



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION
JUNE 2020

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Foreword from Councillor John Philip, Cabinet member for Finance and Economic Development and Councillor Nigel Bedford, Cabinet member for Planning and Sustainability

Our District is home to a rich and unique tapestry of 'natural' greenspace – including but not only Epping Forest itself. This network of landscapes has deep roots in ecology, culture and natural heritage and we need to make best use of it to help us tackle the climate emergency, to enable us to build resilient communities and to ensure we develop an understanding of what high quality open space looks like and how it can be delivered.

We have developed this Strategy to identify how Green and Blue Infrastructure can benefit new and existing local communities. We have analysed how the District's network of ecological, cultural and natural heritage currently benefits us and how we can protect them. In doing so we have examined the importance of design, maintenance and engagement within the 'managed' landscape. This has helped shape our ambition for the future as we look to ensure that high-quality Green and Blue Infrastructure is delivered across the District whether it be through small scale community-led projects or the strategic masterplanning of new communities.

Our approach builds on National Planning Policy and Practice Guidance. This requires Councils to take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and Green and Blue Infrastructure and make planning decisions using an evidenced based approach. This Strategy supports that approach, embedded in many of the policies within the Council's emerging Local Plan, by

providing a framework to show how our ambition and the implementation of those policies will be achieved. We are clear that we cannot achieve our ambitions for the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure on our own. We will continue to work in partnership with other organisations including Natural England, the Conservators of Epping Forest, adjoining local authorities, landowners and with local communities to take forward this critical part of our Vision for the future of the District.

The uncertain times that we are currently living through has brought into focus how important Green and Blue Infrastructure is to our health and well-being. I would therefore urge anybody who has an interest in the future of our Green and Blue Infrastructure assets to engage in shaping the final strategy by responding to this consultation. We have identified different types of projects that could be brought forward but we want to hear your ideas as to how we can protect, improve and add to the rich and unique tapestry that we already have on our doorstep.

We look forward to many constructive suggestions as a result of this consultation so that we end up with the best possible strategy for our district.

Councillor John Philip Councillor Nigel Bedford



HOW DO I RESPOND TO THE STRATEGY?

The consultation period for the Green Infrastructure Strategy is from **9am on 4th June – 5pm on 16th July 2020.**

Online

Please go to the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy webpage at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/greeninfrastructurestrategy and click the link to the survey to complete a short questionnaire about your feedback and thoughts on the Strategy.

By Email

If you would prefer to submit your feedback via email, or have any further comments on the Strategy, please send your email to ldfconsult@eppingforestdc.gov.uk with the subject 'Green Infrastructure Strategy Feedback.'

By Post

If you would prefer to submit your feedback via post, or have any further comments on the Strategy, please send your completed survey or letter to:

Planning Policy
Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices
323 High Street
Epping
Essex
CM16 4BZ

By Phone

If you would like to book an appointment on the 30th June 2020 to speak to an officer regarding your feedback on the Strategy, please send an email to ldfconsult@eppingforestdc.gov.uk with the subject 'Green Infrastructure Strategy Phone Call.'

Please indicate a 2 hour window in which you would be available for an officer to call you (between the hours of 10am and 4pm), plus the phone number you wish to be contacted on. If you can give an indication of what you would like to ask about that would be appreciated.

If you have problems accessing the document or survey material online, we can help. Please call Epping Forest District Council on 01992 564288 (between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday) to make alternative arrangements.

The strategy is made up of the following sections:

Section 1 Context

This section provides the context within which the Strategy has been developed, together with its purpose to ensure that Green and Blue Infrastructure forms a core benefit for new and existing local communities and protects existing ecological assets within the District, including as part of the design of future development.

Section 2 The District's Assets, Vision And Objectives

This section provides an understanding of the quantity and quality of the District's existing Green and Blue Infrastructure assets and establishes the Vision and Objectives to inform the delivery of the Strategy.

Section 3 Delivering Multifunctional Places And Spaces

This section examines the relationship between multifunctional Green Infrastructure and the typology-based approach to provision in national policy and guidance. It looks at the importance of design and maintenance in the 'managed' landscape in engaging more people with greenspace. It explores how greenspace can respond to a diverse agenda including: tackling childhood obesity, the climate emergency, enhancing and protecting biodiversity assets, the 'healthy-living' agenda, water quality and loneliness.

Section 4 Implementation

This section looks at how this ambition will be taken forward in Epping Forest District, in order to deliver a legacy of high quality, integrated Green and Blue Infrastructure assets of a strategic scale, including through strategic development sites, and provides strategies as to how this will be achieved.

Appendix 1 Project Pages

This appendix sets out the types of projects that could be delivered across the district. Projects vary from maintenance, to ecology and movement projects - many of which will need engagement with a variety of stakeholders and partners to deliver. The Project Pages act as mini briefs for these projects setting goals, identifying key partners and including outline costs where possible.

Appendix 2 Strategic Allocations

This appendix sets out the framework within which the strategic sites proposed in the emerging Local Plan should be developed to maximise Green and Blue Infrastructure opportunities and successfully integrate with the existing communities and places.

Appendix 3 SANG Guidance

This appendix sets out the principles that should be applied in the design and implementation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and should be read primarily in conjunction with Appendix 2.

Appendix 4 Sites for Enhancement

This appendix identifies site specific projects that should be brought forward in order to protect or enhance the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure assets.

Reviewing And Monitoring This Document

This document will be reviewed regularly (maximum every two years) to ensure it remains fit for purpose and updated as necessary.

SECTION 1

CONTEXT

This section provides the context within which the Strategy has been developed, together with its purpose to ensure that Green and Blue Infrastructure forms a core benefit for new and existing local communities and protects existing ecological assets within the District, including as part of the design of future development.

Overview

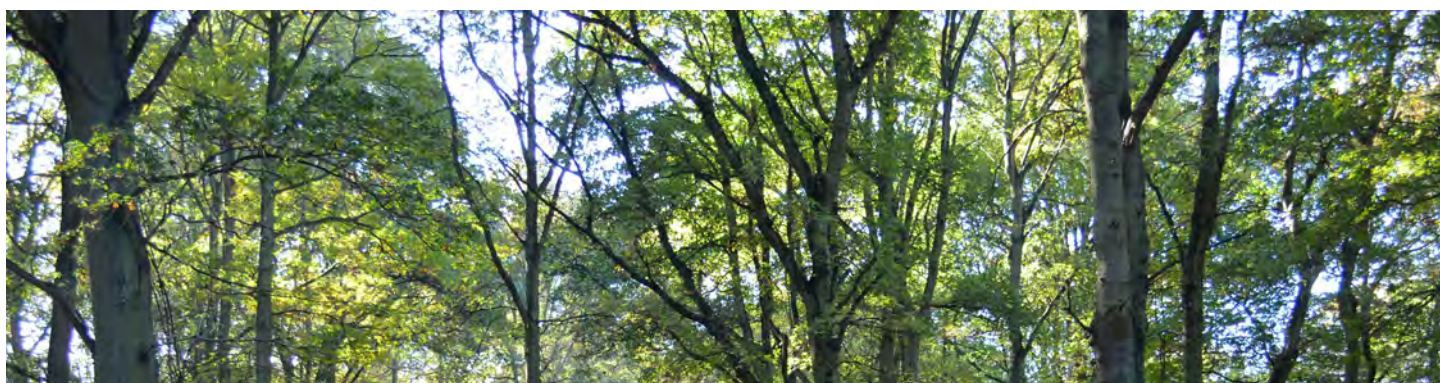
1.1 Over recent years the social, environmental, and economic benefits of Green and Blue Infrastructure have become more apparent, as have the benefits of taking a landscape led masterplanning approach to designing development. The provision and improvement of Green and Blue Infrastructure has become the primary means of framing sustainable communities and liveable neighbourhoods.

1.2 The Council's emerging Local Plan sets out the most significant level of development to be brought forward across the district in a generation. In doing so it has established ambitious policies in relation to the provision and enhancement of Green and Blue Infrastructure, the protection of ecological and landscape assets including those with a heritage value and the importance of design in creating positive places for people to live, work and visit. In proposing to allocate strategic sites around Harlow, we are working with our partner authorities under the umbrella of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, to deliver integrated development and associated infrastructure (including Green and Blue Infrastructure) to support the delivery of Garden Town principles. Within this context the Strategy includes a particular focus on ensuring that strategic housing allocations that sit within the Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) administrative boundary fully integrate with the wider Garden Town. The Strategy also recognises the importance of other cross-boundary opportunities to integrate Green and Blue Infrastructure by working with a range of partners including our neighbouring authorities within and outside of London.

1.3 An important purpose of the Strategy, but not the only one, is to provide a framework by which Green and Blue Infrastructure will be enhanced or provided in such a way as to avoid or mitigate the impacts of development on the integrity of the Epping Forest. The Epping Forest is a key natural and recreational asset for both the District and the wider area, including London. However, as an internationally important ecological site, it is critical that the Council provides a framework to deliver measures which avoid placing additional pressure on the Epping Forest as a result of new development.

1.4 The evidence base for the Epping Forest District Local Plan Submission Version 2017 ('the emerging Local Plan') provides an assessment of landscape character, an overview of the level and type of existing Green and Blue Infrastructure, identifies where there are deficits, and assesses the effects that new homes in particular may have on the Epping Forest and other existing Green and Blue Infrastructure assets. This evidence underpins the policy approach to the provision and improvement of Green and Blue Infrastructure. This strategy builds on this evidence base and the policy framework within the emerging Local Plan by providing guidance to ensure that good design principles underpin the provision of Green and Blue Infrastructure, while also identifying projects at the strategic level as well as more local, community-led initiatives that can be delivered across the district.

1.5 Account has also been taken of evidence produced by other local authorities, including by Harlow District Council, in relation to the development of their own Local Plans.



SECTION 1 | CONTEXT

1.6 Why have a Strategy?

National Planning policy and guidance requires councils to take a strategic approach to protecting, maintaining and enhancing ecological habitats and landscape features, including those of heritage importance, and other Green and Blue Infrastructure assets and make planning decisions using an evidenced based approach. The policies within the emerging Local Plan respond to this requirement and this Strategy has been developed to support the implementation of those policies. In doing so there needs to be an integrated approach which:

- Responds to the need to address the requirement to provide suitable avoidance or mitigation measures to manage any potential impacts of growth on protected sites – in our case primarily the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation together with a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites.
- Support the provision of net biodiversity gain (reflecting the emerging requirements in the Environment Bill).
- Ensures the future provision of greenspace to support the needs of new and existing communities and that the District's natural assets are managed in a coherent and sensitive way.
- Responds to the climate change crisis through measures for enhancing biodiversity and managing surface water and other sources of flooding.
- Supports healthy lifestyles through active travel and recreational opportunities and the creation of connected communities.
- Provides a coherent framework for the long term management and maintenance of Green and Blue Infrastructure.
- Provides the evidence to support the assessment of the costs for securing delivery and management through the planning process, and support applications for external funding.

What Is Green And Blue Infrastructure?

1.7 The emerging Local Plan contains the following definitions:

Green Infrastructure:

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



Blue Infrastructure:

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



The Value Of Green And Blue Infrastructure

1.8 The need for people to have contact with greenspace and nature has long been recognised. The Victorians saw the need for public parks as a release from urban overcrowding and a broad coalition of local people as well as the City of London Corporation fought to save the Epping Forest from enclosure. This culminated in the passing of the Epping Forest Act in 1878 which established the City of London as the Conservators of Epping Forest and has ensured the protection of the Forest. Later, in the 20th Century, Sir Frederick Gibberd's work in master planning the original Harlow New Town responded to Sir Patrick Abercrombie's plans for London and Greater London including that open space should be coordinated into a park system to provide 'an easy flow of open space from garden to park, from park to parkway, from parkway to green wedge and from green wedge to Green Belt'. Gibberd, in his Harlow New Town Masterplan (page 10) set out that 'Links to the countryside are formed by green wedges designed to embrace natural features such as valleys, woods, brooks and quarries. It is proposed that the wedges and valleys left free of buildings should be kept as natural as possible, and in no way turned into the character of a Town Park.' In taking this approach Gibberd sought to bring together the best of town and country.



Sir Frederick Gibberd's Harlow New Town

1.9 While the value of greenspace has long been considered important, only recently has it been more clearly evidenced. Empirical evidence, from organisations including the World Health Organisation, Natural England, and Public Health England make a clear and robust case for the multiple benefits that Green and Blue Infrastructure can deliver, across a diverse agenda including: tackling childhood obesity, the climate emergency, enhancing and protecting biodiversity assets, the 'healthy living' agenda, water quality and loneliness. It also provides the opportunity to restore, for example, biodiversity assets that have been lost over time, as has been experienced in many areas including Epping Forest District.

1.10 In recent years this established evidence of benefits has begun to be quantified with work by, among others, Field in Trust and the Greater London Authority which demonstrates the monetary value of Green and Blue Infrastructure. This has provided the formulation of pragmatic fiscal arguments for investing in the delivery and, crucially, the maintenance of Green and Blue Infrastructure.

1.11 The Value of Green and Blue Infrastructure is also recognised in National Planning Practice Guidance as follows:

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

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 8-005-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019

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

SECTION 1 | CONTEXT

What Planning Goals Can Green Infrastructure Help To Achieve?

1.13 The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that GI can help in:

Building a strong, competitive economy

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

Achieving well-designed places

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



Sovereign Square, Leeds by re-form landscape architecture

Promoting healthy and safe communities

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

Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change

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



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

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

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

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 8-006-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019

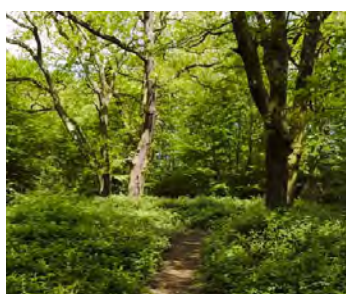


Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford by Hargreaves Associates and LDA Design

What Does Green Infrastructure Include?

1.14 Natural England's 'Green Infrastructure Guide' provides a useful summary of what GI includes:

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



The Role Of Design

1.15 Key to the success of GI is its provision as a multifunctional 'asset'. However, open space assessments and policy requirements are often based on individual typologies. Too often new developments follow the provision of GI through a rigid application of individual typology standards, and as such wider benefits that could be delivered by taking a strategic approach to GI provision to designing multifunctional space are missed. Taking a narrow approach can result in the creation of bland and unattractive places which do nothing to encourage people to use them. Therefore the quality of GI is as important as the quantity of GI, whilst recognising that the quantity of provision forms the backbone of many typologies. There will, however, be occasions, particularly where there are deficiencies in the quality rather than the quantity of a typology, that greater benefits can be achieved by investing in existing spaces rather than in creating additional space.

1.16 In the context of national and local planning policy and guidance in relation to place-making and good design, an approach that simply follows space standards is not enough.

1.17 Instead the Council's planning policy approach supported by this Strategy recognises the role of high quality design to bring open space to life and makes it a requirement of development proposals. Drawing out the overlap of functions in relation to the opportunities of individual sites supports the ambition of delivering high quality, multifunctional, and joyful greenspaces. However, in encouraging such an approach it is also important to recognise that it may not be appropriate to apply the multifunctional approach to GI to each greenspace. There will be a need for some areas, particularly some smaller spaces, to fulfil only one function well, such as for example wildlife enhancement. Other spaces may already have 'life' and therefore increasing their size could help to buffer and protect existing wildlife-rich areas.

Upcoming Development

1.18 Within the period 2011-2033 the growth proposed in the emerging Epping Forest District Local Plan will provide for a minimum of 11,400 new homes. Much of this will be delivered through larger strategic sites which, through the application of Local Plan policy, will require planning applicants to take a collaborative, cohesive, coherent, integrated and proactive approach to the provision of GI.

Epping Forest Special Area Of Conservation

1.19 The Epping Forest is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Under the Habitats Directive 1992 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 EFDC, as a competent authority, is required to ensure that any proposed project or plan, including our emerging Local Plan, will not adversely affect the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC. We know that the Forest is already under pressure from recreational use by existing residents and visitors, and from atmospheric pollution caused by vehicles. It is therefore imperative that the emerging Local Plan ensures that such pressures are avoided or mitigated so that new development does not cause harm to the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC.

1.20 The Strategy provides a framework for taking an integrated approach to protecting the Epping Forest SAC through a number of measures including through the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is the name given to the greenspace that is of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation, its role is to avoid and mitigate recreational pressure on Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. In addition the identification and funding of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategies (SAMMS) provide a way of mitigating recreational pressures within the internationally designated sites themselves.

1.21 The City of London Corporation has, since 1959, purchased nearly 730 hectares (1,800 acres) of 'Buffer Land' to protect the context and setting of the Forest. The Epping Forest Buffer land has, up until now, been used to provide a landscape and ecological Buffer between the Forest itself and the wider local landscape. However, we know, through our engagement with the Conservators of Epping Forest, that there is the potential to open up parts of the Buffer Lands for residents and visitors so take some pressure off the Epping Forest SAC itself.

1.22 In order to address the potential harm to the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC, development in the District needs to take place alongside avoidance and mitigation measures to ensure its protection and enhancement. In the Thames Basin Heaths area, for example, SANG has been provided as part of, or close to development, as an alternative recreational offer to the Heath areas, to avoid placing additional recreational pressure on the Heath. More detail about the Council's proposed approach to avoidance and mitigation measures is set out in Section 4 and Appendix 2, 3 and 4 to this Strategy.



1.23 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). 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. 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 therefore 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 including in light of the latest information from the 2019 Visitor Survey and will sit alongside this Strategy.

1.24 An important aspect of the Epping Forest Visitor Survey is that it helps us to understand where people come from when they visit, how often they visit, and what types of activities they use the Epping Forest for. The 2019 Survey has also provided us with further information on other GI sites that, if improved or better connected with the wider area, could act to attract people away from using the Epping Forest as frequently. All of this information is invaluable in helping us to ensure that the approach we take in this Strategy, whether it be in the scale and design of SANG, the improvement of existing GI or creating connections between different GI assets, that it contributes to attracting people away from using the Epping Forest. In this way we can avoid as much as possible putting extra pressure on the Epping Forest. This Strategy is a key tool to achieving this 'avoidance' through the provision and enhancement of GI to attract existing residents who currently use the Epping Forest to other GI opportunities instead.

1.25 In particular we do not believe that the simple provision of SANG provides the most effective approach and that by taking an informed approach to the design of the SANG 'offer' and integrating them as part of a wider GI Strategy can support the delivery of a more integrated and attractive offer for residents, both new and existing, to encourage the use of GI opportunities closer to home. Taking such an approach has the potential not only to provide for new residents' recreational needs but also offer an attractive alternative to existing residents so that they reduce the number of visits that they make to the Epping Forest. This Strategy, in all its forms, provides the framework for delivering this integrated approach and the positive contribution that it will make in delivering avoidance measures is the implicit 'golden thread' that runs through it.

SECTION 1 | CONTEXT

1.26 To support the effectiveness of the creation of SANG and the enhancement of existing spaces to make them more attractive to people to use instead of the Epping Forest SAC, the Council will work with the Conservators of Epping Forest to explore the potential for introducing car parking charges. Such an approach would act as one way of encouraging more locally based visitors to use alternative GI opportunities, particularly for regular activities such as dog walking.

District Wide And Strategic Allocation Delivery

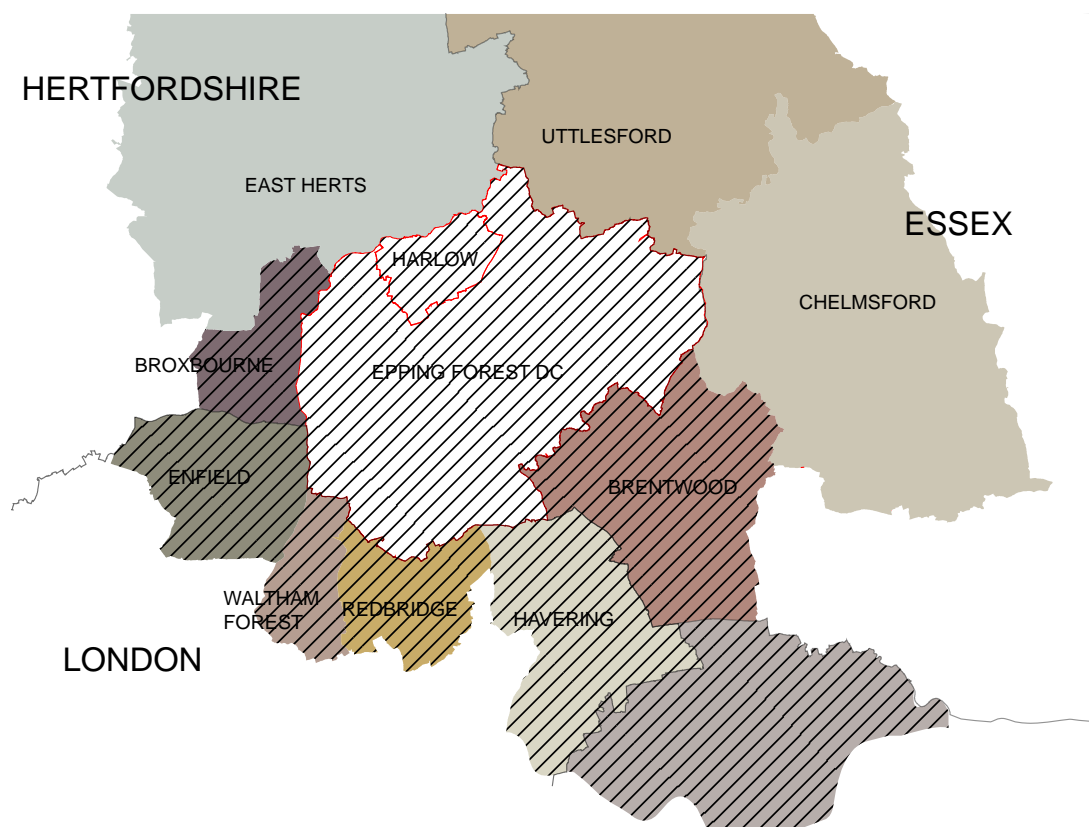
1.27 The emerging projects proposed in this Strategy are split between district wide projects and those relating to strategic site allocations.

1.28 Undertaking a district wide analysis and setting of objectives and in looking to provide guidance to inform the development of the strategic allocations has led to a series of Project Pages (Appendix 1) that set out the types of projects that the Council wishes to see delivered across the District. They vary from ecological enhancement and movement projects - many of which will involve

working with a variety of stakeholders and partners to deliver – through to adopting different approaches to managing and maintaining GI. The Project Pages act as mini briefs for these projects. They set goals, identify key partners and include, where appropriate and possible, outline costs.

