



MEETING : EXECUTIVE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2025
TIME : 7.00 PM

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Ben Crystall	- Leader of the Council
Councillor Mione H Goldspink	- Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Carl Brittain	- Executive Member for Financial Sustainability
Councillor Alex Daar	- Executive Member for Communities
Councillor Joseph Dumont	- Executive Member for Corporate Services
Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward	- Executive Member for Planning and Growth
Councillor Sarah Hopewell	- Executive Member for Wellbeing
Councillor Tim Hoskin	- Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
Councillor Chris Wilson	- Executive Member for Resident Engagement

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AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Leader's Announcements

To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.

3. Minutes - 18 March 2025 (Pages 6 - 22)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2025.

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member(s) declaration(s) of interest.

5. Council Tax Support Scheme (Pages 23 - 36)

6. Provisional Outturn 2023/24 & 2023/24 Draft Statement of Accounts (Pages 37 - 136)

7. Monitoring 2024/25 quarter 4 corporate risk register (Pages 137 - 142)

8. Options for Elizabeth Road shops and flats, Bishop's Stortford (Pages 143 - 171)

To move that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of item 8, Appendix B on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

9. Update of the Statement of Community Involvement (Pages 172 - 249)

10. Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (Pages 250 - 561)
11. Membership of the District Plan Executive Panel (Pages 562 - 571)
12. Urgent Business

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

Agenda Item 3

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors B Crystall, C Brittain, A Daar,
J Dumont, V Glover-Ward, S Hopewell and
T Hoskin.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Deering and T Stowe.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Crutchley	- Team Leader (Planning Policy)
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Laura Guy	- Principal Planning Officer
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Helen Standen	- Interim Chief Executive
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

382 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor

Goldspink and Councillor Wilson.

383 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council announced the sad passing of Paul Burt, the Planning Support Service Manager. He sent his condolences and best wishes to his friends, family, and colleagues. A minute's silence was held to remember Paul.

384 MINUTES - 11 FEBRUARY 2025

Councillor Glover-Ward asked for a correction at minute number 327. She said that there would not be a consultation in autumn 2025 but they would be starting the preparatory work then and the consultations would be held in 2026 and 2027.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed, and Councillor Hopewell seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025, as amended, be approved as a correct record, and be signed by the Leader. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025, as amended, be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Leader.

385 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

386 ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER INTERIM PLAN

The Leader of the Council introduced the English Devolution White Paper Interim Plan. He said that the government had published its white paper on devolution

in December which laid out its plan for reforms in two tier areas. The government had asked Hertfordshire to come up with an interim proposal to be submitted to them which must be submitted by 21 March 2025.

The Leader of the Council said that last month, all 11 councils in Hertfordshire have met to discuss the options and have been meeting frequently. He said the options proposed in the report had been a positive, collaborative effort and it had been brought to the Executive for discussion and agree for it to be submitted.

Councillor Daar felt that there were not enough resources delegated to town and parish councils to fulfil their new roles under these proposals. She hoped that this would be resolved moving forward.

Councillor Crystall said that town and parish councils had been a consideration, but it was not yet clear how their role would change. It may be that parishes are put in where they do not currently exist.

The Interim Chief Executive said that a working group was being set up specifically for town and parish councils and Ware had expressed an interest to join the group. She said that central government had not yet been clear how they fit into the overall picture.

Councillor Brittain said that from a public point of view, the biggest question was what would happen to Council Tax. He referred to page 26 and said implications needed to be understood in relation to council tax for the different options.

Councillor Crystall said there was a lot of data that did not exist yet. He said that a considerable amount of work had been done by all councils but were only starting to see the real implications of what the different models mean.

Councillor Glover-Ward said there was still some discussion about the ideal number of residents in a unitary. If the ideal number was 350k – 500k then the four unitary option was not a viable solution.

Councillor Crystall said it was balance between financial sustainability and democratic representation.

Councillor Dumont said that there were a lot of questions that did not have answers at the moment. He said that this was a once in a generation opportunity and was pleased to hear that progress was being made. He said that there were things that concerned him such as the transition costs of £52-54 million and questioned who foots the bill.

Councillor Hoskin said that this exercise was about economies of scale and said that option one looked too large. He referred to the waste service and said that when the district hands over, it was important that the service did not stop start but was a continuation.

Councillor Deering said that this was coming from the government, not the county council. His personal view was that it was important to consider what was best for residents. He said it was difficult to see any savings realised through breaking up the county and felt that most residents knew which council to go to for certain issues, i.e. the county council for highways, adult services, and the district for planning services. He said that he struggled to see where the benefits for residents were coming from and if residents knew this reorganisation was happening then they might wish for the money to be spent elsewhere.

Councillor Hopewell said she had concerns about larger services such as adult and children's services being spread over multiple councils. She said that in Nottingham, a workplace parking levy was ringfenced and

put into local bus services. She felt that residents appreciated having a local feeling and East Herts residents would not be particularly connected to other residents in Hertfordshire.

Councillor Stowe said he remembered the last reorganisation in 1973 and felt it was a disaster and lots of money was wasted. He said the argument was that devolution gave more power to the people, but he felt it would do the opposite.

Councillor Hopewell referred to the practicalities of IT infrastructure and the transfer of residents across different systems and the risk to front line services.

Councillor Glover-Ward said she had mentioned the devolution plans to residents at the Gilston Residents Association and they were horrified that they might lose their local council. She said that residents may not be happy about planning decisions, but recognised officers do the best they can and felt having services locally was better.

Councillor Daar said she was disappointed that there was no mention of environmental sustainability and the current ongoing work with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. She said that on the doorstep, people did not understand the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner and felt that if there was an elected mayor, there would be little connection to residents.

Councillor Crystall said that there was a feeling of a loss of democratic accountability and connection to local councils in the proposals. He said that the Hertfordshire Growth Board had a set of missions that were clearly environmentally focused and councils across Herts agreed this was an important stream to focus on.

Councillor Dumont said that the debate was good and

important, and it was good to voice any concerns.

Councillor Crystall said that conversations with residents was important, and the council had a page dedicated to local government reform which would have updated FAQs as and when more information came from the government.

Councillor Deering said that he struggled to see how these proposals would bring more devolution. He said that councillors would still be democratically elected, but they would be more remote.

The motion to support the recommendation was proposed by Councillor Crystall and seconded by Councillor Daar.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Government’s proposals for English Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation be noted, and

(B) the Executive delegates to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, that the interim proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire as set out in the report be submitted to the Government by the deadline of 21 March 2025.

387 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2024/25 - Q3 FORECAST TO YEAR END

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Q3 forecast to year-end report which was currently showing a £955k overspend. He said the list of variances was shown at Appendix C and 75% of the

overspend related to BEAM. A change to the accounting policy to capitalise on interest had resulted in a reduced interest payment of £340k. He said that work was ongoing to reduce outstanding debt and old debt over 180 days totalled £2.2 million.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Dumont seconded the proposal.

Councillor Crystall referred to the reduction to the end of year overspend and asked if this would continue to decrease over the financial year.

Councillor Brittain said that number was a predicted overspend and the fact that it was lower than the Q1 estimate did not mean that it would continue to get lower. He said it would depend on outcomes at BEAM.

Councillor Daar referred to paragraph 2.3 and the moving of £160k to reserves to meet future potential losses on property funds.

Councillor Brittain said the money had been invested into two property funds and these were in the process of being wound up for differing reasons. He said that the likely capital received back from funds would be less than the council put in, but the exact amount was still unknown. It was anticipated that the council would know within the next three to six months.

Councillor Dumont referred to the 75% overspend on BEAM and highlighted how unpredictable things could be. He recognised the good work within the outstanding aged debt.

Councillor Brittain said work was being done and the debt figure would decrease over the next six months as issues were resolved. He said that a lot of it would be resolved

by writing it off as a lot of the debt was not recoverable.

Councillor Deering referred to paragraph 2.7 and that debt over 180 days had gone up which suggested this was fresh debt. He said the fresher the debt, the greater the chance of it getting paid.

Councillor Brittain said that one of the issues raised during the work was that some of the invoices that the council was raising were not valid so things in the debt account were there that should not have been counted as income.

Councillor Deering asked if the team would be going after fresh debt.

Councillor Brittain said that whilst looking at the old debt, the department could understand why it was there. He said that he understood the point about catching up on recent debt, but the exercise had to be done to identify old debt that was recoverable. He said that systems were being changed to avoid debt occurring in the first place by moving people onto direct debits.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) The reasons for the net revenue budget end of year projected overspend of £955k be noted; and

(B) the capital programme forecast outturn of £9.083m, carry forward of £7.835m be noted.

388 CORPORATE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2025-2030

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Corporate Procurement Strategy 2025-

2030. He said the strategy was underpinned by the Procurement Act 2023 which came into force in February 2025 and reformed existing rules focussed on cutting red tape, supporting innovation, transparency and simplifying processes to work with more small and medium sized businesses.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hoskin seconded the proposal.

Councillor Dumont said that there was a video on the government's website to explain the changes. He said that social value was important and a lot easier for larger companies to demonstrate. He said that the evidence was asked for at the start but was not followed through to monitor its success and he encouraged the council to take a proactive approach in getting social value from contracts.

Councillor Daar said that the strategy covered community wealth building adequately which boosted local economies. She said that one consideration of awarding contracts is local if they spent money locally.

Councillor Hoskin said that the council bought services from the county council as the waste disposal authority but the tracker on the waste stopped when it left the UK. He said there needed to be traceability.

Councillor Brittain said that was a good point and the practicalities could be worked through.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that the updated Corporate Procurement Strategy 2025-2030 be approved.

389 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2024/25

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review which highlighted the key issues in the economic background and council borrowing. He said that all the council's borrowing was now short-term loans, and the report showed a reduction in property investment as investment funds would be being wound up.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Wilson seconded the proposal.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – to recommend to Council to approve the Mid-Year Treasury Management review and Prudential Indicators for 2024/25.

390 EAST HERTS EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

The Committee Support Officer presented the East Herts Executive Scrutiny Protocol which had been developed because of new government guidance being issued in April 2024 about the purpose of Overview and Scrutiny and how this should be conducted.

He said that the protocol document set out the principles that would define the relationship between the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive. Overview and Scrutiny Members considered the protocol on 4th March, and Members of Overview and Scrutiny agreed to sign up to the protocol. Comments from the committee included adding the word 'overview' into the title and adding the ability to scrutinise external organisations.

Councillor Dumont proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hoskin seconded the proposal.

Councillor Crystall said it was a positive document and recognised a useful way of working.

Councillor Dumont was pleased to see that there would be an agenda item for the Executive to bring updates back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny protocol be approved with effect from 18 March 2025, and

(B) the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny protocol be reviewed after June 2027.

391 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the UK Shared Prosperity Fund report. She said that money had been provided to the council from the government and the spending of this money had been delegated to Officers in consultation with Executive Members. She referred to page 117 which showed the five main spending streams.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth ran through a number of highlights and projects that had benefitted from the grant money and said that officers would be providing a full evaluation of the projects later in the year. She thanked everyone involved for their work and felt that the rewards spoke for themselves.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Daar seconded the proposal.

Councillor Crystall said this was a good news story.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that there were more great projects out there, but she could not mention them all.

Councillor Hopewell said she echoed the comments that this was a great piece of work and that most of these projects were not achievable otherwise.

Councillor Daar reflected that the council had done a lot of hard work on developing strategies which has enabled good projects to be identified.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) Members review progress to date; and

(B) Members consider priorities for the 2025-26 year.

392 EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW – BUNTINGFORD EMPLOYMENT STUDY 2025

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the Buntingford Employment Strategy. She said that in order to update the District Plan, there was a large evidence base to be collated underpin and part of that evidence base was to have an understanding of the town's current employment market in order to guide policy decisions and whether further employment land was needed.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the key findings of the report was that Buntingford was experiencing significant housing growth, a lack of vacancies and a loss of employment land.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hopewell seconded the proposal.

Councillor Crystall asked if every town would have an employment study.

Councillor Glover-Ward confirmed that would be the case.

Councillor Crystall asked how long the report took to produce.

The Principal Planning Officer said that this study had been commissioned in November 2024 and had been a desktop study so could be worked through relatively quickly.

Councillor Hoskin asked how this document sat alongside the Hertfordshire Growth Board and the requirement for employment to sustain new housing.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the employment study was part of the bigger picture and would be looked at alongside district wide employment studies and the wider evidence base for infrastructure.

Councillor Hoskin asked if there were any case studies where an employment study had been used as a planning consideration elsewhere and worked.

The Principal Planning Officer said there was an emphasis on understanding that there was a balance between making employment and housing more sustainable.

Councillor Deering said he was in favour of the report and every town needed employment facilities and people needed jobs. He hoped the other studies would be expediated as much as possible.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that the Buntingford Employment Study (2025), attached as Appendix A, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts District Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.

393 EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW – EAST HERTS STRATEGIC VISION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the East Herts Strategic Vision report. She said that the strategic vision would be used to inform the debate and a unified direction of the council's approach to growth. She said that the report discussed the reasoning behind the vision based on the important issues and challenges facing the district. The Strategic Vision was formed via a series of workshops with the Leadership Team and councillors and a result of engagement with strategic stakeholders.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Dumont seconded the proposal.

Councillor Crystall thought that it was a great vision document and said the process had been really engaging. He asked when the consultation for the document would

be.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that there would be two mandatory consultations at various stages. She said that one would be expected towards the end of next year.

Councillor Hopewell asked if there was any opportunity to provide any additional support to town and parish councils in aiding their understanding of the document.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that she had opened up DMC training to all parish councillors and Planning forums had been introduced. She said she could set up a session on the District Plan if it was required.

Councillor Dumont felt that the visioning sessions had been very productive with cross party representation.

Councillor Brittain asked what happened to the District Plan if devolution went ahead and the district no longer existed.

Councillor Glover-Ward said there was experience of this within the planning team at previous authorities. She said that two separate plans had been adopted by the unitary and stayed in place until it was replaced by the next one. She said that the National Planning Policy Framework insisted that everything was to be plan led.

Councillor Daar asked if that meant the future potential unitary could have several plans adopted.

Councillor Glover-Ward expected that to happen initially but eventually there would be one plan to cover the whole unitary.

Councillor Stowe said that the last District Plan took more than a couple of years to go through the process.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that the process would be challenging but the 2.5 years timescales was set by the government.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – to recommend to Council that (A) the East Herts Strategic Vision is made available to stakeholders and the wider community to begin a discussion about the new District Plan, and to seek comments on the Vision;

(B) Engagement on the Strategic Vision should commence, and take the form of a six-week period of activity during Spring / Summer 2025 through a range of different forums, including online and in-person; and

(C) A further report detailing any feedback is prepared following engagement to agree a final version of the Strategic Vision, and to set the out the next stages of plan-making.

394 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chairman
Date

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Carl Brittain – Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Council Tax Support Scheme

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update members on the work undertaken so far and to request permission to undertake a consultation with both the public and the Major Precepting Authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme with effect from 1 April 2026.

1. Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
2. Council Tax Support (CTS) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the Council from government has reduced year on year.
3. As with the majority of authorities within England, the Council need to make changes to the CTS scheme for working age applicants (the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government) in order to reduce the significant administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.
4. This report provides details of the proposed scheme which will provide assistance to the most vulnerable and negate the negative

administrative effects of the introduction of Universal Credit. If the review of the current scheme is approved, the report requests permission to consult on these proposed changes as required by the legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE

- (A) **Agree that the Council will consult with the public and Major Precepting Authorities on the introduction of a new income banded/grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1 April 2026 to:**
- (I) **reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit**
 - (II) **to improve the overall level of support for the lowest income families; and**
 - (III) **to improve the level of Council Tax collection**

6. The proposed scheme within this report will address the issues faced by the Revenues and Benefits Service in administering the current scheme.

REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

7. CTS was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:
- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities;
 - Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
 - Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.

8. Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Support scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources.
9. The current CTS scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.
10. Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100% support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of CTS can only be made to the working age scheme.
11. When CTS was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support.
12. Due to the reduction in finance, the Council reduced the maximum level of support available to working age applicants 91.5%.
13. The only other changes made were in line with prescribed requirements (set by Government) and to bring the scheme into line with either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

The main issues with the current scheme

14. There are a number of issues with the current scheme that will need addressing if the system is to continue to provide effective support to low-income taxpayers and also to provide the service in an efficient manner. The main issues are as follows:
 - The need to continue to assist low-income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax;
 - The introduction of Universal Credit for working age applicants; and
 - The need for a simplification of the scheme.

15. Each of these points are examined in detail below:

The need to assist low-income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax

16. Similar to other authorities, the Council, now requires all working age applicants to pay a minimum payment (8.5%). Under the previous scheme (Council Tax Benefit), almost 75% of working age applicants would not have been required to pay any Council Tax and would have received full (100%) support.
17. It is essential that this level of support is maintained notwithstanding that the design and the administration of the scheme needs to change.

Council Tax Support and the roll out of Universal Credit

18. The introduction of Universal Credit within the area has, as experienced in all other areas, brought a number of significant challenges to both the administration of CTS and also the collection of Council Tax generally. All Councils have experienced the following:

- The reluctance of Universal Credit claimants to make a prompt claim for Council Tax Support leading to a loss in entitlement;
- A high number of changes to Universal Credit cases are received from the Department for Work and Pensions requiring a change to Council Tax Support entitlement. This currently stands at 48746 per annum and is expected to rise from the end of 2025. On average 40% of Universal Credit claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum. These changes result in amendments to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays, and the demonstrable loss in collection; and
- The increased costs of administration through multiple changes with significant staff time being needed. Consequently, this has resulted in delays in processing CTS claims and sending revised council tax bills.

19. The existing means tested CTS scheme, is too reactive to change,

and is not viable in the longer term now that Universal Credit has been rolled out fully within the area and the managed migration from legacy benefits (to be completed by the 2026). The move to a new more efficient CTS scheme from 2026/27 has now become essential.

The need for a simplified approach to the Council Tax Support Scheme.

20. Notwithstanding the introduction of Universal Credit, the existing scheme is based on an 'old fashioned;' means tested benefit scheme. It has major defects namely:
 - It is difficult for customers to understand and is based on a complex calculation of entitlement;
 - The administration for staff is complex, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants;
 - Staff have to undergo significant training to be competent in processing claims, it takes over a year for an assessor to be proficient in the basics.
 - The timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications; and
 - The administration of the scheme is costly when compared to other discounts for Council Tax

21. There is now a need to review the CTS scheme, not only to mitigate the effects of Universal Credit, but also make it easier for customers to make a claim and to significantly reduce the time and costs of administration so work demands are more manageable on the team.

The proposed approach for the 2026/27 Council Tax Support Scheme

22. In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it is proposed that an alternative approach be taken from

2026/27. The approach is to fundamentally redesign the scheme to address all of the issues with the current scheme and in particular:

- (a) To maintain the level of support available to the poorest households;
- (b) To address the problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
- (c) To reduce the administration costs and delays in processing due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;

23. Work has been ongoing since the beginning of January this year on a proposed new scheme which is nearly completed. If agreed by committee, consultation needs to be undertaken with the public and the major precepting authorities. If agreed by Full Council later this year, the new scheme will take effect from 1 April 2026.

24. The current means - tested schemes will be replaced by a simple income grid model as shown below in Table 1:

Table 1 - EXAMPLE

	Passported	Single	Single with 1 Child	Single with 2 or more Children	Couples £	Couple with 1 Child £	Couple with Two or more children £
Discount level	Weekly Income Levels £						
100% Band 1*	Relevant Benefit	£0.00 to £125.00	£0.00 to £225.00	£0.00 to £275.00	£0.00 to £175.00	£0.00 to £225.00	£0.00 to £275.00
80% Band 2	N/A	£125.01 to £175.00	£225.01 to £275.00	£275.01 to £325.00	£175.01 to £225.00	£225.01 to £275.00	£275.01 to £325.00
60% Band 3	N/A	£175.01 to £225.00	£275.01 to £325.00	£325.01 to £375.00	£225.01 to £275.00	£275.01 to £325.00	£325.01 to £375.00
40% Band 4	N/A	£225.01 to £275.00	£325.01 to £375.00	£375.01 to £425.00	£275.01 to £325.00	£325.01 to £375.00	£375.01 to £425.00

- It is proposed that the highest level of discount will be at a maximum level of liability Band 1, and all current applicants that are in receipt of a '*passport benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount:
- All other discount levels are based on the applicant's and partner's, (where they have one) net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependants;
- All of the proposed scheme options specified below, have the same 'grid' and are identical in other respects except for non-dependant deductions;

25. For all of the above options, the following key features will apply:

- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards. Where a family also receives a childcare disregard (for childcare costs not paid for by Central Government schemes), the income levels in the 'grid scheme' are set at a higher rate;
- No charges will be made for non-dependants;
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;
- Where any applicant, their partner or any dependant child(ren) are disabled, a further disregard of £50 per week will be given, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded;
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will be disregarded;
- The following elements of Universal Credit will also be disregarded:
 - An amount in respect of the Housing Element;
 - Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity Element;
 - Carer's Element; and

- Disabled Child Element
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue (maintaining the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant);
- Extended payments will be removed; and
- The capital limit will be £10,000 but with no tariff (or assumed income) being applied.

How the new scheme will address the problems with the current Council Tax Support

26. With the simplicity of the proposed new scheme and by taking a more 'Council Tax discount approach', it will address the problems associated with the increased administration and delays in processing caused by failings in the current scheme and Universal Credit as follows:

- **The scheme will require a simplified claiming process.** All applicants will see a significant reduction in the claiming process and, where possible, CTS will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants *any* Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for CTS. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to CTS will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the council taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
 - **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays;
 - **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** The claiming process will be simplified significantly for all CTS claimants. Entitlement to CTS will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating;
 - **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and therefore assist in improving and increasing collection rates. The maintained maximum level of discount will also assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;
 - **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current CTS scheme is

very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax bills. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:

- Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
- Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Support will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and
- The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes it will be effective from the day of the change rather than the Monday of the following week.

The effect of proposed scheme on individual households

27. The proposed changes will have a significant effect on households especially those on the lowest of incomes. Current modelling allows us to project the likely outcomes for typical households given their individual circumstances.

38. Based on the schemes as outlined the following would result:

Table 2 - the potential number of that gain winners and that lose under the proposed options

Number of recipients that would:	
Gain	2186 (43%)
Stay the Same	2140 (43%)
Lose	708 (14%)

29. Inevitably, with any change in scheme, there will be some who would be worse off although the proposed scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable and the vast majority of applicants. The amount of CTS lost by residents is dependent on the income they receive. They are then attributed to a band under the new scheme. A summary of potential annual CTS recipients who would be worse off are included below. This is based on information held on the system currently and could be subject to change.
- Band 1 – CTS recipients who receive a partial award currently due to their income level will potentially lose all of their CTS entitlement. Amounts vary from £10 to £509 per annum.
- Band 2 - 517 cases with a potential loss of £197 per annum
- Band 3 – 221 cases who, dependent on income received will lose between £182 and £673 per annum.
- Band 4 – 69 cases who will lose between £809 and £1283 per annum under the scheme due to income levels. Most of the cases affected are where the resident receives income from employment which is included in the Universal Credit calculation.

The losses will apply mostly to working age residents. Of the potential loss, 10 relate to Pensioner cases.

30. In order to assist any household who may lose entitlement, it is proposed that the new scheme will contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experience exceptional hardship. Where any applicant is likely to experience exceptional hardship, they will be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment.
31. The Council will consider all applications for hardship on an individual case-by-case basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support will be given to the applicant. Any discretionary awards made are to be paid through the Collection Fund.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

32. The alternative to introducing a new income-banded scheme for Council Tax Support from 2026/27 is to leave the existing scheme in place. This would be a short-term option; lead to increasing costs of administration; and in the longer term, continue to significantly affect the collection of Council Tax and the effectiveness of the scheme to support households within the Council's area.

ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

33. In order to change the scheme, a full consultation will need to be undertaken in line with the statutory requirement with:

- The County Council;
- Police and Crime Commissioner;
- The public

34. The responses to the consultation will assist the authority in making its decision which must be made by Full Council

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes, if the proposed recommendation is agreed, we will assess the Council's equalities duty in regard to this proposal and include any relevant findings from the outcome from the consultation in the report to Full Council

Environmental Sustainability

There will be no measurable environmental impact

Financial

Since 2013 the tax base has grown whilst the effect of CTS on the tax base has reduced considerably.

The overall CTS caseload is reducing year on year due to mainly the increasing income of pensioners (this is in line with all other English Authorities) and whilst the working age caseload increased temporarily through the COVID crisis, this is again reducing and is expected to reduce further from now on.

The current Council Tax Support scheme costs approximately £7.3 million which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in the following proportions:

- Council 9%
- County Council – 79.2%
- Police and Crime Commissioner 11.8%

The approach and 'shape' of the scheme is changing, and the overall approach will be to provide additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes. Based on current modelling, were the new scheme to be in place at the current time, the cost would be approximately £224k

Financial modelling will continue to be undertaken throughout the project as CTS caseloads change throughout any financial year.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states that before making a scheme, the authority must:

- consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

In addition to the statutory consultation, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is obliged to make a resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 N/A

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East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Carl Brittain – Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Provisional Outturn 2023/24 & 2023/24 Draft Statement of Accounts

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – This report presents the provisional outturn for the General Fund Revenue Budget and the Capital programme outturn for 2023/24 financial year. The outturn remains provisional as the figures are subject to external audit.

Also presented is the 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

- a)** Note the general fund revenue outturn of £224k underspend to be transferred to the general reserve; and
- b)** Note the capital outturn position; and
- c)** Receive the 2023/24 draft statement of accounts.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 To advise members on the general fund revenue outturn for 2023/24 and provide explanations for significant variances against approved budgets.
- 1.2 To advise members of the final capital outturn position and financing arrangements for the 2023/24 capital programme.
- 1.3 To provide the 2023/24 draft statement of accounts.

2.0 Background

2.1 Officers acknowledge the significant delay in presenting this report to members. This delay has been caused by the ongoing audit of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, capacity within the finance team, a review of all aged debt and reviews of Councils accounting policies (specifically Minimum revenue Provision (MRP) and capitalisation of Interest).

2.2 At the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 22nd April 2025, the external auditors (Ernst & Young) presented their completion report for 2021/22 and 2022/23, which has concluded the outstanding audits. A number of statutory recommendations were included in the report received. Within the completion report, Leadership Team have outlined the steps that will be taken to resolve these recommendations.

2.3 The reviews mentioned in paragraph 2.1 were undertaken in Q3 & Q4 2024/25. The impacts of these are included in the 2023/24 accounts.

2.3 The deadline for the draft 2024/25 Statement of Accounts is 30th June 2025, the provisional outturn for 2024/25 and draft statement of accounts will be presented to Audit and Governance Committee at the September 2025 meeting.

3.0 Reason(s)

Revenue

3.1 An underspend of £224k is reported against the 2023/24 revenue budget. This is summarised in table 1. It is recommended that this is transferred to the general fund, to mitigate overspends in future year.

Table 1: Summarised 2023/24 Outturn Position

2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Outturn	Variance
£'000	£'000	£'000

Net Cost of Services	17,230	18,530	1,300
Corporate Budgets	1,023	(194)	(1,217)
Net (use)/Transfer to Reserves	(818)	2,223	3,041
Funding	(5,322)	(8,670)	(3,348)
Council Tax	(12,113)	(12,113)	-
2023/24 Underspend		(224)	(224)

3.2 Details on the significant variances against the 2023/24 revenue budget are shown in Appendix A.

3.3 The reserve position of the Council as at 31 March 2024, is shown in Table 2. Appendix A provides further details:

Table 2: 2023/24 General & Earmarked reserve position

Usable reserves	£'000
General Fund	3,854
Earmarked reserves	22,015
Capital grants unapplied	189
Total as at 31 March 2024	26,058

The calculated minimum level of general fund balance is £3.3m, as at 31 March 2024 the Council's general fund balance was £3.854m, this is set aside to meet unforeseen risks. As per the table above the earmarked reserves are £22m, these are set aside for specific purposes or are required to provide risk finance.

Capital

3.4 The progress of the capital programme has been reported to Audit and Governance Committee throughout the year as part of the budget monitoring process. Capital Expenditure in 2023/24 was £25.6m, against a budget of £36.5m as set out in table 3.

Table 3: 2023/24 Capital Outturn & budget carry forwards to 2024/25

2023/24 Revised budget	2023/24 Outturn	Variance
-------------------------------	------------------------	-----------------

	£'000	£'000	£'000
Land & Buildings	30,137	21,910	(8,227)
Vehicles & Equipment	1,363	152	(1,211)
Community Assets	2,927	1,615	(1,312)
REFCUS	238	33	(205)
Grants	1,850	1,850	-
Capitalisation of interest	-	1,017	1,017
Total	36,515	26,577	(9,938)

3.5 An underspend of £9.938m is reported in respect of 2023/24. This is due to reprofiling of capital budgets undertaken as part of 2024/25 budget setting.

3.6 A new accounting policy was approved by Audit & Governance Committee in February 2025, regarding the capitalisation of interest in relation to assets under construction. This change in accounting policy has been retrospectively applied to the 2023/24 accounts, and the interest amounts capitalised are included in the 2023/24 outturn in paragraph 3.4.

3.7 The 2023/24 capital programme has been financed from the following sources:

Table 4: 2023/24 Capital Financing

	£'000
Capital Receipts	1,615
Third party contributions	1,608
Government grants	1,850
External borrowing	21,471
Revenue	33
Total	26,577

2023/24 Draft Statement of Accounts

3.8 The 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts are included as Appendix B. The delay in publishing the accounts is due to the ongoing audits of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Accounts, which were finalised in April 2025. A review of the Councils MRP (Minimum Revenue Provision) policy and Capitalisation of Interest were undertaken in 2024/25 by ArlingClose (The Councils treasury advisors). The impact of these reviews are included in the 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts

3.9 The 2023/24 Statement of Accounts are available on the Councils website, and currently in a period of public inspection. This is due to complete on 13th June 2025. After this point the Councils external Auditors (Azets) will work with officers to complete the 2023/24 Audit.

4.0 Options

4.1 the Executive can choose to transfer the underspend to an earmarked reserve rather than the general reserve.

4.2 The Executive can choose not to carry forward capital budgets although this would cause budget shortfalls and overspends on major projects that span financial years. This is not recommended.

5.0 Risks

5.1 The statement of accounts and provisional outturn position are subject to external audit and there is a risk that the accounts will need to be adjusted, which may affect the outturn position.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1

Community Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Data Protection

None arising directly from this report.

Equalities

None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

None arising directly from this report.

Financial

All financial implications are included in the report.

Health and Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Human Resources

None arising directly from this report.

Human Rights

None arising directly from this report.

Legal

Regular monitoring and forecasting of the budget and capital programme are required to ensure that the Council is managing its resources effectively and complies with section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 and The Councils Financial Procedure Rules.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1

Appendix A	2023/24 Revenue outturn Position
Appendix B	2023/24 Draft Statement of Accounts

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General Fund Revenue Outturn position 2023/24

1. Net Cost of Services

An overspend of £1.3m is reported against the net cost of services budget, the main areas of variance against budget are detailed across the following paragraphs:

- Within Planning ongoing recruitment difficulties meant that the service continued to use consultants to assist with the workload and planning application backlog alongside a decrease in planning applications fee income as a result of the cost of living crisis has led to a £368k overspend against budget.
- Charringtons House was closed to tenants on 31 March 2023, the Council remains liable for costs in relation to Business rates and utilities, which totalled £361k in 2023/24.
- A review of the council's aged debt position was undertaken in 2024/25, which resulted in a number of debts being deemed uncollectable, therefore the provision for doubtful debts was increased by £659k, as the 2023/24 Statement of accounts were still in production this amount was charged against the 2023/24 revenue position.

2. Corporate budgets

An underspend of £1.2m is reported against corporate budgets;

- A review of the Councils Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) has undertaken by external advisors (Arlingclose) to ensure that the Council is making proper provision. A budget for MRP was set at £557k, following the review it was determined that £600k needed to be set aside in respect of 2023/24. This has resulted in a pressure of £43k.
- In 2023/24 the council entered into short term borrowing to fund the capital programme. Interest on borrowing cost the authority £1.5m. Following a review by Arlingclose the 2023/24 accounting policies have been updated to include the capitalisation of interest (presented to audit and Governance Committee on 18th February 2025). This enables the Council to allocate borrowing costs to assets under construction, this increased the capital cost of project and reduced the interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) by £1m to £541k. This has resulted in a £438k saving against the 2023/24 interest payable budget. This has been transferred to the interest equalisation reserve.
- Due to the increased bank of England base rate, the interest that the Council received on its investments was £774k higher than the budget of £1m. This has been transferred to the interest equalisation reserve.

3. Use of Reserves

The 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) budgeted a contribution from reserves of £818k, the outturn position was a net contribution to reserves of £2.2m a movement of £3m;

- New Homes Bonus Grant of £931k was received in 2023/24, this was all transferred to the New Homes Bonus priority spend reserve.
- As detailed in the section above the £1.2m was transferred to the interest equalisation reserve.
- In line with the MTFP £235k was transferred to the Council election reserve.

At the 31 March 2024 the usable reserves total £26m, as shown in the following table and the 2023/24 draft statement of accounts (Appendix C to this report).

Usable reserves	£'000
General Fund	3,854

Earmarked reserves	22,015
Capital grants unapplied	189
Total as at 31 March 2024	26,058

The calculated minimum level of general fund balance is £3.3m, as at 31 March 2024 the Council's general fund balance was £3.854m, this is set aside to meet unforeseen risks. As per the table above the earmarked reserves are £22m, these are set aside for specific purposes or are required to provide risk finance.

4. Funding

A movement of £3.3m against the budget set in March 2023 is shown as at 31 March 2024. When the budget was set a net £1.6m deficit on the council tax and business rate collection funds. The outturn position for 2023/24 was a surplus of £1.7m, this gives a movement of £3.3m.

DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023-24



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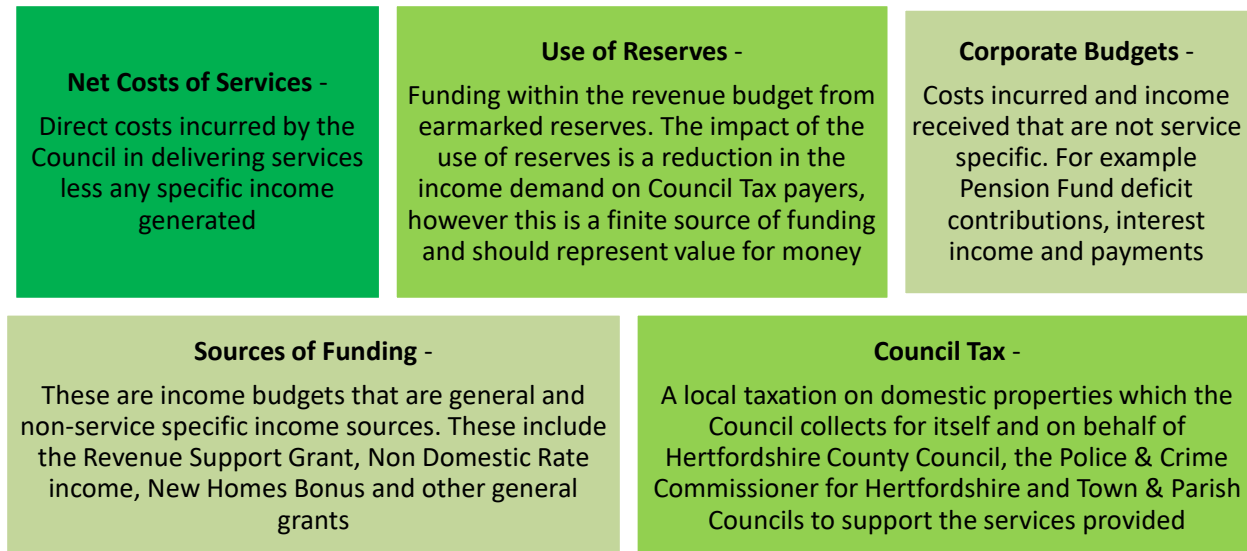
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FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE IN 2023/24

The 2023/24 budget was set by Council in March 2023 as part of the budget report and Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023/24 to 2027/28. There are five major 'building blocks' to the Council's revenue budget. These are shown below:



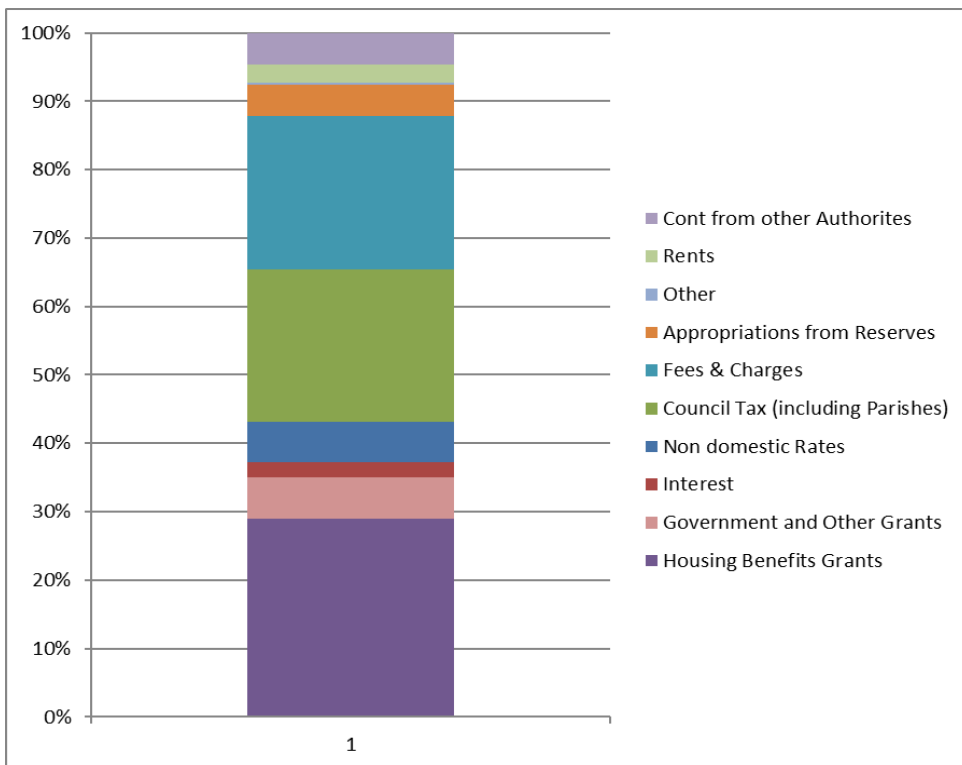
The table below details the Council's performance against the five major 'building blocks'. There was a £223k underspend in 2023/24, this has been transferred to the General Reserve.

	Original Budget 2023/24	2023/24 Outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Net Cost of Services	17,230	18,530	1,300
Corporate Budgets Total	1,023	(194)	(1,217)
Net Use of Reserves	(818)	2,224	3,042
Funding	(5,322)	(8,670)	(3,348)
Council Tax	12,113	12,113	0
Overspend	-	24,003	(223)

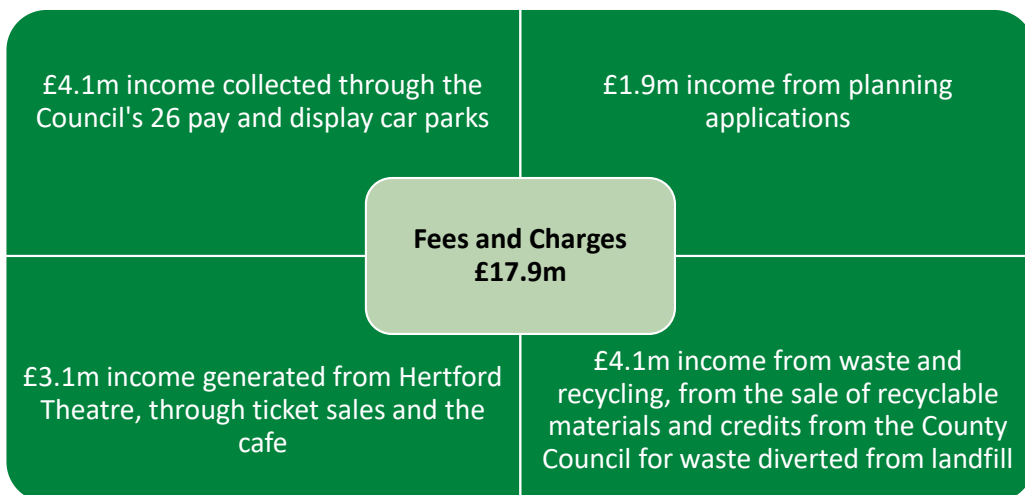
The Council's budget is monitored monthly by senior management and reported quarterly to the Executive.

2023/24 Income streams

The chart below shows the £79.7m of income that the Council received in 2023/24. The largest source of income was Housing Benefits subsidy (from Central Government) which is used to fund the payment of Housing Benefits to claimants.



Fees and charges are the second largest source of funding for the Council, highlighted below are some of the largest income generating activities of the Council;



Included in the £4.8m of government and other grants income are:

- £0.9m of New Homes Bonus, which is a Government scheme aimed at encouraging local authorities to grant planning permission in return for additional revenue.
- £1.3m General government grants to fund service provision
- £0.8m grants received to support homelessness
- £0.5m grants received in relation to UK Shared Prosperity Fund

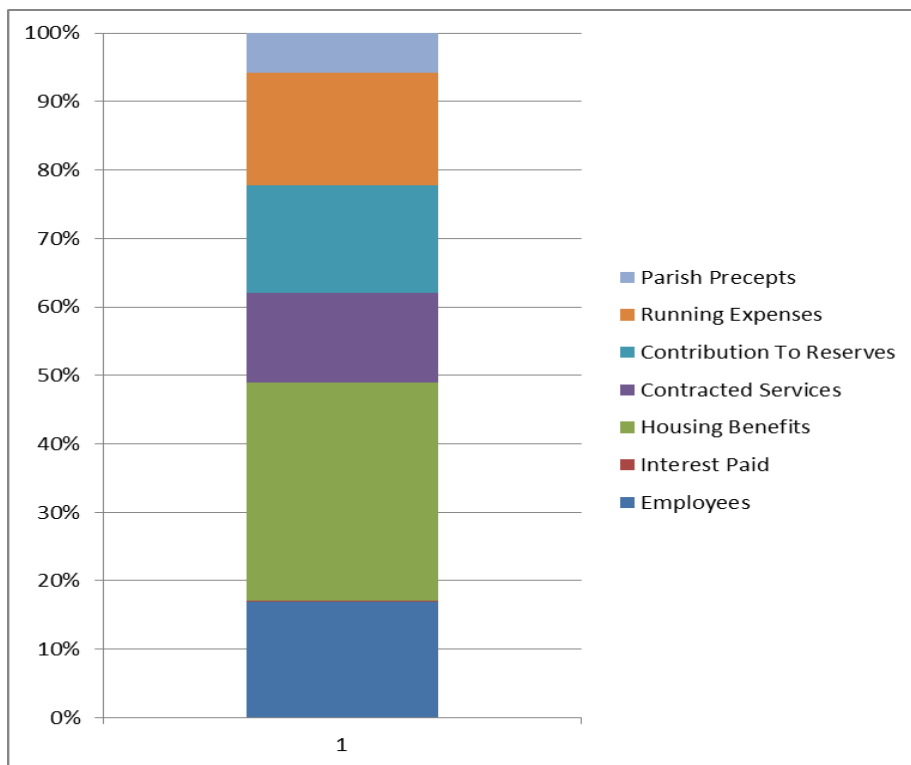
East Herts Council is the billing authority for Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) collected from businesses across the district. This is then distributed to Central Government, East Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council. After distribution the income attributable to East Herts including section 31 grant income totalled £4.8m in 2023/24.

As the billing authority, East Herts Council collects Council Tax income from residents of the district; this is then distributed between Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Of the income collected the Council's share in 2023/24 was £17.7m; £5.4m of which was distributed to Town and Parish Councils across the district. The remaining Council Tax income is used to fund services in the year.

The Council earned Interest and Investment income of £1.7m in 2023/24 on its portfolio of investments and holdings in property funds. This was £774k above budget, this has been transferred to the Interest Equalisation reserve to mitigate future losses.

2023/24 Expenditure

The chart below shows the £79.7m that the the Council spent in 2023/24. Housing benefits make up the largest outgoing (£23m) of the Council.



Included in the Council's running expenses figure of £18.7m is the following expenditure:

- £4.1m of premises related costs, including ongoing maintenance of the Council's operational buildings, business rates, insurance and utilities costs for all the Council's buildings, car parks, theatre and leisure facilities;
- £14m direct costs of providing Council services throughout the year including, public and environmental health, planning, sports, leisure and parks;

The cost of the Council's main contracts are included in the contracted services figure (£10m) are as follows:

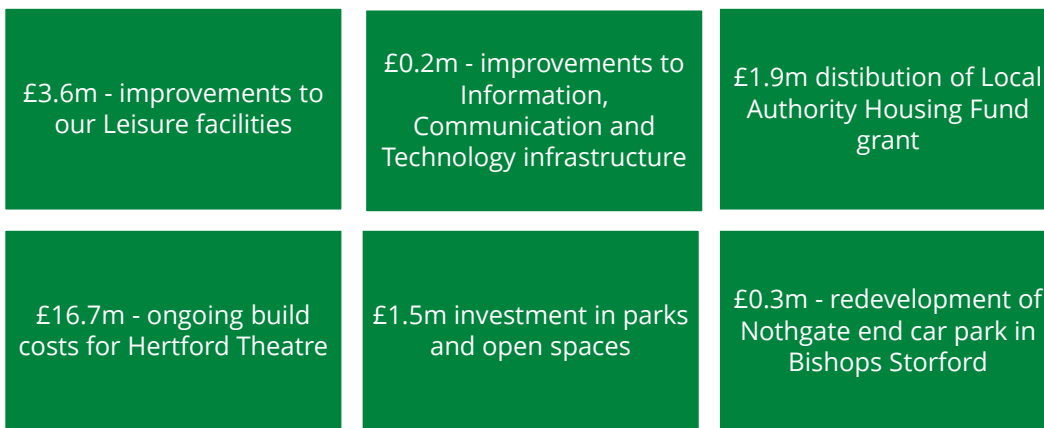
- £5.7m Refuse & Recycling
- £1.3m Grounds maintenance
- £0.8m Parking enforcement
- £0.8m Cleansing

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

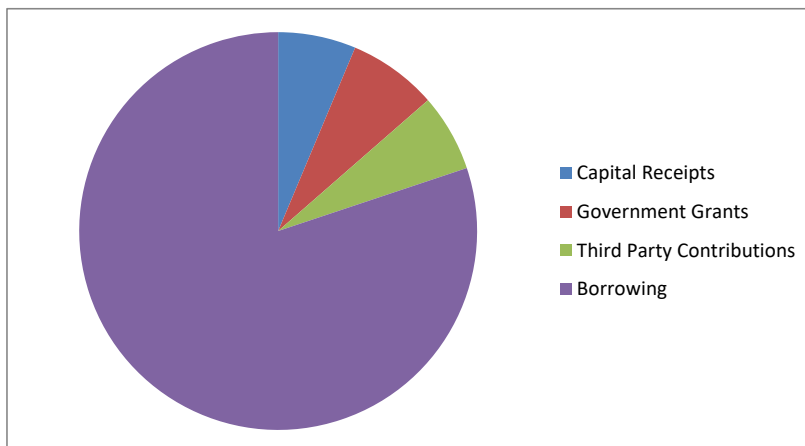
Capital

Capital expenditure relates to the acquisition or enhancement of assets which generates a benefit for a period greater than one year. This differs to the Revenue expenditure, discussed over the previous pages, which is defined as money that the authority spends or receives in the same year that the services are delivered.

