Growing Baldock

Strategic Masterplan



February 2025

Urban&Civic Hertfordshire

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1.0 Introduction

This Strategic Masterplan provides a framework for the development of land to the north and east of Baldock, in accordance with policy SP9 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022). The Baldock site is allocated in the Local Plan as a sustainable extension of around 3,000 homes, employment, local centre(s), schools and community facilities, sustainable transport connections and green infrastructure. The Strategic Masterplan has been prepared in stages to align with the North Hertfordshire Strategic Masterplan Brief (2022), including the collation of baseline evidence, options testing and public consultation, culminating in this final Strategic Masterplan report.

Purpose of the Strategic Masterplan

This Strategic Masterplan:

- secures an integrated evidence base that informs the optimal distribution, location and type of land uses, green space and infrastructure to create a high-quality development that meets the requirements of Local Plan policies SP9 and SP14;
- sets a framework for the resolution of planning, infrastructure and delivery issues to expedite implementation;
- supports a collaborative approach and shared vision between the landowner, North Herts Council (NHC), Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), key stakeholders and the community; and
- supports the delivery of a coordinated and integrated place, design quality and phased infrastructure provision.

The Growing Baldock development is being brought forward by master developer Urban&Civic (U&C) in a development partnership with landowners HCC.

The Strategic Masterplan will help shape the development as it is brought forward and defined within an outline planning application, which will be the next step towards delivering the growth of Baldock. This final Strategic Masterplan marks the point at which the Growing Baldock scheme transitions from strategic masterplanning into the planning application stage, moving one step closer to implementation.

Structure of the Strategic Masterplan

The Strategic Masterplan includes the following sections:

- Vision for Growing Baldock
- The Baldock Conversation
- Context & Baseline Evidence
- Land Use Framework
- Green Infrastructure Framework
- Biodiversity Framework
- Movement Framework
- Urban Design Framework
- Sustainability and Energy Framework
- Housing Need and Diversification
- Composite Framework
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Conclusions and Next Steps

The Strategic Masterplan is supported by the following separate documents that were produced in February 2024 and will continue to evolve and be updated to inform the outline planning application:

- Heritage Impact Assessment – Built Heritage
- Heritage Impact Assessment – Archaeology
- Interim Transport Assessment
- Interim Sustainable Drainage Strategy
- Interim Utilities Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation and Feasibility Assessment
- Sustainability and Energy Strategy
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- Landscape Character and Sensitivity Appraisal

2.0 Vision for Growing Baldock

Vision

Sustainability is at the heart of the vision for Growing Baldock. U&C, HCC and NHC have jointly prepared a vision which is expressed diagrammatically and in full text opposite:



Figure 01: Growing Baldock Vision

Vision Statement

Growing Baldock will deliver a **new neighbourhood** of open spaces, homes, community facilities and employment areas that is part of and intrinsically linked to the existing town. Baldock will grow in an environmentally, socially and financially sustainable way through excellent planning, design, construction and operation.

The new development will **strengthen Baldock** as a vibrant town with a rich and distinctive history by helping reveal and celebrate the historic environment through the creation of heritage trails, new community assets, public realm and community events and activities.

The Baldock Greenway, will **connect new and existing open spaces** around the town, supporting active travel and healthy lifestyles and providing access to the surrounding countryside. On site provision of green spaces will alleviate pressure on the Ivel Springs and Weston Hills Nature Reserves make substantial new **'space for nature'** and biodiversity net gain.

Growth will be planned so that every resident's first choice of movement can be to walk, cycle, or use public transport to meet their daily needs. This will be reflected in the wider transport strategy for Baldock, working with the council to **improve walking and cycling routes** through and around the town.

New education, health, employment and community facilities will complement and enhance existing provision in Baldock, including strengthening existing education provision before delivering new facilities, and **meeting the needs of all children within Baldock**. Day to day needs will be met on site in locations that are easily **accessible by sustainable modes of travel**, to encourage social interaction, well-being and strong communities. Enhanced **connections to the town centre**, and increased footfall will support the heart of the town and its diversity of shops and businesses.

The development will achieve **net zero** in operational carbon emissions through building design, minimising construction emissions, local renewable energy production and storage (where feasible) and via carbon offsetting.

Framework Key Principles

The Vision will be delivered through the application of the following Framework Key Principles. These are guiding principles that fix key components of the development and are explained further in the Framework sections of the SMP (sections 5–10).

Land Use Key Principles:



High-quality housing to meet the needs of all ages



Meet the educational needs of primary and secondary pupils from the development, in Baldock



Supporting and strengthening Baldock Town Centre

Green Infrastructure Key Principles:



Enhancing inherited assets



Prioritising nature rich places



Celebrating heritage



A Greenway for Baldock



Creating a series of parkland destinations



Landscape-led design



Ensuring 360° access to your '5-a-day'

Biodiversity Key Principles:



Enhancement of Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site



Integrating habitats and corridors, trees and hedgerows, into GI network



Creation of network of connected wildlife corridors and green spaces



Connections to and buffering of Local Nature Reserves



Mitigation of impacts on ecology through provision of new habitats



Native and climate resilient planting



Additional green spaces to reduce recreational pressure elsewhere

Movement Key Principles:



A place where half of all trips are made on foot, bicycle or public transport



Town-wide improvements to encourage sustainable and active travel



Reclaiming space for walking, cycling and public transport

Urban Design Key Principles:



Respecting and responding to Baldock's unique character and built form



Retaining and enhancing key views towards Baldock and the wider landscape



Integrating the new neighbourhoods with Baldock through the considered design of connections and transitions between old and new



Putting place-making at the heart of the development.



Creating a new gateway into Baldock



A mix of buildings, spaces and character

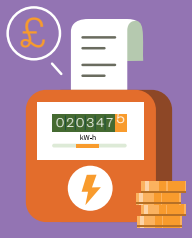
Sustainability Key Principles:



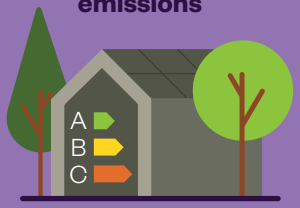
All buildings Net Zero in operational carbon emissions



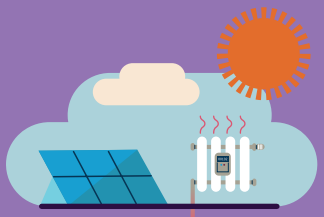
All-electric development



Contributions to carbon offset fund, if required



Highly energy efficient homes and buildings



Use of renewable heat and energy-generating technologies

The vision and principles establish a clear framework for the development, against which the outline planning application, Design Code(s) and detailed applications will be tested, as they are brought forward. The principles are explained in more detail in the thematic chapters of the SMP (sections 5–10) and identify the core components of the Growing Baldock development. Each of these chapters includes a framework plan which identifies one way in which the site might be brought forward, based on the current known constraints and opportunities and applying the framework key principles.

The Ten 'Big Moves'

Ten 'Big Moves' are proposed that form the basis of the Strategic Masterplan, around which the development, and the principles that underpin it, are based. The Ten 'Big Moves' are presented here in no order of preference.

1. Local Centre to Complement High Street

A small local centre will meet the day-to-day needs of residents in the new development without competing with the vibrancy and success of the High Street.

2. Recharging the River Ivel

The development can help address some of the problems facing the River Ivel, by draining surface water from the development into the aquifer, which will help to restore the Ivel.

3. A Healthy and Connected Town – Baldock Greenway

A Greenway for Baldock will provide a continuous green loop around the development and town, connecting to wider walking routes including the Letchworth Greenway and the Etonbury Wheel.

4. Health Hub for Baldock

Baldock will need new health facilities as it grows as the existing medical centre is nearing full capacity. The development will work with health authorities to provide a new 'health hub' with GP and other health facilities, to serve the Baldock community.

5. Achieving Growing Baldock Net Zero

The development will be as sustainable as possible, aiming to be net zero in operational carbon and minimise construction carbon emissions. This is important to how Baldock grows and is a priority of HCC and NHC.

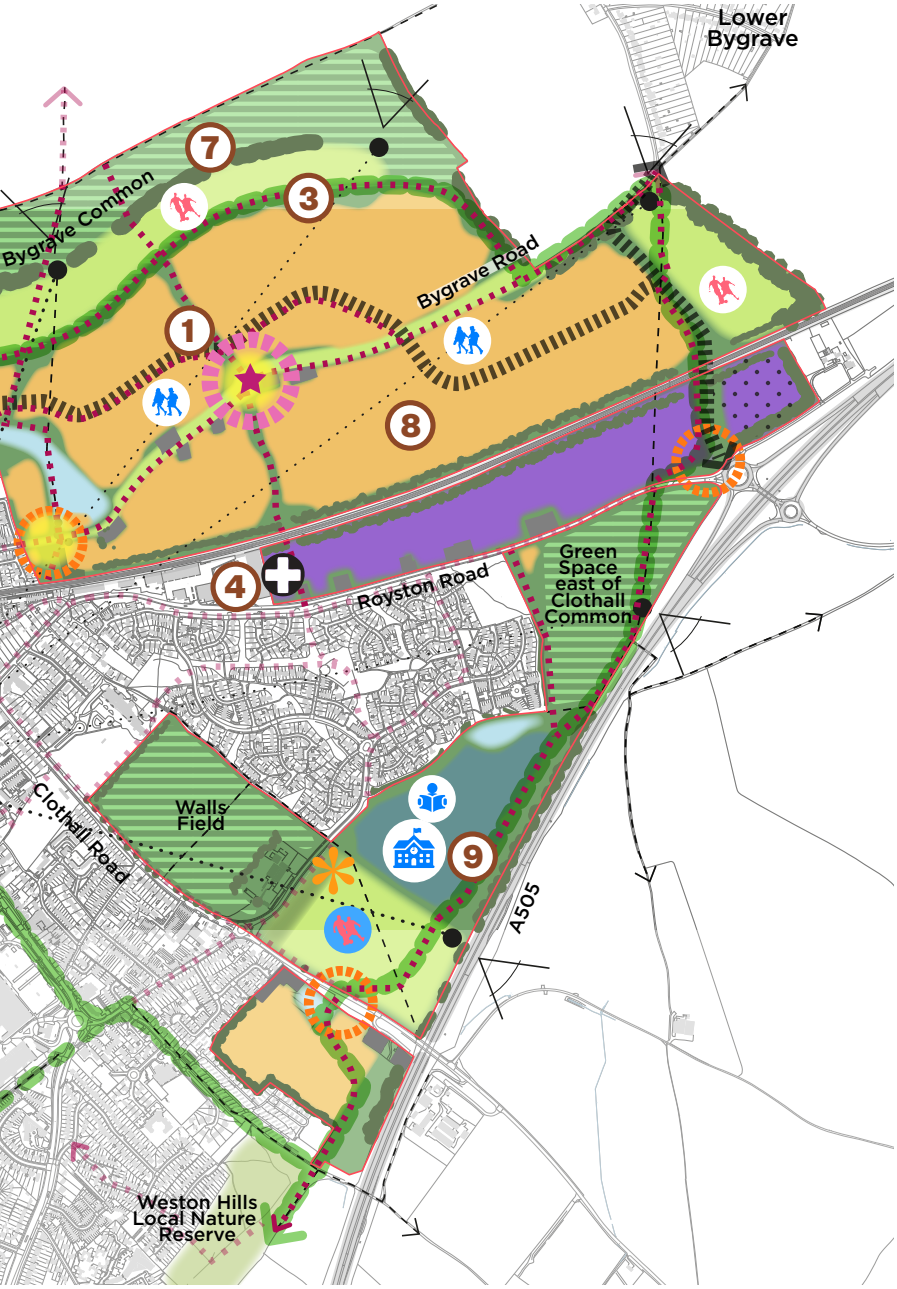
6. Re-interpreting Baldock's History – Heritage Trail

This part of Baldock has a very rich archaeological heritage dating back to Prehistoric and Roman times. This history will be brought to life through the creation of a 'Heritage Trail', a footpath around the development that connects and shares information about the features of archaeological interest, so that people can learn more about the history of human settlement at Baldock.



7. A New Life for Bygrave Common

A new Bygrave Common is proposed for Baldock, reinterpreting the historic common land in this area, and creating a brand-new park for the community. It will connect with the Baldock Greenway and provide spaces for nature and people to enjoy. Bygrave Common will incorporate some areas that are more informal and accessible to people, some that are dedicated to wildlife and biodiversity, and some areas that make provision for sports.



8. Much-needed New Homes for Baldock

Growing Baldock will provide c.3,000 new homes in a new neighbourhood that is strongly connected to the town. It will incorporate a mix of dwelling types, sizes and affordabilities to meet a wide range of needs.

9. Secondary Education to Meet Needs in Baldock

Knights Templar is extremely important to Baldock and the feedback from the community agrees that the preference is that it should remain the one secondary school provider in the town, serving its priority catchment area and where possible expanded, and potentially relocated, to cater for the increase in pupils generated by the development. Options being considered are that Knights Templar could either remain where it is and be expanded or relocated to the new development and expanded, or a new, additional secondary school be provided on-site. The Strategic Masterplan shows the potential for a secondary school on the BA3 parcel, south of Clothall Common. If the agreed solution is a relocated Knights Templar, then the school would need to be of sufficient size to provide for existing need plus any additional spaces required to meet need generated by the new housing growth. This option would mean the school would be larger than it is now, and that the site of the existing school would most likely be considered for redevelopment for new homes.

10. Redistributing Through Ttraffic

Approximately half of the traffic going through Baldock is through traffic that does not stop in the town. The Baldock development aims to repurpose the existing network to allow more sustainable journeys and 'reclaim' the streets for Baldock. It will be easier to walk and cycle through the heart of the town, although this does mean that it will be harder to drive through the town on some roads. Some junctions and roads within the town centre will need to change, in particular at the North Road railway bridge, where the width of the road will be restricted for vehicles and a 'shuttle' system controlled by traffic lights will be introduced. The Strategic Masterplan also suggests preventing cars being able to move from Station Road to Icknield Way/ Football Close to stop rat-running, and a 'modal filter' onto Norton Road where it joins with Icknield Way, to prevent people avoiding the road under the railway bridge.

The Strategic Masterplan also proposes restricting some of the turns that can be made at the Whitehorse crossroads, including a left-turn ban from Whitehorse Street into Station Road. This would stop people using Baldock to get to the A1(M) from Letchworth, but it would inconvenience some residents who would need to approach Station Road from Clothall Road instead.

3.0 The Baldock Conversation

The Strategic Masterplan has been prepared on a staged basis, as set out in the diagram at Figure 02 below:



▲ Figure 02: Strategic Masterplan Production Process

The discussions around the diverse aspects of Growing Baldock have continued as the work on the Strategic Masterplan has progressed and included a range of work streams and discussions with the community, with partners and stakeholders and a range of technical groups. U&C have developed the term 'The Baldock Conversation' to ensure continuity and inter-connectedness across themes as the plans evolve, and to reflect the genuine engagement by all parties to take this ambitious project forward in the right way for new and existing residents.

Given the scale of the new development, in respect to the existing town, and the multi-locational aspect of the allocation, it was essential to ensure that the key stakeholders were mapped and engaged at each stage of the process across statutory partners, key technical and interest groups and the wider community of the town and its surrounding villages. An engagement strategy to achieve this was developed with and signed off by NHC and HCC.

The Baldock Conversation: The Baseline

The conversation started at the Baseline Evidence report stage, with technical studies tested and inputted to by a range of stakeholders.





▲ Members of the public at the Baseline public exhibition, March 2023

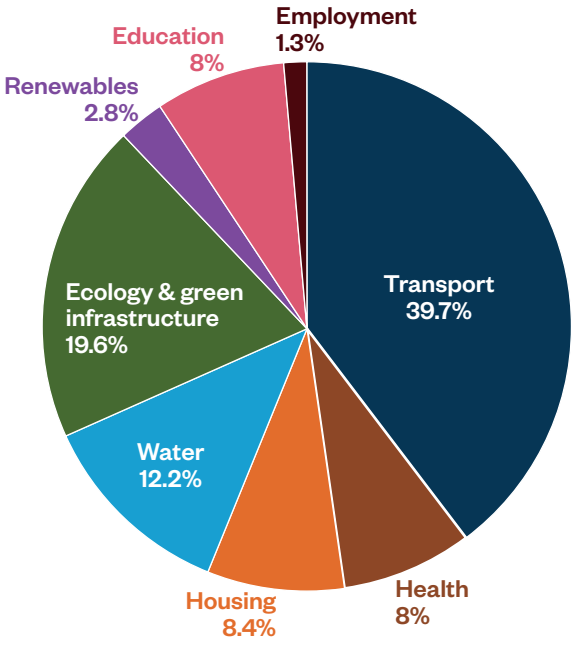
A summary of this baseline work is provided in section 4 of this report and in more detail in the separate Composite Baseline Report. This work was shared with key partners and formed the basis of initial themed workshops with statutory authorities and key interested parties.

The information in the reports was further tested with the local community, in public events in March 2023. This engagement work consisted of:

- targeted promotion to the core stakeholders and interested groups identified for face to face meetings before, during or after the consultation events;
- widespread promotion to the town and local villages for two drop-in consultation events at the Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre;
- an online consultation, supported by social media promotion, using the same core material and hosted on the Growing Baldock website.

The content shared in these events covered the background of the site, including its allocation and local policy; the master developer approach and U&C's role within the project; and asked residents their thoughts on the many aspects of growing a community such as transport, education and ecology as well as their knowledge of the town and how it functions. A full set of the consultation content is available on the Growing Baldock website (www.growingbaldock.co.uk).

A summary of the outcomes of this consultation is presented below:



▲ Figure 03: Key topics raised by the community – March 2023 from 400 comments

Figure 04 below captures the core issues that were raised in the initial public consultation events in March 2023. As the process then moved from baseline investigation and public consultation, the below defines how how the issues were responded to through exploring them further in the options testing and moving forward to a draft strategic masterplan.



▲ Figure 04: Comments arising from consultation, March 2023

1. *Ivel Springs*

We are exploring how sustainable drainage systems within the development can support recharging the aquifer as well as working with the wider local water cycle. We are also talking with the water companies to ensure future water supplies are robust and sustainable for the development and wider area. New homes will also feature water reduction technologies, and encourage sustainable use of water.

2. *Green space*

We will provide not just new areas of accessible green space for people and nature – such as Bygrave Common and Walls Field – but also corridors throughout the development to connect with wider green areas. The Baldock Greenway will be a key part of connecting these new important spaces, alongside enabling sustainable connections to existing Nature Reserves at Ivel Springs and Weston Hills.

3. ***Royston Road***

The team have been meeting with residents of Royston Road individually to discuss the planned approach, and identify issues which need picking up at the right stage of the future development process. The principle is to work with and design around the existing properties: respecting privacy and accesses and establishing landscape buffers where possible between new and existing homes.

4. ***Bygrave Road***

We are proposing to make existing roads such as Bygrave Road better for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. This also enables us to enhance the habitats along the road side.

5. ***Raised land ('Green Space east of Clothall Common')***

This is an important place which people enjoy walking through and want to retain – even though everyone had different names for it! It has also become home to important insects and birds, so we have ensured it remains green space in the plans.

6. ***Development edges***

Our discussions with those living on the boundaries of the new development have varied depending on the location and current and future views/neighbours. We will establish character areas which will explain how the boundaries between new and existing homes will be designed: the spaces between buildings and gardens, what planting might go there, and the design of the new homes. We are not proposing large areas of land between the existing and new homes, as we are looking to create one Baldock where the new development integrates well with the existing, but we will find ways that ensure privacy is protected, and landscape design reduces the negative impact of losing views.

7. ***Clothall Common***

We have developed key principles to ensure our approaches to transport reduce the risk of increased car trips through Clothall Common and improve the opportunities for existing residents to use improved cycling and walking routes, and better bus services to get to town and connect to wider amenities.

8. ***Walls Field***

We recognise the importance of Walls Field to residents and heritage partners, and have evolved plans to ensure this area remains as open green space, with opportunities for a wildflower and grassland setting, heritage information displays and light touch play facilities which reflect the historic setting.

9. ***Medical centre***

Discussions continue to support the existing medical centre and explore timings for a new centre within the development, south of the railway line, so it can be easily accessible by as many people as possible. We will explore the services to be delivered and finalise timings through the planning process.

10. ***Town centre***

The importance of the town centre and the need to strengthen it is clear, and the approach set out today supports improving access to the town centre for all Baldock residents, including for the new homes. It is important that new facilities complement and do not compete with facilities in the town, and make the High Street and surrounding roads better for people to spend time or walk and cycle around.

11. ***Knights Templar school***

The principle set out at the consultation is for one secondary school provider for Baldock to enhance the strong and well loved reputation of Knights Templar. To ensure it has space to grow, options for locations for the larger school were explained to ensure sufficient capacity is provided.

12. ***Whitehorse Street junction***

The proposal is to rework the junction and the wider network, to keep more through traffic out of the centre of Baldock and reduce the number of directions you can travel via the junction. This will discourage "through traffic" vehicles from coming through the junction and the town centre and enable a safer design for those walking and cycling.

13. ***Railway station***

We have drawn on the feedback to explore options that prioritise more inclusive access to the station for wheelchair users, and better access for walking and cycling from the north-east corner of the station, to make traffic flow better through and around the station. We will not put more parking at the station, as we want people to walk, cycle or catch a bus to the station. We are working with Network Rail to explore station improvements.

14. ***Railway bridge***

We are looking at bold measures which take traffic routing through Baldock away from needing to use North Road and making it more of a local route. This will see traffic management put in place and the width reduced to one car lane, controlled by traffic lights, with the rest of the road providing a safe cycle and walking route through to the station and town centre.

The Baldock Conversation: Options testing and preferred option

This phase of work was taken forward in two key ways:

1. working with stakeholders and technical working groups; and
2. through direct discussions with Community Groups and the establishment of a Community Forum.

Technical work

An options workshop involving key stakeholders (NHC and HCC officers) was undertaken in May 2023 during the early stages of options testing and Strategic Masterplan production.

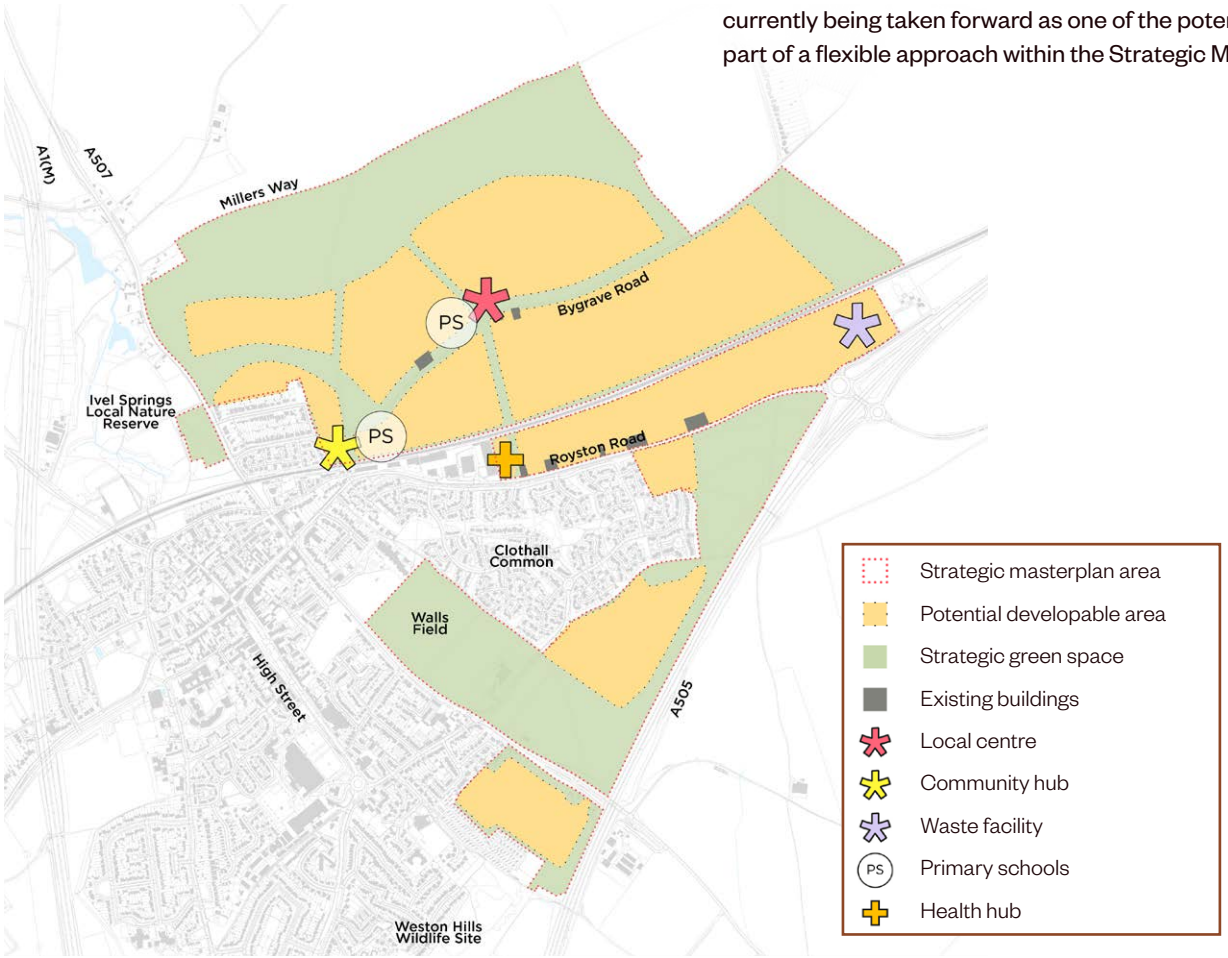
The emerging masterplan was then subject of a Design South East Design Review in July 2023. A further design workshop between U&C, NHC and HCC officers was held in August 2023. Throughout the process, a series of task group meetings themed around movement and access, green infrastructure and land use, took place, involving officers and stakeholders in key design discussions on issues directly influencing the emerging Strategic Masterplan.

In these discussions various iterations of the masterplan were tested against an agreed set of criteria: response to the baseline, compliance with place making objectives, compliance with policy and feasibility and delivery.

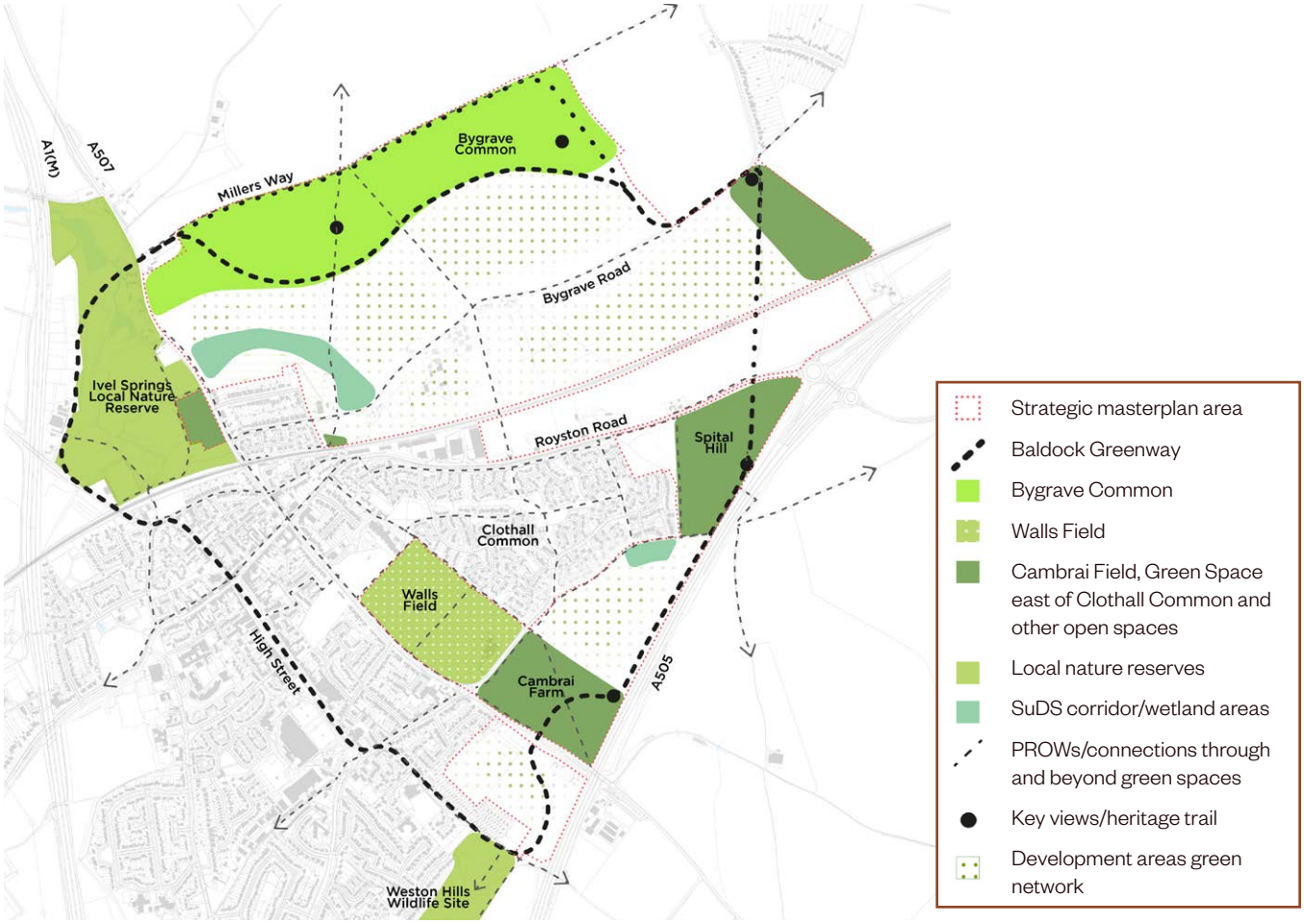
The suite of technical and design inputs discussed and refined over several months culminated in a consensus on various matters, which were presented in the Options Report as 'fixes' (shown in Figures 05 to 07 below). These reflect the status of parameters at the time of the Options Report, some of which have evolved as the SMP has been finalised, and are shown in the Framework Plans in sections 5–10.