1.29 Appendix 2 focuses on the larger scale developments proposed to be allocated in the emerging Local Plan and so goes into further detail at a settlement scale, through identifying the approach to be taken when providing GI, and outlining specific key projects. This initial approach is to be further tested through the design process and ongoing engagement between council officers and applicants. Section 4 sets out what is expected through that process.

1.30 There is of course a need to consider the overlap between the two levels and how, for example, by integrating the provision of SANG with the wider network of GI and walking and cycling opportunities can support a more attractive and beneficial offer for reducing the use of the car and supporting 'healthy lifestyle' activities.



Partners

1.31 The development of this Strategy has sought to take into account and respond to the views of a range of stakeholders as to how the provision of GI can be best secured within the District. This has included those of Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest including as part of their submissions on the Council's emerging Local Plan, and a range of local authorities and public bodies through the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Member and Officer Groups. The responses received as a result of the consultation and engagement on this draft Strategy will be considered by the Council, and where appropriate, amendments made. The final version of the Strategy will then be adopted by the Council as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Strategy is also intended to inform approaches to the provision and maintenance of GI outside of the planning context. It will also provide the context for seeking external funding for the implementation of GI initiatives where opportunities arise and support the implementation of local community GI initiatives such as tree planting. It therefore has both a strategic and local focus.

1.32 Ongoing engagement with our partners will be key to the successful funding, design and delivery of projects. Our partners include: Natural England, the Conservators of Epping Forest, adjoining local authorities, the Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Essex Wildlife Trust, EFDC Country Care, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the Canal and River Trust, Parish and Town Councils, the Ramblers Association, the Woodland Trust and Local Friends Groups. Where appropriate existing partnership mechanisms such as the 'Green Arc' strategic partnership, the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town partnership, will be used to ensure an efficient, effective and coordinated approach to the planning and delivery of 'larger than local' GI is achieved.

Stewardship

1.33 While the case for the value of GI and its provision is a convincing one, there is no central government funding specifically for its maintenance. This is instead left to landowners. Local authorities and parish and town councils, who have traditionally been the custodians of key parts of the GI network, have been facing increasing budget cuts when having to balance a range of funding priorities. As a result GI assets in public ownership are increasingly facing underfunding for their maintenance despite the importance of their value to communities and how the quality of a place is perceived by the business community. . To ensure that long-term maintenance of GI is sustainable in the long term and does not result in unreasonable cost-burdens the Strategy provides information on the approaches to stewardship currently being considered by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The most appropriate model or models will be pursued in relation to the proposed Garden Town communities and other strategic sites which are proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan. Consideration will be given to these stewardship models and their potential use in relation to relevant GI assets in the rest of the district.

Legislative And Policy Context

1.34 A significant amount of legislation and national and local planning policy and guidance provide the context to the production of this draft GI Strategy for Epping Forest District. The following section outlines the international, national, regional and local legislation and/or policies that have influenced the development of this draft Strategy.

Legislative Framework

1.35 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision making throughout the public sector, which should be seeking to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the commitments made by government in its 25 Year Environment Plan. It therefore goes wider than just a local authority's planning functions.

1.36 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, provide the primary legislative framework for the protection wildlife, nature conservation, the countryside, national parks and public rights of way in the UK. This includes the legislative framework in relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), of which there are a number across the district.



Hainault Forest SSSI

1.37 The conservation of the natural environment as it relates to sites of international importance is enshrined in legislation through the EU Habitats Directive the requirements of which have been encapsulated in the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which came into force on 1 February 2020. The ultimate aim of the Directive is to “maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest” (Habitats Directive, Article 2(2)). The Directive established internationally designated sites of importance for biodiversity (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar sites). The District has two internationally designated sites, being the Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley SPA and Lee Valley ‘Ramsar’ site. The Epping Forest (including that area designated as SAC) is legally protected. The Epping Forest Act 1878 established that the unenclosed parts of the Forest should be preserved and maintained as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public and named the City of London Corporation as its conservators.

1.38 As well as the statutory designations set out above the district contains a number of local established designations including Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife and Local Wildlife sites.



Roding Valley Meadows SSSI

1.39 The role of GI in responding to the Climate Emergency should also not be underestimated. Global climate change and species protection provide clear drivers to introduce measures such as local GI networks. International agreements and legislation make provision for addressing both climate change and species protection whilst a growing body of evidence identifies the value of nature to human health and well-being.

1.40 At a national level, legislative imperatives are included in the UK Climate Change Strategy with the overarching 'net zero' emissions target by 2050 arising from the Climate Change Act 2008. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' sets out a framework to maintain and improve the environment for the next generation. It commits to:

- Making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and well-being; and
- Focusing on increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.

1.41 To complement its 25 Year Environmental Plan, Industrial Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy, the UK government launched a Clean Air Strategy in 2019. The Clean Air Strategy setting out comprehensive actions required across all parts of government and society to improve air quality. The strategy sets out how we will protect the nation's health, the environment, secure clean growth and innovation, reduce emissions from transport, homes, farming and industry and monitor our progress.

1.42 Importantly, Government re-introduced the Environment Bill on 30 January 2020. The Bill sets out how the government plans to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK. There are a number of elements within the Bill which are relevant to this Strategy including the proposed introduction of a mandatory requirement for biodiversity net gain in the planning system to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity and create new greenspaces for local communities to enjoy. In introducing the Bill Government has made it clear that net gain requirements will supplement, not replace or undermine, existing protections for protected sites or irreplaceable habitats.

1.43 The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (February 2019) sets out national policy for local planning authorities and decision-takers. The NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11), with sustainable development having economic, social and environmental objectives. The environmental objective is that development should protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment as well as protecting biodiversity, minimising pollution and adapting to climate change and the demands of a low carbon economy. The NPPF defines Green Infrastructure (which also includes Blue Infrastructure) as:

"A network of multi-functional greenspace, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities."

1.44 The NPPF outlines the relevance of GI to the development of policies within local plans and neighbourhood plans:

- Paragraph 20 highlights that ‘Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for...conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure’.
- Paragraph 91 requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places; referencing safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities and high-quality public space as a means to achieving this.
- Paragraph 150 states that ‘New development should be planned for in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change...including through the planning of green infrastructure’.
- Paragraph 171 states that ‘Plans should...take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure’.
- Paragraph 181 links the requirement for the identification of green infrastructure provision and enhancement at the plan making stage to the improvement of air quality or mitigation of impacts relating to this issue.

1.45 The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) encourages a strategic approach to incorporating GI into local plans and implementing planning decisions through an evidence-based approach. It emphasises the importance of GI to the delivery of high-quality sustainable development, alongside other forms of infrastructure such as transport, energy, waste and water. GI provides multiple benefits, notably ecosystem services, at a range of scales, derived from natural systems and processes.

1.46 The PPG states that local authorities are required to provide suitable mitigation for potential impacts on international nature conservation sites and recommends the provision of open space to deliver a range of benefits and mitigation measures.

1.47 The PPG also requires the sustainable management of GI, which should be identified at the earliest stage, alongside the determination of sources of funding for its on-going management.

SECTION 1 | CONTEXT

Regional Context

1.48 At the strategic / cross-boundary level, Essex County Council's emerging Green Essex Strategy takes into consideration priorities offset out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, and other key national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans, including the Essex Growth Infrastructure Framework, that influence action to protect, manage and enhance our GI network. The emerging Vision and objectives in the Green Essex Strategy and those in this emerging GI Strategy align.

1.49 The aim of the Council is to manage the potential impact of development on GI with the strategic objective, working in partnership with other groups, of maintaining and where possible enhancing the ecological, recreational and conservation role of GI within a wider context. Within this strategic, cross-boundary context, the Council will collaborate with partners to:

- Protect and enhance the natural environment of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor (LSCC) Core Area;
- Protect the natural biodiversity of the Lee Valley Regional Park SPA and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Site (a wetland of international importance), and support the utilisation of natural assets for recreation purposes where appropriate; and
- Conserve and enhance the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

1.50 The Council is taking a comprehensive approach to managing, protecting and enhancing the GI network through this Strategy. It will support the implementation of a range of policies in the emerging Local Plan to ensure development is delivered in the context of maintaining a high quality built and natural environment. Whilst the emerging Local Plan is yet to be adopted and some changes are proposed to be made to it, the overarching approach to the built and natural environment, including the relevant policies, have been supported.

These policies include:

- The location of development (Policy SP 2 and Chapter 5)
- Green Belt and District Open Land (Policy SP 6);
- The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green and Blue Infrastructure (Policy SP 7);
- Visitor Economy (Policy E 4);
- Supporting sustainable transport choices (Policy T 1);
- Protecting habitat and improving biodiversity (Policy DM 1);
- Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley SPA (Policy DM 2);
- Landscape character, ancient landscapes and geodiversity (Policy DM 3);
- Sustainable urban drainage systems (Policy DM 16);
- Green and Blue Infrastructure (Policy DM 5);
- Open space, sport and recreation provision (Policy DM 6);
- High Quality Design (Policy DM 9);
- Managing and reducing flood risk (Policy DM 15);
- Sustainable drainage systems (Policy DM 16);
- Protecting and enhancing watercourses and flood defences (Policy DM 17)
- On site management of waste water and water supply (Policy DM 18)
- Air Quality (Policy DM 22)

1.51 Policy DM 5 (Green and Blue Infrastructure) in particular sets out the Council's expectations as to how development proposals should respond to the GI needs of the District to ensure that GI assets are protected and enhanced or new provision made to ensure that a network of multi-functional green and blue assets is created across the District.

SECTION 2 THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

This section provides an understanding of the current quality and quantity of the District's GI assets, and sets out the Vision and Objectives to inform the delivery of the Strategy.

Landscape Overview

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

2.2 These landscapes provide unique 'natural' open space resources for residents and visitors to enjoy.

2.3 Green belt protection has previously limited development in the District. However, in order to meet the housing requirement for the District a minimum of 11,400 new homes will need to be provided over the period of the emerging Local Plan, being 2011-2033. This proposed growth is happening at a time when the impact on the Epping Forest SAC

as a result of atmospheric pollution and recreational pressure in particular is already an issue. Further development will increase harm to the Epping Forest SAC if a suitable range of mitigation measures are not identified and implemented.

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

- How do we create a mix of landscapes that encourage people to use outdoor space near their home, rather than travel to the Forest?
- How do we make that mix of spaces function as social infrastructure to help address build resilient communities?
- How do we build an ecological network to tackle the ecological and climate crises? And how does that network build on historic, or create new landscape character?
- How do we increase understanding and appreciation of the landscape, its ecology and its cultural and natural heritage? And how to we engage new users to draw them into the countryside?



Church Lane Flood Meadow, North Weald Bassett

Quantity

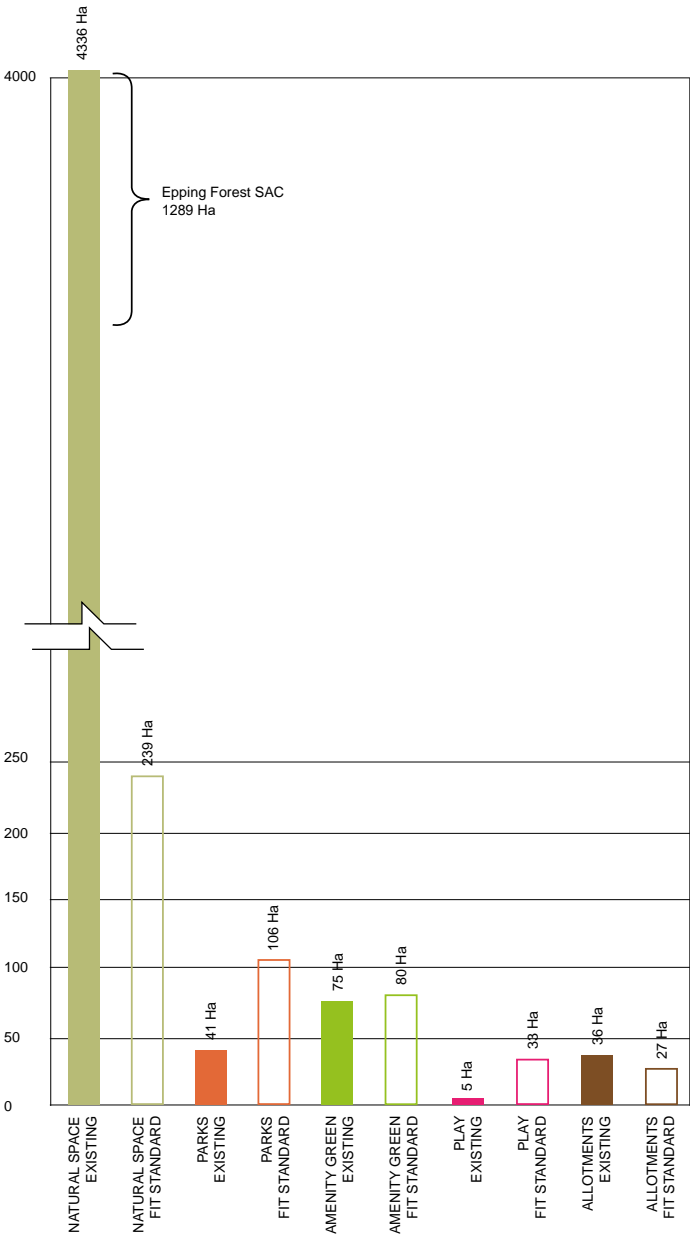
2.5 The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 (EB703) separates open spaces into different typologies (as shown in the graph opposite). In line with normal practice sites of under 0.2ha are not included. The quantity of open space required in relation to the resident population is assessed against Fields in Trust standards. Whilst the Council, through the development of this Strategy, is keen to move away from the delivery of individual typologies of GI and rather focus on the creation of more multi-functional spaces, having an understanding of the level of existing provision of different assets provides a useful baseline of understanding in moving forward.

2.6 The most striking feature is the extent of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace within the District (from here on referred to as 'natural' greenspace*7) - it is over 18 times the minimum provision. This is in part because it includes the Epping Forest, but the District also benefits from a network of other spaces including many ancient woodlands. However, the level of such provision should not be relied on to support the needs of future residents recognising that the ecological status of much of this provision is already under pressure. At the opposite end of the scale parks and provision of open space specifically for children and young people are below the minimum standards in some parts of the District.

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

- Natural and Semi Natural Open Space 1814%
- Parks and Gardens 38%
- Amenity Greenspace 94%
- Play and facilities for Young People 15%
- Allotments 133%

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



SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

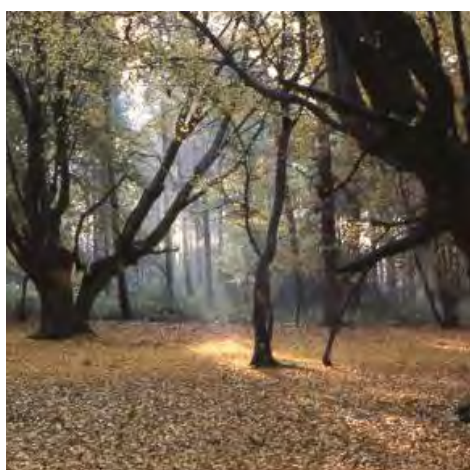
Quality

2.7 The quantity of 'natural' greenspace in the District has no doubt compensated for the lack of amenity value in some other typologies. The quality of 'natural' greenspace in the District is exceptional as evidenced by the number of sites and the 'high status' of their environmental designations ranging from the SAC and SSSI's through to an extensive network of Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS). These LoWS, whilst not as well-known as the Epping Forest, create a high-quality patchwork of ancient woodlands and wildlife sites. Increasing local knowledge of the existence of these sites, improving accessibility to them, as well as raising awareness of their natural and cultural heritage, could increase their use. In doing so there is a need to ensure that this would not cause harm to their ecological value, including to ground flora and soils. As well as supporting the concept of locally accessible natural greenspace such an approach can help to take pressure off those assets, including the Epping Forest, which are suffering as a result of recreational pressures.

2.8 Quality across other typologies is also assessed in the Open Space Strategy. Quality is most commonly assessed against Green Flag criteria, which evaluates greenspaces as to whether, for example, they are welcoming, accessible

to all, well maintained, safe and secure. Other assessments including that provided by the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS), Green Heritage, and Green Tourism assessments also measure the quality of sites, alongside favourable condition assessments for Sites of Special Scientific Interest. All of these measures can help to measure the expected quality of new provision.

2.9 As well as using these approaches future assessments also need to include how places respond to other quality criteria. For example, a playground needs to also be assessed as to how it responds to the variety of senses that play stimulates, the provision of natural play or how a playground might encourage play in the wider natural environment - all of which would be endorsed as best practice by Play England. Similarly consider of the quality of design should be a key criteria such as by assessing whether a playground has been sensitively designed to fit into its local landscape. All too often playgrounds are located and designed in such a way that this objective is not achieved.



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



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



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

SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Movement

2.10 The District has an established Public Rights of Way (PROW) network which provides access to many of the significant landscape and cultural heritage features in the area. The network also provides links beyond the district administrative boundary, including into the town of Harlow and the Lea Valley, and includes a variety of long-distance walks such as the Epping Forest Centenary trail, which connects the District to Greater London. Others, such as the Essex Way, provide routes east into the wider Essex area. A series of shorter trails are promoted by the Council's Country Care team and local organisations and groups including Parish and Town Councils and Local Access Forums.

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

2.12 There are significant physical barriers to walking and cycling in the District created by, for

example, the M25 and M11 motorways and rail and underground lines which have only a limited number of crossing places. This has resulted in convoluted pedestrian and cycle routes and in places an inhospitable environment. An example of this is where the Roding Valley path becomes entangled with the M11 motorway and its slip roads.

2.13 The emerging Local Plan, through its spatial strategy and policies, recognises the need to maximise the opportunities that walking, cycling and public transport offer in reducing the effects of air quality and traffic congestion on the District's environmental assets and on its local communities. There are, however, gaps in the network which, if they were filled would support a shift from people using private passenger vehicles to more active and environmentally sensitive modes. Consequently identifying opportunities to address parts of the walking and cycling network in particular which are fragmented or incomplete provides the opportunity to negotiate with landowners to secure real improvements to the value of the network.



SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Ecology And Carbon

2.14 The District is home to a part of the internationally designated sites of the Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). There are also a number of SSSI's (including parts of the Epping Forest not designated as a SAC) and a network of local wildlife sites (LoWS) located across the District, all of which illustrate the value of the District's natural habitat.



Epping Forest SAC

2.15 A number of the LoWS sites within the District are designated as ancient forest and are remnants (even if sometimes replanted) of the Essex Forest which, prior to the enclosure of farmland, would have stretched across much of the District. Others comprise woodland. The remaining pockets of ancient forest, although ecologically and culturally valuable in their own right, remain isolated in ecological terms.

2.16 In developing this draft Strategy, we recognise the importance of not just focusing on those ecological assets of the highest 'status'. The more local but disconnected habitat areas provide the opportunity, through linking them together, to create larger ecological networks of real value; it is often these links that are missing.

2.17 It is important that we consider the need to increase habitats not just in response to the global biodiversity crisis but also the climate crisis. In recognition of this the Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and set itself a target of ensuring its own buildings and operations are carbon neutral by 2030. Increased scrub and forest cover is not only key to habitat creation but also in increasing carbon capture to support the Council's commitment to responding to the climate crisis.

2.18 It is also important to recognise that the approach to managing the countryside is also changing. Some projects are no longer using traditional conservation approaches such as making targeted interventions aimed at specific Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) actions. Instead they are taking a more hands-off approach by allowing nature the space to take over. This approach is often called 'wilding' or 're-wilding' and seeks to restore ecosystems where nature can take care of itself. It seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species – allowing them to shape the landscape and the habitats within. The Knepp Wildland Project in West Sussex is one such example – its Vision '... is radically different to conventional nature conservation in that it is not driven by specific goals or target species. Instead, its driving principle is to establish a functioning ecosystem where nature is given as much freedom as possible. The aim is to show how a 'process-led' approach can be a highly effective, low-cost method of ecological restoration - suitable for failing or abandoned farmland - that can work to support established nature reserves and wildlife sites, helping to provide the webbing that will one day connect them together on a landscape scale'. 'Wilding' can be introduced on sites of different sizes and can support initiatives such as the Wildlife Trust's approach to landscape conservation by creating 'Living Landscapes'.

2.19 In addition the Government's draft Agriculture Bill (2020) proposes to replace the EU subsidy system of Direct Payments which currently pays farmers based on the total amount of land farmed. This has resulted in the majority of subsidies being paid to the largest farmers. The draft Bill sets out how farmers and land managers in England will "in future be paid for public goods", such as better air and water quality, improved soil health, higher animal welfare standards, public access to the countryside and measures to reduce flooding.

SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.20 Within this changing context the Council will pro-actively encourage greater biodiversity, and carbon capture across the District. In doing so increased tree cover and the density of that cover will be key. Tree densities, the presence and importance of open-grown trees (as opposed to plantation-style trees) and the structure of the subsequent habitats are also critical for biodiversity and people's enjoyment of places and spaces. The Council will work with partners to achieve this including with local communities, farmers, large landowners, Essex CC and through cross boundary initiatives such as the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town initiative and the Green Arc (One Partnership). This will include working to secure improvements to water and air quality.

Blue Infrastructure

2.21 The District also benefits from Blue Infrastructure. This next section provides the context to ensure that Blue Infrastructure is also considered as part of this Strategy.

2.22 There are existing routes that already capitalise on the environment of waterways in the District, such as the Lee Navigation footpath. The GI Strategy can support improved access to the waterside where feasible as well as assist in the improvement of water quality and drainage. Ecologically the waterways and wetlands in the District provide important habitat. These waterways and their associated terrestrial habitats and built structures provide attractive habitats for urban and rural wildlife. Surface water and floodwater storage is also a critical consideration in development given that the water table is high in much of the District.

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

2.24 The River Roding is a natural watercourse which has not been heavily modified. This means that there can often be delays of up to 2 to 3 days

after heavy rainfall before any water reaches the river. Due to the rural nature of the upper and middle parts of the River Roding the natural floodplain has been preserved. Even in the lower areas around Loughton and Buckhurst Hill an area of natural floodplain and buffer exists between the river channel and development in the form of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve.

2.25 Water quality in the River Roding is ecologically 'poor' in the north of the District and 'moderate' where the Cripsey Brook joins the River Roding at Ongar. This 'moderate' ecological status continues all the way down to the Thames. Its chemical status is 'good' throughout. The overall water quality status is 'poor' for the Upper Roding and 'moderate' for the Middle and Lower Roding. Under the EU Water Framework Directive all bodies of water should achieve overall 'good' status by 2027. The reasons for not achieving 'good' ecological status in the River Roding is primarily due to poor soil/nutrient management from agricultural land and as a result of sewage discharges from public sewers and private treatment plants.



