations.***
☐ ***Achieve a Net Zero North Herts district by 2040.***
☐ ***Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change.***
☐ ***Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.***
☐ ***Increase biodiversity in North Herts.***

14.2. Pick <u>one</u> of the following statements:

A. ***There are no significant environmental impacts or requirements that apply to [the actions/ Policy/this report/recommendations].***

B. ***There are tangible [positive or negative] environmental impacts or requirements that apply to [the actions/ Policy/this report] and these are (xyz... author to include).***

C. ***Positive or negative environmental impacts have not been identified at the time of writing. As the project progresses, if there are impacts identified, the need to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment will be identified.***

D. ***Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken. [The actions / Policy /this report] have been considered and [there are/ are no relevant adaptations/ mitigation measure that could be applied] [the following adaptations/ mitigations have been included – as detailed in X].".***

If the report has identified environmental impact, then this guidance assists the author to articulate them in a uniform manner.

2.0 Identifying who is responsible for the Environmental Impact Assessment

The person identified to undertake the Environmental Implications Assessment should be the person with whom responsibility for evidencing need to change a policy or service decision rests.

It is advisable that assessment should only be taken by council officers in their relevant policy/service areas. This will ensure that proper ownership of the analysis is maintained, that there is sufficient knowledge of the service itself, and any results of the analysis inform future service development and improvement.

3.0 Conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment

The assessment and its principles apply to existing as well as new and proposed policies. In order to be most effective, any Environmental Impact Assessment should begin with analysis during policy development or at the early stages of a policy review, considering its possible effects well in advance of implementation. The assessment form includes example questions to help guide your consideration of the environmental impact of the policy.

3.1 Undertaking analysis: what environmental information can I use?

The analysis you undertake will inform your assessment. It is important that information about the projected impact of the policy is appropriate, factual and reliable.

If you do not have environmental information about a particular policy, consider whether you need to fill these information gaps by surveys or other engagement or stakeholder meetings. This may include, in the longer term, questions included in the District Wide or Citizens Panel surveys, for example, or the making use of community events to test agreement with a policy

decision that clearly impacts our contribution to climate change. You might also consider engaging with environmental organisations.

3.2 The findings

Having reviewed your analysis and assessment, there are four main steps that you can take with regard to any proposal you are making:

No major change – The analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, and the evidence shows no potential of adverse impacts.

Adjust the policy – This involves taking steps to remove barriers or to better promote a reduction in the impact on the environment. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential effect.

Continue the policy – This means adopting your proposals, despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to reduce the impact on the environment.

Stop and remove the policy – If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you will want to consider stopping the policy altogether.

4.0 Monitoring and review

Assessment is an ongoing process that does not end once a policy has been agreed or implemented. Service provision, demographics, and the physical environment may change, or new options to reduce an adverse effect could become apparent. This does not mean repeating the analysis, but using the experience gained through implementation to check the findings and to make any necessary adjustments.

Consider:

- How you will measure the effects of the policy
- When the policy will be reviewed and what could trigger an early revision
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and review
- What type of information is needed for monitoring and how often it will be analysed
- How to engage stakeholders in implementation, monitoring and review

5.0 Publication

It is recommended that the Council should publish information on environmental analysis alongside the policy or decision that it refers to. Arrangements have been made to ensure that reference to environmental analysis appears in all formal committee reports on the corporate template.

Environmental Impact assessment

1. *Name of activity:*					
2. *Main purpose of activity:*					
3. *List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:*					
Area of Potential Impact	***Examples to Consider*** *(non-exhaustive)*	***Neutral*** *(X)*	***Negative*** *(X)*	***Positive*** *(X)*	*Describe the contribution/impact on the area that the decision may have - assess whether this impact is a* ***negative or positive or neutral one.*** ***Negative: What are the risks?*** ***Positive: What are the benefits?***
1. Impact on greenhouse emission and support adaption to the effects of climate change	Will energy needs be met through renewable sources? Will it reduce emissions through retrofitting new technology? Will it reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy consumption and the need to travel?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
2. Use of natural resources including water and energy	Will it reduce water consumption? Will it reduce energy consumption?				***Negative*** ***Positive***

3. Minimisation of flood risks to the area (i.e. promotion of SUD's. protect surface and ground water quality)	Will it minimise flood risk from all sources of flooding? Will it reduce property damage due to storm events/ heavy rainfall by improving flood resistance and flood resilience?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
4. To protect, enhance and create environments that encourage and support biodiversity	Will it protect, enhance and increase biodiversity and protect habitats? Will it improve access to and promote educational value of sites of biodiversity interest?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
5. To improve Air Quality *(air quality describes how polluted the air we breathe is)*	Will it improve air quality? Will it reduce emissions of key pollutants?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
6. To reduce need to travel, the use of private motorised vehicular transport as well as encourage walking, cycling, and use of public transport	Will it encourage increased walking, cycling and use of public transport? Will it increase the proportion of journeys using modes other than a car?				***Negative*** ***Positive***

7. To reduce waste production and increase recycling, recovery and reuse of waste	Will it lead to reduced consumption of materials and resources? Will it reduce household waste? Will it reduce construction waste? Will it increase recovery recycling and re-use?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
8. To enhance the public realm and street improvements	Will it reduce litter? Will it enhance the quality of public realm?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
9. To protect, enhance and seek opportunities to increase open space	Will it improve open space? Will it improve landscape character? Will it minimise development on Greenfield sites?				***Negative*** ***Positive***
10. To reduce noise and impact of noise	Will it reduce noise pollution from vehicles?				***Negative*** ***Positive***

6.0 Results			
	Yes	**No**	
Were positive impacts identified?	☐	☐	
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	☐	☐	

7.0 Consultation, decisions and actions		
Describe the decision on this activity **(refer to section 3.2)**		
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positive impact		
Action	*Responsible person*	*Completion due date*
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		

8.0 Signatures	
Assessor (report author):	
Name:	*Signature***
Validated by (line manager):	
Name:	*Signature***

Forward to the Policy inbox: policy@north-herts.gov.uk	
*Signature***	
Assessment date:	*Review date:*

** **Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically.**
A copy of this form should be forwarded to policy@north-herts.gov.uk and a duplicate filed on the council's report system, alongside any report proposing a decision on policy or service change.

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Annex A - Equality Analysis Template

1. Name of activity:	
2. Main purpose of activity:	
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	

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)	☐	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person living with a disability	☐	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a particular race	☐	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	√☐	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	☐	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a particular religion or belief	☐	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a particular age	☐	☐	☐	**Negative**

				Positive
Transgender	☐	☐	☐	**Negative**
				Positive

5 Results			
	Yes	**No**	
Were positive impacts identified?	☐	☐	
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.	☐	☐	.
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	☐	☐	.

6. Consultation, decisions, and actions		
If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?		
Describe the decision on this activity		
.		
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively		
Action	Responsible person	Completion due date
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		

7. Signatures	
Assessor (Report Author)	
Name:	Signature**
Validated by (relevant Senior Manager)	
Name:	Signature**
Forward to the Policy & Strategy Team	
Signature**	
Assessment date:	Review date:

** **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.

Appendix 2

Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Statement of Consultation

June 2026

Introduction

This consultation statement has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 12 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The statement sets out who, when and how interested parties were consulted when preparing the draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The statement also summarises the representations received and how they have influenced the revised SPD.

The Developer Contributions SPD sets out detailed guidance on the type and scale of developer contributions that will be sought to support new development in North Hertfordshire and supports Policy SP7 in the Local Plan.

Consultation on the Developer Contributions SPD

The draft SPD was approved for consultation at Cabinet on 23 September 2025.

Notifications were sent by email or post to a wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultees, developers and agents, Town and Parish Councils and any other interested parties who have signed up for Local Plan updates. The consultation documents were made available on our website and at the Council Offices.

Consultation took place between 6 November 2025 and 16 January 2026.

In total, 55 individual representations were received from 14 consultees. Respondents included residents, housebuilders and planning agents. Representations were received through the Council's online consultation software and by email. The responses to the consultation are summarised in Appendix A.

Changes made to the Developer Contributions SPD

The consultation draft SPD included a number of areas where we considered that updates were necessary. These included:

- Deleting references throughout the document to developer contributions requested by Hertfordshire County Council;
- Updating and providing details with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Updating the open space standards to reflect new guidance from Fields in Trust and introducing tiers of open space incorporating the Fields in Trust standards; and
- General updating of relevant strategies and guidance where it has been updated or new guidance has been published.

Recommendation

Following the consultation, all representations have been reviewed and fully considered. Some representations were not directly relevant to the scope of the SPD, but where appropriate, changes have been made to the final version of the SPD.

Following the consultation and reviewing the representations, it is recommended that the SPD, as modified under the powers of S23(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) is presented to Cabinet with a resolution to adopt.

Appendix A: Summary of representations received and responses

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
Introduction		
General	A number of comments were made about transport and car parking in Codicote and the effect of development on the road network in Baldock.	The comments are noted and where appropriate these have been forwarded to the Development Management Team to be considered as part of the planning applications. No changes have been made in the Developer Contributions SPD as the issues cannot be addressed through the SPD.
	Previously, Anglian Water Services have advised that developer contributions have not been required. However, that situation may change in the next decade as current Ofwat funding is unlikely to meet the investment needed.	Noted. This will be kept under review through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Local Plan Review.
	A number of representations referred to typographical errors and inaccurate links to other paragraphs throughout the document.	These errors have been corrected.
1.1.3	The relationship with the HCC Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions, 2024 should be made clear	In the adopted Developer Contributions SPD, there were a number of sections which considered developer contributions requested by Hertfordshire County Council.

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
		The County Council has subsequently published its own Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions in 2024. To avoid confusion and duplication, the Developer Contributions SPD has been amended to delete the detailed references to developer contributions requested by the County Council and where appropriate these have been replaced with links to the County Council's website.
1.10.2	A number of representations and concerns were made in respect of this paragraph on the delivery of infrastructure ahead of planned development. The concerns included: • Whether the approach is consistent with national guidance and the statutory tests for planning obligations; • That additional guidance should be included in the SPD to establish how proportionate contributions would be determined to ensure that any required contributions would be fairly and reasonably related to the scale and kind of development; • That guidance should be added to this section to ensure that the Council do not seek to use this retrospectively fund infrastructure already in place; and • Additional text should be added to state that contributions should only be sought if they meet the	The SPD was amended prior to consultation to ensure that the Council can seek contributions for infrastructure ahead of multiple planned developments to address the specific needs of an area. It is considered reasonable for large multiple planned developments to pay for infrastructure that has been future funded so that it can be delivered at the same as time or ahead of such development. This will help build confidence for the public in accepting development and of making the link between developments and the benefits they provide. Statutory planning obligation tests will still apply. Paragraph 1.10.2 already refers to defined expectations in relation to any future funding of projects, however, an additional reference to timescales has also been added for further clarity.

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
	tests as set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).	
Process, Procedure & Management		
2.2.4	A comment was made about development proposals changing between the pre-application stage and submission of the proposals and that the level of developer contributions needed can also change over that time.	Additional text has been added into the paragraph to clarify that the required timescales may be prescribed by Planning Control Committee within any resolution to grant planning permission.
	Separately, a comment was made that discussions about developer contributions should include any organisations seeking developer contributions, in addition to specific Council services and that those organisations should be defined as "requestors".	No amendments have been made in response to these comments. Clear priorities for new infrastructure provision will be set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. These priorities will determine what S106 contributions can be requested by the case officer when considering an application.
2.3.4	A representation sought an amendment to reflect that there could be a difference in the level of developer contributions between the pre-application and application stage.	No amendments have been made as any significant changes would be considered as part of the Development Management process.
2.8.2	A representation from the County Council requested that the paragraph should not be deleted from the Developer Contributions SPD.	All references to the HCC Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions have been deleted throughout this document to avoid duplication and

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
		references to indexation for HCC contributions should be included in the HCC Guide.
Economy and Town Centres		
General	One comment was received which noted the vibrancy and vitality of Codicote High Street.	Comment noted.
3.2.1	The paragraph should include additional guidance and examples of how developers can create skill opportunities for local people.	An additional reference has been included in the SPD to refer to the Economic Development Strategy and any associated Action Plans.
Transport		
General	Comments were made in respect of travel, transport and congestion because of new development proposals in Baldock and the need for car park provision in Codicote which should be provided by new development.	The comments which were made in respect of Baldock will be forwarded to be considered as part of the public consultation responses to the planning application for North of Baldock. The comments made in respect of Codicote cannot be addressed directly through the Developer Contributions SPD. Developer Contributions can only be used for projects to help mitigate the effects of development; they cannot be used for unrelated local improvements. However, some of those issues have been addressed through the Codicote Neighbourhood Plan.

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
	An observation was made that the table illustrating the Local Plan policies and other relevant strategies and guidance included the Vehicle Parking SPD which dated and that it would be helpful if there was a single document published.	Residential parking standards are set in the Local Plan, rather than through a separate SPD. New parking standards will be considered as part of the new Local Plan which, in line with the new NPPF.t.
4.2.5	Representations state that an amendment should be made to the paragraph to provide further guidance as to how a "proportionate contribution" will be calculated.	No amendments made. A proportionate contribution will need to be determined and agreed on a site by site basis as it will depend on the scale of the impact.
Housing		
General	Comments were received in respect of the design of new homes and that on social housing. The comments about social housing stated that no more social housing should be built in North Hertfordshire, it should not be combined with private dwellings and that in the long term, it should all be returned to the private sector. There were a number of supporting representations were received in respect of the proposed deletions and minor wording additions in this chapter of the SPD.	The design of new housing cannot be addressed through the Developer Contributions SPD, but the District Design Code may have an influence in new developments in the future. The demand for housing in the District is high and market cost housing is increasingly out of reach for many households. Households who are without adequate housing and who cannot afford to buy or rent suitable housing are in housing need. The Council is committed to meeting this housing need through the provision of affordable housing in the district. Allocations for new development in the Local Plan can help to achieve that.

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
		A number of typographical issues were picked up in this part of the SPD and these have been corrected and additional text added where appropriate, including references to the District Design Code.
5.2.14 – 5.2.16	Although no changes had been proposed to this section of the SPD, Vacant Building Credit, detailed wording changes were put forward in the representations to simplify this section of the SPD.	Agreed and amendments have been made to this section of the SPD.
Design		
General	The representations included comments about air quality in Baldock, the design of recycling / bin storage in developments and whether the Developer Contributions SPD strayed into policy on the design of waste storage.	The comments which were made in respect of Baldock will be forwarded to be considered as part of the public consultation responses to the planning application for North of Baldock. The SPD has been amended to delete the previous guidance and include references to new guidance which has been prepared by the East and North Herts Shared Waste Service for developers and to the District Design Code.
Healthy Communities		
General	The representations included a comment about health facilities in Baldock and water supply following the major fire in the town.	The comments which were made in respect of Baldock will be forwarded to be considered as part of the public

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
	There was also a representation which outlined the health and recreational facilities in Codicote. In addition, there were representations in respect of the sport facilities provided in Royston at Therfield Heath and the conflicts that can arise between the needs of the sport facilities and the open common land and the SSSI. No amendments to the SPD were put forward.	consultation responses to the planning application for North of Baldock. A number of additional references have been included in the SPD where new guidance has been published.
Section 7.2	The Central East Integrated Care Board made representations in respect of the Section 7.2 and put forward a series of amendments to ensure that the SPD is up to date.	The amendments suggested by the Central East Integrated Care Board have been included in the SPD to ensure that the SPD is up to date and reflects the levels of financial contributions required for health care.
Section 7.3	A number of representations were made in respect of this section, Indoor and Outdoor Sport Facilities being included in the Natural Environment section of the SPD.	A new section has been included in the SPD, Open Space, Indoor and Outdoor Sport Facilities, taking those elements from the existing Healthy Communities chapter and creating a new section which should make the SPD easier to use.
Natural Environment		
General	Comments were made in respect of contributions towards biodiversity associated with new development.	These comments are noted and it should be noted that there is a requirement for developers to provide on site Biodiversity Net Gain.
	There was support for the overall approach to securing developer contributions and in particular the potential	Noted

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
	for securing contributions in the future for chalk stream projects.	
	Representations were received in respect of solar farms in Baldock and the associated loss of agricultural land and decentralised energy being extended to villages.	Neither of these issues can be addressed through the Developer Contributions SPD.
Section 8.2	The representations suggested that the Developer Contributions SPD should not include plans for Biodiversity Net Gain and that a separate SPD should be prepared and that the SPD should be updated to reflect future changes in legislation.	The Developer Contributions SPD provides sufficient detail for BNG and there are no plans to prepare a separate SPD for BNG. No further changes are proposed to this SPD to try and address any forthcoming changes that may be made in future policy and legislation.
	A comment was made about the table provided in paragraph 8.2.31 as no BNG pricing details were included.	An amendment has been made to make the table clear and a link to the website has been included to the monitoring fees that the Council has published previously.
Section 8.3	A representation expressing disappointment that the Therfield Heath Mitigation Strategy was referenced in the open space section of the SPD and that the Mitigation Strategy should be used to secure developer contributions for Therfield Heath SSSI.	The Therfield Heath Mitigation Strategy is included as a separate section in the Natural Environment chapter of the SPD. Those parts of the Natural Environment section which refer to open space and sports facilities have been moved to a separate section of the SPD for clarity. Section 8.3 has also been amended to clarify that contributions will be sought in discussions with Natural

Section / Topic / Para. No	Summary of representations	Actions
		England and the Conservators of Therfield Heath and Greens rather than in agreement with.
Section 8.4	A number of representations were made in respect of this section of the SPD. There were no objections to the updating of the Fields in Trust open space standards in the SPD. However, objections were received in respect of the proposed modifications which sought to introduce tiers of open space in developments of different sizes and that open space standards should be reviewed as part of the Local Plan review.	The consultation draft of the Developer Contributions SPD was amended to include the 2024 Fields in Trust open space standards and set out how that open space might be provided in new developments. It is acknowledged that the introduction of "tiers of open space" made the open space requirements more complicated in the context of this document. The Council has subsequently published a District Design Code which explains in more detail how the quantum of open space should be provided in new developments at different scales. The Developer Contributions SPD has been amended to set out just the quantum of open space that developers will be expected to provide with the District Design Code focusing on how that open space is provided.

Developer Contributions

Supplementary Planning Document

June 2026

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 5
1.1 Overview 5
1.2 Background and status of the SPD 5
1.3 Legislative context 5
1.4 National policy context 6
1.5 The Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans 7
1.6 Developer contributions, planning obligations, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) 8
1.7 Sustainability Appraisal 8
1.8 Cross-boundary issues 8
1.9 Other providers that may seek S106 contributions 9
1.10 Infrastructure Planning and Funding 9
1.11 Strategic sites and masterplanning 10
1.12 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) 11
1.13 Developer Infrastructure Contributions for Hertfordshire County Council 11
2 PROCESS, PROCEDURE & MANAGEMENT 13
2.1 Pre-application stage 13
2.2 Application stage 13
2.3 Viability 15
2.4 Viability review mechanisms 16
2.5 Policy priorities and planning obligations 16
2.6 Deeds of variation 17
2.7 Monitoring, enforcement and allocation 17
2.8 Indexation 18
2.9 Bonds 19
3 ECONOMY AND TOWN CENTRES 20
3.1 Policy context 20
3.2 Business, economic development, local employment and training 20
3.3 Regeneration, town centres and streetscapes 21
4 TRANSPORT 23
4.1 Policy context 23
4.2 Financial and non-financial obligations 25
5 HOUSING 26

5.1 Policy context 26
5.2 Affordable Housing 26
5.3 Self-build 38
6 DESIGN 41
6.1 Policy context 41
6.2 Design 41
6.3 Sustainable construction methods 41
6.4 Protecting living conditions 42
6.5 Air quality monitoring 42
6.6 Waste collection and recycling 43
7 HEALTHY COMMUNITIES 44
7.1 Policy context 44
7.2 Health 45
7.3 Arts, culture and public realm 47
7.4 Community facilities including Town and Village Halls 48
7.5 Fire and rescue services, Police and community safety 48
7.6 Information Technology 49
8 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 51
8.1 Policy context 52
8.2 Biodiversity 52
8.3 Therfield Heath SSSI Mitigation Strategy 57
8.4 Flood risk and management 58
8.5 Waterways 58
8.6 Other forms of Green Infrastructure 58
8.7 Water supply and waste-water infrastructure 59
8.8 Development on contaminated land 59
8.9 Climate change and renewable and decentralised energy 59
9 OPEN SPACE, INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES 61
9.1 Indoor sports facilities 61
9.2 Open Spaces 62
Appendix A: S106 process flow-chart 70

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 North Herts Council (NHC) is committed to ensuring that the necessary infrastructure, services and facilities are provided to support growth and development in the District.

1.1.2 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out detailed guidance on the type and scale of developer contributions that will be sought to support new development in our area.

1.1.3 The aim of the document is to assist Council Officers, applicants, agents and Members through the planning application process in a fair, transparent and consistent way. This SPD does not cover every possible circumstance and/or obligation that may need to be taken into account.

1.2 Background and status of the SPD

1.2.1 This document has been produced by NHC to provide further information on requirements set out in our Local Plan. In particular, it expands upon Local Plan Policy SP7: Infrastructure Requirements and Developer Contributions.

1.2.2 This SPD has been widely consulted upon, including with developers and members of the public. The SPD was approved and adopted by Cabinet in June 2026.

1.2.3 This SPD is a material consideration when determining planning applications in the District and will be used when securing obligations, whether by Section 106 agreements or unilateral undertakings.

1.3 Legislative context

1.3.1 SPDs are documents which add further details to policies in a Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance on particular issues, but they cannot introduce new policies. SPDs are a form of Local Development Document produced under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (as amended). Government regulations set out the requirements for producing SPDs[1].

1.3.2 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) to enter into agreements with persons with an interest in land. These agreements can be used (but are not necessarily limited) to:

- Restrict the development or use of the land;
- Require (parts of) the land to be used in a specific way;
- Require the payment of a sum to the local authority.

[1] The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

1.3.3 The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) set out the requirements that planning obligations must fulfil. Planning obligations can only be used:

- To make the development acceptable in planning terms
- Where they are directly related to the development; and
- Are fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

1.3.4 Paragraph: 4, reference ID: 23b-004-20190901 of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes clear that it is not appropriate for plan-makers to set out new formulaic approaches to planning obligations in SPD's or supporting evidence base documents, as these would not be subject to examination. Whether or not an obligation meets the test of fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development will be assessed on a case-by-case basis considering the project, harm or stress added to such facilities (in the round) from the development proposed and considering the residual S106 figures arising from the viability evidence supporting the Local Plan[2].

1.3.5 The pooling limits previously imposed by regulation 123 of the above Regulations have been omitted by way of regulation 11 of The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019. This omission now allows more than five obligations to fund a single infrastructure project where the contribution meets the three tests set out in paragraph 1.3.3 of this document.

1.4 National policy context

1.4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that Local Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include the levels and types of affordable housing and other infrastructure requirements. These policies should not undermine the deliverability of the Local Plan.[3]

1.4.2 LPA's should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development can be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition[4].

1.4.3 Where up-to-date policies set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable[5].

1.4.4 The Government sets out requirements for considering viability in the NPPF and in associated NPPG. Local Plans should clearly set out the contributions that developers are expected to make towards infrastructure and affordable housing; there should be a standard approach to establishing land value; transparency

[2] NHDC – Local Plan Viability Assessment – Update Final Report, August 2016 and NHDC Local Plan Examination Addendum (Viability) (Proposed policies HS4 and HS5) (January 2018)
[3] NPPF Paragraph 35
[4] NPPF Paragraph 56
[5] NPPF Paragraph 59

and accountability through the publication of viability assessments and through improvements to the monitoring and reporting of Section 106 planning obligations[6].

1.5 The Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans

1.5.1 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan was adopted in November 2022. Policy SP7 of the Local Plan provides the main policy 'hook' for this SPD while other Local Plan policies have further requirements for developer contributions. This Policy is shown below.

Policy SP7: Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

The Council will require development proposals to make provision for infrastructure that is necessary in order to accommodate additional demands resulting from the development. We will:

a) Require developers to provide, finance and / or contribute towards provision which is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, including:

   i. on-site and/or off-site improvements and infrastructure necessary as a result of the development in order to:

      - ensure appropriate provision of facilities and infrastructure for new residents;
      - contribute toward addressing cumulative impacts that might arise across multiple developments;
      - avoid placing unreasonable additional burdens on the existing community or existing infrastructure;
      - mitigate adverse impacts where appropriate; and/or
      - enhance critical assets or make good their loss or damage; and

   ii. maintenance and/or operating costs of any such new provision;

b) Ensure essential new infrastructure to support new development will be operational no later than the completion of development or during the phase in which it is needed, whichever is earliest;

c) Refuse planning permission where appropriate agreements or processes ensuring criteria (a) and (b) can be met are not in place;

d) Have regard to relevant national guidance or requirements in relation to planning obligations and any Community Infrastructure Levy or successor funding tariff which may be introduced by the Council;

e) Work with landowners, developers and other agencies in facilitating the delivery of sites identified in the Local Plan and associated infrastructure and seek to overcome known obstacles; and

f) Need robust evidence to be provided where developers consider that viability issues impact upon the delivery of key infrastructure and/or mitigation measures. This evidence will be used to determine whether an

[6] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/viability

appropriate and acceptable level of contribution and / or mitigation can be secured.

1.5.2 This document has been structured to broadly follow the chapters and topics set out in the Local Plan.

1.5.3 Developer contributions may also be required by policies set out in Neighbourhood Plans and applicants should have regard to such policies when formulating development proposals.

1.6 Developer contributions, planning obligations, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

1.6.1 Developer contributions are normally secured through planning obligation agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

1.6.2 The terms 'developer contributions', 'planning obligations' and 'Section 106' (s106) are used interchangeably but generally refer to the same things. Agreements may be used to ensure that the impacts arising as a result of a new development can be addressed. They are also a valuable way of ensuring that a development complies with planning policies contained in the Local Plan and any Neighbourhood Plans.

1.6.3 Planning obligations may be set out in a Section 106 agreement between the Council and the developer (and any other relevant parties) or in a unilateral undertaking offered by the developer. Section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings are individual, scheme-specific, legal documents. Such agreements or undertakings can contain a number of planning covenants which can relate to both financial and non-financial obligations.

1.7 Sustainability Appraisal

1.7.1 This SPD has been reviewed against the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (commonly referred to as the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations). This scoping exercise has shown that this SPD does not require an SEA to be undertaken.

1.8 Cross-boundary issues

1.8.1 There may be instances where the impacts of development that lie within other local authority areas may affect areas within the District. When notified of developments that could potentially affect the delivery of services by NHC, the authority will discuss these with the relevant local authority and seek obligations from the developer accordingly. In these cases, the Council would expect a clause enabling money to be transferred for spending in the District if necessary.

1.8.2 The Council will make reciprocal arrangements to those set out above should a development falling within the NHC administrative boundary have cross-boundary impacts affecting another authority area(s).

1.8.3 The above approaches will also apply, having regard to the general principles in this document, in relation to any Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects (NSIPs) in or affecting the District.

1.9 Other providers that may seek S106 contributions

1.9.1 A range of infrastructure providers may seek contributions from new development. This includes, but is not limited to, Hertfordshire County Council, the NHS, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and local Parish, Town or Community Councils. These are indicated under the relevant topic areas below. Guidance should also be taken from programmes from these other authorities, such as the Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions document[7] (or any such subsequent Hertfordshire County Council document), or neighbourhood development plans from local Councils.

1.9.2 Hertfordshire County Council will normally be signatories where contributions are required for services they provide. Other providers may also be required to be signatories to the S106 agreement. The decision to make any other provider a signatory will be based on the level of financial contribution sought by the other provider.

1.10 Infrastructure Planning and Funding

1.10.1 Any provider (other than NHC, Hertfordshire County Council, any Parish or Town Council and the NHS) seeking a financial contribution in excess of £250,000 will, on a case-by-case basis, be requested to be a third-party signatory to the Section 106 agreement. This threshold has been set as holding funds in excess of this figure for third parties or transferring monies without adequate safeguards represents an unacceptable financial and audit risk for NHC. The need for third parties to become signatories will be considered having regard to, but not limited to, the level of contributions anticipated, the matters they relate to, the number of signatories involved and any bearing on the timescales for the delivery of the development.

1.10.2 In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to deliver infrastructure ahead of multiple planned developments in order to address the specific needs of an area. This early delivery may be led by the Council, Hertfordshire County Council, or other relevant bodies. Developers of subsequent schemes will be required to contribute proportionately to the cost of this infrastructure, even if it is already in place and operational at the time their proposals are determined. This approach helps to mitigate financial and logistical risks for individual developers and

[7] Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions, Planning obligations and developer infrastructure contributions | Hertfordshire County Council

enhances community acceptance by demonstrating tangible benefits associated with development. Where such forward funding occurs, a clear rationale will be provided, along with defined expectations and timescales for contributions from future development proposals.

1.10.3 An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)[8] is part of the Local Plan evidence base and sets out the requirements for infrastructure over the plan period. A new Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is currently being undertaken and will support and inform our new Local Plan. The IDP will need to be updated regularly to take into account the infrastructure needs of the District, including any updating of costs that is required.

1.10.4 The IDP examines the supply and demand for infrastructure based on forecasts of population growth. The IDP assesses current and future infrastructure needs across the district, ensuring that planned growth is supported by appropriate and timely delivery of essential services and facilities.

1.10.5 Individual Council departments have priority projects that are set out in relevant strategies and action plans. These are identified under specific topics elsewhere in this SPD. Applicants should also have regard to other plans and strategies prepared by other service providers.

1.10.6 In addition to updating the IDP, we are required to publish an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement. The latest version is available to view on our website[9].

1.11 Strategic sites and masterplanning

1.11.1 Policy SP9 of the 2022 Local Plan requires the masterplanning of strategic and significant development sites, generally defined as developments of 100 or more homes. The Council has published detailed guidance on the masterplanning process and the expected contents of masterplans. This includes an IDP allowing for early identification of strategic infrastructure requirements. This would involve a high-level indication of the key items of infrastructure required by the development, which would be linked to the phasing of the scheme. It would also set out the mechanisms required for management and maintenance. The Local Plan identifies six Strategic Sites, for which there are detailed policies. For these sites a strategic masterplan should be provided for the whole allocation to ensure that infrastructure provision fully meets the demands arising from development. The Strategic Sites are:

- Policy SP14: Site BA1 – North of Baldock
- Policy SP15: Site LG1 – North of Letchworth Garden City
- Policy SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage
- Policy SP17: Site HT1 – Highover Farm, Hitchin
- Policy SP18: Site GA2 – Land off Mendip Way, Great Ashby

[8] Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2016)
[9] Infrastructure Funding Statement : Planning obligations (section 106 agreements) | North Herts Council

- Policy SP19: Sites EL1, EL2 & EL3 – East of Luton

1.11.2 The Strategic Sites will need to address any specific contribution requirements set out in their individual policies, other relevant policies in the Plan, in this document and in accordance with site-specific circumstances. Developers should be aware that non-financial obligations may be required to secure details outside of the scope of this document, such as securing a masterplan, the final location and use splits of local neighbourhood centres, or management plans for the maintenance and sustainability of any new neighbourhood centres required as a result of the development.

1.11.3 For sites of between 100 and 500 homes (or as otherwise captured by Policy SP9), the Council's masterplanning requirements will be applied in a proportionate manner having regard to the nature of the scheme proposed and the key issues.

1.11.4 The Council encourages the production of masterplans prior to the submission of a planning application. Detailed Section 106 discussions will not normally take place at this stage. However, it is anticipated that the masterplan process will normally 'dovetail' into a bespoke pre-application and / or a planning application where more detailed information may be sought or provided in line with this SPD.

1.12 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

1.12.1 Since the adoption of the 2022 Local Plan, the Secretary of State has granted consent for the expansion of London Luton Airport up to 32 million passengers per year.

1.12.2 The Council may seek appropriate contributions from any part of any NSIP in or affecting the District, in line with the advice and principles in this document.

1.13 Developer Infrastructure Contributions for Hertfordshire County Council

1.13.1 Hertfordshire County Council have prepared a "Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions 2024" which provides an overview of the planning obligations that might be sought by the County Council to mitigate the impact of development. Applicants should have regard to the Guide in addition to the provisions set out in this SPD. The Guide includes details on:

- Transport;
- Education (Early Years);
- Education (Mainstream Schools);
- Education (Special Schools and Specialist Provision);
- Services for Young People;
- Libraries;
- Waste Management;
- Fire and Rescue Services;

- Adult Care Services;
- Children’s Homes; and
- Land Matters

2 PROCESS, PROCEDURE & MANAGEMENT

2.1 Pre-application stage

2.1.1 Pre-application discussions offer the opportunity for the council to clarify the planning policies and material considerations that will be relevant to determining an application, as well as enabling issues to be resolved through a collaborative process.

2.1.2 NPPF paragraph 101 sets out that engagement between local authorities and promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies before applications are submitted can ensure the faster delivery of public service infrastructure.

2.1.3 Discussions regarding the type and level of developer contributions should take place at the pre-application stage. Draft S106 Heads of Terms will be considered at this stage. The Council will accept the submission of and develop a draft Heads of Terms as part of any pre-application advice for housing developments expected to exceed 10 units or 0.5 hectares, or any other form of development for which an obligation may be expected. The level of detail included will depend on the specific issues relating to the proposed development, as well as whether an Outline or Full planning permission to be is sought. Where proposals are general in nature, for instance unit mixes are not yet specified, indicative S106 contributions will be calculated on the assumption that any future scheme would be fully policy- compliant.

2.1.4 Where an application requires developer contributions that would be delivered by an organisation other than the Council or the applicant, the Council encourages the applicant to engage with those organisations for pre-application discussions. This may include, but is not limited to, discussions with: Registered Providers, Hertfordshire County Council, Parish Councils, Sport England, the Police and Crime Commissioner on behalf of Hertfordshire Constabulary, Environment Agency, utility providers and the NHS. The Council will approach most organisations which will be engaged in the forming of the S106 obligations document. The above organisations are recommended as they provide independent, chargeable, pre-application advice services, or have particular requirements which may require further, independent engagement.

2.1.5 For schemes where viability is raised as an issue by the applicant, a draft viability appraisal will be required at pre-application stage if comments from the Council are required on this matter. For further advice, please see section 2.3 of this document.

2.2 Application stage

2.2.1 Where pre-application discussions have identified that developer contributions will be required, applicants should submit heads of terms with their planning application.

2.2.2 Any developer contributions required will be considered at application stage by the case officer, other Council directorates, Hertfordshire County Council and any other external service providers and statutory consultees as relevant to the application. All developer contribution requests and requirements will be coordinated by the relevant NHC case officer. This is to ensure that:

- correct processes are followed;
- applications can be dealt with in a fair and consistent way having regard to all relevant policy requirements; and
- all requests for contributions are assessed to meet the relevant regulatory and policy tests.

2.2.3 This holistic approach may require compromise between competing interests (for example the preferred approach of the highway authority vs urban design and place-making considerations). Whilst applicants are encouraged to engage in pre-application discussions with certain organisations, no obligation should be agreed in principle independently of the case officer representing the Council to ensure that competing demands can be appropriately balanced.

2.2.4 The case officer will discuss the required developer contributions with the applicant, ensuring conformity with CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended). Where agreement cannot be reached between the applicant and the Council regarding the required obligations, or the applicant does not sign the S106 legal agreement within the required timescales (as may be prescribed within any resolution for grant awarded by Planning Control Committee), the planning application may be refused by the Council[10]. For this reason, close dialogue between case officers and specific Council service areas and applicants is recommended from an early stage.

2.2.5 Planning applications that require obligations and that are determined by the Council's Planning Control Committee will not normally be recommended favourably to the Planning Control Committee until all parties to the agreement have agreed the content of the agreement in the form of Heads of Terms. Ideally, the legal documents which secure the obligations, whether via section 106 or unilateral undertaking, should be agreed with regard to the wording of definitions, scale, phasing of delivery and trigger points of any obligations prior to the deadline for draft reports for the targeted Committee date.

2.2.6 Standard templates for legal agreements and Unilateral Undertakings can be found on the Council's webpage at: Advice on Planning Obligations | North Herts Council.

2.2.7 Developers / applicants will need to produce satisfactory proof of title for their particular site and all persons with an interest in the development site including

[10] Where planning applications are refused in this way on the advice of a consultee, that consultee will be responsible for defending their advice to the Council at any future appeal by the applicant. Consultees can have costs awarded against them at appeal in specified circumstances. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appeals

owners, mortgagees, tenants and option holders must be party to the agreement.

2.2.8 Applicants will be required to pay the Council's legal costs as well as their own for drafting and checking legal agreements and will need to provide a solicitor's undertaking to do so. Applicants should also be aware that a solicitor's undertaking to cover the County Councils legal costs for negotiating and checking of the legal agreement as well as proof of title will be required by Hertfordshire County Council where applicable.

2.2.9 Where an applicant challenges the contributions required at application stage on viability grounds, a viability appraisal will be required. For further advice, please see section 2.3 of this guidance document.

2.3 Viability

2.3.1 Applicants should ensure that development proposals adhere to Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies and that these requirements are factored into land value. The Local Plan should be treated as the starting point, with the underlying viability evidence demonstrating overall viability[11]. This reflects NPPG, which states that where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. It is therefore up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage and where needed, provide evidence of what has changed since then.

2.3.2 Overpayment for land will not be accepted as a reason for reducing contributions.

2.3.3 A viability appraisal should cover and consider whether viability enhancements could improve the situation, for example deferring triggers for contribution payments. It should be an 'open book' assessment which should include information covering (but not necessarily limited to) the following:

- Existing use values;
- Proposed use values (sales and rental);
- Demolition and construction costs;
- Finance and marketing costs;
- Assumed yield;
- Construction site abnormals;
- Development phasing/timetable.

2.3.4 A viability appraisal should be submitted at the application stage for any planning application where viability is a factor in determining the application. The viability

[11] DSP – North Hertfordshire District Council – Local Plan Viability Assessment – Update – Final Report (August 2016)
DSP – North Hertfordshire District Council – Local Plan Examination Addendum (Viability) (Proposed policies HS4 and HS5) (January 2018)

appraisal will be independently assessed by consultants acting on behalf of the Council and the cost of this will be covered by the applicant.

2.3.5 A revised viability appraisal will be required where material changes are made following the submission of the planning application, or where there are delays where issues have not been resolved within the timescales originally envisaged.

2.3.6 NPPG provides further information on the expected requirements in relation to viability appraisals, including but not limited to: assessment of land value, inputs and assumptions as well as an open book approach and ensuring accountability. The viability assessment shall be treated as a public document and made available on the Council's planning portal in line with national policy.

2.4 Viability review mechanisms

2.4.1 The Council will use a viability review mechanism where obligations or covenants are agreed at lower than policy compliant levels on viability grounds. A viability review mechanism can trigger a review of the originally agreed contributions where there is an improvement in viability and/or broader economic conditions since the original viability appraisal was undertaken.

2.4.2 A viability review mechanism should be used for multi-phased or long-term development schemes. Viability review mechanisms may also be appropriate whereby there are large scale, estimates or bespoke costs which may be subject to change or further surety upon investigation. The trigger point(s) for review will be set out at application stage and be relevant to the reason for the inclusion of the viability review mechanism. Further developer contributions will only be required if a surplus is identified during the review over and above the returns necessary to be deemed viable.

2.4.3 In cases where viability has improved, any surplus will be shared on a 60:40 basis between the local authority and the developer. This split reflects established practice and recognises that developers' target returns will have been secured through the initial agreement, while also enabling the local authority to capture uplift towards addressing policy-compliant contributions.

2.4.4 The applicant will be expected to pay for the full cost of a viability appraisal required by a viability review mechanism. The appraisal should meet the requirements set out above. The viability review mechanism would be included in the S106 agreement, and will, as is necessary, be bespoke based on the facts of the case and reasons for its inclusion in the first place.

2.5 Policy priorities and planning obligations

2.5.1 This SPD outlines in further detail the type of planning obligations that may be required. The coverage of likely obligations is not exhaustive, and each application will be considered on its merits on a case-by-case basis. Nonetheless, in every instance, the obligations sought will be in line with the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended or subsequently replaced).

2.5.2 Paragraph 4.90 of the 2022 Local Plan identifies that there may be instances whereby policy requirements are prioritised. Where an agreed viability study has been produced in accordance with relevant policies, the Council will consider the requirements most critical to securing development and meeting the overall objectives of the Local Plan.

2.5.3 The Council will normally prioritise those contributions that have been properly tested through the Local Plan, in accordance with NPPG. The Council will have regard to potential alternative sources of funding and / or the likelihood of direct funding (in whole or part) of infrastructure for which S106 requests have been received.

2.5.4 Whether contributions have been subject to appropriate levels of consultation, examination and / or testing, is a significant factor in the viability of a scheme. The Council reserves the right to continue to require fully policy-compliant affordable housing provision (and other forms of properly tested contributions) at the expense of other requests.

2.5.5 The Council will seek to work with the relevant infrastructure provider to understand other potential forms of funding to fill any shortfall and negotiate an appropriately reduced level of contribution from the applicant.

2.6 Deeds of variation

2.6.1 In some cases, it may be necessary to change the contents of an agreement after it has been completed and signed. In such instances, the variation would need to be agreed by all parties affected by the variation prior to the submission of any application under Section 106B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). This will result in additional costs to the applicant to take into account the negotiation, preparation and drafting of the variation. These costs include the costs of the applicant's legal representation, the reasonable costs of any signatories' legal representation as well as the costs of the application to vary or modify an obligation in of itself. Forms to apply for modifying or discharging a S106 agreement are available on our website.

2.7 Monitoring, enforcement and allocation

2.7.1 Charging for monitoring fees is provided for under Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010[12].

2.7.2 The Council will monitor all planning obligations and agreements, taking into account the trigger points and the different obligations included for both the developer and the Council. Those requirements are that the sum to be paid fairly and reasonable relates in scale and kind to the development and does not

[12] The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, as amended by Regulation 10 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019.

exceed the authority's estimate of its costs. Fees may be required to cover the cost of land transfer, where applicable.

2.7.3 The authority's estimate of costs for monitoring of obligations will, necessarily, be bespoke and context dependent. The estimated costs may include the monitoring costs of other departments in and or outside of the Council. Fees for monitoring will be negotiated by the case officer. Further information is available on our website.

2.7.4 The Council may additionally seek contributions to cover reasonable legal costs, such as for the transfer of land for open space.

2.7.5 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) outlines provisions for local authorities to enforce planning obligations. Due to this, the applicant may be required to provide evidence as the development progresses that all financial and non-financial obligations have been met.

2.7.6 The Council will charge interest on any payment that is paid late, and this will be payable from the date that the payment was due to the date of payment. Interest will be applied at two percentage points above the base lending rate of Lloyds Bank, as varied from time to time.

2.7.7 A S106 agreement and Unilateral Undertaking report is produced by the Planning Department and the information is reported quarterly to the Planning Control Committee and updates are provided on the website: Planning obligations (section 106 agreements) | North Herts Council.

2.7.8 The Council will comply with the requirements of Part 10A, Regulation 121A of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 as amended by Regulation 9 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 in so far as it relates to planning obligations.

2.7.9 The Council also produces an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement and quarterly reports on receipt and expenditure of s106 funding.

2.8 Indexation

2.8.1 Commuted sums will be indexed linked from the date of the agreement to the date when the contribution is requested. Where the contribution relates to a commuted maintenance payment, this will be index linked from when maintenance costs are agreed. The Consumer Price Index CPI) will be used for ongoing revenue costs, and PubSec for all capital costs. This is to ensure that the value of an obligation does not reduce over time. This information is subject to change.

2.9 Bonds

2.9.1 A bond may be used in cases where a developer will be delivering the work or where payments are phased. For instance, where the contribution relates to Highway infrastructure works, a bond may be used to provide a guarantee to the Council that the infrastructure can be delivered and to required standards.

2.9.2 Bonds may also be requested by the Council to hold for future decommissioning works, such as a solar farm subject to a temporary planning permission or in other circumstances deemed appropriate.

3 ECONOMY AND TOWN CENTRES

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies &Guidance
• SP3: Employment • SP4: Town Centres, Local Centres and Community Shops • SP9: Design and sustainability • ETC3: New retail, leisure and other main town centre development • ETC6: Local Centres • D1: Sustainable design • Site-specific policy criteria	• Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan 2017 – 2030, July 2017 • Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2021 – 2024 • North Hertfordshire Economic Development Strategy 2025 – 2030 • Town Centre Strategies for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston • Hertfordshire Growth Board Strategies

3.1 Policy context

3.1.1 The NPPF seeks to support economic growth and support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities[13].

3.1.2 The 2022 Local Plan sets out our aspiration to provide an appropriate balance between skills, housing, and economic development. It recognises the contribution of 'footloose' careers in sectors such as construction and the trades in the overall employment balance of the District.

3.1.3 The retail policies of the Local Plan seek to maintain the vibrancy and vitality of key centres within the District. This includes the main town centres of our largest settlements as well as smaller parades of shops serving a local function.

3.1.4 Hertfordshire Futures provide the strategic framework for economic growth within the county. This is supported by local strategies for economic development in the District and for our town centres.

3.2 Business, economic development, local employment and training

3.2.1 We will support and promote the use of local people and businesses through the construction and delivery phases of new developments. We will particularly encourage these on our larger and strategic sites. These will have build-out periods lasting a number of years and will deliver significant employment and supply-chain opportunities over a prolonged period. Once implemented they will provide ongoing employment opportunities in shops, schools, and other facilities. On longer-running schemes we will also encourage the creation of

[13] NPPF Paragraph 86

apprenticeship programmes providing the opportunity for local people to develop skills and put these into practice. These approaches will help to deliver social value through the planning system. Further detail will be provided in the Economic Development Strategy and associated Action Plans.

3.2.2 Where these measures are pursued, we will incorporate a (commitment to the production of a) Local Labour Agreement within the S106 agreement. The detail of the Local Labour Agreement should be informed having regard to recognised resources and toolkits such as the Construction Industry Training Board's client-based approach[14]. The use of the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal and North Hertfordshire College will be encouraged for training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

3.2.3 Any specific requirements relating to built development for employment uses are set out in relevant policies and site criteria. Where appropriate and necessary, relevant measures may be secured in any legal agreement relating to the relevant planning application(s) for those schemes.

3.3 Regeneration, town centres and streetscapes

3.3.1 Each of the District's four main towns has a recognisable town centre. Over time a range of enhancement works have been carried out to maintain their distinctive characters and vibrancy. Contributions towards future town centre public realm enhancements will be sought from relevant major development schemes potentially including (but not necessarily limited to):

- Schemes for development within existing town centres;
- Schemes for out-of-centre development where such contributions will help preserve the vitality and / or viability of the existing centre(s); and
- Schemes elsewhere that will result in a substantive increase in footfall in existing town centres.

3.3.2 Major residential or non-residential development schemes near town centres have the potential to drive substantive increases in footfall in town centres. Schemes for out-of-centre development will have to meet the necessary policy tests with regard to the sequential and impact tests. It may be that within the impact tests, contributions could be nominated or sought to mitigate harm to the vitality or viability of an existing town centre to an acceptable level.

3.3.3 Contributions may be sought for improvements to the wider public realm, the installation of specific facilities such as bike racks, wayfinding signage, other street furniture or features such as public art. Specific projects for which contributions may be sought will be identified in an updated suite of Town Centre Strategies. Following the adoption of the 2022 Local Plan, work on a Town Centres Strategy is underway and will be published in September 2026.

[14] National Skills Academy for Construction (NSAfC) - CITB

3.3.4 Where potential improvements are identified adjacent or otherwise in close proximity to a development site it may be appropriate for the applicant to carry out works directly with the approval of any other relevant bodies (such as the freeholder of the land affected). Such an agreement will be on a case-by-case basis, and if not feasible, financial contributions may be sought.

3.3.5 Improvements to public realm will not necessarily be confined to the main town centres. Where appropriate, we will seek contributions towards public realm improvements in smaller centres and other areas which play an important role in defining place and supporting the day-to-day function of the built environment. Priorities for public realm enhancements may be identified in Neighbourhood Plans or other locally led strategies or initiatives, such as Parish Plans. Applicants should have regard to any relevant policies or requirements applicable to their scheme.

3.3.6 The Council may seek contributions towards the ongoing maintenance of any public realm improvements to be provided.

4 TRANSPORT

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies & Guidance
• SP6: Sustainable transport • SP9: Design and sustainability • SP10: Healthy communities • T1: Assessment of transport matters • T2: Parking • D1: Sustainable design • D4: Air quality • Site-specific policy criteria • Appendix 4 of the Local Plan: Car Parking Standards	• NHDC Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD – November 2011 • NHDC Design SPD – July 2011 • NHDC Transport Strategy, 2017 • NHDC Parking Strategy, 2019 • NHDC District Design Code, 2026 • North Hertfordshire District Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – September 2023 • Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2017/18 – 2027/28 • Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions 2024 • Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 2018 – 2031 and supporting strategies • North Central Hertfordshire Growth & Transport Plan – May 2022 • Hertfordshire Active Travel Strategy – June 2024 • Hertfordshire County Council : Highways Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide – March 2024 • Hertfordshire County Council Travel Plan Guidance • Department of Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2022 : Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development – December 2022

4.1 Policy context

4.1.1 The levels of growth and development envisaged in the plan will place additional demands on transport and highway networks and planning obligations can be used to mitigate against these effects.

4.1.2 The NPPF asks that transport issues be considered from the earliest stages to allow development impacts to be addressed and so that opportunities to promote more sustainable modes of travel can be identified and pursued.[15]

4.1.3 Hertfordshire County Council is the local highway authority and has the primary responsibility for providing and maintaining transport infrastructure and some bus services in the District. As a statutory consultee, it is consulted on all applications for which S106, S278 or S38 works or contributions may be required (please see also paragraph 4.2.3 below).

4.1.4 National Highways is responsible for the Strategic Road Network (i.e. in North Hertfordshire the A1(M)). As a statutory consultee, it is consulted on all applications for which S106, S278 or S38 works or contributions may be required (please see also paragraph 4.2.3 below).

4.1.5 The County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) states that sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling, and improving access to public transport are to be prioritised while working to reduce need for journeys overall. LTP4 is supported by a range of strategies. These are both topic-specific (e.g. rail strategy) and geographically based (e.g. area growth and transport plans). In particular, regard should be had to promoting modal shift as endorsed in LTP4, the Hertfordshire County Council's, Place & Movement Planning and Design Guidance for Hertfordshire as well as the management of highway impacts arising from the Local Plan where those impacts would be directly related to the development proposed.

4.1.6 The Local Plan sets out policies that align with LTP4 to ensure that transport provision across the District is sustainable and safe and that negative environmental impacts, such as noise and air pollution, can be avoided or mitigated.

4.1.7 Local Plan Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters, requires that Transport Statements, Transport Assessments and/or Travel Plans are provided where required, depending on the development type and size. Further guidance is included in the NPPF[16]. These documents provide an assessment of the likely transport impacts of the development in question. Where impacts cannot be fully mitigated, sustainable transport and highways planning obligations will be sought. This may include contributions towards more strategic projects in accordance with the CIL Regulations.

4.1.8 The Plan is supported by the NHC Transport Strategy. This identifies areas for intervention, recognising that these will be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis.

[15] NPPF Paragraph 109

[16] National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 118

4.2 Financial and non-financial obligations

4.2.1 The Council will be guided by the response(s) of Hertfordshire County Council in determining measures required to mitigate transport impacts. The County Council's Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions (2024) provides an indication of the scale of requests they are likely to make in response to planning application consultations.

4.2.2 (Prospective) applicants should review the relevant strategies and guidance documents, including those listed above, to identify potentially relevant and suitable projects for which contributions may reasonably be sought.

4.2.3 In addition to S106 agreements, Section 278 (S278) agreements can be used as a mechanism to secure highway measures that cannot be addressed through the design of the proposed development. S278 agreements are used when the proposed works relate to the existing highway network, and Section 38 of the Highways Act is used where new highways are to be created and this can be provided by way of commuted sum where necessary. On occasions where the developer is solely responsible for delivering works, a S278 agreement may be used in place of S106, secured by way of Grampian condition. This will only apply to matters relating to timing and delivery, rather than the detail of the works.

4.2.4 The applicant should discuss with the Council and other relevant service providers whether the developer is best placed to deliver the works on-site, or to provide a financial contribution.

4.2.5 The cumulative transport impact of development proposals will also be taken into account, as set out in the Local Plan. This can mean that a scheme of any size is expected to make a proportionate contribution towards a scheme or schemes designed to address the cumulative impacts of growth.

4.2.6 Non-financial contributions towards sustainable transport may also be required and may include securing a club car and/or micromobility hire vehicles (cycles and/or e-scooters) and docking stations (physical or virtual), providing public electric vehicle charging infrastructure, land for Rights of Way improvements, and safe cycle storage. These requirements may relate to off-site transport interchanges and other travel/mobility hubs.

5 HOUSING

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies &Guidance
• SP8: Housing • HS2: Affordable housing • HS3: Housing mix • HS4: Supported, sheltered and older persons housing • HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing • Site-specific development criteria	• Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 • Tenancy Strategy 2024 – 2029 • North Hertfordshire District Council Self-Build and Custom House Building Guidance, 2024

5.1 Policy context

5.1.1 The NPPF stresses the importance of addressing the needs of groups with specific requirements for housing[17].

5.1.2 The Council's overall planning approach to Affordable Housing is set out in Policy HS2 of the Local Plan and supporting text. This section of the SPD provides additional information to aid interpretation of these requirements.

5.1.3 Further information on the Council's approach to Affordable Housing is set out in our Housing Strategy, 2024 – 2029. These, and other relevant documents, including the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment, are provided on our website. Where relevant, this section of the SPD makes reference to the latest findings from these reports. However, these documents may be updated over the lifetime of this SPD and should always be referred to for the most up-to-date information.

5.1.4 Policies HS4 and HS5 contain specific requirements relating to housing for older persons and accessibility respectively.

5.2 Affordable Housing

Demonstrating compliance with Affordable Housing requirements

5.2.1 We encourage the submission of an Affordable Housing Statement alongside any relevant planning applications to demonstrate how the requirements of the Local Plan and this SPD have been met. This could also be submitted as a distinct section within one or more of the following documents (as applicable):

- Design & Access Statement

[17] NPPF Paragraph 61

- Planning Statement
- Environmental Statement

5.2.2 The following details set out the Councils expectations in line with policy HS2 of the Local Plan. All expectations set out below will be secured in a legal agreement in any potential approval of a relevant application. In the event of an outline planning application with all or most matters reserved, these matters will remain secured in a legal agreement, up to, including and not limited to amount, tenure, mix and design.

Calculating the Affordable Housing requirement - Policy HS2(a)(i)

5.2.3 Policy HS2 sets the following target percentages of dwellings to be affordable:

Size of site (gross dwellings)	Target % of Affordable Housing
11-14 dwellings	25%
15-24 dwellings	35%
25+	40%

5.2.4 When calculating the number of affordable units, the general approach will be to round the requirement to the nearest whole number. Where the requirement is subject to rounding up, the target levels of Policy HS2 may be slightly exceeded. As a general principle and having regard to the findings of our evidence[18], this approach is unlikely to affect scheme viability. Subject to the exceptions below, the Council will not entertain viability appraisals or attempts to reduce the Affordable Housing contribution on this ground alone.

5.2.5 The impact of rounding the requirement can be more significant for smaller sites given the low numbers of units involved. We specifically recognise the potential impact upon schemes of 11, 14, 16 and 19 units. In these instances, we will determine the most appropriate approach having regard to:

- The nature of the scheme;
- The tenure of any proposed Affordable Housing products; and
- The proposed / potential Affordable Housing floorspace as a proportion of the overall development, particularly where larger units are proposed for private sale with smaller units proposed as the Affordable Housing contribution.

5.2.6 These factors will also be considered in other instances where the proposed Affordable Housing contribution does not comply with policy.

18 North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan Viability Assessment Update 2016 (Dixon Searle Partnership (DSP))

Off-site provision of Affordable Housing

5.2.7 Where the off-site provision of Affordable Housing or a financial contribution is agreed in principle (see below), the requirements of Policy HS2 should be met when viewing the application site and the 'donor' site(s) (or other agreed alternate form(s) of contribution) as a single entity.

5.2.8 A scheme for 100 units would normally generate an on-site requirement for 40 affordable homes, with the remaining 60 homes available for market sale (40 / 100 = 40%).

5.2.9 However, a scheme of 100 market sale homes with no on-site Affordable Housing would require off-site provision or a financial contribution equivalent to 67 affordable units to make the same contribution: (67 / (67+100) = 40%).

5.2.10 The table below summarises the equivalent percentages required to meet the targets in Policy HS2 where fully off-site provision or a commuted payment is to be made.

Size of site (gross dwellings)	Target % of Affordable Housing (on-site)	Off-site equivalent
11-14 dwellings	25% of all dwellings	33% of market homes
15-24 dwellings	35% of all dwellings	54% of market homes
25+	40% of all dwellings	67% of market homes

5.2.11 We will use bespoke calculations where it is agreed that the Affordable Housing is to be split between on-site and off-site provision.

Provision involving existing Affordable Housing

5.2.12 Where existing Affordable Housing is to be demolished or otherwise lost, we will normally expect that existing units will be replaced on a one-for-one basis with the targets of Policy HS2 then applied to any net additional units.

5.2.13 Exceptions to this approach will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for example when a scheme proposes replacement units that better meet identified Affordable Housing needs or where private sale units will cross-subsidise the scheme.

Vacant Building Credit

5.2.14 National policy provides an incentive for brownfield development on sites containing vacant buildings. This requires Affordable Housing requirements to be reduced based on the quantity of floorspace being brought back into use or replaced.

5.2.15 Vacant Building Credit is intended to incentivise the re-use of buildings or redevelopment of brownfield.

5.2.16 Where Vacant Building Credit is applied for, the applicant should take account of guidance available in Planning Practice Guidance[19]. Other relevant national and / or local planning policy tests relating to the application proposals should be addressed in the normal way.

Viability

5.2.17 Our overall approach to viability is set out in Policy SP7 of the 2022 Local Plan and Section 2.3 of this SPD. Where a developer seeks to reduce Affordable Housing below target levels on viability grounds, the appraisal should demonstrate the impact of full compliance with the Affordable Housing Requirements in the Local Plan and this SPD on a 'nil grant' basis.

5.2.18 Any departure from policy compliant Affordable Housing provision on viability grounds will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis having regards to the findings of the viability study, scheme-specific circumstances and the potential for any alternate and / or reduced forms of contribution towards Affordable Housing.

On-site vs. off-site provision (Policy HS2(a)(ii))

5.2.19 Affordable Housing is normally delivered in partnership with Registered Providers and can include schemes built through Community Land Trusts or other forms of co-operative provision. Our presumption is strongly in favour of Affordable Housing provision being made on site. Although some sites will deliver relatively low numbers of affordable homes, Registered Providers operating in the District are normally willing to take these on as part of their wider portfolio.

5.2.20 We recognise that there can be specific circumstances where it is not possible or appropriate to make Affordable Housing provision on site. This might include in some smaller flatted developments or where specialised accommodation within Use Class C3 is being provided.

5.2.21 Any (proposed) departures from on-site provision will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Where it is accepted that on-site provision is not feasible, we will first seek provision on an alternate site. If this is not possible, we will seek a commuted sum in lieu of provision.

Approach to off-site provision

5.2.22 Off-site provision may be an appropriate alternative where an alternate site is in possession of, or can be reasonably acquired or otherwise accessed by, the applicant who can then deliver affordable homes upon it in partnership with a

[19] Planning Practice Guidance, paragraphs 026 – 028

Registered Provider in the normal way. The Affordable Housing provision on the 'donor' site will need to comply with relevant planning policies and the requirements of this SPD. It will normally be secured with an appropriate clause(s) in the legal agreement and / or Grampian condition on the principal site to ensure delivery of both schemes.

5.2.23 The 'donor' site should be reasonably related to the application site. In considering the acceptability of potential alternate sites, we will have regard to the approach taken by the Local Plan to Rural Exception sites. Alternate sites should normally be located within both a 15-minute drive time and a 30-minute journey time using passenger transport of the principal application site.

Commuted sums

5.2.24 Where it is accepted that a commuted sum is required, the starting point for negotiation will be an equivalent payment sufficient to deliver the Affordable Housing requirement on an alternate site:

- The Affordable Housing requirement will be calculated in line with the requirements set out in this section of the SPD;
- The cost per required affordable unit (the unit cost) will be based upon the provision of a 2-bed house (including land);
- The unit cost will be derived from the costs set out in the Council's most recent District-wide viability assessment.

5.2.25 At the time of writing this approach gives a unit cost of £123,000.[20]

C2 Uses and affordable housing

5.2.26 For the purposes of the Local Plan, the Council has treated the need for and provision of housing within use-class C3 separately from the need for and provision of more specialist accommodation within use-class C2. The overall housing requirement and references to dwelling estimates for the Strategic Housing Sites and Local Housing Allocations are for C3 uses only. The Local Plan relies on delivery of the housing allocations with policy-compliant affordable housing to meet future market and affordable housing needs in full.

5.2.27 Requirements for C2 uses are set out separately and in addition. A minimum target for the overall provision of C2 bedspaces is set in Policy SP8(g).

5.2.28 The Council will not normally seek the provision of affordable housing or affordable housing contributions from:

[20] Taken from *North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan Viability Assessment Update 2016 (DSP)*. Figure based upon: a base build cost for a 79m^2 2-bed home at £1,190/m2; £4,500 site prep and survey costs; a 17% uplift on the base build cost for contingencies, fees and sustainable design & construction standards; £2,447 to achieve M4(2) accessibility compliance; and £9,250 to purchase 1/40th hectare of land at assumed greenfield enhancement value of £370,000 per hectare. Total rounded to nearest £1,000.

- C2 uses where they satisfy a specific policy requirement on Strategic Sites; or
- C2 uses on windfall sites not identified in the Plan

5.2.29 However, where a C2 use is otherwise proposed on a site allocated in the Local Plan for housing, the Council will seek a commuted sum for affordable housing that compensates for any loss of affordable housing units that might otherwise have been provided if the site had been fully developed for C3 use in accordance with the Plan.

5.2.30 The relevant sum will be calculated on a case-by-case basis using the dwelling estimate and affordable housing policies in the Plan and the guidance above on commuted sums.

Expenditure of commuted sums for Affordable Housing

5.2.31 Any specific provisions relating to the expenditure of the commuted sum, including time limits, will be set out in the S106 agreement. In general terms, commuted sums for Affordable Housing might reasonably be spent upon (but is not necessarily limited to):

- The delivery of additional affordable units on other S106 schemes;
- The provision of new affordable homes on (up to) 100% Affordable Housing schemes by the Council or a Registered Provider;
- The acquisition of (serviced) land to facilitate such schemes;
- The adaptation or modification of existing stock to meet standards and / or specific identified housing needs;
- The acquisition of homes on the open market for Affordable Housing; or
- The provision of other forms of housing providing homeless or temporary accommodation;

5.2.32 Specific projects may be identified in our Housing Strategy or other relevant documents and expenditure can take place anywhere in the District regardless of the location of the development to which the commuted sum relates. The Council will endeavour to locate commuted sum expenditure close to sites where the sum has been contributed, however, this may not always be viable or appropriate.

Ensuring affordability (Policy HS2(a)(iii))

5.2.33 Housing affordability is a significant issue in the District. Even with discounts applied, rents and purchase requirements for affordable home ownership products remain difficult to afford for many households.

5.2.34 The Local Plan recognises that it will be necessary to introduce rental caps at below 80% of market rates to ensure affordability, particularly for larger units. Our approach to rents, and seeking to ensure the affordability of all Affordable Housing products, is set out in our Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 and Tenancy Strategy 2024 - 2029. We currently require the following rental levels:

- 1 & 2 bed properties: 80% of market rents
- 3 bed properties: 70% of market rents
- 4+ bed properties: social rents

5.2.35 All rents are to be within Local Housing Allowance Rates. Rents for 1-, 2- and 3-bed properties should achieve the percentages above inclusive of any service charges, management fees or similar.

5.2.36 The requirements in the Plan are based upon households allocating 35% of their gross income to housing. Applicants should demonstrate that any intermediate products, including the initial purchase percentage(s), will be affordable on this basis having regard to local income and house price data. House prices vary significantly across North Hertfordshire and district-wide price averages will generally not be considered an appropriate basis for making these calculations. In determining the affordability of products, any service charges, management fees or similar which may be applied should be included.

5.2.37 For shared ownership units, applicants should be able to purchase in multiples of 1% an initial equity share in the property of between 10% and 75%. The rent on unsold equity will be capped at 2.75% in accordance with Homes England model shared ownership lease requirements.

5.2.38 Due to the high cost of housing throughout the District, some forms of intermediate tenure products are considered unlikely to meet the affordability requirements of the Local Plan. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, discounted market sales housing.

5.2.39 The Government recognises that shared ownership products can be hard to replace, particularly in rural areas. To address this issue, regulations identify Designated Protection Areas[21]. Within these, any shared ownership products will be required to restrict 'staircasing' to a maximum 80% equity share in the property.

5.2.40 Where applicable, these requirements will be incorporated into the legal agreement. The following parishes within North Hertfordshire are currently Designated Protection Areas:

- Ashwell
- Barkway
- Barley
- Bygrave
- Lilley
- Newnham
- Nuthampstead
- Offley

[21] Designated Protected Area status only applies to parishes with populations of 3,000 or less. This is in accordance with The Housing (Shared Ownership Leases) (Exclusion from Leasehold Reform Act 1967) (England) Regulations 2009. These regulations included the introduction of Protected Area Status for settlements exempt from the Right to Acquire (i.e. those with populations of less than 3,000).

- Caldecote
- Clothall
- Codicote
- Graveley
- Hexton
- Hinxworth
- Holwell
- Ickleford
- Kelshall
- Kimpton
- Kings Walden
- Langley
- Pirton
- Preston
- Radwell
- Reed
- Rushden
- Sandon
- St Pauls Walden
- Therfield
- Wallington
- Weston
- Wymondley

Affordable Housing tenures (Policy HS2(b)(i))

5.2.41 Local Plan Policy HS2 expects 65% of Affordable Housing units to be for rent with the remaining 35% other forms of Affordable Housing. The definition of the various housing types considered to be Affordable Housing is set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF.

5.2.42 When calculating the required tenure split, the number of rented units will normally be rounded to the nearest whole number. The number of intermediate units will normally represent the balance of the overall requirement.

5.2.43 On schemes of 25 units or more it should be possible to deliver the tenure split required by Policy HS2.

5.2.44 On schemes of less than 25 units, or in other instances where less than 10 Affordable Housing units are proposed or agreed, we will consider the most appropriate approach to tenure mix on a case-by-case basis having regard to the above advice. It may not, for example, be desirable for a scheme to deliver a single intermediate unit. Equally, it may not be practical to deliver affordable rented units within a small block of flats.

5.2.45 The most appropriate mix of intermediate products will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis having regard to relevant evidence (including upon affordability) and the type and size of Affordable Housing product(s) proposed by the applicant or otherwise considered realistic in the context of the site and overall scheme.

5.2.46 The NPPF allows for self-build housing to be Affordable Housing. For this to be the case, the self-build must fall within one of the Affordable Housing types contained in the NPPF definition. Where any self-build housing is accepted as

being a form of Affordable Housing (and vice versa) it will count towards any relevant policy targets or requirements for both forms of provision. Self-build not falling within the NPPF definition of Affordable Housing will not count towards, or otherwise be offset against, the Affordable Housing requirement.

First Homes

5.2.47 First Homes were introduced by government in June 2021 as an additional affordable housing product. However, revisions to the NPPF in 2024 state that the requirement to deliver a minimum of 25% of affordable homes as First Homes no longer applies.

Evidence of housing need (Policy HS2(b)(ii))

5.2.48 The starting point for evidencing Affordable Housing need is the Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)[22] which provides advice on overall requirements and advised tenure and mix requirements for the whole District. We supplement data from district-wide studies, with more localised information. A new SMHA is currently being prepared to support the review of the Local Plan. Once published, this should be used as a basis of housing need.

5.2.49 Prospective applicants should contact the Council's Housing team for up-to-date housing register data. Surveys for individual parishes are conducted in partnership with Parish Councils and Community Development Action's Rural Housing Enabler. Applicants should have regard to the findings for any up-to-date Parish surveys relevant to their site. Where a prospective applicant is considering bringing forward a significant scheme in a parish where there is no survey, or the survey is out of date, they should liaise with the Council at the earliest opportunity to determine whether it is practicable to produce or update a survey in advance of the submission of an application.

5.2.50 Where an applicant is considering gathering their own evidence to inform the assessment of housing needs for their own project(s), we encourage early engagement with the Council's Housing Team to ensure any survey is appropriately defined.

5.2.51 Any findings from the above will help inform whether there is justification to depart from the general tenure and mix requirements set out in the Local Plan and this SPD on a case-by-case basis.

5.2.52 Applicants will need to demonstrate compliance with any additional or alternate requirements in Neighbourhood Plans that are brought forward following adoption of the Local Plan[23].

[22] North Herts and Stevenage SHMA Part II Update 2023

[23] If policies in the Local Plan conflict with policies in a more recently "made" Neighbourhood Plan (or vice versa) the most recent plan policy takes precedence.

Affordable Housing Mix (Policy HS2(b)(v))

5.2.53 The aim of the 2022 Local Plan is to meet assessed district-wide needs for Affordable Housing over the period to 2031. The starting point for consideration of an appropriate housing mix and split will be our most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment. We will consider whether any specific, local evidence justifies a departure from the general guidance in the SHMA on a case-by-case basis. On phased developments each phase will include rented and intermediate tenures where possible.

5.2.54 In considering the suitability of the proposed Affordable Housing mix, we will also have regard to other relevant policies of the Plan. Please refer to the following sections of this chapter in relation to self-build, older persons housing and housing accessibility.

Affordable Housing Design

5.2.55 Wherever practicable, affordable housing design should be tenure neutral. It should be physically indistinguishable from the market housing and on larger sites be distributed across the site in small clusters, rather than concentrated on one or two parts of the site. Affordable Housing should be distributed in a way which ensures that access to key facilities such as schools, local shops and open space is equivalent to that provided for market homes. Further guidance is provided in the North Hertfordshire District Design Code.

5.2.56 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that new homes must meet the Government's minimum nationally described space standards. In some instances, space requirements for affordable housing may be set at a higher level. Where there is conflict between two (or more) standards, the highest (most spacious) will be applied to the affordable housing.

5.2.57 The Local Plan requires that, where more than 10 Affordable Housing units are to be provided, 10% of these should be to the higher M4(3) wheelchair user standard. The 10% requirement will be rounded to the nearest whole number based upon the Affordable Housing requirement. These should be provided within rented tenure units and to wheelchair accessible standards wherever possible. Where this approach is not considered viable (and subject to the general guidance on viability in the Local Plan and this SPD), we will consider whether provision of units to the wheelchair adaptable standard is an appropriate alternative.

Registered Providers

5.2.58 There are a number of Registered Providers operating within the District. We do not have a preferred partner, nor do we recommend partners. We are able to provide contacts and facilitate introductions where required. The transfer of the Affordable Housing to the Registered Provider will normally be subject to a separate agreement with the applicant / developer. The Registered Provider will not normally be a signatory to the legal agreement.

5.2.59 Some forms of Affordable Housing do not need to be delivered by a Registered Provider. Where this is the case, we will consider whether it is appropriate to secure a bond or other form of guarantee in the legal agreement. Where the Council cannot secure nomination rights in accordance with the guidance below, we may request that the legal agreement restricts occupancy to households who cannot compete in the housing market.

Content of the legal agreement in relation to Affordable Housing

5.2.60 The Council fully expects affordable housing to be secured via Section 106 agreements. Any divergence from this approach to use planning conditions would only be considered in rare and exceptional cases, for instance where the applicant is a Registered Provider. This is due to the inherent risk to the delivery of affordable housing in the context of Section 73 applications.

5.2.61 The key provisions relating to Affordable Housing will be secured through the S106 legal agreement and, to the extent that is appropriate, any associated Nomination Agreement. It is expected that the legal agreement will normally contain (but is not necessarily limited to) the following information:

- The overall amount of Affordable Housing to be provided;
- Details of the tenure and type of Affordable Housing to be provided;
- Details of any specific standards to be met by the Affordable Housing
- Details of any trigger points for the construction and / or transfer of the Affordable Housing;
- Any Mortgagee in possession (or other similar) clauses to safeguard the provision of Affordable Housing;
- Any specific requirements in relation to nomination rights, lettings and cascades including qualifying persons and local connection criteria (see below); and
- Details of any applicable staircasing restrictions.

5.2.62 Where development is anticipated to occur over a number of phases, the provision of Affordable Housing should not normally be backloaded into later phases, but should be equally distributed among the phased development. This will be addressed through the inclusion of appropriate trigger points in the legal agreement. On phased developments each phase should include rented and intermediate affordable housing tenure units.

5.2.63 Where outline permission is sought on an “up to…” basis, we may seek to secure a guaranteed minimum number of Affordable Housing units within the legal agreement. This is to ensure that the anticipated provision of Affordable Housing is not subsequently undermined (for example by submission of a detailed application for an alternate use on part of the same site).

Nomination rights, lettings and cascades

5.2.64 The Council will normally seek to secure 100% of initial nomination rights and at least 75% of nomination rights for subsequent re-lets. Nominations will be made

in accordance with the Common Housing Allocations Scheme or any successor.In the rural Designated Protection Areas, we normally operate the following cascade to prioritise the allocation of affordable housing:

- Applicants from within the Parish;
- Applicants from adjoining Parishes;
- Applicants from other rural parishes in North Hertfordshire;
- Applicants from elsewhere in the District.

5.2.65 This approach will normally be continued on smaller rural sites. However, some rural parishes have significant development allocations in the Local Plan – either because they physically adjoin larger towns or because they have been identified as locations capable of meeting a wider-than-local need. In the following parishes and for the following developments we will determine the most appropriate cascade mechanism on a case-by-case basis:

- Barkway – Site BK3
- Bygrave – Site BA1
- Clothall – Sites BA2 and BA3
- Graveley – Sites GA1 and NS1
- Ickleford – Site IC3
- Offley – Sites EL1, EL2 & EL3
- Weston – Site GA2
- Wymondley – Site WY1

Subsequent occupiers

5.2.66 The measures above will normally secure the Affordable Housing provision on new development sites for subsequent occupiers. However, it is recognised that some units may eventually be lost from the Affordable Housing stock through Right to Buy, by achieving 100% ownership of intermediate products through 'staircasing' or through any additional or successor arrangements.

5.2.67 Presently, these rights and the recycling of monies received through these events are subject to their own regulation and will not normally need to be reflected in the legal agreement.

Deeds of variation

5.2.68 We sometimes receive applications to vary the conditions of the legal agreement following completion of the scheme and / or its transfer to the Registered Provider. In the past, these have mainly related to shared ownership units and / or the cascade mechanism where it has not been possible to allocate the Affordable Housing within the terms of the original agreement. In turn, this is often linked to the (un)affordability of the products.

5.2.69 By following the requirements of our Local Plan policies and the guidance in this SPD and other relevant strategies, the need to vary the legal agreement should only arise in exceptional circumstances.

Any Deed of Variation applications should be accompanied by robust evidence, including upon viability where relevant and follow the principles set out Section 2 of this document.

Review mechanisms (Policy HS2(c)(ii))

5.2.70 The general approach to review mechanisms for legal agreements is set out in Section 2 of this SPD. Where viability improves such as to trigger a review, we will take a fair and proportionate approach. Affordable Housing targets will be applied to the remaining phases or quanta of development at the point of review in line with the requirements of Policy HS2 and this SPD. We will not normally use review mechanisms to seek above target levels of Affordable Housing provision on future phases of development in order to make up for previous shortfalls.

5.3 Self-build

5.3.1 On five of our Strategic Housing Sites (sites BA1; LG1; NS1; HT1 and GA2)[24], our policies require that 1% of plots are reserved for self build. We will have regard to the self-build register and encourage the provision of self-build plots on other sites where there is proven evidence of demand. Neighbourhood Plans may also set requirements for self-build. Councils may additionally need to have regard to statutory requirements relating to self-build in other, non-planning functions such as land disposal.

5.3.2 The delivery of self-build sites, or proportion of sites as self-build opportunities, brings complexities, as detailed below. Considering the depth of considerations for the appropriate delivery of self-build housing, it is highly likely that any approval of such housing will require planning obligations, rather than conditions, to secure the details of delivery. As a result, guidance in what is required to be considered in delivery of self-build housing is set out below to inform heads of terms and eventual agreed obligations.

5.3.3 For the purposes of planning policy, Custom and Self-build dwellings share the same definition and the terms can be used interchangeably. Custom Build is where a person appoints a specialist developer to help build their own home. Self-build is where a person is more directly involved in organising and constructing their own home.

5.3.4 Where self-build plots are to be delivered, we will secure, by legal agreement or condition as appropriate in each instance:

[24] SP14: Site BA1 - North of Baldock; SP15: Site LG1 - North of Letchworth Garden City; SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage; SP17: Site HT1 – Highover Farm, Hitchin; SP18: Site GA2 – land off Mendip Way, Great Ashby

- The number and location of plots to be delivered for self-build;
- The trigger point(s) for the provision and / or marketing of the serviced plots;
- The transfer of the plots where the developer does not wish to retain or market them for self-build;
- The means by which detailed permission(s) for the self-build plots shall be obtained;
- Reversion clauses or similar allowing for the return of the plot to the developer and / or the use of any unsold self-build plots for other forms of housing; and / or
- Time limits for the commencement and / or completion of development on any self-build plots.

5.3.5 The Council maintains a Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register in accordance with relevant regulations. This contains details of persons interested in acquiring plots of land for self-build.

5.3.6 Where relevant developments come forward, the Council will notify those on the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register of any upcoming opportunities.

5.3.7 Where the developer is unable to market self-build plots themselves (either directly or via a third party), the freehold of the area that will contain the serviced plots should be transferred to the Council for a nominal sum. This sum may include the recovery of a reasonable proportion of the S106 costs attached to the site as a whole and / or the costs of providing services to those plots where this occurs prior to, or as a condition of, the transfer. It is anticipated that there would be further negotiations if these circumstances were to arise. The Council would then undertake the marketing and sale of the plots.

5.3.8 Prior to the marketing of any self-build plots, the body responsible for their disposal shall secure an appropriate permission or planning framework for the whole of the self-build area detailing:

- The highway layout;
- The provision of services;
- Any incidental or communal landscaping, open space or similar;
- The extent of the individual self-build plots;
- The unit type of the individual self-build plots;
- Vehicular access and parking provision;
- Key design parameters including:
  - Fixed positions or zones for front and rear facades;
  - Maximum building heights;
  - Maximum internal floor areas; and
- A palette of materials

5.3.9 This approach strikes a reasonable balance between individuality and ensuring the site as a whole remains coherent in design terms. The permission should be sufficiently flexible to allow for innovative design and methods of construction. It

should also ensure sufficient scope remains for future plot owners to have a meaningful input into the final design of their home. The factors above may be identified and / or secured through a design code (or similar) attached to a hybrid application[25].

5.3.10 The Council will consider whether it is expedient to introduce a Local Development Order, or other form of simplified planning framework, for self-build areas on a case-by-case basis.

5.3.11 Any marketing period should be of sufficient length to give interested parties reasonable opportunity to investigate likely acquisition and build costs and draw together appropriate funding. This may include securing in principle agreements for finance and / or quotes or expressions of interest from builders or developers to deliver the scheme where they will seek assistance in building their home. Plots should be made available at a reasonable market value so as to encourage, rather than deter, their uptake.

5.3.12 Our expectation is that any reversion clause will allow for a minimum two-year marketing period for self-build. Shorter periods will only be entertained when the applicant expects the remainder of the site to be completed more quickly. On Strategic sites, or other schemes where development is to be phased, it may be appropriate to seek longer clauses to maximise the opportunity for self-build plots to be taken up.

5.3.13 In all instances, self-build plots should be delivered in a timeframe that is compatible with the delivery of the site as a whole. Equally it is necessary to ensure that the site can be fully built out in the absence of interest in (all of) the self-build plots; unbuilt or incomplete plots on an otherwise completed scheme would detract from the Government's aim to create high quality places.

[25] In this instance, the final, detailed design of individual homes may be secured through a discharge of condition application (or similar) by the intended occupier upon, or prior to, acquisition of the plot.

6 DESIGN

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies &Guidance
• SP9: Design and sustainability • D1: Sustainable Design • D3: Protecting living conditions • D4: Air quality • Appendix 5: Letchworth Garden City Design Principles	• Design SPD – 2011 • NHC Air Quality Planning Guidance – 2018 • NHDC Note to Local Plan Inspector on Air Quality - 2018 • Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework - 2012 • HCC Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions - 2024 • NHC Design Review Protocol 2024 • NHC Sustainability SPD – 2024 • HCC Service Provision and Place-Making Guide - 2025 • NHC District Design Code - 2026

6.1 Policy context

6.1.1 National policy recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development[26]. The Local Plan contains policies focused on ensuring that design responds positively to local context and that suitable mitigation measures can be delivered through the planning process.

6.2 Design

6.2.1 The general design requirements of the Plan will normally be met through consideration of planning applications and, where appropriate, the use of planning conditions. However, there may be some instances where contributions are sought towards schemes which deliver upon the design aspirations of the Plan (see, for example, Section 7.6 on public realm).

6.3 Sustainable construction methods

6.3.1 Local Plan Policy D1 Sustainable design outlines that development proposals are required to consider the potential to minimise the impact on the environment during both construction and throughout the lifetime of the development. The

[26] NPPF Paragraph 131

Council may require planning conditions and/or legal agreements, such as sustainable material sourcing, to achieve this.

6.4 Protecting living conditions

6.4.1 Policy D3 seeks to secure protection against potential statutory nuisances and other impacts which may adversely impact upon living conditions.

6.4.2 There may be a requirement for reciprocal measures to be secured from proposed development in adjoining authorities under the arrangements set out in Section 1.8. This may include, but is not necessarily limited to, any future schemes at London Luton Airport.

6.5 Air quality monitoring

6.5.1 Legal agreements may be used to ensure that there are appropriate levels of monitoring and mitigation to minimise development impacts in line with Local Plan Policy D4 Air quality. This is particularly relevant where development proposals are likely to create additional road traffic.

6.5.2 Policy D4 sets out the circumstances in which an air quality impact assessment will be required. Strategic Housing Sites in particular will be expected to carry out or otherwise fund ongoing air quality monitoring before, during and after construction of their schemes. This may also be required of other significant or sensitive developments within the District or where the cumulative impacts of development may lead to an air quality issue.

6.5.3 The Council's own monitoring will be used to provide a baseline of data across the District against which applicant's data can be benchmarked and calibrated. The Council may require contributions towards equipment.

6.5.4 Methods to reduce emissions may include: design of development, encouraging the use of public transport and car sharing, promoting low emission vehicle use, road and traffic management schemes as well as appropriate parking standards. These methods may be secured at planning application stage via planning conditions and/ or legal agreement.

6.5.5 Where air quality impact assessments are required and where those assessments predict that an adverse impact on local air quality will occur there will be a requirement for the Defra 'air pollution damage costs' approach to be applied. This air pollution economic analysis damage costs approach is founded upon the application of Defra's Emissions Factors Toolkit and Central Government's Interdepartmental Group on Costs and Benefits (IGCB) guidance. Further information can be found in the NHDC Air Quality Planning Guidance Document.

6.5.6 The financial contributions calculated by the 'air pollution damage costs' approach will need to be targeted to air pollution mitigation measures that are

relevant to the development in question and of specific benefit to the local areas that have been identified as being adversely impacted by that development.

6.5.7 Identified measures or contributions will be secured by condition or legal agreement as appropriate in each instance.

6.6 Waste collection and recycling

6.6.1 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Hertfordshire County Council is required to perform the statutory functions of the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) for Hertfordshire. The WDA is also required to provide facilities in its area where residents may deposit their own household waste free of charge. The HCC Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions document outlines how the County Council will seek to achieve this.

6.6.2 The East and North Herts Shared Waste Service (ENHSWS) has published guidance for developers on the provision of waste storage and collections in new developments, "Waste Storage and Collection Guidance for Developers[27]". Developers are encouraged to consult with the ENHSWS as early as possible in planning new development to ensure that waste and recycling provision meets the need of new residents and the waste collection service to ensure conformity with Local Plan Policy D1: Sustainable Design. Guidance on waste and refuse storage is also set out in the District Design Code.

6.6.3 The revenue costs of waste management are covered through Council Tax. However, in the case of residential development, implementation costs may be required to cover the purchase of bins, the purchase of additional vehicles and setting up new or extended rounds.

6.6.4 In addition, the management of litter should be considered and infrastructure and implementation costs for schemes to manage this may also be required.

[27] East and North Herts Shared Waste Services: Waste Storage and Collection Guidance for Developers 2025

7 HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies &Guidance
• SP4: Town Centres, Local Centres and Community Shops • SP10: Healthy communities • ETC3: New retail, leisure and other main town centre development • ETC8: Tourism • CGB2b: Community facilities, services and affordable housing in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt • HE1: Designated Heritage Assets • HE2: Heritage at Risk • HE3: Non-designated heritage assets • HE4: Archaeology • Site-specific policy criteria	• North Hertfordshire Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan - 2018 • Community Halls Strategy for North Hertfordshire - 2011 • Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions - 2024 • Sustainability SPD – 2024 • The Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework - 2025

7.1 Policy context

7.1.1 The NPPF requires us to plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments[28].

7.1.2 The Local Plan recognises that the provision of adequate social infrastructure is essential to the successful delivery of the levels of growth over the plan period. Social infrastructure encompasses a range of facilities, including but not limited to: health services, educational facilities, libraries, arts and cultural facilities, community facilities, and indoor sports and leisure facilities.

7.1.3 Local Plan Policy SP10: Healthy Communities states that the Council will work with:

- Hertfordshire County Council as the Local Education Authority, as well as other education providers to ensure the planning system contributes to the provision of sufficient school places and facilitates the provision of new or expanded schools in appropriate and accessible locations.
- the Central East Integrated Care Board, East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust, Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust, East of England Ambulance Service

[28] NPPF Paragraph 98 and 101

Trust and other relevant providers to ensure that appropriate coverage of healthcare facilities across the District; and

- Other providers to deliver appropriate levels of new community, cultural, leisure and built sport and recreational facilities.

7.1.4 Policy ETC8: Tourism sets out that planning permission will be granted where development increases attractiveness of the District as a tourist destination and delivers sustainable tourist and visitor attractions in appropriate locations.

7.1.5 Taken together, requests for social infrastructure are normally the largest single 'ask' of applicants on new development schemes. We will have regard to these requests in accordance with the general approach set out in Section 2 of this document. The Council will consider potential for other sources of funding, such as direct funding from Government departments or agencies, when planning new social infrastructure provision.

7.2 Health

7.2.1 Housing growth places pressure on primary health care services in North Hertfordshire. The need for new, on-site health provision from the Local Plan strategic sites are assessed on a case-by-case basis and identified and costed in the IDP Schedule. The IDP will be kept under review by the Central East Integrated Care Board (CEICB).

7.2.2 The HWE ICB calculates the General Medical Services cost of the additional infrastructure needed to deliver planned new homes using the following formula.

GP / GMS costs[29]	• Multiply number of residential units by 2.4 *(commonly accepted occupancy factor)* to calculate number of new patients; • Divide number of new patients by 2000 (*based on ratio of 2,000 patients per GP*) (*as set out in the NHS England "Premises Principles of Best Practice Part 1 Procurement & Development")* to determine number of GPs required; • Multiply number of GPs required by 199m^2 to determine the amount of additional space required (m^2) (*based on ratio of 2,000 patients per GP and 199m2 as set out in the NHS England "Premises Principles of Best Practice Part 1 Procurement & Development")*

[29] Details and costs are provided by the Central East ICB and subject to change over time and may be index linked to reflect this

	• Multiply the amount of additional space (m^2) required by £7,000* (*build costs including land, fit out and fees)* to calculate build cost including fit out and fees • Divide the total cost by the number of dwellings to establish a cost per dwelling

Worked example for 1000 dwellings		
No. of new residents in 1000 dwellings	1000 x 2.4	2400
No. of GPs required for new residents	2400 / 2000	1.2
Amount of floorspace required (m^2)	1.2 x 199	238.8
Cost of new floorspace	238.8 x 7000	£1,671,600
Cost per dwelling (rounded up)	£1,671,600 / 1000	£1,672

7.2.4 It should be noted that above costs are based on a single GP practice, however, all GP surgeries vary in size. In circumstances where investments are made in larger buildings, economies of scale can reduce the overall impact per unit as there will be some common and shared areas. Despite this, space and technical guidance requires larger sized rooms than those in older premises; newer buildings are both larger and more costly.

7.2.5 For the purposes of long-term planning, the CE ICB has also adopted an alternative calculation based on 18 patients per m^2, which still has regard to national GMS space guidelines but also considers opportunities for economies of scale.

7.2.6 Within North Herts, GP Practices still retain extensive paper records at their premises. This space can often be repurposed into clinical space to help provide additional patient capacity. Financial contributions will therefore be sought towards the digitising of records and / or offsite storage as a means of releasing additional capacity to meet demands generated by new development.

7.2.7 New or extended GP provision, as per the IDP Schedule can be funded in a number of ways, including NHS capital funding, if available, CIL and section 106 contributions and through private finance.

7.2.8 With regard to Acute Care, the 2012-based population projections anticipate an increase in population across the HWE ICB area of approximately 104,000 over the 20 years to 2031. Using this overall figure as a guide, a total requirement for approximately 15,000m^2 of additional acute health infrastructure is needed to serve the east and north Hertfordshire.

7.2.9 As well as the importance of Section 106 contributions for GMS, it is also vital to consider the impact of developments and additional residents on community and mental healthcare as occupiers of the development will access a variety of healthcare. Based on recent cost impact forecasting calculations, the potential cost impact of development on community and mental healthcare is as follows:

	Cost per dwelling[30]
Mental Health	£338.92
Community Healthcare	£352.68

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7.2.10 For health contributions of less than £250,000 the Council will not require the NHS to be signatories to planning obligations. For strategic sites and any contributions greater than £250,000 the Council will require the NHS to be direct recipients of any funds from developers at payment stage, either as signatories to associated legal agreements or recipients of funds from unilateral undertakings from developers.

7.3 Arts, culture and public realm

7.3.1 Arts and culture contributions may relate to museums, arts or heritage assets. Contributions may also be sought for public realm improvements that improve the attractiveness and character of the District.

7.3.2 It is recognised that a number of the proposed allocations in the Local Plan are extensive greenfield sites. These may yield a significant quantity of archaeological material when they are explored in compliance with Policy HE4 of the plan. This is particularly the case in areas of known historic importance such as the land around Baldock.

7.3.3 Contributions may be sought towards new public facilities that allow the preservation and display of archaeological remains; to enhance and/or expand existing facilities; or to deliver improvements to a heritage asset in situ.

7.3.4 Depending on the scale and nature of the scheme and to support the delivery of the Plan's heritage strategy the following contributions may be sought:

- Repair, restoration and maintenance of heritage asset(s) and their setting;
- Increased public access and improved signage to and from heritage assets;
- Interpretation panels / historical information and public open days;

[30] Costs are provided by the Central East ICB and subject to change over time and may be index linked to reflect this

- Production and implementation of up to date Conservation Area management plans and appraisals;
- Measures for investigation, preservation and display of archaeological remains and sites;
- Provision of local capacity for the storage of, and public access to, archives resulting from archaeological and/or historical investigation;
- Dissemination of historic environment information for public/school education and research, including museum displays for popularisation of archaeological discoveries;
- Sustainability improvements (such as loft insulation) for historic buildings;
- Public realm obligations, including enhancement of historic squares and spaces, registered parks and gardens, historic pavement materials, street furniture, removal of street clutter and installation of sympathetic lighting etc.

7.3.5 The Council will seek contributions towards other public realm and public facilities, including public conveniences, where necessary and reasonable. This is underpinned by policy D1 Sustainable Design that seeks to create or enhance public realm and design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

7.4 Community facilities including Town and Village Halls

7.4.1 The Local Plan recognises that community facilities have an important role in community life and new facilities may need to be provided as a result of development proposals.

7.4.2 The Council will encourage the development and use of such facilities as multi-functional community centres. These can act as ‘hubs’, offering a range of facilities to support the creation of sustainable communities.

7.4.3 The most up to date Community Halls Strategy for North Hertfordshire includes an Action Plan that can be used to inform required developer contributions. Further projects may be set out in Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Council strategies or similar. Engagement with the appropriate Parish, Town or Community Councils should be undertaken.

7.4.4 Where new community centres are to be provided within new development, the Council will expect, in most instances, the freehold of the new centre to be transferred to the Council, Town or Parish Councils for a nominal fee and for appropriate ongoing management arrangements to be demonstrated. It will be incumbent on the developer to evidence the proposed management arrangements and potential contributions towards on-going management to be proportionate and sustainable.

7.5 Fire and rescue services, Police and community safety

7.5.1 Hertfordshire County Council is the Fire and Rescue Authority and has a statutory duty to ensure that all developments are provided with adequate water

supplies for fire – fighting as well as provision is made for emergency response arrangements under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004[31].

7.5.2 Applicants should have regard to the Hertfordshire County Council Guide for Developer Infrastructure Contributions which contains technical advice and recommended wording for planning conditions for fire hydrants.

7.5.3 Police services are provided through the Office of The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and contribute to the overall well-being of local communities. Police infrastructure comprises fixed property and technology assets; and human resources, which includes Local Community Policing, victim support, and crime reduction initiatives such as use of CCTV. These can arise either locally, or as a result of cross – boundary considerations where scale and efficiency of operation require policing facilities to be located out with the boundaries of the local authority. The Council will therefore require development, where required and appropriate, to contribute towards the delivery of policing infrastructure to serve new developments and mitigate against their impact upon existing police resources.

7.5.4 In line with Local Plan Policy D1 Sustainable Design applicants, should demonstrate that opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour have been designed-out. Hertfordshire Constabulary will be consulted on planning applications where it is considered that there may be an impact in terms of community safety.

7.5.5 Where it is expected that the proposed development will generate a need for extra policing, resources and extensions to or new police buildings, this will be sought through legal agreements.

7.5.6 Contributions towards CCTV will be sought on a case-by-case basis where needed to cover the cost of equipment, installation, maintenance and running costs.

7.6 Information Technology

7.6.1 Internet and mobile coverage across the District are generally quite good, though there are pockets where this is not the case, particularly in more rural areas.

7.6.2 All new developments should be able to plan-in the provision of high quality (superfast) communication infrastructure in consultation with providers. Early engagement is recommended. This avoids the need to retrofit cabling or other required facilities in recently completed schemes. It also increases the saleability of new properties. Where appropriate, we will secure the provision of high-speed connectivity with new development, normally by condition.

[31] Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

7.6.3 This approach supports the rise in homeworking and the need to manage private vehicle use in accordance with local and county transport policy.

8 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies &Guidance
• SP11: Natural resources and sustainability • SP12: Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity • D1: Sustainable design • NE1: Strategic green infrastructure • NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites • NE5: Protecting open space • NE6: New and improved open space • NE7: Reducing flood risk • NE8: Sustainable drainage systems • NE9: Water quality and environment • NE10: Water conservation and wastewater infrastructure • NE11: Contaminated land • NE12: Renewable and low carbon energy development • Site-specific policy criteria	• North Herts Council Sustainability Strategy 2025 - 2030 • Therfield Heath SSSI Mitigation Strategy, 2022 • NHC Sustainability SPD - 2024 • NHC Green Space Management Strategy 2022- 2027 • NHDC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2023 • North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2009 • NHDC Green Space Action Plans (various) • NHDC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Update (2016) • Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions, 2024 • Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2017/18 – 2027/28 • Hertfordshire Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Technical Study, 2010Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, 2025 • Affinity Water Draft Drought Management Plan 2023 • Upper Bedford Ouse Catchment Plan • Anglian River Basin District Flood Risk Management Plan • Thames River Basin District Flood Risk Management Plan • Thames and Great Ouse River Basin Management Plan, 2022

8.1 Policy context

8.1.1 The NPPF identifies that access to a network of high-quality open spaces is important for the health and well-being of communities[32]. It also seeks to minimise impacts on, and provide net gains for, biodiversity and advocates a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change[33].

8.1.2 Open spaces are a defining feature of North Hertfordshire and provide a valuable resource for recreation, sports and culture. The quality of the open spaces is critical to ensure that active lifestyles can be promoted.

8.1.3 The Local Plan contains a range of policy requirements relating to open space and the natural environment which, collectively, seek the provision and retention of a network of quality spaces.

8.1.4 These policy requirements are supported by a breadth of supporting strategies produced by the Council, County Council and other bodies.

8.2 Biodiversity

Policy Background

8.2.1 Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

8.2.2 The Environment Act 2021 sets out the following key components of mandatory biodiversity gain:

- Amends the Town and Country Planning Act
- Minimum 10% gain required calculated using the Biodiversity Metric and approval of a biodiversity gain plan
- Habitat secured for at least 30 years via planning obligations or conservation covenants
- Delivered on-site, off-site or via a new statutory biodiversity credits scheme; and
- National register for net gain delivery sites.

The Environment Act 2021 does not change the existing legal protections for important habitats and wildlife species. It maintains the mitigation hierarchy of avoid impacts first, then mitigate and only compensate as a last resort.

8.2.3 Policy NE4 Biodiversity and Geological Sites states that: *"Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations and features listed in policy SP12. All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological*

[32] NPPF Paragraph 98
[33] NPPF Paragraphs 153 and 174

networks and the water environment and restore degraded or isolated habitats where possible."

8.2.4 The policy also requires the integration of *".appropriate buffers of complimentary habitat for designated sites and other connective features, wildlife habitats, priority habitats and species into the ecological mitigation and design. The appropriateness of any buffers will be considered having regard to the status of the relevant habitat. 12 metres of complimentary habitat should be provided around wildlife sites (locally designated sites and above), trees and hedgerows. It may be necessary to exceed this distance for fragile habitats such as ancient woodland or to provide appropriate root protection for mature trees."*

8.2.5 In addition, the Local Plan promotes a master plan led approach to deliver a net gain for biodiversity as set out in Policy SP9 Design & Sustainability[34]. Strategic Masterplans where required should '*Create a multi-functional green infrastructure network that provides a high-quality integrated network to support ecological connectivity, biodiversity net gain, climate adaptation and mitigation linking into the wider Ecological Network'*.

8.2.6 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a mandatory requirement for new development to deliver a net gain for biodiversity of at least 10% calculated using the Statutory Metric. In addition, the Small Sites Metric is available for those sites not classed as being major development.[35]

Biodiversity Net Gain and the Biodiversity Metric

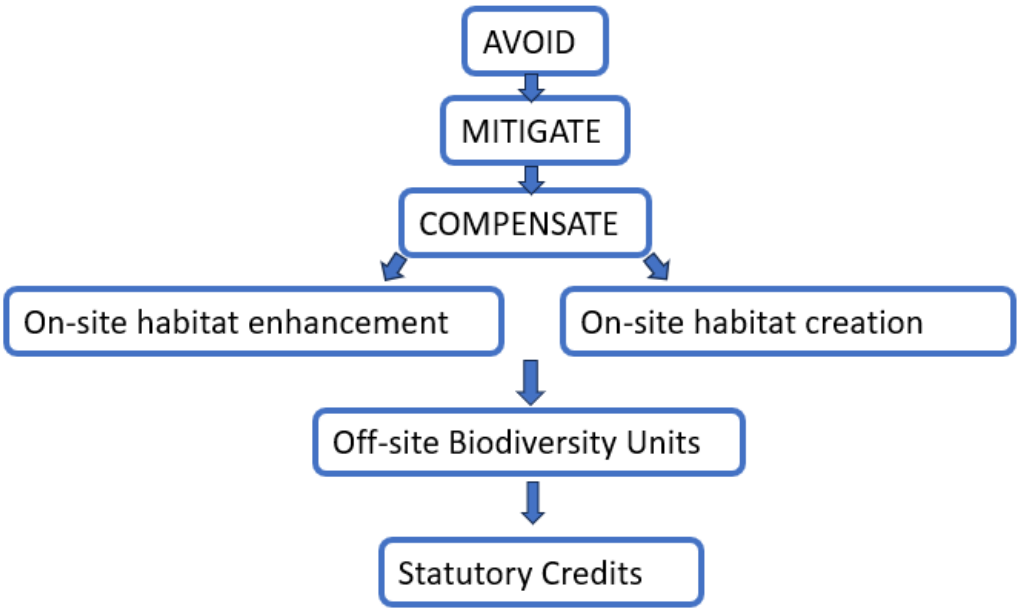
8.2.7 The Council will expect applicants to assess BNG using the Statutory or Small Sites Metric. The biodiversity metric is a habitat-based approach used to assess an areas value to wildlife. The metric uses habitat features as a proxy to calculate a biodiversity value and can assess the biodiversity unit value of an area of land, demonstrate biodiversity net gains or losses in a consistent way. It can help to design, plan and make land management decisions that take better account of biodiversity. To use the metric you need to know, the types of habitat on site, the size of each habitat parcel, the condition of each habitat parcel, whether the sites are in locations identified as of strategic significance for local nature priorities. The biodiversity metric calculation tools and user guides are published by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs[36].

Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy

[34] It is important that councils apply and test the application of BNG prior to the legislative requirements and that BNG is frontloaded into the planning process to ensure effective delivery
[35] residential development where the number of dwellings is between 1 and 9 on a site of an area 1 hectare or less, or if the number of dwellings is unknown, the site area is less than 0.5 Ha, or • commercial development where floor space created is less than 1,000 square metres or total site area is less than 1 hectare, or • development that is not the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits, or • development that is not waste development

[36] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides

8.2.8 Biodiversity Net Gain should be delivered in the context of the following Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy:



BNG should be considered at the early stage of a project before the layout and design is fixed. Applicants will be required to demonstrate to the Council that all methods of avoidance have been fully explored and all new development should seek to deliver BNG on site within the red line application boundary in the first instance. Where on-site provision is not possible the Biodiversity Gain hierarchy should be followed. Non-exempt developments will be required to deliver 10%BNG to be secured through a Biodiversity Gain Plan where it will be demonstrated that a net gain in biodiversity can be achieved and secured for 30 years.

Evidence and reporting requirements[37]

8.2.9 The Council already require a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal or Ecological Impact Assessment to be submitted with most types of planning applications. These will now be required to contain a specific section entitled 'Biodiversity Net Gain' which must clearly show how the site has been assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. This will demonstrate the baseline habitat value of the site (pre-development) and the post development habitat value.

8.2.10 Where it is apparent that the baseline habitat value of the site has been negatively affected between 30 January 2020 and the assessment date, the Council will require an assessment of the site based on the habitat condition prior to any intervention (i.e. removal of vegetation). This could be based on

[37] CIEEM have published Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates that provide a framework for writing reports for projects aiming to achieve BNG. This should inform the report writing approach.

previous aerial photography and environmental records. Where there is insufficient evidence about the biodiversity value of the onsite habitat immediately before the degradation, the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat must be taken to be the highest biodiversity value of the habitat which is reasonably supported by any available evidence relating to it[38].

8.2.11 A habitat baseline plan should be produced using the UK Habitat Classification[39]. This should clearly show the habitat types and area and length of any habitat type or habitat parcel. A reference number for each habitat parcel should cross reference to the metric. Baseline maps showing linear features e.g., hedgerows, rivers and streams should be provided in spatially accurate digital drawings. All habitat types selected must be justified with survey evidence i.e. species lists, relative abundances and photographs. These must correlate with UK Habitat Community descriptions. Habitat enhancement will only be permitted within the same habitat type, e.g. grassland to better quality grassland.

8.2.12 Following the baseline habitat conditions the report should demonstrate how compliance with the BNG 10 good practice principles[40] has been applied as part of the net gain assessment.

8.2.13 A proposed habitats plan should be provided that clearly cross references to the individual lines of the metric habitat calculations. It can be based on the site layout plan, illustrative masterplan, strategic masterplan or green infrastructure parameter plan depending on the nature of the planning application.

8.2.14 Habitats should be mapped using the UK Habitat Classification (to allow comparison with the baseline situation). This plan should clearly show what habitats are to be retained and enhanced and what new habitat types will be created through clear colour coding. The area (ha) or length (km) of each habitat type should be quantified with spatially accurate digital drawings. Other proposed biodiversity enhancements should also be described in this section and shown on appropriately scaled plans e.g., bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways and mitigation for protected/priority species.

8.2.15 The full, completed Excel spreadsheet and a PDF version must be submitted to the Council to allow the full analysis and scrutiny of the information. Summary results or extracts of any metric calculation are insufficient alone. All assumptions made in the metric should be clearly identifiable. Different habitat parcels should be individually referenced and identifiable on the relevant drawings so that these can be cross referenced with the Biodiversity Metric.

8.2.16 The BNG section of the report should provide sufficient detail that biodiversity gains and anticipated 'condition' of the habitat can be realistically achieved within the site framework. It is important that other land uses and land use budget is considered at outline stage and that there is no double counting. Some

[38] Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Schedule 7A, Para 6
[39] The UK Habitat Classification is available from http://www.ukhab.org
[40] BNG Good Practice Principles for Development 2016 CIEEM, IEMA and CIRIA

elements can contribute to BNG such as enhancing green infrastructure, but it is important to ensure that BNG is additional to this, see What you can count towards a development's biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK

Delivery

8.2.17 The choice of habitat type will be informed by landscape character, what is existing on the site and surroundings, soils drainage and aspect. Examples of the most common habitat types are:

- Trees/woodland
- Hedgerows
- Scrub
- Grassland
- Ponds

8.2.18 The consideration of recreational and visitor impact on habitat types proposed will be discussed as required in the consideration of the application of the Biodiversity Metric.

8.2.19 Where sufficient net gain cannot be delivered on site this will need to be evidenced through the illustration of design and layout options and the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy will apply.

Significance

8.2.20 Significant enhancements are those which contribute significantly to the proposed development's BNG, relative to the biodiversity value before development. What counts as a significant enhancement will vary depending on the scale of development and existing habitat, but these would normally be:

- Habitats of medium or higher distinctiveness in the biodiversity metric;
- habitats of low distinctiveness which create a large number of biodiversity units relative to the biodiversity value of the site before development;
- habitat creation or enhancement where distinctiveness is increased relative to the distinctiveness of the habitat before development;
- areas of habitat creation or enhancement which are significant in area relative to the size of the development;
- enhancements to habitat condition, for example from poor or moderate to good.

8.2.21 Where BNG to be delivered is considered significant this will need to be supported by a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan to cover the 30 years of management which will be secured by a s106 to cover LPA monitoring costs.

8.2.22 Costs are calculated according to site size, the 'red line' area of the relevant planning application. Based on the following area thresholds;

Small	Less than 10 hectares
Medium	10-<25 hectares
Large	25-50 hectares

Sites of over 50 hectares will be subject to bespoke fee arrangement

8.2.23 Difficulty will be determined by reference to information provided in the applicant's statutory BNG metric calculation. Where habitats of different difficulties are proposed within a site, the highest would be used to set the charge. Site size and complexity will be considered together to place a scheme into one of five price bands for monitoring, as illustrated in the table below. Further information and the BNG monitoring fee calculator are available on our website.

BNG Monitoring Price Bands			
Complexity	**Size**		
	Small	Medium	Large
Low	1	2	3
Moderate	2	3	4
High	3	4	5

8.3 Therfield Heath SSSI Mitigation Strategy

8.3.1 Therfield Heath is a popular destination for recreational walkers to the west of Royston. This site is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is a significant archaeological site comprising prehistoric burial mounds, many of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. It is necessary to manage recreational disturbance to protect the notified features of the site, including through the collection of developer contributions.

8.3.2 The Therfield Heath Mitigation Strategy was approved as a material consideration by Cabinet in November 2022. This strategy was developed by the Council along with Natural England and the Heath's Conservators and provides a planning mitigation strategy to inform new developments within the SSSI's identified Zone of Influence (ZOI). Sites within the ZOI may be required to make appropriate contributions towards projects or approaches identified in the Strategy, or any other management strategy (or equivalent) produced for this area.

8.3.3 This approach may require schemes to make provision for and / or contributions towards:

- Enhanced open space provision within the development scheme;
- Projects within the SSSI that are identified in consultation with Natural England and / or the Conservators of Therfield Heath;
- Alternate recreation provision or projects within Royston and the surrounding area that provide alternate open space, leisure routes and / or recreational opportunities.

8.4 Flood risk and management

8.4.1 Local Plan Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability expects that development is directed at areas of lowest risk of flooding and that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other appropriate measures are in place. Applicants are required to work with the Lead Local Flood Authority (Hertfordshire County Council), the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards at the earliest opportunity.

8.4.2 It is expected that any necessary flood mitigation measures are to be provided by the developer through on or off-site provisions to make the proposed development acceptable and this will be secured by planning conditions and/or legal agreement.

8.4.3 Where SuDS are required, on-going funding, management and maintenance arrangements will need to be demonstrated.

8.5 Waterways

8.5.1 Local Plan Policy NE9: Water quality and environment requires river restoration and resilience improvements where proposals are situated close to a river or considered to affect nearby watercourses. In some instances, contributions will be required towards these measures. These may also form part of a programme to deliver biodiversity net gain associated with new development.

8.5.2 In particular, there are a number of rare chalk streams in Hertfordshire. There are only around 200 such streams in the world of which 85% are found in the UK. The Environment Agency has been working with water companies and key partners to improve and restore chalk streams in the area. Contributions may be sought towards appropriate projects.

8.5.3 Developments may also need to incorporate improvements in the efficiency of water use, surface drainage systems and pollution prevention measures and such measures will be secured via planning conditions or legal agreement.

8.5.4 Applicants should work with the Council, the Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency where proposals affect water resources.

8.6 Other forms of Green Infrastructure

8.6.1 The subsections above refer to various forms of green infrastructure. However, these are not exhaustive. The provision of open space (in the context of Section

8.4), for example, relates to more formal, and mainly publicly accessible, opportunities within settlements or proposed developments.

8.6.2 The definition of Green Infrastructure is much broader than this. It includes green spaces outside of settlement boundaries such as areas of woodland, other key habitats or species-rich areas. These may or may not be publicly accessible. It also encompasses access links such as the rights of way network, long-distance paths and cycle routes and the broader setting of all of these assets in the landscape.

8.6.3 The Council may seek contributions towards projects identified in strategies and guidance. Where it is reasonable to do so, in this or any equivalent successor document.

8.7 Water supply and waste-water infrastructure

8.7.1 Local Plan Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability requires that the water environment is protected, enhanced and managed. The Water Cycle Studies for both the Rye Meads catchment area and Royston identify technical solutions that will be secured via planning conditions and/or legal agreement.

8.7.2 The Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer should be used to identify contributions that may be required by development proposals towards improvements to water resources.

8.7.3 Residential schemes are required by Local Plan Policy D1: Sustainable design to meet or exceed the optional water efficiency standards. This will be secured by planning conditions and/or legal agreement.

8.7.4 Mechanisms for delivering any necessary new or improved water and/ or wastewater infrastructure, including foul water treatment and drainage disposal, may be required via planning conditions and/or legal agreement in accordance with Local Plan Policy NE10: Water Conservation and wastewater infrastructure.

8.8 Development on contaminated land

8.8.1 The Council will support proposals that involve the remediation of contaminated land in line with Local Plan Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability.

8.8.2 Where a contaminated land study/contaminated land risk assessment identifies required remediation works in accordance with Local Plan Policy NE11: Contaminated land, these will be secured through planning conditions and/or legal agreement. Remediation works may include measures to safely manage land contamination before, during and after development.

8.9 Climate change and renewable and decentralised energy

8.9.1 Local Plan Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability supports proposals for low carbon energy and Policy D1: Sustainable design requires development proposals to reduce energy consumption and future proof for changes in

technology and lifestyle. In securing such measures relating to design (including materials used) and the use of technology, the Council will use planning conditions and/or legal agreements.

8.9.2 Policy NE12: Renewable and low carbon energy development refers to renewable and low carbon energy development comprising wind, wave, tidal, hydro or solar power and biomass fuels. On larger schemes, there may be opportunities for decentralised energy. In line with the NPPF any impacts of this type of development should be addressed. This may include the use of planning conditions and/or legal agreement to secure any mitigation measures.

9 OPEN SPACE, INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

2022 Local Plan Policies	Other relevant Strategies &Guidance
• SP11: Natural resources and sustainability • SP12: Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity • D1: Sustainable design • NE1: Strategic green infrastructure • NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites • NE5: Protecting open space • NE6: New and improved open space • NE7: Reducing flood risk • NE8: Sustainable drainage systems • NE9: Water quality and environment • NE10: Water conservation and wastewater infrastructure • NE11: Contaminated land • NE12: Renewable and low carbon energy development • Site-specific policy criteria	• North Herts Council Sustainability Strategy 2025 - 2030 • NHC Sustainability SPD - 2024 • NHC Green Space Management Strategy 2022- 2027 • NHDC Open Space Review and Standards 2016 • North Hertfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2018 • NHDC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2023 • North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2009 • NHDC Green Space Action Plans (various) • Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions, 2024 • Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2017/18 – 2027/28

9.1 Indoor sports facilities

9.1.1 In line with Local Plan policy SP10: Healthy communities the Council will support the retention of existing leisure facilities and require appropriate levels of leisure and sport and recreation facilities to be provided in new development. Where replacement facilities are required by Policy HC1: Community facilities, these will be secured by legal agreement and / or Grampian condition upon the site which is to be redeveloped.

9.1.2 New developments will be expected to contribute proportionately towards the provision of additional facilities to meet future demands. The Council will use the Sport England Sport Facility calculator to inform calculations for the level of S106 to be sought for indoor sports and leisure facilities. It will identify relevant and appropriate projects to which contributions will be used in consultation with Sport England and by referring to the most up to date Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan.

9.2 Open Spaces

Current policy

9.2.1 The importance of good quality green space or 'green infrastructure' to where we live has significantly increased over recent years, and this is reflected in the planning system. The climate, biodiversity and health crises mean we all need access to good quality, multi-functional green space.

9.2.2 Residents of new housing developments will generate additional needs and demands for open space, sport and recreation facilities. It is therefore important such facilities are sufficient, accessible, connected and enhance nature and biodiversity, as well as contributing in climate mitigation and adaptation. There should also be activities for all to enjoy such as play, food production, recreation and sport so as to encourage physical activity and support good health, social inclusion and well-being.

9.2.3 Policies NE6: New and Improved Open Space and SP9 Design & Sustainability encourage the provision of new and/or improved open space and multi-functional green infrastructure as an integral part of new development. The policy requires that any on-site provision must include a long-term maintenance and management plan and where required phasing plans to demonstrate delivery. Proposals for new open spaces which meet identified needs will be encouraged in suitable locations served by a choice of sustainable travel options. Financial contributions towards the provision of open space will be considered only where it can be demonstrated that the requirements of Policy NE6 part (b) ii are met. Where a development is phased or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole for the purposes of open space provision.

Evidence Base

9.2.4 The NPPF advises that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for health and well-being as well as wider benefits for nature and supporting measures to address climate change.

9.2.5 Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate. The following documents (and any relevant updates) should inform both on-site and any off-site green space provision.

9.2.6 The Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2025 sets out playing pitch and outdoor sports facility needs across the district and will be used to inform new and enhanced playing pitch and outdoor sports facility provision.

- There are a number of neighbourhood plans across the district that should be referred to for more detailed information on existing open space provision (quantitatively and qualitatively), local open space needs and where new or enhanced open space provision are required in policies and supporting evidence.
- The Council has publicised a number of green space action plans for key green spaces across the district. These set out a series of physical and management requirements to enhance the sustainability of each green space.

Open Space Standards

9.2.7 The Council previously used the Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard November 2020 to set the baseline requirements for open space in new development. This guidance has been superseded by the Fields In Trust Standards, 2024. This guidance sets national benchmark guidelines and guidance to ensure that the provision of open spaces is of a sufficient size to ensure its effective use and is located in an accessible location. The open spaces should be in close proximity to dwellings and be of a quality to maintain longevity to encourage its continued use. Our District Design Code will provide further guidance and expectations about the design of open spaces within new developments.

9.2.8 These standards are shown below:

Category of Open Space	Sub-Category	Quantum required	
		Sq m per person	Hectares per 1000 people
Open Space	Parks and Gardens	8	0.80
	Amenity Green Space	6	0.60
	Natural / Semi Natural	18	1.8
Play Space	Equipped Designated Play Areas	2.5	0.25
	Informal Play Provision	3	0.3
Outdoor Sports	Sports pitches / courts and greens / tracks and trails	16	1.6
Other	Allotments	3	0.3
Total		56.5	5.65

Requirements for equipped play

Play Space Typology	Minimum Size	Characteristics
LAP	0.01 ha	Small area of open space for very young children to play close to home No play equipment required
LEAP	0.04 ha	An area of open space specifically designed and laid out with features including equipment for children beginning to play independently.
NEAP	0.1 ha	An area of open space specifically designed, laid out and equipped mainly for older, more independent children.

9.2.9 The table below sets out the application of equipped play standards to the scale of development proposed.

Scale of development (No. of dwellings)	Informal play provision	Local Area of Play (LAP)	Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP)
Up to 20	✓			
21 – 100	✓	✓		
101 – 500	✓	✓	✓	
501 – 1000	✓	✓	✓	✓
1000 +	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Fields in Trust Standards : Creating great spaces for all: 2024

9.2.10 In the calculation of playing pitch/outdoor sports, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator and Sports Facility Calculator should also be used alongside Fields in Trust to estimate demands that will be generated from the new development.[41]

[41] As of May 2020 Sport England limited the use of their Playing Pitch Calculator on the Active Places Power website to local authorities and their consultants. Therefore, developers will need to contact the Council's planning team where required.

This should be used in conjunction with the Councils Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2025 (or any subsequent update) (or) to identify where the demands should be met in the locality. Consultation with Sport England, Town and Parish Councils and the relevant National Governing Bodies will be required where appropriate[42].

9.2.11 All schemes should have regard to these standards as a guide when proposals are developed. The standards should not be treated as a cap for open space provision. We will encourage provision at above minimum standards wherever possible. Any discrepancies between the requirements arising from the Fields in Trust standards vs the Sport England calculator will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to local circumstances, provision and priorities.

9.2.12 Pre-application discussions are encouraged with the NHC Greenspace Manager and planning officers to select what is appropriate for the site. The Council aim to provide larger play spaces where a LAP could be sensitively integrated into a LEAP (as play for toddlers can sometimes benefit from a buffer/separation area with play for older children). Stand-alone LAPS will in general only be considered on an exceptions basis where there is no appropriate accessible play provision.

Qualitative provision and design of open space

9.2.13 Each application (using the relevant evidence base documents) will be considered on its individual merits taking account of the:

- Future demands for open space arising from the development
- Current quantity deficiencies in the area
- The quality of existing open spaces in the area
- Accessibility (distance) to existing open space provision

9.2.14 The table below provides definitions of the open space types that we are currently using.

Open Space Type	Description
Parks and Gardens	Managed and accessible, high public value opportunities for informal recreation and community events (should be designed around community hubs where co-location of facilities is encouraged in accordance with Sport England's Active Design Guidance). Include Country Parks, urban and town centre parks, local recreation grounds, formal gardens and local/neighbourhood pocket parks

[42] Sports England is a non-statutory consultee on residential development of 300 dwellings or more

Open Space Type	Description
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	Sites that provide wildlife conservation, biodiversity and a natural capital function (e.g. water management, soil quality, carbon sequestration). This type of greenspace includes local nature reserves, local wildlife sites, woodland, grassland, scrubland, wetlands etc. It also includes agricultural land or grazing land where there are public rights of way.
Amenity Greenspace	Informal recreational 'doorstep; spaces located close to people's homes providing a landscape and visual amenity role and supporting social interaction.
Allotments	Land where vegetables and fruit can be cultivated.
Equipped Areas for Play LAPs	• Small area close to home • Specifically designed and laid out for very young children • Designed for informal observation and supervision • No play equipment required – relies on demonstrative features to indicate that play is positively encouraged • Recommended minimum activity zone: 100 square metres
LEAPs	• Specifically designed for children who are beginning to go out and play independently • Within 400m walking distance of every home • Located at the heart of the development, not at the edge • No significant barriers to access the LEAP, for example main roads • Should provide for informal recreation and varied, stimulating and challenging play experiences • Positioned by pedestrian route that is well used • Recommended minimum activity zone is 400 square metres • Equipment or natural landscape features should cater for different play types that test children's physical abilities
NEAPs	• Specifically designed, laid out and equipped mainly for older children but with play opportunities for younger children too • Within 1000 metres walking distance from home • Minimum area of 1000 square metres

Open Space Type	Description
	• More challenging items of equipment and features which meet the needs of older children and sufficient space to play larger group games • Seating and shelter to enable young people to socialise
MUGA	Minimum activity zone of 1000 sq m comprising structures and hard surfaced court for sports (court minimum dimensions 40x20 metres) with 30 m separation zone between the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling
Outdoor Sports	Natural or artificial playing pitches including for football, rugby, cricket, hockey, tennis, bowling and athletics tracks and other outdoor sport activities.

9.2.15 For sites that require a Strategic Masterplan, a Green Infrastructure Framework Plan will be required. This should clearly colour code the open space types that the application seeks to deliver in accordance with Fields in Trust standards as well as areas for sustainable urban drainage to inform the LPA of the proposed green space provision and design intent. The proposed site area (in hectares) should be provided for each open space and clearly referenced to the plan. Plans and supporting commentary should identify the character and function of new open spaces through specific names rather than a generic POS reference.

9.2.16 Children benefit from access to natural environments, features and natural play. In the right location grassy mounds, planting, logs, sand, trees, trunks and boulders can all help make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment where children can play in different ways and nature can also be supported. Play areas should be located where there is sufficient natural surveillance or on natural through routes and should be designed using Play England's 10 principles for designing successful play space.

9.2.17 Guidance on how open spaces should be designed to become an integral part of the community is set out in the District Design Code and in Sport England's Active Design Guidance[43].

9.2.18 For the avoidance of doubt, open space must be useable and accessible to the public (in perpetuity). SLOAP ('space left over after planning') should not be present in a well-designed scheme. Every space should have a clear design function. SLOAP such as roadside verges and small areas of incidental land will not count towards public open space. Structural and peripheral landscaping

[43] Sport England - Active Design Guidance

footpaths and cycleways also will not be included, unless they form an integral part to a large area of open space.

9.2.19 In relation to sustainable urban drainage these need to be designed according to the latest CIRIA guidance, where possible they should also be a usable and accessible feature of public open space fully integrated into the site layout and green space network with a well-designed interface with the surrounding space. To be considered as such they should bring amenity, landscaping and biodiversity benefits as well as the technical elements required. This would include a naturalistic and landscape-led approach with carefully planted edges with appropriate habitat, shallow gradients and banks/beaches with perimeter pathways for any areas of permanent water. The area of SUDS to be counted as 'recreational' open space should be dry and usable for a significant majority of the time.

Financial contributions in lieu towards off-site provision of open space types

9.2.20 Where the Council considers it appropriate a financial contribution to be paid in lieu of on-site provision, towards new or enhanced provision off site within the vicinity of the development will be considered where the need arises directly from the development. Such financial contributions in lieu may be considered where the full amount of required open space cannot be realistically delivered on-site (e.g. the site is too small to provide a space of a functional size or improvements to a site in the local vicinity could adequately meet the open space needs generated by the development).

9.2.21 This decision-making will be informed by the relevant evidence base e.g. the Green Space Action Plans, relevant Neighbourhood Plans, the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2025 and any subsequent equivalent documents. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by North Hertfordshire Council's Greenspace and Planning teams, in consultation with relevant organisations such as Sport England, Town and Parish councils and National Governing Bodies as appropriate.

Maintenance and management of green space

9.2.22 The North Hertfordshire Council Green Space Management Strategy 2022-2027 sets out all sections of the community should have access to green space and experience its multiple benefits. Green space should be freely accessible to all the public and not be reserved for the private use of residents.

9.2.23 The council will consider the adoption and management of new strategic green space in the following circumstances:

- It is located within the four main towns of Baldock, Letchworth, Hitchin and Royston (and Great Ashby) and complements existing service maintenance operations.

- The green space is meeting a current deficiency and new provision would meet the needs of existing and new residents.
- The green space is meeting a strategic gap in the green space network and improving the quantity, quality and connectivity of the district's green space network.
- Where longer term revenue streams such as council tax can be effectively recycled back into the locality as part of place investment.
- Where other corporate objectives can be meet such as climate change, biodiversity and health and wellbeing.

9.2.24 For smaller green spaces and new green space in other settlements, other options should be considered and agreed on a site-by-site basis, such as parish councils and private management companies.

9.2.25 Allotments are often managed by Town or Parish Councils (or Allotment Associations), and it is recommended that they are consulted before submitting a planning application to discuss provision, local demands and design preferences (i.e. full or half plots).

9.2.26 Should new provision by adopted by North Hertfordshire Council or by a Town or Parish Council then a commuted management sum would be payable for a period of not less than 20 years with the contributions being given to the relevant body.

9.2.27 The Council will consider other management approaches such as private management companies. Such arrangements would require open space management in perpetuity.

Appendix A: S106 process flow-chart

Proposal development and early engagement

Development proposal designed in accordance with Council policy and early engagement with Council officers to determine if planning obligations will be required.

For sites of 100 or more homes this process may occur as part of the wider masterplanning process

Pre-application stage

Where planning obligations are required, and a pre-application is submitted to the Council, the Council will consider the impacts of the proposal and provide indicative S106 Heads of Terms to the applicant

Other organizations may run their own pre-application services

Heads of Terms

Discussion and agreement of Heads of Terms between applicant and Council

Planning application stage

Application submitted alongside planning obligations statement and draft Heads of Terms, solicitors contact details and land title information

Consultation

Application validated and public consultation on the application and any revision to Heads of Terms if needed

All obligations will be coordinated by the case officer. Applications will be recommended for refusal if necessary obligations are not agreed

Committee

Heads of Terms included in the report to planning committee and decision made to approve or refuse subject to completion of the S106 agreement.

Positive recommendations will be presented to the Planning Control Committee only following the full agreement of the terms of a S106 Obligation document by all parties (not signed) to avoid unacceptable delays between Committee resolution and completion of a S106 Obligation.

The application will be refused if the legal agreement is not signed within the agreed timescale

Completion of legal agreement

Legal agreement signed and planning permission issued

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination Statement for North Hertfordshire District Council Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2023 & 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out a Screening Determination for the North Hertfordshire District Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Developer Contributions 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 Sustainability SPD specifically (section 4).

1.2 The assessment of the Developer Contributions 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 (the Local Planning Authority) 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 & 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:

i. 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.

ii. 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.

iii. 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. Developer Contributions SPD

4.1. Developer contributions can be used to make a development acceptable but should only be used where unacceptable impacts cannot be dealt with by planning conditions. Legal tests must be applied to any planning obligations sought, and this is outlined in Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and in paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Any contributions must be:

a. necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
b. directly related to the development; and
c. fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

4.2. The NPPF 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 following submission of the proposed new Local Plan for examination. This identified that the Council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) dating from 2006 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

[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

4.5. A Draft Developer Contributions SPD was subsequently produced and consulted upon between February and March 2020.3 In July 2020, Cabinet resolved to adopt the Developer Contributions SPD subject to the adoption of the new Local Plan within 12 months of the Cabinet meeting. Further to this, in the interim it was agreed that the document would be published and used as a material consideration when considering planning applications.

4.6. In March 2021, a Cabinet decision was made to not pursue a Community Infrastructure Levy at this time, and also to commence work on a revised and updated suite of Supplementary Planning Documents (although the latter had no bearing on the Developer Contributions SPD).

4.7. Delays in the Local Plan Examination precipitated a need to obtain Cabinet approval in July 2021 to continue to use the draft SPD as a material consideration in decision making, and to review the SPD to determine whether any further work was needed prior to adoption and any associated Cabinet decision. It was additionally decided at the same Cabinet meeting to use the Fields in Trust standards for open space provision in new development.

4.8. It is proposed that this latest version of the SPD will be consulted upon starting in October 2022 to enable adoption at the same time as, or shortly after, any future decision to adopt the Council's emerging 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	No	The SPD provides greater detail on the policy and principles established in the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The 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 effective and constant

conditions or by allocating resources		implementation of the relevant requirements and sustainability related policies (principally Policy SP7 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 developer contributions policy. The aim of this policy is to ensure that development proposals make provision for infrastructure that is necessary in order to accommodate the additional demands resulting from the 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 new development supported by the necessary infrastructure. The SPD will require contributions towards any mitigation measures for any development that requires environmental enhancement. 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 Local Plan SA/SEA expects overall positive benefits to arise from the specific policies related to infrastructure provision that the SPD relates to.
2 (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	Planning obligations/developer contributions will be local to North Hertfordshire district and only indirect effects are expected cross-boundary, for example, where the obligation secures a contribution towards infrastructure in an adjoining 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 relevant planning applications in the district, although the effects of the SPD will be more likely felt at a more local scale (i.e. site or neighbourhood).
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 able to set policy related to specific land uses. They will only affect the way in which infrastructure is funded or provided.

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 Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document. The Council will consult the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (English Heritage, the Environment Agency & 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 concluded that at this time the Developer Contributions SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this conclusion are that:

- The development plan policies supplemented by this SPD have themselves been subjected to SA and SEA. The SA conclusion on Policy SP7 states that the policy is critical in ensuring that the Plan delivers against a significant number of the sub-objectives in the sustainability appraisal framework, not only through ensuring the delivery of needed infrastructure but also through making provision for the mitigation of the adverse impacts of new development. 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 Local Plan SA/SEA. The SPD cannot set new policy. It has been prepared to build upon the Local 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 Local Plan, and the effects expected, North Hertfordshire District Council concludes that the Developer Contributions SPD does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

8. Addendum for 2026 Developer Contributions SPD

8.1. The Developer Contributions SPD was adopted in February 2023 to support the implementation of the development and has been used to secure appropriate contributions arising from developments across the District.

8.2. There are a number of areas where updates to the Developer Contributions SPD 2023 were considered necessary. The significant changes included:

- Deleting references throughout the document to developer contributions requested by Hertfordshire County Council;
- Updating and providing additional details with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Updating the open space standards to reflect the new guidance published by Fields in Trust; and
- General updating of relevant strategies and guidance where those have been updated or new guidance has been published.

8.3. Consultation has taken place on the draft Developer Contributions SPD and a number of comments have been received which are summarised below:

- Support to replace the references for HCC developer contributions with a link to the guide that the County Council have published;
- A number of representations were made in respect of the delivery of infrastructure ahead of planned development. A minor change was made to reference 'expected timescales' that funding would apply to, however the overarching principle within the SPD remains unchanged; it is considered to be reasonable for large or multiple developments to pay for infrastructure that has been forward funded, enabling it to be delivered at the same time or ahead of development it supports. Statutory planning obligation tests will still apply.
- A number of amendments were made to the section Vacant Building Credit to simplify the text;
- Significant updates have been made to Section 7: Healthy Communities as the information and costs for healthcare facilities have been updated by the Central East Integrated Care Board;
- Some further amendments have been made to update the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements;
- A new section has been added to the SPD, "Open Space, Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities". This amendment has been made to ensure that all the relevant guidance is in one section of the SPD;
- There were objections which related to the proposed introduction of open space provision in different scales of development, or "tiers". The objections stated that these changes made the SPD complicated. It is agreed that these changes should not be made in the Developer Contributions SPD as the District Design Code SPD can include the details of how open space is provided in new development; and
- There were no objections to updating the Fields in Trust open space standards in the SPD.

8.4. The explanatory text in the Developer Contributions SPD has been amended in response to the representations made, but there are no substantive changes in the approach of the SPD and therefore it is considered that the SEA screening determination remains the same as for the 2023 version of the SPD.

CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: North Herts Design Code SPD

REPORT OF: Director - Place

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Place

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To present this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for adoption following public consultation and amendment.

The Design Code SPD supports the Local Plan and sets out detailed design standards for new development. The Design Code SPD has been produced in response to up-to-date national policy.

The SPD sets out our design expectations and requirements for development in North Herts. It offers good practice guidance to developers when developing proposals and policy advice to decision-makers when determining planning applications.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the outcomes of the consultation on the draft Design Code SPD, as contained in the Statement of Consultation at Appendix A, be noted

2.2. That the Design Code SPD, attached as Appendix B, be adopted

2.3. That the 2011 Design Supplementary Planning Document is revoked

2.4. That delegated authority is granted to the Director: Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Place, to make any minor non-material corrections to the Design Code SPD as considered necessary for publication and publicity in accordance with the relevant regulations.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To allow the Design Code SPD to be adopted to support delivery of the policies in the adopted Local Plan and ensure that developer contributions for development schemes are secured appropriately where they are necessary.

3.2. To ensure the SPD is presented in advance of the Government's final cut-off of 30 June 2026 for any SPDs to be adopted under the outgoing legacy planning system.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None. Consultation has taken place on the Design Code SPD. Responses have been considered and amendments have been made in response to the representations made. The SPD is ready for adoption in accordance with the relevant regulations.

4.2. Following the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No.11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026, Supplementary Planning Documents in preparation must be adopted no later than 30 June 2026.

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 content of the Design Code SPD and the programme for its development on a regular basis.

5.2. Internal and external consultation with relevant officers and Members across Council departments, and residents, has taken place in developing the SPD, including

- Member Workshops and Site Visits
- Specialist Working Groups (with external consultants, officers and HCC officers)
- Residents Design Forum

5.3. Public consultation on the draft SPD was undertaken between 4 March and 2 April 2026. A summary of the comments made in response to the draft SPD has been prepared and is included within the Statement of Consultation at Appendix A. Further detail is set out below.

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 13 February 2026.

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. The Government provided further detail on their proposed roll-out of a new plan-making system in late 2025. These were reported to Cabinet in January 2026. Importantly, in this context, the Government proposals included a 'cut-off' date of 30 June 2026 for the adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents under current legislation and regulations. This 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.

7.7. Cabinet approved the draft Design Code SPD for consultation in February 2026. Consultation took place between 4 March and 2 April. In March 2026, the Government also laid relevant regulations to update and change the planning system. This confirmed the 'cut-off' arrangements above.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The report to Cabinet in February 2026 set out the approach to the scope and broad content of the (then) draft SPD.

8.2. As a result of the public consultation, 66 individual responses were received from residents, the County Council, developers and other interested parties.

8.3. In response to the representations, and issues raised, amendments have been made to the content of the SPD. These include:

a. Amending the detailed wording of objectives and codes to provide greater clarity. This includes incorporating specific amendments requested by Historic England
b. Updating open space codes to include requirements for specific accessible equipment
c. Changing street specification to align with building regulations and emergency access requirements
d. Deletion of a subcode on clustering of affordable housing as this is adequately dealt with by other codes
e. Clarifying the approach to car and cycle parking codes to ensure alignment with adopted standards and to be clearer about the differentiation between on-plot and off-plot provision

8.4. In addition to technical comments, some respondents raised procedural concerns. These included:

a. That insufficient prior engagement and consultation had been carried out
b. That the document goes beyond the scope of what is permitted in an SPD
c. That the SPD effectively introduces new policies and requirements beyond those set out and tested in the Local Plan

These issues have been comprehensively considered and officers' view is that they should not prevent the SPD from being adopted. Detailed reasoning, along with responses to the technical issues, are set out in the Statement of Consultation attached as Appendix A.

8.5. The SPD has been updated to reflect issues raised during consultation and further internal discussions. The SPD is attached at Appendix B. The sustainability screening determination is attached at Appendix C. This has been updated to reflect the responses received during the statutory consultation.

8.6. Subject to approval by Cabinet, the SPD will be adopted and will be a material consideration in planning decisions.

8.7. A compliance checklist is being developed to support the SPD. This will allow applicants to 'self-assess' their schemes against the SPD prior to submitting an application. It will also assist officers in considering proposals. It is likely that the checklist will adapt and evolve as lessons are learnt from implementation. This will be published on the Council website alongside the SPD allowing it to be separately updated. Work will also continue to enable the Design Code SPD to be accessed and used as a web-based resource.

8.8. The Design Code SPD replaces and supercedes the 2011 Design Supplementary Planning Document. Cabinet is requested to formally revoke this document.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, paragraph 5.7.18 of the Constitution states that the Cabinet should exercise the 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). These same documents make provision for local planning authorities to revoke any Supplementary Planning Document

9.3. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No.11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026 ; Schedule 1 – Plan Making Saving and Transitional Provisions states that local planning authority may prepare and make arrangements for the adoption of a proposed supplementary planning document, provided that the document is adopted no later than 30 June 2026.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The costs of preparing the Design Code SPD have been met through existing staff resources and approved revenue budgets.

