

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

**PRIMER:
INTRODUCING
GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE**



Everyone should read this document before
reading other parts of the Green Infrastructure Strategy

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Welcome to Epping Forest District Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy

Epping Forest District has an extraordinary network of landscapes, including the renowned ancient woodland, Epping Forest.

But the Forest is under threat, from rising levels of vehicle emissions and increased human activity. The planned growth and development in the District would add to this pressure so we need to have positive strategies in place to address this.

This Green Infrastructure Strategy seeks to protect the Forest and other remarkable ecological sites, by ensuring that new and existing communities have better access to high-quality and local green and blue spaces.

Well-designed and multifunctional greenspaces can make people happier, healthier and bring communities together.

Great Green and Blue Infrastructure is also key to tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, providing long-term benefits for people, wildlife and ecology.

So by 2026 we want to make sure that 56% of the high quality Green Infrastructure projects in this Strategy have been delivered. And by 2033 we want 100% delivered with more green and blue spaces planned for the future.

We thank you for your input last year – despite the challenges Covid-19 presented, we held an exciting programme of workshop events online with groups across the District, and we received 175 written responses to our survey.

We are also looking to kick-start the implementation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy with some of our District-Wide Projects found in [Part 1 - Implementation: Enhancing Our Existing Network](#), and we want you to be involved.

We will be starting with our 'Tree Planting – A Call For Sites' project and we need District residents to get in touch with places they think would benefit from more tree planting. These could be greenspaces, school grounds, verges, public spaces and rural sites.

Keep an eye on our [website](#) and [Twitter](#) for more information in coming months.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Purpose of the Strategy and Parts

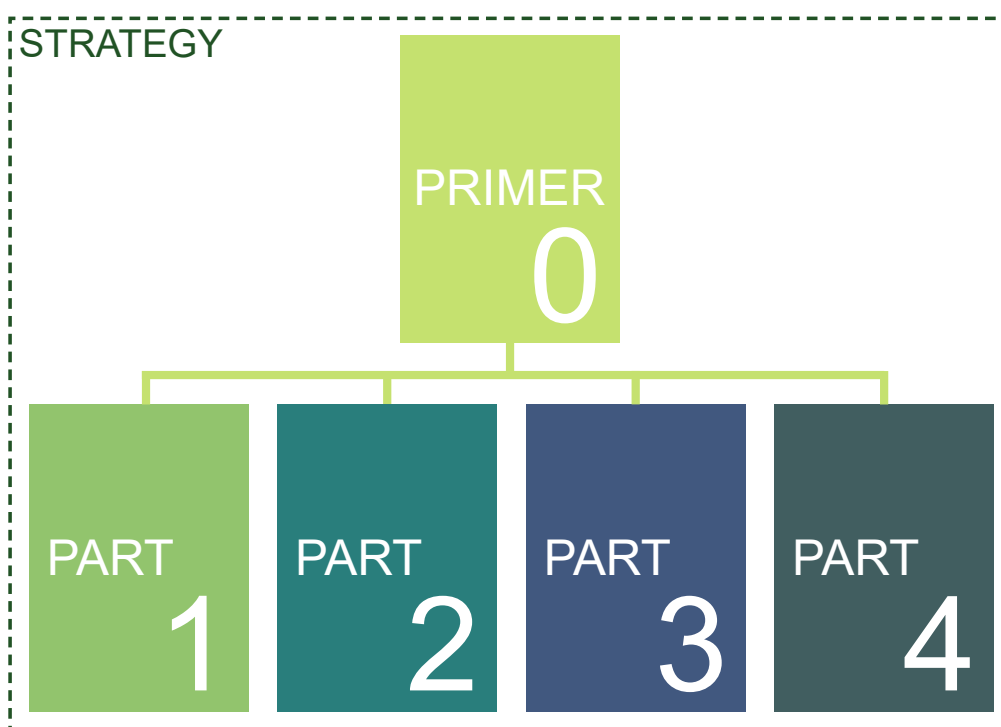
The purpose of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (“the Strategy”) is to ensure a strategic and holistic approach is taken to protecting, maintaining and enhancing the ecology, landscape and heritage in the District.

This Primer document provides:

- An introduction to what green and blue infrastructure is - its definition and value;
- An understanding of the existing green and blue assets in the District - their location, importance, quantity and quality;
- The Vision and Objectives of the Strategy - that opportunities and projects will need to follow

The other parts of the Strategy are to be read in conjunction with this Primer. These are:

1. [Implementation: Enhancing our Existing Network](#)
2. [Implementation: Landscape-Led Design](#)
3. [Implementation: Green Infrastructure in Strategic Allocations](#)
4. [Implementation: Infrastructure Enhancement Projects](#)



HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Who is the Strategy and Primer for?

The Strategy consists of five Parts which set out the requirements for landscape-led development and mitigation and identify local projects which align with its objectives. Anyone interested in the Strategy and the associated guidance and projects should read the Primer first, to familiarise themselves with the purpose, context and vision of the Strategy.

This includes local residents, community groups including town and parish councils, planning applicants, designers, local authority officers, policy makers and elected members. The different parts of the strategy (1,2, 3and 4) each have a particular focus, which may be more relevant to different readers, depending on their interest.

When to use the Primer?

The Primer should be read before the start of any green and/or blue infrastructure project, to ensure that projects and proposals account for the existing context and assets and align with the Vision and Objectives of the Strategy.

Status of the Strategy

The Strategy has been endorsed as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, masterplans/concept frameworks and to guide design and implementation processes.

Relationship to the Council's emerging Local Plan

Whilst not its sole purpose, and important part of the Strategy is to support key [emerging Local Plan policies](#) on high-quality place making and site specific guidance, particularly in masterplan areas, alongside the Council's commitment and legal obligation to ensure that there is no adverse effect on the integrity of ecologically important sites, such as the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Reviewing and Monitoring

Identified projects for the provision of green and blue infrastructure will require long term management and maintenance arrangements to be put in place where appropriate. The intention is that, where appropriate, these projects will be included in the Council's [Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(IDP\)](#), which is a 'live' document that will be monitored and updated regularly.

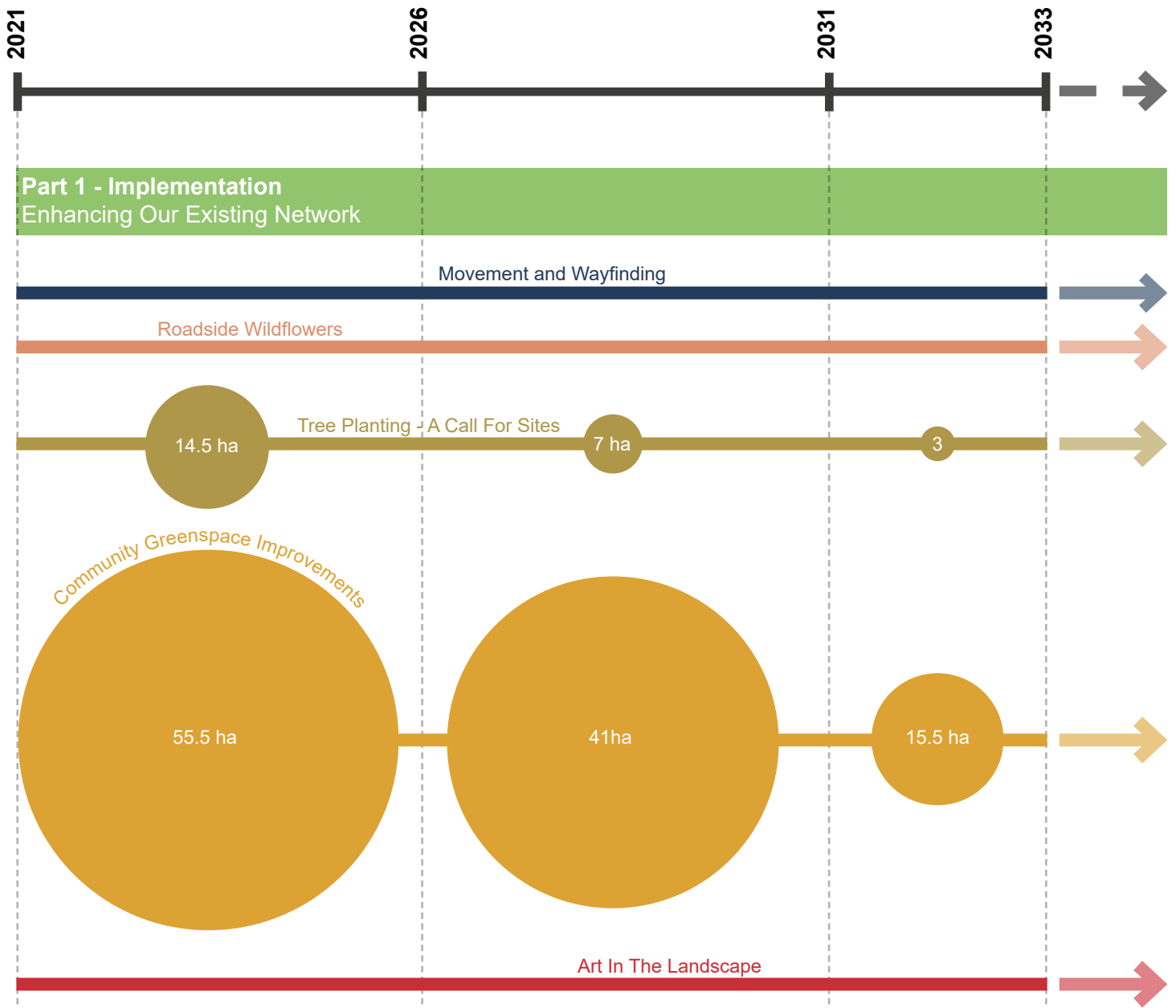
DELIVERY PLAN

0.1

0.1 DELIVERY PLAN

These pages set out how much Green Infrastructure will be delivered through this Strategy, and by when (the below time periods align with the [Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(IDP\)](#) and the [Local Plan Submission Version 2017](#)). Some projects are 'themes' which can be implemented steadily across the GI network (such as Movement and Wayfinding, Art in the Landscape), whereas some are more 'defined' and quantifiable (such as Community Greenspace Improvements, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace). More information can be found by reading [Parts 1, 2 and 3](#).

This Delivery Plan forms the basis for our Mission in achieving 56% of Green Infrastructure identified in this Strategy to be delivered by 2026, and 100% by 2033.