River Roding

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

SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.27 The River Roding's catchment area dominates the eastern two thirds of the District and has a rapid response to rainfall due to the predominance of a clay underlying geology. The River Lea's catchment occupies the western third of the District, whilst a small part of the north of the District falls into the catchment of the River Stort. In addition, the Lee Navigation, Old River Lea and Lee Flood Relief Channel follow along the western boundary of the District. Both the River Lea and Roding have proportions of their catchment defined by low permeability surfaces which reduces the potential for water infiltration to sub-soils. Consequently, a large proportion of any rainfall is conveyed directly to the river.

2.28 A number of the District's surface water drainage channels are spring fed at their head. Groundwater fed watercourses and springs are affected by seasonal variability in rainfall and man-made interventions such as through the construction of foundations and basements. Consequently care needs to be taken in the use of infiltration drainage systems in areas within the District where their use may contribute to groundwater flooding nearby.

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

2.30 Overland flow and surface water flooding can result in localised flooding. In more rural northern parts of the District surface water drainage tends to comprise isolated systems. When these become silted or blocked surface water flooding can occur. In more urban areas a decrease in areas of permeability over time has led to many surface water drainage systems being unable to cope leading to an increased frequency of surface water flooding.

2.31 A number of reservoir are located in the District including at Berners Hall Farm, Chigwell Row water and Chigwell Washwater Lagoon, Staples Road Flood Storage Reservoir, Rye Hill No. 2 Reservoir and Cobbins Brook FSA.

2.32 Recognising that a number of the proposed allocations in the emerging Local Plan are on greenfield sites ensuring that they do not contribute to increase surface water run-off will be key.

2.33 Within the context of the above the Thames River Basin District Flood Risk Management Plan, which covers the District, sets a number of objectives which are relevant to the GI Strategy including:

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

2.34 More site specific examples include that along the Cobbins Brook, an upstream storage area was developed in 2010 – continued maintenance of the scheme and the watercourse in general is recommended.

2.35 In catchments of ordinary watercourses, which can be key areas where surface water runoff is contributing to main rivers or areas of known historic flooding, the cumulative impact of surface water run-off from development can be significant if not addressed as close to source as possible.

SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Visitor Offer

2.36 The Epping Forest has long been a draw for residents within the District and beyond. However, the pressure from visitors together with the effects of atmospheric pollution means that large parts of the Forest are now classified as being in 'unfavourable conservation status'.

2.37 As well as the Epping Forest the District has other strategic landscape attractors including the Lea and Stort Valleys and Hainault Forest. At a smaller scale there is a patchwork of ancient woodland across the District with differing characteristics and a series of built and landscape heritage features such as the Ancient Green Lanes at Latton Priory, the waterways and marshland of the Waltham Abbey SSSI and the remnant of the royal deer park at North Weald Bassett. These places are unique and deserve to be more visited where this would not impact on their ecological or heritage status.

2.38 The walks that provide access to the countryside in which these features sit are themselves a visitor attraction including long distance walks that connect into the wider Essex area and into London.

2.39 In Harlow there is a sculpture connection with work by world renowned sculptors including Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth - which are promoted through Harlow's Sculpture Trail and the Harlow Art Trust.



Gunpowder mill on the Waltham Abbey SSSI

Community

2.40 In making provision for GI within the District it will be important to ensure that it will respond to the needs of all of the resident population. Compared to the rest of England, in 2011 the District had higher numbers of people aged 45-64 and 65 and over with the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the District projected to grow substantially by 2033. Alongside this increase, the number of 30-64 year olds is projected to drop, with the number of 15-29 year olds projected to drop slightly and the proportion of people aged 0 to 14 to rise a little. In addition those residents with mobility, visual and age-related impairments must be provided for and GI should be designed so that it is safe for all users.



Contrapuntal Forms, Harlow Sculpture Trail by Barbara Hepworth

SECTION 2 | THE DISTRICT'S ASSETS, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

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

By 2033 a well-connected network of Green and Blue Infrastructure will have been created which ensures that both existing and new communities have access to high-quality, well-maintained multi-functional spaces which are safe and sociable and support peoples' health and well-being. The District's important ecological, natural heritage and landscape assets will have been protected and enhanced. Net gains in carbon capture and biodiversity will have been achieved and a design-led approach to the provision and integration of Green and Blue Infrastructure will have been at the heart of creating the District's new places.

2.42 In order to deliver the Vision the following objectives have been set:

- To protect and enhance the District's most sensitive ecological and landscape assets (including those of heritage value).
- To enhance the quality, attractiveness and functionality of the District's existing Green and Blue Infrastructure.
- To secure long-term carbon sequestration and enhancement of biodiversity.
- To ensure that existing and new Green and Blue Infrastructure is well-connected to the communities it serves both within the District and beyond.
- To embed a landscape led approach to the design of new Green and Blue Infrastructure as part of new development to secure the delivery of high quality spaces which enable communities to have active, healthy and sociable lifestyles.
- To ensure that appropriate funding and management mechanisms are in place to sustain the long-term future of Green and Blue Infrastructure.
- To effect positive change guided by local communities and the custodians of Green and Blue Infrastructure.



SECTION 3 DELIVERING MULTI - FUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

This section sets out how multifunctional Green Infrastructure can be achieved. It looks at the importance of design and maintenance in the ‘managed’ landscape in engaging more people with GI. It explores how GI can respond to a diverse agenda including: tackling childhood obesity, the climate emergency, enhancing and protecting biodiversity assets, the ‘healthy-living’ agenda, water quality and loneliness.

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

3.1 This section provides more detail about how multifunctional places and spaces can be delivered. It identifies a number of approaches and opportunities which can be integrated into Green Infrastructure – both existing and new. These opportunities should therefore not be seen as discrete elements but rather looked at as a package of measures to enhance the attractiveness, usability and functionality of Green Infrastructure for all.

Design And Multifunctionality

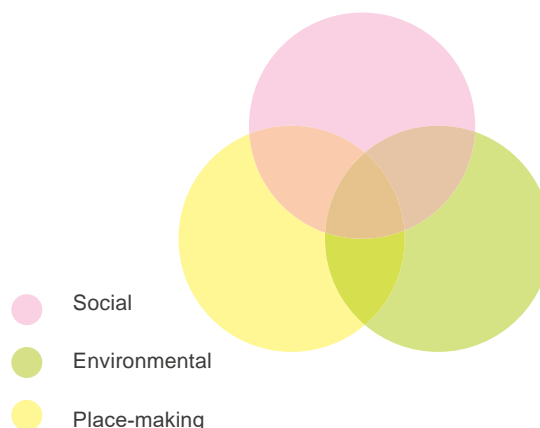
3.2 Well designed and implemented GI can fulfil multiple purposes by:

- Ensuring that development sits sensitively in the landscape while maximising its relationship to that landscape;
- Providing places and spaces that are well designed and maintained to ensure their long-term sustainability;
- Responding to the twin environmental and ecological crises’;
- Supporting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing; and
- Promoting access to the wider countryside as well as other complimentary greenspaces.

This multi functionality within and across projects is explored in this Section.

3.3 Design of developments must be landscape led and cross disciplinary and should inform development proposals from their initial planning through their detailed design. It is important that the design process is iterative and involves the Council’s urban and landscape design officers, all members of the development design team, and stakeholders; and that, where appropriate, it is informed by use of the Council’s Quality Review Panel.

3.4 The design process must include testing and communicating ideas on what a place will look like from the earliest stages of the process. This is important as testing ideas can then inform the initial planning of a development, ensuring that opportunities are not missed.



Example of multifunctional space in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Natural And Semi Natural Greenspace

3.5 As already stated, there is a significant amount of 'natural' greenspace of high quality within the District. The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 identified that this provision is generally well located to towns and villages. However some smaller 'natural' greenspaces have issues of access and legibility.

3.6 In terms of ecology the District benefits from high quality habitats, but they are often isolated. In terms of carbon capture the District has relatively little woodland outside of the Epping Forest.

Considering The Role Of 'Natural' Open Space

3.7 Natural open space has a significant role to play in peoples' lives if safe and attractive access is provided (primarily by walking and cycling) and that it provides a positive experience for its visitors so that people are attracted to using it. It is important therefore to make these spaces and their rich cultural and ecological heritage visible, and by including appropriately designed areas of natural play. Natural open spaces can also support the Council's aim of become carbon neutral District by, for example, increasing the number of trees and planting and connecting habitats to support attractive places to walk and linger. Taking this approach to places located in other parts of the District can also

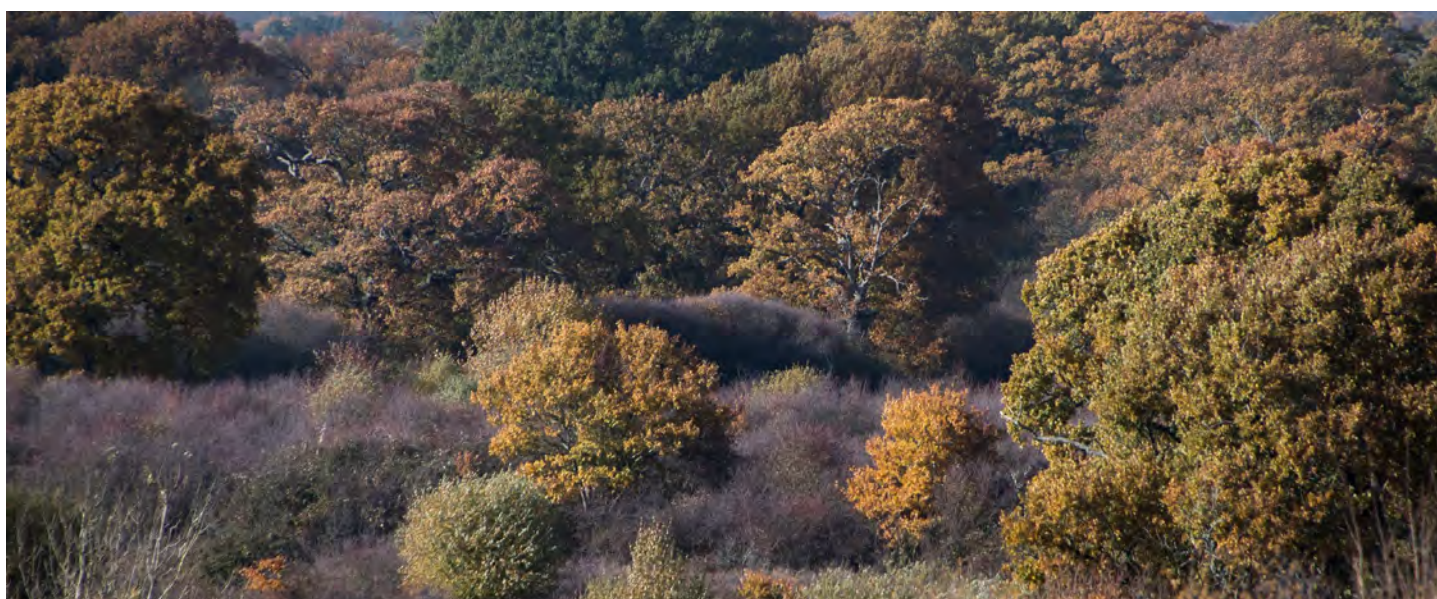
help to draw people away from the Epping Forest and therefore reduce the issues that recreational pressure is placing on it.

How Do We Get There?

3.8 Approaches that focus on engaging the public with existing 'natural' open space through 'revealing' its existence are required. This will need to be delivered by taking a collaborative approach with landowners, applicants, arts organisations and land management teams.

3.9 Where provision cannot be accommodated on-site contributions toward the provision or enhancement of natural open space nearby, and links to them, will be required.

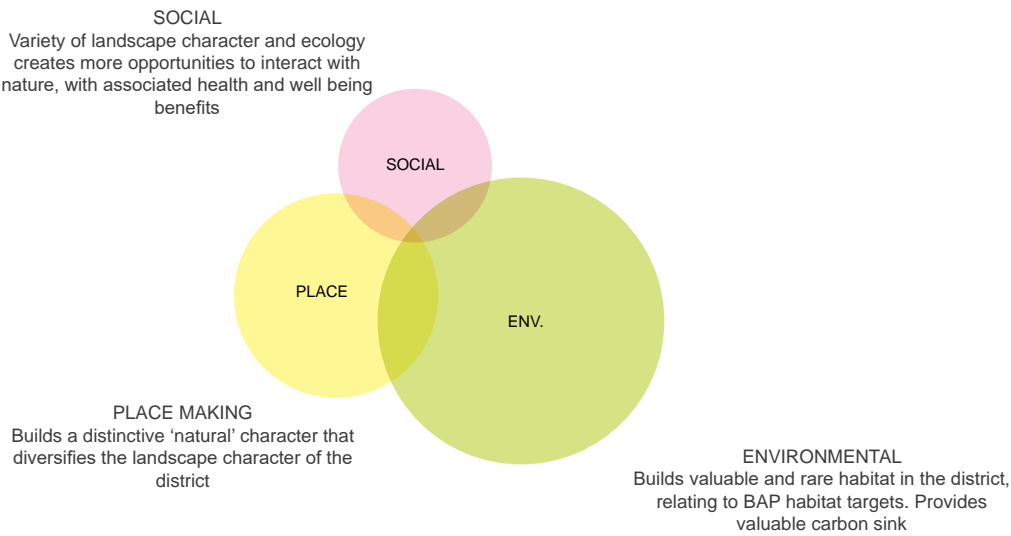
3.10 The extension and connection of 'natural' spaces can be a significant attractor for visitors, as the Knepp Wildland Project in West Sussex has shown, and, more importantly, makes an important contribution to tackling the biodiversity and climate crises'. The development of a wilder district, where it does not have unintended consequences on important habitats and species, should happen at all scales from local left-over greenspaces such as verges through strategic development and district-wide projects and partnerships including with organisations such as the Green Arc (One Partnership) and the Conservators of Epping Forest.



Knepp Wildland Project in West Sussex

Enhance

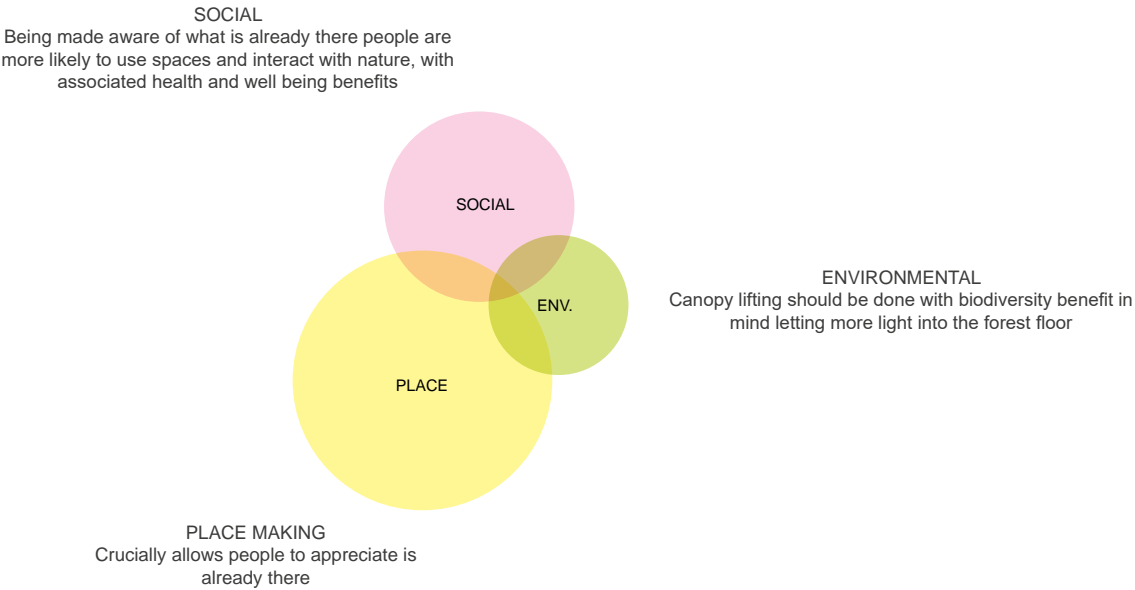
3.11 Enhancing the existing landscape by making the most of site-specific opportunities to create a more varied and ecologically connected countryside is an important strand of this Strategy. An example of such an approach is through building wet woodland (below) in flood plains and man-made flood attenuation features to increase their visual attractiveness and ecological diversity.



A wet woodland in Devon

Reveal – Through Management

3.12 Lifting canopies and clearing scrub on the edge of woodlands which have no ecological or natural heritage designations can create windows into the woodland interior. This reveals to people the exceptional landscape character within woodlands that might not be apparent to most. It also increases the perception of safety within woodlands making them feel more inviting. This will need to be approached in a sensitive and informed way to ensure that any removal of edge or understorey does not result in negative conservation outcomes. This is because scrub edges and scrub mosaics are also the most important areas for biodiversity. Ancient woodlands in particular need to be managed for their special features, distinctive sense of place and wildlife.



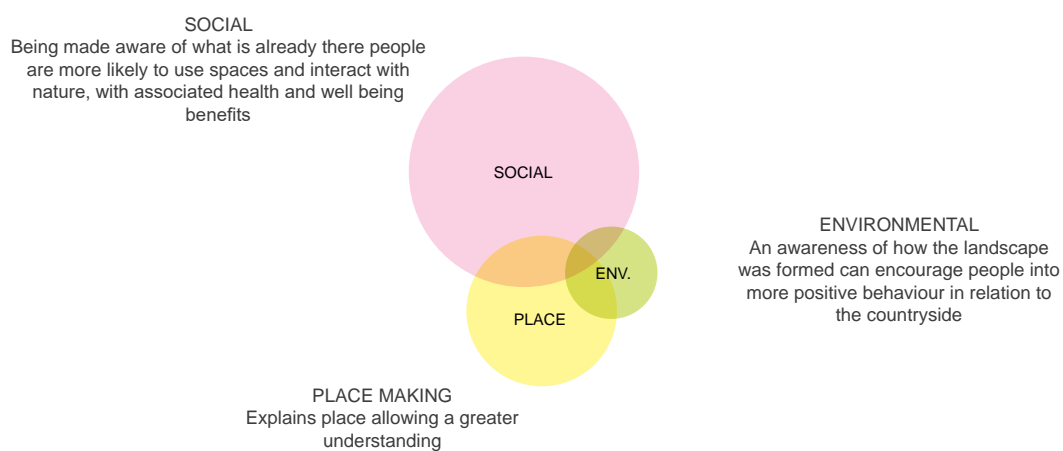
Lifted canopies and managed understoreys in Epping Forest

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Reveal – Through Thoughtfully Designed Interpretation

3.13 Interpretation should be coordinated with a wayfinding package in order to create strategic routes that take in the best of the District as well as making provision for more locally focused opportunities.

3.14 How this interpretation is provided is an important part of any approach and will need to be designed to be sensitive to its environment so that it sits carefully in its landscape setting, intrigues visitors, makes them curious about the place or space and informs them of what they are seeing or experiencing but never intrudes into the natural character of the place.



Text interpretation incidental to the landscape may not tell the whole story but leaves some to the imagination

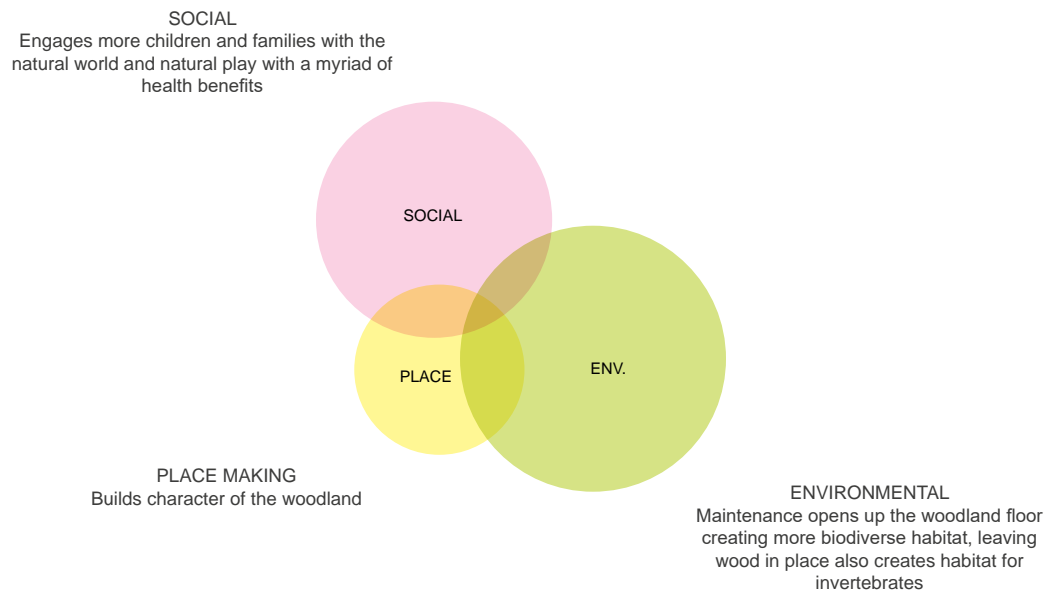


The Squires Oak in Hainault Forest

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Engage – Through Management

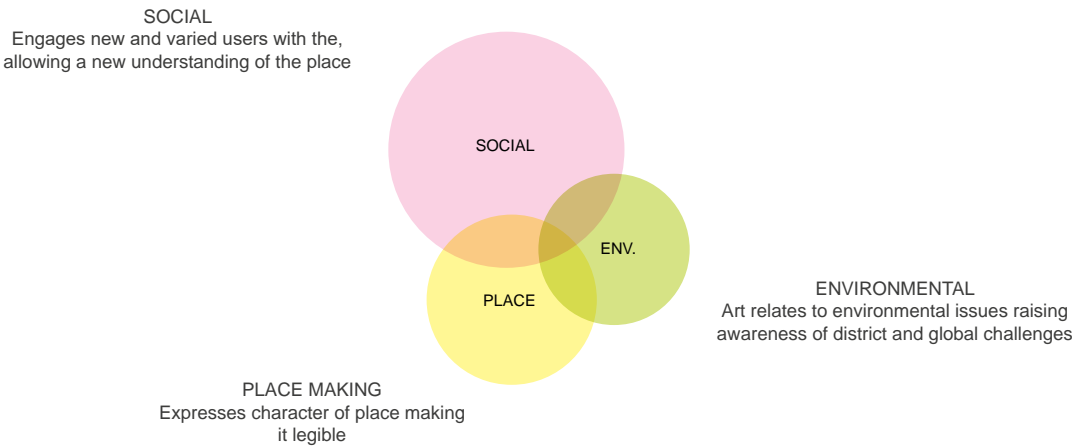
3.15 Management of woodland can ensure large low branches are left to allow tree climbing where it does not cause damage and providing opportunities for building dens. Overlapping natural assets and play typologies can engage children and families with the natural world through play.



