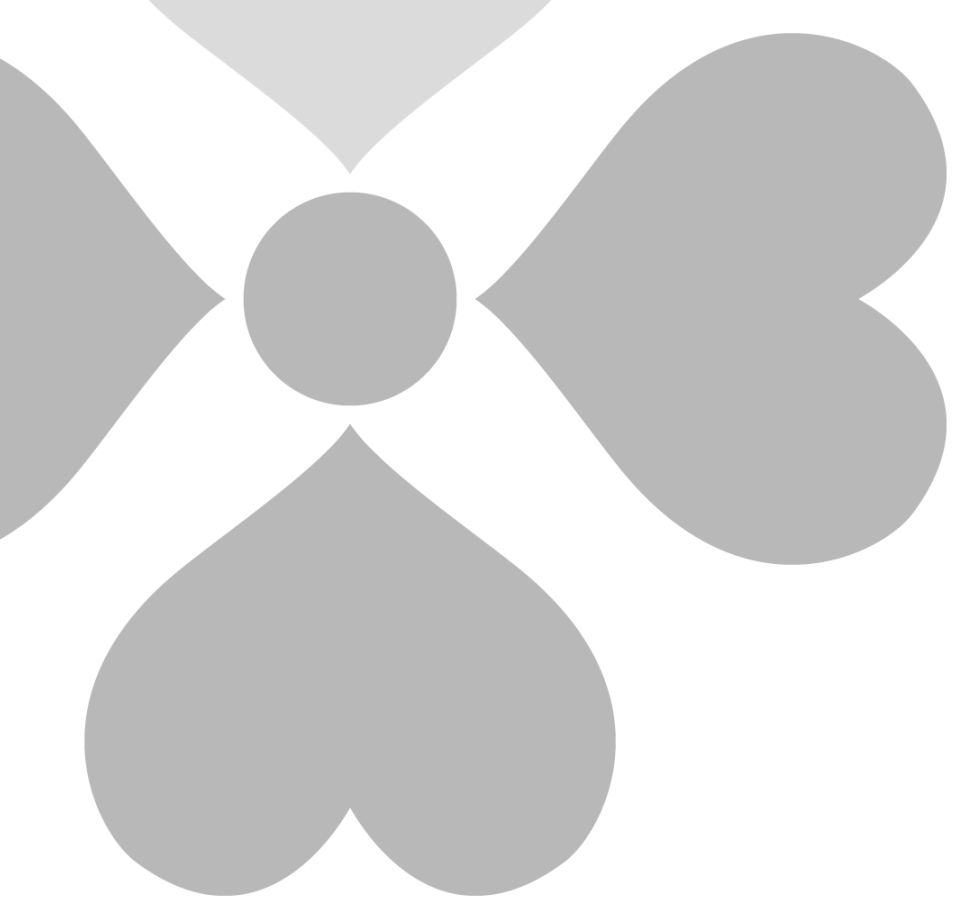




DEVELOP VISION

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT DESIGN CODE
STAGE 2 SUMMARY REPORT



The following report summarises work undertaken by the North Herts Urban Design team during Stage 2 of the District Design Code (between February and July 2024). The main focus for Stage 2 'Develop Vision' was to develop a set of North Herts-specific place-making objectives that will form the basis for the District Design Code and design policies in the new Local Plan (currently being reviewed). This report is intended for internal North Herts circulation only.

CONTENTS

COUNCIL VISIONING DAY - KEY INFORMATION

ACTIVITY 1 - THE COOL WALL

ACTIVITY 2 - PLACE CHARACTERISTICS

ACTIVITY 3 - TESTING CODE

RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1 - KEY INFORMATION

ACTIVITY 1 - LIVING IN NORTH HERTS

ACTIVITY 2 - VISIONING COLLAGE

RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1 - SUMMARY

STAGE 2 SUMMARY

COUNCIL VISIONING DAY

KEY INFORMATION

The District Design Code Visioning Workshop brought together councillors and senior officers to shape the strategic direction of the emerging authority-wide design code. The day was facilitated by Esther Kurland and colleagues at Urban Design Learning (UDL) and was structured around three key activities that were designed to facilitate discussions at a strategic scale down to the granular. Attendees discussed and debated what good development is and explored how the emerging Design Code could reflect and deliver on the Council's four key priorities - thriving communities, accessible services, responsible growth and sustainability.

Key objectives from the event were:

1. To facilitate discussions around what good and bad development looks and feels like.
2. To understand what the council priorities mean in the context of the code.
3. To develop a set of place characteristics.
4. To prioritise which place characteristics and problems the code should focus on addressing.
5. To explore the golden thread between priorities, place characteristics and code.

Attendees: North Herts Councillors (proportionately represented) and Senior North Herts Officers

