

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

You should read this document after reading
[The Primer](#) if you are:

A Strategic Site Developer / Designer /
Authority Officer / Policy Maker
who is designing, assessing or delivering Green
Infrastructure



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HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Purpose of the Strategy and Parts

The purpose of the Green 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.

The Primer document provides an introduction and to the existing green and blue assets in the District, and the Vision and Objectives of the Strategy. The other parts of the Strategy are to be read in conjunction with Primer. These are:

1. Implementation: Enhancing our Existing Network
2. Implementation: Landscape-Led Design

This Part provides guidance on:

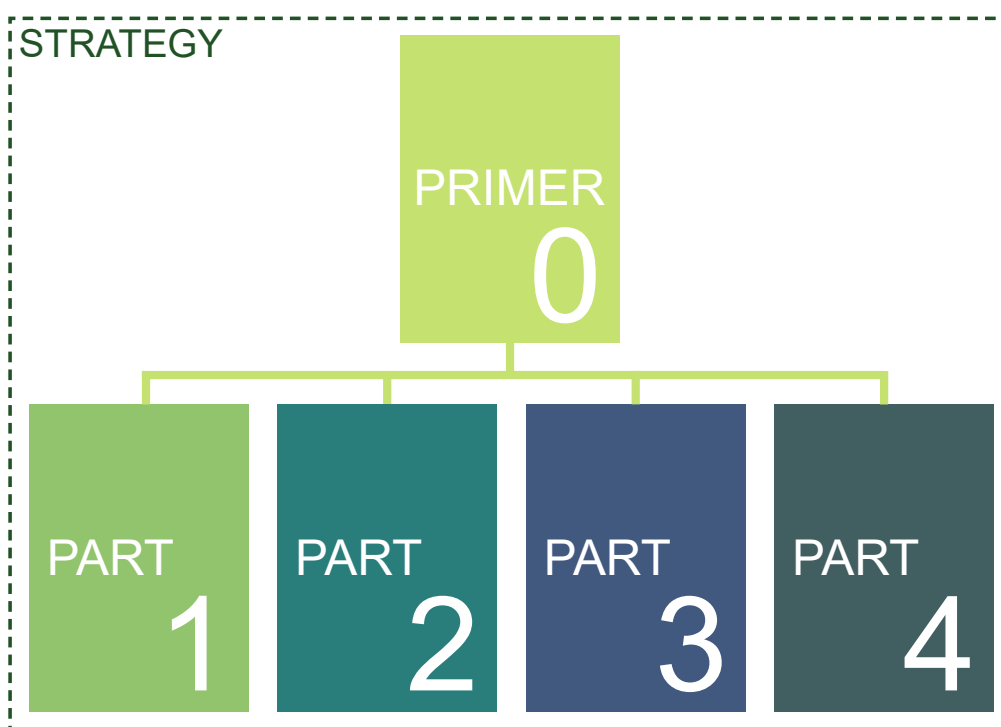
3. Implementation: Green Infrastructure in Strategic Allocations

It provides:

- A more in-depth look at green and blue infrastructure in relation to specific Strategic Allocations
- Guidance on the creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

The other Parts of the Strategy cover:

4. Implementation: Infrastructure Enhancement Projects



HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Who will use the Strategy and Part 3?

The Strategy consists of five Parts. Anyone using this Part of 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 document (3. Implementation: Strategic Allocations) is primarily focused at strategic site developers, designers, authority officers and policy makers, who are designing, assessing and delivering green and blue infrastructure as part of wider Masterplanning activities. The East of Harlow Garden Town Community Masterplan Area lies within both the Epping Forest District and Harlow District Council administrative areas. Because the masterplanning of the site involves a partnership between the two councils the site has not been included for detailed analysis within Part 3.1. Nevertheless, the development of the masterplan and subsequent detailed planning applications for the East of Harlow Garden Town Community will be expected to accord with the principles contained within this Strategy in relation to GI provision.

When to use this document?

Developers and designers of Strategic Sites should refer to the principles and guidance in Part 3 when initiating their masterplanning process, and in order to demonstrate, where appropriate, that the development of the site would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of ecologically important sites.

STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

3.1

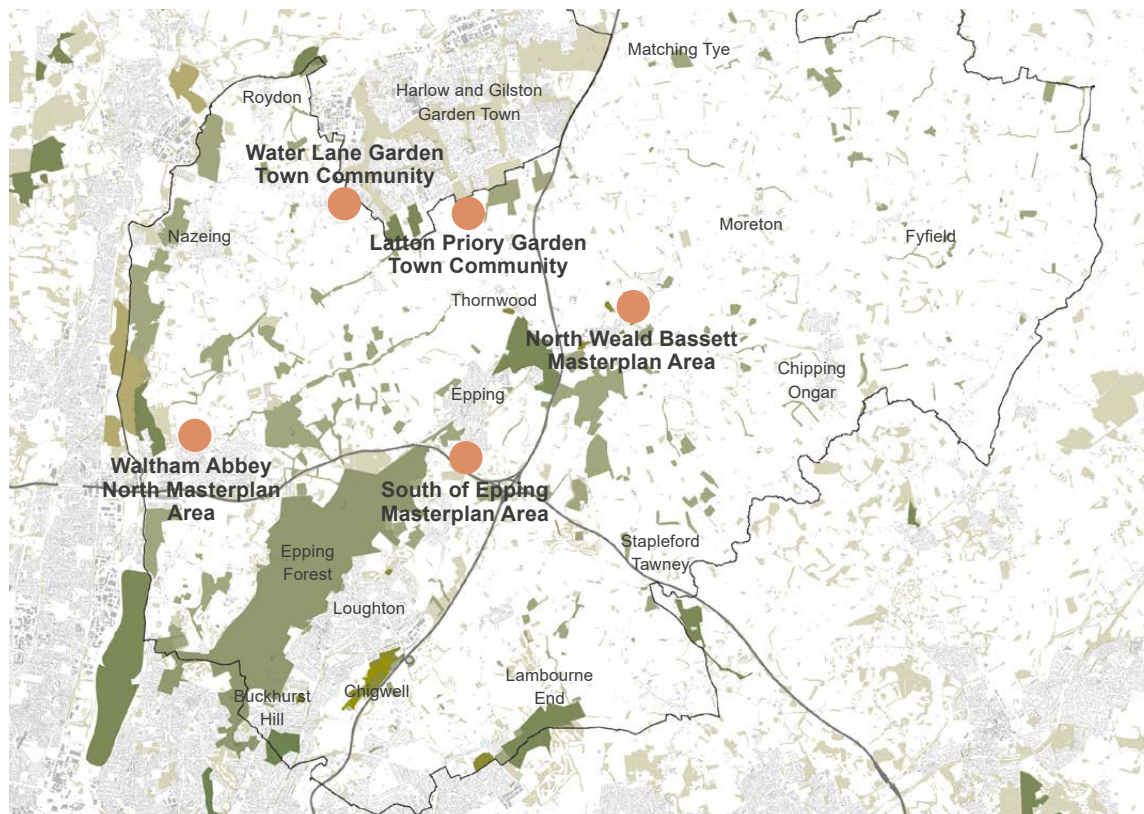
3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Overview

The development of the strategic allocations in the emerging Local Plan provides the opportunity to deliver an integrated and complementary GI offer that supports place-making principles, encourages healthy lifestyles and community cohesion, provides for a net-gain in biodiversity, responds to climate change issues. It also supports the objective of avoiding harm to the integrity of ecologically important sites such as the Epping Forest SAC including, where appropriate, through the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Further detail on the principles that should be applied to the development of SANG is set out in Part 3.2.

The development of masterplans, and the Landscape Frameworks within them, for the following locations will therefore be required to take a coordinated approach to the provision of a significant and varied amount of green infrastructure. In doing so the Council recognises that it will only be at the detailed planning application stage that a granular level of detail will be able to be provided. This Part of the Strategy has been developed to inform both the development of the Masterplans and subsequent planning applications.

- Latton Priory and Water Lane Garden Communities
- North Weald Bassett Masterplan Area
- Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Area
- South of Epping Masterplan Area



District map showing the location of Strategic Allocations

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

1. Summary for Latton Priory and Water Lane Garden Town Communities

Latton Priory

Residential capacity: **c. 1050 homes**

GI provision: **In accordance with emerging Local Plan policies SP4 and SP5**

Indicative SANG size: **20ha** (see page 123 for further information)

Preferred location: **Southern part of the Masterplan Area**

Future proofing required? **Yes**

Water Lane

Residential capacity: **c. 2100 homes**

GI provision: **In accordance with emerging Local Plan policies SP4 and SP5**

Indicative SANG size: **13ha** (see page 123 for further information)

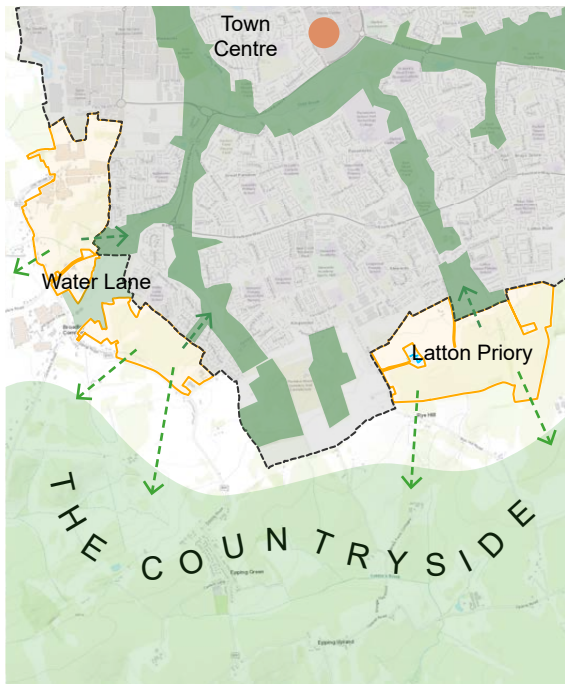
Preferred location: **Integrated with the West Sumners site**

Future proofing required? **Yes**

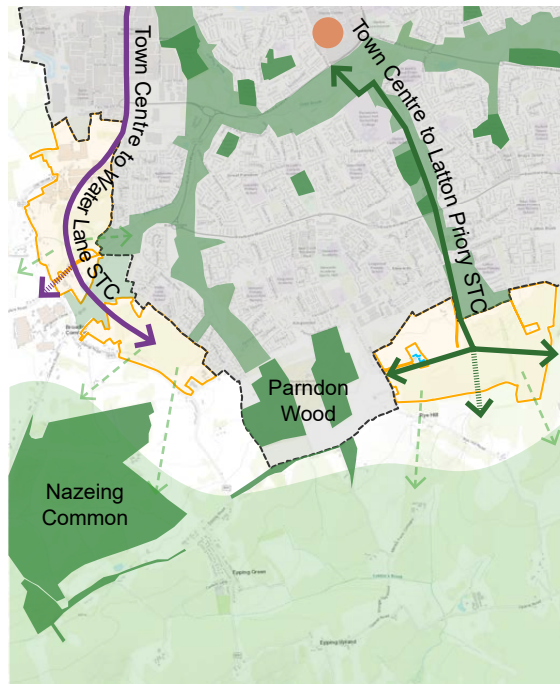
Green Infrastructure Key Characteristics:

1. **Connecting into the big landscape attractors including the Lea and Stort Valleys**
 - Link to the Stort Valley Way and Lea Valley
 - Connect into Harlow's Green Wedges to provide direct links to Harlow Town Centre, the surrounding countryside and other greenspaces
2. **Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside**
 - Achieving a network of greenspaces centred around safe walking and cycling connections
 - Connect new communities into the proposed Sustainable Travel Corridor (STC)
 - Develop local walks to connect communities with local Green Infrastructure assets including Nazeing Common
3. **Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG**
 - Complete strategic scale ecological corridor between Long Green Lane and Marks Wood (Ware)
 - Enhance habitats by improving management of local woodlands and grasslands, including Harlow and Latton Commons
 - Include natural play elements along routes and in greenspaces
 - Develop a complementary network of new spaces – using a balanced variety of greenspace typologies
4. **Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside**
 - Develop a network of interventions to increase understanding and appreciation for natural greenspace and encourage visitors
 - Provide initiatives to encourage social interaction between communities
 - Encourage community participation in greenspace through inclusion of productive landscapes.