The Options Report also identified two areas where further work is required before a 'fix' can be achieved: education, particularly secondary school provision and archaeology.

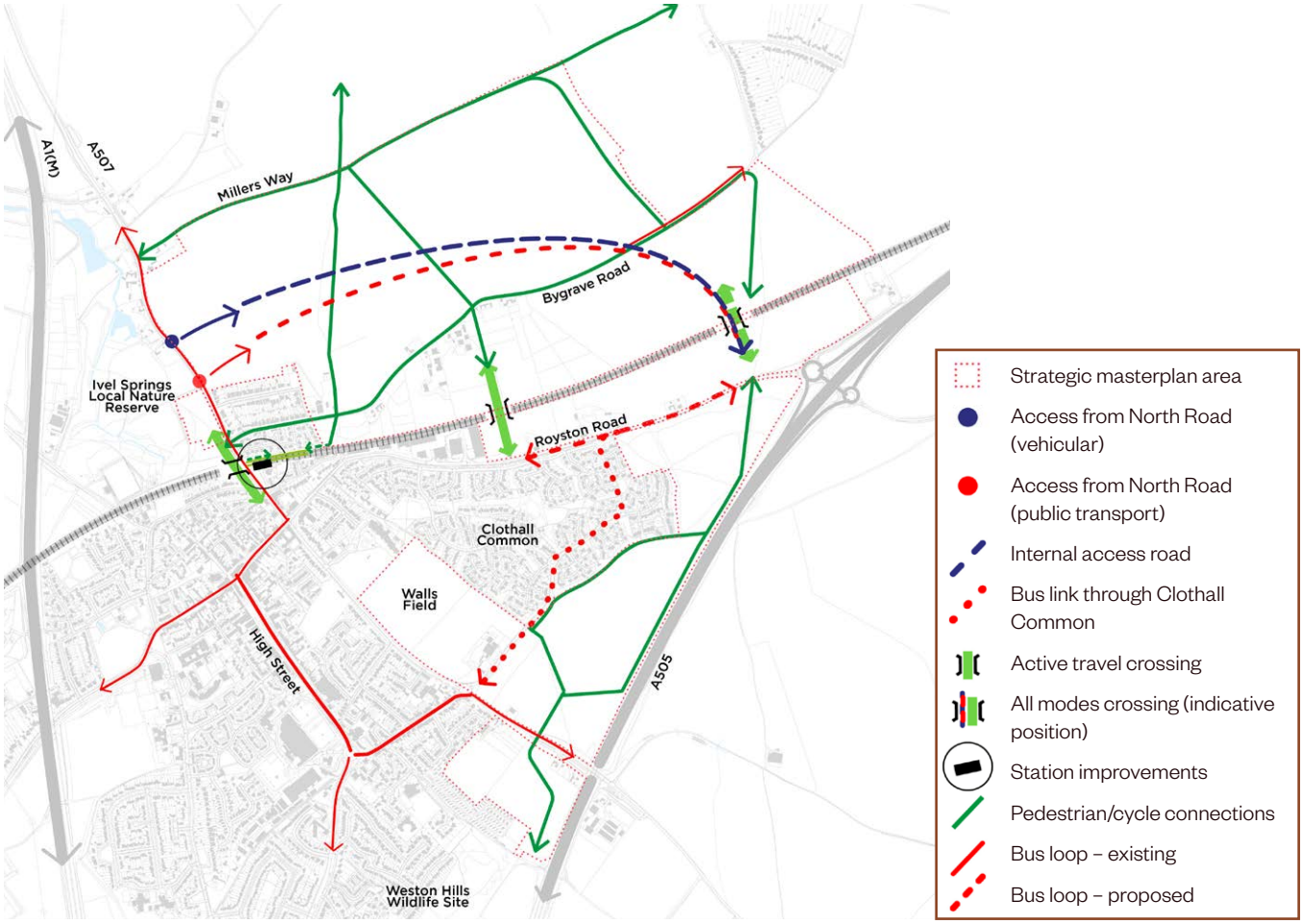
As part of identifying the secondary school as an area where further work was required, an alternative option for the location of the secondary school has been explored, envisaging the secondary school in parcel BA3, rather than BA1. This has been and continues to be the subject of extensive discussion and exploration with NHC and HCC (education and highways) and is currently being taken forward as one of the potential options as part of a flexible approach within the Strategic Masterplan.



▲ Figure 05: Land Use Fixes (Options Report)



▲ Figure 06: Green Infrastructure Fixes (Options Report)



▲ Figure 07: Movement and Access Fixes (Options Report)

Community Engagement

The input of the community and wider interest groups was also brought into the options testing stage through a series of parallel meetings and events. The approach mapped out key representative groups and responded to those who had bought up key issues, ideas and opportunities in discussions on the baseline work.

The approach focused on the setting up of a Growing Baldock Community Forum, which was scoped out and co-run with the NHC Communities Team. This Forum bought together key representative groups who had been heavily involved in both the Neighbourhood Plan for Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall, and the Local Plan, including the Neighbourhood Plan Group, Baldock Beats Waste, business and education representatives and Revlvel. Meetings provided an opportunity to present the latest thinking and options on each theme, share the latest key framework diagrams, and ensure the group's views and inputs were brought into the wider options testing approach.

A schedule of these meetings and themes is set out below:

Date	Topic
26 April 2023	First meeting project introduction
23 May 2023	Transport
19 July 2023	Green Infrastructure
26 July 2023	Community Infrastructure
16 August 2023	Transport
20 September 2023	Water (with Revlvel)

Alongside these meetings the team also held additional meetings and attended events including:

- Baldock Ecofest (May 2023 and September 2024) – meeting residents and answering questions on future plans and particularly ecology and sustainability
- The site's direct neighbours (10 July 2023) – including Salisbury Road, Bygrave Road, Royston Road, Hillside Park – 3 Q&A sessions with over 70 attendees
- Meeting with residents from the Football Close/Icknield Way area to discuss the proposed changes to road access in that area (15 May 2024)
- The Knights Templar School (4 July 2023) – several meetings with the Headmaster and the leadership team, including a sustainability session with the student Green Knights team
- Ashwell residents (4 July 2023) – drop in session sharing the plans for Growing Baldock with the community, providing an opportunity to better understand the interconnections with Baldock for facilities and amenities, and to inform some of the thinking about transport planning. Strong turnout of over 100 people across the four hour session. Attendance at Ashwell Parish Council meeting to speak to residents about SMP in March 2024
- Baldock Area Forum (17 July 2023, 11 September 2023, 15 January 2024 and 2 December 2024) – U&C attendance to provide project overview and updates
- Meeting with Radwell Parish Council and residents on Growing Baldock plans (26 February 2024)
- Meeting with Bygrave residents on Growing Baldock plans (28 November 2024)
- Meetings and site visits with local Councillors
- Meetings with local and national stakeholders including:
  - Baldock Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association (BALGA) including a site visit (April 2023) and AGM presentation (21 January 2024), meeting and visit to BALGA shop in May 2024
  - Friends of Baldock Green Spaces (FOBGS) (24 July 2023)
  - Baldock Forum (group of Headteachers and Chair of Governors of the schools in Baldock and the surrounding area) (8 November 2023)
  - Baldock and Letchworth Scouts (4 May 2023)
  - Girlguiding Baldock (14 November 2023)
  - Rotary Club of Baldock (26 April 2023)
  - The Baldock Surgery and NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex (23 August, 02 October 2023 and 11 October 2024)
  - Sport England (1 August 2023)
  - Historic England site meeting (12 July 2023)
  - Revlvel (14 March 2023, 13 September 2023 and 26 February 2024)
  - Affinity Water (2 January 2023 and 12 January 2024)
  - British Horse Society (BHS) (10 August 2023 and 3 May 2024)
  - Christchurch Baldock (20 November 2023)
  - Baldock Benefice (including St Mary's Church Baldock) (30 November 2023)
  - Hillside Park (Owner, Manager and Chair of the Residents) (20 October 2023, 30 November 2023 and 1 October 2024) including a site visit

Feedback from the discussions with all stakeholders, members and events, were continually informing the full Strategic Masterplan process, being drawn into the options testing, supporting the refining to a preferred option and concluding on a strategic masterplan.

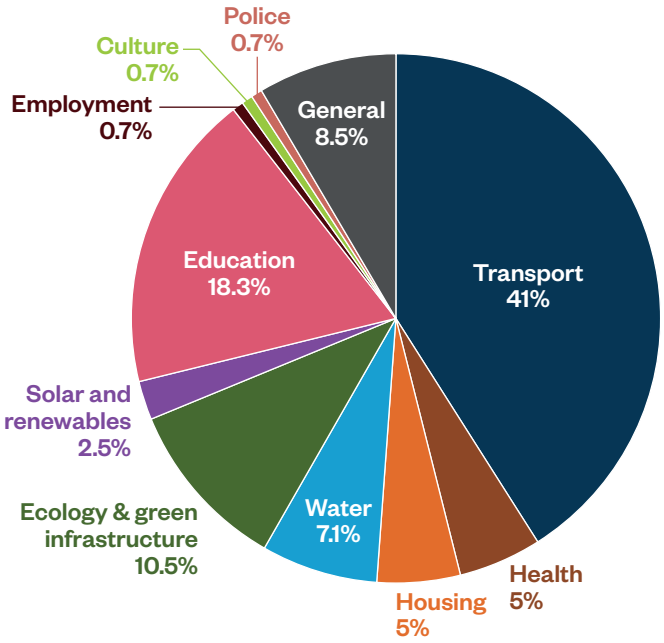
The Baldock Conversation: Draft Masterplan

U&C, HCC and NHC discussed the core remaining issues and finalise the approach for the draft masterplan. In October 2023 the draft masterplan was presented to the North Herts internal Project Board to seek support for public consultation on the draft plan. This was granted.

In November 2023, a series of public consultation events were held to gather public views and preferences regarding the preferred masterplan for the development site. These four face to face exhibition style engagement events, including a session with students at The Knights Templar school, provided the opportunity to demonstrate how the Strategic Masterplan had evolved, and share the preferred options being set out in the draft masterplan. The consultations had a particular focus on:

- feedback and actions taken since the March events (as shown in Figure 4);
- the Baldock Greenway and connecting green and blue infrastructure throughout the town and wider area;
- transport and proposed changes to the local network to support the new homes, and create a culture of active travel;
- education and the secondary school location options; and
- a cohesive approach to planning other community facilities and amenities to work with the town and local villages: termed the "One Baldock" approach.

Across the four events in November over 400 people attended and over 300 comments were received. Below are the core themes of issues covered by those comments.



▲ Figure 08: Key topics raised by the community – November 2023



▲ Preferred options consultation, November 2023



The table below, and figure to the right, show how these issues are being taken forward in the final Strategic Masterplan, and in the work being undertaken to move forward to the next stage of planning in the outline planning application for the development.

	Issue	Detail	Next steps
1.	Future of Bygrave Road	Concern that closure of Bygrave Road will impact on those living in villages and coming into the town.	The scheme will be delivering a new road (together with a required bridge) connecting North Road and Royston Road through the development north of the railway line. Once this is in place, all users of Bygrave Road will use the new connection, enabling two routes from Baldock to the north east neighbouring villages. The new road connection provides a safer vehicular route, and enables Bygrave Road to be safer for walking, cycling or public transport use. The approach will continue to be tested through the planning process, but it is thought to be the right approach for the growth of the town (as set out in the Access and Movement section on page 61).
2.	Parking capacity at the Station	Access to Station Road and parking provision is inadequate. Parking is needed at the northern entrance of the station.	Feedback from the community, as well as the technical transport work, all stress that the car should be less dominant within the town. This requires improving the active travel connections. More parking being provided will encourage more people to drive to the station, and so the approach to building additional capacity at the station is to ensure a safe northern access from the new homes by bike and walking. This will be further tested as the transport strategy is developed in detail but remains the current position to achieve the overall modal shift away from cars.
3a.	Town centre transport interventions	Consider altering the location of the restrictions to Football Close and Icknield Way.	Experience from local residents and regular uses of these routes will helpfully inform how the details of these interventions evolve as the planning process moves into more detail at outline and phased applications and reserved matters applications. A follow up session will be arranged with local residents to explore the issues further to help define the future options of an intervention here.
3b.		Norton Road modal filter	This is under review with the transport consultant team. Detail of the exact location and type of modal filter to follow in the outline planning application. Close collaboration with the Letchworth Heritage Foundation will ensure the plans are not in conflict with planned development north of Letchworth (LG1).
3c.		Left-turn ban Whitehorse Street to North Road	The inclusion of this left-turn ban has been reviewed by our transport consultants who conclude that keeping the left-turn ban whilst allowing access for residents of Football Close and Icknield Way remains the best approach. However, the left-turn ban could be introduced only if other traffic demand measures in the town and A1(M) J9 capacity enhancements are not sufficiently effective.
4.	Secondary School location	Primary concerns were around traffic impact at South Road / Clothall Road junction	Initial transport modelling has confirmed that the Wallington Road/South Road/Clothall Road roundabout can accommodate the additional trips that would be generated by a secondary school on BA3. All opportunities to provide the optimal environment for walking and cycling will be explored.
5.	Access to Clothall Common	Concerns were expressed about the bus only route into Clothall, but no additional vehicle access to the north, especially if the school is located at BA3. Access for emergency vehicles was also raised as a priority for Clothall Common residents.	This is being reviewed by the design team and will inform the outline planning application.
6.	Weight restrictions limit for HCVs	Support for approach to limit HGV use of the town as a cut through. Comments on options to extend the current weight restrictions coming into force to include a wider area including key routes in the town.	This will be further explored with HCC who are managing the process and outcomes of this. There are some challenges with ensuring the restrictions are enforceable and effective so this will be an ongoing discussion as the transport strategy continues to evolve.
7.	Health provision	Concern about ensuring further or relocated provision is accessible for all	The detailed plans on whether there will be an additional surgery or a larger relocated health centre within the development area is still in discussion and will be finalised later in the planning process – with specific consultation around this. Ensuring effective access to the surgery from existing residents as well as the new community will be a fundamental part of this process. This will also be further tested and consulted on as part of outline planning and later detailed planning applications.



▲ Figure 09: Map of comments arising from consultation – November 2023

Transport was the leading area of focus again, with the proposed interventions provoking useful and specific feedback on potential impacts based on people's local knowledge and everyday experience. Further work to assess any unintended consequences of the interventions in key locations is underway. Several comments were made on the need for improvements to the train station, more capacity on trains and the lack of bus services and connections to necessary destinations including Stevenage hospital.

Education was the second most commented on area with the highest number focusing on the options presented for secondary education provision, to which attendees were asked to express their preference. The majority of respondees supported the idea of one new school for Baldock in a new location. There was a strong preference for locating the new school on BA3, albeit with some concerns about impacts on existing roads with the additional traffic this would bring.

Green spaces: There were a number of supportive comments for the Baldock Greenway and improved pedestrian and cycling provision generally. A number of BALGA members commented positively on the proposed increased provision of allotments.

Health: Comments related to the provision of healthcare with a consensus that more was needed and that any new location should consider the mobility of those using the service and provide adequate parking and access by public transport if it was moved out of the high street.

Housing: 5% of comments were linked to housing provision including the need for a high level of affordable housing with a good mix of property types to include bungalows and larger family homes all with a high environmental performance.

Water and the River Ivel received 21 comments albeit this was fewer than the 50 comments received in March. The focus was still predominantly on water extraction and sewage capacity but with recognition that the issue was being taken seriously and the proposed drainage strategy seeks to help recharge the River Ivel.

Other topics with a small number of comments included the need for more policing, a larger cemetery and a splash pad. There were also a number of Ashwell residents who noted their concerns about reduced access to Baldock, particularly the train station by both car and bike and the need for Ashwell to remain in the Knights Templar catchment area.

The consultation was followed up by formal responses from Bygrave, Ashwell and Radwell Parish Councils which also stress additional points on:

- the role of Bygrave Road /Ashwell Road and perceived reduction of vehicular connection with the town (from Bygrave and Ashwell);
- concern around Whitehorse junction changes to journeys from Radwell;
- impacts of controlled flow under the Railway bridge;
- concern around car access and needing more parking to key amenities including the station and doctors surgery;
- concerns that reducing traffic into Baldock will route traffic through the villages;
- needing to plan for farm traffic movements; and
- air pollution around the A507.

A number of key alternate proposals were also put forward which have been worked through by the transport team to shape the final proposals set out in the chapters below.

Conclusion

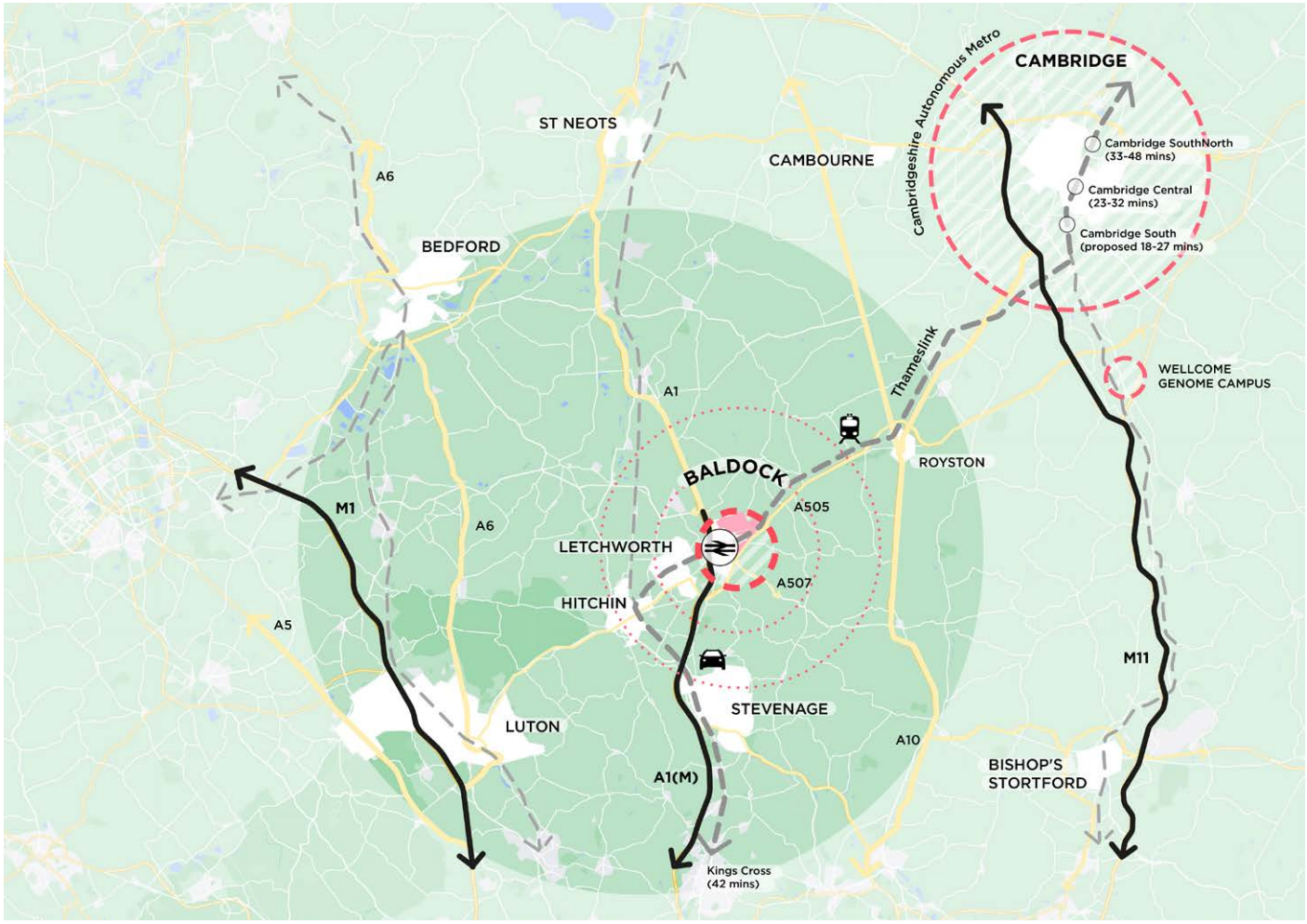
Through both evolution of the Strategic Masterplan and noted points which will flow into the development of the next stage of detail, the team will continue to address the key points raised.

One clear reflection on the Conversation to date has been that people are keen to be engaged, and are feeling listened to by this process. Continuing to ensure that interactive dialogue is maintained and the plans continue to respond to points raised will be key, as well as keeping people informed of the process and timing as the planning process continues.

The Baldock Conversation started through the Masterplan, will continue beyond it, as the plans move to outline and detailed planning. The intention is that it continues into the delivery of the town's expansion and the start of community development and cohesion work as Growing Baldock moves into implementation.

4.0
Context & Baseline – Understanding the Place

Figure 10: Strategic Context



Where Will Baldock Grow

The site is c.220 hectares in size and located to the north and east of the historic market town of Baldock (population c.10,000), within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire. It benefits from a well-connected strategic location on the A1(M) and lies to the north of Stevenage and immediately to the east of Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin (refer to Figure 10). Once an important coaching town, it has been bypassed twice: first by the A1(M) and more recently by the A505 Baldock Bypass, which opened in 2006.

The land to be developed comprises a series of parcels of predominantly agricultural land immediately adjoining the urban area (refer to site features plan at Figure 11). The northernmost, and largest component (BA1) lies to the east of North Road, which connects to the A1(M) junction to the north (the A1 (M) runs in parallel to North Road) and Baldock town centre to the south. The southern boundary is defined by the railway line and the eastern and northern edge by existing field boundaries and footpaths. Bygrave / Ashwell Road runs through this part of the land to be developed, from North Road to the village of Bygrave to the north east.

A narrow strip of land between the railway to the north and Royston Road to the south, forms the central portion of the Baldock development area (BA10). This area incorporates a number of small businesses and private homes. The remaining portion of the land wraps around the eastern side of the settlement, bound to the west by existing development area and to the east by the A505, which travels south west beyond Baldock to connect to the next A1 (M) junction further south. Clothall Road dissects this part of the site, as it runs north west towards the town centre.

The majority of the land to be developed is given over to agricultural tenancies and is therefore rural in character, with field boundaries defined by hedgerows / trees of varying age and quality. There are no watercourses or water bodies present. A network of public rights of way and bridleways traverse this area. The development area is located to the immediate north east of Baldock town centre and Baldock railway station, which provides direct rail connections to Letchworth Garden City and onwards to London. Baldock is a historic market



View of site as existing

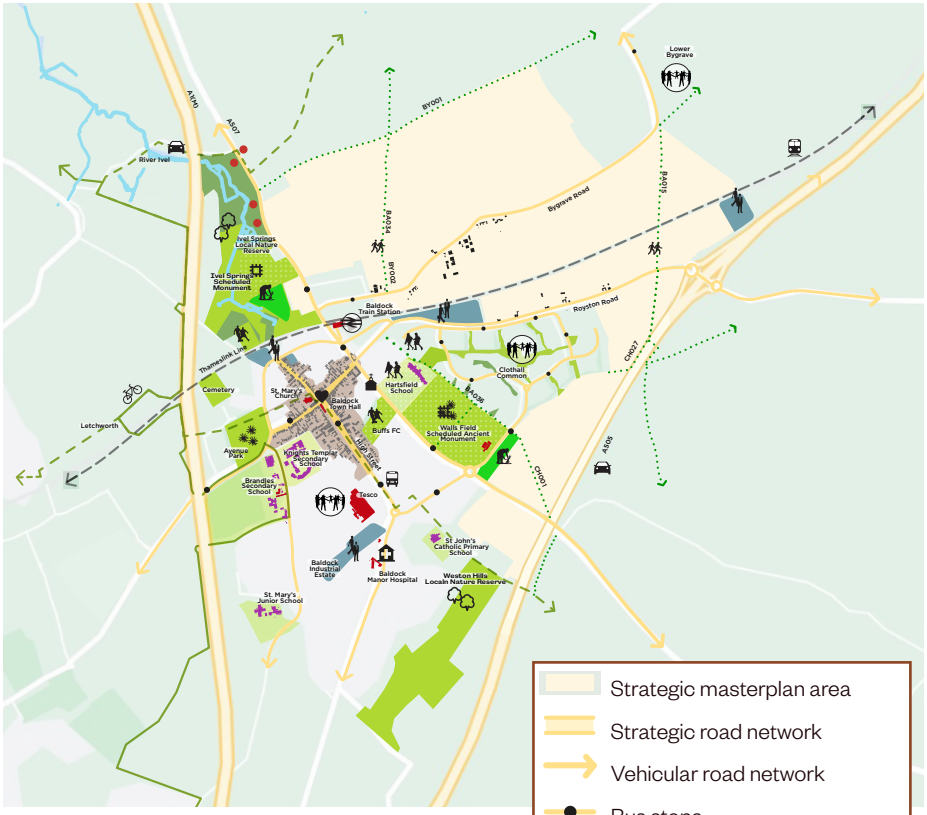


Figure 11: Site Features

town comprising a large Conservation Area and numerous listed buildings. A Scheduled Monument (Romano-British town and Late Iron Age settlement – Walls Field) is located off Clothall Road adjacent to (west of) the development site (BA11). A further Scheduled Monument is situated west of the BA1 site and North Road (Ivel Springs).

Planning Context

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022)

The Strategic Masterplan is a requirement of the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022). The Local Plan addresses the key issues in the District including the allocation of at least 13,000 new homes. Just under half of all new homes over the plan period are to be delivered on six Strategic Housing Sites, including at Baldock. Each strategic allocation has a site-specific policy which defines the required components of the development.

The Local Plan identifies land at Baldock as a sustainable extension made up of a series of allocations: BA1 (North of Baldock) for 2,800 homes; BA2 (Land southwest of Clothall Road) for 200 homes; and BA3 (Land south of Clothall Common) for 245 homes (refer to Figure 12). Policy SP8 (Housing) identifies that of the 2,800 homes allocated at parcel BA1, approximately 1,400 of these will be delivered by 2031.

This policy also requires sites to deliver up to 40% Affordable Housing where this is viable, with a broadly even split between smaller (1–2 bed) and larger (3+ bed) properties. Demand for self build development must also be provided on specific sites.

The site-specific policy SP14 relates to strategic site BA1 to the north of Baldock. Planning application(s) for this parcel are to be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the development as a whole.

The Strategic Masterplan covers the sites that are subject to the Local Plan Allocations (BA1, BA2, BA3, BA10) as well as the Urban Open Land, Walls Field Scheduled Monument and a parcel of land to the west of North Road, adjacent to the Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve. A series of requirements are set out for the allocated sites, including up to 3,300 homes, 19.6 hectares of employment land, sustainable and active travel connections, green infrastructure, schools, community and local centre facilities and infrastructure.

Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (2021)

The Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in June 2021 and now forms part of the Development Plan. It provides policies to guide the growth of Baldock, make improvements to access and parking, maintain strategic green space, achieve high quality design and preserve the character of the town. It also sets out requirements to maintain the separation of Lower Bygrave, creative a distinctive gateway into Baldock from Royston Road and provide landscaped buffers to the development.

Two outline planning applications for the development north (17/04420/OP) and south (17/04417/OP) of the railway were submitted by Hertfordshire County Council in 2017 but were subsequently withdrawn in 2023.