The Council has embarked on an ambitious Capital Programme over the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan, during 2023/24 the Council incurred expenditure of £25.5m on capital projects, compared with a capital programme budget of £36.5m. A total budget of £11m has been carried forward to 2024/25 to match ongoing schemes which didn't commence in 2023/24 or where works are ongoing. A selection of the capital schemes undertaken this year are shown below:



A combination of capital grant income, receipts from disposal of assets, third party contributions and revenue contributions were used to fund the 2023/24 capital programme. The split is shown in the following pie chart:



MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

East Herts' approach to setting the revenue and capital budget for the four years commencing 2023/24 was to improve the organisational financial sustainability and resilience in the forthcoming years.

The budget report sets out the proposals and outcomes that Officers and Members had arrived at to ensure that the Council maintains a sustainable budget position for the future.

The MTFP provides the framework for the development of annual budgets in line with the aims of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

Reserves are an essential part of good financial management. They help councils cope with unpredictable financial pressures, help them smooth the impact of known spending requirements over time, and help to fund any in-year overspending. In 2023/24 the Council contributed a net £2.5m to general and earmarked reserves; the balance held in the general and earmarked at the end of the year is £22m.

Details of the Council's earmarked reserves (set aside for a defined purpose to meet known or predicted future liabilities) and General Reserve (to manage cash flows and limit the need for temporary borrowing and to provide a contingency for unforeseeable events and emergency spending) can be found within the Statement of Accounts.

PENSION FUND

The Council participates in the Local Government Pension Scheme which is administered by Hertfordshire County Council. Under current accounting standards the impact of any pension liability must be shown in the balance sheet.

Further information is given in note 33, on page 66.

EXPLANATION OF ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

Statement	Explanation
Movement in Reserves Statement	Shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other reserves
Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement	A summary of the resources generated and consumed by the Council in the year
Balance Sheet	Sets out the financial position of the Council on 31 March 2024
Cash Flow Statement	Summarises the Council's inflows and outflows of cash for the year 2023/24
Notes to the Accounts	Provides support to the core financial statements, which informs and gives sufficient information to present a good understanding of the Council's activities. The notes include a Statement of Accounting Policies which details the legislation and principles on which the Statement of Accounts have been prepared. The purpose is to explain the basis for recognition, measurement and disclosure of transactions and other events in the Statement of Accounts
Supplementary Financial Statements – The Collection Fund	Shows the level of Non Domestic Rates and Council Tax that has been received by the Council, as billing authority, during the period
Glossary of Financial Terms	Explains some of the key terms used in the Statement of Accounts
Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts	Identifies the officer who is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. The purpose is for the Chief Finance Officer to sign under a statement that the Statement of Accounts present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024

The Core Accounting Statements

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into usable reserves (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce taxation) and other reserves. The Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services line shows the economic cost of providing the Council's services with more details shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for council tax setting purposes. The Net Increase/Decrease before transfers to Earmarked Reserves line shows the statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

	General Fund Balance	Earmarked General Fund Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	General Reserve	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Balance at 31 March 2023	3,854	18,689	0	224	878	23,645	94,935	118,580	
Movement in reserves during 2023/24	(15,000)	0	0	0	0	(15,000)	-	(15,000)	
Other Comprehensive Income & Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	0	17,603	17,603	
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(15,000)	0	0	0	0	(15,000)	17,603	2,603	
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	Note 5	17,448	-	0	(35)	-	17,413	(16,440)	973
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	2,448	-	0	(35)	-	2,413	1,163	3,576	
Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	Note 6	(2,448)	2,224	-	-	225	-	-	-
Increase/Decrease in Year		0	2,224	0	(35)	225	2,413	1,163	3,576
Balance as at 31 March 2024 carried forward	3,854	20,913	0	189	1,103	26,058	96,098	122,156	

	General Fund Balance	Earmarked General Fund Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	General Reserve	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Balance at 31 March 2022	3,854	21,307	0	224	1,065	26,450	61,335	87,785	
Movement in reserves during 2022/23	(204)	0	0	0	0	(204)	30,999	30,795	
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(204)	-	-	-	-	(204)	30,999	30,795	
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	Note 5	(2,601)	-	0	0	-	(2,601)	2,601	0
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(2,805)	-	-	0	-	(2,805)	33,600	30,795	
Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	Note 6	2,805	(2,618)	-	-	(187)	-	-	-
Increase/Decrease in Year		0	(2,618)	0	0	(187)	33,600	30,795	
Balance as at 31 March 2023 carried forward	3,854	18,689	0	224	878	23,645	94,935	118,580	

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices (GAAP), rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations, generally this will be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

	2023/24		2022/23	
	Gross	Gross	Net	Net
	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure	Expenditure
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Chief Executive, PA's & Directors	563	0	563	643
Communications, Strategy & Policy	2,635	(1,123)	1,512	1,526
Human Resources & Organisation Development	622	(11)	611	656
Strategic Finance & Property	10,052	(5,024)	5,028	5,015
Democratic & Legal Services	2,162	(470)	1,692	1,717
Housing & Health	6,231	(2,925)	3,306	3,583
Planning & Building Control	4,453	(1,777)	2,676	2,482
Operations	31,629	(11,574)	20,055	4,612
Shared Revenues & Benefits Service	27,032	(26,059)	973	1,424
Shared Business & Technology Services	2,258	(19)	2,239	2,277
NET COST OF SERVICES			38,655	23,935
Payments of precepts to parishes			5,351	5,060
Gain on disposal of non current (fixed) assets			(974)	(1,427)
Minimum Revenue provision			600	0
OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE			4,977	3,633
Interest payable and similar charges			541	596
Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability & remeasurements of the defined benefit liability for long term employee benefits			189	1,024
Interest receivable and similar income			(1,774)	(1,463)
Income from investment properties (Note 10)			(501)	(822)
Direct expenditure incurred on investment properties (Note 10)			364	200
Changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties			740	(795)
FINANCING AND INVESTMENT EXPENDITURE			(441)	(1,260)
Recognised capital grants and contributions			(3,423)	(2,207)
Council tax income			(17,722)	(16,768)
Non domestic rates			322	(188)
Non service related government grants			(7,298)	(6,624)
Renewable energy			(70)	(318)
TAXATION AND NON-SPECIFIC GRANT INCOME (Note 29)			(28,191)	(26,105)
(SURPLUS) / DEFICIT ON PROVISION OF SERVICES			15,000	203
(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of Fixed assets			(12,637)	1,566
Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability (Note 33)			(7,656)	(37,236)
ITEMS THAT WILL NOT BE RECLASSIFIED TO THE (SURPLUS) OR DEFICIT ON PROVISION OF SERVICES			(20,293)	(35,670)
(Surplus) / Deficit on revaluation of financial instruments (Note 12)			1,717	4,667
ITEMS THAT MAY BE RECLASSIFIED TO THE (SURPLUS) OR DEFICIT ON PROVISION OF SERVICES			1,717	4,667
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE			(18,576)	(31,003)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE			(3,576)	(30,800)

BALANCE SHEET

These financial statements are authorised by Brian Moldon - Head of Finance & S151 officer 29/04/2025



The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council.

		31 March '24		31 March '23
		£000	£000	£000
Property, Plant & Equipment	Note 7			
- Other land and buildings		89,854		88,533
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment		1,884		2,280
- Infrastructure assets		1,140		1,285
- Community assets		6,625		4,900
- Surplus assets		4,886		6,093
- Assets under Construction		31,328		18,711
			135,717	
Investment Properties	Note 10	7,853		8,594
Intangible Assets	Note 11	199	8,052	292
			143,769	130,688
Long Term Investments	Note 12	17,838		19,555
Long Term Debtors	Note 15	5,188	23,026	5,190
TOTAL LONG TERM ASSETS			166,795	155,433
Assets Held For Sale	Note 17	4,441		409
Short Term Investments	Note 12	6,500		6,500
Short Term Debtors	Note 15	12,433		12,754
Cash and Cash Equivalents	Note 16	4,156		8,944
CURRENT ASSETS			27,530	28,607
Provisions	Note 19	(249)		(300)
Short Term Creditors	Note 18	(18,200)		(21,894)
Short Term Borrowing	Note 12	(48,500)		(30,000)
CURRENT LIABILITIES			(66,949)	(52,194)
Provisions	Note 19	(997)		(1,233)
Long Term Borrowing	Note 12	(1,500)		(1,522)
Net Pension Liability	Note 33	5,266		(2,862)
Grant Receipts in Advance	Note 29	(2,066)		(2,476)
- Capital				
- Revenue		(5,923)		(5,173)
LONG TERM LIABILITIES			(5,220)	(13,266)
NET ASSETS			122,156	118,580
USABLE RESERVES				
- General Fund	Note 20	3,854		3,854
- General Reserve	Note 20	1,103		878
- Earmarked Reserves	Note 6	20,912		18,688
- Capital Receipts Reserve	Note 20	0		0
- Capital grants Unapplied	Note 20	189		224
			26,058	23,644
UNUSABLE RESERVES				
- Revaluation Reserve	Note 21	31,032		20,815
- Financial Instrument Revaluation Reserve	Note 21	(2,160)		(443)
- Pensions Reserve	Note 21	5,250		(2,862)
- Capital Adjustment Account	Note 21	61,619		75,629
- Deferred Capital Receipts	Note 21	142		144
- Collection Fund Adjustment Account	Note 21	491		1,858
- Short-term Accumulating Compensated Absences Account	Note 21	(276)		(205)
			96,098	94,936
TOTAL RESERVES			122,156	118,580

THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the authority during the reporting period.

	2023/24		2022/23
	£000	£000	£000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Inflows			
Council Tax receipts	(12,985)		(12,131)
NNDR Receipts	(16,025)		(15,704)
DWP grants for benefits	(24,370)		(22,375)
Other Government grants	(9,330)		(10,062)
Cash received for goods and services	(18,365)		(21,508)
Interest received	(1,774)		(1,463)
Cash inflows generated from operating activities	(82,849)		(83,243)
Cash Out Flows			
Cash paid to and on behalf of employees	15,754		14,895
Housing Benefit paid out	22,705		22,409
Other operating cash payments	40,117		37,884
Precepts paid to other authorities	5,351		5,060
Interest paid	1,306		320
Cash outflows generated from operating activities	85,233		80,568
Net Cash Inflow from operating activities		2,384	(2,675)
INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
- Purchase of property plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	24,149		16,620
- Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(1,722)		(1,427)
- Capital grants	(3,917)		(2,717)
- Proceeds from short-term and long-term investments	(4,000)		(4,000)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		14,510	8,476
FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
- Cash receipts of short and long-term borrowing	(18,500)		(10,000)
- Cash Payments for the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases (Principal)			
- Other payments for financing activities	6,405		4,161
Net cash outflow from financing activities		(12,095)	(5,839)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		4,799	(38)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		(8,944)	(8,906)
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		(4,145)	(8,944)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Accounting Policies

- i.** The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2024. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to prepare the Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Council Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 and the Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP) 2023/24, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act. The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.
- ii.** The accounts are prepared on a going concern basis; that is, on the assumption that the functions of the Council will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future from the date that the accounts are authorised for issue.

iii. Accruals of Income & Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Income from the provision of services in the form of sales, fees, charges and rents is recognised and accounted for in the period to which they relate.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees, transport related, premises related and supplies and services related expenditure) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made, with the exception of quarterly utility payments where no actual apportionment is made for bills spanning two financial years.
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.
- Where income and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Provision is made for doubtful debts and known uncollectable debts are written off in accordance with the Council's agreed policy.

iv. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature in no more than three weeks or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value, and are used to meet short term liquidity requirements.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Council's cash management.

v. Prior Period Adjustments , Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Council's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

vi. Charges to Revenue for Non - Current Assets (Property, Plant and Equipment and Intangible Assets)

Services, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding fixed assets during the year:

Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off amortisation of intangible fixed assets attributable to the service.

The Council is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. Depreciation, revaluation, impairment losses and amortisations are therefore transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

vii. Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year- end. They include such benefits as salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Council. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements and flexi time earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is made at the salary rates applicable in the following accounting year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

Post Employment Benefits (Pensions)

The Council participates in one scheme, the Local Government Pension Scheme, which is a defined benefit final salary scheme administered by Hertfordshire County Council.

The liabilities of the Hertfordshire County Council pension fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc, and projections of future earnings for current employees.

Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.5%. The discount rate has been determined as the long term government bond yield plus an allowance for the average difference between the yield on corporate bonds and government bonds. This difference in yields is a result of the difference in the risk of default. This approach has been adopted as government bonds have a long enough term to match the term of the liabilities whereas corporate bonds have shorter terms.

The assets of Hertfordshire County Council pension fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:

- quoted securities – current bid price;
- unquoted securities – professional estimate;
- unit trust and managed fund investments (including property) – current bid price and disclosed in line with the requirements of IAS19.

The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into seven components:

- current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked;
- past service cost / gain – the increase / decrease in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years - debited / credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs;
- interest cost – the expected increase in the present value of liabilities during the year as they move one year closer to being paid – debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- expected return on assets – the annual investment return on the pension fund assets attributable to the Council, based on an average of the expected long-term return, credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;

- gains or losses on settlements and curtailments – the result of actions to relieve the Council of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees
- debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs;

- actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – debited to the Pensions Reserve;

- contributions paid to the pension fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

In line with the requirements of the Code the past service contribution is no longer a current revenue item but is included as part of the payments to the pension fund (in accordance with pension scheme regulations) and is treated as a cash flow item which reduces the pensions liability. This is also in line with the requirements of the Code.

Further information can be found in Hertfordshire County Council’s Pension Fund’s Annual Report which is available upon request from LPP, Hertfordshire County Council, Post point CHO 033, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DQ.

viii. Events after the Balance Sheet Date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted where material to reflect such events
- those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

ix. Government grants and contributions - revenue and capital

Grants and contributions relating to capital and revenue expenditure are accounted for on an accruals basis and recognised in the accounts when there is reasonable assurance that the Council will comply with any conditions attached to the payments, and the grants or contributions will be received.

The grant or contribution is recognised immediately within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as income, except to the extent that the grant or contribution has a condition relating to the initial recognition that the Council has not satisfied.

Monies received as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as a liability within the Grants Receipts in Advance Account. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ring fenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves statement. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund expenditure.

Revenue grants specific to service provision are shown against the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. General grants allocated by central government directly to local authorities as additional revenue funding which are non-ring fenced are credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

x. Minimum revenue provision

In accordance with current legislation the minimum revenue provision (MRP) for the redemption of debt is required to be calculated on a prudent basis having regard to guidelines set out for application of the prudential code.

xi. Overheads and support services

As the Council does not include the recharge of overheads and support services in how they monitor and manage financial performance they are no longer included in the year end accounts.

xii. Provision for bad debt

The value of receivables (debtors) shown on the Balance Sheet is adjusted for doubtful debts. The level of bad debt provision is reviewed annually. Uncollectable debts are written off against the provision. The following methods are used:

Trade Accounts Receivable	- Age and Collectability
Housing Benefits Overpayments	- Age and Collectability
National Non Domestic Rates	- Currently 100% of outstanding arrears
Council Tax	- 0.46% against the net debit due reviewed against sums written off and opening yearly balances

xiii. Revenue expenditure funded from Capital under Statute (REFCUS)

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Council has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account is made which reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of council tax.

xiv. Capital receipts

Capital Receipts arise from the sale of non-current assets (Property, Plant and Equipment and Investment Properties). Further to the introduction of the Prudential Capital Finance System on 1 April 2004, capital receipts are all deemed to be “usable” and are held within the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Prior to this date, in accordance with Government legislation, a proportion of certain receipts had to be “set aside” and are retained within the Capital Adjustment Account as provision for the repayment of debt.

xv. VAT

Income and expenditure excludes any amounts related to VAT, as all VAT collected is payable to HM Revenues & Customs and in most circumstances all VAT paid is recoverable from them. VAT has been included in the income and expenditure accounts only to the extent that it is irrecoverable.

xvi. Tax Income (Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates (NDR))

Non Domestic Rates (NDR)

The Council collects, administers and distributes Non Domestic Rates (NDR) for its area based on local rateable values determined by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The tax liability is then calculated applying a business rate which is set and uniformly applied on a national basis. In 2013/14, the administration of NDR changed following the introduction of a Business Rates Retention Scheme which aims to give Councils greater incentive to grow businesses in their locality. This regime also increased the financial risk and opportunities for local authorities, with income becoming more volatile and difficult to predict.

The regime provides for local authorities to retain a proportion of the total collectable rates due in proportion of their relevant statutory share. The proportion for East Hert is 40%, the remainder being distributed to Hertfordshire County Council (10%) and Central Government (50%).

As part of the regime the Government set up a system of 'Top ups', 'Tariffs' and 'Safety Nets' that were introduced to ensure that Councils were guaranteed a minimum level of retained NDR income, thus providing some financial certainty under the new scheme. In addition to the local management of business rates, authorities are expected to finance appeals made in respect of rateable values as defined by VOA and the financial impact of uncollected business rate income as at 31 March 2021. Authorities are required to make a provision for these assets and liabilities in their accounts.

The accounting arrangements for the Non Domestic Rates are summarised as follows:

- the Council's element of Retained Business Rate income, Tariffs, Top Up and Safety net is included in the CI&E Statement based on the relevant regulations.
- the NDR Collection Fund is prepared on an agency arrangement basis. Relevant proportions of the accounts Surplus/Deficit/taxpayer's Arrears and Provisions are allocated to the relevant Preceptors and Government and accounted for as Debtors/ Creditors in the Billing Authority's Accounts
- the council's cashflow statement only includes the council's share of council tax, net cash collected and precepts paid.

Council Tax

The Council as billing authority acts as agent with regards to the collection and distribution of Council Tax on behalf of itself, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police and Town and Parish Councils. In line with these agency arrangements, and in order to reflect the risks and rewards within the Council, the following transactions are included:

- the Council's Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement includes only the statutory precept under regulation.
- a debtor/creditor to reflect the difference between the various preceptors share of cash collected in the year and cash paid to the preceptors on account in line with the appropriate regulations will be included in the Council's balance sheet.
- the council's cashflow statement only includes the council's share of council tax, net cash collected and precepts paid

xvii. Interests in Other Entities

The Council has set up a wholly owned subsidiary called Millstream Property Investments Ltd, which has the principal activity of acquiring, developing and refurbishing properties. The Company's accounts are consolidated into the Council's accounts and the consolidated accounts are included in the Council's Statement of Accounts.

Additionally, the Council also has an interest in Hertfordshire Building Control Limited, a company which is equally owned by seven Hertfordshire authorities.

xviii. Capitalisation of Interest

The Council capitalises borrowing costs incurred whilst qualifying assets are under construction. Qualifying assets are where there is a 'substantial period of time' from the first expenditure financed from borrowing until the asset is ready to be brought into use. A substantial period of time is considered to mean in excess of two years.

2. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The object of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is to demonstrate to Council Taxpayers how the funding available to the authority (ie government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) for the year has been used in providing services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with general accepted accounting practices. The Expenditure and Funding Analysis also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's services. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2023/24	Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund balance £000	Adjustments between Funding & Accounting basis £000	Net Expenditure in CIES £000
Chief Executive, PA's & Directors	402	161	563
Communications, Strategy & Policy	1,435	75	1,510
Human Resources & Organisation Development	595	16	611
Strategic Finance & Property	4,083	613	4,696
Legal & Democratic Services	1,627	64	1,691
Housing & Health	3,877	1,524	5,401
Planning & Building Control	2,590	85	2,675
Operations	2,568	17,486	20,054
Shared revenues & Benefits Service	823	150	973
Shared Business & Technology Services	2,235	4	2,239
Net cost of services	20,235	20,178	40,413
Other income and Expenditure	(24,311)	(1,102)	(25,413)
(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services	(4,076)	19,076	15,000
Operating General Fund balance at 1 April 2023	23,644		
Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	2,414		
Closing General Fund Balance at 31 March 2024	26,058		

2022/23	Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund balance £000	Adjustments between Funding & Accounting basis £000	Net Expenditure in CIES £000
Chief Executive, PA's & Directors	413	230	643
Communications, Strategy & Policy	1,222	303	1,525
Human Resources & Organisation Development	558	98	656
Strategic Finance & Property	3,072	1,943	5,015
Legal & Democratic Services	1,453	264	1,717
Housing & Health	2,640	943	3,583
Planning & Building Control	2,100	382	2,482
Operations	2,478	2,134	4,612
Shared revenues & Benefits Service	649	776	1,425
Shared Business & Technology Services	2,273	4	2,277
Net cost of services	16,858	7,077	23,935
Other income and Expenditure	(13,705)	(10,028)	(23,733)
(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services	3,153	(2,951)	202
Operating General Fund balance at 1 April 2022	26,449		
Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(2,805)		
Closing General Fund Balance at 31 March 2023	23,644		

Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis - Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis

2023/24

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts

	Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note 1) £000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments (Note2) £000	Other Differences (Note 3) £000	Total Adjustments £000
Chief Executive, PA's & Directors	147	10	4	161
Communications, Strategy & Policy	33	38	6	77
Human Resources & Organisation Development	4	11	1	16
Strategic Finance & Property	562	40	11	613
Legal & Democratic Services	30	30	5	65
Housing & Health	1,436	72	13	1,521
Planning & Building Control	18	59	8	85
Operations	17,448	31	7	17,486
Shared Revenues & Benefits Service	36	97	17	150
Shared Business & Technology Services	4	0	0	4
Net cost of services	19,718	388	72	20,178
Other income and expenditure from the Funding Analysis	(2,040)	(428)	1,366	(1,102)
Difference between General Fund (surplus) or deficit and Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement (surplus) or deficit	17,678	(40)	1,438	19,076

2022/23

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts

	Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note 1) £000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments (Note2) £000	Other Differences (Note 3) £000	Total Adjustments £000
Chief Executive, PA's & Directors	145	87	(1)	231
Communications, Strategy & Policy	37	268	(1)	304
Human Resources & Organisation Development	10	88	-	98
Strategic Finance & Property	1,609	338	(4)	1,943
Legal & Democratic Services	31	234	(2)	263
Housing & Health	386	562	(4)	944
Planning & Building Control	21	363	(2)	382
Operations	1,887	248	(2)	2,133
Shared Revenues & Benefits Service	44	738	(7)	775
Shared Business & Technology Services	4	0	-	4
Net cost of services	4,174	2,926	-23	7,077
Other income and expenditure from the Funding Analysis	(4,427)	269	(5,870)	(10,028)
Difference between General Fund (surplus) or deficit and Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement (surplus) or deficit	(253)	3,195	(5,893)	(2,951)

Note 1 – Adjustments for Capital Purposes

Adjustments for capital purposes for this column add in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the services line and for:

- Other operating expenditure – adjusts for capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those asset;
- Financing and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices;
- Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure – Capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those received in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions or for which conditions were satisfied throughout the year. The Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income and Expenditure line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions were satisfied in the year.

Note 2 – Net change for the pensions’ adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

- For Services – this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past services costs;
- For Financing and investment income and expenditure – the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

Note 3 – Other Differences

Other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- The charge under Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for Council Tax and NDR that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future surpluses or deficits on the Collection Fund.

3. Accounting Standards Issued not yet adopted

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) requires the Council to disclose information relating to accounting standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted that could have a material impact on the accounts.

For this disclosure the standards introduced by the 2023/24 Code are:

- Definition of Accounting Estimates (Amendments to IAS 8) issued in February 2021.
- Disclosure of Accounting Policies (Amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2) issued in February 2021.
- Deferred Tax related to Assets and Liabilities arising from a Single Transaction (Amendments to IAS 12) issued in May 2021.
- Updating a Reference to the Conceptual Framework (Amendments to IFRS 3) issued in May 2020.

4. Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Council about the future that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account professional advice (e.g. actuarial advice), historical experience, current trends and other relevant information. Items included within the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024 for which there is a risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming year are as follows:

Pension Liability

The value of the pension liability as at 31st March 2024 is £2.9m. This liability depends on a number of factors, including discount rates, changes in retirement age, mortality rates and expected return on pension's assets. These are determined on an actuarial basis by Hymans Robertson, the actuaries for the Hertfordshire pension fund.

Change in assumptions at 31 March 2024	% increase to Defined Benefit Obligation	Approximate monetary amount (£m)
0.1% decrease in Real Discount Rate		
0.1% increase in the Salary Increase Rate		
0.1% increase in the Pension Increase Rate		

The figures in the table on the previous page give an indication of the potential impact that a change in assumptions could represent to the value of the pension liability. The figures represent key factors taken in isolation and are only indicative of the estimated impact as the assumptions interact in complex ways. The approach taken is consistent with that adopted to derive the IAS19 figures as per note 33.

Property, Plant and Equipment

The Councils assets are shown in the accounts at either Fair Value, Fair Value (Existing Use) or Market Value (dependent on the class of asset. Further information can be found in Note 7). The valuations are carried out by our internal asset management team in accordance with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Valuation professional standards and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). These valuations are arrived at using recent comparable transactions and for specialised properties using depreciated replacement cost methodology.

The tables below show the 31 March 2024 value of the assets in the Statement of Accounts, the impact a 5% increase or decrease in asset value would have on the Balance Sheet and the depreciation charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement.

	31/03/2024	-5%		5%	
	Value	Value	Movement	Value	Movement
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Other Land & Buildings	126,674	120,340	(6,334)	133,008	6,334
Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equip.	22,076	20,972	(1,104)	23,180	1,104
Infrastructure	8,633	8,201	(432)	9,065	432
Community Assets	6,716	6,380	(336)	7,052	336
Surplus Assets	4,886	4,642	(244)	5,130	244
	168,985	160,536	(8,449)	177,434	8,449

Depreciation

	31/03/2024	-5%		5%	
	Value	Value	Movement	Value	Movement
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Other Land & Buildings	36,821	34,980	(1,841)	38662	1,841
Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equip.	20,191	19,181	(1,010)	21201	1,010
Infrastructure	7,493	7,118	(375)	7868	375
	64,505	61,280	(3,225)	67,730	3,225

Investment Properties

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the amount at which the asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable parties at arm's-length. The Council's investment property has been valued as at 31 December 2023 (with a statement of professional opinion given that there has been no material change up to 31 March 2024) by the Council's Estates and Asset Manager, Anna Osborne (MRICS) and Principal Assets and Estates Surveyor Lucy Smith (MRICS) in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Non Domestic Rates – Provision for outstanding appeals

Since the Retained Business Rate scheme was introduced on 1st April 2013 Local Authorities have assumed the liability for refunding business rate payers who successfully appeal against the rateable value of their property.

Appeals against the rateable value of a property are lodged by the rate payer with the Valuation Office Agency, who provides information of all the appeals that have been lodged to the Council.

An estimate of the potential impact of successful appeals has been calculated using analysis provided from Inform (a member of the Institute of Rating, Revenues and Valuation) and local knowledge.

The carrying amount of the provision at 31 March 2024 is £3.1m, of which the Council's share of £1.25m is reflected in the accounts. Higher success rates of appeals could result in a need for a larger provision. An increase of 5% would change the required provision by £155k affecting the surplus/deficit distribution to the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Central Government.

Debtors - As at 31 March 2024 the authority had a balance of short term debtors of £15.7m. A review of the age and collectability of the debts outstanding has resulted in a bad debt provision of £3.3m. If collection rates were to deteriorate then an additional provision would be required.

5. Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations

2023/24

Adjustments involving the Capital Adjustment Account:

Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	General Fund balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £000
Charges for depreciation of non current assets	3,002			- 3,002
Revaluation / Impairment on Property Plant and Equipment	14,653			- 14,653
Movements in the market value of Investment Properties	740			- 740
Amortisation of intangible assets	166			- 166
Capital grants and contributions applied	(3,423)			3,423
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	1,883			- 1,883
Revenue grants written down to the Capital Adjustment Account	-			-
Disposal of non current assets	641			- 641
Disposal of investment Properties	-			-

Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

Statutory adjustment relating to capital element of principal repayment for finance lease
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund

Adjustments involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:

Capital grants and contributions unapplied credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement			- - 35	35
Application of grants to capital financing transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account				-

Adjustments involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:

Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(1,615)	1,615		-
Use of Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure		(1,615)		1,615

Adjustments involving the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve:

Statutory adjustment relating to capital element of principal payment for finance lease	2			- 2
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Adjustments involving the Pensions Reserve:

Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (see Note 33)	2,754			- 2,754
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(2,793)			2,793

Adjustments involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:

Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	1,366			- 1,366
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Adjustment involving the Accumulated Absences Account

Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	72			- 72
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Total Adjustments	17,448	0	(35)	(17,413)
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2022/23 comparative figure

Adjustments involving the Capital Adjustment Account:

Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

Charges for depreciation of non current assets	2,656	-	-	(2,656)
Revaluation / Impairment on Property Plant and Equipment	1,320	-	-	(1,320)
Movements in the market value of Investment Properties	(795)	-	-	795
Amortisation of intangible assets	200	-	-	(200)
Capital grants and contributions applied	(2,207)	-	-	2,207
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	348	-	-	(348)
Revenue grants written down to the Capital Adjustment Account	-	-	-	-
Disposal of non current assets	1,656	-	-	(1,656)
Disposal of investment Properties	-	-	-	-

Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

Statutory adjustment relating to capital element of principal repayment for finance lease
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund

Adjustments involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:

Capital grants and contributions unapplied credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-	3,083	3,083	-	-
Application of grants to capital financing transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account		-	3,083		3,083

Adjustments involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:

Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement				-	-
Use of Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure				-	0

Adjustments involving the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve:

Statutory adjustment relating to capital element of principal payment for finance lease	2	-	-		(2)
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Adjustments involving the Pensions Reserve:

Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (see Note 33)	5,878	-	-		(5,878)
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(2,683)	-	-		2,683

Adjustments involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:

Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(5,870)	-	-		5,870
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Adjustment involving the Accumulated Absences Account

Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(23)	-	-		23
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Total Adjustments	(2,601)	0	0		2,601
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6. Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves

Amounts appropriated to / from reserves are distinguished from service expenditure disclosed in the Statement of Accounts. Reserves include earmarked reserves set aside for specific policy purposes and balances which represent resources set aside for purposes such as general contingencies and cashflow management.

This note sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund in earmarked reserves to provide funding for future expenditure plans and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund expenditure in 2023/24

	Balance 1 April 2022 £000	Transfers Out/(In) 2022/23 £000	Balance 31 March 2023 £000	Transfers Out 2023/24 £000	Transfers In 2023/24 £000	Balance 31 March 2024 £000
Interest Equalisation Reserve	(2,045)		(2,045)	-	(1,212)	(3,257)
Insurance Fund	(908)	161	(747)	-	-	(747)
Emergency Planning Reserve	(36)	-	(36)	-	-	(36)
LDF/Green Belt Reserve	(62)	-	(62)	-	-	(62)
Housing Condition Survey Reserve	(90)	-	(90)	-	-	(90)
Council Elections Reserve	(63)	(35)	(98)	-	(235)	(333)
Sinking fund - Leisure Utilities / Pension Reserve	(228)	-	(228)	-	-	(228)
Performance Reward Grant Reserve	(10)	-	(10)	-	-	(10)
Waste Recycling Income Volatility Reserve	(353)	-	(353)	-	-	(353)
Footbridge Reserve	(150)	-	(150)	-	-	(150)
DCLG Preventing Repossessions	(18)	-	(18)	-	-	(18)
New Homes Bonus Priority Spend	(6,668)	(1,270)	(7,938)	-	(931)	(8,869)
Collection Fund Reserve	(1,963)	300	(1,663)	-	(3,400)	(5,063)
DEFRA Flood Support	(4)	-	(4)	-	-	(4)
Neighbourhood Planning	(64)	-	(64)	-	(111)	(175)
IER	(106)	26	(80)	32	-	(48)
MTFP Transition Funding Reserve	(413)	-	(413)	98	-	(315)
Flexible Homelessness Grant	(354)	-	(354)	-	-	(354)
Preventing Homelessness New Burdens Reserve	(31)	-	(31)	-	-	(31)
Healthy Lifestyle Promotions Reserve	(33)	-	(33)	-	-	(33)
Land Charges New Burdens	(30)	-	(30)	-	-	(30)
HB Subsidy Volatility Reserve	(50)	(50)	(100)	-	-	(100)
Section 31 NNDR	(7,071)	3,536	(3,535)	3,535	-	-
Parks & Open Spaces Reserve	(306)	-	(306)	-	-	(306)
Revs & Bens New Burdens Reserve	(250)	(50)	(300)	-	-	(300)
Total	(21,306)	2,618	(18,688)	3,665	(5,889)	(20,912)

Interest Equalisation Reserve	This reserve was established to assist the Council in managing the financial implications of adverse interest rate fluctuations. £1.2m has been added to this reserve in 2023/24
Insurance Fund	Its purpose is to support the Council's insurance and risk management process in anticipation of setting up a self-insurance fund in some areas to reduce future insurance premiums.
Emergency Planning Reserve	The reserve was set up to support the work of an Emergency Planning Officer Group that has been established within the Council. There was no call on it in 2023/24.
Local Development Framework / Green Belt Reserve	This reserve was established in 2008/09 to smooth expenditure over the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). There has been no call on the reserve in 2023/24.
Housing Condition Survey Reserve	This reserve was established to fund House Condition Surveys. There has been no movement on the reserve in 2023/24.
Council Elections Reserve	Established to smooth the cost of Elections over the MTFP. A further £235k was added to the reserve in 2023/24 to fund the cost of future elections.
Sinking Fund – Leisure Utilities and Pension	Further to the Council awarding a leisure contract to Sports and Leisure Management from January 2020, the Council provided guarantees in respect of utilities and employers pension costs. There was no call on it in 2023/24.
Performance Reward Grant Reserve	The Council received revenue grant funding in respect of the Local Area Agreement (Performance Reward Grant) in 2009/10. There was no call on the reserve in 2023/24.
Waste Recycling Income Volatility Reserve	The reserve has been established to manage income volatility in recycling income. There was no call on this reserve in 2023/24.
Footbridge Reserve	The Council's MTFP included setting aside £50k a year from 2010/11 to 2012/13 in order to meet any potential maintenance costs or liabilities that may arise relating to the footbridge over the River Stort. There was no call on the reserve 2023/24.
DCL Preventing Repossessions	This reserve was established from unspent Government Grant monies. There were no appropriations in 2023/24.
New Homes Bonus Priority Spend	This reserve was established from unspent New Homes Bonus monies received from DCLG and the 2014/15 GF underspend. Over the years, further amounts of New Homes Bonus monies have been transferred to this reserve with £931k added in 2023/24.

Collection Fund Reserve	As a result of a Council decision in January 2014, a Government Funding Risk Reserve was established to smooth the effect on the Council of income volatility following the new NDR funding regime. This was subsequently renamed the Collection Fund Reserve. £3.4m was transferred to the reserve in 2023/24.
DEFA Flood Support for Local Businesses	This reserve was established from the unspent element of a DEFRA grant received to enable the Council to support local businesses to repair damage following the flooding in 2013/14. There has been no call on this in 2023/24.
Neighbourhood Planning Grant	Created in 2014/15 from unspent Neighbourhood Planning grant received from MHCLG to fund future spend. There has been no call on this reserve in 2023/24.
IER Grant	This reserve was created from unspent grant monies received from the Cabinet Office to fund the costs of additional work involved in the Individual Electoral Registration Scheme. Further unspent grant monies were added to the reserve in 2019/20. £32k was utilised from this reserve in 2023/24.
MTFP Transition Funding Reserve	A new reserve established in 2016/17 from the Transition Grant awarded by MHCLG as part of the 2016/17 financial settlement. £98k was utilised in 2023/24.
Flexible Homelessness Grant	Established from unspent Government Grant monies in 2017/18 specifically to prevent and deal with homelessness. Further unspent grant monies have been added in 2019/20. No call on this reserve in 2023/24.
Preventing Homelessness New Burdens	A new reserve set up in 2017/18 from unspent Government Grant to deal with Homelessness. There was no call on this in 2023/24.
Healthy Lifestyle Promotions	A new reserve created in 2018/19 from unspent grant monies received to promote healthy living. There has been no call on this in 2023/24.
Land Charges New Burdens	This reserve was created from unused government grant received to cover costs of transferring the local land charges register to HM Land Registry. There has been no call on this in 2023/24.
HB Subsidy Volatility Reserve	This reserve was created in 2018/19 to manage the financial implications of fluctuations in Housing Benefit subsidy. There has been no call on this in 2023/24.
NNDR Section 31 Reserve	A new reserve created in 2020/21 from Section 31 grants received in 2020/21 but for use in 2021/22 to fund NNDR Collection Fund transactions. £3.535m has been appropriated in 2023/24.
Parks & Open Spaces Reserve	A new reserve created in 2021/22 from unspent contribution to be used to fund future works. No call made on this reserve in 2023/24.
Revs & Bens New Burdens	A new reserve established in 2021/22 from unspent Government Grant monies. No call made on this reserve in 2023/24.

7. Property, Plant & Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- The purchase price;
- Any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management;

The Council does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction. Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- Operational non-specialised property – fair value based on existing use value. The multi-storey car parks and surface car parks have been valued using the Existing Use Valuation method on the basis of income & expenditure, profit information;
- Operational specialised property (inc leisure centres and Hertford theatre) – depreciated replacement cost (DRC);
- Community assets – nominal value or historical cost;
- Infrastructure and all other assets – depreciated historical cost;
- Surplus assets - fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant's perspective.

In the event of a future disposal the market value at that time may realise more or less than the carrying value. Since April 2016 the Council has revalued its assets on an annual basis (formerly four year rolling basis). Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

The Valuations were carried out by the Council's Estates and Asset Manager, Anna Osborne (MRICS) and Principal Assets and Estates Surveyor Lucy Smith (MRICS) on the basis of standards of professional practice set out in the guidance below:

- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Valuation - Professional Standards ('The red Book')
- International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting ('The CIPFA Code')

The valuer has arrived at their opinion of Fair Value, Fair Value (Existing Use) and Market Value from referring to recent comparable transactions. For Specialised properties the Fair value (Existing Use) has been derived using Depreciated Replacement Cost methodology.

Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for:

- where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains);
- where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account. The current asset values used in the accounts are based upon a certificate issued by the Council's Asset & Estates Manager, Anna Osborne MRICS and Lucy Smith MRICS as at 31 March 2024. Property, plant and equipment are classified in the Balance Sheet in line with current Accounting Codes of Practice.

Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

- where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains);
- where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Depreciation

All Property, Plant and Equipment, other than freehold land and Community Assets (with two exceptions being recreational facilities with a building element) are depreciated on a straight line basis over the period of the assets useful economic life. The following periods are used:

Freehold Land	No depreciation
Council Buildings	20 to 60 years
Infrastructure	10 to 20 years
Equipment, Furniture and Fittings	5 to 20 years
Community Assets	No depreciation (30 years for exceptions)
Non-operational assets	40 to 60 years
Enhancement to Leased Properties	10 to 25 years
Plant	20 to 35 years

Where an item of Property, Plant and Equipment has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately.

Componentisation

In line with accounting requirements the Council considers the identification of individual asset components on a prospective basis following either the enhancement of an asset or its revaluation. The Council has determined that it will adopt a de-minimis value of £1m for individual assets.

Disposals

When an asset is disposed of the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

The gain or loss on disposal is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of fixed assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are transferred from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement to the Capital Adjustment Account (the carrying amount of the asset) and the usable Capital Receipts Reserve (the disposal proceeds).

Property, Plant & Equipment

Cost or Valuation	Other Land & Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equip.	Infrastructure	Community Assets	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Plant & Equipment
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2022/23							
As at 01/04/2022	103,722	20,729	8,560	3,615	2,416	31,373.00	170,415
Additions	61	1,266		1,376	-	12,210	14,913
Disposals	0				-	-	0
Reclassifications	21,284				4,542	(24,872)	954
Revaluations	(2,021)				(865)	0	(2,886)
Total as at 31/03/2023	123,046	21,995	8,560	4,991	6,093	18,711	183,396
2023/24							
As at 01/04/2023	123,046	21,995	8,560	4,991	6,093	18,711	183,396
Additions	434	112	73	1,725		22,279	24,623
Disposals		(31)					(31)
Reclassifications	5,020					(9,662)	(4,642)
Revaluations	(1,826)				(1,207)		(3,033)
Total as at 31/03/2024	126,674	22,076	8,633	6,716	4,886	31,328	200,313
Depreciation & Impairment							
2022/23							
As at 01/04/2022	32,575	19,228	7,044	91	0	0	58,938
Charge for Year	1,938	487	231	-	-	-	2,656
Acc depreciation w/o on revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Impairment (reversal) recognised in the service	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Revaluations	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total as at 31/03/2023	34,513	19,715	7,275	91	0	0	61,594
2023/24							
As at 01/04/2023	34,513	19,715	7,275	91	0	0	61,594
Charge for Year	2,308	476	218				3,002
Acc depreciation w/o on revaluation				-	-	-	0
Disposals				-	-	-	0
Impairment (reversal) recognised in the service				-	-	-	0
Revaluations				-	-	-	0
Total as at 31/03/2024	36,821	20,191	7,493	91	0	0	64,596
Net Book Value							
Balance Sheet as at 31/03/23	88,533	2,280	1,285	4,900	6,093	18,711	121,802
Balance Sheet as at 31/03/24	89,853	1,885	1,140	6,625	4,886	31,328	135,717

Reconciliation of Additions in the year to Capital Spend

	2023/24	2022/23
	£000	£000
Additions in the year (as above)	24,623	14,913
Intangible assets	74	116
Investment Properties	0	0
	24,697	15,029
plus CERA (not included in note 7)	0	0
Total Capital Spend	24,697	15,029

8. Analysis of Fixed Assets

	31 March '24	31 March '23
	Number	Number
Council Dwellings - Hostels	7	4
- Houses	2	2
Council Offices - Freehold	1	2
- Leasehold	1	0
Service Centre - Leasehold	1	1
Cash Offices	0	2
Off-Street Car Parks (incl. Leasehold)	35	35
Swimming Pools (including 3 joint-use pools)	5	5
Parks and Recreation Grounds/Open spaces	226Ha	188Ha
Public Halls/Community Centres (incl leasehold)	7	9
Commercial Property Rented Out	47	56
Land Awaiting Development	1.24Ha	1Ha
Public Convenience	2	3

9. Heritage Assets

In line with the 2012 Code and FRS 30, the Council has identified a number of assets that meet the definition of a heritage asset and are being preserved in trust for future generations because of their cultural, environmental or historical associations.

The Council's policy is to maintain Heritage assets in order to preserve them for future generations because of their cultural and historical associations. The Council does not consider that a commercial value can be placed upon these assets and its policy is, therefore, not to disclose on the balance sheet. They continue to be included within community assets with a nominal value. The assets are insured in order to protect the Council's interest in the event of damage or destruction.

The Heritage assets held within Community assets at a nominal sum are as follows; there is no value held for these assets.

- The Castle Wall (ancient flint), Hertford
- Monument, remains of Church of St Mary's, Old Cross
- Community land Obelisk, Bishop's Stortford
- Flowing River Sculpture, Bishop's Stortford
- Evolution sculpture at Hartham Common
- Hertford Theatre Wall Bronze Resin Sculpture
- Civic Regalia
- Oil Painting of Wallfields, Hertford
- Chainsaw sculpture Pishiobury Park, Sawbridgeworth

10. Investment Properties

Investment properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation.

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the amount at which the asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable parties at arm's-length. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year-end. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rents received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance. However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

The following items of income and expenditure have been accounted for in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

	2023/24	2022/23
	£000	£000
Rental income from investment property	(501)	(822)
Direct operating expenses arising from investment property	364	200
Net gain	(137)	(622)

There are no restrictions on the Council's ability to realise the value inherent in its investment property or on the Council's right to the remittance of income and the proceeds of disposal. The Council has no contractual obligations to purchase, construct, enhance or develop investment property. In some cases, the Council has repairing obligations which are met through revenue expenditure.

Authorities shall account for investment property in accordance with IAS 40 Investment Property and should be valued to 'Fair Value'.

Investment property is recognised at cost, including transaction costs but excluding operational components (PPE) where these can be measured reliably. Following recognition investment property is revalued on a fair value basis reflecting market state and circumstances on a given date.

The objective of this measurement approach is to estimate the price at which an orderly transaction to sell the asset or to transfer the liability would take place between market participants at the measurement date under the current market conditions.

The following table summarises the movement through additions and re-classification of investment properties over the year:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at start of the year	8,594	9,161
Additions: Not transferred through re-classification	0	-
Additions: Transferred through re-classification	-	0
Disposals : Transferred through re-classification	-	(1,362)
Net gains / (losses) from fair value adjustments	(740)	795
Balance at end of the year	7,854	8,594

In addition to arriving at the fair values for the assets, IFRS 13 seeks to increase consistency and comparability within the valuation process which has been achieved through a 'fair value hierarchy'.

Fair Value Hierarchy

All the Council's investment properties have been value assessed as Level 2 on the fair value hierarchy for valuation purposes.

Valuation Techniques Used to Determine Level 2 Values for Investment Property

The fair value of investment property has been based on the market approach using current market conditions and recent sales prices, existing lease terms and rentals and other relevant information for similar assets in the local authority area. Market conditions for these asset types are such that the level of observable inputs are significant leading to the properties being categorised at Level 2 in the fair value hierarchy.

There has been no change in the valuation techniques used during the year for investment properties.

Highest and Best Use

In estimating the fair value of the Council's investment properties, the highest and best use is their current use.

Valuation Process for Investment Properties

The Council's investment property has been valued as at 31 December 2023 (with a statement of professional opinion given that there has been no material change up to 31 March 2024) by the Council's Estates and Asset Manager, Anna Osborne (MRICS) and Principal Assets and Estates Surveyor Lucy Smith (MRICS) in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

11. Intangible Assets

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Council as a result of past events (e.g. software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Council. In addition, the Council has agreed that all software will be treated as intangible assets.

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Council can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Council meets this criterion, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation is not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. This is therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account.

The Authority accounts for its software as intangible assets, to the extent that the software is not an integral part of a particular IT system and accounted for as part of the hardware item of Property, Plant and Equipment.

All software is given a finite useful life, based on assessments of the period that the software is expected to be of use to the Authority. The useful life assigned to the major software applications used by the Authority is 5 years. The movement on Intangible Asset balances during the year is as follows:

	Software	2023/24 Other Intangible	Total	Software	2022/23 Other Intangible	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at start of year:						
Gross carrying amounts	6,086	-	6,086	5,970	-	5,970
Accumulated amortisation	(5,794)	-	(5,794)	(5,594)	-	(5,594)
Net carrying amount at start of year	292	-	292	376	-	376
Additions:						
Purchases	74	-	74	116	-	116
Amortisation for the period	(166)	-	(166)	(200)	-	(200)
Net carrying amount at end of year	200	-	200	292	-	292
Comprising:						
Gross carrying amounts	6,160	-	6,160	6,086	-	6,086
Accumulated amortisation	(5,960)	-	(5,960)	(5,794)	-	(5,794)
	200	-	200	292	-	292

12. Financial Instruments

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value and are carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised. For most of the borrowings that the authority has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the CIES is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cashflow characteristics. There are three main classes of financial assets measured at: amortised cost, fair value through profit or loss (FVPL), and fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI). The authority's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. Financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost, except for those whose contractual payments are not solely payment of principal and interest (ie where the cash flows do not take the form of a basic debt instrument).

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the financial assets held by the authority, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Soft Loans

The Code requires that a discounted interest rate be recognised as a reduction in the fair value of the asset. Potential Council loans falling within this category relate to an assisted car purchase scheme and a cycle scheme. The Council currently has no loans under its assisted car purchase scheme and the amount advanced under the cycle scheme is considered immaterial.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of an asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Expected Credit Loss Model

The authority recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost [or where relevant FVOCI], either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. The expected credit loss model also applies to lease receivables and contract assets. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the authority. Impairment losses are calculated to reflect the expectation that the future cash flows might not take place because the borrower could default on their obligations. Credit risk plays a crucial part in assessing losses. Where risk has increased significantly since an instrument was initially recognised, losses are assessed on a lifetime basis. Where risk has not increased significantly or remains low, losses are assessed on the basis of 12-month expected losses.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss

Financial assets that are measured at FVPL are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value. Fair value gains and losses are recognised as they arrive in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services. The fair value measurements of the financial assets are based on the following techniques: instruments with quoted market prices – the market price Other instruments with fixed and determinable payments – discounted cash flow analysis.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income

These assets are measured and carried at fair value. All gains and losses due to changes in fair value (both realised and unrealised) are accounted for through a reserve account, with the balance debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when the asset is disposed of. The inputs to the measurement techniques are categorised in accordance with the following three levels:

- Level 1 inputs – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets that the authority can access at the measurement date;
- Level 2 inputs – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly;
- Level 3 inputs – unobservable inputs for the asset.