Data Sources

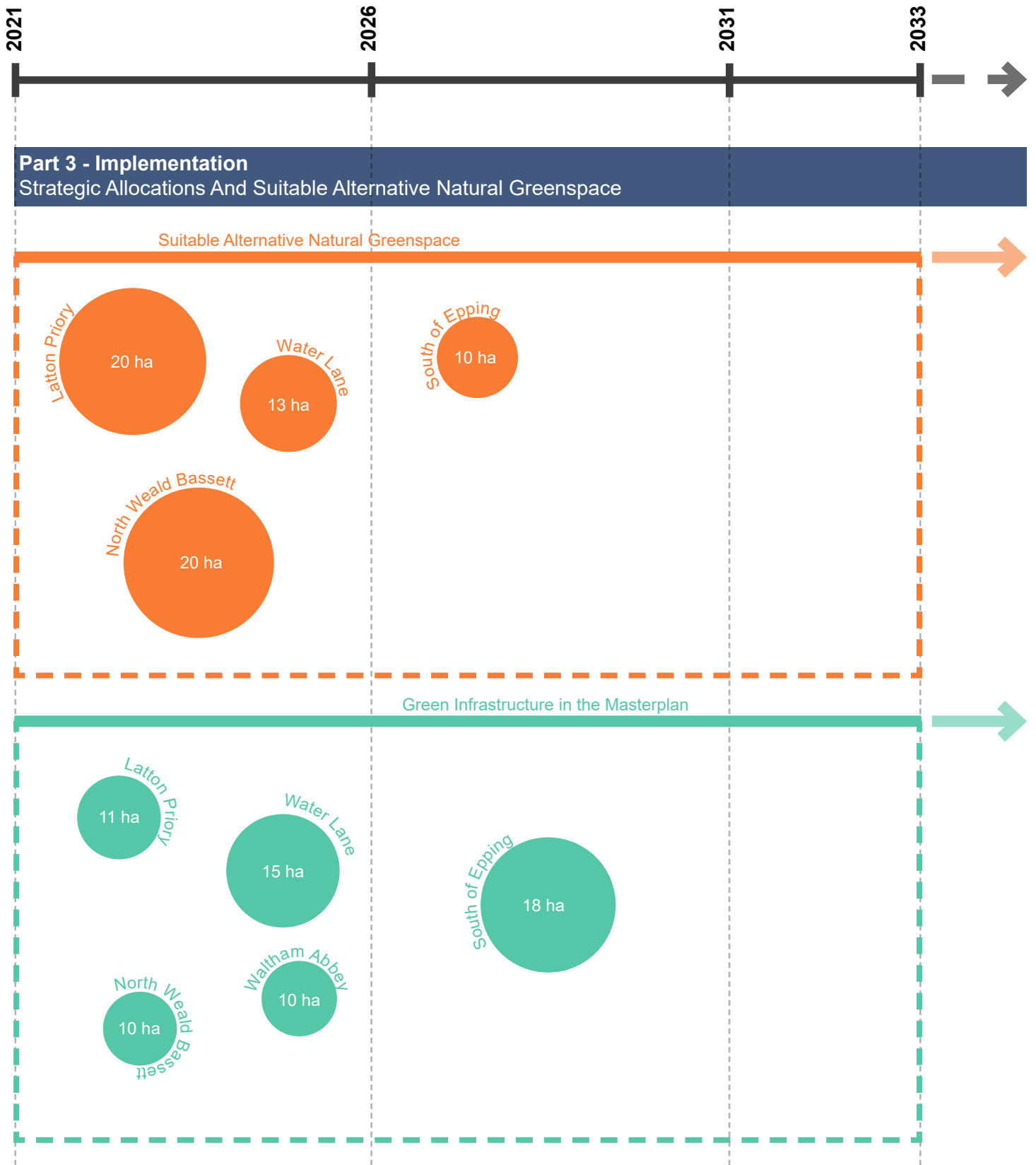
Tree Planting - A Call For Sites:

50% of total area of potential tree planting sites identified by the EFDC Tree Taskforce in early discussions (November 2020), assuming the other 50% would be undeliverable or inappropriate. This figure is then distributed between the three periods, with greater focus on tree planting between 2021 - 2026.

Community Greenspace Improvements:

Sites identified in EFDC's Infrastructure Delivery Plan as Open Spaces and Green Infrastructure for improvement / enhancement.

0.1 DELIVERY PLAN



Data Sources

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace:

As set out for each Strategic Masterplan in this Strategy (*Part 3 - Implementation: Strategic Allocations and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace*)

Green Infrastructure:

Strategic Allocations as identified in [Local Plan Submission Version 2017 Appendix 6 Site Specific Requirements](#), where Green Infrastructure is assumed to be Indicative Development Area subtracted from Masterplan Area. Latton Priory and Water Lane Green Infrastructure provision is taken from early masterplan development in 2019.

Green Infrastructure provision within Strategic Masterplans is subject to design development and the number above is a current estimate, not a guide.

ABOUT THE STRATEGY

0.2

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Overview

The social, environmental, and economic benefits of Green and Blue Infrastructure has become key to creating sustainable communities and liveable neighbourhoods.

The Council's emerging Local Plan proposes the most significant level of development to be brought forward across the District in a generation. In doing so it has established ambitious policies in relation to:

- The protection of ecological and landscape assets
- The provision and enhancement of Green and Blue Infrastructure
- The importance of design in the creation of high quality places for people to live, work and visit
- The stewardship of Green and Blue Infrastructure

The evidence base for the emerging Epping Forest District Local Plan provides an assessment of landscape character, the quantity and type of existing Green and Blue Infrastructure, identifies where there are deficits, and assesses the effects that new homes in particular may have on the Epping Forest and other ecologically important sites. This evidence underpins the policy approach to the provision and enhancement of Green and Blue Infrastructure across the District. This evidence base, including the [Council's Open Space Strategy 2017](#) (EB703), provide an important resource for all of those using this Strategy as it provides a much more fine-grained analysis of a significant number of the District's Green Infrastructure assets in particular.

The Strategy also recognises the importance of cross-boundary opportunities to integrate Green and Blue Infrastructure by working with a range of partners including our neighbouring authorities inside and outside of London.



A view across Harlow towards Central London

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

What Is Green And Blue Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is a network of high quality greenspaces and other environmental features such as parks, public open spaces, playing fields, sports pitches, woodlands, and allotments. The provision of Green Infrastructure can provide social, economic and environmental benefits close to where people live and work.

Blue Infrastructure is infrastructure provision relating to water. This includes natural features such as rivers, streams and ponds, semi-natural features such as sustainable drainage systems, bio swales and canals, and other engineering features such as dams, weirs and culverts. Blue and Green infrastructure are often considered together, placing emphasis on the importance of biodiversity and flood risk mitigation.



Green infrastructure: Waltham Abbey Gardens



Blue Infrastructure: River Roding

What Does Green Infrastructure Include?

[Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guide](#) provides a useful summary of what GI includes:

- **Parks and Gardens** – urban parks, Country and Regional Parks, formal gardens.
- **Amenity Greenspace** – informal recreation spaces, greenspaces related to housing developments, domestic gardens, village greens, urban commons, other incidental space, green roofs.
- **Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces** - woodland and scrub, grassland (such as downland and meadow), heath or moor, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and disturbed ground), bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs and quarries).
- **Green corridors** – rivers and canals including their banks, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths, and rights of way.
- **Other** - allotments, community gardens, city farms, cemeteries and churchyards.

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

The Value Of Green And Blue Infrastructure

The need for people to have contact with greenspace and nature has long been recognised. The Victorians saw the need for public parks as a release from urban overcrowding and a broad coalition of local people working with the City of London Corporation fought to save the Epping Forest from enclosure. This culminated in the passing of the Epping Forest Act in 1878 which established the City of London Corporation as the Conservators of Epping Forest and has ensured the protection of the Forest.

Later, in the 20th Century, Sir Frederick Gibberd's work in masterplanning the original Harlow New Town responded to Sir Patrick Abercrombie's plans for London and Greater London - based on the idea that open space should be coordinated into a park system to provide 'an easy flow of open space from garden to park, from park to parkway, from parkway to green wedge and from green wedge to Green Belt'. Gibberd, in his Harlow New Town Masterplan set out that 'Links to the countryside are formed by green wedges designed to embrace natural features such as valleys, woods, brooks and quarries. It is proposed that the wedges and valleys left free of buildings should be kept as natural as possible, and in no way turned into the character of a Town Park.'

The 20th Century also saw the establishment of the Lee Valley Regional Park. The park was created by a unique Act of Parliament as a 'green lung' for London, Essex and Hertfordshire. It comprises a 26-mile-long, 10,000 acre park containing award winning green spaces, world class sports venues and ecologically vital wildlife havens. Responsibility for its oversight lies with the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and the Council is represented on its Board.



Sir Frederick Gibberd's Harlow New Town

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

While the value of greenspace has long been considered important, only recently has it been more clearly evidenced. Bodies such as the United Nations (through its Sustainable Development Goals), the World Health Organisation, Natural England, and Public Health England make a clear and robust case for the multiple benefits that Green and Blue Infrastructure can deliver, across a diverse agenda including: tackling obesity, responding to the climate emergency, enhancing and protecting biodiversity assets, the 'healthy living' agenda, water quality and improving mental health.

Work done by Fields in Trust and the Greater London Authority in recent years demonstrates the monetary value of Green and Blue Infrastructure. This has provided the formulation of pragmatic fiscal arguments for investing in the delivery and maintenance of Green and Blue Infrastructure.

The Value of Green and Blue Infrastructure is also recognised in [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) as follows:

Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 8-005-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019

For the sake of brevity the term Green Infrastructure (GI) is used in the rest of this Strategy but its use encompasses both Green and Blue Infrastructure.

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Why have a Strategy?

The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) sets out the government's national policy context that local planning authorities need to take account of in developing plans and making decisions. The NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11), with sustainable development having economic, social and environmental objectives. The environmental objective is that development should protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment as well as protecting biodiversity, minimising pollution and adapting to climate change and the demands of a low carbon economy. In addition, national planning policy and guidance requires councils to take a strategic approach to protecting, maintaining and enhancing ecological habitats and landscape features, including those of heritage importance.

Whilst one purpose of the Strategy is to respond to the requirements of the NPPF, it also provides a mechanism for supporting a range of other legislation and national policies ranging from the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act through to the government's 25 Year Environment Plan (see [Appendices](#)).

As well as allocating sites for development the Council's emerging Local Plan contains policies which respond to the government's environmental objectives. This not only includes policies which require larger scale developments, including within the Masterplan Areas, to be self-sufficient in terms of the provision of GI, but also provides for the protection of existing GI and, where appropriate, its enhancement.

This Strategy supports the implementation of those policies by providing a clear framework through which to ensure that new development proposals respond positively to the achievement of high-quality GI provision across the District. These include in particular policies SP3 (Place Making), SP4 and SP5 (the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Communities), SP7 (The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green and Blue Infrastructure), DM2 (Epping Forest SAC and Lee Valley SPA) and DM5 (Green and Blue Infrastructure). More information on the suite of relevant policies within the emerging Local Plan are set out in the [Appendices](#) of this Strategy.

The Strategy, and in particular Parts 3 and 4, forms a key part of the Council's approach to avoiding or mitigating the effects of plans and projects, both alone and in combination, on the Epping Forest SAC in order to demonstrate that development will not have an adverse effect on its integrity. The following Strategies (which have already been endorsed by the Council as a material consideration in relation to the determination of planning applications and other development related activities) together with this Strategy, form the Council's comprehensive approach:

- [Epping Forest Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy: Managing the Effects of Air Pollution on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation December 2020](#)
- [Interim Approach to Managing Recreational Pressures on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation October 2018 \(EB134\)](#)

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

From a cross boundary perspective, the Strategy supports the GI objectives of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor, the Green Arc partnership and the [Green Essex Strategy](#). The Strategy also recognises and supports the opportunities provided by the Lee Valley Regional Park whilst protecting its internationally important ecological sites and responds to the need to protect other designated assets such as SSSI's.

This Strategy has been endorsed as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, the development of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks, and other development related activities. This is in order to provide it with material planning weight within the planning process.