Time: Friday 7 March 12 midday to 5:30pm

Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth



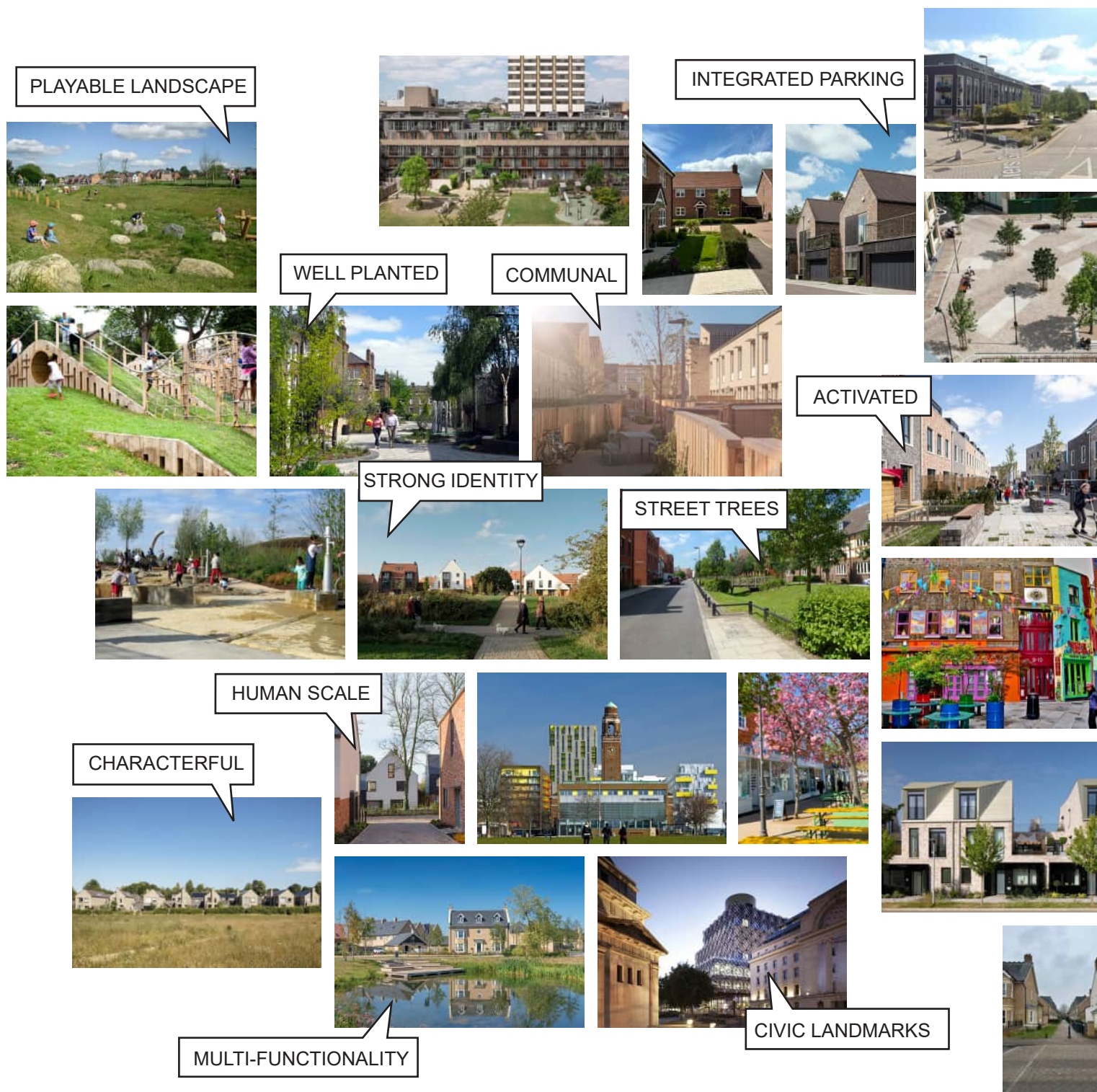
ATTENDEES	ROLE
Cllr Daniel Allen (Labour/Co-operative)	Letchworth Norton Leader of the Council and Labour and Co-operative Group Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport
Cllr Alistair Willoughby (Labour/Co-operative)	Baldock West Chair of Licensing and Regulation Committee Chair of Standards Committee Chair of Baldock and District Community Forum
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis (Labour/Co-operative)	Hitchin Walsworth Chair of Planning Control Committee
Cllr Val Bryant (Labour/Co-operative)	Hitchin Bearton Deputy Leader of the Council Executive Member for Community and Partnership
Cllr Vijaiya Poopalasingam (Labour/Co-operative)	Great Ashby
Cllr Tom Tyson (Liberal Democrats)	Arbury
Cllr Paul Ward (Liberal Democrats)	Knebworth
Cllr Clair Strong (Conservative)	Offa
Ian Fullstone	Service Director - Regulatory
Jo Doggett	Service Director - Housing and Environmental Health
Reuben Ayavoo	Policy and Community Manager
Georgina Chapman	Policy and Strategy Team Leader
Nigel Smith	Service Director - Place
Deborah Coates	Principal Planning Officer

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
12:00-12:20	Registration, tea and coffee
12:20-13:20	Activity 1 - The Cool Wall - What do good places look like?
13:20-13:30	UDL Introduction
13:30-13:50	Tea and coffee break
13:50-14:20	North Herts Design Code Introduction
14:20-15:30	Activity 2 - Identifying and prioritising place characteristics
15:30-15:50	Break with afternoon tea, sandwiches and snacks
15:50-16:10	How coding can deliver - presentation
16:1--17:00	Activity 3 - How coding can deliver
17:00-17:10	Short break
17:10-17:30	Wrap up and next steps

ACTIVITY 1

THE COOL WALL

In the first activity, participants took part in a 'Cool Wall' exercise using a broad selection of images to discuss and debate what good and bad development looks and feels like. Images presented were a mixture of those provided by attendees, UDL and the Urban Design team, covering local and national projects. After discussion and debate, attendees placed the image on the wall, locating it somewhere on the scale from 'cool' to 'uncool.'



The activity encouraged open discussion about what makes places successful (or unsuccessful). Conversations explored elements such as layout, architectural quality, materials, greenery, walkability, the presence of community infrastructure, when buildings should stand out, parking and many other elements.

As the wall filled up, patterns began to emerge and the group began to identify recurring characteristics of successful and unsuccessful places. Common positive attributes of 'cool' development included plenty of planting/street trees, playable landscapes, strong built form identity and character, communal space, activated public realm and a human scale. Conversely, common negative attributes of 'uncool' places included excessive hardstanding, undefined and unclaimed spaces, poorly overlooked routes, bland streets that could be anywhere and disconnected networks. Images placed in the middle were debated within the group and tended to have a mixture of positive and negative characteristics. More detailed notes on the discussions are arranged into themes on the next page.

The wall has been recreated below with common characteristics highlighted.





NATURE AND OPEN SPACE

WELL PLANTED

MULTI-FUNCTIONALITY

PLAYABLE LANDSCAPE

Attendees unanimously agreed that high quality green spaces, plenty of planting and nature were integral to delivering successful places. In particular, attendees picked up on multi-functional open spaces that balanced ecology, amenity, play and active travel, creating activated and well-used spaces. An image of a playable attenuation basin in Solihull with children jumping on boulders and tree stumps was chosen as the 'most cool' for its dual function.

Attendees also highlighted that maintenance of green spaces was a key issue - an example of a poorly maintained attenuation basin attracted a lot of criticism for its lack of function and poor quality planting.

BADLY MAINTAINED

PUBLIC REALM

INTEGRATED PARKING

ACTIVATED

COMMUNAL

STREET TREES

Public realm made up a significant part of the discussion with attendees agreeing that successful places tended to have activated streets with plenty of trees and areas for residents to gather. Parking was a key issue and the group debated how best to integrate parking to ensure cars did not dominate the public realm. Whilst there was no consensus, options such as integral garages, on street parking and parking courts were all discussed with general agreement that ad-hoc parking on verges and pavements was undesirable.

Unsuccessful examples were harsh, hard and unwelcoming with a lack of planting and excessive hardstanding. Safety and walkability were also discussed and it was generally agreed that routes, streets and paths should be well-verlooked to create a sense of safety for pedestrians.

The group also discussed a lack of legibility and connectivity through one such example of development in Whitwell where peripheral routes were disconnected and the development did not integrate with the surrounding village.

NOT OVERLOOKED

EXCESSIVE HARDSTANDING

AWKWARD FENCING

LACK OF GREEN

UNWELCOMING

UNDEFINED SPACES

DISCONNECTED

BUILT FORM

CHARACTERFUL

HUMAN SCALE

CIVIC LANDMARKS

STRONG IDENTITY

Built form characteristics created the most debate with some attendees expressing a preference for more contemporary examples whilst others preferring traditional architectural approaches. Architectural style aside, in all examples the group agreed that characterful buildings with a strong identity driven by their context were the most successful.

Conversely, places with standard housing types that could be anywhere and lacked any identity were agreed to be unsuccessful. Scale was also discussed with the group identifying clunky transitions between building heights as undesirable.