Financial Guarantees

The Code includes a requirement for financial guarantees to be recognised at fair value and charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (amortised over the life of the guarantee). The levels of liability assessed at March 2024 are regarded as non material and therefore the accounting requirement has not been followed in respect of these guarantees. The Council has determined to set aside a reserve against potential liabilities under these guarantees as set out in Note 6 to the Notes to the Core Statements.

No other financial guarantees were identified in 2023/24.

Financial Instruments Balances

	Non-Current		Current	
	31 March '24	31 March '23	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Financial Assets				
Investments				
At amortised cost - principal amount	-	-	6,450	6,450
- accrued interest	-	-	50	50
Fair Value through other comprehensive income - designated equity instruments	17,838	19,555	-	-
- accrued interest	-	-	-	-
Total Investments	17,838	19,555	6,500	6,500
Cash & Cash Equivalents				
At amortised cost - principal amount	-	-	4,156	8,944
At amortised cost - accrued interest	-	-	-	-
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents	-	-	4,156	8,944
Debtors				
Financial Assets at amortised cost	5,188	5,190	12,433	12,754
Less Non Financial Instruments Assets	-	-	(2,426)	(9,454)
Total Debtors	5,188	5,190	10,007	3,300
Total Financial Assets	23,026	24,745	20,663	18,744
Financial liabilities				
Borrowing				
At amortised cost	(1,485)	(1,500)	(48,500)	(30,000)
At amortised cost - accrued interest	(15)	(22)	-	-
Creditors	-	-	18,200	(21,894)
Non Financial instruments Liabilities	-	-	5,052	8,956
Total Financial liabilities	(1,500)	(1,522)	(61,648)	(42,938)

See also Notes 33 and 33 to the Core Statements. (Investments and Borrowings)

The portion of long-term liabilities and investments due to be settled within 12 months of the Balance Sheet date are presented in the Balance Sheet under 'current liabilities' or 'current assets'. This would include accrued interest on long term liabilities and investments that are payable/receivable in 2023/24.

Available for Sale Financial Assets are measured at fair value on a recurring basis. The valuation techniques used to measure them maximise the use of relevant observable inputs and minimise the use of unobservable inputs and are categorised as follows:

Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the Council can access at the measurement date

Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly

Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

Recurring fair value measurements	Input level in fair value hierarchy	Valuation technique used to measure fair value	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Property Funds	Level 1	Unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical shares	17,408	19,083
Balance at end of the year			17,408	19,083

Transfers between Levels of the Fair Value Hierarchy

There were no transfers between input levels 1 and 2 during the year

The Fair Values of Financial Assets and Financial Liabilities that are not measured at Fair Value (but for which Fair Value disclosures are required)

Except for the financial assets carried at fair value (described in the table above), all other financial liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and receivables and long term debtors and creditors are carried on the balance sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that take place over the remaining life of the instruments (Level 2), using the following assumptions:

- For loans from the PWLB payable, premature repayment rates from the PWLB have been applied to provide the fair value under PWLB debt redemption procedures. As the Debt Management Office provides a transparent approach allowing the exit cost to be calculated without undertaking a repayment or transfer it is appropriate to disclose the exit price.
- For non-PWLB loans payable, PWLB premature repayment rates have been applied to provide the fair value under PWLB debt redemption procedures;
- For loans receivable prevailing benchmark market rates have been used to provide the fair value;
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised;
- Where an instrument has a maturity of less than 12 months or is a trade or other receivable the fair value is taken to be the carrying amount or the billed amount;

Financial Liabilities - fair value

	Input level in fair value hierarchy	Valuation technique used to measure fair value	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Long Term Borrowing	Level 2	premature repayment rates	(2,455)	(2,452)
Short Term Borrowing			(49,016)	(30,090)
Balance at end of the year			(51,471)	(32,542)

Financial Instrument Revaluation Reserve

For financial instruments, there is a reserve to help manage the accounting requirements, the Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve. This records unrealised revaluation gains/losses arising from holding available-for-sale investments and any unrealised losses that have not arisen from impairment of the assets. The table below sets out the transactions for the year:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	(443)	4,224
Upward revaluation of investments	(1,717)	(4,667)
Downward revaluation of investments not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the provision of Services	-	-
Accumulated Gains on assets sold and maturing assets written out to CI&E as part of Other Investment Income	-	-
	(2,160)	(443)

13. Financial Instruments Gains / Losses

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account in relation to financial instruments are made up as follows:

	2023/24		2022/23	
	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000
Net (gains) / losses on				
Financial Assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
Financial assets measured at amortised cost	-	-	-	-
Investments in equity instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income	-	(1,717)	-	(4,667)
Financial liabilities measured at fair value through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost	-	-	-	-
Total net (gains)/losses	-	(1,717)	-	(4,667)
Interest Revenue				
Financial Assets measured at amortised cost	(967)	-	(612)	-
Other financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	(807)	-	(828)	-
Total interest revenue	(1,774)	-	(1,440)	-
Interest Expense				
Fee income:				
Financial assets or financial liabilities that are not at fair value through profit or loss	132	-	148	-
Fee expense:				
Financial assets or financial liabilities that are not at fair value through profit or loss	541	-	596	-
Total interest expense	673	-	744	-

14. Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities carried at Amortised Cost

Financial assets (represented by lending and receivables) and financial liabilities (represented by borrowings) are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that will take place over the remaining term of the instrument, using the following assumptions:

- Link Asset Services has provided the Fair Value Calculation for the loans and investments.
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised.
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount
- Where the instrument will mature in the next 12 months, carrying amount is assumed to approximate to fair value.

The fair values are calculated as follows:

	31st March 2024		31st March 2023	
	Carrying Amount £000	Fair Value £000	Carrying Amount £000	Fair Value £000
Financial Liabilities	(63,148)	(64,709)	(45,480)	-45,480

	31st March 2024		31st March 2023	
	Carrying Amount £000	Fair Value £000	Carrying Amount £000	Fair Value £000
Loans and Receivables	43,689	43,259	43,489	43,017

For financial liabilities, the fair value is more than the carrying amount because the Council's portfolio of loans comprises fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the rates available for similar loans at the Balance Sheet date. The commitment to pay interest above current market rates increases the amount that the Council would have to pay if the lender requested or agreed to early repayment of the loans.

The fair value is greater than the carrying amount due to the Council's investment in Property Funds. The Fund value per unit, less the exit fee, is higher than price paid.

15. Debtors

Short Term Debtors

	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Central government bodies	1,214	1,045
Other local authorities	2,798	1,237
Bodies external to general government (ie all other bodies)	11,700	13,428
Bad debt provision	(3,279)	(2,956)
	12,433	12,754

Long Term Debtors

	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Bodies external to general government (ie all other bodies)	5,188	5,190
	5,188	5,190

16. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Short-term deposits with banks	4,156	8,944
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	4,156	8,944

17. Assets Held for Sale

Assets Held for Sale	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Additions	4,441	409
	4,441	409

18. Creditors

Short Term Creditors	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Central government bodies	(3,992)	(9,637)
Other local authorities	(2,929)	(1,725)
Bodies external to general government (ie all other bodies)	(11,279)	(10,532)
	(18,200)	(21,894)

19. Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. For instance, the Authority may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or the payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the authority becomes aware of the obligation, and are measured at the best estimate at the balance sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

The provisions held for Non Domestic Rate appeals, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates bad debts are charged as an expense to the relevant collection fund in the first instance. This charge either reduces the Council's surplus or increases the deficit due from the collection fund. These amounts are included in the Taxation and Non-specific Grant income section on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year - where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the authority settles the obligation.

Proper provision has been made for various liabilities which will be incurred but for which it is uncertain as to the amounts or the dates on which they arise. The provisions required cover a range of activities with the most significant being in respect of Non Domestic Rates Valuation Appeals.

	Short Term		Long Term	
	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	300	496	1,233	2,200
Additions/Reductions	(43)	(388)	(116)	(1,500)
Amounts used	(8)	(60)	(120)	(100)
Transferred	-	252	-	633
Balance at 31 March	249	300	997	1,233

20. Usable Reserves

Movements in the Council's usable reserves are detailed in the Movement in Reserves Statement, Note 5 Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations and Note 6 Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves.

21. Unusable Reserves

	31 March '24 £000	31 March '23 £000
Revaluation Reserve	31,032	20,815
Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve	(2,160)	(443)
Capital Adjustment Account	61,619	75,629
Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve	142	144
Pensions Reserve	5,250	(2,862)
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	491	1,857
Accumulated Absences Account	(276)	(205)
Total Unusable Reserves	96,099	94,936

Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Council arising from increases in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment and Intangible Assets. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

The Reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, the date that the Reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.

	2023/24		2022/23
	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April		20,815	22,761
Downward revaluation of assets	10,647		(1,566)
Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services			
Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services		10,647	(1,566)
Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	(430)		(380)
Amount written off to the capital adjustment account			0
Balance at 31 March		31,032	20,815

Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve

The Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve contains the gains/losses made by the Council arising from increases/decreases in the value of its investments that have quoted market prices or otherwise do not have fixed or determinable payments. The balance is reduced when investments with accumulated gains are revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost or disposed of and the gains are realised.

	2023/24		2022/23
	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April		(443)	4,224
Upward revaluation of investments			
Downward revaluation of investments not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the provision of Services	(1,717)		(4,667)
		(1,717)	(4,667)
Accumulated gains on assets sold and maturing assets written out to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Other Investment Income		-	-
Balance at 31 March		(2,160)	(443)

Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Council as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties that have yet to be consumed by the Council. The Account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains. Note 5 provides details of the source of all transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.

	2023/24		2022/23
	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April		75,629	75,343
Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:			
· Charges for depreciation of non current assets	(3,002)		(2,656)
· Charges for depreciation on revalued assets	319		380
· Movements in the market value of investment properties	(740)		795
· Revaluation/Impairment on Property, Plant and Equipment	(13,680)		(1,320)
· Amortisation of intangible assets	(166)		(200)
· Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	(1,883)		(348)
· Revenue grants written down to the Capital Adjustment Account	3,458		2,207
· Disposal of non-current assets	(530)		(1,656)
· Minimum Revenue Position	600		
· Adjusting amounts written out of Revaluation Reserve			
		(15,624)	(2,798)
Capital financing applied in the year:			
· Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	1,614		3,084
· Capital grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing			0
· Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account			-
· Statutory adjustment for the capital element of finance lease repayments - Refuse trucks			-
· Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	-		0
		1,614	3,084
Balance at 31 March		61,619	75,629

Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Council accounts for post employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Council makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pension Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Council has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	(2,862)	(28,511)
Actuarial gains or (losses) on pensions assets and liabilities	8,388	28,848
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(3,030)	(5,879)
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	2,754	2,680
Balance at 31 March	5,250	(2,862)

Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve

The Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve holds the gains recognised on the disposal of non-current assets but for which cash settlement has yet to take place. Under statutory arrangements, the Council does not treat these gains as usable for financing new capital expenditure until they are backed by cash receipts. When the deferred cash settlement eventually takes place, amounts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	143	145
Transfer to the General Fund for the capital element of finance lease payments	(1)	(2)
Balance at 31 March	142	143

Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account manages the differences arising from the recognition of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as it falls due from Council Tax and Non Domestic tax payers compared with the statutory arrangements for paying across amounts to the General Fund from the Collection Fund.

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	1,857	(4,013)
Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from Council Tax and Non Domestic Rate income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(1,366)	5,870
Balance at 31 March	491	1,857

Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	(205)	(228)
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(71)	23
Balance at 31 March	(276)	(205)

22. Nature of Expenses Disclosure

	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Employee Benefits Expenses	17,415	18,942
Other Service Expenses	28,164	23,136
Housing Benefits Transfer Payments	22,705	22,409
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	19,718	4,591
Precepts and levies	5,351	5,060
Interest payments	541	596
Changes in fair value of Investment Properties	740	0
Minimum revenue Provision	600	0
Loss on disposal on non current assets	0	-
Net interest on the net defined benefit liability & remeasurement of the defined benefit liability for long term employee benefits	188	1,024
Total Expenditure	95,422	75,758
Fees charges and other service income	(23,894)	(21,054)
Government grants	(32,958)	(31,652)
Interest and investment income	(1,774)	(1,463)
Income from council tax and non-domestic rates	(17,399)	(16,956)
Gain on disposal of non current assets	(974)	(1,427)
Changes in fair value of Investment Properties	-	(795)
Recognised capital grants and contributions	(3,423)	(2,207)
Total Income	(80,422)	(75,554)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	15,000	204

23. Jointly Controlled Operations

The Council operates four services under a 'Jointly Controlled Operation' arrangement:

- Revenues and Benefits Service, with Stevenage Borough Council which commenced on 1st August 2011
- Business and Technology Services, with Stevenage Borough Council, which commenced on 1 August 2013
- Waste and Street Cleansing Service, with North Herts District Council, which commenced on 8 May 2018 and
- Hertfordshire CCTV partnership, with Stevenage Borough Council, North Hertfordshire Council, East Hertfordshire Council and Hertsmere Borough Council. Each member of the arrangement accounts for their share of the asset, liabilities and cash flows of the CCTV in their own accounts. This is considered de minimis and not included in the table below.

The Council is lead authority for the Revenues and Benefits shared service and Stevenage is lead for the Business and Technology service and North Herts is lead for the Waste and Street Cleansing service. All three arrangements are governed by separate Joint Partnership Boards comprising of Council officers. Each authority has equal representation on both Boards. These Boards report to each Authority's Executive Committee. The Revenues and Benefits Shared Service also operates a joint Committee with equal numbers of Councillors from both Authorities to scrutinise the operational management of the service.

In line with the Accounting Code of Practice this arrangement is accounted for as a jointly controlled operation. A jointly controlled operation uses the assets and resources of the two partner councils without the establishment of a separate legal entity. Under these arrangements each council accounts separately for its own transactions including use of assets, liabilities, income, expenditure and cash flows.

This note sets out details of the income & expenditure of the joint arrangements and the apportionments between the councils in accordance with the agreement entered into. For information purposes only and where relevant, other notes to the accounts show amounts relating to these arrangements.

	2023/24			2022/23		
	Waste and Street Cleansing Service	Business & Technical Service	Revenues & Benefits Service	Waste and Street Cleansing Service	Business & Technical Service	Revenues & Benefits Service
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure						
Employees	528	1,695	3,726	502	1,930	4,275
Transport Related Expenses	20	30	12	21	25	10
Supplies and Services	24	1,740	286	31	1,834	230
Support Services		468	1,034		414	1,356
Total Expenditure	572	3,933	5,058	554	4,203	5,870
Income						
Stevenage Borough Council		1,834	2,117			2,069
East Herts District Council	276	2,099	2,941	265	2,133	3,801
North Herts District Council	296		-	289	2,070	
Total Income	572	3,933	5,058	554	4,203	5,870
Net Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-

The contribution made by the Council has been incorporated into the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the Net Costs of Service.

Additionally the Council partnered with 7 other local authorities across Hertfordshire to create a new fully integrated building control service, which was launched in August 2016. An additional local authority joined in 2019, so eight local authorities have equal control. The Council holds 13% of the share capital (£8) and is represented on the board. The company aims to provide a more flexible and efficient response to building control issues across the county. In 2016/17 the Council made a loan to the company of £107k, which is held under Long Term Debtors on the balance sheet.

24. External Audit Costs

This note discloses the amounts that East Herts Council has paid to its external auditors for work carried out in performing statutory functions and in providing any additional services. In 2023/24 the auditors appointed to East Herts council changed from Ernst & Young (up to 2022/23) to Azets.

In 2023/24 East Herts Council incurred the following fees relating to external audit and inspection:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Fees payable to Azets with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor	208	55
Fees payable to Azets for the certification of grant claims and returns	28	22
Prior Year additional fees	0	0
	236	77

25. Members Allowances

The total payments made to elected Members of East Herts Council, under its Members' Allowance Scheme for the year ending 31 March, was as follows:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Basic Allowances	284	271
Special Responsibility Allowances	144	132
Travel and Subsistence expenses	2	2
	430	405

A full disclosure of payments is available on the Council's website.

26. Officer Emoluments

The number of employees, excluding senior officers disclosed in note 28, whose remuneration, was £50,000 or more in bands of £5,000 are shown below. The previous year has been restated to exclude officers disclosed in note 28.

Remuneration Band	Number of Employees	
	2023/24	2022/23
	Total	Total
£50,000 to £54,999	12	4
£55,000 to £59,999	6	6
£60,000 to £64,999	2	10
£65,000 to £69,999	8	-
£70,000 to £74,999	-	-
£75,000 to £79,999	-	1
£80,000 to £84,999	1	-

27. Exit Packages

The numbers of exit packages with total cost per band and total cost of the compulsory and other departures are set out in the table below.

Exit package cost band (including special payments)	Number of Redundancies		Number of other departures		Total number of exit packages by cost band		Total cost of exit packages in each band	
	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23
							£	£
£								
0-20,000	4	-	4	-	8	-	104,450	-
20,001-40,000	-	-	1	-	1	-	33,807	-
40,001-60,000	2	-	-	-	2	-	90,838	-
60,001-80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
80,001-100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
100,001-150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6	-	5	-	11	-	229,095	-

28. Senior Officer Remuneration

An additional disclosure is required for Senior Officer's Remuneration (the Chief Executive and those reporting directly to the Chief Executive), whose salary is more than £50,000 per year:

	Salary (inc expense allowance)	Expenses Allowances	Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions	Pension Contributions	Total Remuneration including pension contributions
	£	£	£	£	£
2023/24					
Chief Executive	130,728	-	130,728	25,884	156,612
Deputy Chief Executive	109,672	-	109,672	21,715	131,387
Head of Revenues & Benefits Shared Service	65,172	-	65,172	12,904	78,076
Head of HR & Organisational Development - left part way through the year	28,692	-	28,692	5,388	34,080
Head of Strategic Finance & Property	85,237	-	85,237	16,877	102,114
Head of Communications, Strategy & Policy	82,301	-	82,301	16,296	98,597
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	88,271	379	88,650	17,478	106,128
Head of Housing & Health	82,301	-	82,301	16,296	98,597
Head of Operations - on maternity leave for part of the year	32,183	-	32,183	-	32,183
Head of Planning & Building Control	82,925	-	82,925	15,498	98,422
2022/23					
Chief Executive	126,645		126,645	24,063	150,708
Deputy Chief Executive	105,963	23	105,986	20,133	126,119
Head of Revenues & Benefits Shared Service	87,084		87,084	16,546	103,631
Head of HR & Organisational Development	79,227		79,227	15,053	94,280
Head of Strategic Finance & Property	82,240		82,240	15,626	97,866
Head of Communications, Strategy & Policy	79,227	37	79,264	14,864	94,129
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	83,504	341	83,845	15,866	99,711
Head of Housing & Health	79,227	60	79,287	15,053	94,340
Head of Operations	75,347		75,347	-	75,347
Head of Planning & Building Control	73,504		73,504	13,966	87,470

29. Grant Income

The Council credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2023/24:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income		
Council Tax	17,722	16,768
Non-Domestic Rates	- 322	188
New Homes Bonus	931	1,383
Other Capital Grants	3,423	2,207
Sec 31 Business Rate Support	5,102	4,846
Other Revenue Grants	1,265	395
Renewable Energy	70	318
	28,191	26,105
Credited to Services		
<u>Grants</u>		
DWP	23,386	23,078
DCLG	1,846	1,432
DEFRA	154	9
Home Office	194	136
Office of National Statistics	-	1
Department of Education	9	16
	25,589	24,672
<u>Other Contributions</u>		
Contributions from Other Authorities*	3,555	3,566
Income from Other Bodies	1,466	1,195
	5,021	4,761

* includes the contribution from Stevenage Borough Council for the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service

The Council has received a number of grants and contributions that have yet to be recognised as income as they have conditions attached to them that will require the monies to be returned to the funding body if not used for the purpose provided. The balances at year end are as follows:

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Grants Receipts in Advance		
Capital		
Other Capital Grants	411	811
Developer Contributions	1,655	1,665
	2,066	2,476
Revenue		
Developer Contributions	5,609	4,936
Other Revenue Grants	314	237
	5,923	5,173

30. Related Party Transactions

A related party transaction is the transfer of assets or liabilities or the performance of services by, to or for a related party irrespective of whether a charge is made.

Related parties to this authority would include:

Central government; local authorities and other bodies precepting or levying demands on the Council Tax; its members; its chief officers; and its pension fund. Members of close family, or the same household of an individual identified as a related party are also assumed to be related parties.

All significant material transactions with related parties, such as parish precepts, precepts, pension fund contributions etc, have been disclosed in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The UK government exerts significant influence through legislation and grant funding, which has been disclosed in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Three senior officers of the Council held a position of director at Millstream Property Investments Ltd, a wholly-owned company by East Herts. The Council transacted with this company to the value of £175k in 2023/24

A senior officer of the Council held a position of Director at Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership Ltd. The Council paid this company £92k during 2023/24

A number of District Council members are also members of Town and Parish Councils that receive funding from this Council. Precept payments are disclosed in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any grants made to these bodies were made with proper consideration of declarations of interest.

Hertfordshire County Council is a related party in respect of various transactions including pension's contributions and precepts. Additionally they act as the "accountable body" for the Hertfordshire Local Area agreement.

Shown in the Balance Sheet are totals for debtors and creditors which represent amounts due to or from related parties. The principal year end balances with related parties included in these totals are shown within Notes 15 & 18.

31. Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	40,065	28,321
Capital investment		
Property, Plant & Equipment	507	1,327
Infrastructure	73	-
Community Assets	1,723	1,376
Investment Property	-	-
Intangible Assets	74	116
Assets Under Construction	21,303	12,210
Revenue Expenditure Funded from capital under Statute	1,883	402
Third Party Loan	-	-
Surplus	-	-
Assets Held For Sale	-	-
Sources of finance		
Capital receipts	(1,615)	(1,427)
Government grants and other contributions	(3,458)	(2,207)
Borrowing		
Sums set aside from Revenue:		
Direct revenue contributions	(33)	(53)
Loan/ finance lease principal repayments		
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	60,522	40,065
Explanation of movements in year		
Increase in underlying need to borrowing (unsupported by government financial assistance)	(20,457)	(11,744)
Decrease in Surplus in Capital Resource	(20,457)	(11,744)

32. Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

Arrangements that do not have the legal status of a lease but convey a right to use an asset in return for payment (embedded leases) are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

The Council as a Lessor

Finance Leases

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor.

Lease payments are apportioned between:

- a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant or equipment applied to write down the lease liability, and

a finance charge (debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

Property, Plant and Equipment recognised under finance leases are accounted for using the policies applied generally to such assets, subject to depreciation being charged over the lease term if this is shorter than the asset's estimated useful life (where ownership of the asset does not transfer to the Council at the end of the lease period).

Depreciation is applied in the year of acquisition.

The Council is not required to raise council tax to cover depreciation, impairment and gains and losses on revaluation arising on leased assets. Any such costs that have been charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services are not proper charges to the General Fund. Such amounts are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account and reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Operating Leases

Rents paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease.

The Council as a Lessor

Finance Leases

Where the Council grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Investment Properties) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the Council's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal), matched by a lease (long-term debtor) asset in the Balance Sheet.

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between:

- a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the lease debtor (together with any premiums received), and

- finance income (credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on disposal is not permitted by statute to increase the General Fund Balance and is required to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the lease debtor. At this point, the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Operating Leases

Where the Council grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease). Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging the lease are added to the carrying amount of the relevant asset and charged as an expense over the lease term on the same basis as rental income.

Finance leases

As at 31 March 2024, the Council did not hold any leases that fell into the category of a finance lease.

Council as a lessee

Operating leases

The Council leases the Buntingford Service Centre.

The future minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Not later than one year	300	300
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,200	1,200
Later than five years	1,200	1,500
	2,700	3,000

The expenditure charged to Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year in relation to these leases was:

	2023/24	2022/23
	£000	£000
Minimum lease payments	300	300
Lease payments receivable	-	-
	300	300

Council as a lessor

Finance leases

The Council leases out Pindars Lodge.

Following the introduction of IFRS 1 and this asset's transfer from an operating lease to finance lease, a lease term of 50 years from March 1997 was set.

The Council has a gross investment in the lease, made up of the minimum lease payments expected to be received over the remaining term. The minimum lease payments comprise settlement of the long-term debtor for the interest in the property acquired by the lessee and finance income that will be earned by the Council in future years whilst the debtor remains outstanding. The gross investment is made up of the following amounts:

	2023/24	2022/23
	£000	£000
Finance lease debtor as at 31 March	142	144
Unearned finance income	200	202
Gross investment in lease as at 31 March	342	346

The gross investment in the lease which are the minimum lease payments, will be received over the following periods:

	Gross investment in lease 31 March '24 £000	Gross investment in lease 31 March '23 £000
Not later than 1 year	14	14
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	56	56
Later than 5 years	265	279
	335	349

Operating Leases

The council receives income from a variety of properties ranging from Industrial and Commercial ground leases, to a small number of commercial premises including shops and other miscellaneous properties. Each is subject to individual agreements and reviews. The terms are dependent upon a number of criteria; the corporate priorities of the Council, options that are available, historic and legal agreements. The future minimum lease payments receivable under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

	31 March '24 £000	31 March '23 £000
Not later than one year	1,346	1,243
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	5,136	3,529
Later than 5 years	58,156	59,227

33. Pension Scheme

As part of the terms and conditions of employment the Council makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until the employee retires, the Council has a commitment to disclose them at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The Council participates in the Local Government Pension Scheme which is administered by Hertfordshire County Council. This is a funded defined benefit scheme which means that the Council and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets in the long term. Under the Scheme members' retirement benefits are not affected by the Fund's performance.

Pension contributions are based on rates determined by the Fund's professionally qualified actuary based on triennial reviews. The most recent review was undertaken in January 2022.

Transactions Relating to Post Employment benefits

The Council recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the Net Cost of Services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions.

However, the charge the Council is required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund balance via the Movement in Reserves during the year.

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement:		
<i>Service Cost comprising:</i>		
Current service cost	2,457	4,855
Past Service Cost	108	0
<i>Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure</i>		
Net Interest Expense	131	1,024
Total post employment benefit charged to surplus or deficit on the provision of services	2,696	5,879
<i>Other post employment benefit credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</i>		
<i>Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:</i>		
Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in net interest ex	(5,393)	(12,477)
Actuarial gains/(losses) arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(5,790)	58,226
Actuarial gains/(losses) arising on changes in financial assumptions	(812)	1,123
Other actuarial gains or losses	3,972	(9,636)
Total post employment benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(8,023)	37,236
Movement in Reserve Statement		
Reversal of net charges made to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services for post employment benefits in accordance with the code		
<i>Actual amount charges against the general fund balance for pensions in the year:</i>		
Employers contributions payable to scheme	0	2,680

Pensions Assets and Liabilities recognised in the Balance Sheet

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Opening Fair Value of scheme assets	123,799	133,905
Interest income	5,833	3,597
Remeasurement gain/(loss):		
Other Experience		-
Return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	5,393	(12,477)
Contributions from employer	2,786	2,680
contributions from employees into the scheme	739	709
Benefits paid	(5,530)	(4,615)
31 March	133,020	123,799

Reconciliation of present value of scheme liabilities

Balance at 1 April	126,661	170,804
Current service cost	2,457	4,855
Past service cost	108	0
Interest cost	5,964	4,621
Contributions by scheme participants	739	709
<i>Remeasurment (gain) and losses:</i>		
Actuarial gains/(losses) arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(5,790)	(58,226)
Actuarial gains/(losses) arising on changes in financial assumptions	(812)	(1,123)
Other acutarial gains or losses	3,972	9,636
Benefits paid	(5,530)	(4,615)
31 March	127,769	126,661

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Scheme history		
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(127,769)	(126,661)
Fair value of assets	133,020	123,799
Surplus/(Deficit) in the scheme	5,251	(2,862)

Impact on the net worth of the Council

Statutory arrangements for funding the deficit means that the financial position of the Council remains healthy as:

the deficit on the Local government scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees (i.e. before payments fall due), as assessed by the scheme actuary.

finance is only required to be raised to cover discretionary benefits when the pensions are actually paid.

The total contributions expected to be made to the pension scheme by the Council in the year to 31 March 2025 is £2.743m (£2.624m to 31 March 2024).

A full breakdown of the Fund's assets including the prior financial year comparator is detailed below:

Asset Category	Period Ended 31 March 2024				Period Ended 31 March 2023			
	Quoted prices in active markets	Quoted prices not in active markets	Total	% of Total Assets	Quoted prices in active markets	Quoted prices not in active markets	Total	% of Total Assets
	£000	£000	£000	%	£000	£000	£000	%
Equity Securities								
Consumer	1,800	-	1,800	1	1,904	-	1,904	2
Manufacturing	2,087	-	2,087	2	1,044	-	1,044	1
Energy & Utilities	0	-	-	0	-	-	-	0
Financial Institutions	1,184	-	1,184	1	711	-	711	1
Health & Care	1,127	-	1,127	1	1,037	-	1,037	1
Information Technology	1,845	-	1,845	1	2,296	-	2,296	2
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Debt Securities								
Corporate Bonds (investment grade)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Corporate Bonds (non investment grade)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
UK Government	6,782	-	6,782	5	5,165	-	5,165	4
Other	-	3,382	3,382	3	-	3,324	3,324	3
Private Equity	-	11,623	11,623	9	-	10,963	10,963	9
Real Estate								
UK Property	-	9,167	9,167	7	-	9,157	9,157	7
Overseas Property	-	6,661	6,661	5	-	7,074	7,074	6
Investment Funds & Unit Trusts:								
Equities	50,226	-	50,226	39	46,650	-	46,650	38
Bonds	19,058	-	19,058	14	17,348	-	17,348	14
Commodities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Infrastructure	-	201	201	-	-	143	143	0
Other	997	8,137	9,134	7	1,077	7,406	8,483	7
Derivatives								
Foreign Exchange	-	387	387	0	-	182	182	0
Cash and Cash Equivalents	8,357	-	8,357	6	8,320	-	8,320	7
TOTALS	93,462	39,559	133,020	100	85,552	38,248	123,799	100

Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Hertfordshire County Council Fund liabilities have been assessed by Hymans Robertson LLP, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates for the Hertfordshire County Council Fund being based on the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 2022.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been:

	31 March '24	31 March '23
Long-term expected rate of return on assets in the scheme:		
Equity investments	2.5%	2.5%
Bonds	2.5%	2.5%
Property	2.5%	2.5%
Cash	2.5%	2.5%
Mortality assumptions:		
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners:		
Men	22.0 years	22.2 years
Women	24.5 years	24.7 years
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:		
Men	22.8 years	23.0 years
Women	26.0 years	26.2 years
Rate of inflation/ Pension increase	2.8%	3.0%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.3%	3.5%
Discount Rate	4.8%	4.75%
Take up option to convert annual pensions into retirement lump sum for pre April 2008 service		
Take up option to convert annual pensions into retirement lump sum for post April 2008 service		

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analysis below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes at each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the others remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme ie. on an actuarial basis using the projected cost method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis did not change from those used in the previous period

Change in assumptions as at 31 March 2024:	Approximate % increase Defined Benefit Obligation %
Longevity (increase or decrease in 1 year)	4%
0.1% decrease in real discount rate	2%
0.1% increase in the salary increase rate	0%
0.1% increase in the Pension increase rate	2%

Impact on the Council's Cashflow

The objectives of the scheme is to keep employer contributions at as constant a rate as possible. The Council has agreed a strategy with the schemes actuary, Hymans Robertson LLP, to achieve a funding level of 100% over the next 25 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis.

34. Nature and Extent of Risks arising from Financial Instruments

Key Risks

The Council's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks. The key risks are:

- ▣ **Credit risk** the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Council;
- ▣ **Liquidity risk** the possibility that the Council might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments;
- ▣ **Re-financing risk** the possibility that the Council might be requiring to renew a financial instrument on maturity at disadvantageous interest rates or terms;
- ▣ **Market risk** the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Council as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates or stock market movements.

The Council's management of treasury risks actively works to minimise the Council's exposure to the unpredictability of financial markets and to protect and maximise (given the identified level of risk) the financial resources available to fund services. The Council in the annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement provides written principles for overall risk management, as well as written policies (covering specific areas, such as interest rate risk, credit risk and the investment of surplus cash).

1 Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Council's customers.

This risk is minimised through the Annual Investment Strategy, which requires that deposits are not made with financial institutions unless they meet identified minimum credit criteria, in accordance with the Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's Credit Ratings Services. The Annual Investment Strategy also considers maximum amounts and time limits with a financial institution located in each category.

This Council uses the creditworthiness service provided by Capita Asset Services. This service uses a sophisticated modelling approach with credit ratings from all three rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's, forming the core element. However, it does not rely solely on the current credit ratings of counterparties but also uses the following as overlays:

- Credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies
- CDS spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

The full Investment Strategy for 203/24 was approved by Full Council on 3rd March 2023 and is available on the Council's website.

Customers for goods and services are assessed, taking into account their financial position, past experience and other factors, with individual credit limits being set in accordance with internal ratings in accordance with parameters set by the Council.

The Authority's maximum exposure to credit risk in relation to its investments in financial institutions cannot be assessed generally as the risk of any institution failing to make interest payments or repay the principal sum will be specific to each individual institution. Recent experience has shown that it is rare for such entities to be unable to meet their commitments. A risk of irrecoverability applies to all of the Authority's deposits, but there was no evidence at the 31 March 2024 that this was likely to crystallise.

No credit limits were exceeded during the reporting period and the Council does not expect any losses from non-performance by any of its counterparties in relation to deposits and bonds.

Accounts Receivable

The Council does not generally allow credit facilities to customers in relationship to debts.

The past due amount can be analysed by age as follows: (see policy xii)

	31 March '24	31 March '23
	£000	£000
Less than three months	626	349
Three months to one year	516	475
More than one year	1,462	1,476
	2,604	2,300

The Council pursues all debts in line with its established debt recovery policy.

2 Liquidity Risk

The Council manages its liquidity position through the risk management procedures above (setting and approval of prudential indicators and the approval of the treasury and investment strategy reports, as well as through a comprehensive cash flow management system, as required by the CIPFA Code of Practice. This seeks to ensure that cash is available when needed.

The Council has ready access to borrowings from the money markets to cover any day to day cash flow need, and the PWLB and money markets for access to longer term funds. The Council is also required to provide a balanced budget through the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which ensures sufficient monies are raised to cover annual expenditure. There is therefore no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

See Financial instruments Note 12

3 Refinancing and Maturity Risk

The Council maintains a debt and investment portfolio. Whilst the cash flow procedures above are considered against the refinancing risk procedures, longer-term risk to the Council relates to managing the exposure to replacing financial instruments as they mature. This risk relates to both the maturing of longer term financial liabilities and longer term financial assets.

The approved treasury indicator limits for the maturity structure of debt and the limits placed on investments placed for greater than one year in duration are the key parameters used to address this risk. The Council approved treasury and investment strategies address the main risks and the central treasury team address the operational risks within the approved parameters. This includes:

- monitoring the maturity profile of financial liabilities and amending the profile through either new borrowing or the rescheduling of the existing debt; and
- monitoring the maturity profile of investments to ensure sufficient liquidity is available for the Council's day to day cash flow needs, and the spread of longer term investments provide stability of maturities and returns in relation to the longer term cash flow needs.

4 Market Risk

Interest rate risk

The Council is exposed to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments.

Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on the Council, depending on how variable and fixed interest rates move across differing financial instrument periods. For instance, a rise in variable and fixed interest rates would have the following effects:

- Borrowings at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement will rise;
- Borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the borrowing will fall (no impact on revenue balances);
- Investments at variable rates – the interest income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement will rise; and
- Investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the assets will fall (no impact on revenue balances).

Borrowings are not carried at fair value on the balance sheet, so nominal gains and losses on fixed rate impact on the Income and Expenditure Account. However, changes in interest payable and receivable on variable rate borrowings and investments will be posted to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and affect the General Fund Balance. Movements in the fair value of fixed rate investments will be reflected in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement.

The Council has a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. The Annual Treasury Management Strategy draws together Council's prudential and treasury indicators and its expected treasury operations, including an expectation of interest rate movements. From this Strategy a treasury indicator is set which provides maximum limits for fixed and variable interest rates exposure. The treasury team will monitor market and forecast interest rates within the year to adjust exposures appropriately. For instance during periods of falling interest rates, and where economic circumstances make it favourable, fixed rate investments may be taken for longer periods to secure better long term returns, similarly the drawing of longer term fixed rates borrowing would be postponed.

With low interest rates generally prevailing, the Council has an interest equalisation reserve that assists in managing interest rate fluctuations in the medium term. The balance as at 31 March 2024 is £3.3m.

Based on the current Treasury Management position at 31 March 2024, if interest rates had been 1% higher with all other variables held constant, the financial effect would be:

	£000
Increase in interest payable on variable rate borrowings	no variable borrowings
Increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments	371
Increase in government grant receivable for financing costs	de minimus
Surplus on the Provision of Services	de minimus

Impact on Comprehensive I & E Statement

The approximate impact of a 1% fall in interest rates would be as above but with the movements being reversed.

5 Price Risk

The Council, does not generally invest in equity shares or marketable bonds.

However, it does hold units in property funds to the value of £20m. Whilst these holdings are generally illiquid, the Council is exposed to losses arising from movements in the price of the units.

To limit its exposure to price movements the council has set a property fund investment limit of £20m, at the time of investment.

These units are all classified as Available-for-Sale, meaning that all movements in price will impact on gains and losses recognised in the Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve. A general shift of 5% in the general price of shares (positive or negative) would thus have resulted in a £1m gain or loss being recognised in the Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve.

6 Foreign Exchange Risk

The Council has no financial assets or liabilities denominated in foreign currencies and thus has no exposure to risk arising from movements in exchange rates.

The Council also has no shareholdings or insurance investment fund, therefore has no exposure to any further risks.

35. Capital Commitments

At 31 March 2024, the authority has entered into one contract for the construction or enhancement of property, plant and equipment, the major commitments are:

- **Hertford Theatre – £30.975m** *(This figure includes £26.16m spend to 31/03/2024)*

36. Contingent Liability

The Council has identified one contingent liability which may give rise to future costs.

Following the Municipal Mutual Insurance Scheme Arrangement being "triggered" the Council has paid a total levy of £34,478 as at 31 March 2024. A contingent liability of around £137,913 remains in respect of potential further exposure against existing claims. Further claims could be notified.

Given the level of General Reserves held by the Council and the uncertainty of the value of the potential liabilities identified it has not been considered appropriate to make specific financial provision within the accounts at this stage.

37. Post Balance Sheet Event

There are no post balance sheet events as at 23 April 2025

THE COLLECTION FUND

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

		2023/24			2022/23		
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
		Council Tax	NDR	Total	Council Tax	NDR	Total
Income collectable from Council Taxpayers	Note 2	136,973		136,973	128,058	-	128,058
S31 S13A(1)/ (c) transfer from General Fund		117		117	35	-	35
Income collectable from Business Ratepayers	Note 3		41,737	41,737	-	39,580	39,580
Total Income		137,090	41,737	178,827	128,093	39,580	167,673
Council Tax Precepts and Demands							
Hertfordshire County Council		102,588		102,588	95,750	-	95,750
East Herts Council		17,464		17,464	16,586	-	16,586
Hertfordshire Police		15,206		15,206	13,962	-	13,962
Business Rates Shares:							
Payments to Government			24,780	24,780	-	19,918	19,918
Payments to Hertfordshire County Council			4,956	4,956	-	3,984	3,984
Payment to East Herts Council			19,824	19,824	-	15,934	15,934
Charges to Collection Fund							
Costs of Collection			202	202	-	199	199
Bad Debt Provision - Increase:							
Council Tax		(164)		(164)	704	-	704
Non Domestic Rates			(178)	(178)		(176)	(176)
Non Domestic Rates Appeals Provision	Note 4		(716)	(716)	-	(2,227)	(2,227)
Transitional Protection Payment			(7,495)	(7,495)	-	174	174
Disregarded Amounts			113	113	-	318	318
Distribution of prior years' Fund balance		1,351	3,869	5,220	1	(12,763)	(12,762)
Total Expenditure		136,445	45,355	181,800	127,003	25,361	152,364
In year Movement in Fund		(645)	3,618	2,973	(1,090)	(14,219)	(15,309)
Balance as at 1 April		(2,215)	(3,921)	(6,136)	(1,125)	10,298	9,173
Balance as at 31 March		(2,860)	(303)	(3,163)	(2,215)	(3,921)	(6,136)
Allocated to :							
East Herts Council		(369)	(121)	(490)	(288)	1,569	1,281
Hertfordshire Police		(322)	(30)	(352)	(247)	-	(247)
Hertfordshire County Council		(2,169)		(2,169)	(1,680)	392	(1,288)
Government			(152)	(152)	-	1,961	1,961
Total		(2,860)	(303)	(3,163)	(2,215)	3,922	1,707

NOTES TO THE COLLECTION FUND INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

1. General

The Collection Fund is an agent's statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Collection Fund.

The statement shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to local authorities and Government of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates.

There is no requirement for a separate Collection Fund Balance sheet, as the assets and liabilities of the fund belong to the various bodies and Government.

In 2013/14 the local government finance regime was revised with the introduction of the Retained Business Rates scheme. The main aim of the scheme is to give Council's a greater incentive to grow businesses in the district. It does, however, also increase the financial risk to the Council due to non collection and the volatility of the NDR tax base.

The retained income scheme allows the Council to retain a proportion of the total NDR income received. The Council's share is 40% with the remainder being split between Hertfordshire County Council (10%) and Government (50%).

2. Council Tax

The Council's tax base i.e. the number of chargeable dwellings in each valuation band (adjusted for dwellings where discounts apply) converted to an equivalent number of Band D dwellings, is calculated as follows:-

The tax base for 2023/24 was approved at Full Council on 14 December 2022 and was calculated as follows:

Band	Estimated no. of taxable properties after effect of discounts	Ratio	Band D Equivalent dwellings
Disa A	0.00	5/9	0.00
A	656.86	6/9	437.91
B	4,305.65	7/9	3,348.84
C	12,831.26	8/9	11,405.56
D	14,529.67	9/9	14,529.67
E	10,789.37	11/9	13,187.01
F	7,472.12	13/9	10,793.06
G	5,584.57	15/9	9,307.62
H	796.84	18/9	1,593.68
	56,966.34		64,603.35
Estimated collection rate			98.9%
2023/24 Estimated Council Tax base			63,892.7
Council Tax Collection			£000
2023/24 estimated Council Tax due			135,259
<i>63892.8 x £2,116.96 (average band D charge)</i>			
2023/24 Council Tax income			137,090
Surplus			(1,831)

3. Income from Business Ratepayers

The Council collects non-domestic rates for its area which are based on local rateable values provided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) multiplied by a uniform rate (which for 2021/22 was 51.2p (2020/21 51.2p).

The total amount less certain reliefs and allowances is distributed to East Herts Council (40%), Hertfordshire County Council (10%) and Central Government (50%).

When the Retained Business Rates scheme was introduced, the Government set a baseline for each authority identifying the funding required. In order to ensure that each authority receives their base line amount, a top up or tariff amount is applied to each local authority.

East Herts is a tariff authority, which means that it doesn't keep its entire share but is subject to pay a tariff (£15.853m in 2021/22) to Central Government which is when used to fund 'top up' authorities.

The business rates retention scheme provides the opportunity for local authorities to share in the benefits of growth in the rates tax base i.e. provides an incentive for economic development and regeneration. Any income retained from growth is subject to a levy of 50%. Conversely if any Council suffers a significant drop in NNDR due to the loss of one or more major businesses, or a large number of smaller businesses, or a greater than expected loss from revaluations, then a safety net of 92.5% of the baseline applies. At the year end the total non-domestic rateable value was £118 million (£117 million for 2020/21).

4. Provisions

The Collection Fund account includes provisions for bad debts on arrears based on past years experience and the current years collection rate.

	2023/24			2022/23		
	£000 Council Tax	£000 NDR	£000 Total	£000 Council Tax	£000 NDR	£000 Total
Balance at 1 April	(4,012)	(2,099)	(6,111)	(3,539)	(2,474)	(6,013)
Additional provisions made in year	114	178	292	(705)	177	(528)
Provision applied	285	327	612	232	198	430
Balance at 31 March	(3,613)	(1,594)	(5,207)	(4,012)	(2,099)	(6,111)

In addition, a provision has been made for NDR appeals against the rateable valuations assessed and determined by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) which have not been settled by 31 March 2024.

	2023/24 £000	2022/23 £000
Balance at 1 April	(3,832)	(6,059)
Change in provisions made	396	1,474
Provision applied in year	320	753
Balance at 31 March	(3,116)	(3,832)

Group Accounts

Introduction

In order to provide a full picture of the economic and financial activities of the Council, and its exposure to risk, the accounting statements of its subsidiary are consolidated with those of the Council. The resulting Group Accounts are presented in addition to the Council's single entity accounts. They include the core accounting statements, similar in presentation and purpose to the Council's accounts, and any explanatory notes considered necessary to explain material movements from the single entity accounts. Where no notes are given, users of the accounts should refer to the notes in the single entity accounts.

Group accounts have been prepared under the requirements of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, consolidating any subsidiary over which the Council exercises control or influence.

Millstream Property Investments Ltd, is a wholly owned company formed in February 2018 by the Council. There are no minority shareholders and no restrictions on the Council's ability to access or use the assets or settle the liabilities of the group. Millstream Property Investments Ltd was created to acquire, develop and refurbish homes to provide rental properties to tenants wishing to live in the private sector, but with the assurance that the accommodation is managed by a responsible landlord.

Millstream was not consolidated in 2018/19 as it's activities for that year were not material to the Council's accounts

Accounting Policies

Millstream Property Investments Ltd has prepared it's 2023/24 accounts using accounting policies consistent with those applied by the Council and no adjustments have been required to align accounting policies. Both entities have a financial year end of 31 March.

GROUP MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into usable reserves (ie those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce taxation) and other reserves.