The Council also recognises that there are wider opportunities to provide new and enhance the District's existing GI assets which are not dependent on new development. It has taken the opportunity to build these into the Strategy. This is to ensure that a coherent and complementary approach is taken to the District's GI provision and a holistic and strategic approach taken.

In terms of development over the period 2011-2033, the growth proposed in the Council's emerging [Local Plan](#) will provide for a minimum of 11,400 new homes. Much of this will be delivered on larger strategic sites where planning applicants will be required to take a collaborative, cohesive, coherent, integrated and proactive approach to the provision of Green Infrastructure. This includes for those sites which form part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

What Planning Goals Can Green Infrastructure Help To Achieve?

The [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) sets out that GI can help in:

Building a strong, competitive economy

- Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.

Achieving well-designed places

- The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.



Sovereign Square, Leeds by re-form landscape architecture

Promoting healthy and safe communities

- Green infrastructure can improve the wellbeing of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. Outdoor Recreation Value (ORVal) is a useful online tool that can be used to quantify the recreational values provided by greenspace. Green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.



Bridget Joyce Square and Community Rain Garden, White City by Robert Bray Associates

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change

- Green infrastructure can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats, and the protection of water quality and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural flood risk management.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 8-006-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019



Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford by Hargreaves Associates and LDA Design

Green Infrastructure also has an important role in enhancing the setting of, access to, and revealing of heritage assets within the landscape. It can help to provide a sense of place and make tangible links with local history and integrating heritage assets with Green Infrastructure.

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Epping Forest Special Area Of Conservation

The Epping Forest is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Under the [Habitats Directive 1992](#) and [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019](#), the Council is required to ensure that our emerging Local Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC. We know from the Habitats Regulations Assessments undertaken to inform our emerging Local Plan that the Forest is already under pressure from recreational use by existing residents and visitors, and from atmospheric pollution caused by vehicles using roads in close proximity to the Forest.

The responsibility for the development of an approach to avoid or mitigate any harm to the Epping Forest SAC lies with the competent authorities. Competent authorities are any organisation or individual that has a statutory role as defined in UK legislation and have a legal responsibility to help safeguard the features of an internationally designated site in undertaking their work and thereby achieve the aims of the Habitats Directive. The competent authorities for the Epping Forest SAC include (but are not limited to) EFDC and the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge. We will continue to work with the other competent authorities, Natural England (as the responsible statutory body) and with the Conservators of Epping Forest (as the body responsible for the management of the Epping Forest) to secure the implementation of the relevant components of our approach to avoidance and mitigation (as set out above).

The Epping Forest SAC extends across local authority administrative boundaries and we know, having undertaken surveys in [2018](#) and [2020](#), that it is not just people who live, or will live, in Epping Forest District who use, or will be likely to use, the Epping Forest SAC on a regular basis. People from the surrounding local authority areas, including a number of London Boroughs and from further afield also use the Epping Forest SAC. This information has helped us to identify a 6.2km 'Zone of Influence' (ZoI) around the Epping Forest SAC boundary, which indicates where 75% of existing visitors come from. This means that all new residential development within this ZoI will need to either avoid or mitigate the effects of the new visitors that would result.



Epping Forest

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

As well as the provision of larger areas of new natural greenspace linked to the Masterplan sites proposed in the emerging local plan, the provision of smaller areas, the improvement of existing GI or creating connections between different GI assets, can all contribute to attracting people away from using the Epping Forest. In this way we can avoid as much as possible putting extra pressure on the Epping Forest. In particular we do not believe that the simple provision of SANG provides the most robust approach to protecting the Epping Forest – not just the SAC itself, but areas adjoining it which are designated as SSSIs. By taking an informed approach to the design of the SANG ‘offer’ and integrating them as part of a wider GI Strategy, as well as providing new GI on smaller sites and enhancing and connecting existing GI assets can support the delivery of a more integrated and attractive offer for residents, both new and existing, to encourage the use of GI opportunities closer to home. Taking such an approach has the potential not only to provide for new residents’ recreational needs but also offer an attractive alternative to existing residents so that they reduce the number of visits that they make to the Epping Forest. It will also help to reduce car journeys by supporting more local access and therefore help to reduce the effects of atmospheric pollution on the Epping Forest SAC.

This Strategy, in all its forms, provides the framework for delivering this integrated approach and the positive contribution that it will make in delivering avoidance and mitigation measures.

More detail about the Council’s proposed approach to avoidance and mitigation measures is set out in [Part 3 - Implementation: Green Infrastructure in Strategic Allocations](#) and [Part 4 - Implementation: Identified Sites](#).

Lee Valley Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site

The Lee Valley Regional Park contains a Special Protection Area (SPA) and is a Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Site, both of which designations relate to internationally important ecological habitats. The Lee Valley comprises a series of embanked water supply reservoirs, sewage treatment lagoons and former gravel pits along the extent of the valley. These waterbodies and reedbeds support internationally important bird populations. In addition, the site’s Ramsar status is on account of the rare and scarce plants and invertebrates present. The Lee Valley SPA/Ramsar consists of four Sites of Special Scientific Interest, of which Turnford and Cheshunt Pits SSSI, Rye Meads SSSI and Amwell Quarry SSSI all lie on the Hertfordshire/ Essex border. The SPA and Ramsar site are managed by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and by Thames Water and there are a number of management plans in place including in relation to visitor access and water pollution.

0.2 ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Partners

The development of this Strategy has sought to take into account and respond to the views of a range of stakeholders as to how the provision of Green Infrastructure can be best secured within the District. Stakeholders include Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest and a range of local authorities and public bodies through the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Member and Officer Groups.

Ongoing engagement with our partners will be key to the successful funding, design and delivery of projects. Our partners include: Natural England, the Conservators of Epping Forest, adjoining local authorities, the Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council, Harlow Council, Essex Wildlife Trust, EFDC Countrycare, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the Canal and River Trust, Parish and Town Councils, the Ramblers Association, the Woodland Trust and Local Friends Groups. Developers, landowners and farmers will also be key partners in the achievement of the Strategy's Vision and Objectives.

Where appropriate existing partnership mechanisms such as the 'Green Arc' strategic partnership, the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town partnership, will be used to ensure an efficient, effective and coordinated approach to the planning and delivery of 'larger than local' Green Infrastructure is achieved.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

0.3

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Landscape Overview

Epping Forest District has a predominantly agricultural landscape. Ridges which run east-west across the District are the high points in the landscape - the town of Epping sits on the Epping Forest Ridge whilst Rye Hill Ridge defines the southern edge of Harlow. To the west of the District the Lea Valley presents a unique landscape shaped by industry and ecology, while to the north the Stort Valley's significant wet woodland and marshland habitat wraps around the northern edge of Harlow. The remnants of an extensive ancient forest are reflected in the presence of mature trees which are the defining landscape feature in woodlands, hedgerows and in open fields. While the Epping Forest itself (both the SAC and the wider Forest) is the largest and most well-known part of this ancient forest, remnants of the wider forest exist in pockets of ancient woodland and trees located across the District. The [Council's Landscape Character Assessment](#) (EB709) provides an in-depth analysis of the District's landscape.

The need to protect the Metropolitan Green Belt, which currently applies to over 92% of the District, has previously limited development. However, a minimum 11,400 new homes, along with new employment floorspace, is now required to be built over the 2011-2033 period of the emerging Local Plan.

Balancing future development alongside ecological well-being, responding to the climate crisis and meeting objectives to improve physical and mental health are some of the key challenges for the emerging Local Plan. In Epping Forest District, we have a unique opportunity to consider the function of Green Infrastructure in respect of these challenges and through this Strategy answer the following questions:

How do we create a mix of landscapes that encourage people to use outdoor space near their home, rather than travel to the Forest?

How do we make that mix of spaces function as social infrastructure to help address build resilient communities?

How do we build an ecological network to tackle the ecological and climate crises? And how does that network build on historic landscape character, or create new landscape character?

How do we increase understanding and appreciation of the landscape, its ecology and its cultural and natural heritage? And how to we engage new users to draw them into the countryside?

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Quantity

The [Council's Open Space Strategy 2017](#) (EB703) separates open spaces into different types (as shown in the graph on the next page) and assesses their provision across nine settlement areas. The quantity of open space required in relation to the resident population is assessed against Fields in Trust standards. Whilst this Strategy seeks to move away from the delivery of individual types of Green Infrastructure and focus more on the creation of more multi-functional spaces where at all possible and appropriate, having an understanding of the level of existing provision of different open spaces provides a useful starting point to help understand what type of provision should be prioritised in the future.

The most striking feature is the extent of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace within the District (from here on referred to as 'natural' greenspace^{*1}) - it is over 18 times the Fields in Trust standards minimum provision. This is in part because it includes those areas of the Epping Forest and Lee Valley Regional Park located within the District, but also because the District benefits from a generous network of other Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace.

The District has a wide range of Green Infrastructure assets but some of these, including parks and provision of open space specifically for children and young people are below the minimum Fields in Trust standards in some parts of the District. As well as the Open Space Strategy 2017 further information is available on a parish by parish basis in the [Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Audit](#) (EB706).



Roding Valley Meadows SSSI

Next page, a graph to show the current provision of green infrastructure in the District measured against National Fields in Trust Standards broadly accepted classifications:

Natural and Semi Natural Open Space 1814%

Parks and Gardens 38%

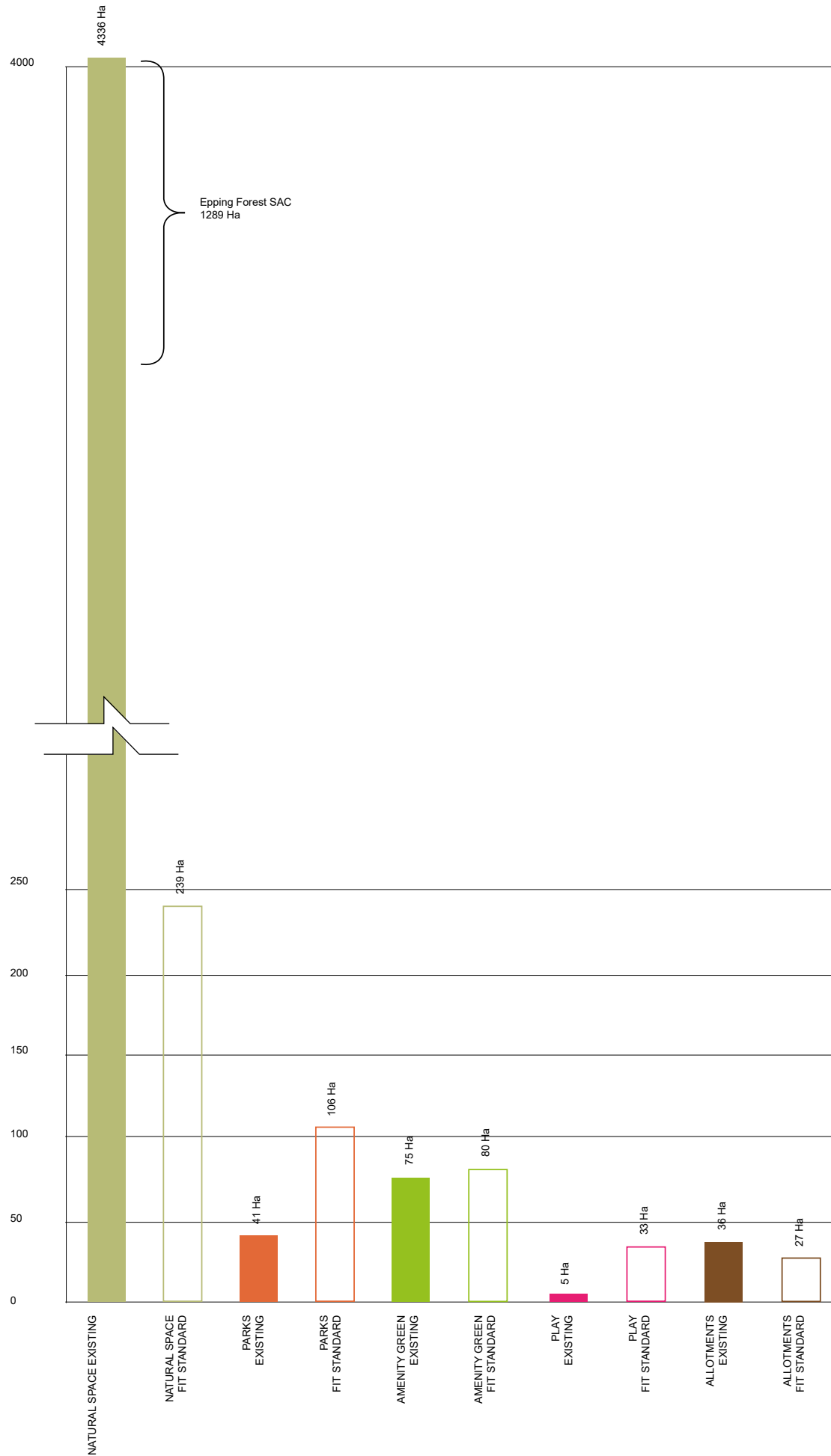
Amenity Greenspace 94%

Play and facilities for Young People 15%

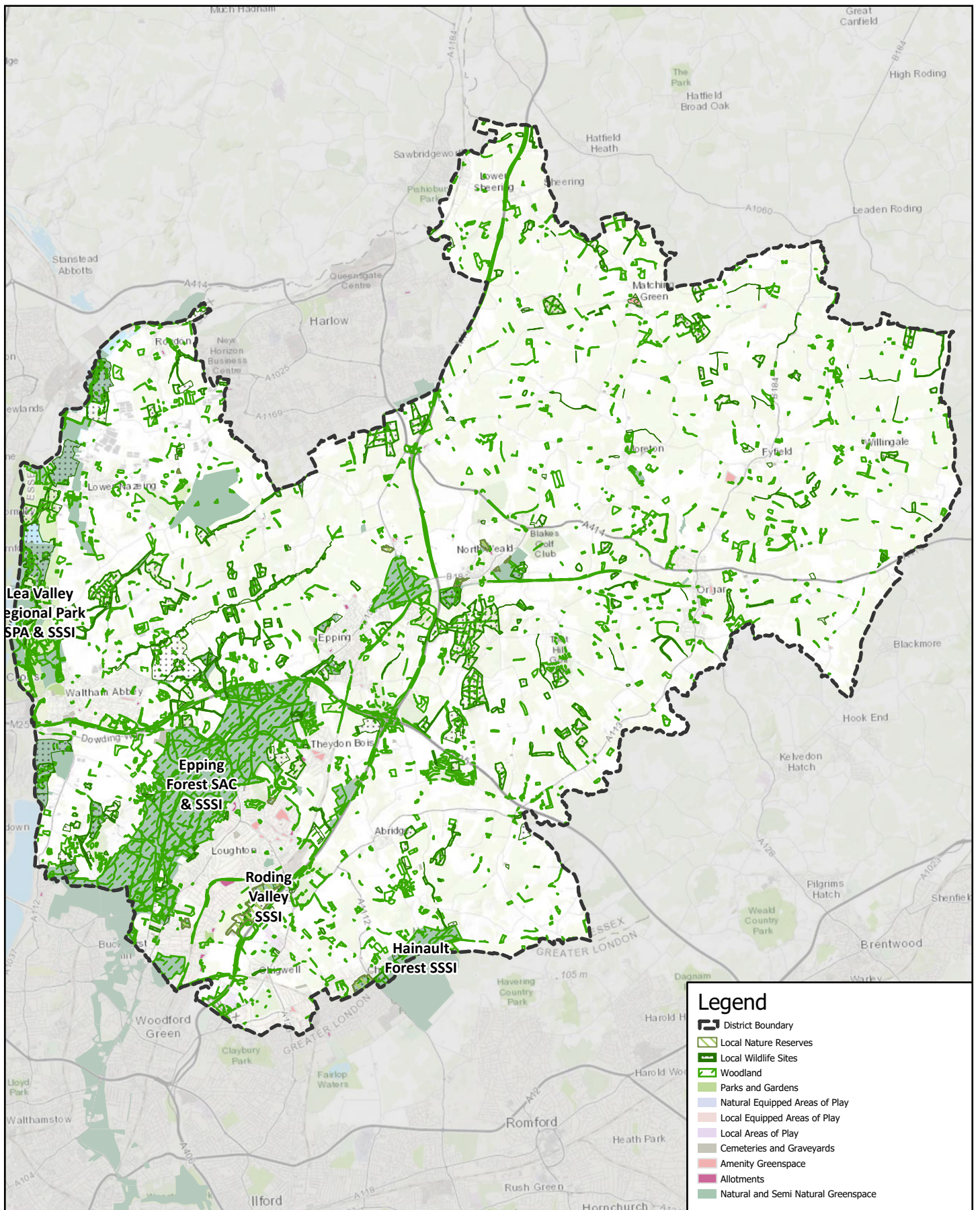
Allotments 133%

^{*1} The accepted classification of Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace is something of a misnomer. No open space in Britain is truly natural as each is shaped by the humans and it is this confluence between people and nature which gives us today's landscapes which are often rich in cultural heritage. For expedience and clarity Natural or Semi-Natural Greenspace will be referred to as 'natural' open space.

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

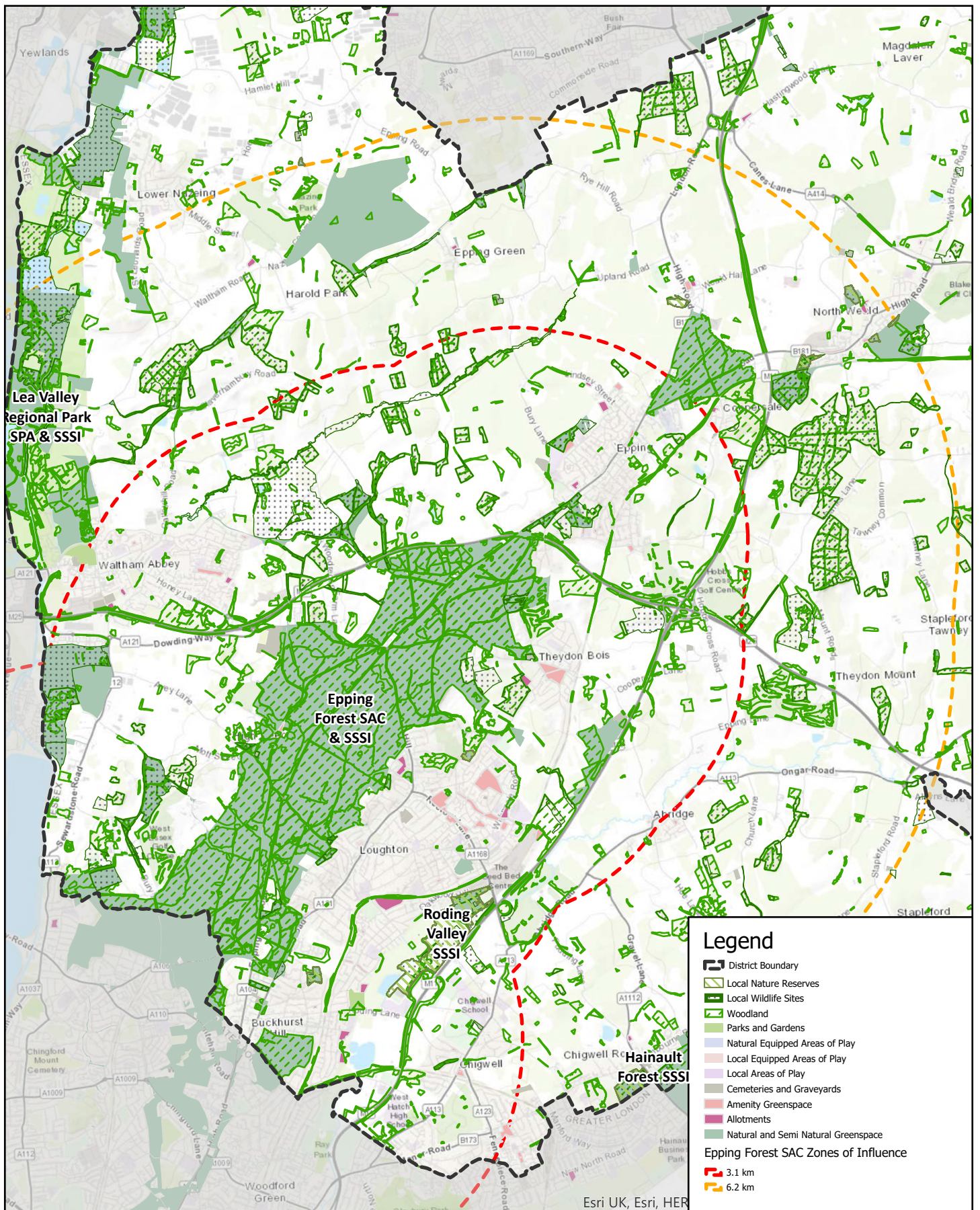


0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 01: Quantity
Scale 1:135,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 02: Quantity ZOI
 Scale 1:75,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

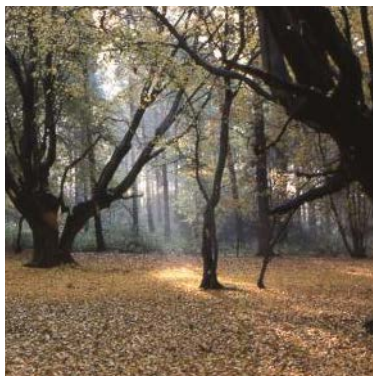
Quality

The quality of 'natural' greenspace in the District is exceptional as evidenced by the number of sites with 'high status' environmental designations including the Epping Forest SAC, the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site and numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's). The District also has an extensive network of Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) - whilst not as well-known as the Epping Forest and Lee Valley, provide a high- quality patchwork of ancient woodlands and wildlife sites.

Increasing local knowledge of the existence of these sites, improving accessibility to them and raising awareness of their natural and cultural heritage could increase their use as locally accessible greenspace as well as helping to take some pressure off assets such as the Epping Forest. In doing so there is a need to ensure that this would not cause harm to their ecological value, including to their ground flora and soils. More information can be found in the [Council's LoWS Review](#) (EB708).

Quality across some landscape types is also commonly assessed against Green Flag criteria, which evaluates greenspaces as to whether they are welcoming, accessible to all, well maintained, safe and secure. Such tools can help to measure what we should expect in terms of the quality of existing and new green and blue spaces within the District. Other assessments include those provided by the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS), Green Heritage and Green Tourism assessments.