INACTIVE FRONTAGE

COULD BE ANYWHERE

MONOTONOUS

BLAND

ACTIVITY 2

PLACE CHARACTERISTICS

In this activity, attendees were divided into two groups; members and officers. Using the key challenges identified during the site visits, attendees in each group worked together to prioritise characteristics they felt the code needed to address. There was also an opportunity to add or amend characteristics based on Activity 1. At the end of the activity, UDL facilitated a discussion bringing together both lists, looking for common threads and discussing differing priorities.

Across both groups, several place characteristics consistently emerged as top priorities:

- Streets as places: Both groups agreed that streets that function as social, walkable and nature-integrated spaces were foundational elements of successful places.
- Tenure-neutral design: Both groups strongly supported tenure neutral neighbourhoods where affordable tenures could not be differentiated from private/market tenures.
- Connectivity and integration: Both groups felt that well-integrated development was an important aspect of creating connected communities with access to local services and amenities.
- High-quality green spaces: Officers felt high quality green spaces with well integrated attenuation basins should be a top priority for the code.
- Distinctiveness: Members felt that the code should push for distinctive neighbourhoods that have a sense of local identity and character, moving away from developments that could be anywhere.
- Structure first, detail second: When presenting the lists, both teams highlighted the important of getting the structure and networks right which would in turn 'take care' of the more granular or detailed elements - such as designing out unmanaged spaces on streets, etc.



OFFICERS

1: HIGH QUALITY GREEN SPACES

High quality green spaces that have a clear function.

Well-integrated attenuation basins that contribute to place-making.

2: STREETS THAT FEEL LIKE PLACES

Streets that feel like places and encourage walking.

Advocating for collectiveness, sharing and chance encounters - important for ~~an ageing population~~ everyone.

Streets designed as places for nature with high quality planting and trees.

3: TENURE NEUTRAL AND MIXED

Tenure neutral, equitable and mixed neighbourhoods.

4: CONNECTED

Well connected routes, roads and paths - no impermeable edges.

Future-proofing edges of proposals with growth in mind to ensure connections are possible.

Developments that are stiched into their surroundings.

Planning for reduced car ownership to ensure infrastructure is flexible and can be adapted back into public use.

Reduce car reliance with hub, employment and public transport.

Compact settlements/walkable neighbourhoods that use land efficiently to reduce pressure to release Green Belt.

Green spaces that are distinctive to the local area.

Distinctive homes that celebrate the area's local character.

Well-integrated schools that create legible focal points within neighbourhoods - not just large fenced off sites.

Alternative approaches to non-residential uses that support community networking and do not compete with the high street.

Streets with a clear delineation of managed and private spaces - ambiguous 'grassy patches' are designed out.

MEMBERS

1: TENURE NEUTRAL AND MIXED

Tenure neutral, equitable and mixed neighbourhoods.

2: STREETS THAT FEEL LIKE PLACES

Streets that feel like places and encourage walking.

3: CONNECTED AND INTEGRATED

Developments that are stiched into their surroundings.

Should feel organic.

Alternative approaches to non-residential uses that promotes community use and networking do not rely on large space-take and high footfall.

4: DISTINCTIVE

Distinctive homes that celebrate the area's local character.

Look and continuity of theme.

Future-proofing edges of proposals with growth in mind to ensure connections are possible.

Well connected routes, roads and paths - no impermeable edges.

High quality green spaces that have a clear function.

Green spaces that are distinctive to the local area.

Streets designed as places for nature with high quality planting and trees.

Well-integrated schools that create legible focal points within neighbourhoods - not just large fenced off sites.

Well-integrated attenuation basins that contribute to place-making.

Streets with a clear delineation of managed and private spaces - ambiguous 'grassy patches' are designed out.

Compact settlements that use land efficiently to reduce pressure on release of additional green belt (and promote sustainable journeys).

Advocating for collectiveness, sharing and chance encounters - important for an ageing population.

Planning for reduced car ownership to ensure infrastructure is flexible and can be adapted back into public use.

ACTIVITY 3

TESTING CODE

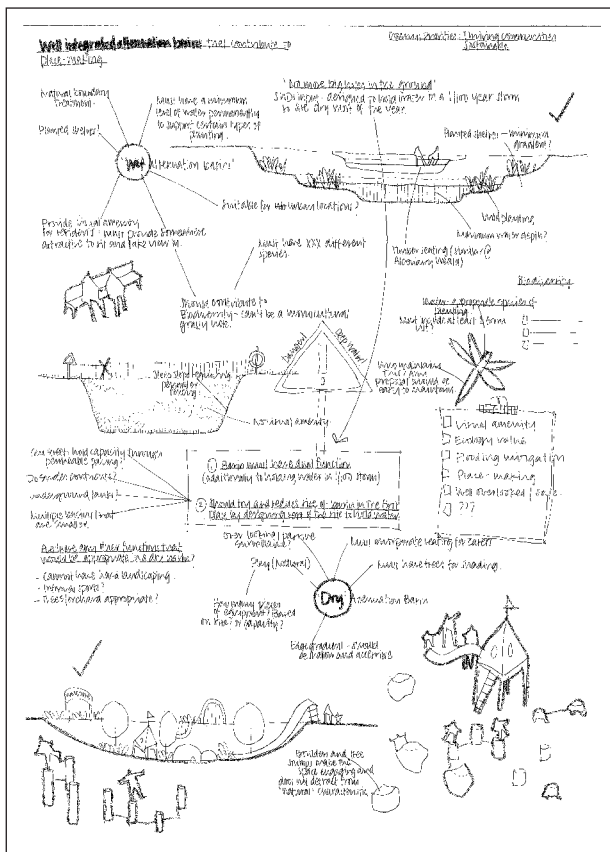
The final session of the workshop began with an introductory presentation around how coding can be used to deliver on the place characteristics and priorities identified in the previous two activities. The presentation explored the golden thread between setting an ambition such as 'Thriving Communities' (Council Plan Priority), translating this into a spatial characteristics such as 'Developments that are stitched into their surroundings' and finally turning this into code covering spatial requirements, process requirements, etc.

Participants were divided into three groups mixing officers with members to focus on one key place characteristic. Group 1 focussed on integrating attenuation basins, Group 2 looked at emdedding tenure neutrality and Group 3 discussed stitching developments into their surroundings. The objective of this activity was to encourage members to explore key requirements that would deliver on the previously identified ambitions and to gain a better understanding of how code is written.



GROUP 1

WELL INTEGRATED ATTENUATION BASINS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PLACE-MAKING



Nature-based over engineered solutions that contribute to the natural character of the green spaces they sit within

Code the process

Must be multi-use integrating play or biodiversity rich planting

Deal with water at the source - minimising water transported

Nature-based solutions for road run-off

No holes in the ground - code edges

Need code for other types of SUDs such as swales and rain gardens



GROUP 2

TENURE NEUTRAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

Parking is the biggest giveaway - usually right up to front doors of terraced blocks.