Den building and natural play in woodlands

Engage – Through Curation Of Art And Sculpture

3.16 Art has the power to captivate and reveal something previously unnoticed. A focus on the commissioning of quality art would build on and connect into Harlow’s exceptional sculpture collection which includes works by Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. It provides both visual interest and can make a place or space a destination in its own right. How such work is commissioned will be critical in ensuring that the right installations are procured for their intended location. For example the quality of the piece, rather than whether an artist is local or not, will be the central consideration in the process. Building in opportunities for installations which allow for temporary displays can also be used to add interest for the visitor particularly if they visit regularly.



The Hear Heres by Studio Weave, Derbyshire

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Parks

3.17 There are only two spaces in the District which are categorised as 'Parks' in the Council's Open Space Strategy 2017. These are located in Waltham Abbey and Loughton.

3.18 The proposed Water Lane, Latton Priory and East of Harlow Garden Town Communities border the town of Harlow, which has a significant amount of green open space. Much of this space is categorised as 'Park' which the Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study 2013 identified as being areas with significant room for improvement.

Considering The Role Of Urban Parks

3.19 The evidence base shows that compared to the Fields in Trust standard there is a deficit of park provision within the District, and also on the edge of Harlow adjoining the three proposed Garden Town Communities. Addressing this through the design and development of these new places, and the types of facilities within them, provides the opportunity to create parks which act as local attractors, and as social infrastructure for both new and existing communities. To achieve this they should be easily accessible to these communities. Urban parks can provide an opportunity to create places that are safe for all parts of the community, including those with dementia. Design approaches should be adopted learning from initiatives such as the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames's 'Friendly Parks for All' programme.



Waltham Abbey Garden, Epping Forest District

3.20 Through exceptional quality design the provision of parks should extend beyond their intrinsic benefits and should:

- Engage people with landscape, nature and healthy eating opportunities;
- Encourage spontaneous activity to get the inactive active;
- Encourage interaction between communities and specific community groups;
- Engage and be accessible to people of all ages, and;
- Form part of the wider GI network, by building on local landscape character and ecology to create distinctive and ecologically valuable places

How Do We Get There?

3.21 To deliver on these opportunities' parks should be designed in at the start of the master planning process, and form part of a cohesive open space network which is closely related to other social infrastructure such as local centres, schools and community facilities. The design process should include specific workshops focusing on Parks with community groups and the Council's Design officers.

3.22 Further information on design within more strategic developments can be found in Section 4.



Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground, Harlow

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

What Does Success Look Like?

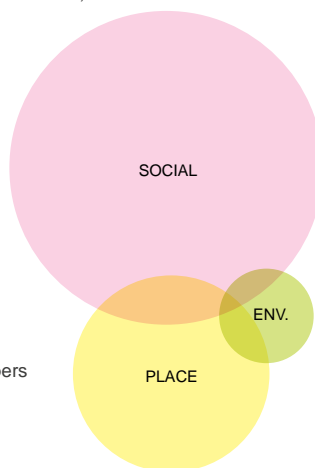
3.23 An example of such an approach can be found at Drapers Field, in LB Waltham Forest, which borders the 2012 Olympics Athletes Village. Drapers Field was one of a series of Olympic fringe projects which aimed to further the Olympic legacy while providing space for new and existing communities to come together.

3.24 The project is included as it looks beyond the conventional approach to designing an urban park to address wider issues including community cohesion and improvements to health and wellbeing.

3.25 The park does this through creating an undulating playful surface which is not 'territorialised' or defined in terms of its use - no fencing surrounds it uses such as play are not specifically designated. Features such as concrete waves are left open to be used as a play feature, a skate park or a seat. This encourages the surface to be shared as people sunbathe, run through the waves, skateboard, scoot, break dance and more. In turn, this encourages positive interaction between user groups through activity, helping to build healthy and socially sustainable communities.

SOCIAL
Engages communities through activity, addressing a variety of public health issues and building sustainable, sociable and healthy communities

PLACE MAKING
Clear form within open space such as Drapers Field can give urban parks a distinctive character



ENVIRONMENTAL
While not the main focus of this project there is always the opportunity to engage with environmental systems



Drapers Field, Waltham Forest by Kinnear Landscape Architects



SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Amenity Greenspace

3.26 The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 shows that the quantum of amenity greenspace in the District equates almost exactly to the Fields in Trust national guidance of 0.6 ha per 1000 population. Within the District the quality has been assessed as generally average with a large amount of maintained amenity grass areas.

Considering The Role Of Amenity Greenspace

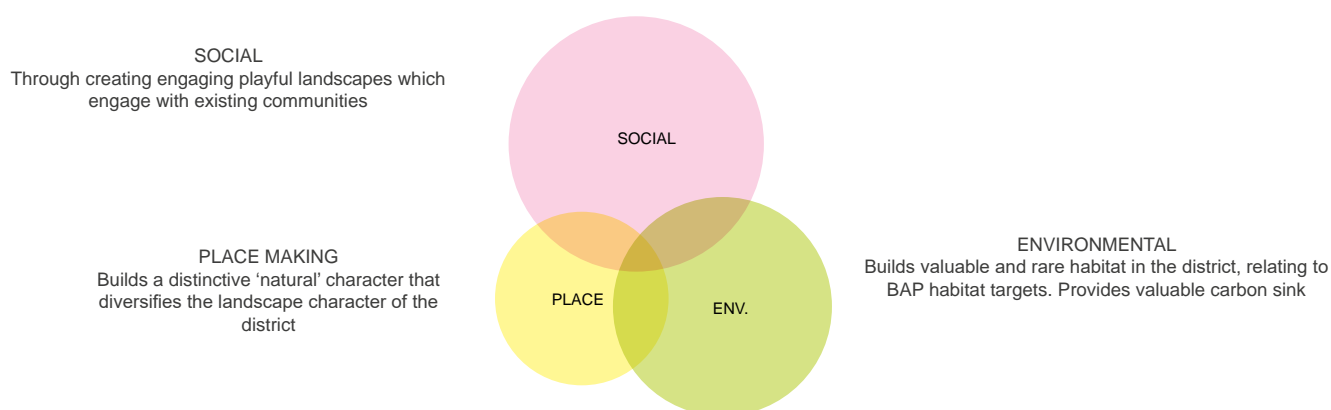
3.27 Amenity Greenspace should be viewed as an integral part of the public realm serving a new development. It should also be considered as part of a wider network of complimentary open spaces which are attractive to communities, build character and enhance biodiversity. To do this Amenity Greenspace needs to avoid the default position of providing amenity grass areas and instead consider how spaces can deliver multifunctional uses. Designing space which considers overlapping functions such as food production, play, and natural

systems or new systems through the creation of Sustainable Drainage Systems, can deliver these benefits at relatively low capital costs and maintenance costs.

How Do We Get There?

3.28 To deliver on these opportunities within strategic developments Amenity Greenspace should be designed in from the early master planning stages as part of a cohesive open space network which is closely related to other social infrastructure such as local centres, schools and community facilities. The design process should include specific workshops focusing on Amenity Greenspace with community groups and Council design officers. Further information on design within the more strategic developments can be found in Section 4.

3.29 Within existing settlements initiatives to improve Amenity Greenspace should be community led and council supported, as set out in the project pages (Appendix 1).



Amenity greenspace at Centre Green, Epping



Drapers Field, Waltham Forest by Kinnear Landscape Architects

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Allotments And The Productive Landscape

3.30 The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 shows that there is in general adequate provision of allotments in the District. However, allotments have historically been designed so that they inward looking, often due to their location on the fringes of urban areas or on back-land sites. This makes them seem to be closed off from their immediate surroundings and not integrated with the local community.

Considering The Role Of Allotments

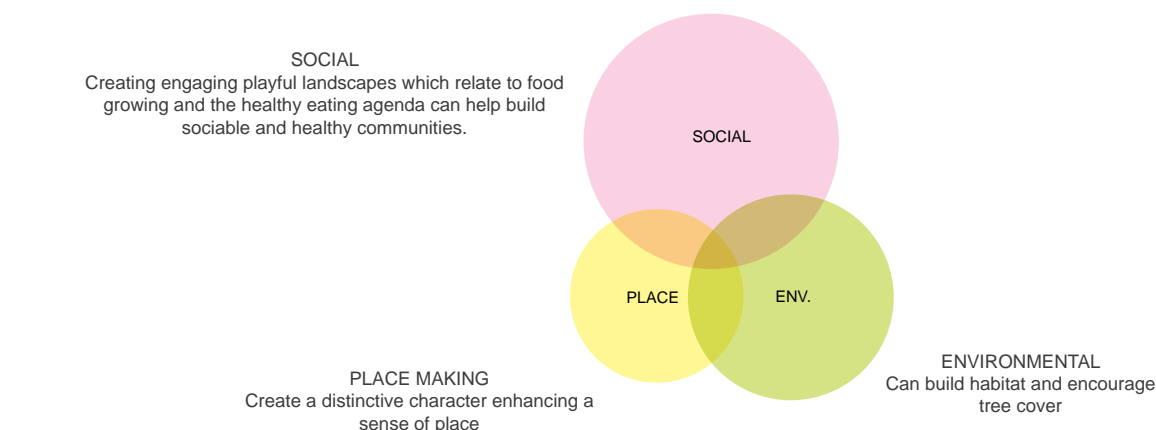
3.31 As well as providing healthy food, allotments facilitate mental and physical well-being through a connection to nature from growing vegetables, outdoor exercise involved in working the allotments and the social interaction and community groups that develop.

3.32 While limited public access can help build a strong community within allotments it also limits the public engaging with food growing. Therefore, while maintaining the value of current allotments there is the opportunity to expand the variety of productive

landscapes and to look to engage new users with them. This might be as simple as providing a public orchard adjacent to the entrance of an allotment with benches to encourage people to linger. Similarly, informal play equipment, interpretation or art within such an orchard could help to engage new users with food growing. Opportunities for considering designing in productive landscapes at school entrances and as part of Amenity Greenspace also supports this ambition.

How Do We Get There?

3.33 Allotments and food growing should be seen as an opportunity to engage residents with the benefits that stem from productive landscapes. Consideration should be given as to how food growing can be woven through and overlap with different open spaces such as amenity greenspace, streets and parks as well as within education facilities. To develop an integrated approach food growing should be considered from the first stages of master planning new developments and should engage with existing allotment groups. Outside of strategic development sites proposals should be community led and council supported.



Meadow Road Allotment, Epping



A Variety of Cultures by Alec Findlay - ladders art installation for picking apples, pre-empting the orchard reaching maturity

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Provision For Children And Young People

3.34 The current provision of play in the District consists of almost exclusively traditional equipment in fenced play areas with 44 sites across the District totalling 5 ha. This is considerably under the Fields In Trust guideline for equipped play areas which indicates that there should be over 30 ha of provision in the District.

3.35 Existing traditional equipped play provision should be considered as one component of a more integrated and engaging play and open space offer.

3.36 The term 'play' should be considered in its widest sense: considering who can partake in play, what senses are engaged, and how it can instigate behavioural change to encourage more active communities; how it can be collaborative, intergenerational and how it can engage with the natural world.

3.37 Alongside designated play areas, play should be considered as a theme that runs through the landscape encouraging people to engage with different landscapes be those surrounding woodlands or Amenity Greenspace outside their door. This can be provided in a number of ways. For

example the management of woodland can ensure large low branches are left to allow tree climbing where it will not affect the ecological or historic value of the tree while logs can be left for building dens. Playful art that animates amenity space can encourage a connection with food growing such as is used in Alex Findlay's work. Incorporating play built into Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features or playful landscapes in Urban Parks (see Drapers Field) ensures the provision of multi-functional space. Connections between places and spaces can also be enhanced by creating 'Play on the Way' opportunities (as set out below).

How Do We Get There?

3.38 Existing play spaces, in particular, should be improved by working with communities. This should be supported by using illustrations which show what collaborative, natural and intergenerational play looks like with the aim of diversifying the play offer and moving away from the provision of traditional play equipment.

3.39 Within development play in its widest sense, including social and environmental value over and above the standard value of play and GI should be considered from the outset of the planning process.



Sound play at Elbe Waterfront Park by Rehwaldt LA

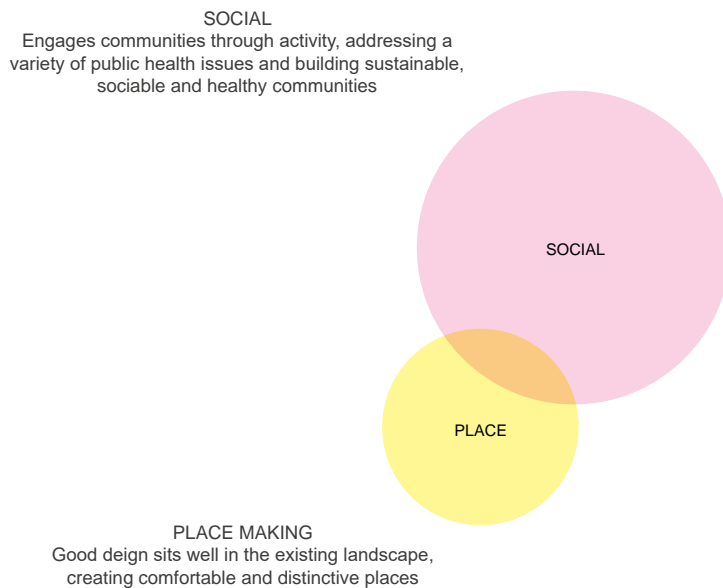


Right: Sand play at Victoria Park by LDA design

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Youth Shelter And Sport

3.40 The picture below shows a typical Youth Shelter, and MUF Architect's Social Multipurpose Use Games Area (MUGA). MUF's work demonstrates the value of overlapping space for young people to socialise with sport - so encouraging young people into activity. This approach is in contrast to an off the shelf 'Youth Shelter' which leaves young people bored and disconnected which does not encourage positive behaviour.

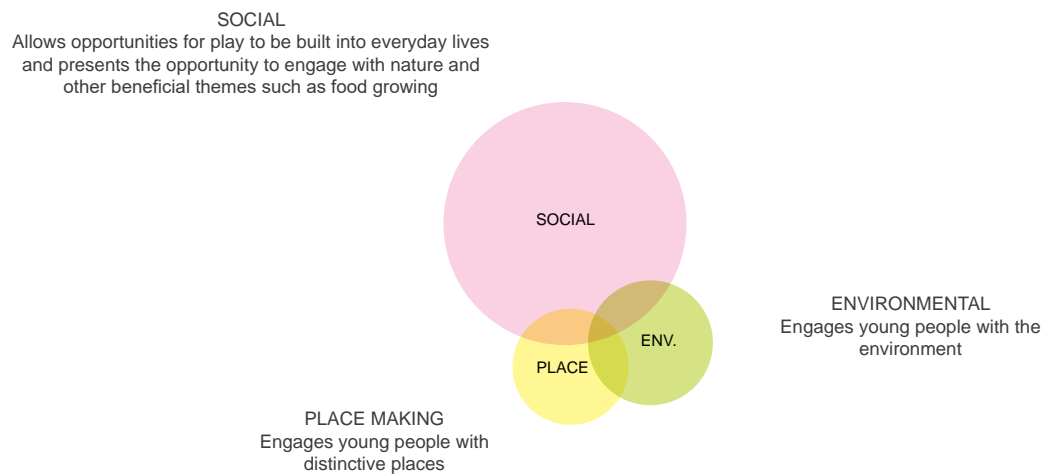


The social MUGA by MUF Architecture and Art

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Play On The Way

3.41 Informal play can extend way beyond the playground and can be seen as a way of building play and activity into everyday life. This approach to building play into everyday movement patterns is relatively common and has been termed 'play on the way' and can be incorporated in such a way so as to lead to interaction with nature (below) or other themes such as healthy eating.



Informal play on the edge of Epping Forest

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

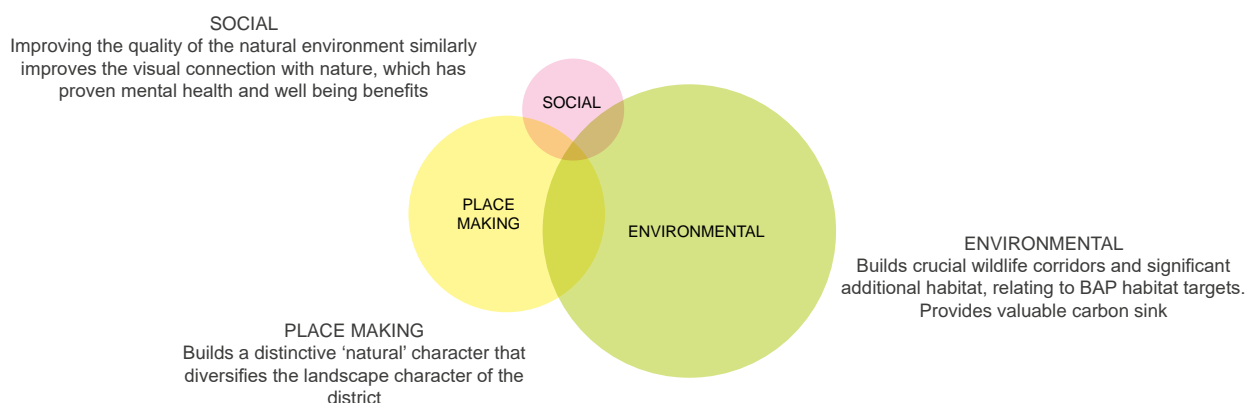
Smaller Spaces

3.42 The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 only identifies greenspaces over 0.2ha in size. This equates to spaces of more than 50m x 40m. Smaller spaces can still be meaningful and can often have significant local value. When considered collectively these spaces become a significant asset within the District, particularly in terms of the opportunities they provide for net biodiversity/environmental gain.

3.43 As an example, a local greenspace set within an existing development could be improved through simple measures such as relaxing mowing regimes/ use of herbicides / plug planting to create biodiverse wildflower areas, creating a depression that acts as a rain garden /play feature; or simply by providing seating or logs that act as an informal play opportunity. The importance of these more incidental spaces should therefore not be underestimated in terms of their local community value, including in providing a local outdoor meeting place.

3.44 Developed with local people these types of interventions can generally be low cost – or, in the case of a reduced mowing regime, cost saving – but can deliver a significant increase in their social and environmental value.

3.45 Similarly at a district scale underused leftover spaces can deliver significantly more. An obvious example is the roadside verges which are currently cut regularly by both Essex County Council and EFDC in order to maintain short mown grass. Relaxing this mowing regime and cutting only twice a year can encourage wildflower growth and deliver a number of benefits. These include significant reductions in maintenance costs,; the creation of a significant ecological network encouraging insect habitat and create a much more visually interesting appearance to roads and lanes, which would enhance the character of the District. More and more local authorities are implementing similar schemes including in places such as Sheffield and Rotherham. Such approaches can also help to encourage safer driver behaviour.



St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow by Townshend Landscape Architects



Wildflower verges in North East Lincolnshire

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Movement

3.46 The focus is on design for walking, cycling and horse riding so that more people can move safely and easily through the District using these modes.

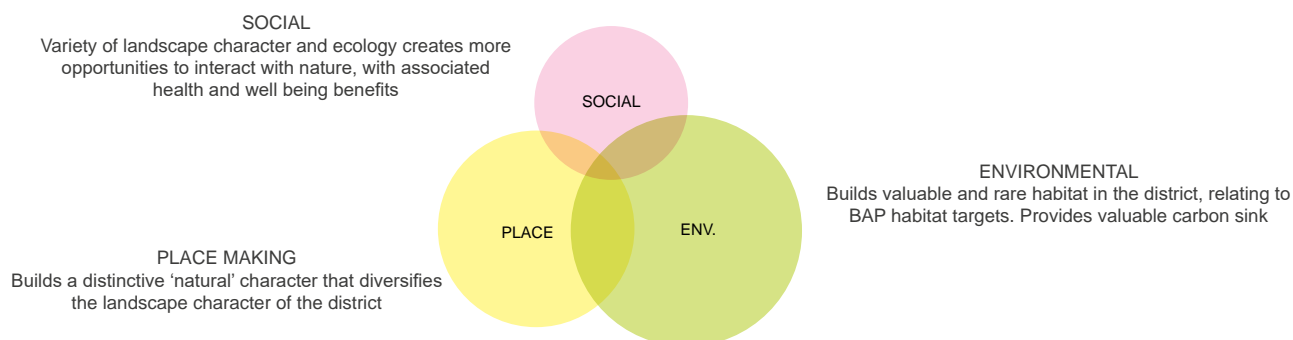
3.47 Route hierarchy – The first key step is to prioritise existing routes. This should be done as part of landscape led local cycle and walking infrastructure plans (LCWIP) or similar approaches that consider the landscape and how the community could be encouraged to use them alongside their primary purpose of acting as a movement corridor.

3.48 Accessibility and safety – The ease of accessibility for all users should be considered across the network. For example, some routes cut across fields meaning that they are less accessible at certain times of year. Similar consideration should be given to stiles and other obstacles along the network, to widen its accessibility. Surfaces on certain routes, identified through a route hierarchy work should work on the principle of enabling access for all. In connecting places and spaces it is also important not to ignore the opportunities that the identification of 'Quietways' for cyclists can provide to encourage more people living in towns and villages to access Green Infrastructure.

3.49 Legibility – This can be viewed as how clear, without the use of signage, the route is. Legibility can be achieved by consistent surfacing, adopting a management regime that ensures routes are easy to see and not overgrown, or using vegetation as a structure to follow - for example a route might follow a green lane, a new or existing line of trees, or a hedge line.

3.50 Signage - A coherent set of wayfinding proposals should build on the inherent legibility of the route and may include signage, such as finger posts and in-ground signage, through landscape improvements to open views and build distinctiveness, or through improved information of routes.

3.51 Alongside Legibility and Signage, routes should tie easily into new and existing communities giving easy access to both. Routes should be visible within settlements with given lengths to encourage new users. Routes should take advantage of any points of interest along their length. Ecological enhancements included within the project which build on local landscape character will enhance the attractiveness of the route, as well as its ecological value. All of these approaches if taken forward in a comprehensive, area-based way support both recreational and commuter based cycle trips.