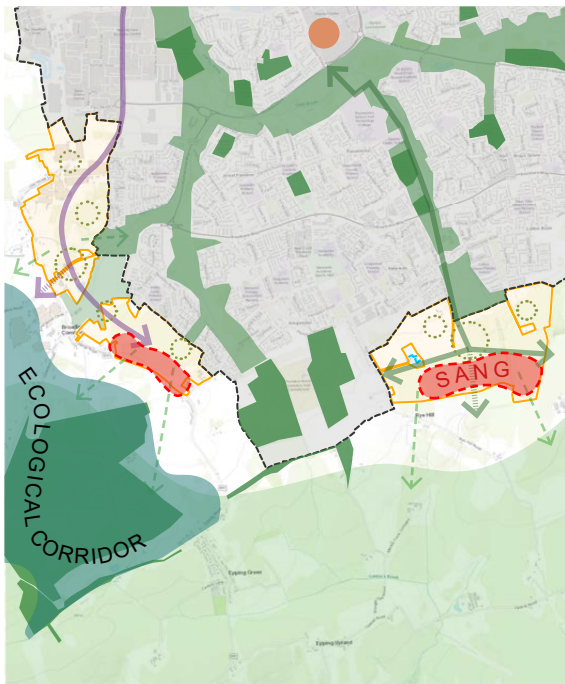
3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS



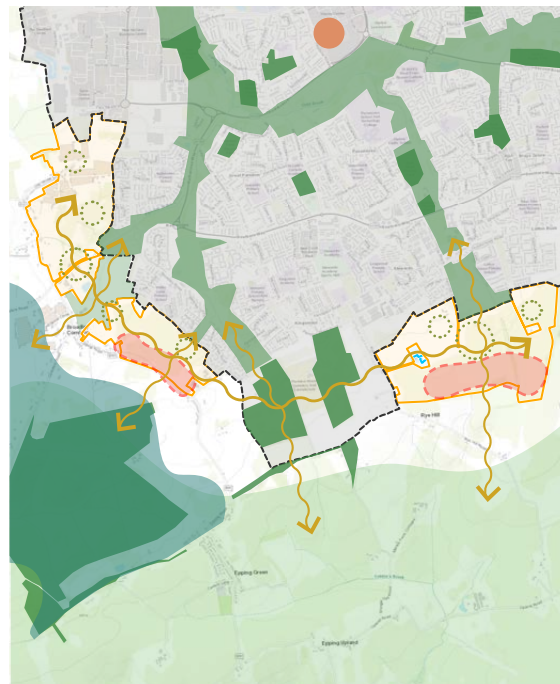
1. Connecting into the big landscape attractors including the Lea and Stort Valleys



2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside



3. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG



4. Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

Key

- New Pedestrian and Cycle Links
- Green Wedges and Fingers
- Sustainable Transport Corridor
- Nearby Greenspaces

- Ecological Corridor to Marks Wood near Ware
- Indicative SANG
- New Open Spaces
- Network of Interventions between Countryside and Communities

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Latton Priory and Water Lane Garden Town Communities

The Latton Priory and Water Lane Garden Communities are proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. They are strategic sites which are required to have Masterplans in place prior to any planning application(s) for their development being determined.

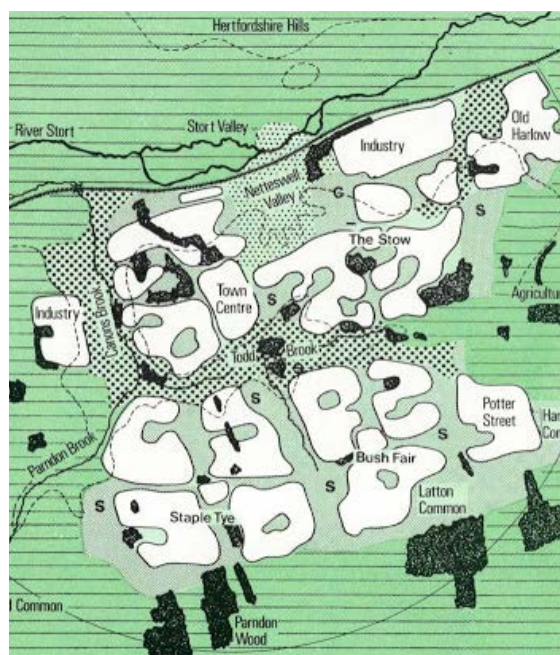
Landscape Context

Latton Priory sits on a prominent ridge between Jack's Hatch and Church Langley which is identified as 'Farmland Ridge' in the Council's [Landscape Character Assessment 2010](#) (EB709). The ridge forms the highest land point in the District and was a defining landscape feature in Sir Frederick Gibberd's planning of Harlow, with the town sitting in the dip in the landscape to the north of the ridge. There are views from the ridge south across gently undulating farmland towards the town of Epping and northwards towards Harlow - the centre of which is a prominent feature. However, in the surrounding residential areas it is mature trees rather than the built form which dominates the view. Trees are also a key component of the landscape character of the ridge with large blocks of ancient woodland defining the landscape.

Water Lane is located on the edge of an undulating landscape of predominately arable fields with mature hedgerows and veteran trees which is described as 'Farmland Plateau' in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment 2010. This landscape is part of the historic field patterns and settlements identified within the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation Areas. As it is set on lower ground than Latton Priory, Water Lane is not as visually important to the setting of Harlow despite there being views back towards the town from it.



Farmland Ridge landscape character, Epping Forest District Council's Landscape Character Assessment

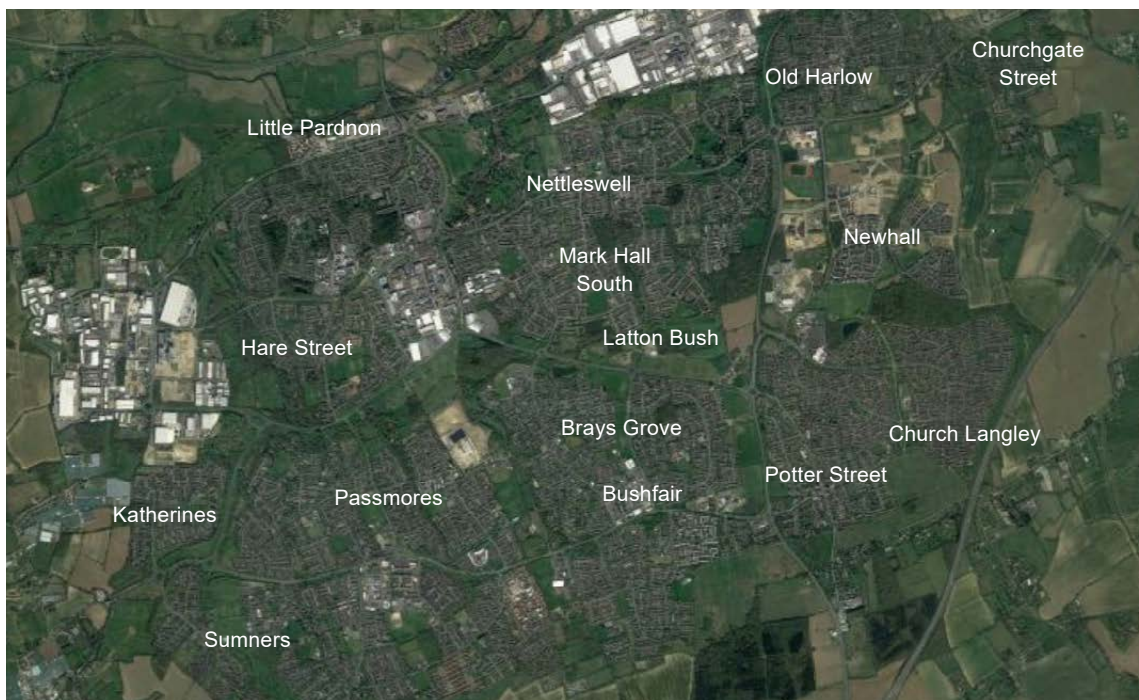


Harlow's Green Wedges as planned by Sir Frederick Gibberd

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Harlow's Green Wedges were a major feature of Sir Frederick Gibberd's design for bringing the countryside into the town and continue to have a significant influence on the design of the town. The aim of the approach was to give residents the opportunity to experience the best of town and country living. The Wedges provide amenity space for residents, habitats for wildlife, transport corridors, locations for schools and sport and community facilities. Harlow District Council has undertaken reviews of the individual Green Wedges in the context of the criteria relevant to them.

The Wedges relate directly to Latton Priory and Water Lane and the continuation of this landscape structure through the sites and its relation to the surrounding countryside and pedestrian rights of way will be key to creating an integrated landscape. In doing so regard should be had to the relevant policies set out in the [Harlow Local Development Plan](#) (adopted December 2020) including Policy WE2 (Green Belt, Wedges and Green Fingers).



Harlow's Green Wedges today

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Communities

Latton Priory is located to the south of the Staple Tye and Latton Bush neighbourhoods within Harlow District. The emerging Local Plan proposes to allocate the site (SP5.1) for development including the provision of a minimum of 1050 new homes, traveller pitches, new employment opportunities, a new primary and secondary school and a new local centre. There is a policy requirement to provide strategic 'green infrastructure' comprising natural/ semi natural open space (including SANG), walking and cycling routes, flood mitigation, wildlife space and urban agriculture.

Water Lane (SP5.2) is located to the west of the existing Katherines, Sumners and Kingsmoor communities within Harlow District. The emerging Local Plan proposes that a minimum of 2100 new homes is provided for within the Masterplan area, together with a new primary school, traveller pitches, as well as local shops and services. There is a policy requirement to provide strategic 'green infrastructure' comprising natural/semi natural open space (including SANG), walking and cycling routes flood mitigation, wildlife space and urban agriculture.

Developing a cohesive urban and landscape structure that allows easy movement between communities (including those within Harlow), Harlow's local centres/hatches and landscape destinations (such as parks, woodlands or play spaces) will be key to creating connected, healthy and sustainable communities. In this it is essential that existing communities are able to see the benefits of development in their own neighbourhoods and that new development feels like a cohesive part of Harlow, where existing residents feel welcome.



Parndon Wood SSSI, located between Latton Priory and Water Lane Garden Town Communities

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Landscape and Ecology Assets

The [Green Infrastructure Plan for Harlow](#) (2005) identifies the landscape to the south and west of Harlow, within which the Latton Priory and Water Lane sites are located, as “a ‘heritage landscape’ which reflects key historic themes that are characteristic/ distinctive of the Harlow Area.

One of the defining features of this landscape is the significant blocks of ancient woodland that stretch from Copy Wood to Harlow Park Woods. Smaller relics of ancient woodland also appear within the urban form of Harlow at Burnett’s Wood and Maunds Wood. Within these various woodlands there are a variety of distinctive woodland characters such as the canopy of oak with coppiced hornbeam growing beneath it in Parndon Woods and the sparse canopy of elms with rich under-story and ground flora in Copy Wood. These habitats are a product of ancient ecologies intertwined with the cultural heritage of the area and provide a distinct experience of nature in an urban context. As such they have significant local value. This is evidenced by the Green Infrastructure Plan for Harlow which identifies Harlow Woods as having a district wide draw.