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 leading to poor scheme outcomes:** Insufficient clarity in national policy or guidance may result in development that does not appropriately support corporate priorities relating to climate change, the environment, the economy, or place making; and
- **Poor design outcomes:** Development may fail to respond appropriately to local character and context if policy clarity or evidence is lacking.

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 was completed at the draft SPD stage and concluded there are positive impacts to our communities as a result of the work of the SPD. This was reported to Cabinet in February 2026. The changes made to the SPD in response to the consultation are largely technical and do not substantively impact upon the scope, intent and anticipated outcomes of the previous EqIA.

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. Government regulations require that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are 'screened' to determine whether statutory environmental assessment is required which would consider the social, economic and environmental implications of proposed policies and allocations.

14.2 A screening opinion was completed at draft stage and has been reviewed in light of the consultation. This is attached at Appendix C 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 has been supported by establishment staff supplemented by a fixed-term post funded from the project revenue budget.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – North Herts Design Code SPD Statement of Consultation

16.2 Appendix B – North Herts Design Code SPD [*For the purposes of committee reporting this document is split into four parts due to file size. The final document will be presented as a whole*]

16.3 Appendix C – North Herts Design Code SPD SEA Screening Determination

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Report to Cabinet February 2026 – Draft Design Code SPD

18.2 Report to Cabinet March 2021 – Local Plan implementation

18.3 Report to Cabinet July 2017 – Review of existing North Hertfordshire Planning Guidance

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

V.01 2026

INTRODUCTION

Background

This Statement of Consultation has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Statement sets out who, when and how interested parties were consulted when preparing the North Herts Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The statement also summarises the representations received and how they have influenced the SPD.

The Design Code SPD provides additional detail and clarity to adopted Local Plan Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability), Policy D1 (Sustainable Design) and other relevant policies in the Plan.

The aim of the document is to set out our expectations for high-quality design for development in North Herts and offer clear codes to developers to guide the preparation of schemes and to case officers and Local Councillors in determining planning applications.

Visioning Workshop, Residents Design Forum, June 2025.

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

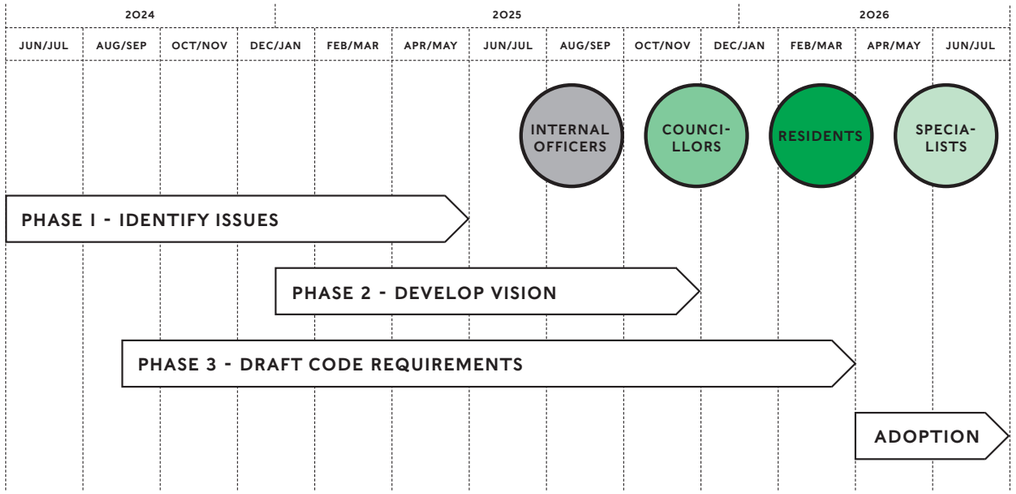
Preparation and Overview

The preparation of the North Herts Design Code involved a structured programme of engagement with internal officers, Local Councillors, residents and specialist stakeholders between June 2024 and April 2026. The engagement process was organised into three key phases: Identifying Issues, Developing the Vision, and Drafting the Code Requirements.

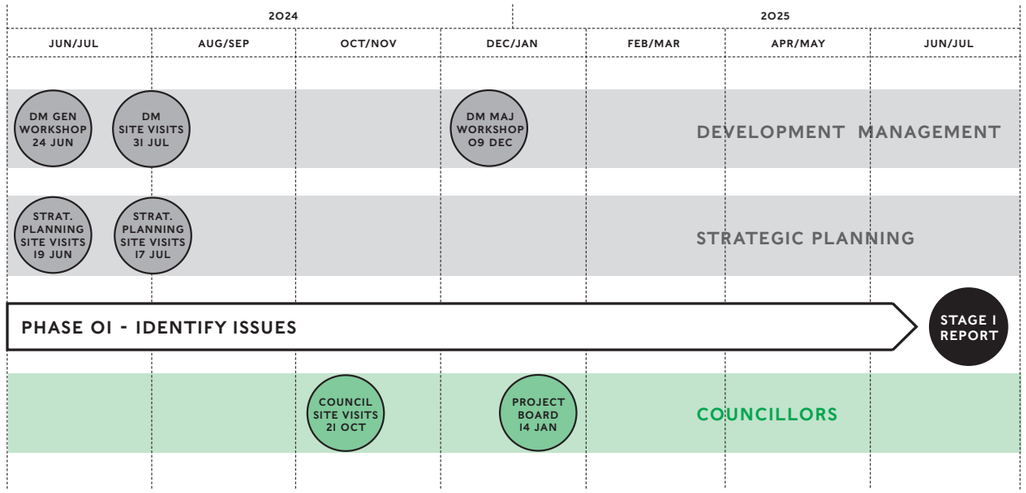
Each phase included targeted workshops, meetings and forums designed to gather feedback from different groups, including Development Management officers, Strategic Planning officers, Local Councillors, residents,and specialist stakeholders. This engagement helped ensure that the emerging design code reflected local priorities, practical development considerations and the views of the community.

The timeline provides an overview of the key engagement activities undertaken throughout the project.

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE



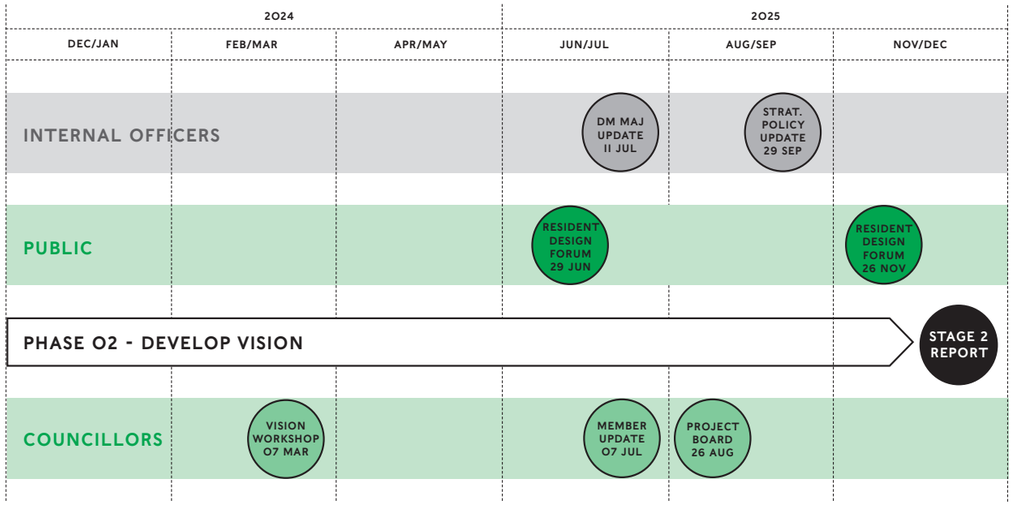
Phase 1 - Identify Issues



The first phase of engagement focused on identifying key design issues and priorities across North Hertfordshire. Engagement during this stage primarily involved internal officers and Local Councillors, supported by site visits and workshops.

These discussions helped identify the main design challenges, opportunities, and local priorities that informed the emerging vision for the Design Code.

Phase 2 - Develop Vision

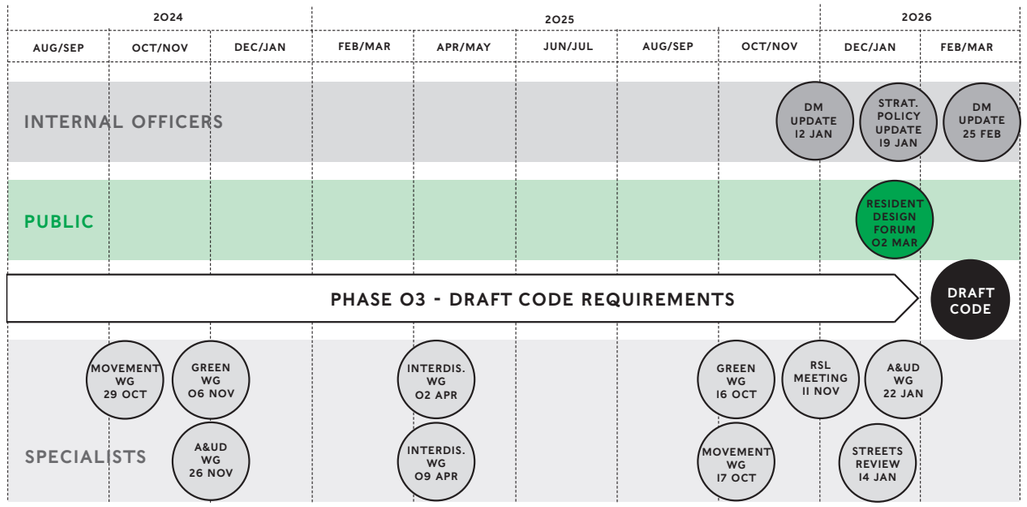


The second phase of engagement focused on developing the overarching vision and principles that would guide the North Herts Design Code. This stage broadened engagement to include residents and Local Councillors alongside internal officers.

Key engagement activities included a Vision Workshop with Local Councillors, internal officer updates and the first two Residents Design Forums held in June and November 2025. These sessions provided an opportunity to explore local priorities, discuss key design themes and gather early feedback on the emerging vision for the design code.

Feedback from these discussions helped shape the overall direction of the code and informed the development of the draft principles.

Phase 3 - Draft Design Code Requirements

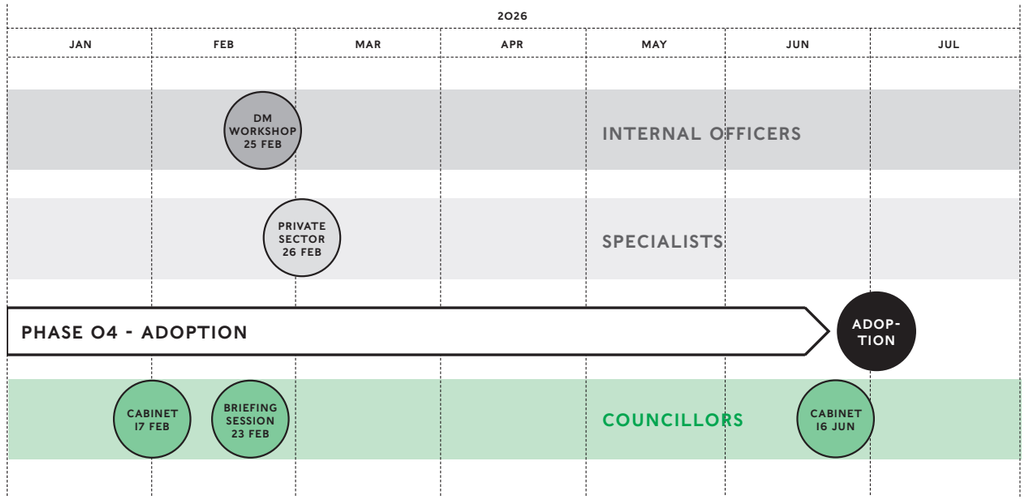


The third phase focused on developing the detailed design code requirements. Engagement during this stage involved a wider range of stakeholders, including internal officers, residents, registered social landlords and specialist working groups.

A series of specialist working groups were held to discuss specific technical topics such as movement, green infrastructure, streets and architecture and urban design. Internal officer updates and meetings with housing associations also helped ensure that the emerging codes were practical and aligned with development management processes.

The final Residents Design Forum was held in March 2026, providing an opportunity for participants to review and discuss the draft code requirements prior to the start of the public consultation.

Phase 4 - Adoption



The final phase focuses on the formal adoption of the North Herts Design Code Supplementary Planning Document. During this stage, internal officer discussion and briefing sessions were held to finalise the document prior to adoption.

Key activities included a Development Management workshop and a private sector briefing session in February 2026. Local Councillors were also engaged through cabinet briefings and Local Councillor sessions to review the draft code and the consultation outcomes where the Draft Design Code received positive feedback and praise from councillors.

Following the close of the public consultation period, subsequent amendments were mad in response to the representations received, contributing towards the final version of the Design Code as presented for Cabinet's consideration in relation to adoption.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Stage 1 Summary
Methodology 14
Officers Place Review 16
Local Councillors Place Review 18
Key Conclusions 20

Stage 2 Summary
Council Visioning Day 24
Residents Design Forum #1 42
Residents Design Forum #2 54

Stage 3 Summary
Working Groups 68
Housing Association Workshop 70
Members Briefing 71
Private Sector Briefing 72
Residents Design Forum #3 73

Public Consultation
Methodology 78
Responses Breakdown 80
General Comments 81
Exceptional Open Space 84
Sociable Streets 86
Well Integrated Development 88
Convivial Communities 90
Efficient Use of Land 92
Equitable Neighbourhoods 94
Contextual Buildings 96

Settlement Structure 98
Open Space 102
Streets 106
Built Form 110
Parking 114
Conclusion and Next Steps 118

Appendix A - Public Consultation Form 120

Page 150

STAGE I SUMMARY

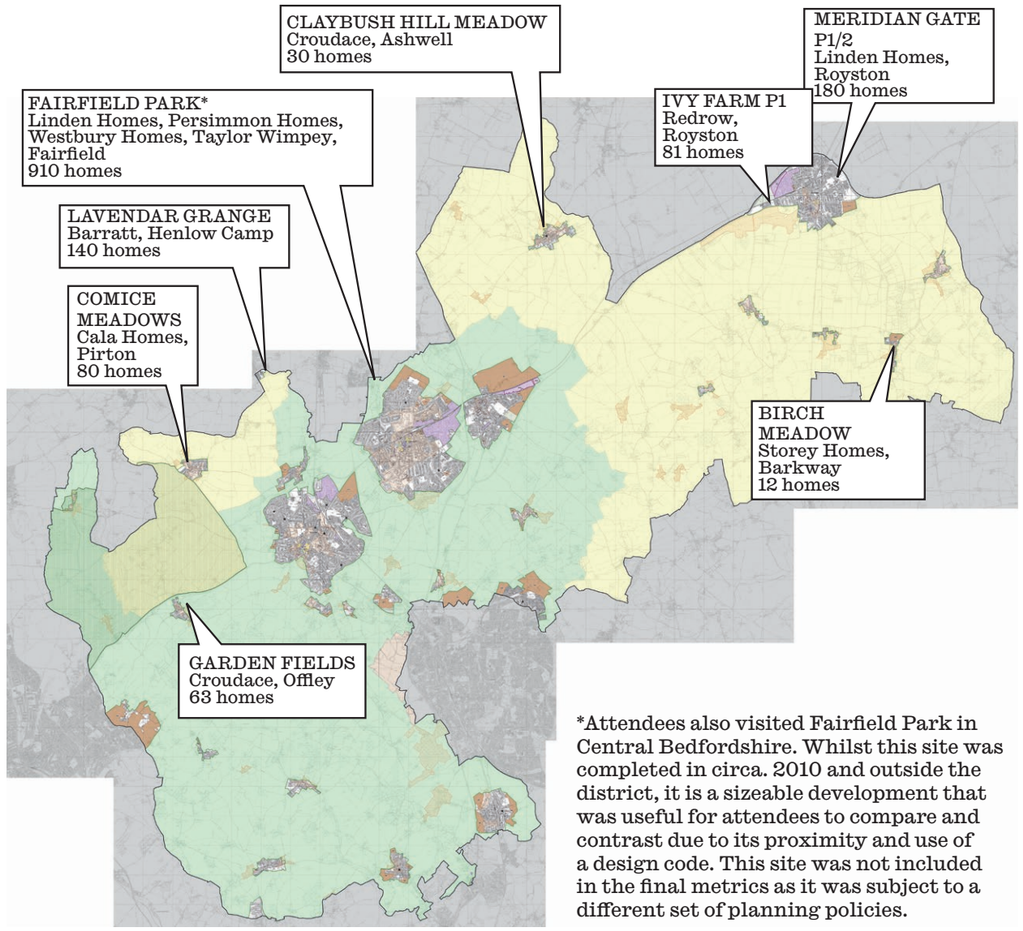
METHODOLOGY

Place Review Approach

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 Local Councillors 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.

District Map showing sites visited.

OFFICERS PLACE REVIEW

Officer Site Visits

North Herts officers from across the Place Directorate took part in a series of Place Review site visits held in June and July 2024. Officers represented a range of disciplines, including strategic planning, development management, urban design, transport, ecology, infrastructure and policy, ensuring that the exercise captured a broad range of professional perspectives.

Across the site visit days, officers visited a number of recently completed residential developments across the district. These included Claybush Hill Meadows (Ashwell), Meridian Gate (Royston), Birch Meadow (Barkway), Comice Meadows (Pirton), Garden Fields (Offley), Lavender Grange (Lower Stondon) and Ivy Farm (Royston). Officers also visited Fairfield Park (Central Bedfordshire) as a comparator scheme outside the district.

At each location, participants completed a structured place review questionnaire assessing the design and performance of the development against a series of criteria covering settlement structure and layout, movement and connectivity, nature and open space, character and built form, social infrastructure, and management of public spaces.

In total, 74 officer response forms were completed across seven sites, allowing results to be collated and analysed.

Key Findings

The scoring indicated that most categories performed relatively consistently across the sites, with average scores typically falling between 2.5 and 3.5. This suggested that while many developments perform reasonably well in several areas, there are also recurring design issues that the Design Code should seek to address.

The place reviews highlighted a number of positive aspects, including appropriate buildings heights, well-maintained front gardens and streets that generally feel safe with good levels of natural surveillance. However, officers also identified areas for improvement, particularly relating to the quality and usability of open spaces, the integration of new development with surrounding contexts, and the prominence of car parking within some schemes.

Officers Site Visit Day, 31st July 2024

LOCAL COUNCILLORS PLACE REVIEW

Local Councillor Site Visits

Following the officer review, a second set of site visits was undertaken with elected Local Councillors. These visits were organised to allow Local Councillors to review a selection of recent residential developments across the district and provide their own perspectives on what was working well and where improvements could be made.

Local Councillors were asked to consider the same themes explored in the officer review, including streets and movement, parking, public spaces, building design and the overall quality of place. As with the officer review, Local Councillors recorded their views using a structured scoring form to ensure that feedback could be compared consistently across sites.

Key Findings

Local Councillors highlighted a number of positive aspects across the developments visited, including attractive streets in some locations, well-maintained landscaping and developments that generally felt safe and well overlooked.

However, Local Councillors also identified several recurring issues. These included concerns about the dominance of car parking in some streets, the limited usability or quality of certain open spaces, and the need for stronger connections between new developments and their surrounding settlement.

The feedback provided by Local Councillors helped reinforce many of the themes identified through the officer review and provided an important democratic perspective on the design issues that the Design Code should address.

Members Site Visit Day, 21st October 2024

KEY CONCLUSIONS

Local Councillor and Officer Site Visits

The officer and Local Councillor place reviews identified a number of consistent themes across the developments visited. While many schemes demonstrated positive aspects of design, the exercise highlighted several recurring issues which the Design Code seeks to address.

Across the sites reviewed, development often performed well in terms of basic layout, building height and the presence of front gardens, and most streets generally felt safe with reasonable levels of natural surveillance. Landscaping and planting were also frequently well established in more mature developments.

However, several areas of concern were identified. Car parking was often visually dominant, with vehicles sometimes defining the character of streets rather than buildings or landscape. In some locations, open spaces lacked a clear purpose or were poorly integrated with surrounding streets, reducing their usability and contribution to the wider neighbourhood.

Both officers and Local Councillors also noted that connections between new developments and their surrounding settlements were sometimes weak, resulting in developments that felt inward-looking or poorly integrated with existing communities. In addition, some developments showed limited architectural variety or a lack of distinctive local character, which reduced their ability to contribute positively to the identity of the area.

These findings helped to establish the key design challenges within North Hertfordshire and directly informed the next stage of the Design Code process, including the development of the Place Objectives and technical design codes.

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STAGE 2 SUMMARY

COUNCIL VISIONING DAY

Session Overview

The District Design Code Visioning Workshop brought together Local 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 Objectives.
4. To prioritise which Place Objectives and problems the code should focus on addressing.
5. To explore the golden thread between priorities, Place Objectives and code.

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

ATTENDEES	ROLE (AS OF 07/03/25)
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	Strategic Planning Manager
Deborah Coates	Principal Planning Officer

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
12:00-12:20	Registration, tea and coffee
12:20-13:20	Activity 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	Herts Design Code-intro North
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

Attendees: North Herts Councillors (proportionately represented) and Senior North Herts Officers
Time: Friday 7 March 2025
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth

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 unsuccessful 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.

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

Nature And Open Space

Multi-Functionality
Playable Landscape
Well Planted

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

Activated
Communal
Street Trees
Integrated Parking

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 discussed 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-overlooked 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.

Awkward Fencing
Not Overlooked
Excessive Hardstanding
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; Local Councillors 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: Local Councillors 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.

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

Officers

1: High Quality Green Spaces

- High quality green spaces that have a clear function.
- Well-integrated attenuation basins that contribute to place-making.
- Streets designed as places for nature with high quality planting and trees.

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.

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 stitched into their surroundings.

Local Councillors

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 stitched 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.

Officers

- Green spaces that are distinctive to the local area.
- 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.~~
- 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.

Local Councillors

- Future-proofing edges of proposals with growth in mind to ensure connections are possible.
- High quality green spaces that have a clear function.
- Streets designed as places for nature with high quality planting and trees.
- Well connected routes, roads and paths - no impermeable edges.
- Green spaces that are distinctive to the local area.
- 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.

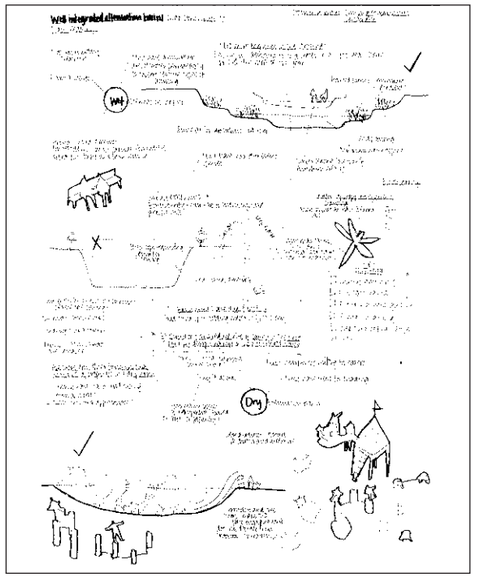
Activity 2: Testing the Code

The final session of the workshop began with an introductory presentation around how coding can be used to deliver on the place characteristics 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 Local Councillors to focus on one key place characteristic. Group 1 focussed on integrating attenuation basins, Group 2 looked at embedding 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.

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

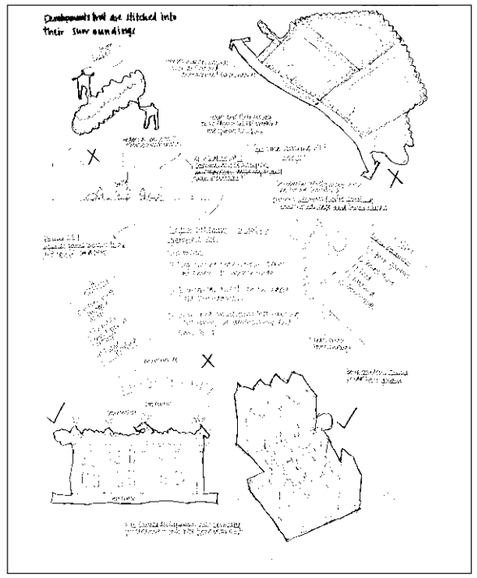
Group 1: Well Integrated Attenuation Basins That Contribute To Place-Making



- Nature-based over engineered solutions that contribute to the natural character of the green spaces they sit within
- Nature-based solutions for road run-off
- No holes in the ground - code edges
- Must be multi-use integrating play or biodiversity rich planting
- Deal with water at the source - minimising water transported
- Need code for other types of SUDs such as swales and rain gardens
- Code the process

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

Group 2: 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

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

Group 3: Tenure Neutral Neighbourhoods

Parking is the biggest giveaway - usually right up to front doors of terraced blocks.

Parking amenities such as EV charging

Code for distance in front of homes

Code for flexible parking space - dual use

Private tenures have garages, affordable tenures don't

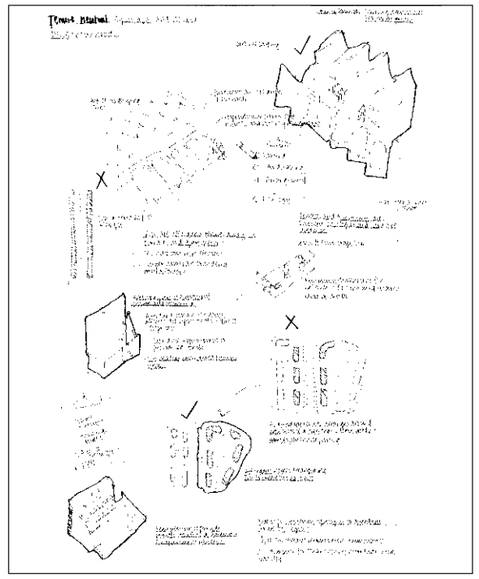
Mix of blocks and building types

Consider management

Consider letterbox provision and design

Parity of public realm

Location and access to playspace is important



Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

Council Visioning Day, Friday 7th March 2025

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RESIDENT DESIGN FORUM #I

Session Overview

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.

Agenda	Activity
18:00-18:10	Registration
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

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

*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.

Resident Design Forum, Wednesday 29th June 2025

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.

Resident Design Forum, Wednesday 29th June 2025

What Do You Like About Where You Live?

Quietness
Nature
Green Space

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.

Wide Tree-Lined Streets
Community Spirit
Baby Friendly Cafes
The Countryside
Peaceful
Dark Skies
Lots Of Walks
Historic Town

What Don't You Like About Where You Live?

Traffic
Parking
Congestion

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).

No Cycle Lanes
Lack Of Lighting
Air Pollution And Fumes
Monotonous Town Centre Shops
Lack Of Facilities
Access To Amenities/Healthcare

Is There a Place in the District That Feels Special / Meaningful to You?

Broadway Gardens

Western Way

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.

Weston Woods

Market Square

Therfield Heath

St Mary's Church

The Greenway

Oughtonhead

Hitchin Market

Kennedy Gardens

Standalone Farm

Icknield Way

Activity 2: Vision 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.

Resident Design Forum, Wednesday 29th June 2025

Group 1

KEY PRIORITIES

1: Green ecological neighbourhoods that include allotments, community gardens and connections to nature for residents and visitors.

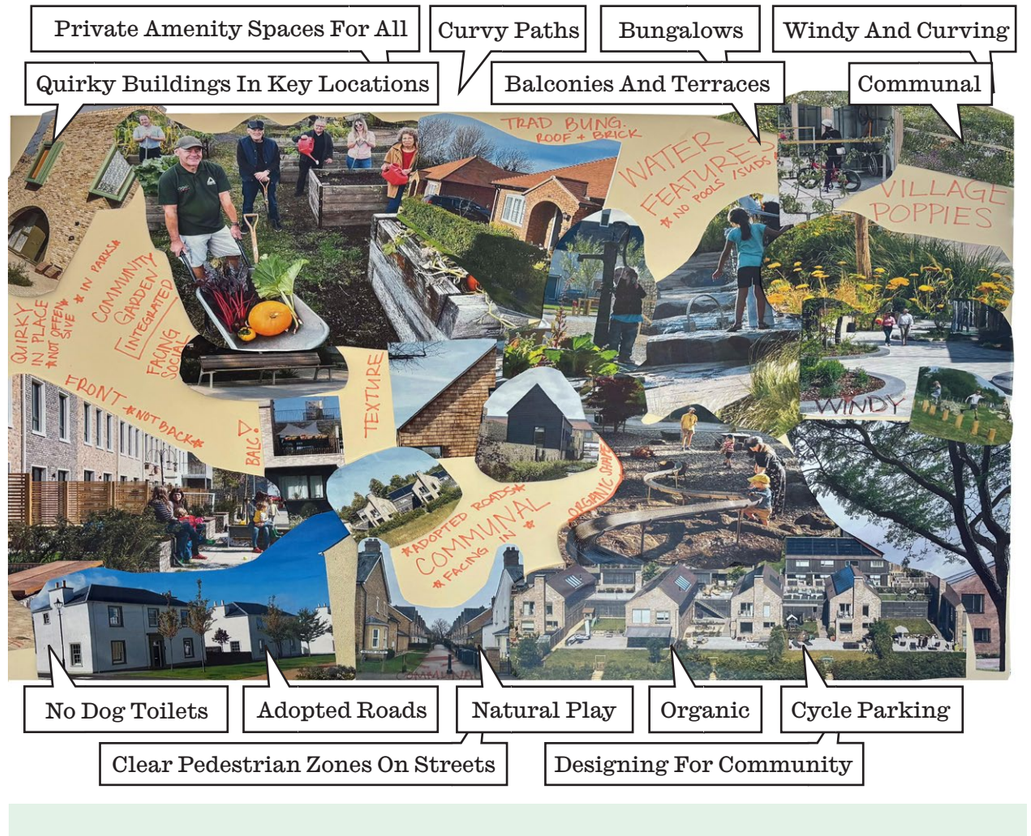
2: Neighbourhoods that enable active travel with walkable routes and reduced reliance on/dominance of cars.

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



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 and/or flats through balconies and terraces.

Group 3

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.

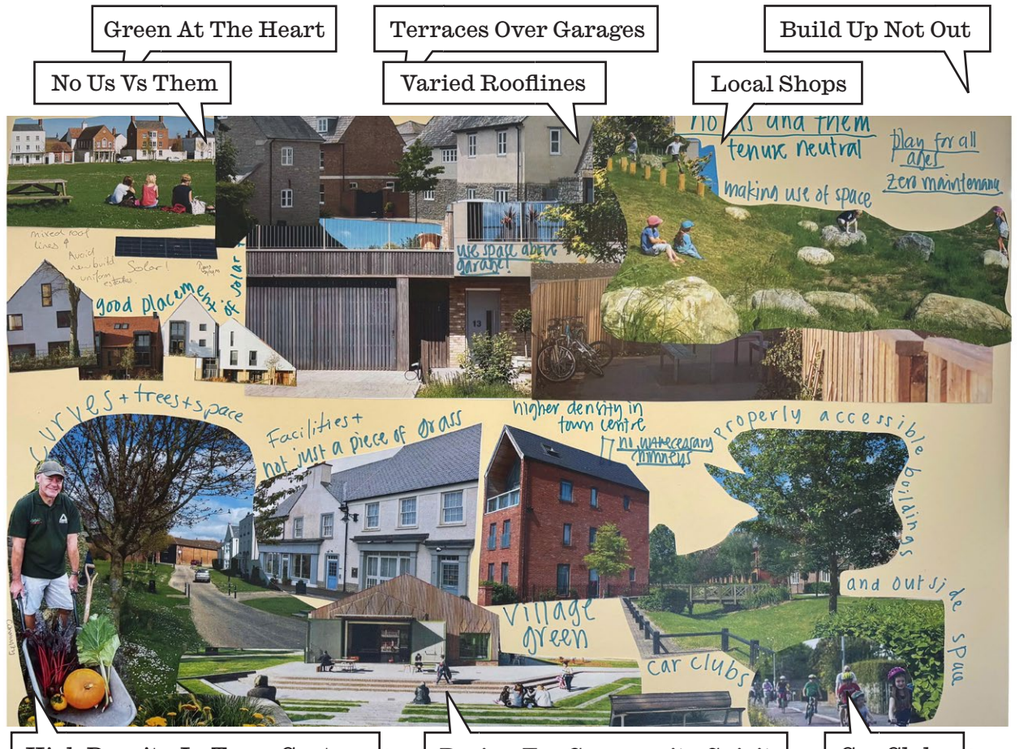
2: Safer streets that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over cars. Prompted by the image of the cyclist without a helmet, the group felt that streets should be a welcoming place for people that is not dominated by cars.

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



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 natural play.

Summary and Next Steps

The Urban Design Team at North Herts used 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 was 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. The request was noted and arranged for the second Residents Design Forum on 26th November 2025.

The Council thanks all the Resident Design Forum members for their invaluable contributions and for working in a collaboratively and respectful way with fellow residents.

Resident Design Forum, Wednesday 29th June 2025

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RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #2

Session Overview

The second Residents Design Forum brought together the same group of North Herts residents from the first event, joined by Local 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 Local 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 Local Councillor and Resident input.

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
17:45-18:00	Arrival
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

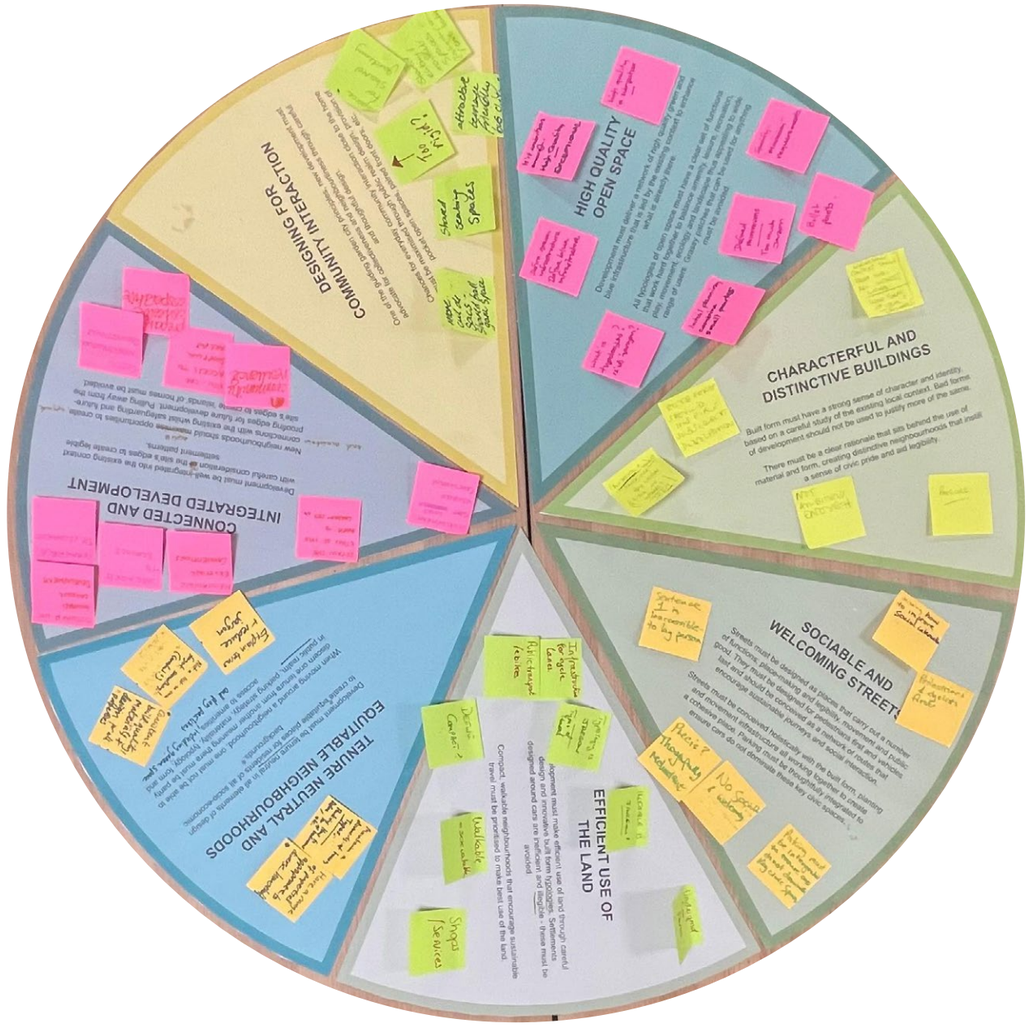
Attendees: North Herts Residents and Local Councillors
Facilitators: North Herts Urban Design Team
Time: Wednesday 26 November 6:00-8:30pm
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth

*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.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

Place Objectives Collaborative Workshop

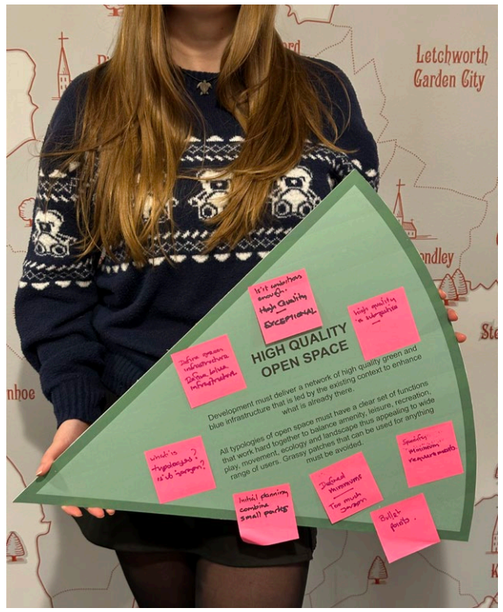
Attendees were split into 7 groups that combined Local Councillors and Residents, each with 4-5 participants. Each group was assigned one Place Objective and asked to collectively assess its clarity, intentions and level of ambition. Groups annotated the objectives with written comments, suggested amendments 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.



Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025 - Place Objectives Assessment

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.

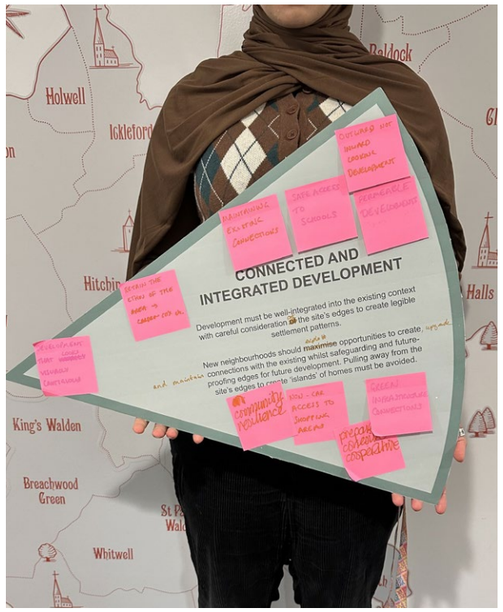
Small parks should have a function or they are better off being combined to create larger ones.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

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.

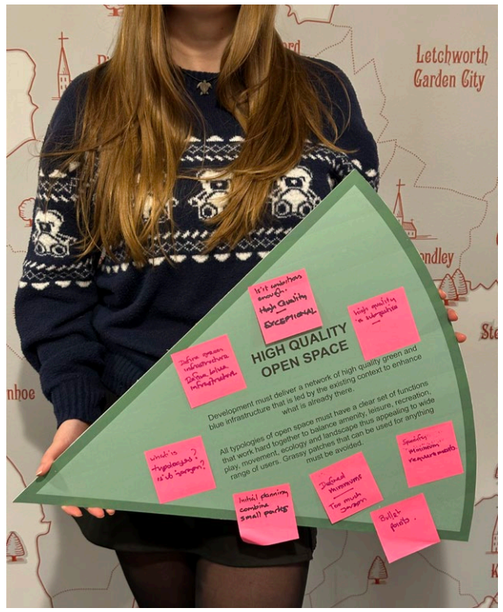
More focus on green infrastructure connections.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

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.

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.

Consider use of underground car parks to make sites more efficient.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

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.
- Bus shelters are important for social interaction - should be attractive and friendly.
- Shared gardening or growing spaces, informal spaces for shared eating, markets and community activity are important.
- Policy should include safe, shared spaces for informal play and activities close to homes.
- Seating as a key part of social interaction in communities.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

TENURE NEUTRAL AND EQUITABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

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.
- Walkable is sociable - need to link these two terms in the objectives.
- Terms such as tenure neutral and public realm should be clearly explained and unnecessary 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.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

SOCIABLE AND WELCOMING STREETS

Group Members
Cllr Allen
3no. Residents Design Forum Members

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.

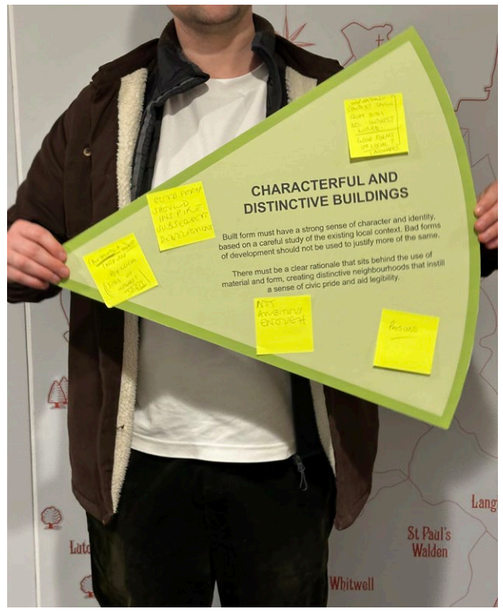
The first sentence is inaccessible to a layperson - consider rewording this or shortening.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

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 instil 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.

Designs should be ambitious and distinctive, rather than generic or risk-averse.

Should include a requirement for development to set a high-quality benchmark that can positively influence future development.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

Summary

The Urban Design Team used 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 was 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 Local Councillors 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 Council thanks all forum members for their valuable contributions and constructive engagement. Further workshops were scheduled as the Design Code evolved, including a third Residents Design Forum to present the draft Design Code ahead of public consultation.

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

Residents Design Forum #2, 27th November 2025

STAGE 3 SUMMARY

WORKING GROUPS

Overview

A series of interdisciplinary working groups were established to support the development of the Design Code, bringing together officers and specialists across key themes. The working groups were structured around three core areas: Architecture & Urban Design, Green Infrastructure, and Movement.

Each group met up over the course of Stage 2, with sessions focussed on identifying key issues, testing emerging ideas, and refining draft design codes.

Working Group Structure

- **Architecture & Urban Design Working Group**
  Included architectural professionals, focussing on built form, layout, character and placemaking.
- **Green Working Group**
  Included a Senior Ecologist, Service Manager for Green Space, and a Landscape Architect, focusing on green infrastructure, biodiversity, and environmental quality.
- **Movement Working Group**
  Included an engineer, a County Highways representative, and a Transport Officer, focusing on access, movement, and connectivity.

Session Structure

- **Session 1 - Issues and Opportunities**
  A collaborative brainstorming session exploring key issues identified through site visits and how design codes could respond. This included sketching and discussion based on real site examples.
- **Session 2 - Emerging Codes**
  Interdisciplinary workshops where groups were mixed to review early draft codes. Discussions focused on the scope, content, and whether additional codes were required.
- **Session 3 - Draft Codes Review**
  A detailed review of the draft design codes, including wording, structure, and supporting diagrams to ensure clarity and effectiveness.

Movement Working Group, 29nd October 2025.

HOUSING ASSOCIATION WORKSHOP

Session Overview

A targeted workshop was held with representatives from local Housing Associations, including Settle and First Garden Cities Homes (FGCH), to gather input on key housing and delivery considerations.

The session focused on presenting emerging issues and elements of the Design Code, alongside open discussion with attendees to understand practical challenges and opportunities from a housing perspective.

Code Review and Discussion

The discussion explored a range of topics including tenure integration, layout considerations, and the practical application of design codes within residential schemes. Attendees provided insight into how design requirements can impact delivery, management and long-term stewardship of developments.

The session also provided an opportunity to test aspects of the emerging code, ensuring that it is both aspirational and deliverable in practice.

Key Feedback

Feedback from the workshop helped to refine a number of areas in the emerging Design Code, such as tenure neutrality, parking and housing mix. Key points included:

- The importance of avoiding clear visual distinctions between affordable and private housing through typology, parking arrangements and external appearance.
- The need for balancing a mix of housing types across developments rather than clustering affordable housing into isolated tenure blocks.
- Concerns regarding service charges and long-term management implications where mixed tenure apartment blocks are proposed.
- The importance of ensuring streets and public spaces are designed to encourage natural surveillance, interactions and long-term stewardship.

LOCAL COUNCILLORS BRIEIFING

Session Overview

A Local Councillors Briefing session was held to update elected Local Councillors on the progress of the Design Code and to provide an opportunity for detailed review and discussion.

The session followed a similar structure to previous presentations, outlining the programme and Place Objectives, before focusing in more detail on the emerging Design Codes.

Code Review and Discussion

During the session, a selection of design codes from each Technical Code section were presented and discussed in detail. This included reviewing approximately two or three codes per section to provide Local Councillors with a clear understanding of the structure, intent and level of detail within the document.

The discussion enabled Local Councillors to ask questions, seek clarification and provide feedback on the clarity, applicability and ambition of the codes.

Key Feedback

The session generated constructive discussion with regards to the implementation and practical application of the Design Code across North Hertfordshire. Key points included:

- Questions regarding how the “comply or justify” approach would operate in practice and the level of weight the Design Code would carry.
- Discussion around how the District-wide Design Code would relate to neighbourhood plans, existing site-specific codes and future Local Plan review work.
- Concerns regarding whether some parking approaches were fully suited to the North Herts context, resulting in healthy debate around balancing parking demand.
- Support for ensuring the Design Code reflects the historic, rural and heritage character of North Hertfordshire settlements.
- Discussion around the management and long-term responsibility for play spaces and open space features.

PRIVATE SECTOR BRIEFING

Session Overview

A Private Sector Briefing session was held to present the draft Design Code to developers, planning consultants and other industry representatives. The session provided an overview of the Design Code, including Place Objectives and emerging technical codes.

Key Feedback

The session generated a range of feedback and questions from developers, planning consultants and industry representatives.

Key points included:

- Questions regarding how the Design Code would apply proportionally to smaller-scale developments and rural schemes such as sites delivering between 3-9 homes.
- Concerns that engagement with the private sector had taken place relatively late within the drafting process.
- Requests for flexibility within the Design Code to allow future adaptability and respond to changing market conditions ans development requirements.
- Discussion around how the District-wide Design Code would relate to existing approved schemes and site-specific design codes.
- Questions around how the Design Code aligns with existing highways guidance and parking standards, including the Hertfordshire Country Council Place and Movement Planning Design Guide (PMPDG).
- Discussion regarding the status and weight of the Design Code and as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and how requirements relating to private amenity space and design quality would be applied through the planning process.
- Feedback that the Design Code could further strengthen references to local distinctiveness and reflect the specific character of North Hertfordshire settlements.

RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #3

Session Overview

The third Residents Design Forum (RDF) session focused on presenting the emerging Design Code and gathering feedback from residents on its content. Building on the previous sessions, this workshop marked a shift from identifying issues and priorities to reviewing the proposed design responses.

Residents were provided with an update on the overall programme, including the development of the Place Objectives, before being introduced to the emerging set of design codes. Members of the Urban Design Team presented a summary of the codes, explaining their purpose and how they respond to the key themes identified through earlier engagement.

Key Feedback

Following the presentation, residents were invited to provide feedback on the draft design codes through structured feedback forms. This enabled participants to comment on the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of the proposed codes, as well as highlight any areas where further refinement may be required.

Key points included:

- General support for the ambition and structure of the emerging Design Code and Place Objectives.
- Requests for the Design Code to remain clear, practical and easy to understand for both applicants and local communities.
- Support for creating safe, accessible and sociable neighbourhoods which support community interaction and inclusivity.
- Discussion around considering the balance between accommodating vehicles and creating attractive, pedestrian-friendly streets.
- Support for stronger guidance relating to landscaping, green infrastructure and high-quality public open space.

Residents Design Forum #3, 3rd March 2026

Residents' Feedback Forms Responses

The following section reveals feedback received from residents who attended the Residents' Design Forum sessions. The responses highlight participants views on the structure, content and effectiveness of the workshops, alongside overall satisfaction with the engagement process.

Overall, feedback was very positive, with 100% of respondents stating that they were 'Very Satisfied' with how the Residents Design Forum sessions were organised and delivered.

"Well organised, friendly and clear how our input has shaped proposals."

"I have enjoyed the presentations, I feel that I have been part of the whole process."

"The Design team made it such an open forum - constantly giving us time and space to voice opinion."

"Each session was well run and productive - objectives clearly stated and worked through. All participants were given a chance to contribute."

"I loved how creativity played a role in forming our thoughts - as someone with no design experience, it helped give me a foundation to build my thoughts and opinion on."

"I really enjoyed the sessions and thought care had been taken to make us feel welcome and valued."

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

METHODOLOGY

Public consultation was carried out in accordance with relevant regulations and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. Notifications of the public consultation were issued via email and post to a wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultees, including developers, planning agents, parish and town councils, landowners, and individuals who have registered an interest in planning policy matters within North Hertfordshire.

The consultation was also promoted through the Council's website and social media channels to ensure broad public awareness.

The consultation ran for four weeks, from 4 March 2026 to 2 April 2026. The Draft Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was made available to view online via the Council's website, as well as in person at the Council Offices during normal opening hours.

Additional promotion was undertaken through local engagement channels, including distribution of information at Community Forums and Local Councillor surgeries, to help reach a wider audience.

Representations were received through the Council's online consultation portal, via email and by post. An online feedback form was prepared to gather responses on two key components of the document: the Place Objectives and the Technical Design Codes. Respondents were required to complete the Place Objectives section, with the Technical Design Codes section optional.

In addition, targeted emails were sent to planning professionals and stakeholders included within the Council's planning consultation database.

"Have Your Say" Public Consultation Poster distributed at Community Forums and Local Councillor surgeries

RESPONSES BREAKDOWN

Summary

This section provides a breakdown of responses submitted through the online public consultation form, categorised by stakeholder group and sector representation. The chart and table* below illustrate the distribution of these online responses.

Respondent Group	Number of Responses
North Herts Resident	38
Member of a Community Group	4
Public Sector - Officer	2
Private Sector - Architect/Designer	2
Other	4

*Note: The breakdown above relates only to responses received through the online consultation questionnaire (50 responses). A further 16 responses were received separately via email and have been included within the consultation summaries but are not represented in the statistics above.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Summary

The table below summarises developer feedback highlighting concerns around viability, the role of the Design Code within the SPD process, perceived prescriptiveness, and potential conflicts with site-specific design codes. In response, it clarifies that the Design Code operates as technical guidance within an SPD and does not introduce new policy, instead supporting the delivery of Local Plan policies through design. It emphasises a flexible “comply or justify” approach to avoid overly prescriptive outcomes and confirms that existing, site-specific design codes and masterplans will take precedence where relevant. Overall, the Council’s responses intend to address these concerns by emphasising that the Design Code is a clear but adaptable framework to support high-quality design without conflicting with existing policy requirements.

Summary of Comments	Response
The SPD should more clearly embed health, equity and inclusivity within its vision to ensure long-term positive outcomes.	No Change: The Introduction to the Design Code clearly establishes that high-quality design is closely linked to mental health, wellbeing, community cohesion and perceptions of safety. This overarching ambition is reinforced through multiple Place Objectives: Exceptional Open Space, Sociable Streets, Well-Integrated Development, Convivial Communities, and Equitable Neighbourhoods. Together, these collectively set out a clear framework for delivering inclusive, healthy and high-quality places.

Many developers expressed concern about limited consultation during the formative stages of the design code, with some suggesting this may not align with due process.	No Change: The Residents' Design Forum (RDF) provided early and meaningful engagement during the formative stages of the Design Code. This has been supported by input from industry experts, offering technical design guidance and best practice advice. Officers and Local Councillors have also contributed local insight which has informed the Place Objectives and drafting of the Code. Developers were invited to a draft Code briefing and have been given the opportunity to comment on the emerging document prior to adoption, alongside the wider general public. The reference to two stages of consultation in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement recognises it is sometimes necessary to re-consult on an SPD but this is not mandatory.
Respondents requested clearer flexibility within the code to respond to changing market conditions, site constraints and local character differences.	The Design Code adopts a "comply or justify" approach, allowing applicants to propose alternative solutions where they can demonstrate that the of the code is achieved. This provides flexibility to respond to site-specific circumstances while maintaining the ambitions of the Design Code.
Concerns raised that the guidance is too prescriptive and doesn't allow for responses to site-specific circumstances/conflicts with site-specific masterplans and/or design codes.	The Design Code has been prepared as a district-wide framework and is intended to be applied proportionately according to the scale and nature of development proposals. The Use and Application section of the Design Code has been updated, stating existing site-specific masterplans and design codes adopted or approved before June 2026 will take precedence where relevant. The Design Code also recognises that sites at different stages of the planning process may require a flexible approach to implementation, ensuring that local circumstances and previously approved design principles can be appropriately considered.
Concerns raised that some terminology lacks clarity such as "ecological assets", "social spaces".	

Concerns raised that the SPD positions itself as mandatory rather than guidance.	The Design Code will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and therefore forms a material consideration rather than policy in its own right. The Code provides technical guidance on how Local Plan policies can be delivered through the design of the development.
Concerns raised that requirements on viability or development capacity have not been considered and that new cost burdens are not accounted for in Local Plan viability testing.	The Design Code has been informed by a review of best practice and seeks to improve the quality of development rather than introduce additional policy requirements. The Code provides guidance on how existing Local Plan policies can be delivered through design.
Concerns raised that requirements for bespoke design will significantly increase costs as housebuilders rely on standard types and standardisation for efficiency.	The Design Code does not prohibit the use of standard house types. Instead, it seeks to ensure that development responds appropriately to local context and character. Standard house types may continue to be used where they can demonstrate compliance with the Place Objectives and technical requirements of the Code.
Concerns raised that the combined effect of the code reduces density, increases costs and lowers salves values.	The Design Code seeks to balance the efficient use of land with the delivery of high-quality and sustainable places. Efficient Use of Land is one of seven place objectives and must be considered alongside the other objectives that promote strong landscape character, connected communities, inclusive neighbourhoods and high-quality public spaces. The Code has been informed by national guidance, best practice examples and local evidence. This aims to support a balanced approach to development rather than prescribe specific development densities.

EXCEPTIONAL OPEN SPACE

To what extent do you agree that the 'Exceptional Open Space' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

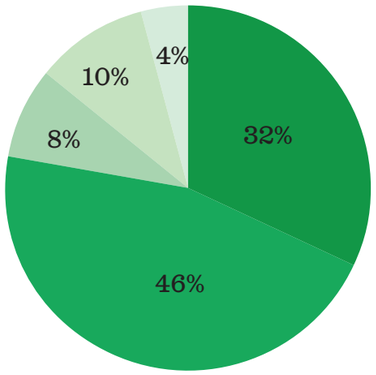
Development must create a connected network of green spaces that celebrates the area's natural assets and strengthens the district's landscape character.

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.

Page 187



Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Exceptional Open Space' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Action or Response
Respondents supported a connected network of green spaces but stressed the importance of balancing formal, designed areas with more natural, less managed "wild" spaces. Many highlighted the ecological and wellbeing value of unplanned landscaping, cautioning against spaces becoming overly formal or regimented and emphasising accessibility, multifunctionality and local character.	Minor Change: Last sentence has been changed to remove the term 'grassy patches' and provide greater clarity on the types of open space being referenced. The Design Code aligns with Fields in Trust (FiT) standards, which recognise a range of open space typologies, including parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural and semi-natural green space. This ensures that a variety of functional, accessible and ecologically valuable spaces are delivered, rather than undefined or residual areas.

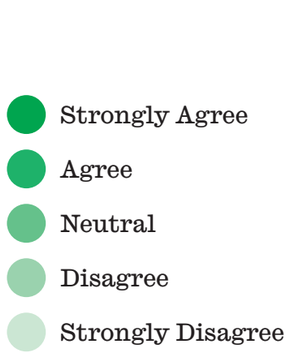
SOCIABLE STREETS

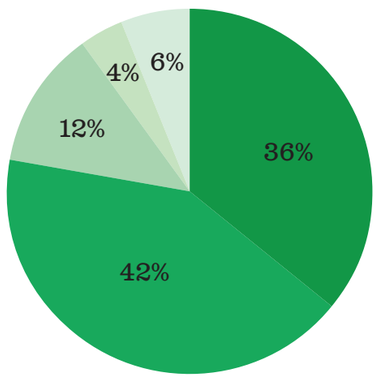
To what extent do you agree that the 'Sociable Streets' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

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 dominated 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.





Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Sociable Streets' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Response
Respondents highlighted the need to balance adequate parking provision with reducing car dominance, noting risks of congestion and safety where parking is insufficient, especially in car-dependent areas.	No Change: The Design Code includes alternative parking approaches in PA-02: Communal Parking Typologies. However, overall parking provision is established through the Local Plan. The Design Code focuses on the arrangement, location, and design of residential parking within sites to support well-designed places and encourage more sustainable travel choices.
Many supported prioritising walking, cycling and public transport, alongside inclusive street design that meets the needs of disabled, older and neurodivergent people and other users.	No Change: Street types have been designed prioritising pedestrians allowing access to social spaces, overlooking and greenery.

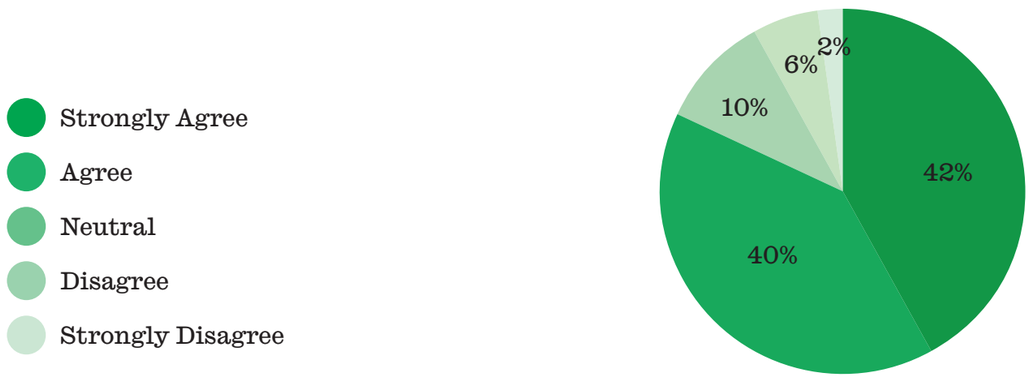
WELL-INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

To what extent do you agree that the 'Well-Integrated Development' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

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.



Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Well-Integrated Development' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Action or Response
Respondents stressed the importance of delivering infrastructure alongside development to ensure good connectivity, accessibility and functionality. Many raised concerns about poorly integrated or isolated developments, highlighting issues such as limited access, lack of permeability and self-contained layouts.	No Change: Code SSO1 promotes rational street and plot layouts, while Code SSO3 focuses on responding to edges, both of which help to improve connectivity and integration. In addition, Code SSO4 on well-integrated schools responds specifically to concerns about ensuring schools are properly embedded within developments rather than isolated.
There were also wider concerns about the impact on existing settlements, including pressure on infrastructure, urban sprawl, and the potential loss of local character and green space, underscoring the need for a holistic and sensitive approach to integration.	No Change: BF04: Architectural Approach addresses how development should respond appropriately to the North Hertfordshire context and local character. The delivery and quantum of infrastructure for each site is determined through site allocation in the Local Plan, while the Design Code focuses on how this is arranged and integrated within the site to achieve a well-designed outcome.

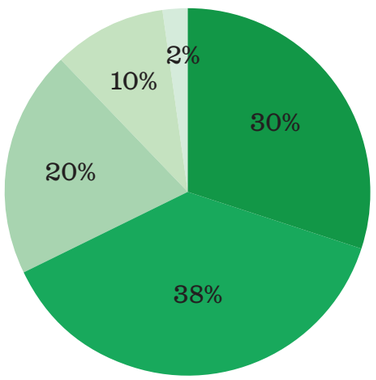
CONVIVIAL COMMUNITIES

To what extent do you agree that the 'Convivial Communities' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

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 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.



Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Convivial Communities' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Action or Response
Respondents highlighted the value of shared spaces and facilities in supporting community life, but raised concerns about their long-term management and maintenance.	No Change: The codes also require the use of robust, high-quality materials in open and communal spaces that are durable, resistant to degradation and easy to repair or replace, helping to support long-term usability, safety and appearance.
There was a strong emphasis on ensuring communal spaces are inclusive and accessible to all users, alongside specific concerns about the safety, cleanliness and usability of features such as communal bin and cycle stores.	No Change: Codes BF09 and BF10 set out requirements for communal cycle and bin storage to ensure accessibility, safety, cleanliness and usability. The use of communal storage will be determined on a site-by-site basis; the Design Code establishes requirements where this is identified as the most appropriate design response.
Place Objective heading was criticised as being unclear.	Minor Change: Place Objective has been changed to Cohesive Communities.

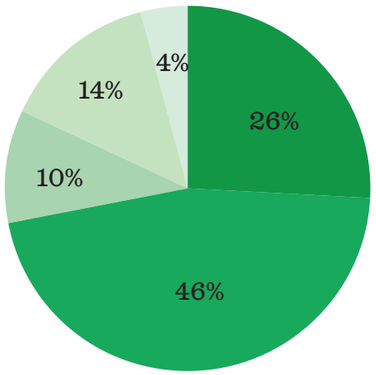
EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

To what extent do you agree that the 'Efficient Use of Land' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

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.



Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Efficient Use of Land' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Action or Response
Respondents expressed concern that higher densities could undermine living quality if not well designed, particularly if developments feel cramped or lack green space.	No Change: Applicants are still required to comply with national space standards, which establish baseline internal spatial requirements. Codes BF05–BF08 complement this by setting out expectations for the quantum of private and communal amenity space, helping to avoid the under-provision of green space. The Design Code must be applied holistically, with individual codes working together to ensure high-quality outcomes. For example, open space is expected to meet both quantitative and qualitative requirements, ensuring it is not only sufficient in amount but also well-designed, functional and attractive.
There were strong concerns about existing transport and infrastructure capacity, alongside the continued need to accommodate car use through adequate parking and access.	No Change: Street types have been developed together with Parking codes PA01-03 to address concerns with low quality streetscape and accessibility.
Many also warned that reduced parking could result in overspill parking, creating safety issues and harming the street environment, underscoring the need to balance density with infrastructure, accessibility and a sense of spaciousness.	No Change: The Design Code addresses these concerns through its street typologies, which are designed to discourage anti-social and indiscriminate parking. A clear hierarchy of streets, combined with appropriate design measures such as narrower carriageways, helps to manage vehicle behaviour and reduce the likelihood of overspill parking dominating the public realm.

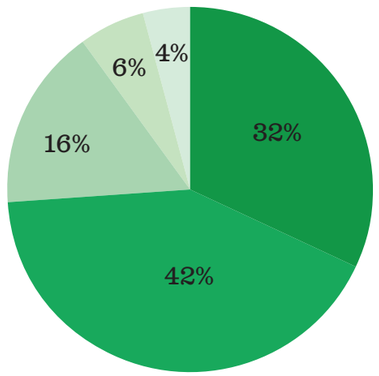
EQUITABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

To what extent do you agree that the 'Equitable Neighbourhoods' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

Development must create neighbourhoods that are fair, inclusive and welcoming to everyone, regardless if tenure or socio-economic background. All homes and public spaces should be designed to the same high standards, ensuring 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 tenure, whether through lower quality materials, separate entrances, poorer landscaping, or isolated clusters will not be permitted.



Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Equitable Neighbourhoods' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Action or Response
Respondents stressed the importance of inclusive, mixed neighbourhoods. Many emphasised that affordable homes should be well designed, fully integrated and indistinguishable from market housing, and not concentrated in poorer-quality locations.	No Change: Affordable housing distribution is covered in BF01 and BF02 deals with tenure neutral typologies which ensures affordable homes are well designed and indistinguishable from market housing.

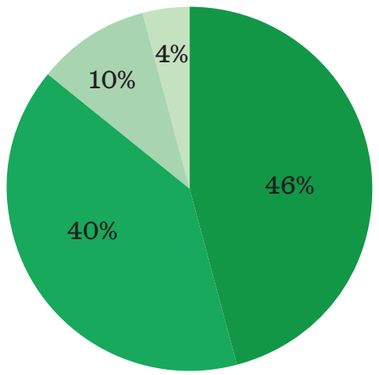
CONTEXTUAL BUILDINGS

To what extent do you agree that the 'Contextual Buildings' Place Objective (included below) is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts?

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.



Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Contextual Buildings' Place Objective:

Summary of Comments	Response
Respondents strongly supported development that reflects local character and identity, with concerns about generic or standardised design that lacks distinctiveness and long-term quality. Issues were raised around the impact of dense or repetitive housing typologies, with calls for greater variety, space between buildings and more thoughtful layouts. There was also emphasis on respecting local heritage assets and using new development as an opportunity to improve accessibility and inclusivity for all users.	No Change: BF03: Balancing Variety and Consistency as well as Code BF04: Architectural Approach sets out code to ensure new buildings reflect local character and identity avoiding generic standardised design.

SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE CODES

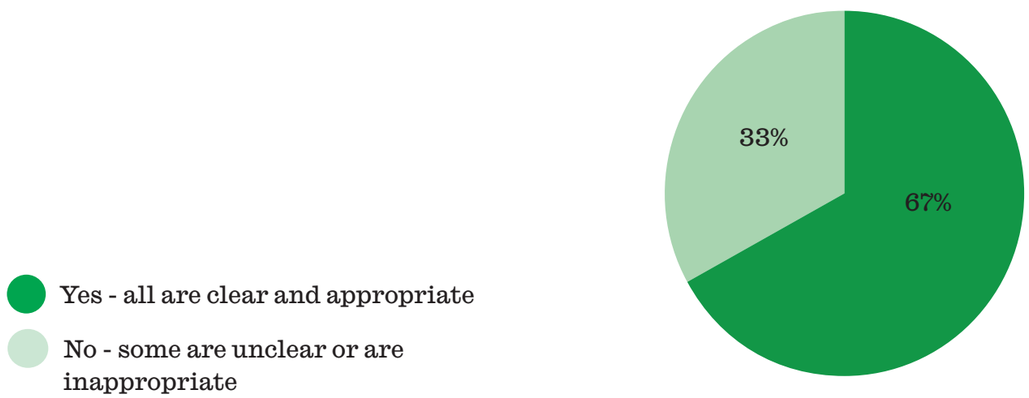
Overall, do you think the 'Settlement Structure' codes are clear and appropriate?

These codes set out the requirements for how new development should be arranged within North Herts. This includes layout, density, block structure, connections and edges.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- SS01 - Rational Street and Plot Layouts
- SS02 - Optimising Land Use
- SS03 - Responding to Edges
- SS04 - Well-integrated Schools
- SS05 - Legible Focal Points
- SS06 - Private Drives and Cul-De-Sacs

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.



'Settlement Structure' codes feedback via Public Consultation survey form:

Summary of Comments	Response
Some respondents found the Settlement Structure Codes difficult to understand, noting that the use of technical language and jargon limited accessibility.	No Change The Design Code is intended for use by officers, designers and developers, and therefore includes technical language where necessary to clearly define and protect key requirements. Where possible, codes have been amended to improve clarity.
Concerns were raised about the use of narrow streets and higher density layouts, with respondents highlighting potential issues around congestion, parking pressure and general functionality.	No Change Street types have been developed to provide a clear hierarchy and variety within developments, while remaining flexible rather than overly prescriptive. All street types have been designed to accommodate servicing requirements, and narrower street typologies are also intended to discourage anti-social parking, helping to create safer environments.
A small number of respondents highlighted opportunities to strengthen environmental performance, including integrating existing trees and supportive renewable energy such as solar panels through layout and orientation.	No Change The Design Code is a material consideration in decision-making; however, detailed sustainability requirements are primarily established through national policy and other North Herts Council SPDs, such as the Sustainability SPD, and therefore sit beyond the remit of the Design Code.

There was support for ensuring that settlement structure considers wider infrastructure requirements, including services, facilities and connections beyond the immediate site.	No Change Codes SS01-SS05 acknowledge the need for wider infrastructure, including services, facilities and connections; however, the provision and strategic planning of this infrastructure is established through the Local Plan and county-level planning processes.
There were shared views expressed that there can be good reasons for curved roads in placemaking.	Changes Made: Relevant Code SS01.02: Code has been amended to remove mention of curved streets and to be more specific and focused around 'events' at points where there are changes in direction on streets.
Questions were raised regarding the evidence base for limiting detached housing to under 30%, including how this aligns with SHMA evidence and differing settlement contexts.	No Change: Relevant Code SS02.01: Justification for this policy is evidenced by 2021 Census data, which illustrates 24% average existing detached homes in North Herts, and there are no settlements that exceed 30%. The code does not differ from the SHMA as it deals with housing typology rather than bedroom numbers.
Concerns were raised that it may be challenging in some instances for highways to agree access from existing roads.	No Change: Relevant Code SS03.01 - It may be acceptable to justify alternative approaches when evidenced and supported by HCC highways and NHDC officers.
There was a suggestion that servicing alleys should be caveated for 'resident access only' to protect against antisocial behaviour.	Minor Change: Relevant Code SS03.05 - Code will be updated to include text that states that servicing alleys should be caveated 'for resident access only' to protect against antisocial behaviour.
Concerns were raised regarding how spur streets would accommodate emergency access and vehicle turning.	Minor Change: Relevant Code SS06.01 - Compliance has been checked by against building regs and amendments have been made to ensure servicing and emergency access compliant.

Some have noted concerns over clarity of diagrams.	No Change: Relevant Code: SS03.07 Diagrams place emphasis on not creating double streets and not creating back to front streets. Proposed homes in diagrams are to be served to the rear.

OPEN SPACE CODES

Overall, do you think the 'Open Space' codes are clear and appropriate?

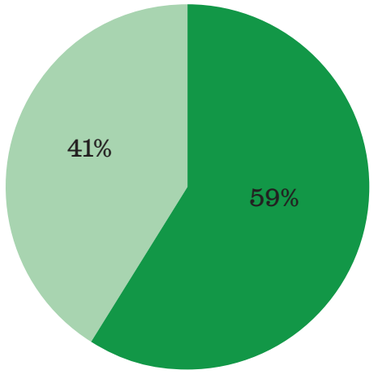
This section of the Design Code covers requirements for parks, green spaces, play areas, landscaping, rainwater attenuation and biodiversity.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- OS01 - Open Space Provision
- OS02 - Open Space Design
- OS03 - Tier 1 Open Spaces
- OS04 - Tier 2 Open Spaces
- OS05 - Tier 3 Open Spaces
- OS06 - Tier 4 Open Spaces
- OS07 - Play Space Design
- OS08 - Informal Play
- OS09 - Local Areas for Play (LAP)
- OS10 - Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)
- OS11 - Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)
- OS12 - Planting Palette
- OS13 - Multi-Functional Attenuation Basins

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.

- Yes - all are clear and appropriate
- No - some are unclear or are inappropriate



Please provide feedback on 'Open Space' codes.

Summary of Comments	Response
Some respondents found the codes unclear, citing excessive jargon and overly technical language. The number and complexity of code types were also seen as confusing, with the tier system lacking sufficient standalone explanation.	Minor Change: The Design Code is intended for use by officers, designers and developers, and therefore includes technical language where necessary to clearly define and protect key requirements. An introduction to tiered open spaces has been added to aid clarity.
Some respondents preferred more natural, informal play spaces, noting that children benefit more from exploring countryside and woodland than structured playgrounds. This suggests a need to better balance formal and natural provision.	No Change: The Open Space codes clearly set out standards to provide natural and semi-natural spaces together with formal/equipped play in line with Fields in Trust National standards.
There was clear support for more inclusive design, particularly ensuring play spaces and equipment are accessible to children with disabilities, including wheelchair users.	Changes Made: Equipped areas for play now have a coded requirements for specific accessible equipment.
Concerns were raised around planting choices, including potentially harmful species. Respondents also suggested the planting palette should be strengthened and aligned with recognised guidance.	No Change: The planting palette has been developed by Local Authority ecologists and an arboriculturist and is provided as a starting point for schemes. Any planting proposals will be subject to further assessment to ensure their suitability to specific site conditions. Key considerations to guide this process are set out in Codes OS12.01–OS12.03.

It was noted that bunds or mounding may exceed the gradient stipulated within the code requirements.	Minor Change: Relevant Code OS02.01 - Code has been updated to state that all open spaces must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the open space and gradients no steeper than 1/20 for access routes.
Questions were raised regarding how requirements for hedge heights not exceeding 1.5m could be effectively enforced.	Minor Change: Relevant Code OS02.7 - Code has been updated to state that all open spaces must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the open space and gradients no steeper than 1/20 for access routes.
Queries were raised regarding co-design can be achieved in instances where there is not yet an existing community to engage with.	No Change: Relevant Code OS04.01F - Applicant would be expected to either comply where there are existing residents or otherwise justify how the open space has been discussed through the statutory consultation process.
Safeguarding concerns were raised regarding the interface between metal fencing and play features.	Minor Change: Relevant Code OS07.02 - Incorporation of play features with metal fencing has been removed to avoid safeguarding concerns.
There was a request to secure the addition of accessible play equipment for children with disabilities.	Changes Made: Relevant Code OS07.07 - Amendment to code OS10.04A to say '2no. must be accessible,' has been made. Amendment to code OS11.04A to say '3no. must be accessible,' has been made.
A concern was the absence of reference to Sport England's Active Design principles, which provide established physical activity into development and align with national planning policy.	No Change: The Design Code has accounted for the design of open spaces in line with Fields in Trust standards. This does not negate the need for Sports England's Active Design principles to be considered on sites going forward.

The SPD fails to reference the Chilterns National Landscape despite covering areas within it.	No Change: The Chilterns National Landscape is a key component of North Herts' green infrastructure, and all green open spaces must be delivered sensitively to their context, with specific reference set out in the Council's Local Plan policies.
Public Health raised safety concerns over playable boundaries specifically where there are metal railings.	Minor Change: This has been removed from the code.
The SPD should better address the needs of diverse users, particularly older people, through accessible public realm, seating, materials and inclusive design features.	No Change: Design quality is closely linked to mental health, wellbeing, community cohesion and perceptions of safety. Poorly designed housing can disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, reinforcing inequality. The North Herts Design Code places people at the heart of planning to create high-quality places that support thriving, resilient communities and leave a positive long-term legacy.

STREETS CODES

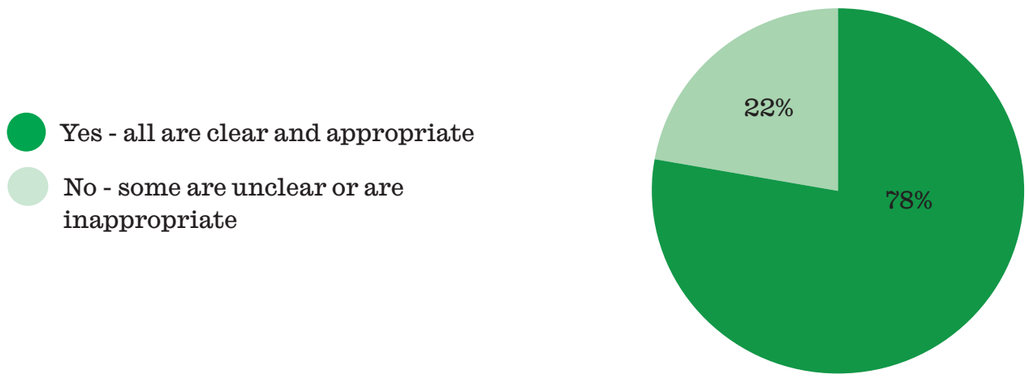
Overall, do you think the 'Streets' codes are clear and appropriate?

This section of the Design Code covers street design, movement, route hierarchy, active travel and accessibility.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- ST01 - Selecting Street Types
- ST02 - Street Design
- ST03 - Green Streets
- ST04 - Avenues
- ST05 - Neighbourhood Streets
- ST06 - Residential Streets
- ST07 - Residential Mews
- ST08 - Rear Mews
- ST09 - Spur Lanes
- ST10 - Edge Lanes

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.



Please provide feedback on 'Streets' codes.

Summary of Comments	Response
Several respondents felt the Streets codes are overly complex and difficult to understand, with comments questioning why they are overcomplicated and not clear to a lay person.	No Change: The Design Code is intended for use by officers, designers and developers, and therefore includes technical language where necessary to clearly define and protect key requirements.
Concerns were raised that streets may be too narrow to accommodate existing parking demand, particularly in areas with multigenerational households and external parking pressures.	No Change: Street types have been designed in line with Place and Movement Planning Design Guide. The Code has been reviewed by HCC Highways and NHDC transport officer to comply with parking requirements as set out in the Local Plan.
Responses highlighting concerns around the practicality of walking and cycling proposals, alongside the need to better recognise other users and protect existing Public Rights of Way.	No Change: Streets have been developed to provide a clear hierarchy and variety within developments. The Design Code sets out a "menu" of street typologies that should be selected and applied based on site-specific conditions, including the integration of existing walking and cycling routes. This approach ensures that street design remains flexible and responsive to context, while creating well-connected, legible, and functional places.

There was a question about if street widths, surfacing and junction radii conflict with HCC guidance.	No Change: Relevant Code ST01 - Streets have been developed with HCC Highways as part of formative working groups. Streets have been reviewed by HCC throughout the development of the District Design Code and are compliant with PPPMPDG.
There was a minor variation between the code and PMPDG guidance for speed and junction spacing on Residential Streets.	Minor Change: Code has been updated to align with PMPDG parameters .
It was asked whether there is a risk of duplication with existing HCC highway guidance, as the highway authority already addresses some street design matters within their own guidance documents.	No Change: Relevant Code ST02 - Street design has been developed in collaboration with HCC officers and in line with highways policy. The code is intended to act as a comprehensive, one-stop resource for site layouts, reducing the need for duplication by applicants.
There were concerns as to where parking would be located for homes on Green Streets and if they will lead to undesirable parking courts.	No Change: Relevant Code ST03 - Parking and servicing for Green Streets will be accommodated alongside other street types, which avoid large rear parking courts in low-density contexts. Additional off-plot parking can be provided through the communal parking typologies set out in the code.

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BUILT FORM CODES

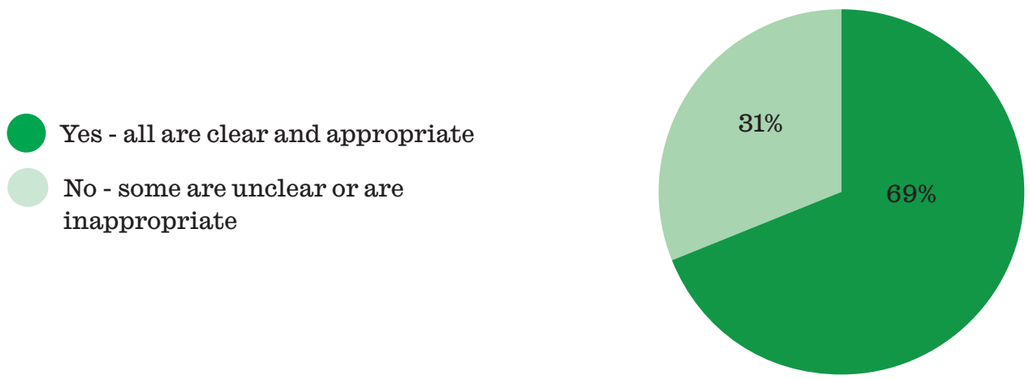
Overall, do you think the 'Built Form' codes are clear and appropriate?

This section of the Design Code covers affordable housing, materiality, form, architectural approach, private and communal amenity, refuse storage and cycle parking requirements.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

BF01 - Affordable Housing Distribution
BF02 - Tenure Neutral Typologies
BF03 - Balancing Variety and Consistency
BF04 - Architectural Approach
BF05 - Private Amenity for Apartments
BF06 - Communal Amenity for Apartments
BF07 - Private Amenity for Houses
BF08 - Communal Amenity for Houses
BF09 - Cycle Parking and Storage
BF10 - Waste and Refuse Storage

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.



Please provide feedback on 'Built Form' codes.

Summary of Comments	Response
Some respondents felt development could appear overly dense and visually harsh, particularly where frontages are dominated by parking, bins and cycle storage.	No Change: Car parking codes have been designed to reduce car-dominated streets and limit on-plot provision, with Codes BF09–BF10 specifically requiring purpose-built, robust cycle and bin storage. The Design Code provides a flexible "menu" of storage solutions, including options such as gardens, garages, and communal storage, which may be more appropriate in lower-density or rural contexts. The selection of appropriate solutions is expected to be informed by a thorough assessment of the site and its surroundings, ensuring that proposals respond sensitively to local character while meeting the overarching objectives of the Code.
Feedback highlighted concerns around the delivery of affordable housing, including risks of under-provision.	No Change: The delivery of affordable housing is determined through viability considerations at the application stage and is therefore outside the remit of the Design Code. The Code does, however, address the placement of affordable housing to support mixed communities, as set out in BF01.
Respondents emphasised the need to ensure equal accessibility standards for disabled and wheelchair users.	Requirement of M4(2) and M4(3) homes are set out in the Local Plan Policy XXX. The Design Code cannot go beyond this but these concerns have been passed on to the LP team and can form part of the LP review.

Some respondents raised concerns about mixing different housing types and tenure, suggesting it may impact perceptions of desirability. This highlights ongoing tensions around tenure integration and community cohesion.	No Change: The overall quality of development is affected where schemes are not genuinely tenure neutral, and where different tenures become visually or spatially distinguishable. The Design Code addresses this through Codes BF01–BF03, alongside the Convivial Communities and Equitable Neighbourhoods Place Objectives, which promote fully integrated and inclusive neighbourhoods. Ensuring that affordable housing is indistinguishable from market housing and distributed throughout developments is a key priority. This approach reflects feedback from the Residents' Design Forum and Councillor workshops, where the creation of truly mixed communities was strongly supported as a means to enhance the desirability and quality of all areas, rather than concentrating value solely in those intended for private sale.
Concerns were raised over the prescriptive nature of affordable housing cluster requirements.	Changes Made: Relevant Code BF01.02 - Subcode has been removed.
There was a question over what the evidence base was for this code, and whether it might not be supported by demand or whether it could hinder affordable delivery in certain instances.	Minor Change: Relevant Code BF02.01 - This code has been removed. Density will be determined through the Local Plan, which will guide appropriate housing typologies in response to the local context.
A question was raised about what constitutes generic design and whether efforts to avoid it could negatively impact developers.	No Change: Relevant Code BF04.02 - Code is taken from and supported by existing National policy in the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance pg41 Built Form. Through engagement with Local Councillors and the Residents Design Forum, there was strong support for ensuring that house types respond appropriately to local context and character. The Code does not prohibit standard house types, but seeks to ensure they are selected, arranged and detailed in a way that positively responds to the character of North Herts.

A question was raised as to whether smaller areas of rear amenity space may be appropriate where high-quality public open space is available nearby.	Relevant Code BF07.01 - The Code does not support reduced private amenity space on the basis of public open space provision alone. However, the Design Code allows the 'comply or justify' approach where private amenity is delivered in alternative or innovative ways, such as roof terraces, first-floor amenity spaces or generous front gardens. Code BF07.01 also allowed flexibility in rear garden depths where high-quality alternative amenity provision can be demonstrated.
Questions were raised about the amount of cycle parking proposed in the code and the amount of space it may take up within developments.	Minor Change Made: Relevant Code BF09.01 - Parking Ratios have been updated to clarify what is on plot and what is secondary or communal provision for clarity.
Concerns were raised about the extent of hard-edged boundary treatments required for cycle storage and their potential impact on the quality and appearance of the street scene.	No Change: Relevant Code BF09.02 - The Code has alternative solutions for accommodating cycle storage such as in garages and to the sides of homes which may be more suitable in rural locations. The Code includes a menu of options, including integrated front boundary stores, garages, communal cycle stores and rear garden storage where direct access is provided.
The SPD should make clear that changes within the setting of a heritage asset must consider and respond to its contribution to significance. Proposals within or affecting Conservation Areas should be informed by Conservation Area Appraisals and reinforce local character.	Changes Made: Historic England has provided specific revised wording for BF04.05 to strengthen clarity and policy alignment.

PARKING CODES

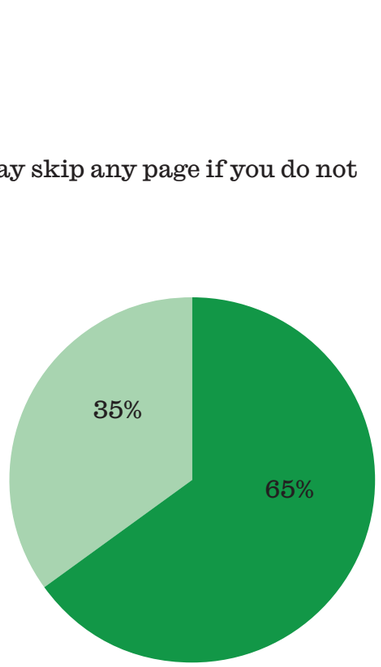
Overall, do you think the 'Parking' codes are clear and appropriate?

This section of the Design Code covers requirements for parking layout, communal car parking and on-plot car parking.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

PA01 - Parking Hierarchy
PA02 - Communal Parking Typologies
PA03 - On-Plot Parking

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.



- Yes - all are clear and appropriate
- No - some are unclear or are inappropriate

Please provide feedback on 'Parking' codes.

Summary of Comments	Response
A dominant concern was that parking provision is insufficient and does not reflect real household needs, with many respondents stating new developments consistently underestimate car ownership.	No Change: The Design Code focuses solely on the delivery of parking within sites rather than establishing overall parking quantum. Parking provision is set through the Local Plan, while the Design Code deals with the location and arrangement of residential parking to support more efficient site layouts and well-designed places.
Some respondents noted that regardless of policy, residents will park where convenient, often ignoring restrictions, which can lead to conflict and poor street conditions.	No Change: Street types have been designed to carefully deter antisocial parking through the use of planting, landscaping and minimised carriageway widths.
There was a clear preference for parking to be located on-plot or directly outside homes, with resistance to remote or detached parking arrangement.	No Change: For almost all situations, on-plot parking is still permitted. A secondary space is required to be in a communal parking typology within 100m of the house to gently encourage sustainable journeys where possible and use land more efficiently.

Feedback emphasised the need to accommodate specific needs, including space for wheelchair-adapted vehicles and consideration of emerging requirements such as electric vehicle charging.	No Change: Accessible parking is provided for M4(2) and M4(3) dwellings in accordance with Building Regulations. EV charging requirements are set out in ST02: Street Design within the technical section of the Design Code. In addition, the street and parking typology illustrations incorporate EV charging to demonstrate appropriate and practical locations for infrastructure as part of well-designed layouts.
Concerns were raised regarding unclear parking tier definitions, the absence of a district-wide tiering map and the justification for the proposed tiered parking approach.	Minor Change: Relevant Code PA01.01 - The tiering system has been reviewed to improve clarity, alongside the inclusion of a new introductory section explaining how the approach should be applied in practice.
Questions were raised about the appropriateness of multi-storey and underground parking solutions within the North Hertfordshire context.	No Change: Relevant Code PA02 Code PA02 focuses instead on communal parking typologies that make efficient use of land while remaining appropriate to the character and scale of development within the district.
Concerns were raised that the 100m distance from off-plot parking may be too restrictive for Tier 2 parking areas, particularly on larger sites and where peripheral parking arrangements are proposed.	No Change: Relevant Code PA01.03 - The 100m distance is set as an ambition within the code; however, 'comply or justify' approach may be applied where off-plot parking spaces need to be located further than 100m from homes, provided this can be robustly justified and delivers better overall outcomes.
Concerns were raised about the lack of reference to parking barns or multi-storey examples.	No Change: Relevant Code PA02 - The design code dose not discourage the use of innovative parking solutions where justified, NHDC encourages the development of innovative solutions to avoid car dominated plots, streets and to make the most efficient use of land possible.

Questions were raised regarding the necessity of placing a limit on how far garages can step back into rear gardens.	No Change: Relevant Code PA03.01 - Historically, garages positioned too far into rear gardens have led to excessive front garden areas being used for parking, resulting in car-dominated frontages. Garages that extend too deeply into rear gardens can also create awkward, low-quality private rear amenity.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Summary

The consultation process has provided valuable insight from residents, community groups, statutory consultees, developers and industry professionals. The feedback received has informed a series of amendments and clarifications to the District Design Code, helping to strengthen its effectiveness, practicality and consistency across the District.

The Council remains committed to ensuring the code supports the delivery of high-quality, sustainable and locally distinctive development across North Hertfordshire.

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Welcome to the North Herts Design Code Public Consultation

The North Herts Design Code sets out a shared vision for how new development should look and feel across the district. Its purpose is to make sure that growth is sustainable, inclusive, and locally distinctive, creating places where people feel safe, connected and proud of the places they live. The Design Code will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to support the current North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031, and will also help shape the next Local Plan.

Please review the North Herts Draft Design Code SPD (the document to which this form relates) before answering this questionnaire.

It can be found at the following web address: www.north-herts.gov.uk/design-code-supplementary-planning-document

The draft code has been developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, councillors, council officers and external specialists in areas such as architecture, urban design, civil engineering, transport and landscape.

This consultation is an opportunity to share your views on:

- The seven North Herts Place Objectives which guide development
- The technical design requirements for settlement structure, open spaces, streets, parking and built form.

This questionnaire has two sections:

- Section 1: Place Objectives
- Section 2: Technical Design Requirements

Feedback is optional throughout section 2 and you may skip any of the pages if you do not wish to give feedback.

Your feedback will help to refine the North Herts Design Code before it is finalised and adopted.

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About You (Optional)

Are you responding as: *

- ◯ North Herts Resident
- ◯ Member of a Parish Council
- ◯ Member of a Community Group
- ◯ Public Sector - MP
- ◯ Public Sector - NHDC Councillor
- ◯ Public Sector - HCC Councillor
- ◯ Public Sector - Officer
- ◯ Private Sector - Developer
- ◯ Private Sector - Architect/Designer
- ◯ Private Sector - Planning Agent
- ◯ Private Sector - Land Agent
- ◯ Other

Please provide us with your full name: *

Email/Postal Address: (we will use this to contact you regarding any updates to the Design Code SPD and Local Plan) *

Section 1 - North Herts Place Objectives

The Design Code is guided by seven North Herts Place Objectives, developed collaboratively with the Residents Design Forum and Local Councillors. The Place Objectives set out the overall principles that new development within North Herts must adhere to.

You will now be taken through each of the North Herts Place Objectives and asked questions relating to each one.

Place Objective 1 - 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, functioning 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Exceptional Open Space' Place Objective:

Place Objective 2 - 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Sociable Streets' Place Objective:

Place Objective 3 - 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Well-Integrated Development' Place Objective:

Place Objective 4 - 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Convivial Communities' Place Objective:

Place Objective 5 - 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Efficient Use of Land' Place Objective:

Place Objective 6 - 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 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Equitable Neighbourhoods' Place Objective:

Place Objective 7 - 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.

To what extent do you agree that this Place Objective is appropriate for guiding development within North Herts? *

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please use the box below to explain your answer, provide feedback or suggest changes to the 'Contextual Buildings' Place Objective:

Place Objectives - General Questions

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the seven North Herts Place Objectives set an appropriate level of ambition to guide future development in the district? *

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Do you have any further suggestions relating to the North Herts Place Objectives?

End of Section 1 - Place Objectives

You have now completed Section 1 - Place Objectives.
Thank you for your valuable feedback and insights into the Place Objectives.

Please continue to Section 2 - Technical Design Requirements.

Section 2 - Technical Design Requirements

The following section will ask you questions regarding codes in order of appearance in the design code document:

- Settlement Structure
- Open Space
- Streets
- Built Form
- Parking

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give feedback.

Settlement Structure Codes (SS01 - SS06)

These codes set out the requirements for how new development should be arranged within North Herts. This includes layout, density, block structure, connections and edges.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- SS01 - Rational Street and Plot Layouts
- SS02 - Optimising Land Use
- SS03 - Responding to Edges
- SS04 - Well-Integrated Schools
- SS05 - Legible Focal Points
- SS06 - Private Drives and Cul-De-Sacs

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.

Overall, do you think the Settlement Structure codes are clear and appropriate?

◯ Yes - all are clear and appropriate.

◯ No - some are unclear or are inappropriate *(please explain in the comments box below)*.

Please provide feedback on the Settlement Structure codes:

Where you make reference to a specific code, please indicate which code you are referring to.

Open Space Codes (OS01 - OS13)

This section of the Design Code covers requirements for parks, green spaces, play areas, landscaping, rainwater attenuation and biodiversity.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- OS01 - Open Space Provision
- OS02 - Open Space Design
- OS03 - Tier 1 Open Spaces
- OS04 - Tier 2 Open Spaces
- OS05 - Tier 3 Open Spaces
- OS06 - Tier 4 Open Spaces
- OS07 - Play Space Design
- OS08 - Informal Play
- OS09 - Local Areas for Play (LAP)
- OS10 - Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)
- OS11 - Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)
- OS12 - Planting Palette
- OS13 - Multi-Functional Attenuation Basins

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.

Overall, do you think the Open Space codes are clear and appropriate?

◯ Yes - all are clear and appropriate.

◯ No - some are unclear or are inappropriate *(please explain in the comments box below)*.

Please provide feedback on the Open Space codes:

Where you make reference to a specific code, please indicate which code you are referring to.

Streets Codes (ST01 - ST10)

This section of the Design Code covers street design, movement, route hierarchy, active travel and accessibility.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- ST01 - Selecting Street Types
- ST02 - Street Design
- ST03 - Green Streets
- ST04 - Avenues
- ST05 - Neighbourhood Streets
- ST06 - Residential Streets
- ST07 - Residential Mews
- ST08 - Rear Mews
- ST09 - Spur Lanes
- ST10 - Edge Lanes

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.

Overall, do you think the Streets codes are clear and appropriate?

◯ Yes - all are clear and appropriate.

◯ No - some are unclear or are inappropriate *(please explain in the comments box below)*.

Please provide feedback on the Streets codes:

Where you make reference to a specific code, please indicate which code you are referring to.

Built Form (BF01 - BF10)

This section of the Design Code covers affordable housing, materiality, form, architectural approach, private and communal amenity, refuse storage and cycle parking requirements.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- BF01 - Affordable Housing Distribution
- BF02 - Tenure Neutral Typologies
- BF03 - Balancing Variety and Consistency
- BF04 - Architectural Approach
- BF05 - Private Amenity for Apartments
- BF06 - Communal Amenity for Apartments
- BF07 - Private Amenity for Houses
- BF08 - Communal Amenity for Houses
- BF09 - Cycle Parking and Storage
- BF10 - Waste and Refuse Storage

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.

Overall, do you think the Built Form codes are clear and appropriate?

◯ Yes - all are clear and appropriate.

◯ No - some are unclear or are inappropriate *(please explain in the comments box below)*.

Please provide feedback on the Built Form codes:

Where you make reference to a specific code, please indicate which code you are referring to.

Parking (PA01 - PA03)

This section of the Design Code covers requirements for parking layout, communal car parking and on-plot car parking.

The individual codes are listed here for reference:

- BF01 - Parking Hierarchy
- BF02 - Communal Parking Typologies
- BF03 - On-Plot Parking
-

Feedback is optional throughout this section, you may skip any page if you do not wish to give any feedback on these codes.

Overall, do you think the Parking codes are clear and appropriate?

- ◯ Yes - all are clear and appropriate.
- ◯ No - some are unclear or are inappropriate *(please explain in the comments box below)*.

Please provide feedback on the Parking codes:

Where you make reference to a specific code, please indicate which code you are referring to.

End of Section 2 - Technical Design Requirements

You have now completed Section 2 - Technical Design Requirements.
Thank you for your valuable feedback and insights into the code.

Are there any issues that are not covered by the North Herts Design Code SPD that you think should be included?

Please use the space below to provide any additional comments on the North Herts Design Code SPD:

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NORTH HERTS DESIGN CODE

V.01 2026

NORTH HERTS DESIGN CODE

V.01 2026

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, especially at a time when the Government has set ambitious national housebuilding targets.

As the district grows and changes, we need to meet this challenge in a new way. This means questioning current approaches and moving away from formulaic and land-hungry development that risks consuming substantial areas of our countryside.[1]

The North Herts Design Code, developed with residents, 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 walkable, green and locally distinctive, where people feel safe, connected and proud of the places they live.

Prioritising design quality has many proven benefits. Research demonstrates that good design is not simply an aesthetic consideration but a social one.[2]

Visioning Workshop, Residents Design Forum, June 2025.

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.

Councillor Donna Wright
Executive Member for Place

[1] Why We Need Higher Housing Densities, Nottingham Design Quality Framework, Nottingham City Council (2019)
[2] Professor Matthew Carmona, Tackling Inequality in Housing Design Quality: Routes to Success (2021)

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 and policy principles 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 was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in June 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 both the current and anticipated versions of the National Planning Policy Framework. 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.

The North Herts Design Code 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.

The North Herts Design Code will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for residential-led development across the district and 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 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.

This Design Code forms the overarching authority-wide framework for securing high quality design across the area and will be used by Decision Makers in assessing design quality and issuing of pre-application advice.

Significant schemes are being brought forward across the district. Large-scale development takes many years to be implemented and substantive design work may already have been undertaken.

The Design Code SPD will be applied having regard to the following guidelines:

• Where sites benefit from a masterplan and site-specific design code adopted or approved before June 2026, those documents will take precedence over the North Herts Design Code SPD in the determination of compliance and decision-making for the relevant site areas.

• Where a masterplan or other design material has been adopted or approved before June 2026 but detailed work remains ongoing, schemes must be consistent with the North Herts Design Code SPD where;
- this would complement principles established in earlier, approved phases of work;
- or design parameters or detail have not yet been established.

All other sites and schemes must be demonstrably consistent with the North Herts Design Code SPD.

To support the effective implementation and assessment of the Design Code, the Council will prepare and maintain a suite of supporting documents, including a compliance tracker to assist officers in the assessment of proposals against relevant coding requirements, and a practical guide for applicants, both of which will be developed following adoption of the Design Code.

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 all new development must achieve across North Hertfordshire. They have been shaped through a series of workshops with key stakeholders and reflect local priorities and shared ambitions for the future of the district.

There are seven Place Objectives, each describing an essential aspect of creating high-quality, well-designed places. These objectives are all equally important and should be considered together; no single objective should be prioritised over another.

The objectives align with the draft National Planning Policy Framework, the draft Place and Design Planning Practice Guidance, Building for a Healthy Life (2020), and the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031). The symbols represent the seven objectives and are used throughout this document to show how different parts of the code relate to them.

The background images behind the Place Objectives as presented within the design code, are informed by the visioning collages developed by local residents during the first Residents Design Forum.

EXCEPTIONAL OPEN SPACE

SOCIABLE STREETS

WELL-INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

COHESIVE 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.

Incidental or residual areas of land with no defined function or design purpose, including amenity grass that does not contribute to recreation, ecology, visual quality or drainage.

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.

COHESIVE 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.

INTRODUCTION TO CODES

The North Herts Design Code is built around a set of 39 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
BF – Built Form
PA – Parking

Referencing

Each code is given a unique reference number (eg. OS02 Open Space Design), 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.

Page 232

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. See p238 for the full list of codes and corresponding Place Objectives.

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

SS-01	Rational Street and Plot Layouts	35
SS-02	Optimising Land Use	38
SS-03	Responding to Edges	40
SS-04	Well-Integrated Schools	52
SS-05	Legible Focal Points	54
SS-06	Private Drives and Cul-de-Sacs	56
OS-01	Open Space Provision	58
OS-02	Open Space Design	61
OS-03	Tier 1 Open Spaces	72
OS-04	Tier 2 Open Spaces	76
OS-05	Tier 3 Open Spaces	82
OS-06	Tier 4 Open Spaces	87
OS-07	Play Space Design	90
OS-08	Informal Play	93
OS-09	Local Areas for Play	100
OS-10	Local Equipped Areas for Play	104
OS-11	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play	108
OS-12	Planting Palette	112
OS-13	Multi-Functional Attenuation Basins	119
ST-01	Selecting Street Types	124
ST-02	Street Design	126
ST-03	Green Streets	130
ST-04	Avenues	136
ST-05	Neighbourhood Streets	142
ST-06	Residential Streets	148
ST-07	Residential Mews	154
ST-08	Rear Mews	160
ST-09	Spur Lanes	166
ST-10	Edge Lanes	171
BF-01	Affordable Housing Distribution	176
BF-02	Balancing Variety and Consistency	179
BF-03	Architectural Approach	188
BF-04	Private Amenity for Apartments	192
BF-05	Communal Amenity for Apartments	194
BF-06	Private Amenity for Houses	196
BF-07	Communal Amenity for Houses	200
BF-08	Cycle Parking and Storage	202
BF-09	Waste and Refuse Storage	209
PA-01	Parking Hierarchy	212
PA-02	Communal Parking Typologies	214
PA-03	On Plot Parking	228
	Worked Examples	233
	Place Objectives and Code Index	238
	Glossary	242
	Acknowledgements	254

RATIONAL STREET AND PLOT LAYOUTS

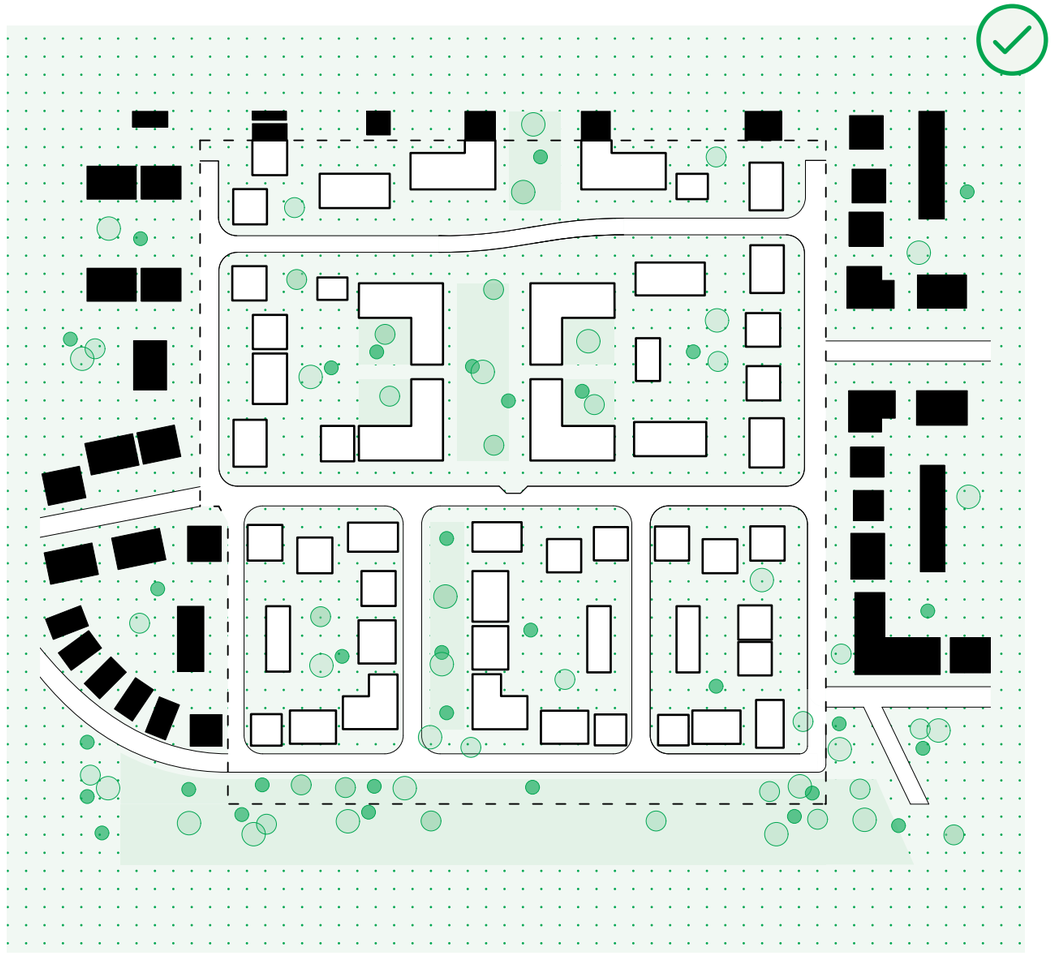
SS01.01

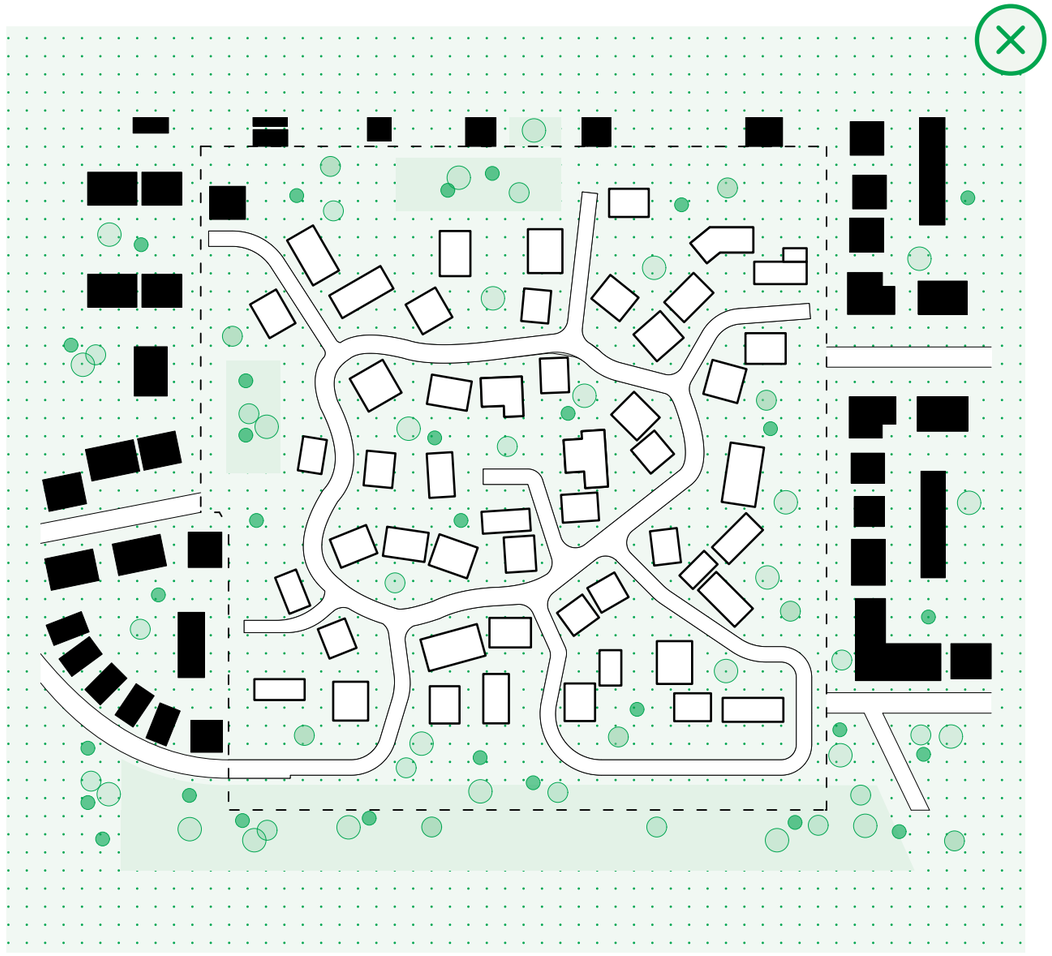
Plot, block and street geometries must be efficient and clearly distinguish public, private and communal realms. Layouts should start from simple, legible structures, such as grids or coherent connected networks, then adapt to site-specific conditions including topography, key views, landscape features and heritage assets. Irregular plot shapes are inefficient, often resulting in poorly defined residual green spaces with unclear ownership and maintenance, contributing to fragmented, less legible neighbourhoods.

SS01.02

Street alignments should be composed of simple, straight sections, with clear ‘events’ introduced at points of directional change to support legibility and placemaking. Continuous or arbitrary geometries that lack clear structuring will not be supported.

Events should act as focal moments within the layout, foregrounding place-making features such as landmark buildings, trees, seating, play elements, or active non-residential uses, thereby reinforcing orientation and spatial identity.





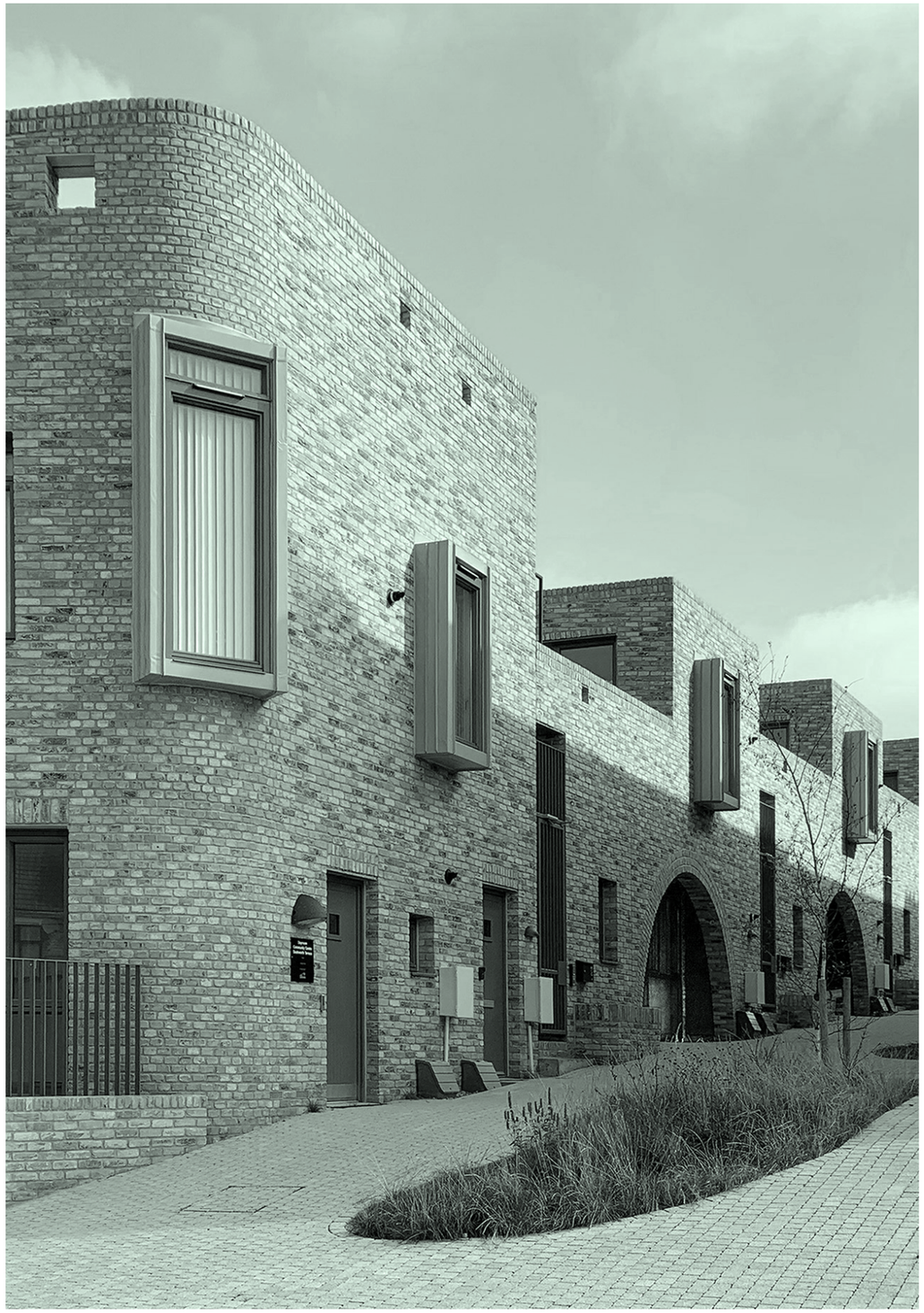
OPTIMISING LAND USE

Making efficient use of land is essential to support responsible growth, as set out in the 'Efficient Use of Land' Place Objective. The following requirements are informed by an analysis of Census 2021 data on housing types across the district's rural and urban settlements, ensuring that development reflects the local context while 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.



Bevan Road, Greenwich, Peter Barber Architects (2020) Map Location →

RESPONDING TO EDGES

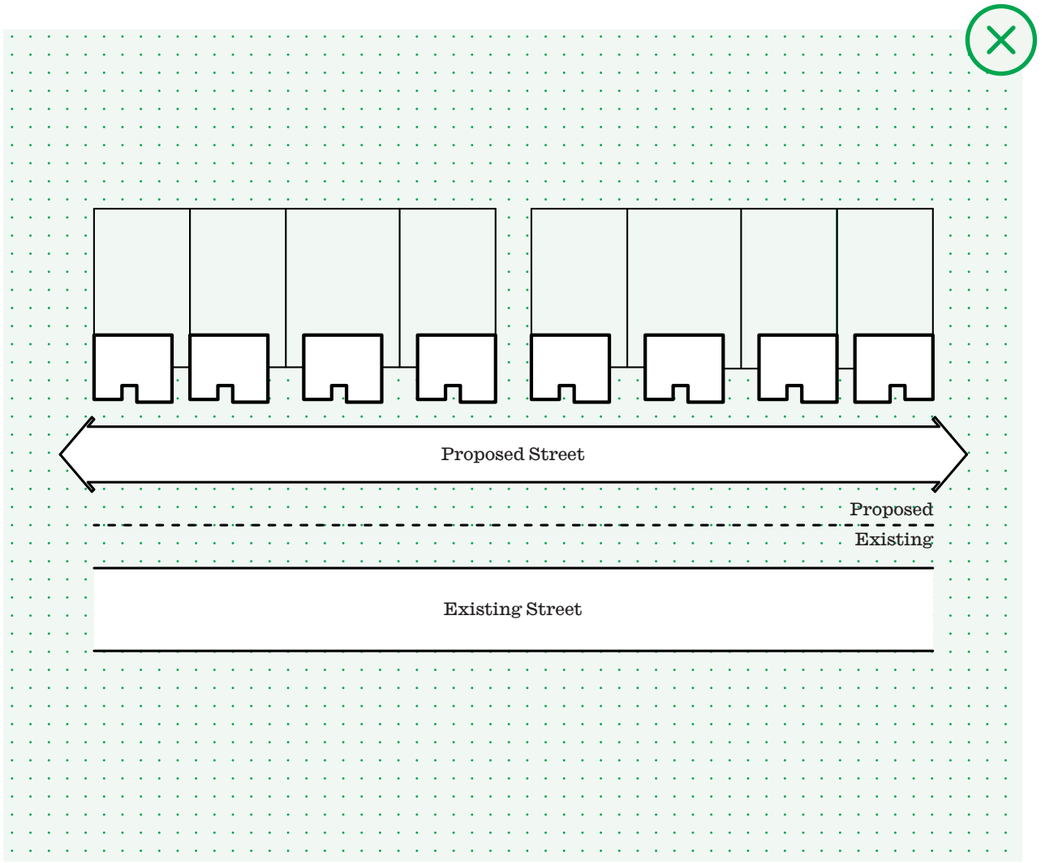
The way in which development addresses the site's edge conditions is integral in delivering legible settlement patterns and connected communities. 'Islands' of housing that pull back from site boundaries must be avoided in favour of developments that positively address the edges as a starting point for 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 edge conditions including significant ecological assets, rear gardens, private drives or edge lanes and existing streets. Requirements are organised around public realm, ecology, built form, movement and parking.

SS03.01 — Movement

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 dwellings fronting the existing road.

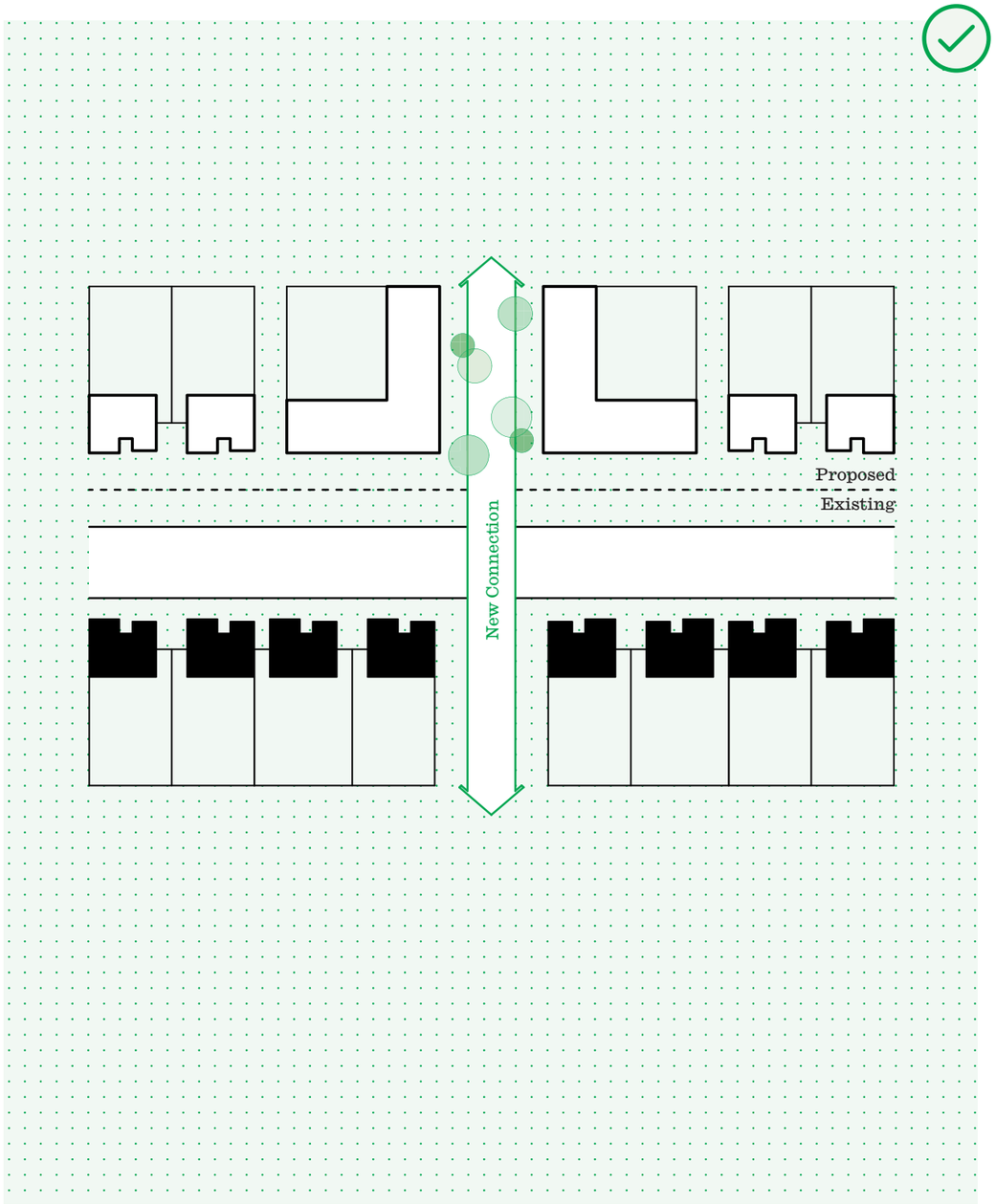


SS03.02 — Built Form

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 – Connections

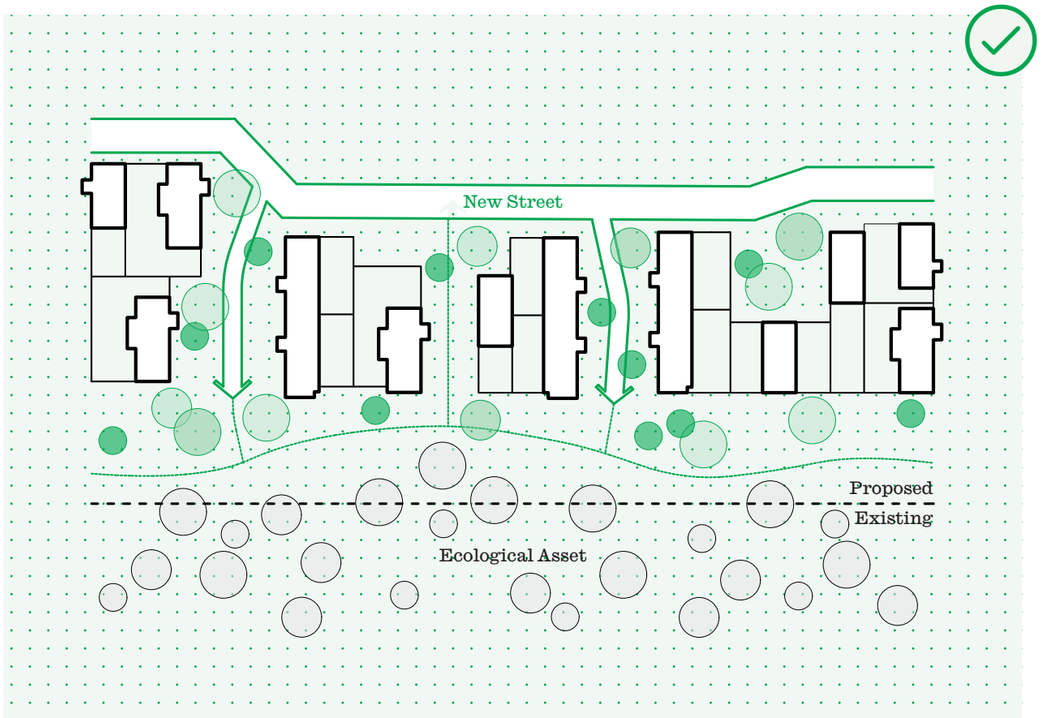
When a new development adjoins an existing neighbourhood, connections must align with existing desire lines.

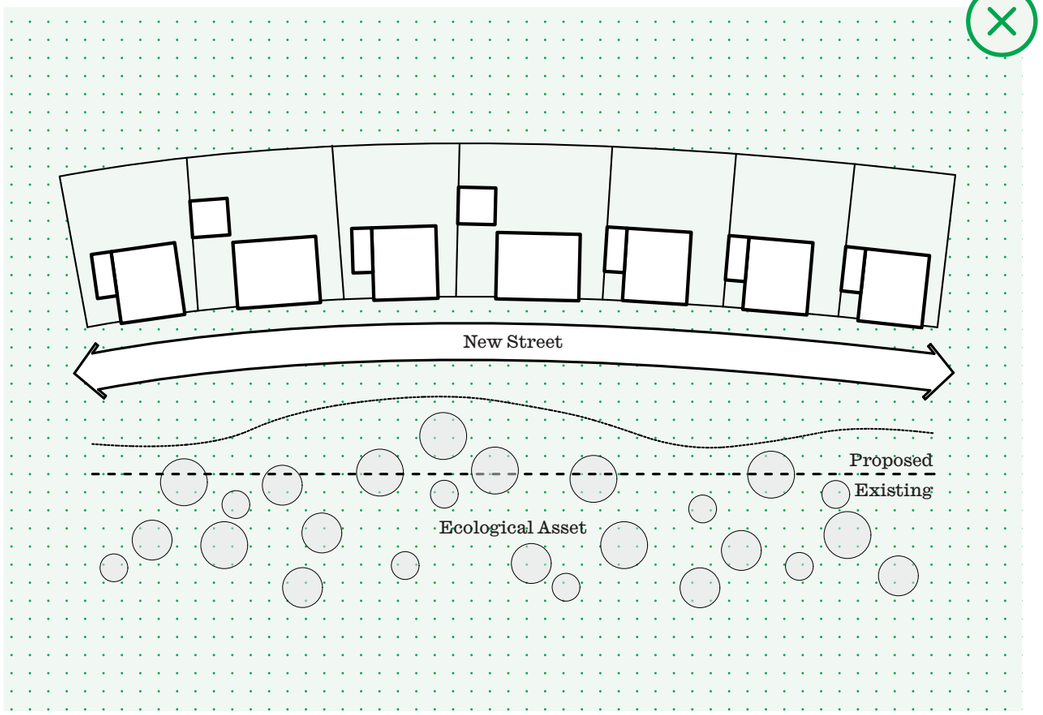


SS03.04 – Significant Ecological Assets

When responding to significant ecological assets such as Important Hedgerows and ancient woodlands, proposals must be in accordance with the code below.

SS03.04A – 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.
SS03.04B – Ecology	The linear open space must incorporate complimentary planting to support the biodiversity of the significant ecological asset. Refer to OS12 for appropriate species. Boundary treatments must include hedgehog holes to ensure permeability for such species on natural edges.
SS03.04C – 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.
SS03.04D – 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.
SS03.04E – Parking	Parking fronting the linear open space and significant ecological asset will not be permitted.



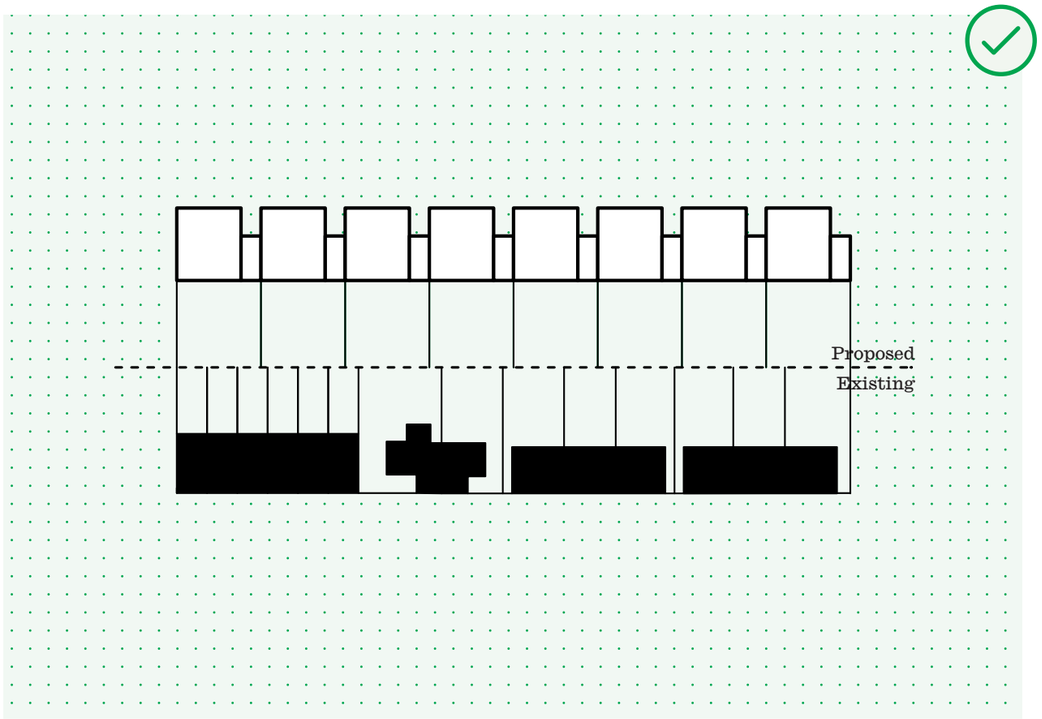


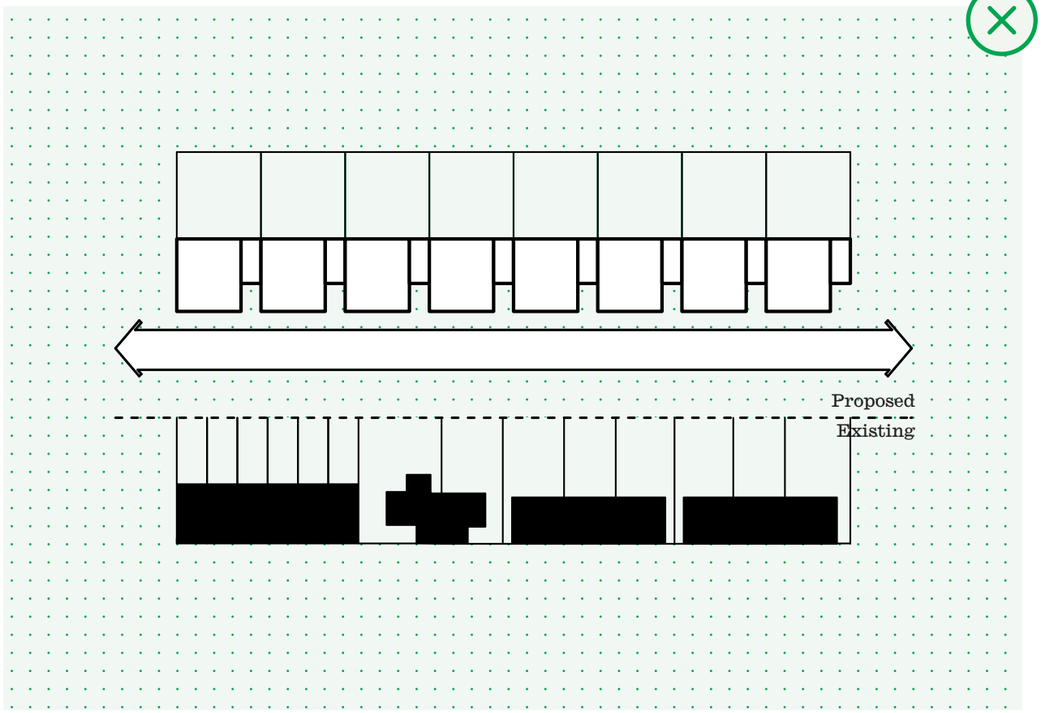
Abode, Great Kneighton, Proctor and Matthews Architects (2019) Map Location →

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.

SS03.05A – Public Realm	Proposals must not incorporate public realm between rear gardens as such spaces will be poorly overlooked and difficult to maintain.
SS03.05B – Ecology	Existing trees to be retained must be integrated into proposed rear gardens to provide screening and privacy.
SS03.05C – Built Form Frontage	The existing rear garden condition must be mirrored across the site boundary to create a back to back condition.
SS03.05D – Movement	A rear servicing alley for the movement of bikes and bins may be incorporated to the back of rear gardens if required. Servicing alleys must be 'for resident access only'.
SS03.05E – Parking	Terrace parking courts, farmstead parking courts, rear parking courts and rear parking drives are permitted along this edge.

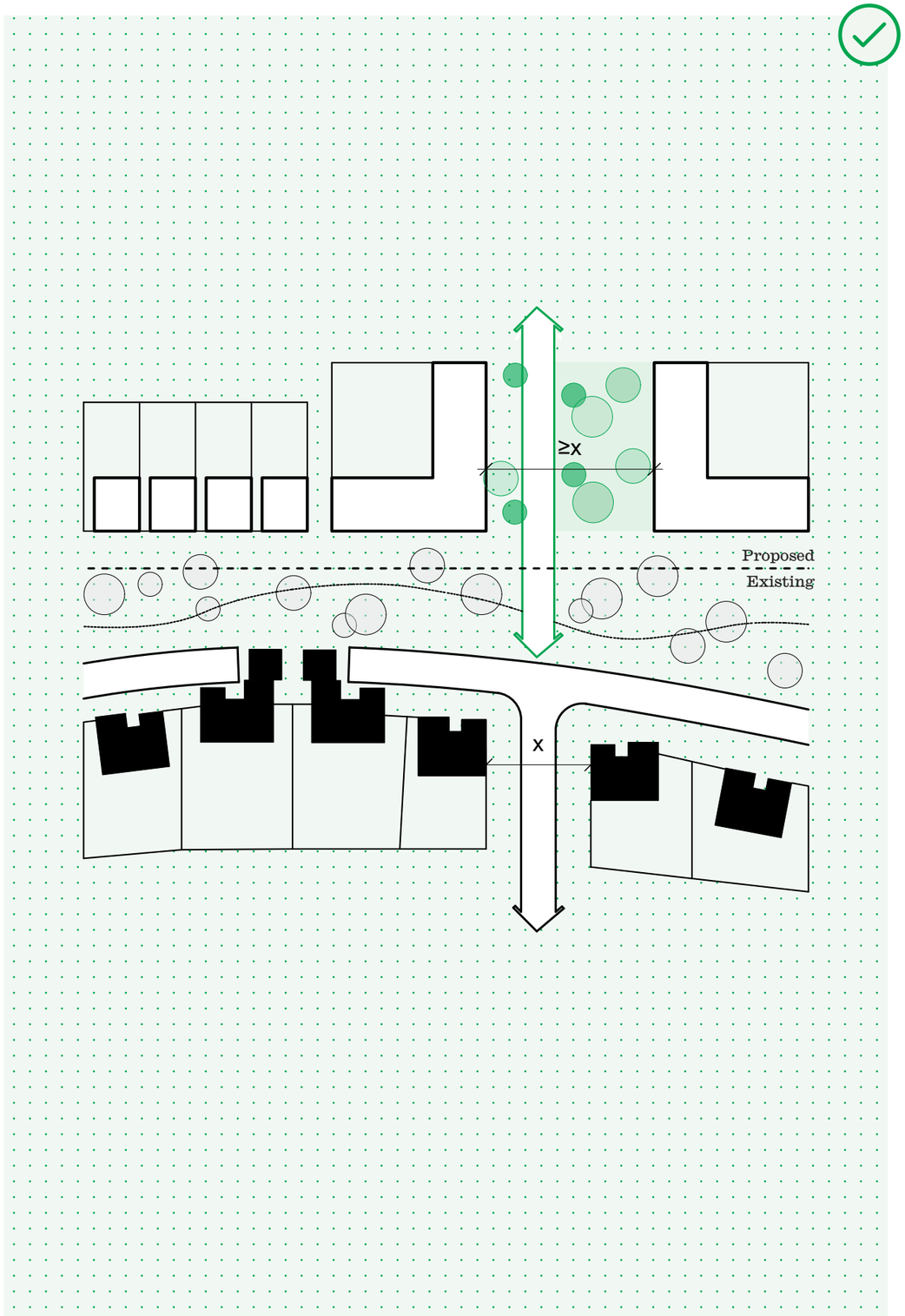




SS03.06 – Private Drives and Edge Lanes

When responding to existing built form frontage arranged along private drives and/or edge lanes, proposals must be in accordance with the code below.

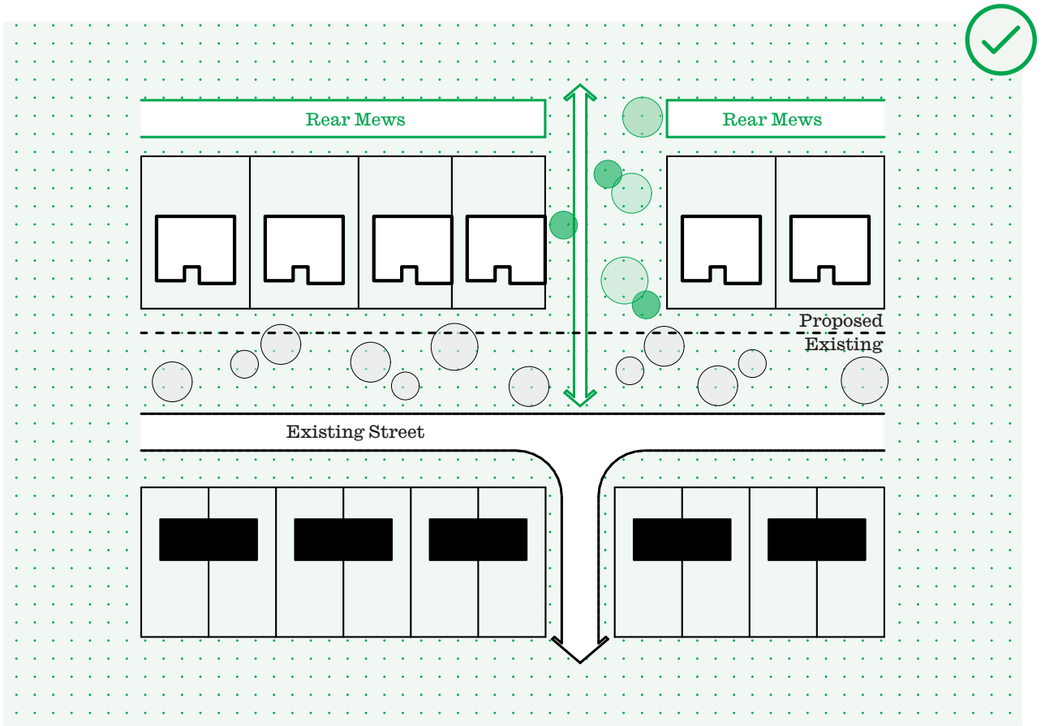
SS03.06A – Public Realm	Proposals must incorporate a public space at the connection point that is at least the width of the existing connection point to safeguard clear sight lines from existing to new neighbourhoods.
SS03.06B – Ecology	Where ecological assets are to be removed for connection points or to create clear sight lines and there is a requirement to retain connectivity for flying species, 'hop overs' must be incorporated.
SS03.06C – Built Form Frontage	Connection points must be emphasized through a change in built form typology, massing and/or materiality.
SS03.06D – Movement	The connection point must be aligned to routes into the existing context to create direct and legible connections over the site boundary, with clear sight-lines. 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.
SS03.06E – Parking	Accommodated on the Edge Lane (if permitted).