Accessible surfaces facilitate easy cycling as well as use by buggies and wheelchairs



Prominent entrances with a suite of signage can make routes clear and legible

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

The Water Environment

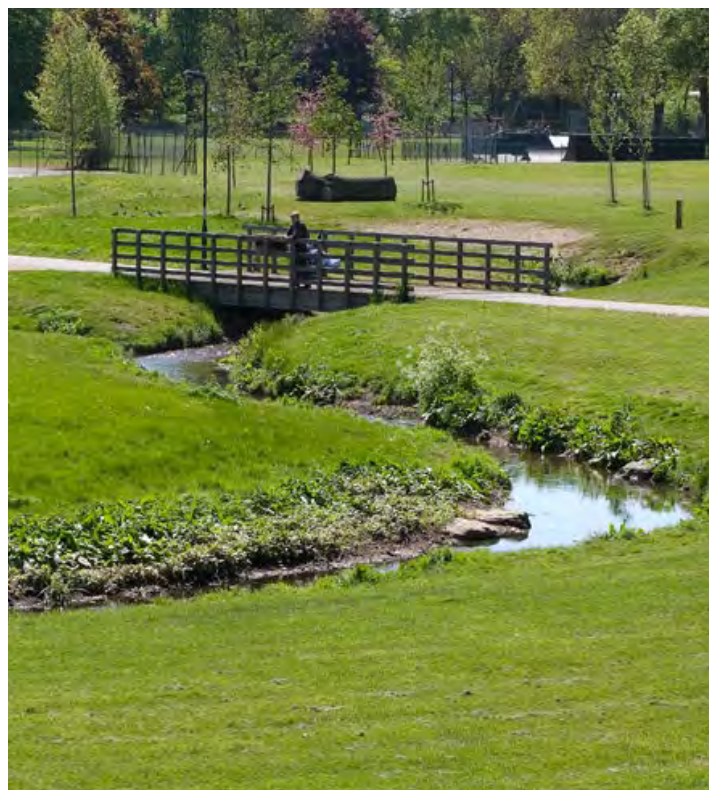
3.52 Taking a proactive approach to managing the water environment can have a number of significant benefits for the health and well-being for both people and the natural environment. The use of a multi-functional approach to the delivery of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), as explained in more detail below helps to manage flood risk, can provide interest in the provision of public open space, and increase biodiversity. The main mechanism for securing the SuDS approach is through the design of new development. There are, however, other approaches which can also support managing the challenges of flood risk and water quality - both of which are important in ensuring that the District's Water Environment provides both recreational and biodiversity value.

3.53 Essex County Council, as the Local Lead Flood Authority, has responsibility to reduce the impact of local flooding and has developed a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. As well as influencing new development and drainage by commenting on development proposals and the development of a SuDS Design Guide, the strategy includes a number of initiatives which involve working in partnership with communities, councils, and landowners. These include:

- Looking after watercourses: small streams and ditches have an important job in draining water. Unblocking these water courses, which can often become heavily silted or contain a large amount of debris, not only helps to address localised flooding issues but also improves the quality of the water environment which then benefits local biodiversity. As well as working with local landowners to clear these watercourses, Essex County Council has also worked with local communities to help identify the location, condition and size of ditches and pipes so that they could be added to the County's Flood Asset Register.
- Building new flood defences using an approach which not only provides flood risk reduction benefits but can also improve local biodiversity by creating new and diverse habitats.

3.54 There are also opportunities to work with landowners to encourage best practice in terms of land management to support biodiversity objectives ranging from changing management approaches to the banks of watercourses through to changes in land management practices to secure the reduction of, in particular, the ammonia component of surface-water run-off.

3.55 The District is classed as being in an area of 'serious water stress' by the Environment Agency. In such areas it is recommended that water efficiency standards are followed in order to manage demand on the water environment. The Council's emerging Local Plan puts in place an approach which will secure the incorporation of water saving measures and water efficiency standards. There are many routes to achieving these standards such as the use of grey water systems and rainwater harvesting together with water efficient fittings and appliances. Whilst the main objective of this approach is to reduce the consumption of water the spin-offs are that the measures can help to improve water quality and maintain water levels in areas where the biodiversity of the water environment would be harmed as a result of dry periods.



Ladywell Fields, Lewisham by BDP

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Sustainable Drainage Systems

3.56 Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are designed to manage stormwater locally (as close its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment.

3.57 SuDS are designed to both manage the flood and pollution risks resulting from urban runoff and to contribute wherever possible to environmental enhancement and place making. With this in mind, the multi-functionality and multiple benefits of SuDS should always be considered.

Key Principles

3.58 SuDS essentially operate through infiltration where possible and attenuation combined with slow conveyance. Many SuDS solutions employ a combination of infiltration and attenuation. Situations where infiltration is not an option, for example because of the soil type or contamination, tend to favour attenuation type SuDS.

3.59 Good SuDS design should follow the SuDS philosophy, which calls for the inclusion of a number of key principles:

- A management train – using a number of SuDS components in series and characterising areas into land use and drainage type
- Source control – managing runoff as close as possible to where it falls as rain
- Managing water on the surface – wherever possible, runoff should be managed on the surface
- Early and effective engagement – consider the use of SuDS at the earliest stages of site selection and design.

3.60 Good practice with attenuation and slow conveyance type SuDS is to use ‘soft engineered’ surface features rather than underground storage and to align the conveyance train with exceedence flood routing.

3.61 When SuDS are used in new developments with highways or retrofitted in existing developed areas where there is also highway drainage, the highway drainage arrangements will generally be a key theme which shapes the form of the SuDS. This is because highway run-off often forms a high percentage of the total run-off from developed areas and is also the surface water element that contains the highest level of pollutants.



Grey to Green SuDS project, Sheffield by Nigel Dunnett

SECTION 3 | DELIVERING MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES AND PLACES

Benefits Of Suds

3.62 Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) mimic natural drainage processes to reduce the effect on the quality and quantity of run-off from developments and provide amenity and biodiversity benefits. When specifying SuDS, early consideration of potential benefits and opportunities will help deliver the best results. The benefits of SuDS include:

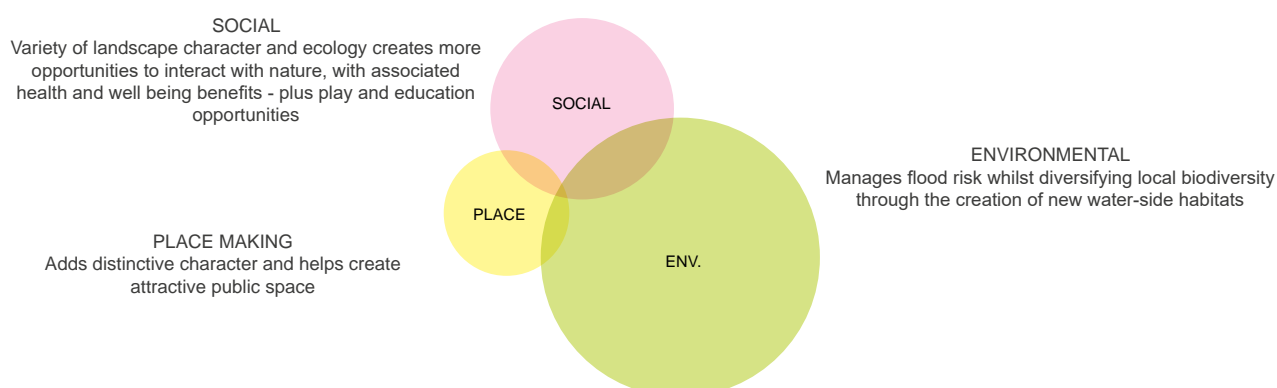
- Flood risk management – reducing the risk of flooding from development
- Water quality management – reducing the impact of diffuse pollution
- Improving amenity and biodiversity – the integration of green infrastructure with SuDS solutions can help to create habitat, recreational and biodiversity areas
- Water resources – SuDS can help to recharge groundwater supplies and capture rainwater for re-use purposes
- Community benefits – attractive, well designed public open space that incorporate SuDS can help to create better communities through social cohesion and quality of life improvements
- Recreation – multi-purpose SuDS components can not only manage surface water, but also act as sports/play areas
- Education – SuDS in schools provide a fantastic learning opportunity whilst also providing additional recreational space
- Enabling development – SuDS can help to free up capacity in already established drainage networks, and the provision of SuDS can often be a prerequisite of planning permission.

How Do We Get There?

3.63 The main mechanism for securing SuDS is through the development process. Consequently, the consideration of SuDS as part of the early stages of designing a development will be key to its success and provides the opportunity to integrate measures as part of the multifunctional approach that this Strategy is seeking to achieve.



Ladywell Fields, Lewisham by BDP



SECTION 4

IMPLEMENTATION

This section looks at how this ambition will be taken forward in Epping Forest District, in order to deliver a lasting legacy of high quality, integrated Green and Blue Infrastructure assets of a strategic scale, including through strategic development sites, and provides strategies as to how this will be achieved.

SECTION 4 | IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

4.1 Section 4 draws together the objectives from Section 2 and the ideas from Section 3 into deliverable projects. This includes:

- The delivery of District wide projects.
- Securing financial contributions from smaller development sites to support the improvement of existing spaces and connections to them.
- Projects that relate to, and are integrated with the delivery of strategic developments including SANG.

Implementation – District Wide Projects

4.2 Potential District wide projects are set out in the Project Pages (see Appendix 1). These relate to the GI potential at a strategic scale, be that single significant projects or smaller similar projects that together make an impact at a District wide scale.

Strategic Projects

4.3 Projects that function at a District scale or need coordination across the District. Examples include improvements to existing open spaces, implementing meadow planting to roadside verges, strategic green routes, or a district wide wayfinding and signage strategy.

Community Initiated Projects

4.4 The frameworks to encourage these projects may be district wide but the evolution of projects would be initiated by local communities, including by Parish and Town councils. For example, this could be by supporting improvements/changes in maintenance regimes to small local amenity greenspaces, or community tree planting in gardens or leftover public greenspaces.

Projects To Increase Engagement With Green Infrastructure

4.5 Projects which tie into the above but aim to increase and diversify those using GI. Projects may include an art trail that engages people with the

landscape, the promotion of local walking routes or specific trails / interventions targeted at those with mobility and visual challenges.

SANG

4.6 Provision of new SANG is required in the Masterplan areas. In addition opportunities to make better use of existing sites that could act as SANG, such parts of the City of London Corporation's Buffer Lands, could support the objective of protecting the Epping Forest SAC from harm as a result of recreational pressures. Details are contained in Appendix 2, 3 and 4.



Kentwood Meadows SANG, Wokingham by Allen Pyke Associates

Delivering Projects

4.7 The Project Pages included in Appendix 1 include information on:

- Clear ambitions and objectives;
- What success looks like;
- How do we get there;
- Key stakeholders and partners; and
- The value of the project

Project Prioritisation

4.8 All projects need to relate back to the Vision set out in this Strategy, assessed against its objectives as well as the principles of good design and place-making/landscape character and linked to the timescales for the delivery of new homes as set out in the Council's latest Housing Trajectory.

SECTION 4 | IMPLEMENTATION

Design In Relation To District Wide Projects

4.9 Design must be recognised as not just how something looks but more importantly how it functions. Therefore, design input is key to the majority of projects.

4.10 The delivery of high-quality design requires high quality designers to be commissioned (in the design of GI and external space these designers would usually be landscape architects).

4.11 Where public money is being used the Council has a duty to ensure that it is used in the most efficient and effective way. The value of good design as discussed above should not be underestimated. This consideration starts with the tender process by publishing design focused briefs which are assessed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.

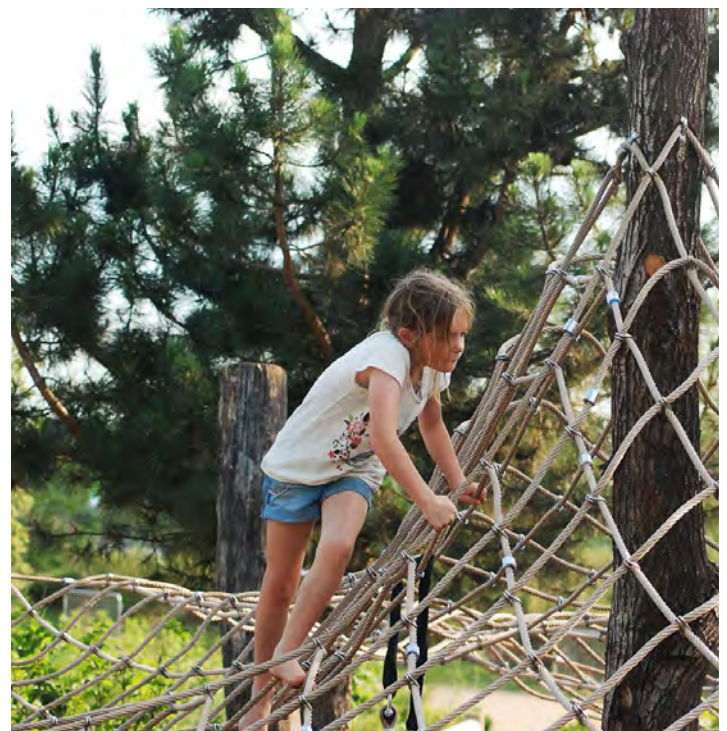


Mont-Evrin Park, near Paris by URBICUS

District Wide Projects

4.12 This will be taken forward by identifying resources to lead on the delivery of the district-wide projects, including through the allocation of specific council staff to individual projects were required. The Council will also work in close collaboration with its partners and neighbouring authorities to bring projects forward. This will include projects such as supporting organisations looking to fulfil their corporate environmental responsibilities through, for example, tree planting.

4.13 Projects that have been identified can be costed and funding through a number of different funding streams including Section 106 planning obligations. Some projects have already been included within the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which has been developed to support the emerging Local Plan. Where appropriate projects identified as part of this consultation may be added to the IDP.



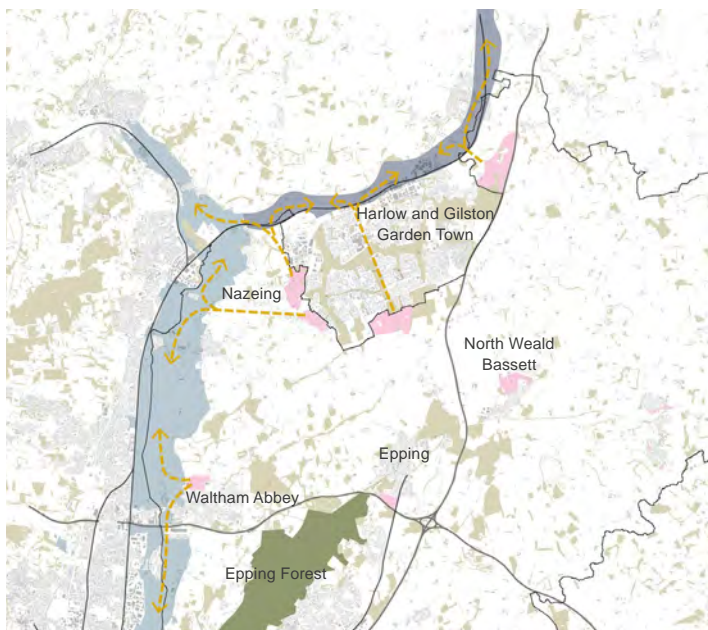
Tumbling Bay Playground, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park by LUC

SECTION 4 | IMPLEMENTATION

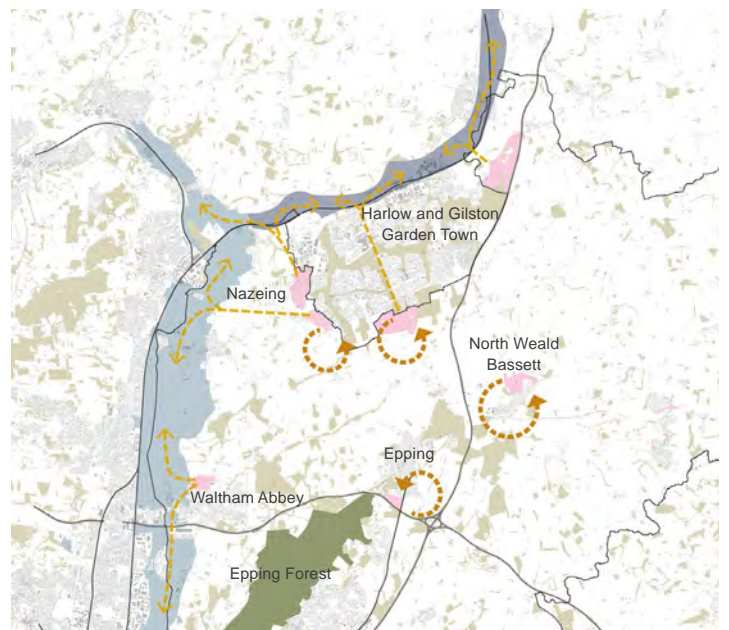
Implementation Of Strategic Allocations

4.14 The development of the strategic allocations identified in the emerging Local Plan provide the opportunity to deliver an integrated GI offer that supports the objective of avoiding harm being caused to the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC and supports the delivery of high-quality greenspaces that help build community cohesion between new and existing residents. Below is the master planning led approach for such allocations.

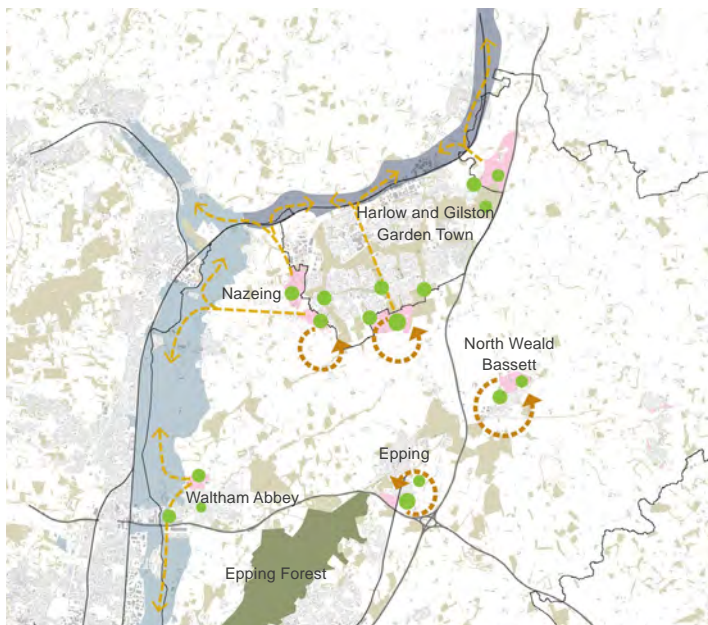
4.15 The approach sets out four key principles for the development of strategic sites through a masterplan led approach which - in line with the vision and objectives of this Strategy - aims to make the most of the 'natural' open space while complimenting it through the creation of a local network of varied, connected and high-quality greenspace. Appendix 2 goes into further detail applying these four principles at a settlement scale, setting a framework for green open space provision.



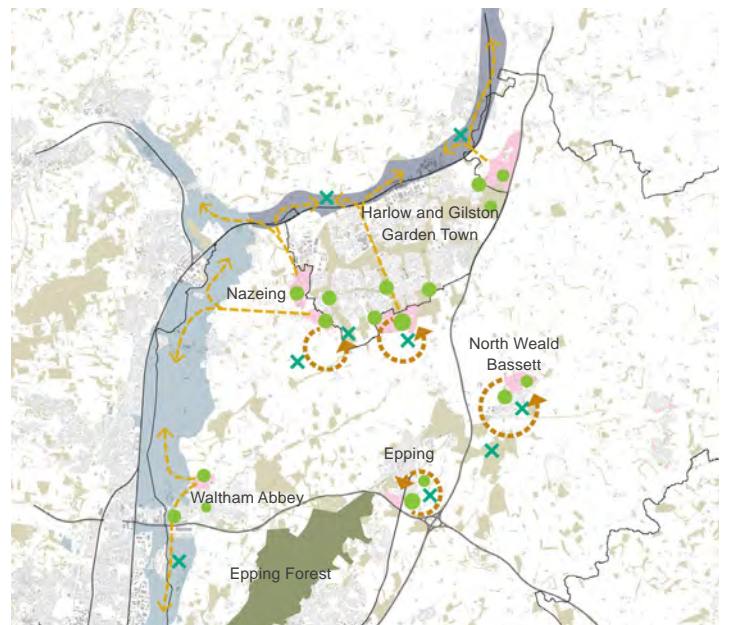
1. Connecting into the big landscape attractors of the Lea and Stort Valleys



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

SECTION 4 | IMPLEMENTATION

Design In Relation To Strategic Site Allocations

4.16 Throughout the design development process proposals must clearly demonstrate how they deliver on vision and objectives set out in Section 2, and the potential for overlap in function and social sustainability described in Section 3. Design should be landscape led from the start and across all design stages, as set out in Section 2.7.

4.17 The best design and development outcomes will be delivered by engaging the best design consultants. Any additional spending on design fees will be vastly outweighed by the speed and ease of securing planning permission, cost savings through the provision of multi-functional landscapes, and an enhanced corporate reputation through the provision of a positive lasting legacy for the area.

4.18 Initial work necessary to inform a Landscape Led approach to masterplanning is set out below:

- Landscape Analysis to cover site and context. Work should be mainly plan based with supporting pictures
- Ecological survey with opportunities and constraints
- Landscape opportunities and constraints plan covering landscape character, views and key landscape features including existing hedges and trees
- Overview levels plan with broad gradients and falls
- Flood and local water quality constraints and opportunities plan
- Existing movement plan with constraints and opportunities showing urban connections and transport links public and private alongside any footpaths, cycleways and bridleways both formal and informal

- Overview of relevant appendix to this document and the applicants approach to providing an equivalent quantum of greenspace in line with current guidance, which also meets local needs. Eg. if there is currently an over provision of playgrounds in the area but an under provision of allotments the applicant may fund more allotments and less playgrounds in order to even up the balance of open space provision overall
- Concluding analysis which overlays the above work to draw together the potential for multifunctional spaces and initial discussion on how this can inform the urban grain and character of the development. Precedent images to be used to illustrate character
- A series of working visualisation, axonometrics and / or other illustration that communicates qualities of space and material. This should be based in the analysis above and should inform the urban design layout influencing for example street widths, street orientation, street length and alignment; as well as relationship to existing landscape features and key views
- Initial review of Urban Design approach informed by the above work
- Ongoing design development with regular session with council design officers to ensure Landscape Led approach is carried through all stages of the design process



BIGyard, Berlin by Zanderroth Architekten

SECTION 4 | IMPLEMENTATION

Forward Strategy In Relation To Strategic Allocations

4.19 Appendix 2 sets out proposals in relation to site allocations which stem from the work in this Strategy. They are provided as a ‘starting point’ rather than as a complete set of parameters and requirements. Instead they provide a framework that must be developed in line with this Strategy. Key steps in this process will be:

- Securing community feedback to help inform and prioritise projects.
- Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders.
- Working with the Council to ensure that the design delivers a green open space network.
- Working with applicants to identify off-site projects which are needed to support the delivery of development in a co-ordinated and coherent way in line with the Vision and objectives of this Strategy.

Stewardship

4.20 Green infrastructure will require sustainable management and maintenance if it is to provide benefits and services in the long term, putting local communities at the heart of its management and stewardship

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

TCPA (2014) Built today, treasured tomorrow.