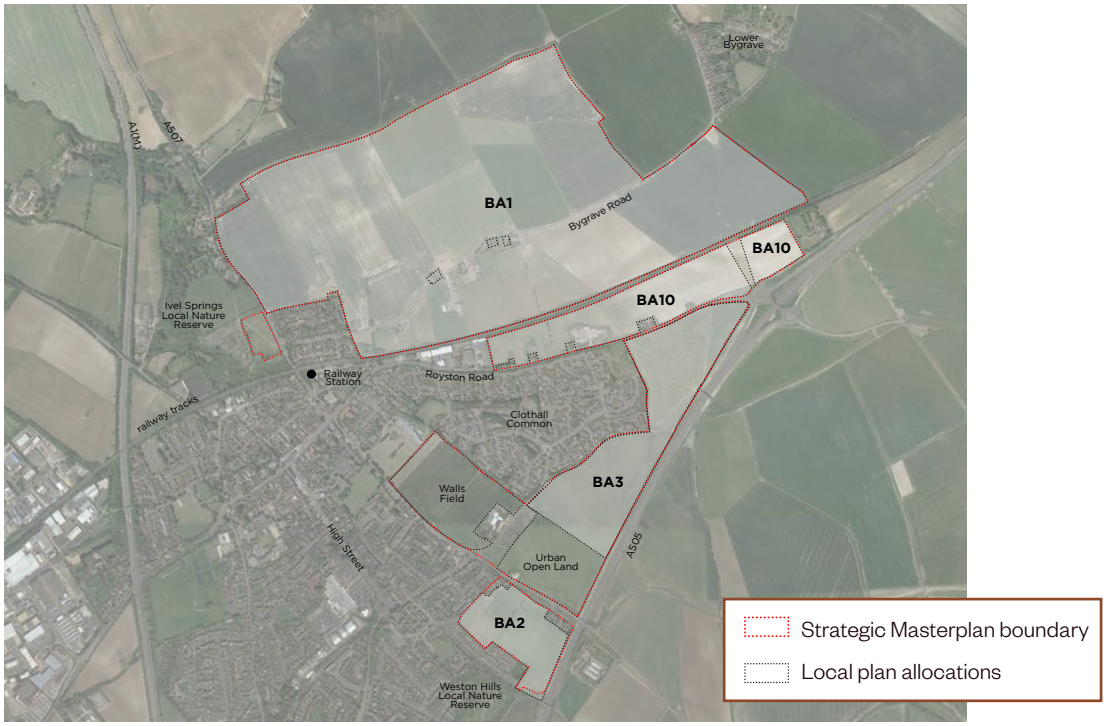


Figure 12: Local Plan Site Allocations

Historical Development

Baldock has a rich history, with traces of human life evident from Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras. The pattern of historic growth of Baldock is illustrated in the plans at Figure 13.

Baldock is an attractive market town with a defined local character derived from a range of architectural and landscape features which could be reinterpreted through the new development. It has an established and active community, meaning its facilities such as community halls are well used. Some, such as the GP surgery, are at capacity. The High Street and the local shops and facilities along it are also highly valued locally.

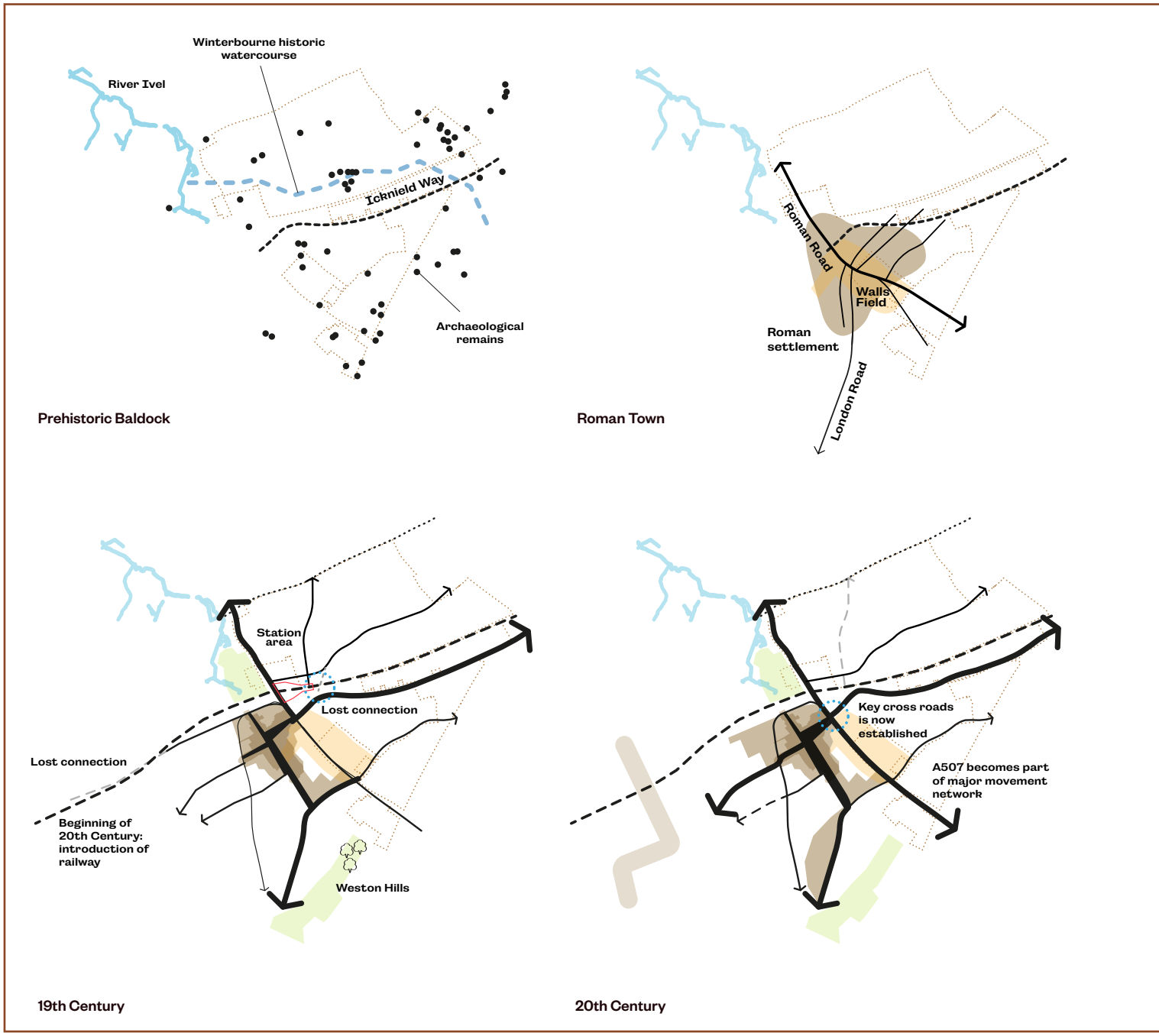


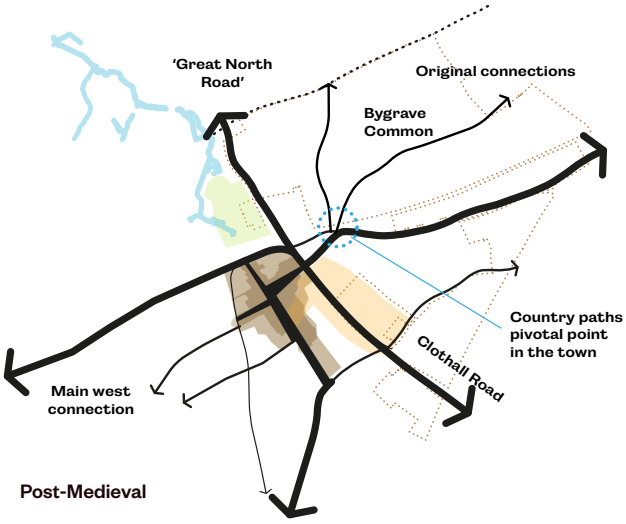
Figure 13: Baldock's Historic Growth

Archaeology

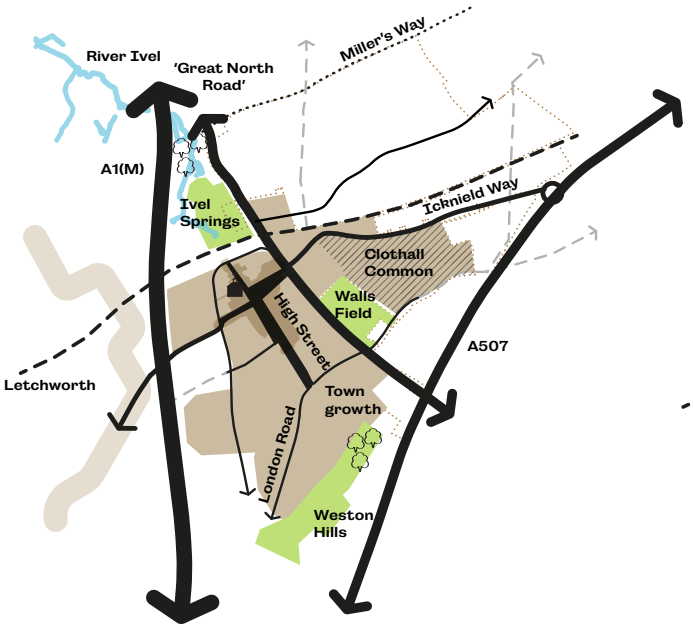
The site has been subject to extensive archaeological evaluation including additional trial trenching and detailed geophysical surveys in 2024, adding to the wealth of existing archaeological information known about the site's human inhabitation from the early prehistoric period onwards. This information will inform a range of mitigation measures, which may include further excavations in some areas, which will be set out in an Archaeological and Heritage Management Plan to be submitted with the outline planning application.



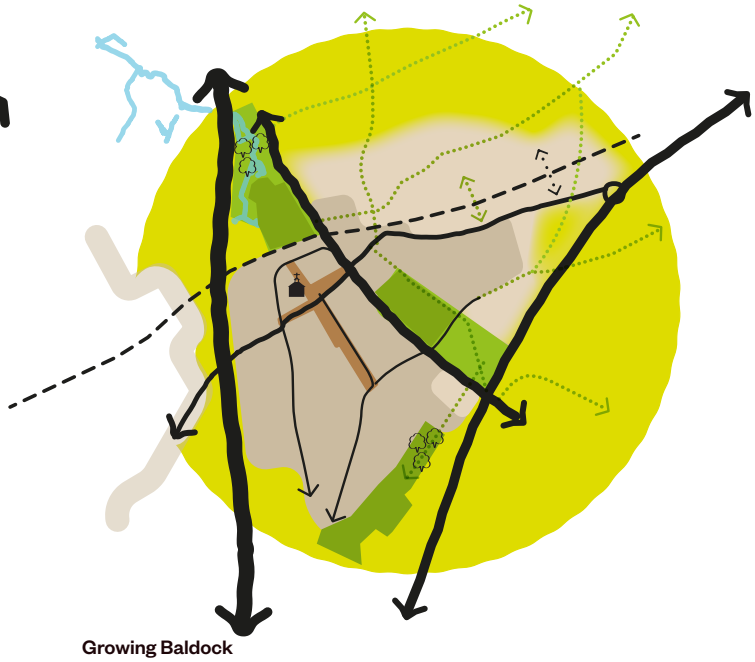
Medieval Town



Post-Medieval



Present Day



Growing Baldock

Constraints and Opportunities

Figures 14 to 16 below summarise the opportunities and constraints revealed by the Composite Baseline Report, which have directly informed the Strategic Masterplan.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

Figure 14: Green and Blue Infrastructure Opportunities identified in Composite Baseline Report (June 2023)

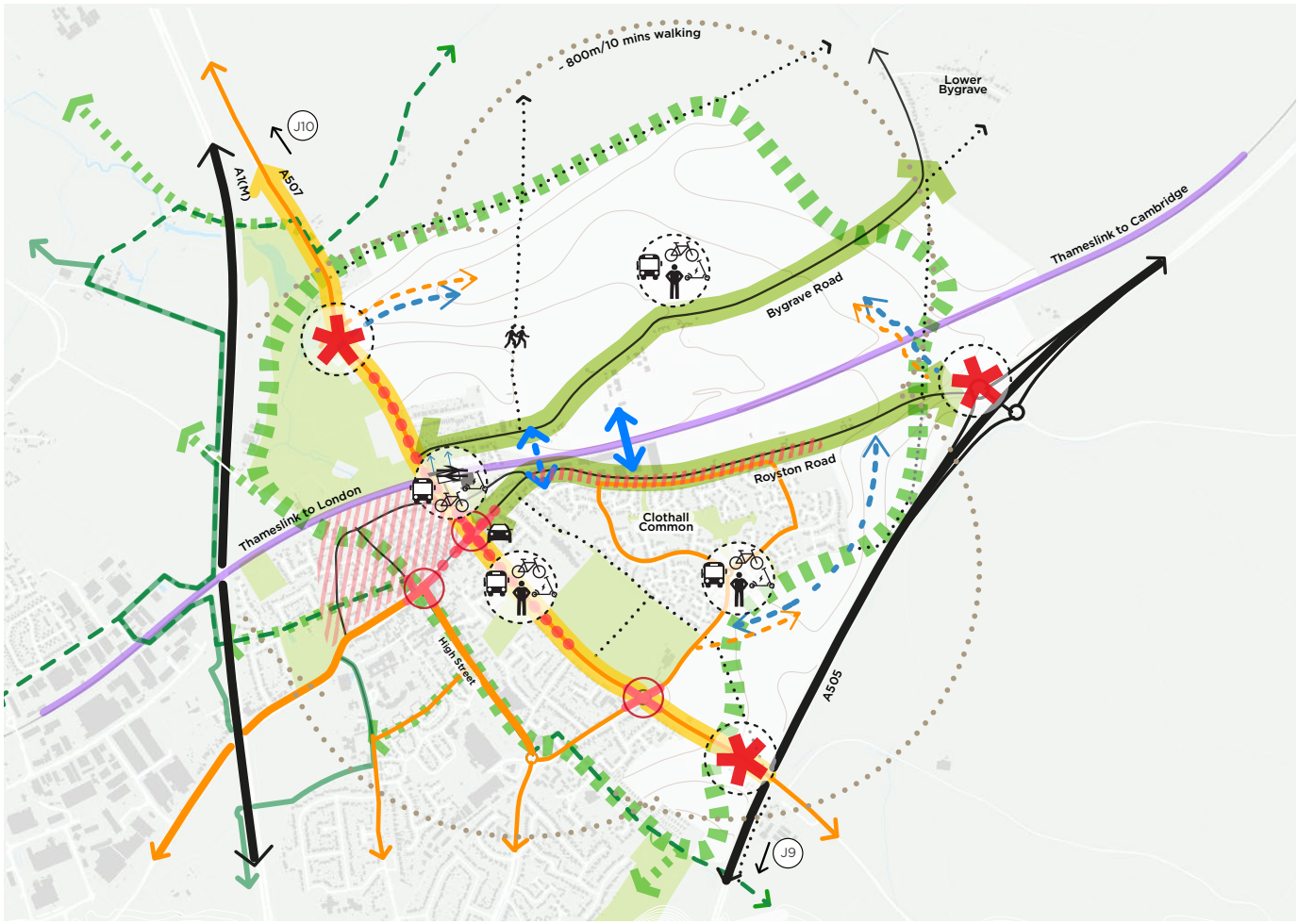


- Key long views outwards to countryside
- Views to St. Mary's Church
- Public rights of way – bridleways
- Public rights of way – footpaths
- National Cycle Network Route 12
- Icknield Way Cycle Trail
- Baldock Circular Walk (Saturday Walkers Club)
- Integrate existing overland flow into landscape/sustainable drainage features
- Integrate surface water into sustainable drainage features
- Existing green spaces
- Existing allotments
- Scheduled monument
- Opportunity to create open space
- Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site
- Ecologically sensitive area
- Potential for strategic green corridor
- Opportunity for town-wide green circular connections – 'Green Loop'
- Opportunity for new green connections
- Potential to create defensible green belt boundary
- Planting at the periphery of new development
- Development contained to south of the ridgeline (Local Plan)
- Provision of gap between Bygrave and Baldock (Neighbourhood Plan)
- Opportunity for open space associated with drainage features
- Key bat foraging corridor

- Presence of large and well-used green spaces (Ivel Spring, Walls Field, Weston Hills), forming a positive asset for the Town with the opportunity to safeguard, buffer and improve connectivity with them as part of a "Baldock Greenway";
- A new "Baldock Greenway" should connect existing well used pedestrian/ cycle connections and public right of ways in Baldock with new established sustainable links in the study area and plug into the "Letchworth Greenway" and "Etonbury Wheel", creating a comprehensive network of accessible green infrastructure in the wider area;
- Potential to establish Bygrave Road as a new landscape corridor, reflecting and enhancing its historic and ecological interest and contributing to the wider sustainable, green network of routes;
- Opportunity to provide a new parkland area for the town on Bygrave Common, at the northern edge of the study area, and connect it to a series of smaller open spaces, all interlinked by green connections. This would establish a "green network" of active travel routes aligning with objectives to deliver a healthy and active development, provide access to nature, and relieve pressure on the Local Nature Reserves (LNRs);
- Opportunity to celebrate the area's rich heritage to positively influence the landscape and reference and interpret some of the area's archaeology within the landscape and movement framework;
- Opportunity to complement and integrate the provision of play areas, sport facilities and community allotments within the network of new open spaces;
- Commitment to protect and enhance areas of elevated ecological value and local wildlife habitats and achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) target;
- Need to reinforce defensible green belt boundary on the northern and eastern edges of the land to be developed;
- Creation of consistent landscape buffers along the edge of the A505, A507 and railway corridor;
- Enhancement and preservation of long distance views to the countryside;
- Retention of the open character of Walls Field, improving the visual and recreational value of this land, in particular the views to open countryside to the south east, and creating a potential green corridor extending from the southern boundary of the Scheduled Monument towards the south;
- Preservation of existing long-distance views to St. Mary's Church Tower from elevated parts of land within the study area;
- Addressing the existing surface water flood risk issues by locating development areas away from surface water flooding risk areas, integrating overland flow into the landscape and the creation of a network of SuDS in areas at higher risk of flooding as part of the wider green infrastructure provision. Also potential to help recharge the River Ivel via the infiltration of surface water into the groundwater.

Access and Movement

Figure 15: Access and Movement Opportunities identified in Composite Baseline Report (June 2023)

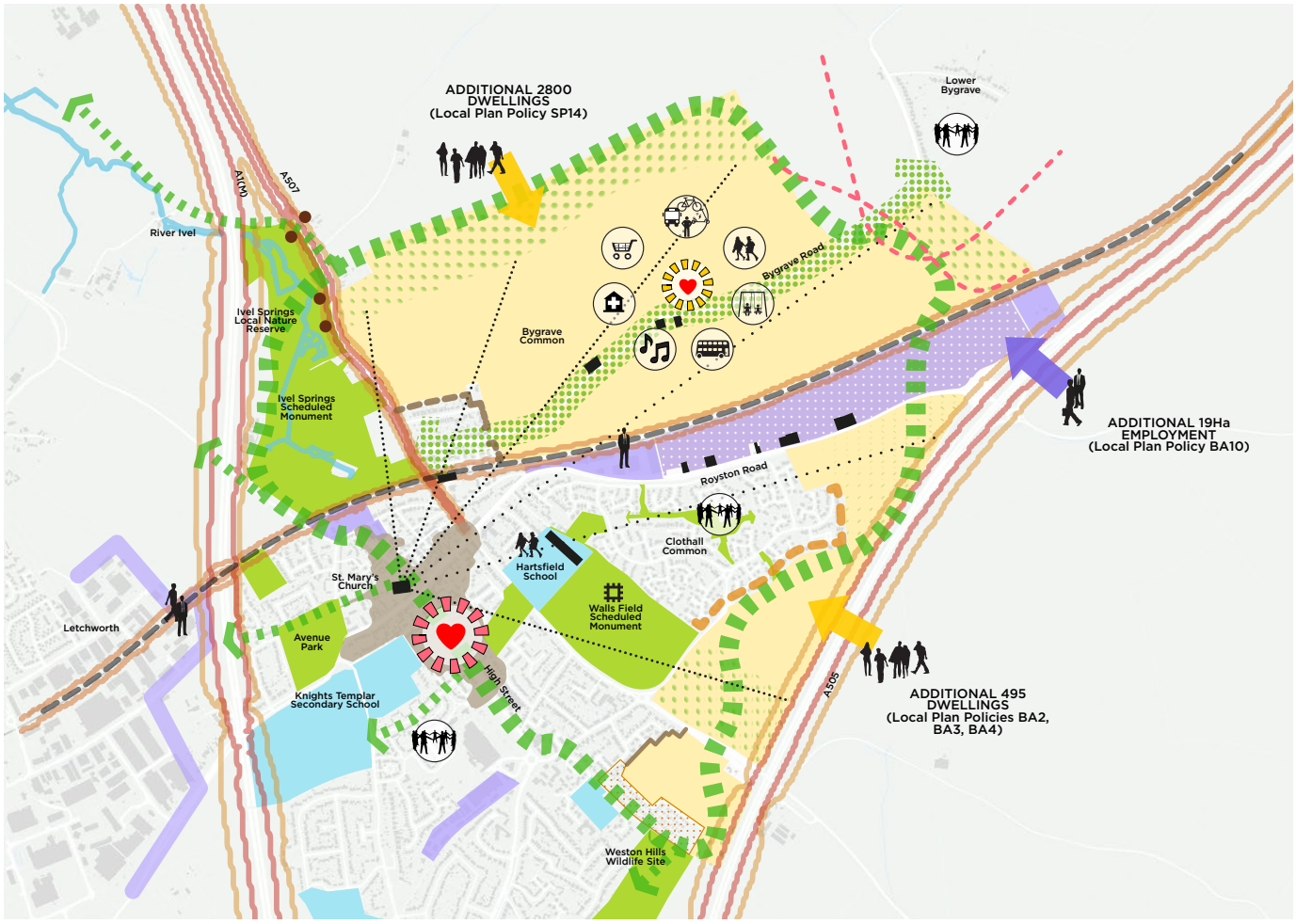


- Strategic Road Network
- Railway severance
- Public Rights of Way with potential to be integrated in emerging movement network
- National Cycle Network Route 12
- Icknield Way Trail
- Existing bus route (4+ services/day)
- Existing bus route (less than 4 services/day)
- Potential for new Public Transport route
- Vehicular congestion
- Congested junctions
- Impermeable network of streets
- Potential to improve pedestrian/ cycling experience + environmental quality
- Potential for town gateway
- New access network (Local Plan)
- Potential for pedestrian/cycle railway crossing (Local Plan)
- Potential for pedestrian/cycle railway crossing
- Potential for sustainable transport corridor
- Opportunity for town-wide green circular connections
- Potential for station improvements and key transport hub
- Potential for key transport hub
- Indicative 10-minute walking distance from key transport hub

- To prioritise the provision of safe, direct and coherent networks for active modes on and off-site, that reduce demand for car travel, combined with off-site improvements that manage existing travel demand and prioritise active and sustainable modes of transport;
- Creation of a network of walking/ cycling/riding routes to complement the existing well-established connections and public right of ways, linking into the existing network of routes in the town and ultimately to the wider sustainable network around the area, such as to the National Cycle Network Route 12;
- Opportunity to reduce traffic dominance in Baldock through a series of off-site interventions that may discourage through traffic and HGV movements along the town road network, and design interventions prioritising local traffic and sustainable movement;
- Potential for Bygrave Road and Royston Road to focus on sustainable and active travel (cycling and walking);
- Potential to improve walking and cycling experience along existing routes such as Station Road/ Clothall Road / Royston Road;
- Prioritisation of buses over private vehicles by providing efficient routes, high quality bus stop infrastructure that connect the development to key destinations such as the railway station, town centre, and the surrounding areas;
- Potential to provide improved access and facilities around the Railway Station, exploring connections towards the northern part of the development to improve permeability between the areas on either side of the railway line. Other improvements to the station should be explored;
- Provision of at least one new pedestrian/ cycle crossing over the railway line to improve the permeability of the area by active modes;
- Opportunity to create distinctive entrances or “gateways” to the town in key locations such as the northern and southern part of North Road/ Clothall Road and the eastern end of Royston Road;
- Potential to introduce a vehicular road serving the new development on the northern side of the development area (and associated new bridge), connecting the A507 to the road network south of the railway line and on the southern side of the land connecting Royston Road and Wallington Road. The character and alignment of both are to be explored at the options stage;
- Opportunity to create a series of key “transport hubs” in close connections to the new residential neighbourhood and the Railway Station, with the aim of offering cycling, e-scooters, taxi, public transport, car clubs facilities.

Land Use

Figure 16: Land Use and Neighbourhood Development Opportunities identified in Composite Baseline Report (June 2023)



- Key prominent views to St. Mary's Church spire
- Distant views to St. Mary's Church spire
- Railway severance
- Existing employment uses
- Local Plan employment allocation
- Local Plan allocations
- Existing properties
- Conservation Area
- Grade II Listed Buildings
- Provision of gap between Bygrave and Baldock (Neighbourhood Plan)
- Areas potentially impacted by road and rail noise (DEFRA road and rail noise 65–69.9dB)
- Areas potentially impacted by road and rail noise (DEFRA road and rail noise 70–74.9dB)
- Existing green assets
- Opportunity for new strategic green infrastructure
- Existing education provision
- Town centre
- Potential for new local/ neighbourhood centre
- Positive residential edge
- Existing residential "backs"
- Park homes
- Additional dwellings (Local Plan) 2,800 north + 495 south
- Additional employment (19ha)
- Opportunity for town-wide green circular connections

- Opportunity to create a new centre(s) complementing and not competing with the existing town centre. The new centre(s) could offer a set of community facilities to serve the day to day needs of the new development alongside complementing the existing offer in Baldock town centre. A new local transport hub could be integral part of the Local Centre;
- New centre(s) to be positioned in such a way to promote the development of "20-minute neighbourhoods", places that are designed so residents can meet their day-to-day needs within a 20-minute walk from their home, via access to safe walking and cycling routes, or by public transport;
- Employment area to support a sustainable community and encourage living and working in close proximity;
- Opportunity to introduce additional education provision (primary and secondary schools) in close connection with the new centre and at walking distance from the new residential developments, at the heart of the new community;
- Opportunity for the new development to reflect and sensitively relate to the historic character and strong identity of Baldock, defined by a its rich history, its landmarks and its strong visual and physical connections to the countryside;
- Preservation of existing long distance views to St. Mary's Church Tower from elevated parts of land within the study area creating a strong visual connection between the new and the old part of Baldock;
- Addressing the sensitive relationship to the edge of existing residential neighbourhoods, with particular attention to creating a visual and physical gap between the proposed expansion and Lower Bygrave (at least 170m gap/ development contained within 80m contour line, as per Neighbourhood Plan policy);
- Opportunity for the new development to complement the southern boundary of Clothall Estate, reflecting its positive characteristics and approach to landscape;
- Effective integration of existing residential properties that are to remain in-situ and protection from any adverse environmental impacts.

Figure 17: Land Use Framework ▸

5.0 Land Use Framework

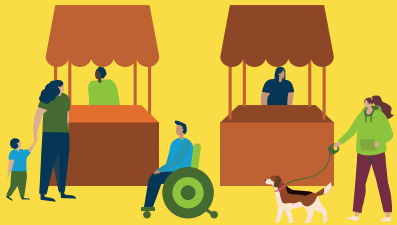
Land Use Key Principles:



High-quality housing to meet the needs of all ages.

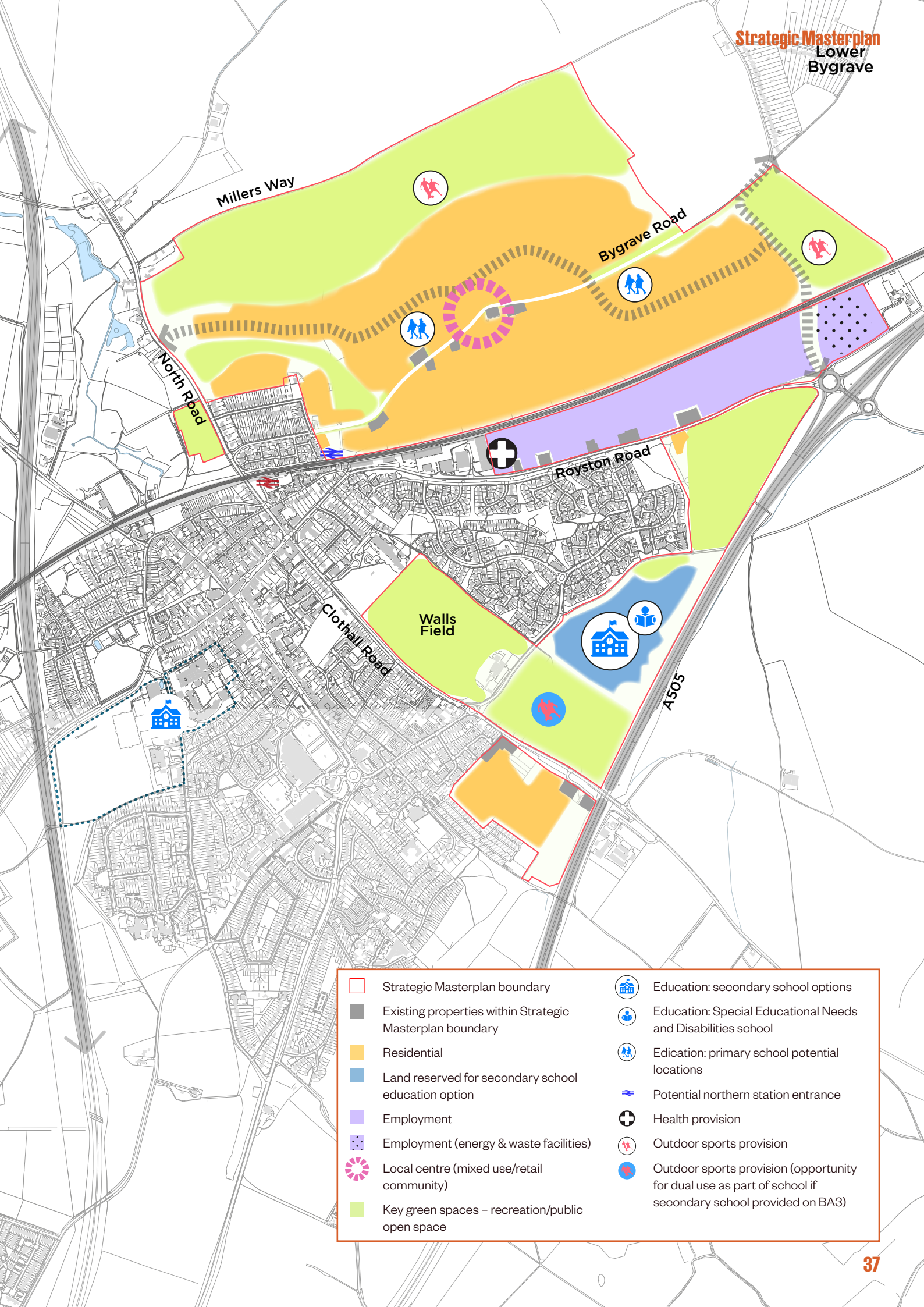


Meet the educational needs of primary and secondary pupils from the development, in Baldock.