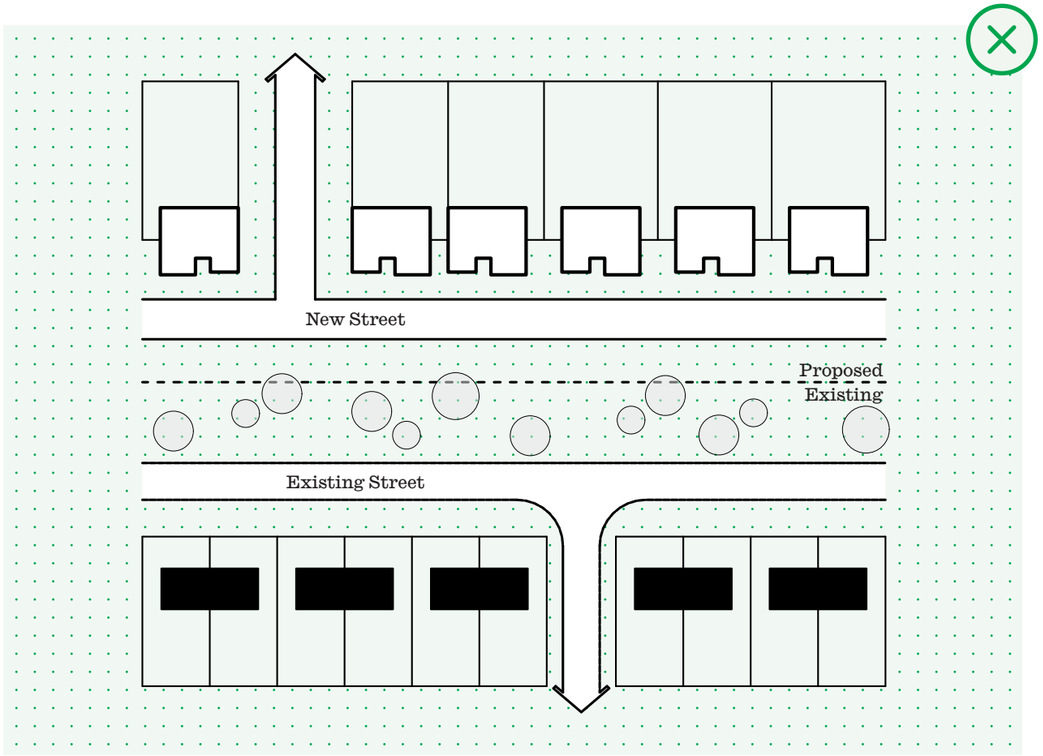


SS03.07 – Existing Streets

When responding to existing streets, proposals must be in accordance with the code below. See ST04 Avenues where one half of the street is appropriate for these edge conditions.

SS03.07A – Public Realm	Public spaces must be provided at key connection points to emphasize important routes into the new development.
SS03.07B – Ecology	Ecological assets along this boundary must be retained where possible and incorporated into a planted verge or generous front gardens.
SS03.07C – 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.
SS03.07D – 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.
SS03.07E – Parking	Accommodated to the interior of the plot through rear access streets or courts (if permitted).



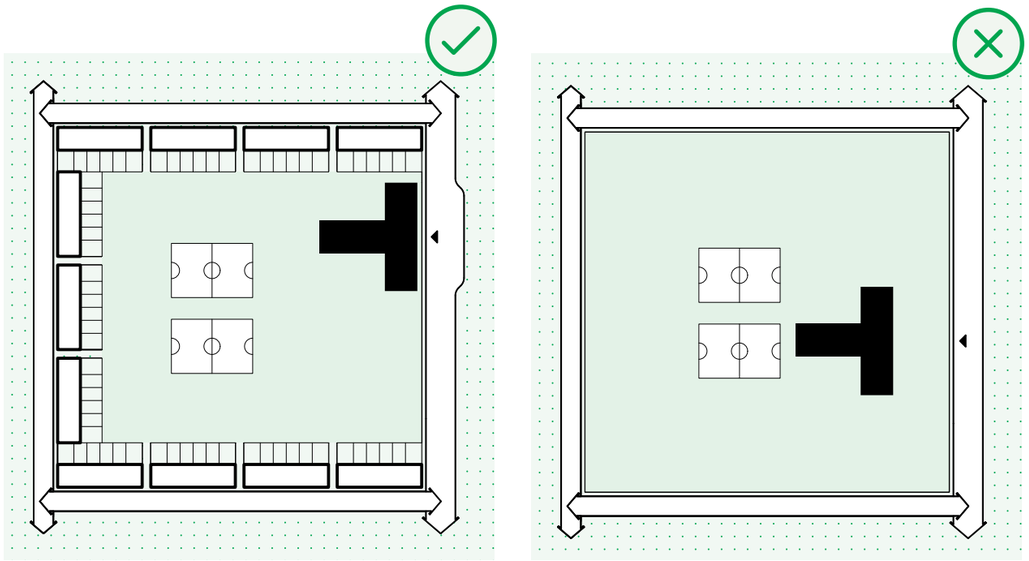


WELL-INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

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.

Page 243



Storey’s Field Centre and Eddington Nursery, Cambridge, McInnes Usher McKnight Architects (2018) Map Location →

LEGIBLE FOCAL POINTS

SS05.01

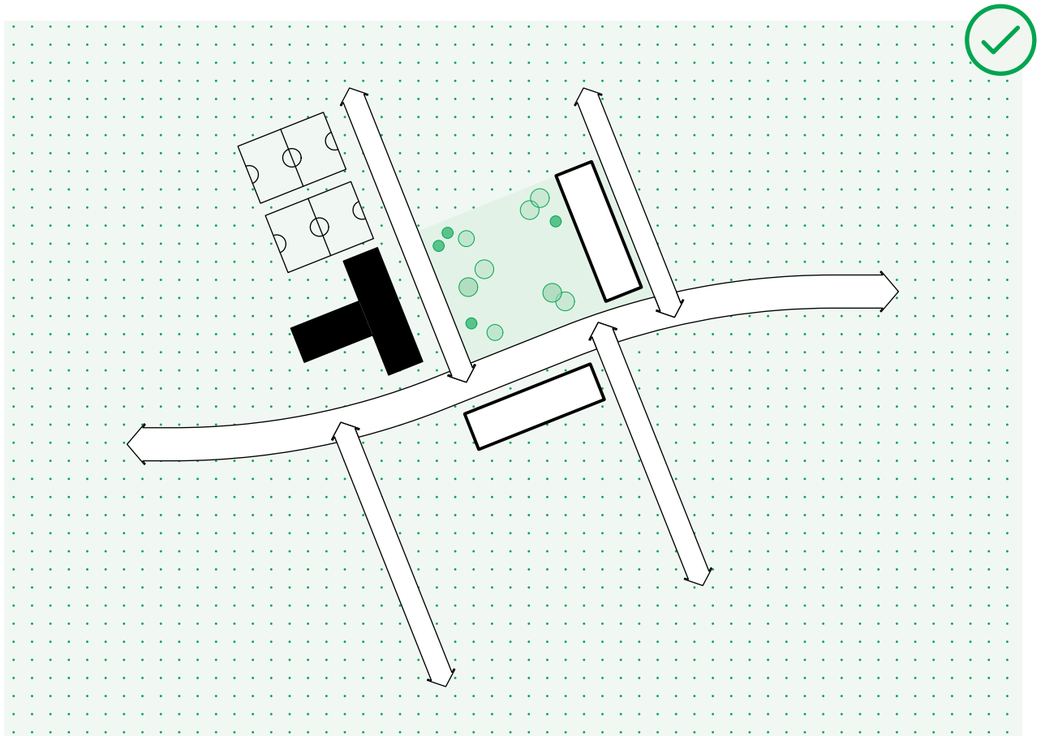
In large developments (100+ homes), proposals must be designed around focal points that co-locate key social infrastructure such as open spaces, play, schools, shops, pubs, community spaces and allotments to attract a range of users and foster community cohesion.

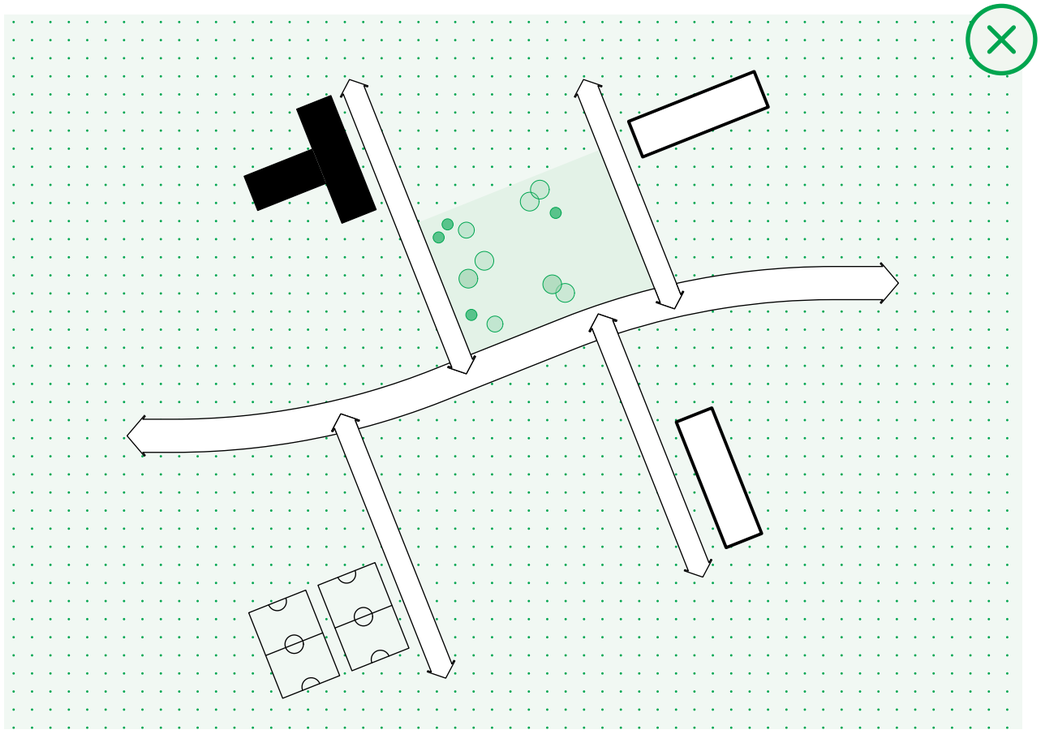
In smaller developments, proposals must be designed to encourage safe and sustainable routes to key destinations that are likely to be located outside the site boundary.

Dispersed social infrastructure that creates illegible neighbourhoods will not be permitted.

SS05.02

Schools must be co-located with at least one other element of social infrastructure, as illustrated opposite.





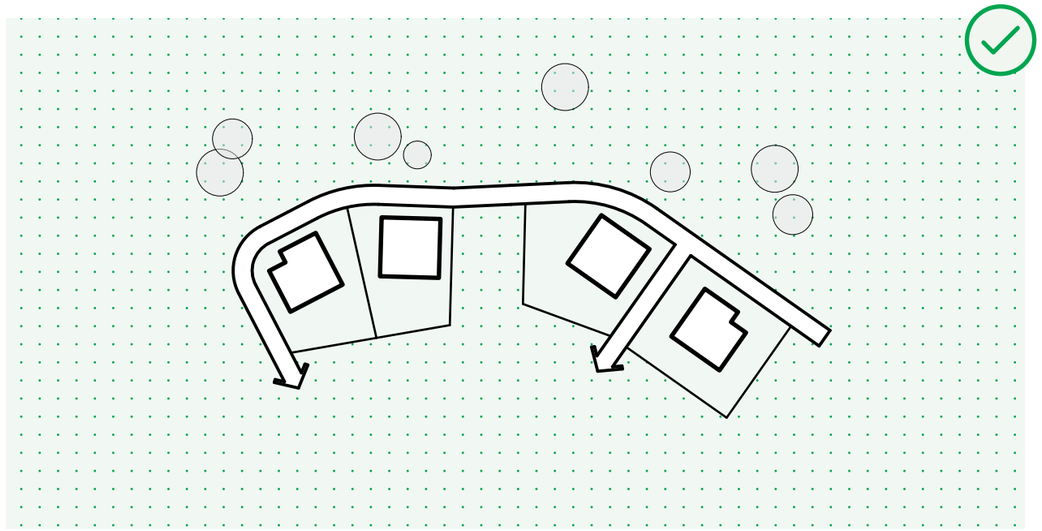
PRIVATE DRIVES AND CUL DE SACS

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 through-routes must be designed out through the use of Spur Lanes (see ST09) or Edge Lanes (see ST10).



Ashmere Garden Village, Ebbsfleet, PRP Architects (2024), Map Location →

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OPEN SPACE PROVISION

The following code establishes a tiered system for open space provision that defines quantum, scale and hierarchy. Quantum is aligned with the Fields in Trust (FiT) Standards and the North Herts Developer Contributions SPD whilst the tiers set out the scale and hierarchy of open spaces that are aligned with play provision. The approach responds to the North Herts context by placing greater emphasis on more local, accessible spaces, providing a finer grain of provision than that set out in Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standards.

OS01.01 – Scale and Hierarchy

The following table sets out requirements for each tier of open space including distance from homes and area.

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

OS01.02 – Play Provision

As a minimum, LAPs must be provided in Tier 1 Open Spaces, LEAPs in Tier 2 Open Spaces and NEAPs in Tier 3 Open Spaces. Informal play provision can be accommodated in any tier of open space, along streets, in the public realm or in dry attenuation basins.

OS01.03 – Development Scale

The table below (taken from FiT 2024) sets out the level of play provision required based on the number of homes. It must also be used to determine which tiers of open space must be delivered per development.

Homes	Informal Play	Tier 1 spaces with LAPs	Tier 2 spaces with LEAPs	Tier 3 spaces with NEAPs	Tier 4 spaces
2-20	x	-	-	-	-
21-100	x	x	-	-	-
101-500	x	x	x	-	-
501-1000	x	x	x	x	-
1000+	x	x	x	x	x

OS01.04 –Access

Access to a higher tier of 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.

OS01.05 – Quantum

The minimum quantum of open space delivered must be provided in accordance with 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	2.5
	Informal Play Provision	3
Other	Allotments	3
	Total Open Space and Play Quantum:	40.5

The following codes set out design requirements for each tier of open space. OS02 applies to all tiers and includes a menu of permitted options, while OS03-06 set out tier-specific requirements across access, nature, uses, materiality and facilities.

OPEN SPACE DESIGN

OS02.01 – Accessibility

All open spaces must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the open space and gradients no steeper than 1/20 for access routes.

OS02.02 – FiT Sub-Categories

All tiers of open space should accommodate a mixture of FiT landscape categories (parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural/semi-natural) to create mixed and multi-functional open spaces.

OS02.03 – Soft Landscaping

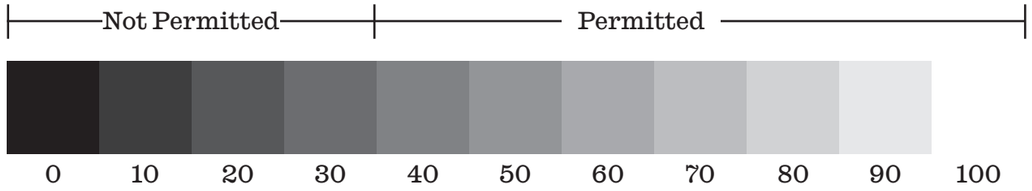
All soft landscaping within open spaces must contribute to ecological enhancements and climate resilience through the appropriate selection of planting species.

OS02.04 – Rest Spots

In open spaces where rest spots are required, they must be provided every 50m along both formal and leisure routes. Rest spots may be single benches and need not be social.

OS02.05 – Colour and Tone

All hard surfacing materials in open spaces must have a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of at least 30. Materials with an LRV below 30, including black, charcoal, graphite and similar dark tones will not be permitted.



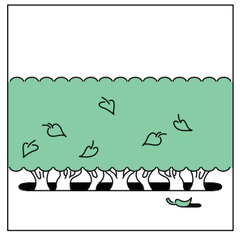
OS02.06 – Boundary Treatments

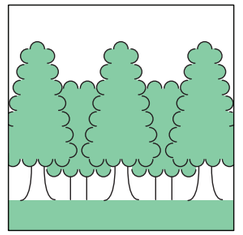
Landscaped, social and playable boundaries must be prioritised. Walls and fencing are only permitted adjacent to roads for safety or access control, with timber preferred. A mix of boundary treatments is encouraged.

The following codes set out the permitted menu of open space features that are referenced in the tier-specific open space and play codes. They are organised around boundary treatments, ecological features, productive landscapes, features for teenagers and young adults, sociable seating and sport.

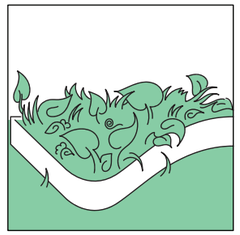
OS02.07 – Landscaped Boundaries

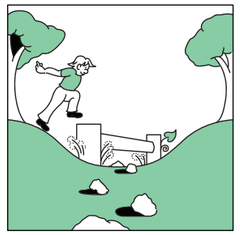
Hedges as boundary treatments must be kept within a range of between 1.2m - 1.5m tall to maintain passive surveillance over open spaces. Edge gradients on swales must not exceed 1/3.

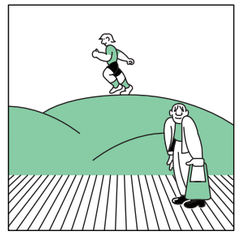

Hedge


Row of trees

Sensory planting


Planters


Swale


Ground modelling

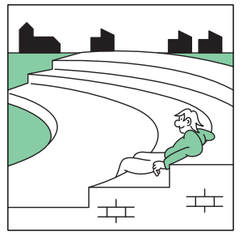
OS02.08 – Social and Playable Boundaries

Sociable and playable boundaries may be used on edges with other open spaces or pedestrian zones. They are not appropriate on edges bordered by busy streets unless the footway acts as a buffer.

Raised planters with seating

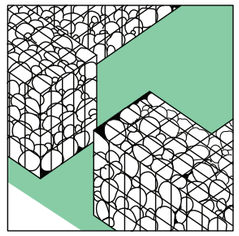
Low playable boulders

Sculptural play elements

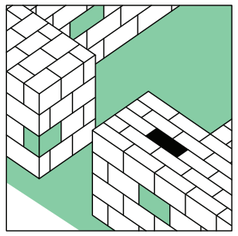

Amphitheatre style seating

OS02.09 – Walls

Walls as boundary treatments must not exceed 1.5m in height to maintain passive surveillance over open spaces. They may be designed at varying heights to incorporate seating and play.



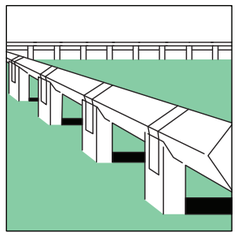
Gabion walls



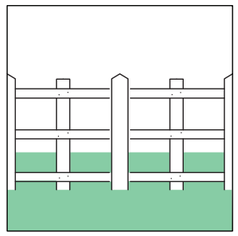
Brick walls

OS02.10 – Timber Fencing

Low timber posts



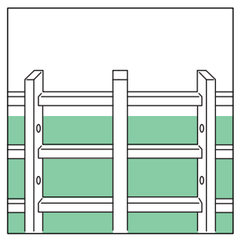
Timber knee rail



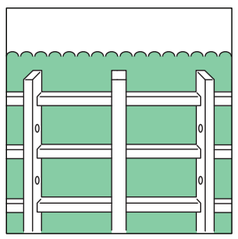
Post and rail

OS02.11 – Metal Fencing

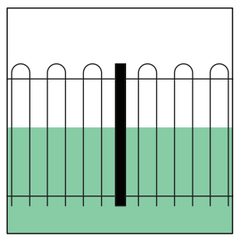
Bowtop fencing is only permitted around play spaces.



Estate fencing



Estate fencing with hedge



Bowtop fencing

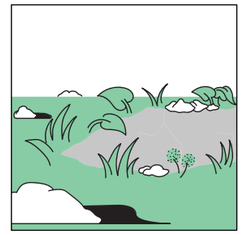
Hartham Play Park, Hertford, Groundwork East (2021) Map Location →

Folly Island Community Garden, Hertford Map Location →

OS02.12 — Ecological Features

When selecting ecological features for Tier 1 Open Spaces, features must be selected from the first row. All other open spaces must select features from the second row. All focal trees must be delivered in Heavy Standard Size.

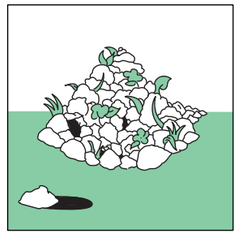
Nectar-rich planting



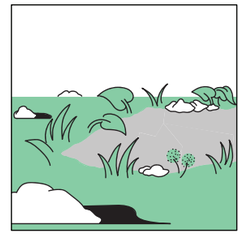
Permanent water body

Focal tree

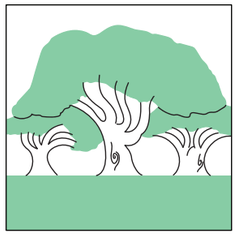
Bug hotel



Hibernacula



Permanent water body



Cluster of three focal trees

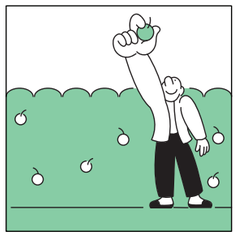
Trail of three bug hotels

OS02.13 — Productive Landscapes

Community gardens in Tier 3 Open Spaces must also include composting facilities.

Orchard

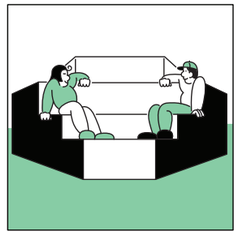
Community garden



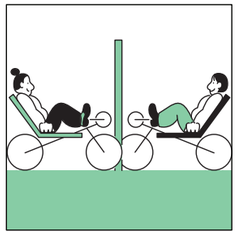
Edible trail

OS02.14 – Features for Teenagers and Young Adults

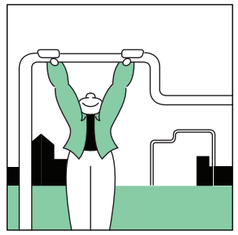
Features must be located along a key route, be independent of any formalised play and be well-overlooked to discourage anti-social behaviour. Refer to Make Space for Girls 'What does better look like?' for further information on below features.



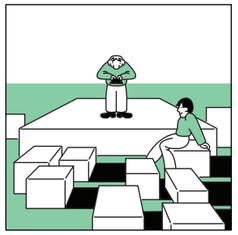
Multi-level seating unit



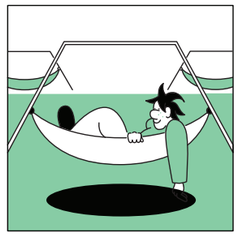
Social exercise space



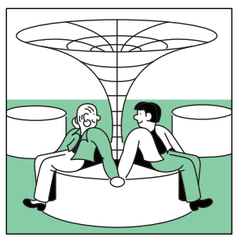
Hanging bar installation



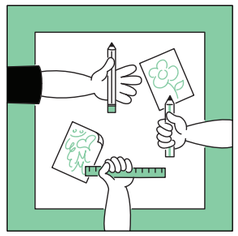
Stage with informal seating



Social swings and hammock area



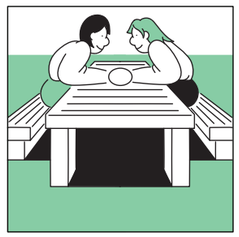
Sheltered seating area



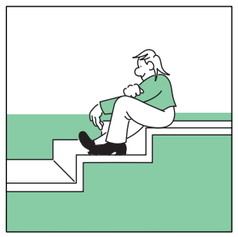
Co-designed feature

OS02.15 – Sociable Seating

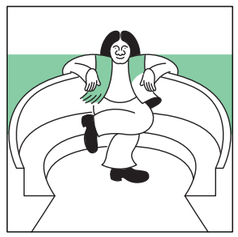
Defined as seating that encourages social interaction, conversation or shared activity through its use.



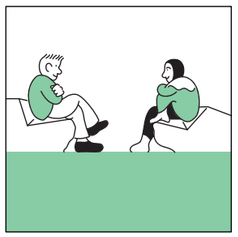
Picnic bench(es)



Raked audience seating



Seating booth



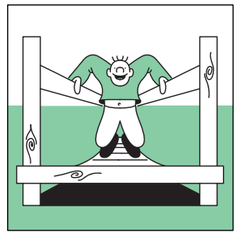
Natural seating cluster

Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City, Paul Bancroft Architects (2012) Map Location →

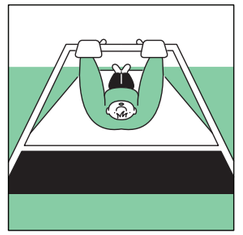
Merrion Cricket Pavilion, Dublin, TAKA Architects (2014) Map Location →

OS02.16 – Sport and Fitness

Trim trails must incorporate a minimum of 3 stations. Outdoor gym areas must incorporate a minimum of 6 pieces of equipment.



Trim trail with distance markers



Outdoor gym area

OS02.17 – Sports and Sports Pavilions

Sports provision in open spaces must be determined through community engagement, the North Herts Playing Pitch Strategy and consultation with Sport England. Sports facilities must be placed along key routes and co-located with other uses to create clear destinations and focal points.

Sports facilities must minimise light and noise pollution to neighbouring homes and sensitive ecological assets through careful placement and sensitive design. 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 design whilst incorporating an external canopy.

Fencing around formalised sport must be minimised and rationalised - double fencing with narrow strips of leftover land in between will not be permitted.

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

OS03.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 100m of a Tier 1 Open Space.
OS03.01B – Size	Must be between 0.03-0.5 hectares in size.
OS03.01C – Critical Dimensions	Must not be less than 10m in width at any point for linear spaces.
OS03.01D – Offset	No minimum offset.
OS03.01E – 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).
OS03.01F – Community Co-design	Only required if the open space is delivered as part of a wider engagement strategy on larger sites.
OS03.01G – Public Art	No coded requirements.

Greyhound Opening, Goldsmith Street, Norwich, Mikhail Riches Architects (2019)
Map Location →

OS03.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS03.02A – Access	Must be open for public use at all times of the day with no gates or lockable barriers.
OS03.02B – Boundary Treatments	Must be selected from landscaped (OS02.07), social and playable (OS02.08) or walled (OS02.09) boundaries.
OS03.02C – Routes	No coded requirements.

OS03.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS03.03A – Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 30% of the total area at maturity.
OS03.03B – Priority Planting	No coded requirements.
OS03.03C – Ecological Features	Must incorporate at least one ecological feature selected from OS02.12.
OS03.03D – Productive Landscape	No coded requirements.

OS03.04 – Use(s)

OS03.04A – Play	Must incorporate a Local Area for Play (LAP).
OS03.04B – Sport	Must not incorporate any formal sporting provision due to the proximity to homes.
OS03.04C – Community and Social	Sociable seating is the main form of encouraging community interaction.

OS03.05 – Materiality

OS03.05A – Surfacing	Hardstanding must not exceed 50% of the total area.
OS03.05B – Materials	Hard surfacing must be selected from one or more of the following options; permeable block paving, cobblestones, large format pavers and/or resin-bound gravel.
	Softer surfacing materials must be used around play. Permitted materials include wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip.

OS03.06 – Facilities

OS03.06A – Sociable Seating	Must provide at least one sociable seating area per 0.3Ha of open space selected from OS02.15.
OS03.06B – Rest Spots	Not required.
OS03.06C – Cycle Parking	May be accommodated near or in Tier 1 Open Spaces.
OS03.06D – Vehicular Parking	May be co-located with parking (see PA02).
OS03.06E – Waste Bins	Not required.
OS03.06F – Public Toilets	Not required.
OS03.06G – Drinking Fountains	Not required.
OS03.06H – 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

OS04.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 400m of a Tier 2 Open Space.
OS04.01B – Size	Must be between 0.5-2 hectares in size.
OS04.01C – Critical Dimensions	No coded requirements.
OS04.01D – Offset	No minimum offset.
OS04.01E – 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).
OS04.01F – Community Co-design	Required if the Tier 2 Open Space is the highest tier of open space being delivered. A minimum of one collaborative, focussed workshop with the community is required as part of the design process.
OS04.01G – Public Art	No coded requirements.

Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City, Paul Bancroft Architects (2012) Map Location →

OS04.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS04.02A – Access	Must have a minimum of four entrance points which are well-signed and well-placed to align with connections beyond the open space boundary.
	All areas must be accessible to the public. Managed access via defined routes are not permitted to count towards the total area at this tier.
OS04.02B – Boundary Treatments	Must be selected from landscaped (OS02.07), social and playable (OS02.08), walled (OS02.09) or fenced (OS02.10/OS02.11) boundaries.
OS04.02C – Routes	Must incorporate surfaced routes that are direct and align with entrance points to provide access to key destinations within the open space.
	Must incorporate a circular/peripheral leisure route (unsurfaced) to accommodate dog walkers and recreational users.

OS04.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS04.03A – Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 30% of the total area at maturity.
OS04.03B – Priority Planting	Must have a minimum of 5% of the total area dedicated to meadow planting.
OS04.03C – Ecological Features	Must include at least two ecological features selected from OS02.12.
OS04.03D – Productive Landscape	Must include at least one productive landscape feature selected from OS02.13.

Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin (refurbished 2014) Map Location →

OS04.04 – Use(s)

OS04.04A – Play	Must incorporate a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). May also incorporate LAPs and Informal Play.
OS04.04B – Sport	Refer to OS02.17 for sports requirements.
OS04.04C – Community and Social	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.
	Must include at least one feature for teenagers and young adults selected from OS02.14.

OS04.05 – Materiality

OS04.05A – Surfacing	No coded requirements.
OS04.05B – 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.

OS04.06 – Facilities

OS04.06A – Sociable Seating	Must provide a minimum of two sociable seating types selected from OS02.15. In smaller Tier 2 Open Spaces (<1Ha), sociable seating requirements may be combined with requirements for teenagers and young adults.
OS04.06B – Rest Spots	Required (see OS02.04).
OS04.06C – Cycle Parking	Must be provided at entrances and near destinations (such as play spaces and sporting facilities). Sheffield stands must be a minimum of 1m apart.
OS04.06D – 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).
OS04.06E – Waste Bins	Must be provided at entrances.
OS04.06F – Public Toilets	If sports pavilions or buildings are being provided within the open space, then a publicly accessible toilet must be incorporated into the built form.
OS04.06G – Drinking Fountains	No coded requirements.
OS04.06H – 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

OS05.01A — Distance	All homes must be within 1000m of a Tier 3 Open Space.
OS05.01B — Size	Must be between 2-5 hectares in size.
OS05.01C — Critical Dimensions	No coded requirements.
OS05.01D — Offset	No minimum offset.
OS05.01E — Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 75% of their edges.
OS05.01F — 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 uses within the open space.
OS05.01G — Public Art	Must incorporate a public art commission.

Norton Common, Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City Map Location →

OS05.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS05.02A – Access	Must have a minimum of four entrance points which are well-signed and well-placed to align with connections beyond the open space boundary.
	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.
OS05.02B – Boundary Treatments	Must be selected from landscaped (OS02.07), social and playable (OS02.08), walled (OS02.09) or fenced (OS02.10/OS02.11) boundaries.
OS05.02C – Routes	Must incorporate surfaced routes that are direct and align with entrance points to provide access to key destinations within the open space.
	Must incorporate a circular/peripheral leisure route (unsurfaced) to accommodate dog walkers and recreational users.

OS05.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS05.03A – Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 20% of the total area at maturity.
OS05.03B – Priority Planting	Must have a minimum of 5% of the total area dedicated to meadow planting.
OS05.03C – Ecological Features	Must include at least three ecological features selected from OS02.12.
OS05.03D – Productive Landscape	Must include at least two productive landscape features selected from OS02.13.

OS05.04 – Use(s)

OS05.04A – Play	Must incorporate a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP). May also incorporate LAPs, LEAPs and Informal Play.
OS05.04B – Sport	Refer to OS02.17 for sports requirements.
	Must incorporate a minimum of one fitness feature selected from OS02.16 to encourage active lifestyles.
OS05.04C – Community and Social	Must include at least two features for teenagers and young adults selected from OS02.14.
	Must facilitate community events and large gatherings by provision of a sheltered focal feature (such as a bandstand or covered stage) with water and an electricity supply.

OS05.05 – Materiality

OS05.05A – Surfacing	No coded requirements.
OS05.05B – 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.

OS05.06 – Facilities

OS05.06A – Sociable Seating	Must provide a minimum of two sociable seating types selected from OS02.15.
OS05.06B – Rest Spots	Required (see OS02.04).
OS05.06C – Cycle Parking	Must be provided at entrances and near destinations (such as play spaces and sporting facilities). Sheffield stands must be a minimum of 1m apart.
OS05.06D – 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).
OS05.06E – Waste Bins	Must be provided at entrances.
OS05.06F – Public Toilets	Must provide a publicly accessible toilet as a standalone facility or as part of another building.
OS05.06G – Drinking Fountains	Must provided a minimum of 2no. drinking fountains to support use in hot weather.
OS05.06H – Medical Equipment	Must provide access to a defibrillation case in case of medical emergencies.

OS06

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.

Therfield Heath, Royston Map Location →

OS06.01 – Key Parameters

OS06.01A Distance	All homes must be within 1200m of a Tier 4 Open Space.
OS06.01B Size	Must be between 5-10 hectares in size.
OS06.01C 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 uses within the open space.
OS06.01D Public Art	Must incorporate at least one public art commission.
OS06.01E Accessibility	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.
OS06.01F 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.
OS06.01G Informal Play	Must incorporate an element of informal play that is appropriate to the context and informed by community co-design.
OS06.01H Sport	Refer to OS02.17 for sports requirements.
OS06.01I Facilities	Same as Tier 3 Open Space requirements (see OS05.06)

PLAY SPACE DESIGN

OS07.01 – Play Equipment

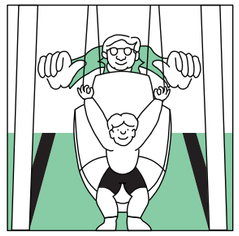
All play equipment must maximise natural materials with excessive plastic equipment not permitted. In addition, colourways within the play spaces must be co-ordinated to ensure a holistic identity within the space.

OS07.02 – Metal Fencing around Play

If metal fencing is proposed around play, a minimum of 0.5m strip of sensory planting or a hedge must be incorporated on both sides of the fence to soften the boundary.

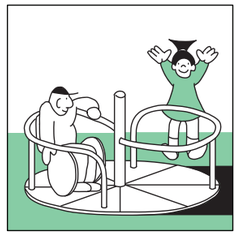
OS07.03 – Inclusive Play Experiences

Equipped play spaces must include accessible equipment suitable for a wide range of abilities, recognising that some play activities may be inherently restrictive.



Cradle Swings

Inclusive Play Towers



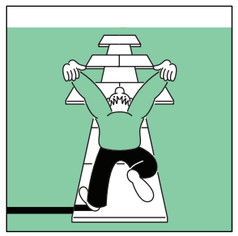
Accessible Roundabouts

Wide Slides

The following codes OS07.04-08 set out a series of play experiences and features required by the different tiers of play space.

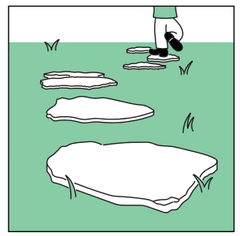
OS07.04 – Floor-based Play Experiences

Stepping stones and boulders must include a minimum of 7 points along a route. Barefoot trails must incorporate a minimum of 5 textures.

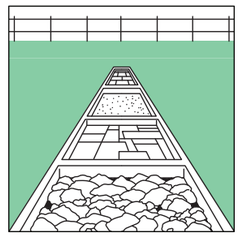


Hopscotch stones

Ground modelling



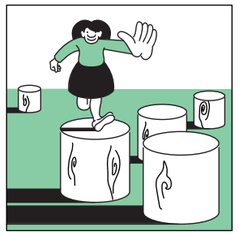
Stepping stones and boulders



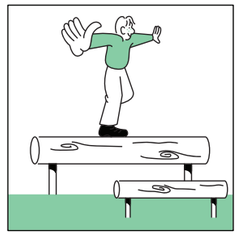
Barefoot trail

OS07.05 – Low Level Climbing and Balancing

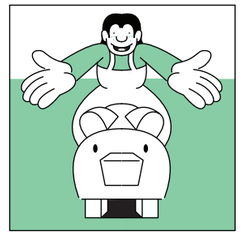
Timber animal seating sculptures and log pile clusters must include a minimum of three features. Tree stump trails must be a minimum of 5m in length. Log balancing beams must incorporate a minimum of two levels for children of different ages and abilities.



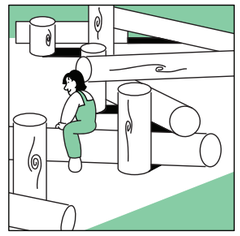
Tree stump trail



Log balancing beams



Timber animal seating sculptures



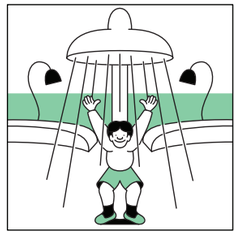
Log pile(s)

OS07.06 – Water Play

Taps with troughs must incorporate a minimum of two levels to cater to different age ranges and abilities. Splash jets and fountains must incorporate a minimum of three features.

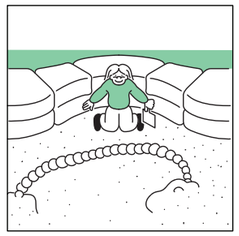
Tap with natural trickle trail

Tap with trough

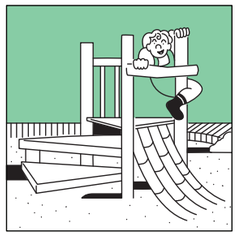


Splash jets and fountains

OS07.07 – Sand Play



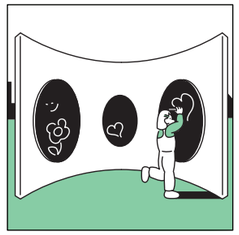
Fossil discovery



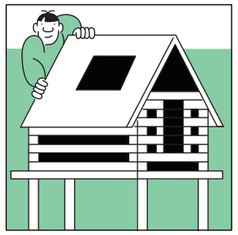
Sand pit

Raised sand box

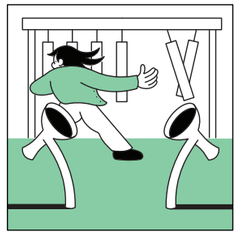
OS07.08 – Social and Creative Play



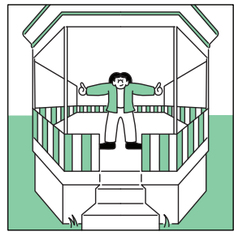
Chalkboard



Playhouse or shelter



Cluster of three instruments



Stage, plinth or bandstand

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.

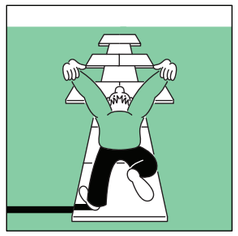
Royal Docks Corridor, Newham, 5th Studio (2024) Map Location →

OS08.01 — Natural Play on the Way

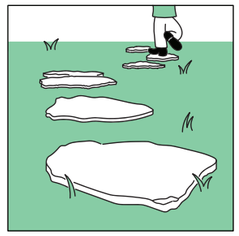
Natural play on the way must not be enclosed by any formal barriers such as fencing or gates. They are also distinct from Local Areas for Play (OS09) and must not be double-counted.

Suitable locations for natural play on the way include along formal and leisure routes in Tier 2,3 and 4 open spaces, in social spaces on streets, in the central landscaped zone on Green Streets (see ST03) and in dry attenuation basins (see OS13).

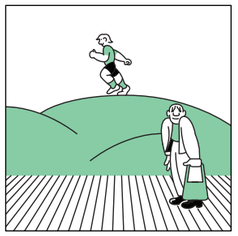
Suggested features for natural play on the way include the following elements.



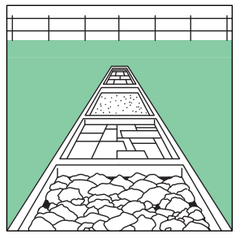
Hopscotch stones



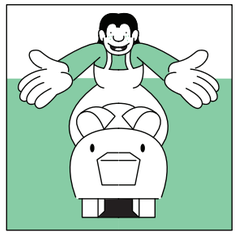
Stepping stones and boulders



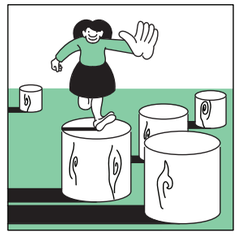
Ground modelling



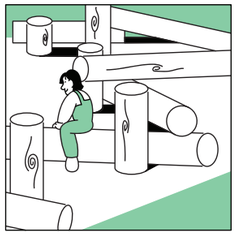
Barefoot trail



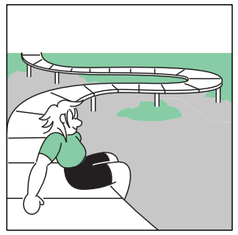
Wooden seating sculptures



Tree stump trail



Log piles and balancing beams



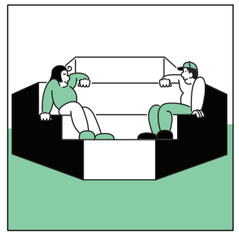
Boardwalks and timber crossings

OS08.02 – Social Spaces for Teenagers

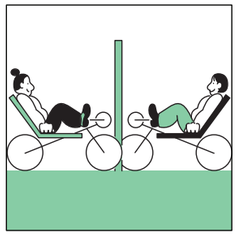
Social spaces for teenagers must not be enclosed by any formal barriers such as fencing or gates.

Suitable locations for social spaces for teenagers include along formal and leisure routes in Tier 2,3 and 4 open spaces that must be outside any formal play provision. They may also be incorporated in civic squares and plazas - especially encouraged in public realm areas outside secondary schools.

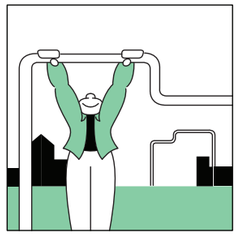
Social spaces for teenagers are required in Tier 2 and 3 open spaces (See OS04, OS05) and will count towards informal play provision. Features for teenagers and young adults must be selected from the below options.



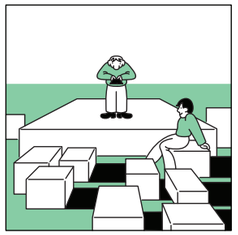
Multi-level seating unit



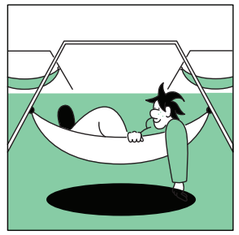
Social exercise space



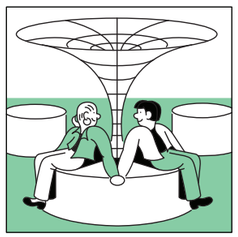
Hanging bar installation



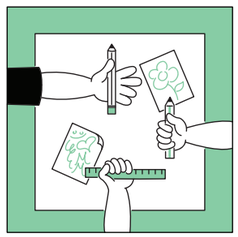
Stage with informal seating



Social swings or hammock area



Sheltered seating area



Co-designed feature

Frizon Arstidernas Park, Umea, Sweden, Tyrens Architects with Kerstin Bergendal (2016) Map Location →

Den Sorte Plads, Superkilen, Copenhagen, Bjarke Ingels Group with Topotek1 and Superflex (2012) Map Location →

OS08.03 — Active Play

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, landscaped boundary treatments are permitted (see OS02.07).

All elements of active play must be co-located with a sociable space for teenagers feature (see OS08.02) to encourage a gender-inclusive public realm.

Pump tracks, skateparks and skate areas must provide progression routes that cater to beginner, intermediate and advanced levels to appeal to a wide range of users.

The following codes set out specific requirements for each tier of play space (LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs) organised around key parameters, access, movement and thresholds, nature and ecology, play experiences, materiality and facilities.

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 the home. LAPs are integral features within the public realm network, helping to link nearby homes with larger play destinations.

OS09.01 – Key Parameters

OS09.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 100m of a Local Area for Play (LAP)
OS09.01B – Size	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.01C – Location	LAPs must be incorporated into all Tier 1 Open Spaces.
OS09.01D – Typology	On developments where more than 1 LAP is being delivered, LAPs must demonstrate sufficient variation from eachother to create a diversity of experiences.
OS09.01E – Offset	No minimum offset from nearby dwellings.
OS09.01F – Setting	The entirety of the Tier 1 Open Space must be designed and designated for play. A gated LAP within the open space will not be permitted.

Dujardin Mews, Enfield, Karakusevic Carson with Maccreanor Lavington Architects and East Architecture Landscape Urban Design (2017) Map Location →

OS09.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS09.02A – Access	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.02B – Boundary Treatment	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03). Boundary around LAP not permitted.

OS09.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS09.03A – Quantum of Trees	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.03B – Focal Trees	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.03C – Sensory Planting	Refer to OS09.04B.

OS09.04 – Play Experiences

OS09.04A – Physical Experiences	Must incorporate a minimum of one floor-based play experience selected from OS07.04.
	Must incorporate a minimum of one low-level climbing and balancing feature selected from OS07.05.
OS09.04B – Sensory Experiences	Must incorporate at least one multi-sensory play feature selected from OS07.06 or sensory planting. Sand play is not permitted in Tier 1 Open Spaces and LAPs.
OS09.04C – Social and Creative Experiences	All features must be open-ended and ambiguous encouraging creative and imaginative play alongside physical and sensory experiences.
OS09.04D – Play Equipment	All features must be natural, low maintenance and durable, requiring inspection only once a year.

OS09.05 – Materiality

OS09.05A – Soft Landscaping	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.05B – Surfacing	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

OS09.06 – Facilities

OS09.06A – Sociable Seating	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.06B – Cycle Parking	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.06C – Waste Bins	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

LOCAL EQUIPPED AREAS FOR PLAY

Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) are 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.

OS10.01 — Key Parameters

OS10.01A — Distance	All homes must be within 400m of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
OS10.01B — Size	Must have a minimum area of 400sqm.
OS10.01C — Location	Must be incorporated into all Tier 2 Open Spaces. They may also be incorporated into other tiers.
OS10.01D — 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 a destination within the open space.
OS10.01E — Offset	Must not be closer than 10m to the nearest habitable room facade of surrounding dwellings.
OS10.01F — Setting	Must be positioned along a formal route or near main entrances for passive surveillance.

Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City, Paul Bancroft Architects (2012) Map Location →

OS10.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS10.02A – Access	Nucleated LEAPs must incorporate a minimum of 2 entrances.
OS10.02B – Boundary Treatment	No boundary treatments are required for dispersed typologies.
	Nucleated typologies must select boundary treatments from landscape boundaries (OS02.07), social and playable boundaries (OS02.08), timber fencing (OS02.10) or metal fencing (OS02.11). Fencing should be minimised in favour of landscaped and social boundaries.

OS10.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS10.03A – Quantum of Trees	One non-fruiting tree per piece of equipment must be incorporated to provide shading for users.
OS10.03B – Focal Trees	Must incorporate at least one Focal Tree in a Heavy Standard Size (see OS12 for suitable species).
OS10.03C – Sensory Planting	Must include an area of sensory planting.

OS10.04 – Play Experiences

OS10.04A – Physical Experiences	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. A minimum of 2 pieces od equipment must be selected from OS07.03 Inclusive Play.
OS10.04B – Sensory Experiences	Must incorporate at least one multi-sensory play feature from either OS07.06/07 water and sand play.
OS10.04C – Social and Creative Experiences	Must incorporate at least one social and creative play experience selected from OS07.08.

OS10.05 – Materiality

OS10.05A – Soft Landscaping	In nucleated typologies, a minimum of 30% of the total area must be soft landscaping.
OS10.05B – Surfacing	Impact absorbing materials (such as wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip) that comply with EN1177 must be used around play equipment and features with a risk of falling.
	In nucleated typologies, a uniform material tone across the whole space is not permitted. One material and/or tone can make up a maximum of 50% of the total area.

OS10.06 – Facilities

OS10.06A – Sociable Seating	Must include a minimum of one sociable seating feature selected from OS02.15.
OS10.06B – Cycle Parking	Must provide at least 4 sheffield stands at entrance points. Sheffield stands must be spaced 1m apart.
OS10.06C – 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. They are key recreational anchors within neighbourhoods, offering space for extended visits, active play and gathering.

OS11.01 – Key Parameters

OS11.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 1000m of a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)
OS11.01B – Size	Must have a minimum area of 1000sqm, incorporating a hard surface area of at least 465sqm for games and informal sport.
OS11.01C – Location	Must be incorporated into all Tier 3 Open Spaces. They may also be incorporated into other tiers.
OS11.01D – Typology	Must be configured as nucleated play spaces forming a key destination within the host open space.
OS11.01E – Offset	Must not be closer than 30m to the nearest habitable room facade of surrounding dwellings.
OS11.01F – Setting	Must be positioned along a formal route or near main entrances for passive surveillance.

Hartham Play Park, Hertford, Groundwork East (2021) Map Location →

OS11.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS11.02A – Access	Must incorporate a minimum of 2 entrances.
OS11.02B – Boundary Treatment	Must select boundary treatments from landscape boundaries (OS02.07), social and playable boundaries (OS02.08), timber fencing (OS02.10) or metal fencing (OS02.11). Fencing should be minimised in favour of landscaped and social boundaries.

OS11.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS11.03A – Quantum of Trees	One non-fruiting tree per piece of equipment must be incorporated to provide shading for users.
OS11.03B – Focal Trees	Must incorporate at least three Focal Trees in a Heavy Standard Size (see OS12 for suitable species).
OS11.03C – Sensory Planting	Must include an area of sensory planting.

OS11.04 – Play Experiences

OS11.04A – Physical Experiences	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. At least 3 pieces of equipment must be selected from OS07.03 Inclusive Play.
OS11.04B – Sensory Experiences	Must incorporate at least one water play feature selected from OS07.06.
	Must incorporate at least one sand play feature selected from OS07.07.
OS11.04C – Social and Creative Experiences	Must incorporate at least one creative play experience selected from OS07.08.

OS11.05 – Materiality

OS11.05A – Soft Landscaping	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 different ages.
OS11.05B – Surfacing	Impact absorbing materials (such as wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip) that comply with EN1177 must be used around play equipment and features with a risk of falling.
	A uniform material tone across the whole space is not permitted. One material and/or tone can make up a maximum of 50% of the total area.

OS11.06 – Facilities

OS11.06A – Sociable Seating	Must include a minimum of one sociable seating feature selected from OS02.15.
OS11.06B – Cycle Parking	Must provide at least 6 sheffield stands at entrance points. Sheffield stands must be spaced 1m apart.
OS11.06C – Waste Bins	2no. waste bins must be provided.

PLANTING PALETTE

OS12.01 – Planting Species Selection

All planting proposals must demonstrate a context-responsive approach to species selection. Species must be chosen to ensure long-term resilience, ecological value and environmental sustainability. Particular consideration must be given to the attributes outlined below.

Drought tolerance and climate resilience where planting prioritises species known for their ability to withstand prolonged dry periods and increasing climate variability. Preference must be given to native or well-acclimatised species.

Support for biodiversity and wildlife where selected species enhance the local ecological networks by providing habitat, food sources and pollinator value. Planting strategies must be informed by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with particular reference to focus areas and priorities.

Low maintenance and longevity where selected species are robust, disease-resistant and capable of establishing with minimal ongoing intervention. Planting schemes must be designed to reduce long-term watering, use of fertilisers and pruning cycles.

OS12.02 – Context Appropriate Planting

Species selection must respond to the specific micro-climatic and spatial conditions of each location, including; orientation and sun-shade levels; soil type, depth and drainage characteristics; exposure to wind and urban heat effects; proximity to built form, streets, utilities and infrastructure; relationship to public realm and settlement edge conditions. Planting must reinforce local landscape character and contribute positively to the distinctiveness of place.

OS12.03 – 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.

The following tables include example species organised around important attributes that must be taken into consideration when selecting appropriate species. The information is organised into 5 categories; bulbs, herbaceous perennials, medium canopy trees, large canopy trees and shrubs.

Bulbs

	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

Page 275

Herbaceous Perennials

	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
Wild marjoram Origanum vulgare	x			x		x	x	x
Feather grass Stipa tenuissima	x					x		
Golden oats Stipa gigantea	x					x		x

Medium Canopy Trees

	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	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
Rowan Sorbus aucuparia	x	x	x				x		x		x	x
Hazel Corylus avellana	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x
Hitchin pippin Malus domestica	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x

Large Canopy Trees

	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

	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	

Page 277

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ATTENUATION BASINS

OS13.01 — Capacity

The area and capacity of attenuation basins must be minimised through prioritising source control features upstream.

OS13.02 — National Guidance

Attenuation basins must be designed in accordance with the National Standards for Sustainable Urban Drainage.

OS13.03 — 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.

OS13.04 – 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 OS13.05. Basins designed to permanently hold water, must provide ecological benefits and visual amenity for residents, in accordance with the requirements set out in OS13.06.

OS13.05 – Dry Attenuation Basins

Dry attenuation basins 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 included and selected from OS08.01.

Informal play features must be arranged along a trail or route to encourage exploration and make best use of the topography.

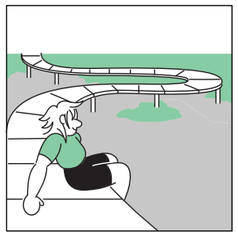
Edge gradients must not exceed 1/3 to ensure basins are accessible and feel part of the open space. In addition, fencing or any barriers to access will not be permitted

Cooks Lane Housing, Solihull, Birmingham, DSA Environment and Design (2019)
Map Location →

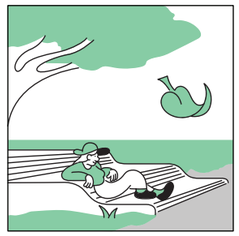
Derwenthorpe, York, Studio Partington with FIRA Landscape Architects and PRP Architects (2019) Map Location →

OS13.06 — Wet Attenuation Basins

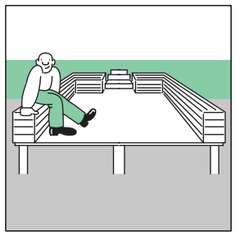
Wet attenuation basins must incorporate a minimum of one seating/viewing platform from the options below to allow residents to enjoy the visual amenity of the basin.



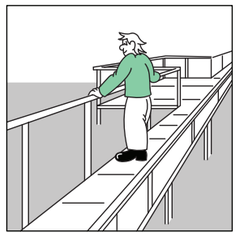
Timber bridges and boardwalks



Stepped water access



Seating platform



Pier

Wet attenuation basins must also incorporate a series of planted shelves that support a variety of planting and contribute to ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain (see OS12). Mono-cultural grass banks will not be permitted.

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.

Fencing must be minimised to retain the natural character of the open space. Where fencing is required and landscaped boundaries (see OS02.07) are not feasible, timber fencing is permitted (see OS02.10).

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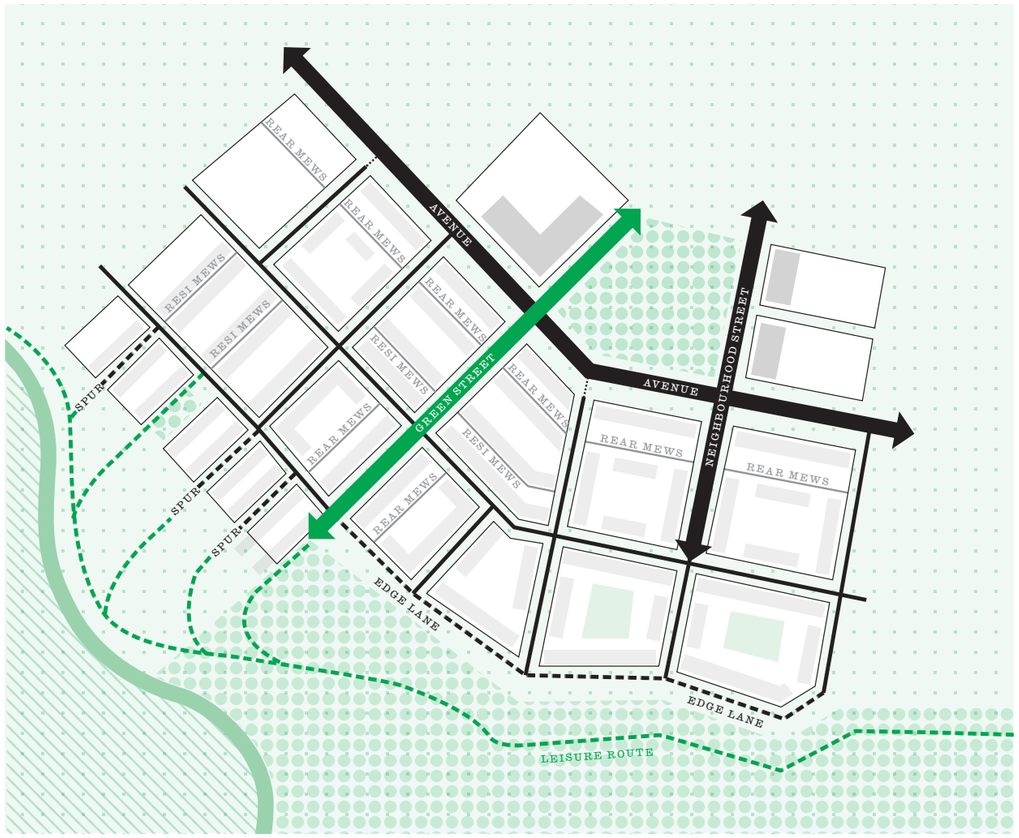
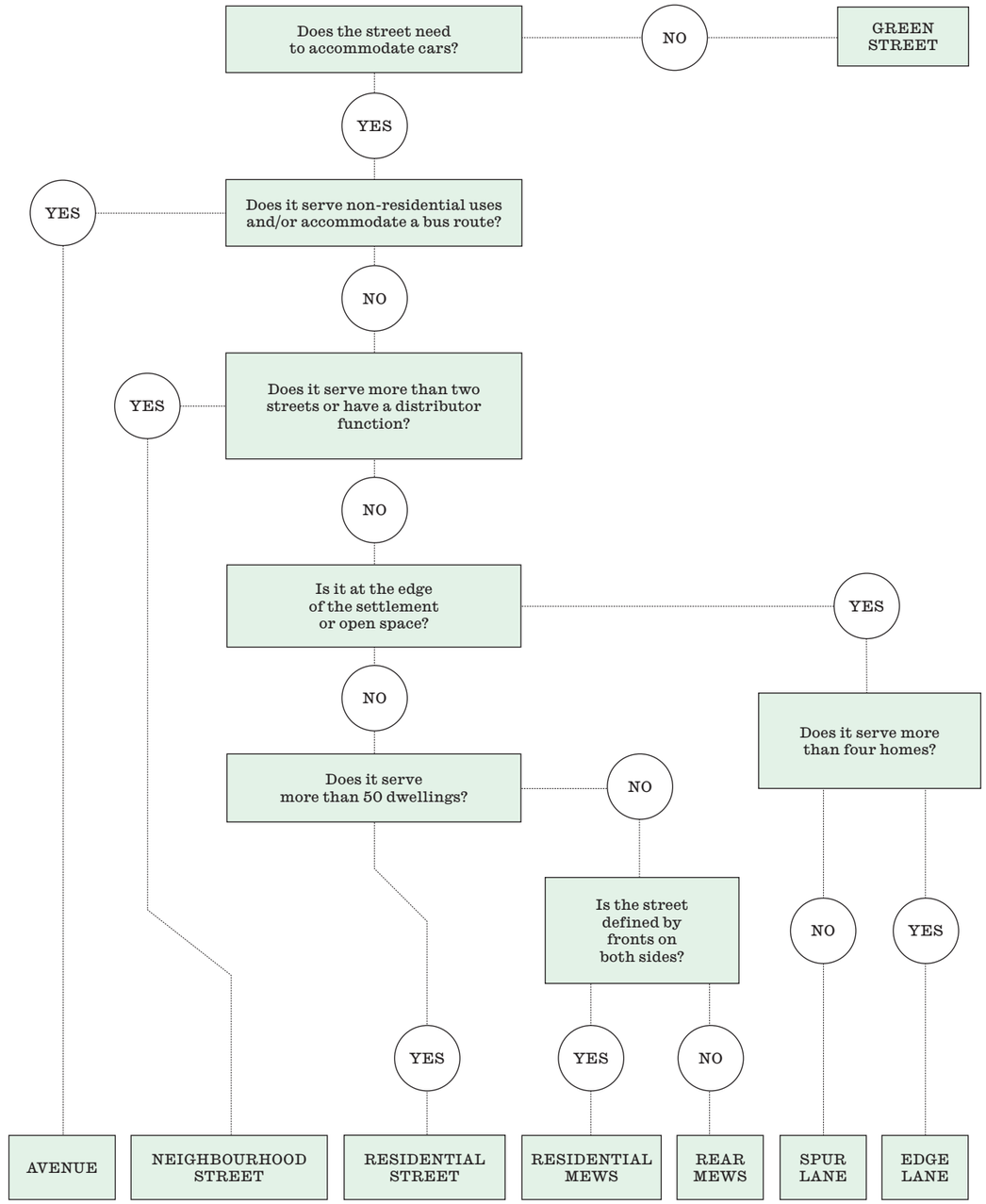
SELECTING STREET TYPES

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.

ST02.01 – 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 Team in assessing proposals. The HCC PMPDG aligns with the Manual for Streets, a document reviewed by the Association of Chief Fire Officers, providing clarity on emergency access requirements.

ST02.02 – Adoption

The adoption of streets is done on a case by case basis and determined by the Highway Authority in accordance with the HCC PMPDG. Avenues and Neighbourhood Streets are likely to be adopted whilst lower order street types may, if they incorporate a strategic active travel link.

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 using tracking. Vehicles may swing out over the centreline when turning and tracking does not have to follow the kerbline - an approach to be agreed with the Highway Authority early in the design process.

ST02.08 – Inconsiderate 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

The following table includes appropriate materials for each street 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
LB	Bituminous that must be non-black with an LRV >30.
EB	Enhanced bituminous surfacing with the use of coloured or non-black aggregates to enhance visual quality and create a more distinctive finish.
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	Social Spaces	On Street Parking	On Plot Parking
ST03 Green Street			BP PP SS	BP PP SL		
ST04 Avenue	BI		BI	BP SS SL	LB EB BP	
ST05 Neighbourhood Street	BI		LB	BP PP SS SL	LB BP	BP PP SS
ST06 Residential Street	BI		LB EB	BP PP SS SL	BP LB	BP PP SS
ST07 Residential Mews	LB EB BP PP SS	BP PP SS			BP PP SS	
ST08 Rear Mews	LB EB BP PP SS	BP PP SS			BP PP SS	BP PP SS
ST09 Spur Lane	BP PP SS			BP PP SS SL	BP PP SS	BP PP SS
ST10 Edge Lane	LB EB BP PP SS	SS			LB EB BP PP SS	BP PP SS

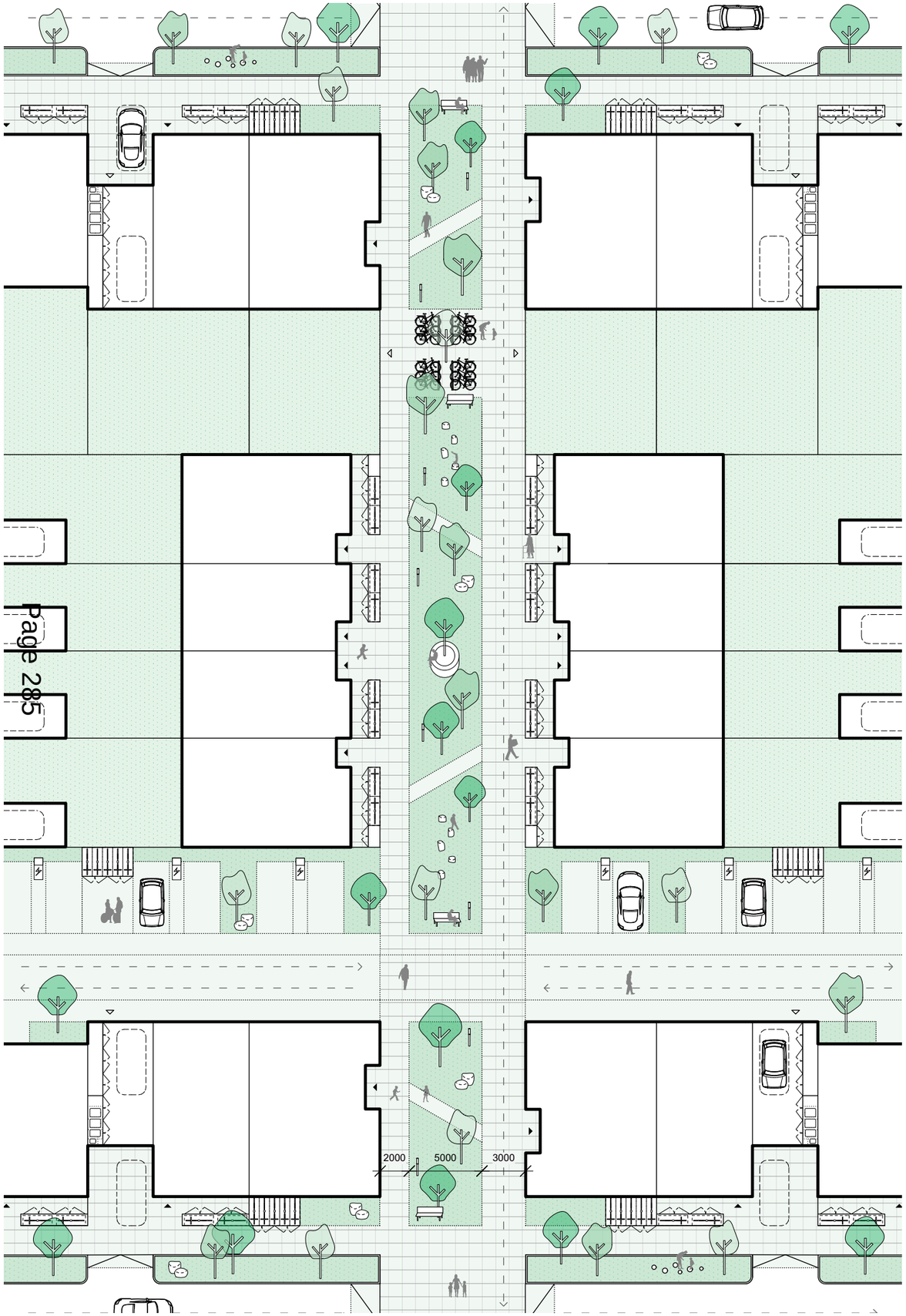
GREEN STREETS

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 central 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

ST03.01A – Maximum Width	No maximum width. Must be at least 10m between private thresholds.
ST03.01B – Social Spaces	Must be provided at least every 50m.
ST03.01C – Views and Vistas	No coded requirements.
ST03.01D – Landscape	Must incorporate a central landscaped zone with a minimum width of 5m.
ST03.01E – Junctions	No coded requirements.
ST03.01F – Street Trees	Must incorporate at least one street tree per dwelling served.
ST03.01G – Homes Served	No maximum limit.
ST03.01H – Frontage	Must be defined by fronts or sides. Rear elevations onto Green Streets will not be permitted.

Doyle Place, Fairfield Park, Central Bedfordshire Map Location →



ST03.02 – Movement Requirements

ST03.02A – Pedestrians	Footways on both sides must have a minimum width of 2m. Steps will not be permitted.
ST03.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	Surfaced crossings (appropriate for wheelchair and pram use) must be provided over the central landscape zone at least every 25m.
ST03.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST03.02D – Cyclists	Pavement width on one side will vary between 2-3.5m depending on the capacity required for cycling.
ST03.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Not permitted.
ST03.02F – Carriageway	n/a
ST03.02G – Through Traffic	n/a
ST03.02H – Passing Points	n/a
ST03.02I – Service Vehicles	n/a
ST03.02J – Vehicular Speed	n/a
ST03.02K – Junction Forms	n/a
ST03.02L – Junction Spacing	n/a
ST03.02M – Bus Stops	n/a

ST03.03 – Parking Requirements

ST03.03A – On Street Parallel Parking	n/a
ST03.03B – On Street Perpendicular Parking	n/a
ST03.03C – On Plot Parking	n/a
ST03.03D – Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within the central landscape zone.

ST03.04 – Technical Requirements

ST03.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M1 L2 Sustainable Travel Links
ST03.04B – Street Drainage	Drainage must be attenuated through SuDS such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
ST03.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be incorporated on built form surfaces or in the landscape zone to keep footway widths unobstructed.
ST03.04D – Car Charging	n/a
ST03.04E – Forward Visibility	Forward visibility and visibility splays at junctions must be considered for cycling.
ST03.04F – Speed Restraints	n/a

Hazelmead Cohousing, Birdport, Dorset, Barefoot Architects (2024)
Map Location →

AVENUES

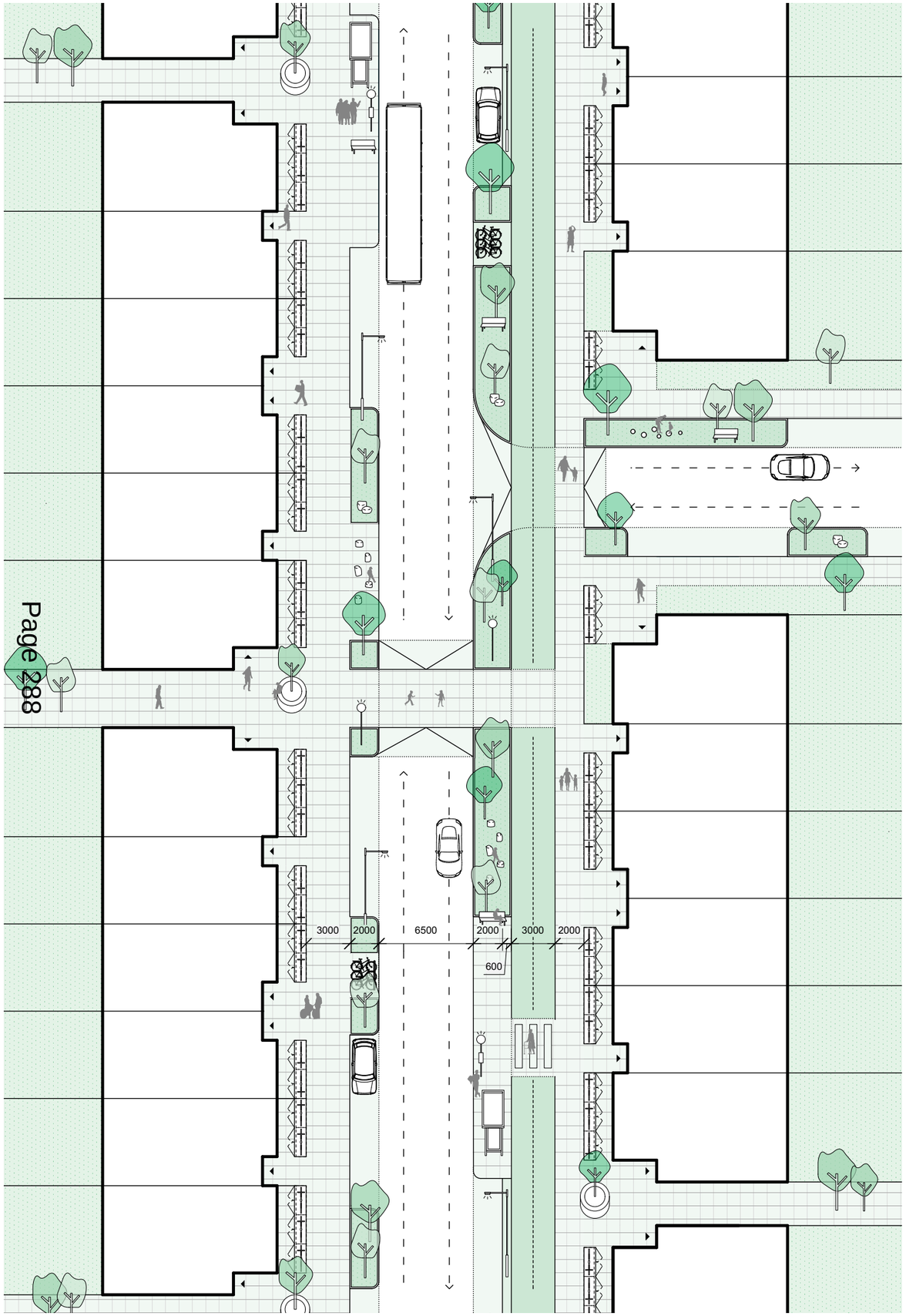
Avenues are the highest order of street types that will be delivered within developments sites in North Herts. They accommodate non-residential uses, active travel routes and public transport, serving as a key connector within the street network.

STO4.01 – Place Requirements

Page 287

STO4.01A – Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 18.5m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
STO4.01B – Social Spaces	Must be provided at least every 50m on both sides.
STO4.01C – Views and Vistas	Car parking must not terminate the vista at the end of streets that connect on to Avenue streets.
STO4.01D – Landscape	Must have landscape zones on both sides with a minimum width of 2m, accommodating verges, parking, social spaces and street furniture.
STO4.01E – Junctions	No coded requirements.
STO4.01F – Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per two homes.
STO4.01G – Homes Served	No maximum limit.
STO4.01H – Frontage	Both sides must be defined by frontage. Gables are permitted on corners at junctions with other streets.

Broadway, Letchworth Garden City Map Location →



ST04.02 – Movement Requirements

ST04.02A – 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.
ST04.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	Zebra and parallel crossings. Copenhagen crossings to lower order streets.
ST04.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST04.02D – 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.
ST04.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not comprise more than two vehicular lanes at any point.
ST04.02F – Carriageway	Width must not exceed 6.5m. No centre-line markings permitted.
ST04.02G – Through Traffic	Yes.
ST04.02H – Passing Points	Not required.
ST04.02I – Service Vehicles	Yes.
ST04.02J – Vehicular Speed	20mph
ST04.02K – Junction Forms	Continental/compact roundabouts, signal junctions and priority junctions permitted.
ST04.02L – Junction Spacing	Minimum 20m opposite, 45m adjacent.
ST04.02M – 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

ST04.03A – 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.
ST04.03B – On Street Perpendicular Parking	Clusters permitted around focal points (such as Local Centres) but never on opposite sides of the street.
ST04.03C – On Plot Parking	Not permitted.
ST04.03D – 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

ST04.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M2 L2 Local Access
ST04.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through SuDS such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
ST04.04C – 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.
ST04.04D – Car Charging	Must be placed within with landscape zones or within the adjacent buffer to ensure cycleway and footway widths are not reduced.
ST04.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
ST04.04F – Speed Restraints	Maximum 80m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points, raised tables and chicanes.

Eddington Avenue, Cambridge, Pollard Thomas Edwards (2024) Map Location →

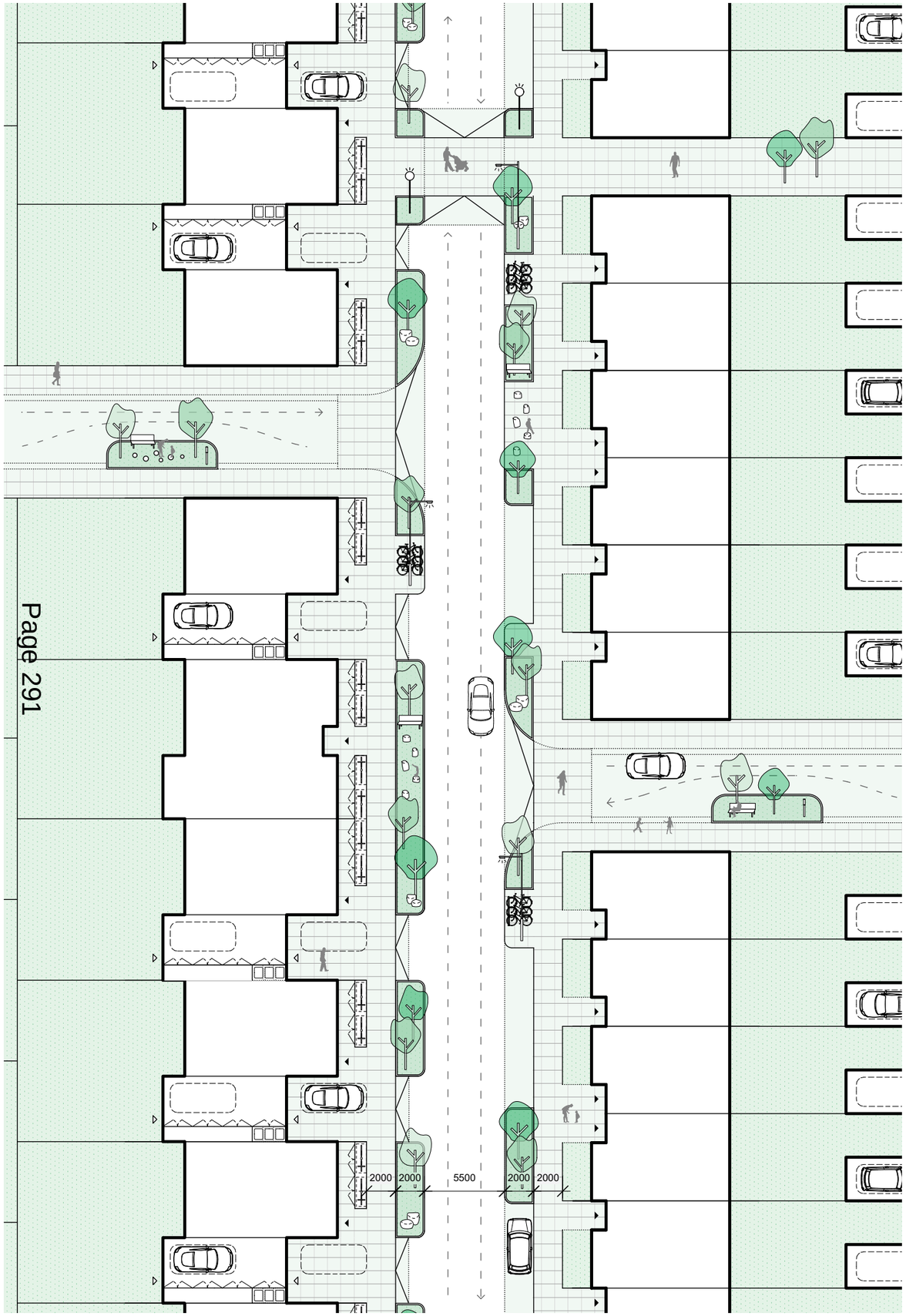
NEIGHBOURHOOD STREETS

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

ST05.01A – Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 13.5m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
ST05.01B – Social Spaces	Must be provided at every junction with another street.
ST05.01C – Views and Vistas	Car parking must not terminate the vista at the end of streets that connect on to Neighbourhood Streets.
ST05.01D – Landscape	Must have landscape zones on both sides with a minimum width of 2m, accommodating verges, parking, social spaces and street furniture.
ST05.01E – Junctions	Refer to ST05.01B Social Spaces.
ST05.01F – Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per two homes.
ST05.01G – Homes Served	No maximum limit.
ST05.01H – Frontage	Both sides must be defined by frontage. Gables are permitted on corners at junctions with other streets.

Chiltern Road, Hitchin Map Location →



ST05.02 – Movement Requirements

ST05.02A – 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.
ST05.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	No coded requirements.
ST05.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST05.02D – 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.
ST05.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not comprise more than two vehicular lanes at any point.
ST05.02F – Carriageway	Width must not exceed 5.5m. No centre-line markings permitted.
ST05.02G – Through Traffic	Yes.
ST05.02H – Passing Points	Not required.
ST05.02I – Service Vehicles	Yes.
ST05.02J – Vehicular Speed	20mph
ST05.02K – Junction Forms	Continental and priority junctions permitted.
ST05.02L – Junction Spacing	Minimum 20m opposite, 45m adjacent.
ST05.02M – Bus Stops	May be accommodated within landscape zone.

ST05.03 – Parking Requirements

ST05.03A 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.
ST05.03B 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.
ST05.03C On Plot Parking	Permitted on one side of the street.
ST05.03D Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape zone or social spaces.

ST05.04 – Technical Requirements

ST05.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M2 L2 Local Access
ST05.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through SuDS such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
ST05.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be on columns and located within landscape zones.
ST05.04D – Car Charging	Accommodated on plot, in between parallel parking bays or at the front of perpendicular bays.
ST05.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
ST05.04F – Speed Restraints	Maximum 80m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points, raised tables and chicanes.

Haslips Close, Goldsmith Street, Norwich, Mikhail Riches Architects (2019)
Map Location →

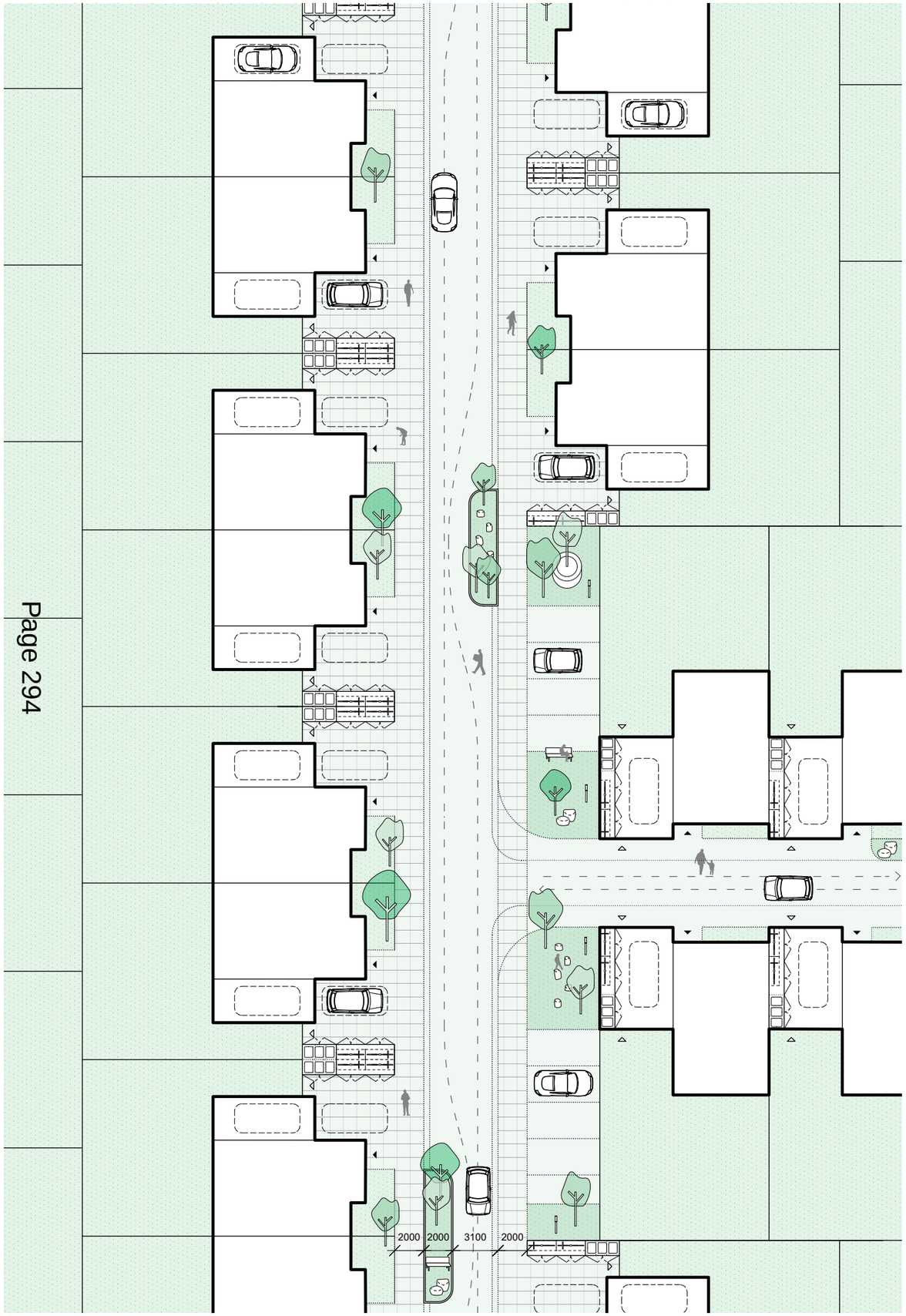
RESIDENTIAL STREETS

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

ST06.01A – Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 9.1m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
ST06.01B – Social Spaces	Must be provided at every junction with another street.
ST06.01C – Views and Vistas	Car parking must not terminate the vista at the end of streets that connect on to Residential Streets.
ST06.01D – Landscape	A landscape zone (minimum dimensions 2x6m) must be provided every 35m.
ST06.01E – Junctions	Refer to 06.01B Social Spaces.
ST06.01F – Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per two homes.
ST06.01G – Homes Served	Maximum 300 homes per km.
ST06.01H – Frontage	At least one side must be defined by frontage. Gables are acceptable if Residential Street is providing access to Spur Streets.

Field Lane, Letchworth Garden City Map Location →



ST06.02 – Movement Requirements

ST06.02A – 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.
ST06.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	No coded requirements.
ST06.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST06.02D – 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.
ST06.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not comprise more than two vehicular lanes at any point.
ST06.02F – Carriageway	Width must not exceed 5.5m. No centre-line markings permitted.
ST06.02G – Through Traffic	Through traffic and filtered permeability permitted.
ST06.02H – Passing Points	Not required.
ST06.02I – Service Vehicles	Yes.
ST06.02J – Vehicular Speed	20mph
ST06.02K – Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
ST06.02L – Junction Spacing	Minimum 20m opposite, 33m adjacent.
ST06.02M – Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST06.03 – Parking Requirements

ST06.03A – 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.
ST06.03B – 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.
ST06.03C – On Plot Parking	Permitted on both sides of the street.
ST06.03D – Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or social spaces.

ST06.04 – Technical Requirements

ST06.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P2M1 L2 Local Access
ST06.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through SuDS such as rain gardens or permeable paving.
ST06.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be on columns and located within landscape areas.
ST06.04D – Car Charging	Accommodated on plot, in between parallel parking bays or at the front of perpendicular bays.
ST06.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 33m
ST06.04F – Speed Restraints	Maximum 70m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points, raised tables and chicanes.

Royal Way, Great Kneighton, Proctor and Matthews Architects (2019)
Map Location →

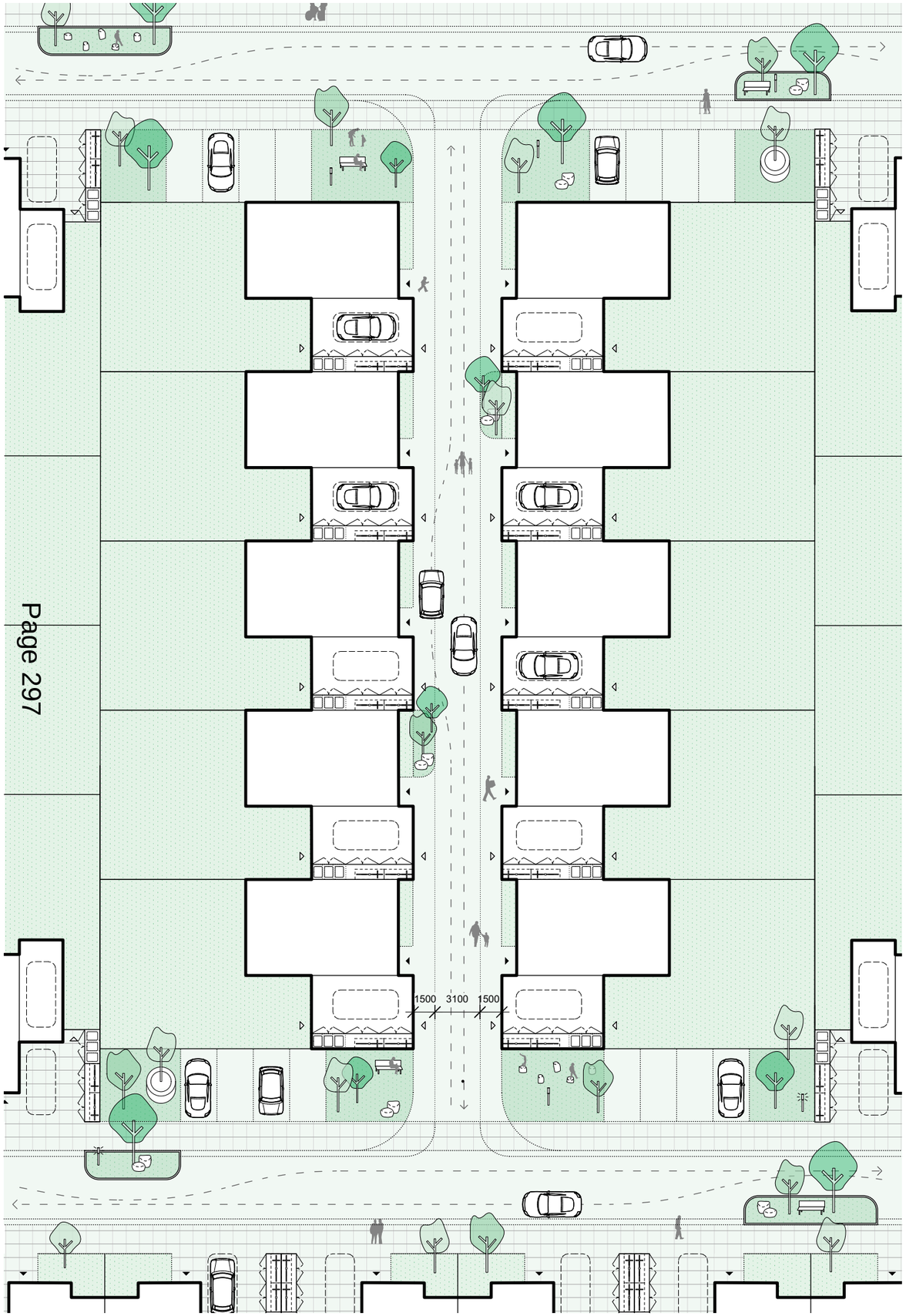
RESIDENTIAL MEWS

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 an intimate character. Surfaces are shared as vehicular movements are very low.

ST07.01 – Place Requirements

ST07.01A – Maximum Width	Must be no wider than 6m between private thresholds (unless merged with another aspect of public realm).
ST07.01B – Social Spaces	Must be provided at access points.
ST07.01C – Views and Vistas	No coded requirements.
ST07.01D – Landscape	Landscaped build outs must be used as a traffic calming measure. Each area must contain at least one tree.
ST07.01E – Junctions	Refer to 07.01B Social Spaces.
ST07.01F – Street Trees	Must incorporate one street tree per three homes.
ST07.01G – Homes Served	Maximum 50 dwellings with a through route and 25 dwellings without.
ST07.01H – 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.

Christopher Court, Ware Map Location →



ST07.02 – Movement Requirements

ST07.02A – Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST07.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	Copenhagen crossings at junctions with Avenues and Neighbourhood Streets.
ST07.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST07.02D – Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST07.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point.
ST07.02F – Carriageway	Width must not exceed 6m and must include 1.5m edging on both sides. Carriageway must narrow to 4.5m to slow vehicles.
ST07.02G – Through Traffic	Through traffic and filtered permeability permitted. Turning heads (if required) must be carefully integrated and provide public realm benefits.
ST07.02H – Passing Points	Not required.
ST07.02I – Service Vehicles	Yes.
ST07.02J – Vehicular Speed	10mph
ST07.02K – Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
ST07.02L – Junction Spacing	n/a
ST07.02M – Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST07.03 – Parking Requirements

ST07.03A – On Street Parallel Parking	Not permitted.
ST07.03B – On Street Perpendicular Parking	Not permitted.
ST07.03C – On Plot Parking	Permitted - must be accommodated within garages or car ports to ensure continuous built form on ground floor on both sides.
ST07.03D – Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape zones or at access junctions.

ST07.04 – Technical Requirements

ST07.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Mews Streets
ST07.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through permeable paving or a flush channel at the carriageway edge.
ST07.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be on columns or bollards within landscape areas or surface mounted on built form.
ST07.04D – Car Charging	Accommodated on plot.
ST07.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
ST07.04F – Speed Restraints	Maximum 70m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points and chicanes.

Henslow Mews, Accordia, Cambridge, Alison Brooks Architects with Maccreanor Lavington Architects and Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (2009) Map Location →

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

ST08.01A – Maximum Width	No coded requirements.
ST08.01B – Social Spaces	Not required.
ST08.01C – 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.
ST08.01D – Landscape	No coded requirements.
ST08.01E – Junctions	Vehicular entry points must be softened by a tree on at least one side of the junction.
ST08.01F – Street Trees	Minimum one tree per dwelling fronting the street.
ST08.01G – Homes Served	Maximum 50 dwellings.
ST08.01H – Frontage	Must be fronted by a minimum of four dwellings.

Acorn Mews, Baldock Map Location →

ST08.02 – Movement Requirements

ST08.02A – Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST08.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	n/a
ST08.02C – 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.
ST08.02D – Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST08.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point.
ST08.02F – Carriageway	Width must not exceed 6m and must include 1.5m edging on both sides.
ST08.02G – Through Traffic	Yes - turning heads not permitted.
ST08.02H – Passing Points	Not required.
ST08.02I – Service Vehicles	Yes - through a one-way system.
ST08.02J – Vehicular Speed	10mph
ST08.02K – Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
ST08.02L – Junction Spacing	n/a
ST08.02M – Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

ST08.03 – Parking Requirements

ST08.03A – On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - no more than 3 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m).
ST08.03B – 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.
ST08.03C – On Plot Parking	Permitted.
ST08.03D – Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or at access junctions.

ST08.04 – Technical Requirements

ST08.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Mews Streets
ST08.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through permeable paving or a flush channel at the carriageway edge.
ST08.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be on columns or bollards within landscape areas or surface mounted on built form.
ST08.04D – Car Charging	Accommodated on plot, in between parallel parking bays or at the front of perpendicular bays.
ST08.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 25m
ST08.04F – Speed Restraints	Maximum 70m between speed restraints. Acceptable speed restraints include pinch points and chicanes.

Langerak, Utrecht, Maccreanor Lavington Architects (2008), Map Location →

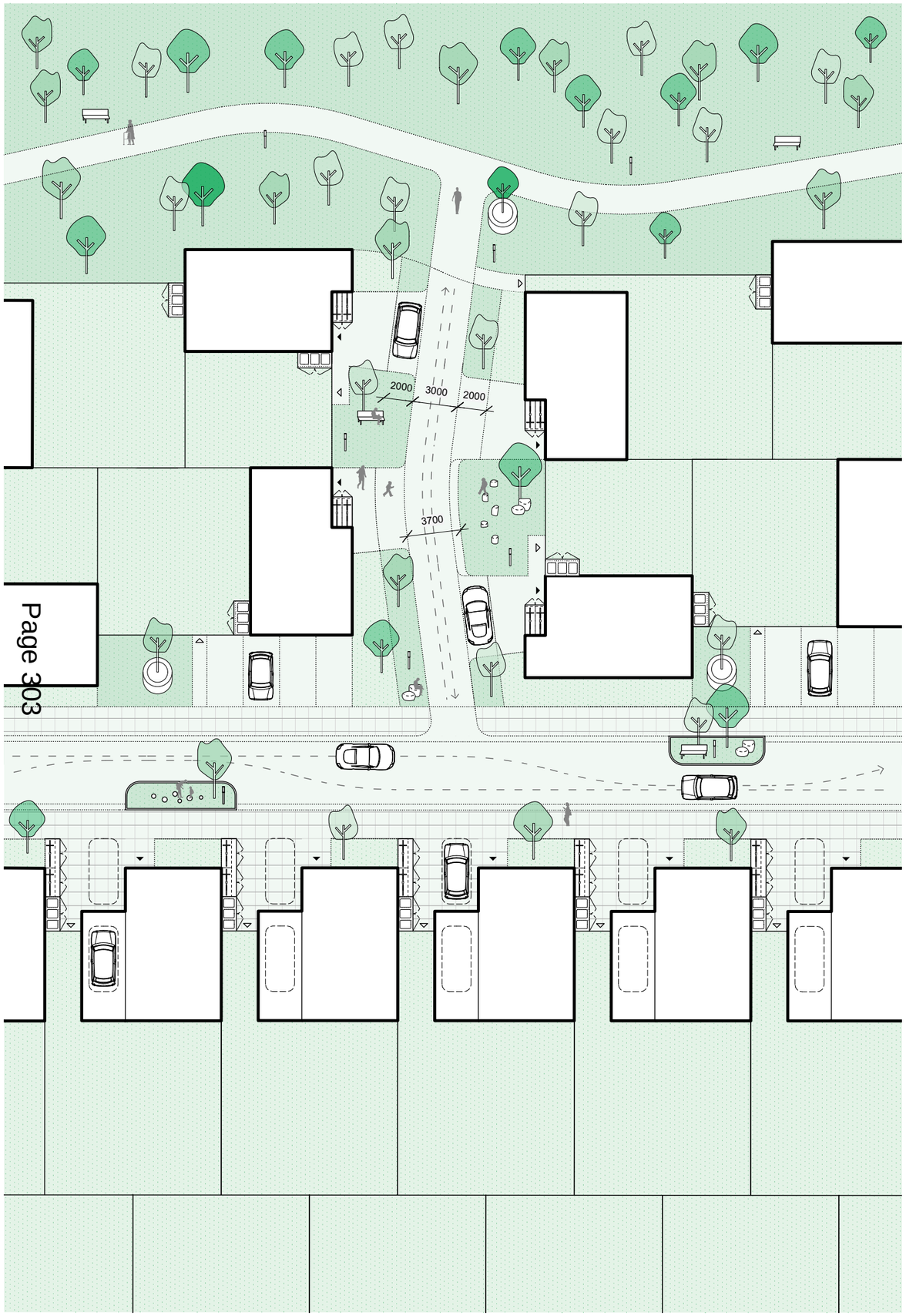
SPUR LANES

Spur Lanes are short streets that run perpendicular to the edge of the site and provide access to small groups of dwellings. They are most appropriate when responding to ecologically sensitive edges or rural contexts due to the informal arrangement of buildings (see SS03).

ST09.01 – Place Requirements

ST09.01A – Maximum Width	No coded requirements.
ST09.01B – Social Spaces	Must accommodate at least one Social Space.
ST09.01C – Views and Vistas	Must frame views out into the landscape. Spur Lanes terminated by built form will not be permitted.
ST09.01D – Landscape	No coded requirements.
ST09.01E – Junctions	No coded requirements.
ST09.01F – Street Trees	Minimum one tree per home fronting the street.
ST09.01G – Homes Served	Maximum 5 dwellings.
ST09.01H – Frontage	Must be fronted by a minimum of three dwellings.

Abode, Great Kneighton, Proctor and Matthews Architects (2019) Map Location →



ST09.02 – Movement Requirements

ST09.02A – Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST09.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	n/a
ST09.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST09.02D – Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST09.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point.
ST09.02F – Carriageway	Width must not exceed 3m.*
ST09.02G – Through Traffic	Not permitted.
ST09.02H – Passing Points	Not required.
ST09.02I – Service Vehicles	No - length of Spur Street is limited to 30m due to maximum resident drag distances (see BF10).
ST09.02J – Vehicular Speed	10mph
ST09.02K – Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
ST09.02L – Junction Spacing	n/a
ST09.02M – Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

*The Association of Chief Fire Officers has clarified a 3.7m carriageway (kerb to kerb) is required for operating space at the scene of a fire. The access route could be reduced to 2.75m over short distances, provided the pump appliance can get to within 45m of dwelling entrances, to reach a fire.

ST09.03 – Parking Requirements

ST09.03A – On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - no more than 3 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m).
ST09.03B – On Street Perpendicular Parking	Permitted - no more than 4 bays before a landscape area (minimum dimensions 2x6m).
ST09.03C – On Plot Parking	Permitted.
ST09.03D – Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within landscape areas or at access junctions.

Page 304

ST09.04 – Technical Requirements

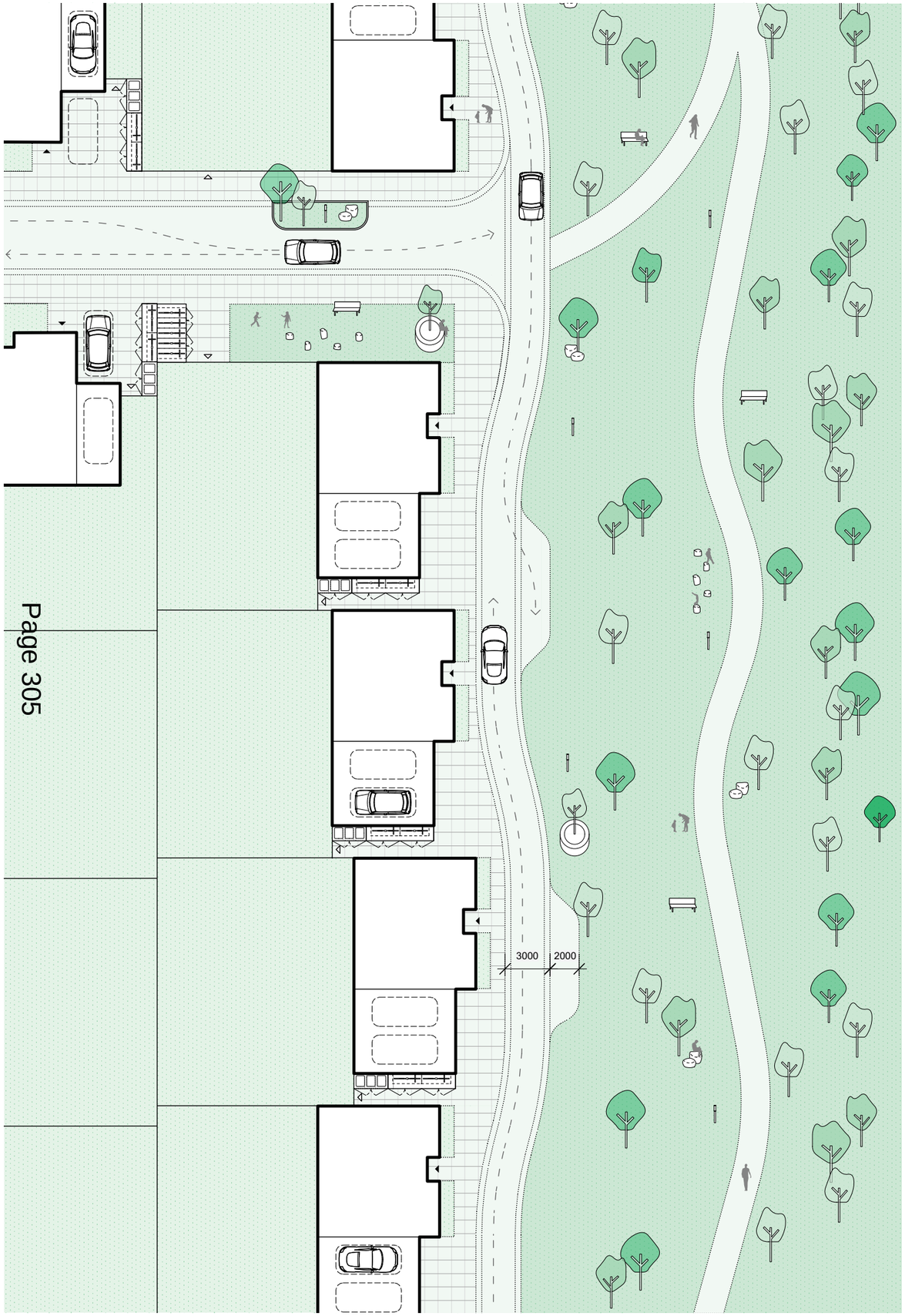
ST09.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Informal Streets
ST09.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through rain gardens, permeable paving or a flush channel at the centre of the carriageway.
ST09.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be on columns or bollards within landscape areas or surface mounted on built form.
ST09.04D – Car Charging	Accommodated on plot, in between parallel parking bays or at the front of perpendicular bays.
ST09.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 11m
ST09.04F – Speed Restraints	Not required.

EDGE LANES

Edge Lanes are most appropriate at the edges of development and run parallel to the site boundary. These streets are most appropriate when they front open spaces creating a sense of passive surveillance. It is important they provide continuous pedestrian permeability.

ST10.01 – Place Requirements

ST10.01A – Maximum Width	No coded requirements.
ST10.01B – Social Spaces	No coded requirements.
ST10.01C – Views and Vistas	Access points into Edge Lanes must frame views out into the landscape. Views terminated by built form will not be permitted.
ST10.01D – Landscape Zones	No coded requirements.
ST10.01E – Junctions	Junctions into Edge Lanes must be framed by a tree on each side of the street.
ST10.01F – Street Trees	No coded requirements - trees to be incorporated into adjoining open space.
ST10.01G – Homes Served	Maximum 50 dwellings.
ST10.01H – 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.



ST10.02 – Movement Requirements

ST10.02A – Pedestrians	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST10.02B – Pedestrian Crossings	n/a
ST10.02C – Pedestrian Access	No coded requirements.
ST10.02D – Cyclists	Accommodated on the carriageway.
ST10.02E – Vehicular Lanes	Must not exceed one vehicular lane at any point (apart from at passing points).
ST10.02F – 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.
ST10.02G – 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.
ST10.02H – Passing Points	Required if Edge Lane is longer than 11m. Passing point must be provided halfway through gentle widening of carriageway.
ST10.02I – Service Vehicles	If required, turning heads will not be permitted and must be designed out through one-way servicing route.
ST10.02J – Vehicular Speed	10mph
ST10.02K – Junction Forms	Simple priority only.
ST10.02L – Junction Spacing	n/a
ST10.02M – Bus Stops	Not accommodated.

*The Association of Chief Fire Officers has clarified a 3.7m carriageway (kerb to kerb) is required for operating space at the scene of a fire. The access route could be reduced to 2.75m over short distances, provided the pump appliance can get to within 45m of dwelling entrances, to reach a fire.

ST10.03 – Parking Requirements

ST10.03A – On Street Parallel Parking	Permitted - no more than two bays (length 10m).
ST10.03B – On Street Perpendicular Parking	Not permitted.
ST10.03C – 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.
ST10.03D – Visitor Cycle Parking	Must be provided within open space or at access junctions.

ST10.04 – Technical Requirements

ST10.04A – HCC PMPDG Classification	P3M1 Mews
ST10.04B – Street Drainage	Street drainage must be attenuated through permeable paving or a flush channel at the centre of the carriageway.
ST10.04C – Lighting	Lighting must be surface mounted on built form or on low-level bollards to the open space side.
ST10.04D – Car Charging	Accommodated on plot or between parallel parking bays.
ST10.04E – Forward Visibility	Minimum 11m
ST10.04F – Speed Restraints	Not required.

Holmead Walk, Dorchester (2001) Map Location →

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DISTRIBUTION

BF01.01 – Cluster Size

Affordable houses must be grouped in clusters as set out in the table below where 'development size' is determined by the number of homes per Reserved Matters or Full Application (not an Outline Planning Application).

A cluster is defined as a coherent grouping of dwellings positioned in close proximity to each other, that share a common access or entry sequence such as a street, communal entrance, parking court or courtyard.

Development Size	Minimum Cluster Size	Maximum Cluster Size
10-50 homes	6	8
51-500 homes	6	12
500+ homes	6	24

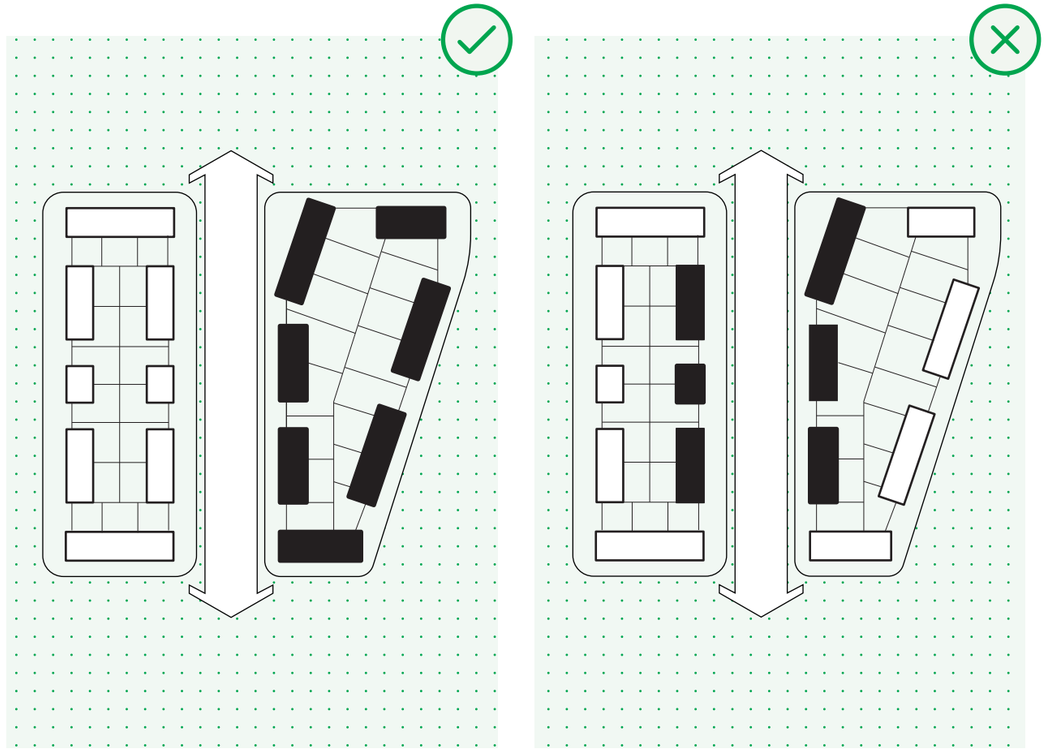
BF01.02 – Distribution

Affordable housing clusters must be distributed evenly across the site with equal access to open space, amenities, social infrastructure and public transport.

Proposals that place the majority of affordable housing clusters in the least desirable parts of the site (for example along railway tracks) will not be permitted.

BF01.03 – Streets

Affordable homes must not 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.



BALANCING VARIETY AND CONSISTENCY

BF02.01
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.

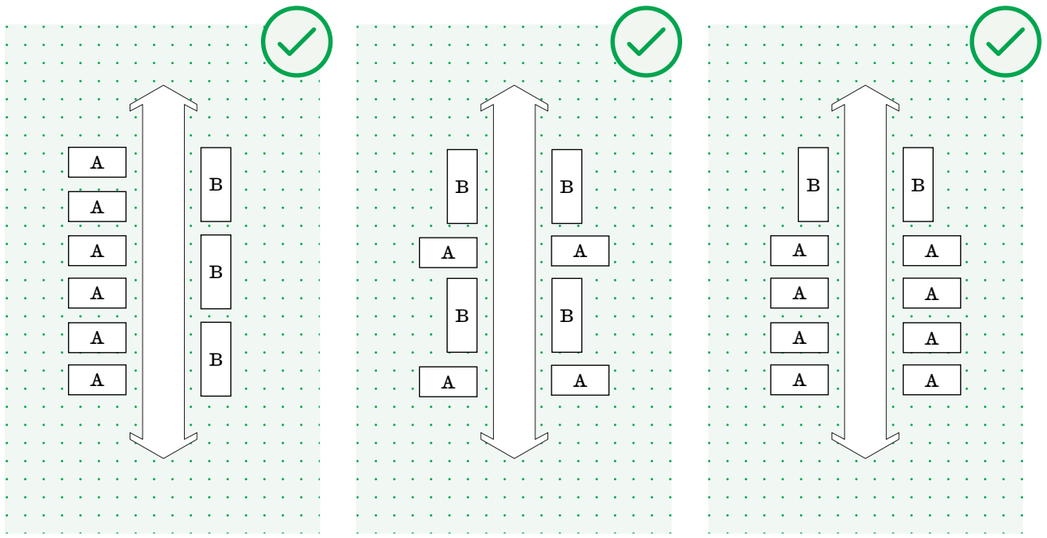
Successful streets vary either materiality, form or none. Streets that include a variety of house types in multiple primary materials are overwhelming and will not be permitted. With this is mind, built form on streets must be designed in accordance with one of the categories outlined on the next pages.

BF02.02 sets out requirements for streets that have consistent materiality and form, BF02.03 covers streets that vary form and BF02.04 covers streets that vary materiality. All requirements per category are organised around location, use, materiality and form.

Westholm Green, Letchworth Garden City, Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin
Map Location →

BF02.02 – Consistent Materiality and Form

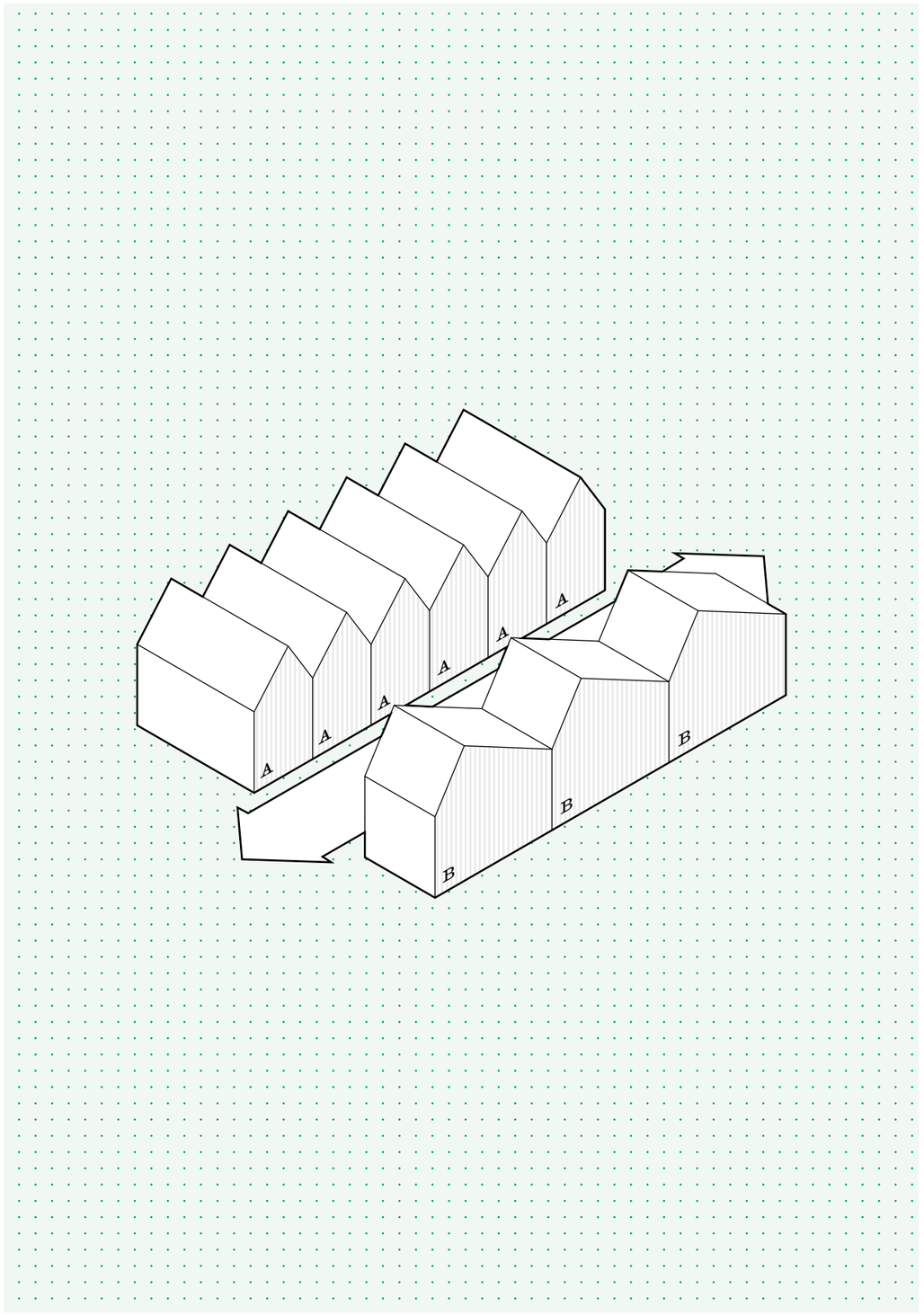
BF02.02A – Location and Use	Suitable for short runs of residential streets that must not exceed 150m in length and are appropriate for both rural and urban settings. May be used to frame views to focal points as their consistency emphasizes changes in the materiality and tone of the building terminating the vista.
BF02.02B – Materiality	Consistent materiality on this street type is defined as all buildings on the street having the same primary material.
BF02.02C – Form	Consistent form on this street type is defined as a maximum of two house types that must be arranged rationally as per the diagrams below.



From left to right:
Arrangement where each side of the street incorporates a consistent house type.
Arrangement where house types are alternated on both sides of the street.
Arrangement where house types are consistent on both sides of the street and change to frame views.

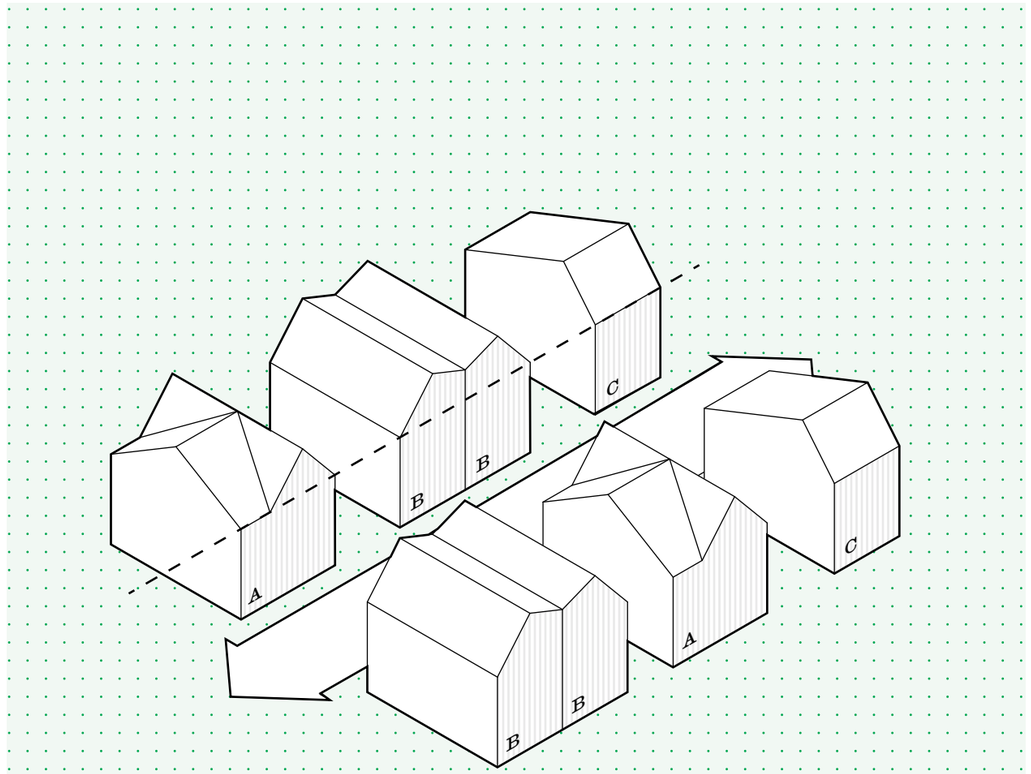
Stockens Green, Knebworth, Sir Edwin Lutyens Map Location →

De Beauvoir Sqaure, Hackney, London Map Location →



BF02.03 – Consistent Materiality and Varied Form

BF02.03A – Location and Use	Suitable for longer streets and are appropriate for both rural and urban settings.
BF02.03B – 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.
BF02.03C – Form	Varied form on this street type is defined as a maximum of ten house types that must have a consistent ridge height.

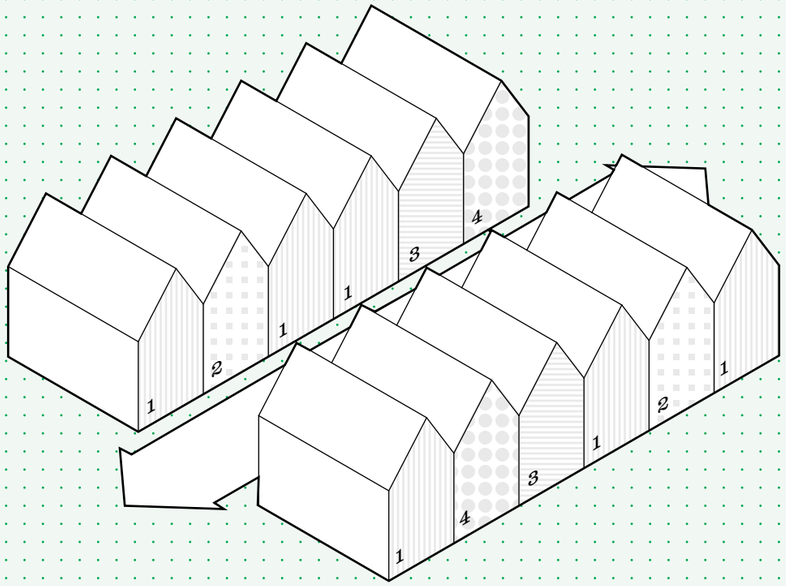


Hillshott, Letchworth Garden City More info →

Marleigh Park, Cambridge, JTP (2026) Map Location →

BF02.04 – Varied Materiality and Consistent Form

BF02.04A – 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.
BF02.04B – Materiality	Varied materiality on this street type is defined as a maximum of four primary materials. At least half of the houses on the street must be in the same primary material.
BF02.04C – Form	Consistent form on this street type is defined as one house type.



ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH

Development must deliver buildings with a clear sense of character and identity, shaped by a rigorous understanding of the site, its landscape setting and the distinctive qualities of the surrounding area.

The Council supports innovative building forms where they are justified by a robust design rationale. In areas with limited or fragmented character, development must establish a new and coherent identity.

BF03.01 – Contextual Analysis and Design Rationale

A comprehensive and clearly presented contextual analysis must underpin the architectural strategy for all development. This analysis must be included in the Design and Access Statement and must demonstrate; how the natural environment informs siting, orientation and form, how street patterns, block structures and landscape features influence layout, how building scale, massing and proportions relate to surrounding streets and spaces, which elements of local character, such as materials, roof profiles or building rhythms are relevant, how the proposal will protect, reinforce or improve the area's character.

Purley Downs Road, Croydon, Harp & Harp (2025), Map Location →

The analysis must not result in stylistic imitation. It must identify what must be retained to protect valued character, what must be improved to address weaknesses and what must be introduced to create a distinctive, well-functioning neighbourhood.

Development that does not demonstrate a rigorous understanding of context will not be permitted.

BF03.02 – Avoiding Generic Design

Proposals must not rely on generic national house types or poorly adapted standard designs. Poor-quality buildings in the surrounding area must not be used to justify further low-quality or generic development.

The contextual analysis (see BF03.01) must identify positive and exemplary built-form characteristics, within the immediate surroundings where possible, or from the wider district or region where local examples are weak, and clearly demonstrate how these higher-quality references have informed the proposal.

Development that fails that applies generic solutions, will not be permitted.

BF03.03 – Positive Legacies

New buildings must be rooted in the context while positively shaping the future character of the neighbourhood.

BF03.04 – Quality and Longevity

Buildings must be designed for long-term performance using high-quality, durable materials supported by robust detailing. Material choices must respond to local character and weathering conditions. Construction methods and detailing must deliver longevity, ease of maintenance and visual quality.

BF03.05 – Conservation and Heritage Settings

All proposals must consider whether change within the setting of a heritage asset would affect its significance. Where the setting contributes to that significance, development must conserve and, where possible, enhance it.

Proposals within Conservation Areas, or affecting their setting, must also be informed by the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal and reinforce the areas defining qualities.

PRIVATE AMENITY FOR APARTMENTS

BF04.01

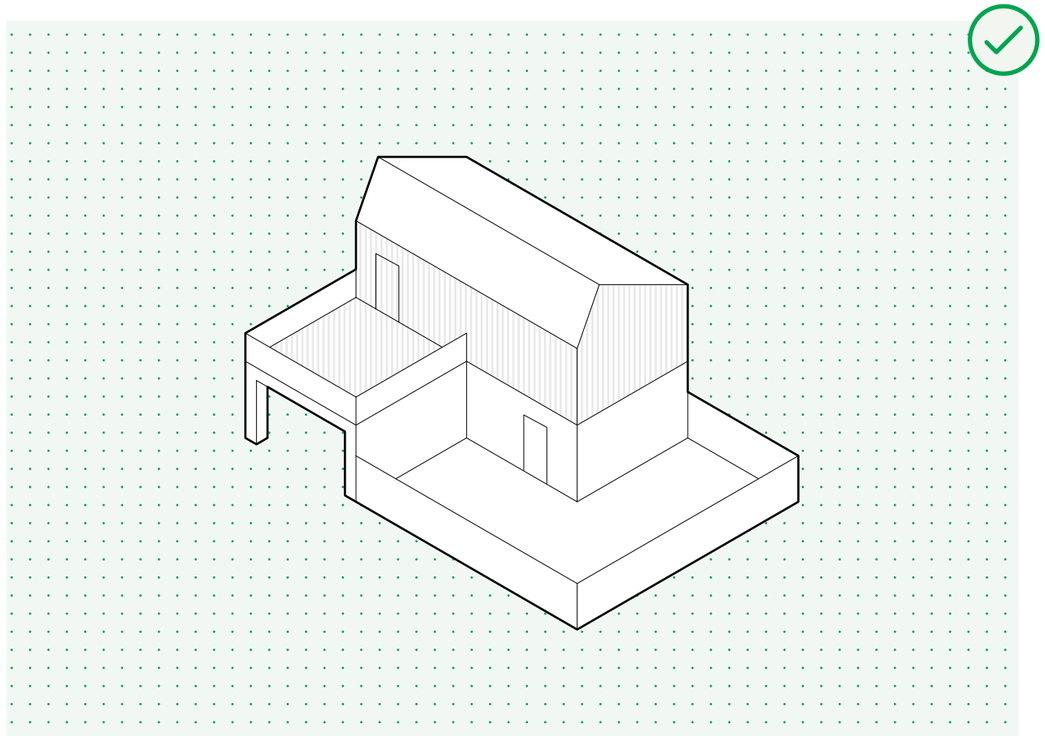
Private outdoor space, such as balconies, must be provided for all apartments in accordance with the table below.

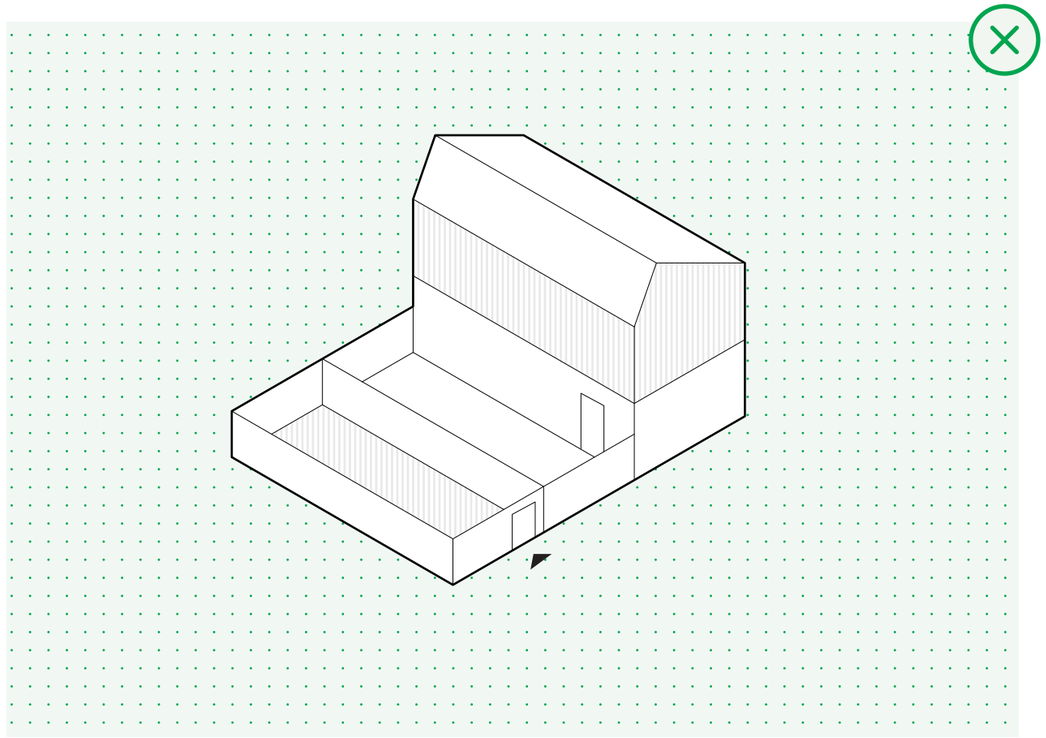
Number of bed spaces	Minimum depth and width	Minimum area
1	1.5m	5 sqm
2	1.5m	5 sqm
3	1.5m	6 sqm
4	1.5m	7 sqm
5	1.5m	8 sqm
6	1.5m	9 sqm

BF04.02

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 as their only form of private amenity will not be permitted.





BFO5

COMMUNAL AMENITY FOR APARTMENTS

BF05.01 – Quantum
A minimum of 50sqm of communal amenity space must be provided for apartment buildings with an additional 5sqm per dwelling over 5 dwellings.

For example, an apartment building with 12 dwellings must provide a communal amenity space of at least 85sqm.

BF05.02 – Access
All apartments must have direct access to the communal amenity space via a communal entrance or lobby. Communal gardens on ground floor must directly adjoin the apartment building it serves.

BF05.03 – Landscaping
Communal gardens must have a minimum of 50% soft landscaping and a minimum of one tree per dwelling.

For example, an apartment building with 12 dwellings must provide a communal amenity space incorporating a minimum of 12 trees.

BF05.04 – Boundary Treatment
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.

BF05.05 – Defensible Space
Dwellings that face directly onto the communal amenity space must incorporate a minimum defensible space of 1.5m to ensure adequate privacy for residents.

PRIVATE AMENITY FOR HOUSES

BF06.01 – Quantum

Private amenity space 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.

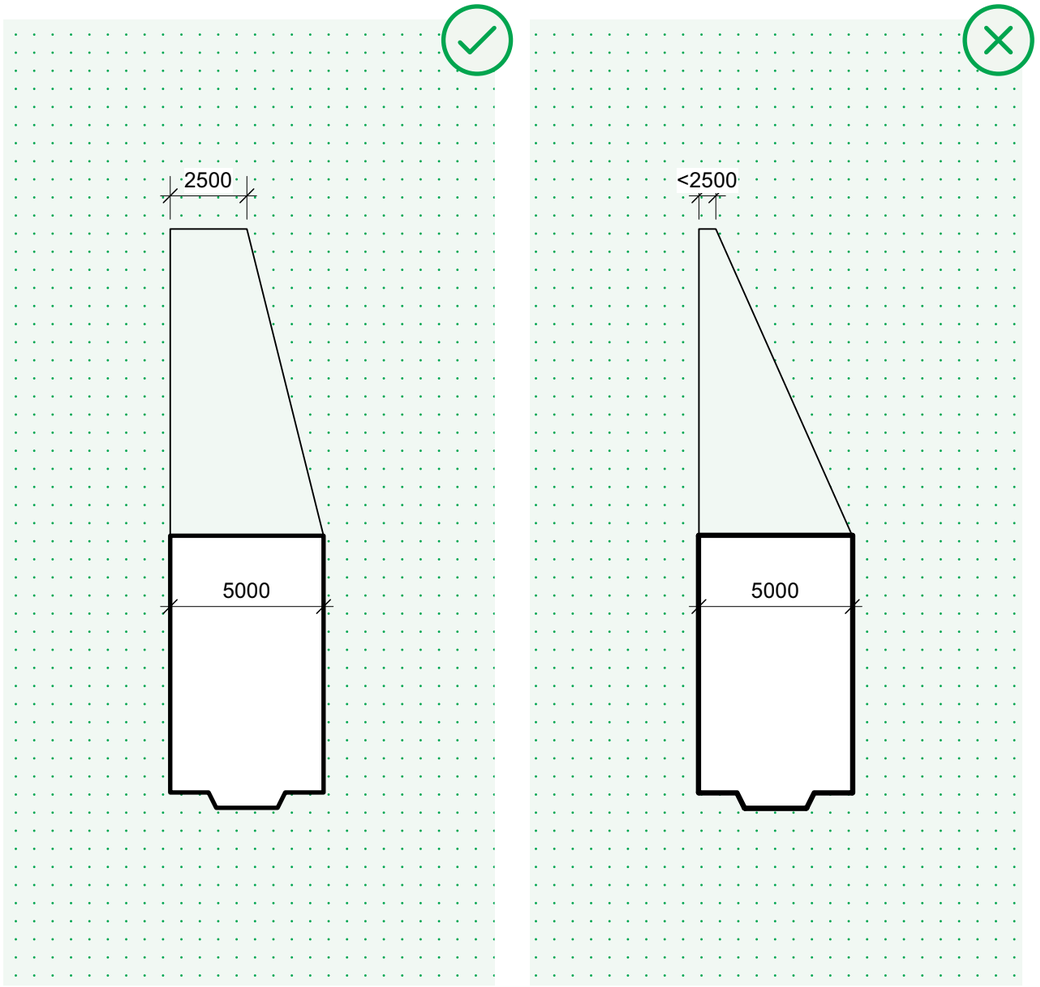
All other locations are defined as rural for the purposes of the table above.

*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.

BF06.02 – Layout

Private amenity space must be regularly shaped. Tapered or oddly shaped gardens that reduce to more than half the plot width will not be permitted. Amenity space to the side of dwellings are excluded from this requirement.

For example, a rear garden for a dwelling on a 5m wide plot must maintain a minimum width of 2.5m.

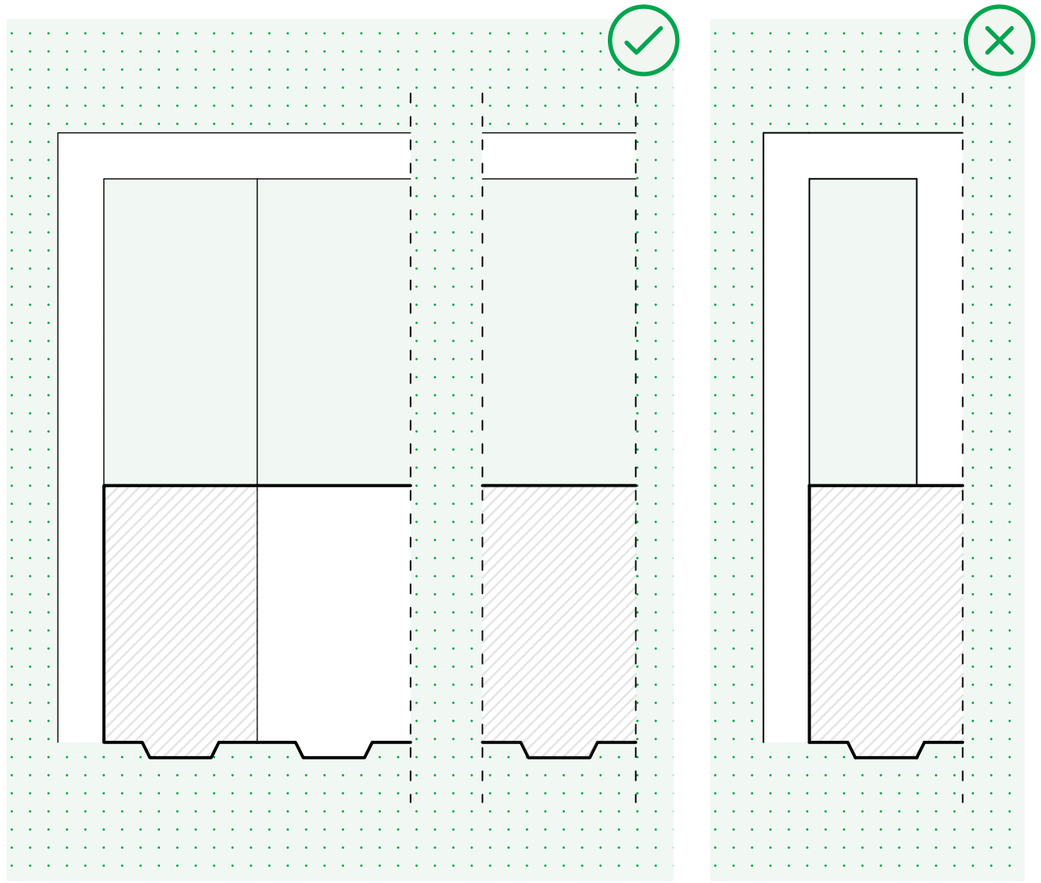


BF06.03 – Levels

A minimum of 50% of private amenity space must be at the same level to ensure usability by residents.