Parking amenities such as EV charging

Parity of public realm

Private tenures have garages, affordable tenures don't

Code for distance in front of homes

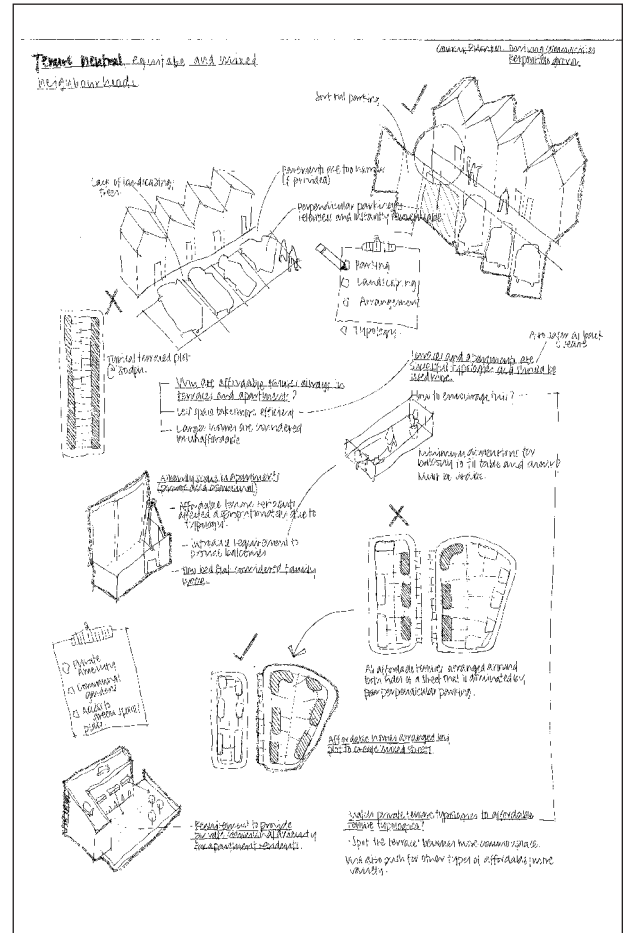
Consider management

Code for flexible parking space - dual use

Mix of blocks and building types

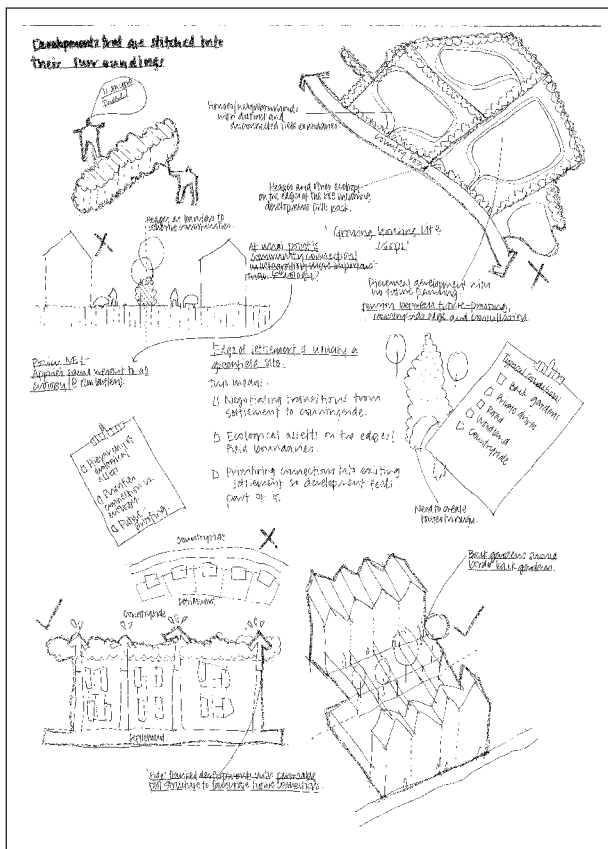
Location and access to playspace is important

Consider letterbox provision and design



GROUP 3

DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE STITCHED INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS



Consider tiers of ecological assets and how you could work with what's there

Require BNG on site

Include responses to each tier of ecological asset

Guidance or templates showing developers what to do for eg. ancient woodland

Access and highways important

Additional active travel access for connectivity

Code for what you want as well as what you don't want



RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1

KEY INFORMATION

The first Residents Design Forum brought together a diverse group of 22 North Herts residents to explore and develop a vision for new development in the district and set the direction of travel for the emerging District Design Code*. The session lasted 2.5 hours and was made up of two main activities. In the first, attendees were asked to reflect, individually and then as a group, about their experience of living in North Herts. In the second session, attendees created a vision board in groups, that captured their priorities and ambitions for new development in the district.

Key objectives from the event were:

- 1. To foster a sense of collaborative spirit between forum members.
- 2. To gain an understanding of residents’ experiences of living in North Herts including both positive and negative aspects.
- 3. To facilitate discussions around what good and bad development looks and feels like.
- 4. To develop a vision for new development in the district, including aspects that should be prioritised.

Attendees: North Herts Residents**
Facilitators: North Herts Urban Design Team
Time: Wednesday 29 June 6:00-8:30pm
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth

**A design code is a set of clear, detailed, and often visual rules and guidelines that specify how development should be designed and built in a particular area. They aim to ensure high-quality, context-sensitive, and coherent urban development by providing specific parameters for building forms, materials, street layouts, public spaces and landscaping. They are used to guide developers, planners, and architects in creating proposals that align with a shared vision for the area.*

***Forum members were recruited by an external organisation (Field Locker) and advertised to the North Herts Citizens Panel. The council team set strict quotas around age, ethnicity, social grade, location and gender to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds were represented.*

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
18:00-18:10	Registration, Tea and Coffee
18:10-18:30	Activity 1 - Ice Breaker ‘Living in North Herts’
18:30-19:10	Dinner and Introductory Presentation
19:10-19:50	Activity 2 - Visioning Collages
19:50-20:10	Feedback Session
20:10-20:30	Wrap Up and Next Steps



ACTIVITY 1

LIVING IN NORTH HERTS

The first activity, designed as an ice breaker for the group, asked participants to reflect on their experiences of living in North Herts through a series of questions. Attendees were seated in groups with others that lived close by, first reflecting individually, then in pairs and finally as a whole table. Opposite is a summary of responses and discussion points that were raised.



WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

QUIETNESS

NATURE

GREEN SPACE

The majority of responses for this question centred around green spaces and access to them. Attendees expressed the value of being close to green space as a key positive attribute of living in North Herts across the district, with quietness, long walks and natural spaces bringing a wealth of health and well-being benefits to residents.

WIDE TREE-LINED STREETS

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

BABY FRIENDLY CAFES

THE COUNTRYSIDE

PEACEFUL

DARK SKIES

LOTS OF WALKS

HISTORIC TOWN

WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?