Supporting and strengthening Baldock Town Centre by:

- improving connectivity and routes between the development and Baldock High Street and town centre;
- creating new community facilities within the new development, and health facilities between the new and existing homes for all;
- supporting existing businesses to grow and new ventures to be brought to the town, providing jobs and opportunities;
- utilising existing capacity within facilities in Baldock where possible e.g. education, before new provision in the development area; and
- ensuring facilities are provided at the right time, providing early benefits where possible.



- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Residential
- Land reserved for secondary school education option
- Employment
- Employment (energy & waste facilities)
- Local centre (mixed use/retail community)
- Key green spaces – recreation/public open space
- Education: secondary school options
- Education: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities school
- Edication: primary school potential locations
- Potential northern station entrance
- Health provision
- Outdoor sports provision
- Outdoor sports provision (opportunity for dual use as part of school if secondary school provided on BA3)

Land Use Framework Components

Land Use and Social Infrastructure Needs

The Local Plan policies for Growing Baldock set out the following land use requirements, which form the starting point for the Strategic Masterplan land use mix.

- Approximately 3,300 homes
- Local centre(s)
- Structural planting to reinforce defensible green belt boundary
- Link road connecting A505 and A507 and southern link road connecting Royston Road to Wallington Road or A507.
- Vehicle, cycle and pedestrian links
- 19.6ha employment
- 28 self-build plots
- Site for care home
- Community hall and GP surgery
- Up to 6FE primary school provision
- Up to 8FE secondary school provision
- Secondary rail crossing
- Green infrastructure including play
- Urban Open Land

A range of additional uses have been suggested by NHC / HCC and other stakeholders and will be incorporated into the Strategic Masterplan:

- Waste Transfer Station / Vehicle Depot
- Household Waste Recycling Centre (dependent on funding being secured)
- On site utilities infrastructure – foul pumping station and primary substation
- SEND School
- Childcare – pre-school, private nurseries
- Youth provision
- Extra Care and supported housing
- GP Surgery



A network of green and blue spaces improving the quality of the environment as well as people's health and quality of life



Green corridor integrating play, wildlife and routes for walking and cycling

Residential

The Strategic Masterplan has explored options to determine how the site could accommodate a development of up to 3,300 homes, in accordance with the Local Plan policy. It is apparent that due to a combination of site constraints and the requirement to deliver appropriate on-site infrastructure, such as a road network, surface water management and education, that the 3,300 target may not be met. However, a substantial proportion of this figure will be able to be accommodated on site, including a mix of tenures, sizes and types to satisfy policy requirements.

The actual number of new homes that will be delivered will be confirmed through the outline planning application, and will depend on numerous factors including site constraints such as archaeology and the approach to education provision. However, it is considered that around 3,000 new dwellings will be incorporated, including a mix of tenures, sizes and designs predominantly located in areas BA1, BA2 and potentially BA3, including homes for senior living and self and custom build.

Employment

Up to 16 hectares of employment development will be located between Royston Road and the railway. The ambition is for this parcel to accommodate strategic and/or aspirational employment uses. The type of employment development will also be influenced by market demand combined with site constraints and opportunities (e.g. the site size / shape effectively rules out large B8 type logistics buildings).

Green Infrastructure

A network of open spaces and green infrastructure will be provided throughout the development. Refer to section 6 for details of the range of open space typologies to be included.

Waste Facilities

The easternmost end of the employment parcel will also incorporate waste facilities (waste transfer station, vehicle depot and potentially a household waste recycling centre – exact mix to be defined as part of outline planning application).

▼ New green spaces and informal play areas delivered by U&C at Houlton, Rubgy





◀ Bespoke employment space delivered by U&C at The Incubator, Alconbury Weald





▲ Green spaces and sustainable drainage features delivered by U&C at Houlton, Rugby

Education

Primary

Primary age pupils generated by phases of development south of the railway line will attend the existing Baldock primary schools, if there is capacity. Thereafter, up to two new primary schools will be delivered in BA1 to meet the needs of the northern part of the development. The process for determining primary school provision and phasing is illustrated diagrammatically at Figure 18. One primary school will be located in the vicinity of the local centre, at the heart of BA1, with the second school located further east, adjacent to the east–west green corridor. Both will be wrapped in residential uses, with the main school buildings fronting and defining the street.

Secondary

Local Plan policy SP14 identifies the need for secondary school provision as part of the Growing Baldock development. The following options have been explored as part of the SMP process:

1. Additional secondary school at BA1 (as required by Local Plan Policy SP14; considered at SMP options testing stage and not progressed)
2. Expansion and relocation of Knights Templar School to BA3 (new school buildings to serve the whole of Baldock and surrounding villages);
3. Expansion of Knights Templar School on its existing site, with BA3 developed for residential;
4. Additional secondary school on BA3, alongside some residential on the remainder of the parcel.

These have been explored extensively with stakeholders, including HCC Education. At the November 2023 public exhibition, options (2), (3) and (4) were presented as potential ways in which secondary education need could be met.

There is a clear preference for an expanded Knights Templar secondary school on the BA3 site. There are multiple reasons for this, including location and relationship with the existing town. The framework plans reflect this preference and BA3 is to be reserved for a secondary school.

An expanded Knights Templar secondary school on the BA3 site is the preferred option; it is not currently deliverable due to a lack of funding. There are also current uncertainties on the level of future secondary capacity required and exactly how many children will come from the new housing development. All parties will carry on working together on these issues to try and deliver the preferred approach.

The masterplan reserves land on BA3 for education. This will be held, controlled by the outline planning permission and S106 legal agreement, until such a time that all reasonable attempts to fund and deliver the preferred approach have been made and / or it is no longer needed for this use.

To make sure the masterplan is deliverable and the scheme can progress, the SMP also includes two other options: the expansion of Knights Templar School on its existing site and an additional secondary school on BA3.

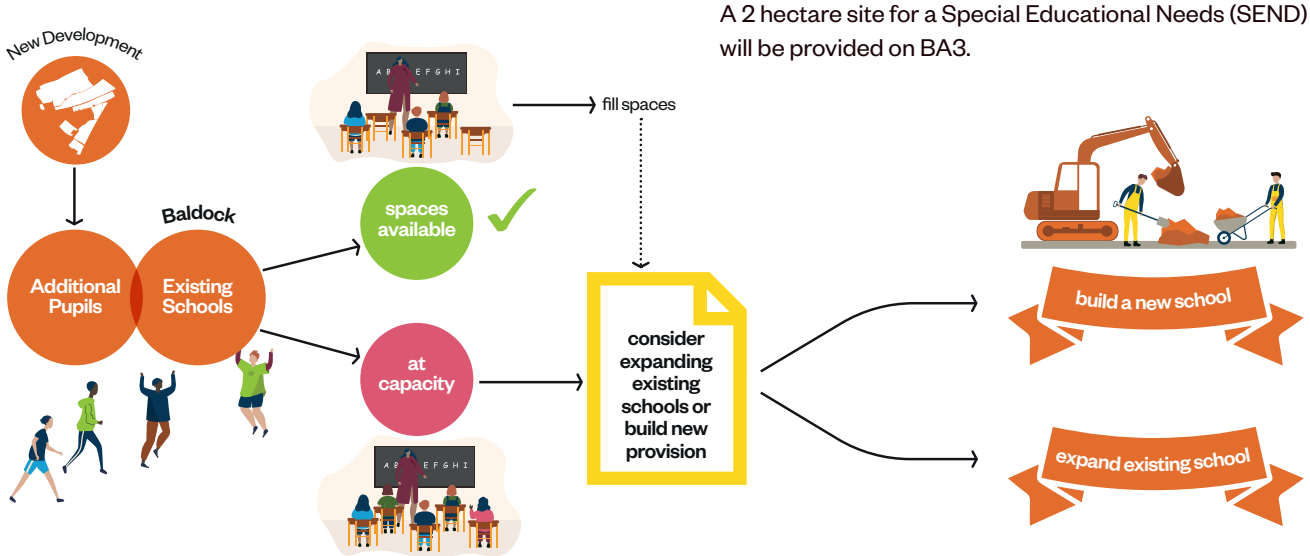
The final decision on the secondary school will be made involving the district and county councils in consultation with local, elected representatives. Appropriate governance and decision-making mechanisms will be secured through the planning process.

Early Years

Nursery facilities will be provided as part of the new primary schools, coordinating with existing provision in Baldock, alongside private commercial nursery facilities.

SEND

A 2 hectare site for a Special Educational Needs (SEND) school will be provided on BA3.



▲ Figure 18: Primary School Provision

Sport facilities at Houlton School, Rugby



Wintringham Primary Academy, Cambridgeshire





School at the heart of community life: Ermine Street Church Academy, Alconbury Weald

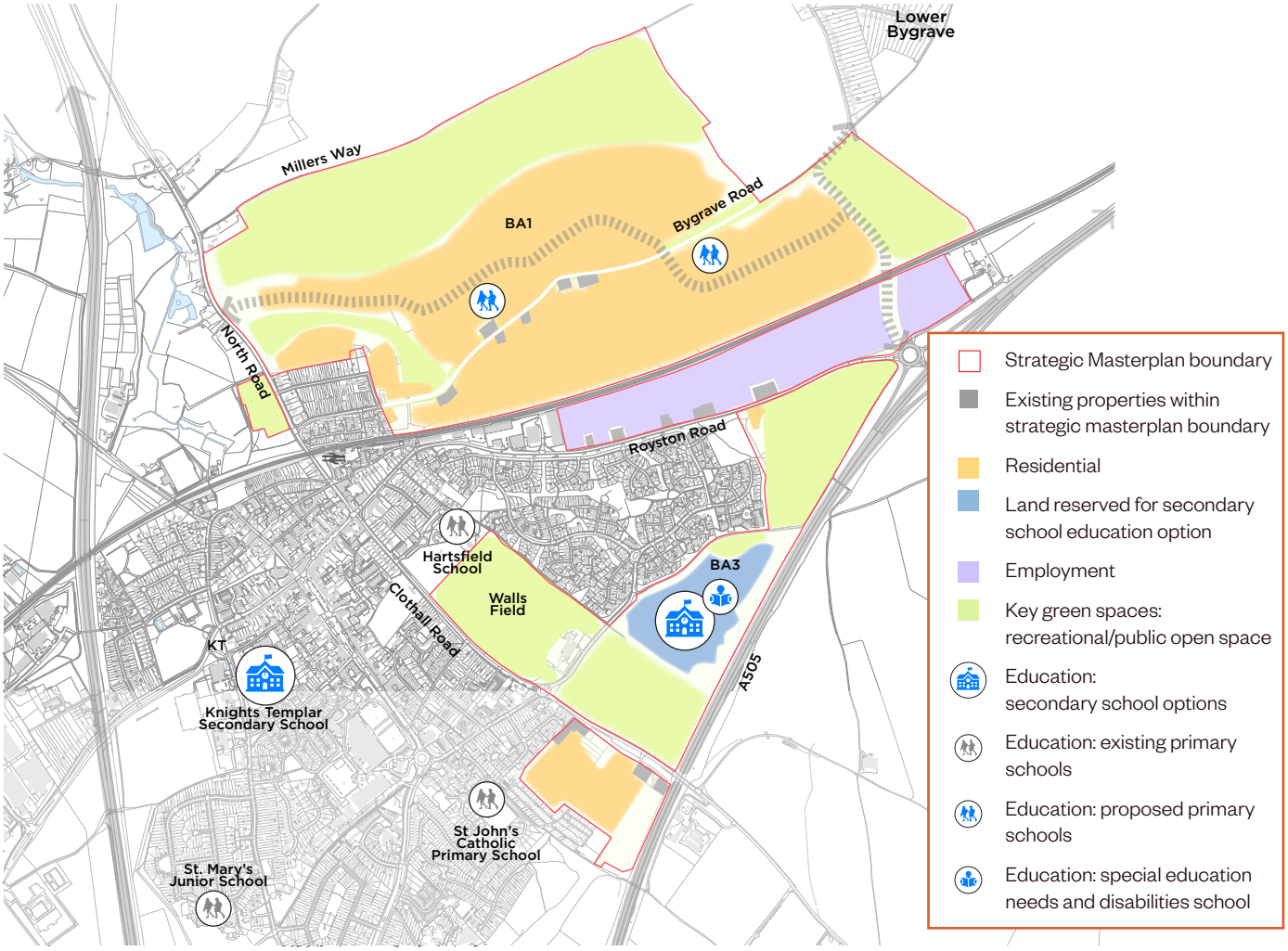


Figure 19: Secondary School Options

Figure 20: Development Areas plan

Local Centre

A single local centre will be located centrally within BA1, at the confluence of active travel routes through the development. The development is not large enough to sustain a second centre and it is important that the primacy of the town centre as the main retail / leisure offer is not compromised by over provision of these uses within the development. The exact nature and mix of uses within the Local Centre is being explored, but it will likely comprise of local retail and community facilities.

Energy

An area of land could also be reserved at the eastern end of BA10 for potential future energy uses such as battery storage, to facilitate the low carbon nature of the development.

Health

A health 'hub' could be incorporated at the western end of the employment parcel, adjacent to the active travel crossing. This could include new GP services alongside a wider health offering, potentially combined with small community / retail uses that would connect the employment area to Baldock and create an active and vibrant community facility in this location.

Figure 20 opposite identifies the principal development areas within the Strategic Masterplan area, as explained in the preceding paragraphs. These areas and the capacity of the development will be refined further as part of the forthcoming outline planning application.



The Tuning Fork community cafe, Houlton





Community hubs should be designed to offer a range of spaces for different community activities



Community allotments, Alconbury Weald

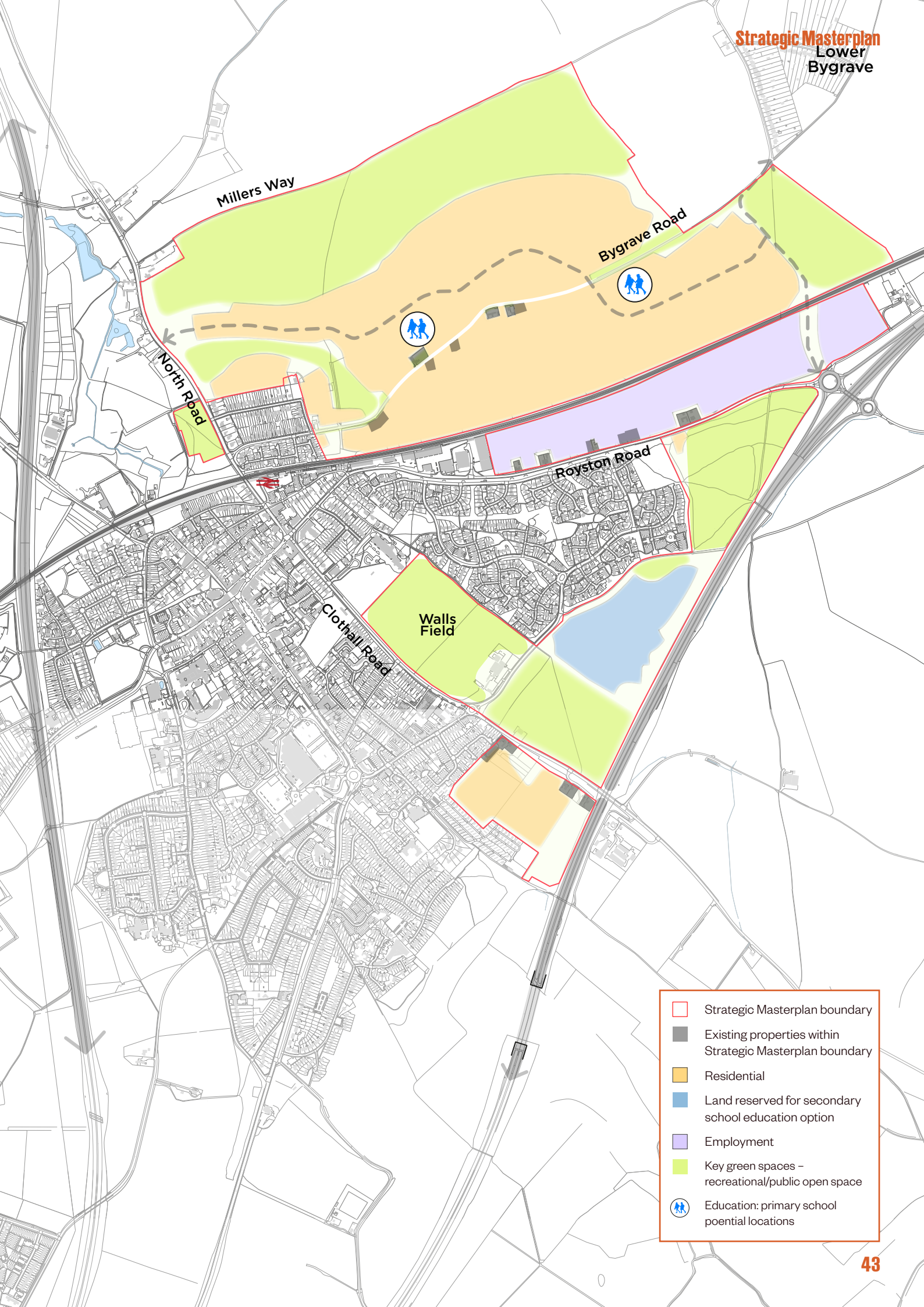

Millers Way
Bygrave Road
North Road
Royston Road
Walls
Field
Clothall Road
Strategic Masterplan boundary
Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
Residential
Land reserved for secondary school education option
Employment
Key green spaces – recreational/public open space
Education: primary school poential locations

Figure 21: Green Infrastructure framework

6.0 Green Infrastructure Framework

Green Infrastructure Key Principles:



Enhancing inherited assets



Prioritising nature rich places



Celebrating heritage



A Greenway for Baldock



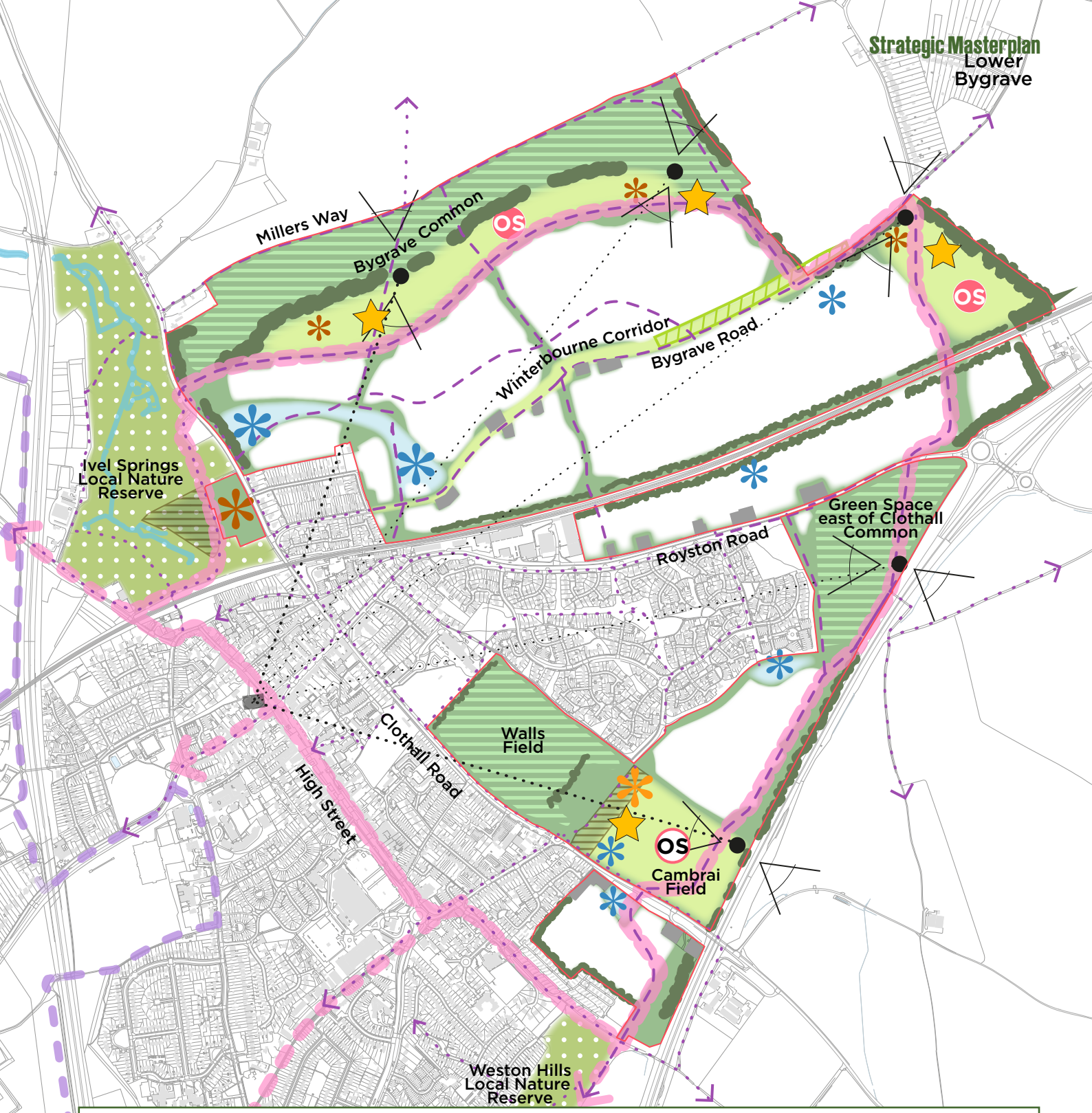
Creating a series of parkland destinations



Landscape-led design



Ensuring 360° access to your '5-a-day'

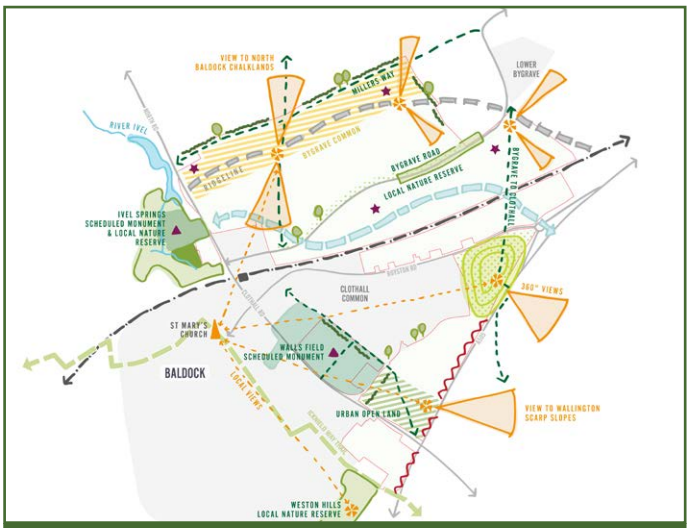


Existing

- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing local nature reserve
- Existing local wildlife site
- Existing allotments

Proposed

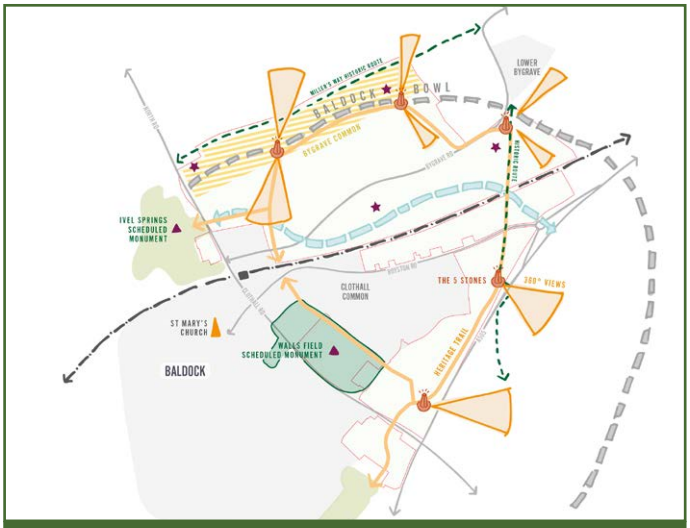
- Key green spaces – recreational/public open space
- Key green spaces – semi-natural
- Key green spaces – wetlands
- Strategic sustainable drainage systems feature
- Outdoor sports provision
- Outdoor sports provision (opportunity for dual use as part of school if secondary school provided on BA3)
- Key on-site pedestrian and/or cycle routes
- Key off-site pedestrian and/or cycle routes
- Key play areas
- Enhanced allotments
- New allotments
- Productive landscape
- Indicative planting buffers
- Key vantage points
- Key views to St. Mary's Church
- Baldock Greenway
- Baldock Greenway additional connections
- Letchworth Greenway



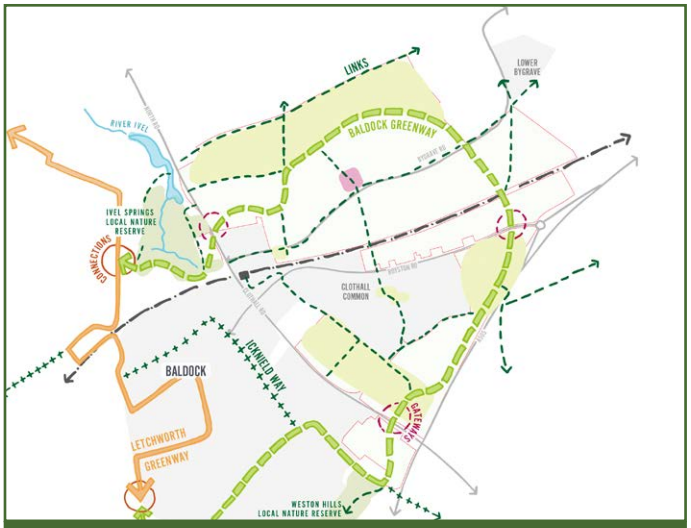
Inherited assets – working with the area's landscape, history and habitats.



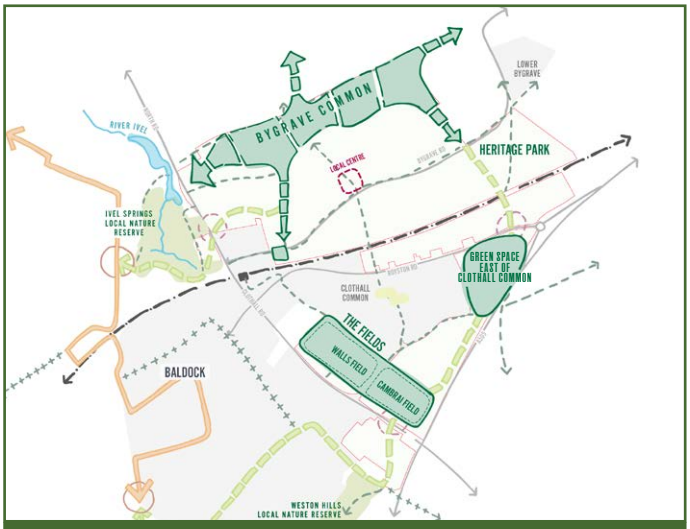
Prioritising nature-rich places – creating and linking a range of habitats and safeguarding the Local Nature Reserves



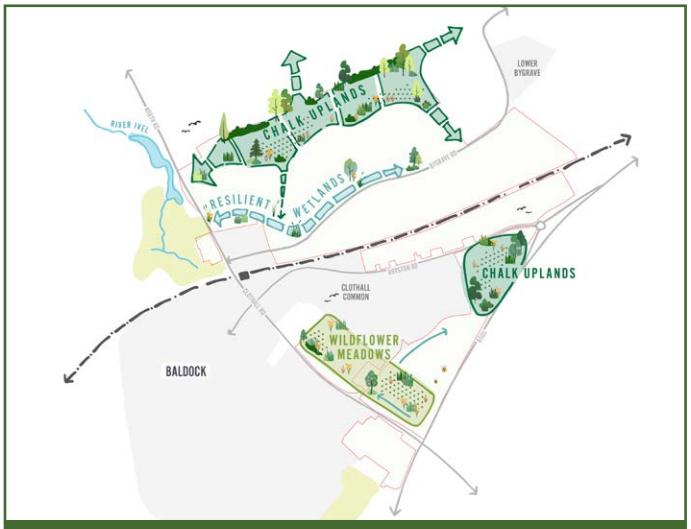
Celebrating heritage – embracing the area's rich archaeological heritage by creating a 'heritage trail', reinterpreting the historic 'winterbourne' and creating a new 'Bygrave Common'.