BF06.04 – 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.



Page 318

BF06.05

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.

BF06.06

Front gardens and defensible space at the front of homes must not exceed 3.5m depth to prevent the loss of gardens to frontage parking.

COMMUNAL AMENITY FOR HOUSES

BF07.01

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 is assumed that any communal amenity space for houses would replace Tier 1 Open Space provision for dwellings with access.

This typology is particularly relevant when working in Garden City contexts such as Letchworth and Knebworth.

Rushby Walk, Community Allotments, Letchworth Garden City Map Location →

CYCLE PARKING AND STORAGE

BF08.01 – Quantum

Secure cycle parking must be provided in line with the table below.

Number of Bedrooms	Primary Spaces (on plot)	+	Secondary Spaces (on plot)	or	Secondary Spaces (communal)
1	1	+	1	or	0.25
2	2	+	1	or	0.25
3	2	+	2	or	0.75
≥4	2	+	3	or	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 BF08.02-09. In higher density developments, primary spaces can also be provided in communal stores and must comply with BF08.10-16.

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

BF08.02 – Location

Primary on-plot cycle parking for houses must be accommodated in locations that prioritise convenient and direct access to the street. This is typically at the front or side of the dwelling in a secure cycle store, car port or garage.

Cycle parking may be provided in rear gardens or coach houses where access to the street is direct, safe and unobstructed, and where the route is no less convenient than access for cars, ensuring cycle use is not disadvantaged as a primary mode of travel.

BF08.03 – Accessibility

Primary secure cycle parking must not require cycles to be stored upright or in double-stacked racks.

BF08.04 – Minimum Clearance

A passageway of 1200mm width must be kept clear to manoeuvre cycles from the secure store to the street, avoiding tight corners.

BF08.05 – Design

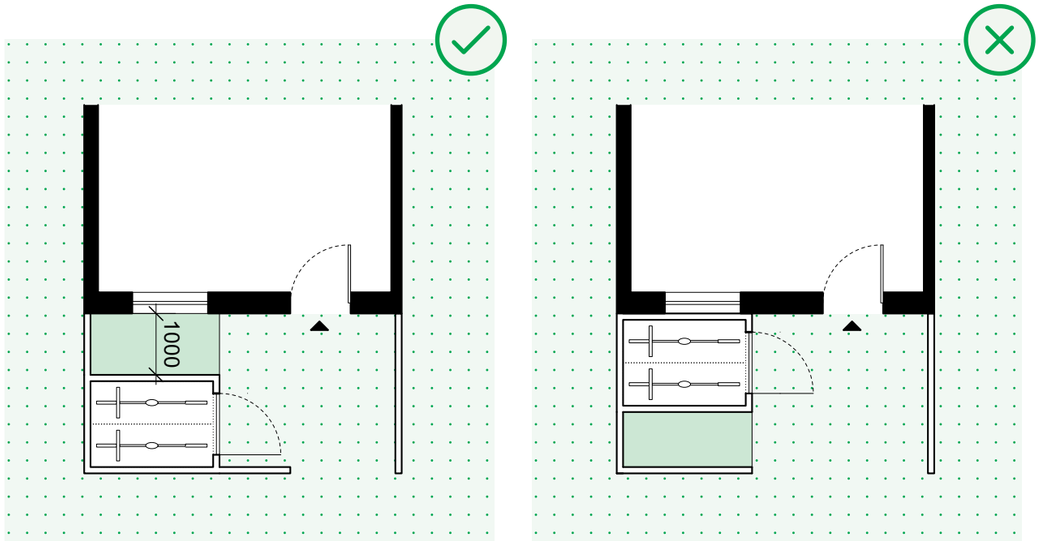
Cycle storage at the front of houses must be holistically integrated into the boundary treatment for defensible space. Disjointed elements in different materials will not be permitted.

BF08.06 – Materiality

Secure cycle storage at the front of houses must be constructed primarily from the same materials as the main structure or high quality timber.

BF08.07 – 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.

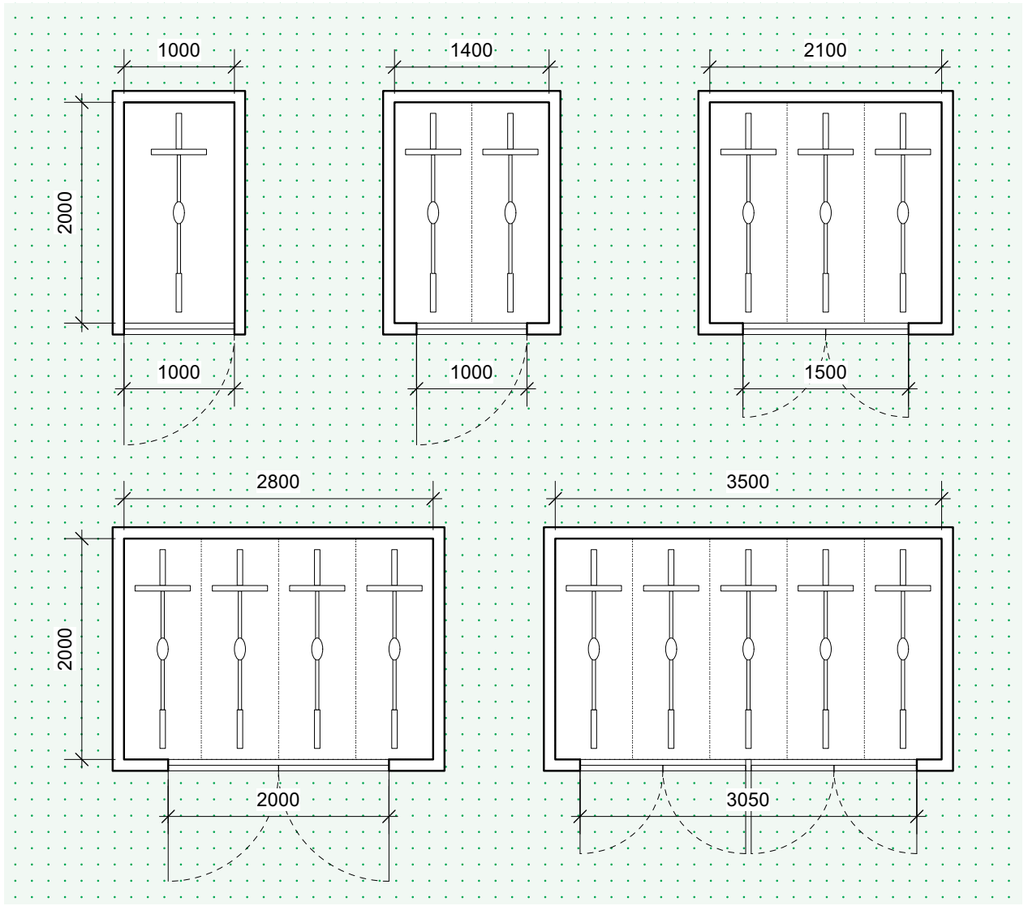


BF08.08 – Garage Access

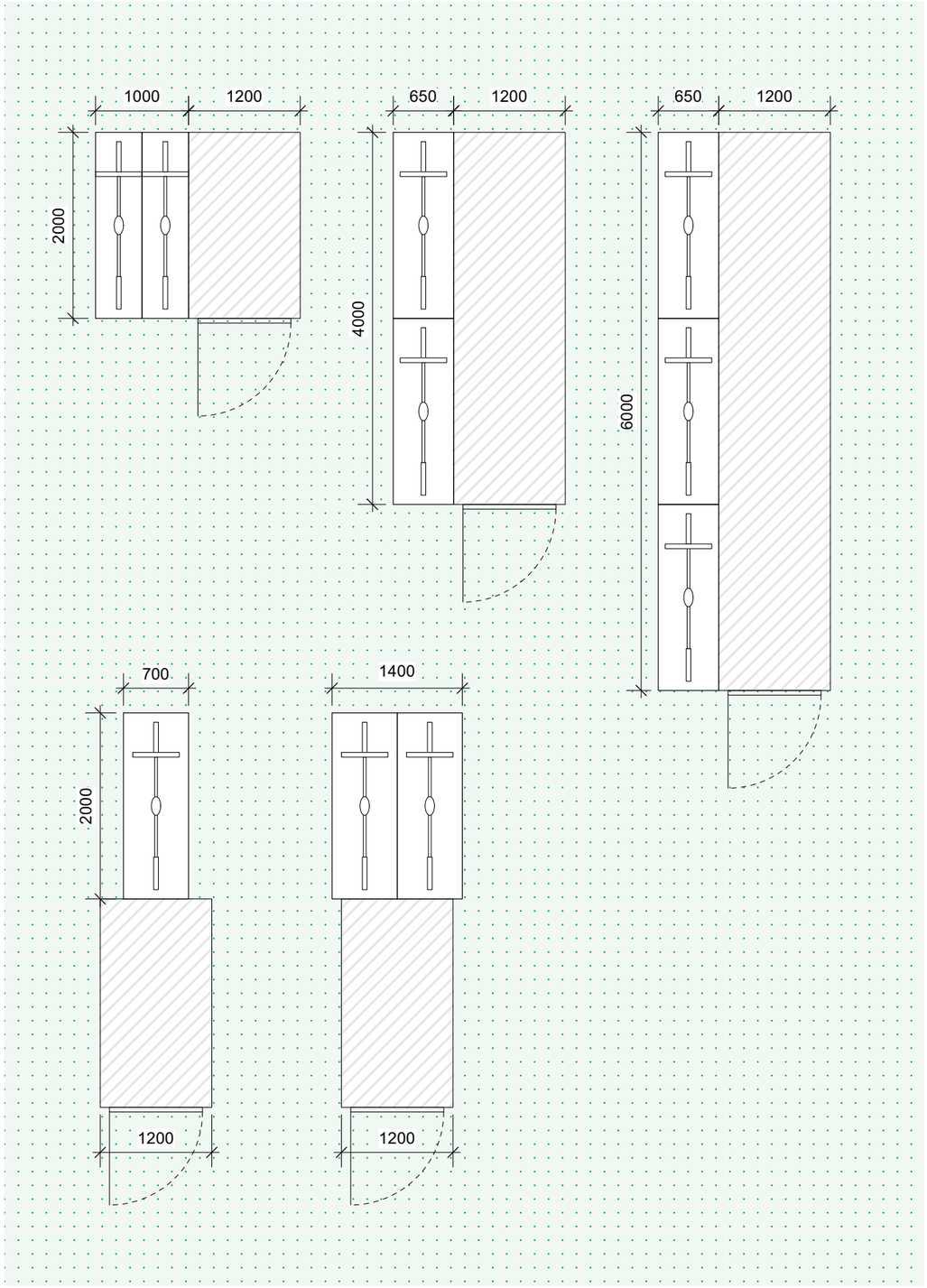
Any garages accommodating cycle storage must provide a hinged pass door with a minimum clear width of 1000mm.

BF08.09 – 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 (see PA02.05) as they bring activity and footfall to these public realm areas.

BF08.11-16 do not apply to on-street bike hangars which are supported and encouraged.

BF08.10 — Location

Communal cycle stores must be within 100m walking distance of residents' front doors.

BF08.11 — Accessibility

Cycle parking in communal stores must not require cycles to be stored upright or in double-stacked racks.

BF08.12 — Design

Communal cycle stores must be located in well-surveilled areas with a minimum of habitable room window directly overlooking the entry point.

BF08.13 – Materiality
Communal cycle stores must be built from high quality materials with detailing equivalent to the surrounding homes.

BF08.14 – Access Aisles
All access aisles in communal cycle stores must be a minimum of 1.1m to manoeuvre bikes in and out of the space.

BF08.15 – Fenestration
Communal cycle stores must include a minimum of one window to provide natural daylight to the cycle space and a sense of safety to users.

BF08.16 – Co-location
Communal cycle stores co-located with other uses is supported and strongly encouraged. Any additional uses must be separated from the cycle storage space by an internal wall for security.

BF09

WASTE AND REFUSE STORAGE

BF09.01
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.

BF09.02
Residents must not have to move bins more than 30m from their secure storage area to the collection point.

BF09.03
A passageway of 1100mm must be provided to manoeuvre wheelie bins from the storage area to the refuse collection point.

BF09.04
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.

BF09.05

Secure bin storage if provided at the front of houses must be primarily constructed from the same materials as the main structure or high quality timber.

BF09.06

Secure bin storage at the front of houses must be holistically integrated into the boundary treatment for defensible space. Disjointed elements in different materials will not be permitted.

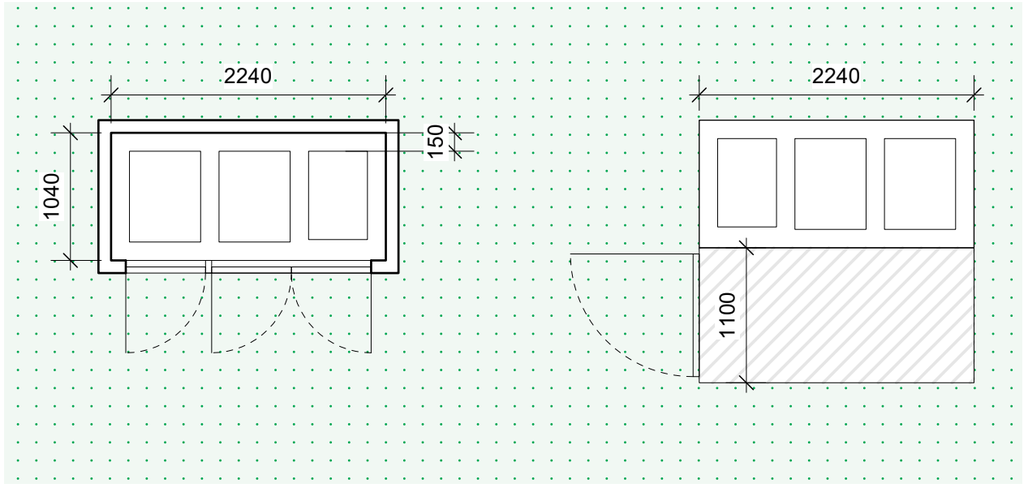
BF09.07

Houses must provide bin storage for a minimum of one 180L and two 240L bins, in accordance with the dimensions set out in the table below. Provision for an optional 240L garden waste bin may be made within the garden on a suitable hardstanding area.

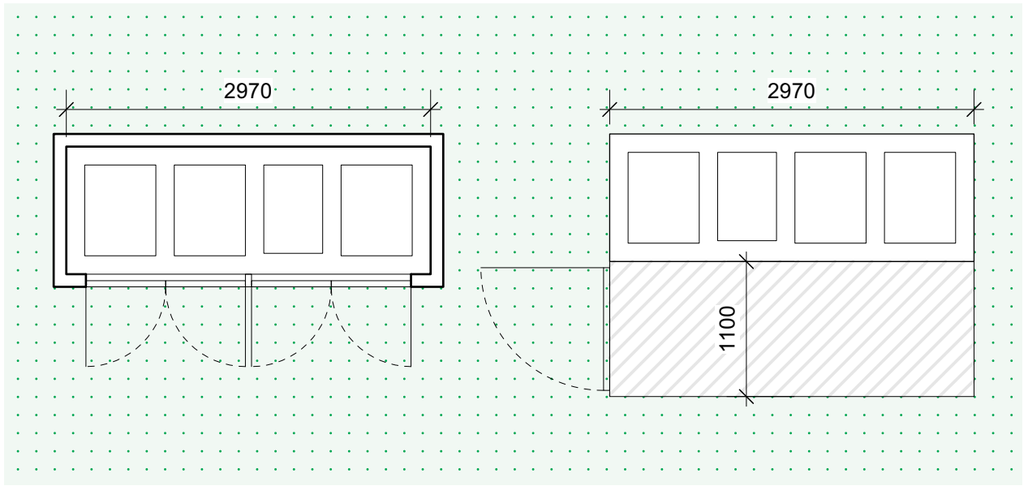
Capacity	Dimensions (mm)	Material
180L	480(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Residual Waste
240L	580(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Fibre, Paper and Card
240L	580(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Mixed Dry Recycling
240L	580(w)x750(d)x1080(h)	Garden Waste

BF09.08

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 stores that accommodate additional space for the garden waste bin must be designed in accordance with the figure below.



PARKING HIERARCHY

Proposals must demonstrate that all homes have safe and direct access to a high-quality public transport network and local services, and that reliance on private vehicles is not required for day-to-day travel.

PA01.01 — Low-Car Developments

Low-car developments with parking provision limited to Blue Badge users will be supported in Town Centre locations and sites within a convenient walking distance of a train station or major transport hub.

PA01.02

For all other residential developments, parking must be provided in accordance with the table opposite:

Number of Bedrooms	On-Plot Spaces	+	On-Plot Spaces within a Garage or Carport	or	Off-plot Unallocated Communal Spaces
1	-		-		1
2	1		-		1
3	1	+	1	or	1
≥4	2	+	1	or	0.75

PA01.03

Off plot parking spaces must be within 100m of residents' front doors.

PA01.04

Car port and garages must be appropriately dimensioned to park a car and incorporate any additional items (such as storage, refuse and cycle storage) and will be counted as a parking space if provided. Refer to PA03 for critical dimensions.

PA01.05

Development proposals that include triple tandem parking will be refused. For the avoidance of doubt, tandem parking spaces positioned in line with a garage will be treated as triple tandem, irrespective of whether the garage is designated as a parking space.

PA01.06

Part M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes are exempt from the parking hierarchy requirements.

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.

Parking Squares (PA02.08)

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.

This typology 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.

Terrace Parking Courts (PA02.09)

Terrace parking courts are small clusters of perpendicular parking integrated within breaks in the built form along street frontages. To encourage active use and passive surveillance, they may incorporate ancillary functions such as communal cycle and refuse storage or shared hobby spaces.

Farmstead Parking Courts (PA02.10)

Farmstead parking courts reference 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.

Rear Parking Drives (PA02.11)

Rear parking drives are permeable linear parking features located to the rear of apartment blocks and are utilitarian spaces whose primary function is to maximise parking for higher density housing.

Rear Parking Courts (PA02.12)

Rear parking courts are also designed to maximise car-parking for higher density housing typologies. They must incorporate a secure entrance and serve a small group of dwellings to ensure the safety of residents.

The following codes apply to all communal parking typologies and must be read in conjunction with the specific requirements set out on the next pages.

PA02.01 – Allocation of Spaces

The allocation of spaces within communal parking typologies will depend on whether the parking spaces provided are primary or secondary. 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.

PA02.02 – Demarcation of Bays

Parking bays must be delineated subtly through hard surfacing treatments (such as edging or changes in tone) or discs set into the hardstanding. Painted lines and numbers will not be permitted in any type.

PA02.03 – Boundary Treatments

Any visible boundary treatments from the public realm must be walls. Rear garden fencing visible from the public realm will not be permitted in any communal parking typology.

PA02.04 – Pedestrian Safety

All types must prioritise pedestrian safety through permeability, passive surveillance and clear sight lines.

PA02.05 – Landscape Areas

Parking must be interspersed with soft landscaping. There must be no more than 4 parking bays before a landscape section (minimum dimensions 2x6m).

PA02.06 – Materiality

Surfacing materials must be determined by the adjoining street type (see ST02.10).

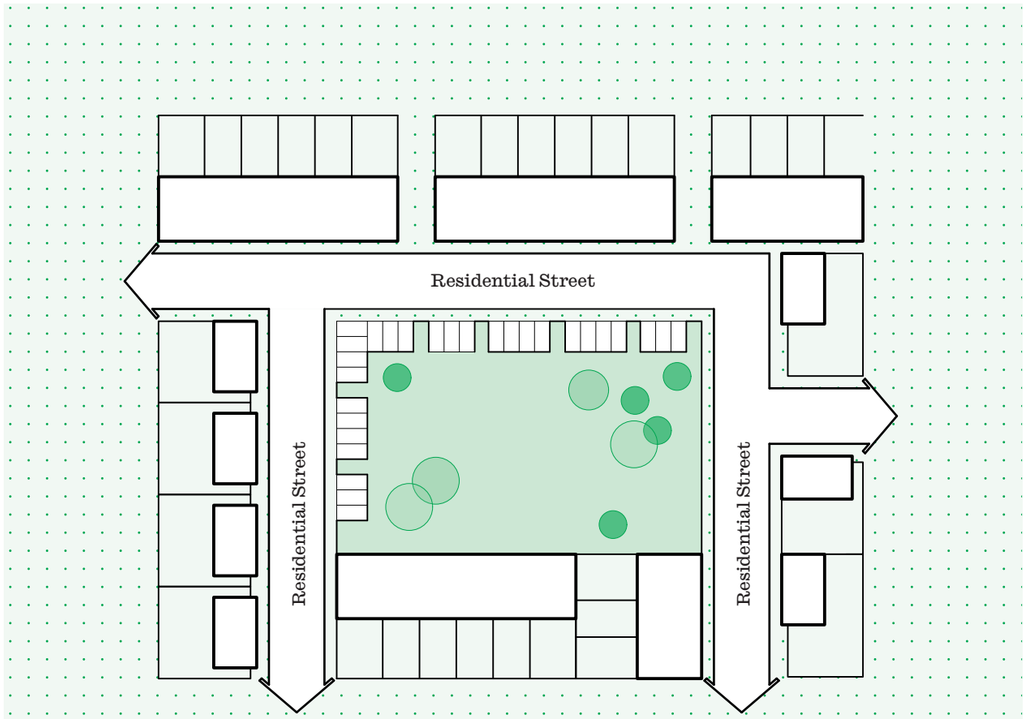
PA02.07 – Access

Communal parking typologies must be accessed from an appropriate street type as outlined in the table below.

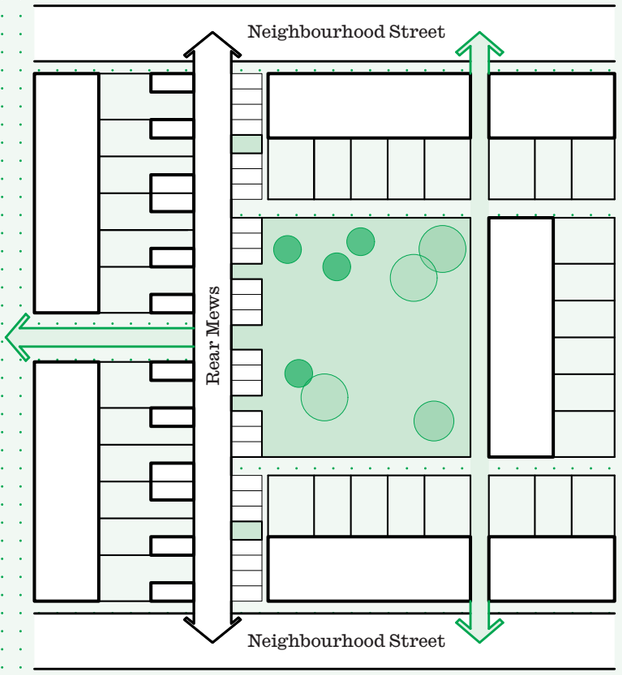
	Avenue	Neighbourhood Street	Residential Street	Residential Mews	Rear Mews	Spur Lane	Edge Lane
Parking Square	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Terrace Parking Court		x	x	x			x
Farmstead Parking Court		x	x				x
Rear Parking Drive		x	x	x			
Rear Parking Court		x	x	x	x		

PA02.08 – Parking Squares

PA02.08A – Location	Varied, can be internal or external to plots.
PA02.08B – Access	Parking bays accessed directly from surrounding streets.
PA02.08C – Frontage	Must be directly fronted by at least 4 homes.
PA02.08D – Maximum Limits	Co-located open space must not be lined with parking for more than 50% of its perimeter.
PA02.08E – Landscaping	Must be combined with a Tier 1 Open Space as a minimum.



Above: A formal parking square becomes the focal point for the surrounding homes whilst incorporating secondary parking spaces and play.
Opposite: An informal parking square is combined with a Tier 1 Open Space at the development edge through a Spur Lane layout (see ST09).

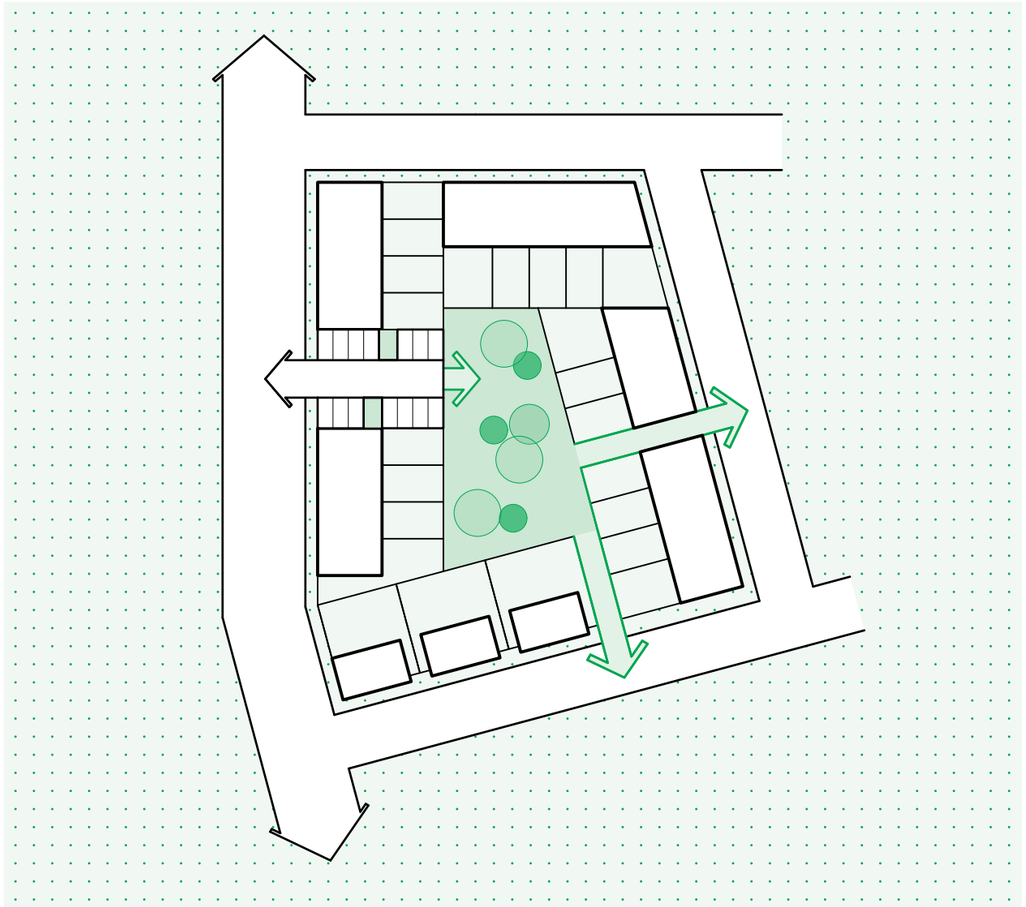


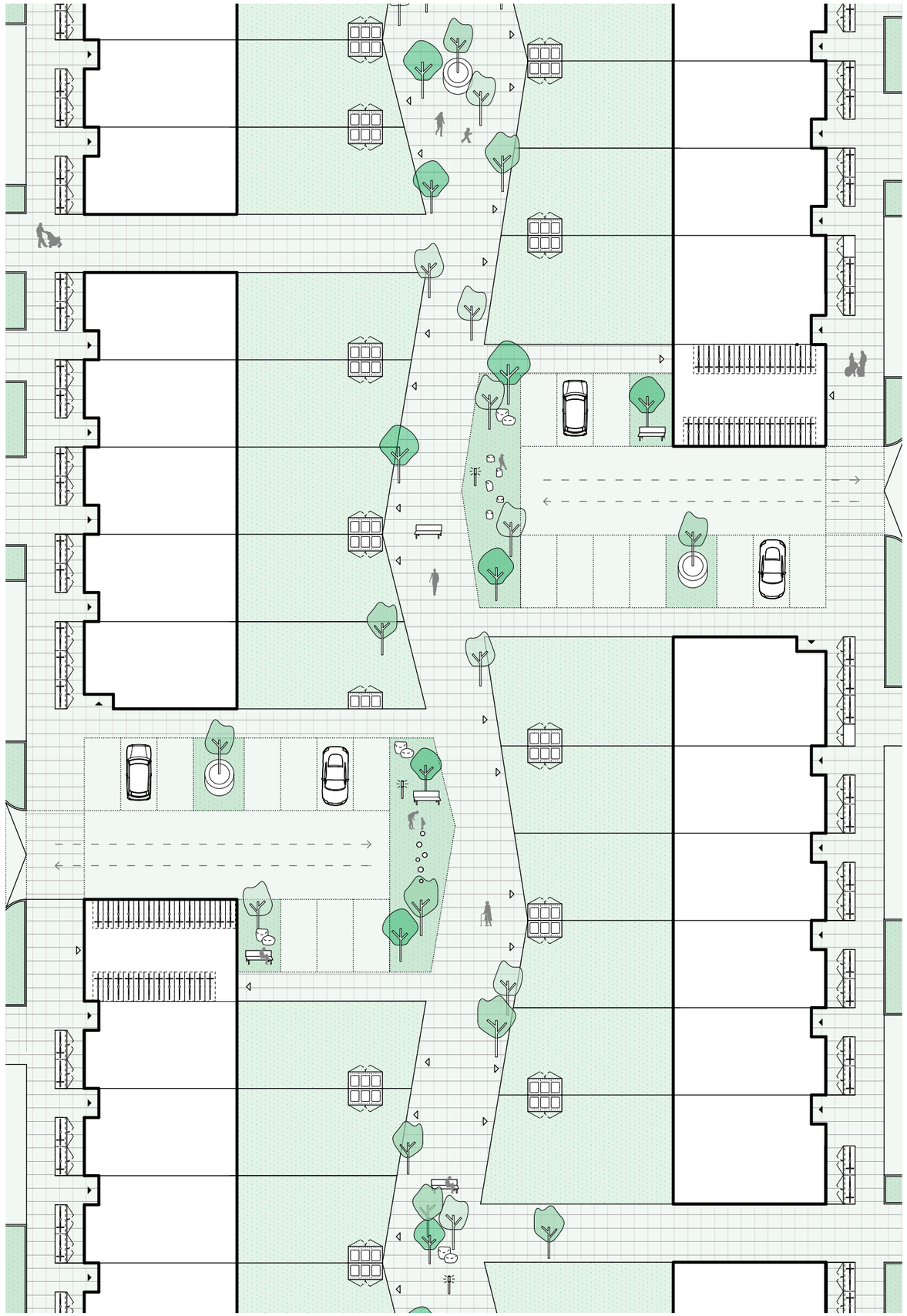
The parking square is incorporated into the centre of the plot through a Rear Mews access with multiple pedestrian links to neighbouring streets. The square is co-located with a Tier 1 Open Space and has the potential to incorporate play or growing spaces for the surrounding homes.

Cherry Hinton Close, Ebbsfleet, PRP Architects (2024), Map Location →

PA02.09 – Terrace Parking Courts

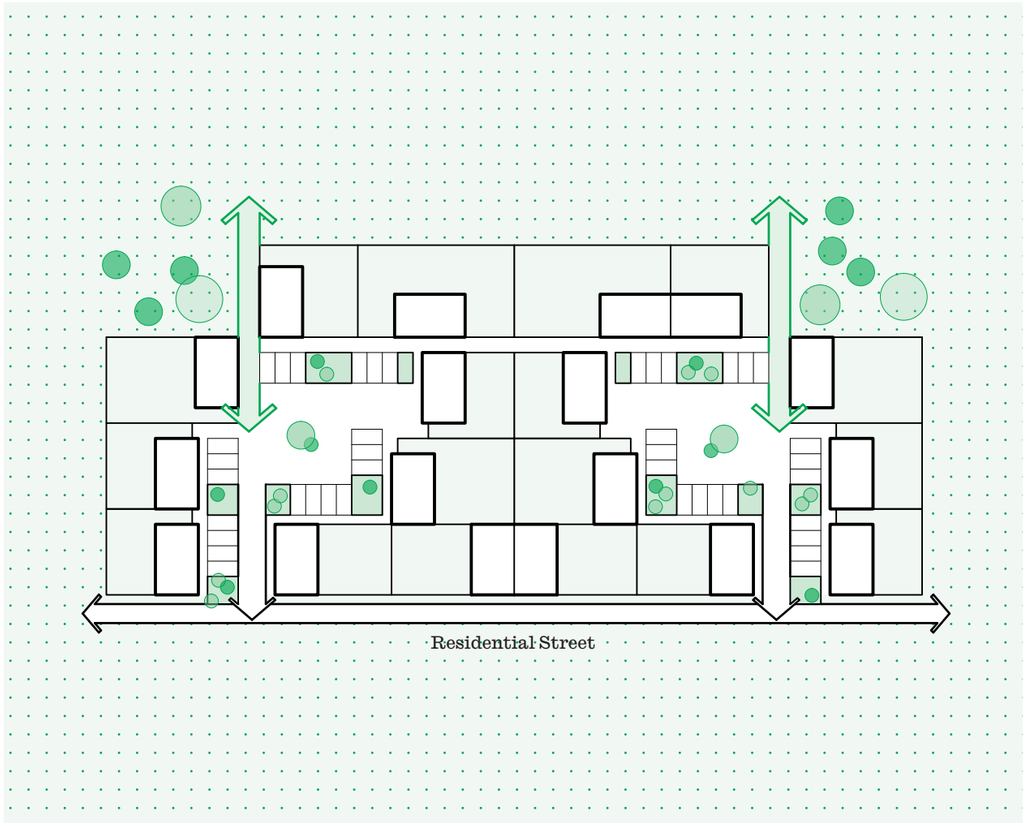
PA02.09A – Location	In between built form frontage along a street.
PA02.09B – Access	Singular entry and exit point from the adjoining street.
PA02.09C – Frontage	Gables defining the court must incorporate a minimum of one habitable room window each.
PA02.09D – Maximum Limits	Must not accommodate more than 12 parking bays.
PA02.09E – Landscaping	Must incorporate a strip of landscaping along the length of the front boundary to the street with a minimum depth of 2m.



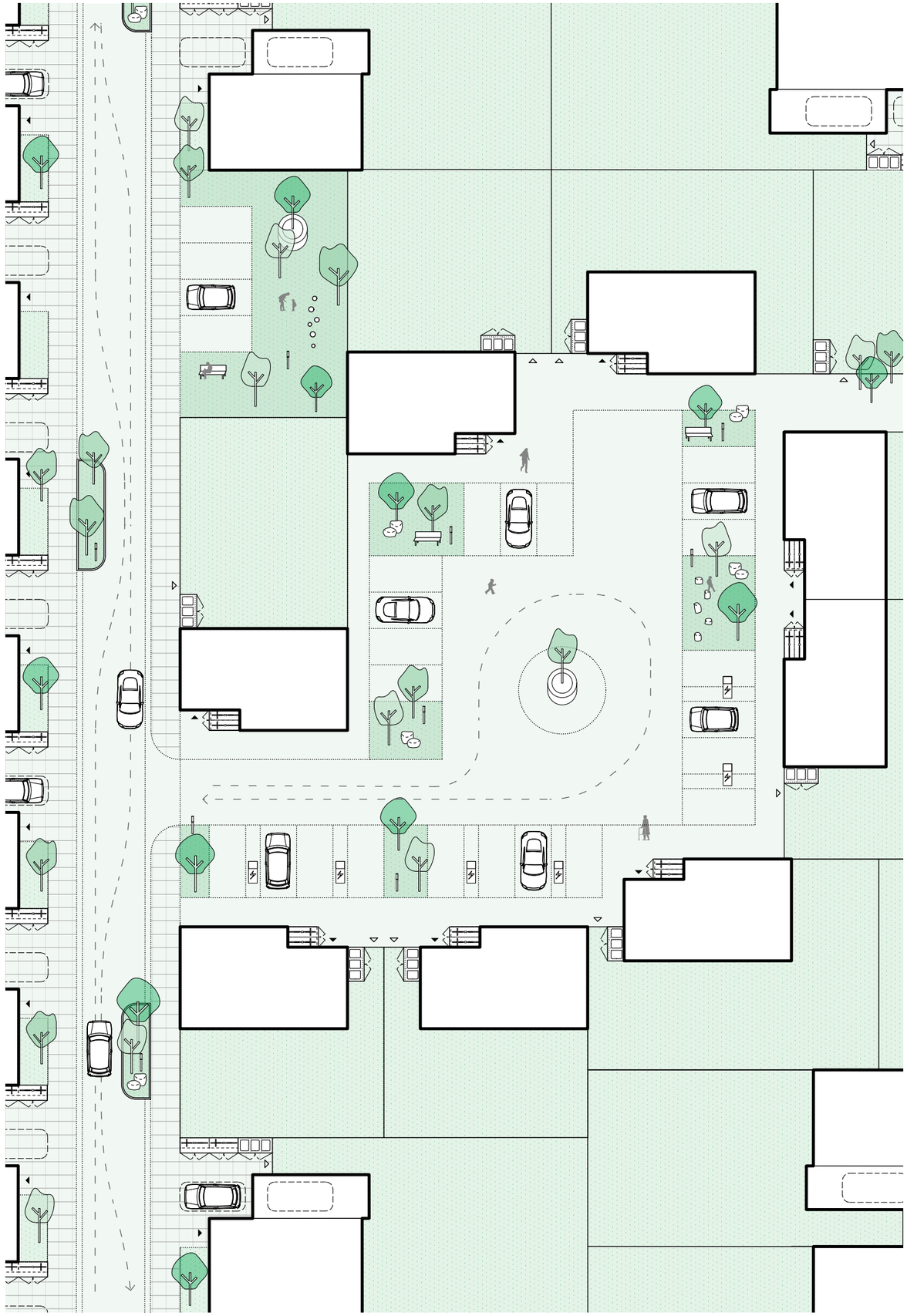


PA02.10 — Farmstead Parking Courts

PA02.10A — Location	At the centre of 5-8 homes arranged around a court.
PA02.10B — Access	Singular vehicular entry and exit point from the adjoining street.
PA02.10C — Frontage	Must be activated by a minimum of five homes that front directly onto the court.
PA02.10D — Maximum Limits	Must not service more than 8 homes.
PA02.10E — Landscaping	Vehicular access point must be softened by a tree at the junction.

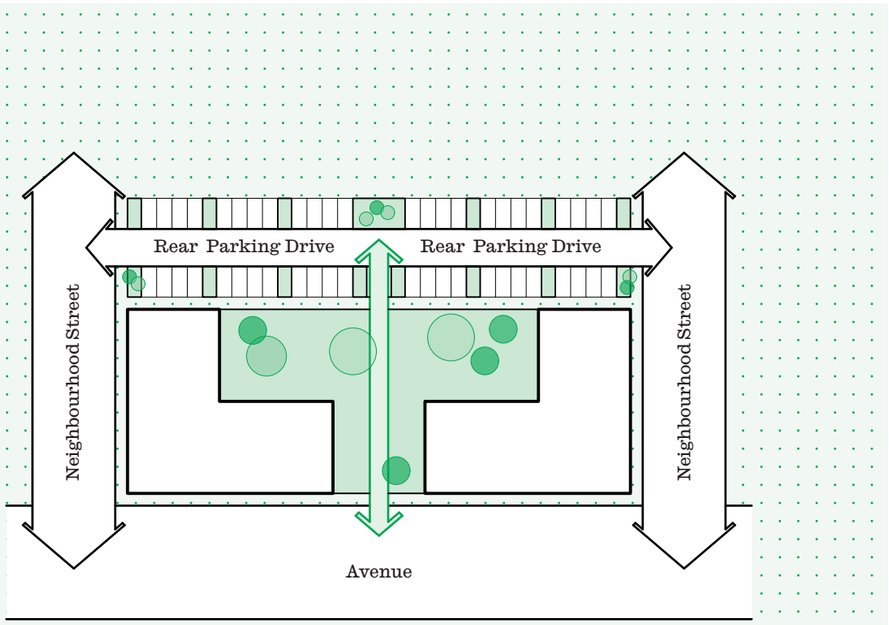


Multiple farmstead parking courts arranged along an Edge Lane or Residential Street to create a loose urban grain. Courts incorporate routes between eachother and to the landscape - evoking informal paths found in historic farmstead layouts.



PA02.11 — Rear Parking Drives

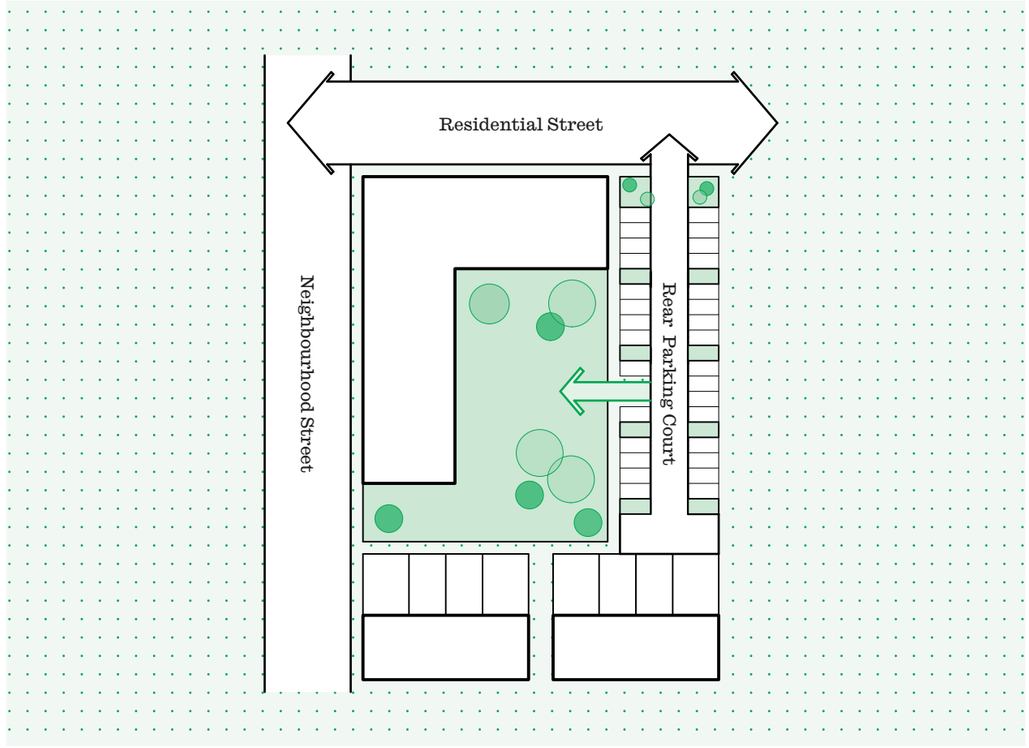
PA02.11A — Location	To the rear of apartment buildings adjoining communal amenity space.
PA02.11B — Access	Must incorporate two vehicular points of access to create a through route.
PA02.11C — Frontage and Surveillance	Entry and exit points must be visible from eachother - curved or kinked geometries are therefore not permitted.
PA02.11D — Maximum Limits	Only permitted when servicing apartment buildings. Must not service more than 24 dwellings.
PA02.11E — Landscaping	Must have at least one tree at each access point to soften entrance areas.



Rear parking drive is used to accommodate parking spaces for apartments that front onto an Avenue. The rear parking drive is well-planted, permeable and adjoins the communal amenity space for residents thus improving the entry sequence from car to front door.

PA02.12 — Rear Parking Courts

PA02.12A — Location	To the rear of apartment buildings, as illustrated in the diagram opposite.
PA02.12B — Access	Singular vehicular entry and exit point from the adjoining street. Vehicular access point must be secure and gated with 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 must go through a landscaped communal amenity space to a communal entrance.
PA02.12C — Frontage	No coded requirements.
PA02.12D — Maximum Limits	Must not serve more than 12 dwellings.
PA02.12E — Landscaping	Must have at least one tree at access point to soften entrance areas.

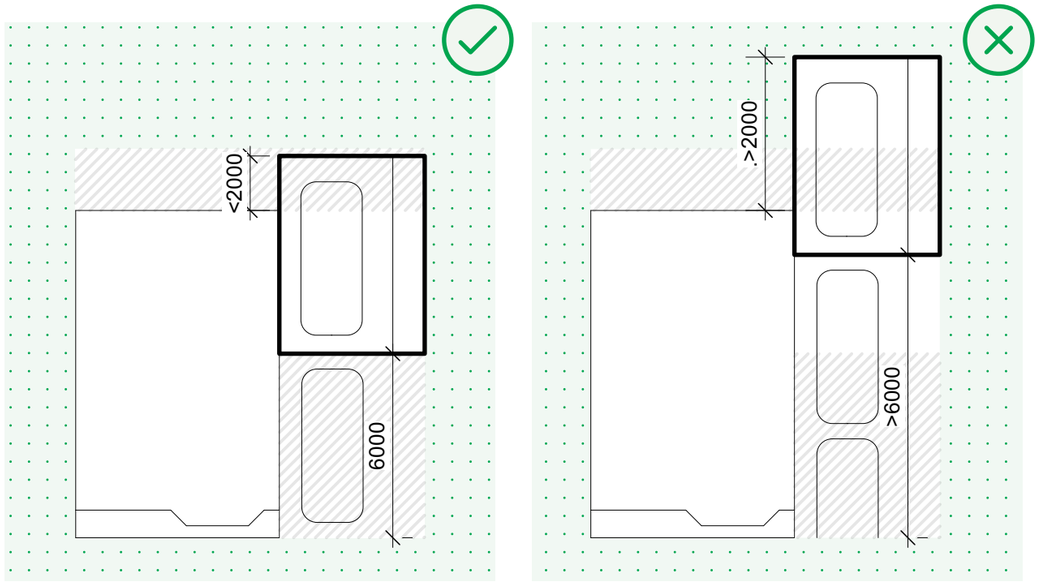


ON PLOT PARKING

PA03.01

The position of garages and car ports must not negatively impact rear private amenity for houses nor create space for additional on-plot parking over what is permitted.

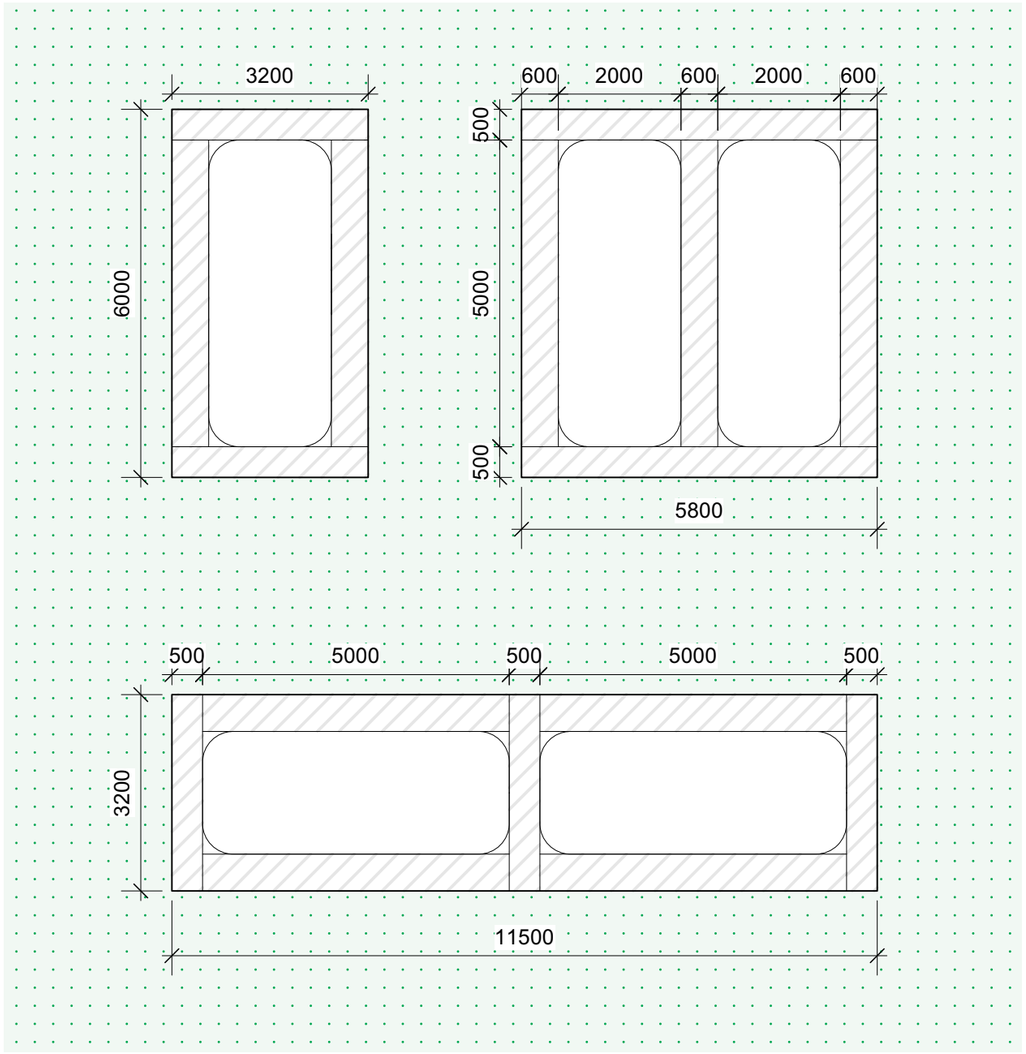
The rear face of a garage or car port must not extend into the rear garden by more than 2m from the rear elevation of the house. In houses where a vehicular parking space is permitted in front of a garage or car port, the front face of the structure must not be more than 6m behind the front boundary of the dwelling.



Lovedon Fields, Kings Worthy, Hampshire (2018) Map Location →

PA03.02

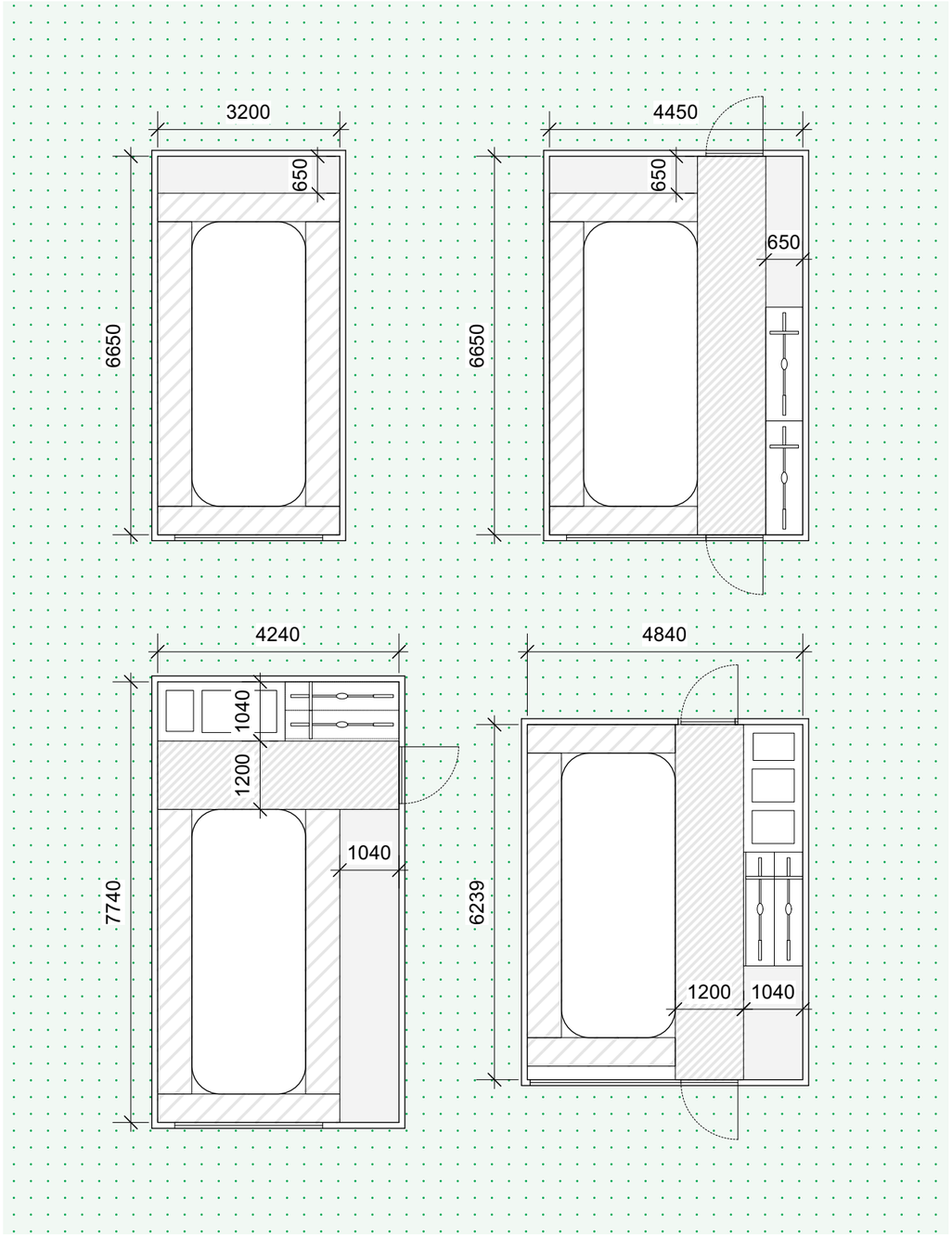
On plot parking bays for houses must be designed in accordance with the diagrams below setting out dimensions and clearances for one and two vehicles.

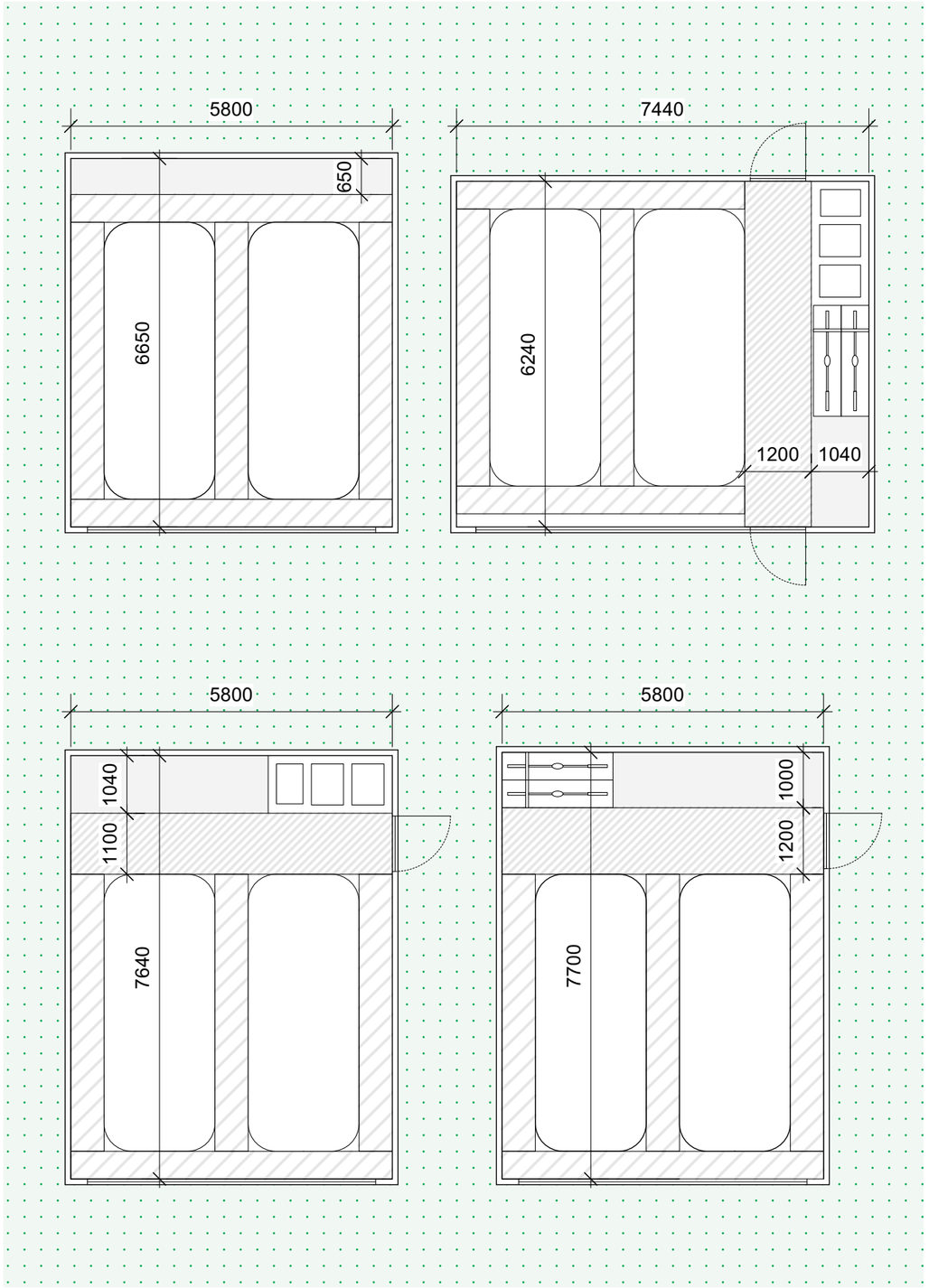


PA03.03

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.

The following diagrams illustrate a series of efficient single and double garage options accommodating storage with secure cycle and/or refuse storage.

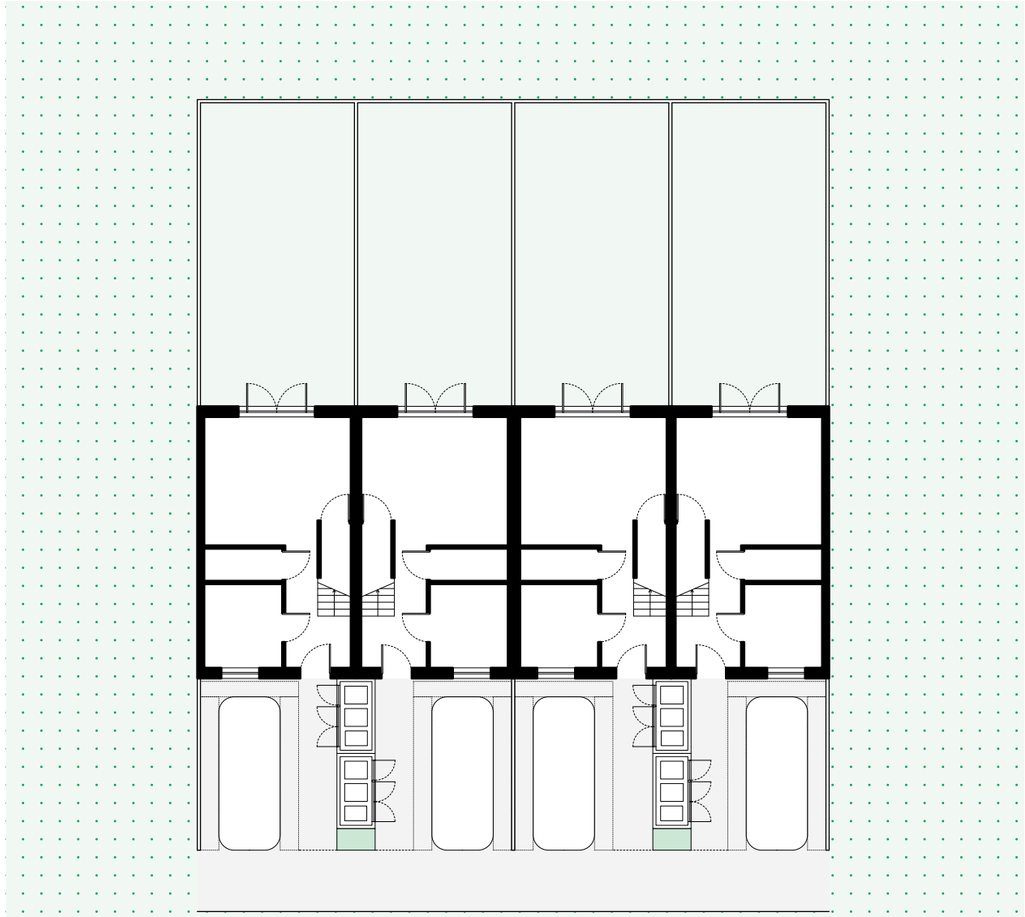




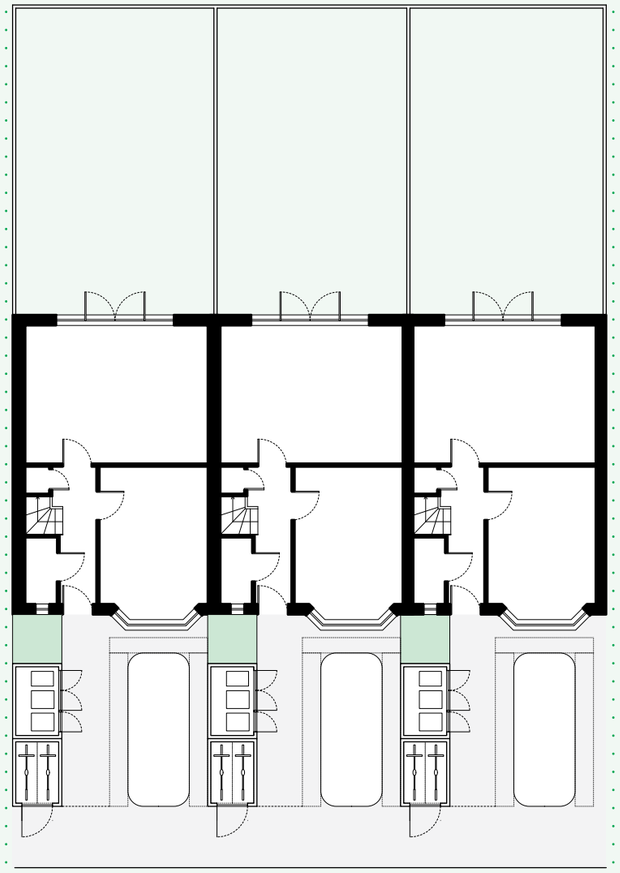
Example layouts for efficient double garages that accommodate storage with cycle and/or refuse storage

Worked Examples

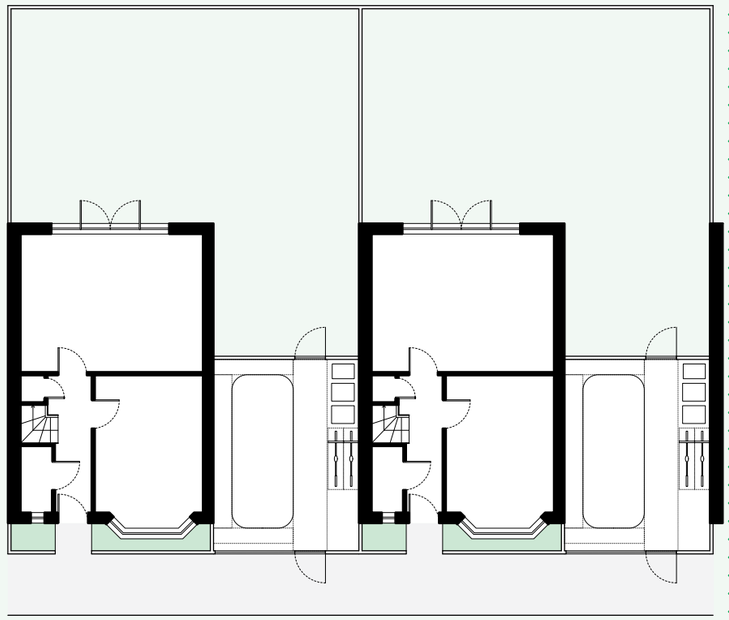
The following diagrams illustrate how parking, cycle and refuse storage can be holistically integrated on-plot for a range of dwelling typologies and sizes. See PA03, BF08 and BF09 for detailed requirements.



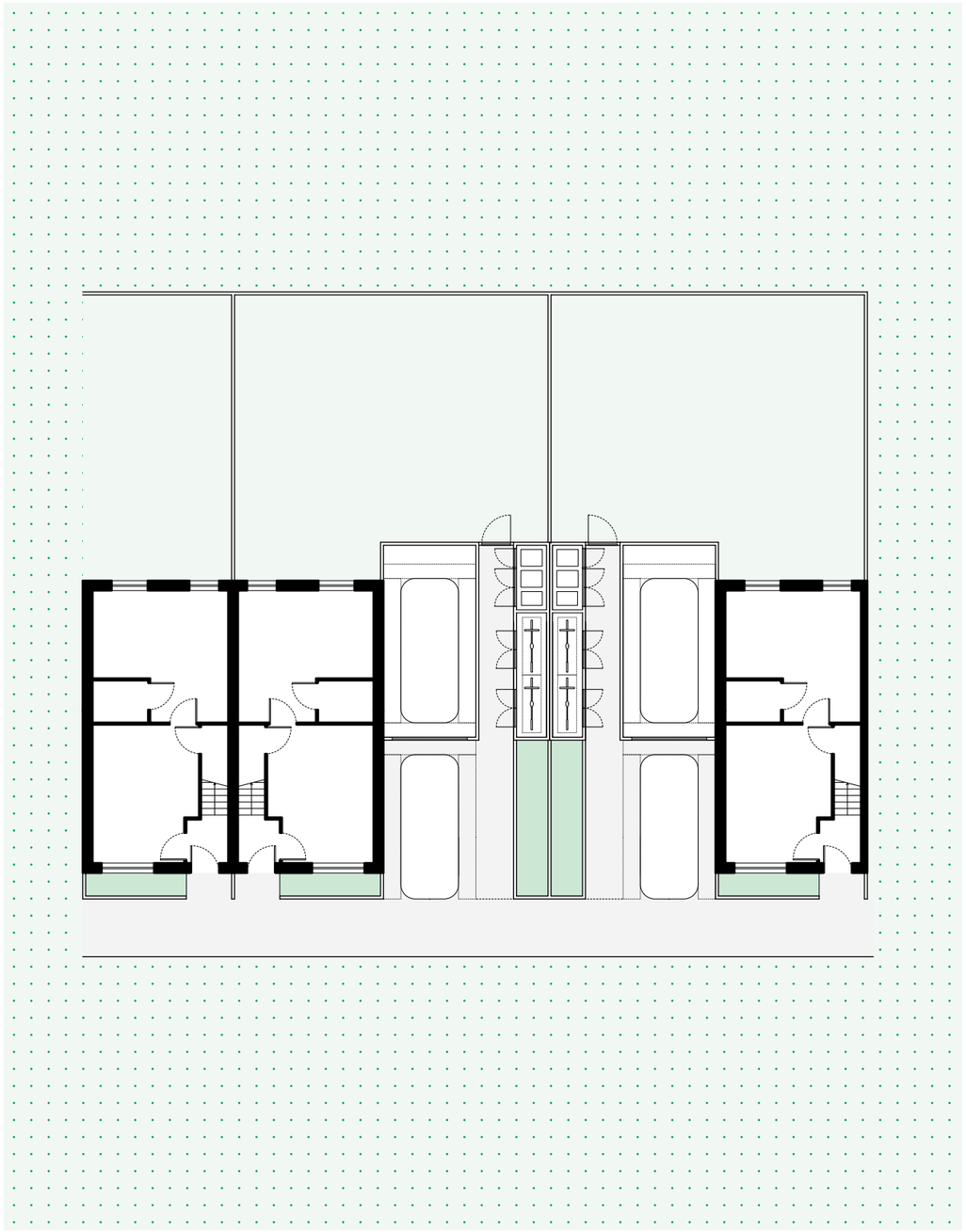
Two bedroom terraced typology with bins and on plot parking accommodated at the front of the home. In this scenario, a secondary (unallocated) parking space is provided in a communal parking typology (see PA02) along with communal cycle storage.



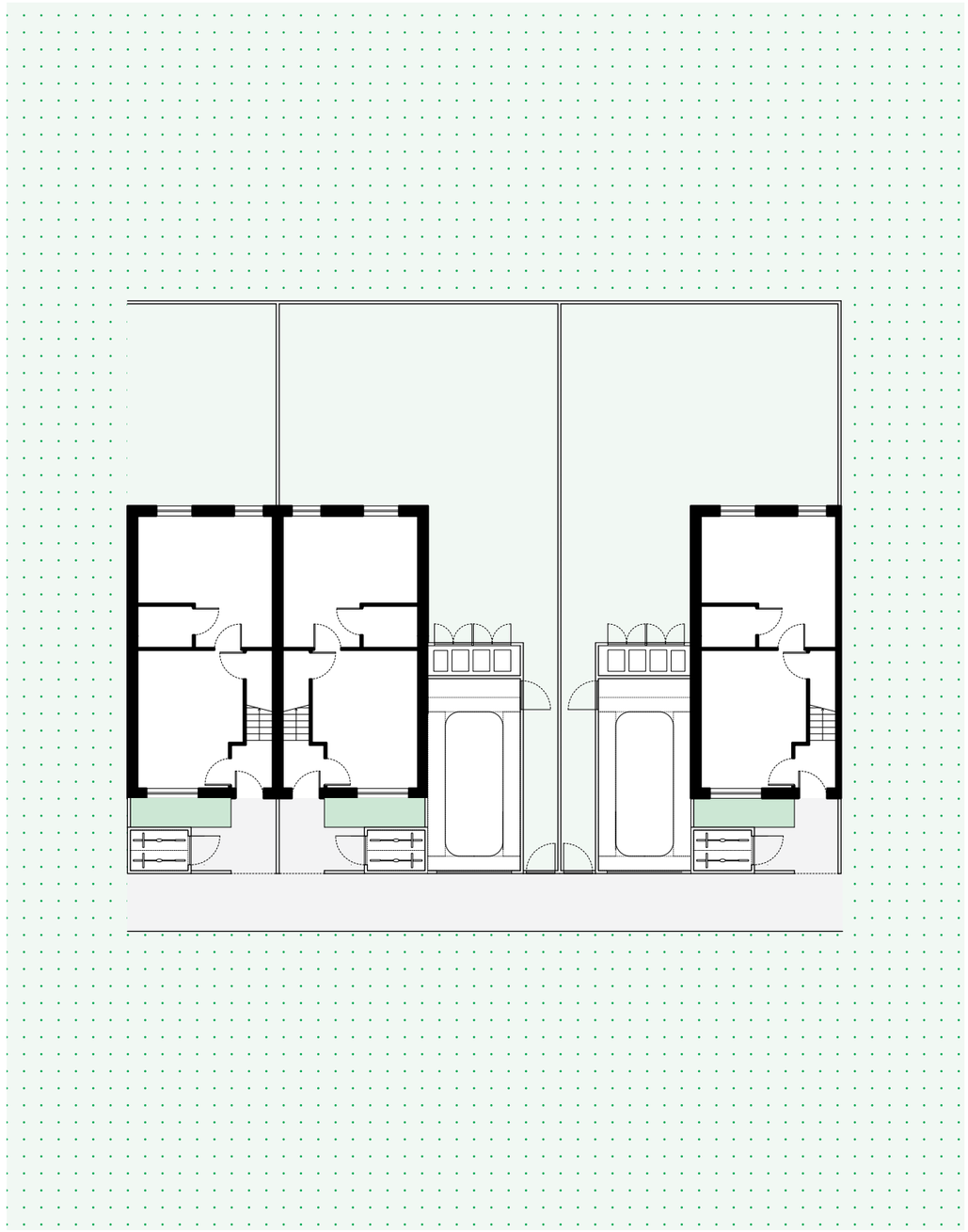
Three bedroom terraced typology with bins, primary cycle and on plot parking accommodated at the front of the home. In this scenario, a secondary (unallocated) parking space is provided in a communal parking typology (see PA02) along with secondary spaces for cycle storage.



Three bedroom linked typology with bins, storage, primary cycle and on plot parking accommodated in a garage (or car port) to the side of the home. In this scenario, a secondary (unallocated) parking space is provided in a communal parking typology (see PA02) along with secondary spaces for cycle storage.



Four bedroom semi-detached typology with bins and primary cycle storage accommodated along the rear access corridor with integrated planting. Two parking spaces are accommodated on-plot, with one space in a garage with storage. In this scenario, secondary spaces for cycle storage are located communally.



Four bedroom semi-detached typology primary cycle storage incorporated into the front defensible space boundary. The primary vehicular parking space and storage is accommodated within a garage. Refuse storage is neatly tucked behind the garage in the rear garden to minimise impact on private amenity. The secondary vehicular parking space and cycle storage is accommodated off plot.

Code and Place Objectives Index

		Exceptional Open Space	Sociable Streets	Well Integrated Development	Cohesive Communities	Efficient Use of Land	Equitable Neighbourhoods	Contextual Buildings
SS-01	Rational Street and Plot Layouts	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
SS-02	Optimising Land Use	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
SS-03	Responding to Edges	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
SS-04	Well-Integrated Schools	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
SS-05	Legible Focal Points	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
SS-06	Private Drives and Cul-de-Sacs	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-01	Open Space Provision	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-02	Open Space Design	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-03	Tier 1 Open Spaces	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-04	Tier 2 Open Spaces	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-05	Tier 3 Open Spaces	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-06	Tier 4 Open Spaces	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-07	Play Space Design	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂

		Exceptional Open Space	Sociable Streets	Well Integrated Development	Cohesive Communities	Efficient Use of Land	Equitable Neighbourhoods	Contextual Buildings
OS-08	Informal Play	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-09	Local Areas for Play	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-10	Local Equipped Areas for Play	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-11	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-12	Planting Palette	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
OS-13	Multi-Functional Attenuation Basins	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-01	Selecting Street Types	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-02	Street Design	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-03	Green Streets	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-04	Avenues	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-05	Neighbourhood Streets	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-06	Residential Streets	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-07	Residential Mews	●	●	✖	♥	■	●	⌂

		Exceptional Open Space	Sociable Streets	Well Integrated Development	Cohesive Communities	Efficient Use of Land	Equitable Neighbourhoods	Contextual Buildings
ST-08	Rear Mews		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-09	Spur Lanes	●	▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
ST-10	Edge Lanes	●	▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-01	Affordable Housing Distribution		▽	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-02	Balancing Variety and Consistency		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-03	Architectural Approach		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-04	Private Amenity for Apartments		▽	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-05	Communal Amenity for Apartments		▽	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-06	Private Amenity for Houses		▽	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-07	Communal Amenity for Houses		▽	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-08	Cycle Parking and Storage		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
BF-09	Waste and Refuse Storage		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂

		Exceptional Open Space	Sociable Streets	Well Integrated Development	Cohesive Communities	Efficient Use of Land	Equitable Neighbourhoods	Contextual Buildings
PA-01	Parking Hierarchy		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
PA-02	Communal Parking Typologies		▼	✖	♥	■	●	⌂
PA-03	On Plot Parking		▽	✖	♥	■	●	⌂

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.

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.

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 applicants 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 that are enclosed by streets. They help shape the structure of a neighbourhood by defining where homes, shops and other uses sit. 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. Blue infrastructure should work 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 and woodland. 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 first.

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, background and tenures can meet, interact, and feel safe and supported.

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 both the physical and intangible elements that should shape how places are designed. 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. Context also refers to what is happening beyond the physical, such as changing ways of living, advances in technology, emotions and/or evolving family structures.

Contextual Design

Contextual design means shaping new development so it responds positively to the character and qualities of the context. 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 thoughtful way. True contextual design fits comfortably within its setting while still allowing for creativity and high-quality, rather than producing pastiche.

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 front of a home facing the public real that 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.

Delineation

Making the boundaries between different spaces clear and easy to understand. This can involve using features such as planting, changes in paving, walls, fences or subtle level changes to show where public space ends and private space begins.

Density

Refers to how many homes 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 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 applicants 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.

Desire Lines

The informal paths people naturally create when they take the quickest or most convenient route between places, often cutting across grass or open spaces. They show where people actually want to walk, which may be different to where paths have been designed. Understanding desire lines helps designers plan better routes that match real movement patterns and make streets and spaces more intuitive to use.

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 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 future-proofing 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 defined 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.

Focal Points
Features or places that naturally draw attention and help people orient themselves within a neighbourhood. They might be created by a distinctive building, a public square, a key junction, a piece of public art or open space. Focal points add interest, guide movement and help structure the layout of a place, making it easier for people to understand and navigate.

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.

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. 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 with 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 character of streets, buildings, and open spaces.

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, tower, public square, piece of public art or landscape feature. Landmarks create points of interest, strengthen local identity, and make neighbourhoods easier to navigate by giving people memorable reference points.

LAP (Local Area for Play)
A small play space for very young children, located close to homes, providing opportunities for imaginative and informal play in a simple, safe setting, often incorporating features and greenery to support early interaction with the natural environment.

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.

LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play)
A play area for children beginning to play more independently, located within easy walking distance of homes, offering a variety of play experiences that support physical activity, creativity and social interaction, with scope to include natural elements and landscaping as part of the play setting.

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 and antisocial behaviour is discouraged. Good natural

surveillance comes from buildings facing the street, active frontages and well-used routes, rather than relying on cameras or security measures.

NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play)
A larger play space serving older children and young people, providing a wide range of play and informal recreation opportunities within a neighbourhood setting, where built and natural features combine to support active, social and varied forms of play.

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 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.

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 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.

Red-Line Boundary
Red-line boundaries show the exact area of land included within a planning application on the application drawings. They mark what the applicant has control over and where development, access or works are proposed. Anything inside the red line is part of the planning submission, while anything outside is not. Clear red-line boundaries help everyone understand the extent of the site and what the application covers.

Settlement Extension
New areas of development built on the edge of an existing town or village. They expand the settlement's boundary to create new homes, streets and community facilities. Good settlement extensions are carefully planned so they connect well to the existing place, feel like a natural continuation rather than a separate add-on and create a sensitive transition to the surrounding countryside. They should be designed with strong movement links, local character in mind and the potential for future growth where appropriate.

Social Infrastructure
Refers to the places, spaces and facilities that help build and sustain strong community life. It includes everything that supports social interaction, everyday meeting and a sense of belonging from local centres, pubs and community halls to parks, local shops, play areas and public spaces.

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.

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 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.

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.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the following contributors for their time, invaluable input and support, all of which have helped shape the North Herts Design Code.

Residents' Design Forum Members
Working Group Experts:

- Abigail Batchelor, Brillet Ltd
- Alexis Butterfield, Pollard Thomas Edwards
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Strategic Environmental Assessment

Screening Determination Statement

For North Hertfordshire District Council

Design Code Supplementary

Planning Document

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out a Screening Determination for the North Hertfordshire District Council Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (hereafter Design Code SPD), and has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Design Code SPD requires 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 Code SPD specifically (section 4).

1.2 The assessment of the Design Code 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 took 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 Code SPD

4.1. The Design Code 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 change. 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 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.

[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

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 North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The Local 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. 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 Local 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 residential-led planning applications over 2 homes.
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. A screening determination was produced alongside the consultation on the draft Design Code Supplementary Planning Document. The Council consulted the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency & Natural England) on whether a strategic environmental assessment was required.

6.2. Following consultation, responses were received from Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The response from Historic England supported the conclusion of the SEA Screening Determination that the Design Code SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. Natural England had no comments to make on the SEA Screening Opinion. The Environment Agency confirmed that they had no comments to make at the screening stage.

6.3. Consequent to the above, no consultation responses were received which altered the preliminary findings of this screening determination.

6.4. Consultation on the draft SPD took place between 4 March and 2 April. A total of 66 responses were received (including the two responses referenced above). Outside the responses identified above, these did not directly address the SEA Screening Opinion.

6.5. The changes made to the SPD in response to the consultation are largely technical and do not substantively impact upon the scope, intent and anticipated outcomes of the previous exercise

7. Screening Determination

7.1. In summary, it is the Council's opinion that the Design Code 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 Local Plan SA/SEA. The SPD cannot set new policy. It has been prepared to build upon the Local 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 Local Plan, and the effects expected, North Hertfordshire District Council concludes that the Design Code Supplementary Planning Document does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

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CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

Any queries must be directed to the Democratic Services Manager

TITLE OF REPORT: Waste Vehicles Fuel Arrangements

REPORT OF: Director - Environment

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Environment

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To agree a position on fuelling of waste vehicles which takes into account both environmental and financial issues, related to the use of hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet approves use of a HVO mix for the Council's large waste vehicles, that limits the additional cost to the Council (of using HVO over diesel) to approximately £5,000 per month from 1 July 2026 to 31 March 2027. This would be subject to a minimum HVO use of 20%, unless it became impossible to obtain HVO fuel.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Council set a budget in January 2025 to use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil in the vehicles (above 3.5 tonnes) in the waste and street cleansing contract. The budget set aside at the time (£40k per year ongoing) was expected to be sufficient to use 100% HVO in those vehicles, although the budget decision did reference that it would be possible to use incremental levels of HVO depending on cost. Inflation added to the budget means that £40k budget is now £42k (for 2026/27).

3.2 Global events have increased the cost of fuel, with an even more substantial increase in the cost of HVO. This recommendation manages the cost impact on the Council during this period of uncertainty. Overall, the Council remains committed to its Sustainability Strategy and the carbon emission targets set within that strategy.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The Cabinet could choose to carry on using 100% HVO but (at current prices) it is estimated that it will cost around £13k per month extra (above the allocated HVO budget). This would have the best environmental impact.

4.2 The Cabinet could choose to use 100% Diesel. The HVO budget could then be used to offset some of the increased cost of diesel which has occurred due to global events. This would have the biggest negative effect on emissions.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Council's Political Liaison Board consisting of Cabinet and Leadership team were consulted on the original decision (taken on 15 April 2026) to target a HVO mix, limiting the additional cost to the Council (of using HVO over diesel) to £5,000 per month up to the end of June 2026. The Executive Member for Environment and Executive Member for Resources have since been consulted on the proposed recommendation for the period 1 July 2026 to 31 March 2027.

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 15 May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. The Council set a budget in January 2025 to use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil in the vehicles (above 3.5 tonnes) in the waste and street cleansing contract that commenced in May 2025. The decision was based on the Council's commitments to addressing climate change. The budget set aside at the time (£40k per year ongoing) was expected to be sufficient to use 100% HVO in those vehicles, although the budget decision did reference that it would be possible to use incremental levels of HVO depending on cost. Inflation added to the budget means that £40k budget is now £42k (for 2026/27).

7.2. In the waste and street cleansing contract all vehicles under 3.5 tonnes are electric. Using HVO in the vehicles above 3.5 tonnes has a significant positive impact on the environmental impact of the service. HVO reduces carbon emissions by 90% compared to using diesel.

7.3. The table below shows the impact on emissions depending on the blend of HVO / diesel that can be achieved:

Diesel	***HVO***	***Percentage change in emissions***
100%	*0%*	
90%	*10%*	*-9%*
80%	*20%*	*-18%*
70%	*30%*	*-27%*
60%	*40%*	*-36%*
50%	*50%*	*-45%*
40%	*60%*	*-54%*
30%	*70%*	*-63%*
20%	*80%*	*-72%*
10%	*90%*	*-81%*
0%	*100%*	*-90%*

7.4. The current global political situation has resulted in a marked increase in fuel prices. The premium for HVO (the additional cost of HVO above diesel prices) has significantly increased. It has gone from around 10p per litre when the cost was initially estimated, and latest estimates are that is around 40p per litre.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Based on current prices it is estimated that to use 100% HVO would cost the Council up to an additional £15k (above the budgeted premium for HVO) in a full month.

8.2. The vehicles can run on blends of diesel and HVO, which means that a decision can be taken to balance cost and environmental impact. An exact blend cannot be achieved at all times, as it depends on the timing of fuel deliveries to the depots. But under the contract, Veolia can be instructed to target a certain blend, and this can be changed over time.

8.3. The contract is a joint one with East Herts Council. There are fuel tanks at both the Letchworth and Buntingford depots. This allows the two Councils to take independent decisions.

8.4. On 15 April 2026 an interim decision was taken by the Director – Environment in consultation with the Executive Member – Environment to ask Veolia to target a HVO mix that limits the additional cost to the Council (of using HVO over diesel) to £5,000 per month. This would be subject to a minimum HVO use of 20%, unless it became impossible to obtain HVO fuel. That decision was taken to cover the period up to the end of June 2026, so that a more medium-term decision could be taken by Cabinet.

8.5. It is proposed that the Cabinet agree to continue with the same approach as currently in place until 31 March 2027, given the current global uncertainty and large differential between the price of HVO and diesel.

8.6. The Council remains committed to achieving the aims of its sustainability strategy, including reducing carbon emissions. However, this needs to be balanced against cost, so in the short / medium term it is necessary to reduce the amount of HVO that we use. To allow flexibility with changing prices, the 15 April decision sought to limit the financial exposure (to £5k above budget), rather than setting a specific level of HVO/ diesel mix.

8.7. The recommendation to set a minimum level of 20% HVO (subject to being able to obtain HVO) means that the Council will continue to have some positive environmental impact, and demonstrate the intention to revert back to 100% HVO when it is financially viable.

8.8. The decision can be revisited again as part of the budget-setting process for 2027/28.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Paragraph 14.6.8 a) i) determines that the Director – Environment shall “manage, direct and control all resources allocated to the Directorate in accordance with the Council’s policies and procedures”. Paragraph 14.6.8 b) viii) determines that this includes “waste collection and waste management”.

9.2. Under paragraph 14.6.2 e) “an officer may always refer a delegated decision to the Cabinet…”. Under paragraph 5.7.8 Cabinet also “monitor … revenue expenditure and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework.”

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The decision to limit the additional budget to £5k per month, means that the cost of this decision is up to £45k for the period 1 July 2026 to 31 March 2027.

10.2. The cost risk of being able to maintain 20% HVO is thought to be insignificant. The HVO premium would need to be around double the maximum seen so far for this to cost more than the allocated allowance.

10.3. The Council will also incur additional costs due to the base increase in diesel costs. The increased costs of fuel in general are unavoidable, and are outside the scope of this decision. Although a decision could be taken to use no HVO and use the allocated budget (£32k over a 9-month period) to mitigate the increased costs of diesel. Current diesel prices (bulk purchase net of VAT) are around £1.35 per litre. This is about 30p per litre above the open book price used to set diesel costs at the start of the contract (May 2025). It is also just under 10p per litre above the diesel price that contractors were instructed to use in bidding for the contract. Both amounts are after adjusting for inflation. This means that (depending which base is chosen) diesel is costing between £38k and £120k more than budgeted for the 9-month period.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

11.2. This decision is a balance between environmental impact and cost. The cost cap being applied helps to manage the overall risk. This is also a decision that can be changed in the future once we know more about longer term pricing. There is a reputational risk of not targeting 100% HVO, but this is mitigated to some extent by setting a minimum level of 20% HVO (subject to being able to obtain HVO). This means that the Council will continue to have some positive environmental impact, and demonstrate the intention to revert back to 100% HVO when it is financially viable. However, using less HVO over the 9-month period does potentially impact the Council’s ability to achieve its short-term emissions target for 2026/27.

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 equalities implications as a result of 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. An Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The recommendations of this report have been considered and the following adaptations/ mitigations have been included - By setting a minimum level of 20% HVO (subject to being able to obtain HVO) this means that the Council will continue to have some positive environmental impact and demonstrates its intention to revert back to 100% HVO when financially viable.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no human resources implications as a result of this report.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 None

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Sarah Kingsley	Director - Environment	sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk
Ian Couper	Director – Resources	Ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Decision to ask Veolia to target a Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil mix that limits additional costs: Record of Decision made under Delegated Authority

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Environmental Impact assessment

<table>
<tr><td>1. Name of activity:</td><td>Review of Waste Vehicles Fuel Arrangements</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Main purpose of activity:</td><td>The Council set a budget in January 2025 to use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil in the vehicles (above 3.5 tonnes) in the waste and street cleansing contract that commenced in May 2025. The decision was based on the Council’s commitments to addressing climate change, The budget set aside at the time (£40k per year ongoing) was expected to be sufficient to use 100% HVO in those vehicles, although the budget decision did reference that it would be possible to use incremental levels of HVO depending on cost. Inflation added to the budget means that £40k budget is now £42k (for 2026/27).

In the waste and street cleansing contract all vehicles under 3.5 tonnes are electric. So, using HVO in the vehicles above 3.5 tonnes has a significant impact on the environmental impact of the service. HVO reduces carbon emissions by 90% compared to using diesel.

The current global political situation has resulted in a marked increase in fuel prices. The premium for HVO (the additional cost of HVO above diesel prices) has significantly increased. It has gone from around 10p per litre when the cost was initially estimated, and latest estimates are that is around 40p per litre.

To limit financial exposure to the Council of increased HVO prices, a decision was made on 15 April 2026 to ask Veolia to target a HVO mix that limits the additional cost to the Council (of using HVO over diesel) to £5,000 per month. This would be subject to a minimum HVO use of 20%, unless it became impossible to obtain HVO fuel. That decision was taken to cover the period up to the end of June 2026, so that a more medium-term decision could be taken by Cabinet. At its meeting on 16 June, Cabinet are recommended to adopt the same approach until 31 March 2027.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:</td><td>The table below shows the impact on emissions depending on the blend of HVO / diesel that can be achieved:

<table>
<tr><th>Diesel</th><th>HVO</th><th>Percentage change in emissions</th></tr>
<tr><td>100%</td><td>0%</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>90%</td><td>10%</td><td>-9%</td></tr>
<tr><td>80%</td><td>20%</td><td>-18%</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

	70%	*30%*	*-27%*		
	60%	*40%*	*-36%*		
	50%	*50%*	*-45%*		
	40%	*60%*	*-54%*		
	30%	*70%*	*-63%*		
	20%	*80%*	*-72%*		
	10%	*90%*	*-81%*		
	0%	*100%*	*-90%*		

Area of Potential Impact	***Examples to Consider*** *(non-exhaustive)*	***Neutral*** *(X)*	***Negative*** *(X)*	***Positive*** *(X)*	*Describe the contribution/impact on the area that the decision may have - assess whether this impact is a* ***negative or positive or neutral one.*** ***Negative: What are the risks?*** ***Positive: What are the benefits?***
1. Impact on greenhouse emission and support adaption to the effects of climate change	Will energy needs be met through renewable sources? Will it reduce emissions through retrofitting new technology? Will it reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy consumption and the need to travel?		x		***Negative*** Adopting a HVO / diesel blend lowers the emissions benefits from the waste vehicles (as shown in the table above). However adopting a minimum 20% threshold means some benefits are retained. ***Positive***
2. Use of natural resources including water and energy	Will it reduce water consumption? Will it reduce energy consumption?	x			***Negative***

					Positive
3. Minimisation of flood risks to the area (i.e. promotion of SUD's. protect surface and ground water quality)	Will it minimise flood risk from all sources of flooding? Will it reduce property damage due to storm events/ heavy rainfall by improving flood resistance and flood resilience?	x			***Negative*** ***Positive***
4. To protect, enhance and create environments that encourage and support biodiversity	Will it protect, enhance and increase biodiversity and protect habitats? Will it improve access to and promote educational value of sites of biodiversity interest?	x			***Negative*** ***Positive***
5. To improve Air Quality *(air quality describes how polluted the air we breathe is)*	Will it improve air quality? Will it reduce emissions of key pollutants?		x		***Negative*** Adopting a HVO / diesel blend lowers the emissions benefits from the waste vehicles (as shown in the table above). However adopting a minimum 20% threshold means some benefits are retained. ***Positive***
6. To reduce need to travel, the use of private motorised vehicular transport as well as	Will it encourage increased walking, cycling and use of public transport? Will it increase the proportion of journeys using modes other than a car?	x			***Negative*** ***Positive***

encourage walking, cycling, and use of public transport					

7. To reduce waste production and increase recycling, recovery and reuse of waste	Will it lead to reduced consumption of materials and resources? Will it reduce household waste? Will it reduce construction waste? Will it increase recovery recycling and re-use?	x			***Negative*** ***Positive***
8. To enhance the public realm and street improvements	Will it reduce litter? Will it enhance the quality of public realm?	x			***Negative*** ***Positive***
9. To protect, enhance and seek opportunities to increase open space	Will it improve open space? Will it improve landscape character? Will it minimise development on Greenfield sites?	x			***Negative*** ***Positive***
	Will it reduce noise pollution from vehicles?	x			***Negative***

10. To reduce noise and impact of noise					***Positive***

6.0 Results			
	Yes	**No**	
Were positive impacts identified?	☐	☒	
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	☒	☐	

7.0 Consultation, decisions and actions		
Describe the decision on this activity (refer to section 3.2)		
The decision being taken is a balance between financial and environmental impact. It is only seen as a temporary measure while there is global uncertainty on fuel pricing. The Council remains committed to the objectives of its Sustainability Strategy, including reducing emissions of the waste fleet.		
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positive impact		
Action To target a HVO mix that limits the additional cost to the Council (of using HVO over diesel) to £5,000 per month, subject to ensuring a minimum HVO use of 20%, unless it becomes impossible to obtain HVO fuel.	*Responsible person*	*Completion due date*
By	*Jeanette Lowden*	*31 March 2027*
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		
Veolia will target a mix of HVO/ diesel which limits financial exposure to the Council up to £5,000 a month above the HVO budget. This means that if prices reduce (and the differential between HVO and diesel also reduces), the blend of HVO can be increased. This would be subject to a minimum HVO use of 20%, unless it became impossible to obtain HVO fuel. The waste service manager will ensure that Veolia are instructed to act on the decision from 1 July 2027. Prices will be continually monitored to ensure the optimum level of HVO / diesel is achieved.		

8.0 Signatures	
Assessor (report author):	
Name: ***Sarah Kingsley***	*Signature***
Validated by (line manager):	
Name:	*Signature***
Forward to the Policy inbox: policy@north-herts.gov.uk	
*Signature** Amber Smith-Howell*	
Assessment date: ***02/06/2026***	*Review date:* ***02/09/2026 (quarterly)***

** **Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically.**
A copy of this form should be forwarded to policy@north-herts.gov.uk and a duplicate filed on the council's report system, alongside any report proposing a decision on policy or service change.

CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: GA2 Access Land

REPORT OF: Principal Estate Surveyor Enterprise

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Enterprise

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site GA2 is a strategic housing site and lies to the north-east of Great Ashby and is allocated for a new neighbourhood of approximately 600 homes. Following approval of the Masterplan a planning application has been submitted under reference number: 25/03080/HYA. As part of the proposals a new access road to the development will be created from Mendip Way and to achieve this the developer will need to acquire land owned by third parties, including the Council.

At the meeting held on 23rd September 2025 Cabinet gave approval to the heads of terms for an option agreement to give the developer a right to acquire land owned by the Council to facilitate access to GA2, in collaboration with the other four owners. However, the heads of terms were subject to notices being published in accordance with s122 & s123 of LGA 1972 and to giving due consideration to objections received.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet notes that the proposals to appropriate open space for planning purposes and dispose of the open space land has been publicly advertised in compliance with the requirements of s122 and s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

2.2. Cabinet appropriates for planning purposes, pursuant to s122 of the Local Government Act 1972, the land that is the subject of the transaction for the purposes of facilitating the development of the GA2 site including the provision of a new access road and associated works and infrastructure.

2.3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director: Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources, to finalise, complete, sign and seal all necessary documentation associated with the transaction, subject to receipt of valuation advice confirming compliance with the Council's duty under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain best consideration reasonably obtainable.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Public notices as required by s122 & s123 of the LGA 1972 have been published and no objections or representations have been received by the deadline of 5pm on 15th May.

3.2. The recommendations are made to ensure that access is available to facilitate the development of GA2, a Strategic Housing site allocated in the Local Plan, which will

assist in the delivery of circa 600 new homes and associated facilities including affordable homes.

3.3. Completion of the sale is also expected to generate a capital receipt.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. For the Council, in its capacity as landowner, not to sell the land and not to properly deal with its obligations under the LGA 1972: This would prevent delivery of the access and development of the site, and a potential capital receipt. This course of action is not recommended.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Executive Members for Enterprise and Resources have been consulted.

5.2. Opposition lead members have been briefed, and Members are more widely aware of the proposed development.

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 13th September 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. The development of site GA2 is part of the Council's Local Plan. Under Policy SP18 of the Local Plan, site GA2 was allocated for a development of approximately 600 homes and associated facilities including affordable homes.

7.2. Site allocation GA2 is within Weston Parish whereas the land required for the access road is within Great Ashby.

7.3. To deliver this development, a new access road from Mendip Way to the site is needed.

7.4. The proposed route of the new access road will require the developer to acquire five parcels of land owned by third parties with one of the landowners being the Council. There is no viable alternative route for the access road.

7.5. Picture Estates Ltd and associated companies and personal interests own the land shown edged red on the plan at Appendix A and are promoting the development of the land in accordance with the local plan allocation. Picture Estates are an unconnected party to the Council. The land Picture Estates require for the access road is shown coloured blue on that plan and different parcels of land are owned by North Herts Council, Croudace, Vistry, the Trustees of the Weston Settlement and Homes England/Stevenage Borough Council.

7.6. The plan at Appendix C shows the Council's ownership edged red. The access land owned by the Council is currently designated as public open space and features a children's playground. To compensate for the loss of the public open space including playground, the planning application proposes the relocation of the play equipment, which will be at the developer's cost, and the provision of additional public open space within the GA2 development.

7.7. At the meeting held on 23rd September 2025 Cabinet gave approval to the heads of terms for an option agreement to give the developer a right to acquire land owned by the Council to facilitate access to GA2, in collaboration with the other four owners. However, the heads of terms were subject to the outcome of Notices being published under s122

& s123 of LGA 1972. The Cabinet decision was recorded under agenda item 19 & 20 of the printed minutes of the meeting.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The proposed option agreement is to give Picture Estates, or their successors, the right to acquire the land owned by the Council to facilitate the access to GA2, in collaboration with the other four owners. One of the conditions for exercising the option is that planning permission must have been granted for the development. The planning application has been submitted and is in outline for the development of the site but in detail regarding the new access road. It identifies a possible site for the relocation of the playground currently on the Council's land and new areas of public open space.

8.2. As it is public open space, section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to publish notification of its intention to dispose of the land in a local newspaper for two consecutive weeks and to consider any objections that are made before taking a decision to proceed. This process was not to be initiated until the planning application for the development was sufficiently advanced to identify plans for the re-provision of the existing play area and public open space to avoid the risk of legal challenge. Any obligation to dispose of the land was subject to due consideration of the objections received as part of the statutory process.

8.3. Once planning permission has been granted, Picture Estates intends to sell the site with the benefit of that permission.

8.4. Without all five parcels of land which form part of the access road, the development will not be able to take place. Consequently, there is a joint set of heads of terms between all the landowners and Picture Estates.

8.5. The heads of terms propose that all five landowners will grant the developer an option to acquire the land in their ownership in return for an agreed share of the net proceeds of sale achieved by Picture Estates. The share of net proceeds is calculated as a percentage of the development land value, less legal and professional fees. Each landowner will then receive one fifth of this sum, irrespective of the individual land parcel's location or size. This reflects the principle of equalisation as all five parcels of land are required.

8.6. To ensure that the Council complies with its statutory obligation to obtain best value for the disposal of the site, Avison Young Chartered Surveyors have been instructed to provide a report confirming that the payment due to the Council represents the best value that could be achieved. This Report should be available shortly after the Cabinet meeting.

8.7. All five landowners will sign a collaboration agreement governing co-operation, joint obligations, decision making, dispute resolution and cost/receipt.

8.8. The site will not be marketed by Picture Estates before the expiry of the period in which legal challenge could be raised to either the planning permission, disposal of public open space or release of the access road from any restrictive covenants. Further, there will need to be a period for marketing of the site. It could, therefore, be several years before the Council receives a capital receipt.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Cabinet, in exercising its functions, has powers to dispose of land or buildings where the consideration is between £250,000 and £2,500,000.

9.2. The option arrangement will enable the party that is successful in acquiring Picture Estates' interest to acquire the land needed for the access to the site.

9.3. Section 122(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a local authority intending to appropriate public open space for an alternative use to advertise its intentions in a local newspaper for 2 weeks and to consider objections received.

9.4. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows a Council to dispose of land in any manner it wishes provided that the consideration is the best that can be reasonably obtained unless the Secretary of State consents to the disposal.

9.5. Sections 123(2A) and 127(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 require a local authority wishing to dispose of open space to advertise its intentions in a local newspaper for 2 consecutive weeks and to consider objections received. The s122 & s123 Public Notices were published in The Comet Newspaper on 16th & 23rd April 2026 as per the Final Proof of the advert attached at Appendix B and no objections were received by the deadline of 5pm on 15th May.

9.6. In relation to the sites owned by third parties, there is a need for the Council to enter into Deeds of Variation to release obligations imposed under existing section 106 Agreements requiring the land to be used for public open space. This will be tied to the new GA2 planning application which will reflect mitigation measures as part of the new section 106 Agreement.

9.7. There are a number of procedures which need to be followed for the disposal of the site to mitigate any risk of challenge, and these will be adhered to once the planning application has been considered. The Council will continue to be advised throughout this process to ensure that the regulatory and statutory framework is fully adhered to.

9.8. Under section 122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 councils "may appropriate for any purpose for which the council are authorised by this or any other enactment to acquire land by agreement any land which belongs to the council and is no longer required for the purpose for which it is held immediately before the appropriation …" There is a statutory process which must be followed including consultation and formal appropriation which can only take place after the site has been granted planning permission.

9.9. Where land has been appropriated for planning purposes Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (power to override easements and other rights) applies such that the erection, construction or carrying out or maintenance of any building or work on the land (by the council or a person deriving title from the council) is authorised if it is done in accordance with planning permission, notwithstanding that it interferes with certain private rights such as restrictive covenants and easements. The effect of triggering section 203 is that private rights are effectively overridden and converted into a claim for compensation pursuant to s 204. The level of compensation for interference with rights or breach of restrictive covenant is assessed on the basis of the loss in value of the claimant's land as a consequence of the interference or breach of covenant. An important consequence of the operation of Section 203 is that a claimant cannot secure an injunction, to prevent the development from going ahead, their remedy is a claim for compensation.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The Council's legal & professional fees are being paid for by Picture Estates in the first instance, and the total amount will be deducted from the net proceeds of sale before an agreed percentage is distributed to the five landowners. This avoids the Council paying fees up front and being at risk of abortive costs in the unlikely event that a sale of the site does not complete.

10.2. The sale of this site will generate a capital receipt for the Council to assist in funding the overall capital programme. The use of capital receipts reduces the need for borrowing, which in turn reduces revenue costs from interest payments and Minimum Revenue Provision charges. This site will also contribute to providing additional housing in the district. Ultimately this will increase Council Tax income, although that will need to be balanced against the cost of increased service demand, including the direct costs of waste collection.

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 Cabinet decision on 23rd September 2025 was based on the option heads of terms, which stated that the option would be subject to the outcome of the s122/s123 processes. Public notices as required under s122 & s123 of the LGA 1972 have been published and no objections or representations have been received. This statutory process has, therefore, been followed.

11.3. Although the option agreement is due to be signed by all five landowners these are subject to contract and formal approval. The Option Agreement is still being negotiated by the solicitors acting for the 5 landowners involved and is not yet in a final approved form. There is a possibility that the option agreement and collaboration agreement will not be concluded. Should that happen, it may be necessary to consider using compulsory purchase powers, but this appears to be unlikely as matters currently stand given that each party is due to receive a substantial sum from the sale of their land, which has a low existing use value.

11.4. Although Site GA2 is an allocated site and a Strategic Masterplan Framework has been approved and adopted, Picture Estates still needs to obtain planning permission, and the application is currently under consideration.

11.5. If the proposed option agreement is signed this will confirm that the responsibility and liability for any additional risks that may arise from the appropriation of the land or payment of fees rests with Picture Estates.

11.6. The use of section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 may involve the payment of compensation to third parties based on the loss in value of the land that had the benefit of the rights/covenants that exist. The value will be provided by an independent valuer appointed by the Council and the proposed option agreement will confirm the responsibility and liability for the valuer's fees and payment of any compensation rests with Picture Estates.

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 equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. The environmental Impact of developing site GA2 will be considered as part of the planning application process for the site giving due regard to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for improvements to the natural environment.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 The Council has appointed external solicitors at the initial cost of Picture Estates. It is intended that this matter will be dealt with by the Estates team in conjunction with external solicitors and valuers. Should it be necessary for the Council to use other external consultants either because of a lack of resources within the Council or for reasons of expediency the cost of this will be covered by Picture Estates.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – Land owned or controlled by Picture Estates.
16.2 Appendix B – Public Notice as published on 16th & 23rd April 2026 in The Comet Newspaper.
16.3 Appendix C - Plan showing land owned by North Herts Council to which the Public Notice relates.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Stephen Hensby	Estates Surveyor	stephen.hensby@north-herts.gov.uk
Philip Doggett	Principal Estates Surveyor	Philip.Doggett@noth-herts.gov.uk
Steve Crowley	Service Director – Enterprise	steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk
Ian Couper	Service Director - Resources	Ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk
Reuben Ayavoo	Policy & Community Manager	Reuben.Ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk
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Natasha Jindal	Governance Consultant	Natasha.Jindal@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Masterplan - Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 19th November, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council

18.2 Previous Cabinet report - Cabinet Report item 20 23rd September 2025

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APPENDIX A:

GA2 - LAND OWNED OR CONTROLLED BY PICTURE ESTATES EDGED RED & ACCESS LAND COLOURED BLUE

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTIONS 122(2A) AND 123(2A)

NOTICE OF PROPOSED APPROPRIATION AND DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE LAND LOCATED TO THE EAST SIDE OF MENDIP WAY, GREAT ASHBY, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Sections 122(2A) and 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 that North Hertfordshire District Council of Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 3JF ("the Council") intends to:

(1) appropriate an area of public open space land for an alternative purpose pursuant to Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972; and

(2) dispose of an area of public open space land pursuant to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The land the subject of the proposed appropriation and disposal comprises approximately 0.54 hectares (1.34 acres) of public open space land situated to the south side of Cromdale Walk and east side of Mendip Way, Great Ashby, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, being part of the land comprised in HM Land Registry title number HD476885.

By virtue of Section 122(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972, where a local authority proposes to appropriate open space land for another purpose, the authority is required to give notice of the proposed appropriation and to consider any objections received.

By virtue of Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972, where a local authority proposes to dispose of open space land, the authority is required to give notice of the proposed disposal and to consider any objections received.

A copy of this Notice and an accompanying plan showing the land to which it relates will be made available for inspection during normal office hours at: North Hertfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 3JF.

Any objection or representations regarding the proposed appropriation and/or disposal should be made in writing, stating the grounds for objection, and submitted no later than 5:00 PM on 13th May 2026 to:
By post: North Herts Council PO Box 7075 Manchester M28 8JX
By email: Estates@north-herts.gov.uk

Dated this 16th day of April 2026

North Hertfordshire District Council

Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 3JF

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Land east of Mendip Way

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CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Funding for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

REPORT OF: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation, Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To seek agreement on how the LGR funding will be allocated, including decision making processes.

As part of the budget for 2026/27 onwards, £2 million was allocated towards the costs of LGR. This is made up of £1 million in 2026/27 and a further £1 million in 2027/28. The funding was allocated for three purposes:

- County-wide costs associated with the LGR project management and transition costs.
- Additional staffing costs arising from additional LGR work and/or back-filling to allow Officers to contribute towards the LGR programme.
- Training costs for our staff to allow them to be in the best place for LGR transition, and in turn support the new organisations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet approve that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to county-wide costs. Any contribution will be based on a fair share from each Council and can be approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and Executive Member for Resources.

2.2. That Cabinet approve that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to additional staffing costs, noting that £450k has already been allocated. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Resources, except where the Constitution already requires different approval processes.

2.3. That Cabinet approve that up to £200k of the available funding can be spent on additional training costs. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Resources.

2.4. That any spend is subject to cap of £1 million in 2026/27 and £2 million overall.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. This is intended to provide a practical framework for agreeing LGR costs. It aims to allow timely reactions in what will need to be a fast-moving project.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. All spend could be approved as it arises without delegation but that may then require use of urgency provisions.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. Relevant Executive Members have been consulted on this decision. The report will also be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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 15/5/2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. As part of the budget for 2026/27 onwards, £2 million was allocated towards the costs of LGR. This is made up of £1 million in 2026/27 and a further £1 million in 2027/28. The funding was allocated for three purposes:

- County-wide costs associated with the LGR project management and transition costs.
- Additional staffing costs arising from additional LGR work and/or back-filling to allow Officers to contribute towards the LGR programme.
- Training costs for our staff to allow them to be in the best place for LGR transition, and in turn support the new organisations.

7.2. On 22 April 2026, the Chief Executive made an urgent decision to allocate £450k of the funding for 4 posts (two in IT and two in HR). Each post was for a 2 year fixed-term period. See background papers for the decision notice.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. LGR is a huge change project that brings together a wide range of professional expertise and project management resource to achieve a successful transition to the new Unitary Councils in April 2028.

8.2. The Chief Executives Co-ordinating Group (CECG) have agreed a project structure including service workstreams, enabling workstreams, project support and a delivery unit. This will use a combination of funded staff (new appointments and continuation of appointments for staff where there was no funding in place), in-kind support from staff across the Councils (doing LGR work alongside their core role) and expert consultancy advice. There will also be other non-people costs incurred. CECG have agreed an interim budget for this work. This budget is currently being funded from the promised Government Grant funding. The funding is provided as a minimum of £900k per new Unitary Council (https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-

statements/detail/2026-03-25/hcws1455), so Hertfordshire could receive between £1.8 million and £3.6 million, depending on the decision on structure. The current allocated funding is under £1.8 million, but the total funding required will ultimately exceed Government funding, even at the higher level. The final version of the Hertfordshire LGR Reorganisation proposal to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) identified various one-off costs of which a proportion would be incurred prior to vesting day, i.e. programme management, contract novation/ renegotiation, communications and rebranding, estates and facilities reconfiguration, and specialist support and advice. The estimated overall total of these (including contingency) is just under £40 million. The element of these costs that is incurred prior to vesting day will need to be funded from the existing Councils. It has been agreed that costs will be shared 50% to the County Council and 5% to each of the ten District and Borough Councils. District and Boroughs have generally each set aside at least £1 million for LGR costs as part of their 2026/27 budget. Where the allocation by a Council is £1 million (rather than a greater amount) this is understood to be for these central county-wide costs only. It therefore seems reasonable that there should be delegated authority for spend up to £1 million. The spend on these costs may ultimately be above £1 million (prior to vesting day) but that would be subject to the additional requirements to allocate more budget (e.g. through the 2027/28 budget-setting process). To ensure equity the decisions need to be taken jointly, and are therefore currently being co-ordinated through the CECG. So the recommended delegation is to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (as relevant Executive Member), in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources.

8.3. Each Council will need to provide in-kind (unfunded) staff resource towards the LGR programme. There is a central list being maintained of the staff resource being provided as sub-workstream leads and project managers. The North Herts staff on that list are (currently): HR Services Manager (Workforce sub-workstream co-lead), IT Services Manager (Technology sub-workstream lead), Customer and Digital Project Manager (Technology project manager), Director- Customers (Director lead on the Technology workstream) and Director- Resources (Resources sub-workstream lead), Director for Governance (Democratic, Legal and Assurance workstream co-lead). The list does not include the Chief Executive (Workstream Co-Chair and significant other time on strategic direction, oversight groups and joint decisions through CECG) and other staff that are contributing to workstreams (large number with some contributing 1-2 days per week, or more). It is expected that the level of resource required will increase throughout the LGR programme.

8.4. This resource input will have an impact on normal service delivery. Some of this will be accommodated through a reduced need to undertake normal activity, as it is work that will be superseded by the new Unitary arrangements. To help mitigate the impact there will be a need for non-core projects to be significantly limited. In some areas (e.g. HR and IT were identified in the decision notice of 22nd April 2026) there will be a need for additional North Herts focused work and capacity as part of the transition process. The Officer Leadership Team has started to consider how North Herts can be a good ancestor (i.e. what can we do now to make things easier for the new Unitary Councils) which could also create more resource pressure. It is therefore proposed that the Chief Executive (as Head of Paid Service) be given authorisation to approve up to £1 million of the funding for additional temporary staffing resource. That delegation would be in consultation with the Leader of the Council. As £450k (amount may be lower due to the time taken to recruit) has already been allocated, that leaves around £550k that can be

allocated. If any appointment requires additional approval (e.g. Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer posts) then that will be obtained.

8.5. The LGR process is an uncertain time for staff. Ultimately there may be change to job roles and (for some roles) there may be a need to be selected for those new roles. Staff will be supported through the process and kept informed. There is also a commitment to make training and development available to staff to put them in the best possible place for any new roles and opportunities. Those options will be different for everyone (from no requirement or available from free resources, through to professional qualifications), so it is difficult to estimate a budget requirement. It is proposed that up to £200k can be allocated on training and development opportunities. This allocation would be approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council. As this is likely to be made up of many low value requests, the HR team will support with the allocation of this funding. All requests will require approval by the Line Manager.

8.6. The maximum amount that can be allocated under these delegations is £2.2 million. There will be monitoring processes in place to ensure that (1) the total allocation does not exceed £2 million and (2) the amount incurred in 2026/27 does not exceed £1 million.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Paragraph 14.6.5 a) i) determines that the Chief Executive shall "carry out the duties of the Head of Paid Service (section 4 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989) which includes all necessary powers for exercising overall managerial responsibility for staff".

9.2. Paragraph 5.7.3 states that Cabinet are "to take decisions on resources and priorities … and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council".

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. This report sets a process for allocating the LGR funding that has been agreed by Full Council as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process. It also highlights that there could be additional costs (beyond the amounts allocated) of the LGR process prior to vesting day. That would require a separate process (with approval by Council) to allocate further budget.

10.2. There are no capital implications arising from this report. There is a "Flexible Use of Capital Receipts" direction that allows Councils to use capital receipts to fund transformation programmes, which would include the LGR process. Capital receipts are the money that is received from the sale of assets. The Council does not currently have any available capital receipts, although there are forecasts of future capital receipts. Currently the Council has sufficient General Fund revenue reserves to fund its expected (pre-vesting day) LGR costs.

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. LGR is a corporate risk on the Council's risk register with a score of 9 (red risk). A significant element of the risk arises from the resource input required and the impact on staff. The allocations for staff resource and training aim to mitigate some of that risk.

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 specific equalities implications arising from this report. Opportunities for training will be available to all staff. Any prioritisation will be based on objective assessment.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1. There are significant HR implications arising from the LGR process, which are referenced in section 8.

16. APPENDICES

16.1. None

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Ian Couper	Director - Resources,	ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk,
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Rebecca Webb	HR Services Manager	Rebecca.webb@north-herts.gov.uk
Tim Everitt	Performance and Risk Officer	Tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1. Delegated Decision Notice (22 April 2026)
https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-04/12.%2022%20April%202026%20-%20LGR%20Funding%20for%20HR%20and%20IT.pdf

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CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: 2025-26 Q4 Council Delivery Plan Update

REPORT OF: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A year end update on progress against the Council Delivery Plan for 2025-26. Whilst this is a year end update it generally reflects progress as at the time the report was prepared (early May 2026).

The report also recommends the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets for 2026/27, and that the current incomplete Delivery Plan projects are retained for 2026/27. The Royston Learner Pool project will be added to the Council Delivery Plan.

Three projects (Phase 2 of Council building decarbonisation, Local Plan Review and Museum Collection Facility) have an amber project status. This reflects that milestone due dates have passed. In each case it is recommended that a new milestone target date is agreed.

Two projects (Leisure Centre Decarbonisation and Town Centre Strategy) have a green status, but it is recommended that new target dates are agreed that would extend the overall project timetable.

Three KPIs have a red status (Careline installations within both 5 and 10 working days, and Customer Service Centre calls answered within 45 seconds. Five KPIs have an amber status).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet notes the progress against projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan, and approves the changes to the milestones (Appendix 1).

2.2. That Cabinet notes the performance against the Key Performance Indicators and confirms the actions for those with a red or amber status.

2.3. That Cabinet approves the Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2026/27 (Appendix 2).

2.4. That Cabinet approves that the existing incomplete projects on the Council Delivery Plan are carried forward into 2026/27, and that the Royston Learner Pool project is added.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) report provides Cabinet with the opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects and KPIs, including any overall trends. This end of year report also sets the scope (projects and KPIs) for 2026/27 monitoring. Overview and Scrutiny can use these reports to help with setting their work programme.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. In developing the CDP, it was agreed that Cabinet would receive quarterly updates.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. Directors and Service Managers have provided the relevant information to enable the collation of this report and will also have made the relevant Executive Member aware of progress.

5.2. A draft of the Council Delivery Plan was provided to Risk and Performance Management Group (RPMG) in May. The Group has a standing invite to Executive Member for Resources, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Other members of either Committee and Cabinet are also welcome to attend. There were no specific issues raised by the RPMG.

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 15 May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. The CDP brings together projects, risks, and performance indicators together in one document. The projects and performance indicators to be included are agreed by Cabinet in June each year, although can be added to during the year.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

2025/26 Council Delivery Plan

8.1. Appendix 1 provides an update on the progress made in delivering the Council Delivery Plan 2025-26. Whilst it is labelled as a Quarter 4 (end of year) update, it generally reflects the latest position at the time that the report was written (early May). Milestones are set as far ahead as possible but are not included where there is too much uncertainty over the scope or timing of the milestone. In some cases, the expected actions are included, but without a target date.

8.2. The focus of the report is on providing a description of the progress made. Projects are rated on overall progress, i.e. shown as completed, on track, some delays, significant delays. Where there are delays, Cabinet will be asked to consider revisions to milestones. For this report:

- Six projects have proposed changes to dates of milestones. These are highlighted in yellow in Appendix 1.
- Two projects (Churchgate and Digital Transformation) have new milestones. These are highlighted in blue in Appendix 1.
- Three projects have an amber project status. This means that they have missed a milestone target date. For one project (Local Plan Review), this has been accompanied by milestone target date changes that have extended the end date of the project. For one project (Museum Collection Facility), milestone target dates have been added (previously not included) that extend the project beyond the previous overall end date. For the final one (Phase 2 of Council building decarbonisation), the overall end date is unaffected.
- A further project (Leisure Centre Decarbonisation) has not missed a milestone target date, but the proposed change to the milestone dates does extend the overall project end date.

8.3. Our performance indicators now reflect the overall performance of the Council. Whilst new indicators that align with Council Plan objectives are now included in Appendix 1, these have not been included in the status summaries detailed below and displayed in the appendix. These summaries only relate to the original 23 performance indicators that have been reported throughout the year. Performance levels are rated as either green (achieving or exceeding the target), amber (not achieving the target level and need to look at actions to get back on track) and red (urgent action needed to get back to the target performance). For this report:

- 6 indicators are rated green (5 at last report).
- 5 indicators are rated amber (6 at last report).
- 3 indicators are rated red (same as last report)
- 9 indicators do not have a target (unchanged from last report).

8.4. For the indicators that are rated red, the following actions are being taken:

- Careline installations completed within 5 working days (79.6% against a target of 90% and in line with the Q3 value):
  During 2025/26, performance against the 5-day installation KPI was impacted by reduced technician capacity (e.g. vacancies and absences), and fluctuating demand, particularly linked to hospital discharge activity. These challenges were actively managed through redeployment and task-balancing, targeted recruitment and phased onboarding, improved scheduling and workload smoothing, and prioritisation of urgent and safeguarding cases to ensure risk-critical outcomes were protected. Although KPI performance varied during periods of pressure, absolute delivery remained strong and stabilised towards the end of the year as capacity recovered and operational controls embedded. The target for 2026/27 is to sustain performance closer to the 5-day standard where capacity and referral patterns allow, while maintaining appropriate prioritisation for high-risk service users.
- Careline installations completed within 10 working days (97.7% against a target of 100% and in line with the Q3 value):
  Performance against the 10-day installation KPI remained consistently strong throughout 2025/26 (albeit below the challenging 100% target) and was less sensitive to workforce pressures than the 5-day measure. Where minor

variation occurred, this was driven primarily by client availability factors, including access constraints, hospital discharge coordination, and property readiness, rather than delays in operational delivery. These impacts were managed through active monitoring of longer-wait cases, effective backlog control, and prompt progression once external barriers were resolved, ensuring installations continued to complete within acceptable timescales. The target for 2026/27 is to maintain strong performance against the 10-day KPI, recognising that remaining variability is largely client-led rather than service-driven.

- Percentage of Customer Service Centre (CSC) calls answered within 45 seconds (56% against a target of 80%, and in line with the Q3 value):
  The Customer Service Centre continued to manage very high levels of demand, answering over 99,000 calls across the year; however, the overall percentage of calls answered (85%) and the percentage answered within 45 seconds (56%) fell short of targets. This was largely driven by sustained peak demand such as the Waste service change and garden waste resubscriptions, on top of ongoing staffing pressures and more complex enquiries, which all went towards extending average call handling times. Despite this, the service remained highly effective in dealing with the majority of customer contact, and work is ongoing to strengthen capacity, improve resilience at peak times, and reduce avoidable contact through continued promotion of appropriate digital and self-service options. The proposal (see Appendix 2) is that the target is retained at the same level of 80% for 2026/27, but with a wider tolerance for amber performance (60-79% rather than 70-79%).

8.5. For the indicators that are rated amber, the following actions are being taken:

- Percentage of Council Tax and Business Rates collected in year (both just under target (96.93% versus 97% and 94.57% versus 96%)):
  Recovery action had been suspended following the new finance system implementation. This was to ensure that the Council did not take action against anyone that had actually paid. The allocation of payments is now up to date, and recovery action has recommenced. This should lead to improved performance in 2027/28.
- Percentage of CSC call answered (85% against a target of 90%, an improvement on Q3 which was 84%):
  Actions being taken are the same as those to address the calls answered within 45 seconds KPI.
- Working days lost due to short-term absence (4.45 days per year per FTE against a target of 4 days):
  Current data is showing a gradual increase in short-term absences. This is in line with general trends. There is a risk that such absences could increase with the workload and wider implications of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process. Whilst managers will continue to be supported with absence prevention and management, the risk is that short-term absence will continue to increase.
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (58.67% against a target of 59%):
  Only just short of target and this data is still provisional.

2026/27 Council Delivery Plan

8.6. Three projects were completed during 2026/27 (King George V Skate Park, Waste and Street Cleansing Contract and Engaging the Community on our Finances). The remaining projects on the CDP are still in progress, so it is recommended that the projects are carried forward to 2026/27. It is recommended that The Royston Learner Pool project is added to the CDP. The LGR work is still identified as an over-arching risk. This reflects that it is being managed on a county-wide basis and the project plans are being managed on that basis, but the work involved creates a risk to the Council and may affect the ability to manage other projects.

8.7. Relevant managers have reviewed their KPIs for 2026/27, and in Appendix 2 there are recommendations on the targets to be adopted for 2026/27 or noting that they will be for information only. This includes the new KPIs that enable a stronger link to the Council Plan, that sit alongside those that measure corporate performance. Two data only KPIs are being proposed for deletion – 'Total number of [Careline] alarm calls in a given period' and 'Sign-ups to the Digital Budget Hub'. Cabinet are asked to approve the targets for 2026/27 and proposed deletions.

Access to Ideagen (previously known as Pentana)

8.8. All the detail behind the projects, risks and performance indicators is available to view in Ideagen, the Councils performance and risk software. A guest login is provided on the intranet for any member to use, along with a procedure note and short video on how to view the data.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The constitution determines the role of Cabinet as including: "To take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders and partners in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council. To monitor performance and risk in respect of the delivery of those policies and priorities" (paragraph 5.7.3).

9.2. There are no specific legal implications arising from the CDP. However, there may be individual legal implications for some of the projects outlined. Any commissioning of work on new and existing projects will follow the standard legal requirements and those required by the Council's internal standing orders, contained within the Constitution.

9.3. It is worth noting that a robust and measurable delivery plan is an important tool for the Council to fulfil the 'best value' requirement set out in Section 3 of the Local Government Act. The Act requires authorities, including the Council, 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." Monitoring reports to Members and actions arising from those reports will ensure discharge of this statutory responsibility.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Where projects are linked to efficiencies or investments then these are included in the budget proposals and monitored through the quarterly finance reports.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. 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 CDP aims to support the risk management process by directly linking risks to projects being undertaken, and strengthens the link between performance and risk, making risks more current and providing an improved perspective of the risks that the Council faces.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are no known environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. However, some of the projects to be monitored throughout the year are related to key environmental issues. Environmental Impact Assessments are conducted for individual projects, as needed.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1. There will continue to be a need to align Council and Service objectives with available people resources to be able to achieve them. The CDP helps to make that link clearer and highlights the risks to achieving them.

16. APPENDICES

16.1. Appendix 1- Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Q4 (end of year) Monitoring Report

16.2. Appendix 2- Key Performance Indicator proposed targets for 2026/27

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1. None

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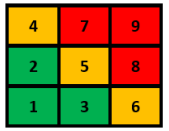
Council Delivery Plan – Status Key

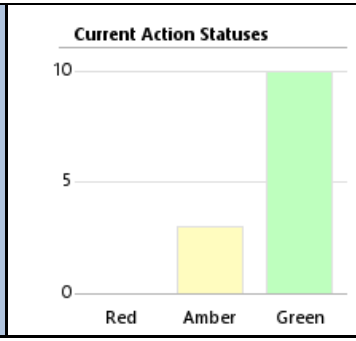
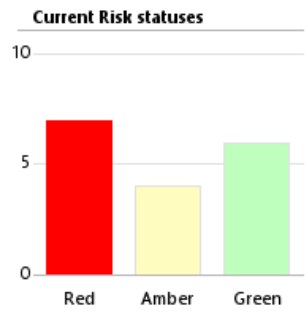
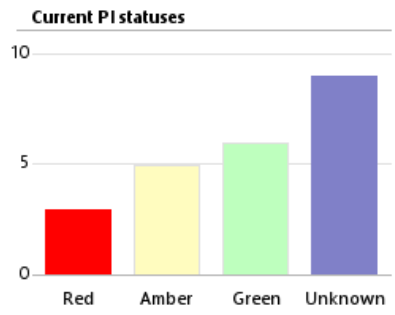
Status	Description
Projects	
	The project (and all recorded milestones) has been completed.
	All ongoing milestones have not reached their due dates (or do not have due dates).
	There is at least one ongoing milestone that has not been completed by the due date, but the overall project due date has not passed. Proposals to change milestone due dates will be made, which may also lead to a proposed change to the overall project due date.
	Overall project due date has passed and there is at least one milestone that has not been completed. Proposals to change project due date and milestone due dates will be made.
Risks	
	Assessed as a low risk.
	Assessed as a medium risk.
	Assessed as a high risk.
KPIs	
	Data value has met or exceeded the target figure. Performance is at an acceptable level.
	Data value has not achieved the target figure. Need to consider appropriate action to return performance to an acceptable level.
	Data value has not achieved the target figure. Urgent action required to return performance to an acceptable level.
	Data value is reported for 'information only' and there is no requirement to set targets for the KPI.
	Ideagen cannot calculate a status, as officers have not entered a target figure for the period.
	Data value has improved compared with the same time last year.
	Data value has deteriorated compared with the same time last year.
	Data value has not changed compared with the same time last year.
	Ideagen cannot calculate a direction of travel, as previous data is not available for comparison.



Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Year-End Monitoring Report – Project Statuses

Project	Status	Risk Level
Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2		
Local Plan Review		
Museum Collection Facility		
Churchgate		
Digital Transformation		
Leisure Centre Decarbonisation		
Oughtonhead Common Weir		
Pay on Exit Parking		
Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks		
Town Centres Strategy		
Engaging the community on our finances		
King George V Skate Park		
Waste and Street Cleansing Contract		

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Year-End Monitoring Report - Status Summaries

Projects Summary	Risks Summary	PIs Summary
		

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Year-End Monitoring Report - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

PI	Latest Update	Current Value	Current Target	Status	Trend (Compared with the same time last year)	2025/26 Target
Percentage of council tax collected in year	2025/26	96.93%	97%		(97.35%)	97%
Percentage of NNDR collected in year	2025/26	94.57%	96%		(95.38%)	96%
Council's Scope 1-3 emissions (tonnes CO2e)	2024/25	3,888.47	N/A Data Only		(3,782.50)	N/A Data Only
Number of Stage 1 complaints	2025/26	369	N/A Data Only		(176)	N/A Data Only
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days	2025/26	82%	80%		(94%)	80%

KPI	Latest Update	Current Value	Current Target	Status	Trend (Compared with the same time last year)	2025/26 Target
Percentage of Stage 2 complaints resolved within 20 working days	2025/26	91%	70%		(83%)	70%
Total number of alarm calls in a given period	2025/26	378,102	N/A Data Only		(378,104)	N/A Data Only
Rolling number of Careline service users supported under the HCC contract	March 2026	7,232	N/A Data Only		(6,992)	N/A Data Only
Percentage of Careline installations completed within 5 working days	2025/26	79.6%	90%		(94.1%)	90%
Percentage of Careline installations completed within 10 working days	2025/26	97.7%	100%		(99.0%)	100%
Percentage of CSC calls answered	2025/26	85%	90%		(88%)	90%
Percentage of CSC calls answered within 45 seconds	2025/26	56%	80%		(58%)	80%
Sign-ups to the Digital Budget Hub	Q4 2025/26	1,017	N/A Data Only		(243)	N/A Data Only
Average number of penalty points awarded per Grounds Maintenance contract monitoring inspection. (Lower numbers are good.)	2025/26	2.04	N/A Data Only		(3.95)	N/A Data Only
Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee	March 2026	4.45	4.00		(4.38)	Not Measured for Years
Working days lost due to long-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee	March 2026	4.42	N/A Data Only		(4.12)	N/A Data Only

KPI	Latest Update	Current Value	Current Target	Status	Trend (Compared with the same time last year)	2025/26 Target
Staff turnover - rolling 12-month percentage	March 2026	7.04%	15%		(10.06%)	Not Measured for Years
Percentage of advertised vacancies filled in first round	2025/26	82.1%	75%		(77.3%)	75%
Number of visits to leisure facilities	2025/26	1,558,505	N/A Data Only		(1,724,052)	N/A Data Only
Percentage of all planning applications determined within the relevant statutory or agreed time periods	2025/26	83.27%	80%		(85.02%)	80%
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	2025/26	58.67%	59%		(57.11%)	59%
Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste	2025/26	91	N/A Data Only		(47)	N/A Data Only
Performance against revenue budget (projection against original budget)	Q4 2025/26	-11.2%	0%		(-14.1%)	0%

* Data for the ‘Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting’ is only provisional, as we are still awaiting final Quarter 4 figures for a number of waste streams. Therefore, the currently reported percentage figure may be subject to change.

** Data for the ‘Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste’ only covers an 11-month period, as the new waste contract commenced in May 2025.

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Year-End Monitoring Report – New Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The table below displays the new KPIs that will now be included in the Council Delivery Plan. These KPIs have not been included in the Status Summaries section above but will be included for future Council Delivery Plan monitoring reports.

KPI	Latest Update	Current Value	Current Target	Status	Trend (Compared with the same time last year)	2025/26 Target
Percentage of primary schools in North Herts subscribed to the museum loan service	2025/26	37.3%	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Number of consultations and surveys completed	2025/26	9	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Number of responses to consultations and surveys	2025/26	4,170	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Number of people attending outreach activity and wellbeing sessions	New for 2026/27					
Number of Community Forum Grants awarded	2025/26	55	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Value of Community Forum Grants awarded	2025/26	£65,511	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Net number of new dwellings built	2025/26	439	N/A Data Only		(407)	N/A Data Only
Number of new homes granted planning permission	2025/26	711	N/A Data Only		(1,185)	N/A Data Only

KPI	Latest Update	Current Value	Current Target	Status	Trend (Compared with the same time last year)	2025/26 Target
Growth in properties paying Council Tax	2025/26	0.81%	N/A Data Only		(0.5%)	N/A Data Only
Section 106 spend – value returned to developers	2025/26	£0	£0		(£0)	£0
Number of Council-approved habitat banks in the district	2025/26	2	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Number of biodiversity units to be delivered by Council-approved habitat banks in the district	2025/26	229	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Number of NHDC-supported electric vehicle charge points available for public use	2025/26	25	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only
Number of electric vehicle charge points available to NHDC fleet vehicles only	2025/26	12	N/A Data Only		(New for 2025/26)	N/A Data Only

* Data for the two consultations/surveys KPIs is only provisional, as we are awaiting confirmation of whether a further two exercises need to be included in the 2025/26 figures.

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Year-End Monitoring Report - Projects / Risks

	Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2				
Council Plan Objective	Sustainability (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-Mar-2028	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2028
Project Summary	Finalise plans and complete works to decarbonise further Council buildings - Hitchin Town Hall, North Herts Museum, and the learner pool at North Herts Leisure Centre. 2025/26 is a planning year, with the project progressing throughout 2026/27 towards works commencing in 2027/28 and due to complete by 31 March 2028. Current milestones only relate to the planning year 2025/26 and activities scheduled to complete in early 2026/27. Decarbonisation of the District Council Offices is also part of the wider project but will now be delivered by Property Services using existing contractors.				
Latest Update	01-May-2026 Following the 2025/26 planning year, the project will progress throughout 2026/27 towards works commencing on site in 2027/28. Works still due to complete by 31 March 2028. Funding for the project has been secured via the Capital Programme and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 4). To progress a more practical and cost-effective solution for the District Council Offices, these works will now be delivered by Property Services using existing contractors. This element of the project will now fall outside of PSDS funding, and we have notified Salix of this but will only formally issue a change request once preliminary designs are complete. We have appointed a principal designer, quantity surveyor, and architect, to support continuity across the wider PSDS funded project. Initial surveys of relevant buildings have been undertaken and RIBA stages 2-3 designs have been signed off ahead of planning submission. The NHLC planning application was submitted on 24 April 2026 and the HTH planning application is due to be submitted in May 2026. A Project Board meeting is scheduled for 18 May 2026 to discuss an updated cost plan and preferred procurement route for the main contractor, after which, we should be in a position to add further milestones to the Council Delivery Plan item. We continue to update Salix on progress, which has moved to monthly monitoring reports in 2026/27. At this early stage, there remains some uncertainty associated with aspects of the project, with failure to obtain planning permission for Hitchin Town Hall identified as one of the top risks. Despite the currently assessed overall high risk level, the governance arrangements in place and the activities planned over coming months aim to mitigate project risks and in time, reduce the assessed risk level.				

Milestone	**Due Date**	**Complete**	**Note**
Full Council approve NHC capital budget to deliver project.	27-Feb-2025	Yes	On 27 February 2025, Full Council approved a capital budget of £1.98m as part of the Capital Programme 2025-35.
Salix funding secured.	30-Apr-2025	Yes	In April 2025, Salix awarded the Council £1.17m of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 4) funding. At this time, the estimated total project cost was £3.15m.
Commence engagement with officers delivering the Leisure Centre Decarbonisation project.	21-May-2025	Yes	We held discussions with the project team delivering the Leisure Centre Decarbonisation project to share internal lessons learned and help inform our approach to managing this Phase 2 project.
Submit first Salix monitoring report.	13-Jun-2025	Yes	We submitted our first monitoring report to Salix in June 2025 and had an initial meeting with our Salix relationship manager.
Project Board established.	17-Jun-2025	Yes	
Appoint Quantity Surveyor to review initial feasibility study.	15-Jul-2025	Yes	We appointed Varsity Consulting (who provide QS support to the Leisure Centre Decarbonisation project) to review the initial feasibility study.
Feasibility study received from Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd.	01-Aug-2025	Yes	We appointed WDC (the contractor who assisted us with our funding application) to conduct a feasibility assessment. The aim was for this to help us validate the original funding submission, revise/update overall costs, update the project programme, revise cash flow in line with total project value and Salix submission, update anticipated running costs, review planning options, and provide options for procurement of solutions.