4.21 The right stewardship model will provide benefits for communities, developers and the Council. For communities it means putting people at the heart of delivering successful places, the long-term maintenance and management of high-quality facilities and moving towards social sustainability. For developers, it creates confidence that assets will be maintained in perpetuity, adds value to the development and improves place-making and marketability. For the Council, it reduces long-term financial liabilities and therefore provides greater value for the community of Epping Forest District.

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

- Community Land Trust - An organisation backed by a trust which is controlled by the community for the benefit of the community
- Community Interest Company - A company which must trade and use its assets for a social purpose, to benefit the community
- Local Councils (Parish/Town) – Use existing local councils as a vehicle for stewardship
- Housing Associations - Private, non-profit organisations which provide a service to communities beyond its role as landlord

4.23 There are a number of funding options for managing community assets in the long-term. The principle revenue source for funding stewardship bodies will come from funding secured through planning mechanisms such as S106 planning obligations. These will be used to secure funding for the provision and ongoing management of community assets.

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT PAGES

This appendix sets out the types of projects that could be delivered across the district. Projects vary from maintenance, to ecology and movement projects - many of which will need engagement with a variety of stakeholders and partners to deliver. The Project Pages act as mini briefs for these projects setting goals, identifying key partners and including outline costs where possible.

Strategic Projects

Movement And Wayfinding

The Project

To develop a Wayfinding Strategy for the District's public right of way network to make it more legible, accessible and useable.

Why?

To increase use of Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace to develop a more active population and reduce recreational pressure on Epping Forest.

What Does Success Look Like?

A coherent set of wayfinding proposals that may include:

- Maintenance regimes to make routes safer and more visible
- Signage, such as finger posts and in-ground signage
- Landscape improvements to open views and build distinctiveness
- Improved accessibility of walking routes

How Do We Get There?

By commissioning a consultant team, including Wayfinding Design and Landscape Architectural expertise for design, technical and construction stages.

Key Stakeholders

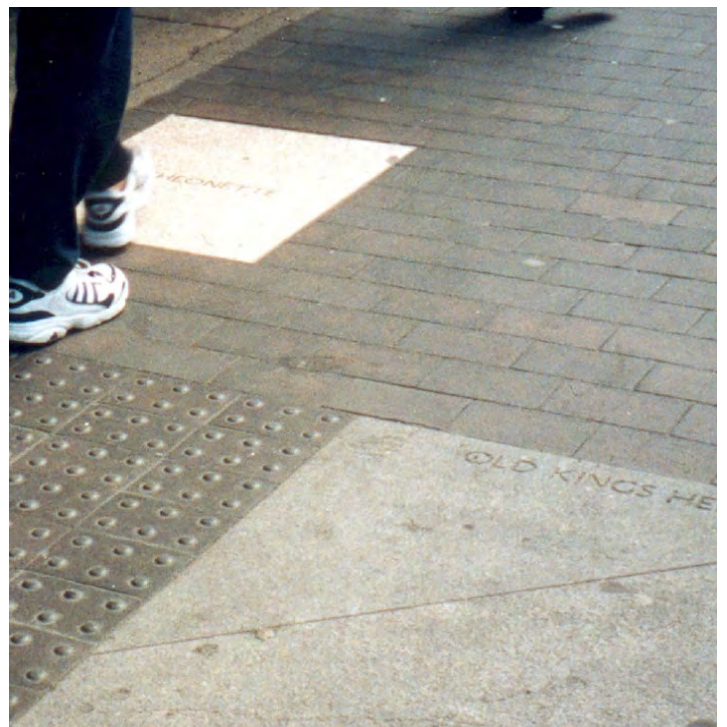
- Parish Councils
- Country Care
- Essex County Council Public Rights Of Way Team

Epping Forest District Council Officer Assistance

To be confirmed.



Walthamstow Wetlands by Kinnear Landscape Architects



Borough Highstreet by East Architecture

Strategic Projects

Roadside Wildflowers

The Project

To relax cutting regime of roadside verges and seed areas to create wildflower verges.

Why?

To increase biodiversity and aesthetic value, whilst reducing maintenance intensity and associated costs.

What Does Success Look Like?

This has been done before to great effect by authorities including Sheffield and Rotherham. Plantlife are a charitable organisation who can help facilitate the necessary change in mowing regimes

How Do We Get There?

- Council to work closely with EFDC Country Care, EFDC ecology officers and Essex Highways to establish a mowing regime that encourages wildflower growth
- Establish if some seeding is required to develop wildflower growth
- Work with Essex Highways to identify junctions where grass needs to be kept short to allow safe visibility splays

Key Stakeholders

- Internal Stakeholders
- Country Care
- Essex Highways

Other Potential Groups To Involve

- Plantlife

Epping Forest District Council Officer Assistance

Yes.



Roadside wildflowers in Sheffield



Roadside meadow planting in Leeds

Community Based, Council Supported

Tree Planting - A Call For Sites

The Project

Using social media, Parish Councils and existing community groups send out 'a call for tree planting sites' which can be planted by communities the council and by partner organisations

Why?

To increase the carbon capture within the District and to bring the range of social, economic and environmental benefits offered by trees in urban and rural contexts.

What Does Success Look Like?

Improving the quality of places through well considered tree planting and delivering the next generation of big trees in the District, as set out in the Local Plan Submission Version 2017.

How Do We Get There?

- Council to put out a call for sites, community to respond with potential sites they've seen where they live
- Council to map and assess results to compile a list of sites to be planted
- Council to channel money from Section 106 and third parties into identified planting projects
- Council to work with internal partners and communities to organise tree planting and maintenance

Key Stakeholders

- Internal Stakeholders

Epping Forest District Council Officer Assistance

Yes.



New tree planting in urban 'Forest' by Spacehub



New woodland creation at Heartwood Forest, Hertfordshire

Community Based, Council Supported

Community Greenspace Improvements

The Project

A pioneer community led project to improve a local amenity greenspace. The project is to be based around a community design approach to develop a tool-kit of components that can be maintained within existing budgets, and applied to other sites. This tool-kit may include elements such as: a relaxed mowing regime, seating, bins, growing beds, light touch boundary treatments in knee rails or swales, informal natural play such as mounds, logs and boulders.

Why?

- The existing spaces are generally amenity grass which, without any other function often provide little value to the community
- Existing grass also requires significant maintenance by the council
- Improvements that relax mowing can build aesthetic and environmental value
- To strengthen community relationships with each other and nature through the process and the use of the finished space
- To set a precedent for other community groups to follow

What Does Success Look Like?

- Increased community use and pride in the space - from a range of different ages and backgrounds within the community
- Increased sense of community.
- Improved biodiversity
- No increase to maintenance budget

How Do We Get There?

- Council to put out a call to the community to establish a trial project
- Community group to commit to taking project forwards
- Council to have a designated contact who could coordinate design advice from design officers, who could liaise with country care about changes to maintenance, and who could give advice to the community group on funding

Key Stakeholders

- Community group
- Parish Councils
- Country Care

Epping Forest District Council Officer Assistance

Yes.



Drapers Field, Waltham Forest by Kinnear Landscape Architects



Warpole Park, Ealing by J&L Gibbons

Activation Projects

Art In The Landscape

The Project

To curate high-quality art within the landscape of the District.

Why?

Good landscape embedded art work can allow a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the Epping landscape, drawing new visitors into the countryside and creating alternative destinations for those who are already familiar with the local landscape.

- To build and physically extend Harlow's legacy of highest quality art
- To build an appreciation of the Landscape and it's complex social, cultural and ecological values
- To attract users who might otherwise have visited Epping Forest, including those from outside the District
- To draw new users into the countryside and to facilitate their appreciation of nature

What Does Success Look Like?

Success is great art in the landscape for all to access and enjoy. Artwork could come from local artists or artists from elsewhere, well-known or lesser known artists, it could be temporary or permanent and could vary from sculpture to theatre.

How Do We Get There?

By Establishing a working group including experts in Public Art Curation and Landscape Architecture, whilst ensuring community groups are involved and engaged throughout the process.

Key Stakeholders

Parish Councils

Harlow Arts

Others

Epping Forest District Council Officer Assistance

Yes.



Nuria and Irma, Yorkshire Sculpture Park by Jaume Plensa



Ecology of Colour, Dartford by Studio Weave

APPENDIX 2

STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

This appendix sets out the framework within which the strategic sites proposed in the emerging Local Plan should be developed to maximise Green and Blue Infrastructure opportunities and successfully integrate with the existing communities and places.

APPENDIX 2 | STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

The development of the strategic allocations in the emerging Local Plan provides the opportunity to deliver an integrated and complementary GI offer that includes Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace SANG. This integrated approach will support the need to avoid placing additional pressure on the Epping Forest and other existing GI of ecological and natural heritage importance, and deliver the high quality greenspaces that will help bring new and existing residents together. Further detail on the principles that should be applied to the development of SANG is set out in Appendix 3. The development of masterplans for the following locations will therefore be required to provide for significant green infrastructure.

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



1. Latton Priory and Water Lane Garden Town Communities

1.1 Latton Priory and the Water Lane area are Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Communities that are proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan. 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

1.2 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.



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

1.3 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.

1.4 Harlow's Green Wedges were a major feature of Sir Frederick Gibberd's design for bringing the countryside into the town. The aim of the approach was to give residents the opportunity to experience the best of town and country living. 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.



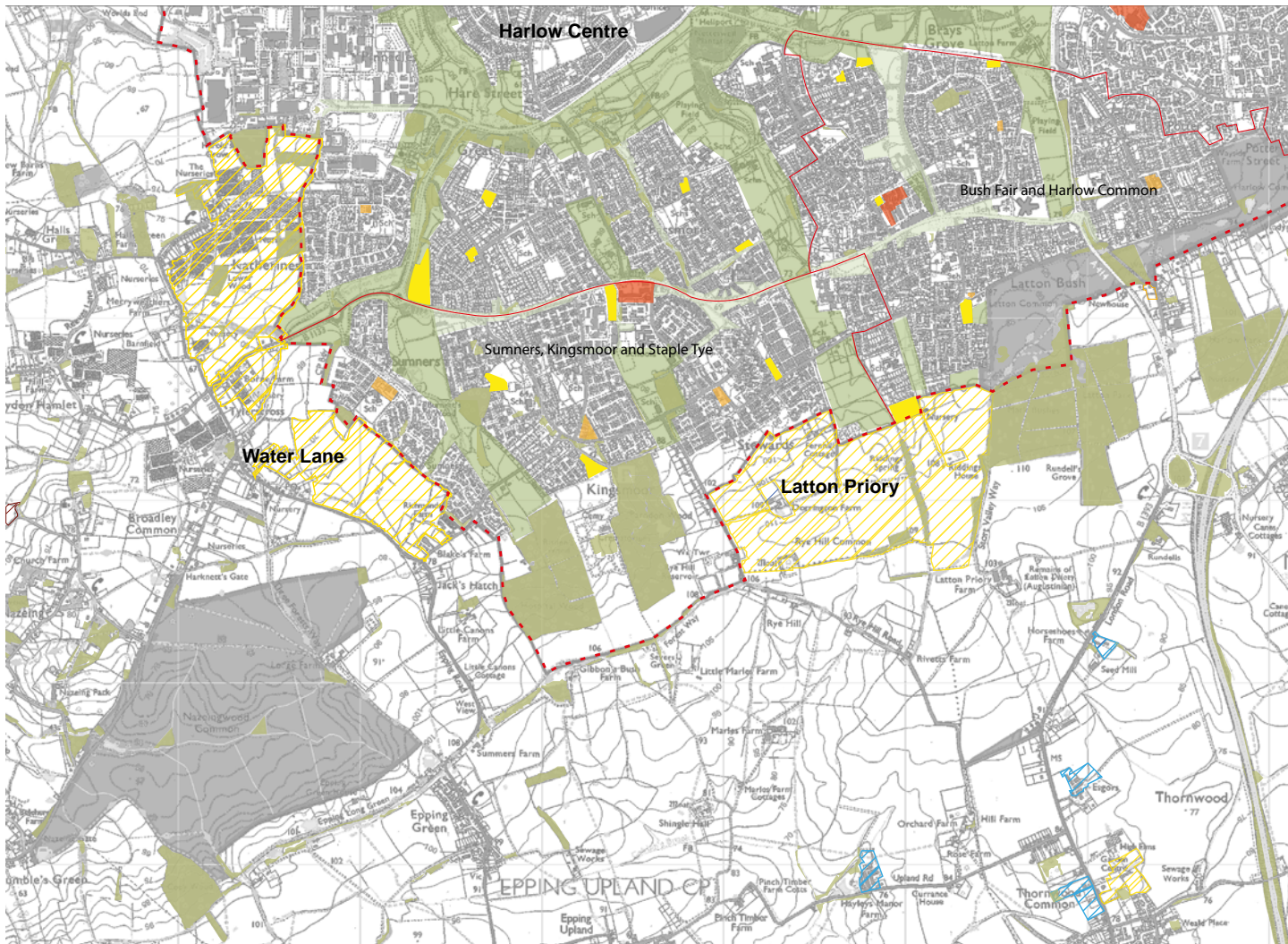
Harlow's Green Wedges as planned by Sir Frederick Gibberd

Communities






1.5 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, walking and cycling routes, flood mitigation and wildlife space.

1.6 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 to allocate the site for development including the provision of a minimum of 2100 new homes, 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, walking and cycling routes flood mitigation and wildlife space.

1.7 Developing a cohesive urban and landscape structure that allows easy movement between communities, 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 the Harlow, where existing residents feel welcome.



Key

-  Proposed Masterplan Areas (Residential)
-  EFD / HD Administrative Boundary
-  Local Centres
-  Local Hatches
-  Harlow Residential Allocations

Landscape and Ecology Assets

1.8 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”.

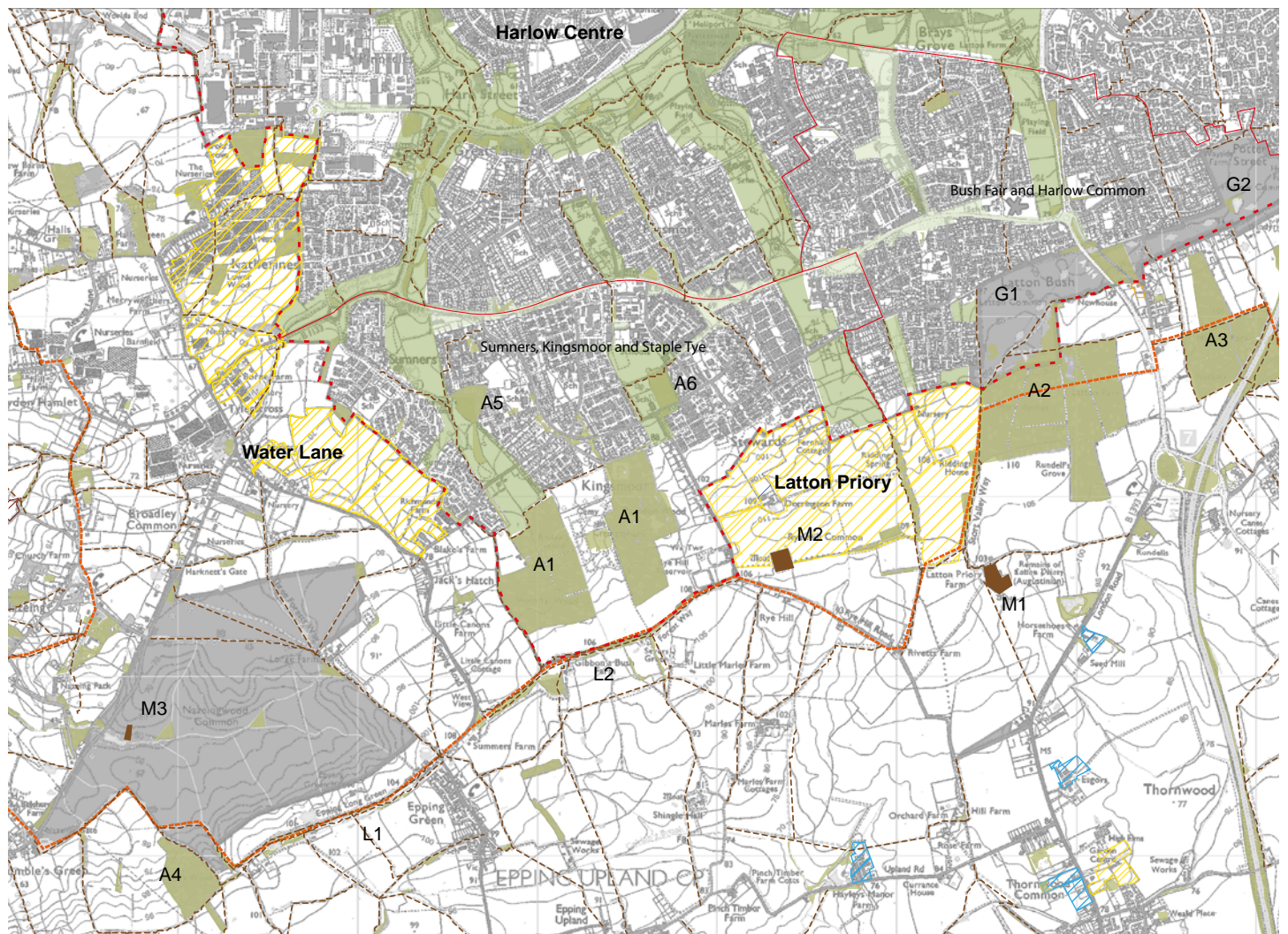
1.9 One of the defining features of this landscape is the significant blocks of ancient woodland that stretch from Copy Wood to Harlow Park Woods. Smaller relics of ancient woodland also appear within the urban form of Harlow at Burnett’s Wood and Maunds Wood. Within these various woodlands there are a variety of distinctive woodland characters such as the canopy of oak with coppiced hornbeam growing beneath it in Parndon Woods or 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.

1.10 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, although accessible, is currently used as arable land.

1.11 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 neutral 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 define 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 strengthen a hugely valuable shared resource for current and future residents.



Epping Long Green



Key

	Proposed Masterplan Areas (Residential)		Grassland Habitat		Registered Common Land
	EFD / HD Administrative Boundary		Woodland Cover		Local Wildlife Site (LoWS)
	Harlow Wards		Epping Long Green		Key View
	Green Wedge		Scheduled Monument		

Ancient Woodland

- A1 – Harlow Woods (Parndon Wood, Hospital and Ridsen's Wood, SSSI (45 Ha)
- A2 – Mark Bushes Complex Ep90 (46.9 Ha)
- A3 – Harlow Park Ep98 (19.5 Ha)
- A4 – Copy Wood LoWS 43 (9.1 Ha)
- A5 – Burnett's Wood Ha10 (2.8 Ha)
- A6 – Maunds Wood Ha19 (3.5 Ha)

Grassland

- G1 – Ha29 Latton Common
- G2 – Ha38 Harlow Common

Ancient/Species-rich Hedgerows and Green Lanes

- L1 – Epping Long Green West, LoWS 55 (6.3 Ha)
- L2 – Epping Long Green East, LoWS 67 (9.1 Ha)

Scheduled Monuments

- M1 – The site of the Augustinian priory of St John the Baptist, now Latton Priory Farm
- M2 – Medieval Moat.
- M3 – World War Two bombing decoy, encompassing a subterranean and an above ground earth-covered shelter

Heritage

1.12 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 be an integrated part of the network of landscape assets.



Parndon Woods

Amenity Greenspace and Public Parks and Gardens

1.13 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 emerging 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' is currently above the advised minimum size while 'Bush Fair and Harlow Common' has less provision. However, the shortfall in 'Bush Fair and Harlow Common' is to some extent compensated for by the proximity of Latton and Harlow Commons.

1.14 Amenity spaces and parks are of mixed quality, with 11 of the 25 parks assessed in the Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study (2013) falling below quality standards. More of these lower quality parks are located on the southern side of Harlow.



Rye Hill Recreation Ground

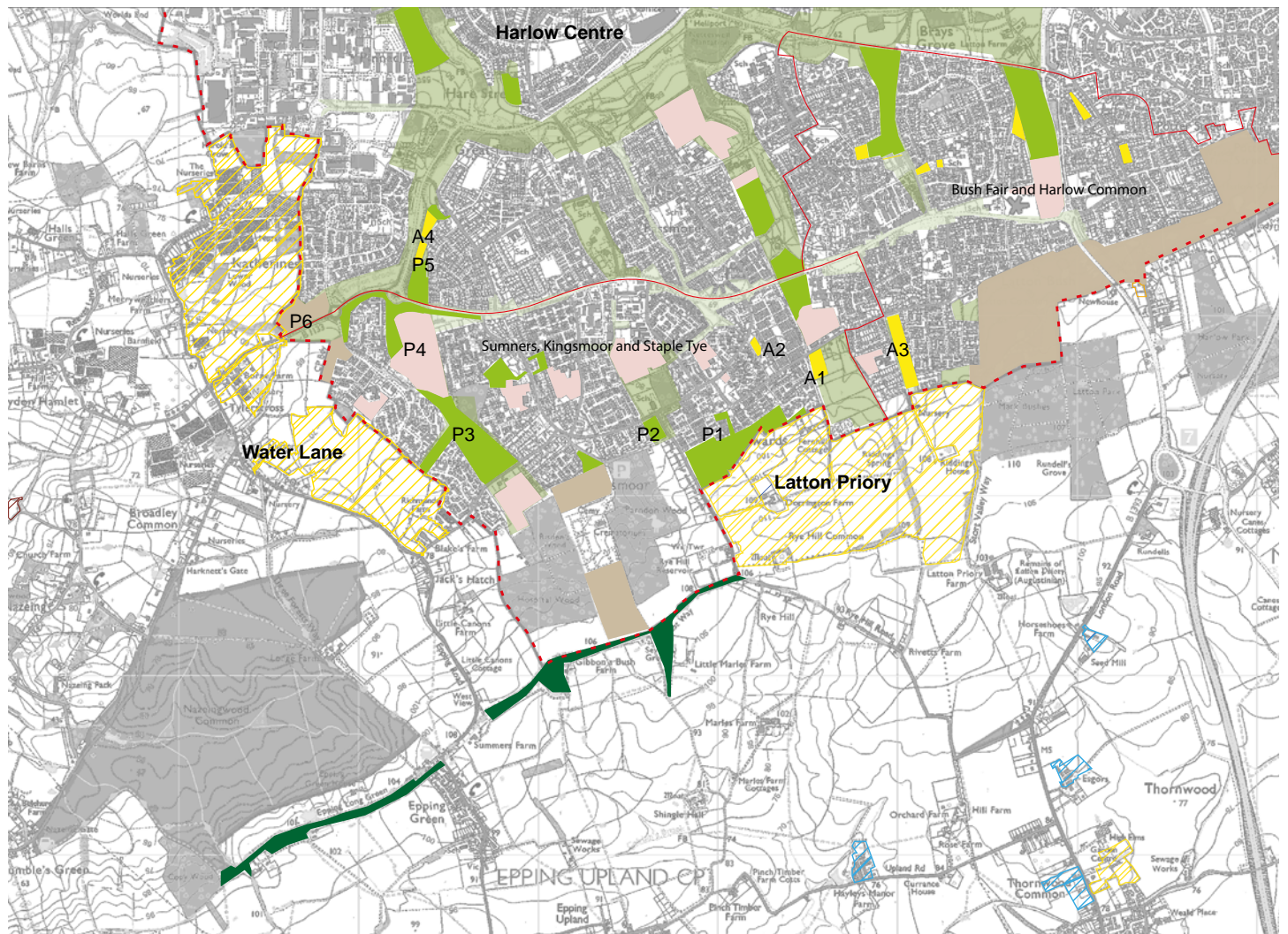
Allotments

1.15 The Council's Open Space Strategy 2017 shows that allotments are generally well provided 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 that will provide the green social infrastructure that can aid the development 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 allotments it also limits the public engaging with food growing. Therefore proposals should look to expand the variety of productive landscapes and to look to engage new users with them.