	General Fund Balance	Earmarked General Fund Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	General Reserve	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Authority Reserves	Share of Reserves of Subsidiaries	Total Reserves
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 31 March 2023	3,854	21,306	0	224	1,065	26,449	72,174	98,623	1,754	100,377
Movement in reserves during 2023/24										
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		-	-	-	-	0		0		0
Tax expenses for Millstream Property Investment		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adjustments between group accounts and authority accounts		0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Adjustments between group accounts and authority accounts		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves			-	-		-	-	-		
Increase/Decrease in Year	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024 carried forward	3,854	21,306	-	224	1,065	26,449	72,174	98,623	1,754	100,377

GROUP COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations, generally this will be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

	2023/24		2022/23	
	Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000	Net Expenditure £000
Chief Executive, PA's & Directors	563	-	563	643
Communications, Strategy & Policy	2,635	(1,123)	1,512	1,526
Human Resources & Organisation Development	622	(11)	611	656
Strategic Finance & Property	10,052	(4,975)	5,077	5,049
Democratic & Legal Services	2,162	(470)	1,692	1,717
Housing & Health	6,231	(2,926)	3,305	3,583
Planning & Building Control	4,453	(1,777)	2,676	2,482
Operations	31,629	(11,574)	20,055	4,612
Shared Revenues & Benefits Service	27,032	(26,059)	973	1,424
Shared Business & Technology Services	2,258	(19)	2,239	2,277
NET COST OF SERVICES	87,637		38,703	23,969
Payments of precepts to parishes			5,351	5,060
Gain on disposal of non current (fixed) assets			(974)	(1,427)
Minimum Revenue Provision			600	0
OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE			4,977	3,633
Interest payable and similar charges			541	596
Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability & remeasurements of the defined benefit liability for long term employee benefits			189	1,024
Interest receivable and similar income			(1,633)	(1,322)
Income from investment properties		Note 1	(763)	(1,037)
Direct expenditure incurred on investment properties		Note 1	447	296
Changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties			899	(860)
FINANCING AND INVESTMENT EXPENDITURE			(320)	(1,303)
Recognised capital grants and contributions			(3,423)	(2,207)
Council tax income			(17,722)	(16,768)
Non domestic rates			322	(188)
Non service related government grants			(7,298)	(6,624)
Renewable Energy			(70)	(318)
TAXATION AND NON-SPECIFIC GRANT INCOME			(28,191)	(26,105)
(SURPLUS) / DEFICIT ON PROVISION OF SERVICES			15,169	194
Millstream Capital contribution			0	0
Tax expenses of subsidiaries			(43)	3
GROUP (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT			15,126	197
(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of PPE assets			(12,637)	1,566
Reclassification of Grant				
Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability			(7,656)	(37,236)
ITEMS THAT WILL NOT BE RECLASSIFIED TO THE (SURPLUS) OR DEFICIT ON PROVISION OF SERVICES			(20,293)	(35,670)
(Surplus) / Deficit on revaluation of financial instruments			1,717	4,667
ITEMS THAT MAY BE RECLASSIFIED TO THE (SURPLUS) OR DEFICIT ON PROVISION OF SERVICES			1,717	4,667
Millstream Other Operating Income				2
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE			(18,576)	(31,001)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE			(3,450)	(30,804)

All operations arise from continuing activities.

GROUP BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council.

	31 March '24		31 March '23
	£000	£000	
Property, Plant & Equipment			
- Other land and buildings	89,854		88,533
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment	1,884		2,280
- Infrastructure assets	1,140		1,285
- Community assets	6,625		4,900
- Surplus assets	4,886		6,093
- Assets under Construction	31,328		18,711
		135,717	
Investment Properties	13,360		14,260
Intangible Assets	199	13,559	292
		149,276	136,354
Long Term Investments		17,838	20,108
Long Term Debtors	Note 2	1,905	245
TOTAL LONG TERM ASSETS		169,019	156,707
Assets Held For Sale		4,441	409
Short Term Investments		6,500	6,500
Short Term Debtors	Note 2	12,244	12,601
Cash and Cash Equivalents		4,249	9,012
CURRENT ASSETS		27,434	28,522
Provisions	Note 2	(249)	(300)
Short Term Creditors	Note 2	(18,234)	(21,934)
Short Term Borrowing		(48,500)	(30,000)
CURRENT LIABILITIES		(66,983)	(52,235)
Provisions		(1,068)	(1,347)
Long Term Borrowing		(1,500)	(1,522)
Long Term Creditors	Note 2	0	-
Net Pension Liability		5,266	(2,862)
Grant Receipts in Advance	- Capital	(2,066)	(2,476)
	- Revenue	(5,923)	(5,173)
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		(5,291)	(13,379)
NET ASSETS		124,179	119,614
USABLE RESERVES			
- General Fund		3,854	3,854
- General Reserve		1,103	878
- Earmarked Reserves		20,912	18,688
- Capital Receipts Reserve		0	0
- Capital grants Unapplied		189	224
- Profit and Loss Reserve	Note 3	367	682
		26,425	24,326
UNUSABLE RESERVES			
- Revaluation Reserve		31,032	20,815
- Financial Instrument Revaluation Reserve		(2,160)	(443)
- Pensions Reserve		5,250	(2,862)
- Capital Adjustment Account		61,619	75,629
- Deferred Capital Receipts		142	144
- Collection Fund Adjustment Account		491	1,858
- Short-term Accumulating Compensated Absences Account		(276)	(205)
- Share capital		1,656	0
		97,754	94,936
TOTAL RESERVES		124,179	119,262

GROUP CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the authority during the reporting period.

	2023/24		2022/23
	£000	£000	£000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Inflows			
Council Tax receipts	(12,985)		(12,131)
NNDR Receipts	(16,025)		(15,704)
DWP grants for benefits	(24,370)		(22,375)
Other Government grants	(9,330)		(10,062)
Cash received for goods and services	(18,628)		(21,693)
Interest received	(1,633)		(1,322)
Cash inflows generated from operating activities	(82,971)		(83,287)
Cash Out Flows			
Cash paid to and on behalf of employees	15,754		14,895
Housing Benefit paid out	22,705		22,409
Other operating cash payments	40,282		38,063
Precepts paid to other authorities	5,351		5,060
Interest paid	1,165		179
Cash outflows generated from operating activities	85,257		80,606
Net Cash Inflow from operating activities		2,286	(2,681)
INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
- Purchase of property plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	24,149		16,620
- Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(1,722)		(1,427)
- Capital grants	(3,917)		(2,717)
- Proceeds from short-term and long-term investments	(4,000)		(4,000)
Net cash inflow from investing activities		14,510	8,476
FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
- Cash Payments for the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases (Principal)	(18,500)		(10,000)
- Other payments for financing activities	6,405		4,161
Net cash outflow from financing activities		(12,095)	(5,839)
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents		4,701	(106)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		(9,012)	(8,906)
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		(4,311)	(9,012)

Note 1 - Investment Property

The following items of income and expenditure have been accounted for in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	31 March '24			31 March '23		
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
	East Herts District Council	Millstream Property Investments Ltd	Group total	East Herts District Council	Millstream Property Investments Ltd	Group total
Income from investment property	(501)	(263)	(764)	(822)	(215)	(1,037)
Direct expenditure arising from investment property	364	30	394	200	270	470

Note 2 - Debtors and Creditors

The effect of transactions between the Council and its subsidiary Millstream Property Investments Ltd are eliminated in Group Accounts, therefore debtors and creditors between these parties have been excluded.

Note 3 - Financial Instruments

IFRS 9 requirement is to consider whether loans are made under market terms, especially those made between related parties.

During the year Millstream Property Investments Ltd did not receive any loans from its parent company East Herts Council. However loans were advanced to Millstream by the parent company in 2019/20 and 2020/21 but were deemed at below market rate as there was no interest charged.

	31 March '24 £000
Opening balance at 31 March 2023	2,338
Profit or loss for 2023/24	- 128
Closing balance at 31 March 2024	2,210

	31 March '23 £000
Opening balance at 31 March 2022	
Profit or loss for 2022/23	
Capital contribution	
Closing balance at 31 March 2023	2,338

Note 4 - Summary of Financial Position of Subsidiary

Millstream Property Investments Ltd has been consolidated in the group accounts as a 100% owned subsidiary. The summary of financial position of the company is shown below:

Statement of comprehensive income and expenditure	31 March 2024	31 March 2023
	£000	£000
Revenue	263	215
Cost of sales	(60)	(30)
Gross profit	203	185
Administrative expenses	(66)	(51)
Other operating income	0	2
Operating profit	137	136
Interest payable	(148)	(190)
Other gains losses	(159)	65
Profit/(Loss) on ordinary activities before taxation	(170)	11
Tax on profit/(loss)	43	(3)
Profit/(Loss) and total comprehensive income for the financial year	(127)	8

Statement of financial position	31 March 2024	31 March 2023
	£000	£000
Non current assets		
Investment properties	5,507	5,666
Current assets		
Trade debtor	3	2
Cash and Cash equivalents	93	68
Total Assets	5,603	5,736
Current liabilities		
Trade creditor	225	196
Non current liabilities		
Loans	3,097	3,089
Provision for liabilities	71	114
Total liabilities	3,393	3,399
Net Assets/Liabilities	2,210	2,337
Equity		
Share capital	1,656	1,656
Retained earnings	554	682
Total equity	2,210	2,338

GLOSSARY OF FINANCIAL TERMS

Accounting Policies

Those principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by the Council that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are to be reflected in its financial statements through:

- Recognising;
- Measuring bases;
- Presenting.

Accruals

Accruals The concept that Income & Expenditure are recognised as they are earned or incurred, not as money is received or paid.

Accumulated Absences

Accumulated Absences Holiday entitlements (or any form of leave such as time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year end which can be carried forward into the following year.

Actuarial Gains and Losses

Changes in the net pensions liability that arise because

- events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation, or
- the actuarial assumptions have changed

Amortisation

The term used to refer to the charging of the value of a transaction or asset (usually related to intangible fixed assets) to the Income and Expenditure Account over a period of time, reflecting the value to the authority; similar to the depreciation charge for tangible fixed assets.

Asset

An item having value measurable in monetary terms. Assets can either be defined as fixed or current. A fixed asset has use and value for more than one year whereas a current asset (eg stocks or short term debtors) can readily be converted into cash.

Capital Expenditure

Capital Expenditure Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset or works which have a long term value to the Council, either directly to the Council or indirectly in the form of grants to other bodies.

Capital Financing Requirement

It measures an authority's underlying need to borrow or finance by other long term liabilities for a capital purpose.

Capital Receipts

The proceeds from the disposal of land and other assets. Proportions of capital receipts can be used to finance new capital expenditure, within rules set down by government, but they cannot be used for revenue purposes.

CIPFA

CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The principal accountancy body dealing with local government finance.

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (The Code)

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting sets out the arrangements required to be followed in the Statement of Accounts. It constitutes 'proper accounting practice' and is recognised as such by statute.

Community Assets

Assets that a local authority intends to hold indefinitely, that have no determinable useful life, and that may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples of community assets are parks and historic buildings.

Consistency

The principle that the accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next is the same.

Contingent Asset

A contingent asset is a possible asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain events not wholly within the Council's control.

Contingent Liability

A contingent liability is a possible liability arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain events not wholly within the local authority's control.

Creditor

An amount owed by the Council for work done, goods received, or services provided within the accounting period and for which payments has not been made at the Balance Sheet date.

Current Service Cost (Pensions)

The increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year.

Curtailment

For a defined benefit scheme, an event that reduces the expected years of future service of present employees or reduces for a number of employees the accrual of defined benefits for some or all of their future service.

Curtailments include:

- Termination of employees' services earlier than expected, for example as a result of closing a factory or discontinuing a segment of a business;
- Termination of, or amendment to the terms of, a defined benefit scheme so that some or all future service by current employees will no longer qualify for benefits or will qualify only for reduced benefits.

Debtor

Sums of money due to the Council but not yet received at the Balance Sheet date.

Deficit

An excess of expenditure over income (or liabilities over assets).

Defined Benefit Scheme

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme other than a defined contribution scheme. Usually, the scheme rules define the benefits independently of the contributions payable, and the benefits are not directly related to the investments of the scheme. The scheme may be funded or unfunded (including notionally funded).

Depreciation

Charges reflecting the decline in the value (not cost) of assets as a result of their usage or ageing.

DEFRA

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

DWP

Department for Work & Pensions.

Expected Rate of Return on Pensions Assets

For a funded defined benefit scheme, the average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the scheme.

Earmarked reserve

These are funds that are set aside for a specific purpose, or a particular service, or type of service.

Financial Instruments

Any document with monetary value. For example, securities such as bonds and stocks which have value and may be traded in exchange for money.

Finance Lease

A lease that transfers substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership of a fixed asset to the lessee.

Government Grants

Assistance by government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, towards either revenue or capital expenditure incurred in providing local services.

International Financial Reporting Standards

International Financial Reporting Standards cover specific aspects of accounting practice and set out the correct accounting treatment. Compliance with them is mandatory.

Impairment

This is a reduction in value of a fixed asset as shown in the balance sheet to reflect its true value

Infrastructure Assets

Expenditure on works of construction or improvement but which have no tangible value, such as construction or improvement to highways and footpaths.

Intangible Asset

Non-financial fixed assets that do not have physical substance but are identifiable and are controlled by the authority through custom or legal rights e.g. computer software.

Interest Cost (pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

Investments (non-pensions fund)

A long term investment is one that is intended to be held for use on a continuing basis in the activities of the Council. Investments should be so classified only where an intention to hold the investment for the long term can clearly be demonstrated or where there are restrictions as to the investor's ability to dispose of the investment.

Investments, other than those in relation to the pension fund, that do not meet the above criteria should be classified as current assets.

Investment properties

Property that is used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation.

LAA

Local Area Agreement.

Liquid resources

Current asset investments that are readily disposal by the authority without disrupting its business.

MHCLG

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly DCLG - Department for Communities and Local Government).

MTFP

Medium Term Financial Plan.

NDR

Non Domestic Rates.

Operating Lease

A lease whereby the ownership of the fixed asset remains with the lessor.

Past Service Cost

The increase / decrease in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years.

Revenue Expenditure

The day to day running costs incurred by the Council in providing its services.

REFCUS (Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute)

Capital expenditure which is allowable under statute to be funded from capital resources but which does not fall within the definition of a fixed asset. An example is a grant made to another party to finance capital investment.

Surplus

An excess of income over expenditure (or assets over liabilities)

Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Account

The Authority's Responsibilities

The Authority is required:

- To make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this authority, that officer is the Chief Financial Officer;
- To manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;
- To approve the Statement of Accounts.

The Chief Financial Officers' Responsibilities

The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the preparation of the authority's statement of accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Chief Financial Officer has:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- Complied with the local authority Code.

The Chief Financial Officer has also:

- Kept proper accounting records which were up to date;
- Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Certificate of Responsible Finance Officer

I certify that this Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority at the reporting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.



Signed

Date

29/04/2025

Brian Moldon

Head of Strategic Finance and Section 151 Officer
East Hertfordshire District Council

Signed

Date

Councillor Martin Adams

Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Carl Brittain – Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Monitoring 2024/25 quarter 4 corporate risk register

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary – This report provides the Committee with the corporate risk register which details how East Herts manages the key risks to the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

- a) The 2024/25 quarter four corporate risk register and actions being taken to control and mitigate risk be noted.

1.0 Background

1.1 Leadership team reviews the content of the corporate risk register quarterly and provides updates that are relayed within this monitoring report to Audit and Governance Committee.

1.2 The Corporate Risk Register is attached at Appendix A. The format concentrates on key risks and is very focussed on control and mitigation actions.

2.0 Risk register results for quarter four

2.1 Leadership Team has set a risk tolerance level. Risks above the tolerance levels are actively managed and regularly reviewed to ensure that contingency and mitigation action is being taken. Risks below the tolerance line are managed by Heads of Service but these are often delegated. Heads of Service are responsible for keeping all risks under review and taking action to reduce the impact of the risk on the council.

	Likelihood			
	1	2	3	4
Impact	A			
	B		2	1, 6
	C		3, 7	4, 8
	D		5	

Table 1 Risk score

2.2 Details of how risks are scored can be found below. Appendix A shows the comprehensive breakdown of each risk.

Likelihood	Score	Description	Likelihood of occurrence	Probability of occurrence	
	4	High	Monthly	The event is expected to occur or occurs regularly	
	3	Medium	Annually	The event will probably occur	
	2	Low	1 in 5 years	The event may occur	
	1	Very Low	Less frequently than 1 in 5 years	The event may occur in exceptional circumstances	

Impact	Score	Description	Financial	Reputation	Service / operation
	A	Critical	> £1m p.a.	Serious negative media	Catastrophic fall in service quality or long-term disruption to services
	B	Significant	£400,000 to £1m p.a.	Adverse national media	Major fall in service quality or serious disruption to services
	C	Marginal	£100,000 to £400,000 p.a.	Adverse local media	Significant fall in service quality
	D	Minor	< £100,000	Public concerns restricted to local complaints	Little impact to service quality

Table 2: Methodology of corporate risk scoring

2.3 The risk scores reflect control and mitigation measures (Residual scores) rather than the Inherent (before any action is taken to control) scores.

2.4 No risks have had a score increase or decrease since the last report and no new risks have been added.

3.0 Implications

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

The topic features within the corporate risk register.

Equalities

The topic features within the corporate risk register.

Environmental Sustainability

Climate change features within the corporate risk register.

Financial

Not specific but risk management can provide protection of budgets from unexpected losses. Better governance can be demonstrated, and the annual audit plan is risk based.

Health and Safety

Not specific but risk management can provide a safer environment across the District and all services for the benefit of the public, staff and our contractors.

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Not specific but legal matters feature within the corporate risk register.

Specific Wards

No

4.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

4.1 Appendix A Corporate Risk Register

Contact Member Councillor Carl Brittain, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

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Reference	Risk Title	Impact	Likelihood	Likelihood reduction	LR Target Date	Impact Mitigation	RHT Target Date	Residual Impact	Residual Likelihood	Progress Update	Risk Owner
1 - Financial Resources	Expenditure is likely to exceed the resources available to the council triggering a report in the public interest by the s.151 officer under section 114 (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.	A	4	Medium Term Financial Plan which plans for further reductions in net expenditure to reflect real terms reduction in council funding Annual savings plan Transforming East Herts Programme to deliver efficiencies and enable customers to access services 24/7 on the web site Reductions in non-essential capital expenditure and agreement to sell assets to realise capital receipt which will be applied to pay down debt. Revised BEAM business plan aims to support the MTFP with £200k per year		s.114 Report leading to appointment of Commissioners but also access to Government support Requesting CIPFA support prior to reaching s.114 threshold Requesting Government support although flexibility on capital receipts and further borrowing would be counter-productive BEAM business plan kept under review in its first year of operation		B	4	Savings schedule being reviewed to ensure achieved Monthly budget meetings with Leadership Team MTFP refresh is underway Expedited asset disposal programme commenced	Brian Moldon
2 - Climate Change	Lack of mitigation of and adaptation to climate changes adversely impacts of service delivery	B	4	Declaration of Climate Emergency by Council Reducing carbon emissions from council operations - Climate Change Action Plan Seeking to influence residents to reduce carbon footprint for the district		Adaption Plan Business Continuity Plan Severe Weather section Emergency Plan including specific response plans to flooding etc. Health and Safety Policy details severe weather response Works to Great Amwell depot site taking account of flood risk assessment.		B	3	Adaption risk assessment substantially complete. Producing offsetting strategy and business case for carbon credits. All vehicles in council fleet now BEVs and in waste contract all vehicles below 3.5 tonnes will be electric. Depot works due to go to Development Management Committee in summer 2025.	Jonathan Geall
3 - District Plan	District Plan not up to date leading to a developer led system, resulting in unsustainable, unplanned, piecemeal development across the district without the required supporting infrastructure such as roads, schools, healthcare facilities etc.	A	2	By Executive / Council Budget for evidence studies in place, including reserve. Evidence base updated in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. Legal requirements including the Duty to Co-operate met.	Mar-26	Programme of work agreed for the preparation of the new District Plan. Resources in place to progress the new District Plan. Duty to Co-operate complied with. New District Plan is legally compliant and in conformity with the NPPF.	Mar-26		2	Formal work on the new District Plan will start in early 2026 under the new planning system. In the meantime, we have undertaken the following preparatory work: •Agreed a revised timetable for the preparation of the new District Plan in the form of a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS sets out the key plan-making stages and timetable for the new District Plan and takes account of the Government's plan-making reforms. •Undertaken a Call for Sites - an opportunity for landowners, developers, agents and site promoters to submit sites which may be considered to have the potential for future development. •Developed a Strategic Vision to chart a clear and ambitious course for the district's future which will serve as the golden thread for the new District Plan, informing policies and decision-making that will shape East Herts in the years to come. Community Engagement on the Vision will take place in June/July 2025. •Commenced work on a District Design Code. •Started work on updating our evidence base including - Green Belt Review, Employment Land Review, Open Space and Sports Facilities Assessment, Village Hierarchy Study, and LCWIP.	Sara Saunders
4 - Key Contractor	A key major contractor of the council fails meaning that services stop altogether e.g the refuse contractor fails and streets are not swept and bins are not emptied	C	4	Monitoring of major contractors for risks of business failure Parent Company Guarantee/Performance Bond Contract compliance procedure should note issues locally such as recruitment freeze or other issues that may indicate financial health issues with company		Local Authority Trading Company ready to activate to take over service provision Business Continuity Plans Performance Bonds or parent company guarantee		C	3	Continued monitoring of positions. The new waste contract with Veolia is currently in mobilisation, and the Council will continue to monitor this as the new service is rolled out.	James Ellis
5 - Governance	There is a governance failure caused by a lack of policies, procedures and internal controls leading to loss of legal cases on process and/or loss of assets	B	4	All Executive, Committee and Council reports require sign off by legal and finance to ensure compliance with budget and policy framework and current legislation. List of policies maintained with review dates. Information Governance function strengthened to ensure compliance with data protection and Freedom of Information. Ensuring Equalities Impact Assessments are completed for all policies		In house legal staff in place with few vacancies therefore capacity available to address issues that arise unexpectedly. Internal audit provided by Shared Internal Audit Service using assurance mapping methodology which allows for all assurance levels to be seen and assessed. Monitoring Officer and s.151 officer work closely together and horizon scan for potential issues		D	2	Minor amendments to Constitution to reflect legislation changes made. HR policies have been amended for legislative change.	James Ellis
6 Ransomware attack deletes data	A successful ransomware attack would render the council's IT systems completely inoperative for an extended period. This would paralyze all council operations, preventing it from collecting revenues, calculating and paying benefits, paying staff and suppliers, and executing any regulatory or enforcement actions.	A	4	We patch all systems and have updated firewalls and anti-virus software for the network. Databases are moved, operating systems use support releases, and laptops are protected with AV and firewall systems. System access requires 2-factor authentication. Staff complete mandatory data protection and Cyber security training.	WiFi - May 2025	Rubrik backs up our on-premises systems for a duration of 42 days. The most recent three backups are retained on the Rubrik appliance located in Daneshill, and all backups, including these three, are stored in the Rubrik Cloud Vault. Rubrik identifies indicators of compromise in our backups, allowing us to either revert to a clean backup (up to 42 days old) or recover the latest backup to an isolated network environment, remove the compromise, and then restore from the backup. We also maintain snapshots on the Pure arrays. A snapshot is created on the array volume every four hours, with all snapshots retained on the array volume for one week. Additionally, we keep a consolidated snapshot per day for an additional five days. This results in six snapshots per day, which are kept for five extra days beyond the current setup, totaling 42+5 (consolidated) snapshots.	On-going	B	4	Our systems are undergoing updates. Business systems are migrating to New Vision, and office WiFi will be upgraded for better coverage and security. The IT restructure has created a dedicated cybersecurity team to enhance protection, though ransom attacks can't be fully eliminated. This year, 529 attacks have been detected and prevented.	Helen Standen
7 - Major Data Breach	A major data breach of sensitive personal data occurs causing reputational damage and the Information Commissioner to fine the Council	A	3	Mandatory staff training Laptop/mobile device security Confidential waste shredded		Mandatory staff training Data Protection and Privacy Statements Culture of reporting all breaches and learning from each breach		C	2	The Cyber Police training course has been well received and uptake has been very high. IT will provide a half yearly update on any non compliance.	James Ellis
8 - Staff and skills	The lack of the right staff to deliver services leads to service backlogs and failures. Staff are not skilled up to perform work in a digital environment and to work in an agile ways means that investment in systems and digital access channels is wasted	B	4	LGA have been commissioned to undertake a Decision Making Accountability Review to help inform the structure of the council. Commercial skills training requirements identified. Cultural change training requirements being worked on to cement Transforming East Herts investment as recognised in the July 2022 Business Case	LGA DMA report expected 24/05/2024 Culture Change training 31/03/2025	Introduction of new systems and moving transactions onto the web goes through a first stage of process review using Lean Six Sigma principles so wasteful processes are eliminated as well as maximising the technological capabilities. As far as possible human interventions in a process will be reduced or eliminated altogether. Training in skills is being worked up to deliver culture change to ensure investment is maximised. Managers have been trained as part of the Blueprint Programme and aspiring managers trained as part of the First Step Programme	Culture Change training 31/03/2025	C	3	Decision Making Accountability review is being reviewed by the new Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Following announcement of LGR and Devolution the CEO has reviewed the senior structure and is working towards ensuring decision making is taken at the most efficient and cost effective level.	Helen Standen

East Herts Council Executive Report

Date: 3rd June 2025

Report by: Cllr Carl Brittain, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Options for the Council-Owned Commercial and Residential Block at Elizabeth Road, Bishop's Stortford

Ward(s) affected: Bishop's Stortford Central

Summary

This report identifies a series of options for the commercial and residential block owned by the council at Elizabeth Road, Bishop's Stortford, referred to herein as 'the Elizabeth Road site'. The report discusses the costs and feasibility of complete refurbishment, works to a lesser specification and disposal on the open market, all alongside a 'do nothing' comparative position. The report recommends that disposal represents the most cost-effective option for the council while leveraging in external investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION: That:

- (A)** the freehold of the commercial and residential block owned by the council at Elizabeth Road, Bishop's Stortford (as shown in the plan at Appendix A) be marketed for disposal, in its current condition and with the current short-term leases in place, with authority to determine the best means of disposal and to complete the sale delegated to the Director for Communities.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The report recommends the disposal of the Elizabeth Road site, Bishop's Stortford, by means of sale on the open market of the

entire freehold to a single purchaser. This option has been compared with full refurbishment and a lesser level of works, as well as a 'do nothing' position. The options appraisal, discussed in greater detail in this report, indicates that disposal, in its current condition and with its current occupants, would be the best opportunity to lever in external investment, with the council being able to utilise the resulting capital to pay down existing debt or avoid future debt. Using the receipt in this way would reduce the need for the council to make interest payments on that debt and make the required minimum revenue provision in its annual revenue budget.

1.2 The plan showing the Elizabeth Road site is attached at Appendix A. The site under consideration includes the entirety of the council's land holding, including the building, garages, car park, grassed areas and footpath with the red line. The site includes areas in the council's ownership held for Highways' use and subject to Hertfordshire County Council Highways' control.

1.3 It is the site within the red line that would be marketed should the recommendation to dispose be agreed. Configuring the site in this way ensures the site would be within a single ownership so as to:

- remove the council's liability for maintenance of any land on the site, such as the car park and grassed areas, without an associated income to cover the liability
- avoid disputes regarding responsibility and liability for land use and/or maintenance
- enable the new owner to consider revised land use, design or development subject, of course, to planning permission where required.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Elizabeth Road site consists of a two storey, post-war, mixed use development behind a grassed area fronting Elizabeth Road,

Bishop's Stortford. The block is typical of local shopping parades that were developed to serve the new post World War II housing developments. The block contains 7no. shops, of which 4no. are currently let on short term leases, and 3no. flats above the commercial units which are included in the lease of the three of the shops. There is a service yard and small car park located behind the main building to the west. The service yard is bounded by a range of single storey outbuildings. It is not known if there are any rights of way across this rear yard. The site plan is included in Appendix A.

- 2.2 The income that can be derived from the building, even if fully let, has fettered the council's ability to invest in it over many years such that the building now requires significant investment due to its age, backlog of repairs, ongoing maintenance issues and the need to meet nationally set energy efficiency standards.

Essential works: balcony repair

- 2.3 At the rear of the block, the flats above the shops are accessed via a flight of external stairs to a first floor balcony which runs across the roofs of the shops for the length of the block. Unfortunately, the balcony suffers from a design defect that means that water collects on it and is channelled into the shops below. Over the years, various patch-up repairs have been carried out and relatively low cost remedies attempted. The problem, however, remains.
- 2.4 If the council were to retain the block, specialist advice would have to be sought to determine a bespoke solution. This would add to the cost of refurbishment.

Essential works: energy efficiency upgrades

- 2.5 Under the national Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES), successive governments have prioritised increasing the energy efficiency of existing buildings, including by looking to mandate

minimum energy efficiency levels when commercial and residential properties are relet. Of note, currently a minimum EPC rating of E for commercial and residential lettings is required. The cost of non-compliance is potentially significant for non-domestic landlords, as it is linked to the rateable value of the property. This means that a fine for non-compliance could be as much as £150,000.

2.6 The government is now proposing to set higher energy efficiency targets for lettings. It is likely that in the regulations will require residential properties to meet an EPC C with the discussion that both residential and commercial lettings could require an EPC rating of at least B by as soon as 2030.

2.7 The table below summarises the current position at the Elizabeth Road site.

Current EPC rating	Shops – number (% of shops)	Flats – number (% of flats)
C	3 (43%)	0
D	3 (43%)	2 (67%)
E	0	0
F	0	1 (33%)
No EPC*	1 (14%)	0

* No EPC in place as the property is now vacant and the previous lease commenced before the EPC requirement. Under the current regulations, an EPC at E or above will be required for reletting.

2.8 The table shows the generally poor condition of the units and the need for energy efficiency works to enable letting in the immediate term in some cases and the short-to-medium term for most, if not all, properties.

2.9 The energy efficiency works, to achieve a minimum C rating, identified through EPC surveys and a wider-ranging independent survey of the block include:

- wall, roof and underfloor insulation
- replacement / upgrade of double-glazed windows and doors
- replacement of boilers or installation of air source heat pumps

- installation of central heating where this is not fitted in some units
- LED lighting.

The context for shops on the site

- 2.10 It is recognised that local shops can have a role in a locality. Businesses are currently operating at four of the seven shops. Relevant to a consideration of the future of the Elizabeth Road site, however, is the extent of demand for the *number* and *size* of units currently on the site.
- 2.11 While from time-to-time, some existing and nearby shop leaseholders have expressed that they may be interested in leasing one or more of the vacant shops in the parade, actual marketing of the units through an external agent has been less successful. The most recent comprehensive marketing took place in 2019 at which time interest in two empty shops was gauged.
- 2.12 The marketing exercise carried out in 2019 eventually led to two short term lettings being agreed, one for the sale of home decorations and accessories, the other as a beauty salon. The timing of these new leases meant that unfortunately both businesses were affected by the Covid 19 lockdowns and so after struggling to pay the rent, both terminated their leases in 2021.
- 2.13 There has been a history of voids and rent arrears at this parade, with officers' attempts to manage rent arrears by various methods including rent payment plans, allowing assignments and increasing scope of user clauses where possible having had limited success. On two occasions, rent arrears have led to forfeiture of the leases.
- 2.14 The views of a local commercial property letting agent were sought in March 2025 as part of the preparation of this report. With regard to reletting the shops, the agent's views can be summarised thus:
- there is a change in occupiers on the high street to more leisure-based uses, including fitness. Retail occupiers of this nature could *possibly* be attracted to a neighbourhood location such as the Elizabeth Road site

- the attractions to a retail tenant of a neighbourhood centre are lower rent levels and ease of parking, however, a business then has to rely on advertising to attract customers if it is to establish a customer base beyond those living in the vicinity and therefore achieve viability
- carrying out a basic refurbishment of the Elizabeth Road site would not increase the rental value although it may assist with the 'first impression' the potential tenant has of the property. Any works are unlikely to stop an incoming tenant from seeking a rent-free period to fund refurbishment and fit out, no matter the condition of the premises.

2.15 With regard to its small district-wide shop portfolio, the council receives speculative enquiries from time-to-time. With regard to the Elizabeth Road site, at least one of the current shop leaseholders has raised the idea of acquiring more units or indeed the whole block, however, no substantive offer has come forward. If the Executive were to agree the recommendation to dispose of the block, the council would be barred under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 from disposal 'for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained'. The best way to achieve the best price for the council is to actively market the asset and invite bids; the shop leaseholder could make an offer as part of this process.

2.16 With regard to future changes to the configuration and/or number of shops at the Elizabeth Road site or the building's demolition and replacement, it should be remembered that any such changes would require planning permission. In 2022, the council itself sought planning permission for a redevelopment at the site to provide a mix of shops and residential units. At this time, the Planning team pointed to the relevant policies in the council's District Plan. The council subsequently withdrew its application but reflecting on the Planning team's consideration of the proposal is arguably very helpful in demonstrating the role of the council's planning policies in seeking to ensure high quality use of the site. Of note:

- the District Plan recognises the role that local shops can play in a locality and states at paragraph 16.8.5 that, *'Local parades provide a range of small shops of a local nature for a small catchment'*
- Policy RTC5ii in the District Plan provides the following guidance to developers, *'Proposals that result in the loss of individual shops in A1 Use will be resisted and will be considered in accordance with Policy CFLR8 (Loss of Community Facilities'*
- Policy CFLR8 states that, *'Proposals that result in the loss of uses, buildings or land for public or community use will be refused unless: (a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown that the facility is no longer needed in its current form; or (b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by enhanced provision in terms of quantity and/or quality in a suitable location; or (c) The development is for an alternative community facility, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss'*
- Policy DES4 states that, *'All development proposals, including extensions to existing buildings, must be of a high standard of design and layout to reflect and promote local distinctiveness. Proposals will be expected to: (a) Make the best possible use of the available land by respecting or improving upon the character of the site and the surrounding area, in terms of its scale, height, massing (volume, shape), orientation, siting, layout, density, building materials (colour, texture), landscaping, environmental assets, and design features, having due regard to the design opportunities and constraints of a site...'*

2.17 Any planning application for the site would also have to have regard to the *Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley: 1st Revision. 2021-2033.*

Is the council best placed to manage shops and residential units?

2.18 When the council (and its predecessor councils) built council housing, it was not unusual to build small neighbourhood parades of shops to cater for local day-to-day needs. When the council sold

its housing stock under the large stock voluntary transfer (LSVT) arrangements in 2002, it disposed of several shops which are now leased back from SNG housing association. In contrast, it retained ownership of the parade at Elizabeth Road, Bishop's Stortford.

- 2.19 Although the council can rely on the Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 to own and lease shops (including residential accommodation attached to a commercial property), the management of small shops is *not* a core activity of the council and the cost of management and maintenance, especially of harder-to-let shops such as those at Elizabeth Road, erodes the commercial case for their retention.
- 2.20 The council has embarked on an expedited disposals programme which is based on an evidence-based review of council assets with a view to determining whether retention (and investment if necessary) or disposal offers a better route to securing inward investment for the site and a better return on the council's resources. Thus, when considering the future of the Elizabeth Road site it is incumbent on members to consider how to enable the ongoing provision of services at the site alongside strategic asset management considerations. Members are therefore encouraged to weigh up whether the council wishes to continue to directly manage these shops (and associated residential units), especially within the context of needing to expend capital to enable continued lettings, or enable a capital receipt which could be used to reduce / avoid the revenue costs of borrowing.
- 2.21 With regard to the idea of the council splitting the letting of the shops and the flats, with the flats being let in the private rented market, this does cause a problem. This is because the council's power to directly provide housing under the Housing Act 1985 relates to council housing which needs to be accounted for, under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, in a ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account, subject to a de minimus level of 200 such homes. Where a council wishes to rent homes in the private sector, this can be considered commercial trading which the

council has the power to do under the Local Government Act 2003, however, this is subject to the requirement under the Localism Act 2011 to do this through a company rather than directly. Indeed, the council set up its wholly owned company, Millstream Property Investments Ltd, in order to trade in the private rental market. At the Council meeting of 26th February 2025, Council agreed, however, to exert its rights as Millstream's shareholder to resolve that the company should sell all its assets over the coming three years. This is to allow the council to liquidate its investment in the company and use the capital freed up in a more financially advantageous way. In this context, it may now seem questionable that the council would seek to develop residential units for rent, presumably via disposal to Millstream.

3.0 Reasons

3.1 Given the discussion above, there are clearly several factors driving the need to make a decision about the future of the Elizabeth Road site. These can be summarised thus:

- deterioration of the roof, which has not been helped by limited cyclical maintenance, and the structural problem of the balcony affording deck access to the flats which allows serious water ingress to the shops
- ongoing maintenance costs
- anticipated increases in national targets for the energy efficiency of both commercial and residential properties
- the council's lack of capital resources, without borrowing, necessary to safeguard the continued ability to let the shops and flats
- strategic asset management considerations – does the council wish to continue to directly manage shops (and associated residential units), especially within the context of wishing to maximise capital receipts in order to reduce / avoid the revenue costs of borrowing?

3.2 This report thus presents four potential options for the future of the block. It is worth noting that none of the options would

preclude any very short-term use of vacant shops for other purposes.

1. **Option 1:** Full catch-up repairs and improvements, including upgrades to meet anticipated new energy efficiency standards under the government's Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regime.
2. **Option 2:** A lesser level of works, notably not carrying out aesthetic improvements to the flats and not demolishing the garages although these capital savings are likely to hamper the ability to let the properties and incur mounting ongoing maintenance revenue costs respectively.
3. **Option 3:** Disposal of the entire block on the open market.
4. **Option 4:** Do nothing.

3.3 This report details each option's key features, financial implications and strategic considerations to assist the Executive in determining the preferred course of action.

3.4 An options appraisal has been carried out. The key findings are presented below, with the financial analysis included in the EXEMPT Appendix B. The financial analysis is EXEMPT from consideration in public as it gives the estimated tender prices for works derived from survey work and Build Cost Information Service (BCIS) tendered works costs, as well as externally derived disposal valuations, the publication of which could fetter the council's ability to achieve best value for works or best consideration on disposal, dependent on the option ultimately followed.

Option 1: Full Catch-Up Repairs and Energy Efficiency Improvements

3.5 The scope for the full catch-up repairs and energy efficiency improvements is as follows:

- comprehensive repairs to structural failure of the balcony deck
- works to the roofing and façade elements

- modernisation of internal facilities, notably electrical systems and plumbing
- installation / upgrade of wall, floor and roof insulation, energy-efficient windows and new boilers and/or air source heat pumps
- new kitchens and bathrooms to enable the letting of the residential units as this option would see the flats let separately to private tenants
- demolition of the garages, which are in exceedingly poor repair, and replacement with hard standing or replacement storage for the shops at even higher costs than those modelled in this report.

3.6 The advantages of this approach are as follows:

- works will prolong the asset's life by around 25-30 years
- ensures compliance with anticipated upcoming energy efficiency legislation, avoiding future difficulties in letting the commercial and residential units and/or the need for further invasive works in the foreseeable future
- enhances tenant satisfaction and potentially increases rental income, though not appreciably as rents are driven by the market
- aligns with the council's sustainability goals and climate commitments.

3.7 There are disadvantages, however, which can be summarised thus:

- highest upfront capital cost of all the options, requiring external borrowing which would put additional pressure on the council's revenue budget
- considerable disruption to existing tenants during works. The shop leaseholders would have to cease trading and move out during the works
- risk of cost overruns due to unforeseen repairs, which would add further to the capital costs and thus the revenue costs of servicing debt
- long payback period given that only minimal uplifts in rents are likely to result from the works.

Option 2: Lesser Level of Works, though still including Energy Efficiency Works

3.8 The scope of works under this option is, essentially, as under option 1 but *without* the following works:

- new kitchens and bathrooms to ensure the ability to let the residential units as this option would see the flats remaining as part of the lease for 3no. shops
- demolition of the garages which would have to remain as ongoing repair and health and safety liabilities.

3.9 The advantages of this approach are as follows:

- lower short-term capital expenditure
- slightly lesser disruption although the shop leaseholders would have to move out and cease trading during the works
- retention of the garages which would reduce the capital costs but increase the ongoing repairs costs.

3.10 The disadvantages can be summarised thus:

- lower works to the flats precludes them being able to be let out separately at higher rents
- demolition of the garages would only be delayed.

Option 3: Disposal on the Open Market

3.11 This option would see the sale of the entire block, including the commercial and residential units and garages, land used to access/service the block, the small car park and the green space in front of the building. This option would see the block marketed with the existing short-term shop leases in place. If a sale then went ahead, it would be for the purchaser to determine the nature of any future leases, subject to the prevailing legislation, the purchaser's longer-term aspirations for the site and planning requirements if changes to or redevelopment of the site were to be proposed – see the discussion of planning considerations at paragraph 2.16.

3.12 The advantages of disposal are as follows:

- the securing of external investment in the site
- the generation of a capital receipt which could be used to reduce/avoid debt, thus having a medium-to-longer term revenue benefit for the council – see EXEMPT Appendix B
- removes ongoing liabilities, maintenance costs and compliance risks from the council
- simplifies the council's asset portfolio
- could possibly lead to a redevelopment which could improve the use and appearance of the site, while being in line with the council's planning policies (see paragraph 2.16). Redevelopment would have the potential of enabling a more attractive building and better visual amenity that could reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour by incorporating Secured by Design features such as better lighting of communal areas, control of access to individual and common curtilages, defensible space and landscape design supporting natural surveillance and safety.

3.13 At the same time, the disadvantages can be summarised thus:

- loss of long-term rental income
- reduced direct control over future use of the building/site, although any proposals by a future owner would, of course, be subject to the council's planning processes
- potential impact on existing shop tenants.

Option 4: Do Nothing

3.14 This option would see no investment made in the shops, flats or garages.

3.15 The advantages of doing nothing are as follows:

- no capital investment or revenue expenditure other than for essential day-to-day health and safety repairs

3.16 At the same time, the disadvantages can be summarised thus:

- loss of long-term rental income as (a) it is likely that only the three shops with an EPC rating of at least C could be let in the near future and (b) the garages are in such poor repair that in the short-to-medium term they will no longer be lettable without significant works.

Appraisal of the three scenarios

3.17 The financial appraisal of the four options is given in the EXEMPT Appendix B. The findings from the financial analysis are summarised in Tables 1 to 4 below.

Table 1: Retention and Improvement – options 1 and 2

	Option 1: Full Catch-Up Repairs and Energy Efficiency Improvements	Option 2: Lesser Level of Works, though still including Energy Efficiency Works
After works		
Maximum achievable income net of management and maintenance – <i>year 1</i>	£63,500	£45,500
Less: Revenue cost of works – <i>interest and minimum revenue provision</i>	£59,000	£43,500
Net income after works	£4,500	£2,000
Current budget		
Current budgeted income net of management and maintenance – <i>year 1</i>	£32,000	£32,000
Change in income – year 1 (minus figure represents a loss in annual income)	-£27,500	-£30,000

Note: all figures rounded to nearest £500.

Table 2: Disposal – option 3

	Disposal
Revenue after disposal	
Interest payments reduced / avoided	£38,000
MRP reduced / avoided	£20,000
Combined revenue benefit	£58,000
Current budget	
Current budgeted income net of management and maintenance – <i>year 1</i>	£32,000
Change in income – year 1 (minus figure represents a loss in annual income)	£26,000

Note: all figures rounded to nearest £500.

Table 3: Do Nothing – option 4

	Option 4: Do Nothing – in short-to-medium term only let shops with EPC of C or above and no longer let the garages
Short-to-medium term position	
Revenue cost of works – <i>interest and minimum revenue provision</i>	£0
Maximum achievable income net of management and maintenance – <i>short-to-medium term</i>	£5,000
Net income after works	£5,000
Current budget	
Current budgeted income net of management and maintenance* – <i>short-to-medium term</i>	£32,000
Change in income – short-to-medium term (minus figure represents a loss in annual income)	-£27,000

Note: all figures rounded to nearest £500.

* Only management and maintenance of the remaining shops included so the modelled costs are likely to significantly under-represent the costs to the council of managing a block that is more than half empty. A higher management and maintenance figure would *increase* the annual losses to the council.

Table 4: Year 1 revenue benefit to the council of the four options as compared with the income currently budgeted for from the Elizabeth Road site

Option	Year 1 revenue benefit to the council (minus figure represents a loss in comparison with the current budgeted income)
1: Full Catch-Up Repairs and Energy Efficiency Improvements	-£27,500*
2: Lesser Level of Works, though still including Energy Efficiency Works	-£30,000*
3: Disposal on Open Market	£26,000
4: Do Nothing	-£27,000**

Note: all figures rounded to nearest £500.

* Year 1. The loss is likely to lessen slightly over time as rents increase but the revenue costs of borrowing remain unchanged – see Table 5 for 30 year effect.

** Annual figure in the short-to-medium term. The loss to the council is likely to be under-represented as the model only includes management and maintenance of let shops, with no addition for management and maintenance of the predominantly vacant block.

Table 5: 30 year revenue benefit to the council of retention and disposal as compared with budgeted income

Option	Total 30 year revenue benefit* to the council (minus figure represents a loss to the council)
1: Full Catch-Up Repairs and Energy Efficiency Improvements	-£485,500
2: Lesser Level of Works, though still including Energy Efficiency Works	-£754,500
3: Disposal on Open Market	£447,500
4: Do Nothing	-£717,000

Note: all figures rounded to nearest £500.

* The 30 year total is not simply 30 times the year 1 figure as the modelling incorporates different inflationary multipliers for the various elements of income and expenditure over the 30 year period – see the EXEMPT Appendix B for more details.

3.18 Tables 1 to 5 indicate that when taking the current income net of management and maintenance costs included in the budget as the baseline, the retention and do nothing options represent a financial loss to the council both in the immediate term and over a 30 year timescale. This is because (a) the costs of borrowing and paying MRP to carry out works would not yield a higher rental income than that currently budgeted for and (b) the do nothing option would see the council being unable to let the majority of the units in the near future because of poor repair and poor energy efficiency, thus significantly reducing income compared with the budgeted income. On the other hand, disposal has a revenue benefit as it would reduce interest and MRP within the council’s borrowing.

4.0 Options

4.1 It is RECOMMENDED that option 3 is followed for the Elizabeth Road site, that is, disposal of the entire block, associated garages and access/service land, car park and grass areas for the operational and financial reasons discussed in this report. Of pivotal importance is that disposal would lever in external investment in site while realising a capital receipt that the council

could use to pay down existing debt or avoid future debt, thus giving a more beneficial impact on the council's revenue position in comparison with retaining the block, even when rent increases over a 30 year timeframe are taken into account.

- 4.2 Retain and improve the asset. NOT RECOMMENDED as there are unavoidable works required to, among other things, improve the energy efficiency of many of the commercial and residential units so as not to fall foul of anticipated nationally-set Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards increases and to remedy the fault with the structure of the balcony affording deck access to the residential units. The market-led ceiling for rent values on the site means realistically achievable commercial and residential rent increases following works would be insufficient to out-perform the revenue benefits of disposal.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 As with any property disposal, there is a risk that an acceptable sales price cannot be achieved. This risk would be mitigated by disposing of the site in line with officers' and their agents' professional advice and expertise as, indeed, the council is obliged to achieve best consideration.
- 5.2 Also, as with any sale there is the risk that the neighbours or close community may not welcome a change in ownership and/or use of the land or buildings. Any alternative use would be subject to planning approval which affords interested parties the opportunity to raise their objections or concerns.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The two ward members have, understandably, shown an interest in the future of the Elizabeth Road site for some time. The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability and officers consulted these members during the drafting of this report. The discussion in the report has taken into consideration several

points raised by wards members.

6.2 As noted above, any change of use and/or redevelopment of the site would be subject to the appropriate planning permission.

Community Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Data Protection

None arising directly from this report.

Equalities

None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

Any future substantial works, redevelopment or change of use of any part of the Elizabeth Road site would be subject to planning permission and building control. This is likely to see environmental sustainability improvements.

Financial

Finance colleagues have input to the financial analysis contained in this report and have scrutinised the modelling on which the financial discussion of the options has been based. The council's s151 officer has confirmed that, using parameters supplied by the Finance team, the recommended option to dispose of the Elizabeth Road site would have more beneficial revenue impact on the council than retention and improvement, both in the immediate term and over a 30 year timescale.

Health and Safety

Disposing of surplus assets or aging assets relieves the council of any future health and safety responsibilities, which are only set to increase over time with rising national standards, particularly relating to health and safety and energy efficiency.

Human Resources

None arising directly from this report.

Human Rights

None arising directly from this report.

Legal

For any site approved by the Executive for disposal, the Director for Communities shall work with colleagues to ensure an appropriate means of disposal such that s123(2) is adhered to, that is, the council will **not** dispose of any site *'for consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained'*.