In addition to these assessments, the provision of new and enhancement of existing outdoor spaces should be created through the use of high quality, multifunctional design principles, as outlined in [Part 2 - Implementation: Landscape-Led Design](#).



High quality 'natural' greenspace exists in a patchwork of ancient woodland sites across the district.



Amenity greenspace in the district is characterised by mature trees and mown grass. These spaces which offer significant room for improvement both in terms of biodiversity and amenity value.



Provision for children and young people is of low quality when measured against best practice.

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Movement

The District has an established Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network (that can be viewed using [Essex County Council's Interactive PRoW map](#)) which provides access for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders (depending on the status of the route) to many of the significant landscape and cultural heritage features in the area. The network also provides links beyond the administrative boundary of the District, including to Harlow and the Lee Valley Regional Park, and includes a variety of long- distance walks such as the Epping Forest Centenary trail, connecting the District to Greater London. Others, such as the Essex Way, provide routes east into the wider Essex area. A series of shorter trails are promoted by the Council's Countrycare team, the City of London Corporation and local organisations including Parish and Town Councils and Local Access Forums.

Cycle tracks run through the Lea Valley linking into Harlow and connecting to Harlow station. To the south of the District the cycle network links into the Greater London cycle network.

There are significant physical barriers to walking, cycling and horse-riding in the District created by the M25 and M11 motorways, and railway and underground lines with a limited number of crossing places. The result is convoluted pedestrian, cycle and bridleway routes, sometimes through inhospitable environments.

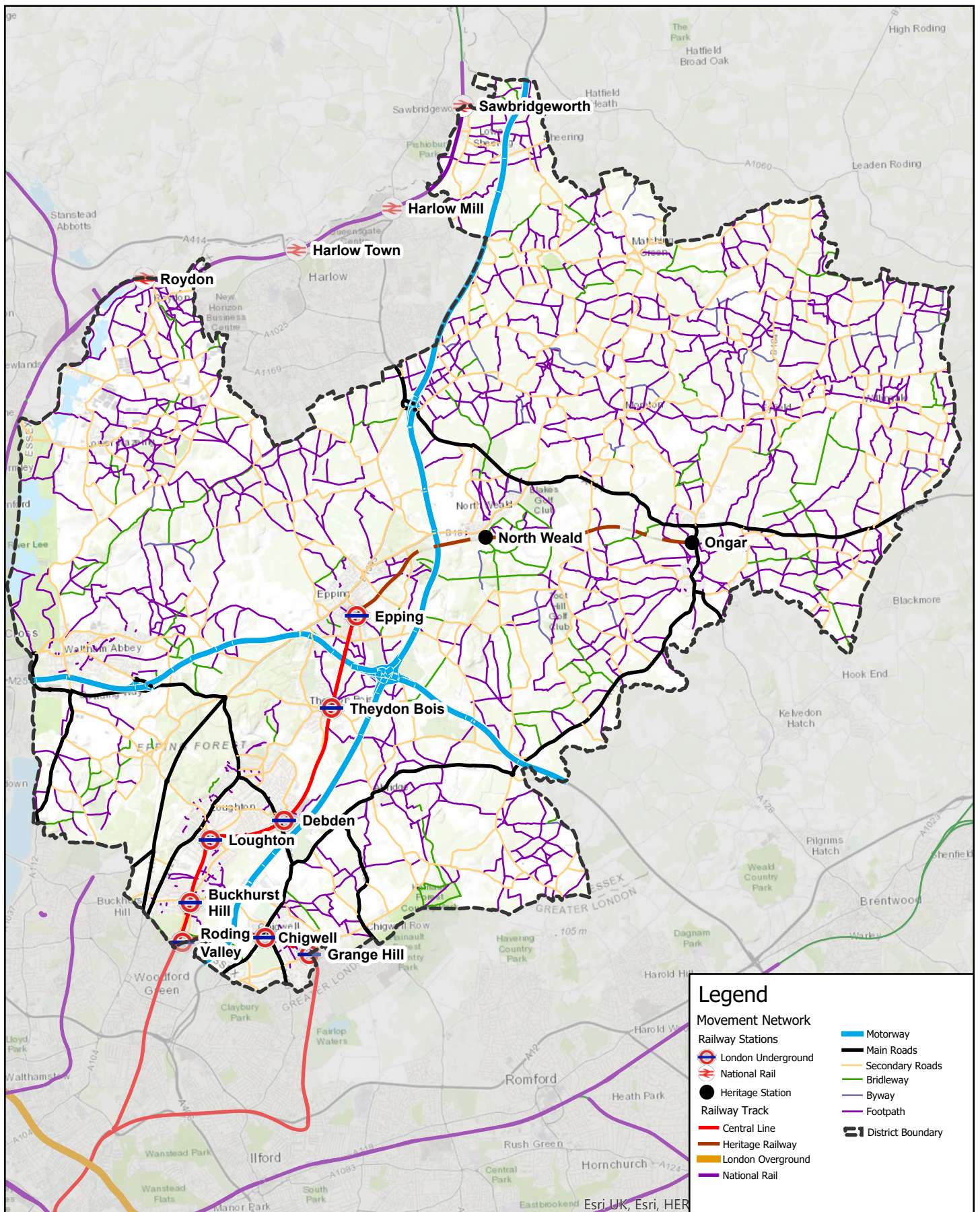
The Council recognises that making it easy for people to walk, cycle and use of public transport can help to reduce the effects of poor air quality and traffic congestion on environmentally valuable sites and local communities. The creation of well-designed multi-functional routes with a focus on creating green corridors can enhance their usability, attractiveness and support biodiversity and enhanced public realm objectives. There are gaps in the network which could be mended to further support these objectives.

Looking at ways to identify and address these fragmented parts of the walking, cycling and bridleway network will help us to work with landowners to secure real improvements to the benefit of residents of Epping Forest District.



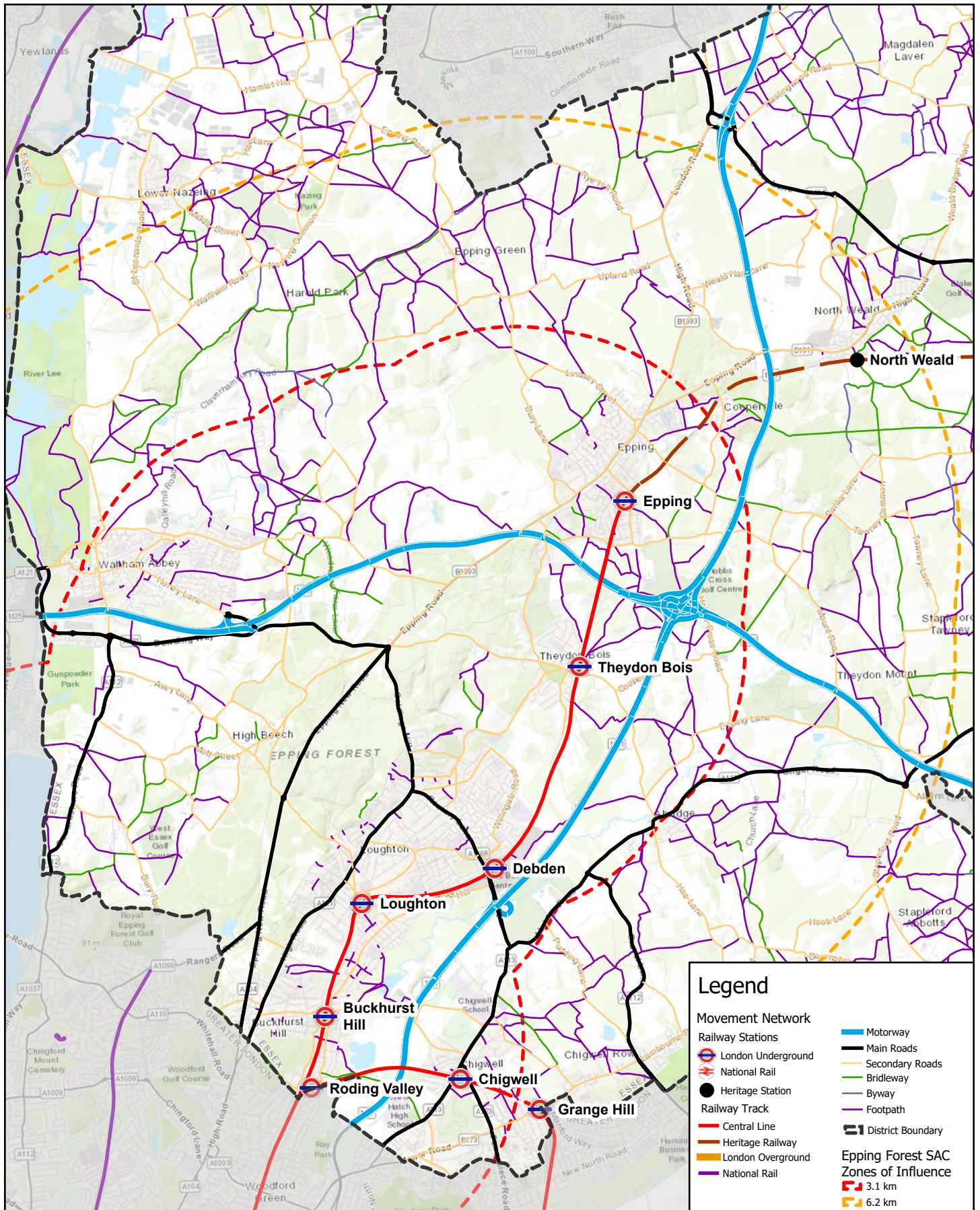
A public footpath fingerpost in Epping

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 03: Movement
Scale 1:135,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 04: Movement ZOI
Scale 1:75,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Ecology And Carbon

The District is home to a part of the internationally designated sites of the Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley SPA/Ramsar, various SSSI's and a network of LoWS. A number of the LoWS within the District are designated as ancient forest and are remnants of the Essex Forest which would have once stretched across much of the District. These remaining pockets, although ecologically and culturally valuable in their own right, remain isolated in ecological terms.

The Council recognises the importance of not just focusing on ecological assets of the highest 'status', but also seeking areas for enhancement across the District. Disconnected local habitat areas provide the opportunity to create larger ecological networks of real value, re-establishing lost green links and wildlife corridors. It is important that we consider the need to increase habitats not just in response to the global biodiversity crisis but also the climate crisis. The Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and considers the need to increase scrub and forest cover vital in promoting carbon capture alongside biodiversity enhancement.

Management of the countryside is also changing - some projects are no longer using traditional conservation approaches such as making targeted and intensive interventions. Instead they are taking a more hands-off approach by allowing nature the space to take over. This approach is becoming more favoured and is often called 'wilding' or 're-wilding' as it seeks to restore ecosystems by reinstating natural processes and lost species - allowing nature to take care of itself.