To the east, Latton Common and Harlow Common provide freely accessible common land which are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) in recognition of their grassland habitats. They represent significant vestiges of the once large tract of common land which stretched from Harlow Common to close to Maunds Wood. To the west Nazeing Common is another significant area of common land which is the subject of the Nazeing Wood or Park Act 1947 and is regulated and managed by Trustees. It was originally part of Waltham Forest but was deforested in the 13th century for pasture. It was used in the early stages of the Second World War as a dummy airfield, designed to be a decoy for North Weald airfield, and was then put into agricultural production. It contains a Scheduled Monument encompassing an above ground and below ground night shelter from this time.



Harlow Common

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Running east - west Epping Long Green is an ancient landscape feature which pre- dates the town of Epping. It consists of a broad strip of semi-improved natural grassland and a footpath, bordered on both sides by ancient hedgerows. Epping Long Green was historically part of a network of drovers routes connecting, Waltham Abbey, Harlow, Latton Priory and surrounding villages. Together these natural greenspaces provide a distinctive landscape character while also offering a wide variety of culturally and ecologically rich places. Work to improve their legibility, access, habitat value and ecological connections would all contribute to strengthening a hugely valuable shared resource for current and future residents.



Epping Long Green

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Heritage

Latton Priory and Water Lane are located in areas which provide a rich diversity of landscape and heritage assets, from Ancient Green Lanes and Woodlands, through to the Scheduled Monument of Latton Priory. Developing and signing a clear network of footpaths is key to allow these assets to form an integrated part of the network of landscape assets.



Historic England map for the Scheduled Monument at Latton Priory - the site of an Augustinian priory

Amenity Greenspace and Public Parks and Gardens

The [Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study](#) assesses the quantity, quality and value of the open space and green infrastructure in Harlow District, and forms part of the Evidence base for Harlow District Council's adopted Local Plan. Amenity Greenspace and Public Parks and Gardens are assessed separately but here, given the similarities of the provision and the potential for overlapping functions, they are grouped together as this gives a more comprehensive picture of provision. The study showed that in terms of size 'Sumner, Kingsmoor and Staple Tye' (which are the closest neighbourhoods to the Latton Priory and Water Lane Masterplan areas) is currently above the advised minimum provision while 'Bush Fair and Harlow Common' has less provision. However, this shortfall is to some extent compensated for by the proximity of Latton and Harlow Commons.

Amenity greenspaces and parks are of mixed quality, with a number of parks assessed in the Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study (2013) falling below quality standards with the highest proportion being located on the southern side of Harlow.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Allotments

The [Council's Open Space Strategy 2017](#) shows that allotments are generally well provided for across the District and the Harlow Green Infrastructure Strategy shows a similar position. Allotments and food growing are key components of the network of greenspaces as they provide the green social infrastructure that can support the creation of cohesive and healthy communities. To do this any new allotment provision should, through their location and allocation, serve new and existing communities. While limited public access can help build a strong community within allotment sites themselves it also limits the public engaging with food growing. Therefore, proposals should look to expand the variety of productive landscapes beyond just the provision of allotments and look to incorporate ways of engaging new users with them.

The Netteswell Common Allotments are located within the existing Green Wedge proposed to be extended into the Latton Priory Garden Town Community. The shortage of provision at Sumners, Kingsmoor and Staple Tye could be addressed through enhancements to provision within the Green Wedge.

Provision for Children and Young People

Current provision is located in the adjacent Harlow communities and consists of almost exclusively traditional equipment in fenced play areas. The condition of the equipment is mixed. There is therefore significant opportunity to enhance both the quality and variety of opportunities for children and young people of all age groups.



Playground at Maunds Hatch

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Movement

There is an established network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that runs through the surrounding countryside. These routes are well used but as with many routes across the District there is room for improving accessibility, legibility and wayfinding. Both sites are well linked into the wider PRoW network by local footpaths.

Regional walks such as the Nazeing Country Walk, the Stort Valley Way and the Forest Way Long Distance Walking Path (which runs from the edge of the Epping Forest to Hatfield Forest and crosses both Latton and Harlow Commons) highlight the draw of the local landscape. There are real opportunities to link the sites into this wider network, including to integrate different parts of the bridleway network and byway network.

The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will be served by a network of Sustainable Transport Corridors (STCs) which will provide rapid transit, walking and cycling routes from the proposed Garden Town Communities through existing communities to Harlow town centre and its train stations. Two arms of the proposed STCs will extend to Water Lane and Latton Priory. There is potential to continue the walking and cycling component of these routes to connect Latton Priory and Water Lane. There is significant room to improve accessibility, legibility and wayfinding through the Green Wedges especially where the wedges link into Latton Priory and Water Lane. The existing PRoW network should also be enhanced to create an attractive connection between the two new communities and in particular the proposed secondary school in Latton Priory.

There are also two well-established walking routes known as [Millennium Walks 2 and 3](#), in Thornwood and Hastingwood, which were established to celebrate the turn of the millennium. There is a significant opportunity to link these existing routes through to the new development at Latton Priory, including to the proposed secondary school, and provide for their enhancement.



The Stort Valley Way at Harlow

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Opportunities

The opportunities set out below are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites:

1. Connecting into the big landscape attractors including the Lea and Stort Valleys
2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside
3. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG
4. Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

Connecting into the big landscape attractors

The Stort Valley Way offers an opportunity to link into a strategic route that ties into the Stort Valley. Alongside this the Green Wedges provide direct routes into Harlow's greenspaces and Harlow Town Centre. Existing routes also enable access to longer distance routes including to the Stort Valley as well as to more local destinations including Nazeing Common. Prioritising the enhancement of these routes to be able to accommodate additional users or including new links is key to the integration of the sites into their context and the promotion of destinations such as the Stort Valley as an accessible recreational landscape.

Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside

Easy, safe and attractive walking and cycling connections between neighbourhoods and open spaces are an important component of building a successful network of greenspaces. Consideration should also be given to the needs of horse-riders where appropriate. To deliver these connections improved accessibility, legibility and wayfinding will be needed. Key areas will include:

- Enhancements to the Green wedges that currently run out to the countryside in order to provide high quality connections into the Green Wedge network and on to Harlow Town Centre and the stations and facilitate local links into existing greenspaces and local centres
- Continuing the walking and cycling component of the proposed STC routes to connect Latton Priory and Water Lane, including in order to provide Water Lane residents with a safe and active route to the proposed secondary school in Latton Priory
- Develop a series of local walks that link communities with local GI assets. Routes should be planned to give a series of routes that are of an optimal distance for users including dog walkers and to provide variety in walking routes and lengths.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG

Local GI Overview

In line with the rest of the District an analysis of existing open space provision indicates that high quality Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace already exists both in the locality and further afield. However, some of this greenspace is itself under pressure (including both the Harlow Woods SSSI and the Epping Forest SAC) and therefore the provision of SANG will help to ‘absorb’ pressure arising from new residents by adding to the Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace offer.

Other types of open space, including parks, play and allotments are of average or lower quality and are generally under provided. These should therefore be integrated into the GI offer for the sites.

Reveal and Enhance

Specific opportunities to reveal and enhance the existing Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace offer include the following:

- Complete the ecological corridor from Long Green Lane to Marks Wood. Where it would not be harmful to the ecological and natural heritage value of the assets tree canopies could be lifted and scrub cleared to allow views into woodland areas
- Enhance habitats through improved management including to the grassland of Harlow and Latton Commons and woodlands in the locality
- Maximise opportunities to create an overlap between people and ecology such as leaving some large, felled trees in woodlands or retaining low branches on appropriate trees when pruning for play opportunities



Latton Common

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

Initial design work has started on developing the approach to SANG provision for Latton Priory and Water Lane including how it relates to existing paths and habitats.

Latton Priory Garden Community:

This site has an indicative capacity for 1050 homes. Based on this indicative c. 20ha of SANG would be required. Whilst part of the site lies outside of the current 6.2 km Zone of Influence the full quantum of development would need to be mitigated recognising the need to 'future-proof' the development in light of the potential for the Zone of Influence to increase (as is already indicated in the 2019 Epping Forest SAC Visitor survey) and to minimise the potential for the site to contribute to this increase. The preferred location of the SANG is on land on the southern side of the Masterplan area. The detailed form of the SANG provision will be determined once the final location of the access road has been resolved. The site promoter has control over land contiguous with the southern boundary of the site allocation. This could be brought forward for SANG provision as indicated at the Local Plan Examination hearing sessions this land could be brought forward SANG provision. The priority for its use will be as mitigation for the development arising from the Masterplan area. Any residual carrying capacity which is potentially able to mitigate the impacts of development elsewhere will be subject to commercial arrangements.

Water Lane Garden Community:

The Masterplan area provides for some 2,100 new homes. Based on the total number of homes proposed within the Masterplan area the provision of SANG would equate to 39.68 ha. However, the Masterplan area comprises two distinct areas for development, the larger of which (West Katherine's) is located some distance from the current 6.2km Zone of Influence and a significant proportion of the smaller site (West Sumners) is also outside of the Zone of Influence. Nevertheless, as with Latton Priory, the Council considers that there is a need to 'future-proof' the development and to minimise the potential for the site to contribute to any extension to the Zone of Influence. The Council is therefore seeking an element of SANG provision based on the total indicative residential capacity of the West Sumners site. Assuming a capacity of c. 700 dwellings the size of SANG required would be c. 13ha.

The Masterplan should also identify greenspace connections to the Green Wedge and to the west towards Epping Long Green. GI beyond the provision of the SANG will also need to be developed as part of the emerging masterplan.

Complimentary Network

Provision of open space should be integrated as part of the Masterplanning of the Garden Town Communities and designed in such a way as to encourage integration between the new and existing communities. A balance of open space typologies across the wider area within both Epping Forest and Harlow Districts should also be planned for. Existing spaces that need to be addressed in qualitative terms are Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground, Paringdon Road Recreation Space, and Parsloe Road Open Space.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

The landscape should be considered as forming part of the social infrastructure. This will help to support the creation of cohesive communities through engaging more people with outdoor space and creating opportunities for social interaction. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- Natural and Semi natural open space should be enhanced where possible to help increase peoples understanding and appreciation of nature and inspire new people to visit these places. Potential areas where this could be achieved are: Local woodlands, the three Commons, local Green Lanes, and the Scheduled Monuments at Latton Priory and Nazeing. Potential interventions could include: Bird Hides, Natural Play, Low key interpretation and Art
- Parks and amenity space should be brought to life with initiatives that encourage social interaction and which link help to tackle loneliness, obesity, and encourage healthy eating. Places where this could be achieved are: The Green Wedge north of Latton Priory, and the Parsloe Road Open Space. Initiatives could include: Multi-sensory planting, intergenerational and natural play, art, food growing
- Productive Landscapes should be developed beyond just the provision of allotments to encourage wider participation and engagement between communities. The main place where this could be achieved is at the Netteswell Common Allotments. Other potential opportunities include: Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground, Parsloe Road Open Space and the proposed schools to be developed within the Garden Town Communities.