Ward(s) affected: Bishop's Stortford Central

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.2 Appendix A Location plan

7.1 Appendix B Options appraisal – EXEMPT

Contact Member

Councillor Carl Brittain

Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

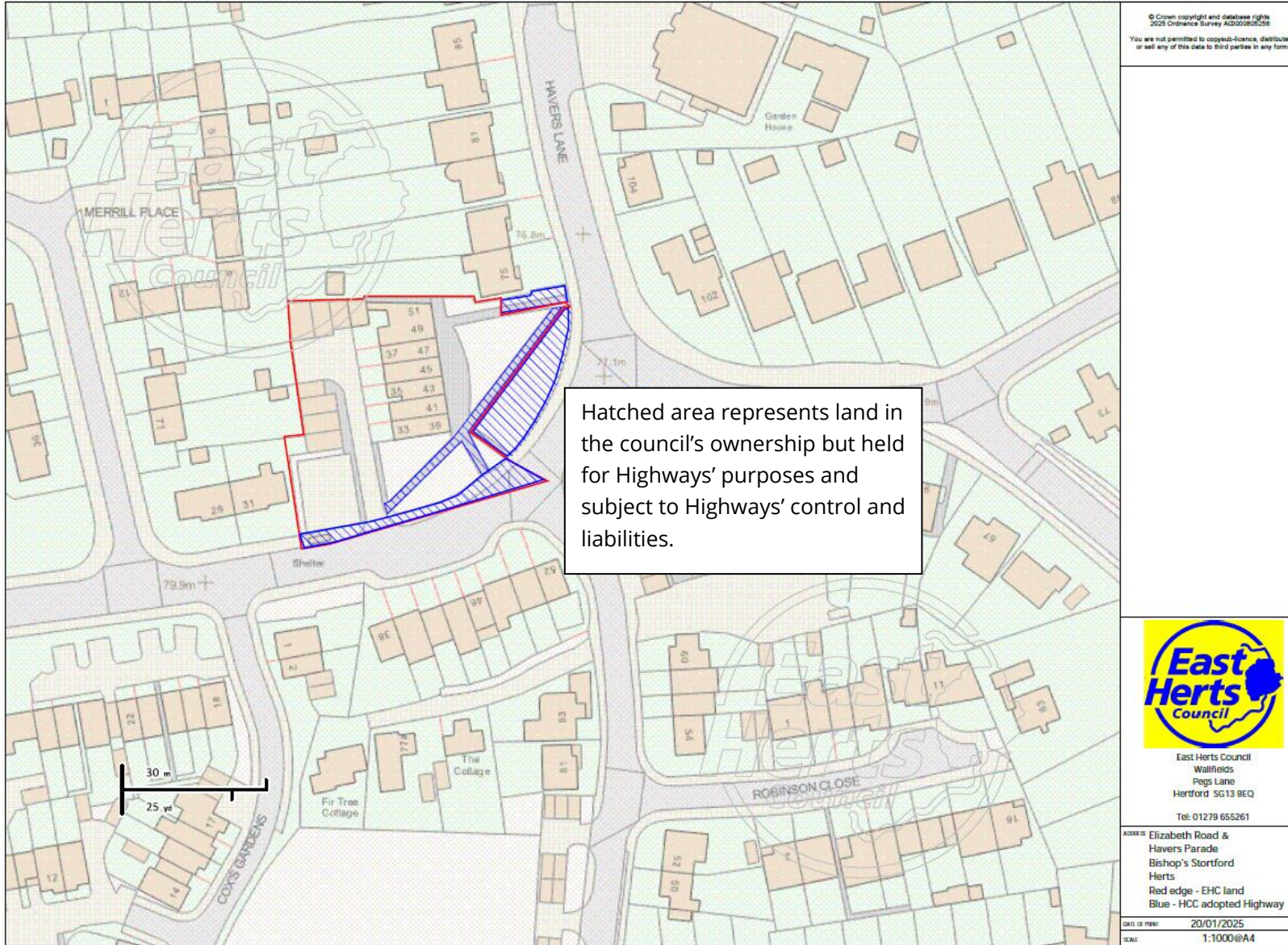
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Appendix A: Site Plan



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 9

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: Statement of Community Involvement

Ward(s) affected: All Wards;

Summary – This report sets out a number of proposed changes to the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2019 and seeks Members agreement to adopt a revised SCI.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE to recommend to Council that:

- a) **The Statement of Community Involvement 2025, as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be approved for adoption.**

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explains how the local authority intends to consult with the community and stakeholders on planning matters. The planning system can be complex, and the SCI aims to address uncertainty by setting out how the Council will engage with individuals and organisations at various stages of the planning process.
- 1.2 It is currently a legal requirement for the Council to update their SCI every five years. This is requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 18) as amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
- 1.3 This report sets out the content of an updated SCI, outlining what changes have been proposed and the reasoning behind them.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council's existing SCI¹ was formally adopted by the Council on 23 October 2019. A review of this document is therefore required under the current legislation.
- 2.2 It should be noted that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 has proposed a number of changes to the planning system, in particular, the removal of the requirement for local planning authorities to have an SCI. At this point in time secondary legislation is required before these changes can be implemented.
- 2.3 An update to the SCI is therefore not required under the LURA. It is however noted that these changes are not currently in force, and an SCI can help to provide clarity to the public on how the Council will engage and consult on planning matters.
- 2.4 On 16 October 2024 the Council approved the latest Local Development Scheme 2024², which sets out the timetable for the new District Plan. Updating the existing SCI would clearly demonstrate to communities and stakeholders how the Council wishes to engage with them through the preparation of the new District Plan. This also helps to ensure the planning process is transparent, which aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan 2024³ in being open and transparent and acting with the community.
- 2.5 This report provides further details on the proposed changes to SCI for the Council.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 This section outlines the various changes proposed through the update to the SCI. These amendments are largely a consequence of changes to legislation, the Council's priorities and procedures,

¹ [Statement of Community Involvement \(SCI\) | East Herts District Council](#)

² [Local Development Scheme \(LDS\) | East Herts District Council](#)

³ [Vision and Corporate Priorities | East Herts District Council](#)

best practice and general updates to help make planning more accessible to the public and accurate. A copy of the updated SCI is attached at **Appendix A**.

General updates

- 3.2 The SCI has been updated in the context of the latest Corporate Plan, which sets out the Council's LEAF priorities which were adopted by the Council in February 2024. These are soon to be updated and specifically relate to planning matters, such as the District Plan, Community Forums and Neighbourhood Plans. In addition to the LEAF priorities, the Council consulted on and then adopted 'A Listening Council' document, this sets out a framework for the principles over how we should consult with stakeholders and led by the Executive Member for Resident Engagement whose remit is to champion and lead community engagement. Both of these documents have a focus on the Council being open, transparent, listening and engaging with the community, in a fair and inclusive way. These attributes set out the ethos for the approaches to consultation and engagement within the updated SCI.
- 3.3 As highlighted at paragraph 2.2, the Government introduced the LURA in 2023 setting out a number of changes to the planning system. As secondary legislation is yet to be released, the proposed SCI has reflected this and where appropriate removed references to documents or phrases which will not be relevant in the new system, such as Sustainability Appraisals. This allows the document to transition smoothly into the new system, whilst ensuring the Council will continue to meet its legal duty.
- 3.4 The document also now includes a review section, highlighting what may trigger a review of the document, such as large changes as a consequence of the LURA 2023. This will allow the Council to review and update the document when necessary. This is particularly relevant to the introduction of Supplementary Plans which are proposed under the LURA. At this point in time it would be premature to outline the exact process for Supplementary Plans

in the absence of the secondary legislation. This could be provided in a later review of the SCI.

- 3.5 The existing SCI sets out several principles that the Council would follow when consulting with the public in regard to planning matters. This section has been updated highlighting how these principles will be implemented through action. This demonstrates the Council's commitment in being open with the public.
- 3.6 The updated SCI provides more detail on the principles of consultation and gives examples of different consultation methods that could be utilised during consultations. This document could also be used as a guide to stakeholders when conducting consultations within the district, such as developers consulting on planning proposals.
- 3.7 An ever-growing topic in planning is digital technology. This has been reflected by the Government through the introduction of the Digital Planning Programme ⁴. This seeks to modernise the planning system through utilising digital technology. The updated SCI provides commentary on this, highlighting how digital technology may be used to make planning consultations more accessible and inclusive, but also how it can help make the Council more efficient by speeding up processes that traditionally could use a lot of resources, such as processing responses manually.
- 3.8 Additionally, the updated SCI provides further detail on the level of participation that the public should expect at different stages of planning policy consultations. This illustrates how their responses will be used to shape planning decisions and the level of engagement that may be used, providing clarity to the process.

Planning policy

- 3.9 The document provides an update to the stages of plan making in line with the LURA 2023 which is the system the Council intends to

⁴ [The MHCLG Digital Planning Programme | Local Digital](#)

prepare the new District Plan under. This ensures the SCI is consistent with the adopted Local Development Scheme, including the proposed minimum length of consultation at the key stages of plan making.

- 3.10 There is a new requirement within the SCI to prepare and agree an engagement strategy for the two formal stages of plan making, as well as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). A template for this can be found in Appendix B in the document. An engagement strategy at these key stages will help the Council to ensure the key messages of the consultation are clear, and highlighting from the outset where particular groups may be impacted and how the Council could try to reach such groups. This helps to make the process more inclusive from the outset. It also clearly sets the parameters of the consultation to the public at the start of consultations, such as timeframes, consultation methods etc which provides clarity.
- 3.11 An important part of consultation is the feedback loop, ensuring those that have taken the time to participate within consultations can see how their input has fed into the process, as well as keeping the public up to date on progress. The updated SCI includes a section on how the Council will keep respondents and the public informed of planning policy matters following periods of consultations. For example, when individuals may be notified at key stages and where information can be found on updates in the process.

Neighbourhood planning

- 3.12 The district has seen several Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) adopted in recent years and more recently a number of these NPs have been reviewed. The proposed SCI therefore now includes further information on the process for NP reviews, including when Examinations may be appropriate and the level of consultation that may be required.

Planning applications

- 3.13 Alongside updates to the planning application section, in line with planning practice guidance, updates have been made to signpost and update the public to information that accurately reflects the Council's current processes where they have changed since 2019. For example, the Council updated the Constitution⁵ on 26 February 2025 which had implications for the masterplan process. The updated SCI illustrates these changes.
- 3.14 The Council has also updated the Amendments and Extensions of Time Protocol⁶ and it is important to correctly link to that document within the SCI.
- 3.15 The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project has progressed since the previous 2019 SCI, as a consequence the updated SCI provides the latest links to relevant resources on the project and details on the creation of the Joint Committee and future stewardship groups.
- 3.16 Lastly, there are a number of forums and steering groups set up around the district to engage communities and stakeholders in the planning application process. This ranges from agent forums, to community forums and the Development Management Forum. A new Appendix A in the SCI has been provided setting out what the different groups are and how they help to keep different groups engaged in the planning process.

Next Steps

- 3.17 Following agreement to adopt the SCI found at **Appendix A**, the Planning Policy Team will replace the existing SCI on the Council's website with the revised document. The updated SCI will be used for consultation on planning matters from the date of adoption.

⁵ [Agenda for Constitution on Wednesday 26th February, 2025 - East Herts District Council](#)

⁶ [Amendments and Extensions of Time Protocol.pdf](#)

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to approve the updated SCI for adoption and continue to use the existing adopted SCI. The latest review does however provide additional useful information and ensures that the document is up to date.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 An SCI is currently a legal requirement for local planning authorities. This is why it is important to ensure the information within the SCI is up to date and accurate.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 An SCI forms an integral part of the planning process. It provides clarity to the public on how the Council will consult on such matters.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

The SCI has a positive impact to equality, diversity, and inclusion as it outlines how planning can be more inclusive to all groups as set out in the Equality Act 2010. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) of the SCI has been carried out and is found at **Appendix B**.

Environmental Sustainability

The SCI encourages more digital engagement with the public, providing a greater variety in the ways in which the public can engage with planning. This can help to reduce paper waste that was more typical in traditional consultation methods, such as hardcopy notifications, responses and leaflets.

Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Council has a legal duty to consult on planning matters and the cost of this has been accounted for in existing budgets.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

The Council is required to have an up to date SCI under existing legislation. It also has a duty to consult on a number of planning matters, as set out in the SCI.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices, and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – Statement of Community Involvement 2025

7.2 Appendix B – Statement of Community Involvement Equalities
Impact Assessment

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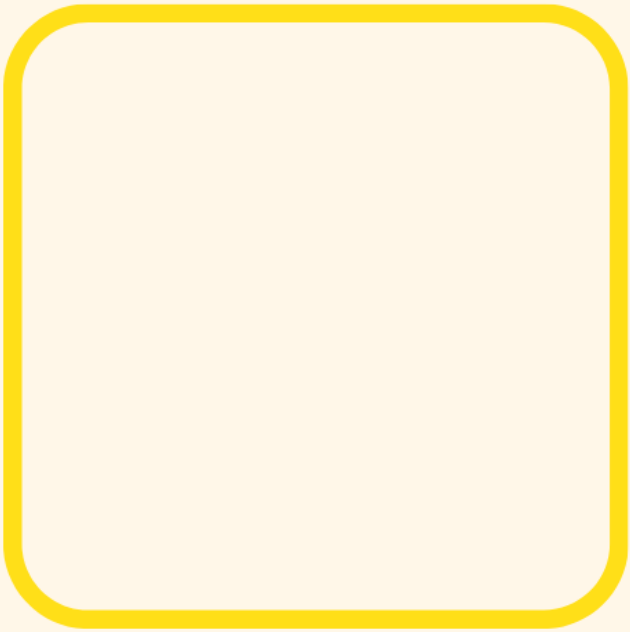
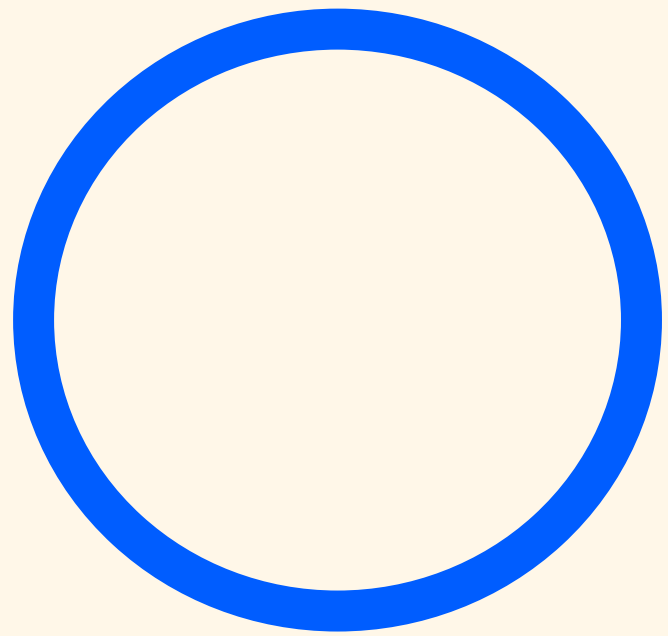
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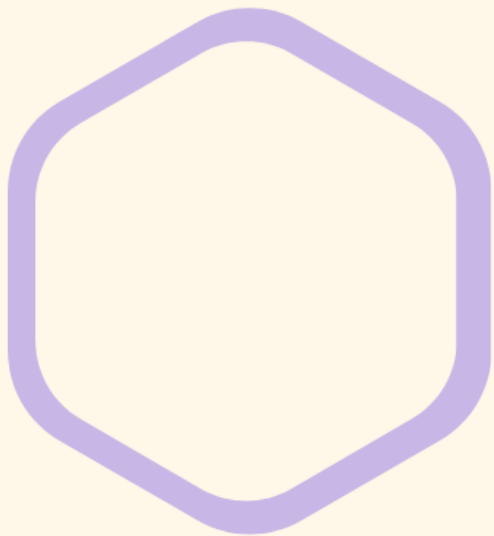
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East Herts SCI 2025

Statement of Community Involvement



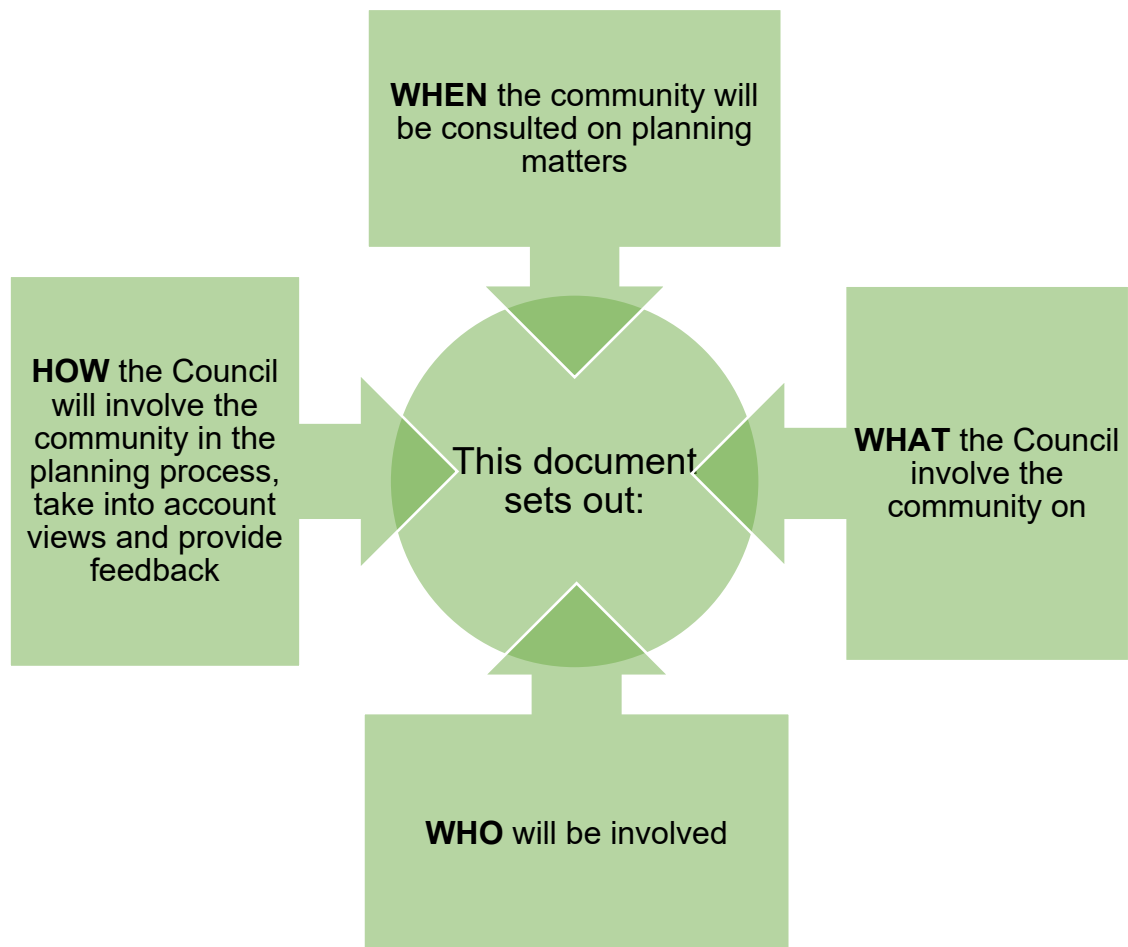
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1.0 Introduction

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explains how East Herts District Council will involve the community and stakeholders in plan making, neighbourhood planning and in the consideration of planning applications, including master planning. The planning system can be complex and the SCI aims to address uncertainty by setting out how the Council will engage with people at the various stages of the planning process.



Why prepare an SCI?

1.2 Planning shapes the places where people live and work. Community engagement is fundamental to ensuring that stakeholders and the local community are involved with the planning system and can influence a wide range of planning decisions. The NPPF requires that local planning authorities engage early, proportionately and effectively.

1.3 The Council wants to involve all sectors of the community in the planning process and is committed to always either meeting or exceeding the minimum legal requirements for consultation set out in the Planning Regulations¹. This approach is in accordance with East Herts District Council's Corporate Plan (2024-2027)², which has a priority to listen, be open and transparent in decision making and actions, as well as making improvements to consultation, engagement and conversations with our communities. As the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the Council has a legal duty to prepare an SCI in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (section 18³).

Why revise the current SCI?

1.4 The Council's first SCI was published in 2008 and later revised in 2013 and then 2019. In 2020 an Addendum updated the SCI to reflect Covid-19 restrictions. Under the current system there is a statutory requirement to review the SCI every five years and also to include policies for giving advice or assistance on making and modifying neighbourhood development plans.

Contacting us and more information

1.5 You can get in contact with the planning team on the email address below:

- For questions relating to this document and planning policy matters contact the planning policy team - planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk
- For questions relating to the planning application process please contact the development management service – planning@eastherts.gov.uk

¹ Currently the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012; the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017; The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended); Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015; The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017; The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 1995.

² Corporate Plan 2024-27 - www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/vision-and-corporate-priorities

³ As amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.

1.6 Both teams can be contacted on 01279 655261 or by post at East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ.

1.7 You can also keep up to date by following the Council's social media accounts below:

- Facebook @EastHertsCouncil;
- Instagram @EastHertsCouncil;
- X @EastHerts;
- LinkedIn @EastHertsDistrictCouncil;
- YouTube @EastHertsDistrict.

2.0 Principles of consultation

What has informed the principles?

1.8 The 'Gunning Principles' set out four consultation principles that have been recognised through the courts as the basis for a fair public consultation. These are that:

Proposals are at a formative stage and a final decision has not been made or predetermined;

There is sufficient information to give intelligent consideration i.e. the information provided is related to the consultation, available, accessible and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response;

Adequate time is given to consultees for consideration and response;

Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made. For example, providing evidence that consultation responses were taken into account.

1.9 The Council will ensure that these principles are incorporated into all consultations. This commitment is illustrated through the Council's [Corporate Plan 2024-2027](#) which agreed the LEAF priorities for the Council, these include a number of planning matters such as the District Plan, Community Forums and Neighbourhood Plans. The priorities for the Council are:

- Listening, opening and transparent;
- Environmentally focused;
- Acting with the community;
- Fair and inclusive.

1.10 This further highlights the Council's agreed commitment to work with and engage with communities and stakeholders in decision making in the district. In addition to this commitment the Council consulted and adopted 'A Listening

Council' document in 2024, setting out principles for information giving, engagement and consultation, this includes:

- Transparency;
- Straightforward, jargon free messaging;
- Involvement methods tailored to the locality, community and topic;
- A genuine desire to listen;
- Multi-channel involvement;
- Reaching out to those whose voices can sometimes go unheard;
- Allowing people to be able to get the information from the Council at the level of detail they prefer;
- Councillors being fully involved;
- Listening to feedback.

What are the guiding principles?

1.11 Taking account of all of the principles set out above, table 2.1 below sets out the guiding principles for consultations on planning matters. There are however statutory requirements that the Council needs to fulfil when consulting on planning applications which may set out different parameters, such as the length of time to consult. The specific process undertaken for planning applications is set out in section 6. Further details on the process and consultation methods used will be set out in section 3.

Table 2.1: Guiding principles of consultations

Principle		How will this be achieved?
1	Consultation publications will be clear and concise, making them accessible to all groups and individuals, including those with little to no knowledge of the planning process.	Consultations will clearly state what is being proposed, how and when you can get involved. Planning jargon will be avoided as far as possible.
2	Effective consultation is used as early as possible in the process.	Where possible, consultations will be programmed early in the planning process, ensuring enough time is given for responses to be analysed effectively and feed into decision making.
3	Consultations clearly highlight how responses will be taken into account and the next stages in the planning process.	The Council will highlight what consultations will inform and how they can view the Council's response to issues they have raised.
4	Planning decisions are carried out in a transparent way.	Planning decisions will be easily accessible to view to all and will be available to view on the Council's website.
5	We welcome a wide range of views from all and will involve representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and a view of different sections or groups of the community are considered.	Anyone can respond to planning consultations regardless of background and personal circumstances. Where proposals are likely to impact a certain group within the community, a targeted approach may be used.
6	Consultation material will be made accessible for those with different needs.	We will ensure communication materials represent a diverse range of people, including different ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual

	Principle	How will this be achieved?
		orientations, disabilities and ages. We will ensure, wherever possible, that digital content (websites, social media, online resources) meets accessibility standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), screen reader compatibility, etc.). For non-digital material, we will consider requests for translation services, including Easy Read, Braille and multi-language formats.
7	We will adhere to legislative requirements in all planning matters.	We will monitor emerging legislative requirements as well as ensuring all planning regulations and acts are followed. We will also handle personal data in the Council's Data Protection Policy and Guidelines, which are designed to ensure that the activities of the Council comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) which came in to force on 25th May 2018.
8	We will reach out to our communities in the most direct and resource efficient manner possible, so that we can deliver cost-effective mechanisms for consultation in planning matters.	We promote electronic methods of consultation, including email, website and social media, to make involvement easier, quicker and more cost effective. This may also include the use of emerging digital technology.
9	Appropriate consultation methods are used in order to maximise opportunity for community involvement, including those who are hard to reach or seldom heard.	We will use inclusive engagement methods (making use of current guidance and good practice), encouraging participation by people of all backgrounds. Examples of 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard' groups may include young people, students, the elderly, ethnic minorities,

	Principle	How will this be achieved?
		Gypsies and Travellers, homeless people, single parent families, people with disabilities, rural communities and more deprived areas of the district.
10	We will set out clear expectations in relation to how we want developers to engage with our communities throughout the planning process.	Processes such as master planning will be clearly set out so the community and developers both understand how the Council wishes for engagement to be undertaken.

Other consultation considerations

1.12 The SCI aims to ensure that all consultation is carried out in a professional, cost effective and coordinated way. The central role of elected Council members as representatives of their community is unaffected by the SCI; councillors are important as representatives of the Council and the local community. Their knowledge of, and role within, the community can be used to great advantage and should be regarded as central to the determination and implementation of both consultations and policy decisions.

1.13 It is important to note that the Council reserves the right not to consider or include in its documentation any inappropriate comments submitted from the consultations. These may include, but not be limited to:

- Discriminatory comments;
- Offensive or inflammatory remarks;
- Personal information - this will be redacted where needed.

3.0 Consultation techniques and participation

Consultation techniques

1.14 There are various methods of consultation that we can use to notify communities and stakeholders about consultations as well as methods to engage throughout consultation periods. These can come in different forms such as written word, face to face events and social media.

1.15 We will use various techniques to consult on planning matters. The amount and type of consultation techniques deployed will depend on the scope, scale and topic that is being consulted on. Table 3.1 below provides examples of different consultation techniques that may be utilised.

Table 3.1: Examples of consultation methods

Method	Examples	How they may be used
Traditional written methods	Emails, letters, noticeboards, posters, advertisements in local press, website, surveys, site notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All information relating to consultations on planning policy documents, planning applications and supporting information will be available on our website, and, where possible, in pdf format so they can be downloaded. • We will notify relevant parties on consultations and where relevant keep them updated on progress of proposals e.g. examination and adoption. This will be through email in the first instance and then letters where that is not the preferred method. • For proposals affecting a large number of people, we will provide the local press with consultation details in advance or within the first few days of its launch to ensure broad public awareness. • Written advertisements or site notices will be used in appropriate locations, dependant on the proposal/consultation. • Depending on the consultation, surveys may be made available online for people to respond.
Face to face	Public meetings, community forums, the development management forum, steering groups, focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate we will meet with communities and stakeholders to discuss proposals in more detail. • We may facilitate workshops or focus groups to get more specific views on proposals. • Community forums or steering groups may be used to gather different stakeholders to discuss matters relating to strategic sites or issues. Details of the different forums we have can be found at Appendix A.

Method	Examples	How they may be used
	groups, workshops, drop-in sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some cases, drop-in sessions may be provided for the public to discuss issues with the Council.
Social media	Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, NextDoor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's social media accounts may be used to notify and signpost the public to consultations. Local advertisements on social media may be used to help reach a larger demographic than traditional methods. Explanatory videos may be utilised to help explain complex planning matters. Formal Council meetings or planning events such as hearing sessions may be webcast and available to view online.
Digital technology	AI, GIS, online meetings and workshops.	The use of digital technology in planning is expanding with technology being used more widely. Where appropriate, these will be utilised to help visualise proposals, summarise responses to consultations and aide consultation on planning matters.

Digital technology

- 1.16 The Council will seek to utilise digital technologies where appropriate to help improve access to planning and reach a wider audience through consultations, as well as streamlining the process and removing barriers to planning. We will also encourage developers to use these methods where appropriate when consulting on proposals to help improve engagement and get greater input from the community. This area of engagement is under rapid development as innovation and techniques emerge and improve. The Council will seek to harness methods, such as some of those discussed below, where we believe it can bring benefits and improvements to our own engagement exercises.
- 1.17 A digital transformation in planning is underway, with new technologies being created to help make planning more accessible to the public, diversify the ways that consultations are undertaken to reach a wider audience, illustrate complex proposals and issues in a clearer way, make responding to consultations easier and reducing the time required to process responses.
- 1.18 The Government set up the Digital Planning Programme, to help deliver better services, increase productivity within the public sector and use digital technology to modernise the planning system. East Herts has already utilised this programme through the 'call for sites' process which was undertaken in 2024. This helped develop a new online mapping technology for site submissions to be made directly online, allowing for more accurate boundary mapping of sites and reducing the amount of time taken to process responses. Building upon this we will look to see how digital technology can further help make consultations more inclusive, effective and clearer.
- 1.19 Below provides some examples of how technology has and could be used in the future to make planning more accessible and inclusive, whilst reducing the amount of internal resources used on processing information which in turn could be used more effectively on other planning matters.

Accessibility and inclusivity

- 1.20 Technologies such as pdf readers and translate services can make planning documents more accessible to different audiences. There is also a growing rate of online planning events and exhibitions which were more traditionally held in person, accessible online for those who may not want to or be able to make in person events.
- 1.21 AI software is increasingly being used to help answer specific questions that the public may have, this has been demonstrated in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project where an AI chat is set up on the website to allow people to ask direct questions about the project and get instant responses.
- 1.22 Emerging virtual reality technology and mapping is helping to create more visual proposals which can help make proposals easier to understand compared to traditional 2D maps. This can help empower those to make informed responses to proposals as they can clearly visualise the impact that a proposal may have to the wider area, such as impacts to landscape, design etc. It may also help to eliminate concerns that the public may have from such proposals.
- 1.23 GIS and mapping technology has improved helping to present multiple layers of planning data visually allowing individuals to interact with the data themselves and identify issues relating to particular locations that may impact them more clearly. This can be seen on the East Herts website through on the Policies Map⁴.

Council resources and productivity

- 1.24 Surveys using interactive mapping are becoming the norm as this allows comments to be pinpointed onto a map. This helps to identify where key issues are located more accurately and could reduce the amount of time processing responses into a consistent format.
- 1.25 New technologies are also emerging that can help to summarise key issues raised through consultations. This can help to reduce the amount of time spent

⁴ Policies Map - <https://cadcorp.cloud/963e0553-5238-483f-8fa7-005650c16546/webmap/1/en-gb/PublicMap/Planning#/>

processing responses and allow the Council to use that time saved for other matters. Consultation software has also progressed to help create instant reporting to provide key statistics and charts from responses instantly, helping to present general, high-level views on certain matters quickly.

1.26 The use of AI is being investigated to see how this can help speed up the planning application validation process. The Government highlighted that up to 50% of planning applications are invalid on submission, which can lead to an estimated 34-day delay per invalid planning application⁵. This has implications for the speed of the planning process as well as officers time. The use of AI to help automate some aspects of validation will help to reduce the chance of invalid applications and speed up the overall process.

Levels of participation

1.27 The level of participation from the community and different stakeholders will vary depending on the nature of the proposal/project and how advanced the proposal/project may be. We will use a range of methods and activities to involve a variety of stakeholders at different stages.

1.28 Table 3.2 will be used to help identify the level of participation required for the specific project or proposal being consulted on. This will help inform the type of consultation methods that may be used at that stage.

Table 3.2: Objectives and examples of the levels of participation

Level of participation	Objective	Promise to the public	Examples
Empower	Devolving or taking joint responsibility for	We will support you to make informed decisions and	Ballots, delegated decision making, referendums

⁵ Digital Planning Programme Overview - <https://www.localdigital.gov.uk/digital-planning/digital-planning-programme-overview/>

Level of participation	Objective	Promise to the public	Examples
	decision making.	implement what you decide.	
Collaborate	Working in partnership with stakeholders to shape outcomes.	We will look to you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into decisions.	Neighbourhood Plan Group, steering groups.
Involve	Work with the public to understand aspirations and concerns, ensuring they are understood and considered.	We will work with you ensuring that your feedback is incorporated into proposals and projects.	Workshops, focus groups, interviews, masterplanning, the development management forum, community forums.
Consult	Obtaining feedback and views from the public.	We will take account of your views and feedback.	Surveys, public meetings, website, social media.
Inform	Sharing information on plans, projects and/or progress.	We will keep you informed about what we are doing and how we have considered your opinions/ responses.	Websites, social media posts, newspapers, noticeboards.

4.0 Planning Policy Documents

Introduction

1.29 This section outlines when, how and who the Council will consult on planning policy documents.

1.30 The current planning policy framework for East Herts is set out in two types of documents - Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents – as well as supporting documents. Table 4.1 sets out the purpose of the different documents.

1.31 Development Plan Documents are the basis upon which planning applications will be decided, unless there are material planning considerations that indicate otherwise. They are subject to various stages of community involvement and examination by an independent Inspector. They must accord with national planning policy, be supported by technical evidence and informed by the views of residents, businesses and stakeholders, as appropriate.

Table 4.1: Types of planning documents

Type of document	Document	Description
Development Plan Document	Spatial Development Strategy (joint plans)	A Spatial Development Strategy is a document that is prepared between two or more local planning authorities. A Spatial Development Strategy will set the strategic framework and shared priorities within the wider area within which individual local plans can be prepared.
Development Plan Document	Local Plan (District Plan) and Policies Map	The Council is responsible for producing a Local Plan, which will set out how the district will develop in the future. The Local Plan is locally referred to as the District Plan. The most recent District Plan was adopted in October 2018. It contains strategic policies and site allocations alongside detailed policies for determining planning applications. These are set out spatially on a Policies Map.
Development Plan Document	Minerals and Waste Local Plans	Minerals and Waste Local Plans are produced by Hertfordshire County Council so East Herts Council is a statutory consultee but not directly involved in their production. The County Council has produced its own SCI for matters to which it is responsible.
Development Plan Document	Adopted Neighbourhood Plans	Neighbourhood Plans are led by Parish and Town Councils or designated Neighbourhood Plan Groups. However, East Herts Council has a legal responsibility to advise or assist in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration of this role and the consultation involved is set out in section 5 of this SCI.

Type of document	Document	Description
Supplementary Planning Documents	Supplementary Planning Documents	These provide guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in the District Plan. They are not part of the development plan, but are a material consideration in planning decisions. SPDs cover a range of issues including topic based advice and site development briefs. They are subject to consultation but not to examination.
Supporting documents	Local Development Scheme	A timetable setting out when documents will be produced.
Supporting documents	Authority Monitoring Report	An annual report setting out the Council's progress against targets and policies.
Supporting documents	Statement of Community Involvement	This sets out how the Council will involve the community and stakeholders in planning matters.

Who will we consult?

1.32 The Council wants to know the opinions of the people who live, work and visit East Herts. We are required to consult a wide range of statutory organisations and stakeholders during the process of preparing our planning policies. However, the Council is also committed to involving as many local people, groups and organisations as possible in the preparation of planning policy documents.

1.33 We are legally required to consult a range of specific and general consultees when preparing planning policy documents. These are groups with specialist knowledge in certain areas or those that represent specific interest groups. These will be specific and general consultation bodies that may have an interest and/or the local planning authority consider appropriate to the consultation document being prepared. Examples of these consultation bodies include:

- Hertfordshire County Council;
- Adjoining local authorities;
- Parish or town councils within or adjoining the district;
- Organisations that represent business interests in East Herts;
- Organisations that represent the interests of specific parts of the community;
- Infrastructure providers;
- National agencies or bodies.

1.34 Legally the Council must also notify and consult such residents or other persons carrying out business as they consider appropriate. This includes those that have asked to be consulted. The Council recognises that the views of the wider community are important and consults a range of groups and individuals as relevant to the scope and subject of the planning document. These may include the following:

- Residents' Associations and designated Neighbourhood Plan Groups;
- Social, economic and environmental organisations;
- Developers, agents and landowners.

1.35 The Council maintains a database of people and organisations and will consult them where relevant. Individuals, groups and organisations who want to

be involved in future planning policy consultations can be added to the database. They can register on the Council's consultation portal <http://consult.eastherts.gov.uk/portal> or contact the Planning Policy Team. Consultees on the database will also be emailed copies of the District Planning Bulletin as new editions are published.

How will we consult?

1.36 The Council will use a variety of methods to engage and consult with the community and stakeholders. The principles for consultation will be used as a basis for all consultations and a variety of consultation techniques set out in section 3 will be used as and where appropriate. The scope of the planning document and the availability of resources will influence how the Council consult on a case-by-case basis. In all scenarios the Council will meet its statutory duty in regard to consultation.

1.37 For particular stages of consultation on planning policy documents an engagement strategy will be prepared, which will set out the scope of the consultation, timeframes, key messages, the materials required and the methods that will be undertaken in the specific consultation. A template engagement strategy can be found in Appendix B.

1.38 In relation to planning policy consultations we will:

- Meet all of the consultation principles set out in section 2 of this document;
- Directly contact those individuals or organisations we have a statutory duty to contact;
- Directly contact those organisations and individuals in our planning policy database, as appropriate;
- Publicise consultations on our website. We will also use an appropriate combination of other methods set out in table 3.1, to let individuals know that the consultation is underway;
- Make consultation materials available on the Council's website and where appropriate at the Council offices and other deposit locations in the district.

How should people respond to consultations?

- 1.39 Consultation material will clearly highlight how people can respond to consultations. Comments can usually be made as follows:
- the Council's online consultation portal <http://consult.eastherts.gov.uk> ;
 - by email planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk ;
 - by post to Planning Policy, East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ.

1.40 It is easy to register and respond via the online consultation portal and all the consultation documents and sections can be easily viewed and downloaded in pdf format. You can then submit comments against the relevant part of the document. The portal is particularly useful for managing a high volume of consultation responses efficiently. The Council can provide help on how to use it if required.

How will consultation responses be dealt with?

- 1.41 Following consultation periods, it is essential to have a feedback loop to keep consultees and the public aware of how their comments have informed the process, what the next stages to provide comments is, and how the Council is progressing on planning policy documents. Following consultations on planning policy documents we will:
- Send confirmation that comments have been received;
 - Publish all comments received as soon as feasible, usually planning policy consultations will publish responses in full, unless there is a reason to redact information, for example for GDPR purposes or if comments are discriminatory;
 - Comments received in hard copy format will be made available online in an appropriate format where practicable (either scanned or typed up), or if not practicable, the original documents will be available for viewing at the Council offices upon request;
 - Petitions will be addressed in accordance with Council policy. Details about the process are set out on the website: www.eastherts.gov.uk/petitions;
 - Standard responses will be considered collectively;

- We will address comments or provide a summary of the main issues raised by the comments, explaining how these have been considered. This process will be reported to either the District Planning Executive Panel (DPEP) or Executive and subsequently recommendations will be agreed by Full Council;
- At the required stages we will produce a consultation statement setting out who was consulted, the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed;
- We will inform all those people who have requested to be notified of the adoption of future development plan documents and SPDs, when they have been adopted, including details of where and when they can be inspected.

How will the public be kept informed following consultations?

1.42 To ensure that the planning process is transparent, it is vital that the community and stakeholders are kept up to date on how the Council are progressing with planning policy documents and clear communications are provided. Therefore, in addition to consultations and providing feedback we will:

- Update our website, social media and issue press releases highlighting the next steps in the process, if appropriate;
- Notify those that have requested to be kept up to date of key milestones e.g. adoption of documents;
- During examination periods, the Council's website will be kept up to date on progress of the examination, relevant documentation and relevant consultees will be kept informed of the process;
- When a document has been adopted by the Council, the document will be published on the Council's website and when required will be made available in hard copy at relevant locations in the district and relevant consultees will be notified that it has been adopted.

East Herts District Plan

1.1. The District Plan is the local plan for East Herts. It sets out the framework for development in the area and involves various opportunities for public consultation. There are certain regulations that the Council must follow when consulting in the District Plan process, such as the length of consultation and some of the stakeholders with whom consultation is required.

1.2. Table 4.2 illustrates the District Plan making process. The process set out below is based on the new plan making system proposed through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. These are the key steps anticipated in preparing the District Plan. It also highlights the level of participation that is expected at each stage based on table 3.2 in this document.

Table 4.2: District Plan Process and expected consultation at each stage

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
Scoping and early participation	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	In the early phases of plan making we may consult with communities and stakeholders to inform research on matters that might shape the direction of the Plan. The level of consultation that may occur at this stage will depend on what information is being sought.
Plan visioning and strategy development	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Once formal plan making has commenced a formal public consultation will be held, building on the outputs from the early participation at the scoping phase. Understanding what the issues are in the area will help to shape what should be included within the District Plan and what further research and/or evidence work is required to support the emerging plan. At this stage we will hold a minimum 8 week consultation, and prepare and agree an engagement strategy (as set out in Appendix B) setting out consultation methods that will be used.
Engagement, proposing changes and submission of the Plan	Inform Consult Involve	<p>Following a period of evidence gathering a draft District Plan will be prepared. At this stage the draft District Plan will be formally consulted on with the community, statutory bodies and other key stakeholders. This is the Plan that the Council is seeking to submit to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.</p> <p>At this stage we will hold a minimum 6 week consultation, and prepare and agree an engagement strategy (as set out in Appendix B), setting out the consultation will be undertaken. The Council will have an opportunity to make changes prior to submission of the Plan following consultation.</p>
Examination	Inform Consult	An examination in public on the draft District Plan will be held by an independent Inspector. They will examine if the Plan meets the tests of soundness and is legally compliant. Those who made a

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
		representation in relation to the draft District Plan will be given an opportunity to appear before the Examiner. The Council will ensure that the details of the examination will be available to view on the Council's website and advertised, where appropriate.
Adoption	Inform	The District Plan is finalised, and the Council formally adopts the District Plan. Details of the adoption and the District Plan will be available on the Council's website.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

1.3. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) do not have to go through the formal examination process, but consultation with stakeholders and the wider community is still a vital part of the preparation process. The scope of the consultation and decision on who will be consulted will reflect the nature of the SPD.

1.4. At this point in time the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has been introduced and does not include the continuation of SPDs. We are currently awaiting secondary legislation before this legislation can be implemented. Therefore, it is likely that during the lifetime of this document SPDs will no longer be in use, and this will be picked up within a future review of this document.

1.5. Table 4.3 sets out the current process in creating SPDs and the level of participation expected at each stage.

Table 4.3: Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) process

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
Preparation and evidence gathering	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Depending on the content and scope of the SPD, early consultation with relevant stakeholders may be used to inform research and evidence gathering. If consultation is required at this stage then the length of consultation will depend on what information is being sought.
Public participation	Inform Consult Involve	Once an SPD has been drafted comments will be sought on the draft SPD from relevant stakeholders. An engagement strategy will be prepared and agreed with key information about the consultation, a copy of the template can be found at Appendix B.

Stage	Level of participation	Actions
		A minimum 4 week consultation will be undertaken.
Adoption	Inform	Following consultation the SPD will be updated and the Council will formally adopt the SPD and notify those who have asked to be notified of adoption.

5.0 Neighbourhood Planning

Introduction

1.6. Neighbourhood planning is a tool to allow local people to have more control over the planning process. It gives communities statutory powers to identify local priorities and policies that shape development in their area. In East Herts neighbourhood planning is led by parish and town councils, but Neighbourhood Plan Groups may also be designated to lead the work. Neighbourhood Planning consists of:

- Neighbourhood Development Plans - a local framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area;
- Neighbourhood Development Orders - a way for Town and Parish Councils or designated Neighbourhood Plan Groups to grant planning permission for certain kinds of development within a specified area;
- Community Right to Build Orders - a special kind of Neighbourhood Development Order, which grant planning permission for certain development schemes.

1.7. East Herts District Council has a legal responsibility to advise or assist in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. As of April 2025 there are 15 adopted or 'made' Neighbourhood Plans in East Herts and three currently in development. Details about the production of all Neighbourhood Plans is set out on the Council's Neighbourhood Planning webpage⁶, which is updated regularly. There have not yet been any neighbourhood development orders or community right to build orders in East Herts.

1.8. A Neighbourhood Development Plan must follow a similar process to that carried out by the Council for the District Plan, including public consultation and an examination process. However, there is an additional step of a local referendum whereby if more than half the vote is in favour, the plan must then be adopted by the Council. Once brought into legal force, a Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan, as set out in table 4.1, and decisions on whether or not

⁶ www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning-activity-east-herts

to grant planning permission in the Neighbourhood Area will need to be made in accordance with it, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

When and how are we involved in plan consultation?

1.9. The process for preparing Neighbourhood Plans and Orders is set out in the Regulations⁷. We have published our own guidance on Neighbourhood Planning which is available on the Council's website⁸ and outlines the key stages of the preparation process and how the Council will work with groups to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. The Locality Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide also provides additional advice and is available on its website⁹. A summary of the plan preparation process and how we guide and assist the neighbourhood planning process is set out in table 5.1. Where the Council consults on the Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation principles outlined in section 2 will be applied, with the level of participation expected at each stage highlighted in table 3.2 in this document.

⁷ Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017.

⁸ www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning

⁹

www.neighbourhoodplanning.org/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIqObChMI_Pvj8v3eiwMV4IBQ_Bh2jlhowEAAYASAAEgLapvD_BwE

Table 5.1: Stages in advising and assisting Neighbourhood Planning

Stage	Level of participation	Consultation opportunities and who leads on the consultation
Regulation 6 & 9 - Receipt of a Neighbourhood Area Designation	Inform Consult	No consultation is required where the whole of the parish is proposed. For other proposed areas the Council will consult for a minimum of 6 weeks. We will publish the application on the website and inform local people in the relevant locality.
Regulations 7 & 10 - Publishing designation of Neighbourhood Area/ Forum	Inform	If the Council approves the application, we will publicise the decision on the website. If refusing, the Council will publish the reasons for the decision and details about where it can be viewed.
Regulation 14 - Publicity of a Neighbourhood Development Plan prior to submitting to the Council	<u>Led by the Parish/ Town Council or designated Neighbourhood Plan Group.</u>	The Neighbourhood Forum can determine how to consult at this stage, but they will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw up a consultation statement, setting out who and how they have consulted for the next stage of the process. • Consult for a minimum of 6 weeks. • Ensure that they consult the relevant consultation bodies and bring the plan to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area the plan relates to. • Send the Neighbourhood Plan to East Herts District Council. The Council will advise on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and provide advice on key assessments.
Regulation 15 & 16 - After Neighbourhood	Inform Consult	Where a draft neighbourhood plan is submitted to the Council and the Neighbourhood Plan meets the legal requirements we will publicise the final version of the Plan for a minimum of 6 weeks.

Stage	Level of participation	Consultation opportunities and who leads on the consultation
Plan is submitted to the Council.		At this stage the Neighbourhood Plan and all representations (comments) made through consultations will be submitted to the Examiner for their consideration.
Examination, referendum and adoption	Inform Empower	<p>The Plan will be examined by an independent Examiner and a report issued.</p> <p>The results of the examination will be published. The Council will decide if the Plan should move forward to a referendum, publicise that decision and the reasons for it and then coordinate a referendum, where necessary.</p> <p>Following a successful referendum the Council will adopt the Neighbourhood Plan and notify any person that has asked to be notified.</p>

Reviews and updates to Neighbourhood Plans

1.10. There is no requirement to review or update neighbourhood plans. However, policies in a Neighbourhood Plan may become out of date over time, for example if they conflict with policies in a local plan that is more up to date or where a policy has been in force for a while and new material planning considerations have emerged. Currently, three neighbourhood plans in East Herts have been updated. Once adopted, these revised plans replace the previous neighbourhood plans.