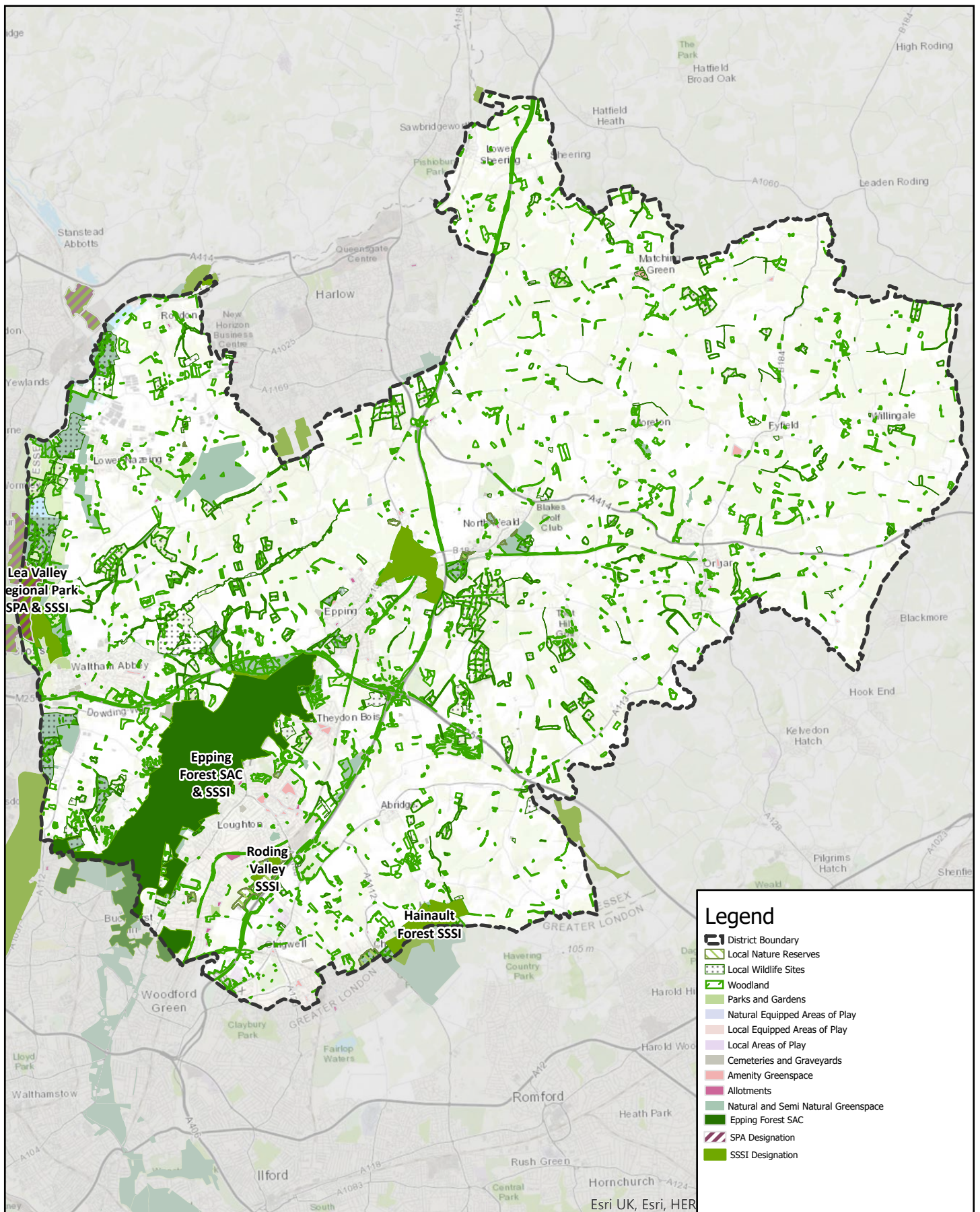
The [Government's Agriculture Act \(2020\)](#) is also proposing a different approach to subsidies. It sets out how farmers and land managers in England will "in future be paid for public goods", such as better air and water quality, improved soil health, higher animal welfare standards, public access to the countryside and measures to reduce flooding.

Within this changing context the Council will proactively encourage greater biodiversity and carbon capture across the District. To achieve this, the Council will work with partners including local communities, developers, farmers, landowners, Essex County Council, Essex Wildlife Trust and through cross boundary initiatives such as the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Partnership and the Green Arc (One Partnership).



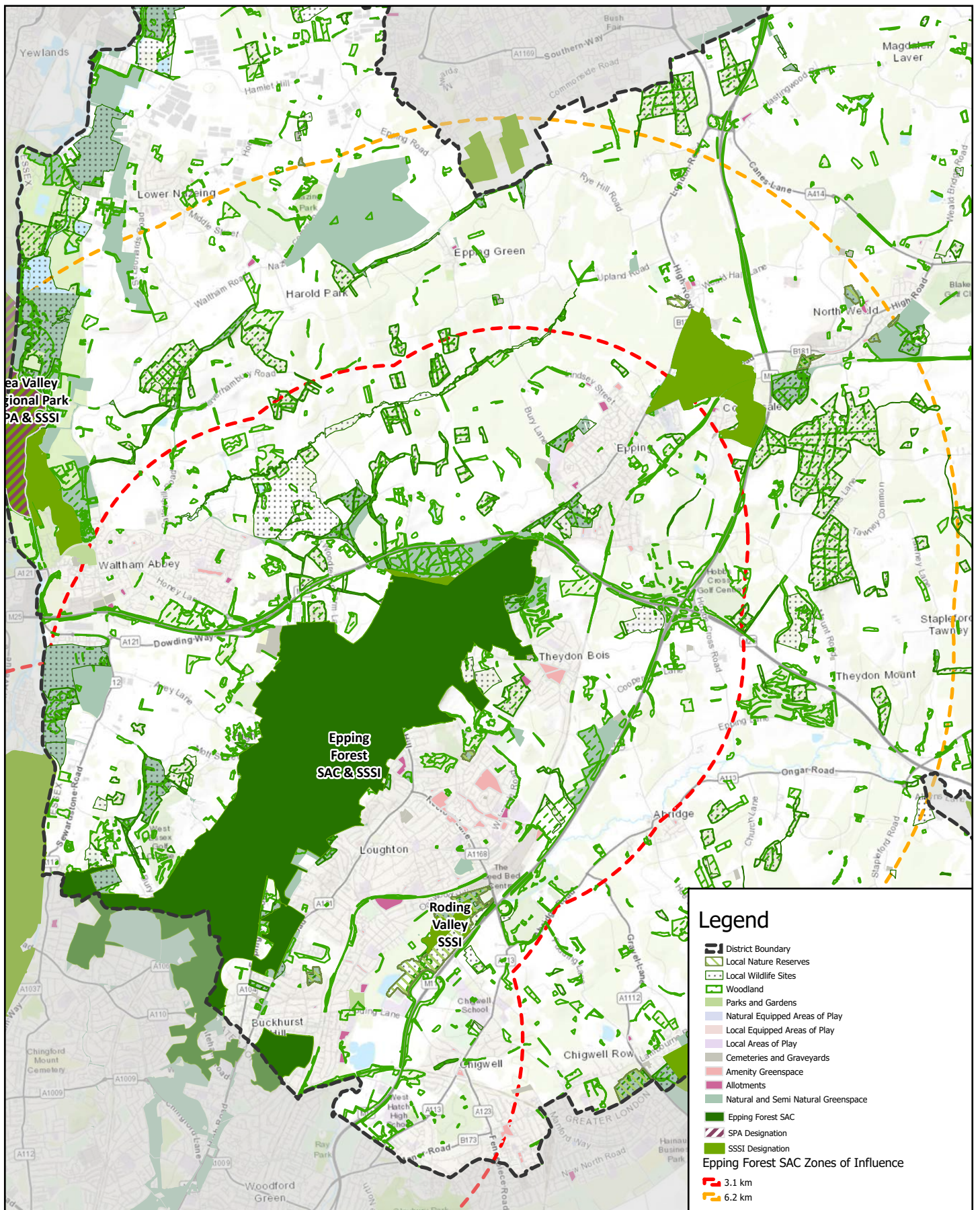
Hainault Forest SSSI

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 05: Ecology
Scale 1:135,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 06: Ecology ZOI
Scale 1:75,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Blue Infrastructure

The District has an extensive network of Blue Infrastructure, which is in places interwoven with the pedestrian footpath network. The Strategy can support improved access to the waterside where feasible as well as assist in the improvement of water quality and drainage. Ecologically the waterways, wetlands, lakes and ponds in the District provide important habitats. These Blue Infrastructure assets and their associated terrestrial habitats and built structures provide attractive habitats for urban and rural wildlife. They also help to enhance the attractiveness and interest of the local area and provide recreational opportunities for activities such as fishing and boating. Surface water and floodwater storage is also a critical consideration in development given areas of the District have poor water infiltration due to underlying clay geology and high-water tables.

The River Roding is a narrow and winding watercourse which rises in Molehill Green near Stansted Airport in the neighbouring district of Uttlesford. The Roding has several tributaries, the most significant of which are the Cripsey Brook at Ongar and the Loughton Brook.

Water quality in the River Roding is ecologically 'poor' in the north of the District and 'moderate' where the Cripsey Brook joins the River Roding at Ongar. This 'moderate' ecological status continues all the way down to the Thames. Its chemical status is 'good' throughout. The overall water quality status is 'poor' for the Upper Roding and 'moderate' for the Middle and Lower Roding, primarily due to poor soil/nutrient management from agricultural land and as a result of sewage discharges from sewerage treatment plants. The River Roding's status is impacted primarily from poor soil/ nutrient management from agricultural land.

The River Stort runs through a small section of the northern part of the District with a catchment comprising Roydon and Broadley Common. The River Stort Navigation is a heavily modified and canalised watercourse containing inland boating and structures. The water quality is chemically 'good' but ecologically 'moderate', with sewage discharge issues and diffuse pollution due to urban development. The Stort Navigation lies to the west of the District and flows into the lower parts of the River Lea at Feildes Weir on the boundary between the counties of Essex and Hertfordshire, and at Dobbs Weir. These assets are managed by the Canal and River Trust.



River Roding



River Stort Navigation

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

The River Roding's catchment area dominates the eastern two thirds of the District and its flow changes rapidly in response to rainfall, whilst the River Lea's response is much faster to reach a risk of flooding. The River Lea's catchment occupies the western third of the District, whilst a small part of the north of the District falls into the catchment of the River Stort. In addition, the Lee Navigation, Old River Lea and Lee Flood Relief Channel follow the western boundary of the District.

The main flooding risk to Epping Forest District is fluvial flooding associated with the River Roding and River Lea. The Lee Valley Flood Relief Channel (completed in 1977) is a predominantly artificial watercourse built to carry flood waters and relieve flooding in the Lee catchment. Large parts of the District do not have formal flood defences.

Groundwater fed watercourses and springs in the District are affected by seasonal variability in rainfall and through the construction of development foundations and basements. In addition, infiltration drainage systems can in parts of the District, contribute to localised groundwater flooding.

In more rural northern parts of the District, surface water drainage tends to comprise isolated systems. When these become silted or blocked, surface water flooding can occur. In more urban parts of the District, an increase of hard, impermeable surfaces over time has led to many surface water drainage systems being unable to cope, leading to an increased frequency of surface water flooding.