Getting around – dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding routes through the development and beyond, as part of the new Baldock Greenway.



Parkland destinations – new community green spaces for people to play, exercise, meet, socialize, relax, grow and connect with nature.



Landscape character – creating new landscapes influenced by the surrounding Ivel Valley, chalk uplands, Wallington scarp slopes and Weston Hills.

Green Infrastructure Framework Components

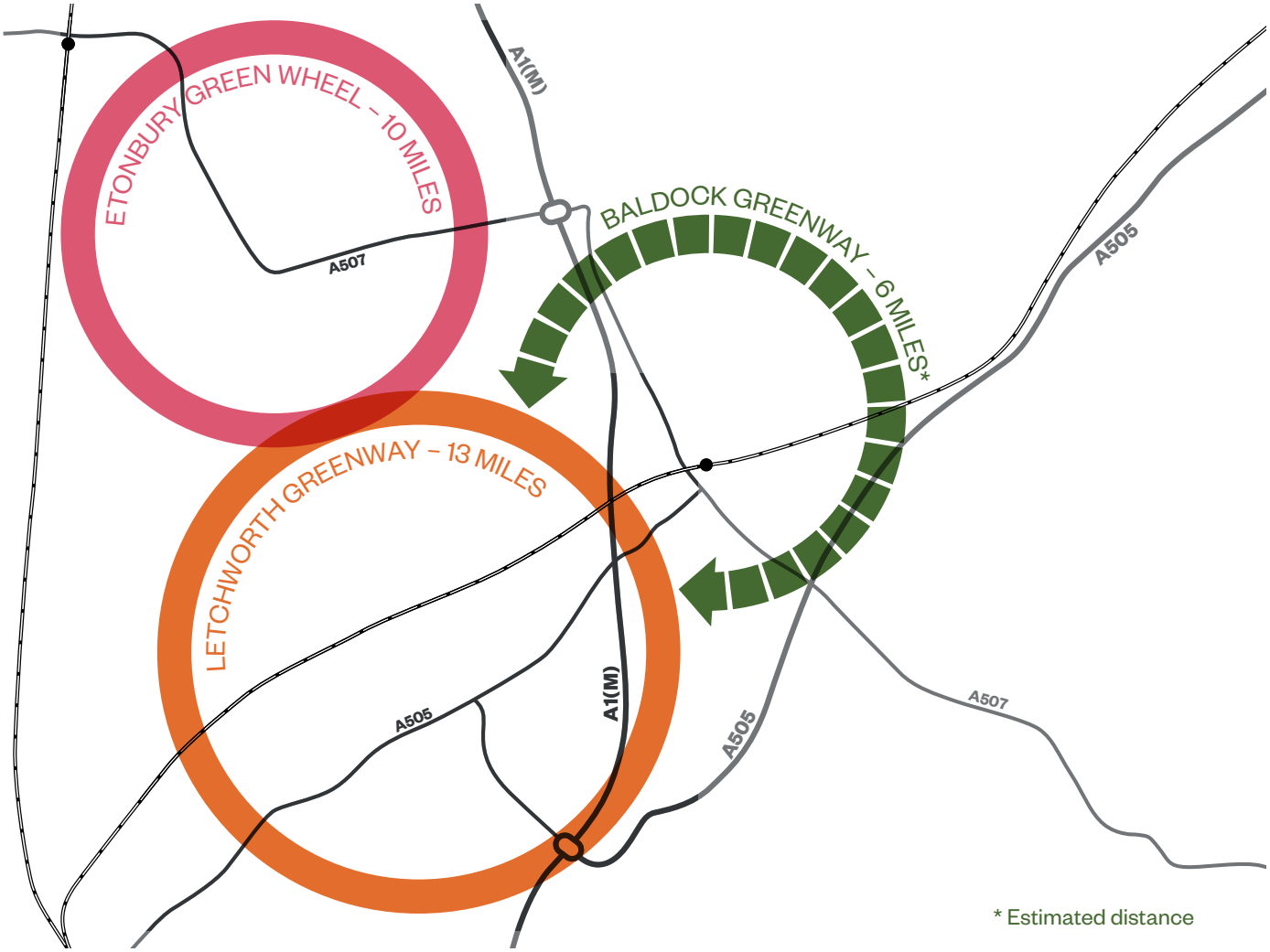
The green infrastructure network will comprise of a series of strategic scale green spaces as well as smaller scale green and open spaces, such as play areas and space for community food production, within and throughout development parcels.

Strategic Green Spaces

Baldock Greenway

A circular walking and cycling route around Baldock, known as the Baldock Greenway, is proposed as part of the development. It will provide a third 'greenway' to connect to the two existing routes: the Etonbury Green Wheel to the north west, and the Letchworth Greenway to the south west.

The route will connect large areas of green space in Baldock such as the Ivel Springs and Weston Hills LNRs, via Bygrave Common and Cambrai Fields through the development, as well as providing strategic connectivity to Letchworth.



▲ Figure 22: Strategic Recreational Routes

Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire ▶



Bygrave Common

Bygrave Common will deliver a substantial new community public parkland and natural landscape that will ensure that everyone has access to native-rich green space. The park will provide space to relax, exercise and socialise, with the opportunity to experience nature through a range of habitat typologies and biodiversity enhancements. There may be an opportunity to explore including a memorial garden in Bygrave Common.

Recreation focused activities (productive, play and sport) will be located alongside the development edge, whilst the land north of the ridgeline will provide a habitat mosaic that will support a range of species as well as encouraging species to move through the wider landscape, as part of a natural and semi-natural typology.

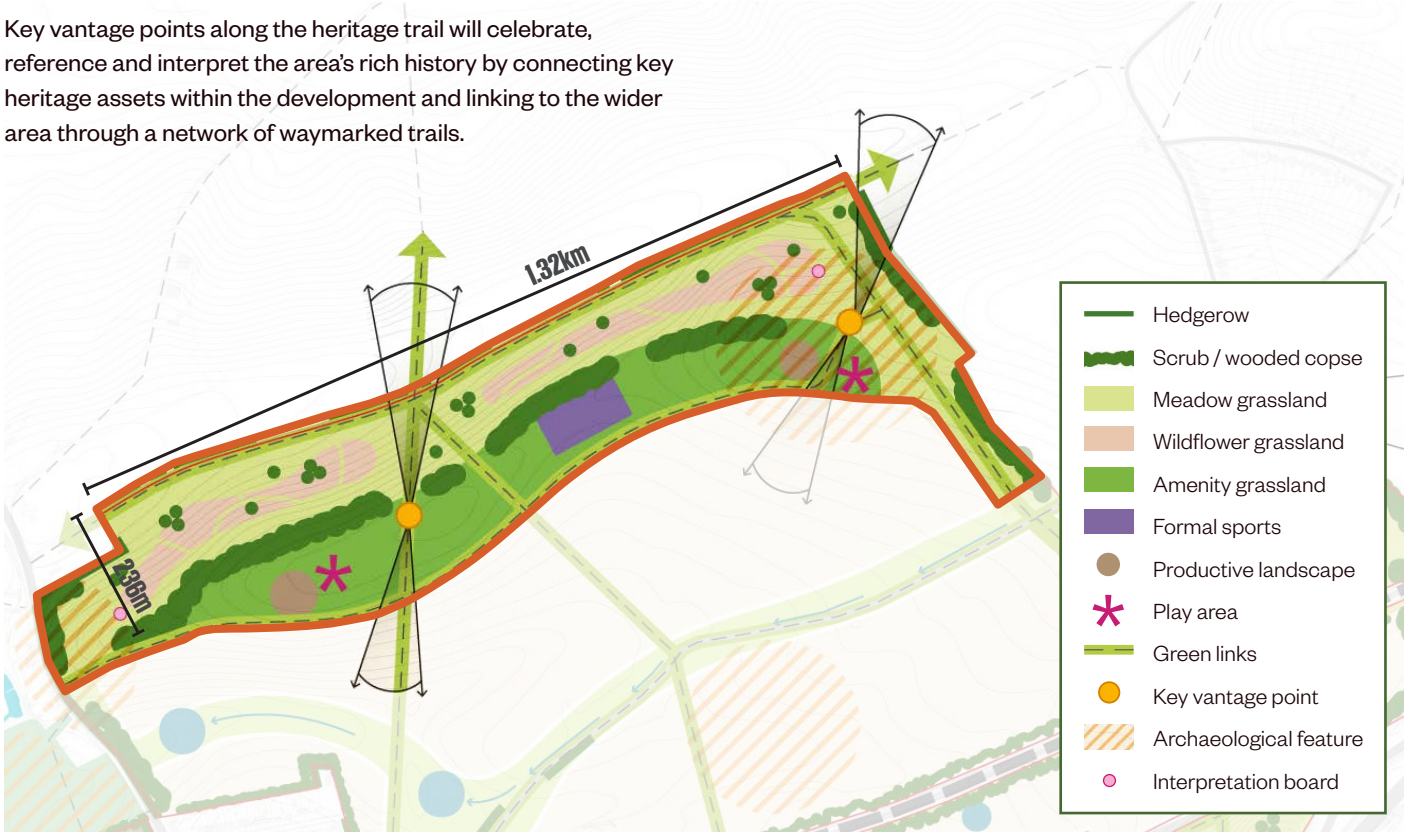
A new open chalk grassland habitat will be created in the northern area, featuring areas of scattered trees and scrub and providing onsite mitigation for corn bunting. Existing hedgerows should be retained, enhanced and gapped up where necessary with native species rich hedgerow and hedgerow trees.

The historic Millers Way route will be retained as a grass track, with new surfaced routes through Bygrave Common for cyclists, walkers and horse riders, including as part of the Baldock Greenway.



▲ Landmark feature as part of Heritage Trail

Key vantage points along the heritage trail will celebrate, reference and interpret the area's rich history by connecting key heritage assets within the development and linking to the wider area through a network of waymarked trails.



▲ Figure 23: Bygrave Common Key Design Principles



Key vantage point as part of the '5 stones heritage trail'



Green Space east of Clothall Common

Grassland and scrub habitat to be retained and enhanced at land east of Clothall Common, to provide an ecological stepping stone, which will allow the wider development to be permeable for key species.

Improvements to the informal footpath network through this area could include surfaced pathways for improved pedestrian, cycle and horse rider access. This key vantage point will be celebrated and reference made to Baldock's rich cultural heritage, through the addition of interpretation boards and as part of a heritage trail around Baldock, linking all the heritage open spaces and features.

This area of land will be a public open space/nature park managed for informal recreation and access to nature for the local community.



▲ Figure 24: Green Space east of Clothall Common Key Design Principles



Biodiversity benefits of meadow grassland

Walls Field

Walls Field presents a key opportunity for a new natural and semi-natural open space, featuring meadow grassland. Taking Walls Field out of arable land use would be beneficial to preserve the archaeology associated with the Scheduled Monument.

Walls Field is envisaged as a meadow grassland, managed for biodiversity, amenity and heritage purposes and will likely provide BNG for the wider scheme. Mown pathways through the meadow grassland would control people movement whilst providing attractive recreational routes.

Baldock's rich cultural heritage can also be referenced here, through the addition of interpretation boards and as part of a heritage trail around Baldock, linking all the heritage open spaces and features.

There is also the potential to enhance the Clothall Road edge arrival/gateway further, for instance, through the addition of estate rail fencing, additional tree avenue planting, native hedgerow and meadow grassland.



▲ Meadow grassland



▲ Figure 25: Walls Field Key Design Principles

Sports provision







Community garden

Heritage Park

This will be a local park to serve the north eastern community of Baldock. It will co-locate sports provision alongside other community facilities such as equipped play areas, informal recreation and food production.

Landscape buffer planting (scrub and woodland habitat) should be provided along development boundaries, to create sheltered movement corridors and foraging routes for wildlife as well as visual mitigation / screening from Lower Bygrave.

The park's location, close to archaeology features, could provide the opportunity for heritage landscape interventions and a strong heritage theme, influencing the design of the play areas, interpretation, layout and species planted.



Figure 26: Heritage Park Key Design Principles

Winterbourne Way

The Winterbourne Way will be a linear, open space corridor, focused on the movement of people, water and wildlife, which also reinterprets the historic Winterbourne paleo channel that used to exist here.

The linear corridor incorporates Bygrave Road, passes through the development, accommodates sustainable transport links (pedestrian, cycle and bus) and will vary in width along its length. The linear open space will facilitate multiple uses including biodiversity enhancements, active travel, SuDS, informal recreation and play.

Overlooked by built form on both sides – it serves as a strong interactive and connection space for the community. Existing hedgerow, grassland and Bygrave Road LWS to be retained (where appropriate) and enhanced as part of a wildlife focused and active travel corridor.



▲ Integration of blue infrastructure into Winterbourne Way



▲ Figure 27: Winterbourne Way Key Design Principles

Heritage Trail

The Baldock Heritage Trail will celebrate, reference and interpret the area's rich history by connecting key heritage assets within the development and linking to the wider area through a network of waymarked trails.

The trail will run in part along the Baldock Greenway and destination parks along surfaced paths, connecting important assets and highlighting the area's heritage, through interpretation using either boards / signage, wayfinding, landscape features and / or public art.

The green infrastructure network will interpret the Winterbourne palaeo channel as part of the development's water story and potential SuDS network, incorporating it into the Winterbourne Way linear park.



Play

The play strategy for the Strategic Masterplan interacts with existing and proposed landscape elements and will offer equipped designated play spaces and informal natural play opportunities. Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP), Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) and informal play on the way for Baldock. The Strategic Masterplan will deliver a range of play experiences that suit all ages and abilities and will be connected by a network of active travel routes that encourage social interaction and a healthy community. This could include a water play facility such as a 'splash pad'.

This provision will also include additional informal and natural play spaces along key pedestrian and cycle routes for spontaneous play such as 'play on the way' and pocket parks within development areas, detailed as part of future RMAs. Play spaces, where possible, should:

- Based on Fields in Trust (FIT) benchmark guidelines, policy standards and design requirements for minimum activity zones, buffer zones, and walking distances;
- Be accessible via pedestrian and cycle routes, providing safe, inclusive and sustainable movement between open space destinations;
- Provide adequate seating, be well overlooked and enclosed by landscape features rather than fencing; and
- Respond to the individual character of their setting, landscape and heritage assets and offer unique play experiences that create stimulating spaces to promote imaginative play.



▲ Green connections, Houlton, Rugby



Pocket Parks within a residential parcel ▶ have the potential to facilitate community integration, Alconbury Weald

Sports Provision

NHC have developed a sport strategy to inform the Baldock Strategic Masterplan based on Sport England's playing pitch calculator, to understand future demand for sport generated by population increases arising from new housing developments. The Sport England playing pitch calculator provided a benchmark figure for future sport demand, in addition to a qualitative assessment, and shows that the following outdoor sports provisions may be required within the development:

- Grass adult pitch;
- Grass cricket pitch;
- Grass mini soccer pitches;
- Multiple 3G pitch at the school site; and
- Grass pitch at the school site.

The Strategic Masterplan will work to deliver what is needed to meet the additional need and will incorporate two Sports Hubs – one publicly accessible in the Heritage Park and one on the Urban Open Land. Depending on the eventual use of BA3, either for residential or secondary school use, the Urban Open Land sports facilities will either form part of the school and be accessible to the community outside of core school hours, or publicly accessible as per the Heritage Park.

The strategic open spaces within the development will also include areas of informal sport including outdoor gym facilities, running/walking/cycling trails (2km and 5km loops) and recreation areas for informal kickabouts (e.g. mini soccer pitches on Bygrave Common).

In terms of indoor sports, if a secondary school is delivered in BA3, this will include a sports hall, which will be secured for community use. If Knights Templar is expanded on its current site, a contribution will be made to enhancements to the existing sports hall.

Productive Landscapes

Productive landscapes will provide an accessible growing landscape for residents to cultivate, produce and grow food. The productive landscape strategy for Baldock is to strategically locate facilities, to provide even distribution and walkable access to the existing and new community, complimenting the location of existing productive provision. Productive landscape provision will be located in the following locations and will include:

- **Formal allotments –** to expand and enhance the existing allotment facilities at North Road;
- **Community growing spaces –** create informal community gardens and orchards, co-located within parkland destinations (Bygrave Common and Heritage Park) and next to community facilities; and
- **Informal foraging/edible trails –** informal opportunities will be provided along the greenway and open spaces for the foraging of berries, nuts and herbs.

Productive landscapes should:

- Be accessible via pedestrian and cycle routes, providing safe, inclusive and sustainable movement between open space destinations;
- Include interpretation boards and signage, where located in public open space, to reference species, how to grow and suggested recipes;
- Consider infrastructure requirements where appropriate to facilitate management – water, seating and picnic tables, composting areas and secure storage facilities (sheds); and
- Offer access points for community gardens and allotments for vehicle delivery and servicing, and where necessary appropriate provision of car and cycle spaces.

▼ Grass sports pitch alongside a play area, Houlton, Rugby



▼ Allotments alongside a play area, Alconbury Weald



Strategic SUDS and water

The areas of greatest surface water drainage risk, at the lowest parts of the land, will be the location for a sustainable drainage corridor/wetlands area to convey and store surface water, as well as performing a wider ecological and amenity function. Sustainable drainage features will be used to either prevent flooding or be located in areas that are known to flood currently, to alleviate this. Soakaways will also be incorporated into residential parcels to provide on-plot sustainable drainage.

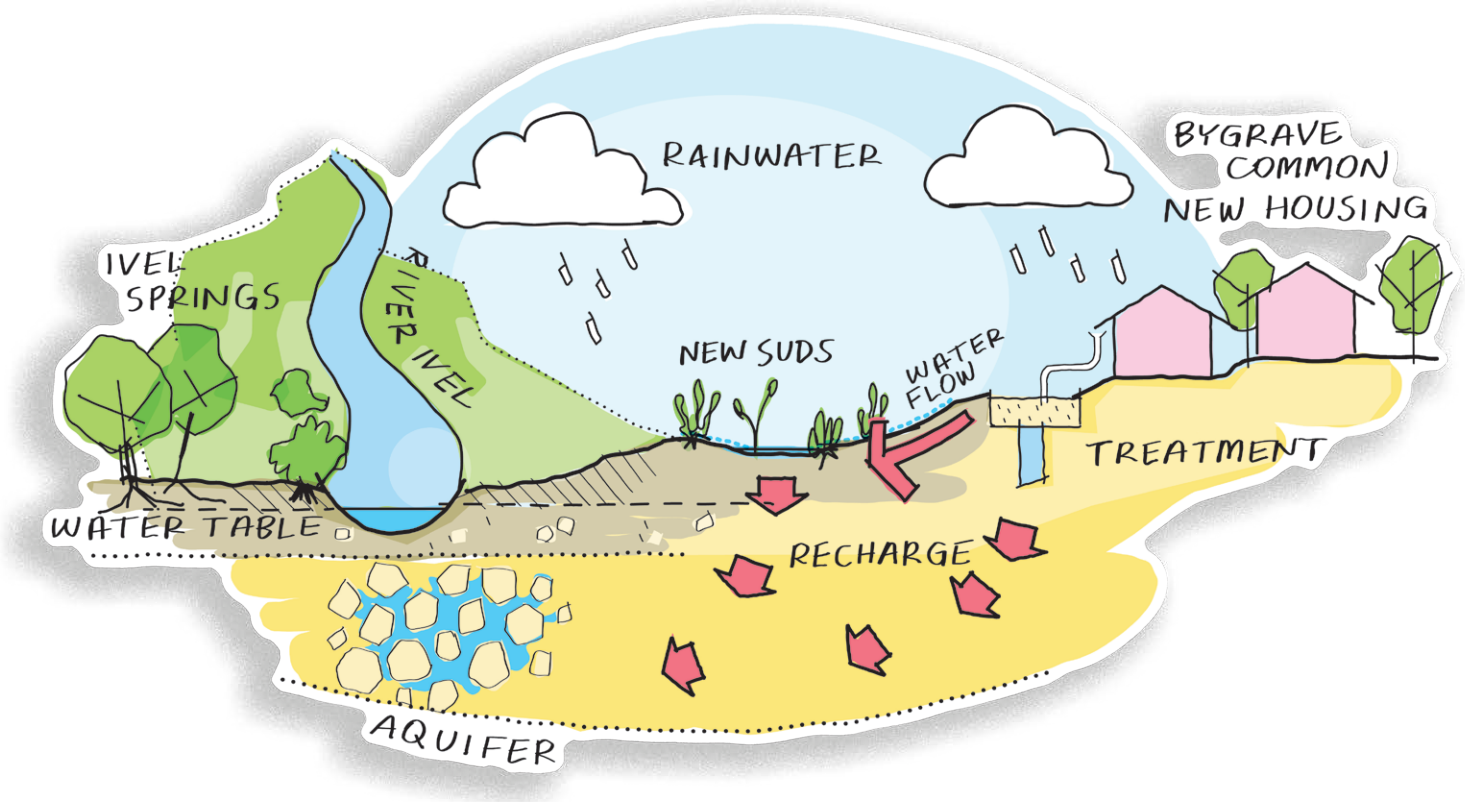
The development will contribute as far as possible to helping resolve the issues facing the River Ivel chalk stream. During the initial phases of development, sustainable drainage features will capture and convey surface water and allow it to infiltrate into the ground. This will help recharge the existing aquifer which feeds the River Ivel and provide ecological benefits to the wider area (see Figure 28 below).

Water levels in the aquifer will be monitored and if the infiltration has helped to recharge it sufficiently, later phases of the development may begin to re-use surface water within the new homes and buildings instead, through water 'harvesting' methods. This would reduce the overall demand for water generated by the new development.

U&C are in discussion with Affinity Water as the water supplier for the area, to ensure that proper plans are in place to supply water to new houses as Baldock grows.

This will involve delivering a supply of water to the new development, but importantly will also have a strong focus on water efficiency measures and the use of water by residents of new homes and people living in and around Baldock. The new homes will incorporate water efficiency measures to ensure that water use is minimised wherever possible.

Affinity Water have set up 'Project Zero' to help achieve water neutrality and to address two problems; to make new homes water efficient and thereby reduce their anticipated water consumption; and to reduce water waste in the community where the new homes are situated. Project Zero aims to develop the world's first water neutral housing developments without increasing the overall water use in the community. Growing Baldock will be influenced by the lessons learnt by Project Zero as it is implemented.



▲ Figure 28: River Ivel Recharge Strategy

Figure 29: Biodiversity Framework

7.0 Biodiversity Framework

Biodiversity Key Principles:



Enhancement of Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site



Integrating habitats and corridors, trees and hedgerows, into GI network



Creation of network of connected wildlife corridors and green spaces



Connections to and buffering of Local Nature Reserves



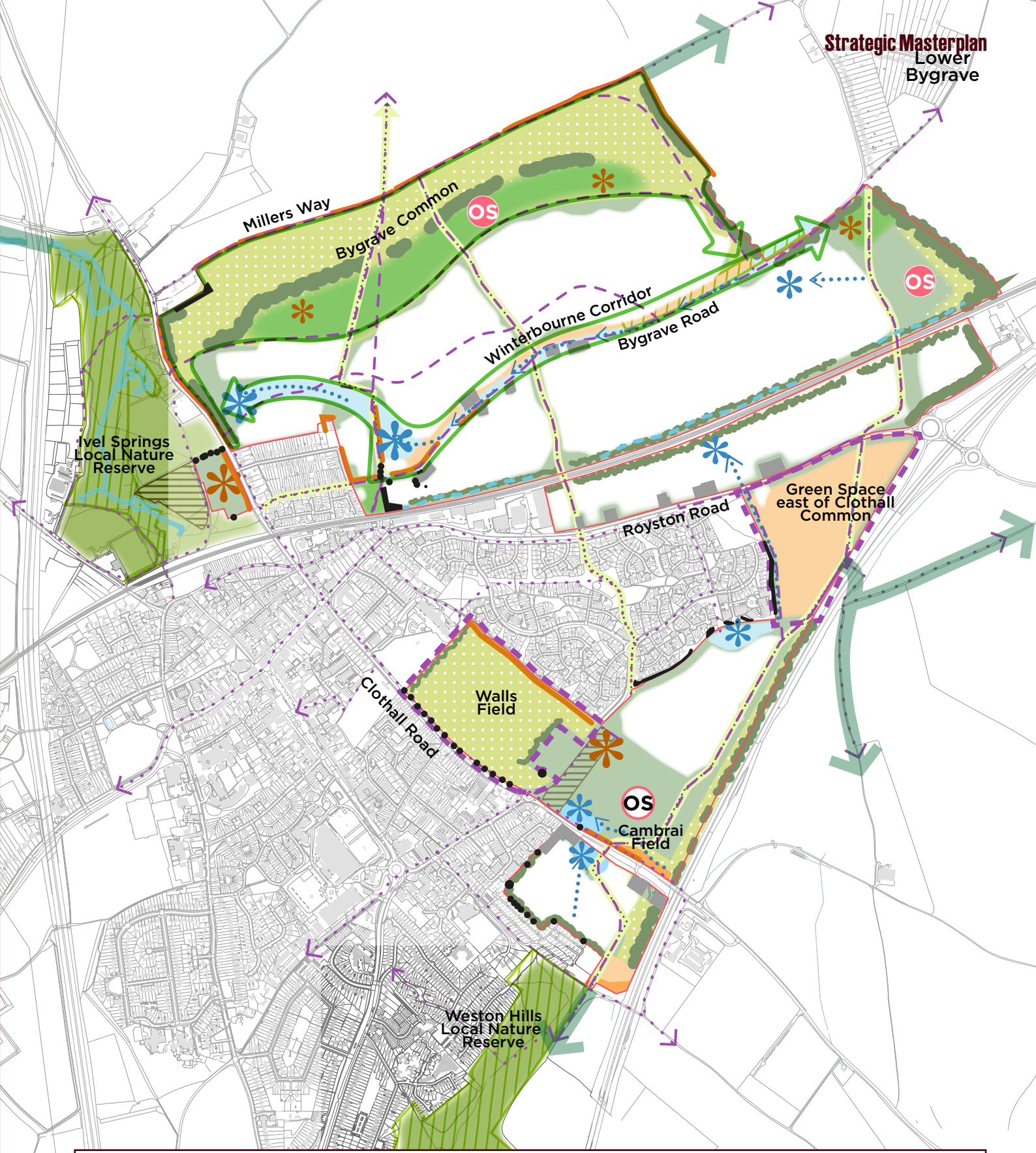
Mitigation of impacts on ecology through provision of new habitats



Native and climate resilient planting



Additional green spaces to reduce recreational pressure elsewhere



- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing local nature reserve
- Existing local wildlife site
- Retained allotments
- Retained grassland
- Retained scrub
- Retained hedgerow
- Retained on-site trees
- Wildlife-focused corridors
- Wildlife-focused areas
- Wider green infrastructure connectivity
- Key green active travel links
- Indicative buffer planting
- Grassland habitat
- Wetland habitat
- Sustainable drainage systems/strategic surface water flow
- Amenity landscape
- Productive landscape
- OS Outdoor sports provision
- OS Outdoor sports provision (opportunity for dual use as part of school if secondary school provided on BA3)



▲ Figure 30: Sowing the Seeds for a Wilder Future



Biodiversity Framework Components

A network of ecological areas and corridors will traverse the development and connect larger green spaces and habitats. These will include the following strategic ecological areas and interventions:



Green Space east of Clothall Common can support reptiles and insects such as the Small Blue Butterfly

Green Space east of Clothall Common

Wildlife focused area to be retained, to protect the existing grassland habitat that supports reptiles and butterflies such as the Small Blue. This area will be designated as land for informal recreation and for the community to access nature.

Wildlife Corridors & Green Links

Wildlife corridors will be incorporated within Bygrave Common and the Winterbourne Way, to provide strategic ecological connections west–east and between large areas of open space and the LNRs. Smaller green links will connect to these corridors, running through development parcels and providing an extra layer to the ecological network that underpins the development.

Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site and Winterbourne Wetland

A linear corridor of green and blue infrastructure will run east-west through BA1, aligning with the topography of this part of the development, the historic route of the winterbourne channel and incorporating the Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site. This will form a key wildlife corridor and part of the nature recovery network, protecting existing and providing new habitat areas along its length.

Bygrave Common

The northern part of Bygrave Common will incorporate a grassland habitat that provides a home for ground nesting birds such as corn bunting. This ecological area will be separate from the more active and accessible parts of Bygrave Common to the south, to ensure there is space for both humans and wildlife alike.

Ivel Springs and Weston Hills Local Nature Reserves

Ecological connectivity to the LNRs will be improved through the provision of wildlife corridors incorporating newly created habitat areas in close proximity, including SuDS features, woodland and wildflower grassland.

Walls Field

Walls Field will be taken out of agricultural use and planted as a wildflower meadow, forming a new habitat area.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation has been undertaken of the Strategic Masterplan, concluding that the development will deliver a BNG in excess of the 10% statutory requirement.