1.16 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 the green wedge.

Provision for Children and Young People

1.17 The current provision in adjacent Harlow communities 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 all age groups.



Key

	Proposed Masterplan Areas (Residential)		Parks and Amenity Greenspace		Other Grassland
	EFD / HD Administrative Boundary		Allotments		
	Harlow Wards		Grass Pitches		

Parks

- P1 - Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground 10.6 ha
- P2 - Paringdon Road Recreation Space 1.1 ha
- P3 - Parsloe Road Open Space and Parsloe Recreation Ground 10.1 ha
- P4 - Sycamore Field 4.6 ha
- P5 - Katherine's Way Playing Field 2.4 ha
- P6 - Fennells Playing Fields 1 ha

Allotments

- A1 - Netteswell Common Allotments 1.2 ha
- A2 - Honey Hill Allotment 0.4 ha
- A3 - Rundells Allotments 0.9 ha
- A4 - Water Lane Allotments 1.3 ha

Movement

1.18 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 routes across the district there is room for improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding.

1.19 Regional walks such as the Nazeing Country Walk and the Stort Valley Way highlight the draw of the local landscape. 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) to the west there is a good opportunity to link into this wider network. There is significant room to improve accessibility, legibility and way-finding through the Green Wedges especially where roads cross the wedges and where the wedges link into Latton Priory and Water Lane.

1.20 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 Land and Latton Priory. There is potential to continue the walking and cycling component of these routes to connect Latton Priory and Water Lane, providing Water Lane residents with an active route to the secondary school in Latton Priory.

Opportunities

1.21 The opportunities set out below are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites as set out in section 4:

1. Connecting into the big landscape attractors of 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

1.22 The Stort Valley Way offers an opportunity to link into a strategic route that ties into the Stort Valley. Alongside this the green wedge directly to the north of Latton Priory provides a direct route into Harlow's greenspaces, Harlow Town Centre and beyond that the Stort Valley. Prioritising these routes is key to the integration of the site into its context and the promotion of the Stort Valley as an accessible recreational landscape.

Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside

1.23 Easy, safe and attractive walking and cycling connections between neighbourhoods and open spaces are an important component of building a successful network of greenspaces. To deliver these connections improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding will be needed. Key areas to address will include:

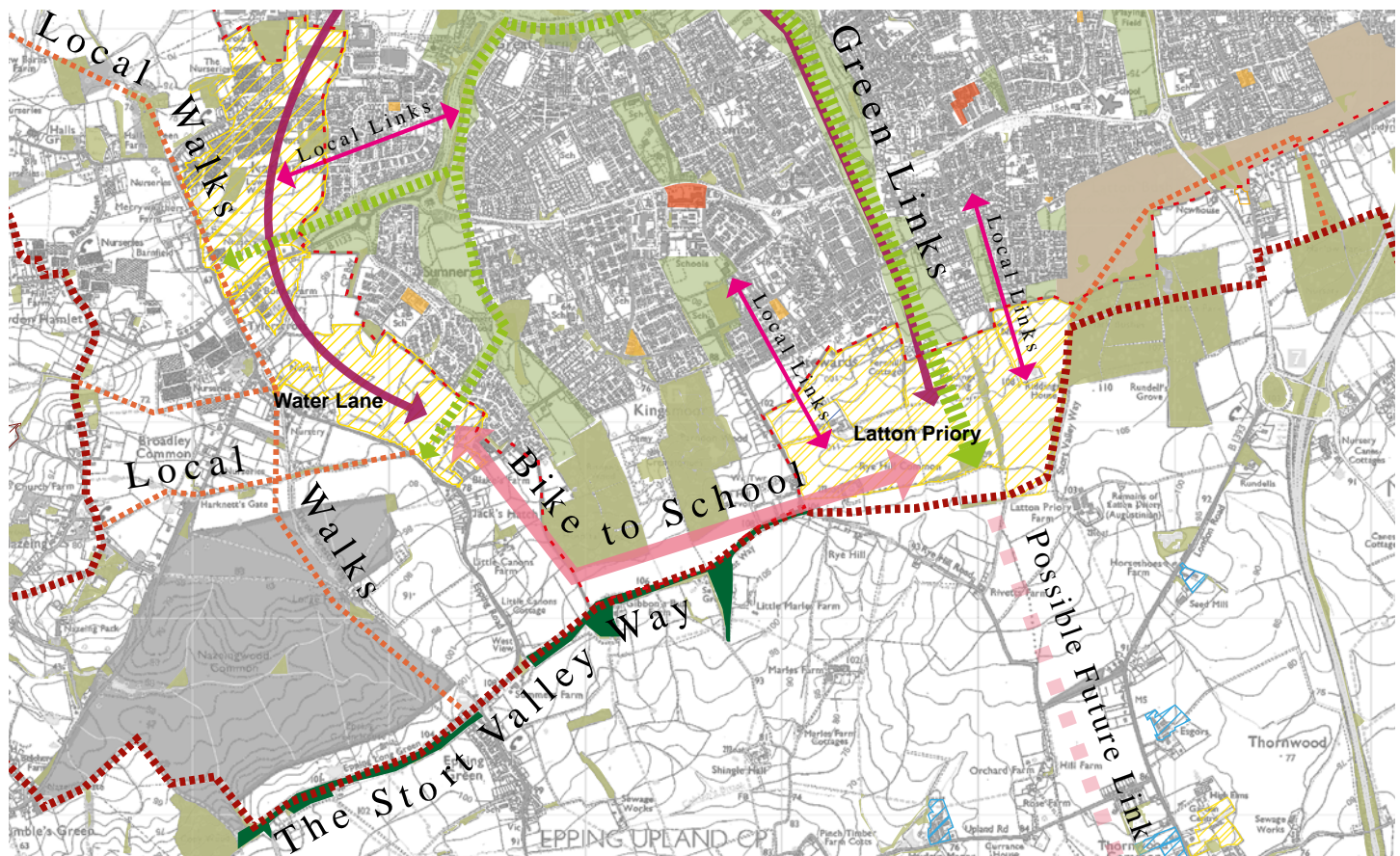
- Green wedges that currently run out to the countryside need significant improvements, to provide high quality connections into the Green Wedge network and on to Harlow town centre and the stations and facilitate local links into existing greenspaces and local centres.
- Continuing the walking and cycling 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 dog walkers and to provide variety in walking routes.

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

Local GI Overview

1.24 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 in the locality. However, some of this greenspace is itself under pressure and therefore the provision of SANG will help to 'absorb' some of this pressure and add to the Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace offer for new and existing residents. Other open space typologies, including parks, play and allotments are of average or poor quality and are generally under provided.



Improving access between existing and proposed communities, and the countryside

Reveal and Enhance

1.25 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.
- Potential to create 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.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

1.26 Initial design work has started on developing the approach to SANG provision for the Latton Priory Garden Town Community. Habitat proposals for provision of SANG as well as how it relates to existing paths and habitats are also being developed.

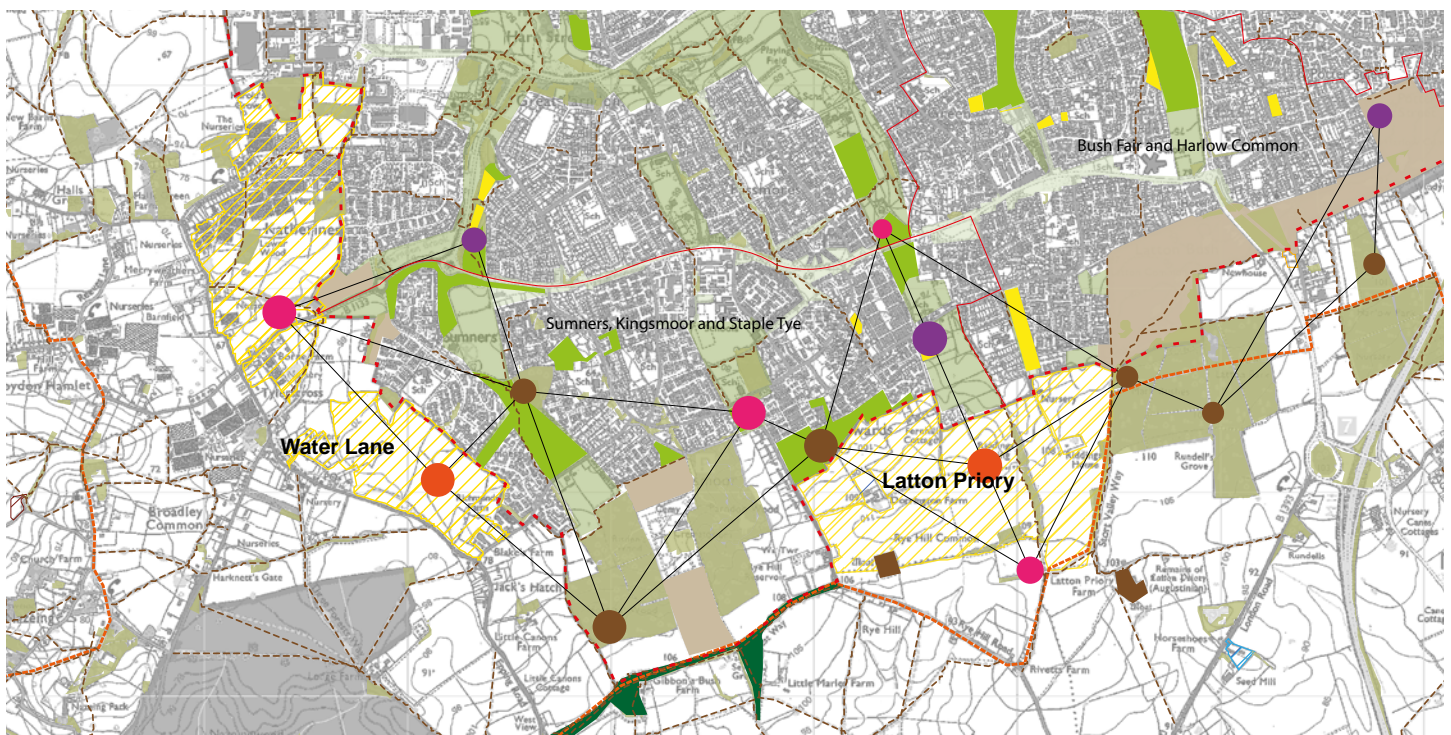
In addition, at the Examination Hearing session in relation to the Council's Local Plan on 21 May 2019, representatives of the site promoters for Latton Priory indicated that additional land was also available to provide a wider SANG offer if this was needed.

1.27 This work also sets out greenspace connections to the green wedge and to the west towards Epping Long Green. Greenspaces outside of the SANG will be developed along with the emerging masterplan.

Complimentary Network

1.28 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 use by both 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

1.29 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.



Complimentary network of green open spaces

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

1.30 Landscape should be considered as forming part of the social infrastructure in order to build cohesive communities through engaging more people with outdoor space and creating opportunities for social interaction as follows:

- 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: Woodlands, Commons, Green Lanes, Scheduled Monuments Potential interventions could include: Bird Hides, Natural Play, Low key interpretation, 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, 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.



Magneten Sensory Garden, Copenhagen by MASU Planning



The Kerb Garden, Stockwell by The Edible Bus Stop

2. North Weald Bassett Masterplan Area

Landscape Context

2.1 North Weald Bassett lies in an area characterised 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

2.2 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.

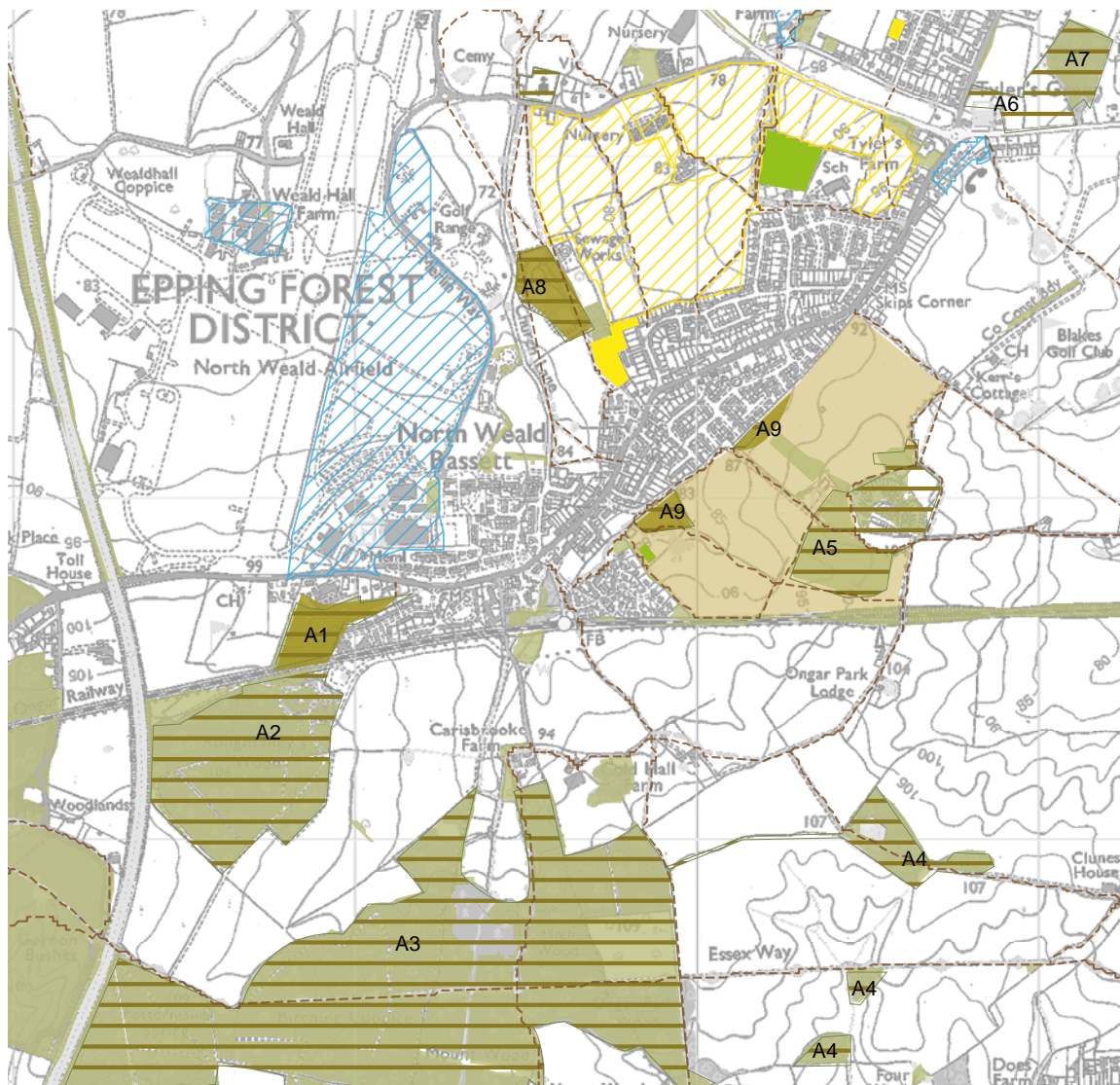
2.3 Woodlands include a variety of flora which provide a range of distinctive woodland characters including: virtually pure hornbeam coppice (Reynkyns Wood); blocks of Scotts Pine (Birching Coppice Complex); and Hornbeam/Pedunculate composition with scattered Rhododendron (Birching Coppice Complex).

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

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



Key

	Proposed Masterplan Areas (Residential)		Woodland
	Proposed Masterplan Areas (Commercial)		Local Nature Reserve
			Local Wildlife Site (LoWS)

BAP Habitats – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK); Ancient Woodland (Essex)

- A1 – Roughtalleys Wood, LoWS 114
- A2 – Roughtalleys Wood, LoWS 108
- A3 – Birching Coppice Complex, LoWS 116 (138.2 ha)
- A4 – Ongar Park Woods LoWS 129 (6.8 ha)
- A7 – A7 Reynkyns Wood LoWS 145 (3.0 ha)

BAP Habitats – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK), Selection Criteria - HC28 – Small Component Mosaics

- A5 – Ongar Radio Station LoWS 130 (10.8 ha)

BAP Habitats - Species-rich Grasslands (Essex)

- A6 – Tylers Green Grasslands LoWS 130 (10.8 ha)
- A9 – Weald Common LNR LoWS 124 (1.2 ha)

BAP Habitats – Lowland Fens, Reed beds (UK). Reed beds (Essex)

- A8 – Church Lane Flood Meadow LoWS 118 (3.5 ha)

Heritage

2.8 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.

2.9 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.



North Weald Airfield

2.10 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.

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

Parks and Amenity Greenspace

2.12 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.

2.13 The recreation ground is the main amenity greenspace within North Weald Bassett and includes play and sports facilities as well as a community hub. In the context of development the recreation ground offers the potential, particularly if additional land is provided, to be upgraded into an urban park. This would be positive initiative in terms of creating a space that would support community integration, by providing a place where people from new and existing communities can come together. Any such initiative should provide the opportunity for existing and new communities to come together. The provision of a new urban park 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

2.14 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.

2.15 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 Section 3 of this document as an example of best practice.



The social MUGA by MUF Architecture and Art

Allotments

2.16 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.

2.17 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 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 proposals should look to expand the variety of productive landscapes and to look to engage new users with them.

2.18 There is also a well-established and commonly used walking route around North Weald Village, known as Millennium Walk 1, which was established to celebrate the turn of the millennium (<https://www.northweald-pc.gov.uk/assets/documents/bm-walk-1>). Although used frequently by the local community, the route would benefit from improved wayfinding, accessibility and legibility. 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.

Movement

2.19 There is an established network of both Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and informal routes that run through the surrounding countryside. These routes are well used but as with routes across the District there is room for improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding. Such improvements should focus on promoting links between the existing community, the emerging masterplan areas, the surrounding countryside and between settlements.

2.20 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 the main body of this document the Council support 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.

2.21 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.

2.22 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.

Opportunities

2.23 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

2.24 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 – unless accessed by car. 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

2.25 Easy, safe and attractive walking and cycling connections between the residential and airfield Masterplan sites and neighbourhoods and open spaces are key to building a successful network of green spaces. Such an approach also supports the objective of creating a connected community and place. To deliver these connections improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding. Key areas to address will include:

- 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.
- 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.

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

2.26 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.
- Explore the idea of tree planting to 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

2.27 The provision of SANG should complement the existing network of Natural Greenspace offer in North Weald Bassett and be developed in line with the principles set out in Appendix 3. The potential location for SANG provision between the emerging Local Plan's commercial and residential allocations, offers a range of opportunities both for the creation of distinctive and valuable habitats as well as the opportunity to allow people to connect with these habitats. The Council, in its landowner role, is currently engaging with the site promoters of the residential led Masterplan to better understand how this land could support the delivery of the SANG offer in North Weald Bassett.

Complimentary Network

2.28 Provision of other open space typologies will be master planned through the new development. This should be designed in a way to encourage use by both new and existing communities and be developed through the master planning process to ensure a balance of open space typologies across the wider area. Any approach should include improvements outside the site allocation boundary to develop the wider network. Some key spaces to consider will be:

- The development of the recreation ground to include high quality play and urban park facilities to become a focal point for new and existing communities.
- 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.



Playground, Peckham Rye Park by Turkington Martin

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

2.29 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 section.

3. Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Area

3.1 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

3.2 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.

3.3 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

Communities

3.4 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

3.5 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.

3.6 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.

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

3.8 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.

APPENDIX 2 | STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

A map showing the location of the assets for the area will be provided in the final document.

Heritage

3.9 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 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 (as it was then known) 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.

3.10 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

3.11 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'.

Provision for Children and Young People

3.12 Current provision children's' play across Waltham Abbey is based primarily on traditional playgrounds (although the Townmead Sports and Social Club was a wider offer including a play park and skate park). In terms of quantity, provision is below that recommended by the Field in Trust national 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.



Waltham Abbey Gardens

Allotments

3.13 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, Capershots 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

3.14 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 which is one of the potential sites for enhancement referred to in Appendix 4 (although access to the site from the Masterplan Area requires using a short stretch of Galley Hill Road). 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.



Lee Valley Regional Park (LVRP)

Opportunities

3.15 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, including the provision of SANG.

Connect into the big landscape attractors

3.16 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

3.17 The enhancement of the existing PRoW that runs across the site together with the provision of new and improved walking and cycling connections and way-finding/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 both into the countryside, Waltham Abbey and to the national rail station at Waltham Cross.

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

3.18 The creation of a complimentary network of green open spaces can best be achieved by adopting the Landscape Framework approach set out in Appendix 3. 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.



The Discovery Garden, Wellington by Isthmus

3.19 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.

3.20 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.

4. South of Epping Masterplan Area

4.1 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 build up area of the town of Epping.

Landscape Context

4.2 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

4.3 The Planning Inspector who is examining the emerging Local Plan has supported the principle of allocating the South Epping Masterplan Area for primarily residential development. However, in her advice note of 2 August 2019 (ED98) she identified a number of matters which require further assessment including Green Belt and Habitats Regulation Assessment considerations as well as responding to noise and air quality issues associated with the M25 Motorway. Responding to these matters will inform the level of development that can be accommodated within the Masterplan Area and the infrastructure needed to support new residents.

Landscape and Ecology Assets

4.4 The northern most part of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies very close to the western part of the Masterplan Area. The Epping Forest 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 access to the Epping Forest 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.

4.5 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 the 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 as well as 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.

APPENDIX 2 | STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

A map showing the location of the assets for the area will be provided in the final document.

4.6 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 Lane, 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 as part of the existing PRoW network that crosses 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 landscape and is therefore a prominent feature within it.

Heritage

4.7 Gardners Farmhouse, and an associated barn, are Grade II Listed Buildings. 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.