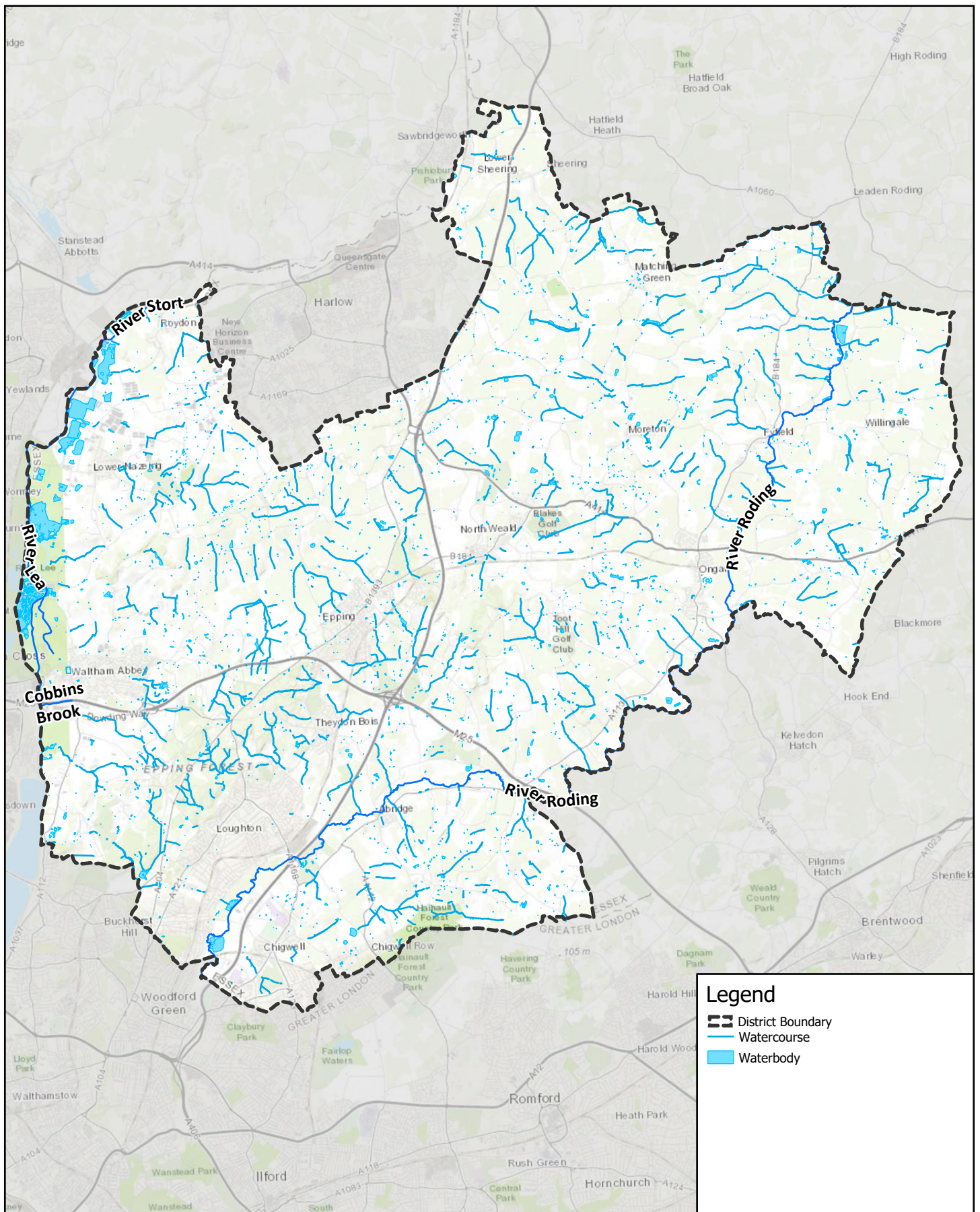
A number of reservoirs are located in the District including at Berners Hall Farm, Chigwell Row Water Works and Chigwell Washwater Lagoon, Staples Road Flood Storage Reservoir, Rye Hill No. 2 Reservoir and Cobbins Brook Flood Storage Area (FSA).

In recognition of the number of proposed allocations in the emerging Local Plan that are on greenfield sites, ensuring that they do not contribute to increased risk of flooding due to surface water run-off will be key. The preferred approach to flood risk management schemes is through the use of naturalised solutions. Within the context of the above, the Thames River Basin District Flood Risk Management Plan which covers the District, sets a number of relevant objectives to the GI Strategy including to:

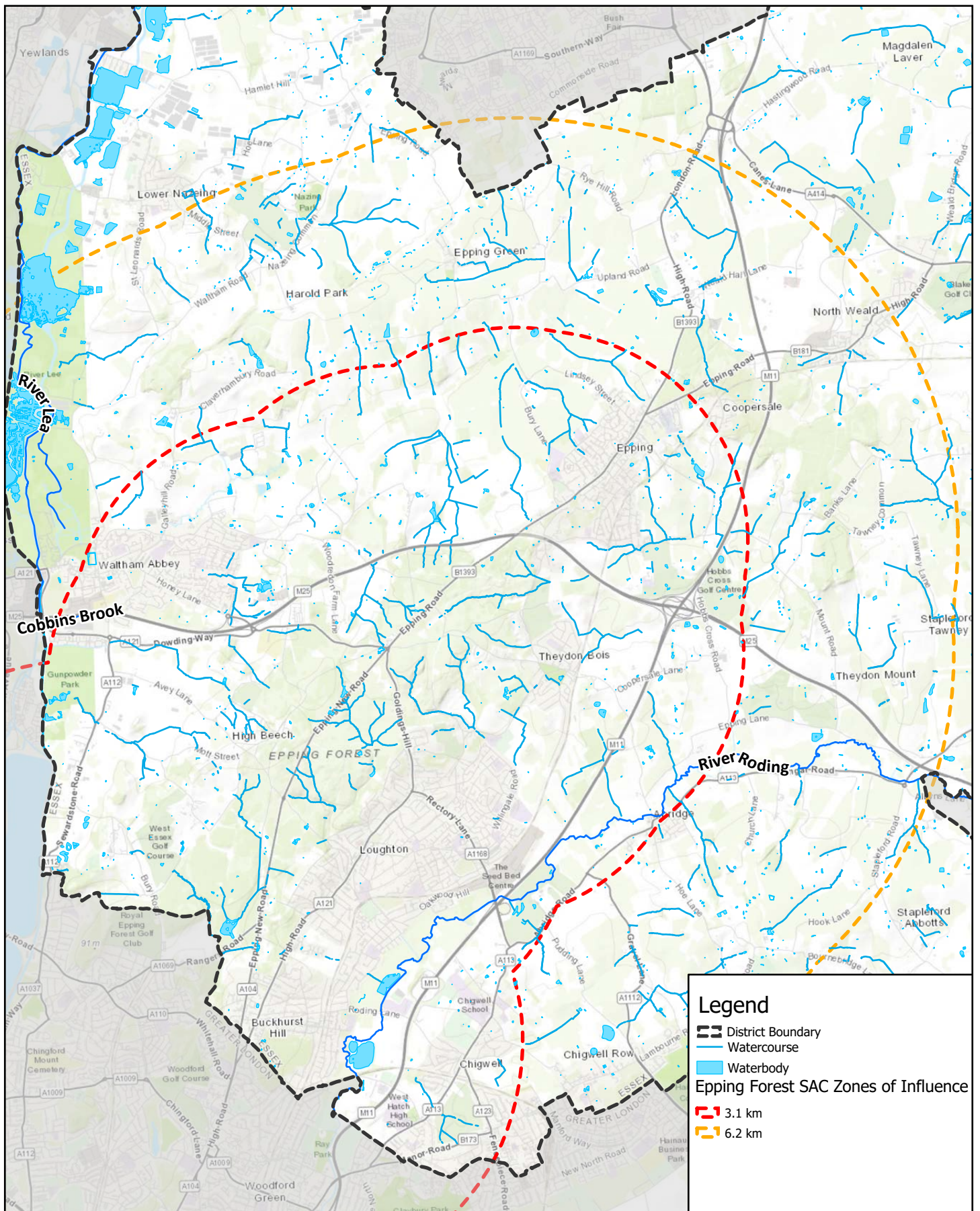
- Promote the use of sustainable drainage systems in development to help reduce pressure on existing drainage networks
- Protect and enhance biodiversity through flood risk management schemes
- Restore naturally functioning river systems where possible
- Promote sustainable land use management to achieve reduction in flood risk.

A number of other plans and strategies relevant to managing the water environment in the District include those prepared for the Lee Valley Regional Park and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and the [River Stort Catchment Management Plan](#) (which includes projects such as the restoration of the Princey Brook).

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT



Map 08: Blue Infrastructure ZOI
Scale 1:75,000 @ A4

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Visitor Offer

The Epping Forest has long been a draw for residents in the District and beyond. However, the increasing pressure from visitors has resulted in large parts of the Forest now classified as being in 'unfavourable conservation status'. As well as the Epping Forest, the District has other landscape draws including the Lee Valley Regional Park (which incorporates the Lea Valley and important heritage assets) the Stort Valley and Hainault Forest. At a smaller scale, there is a patchwork of ancient woodland across the District with differing characteristics and a series of built and landscape heritage features. These include the Ancient Green Lanes at Latton Priory, the waterways and marshland of the Waltham Abbey SSSI and the remnant of the royal deer park at North Weald Bassett. These places are unique and deserve to be more visited where this would not impact on their ecological or heritage status.

The walks that provide access to the countryside in which these features sit are themselves a visitor attraction, including long distance walks that connect into the wider Essex area and into London. In Harlow public art acts as an attraction through the sculptures by world renowned artists including Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth - which are promoted through [Harlow's Sculpture Trail](#) and the [Harlow Art Trust](#).



Gunpowder mill on the Waltham Abbey SSSI



Contrapuntal Forms, Harlow Sculpture Trail by Barbara Hepworth

0.3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Community

An important role of the Strategy is to ensure that all new and existing Green Infrastructure will respond to the needs of the resident population of the District. Compared to the rest of England, in 2011 the District had higher numbers of people aged 45-64 and 65 and over, with the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the District projected to grow substantially by 2033. Alongside this increase, the number of 30-64 year olds is projected to drop, with the number of 15-29 year olds projected to drop slightly and the proportion of people aged 0 to 14 to rise a little.

Green infrastructure should be accessible and safe to all members of the community. Whilst an aging population requires careful consideration of those with age-related impairments, younger years access and enjoyment and providing access for those with disabilities must also be integrated into the development of enhanced or new outdoor spaces. The important role of GI for local communities has become even more evident since the start of the COVID-19 crisis.

STEWARDSHIP FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

0.4

0.4 STEWARDSHIP FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Maintaining Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure assets will need to be supported by efficient and effective management and maintenance if it is to provide long term benefits and be of a high quality.

There is no central government funding specifically identified for the maintenance of GI - instead it is left to landowners. Local authorities and parish and town councils, (who have traditionally been the custodians of Green Infrastructure), have been experiencing increasing budget cuts whilst having to balance spending on a range of funding priorities including for statutory services.

As a result, open spaces and landscapes in public ownership are increasingly facing underfunding for their maintenance despite the importance of their value to communities and are relying more and more on local volunteers to help maintain them. To ensure long-term maintenance of green Infrastructure is sustainable and does not result in unreasonable cost burdens, the Strategy provides examples of potential approaches to stewardship of new spaces currently being considered by the Council as part of the work on developing stewardship models for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.



Maintaining new outdoor spaces and green infrastructure

0.4 STEWARDSHIP FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Stewardship

Stewardship: *“ensuring that a community asset is properly looked after in perpetuity”*

[TCPA \(2014\) Built Today, Treasured Tomorrow](#)

The right stewardship model will provide benefits for communities, developers, landowners and public bodies involved in the long-term management of Green Infrastructure assets.

For communities it means putting people at the heart of delivering successful places, by ensuring that long-term maintenance and management arrangements are in place to ensure that they continue to be of a high quality.