1.11. National Planning Guidance outlines that when updating a neighbourhood plan there are currently three types of modifications that can be made. The level of changes proposed will have implications for the level of consultation that may be undertaken and whether an examination or referendum is required. The different types of modifications are set out below:

Minor (non-material) modifications	Are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. This could include correcting minor errors such as typos or broken links. These would not require any consultation, or an examination or referendum. Changes must be made by the local planning authority following consent from the qualifying body (Parish/Town Council);
Material modifications	Which do not change the nature of the plan or order would require examination but not a referendum. An example could be the production of a design code which builds upon the existing design policies. A Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 consultation would take place for these proposed modifications. An examination would be required for any material modifications, it is unlikely that this type of modification would lead to a referendum, however this is to be decided by the Examiner;
Material modifications that change the nature of the plan or order	Such as allocating a significant site for development. This type of modification would require the same process as for new neighbourhood plans: a Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 consultation, an examination and a referendum before the plan or order is to be adopted.

1.12. The principles of this document will be used when consulting on neighbourhood plans and order reviews. In all instances the Council will keep the [‘Neighbourhood Planning Activity in East Herts’](#) webpage up to date.

How does the Council make decisions at each stage?

1.13. The District Council needs to make a number of decisions to support a Neighbourhood Development Plan through the process. Figure 5.1 below clearly sets out the different decision-making process behind each of the steps. The non-key decision process is explained in the glossary.

Figure 5.1: Stages in advising and assisting Neighbourhood Plan groups

Regulation 7 & 10	• Executive Committee
Regulation 14 - Council Consultation Response to Neighbourhood Plan	• Non-key decision
Supporting documents e.g Environmental Outcome Reports Screening	• Non-key decision
Consideration of Examiners report & decision to proceed to referendum	• Non-key decision
Making the Neighbourhood Plan	• Full Council

How do I respond to a Neighbourhood Plan consultation?

1.14. During Council led consultations, comments must be made in writing either in hard-copy form or digitally via email, these can be sent to:

- planningpolicy@eastherts.gov.uk ;
- Planning Policy, East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ;
- Via the online consultation portal.

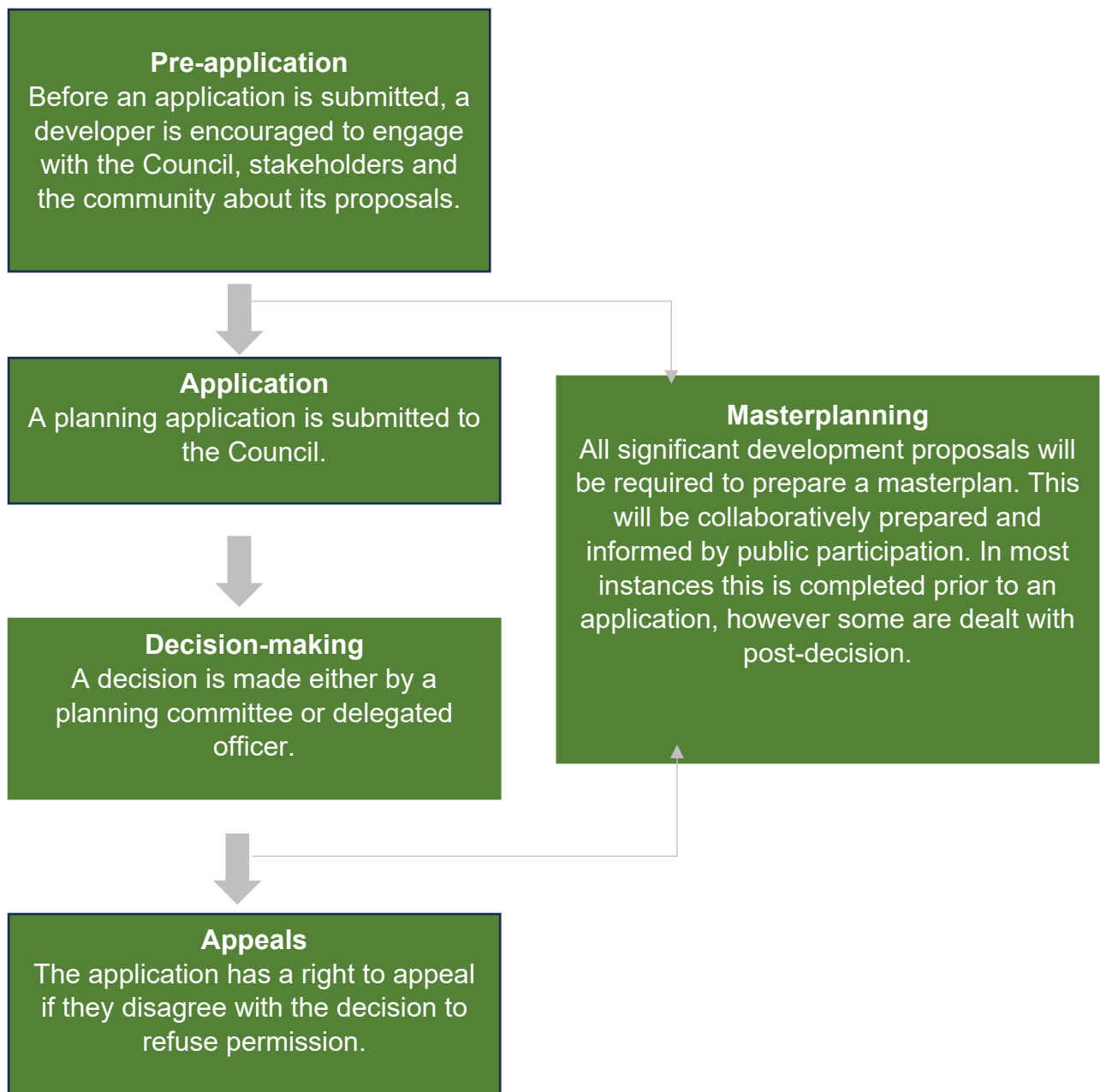
6.0 Planning Applications

Introduction

- 1.15. For many people, the submission of a planning application is the first experience of the planning system, either as an applicant submitting an application, or in relation to applications on a neighbouring or nearby site. While some development can be carried out as Permitted Development¹⁰, a significant amount of new development in East Herts will require planning permission.
- 1.16. There are a number of different types of planning application, with the type of application determined by the size, scale and nature of the proposed development. Whilst the process for consulting on all types of planning application is similar, there are some differences. As a minimum the relevant statutory requirements will always be met.
- 1.17. The key stages to the planning application process are illustrated in figure 6.1.
- 1.18. This section of the SCI therefore sets out the Council's approach to consulting and notifying statutory bodies and the wider community as part of the application processes.

Figure 6.1: Stages in the planning application process

¹⁰ Permission to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application to a local planning authority, as granted under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order. The Planning Portal website is a useful resource for explaining when planning permission is required.



Who will we consult?

1.19. The Government sets out minimum requirements for consultation in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended).

1.20. The legislation identifies statutory consultees that the Council must engage with. These currently include environmental organisations (such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England) and local services and infrastructure providers (including Highways Agency, Hertfordshire County

Council and utilities companies). The local community is also engaged as appropriate. The scale of consultation reflects the type and stage of the planning application.

How and when will we consult?

Masterplan process

- 1.21. All significant development proposals in the district are required to prepare a masterplan because the Council is committed to delivering well designed growth. They should deal with a range of issues including land use, infrastructure and design and once endorsed by the Council they are used as the basis by which planning applications on site will be determined.
- 1.22. Policy DES1 of The East Herts District Plan (2018)¹¹ outlines the approach that will be taken to masterplanning. The significance of a development will be measured not only on its scale, but on the potential impact on the community and the local character of a place.
- 1.23. Masterplans must involve collaboration with East Herts District Council, other stakeholders and the local community, including town/ parish councils. Engagement from an early stage should inform the development of the master plan. Steering groups have been established for certain towns in the district to help inform the development of strategic sites allocated in the adopted District Plan. These often comprise of East Herts councillors, town and parish councillors, representatives of the local community and other interested groups, where appropriate. Membership of the steering groups will be determined on a site by site basis, depending on the local issues and circumstances. Wider public participation should also be undertaken as appropriate.
- 1.24. Many of the strategic sites within the District Plan have prepared masterplans prior to a planning application being submitted. However, in some cases it has been appropriate for some speculative applications and larger sites, such as the Gilston Area to prepare a masterplan following the grant of planning permission. In such cases, a planning condition is applied to a planning decision which

¹¹ [East Herts District Plan 2018](#)

requires a masterplan to be prepared and submitted to the Council for approval. The amount of collaboration in creating masterplans should not differ on whether the masterplan is prepared prior to or post a decision. The Council's website provides further guidance on the process.

Pre-application advice

1.25. Before submitting a planning application, we advise and encourage potential applicants to seek pre-application advice from the Council.¹² It is not a statutory requirement, but it allows for the identification of any issues, concerns and constraints at an early stage. This may help avoid delays or a refusal once a planning application has been submitted.¹³

1.26. This service allows the Council to provide advice and guidance to potential applicants on development proposals prior to the submission of any application. Subsequently, in accordance with the advice provided, amendments can be made to proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. Free advice may be available depending on the application type. However, for other application types there is a charge due to resource implications. Details of the pre-application process is set out on website:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/preapplicationservice>

1.27. The advice provided by case officers during the pre-application process is based on the professional judgement of the officer and is therefore informal and not binding on any subsequent formal decision made by the Council. If a scheme progresses to a formal submission it will be subject to consultation and any formal decision will take the results of that consultation into account.

1.28. Except where required by legislation, submitted information and advice is not made available to the public via our online portal of applications, nor are any

¹² It should be noted that, in respect of the pre-application service, any advice given at this stage is not binding and there are no statutory requirements for pre-application discussions. Because of the resources involved in providing pre-application advice, in many cases it is necessary to charge a fee for this service.

¹³ It could also be helpful to have pre-app discussions with other relevant agencies including Hertfordshire County Council, Thames Water, and the Environment Agency.

surrounding neighbours notified. Therefore, the public and third parties are generally not provided with the opportunity to comment upon such enquiries.

1.29. In some instances, such as large, complex schemes, it may be appropriate for a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) to be put in place. These are resourcing and management agreements between applicants and the Council, to enable the Council to adequately resource and provide an open dialogue on such applications, with an agreed programme. Further details on the PPA process can be found on the Council's website¹⁴.

Pre-application (pre-app) consultation

1.30. We do not tend to consult statutory consultees on requests for pre-application advice. However, there may be instances where consultation with other teams within the Council or County Council may be required to aid the advice provided, for example on proposals which relate to Listed Buildings or major development proposals.

1.31. Pre-app consultation is not legally required for most types of development. It is however strongly encouraged that applicants involve the community in formulating their proposals as early as possible, particularly if the site is particularly sensitive or would have a significant impact on local communities. This is advised to assist in addressing any issues that may arise from the community and may help to avoid unnecessary objections during the consideration of a planning application.

1.32. For large scale major developments, it is expected that the applicant carries out pre-application consultation which may involve:

- Public meetings and exhibitions;
- Individual letters or leaflets;
- Engagement with parish/ town councils;
- Engagement with Design Review Panels;

¹⁴ Planning Performance Agreements - www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-performance-agreements-ppas

- Social media.

Application stage

- 1.33. Once an application has been submitted, East Herts District Council will meet its statutory consultation requirements as a minimum. The formal consultation period will normally last for 21 days.
- 1.34. Formal consultation on planning applications will be undertaken in accordance with article 15 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and regulations 5 and 5A of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) or any amending orders, and any relevant consultation directions ¹⁵. Table 6.1 sets out the consultation methods used by the Council.
- 1.35. All new applications can be viewed on the Council's website. People can also use pre-set searches to see weekly lists of planning applications received or determined.
- 1.36. People can respond to applications online. Alternatively, comments can be made by email or post.
- 1.37. The Council holds regular Development Management Forums (DMFs) which provides residents the opportunity to present their views on complex or sensitive major planning applications to councillors, planning officers and the applicant in the early stages of the planning application process. Further details on DMFs can be found in Appendix A.

¹⁵ The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) includes powers for the Secretary of State to direct local planning authorities that additional consultation must take place in specific circumstances. These are referred to as 'consultation directions'.

Table 6.1: Consultation methods used to publicise planning applications

Type of application	Site notice	Site notice OR neighbour notification letter/email	Press notice in local paper	Parish Council notification	Website	Ward member notification
Major development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minor Development		X		X	X	X
Householder Applications		X		X	X	X
Applications subject to EIA which are accompanied by an Environmental Statement	X		X	X	X	X
Applications that do not accord with the development plan	X		X	X	X	X
Listed Building applications and applications affecting the setting of a Listed Building	X		X	X	X	X
Applications relating to an advertisement				X	X	X
Applications which would affect a right of way	X		X	X	X	X
Applications for development which would affect the setting of a listed building, or affect the character or appearance of a conservation area.	X		X	X	X	X

1.38. Where an application falls within a Conservation Area, a site notice may be required where it may affect the setting of a listed building or the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Prior Notification applications will be publicised as set out in the relevant regulations¹⁶.

1.39. There is no statutory requirement to consult on the following types of applications:

- Certificates of Lawfulness of proposed use or development;
- Certificates of Lawfulness of existing use or development;
- Approval of details/ discharge of conditions;
- Non-material amendments.

How will the Council deal with consultation responses?

1.40. All comments received will be made publicly available online alongside the planning application documents, in line with the Council's [Corporate Privacy Notice](#). It is important to note that the Council reserves the right not to consider or include in its documentation any inappropriate comments submitted as a result of its consultations.

1.41. The Council will take account of all responses received as a result of its consultations on planning applications where the issues raised are material planning considerations. These comments will be considered in the officer's report.

1.42. All relevant planning issues raised within the consultation period will be taken into account in the Planning Officer's report to help inform the recommendation.

Amendments to applications during the consideration of the application

1.43. The Council have set out where amendments to planning applications and requests for extensions of time for planning applications may be appropriate. Details of this can be found in the [Amendments and Extensions of Time Protocol](#).

¹⁶ [Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) (as amended)

1.44. Where an application has been amended following the initial period of consultation, it may be that additional consultation on the changes submitted by an applicant is considered necessary prior to a decision being made. In these cases, it is up to the Council to decide whether further publicity and consultation is necessary, and the requirement to consult will be determined based on whether the proposed changes are significant and whether there were objections or concerns raised in the original consultation stage. Where it is decided that re-consultation is necessary, it is open to the Council to set the timeframe for responses which is likely to be for a period of 14 days or less.

Decision stage

1.45. Once the consultation period has concluded, the Council will determine the planning application. It is therefore important to make comments before the statutory deadline for the end of the consultation period.

1.46. The Council typically deals with around 2,600 applications per year; most of these (over 90%) are determined by planning officers under delegated powers granted to them, as set out in the [Council's Constitution](#).

1.47. The remaining applications are determined by the Development Management Committee. This Committee generally meets every four weeks and handles the larger and more complex applications, in accordance with the criteria set out in the Council's Constitution. If the application is to be considered by the Development Management Committee, we will inform anyone who responded to the consultation before the meeting takes place.

1.48. The Council allows supporters, objectors and town/parish council representatives to make a short oral statement to the Development Management Committee on any of the planning applications which are being considered by

the Committee ¹⁷. Further details on public speaking at Development Management meetings can be found on the website¹⁸.

1.49. Development Management Committee meetings are webcast¹⁹.

After a decision is made

1.50. The Council will:

- Publish the decisions on all planning applications on its website;
- Write back to respondents (by email if possible and by post where no email address is available) to inform them of the Council's decision;
- In relation to applications that have been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, notify the public of the decision by reasonable means, including by local advertisement if deemed necessary. A copy of the decision notice, officer report and legal agreement (if relevant) will be placed on the planning portal.

Appeals

1.51. An applicant may appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a refusal or contest any of the conditions imposed to the granting of permissions or the non-determination of an application. The Council will inform all those people who responded to the consultation on the original planning application (although the rest of the appeal procedure will be handled by the Planning Inspectorate)²⁰

Implementation

¹⁷ One person may be allowed to speak in support of an application, and one person to speak in objection to each application at the meeting. Each person or group of people opposing or supporting the proposal will be allowed up to three minutes (or 6 minutes for strategic sites allocated in the District Plan) to speak to the Committee. How to register to speak and the rules for these meetings are explained in greater detail on the Council's website <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk>

¹⁸ <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees/public-speaking-development-management-meetings>

¹⁹ <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees/live-meetings-online>

²⁰ Further information on the appeals process is available on the Planning Inspectorate website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>

1.52. Following a planning application, it is essential that the application is implemented to a high standard, ensuring that the best quality outputs are achieved. Below describes what may happen post an application decision to support delivery of an application.

Community Forums

1.53. A number of community forums have been set up to assist with the delivery of some strategic sites and implementing the sites on the ground. These are public and open to residents and other stakeholders interested in the delivery of sites. The Council acts as the facilitator in bringing residents and developers together in order to resolve delivery issues as new developments progress. Examples include the Gilston Garden Town community forum. Further details on community forums can be found in Appendix A.

Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)

1.54. Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town in 2017. The proposed development lies within East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow Districts. The three local authorities, together with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils are working together to deliver growth at the Garden Town which reflects local priorities.

1.55. Due to the scale of the project, some of the processes and governance arrangements differ to other strategic sites and applications within East Herts, and these have been implemented to oversee the progression of the development. The individual Councils remain the decision-makers for plan making and planning applications within their local authority area.

1.56. A Joint Committee has been set up for this project, which consists of one elected councillor from each of the five authorities. The purpose of the Joint Committee is to oversee the vision and delivery of the Garden Town, to enable collaboration and joint decision making by the Garden Town partners and to enable them to work together to respond to issues which may have an impact on the scale and quality of delivery, where these occur.

1.57. There are also a number of working groups that support the day to day work of the HGGT such as officer groups, the quality review panel and the developer forum. These help to provide up to date information to guide the implementation of the HGGT.

1.58. A designated website²¹ has been set up which provides the latest updates to the project, it also includes details on latest consultations and how to subscribe to updates.

1.59. The Gilston Area developers have also set up a website²² to provide updates relating to construction activity and for residents to inform the developers of issues arising relating to construction and development matters through an interactive mapping tool.

Future Stewardships Groups

1.60. As implementation of the Gilston Area development progresses, it is essential to ensure that the long-term stewardship and management arrangements secured through the Section 106 Agreement are implemented. These require that a Stewardship Body is formed which includes representation on behalf of local residents. Its role will be to ensure that the community assets delivered in the Gilston Area that are transferred to the body are maintained to a high standard for years to come.

Enforcement

1.61. Planning Enforcement is concerned with works which have taken place in breach of normal planning controls. Where a breach of planning control is reported, an officer will investigate and assess the complaint, gather evidence and establish what, if any, the most appropriate course of action should be. Many investigations result in the submission of a planning application to potentially regularise a breach. This means the community will be involved in the same way as any other planning application. If a breach cannot be regularised the Council will consider formal enforcement action. Officers are delegated to

²¹ Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Website - <https://hgggt.co.uk/>

²² Gilston are developer website - <https://gilston.info>

make these decisions on behalf of councillors. The Council will ensure that the complainant is informed of decisions made in relation to the case. Further details about the process are set out in the [Planning Enforcement Plan](#).

7.0 Review

- 7.1 In 2023 the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act²³ came into force. Part 3 of this legislation sets out large changes to the planning system, in particular, changes to the way in which local plans are made, the requirement for design codes and the introduction of Supplementary Plans. We are currently awaiting secondary legislation that will set out in more detail how the changes will be implemented.

- 7.2 Once secondary legislation is released there may be implications to the way in which consultations are undertaken, it therefore may be the case that this SCI will need to be updated to reflect these changes at that time.

- 7.3 In the meantime, in all instances, the Council will, as a minimum, meet the statutory requirements for consultation at any time.

²³ Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 Part 3 Planning

Appendix A: Forums and Steering Groups

There are a number of forums which the Council uses to engage with communities and stakeholders to share information and views on particular proposals. Details on the different forums and their purpose is set out below:

Agent Forum

This forum has been set up to create an open dialogue between the Council and the development industry. It allows information to be shared and discussed, creating a channel to keep the development industry up-to-date to any changes to the planning service and procedures at the Council. This will help to create applications that meet the Council's requirements, reducing time spent processing incorrect information.

Community Forums

These forums have been created to bring together residents, community groups, Town and Parish Councils, local councillors, developers and other interested parties to engage with each other about development proposals and aide the delivery of sites. The Council acts as the facilitator, with the Forums providing an opportunity for residents to share any topics, concerns and community projects as new communities are developed on the ground. It also provides regular, accurate and timely information to residents regarding relevant developments. There are currently active community forums for the Gilston Area and Stortford Fields where permission has been sought. Further community forums are likely to start in other locations where strategic allocations in the District Plan are based. Further details on the community forums and how to get involved can be found on the Council's website.

Development Management Forum

This is a meeting where petitioners can present their views to councillors, planning officers and the applicant before a planning application is determined. The aim of this forum is to allow for early discussion of the planning issues raised by petitioners and to explore the scope for building consensus and resolving concerns. It is an informal meeting and does not determine the application. Further details on the process and requirements for a Development Management Forum can be found on the Council's website.

Garden Town Developer Forum

Comprising landowners, developers and promoters active in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, for discussion and engagement in relation to planning policies, guidance, evidence and the sharing of information in respect of masterplans and planning applications.

Site Specific Steering Groups

These are set up where there are strategic sites that require a masterplan. It brings together different organisations, groups and the community to discuss the specific site, key issues and guide the masterplan process.

Further Information

- Community Forums - www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/community-forums
- Development Management Forum - www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/development-management-forum

Appendix B: Engagement Strategy Template

Disclaimer- This template is an example of how the engagement strategy could be filled out. This will be completed at the relevant stage of creating planning policy documents.

Engagement Strategy	
Consultation	<i>Example Title</i>
Content	
What is being consulted on?	<i>Draft District Plan</i>
What is being sought through the consultation?	<i>The Council is looking for comments on the soundness and the legal compliance of the draft District Plan</i>
Key messaging	<i>This is a technical consultation on the draft District Plan. This is the stage before the Plan is submitted for Examination.</i>
Length of consultation	<i>6 weeks</i>
Stage of consultation	<i>Publication of District Plan</i>
Audience	
Define the area that is being consulted	<i>The whole district and surrounding areas are within the scope of the consultation</i>
Who will be consulted?	<i>Duty to co-operate bodies, local organisations, local communities, planning policy database, developers, local businesses and residents</i>
Will the planning policy document or consultation impact any specific groups? If so, will different methods be used to reach them?	<i>The draft District Plan impacts the entirety of the borough. The consultation is open to everyone and will be publicised widely. If it becomes apparent during the consultation that particular groups have not engaged e.g. younger people, then the Council may implement further measures to try and increase participation in those groups such as targeted methods e.g. going to colleges and schools.</i>
Consultation methods	

<p>How will be people or organisations be directly notified?</p>	<p><i>Where contact information is held, notifications will be sent via email in the first instance, and if that is not possible then a letter will be sent at the beginning of the consultation period.</i></p> <p><i>If no direct contact information is held then indirect methods of consultation will be used through the promotion set out below.</i></p>
<p>How will the consultation be promoted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Social media posts</i> • <i>Email newsletter</i> • <i>Press release</i> • <i>Community noticeboards</i> • <i>Local media advertising</i> • <i>6 x Public drop in sessions</i> • <i>2 x online public meeting</i> • <i>Online exhibitions</i>
<p>Will any digital technologies be used in this consultation? If yes, what technologies?</p>	<p><i>There will be 2 online public meetings that will be held on Microsoft Teams, these will be open to all.</i></p> <p><i>An online exhibition will be available to view from the Council's website.</i></p> <p><i>AI software will be used after the consultation to help summarise key issues and help report writing.</i></p>
<p>How can the consultation material be accessed?</p>	<p><i>The draft District Plan and supporting evidence base will be available on the Council's website and hard copies will be available at the Council offices and local libraries.</i></p>
<p>Next steps</p>	
<p>What will happen with responses?</p>	<p><i>Responses will be analysed and sent to the Inspector examining the District Plan. These responses will be made available to view on the Council's website with a report setting out how they have informed the Plan.</i></p>

Additional considerations	
1	<i>Further public drop-in sessions may be necessary if there is high public demand, these will be widely publicised via all communications channels.</i>
2	<i>Responses will be made public on the Council website, therefore those that respond will need to confirm their name is to be published alongside their name. Other personal information will be in compliance with the Council's privacy notice.</i>

Appendix C: Glossary

- Deposit or Inspection Point: Locations across the district where consultation documents can be viewed.
- Development Plan: This includes adopted Local Plans, Mineral and Waste Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- Development Plan Documents: A generic term for the different plans that constitute the Development Plan.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): A procedure to be followed for certain types of projects to ensure that decisions are made in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment.
- Local Development Scheme (LDS): The Local Authority's timetable for the preparation of Development Documents.
- Local Plan: The District Plan which sets out the Council's planning framework for the district. It consists of a Written Statement and Policies Map.
- Masterplan: A plan that shows an overall development concept that includes urban design, landscaping, infrastructure, service provision, movement, present and future land-use and built form.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- Neighbourhood Plan: A plan prepared by a Parish/ Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area.
- Non-key Decision: Executive decisions taken by Executive Members and Officers on less significant matters, rather than using the relevant committee process.
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs): Documents which add further details to the policies of the Local Plan (District Plan). These documents are not part of the development plan but are material considerations in planning decisions.
- Disclaimer- This glossary is neither a statement of law nor an interpretation of law, and its status is only as an introductory guide to planning issues and it should not therefore be used as a source for statutory definitions.

Equality Impact Analysis for East Herts Statement of Community Involvement

Created by Maria Hennessy April 2025

Title of EqIA (policy/change it relates to)	Statement of Community Involvement	Date	April 2025
Team/Department	Planning Policy		
<p>Focus of EqIA</p> <p>What are the aims of the new initiative? Who implements it? Define the user group impacted? How will they be impacted?</p>	<p>The Council is legally required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) every 5 years. This sets out how the Council will involve the community in the planning process. The previous SCI was adopted in 2019 with a later 2020 Addendum in light of Covid-19 restrictions. The latest SCI has been prepared taking account of changes to legislation and the increased use of digital technology in planning.</p> <p>The aim of the SCI is to ensure that, as far as possible, all parts of the community have the opportunity to get involved in preparing planning documents and processing planning applications. In addition to setting out the Council's publicity and consultation procedures, the SCI also outlines what we expect applicants to do before they submit a planning application. When the Council consults on planning policy documents and planning applications it must comply with the SCI.</p> <p>The SCI will impact on a range of user groups. Generally it will have a positive impact on all people who live and work in East Herts because it encourages engagement with stakeholders and the wider community at various opportunities in the planning process. By providing clarity about when and how to get involved and the varied methods for notifying, consulting and responding, it is beneficial for various sections of the community as defined in the Equality Act 2010. Specific reference is made to promoting accessible and inclusive consultation procedures so no group should be disadvantaged. There is also an aim to increase the involvement of 'hard to reach groups' on the basis of age, race and disability.</p> <p>The SCI provides the framework for consultation that the Council's District Plan must comply with. By ensuring that all groups within the community are given the opportunity to participate in the planning process, this gives a greater chance for issues impacting different groups to be incorporated into the decision-making process, which in turn will create more inclusive decisions.</p>		

2. Review of information, equality analysis and potential actions

Please fill in when appropriate to the change. If it does not, please put N/A

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
<p style="text-align: center;">Age</p>	<p>Age profile of the district (Census 2021):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 years and under - 5.5% • 5 to 9 years - 5.9% • 10 to 15 years - 7.8% • 16 to 19 years - 4.2% • 20 to 24 years - 4.6% • 25 to 34 years - 12.3% • 35 to 49 years - 20.5% • 50 to 64 years - 20.9% • 65 to 74 years - 9.7% • 75 to 84 years - 6.0% • 85 years and over - 2.6% <p>Between the Census years of 2011 and 2021 the average age in East Herts has increased. The median age of residents in East Herts rose from 40 to 42. The share of residents aged between 50-64 rose by 1.9% and the number of residents aged between 35 and 49 years decreased by 8.5%.</p>	<p>Typically planning has less representation in consultations from younger and older people. These groups can be categorised as hard to reach groups for planning purposes.</p>	<p>The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact.</p> <p>However, the SCI identifies in particular that younger people and elderly people can be hard to reach groups and are less likely to engage in the planning process. The SCI aims to consult in a way that ensures hard to reach groups are involved in consultations from an early stage.</p>	<p>To foster good relations, the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered.</p> <p>Specific techniques that may attract younger people include promoting electronic methods of consultation and social media and where appropriate encouraging the use of community events/displays, producing summaries to make information easier to understand, visiting local schools and colleges and using digital technology to convey complex planning issues in a visual format.</p> <p>In relation to the elderly population the ability for the population group to access consultations through digital means may be reduced. In this circumstance it may therefore be appropriate to promote the</p>

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
				<p>consultation through more physical means such as posters, community noticeboards, and letters, whilst allowing hardcopy responses. In addition, in-person events at various locations around the district could help improve accessibility to this age range.</p> <p>In both age groups it may also be appropriate to engage with known groups or organisations that work with the relevant age groups, for example youth groups and Age UK.</p> <p>This process will have a positive impact by increasing awareness of planning opportunities and enhancing opportunities to be involved and respond to planning consultations.</p>
Disability	<p>Percentage of population with a disability in the district (Census 2021):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot - 	It is considered that those with disabilities can be harder to reach or are seldom heard in planning consultations. For planning purposes these are known as	The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact.	To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
	<p>4.9%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little - 8.8% • Not disabled under the Equality Act: Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited - 7.5% • Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long term physical or mental health conditions - 78.9% <p>The number of people identifying themselves as not having a disability has increased between 2011 and 2021 from 85.3% to 86.1% of the population.</p>	<p>‘hard to reach groups’, meaning that this group can be harder to reach and therefore less representation is received in consultations.</p>	<p>However, people with disabilities are identified in the SCI as a ‘hard to reach’ group. The SCI aims to consult in a way that ensures hard to reach groups are involved in consultation from an early stage.</p>	<p>The SCI sets out a number of methods that could assist people with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written information will be made available on request in accessible formats. • Summaries of long documents will be produced when relevant to ensure information is easily accessible. • The aim to improve engagement by promoting electronic methods of consultation and social media may help some people with disabilities access and respond to consultation materials. • Events will be at accessible locations. • Where appropriate events may be held online to allow individuals to take part who may not be able to attend in-person events.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Gender reassignment	Gender identity, by percentage of population (Census 2021): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth - 115,220 persons - 95.1% • Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given – 105 persons - 0.1% • Trans woman – 66 persons - 0.1% • Trans man – 54 persons - 0.0% • Non-binary – 53 persons - 0.0% • All other gender identities – 26 persons- 0.0% • Not answered - 5,628 persons - 4.6% 	No feedback has been provided.	<p>The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact.</p> <p>However, no specific gender reassignment impact has been identified.</p>	<p>To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered.</p> <p>A range of consultation principles and techniques are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In addition the SCI sets out clear processes for dealing with discriminatory comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	No reliable data currently.	No feedback has been provided.	The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance,	To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
			which is a positive impact. However, no specific pregnancy and maternity impact has been identified.	views of different sections or groups of the community are considered. A range of consultation principles and techniques are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In addition, the SCI sets out clear processes for dealing with discriminatory comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.
Race Page 243	Ethnic Group, by percentage of population (Census 2021): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh - 2.7% • Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African - 1.3% • Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups - 2.8% • White - 92.3% • Other ethnic group - 0.9% In comparison to the 2011	It is considered that minority ethnic groups can be harder to reach or are seldom heard in planning consultations. For planning purposes these are known as 'hard to reach groups', meaning that this group can be harder to reach and therefore less representation is received in consultations.	The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact. However, people from ethnic minorities are identified in the SCI as a 'hard to reach' group. The SCI aims to consult in a way that ensures hard to reach groups are involved in consultations from an early stage to feed into the	To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered. A range of consultation principles and methods are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In addition, the SCI sets out clear processes for dealing with discriminatory

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
	<p>Census the amount of individuals identifying themselves as 'Asia, Asian British or Asian Welsh', 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African', 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups' and 'Other ethnic groups' all increased between the Census years. The number of individuals identifying themselves as 'White' decreased from 95.5% of the population in 2011 to 92.3% in 2021.</p>		<p>planning process. In some instances English may not be a first language of those with different ethnic backgrounds and taking part in planning consultations may be difficult to understand.</p>	<p>comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.</p> <p>The SCI includes principles such as making consultations accessible to different groups. Examples of how this can help those who do not have English as a first language is through the use of digital technology which can help translate documents, as well as using plain English, making documents easier to understand.</p> <p>The SCI also promotes targeted consultation where relevant to help engage specifically with particular groups, for example Gypsy and Travellers.</p>
<p>Religion or belief</p>	<p>Religion, by percentage of population (Census 2021):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No religion - 41.8% • Christian - 49.1% • Buddhist - 0.4% • Hindu - 0.6% • Jewish - 0.4% 	<p>No feedback has been provided.</p>	<p>The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact.</p> <p>However, no specific religion or belief impact has</p>	<p>To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered.</p>

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim - 1.2% • Sikh - 0.1% • Other religion - 0.4% • Not answered - 6.0% <p>Since the 2011 Census the number of residents reporting having 'no religion' increased by 14.1%, while the number of residents who described themselves as 'Christian' decreased from 62.7% to 49.1% of the population.</p>		been identified.	<p>A range of consultation principles are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In particular, where different consultation techniques may benefit those with specific religions or beliefs, could be in relation to specific religious events or practices that could coincide with consultation events. Therefore, some in person events may be impractical for individuals, and the use of digital technology and online resources makes planning accessible at different times of the day for all. In addition, varying times and locations of events can help to minimise the impact of this.</p> <p>In addition, the SCI sets out clear processes for dealing with discriminatory comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.</p>
Sex/Gender	<p>Sex, by percentage of population (Census 2021): Female – 51%</p>	No feedback has been provided.	The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or	To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders,

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
	Male – 49%		personal circumstance, which is a positive impact. However, no specific sex/gender impact has been identified.	ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered. A range of consultation principles and methods are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In addition, the SCI sets out clear processes for dealing with discriminatory comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.
Sexual orientation	Sexual orientation, by percentage of population aged 16 and over (Census 2021): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight or Heterosexual - 110,717 persons - 91.4% • Gay or Lesbian - 1,431 persons - 1.2% • Bisexual - 1,087 persons - 0.9% • Pansexual – 105 persons- 0.1% • Asexual - 46 persons- 	No feedback has been provided.	The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact. However, no specific sexual orientation impact has been identified.	To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered. A range of consultation principles and techniques are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In addition the SCI sets out clear processes for

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
	0.0% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queer – 20 persons- 0.0% • All other sexual orientations – 115 persons- 0.1% • Not answered - 7,634 - 6.3% 			dealing with discriminatory comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.
Marriage and civil partnership	Legal partnership status, by percentage of population aged 16 and over (Census 2021): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never married and never registered a civil partnership - 33.9% • Married or in a registered civil partnership - 49.9% • Married - 49.7% • In a registered civil partnership - 0.2% • Separated, but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership - 1.9% • Divorced or civil partnership dissolved - 8.7% • Widowed or surviving 	No feedback has been provided.	The SCI seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to planning engagement regardless of background or personal circumstance, which is a positive impact. However, no specific marriage and civil partnership impact has been identified.	To foster good relations the SCI aims to improve engagement by involving representatives of a cross-section of stakeholders, ensuring that different needs and views of different sections or groups of the community are considered. A range of consultation principles and methods are proposed to ensure consultation is inclusive so all sectors of the community should benefit. In addition, the SCI sets out clear processes for dealing with discriminatory comments, which is a positive approach to addressing discrimination.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
	civil partnership partner - 5.7%			

Assessment of overall impacts and any further recommendations

It is not considered that the SCI will give rise to the actual or likely adverse impacts to the groups identified as being potentially affected. The role of the SCI is to clearly set out how consultation in planning matters will be undertaken, the approach to this document is for consultation to be open and inclusive, as far as possible. This will have positive impacts to all groups listed in the Equalities Act 2010, ensuring that a range of views are provided and considered in planning decisions, resulting in more positive outcomes for communities.

3. List detailed data and/or community feedback which informed your EqIA (If applicable)

Title (of data, research or engagement)	Date	Gaps in data	Actions to fill these gaps: who else do you need to engage with? (add these to the Action Plan below, with a timeframe)
Census Data	2021	Not applicable	Not applicable

4. Prioritised Action Plan (If applicable)

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Timeframe
NB: These actions must now be transferred to service or business plans and monitored to ensure they achieve the outcomes identified.				

NOT APPLICABLE				

EqIA sign-off: (for the EQIA to be final an email must sent from the relevant people agreeing it or this section must be signed)

Directorate Management Team rep or Head of Service: Sara Saunders, Head of Planning

Date: 28/04/2025

Author of Equality Impact Analysis: Maria Hennessy, Principal Planning Officer

Date: 24/04/2025

Agenda Item 10

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – Members have agreed to undertake a review of the District Plan, including an update of the evidence documents needed to support the new District Plan. The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, published in 2022, provides a strategic framework for the delivery of green infrastructure in the county, that can usefully inform local planning policies and strategy in East Herts. Therefore, this report summarises key priorities of the Strategy and seeks agreement to use the document as part of the new District Plan evidence base.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE to recommend to Council that:

a) The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022), attached in three sections as Appendix A, B and C, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts District Plan.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree that the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy can be used as part of the evidence base for the new District Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 Local planning authorities are required to complete a review of their local plans at least once every 5 years from the adoption date

to ensure that plans remain relevant. In October 2023, the Council agreed that East Herts District Plan 2018 needs updating, and that work should commence in 2023/24 on updating the technical studies and other preparatory work required to provide a robust evidence base to support this Review¹. The 30-month period of formal plan-making will then commence in early 2026.

- 2.2 A clear, relevant and proportionate evidence base is essential for efficient and sound plan-making to ensure that all future planning policy and decisions are based on up-to-date information. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) sets out the requirement for the preparation and review of all policies to be, '*underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence*' (paragraph 32).
- 2.3 The evidence base consists of supporting documents that will help inform the future policies and site allocations in the new District Plan. It will cover a range of social, economic, and environmental topics and help identify local needs, constraints and opportunities.
- 2.4 The evidence base will be developed throughout the preparation of the new District Plan and the planning policy team will seek agreement from Executive and Council to include relevant studies as part of the evidence base.

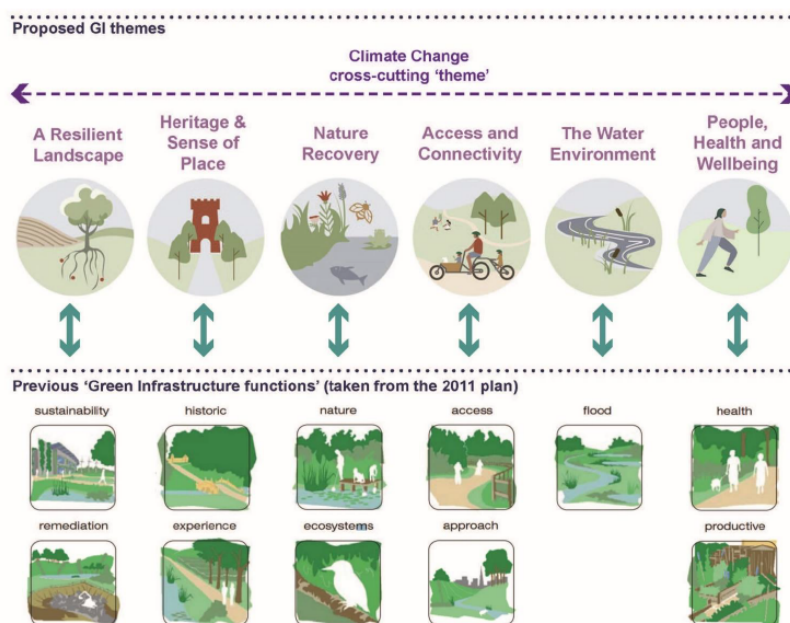
Development of the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 2.5 The current District Plan (2018) was informed by the 2011 Hertfordshire Green (GI) Infrastructure Plan, which was endorsed as part of the evidence base. Likewise, the new District Plan should take account of the latest green infrastructure evidence.

¹ [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday 3rd October, 2023, 7.00 pm - East Herts District Council](#)

2.6 Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP),² commissioned the Hertfordshire Green (GI) Infrastructure Strategy to update the original 2011 Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan and provide a joint approach on green infrastructure planning. The relationship between the functions identified in the previous 2011 GI Plan and the themes in the updated Hertfordshire GI Strategy is set out in Figure 5.2 of Part 1 of the GI Strategy. For clarity, this figure is included below:

Figure 5.2: Proposed GI themes and their relationship to the former GI functions from the 2011 Plan



2.7 Published in August 2022, the Hertfordshire GI Strategy presents an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of Hertfordshire's current green infrastructure network. It also identifies priorities, mechanisms and an overarching vision to provide green infrastructure enhancements, with the aim of delivering a more resilient and healthier Hertfordshire. It was developed by consultants, LUC (Land Use Consultants), in consultation with all the Hertfordshire local authorities, through the collection of data, agreement of green infrastructure assets within the county and online workshops. The final Strategy was reported to HIPP on 21

² HIPP comprises the Planning/Transport Portfolio Holders and Heads of Planning from the eleven councils in Hertfordshire and its purpose is to provide a discussion forum for joint planning and infrastructure issues and work programmes.

September 2022, with the recommendation that partners take forward and deliver the priorities in the plan.

3.0 Reason(s)

Importance of Green Infrastructure

- 3.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of green and blue spaces and routes, landscapes, biodiversity, water bodies and heritage, which provide a range of benefits for people, nature and the climate. Essential for creating high-quality, sustainable places, it is an important planning policy consideration. The NPPF requires strategic local plan policies to conserve and enhance green infrastructure. Therefore, policies and site allocations in the new District Plan will need to promote the protection, provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in East Herts, at various scales. GI can serve multiple functions, so will be relevant to a range of topic areas, including nature recovery, biodiversity net gain, sport and recreation, flood risk management, design, active travel, climate change mitigation and adaptation and improvements to air and water quality.
- 3.2 To support the development of a holistic approach to GI in the new District Plan, policies need to be underpinned by a robust evidence base. The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy provides a strategic framework for considering GI in the district.

Overview of the Strategy

- 3.3 The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy is one document, split in three sections. These are:
- Part One, a strategic review of GI in Hertfordshire;
 - Part Two (a) GI baseline, analysis and priorities;
 - Part Two (b), GI priority actions and delivery.
- 3.4 The three parts of the Strategy are attached to this report as **Appendices A, B and C**. Part One presents the strengths and weaknesses of the county's GI network. It sets the scene by

providing an overview of changes since 2011. This includes an update on policy, examples of best practice in GI and the development of a vision for GI in the county.

- 3.5 Part Two (a) explores the GI baseline in Hertfordshire. The analysis was divided into 'themes' to help understand GI in the county. The review of existing GI functionality was to reflect the aims of climate and nature recovery as well supporting the wellbeing of communities within Hertfordshire. The relevance of green infrastructure to different themes is examined as well as the key assets and factors influencing the need for green infrastructure. The analysis reviews socio-economic indicators to assist with identifying severance and areas for intervention.
- 3.6 Part Two (b) is the final section of the strategy and reviews the priority actions and potential delivery mechanisms. The Green Infrastructure priority actions aim to repair, reconnect and restore GI across Hertfordshire. Of the priorities identified, the following are most relevant to planning policy:
- Deliver environmental enhancement in vulnerable valleys and catchments, including requirements for Sustainable Drainage (SuDs) in policies, conservation of chalk rivers, enhancement of river corridors and integrating GI in planned growth;
 - Expand tree coverage and enhance woodland connectivity;
 - Protect, enhance and connect habitats to support species recovery and climate resilience;
 - Develop local plan policies to promote a GI-led design;
 - Deliver and manage GI as a mechanism to improve air quality and public health;
 - Improve the connectivity of active travel infrastructure, increasing walking and cycling routes and enhancing wildlife corridors.
- 3.7 Whilst not the only mechanism for delivering these GI priorities, the new District Plan can play a key role in conserving and enhancing GI in East Herts. It is officers' view that the strategic

analysis and actions in the Hertfordshire GI Strategy provide an overarching framework that can usefully inform the new District Plan, alongside other relevant documents and strategies that impact the consideration of GI (for example, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Open Space and Sport Assessment). Therefore, now work has commenced on collating the evidence base, it is recommended the Strategy is agreed as part of this District Plan evidence base.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to agree to endorse the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of the new District Plan evidence base.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 If the Green Infrastructure Strategy is not agreed as part of the evidence base, it may be considered as having reduced weight in informing the strategy and the policy in the new District Plan. This would mean that significant information about local green infrastructure issues could be undervalued. This would be contrary to Government policy to have a robust evidence base and could undermine the Council's position in terms of successfully bringing forward the update of the East Herts District Plan, 2018.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The Strategy was informed by consultation with stakeholders. It will be subject to a number of statutory public consultations as part of the production of the new District Plan.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be carried out of the new District Plan in accordance with The Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Evidence to support the delivery of green infrastructure has a range of environmental benefits including nature recovery, flood alleviation, biodiversity enhancement and climate change mitigation.

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

- 7.1 Appendix A - Part One, a strategic review of GI in Hertfordshire.
- 7.2 Appendix B - part Two (a), GI baseline, analysis and priorities.
- 7.3 Appendix C - part Two (b), GI priority actions and delivery.

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Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Part 1: Setting the Scene – A Strategic
Review of Green Infrastructure in
Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council

Final report
Prepared by LUC
August 2022

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft	S Crewe M Cooke V Roberts R Hammonds A Peet	K Ahern	K Ahern	August 2021
2	Final	S Crewe	K Ahern	K Ahern	August 2022

The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) provides a forum to discuss and, where appropriate, develop a shared view and agree joint work programmes on infrastructure and planning issues of common concern. A key objective is to work co-operatively within Hertfordshire and across the county borders according to the principles of localism and the duty to co-operate. The Partnership works together with Hertfordshire Forward, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Local Transport Body for Hertfordshire, the Local Nature Partnership and other appropriate organisations in areas of shared interest to develop and where possible and necessary agree joint approaches to common issues. The Chairman, or his or her deputy, represents the Partnership as appropriate on external bodies, including the Board of the Local Transport Body for Hertfordshire.



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Chapter 1

Introduction

This document will build on the existing Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy of 2011 to present a picture of both the strengths and weaknesses of the county's current GI network. It will also identify priorities, mechanisms and an overarching vision to provide green infrastructure enhancements, with the aim of delivering a more resilient and healthier Hertfordshire.

1.1 'Green Infrastructure' (or GI) is an essential component of healthy, thriving communities and ecosystems. Working on behalf of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), and in consultation with key stakeholders, LUC was commissioned to prepare a GI Strategy for the county. The document will provide an update and refresh of the 2011 Hertfordshire GI Strategy (herein referred to as the '2011 Plan') **[See reference 1]**.

1.2 This document (herein referred to as the 'Strategy') provides an update on the concept of GI and identifies opportunities across the county to protect and enhance the GI network. Importantly, the Strategy reflects on the successes and the shortcomings of the 2011 Plan in order to help guide and inform the investment and future delivery of GI in the context of the county's future growth agenda. The Strategy is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 'sets the scene' by providing an overview of context since 2011; and
- Part 2 outlines baseline analysis, an action plan of priority opportunities and delivery mechanisms.

What is GI?

1.3 Since the publication of the 2011 Plan, the definition of GI has evolved to incorporate wider environmental and societal assets and benefits. The concept has also become increasingly prevalent in national policy and among a variety of other actors, including developers and transport authorities. In addition, GI has been promoted through the 2018 publication of the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) [See reference 2]. The Landscape Institute, the chartered body for the landscape profession, has also urged that It has ‘never been more necessary to invest in GI...the role of GI in addressing the challenges of the 21st century cannot be underestimated [See reference 3].