The Kerb Garden, Stockwell by The Edible Bus Stop



Magneten Sensory Garden, Copenhagen by MASU Planning

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

2. Summary for North Weald Bassett Masterplan Area

Residential capacity: **c. 1050 homes**

GI provision: **In accordance with emerging Local Plan policies SP4 and SP5**

Indicative SANG size: **20ha** (see page 134 for further information)

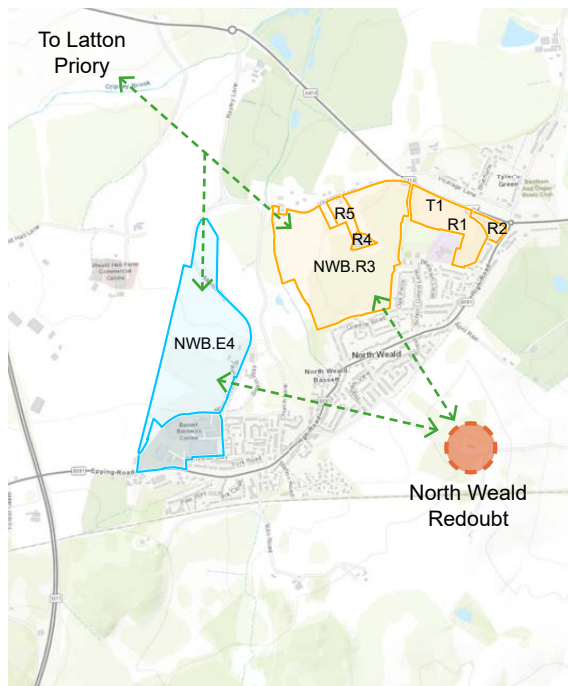
Preferred location: **Between the commercial and residential masterplans**

Future proofing required? **Yes**

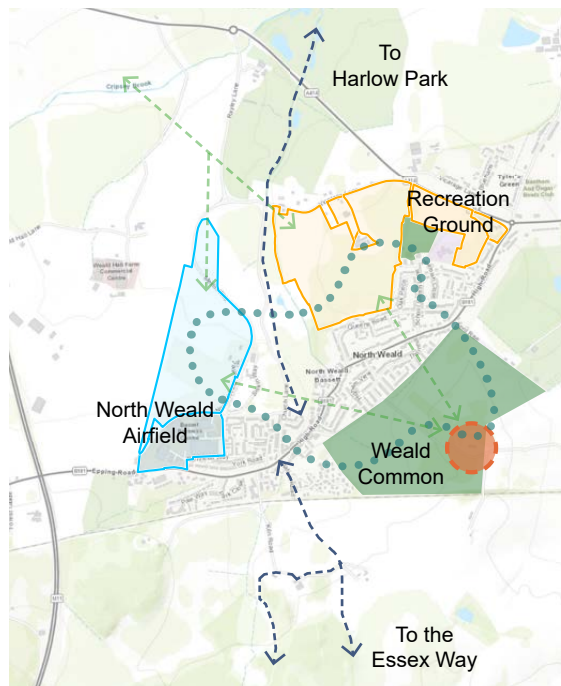
Green Infrastructure Key Characteristics:

1. **Connecting into the big landscape attractors**
 - The masterplan area is too far away from the Lea and Stort Valleys to make a significant connection
 - Therefore, walking routes to Latton Priory and nearby heritage landscapes are to be promoted
2. **Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside**
 - Create a 'Green Loop' connecting North Weald Airfield, Weald Common, North Weald Redoubt and the Recreation Ground
 - Connect to the Essex Way and develop a wider network of routes with improved wayfinding and accessibility, including to the Latton Priory Masterplan Area and its proposed secondary school.
3. **Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG**
 - Provide new greenspaces within the masterplan with different types of open space than those currently in existence, for the benefit of new and existing communities
 - Consider improvements to existing greenspaces surrounding the site, such as the Recreation Ground and the court facilities within the Common
4. **Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside**
 - Include initiatives such as sensitively integrated play, art and interpretation elements

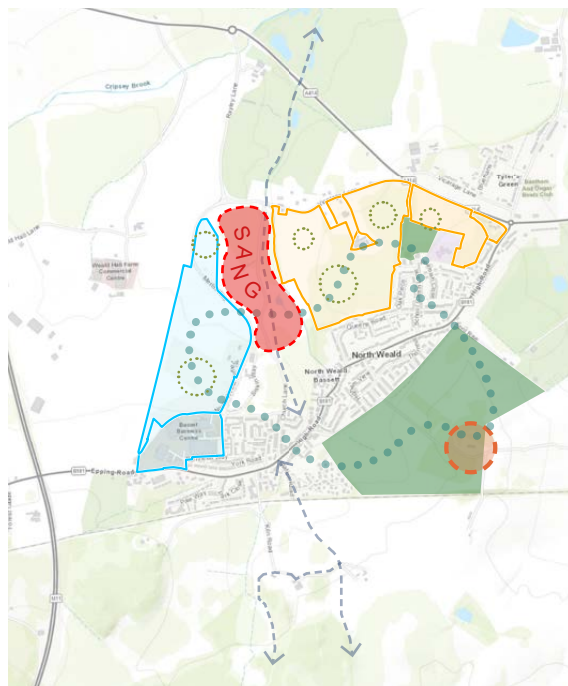
3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS



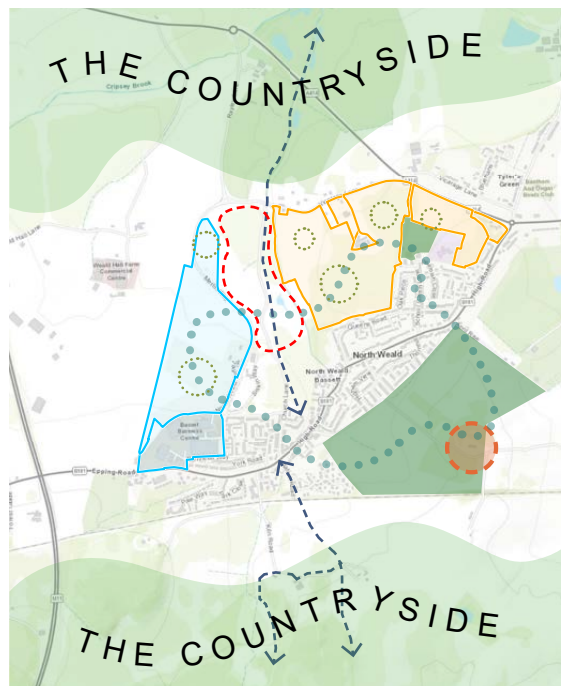
1. Connecting into the big landscape attractors



2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside



3. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG



4. Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

Key

- New Pedestrian and Cycle Links
- North Weald Redoubt
- Nearby Greenspaces
- Green Loop
- Existing PRoW Network
- Indicative SANG
- New Open Spaces

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

North Weald Bassett Masterplan Area

Landscape Context

North Weald Bassett lies in an area defined as 'Ridges and Valleys' in the Council's [Landscape Character Assessment 2010](#). The landscape is characterised by a patchwork of arable fields, with mature hedgerows. Mature trees are also a defining feature of the landscape both within hedgerows and in fields and there are a large number of trees in the village which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. This landscape pattern provides for a number of open and framed views to the surrounding landscape. North Weald Airfield, which is defined by a strong fenced perimeter, is a significant presence in the landscape as is the M11 to the west.



Ridges and Valleys landscape character, Epping Forest District Council's Landscape Character Assessment

Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace and Landscape and Ecology Assets

There are a variety of lowland mixed deciduous ancient woodlands, located mainly to the south of North Weald Bassett. These woodlands include original and replanted ancient woodland with BAP Habitats designated as Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK); and Ancient Woodland (Essex). An existing Nature Reserve is located adjacent to the proposed residential Masterplan Area and is a source of extensive biodiversity.

Woodlands include a variety of flora which provide a range of distinctive woodland characters including virtually pure hornbeam coppice (Reynkyns Wood); blocks of Scotts Pine (Birching Coppice Complex); and Hornbeam/ Pedunculate composition with scattered Rhododendron (Birching Coppice Complex).

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

These woodlands provide a significant natural resource within easy reach of North Weald Bassett. There is an opportunity to connect people to these ancient woodlands, through improved physical connections and legibility, to bring them into people's consciousness. This would need to be carefully managed to ensure that their ecological and natural heritage interest features are not harmed. There are a variety of species rich grasslands, wetland and reed beds that are also located in the area including relatively recent flood alleviation works.

There is significant potential to connect people to these landscape assets drawing out cultural and ecological heritage while building new relationships between local people and their environment. Carefully considered natural play opportunities, seating, low key interpretation and art, could engage local people to connect with these areas.

The provision of SANG should complement the existing provision of Natural Greenspace to provide a more coherent and attractive network of spaces and places.



Church Lane Flood Meadow Local Nature Reserve

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Heritage

North Weald Bassett has an interesting variety of built and landscape heritage. North Weald Airfield opened in 1916 to defend London against German air raids in World War I. Operational flying ceased in 1919 but restarted as an operational RAF Fighter station in 1927. Its role in the Battle of Britain resulted in enemy raids on the airfield with many bombs falling on the village and surrounding areas. Squadrons from many nationalities were based at North Weald during the course of the war, including Norwegians, Czechs, Poles, Canadians, New Zealanders and American volunteers. The last operational fighter squadron left in 1958 and the RAF vacated the airfield in 1964. A memorial is located at the former main entrance to the airfield dedicated to all who served there between 1916 and 1964. The airfield's control tower, which was built in 1952, is a Grade II Listed Building as is the former Officer's Mess. The control tower was one of only seven of its type to be constructed post-war and is a rare physical reminder of the role of RAF Fighter Command in the early years of the Cold War.

Ongar Park Woods (part of the Birching Coppice Complex) was historically part of the same woodland lying within the boundary of Ongar Great Park, the earliest deer park in Essex (dating back to the 11th century). The woodland remnants of Ongar Great Park still exist to the south of the town, while ancient woodlands with distinctive coppiced trees are landscape remnants of the formerly common practice of coppicing timber on rotation.

Immediately to the south of North Weald Bassett is the North Weald Redoubt Scheduled Monument. It was constructed in the 1890's as a mobilisation centre as part of a comprehensive military scheme known as the London Defence Positions drawn up to protect the capital in the event of enemy invasion. It was reused as a radio station after the First World War and has a remarkable level of survival. To the west, on the edges of Thornwood, lies the moated site known as Marshalls which is likely to have been constructed between 1250 and 1350, and which is also a Scheduled Monument.

There is significant potential to connect and illuminate the landscape and heritage assets of the area.



North Weald Redoubt Scheduled Monument

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Parks and Amenity Greenspace

The [Council's Open Space Strategy 2017](#) shows that there is an under supply of amenity greenspace in North Weald Bassett and that there are no parks. The existing amenity greenspace consists primarily of short cut grass and therefore has the potential to be enhanced in terms of its amenity, biodiversity and community offer.

The Memorial Playing Fields provides the main amenity greenspace within North Weald Bassett and includes play and sports facilities as well as a community hub. The Memorial Playing Fields have the potential to be enhanced to accommodate new residents if additional land is provided to ensure that this is not to the detriment of their enjoyment by existing residents. This would be a positive initiative in terms of creating a space for recreation, community activities and for quiet contemplation and as such would support community integration, by providing a place where people from new and existing communities can come. Any such initiative should provide the opportunity for existing and new communities to come together. Additional provision is supported by the Council's Open Space Strategy which identifies the need for an increased park offer in North Weald Bassett.

Provision for Children and Young People

There is currently a significant under supply of facilities in North Weald Bassett. The existing equipment is traditional and functional but lacks variety when measured against best practice. There is therefore a real opportunity to broaden the play offer to include natural play, multi-sensory play, play for all ages and play that is accessible for all. Consequently, new and enhanced provision should provide variety in the offer including using the provision of natural play opportunities as a means of encouraging people into the wider landscape and particularly as a means of bringing children into contact with nature.

Potential improvement to the existing basketball facilities, or the provision of other new ball courts, should look to MUF's social MUGA highlighted below and in [Part 2](#) of this Strategy as an example of best practice.