For developers, it creates confidence that any assets provided as part of a development, or where they have made a contribution towards the provision and management of Green Infrastructure assets, that they will be maintained to a high quality for the long term, with place-making at its heart and support the marketability of their development.

For public bodies, it can help to reduce long-term financial liabilities and therefore provides greater value for the community of Epping Forest District.

The Council has assessed a number of stewardship options and has identified **two potential stewardship models** that best meet these principles and objectives. These stewardship model options include:

- **Community Interest Company** - A company which must trade and use its assets for a social purpose, to benefit the community
- **Community Land Trust** - An organisation backed by a trust which is controlled by the community for the benefit of the community

In the following pages, examples of where these stewardship models have been successful are provided, and further details of the strengths and weaknesses of each can be found in the [HGGT Stewardship Advice Stage 2 Report, June 2020](#).

In any stewardship of Green Infrastructure, the Council expects a key principle to be community engagement and involvement in the shaping and management of outdoor spaces. Whilst the following options are not exhaustive, they provide a starting point for exploring potential stewardship models appropriate for new green infrastructure.

0.4 STEWARDSHIP FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Community Interest Company (CIC)

The [HGGT Stewardship Advice Stage 2 Report, June 2020](#) defines a Community Interest Company as:

'... a limited company that trades for a social purpose or the benefit of the community.'

This type of stewardship model would be appropriate for the future management and maintenance of new green infrastructure in large developments and strategic masterplan areas.

An example of where this type of approach has been adopted is at Monksmoor Park in Daventry, Northamptonshire - a new, edge-of-town development of 1000 homes with associated open spaces, green links and public realm.

The CIC's members include homeowners, school providers, registered providers of affordable homes and commercial property owners within the development, as well as the developer as founding member. Green infrastructure asset ownership was transferred from the developer to the CIC upon completion of construction and is managed for the long-term benefit of the community it serves. Funds are raised through service charges and an initial 'set-up' payment of £100,000 by the developer.

Full details of this case study can be found in the [HGGT Stewardship Advice Stage 2 Report, June 2020](#).

Epping Forest District Council is currently in the process of setting up a CIC. During its establishment, it may be found to be appropriate that some open spaces and Green Infrastructure could be acquired and managed by the Council's CIC in the future.



Monksmoor Park in Daventry, Northamptonshire

0.4 STEWARDSHIP FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Community Land Trust

The [HGGT Stewardship Advice Stage 2 Report, June 2020](#) defines a Community Land Trust as:

'... a community-controlled organisation backed by a trust, which acquires and manages assets for the benefit of the local community.'

This type of stewardship model would also be appropriate for the future management and maintenance of new Green Infrastructure assets proposed as part of large developments and strategic masterplan areas.

An example of where this approach has been adopted is Countryside and L&Q's residential development at Beaulieu, Chelmsford. They chose the Land Trust to take over the ownership and management of the 72 hectares of Green Infrastructure that was being provided as part of a development of 3600 new homes - including parks, village greens, orchards, meadows, community gardens and playgrounds.

The following stewardship principles in relation to green infrastructure were established:

- creating, restoring and managing green spaces to improve the natural environment through increasing biodiversity and enhancing habitats;
- promoting the use of green spaces for the improvement of the health and wellbeing of communities;
- inspiring the current and next generation through vocational outdoor education and training opportunities;
- optimising the economic values of spaces and the services that they can provide to benefit the communities that are connected with them;
- involving local people through volunteering and use of sites and encouraging emotional ownership; and
- well managed green open spaces provide multiple benefits for people.

Full details of this case study can be found in the [HGGT Stewardship Advice Stage 2 Report, June 2020](#). The Community Land Trust approach would also be appropriate for the stewardship of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).



Beaulieu in Chelmsford, Essex

FUNDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

0.5

0.5 FUNDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding Projects In The Long Term

Green Infrastructure projects and assets need funding for both their delivery (capital) and their maintenance and management in the long-term (capital and revenue). The latter is normally undertaken by an identified stewardship body.

The sustainable, long-term success of a stewardship model can only be achieved with an effective means of long-lasting funding, including through income generation. Two types of funding/finance are usually required for projects and to support the stewardship body:

Capital investment - which can take a number of forms:

- development capital – required at the start of the organisation and for any new plans/ projects;
- growth capital – required for purchase, development or refurbishment of assets; and
- working capital – required to support an uneven cash flow.

Revenue stream – income required to cover every day running costs and repay any borrowing.

There are a number of mechanisms and sources that can be utilised to secure funding for capital investment and to generate a revenue stream. The funding mechanisms include:

- section 106 funding
- grants and endowments;
- income earned from trading;
- public sector funding;
- resident charges;
- charitable funding; and
- loans and equity finance.

Section 106 Funding

The principle source for funding capital projects and the on-going revenue support for stewardship bodies for Green Infrastructure associated with development proposals is from monies secured through the development process such as through Section 106 planning obligations. These will be used to secure funding for the provision and ongoing management of community assets.

Some green and blue infrastructure projects and costs have already been included within the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

0.5 FUNDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding Of Community-Led Projects

Funding opportunities other than through the developer contributions system are available for smaller scale projects, including for those initiated by community groups. This includes charitable and grant funding. Some funding schemes require an element of 'match funding' either in the form of a financial contribution or people's time.

The Council award grants to organisations involved in providing community work, cultural or sport activities that improve the well-being of residents in the Epping Forest district. More information on [Grant Aid](#) can be found on our website.

The Big Lottery Fund gives out millions of pounds from the National Lottery to good causes every year. Funding goes to community, environment, health and education projects. The [Big Lottery Fund's 'Awards for All'](#) programme funds small, community-based projects across the UK.

The [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) operates a number of funds for both capital and revenue activities, including 'Local Places for Nature' and 'Community Woodlands' funds. [Groundwork](#) provide grants for local community environmental projects across the UK as well as specifically listing those available in the East of England. Fields in Trust provide a useful list of suggested [funding resources for Community Park Projects](#).

The gov.uk website provides details of possible grants from a number of Government Departments including Health; the Home Office; Education and Skills; and Transport. Government funding opportunities include the [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#), which supports the planting and establishment of small trees in urban and adjacent areas in England.



Groundwork's Community Food Growing Hubs

0.5 FUNDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding Mechanism	Funding Source	Description
Endowments	Development process	Endowments from the planning and development processes including: S106 agreements and CIL.
	Gifts/donations	Large endowments from philanthropists or foundations. This can be land, property or a financial endowment.
Income earned from trading	Through an asset	Income earned through utilising an asset, e.g. income from hiring out premises.
	Selling goods and services	Providing goods and services for a fee.
Public sector funding	Grant or subsidy	Funding from on-going statutory budgets, time limited programmes (e.g. regeneration programmes), sector specific subsidies. Can be provided as capital grants or revenue grants.
	Landlord rents	'Peppercorn' rents charged by public sector landlords which functions to save money, reducing revenue costs and releasing funding for capital investment.
	Commissioning of services	Public sector commissioning of services defined by commissioning body.
	National Lottery	Time-limited grant funding annually through a wide range of programmes.
Resident charges	Service charges	Charges levied by landlords/management companies to cover costs of provision and maintenance of shared space detailed in leasehold agreement. Can apply to residential and commercial property.
	Estate management scheme charges	Landlords retain some management control over assets in cases where freehold has been sold to leaseholders. If a scheme is used to provide for upkeep of shared facilities it may permit recovery of charges (rent charges or contractual arrangements).
Charitable funding	Grants from foundations	Grants from a range of charitable institutions, which may be one-off in nature.
	Donations from individuals	Donations and legacies from public fundraising initiatives. Level of funding secured is usually dependent upon body's profile and ability to compete for funding.
Loans and equity finance	Equity and quasi-equity	Public investment of shares in CIC or CS with a limit of £20,000 per individual for co-operative investment. Financial intermediaries can also invest.
	Bonds	A small number of bond issues are raising finance to support charities and social enterprises.
	Social impact bonds	Social investors pay for the project at the start and then receive payments based on the results achieved by the project.
	Loans	Traditional loans or specific sector loans such as the Public Works Loan.
Community Land Trust Funds	Loans and Grants	Feasibility Fund Technical Assistance Fund Investment Fund

Above: Table 01 showing different funding mechanisms and sources, from the HGGT Stewardship Advice Stage 2 Report, June 2020. It should be noted that the mechanisms available will be influenced by the type and purpose of the asset and the legal form of the stewardship body. Therefore, these funding mechanisms may not be appropriate for all assets or if particular legal forms are selected for the stewardship body.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

0.6

0.6 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Having considered the legislative and policy context together with an understanding of the current issues and opportunities in relation to GI within the District the Council's Vision for GI is that:

By 2033 a well-connected network of Green and Blue Infrastructure will have been created and secured for the future to ensure that both existing and new communities are supported by high-quality, well-maintained multi-functional spaces which are safe and sociable, support peoples' health and wellbeing, and are accessible to all.

The District's important ecological, natural heritage and landscape assets will have been protected and enhanced and links to the wider area will have been strengthened. Net gains in carbon capture and biodiversity will have been achieved and a design-led approach to the provision and integration of Green and Blue Infrastructure will have been at the heart of creating the District's new places.



Church Lane Flood Meadows, near North Weald Bassett

0.6 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

In order to deliver the Vision our objectives are:

1. To protect the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure assets (including those of ecological importance and heritage value). We will do this by resisting development on GI assets which conflict with our Local Plan policies and secure contributions from new development where it will put additional pressure on existing assets to invest in projects to mitigate any impacts.

2. To enhance the quality, attractiveness and functionality of the District's existing Green and Blue Infrastructure. We will do this by:

- Working with local communities and providing Council resources to help deliver local projects;
- Working with partners to implement initiatives such as the creation of wildflower verges and by tapping into available funding.

3. To secure long-term carbon sequestration and enhancement of biodiversity. We will do this both through applying our local plan policies robustly in respect of new development through the determination of planning applications. We will also invest in tree planting and bring forward sites on Council owned land, including in North Weald, in response to the climate and biodiversity crisis.

4. To ensure that existing and new Green and Blue Infrastructure is well-connected both within the District and beyond to enhance the extent of the network. We will do this by working with neighbouring local authorities and other public bodies and partnerships to deliver 'larger than local' projects such as through the 'Green Arc' partnership, the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.

5. To ensure that existing and new Green and Blue Infrastructure is well-connected to the communities it serves, provides choice in the range of opportunities available and is accessible to all regardless of age or physical ability. We will do this by assessing all projects to ensure that they comply with Equalities principles and engage with organisations who can provide invaluable advice on how to engage different sections of our communities including our Youth Groups and Access Forum.

6. To embed a landscape led approach to the design of new Green and Blue Infrastructure as part of new development to secure the delivery of high-quality spaces which enable communities to have active, healthy and sociable lifestyles. We will do this by rigorously applying our planning policies and guidance in the Masterplanning and determination of planning applications.

7. To ensure that appropriate funding and management mechanisms are in place to sustain the long-term future of Green and Blue Infrastructure. We will do this as part of assessing planning applications to ensure that funding is adequate and that management arrangements are robust and have longevity.

8. To effect positive change guided by local communities and the custodians of Green and Blue Infrastructure. We will do this by engaging with local communities and our partners on an on-going basis and through timely and on-going monitoring and review of this strategy.