1.4 GI is now more broadly used to describe the network of natural and semi-natural features (including the water environment) within and between our urban and rural areas. GI is not limited to traditional green spaces such as parks and can involve various interventions to thread nature into streetscapes or to increase connectivity between GI assets at various landscape scales.

1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 defines GI as:

“A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.” [See reference 4]

1.6 GI as a term of reference, encompasses open spaces such as parks and public gardens, but also allotments, woodlands, hedgerows, fields, river corridors and catchments, lakes, ponds, playing fields, footpaths and cycle routes. At the street level, this might include green walls, green roofs, soft verges, trees/canopies and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

1.7 The ‘multi-functionality’ of GI refers to the range of benefits it provides to people (both physical and mental wellbeing) and the natural environment. GI can help to create high quality and attractive places, providing a setting for healthy, active day-to-day living. It can also promote habitat creation, enhancement and connectivity (on site as part of development or through biodiversity off-setting) and plays an important role in climate change adaptation and mitigation and alleviating flood risk and soil erosion.

1.8 For GI to serve multiple functions recognises the need, at some locations, for a difference in the importance or weighting of each, particularly where differing functions conflict with each other. For example, the delivery of biodiversity enhancements (favourable status of statutorily designated sites or species) at select locations should be balanced with the need for active transport or recreation.

Components of GI

Elements of the built environment

- Verges;
- Street trees;
- Private gardens;
- Amenity space and pocket parks;
- Green/brown roofs and green walls; and
- Bird/bat boxes.

Managed and natural green spaces

- Public parks;
- Formal and informal open space;

- Allotments;
- Publicly accessible nature conservation site; and
- Undisturbed areas (to accommodate successful breeding, shelter and foraging of wildlife).

Linear linkages

- Footpaths, greenways and bridleways;
- Cycle paths and cycle lanes within roads;
- Disused railway lines;
- Towing paths; and
- Waterways and river corridors.

Aspects of the wider landscape and countryside

- Farmland;
- Wetlands/floodplains; and
- Wildlife habitat.

The benefits of good quality GI

1.9 Owing to its multifunctionality, the benefits of high-quality GI are numerous and far reaching, including:

- Improving residents' and visitors' physical and mental health;
- Aesthetic value and reinforcing sense of place;
- Play, education and interaction with nature;
- Improving air quality and noise regulation;

- Increased economic activity and attractiveness for inward investment;
- Opportunities for community growing;
- Reducing the risk of flooding and improving water quality;
- Active transport opportunities, such as walking and cycling;
- Space for biodiversity and improved ecological resilience;
- Opportunities for social interactions and community cohesion;
- Carbon sequestration and mitigating climate change; and
- Urban cooling, natural air condition and shading.

Hertfordshire's strategic GI context

1.10 Hertfordshire is home to an expansive and multifunctional network of GI at all scales. However, Hertfordshire's location in between a number of strategic GI assets or initiatives helps to strengthen the county's GI provisions, particularly in relation to recreation and movement corridors for wildlife. These include:

- Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): With over ten million people living within one hour of the Chilterns, this landscape of chalk downlands and escarpments is one of the most accessible protected landscapes in Europe.
- Colne Valley Regional Park: A mosaic of farmland, woodland and wetlands, with over 200km of rivers and canals, providing access to the countryside to the immediate west of London.
- Lee Valley Regional Park: A 26 mile long linear park which brings green and blue open space into the heart of London whilst providing considerable biodiversity and recreation value.
- Epping Forest: A significant stretch of ancient woodland and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which was initially designated for recreation access, but is now experiencing significant pressures.

- Chalk Arc: A partnership which focuses on securing green space in and around housing growth within Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton-Linslade.
- Green Arc: A partnership which encourages the bringing of the 'big outdoors' closer to people through conserving the Green Belt, protecting biodiversity and expanding open space.

The Green Recovery: How the Strategy can help

1.11 Investment in infrastructure, including GI, will be essential to the post COVID-19 economic recovery process as it can play a direct role in stimulating economies and maintaining employment. During the pandemic and periods of lockdown, access to open space and nature were increasingly seen as vital for mental and physical well-being and rose up the list of priorities within people's lives [See reference 5]. Investment in nature based solutions and natural capital – as supported by the UK's 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP) – will help to ensure that nature's value is included in recovery packages and taken forward as a vital component to a more sustainable future.

1.12 The policy context for GI has changed significantly since 2011. The Strategy will be informed by this rapidly evolving environment to identify new 'policy hooks' which the document and its future delivery can take advantage of. As well as helping to reinvigorate the economy and improve people's wellbeing, GI will simultaneously help to address the ongoing climate/biodiversity emergencies and health challenges.

1.13 In order to achieve this type of recovery, a strategic approach is crucial to help direct funds to priorities which address identified needs and to link up isolated GI assets to form a resilient and multi-functional network. The approach should also inform the planning and delivery of GI at smaller scale within the county, such as within individual towns and settlements.

How should the Strategy be used?

1.14 Initial consultation feedback from HIPP/Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and other key stakeholders during June 2021 demonstrated that, whilst comprehensive and well received when originally published, delivery of the projects identified within the 2011 Plan has been limited. This has been largely due to a lack of understanding as to what GI is and what it can offer, but also on how to best interpret and use the existing 2011 Plan in a planning context – both in the writing of planning policies and in the assessment of planning applications. The need for a clear delivery plan for the county was identified as being a key component for any future GI Strategy to consider.

1.15 Consequently, a user guide has been developed as part of the Strategy to demonstrate how the document should be used by various recipients and where it sits in the wider planning policy framework. This will provide a basis to assist in the effective delivery of GI. The Strategy will be developed to support the wider planning process and to address previous challenges of successful implementation and long-term management of GI.

1.16 The Strategy will provide a ‘how-to’ guide to help ensure that GI is successfully delivered across the county by HIPP/HCC, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), infrastructure providers, developers, charities and other interested parties.

1.17 Close cooperation with partners, including a consultation event and virtual stakeholder workshop in Autumn 2021 will be a vital process to inform the development and raise the profile of the Strategy. This will also secure buy-in from those most likely to use it and deliver its stated vision.

User guide

County Council level

1.18 Use the GI Strategy to:

- Respond to district or borough level strategies or plans and planning applications; and
- Ensure the HCC reflects the need to retain and enhance GI as part of its planning functions.

1.19 Maintain the GI Strategy as a live resource that can be updated with new evidence and opportunities as they emerge.

District Council level – LPAs

1.20 Use the GI Strategy to:

- Protect and enhance existing GI;
- Incorporate its planning ‘hooks’ and policy context into district or borough strategies and plans (including Local Plans and district or borough level GI Strategies);
- Appraise development proposals to ensure a ‘GI-led’ design approach, with early engagement; and
- Identify mechanisms to fund and implement GI through developer contributions.

Developers

1.21 Use the GI Strategy to:

- Understand the role they can play in the delivery of GI across Hertfordshire;
- Identify existing GI to protect and enhance through development proposals;
- Integrate GI from the beginning of design work;
- Consult the GI checklist for deliverable enhancement opportunities on site;
- Develop sites design with input from stakeholders; and
- Demonstrate how proposals provide enhancements to GI.

External strategic partners/charities

1.22 Use the GI Strategy to:

- Identify existing GI for protection and enhancement;
- Share the priority actions with partnership agencies who have interest in delivering improvements across the GI network; and
- Communicate the deliverable enhancement opportunities to ensure all stakeholders are working towards the shared vision.

Strategic and local planning

- District level GI Strategies and Local Plan policies;
- Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Local Community Action Groups.

Development planning

- Using policy and GI checklists to assess submitted details in planning applications; and

- Inform the creation of Masterplans and design codes.

Structure of the Strategy

1.23 As shown in Figure 1.1, the process of developing this Strategy follows a series of stages, structured around two separate tasks as outlined below:

- Part 1: Setting the Scene – A Strategic Review of Green Infrastructure (GI) in Hertfordshire;
- Part 2a: GI Baseline, Analysis and Priorities; and
- Part 2b: GI Priority Actions and Delivery.

1.24 The remainder of this Part 1 report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides an introduction;
- Chapter 2 provides a policy update – considering the key GI planning policy position and drivers at the international, national, county and local level;
- Chapter 3 examines why the concept of GI is important to Hertfordshire, reflecting on the post-2011 context;
- Chapter 4 explores some recent best practice examples of GI strategies to assess how the approach to GI has evolved since 2011; and
- Chapter 5 sets out the development of the overarching vision for GI within Hertfordshire, informed by analysis of the post-2011 context and the results of stakeholder consultation.

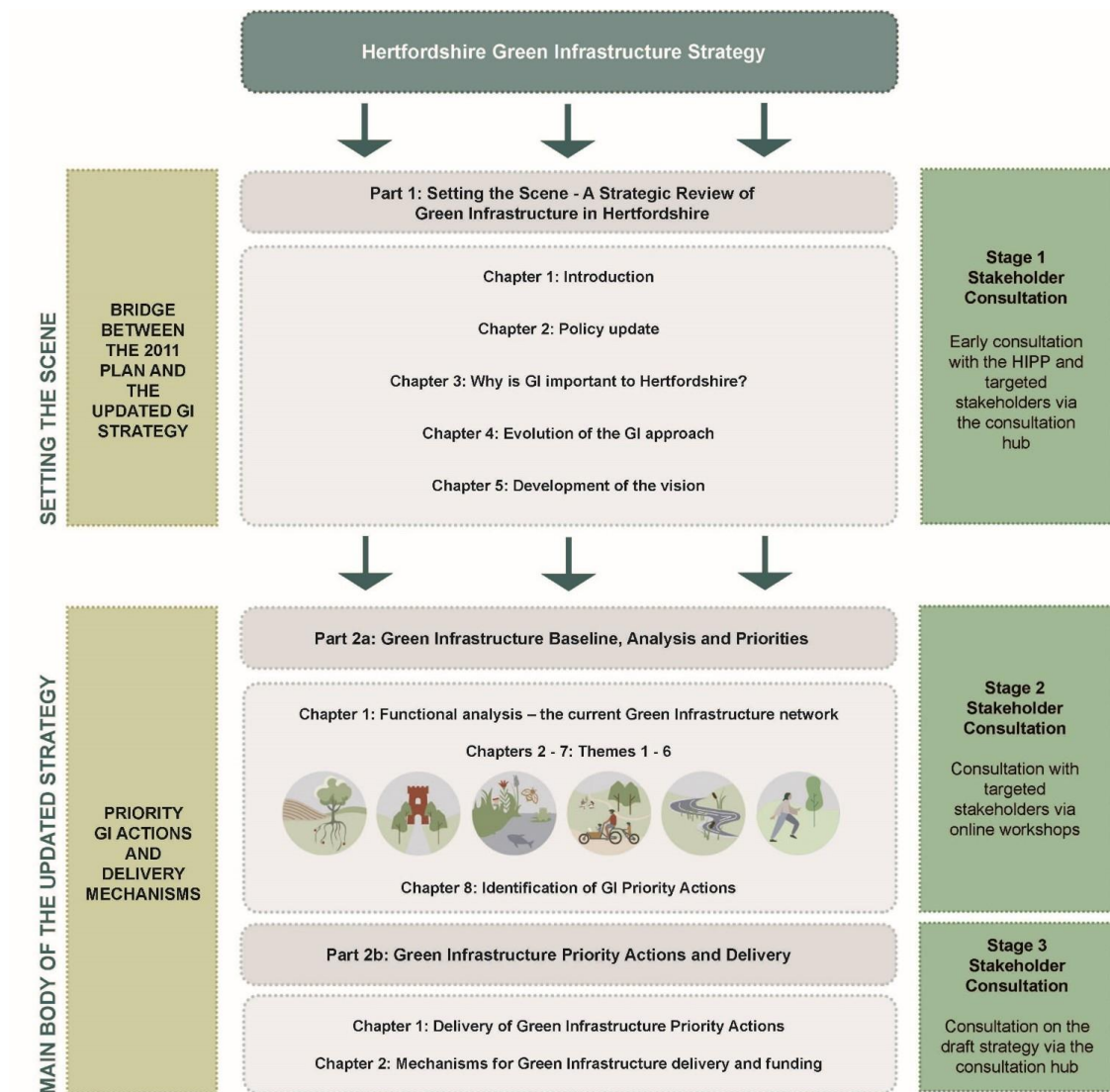
1.25 Part 2a of the Strategy is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides a summary of the functional analysis of the Green Infrastructure (GI) network;
- Chapters 2-7 examine the GI themes; and
- Chapter 8 identifies the suite of GI Priority Actions.

1.26 Part 2b of the Strategy is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides an overview of delivery of the GI Priority Actions; and
- Chapter 2 discusses the mechanisms for GI delivery and funding.

Figure 1.1: Structure of the Strategy



Chapter 2

Policy Update

This chapter provides an overview of the changes in national and local policy affecting GI since 2011.

2.1 Many of the policies and strategies that informed the 2011 Plan have been subsequently updated. It is therefore important that this Strategy corresponds to the most pertinent updates in policy on an international, national, county and local scale. This full policy context is detailed below.

Policy context

International

- International Convention on Biological Diversity;
- UN Paris Climate Agreement; and
- Bern Convention.

National

- Environment Bill (currently in passage);
- National Planning Policy Framework; and
- 25 Year Environment Plan.

County

- Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Funding Prospectus;
- Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
- Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan;
- Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4;
- Hertfordshire Pollinator Strategy;
- Hertfordshire Public Health Service Strategy;
- Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
- Hertfordshire Equality Strategy;
- Hertfordshire's Ecological Networks Report;
- Hertfordshire Air Quality Strategy;
- Hertfordshire Active Travel Strategy;
- The Chilterns AONB Management Plan; and
- Hertfordshire Energy Strategy.

Local

2.2 Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will act as an evidence base for Local Planning Authorities, including:

- Welwyn Hatfield;
- Walford;
- Three Rivers;
- Stevenage;
- St Albans;

- North Hertfordshire;
- Hertsmere;
- East Hertfordshire;
- Dacorum; and
- Broxbourne.

International policy context

2.3 A number of international policies set out the high-level strategic objectives for enhancing the natural environment, addressing climate change and ensuring sustainable development. This Strategy is committed to our international obligations; building significantly from the International Convention on Biological Diversity [See reference 6] and European Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) [See reference 7].

2.4 Since 2011, the UN Paris Climate Change Agreement [See reference 8] has become a legally binding international treaty on climate change, which aims to ensure that global temperatures stay below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report [See reference 9] published in August 2021 states that:

“it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.”

2.5 This highlights the urgency for nations and governments to take action and ensure resilience across society, including through nature-based and sustainable solutions such as GI. The UK hosts the COP26 summit in late 2021 which will bring parties together to further accelerate action towards the goals of

the Paris Agreement and UNITED Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

2.6 At the European Union (EU) level, there are several important directives that focus on protecting and conserving the natural environment. Although the UK is no longer in the EU, the objectives of policy such as the EU Water Framework Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive are still relevant as their primary goals are translated into UK legislation, for example, through the Environment Bill.

National policy context

2.7 The 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) [[See reference 10](#)], published in 2018, outlines the Government's support for habitat creation and connection, for multi-functional SuDS and for natural spaces close to where people live and work. It represents an important shift in thinking towards long term positive action to improve people's lives and the environment. It views the planning system as a key mechanism for delivering upon these ambitions. The first action of the 25YEP seeks to embed an 'environmental net gains' principle into development:

"We want to establish strategic, flexible and locally tailored approaches that recognise the relationship between the quality of the environment and development. That will enable us to achieve measurable improvements for the environment – 'environmental net gains' – while ensuring economic growth and reducing costs, complexity and delays for developers."

2.8 The 25YEP goes on to state that in future the Government should aim to:

“expand the net gain approaches used for biodiversity to include wider natural capital benefits, such as flood protection, recreation and improved water and air quality. They will enable local planning authorities to target environmental enhancements that are needed most in their areas and give flexibility to developers in providing them.”

2.9 The emerging Environment Bill [[See reference 11](#)] places the ambitions of the 25YEP on a statutory footing, by creating a new governance framework for the environment, to ensure a ‘cleaner, greener and more resilient country for the next generation’ as the UK leaves the EU. The bill is nearing the final stages of consideration, with the House of Lords scheduled to be considered further in September, with the aim of being given royal assent by the end of 2021. Requirements of the bill will then become mandatory after a two year transition period.

2.10 The NPPF emphasises the need for GI networks, stating that strategic policies in plans should set out an overall strategy that makes sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of GI (Paragraph 20). It also requires that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, including through the provision of ‘safe and accessible GI’ (Paragraph 92) and should plan positively for the provision of shared spaces and community facilities, including open space (Paragraph 93).

2.11 Regarding new development, the NPPF requires that it be planned in a way that avoids increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change, particularly in vulnerable areas, and states that risks can be managed through the planning of GI (Paragraph 154).

2.12 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF also requires that a strategic approach is used to ensure that, within a plan area, networks of habitats and GI are maintained, and that planning is undertaken for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across LPA boundaries.

County policy context

2.13 Hertfordshire County Council has produced a number of strategy and policy documents which are relevant to the need for an updated GI Strategy. The Hertfordshire Corporate Plan 2019-2025 [See reference 12] outlines the vision and aspiration of the region and is underpinned by four ambitions. One of these ambitions, which is a key aspiration for the Strategy to help deliver, is to enable thriving places by creating:

“sustainable places where people can enjoy a good quality life, growth is sensitively managed, and the value of Hertfordshire’s clean and green environment is respected.”

2.14 In response to the climate emergency declared by HCC in 2019, an outcome of the Corporate Plan was to produce the 2020 Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan [See reference 13], which acts to limit the impact of climate change by taking a county-wide approach to sustainable solutions. This, and the supporting Action Plan [See reference 14], recognise the 2011 Plan and its role in identifying a network of natural spaces and corridors across the county which provide valuable biodiversity benefits in need of protection. Eight out of the ten LPAs comprising HCC have also declared climate emergencies to date.

2.15 Key actions in the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy which are of current and future relevance to the Strategy include adopting the upcoming National GI Standards, embedding climate change policy in strategy development, and establishing a Hertfordshire Biodiversity Strategy.

2.16 The Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy uses existing strategy documentation in place as its baseline, including the Energy Strategy [See reference 15], which sets a goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to 80% of those in 2012/13 by 2025, the Pollinator Strategy [See reference 16], and

the Air Quality Strategy [\[See reference 17\]](#), which were all published in 2019 and are considered within this GI Strategy.

2.17 The Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) forms a joint committee of all the LPAs in Hertfordshire; comprised of HCC, the 10 district or borough councils, the Integrated Care System, Homes England and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The aim of the HGB is to manage future growth and support economic recovery within Hertfordshire, helping to deliver happy, healthy and diverse communities. In close collaboration with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, the HGB also promotes the delivery of climate change action with the objective of achieving lasting sustainable change.

2.18 The Local Transport Plan 4 (2018-2031) [\[See reference 18\]](#) identifies modal shift and encouraging active travel as one of its four key principles, with the plan making explicit reference to the production of this Strategy. It states that the emerging Strategy will highlight the key issues with managing GI in the county in the future, including its role in supporting and improving sustainable active travel, rights of way, health and wellbeing. This Strategy also recognises the priorities within the Active Travel Strategy [\[See reference 19\]](#) and Rights of Way Improvement Plan [\[See reference 20\]](#).

2.19 Other policy and strategy documents have been considered and integrated into the update of the GI Strategy, including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy [\[See reference 21\]](#), Equality Strategy [\[See reference 22\]](#), Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) [\[See reference 23\]](#) which each focus on the health, wellbeing and social care needs of the local population. In terms of managing flood risk, the regulatory context since the 2011 Plan has also been fundamentally updated through the establishment of legislation and creation of Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA), a function fulfilled by HCC.

Local planning context

2.20 HCC is the upper-tier authority of ten local authority districts/boroughs who each act as the LPA for their areas. County-level guidance is provided to districts/boroughs, such as Health and Wellbeing Guidance [\[See reference 24\]](#) which advises on the delivery of healthy developments and communities, including good quality open space and GI.

2.21 Guiding principles of planning for biodiversity and the natural environment [\[See reference 25\]](#) were developed by the Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in 2014 to add local value to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity/habitat connectivity. This is considered in this Strategy, as is the Wildlife Trust's 2014 report detailing Hertfordshire's Ecological Networks [\[See reference 26\]](#) which produced a county-wide habitat inventory and potential habitat network maps.

2.22 Planning policy plays a key and critical role in the assessment and delivery of GI across Hertfordshire. The district or borough Local Plans are vital tools for conveying the priorities identified through the county level GI Strategy and delivering these through effective GI planning policy. However, the quality of GI policies and/or wider policies that deliver the key components of the GI network, varies throughout the county and is inconsistent due to the continuously evolving nature of district or borough-level Local Plans and updates that occur at different times.

2.23 Although this is to be expected, a cohesive and strategic vision and assessment at the county level would be of benefit to district or borough-level GI planning, eventually trickling down to sub-local GI for strategic allocations and smaller developments that responds to local character and need.

Hislop Review of District or Borough Plans

2.24 A high-level assessment of the effectiveness of district or borough level Local Planning policy in delivering GI has been undertaken as part of the formation of this Strategy – this was informed by the Hislop Review Tool [See [reference 27](#)].

2.25 The Hislop Review Tool is a framework complete with guidance that critically assesses the policies, objectives and actions relating to GI when assessed against a number of core GI functions, such as mainstreaming, integration, multifunctionality and long term management. The framework identifies seven GI subject areas that effective plans and policies should cover. This framework process has been refined for the purposes of this Strategy and has been undertaken to identify broad trends in the strength and coverage of GI policies in the ten Hertfordshire district or borough Local Plans at the time of writing.

2.26 Key facts and findings from this assessment are presented in the following section and demonstrate the areas where local GI policies perform well or where they could be improved in the future. It will be the role of this GI Strategy to provide guidance in how to effectively ‘mainstream’ GI into wider policy and Local Plan aspirations.

Key results from the Hislop Review Tool

General

General:

- 90% of districts have strong policies relating to at least one important aspect of designing and delivering GI.

Policy plan mainstreaming

GI recognised in vision:

- Under a third of districts do not make any reference to GI in the vision, principles or objectives of their Local Plan; and
- Only a fifth of districts were found to strongly value GI in the vision of their Local Plan.

Policy integration:

- Half of the districts poorly integrate GI outside the environment policies in their Local Plans.

Development integration

Early design and engagement:

- The policies of half of the districts fail to sufficiently recognise the importance of early GI design and pre-application engagement.

Multi-functionality:

- Just under half of the districts strongly emphasise how GI can deliver multiple benefits on the same land parcel in Local Plan policies.

Development setting:

- There is poor policy coverage of the benefits of using site appraisals in relation to GI in over a third of districts.

Landscape scale:

- Over half of all districts have policies which recognise wider landscape scale GI networks.

Access networks

Active travel and recreation:

- Over half of districts have very strong coverage and policy wording strength of using GI to enhance opportunities for sustainable travel.

Biodiversity/habitats

Biodiversity gain:

- Less than a quarter of districts currently have strong policy wording on the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); and
- Although delivering net gains for biodiversity are referenced in all Local Plans, wording is currently assessed as being weak in over a third.

Habitat connectivity:

- Over two thirds of districts have adequate or strong policies relating to GI's contribution to retaining and enhancing habitat networks; and
- Over a quarter of districts do not have policies regarding the expansion of habitat networks through GI.

Physical environment

Water environment:

- Over half the districts have adequate or strong policies in relation to using SuDS as multifunctional GI assets; and
- Watercourses and blue infrastructure is poorly referenced or recognised as GI in the Local Plans of over a third of districts.

Air quality:

- GI's contribution to tackling local air quality is poorly recognised in over half of the district Local Plans assessed.

Greenspace

Open space standards:

- All districts in Hertfordshire have adequate or strong policy coverage in terms of using GI to meet open space standards.

User needs:

- Nearly three quarters of districts have strong policies that make provision for recreational facilities that meet local user and community needs; and
- The importance of multi-user design is not well realised in the policies of 20% of districts.

Stewardship

Management and Maintenance:

- Long term management and maintenance of GI is poorly documented or agreed in the Local Plans of just under half of the districts; and
- Over half of districts have policies which require GI proposals to be properly managed and maintained.

Resourcing:

- At least half of the districts identify GI as being a potential requirement for financial contributions from development; and
- Nearly a quarter of districts fail to explicitly identify mechanisms to fund the management and maintenance of GI in their Local Plan policies.

Taking forward the key findings from the Hislop Review

2.27 The findings of the Hislop Review of Hertfordshire’s district or borough Local Plans demonstrates the varying nature and performance of GI in local planning policy. Whilst there are general areas of strength, such as referencing the use of GI to enhance opportunities for sustainable travel and meeting open space standards, there are other areas of weakness which will be of particular focus for this Strategy to consider. Key areas requiring further consideration include:

- Ensuring that GI is considered as a mandatory and strategic planning issue, more explicit reference to it should be made throughout Local Plans to recognise its multifunctional benefits for placemaking. It should be included in the long-term vision for a district or borough, through its Local Plan Objectives and should weave itself through various policies within the Local Plan, not just be referenced through a GI policy alone. This GI

Strategy will emphasise the importance of mainstreaming GI into Local Plans and the importance of developing GI policy hooks.

- Ensuring that GI is designed into developments from the early stages of the design process will be a key focus for this GI Strategy. A Developer Checklist will be developed to provide guidance for developers and council officers (when assessing applications) in order to bridge the gap between high-level strategic GI planning and its delivery through strategic and local scale development across Hertfordshire.
- Approaching the GI Strategy as a live document that is adaptable to future changes in international and national policy context. In particular, the GI Strategy should be alert to upcoming changes in the Environment Bill which will introduce requirements for developments to achieve biodiversity net gain and establish nature recovery networks. Being adaptable to future legislation will ensure that district or borough level Local Plans can use the GI Strategy to respond to these changes effectively.
- There are currently missed references in policy regarding the role that SuDS can play as multifunctional GI assets, as well as missed opportunities for GI to improve other important issues such as air quality. Incorporating 'blue' infrastructure in the design and planning of GI in Hertfordshire will be an important focal point of this GI Strategy. Likewise, other multifunctional nature-based solutions should be sought to improve local air quality.
- The GI Strategy will identify how the multifunctional nature of GI should be addressed throughout Local Plans. Improving stewardship of GI at a strategic scale. It is important for GI to not only be delivered, but to ensure that there are strong processes in place for its management and maintenance. This GI Strategy will help identify key stakeholders and partnerships already involved in protecting and enhancing GI assets in Hertfordshire, engaging partners at all scales from national bodies to local community groups to help deliver and maintain improvements to the GI network across Hertfordshire.
- Establishing sources of GI funding, which is increasingly essential. Whilst this has been considered in part through many district or borough level Local Plans, this Strategy will make recommendations on suitable sources

of funding and help generate a cohesive approach to resourcing GI throughout Hertfordshire.

Chapter 3

Why is GI important to Hertfordshire?

The updated Strategy is being undertaken against the backdrop of global emergencies, which form the 'backbone' of key drivers for GI opportunities. These challenges relate to climate, biodiversity, health and delivery of sustainable development.

3.1 The role of the Strategy is to acknowledge these significant challenges and address them at a local scale, transforming the issues into opportunities for positive change. The following section identifies the key drivers and 'needs' for GI within Hertfordshire, updated to reflect the post-2011 context. Positively addressing these challenges alongside the pressures of future housing growth will help to strengthen the GI network across the county and its ability to accommodate future change.

3.2 The drivers essentially frame why Hertfordshire would benefit from an updated strategic approach to the provision of GI in both urban and rural areas. Driven by an emerging growth agenda, the enhancement of the GI network will aim to address these multiple challenges whilst helping to accommodate sustainable growth, secure high quality of life for all and protect and enhance the natural environment.

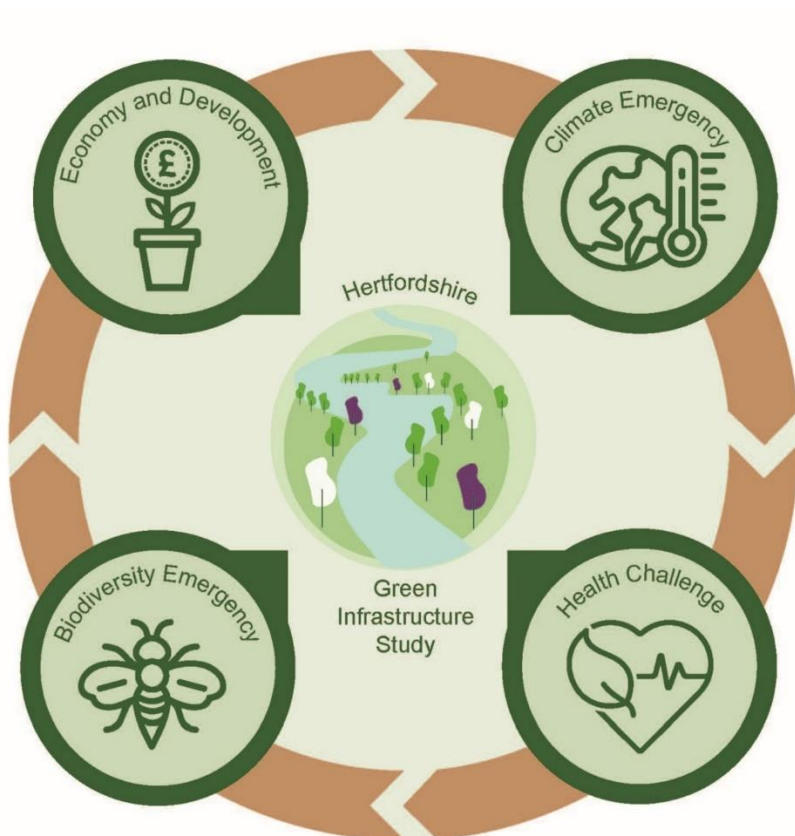
3.3 The key drivers for the Strategy are listed below:

- 'Resilient spaces' – which play a role particularly in addressing the climate emergency;
- 'Wilder spaces' – which play a role particularly in addressing the biodiversity emergency;
- 'Healthier spaces' – which play a role particularly in addressing local and nationally recognised health challenges; and

- 'Destination spaces' – which play a role particularly in recreation and regeneration.

3.4 These drivers are generally 'cross-cutting' and often relate to the provision of all types of GI. This reflects the multifunctionality and range of benefits that may be derived from any given GI asset. Figure 3.1 presents typical GI network components in the context of the above 'key drivers'.

Figure 3.1: Drivers for GI



The climate emergency

3.5 Adopting a strategic approach to GI across the county will help to support HIPP/HCC and the individual LPAs in their response to the climate emergency. Climate change poses a significant risk to the landscapes and communities

within Hertfordshire. Future climatic trends indicate more severe and frequent weather events, an increasing annual global average temperature and rising sea levels. By the end of the 21st century, all areas of the UK are projected to be warmer, more so in summer than in winter, consistent with future warming globally.

3.6 The UK Climate Projections (UKCP) [See reference 28] uses probabilistic projections to provide low, central and high changes across the UK corresponding to 10%, 50% and 90%. These events are expected to intensify in the coming decades. Projections also suggest up to a 28% decrease in summer rainfall in 2030 and a 45% reduction by 2050 (see Figure 3.2). Winter rainfall is predicted to increase by up to 14% by the 2030s and up to 25% by the 2050s. The effects of a changing climate will be far reaching, extending to impacts on health, resources and biodiversity within the county. However, GI can help to both mitigate climate change (address the causes) and support adaptation (address the effects). Well designed and managed GI is therefore a key component in the provision of climate resilience.

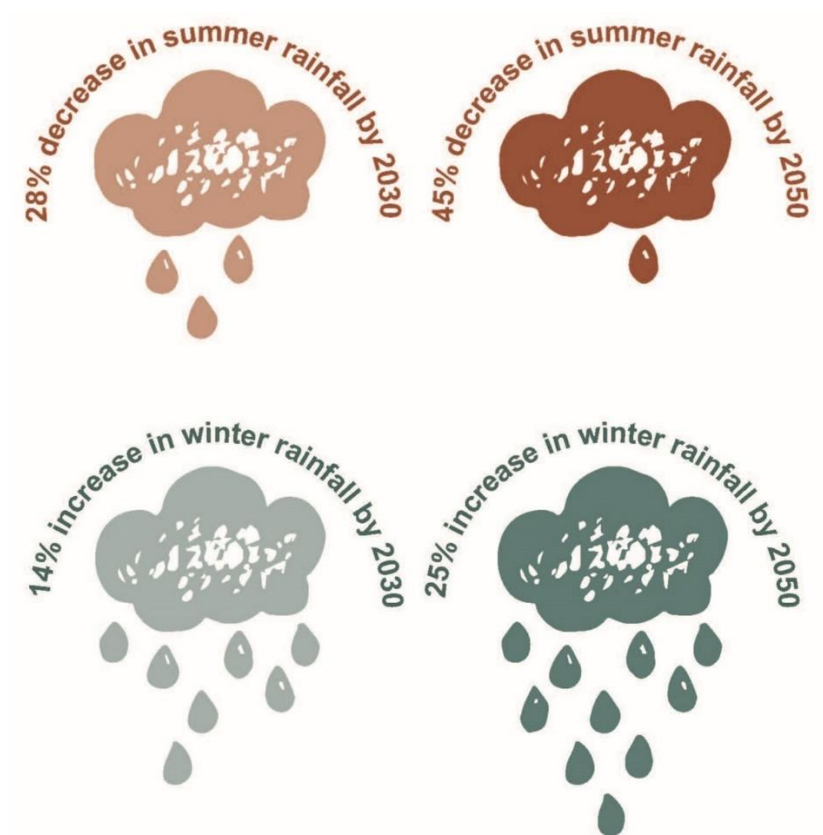
3.7 Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in July 2019, HCC prepared the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy [See reference 29]. The document establishes HCC's commitment to ensuring an effective response to the threat of climate change through the integration of sustainability principles across all operations throughout the county. A suite of ambitious environmental aspirations are presented; including proposals for carbon neutrality for all HCC operations and improvements to biodiversity on council land by 20% by 2030. The document also acknowledges the importance of working collaboratively across local government, ensuring HCC and the ten LPAs work together to inspire environmental action across Hertfordshire.

3.8 The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) was subsequently formed in March 2020 and acts as the lead partnership organisation for the collaboration and identification of joint work programmes on environmental, climate changes and wider sustainability issues. The partnership works collaboratively to deliver climate change action, address carbon reduction targets for Hertfordshire and achieve lasting change.

Opportunity for GI?

The effective delivery of GI will aim to provide a positive response to the Climate Emergency. The GI network will play a vital role in climate change mitigation and adaptation through contributions such as surface water and flood management, storage of greenhouse gases, improvements to air quality and provision of habitats for wildlife. GI can also help mitigate against other predicted effects of climate change by sequestering carbon, promoting greenways for active travel and reductions to the urban heat island effect.

Figure 3.2: Projected rainfall variations with climate change in the UK



The biodiversity emergency

3.9 Adopting a strategic and coordinated approach to the provision of GI within the county provides an opportunity to apply best practice principles for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Securing a well-connected nature network will complement a cross-boundary approach to establish a framework for nature recovery, whilst also delivering resilience to climate change and the wider functions of GI. The network will need to accommodate future population growth, balancing the need for protection of habitats and species most sensitive to disturbance and therein, accommodate the delivery of locally appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

3.10 Approximately 14% (22,080ha) of the county is protected under designation – including 1,174 hectares of international Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and/or Ramsar designated land [See reference 30], 1,238 hectares of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 13,729 hectares of Local Wildlife Sites (see Figure 3.3). Together with 5,941 hectares (partially overlapping the designations) of ancient woodland and Tree Preservation Order (TPO) trees, these form the foundation of the protected network. The mosaic of priority habitats and veteran trees that extend across and between these designations are critical to effective connection and buffering of the protected network. More widely, biodiverse habitats – grasslands, wetlands, hedgerows, scrub and green roofs and walls within urban areas – are essential to support abundant and thriving biodiversity, disperse through the landscape. The resilience of biodiversity to the pressures of agricultural intensification, climate change, increased urbanisation and transport infrastructure is not only dependent on sufficient space but the support of healthy soils, connected and functioning hydrology, etc.

3.11 The 2020 Hertfordshire State of Nature report [See reference 31] states that 20% (1,524 in number) of the species recorded are of conservation concern i.e. extinct [See reference 32] or threatened in a county context. Of these, approximately one third is associated with each woodland and grassland habitats and one quarter with wetland. The most dramatic decline – reminiscent of the national picture – is that of grassland and heathland habitats, both in

quality and total area. The 2020 report highlights “potential new threat is the recent ambition to plant trees to offset climate change impacts” in relation to these habitat types in particular.

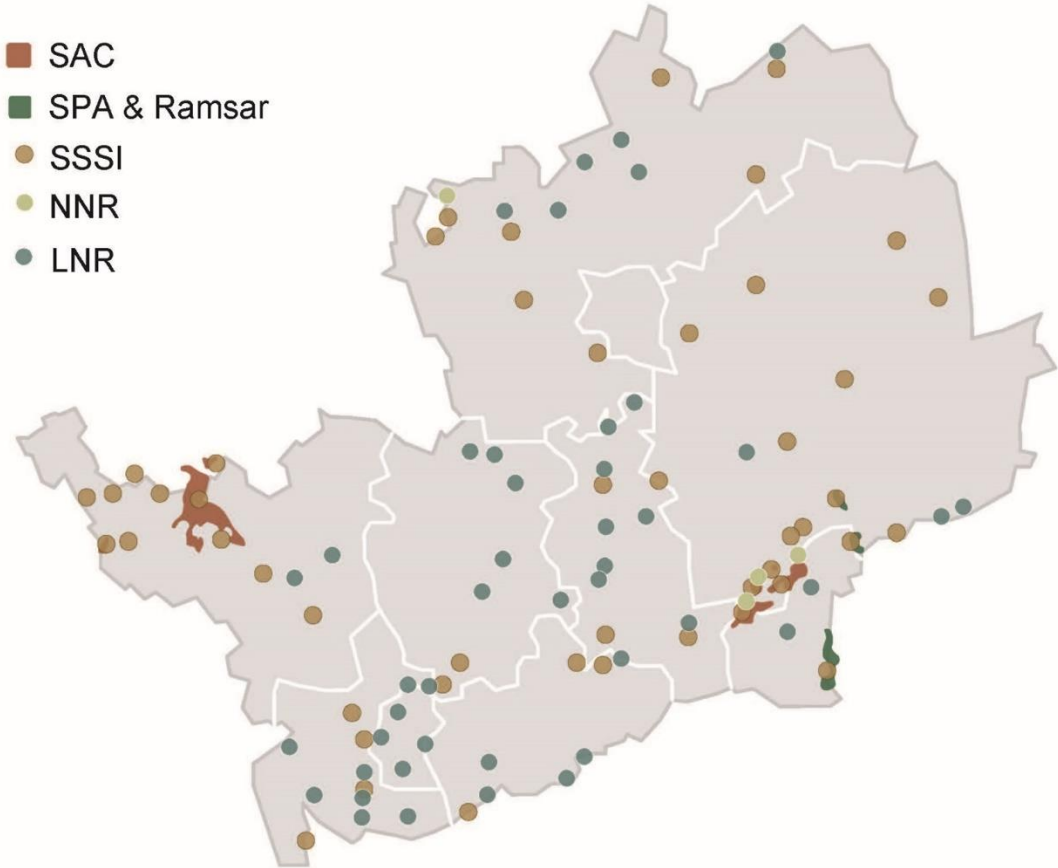
Figure 3.3: Total coverage of designated sites for nature conservation within Hertfordshire



Opportunity for GI?

To protect, enhance and expand the ecological resource in the coming years it will be necessary to ensure existing habitats are resilient to the effects of climate change and form a coherent nature network. Provision of GI in Hertfordshire should be informed by the need for natural spaces to become bigger, better and more joined up. It must also recognise variation in local character (including biodiversity imperatives and duties) and broaden the complexity and reach of biodiversity through the urban areas of the county.

Figure 3.4: Nature conservation designations across Hertfordshire and the surrounding area



The health challenge

Physical health

3.12 The national government’s 2020 Obesity Strategy [See reference 33] frames obesity as one of the greatest long-term health challenges faced by the country. Specific emphasis is placed on the need to address the problem of unhealthy lifestyles in childhood, which sow the seeds of adult diseases and health inequalities. The document was based on the recognised need to heed the ‘wake up’ call of COVID-19 in terms of health vulnerabilities. Evidence also increasingly recognises the role of green spaces and active travel networks –

both key components of a successful GI network – in tackling health challenges. Public Health England (PHE) highlights that people who have greater exposure to green space have a range of more favourable physiological outcomes, however competing demands for space are putting pressure on these resources [\[See reference 34\]](#).

3.13 Health outcomes in Hertfordshire vary across the county. Overall, it is estimated that 63% of the population aged 16 years+ are obese or overweight, a statistic which is higher than the national average. However, significant disparities exist within individual districts/boroughs, with Stevenage exhibiting the highest proportion of excess weight (66.4%) compared with Welwyn Hatfield which has the smallest proportion (58%). Based on projection data from 2015, the estimated direct costs to the NHS of being overweight and obese equate to approximately £114 million. In addition, the cost of physical inactivity alone to the NHS within Hertfordshire has been estimated at £16.1 million. Pressure on the existing health and social care sector will also continue to grow as Hertfordshire sees increased population growth in those aged over 65.

3.14 Policy updates since 2011 have included the publication of Hertfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Planning Guidance [\[See reference 35\]](#) which aims to guide planning professionals, LPAs and developers in the delivery of healthy communities by increasing knowledge of health and wellbeing and its relationship to spatial issues. The document focuses on seven key areas, of which two are of particular relevance to GI in Hertfordshire:

- Movement and Access: Focussing on improving active travel and connectivity and urban permeability; and
- Quality Open Space, Play and Recreation: Focussing on the provision of open space and GI in design.

3.15 Evidence also increasingly recognises the role of green spaces and active travel networks – both key components of a successful GI network – in tackling health challenges. PHE highlights that people who have greater exposure to green space have a range of more favourable physiological outcomes, although competing demands for space are putting pressure on these resources [\[See reference 36\]](#). This relationship is consistent with wider deprivation trends

acknowledged within Hertfordshire's JSNA. During 2013-2014, people in higher social grades within Hertfordshire were found to be more physically active (62%) than those in lower social grades (50.9%) [\[See reference 37\]](#).

Opportunity for GI?

The potential benefits of GI are far reaching, including the development of priorities in relation to the health and wellbeing of Hertfordshire's residents. The expansion and improvement of GI projects offer the potential to support the delivery of health benefits within the county.

Air quality

3.16 Evidence of the impact of air pollution on health outcomes – particularly those of children, who are more vulnerable – is building, with evidence from Public Health England highlighting that poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK [\[See reference 38\]](#). In 2011, Hertfordshire exhibited a higher mean concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) of fine particulate matter than England (10.7 compared to 9.5). The proportion of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution in the county was also higher than the England average in 2015, a trend dating back to 2010 [\[See reference 39\]](#). In addition, poor air quality is likely to contribute to health inequalities because its impact is greater on deprived communities. There are two major ways in which a GI network can help to address the challenge of poor air quality:

- Providing a strong network of active travel routes (requiring physical exertion) between developments and key services, in an attempt to reduce transport related emissions, and to build a sustainable '15-minute' neighbourhood; and
- Using vegetation to capture pollution particles as part of multi-functional public realm improvements. This approach could be targeted at key locations such as schools or along particular busy transport corridors.

3.17 When utilising GI to improve air quality, it is important to use interventions which are suitable to the context and space. For instance, narrow urban canyons where the pollution source is at street level should not be characterised by dense avenues of trees.

Air quality context and green infrastructure interventions

Street canyon where air at street level is more polluted than the air above (see Figure 3.5)

3.18 In these locations, limiting the movement of air upwards and downwards should be avoided. For example, a dense avenue of trees can trap pollution from vehicles.

3.19 Instead, a vegetated barrier, such as a green screen or hedge, between the pollution source and receptors can reduce the level of pollution reaching people. Green walls and roofs can also play a significant role in reducing pollution at street level.

Figure 3.5: Street canyon where air at street level is more polluted than the air above



Street canyon where air above the buildings is more polluted than the air at street level (see Figure 3.6)

3.20 In these locations, a dense avenue of trees can act as a barrier to downward dispersion. Scots pine, common alder, larch, Norway maple, field maple, ash and silver birch are all very effective.

3.21 An additional taller barrier combined with open space can protect people who are further away from the pollution source, for example school playgrounds. Oaks, poplars and willows can have a detrimental effect on air quality downwind so should be planted carefully when in numbers.

Figure 3.6: Street canyon where air above the buildings is more polluted than the air at street level



Opportunity for GI?

GI can help reduce public exposure to air pollution produced by vehicles, particularly in the urban environment. However, the principal value of GI for urban air quality is not its ability to remove pollutants, but its capacity to control their flow/distribution. An integrated network of green and blue spaces can therefore play an important role in reducing future exposure as the transport system within the county develops.

The economy and delivering sustainable development

Housing demand

3.22 Significant new development is planned for the county in the coming years. This proposed growth has the potential to affect GI assets across Hertfordshire, exacerbating current deficiencies as well as creating new issues. As defined within the Infrastructure and Funding Prospectus, Hertfordshire LPAs have identified housing growth over the 13 year period to 2031 of on average 6,425 dwellings per annum. This compares to average annual completions of 3,189 dwellings per year across Hertfordshire from 2011/12 to 2016/17. These projections equate to a total housing supply of 83,530 dwellings that are expected between 2017/18 and 2031/32, equating to 30% growth. In addition, significant financial constraints on local authorities have seen savings of almost £315 million since 2010, and with further savings required of £90 million per annum by 2023 [See reference 40].

3.23 This increased housing demand will place greater pressure on the existing GI network and will require a strategic approach to landscape planning to ensure new GI is successfully delivered as part of new development. For this growth to be sustainable, GI must be considered alongside other forms of infrastructure and built development. Planned housing and economic growth will therefore require mitigation through provision of new strategic GI and enhancements to retain the quality of existing provision and mitigate existing localised issues.