TRAFFIC

PARKING

CONGESTION

Much of the discussion around negative aspects about living in North Herts centred around vehicular traffic on the roads, a lack of parking and congestion which led to concerns around air quality and fumes along major roads. Attendees highlighted the frustration around trying to get around the district in a car and also a lack of viable alternatives such as cycle paths and/or regular bus services. There was discussion around the placement of cycle tracks which tend to be delivered along major roads - undesirable with more natural routes preferred.

This led to a discussion around over-development and general agreement that new development was not delivering an appropriate level of infrastructure to service the homes, putting pressure on existing facilities (such as healthcare).

LACK OF LIGHTING

NO CYCLE LANES

AIR POLLUTION AND FUMES

MONOTONOUS TOWN CENTRE SHOPS

LACK OF FACILITIES

ACCESS TO AMENITIES/HEALTHCARE

IS THERE A PLACE IN THE DISTRICT THAT FEELS SPECIAL OR MEANINGFUL TO YOU?

The most cherished places in the district were mainly open spaces, linking back to the responses for the first question where attendees valued green spaces in the district as a key positive of living in North Herts. Well-planned and multi-functional green spaces that appealed to a variety of users were most loved with some debate around safety and lighting. Whilst some attendees claimed they felt safe out in most green spaces, others felt the opposite citing a lack of lighting as a key issue. Cherished green spaces were a mixture of historic routes such as the Icknield Way and planned parks such as Broadway Gardens.

WESTON WOODS

MARKET SQUARE

THERFIELD HEATH

ST MARY'S CHURCH

THE GREENWAY

OUGHTONHEAD

HITCHIN MARKET

KENNEDY GARDENS

BROADWAY GARDENS

WESTERN WAY

STANDALONE FARM

ICKNIELD WAY

ACTIVITY 2

VISIONING COLLAGES

In this activity, groups were asked to produce a visual representation of their ambitions for future development in North Herts. Each group (of 5-6 attendees) was provided a set of printed references that showcased a wide range of recently completed developments both in the district and further afield. As a group, attendees looked through the examples, debating and discussing their perceived successes and failures before selecting desirable examples to stick on the board. Where the discussion focused on aspects that were not displayed in the reference images, attendees were encouraged to write or draw things to illustrate the point.

At the end of the session, a nominated member presented the completed vision board to the wider group - some chose to also highlight undesirable images that needed to be coded against.



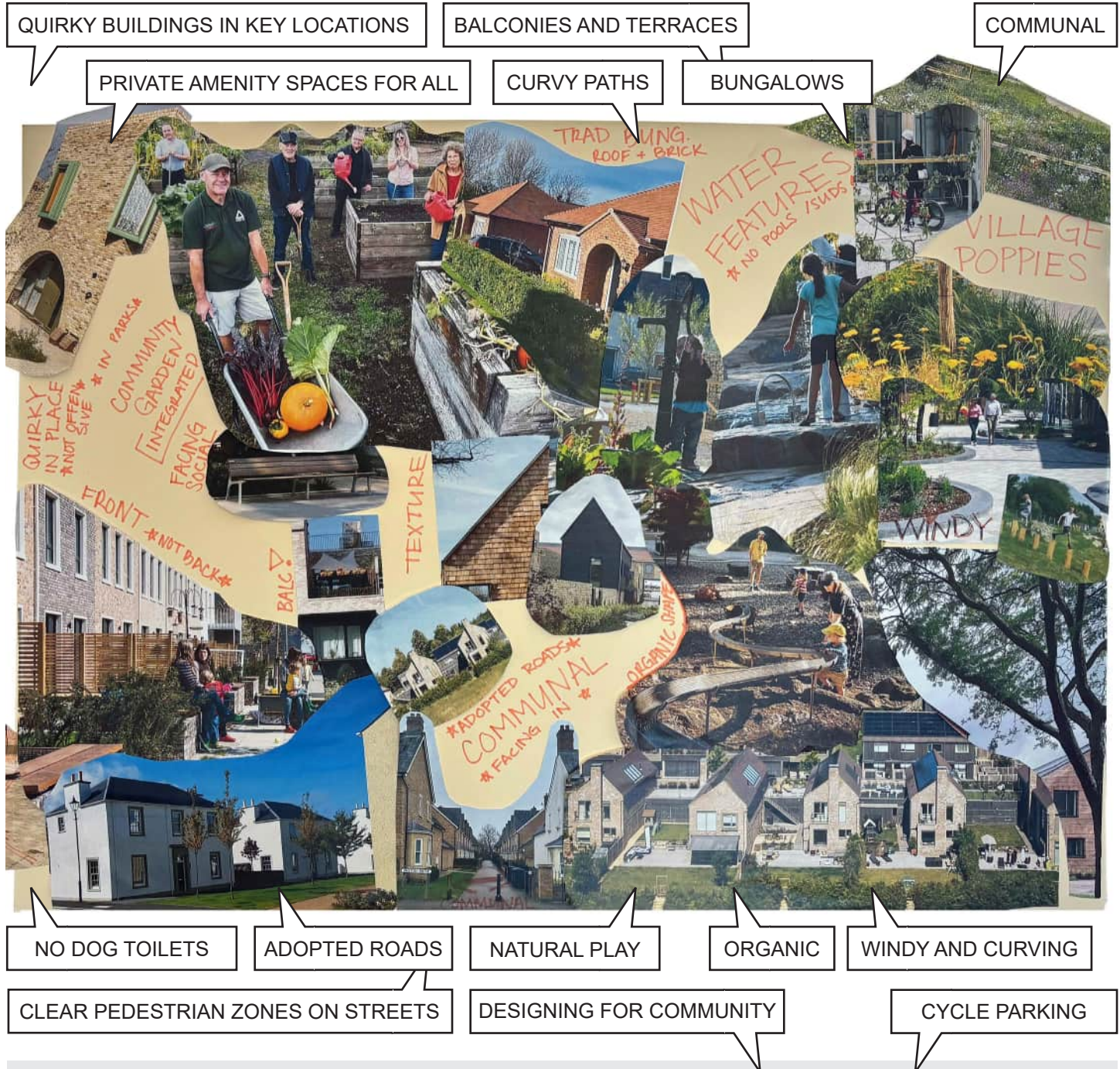
GROUP 1



KEY PRIORITIES

- 1: Green ecological neighbourhoods that include allotments, community gardens and connections to nature for residents and visitors.
- 2: Neighbourhoods that enable active travel with walkable routes and reduced reliance on/dominance of cars.
- 3: Characterful and distinctive places - there was a strong rejection of monotonous and bland neighbourhoods that lacked character and sociability.
- 4: Built form that is contextual with some support for more contemporary architectural approaches.
- 5: Tenure-blind social housing where affordable homes are fully integrated and indistinguishable in quality and appearance.