The social MUGA by MUF Architecture and Art

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Allotments

North Weald Bassett, in line with the District as a whole, has an adequate supply of allotments in relation to [Fields In Trust standards](#). Engagement with the North Weald Bassett community in the development of the emerging residential Masterplan should test the supply of allotments to ensure that provision continues to meet community needs.

Alongside this food growing opportunities should be developed in a wider sense. Allotments and food growing are key components of the network of greenspaces that will provide the green infrastructure that can aid the development of cohesive and healthy communities. To do this any new allotment provision should, through its location and allocation, serve as an integrated resource for both new and existing communities. While limited public access can help build a strong community within allotments it also limits the public engaging with food growing. Therefore, in addition to any allotment provision, proposals should look to expand the variety of productive landscapes and to look to engage new users with them.

Movement

There is an established network of both Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and informal routes that run through the surrounding countryside. This includes a well-used walking route around North Weald Village, known as [Millennium Walk 1](#), which was established to celebrate the turn of the millennium. There are a further two Millennium walks in the Parish of North Weald, in Thornwood and Hastingwood respectively. There is a significant opportunity to link these existing routes through to the new development at Latton Priory. These routes are well used but as with routes across the District there is room for improving accessibility, legibility and wayfinding. Such improvements should focus on promoting links between the existing community, the emerging masterplan areas, the surrounding countryside and between settlements. An existing bridleway runs through the site which will need to be preserved in a semi-rural state.

There is considerable community support for a wider active travel (walking and cycling) network to connect North Weald Bassett to both Latton Priory and Epping. As set out in [Parts 1](#) and [2](#) of the Strategy the Council supports active travel and will look to work with landowners/developers, the community and other stakeholders to secure these opportunities. In particular the route of the Epping-Ongar Railway line between North Weald Bassett and Epping should be explored as an opportunity for such a link to be provided adjacent to it.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

The Essex Way, which runs 82 miles across Essex from Epping to the coast at Harwich, lies just to the south of North Weald Bassett. The development and enhancement of the local PRow network provides a good opportunity to link into this wider facility.

Significant barriers to movement are created by the M11 Motorway and the A414. Nevertheless, the Council will work with landowners, developers and stakeholders to explore ways of circumventing these barriers, and how any such initiative should be funded.



The Essex Way

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Opportunities

The opportunities set out below are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites:

1. Connecting into or creating landscape attractors.
2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside.
3. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG.
4. Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside.

Connecting into the big landscape attractors

Due to the distance between North Weald Bassett and the Stort and Lea Valleys it is not envisaged that these will serve as significant attractions. However, the promotion of wider strategic footpaths including a route north to tie into Latton Priory and to heritage assets in the locality should be pursued.

Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside

Easy, safe and attractive walking and cycling connections between the residential and airfield Masterplan sites, existing neighbourhoods and open spaces are key to building a successful network of greenspaces. Such an approach also supports the objective of creating a connected community and place. To deliver these connections improvements to accessibility, legibility and wayfinding should be provided for including:

- To create a green Loop to link new green space with key existing local green spaces and attractors, including North Weald Airfield, North Weald Common and the North Weald Redoubt and the Recreation Ground. Wayfinding and easy links through North Weald Bassett will be key to achieving this. This will require a collaborative approach between developers, landowners and the Council and it is recognised that there are significant safety and accessibility challenges in relation to North Weald Redoubt itself.
- A series of wider routes with improved legibility and access would provide longer walks and provide connections that link to strategic routes such as the Essex Way to the south and to the development at Latton Priory.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG

The proposed network of paths described above aims to provide improved access to existing greenspaces where this would not affect their ecological interest features.

- Reveal and Enhance
- Build ecological links between established habitats
- Where it would not be harmful to the ecological or natural heritage value of the asset tree canopies could be lifted and scrub cleared to allow views into woodland areas
- Enhance habitats through improved management including to the North Weald Common
- Identify opportunities for tree planting at North Weald Common to establish future large field trees
- Look for overlap between people and ecology such as leaving some large, felled trees in woodlands or retaining low branches on appropriate trees when pruning for play opportunities.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

The provision of SANG should complement the existing network of Natural Greenspace offer in North Weald Bassett. The preferred location for the SANG is between the emerging Local Plan's commercial and residential Masterplan Areas, as this area would best enable the creation of distinctive and valuable habitats, maximise access to the PRoW network as well as the opportunity to allow people to connect with these assets. This would provide a positive alternative offer to the Epping Forest SAC. The Council, in its landowner role, has indicated that it is proposing to provide an element of SANG to complement development within the North Weald Airfield Masterplan. In order to maximise this opportunity, the Council and the site promoters of the residential led Masterplan should work together to better understand how this land could support the delivery of an enhanced SANG offer in North Weald Bassett.

The Masterplan Area provides for some 1050 new homes. Based on the total number of homes proposed within the Masterplan area this equates to c.20 ha of SANG. It is recognised that a large part of the site lies beyond the current 6.2km Zone of Influence. As with the Latton Priory and Water Lane Masterplan Areas, there is a need to 'future-proof' the development recognising that the Zone of Influence could extend further, and that the development of the North Weald Bassett Masterplan Area should not contribute to that expansion. Therefore, there will be a need to ensure that sufficient SANG provision is provided. There are also opportunities within close proximity to the Masterplan site that could, with appropriate enhancements and financial contributions towards long-term maintenance costs, be used by dog- owners in particular. In the event that the quantum of SANG to be provided cannot adequately accommodate such activities without creating conflict with other users of the SANG, it may be possible to adopt a flexible approach if this can be fully justified in terms of protecting the Epping Forest SAC and be deliverable.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Complimentary Network

Provision of other types of open space provision should be designed in as part of the masterplanning process for the new development. This should be designed in a way to encourage integration between the new and existing communities. The masterplanning process should ensure that there is a balance of types of open space across the wider area. Any approach should include improvements outside the site allocation boundary to develop the wider network. Some key opportunities include:

- The expansion of recreation opportunities at the Recreation Ground to include high quality play and park facilities to become a focal point for new and existing communities. This will require working with the Parish Council and ensure that it does not impact on its use by the existing community
- Broadening the food growing theme to outside of the allotment
- Enhancing the existing basketball court and facilities for young people in the existing play areas by the Common.

Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

This will involve initiatives including sensitively integrated play, art and interpretation. Opportunities that should be considered include those identified landscape and heritage assets set out earlier in this Part.



High quality play at Peckham Rye Park by Turkington Martin

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

3. Summary for Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Area

Residential capacity: **c. 740 homes**

GI provision: **In accordance with emerging Local Plan policy P3**

Indicative SANG size: **N/A**

Other requirements: **Contributions towards GI projects within the Lee Valley Regional Park** (see pages 142 and 143 for further information)

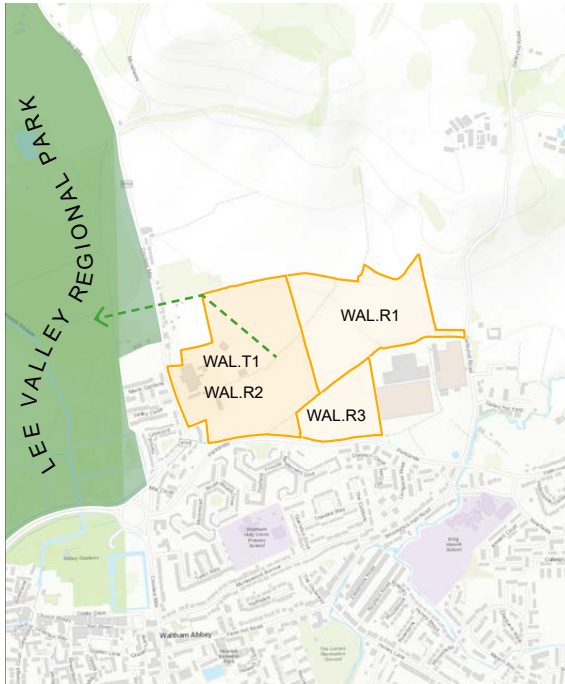
Preferred location: **N/A**

Future proofing for potential ZOI expansion? **N/A**

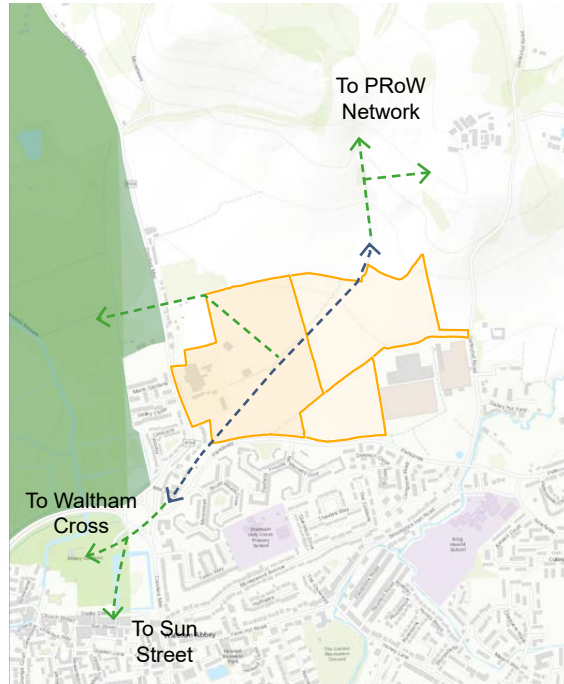
Green Infrastructure Key Characteristics:

1. **Connecting into the big landscape attractors**
 - Create new walking and cycling links into the Lee Valley Regional Park
2. **Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside**
 - Enhance the existing Public Right of Way through the masterplan area
 - Provide new and improved routes to connect to the PRow network, Waltham Abbey and Waltham Cross railway station
3. **Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG**
 - Provide new greenspaces within the masterplan with different types of open space provision than those currently in existence, for the benefit of new and existing communities
 - Using the existing PRow through the site to develop a 'Green Corridor'
 - Integrate Green Infrastructure provision into the site's defensible edge condition
 - Secure Green Infrastructure improvements beyond the site boundary, such as enhanced water habitats along Cobbins Brook and improved facilities for young people at Town Mead and Honey Lane

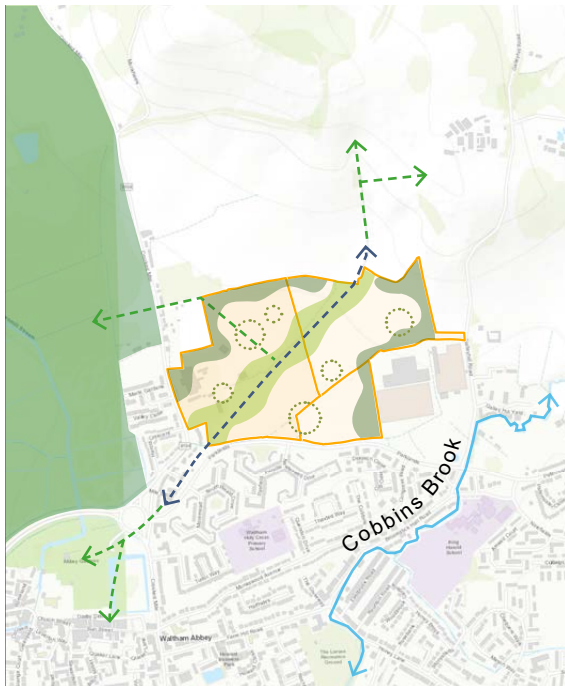
3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS



1. Connecting into the big landscape attractors



2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside



3. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG

Key

-  Green Belt Boundary and Defensible Edge
-  Green Corridor
-  Existing PRoW Network
-  New Pedestrian and Cycle Links
-  New Open Spaces

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Area

The Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Area is proposed for allocation within the emerging Local Plan and is located immediately to the north of the existing urban area of Waltham Abbey.