4.8 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, 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 in 1948/1949 and became part of the London Underground Central Line.

Parks and Amenity Greenspace

4.9 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. In terms of quality 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'.



18th Century map of Coopersale Hall

Provision for Children and Young People

4.10 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.



Ivy Chimney Road playspace from Google Streetview

Allotments

4.11 Epping is considered to be well served by allotment sites two of which are managed by Epping Town Council (Lower Bury Lane and Meadow Road). The quality of the sites is mixed. Lower Bury Lane, Meadow Road and Thornwood Common are all rated as 'good', Coopersale is considered to be 'average' and Lindsey Street and High Road and Theydon Road are considered to be 'poor'. All of the existing allotment sites are located some distance from the Masterplan Area.

Movement

4.12 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.

4.13 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 to the High Street.



The Essex Way

Opportunities

4.14 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.

4.15 The Masterplan Area provides a significant opportunity to provide an integrated approach towards GI both within the site and into the wider area. The Masterplan Area should adopt the principles and Landscape Framework approach to the provision of GI as set out in Appendix 3. 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 EFSAC which, having had regard to the site's close proximity to it and the ease of access to it using the existing PRoW link from the western part of the Masterplan Area 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.

4.16 Using the Landscape Framework approach set out in Appendix 3 provides the mechanism for ensuring that the Masterplanning of the area takes account of, and provides an integrated approach to responding to the following:

- The Ancient woodland assets, the BAP Priority Habitat within the site and the nearby Local Wildlife Site;

- 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; and
- 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.



Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford

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

4.17 The enhancement of the existing PRow that runs across the site together with the provision of new and improved walking and cycling connections and way-finding/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 Epping Forest SAC for walking and dog-walking in particular. This could include enhancing and signposting a range of circular walking routes. The approach would support greater opportunities for both new and existing residents to access existing networks into the wider countryside and help to avoid placing further recreational pressure on the Epping Forest SAC.

APPENDIX 3

SANG GUIDANCE

This appendix sets out the principles that should be applied in the design and implementation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and should be read primarily in conjunction with Appendix 2.

1.1 A key aspect of the development of the GI offer in the Masterplan areas is the delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This is primarily in order to avoid placing pressure on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (the Epping Forest) but will also relieve pressure on other important sites of ecological and natural heritage importance affected by recreational use.

1.2 To successfully perform as avoidance and mitigation measures with a particular focus on the Epping Forest it is important that all spaces provided are inviting and comfortable for all people to visit and use. In master planning terms SANG will be provided as an integral part of the fabric of new strategic development sites. It will form part of a network of greenery and provide a green setting for new developments. It will not be acceptable to fill up the Masterplan area with built development and simply offer a field nearby for dogs, for example, to be exercised.

1.3 Each of the new Masterplan areas will be treated on its own merits but it is expected that an avoidance and mitigation strategy, illustrated by a Landscape Framework, will be prepared by joint working between all land promoters, developers and landowners involved in the development of the site and the provision of SANG to avoid a piecemeal approach. In the first instance this joint working should be demonstrated through the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding. More information in relation to the key components of a Landscape Framework are set out below, which incorporate a number of elements of the GI Strategy. This is to ensure that a coherent approach is taken to embedding SANG as part of GI provision rather than being isolated from it.

1.4 Whilst the starting point is for SANG to be provided within the Masterplan areas, in some locations there may be an opportunity to offer alternative areas of natural greenspace as SANG close to development sites. This can be considered where the land in question would provide effective avoidance or mitigation, is in the control of the site promoter/developer, or where there is landowner agreement, where it would support the principles of GI and SANG provision, and complements the landscape setting of the development.

1.5 A fundamental part of the design approach is to articulate how the site will avoid or mitigate the impact of increased population on the Epping Forest so that development (and cumulatively the local plan as a whole) complies with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. To achieve the levels of avoidance and mitigation measures required through on-site provision of SANG any application should include the submission of a Landscape Framework, making the case that avoidance or mitigation would be delivered in accordance with local plan policy and guidance. This will include a combination of proposals for spaces; paths; habitat and biodiversity improvement and complementary advantages that would support leisure uses which would otherwise impact upon the Epping Forest.

1.6 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 the use of the 8ha per 1,000 population figure to guide the quantum of SANG required is justified.

1.7 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 2016 based). These household projections suggest that the average household size in Epping Forest District in 2031 will be 2.37 persons and in 2036 will be 2.34 persons. There is no specific projection for 2033, which is the end date of the emerging Local Plan. To reflect the indicated reduction in household size the Council proposes that a figure of 2.36 persons per dwelling is used to reflect the likely household size at the end of the Local Plan period.

1.8 Using a Landscape Framework will have the added advantage that sustainable drainage, public open space, green infrastructure, play and visual amenity can be clearly articulated without having to provide full details at such an early stage.

1.9 The Landscape Framework may be aspirational in some aspects, indicating landscape and amenity benefits which may not yet be quantifiable but it must tie down certain fundamental aspects of provision in order to make a convincing case that avoidance or mitigation will be achieved.

1.10 The Landscape Framework needs to explain what elements will be provided. We suggest that as a minimum this should be submitted as a 1:500 plan annotated to explain the following issues:

- 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.

1.11 There are a number of elements which will need to be understood in order to ascertain whether the development is likely to achieve a reasonable level of avoidance or mitigation for the additional population pressures.

1.12 It therefore needs to be clear how each of the following matters will be dealt with. This is best shown on the Landscape Framework which should be accompanied by a table or list explaining briefly how the proposal intends to provide for each matter:

- 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.

1.13 Since Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Public Open Space (POS) are also fundamental to the success of any application, 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.

1.14 Current policies apply but 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 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 multi-functionality of provision can be achieved. For example SuDS features can also support biodiversity net gain objectives and create a natural interest feature which provides variety of landscape for the visitor.

1.15 Avoidance and mitigation of recreational pressure on the Epping Forest will be most effective where the spaces provided are easily accessible to both new and existing populations. This can also help the layout of sites to knit well with existing townscapes and communities. However, above and beyond the avoidance and mitigation rationale, there will also often be a need to create soft and green edges to rural land. Locations for avoidance and mitigation land as part of the buffering of rural edges may therefore be considered appropriate but maximising the avoidance and mitigating impact will be the main criterion for such fundamental design decisions.

1.16 The suitability of land for creating avoidance and mitigation needs to be considered in terms of its potential to become part of a strategic Landscape Framework. Sites where habitat can be enhanced will be part of that consideration, however ecologically sensitive sites are not usually considered appropriate places for increased human activity.

1.17 Each site will be considered on its individual merits but designated ecological sites are unlikely to be protected or enhanced by allowing additional recreational activities through them. Consequently such sites will not normally be considered as SANG avoidance or mitigation unless it can be demonstrated that additional recreational activities, and in particular dog-walking, would not cause harm to that site's interest features.

1.18 SANG is not intended to address the other functions of greenspace. However, other functions may be provided within SANG, as long as this does not conflict with the specific function of seeking to avoid the impacts of new residents on the Epping Forest. For example, appropriately designed children's play opportunities could be provided if it is sympathetic to the character of that part of the SANG within which it is to be provided.

1.19 SANG may be created from:

- existing open space of SANG quality with no existing public access or limited public access, which for the purposes of avoidance 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 who might otherwise visit the Epping Forest.
- land in other uses which could be converted into SANG

1.20 The identification of SANG should seek to avoid sites of high nature conservation value which are likely to be damaged by increased visitor numbers. 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 considered alongside relevant policies in the Local Plan. We do know that there are some sites of high ecological value within the District whose interest features would not be impacted by an increase in visitors.

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

1.21 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 these activities.

1.22 The existence of the SANG needs to be well publicised in order to attract people to use it instead of the Epping Forest. Consequently, initiatives such as providing leaflets/ walk packs for all new homes within the Epping Forest Zone of Influence to advertise the existence of the SANG and to encourage their use should be explored.

Walking Routes

1.23 SANG needs 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.

1.24 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. The key consideration will be that a variety of routes are provided to dog-walkers and walkers.

1.25 Path type and surfacing can be varied. Both vehicular-sized tracks and narrow PRoW type paths are acceptable.

Natural Play

1.26 Natural play provision will be an important element of the design to support both the attractiveness of the SANG to families, but also to support the multi-functional approach to the use of GI that the Council is seeking to achieve.

Wayfinding

1.27 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.

Appearance

1.28 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.

1.29 Sport facilities and formal public open space cannot be used as SANG.

1.30 SANG needs to reproduce the quality of the experience that a visit to the Epping Forest would provide, so an air of relative wildness, even when there are significant numbers of visitors on site is important.

Catering for dog walkers

1.31 A key component for SANG will be to allow pet owners to let dogs run freely. Therefore access on the SANG or parts of the SANG (depending on its size) should be largely unrestricted, with both people and their pets being able to freely roam. This means that sites where freely roaming dogs will cause a nuisance or where they might be in danger (from traffic or such like) should not be considered for SANG.

1.32 In developing footpath networks opportunities to link with other large areas of open space which allow for free roaming dogs should be maximised to provide interest and diversity in the 'dog-walker' offer.

1.33 SANG should not normally seek to deliver bike access within them. This is because high bike usage is not conducive to off lead walking of dogs and as such SANG sites would not attract one of the key impact groups to them. Opportunities for cyclists should instead normally be provided using the PRoW network outside of the SANG itself.

1.34 The information below provides a Site Quality Checklist for an individual SANG

- For all sites larger than 8ha there must be access to adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local use, i.e. within easy walking distance (c.400m) of the developments linked to it. The amount of car parking space should be determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflect the likely visitor catchment of the SANG. As a first step consideration should be given to using existing, or planned, car parking opportunities in the vicinity of the site, subject to there being sufficient capacity to accommodate additional use.
- If car parking is to be provided it must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
- Easy access to the site should be created 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.
- The SANG must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath(s).
- SANG must be designed so that it is perceived to be safe by users.
- 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.
- SANG must be perceived as semi-natural spaces with little intrusion of artificial structures. Visually sensitive way-markers, seating and natural play features, if appropriately designed, are likely to be acceptable.
- Access within the SANG must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.
- SANG must be free from unpleasant intrusions which would detract from its attractiveness as a place to visit.

APPENDIX 4

SITES FOR ENHANCEMENT

This appendix identifies site specific projects that should be brought forward in order to protect or enhance the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure assets.

Potential Sites For Enhancement To Increase Recreation Opportunities

1.1 The GI Strategy will be delivered by a range of projects including identifying opportunities to maximise the benefits of existing greenspace either through investment to increase their attractiveness or by opening them up for public use where this is currently restricted.

1.2 There are a number of benefits for doing so. These include:

- Providing local opportunities to support health and well-being objectives and therefore encouraging more people to use GI for recreation and exercise;
- Creating greater opportunities for people to walk and cycle in support of climate change and health, wellbeing and air quality benefits; and
- Relieving pressure on assets of ecological and natural heritage importance including the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.

1.3 This appendix includes sites where it may be possible to achieve the above benefits. These have been identified through a number of sources including:

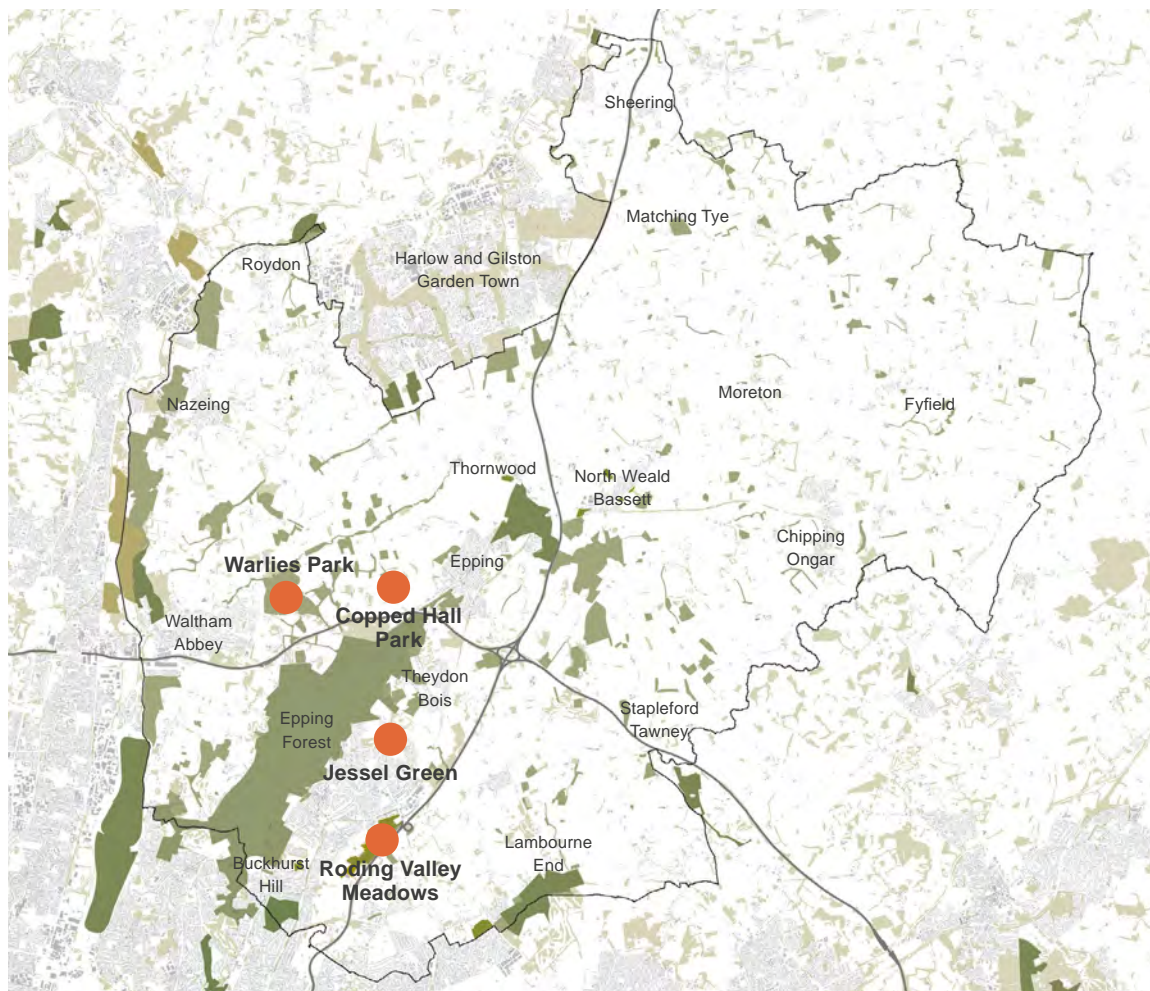
- Knowledge of the aspirations of landowners such as the City of London Corporation,
- Sites suggested by visitors who currently use the Epping Forest, and
- The Local Plan evidence base.

1.4 We are exploring, through this consultation, the views of individuals and organisations on whether the above benefits could be achieved through the enhancement of these sites, what enhancements may be needed and whether there are other sites that should be considered. In doing so it is important to recognise that any enhancements will need to be funded, and on-going management and maintenance costs will need to be factored in. In some cases this funding could be by securing contributions from new development but this can only be done where there is a direct relationship between that development and the site to be improved. In other cases money saved by adopting less regular maintenance to support 're-wilding' and biodiversity improvements (as set out in Appendix 1) could be used instead to invest in other sites. However, it is important to recognise that there are many pressures on the finances of public and third sector organisations. Some enhancements could be funded from external sources including bids for schemes such as the Heritage Lottery Fund or central government initiatives and the GI Strategy can provide an important part of the evidence needed to support such bids.

Sites of a strategic scale

1.5 These sites have been identified as they are of a sufficient scale to be able to provide the type, size and character to act as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in accordance with the principles set out in Appendix 3. As also set out in Appendix 3 SANG does not necessarily have to be provided on a completely new site but can be provided on existing sites with capacity to accommodate visitors but which require some enhancements to improve their attractiveness. Where possible the type of enhancements that might be needed have been identified. In deciding how effective these sites could be it will be important for the Council to think about:

- Their location in relation to where people live within Epping Forest District who already visit the Forest and how easy it will be for them to access the site
- How they relate to the number and location of new homes
- How any enhancements will be funded
- What the landowner or organisation that manages the site can do themselves to enhance it.



Warlies Park

1.6 Warlies Park is located immediately to the north-east of Waltham Abbey. The site is owned by the City of London Corporation. As such it has the potential to act as a SANG. The Park, which has its origins in Georgian times, encircles Warlies Park House, a Grade II Listed Building in separate ownership and used as offices and therefore is not part of the potential SANG offer. The Park includes a Scheduled Monument known as The Temple which is located to the east of the House. It includes areas of grassland some of which is used for grazing, clusters of trees, and some areas of important biodiversity value. Cobbins Brook is located towards its northern edge. A number of Public Rights of Way and permissive paths cross the site.

1.7 Potential enhancements and matters to be considered:

- Landscaping and tree planting to reflect its historic parkland character and support an increase to the biodiversity value of the site;
- Increasing public access whilst maintaining livestock grazing
- Improved signage on routes into and across the site
- Improvement to the surfacing of links into and across the Park, including the improvement and accessibility of the site for those with mobility impairments
- Provision of car parking



Warlies Park House

Copped Hall Park

1.8 Copped Hall Park lies to the south-west of Epping. The site is owned by the City of London Corporation. As such it has the potential to act as a SANG. Copped Hall Park is listed by Historic England as a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. The Registered Park and Garden includes Copped Hall and its immediate grounds, which are now within the ownership of the Copped Hall Trust and which has only limited public access. It also includes a large area of parkland, part of which is under arable production and part is grassland with some surviving parkland trees. The potential SANG area is focused on the parkland located to the south of Copped Hall and its immediate grounds.

1.9 Potential enhancements and matters to be considered:

- Landscaping and tree planting to reflect its historic parkland character and support increases to the biodiversity value of the site;
- Improving walking and cycling access into and across the Park, as well as for those with mobility impairments
- Provision of signage on routes into and across the site
- Improvement to the surfacing of links into and across the Park, including to improve the accessibility of the site for those with mobility impairments
- Provision of car parking
- There will need to be engagement with Historic England on any proposals for landscaping and tree planting, and physical works needed to provide public access recognising the site's designation as a Grade II* registered Park and Garden.

Roding Valley Meadows Nature Reserve

1.10 Roding Valley Meadows was suggested as an opportunity to act as a SANG by a number of people as part of the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2019. Roding Valley Meadows is some 65ha in size and is managed by Essex Wildlife Trust. It is the largest remaining species-rich water meadow in Essex, and contains a mosaic of herb-rich meadows, hedgerows, marsh, ponds, scrub and woodland, and is famous for its array of wild flowers. It has a number of environmental designations – being a County Wildlife Site, Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

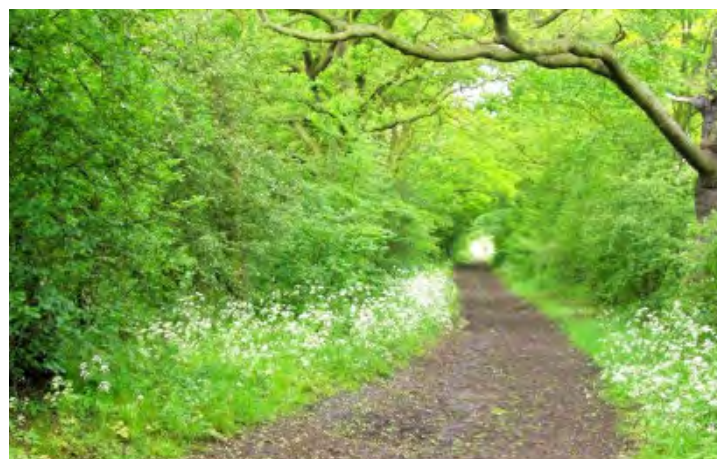
1.11 It contains a mix of footpaths and wheelchair friendly paths that run through and around the reserve. It can be accessed from the Roding Valley Recreation Ground via a number of entrances on the Loughton side of the river Roding and as such is well placed to provide opportunities to act as an alternative recreational offer to the Epping Forest for new residents on some of the emerging Local Plan sites on the eastern side of Loughton. There is also access from the Chigwell side via a footbridge over the M11 motorway at the end of Grange Farm Lane. As the site has grazing cows from spring to autumn dogs have to be kept under close control while on the reserve. Two car parks also serve the Reserve. One is located next to the reserve office at the Grange Farm Pavilion off the High Road, Chigwell and one next to the David Lloyd Centre off Roding Lane (IG7 6BQ). Facilities include toilets (including a disabled toilet), a picnic area, baby changing facilities and an outdoor play area. The important ecological interest features (the reason why it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in particular) would not be affected by increased recreational use. Enhancements identified through the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2019 and which would encourage more people to visit the site include improving signposting, walking and cycling facilities, enhancing the paths and the entrances/exits, providing more parking and the removal of parking charges.

Jessel Green

1.12 Jessel Green was suggested as an opportunity to act as SANG by a number of people as part of the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2019. Jessel Green is located in Loughton and is bordered by Colebrook Lane, Jessel Drive, Burney Drive, Goldingham Avenue and Brady Avenue. It is a large open grassed area and forms part of the Debden Estate which was built as an 'Out-county' estate under the 1943/44 County of London Plan and Greater London Plan prepared by Sir Patrick Abercrombie. The site is owned by Epping Forest District Council, with Loughton Town Council providing some functions of its management. There are no Public Rights of Way within Jessel Green but it can be freely accessed on foot as the site is unfenced. The site is used by local residents of all ages including for strolling, ball games, dog-walking, community events and picnics. The main enhancement suggested was to provide better access for those with mobility impairments.



Jessel Green



Roding Valley Meadows

Other sites within Epping Forest District that have been identified as having potential for enhancement

1.13 The sites below have been identified through the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2019 as other sites that could act as an alternative to the Epping Forest for recreational purposes with enhancements as suggested in response to the survey.

- Debden Green: Provision of car parking
- Gunpowder Park: At the moment the visitor survey response suggests it is not considered to be a great place to walk – improvements required include a need to control dogs and dog faeces, provide free car parking, the provision of a café, improved access into the site, provision of cycle trails, facilities for children.
- Linder's Field: Is currently a fragmented site so there would be a need to provide a unified route, and controls regarding the number of dogs.
- Theydon Bois Wood: Provision of car parking and trails going into the site, creation of picnic areas, activities for children, better advertising and way markers.

Further information

1.14 The Council's Open Space audit provides more detail about the variety of places and spaces that exist across the District on a parish by parish basis (see EB706 included as part of the Evidence base for the Local Plan <https://www.efdclocalplan.org/local-plan/evidence-base/>) . Whilst the audit is now some 10 years old it provides a good starting point of information about other sites in the District that may also benefit from enhancements, not just for the provision of SANG but also for other GI assets.