Technical presentation of feasibility study by WDC.	13-Aug-2025	Yes	
Initial meeting with Varsity Consulting to discuss options to take forward to Project Board.	15-Aug-2025	Yes	Initial meeting held.
Project Board to agree a preferred procurement option for delivering the pre-construction phase.	08-Sep-2025	Yes	Project Board meeting took place, but no decision was made on a preferred procurement option. Following advice from Varsity Consulting, an additional feasibility study was requested.
Cabinet report seeking funding approval for appointing a Principal Designer and a Quantity Surveyor for the full project.	23-Sep-2025	Yes	Services provided by Quantity Surveyor and Principal Designer were not covered by existing project budget. Cabinet approved the additional funding via the first quarter Capital Budget Monitoring Review 2025/26 report.
CPW to provide updated feasibility study and Varsity Consulting to provide related costings.	04-Nov-2025	Yes	Requested by Project Board on 8 September 2025.
Project Board decision on a preferred delivery route.	13-Nov-2025	Yes	
Design phase commences.	12-Jan-2026	Yes	Following the appointment of a principal designer, the design phase commenced.
Appoint quantity surveyor, designer, and architect to help deliver project.	31-Jan-2026	Yes	On 13 November 2025, Project Board approved the project approach and the appointment of a quantity surveyor, designer, and architect to assist with the delivery of the project. We have now appointed to all of these, with the final one completing on 17 February 2026.
Confirm to Salix that we intend to proceed with the project into the first delivery year, in line with funding conditions.	31-Jan-2026	Yes	Confirmed to Salix via email on 30 January 2026.
Surveys of the buildings completed.	20-Mar-2026	Yes	Surveys undertaken as follows: - A structural survey was undertaken on 9 February 2026 (HTH). - An acoustic survey was undertaken between 13 and 16 March 2026 to identify background noise levels in relation to the air source heat pump (HTH and NHLC). - A solar suitability assessment was undertaken on 2 March 2026, outlining the limited locations suitable for rooftop solar (HTH). - A heritage site visit was undertaken on 16 April 2026 to support production of a heritage statement. - A preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken on 16 April 2026 (HTH).
Decision point on proceeding to the procurement of contractor before or after RIBA stage 4 detailed designs.	30-Apr-2026	No	**Due date to change to 18 May 2026.** An additional Project Board meeting will now be arranged for 18 May 2026 to discuss an updated cost plan and preferred procurement route for the main contractor.
Planning submission.	30-Apr-2026	No	**Due date to change to 31 May 2026.** The NHLC planning application was submitted on 24 April 2026. The HTH planning application is now due to be submitted in May 2026.
RIBA stages 2-3 designs sign-off.	30-Apr-2026	Yes	Completed ahead of planning submission, having been signed off at Project Board on 20 April 2026.
Planning approval received.	06-Jul-2026	No	The due date is based on the current project programme. This is subject to Planning, as an external party to the project.
Pre-construction Service Agreement signed.		No	If required, timings to be confirmed at appropriate time later in the project.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Key Risks: - Failure to obtain planning permission - particular risk for Hitchin Town Hall as it is a listed building (currently assessed as a top risk for the project). - NHC responsible for funding all project costs beyond agreed grant funding. - Failure to deliver project in line with agreed grant conditions leads to loss of grant funding - grant spend scheduled for 2026/27 and 2027/28. - Delays obtaining required Distribution Network Operator/Planning approvals lead to delays in commissioning/completing project works. - Unforeseen detailed survey findings require changes to project specifications and lead to additional financial costs e.g., identification of asbestos.		7	7	5

	Local Plan Review				
Council Plan Objective	Responsible Growth (2024-28)	**Due Date**	05-Jan-2029	**Original Date**	31-Dec-2027
Project Summary	To undertake an update of the Council's statutory Local Plan as agreed in principle by Cabinet in January 2024.				
Latest Update	28-Apr-2026 New plan-making regulations came into force on 25 March 2026. Officers prepared a revised programme, presented to Cabinet on 20 January 2026, based on the requirements that were set out in the then guidance. The report to Cabinet requested delegated authority to submit the required documentation once the new system became operational, as well as update the revised timetable if necessary. Following the introduction of the new system in March 2026, officers have revised the timetable, which aligns with the new requirements. The Council published its 'Notice of intention' to review the Local Plan on 24 April 2026. The new timetable sets out the expectation that submission of the proposed Local Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination will take place at the end of May 2028, with adoption following in early January 2029. The Strategic Planning Manager role is currently occupied on an interim basis and will be advertised in September 2026. Two Senior Planner roles were advertised to assist in the capacity of the wider team, and both have been filled. A temporary contract role, originally filled for six months to provide additional support, has been extended until December 2026. A bid for additional MHCLG funding for local authorities preparing Local Plans under the new system as long as they met certain milestone dates has been successful. This funding will help provide additional staff capacity and skills required for meeting the milestone requirements. Implementation of the consultation and site analysis digital platform has commenced, and evidence and scoping work continues. The initial Call for Sites ran from June to mid-September 2025. A further request for information from promoters will close on 8 May 2026 with further analysis continuing throughout 2026. Changes to milestone due dates have been highlighted, which align with the revised programme that came into effect from 24 April 2026.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
01. In principle approval that Local Plan review is undertaken.	16-Jan-2024	Yes	Approved by Cabinet in January 2024.
03. Approval of Local Development Scheme.	14-Jan-2025	Yes	Approved by Cabinet in January 2025.
03. Approval of revised Local Plan Timetable.	20-Jan-2026	Yes	Approved by Cabinet in January 2026.
04. Notice of start of plan-making given to Secretary of State.	24-Apr-2026	Yes	Notice published on our website on 24 April 2026.
05. Early scoping consultation.	27-Apr-2026	No	**Due date to change to 11 May 2026.** Document prepared and undergoing sign off.
06. Complete 'Gateway 1' advisory assessment.	29-Jun-2026	No	**Due date to change to 9 October 2026.** Milestone in line with the published timetable.
07. Complete first mandatory public consultation - proposed content and evidence base.	17-Aug-2026	No	**Due date to change to 24 November 2026.** Milestone in line with the published timetable.
08. Complete 'Gateway 2' (4-6 weeks).	23-Nov-2026	No	**Due date to change to 5 April 2027.** Will be undertaken in March / April 2027. Milestone in line with the published timetable.
09. Complete second mandatory public consultation - draft Local Plan.	13-Sep-2027	No	**Due date to change to 4 January 2028.** Milestone in line with the published timetable.
10. Complete 'Gateway 3' assessment and submit for examination.	23-Jan-2028	No	**Due date to change to 31 May 2028.** Milestone in line with the published timetable.
11. Receipt of examination outcome.	29-Sep-2028	No	**Due date to change to 30 November 2028.** Milestone in line with the published timetable.

12. Finalisation and adoption of digital Local Plan.	30-Oct-2028	No	**Due date to change to 5 January 2029.** Milestone in line with the published timetable.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: **- Further reforms to the planning system or national policy:** The introduction of new or substantive reforms could impact the scope and content of the Local Plan. The new NPPF includes non-statutory Development Management policies. There is currently uncertainty about how these should be applied when decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This may have implications for decision making and could lead to increased challenges through appeals and the courts. **- Inability to recruit or retain experienced officers:** Previous recruitment exercises have been unsuccessful, with limited interest due to salary levels not aligning with expectations or with those offered by neighbouring authorities. This poses a risk to delivering the required programme of work. **- Internal delays in securing necessary resources:** Organisational complexities may delay resources needed to progress the Local Plan such as overly complex procurement processes. **- Insufficient overall capacity to deliver the Local Plan update:** Limited staffing and competing priorities may constrain the ability to complete required tasks within statutory timeframes. **- Lack of clear or aligned corporate direction:** Conflicting priorities or a lack of shared vision across departments could hinder a joined-up approach to strategy development and policy alignment. **- Introduction of new Spatial Development Strategies (SDS):** SDS preparation is likely to progress on a similar timeline to the Local Plan, creating risks of abortive work, policy conflict, or delays due to uncertainty or required changes. Early collaboration and shared evidence gathering between authorities will be essential. **- Failure to secure adequate funding:** Insufficient financial resources could delay or limit the scope of the Local Plan review. **- Failure to obtain political or Government approval at key stages:** Lack of support or sign off at critical gateways could stall progress. **- Risk of Government intervention:** If inadequate progress is made on the Local Plan review, the Council may be subject to intervention measures. **- Inadequate guidance leading to poor scheme outcomes:** Insufficient clarity in national policy or guidance may result in development that does not appropriately support corporate priorities relating to climate change, the environment, the economy, or place making. **- Poor design outcomes:** Development may fail to respond appropriately to local character and context if policy clarity or evidence is lacking. **- Adverse appeal decisions:** Delays or stalling of the Local Plan review may increase the risk of unfavourable appeal outcomes on non-Local Plan sites. **- Impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR):** LGR proposals may divert resources, affect the timetable or approach, or introduce new workstreams. LGR may also result in conflicting policy approaches between authorities; early collaboration will be required to align policy direction where possible.		5	5	3

Museum Collection Facility

Council Plan Objective	Thriving Communities (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-Jan-2029	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2028
Project Summary	Delivery of a new facility to house the museum collection of North Hertfordshire.				
Latest Update	08-May-2026 We have commenced the project to resolve current museum collection storage capacity pressures and to secure the long-term future and preservation of the museum collection in an environmentally stable facility. A modern and upgraded facility also provides the opportunity to facilitate greater community outreach and engagement, along with enhancing our ability to rotate lesser seen items from our collection in temporary museum displays. The current estimate is that we will complete the renovation at the end of Summer 2027, followed by relocation of the museum collection to the new facility. In July 2025, the Council acquired a suitable long leasehold facility in Letchworth, and we are now moving forward with converting this into a long-term home for the museum collection facility. An initial Project Board meeting took place in September 2025, and a number of developments have already occurred. The existing tenants' lease has been extended until July 2026, allowing time for the designs for the new facility to be progressed whilst securing additional income for the Council and avoiding an extended void period. A communications plan has been adopted, and officers are developing a full submission for grant funding based on a successful expression of interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We are also at an advanced stage of negotiations with a potential provider of professional technical services, who will provide the expertise necessary to spearhead design work and develop technical specifications. We expect to appoint the provider by the end of May 2026. Indicative milestone due dates for the whole project have now been entered, following the production of the latest indicative programme, which benefits from the potential provider's technically informed specialist knowledge. These indicative dates will be confirmed following the completion of a formal contract and further detailed work to develop a comprehensive and realistic delivery programme. The project will also include appointing to community engagement and collection relocation related roles (both paid and voluntary) to progress related workstreams at the appropriate time. Key risks include financial pressures, escalating costs, staffing capacity, possible damage to the collection, managing staff/Member/public expectations, and possible loss of accreditation, although this last one has lessened due to the Council embarking on this project. Although the overall risk level is assessed as high, this reflects the risk score for the highest risk area (Project Team capacity throughout the whole project lifecycle) and is should be noted that the majority of risks recorded in the project risk log are assessed as low risk.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
01. Cabinet approval for the acquisition of a long leasehold interest of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City.	18-Mar-2025	Yes	
02. NHC formally acquires the long leasehold interest of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City.	04-Jul-2025	Yes	Sitting tenant now in place until July 2026. NHC agreed an extension to the lease (previously to January 2026) to allow time for project design work and a specification for the procurement of a principal renovation contractor to progress whilst securing an ongoing income stream while this happens and avoiding an extended void period.
03. Project Board established.	31-Jul-2025	Yes	
04. Commence Project Board meetings.	02-Sep-2025	Yes	
05. Present project information note and update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	06-Jan-2026	Yes	
06. Appoint Professional Technical Services contractor to guide and support NHC through design phases.	31-Mar-2026	No	**Due date to change to 31 May 2026.**
07. Sitting tenant vacates premises following expiration of lease.	08-Jul-2026	No	
08. Procure principal renovation contractor and mobilise contract.	31-Jan-2027	No	**Indicative due date added.**
09. Complete recruitment to collection strand project roles (roles potentially grant funded).	26-Apr-2027	No	**Indicative due date added.**

10. Commence onsite renovation works.	31-May-2027	No	**Indicative due date added.**
11. Commence recruitment and training of volunteers to support project stages that follow completion of renovation works.	07-Jun-2027	No	**Indicative due date added.**
12. Complete renovation of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City.	17-Sep-2027	No	**Indicative due date added.** Currently, expect renovation works to be completed at the end of Summer 2027.
13. Commence relocation of museum collection to new facility.	04-Oct-2027	No	**Indicative due date added.**
14. Complete relocation of museum collection to new facility.	31-Jan-2029	No	**Indicative due date added.** Existing Bury Mead Road site will then subsequently be fully vacated.
Conclusion of design works.		No	**Milestone proposed for deletion.** Design will evolve throughout the project in various phases, so not necessarily best suited to be represented by a single milestone.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Key Risks: - Failure to deliver project to planned project timescales and within agreed budgets. - Project Team capacity to deliver project is in addition to existing business-as-usual responsibilities. - Failure to secure external grant funding to maximise the ambitions of the project. - Delays in procuring the design technical team early in the project utilises all time contingencies built into the overall programme.		7	7	3

	Churchgate				
Council Plan Objective	Responsible Growth (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-Mar-2027	**Original Date**	
Project Summary	Progress the long-term regeneration of the shopping centre and surrounding areas. Project will span a number of years. Currently, recorded action relates to key milestones up to 2025/26 and early 2026/27.				
Latest Update	01-May-2026 The scheme remains committed to the five development principles agreed following public consultations and stakeholder engagement. A regeneration specialist Project Manager was appointed in September 2025 for an initial period of one year, and this has now been extended. The Project Team have been undertaking soft market testing over recent months to engage with potential interested parties, and the formal procurement preliminary market engagement exercise is due to conclude in May/June 2026. Two Member briefing sessions have already been held, with approximately 60% of Members attending, and a final in-person briefing session prior to UKREiiF 2026 is scheduled for 13 May 2026. At UKREiiF in May 2026, we will be hosting a breakfast event to engage with interest parties and potential developers on a non-committal, open forum basis. The aim is to seek views on the viability of proposals and to gauge how receptive the market may be. Following UKREiiF, Project Board will be asked for a decision on a preferred approach, and subsequent reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet are still currently expected to be presented in June 2026. The Enterprise Manager continues to work with Hitchin Market to ensure that the operation is successful in the interim period leading up to the regeneration, and traders continue to be engaged and supported whilst the Council determines the next steps. At an appropriate time, further milestones and related timings for the Council Delivery Plan will be developed. Due to the challenges, uncertainty, and variables associated with the project, the overall risk level remains high. However, current project management arrangements and controls enable us to manage these risks as well as we can, albeit that certain external factors are out of our control.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
Start of engagement.	02-Sep-2024	Yes	
Run workshops.	16-Sep-2024	Yes	Hitchin Market Board workshop held 9 September 2024. Hitchin Forum workshop held 9 September 2024 (in the evening). Tenants workshop held 12 September 2024.
Start public consultation.	17-Sep-2024	Yes	
Public consultation ends.	01-Oct-2024	Yes	The consultation period was extended to 3 November 2024 to take into account the leaflet drop to all North Hertfordshire households.
Open 'in-person' Churchgate Regeneration Hub on market days, up to the end of the consultation period.	17-Oct-2024	Yes	Churchgate Regeneration Hub opened in an unused Churchgate unit.
Feedback to Project Board.	29-Oct-2024	Yes	Update on progress presented to Project Board on 14 October 2024.
Feedback to Project Board.	26-Nov-2024	Yes	Project Board meeting re-scheduled to 4 December 2024. Consultation findings were presented to Project Board at this meeting.
Publish second stage public consultation feedback report.	28-Feb-2025	Yes	Consultation results published in February 2025 and communicated throughout March 2025.
Complete detailed evaluation of consultation findings and financial options appraisal.	16-May-2025	Yes	
Project Board decision on overarching direction and preferred pathway.	16-May-2025	Yes	

Attend UKREiiF 2025.	22-May-2025	Yes	Anthony Roche, Steve Crowley and Chloe Gray attended UKREiiF - 20-22 May 2025.
Report to Council and formal decision on overarching direction and preferred pathway.	10-Jul-2025	Yes	At Full Council on 10 July 2025, councillors voted to progress with their preferred approach to regenerate the Churchgate area, following extensive public consultation and technical feasibility work.
Churchgate Project Board Workshop 1	28-Nov-2025	Yes	
Churchgate Project Board Workshop 2	08-Dec-2025	Yes	
Project Board meeting to finalise the position of the project and recommended options prior to Member Briefing and Cabinet report/decision.	27-Feb-2026	Yes	Project Board met on 27 February 2026. Agreed that the Project Team progress to launching a soft market testing phase, in line with the Project Team recommendation.
Member Briefings.	13-May-2026	No	Two briefing sessions have already been held, with approximately 60% of Members attending. The last briefing session prior to UKREiiF 2026 will be in-person and is scheduled for 13 May 2026.
New Milestone - Undertake soft market testing and other preparatory work prior to UKREiiF 2026.	18-May-2026	No	**New milestone.** Significant work and soft market testing have been undertaken over recent months to engage with potential interested parties. The formal procurement preliminary market engagement exercise will conclude in May/June 2026.
Host event at UKREiiF 2026.	21-May-2026	No	We will be attending UKREiiF in May 2026 and have invited interested parties identified through soft market testing (and other parties) to a breakfast event so that we can engage with potential developers on a non-committal, open forum basis.
New Milestone - Project Board decision on preferred approach.	05-Jun-2026	No	**New milestone.** Project Board meeting date still to be confirmed, although expect this to happen prior to the O&S meeting on 9 June 2026.
Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	09-Jun-2026	No	Currently still anticipate presenting a report to O&S at the 9 June 2026 meeting.
Further report to Cabinet.	16-Jun-2026	No	Currently still anticipate presenting a report to Cabinet at the 16 June 2026 meeting.
22. Start procurement process for development partner.		No	Milestone and due date to be confirmed. Dependent on Project Board's recommended option for moving the project forward and subsequent Cabinet decision.
23. Procurement process for development partner ends and contract awarded.		No	Milestone and due date to be confirmed. See note for above milestone.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. The regeneration will not meet expectations of stakeholders. 2. Regeneration of the Centre and surrounding area is not cost effective/not affordable. Including impacts of possible high inflation and increasing cost of building materials. 3. Availability of specific funding for consultants (i.e., agreed budgets and income from existing tenants). 4. Overspends against agreed project budgets.		9	8	6

	Digital Transformation				
Council Plan Objective	Accessible Services (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-Mar-2028	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2025
Project Summary	Invest in and develop a low code digital platform that can be used to transform our services and applications. Programme to span a number of years, with the Council Delivery Plan project focussing on key activities planned for the short-term.				
Latest Update	24-Apr-2026 The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) platform went live in mid-March 2026 and an additional councillor platform, which was not included in the original scope, was subsequently added later in March 2026. Finance system integrations for Waste process automations have been fully signed off and went live in April 2026. Officers are currently investigating other options for delivering enhancements to the Hitchin Town Hall booking system and we expect a decision on a preferred approach in May 2026. Following this, we will be in a position to update the milestone/timings to reflect the preferred path and whether the Digital Services team will be directly involved. We have utilised UKSPF funding to secure a support officer for six months to assess our services' digital inclusion and to propose related recommendations and start to implement identified improvements. Initial focus is on customer facing services. This project will run to the end of August 2026. Currently, CRM/Tascomi integrations for a number of regulatory services are still in the planning/scoping phase. Timings still to be determined, as the third party supplier has only just given us access to the required test system. The Digital Services team are now undertaking practical testing to move things forward, but potential delays in receiving responses from the third party supplier remains a risk to how quickly the project progresses. Due to finance system integrations for Grants process automations being more complicated than first envisaged, further scoping work will be required. However, this is a low priority project and currently resources are assigned to the CRM/Tascomi integrations project. Prior to completing the process automations, the Community Partnerships team continue to undertake the relatively straightforward manual processes. In general, key risks to the programme continue to be the availability of sufficient resources (including the diversion of resources to the LGR process) and LGR creating general uncertainty across the organisation. The Digital Services team continue to progress several parallel workstreams alongside core programme delivery, including the rollout of Microsoft Copilot across the organisation, undertaking business process analysis to identify options for digitalisation/optimisation and prepare for LGR, and continuing to develop a range of ad-hoc online forms and digital processes to meet service needs.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
Scope and investigate replacement of Burials system.	30-Jun-2024	Yes	Initial decision was to provide a replacement system via the new digital platform.
Integrate Netcall into Microsoft Azure for wider integration capabilities.	30-Sep-2024	Yes	The Azure tenancy can facilitate single sign on for customers to sign in via MyAccount or for staff to sign into any applications created.
Commence development of waste services processes and preparations for integration with new contractors' software.	01-Oct-2024	Yes	Work commenced, with plans agreed with Veolia.
Hitchin Town Hall booking system developed.	31-Oct-2024	Yes	The Hitchin Town Hall application was completed and handed over.
Waste Services - integrations with contractors' software.	30-Jun-2025	Yes	Completed on 7 August 2025. There was a slight delay fully integrating with Veolia systems, caused by late access to Veolia's ECHO system/data (April 2025) and delays clarifying specific data requirements. This delay did not have any impact from a customer perspective.
Waste Services - project delivery.	30-Jun-2025	Yes	High priority waste services processes were available for the start of the contract, with lower priority/frequency processes completed and delivered by 7 August 2025. One additional form, Waste Issues, was not delivered at this time, but there was an alternative way for Customer Services to do this, so the delay did not impact the customer experience.
Development and delivery of Trade Waste processes.	07-Aug-2025	Yes	This work was outside the scope of the original Waste Services project. The majority of Trade Waste processes went live on 7 August 2025 when we implemented the weekly system updates. There was a small part still outstanding due to needing process clarity, but the rest were live. The outstanding item had minimal impact, and the milestone was considered complete.

Development and delivery of a Grants database.	28-Nov-2025	Yes	Database now live. Officially launched on 24 November 2025.
Safety Advisory Group (SAG) platform.	12-Mar-2026	Yes	The platform went live in mid-March 2026. An additional councillor platform, which was not included in the original scope, was subsequently added later in March 2026.
TechnologyOne integrations: Waste process automations.	31-Mar-2026	Yes	The TechnologyOne/Waste project has been fully signed off and is now live.
New Milestone - Digital Inclusion Project.	31-Aug-2026	No	**New milestone.** We have utilised UKSPF funding to secure a support officer for six months to assess our services' digital inclusion, propose related recommendations, and start to implement identified improvements. Initially, focus is on customer facing services.
Scoping Version 2 of the Hitchin Town Hall booking system.	30-Sep-2026	No	**Previous due date to be removed.** Officers are now investigating other options, to enable a decision to be made in May 2026 regarding the best way to deliver further enhancements to the HTH booking system. Following the May 2026 decision, we will be in a position to update the milestone/timings to reflect the preferred option and the related involvement of Digital Services.
CRM/Tascomi integrations - Regulatory services.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Currently still in the planning/scoping phase. Timings still to be determined, as the third party supplier has only just given us access to the required test system. Digital Services are now undertaking practical testing to move things forward. The delay in the third party supplier responding to requests remains a risk to how quickly the project progresses.
TechnologyOne integrations: Grants process automations.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Following initial investigations, we have determined that this is more complicated than first envisaged and further scoping work is required. This is a low priority project and currently resources are assigned to the CRM/Tascomi integrations project. Prior to completing the process automations, the Community Partnerships team will continue to undertake the relatively straightforward manual processes.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Resources within key teams available to deliver. 2. Unexpected limitations within new digital platform (now assessed as low risk). 3. Delays in receiving required access to and/or responses from third party systems/providers. 4. Local Government Reorganisation creates uncertainty around the delivery of the wider programme.		6	6	3

	Leisure Centre Decarbonisation				
Council Plan Objective	Sustainability (2024-28)	**Due Date**	27-Oct-2026	**Original Date**	02-Feb-2026
Project Summary	Using a combination of external funding and NHC capital funding, deliver a project to decarbonise our three leisure centres. The main activities are replacing end of life gas boilers with Air Source Heat Pumps and installing Solar PV panels to enable on-site generation of electricity. Replacing gas heating for our leisure centres with low carbon alternatives is the single most effective action we can take towards meeting our target of being carbon neutral by 2030.				
Latest Update	06-May-2026 Building works at Royston Leisure Centre have been completed and signed off, with a formal handover to Everyone Active on 14 April 2026. Salix have approved the final commissioning conditions, and we have received the full grant value. The programme at North Herts Leisure Centre (NHLC) and Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre (HSFC) has been delayed due to the additional time required to complete legal easements with third parties. These easements are needed to enable the new electricity supplies for the substations and their connection to the wider electricity network at both sites. The project team is working closely with third-party landowners (Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and Hitchin Cow Commoners Trust) and the statutory authority (UKPN) to progress these easements. However, delays have arisen due to multiple required amendments and slow response times from third-party solicitors. As a result, the programme has reached a point where maintaining a contractor presence on site while legal matters are finalised would lead to increased project costs. To mitigate this, the project team has worked with the contractor to review available options. On the basis that a further ten weeks may be required to conclude the legal process, an extension of time has been agreed, enabling the contractor to temporarily demobilise from both sites in April 2026. Works at NHLC and HSFC are now anticipated to be completed, and signed off by the Building Safety Act Principal Designer, by the end of October 2026. We continue to provide updates to Salix through Monthly Monitoring Reports (MMRs). Given the ongoing uncertainty around the easements, some of which remain outside our control, the assessed risk level is unchanged. Despite the significant consultancy input to date, residual risks remain until the Air Source Heat Pumps are installed and fully operational. These include potential impacts on performance, the achievement of projected carbon and revenue savings, and the possible requirement to install harmonic filters should distortion levels exceed permitted limits.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
Council approves an increase in capital expenditure for the decarbonisation work and revenue expenditure for the termination and removal fees of gas CHPs.	11-Jul-2024	Yes	
Pre-Construction Services Agreement with Willmott Dixon signed.	29-Jul-2024	Yes	Agreed and signed on 2 August 2024.
Appoint external Quantity Surveyor to oversee NHC's interests.	30-Aug-2024	Yes	Appointed Varsity Consulting to act as the Employers Agent for North Herts Council on the leisure decarbonisation project. This includes carrying out tasks of Quantity Surveyor, Cost Consultant and Contract Administrator. Decision taken 24 September 2024. Decision notified 27 September 2024.
Project Board - hold point to decide whether to continue the project.	04-Nov-2024	Yes	Project Board approved a number of recommendations allowing the project to move into the next phase.
Complete Stage 3 design phases.	11-Nov-2024	Yes	Stage 3 completed.
Council decision on preferred option.	15-Jan-2025	Yes	
Willmott Dixon Construction submit contract offer.	20-Mar-2025	Yes	Contract offer received from Willmott Dixon and final costs subsequently agreed.
Provide Salix with required project updates.	01-Apr-2025	Yes	All grant conditions and updates for the 2024/25 financial year have been issued and reviewed. Conditions 2-4 have been approved by Salix consultants and are with Salix to approve. Condition 1 will need to be reviewed, amended, and resubmitted later.

Further report to Cabinet to approve contract award and additional budget.	20-May-2025	Yes	Cabinet agreed to increase the project capital budget, approved the extension of lido seasons at both outdoor pools, approved changes to the 2025/26 General Fund budget as a result of the increase in net expenditure caused by planned closures and extended lido seasons, and awarded the contract to WDC.
Salix confirm acceptance of our 2024/25 updates.	31-May-2025	Yes	Salix have approved and paid the Council the 2024/25 grant amount in full.
Commence de-carb works at Royston Leisure Centre.	17-Jun-2025	Yes	Willmott Dixon started setting up on site in the week commencing 14 July 2025 and started to shutdown areas of the building to prepare for works in the week commencing 21 July 2025.
Planning permissions obtained.	19-Jun-2025	Yes	Planning permission received for Royston and Letchworth on 19 June 2025, with Hitchin granted on 11 July 2025.
Commence de-carb works at North Herts Leisure Centre.	23-Jun-2025	Yes	Willmott Dixon started setting up on site in the week commencing 14 July 2025 and started to shutdown areas of the building to prepare for works in the week commencing 21 July 2025.
Commence de-carb works at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre.	01-Sep-2025	Yes	The start date for commencing works was pushed back due to a delay with Natural England issuing the required Bat Licence.
Enter into construction contract with Willmott Dixon.	07-Sep-2025	Yes	There was a slight delay completing this milestone, as it took longer than expected to reach agreement on how practical completion would be agreed in a way that complies with the new Building Safety Act and to undertake the subsequent Legal work prior to signing.
Provide Salix with an updated application form with finalised project data (including costs and energy values) and a monitoring plan detailing how carbon savings will be monitored/reported following completion of the project.	02-Feb-2026	Yes	Salix confirmed revised final commissioning condition dates and that we needed to submit relevant information to them by 31 March 2026. However, we agreed to do this earlier to ensure Salix had sufficient time to review the information provided and to raise any queries. We submitted the final commissioning conditions to Salix at the end of February 2026, which they subsequently approved.
Complete de-carb works at Royston Leisure Centre.	09-Jun-2026	Yes	Building works completed. Building Control sign-off received 20 March 2026. Formal handover to EA on 14 April 2026.
Complete de-carb works at North Herts Leisure Centre.	21-Aug-2026	No	**Due date to change to 27 October 2026.** This factors in the agreed extension of time linked to the delay in formalising the required easement over Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation land and is inclusive of the eight-week Building Safety Act Principal Designer sign-off period.
Complete de-carb works at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre.	04-Sep-2026	No	**Due date to change to 27 October 2026.** This factors in the agreed extension of time linked to the delay in formalising the required easement over Hitchin Cow Commoners Trust land and is inclusive of the eight-week Building Safety Act Principal Designer sign-off period.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: - NHC responsible for funding all project costs beyond agreed grant funding. - NHC paying up front for the larger Air Source Heat Pumps (no longer a risk). - Unforeseen detailed survey findings require changes to project specifications and lead to additional financial costs. - Failure to obtain required planning permissions (no longer a risk). - Delays obtaining required Distribution Network Operator approvals lead to delays in commissioning/completing project works. - Delays obtaining required easements lead to delays in commissioning/completing project works. - Failure to deliver project in line with agreed grant conditions leads to loss of grant funding. - Short programme delivery timeframes impact the ability to drawdown Year 1 2024/25 Salix grant funding within the agreed financial year leading to loss of funding (no longer a risk). - Disruption to day-to-day operations during works leads to customer dissatisfaction (one-week closures of NHLC and HSFC required to complete commissioning of ASHPs). - Demand on existing officer resources to cover the loss of the dedicated Project Manager. - Once ASHPs are operational, UKPN may require us to install harmonic filters to reduce distortion if harmonic levels go above allowed limits.		8	5	3

	Oughtonhead Common Weir				
Council Plan Objective	Sustainability (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-Oct-2026	**Original Date**	30-Sep-2024
Project Summary	Complete works to rectify the collapsed weir.				
Latest Update	22-Apr-2026 Officers held a site meeting with HCC's Countryside Management Service (CMS) in February 2026, where we emphasised the priority of the project from a NHC perspective. CMS are now finalising preparations for the procurement process, and we are awaiting an update on precise timings. There have been delays receiving responses from Affinity Water regarding possible financial support for the project, so to move things forward in a timely manner, we have decided not to wait any longer and to proceed using the allocated Capital budget. However, CMS continue to chase Affinity Water and financial support from them remains a possibility. If received, this would help to reduce the cost to the Council of undertaking the works. To date, we have undertaken significant work to identify what is required to improve both the flow and quality of the water, obtained a number of required permits/consents, and have strived to keep relevant stakeholders updated and involved. Detailed designs for the project included a Buildability Statement, which outlined delivery options. This suggested an optimal timing of late summer/early autumn, when breeding bird season will have finished, ground conditions should be most favourable, and river levels will be at their lowest, all of which should create the best conditions for delivery. Although precise details are still to be confirmed, we anticipate the project being delivered in September to October 2026. Once works start on site, the delivery timeframe is expected to be approximately four weeks. Public communications throughout various project stages remains key to managing stakeholder expectations and potential reputational risks associated with delays. The impact of a delay in completing the project is still assessed as low, due to any further short-term deterioration of the existing weir being unlikely to result in significant environmental damage.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
01. Conduct the further modelling requested by the Environment Agency.	31-Aug-2024	Yes	Cost of completing further modelling circa £3k.
02. Obtain required Environment Agency permits.	31-Dec-2024	Yes	Permits obtained in December 2024.
03. Commence tender process for undertaking required works.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** CMS currently finalising preparations and we are awaiting an update from them regarding project timings.
04. Appoint contractor(s) to undertake required works.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Awaiting update from CMS regarding procurement timings. CMS have indicated the tender is likely to be open for six weeks to allow sufficient time for contractors to put their returns together, followed by a two-week period for evaluating and scoring. Therefore, the procurement process is expected to last for approximately two months.
05. Successful contractor confirms project plan and timings.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Will be confirmed following contract award.
06. Undertake further communication with the public regarding plans.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Will take place once contract awarded and plans have been finalised.
07. Commence work on-site.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Will be confirmed when successful contractor confirms project plan and timings. Currently anticipate works commencing in September 2026.
08. Works on-site completed.		No	**Due date to be confirmed.** Will be confirmed when successful contractor confirms project plan and timings. Currently anticipate works being completed in October 2026.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: - External funding from HCC, EA and residents is not available leading to full allocated Capital budget being used (currently assessed as low risk in view of reduced work now being required and possible new funding stream from Affinity Water). - Existing situation deteriorates prior to any works being undertaken requiring further urgent temporary solutions to manage an immediate changing situation (currently assessed as low risk). - Failure to obtain planning permission (no longer a risk). - Failure to obtain Environment Agency (fish pass approval) and HCC (ordinary watercourse consent) approval/consent (no longer a risk). - Lack of contractor appetite to undertake works prolongs procurement process and delays project delivery (prior to tender process, assessed as relatively low risk). - Without confirmed plans for the procurement process and project delivery, there is a risk that the project will not be completed in line with current stakeholder expectations (currently assessed as low risk, with a current preference for delivery in summer/autumn 2026).		4	2	1

Pay on Exit Parking

Council Plan Objective	Accessible Services (2024-28)	**Due Date**	30-Sep-2026	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2026
Project Summary	Replace existing parking machines and update tariff boards to implement pay on exit in all our town centre car parks. Capital budget approved to deliver the project over two years - 2024/25 and 2025/26 - although project now scheduled to complete in 2026/27.				
Latest Update	16-Apr-2026 Norton Common TRO was updated (delegated decision notified 27 June 2025). Following discussions with Leisure/Everyone Active, agreed to retain existing TRO for Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre and to continue with a pay and display approach in the car park for now. Any future proposals to change the TRO and parking options will be considered outside the scope of this project. Installation of new parking machines/signage at both car parks is scheduled for mid-May 2026. From a scheduling and resource perspective, a decision was made to undertake these works at a similar time. The installation of new tariff boards in all car parks has not progressed and the associated Capital funding has been carried forward to 2026/27. Discussions with the contractor continue regarding the quality of installed parking signage, and this needs to be resolved before we proceed with the installation of new tariff boards. We are also reviewing the signage contract to clarify available options. Temporary updates to existing tariff boards have been completed, to reflect approved changes to parking tariffs (Cabinet 17 February 2026) and to ensure our car parks remain compliant. Should a change in tariff board provider be required, this is likely to impact our ability to meet the current target date of the end of September 2026. However, this will not affect the operation of our car parks or users' ability to park in them. We continue to work with the contractor to agree arrangements for monitoring income lost associated with identified quality issues, and the contractor has extended the initial two-year warranty, with the maintenance contract kicking in after the third year of operation. The Parking Team continue to respond to and resolve users' issues, which remains key to managing possible reputational risks. Overall, the majority of users continue to successfully pay for parking.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
Procure supplier to replace tariff boards.	30-Aug-2024	Yes	Procurement complete. Supplier appointed on 2 September 2024.
Draft implementation programme received from contractor.	30-Nov-2024	Yes	
Full implementation programme agreed with contractor.	31-Dec-2024	Yes	Full implementation programme agreed in December 2024 with some minor modifications finally agreed early February 2025.
Commence installation of new parking machines on a town-by-town basis, along with new entrance/information signage.	17-Feb-2025	Yes	Rollout commenced in Hitchin.
Update TROs.	18-Feb-2025	Yes	The majority of updated TROs became effective on 18 February 2025. Updated TROs introduced alternative methods of payment, virtual permits and season tickets, and reviewed the definitions and length of stay for electric vehicle parking bays within the Council's car parks.
Complete installation of new parking machines and new entrance/information signage.	31-Mar-2025	Yes	Works on site completed. However, as with the introduction of any new technology, the Council and users did experience issues associated with the new machines and payment options. Officers worked with the contractor to address identified issues.
Norton Common and Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre TROs updated.	31-Mar-2026	Yes	The Norton Common TRO was updated (delegated decision notified 27 June 2025). Following discussions with Leisure/Everyone Active we have agreed to retain the existing TRO for Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre and to continue with a pay and display approach in the car park for now. Any future proposals to update the TRO and parking options will be considered outside the scope of the current project. As a result, the milestone is now considered complete.
Complete installation of new parking machines and signage at Norton Common and Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre car parks.	31-May-2026	No	Works scheduled for the week ending 17 May 2026. Therefore, on track for new parking machines/signage to be installed by the end of May 2026.

Installation of new tariff boards completed.	30-Sep-2026	No	Capital funding for this element of the project carried forward to 2026/27. Discussions with the contractor regarding the quality of installed parking signage are ongoing, and this needs to be resolved before we proceed with the installation of new tariff boards. Temporary updates to existing tariff boards have been completed, to reflect approved changes to parking tariffs (Cabinet 17 February 2026). Should a change in tariff board provider be required, this is likely to impact our ability to meet the current target date.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Budget implications of selected scheme (no longer a risk). 2. Inability to procure suppliers within approved budget (no longer a risk, as procured suppliers within budget). 3. Negative public reaction to changes and disruption during works. 4. Loss of income during associated works and immediate post-installation period. 5. Failure to bring together separate project elements to achieve seamless project delivery. 6. Public have issues using the new parking machines or understanding new payment options. 7. Issues with installed signage leads to a change in tariff board provider being required.		1	2	1

	Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks				
Council Plan Objective	Sustainability (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-May-2026	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2025
Project Summary	Finalise contract/leases with private sector partner and subsequently install new EV charging points in six of our outdoor surface car parks. OZEV grant secured to help deliver the project, although availability of funding has only currently been formally extended to March 2026.				
Latest Update	20-Apr-2026 First phase of installation works was completed, with EV charging points in place at six outdoor car parks. Subsequently, four of these became operational - Civic Centre, Hillshott, Warren, and Woodside. Leases have been drafted for these four car parks and now that we have received correct site plans detailing the precise location of installed items and cabling, we can move forward to finalise these with the contractor. However, a decision has now been made to no longer proceed with the full installation/commissioning of EV charging points in the Bancroft and Twitchell car parks under the existing contract. This decision was due to the Distribution Network Operator identifying significant further required works, related complex traffic management issues, the restricted delivery window linked to changes to OZEV grant funding, and the cost/benefit assessment of required works at these relatively low usage locations. We have been in ongoing communication with the DfT regarding these changes, which are likely to result in approximately £18k of claimed grant funding being paid back. Officers are also working with Legal regarding required variations to the existing contract and with the contractor to agree arrangements for removing installed items and making good the car parks. Therefore, the project will now only deliver EV charging capabilities in four outdoor surface car parks rather than the six envisaged at the start of the project, and these charging points are available for use. Although not related to this specific project, the private sector partner has indicated that they are no longer interested in pursuing works at the Lairage or Garden Square Shopping Centre multi-storey car parks. Due to Cabinet agreeing on 14 April 2026 to surrender the lease, plans have changed for the Garden Square Shopping Centre. However, we now have the opportunity to improve EV charging capabilities at the Lairage, Bancroft and Twitchell car parks (and potentially other car parks) in the future with a different partner and to deliver better outcomes.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
HC to start promoting project.	31-Oct-2024	Yes	Our investment in EV charging infrastructure was included in the Winter 2024 edition of Outlook magazine, which was published in early December 2024.
Contract finalised with private sector partner.	31-Dec-2024	Yes	Contract finalised 7 January 2025. Contract amended to enable the OZEV ORCS funded project (installation of new EV charging points in our outdoor surface car parks) to progress in advance of the further project to replace existing charging points in our multi-storey car parks, which was delayed by the need to satisfy the Council's property insurer regarding potential fire risks.
Contractor to commence works.	03-Mar-2025	Yes	Having issued authority-to-proceed letters to the contractor, works commenced at the Civic Centre car park in Royston on 22 April 2025.
Issue progress report to the Department for Transport in line with grant funding conditions.	31-Dec-2025	Yes	
Installation and commissioning of all new EV charging points completed.	31-Mar-2026	Yes	First phase of installation works was completed, with EV charging points in place at six outdoor car parks. Subsequently, four of these became operational - Civic Centre, Hillshott, Warren, and Woodside. However, full installation/commissioning of EV charging points in the Bancroft and Twitchell car parks is no longer proceeding under the existing contract with the private sector partner. This decision is due to the Distribution Network Operator identifying significant further required works, related complex traffic management issues, the restricted delivery window for grant funding, and the cost/benefit assessment of required works at these relatively low usage locations. Therefore, the project will now only deliver EV charging capabilities in four outdoor surface car parks rather than six, and these charging points are available for use.

Complete relevant leases with contractor for the length of the contract.	31-May-2026	No	The intention was that all leases would be formalised once all EV charging points had been installed and commissioned, and necessary details had been agreed with the contractor to allow this to happen. Leases have been drafted and we have just received a correct site plan for Hillshott to enable us to move things forward for the four relevant car parks. Following the decision to no longer proceed with the full installation/commissioning of EV charging points in the Bancroft and Twitchell car parks, officers are working with Legal regarding required variations to the existing contract.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Not successful in obtaining grant funding (no longer a risk). 2. Unable to identify/procure a private sector partner (no longer a risk). 3. Unable to agree contract conditions/relevant lease arrangements with contractor. 4. Unable to deliver full project in accordance with OZEV requirements (now materialised, in part due to changes to OZEV grant funding and related inability to further extend funding deadline). 5. Unable to schedule required DNO upgrades in line with implementation programme/funding window (now materialised, due to the cost/benefit implications of relevant DNO surveys and the restricted delivery window referenced above). 6. Insurance requirements lead to changes to installation plans (no longer a risk). 7. Unable to reach agreement with Garden Square Shopping Centre regarding the replacement of existing charging points in Letchworth multi-storey car park (outside scope of OZEV funding, not a risk for this specific Council Delivery Plan project and now agreed to surrender car park lease (Cabinet 14 April 2026)).		5	1	1

	Town Centres Strategy				
Council Plan Objective	Responsible Growth (2024-28)	**Due Date**	22-Sep-2026	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2025
Project Summary	Progress development of an overarching Town Centres Strategy, including guidance on developing strategic plans for individual town centres.				
Latest Update	17-Apr-2026 Full analysis of consultation responses has been delayed, due to the officer assigned to the task leaving the Council in March 2026. We are currently reviewing options for moving things forward, and a contingency budget is available to re-engage the previously appointed consultants to help with this, if required. Due to this delay, and the scheduling of relevant committee meetings over the summer period, we now expect the draft Strategy to go back to Cabinet for formal adoption in September 2026. Currently, the findings of the consultation process are uncertain and resource pressures within the Strategic Planning & Projects team remain. The related delivery plan is also still in development. As a result, the overall project risk level continues to be assessed as 'medium' for now.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
1. Undertake work to complete evidence base.	31-Jul-2024	Yes	Consultants presented initial report on evidence base and stakeholder workshop held to review findings.
2. Further review/refinement of evidence base and final sign-off.	20-Dec-2024	Yes	Finalised retail evidence base in December 2024. Consultants then reviewed wider evidence base for draft Strategy. This was published as supporting evidence base when consulting on the draft Town Centres Strategy.
3. Project Board review draft Town Centres Strategy.	20-May-2025	Yes	Project Board members requested further work to be undertaken and to see the revised version prior to submitting the Strategy to Cabinet.
4. Project Board review and approval of draft Town Centres Strategy.	15-Jul-2025	Yes	Presented the detailed overview and priorities for each of the town centres at the Project Board meeting on 15 July 2025. At this meeting, Project Board suggested the draft Strategy should be presented to PLB prior to going to Cabinet.
5. Development and finalisation of draft Strategy.	15-Aug-2025	Yes	Consultants provided a first full draft of the Town Centres Strategy on 3 September 2025 for officer review and comment. Over the subsequent four weeks, further tweaks were made, and Section 4 (Delivery) was further developed.
6. Present draft Strategy to Political Liaison Board (PLB).	02-Sep-2025	Yes	Presented on 7 October 2025. PLB were happy with the draft Strategy on the basis that Section 4 (Delivery) was developed further. Working with stakeholders to develop an action plan formed part of the consultation process.
7. Present draft Strategy to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.	09-Sep-2025	Yes	Following Project Board approval of the draft Strategy and consultation approach, the draft Strategy was presented to O&S on 11 November 2025.
8. Present details of draft Strategy, including guidance sections for each town, to Cabinet.	23-Sep-2025	Yes	Draft Strategy presented to Cabinet on 19 November 2025. Cabinet endorsed and approved the Strategy for public consultation.
9. Consultation on draft Town Centres Strategy.	31-Jan-2026	Yes	Following the November 2025 Cabinet decision, an extended eight-week consultation took place over December 2025 and January 2026, ending on 30 January 2026. During this time, the draft Strategy was also presented to Community Forums.
10. Cabinet adopt Town Centres Strategy.	30-Jun-2026	No	**Due date to change to 22 September 2026.** Due to a loss of staff resource at the end of March 2026, the analysis of consultation responses has been delayed. This, along with the scheduling of relevant committee meetings, means we are now expecting to present the draft Strategy to Cabinet in September 2026.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
1. Lack of available resource to produce and deliver identified strategies. 2. Lack of strategic direction leads to speculative development that undermines function of town centres.		5	5	1

	Engaging the community on our finances				
Council Plan Objective	Sustainability (2024-28)	**Due Date**	28-Feb-2026	**Original Date**	28-Feb-2026
Project Summary	To help the community understand how we set our budget, what affects the funding that we receive, why we have less funding than we used to and the implications of that. To engage the community on the choices that we will need to make to ensure that our spend matches our funding, so that we are financially sustainable, and to enable our community to be part of future budget conversations.				
Latest Update	04-Mar-2026 Council approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-30 on 4 December 2025. Government released the provisional finance settlement on 17 December 2025, which was used as the basis for budget proposals/reports. Government published the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 to 2028/29 on 9 February 2026, which was better-than-expected. Budget for 2026/27 approved at the Full Council meeting held on 26 February 2026 and in view of final finance settlement, there was no need for any cuts to existing service provision. Findings from the 2025 budget consultation survey helped to inform decisions on targeted one-off investments that support healthier, greener, and safer communities across North Herts.				

Milestone	**Due Date**	**Complete**	**Note**
Update the Digital Budget Hub content to highlight the funding pressures we face and likely implications.	31-Aug-2024	Yes	Updates: - Homepage copy amended to reflect current situation. - 'How we set our budget' graphic created and added (to show residents the process we go through). - 'Did you know' film created and promoted, showing what services residents' council tax helps to provide. Above promoted across our social media channels and ENewsletters.
Approve our Medium Term Financial Strategy.	30-Sep-2024	Yes	Council agreed adoption of the MTFS 2025-30 on 19 September 2024.
Update content (Digital Budget Hub and other communications) through process for setting the 2025/26 budget.	28-Feb-2025	Yes	The content update on the Hub was not completed due to it moving from the Zencity platform to the NHC website. However, we did communicate budget information via other channels, with 2025/26 budget and Council Tax communications being promoted via PR to local media, on our website, across our social media channels and via our ENewsletter.
Further update of Digital Budget Hub content to align with the start of the 2025/26 financial year.	31-May-2025	Yes	Content updated to include the following: 2025/26 Council Tax pie chart graphic; budget consultation mention (and link to survey) included in homepage copy; timeline updated with the 2025/26 Council budget PR and Waste Service change PR; and finally, timeline order changed so that the newest news date is first.
Carry out detailed consultation on spend priorities and savings options for 2026/27 onwards.	31-Jul-2025	Yes	Budget consultation (across both digital and non-digital channels) ran for eight weeks. Budget consultation launched on 6 June 2025, and it was open until 1 August 2025.
Consider feedback in setting the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy and approve the Strategy.	04-Dec-2025	Yes	Council approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-30 on 4 December 2025.
Provisional finance settlement used to determine scale of funding gap.	22-Dec-2025	Yes	The Government released the provisional finance settlement on 17 December 2025. This was used as the basis for budget proposals/reports. The Government published the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 to 2028/29 on 9 February 2026, which was the first multi-year settlement for 10 years.

Consider consultation feedback in forming budget proposals for the 2026/27 budget and approve the 2026/27 budget.	28-Feb-2026	Yes	The budget for 2026/27 was approved at the Full Council meeting held on 26 February 2026. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 to 2028/29 was better than expected, so there was no need for any cuts to existing service provision. Findings from the budget consultation survey helped to inform decisions on targeted one-off investments that support healthier, greener, and safer communities across North Herts.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Timing of Government announcements over future funding makes it difficult to engage residents in the scale of the budget gap and the savings that will be required. 2. Lack of engagement means that the consultation doesn't reflect a wide range of views. 3. The scale of the budget gap makes it feel like there are no choices. When making choices it then feels like not taking on board feedback. 4. Local government reorganisation adds uncertainty to medium-term planning.		8	2	2

	King George V Skate Park				
Council Plan Objective	Accessible Services (2024-28)	**Due Date**	31-Oct-2025	**Original Date**	31-Mar-2025
Project Summary	Following complications with the initial procurement exercise in 2023/24, complete a procurement exercise to appoint a contractor to replace the existing King George V skate park and oversee delivery of the completed project.				
Latest Update	04-Nov-2025 The new skate park opened for use on 27 October 2025. Therefore, the project to deliver a much-improved facility that meets the needs and expectations of stakeholders has been completed. Following discussions with relevant parties, we are also planning to hold a ceremonial opening event, but this will not take place until next Spring. Currently, the provisional date for the event is 29 May 2026. All previously identified risks to the successful delivery of the project are no longer applicable.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
Finalise formal SLA with Groundwork relating to the management of procurement processes.	12-Jul-2024	Yes	
NHC Legal to review relevant procurement documentation prior to Groundwork commencing tender process.	18-Aug-2024	Yes	Legal review of procurement documentation undertaken. This took slightly longer than originally envisaged and was completed in September 2024 rather than August 2024.
Groundwork confirms procurement timetable.	11-Oct-2024	Yes	Timetable confirmed following Legal review of relevant procurement documentation.
Commence tender process.	14-Oct-2024	Yes	ITT published on 14 October 2024.
Award contract following evaluation of tender responses.	17-Dec-2024	Yes	Following evaluation of tenders in November 2024, the contract was awarded mid-December 2024.
Contractor to conduct further communication/consultation during the early stages of the project prior to project delivery.	30-May-2025	Yes	This was completed in May 2025 prior to commencement of works on-site.
Contractor confirms project plan and timings.	31-May-2025	Yes	Contract signed on 22 April 2025. Further consultation on the final design held in May 2025. Works commenced on 14 July 2025, with an anticipated 12-week delivery window.
Contractor to commence on-site project delivery.	14-Jul-2025	Yes	Work started on Monday 14 July 2025 to revamp the skatepark.
Contractor completes on-site works.	05-Oct-2025	Yes	Works on-site have been completed and have been signed off. The new facility opened to the public on 27 October 2025.
New skate park officially opened to the public.	31-Oct-2025	Yes	The new skate park opened for use on 27 October 2025 and so the project is now considered complete. However, following discussions with relevant parties, we are also planning to hold a ceremonial opening event next Spring, with a provisional date of 29 May 2026.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: - Until precise timings are confirmed, there is a risk that the project will not be completed in line with stakeholder expectations (no longer a risk). - As with all procurement processes, there is a risk that the outcome will be challenged (no longer a risk, as the outcome was not challenged). - Possible reputational risk due to the park being closed during the construction period (no longer a risk).		2	1	1

	Waste and Street Cleansing Contract				
Council Plan Objective	Accessible Services (2024-28)	**Due Date**	30-Nov-2025	**Original Date**	31-Aug-2025
Project Summary	Complete procurement and mobilisation of a new Waste and Street Cleansing contract. Plan for and implement agreed service changes included in the contract.				
Latest Update	20-Nov-2025 Rollout of new services commenced on 4 August 2025. As with all significant service changes, some issues did arise. However, these were managed on a case-by-case basis, helped by the mitigating measures we had put in place prior to rollout for example, having additional vehicles available to respond to initial teething problems. The final Project Board (Mobilisation) meeting was held on 23 October 2025. The specific project to mobilise the new waste and street cleansing contract and implement the agreed service changes included in the contract is now considered complete for Council Delivery Plan purposes. An update on delivery of the new contract and services was presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2025. The remaining activity is to undertake a lessons learned exercise in early 2026, which will be reviewed by members of the Project Board. All project specific risks are no longer applicable, although there remain some residual operational risks for example, staff resources, public confusion and issues with service delivery, and maintaining an acceptable level of missed collections. These risks will continue to be managed as business-as-usual activities, with the introduction of the new Waste app being an example of initiatives being implemented to enhance management of operational and reputational risks, by providing residents with an easily accessible option for obtaining information on available services and related requirements.				

Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note
Evaluation of final tenders and production of Evaluation Report.	17-Jun-2024	Yes	
Project Board sign off of Evaluation Report and award recommendation.	21-Jun-2024	Yes	
Executive and Cabinet approval to award the contract to the preferred bidder.	09-Jul-2024	Yes	Cabinet agreed to award the contract to the preferred bidder, contingent upon the completion of the Letchworth depots lease assignment from the incumbent provider to the Council. The assignment of the Letchworth depots lease was subsequently completed.
End of contract award standstill period.	12-Aug-2024	Yes	
First meetings held with preferred bidder.	15-Aug-2024	Yes	
Intention to award contract phase completed.	31-Aug-2024	Yes	Milestone completed and communicated in September 2024 that we will be re-establishing a partnership with Veolia.
Press communication.	10-Sep-2024	Yes	
Commence procurement of new fleet vehicles.	15-Nov-2024	Yes	We approved capital funding of £5.285 million (excluding VAT) for the purchase of waste and street cleansing vehicles for the new contract. This allowed the procurement process for NHC vehicles to commence. This process has now completed.
Develop IT specifications.	30-Nov-2024	Yes	Full specifications for the garden waste platform and additional forms developed. Relevant build processes commenced. From a technical standpoint, we have the information we needed to scope and plan the project.
Finalisation and signing of contract (formal contract award).	28-Feb-2025	Yes	Delay did not impact our ability to prepare for contract mobilisation.

Confirmation of final delivery plans and H&S arrangements.	04-Mar-2025	Yes	Delivery plans finalised and H&S risk assessments completed and received. Delivery plans were revisited in advance of service change.
Member briefing session (March 2025).	31-Mar-2025	Yes	Member briefing session held on 27 March 2025.
Condition surveys and demobilisation of depots.	03-May-2025	Yes	Completed. Property Services managed dilapidations with the outgoing tenant (FCC).
Commence mobilisation of new contract.	04-May-2025	Yes	Veolia undertook street cleansing from 4 May 2025 and waste collection operations began on 6 May 2025 following the bank holiday.
New bin and caddy deliveries start.	06-May-2025	Yes	Bin and caddy deliveries commenced. Expected to continue prior to and up to commencement of the new services.
Finalise new service collection rounds.	30-Jun-2025	Yes	We have finalised collection rounds for the agreed service changes included in the contract.
Member briefing session (July 2025).	14-Jul-2025	Yes	Member briefing session held on 14 July 2025. Approximately 15 Members attended.
New bin and caddy deliveries completed.	04-Aug-2025	Yes	Programme of bin and caddy deliveries has now been completed. However, we continue work to rectify identified issues with some deliveries.
New services to commence.	04-Aug-2025	Yes	New services commenced on 4 August 2025.
Update report on service delivery to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.	11-Nov-2025	Yes	Presented on 11 November 2025.

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: - Delay in completing the assignment of Letchworth depot lease delays contract award (no longer a risk, as lease assignment completed). - Insufficient resources/capacity to deliver mobilisation and new service provision work (no longer a risk for this specific project, although still a risk relating to the delivery of business-as-usual services). - Final Government Resources & Waste Strategy differs from contract specification (no longer a risk, as contract specification aligns with new Simpler Recycling policy published late 2024). - Uncertainty over certain cost elements (no longer a risk, as costs finalised with inflationary uplift). - Any delays cause mobilisation challenges (no longer a risk, as any challenges were addressed during project delivery and the project is now completed). - Capability to develop online forms and integrate these with new systems (NHC income management system and preferred supplier systems). This has been completed for North Herts. - EV charging infrastructure is not in place for start of contract (no longer a risk, as EV charging points installed). - Public confusion around contract mobilisation and service changes (residual operational risk remains, with management of the risk being improved with the introduction of the new Waste app). - Discover new collection rounds are not optimal once operational (no longer a risk, as did not materialise for North Herts). - Increased missed collections during the initial rollout period of new collection services (risk materialised and although things have now settled down, an associated residual operational risk remains).		9	3	3

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Year-End Monitoring Report - Corporate Risks

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Resourcing **Risks:** Ability to recruit and retain staff, as well as supporting new priorities and external pressures, affects delivery of the projects and actions in the Council Delivery Plan and service plans. This is particularly relevant for certain service areas where it is especially difficult to recruit and retain staff. Also, impacts of emergency planning events on staff resources. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) increases work pressures and also may affect staff recruitment and retention.	🛑	8	9	8
Cyber Risks **Risks:** Prolonged widespread disruption to/failure of IT infrastructure/systems. Possible causes: - Deliberate and unauthorised breaches of security e.g., ransomware, denial of service. - Unintentional/accidental breaches of security e.g., action of individual staff/Members. - Weakness/failure of essential IT infrastructure e.g., loss of internet access. - Evolving risk appetite/profile associated with IT systems, as we pursue increased use of hosted systems and associated risks to individual systems are transferred to suppliers. Leading to: - Inability to deliver services/projects. - Unbudgeted costs to enable recovery. - Reputational damage.	🛑	8	8	8
Financial Sustainability **Risks:** 1. Funding reductions as a result of updates to the funding formula or data used. 2. Sales, fees, and charges income shortfalls, either due to rates not tracking inflation and/or reductions in demand. 3. Not able to make the required decisions to deliver budget savings required. 4. Increases in costs (reductions in income) as a result of inflationary increases, especially linked to inflationary pressures from the global political situation. 5. Uncertainty over levels of pay inflation required. 6. Local government reorganisation adds uncertainty to medium-term financial planning.	🛑	9	7	5

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
<u>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution</u> **Risks:** The Government have published a White Paper and written to all Local Authorities. This requires Local Authorities to work together to come up with a proposal that results in unitary rather than 2-tier Councils. It also seeks a Strategic Authority structure that allows devolution of powers to a Mayor. Those powers include "housing, planning, transport, energy, skills, employment support and more." The risks relate to this being a very substantial project requiring significant change. Specific risks include: - The work to get to a proposal on a unitary structure (noting that proposal needs to be agreed across 11 Councils, although can include multiple options) is significant in terms of the negotiations needed. High additional workload for the collation of information and analysis to support that decision making process, across multiple workstreams with input from Chief Executive (workstream co-lead and co-ordination group), Directors (one as workstream lead) and others. - If there is an inability to agree proposals, it may prolong the period above, or lead to a structure being imposed upon Hertfordshire. - After a new structure is agreed, there would be even more significant work to move towards the implementation of that new structure. - Efficiency is mentioned as one of the reasons for moving to a unitary structure. This may lead staff to believe that their job may be at risk. Alternatively, the additional work of moving to unitary status may be seen as too much. - Focusing on a new structure may lead to decision making that is too short-term (getting things done before they can be de-prioritised by a new larger Council with wider priorities) or too long-term (avoid making decisions and leave them to the new unitary Council). The Government have provided guidance that Councils should not make decisions that have negative consequences for new Unitary Councils, but unclear how this would work in practice until Government publishes further details as part of a Structural Changes Order. - Under the new Unitary Council(s), some current district services may have to be curtailed e.g., in order to help fund social care. - Ensuring that the views of stakeholders continue to be heard during the transition process and within the new structure.		9	9	5

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
Resources							
BV9	**Percentage of council tax collected in year** Ideagen link: BV9	97%	Within 2% of profile	93.35% Feb 26	97%	Within 2% of profile	Aligns
Justification: Following the new finance system implementation, it has taken time to get back on track with recovery. It is difficult to chase debt when payments could be in suspense accounts. The suspense accounts are now up to date and being cleared regularly. Recovery processes are therefore now back in place, but there is still a backlog on raising court proceedings. Whilst that is resolved, it will be difficult to improve on the current target performance level.							
BV10	**Percentage of NNDR collected in year** Ideagen link: BV10	96%	Within 2% of profile	90.31% Feb 26	96%	Within 2% of profile	Aligns
Justification: Same as for BV9 above.							
CP03	**Growth in properties paying Council Tax** Ideagen link: CP03	N/A	N/A	0.81% 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: Determined by housing developments in the district. The exact timing and scale of completion and occupation of properties is uncertain.							
HR1	**Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee** Ideagen link: HR1	4.00	Between 4.01 and 5.00 days	4.45 Mar 26	4.00	Between 4.01 and 5.00 days	Aligns
Justification: Current data is showing a gradual increase in short-term absences. This is in line with general trends. There is a risk that such absences could increase with the workload and wider implications of the LGR process. Whilst managers will continue to be supported with absence prevention and management, the risk is that short-term absence will continue to increase. Therefore, not appropriate to set a lower target.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
HR2	**Working days lost due to long-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee** Ideagen link: HR2	N/A	N/A	4.42 Mar 26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: Long-term absences generally relate to a small number of absences and can be quite variable. Each employee and their manager will be supported by HR to return back to work. It is not helpful to set targets, but it is useful to monitor.							
HR3	**Staff turnover - rolling 12-month percentage** Ideagen link: HR3	15%	Between 15.01-20.00%	7.04% Mar 26	15%	Between 15.01-20.00%	Aligns
Justification: Currently significantly under target and is currently a sustained trend. However, the impact of LGR may affect performance. Also, it can be positive for an organisation to have some staff turnover and for it to not be too low.							
HR4	**Percentage of advertised vacancies filled in first round** Ideagen link: HR4	75%	Between 60.01-74.99%	82.1% 25/26	75%	Between 60.01-74.99%	Aligns
Justification: Target has not been met in the latest three-month period (Q3 2025/26 - 58.8%). It is affected by the number of jobs being advertised and the types of roles. In some periods, hard to fill roles can have a significant impact on performance.							
RB1	**Performance against revenue budget (projection against original budget)** Ideagen link: RB1	0%	Between 0.1-2.0%	-4.8% Q3 25/26	0%	Between 0.1-2.0%	Aligns
Justification: This measure is to highlight significant overspends. Whilst the Council has achieved underspends, this is not always positive as it can be a sign of activities not happening or being delayed. Therefore, proposed to keep the same target.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
Environment							
CE1	**Council's Scope 1-3 emissions (tonnes CO2e)** Ideagen link: CE1	N/A	N/A	3,888.47 24/25	2,755	N/A (data reported annually)	Yes
Justification: The proposed target reflects a 20% emissions reduction in 2026/27 from the 2025/26 level. It should be noted that the proposed total emissions figure is based on estimates for both 2025/26 and 2026/27, which include a number of assumptions, and so is subject to uncertainty and may need to be updated once the 2025/26 emission figures are finalised.							
CP09	**Number of people attending outreach activity and wellbeing sessions** Ideagen link: CP09	N/A	N/A	New for 26/27	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: 2026/27 is the first reporting year of this new KPI. To be reported as data only, until baseline data has been established to inform the setting of a meaningful target.							
GM1	**Average number of penalty points awarded per Grounds Maintenance contract monitoring inspection. (Lower numbers are good.)** Ideagen link: GM1	N/A	N/A	2.04 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: Retain as a data only KPI. Introduced to provide an overview of the performance of this key Council contract and to allow year-on-year comparisons. An acceptable level of performance (number of penalty points) is agreed within the contract and is managed via regular monitoring meetings, with the contractor penalised financially if performance is above this level.							
MI LI015	**Number of visits to leisure facilities** Ideagen link: MI LI015	N/A	N/A	1,558,505 25/26	1,819,404	Within 4.99% of profile	Yes
Justification: Due to closures during 2025/26 linked to the decarbonisation project, the 2026/27 target has been based on contract Year 1 data (2024/25). Standard growth across all centres has been applied to this baseline data and scheduled week-long closures to complete decarbonisation works at NHLC and HSFC have been factored in. The target also takes into account usage of the Letchworth Lido festive ice rink, which will be included in the reported usage figures this year.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
NI192	**Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting** Ideagen link: NI192	59%	Up to 2.49 percentage points below profile	58.67% 25/26 (provisional data)	60%	Up to 2.49 percentage points below profile	Yes
Justification: Proposed target is in line with the commitment made when planning the recently introduced service changes.							
PLA01	**Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste** Ideagen link: PLA01	N/A	N/A	91 25/26	55	Between 56 and 70	Aligns with contract PMR
Justification: For the second year of the contract, propose a target of 55. Compared with performance in 2025/26, this is a challenging but achievable target. The higher figure in 2025/26 was largely due to a spike in the number of missed collections over a number of months following implementation of service changes, which began to settle down during early 2026.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
Customers							
CF1	**Number of Stage 1 complaints** Ideagen link: CF1	N/A	N/A	369 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: Retain as a data only KPI. We encourage feedback on our services, and our focus is on remedial action rather than a targeted amount of feedback.							
CF2	**Percentage of Stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days** Ideagen link: CF2	80%	Between 70-79%	82% 25/26	80%	Between 70-79%	Aligns with policy and performance
Justification: Keep the same target as per 3Cs policy and full year performance was 82%.							
CF3	**Percentage of Stage 2 complaints resolved within 20 working days** Ideagen link: CF3	70%	Between 60-69%	91% 25/26	70%	Between 60-69%	Aligns with policy
Justification: Keep the same as per 3Cs policy. However, improvements in reporting have seen performance improve in this area and we will continue to strive to exceed the target – full year performance was 91%.							
CLSLA1	**Total number of alarm calls in a given period** Ideagen link: CLSLA1	N/A	N/A	378,102 25/26			
Justification: Propose to delete the KPI for 2026/27. This data is needs-led and there is no requirement from HCC to track the performance of this measure.							
CLSLA3	**Rolling number of Careline service users supported under the HCC contract** Ideagen link: CLSLA3	N/A	N/A	7,232 Mar 26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: No target as needs-led service (this is not monitored by HCC).							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
CLSLA9	**Percentage of Careline installations completed within 5 working days** Ideagen link: CLSLA9	90%	Above 90%	79.6% 25/26	90%	Above 90%	Aligns with SLA
Justification: Contractual SLA. Recent performance impacted by increased demand for HCC clients as well as resourcing challenges. HCC aware of the impact.							
CLSLA10	**Percentage of Careline installations completed within 10 working days** Ideagen link: CLSLA10	100%	100%	97.7% 25/26	100%	97%	Aligns with SLA
Justification: Contractual SLA. Recent performance impacted by increased demand for HCC clients as well as resourcing challenges. HCC aware of the impact.							
CP08a	**Number of consultations and surveys completed** Ideagen link: CP08a	N/A	N/A	New for 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: No target proposed, as dependent on number of consultations and surveys running, which will vary according to need.							
CP08b	**Number of responses to consultations and surveys** Ideagen link: CP08b	N/A	N/A	New for 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: No target proposed, as dependent on number of consultations and surveys running, which will vary according to need.							
CS1	**Percentage of CSC calls answered** Ideagen link: CS1	90%	Between 80-89%	85% 25/26	90%	Between 80-89%	Aligns with performance
Justification: No change – in line with other Local Authorities. During 2025/26, this KPI has been impacted by staffing turnover and increased demand linked to service changes. However, this has now stabilised.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
CS2	**Percentage of CSC calls answered within 45 seconds** Ideagen link: CS2	80%	Between 70-79%	56% 25/26	80%	Between 60-79%	Aligns with previous target, but exceeds recent performance levels
Justification: Amended the tolerable performance as CS1 (above) is the most important of the two KPIs. Not proposing to reduce the target now, however, further research/benchmarking is being undertaken. Action will be taken anyway where performance falls short, but this can take some time to remedy as usually requires additional or temporary resource that cannot be immediately sourced.							
DBH1	**Sign-ups to the Digital Budget Hub (as at end of reporting period)** Ideagen link: DBH1	N/A	N/A	1,017 25/26			
Justification: Propose to delete the KPI for 2026/27. The number of sign-ups has continued to grow steadily throughout 2025/26, but the Digital Budget Hub is not our primary means of communicating budget-related information, with other communication channels taking preference to reach a wider audience. Following the introduction of two new consultation/survey KPIs (CP08a and CP08b), which are considered more meaningful measures, there is limited value in continuing to report this KPI.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
Place							
CP01	**Number of new dwellings built** Ideagen link: CP01	N/A	N/A	439 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: This is a new KPI. The number of homes built is outside of the Council's direct control, as it relies on the implementation of schemes by developers which, in turn, is influenced by macro-economic factors. The Council needs to substantially increase housing delivery in order to meet Government targets and the objectives of the Local Plan. However, it is considered most appropriate to measure this on a data-only basis against a narrative ambition to provide a long-term uplift measured against historic averages of 300-350 homes per year and Government targets of ~1,000 homes per year.							
CP02	**Number of new homes granted planning permission** Ideagen link: CP02	N/A	N/A	711 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: This is a new KPI. The number of homes granted permission is outside of the Council's direct control, as it relies on a variety of external factors including the submission of schemes and, where requested, additional information, external consultee responses, and external legal input on complex schemes. The Council needs to substantially increase housing delivery in order to meet Government targets and the objectives of the Local Plan. However, it is considered most appropriate to measure this on a data-only basis against a narrative ambition to provide a long-term uplift measured against historic averages of 300-350 homes per year and Government targets of ~1,000 homes per year recognising there may be some duplication in permissions data on sites where multiple approvals are required.							
CP04	**Section 106 spend – value returned to developers** Ideagen link: CP04	£0	£0	£0 25/26	£0	£0	Yes
Justification: Planning permissions are granted on the basis that sufficient infrastructure has been secured to mitigate the impacts of development with contributions secured through s106 legal agreements. These normally include a 'payback' clause if relevant contributions are not spent within the applicable time period (usually 10 years). The Overview & Scrutiny s106 task and finish group has reinforced the importance of making sure appropriate infrastructure is delivered and the aim is to ensure that no s106 monies are returned unspent. This indicator includes contributions which are held by the Council that rely on other parties identifying appropriate projects, including Parish Councils and the NHS.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
CP05a	**Number of Council-approved habitat banks in the district** Ideagen link: CP05a	N/A	N/A	2 25/26	3	2	Yes
Justification: The outcomes of this indicator are outside of the Council's direct control as (other than for schemes on the Council's own land), it relies upon landowners putting forward areas of land for consideration. The Government is in the process of reviewing rules around Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which may influence the future market for BNG credits and, in turn, impact whether landowners put forward sites for future use as a habitat bank. This would normally lend itself to 'data only' collection. However, at 1 April 2026, two habitat banks had signed s106 agreements (the trigger for being counted in KPI returns), although the formal registration process for one is still ongoing and will be finalised in Q1 2026/27. Cabinet have approved a further Council-owned site for consideration as a habitat bank. This is a tracked action in the Sustainability Strategy, so a target has been set to implement all three sites within the year.						
CP05b	**Number of biodiversity units to be delivered by Council-approved habitat banks in the district** Ideagen link: CP05b	N/A	N/A	229 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: As per the justification for CP05a, the number of units is dependent upon the number of sites put forward, the current habitat on-site, and the future habitat management proposals. Feasible unit numbers for the Council-owned site are yet to be assessed. Continue to report the KPI as data only.							
CP06a	**Number of NHDC-supported electric vehicle charge points available for public use** Ideagen link: CP06a	N/A	N/A	25 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: The EV contracts for which the Council has a role are concession contracts and/or have been supported by time-limited Government grant. This means the contractor will usually only install points where, after feasibility and review, they consider will deliver an appropriate return or where costs can be recouped against grant eligibility criteria. Installations will be monitored as a data only measure of scheme output.							
CP06b	**Number of electric vehicle charge points available to NHDC fleet vehicles only** Ideagen link: CP06b	N/A	N/A	12 25/26	N/A	N/A	N/A
Justification: This data is recorded for information only. This allows consideration against the number of fleet vehicles requiring easy access to EV charge points. Cabinet have resolved to surrender the lease for multi-storey car parking adjoining the District Council Offices where several charge points are located.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
NI157e	**Percentage of all planning applications determined within the relevant statutory or agreed time periods** Ideagen link: NI157e	80%	Between 70-79.99%	83.27% 25/26	80%	Between 70-79.99%	Yes
Justification: The primary purpose of this indicator is to provide early warning and headroom against national 'special measures' designations. These are the standards below which Government can intervene to take over or remove planning powers from the Local Authority, resulting in decisions being removed from local democratic accountability. For major development, the national ‘special measures’ threshold is presently 60% of decisions made within the statutory determination period, or a longer period agreed with the applicant. For non-major development, the threshold is 70%. NI157e does not correlate directly as it considers all planning applications within a single indicator. However, it is an appropriate proxy measure that allows for early identification, action, and remedial measures to be considered if there is a fall in performance below the target level. No changes are proposed.						

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
Enterprise							
CP07	**Percentage of primary schools in North Herts subscribed to the museum loan service** Ideagen link: CP07	N/A	N/A	37.3% 25/26	N/A Data Only	N/A	N/A
Justification: Continue to be a 'Data Only' KPI for 2026/27. Recent changes to the museum loans service have placed a requirement on schools to collect loan boxes from our store by prior appointment. The creation of a new, more inviting and professional space from which to do this (the Museum Collection Facility at Unit 1, City Park) will arguably move the goalposts in terms of comparing year-on-year KPI improvements. Therefore, it seems sensible to continue with 'Data Only' reporting for now, with the first year operating from the new Museum Collection Facility acting as the baseline for continuous improvement aspirations and related KPI targets in future years.							

KPI Code	KPI Title	2025/26 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2025/26)	Latest Reported Year-to-Date Data	2026/27 Target	Tolerable performance before urgent remedial action required (2026/27)	Target aligns with or builds on past performance?
Governance							
CP10a	**Number of Community Forum Grants awarded** Ideagen link: CP10a	N/A	N/A	55 25/26	N/A Data Only	N/A	N/A
Justification: This is a newly introduced KPI for 2025/26 and there is not yet an established baseline or sufficient historic trend data to support a robust target for 2026/27. The number of Community Forum Grants awarded and different organisations who receive a grant will depend on a range of factors including the level of available funding, the number of eligible applications received, and grant decision-making during the year. In those circumstances, setting a numerical target at this stage risks creating an arbitrary measure that would not provide a reliable basis for performance management. It is therefore proposed that this KPI is reported as 'Data Only' during 2026/27, with the data collected over 2025/26 and 2026/27 then being used to review whether a meaningful target can be set for a future year.							
CP10b	**Value of Community Forum grants awarded** Ideagen link: CP10b	N/A	N/A	£65,511 25/26	N/A Data Only	N/A	N/A
Justification: This is a newly introduced KPI for 2025/26 and there is not yet sufficient baseline information to support a meaningful target for 2026/27. The value of Community Forum Grants awarded is likely to be driven primarily by the budget available for grant funding and the profile of applications and awards made during the year, rather than by a straightforward measure of service performance. A target set now would therefore be of limited value and could be misleading. It is proposed that this KPI is reported as 'Data Only' during 2026/27 so that a fuller evidence base can be established. Once sufficient data is available, the position can be reviewed and consideration given to whether a target should be introduced for a future year.							

CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: 2025-26 Year End report on Risk Management Governance

REPORT OF: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report provides an update on the effectiveness of the Risk Management governance arrangements at the Council.

1.2. At the time Appendix A was finalised (early May), the Council had seven red corporate risks. The two risks with the highest scores relate to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution, and Resourcing. A significant element of the LGR risk specifically relates to resourcing/ staffing. The remaining five red risks (with scores of 7 or 8) are two over-arching risks (cyber risk and financial sustainability) and three project risks (Churchgate, decarbonisation phase 2 and museum collection facility).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the Committee comment on the Risk Management Governance update as attached at Appendix A and recommend that Cabinet refer it on the Council.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To provide assurance that the Council is effectively managing risk. The Council's Risk Management Strategy details that this annual review should be presented to Council. Cabinet have responsibility for the management of risk.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None, as alternatives would not adhere to the adopted Risk Management Strategy.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. Relevant managers provide regular updates on the risks that they are responsible for. The Council's Risk and Performance Management Group (RPMG) regularly review risks, especially those identified as corporate risks. The RPMG is usually attended by the Executive Member for Resources, and has standing invites to members of the Cabinet, Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1. This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision but was referred to in the Forward Plan on 15th May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. The Council's key projects, risks and performance indicators are reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis in the Council Delivery Plan report. When required, this report is also considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and can be used to guide their work programme.

7.2. The Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee support good governance, and receive a mid-year and end of year report on Risk Management governance. The mid-year report is referred on the Cabinet. The end of year report (this report) is referred on to Cabinet and Council.

7.3. The Council's approach to Risk Management is set out in the framework, which is made up of a Policy Statement, Policy, and Strategy.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The end of year report on Risk Management governance is attached as Appendix A. The Appendix includes the following:

- The Council's approach to managing and overseeing risk (sections 3-6).
- The corporate risks and actions taken to manage those risks (section 7)
- An overview of service risks as those more significant service risks could become corporate risks (section 8).
- Performance in carrying out risk reviews and training, and detailing new and archived risks (sections 9-12)
- Activities that are part of or provide significant support to risk management (sections 13-15).
- Action plans for improving risk management (sections 16 and 17). The FAR Committee are encouraged to consider the effectiveness of these actions.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The FAR Committee's Terms of Reference include "to monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance, agree actions (where appropriate) and make recommendations to Cabinet" (Constitution 10.1.5 (t)).

9.2. Cabinet's Terms of Reference include "To take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders and partners in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council. To monitor performance and risk in respect of the delivery of those policies and priorities" (Constitution 5.7.3).

9.3. The Council's Risk Management Framework Strategy document determines that all Councillors should support and promote an effective risk management culture. It also determines that this end of year report should be referred to Council.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no direct financial implications arising 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. The regular review of the effectiveness of Risk Management helps ensure effective risk management.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

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 directly to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1. There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

16. APPENDICES

16.1. *Appendix A- RISK MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE (YEAR-END UPDATE)*

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Rachel Cooper	Controls, Risk and Performance Manager,	rachel.cooper@north-herts.gov.uk,
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Tim Everitt	Performance and Risk Officer	Tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1. None

North Herts Council

RISK MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE (YEAR-END UPDATE)

Progress of risk management activities since the mid-year update reported in January 2026.

1. Introduction

1.1 This year-end update provides an overview of risk management governance arrangements at North Herts Council as of the end of March 2026 and summarises associated activities since the mid-year update, which was reported to relevant committees in January 2026. It provides a wider commentary on risk, a broader understanding of risks faced and associated mitigations, and assurance that risk management processes and governance arrangements are in place and working.

1.2 Following review by the Risk and Performance Management Group (RPMG), the year-end update will be presented to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Cabinet and Council.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The highest strategic risks are currently Cyber, Financial Sustainability, Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution, and Resourcing, as well as project risks for Churchgate, Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2, and Museum Collection Facility.

2.2 Since production of the mid-year update, the risk levels of three Corporate Risks have been reduced - Leisure Centre Decarbonisation, Local Plan Review, and Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks. Risk scores were also reduced for three completed Council Delivery Plan projects - Engaging the Community on our Finances, King George V Skate Park, and Waste and Street Cleansing Contract.

2.3 The new Museum Collection Facility project risk was introduced in January 2026 and was first reported in the Council Delivery Plan 2025/26 (Quarter 3 Update) presented to Cabinet on 14 April 2026.

2.4 All Corporate Risks continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis, with updates to completed and planned mitigating activities.

3. Background

3.1 As set out in the Constitution, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee focuses on its role of “monitor[ing] the effective development and operation of risk management”. To enable this, the Committee receives a mid-year (in December/January) and year-end (in June) risk management governance update.

3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the risks to achieving agreed objectives and priorities, as set out in the Council Plan. Quarterly reports detailing key projects and associated risks, key strategic risks that cut across the delivery of all services, and key performance indicators, form part of established Council Delivery Plan monitoring arrangements.

3.3 The above reports are subsequently presented to Cabinet, which has overall responsibility for ensuring the effective management of risk. The Cabinet reports will include any specific recommendations made by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.4 The Risk and Performance Management Group (RPMG) provides Officer and Member oversight of risk management activities and valuable input to risk-related committee reports. The Director – Resources, the Officer Champion for Risk Management, chairs quarterly RPMG meetings and the Executive Member for Resources, in their role as the Risk Management Member Champion, is a regular attendee. The Chairs of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to attend, with optional invitations extended to members of both committees and Cabinet. The Controls, Risk and Performance team deliver the risk management function, and support the RPMG with the provision of meeting papers and expert advice. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) delivers the Council's insurance services and their Risk and Insurance Manager attended RPMG meetings during the year, enabling the Council to obtain an insight into emerging risks and issues at both HCC and other Hertfordshire local authorities. The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) Head of Assurance also attends, helping to inform a better understanding of wider risk issues. Officers also attend representing the Resilience (NHC Resilience Manager) and Health and Safety (HCC Health and Safety Manager) functions.

3.5 Each Director provides the RPMG with an informal overview of key projects and risks within their directorate once a year and will have ongoing discussions about these with the relevant Executive Member(s).

3.6 The Controls, Risk and Performance team is responsible for the provision of training and support to Officers and Members.

4. Risk Management Framework

4.1 The Council's Risk Management Framework requires us to:

- Identify and document key risks in all areas of our business, understand them and seek to proactively manage them.
- Assess each risk, identify existing controls, and identify further actions required to reduce the risk.
- Have Business Continuity Plans in place for each of our service areas, which identify the key functions, what the risks are and how they can be mitigated to allow them to continue operating.
- Develop capacity and skills in identifying, understanding, and managing the risks facing the Council.
- Regularly review the Risk Management Framework and update it in line with statutory and best practice requirements.

4.2 The Risk Management Framework is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Officers undertook the last review towards the end of 2025 and details of proposed changes were included in the risk management governance mid-year update. Cabinet approved the changes to the Risk Management Framework on 20 January 2026.

5. Risk Awareness and Appetite

5.1 The Council is committed to the proactive identification and management of key external and internal risks that may affect the delivery of objectives. This allows us to be risk aware, understanding that risks may increase as services evolve and more commercial opportunities are developed and undertaken.

5.2 The Council's risk appetite is its willingness to accept risks to realise opportunities and achieve objectives. We must take risks and 'be brave' to evolve and to continue to deliver services effectively, deciding what risks we want to take and what ones we want to avoid, whilst acknowledging that we cannot or should not avoid all risks. The Risk Management Framework recognises that risks accompany all new objectives and opportunities, and it provides guidance on managing them appropriately.

5.3 The Council will have a range of different appetites for different risks depending on the circumstances and these will vary over time. The Risk Management Framework specifies that we will actively manage and monitor risks scoring 4 or higher on the risk matrix. This includes monitoring the completion of risk management activities and assessing their effectiveness.

5.4 As reported in the year-end Council Delivery Plan monitoring report, 11 Corporate Risks have a score of 4 or above (see Section 7.).

6. Risk Identification and Assessment

6.1 Leadership Team and Cabinet are responsible for the Corporate Risks, with Cabinet ensuring these risks are managed appropriately and proportionately. They are likely to require a high-level of resources to manage and need to be monitored at a strategic level.

6.2 The reporting of Corporate Risks to Cabinet, via quarterly Council Delivery Plan updates, allows details of the top risks facing the Council to be monitored. The half-yearly reports on risk management governance presented to FAR and Cabinet help to provide assurance over the processes that are in place to support risk management.

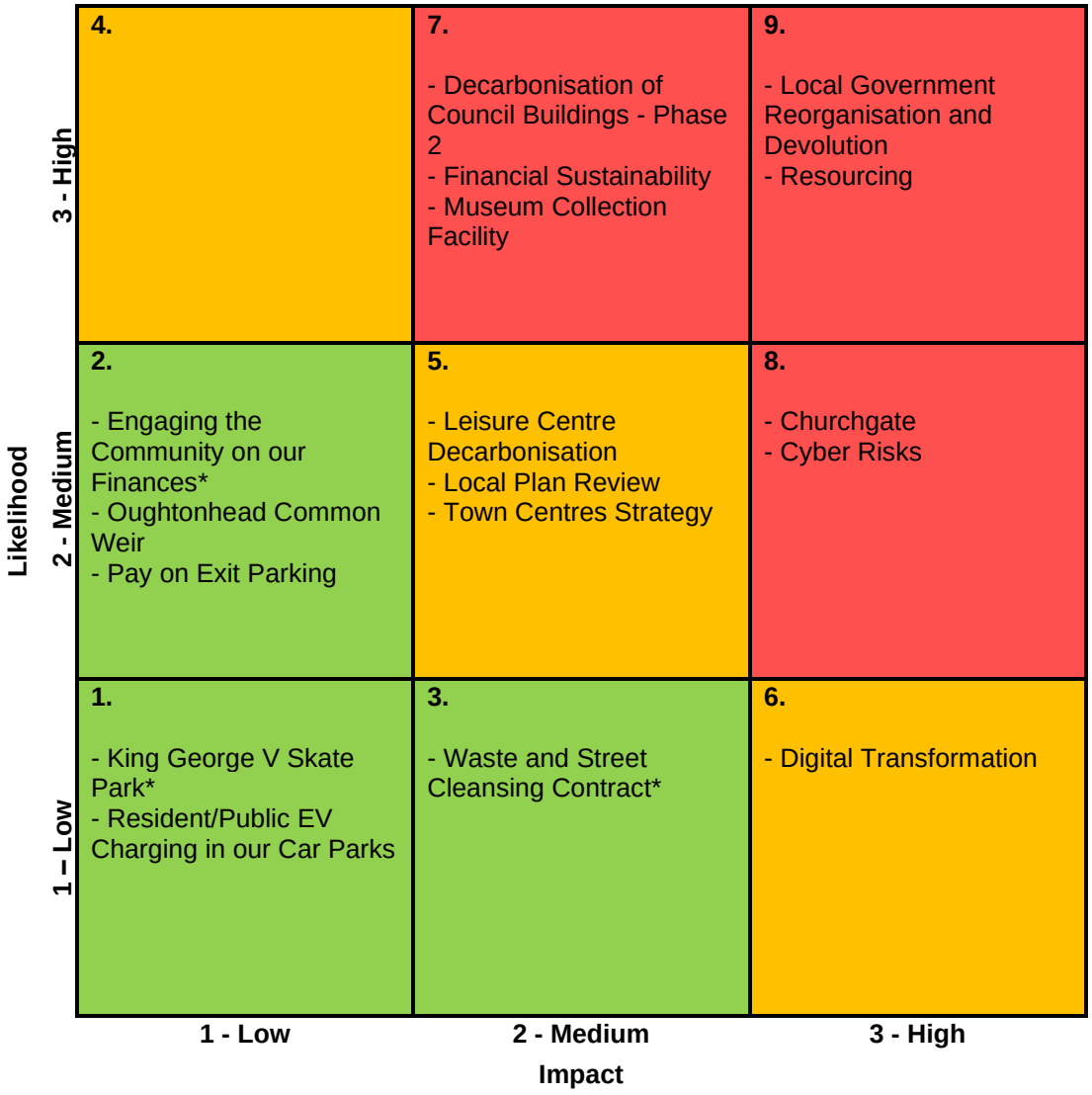
6.3 In June 2025, Cabinet approved the inclusion of 13 projects in the Council Delivery Plan for 2025/26, along with four over-arching Corporate Risks. Each Council Delivery Plan project has a risk assessment in place to determine the major risks to the delivery of the project and the mitigating actions required. The majority of projects and the four Corporate Risks were carried forward from the previous year's Council Delivery Plan. One new project entitled Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2 was added in time for the Quarter 1 monitoring report and another new project entitled Museum Collection Facility was added in time for the Q3 2025/26 monitoring report.

6.4 The following diagram sets out how overall risk scores are produced, detailing the associated individual likelihood and impact scores and related Risk Management Framework definitions for each score:

4. Likelihood High (3) Impact Low (1) Chance of it happening -More than 60% Consequences - Minor	**7. Likelihood High (3) Impact Medium (2)** Chance of it happening - More than 60% Consequences - Noticeable effect on the Council	**9. Likelihood High (3) Impact High (3)** Chance of it happening - More than 60% Consequences - Significant impact on the Council
2. Likelihood Medium (2) Impact Low (1) Chance of it happening – between 20 – 60% Consequences - Minor	**5. Likelihood Medium (2) Impact Medium (2)** Chance of it happening – between 20 – 60% Consequences – Noticeable effect on the Council	**8. Likelihood Medium (2) Impact High (3)** Chance of it happening – between 20 – 60% Consequences – Significant impact on the Council
1. Likelihood Low (1) Impact Low (1) Chance of it happening – less than 20% Consequences - Minor	**3. Likelihood Low (1) Impact Medium (2)** Chance of it happening – less than 20% Consequences – Noticeable effect on the Council	**6. Likelihood Low (1) Impact High (3)** Chance of it happening – less than 20% Consequences – Significant impact on the Council

7. Corporate Risks

7.1 The Council Delivery Plan contains the following risks, which have been plotted on the Corporate Risk Matrix to show a visual risk profile of the Plan, as reported in the year-end monitoring report:



* Associated Council Delivery Plan project completed.

7.2 The risks can also be assessed in the context of mitigating actions, including those that have been completed. When mitigating actions are completed, there is an expectation that the cumulative effect will have a positive impact on the risk score. Detailed below are completed actions and proposed mitigating actions for each of the Council Delivery Plan high-level risks. Actions completed since the previous Risk Management Governance report are in ***bold italics*** to help show how mitigating activity is progressing. The presented information is in line with a previous request from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

Risk Title/ Risk Score	Completed Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Controls and Mitigating Actions
Churchgate Current: 8 Target: 6	- Secured both freehold and leasehold ownership. - Project Board appointed (November 2022). - Lead consultant (Lambert Smith Hampton) appointed (June 2023). LSH supported by design and transport consultants. - Appointed communications agency support (PLMR). - Detailed project risk log created. Issues log also created. - SIAS audit of Churchgate - Ongoing Project Assurance (reported May 2024). Recommendations implemented. - Engagement plan developed and approved by Project Board (July 2024). - Formal engagement process commenced September 2024 and ended November 2024. - Further SIAS audit of Churchgate - Project Assurance (reported May 2025) provided a reasonable level of assurance. Recommendations implemented. - LSH undertook preliminary exercise to identify key risks and appropriate ways to manage these. Details presented in Appendix M (Risk Assessment) of the Viability and Strategy Report. - Council decision (10 July 2025) to develop a proposal based on the preferred option, endorse the five 'Development Principles', and approve additional 12-month funding for a specialist regeneration project manager. ***- Successful 2026/27 growth bid to extend the employment of the regeneration specialist Project Manager***.	Controls: - Communications and consultation plan in place and evolving, which is kept updated. - Decisions explained, including that there will need to be compromises. - Financial and expert consultancy support is in place to provide expert advice and help us to move the project forward. - Cost effectiveness/value for money is a key part of assessing and developing options. - Committee reports to highlight significant risks associated with recommended decisions under Risk Implications. Project Management Controls: - Regular Project Board meetings. - Project risk log and issues log regularly updated and reported to Project Board. - Weekly Project Team meetings with LSH. Actions: - Further work required to explore risks identified in the Viability and Strategy Report in greater detail and to develop appropriate mitigation strategies. - Progressing a number of work packages (e.g., car park survey analysis and future proofing) to support fully informed decision making on options/viability.
Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2 Current: 7 Target: 5	- Project budget contingency in place. - Allocated internal resource for project management and delivery of project programme. - Allowed for comprehensive planning in year one, with no requirement to drawdown any Salix funding. - Project Risk Log in place. - Informal engagement with Planning prior to funding application, to have confidence that proposed interventions are likely to align with planning guidance. - Project plan allows for a significant period of time to undertake planning process, DNO upgrades and procurement of MEP. - Funding for a Principal Designer and a Quantity Surveyor approved by Cabinet via the Q1 2025/26 Capital Budget Monitoring Review report (23 September 2025). - Reviewed the three audit reports and recommendations relating to 'Leisure Centre Decarbonisation Project (Salix Grant) Embedded Programme Assurance'. ***- Decision on preferred project delivery route (13 November 2025).*** ***- Decarbonisation of the DCO removed from Salix funding, with revised works now due to be undertaken via a different delivery route.***	Actions - Apply for planning permission as early as possible (due April 2026). - Engage with DNO regarding upgrade requirements as early as possible. - Undertake asbestos surveys across identified sites (timings to be confirmed, although likely to be undertaken around date works due to commence). Controls - Regular Project Board meetings. - Regular dialogue with Salix relationship manager. - Monitoring reports submitted to Salix (quarterly for 2025/26 and monthly for 2026/27 and 2027/28). - Monthly Executive Member briefings. - SIAS attendance at Project Board meetings.

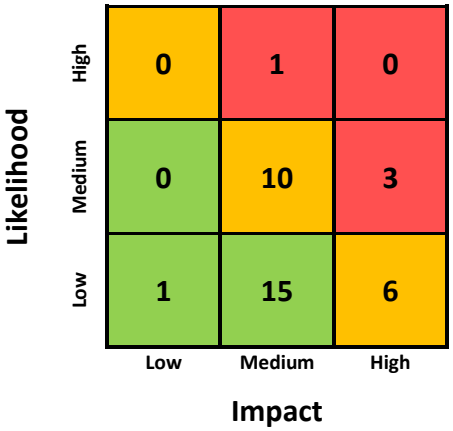
Risk Title/ Risk Score	Completed Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Controls and Mitigating Actions
	- Appointment of project management support (Varsity) to support full project, as well as appointment of MEP consultants and architects to support continuity across project.	
Financial Sustainability Current: 7 Target: 5	- MTFS for 2025-30 agreed by Council in September 2024. - Set budget for 2025/26, which identified additional pressures and incorporated revised funding assumptions. - Government confirmation of three-year settlement from 2026/27 onwards. - Responded to consultation on new funding formula. - Budget consultation carried out. ***- Revised funding projections as a result of formula changes and insight of future direction.*** ***- Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-30 approved on 4 December 2025. MTFS sets out a strategy for addressing funding gaps, including how difficult service funding decisions may have to be made.*** ***- Reviewed results from budget consultation and fed this into 2026/27 budget planning.*** ***- 2026/27 budget approved at the Full Council meeting held on 26 February 2026.***	- Regular budget monitoring to highlight any issues. - Monitor inflation forecasts and impacts.
Museum Collection Facility Current: 7 Target: 3	***- Detailed Project Risk Log in place, recording relevant mitigations agreed with Project Board and the actions required to implement them.*** ***- Approved Capital budget in place, with additional contingency.*** ***- Indicative project expenditure based on consultancy costing exercise, which was reviewed by appropriate officers.*** ***- Project plan adjusted to account for known delays to Stage 1 design and extension of existing tenancy***.	- Project Manager updates to Project Risk Log throughout project lifecycle. - Implementation of agreed mitigating actions to planned timescales. - Regular Project Board meetings provide the opportunity for identified risks to be reported and discussed, and for any additional actions to be agreed. - Project Team and Project Board to scrutinise project expenditure and act diligently when authorising spend. - Tolerances on spend for individual work packages to be agreed with Project Board. - Internal promotion of the project to NHC staff and councillors, including progress made and timescales. - Professional Services Team and any grant funded roles to be brought on board at the earliest opportunity. - Submit grant funding applications at the earliest opportunity.
Resourcing Current: 9 Target: 8	- Carry-forward of staffing underspend to help deliver some priorities. - Work on Baldock Fire recovery has subsided. - Council Delivery Plan reviewed for 2024/25 with a reduction in number of projects. - Recruitment website updated to make it more attractive to applicants. - Some success in recruiting to previously hard to fill roles, although still some continuing issues in certain areas. - Pressures identified in the budget setting process for 2025/26 for additional staffing, including training posts.	- Consider getting in additional staffing resource (especially where New Burdens funding available). - Signposting to external resources and support. - Process automation. - Continue HR projects to help make the Council a more attractive place to work and make the recruitment process easier. - Continue to review the Council Delivery Plan to ensure resources are targeted at those projects that are the highest priority and stop/delay work on those that are a low priority.

Risk Title/ Risk Score	Completed Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Controls and Mitigating Actions
	- Joined in with the national recruitment campaign for councils led by the LGA. ***- Launched new job application system to make it easier to apply for jobs, and easier for recruiting managers.*** ***- Budget allocated for back-filling/additional work linked to LGR.***	- People Strategy being developed with agreed themes, including retention and development of staff. - Tracking the resource impacts of LGR.
Cyber Risks Current: 8 Target: 8	- In-house fully functional Disaster Recovery solution. - SLA from broadband provider in place (although loss of broadband service is out of our control). - 2022/23 SIAS audits of IT Hardware (Reasonable assurance), Phishing (Reasonable assurance) and Cyber Risk (Reasonable assurance). - V3 laptop rollout completed for staff. - Implemented IT Hardware audit recommendations. - Test Immutable Cloud Back-up - Phase 1. - Implemented Immutable Cloud Back-up - Phase 2. - IT Information Team Leader and Technical Operations Manager completed the Certified Information Security Manager course. - Implemented Phishing audit recommendations. - Implemented Cyber Risk audit recommendations. - New email monitoring system Mimecast implemented and live. Backup server for mail routing in the event of attack on Microsoft 365 in place. - Windows 11 operating system with Microsoft Defender now deployed. - Mimecast system now used to conduct more sophisticated Phishing Simulations. - Website Access Control and Monitoring upgrade completed. - 2024/25 SIAS audits: Cyber Security Supply Chain Management (Reasonable assurance), Cyber Governance and Culture (Reasonable assurance). - The Council has introduced a Cyber Resilience Board, which includes key officers and elected Members, and meets quarterly. - The Council will not now appoint a Chief Information Security Officer. IT Manager to undertake the role of principal security officer as Cyber Security Lead. ***- Implemented 2024/25 SIAS audit recommendation management responses.*** ***- Cyber Awareness training for all staff, including a requirement for an annual refresh.*** ***- Technology in place to cover systems being interrupted or damaged, and data being corrupted or erased: Computer virus (Realtime Virus Protection/Defender updated), Malware (Realtime Monitoring), Computer hacking (Firewalls/Admin restrictions).*** ***- Financial Risk identified for 2026/27 to fund services to aid recovery,*** ***"Ransomware attack results in the write-***	<u>Key Controls/Mitigations</u> - Continual evaluation and development of cyber policies and threat analysis. <u>Response Options</u> - Successful cyber-attack would be managed by a complete disconnect, with no/limited service available until the breach is fixed. IT would have responsibility for initiating this. - Power failure would be managed by the generator/UPS, with a limited service available. - For Ransomware, go to backup and rebuild all devices. Ransomware policy discussed by February 2025 Cyber Board. In line with Government recommendations, no ransom will be paid.

Risk Title/ Risk Score	Completed Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Controls and Mitigating Actions
	off of some IT hardware and infrastructure" (Low Risk/£200K). - Data at Rest Encryption purchased ***and now in place.*** ***- 2026 PSN evaluation undertaken and submitted.*** ***- VPN moved from in-house to industry standard***.	
Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Current: 9 Target: 5	- The Council was part of the county-wide White Paper Working Group, which was working on the initial submission in March 2025. - Staff have been provided with regular updates and chances to ask questions, this has included reassurance that services will still need to be delivered under any structure. - Feedback received from central government on the interim proposal for Hertfordshire (May 2025). - Consultants appointed to support Programme Management Office deliver the agreed work programme to November 2025 submission. ***- Stakeholder consultation exercise carried out, and feedback included in the submission.*** ***- County-wide submission deadline met at the end of November 2025.*** ***- New structure for the next phase of work is in place. Officers from North Herts are providing input into those arrangements.*** ***- Reserve allocation of £2m agreed as part of budget setting***.	Controls and Further Mitigating Activities: - Continued support for staff. - Maintain processes for decision making and ensure decisions are taken in the best interests of North Herts (irrespective of future structure). - Input in to work to support transition, both before and after new structures are known.

8. Service Risks

8.1 As of 31 March 2026, the Risk Register contained 36 service risks. A summary of the assessed risk scores is detailed below:



8.2 The four high-risk assessments related to:

- Careline - Field Visits to Service Users' Homes
- Meeting the Needs of Homeless People
- Open Space in Major New Developments
- Renters' Rights Act

9. Review of Risks

9.1 Risk reviews are scheduled within Ideagen (our performance and risk software), with automated reminders sent to assigned officers when risks are due to be reviewed. In line with Risk Management Framework (RMF) requirements, high risks should be reviewed every 3 months, medium risks every 6 months and low risks at least once a year. The Performance and Risk Officer assists assigned officers to ensure that information is captured in line with RMF requirements.

9.2 As of 31 March 2026, there was a total of 53 risks recorded on the risk register – 17 included in the Council Delivery Plan and 36 service risks. All of these had risk reviews scheduled in accordance with the RMF. During the six-month period 30 September 2025 (when the figures for the mid-year Risk Management Governance update were produced) to 31 March 2026, 79 risk reviews took place. 71 (90%) of these took place in line with strict RMF requirements. Of the eight reviews that were late, two were up to one week late and six were more than one week late, ranging from 9 to 54 days late. For most, the reason for delay was due to lack of officer availability (e.g., due to higher priority commitments or leave) and review meetings having to be scheduled after the Next Review Date. Of the eight late reviews, three related to Corporate Risks, with all of these being reviewed in time to be included in the relevant quarterly Council Delivery Plan monitoring report.

10. New Risks

10.1 Between 1 October 2025 and 31 March 2026, two new risks were entered on the Risk Register. These were:

- **Museum Collection Facility:** New Corporate Risk (included in the Council Delivery Plan) describing key risks to successfully delivering the associated project and setting out key activities to control/mitigate these.
- **Renters' Rights Act:** New Service Risk relating to the risk of NHC not being in a position to effectively implement new Renters' Rights Act legislation from the practical implementation date of 01 May 2026.

Both risks were reviewed by the RPMG on 25 February 2026.

11. Archived Risks

11.1 Between 1 October 2025 and 31 March 2026, five risks were archived. These were:

- **Estates Management Information and Reporting:** A new master spreadsheet is now operating adequately to ensure all lease events, such as rent reviews and lease renewals, are actioned and that Estates records align with finance records. As part of a corporate review of Uniform modules across the Council, a decision was taken to cease use of the Estates module, which was signed off by the Director - Enterprise. All data sets have been extracted from Uniform. In view of the significant improvements linked to the new master spreadsheet, implementation of related audit recommendations, and the cessation of the Estates Uniform module, the described risks associated with the Uniform database are no longer relevant. Until LGR, we will continue to use the new master spreadsheet to manage the Estates portfolio, with a further review being undertaken post LGR when portfolios will be merged and other authorities existing property management systems could be potentially utilised. In the interim period, this is assessed as a low risk area for NHC.

- **Land Adjacent to Radburn Way, LGC:** In June 2025, Cabinet approved that the land should no longer be declared surplus and development of the site should not be pursued, and that plans should be progressed to improve management of the land with the intention to provide a habitat bank, or similar, with improved public access as appropriate. Following the Cabinet decision, Green Space are now leading on the new project. As we are no longer looking to dispose of this site, the previously identified risks to disposal are no longer relevant.
- **Museum Storage:** Existing risk entry superseded by the new 'Museum Collection Facility' Council Delivery Plan item, which relates to the adaptation of Unit 1 City Park to meet current and future museum storage requirements. Associated risks to the project and museum collection are now managed/monitored via the Project Risk Log and Council Delivery Plan item.
- **Virgin O2 2G Network Shutdown:** All known Virgin O2 2G Careline clients in affected postcodes were transitioned and Careium (our supplier) successfully removed Virgin O2 2G profiles from their SIM estate in controlled batches. Following the shutdown date (1 October 2025), performance was stable across the network, and at the time of archiving, no service disruptions had been reported. Careium continue to monitor performance and will alert us if any anomalies do occur. All mitigation measures have been completed, the shutdown passed without disruption, and ongoing work has been absorbed into standard operational monitoring.
- **Waste Depots:** This risk entry was originally created for (and was subsequently removed from) the Council Delivery Plan, with described risks specifically relating to the waste depots and the start of the new waste contract. These risks were successfully managed for example, Veolia carried out timely dilapidation repairs, Veolia is now the sole leaseholder (removing risks associated with them having to share the Buntingford depot site), and Veolia replaced the existing depot fuel tank (removing risks associated with it not being fit for purpose). Ongoing risks relating to permitting requirements are managed by Veolia (the permit holder), and we are not aware of any current permitting issues. Broad discussions on waste depots and related infrastructure will need to take place in preparation for LGR and we have a separate risk entry on the Risk Register relating to wider waste transfer infrastructure.

12. Training

12.1 A Risk Management e-learning module is available on GROW Zone and is mandatory training for all managers. As of 31 March 2026, 94% of managers had completed the training – 82 out of 87. This has subsequently increased to 97% - 84 out of 87. For the three still outstanding, the system sends automatic reminders to the managers encouraging completion of the module at the earliest opportunity. The module is also available to all other staff and councillors via the general Courses Library on GROW Zone.

13. Insurance Review

13.1 Hertfordshire County Council continued to handle the Council's insurance arrangements under a shared service arrangement. The Council's insurance policies were renewed from 1 April 2026. Unfortunately, rates were increased by the motor insurers due to the claims history in 2025/26. The liability insurance arrangements were tendered in 2025/26 and a new insurer appointed from 1 April 2026 with significant savings for the Council.

13.2 The Council transfers some financial risks to its insurers. Public liability insurance provides the Council with insurance cover for claims made by the public for personal injury and/or property damage. These types of claims are subject to a £10,000 excess that is charged to the responsible service area. Areas that have been subject to a claim are identified and wherever possible, action is taken to prevent future damage to property or personal injury. As of 31 March 2026, there was only one outstanding public liability claim against the Council.

13.3 The Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) Scheme of Arrangement was triggered in 2013, and the Council now pays 25% of any new claims dating back to the period that MMI was the Council's insurer (1974 to 1993). The Council's Financial Risks make provision for any new claims and any further levy demands relating to the period that MMI were the Council's insurers. As of 31 March 2026, there were no outstanding claims with MMI.

13.4 The Council is uninsured for public liability claims for asbestos exposure, following the introduction of this as an exclusion in policy wordings from around 2003. Following the court case Bolton – v – MMI it is deemed that injury does not occur at the time of exposure but when the tumour begins to develop. This led to injury in mesothelioma claims being deemed to occur 10 years before diagnosis. As it is now 22 years since the exclusion wording was introduced, any new cases will not have cover. In contrast, employers' liability insurance covers the date the exposure happened so the insurer on cover in the 1970/80's will respond (as any claims are likely to be from this period before stricter health and safety controls were introduced). In North Herts Council's case, and as referenced above in 13.3, this is Municipal Mutual Insurance.

14. Resilience Planning

14.1 The Resilience Plan, Recovery Plan, Pandemic Disease Plan and Resilience Communications Support Plan have been updated with formal approval and sign-off to be completed by the end of May 2026. Due to limited staff availability and the prioritisation of other resilience work, the majority of business continuity work was put on hold during the year. Expect to be able to start to catch-up on outstanding tasks during 2026/27.

14.2 The NHC Flood Plan and Kimpton Groundwater Guidance document are being updated. A Kimpton Multi-Agency Action Plan is in place produced by HCC. A multi-agency debrief was facilitated by HCC Flood Risk Management in July 2025.

14.3 The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has produced a new LRF Training and Exercising Plan which has been distributed to NHC volunteers.

14.4 Minor updates were made to the Cyber Incident Business Continuity Response Plan in January 2026 and a Cyber Incident Exercise based on a phishing email scenario was facilitated in March 2026. The learning outcomes from the exercise will be incorporated into a review of the plan and procedures including promotion of the 'TextAnywhere Alert system' to staff.

14.5 Ongoing areas of focus include the development of a Widespread Power Outage Business Continuity Plan and an Adverse Weather Business Continuity Plan.

15. Health and Safety

15.1 As noted in the mid-year review, the Council entered into a service level agreement with Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Health and Safety team from October 2025 to fulfil the statutory requirement to have access to competent health and safety advice, as well as conduct a limited number of H&S services on request.

15.2 The Buildings & Facilities team are managing general H&S queries via the health and safety mailbox and administering the DSE system (Cardinus), with assistance from the Management Support Unit. Work is ongoing with the suppliers of this software to further streamline our process. Where required due to the level of risk indicated on the self-assessment, DSE referrals have been passed to HCC, with four such interventions being undertaken to date. A project has also commenced to increase the provision of sit/stand desks within the DCO, further supporting the proactive management of DSE risks and staff wellbeing.

15.3 Fire risk assessment reviews across NHC's portfolio have commenced via HCC's Health and Safety team, with 10 undertaken as at the end of March 2026 and any identified actions raised via the Safety Culture system.

15.4 To assist service managers, a suite of generic risk assessments has been drafted and reviewed by HCC's Health and Safety team. This will enable service managers to select the risk assessments relevant to job role or task. However, there may still be bespoke or non-generic risk assessments that managers will need to create.

15.5 Accident and incident reporting remains low, with one accident and six incidents or threats recorded during the reporting period.

15.6 Looking ahead, priorities for 2026/27 include an audit of health and safety management systems, reviewing corporate training requirements, and improving systems for reporting and managing accidents and incidents.

16. Actions for 2025/26

16.1 The 2024/25 Risk Management Governance (Year-End Update) report detailed the following key actions for 2025/26 to enhance our risk management processes. An update on the progress made during the year is provided.

Action	Due Date	Progress
Undertake the annual review of Risk Management Framework documentation.	31/12/25	Officers undertook the review, and Cabinet approved the recommended changes to the Risk Management Framework on 20 January 2026.
Training exercise linked to the Cyber Incident Business Continuity Response Plan.	31/12/25	A cyber incident tabletop exercise was held on 9 March 2026 to test the Cyber Incident BCP, which was attended by all of Leadership Team, and officers from Communications, IT, and Resilience.
Senior Managers Group (SMG) review of emerging risks and opportunities.	31/03/26	The revised plan is for this to be undertaken by SMG in Summer 2026.

Action	Due Date	Progress
Updates to Emergency and Business Continuity plans.	31/03/26	The Resilience Plan, Recovery Plan, and Pandemic Disease Plan have been updated. Formal approval and sign-off is ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of May 2026. Due to limited staff availability and the prioritisation of other resilience work, the majority of business continuity work was put on hold during the year. Expect to be able to start to catch-up on outstanding tasks during 2026/27.

17. Actions for 2026/27

17.1 The following key actions for 2026/27 aim to further enhance our risk management processes:

Action	Due Date	Progress
Undertake the annual review of Risk Management Framework documentation.	31/01/27	This is scheduled to take place in September/October 2026. Review outcomes should be reported to the RPMG in November 2026 and to relevant committees in January 2027.
Senior Managers Group (SMG) review of emerging risks and opportunities.	30/09/26	This will be undertaken in Summer 2026.

18. Conclusion

18.1 The Council continued to implement the Risk Management Framework throughout 2025/26, including reviewing and reporting key strategic risks. Related processes and practices aim to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the risks faced. This allows us to be risk aware and to determine the most cost-effective way to manage risks and exploit opportunities.

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CABINET

TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2025/26 (FINAL)

REPORT OF: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the summary position on revenue income and expenditure at the end of the financial year 2025/26. The net outturn of £21.400million represents a £1.385million decrease from the net working budget of £22.785million, of which £618k is requested to be carried forward to fund specific activities in the next financial year, with an ongoing impact in future years of a £33k increase. Explanations for all the significant variances identified at Outturn are provided in table 4, while Appendix A provides a summary of the major changes to planned expenditure and income occurring over the financial year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet note this report.

2.2 That Cabinet approves a decrease of £1.385million in the 2025/26 net General Fund expenditure, as identified in section 8, to a total of £21.400million.

2.3 That Cabinet approves the changes to the 2026/27 General Fund budget, as identified in table 4 and paragraph 8.3, a total £651k increase in net expenditure

That Cabinet recommends to Council

2.4 That Council approves the net transfer from earmarked reserves, as identified in table 9, of £4.925million.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

3.2. Changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Budget holders have considered the options to manage within the existing budget but consider the variances reported here necessary and appropriate.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. Consultation on the budget monitoring report is not required. Members will be aware that there is wider consultation on budget estimates during the corporate business planning process each year.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 15 May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 Council approved the revenue budget for 2025/26 of £22.914million in February 2025. As at the end of the financial year, the working budget has reduced to £22.785million. Table 1 below details the approved changes to this budget to get to the current working budget:

Table 1 - Current Working Budget

	£k
Original Revenue Budget for 2025/26 approved by Full Council	22,914
Quarter 3 2024/25 Revenue Budget Monitoring report – 2025/26 budget changes approved by Cabinet (March 2025)	807
2024/25 Revenue Budget Outturn report – 2025/26 budget changes approved by Cabinet (June 2025)	202
Churchgate Viability and Next Steps report – additional funding for a specialist Project Manager approved by Council (July 2025)	120
First Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26 – working budget changes approved by Cabinet (September 2025)	453
Second Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26 – working budget changes approved by Cabinet (January 2026)	(846)
Decarbonisation of Leisure Centres Contract Award – working budget changes resulting from the extended opening of the lidos (May 2025)	37
Third Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26 – working budget changes approved by Cabinet (April 2026)	(902)
Current Working Budget	**22,785**

7.2 The Council was managed under Service Directorates during 2025/26. Table 2 below confirms the current net direct resource allocation of each Service Directorate and how this has changed from the original net direct budget allocations for 2025/26.

Table 2 – 2025/26 Service Directorate Budget Allocations

	Chief Executive	Customers	Enterprise	Environment	Governance	Place	Regulatory	Resources	**Total**
	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k
Original Budget	**1,030**	**3,899**	**1,168**	**8,053**	**2,391**	**751**	**2,706**	**2,916**	**22,914**
Q3 2024/25	53	79	73	8	25	530	0	39	**807**
Outturn 2024/25	154	(14)	41	(253)	1	212	14	47	**202**
Budget at April 2025	**1,237**	**3,964**	**1,282**	**7,808**	**2,417**	**1,493**	**2,720**	**3,002**	**23,923**
Q1 2025/26	(369)	(8)	(73)	892	43	(140)	(74)	182	**453**
Q2 2025/26	(119)	25	(7)	(97)	65	(559)	(18)	(136)	**(846)**
Q3 2025/26	(389)	(83)	(77)	(184)	2	(297)	(58)	184	**(902)**
Other Changes	(552)	187	(9)	(49)	71	292	65	152	**157**
Current Budget	**(192)**	**4,085**	**1,116**	**8,370**	**2,598**	**789**	**2,635**	**3,384**	**22,785**

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Cabinet are asked to approve the net expenditure on the General Fund in 2025/26 of £21.400million (recommendation 2.2). This is a net decrease of £1.385million on the working budget of £22.785million. Table 3 below confirms the net expenditure for each Service Directorate and the variance with the current working budget. The major changes reported during the year are recorded at Appendix A.

Table 3 - 2025/26 Revenue Outturn by Service Directorate

Directorate	**Net Direct Working Budget**	**Net Direct Outturn**	**(Under) / Overspend**
Chief Executive	(192)	(334)	(142)
Customers	4,085	3,909	(176)
Enterprise	1,116	1,091	(25)
Environment	8,370	7,963	(407)
Governance	2,598	2,580	(18)
Place	789	682	(107)
Regulatory	2,635	2,163	(472)
Resources	3,384	3,346	(38)
TOTAL	**22,785**	**21,400**	**(1,385)**

8.2 Service Managers are responsible for monitoring their expenditure and income against their working budget. Table 4 below highlights and explains the most significant variances, which are generally more than £25k, identified at the end of the year. The final columns detail if there is expected to be an impact on next year's (2026/27) budget:

Table 4 - Summary of significant variances

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Chief Executive Apprenticeship Scheme	283	252	(31)	Two apprentices left their apprentice roles early after being appointed to permanent positions. It is requested that the resulting underspend be carried forward to support the recruitment of additional apprentices in the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.	31	0
Chief Executive Treasury Investments Interest Income	(2,000)	(2,080)	(80)	Higher levels of cash balances available, due to the timing of capital expenditure occurring later than anticipated, was combined with a spike in interest rate returns accessible from lending to other Local Authorities during the final quarter.	0	0
Chief Executive Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF)	34	(10)	(44)	This fund was created to enable short-term investments in Council priorities. The requested carry forward will be used in 2026/27 for emerging opportunities and requirements, likely to include work to support Local Government Reorganisation, including back-fill requirements and our contribution towards joint work/ consultancy support.	34	0
Customers IT Support and Maintenance Expenditure	933	823	(110)	Underspend relates to several planned projects to enhance business resilience and cyber security that were not completed within the financial year. Vacancies held during the year, as previously highlighted at Quarters One and Two, and the technical resource required to support the LGR programme, limited capacity to deliver the projects as planned. In addition, driven by huge global AI infrastructure demand, there has been a significant surge in hardware prices, which is challenging supply and delivery of the hardware required. With the staffing issues now addressed and these critical projects in progress, approval is requested for the carry forward of the unspent budget to finance completion in the next financial year.	110	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Customers Careline Equipment Expenditure	350	284	(66)	Reduction in expenditure on the SIM cards used within Careline alarms follows the negotiation of new billing terms with the supplier during the year. The new terms offer increased flexibility in managing costs by removing the fixed charges included in the previous contract.	0	(60)
Customers Careline Service Desk Solution	25	0	(25)	Having evaluated the option for a solution to be developed internally, the complexity of the system and the technical resource absorbed with supporting LGR has meant that the service desk solution for Careline call handling will need to be procured externally. It is requested that the allocated resource is carried forward into 2026/27 for the procurement of the new system.	25	0
Enterprise Hitchin Town Hall Events Income	(150)	(109)	+41	Staff vacancies and absence during the year limited capacity for planning and delivering events organised internally, which typically generate a higher level of return. Circumstances meant that the focus was instead on keeping the facility operational and open to external hire.	0	0
Enterprise Hitchin Town Hall Repairs and Maintenance	61	17	(44)	The works identified in the respective investment proposals for 2025/26, primarily the redecoration of the Lucas Room, hallway and Mountford Hall, did not go ahead as planned due to officer capacity and long-term absences within the team. It is expected that the works will now be carried out in the next financial year, with the unspent budget requested to be carried forward.	44	0
Enterprise Brotherhood Hall Repairs and Maintenance	30	5	(25)	With the building currently unused, the lease of the hall is expected to be forfeited by the Council earlier than the lease expiry date. Under the terms of the lease the Council as tenant is required to bring the building back to its original condition and is therefore liable for any dilapidations identified. Negotiations are ongoing with the Letchworth Garden Heritage Foundation. The unspent maintenance budget is therefore requested to be carried forward to mitigate the financial impact of dilapidations agreed in the next financial year.	25	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Enterprise Amenity Areas Lighting	17	11	(6)	Structural and electrical testing was undertaken of all lighting in parks and open spaces. This exercise identified a list of remedial works required. With the Surveyor post now filled, there is likely to be additional demand on the budget in the next financial year to meet the backlog of work. As such, the carry forward of the remaining budget is requested.	6	0
Environment Directorate Staffing Costs	1,413	1,381	(32)	Underspend due primarily to vacancies held in the Waste Services Team and the Greenspace Management team. The focus on the delivery of the new Waste contract delayed recruitment to several posts, while a move to flexible retirement within the Greenspace Team reduced expenditure on salaries.	0	0
Environment Green Space management – Historic Landfill Sites	56	0	(56)	Resource was identified in this financial year for the investigations and gas monitoring of two historic landfill sites situated on Council owned green space at Walsworth Common and Cadwell Lane Playing Fields. Historic landfill sites such as these pre-date environmental regulations and therefore we only hold limited information on them. Historic landfill sites either never had, or no longer have, a permit or licence and the position of the Environment Agency, as the regulatory authority in this instance, is that they are the responsibility of the landowner. Limited investigations have previously taken place at the sites, and the Council is now undertaking further monitoring and investigations to ensure it continues to meet its responsibilities as landowner. The carry forward of the budget is requested to meet the costs of these works.	56	0
Environment Green Space Management – Commuted Sums contributions income	(25)	(17)	+8	Commuted sums contributions income has reduced over recent years, with the outturn representing contributions to greenspace maintenance at only two developments in 25/26. Developers have taken the option to set up their own management companies to own and manage the greenspace privately, rather than transfer management responsibility to the Council and incur the cost of a commuted sum contribution.	0	23

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Environment Green Space Management - Repair of the balancing pond at Purwell Meadows, Hitchin	20	6	(14)	Investigation works have been undertaken during the year. It is requested that the unspent revenue investment budget is carried forward to finance the progress of recommendations from the investigations report.	14	0
Environment Income from Burials	(319)	(279)	+40	As previously highlighted and explained at Quarter Three, the trend apparent across the industry away from full body burials to cremations continued in the final quarter of the financial year. The Council only receives income from cremations if the family choose to purchase a grave space or a memorial tree within a North Herts Cemetery.	0	40
Environment Community Wellbeing Projects expenditure	34	23	(11)	During 2025/26, knowing that the external funding for our creative wellbeing, cooking and exercise programmes was coming to an end, delegated decision approval was obtained to introduce low-cost charges for our services, on the basis that these charges would directly support the future continuation of those services in the absence of external grants. This followed requests from service users asking to financially contribute rather than have services removed if they could not be provided free of charge. It is therefore requested that the unspent expenditure budget funded from service user contributions is carried forward to support Wellbeing programmes in the next financial year.	11	0
Environment Leisure Centre Management Contract Income	(196)	(321)	(125)	Two one-week closures at Hitchin and Letchworth Leisure Centres originally anticipated in 2025/26 are now scheduled for 2026/27, following the delay to the delivery of the Leisure Centres Decarbonisation project (as detailed in the Capital End of Year Review 2025/26 report). The impact of the closures will therefore reduce the management fee receivable under the terms of the Leisure and Active Communities contract in the next financial year, with the corresponding budget provision requested to be carried forward accordingly.	125	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Environment Leisure Income in advance	0	(30)	(30)	Prior to going in to liquidation Stevenage Leisure did not pass on the income in advance that they had received to Everyone Active. Under the contract, liability to make this payment then fell to the Council. The initial estimate was that the payment would need to include VAT. Ultimately that was not the case so this releases that over-estimate to the General Fund.	0	0
Environment Waste Services – replacement bins income	(56)	(4)	+52	Demand for replacement bins has been lower than anticipated as existing bins are lasting longer, with many residents repairing bins themselves or utilising the Council's free wheel and lid repair service. Alongside the benefit of reducing plastic waste, this trend should also help reduce pressure on the Council's capital expenditure allocations for the purchase of new bins.	0	52
Environment Haulage and processing of dry recyclates	517	363	(154)	Underspend is due to both the inclusion of soft plastics within the new materials processing contract, which has removed the additional spend previously incurred in managing this waste stream separately, and the sale prices achieved for the recyclable materials collected being higher than anticipated.	0	0
Environment Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract expenditure	7,021	6,944	(77)	Underspend is primarily due to lower levels of contract variation orders undertaken by the contractor than forecast, with demand for these activities not materialising as anticipated. This is typical for the first year of a new contract, where estimates are based on historic data and prudent assumptions. Actual volumes will continue to be monitored with forecasts refined as demand trends emerge.	0	0
Governance Community Forums Grants Expenditure	63	55	(8)	It is requested that the balance of Community Forum grant budget not awarded in 25/26 is carried forward to 2026/27.	8	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Place Directorate Staffing Costs	3,526	3,481	(45)	Underspend on Place salaries due to vacancies held within the directorate. The Planning Service relies on temporary staff and contractors to help cover vacant posts and provide additional capacity. These roles are often paid for using salary lag from vacant permanent posts. As contractors typically cost more than permanent staff, the carry forward of the salary budget underspend is therefore requested to help fund the cost of temporary staff in the next financial year.	45	0
Place Parking Lines and Signs Maintenance	51	34	(17)	Spend against the ongoing monitoring programme of lines and signs relating to parking restrictions to ensure compliance for enforcement purposes can vary depending on resources and pro-active review. We are now in a period of active review so the spend in 2026/27 is expected to be higher than the budget provision in next year. The unspent budget in 2025/26 is therefore requested to be carried forward to ensure there is sufficient funding to undertake such reviews and arrange the maintenance or replacement necessary.	17	0
Place Car Parking Cash Collection	32	(17)	(49)	Negative expenditure outturn is due to the over-accrual of the estimated outstanding liability for cash collections at the end of the prior financial year 2024/25. The actual number of collections undertaken was significantly lower than assumed, while the cash processing fee was lower than anticipated as the amount of cash collected reduced with more users paying for their parking via the alternative cashless means available. The lower level of collections and cash collected has continued in the current year, with the annual budget recommended to be adjusted accordingly.	0	(17)
Place Car Parking PCN Income	(573)	(927)	(354)	The higher than anticipated level of PCN activity is attributed to a lower level of turnover of Civil Enforcement Officers in the parking team in 2025/26. This has meant more staff patrolling across the District to ensure motorists are parking safely and in compliance with the relevant highway restrictions.	0	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Place Car Parking PCN Income – Contribution to bad debt provision	162	372	+210	Higher levels of PCN activity over the last several years has contributed to the increase in the calculated contribution required to the bad debt provision at the end of this financial year. The suspension of income recovery during the transition to the new financial system also affected the age profile of the outstanding debt, with greater provision required for debts aging over that period to recognise the increased risk of non-collection.	0	0
Place Town Centres Strategy	49	31	(18)	The consultation on the draft Town Centres Strategy was completed in late January 2026. Subsequent turnover in staff has delayed progress on the strategy, with officers currently considering alternative resourcing options. It is therefore requested that the remaining budget is carried forward to fund progress in the next financial year, with the Town Centres Strategy anticipated to be ready for possible adoption in the autumn.	18	0
Place Hitchin Station Eastern Access Project	28	3	(25)	The Council is working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and Network Rail on the Hitchin Station Eastern Access project. A feasibility study has been prepared on possible options. Officers are currently waiting on responses from Network Rail to the study. The remaining budget is requested to be carried forward to fund any further work required in the next financial year.	25	0
Place Local Plan Development Expenditure	67	49	(18)	There was a slight delay in the Housing and the Economic studies that meant only the drafts had been prepared by March 2026. The last milestone payments have therefore slipped into 2026/27, with the carry forward of the corresponding budget requested accordingly.	18	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Place Local Plan Development – Government Grant Income	0	(108)	(108)	New Local Plan regulations have come into effect that set out a new plan making system. Government grant funding has been successfully applied for, with North Herts committing to bringing forward early a Local Plan through the new system. The grant funding is intended to support North Herts to ensure good progress. The funding will be spent on increasing staff capacity to meet the strict timetables and milestones for preparing a faster plan as required by the funding. It is requested that the grant amount is transferred to reserve to be drawn down in future years as the development of the Local Plan progresses.	0	0
Transfer to Planning Earmarked Reserve	0	108	+108		0	0
Place Development Control – Planning Applications Fees Income	(1,315)	(1,176)	+139	Shortfall in income follows the accounting adjustment posted at the end of the year end to ensure the income outturn captures income receipts from only those planning applications that have been resolved on or before the 31st March 2026. This adjustment was larger than anticipated as it included some large applications originally received in 2024/25, which were still outstanding due to their complexity.	0	0
Place Development Control – Legal and Consultants expenditure	84	118	+34	Further costs incurred in the final quarter relate to two planning appeals, one of which was a hearing relating to the refusal of planning permission for a Traveller and Gypsy site at Pulmer Water, and the other a Public Inquiry following the refusal, contrary to officer recommendation, of planning permission for 280 dwellings at Barkway Road, Royston. Costs associated with a challenge to a decision of the Council was identified as a financial risk when the budget was approved in February 2025.	0	0
Regulatory Environmental Crime Enforcement – Equipment Purchases	5	0	(5)	Income from Environmental Crime fixed penalty notices in 2025/26 exceeded the budgeted level. The service had planned to reinvest this additional income in the purchase of drones and associated staff training, at an estimated cost of around £5k. This expenditure was delayed due to staffing constraints within the Licensing and Community Safety team. It is therefore requested that the unspent budget be carried forward to cover the cost of the drones and associated training in 2026/27.	5	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Regulatory Contribution to the CCTV Partnership	110	78	(32)	The lower level of contribution follows confirmation from Stevenage Borough Council that the Hertfordshire CCTV partnership reported an outturn underspend for 25/26. The underspend variance was primarily the result of additional income that is generated from services provided and charged to the other Councils.	0	0
Regulatory Housing Services Staffing Costs	1,085	548	(537)	The £537k underspend on salaries follows the application of ringfenced homelessness grant to fund salary costs in 2025/26, in place of the original salary base budget provision. This means that the Council has met the MHCLG's conditions for use of the grant funding in the financial year 2025/26, whilst the transfer to earmarked reserve retains the funding for various multi-year schemes to help local people in housing need in future years.	0	0
Contribution to Housing Earmarked Reserve	0	537	+537		0	0
Regulatory Housing Services Government Grant Income	(125)	(520)	(395)	Variance represents the Asylum Dispersal Grant awarded by the Home Office to support the Council with the financial impact arising from asylum seeker accommodation within North Hertfordshire. Home Office guidance states that any Council service affected by asylum accommodation in the district is eligible to benefit from this funding. Accurately assessing the specific financial impact on each service area would require significant officer time, hence the total grant funding received up to 31st March 2026 has been charged under this heading in the General Fund.	0	0
Resources Corporate Training Expenditure	45	29	(16)	Underspend on corporate training comprises several minor variances within Learning and Development budget headings. There has been a rise in departmental requests for training to be funded from this budget. Requests already received for the 2026/27 financial year are equivalent to the full 2026/27 base budget. It is therefore requested that the Learning and Development underspend from 2025/26 be carried forward to ensure sufficient funding is available to meet further requests expected to be submitted during the 2026/27 financial year.	16	0

Budget Area	Working Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k	Reason for difference	Carry Forward Request £k	Estimated Impact on 2026/27 £k
Resources Contribution to Sales Ledger Bad Debt Provision	10	60	+50	Increase in contribution at the end of this year is attributed to the suspension of income recovery during the transition to the new financial system in 2024/25. This meant an increase in the level of outstanding debt at the end of 2024/25, with aging debt requiring a greater level of provision as the risk of non-collection increases over time. The level of new (1-3 months old) debt has reduced from the prior year, which shows that recovery is now having an impact, with the debt position expected to improve in 2026/27.	0	0
Resources Summons Fees Income	(135)	(94)	+41	Income shortfall follows the cancellation of the court hearing scheduled to take place in March, due to an issue with the production of the summons template. This issue has since been resolved, with the next court date booked for July.	0	0
Total of explained variances	**11,217**	**9,920**	**(1,297)**		**633**	**38**
Other minor balances	11,568	11,480	(88)		(15)	(5)
Overall Total	**22,785**	**21,400**	**(1,385)**		**618**	**33**

8.3 Cabinet are asked to approve the estimated impact on the 2026/27 budget, an overall increase in budget of £651k (recommendation 2.3), which comprises:

- £618k of budget carry-forwards from 2025/26 to 2026/27 for projects that were not completed by the end of the financial year. These are shown in the penultimate column of table 4 above. This will take the total budget carried forward to £1.884million, after including those reported and approved at Quarters One, Two and Three.

- £33k increase in budget to reflect the estimated net impact in 2026/27 and beyond of variances identified at Outturn. These are shown in the final column of table 4 above.

8.4 The original approved budget for 2025/26 (and therefore working budget) included efficiencies totalling £1.341million, which were agreed by Council in February 2025. At the end of the year a net total of £1.379million of efficiencies have been achieved in 2025/26, representing a net overachievement of planned efficiencies of £38k and matches the forecast at the end of Quarter Three.

8.5 The working budget for 2025/26 included budgets totalling £1.682million that were carried forward from the previous year. These are generally carried forward so that they can be spent for a particular purpose that had been due to happen in 2024/25 but was

delayed into 2025/26. At Quarter Three, it was forecast that £710k of the budget carried forward would not be spent in this year. At the end of the financial year £801k of the budget carried forward has not been spent. The increase of £91k relates to budgets carried forward for:

- Strategic Priorities Fund. £34k of the £69k budget carried forward was not spent in this year, as highlighted in table four above.
- Supplementary Planning documents. £69k (further reduction of £7k from the original £83k requested to be carried forward at Quarter Two and the reduction of £7k reported at Quarter Three) of the £135k budget carried forward was unspent at the end of the year. The £7k increase in spend in this financial year compared to the forecast at Quarter Three and the corresponding reduction in the carry forward budget is included in the 'other minor variances' totals in table four above.
- Local Plan review. A total of £95k (an increase of £18k from the forecast at Quarter Three) of the £186k carried forward was not spent in this year, as highlighted and explained in table four above.
- Transport policy projects and initiatives. Underspend reported in table four above of £25k on the budget carried forward for the Hitchin Station Eastern Access project means that an total £81k of the £84k budget carried forward for various transport schemes was unspent this year.
- Town Centres Strategy. A total of £88k (an increase of £18k from the forecast of £70k at Quarter Two) of the £119k budget carried forward was not spent, as explained in table four above.
- Parking Lines and Signs. £1k of the £35k budget carried forward was not spent during the year, as highlighted in table four above.
- Letchworth Multistorey Car Park lighting. £2k of the £25 carry forward budget was not spent in this financial year, which is included in the 'other minor variances' total in table four above.

8.6 Six corporate 'financial health' indicators were identified in relation to key sources of income for the Council in 2025/26. Table 5 below shows the performance for the year. A comparison is made to the original budget to give the complete picture for the year. Each indicator is given a status of red, amber, or green. A green indicator means that income recorded matched or exceeded the budgeted level of income. A red indicator means that the outturn has not met the budgeted level of income. An amber indicator is only used during the year to highlight that there is a risk that the budgeted level of income may not be met.

8.7 At the end of the year, two of the indicators are red and four are green. The status of each indicator is unchanged from that reported at the end of Quarter Three.

Table 5 - Corporate financial health indicators

Indicator	Status	Original Budget £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k
Leisure Centres Management Fee Income	Red	(714)	(321)	+393
Garden Waste Collection Service Subscriptions	Green	(1,622)	(1,633)	(11)
Commercial Refuse & Recycling Service Income	Red	(1,267)	(1,258)	+9
Planning Application Fees (including fees for pre-application advice)	Green	(1,188)	(1,353)	(165)
Car Parking Fees	Green	(1,978)	(2,007)	(29)
Parking Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)	Green	(573)	(927)	(354)

8.8 Table 6 below indicates current activity levels, where these drive financial performance, and how these compare to the prior year to indicate the direction of current trends. As performance against the planning applications fee income budget is generally determined by the number of large applications resolved in the year (rather than the total number of applications received), and this distinction is not captured in the data available, this indicator is omitted from table 6.

Table 6 - Corporate financial health indicators – activity drivers

Indicator	Activity Measure	Performance 2025/26	Performance 2024/25	Percentage Movement	Direction of Trend
Leisure Centres Management Fee	Number of Leisure Centre visits	1,558,505	1,724,052	-9.6%	
Garden Waste Collection Service	Number of bin subscriptions	32,706	34,386	-4.9%	
Commercial Refuse & Recycling Service	Number of customers	992	1,044	-5.0%	
Car Parking Fees	Car park tickets sold / average ticket price sold	1,204,898 / £1.76	1,151,503 / £1.79	+4.6% / -1.7%	
Parking Penalty Charge Notices	Number of PCNs issued	18,991	16,602	+14.4%	

FUNDING, RISK AND GENERAL FUND BALANCE

8.9 The Council's revenue budget is funded primarily from Council Tax and Retained Business Rates income. In November 2024, central government guaranteed an amount of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding in 2025/26. The Council was subsequently notified by Central Government in February 2025 of the amount of New Homes Bonus, Employer National Insurance Contributions Grant and Funding Guarantee Grant it could expect to receive in 2025/26 and planned accordingly.