Landscape Context

The Masterplan Area lies at the southern end of the Holyfield Ridges and Valleys Character Area as defined in the [Council's Landscape Character Assessment 2010](#). The Landscape Character Area encompasses a patchwork of large, medium and small-scale irregularly shaped arable fields, some of which have wooded field boundaries. Fields are interspersed with patches of broadleaved woodland which are located on prominent ridges and slopes within the character area, which, in places results in views to wooded horizons. The southern part of the character area, to which this site relates, contains several modern nurseries and glasshouses.

The western boundary of the Masterplan Area is in close proximity to the Lea Valley Marshes Landscape Character Area, which is formed by the floodplain of the River Lea. However, it is visually separated from it by built development and an allotment site.



Holyfield Ridges and Valleys landscape character, Epping Forest District Council's Landscape Character Assessment

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Communities

The Masterplan Area is located to the north of the town of Waltham Abbey. Its southern boundary is defined by hedgerows with intermittent tree planting which form the edge of Parklands, the main northern road link serving Waltham Abbey. The Masterplan Area will provide for approximately 740 homes, up to five pitches for traveller accommodation, a new local centre and community facilities and the provision of public open space.

Landscape and Ecology Assets

The Masterplan Area does not contain any designated landscape or ecological assets and the land on the northern and western boundaries comprises open arable fields. The land to the north has a gentle incline leading to a belt of trees visible within the wider landscape.

To the west, and in close proximity to the Masterplan Area, lies the Lee Valley Regional Park (LVRP). The LVRP was created in 1967 and is a strategically important site for both recreation and nature conservation. It is a linear park which is some 26 miles long (running from the East India Dock Basin on the River Thames to Ware in Hertfordshire) and 10,000 acres in size and is the only regional park serving Essex, Hertfordshire and London. The LVRP is managed by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority which has a duty to develop and preserve leisure, recreation, sport and nature throughout the Park.

The area of the LVRP to the west of the site contains a range of ecological habitats. Parts of the LVRP are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and as a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site (which denotes it as an internationally important wetland habitat).

The Masterplan Area also falls within the recreational pressures 'Zone of Influence' of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation, which lies to the east and south-east of Waltham Abbey but which is separated from it by the M25 Motorway.



Lee Valley Regional Park (LVRP)

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Heritage

There are no known heritage assets within the Masterplan Area itself. However, Waltham Abbey and its immediate environs have a wealth of history. The town takes its name from its former Abbey, the remains of which are designated as a Scheduled Monument and are located in Abbey Gardens, which is a Public Park. In 1177, as part of his penance for his part in the murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry II refound the existing church in Waltham (as it was then known) as an Augustinian Priory. The priory was enlarged and was founded as an Abbey in 1184. The majority of the Abbey itself and its associated buildings were demolished following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. Only some remnants of the Abbey's structure and the parish church remained. Legend has it that the body of King Harold Godwinson, who died in the Battle of Hastings in 1066, was brought to Waltham to be buried. The town also lies on the Greenwich Meridian, which is demarcated by a number of markers within the town itself and within the LVRP.

To the west, within LVRP, lies the site of the historic Royal Gunpowder Mills, which contains a number of nationally listed buildings and is also a scheduled monument. The site originally housed a mill used initially for cloth and then vegetable oil production.

The mill was converted into gunpowder production in the 1660's and was one of the first examples in the 18th century of an industrialised factory system. It was purchased by the Crown in 1787 and provided gunpowder for both military and civil purposes until the Mills closed in 1943. The site is now home to a Museum including interactive educational exhibits, together with an important wildlife habitat, much of which is designated as a national important Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Parks and Amenity Greenspace

Abbey Gardens is one of only two Public Parks in the District. Abbey Gardens is an attractive and well-maintained site with wider than local significance due to its history (see Heritage Section above) and is located a short distance to the south west of the edge of the Masterplan Area. Waltham Abbey also has five sites classified as amenity greenspace and is assessed as currently having less amenity greenspace than recommended by the national Fields in Trust standards. The quality of the sites, as defined in the Council's Open Space Strategy 2017, is varied with Pick Hill and Thaxted Way being assessed as 'good', High Beech and the Linear Open Space at the Community Centre assessed as 'average' and Winter' Way 'poor'.



Waltham Abbey Gardens

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Provision for Children and Young People

Current provision for children's' play across Waltham Abbey is based primarily on traditional playgrounds (although the Townmead Sports and Social Club has a wider offer including a play park and skate park). In terms of quantity, provision is below that recommended by the Field in Trust standards. The sites are located at Harold Crescent, Pynest Green and Poplar Shaw (rated 'good' in terms of their quality) and Honey Lane (rated 'average'). The closest children's playground to the Masterplan Area is Harold Crescent, which lies to the south-west. The playground is located within a small grassed area surrounded by existing residential properties.

Allotments

Waltham Abbey Town Council manages three allotment sites. The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 identifies Waltham Abbey as being the only settlement in the District with an under-provision based on national standards. In terms of quality these sites, which comprise Denny Avenue, Capershotts and Longfields, are rated as 'average'. These sites are located some distance from the Masterplan Area, being located to the south and east of the town. The Crooked Mile allotment site immediately adjacent to the Masterplan Area is in private ownership.

Movement

A Public Right of Way (PRoW) crosses the Masterplan Area from south-west to north-east and links into a wider network of public footpaths and bridleways. As such the Masterplan Area already has, for the main part, connections into the wider countryside including towards Warlies Park. Safe and direct walking and cycling opportunities for accessing the LVRP and its extensive GI offer are far more constrained with the main barrier being the Crooked Mile. The Crooked Mile lies immediately to the west of the proposed allocation, runs in a south to north direction and separates the site and its environs from the LVRP.



Warlies Park

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Opportunities

The opportunities set out below are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites.

1. Connecting into the big landscape attractor of the LVRP.
2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside.
3. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities.

Connect into the big landscape attractors

The creation of new walking and cycling links to the LVRP provides a significant opportunity to provide access to its considerable range of recreational and natural environment assets. Such an approach is supported by both the LVRPA proposals for the River Lea Country Park (Area 6) and the Council's emerging Local Plan.

Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside

The enhancement of the existing PRow that runs across the site together with the provision of new and improved walking and cycling connections and wayfinding/signage are an important component of the Masterplanning of the proposed allocation. The approach would support greater opportunities for both new and existing residents to access existing networks into the countryside, Waltham Abbey, the LVRP and to the national rail station at Waltham Cross.

Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities

The development of the Masterplan Area provides the opportunity to take a multi-functional approach to the provision of spaces for people of all ages which provides a different experience to that provided elsewhere within Waltham Abbey. This will help to provide an offer which complements rather than competes with existing GI assets.

Existing natural features within the Masterplan area together with the PRows which cross the site provide the opportunity to create a corridor of natural greenspace through it. Whilst the Masterplan area is located within the Zone of Influence of the Epping Forest SAC, its proximity immediately adjacent to the LVRP is such that the provision of a meaningful proportion of bespoke SANG would be difficult to justify. A more robust and appropriate response, having regard to the site-specific circumstances, is for investment to be made to providing safe walking and cycling connections into the LVRP (in accordance with Policy P3) and for financial contributions to be made to support enhancements within the LVRP itself (as included in the IDP under reference WLA15).

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

These financial contributions would be secured to support the LVRPA's adopted proposals including for example:

- For Gunpowder Park to create a more flexible visitor hub and provide the core range of services including refreshment facilities, an indoor public visitor space and park information point
- For the management and enhancement of Gunpowder Park, Sewardstone Marsh and Patty Pool Mead as a key access to nature site with habitat improvements to be undertaken throughout
- Management activities for the existing wet woodland habitats at Osier Marsh and Sewardstone Marsh in order to maintain and expand their special wildlife interest
- Enhancements to visitor access by extending boardwalks and improving interpretation
- The enhancement of floodplain grassland and fen habitat on Sewardstone Marsh and the wet grassland habitat of Patty Pool Mead to be improved to provide nesting opportunities for breeding waders.

Wider opportunities within the Waltham Abbey area include:

- Working with landowners to secured enhanced ecological habitats and improved water quality including along the Cobbins Brook corridor.
- Work with Essex County Council and Hertfordshire County Council to support the development of high-quality walking and cycling networks to local schools, Waltham Abbey Town Centre and Waltham Cross railway station.
- Create more cohesive and connected green spaces and enhance existing facilities including those for young people at Town Mead and Honey Lane.
- Improved access and more welcoming entrances to the three allotment sites, including through the provision of productive landscaping.

Amenity greenspace and Natural and semi-natural greenspace should be planned as an integrated asset which is varied and has the potential to incorporate SuDS features within it. The provision of a defensible boundary to the site should be integrated as part of the GI offer rather than developed separate to it. The boundary has the opportunity to support the creation of new habitats for wildlife and should make reference to the wooded field boundaries which form part of the character of the Holyfield Ridges and Valleys Landscape Character Area.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

4. Summary for South of Epping Masterplan Area

Residential capacity: **c. 450 homes**

GI provision: **In accordance with emerging Local Plan policy P1**

Indicative SANG size: **10ha** (see page 150 for further information)

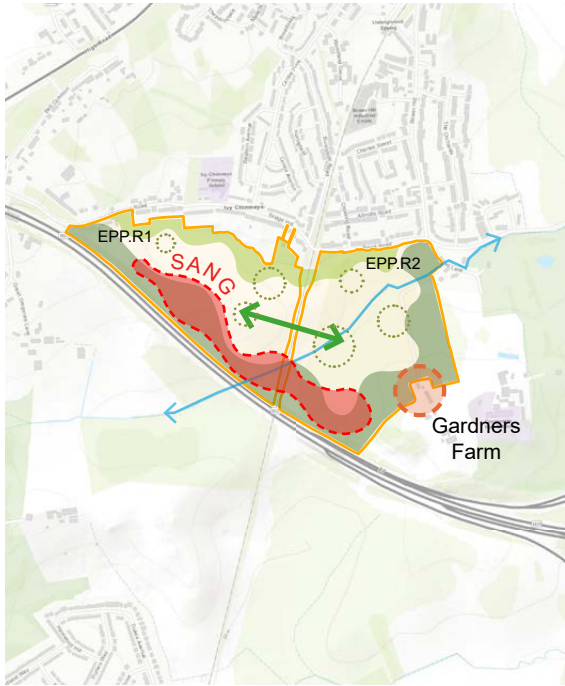
Preferred location: **Between the residential development and the M25 motorway**

Future proofing for potential ZOI expansion? **No**

Green Infrastructure Key Characteristics:

1. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG
 - Secure walking and cycling opportunities between the two sites by improving the accessibility of the existing footbridge link over the London Underground Central Line
 - Regard the prominence of Gardners Farm listed building in the landscape and maintain their setting
 - Integrate Green Infrastructure provision and visual enhancement opportunities into the southern M25 noise mitigation measures and Green Belt boundaries
 - Enhance northern site boundaries for biodiversity gain and visual buffer for adjacent existing properties
 - Retain and integrate all Public Rights of Way across the site, plus existing watercourses and associated vegetation
 - Ensure play for all ages and public open space are integrated as part of the overall Green Infrastructure offer
2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside
 - Enhance existing walking and cycling routes in addition to providing new ones, particularly to the eastern part of the masterplan

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS










1. Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG



2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside

Key

-  Improved footbridge link over the Central Line
-  Gardners Farm
-  Green Belt Boundary and Noise Buffer
-  Biodiversity Boundary and Visual Buffer
-  Indicative SANG
-  Existing PRoW Network
-  New Open Spaces

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

South of Epping Masterplan Area

The South of Epping Masterplan Area is proposed for allocation for residential development in the emerging Local Plan and is located on the southern side of the existing built-up area of the town of Epping.