The site supports around 10% of the singing male corn buntings in Hertfordshire

Figure 31: Movement Framework ▸

8.0 Movement Framework

Movement Key Principles:



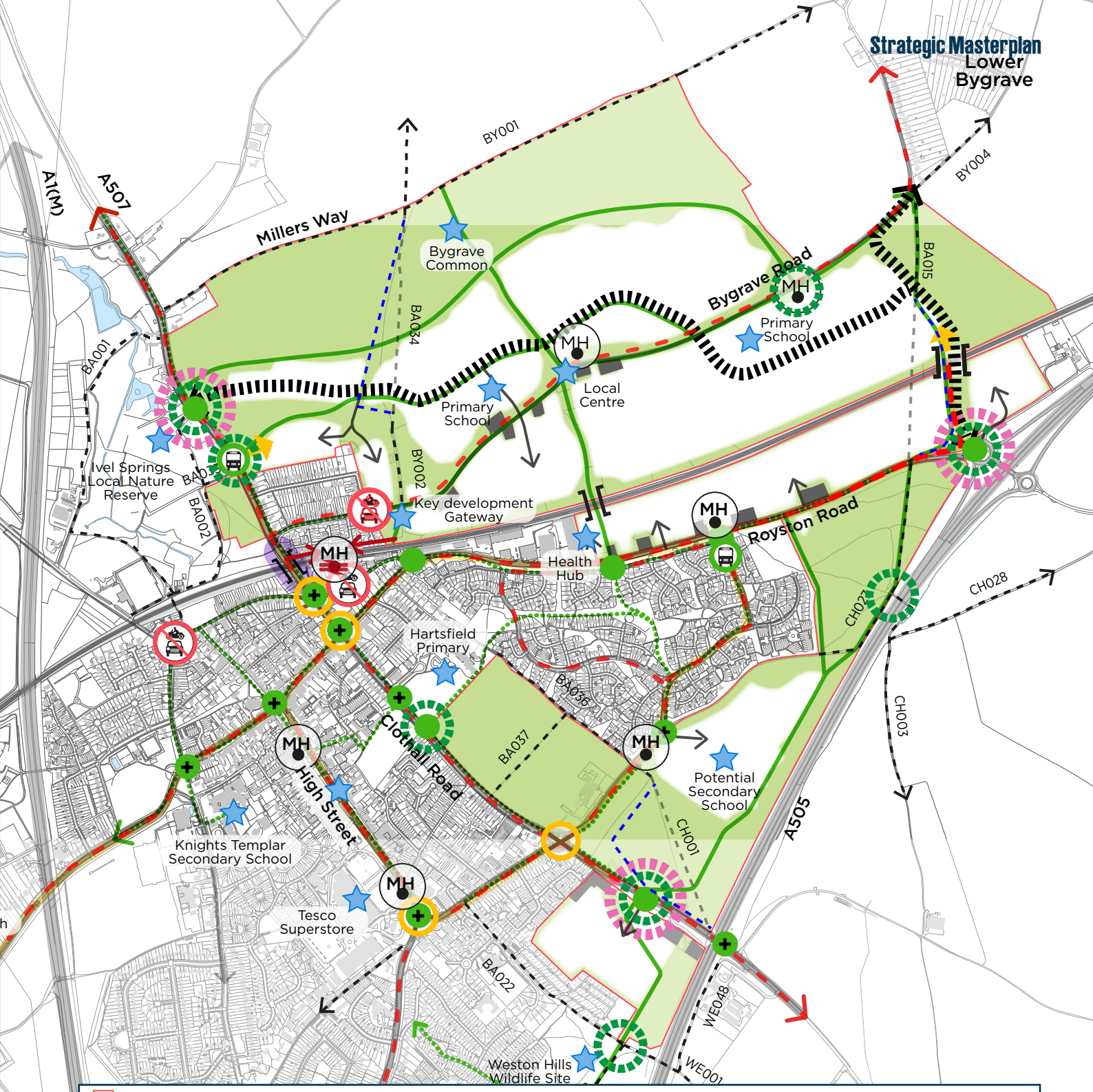
A place where half of all trips are made on foot, bicycle or public transport



Town-wide improvements to encourage sustainable and active travel



Reclaiming space for walking, cycling and public transport



- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Key expanded town destinations
- On-site strategic green infrastructure
- Key existing public rights of way: footpaths/bridleways

Proposed active travel on-site interventions

- Diverted public rights of way
- Key pedestrian & cycle connections
- Pedestrian & cycle gateways

Proposed active travel off-site interventions

- Off-site key pedestrian & cycle connections
- Improved active travel crossing
- New active travel crossing

Proposed public transport on-site interventions

- Primary bus route
- Primary bus access into BA1
- Public transport routes
- Mobility hubs (varying scales/functions)

Proposed public transport off-site interventions

- Existing public transport routes
- Station enhancements
- New station access opportunities
- Bus priority: bus gates

Proposed vehicular on-site interventions

- Primary route (North Road to Royston Road)
- Indicative secondary development access
- Key access junctions and Baldock gateways

Proposed vehicular off-site interventions

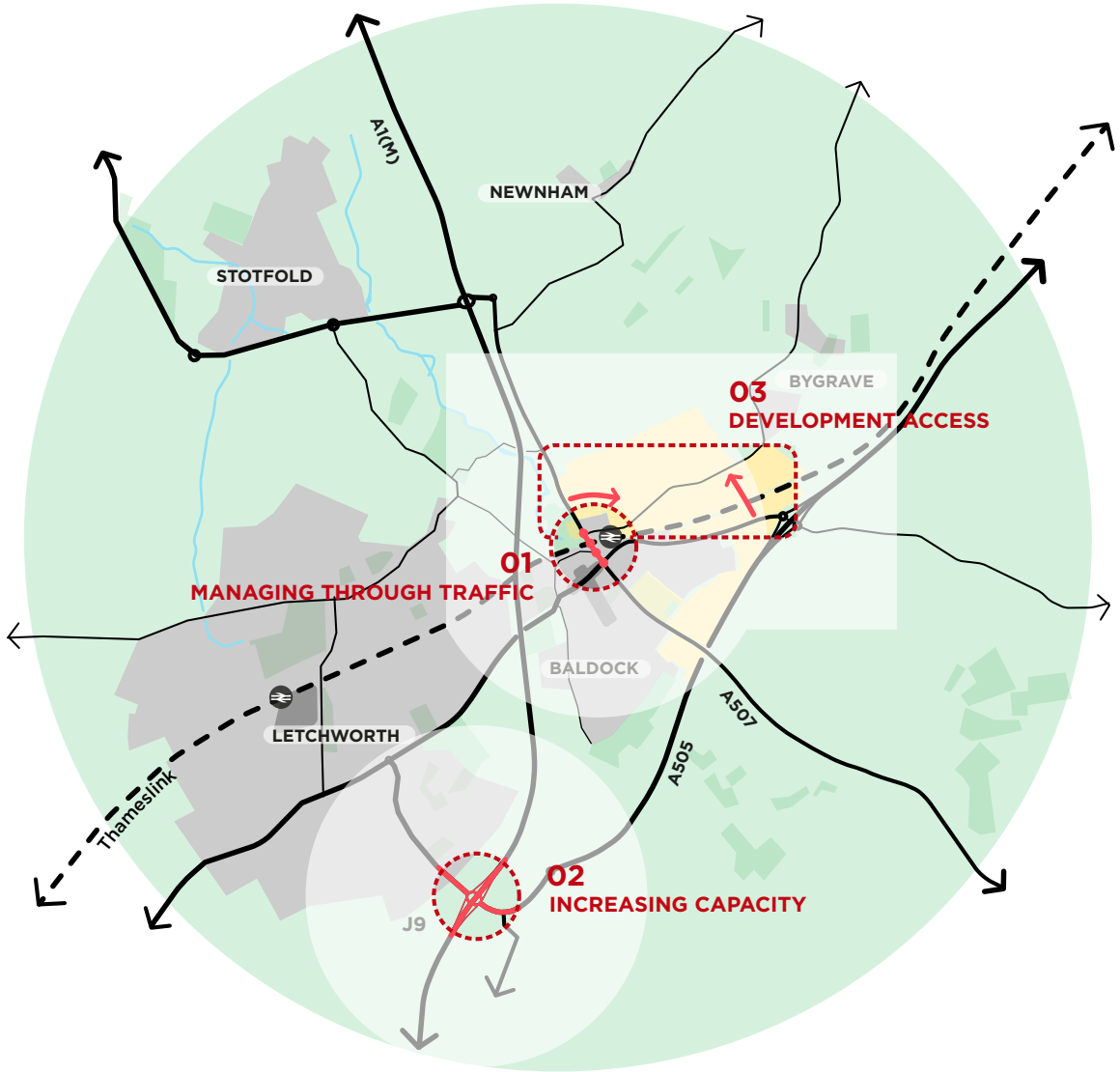
- Junction improvements (active travel priority measures)
- Traffic light controlled one-way 'shuttle' working under railway bridge
- Modal filter to prevent private motor vehicle access

The Strategic Masterplan proposes a package of interventions across the town that will reduce through traffic, allowing conditions to be transformed for walking, cycling and public transport. These measures are being tested and assessed with the HCC Highways team and discussions regarding responsibility for delivery, costs and phasing are on-going. The on and off-site design approach has been informed by three sustainable travel principles:

1. Designing a place where half of all trips are made on foot, bicycle or by using public transport, drawing on best practice across the UK and Europe;
2. Delivering improvements within the town that encourages walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport within and beyond Baldock, creating one connected town; and
3. Encouraging through-traffic to stay on the strategic road network, enabling road space to be used for placemaking, walking, cycling and public transport.

These principles have fed into the following transport objectives for the scheme:

- Reducing car dominance in Baldock;
- Safe, direct and coherent networks for active travel (i.e. walking and cycling);
- Green routes, helping people move away from roads;
- Prioritising buses over private vehicles;
- Excellent rail access;
- Managing freight and logistics; and
- Reducing reliance on the private car.



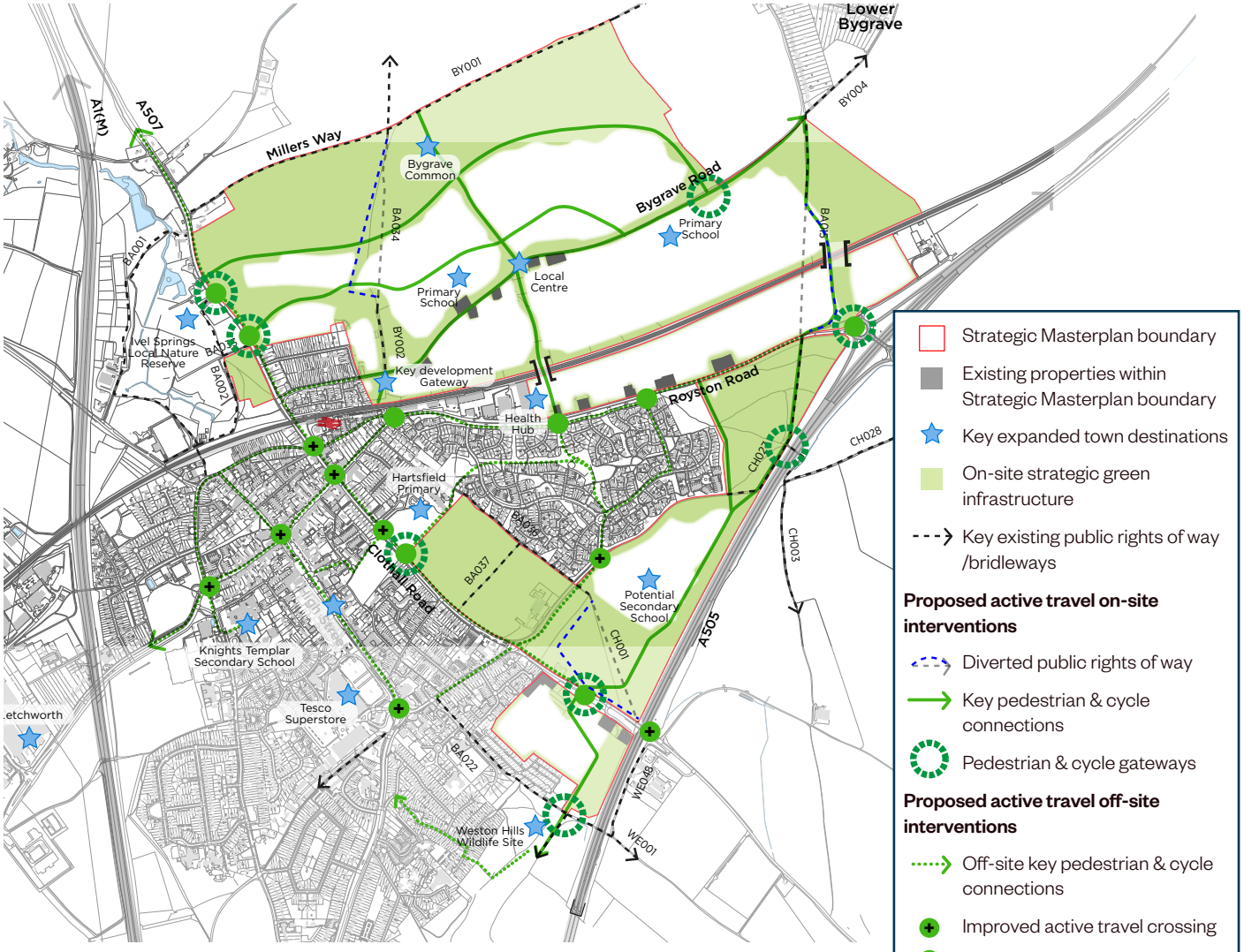
▲ Figure 32: Movement 'Big Moves'

Movement Framework Components

A series of on and off-site interventions will combine to deliver a step change in movement patterns through and within Baldock:

Active Travel (Walking and Cycling)

- safe, continuous and attractive walking and cycling routes will be provided to key local destinations such as the local centre and schools, the employment area, informal play and meeting spaces;
- active travel routes to be more attractive than car routes to key destinations;
- traffic-free routes will be people-centred spaces, overlooked by buildings to enhance personal safety and designed to prioritise walking and cycling, including traffic free cycle routes in busier locations;
- a range of utility and leisure active travel routes will be provided. Utility routes such as the active travel connection between the Local Centre and Health Hub will provide direct and safe access to key destinations. Leisure routes such as the Baldock Greenway will provide opportunities to walk and cycle for pleasure, on longer, circular routes;
- a dedicated walking and cycling route crossing the railway, connecting development either side of the tracks and Clothall Common; and
- new paths and improvements to existing routes will be created.



▲ Figure 33: Active Travel

Public Transport Components

- bus stops will be located within 400m of most new homes and enable bus services to be provided to Baldock town centre and Letchworth, including some traffic-free bus ways, for example, into Clothall Common;
- bus routes to be more direct and attractive than car routes to key destinations;
- bus routes through BA1 should directly serve the local centre and connect North Road to the A505/Royston Road junction;
- a network of 'mobility hubs' will be provided where people can easily switch from one mode of transport to another, to make travelling without a private car easier; and
- a new northern access to the rail station will be created, alongside improvements to the accessibility of the station building.



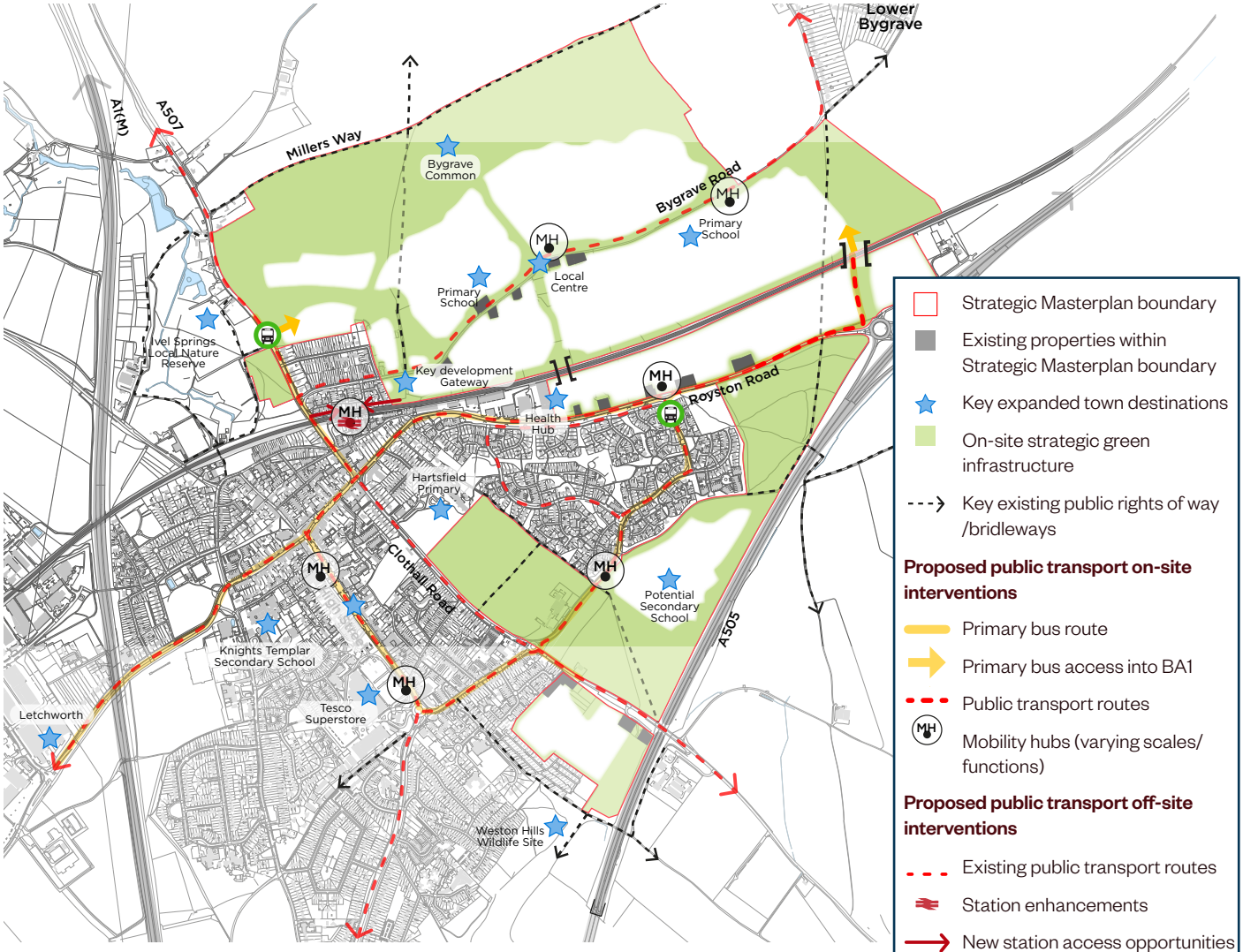
Mobility hubs

- Mobility Hubs bring together a range of transport options in one place, to make travelling without a private car easier;
- A network of mobility hubs will be provided, incorporating a range of options such as bus stops, cycle and scooter hire, cycle parking, car club spaces, cycle repair, shopping pick up / drop-off lockers, EV charging points.



Bus gate

- A bus gate is a section of road along which only buses and other authorised vehicles (such as emergency vehicles) can travel;
- A bus gate is proposed at the entrance to the development on North Road, providing a bus only link into the new community, seperate from the vehicular access from North Road;
- Another is proposed from Royston Road south into Clothall Common.



▲ Figure 34: Public Transport



Modal filter to prevent private car access

- Modal filters can be used to prevent rat-running;
- Modal filters allow pedestrians, cyclists and buses to move along a street while restricting general traffic, with benefits to air quality, safety and quality of life along residential streets



Shuttle working

- The limited space under the Station Road railway bridge means the existing pavements are narrow and there is no space for a dedicated cycle route;
- Narrowing the carriageway under the rail bridge for general traffic to one lane would provide space for pedestrians and cyclists;
- The single lane of traffic would be controlled by traffic lights.

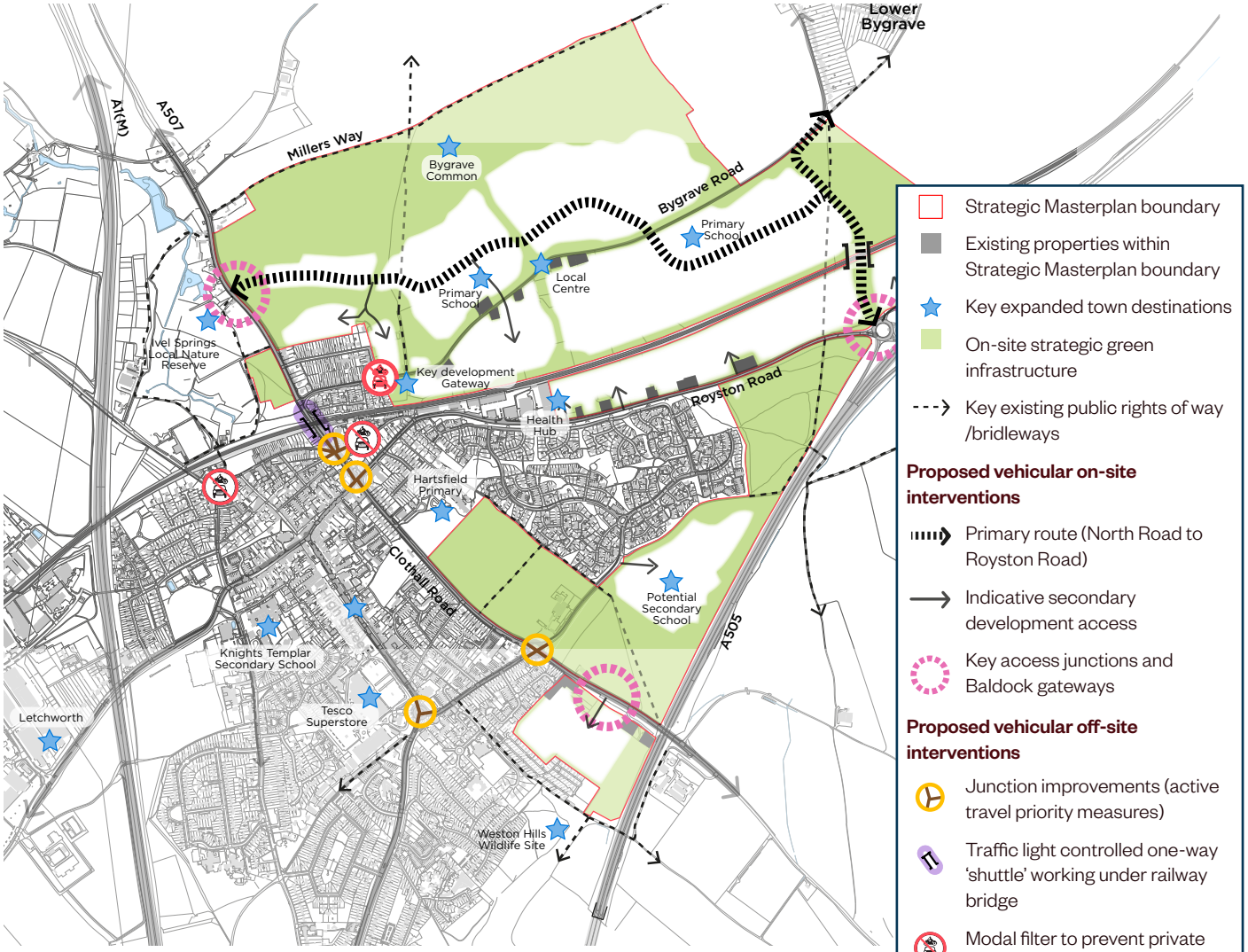


Car club

- Car club cars can be booked by the hour and typically costs less than owning a second or third car;
- Provides comfort that a car will be available if needed, reducing the need to own private cars;
- Car club vehicles are generally newer and less polluting than the average car.

Vehicular Key Components

- access into the development will be via a new road connecting North Road and Royston Road;
- car club cars will form part of the proposals, to reduce the need to own a car;
- car parking will be designed so as not block pavements and to be flexible so parking areas can be used differently in the future, if demand reduces over time; and
- deliveries will be managed via 'consolidation points' and 'pick-up lockers', so that the number of delivery vans and lorries on residential streets is minimised. Dedicated loading bays will be provided to prevent pavements from being blocked.



▲ Figure 35: Private Vehicles

All-modes Access

The number of vehicles on the roads in Baldock were counted as part of the baseline evidence gathering, and the results confirmed that, contrary to early thinking, a new high-speed link road would not remove significant volumes of traffic from the town centre and would be likely to draw more traffic off the major roads, increasing overall traffic volumes. Instead, a new slow speed access road into the development forms a key part of the Strategic Masterplan and will connect the A507 to the A505. This combined with preventing some turns at the Whitehorse Street junction, will take some traffic out of the town centre without increasing overall traffic volumes. The section of this new road that crosses over the railway, linking Bygrave / Ashwell Road and the B656 at the A505 interchange will be designed to enable it to serve a strategic function.

The new slow speed access road into the development will be fronted by buildings, high quality footways and a separate cycle path. It will provide access into BA1 from new junctions on North Road and Royston Road and via a new bridge over the railway, north east of Clothall Common.

The development access will be designed to prioritise active and sustainable travel movement across it, to ensure connectivity between development parcels and open space to the south.



▲ Destinations within the development will be accessible by sustainable modes of transport.



Approach to Parking

A key component for ensuring high levels of active and sustainable mode share is the proper management of car parking, both in terms of the level of car parking provision and how and where it is provided. Some of the key principles for the parking strategy will include:

- overall residential and commercial car parking levels will be guided by policy and reflect the best-practice approach to walking, cycling and public transport;
- residential and commercial car parking levels will be lower where accessibility by non-car modes is at its highest;
- destinations / facilities within the development being more conveniently accessible by sustainable modes, with low levels of parking provision focused on disabled parking;
- a variety of off-plot parking solutions will be explored as a way to encourage modes of transport other than private car use;
- convenient cycle parking at building/dwelling entrances;
- parking bays will be unallocated wherever possible;
- all vehicle parking spaces will be designed so that there is natural surveillance;
- car clubs will be provided to reduce the need for single, or multiple car ownership with the number of vehicles determined in relation to general parking provision;
- vehicle parking will be designed so that the land can be repurposed in the longer term, where possible, responding to changing needs in the future; and
- provide access to electric car charging points for all residential car parking spaces.

Construction Access

Construction access points and routes will be set out within the outline planning application. Construction traffic will avoid the town centre and be routed onto larger roads.



Offering a range of transport options creating a real alternative to private car use (Wolvercote Mill, Oxford)

Off-site Interventions

Walking and cycling conditions within Baldock, between key destinations, will be safer and made suitable for all ages and abilities, through a combination of widened pavements, traffic-free cycle paths and reduced traffic on quieter back streets. Improved junctions and crossings are proposed at key points in the town to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience. The Strategic Masterplan incorporates the following main changes to roads and routes outside the Strategic Masterplan area, within Baldock:

- alterations to the Whitehorse Street junction to provide wider pavements , reduced wait-times for pedestrians, improved safety for people cycling, and restricted turns;
- redesign of the Station Road / Icknield Way junction to provide improved access to the station for pedestrians and cyclists, and to create a new east-west cycle route connecting the town with the proposed employment area on Royston Road;
- a new access is proposed into Clothall Common from Royston Road. This would allow access by buses, cyclists and pedestrians, but not private vehicles; and
- provision of additional capacity at Junction 9 of the A1(M).