8.10 Council Tax and Business Rates are accounted for in the Collection Fund rather than directly in our accounts, as we also collect them on behalf of other bodies. Each organisation has a share of the balance on the Collection Fund account. The Council must repay in this year its share of the Council Tax deficit for the prior year and will receive in this year its share of the Business Rates Collection Fund surplus for the prior year, as estimated in January 2025. As reported previously, this means a contribution from the Council Tax Collection Fund to the General Fund of £144k and a contribution to the General Fund of £98k from the Business Rates Collection Fund. While the transfer of the Council Tax surplus amount of £144k is included in the funding total in table 7 below, the business rates surplus has been transferred to reserve and will be used to mitigate the impact of deficits recorded, and/or changes to the rates retention scheme, in future years. It is also reviewed as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and budget process to assess whether it can be used to support the General Fund budget.

8.11 The Council's share of the Council Tax Collection Fund is a surplus balance of £252k at the end of the financial year. This represents an increase of £1k on the forecast surplus of £251k estimated in January. The forecast surplus of £251k will be transferred from the Collection Fund to the General Fund in the next financial year and this will therefore increase the amount of Council Tax funding available in 2026/27, as was shown in Appendix E to the Budget 2026/27 report. The £1k improvement in the position in the final quarter will be incorporated in the calculation of the surplus/deficit position for 2026/27 and hence impact slightly the level of Council Tax funding available in 2027/28.

8.12 The Council's share of the Business Rates Collection Fund at the end of the year is an overall surplus of £2.623m. This represents a decrease of £203k on the estimated surplus of £2.826million declared in the NNDR1 return submitted to Government in January. The decrease in the surplus is primarily due to the calculated contribution required to the bad debt provision at the end of the year being higher than estimated. This is indicative of the higher level of debt outstanding at the end of the year, with the recovery of NNDR income subject to the same issues as those described in the explanation of the increase in the contribution to the sales ledger bad debt provision in table 4 above. Like the Council Tax Collection Fund, it is the forecast surplus of £2.826million that will be transferred from the Collection Fund to the General Fund in the next financial year.

8.13 The Council is also subject to a business rates levy from Central Government where it collects more in business rates than the baseline determined by Central Government. The Council's business rates levy liability for 2025/26 is £1.159million. This amount has been funded from the grant held in reserve and as such has a net zero impact on the General Fund balance at the end of the year.

8.14 The Council receives compensation in the form of a grant from Central Government for business rate reliefs introduced, which goes into our funds rather than the Collection Fund. The total amount of grant receivable for reliefs in 2025/26 is £4.562m, which includes an amount of £620k received as compensation for the Government's previous decisions to cap the increases in the business rates multiplier. The multiplier compensation is included in the funding total in table 7 below, with the rest of the grant received transferred to reserve. Some of the amount held in reserve has been used to fund the business rates levy payable for this year, while a further £1.4million has been used to top up the business rates income charged to the General Fund in 2025/26 to the baseline funding amount anticipated when the budget was set. In addition, as shown in table 7 below, £2.861million has been transferred from the reserve to the General Fund in 2025/26 to bridge the funding gap anticipated when the budget was set.

8.15 Table 7 below summarises the impact on the General Fund balance of the outturn position detailed in this report. It should be noted however that the accounts for 2025/26 are yet to be audited and changes to the General Fund balance may arise as a result of the final accounts audit.

Table 7 – General Fund impact

	Working Budget **£k**	**Outturn** **£k**	**Difference** **£k**
Brought Forward balance (1st April 2025)	**(16,067)**	**(16,067)**	**-**
Net Expenditure	22,785	21,400	(1,385)
Funding (Council Tax, Business Rates, EPR, NHB, ENIC, Funding Guarantee)	(20,365)	(20,365)	-
Funding from Reserves (including Business Rate Relief Grant)	(2,861)	(2,861)	-
Carried Forward balance (31st March 2026)	**(16,508)**	**(17,893)**	**(1,385)**

8.16 The minimum level of General Fund balance is determined based on known and unknown risks. Known risks are those things that we think could happen and we can forecast both a potential cost if they happen, and percentage likelihood. The notional amount is based on multiplying the cost by the potential likelihood. The notional amount for unknown risks is based on 5% of net expenditure. There is not an actual budget set aside for either of these risk types so, when they occur, they are reflected as budget variances (see table 3). We monitor the level of known risks that actually happen, as it highlights whether there might be further variances. This would be likely if a number of risks come to fruition during the early part of the year. We also use this monitoring to inform the assessment of risks in future years. The notional amount calculated at the start of the year for known risks was £1,077k, and at the end of the financial year a total of £1,618k has come to fruition. The identified risk realised in the final quarter related to:

- Costs associated with a challenge to a Planning Committee decision, as highlighted and explained in table 4 above - £34k.

Table 8 – Known financial risks.

	£'000
Original allowance for known financial risks	**1,077**
Known financial risks realised in Quarter 1	(1,298)
Known financial risks realised in Quarter 2	(67)
Known financial risks realised in Quarter 3	(219)
Known financial risks realised in Quarter 4	(34)
Remaining allowance for known financial risks	**(518)**

EARMARKED RESERVES

8.17 The Council has a number of earmarked reserves, which have been used to fund revenue expenditure during the year. The purpose of each reserve was detailed in the Budget Report. The value of transfers during the financial year are shown in Table 9 below. A total of £5.113million has been contributed to the reserves in 2025/26 and a total of £10.038million has been transferred out of the reserves to the General Fund.

Table 9 – Earmarked Reserves

	Balance at 1 April 2025	Contributions to reserve	Transfers out from reserve	Balance at 31 March 2026
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Children's Services Reserve	1	0	(1)	0
Churchgate Development Reserve	11	24	(35)	0
Climate Change Grant Reserve	20	0	(3)	17
Council Tax Hardship Grant Reserve	269	0	(9)	260
Elections Admin Grant Reserve	121	0	(33)	88
Environmental Health Grants Reserve	15	66	(8)	73
Growth Area Fund Reserve	24	0	0	24
Homelessness Grants Reserve	275	586	(115)	746
Housing & Planning Delivery Reserve	832	288	(148)	972
Insurance Reserve	34	0	0	34
Land Charges Reserve	12	21	0	33
Leased Assets Reserve	63	0	0	63
Leisure Management Maintenance Reserve	33	0	0	33
MHCLG Grants Reserve	6,227	3,942	(5,381)	4,788
Museum Exhibits Reserve	14	0	0	14
Neighbourhood Plan Reserve	121	20	(40)	101
Paintings Conservation Reserve	11	0	0	11
Shared Prosperity Fund Grant Reserve	0	19	(13)	6
Street Name Plates	16	0	0	16
Syrian Refugee Project	758	85	(49)	794
Taxi Licences Reserve	11	0	0	11
Town Centre Maintenance	93	8	0	101
Traffic Regulation Orders	367	0	(12)	355
Waste Reserve	836	0	(836)	0
Waste Vehicles Reserve	3,178	0	(3,178)	0
Welfare Reform Grants Reserve	358	54	(177)	235
Total Revenue Reserves	**13,700**	**5,113**	**(10,038)**	**8,775**

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Cabinet has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council. Specifically, 5.7.8 of Cabinet's terms of reference state that it has remit "to monitor quarterly revenue expenditure and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework." By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet is able to make informed recommendations on the budget to Council. The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget and to maintain a prudent balance of reserves.

9.2 The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute. Sections 31A, 32 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. The Council must ensure sufficient flexibility to avoid going into deficit at any point during the financial year. The Chief Financial Officer is required to report on the robustness of the proposed financial reserves, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

9.3 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires every local authority to 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. The level of the general reserve is a matter for the Council to determine having had regard to the advice of the S151 Officer. This is a requirement of the Council Procedure Rules as set out in Part 4.4.1 (b) and 4.4.1 (k) of the Council's Constitution.

9.4 Council's terms of reference at paragraph 4.4.1 (dd) state that it will "determine those financial matters reserved to Council by the Financial Regulations." The Financial Regulations at paragraph 10.2 include that "[t]he creation and movements in reserves need to be formally approved by Full Council, which is incorporated in to Revenue Budget Outturn report."

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Members have been advised of any variations from the budgets in the body of this report and of any action taken by officers.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. 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. As outlined in the body of the report. The process of quarterly monitoring to Cabinet is a control mechanism to help to mitigate the risk of unplanned overspending of the overall Council budget.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2 For any individual new revenue investment proposal of £50k or more, or affecting more than two wards, a brief equality analysis is required to be carried out to demonstrate that the authority has taken full account of any negative, or positive, equalities implications; this will take place following agreement of the investment.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" 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 Although there are no direct human resource implications at this stage, care is taken to ensure that where efficiency proposals or service reviews may affect staff, appropriate communication and consultation is provided in line with HR policy.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A - Significant Revenue Budget Variances in 2025/26

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None

Appendix A - Significant Revenue Budget Variances in 2025/26

Directorate	Significant Service Area Variances	Net Direct Budget at April 2024	Net Direct Outturn	(Under) / Overspend	Summary Explanation	Relevant Report
Chief Executive	Chief Executive Staffing Costs	250	256	6		
	Capital Financing - Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	402	0	(402)	No MRP charge required in this financial year as there was no capital expenditure in 2024/25 that required funding through borrowing. MRP charges occur in the year after the Council needs to fund capital expenditure from borrowing.	Q3 2025/26
	Revenue savings from planned capital investments	(616)	0	616	Savings resulting from the delivery of planned capital schemes in 2024/25 were anticipated to materialise in 2025/26 when the original budget estimates for 2024/25 onwards were approved by Council in February 2024. These should have been removed as part of setting 2025/26 budget.	Q1 2025/26
	Treasury Investments Interest Income	(825)	(2,080)	(1,255)	Significantly higher cash balances available for investment than anticipated due to the reprofiling of planned capital investments. Plus interest rates remained higher than budgeted.	Q1, Q2 & Outturn 2025/26
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	1,474	1,490	16		
	Directorate Total	**685**	**(334)**	**(1,019)**		
Customers Directorate	Customers Directorate Staffing Costs	5,952	5,916	(36)		
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	(1,800)	(2,007)	(207)		
	Directorate Total	**4,152**	**3,909**	**(243)**		
Enterprise Directorate	Enterprise Directorate Staffing Costs	1,847	1,812	(35)		
	Churchgate Regeneration Project – Consultants Expenditure	36	205	169	To complete the due diligence required to progress with this project, relevant consultants have been appointed to support the work involved. Part of the outturn has been funded from surplus rent income collected and the balance remaining in the Churchgate Regeneration Project earmarked reserve.	Q3 2025/26
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	(729)	(926)	(197)		
	Directorate Total	**1,154**	**1,091**	**(63)**		
Environment Directorate	Environment Directorate Staffing Costs	1,487	1,381	(106)	Underspend on staffing results mainly from turnover in staff in Waste Services, with recruitment to new posts delayed by focus on delivery of new waste contract.	Q2 & Outturn 2025/26
	Leisure Centre Management Contract Income	(1,053)	(321)	732	The leisure centres decarbonisation project required some closures across all three sites during the works, meaning a reduction in the management fee receivable under the terms of the contract.	Q1 2025/26 & Outturn 2025/26
	Waste and Street Cleansing Contract Expenditure	7,046	6,943	(103)	Underspend due to lower levels of contract variation orders undertaken by the contractor than forecast, with demand for these activities not materialising as anticipated. This is typical for the first year of a new contract, where estimates are based on historic data and prudent assumptions.	Outturn 2025/26
	Income from sale of fibre (paper and cardboard) collected for recycling	(85)	(194)	(109)	Since the domestic waste and recycling service changes were implemented in August 2025, paper and cardboard have been collected together as a single fibre recycling stream. While the grade of the material collected is lower than a paper-only stream, with this reflected in a lower sale price per ton, the additional tonnage collected has more than offset this.	Q3 2025/26
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	327	154	(173)		
	Directorate Total	**7,722**	**7,963**	**241**		
Governance Directorate	Governance Directorate Staffing Costs	1,658	1,722	64		
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	829	858	29		
	Directorate Total	**2,487**	**2,580**	**93**		

Directorate	Significant Service Area Variances	Net Direct Budget at April 2024	Net Direct Outturn	(Under) / Overspend	Summary Explanation	Relevant Report
Place Directorate	Place Directorate Staffing Costs	3,732	3,481	(251)	Underspend due to various vacancies within the Place Directorate during the year	Q1, Q2 & Outturn 2025/26
	Local Plan Review and Development	343	49	(294)	Several evidence-based projects, including the viability study, employment needs assessment, strategic flood risk and strategic housing market assessment initially planned for completion in this financial year have taken longer to procure than anticipated and will now be completed in 2026/27. The unspent budget has been carried forward.	Q1 & Q2 2025/26
	Local Plan Development - Government Grant Income	0	(108)	(108)	New Local Plan regulations have come into effect that set out a new plan making system. Government grant funding has been successfully applied for, with North Herts committing to bringing forward early a Local Plan through the new system.	Outturn 2025/26
	Local Plan Development - Government Grant Income - Transfer to Earmarked Reserve	0	108	108	Requested that the grant amount is transferred to reserve to be drawn down in future years as the development of the Local Plan progresses.	Outturn 2025/26
	Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)	122	25	(97)	Work has progressed on the Design Code SPD. Additional staffing resource has been provided through a 1-year fixed term contract post that will extend into the new financial year. Unspent budget carried forward to fund the costs of the post falling in the next financial year and the work associated with the finalisation of this project as a web-based resource (anticipated in Summer 2026).	Q2 2025/26
	Transport Policy Projects Expenditure	124	3	(121)	Officers have been working together with Hertfordshire County Council to prioritise projects that can be taken forward as part of the Sustainable Travel Town Programme. Work will continue in the next financial year.	Q3 2025/26 & Outturn 2025/26
	Development Control - Legal and Consultants Expenditure	0	114	114	Barrister and consultants' fees were incurred in defending the Council's decision at public inquiries held in respect of Wandon End Solar Farm, the Land at Rhee Spring, and proposed dwellings at Barkway Road, Royston, following the refusal of planning permission at each site by the Council's Planning Control Committee. In each case the decision was contrary to officer recommendation.	Q1 2025/26 & Outturn 2025/26
	Planning Fees Income	(1,222)	(1,353)	(131)	The government increased statutory planning fees from the 1st April 2025. The majority were increased in line with general inflation (1.7% as measured by the Consumer Price Index at September 2024), however some householder application fees were doubled. Changes made to the Planning fees structure also encouraged pre-application engagement	Q2 2025/26
	Planning Fees Income - Transfer to Earmarked Reserve	39	139	100	It was requested that half of the additional Planning Applications fees income be transferred to the Planning earmarked reserve to fund further investment in the service, as the letter from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government stated that the fee increase should be used to both alleviate revenue pressures and invest in the planning service.	Q2 2025/26
	Car Parking PCN Income	(573)	(927)	(354)	Lower level of turnover of Civil Enforcement Officers in the parking team in 2025/26 has meant more staff patrolling across the District to ensure motorists are parking safely and in compliance with the relevant highway restrictions.	Outturn 2025/26
	Car Parking PCN Income – Contribution to bad debt provision	162	372	210	Higher levels of PCN activity over the last several years has contributed to the increase in the calculated contribution required to the bad debt provision.	Outturn 2025/26
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	(942)	(1,221)	(279)		
	Directorate Total	**1,785**	**682**	**(1,103)**		

Directorate	Significant Service Area Variances	Net Direct Budget at April 2024	Net Direct Outturn	(Under) / Overspend	Summary Explanation	Relevant Report
Regulatory Directorate	Regulatory Directorate Staffing Costs	3,370	2,705	(665)	£537k of underspend follows the application of ringfenced homelessness grant to fund salary costs, instead of base budget provision. Due to staffing pressures in the first half of the year, the recruitment to the four-year Environmental Health Apprenticeship post will now take place in 2026/27, in time to start the dedicated course from September 2026, with the unspent budget of £100k carried forward.	Q1 & Q2 & Outturn 2025/26
	Transfer to Housing Services Earmarked Reserve	(114)	422	536	Transfer to earmarked reserve of unspent salary budget due to grant funding makes resource available for various multi-year schemes to help local people in housing need in future years.	Outturn 2025/26
	Housing Services Government Grant Income	(125)	(520)	(395)	Asylum Dispersal Grant awarded by the Home Office to support the Council with the financial impact arising from asylum seeker accommodation within North Hertfordshire.	Outturn 2025/26
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	(346)	(444)	(98)		
	Directorate Total	**2,785**	**2,163**	**(622)**		
Resources Directorate	Resources Directorate Staffing Costs	2,905	2,817	(88)		
	Net Housing Benefit Expenditure	430	676	246	The 2021/22 Housing Benefit audit, only completed in this year, identified that there was insufficient evidence of rent agreements with benefit claimants placed in temporary accommodation for the Council to be eligible for the corresponding Housing Benefit subsidy it received in that year.This must be paid back to the DWP. Housing Services have since made changes to Housing Benefit claim forms.	Q3 2025/26
	Other budgets with variances under £100k	(182)	(147)	35		
	Directorate Total	**3,153**	**3,346**	**193**		
OVERALL TOTAL		**23,923**	**21,400**	**(2,523)**		

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CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Treasury Management End of Year Review 2025/26

REPORT OF: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 During the year the Council has generated **£2.08million** of interest from its investments. This is an increase on the budget reported Quarter 3 (£2.0M), and significantly more than the original budget of £0.8250million.

1.2 The Council has repaid £0.02million of borrowing during the year as it has matured. The Council has £0.305million of remaining borrowing. This borrowing is at a fixed rate for a fixed period. The premium incurred from repaying this borrowing early means that it is not worthwhile to do so.

1.3 The Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements throughout the year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of March 2026.

2.2 Cabinet is asked to recommend this report to Council and ask Council to:

1) Approve the actual 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators as detailed in Appendix B.
2) Note the annual Treasury Management Review for 2025/26 (Appendix B).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 There are regular meetings with Treasury advisors MUFG (MUFG Pension & Market Services is a member of Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Inc).

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 15th May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 In February 2025, Council approved the Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2025/26 to 2034/35.

7.2 MUFG are contracted to provide Treasury advice. The service includes:

- Regular updates on economic and political changes which may impact on the Council's borrowing and investment strategies
- Information on investment counterparty creditworthiness
- Technical updates
- Access to a Technical Advisory Group.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Council has operated both within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and in compliance with the Treasury Management Practices. There was a minor breach in August when £4M was invested with Blackpool Council against a limit of £3M. This over-investment was for the period from 22/08/25 to 15/12/25 and was reported in the 2nd Qrt monitoring report. Revised procedures were put in place to prevent this happening again.

8.2 The Council generated £2.08M of interest during 2025/26. The average interest rate agreed on new deals during the year was 4.18%. The average interest rate on all outstanding investments at the 31st March was 4.32%.

8.3 The Council's activities expose it to a variety of risks (credit, liquidity and market). The Treasury Strategy sets out the Authority's appetite for the level of exposure to these risks.

8.4 **Security Risk** – The possibility that other parties fail to pay amounts due to the Authority.

The Council's counterparty list for 2025/26 comprised UK building societies and UK banks with a Fitch (a credit rating agency) credit rating greater than BBB, non-UK banks with a credit rating greater than AA- with a AAA Country rating, other Local Authorities and Public Corporations. It also includes smaller Building Societies that do not have a credit rating.

8.5 **Liquidity Risk** – the possibility that the Authority may not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments.

8.6 **Market Risk** - the possibility that financial loss might arise as a result of changes in interest rates.

Investing long term (greater than one year) currently achieves lower interest rates than short term deals. The risks of long term deals are:

(i) The longer the time period the longer the investment is exposed to default.
(ii) If the investment has a fixed interest rate, interest rates could rise and the potential to invest at a higher rate will be lost until the investment matures. Conversely, rates could fall and it is better to have locked in to a higher rate.

8.7 Members have indicated that they are prepared to accept this risk within the limits expressed in the Treasury Strategy, which allows no more than £6M of outstanding investments to be invested for longer than 365 days at any one time. At the end of the year the Council didn't have any investments invested for longer than 365 days.

8.8 **Interest (Yield)** – The Bank of England decreased Bank Rate three times during 2025/26 starting the year at 4.5% and ending at 3.75%. With investments being kept relatively short for cashflow the yield on investments reduced as the year went on. £2.08million of interest was received during the year compared to £2.983million in 2024/25. This reduction is made up of declining interest rates and lower balances available for investment.

8.9 The investments outstanding at the 31 March 2026 were £25.5million. This compares to a balance of £45.0million at 31 March 2025. The reduction of £19.5M is substantially due to spend on capital projects. Investment in capital projects will continue during 2026/27 and the estimated investment interest for 2026/27 was set at £0.491million. This estimate will be revised in the 1st quarter monitoring report to reflect any change in the level of balances available to invest due to capital slippage and any change in the estimated interest rates.

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. By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet is able to make informed recommendations on the budget to Council.

9.2 The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget. 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." This duty is enhanced further by the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which requires a council to set an annual budget and that budget to be fully balanced or funded. The report will assist the Council in understanding its sources of revenue and assess if the annual budget is balanced, therefore enabling the Council to comply with its statutory obligations.

9.3 The Prudential Indicators comply with the Local Government Act 2003, which permits local councils to prudently borrow and invest.

9.4 The Council's Investment Strategy (agreed by Council each year, and agreed in February 2025 for the 2025/26 year) determines that Council will receive reports which include "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".

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The main financial implications are covered in section 8 of the report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

11.2 Risks associated with treasury management and procedures to minimise risk are outlined in the Treasury Management Practices document, TMP1, which was adopted by Cabinet in July 2003 and is revisited annually as part of the Treasury Strategy review. The risk on the General Fund of a fall of investment interest below the budgeted level is dependent on banks and building societies need for borrowing.

11.3 The variety of risks that the Council is exposed to by undertaking its treasury management activities are summarised in Section 8.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2 There are no direct equalities implications directly arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no direct human resource implications.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A, Annual Treasury Management Review.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Investment Strategy 2025/26 https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s27501/Appendix%20F-%20Investment%20Strategy.pdf

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Classification: Choose classification

Annual Treasury Management Review 2025/26

North Herts Council

DATE MAY 2026

MUFG Corporate Markets
A division of MUFG Pension & Market Services

MUFG

Contents

Annual Treasury Management Review 2025/26 4
Purpose 4
Executive Summary 5
Introduction and Background 6
1. **The Authority's Capital Expenditure and Financing** 6
2. **The Authority's Overall Borrowing Need** 7
3. **Treasury Position as of 31st March 2026** 9
4. **The Strategy for 2025/26** 111
5. **Borrowing Outturn** 112
6. **Investment Outturn** 133

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

CE: Capital Economics - is the economics consultancy that provides MUFG Corporate Markets Treasury Limited, with independent economic forecasts, briefings and research.

CFR: capital financing requirement - the Authority's annual underlying borrowing need to finance capital expenditure and a measure of the Authority's total outstanding indebtedness.

CIPFA: Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy – the professional accounting body that oversees and sets standards in local authority finance and treasury management.

CPI: consumer price index – the official measure of inflation adopted as a common standard by the UK and countries in the EU. It is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food and medical care. It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods and averaging them.

MHCLG: the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government - the Government department that directs local authorities in England.

ECB: European Central Bank - the central bank for the Eurozone

EU: European Union

EZ: Eurozone - those countries in the EU which use the euro as their currency

Fed: the Federal Reserve System, often referred to simply as "the Fed," is the central bank of the United States. It was created by the Congress to provide the nation with a stable monetary and financial system.

FOMC: the Federal Open Market Committee – this is the branch of the Federal Reserve Board which determines monetary policy in the USA by setting interest rates and determining quantitative easing/tightening policy. It is composed of 12 members - the seven members of the Board of Governors and five of the 12 Reserve Bank presidents.

GDP: gross domestic product – a measure of the growth and total size of the economy.

G7: the group of seven countries that form an informal bloc of industrialised democracies - the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom - that meets annually to discuss issues such as global economic governance, international security, and energy policy.

Gilts: gilts are bonds issued by the UK Government to borrow money on the financial markets. Interest paid by the Government on gilts is called a coupon and is at a rate that is fixed for the duration until maturity of the gilt, (unless a gilt is index linked to inflation); while the coupon rate is fixed, the yields will change inversely to the price of gilts i.e., a rise in the price of a gilt will mean that its yield will fall.

HRA: housing revenue account.

IMF: International Monetary Fund - the lender of last resort for national governments which get into financial difficulties.

MPC: the Monetary Policy Committee is a committee of the Bank of England, which meets for one and a half days, eight times a year, to determine monetary policy by setting the official interest rate in the United Kingdom, (the Bank of England Base Rate, commonly called Bank Rate), and by making decisions on quantitative easing/tightening.

MRP: minimum revenue provision - a statutory annual minimum revenue charge to reduce the total outstanding CFR, (the total indebtedness of a local authority).

PFI: Private Finance Initiative – capital expenditure financed by the private sector i.e., not by direct borrowing by a local authority.

PWLB: Public Works Loan Board – this is the part of H.M. Treasury which provides loans to local authorities to finance capital expenditure.

QE/QT: quantitative easing – is an unconventional form of monetary policy where a central bank creates new money electronically to buy financial assets, such as government bonds, (but may also include corporate bonds). This process aims to stimulate economic growth through increased private sector spending in the economy and also aims to return inflation to target. These purchases increase the supply of liquidity to the economy; this policy is employed when lowering interest rates has failed to stimulate economic growth to an acceptable level and to lift inflation to target. Once QE has achieved its objectives of stimulating growth and inflation, QE will be reversed by selling the bonds the central bank had previously purchased, or by not replacing debt that it held which matures. This is called quantitative tightening. The aim of this reversal is to ensure that inflation does not exceed its target once the economy recovers from a sustained period of depressed growth and inflation. Economic growth, and increases in inflation, may threaten to gather too much momentum if action is not taken to 'cool' the economy.

RPI: the Retail Price Index is a measure of inflation that measures the change in the cost of a representative sample of retail goods and services. It was the UK standard for measurement of inflation until the UK changed to using the EU standard measure of inflation – Consumer Price Index. The main differences between RPI and CPI is in the way that housing costs are treated and that the former is an arithmetical mean whereas the latter is a geometric mean. RPI is often higher than CPI for these reasons.

SONIA: the Sterling Overnight Index Average. Generally, a set of indices for those benchmarking their investments. The benchmarking options include using a forward-looking (term) set of reference rates and/or a backward-looking set of reference rates that reflect the investment yield curve at the time an investment decision was taken.

TMSS: the annual treasury management strategy statement reports that all local authorities are required to submit for approval by the Full Council before the start of each financial year.

VRP: a voluntary revenue provision to repay debt, in the annual budget, which is additional to the annual MRP charge, (see above definition).

Annual Treasury Management Review 2025/26

Purpose

This Authority is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2025/26. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

During 2025/26 the minimum reporting requirements were that the Full Council should receive the following reports:

- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Council 29/02/2025)
- a mid-year, (minimum), treasury update report (Council 20/01/2026)
- an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy, (this report)
- In addition, Cabinet and the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee have received quarterly treasury management update reports.

The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is, therefore, important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Authority's policies previously approved by members.

This Council confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee before they were reported to Cabinet / Full Council . Members are provided with an annual training session on Local Government finance, which takes place in June each year. All members are invited, with a focus on new members attending. Members of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee are provided with a short training session before most meetings.

Executive Summary

During 2025/26, the Authority complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The key actual prudential and treasury indicators detailing the impact of capital expenditure activities during the year, with comparators, are as follows:

Prudential and treasury indicators	31.3.25 Actual £000	2025/26 Original £000	31.3.26 Actual £000
Capital expenditure	11.348	21.063	21.975
Capital Financing Requirement:	-0.592	20.585	14.951
Gross borrowing	0.325	26.875	0.305
External debt	0.325	0.305	0.305
Investments	45.000	22.290	25.500
Net borrowing	-44.675	--21.985	-25.195

The level of Investments has reduced by £19.5M. This is primarily due to the large level of Capital Expenditure incurred during the year.

Other prudential and treasury indicators are to be found in the main body of this report. The Director- Resources (s151 Officer) also confirms that no new borrowing was only undertaken and the statutory borrowing limit, (the authorised limit), was not breached.

Introduction and Background

This report summarises the following:-

- Capital activity during the year;
- Impact of this activity on the Authority's underlying indebtedness, (the Capital Financing Requirement);
- The actual prudential and treasury indicators;
- Overall treasury position identifying how the Authority has borrowed in relation to this indebtedness, and the impact on investment balances;
- Summary of interest rate movements in the year;
- Detailed debt activity; and
- Detailed investment activity.

1. The Authority's Capital Expenditure and Financing

The Authority undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:

- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Authority's borrowing need; or
- If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed.

£m General Fund	31.3.25 Actual	2025/26 Budget	31.3.26 Actual
Capital expenditure	**11.348**	**21.063**	**21.975**
Financed in year	9.353	4.331	6.437
Unfinanced capital expenditure	**1.995**	**16.732**	**15.538**

2. The Council's Overall Borrowing Need

The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Authority's indebtedness. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Authority and resources used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2025/26 unfinanced capital expenditure (see above table), and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.

Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the Council's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies, (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board [PWLB], or the money markets), or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.

The Council's 2025/26 MRP Policy, (as required by MHCLG Guidance), was approved as part of the Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) Report for 2025/26 on 29/02/2025.

The Council's CFR for the year is shown below, and represents a key prudential indicator.

CFR (£m): General Fund	31.3.25 Actual	2025/26 Budget	31.3.26 Actual
Opening balance	-2.587	3.853	-0.592
Add unfinanced capital expenditure (as above)	1.995	16.732	15.538
Less MRP/VRP*	0	0	0
Less PFI & finance lease repayments	0	0	**0**
Closing balance	**-0.592**	20.585	**14.946**

Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for gross borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.

Gross borrowing and the CFR - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Authority should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2024/25) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2025/26) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Authority is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allowed the Authority some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs. The table below highlights the Authority's gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Authority has complied with this prudential indicator.

	31.3.25 Actual £'m	2025/26 Budget £'m	31.3.26 Actual £'m
Gross borrowing position	0.325	26.875	0.305
CFR	-0.592	20.585	14.946

The authorised limit - the authorised limit is the "affordable borrowing limit" required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Authority does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2025/26 the Authority has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.

The operational boundary – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Authority during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream - this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue stream.

	2025/26 £'m
Authorised limit	13.0
Maximum gross borrowing position during the year	0.325
Operational boundary	8.0
Average gross borrowing position	0.316

3. Treasury Position as of 31st March 2026

The Authority's treasury management debt and investment position is organised by the treasury management service to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through member reporting detailed in the summary, and through officer activity detailed in the Authority's Treasury Management Practices. At the end of 2025/26 the Authority's treasury position, (excluding borrowing by PFI and leases) was as follows:-

DEBT PORTFOLIO	31.3.25 Principal £'m	Rate/ Return	31.3.26 Principal £'m	Rate/ Return
Fixed rate funding:				
-PWLB	0.325	10.72%	0.305	10.96%
-Market	0.000		0.00	
Variable rate funding:				
-PWLB	0.000		0.000	
-Market	0.000		0.000	
Total debt	**0.325**	**10.72%**	**0.305**	**10.96%**
CFR	**-0.592**		**14.946**	
Over / (under) borrowing	**0.917**		**-14.641**	
Total investments	**45.0**	**5.1%**	**25.5**	**4.3%**
Net debt	**(44.675)**		**(25.195)**	

The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

	31.3.25 Actual £'000	31.3.26 Actual £'000
Under 12 months	20	15
12 months and within 24 months	15	15
24 months and within 5 years	33	25
5 years and within 10 years	7	0
10 years and above	250	250

INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO	31.3.25 Actual £'m	31.3.25 Actual %	31.3.26 Actual £'m	31.3.26 Actual %
Treasury investments				
Banks	0	0	1	4
Local authorities	36	80	18	71
DMADF (H M Treasury)	9	20	6.5	25
TOTAL TREASURY INVESTMENTS	45	100	25.5	100

The maturity structure of the investment portfolio was as follows:

	31.3.25 Actual £m	31.3.26 Actual £m
Investments Longer than 1 Year	0	0
Investments Up to 1 Year	45.0	25.5

4. The Strategy for 2025/26

The strategy in 2025/26 was to continue lending to UK banks, building societies, money market funds and Local Authorities and allow investments with non-UK banks with a credit rating greater than AA- with a AAA Country rating. Only UK banks that met credit rating criteria ("BBB" or above for longer term deals, and F3 or above for short term deals) were on the Council's lending list. (These are Fitch definitions of ratings). Not all building societies are credit rated but this did not preclude them from the lending list as lending to a building society was dependant on their asset size. Where a society did have a rating, this was considered at the time of the deal taking into account the amount of investment and the length of the deal.

4.1 Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk

Investment returns remained robust throughout 2025/26 despite Bank Rate reducing steadily through the course of the financial year (three 0.25% rate cuts in total), and at the end of March the yield curve had turned positive, reflecting inflation concerns emanating from the on-going conflict in the Middle East.

Bank Rate reductions of 0.25% occurred in May, August and December, bringing the headline rate down from 4.50% to 3.75%. Two of the Bank Rate cuts occurred in the same month as the Bank of England publishes its Quarterly Monetary Policy Report, therein providing a clarity over the timing of potential future rate cuts.

As of early April 2026, market sentiment has been heavily influenced by the Middle East conflict. Commentators anticipate a growing risk of inflation, meaning interest rates will not be cut for some time, and may increase to counteract inflationary pressures arising from steepening energy costs. Growth will also be impacted in many regions of the world. UK GDP is projected by the Office for Budget Responsibility (3 March 2026) to be 1.1% in 2026 before picking up to 1.6% in 2027 and 2028. But the likelihood is that there is downside risk to this forecast given events in the Middle East through March and still on-going.

Looking back through 2025/26, investors were able to achieve returns generally in a range of 4.5% - 5% for periods ranging from 1 month to 12 months in the spring of 2025. By the end of March 2026 deposit rates were somewhat volatile, regaining some traction as the Middle East conflict suggested energy driven inflation may lead to higher interest rates than would otherwise have been the case. Where liquidity requirements were not a drain on day-to-day investment choices, extending duration through the use of "laddered investments" paid off.

Heading into 2026/27, UK inflation is likely to increase to over 4% in the coming months as oil prices, for example, remain close to $100 per barrel, over 50% higher than before the Middle East conflict started.

4.2 Borrowing strategy and control of interest rate risk

The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances which has served well over the last few years continued during 24/25.

The Authority has sought to minimise the taking on of long-term borrowing at elevated levels and has focused on a policy of internal borrowing.

Interest rate forecasts initially suggested gradual reductions in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2025/26. Bank Rate did reduce to 3.75% as anticipated, but the initial expectation of significant rate reductions across the whole curve did not transpire, primarily because inflation concerns were very elevated in March 2026.
At the start of April 2026, the market expected Bank Rate to increase over the coming months to 4% or 4.25%, from 3.75%, whilst all parts of the curve have also risen substantially through March. A significant fall in inflation will be required to underpin any material movement lower in the longer part of the curve.

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 25.03.26												
	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28	Jun-28	Sep-28	Dec-28	Mar-29
BANK RATE	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
3 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30
6 month ave earnings	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.20	4.20	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80
5 yr PWLB	5.00	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10
10 yr PWLB	5.50	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60
25 yr PWLB	6.00	6.00	5.90	5.80	5.60	5.40	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.10	5.10
50 yr PWLB	5.80	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.40	5.20	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.90	4.90

Borrowing Outturn

Borrowing

No new borrowing was undertaken during the year

Borrowing in advance of need

The Council has not borrowed more than, or in advance of its needs, purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed.

Rescheduling

No rescheduling was done during the year as the approximate 1% differential between PWLB new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates made rescheduling unviable.

Repayments

£20K of PWLB loans were repaid during the year, as they became due.

5. Investment Outturn

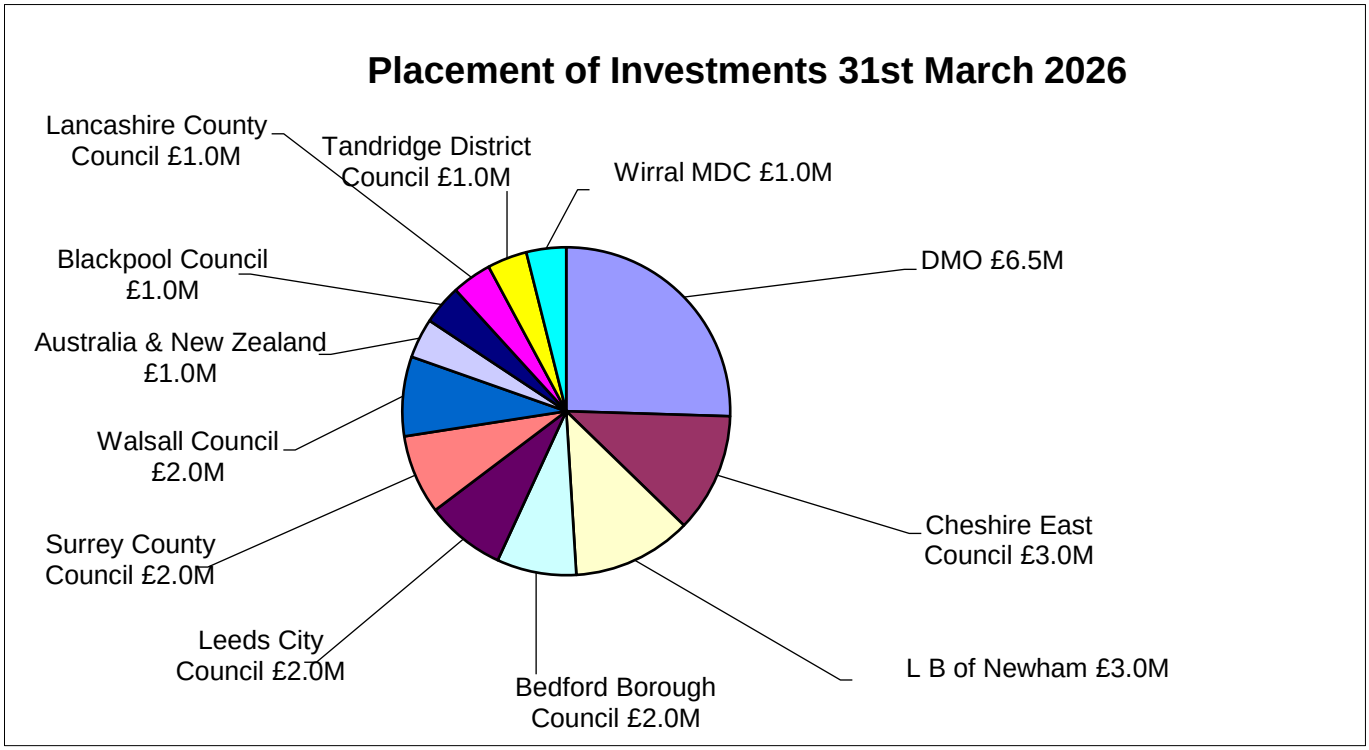
Investment Policy – the Council's investment policy is governed by MHCLG investment guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Authority on 27/02/25. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).

The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Authority had no liquidity difficulties. However, during the period ended 30 September 2025 there was an over investment with one counterparty. £4M was invested with Blackpool Council against a limit of £3M. This over-investment was for the period from 22/08/25 to 15/12/25. This was due to a mistake in recording and checking against previous deals that had already been made. This process can be difficult as there are more instances of other Councils looking for forward dated deals. A further checking process (with another Officer involved) has been put in place to help ensure this does not happen again.

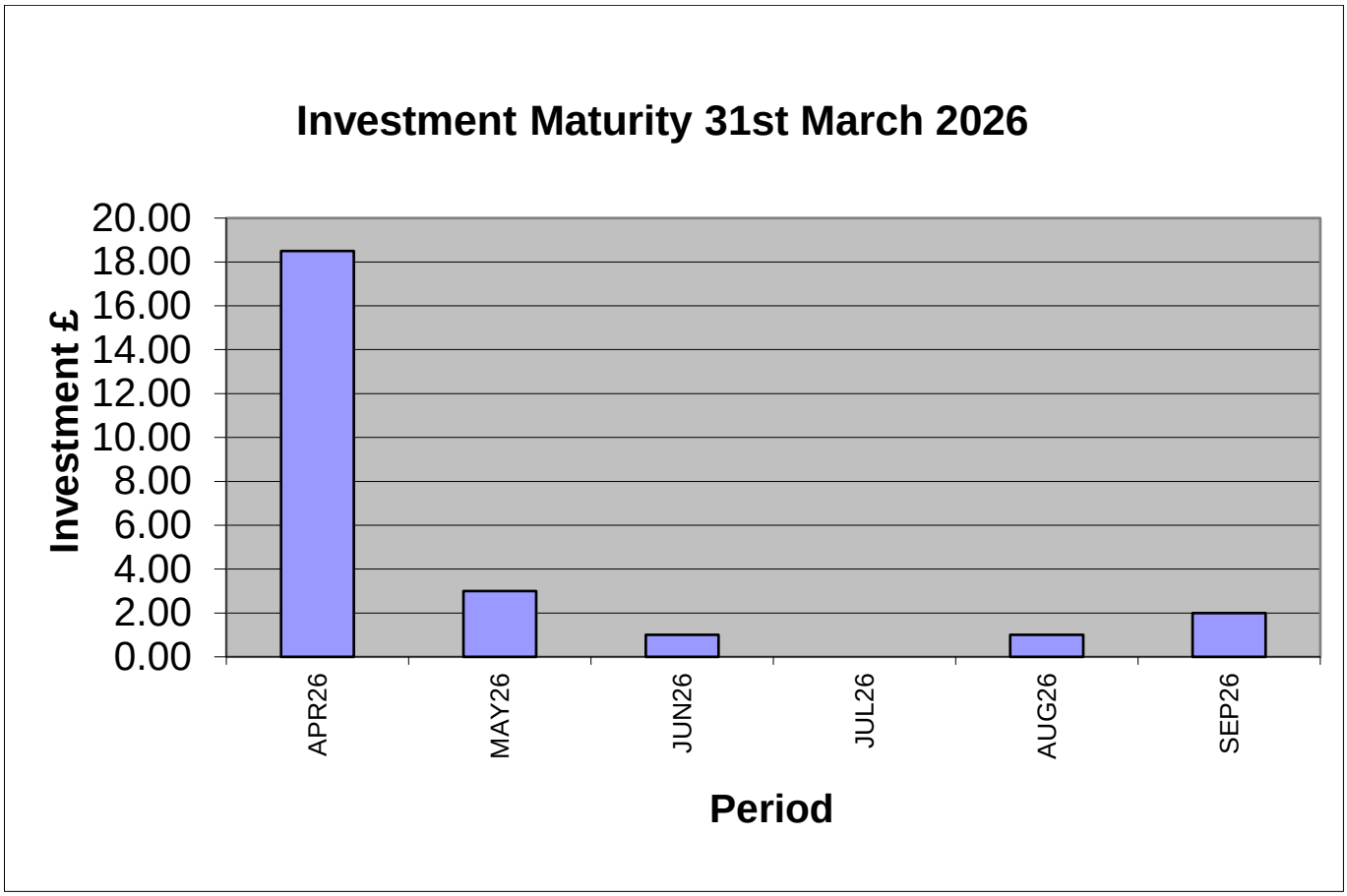
Investments held by the Authority

- The Council maintained an average Investment balance of £48.7M during the year. (£57.3M 24/25)
- Total investment income for the year was £2.080M (£2.983M 24/25)
- Average Interest rate for the year was excluding the Call Account was 4.28% (5.17% 24/25)

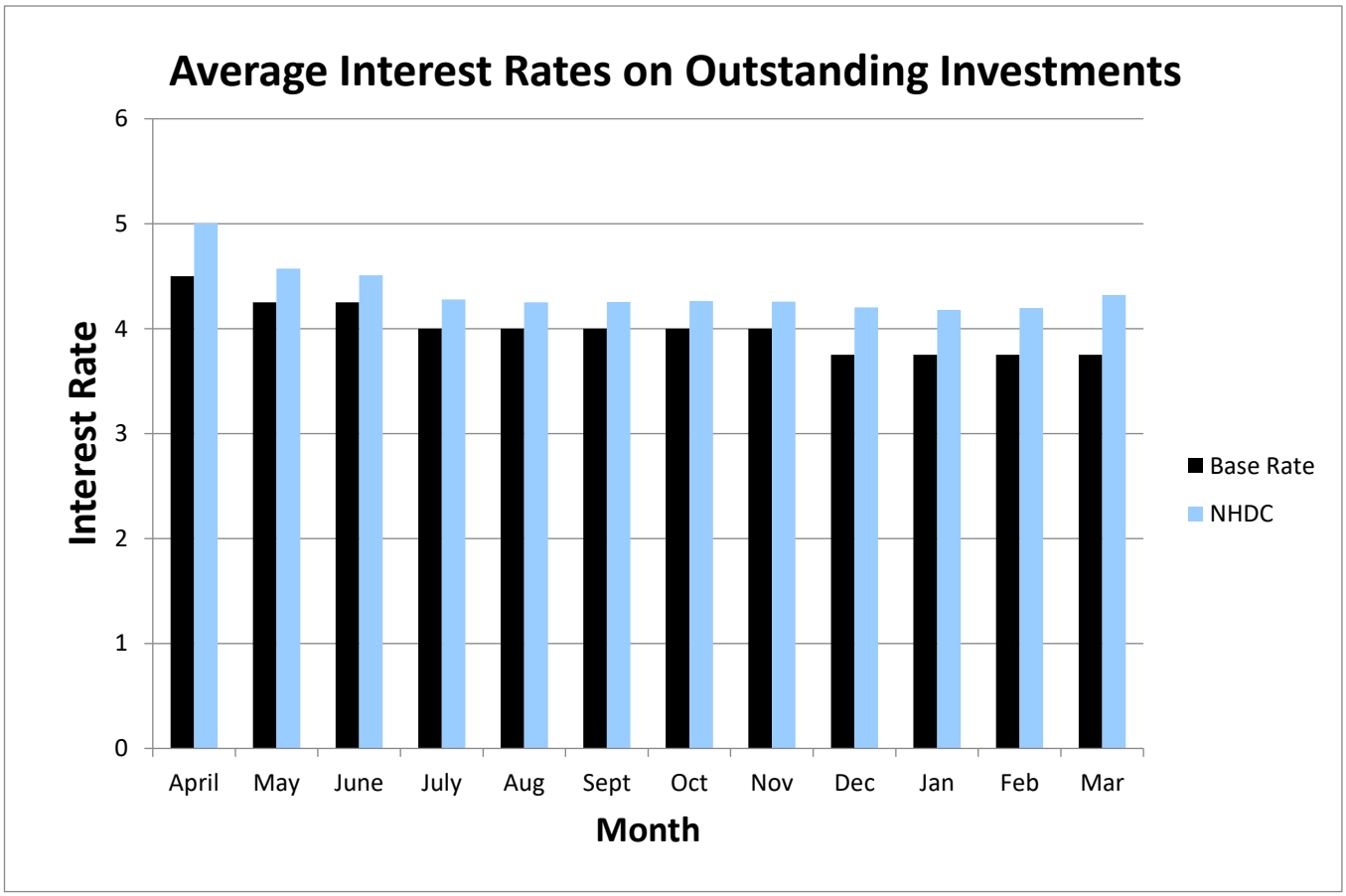
The pie chart below shows the spread of investment balances as at 31 March 2026. This is a snapshot in time that demonstrates the diversification of investments.



The graph below shows the maturity profile of investments at 31st March 2026.



The graph below shows the average interest rates on outstanding Investments at month end throughout the year.



The level of risk of any investment will be affected by the riskiness of the institution where it is invested and the period that it is invested for. Where an institution has a credit rating this can be used to measure its riskiness. This can be combined with the period remaining on the investment to give a historic risk of default percentage measure. The table below shows the Historic Risk of Default for outstanding investments at 31 March. The most risky investment still has a risk of default of only around 0.01%. It should also be noted that in general the interest rate received is correlated to the risk, so the interest income received would be less if it took on less risk. All investments have been made in accordance with the Investment Strategy. The risk of default is also affected by the length of the investment.

Borrower	Interest Rate %	Principal	Days to Maturity from 31/03/25	Risk of Default %	Expected Credit Loss £
Tandridge District Council	8.00	1,000,000	2	0.000	0
Bedford Borough Council	6.60	1,000,000	9	0.001	0
DMO	3.72	1,000,000	9	0.001	0
London Borough of Newham	7.00	3,000,000	9	0.001	0
Surrey County Council	7.80	2,000,000	9	0.001	0
Bedford Borough Council	7.10	1,000,000	14	0.001	0
Cheshire east Council	4.20	2,000,000	14	0.001	0

Lancashire County Council	4.30	1,000,000	14	0.001	0
DMO	3.72	2,000,000	16	0.001	0
DMO	3.73	1,500,000	16	0.001	0
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council	6.10	1,000,000	20	0.001	0
Australia and New Zealan Bank	4.19	1,000,000	30	0.002	18
DMO	3.73	1,000,000	30	0.002	0
Leeds City Council	4.22	2,000,000	44	0.003	0
DMO	3.73	1,000,000	50	0.003	0
Cheshire East Council	4.10	1,000,000	79	0.005	0
Blackpool Borough Council	4.15	1,000,000	148	0.009	0
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	4.25	2,000,000	175	0.010	0
Total	**5.12**	**25,500,000**			**18**

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CABINET
TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Capital End of Year Review 2025/26

REPORT OF: Director - Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Resources

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To consider the Capital End of Year Outturn Review.

1.2 As at the end of financial year 2025/26, there is a reduction in Capital spend compared to quarter 3 of **£1.447 million**. The majority of this change is due to revisions to the profile of planned project spend, with **£1.111million** that will now instead be incurred in 2026/27.

1.3 There is an increase in forecast spend by £839k on the leisure centre decarbonisation project. The main cause (around £600k) is third party delays in completion of legal agreements for cables to go across their land. This leads to increased contractor and temporary boiler costs.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet notes expenditure of £22.002million in 2025/26 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.

2.2 That Cabinet approves the adjustments to the capital programme for 2026/27 as a result of the revised timetable of schemes and other adjustments detailed in table 2, increasing the estimated spend by £1.950million.

2.3 That Cabinet notes the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.7 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.

2.4 That Cabinet approves the application of £1.057million of capital receipts/set aside towards the 2025/26 capital programme, paragraph 8.7 refers.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Options for capital investment are considered as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 Consultation on the capital expenditure report is not required. Members will be aware that consultation is incorporated into project plans of individual capital schemes as they are progressed.

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 15th May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 In February 2025, Council approved the Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2025/26 to 2034/35.

7.2 The Council will seek opportunities to utilise capital funding for 'invest to save' schemes. This is one way the Council will allocate resources to support organisational transformation that will reduce revenue expenditure. Capital spend will also be necessary to ensure the continued provision of services and delivery of priorities.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Council has £127million of capital assets that it currently owns (as at 31 March 2025). The Investment Strategy set out the reasons for owning assets that are not for service delivery, including an assessment of Security, Liquidity, Yield and Fair Value. There have been no significant changes in relation to these since the Strategy was set.

8.2 The full capital programme is detailed in Appendix A and shows the revised costs to date, together with the actual spend from 2025/26 to 2035/36 and the funding source for each capital scheme.

8.3 The Outturn Capital expenditure for 2025/26 is **£22.002million**. This is a reduction of **£1.448million** on that reported at the end of the third quarter. The decrease in spend is largely due to re-profiling spend into 2026/27. Table 1 below details the changes from what was reported at Quarter 3.

Table 1- Current Capital Estimates

	2025/26 £M	2026/27 £M	2027/28 to 2035/36 £M
Budget Reported at Q3	**23.350**	**12.143**	**23.805**
Executive Member – Finance and I.T. approved additional Expenditure Hitchin Lido Changing Facilities	**0.100**		
Changes as detailed in this report	**-1.448**	**1.950**	
Current Capital Estimates	**22.002**	**14.093**	**23.805**

8.4 Table 2 lists the schemes in the 2025/26 Capital Programme that will start or continue in 2026/27:

Table 2: Scheme Timetable Revision:
(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2025/26 Working Budget £'000	2025/26 Outturn £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2026/27 £'000
Public Sector Decarbonisation Project	10,453	10,008	-445	The decarbonisation project is in progress and associated budget will be required in 2026/27 to complete the project. The projected final cost has also increased (by £839k), primarily due to delays from third party land owners in approving relevant legal agreements for cables to go across land at Hitchin and Letchworth. Officers are pushing the third parties to resolve the issues as quickly as possible. The additional costs (estimated at £600k, but could be lower if agreements are resolved more quickly) come from contractor costs and the hire of temporary boilers. It has been agreed that the contractor will temporarily vacate both sites to help minimise further additional costs. The remainder of the increase comes from other lower costs, including fixing seized isolation valves (£114k across the 3 sites) and the requirement for	1,284

Scheme	2025/26 Working Budget £'000	2025/26 Outturn £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2026/27 £'000
				additional costs related to substation harmonics filters (£63k).	
Museum Commercial Storage	1,244	1,144	-100	Ongoing project so unspent budget moved in to 2026/27.	100
Laptop Refresh	339	249	-90	Delays in the procurement has meant that the laptops had not been received by the end of the year.	90
Hitchin Lido Changing Facilities	100	25	-75	This project is fully funded from a donation and was added to the Capital programme in January 2026 (using Resources Executive Member approval). Works commenced in March and will complete early 26/27.	75
Playground Renovations	285	231	-54	Works at Howard Park, Letchworth are set for completion in May	54
Community Centres Flat Roof Safety	43	0	-43	Two community centres were identified as requiring safety rail upgrade works. Since then, it was discovered that the roof at one of the community centres is in poor condition and as a consequence the roof safety rail works have been delayed.	43
Priory Gardens MUGA Fencing	40	0	-40	The MUGA is open for use but waiting for planning approval to progress with works on the floodlights.	40
Property Improvements	128	89	-39	Some planned works have not been completed (e.g. identified by condition surveys but further investigations have determined they are not required) or need to be treated as revenue costs. There is an ongoing pipeline of works to requested to carry-forward.	39
Off Street Car Parking	36	5	-31	The car parks are assessed for future planed works in order to set capital budgets. However, the condition of car parks are regularly inspected and if found to be in	31

Scheme	2025/26 Working Budget £'000	2025/26 Outturn £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2026/27 £'000
				reasonable condition capital works are pushed back.	
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Phase 2	120	92	-28	Underspend of £28k due to timing of surveys at Hitchin Town Hall with some postponed to 2026/27	28
Warm Homes	319	252	-67	Underspend due to a delay in mobilisation for this project which had knock on issues (e.g. gaining landlord permission for Letchworth homes). This meant it was not possible to spend the whole first year allocation for Warm Homes Local Grant. However, there is a strong pipeline for delivery of year 2 funding and therefore expect to deliver the year 2 budget.	25
Total Minor (under £25k) slippage on other projects	1,154	1,005	-149		149
Other changes to 26/27 Budget					-8
Total Revision to Budget Profile			**-1,161**		**1,950**

8.5 There are also changes to the overall costs of schemes in 2025/26. These changes total a net decrease of £0.287million and are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Changes to Capital Schemes Commencing in 2025/26:
(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2025/26 Working Budget £'000	2025/26 Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
Microsoft Enterprise License	679	768	89	More licenses are required due to more staff requiring IT equipment. This will include temporary staff.
Hitchin Fitness Equipment	0	-360	-360	Budget was allocated for the Council to fund works planned by Everyone Active (EA) in return for an increased management fee. This project was carried out and identified for funding by the Council, but since then EA have decided to fund the project themselves and use the Council funding for different capital works.
Other minor changes			**-16**	
Total revision to scheme spend			**-287**	

8.6 The following capital schemes have been completed during 2025/26:

- Renovate Skate Park KGV
- CCTV Control Room upgrade
- Bury Mead Road Transfer Facility
- Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicles
- Fibre Waste Bins
- EV charging at the existing Letchworth depot
- NHLC Lift Replacement
- RLC Members Change Refurbishment
- Hitchin Fitness Member Change and Relaxation Area Refurbishment
- NHLC Pool Flume Replacement
- RLC Dry Side Toilet Refurbishment
- RLC Gym Refurbishment
- RLC Gym Equipment
- RLC Café
- Community Facilities Refurbishments

Capital Programme 2025/26 Funding onwards

8.7 Table 4 below shows how the Council have funded the 2025/26 capital programme.

Table 4: Funding the Capital Programme:

	2025/26 Balance at start of year £M	2025/26 Forecast Additions £M	2025/26 Forecast Funding Used £M	2025/26 Balance at end of year £M
Useable Capital Receipts and Set-aside Receipts	1.057	0.0	(1.057)	0
S106 receipts			(0.485)	
Other third party grants and contributions			(2.066)	
Revenue Contribution			(3.227)	
Borrowing			(15.167)	
Total			**(22.002)**	

8.8 The availability of third-party contributions and grants to fund capital investment is continuously sought in order to reduce pressure on the Council's available capital receipts and allow for further investment. Additional capital receipts are dependent on selling surplus land and buildings. Ensuring that the Council gets best value from the disposal of land and buildings can take a long time and therefore the amounts that might be received could be subject to change.

8.9 The Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2026 was positive £15.162 million (negative £0.592 million 31st March 2025). As the CFR is now positive the Council does have a need to borrow to fund capital spend. This will have an impact on the revenue budget by way of a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charge in 26/27. We will look to borrow internally against cash reserves, so as the money is spent it will reduce the income we generate from treasury investments (which is currently around 4%, but is expected to decrease over time).

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference under Section 5.7.7 of the Constitution specifically includes "to monitor expenditure on the capital programme and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework". The Cabinet also has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council. By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet can make informed recommendations on the budget to Council.

9.2 The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget. 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." This duty is enhanced further by the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which requires a council to set an annual budget and that budget to be fully balanced or funded. The report will assist the Council in understanding its sources of revenue and assess if the annual budget is balanced, therefore enabling the Council to comply with its statutory obligations.

9.3 Asset disposals must be handled in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules, to ensure the Council obtains best value for its assets.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The main financial implications are covered in section 8 of the report.

10.2 The Authority operates a tolerance limit on capital projects that depends on the value of the scheme and on this basis over the next ten-year programme it should be anticipated that the total spend over the period could be £3.952million higher than the budgeted £37.898million.

10.3 The capital programme will need to remain under close review due to the limited availability of capital resources and the affordability in the general fund of the cost of using the Council's capital receipts. When capital receipts are used and not replaced the availability of cash for investment reduces. Consequently, interest income from investments reduces. £1.0million currently earns the Authority approximately £42k per year in interest (4.2%). The general fund estimates are routinely updated to reflect the reduced income from investments. The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is now positive so the Council will need to start charging a minimum revenue provision to the general fund for the cost of capital and will need to consider external borrowing for further capital spend. The CFR at the 31 March 2026 was positive £15.162million.

10.4 The Council also aims to ensure that the level of planned capital spending in any one year matches the capacity of the organisation to deliver the schemes to ensure that the impact on the revenue budget of loss of cash-flow investment income is minimised.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 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 inherent risks in undertaking a capital project are managed by the project manager of each individual scheme. These are recorded on a project risk log which will be considered by the Project Board (if applicable). The key risks arising from the project may be recorded on Ideagen (the Council's Performance & Risk management software).

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2 There are no direct equalities implications directly arising from the adoption of the Capital Programme for 2025/26 onwards. For any individual new capital investment proposal of £50k or more, or affecting more than two wards, an equality analysis is required to be carried out. This will take place following agreement of the investment proposal.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to recommendations of this report. The projects at section 8.4 may have impacts that contribute to an adverse impact. As these projects go forward, an assessment will be made where necessary.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no direct human resource implications.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A, Capital Programme Detail including Funding 2025/26 onwards.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy)
https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24164/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20INTEGRATED%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY.pdf
https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24165/FAR%20Appendix%20A-%20Integrated%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%20Strategy.docx.pdf

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									Funding				
Project	Service Directorate	2025/26 Funding £	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
40 KVA UPS Device or Battery Replacement	Customers	11,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11,800
Air conditioning at Hitchin Town Hall	Enterprise	0	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Air Handling Humidification	Enterprise	0	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,000
Alternative to safeword tokens for staff/members working remotely	Customers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
An alternative set of 25 machines that are outside of the Windows Environment for Disaster Recovery	Customers	0	15,000	0	15,000	0	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	60,000
Audio Improvements to Mountford Hall	Enterprise	0	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,000
Avenue Park Splash Park	Environment	0	70,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,000
Baldock Road Recreation Ground Letchworth	Environment	0	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Bancroft Lighting	Environment	0	0	45,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45,000
Broadway Gardens Resurfacing	Environment	0	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250,000
Burials New Management System	Environment	0	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,000
Burymead Road Transfer Facility	Environment	26,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26,600	0
CCTV at DCO & Hitchin Town Hall	Customers	900	11,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,700
CCTV Control Room Upgrade	Resources	38,700	0	0	0	0	45,000	0	0	0	0	0	83,700
Charnwood House	Enterprise	800	370,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	370,800
Community Centres Flat Roof Safety Barriers	Enterprise	0	43,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43,000
Conference Calling Solutions in Large Meeting Rooms at District Council Offices	Customers	900	5,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000
Council property improvements following condition surveys	Enterprise	88,500	137,800	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	250,000	0	0	0	0	676,300
Cyber Attacks - Events Monitoring Software Solution	Customers	0	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,000
Cycle Strategy implementation (GAF)	Place	0	278,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	278,000	0	0	0
DR Hardware Refresh Inc UPS Battery Pk (unit 3)	Customers	54,600	10,400	0	16,000	0	0	32,000	0	0	0	0	113,000
Digital and other signage for car parks in Hitchin, to promote better use of car parks	Place	0	200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000	0
Everyone Active Projects on NH facilities	Environment	212,400	3,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	216,000
Email Encryption Software Solution	Customers	0	17,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17,700
EV Charging at the existing Letchworth Depot	Environment	45,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45,600
Fibre Waste Bins	Environment	924,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	924,400
Green Infrastructure implementation (GAF)	Place	0	185,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	185,000	0	0	0
Hitchin Lairage car park - cosmetic coating to four stairwells and replacement windows and doors	Enterprise	0	69,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	69,100
Hitchin Fitness Equipment	Enterprise	-360,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-360,000
Hitchin Lido Changing Facilities	Environment	25,000	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	0
Hitchin Swim Centre: Archers Member Change and Relaxation Area Refurbishment	Environment	315,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	315,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Changing Village Refurbishment	Environment	0	0	225,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	225,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Pool Cover Replacement	Environment	0	58,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Pool Hall Seating Replacement	Environment	0	73,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	73,000
Hitchin Town Hall Kitchen Enhancement	Enterprise	0	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
Howard Park Letchworth Path Resurfacing	Environment	0	23,800	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33,800
Infrastructure Hardware	Customers	410,800	18,000	18,000	190,000	0	0	0	0	20,000	0	0	616,800

									Funding				
Project	Service Directorate	2025/26 Funding £	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
Installation of trial on-street charging (GAF)	Place	0	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	0
Ivel Springs Footpaths	Environment	0	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
King George V Muga Hitchin	Environment	0	0	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,000	0	0
Laptops - Refresh Programme	Customers	248,800	139,300	35,000	40,000	349,000	47,000	234,000	0	0	0	0	1,093,100
Match funding for Electric Vehicle charging	Place	82,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	82,500	0	0	0
Mel Tax Offices, Royston	Enterprise	0	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
Members Laptops Refresh Programme	Customers	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Microsoft Enterprise Software Assurance	Customers	768,500	0	0	747,000	0	0	1,494,000	0	0	0	0	3,009,500
Museum Storage Facility	Enterprise	1,144,400	2,855,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,000,000
NH Museum & Community Facility	Enterprise	0	48,300	0	0	0	0	0	48,300	0	0	0	0
NH Museum Chiller	Enterprise	0	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,000
NHLC Lift Replacement	Environment	35,400	54,600	0	0	0	0	0	1,700	0	0	0	88,300
NHLC Pool Cover Replacement	Environment	0	58,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,000
NHLC Pool Flume Replacement	Environment	287,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	287,500
NHLC Water Play Feature	Environment	0	200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000	0
Northern Transfer Station	Environment	0	0	0	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000,000
Norton Common Bowls Pavilion	Environment	0	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28,000	0	27,000
Norton Common Footpaths	Environment	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Norton Common Letchworth Tennis Courts	Environment	0	48,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48,700
Off Street Car Parks resurfacing and enhancement	Enterprise	4,600	74,400	77,000	70,000	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	286,000
Oughtonhead Common Hitchin Weir	Environment	8,500	314,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	323,400
Oughtonhead Common Signage and Interpretation	Environment	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Parking Charging, Payments & Management	Place	0	235,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	235,000
Parking Machines Replacement	Place	11,400	139,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	151,100
Parking Machines Upgrade - Contactless Payment Facility Installation	Place	-1,400	38,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	22,800	0	0	13,800
PC's - Refresh Programme	Customers	0	19,000	5,000	8,000	5,000	8,000	0	0	0	0	0	45,000
Playground Renovation District Wide	Environment	230,500	304,200	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	900,000	0	0	0	0	2,154,700
Priory Gardens Bandstand	Environment	0	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75,000
Priory Memorial Gardens MUGA Royston	Environment	59,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59,400
Priory Memorial Gardens MUGA FencingRoyston	Environment	0	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Private Sector Grants	Regulatory	7,900	279,100	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	300,000	0	0	0	0	827,000
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund	Environment	10,007,600	1,283,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,578,000	0	0	9,713,000
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Phase 2	Environment	92,000	2,761,000	423,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,172,000	0	0	2,104,000
Ransoms Rec Footpaths, Gates and Railing	Environment	0	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Refurbishment and improvement of community facilities	Governance	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,000
Refuse and Recycling Bins	Environment	122,100	167,900	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	450,000	0	0	0	0	1,100,000
Remote testing equipment - Emergency Lights and Water Temperature Monitoring	Enterprise	0	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,000
Renovate skate park at KGV Hitchin	Environment	251,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	251,700
Replacement of Newark Close, Royston	Enterprise	9,100	55,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65,000
Resurface Lairage Car Park	Enterprise	0	346,300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	346,300
Riverside walkway, Biggin Lane	Environment	7,900	45,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53,000
RLC Café	Environment	58,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58,600
Royston Leisure Centre Dry Side Toilet Refurbishment	Environment	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
RLC Gym Equipment	Environment	315,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	315,800

									Funding				
Project	Service Directorate	2025/26 Funding £	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
RLC Learner Pool	Environment	0	750,000	4,002,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,752,000	0
RLC Gym Refubishment	Environment	231,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	231,400
Royston Leisure Centre Members Changing Refurbishment	Environment	12,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,800
S106 Projects	Various	293,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	293,100	0	0
S016 Funding for additional social housing	Place	192,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	192,500	0	0
Security - Firewalls	Customers	0	41,600	0	18,000	0	18,000	36,000	0	0	0	0	113,600
SPF Digital Inclusion Scheme	Customers	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	0	0
SPF Revevation of Estates Buildings	Enterprise	34,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34,100	0	0	0
SPF Sustainable Communities Grants	Governance	64,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64,200	0	0	0
Swinburne Recration Ground Hitchin	Environment	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Tablets - Android Devices	Customers	3,100	24,900	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	0	0	0	0	48,000
Thomas Bellamy House, Hitchin	Enterprise	500	5,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000
Transport Plans implementation (GAF)	Place	0	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	0	0
Walsworth Common Pavilion - contribution to scheme	Environment	0	300,000	0	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	37,000	0	13,000
Warm Homes	Environment	252,300	503,100	478,100	0	0	0	0	0	1,233,500	0	0	0
Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicles	Environment	5,294,200	0	0	0	0	0	5,500,000	0	0	0	3,200,000	7,594,200
WiFi Upgrade	Customers	0	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Wilbury Hills Cemetery Footpaths	Environment	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Wilbury Hills Cemetery Improvements	Environment	0	120,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	120,000
		22,002,000	**14,092,800**	**5,787,100**	**4,488,000**	**3,798,000**	**502,000**	**9,230,000**	**400,000**	**4,980,100**	**605,600**	**8,378,600**	**45,535,600**

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CABINET
16TH JUNE 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Churchgate Regeneration Project Update & Next Steps

REPORT OF: Director - Enterprise

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Enterprise

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Thriving Communities; Responsible Growth; Sustainability;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Since the previous update to Members, further work has been undertaken to assess the viability, deliverability and regeneration potential of the Churchgate site. This report provides an update on that work and seeks approval for the additional funding required to support the next phase of the project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of the additional capital / revenue funding set out in the Part 2 report to support the next phase of the Churchgate Regeneration Project.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Since the last Full Council update in July 2025, and subsequent Overview & Scrutiny Committee discussions in February 2026, the Churchgate Regeneration Project has progressed significantly and moved into a substantially more mature and evidence-led phase.

3.2. Over the past year, the Council has undertaken an extensive programme of work to respond directly to key matters raised by Members and stakeholders, including viability, parking, public realm, market provision, delivery options, governance and long-term town centre sustainability. This has included financial analysis, specialist technical work, Project Board workshops and Member briefings.

3.3. This work has enabled the Council to move from high-level vision setting into a more informed, evidence-led and delivery-focused phase.

3.4. Alongside this, the Council has also undertaken early engagement with the development and investment sector to inform future procurement, delivery and partnership decisions. Feedback from this work has demonstrated strong market interest in Hitchin and increased confidence in both the credibility of the opportunity and the Council's commitment to delivering a high-quality regeneration programme for the town centre.

3.5. The recommendations within this report therefore represent a logical progression from the work completed to date and are intended to ensure that future decisions regarding the regeneration of the site are informed, evidence-led and commercially robust

3.6. The proposed next stage of work is materially different from earlier strategic and visioning exercises. The Council is now seeking to appoint specialist regeneration and development expertise to work alongside the project team in refining a deliverable scheme, testing assumptions in greater detail, reducing uncertainty and supporting the transition from strategic visioning into delivery planning and implementation.

3.7. This phased approach enables the Council to retain control of the project as it develops, whilst ensuring that investment and risk remain proportionate to the level of certainty and information available at each stage.

3.8. The proposed next phase reflects the consistent feedback received through market engagement and specialist advice: that the appropriate next step is a structured feasibility and delivery-planning phase focused on shaping a viable, deliverable and investment-ready regeneration scheme for Hitchin town centre.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Executive Member and Shadow Executive Member(s) have been kept regularly informed throughout the development of this proposal through Project Board meetings and scheduled Executive Member briefings.

5.2. The project team hosted three All Member Briefings during April and May 2026 to provide updates on project progress, emerging findings and next steps.

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 15th May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. The Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ) represents one of the most significant long-term regeneration opportunities within Hitchin town centre. The site occupies a prominent and strategically important location adjoining the historic core, the River Hiz corridor and the existing market area.

7.2. The Churchgate area performs an important role within the town centre but also faces a number of long-standing challenges relating to asset condition, public realm quality, accessibility, connectivity, parking, market provision and the overall visitor experience.

7.3. Alongside these challenges, the site presents a significant opportunity to support the long-term vitality and sustainability of Hitchin town centre through investment in key assets, improved public realm, enhanced connectivity and better integration with the River Hiz corridor. The project also provides an opportunity to strengthen Hitchin's role as a destination, support a vibrant and modern market offer, introduce new homes and mixed-use activity within the town centre, and create a high-quality environment appropriate to a thriving 21st century market town. In doing so, the project also has the potential to deliver wider social and economic benefits through increased town centre activity, improved accessibility, new public spaces and a stronger sense of place for residents, businesses and visitors.

7.4. The Council acquired the Churchgate Shopping Centre leasehold in 2022 to support the long-term regeneration of this important town centre area, recognising that the current condition and configuration of the shopping centre are unlikely to provide a commercially sustainable long-term future.

7.5. The redevelopment of the site also presents an opportunity to deliver wider town centre benefits, including the revitalisation of the existing market area, improved public realm and green space, enhanced accessibility, new housing and flexible community uses.

7.6. In July 2025, the Council considered a range of potential development options in the context of challenging economic, commercial and political conditions affecting town centre regeneration and development viability nationally. A preferred mixed-use option incorporating commercial, residential and environmental benefits was identified as the most credible basis for further feasibility and viability testing. The preferred option included retention of St Mary's car park, consideration of a food store to support viability, provision of affordable housing where feasible, and wider public realm and community benefits.

7.7. Whilst the preferred option was considered to provide the strongest alignment with community aspirations and wider regeneration objectives, further work was identified as necessary to better understand viability, deliverability, development risk and delivery options before progressing to the next phase of the project.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Following consideration of the July 2025 report, Cabinet concluded that further work should be undertaken to examine a number of key aspects of the preferred development option:

- Car parking strategy and capacity
- Market requirements and viability
- Community space requirements
- Public realm expectations and scope
- Planning and design parameters
- Development risk, return and delivery considerations
- Governance and preferred partnership approach

8.2. The following section provides an update on the work undertaken in response to these key matters and demonstrates how the project has progressed from high-level option testing into a more informed and evidence-led phase focused on deliverability, viability and implementation planning.

8.3. The Churchgate Project Board has been regularly consulted throughout the development of these workstreams.

Car Parking Strategy

8.4. The Council appointed transport planning and infrastructure consultants (Markides) to review current parking provision, usage, demand and the scope to redevelop part of the Churchgate Regeneration Zone car parking, principally at Portmill Lane, without detrimental impact on wider town centre vitality and viability. The assessment concluded that Hitchin town centre generally has sufficient parking capacity to meet current and foreseeable demand, with pressure primarily limited to peak Saturday lunchtime periods. The work also identified a range of mitigation measures, including improved signage, parking management, pricing and operational changes, which could support more effective use of existing parking assets. This may also need to be considered alongside changing travel patterns and wider multi-modal transport objectives.

8.5. See Background Paper, ‘Churchgate Car Parking Assessment Findings, Markides, November 2025’.

Market Requirements

8.6. The Council appointed Market Curators to advise on options for delivering a modern market offer capable of supporting both commercial viability and wider town centre activity.

8.7. A range of options were assessed, including open-air, covered and indoor market formats. Each was appraised using an assessment of initial capital costs, potential revenues, together with an assessment of capital costs, potential revenues and likely return periods. The work identified a modern indoor market and food hall-style concept as the strongest commercial option, offering opportunities for flexible day-to-evening use, enhanced activation of the market square and wider community use. Further due diligence will, however, be required in relation to operational arrangements, capital costs and long-term revenue assumptions.

Community Space Requirements

8.8. An assessment of existing community space provision within Hitchin has been undertaken. This work identified a broad range of existing spaces currently available across the town and did not identify a clear requirement for a standalone purpose-built community facility within the town centre. However, opportunities remain to incorporate flexible community uses within wider mixed-use or multifunctional spaces as part of any future regeneration proposals.

8.9. See Background Paper: ‘Community Provision Study, Leonard Design, November 2025’

Public Realm

8.10. The Council commissioned Leonard Design to explore options for delivering high-quality public realm improvements within the Churchgate area, including better integration with the River Hiz corridor and wider riverside walk proposals.

8.11. A range of design approaches and indicative cost options were prepared to help inform future design principles, public realm aspirations and budget considerations. Whilst the objective was not to fix the scheme design requirements, this work has assisted in establishing a clearer understanding of the scale and quality of the public realm which may be achievable as part of a future regeneration scheme.

8.12. See Background Paper, ‘Public Realm Assessment, Leonard Design, November 2025.’

Planning and Design Parameters

8.13. Further design and massing work has been undertaken to better understand development constraints, site capacity and the potential scale and mix of development across the site, including the Portmill Lane car parks.

8.14. This work has helped refine the Council's understanding of planning, heritage and viability considerations, including protected views, townscape impacts and the relationship with adjoining heritage assets, particularly St Mary's Church.

8.15. See Background Paper 'Churchgate Regeneration Zone Massing Diagrams'.

Developer Brief and Governance

8.16. The Churchgate Project Board has undertaken a series of technical workshops examining potential delivery models, development risk, governance arrangements and the Council's appetite for risk and return. This work has included engagement with other local authorities delivering similar mixed-use town centre regeneration schemes, alongside preliminary soft market testing with developers, investors, contractors and development managers.

8.17. The work undertaken has included consideration of a range of delivery approaches, including direct delivery and partnership models, together with the potential relationship between development risk, commercial return and the delivery of wider public realm and community benefits.

8.18. The feedback received consistently indicated that Hitchin is viewed as an attractive regeneration opportunity with strong underlying market interest. However, it also highlighted that the overall viability of the scheme remains finely balanced and that further feasibility, due diligence and delivery planning work will be required before progressing towards any future delivery phase.

8.19. The soft market testing also reinforced the importance of identifying an appropriate commercial and partnership structure capable of supporting the Council's wider regeneration ambitions whilst managing development risk appropriately.

8.20. See Background Paper Churchgate Regeneration Zone - Soft Market Testing Brochure March 2026

8.21. Alongside this activity, the Council presented the opportunity at UKREiiF and subsequently commenced a Preliminary Market Engagement (PME) exercise to further test market appetite and inform the next stage of project development.

8.22. See Background Paper NHDC01128038 - Churchgate Pre Market Engagement Questionnaire May 2025 and Hitchin Prospectus UKREiiF Breakfast Event, May 2026.

8.23. At the time of writing this report, the deadline for Preliminary Market Engagement submissions has not yet passed. A verbal update summarising the responses received will be provided during the Committee meeting on 9 June 2026, with any additional information provided by way of addendum if required.

8.24. Initial feedback from both exercises has reinforced the view that a phased feasibility and delivery-planning approach represents the most appropriate next step in refining a viable and deliverable regeneration scheme for the site.

9. INDICATIVE PROGRAMME AND DELIVERY PATHWAY

9.1. The table below provides a high-level summary of the proposed next stages of the Churchgate Regeneration Zone. It reflects the phased approach being taken by the Council to refine the emerging scheme, undertake further feasibility and delivery planning, and determine the most appropriate long-term delivery and partnership arrangements for the site.

9.2. The programme has been structured to ensure that future decisions are informed by robust technical, commercial and financial evidence, whilst enabling the Council to retain strategic oversight and manage risk proportionately as the project progresses.

Mid 2026 Governance & Direction	**Mid-Late 2026** Partner Procurement	**Late 2026-Early 2027** Delivery Planning Feasibility/De-risking	**2027-2028** Delivery Route & Long-term partner selection Planning & Pre-development
Soft Market Testing Member engagement Pre-Market Engagement Cabinet/Council Approval	Competitive Procurement Partner Appointed	Feasibility/Delivery options tested Development Agreement/Delivery Route agreed	Planning Application Pre-Development & Mobilisation

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Under Section 4.3 of the Council's Constitution, Full Council is responsible for approving the Council's overall revenue and capital budgets and any changes to those budgets. Where additional funding is required beyond existing approved budgets, approval must therefore be obtained from Full Council.

10.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the additional funding required to support the next phase of the Churchgate Regeneration Project, as detailed within the Part 2 report. Cabinet may make recommendations to Council in relation to budget matters in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out within Section 16 of the Constitution.

10.3 Subject to approval of the necessary funding, any procurement activity associated with the next phase of the project will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules, relevant statutory procurement requirements and the Council's scheme of officer delegations.

10.4 The Council has broad powers under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence) to undertake activities connected with the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area, including regeneration initiatives. The proposals contained within this report form part of the ongoing development and assessment of options for the regeneration of the Churchgate area and do not commit the Council to any future development scheme, delivery model or procurement outcome. Any future decisions relating to procurement, development agreements, land transactions or implementation of a regeneration scheme will be the subject of separate decision-making processes and reports as appropriate.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1. It is recognised that additional budget is required for this part of the project, and therefore this will be addressed within the Part 2 report.

12. RISK IMPLICATIONS

12.1. 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.

12.2. This project is closely monitored under the Council's Pentana system. The project team meet with the Risk Officer bi-monthly to reassess and discuss updates to the project. The levels of risk are assessed according to the project milestones and are reported to Committee regularly.

12.3. The reason for conducting the Pre-Market Engagement exercise is to derisk the project, ensuring that the Council are in control of the process and are appointing the most relevant developer to assist the team in the next phase. It will provide the Council with an importance evidence base for the Cabinet report and next stage of work – a procurement strategy and scope of the next phase of feasibility work. The outcome will be robust evidence base and a clear recommendation on what can be delivered, how it can be delivered and what the most appropriate route forward is.

13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

14. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

14.1. This report updates on the procurement approach to be followed. Depending on the value and scope of any procurement, Social Value will be considered and incorporated as relevant.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

16. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

16.1. There are no known Human Resource impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

17. APPENDICES

17.1 None.

18. CONTACT OFFICERS

1. *Steve Crowley, Director- Enterprise, steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk*
2. *Chloe Gray, Enterprise Manager, chloe.gray@north-herts.gov.uk*
3. *Rumi Bose, Churchgate Project Manager, rumi.bose@north-herts.gov.uk*

19. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Development Principles, May 2025
2. Churchgate Car Parking Assessment Findings, Markides, November 2025
3. Community Provision Study, Leonard Design, November 2025
4. Public Realm Assessment, Leonard Design, November 2025
5. Churchgate Regeneration Zone Massing Diagrams
6. Churchgate Regeneration Zone - Soft Market Testing Brochure, March 2026
7. NHDC01128038 - Churchgate Pre Market Engagement Questionnaire, May 2025
8. Hitchin Prospectus UKREiiF Breakfast Event, May 2026.

Churchgate Regeneration Zone Hitchin Town Centre
Summary Report

North Herts Council

Contents

00 Introduction

01 Baseline Review

02 Commercial Market Review

03 Public Consultation Review

04 Summary

05 Next Steps

leonard design

PLMR

kmc transport planning

Lambert Smith Hampton

Introduction
Churchgate Regeneration Zone

North Herts Council (NHC) acquired the long leasehold interest of the Churchgate Centre in August 2022, and effectively merged the leasehold interest with the freehold interest already in the Council's ownership. Their outright ownership of the centre and adjacent land provides the opportunity, for the first time, for the potential comprehensive redevelopment of the 5.6 acre site. The wider opportunity site is referred to as the 'Churchgate Regeneration Zone' (CRZ).

Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) was initially commissioned by North Herts Council (NHC) in 2023 via the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework to review and advise on the market potential for the regeneration of the Churchgate Centre and adjacent (surface car park) sites under its ownership.

The Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ) comprises the Churchgate Centre, Hitchin Market and the Portmill Lane, Biggin Lane and St Mary's Square Car Parks (see plan).

The first phase of work comprised:

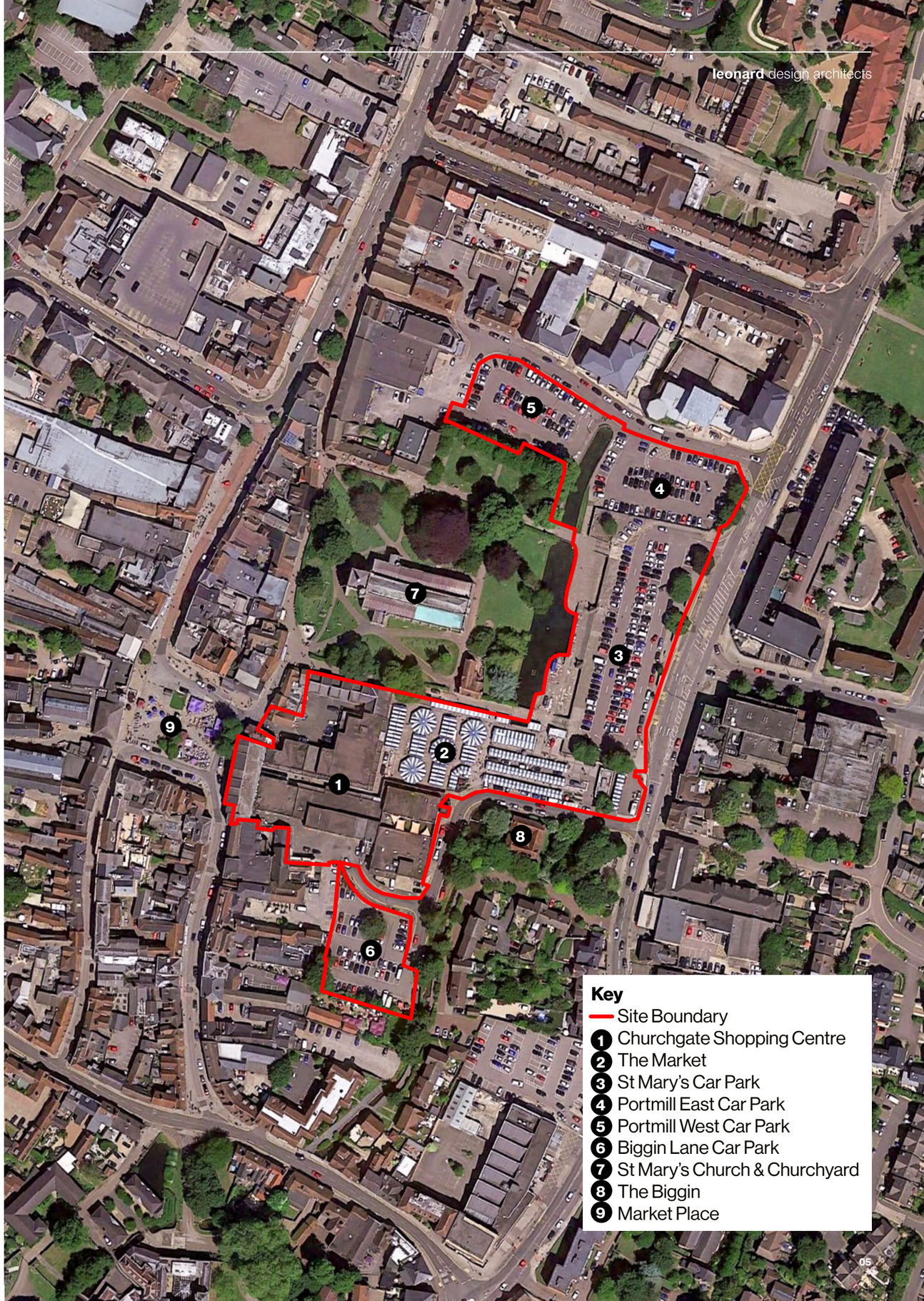
- A review of ownerships and identification of any potential issues that might impact on future development (e.g. restrictive covenants, rights of way, long leases, further land assembly, etc).
- A planning policy overview and assessment of any factors/considerations that might impact (positively and negatively) on the development (e.g. conservation area, proximity of listed buildings, sight lines to St Mary's Church etc).
- A market overview of different uses (retail, leisure, employment, civic, community, market, residential types, etc.) and broad 'value parameters' to help understand the most viable and optimum mix of uses; as well as an early understanding of any potential barriers to development and delivery, and what mitigation steps may be needed to reduce risks.

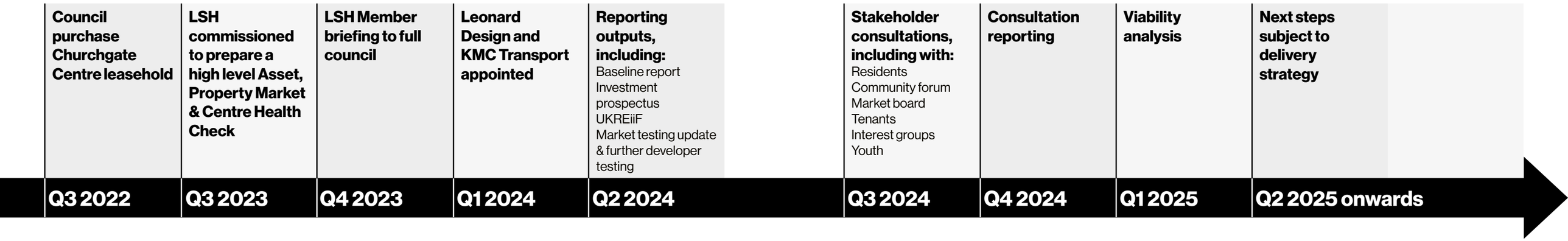
These inter-related work streams were set out in LSH's *'Market Assessment & Planning Overview'* report, including recommendations on next steps. This report was prepared for the Council in September 2023, and the key findings were summarised and presented to the client team and to:

- Churchgate Project Board - 17 October 2023; and
- All Council Members - 9 November 2023.

At these meetings it was formally agreed a *'Regeneration & Investment Framework'* (RIF) be prepared to provide the robust evidence-based spatial strategy, and planning / design / development framework needed to help inform the Council's planning of, and decision-making on the potential redevelopment of the CRZ. The RIF is being prepared in accordance with key Policy SP9 (on Design and Sustainability), to address the requirements of Policies HT11 (on Town centre uses and site-specific allocation criteria) of the adopted Local Plan (November 2022).

Working in collaboration with the Council's Churchgate Project Board team (comprising Councillors, the Managing Director (MD), Finance Director (FD) and Key Council Officers) a multi-disciplinary consultancy team was assembled in early 2024 comprising masterplanners / urban designers (Leonard Design Architects) and transport planners (KMC Transport Planning) via a competitive process.





2024 Review

The combined consultant team, led by LSH, subsequently undertook the following inter-related workstreams during 2024 (also see the timeline above):

1. **A Baseline Review.** As part of this initial work, LSH refreshed and updated the initial commercial property and residential market assessment prepared in 2023. Further to this:
   - LDA prepared a detailed **urban design review** of the issues, constraints and opportunities for the potential redevelopment of the CRZ (including assessments and mapping of the existing street/pedestrian network, building heights, public realm, green/blue spaces, heritage, etc.); and
   - KMC carried out a review of **transport, parking, movement and linkages** to, from and within the Churchgate Centre, and across the wider town centres. The review also covered local/strategic connections; potential opportunities to enhance linkages and active travel routes; and a high level assessment of parking occupancy/policy and any potential to rationalise/repurpose parking provision across the CRZ and town centre.

2. **Soft Market Testing.** Building on the initial high-level market testing carried in 2023, LSH identified a number of prominent developers, housebuilders and development managers with a strong track record of delivering comparable mixed-use town centre redevelopment schemes in centres across the UK.

3. **An Investment Prospectus (IP) was also prepared as part of the soft market testing.** Working in partnership with the Council, LSH used the IP to engage with investors and developers at UKREiiF (the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum) annual conference in Leeds in May 2024. The IP showcased the opportunities in Hitchin, and specifically the potential for the regeneration and transformation of the CRZ.

4. **Stakeholder and Community Engagement.** To further help inform the development of the CRZ, the project team worked in partnership with the Council to plan for, and carry out, a comprehensive and wide-ranging stakeholder engagement. This included a formal public consultation which ran from the 16th September to the 3rd November in the town centre. This enabled the community and stakeholders (including the young and hard to reach members of the community) to 'have their say' on a wide range of issues and help shape the potential development options and end uses on the CRZ. As part of the engagement exercise PLMR (Communications Agency) was commissioned to support the Council to seek views from key stakeholders and the wider community on what they would like to see delivered as part of this programme of regeneration.

5. **Development Viability Appraisals.** The next phase of work currently underway since December 2024 involves the preparation of a high-level and robust desk-top development appraisal of the potential development options for the different opportunity sites to help test and inform their overall financial viability and deliverability (including phasing).

6. **Roadmap to Delivery.** Drawing on all the inter-related workstreams the RIF will advise the Council on the different development and delivery options available.

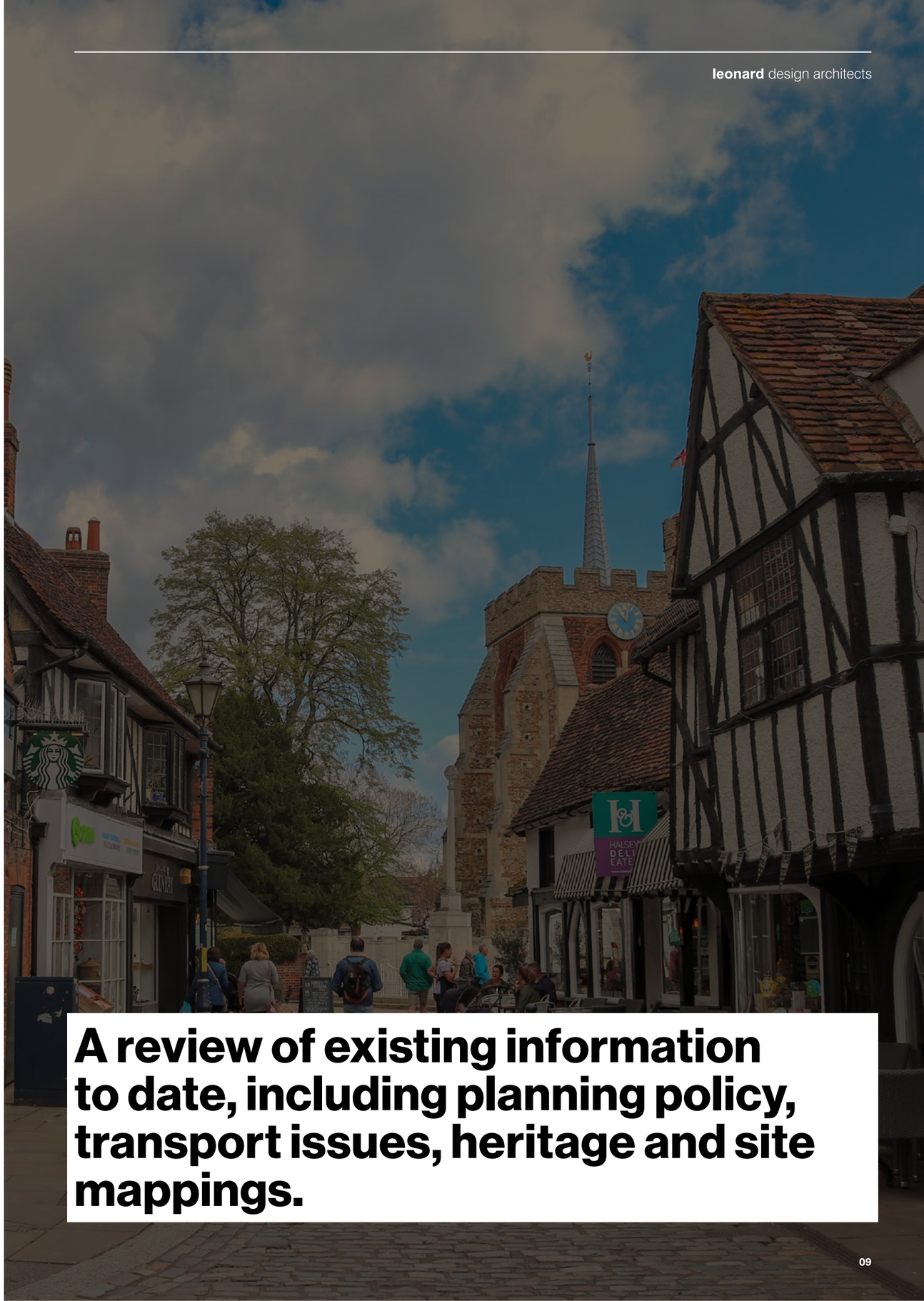
Subject to finalisation of the development viability appraisals and the Council's preferred *"roadmap to delivery"*, we envisage the procurement process will commence in the second half of 2025.

Finally, it should be noted that a series of Officer and Project Board briefings have been carried out throughout 2024/25 to date. The Council's officers have also attended the project team's weekly Monday afternoon meetings (since March 2024) to review and update progress on the preparation of the RIF (as shown on the timeline).

01 Baseline Review

The Baseline Review contained several key work-streams, including:

- **Site and context mapping** ,
- **Planning policy review**,
- **Transport review,**
- **SWOT and constraints analysis**,



A review of existing information to date, including planning policy, transport issues, heritage and site mappings.

A Mapping Review

The Baseline Review (published June 2024) incorporated reports from LSH, Leonard Design and KMC Transport Planning. Initially, a mapping exercise was conducted to understand the site, a summary of which is illustrated here.

From a placemaking and urban design perspective this exercise identified that the existing Churchgate Centre and Market are not of sufficient quality to properly serve the historic town of Hitchin. The car parks do not give a proper setting to, and harm views of the Church and Churchyard. There is also a huge opportunity to introduce more green and blue infrastructure into the centre of town and properly celebrate the River Hiz.

Permeability

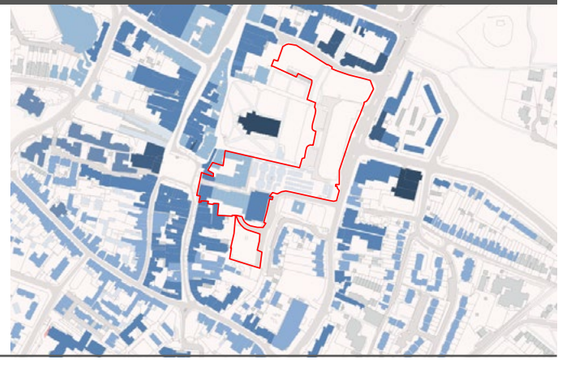
It is essential that strong pedestrian links are created within any new development and that these are linked into the existing pedestrian flows and circulation patterns of the wider town centre and surrounding area.

Key:
- Pedestrian Routes
- Shared Space Pedestrianisation
- Fully Pedestrianised

Building heights

The buildings in the town centre are primarily two to four stories tall, creating a human-scale environment that contributes to the town's charm and walk-ability. The character of the town is defined by a mix of different architectural styles, with many buildings dating back to the Tudor, Georgian, and Victorian periods.

Key:
- 1 Storey
- 2 Storeys
- 3 Storeys
- 4+ Storeys



Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ) Boundary

Heritage

Hitchin is one of the oldest continuously occupied urban centres in Hertfordshire. The ancient Icknield Way passes immediately to the North and there is evidence of Roman activity. The origins of the town, however, likely start later with the Saxon tribe named the 'Hicce', who's first mention dates from the 7th century.

Topography

St Mary's Square car park is at the Queen Street level, the area is terraced with steps along the western edge of the car park to allow pedestrians to descend to the river. There are attractive views across the river of St Mary's Church seen from Queen Street and from higher up in Hollow Lane. Even the notable Corn Exchange in Market Place can be seen from Lyle's Row.

Key, AOD:
- 97
- 57

Public Realm

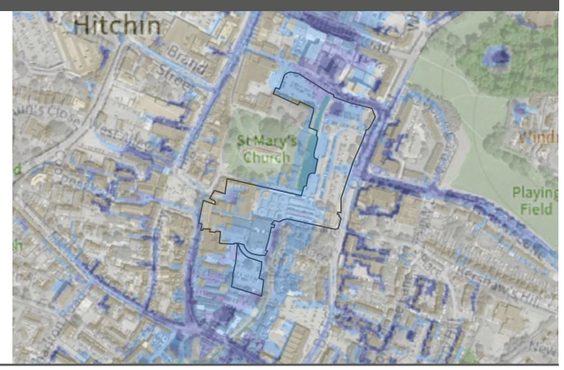
The Hitchin Town Centre Strategy identifies a number of key spaces requiring improvement, these include: Queen Street, St Mary's Square, Portmill Lane, Market, Market Place, Hermitage Road South side, Bridge Street, River Hiz, Bancroft and Paynes Park.

A Mapping Review

Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ) Boundary

Flooding

The flood defences created by the terracing and canalisation of the River Hiz mean there is no risk of fluvial flooding in the town centre.



Key:
- Flood Zone 3
- Flood Zone 2
- Flood Zone 1

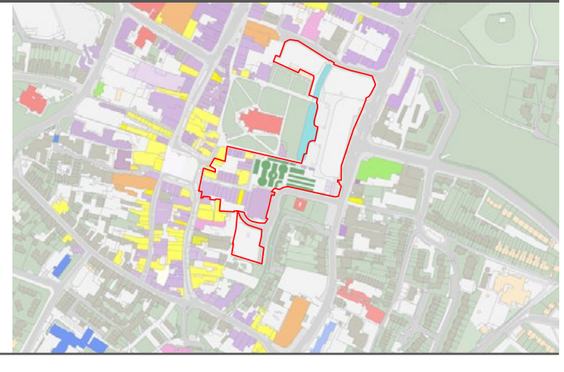
Green Space

There are a significant number of high quality green spaces in and around Hitchin. The town is centred around the historic St Mary's Church and churchyard, providing a beautiful backdrop on the western bank of the River Hiz. Beyond the Market the Biggin is also set in a garden of large, verdant trees.

Key:
- Green Spaces

Uses

Hitchin serves both its local community and a number of surrounding rural villages with a good range and choice of shops, services and community facilities.



Key:
- F&B
- Retail
- Market
- Supermarket
- Local Interest
- Accommodation
- Office
- Leisure
- Residential

Vehicle routes, parking & servicing

The circulatory pattern, especially the one-way system around Paynes Park directs a significant amount of traffic through the western part of the town centre. This has the effect of isolating the Lairage multi-storey car park, the museum, the library and the Waitrose food store from the heart of the town centre.

Key:
- Roads
- Car Parks

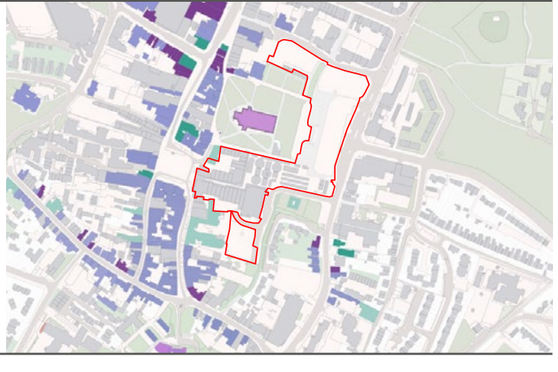
Conservation area review

The site lies within the town centre conservation area and is adjacent to several listed buildings including the Grade II* building of The Biggin and the Grade I building of St Mary's Church. Any proposed development must, therefore, respect the character, proportions, scale and materials and preserve or positively enhance the character of the Conservation Area and the settings of these important Listed buildings.

Key:
- Important Views
- Landmark
- Tree Group
- Important Hardsurfaced Area

Listed Buildings

There are about 300 listed buildings in the Hitchin Conservation Area, of which two are listed Grade I (St Mary's Church and The Priory) and there are eleven Grade II* listed entries on the register. The remainder are listed Grade II. There are no listed buildings within the boundary of the Churchgate Regeneration Zone.



Key:
- Listed Building: Grade I
- Listed Building: Grade II*
- Listed Building: Grade II

B Planning Policy Review

LSH has carried out a comprehensive review of local and national planning policies, guidance and supplementary planning documents relevant to the potential redevelopment of the CRZ (see Planning Policy Review, June 2024). Some of the key policies and provisions are as follows:

Planning Designations

- Churchgate and its Surrounding Area Mixed-Use Allocation (Policy HT11).
- Primary Shopping Frontage (Policy ETC4).
- Secondary Shopping Frontage (Policy ETC5).
- Hitchin Town Centre (Policy SP4).
- Hitchin Conservation Area.
- Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3.

Land Uses

Should be a mix of uses and should:

- Have a long term strategy for the Market;
- Provide a flexible and diverse range of Class E / F1 / F2;
- Provide additional retail and F&B subject to assessment of capacity;
- Introduce new homes;
- Review car parking provision; and
- Provide high quality public realm and better pedestrian links.

Phasing

- Any development should be in keeping with the sites surrounding context and uses.
- Consider any development coming forwards at Paynes Park and Priory Park, both of which are allocated for development.
- Ensure continuity of trading for key retail outlets.
- Safeguard servicing arrangements of surrounding properties.
- Engage anchor tenants at the earliest opportunity.

Movement, Access, Parking & Public Realm

Development will be required to:

- Make new / better connections through the site between Market Place, Queen Street, Portmill Lane, Bancroft and along the River Hiz.
- Promote active frontages.
- Provide high quality public realm, potentially including meanwhile uses, event space and seating areas for casual dining.
- Consider how connections to the site can be improved including pedestrian, cyclist and public transport.
- Ensure that an appropriate level of parking is retained.

Design Principles and Height

- Development will be expected to display high quality urban design and architecture.
- A masterplan should inform land uses, public realm, movement networks and heritage assets.
- Development should respond positively and sensitively to the conservation area, taking into consideration position, orientation, scale, height, layout, massing, detailing and use of materials.
- Building frontage lines on Sun Street and Market Place should be respected.
- The architectural rhythm of the existing historic streets should be reflected towards Market Place.

Transport & Car Park Review

KMC undertook a baseline assessment (June 2024) which have helped inform early options for development. The following summarises the initial key findings:

Conclusions from the transport and car park review are outlined below:

Servicing Access

Southern buildings are serviced via Biggin Lane (open access), while northern buildings use a time-restricted yard at Market Place. Market traders have controlled access for loading/unloading.

Parking Demand & Future Changes

Public car parks are well-utilised, especially on weekends. Any reduction in parking at Churchgate must be offset elsewhere, potentially through a multi-storey facility at Portmill Lane.

Active Travel & Public Transport Gaps

The site is pedestrianised with no cycling routes or facilities. Bus access is available, but secure cycle parking and better connectivity are needed to better serve the town.

Potential for Improved Connectivity

A key link between Market Place and Queen Street should be incorporated into redevelopment plans to enhance movement and accessibility.

Limited Impact of Queen Street Upgrades

Planned improvements (bus stops, crossings) offer minor benefits and should not restrict future redevelopment opportunities.

Baseline Review: SWOT Analysis

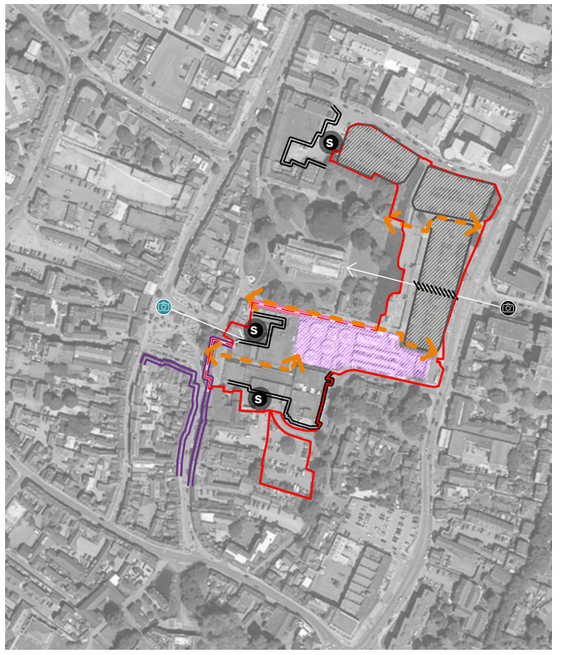
The SWOT analysis consolidates the research conducted through the mapping, planning policy and transport and car parks reviews.

Strengths

- Historic street layout,
- Almost continuous frontages of high quality historic buildings along adjacent streets,
- High number of listed buildings,
- Mixture of residential and retail shopfronts provide variety to the town centre,
- Traditional mix of materials across the town in general,
- Characterful pitched rooves and chimneys,
- St Mary's Church, churchyard and Market Place setting,
- Views along the River Hiz,
- Views towards the St Mary's Church, Market Square, the High Street and up Windmill Hill,
- Ample parking,
- The Market as a key draw / offer for the local population,
- Mix of retail and F&B offers across the town centre.

Weaknesses

- Architecture of the Churchgate Centre not in keeping with the historic town setting and causes considerable harm to Market Place,
- Natural rhythm of the architecture of Sun Street and Market Place broken by the Churchgate facade,
- Large areas of asphalt car park, with very little green space,
- View from Hollow Lane to St Mary's Church blighted in the foreground by surface parking,
- View from Market Place into a service yard,
- Poor state of the market offer,
- Lack of permeability through the site,
- Ugly and inactive rear service accesses along Biggin Lane facing the historic Biggin Almshouses, River Hiz and Sun Hotel courtyard.



D Baseline Review: SWOT Analysis

Opportunities

Remove the concrete lid from on top of the River Hiz,

Open up a pedestrian route along the River Hiz,

Provide a range of different uses, including retail, F&B, leisure & homes:
- » Including potential for new anchor / destination offers; and
- » Potential for a range of residential offers, including flats above active ground floors and townhouses.

Create new permeability through the site, with better linkages between the Market Place, Market, Queen Street, Portmill Lane and Bancroft:
- » Extend the traditional street pattern; and
- » Reinstate the historic route between Market Place and River Hiz.

Provide an enhanced market offer,

Provide buildings reflecting the character & scale of the historic town,

Create new pedestrian-led, high quality public realm with the potential for event space and casual dining,

Redevelop the Churchgate to positively and sensitively respond to the conservation area, taking into account:
- » Orientation and position;
- » Scale and height;
- » Layout; and
- » Massing.

Create active frontages to support the vitality of the town centre,

Inject more green space / biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) to permeate the existing asphalt car parks,

Improve cycling and public transport connections into the town centre,

Safeguard important views within the town,

The entire site is designated an opportunity area in the Conservation Area Review.

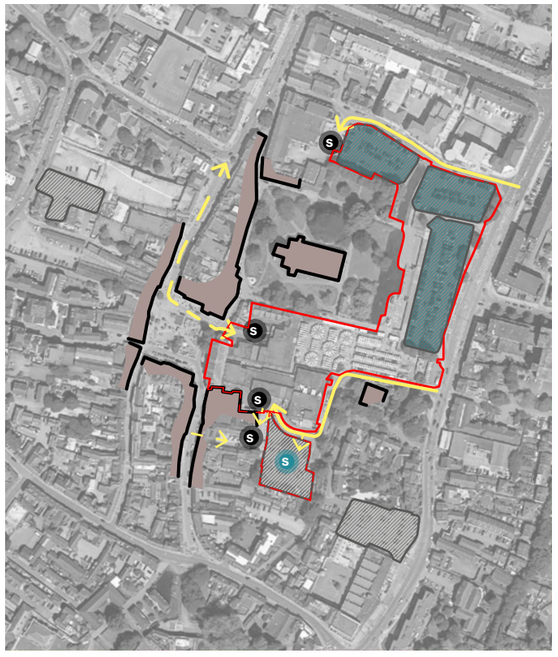
Threats

Large areas of parking serving the town centre opposing the change to active / sustainable travel modes,

Existing parking requirements prohibiting development of any scale,

Historic scale of the town prohibiting developments of scale,

S The requirement to safeguard any service arrangements for surrounding properties, including off Market Place.



Baseline Review: Conclusions

The conclusions identified by the Baseline Review are:

Respect the character & scale of St Mary's Church, the churchyard, Market Place and the historic buildings around it.

Respect and enhance the important views, including in the Market Square, from Hollow Lane and along Churchgate.

Revitalise and enhance the Market.

Connect Market Place and the Hitchin Market area to the River Hiz, Queen Street as well as Portmill Road.

Establish a strong pedestrian route along the River Hiz.

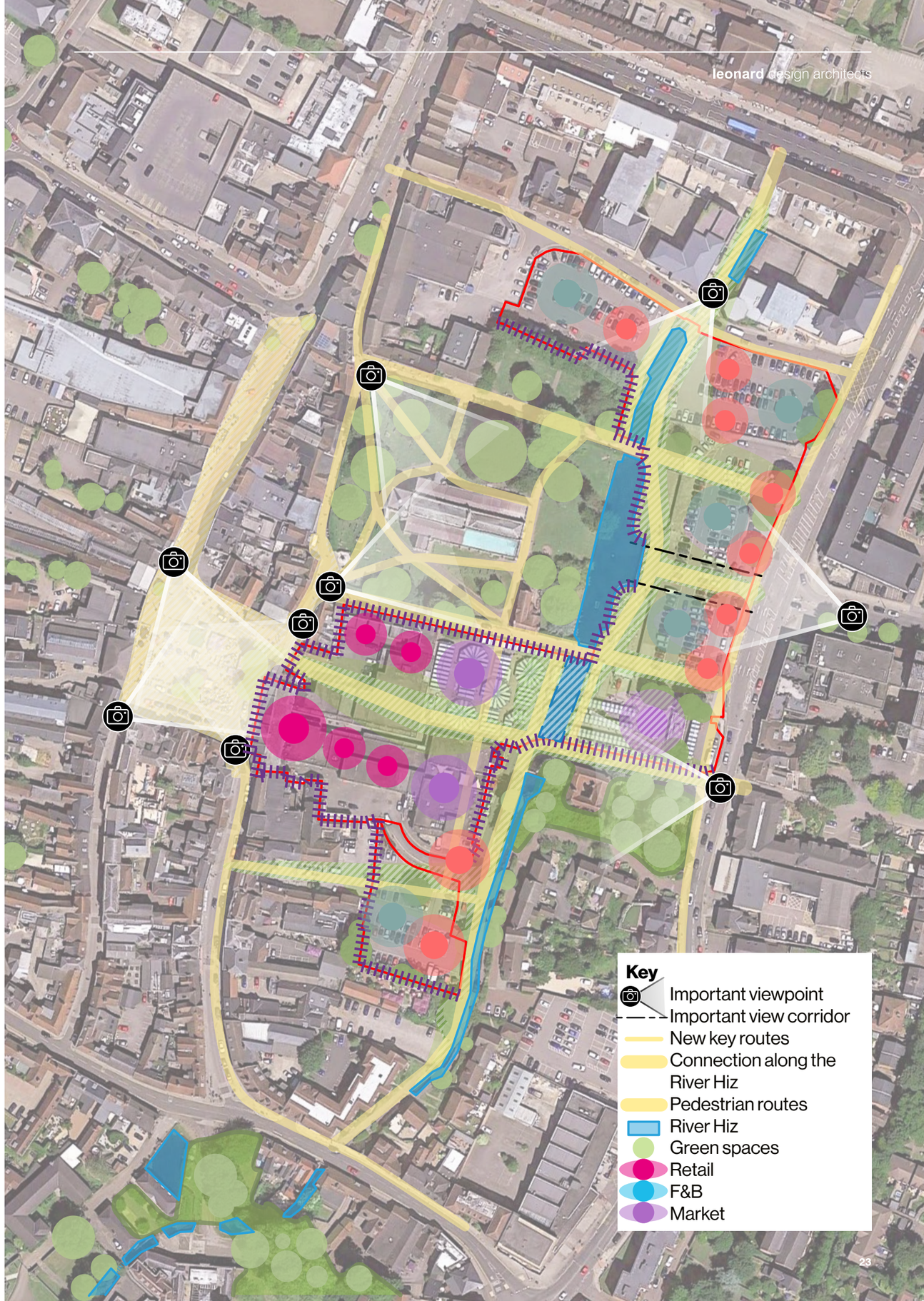
Create a hierarchy of streets and public realm reflecting the historic setting of the town, including lanes, arcades, streets and larger public spaces.

Enhance the setting of the River Hiz by opening it up.

Build upon the beautiful green spaces locally and inject greenery throughout the site, including SuDS where possible.

Bring in a range of uses on the ground floor, including a range of retail and F&B offers, as well as leisure and community opportunities.

Provide a range of homes of different tenure and type.



02 Commercial Market Review

LSH carried out a review of Hitchin Town Centre's commercial and residential market, and placed this in the context of wider regional and national trends. Some of the headline findings include:

National Retail Trends

- Declining disposable incomes continue to impact consumer spending.
- The UK has an oversupply of retail space and the sector has continued challenges due to online shopping growth, cost-of-living pressure and post pandemic effects.
- Despite improvements in footfall, retail vacancy rates have only marginally decreased over the past 12 months.
- There has been an increased demand from independent and service retailers seeking flexible leasing models.
- The retail investment market has marginally improved during the course of 2024 although concerns exist over the impact of the forthcoming increase in retailer operational costs and how that will affect retailer expansion plans.

Hitchin Residential Market Overview

- Hitchin is a highly desirable residential location.
- Soft market testing confirms developers have a strong interest in residential-led regeneration with low-rise residential development (4–5 stories max) with associated car parking and amenity space.
- High-quality communal spaces and amenities are essential to attract buyers.
- Strong new build values with potential for growth in a regenerated town centre setting.

Hitchin's Retail & Leisure Market

- Hitchin Town Centre has 650,000 sq ft of retail space.
- Key shopping areas include Bancroft, High Street, and Market Place.
- Whilst Hitchin's retail sector has been affected by national trends and structural changes its attractive trading environment has meant it has not been as severely affected as some towns in the region.
- Retail vacancy rate is 8.1%, lower than the national average of 19.1% (Q4 2024).
- The Churchgate Shopping Centre and its surrounds require significant investment and revitalisation.
- Hitchin's Market is an historic and important focus for town. However it needs investment and right-sizing to align with modern market trends.
- The local market has potential for revitalisation, particularly through a renewed focus on independent retailers and market spaces.

Hitchin's Office Market

- Hitchin is a secondary office market along the A1(M) corridor with limited market activity.
- Vacancy rate is low (around 3%), which is well below the national average.
- Rental levels are also comparatively low, making new Grade A office development challenging.

03 Public Consultation

The Churchgate public consultation generated valuable feedback from the community and key stakeholders. The engagement process ran from 16th September to the 3rd November 2024 and included:

- Workshops with Hitchin Community Forum and Market Board (both on 09/09/24),
- Feedback from other stakeholder groups including the Labour Group (29/10/24) & Cycling UK (October 2024),
- Inviting current tenants of Churchgate to their own drop-in session at the Consultation Hub (16/09/24 – 03/11/24),
- An in-person Consultation Hub (with exhibition boards, overleaf) which was open on various dates for members of the public to drop-in and meet members of the project team (16/09/24 – 03/11/24),
- A feedback survey that was made available both at the Consultation Hub (physical copy), the Council's online hub and via a QR code/link on the Council website (16/09/24 – 03/11/24),
- A programme of engagement with local schools to facilitate youth engagement (19/11/24 – 26/11/24),
- A social media campaign and outreach throughout the consultation period (16/09/24 – 03/11/24),
- A leaflet drop to households across the whole District (September 2024).

Over 1,000 people visited the Consultation Hub, and 1,505 survey responses were collected. The conclusions from the engagement feedback were:

Page 558

Revitalisation of Hitchin Market

Sustainable Regeneration

Community, Leisure Space, and Entertainment

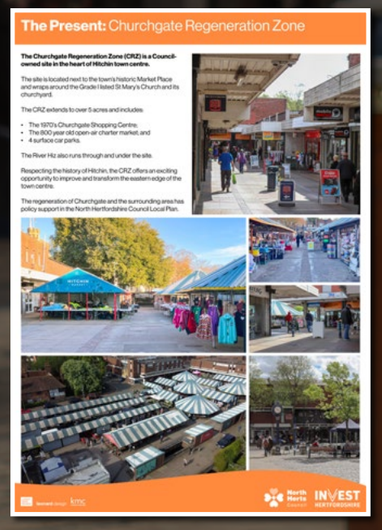
Improvement of Accessibility

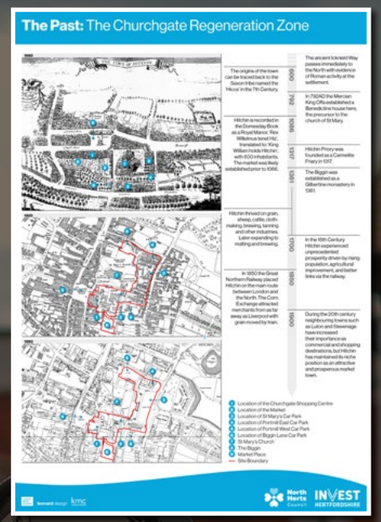
Affordable Housing

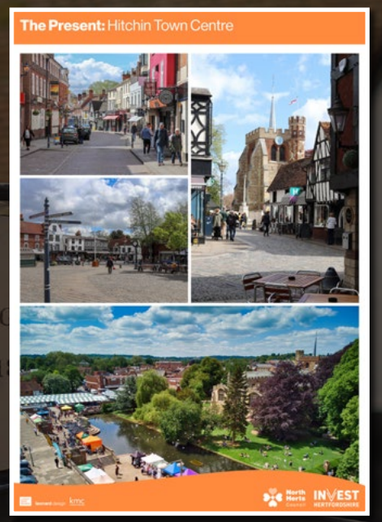
The CRZ engagement and consultation gathered community feedback on the redevelopment potential of the site.

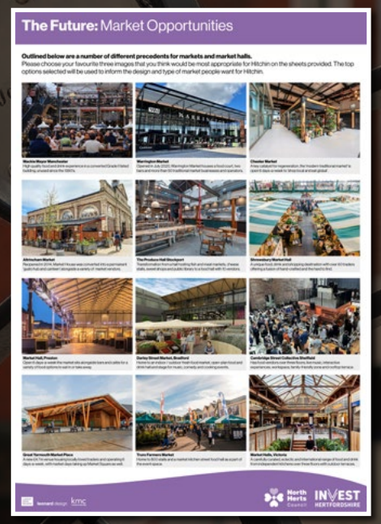
Exhibition boards

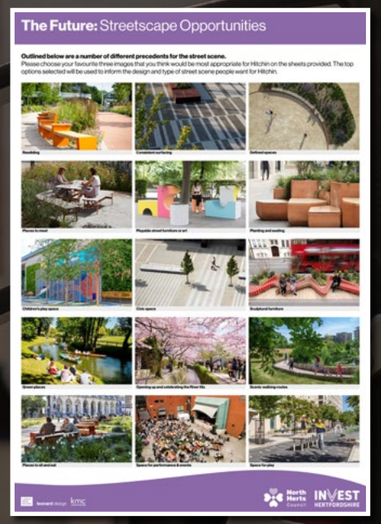
Over 1,000 people visited the Consultation Hub, and 1,505 survey responses were collected.





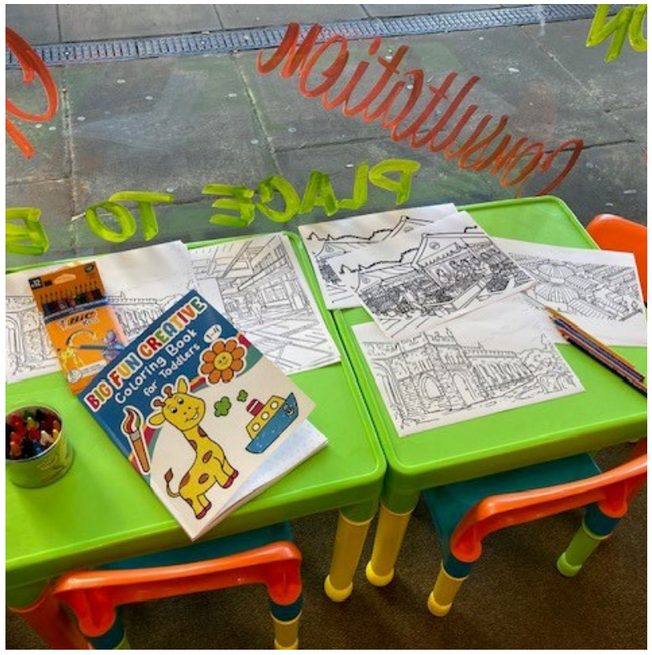






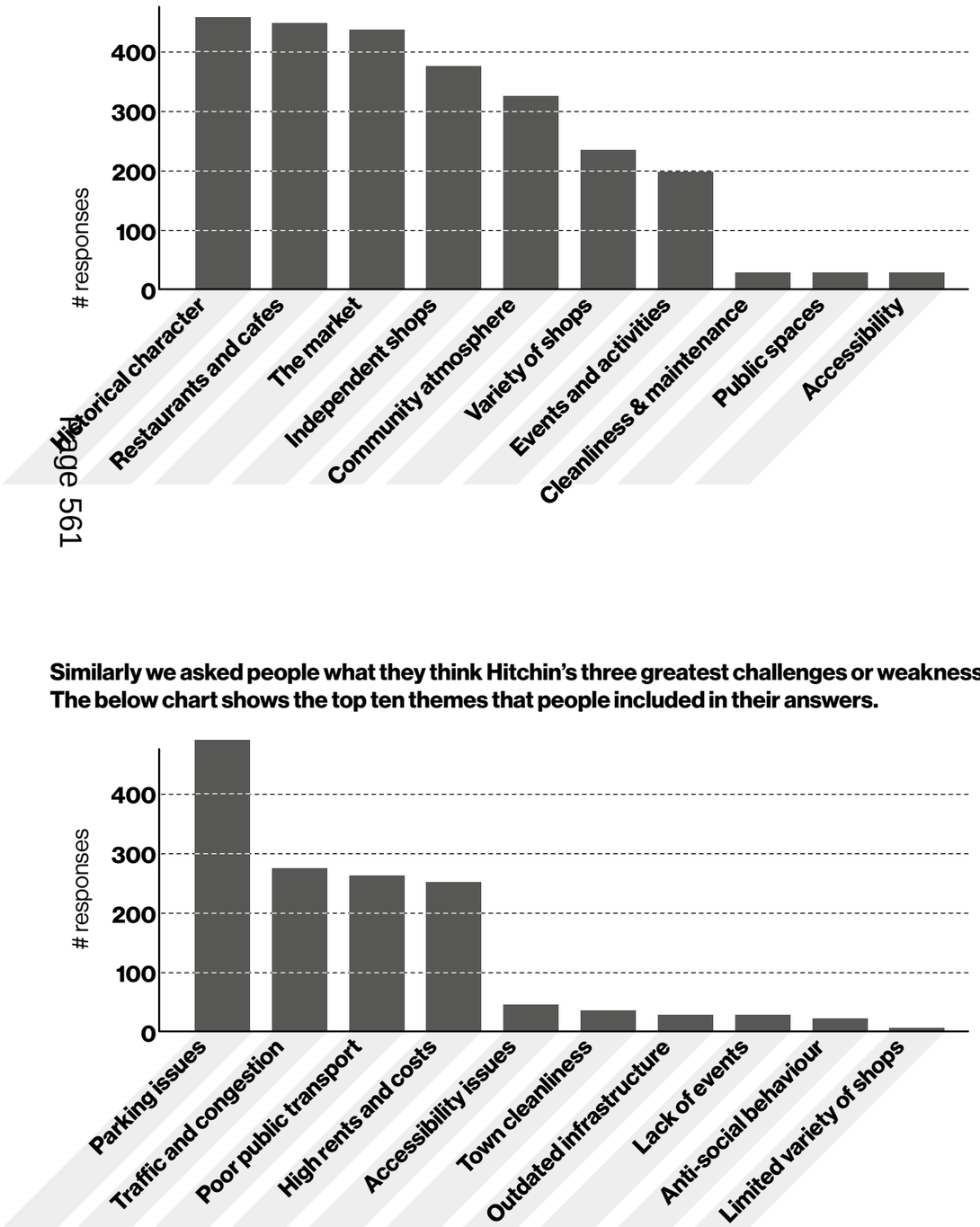
Churchgate Hub

The Churchgate Consultation Hub was open on various dates for the public from 16th September to 3rd November 2024. The hub also hosted drop-in sessions for existing tenants of The Churchgate Centre.



Public Consultation Report

We asked people what they think Hitchin's greatest assets or strengths are. The chart shows the top ten themes that people included in their answers.



Similarly we asked people what they think Hitchin's three greatest challenges or weaknesses are. The below chart shows the top ten themes that people included in their answers.

Shops and services

We asked people what types of shops or services they would like to see within the Churchgate Regeneration scheme. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer. The figure below shows the results.

Specialist food stores and a cinema were the shops / services that people would most like to see in the town, with a gym the least popular.

Of the 15% of people who chose 'other', some of the suggestions included: Multi-storey parking, co-working space, gallery space, information centre, bookshops, vintage / second-hand stores or affordable clothing shops.

Speciality food stores | 51.7%

Cinema | 51.6%

Cafes/restaurants | 47.2%

Clothing boutiques | 41.6%

Lifestyle & home furnishings | 40.9%

Supermarket | 12.5%

Workspaces/Offices | 10%

Hotel | 8.8%

Sports shops | 8.8%

Health and beauty stores/services | 7.2%

Gym | 4.3%

Other | 15.2%

Potential improvements

Which improvements would encourage people to spend more time in Hitchin town centre, with respondents allowed to choose more than one.

Reduction in vacant shops | 68.9%

Improved range of shops | 63.9%

Improved market (outdoor) | 55.7%

More attractive outside spaces | 51.2%

Cinema | 48.9%

More events within the town centre | 45.4%

New indoor/covered market | 29%

Better pedestrian & cycle routes & racks | 28%

Improved selection of food and drink outlets | 24.3%

A music theatre | 17.9%

A theatre | 17.8%

Better public transport | 17.7%

Better/improved links with bus stops | 13%

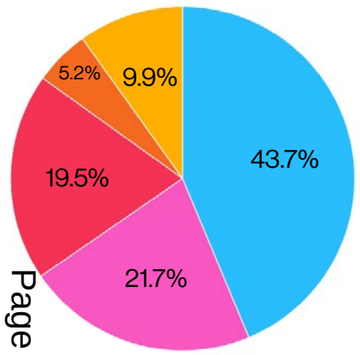
A gym | 3.1%

Other | 8.2%

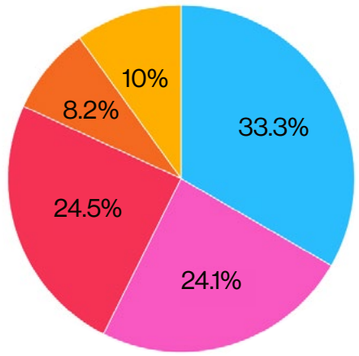
Public Consultation Report

We asked people to rate the importance of various sustainable and environmentally friendly aspects to potentially be incorporated into the regeneration. The graphs below show how people rated each aspect.

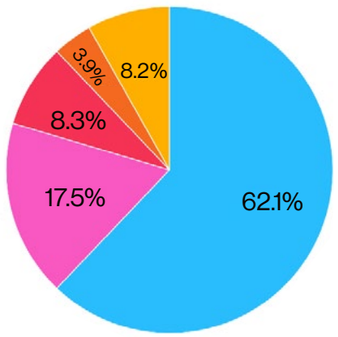
Solar panels



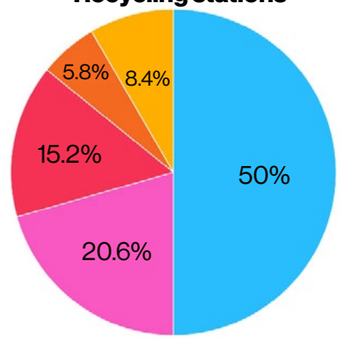
Green roofs



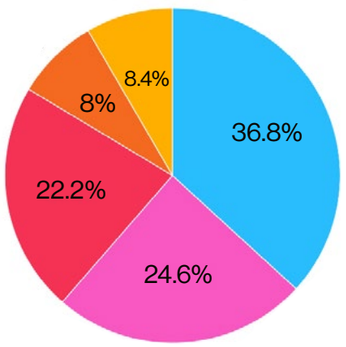
Energy efficient lighting



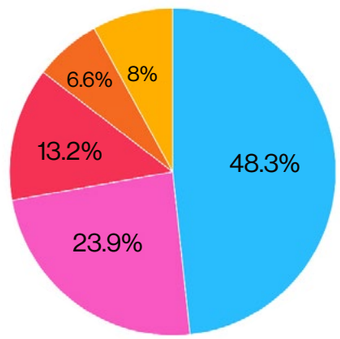
Recycling stations



Cycle parking



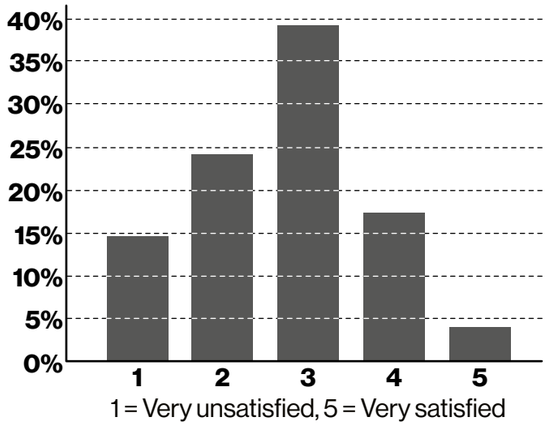
Sustainable building materials



Hitchin Market

Satisfaction with the Market stalls

When asked how satisfied they are with the current selection of stalls at Hitchin Market, the majority of respondents either had no view or were unsatisfied / very unsatisfied, the below table shows the spread of ratings.

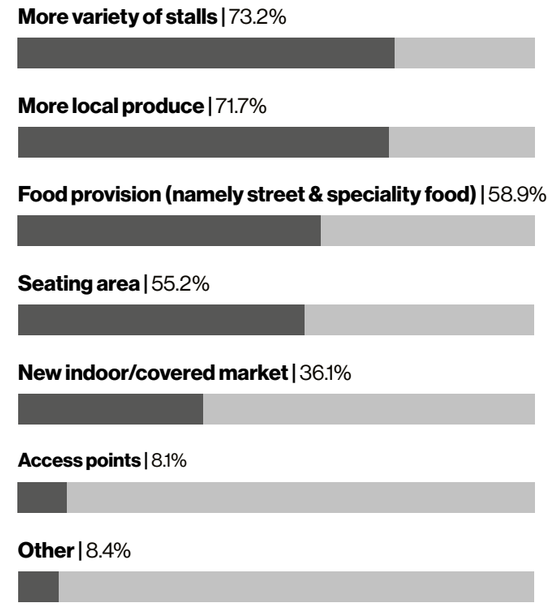


Potential improvements to the Market

When asked what improvements respondents would like to see at the Market (results below) the most popular options were more variety of stalls and more local produce. Access points were the least desired improvement.

8.4% of people chose 'other' and the suggestions given included:

- Move to Market Square;
- Late night market;
- Cleaner/tidier; and
- Higher quality stalls.



Public Consultation Report

In support of the Churchgate Consultation, we designed an engagement programme to specifically target the youth of Hitchin. We recognise that this demographic are key stakeholders in this project and are vital to the future of any regeneration that occurs on the site, as current residents and users of the town, and future users of the space and Hitchin town centre more widely.

We created Churchgate briefing packs to circulate to Hitchin schools, to be sent to parents and shared in classes to engage pupils and spread the word about the Churchgate project. We also offered schools the opportunity to attend an in-person interactive workshop in the Churchgate Hub in Hitchin town centre, which we had previously been using for the consultation to speak to residents and encourage them to take the survey. The outcomes of the workshops are illustrated below.

Year 5s:

- 52 lived in Hitchin;
- Most have shopped at and visited Churchgate and the market;
- 53 are currently regularly visiting the market; and
- 36 regularly use the Churchgate Shopping Centre.

These groups suggestions are illustrated through the below word cloud, in which you can see the most common ideas show up the largest.

Year 9s:

- 17 lived in Hitchin;
- Most have shopped at and visited Churchgate and the market;
- 5 are currently regularly visiting the market; and
- 16 regularly use the Churchgate Shopping Centre.

These groups suggestions are illustrated through the below word cloud, in which you can see the most common ideas show up the largest.

Six formers:

- 6 lived in Hitchin;
- Most have shopped at and visited Churchgate and the market;
- 4 are currently regularly visiting the market; and
- 4 regularly use the Churchgate Shopping Centre.

These groups suggestions are illustrated through the below word cloud, in which you can see the most common ideas show up the largest.

HITCHIN MARKET

04 Summary: Key Conclusions

01 Baseline Review

1. Respect the character & scale of St Mary's Church, the churchyard, Market Place and the historic buildings around it,
2. Respect and enhance the important views, including in the Market Square, from Hollow Lane and along Churchgate,
3. Revitalise and enhance the Market,
4. Connect Market Place and the Hitchin Market area to the River Hiz, Queen Street as well as Portmill Road,
5. Establish a strong pedestrian route along the River Hiz,
6. Create a hierarchy of streets and public realm reflecting the historic setting of the town, including lanes, arcades, streets and larger public spaces,
7. Enhance the setting of the River Hiz by opening it up,
8. Build upon the beautiful green spaces locally and inject greenery throughout the site, including SuDS where possible,
9. Bring in a range of uses on the ground floor, including a range of retail and F&B offers, as well as leisure and community opportunities,
10. Provide a range of homes of different tenure and type.