GROUP 2



KEY PRIORITIES

- 1: Intentional provision of green spaces that are functional and not just something to look at with a preference for smaller scale sociable doorstep green spaces over expansive parks.
- 2: Curvy/windy streets and paths with incidental views were preferred over straight vistas which are perceived as too formal.
- 3: Sense of community should be achieved through design. Provision of communal spaces directly visible from windows was supported and thought to increase sense of ownership and community thus reducing anti-social behaviour. In addition, homes accessed off pedestrians streets encourage neighbourliness/community interaction.
- 4: Unsupportive of shared surface streets - clear demarcation of sidewalks and roads that feel safer for pedestrians, especially children.
- 5: Provision of private outdoor space for all homes, particularly shared buildings and/or flats through balconies and terraces.

GROUP 4

BUILD UP NOT OUT

GREEN AT THE HEART

VARIED ROOFLINES

NO US VS THEM

LOCAL SHOPS

TERRACES OVER GARAGES



Curves in space

Facilities +
not just a piece of grass

higher density in town centre

properly accessible building

and out; ^{to} space



Calculus

community spirit

ACCESSIBLE HOMES

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL GREEN SPACE

CAR CLUBS

NEIGHBOURLY INTERACTION

HIGH DENSITY IN TOWN CENTRES

CURVES IN THE LANDSCAPE

DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY SPIRIT



KEY PRIORITIES

- 1: Using land efficiently and building up rather than out to protect green space in the district. To take this further, space above garages should not be wasted - group was supportive of terraces and integral solutions.
- 2: Built form should be contemporary with a nod to the context and history of the site. Authenticity is important with 'fake' chimneys cited as an example of inauthentic design. Built form and rooflines needed to be varied to avoid monotonous and bland estates.
- 3: Communal spaces that belong to a small number of residents was supported and is something generally considered lacking on new estates.
- 4: Green spaces should not just be a piece of grass. Instead they need to engender community spirit by encouraging interaction through play, raked seating, benches, etc.
- 5: SUDs should be designed like the example in Solihull incorporating low maintenance natural play.

RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #1 SUMMARY

The Urban Design Team at North Herts will use the feedback from the first Residents Design Forum, along with insights from the Council Members Visioning Day (held in March), to help shape a vision for the new District Design Code. This Design Code is expected to be structured around six or seven core principles, turning the ideas and priorities discussed during these events into clear, practical design policies that can help us guide future development in the district.

Residents at the meeting expressed that they would like a joint session with local councillors and forum members to discuss and debate tricky issues and collaboratively review the emerging design code. This request has been noted and will be explored over the coming months.

We (the North Herts urban design team) thank all the Resident Design Forum members for their invaluable contributions and for working in a collaboratively and respectful way with fellow residents. The next workshop will be scheduled for Autumn 2025 where we will present the draft guiding principles and emerging code.



RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #2

KEY INFORMATION

The second Residents Design Forum brought together the same group of North Herts residents from the first event, joined by Councillors, to continue collaborative work on shaping the emerging District Design Code*. The session focused on presenting the journey to the seven North Herts Place Objectives that sit at the heart of the Design Code and a collaborative workshop to further refine them.

Key objectives from the event were:

- 1. To present the stakeholder engagement undertaken so far to define the seven North Herts Place Objectives.
- 2. To review and refine the emerging Place Objectives.
- 3. To facilitate open dialogue between Councillors and Design Forum Residents about the future of development in the district.
- 4. To informally present examples of emerging code that deliver on the draft Place Objectives.
- 5. To present the programme to adoption and upcoming opportunities for Councillor and Resident input.

Attendees: North Herts Residents** and Councillors
Facilitators: North Herts Urban Design Team
Time: Wednesday 27 November 6:00-8:30pm
Location: Committee Room, District Council Offices, Letchworth

**A design code is a set of clear, detailed, and often visual rules and guidelines that specify how development should be designed and built in a particular area. They aim to ensure high-quality, context-sensitive, and coherent urban development by providing specific parameters for building forms, materials, street layouts, public spaces and landscaping. They are used to guide developers, planners, and architects in creating proposals that align with a shared vision for the area.*

***Forum members were recruited by an external organisation (Field Locker) and advertised to the North Herts Citizens Panel. The council team set strict quotas around age, ethnicity, social grade, location and gender to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds were represented.*

AGENDA	ACTIVITY
17:45-18:00	Arrival, Tea and Coffee
18:00-18:30	Introductory Presentation
18:30-18:45	Review of Place Objectives
18:45-19:00	Dinner Served
19:00-20:00	Dinner and Group Feedback Discussion
20:00-20:15	Next Steps
20:15-20:30	Opportunity to chat with Councillors