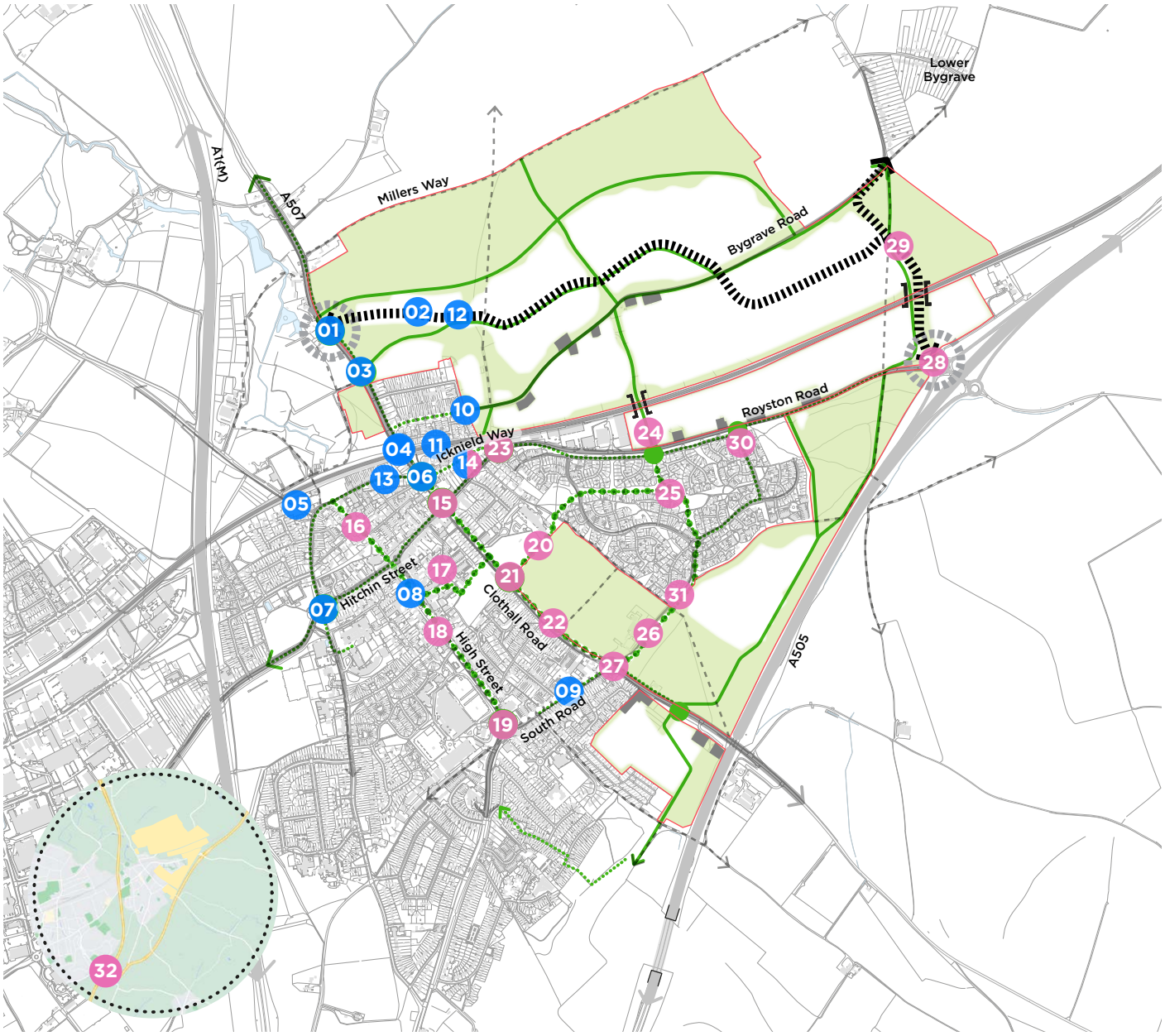
The following interventions are needed in order to allow the improvements above to be delivered:

- modal filters which allow pedestrians and cycles to pass only;
- shuttle running is proposed on Station Road under the railway; and
- restricted turns at the Whitehorse Street junction, including potentially the left turn into Station Road from the High Street to remove the significant through movement from the west and stopping movements between Station Road and Royston Road, to encourage use of the new road through the development.

Taken together the measures above are designed to reduce through-traffic volumes, create more space for walking and cycling and more flexibility in routing buses. Some residents making car trips may be inconvenience, but the benefits should be felt by all residents and visitors to Baldock.

The plan at Figure 36 provides an indication of broadly when the changes which will affect how people move around Baldock might happen – as part of an early or later phase of interventions. The measures, their timing, costs and responsibility for delivery and funding are being discussed in detail with HCC (highways team) and will be tested as part of the outline planning application in due course.

Figure 36: Indicative Access & Movement Interventions Phasing



Early Phase

01. Development access junction
02. Development access road
03. Bus and Cycle only access to BA1
04. Traffic light controlled one-way working under railway bridge
05. Norton Road modal filter to prevent private motor vehicle access
06. Station Road/ Icknield Way crossing and junction enhancements
07. Hitchin Street crossing improvements
08. High Street Mobility Hub
09. South Road public realm and walking improvements and traffic management measures
10. Bygrave Road modal filter to prevent private motor vehicle access
11. Station Mobility Hub
12. Interim arrangement bus loop within BA1 before the new road bridge is open
13. Icknield Way modal filter to prevent private motor vehicle access
14. Icknield Way East public realm improvements

Later Phase

14. Parking controls on Icknield Way East
15. Whitehorse Street junction bans on turns
16. Church Street cycle access
17. Enhanced active travel route to High Street
18. High Street cycleway
19. High Street/ South Road junction improvements
20. Active travel route south of Hartsfield School
21. Clothall Road crossing
22. Clothall Road cycleway
23. Royston Road crossing
24. Active travel crossing
25. Enhanced active travel in Clothall Common
26. Wallington Road cycleway
27. Clothall Road/ South Road junction improvements
28. Multi-modal bridge and development access junction
29. Bus loop connected to the wider bus network
30. Bus-only access to Clothall Common
31. Clothall Common mobility hub
32. Junction 9 capacity enhancement

Figure 37: Urban Design Framework ▸

9.0 Urban Design Framework

Urban Design Key Principles:



Respecting and responding to Baldock's unique character and built form



Retaining and enhancing key views towards Baldock and the wider landscape



Integrating the new neighbourhoods with Baldock through the considered design of connections and transitions between old and new



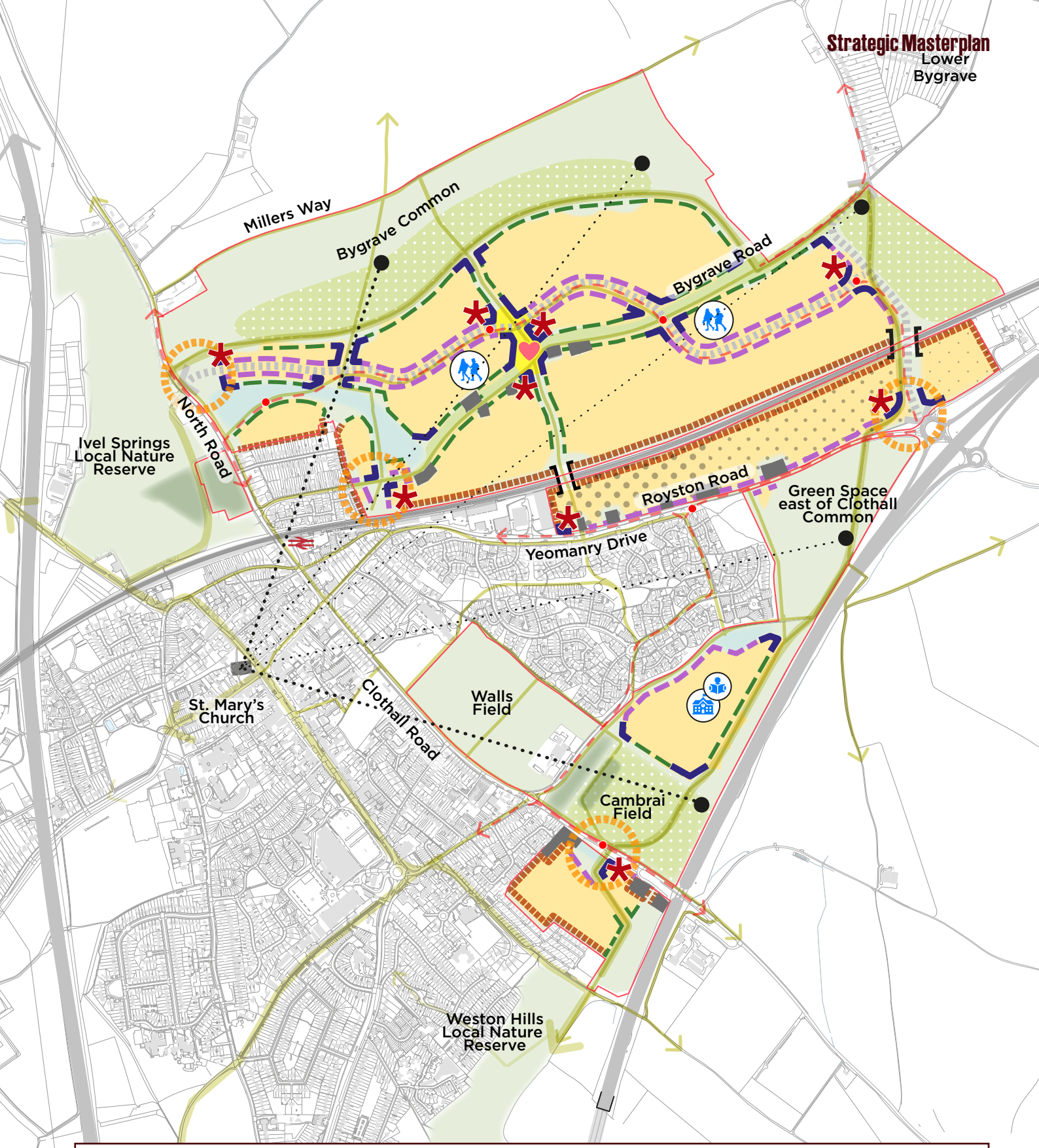
Putting place-making at the heart of the development.



Creating a new gateway into Baldock



A mix of buildings, spaces and character



- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Development block structure
- Gateways
- Landmarks
- Key views to St. Mary's Church
- Key frontages
- Key frontages onto green spaces
- Prominent corners
- Landscaped edges
- Local centre
- Baldock Greenway
- Key active travel links
- Public transport routes
- Access road
- Employment finer grain
- Employment medium grain
- Employment larger grain
- Key green spaces – recreational
- Key green spaces – semi-natural
- Key green spaces – wetlands
- Allotments

The following urban design key principles will shape the design of the Growing Baldock development and will be used to inform the Design Code and forthcoming planning applications:

- Development will respect the character and scale of existing built form in Baldock, drawing on the best local architectural and public realm features to inform the design of new buildings and spaces;
- Built form and block structure to establish a subtle transition from the existing town edge and properties in the Strategic Masterplan area;
- Key views into and out of the development towards Baldock will be maintained and reinforced, connecting it to its wider landscape and the town;
- Development blocks and edges will respond positively to topography and contours, with education and local centre uses falling within the flatter parts of the development area;
- Building heights and density will align with location and accessibility, with higher density development at points of highest accessibility or activity;
- Visual connections to be made to the existing town and in particular to St. Mary's Church spire;
- Plot layouts will be organised to draw views out to the countryside;
- Landmark buildings / features will be located at key interfaces and spaces, such as the Local Centre and Community Hub, to aid legibility and placemaking;
- Gateways will be created at the entrances to the development and Baldock, to signal arrival, assist with legibility and establish high quality routes and spaces into the development;
- Frontages will be clearly defined and varied in character dependent upon whether facing development or green spaces. Key building frontages to be made to important green spaces and create a sense of enclosure;
- Hierarchy of green open spaces of varying sizes and functions;
- Network of active travel connections linking to key destinations and to the proposed Baldock Greenway;
- Variation of tighter urban grain and more disperse and organic layouts, depending on location, to aid identity and sense of place;
- Varied mix of building typologies to accommodate different needs and create a more vibrant environment;
- Building set back and road width to allow for spill-out uses into the public realm around the local centre, community hub and other key spaces;
- Buildings to interact with the street and create sense of enclosure and human-scaled public realm; and
- Special corner treatments and arrangement of plots to extend public realm, orientate buildings to continuously overlook the streetscape and be a prominent feature within the street.

Reinterpretation of Baldock's Architectural Character

The Strategic Masterplan baseline stage included a review of the townscape characteristics of Baldock, to inform elements of the Growing Baldock design. There is an opportunity to reinterpret some of the best local vernacular and design elements in Baldock, to help embed the new development in the town and its history and create characterful new streets, buildings and spaces.

The following elements have been identified as characteristic of Baldock and therefore potentially worthy of reinterpretation through the Growing Baldock development:

Typical Elements

1. Carriage arches, typical of Baldock, representing a distinctive feature of the town.
2. Openings: bay windows, doorways, canopies over front doors.
3. Ornaments: Visually strong window frames, dormers, ornate gables, flat recessed windows on upper storeys.
4. High-pitched roofs, half-hipped roofs (often long so as to be a prominent feature of the building).
5. Large gables facing the street.
6. Facade details variation: from plain to brick detailing.

Typical Materials / Colours

1. Coloured brickwork in varying tones: typical red bricks, including brown, orange and lighter yellows, with bands of different colours.
2. Decorative brickwork.
3. Timber frames and timber cladding.
4. Tile cladding.
5. Plainly rendered houses: in cream or a range of pale oranges colours.
6. Rendered gables, stripes or pediments.



Figure 38: Design Elements



Figure 39: Materials and Colours

Phase 1 – BA2 Character and Design Principles

Indicative development phasing is set out in section 13 of this Strategic Masterplan. The first phase of development will be the residential parcel known as BA2, to the south of Clothall Road, which will deliver c.200 new homes and can be brought forward in advance of the requirement for a strategic sewer connection to the Letchworth Waste Water Treatment Works.

The delivery of homes in parcel BA2 will be expedited as a first phase, via a reserved matters application, submitted upon receipt of the outline planning permission. This allows new homes to be built in Baldock as quickly as possible, responding to the acute housing need across North Herts. The Strategic Masterplan provides the overall vision for the Growing Baldock scheme as a whole, whilst this section provides additional design principles relating specifically to BA2, to guide the preparation of a reserved matters application.

It is imperative that this first area of development sets the design standards for the rest of the scheme and establishes a high-quality gateway into Baldock. The following design principles and framework (at Figure 40) will therefore need to be adhered to in any reserved matters application for BA2:

- Retention of existing hedgerows and vegetation along Clothall Road boundary, where possible, seeking to enhance with additional native buffer planting and offset along this boundary;
- Sensitive edge treatment (including landscape buffer) to Hillside Park (park homes) and houses around the edges of the parcel. Consideration should be given to creating a landscape buffer along these edges, and how this is incorporated into the housing layout to ensure long term management and maintenance;
- Seek to retain and buffer the 'high-value' habitats including existing hedgerows and semi-improved grassland in the south and east of BA2;
- Creation of a nature-focussed landscape buffer olong the A505 boundary to aid movement of species from Weston Hills LNR and a development offset from the A505;
- Incorporation of the Baldock Greenway into the wider green infrastructure setting within BA2;
- Access into and through the parcel via active travel modes to be a priority (over vehicular modes);
- Provision of a range of green space typologies including wetland at the lowest part of the area, a local equipped area for play (LEAP) and further opportunities for informal natural play within the public open space;
- Primary access and gateway into the parcel to be taken from Clothall Road;
- Appropriate and sensitive conversion of the best existing buildings, as appropriate alongside removal of any remaining structures to facilitate development;
- Built form to relate positively to the existing topography and levels;
- Strong built frontage to be established along Clothall Road;
- Excellent design quality in built form and public realm that relates positively to the best of the Baldock vernacular;
- High sustainability performance of buildings and infrastructure established from day one;
- Mix of house types and sizes; and
- Retention of Category A tree and incorporation onto the masterplan.



▲ **Figure 40: BA2 Phase 1 Urban Design Framework**

- Phase 1 (BA2) boundary
- Existing properties – retained
- Existing properties – demolished
- Existing properties – for potential conversion
- Developable area
- Key frontages
- Key corners
- Key buildings
- Development gateway
- Vehicular access from Clothall Road
- Tree-lined street (indicative alignment)
- Baldock Greenway
- PRoWs/pedestrian & cycle connections
- LP Local play within parcel
- Green space – semi-natural
- Primary SuDS
- Existing vegetation
- Landscape buffer/retained grassland
- Noise attenuation measures
- Landscape buffer to existing properties
- Sensitive edge treatment: planting in gardens (min. length 15m)
- High-quality tree to be retained
- 1m contour lines: built form to work with topography

10.0 Sustainability & Energy Framework

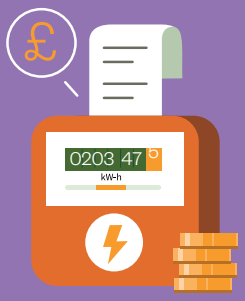
Sustainability Key Principles:



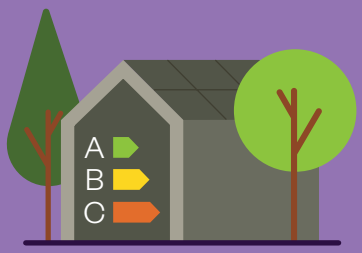
All buildings Net Zero in operational carbon emissions



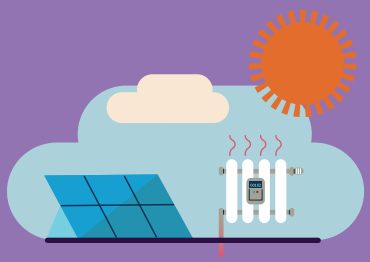
All-electric development



Contributions to carbon offset fund, if required



Highly energy efficient homes and buildings



Use of renewable heat and energy-generating technologies

The Sustainability and Energy Strategy articulates the ambitious approach that will be taken at Baldock in respect of the development's sustainability and energy performance.

Each section of the Strategic Masterplan demonstrates how sustainability has been holistically integrated into the development of the masterplan in the form of:

- Sustainable transport and active travel;
- Biodiversity enhancements; and
- Publicly accessible green space and community facilities to support health and wellbeing.

This section of the Strategic Masterplan is effectively a Framework, albeit one that is not presented through a Framework Plan, like the preceding chapters, but as a series of commitments and principles.

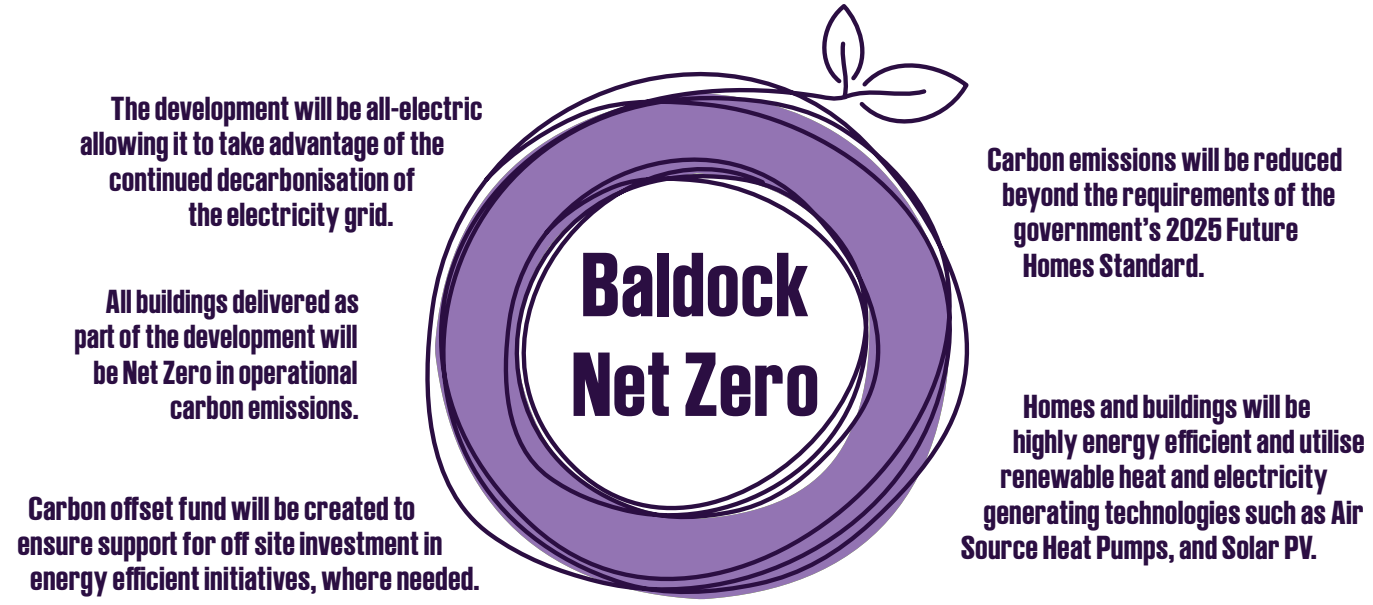
This section of the Strategic Masterplan sets out the carbon and energy strategy for the development, summarising the key points set out within the more detailed Sustainability and Energy Strategy.

The vision for Baldock is to create a development that accelerates the transition towards net zero and provides residents with the infrastructure they require to lead a highly sustainable lifestyle and purchase and occupy a low carbon dwelling that can operate at net zero should they choose.

In relation to construction and buildings, carbon emissions can arise from:

- **Embodied Carbon –** including the materials, components and energy that are required to make up a structure (capital and upfront carbon); and
- **Operational Carbon –** energy consumption in the day to day running of a building or structure.

A range of site-wide and building scale opportunities will be incorporated into the development to reduce both operational and embodied carbon emissions throughout its lifetime.



▲ Figure 41: Baldock Net Zero

Building-scale Opportunities

All buildings will be net zero in operational carbon emissions through the application of the energy hierarchy, which aims to reduce energy demand through passive design measures and a fabric first approach before utilising low carbon energy and the production of on-site renewable energy.

- All homes and buildings will be constructed to a high standard of fabric efficiency and airtightness;
- Buildings will utilise a range of renewable energy technologies such as roof mounted solar PV and/or Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP);
- All dwellings will be powered solely by electricity which will mean that the carbon intensity of each building will reduce over time with the decarbonisation of the grid;
- Any residual carbon emission from operational energy use will be offset through payment into a carbon offset fund, if required, which will be used to fund energy reduction initiatives within Baldock and North Herts; and
- Homes and buildings will also aim to reduce embodied carbon beyond typical practice in line with standards such as RIBA Climate Challenge Embodied Carbon targets or the emerging Net Zero Carbon Building Standard.

Homes and buildings will aim to go beyond the minimum requirements of the Government's Future Homes and Building Standard. This approach is in line with the Hertfordshire Development Charter which recommends that developers commit to a sustainability standard that exceeds minimum current building regulations. Given the extended build out period of the development and evolving sustainability standards (such as the emerging Net Zero Carbon Building Standard, and final Future Homes and Building Standard Specifications), at this stage the strategy for Baldock aims to maintain flexibility around exact energy or carbon performance standards. Therefore, developers will have the option of meeting a sustainability standard that exceeds the Building Regulations in place at the time for both domestic and non-domestic buildings.



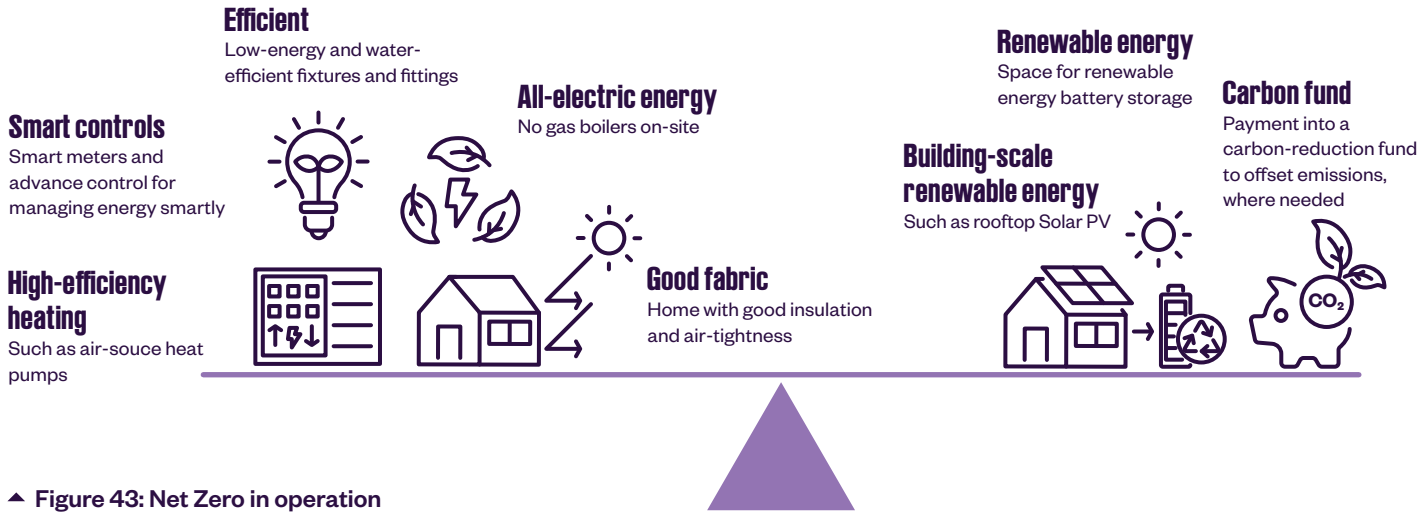
▲ **Figure 42: Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter sets high standards for sustainability performance of new developments**

Development-wide Opportunities

- A low carbon approach to masterplanning has been undertaken which aims to minimise the embodied carbon impacts through optimising the scale of infrastructure that serves the development;
- Potential for stand-alone renewable energy infrastructure, such as battery technology, on land at the eastern end of the employment area. Feasibility will be investigated as part of the forthcoming outline planning application;
- The Strategic Masterplan includes opportunities for future residents to live a low carbon lifestyle through support for sustainable and active transport measures and the provision of extensive areas of green infrastructure to promote passive heating and cooling and encourage healthy lifestyles; and
- Creation of a healthy biodiverse landscape, long-term landscape management, and consideration of best practice soil management techniques to support carbon sequestration benefits.

The Sustainability and Energy Strategy will continue to evolve as design progresses with the outline planning application and each reserved matters application also supported by a more detailed strategy.

Net Zero in operation



▲ Figure 43: Net Zero in operation

11.0
Housing Need & Diversification

The Strategic Masterplan has explored options to determine how Growing Baldock could accommodate a development of up to 3,300 homes, in accordance with the Local Plan policy. It is apparent that due to a combination of site constraints and the requirement to deliver on-site infrastructure that this target may not be met. However, a substantial proportion of this figure (around 3,000 homes) will be able to be accommodated within the development, including a mix of tenures, sizes and types to satisfy policy requirements. Development capacity will be explored further at outline planning application stage.

Housing Mix

The development is of a sufficient size that it can accommodate a broad range of housing sizes and types, from 1 bed apartments to 5 bed homes, including the full breadth of housing typologies in between. The type and size of new homes will vary and reflect the differing character of each part of the development, for instance with higher density homes (terraced houses and apartments) nearer the station and local centre, and larger and lower density detached houses towards the periphery of the development.

Local Plan policy HS3 requires that a range of housing types and sizes are provided on new development taking into account overall targets, local need, the location and accessibility of the land and current delivery. As an edge of settlement site an initial assumption of 60% larger (3+bed) and 40% smaller (1 and 2 bed) homes is suggested by the Local Plan. This will form a starting point for the overall mix which will be explored at outline planning application stage. Housing will be of a high quality design, with provision of appropriate private amenity space.

Housing Type

There is also capacity to incorporate different types of home including senior living, care homes, specialist housing, and self and custom build, dependent on location and the prevailing market. Local Plan policy SP14 requires the delivery of at least 28 serviced plots for self-build development and a site for a care home for older people, whilst policy HS4 requires an appropriate number of sheltered, supported living and extra care housing to be provided (if the criteria of policy HS3 are met).

Housing Tenure

Local Plan policy HS2 requires that 40% of new homes be provided as affordable housing, of which 65% should be rented and 35% in other forms of affordable tenure, subject to viability. The level of affordable housing to be delivered at Baldock will be agreed as part of negotiation of the forthcoming outline planning application, with the amount balanced against other costs such as education provision and sustainability performance, in agreement with the Local Planning Authority. Affordable housing will be designed to be 'tenure-blind', i.e. indistinguishable from market housing, and provided in mixed-tenure streets, distributed throughout the development.

Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire



Houlton, Rugby



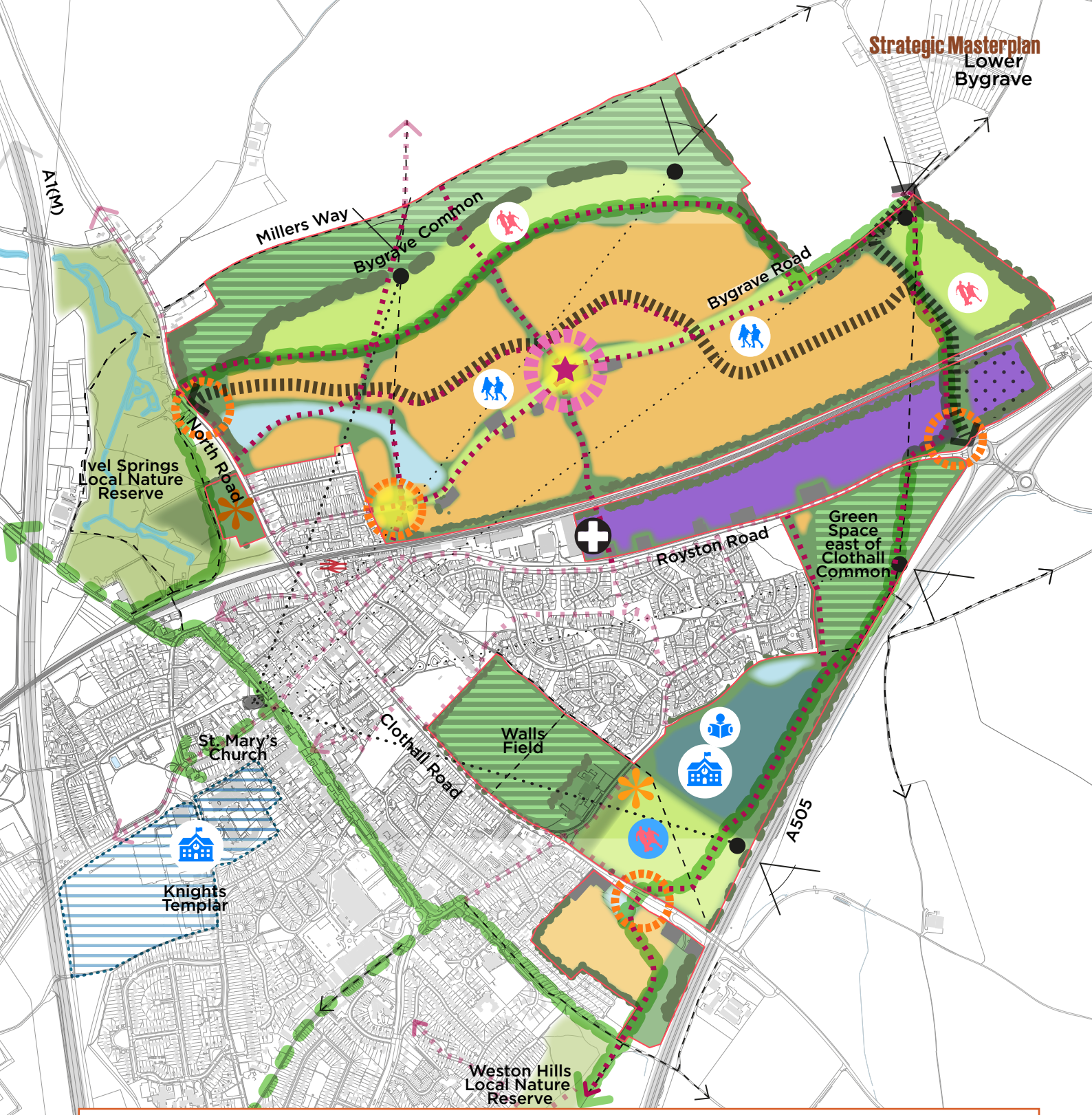


Priors Hall, Corby

Figure 44: Composite Framework Plan ▸

12.0 Composite Framework Plan

The 'Composite Framework Plan' at Figure 44 brings together all the elements of the Baldock development and is the culmination of the Strategic Masterplan document. It sets the overall framework for development, fixing the broad locations for green spaces, built areas, connections across the railway and the centre of the new community, and will help shape the future planning applications for the development.



- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Development Area: Residential
- Land reserved for secondary school education option
- Development Area: Employment
- Development Area: Employment (Energy + Waste Facilities)
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Primary route
- Key existing public rights of way
- Key pedestrian & cycle connections
- Key off-site pedestrian & cycle connections
- Baldock Greenway
- Public spaces
- Development gateway
- Existing local nature reserve
- Key green spaces – recreational/public open space
- Key green spaces – semi-natural
- Key green spaces – wetlands
- Enhanced allotments
- New allotments
- Outdoor Sports Provision
- Outdoor sports provision (opportunity for dual use as part of school if secondary school provided on BA3)
- Indicative buffer planting
- Local centre (mixed-use / retail/ community)
- Education: secondary school options
- Education: primary schools
- Education: special education needs and disabilities school
- Health provision
- Key vantage points
- Key views to St. Mary's Church

13.0 Infrastructure Delivery Plan

This section of the Strategic Masterplan identifies the infrastructure that may be required to support the development. This list will be refined and tested as part of the outline planning application, with key elements secured either by planning condition or legal agreement.

Movement

Off-site	On-site
Public transport provision (including route into site, bus service infrastructure and bus only links into Clothall Common and BA1 from North Road)	Upgrades to existing and provision of new PRoW network
Improvements to Baldock train station	Development access between North Road and Royston Road, including new junctions
Modal filters (Norton Road, Bygrave Road, Icknield Way)	Active travel crossing of railway
One way shuttle system on North Road (under railway)	All modes crossing of railway
Crossing and junction enhancements	Mobility hubs (on and off site)
South Road, Icknield Way and Royston Road improvements	
Whitehorse Street junction improvements	
Enhanced active travel routes to High Street and through Clothall Common	
A1(M) Junction 9 improvements	

N.B. the final package of measures to be agreed with HCC highways and other consultees as part of outline planning application negotiation. These measures have been tested, assessed and concluded as being the appropriate package of interventions, and discussions with stakeholders regarding responsibility for delivery, costs and phasing are on-going and will inform the OPA negotiation.

Utilities

Off-site	On-site
Foul sewer connection to Letchworth Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)	Primary sub stations
Potential reinforcement works to electricity/potable water infrastructure (TBC)	Foul pumping stations and either gravity sewer or pumped connection around edge of the site (to connect to route to WWTW)
	Necessary utilities diversions within site (TBC)

Early years

Off-site	On-site
	Pre-school provision at primary schools
	Private commercial nurseries

Primary Education

Off-site	On-site
	Up to 2 x primary schools in BA1

Secondary Education

Off-site	On-site
Potential expansion of Knights Templar	Potential secondary school on BA3 including community use of 3G pitches and sports hall outside of school hours (secured by a community use agreement)

SEND provision

Off-site	On-site
	2ha site for SEND school

Health facilities

Off-site	On-site
	Health hub incorporating GP services
	In-built design principles to promote healthy lifestyles e.g. active travel; 20-minute neighbourhood principles

Adult care

Off-site	On-site
	Extra care facility / specialist housing

Waste

Off-site	On-site
	Land for waste facilities including waste transfer station and vehicle depot

Public open space

Off-site	On-site
	Significant areas of open space provision, as part of the green infrastructure led Strategic Masterplan

Indoor/outdoor sports provision

Off-site	On-site
Enhancements to Knights Templar indoor sports facilities if existing school expanded in situ	Sports provision at secondary school, if provided on site (indoor sports hall and 3G pitches to be accessible to community outside of school hours, via a Community Use Agreement), plus grass pitch provision elsewhere on site

Flood risk mitigation

Off-site	On-site
	Sustainable drainage network throughout site

Biodiversity net gain

Off-site	On-site
Corn bunting mitigation areas	Provision of range of habitat areas and protection of existing (e.g. Green Space east of Clothall Common and Bygrave Road LWS)

Sustainability and low carbon measures

Off-site	On-site
Contributions to carbon offset fund where required	Energy infrastructure area
	Innovation areas
	Range of low carbon measures associated with development (refer to section 10)

Noise/air mitigation

Off-site	On-site
	Landscape buffers to railway and strategic road network. ES to test requirement for any additional mitigation e.g. acoustic barriers

Community facilities

Off-site	On-site
	Community facilities in the Local Centre

Stewardship Planning

The new development will bring forward a range of new spaces and places, amenities and facilities which sit within the public realm. Some will be used predominantly by residents of the new homes, but given the integrated nature of the growth of Baldock, it is vital a stewardship approach is set out which is inclusive for both the new and existing parts of the town. The approach will need to be proactive and responsive in designing and planning; ambitious in place-making and for community development and driving environmental and social benefits; whilst effective in ensuring long term management of public assets so they can be enjoyed by present and future generations. U&C recognize the importance HCC and NHC place on an effective strategy being in place, and that it works both with their own approaches to adoption, stewardship and governance, and to ensure public amenities support the delivery of their priorities in a cost effective way.

An overarching vision is that the range of new spaces, places, facilities and overall public realm across the new development in Baldock will be managed to a consistent high quality standard throughout and will be the unifying element that ties together different land uses, character areas and building types.

Mechanisms for management of the estate will be robust and tailored to suit the particular requirements of each type of space, with emphasis being placed on sustainability and the protection of ecological and heritage assets, the integration of the development with existing Baldock, and financial sustainability.

Appropriate stewardship and governance structures will be established from the outset that ensure that quality standards are maintained across the full lifecycle, from early phases of development, through ongoing construction, and through to the last home sold on the scheme. As importantly, quality standards must continue to be maintained through the continued operation of the development within Baldock.

The menu of options for the stewardship structures include Local Authority adoption, management by an U&C Management Company (ManCo), management by a charitable trust, or community ownership and local long-term stewardship. It is anticipated that different components of the development could be subject to a different management regimes, dependent on their individual requirements, and it is also anticipated that the arrangements will evolve over time.

The early thinking on the approach is set out below, drawn from the engagement to date, and will continue to be developed as the Strategic Masterplan moves towards an outline planning application, so it can be fully embedded within the S106, obligations and wider planning framework.

Key aims and objectives of the approach

- to ensure a sustainable approach is set in place for the varied spaces and places coming forward to maximise the social and environmental benefits, whilst ensuring robust, diverse and therefore sustainable funding to minimise cost to the public purse in the short, medium and long term;
- to engage and empower local and neighbouring residents and businesses through inclusive and ongoing community participation so they can continue to shape and care for the public areas and green spaces around them; and
- to ensure complementary approaches that work with the wider town and surrounding area for both the public bodies, charitable bodies and volunteer groups and the wider community.

This will be achieved by:

- collaborative planning and design of physical infrastructure which is sustainable, high quality and responsive and effective for delivering shared aspirations in perpetuity;
- collaborative delivery and ongoing care, to establish the spaces and ensure robust and financially sustainable management and maintenance arrangements in the short, medium and long term;
- exploring and agreeing representative and accountable governance structure or structures to develop, deliver and manage stewardship; and
- inclusive participation with existing groups and the wider community at all stages of the process.

Process to agree the approach

The process to deliver this is as follows:

- agreement of approach through the outline planning application process with NHC and HCC to define the types of spaces coming forward and the menu of stewardship options, approaches to adoption, and discussion on future governance;
- detailed design to be carried out to include future management costs alongside biodiversity and other design principles, to enable discussions and agreement on these future options; and
- community engagement at all stages to ensure input and ownership of the agreed approach and enable a wider volunteering strategy to be a core part of connecting the growth of Baldock to the existing town.

Defining the assets

The assets coming forward which would need to be considered for stewardship arrangements includes:

- Doorstep Green Space and Amenity – e.g. pocket parks, play areas, walk and cycle ways within the development;
- Community amenities and facilities – e.g. community centres, allotments etc.;
- Strategic facilities for resident and wider use – e.g. sports pitches, which provide for the wider town as well as new residents; and
- Strategic green space for resident and wider use – e.g. Bygrave Common, designed to support the wider town, as well as new residents.

Potential approaches for discussion

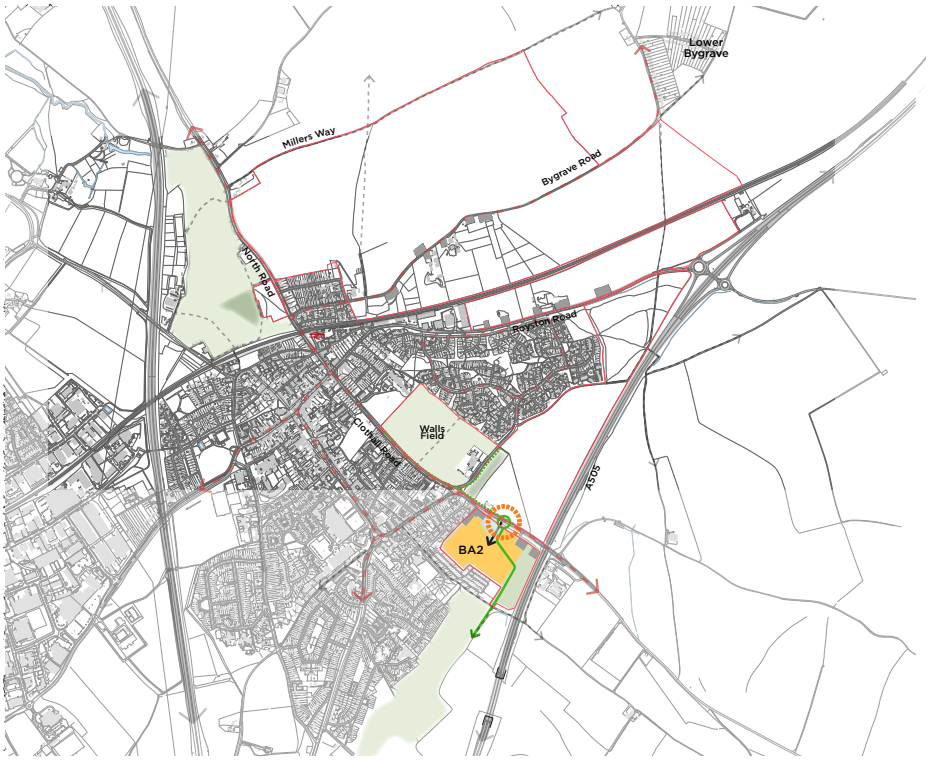
Where U&C have retained management liability of these spaces on their developments, a range of tried and tested models for their management have been adopted, which alongside longer-term management options, provide early management before numbers of new residents are significant enough to enable future governance to be established. U&C have also engaged in meeting pre-adoption commitments. The menu of options will form part of discussions with the local authorities, to explore alongside their existing policies on adoption and other partnership arrangements.

The ManCo/Charitable Trust approach U&C adopts reflects and embeds firstly U&C's company values and secondly, the U&C Sustainability Framework capitals which inform the design, delivery and management of spaces and places. There are huge opportunities to explore how the learning and experience can apply to Baldock, where there is interest and opportunities for the Councils to be involved in core spaces coming forward and existing policies on adoption. Alongside this the thriving existing town and the shared aspiration with local authorities for integration and inclusion, enables further discussions with active groups already engaged in stewardship approaches for existing assets in the town.

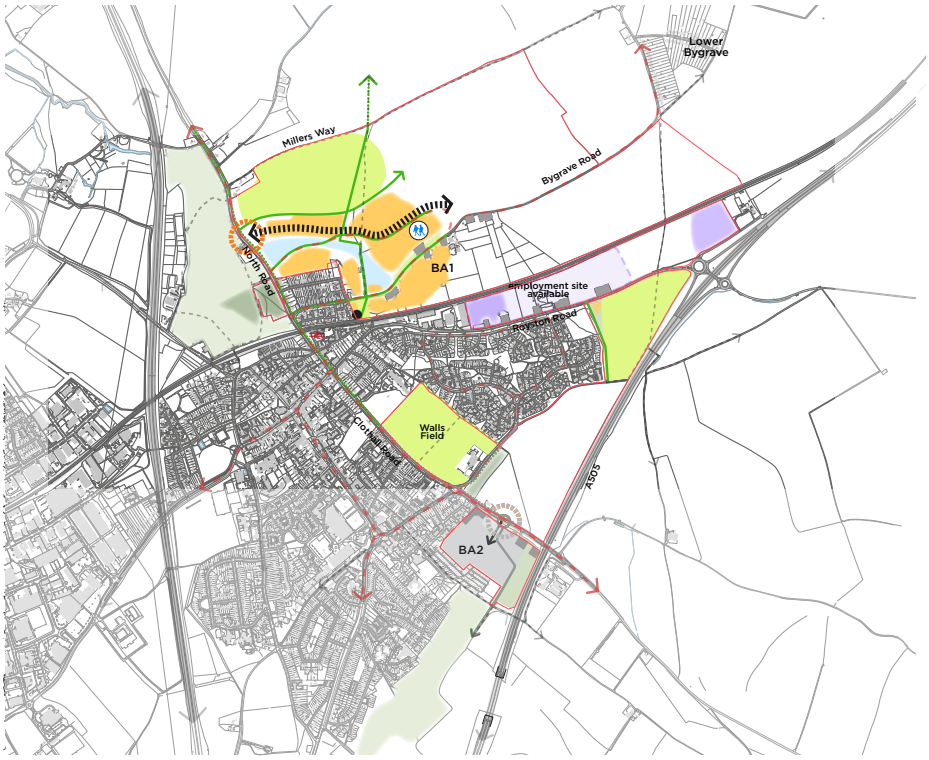
Indicative Phasing

Figures 45 to 48 set out the potential indicative sequencing of development, starting with new homes in BA2, followed by the development of BA1 (new homes, primary schools, local centre and green infrastructure) from North Road, in an easterly direction. The employment parcel (BA10) will be largely market driven on the basis that serviced plots will be made available throughout the construction programme. If a secondary school is to be provided in BA3, it will be delivered in accordance with triggers to be agreed in any future S106 agreement.

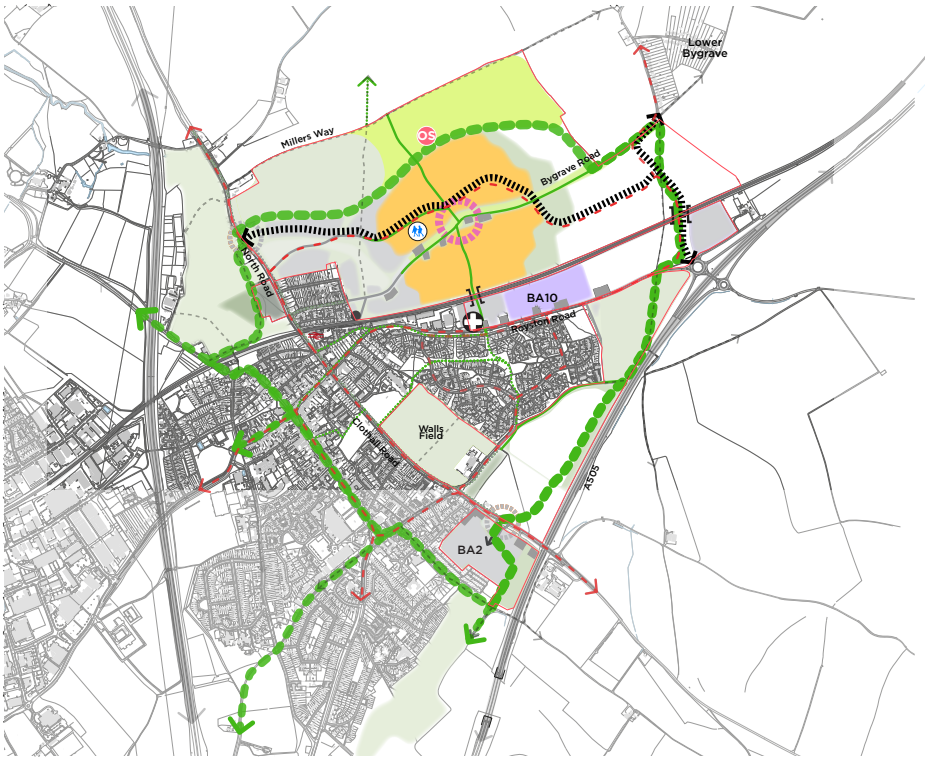
The relationship between development phasing and the timing of delivery of offsite highway interventions (as set out in section 8) will be tested through the transport modelling that will be undertaken to inform the outline planning application.



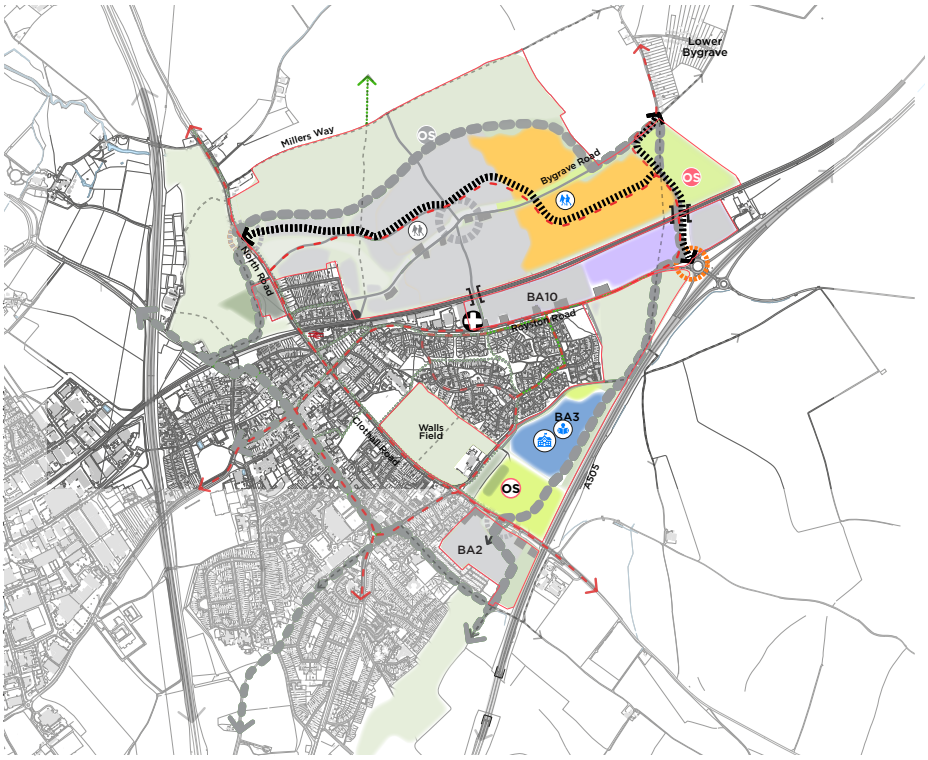
▲ Figure 45: Indicative Phase A



▲ Figure 46: Indicative Phase B



▲ Figure 47: Indicative Phase C



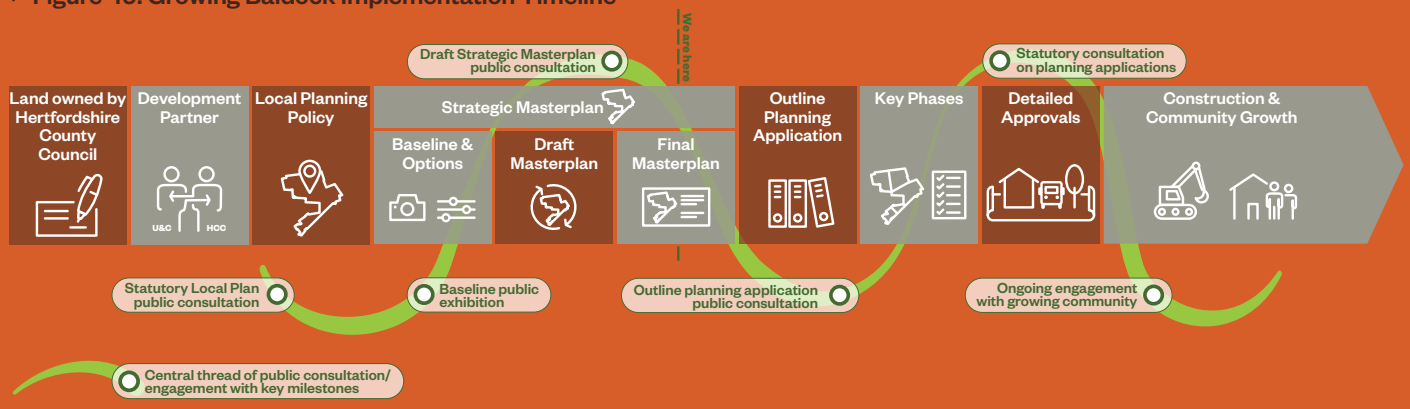
▲ Figure 48: Indicative Phase D

- Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Existing properties within Strategic Masterplan boundary
- Development Area: Residential
- Land reserved for secondary school education option
- Development Area: Employment
- Local centre: (mixed-use/retail/community)
- Education: secondary school options
- Education: proposed primary schools
- Education: special education needs and disabilities school
- Key green spaces
- Development gateway
- Outdoor Sports Provision
- Outdoor sports provision (opportunity for dual use as part of school if secondary school provided on BA3)
- Health hub
- Key pedestrian & cycle connections
- Key off-site pedestrian & cycle connections
- Baldock Greenway
- New station access opportunities
- Bus priority: bus gates
- Public transport routes
- Primary route

14.0 Conclusions

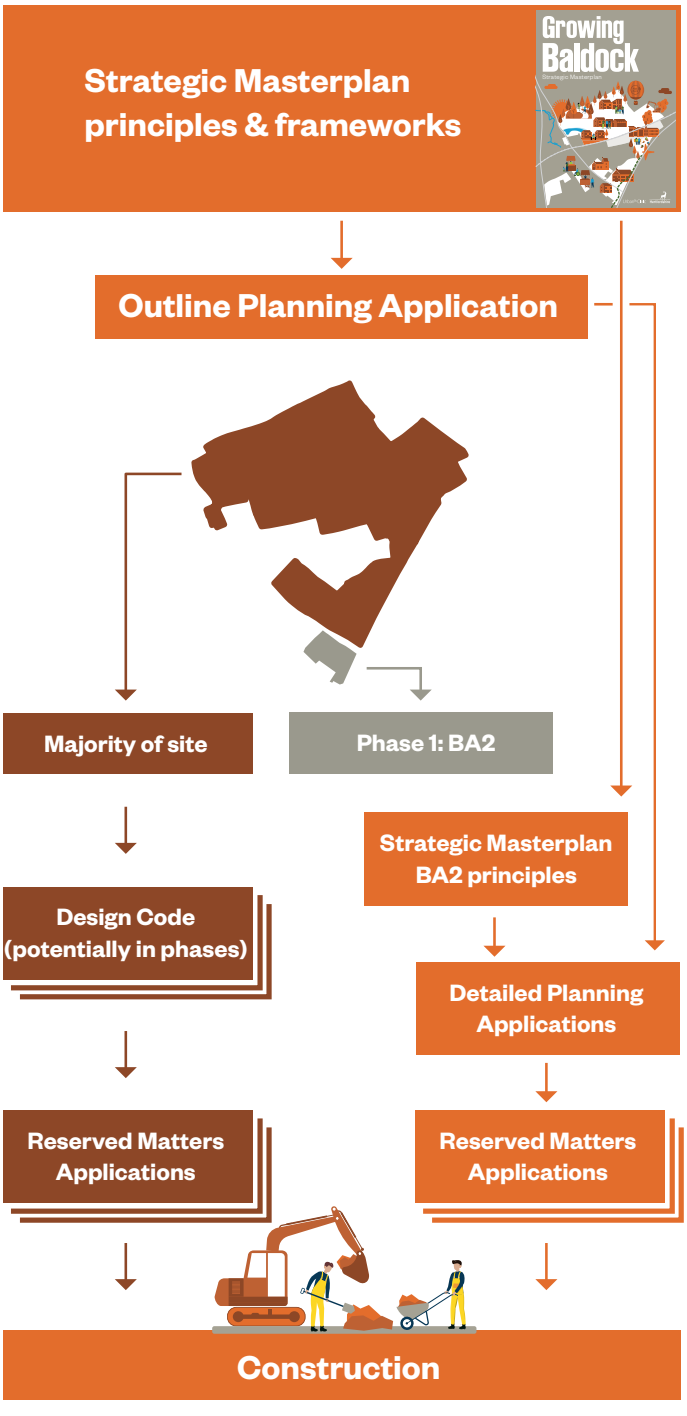
This Strategic Masterplan is the culmination of a comprehensive masterplanning process, involving extensive baseline information gathering, multiple consultation and review events and options testing, working alongside NHC/HCC officers, stakeholders and the community throughout.

Figure 49: Growing Baldock Implementation Timeline



The Strategic Masterplan provides a clear framework for the growth of Baldock. The next stage for the development will be the submission and approval of a series of outline and detailed planning applications that align with the principles set by the SMP.

It is important to note that this final Strategic Masterplan marks the point at which the Growing Baldock scheme transitions from strategic masterplanning into the planning application stage, moving one step closer to implementation. Several further stages of approval will be required before the Growing Baldock development comes to fruition, as shown in Figure 50. The next stage of the planning process for Growing Baldock is the Development Management stage when a series of progressively more detailed planning application submissions will be submitted for approval. This will be followed by any necessary permitting/ licensing, before construction starts on-site, and development becomes operational.



▲ Figure 50: Planning Approval Scenarios

Outline Planning Application (OPA)

This Strategic Masterplan will be followed by an outline planning application which will identify and test parameters that will align with the principles set out in the Strategic Masterplan. At this stage, elements such as the built envelope (the spatial extent and maximum height) of buildings, the location and type of open space and the key access points and primary connections will be fixed and subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA process will provide an assessment of the impacts of the development on the following technical matters (subject to formal agreement with NHC via the EIA Scoping process):

- transport;
- noise and vibration;
- air quality;
- landscape and visual;
- heritage and archaeology;
- hydrology and flooding;
- ecology;
- ground conditions;
- socio-economics and health;
- waste;
- lighting;
- utilities; and
- climate change.

The OPA will also include design principles, illustrative design information and information on phasing and delivery. It will set out planning submission requirements for reserved matters applications, including matters to be controlled by condition such as the Design Code.
A legal agreement will secure scheme benefits and mitigation such as affordable housing, transport and highway improvements, education, health and other community facilities, Biodiversity Net Gain and governance, management and maintenance arrangements.

The OPA will be the subject of further consultation with the local community, via the formal planning process and other events, to be confirmed.

Whether the outline planning application parameters accord with the principles of the Strategic Masterplan will be a material consideration in the determination of the application.

Phase Design Code

Once the outline planning application has been approved, and with it a set of planning conditions and a S106 agreement that secures the mitigation measures and benefits that the development will bring, the majority of the development will be the subject of a Design Code(s). These would set mandatory fixes and guidance for the development to ensure quality design is achieved. The Design Code(s) would identify principles to guide built form, green infrastructure, sustainability and access and movement, building on the strategic principles set out in the Strategic Masterplan and the subsequent outline planning application.

Reserved Matters Applications

Reserved matters applications would then be submitted for individual parcels of development or pieces of infrastructure, to seek approval of their detailed design. These applications would need to demonstrate compliance with all the tiers of design approval above them i.e. the Strategic Masterplan, the design parameters within the outline planning application and the Design Code. Only then will the main development be allowed to start on site and the growth of Baldock can begin.

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