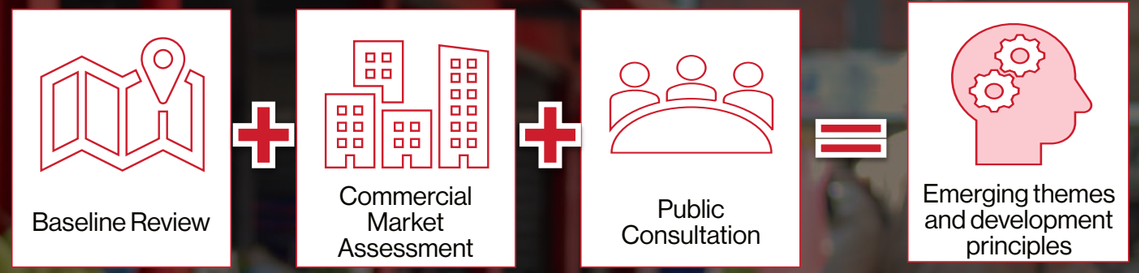
02 Commercial Market Review

1. Hitchin is well-positioned for future growth, but regeneration should focus on mixed-use developments incorporating retail, leisure, and residential space.
2. The town's strengths lie in its attractive streetscapes, affluent demographic, and potential for revitalisation through placemaking and a focus on independent retailers and market spaces.

03 Public Engagement

1. **Revitalisation of Hitchin Market.** Enhanced with flexible, community centered spaces with better visibility, accessibility and affordability of new market units with a mix of permanent stalls and casual trading spaces.
2. **Sustainable Regeneration.** Opening up the River Hiz, green spaces, energy-efficient buildings and sustainable infrastructure, with better cycle routes, pedestrian-friendly designs and transport links.
3. **Improvement of Accessibility.** More convenient parking locations, more reliable public transport connections and improved cycle and walking routes.
4. **Affordable Housing.** Strong support for a balance of affordable housing with a mix to maintain Hitchin's identity.
5. **Community, Leisure Space, and Entertainment.** The community desires multi-functional spaces catering to different demographics. Suggestions included performance spaces, a covered food hall, arts and entertainment hubs and youth-friendly areas, as well as a new cinema, multi-use arts hub, theatre, exhibition space and a live music venue.

Summarising the learnings from the Baseline Review, Commercial Market Assessment and the Public Consultation.



The broad findings from the detailed baseline analysis and consultation suggest that the optimal strategy and future vision for the CRZ is likely to comprise a blend of options that come together to create a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable Hitchin town centre. This will be underpinned by the following themes:

Emerging themes and development principles:

01 Heritage-Led Regeneration

02 Mixed-Use Intensification

03 Market & Riverfront Revitalisation

04 Sustainable & Smart Growth Strategy

05 Strategic Development of Underutilised Sites

01 Heritage-Led Regeneration

Objective: To retain and enhance the historic fabric while introducing complementary development.

Rationale:
Preserves character and identity of the town; and
Enhances local community support and local pride.

02 Mixed-Use Intensification

Objective: Maximise land use efficiency by integrating residential, retail, and leisure into a cohesive development.

Rationale:
Supports a diverse day, evening and night-time economy;
Increases town centre population density and footfall;
Strengthens retail resilience with 'built-in' local demand; and
Supports independent businesses in unique settings.

03 Market & Riverfront Revitalisation

Objective: Transform Hitchin Market and the River Hiz corridor into a dynamic, community-centred hub.

Rationale:
- Enhances the town's natural assets and public realm;
- Creates a destination space for both locals and visitors alike; and
- Supports independent traders and local businesses.

04 Sustainable & Smart Growth Strategy

Objective: Future-proof any development in the CRZ by integrating green infrastructure, low-carbon technologies, and smart mobility.

Rationale:
- Future-proofs the town against climate change; and
- Enhances air quality, biodiversity, and overall liveability.

05 Strategic Development of Underutilised Sites

Objective: Unlock new development potential in key areas of the CRZ such as the car parks while balancing density and character.

Rationale:
- Unlocks new opportunities without overdeveloping heritage areas;
- Expands the town's functional footprint sustainably; and
- Can be phased over time to align with demand.

05 Next Steps

High level viability assessment of the development options has commenced based on the themes defined previously. This will blend options that contribute to creating a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable Hitchin town centre.

The Council is on an early part of its regeneration journey for the Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ). The Council's overarching aim through the revitalisation of the CRZ is to raise the attraction and profile of Hitchin as a place to live, work, shop and visit for a wide range of uses and activities.

As we move forward, we are seeking to further explore opportunities with potential development partners who will share our passion and drive to transform Hitchin into a thriving town that everyone can be proud of.

Q3 2022	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025 onwards
Council purchase Churchgate Centre leasehold	**LSH commissioned to prepare a high level Asset, Property Market & Centre Health Check**	**LSH Member briefing to full council**	**Leonard Design and KMC Transport appointed**	**Reporting outputs, including:** Baseline report Investment prospectus UKREiiF Market testing update & further developer testing	**Stakeholder consultations, including with:** Residents Community forum Market board Tenants Interest groups Youth	**Consultation reporting**	**Viability analysis**	**Next steps subject to delivery strategy**

North Herts Council

Lambert Smith Hampton

PLMR

kmc transport planning

leonard design

Hitchin Town Centre

Churchgate Car Parking Assessment Findings

20th November 2025

Markides Associates are an independent transport planning consultancy, with many years of experience in transport projects including parking.

Our previous involvement with parking in Hitchin was as part of the District-wide parking review in 2017/2018, which gave us a good knowledge of the town.

What have we done for this study?

- We commissioned **detailed parking surveys** using cameras that recorded vehicles using the car parks in Hitchin on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday between 25th and 28th September– we also surveyed on-street parking in the core town centre.
- We also carried out **two other 'snapshot' survey visits** on Friday 7th November and Saturday 4th October to check conditions, confirm the total parking supply by type of bay, and provide another set of data. There was a high level of consistency between the demand recorded in both the 'snapshot' and detailed surveys.
- We reviewed the **consultation responses to the Churchgate project**, which gave us information on why respondents visited the town centre, where they came from and how they travelled there.
- We used the **North Herts Council (NHC) Retail Study** with the above information to estimate the overall spend by shoppers by mode of travel.
- **We have engaged with the project team and NHC parking and transport teams**, who also provided us with parking ticket data from 2018 to 2024.

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Top reasons people travel to Hitchin town centre

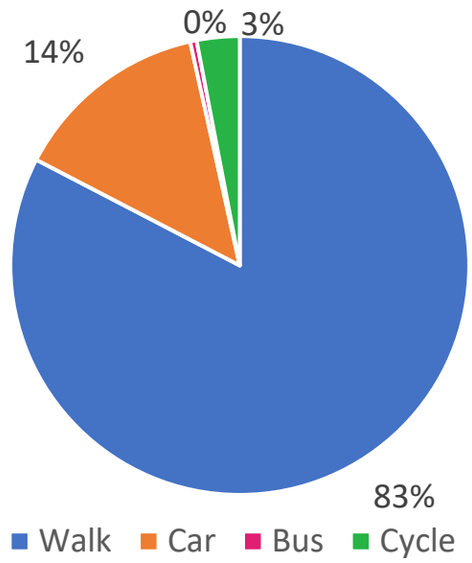
Activity	% of all visitors (multiple activities possible)
Non-food shopping	54.1
Food shopping	24.6
Window shopping/browse	20.0
Café/pub/restaurant	57.1
Visiting family/friends	11.9

Source: North Hertfordshire Town Centres and Retail Study

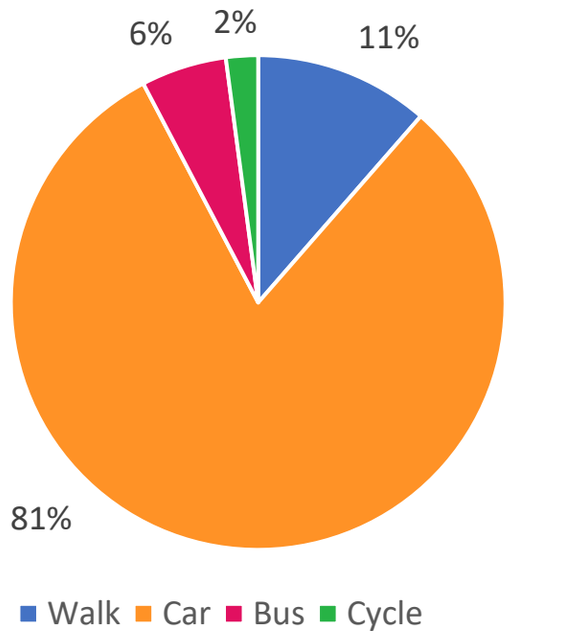
KEY POINTS :

- Hitchin has a particular town centre offer in which café/pub/restaurants and food shopping play a big part.
- Approximately 14% of Hitchin residents shop by car, 83% walk in, but 81% of visitors from outside of Hitchin drive.

Mode of Choice For Hitchin Residents



Mode of Choice for Outside of Hitchin



Source: Consultation responses to Churchgate regeneration –

Parking Supply

Parking beat survey results show that all on-street spaces are almost fully occupied by very short-stay parking. There is little opportunity to increase this supply.

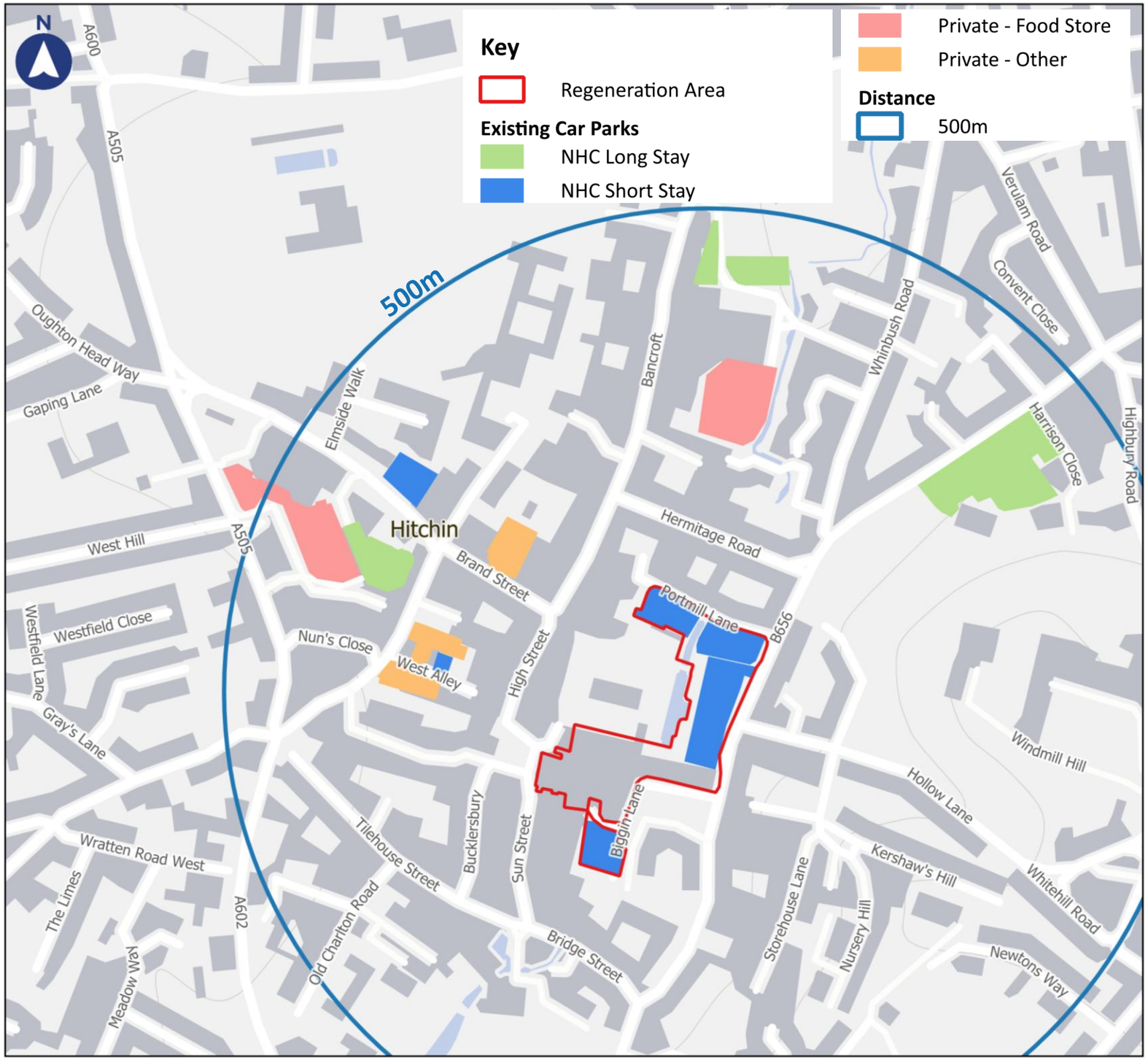
EXISTING OFF-STREET SUPPLY

Type	Total Standard	Disabled Spaces	Electric Vehicles	Total
NHC - Long Stay	580	18	18	**616**
NHC - Short Stay	367	24	0	**391**
Private – Food Store	372	17	4	**417**
Private - Other	153	5	0	**158**
Total	**1472**	**64**	**22**	**1582**

KEY POINTS:

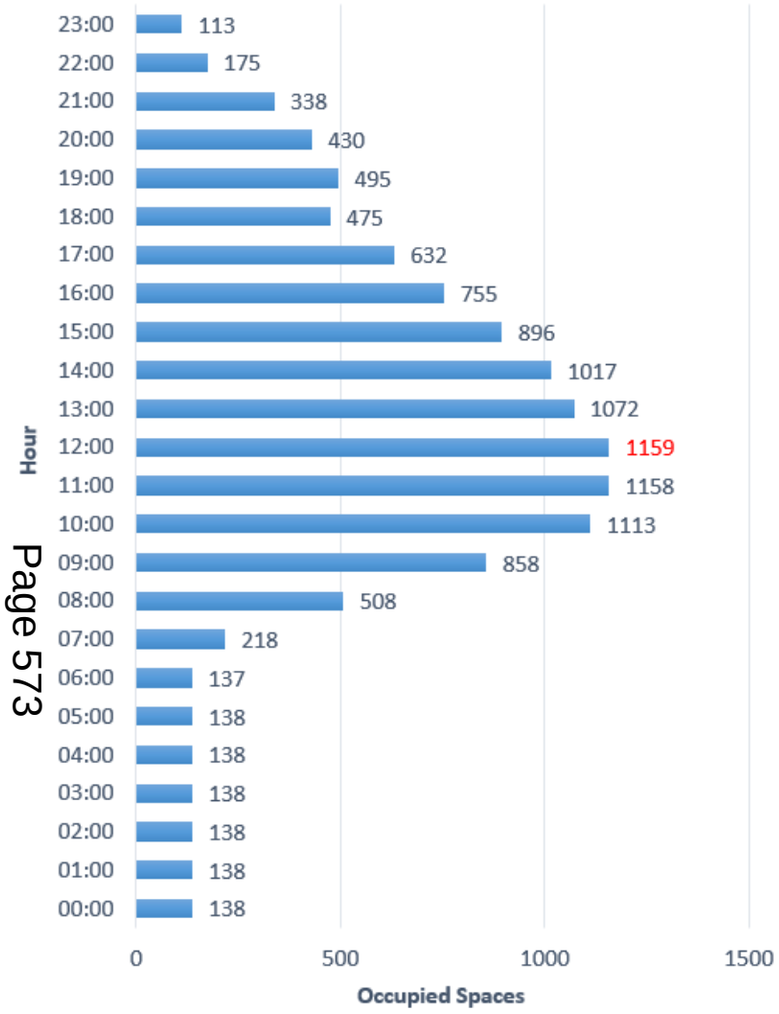
There are 1,582 parking spaces in the surveyed car parks – 36% are private-mainly food stores (Waitrose and Sainsburys).

The car parks are all a short and easy walk from the town centre.

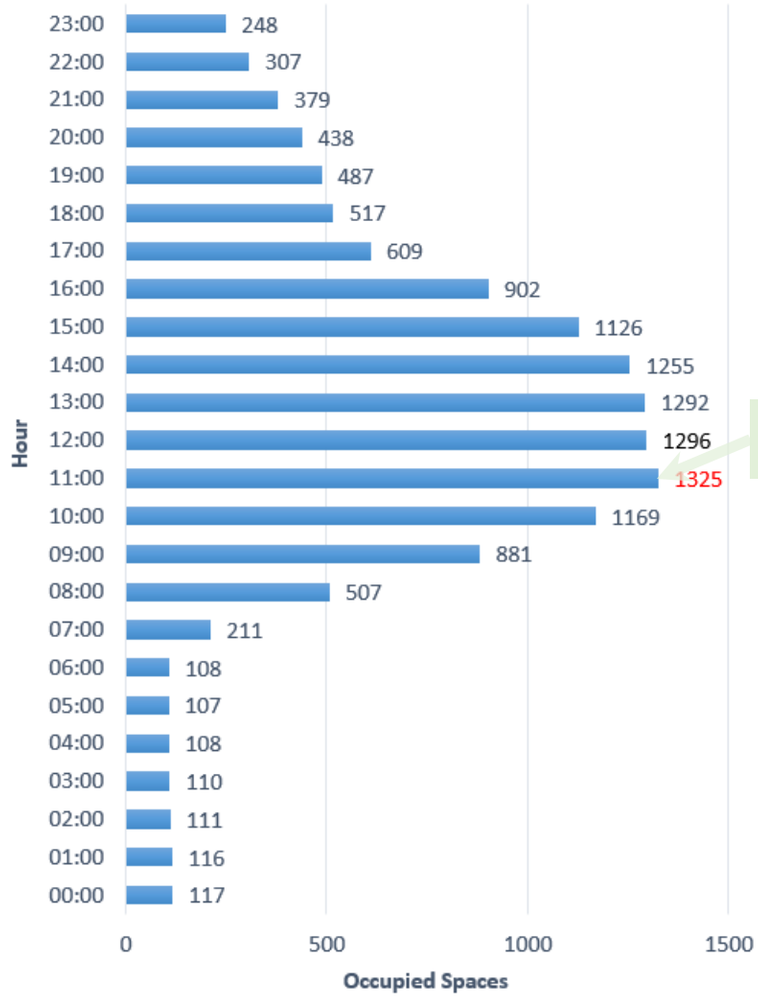


Existing Parking Demand

Peak Accumulation - Weekday



Peak Accumulation - Saturday



Key: Saturday is the peak with demand highest between 11am - 12pm

KEY POINTS

Parking demand varies by day of week, NHC short-stay car parks are very well used on all survey days, peaking at 96% occupancy on Saturday and Sunday.

Weekday peak demand was 73% of total supply, Saturday was 84% and Sunday 66%. Saturday has therefore been the focus of our assessment.

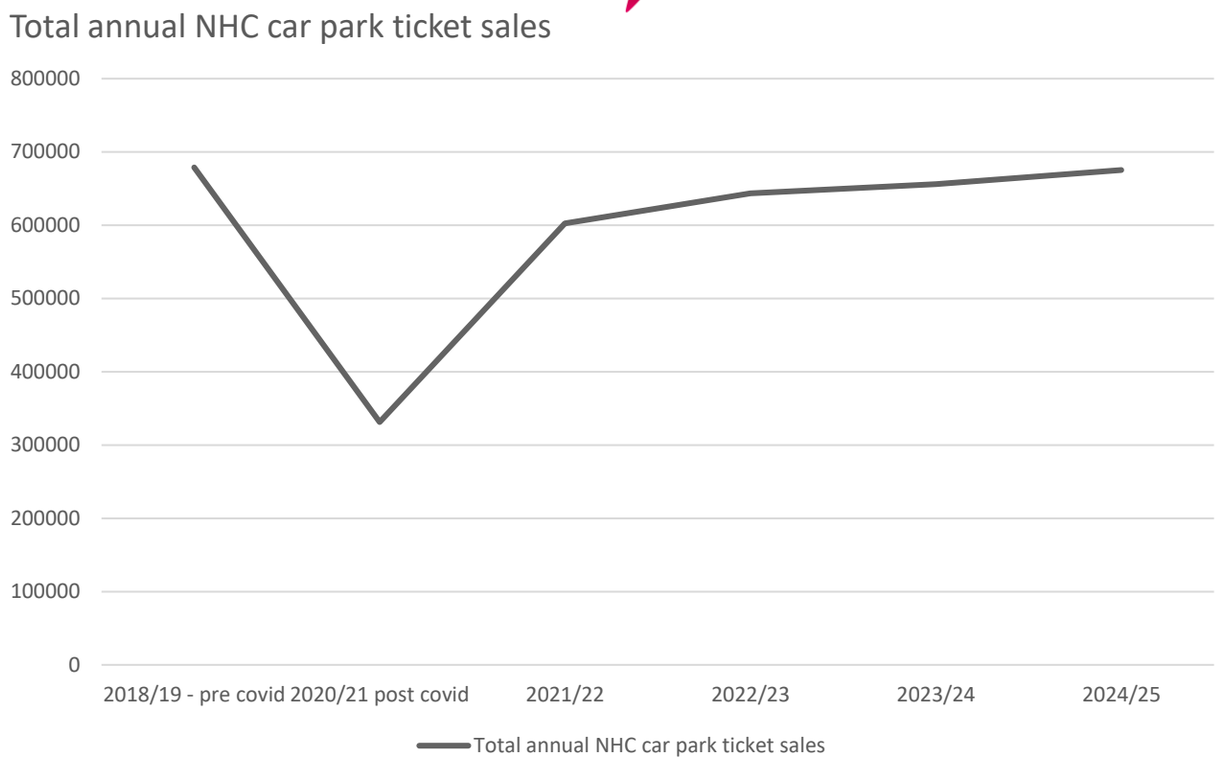
Type	Supply	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
		Peak Occupancy		
NHC - Long Stay	616	64%	75%	37%
NHC - Short Stay	391	86%	96%	96%
Private – Food Store	417	84%	96%	94%
Private - Other	158	46%	57%	27%
Total (% of supply)	**1582**	73%	84%	66%

Future demand may be affected by:

- The general economy
- Changes in retail/leisure activity
- Growth in population in and around Hitchin

Future supply may be affected by:

- **The Churchgate options:**
  - **No food store option** – 219 parking spaces removed
  - **Food store option** – 151 parking spaces removed; this assumes that Biggin Lane car park would remain available at all times for the general public, not allocated to specific store
- **Changes to any private parking** – in this study we have assumed that these private spaces will remain for public parking as now, but if this does change it could have a significant impact on future parking supply.



KEY POINTS

Hitchin parking demand reduced over COVID and has been increasing since but remains lower than2018/19 levels. During this time there were 2,400 new housing completions, approximately 405 dwellings per year.

The data does not show significant **growth in demand**, but it is prudent to allow for some. This study assumed growth of 5% between 2025 and 2031 only, based on DfT travel predictions.

It is best practice to have some **spare parking capacity** in the system at peaks – otherwise motorists would wait in aisles and need to travel between multiple car parks and may be deterred from visiting. In our view this spare capacity at peak times should be 10% or more – **this is lower than existing Saturday peak spare capacity (16%).**

Spare Capacity on Saturday – Existing and Churchgate options

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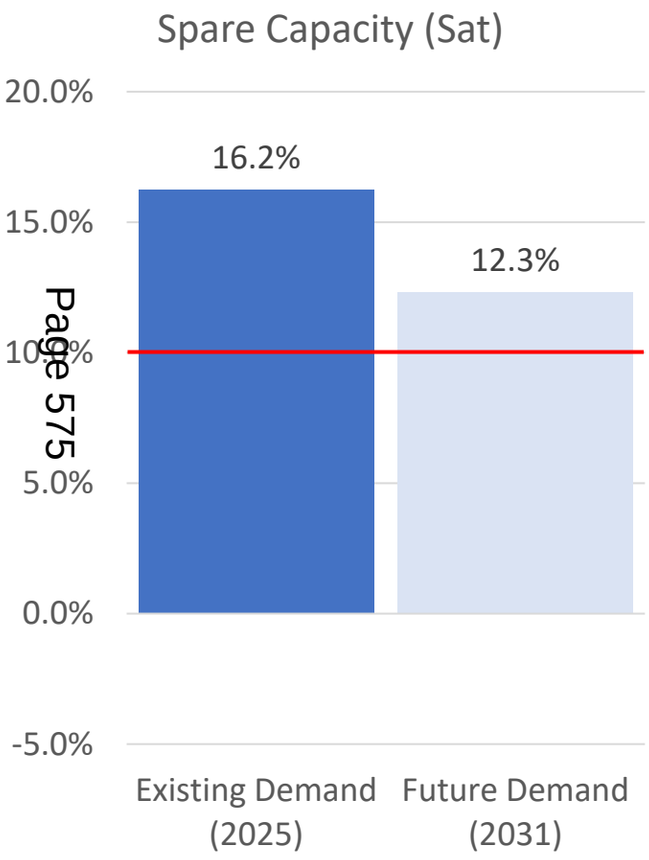
Existing – No change

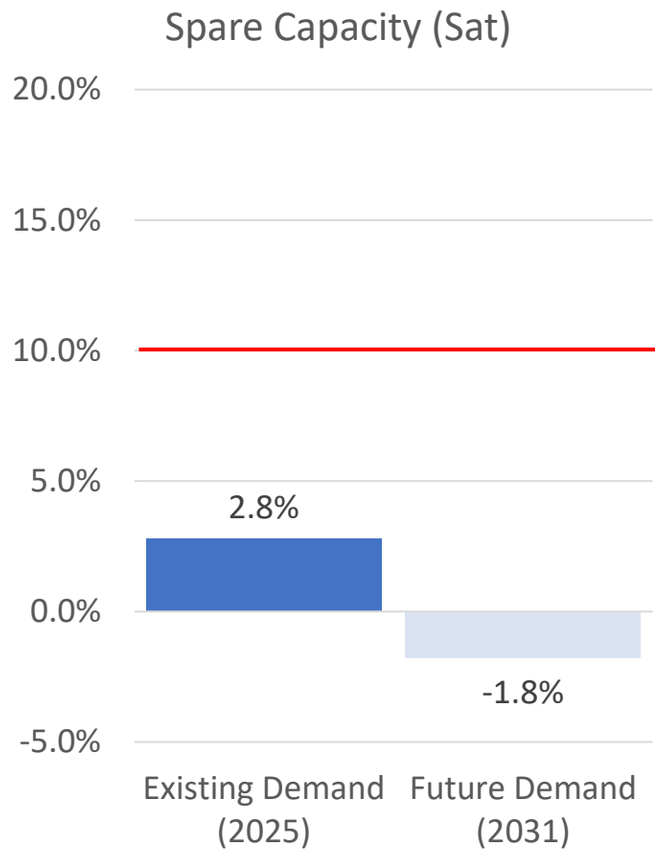
Parking Supply: 1,582 spaces



FINDINGS:
Existing supply will meet operational spare capacity (10%) with expected growth

Churchgate – No Food Store

Parking Supply: 1,363 spaces (-219 spaces)



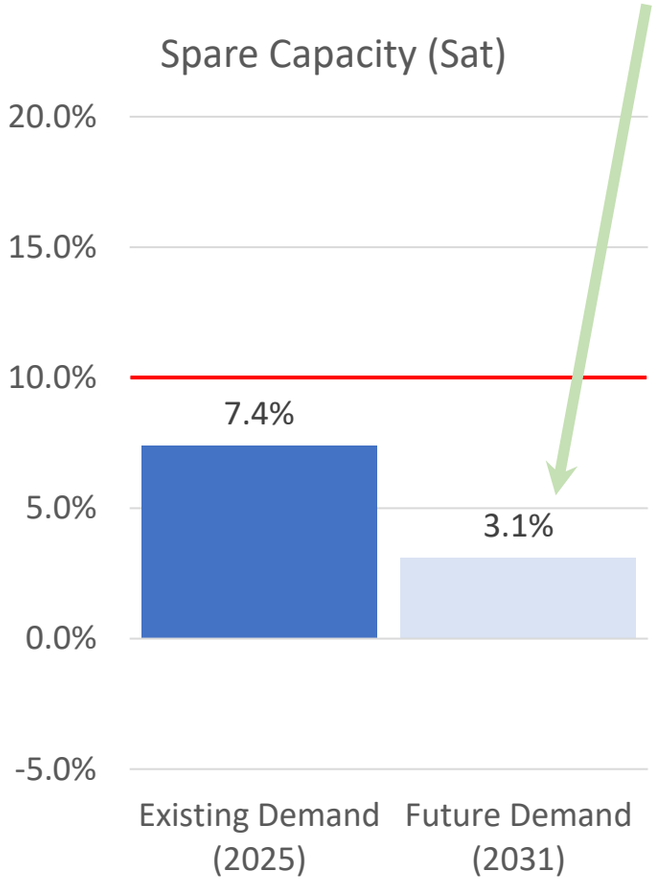
FINDINGS:
Requires an 'additional' 163 spaces to meet 10% spare capacity in 2031

NOT RECOMMENDED

Churchgate – With Food Store

Parking Supply: 1,431 spaces (-151 spaces)

This estimated spare capacity is only 3%, it should be around 10% at least



FINDINGS:
Requires an 'additional' 100 spaces to meet 10% spare capacity in 2031
ONLY
RECOMMENDED IF MEASURES IMPLEMENTED TO IMPROVE 'CAPACITY'

MARKIDES ASSOCIATES

The parking reduction for the Churchgate option with food store will only be a Saturday issue, the rest of the week should have sufficient spare capacity. On a Saturday, the system will need more spare capacity. How can this be created ?

1. Increase physical supply

- **Introduce Variable Message Signing (VMS) in the town and Lairage car park**
- **Park and Cycle**
- **Park and Walk**
- **Another deck at Woodside**

2. Reduce future demand

- **Encourage non-car travel**
- **Relocate long-stay parking** to park and walk/ride, on-street or other modes of travel
- **Shifting peak demand on a Saturday**

Increasing charges between 11:00am – 2:00pm, and reducing outside of these times – *but not expected to have much scope for this*

No single measure is likely to provide all of the solution – needs a combination.

Reducing overall levels of travel by car is the longer–term aim of the council – this focuses on healthy and active modes of travel and improved walking, cycling facilities and bus/rail services.

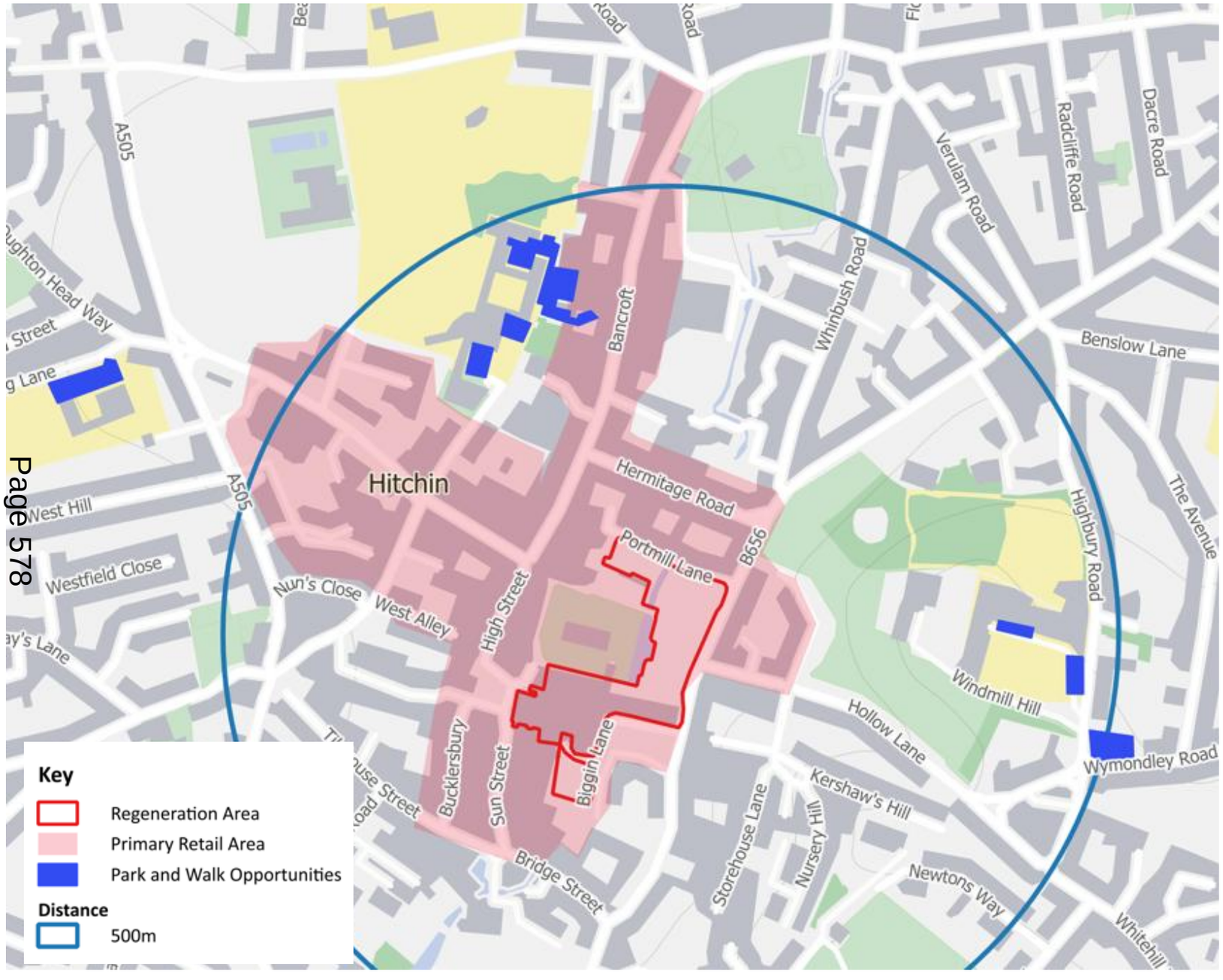
For most residents of Hitchin itself, the evidence is that car use to the town centre is relatively low (14% of consultation respondents) and that some 81% walk while others use the bus or train. This can and should be encouraged even more, but there will still be some Hitchin residents who will want to come by car due to e.g. disability or carrying bulky items and food shopping. However there is some scope for change in car demand from Hitchin itself as the Council implements sustainable travel improvements.

For residents outside of Hitchin, walking and cycling is much more difficult due to distances - bus and rail services do offer an alternative for some, and there are plans to improve these.

KEY POINTS

There remain opportunities to encourage mode shift away from the car for journeys to Hitchin town centre, this is already a popular option for Hitchin residents but the potential is more limited for residents from other areas.

There is probably some opportunity to change long-stay user behaviour, particularly of workers.



Some opportunities:

- Railway station (352 spaces)
- Bancroft Medical Centre (40 spaces)
- Hitchin Boys School (20 spaces)
- NHS Bedford Road (40 spaces)
- Hitchin Girls School (20-30 spaces)
- Wymondley Sports (15 spaces)

Some issues to consider for each

- Landowner views
- Financial viability
- Whether planning consent needed
- Payment mechanisms
- Use on a Saturday
- But use of current private car parks shows that small car parks can be viable.

Opportunity to use private car parks not in use on the weekend
e.g. Bancroft Medical Centre (+ 40 spaces), offices and nearby schools (some may be in use for Saturday sports events). Car park owner receives additional income, but would need to spend some money on payments etc. There could be co-ordination with NHC parking.

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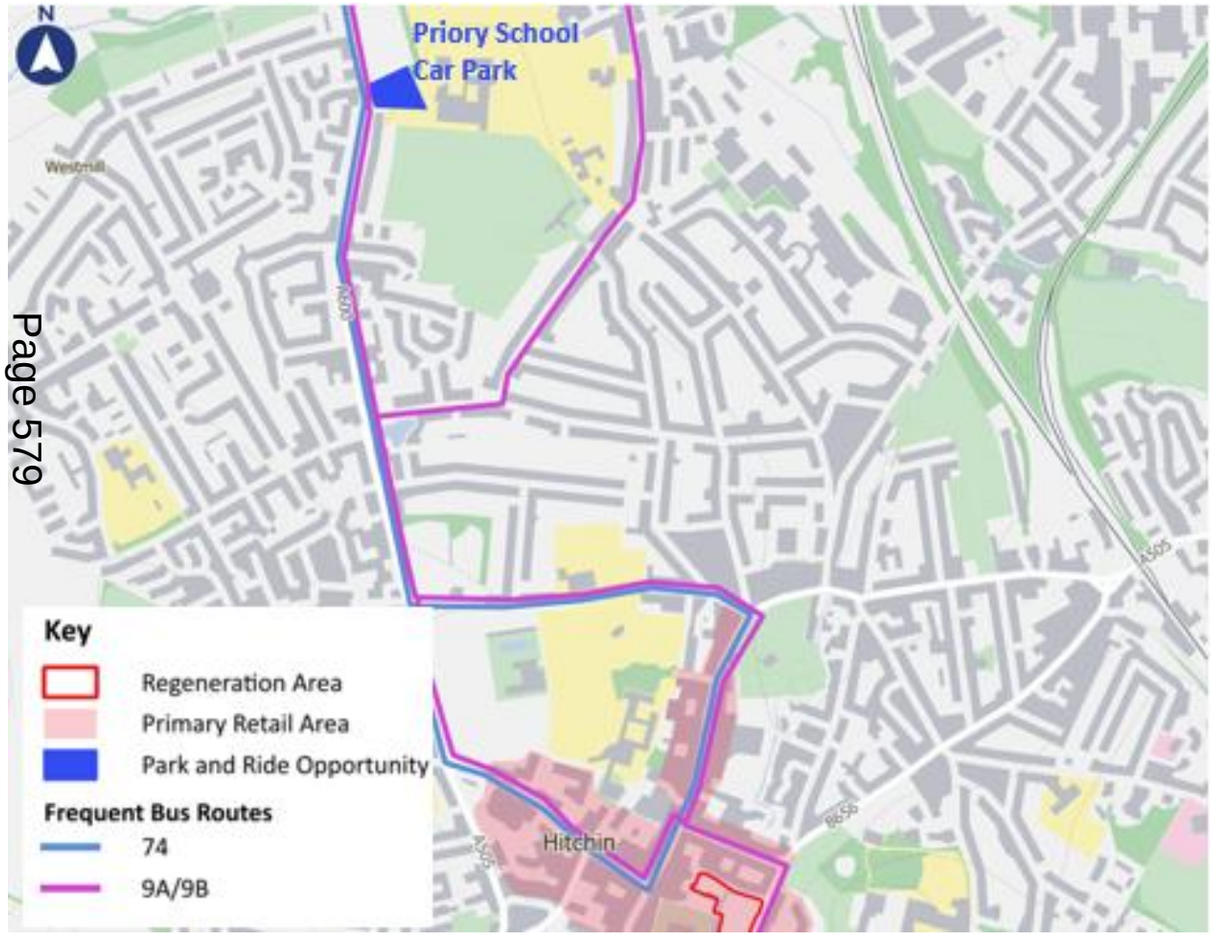
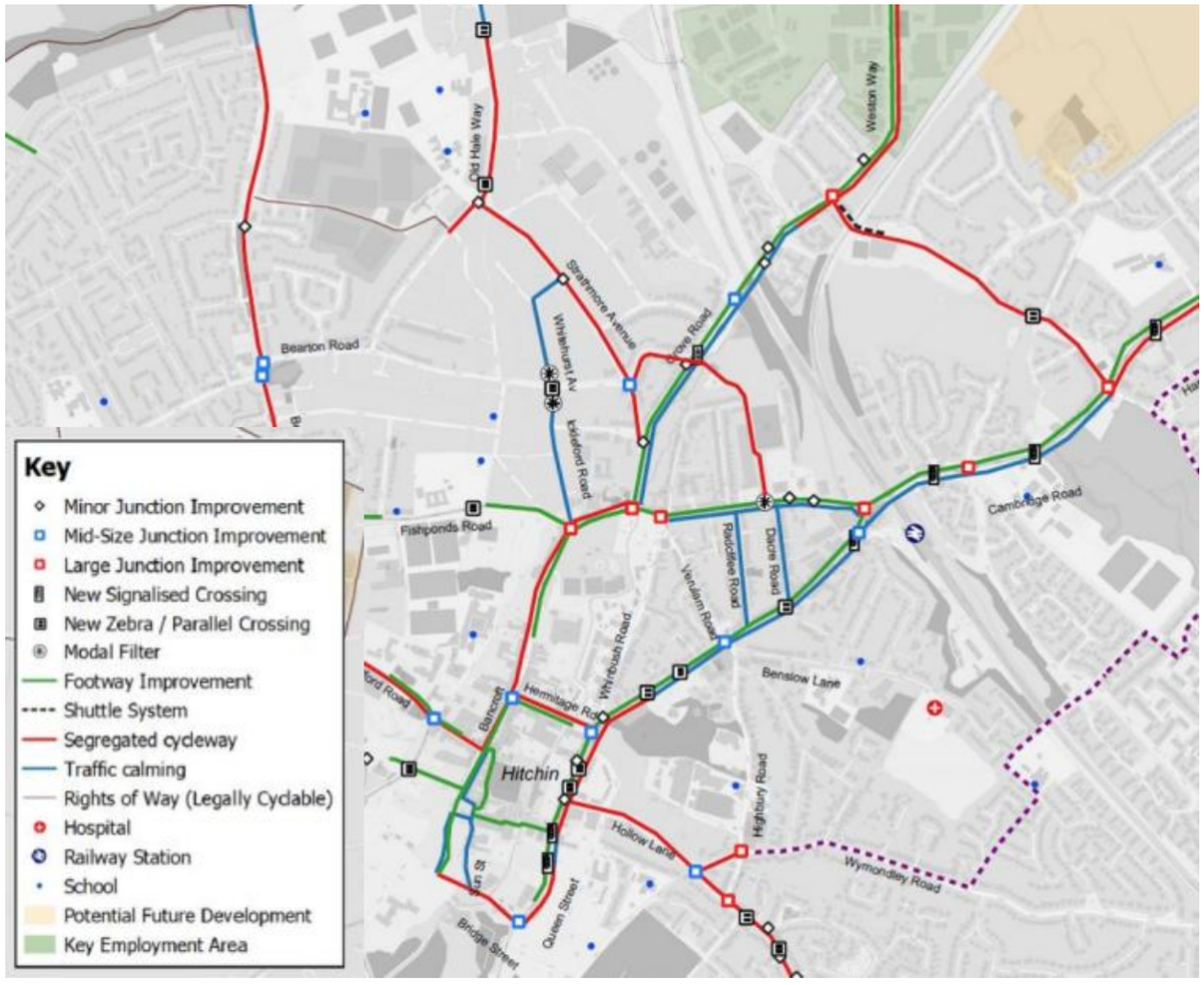
Potential Park & Ride



Opportunity to use any available car parks (or on-street) with existing buses

Potential– Park and Cycle



Tie in potential parking outside of the town centre to the future LCWIP cycle network, encouraging travel by cycle into the town centre

Adding deck to Woodside Car Park

Page 580

Conclusion: High cost that is possibly disproportionate given the potential car parking impact is a Saturday issue only (£1.5M) but if there is expected to be increasing growth in Hitchin, is a medium-term option

Variable Message Signing

Conclusion: Will improve operation and efficiency of car parking system. Necessary to help visitors when parking demand is high on a Saturday and at other peak times of year. (Cost circa £150k-£200k install + operation)

Also necessary to install a VMS system in the Lairage car park to show visitors how many spaces are free on lower levels. (circa £30-£50k = operation)

What will the effect of the Churchgate option with food store be?

- Loss of 151 prime spaces
- There are an existing 265 spare spaces, so in theory there will be adequate capacity at present
- **BUT – when growth in demand and the need for 10% spare capacity is considered , the car parking system will be under high pressure, and the conclusion is that effective capacity needs to be improved by circa 100 'spaces'.**

This can be achieved by
(1) reducing future Saturday parking demand
(2) improving future Saturday parking supply
in practice probably a combination of both.

The parking issue will be on a Saturday only, so any solutions need to be proportionate.
NHC policy is to encourage active and healthy travel and public transport, so this must be part of the solution and building more parking capacity might work against this.
But Churchgate would bring new residents into the town and enhance the retail offer – it will help to revitalise the town centre.

An initial economic assessment of the 'worst case' costs and benefits of 'losing ' 100 Saturday car visitors against the likely benefits of the Churchgate scheme with new residents and better retail/market facilities, indicates that the overall impact to the centre would probably be neutral.

MARKIDES ASSOCIATES

Suggested measures to be investigated and implemented , in order of priority:

- Introduce bay monitoring signing in Lairage Car Park (circa £30-£50k)
- Improve enforcement of long-stay parking in short-stay car parks
- Investigate potential for shifting some Saturday demand to weekdays or off-peak
- Investigate promotional measures and physical changes to encourage walking into the town centre
- Consider reducing all long-stay parking on Saturdays in NHC car parks
- Investigate costs/feasibility of town-wide variable signing scheme
- Discuss with landowners' options to permit some public parking on Saturdays (park and walk, cycle and walk) including Network Rail (possible Christmas trial on a Saturday with shuttle bus to station?)
- Review likely outcome of measures and monitor parking demand
- Should these measures not be likely to deliver approximately 100 spaces ‘capacity’ consider potential for Woodside additional deck

Other Considerations

- Include in Churchgate project any required mitigation such as VMS and potentially costs of use of private car parks
- 36% of existing parking supply are private car parks – monitor any changes to them, and possibly consider planning controls. Should this provision be controlled differently or removed, there will be much higher changes to parking supply

Churchgate Centre, Hitchin
Community Space Provision

Contents
Community Space Provision

01 Existing Community and Leisure Space

02 Opportunities

03 A Dedicated New Community Space
Basic
Standard
Premium
Summary

04 Co-located with a Covered Market Space
The Concept
Case Studies

05 Example Layouts
New Dedicated Facility
Co-Located with a Covered Market

06 Summary

Purpose of this document

This document sets out the scope, approach, and deliverables for the provision of community space within the Churchgate Regeneration Zone. Its purpose is to guide the design process by identifying opportunities and constraints, assessing existing provision in Hitchin Town Centre, and testing options for community and leisure space provision in the Churchgate Regeneration Zone.

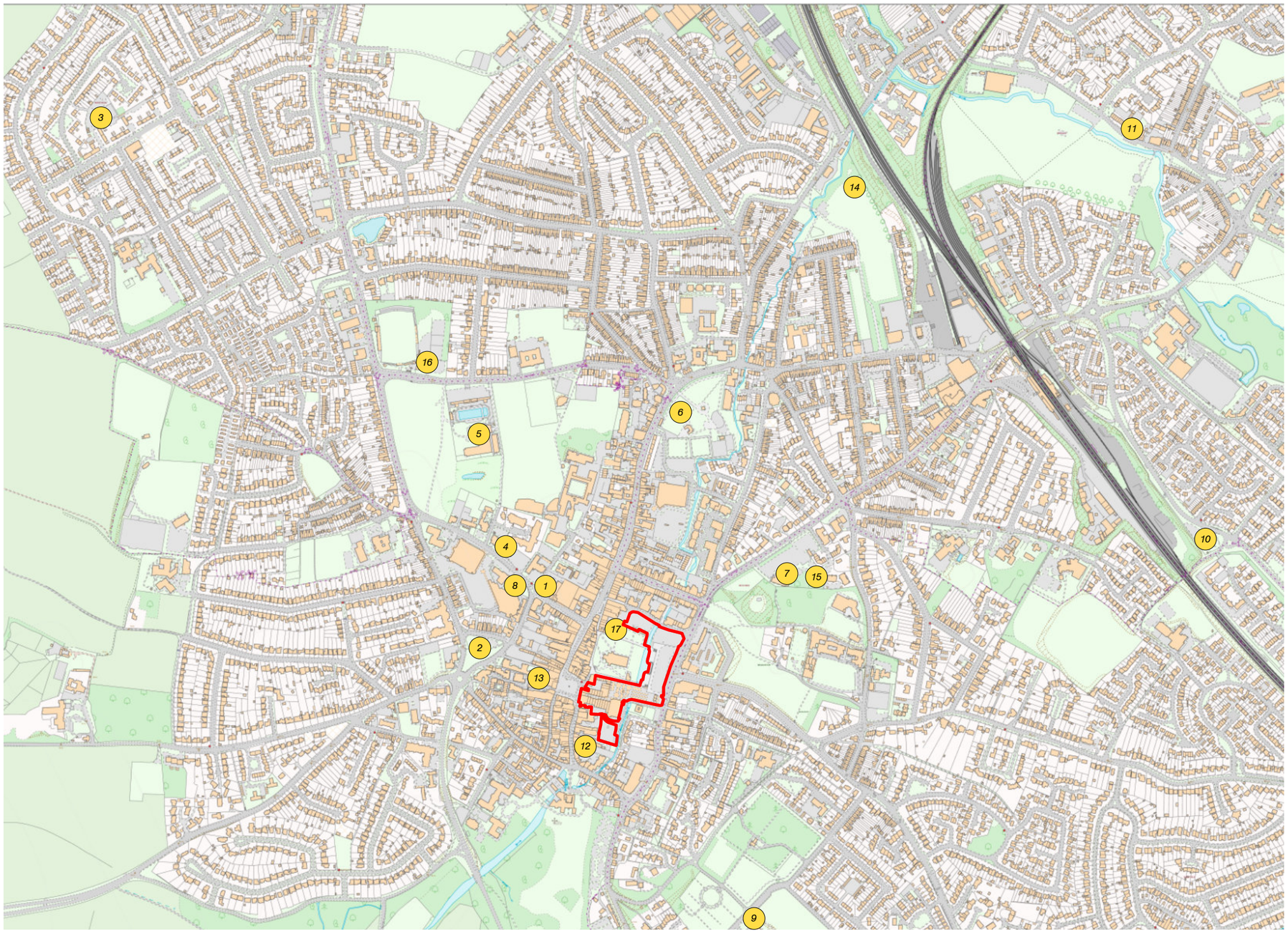
The document provides a framework for exploring ‘Basic, Standard, and Premium’ levels of provision, supported by area schedules, precedent imagery, and design narratives. It is intended to support engagement with stakeholders, inform cost planning, and establish a clear direction for the next stage of the regeneration project.

This document is set in the context of work done to date, which has been summarised in the Summary Report, June 2025.

Existing Community & Leisure Space

Existing Community Space

The network of community spaces in Hitchin spans the civic core, with the Town Hall, North Hertfordshire Museum, Library, and Market forming a cluster in and around the historic centre, complemented by neighbourhood-level community centres, faith halls, and open spaces in surrounding residential areas.



- Site Boundary
- 1 Hitchin Town Hall & North Hertfordshire Museum
- 2 Hitchin Library
- 3 Westmill Community Centre
- 4 Christchurch
- 5 Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre (50 m Lido)
- 6 Bancroft Recreation Ground
- 7 Queen Mother Theatre
- 8 Hitchin Quaker Meeting House
- 9 St Johns Community Centre
- 10 St Michaels Mount Community Centre
- 11 Walsworth Community Centre
- 12 Signing Rooms
- 13 Shared Space Hitchin
- 14 Triangle Community Garden
- 15 Hitchin Thespians
- 16 The Canary Club
- 17 Church House

1:1000 0m 5m 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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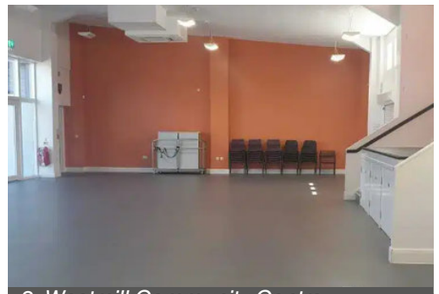
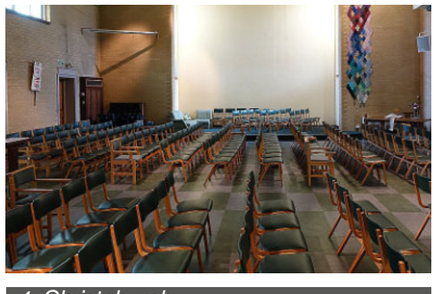
Existing Community Space

Together, these facilities offer a broad mix of formal and informal gathering points, from large-scale event halls to small meeting rooms and flexible outdoor spaces

1. Hitchin Town Hall

2. Hitchin Library


3. Westmill Community Centre


4. Christchurch

5. Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre

6. Bancroft Recreation Ground

7. Queen Mother Theatre

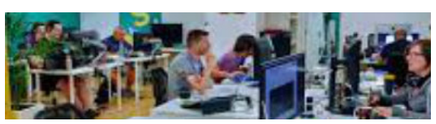
8. Hitchin Quaker Meeting House

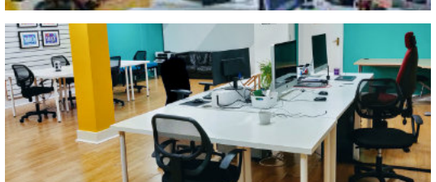
9. St Johns Community Centre

10. St Michaels Mount Community

11. Walsworth Community Centre

12. Signing Rooms




13. Shared Space Hitchin

14. Triangle Community Garden

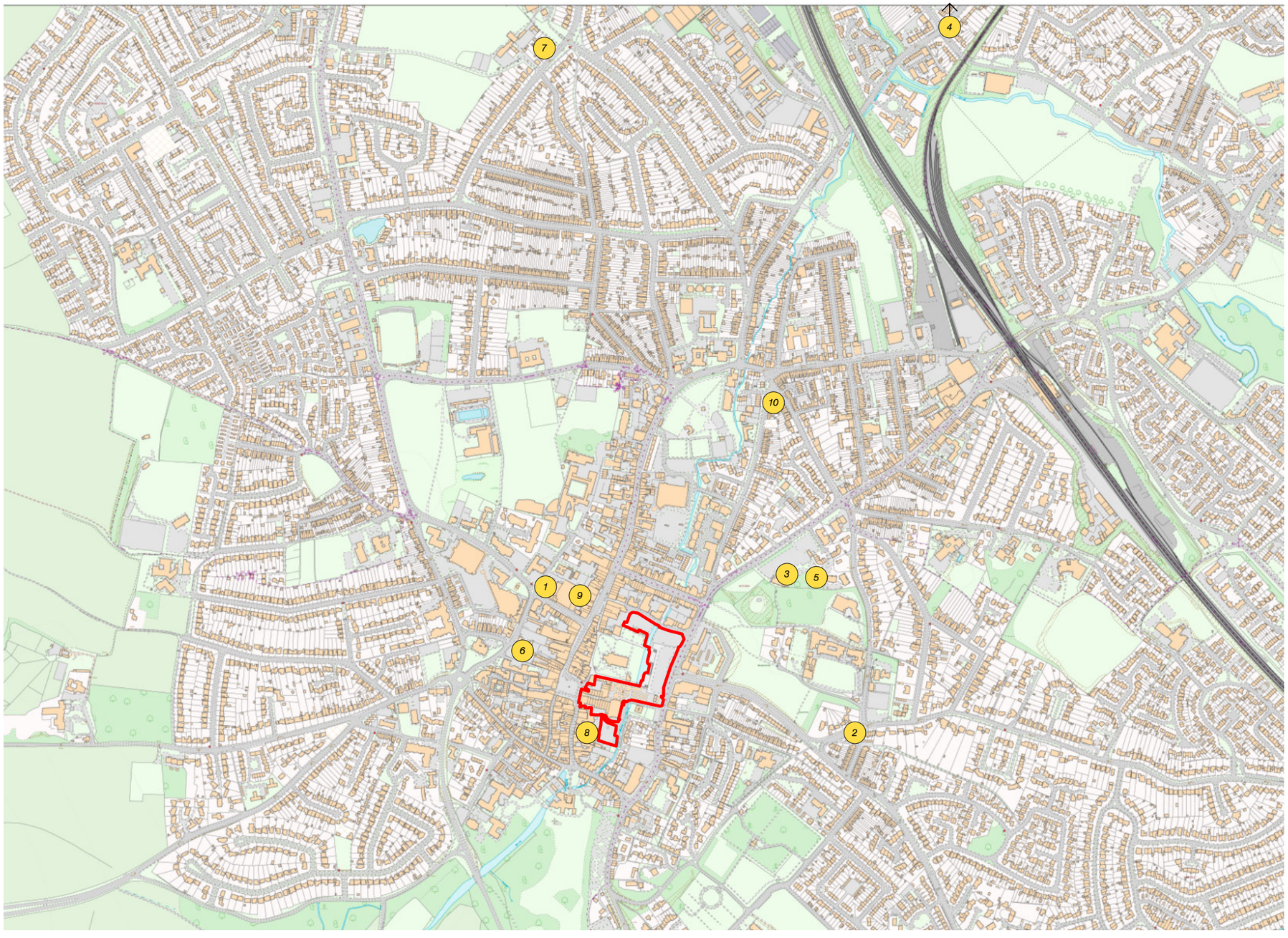
15. Hitchin Thespians

16. The Canary Club

1. Hitchin Town Hall & North Hertfordshire Museum
2. Hitchin Library
3. Westmill Community Centre
4. Christchurch
5. Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre (50 m Lido)
6. Bancroft Recreation Ground
7. Queen Mother Theatre
8. Hitchin Quaker Meeting House
9. St Johns Community Centre
10. St Michaels Mount Community Centre
11. Walsworth Community Centre
12. Signing Rooms
13. Shared Space Hitchin
14. Triangle Community Garden
15. Hitchin Thespians
16. The Canary Club
17. Church House

Existing Leisure Space

The network of leisure and cultural spaces in Hitchin is concentrated within and around the historic town centre, with venues such as the North Hertfordshire Museum, British Schools Museum, Queen Mother Theatre, Factory Playhouse, Market Theatre, and Make Space Studio Gallery providing a varied cultural offer. These are supported by smaller creative studios, galleries, and performance spaces that contribute to the town's distinctive arts identity.

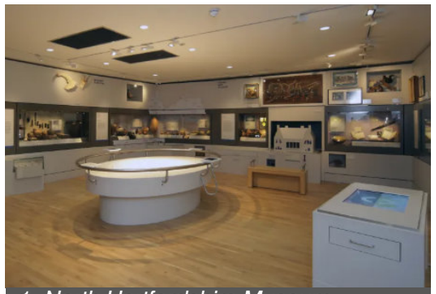


- Site Boundary
- 1 North Hertfordshire Museum
- 2 British Schools Museum
- 3 Queen Mother Theatre
- 4 The Factory Playhouse Theatre
- 5 Hitchin Thespians
- 6 Make Space Creative Workshops Studio Gallery
- 7 Haleshott House of Art
- 8 Market Theatre
- 9 Little Rascals Indoor Play & Party Centre
- 10 Club 85

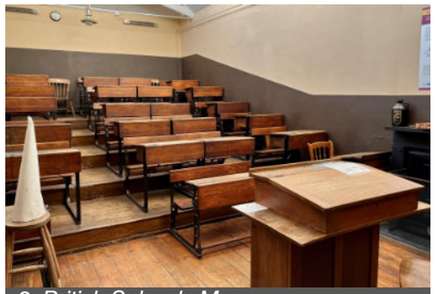
1:1000 0m 5m 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m

Existing Leisure Space

Together, they form a compact and accessible cluster of destinations that cater to a wide range of interests, from visual arts and heritage to live theatre and hands-on workshops.



1. North Hertfordshire Museum



2. British Schools Museum

7. Haleshott House of Art

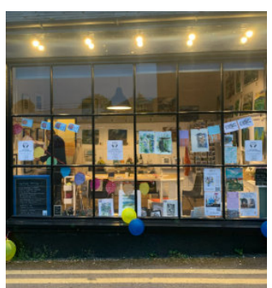
3. Queen Mother Theatre

4. The Factory Playhouse Theatre

8. Market Theatre

9. Little Rascals Indoor Play & Party

5. Hitchin Thespians



6. Make Space Creative Workshops Studio Gallery

10. Club 85 (Live Performance Venue)

1. North Hertfordshire Museum
2. British Schools Museum
3. Queen Mother Theatre
4. The Factory Playhouse Theatre
5. Hitchin Thespians
6. Make Space Creative Workshops Studio Gallery
7. Haleshott House of Art
8. Market Theatre
9. Little Rascals Indoor Play & Party Centre
10. Club 85 (Live Performance Venue)

Opportunities

Community Space Opportunities

The first option for a community space is the refurbishment of the existing community space in the town.

The second option is a new facility as a dedicated independent building ***or*** co-located within the market offer.

There are basic, standard or premium variations of the second option which are explored throughout this document.

This page illustrates an overview of the potential options as a brief for the different sized spaces, which are detailed over the following pages.

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

Work with local community groups to refurbish an existing community space in the town. Explore different funding opportunities.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building

Co-located within the market offer

‘Basic’	‘Standard’	‘Premium’	‘Basic’	‘Standard’	‘Premium’

Basic Provision

Core, small-scale offer:

Community hall and cafe, to facilitate:
- Drop-in events, eg:
  - Coffee mornings,
  - Toddler groups,
  - Book clubs.
- Arts & crafts workshops, eg:
  - Painting,
  - Sewing,
  - Knitting circles.
- Community hire, eg:
  - Parties,
  - Local group meetings.
- Occasional performances, eg:
  - Small-scale concerts,
  - Talks,
  - Open mic nights

Standard Provision

Builds on basic with more flexibility, technical capacity, and added potential childcare facilities.

All basic activities, plus:
- Larger community hall, with:
  - Rigging for lighting & AV
  - Blackout blinds/projection for cinema screenings
  - Storage for stack-able / half-decent seating
- Additional room(s) for classes
  - Dance,
  - Art,
  - IT,
  - Language.
- Expanded cafe, to serve:
  - Cooking classes
  - Community meals.
- Performances & rehearsals
  - Comedy nights,
  - Live music,
  - Theatre workshops)
- Youth & after-school activities
- Well-being & health
  - Meditation,
  - Counselling,
  - Support groups.
- Community markets & fairs
- Small nursery provision

Premium Provision

Builds on standard, offering a larger cultural, leisure, and childcare hub.

All standard activities, plus:
- Large main hall with potential for raked seating, with:
  - Professional AV, sound, and lighting rig,
  - Enabling shows,
- Enabled for a cinema setup, with:
  - Projection booth,
  - Acoustics,
  - Proper seating.
- Multiple smaller studios
- Dance/rehearsal studio with sprung floor & mirrors
- Music rooms with soundproofing
- Wellness suite
  - Small gym, with therapy / treatment rooms)
- Expanded food & drink offer
  - Cafe-bar,
  - Catering kitchen,
  - Evening events)
- Conference & co-working facilities
  - Meeting rooms,
  - Hot-desking.
- Outdoor space
  - Gardens,
  - Terraces,
  - Outdoor fitness/events.
- Exhibition gallery space
  - Art shows,
  - Touring exhibitions.
- Community theatre programming
- Ticketed plays and festivals

A Dedicated New Community Space

Basic Provision
Standard Provision
Premium Provision
Summary

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Basic Provision

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

A compact, adaptable single-room facility with storage, simple kitchenette or tea point, and flexible layout. Ideal for neighbourhood groups, workshops, or pop-up events.

There is potential space for a cinema equipped with a pull-down screen or portable projector, blackout curtains, and simple lighting for casual screenings.

Precedent: Garway Community Centre
(Herefordshire) A Passivhaus-design village hall with cafe, meeting rooms, and low-energy tech.

The Garway Community Centre in Herefordshire, completed in 2018, is a Passivhaus-certified building designed to serve as a sustainable, multi-functional hub for the local community.

Basic Provision

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

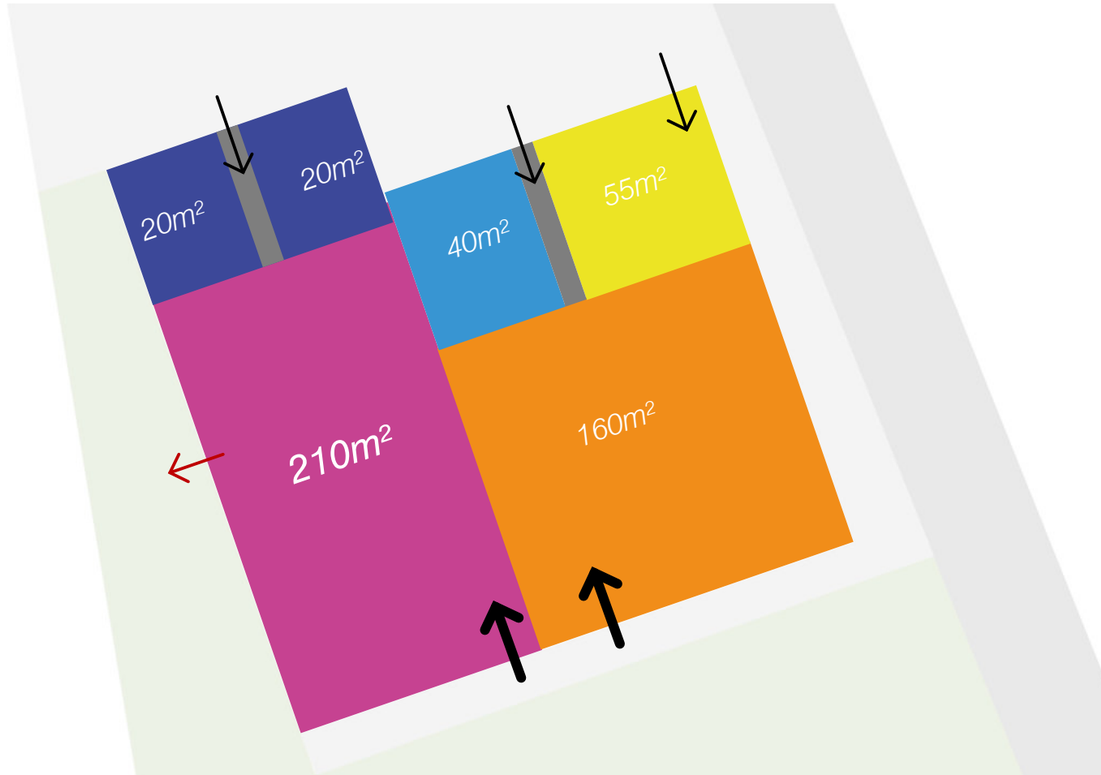
Basic Provision Brief
Size: 300-500 m²

A compact, adaptable single-room facility with storage, simple kitchenette or tea point, and flexible layout. Ideal for neighbourhood groups, workshops, or pop-up events.

There is potential space for a cinema equipped with a pull-down screen or portable projector, blackout curtains, and simple lighting for casual screenings.

Precedent: Garway Community Centre
(Herefordshire) A Passivhaus-design village hall with cafe, meeting rooms, and low-energy tech.

The Garway Community Centre in Herefordshire, completed in 2018, is a Passivhaus-certified building designed to serve as a sustainable, multi-functional hub for the local community.



Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table

Function	*Area (m²)*
Multi-functional Main Hall	*210*
WC	*40*
Cafe	*160*
Kitchen	*55*
Consultation & Treatment rooms	*40*
Circulation	*8*
Total	*513*

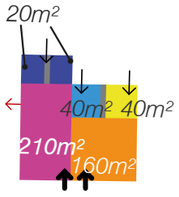
1:250 0m 1.25m 2.5m 5m 7.5m 10m 12.5m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

Basic Provision
On Site

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'



The site can accommodate the same room areas directly within the layout in Building A.

Ground Floor

1:1250 0m 6.25m 12.5m 25m 37.5m 50m 67.5m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table

Function	*Area (m²)*
Multi-functional Main Hall	*210*
WC	*40*
Cafe	*160*
Kitchen	*55*
Consultation & Treatment rooms	*40*
Circulation	*8*
Total	*513*

Standard Provision

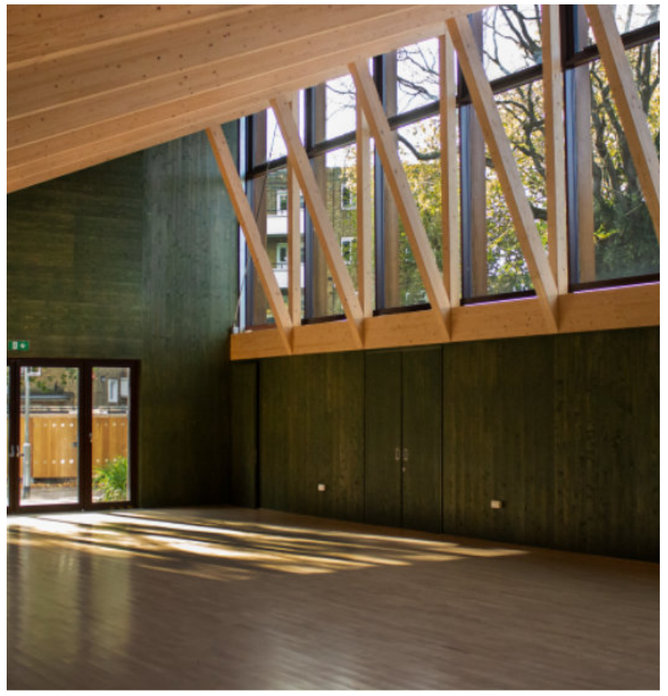
1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

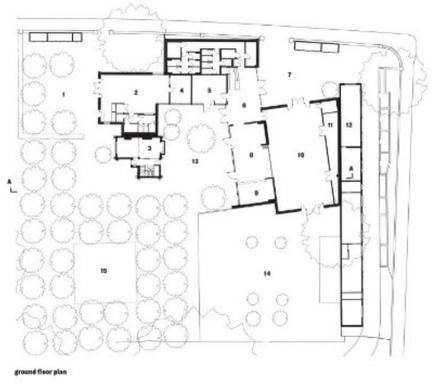
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	**'Standard'**	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

A larger hall with a break-out meeting room, modern kitchenette/servery, accessible WCs, AV setup, and some outdoor spill-out. Suitable for classes, small performances, community film nights, or talks. It should incorporate a portable stage or screen, provision to hang a lighting rig, and flexible seating with decent storage provision.

Precedent: Sands End Arts and Community Centre (London) Designed by Mæ, this modern facility features a cluster of large rooms around a courtyard, sliding walls to create bigger event spaces, café, acoustic CLT timber interiors, and RIBA Stirling Prize shortlist recognition.





ground floor plan

Standard Provision

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

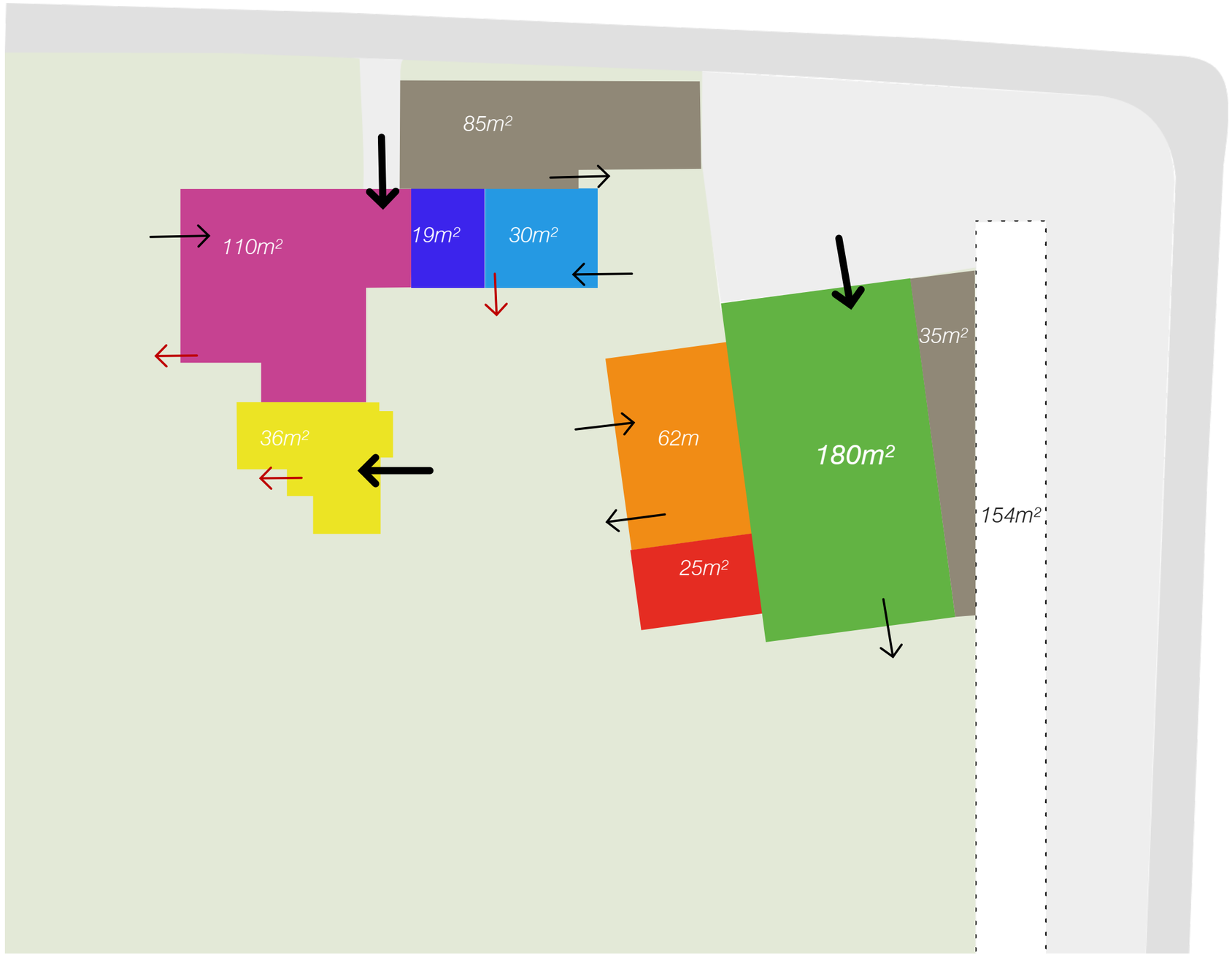
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	**'Standard'**	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

Standard Provision Brief
Size: 400 – 600 m²

A larger hall with a break-out meeting room, modern kitchenette/servery, accessible WCs, AV setup, and some outdoor spill-out. Suitable for classes, small performances, community film nights, or talks. It should incorporate a portable stage or screen, provision to hang a lighting rig, and flexible seating with decent storage provision.

Precedent: Sands End Arts and Community Centre (London) Designed by Mæ, this modern facility features a cluster of large rooms around a courtyard, sliding walls to create bigger event spaces, café, acoustic CLT timber interiors, and RIBA Stirling Prize shortlist recognition.



Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table

Function	*Area (m²)*
Multi-functional Main Hall	*180*
Common Room	*30*
The Lodge (Ground & First Floors)	*36*
Nursery	*110*
Nursery Office	*19*
Cafe	*62*
Cafe Kitchen	*25*
Storage/ WC/ Plant	*120*
Total	*582*
Existing Seed bank	*154*

1:250 0m 1.25m 2.5m 5m 7.5m 10m 12.5m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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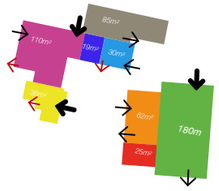
Standard Provision
On Site

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	**'Standard'**	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'



The site can accommodate the same room areas directly within the layout in Building A.

Ground Floor

1:1250 0m 6.25m 12.5m 25m 37.5m 50m 67.5m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table	
Function	*Area (m²)*
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Nursery	*110*
Nursery Office	*19*
Cafe	*62*
Cafe Kitchen	*25*
Storage/ WC/ Plant	*120*
Total	***582***
Existing Seed bank	*154*

Premium Provision

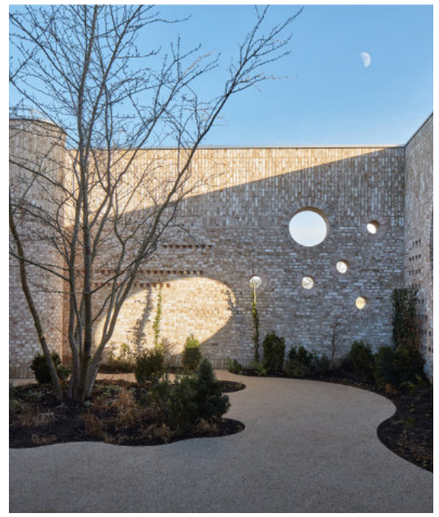
1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

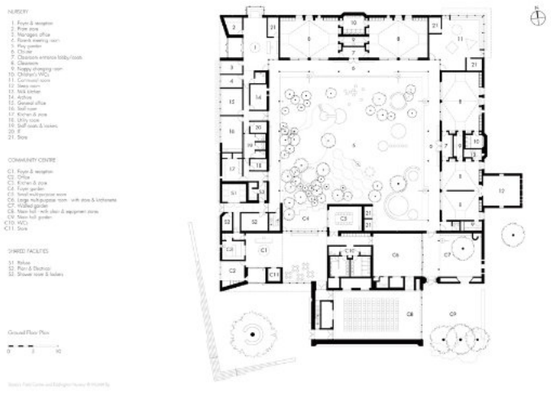
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	**'Premium'**	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

A high-quality community facility featuring a large, acoustically adaptable main hall, flexible meeting rooms, a modern kitchenette/servery, accessible WCs, and outdoor spill-out spaces. Suitable for a wide range of events including performances, screenings, talks, and community gatherings. The design incorporates provision for a portable stage or screen, the ability to hang a lighting rig, and flexible seating arrangements with adequate storage.

Precedent: Storey's Field Centre
(Cambridge), Storey's Field Centre is a modern community hub designed by MUMA. Completed in 2018, the centre serves as the civic heart of the new community, offering a variety of spaces for cultural and social activities. The building features a 180-seat main hall with adjustable acoustics, two multi-purpose rooms, a nursery, and landscaped gardens. The design emphasises high-quality materials, natural ventilation, and a strong connection to the surrounding landscape





Premium Provision

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

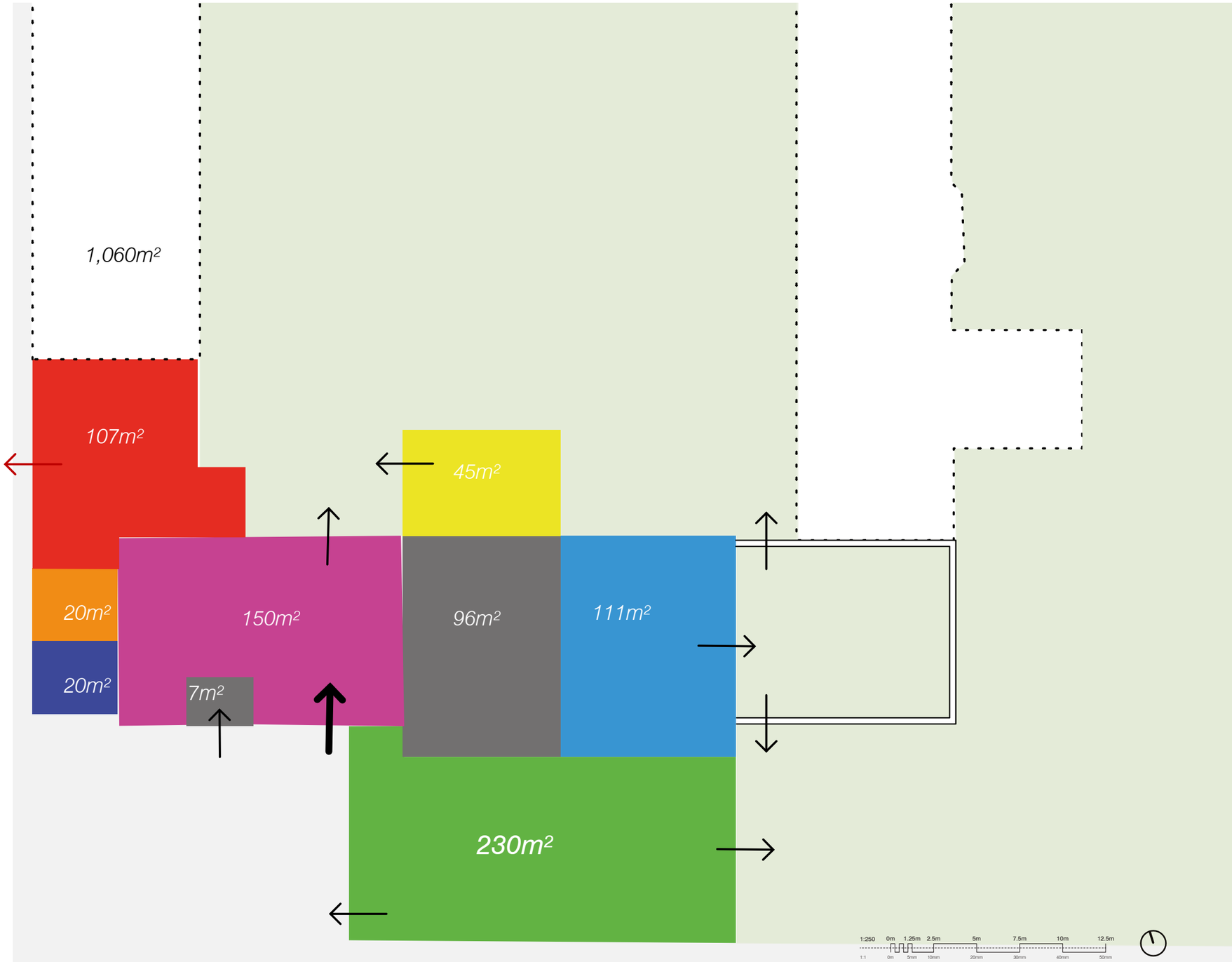
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

- Dedicated independent building: ‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | **‘Premium’**
- Co-located within the market offer: ‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | ‘Premium’

Premium Provision Brief
Size: 600 – 1000 m²

A high-quality community facility featuring a large, acoustically adaptable main hall, flexible meeting rooms, a modern kitchenette/servery, accessible WCs, and outdoor spill-out spaces. Suitable for a wide range of events including performances, screenings, talks, and community gatherings. The design incorporates provision for a portable stage or screen, the ability to hang a lighting rig, and flexible seating arrangements with adequate storage.

Precedent: Storey’s Field Centre
(Cambridge), Storey’s Field Centre is a modern community hub designed by MUMA. Completed in 2018, the centre serves as the civic heart of the new community, offering a variety of spaces for cultural and social activities. The building features a 180-seat main hall with adjustable acoustics, two multi-purpose rooms, a nursery, and landscaped gardens. The design emphasises high-quality materials, natural ventilation, and a strong connection to the surrounding landscape



Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table

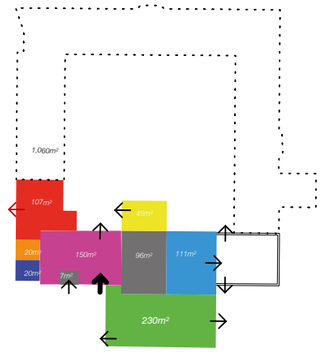
Function	*Area (m²)*
Main Hall	*230*
Multi-purpose Room 1	*111*
Multi-purpose Room 2	*45*
Foyer	*150*
WCs, storage, plant	*103*
Office	*20*
Kitchen	*20*
Shared spaces with nursery	*107*
Total	***786***
Nursery	*1,060*

Premium Provision
On Site

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	**'Premium'**	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'



The site can accommodate all of the 'main spaces' room areas directly within the layout in Building A.

Premium functions (Nursery, shared spaces with nursery and kitchen) can be accommodated within Building B.

160m² of nursery area is lost but could be placed on an upper level.

Ground Floor

1:1250 0m 6.25m 12.5m 25m 37.5m 50m 67.5m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

- *Main entrance*
- *Secondary entrance*
- *Fire exit*

Summary Table	
Function	***Area (m²)***
Main Hall	*230*
Multi-purpose Room 1	*111*
Multi-purpose Room 2	*45*
Foyer	*150*
WCs, storage, plant	*103*
Office	*20*
Kitchen	*20*
Shared spaces with nursery	*107*
Total	***786***
Nursery	*1,060*

Premium Provision
Larger Scale

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building: ‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | **‘Premium’**

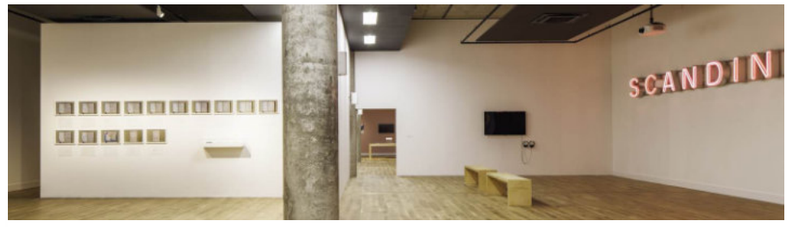
Co-located within the market offer: ‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | ‘Premium’

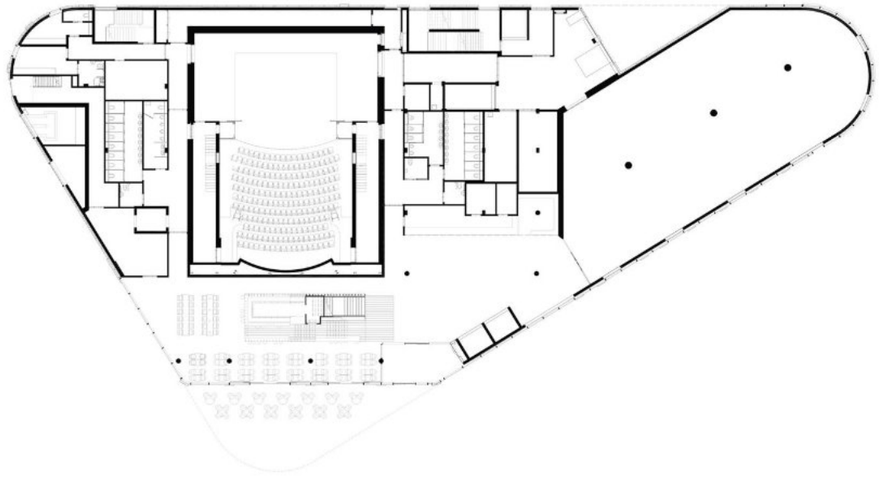
Standard Provision Brief
Size: 1000+ m²

A spacious, high-spec venue offering a main hall with stage, blackout capability, professional lighting and AV, several studios or breakout rooms, café or bar, rehearsal/co-working spaces, and strong indoor-outdoor connections. Fully equipped for theatre and cinema, with scope for raked seating, backstage areas, acoustic treatment, and technical performance infrastructure. Suitable for a wide range of cultural, community, and commercial uses, from live theatre and music to screenings, talks, and creative workshops.

Precedent: HOME
(Manchester) Opened in 2015, this £25 million arts centre combines theatre, film, and visual arts under one roof. It features a 500-seat theatre, 150-seat studio, five dedicated cinemas, gallery space, rehearsal rooms, café bar, and vibrant community programming. Designed as a flexible cultural hub, it demonstrates how professional performance infrastructure can sit alongside public social spaces to create an accessible, high-profile destination for arts and community life.

The total area is 6,500 m², with the main theatre measuring 700 m². Additional spaces include a studio theatre, gallery, cinemas, café/bar, and rehearsal/digital facilities. This is larger than what would be built on site and represents a more premium example of a high-spec cultural hub.





*Note: Building too large for comparative diagram.

Summary Table	
Function	*Area (m²)*
Main Theatre	***700***
Studio Theatre	*200*
Gallery Space	*500*
Cinemas	*1000*
Cafe/ Restaurant/ Bar	*700*
Rehearsal & Digital Facilities	*500*
Ancillary space	
(Foyer, circulation, Wcs, offices plant, storage)	*2,900*
Total	***6,500***

Summary
Key Findings

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.	2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:					
	Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
	‘Basic’	‘Standard’	‘Premium’	‘Basic’	‘Standard’	‘Premium’

Core Similarities in Design

A successful community space is built on a shared foundation. At its core sits a main hall of around 200 sqm, supported by essential elements such as WCs and plant, cafe or catering facilities, nursery or early years provision with potential for wider health functions, office and admin space, and circulation areas that double as foyers and informal social zones. What changes between a basic, standard, or premium centre is not the overall template, but the scale, the number of additional rooms, and the degree of flexibility.

Main Hall as the Anchor Space

All three schemes include a multi-functional main hall around 180–230 sqm, making it the central space for events and community use.

This size range is consistent, suggesting the hall is the baseline element that defines the building type.

Support Facilities (WC / storage / plant)

Every version includes dedicated WC and plant/storage areas.

The proportion varies (40 sqm in basic, 120 sqm in standard, 103 sqm in premium), but the principle of supporting the hall with necessary back-of-house space is constant.

Cafe Provision

Each design provides a cafe and/or kitchen element.

While areas differ, the café is always present as a key community/social feature.

Nursery / Early Years Space

Both the standard and premium options integrate a nursery function (110 sqm standard, 1,060 sqm premium).

Even the basic includes “consultation/treatment rooms” that hint at similar community health/early years provision on a smaller scale.

Administrative / Office Space

Each tier has some form of office/administrative area (basic: consultation/treatment rooms 40 sqm, standard: nursery office 19 sqm, premium: office 20 sqm).

Shows a baseline need for staff support and management space.

Circulation / Shared Space

All include circulation/foyer/shared areas for movement and informal gathering (basic: 8 sqm circulation, standard: common room 30 sqm + lodge 36 sqm, premium: 150 sqm foyer + 107 shared nursery space).

Scale increases with the level of provision, but the concept of shared/common space is consistent.

Summary
Key Findings

The shared DNA across basic, standard, and premium is:

- A main hall - 200 sqm as the anchor
- WCs and plant rooms
- Cafe/catering facilities
- Nursery/early years/community health functions
- Office/admin space
- Circulation/foyer/shared social space

The difference between tiers comes in the scale, number of additional rooms, and the level of flexibility provided, but the building “template” is the same.

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

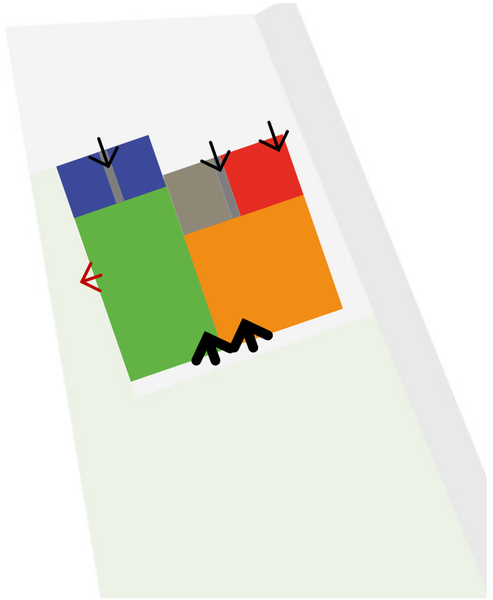
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

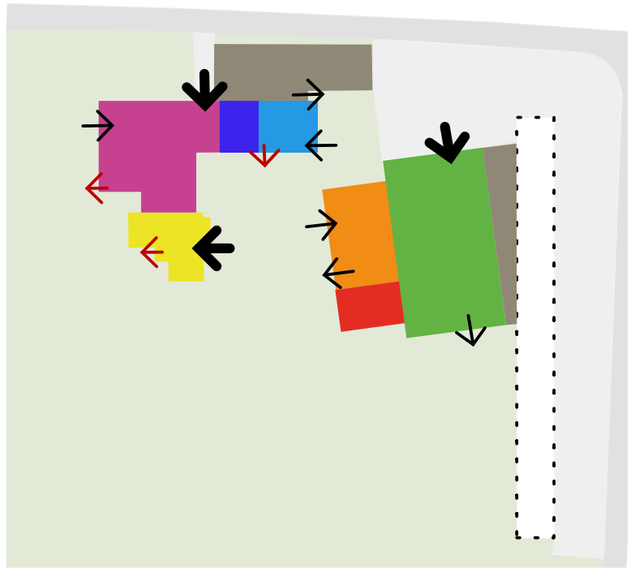
Dedicated independent building

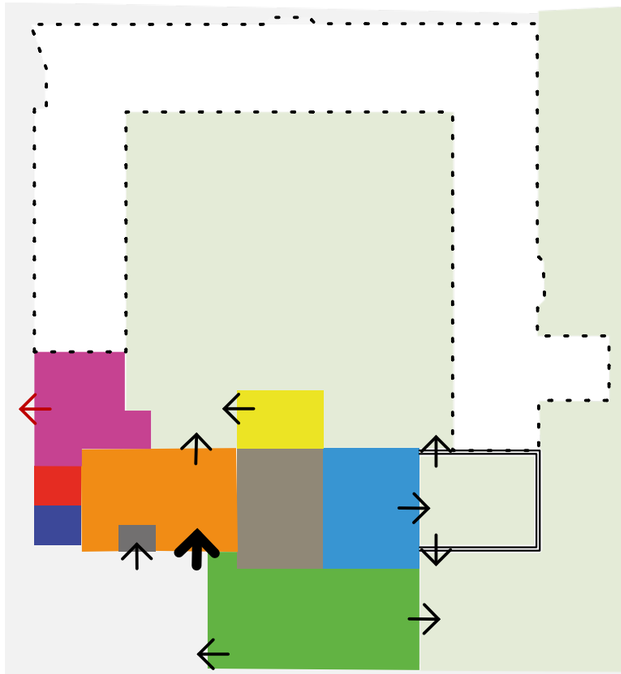
‘Basic’ | **‘Standard’** | **‘Premium’**

Co-located within the market offer

‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | ‘Premium’







Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table

Function	*Area (m²)*
Multi-functional Main Hall	*210*
WC	*40*
Cafe	*160*
Kitchen	*55*
Consultation & Treatment rooms	*40*
Circulation	*8*
Total	*513*

Summary Table

Function	*Area (m²)*
Multi-functional Main Hall	*180*
Common Room	*30*
The Lodge (Ground & First Floors)	*36*
Nursery	*110*
Nursery Office	*19*
Cafe	*62*
Cafe Kitchen	*25*
Storage/ WC/ Plant	*120*
Total	*582*
Existing Seed bank	*154*

Summary Table

Function	*Area (m²)*
Main Hall	*230*
Multi-purpose Room 1	*111*
Multi-purpose Room 2	*45*
Foyer	*150*
WCs, storage, plant	*103*
Office	*20*
Kitchen	*20*
Shared spaces with nursery	*107*
Total	*786*
Nursery	*1,060*

Summary
Key Findings

The shared DNA across basic, standard, and premium is:

- A main hall - 200 sqm as the anchor
- WCs and plant rooms
- Cafe/catering facilities
- Nursery/early years/community health functions
- Office/admin space
- Circulation/foyer/shared social space

The difference between tiers comes in the scale, number of additional rooms, and the level of flexibility provided, but the building “template” is the same.

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

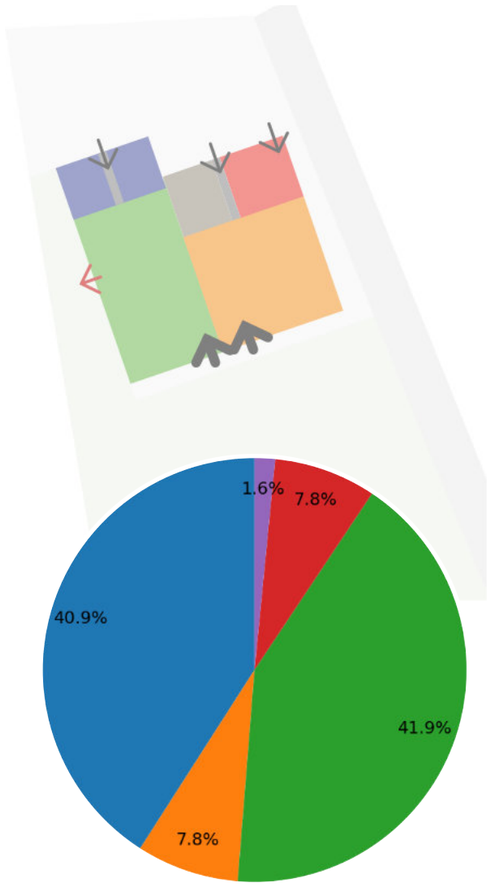
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building

‘Basic’ **‘Standard’** **‘Premium’**

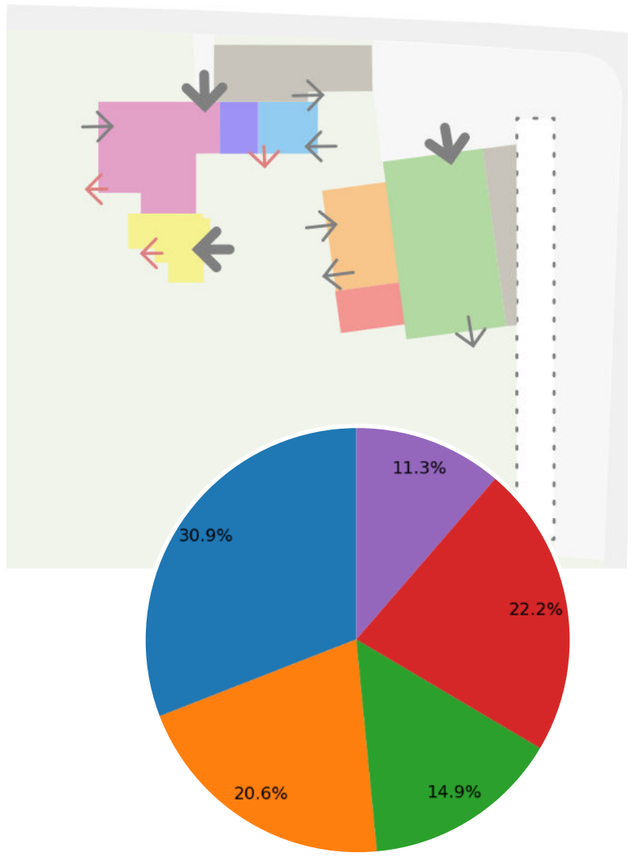
Co-located within the market offer

‘Basic’ ‘Standard’ ‘Premium’



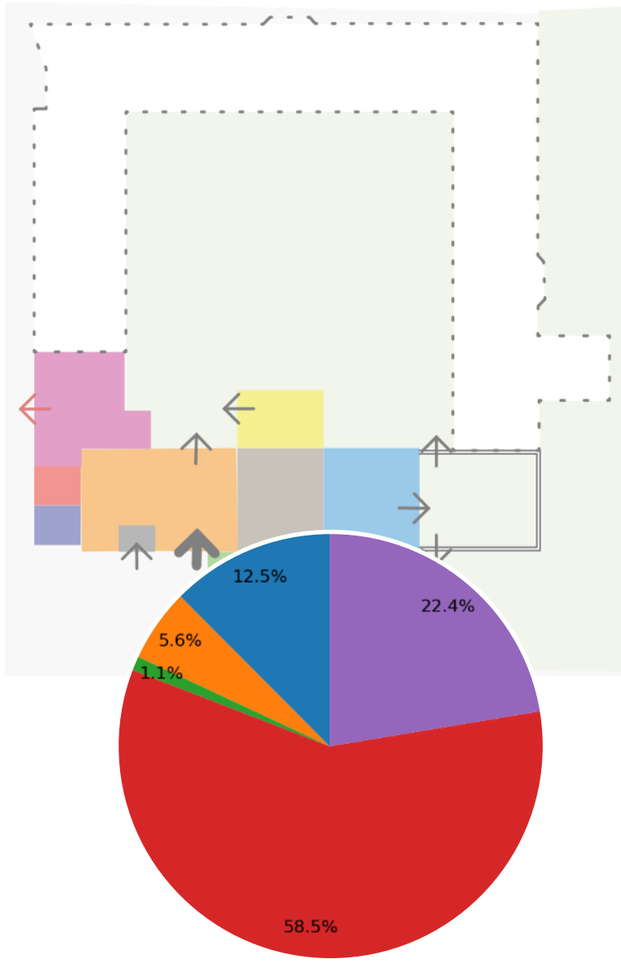
Basic Layout
(513sqm)

- Main Hall
- Circulation/ Shared
- Consultation/ Admin
- Cafe/ Kitchen
- WC/ Plant



Standard Layout
(582sqm + 154sqm existing seed bank)

- Main Hall
- Common/ Shared
- Nursery/ Admin
- Cafe/ Kitchen
- WC/ Plant



Premium Layout
(786sqm + 1060sqm nursery)

- Main Hall
- Foyer/ Shared
- Nursery/ Admin
- Cafe/ Kitchen
- WC/ Plant

Co-located with a Covered Market Space

Community–Market Space: What Can Happen?
Tŷ Pawb
Union Market
Cambridge Street Collective
Saluhall Market
Wolves Lane Centre
Other Examples

Market Hall Community Space

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building: ‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | ‘Premium’

Co-located within the market offer: ‘Basic’ | ‘Standard’ | ‘Premium’

This design combines a lively retail ground floor with flexible, community-focused upper levels. The ground floor features market stalls and independent shops for shopping and dining, while the upper floor offers adaptable spaces for local use - including a demo kitchen, dance and yoga studios, rehearsal rooms, and multi-use areas for art, craft, and events.

Community–Market Space: What Can Happen?

Markets & Food: everyday stalls, independent shops, rotating street food vendors, seasonal food festivals, and a cafe/bar as the social anchor.

Food Learning: teaching kitchen for cooking classes, food heritage workshops, pop-up restaurants, community meals, and nutrition programmes.

Arts & Culture: exhibitions, studios for artists and makers, dance/yoga classes in mirrored rooms, small theatre and music rehearsals, cinema nights, craft fairs, and cultural festivals led by local groups.

Community Life: public talks, resident meetings, well-being and fitness sessions, youth clubs, nursery or early years provision, senior programmes, and counselling or advice drop-ins.

Skills & Education: creative workshops (art, sewing, pottery), language or digital skills classes, gardening and sustainability workshops, and business training for traders.

Outdoor/Shared Spaces: community gardens, rooftop or terrace events, outdoor screenings, and gardening sessions linked to food growing and the market.

Social Support: food banks, community kitchens, affordable meals, health pop-ups, and spaces for volunteering.

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Market Hall Community Space

Tŷ Pawb

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

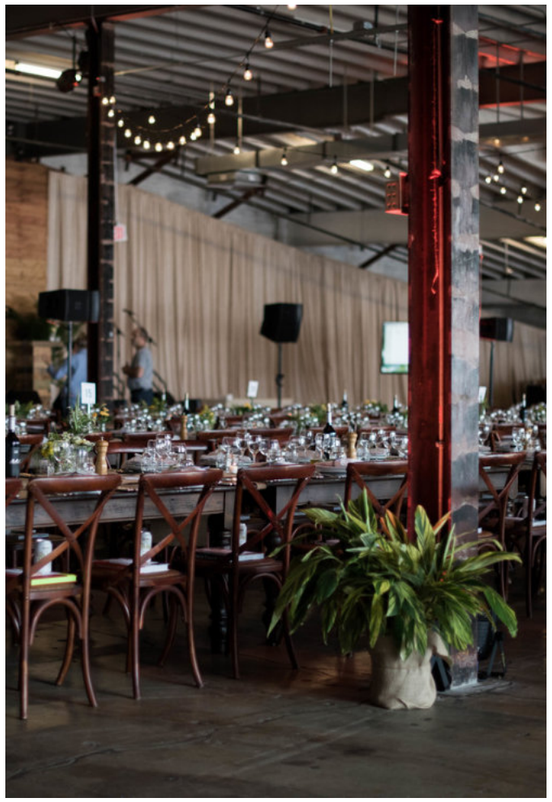
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

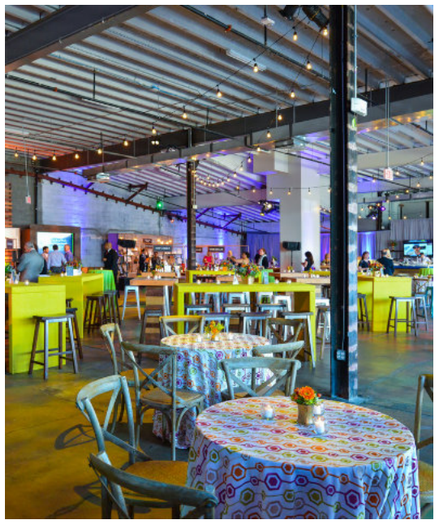
Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	**'Basic'**	**'Standard'**	**'Premium'**

A lively arts centre and market that combines food stalls with galleries, studios, performance spaces, meeting rooms, and a learning centre. It runs exhibitions, concerts, community radio, and multicultural events including art, music, and food led by local people.

Start on site: February 2017
Completion: April 2018
Gross internal floor area: 3,705m^2
(ground floor: 3,050m^2, First floor: 655m^2)

This shows how market activity can be combined with studios, offices, performance spaces, and nursery or learning functions.





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Market Hall Community Space

Tŷ Pawb

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

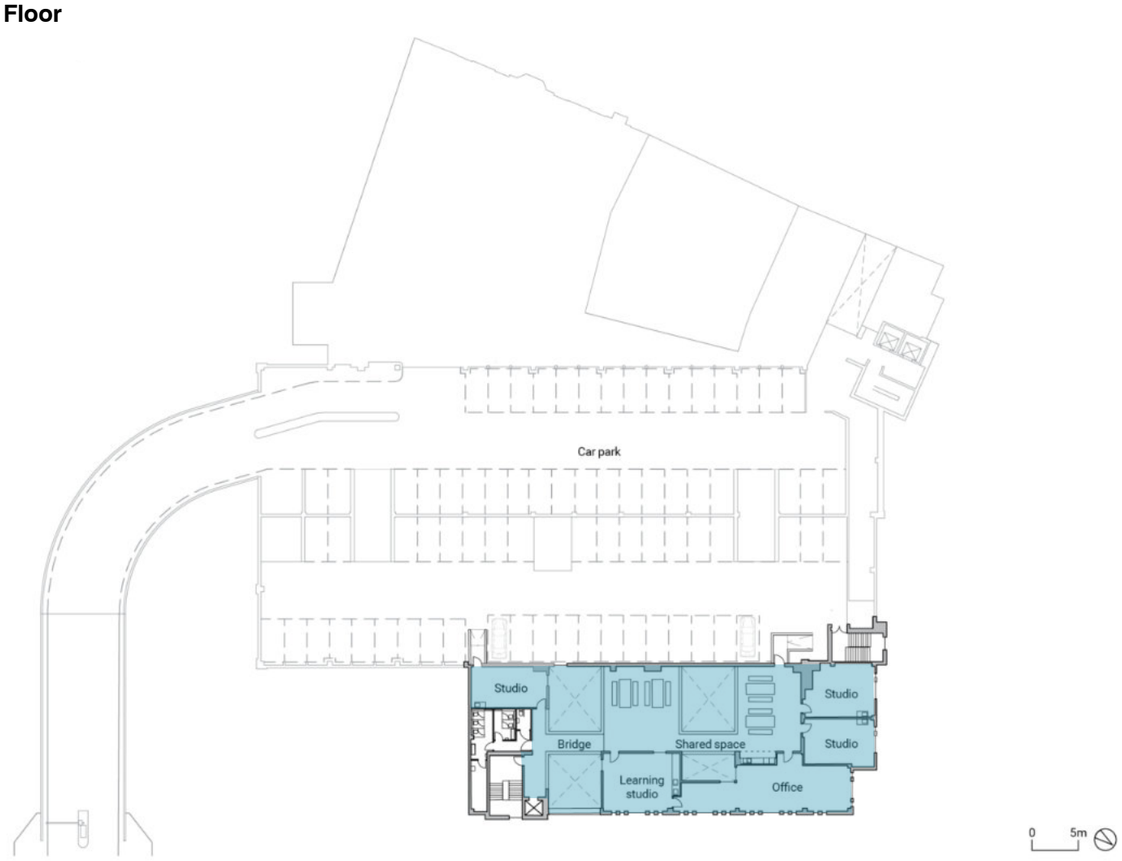
Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

The ground floor mixes food stalls with cultural/ community uses, while the upper floor provides space for studios, meeting rooms, and education. Although larger, it is a useful reference for how commercial, creative, and social spaces can work together.

- Market/ food hall
- Gallery/ performance
- Studio/ shared-space/ Office

Ground Floor

First Floor



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Market Hall Community Space

Union Market

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

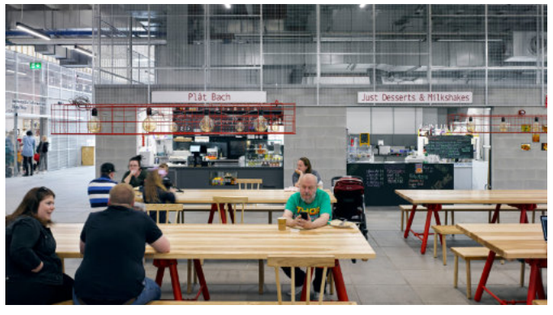
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	**'Basic'**	**'Standard'**	**'Premium'**

A modern food hall with vendors, shared seating, and event spaces. It often hosts cultural and community events, though some highlight the need to keep it accessible to the original neighbourhood.

Start on site: 2007
Completion: 2012
Ground Floor Market Hall floor area:
1,858m^2 *(40+ vendors)*
Upper Floor Dock 5 event space floor area:
1,115m^2
Total floor area:
2,973m^2
Does not include external terraces or ancillary areas

Union Market, with its Dock 5 event space, combines a lively ground floor market with a flexible upper level community space, showing how commercial, cultural, and social uses can coexist in one scheme.



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Market Hall Community Space

Union Market

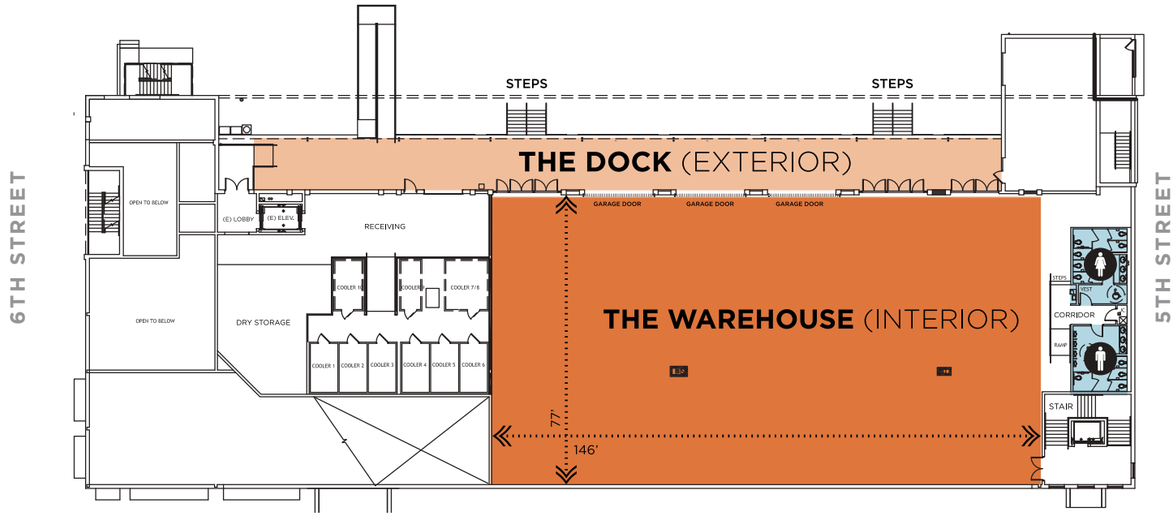
1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	**'Basic'**	**'Standard'**	**'Premium'**

Ground Floor: vibrant market with food stalls, independent vendors, and communal dining, serving as the core commercial and social hub.

First Floor (Dock 5): flexible event and community space for performances, workshops, exhibitions, and gatherings, complementing the market below.



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Market Hall Community Space
Cambridge Street

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

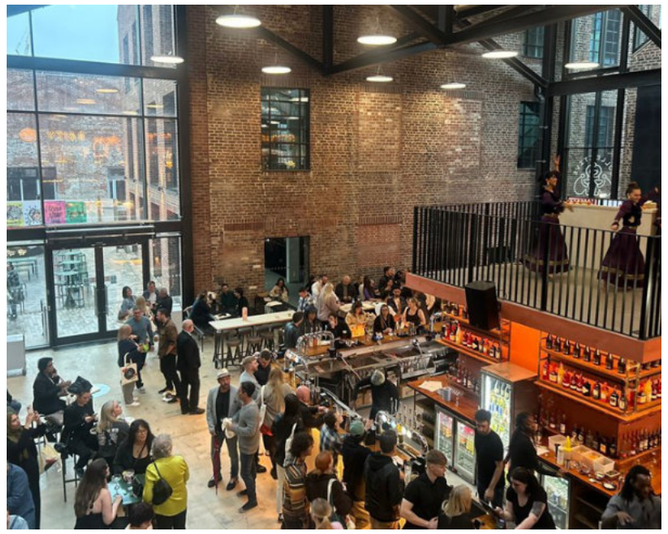
Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

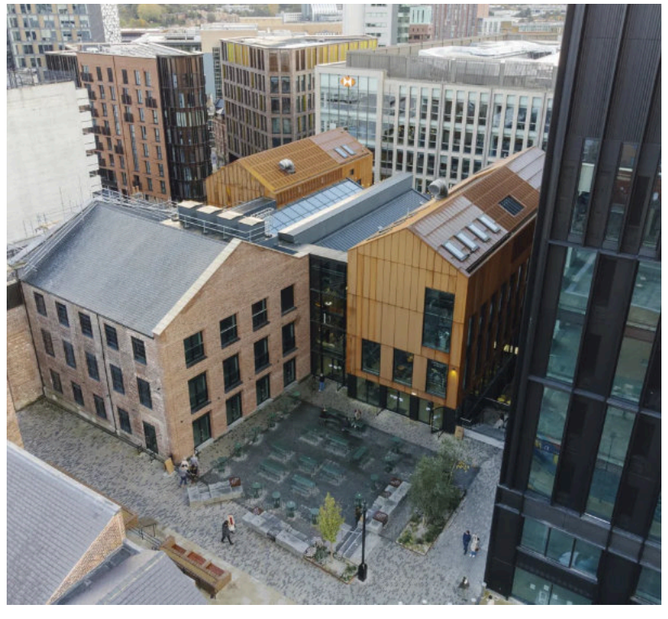
The Cambridge Street Collective was converted from the existing structure of the former Cambridge Street Market and The Apollo building in 2023.

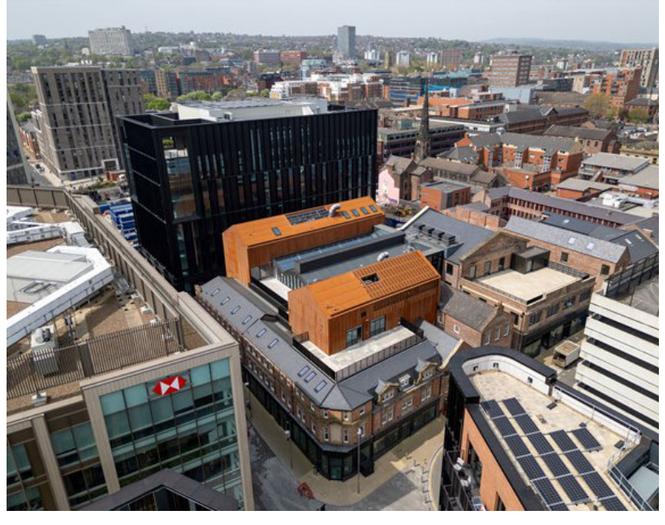
It is a vibrant market and food hall with over 20 vendors, bars, and dining spaces, combined with community-focused facilities such as a cookery school, rooftop terraces, and event spaces. It hosts live music, family events, and monthly markets, blending commercial and social activity in one venue.

Start on site: July 2023
Completion: May 2024
Gross internal floor area: 2,500m^2

Cambridge Street Collective is relevant to our scheme because it combines stalls with community functions, and Leonard Design have worked on the project. While it focuses on food vendors rather than pop-up markets, the activities require similar flexible spaces.







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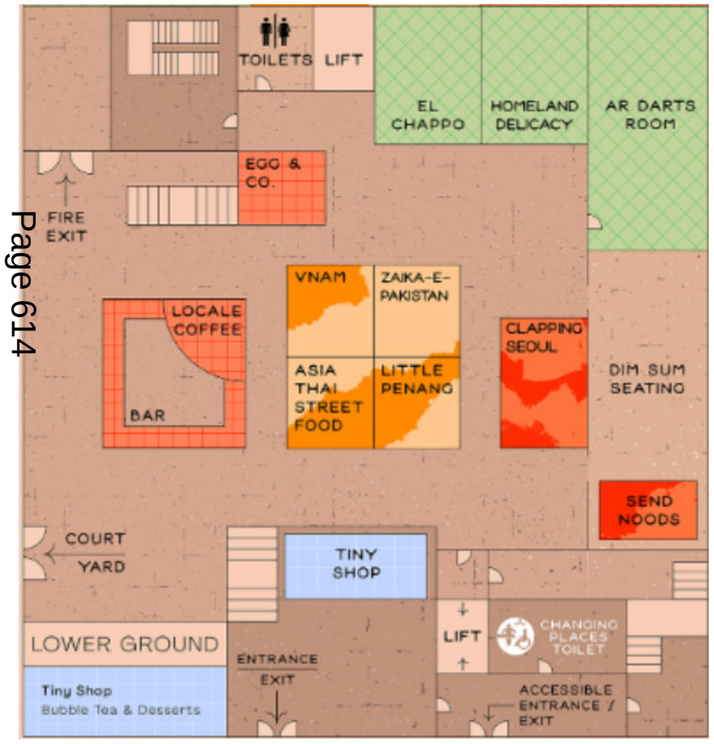
Market Hall Community Space
Cambridge Street

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

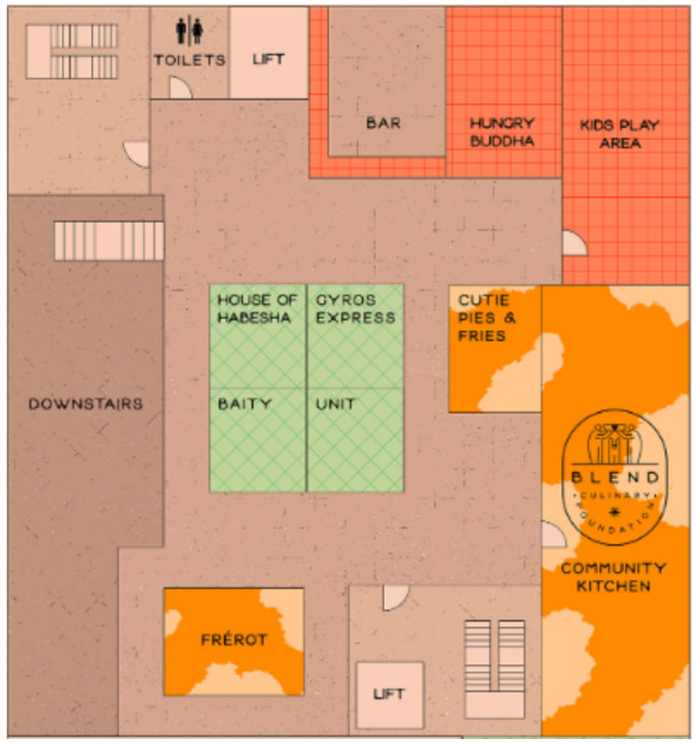
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

Ground Floor: food hall with over 20 vendors, bars, and communal dining; core market and social hub.



First Floor: extension of ground floor and community-focused spaces including a cookery school and flexible event spaces, hosts live music, family events, and monthly markets.



Second Floor / Rooftop: terraces, bar, and private dining areas

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Hitchin Town Centre

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Market Hall Community Space

Saluhall Market

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

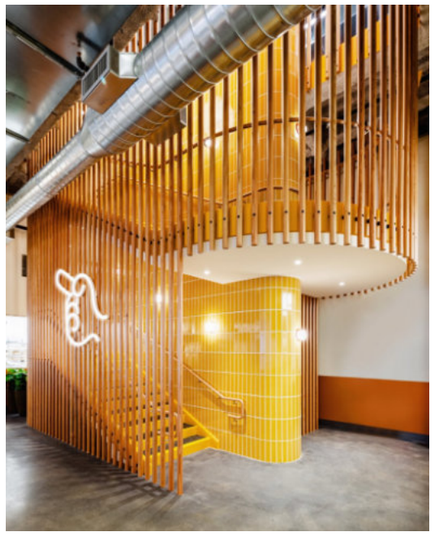
2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

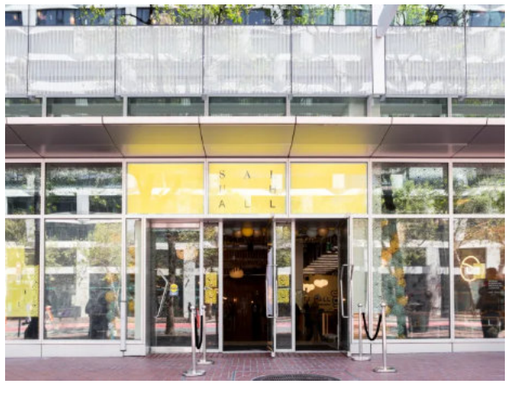
Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'

A Scandinavian-style food hall with a Cookery Skola where visitors can join cooking classes in a well-equipped teaching kitchen above the main market.

Start on site: 2022
Completion: April 11 2024
Gross internal floor area: 2,500m^2

While it is a food hall instead of a traditional market, it is relevant to our scheme because it demonstrates the need for flexible spaces to accommodate multiple vendors and community activities. Its upper-floor cooking school shows how community-focused functions can be integrated alongside commercial functions, requiring similar spatial arrangements to a pop-up market and event space.





Market Hall Community Space

Wolves Lane Centre

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building: 'Basic' | 'Standard' | 'Premium'

Co-located within the market offer: 'Basic' | 'Standard' | 'Premium'

Not a traditional market but a community space with a café, shared kitchen, garden, classroom, and hall used for food markets, music events, and gardening workshops.

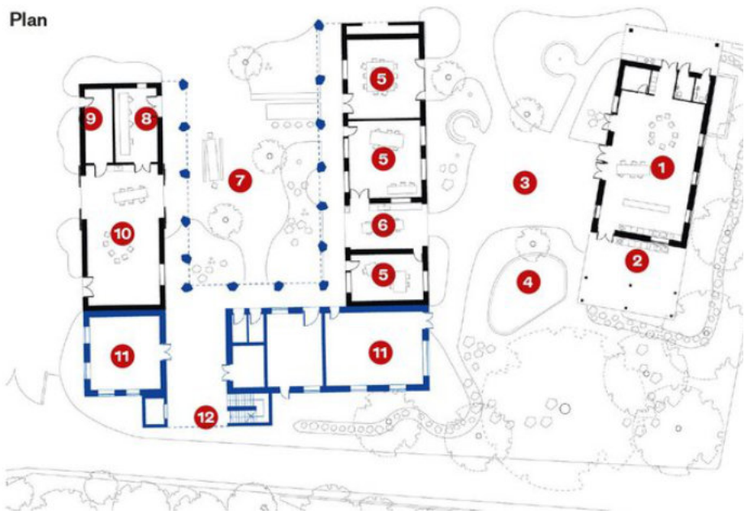
Start on site: Early 2023
Completion: June 2025
Gross internal floor area: 470m²
Land area: 3.5 acres (and growing)

A smaller-scale UK project that combines food growing, education, and community uses. Its strong focus on community involvement and flexible shared spaces makes it highly relevant to our scheme, showing how food, learning, and social activities can be integrated in a local setting.

This precedent differs from the others as its main focus is community use, with food growing, workshops, and education at its core. Market activity is secondary, supporting rather than leading the programme.

1 Community hall
2 Deck
3 Events yard
4 Irrigation pond
5 Office/classroom
6 Outdoor kitchen
7 Working yard
8 Workshop
9 Cold store
10 Warehouse
11 Office/classroom (phase 2)
12 Stair to second floor (phase 2)

Plan



Market Hall Community Space
Other Examples

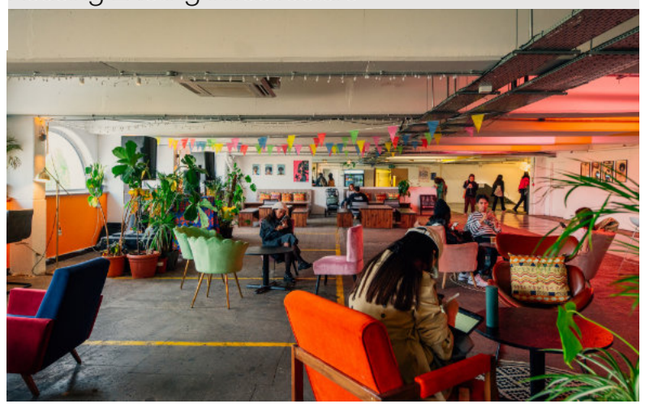
1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building			Co-located within the market offer		
'Basic'	'Standard'	'Premium'	**'Basic'**	**'Standard'**	**'Premium'**

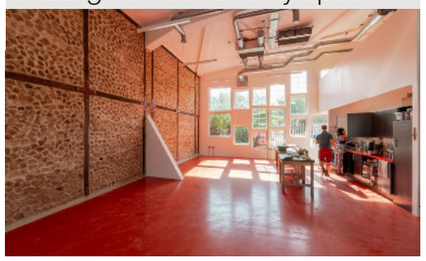
Revitalised Indoor Market

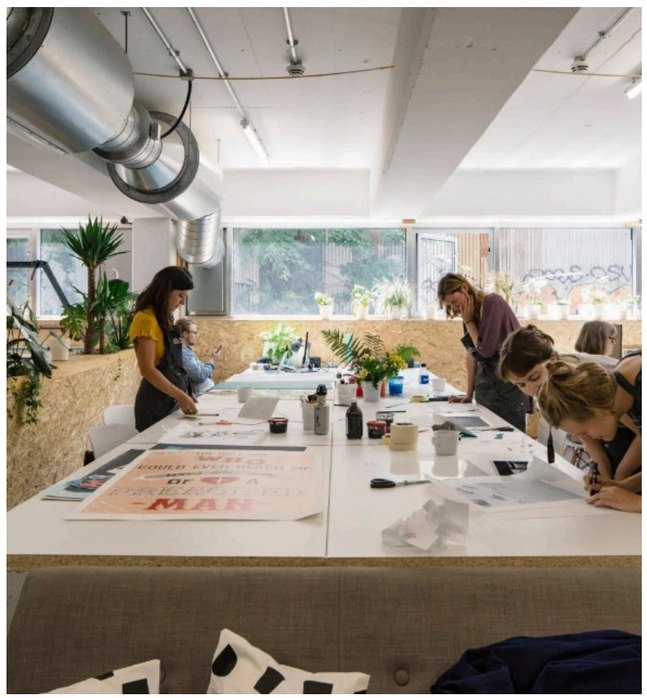
Reusing Existing Infrastructure

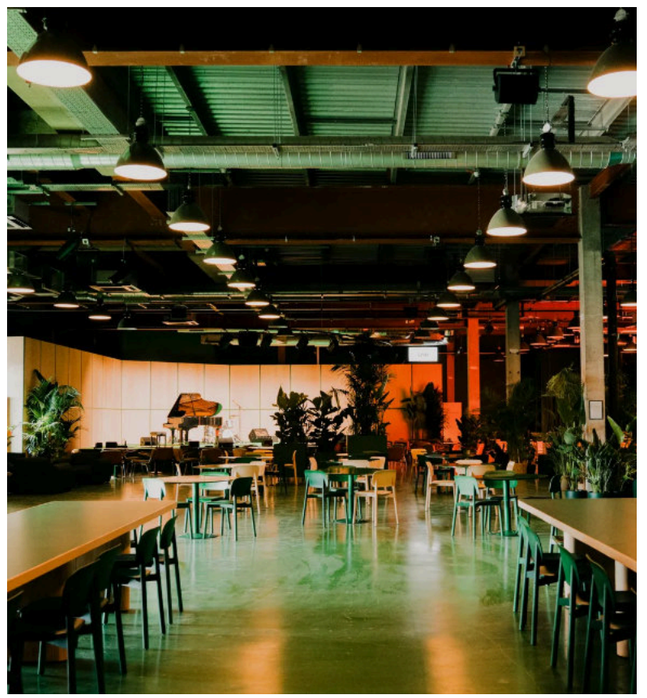


Reusing areas of Shopping Centres

Creating New Community Space







Example Layouts

Existing
Dedicated Facility Layout
First Floor Market Layout

Example Layout
Dedicated Facility

The community space could be located in the block adjacent to Churchyard Walk. With the community space on a first floor with a community cafe & kitchen addressing the public square.

The rest of the building can be used for commercial purposes, with the community cafe hub occupying the lowest footfall area.

Ground Floor
A potential ground floor could comprise of:
- Community cafe hub, facing onto the new public square, saving the commercial offers for the highest footfall areas,
- Kitchen to support the cafe operation,
- WC's,
- Servicing route,
- Storage,
- Central stair & lift up to the community hall spaces.

First Floor
A potential first floor could comprise of:
- Community hall spaces, with windows overlooking the public realm,
- Storage space.

Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table
Function
- *Main Hal*
- *Multi-purpose Room 1*
- *Multi-purpose Room 2*
- *Cafe*
- *Kitchen*
- *WC*
- *Storage/BOH*
- *Consultation-type rooms*
- *Shared Workspace*
- *Circulation*
- *Other Class E Uses*

1:1000 0m 5m 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m

1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

Example Layout
First Floor of Market

Ground floor market with community hub located on the first floor.

Shown here is the premium option with three dedicated community halls plus a community kitchen which can be used for classes, events and functions.
The rest of the building can be used for commercial purposes, with the community cafe hub occupying the lowest footfall area.

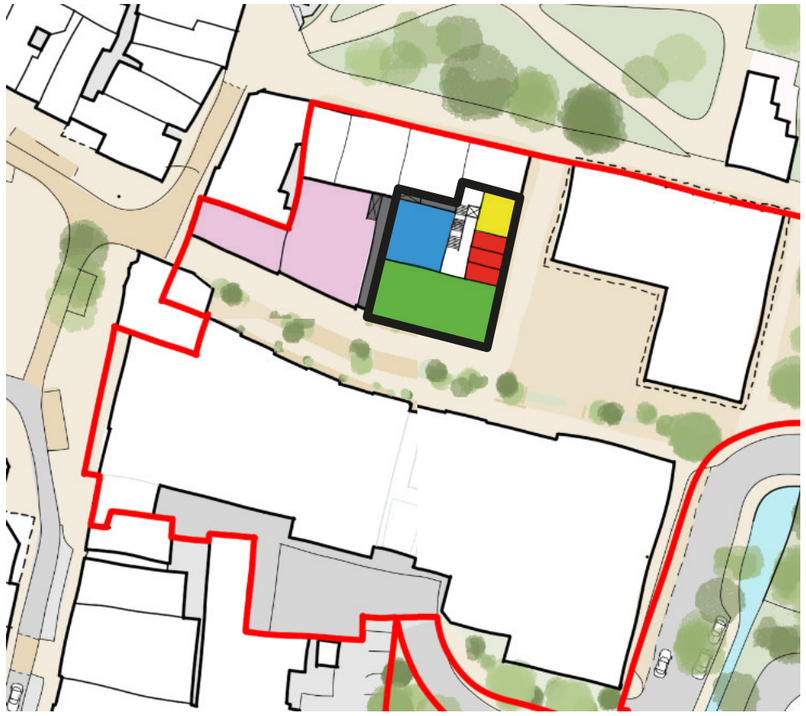
Main entrance

Secondary entrance

Fire exit

Summary Table
Function
- *Main Hal*
- *Multi-purpose Room 1*
- *Multi-purpose Room 2*
- *Cafe*
- *Kitchen*
- *WC*
- *Storage/BOH*
- *Consultation-type rooms*
- *Shared Workspace*
- *Circulation*
- *Other Class E Uses*
- *Covered Market*

1:1000 0m 5m 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm



Ground Floor
A potential ground floor could comprise of:
- Covered market, with entrances off Market Place and the new pedestrian route through the site,
- Central stair and lift up to the community space provision.
- Servicing route,
- Storage,
- Central stair & lift up to the community hall spaces.

First Floor
A potential first floor could comprise of:
- Community hall spaces, with windows overlooking the public realm,
- Storage space,
- Kitchen to support the cafe operation,
- WC's,
- Servicing via the service yard,
- Storage.

Summary

Page 621

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Summary

A redevelopment of the Churchgate Regeneration Zone has the opportunity to provide community space at the heart of the town. Three overarching options have been explored: 1. Refurbishing or supporting an existing space within the town, of which many currently exist and operate; 2. Provide a dedicated facility in the redevelopment; 3. Co-locate a facility with a new covered market, strengthening the offer and creating a community heart in the centre of town.

1. Refurbish an Existing Community Space in the town.

2. A New Facility as part of the Churchgate Regeneration:

Dedicated independent building

‘Basic’

‘Standard’

‘Premium’

Co-located within the market offer

‘Basic’

‘Standard’

‘Premium’

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Summary

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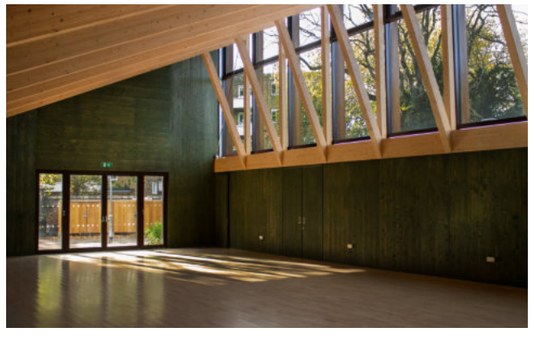

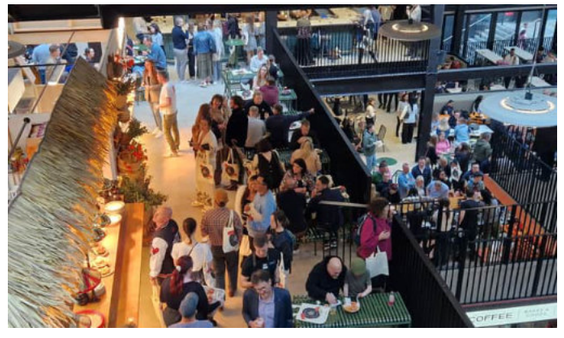

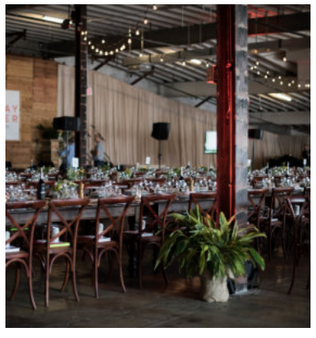

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Churchgate Centre, Hitchin
Public Realm Assessment

Contents
Public Realm Assessment

00 Introduction

01 Site Analysis
The Origins of Hitchin
The Site Boundary
The Site Existing
Planning Policy Context
Planning Policy Review
Mapping Summary
SWOT Summary
Conclusions

02 Public Engagement
Public Engagement

03 Site Strategies
Current Streetscape - Churchgate
Existing Public Realm: Hitchin
Existing Public Realm: Site
Development Option
Existing Public Realm: Plan
Current Streetscape: Churchgate
Preferred Development Option
Site Strategy: Baseline Review
Site Strategies
Summary

04 Public Realm Provision
Public Realm Provision
Residential Courtyards
Character Areas:

05 Summary
Levels of Provision
Existing Site
No Food Store + New Covered Market
No Food Store + Refurbished Outdoor Market
Food Store + New Covered Market
Food Store + Refurbished Outdoor Market

Introduction

Purpose of this document

This document sets out the scope, approach, and deliverables for the development of concept designs for public realm within the Churchgate Regeneration Zone. Its purpose is to guide the design process by identifying opportunities and constraints, assessing existing provision in Hitchin Town Centre, and testing options for the public realm for the Churchgate Regeneration Zone.

The document provides a framework for exploring ‘Basic, Standard, and Premium’ levels of provision, supported by area schedules, precedent imagery, and design narratives. It is intended to support engagement with stakeholders, inform cost planning, and establish a clear direction for the next stage of the regeneration project.

This document is set in the context of work done to date, which has been summarised in the Summary Report, an extract of which is included at the start of this report.

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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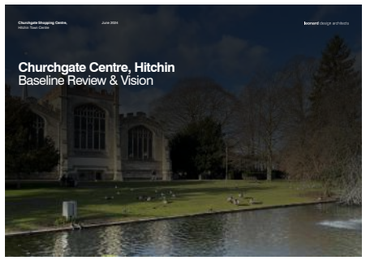
Work to date

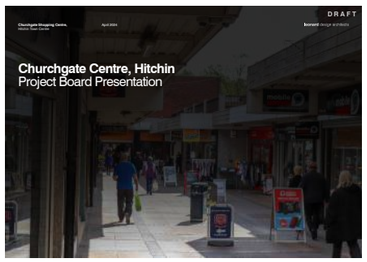
The key outputs to date have included:

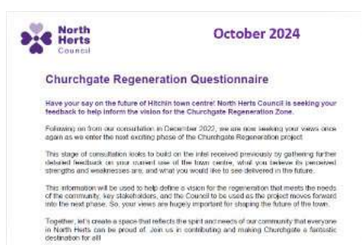
- Hitchin Town Centre, Market Assessment & Planning Overview Report (September 2023).
- Churchgate Centre, Investment Prospectus for UKREiif Conference (May 2024).
- Churchgate Centre, Hitchin: Baseline Review (June 2024).
- Churchgate Centre, Site Specific Planning Advice (June 2024).
- Churchgate Centre, Hitchin (RIF) – Property Market Summary (June 2024).
- Churchgate Centre, Hitchin (RIF) – Transport Review (June 2024).
- Churchgate Centre Consultation Questionnaire (September 2024).
- Detailed Exhibition Boards for Stakeholder Consultation (September 2024).
- PLMR Consultation Report (December 2024).