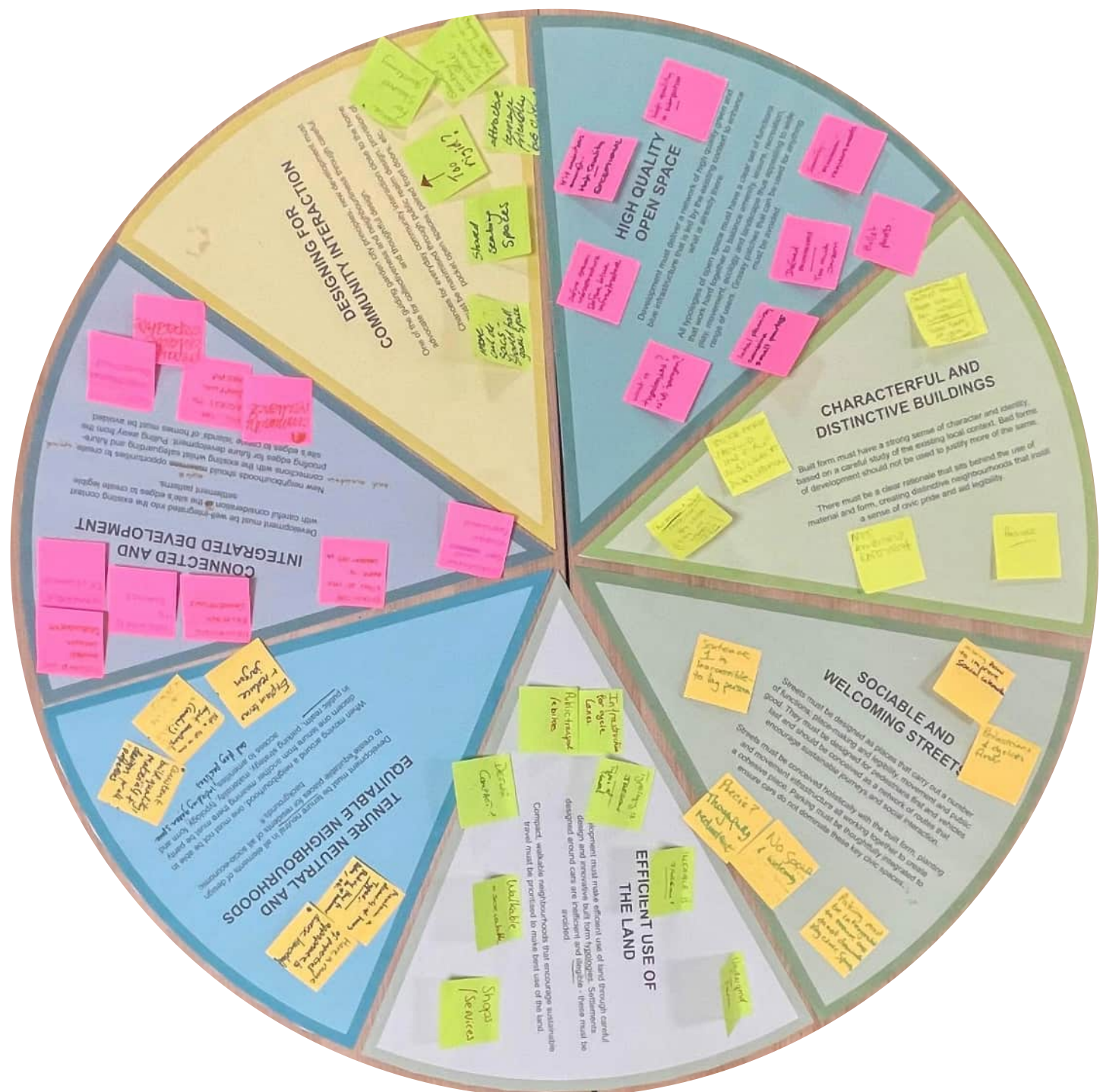


VISIONING

1. Using land efficiently and building up rather than out is a common principle. Green space in the district is vital for the future, open areas should not be used for group work, recreation, or leisure unless people want to change it.
2. Built form should be contemporary with a nod to the recent and history of the site. Architecture is important with a clear emphasis on the use of materials and design. Built form and outdoor space should be used to avoid recreation and leisure spaces.
3. Community spaces that bring in a small number of residents are important and are becoming increasingly important in new estates.
4. Green spaces should not just be a place of grass, but should be used to encourage community spirit by encouraging recreation, design play, social meeting, business, etc.
5. Streets should be designed like the countryside to encourage the community to play.



Attendees were split into 7 groups that combined Councillors and Residents, each with 4-5 participants. Each group was assigned one Place Objective and asked to collectively assess its clarity, intentions and level of ambition. Groups annotated the objectives with written comments, suggested amendments and key discussion points, considering how each objective could better reflect local character, community priorities and deliverable outcomes. The groups then presented their ideas back to the wide group for a wider discussion.



HIGH QUALITY OPEN SPACE

Group Members
Cllr Bryony May
3no. Residents Design Forum Members

Development must deliver a network of high quality green and blue infrastructure that is led by the existing context to enhance what is already there.

All typologies of open space must have a clear set of functions that work hard together to balance amenity, leisure, recreation, play, movement, ecology and landscape thus appealing to a wide range of users.

Grassy patches that can be used for anything must be avoided.



- Is this objective ambitious enough? Perhaps we should be aiming for exceptional and not just high quality.*
- High quality is subjective - is there another way of communicating this?*
- Consider bullet points to break down the text and make it easier to read.*
- There is too much jargon - green/blue infrastructure and typology need to be defined.*
- The code must specify minimum requirements for open space on new developments.*
- Small parks should have a function or they are better off being combined to create larger ones.*



CONNECTED AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

Group Members

Cllr Sean Nolan

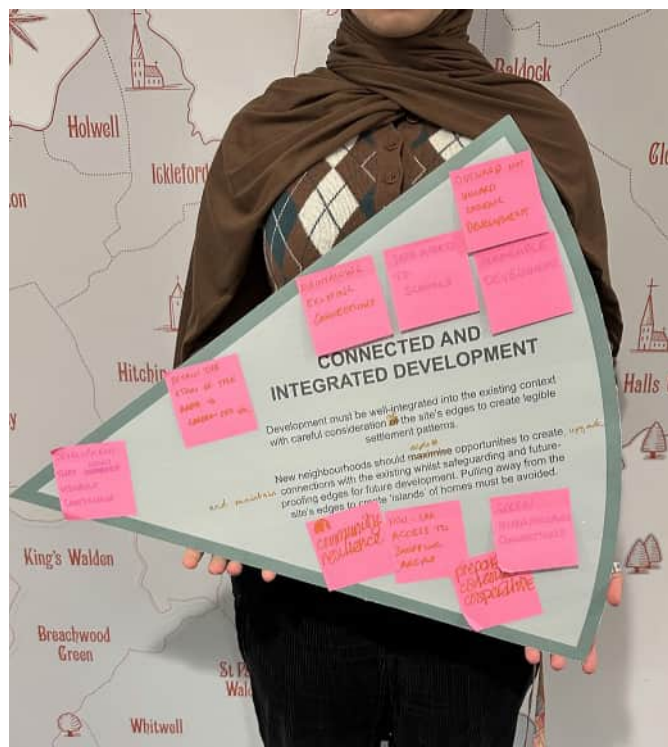
Cllr Emma Fernandes

1no. Residents Design Forum Member

Development must be well-integrated into the existing context with careful consideration of the site's edges to create legible settlement patterns.

New neighbourhoods should maximise opportunities to create connections with the existing whilst safeguarding and future-proofing edges for future development.

Pulling away from the site's edges to create 'islands' of homes must be avoided.



Development needs to be outward looking, not inward looking and permeable.

Objective should include safe access to schools, and non-car access to shopping areas.

Maximise is too weak, we should be exploiting opportunities to create, upgrade and maintain existing connections.

Objective should include visually integrating with the existing settlement and maintaining the ethos of the area.

More focus on green infrastructure connections.



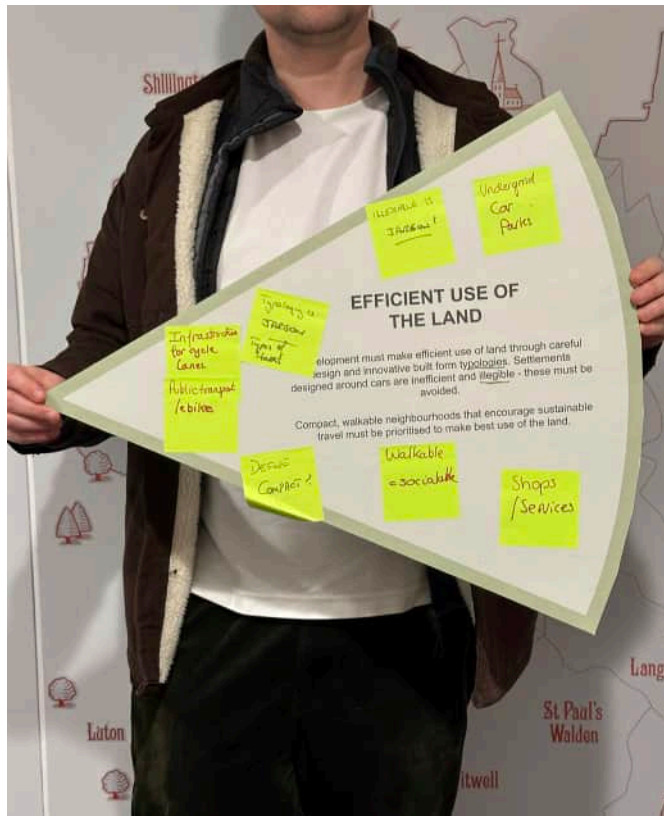
EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

Group Members

Cllr Albert

2no. Residents Design Forum Members

Development must make efficient use of land through careful design and innovative built form typologies. Settlements designed around cars are inefficient and illegible - these must be avoided. Compact, walkable neighbourhoods that encourage sustainable travel must be prioritised to make best use of land.