Landscape Context

The site lies on the northern edge of the Theydon Garnon Wooded Ridges and Valleys Landscape Character Area as defined in the [Council's Landscape Character Assessment 2010](#). The northern boundary of the site abuts the built-up edge of the town of Epping whilst its southern edge is strongly defined by the M25 motorway. The Masterplan area is bisected from north to south by the London Underground Central Line and comprises a number of arable fields. The western, northern and eastern boundaries are, for the main part, defined by established planting including mature trees.



Theydon Garnon Wooded Ridges and Valleys landscape character, Epping Forest District Council's Landscape Character Assessment

Communities

The Planning Inspector who is examining the emerging Local Plan has supported the principle of allocating the South of Epping Masterplan Area for primarily residential development. However, in her advice note of [2 August 2019 \(ED98\)](#) she identified a number of matters which required further assessment including Green Belt and Habitats Regulation Assessment considerations as well as the need to respond to noise and air quality issues associated with the M25 Motorway. In response a review of the level of development that can be accommodated within the Masterplan Area and the infrastructure needed to support new residents has been undertaken. The Council now considers that the indicative number of dwellings that can be accommodated across the Masterplan area is c.450.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Landscape and Ecology Assets

The northern most part of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies very close to the south western part of the Masterplan Area in EPP.R1. The SAC is recognised as being under pressure from recreational use and impacted by atmospheric pollution, primarily as a result of vehicle emissions. The western part of the Masterplan Area contains a Public Right of Way (PRoW) that crosses over the M25 Motorway and provides easy access to the SAC. In addition, the Bell Common/ Ivy Chimneys Local Wildlife Site (LoWS) is located on the north side of Ivy Chimneys Road in close proximity to the western side of the Masterplan Area.

The western part of the Masterplan Area (EPP.R1) has several detracting characteristics including high voltage pylons which run across the south part of the site together with the M25 Motorway along its southern boundary, which is elevated at this point. The core of the site also lacks some of the more valuable landscape and ecology elements such as hedgerows, trees and woodland blocks. The site is enclosed by existing residential development, woodland and planting, and man-made structures. Views across the site can be gained from the existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) which cross the centre of the site and run along its eastern and northern boundaries. The Central Line, which bisects the Masterplan Area north to south is well planted and a wooded ridge is located beyond the site to the west.

The northern boundary to the eastern part of the Masterplan Area (EPP.R2) is formed by planting, including mature trees. The western boundary is formed by the London Underground Central Line, the southern boundary by the M25 Motorway, and to the east by mature planting, including trees. This part of the Masterplan Area is currently used as arable land. The main landscape feature within the site comprises an existing water course, within a mature planted setting, which runs from the north east corner of the site to the centre of the western boundary. The watercourse is crossed at several points by existing PRoWs that cross the site. The topography is undulating and rises up to the south towards Gardners Farm which is located immediately adjacent to the site and at a high point in the landscape and is therefore a prominent feature within it.



London Underground Central Line bisecting the masterplan

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Heritage

Gardners Farmhouse, and an associated barn, are Grade II Listed Buildings lie within the context of the built-up area of Epping Town to the north, and in close proximity to the M25 motorway and electricity pylons. The farmhouse is believed to date back to at least the 15th century (but with later additions) and is mainly timber framed and plastered with some red brick and a red plain tiled hipped roof. The barn is 18th century, with a timber frame, weatherboarding and a plain red tiled roof.

Coopersale Hall which lies to the south east of the site is also Grade II Listed. It dates back to the late 18th /early 19th century and is screened from the site primarily by established planting and trees.

In medieval times, the precursors to what is now the town of Epping, Epping Street and Epping Upland, were sited on a long-distance south-east to north-west trade route. The town owed much of its development to its main road position and its proximity to London. The improvement of the main road through Epping by the Epping and Ongar Highway Trust (1769-1870) increased the amount of traffic using this route on the way to and from London, Norwich, Cambridge, and Bury St. Edmunds amongst other places. The building of a railway line to Loughton in 1856 by the Eastern Counties Railway Co. started the decline in the coaching trade. In 1865 this line was extended to Epping and High Ongar. Epping railway station was built about half a mile to the east of the High Street in order to avoid the high ridge on which the town is built. House building to the east of the town was encouraged by this development. The old steam railway was electrified after the Second World War (1948/1949) and became part of the London Underground Central Line.

Parks and Amenity Greenspace

Despite having twelve sites identified as amenity greenspace in the [Council's Open Space Strategy 2017](#), in terms of quantity Epping has a slight under- provision. From a quality perspective Thornwood Common, Ivy Chimneys Road, High Street/Church Hill, Broadoaks, Station Road and High Street/Hemnall Street are all rated as 'good'. Frampton Road, Lower Swaines, Brook Road, Central Avenue North, Western Avenue South and Hemnall Street are rated as 'average'.



View of Copped Hall from Bell Common

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Provision for Children and Young People

There are a number of existing sites within Epping Town itself with facilities for children and young people. In terms of quantity there is considered to be an under-provision. In qualitative terms Ivy Chimney Road and Stonards Hill were rated as 'good' in the Council's Open Space Strategy 2017, Frampton Road as 'average' and Lower Swaines is 'poor'. Ivy Chimney Road, which is the closest site to the western part of the Masterplan Area, was refurbished in 2015 and caters for a number of different age groups. It includes flat swings, a junior swing, a nest, multi-play, roundabout, seesaw, zip line, activity panels, infinity bowl and seats and benches.

Allotments

Epping is considered to be well served by allotment sites, but the quality of the sites is mixed. All of the existing allotment sites are located some distance from the Masterplan Area.

Movement

The Masterplan Area contains a number of PRowS which link into a wider network, including the Essex Way, which is a long-distance footpath of some 82 miles that runs across Essex. The PRow which runs north to south through the western part of the Masterplan Area provides access to Theydon Bois and the Epping Forest SAC via a footbridge over the M25 motorway. The PRow network on the eastern part of the Master Plan Area links into a much wider network via an underpass beneath the M25 and then beyond via an underpass beneath the M11 Motorway. However, this route is currently unattractive for walkers and cyclists and there are opportunities for these to be improved as part of the development of the Masterplan area.

The Masterplan Area lies a short distance from Epping Station. However, there is currently no attractive walking and cycling provision linking from the site through to the built-up parts of Epping including to the High Street. There are opportunities to improve these links as part of the integration of the Masterplan area with Epping Town Centre and the Station.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

Opportunities

The opportunities set out below are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites but by necessity differs in relation to connections to big landscape attractors which in this case is the Epping Forest SAC.

1. Complementary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG.
2. Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside.

Complementary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG

The Masterplan Area provides a significant opportunity to provide an integrated approach towards GI both within the site and into the wider area. A key component of the approach will be the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in order to provide an attractive alternative recreation destination to the Epping Forest SAC. This is in order to avoid placing additional recreational pressure on the SAC. Taking into consideration the site's close proximity and the ease of access to the SAC by using the existing PRow link from the western part of the Masterplan Area on-site SANG provision will be critical. In addition, walking and cycling opportunities between the two parts of the Masterplan Area should be secured through the improvement of the existing footbridge over the London Underground Central Line.

Based on the indicative capacity of the site to accommodate 450 dwellings and the need to ensure that the SANG can accommodate a reasonable length walking route within it (reflecting the site's close proximity to the SAC) the quantum of SANG to be provided should be a minimum of 10ha. The location of the SANG will be critical to its success and should therefore be located between the residential development and the boundary with the M25 which separates the site from the SAC and its buffer lands. Also, of importance will be the pedestrian links to the SANG from other parts of the site to provide ease of access for all of the new residents across the Masterplan area.

3.1 STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

As well as the provision of SANG the Masterplan, and the Landscape Framework within it, should take account of, and provide for, an integrated approach which responds to the following:

- The setting of the Listed Buildings in Gardners Farm and regard to the prominence of the buildings within the landscape;
- That noise mitigation measures in the vicinity of the M25 Motorway and the buffer to the electricity pylons across the western part of the site are designed in such a way as to maximise GI and visual enhancement opportunities;
- That protected trees form part of the wider GI offer;
- That the northern boundaries of the site in particular are enhanced where necessary to provide biodiversity opportunities and act as a visual buffer for existing properties adjacent to, or in close proximity of, the site;
- That the strengthening and/or creation of new Green Belt boundaries are a component of, rather than separate to, the GI offer;
- That the PRow and existing watercourse and its vegetation, are integrated, retained and improved as part of the GI offer;
- Using the provision of SuDS as a GI opportunity;
- That provision of play for all ages as well as wide public open space opportunities (including the replacement of the Brook Road Informal Recreation Ground) are designed as an integrated part of the overall GI offer; and
- The Ancient woodland assets, the BAP Priority Habitat within the site and the nearby Local Wildlife Site are protected, and if possible enhanced.

Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside

The enhancement of the existing PRows that run across the site together with the provision of new and improved walking and cycling connections and wayfinding/signage will be an important component of the masterplanning of the proposed allocation. This should ensure the provision of attractive and safe access from Epping through the site and into the surrounding countryside. Significant focus should be given to the PRow network within and beyond the eastern part of the Masterplan Area to provide an enhanced offer which acts as an alternative to the SAC for walking and dog-walking in particular. This could include enhancing and signposting a range of circular walking routes. This approach would support greater opportunities for new and existing residents to access existing networks into the wider countryside and help to avoid placing further recreational pressure on the SAC.

DELIVERING SANG

3.2

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

This section sets out some of the key principles that should be considered in the design of bespoke SANG provision where this is required as set out in [3.1 Green Infrastructure in Strategic Allocations](#).

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 take a joined up approach to protecting the Epping Forest SAC where this is appropriate. This reflects the fact that the Epping Forest SAC extends across local authority administrative boundaries and we know, having undertaken surveys in 2017 and 2019 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 in the future. People from the surrounding local authority areas, including a number of London Boroughs and from further afield also use the Epping Forest SAC.

In recognition of this we have been working with adjoining local authorities to develop approaches to managing the effects of development on the Epping Forest in a co-ordinated way. Whatever approach we take through this Strategy we know that not all recreational pressure can be avoided. We have already developed an [‘Interim Approach to Managing Recreational Pressures on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation’](#) in conjunction with our partners. This was agreed by the Council’s Cabinet in October 2018. The Interim Approach identifies a number of projects and programmes to be delivered within the Epping Forest itself, together with monitoring measures, and how these will be delivered through the securing of financial contributions. The Interim Approach will be updated in due course, including in light of the latest information from the [2019 Visitor Survey](#) and will sit alongside this Strategy as set out in the [Primer \(Part 0\)](#).