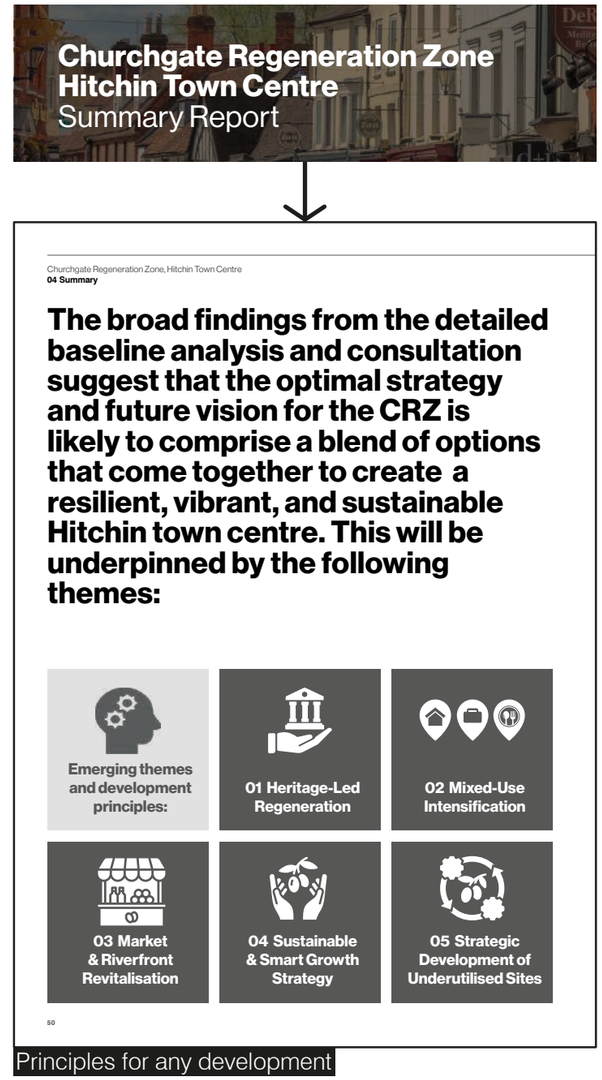
The relevant parts of these reports that effect the public realm provision have been extracted and can be found in the following chapters of this report.

Baseline Review + Commercial Market Review + Public Consultation ⟶ Summary Report









Principles for any development

Baseline Review

The Origins of Hitchin
The Site Boundary
The Site Existing
Planning Policy Context
Planning Policy Review
Mapping Summary
SWOT Summary
Conclusions

The Origins of Hitchin

“My Hitchin grapes surpass them, or those of any country”
Queen Elizabeth I, 16th Century

“Hitchin is a large market town, and particularly eminent for its being a great corn market for wheat and malt…which is brought here for the London market”
Daniel Defoe, 1724

“Hitchin is an ancient market town, full of interest, 32 miles N. from King’s Cross...”
Herbert Tompkins, 1903

The ancient Icknield Way passes immediately to the North with evidence of Roman activity at the settlement.

The origins of the town start with the Saxon tribe name the ‘Hicce’ in the 7th Century.

In 792AD the Mercian King Offa established a Benedictine house here, the precursor to the church of St Mary.

Hitchin is recorded in the Domesday Book as a Royal Manor, *‘Rex Willelmus tenet Hiz’*, translated to: ‘King William holds Hitchin’, with 600 inhabitants.
That the market is not hold a charter suggests it was v long before the crown sought to control towns in this way.

Hitchin Priory was founded as a Carmelite Friary in 1317, and The Biggin was established as a Gilbertine monastery in 1361.

Hitchin thrived on grain, sheep, cattle, cloth-making, brewing, tanning and other industries.
Later expanding to malting and brewing.

In the 18th Century Hitchin experienced unprecedented prosperity driven by rising population, agricultural improvement, and better links via the railway.

In 1850 the Great Northern Railway placed Hitchin on the main route between London and the North. The Corn Exchange attracted merchants from as far away as Liverpool with grain moved by train.

In the late 19th century neighbouring towns such as Luton increased their importance at the expense of Hitchin. However it maintained its niche position its retains today.

Hitchin developed economically from the 1920’s, but its characteristics as an attractive market town have been maintained, while Stevenage and Letchworth expanded further.

Many people now commute into London or Stevenage.

A penny of King Offa

St Mary’s parish church

The Biggin, est. 1361

The Market Place and Corn Exchange

The Sun coaching inn

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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The Site Boundary

The Churchgate Shopping Centre is arranged on ground & first floor over 59,500 ft² net lettable floorspace

Over a site area of 1.26 acres

With 32 retail units

The market is open every Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday and includes over 150 permanent stalls

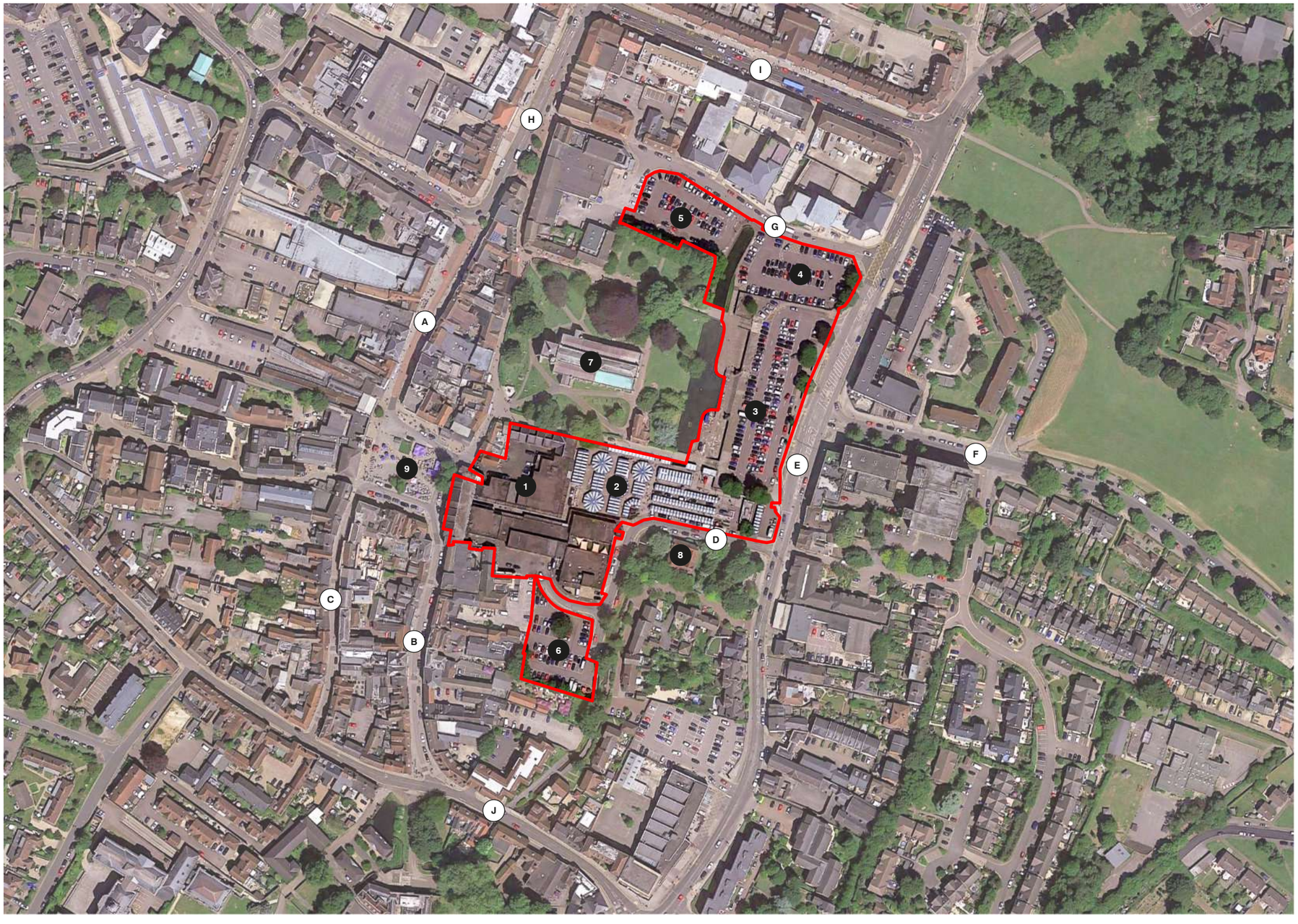
The overall site is 5.35 acres

The service yard off Market Place is shared

The site includes the Churchgate Centre, Market, and Biggin Lane, St Mary's Square, Portmill East and West car parks

The site is located in the centre of Hitchin town centre, adjacent to the Market Place and wrapping around the historic parish Church of St Mary's and its churchyard. The site incorporates the Churchgate Shopping Centre, the market with permanent market stalls, four surface car parks and associated service yards. The site is bound to the north by Portmill Lane, to the east and south east by Queen Street and Biggin Lane. It wraps around the Churchgate Centre and associated service area to the south west, and follows the line of Churchyard Walk, the churchyard and the Garden of Rest to the west.

The site offers the potential to improve the eastern edge of the town centre and provide a more 'fitting' aspect to the Market Place. It also offers the opportunity to provide a better setting for the Grade I Listed church building and the market, as well as an opportunity to revitalise the river edge, and enhance the pedestrian linkages between the site and the rest of the town centre.



- Site Boundary
- 1 Churchgate Shopping Centre
- 2 The Market
- 3 St Mary's Car Park
- 4 Portmill East Car Park
- 5 Portmill West Car Park
- 6 Biggin Lane Car Park
- 7 St Mary's Church & Churchyard
- 8 The Biggin
- 9 Market Place
- A High Street
- B Sun Street
- C Bucklersbury
- D Biggin Lane
- E Queen Street
- F Hollow Lane
- G Portmill Lane
- H Bancroft
- I Hermitage Road
- J Bridge Street

1:2500 0m 12.5m 25m 50m 75m 100m 125m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

The Site Existing

The Churchgate Centre provides the eastern façade to Hitchin's Market Place and provides frontage to Churchyard Walk. The shopping precinct was built in 1971 and included an area for the open- air market built over Hitchin's river, the Hiz. The development has been deeply unpopular with its 1960's brutalist architecture unsympathetic to the layout of the surrounding buildings in Market Place. The centre appears run down and is characterised by numerous empty and boarded-up units. Biggin Lane provides access to the market area, rear servicing of the Churchgate, a public car park and the Sun Hotel. The Churchgate centre presents a blank façade onto Biggin Lane and the river.

The traditional open-air market adjoins the eastern edge of the Churchgate centre, and expands into the area along the river frontage where plant stalls spill out along the river. The permanent market stalls are outdated and unattractive, but the market is seen as an important asset for Hitchin. The River Hiz flows northwards through the area either within concrete embankments, covered or in a 'tank' with raised water level for amenity purposes opposite the church. The Council's aspirations for the River Hiz are to create a walkway along the length of the river in the town centre, and have been defined since 1995 in the 'River Hiz Development Guidelines'.

1 Churchgate Shopping Centre & 12-13 Market Place

2 Churchgate Shopping Centre

3 Churchgate Shopping Centre central street

4 The Market

5 Churchyard Walk

6 Churchgate Shopping Centre from Sun Street

7 Churchgate Shopping Centre central street

8 Market from Biggin Lane / Queen St.

The Site Existing

Portmill Lane is highway land and runs from west to east forming the northern boundary of the site. Portmill Lane provides vehicular access from Queen Street to the two surface car parks. The car parks are basic with unattractive surfaces, and views across them relieved only by the River Hiz and the backdrop of the church, open space and trees in the churchyard. The western part of the road provides a footpath for pedestrians only. A narrow pedestrian route also provides access to the Hermitage Road.

St Mary's Square is another surface car park at the Queen Street level. Queen Street is heavily trafficked and provides an important location for bus stops. Formal steps, with a balustrade which also adorns the western edge of the car park, descend to the river level. Pedestrians can then access the town centre core via footpaths either side of the churchyard. The car park is utilitarian and fails to provide an attractive foreground to the church.

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- C Bucklersbury
- D Biggin Lane
- E Queen Street
- F Hollow Lane
- G Portmill Lane
- H Bancroft
- I Hermitage Road
- J Bridge Street

1 River Hiz looking South to the Church and Market

2 River Hiz looking North along Churchyard Walk

3 Biggin Lane Car Park

4 View from Hollow Lane to St Mary's Church

5 Portmill East Car Park

6 Portmill West Car Park

7 St Mary's Car Park

Planning Policy Context

More information on the planning policy context can be found in the Planning Policy Review document by Lambert Smith Hampton.

Draft list of relevant Local Plan policies to the Churchgate Centre:

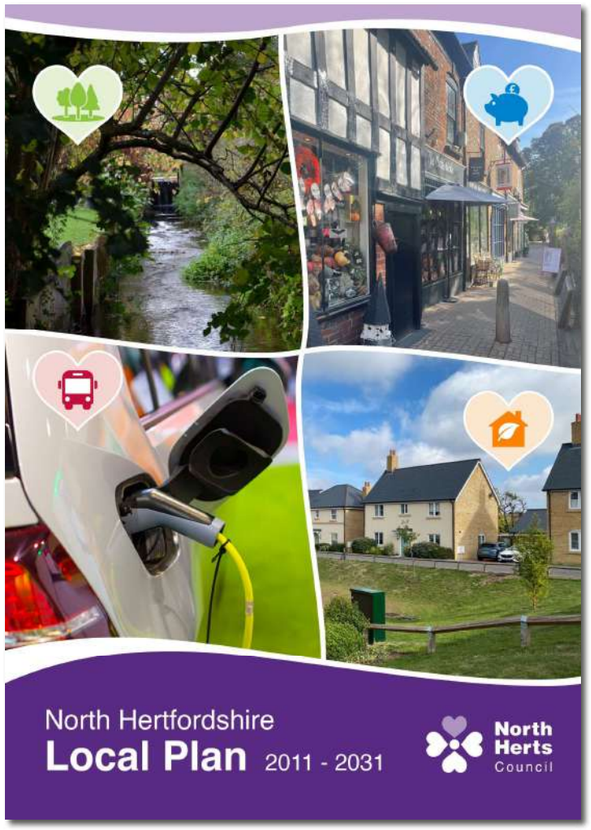
- Policy SP1 – Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP2 – Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
- Policy SP4 – Town Centres, Local Centres & Community Shops
- Policy SP6 – Sustainable transport
- Policy SP7 – Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions
- Policy SP8 – Housing
- Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability
- Policy SP11 – Natural resources and sustainability
- Policy SP12 – Green Infrastructure, landscape, and biodiversity
- Policy SP13 – Historic environment
- Policy ETC3 - New retail, leisure, and other main town centre development
- Policy ETC4 – Primary Shopping Frontages
- Policy ETC5 – Secondary Shopping Frontages
- Policy T1 – Assessment of transport matters
- Policy T2 – Parking
- Policy HS2 – Affordable housing
- Policy HS3 – Housing mix
- Policy HS5 – Accessible and adaptable housing
- Policy D1 – Sustainable design
- Policy D3 – Protecting living conditions
- Policy D4 – Air quality
- Policy NE4 - Biodiversity and geological sites
- Policy NE6 – New and improved open space
- Policy NE7 – Reducing flood risk
- Policy NE8 – Sustainable drainage systems
- Policy HE1 – Designated heritage assets
- Policy HT11 – Town centre uses and site-specific allocation criteria.
- Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018 - 2031
- Appendix 4 – Local Plan Car parking standards

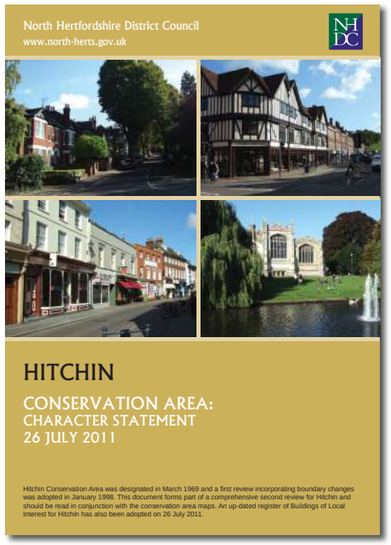
Draft list Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance:

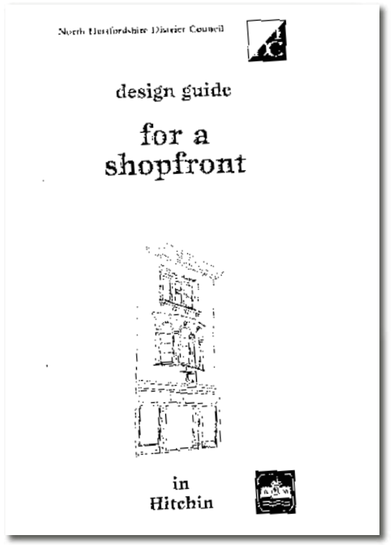
- Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD (Adopted Nov. 2011)
- Design SPD (2011)
- Developer Contributions (Adopted Feb. 2023)
- Sustainability SPD (2024, draft)
- River Hiz SPG (March,1995)
- Design Guide for a shopfront in Hitchin (Jan,1998)

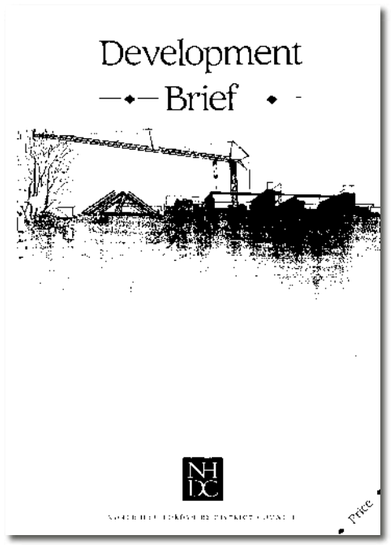
Other Guidance

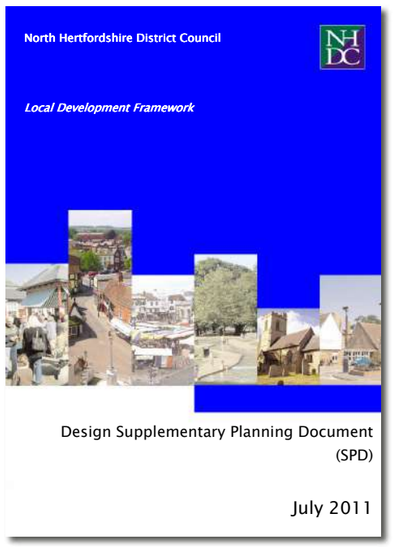
- Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement – July 2011

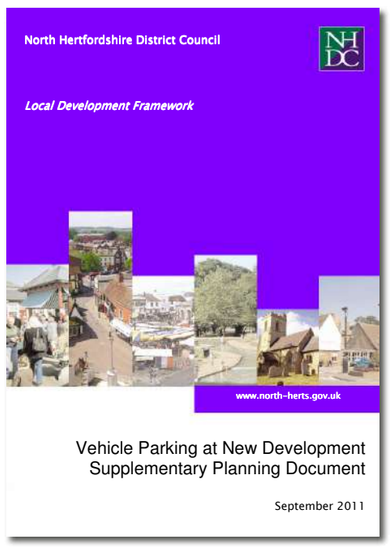












Planning Policy Review

Through the CRZ process 2 sessions were conducted with the North Herts planning team:

- **The first to review the planning policy context and whether policies can be flexible.**
- **The second on the emerging options for the site.**

More information on the planning policy context can be found in the Planning Policy Review document by Lambert Smith Hampton.

Key points include:

- Ensuring a "high quality" public realm;
- In keeping with its surroundings;
- With sensitive use of materials;
- Making better connections through the site;
- Providing space for events;
- With seating for casual dining;
- And improved connections for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

A summary of the planning policy issues is below:

Relevant points to the public realm provision are highlighted in yellow.

Planning Designations	Land Uses	Phasing	Movement, Access, Parking & Public Realm	Design Principles and Height
• **Churchgate and its Surrounding Area Mixed-Use Allocation (Policy HT11).** • **Primary Shopping Frontage.** • **Secondary Shopping Frontage.** • **Hitchin Town Centre.** • **Hitchin Conservation Area.** • **Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3.**	• Should be a mix of uses and should: • Have a long term strategy for the Market, • Provide a flexible and diverse range of Class E / F1 / F2, • Provide additional retail and F&B subject to assessment of capacity • Introduce new homes, • Review car parking provision, • **Provide high quality public realm and better pedestrian links.**	• **Any development should be in keeping with the sites surrounding context and uses,** • Consider any development coming forwards at Paynes Park and Priory Park, both of which are allocated for development, • Ensure continuity of trading for key retail outlets, • Safeguard servicing arrangements of surrounding properties, • Engage anchor tenants at the earliest opportunity.	**Development will be required to:** • **Make new / better connections through the site between Market Place, Queen Street, Portmill Lane, Bancroft and along the River Hiz,** • **Promote active frontages,** • **Provide high quality public realm, potentially including meanwhile uses, event space and seating areas for casual dining,** • **Consider how connections to the site can be improved including pedestrian, cyclist and public transport,** • **Ensure that an appropriate level of parking is retained.**	• **Development will be expected to display high quality urban design and architecture,** • A masterplan should inform land uses, public realm, movement networks and heritage assets, • **Development should respond positively and sensitively to the conservation area, taking into consideration position, orientation, scale, height, layout, massing, detailing and use of materials** • Building frontage lines on Sun Street and Market Place should be respected, • The architectural rhythm of the existing historic streets should be reflected towards Market Place.

Mapping Summary

The key points have been extracted to form the SWOT analysis in the next chapter, which then inform the key principles to development.

What is clear throughout this exercise is that the existing Churchgate Centre and Market are not of sufficient quality to properly serve the historic town of Hitchin. The acres of asphalt of the car parks do not give a proper setting to, and harm views of the Church and Churchyard. There is also a huge opportunity to inject more green space into the centre of town and properly celebrate the River Hiz.

Topography

Flooding

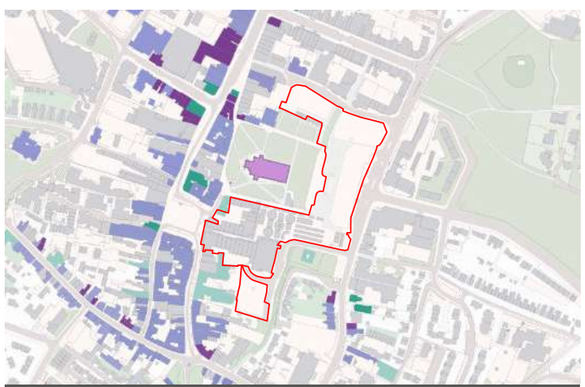
Vehicle Routes, Parking & Servicing

Permeability

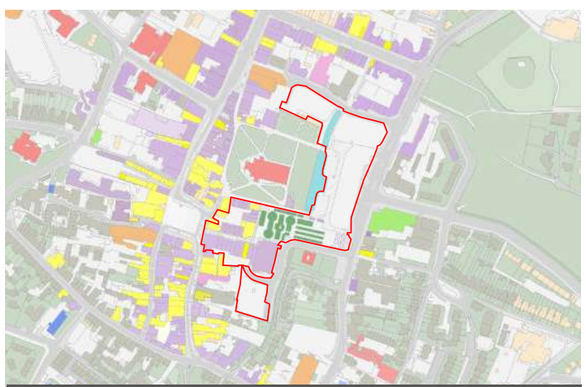
Public Realm

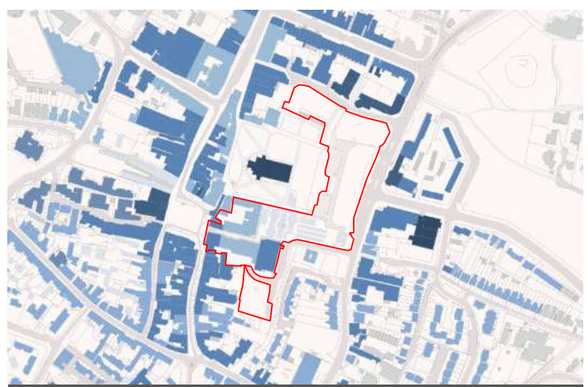
Green Space

Conservation Area Review


Listed Buildings

Placemaking


Uses


Building Heights

SWOT Summary

Relevant points to the public realm provision are highlighted in yellow.

Strengths

Historic street layout,

Almost continuous frontages of high quality historic buildings along adjacent streets,

High number of listed buildings,

Mixture of residential and retail shopfronts provide variety to the town centre,

Traditional mix of materials across the town in general,

Characterful pitched rooves and chimneys,

St Mary's Church, churchyard and Market Place setting,

Views along the River Hiz,

Views towards the St Mary's Church, Market Square, the High Street and up Windmill Hill,

Ample parking,

The Market as a key draw / offer for the local population,

Mix of retail and F&B offers across the town centre.

Weaknesses

Architecture of the Churchgate Centre not in keeping with the historic town setting and causes considerable harm to Market Place,

Natural rhythm of the architecture of Sun Street and Market Place broken by the Churchgate facade,

Large areas of asphalt car park, with very little green space,

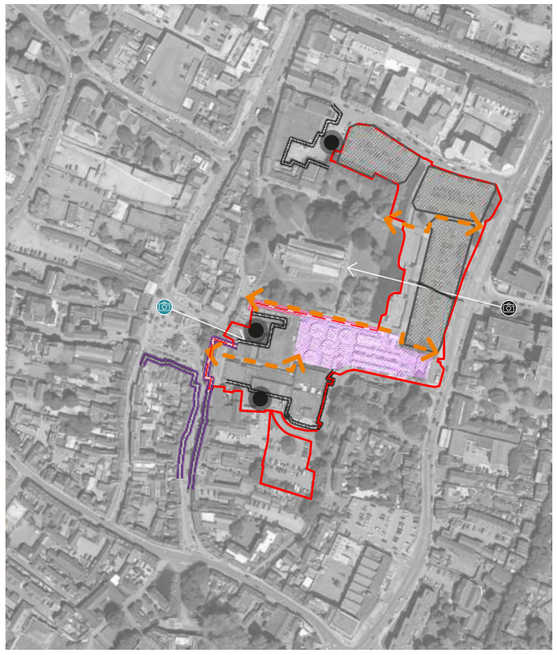
View from Hollow Lane to St Mary's Church blighted in the foreground by surface parking,

View from Market Place into a service yard,

Poor state of the market offer,

Lack of permeability through the site,

Ugly and inactive rear service accesses along Biggin Lane facing the historic Biggin Almshouses, River Hiz and Sun Hotel courtyard.



Key points for the public realm include:

- Maintaining the historic street layout and mix of materials in the town,
- Creating and maintaining views along the River Hiz,
- Restoring the historic market,
- Create more green space,
- Create more permeability through the site,
- Improve the ugly service areas, especially in high-footfall areas.

SWOT Summary

Relevant points to the public realm provision are highlighted in yellow.

Opportunities

Remove the concrete lid from on top of the River Hiz,

Open up a pedestrian route along the River Hiz,

Provide a range of different uses, including retail, F&B, leisure & homes:
- » Including potential for new anchor / destination offers; and
- » Potential for a range of residential offers, including flats above active ground floors and townhouses.

Create new permeability through the site, with better linkages between the Market Place, Market, Queen Street, Portmill Lane and Bancroft:
- **» Extend the traditional street pattern; and**
- **» Reinstate the historic route between Market Place and River Hiz.**

Provide an enhanced market offer,

Provide buildings reflecting the character & scale of the historic town,

Create new pedestrian-led, high quality public realm with the potential for event space and casual dining,

Redevelop the Churchgate to positively and sensitively respond to the conservation area, taking into account:
- » Orientation and position;
- » Scale and height;
- » Layout; and
- » Massing.

Create active frontages to support the vitality of the town centre,

Inject more green space / biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) to permeate the existing asphalt car parks,

Improve cycling and public transport connections into the town centre,

Safeguard important views within the town,

The entire site is designated an opportunity area in the Conservation Area Review.

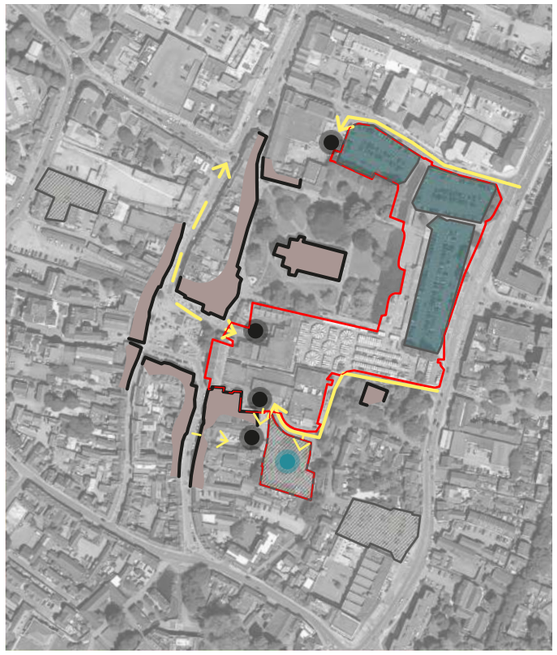
Threats

Large areas of parking serving the town centre opposing the change to active / sustainable travel modes,

Existing parking requirements prohibiting development of any scale,

Historic scale of the town prohibiting developments of scale,

The requirement to safeguard any service arrangements for surrounding properties, including off Market Place.



Key points for the public realm include:
- Open up the culvert of the River Hiz,
- Improve permeability through the site,
- Create new places for events and casual dining,
- Ensure active frontage supports the vitality of the town,
- Inject more green space,
- Improve active travel connections,
- Maintain service arrangements whilst improving the outlook of the town.

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

Baseline Review Conclusions

Respect the character & scale of St Mary's Church, the churchyard, Market Place and the historic buildings around it.

Respect and enhance the important views, including in the Market Square, from Hollow Lane and along Churchgate.

Revitalise and enhance the Market.

Connect Market Place and the Hitchin Market area to the River Hiz, Queen Street as well as Portmill Road.

Establish a strong pedestrian route along the River Hiz.

Create a hierarchy of streets and public realm reflecting the historic setting of the town, including lanes, arcades, streets and larger public spaces.

Enhance the setting of the River Hiz by opening it up.

Build upon the beautiful green spaces locally and inject greenery throughout the site, including SuDS where possible.

Bring in a range of uses on the ground floor, including a range of retail and F&B offers, as well as leisure and community opportunities.

Provide a range of homes of different tenure and type.

Public Engagement

Public Engagement

Public Engagement

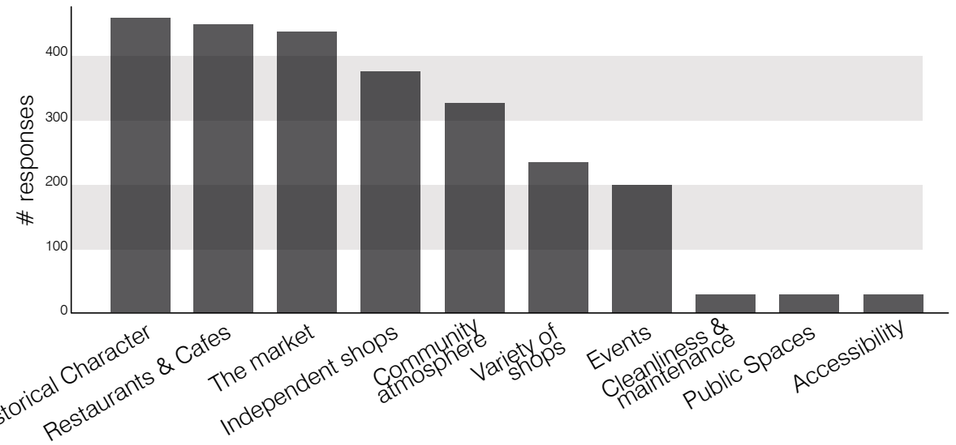
The programme of engagement ran from September to November 2024 and included workshops with Hitchin Community Forum and Market Board, inviting current tenants of Churchgate to their own drop-in session at the Consultation Hub, and an in-person Consultation Hub which was open on various dates for members of the public to drop in and meet members of the project team. At the Hub there were exhibition boards on display that set out the history behind the proposed regeneration and options for the future, as well as interactive activities for attendees to take part in and give their thoughts. A feedback survey was available both at the Consultation Hub and online, alongside a series of social media posts throughout the consultation period encouraging participation. A leaflet drop was sent out to the whole District to ensure maximum reach and boost response rates, and there was also a programme of engagement with local schools to ensure maximum youth engagement.

We received a high level of participation, with over 1000 people attending the Consultation Hub and 1505 responses to the feedback survey.

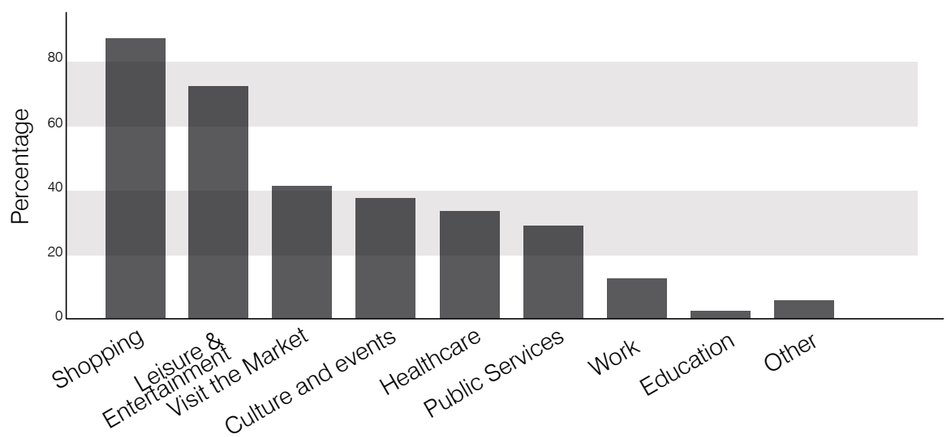
Key findings show that people really value Hitchin's historical character, the range of local restaurants and cafés, and the market, but feel that parking issues, traffic, and public transport are some of the town's main weaknesses.

The consultation helped to identify five key recommendations that are priorities for the local community and should be at the forefront of considerations when planning for the regeneration of the Churchgate Centre.

We asked people what they think Hitchin's greatest assets or strengths are:



We also asked people the main reason they visit Hitchin Town Centre:



We also asked which improvements would encourage people to spend more time in Hitchin town centre:

Public Engagement

We asked people to take part in an activity at the Consulation Hub, sticking numbers to a map to indicate where best they felt certain assets would sit. To analyse this data, we have split the map into seven 'Zones'. These are shown on the map below.

Plot 1:
- Homes (6)

Plot 2:
- Leisure (21)
- Culture, arts & community (11)
- Cafe/restaurants (9)
- Local shops (9)
- National retailers (7)
- Homes (3)

Plot 3:
- Local shops (16)
- National retailers (9)
- Homes (5)
- Revamped market (4)
- Cafe's & restaurants (4)
- Culture arts & community (4)
- Homes (4)

Plot 4:
- Revamped market (36)

Plot 5:
- Parking (17)
- Cafe's & restaurants (11)

Plot 6:
- Parking (11)

Plot 7:
- Parking (10)
- Homes (4)

- Churchgate Centre & Market
- Biggin Lane Car Park
- Portmill East Car Park
- Portmill West Car Park
- St Mary's Car Park

1:2500 0m 12.5m 25m 50m 75m 100m 125m
1:1 0m 5mm 10mm 20mm 30mm 40mm 50mm

Conclusion

Based on the analysis from the survey, the in-person activities at the Consultation Hub, and the stakeholder workshops, we have concluded on five key recommendations that are priorities for the local community and should be at the forefront of considerations when planning for the regeneration of the Churchgate Centre. These five key recommendations are:

Revitalisation of Hitchin Market
The market is considered one of Hitchin's greatest strengths and people are keen to see it brought forward as flexible, vibrant, and community centred.

Sustainable regeneration
The incorporation of green space and eco-friendly initiatives are considered of high importance.

Improvement of accessibility
People want to see better access to the Town Centre through parking, public transport, and pedestrian routes.

Affordable housing
The most important aspect of any housing brought forward in the plans will be affordable homes.

Community and leisure space
It is important to people that community spaces are multi-functional, flexible spaces that provide for all demographics.

Site Strategies

Existing Public Realm: Hitchin
Existing Public Realm: Site
Development Option
Existing Public Realm: Plan
Current Streetscape: Churchgate
Preferred Development Option
Site Strategy: Baseline Review

Site Strategies:

- No Foodstore with a refurbished outdoor market
- No Foodstore with a new covered market
- With Foodstore and a refurbished outdoor market
- With Foodstore and a new covered market

Summary

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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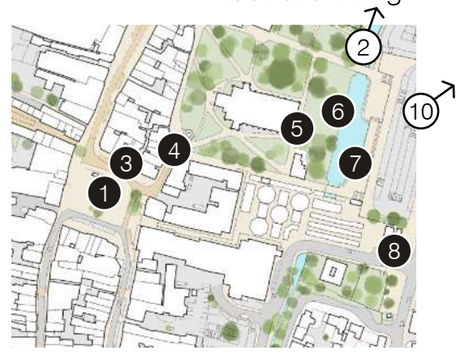
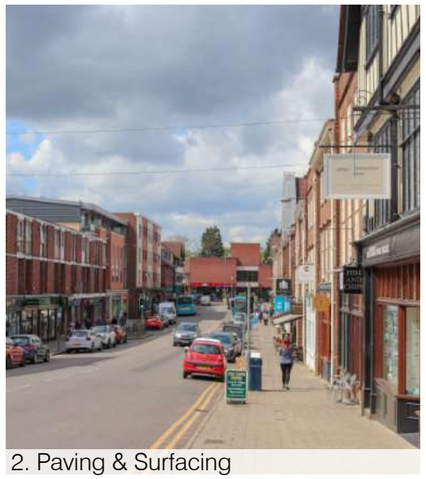
Existing Public Realm: Hitchin

This chapter looks at strategies to provide public realm that complements and enhances the streetscape of the town centre. The current environment of Hitchin is full of character, historic references and high quality hard and soft landscaping. There are limited areas where paving slabs are uneven and have been repaired with a patchwork of asphalt which negatively affects the streetscape.



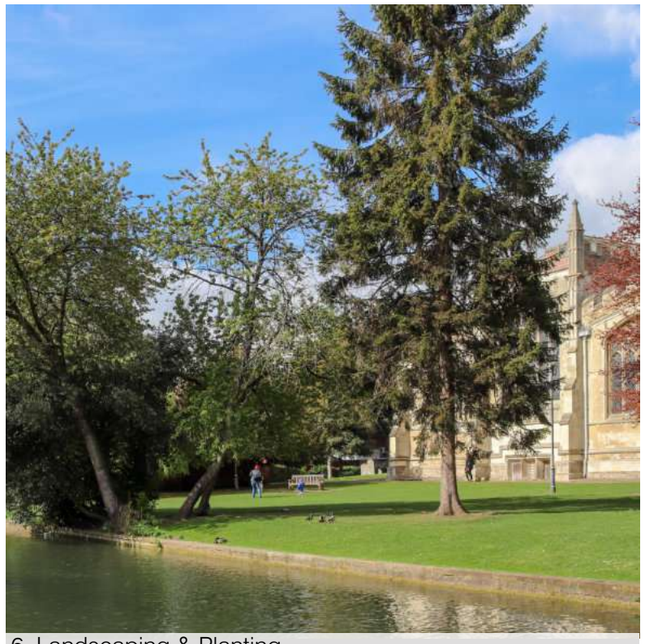
1. Paving & Surfacing


2. Paving & Surfacing

3. Street furniture

4. Lighting

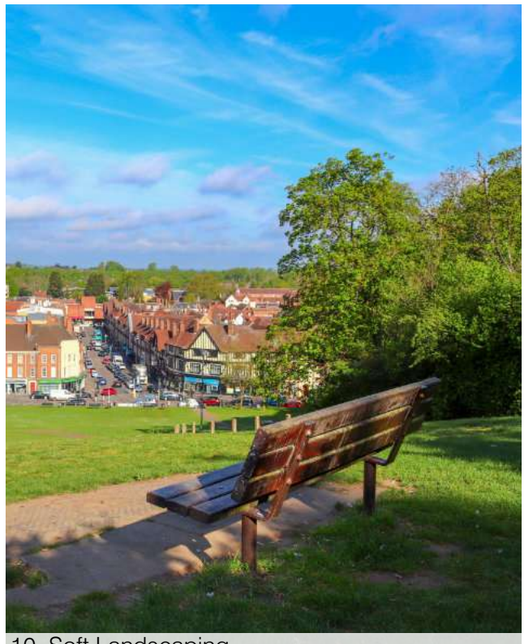
5. Lighting


6. Landscaping & Planting

7. Accessibility

8. Accessibility

9. Wayfinding & Signage


10. Soft Landscaping

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

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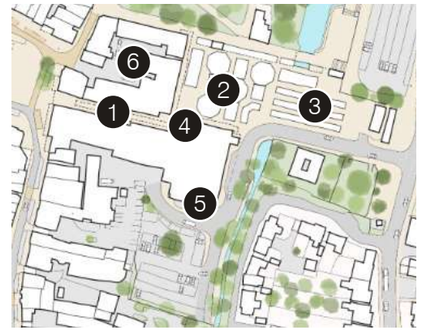
Existing Public Realm: Site

To contrast, the current streetscape in the Churchgate Regeneration Zone is of a much lower quality. There is a variety of different surface textures and materials, repaired with a patchwork of asphalt. The junction between Market Place and the street is a stark illustration in the difference in quality between the town centre in general and the Regeneration Zone.



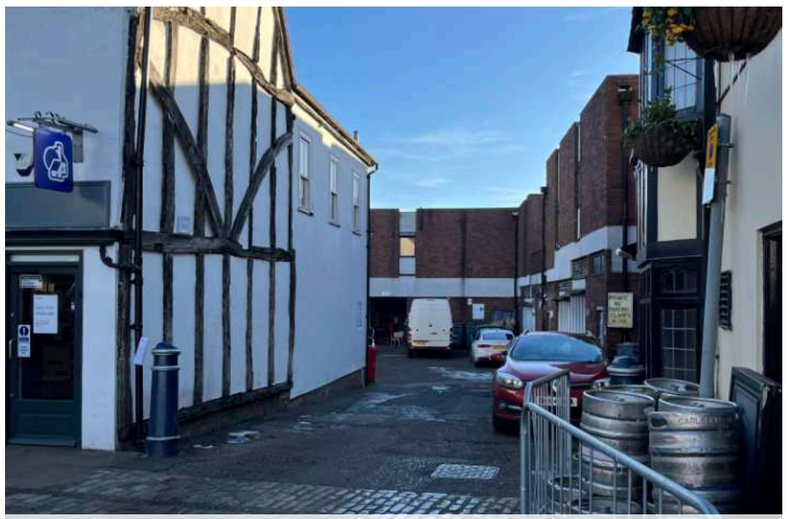
1. Churchgate external street: 498m²

2. Market (west): 2,278m²

3. Market (east) & culvert: 1,168m² & 234m²

4. Service yard: 510m²

5. Ancillary (242m²) & Biggin Lane Car Park (1,885m²)



6. Service yard B: 601m²

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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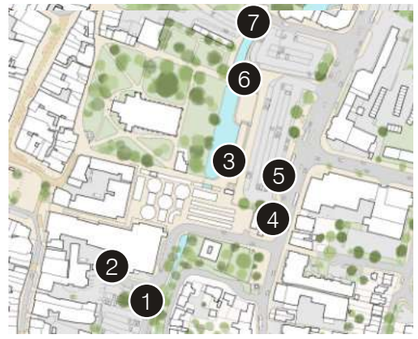
Existing Public Realm: Site

The Portmill Lane, St Mary's and Biggin Lane car parks are standard asphalt car parks, with pedestrian areas of flagstones and raised kerbs. In the limited pedestrian environment the flagstones are uneven in patches and have been repaired in concrete and asphalt. These areas could be significantly improved and more green space introduced to create a less vehicle dominated environment.



1. Biggin Lane Car Park

2. Biggin Lane Service Yard

3. Opposite the Churchyard

4. St Mary's Car Park towards the Market

5. St Mary's Car Park & Queen Street

6. Biggin Lane Service yard

7. Portmill Road Car Parks & the River Hiz

Existing Streetscape

In plan, the existing public realm of the Regeneration Zone comprises of the 4 development plots previously work-shopped with the Council. These include:

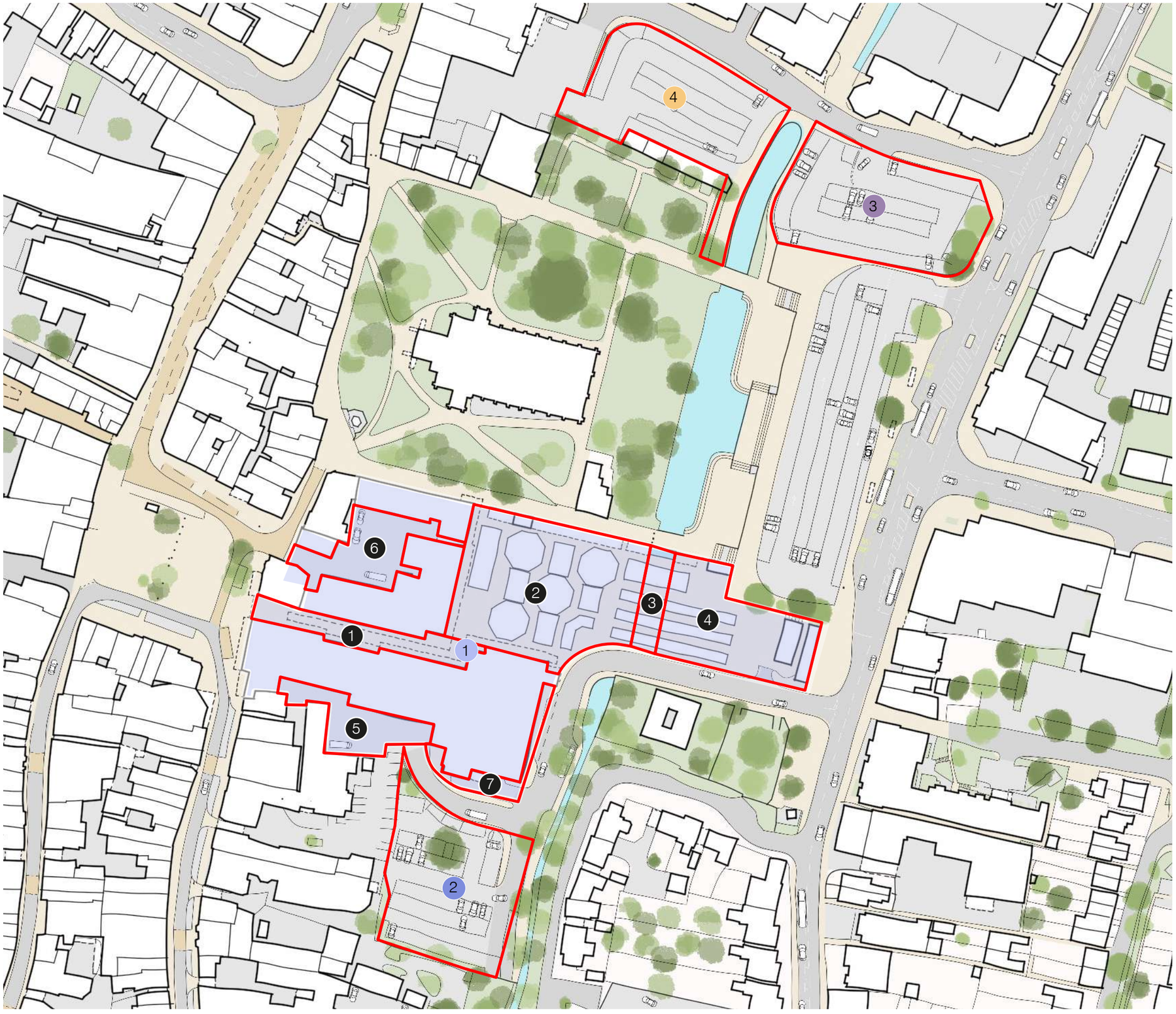
Plot 1: Churchgate Centre & Market
1. Churchgate external street: 498m²
2. Market (west): 2,278m²
3. Culvert: 234m²
4. Market (east): 1,168m²
5. Service yard A: 510m²
6. Service yard B: 601m²
7. Ancillary: 242m²

Retail Footprint: 3,579m²

Plot 2: Biggin Lane Car Park
- Car Park: 1,885m²

Plot 3: Portmill East Car Park
- Car Park: 2,181m²

Plot 4: Portmill West Car Park
- Car Park: 2,073m²



1 Churchgate Centre & Market
2 Biggin Lane Car Park
3 Portmill East Car Park
4 Portmill West Car Park

November 2025

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Churchgate Streetscape

To assess the existing streetscape, we have categorised areas where the public realm currently works well (green), has some scope for improvement (orange), and needs significant improvement or replacement (red). These areas include:

Great public realm:
- Market Place
- Churchyard Walk
- Churchyard

Areas needing some improvement:
- Portmill Lane Car Parks & the River Hiz Walkway
- Opposite the Churchyard

Areas needing significant improvement:
- Churchgate area
- Market Area
- Service Yards (both)
- Link to Biggin Lane Car Park

DRAFT

Churchgate Streetscape

To assess the existing streetscape, we have categorised areas where the public realm currently works well (green), has some scope for improvement (orange), and needs significant improvement or replacement (red). These areas include:

Great public realm:
- Market Place
- Churchyard Walk
- Churchyard

Areas needing some improvement:
- Portmill Lane Car Parks & the River Hiz Walkway
- Opposite the Churchyard

Areas needing signifi
- Churchgate are
- Market Area
- Service Yard
- Link to Big

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Development Option

To assess the existing streetscape, we have categorised areas where the public realm currently works well (green), has some scope for improvement (orange), and needs significant improvement or replacement (red). These areas include:

Great public realm:
- Market Place
- Churchyard Walk
- Churchyard

Areas needing some improvement:
- Portmill Lane Car Parks & the River Hiz Walkway
- Opposite the Churchyard

Areas needing significant improvement:
- Churchgate area
- Market Area
- Service Yards (both)
- Link to Biggin Lane Car Park

Overlaying the preferred development option illustrates where the highest levels of intervention are required.

The Preferred Development Option:
- Mixed Use redevelopment of the Churchgate Centre,
- Re-providing the charter market,
- Redevelopment of Biggin Lane car park,
- Redevelopment of Portmill West car park,
- Redevelopment of Portmill East car park.

1 Churchgate Centre & Market
2 Biggin Lane Car Park
3 Portmill East Car Park
4 Portmill West Car Park
5 St Mary's Car Park

Development Option

Categorising plot-by-plot, requirements include:

Plot 1
- Poor surface materials, flagstones replaced with concrete and asphalt,
- Uneven surfaces,
- Lack of green space,
- Pooling of water,
- Poor relationship with Market Place and Churchyard Walk.

Plot 2
- Standard car park asphalt finish,
- Poor relationship with the River Hiz and homes beyond,
- Lack of green space apart from the single large tree in the centre of the car park.

Plot 3
- Standard car park asphalt finish,
- Poor relationship with the River Hiz,
- Shallow pedestrian area next to the River Hiz, car bonnets project into the space making it tight and unable to walk side-by-side,
- Shallow pavement area to Portmill Road,
- Uneven flag stones adjacent to Rive Hiz,
- Poor green space next to the River Hiz,
- Large mature trees facing onto Queen Street partially mitigate the adjacency to the busy road.

Plot 4
- Standard car park asphalt finish,
- Wider pedestrian route along the River Hiz adjacent to the historic church walls.

Opposite the Churchyard
- Uneven flagstones, patchwork repairs,
- No accessible route from north to south.

1 Churchgate Centre & Market
2 Biggin Lane Car Park
3 Portmill East Car Park
4 Portmill West Car Park
5 St Mary's Car Park

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Site Strategy Baseline Review

Applying the analysis from the Baseline Review, Commercial Markets Review and Stakeholder Engagement has provided a clear direction to the strategy of the site.

These key points include the 10 principles below and can be sketched on the plan on the right hand side.

1. Respect historic Hitchin.
2. Respect important views.
3. Revitalise and enhance the Market.
4. Better connect the site.
5. Establish walking route along the River Hiz.
6. Hierarchy of historic scale streets.
7. Open up the River Hiz.
8. Create green space.
9. Diverse range of uses.
10. Provide a range of homes.

1 Churchgate Centre & Market
2 Biggin Lane Car Park
3 Portmill East Car Park
4 Portmill West Car Park
5 St Mary's Car Park

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Site Strategy: No Foodstore + Refurbished Outdoor Market

Plots 1 & 2:
- Mixed-use redevelopment with a refurbished outdoor market.

Plots 3 & 4:
- Residential developments with parking.

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Site Strategy: No Foodstore + A New Covered Market

Plots 1 & 2:
- Mixed-use redevelopment with a new covered market.

Plots 3 & 4:
- Residential developments with parking.

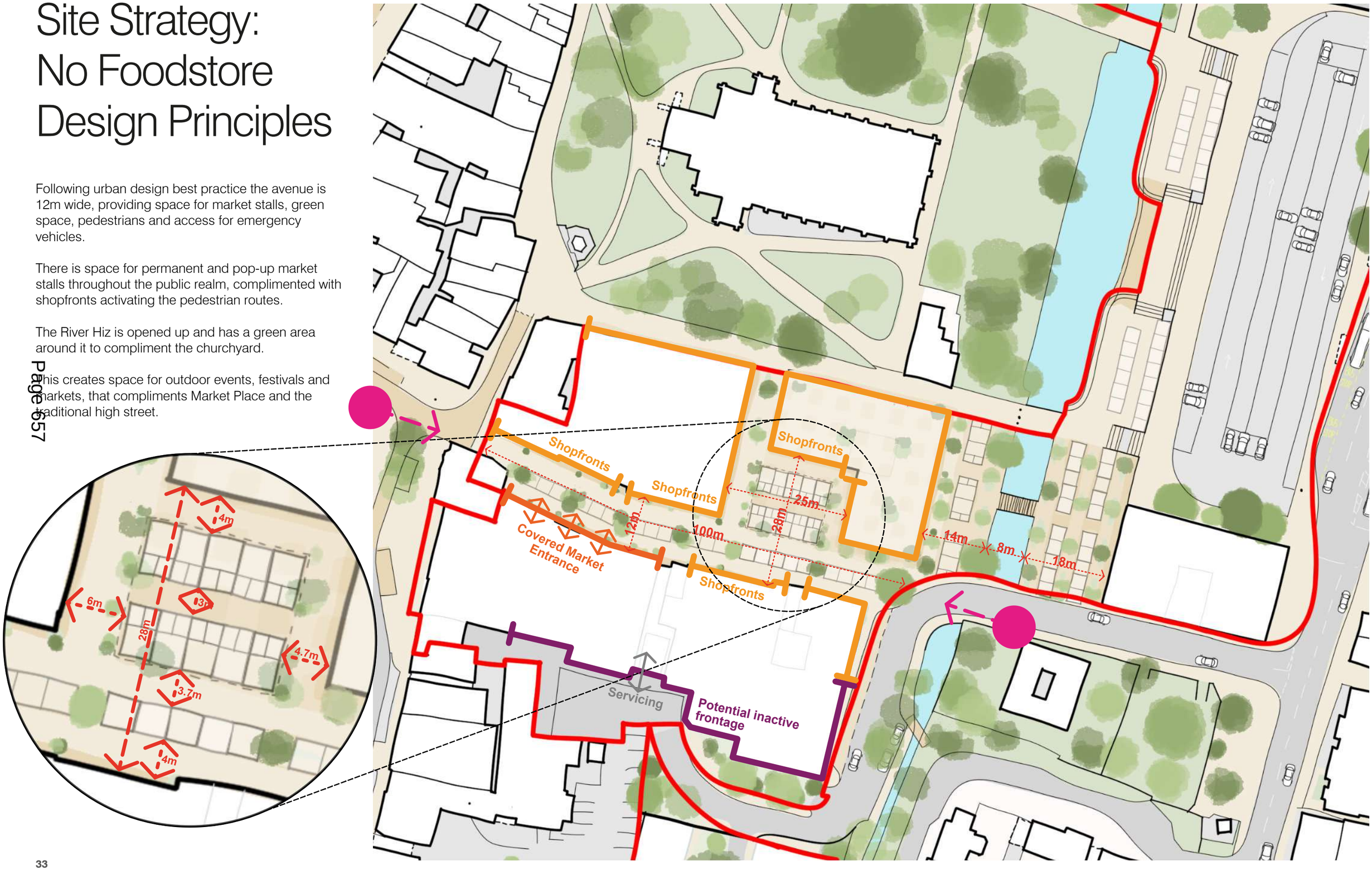
Site Strategy: No Foodstore Design Principles

Following urban design best practice the avenue is 12m wide, providing space for market stalls, green space, pedestrians and access for emergency vehicles.

There is space for permanent and pop-up market stalls throughout the public realm, complimented with shopfronts activating the pedestrian routes.

The River Hiz is opened up and has a green area around it to compliment the churchyard.

This creates space for outdoor events, festivals and markets, that compliments Market Place and the traditional high street.



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Hitchin Town Centre

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Site Strategy: With Foodstore + a Refurbished Outdoor Market

Plot 1
- Mixed-use redevelopment with a refurbished outdoor market.

Plot 2
- Parking for the new food store.

Plots 3 & 4
- Residential developments with parking.

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Site Strategy: With Foodstore + A New Covered Market

Plot 1
- Mixed-use redevelopment with a refurbished outdoor market.

Plot 2
- Parking for the new food store.

Plots 3 & 4
- Residential developments with parking.

Site Strategy: With Foodstore Design Principles

Following urban design best practice the avenue is 12m wide, providing space for market stalls, green space, pedestrians and access for emergency vehicles.

The foodstore would provide significant areas of inactive frontage, which would have to be mitigated with potential market stalls and green space.

There is space for permanent and pop-up market stalls throughout the public realm, complimented with shopfronts activating the pedestrian routes.

The River Hiz is opened up and has a green area around it to compliment the churchyard.

This creates space for outdoor events, festivals and markets, that compliments Market Place and the high street.

Site Strategy: Summary

These four site strategies can accommodate different uses and combinations of uses, and support the 10 principles from the baseline review and public consultation, which include:

1. Respect historic Hitchin.
2. Respect important views.
3. Revitalise and enhance the Market.
4. Better connect the site.
5. Establish walking route along the River Hiz.
6. Hierarchy of historic scale streets.
7. Open up the River Hiz.
8. Create green space.
9. Diverse range of uses.
10. Provide a range of homes.

Site Strategy: Areas Summary

The area schedule below outlines the areas of hard and soft landscaping, car parking, servicing and the culvert to be opened up. These are to aid assessment of the costs.

The basic, standard and premium levels of provision outlined in the next chapter can be applied to either strategy to result in outline costings for the various levels of finish.

With new covered market

With Foodstore

With Foodstore, with a new covered market building

Overall		Landscaping				
Building Footprint	Public Realm	Hard	Soft	Car Park	Servicing	Culvert*
5,626	**3,642**	*2,354*	*543*		*510*	*235*
0	**1,885**			*1,885*		
1,108	**1,073**	*154*	*102*	*817*		
1,052	**1,021**	*155*	*103*	*763*		
7,786	**7,621**	*2,663*	*748*	*3,465*	*510*	*235*

No Foodstore

No Foodstore, with a new covered market building

Overall		Landscaping				
Building Footprint	Public Realm	Hard	Soft	Car Park	Servicing	Culvert*
5,563	**3,705**	*2,131*	*829*		*510*	*235*
975	**910**		*132*	*778*		
1,108	**1,073**	*154*	*102*	*817*		
1,052	**1,021**	*155*	*103*	*763*		
8,698	**6,709**	*2,439*	*1,167*	*2,171*	*510*	*235*

With refurbished outdoor market

With Foodstore

With Foodstore with a refurbished outdoor market

Overall		Landscaping				
Building Footprint	Public Realm	Hard	Soft	Car Park	Servicing	Culvert*
5,019	**4,249**	*2,961*	*543*		*510*	*235*
0	**1,885**			*1,885*		
1,108	**1,073**	*154*	*102*	*817*		
1,052	**1,021**	*155*	*103*	*763*		
7,179	**8,228**	*3,270*	*748*	*3,465*	*510*	*235*

No Foodstore

No Foodstore, with a refurbished outdoor market

Overall		Landscaping				
Building Footprint	Public Realm	Hard	Soft	Car Park	Servicing	Culvert*
4,743	**4,525**	*2,951*	*829*		*510*	*235*
975	**910**		*132*	*778*		
1,108	**1,073**	*154*	*102*	*817*		
1,052	**1,021**	*155*	*103*	*763*		
7,878	**7,529**	*3,259*	*1,167*	*2,171*	*510*	*235*

Public Realm Provision

Public Realm Provision

Character Areas:
- Residential Courtyards
- The Boulevard
- The Square
- The Riverside

Public Realm Provision Levels

This chapter examines the different provision levels for the public realm, separated into different elements. In this way, the Council can prioritise which elements are most important to better inform the cost appraisal of the site.

The following table illustrates a high-level indicative public realm specification for the CRZ, broken down into the three levels of provision for a variety of different elements.

	Basic Provision **Functional, minimal interventions**	**Standard Provision** **Balanced, moderate enhancements**	**Premium Provision** **Aspirational, high-quality design**
Paving & Surfacing	Cost-effective, durable materials (concrete flags, asphalt).Simple patterns, slip-resistant surfaces	Higher-quality paving (concrete blocks, small natural stone areas). Defined pedestrian/vehicular zones, coordinated edging.	High-quality natural stone (granite, yorkstone) with bespoke patterns. Decorative inlays, heritage references, seamless transitions.
Street Furniture	Standard off-the-shelf benches, bins, cycle stands. Minimal quantities, robust materials.	Coordinated suite of benches, bins, and cycle stands in unified style. Additional seating, occasional planters.	Bespoke furniture reflecting local identity. Integrated seating-planter combinations, smart furniture (charging, Wi-Fi).
Lighting	Basic LED street lighting, uniform light levels. Standard column fixtures.	LED lighting with improved ambience. Feature lighting for key buildings, pedestrian-scale columns.	Layered lighting scheme (general, accent, feature). Up-lighters, ground lighting, artistic installations.
Landscaping & Planting	Minimal shrub beds or lawns. Hardy, low-maintenance species.	Structured planting beds with seasonal interest. Small to medium street trees, low-level irrigation.	Extensive planting for biodiversity and year-round colour. Mature trees, rain gardens, water/sensory features.
Accessibility	Step-free routes where feasible. Standard tactile paving at crossings.	Step-free access on all key routes. Extended tactile paving, clear sight-lines.	Universal design principles. Tactile maps, audible cues, frequent seating.
Wayfinding & Signage	Existing signage repaired where needed. Minimal new standard signs.	Updated, consistent wayfinding signage. Visitor maps at strategic points.	Bespoke signage with local branding. Digital wayfinding, interactive heritage trails, public art integration.
Additional Opportunities			Public art commissions. Flexible event spaces with integrated power/water. Heritage interpretation in design.
Notes	*Basic provision assumes minimal disruption to existing utilities and no underground works beyond resurfacing.*	*Standard provision assumes minimal disruption to existing utilities. Includes moderate public realm enhancements, limited bespoke work and modest planting.*	*Premium provision assumes disruption to existing utilities where necessary and includes underground works, highest quality materials, bespoke detailing, integrated technology and associated infrastructure and specialist features.*

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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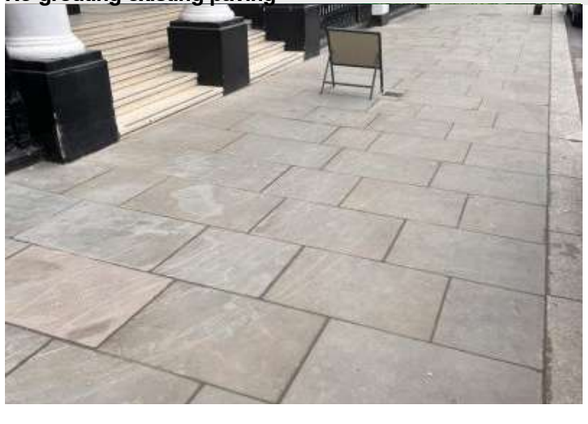
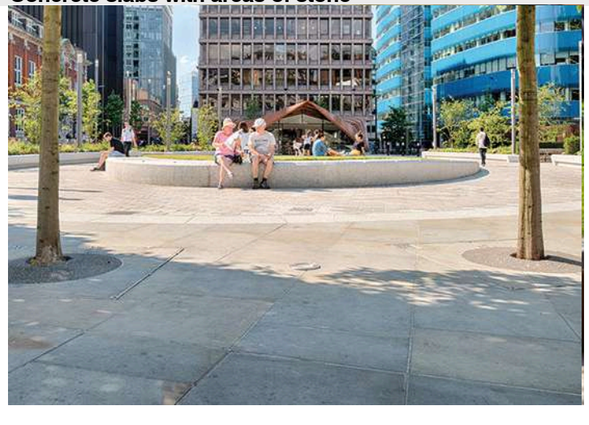
Public Realm Hard Landscaping

There are 3 levels of public realm provision explored through this document. These include:

Basic provision includes:
Cost-effective, durable materials (concrete flags, asphalt).Simple patterns, slip-resistant surfaces

Standard provision includes:
Higher-quality paving (concrete blocks, small natural stone areas). Defined pedestrian/vehicular zones, coordinated edging..

Premium provision includes:
High-quality natural stone (granite, yorkstone) with bespoke patterns. Decorative inlays, heritage references, seamless transitions.

Basic Provision Functional, minimal interventions	Standard Provision Balanced, moderate enhancements	Premium Provision Aspirational, high-quality design
Concrete flags	**Coordinated paving slabs with different finishes**	**Decorative inlays and bespoke combinations**
Painting existing surfaces	**Zoning areas with different colour / finishes**	**High-quality stone slabs (eg. granite, york stone)**
Re-grouting existing paving	**Concrete slabs with areas of stone**	**Reflecting heritage**
		

Public Realm Soft Landscaping

There are 3 levels of public realm provision explored through this document. These include:

Basic provision includes:
Minimal shrub beds or lawns. Hardy, low-maintenance species.

Standard provision includes:
Structured planting beds with seasonal interest. Small to medium street trees, low-level irrigation.

Premium provision includes:
Extensive planting for biodiversity and year-round colour. Mature trees, rain gardens, water/sensory features.

Basic Provision **Functional, minimal interventions**	**Standard Provision** **Balanced, moderate enhancements**	**Premium Provision** **Aspirational, high-quality design**
Areas of maintained grass	**Planters integrated with seating in strategic locations**	**Lush planting in a combination of raised and flat beds**
Resin bonded tree pits	**Raised planting**	**Seating and planting integrated seamlessly**
Pots	**Flowers, grasses and wild planting mixed with sculptural**	**Bespoke raised planting beds**

Churchgate Regeneration Zone
Hitchin Town Centre

November 2025

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Public Realm Street Furniture

There are 3 levels of public realm provision explored through this document. These include:

Basic provision includes:
Standard off-the-shelf benches, bins, cycle stands. Minimal quantities, robust materials.

Standard provision includes:
Coordinated suite of benches, bins, and cycle stands in unified style. Additional seating, occasional planters.

Premium provision includes:
Bespoke furniture reflecting local identity. Integrated seating-planter combinations, smart furniture (charging, Wi-Fi).

Basic Provision
Functional, minimal interventions

Standard benches

Off-the-shelf bins street furniture sets

Standard products with a variety of materials

Standard Provision
Balanced, moderate enhancements

Off-the-shelf modular systems

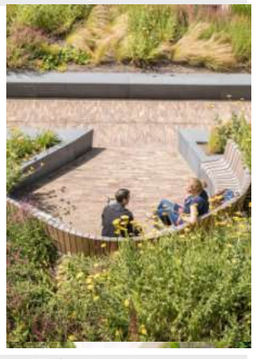
Combining seating, bins and green space

Modular solutions

Premium Provision
Aspirational, high-quality design

Bespoke 'Hitchin' seating

Seating and planting integrated seamlessly



Bespoke materials with integrated wifi & charging

Public Realm Accessibility

There are 3 levels of public realm provision explored through this document. These include:

Basic provision includes:
Existing signage repaired where needed. Minimal new standard signs.

Basic LED street lighting, uniform light levels. Standard column fixtures.

Step-free routes where feasible. Standard tactile paving at crossings.

Standard provision includes:
Updated, consistent wayfinding signage. Visitor maps at strategic points.

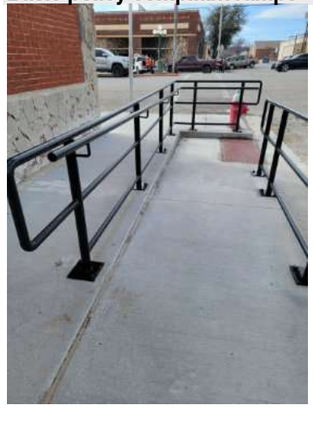
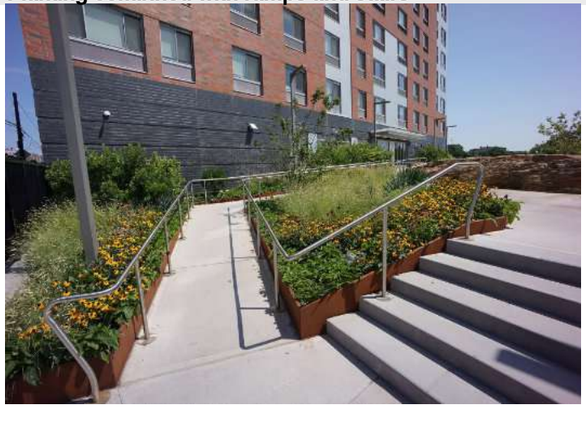
LED lighting with improved ambience. Feature lighting for key buildings, pedestrian-scale columns.

Step-free access on all key routes. Extended tactile paving, clear sight-lines.

Premium provision includes:
Bespoke signage with local branding. Digital wayfinding, interactive heritage trails, public art integration.

Layered lighting scheme (general, accent, feature). Up-lighters, ground lighting, artistic installations.

Bespoke signage with local branding. Digital wayfinding, interactive heritage trails, public art integration.

Basic Provision Functional, minimal interventions	Standard Provision Balanced, moderate enhancements	Premium Provision Aspirational, high-quality design
Standard signage	**Bespoke signage totems and maps**	**Bespoke signage with digital elements**
Standard lighting	**Off-the-shelf lighting poles**	**Bespoke lighting**
Basic policy compliant ramps	**Planting combined with ramps and stairs**	**Considered planting, ramps and public realm**
		

Public Realm
Street Art & Heritage

There are 3 levels of public realm provision explored through this document. These include:

Premium provision includes:
Public art commissions. Flexible event spaces with integrated power/water. Heritage interpretation in design.

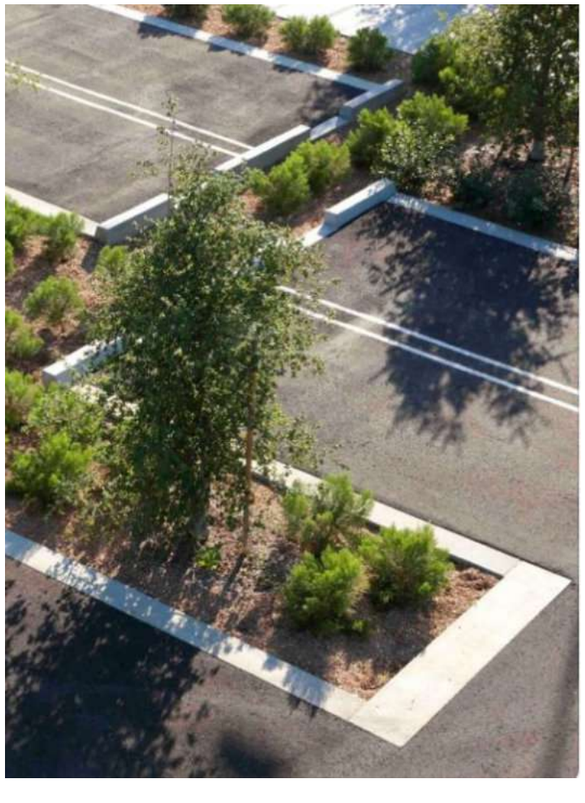
Basic Provision **Functional, minimal interventions**	**Standard Provision** **Balanced, moderate enhancements**	**Premium Provision** **Aspirational, high-quality design**
Murals	**Bringing history to life**	**Sculptures**
Community youth art projects: Wolsey 550	**Activating blank frontages**	**Bringing history to life**
Activating hoardings	**First floor murals**	**Winter lights festivals**

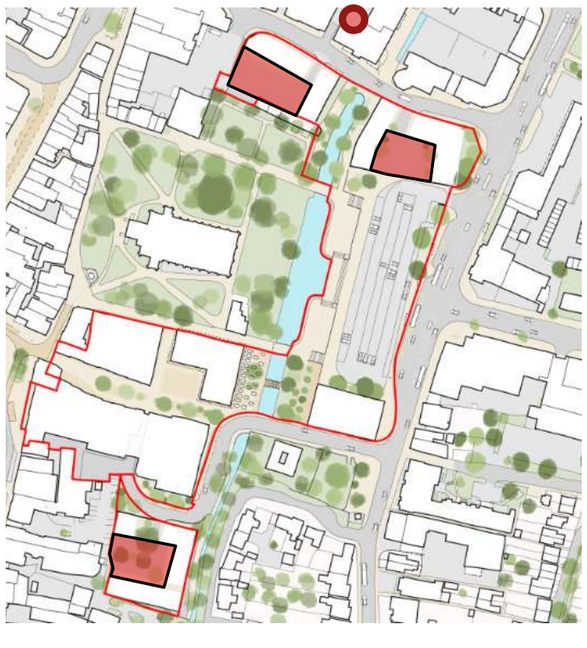
Character Areas
Residential Courtyards

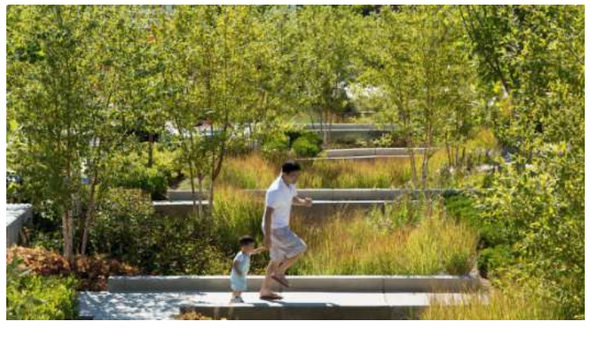
The residential courtyard is designed as a shared space that balances the need for car parking with a welcoming and attractive environment for residents. Planting and landscaping play a key role in softening the look and feel of the parking area, ensuring it contributes positively to the character of the courtyard. Key elements include:

- Planting and greenery - trees, hedges, and planters to break up hard surfaces.
- Permeable paving - moss or grass between paving joints to soften appearance.
- Green walls or climbing plants - on boundaries to create enclosure and visual interest.
- Integrated seating and play areas - maintain social and recreational use.
- Flexible layout - allows parking while keeping the courtyard active and welcoming.

Existing - Church View, Portmill Lane, Hitchin



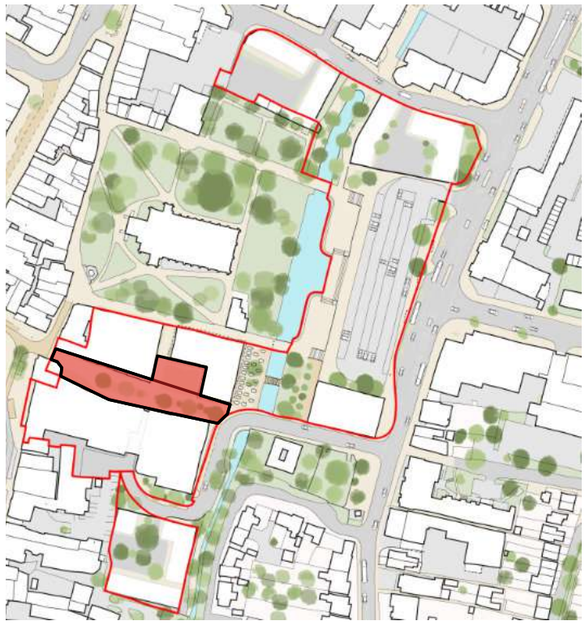


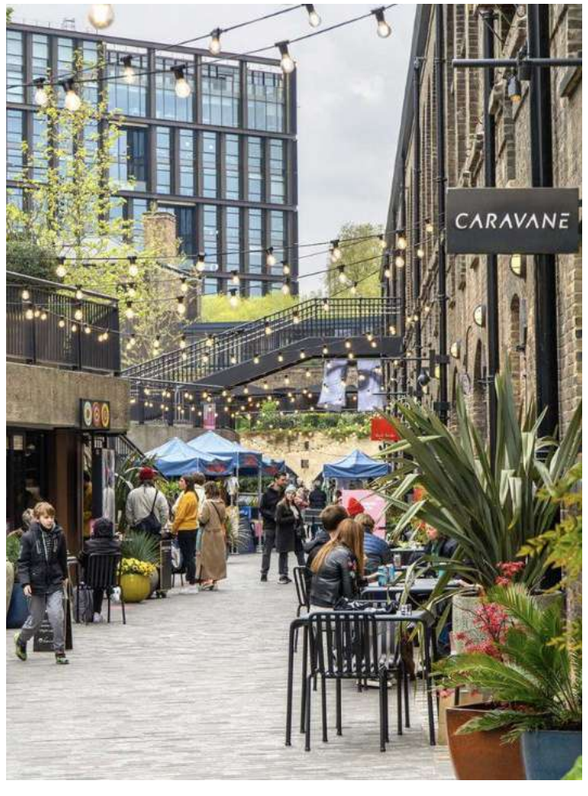


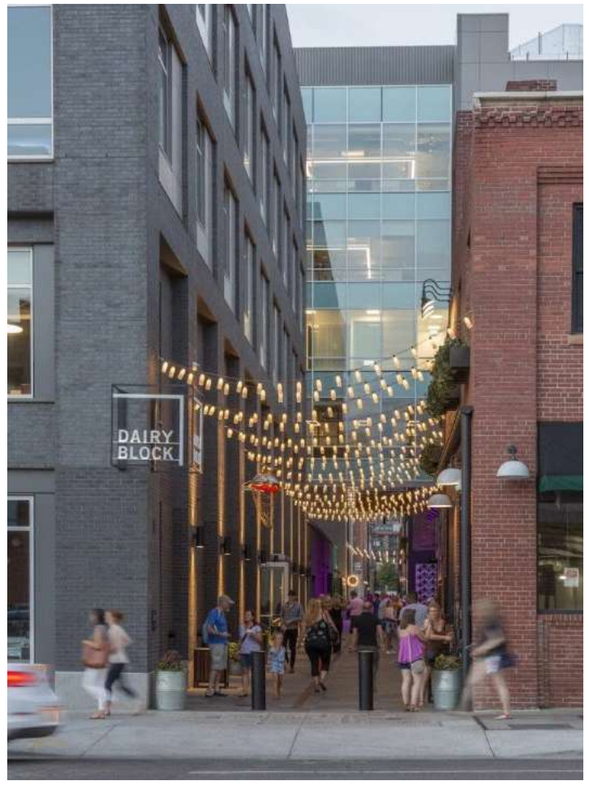
Character Areas
The Boulevard

The boulevard is designed as a generous, clear route through the heart of the scheme. It provides a safe corridor for emergency access while also allowing space for pedestrians to move freely on either side. A central strip accommodates occasional market stall overflow, ensuring the boulevard remains lively and flexible in use.

Around the market building, the space widens to allow for outdoor activity and spill-out, creating an active frontage. At its eastern end, the boulevard opens into a public square, offering a welcoming place for events, gatherings, and everyday social use.

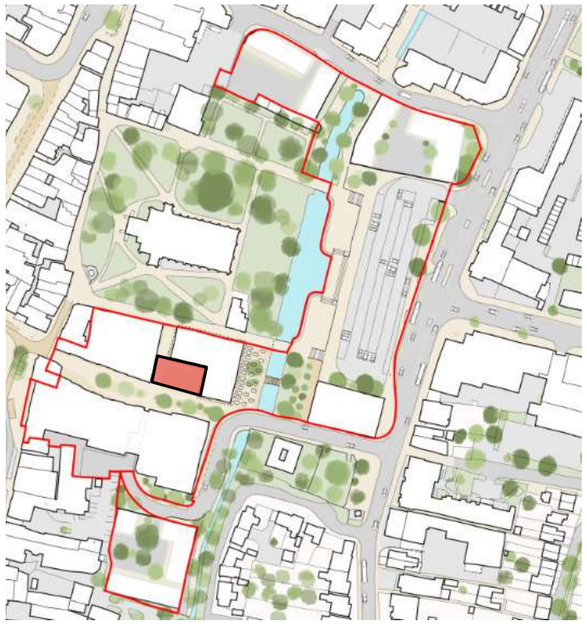


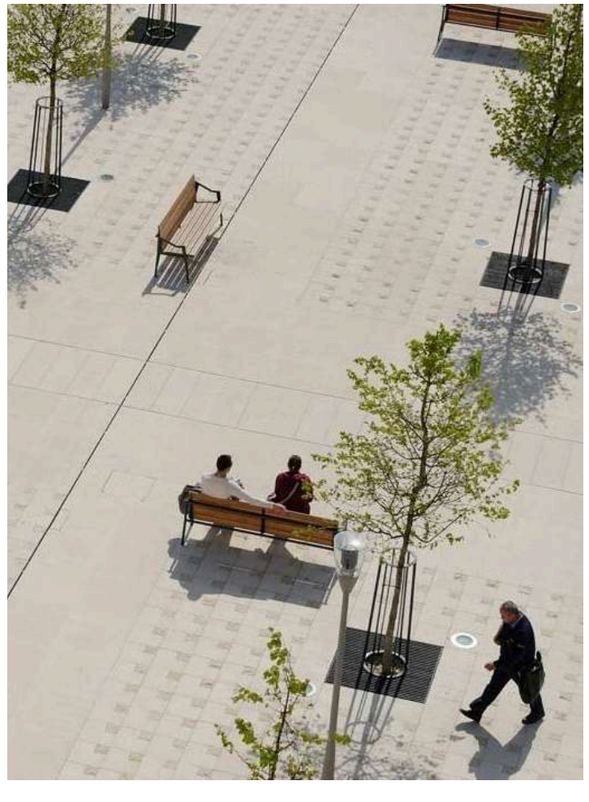




Character Areas
The Square

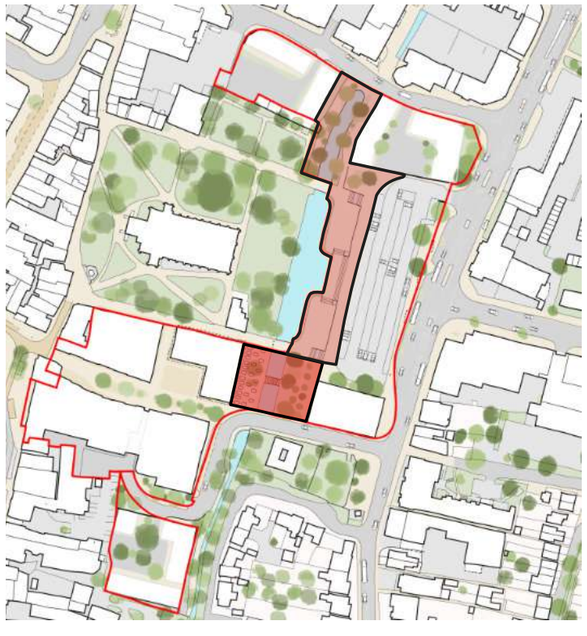
The square forms a central gathering space within the scheme, designed to accommodate both everyday use and larger community events. It provides flexible areas for market stall overflow, ensuring the market can expand outdoors during busy periods. The surrounding buildings activate the edges with community uses spilling out into the space, creating a lively and sociable atmosphere. Seating, planting, and clear sight-lines make the square welcoming and accessible, while its open layout allows it to adapt easily for performances, pop-ups, and seasonal celebrations.





Character Areas
The Riverside

The riverside is designed as a lively edge to the scheme, combining hard landscaping with outdoor seating to encourage activity along the water. The water's edge is activated with features such as steps offering places to sit, gather, or enjoy views across the river. Planting along the road edge provides a natural buffer to reduce noise and create a calmer setting, while flexible open areas allow for pop-up uses and seasonal events to spill towards the water.



Summary

Levels of Provision
Existing Site
No Food Store + New Covered Market
No Food Store + Refurbished Outdoor Market
Food Store + New Covered Market
Food Store + Refurbished Outdoor Market

Conclusion: Site Strategy

These four site strategies can accommodate different uses and combinations of uses, and support the 10 principles from the baseline review and public consultation, which include:

1. Respect historic Hitchin.
2. Respect important views.
3. Revitalise and enhance the Market.
4. Better connect the site.
5. Establish walking route along the River Hiz.
6. Hierarchy of historic scale streets.
7. Open up the River Hiz.
8. Create green space.
9. Diverse range of uses.
10. Provide a range of homes.

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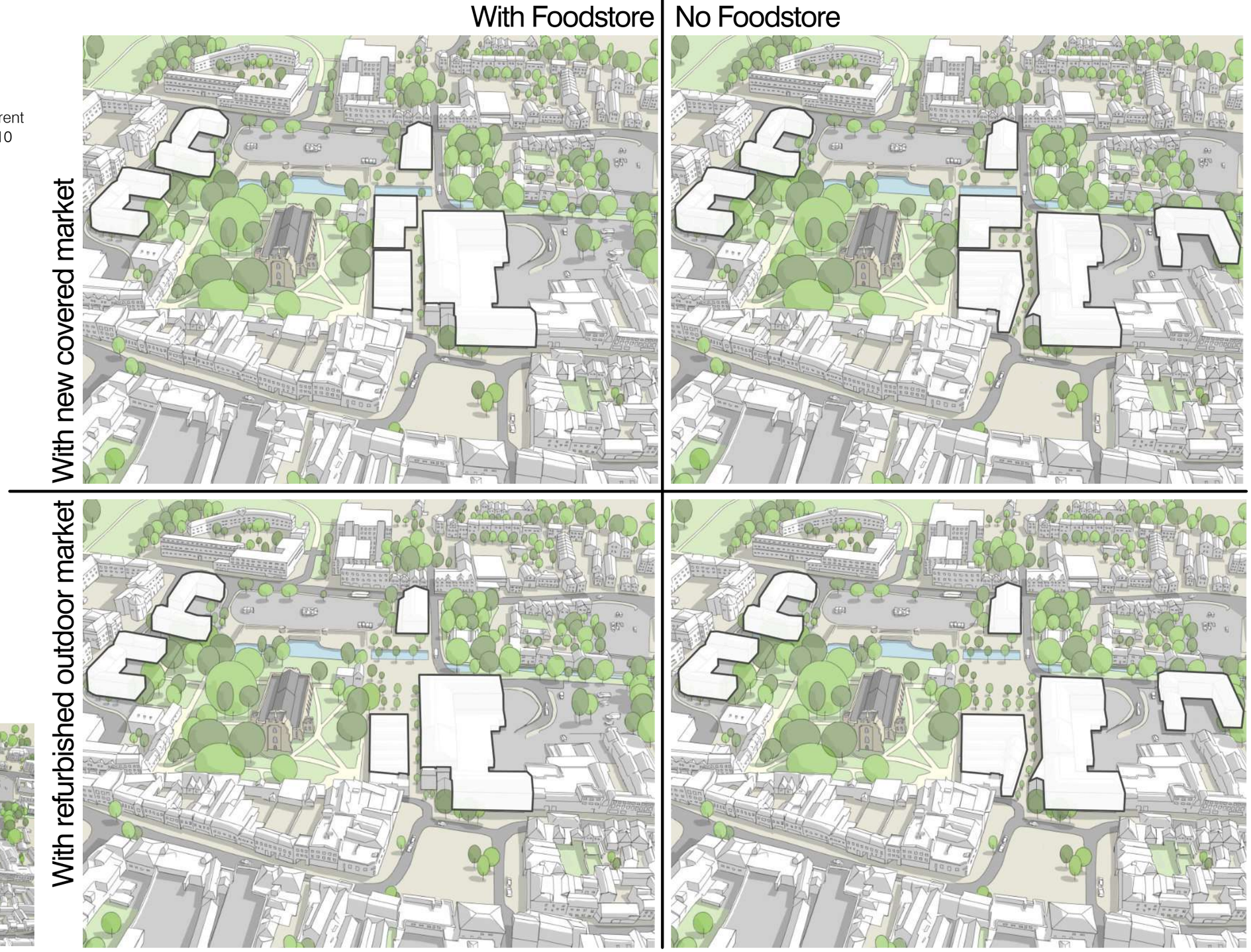
Existing Aerial View



Conclusion: Levels of Provision

Different levels of public realm provision have different cost implications therefore the Council has the opportunity to provide different levels provision for each public realm type, including:

- Hard landscaping
- Soft landscaping
- Street Furniture
- Accessibility
- Lighting
- Signage and wayfinding
- Street art and heritage

Basic Provision
Functional, minimal interventions

Standard Provision
Balanced, moderate enhancements

Premium Provision
Aspirational, high-quality design

www.leonard.design

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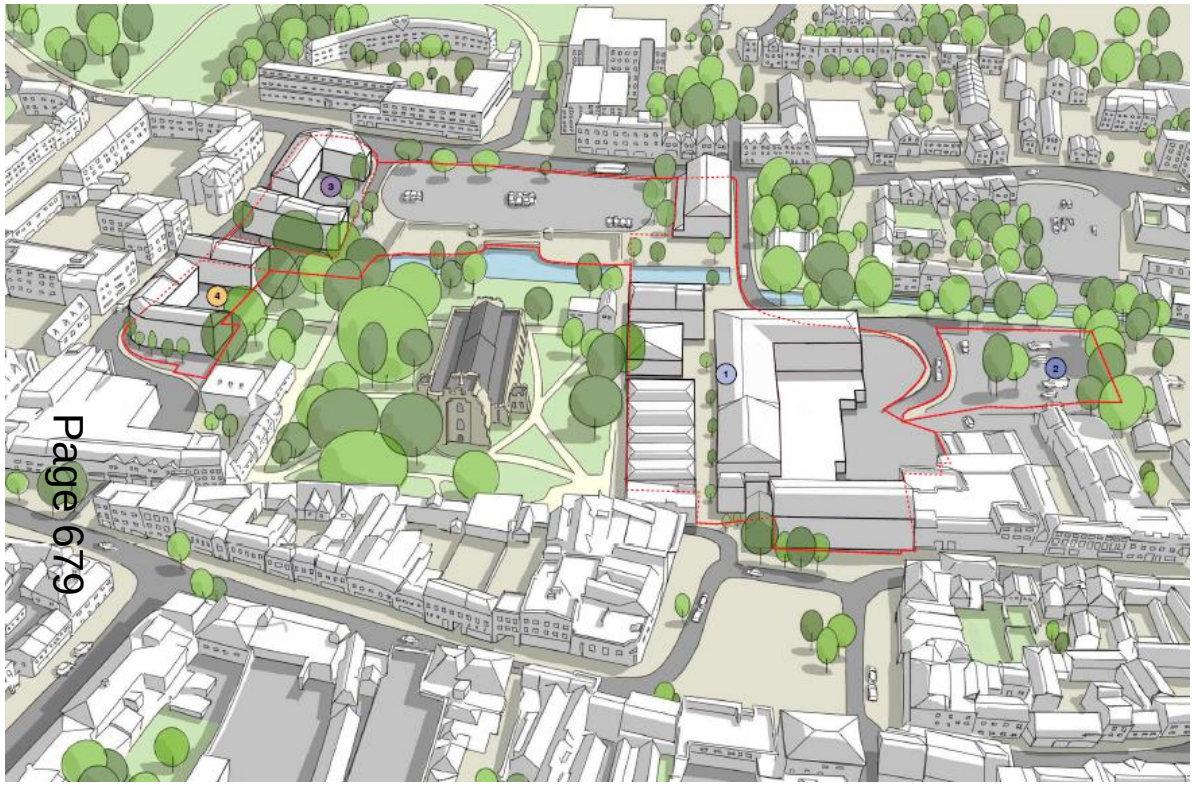
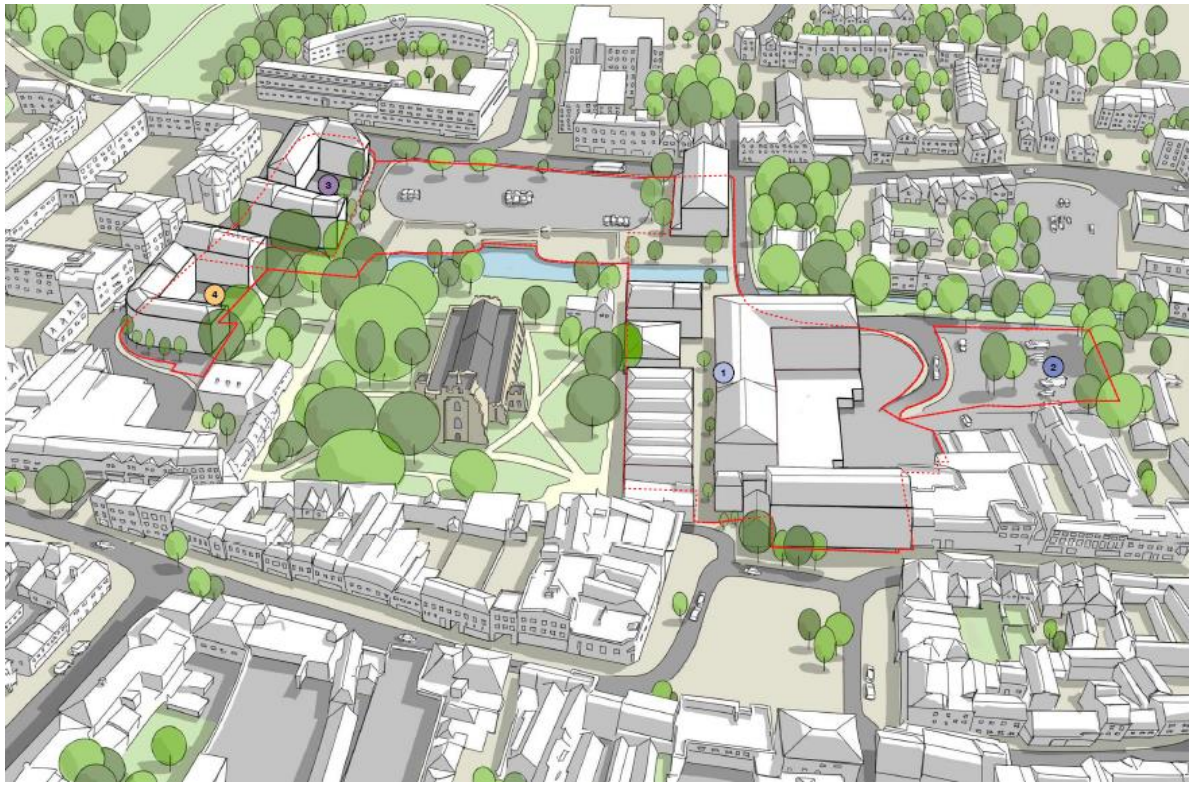
Massing



Standard Massing-
Four Storey



Higher Density Massing-
Five Storey

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Churchgate Regeneration Zone

The Council has a clear vision for regenerating the Churchgate area, based on its adopted development principles.

It acknowledges that a viable scheme will require informed trade-offs and flexibility in the current market.

Soft Market Testing will help align the Council's ambitions with market realities and shape a robust, deliverable strategy for the site.

On the instructions of North Herts Council

Lambert Smith Hampton

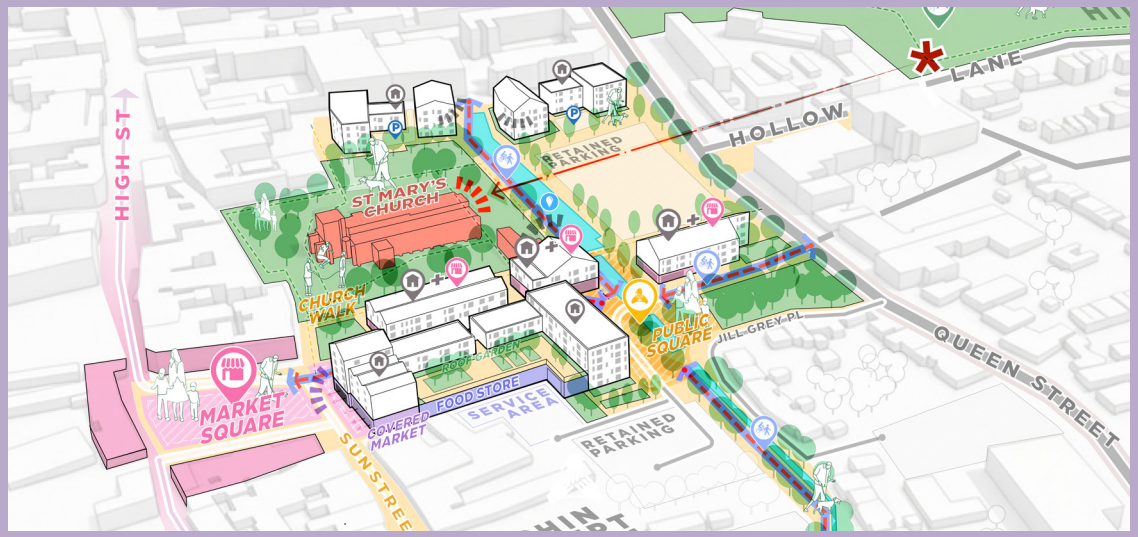
North Herts Council

Site Potential

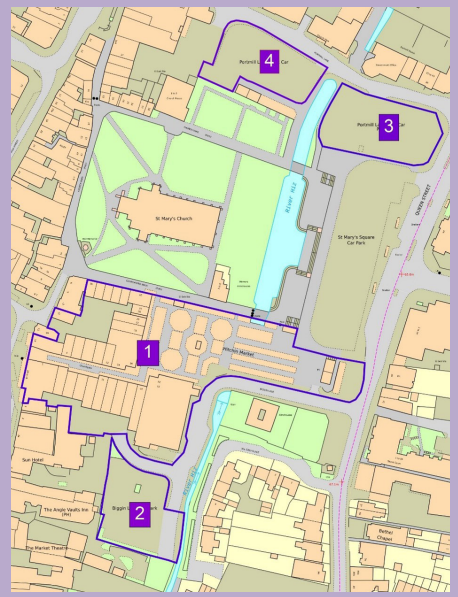
- **Mixed-use town-centre redevelopment** anchored by a major foodstore, complemented by active ground-floor retail and new town-centre residential accommodation. We assume that the reprovision of the commercial element will be similar to the existing provision (60,000 sqft NIA).
- Delivery of high-quality housing, including **affordable housing,** preferably in line with policy requirements. Currently assuming a provision of approx. 250/300 units.
- Creation of a **high-quality public realm,** with opportunities for significant riverside enhancement and **wider regeneration.**
- Reprovision and enhancement of the market, including upgraded indoor and outdoor trading spaces to support a **vibrant, modern market offer.**

The Site

Lambert Smith Hampton



1. **Churchgate Shopping Centre (approx. 2.4 acres):** Located just off Market Square, the site currently includes Churchgate Shopping Centre and Hitchin Market. To the rear of the site is the River Hiz.
2. **Biggin Lane Car Park (approx. 0.5 acres):** Currently, a 68-bay car park located to the rear of Churchgate Shopping Centre, the site benefits from a large stretch of riverside frontage.
3. **Portmill Lane East Car Park (approx. 0.5 acres):** Currently a 81-bay car park located off and accessed from Portmill Lane. There is also access to the Riverside walk to the western site boundary.
4. **Portmill Lane West Car Park (approx. 0.4 acres):** Adjacent to Portmill Lane East car park, this car park currently includes a 71-bay car park adjacent to the St Mary's Church.



Why Hitchin?

Development Principles

Emerging Themes and Development Principles:

01

Heritage-Led Regeneration

02

Mixed-Use Intensification

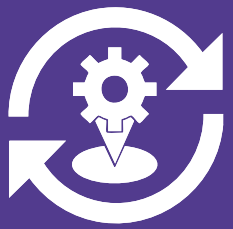
03

Market & Riverfront Revitalisation

04

Sustainable & Smart Growth Strategy

05



Strategic Development of Underutilised Sites

Developer Engagement

1. The Churchgate Regeneration Zone requires a clear delivery strategy that demonstrates how the Council's objectives can be achieved across design, feasibility, viability and deliverability. How can you support the Council in shaping and evidencing this strategy?

2. Recognising that significant pre-development work is required ahead of establishing a commercial deal, how would you help the Council navigate and progress this stage effectively?

3. What resources, expertise and technical disciplines would you bring to help the Council fully understand delivery risk and feasibility, and on what terms would this support be offered?

4. Where do you see the greatest delivery challenges or constraints within the current proposals, and how would you help the Council mitigate or overcome these?

5. How can the Council procure your services in the most efficient, transparent and cost-effective way while enabling momentum on the project?

6. What benchmarking or best-practice examples from similar town-centre regeneration schemes could inform the approach?

North Herts Council

Lambert Smith Hampton

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CHURCHGATE REGENERATION ZONE, HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE: PRELIMINARY MARKET ENGAGEMENT (PME)

1. Overview

North Hertfordshire District Council (The Council) is undertaking this Preliminary Market Engagement in relation to the potential regeneration of the Churchgate area in Hitchin town centre.

2. Churchgate Regeneration Zone, Hitchin Town Centre

Hitchin Market and the Riverside

The Council is bringing forward the regeneration of the Churchgate area in Hitchin town centre, comprising the Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin Market, and adjacent car parks including Portmill and Biggin Lane. The site sits at the heart of the town and plays a critical role in its economic, social and civic function. Since establishing the Development Principles in May 2025, the Council has undertaken a programme of further work to test the viability, deliverability and strategic direction of the scheme, including member workshops, technical analysis and engagement with the market. The ambition remains to deliver a high-quality, mixed-use scheme that supports the long-term vitality of the town centre, including new homes, a reimagined market offer, a viable commercial mix and enhanced public realm.

Building on the Development Principles and the Consultation Summary Report, this subsequent work has explored a number of key factors in greater depth. This has included testing different development scenarios and their impact on viability, reviewing the condition and performance of the existing asset, and examining delivery route options and associated risk profiles. Parking and accessibility have also been considered, including capacity, distribution and mitigation measures. In parallel, early engagement with developers and delivery partners has provided initial insight into market appetite, delivery structures and the conditions required to support investment.

The Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin

This work has helped clarify the key factors needed to develop a viable and deliverable scheme, including the appropriate mix of uses, development capacity, the role of retail and food provision, market re-provision, and the relationship between parking, access and development potential. The Council will look to work with a development partner to build on this foundation.

Further work will focus on phasing, site assembly, and agreeing the most effective approach to risk, funding and responsibilities, ensuring the scheme can be progressed confidently and realistically.

3. Objectives of the Preliminary Market Engagement

The purpose of this Preliminary Market Engagement (PME) is to raise awareness among potential development partners of the opportunity within Hitchin town centre and the Council's emerging proposals for the site. It is intended to gauge market interest in participating in the regeneration and to identify parties with the capability and appetite to work in partnership with the Council.

The PME also aims to provide the Council with early insight into market perspectives on delivery, commercial structures, and risk allocation. In particular, it seeks to understand how developers would prefer to engage with the Council, what approaches would best support a viable and deliverable scheme, and what factors are likely to influence participation in any future procurement process.

Feedback from this exercise will help shape the Council's strategy, ensuring that future proposals and procurement arrangements are aligned with market conditions, commercially realistic, and capable of attracting strong and credible interest.

A PME Notice has been published (Link to Notice), in compliance with the Procurement Act 2023.

- Equal opportunity for all participants, with transparent findings.
- No unfair advantage to any participant, with conflicts of interest mitigated.
- Performance-based requirements instead of restrictive specifications.
- Fair access for SMEs to promote participant diversity.

PME findings will help the Council select the best procurement approach, contract structure, and evaluation criteria while considering whole lifecycle costs, sustainability, and social value.

4. Engagement Process

The Council and Lambert Smith Hampton are holding an informal briefing session at UKREiiF on 19 May 2026. This session is intended to provide background discussion and early market insight only. The formal route for submitting PME responses is through In-Tend, and any relevant information arising from the session will be made available through the PME process where appropriate.

5. Data Room

Please refer to the documents within the data room for further information on the opportunity. The Data room includes:

1. Development Principles May 2025
2. Churchgate Regeneration Zone Full Council Meeting July 2025
3. Churchgate Regeneration Zone Information Pack
4. Hitchin Parking Study Findings
5. Churchgate Progress Update (Internal Briefing Workshops) April 2026

Please refer to the Churchgate Regeneration Zone Information Pack document for the most up-to-date red line boundary, now excluding St Mary's car park, and the Council's latest site requirements.

6. Method of Engagement and Clarifications

North Hertfordshire District Council uses an E-Tendering system (In-Tend) for all procurement activities, including Preliminary Market Engagement (PME). Participants must submit their responses via the Supply Hertfordshire Portal at: Supply Hertfordshire Electronic Tendering Site - Home

- You must be registered on the portal to submit a response.
- If already registered, use your existing username and password.
- A password reminder link is available on the homepage if required.

For technical difficulties, please contact the In-Tend Helpdesk at 0845 557 8079 or support@in-tend.com

7. Instructions for Participants on Responding to PME Questions

Participants should provide clear, concise, and relevant responses to the questions in Annex A. Responses should focus on market insight, deliverability, viability, commercial considerations, procurement strategy, and any relevant evidence or experience that may assist the Council in shaping its future approach.

Participants can download this PME from the Supply Hertfordshire Portal. Participants are requested to complete all the questions at Annex A ensuring responses are returned in Microsoft Word

Please upload the completed document to the In-Tend e-tendering portal before the submission deadline, ensuring all supporting documents are included, where applicable.

8. Deadline for Submission & Clarifications

All PME responses must be submitted by **5pm, Monday 5 June 2026**. Late submissions may not be considered.

Any requests for clarification must be submitted via 'correspondence' function of the InTend portal *before the deadline in the PME Timetable* to allow the Council sufficient time to respond.

The Council reserves the right not to respond to clarifications submitted after the deadline or via any other means. If a clarification is relevant to all participants, the Council will share it anonymously with all participants.

If a participant considers their query confidential, they must state this when submitting their request. The Council will notify them if confidentiality cannot be maintained, allowing them to withdraw or amend the request.

Participants must monitor clarifications issued via the Portal, as the Council accepts no liability for participants missing important updates.

9. Confidentiality and Fair Competition Measures

The Council is committed to protecting confidential information shared during the Preliminary Market Engagement (PME). Any proprietary or sensitive data provided by participants will be:

- Kept strictly confidential and used solely for the purpose of informing the procurement process.
- Not shared with competitors unless deemed necessary for transparency, in which case it will be anonymised.
- Stored securely within the Council's procurement system, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

All relevant non-confidential findings from PME will be included in the final tender documents to ensure transparency. Participants will receive a summary of market insights where appropriate, without revealing individual participant contributions. This ensures that all bidders have access to the same information, maintaining fair competition.

To ensure a level playing field, the Council will:

- Engage with a broad range of participants, including SMEs, to encourage competition.
- Make key PME insights publicly available in tender documents, ensuring no participant has exclusive access to information.
- Avoid overly prescriptive specifications that could favour specific participants, instead focusing on performance-based outcomes.
- Where appropriate, meeting summaries, key discussion points, and market insights will be shared with all potential bidders.
- Any confidential aspects will be redacted before publication to maintain participant trust.
- Any potential conflicts of interest identified during PME will be logged and assessed before proceeding to tender.

10. Next Steps and Indicative Timeline

Following the Preliminary Market Engagement (PME), the Council will:

- Review participant feedback to refine specifications and procurement strategy.
- Incorporate relevant market insights into the final procurement documents.
- Publish the tender notice, ensuring a fair and competitive process.
- Communicate any clarifications arising from PME findings to all potential bidders.

The following indicative timetable provides an estimate of key procurement milestones:

Stage	Indicative Date
Publication of this Preliminary Market Engagement (PME)	1 May 2026
Deadline for clarification questions	22 May 2026
Deadline for Council responses to clarification questions	29 May 2026
Deadline for submission of PME Annex A responses	05 June 2026
Participant feedback review & analysis	30 June 2026
Finalisation of Procurement Strategy (estimated)	03 August 2026

ANNEX A QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS AND RESPONSE FORM

Procurement/Contract Name	Churchgate Regeneration Zone, Hitchin Town Centre
Procurement Initiation Document Reference Number	NHDC01128038

A. Viability, Market Appetite and Land Use

Background

The Council is progressing a mixed-use regeneration vision for the Churchgate area, incorporating residential, retail, food and beverage, market, public realm, and community uses. However, the appropriate balance of uses, market demand, and overall commercial viability requires further testing. The Council is seeking market feedback to refine the proposed land use mix ahead of a future procurement.

Questions

1. Is the proposed mixed-use vision commercially viable in current market conditions? If not, what changes to the land use mix would be required to deliver a viable scheme?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

2. What level and type of retail, food and beverage, and residential development could be realistically supported in this location, taking into account demand, planning, and wider constraints?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

B. Market, Retail and Town Centre Function

Background

Hitchin Market, the Churchgate Shopping Centre, and surrounding town centre uses are central to the area's identity and function. Evidence highlights a need for investment, revitalisation, and potential right-sizing of the market and wider commercial offer. The Council is seeking views on how the market, alongside retail, food and beverage, leisure, community uses, and public realm, can work together to enhance footfall, complement the wider town centre, and remain commercially sustainable.

Questions

3. How would you see Hitchin Market and the surrounding mix of retail, food and beverage, and community uses working together in practice, particularly in terms of their size, layout, and day-to-day operation, to support a vibrant and commercially sustainable town centre without duplicating the existing offer?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

C. Heritage, Parking, Access and Physical Constraints

Background
The Churchgate area sits within a sensitive historic town centre context, close to St Mary's Church, River Hiz, and the conservation area. It also includes parking, established servicing arrangements, and key pedestrian connections. These factors are likely to influence the scale, layout, viability, and deliverability of any redevelopment. The Council is seeking market views on how these constraints can be addressed in a practical and commercially viable way.

Questions
4. What scale and form of development is realistically deliverable in this location, taking into account viability, heritage sensitivities, and planning considerations?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

5. How should parking, access, servicing, and movement be managed to enable development while continuing to support the function and vitality of the town centre, and what are the viability implications of different approaches?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

D. Phasing, Land Assembly and Deliverability

Background
The Churchgate area is an active town centre location with existing trading uses, market activity, access requirements, servicing arrangements, and multiple land and legal interests. As such, any redevelopment will need to carefully consider phasing, land assembly, and delivery constraints. The Council is seeking views on the practical steps required to move from the current position to a viable and deliverable regeneration scheme.

Questions
6. How could development be phased to enable delivery while maintaining the function and vitality of the town centre during construction?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

7. What key land, legal, or operational challenges could affect deliverability, including any risks that could prevent the scheme proceeding in its current form, and how should these be addressed prior to market engagement?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

E. Delivery Model, Commercial Structure and Investment

Background

The Council has not yet determined a preferred delivery model or commercial structure for the Churchgate scheme. Different approaches will have implications for risk, control, funding, viability, phasing, and market appetite. The Council is seeking views on the delivery and investment arrangements most likely to support a viable, deliverable, and investable scheme, including the potential need for public sector intervention.

Questions

8. What delivery model and commercial structure would be most appropriate for a scheme of this complexity, and how should risk, control, and funding be balanced between the Council and a delivery partner?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

F. Procurement Strategy

Background

The procurement will be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023. The Council is also aware of the time, cost and resource implications of undertaking a conventional procurement.

Questions

9. How can a procurement process be structured to remain fully compliant while also being proportionate and commercially realistic for bidders?

Response	Word Count (400 words max)

H. Additional Observations

Please identify any additional observations, lessons learned or practical suggestions that the Council should consider when developing its procurement and delivery strategy for the Churchgate Regeneration Zone.

Response	Word Count (500 words max)

CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSION

Description	Check
Completed Annex A PME response form in Word	
All supporting documents uploaded and referenced	
Confidentiality declaration included (if applicable)	
Submitted via In-Tend before the deadline	
Signed and dated	

The Council looks forward to your participation in this Preliminary Market Engagement and appreciates your valuable input.

SIGNATURE:	_____
NAME (PRINT):	_____
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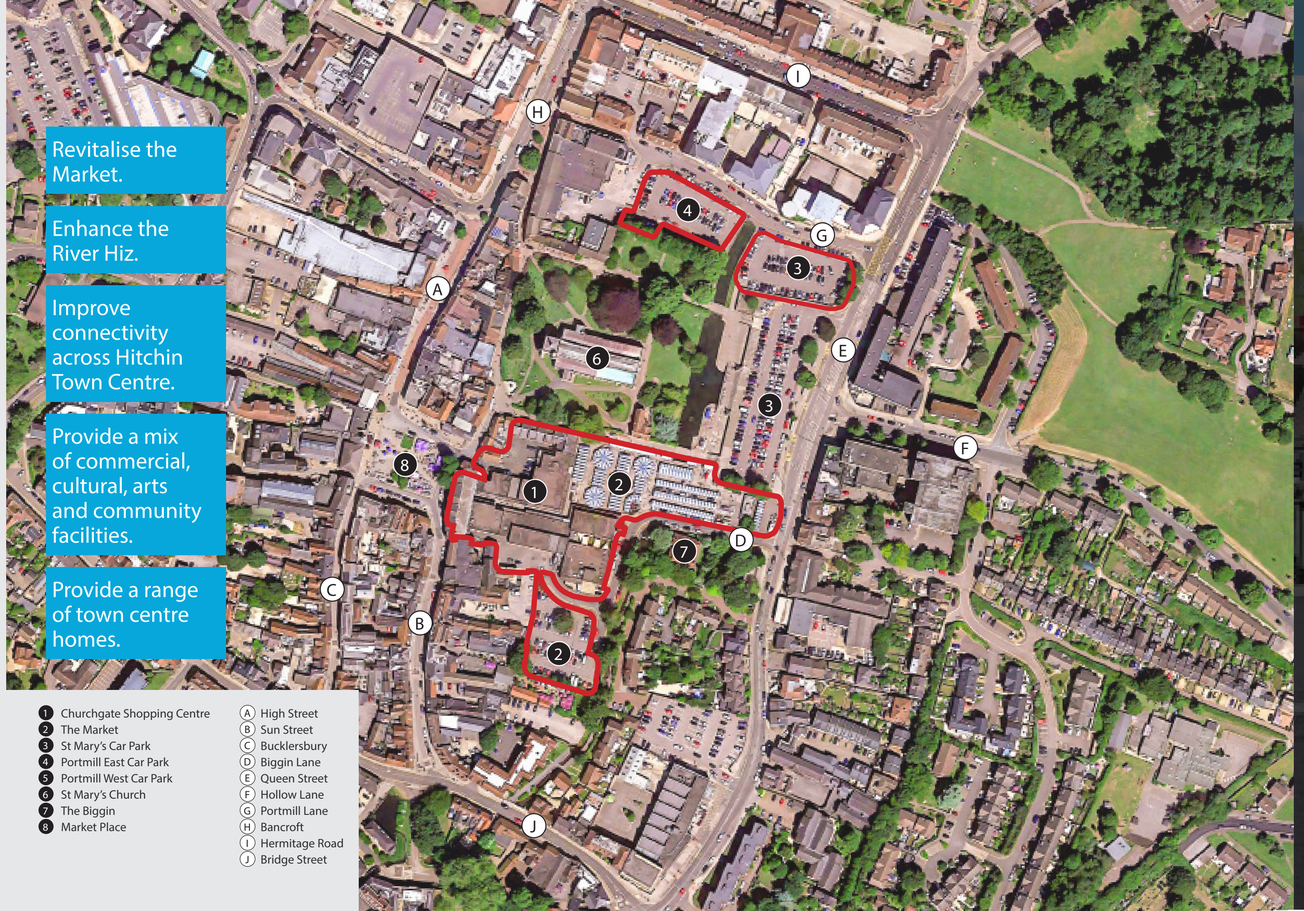
The Site

This is a Council-owned site of over 4 acres in the heart of Hitchin town centre. Its is bounded by Portmill Lane, Queen Street and Biggin Lane. The site sits adjacent to the historic Market Place and the surrounding Grade I listed St. Mary's Church. The River Hiz runs through and beneath the site.

The site includes:

- The 1970's Churchgate Shopping Centre (5,481 sqm)
- The 800 year old open-air charter market
- 3 surface car parks
- Service yards, accessed via Biggin Lane and Market Place.

- The site offers strong opportunity the eastern edge of the town centre with significant potential to:
- Create a more welcoming gateway to Market Place and the Church.
- Revitalise the market as a key destination for the town.
- Enhance the River Hiz and create new riverside walkways.
- Improve pedestrian connections across the town centre.
- Deliver a mixed-use scheme: commercial, market space and town centre homes, including affordable housing.
- Regeneration supported by Local Plan policy.



North Herts Council

Churchgate Regeneration Zone

Hitchin Town Centre

Lambert Smith Hampton

Hitchin is an attractive historic market town with a strong and vibrant offer. It is one of the main shopping and commercial centres in North Hertfordshire, characterised by an eclectic mix of national, regional and independent shops, cafés, restaurants and bars, and a popular market.

£4.05bn GVA in 2021. 10% of Hertfordshire's total GVA.

A 19% increase in GVA since 2016, higher than the national average of 2%.

64,000 jobs in 2021. A 16% increase between 2000 and 2021.

The population growth rate was higher than the national average from 2000 to 2021.

All data is for North Herts as a whole and from the 'North Hertfordshire Economic Profile', December 2023

The future vision for the Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ) will comprise a blend of options that create a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable Hitchin town centre, underpinned by the five themes below.

These have been informed by a baseline review and technical work by Lambert Smith Hampton, KMC Transport Planning, Markides Associates, Maket Curators as well as the public consultation in late 2024:

01 Heritage-Led Regeneration

Preserving Hitchin's rich history whilst introducing complementary development.

02 Mixed-Use Intensification

Maximising land use efficiency by integrating residential, retail and leisure in to a cohesive development.

03 Market & Riverfront Revitalisation

ransform Hitchin Market and the River Hiz corridor into a dynamic, community-centred hub.

04 Sustainable & Smart Growth Strategy

Integrating green infrastructure, low-carbon technologies and smart mobility solutions.

05 Strategic Development of Underutilised Sites

Unlock new development in potential key areas such as the car parks while balancing density and character.

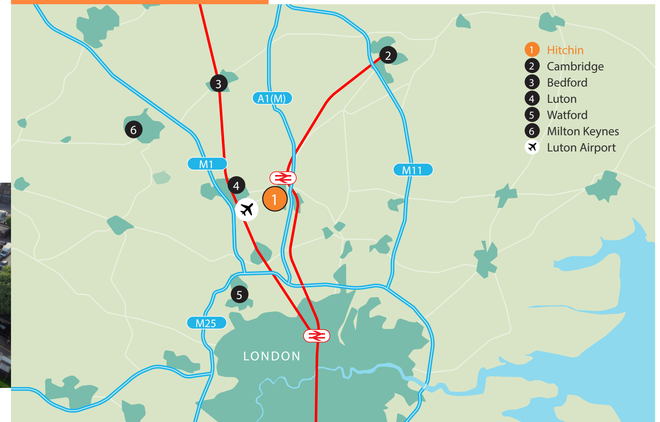
Key retailers in Hitchin Town Centre include:

Waitrose FATFACE
M&S WHITE STUFF
FOOD next
MINT VELVET
OLIVER BONAS
CREW CLOTHING COMPANY

Hitchin Town Centre

Location. The town benefits from strong road and rail transport links, being only a few miles from junction 8 of the A1 motorway and the A6. There is a frequent rail service from Hitchin Station to London Kings Cross, and an easy drive to Luton Airport.

32-46 minutes by train To London Kings Cross St Pancras	55 trains per day To London Kings Cross St Pancras
32 minutes by train To Cambridge (64 services / day)	Every 20 minutes Direct train to Gatwick Airport
17 minutes by car To Luton Airport	45 minutes by car To Milton Keynes and Cambridge



Next Steps

The Council is on an early part of its regeneration journey for the Churchgate Regeneration Zone (CRZ). The Council's overarching aim through the revitalisation of the CRZ is to raise the attraction and profile of Hitchin as a place to live, work, shop and visit for a wide range of uses and activities.

As we move forward, we are seeking to further explore opportunities with potential development partners who will share our passion and drive to transform Hitchin into a thriving town that everyone can be proud of.

Contact us in shaping the next chapter of Hitchin's story!

Key Contacts:

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Pre Market Engagement Website

UKREiiF Breakfast Presentation

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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CABINET
16 June 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT

REPORT OF: Service Director - Regulatory

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Mick Debenham, Executive Member for Regulatory

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The Council has received a multi-year funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting the Council in meeting its homelessness duties.

1.2. This report details proposals for the allocation of some of this funding in line with grant conditions, national policy and local priorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet approves the funding proposals for the allocation of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant received from the MHCLG as outlined in Table 4 in paragraph 8.11.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. There is a need to secure housing services for homeless households in the district, including key existing services on the single homeless pathway. 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 15 May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. Historically, the Council has received homelessness grant on an annual basis and in a variety of forms from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the purpose of supporting it in carrying out its homelessness duties. Recent reform of the local government finance landscape has replaced this with a multi-year funding settlement which brings together multiple funding streams into a single, ringfenced, Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (HRSDAG).

7.2. Final allocations of the HRSDAG for North Herts Council were announced in February 2026:

Table 1. Final funding allocation for North Herts Council

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping & Domestic Abuse Grant TOTAL	**£950,409**	**£959,683**	**£965,267**	**£2,875,359**
of which, indicative allocations of:				
Funding for homelessness and rough sleeping	£857,188	£894,912	£925,795	£2,677,895
Funding for Renters' Rights Act 2025 New Burdens	£55,440	£26,104	£0	£81,544
Funding for Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant	£37,781	£38,667	£39,472	£115,920

7.3. The purpose of the HRSDAG is to support local authorities to:

- discharge their homelessness duties under the Housing Act 1996, including support for single homeless households in non-priority need;
- provide support for rough sleeping;
- deliver against local homelessness strategies and in line with the government's National Plan to End Homelessness (published in December 2025);
- focus on early intervention and prevention activities;
- cover the additional costs for homelessness services stemming from the Renters' Rights Act 2025;
- support survivors of domestic abuse in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

7.4 The Grant may not be spent on costs directly related to temporary accommodation (with some exceptions, including for provision of supported accommodation). Funding for temporary accommodation has now been separated out from the HRSDAG, to end the tension between councils having to choose between investment in prevention and meeting temporary accommodation costs. Instead, funding for temporary accommodation has been rolled un-ringfenced into the Revenue Support Grant as part of the wider Local Government Settlement and councils will not have a separate named allocation for temporary accommodation.

7.5 Alongside the above reforms, the new Grant is more clearly grounded in a needs-based allocation model, informed by local homelessness and rough sleeping data submitted to MHCLG. The Council consistently receives over 1,000 approaches for homelessness and housing advice each year. In addition, table 2 details legal duties that the Council owes to households who formally approach as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Table 2. Homeless duties owed

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Households owed a prevention duty	196	175	204	189	161
Households owed a relief duty	281	241	267	249	209
Households owed a main housing duty	128	123	130	138	119
of which, single households	53	43	43	67	56

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

7.6 Last year (2025/26), the Council owed a legal duty to 370 households who approached us for assistance with preventing or relieving their homelessness. The key reasons behind homelessness are consistently: friends and family being unable or unwilling to accommodate (on average 25% of cases over the past three years); ending of private rented sector tenancies (23%); ending of social rented tenancies (15%); 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 2024/25 (the last full year's published data), 64% of households that the Council owed a duty to had a support need and 39% had two or more support needs, including challenges such as poor mental health, substance misuse and offending histories. In October - December 2025/26 (the latest published data), 71% of households owed a duty had a support need.

7.7 The Council also owed 119 'priority need' homeless households a main housing duty in 2025/26, 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 3 summarises temporary accommodation (TA) demand.

Table 3. Households in temporary accommodation (snapshot at year end)

	31/03/22	31/03/23	31/03/24	31/03/25	31/03/26
Households in TA	101	97	105	99	88
Of which:					
households with children	56	65	75	65	63
single households	42	32	26	32	23
hotel placements*	15	14	21	15	12

Source: NHC analysis of homelessness case data
* includes other nightly paid accommodation

7.8 The Council received £1.09m of homelessness grant funding for 2025/26. This has been used to secure valuable ongoing work on the prevention side (including specialist advice and support services provided by Survivors Against Domestic Abuse, Citizens' Advice, the Black Squirrel Credit Union and Herts Young Homeless) as well as an outreach support service for rough sleepers. Grant funding was also used to support local accommodation options, including the Keystage Housing scheme for single people with complex needs in Hitchin which has been providing a high-quality accommodation and support service for local people since December 2021. The Council has also directed resources into growing its involvement in the private rented sector, enabling a greater number of private rental properties to be

secured for its clients. These decisions were taken at Cabinet on 11 February 2025, 19 November 2025 and 17 February 2026 as well as via a delegated decision of 7 May 2026.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Council no longer owns or manages any housing stock, and it therefore works closely with housing providers to meet local needs. Keystage Housing and One YMCA provide specialist accommodation and support as part of the Council's single homeless pathway, providing high quality, self-contained accommodation for single people with complex needs.

8.2 The Keystage PAIRS (Provision for Assessment, Intervention and Resettlement Support) scheme, located in Hitchin, opened in 2021 and comprises 21 units of accommodation. The One YMCA scheme, at Anderson House, Hitchin opened at the start of 2025 and currently provides 22 units of accommodation (plus an additional 24 units for young people funded by MHCLG's Single Homeless Accommodation Programme). Both locations have 24-hour support and provide safe living environments in which individuals can develop skills and confidence to sustain longer-term housing solutions. The service providers work closely with Adult Social Care, health services and other agencies to help individuals access appropriate specialist services such as mental health support.

8.3 Since the pandemic, single households have become a significant core of demand for homelessness assistance, comprising almost half of all households owed a main housing duty (table 2). The single homeless pathway generally operates at full capacity with a waiting list for accommodation averaging around 30 people at any one time. The pathway enables us to move individuals on from temporary accommodation in a meaningful way, providing them with the support they need, and has reduced reliance on hotel placements to some degree (although these remain a last resort for some people, for example those with restrictions on where they can live, imposed by the criminal justice system).

8.4 The Council has provided both Keystage and One YMCA with MHCLG grant funding (normally) on an annual basis in order to ensure that appropriate support levels could be maintained on the single homeless pathway. The receipt of the multi-year funding award from the MHCLG now enables the Council to provide much needed stability for the next three years, and would sustain these services to March 2029, including the first year of the new unitary council, as the anticpated new local government arrangements take shape.

8.5 This report contains a proposal to provide a total of £697k worth of grant funding over the next three years to Keystage Housing. Since its opening, PAIRS has supported over 100 placements, with 65 to date having moved on to their own accommodation via the single homeless pathway (42), reconnected with family (12) or into other accommodation to suit support needs.

8.6 Keystage are finalising arrangements for their accommodation to be able to access higher levels of Housing Benefit. This is a key funding source that supports the ongoing viability of the services that they provide but still requires the top-up funding detailed in this report due to the support they provide to address the needs of their residents. Keystage have been managing with lower levels of Housing Benefit payments, which has been putting a huge strain on their finances. This was the need for the most recent amount of funding agreed in the delegated decision of 7 May 2026. That delegated funding lasts until the end of June 2026. The Keystage service will be unviable in the medium-term if they do not get the higher level of Housing Benefit funding. The service will become immediately unviable without the regular payment of this HRSDAG funding. To protect the interests of the Council the payment

of grant funding will be made on a monthly basis until it is confirmed that the Keystage provision can access the higher levels of Housing Benefit payments.

8.7 We are also currently in discussion with One YMCA to finalise their proposals for funding their support service over the same period - three years - and this is likely to be presented for Cabinet consideration in September 2026. In the meantime, One YMCA are looking to scale up their capacity at Anderson House in line with the conditions of their planning consent and 'doubling-up' the number of units for some of the flats, eventually increasing the occupancy from 46 to 71 people. This involves replacing internal doors with fire doors on some flats, creating a further 17 units, and then also using the two (ex-warden) houses as step down accommodation for another eight people. One YMCA's funding proposal is for £81,600 for the fire doors which are being procured by a framework agreement, and this does not include the significant cost of compartmentation of each of the thresholds, that need to be attached to the concrete.

8.8 Prevention work is central to the government's new approach to tackling homelessness, contained in its National Plan to End Homelessness. The Council has long invested in prevention activities including working with specialist providers where necessary. Herts Young Homeless (HYH) has provided an education service for secondary school age pupils in local schools for many years, running sessions which aim to help young people make informed life choices and encouraging them to access help and support before crisis point. In 2025/26, HYH educated almost 1,000 young people in North Herts, with 376 vulnerable students receiving more than one education session.

8.9 HYH are expanding this service to primary school pupils aged 10-11 years (with age-appropriate content) and this report proposes to allocate £8,000 of HRSDAG for this purpose in 2026/27. This includes funding to secure the continuation of HYH's Keeping Families Together service, which provides wrap-around support (mediation, counselling and wellbeing services) for young people referred from the education service, aiming to reduce the risk of family relationship breakdown. Last year, HYH supported over 100 young people and their families across Hertfordshire through their Keeping Families Together Service.

8.10 HYH also delivers against domestic abuse priorities, with domestic abuse being the second largest cause of youth homelessness. Their education and mediation services both aim to teach young people and their parents to manage anger and conflict in a healthy, non-violent way. The HYH service is well placed to signpost and refer any VAWG issues for appropriate intervention and safeguarding.

8.11 Table 4 below summarises the funding proposals for Keystage ,One YMCA and HYH:

Table 4. Proposals for homelessness grant allocations for 2026/27 onwards

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Single homeless scheme (Keystage Housing)	£186,063*	£251,591	£259,139	£696,793
Single homeless scheme (One YMCA)	£81,600			£81,600
HYH primary education service	£8,000	-	-	£8,000
Total	**£275,663**	**£251,591**	**£259,139**	**£786,393**

Unallocated HRSDAG	£674,746	£708,092	£706,128	£2,088,966^

***** Interim funding of £58,200, from the 2026/27 HRSDAG allocation, was allocated to Keystage in a delegated decision taken on 7 May 2026 therefore the figure in the above table is the remaining amount of their funding proposal for 2026/27.

^Further proposals regarding the unallocated HRSDAG amounts above will likely be presented for Cabinet consideration in September 2026.

8.12 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.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council has been notified of total allocations of £2,875,359 in Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant, covering the three-year period 2026/27 – 2028/29. Grant is ring-fenced to support delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness including amongst those sleeping rough and survivors of domestic abuse.

10.2 The proposals in this report put forward an initial tranche of proposals for how this grant should be allocated. Further proposals will be brought to Cabinet later in the year.

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 Affordable accommodation remains extremely challenging to source in North Herts. The Keystage and One YMCA schemes form a fundamental part of the Council's single homeless pathway and without funding to support the ongoing operation of these schemes, the pathway will have significantly reduced capacity to accommodate our most vulnerable clients, those with complex needs (such as mental and physical ill health and histories of rough sleeping and substance abuse).

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 None.

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

17.4 Ian Couper, Director – Resources, ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4243

17.5 Daisy Harris, Policy and Strategy Officer, daisy.harris@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4209

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 MHCLG's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant Determination 2026 to 2027

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Name of activity:	Allocation of MHCLG homelessness grant
2. Main purpose of activity:	To fund specialist services to support the Council in meeting its legal homelessness duties, namely: • support and accommodation services for single homeless people with complex needs (provided by Keystage Housing and One YMCA); • an education service for young people (provided by Herts Young Homeless)
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	MHCLG Statutory homelessness local authority level tables 2024-25 Review of Homelessness in North Hertfordshire NHC analysis of case level homelessness data 2025/26 Shelter analysis homelessness and BAME community Centrepoint LGBTQplus safe spaces

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** The Council's homelessness services provide support and accommodation for local people in need across the district. Preventing and tackling homelessness has positive effects not just for the individual but also for the community as a whole, including reduced anti-social behaviour, reduced poverty and increased social cohesion as well as reduced burdens on public services such as health and social care.
A person living with a disability	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** Almost two-thirds of households in the district owed a homelessness duty (because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness) have a support need, and 39% had two or more support needs in 2024/25 (the latest published whole year data). These include poor mental health (36% of households in 24/25), physical ill health (28%) and learning disability (14%). The proposed funding for the Keystage service will enable it to continue to provide a high level of support to individuals with a

				range of needs from learning disabilities, enduring mental health and complex needs.
A person of a particular race	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** Minority ethnic groups are more likely to experience homelessness with black people in particular more than three times as likely to. Locally, 19% of applicants owed a homelessness duty in 2024/25 were of a minority ethnic group, despite comprising 12% of the North Herts population overall. The proposed additional funding for local homelessness services including an expansion of accommodation options via the private rented offer therefore likely to benefit this group in particular (although absolutely numbers remain small).
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, however local data suggests a very small number of LGBTQ+ people applying as homeless in the district (15 in 2024/25, although a significant proportion – 20% - of applicants chose not to provide this information).
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness nationally and in North Herts, with on average 11% of households owed a homelessness duty citing domestic abuse as their reason for homelessness. The vast majority of victims of domestic abuse are women, many of whom will have children and with some forced to flee their home for fear of violence. The specialist Herts Young Homeless service aims to prevent domestic abuse from occurring through education and signposting as appropriate.
A person of a particular religion or belief	x	☐	☐	**Negative** **Positive**
A person of a particular age	☐	☐	x	**Negative**

				Positive The proposed funding to extend the Herts Young Homeless education project to primary school age children will specifically benefit children aged 10-11 years. The primary focus of this intervention is prevention.
Transgender	☐	☐	x	**Negative** **Positive** National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness, however only a very small number of people (7 in 2024/25) owed a homeless duty by the Council are of a different gender to their sex at birth.

5 Results

	Yes	No	
Were positive impacts identified?	x	☐	Additional funding for specialist homelessness services in the district will stabilise provision locally, providing security of funding for the next 3 years. Service users include some of the most vulnerable people in the district who, without assistance, will continue to face ongoing barriers to positive life outcomes (including repeated homelessness, exclusion from society, poverty and ill health) and lack of opportunity to address support needs.
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.	x	☐	In general, homelessness services by their design will benefit those groups who are most likely to experience homelessness e.g. ethnic minority groups and LGBTQ+ people. The HYH service is specifically targeted at young people. Service providers in receipt of grant funding are required to monitor and report on key measures of performance including outcomes by protected characteristics.
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?
The EqiA uses local data, trend information and service demand evidence well to identify the specific need within the district. It highlights protected characteristics who are more vulnerable to homelessness and will benefit from this funding. Key organisations have been consulted to ensure targeted service provision is being delivered to those most at risk.
Describe the decision on this activity
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively

Action	Responsible person	Completion due date
Regular and close working with service providers through formal and informal contacts will highlight any issues in a timely way.	Contract managers	ongoing
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?		
Ongoing and regular dialogue with service providers; formal monitoring and reporting as per funding agreements. Separate MHCLG monitoring and reporting requirements also apply to grant funding received by NHC. Also regular internal monitoring of housing and homelessness activity.		

7. Signatures	
Assessor	
Name: **Tiranan Straughan**	Signature** T F Straughan
Validated by	
Name: Martin Lawrence	Signature** M S Lawrence
Forward to the Corporate Policy Team	
Signature** Daisy Harris	
Assessment date: 02/06/26	Review date: 02/06/27

** **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.