Consider using clear, everyday language for objectives - illegible and typology are jargon.

Safe and continuous infrastructure for cycling is important in this objective.

Walkable is sociable - need to link these two terms in the objectives.

Consider use of underground car parks to make sites more efficient.

Is development designed at a compact scale that makes efficient use of land while remaining comfortable and usable?

Parking solutions are key in delivering efficient sites.



DESIGNING FOR COMMUNITY INTERACTION

Group Members
Cllr Stewart Willoughby
Cllr Nigel Mason
2no. Residents Design Forum Member

One of the guiding garden city principles, new development must advocate for collectiveness and neighbourliness through careful and thoughtful design. Chances for everyday community interaction close to the home must be maximised through public realm design, provision of pocket spaces, paired front doors, etc.



Paired front doors seems to rigid, consider other areas for social interaction.

Shared gardening or growing spaces, informal spaces for shared eating, markets and community activity are important.

Bus shelters are important for social interaction - should be attractive and friendly.

Policy should include safe, shared spaces for informal play and activities close to homes.

Seating as a key part of social interaction in communities.



TENURE NEUTRAL AND EQUITABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Group Members

Cllr Winchester

Cllr Donna Wright

3no. Residents Design Forum Members

Development must be tenure neutral in all elements of design to create equitable places for residents of all socio-economic backgrounds.

When moving around a neighbourhood, one must not be able to discern one tenure from another meaning there must be parity in public realm, parking strategy, materiality, typology, form and access to amenities.



Included requirement for consistent build quality, materials and design on all properties.

It is also important to have a range of properties to cater to diverse households.

Terms such as tenure neutral and public realm should be clearly explained and unnecessary jargon avoided.

Consider how to deal with parking - linked to number of bedrooms?

List at the end needs to include green space and play facilities. Need to be careful of wording as this is not an exhaustive list.



SOCIABLE AND WELCOMING STREETS

Group Members

Cllr Allen

3no. Residents Design Forum Member

Streets must be designed as places that carry out a number of functions; place-making and legibility, movement and public good. They must be designed for pedestrians first and vehicles last and should be conceived as a network of routes that encourage sustainable journeys and community interaction.

Streets must be conceived holistically with the built form, planting and movement infrastructure all working together to create a cohesive place. Parking must be thoughtfully integrated to ensure cars do not dominate these key civic spaces.



Objective misses out how to improve social interaction - such as benches, community spaces, etc.

Important that pedestrians and cyclists are put first.

The first sentence is inaccessible to a layperson - consider rewording this or shortening.



CHARACTERFUL AND DISTINCTIVE BUILDINGS

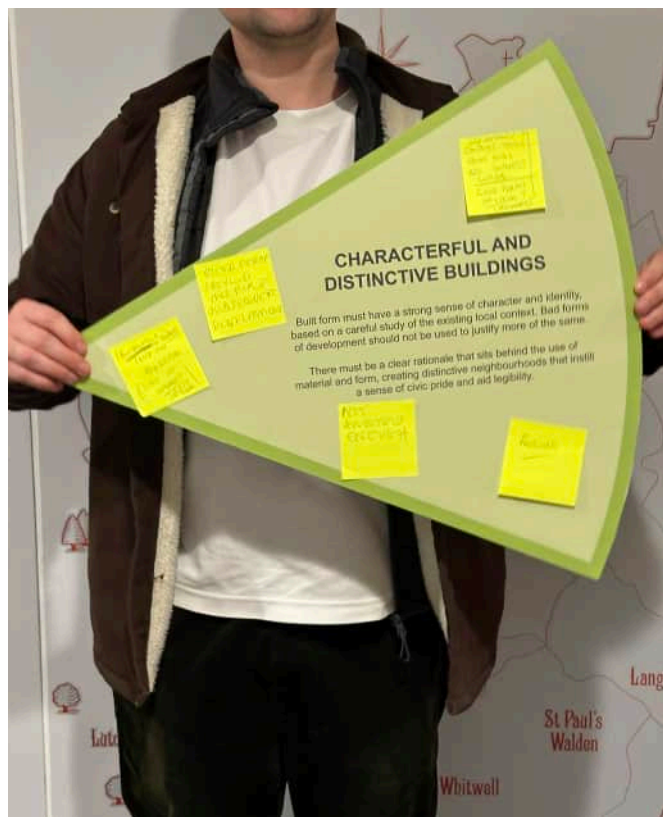
Group Members

Cllr Mick Debenham

3no. Residents Design Forum Members

Built form must have a strong sense of character and identity, based on a careful study of the existing local context. Bad forms of development should not be used to justify more of the same.

There must be a clear rationale that sits behind the use of material and form, creating distinctive and neighbourhoods that instill a sense of civic pride and aid legibility.



This objective is not ambitious enough.

Make more positive - good forms of development should inspire subsequent development.

Local landmarks are important sources of inspiration for buildings.

Should include reference to an area's cultural, historical and contextual influences.

Should include a requirement for development to set a high-quality benchmark that can positively influence future development.

Designs should be ambitious and distinctive, rather than generic or risk-averse.



RESIDENTS DESIGN FORUM #2 SUMMARY

The Urban Design Team will use the feedback from this second Residents Design Forum to refine the emerging Place Objectives that form the foundation of the North Herts Design Code. The detailed comments and suggested amendments gathered during the collaborative workshop will be used to ensure the objectives are ambitious, clear and reflective of local priorities, translating shared community values into accessible and deliverable requirements for future development in the district.

The session marked a positive step forward by bringing residents and members together to jointly review, discuss and shape the vision for the Design Code. Participants expressed strong support for the collaborative approach and the opportunity to directly influence policy as it develops.

The North Herts Urban Design Team thanks all forum members and councillors for their valuable contributions and constructive engagement. Further workshops will be scheduled as the Design Code evolves, including future a third Residents Design Forum to present the draft Design Code ahead of public consultation.







Urban Design Team North Herts Council
Council Offices Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City SG6 3JF
E: urban.design@north-herts.gov.uk
T: 01462 474000