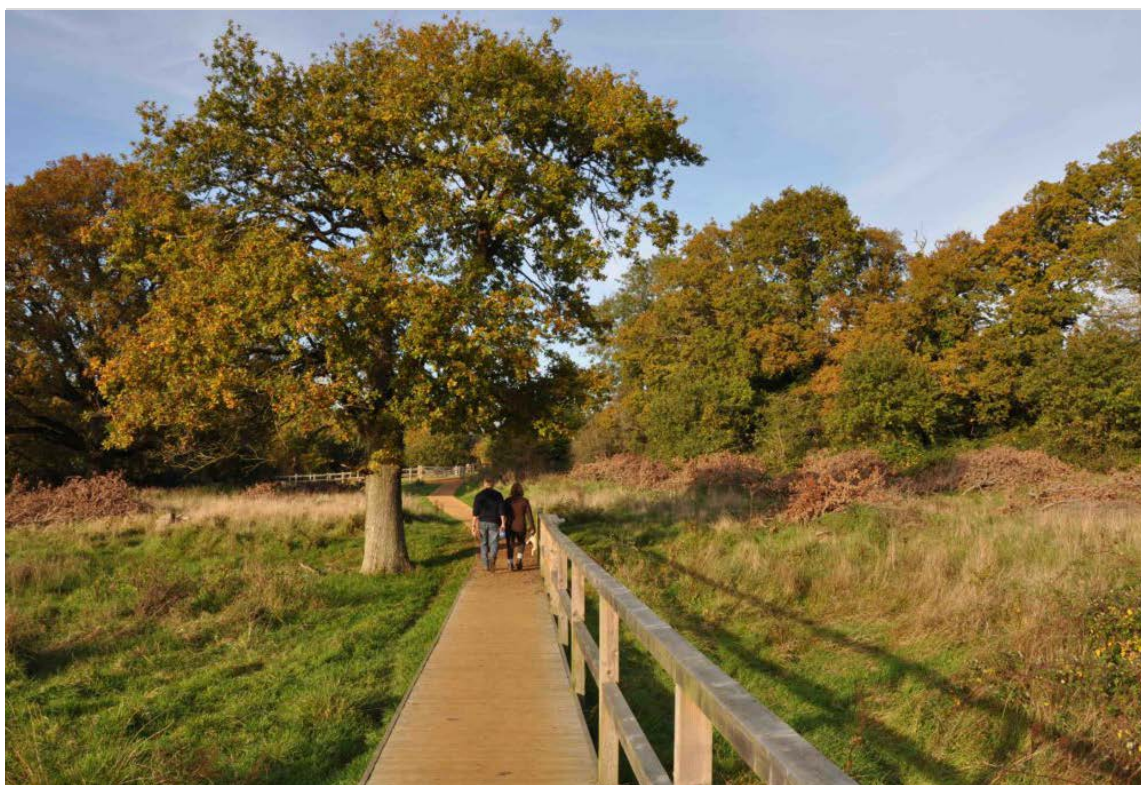


An entrance to the Epping Forest at High Beech

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

The Epping Forest Visitor surveys undertaken in [2017](#) and [2019](#) provide a wealth of information about the characteristics of existing visitors. This means that we have a better understanding of not just where people come from, but also when they visit, how often they visit, why they visit, what attracts them to use the Epping Forest and what types of activities they undertake. Consequently, the information contained in these surveys should be used to help inform the design and form of the site specific SANG provision within the context of the specific characteristics of each site and their context. This will help to ensure that the design approach taken is appropriate, follows a Landscape Led design approach and forms part of the Landscape Framework element of the site-specific Masterplan produced. Taking this approach will provide for a holistic and coherent approach to the provision of green and blue infrastructure which provides a high-quality offer for residents. In doing so the provision of green and blue infrastructure, including the SANG provision, will contribute to attracting people away from using the Epping Forest to avoid as much as possible putting extra pressure on it.

This Strategy is a key tool to achieving this ‘avoidance’ not just through the provision of SANG but also through the provision and enhancement of GI to attract existing residents who currently use the Epping Forest to other GI opportunities instead. Whilst there is a focus on avoiding placing pressure on the Epping Forest SAC the approach should also be considered where it is necessary to relieve pressure on other important sites of ecological and natural heritage importance affected by recreational use, such as Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs).



Naishes Wood SANG at Crookham Park, Fleet

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

Principles

The provision of SANG in order to avoid and/or mitigate recreational pressure on internationally designated sites is not a new concept and there is now a large amount of best practice available in terms of approaches to delivery. This includes the quantum of SANG considered necessary to positively influence visitor choice. One of the international sites where a SANG approach has now been operating for over 10 years in order to avoid an adverse effect on its integrity is the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). The approach taken by the authorities in terms of the quantum of SANG that should be provided is 8ha per 1,000 population. This level of SANG was based on the recommendations of the South East Plan Technical Assessor. It is recognised that the recreational impact pathway for the TBHSPA was focused on the disturbance of ground nesting birds from dog-walking activities.

For the Epping Forest SAC the recreational pressure impact pathway is focused on the harm to its woodland and other habitats caused by walkers, horses and cyclists, including as a result of deposition of dog faeces. We know from the [2017](#) and [2019](#) Epping Forest Visitor Surveys that dog-walkers make up a significant component of the visitor profile followed by walkers. Whilst the interest features of the TBHSPA and the Epping Forest SAC differ, the visitor profile with the greatest impact and therefore the most appropriate approach to avoiding and mitigating that harm is similar. Consequently, the Council considers that, with the exception of the South of Epping Masterplan Area (see Section 3.1 above) the use of the 8ha per 1,000 population figure to guide the quantum of SANG required is a reasonable and justified approach.

In order to undertake the assessment of the quantum of SANG required based on the increase in the population likely to arise as a result of new development the Council is proposing to use the latest nationally derived household projections (which are currently 2018 based). These household projections suggest that the average household size in Epping Forest District in 2033 will be 2.34 persons.

Incorporating SANG within the Masterplan Landscape Framework will have the added advantage that it can be identified within the context of other aspects of GI provision including sustainable drainage, public open space, green infrastructure, play and take account of visual amenity considerations. These can be clearly articulated without having to provide full details at such an early stage.



Chobham Water Meadows SANG, Chobham

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

It is recommended that the approach taken to developing the Masterplanning Landscape Framework is as follows:

- Show the existing landform and landscape features of the site that will influence the design
- Show the location and dimensions of major green areas
- Show the broad concept for drainage for the major green areas (and any provision for taking surface water from within the development areas)
- The broad treatment types applicable to each area of land and the management aspirations for each (for example: woodland; meadow; amenity grass; natural play)
- Identifies a network of connections and circular walks and their hierarchy.

The SANG elements of the Landscape Framework should look to articulate or explain briefly by, for example, a table or list explaining how the proposal intends address a range of matters such as:

- Good pedestrian connections with residential areas
- Linkages with other open spaces, streets, walking routes (and how these will be achieved)
- Provision of attractive walking routes with appropriately surfaced paths
- Open sight lines along walking routes, avoiding overhanging vegetation where this exists
- Access for dog walking with off-lead areas and facilities to attract dog walkers
- Secure boundaries where needed
- Biodiversity enhancements
- Seating, litter and dog waste bins
- Signage and interpretation
- Ongoing landscape management.

It is suggested that the following are also illustrated on the Landscape Framework:

- Play,
- Tree groups,
- Holding ponds,
- Scrapes and swales,
- Furniture and features,
- Any underground constraints or legal constraints.



Kentwood Meadows SANG, Wokingham

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

The location, type and level of provision for these individual elements will help ensure that land is used efficiently whilst maximising the offer - not only for diverting trips from the Epping Forest or other ecological sites but also to ensure that character of place and quality of life achieves their full potential through good design.

Taking a Landscape Framework approach provides the opportunity at an early stage to identify, where appropriate, an element of multi-functionality of provision can be achieved. For example Sustainable Drainage System (SuDs) features can also support biodiversity net gain objectives and create a natural interest feature which provides variety of landscape for the visitor.

SANG is not, however, intended to address the other functions of greenspace. Nevertheless, there are some functions which may be appropriate to incorporate within SANG where it adds value to the attractiveness of the provision and is appropriate within the context of the character of the Natural Greenspace. For example, appropriately designed natural children's play and SuDS provision may be acceptable. To support the attractiveness of the SANG for all appropriately designed and located seating will be acceptable.

SANG may be created from:

- Existing open space of SANG quality with no existing public access or limited public access, which could be made fully accessible to the public.
- Existing open space which is already accessible but is underused and which could be enhanced so that it is more attractive to residents.
- Land in other uses which could be converted into SANG

As SANG is intended to attract new residents arising from the relevant Masterplan areas the SANG provision should be located adjacent to the built parts of the site and designed to be visually and physically linked with it. This does not necessarily need to be within the Masterplan area as proposed to be allocated but can be adjacent/ in close proximity to it. The 'test' will be that it can be demonstrated through the site wide masterplanning process and at the detailed planning application stage that its location will be effective in attracting new residents to it. In particular, easy access to the site should be created. This should be via clear and 'logical' access points from the new development that the SANG is intended to serve and wherever possible, new points of access should be created to make it easy for the existing community to access the SANG in order to support community cohesion. In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given to making contributions to a quantum of off-site provision where it can be clearly demonstrated that such an approach will be effective in providing an appropriate SANG offer in relation to the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

In order to be effective, the land to be used as SANG will need to be available from first occupation of the first phase of the residential development proposed. This will be secured through Section 106 planning obligations and will need to be supported by a phasing and delivery plan for the implementation of the works required to create the full SANG offer.

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

SANG must be designed so that it is perceived to be safe by users and should seek to avoid sites of high nature conservation value where increased visitor numbers would adversely affect that value. Such damage may arise, for example, from increased disturbance, erosion, input of nutrients from dog faeces, and increased incidence of fires. If any sites of high nature conservation value are considered as SANG, the impact on their nature conservation value will need to be assessed and a clear justification for its inclusion provided. This should include the measures needed to ensure the protection of its nature conservation value and how this will be secured.

What types of visitors should the SANG be designed to accommodate?

We know from surveys undertaken in [2017](#) and [2019](#) of people visiting the Epping Forest that the two main user groups who visit on a very regular basis are dog-walkers and walkers. Consequently, any SANG provision and its integration within the wider locality, including, for example, links into the local Public Rights of Way network will need to be designed to provide an attractive 'offer' that supports such activities.

The SANG should be well publicised in order to attract people to use it instead of the Epping Forest or other relevant ecologically important sites. Consequently, initiatives such as providing information for new residents promoting the existence of the SANG as well as other GI assets and encouraging their use should be explored. This could be through leaflets or a phone app. This would also help to support wider ambitions such as supporting Healthy Lifestyles.

Walking and Cycling Routes

SANG should seek to provide a choice of circular routes of around 2.3km – 2.5km in length to cater for dog-walkers. Longer circular routes of at least 3km as part of the choice will be expected to support other walkers.

For smaller scale SANG the provision of circular walking routes do not need to be entirely within the SANG itself but can include connected Public Rights of Way (PRoW), or the creation of connections to existing PRoW and other areas of Natural Greenspace in close proximity to the site where dogs are allowed off the lead. The key consideration will be that a variety of routes and opportunities are provided to dog-walkers and walkers.

Opportunities to provide cyclists and, where appropriate, horse riders with safe access to off-road or 'traffic light' routes should be identified.

Paths must be easily used and well maintained and if surfacing is to be provided in order to support greater accessibility this should be done in a sensitive way so as to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.

3.2 DELIVERING SANG

Natural Play

Appropriately designed Natural play provision is considered to be an important element of the design to support the attractiveness of the SANG to families and would be an acceptable feature.



Hogmoor Inclosure SANG, Bordon

Wayfinding

Routes should be shown on way markers and visitor boards of a design and in a location, which would not undermine the naturalness of the space. Digital tools to facilitate wayfinding should also be explored.

Appearance

A semi-natural looking landscape with plenty of variation will be required although it will not be necessary to reproduce the landscape types within the Epping Forest.

Sport facilities and formal public open space will not be considered as contributing toward the provision of SANG.

SANG needs to reproduce the quality of the experience that a visit to other ecologically important sites would provide, so an air of relative wildness will be an important feature of SANG design.

Avoiding Conflicts

Careful consideration will need to be given to the design of the SANG and routes within it to avoid conflicts between walkers, cyclists and dogs and in some cases horse-riders. There will also be a need to consider locations for areas of natural play and their relationship with areas used for dogs which are off the lead.