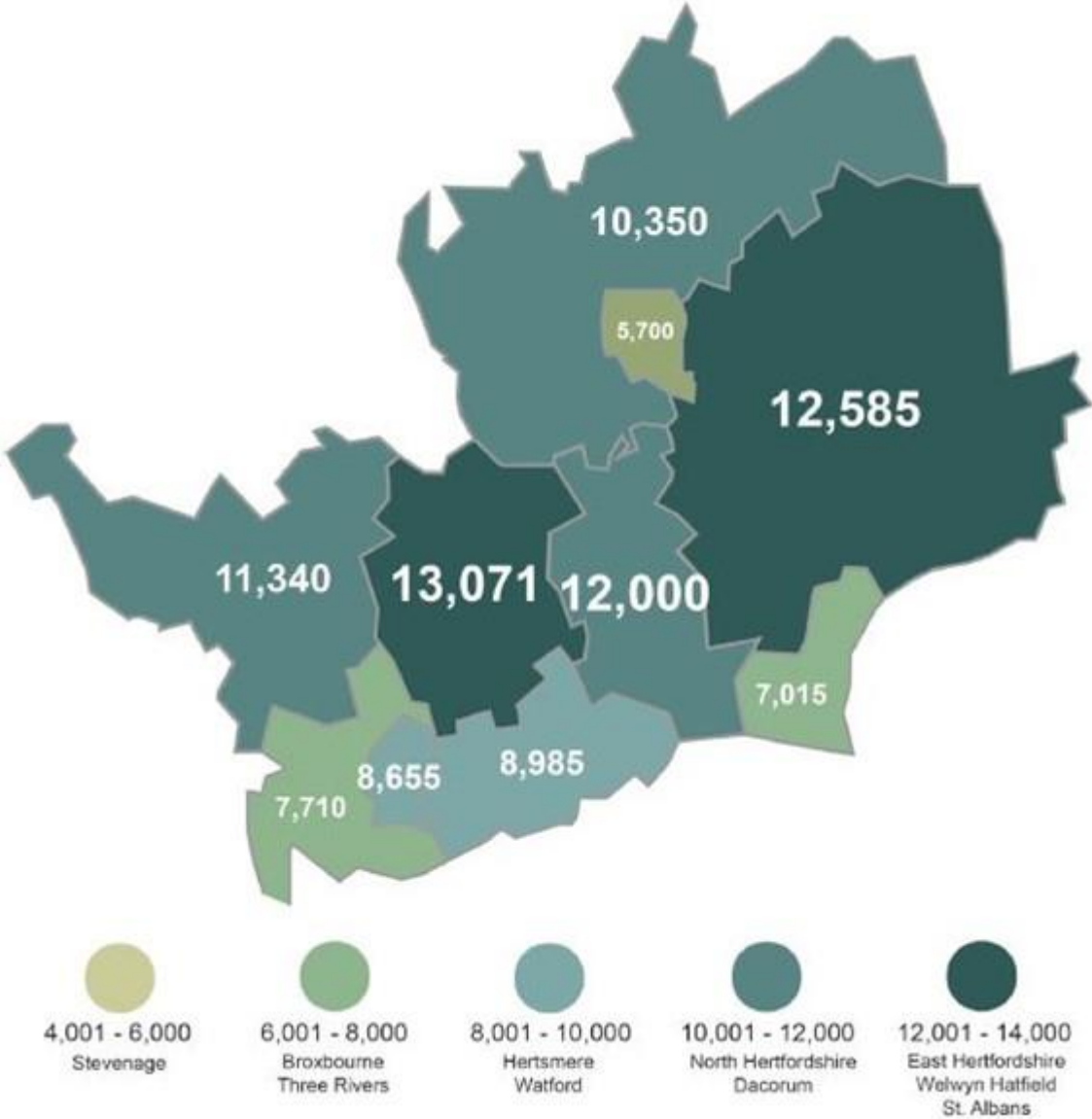
Objectively Assessed Housing Growth 2018-2031 (see Figure 3.7) [See reference 41]

- Stevenage: 5,700 new homes;
- Broxbourne: 7,015 new homes;
- Three Rivers: 7,710 new homes;
- Watford: 8,655 new homes;
- Hertsmere: 8,985 new homes;
- North Hertfordshire: 10,350 new homes;
- Dacorum: 11,340 new homes;
- Welwyn Hatfield: 12,000 new homes;
- East Hertfordshire: 12,585 new homes; and
- St Albans: 13,071 new homes.

Opportunity for GI?

Through the provision of ecosystem services, GI can help alleviate many of the challenges faced by a growing urban population. Responding to issues such as unprecedented urban growth, affords the opportunity to integrate the innovative development of GI to provide future resilience. Well planned GI can help to create cohesive neighbourhoods, which is a fundamental requirement to accompany the county's projected housing growth.

Figure 3.7: Objectively Assessed Housing Need 2018-2031 [See reference 42]



Projected population growth

3.24 Analysis of the 2016 based Office for National Statistics Subnational Population Projections for England [See reference 43] indicate a population forecast up to 2031 of 1,302,400 people, forming an 9% increase from 2018.

Measures are required to ensure this growth is accommodated in a balanced and sustainable way. In the context of a growing population, existing GI assets must be protected and enhanced so they are resilient to additional pressures, whilst providing a resource for a wide range of users.

3.25 Projected population growth in Hertfordshire is also distributed unevenly across the county. The greatest population growth is forecast in East Hertfordshire, Welwyn Hatfield and Dacorum. However, Stevenage, Hertsmere and Broxbourne are forecast to experience relatively low population growth, none exceeding 8,000. This variation in growth patterns across the county is also reflected in the projected age profile of the county, illustrated by the projected largest increase in age categories in absolute terms will be those within the 65-69 cohort. This future demographic shift requires consideration when planning future access and provision of GI.

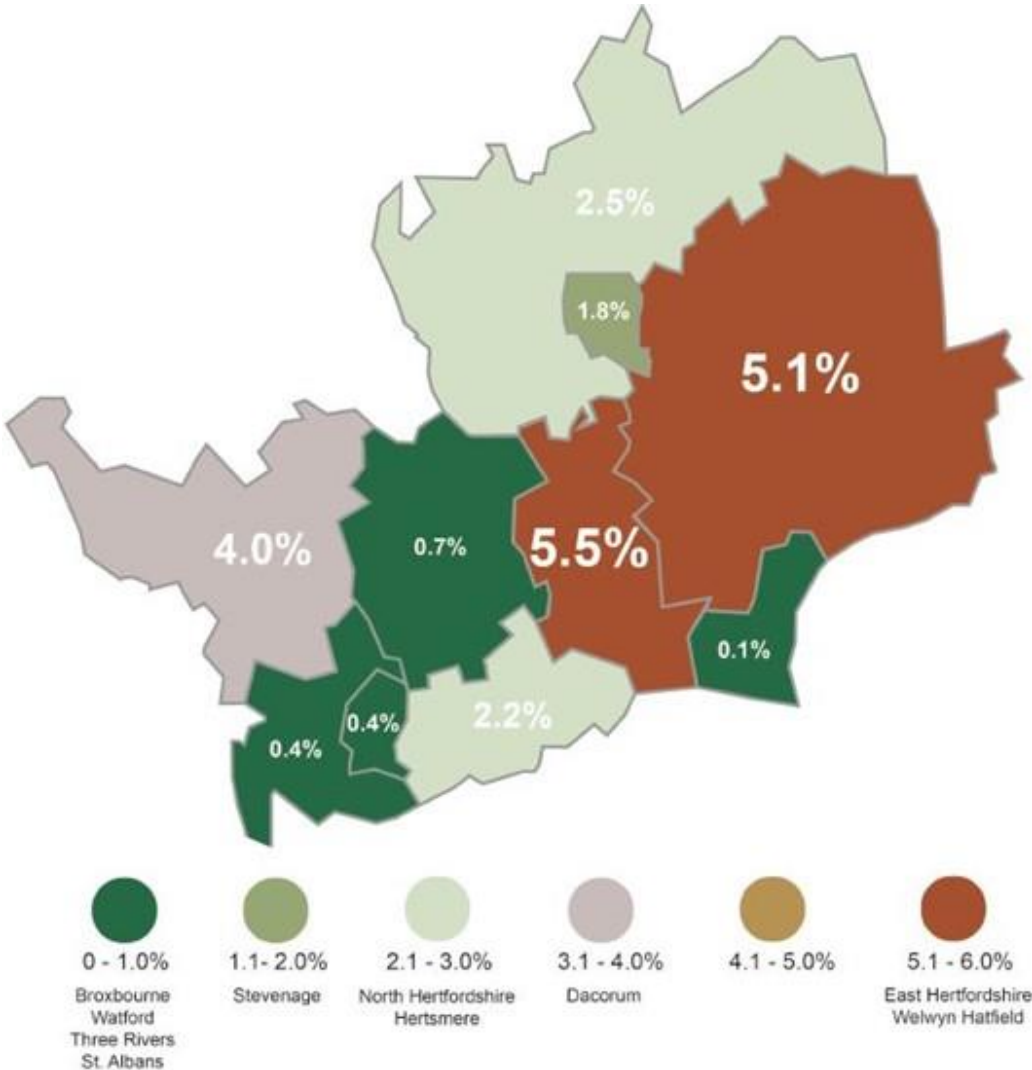
Population change for LPAs within Hertfordshire between mid-2018 and mid-2028 (see Figure 3.8) [See reference 44]

- Stevenage: 1.8% increase in population;
- Broxbourne: 0.1% increase in population;
- Three Rivers: 0.4% increase in population;
- Watford: 0.4% increase in population;
- Hertsmere: 2.2% increase in population;
- North Hertfordshire: 2.5% increase in population;
- Dacorum: 4.0% increase in population;
- Welwyn Hatfield: 5.5% increase in population;
- East Hertfordshire: 5.1% increase in population; and
- St Albans: 0.7% increase in population.

Opportunity for GI?

Population growth, associated urbanisation and competing demands for land use result in increased threats to the provision of accessible green space. The expansion and improvement of GI assets across the county may offer the potential to reduce pressure on the quality and quantity of existing GI in the wake of projected population growth.

Figure 3.8: Population change for LPAs within Hertfordshire between mid-2018 and mid-2028 [See reference 45]



Infrastructure planning

3.26 Planned population growth across the county will increase pressure on existing transport infrastructure. Previous years of growth have created deficits in existing infrastructure across Hertfordshire, with significant congestion apparent on the road and rail network across the county. This trend is partially due to a 80% private vehicle mode share in travel patterns putting additional strain on the road network **[See reference 46]**.

3.27 To reduce future reliance on the private car as a mode of transportation, settlements are required to be well connected to the GI network through provision of safe, active travel routes. Existing cycle infrastructure in the county is variable in quality and coverage, with many areas incomplete or not well-connected. Provision of a strong network of walking and cycling routes between developments and key services can therefore help to reduce transport-related emissions and contribute towards sustainable neighbourhoods.

Options for enhancing active travel provisions and uptake within new development

- Flower-rich grassland/meadow verges provide space for pollinators and enhance the connectivity of the nature network. Features such as bug hotels and log piles should be included here;
- Raised table leading to tertiary roads, mews and courtyards to slow traffic;
- Resident parking using permeable paving and electric vehicle charging points;
- Private front gardens;
- Climate and pollution tolerant street trees which will provide shade, remove pollutants, sequester carbon and cool the urban environment;
- Direct and safe cycle route away from traffic; and

- Hedgerow and hedgerow trees to provide a pollution barrier between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Opportunity for GI?

GI provides opportunities to increase connectivity across Hertfordshire by encouraging the use of active travel as modes of sustainable transport. Increased active travel due to improved GI may also contribute towards reductions in noise pollution and improvements to air quality. The provision of GI offers the potential to link to planned transport infrastructure projects identified across the county.

Chapter 4

Evolution of GI Approach

This chapter explores some recent best practice examples of GI strategies to assess how the approach to GI has evolved since 2011. This includes determining their relevance to Hertfordshire, their positives and negatives, and the lessons that should be taken forward to inform the Strategy.

Following this review, six case studies of good practice GI, both within and outside Hertfordshire, have been identified and evaluated to establish a series of lessons and principles to take forward in the Strategy.

4.1 Six existing green infrastructure strategies have been reviewed, including:

- South Essex Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2020);
- Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020);
- Colne and Crane Valley's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019);
- Enfield's Blue and Green Strategy (2020);
- Wirral Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2020); and
- Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011).

4.2 Six examples of best practice case studies have been evaluated to give an idea of good mechanisms for delivery and multifunctional uses of space at a range of scales. These include:

- Balancing people and wildlife – Panshanger Park, Hertford;
- Re-wilding arable farmland – Heartwood Forest, St Albans;
- Growing community wellbeing – Community food hubs, Luton;

- Improving river corridors – Rediscovering the River Colne, Watford;
- Sustainable growth – Harlow and Gilston Garden Town; and
- Urban cycling and green retrofit – Mini-Holland, Waltham Forest.

South Essex Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Study (2020)

Relevance to Hertfordshire

- The document is strategic in scale, produced on behalf of a number of LPAs;
- Both counties experience development pressures which subsequently lead to recreation pressure on designated sites; and
- Both contexts see a need to enhance sustainable agricultural productivity.

Positives of the Strategy

- Graphical mapping was used extensively;
- There is a cohesive vision, which is to create the SEE Park, giving structure to the opportunities section and allowing the strategy to work as one unit;
- Themes are identified in line with challenges, objectives, opportunities and how these link to GI, giving a greater sense of meaning;
- The strategy uses a strong vision (South Essex Estuary Park) to guide the aims and act as an overall driver/catalyst for the delivery of the strategy's objectives through a series of 'key moves';
- The strategy has a very comprehensive baseline which directly feeds into the opportunities; and

- The Strategy is well coordinated with the Local Plan process.

Negatives of the Strategy

- Opportunity for the baseline analysis to be more concise and streamlined; and
- The use of case studies is good but could be more usefully intertwined throughout the document.

Lessons to take forward

- The well thought out delivery mechanisms which drive forward the next steps of the strategy;
- The use of graphics which makes the report engaging to all;
- The simplifying of the objectives and opportunities into an overall vision broken down into six key moves can help to streamline the strategy and enable HIPP/HCC to deliver aspects efficiently; and
- The clear opportunity mapping, organised into sub-areas.

Figure 4.1: South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure Study 2020



Essex Green Infrastructure Study (2020)

Relevance to Hertfordshire

- Both counties experience similar settlement patterns of nucleated towns with commuter routes which feed towards London, also causing severance;
- Both have significant expanses of agricultural land; and
- Both contain some significant landscape assets and designations, including AONB, SPA and SAC.

Positives of the Strategy

- The strategy is succinct and easy to follow, comprising of one well-structured document;

- The assessment of the current assets is set out in quantitative way, which increases the objectivity of the strategy;
- The opportunities presented have been clearly linked to the overall strategy objectives. These opportunities include key proposals which are laid out in a phased Action Plan;
- There is a strong and clear understanding of how the Strategy fits into the wider policy context;
- The mapping of functions to display the diverse benefits of GI across the county reinforces the need for the Strategy; and
- This is also helped by relating GI benefits directly back to people.

Negatives of the Strategy

- There is a lack of graphics, particularly mapping, and when coupled with a document which is quite text-heavy it can make it cumbersome to the reader;
- The description of current GI provision is brief and descriptive, offering little judgement on whether the provision is adequate, lacking or good, or where there is local variation; and
- Lacking focus on biodiversity benefits.

Lessons to take forward

- The method of setting out a vision and linking clear, pragmatic opportunities to the vision;
- The use of partners and stakeholders which were involved in its preparation;
- The function mapping which shows the areas of GI which are delivering the most multifunctional benefits at present; and
- The use of case studies to demonstrate principles and effective delivery mechanisms.

Figure 4.2: Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020)



Colne and Crane Valleys Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019)

Relevance to Hertfordshire

- A much smaller area covered by this strategy (309km²), population of study area is not known, but 1.6 million people live within 2km (20 minute walk), so similar visitor/growth pressures to some areas of Hertfordshire;
- Development pressure is identified as a key issue;
- Both experience severance by existing and planned major infrastructure routes; and
- Both share some significant GI assets, for example the River Colne and the setting of the Chilterns AONB.

Positives of the Strategy

- The clear presentation which is easy to read in terms of graphics and mapping, as well as a lower density of text. It follows a clear and simple logical flow;
- The specific project examples which make it feel grounded in the real world, less aspirational yet more actionable; and
- The link to an interactive map where visitors can suggest projects and the map can be updated over time as projects come online, again keeping the strategy dynamic.

Negatives of the Strategy

- There is no real sense of prioritisation between objectives or thinking about both synergies and trade-offs; and

- There is a focus on recreation and connections (because it has its roots in a regional park framework) and is largely an update of the previous All London Green Grid Framework for the Colne and Crane.

Lessons to take forward

- The need for the prioritisation of projects;
- The need for consideration of synergies and trade-offs;
- The use of specific project examples to highlight viability; and
- The possibility of creating an interactive map to keep the Strategy current.

Figure 4.3: Colne and Crane Valleys Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019)



Enfield's Blue and Green Strategy (2020)

Relevance to Hertfordshire

- Both counties are experiencing development pressure;
- Both see severance by major infrastructure routes;
- Both suffer from poor access to greenspace in areas of high deprivation; and
- Both counties share some significant strategic GI assets, including the Lee Valley.

Positives of the Strategy

- A concise, well presented GI Strategy with the majority of the underpinning detail contained in the appendices, including detailed project sheets (with detail around how each project meets the Vision and Objectives, timescales, partners, sources of funding, risks and challenges); and
- The strategy document has a clear, logical flow from vision to aims/objectives to setting out some key projects and programmes.

Negatives of the Strategy

- The vision could be stronger and is supported by objectives that are a mix of precise metrics and vague or generic statements of intent; and
- The document also feels like a justification and promotion of what the Council has already planned to do (this works for Enfield but other local authorities will have less influence over many of their key GI assets).

Lessons to take forward

- The concise nature of the Strategy with detail in the appendices;
- The flow of logical progression from vision to project delivery;
- The process of identifying realistic funding mechanisms and delivery partners as well as securing partner buy-in during the consultation phase to ensure momentum is upheld and projects are delivered; and
- The use of 'strategic programmes.'

Figure 4.4: Enfield's Blue and Green Strategy (2020)



Wirral Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

Relevance to Hertfordshire

- Both counties are experiencing pressure for development;
- Both see severance issues due to major roads and railways;
- Both have pockets of significant deprivation where people experience poor access to high-quality open space;
- Both contain SPA, SAC and SSSIs; and
- Both have poor accessibility to open space in some areas, particularly in relation to natural and semi-natural space, allotments and play spaces.

Positives of the Strategy

- Each of the priority projects are explained in detail, including a case study of a similar project which has worked well;
- The GI Strategy has a strong focus on place and is very specific to the Wirral;
- The Strategy is tied to planning policy, offering greater integration and therefore delivery of the opportunities;
- The overview of existing assets is very detailed and links to the objectives, giving the strategy a logical structure; and
- The extensive consultation which took place and which is weaved in throughout the strategy, particularly in Volume 1.

Negatives of the Strategy

- The brief required less focus on building community networks, engagement, promotion, policy and marketing; and
- The Strategy was commissioned before Natural England produced their evidence-base study on functionally linked land across the Liverpool City Region.

Lessons to take forward

- The process of including consultation within the GI strategy;
- The linking of the baseline/existing asset section to the themes, but with the possibility of putting some of the baseline detail in appendices;
- The setting out of priority projects as clear proformas; and
- The very clear and aesthetic GIS maps which a simplified base map, making it clearer for the reader’.

Figure 4.5: Wirral Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2020)



Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)

Relevance to Hertfordshire

- Both are experiencing pressure from development and infrastructure links;
- Both suffer from poor access to greenspace in areas of high deprivation;
- Cambridgeshire is roughly twice the size of Hertfordshire (3,389km²), and less densely populated (population estimated in mid-2019 at 852,523); and
- The Cambridgeshire Strategy was written at the same time as Hertfordshire's previous Strategy.

Positives of the Strategy

- The Strategy is clear and logical, identifying key objectives and then setting out proposals for a strategic network, target areas and projects;
- The way it is broken down into regions, setting out the key issues in those areas and GI opportunities, making the scale of the county more manageable;
- The establishment of a diverse project group which involved representatives from ten bodies to review and manage the report. These then fed back to a Green Infrastructure Forum composed of 25 bodies; and
- The use of graphics to determine the level of influence each local area can have on achieving the strategy objectives.

Negatives of the Strategy

- The Strategy is very long, text heavy, and not as engaging in its presentation compared to other more recent strategies. The maps are difficult to read; and
- There are no clear projects defined – identifying GI projects is included at the end of the report under ‘Further work and next steps’, making this strategy feel more of a context document.

Lessons to take forward

- The clear logical progression throughout the document; and
- The analysis of the pressures facing each region/target area of the county, which is then taken forward into opportunities within the target areas, ensuring the strategy objectives are achieved.

Figure 4.6: Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)



Balancing People and Wildlife

Panshanger Park, Hertford

4.3 Opened to the public in 2014, Panshanger Park is a 1,000 acre site which balances the need for wildlife and recreation.

4.4 Panshanger Park, which comprises both a nature reserve and country park, provides a valuable resource for both wildlife and people in unison. Before its opening in 2014, the site was quarried for sand and gravel, having previously been the site of the 17th century Panshanger Estate. The Humphrey and Capability Brown landscape is a Grade II* listed park and garden and elements of its heritage can be found dotted around the park, including the skeleton of the former orangery.

4.5 Following the park's extractive use, much of the site has now been restored to arable farming and a range of important county and national habitats, including a new section of chalk stream and lakes. The mosaic of habitats across the site, including woodlands, wetlands, grasslands and reedbeds, provide an important refuge for wildlife on the outskirts of Hertford. Furthermore, the scale of the country park and associated trails creates significant recreation opportunities and access to nature for people. Additional parcels of land will continue to open up and expand the site as extraction activities come to an end.

4.6 Panshanger Park relates back to Project 5: Mimram Valley greenspace within the 2011 Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan.

Considerations

- Only one relatively small car park serves the park, meaning informal parking on nearby roads can be an issue (note: there are currently plans for a new 173 space car park);

- Limited active travel routes to the park results in increased usage of private transport for access;
- Increased recreation pressures due to the new Panshanger Airfield development (around 900 homes); and
- Some heritage features, such as the orangery, continue to fall into disrepair.

Lessons to take forward

- Recognise the importance of former industrial and extraction sites in providing new green space for both humans and wildlife;
- Understand the careful balance between recreation and disturbance to create multifunctional spaces;
- Plan for access by active travel, particularly between new development and recreation sites;
- Explore opportunities to restore county-wide and national priority habitat where possible; and
- Utilise heritage features for commercial activity.

Figure 4.7: Panshanger Park, Hertford [See reference 47]



Re-wilding Arable Farmland

Heartwood Forest, St Albans

4.7 Transforming arable farmland into a mosaic of connected biodiverse habitats and recreational assets for Hertfordshire's population and wildlife.

4.8 Located just 3 miles north of St Albans, Heartwood Forest comprises 347ha of newly planted woodland, ancient woodland, wildflower meadows and grassland. Although the site is still maturing, it provides important connections between new and existing habitats on an area which was previously commercially farmed for arable crops.

4.9 Now covered in over 600,000 native trees, the project was achieved through the help of thousands of volunteers and school children. When planting the trees, a variety of methods were trialled to assess their relative success for establishment. This included using both hay and traditional methods of protection, as well as unprotected planting.

4.10 Areas of open space intersperse the woodland planting and create opportunities for biodiversity-rich wildflower meadows and grassland. Furthermore, the creation of a community orchard and arboretum enhances local interaction with the space. Heartwood Forest has been sensitively planned in a way which allows the archaeological importance of the site to be revealed and therefore the time depth of the landscape to be perceived.

Considerations

- High levels of foot, bike and horse traffic, including informal access, can cause damage to sensitive habitats, particularly within areas of ancient woodland;
- Large deer population can pose a threat to the establishment of new trees;

- Irresponsible dog owners can cause disturbance to wildlife, particularly ground nesting birds; and
- Climate change and drought can play a considerable part within the successful establishment of trees as watering on this scale not feasible.

Lessons to take forward

- The methods of tree planting trials should be reviewed and assessed to inform successful largescale re-wilding projects in the future;
- Utilising a wide force of volunteers and school children to help deliver the project has seen high levels of engagement;
- volunteer experts as habitats establish is encouraged; and
- Planning for recreation should come at the start of any project to ensure sufficient space is given to both people and wildlife.

Figure 4.8: Heartwood Forest, St Albans [See reference 48]



Growing Community Wellbeing

Community Food Hubs, Luton

4.11 Supporting Luton's residents to address issues of food poverty, as well as enhancing mental and physical wellbeing alongside community cohesion.

4.12 Groundwork have supported the establishment of a series of community food growing hubs across Luton which have an overarching aim of addressing wellbeing issues and food poverty. The hubs offer a variety of low-cost activities which bring members of the community together in a manner which supports nutritious eating. Furthermore, the food grown within the hubs is redistributed within the community and used to enrich local food banks with nutritious produce.

4.13 Hubs have been established at Memorial Park Hub, Strathmore Hub, Farley Food Growing Hub, Dunstable South Children's Centre and Marsh Farm Futures. All of these provide opportunities for residents to learn new skills and meet new people. Furthermore, family learning and wild play sessions have been introduced to connect children with the outdoors, as well as enhance literacy and education.

Considerations

- Many of Hertfordshire's towns suffer from similar social and economic issues that Luton experiences, for example food poverty, inequality and unhealthy lifestyles; and
- Both Luton and a number of Hertfordshire's towns experience high density interiors where residents do not have access to large expanses of private outdoor space.

Lessons to take forward

- Partnership working has been a key driver for the success of these projects, with each hub having a different funding and start-up depending on its context and surrounding community;
- External funding has been the main driver behind the delivery of these hubs, including British Red Cross, Big Lottery Awards for All and Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation Community Investment Fund (CIF); and
- Small, underused and incidental green spaces have the potential to serve the community.

Figure 4.9: Community Food Hubs, Luton [See reference 49]



Sustainable Growth

Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

4.14 Delivering a new Garden Town which will create economically, environmentally and socially sustainable communities.

4.15 Harlow and Gilston was designated by the Government as a Garden Town in January 2017 and is proposed to supply an additional 23,000 homes to the region. Using Garden City principles, including beautifully designed neighbourhoods and homes, biodiverse landscapes, zero-carbon design, integrated active travel and sustainable transport, and long-term stewardship, the scheme will provide resilient communities of the future.

4.16 Green infrastructure plays an essential role from the outset of masterplanning within the Garden Town through its role in creating a framework for movement, delivering ecosystem services and integrating settlements with the wider countryside. Individual masterplans within the wider Garden Town will design new open space which expands on the existing Green Wedge network and connecting with strategic assets such as the Stort Valley. Furthermore, each individual settlement will require their own GI strategy which links with the overarching aims of the county. The existing settlement of Harlow will be a key focus for the retrofitting and regeneration of residential streets, public realm and employment space.

Considerations

- Much of the funding for green infrastructure projects within the Garden Town will come from developer contributions. The significant scale of new development means funding availability for large green infrastructure projects is viable, however this is not applicable to all projects across Hertfordshire; and

- The need for additional infrastructure will be significant to serve new communities. This will require careful planning to ensure negative environmental impacts are mitigated, for example the Stort Crossing.

Lessons to take forward

- A team of built environment and design professionals have been assembled to form a Quality Review Panel which will ensure the vision is delivered;
- Early and continued work with key stakeholders, including the Environment Agency, Canal and River Trust and RSPB, will be essential in the successful delivery of multifunctional GI; and
- The concept of Garden Towns requires holistic planning and multifunctional design, making GI work harder and to recognise theme imperatives.

Figure 4.10: Harlow and Gilston Garden Town [See reference 50]



Urban Cycling and Green Retrofit

Mini-Holland, Waltham Forest

4.17 London Borough of Waltham Forest have implemented 29km of segregated cycle lanes and improved 62 pedestrian crossings.

4.18 In 2013, London Borough of Waltham Forest secured funding from Transport for London (TfL) to upgrade the Borough's network of streets to tackle issues surrounding safety, air quality and public health. The scheme saw the introduction of significant stretches of new segregated cycle routes interspersed with greening, including trees, planters, parklets and pocket parks. Through enhancing the aesthetic appeal of Waltham Forest's streets, as well as reducing vehicular access, uptake of walking and cycling has increased dramatically within the Borough, with residents, on average, walking and cycling for 41 minutes a week more than those living in comparable areas.

4.19 The Mini-Holland scheme, now re-branded 'liveable neighbourhoods' across London, has changed residents' attitudes towards walking and cycling in a positive manner. This is reinforced through free safe cycling training within schools.

4.20 To ensure the legacy of the liveable neighbourhoods is continued and reinforced through development, the Council have produced a Mini-Holland Design Guide.

Considerations

- A number of active travel proposals are coming forward within Hertfordshire through the Active Travel Fund (£6.4 million). It is important these schemes are well-designed and link with the wider network;

- Identified barriers to walking and cycling include lack of physical infrastructure, safety, lack of awareness or training, and social and cultural attitudes; and
- Restricting car use and enhancing active travel in town centres can help to achieve aspirations for 15-minute, liveable neighbourhoods.

Lessons to take forward

- Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles;
- Offer direct walking and cycling routes;
- Install cycle hubs and hangars to make storing bikes more easily for residents;
- Design new outdoor space, including parklets and pocket parks, throughout the scheme;
- Upgrade bus stops to make them more attractive;
- Produce an active travel design guide; and
- Consider cross-boundary planning at an early stage within the design process.

Figure 4.11: Mini-Holland, Waltham Forest [See reference 51]



Chapter 5

Development of the Vision

This chapter explores the effectiveness of the 2011 Plan, outlines the updated vision and objectives, and introduces the 'themed' approach.

Summary of GI delivery and implementation since 2011

5.1 Early consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken to help identify key attitudes, expectations and aspirations for GI across Hertfordshire. A focussed website was used to gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the GI network, perceived GI deficits and opportunities across the county. The key findings are listed below.

Summary of key issues

- Delivery of strategic projects since 2011 has been minimal or non-existent. Where progress was noted, this was often not attributed to pre-existing projects or schemes driven by other key drivers;
- Requirement to re-visit the overarching drivers and vision for GI within Hertfordshire and update to reflect the 2021 context;
- Projects identified as priority projects within the 2011 Plan are now out of date and should be updated to reflect revised county-wide objectives and needs;
- Limited usage of the 2011 Plan as a working document by Policy Planners and Development Control;

- Requirement for a renewed emphasis on strategy, delivery and implementation; and
- Updates required to reflect the emerging importance of the growth agenda across Hertfordshire.

Development of the vision

5.2 The vision for GI within Hertfordshire aims to set the roadmap for delivering the county's future direction of travel in relation to delivering sustainable, healthy, biodiverse and prosperous communities. Figure 5.1 displays some of the most regularly used words by key stakeholders when they were asked the following questions:

- Are there any outcomes you would like to see in the upcoming review that would enable more effective local planning policies for GI in Hertfordshire?
- Are there any outcomes you would like to see in the upcoming review that would enable improved GI delivery mechanisms in Hertfordshire?

5.3 The prevalence of words such as 'projects' reinforces the need for deliverable and clear project opportunities to fall out of the Strategy which can easily be taken forward by the relevant authority. Furthermore, the use of words such as 'local,' 'strategic' and 'scale' highlights the importance of the Strategy in delivering opportunities across the spectrum. The frequency of the terms 'clear,' 'needs' and 'objectives' would point towards the creation of a strong set of objectives which are designed to achieve the vision and are informed by a thorough assessment of need.

5.4 Other key words which have been highlighted include 'development' and 'funding,' which could point towards developer contributions being an efficient mechanism for delivery, 'engagement' and 'authorities', which could reinforce the importance of engagement with stakeholders as well as between LPAs, and the use of 'linked' and 'network', which emphasises the importance of a cohesive and joined up green and blue network at both the county and local scale.

Figure 5.1: Themes and words which occurred regularly when stakeholders were asked how the Strategy could enable more effective GI delivery mechanisms and incorporation into local planning policy in Hertfordshire



The ‘themed’ approach

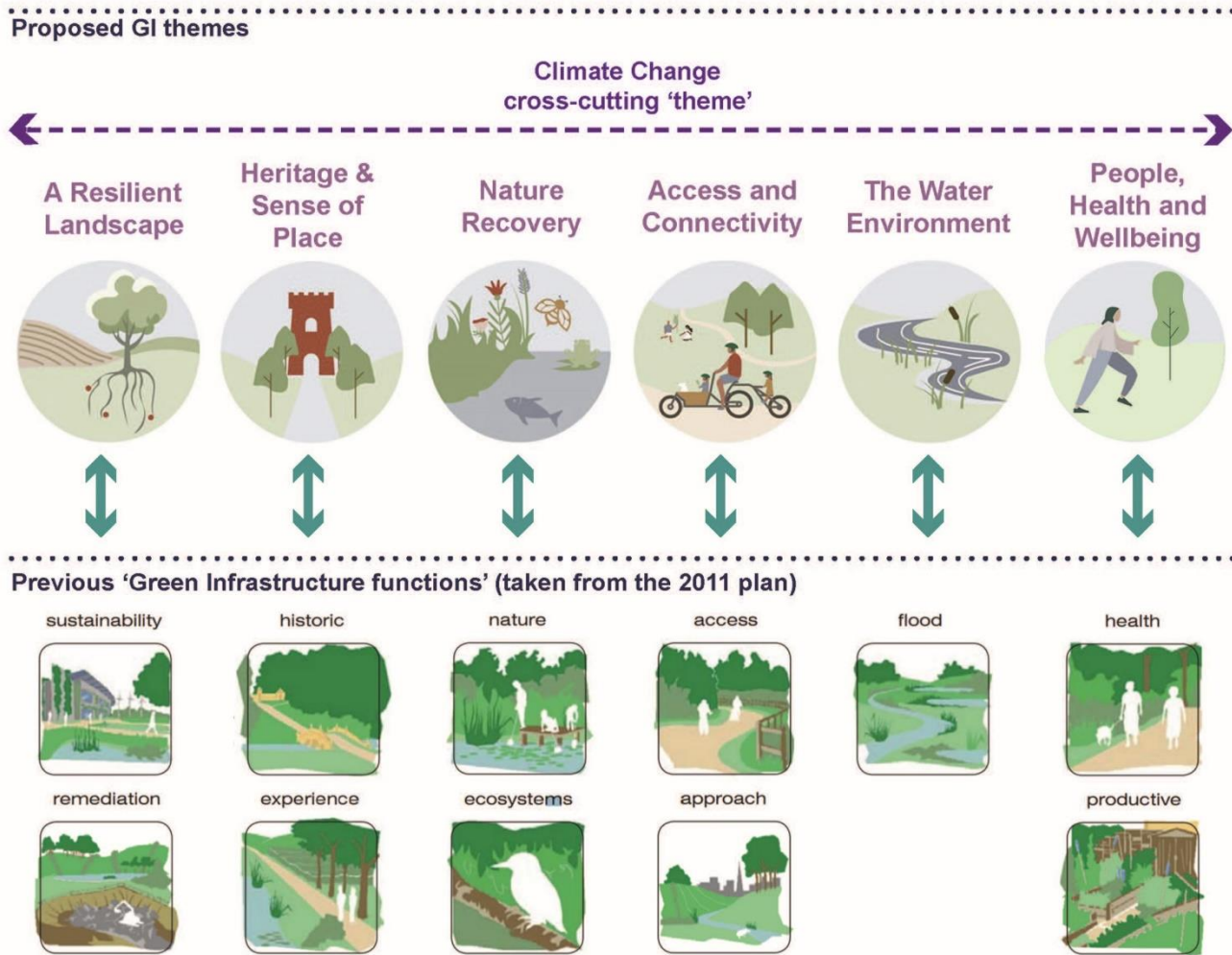
5.5 To provide a comprehensive baseline and evaluation of the GI network in Hertfordshire, a ‘themed’ approach to the assessment will be adopted. This desk-based analysis will be undertaken in order to understand the various

functions and ecosystem services, including the multifunctional benefits, provided by the GI network. The 11 'GI ecosystem functions' captured in the 2011 Plan will be rationalised and categorised into six 'GI themes' to provide a holistic view of the GI network (see Figure 5.2). Climate change will act as an overarching theme, signalling its importance as a driver of the Strategy.

- **A Resilient Landscape:** Identifying areas to protect, connect and enhance, through the creation of a framework for resilient GI networks.
- **Heritage and Sense of Place:** Recognising and considering Hertfordshire's rich historic, archaeological and cultural assets alongside its distinctive landscape heritage.
- **The Water Environment:** Realising the full potential of the county's network of rivers, ditches, wetlands and open water in providing habitats and nature-based solutions to strategic challenges.
- **Access and Connectivity:** Creating permeable landscapes for sustainable travel whilst sensitively enhancing access to nature and green space.
- **Nature Recovery:** Identifying connected and conserved networks of habitats across Hertfordshire.
- **People, Health and Wellbeing:** Consideration of the health and societal benefits of GI within Hertfordshire.

5.6 GI themes will be structures with 'key GI assets,' which provide a detailed overview of the assets in Hertfordshire, and 'key opportunities', which highlight where the network can be enhanced upon the issues identified.

Figure 5.2: Proposed GI themes and their relationship to the former GI functions from the 2011 Plan

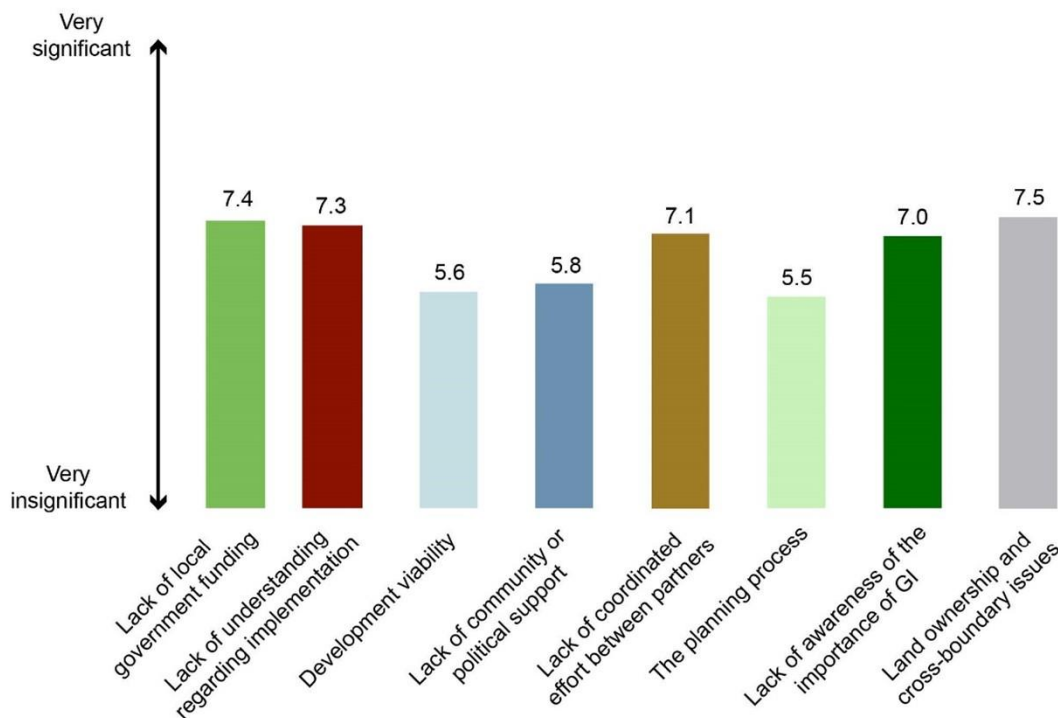


Next steps and recommendations to take forward as part of the Strategy

- Integrate GI project proposals into planning policy and place a greater emphasis on embedding GI in spatial planning;
- Incorporate guidance regarding delivery and viability of large strategic schemes;
- Provide cross-cutting strategic guidance, recommendations, and priority actions for GI in Hertfordshire;
- Deliver greater focus on securing GI project implementation through a combination of delivery and funding models as well as the adoption of GI standards and principles;
- Integrate maintenance and management requirements as key considerations when identifying potential projects;
- Outline a prioritised set of GI projects and investments for the county;
- Ensure overarching ownership of GI delivery by a central body or organisation;
- Address the competing demands of ecological enhancement and recreational demand;
- Identify delivery partners and outline project costings to ensure that realistic 'asks' can be incorporated into Infrastructure Delivery Plans associated with Local Plan delivery Promote collaboration between LPAs within Hertfordshire regarding GI delivery;
- Ensure a greater alignment with strategic objectives in relation to the ambitions of the county, e.g. for education, highways etc; and
- Deliver a user friendly document which can be implemented as part of everyday planning procedures in the county.

Figure 5.3: Mean value score (from 0-10) by stakeholders when determining the significance of barriers to GI delivery

Overall, how significant do you consider each of the following issues present barriers to GI delivery in Hertfordshire?



Barriers to GI delivery and their significance score

- Lack of local government funding: 7.4;
- Lack of understanding regarding implementation: 7.3;
- Development viability: 5.6;
- Lack of community or political support: 5.8;
- Lack of coordinated effort between partners: 7.1;
- The planning process: 5.5;
- Lack of awareness of the importance of GI: 7.0; and
- Land ownership and cross-boundary issues: 7.5.

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Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Part 2a: Green Infrastructure Baseline,
Analysis and Priorities

Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2022

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft	R Hammonds L Beagley A Peet	S Crewe	K Ahern	February 2022
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The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) provides a forum to discuss and, where appropriate, develop a shared view and agree joint work programmes on infrastructure and planning issues of common concern. A key objective is to work co-operatively within Hertfordshire and across the county borders according to the principles of localism and the duty to co-operate. The Partnership works together with Hertfordshire Forward, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Local Transport Body for Hertfordshire, the Local Nature Partnership and other appropriate organisations in areas of shared interest to develop and where possible and necessary agree joint approaches to common issues. The Chairman, or his or her deputy, represents the Partnership as appropriate on external bodies, including the Board of the Local Transport Body for Hertfordshire.



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Chapter 1

Functional analysis – the current Green Infrastructure network

This chapter identifies and summarises Hertfordshire’s existing Green Infrastructure (GI) assets and builds on the findings of Part 1: Setting the Scene.

1.1 The analysis has been divided into several ‘themes’, which provide a useful framework to understand and plan for GI in the county. The review of existing GI functionality also aims to reflect the twin emergencies of climate and nature recovery as well as the role of GI in supporting the wellbeing of communities within Hertfordshire. The themes are listed below:

- Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape;
- Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place;
- Theme 3: Nature Recovery;
- Theme 4: Access and Connectivity;
- Theme 5: The Water Environment; and
- Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing.

1.2 The relevance of GI to each theme is examined as well as the key assets and factors influencing the need for GI. This analysis includes a review of socioeconomic indicators in order to help identify severance and areas for GI interventions. Each theme is concluded with a summary of ‘GI Priorities’. The chapters have been derived through a combination of desk study (including GIS analysis) and targeted stakeholder consultation. This thematic approach is then carried forward within the Strategy to identify a series of ‘GI Priority Actions’ (see Figure 1.1) with the aim of delivering protection, enhancement and

Chapter 1 Functional analysis – the current Green Infrastructure network

additions to the county GI network. Key findings from the series of stakeholder workshops are included in Appendix A.

Figure 1.1: Process to identify GI Priorities and GI Priority Actions



Consultation with the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HiPP)

Part 2a: Green Infrastructure Baseline, Analysis and Priorities	✓	✓	
Part 2b: Green Infrastructure Priority Actions and Delivery			✓
	Summary of GI assets and key factors influencing the need for GI	Establishment of priorities to repair, reconnect and restore GI	Identification of strategic scale GI Priority Actions and associated delivery mechanisms

Chapter 2

Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape

Why is the theme relevant to GI in Hertfordshire?

2.1 The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, plus the effects of economic and technological changes are having (and will continue to have) a profound effect on Hertfordshire's landscape. Threats include species decline and habitat loss through recreation pressures and fragmentation due to urbanisation and agriculture. GI forms an essential component in the creation of resilient, healthy and sustainable communities. All habitats can play a role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, providing climate resilience at the 'frontline' of effects, as well as providing multiple GI benefits. Examples of this includes riparian woodland and wetlands improving drainage, therefore reducing flood risk and improving water quality, or shelter belts of vegetation enhancing air quality next to trunk roads or regulating urban temperatures. The county's stock of natural capital assets – geology, soil, air, water, land and biodiversity provide flows of 'ecosystem' services as benefits for people. These assets and how they are managed provide the foundation of a resilient landscape.

Key assets

Geology and soils

2.2 The geology of Hertfordshire is dominated by the solid formations of chalk, overlain in the south and east by London Clay, with small areas of Gault Clay located in the north and north-west (see Figure 2.1). The Chiltern Hills and Vale

of St. Albans provide the principal topographical features within the county. Superficial deposits overlay the areas of solid geology, including clay-with-flints across much of west Hertfordshire; the boulder clay of central and east Hertfordshire as well as the gravels of the river valleys and the Vale at St. Albans (see Figure 2.2). Sand and gravel are the major aggregate minerals worked in the county. These extraction sites are concentrated primarily to the south of a line between Bishop's Stortford in the east and Hemel Hempstead in the west. The protection of GI forms a key component of the minerals planning process. The restoration/after-use of mineral extraction sites provides wide-ranging opportunities for positive GI planning, delivering landscape character enhancements and the restoration of degraded sites. The spatial clustering of sites also offers the potential for strategically connected initiatives to address GI gaps and needs as part of this Strategy.

2.3 The distribution of soils within the county is characterised by alkaline or neutral chalky soil in the north and east with acid leached soils covering the central and western areas of Hertfordshire (see Figure 2.3). However, settlements within the county are primarily located on the rich gravel deposits of the river valleys. The Government's 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment **[See reference 1]** highlights the importance of soil health in achieving resilient communities. It also highlights its commitment to protecting the best agricultural land, placing a value on soils as a part of natural capital and emphasising the need to manage soils in a sustainable way by 2030.

Woodland

2.4 The Forestry Commission National Forest Inventory (NFI) Map for England covers all forest and woodland area over 0.5 hectare. Woodlands occupy 10% of Hertfordshire, of which approximately 9% is broadleaved and 1% is coniferous (see Figure 2.4). However, this figure is considered to double when canopy cover including new planting, clearfell, windblow and restocked areas is included. Some 3,812 ha are also defined as ancient woodland, providing important habitats. Key opportunities for GI involve the potential enhancement and reconnection of woodland sites through the introduction of additional broadleaf woodland planting schemes. Woodland coverage contributes to

climate resilience and adaptation in a number of ways, including planning for changes in the ranges of species' range and assemblage, reducing habitat fragmentation and protecting species refugia. Trees and woodland also promote cooling, pollutant absorption and carbon sequestration. In addition, the woodlands of Hertfordshire influence landscape character and local distinctiveness. Examples include the oak/hornbeam dominated woodlands, the characteristic beech hangers of the Chiltern Hills and the network of traditional community orchards.

2.5 Hertfordshire's State of Nature [\[See reference 2\]](#) report highlights that whilst the area of woodland within the county has increased, species associated with this habitat continue to decline (refer to Theme 3: Nature Recovery). These changes are attributed to a range of issues including; variation in the structure and condition of established woodlands due to tree diseases, increased browsing pressure and changes to management practices. Human recreational disturbance is also noted as a contributory factor. Further issues for Hertfordshire's woodlands include habitat fragmentation, isolation and lack of beneficial management. The presence of tree pests, pathogens and disease are impacting on the county's characteristic trees including oak and ash, while the shallow rooted beech of the Chilterns Hills are vulnerable to increasing storms associated with climate change. The Strategy offers the potential to plan for new large scale woodland creation or community forests within Hertfordshire. Covering an area of approximately 186 km², the Watling Chase Community Forest forms one of 12 Community Forests located within England.

Farmland

2.6 Over half of Hertfordshire's landscape is characterised by arable farmland, which is greater than the national average. There is a distinct east-west division within the county with the clayland landscapes to the east being primarily arable, with a greater proportion of improved grazing land lying to the west. A mosaic of traditional orchards also stretch across the county, covering approximately 145 ha and providing a wide range of wildlife benefits [\[See reference 3\]](#). This assemblage of agricultural land uses contribute to the distinctive landscape character of the county.

2.7 Approximately 79% of Hertfordshire's agricultural land is classed as either Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3 (see Figure 2.5). This denotes land which is either graded excellent, very good or good to moderate in quality, i.e. land that can produce high yields, has the widest versatility of use, produces the most consistent yield and therefore requires the least input [See reference 4]. On this land, food production will usually continue to be a priority. The county's highest quality agricultural land is generally found in the east of the county, located primarily within the administrative boundaries of North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire. Clusters of Grade 2 land are also found on the settlement edge of urban centres such as Hertford, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, St Albans and Hemel Hempstead.

2.8 While the primary agricultural product is crops, farmland within Hertfordshire provides many other ecosystem services and benefits if managed effectively. These include soil stabilisation, surface water storage and flood attenuation, sequestration of carbon, as well as provision of access to the countryside for recreation as part of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network (see Theme 4: Access and Connectivity). Farmland also forms the rural setting for Hertfordshire's towns and villages. However, agricultural management has been a significant driver of biodiversity loss in the UK, as management practices are often not geared to these wider environmental functions. The urge to maximise yields through intensification has often exacerbated issues such as soil erosion and hedgerow removal. Run-off of nutrients from intensive agriculture is also a key source of pollution of surface and ground waters.

2.9 Agri-environment schemes provide funding to farmers and land managers to farm in a way that supports biodiversity, enhances the landscape and improves the quality of water, air and soil. There is a high take up of Countryside Stewardship schemes in Hertfordshire, particularly within the highly agricultural districts of East Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire, as shown in Figure 2.6. There are key opportunities to enhance multi functionality of farmland landscapes in Hertfordshire. The potential also exists to integrate GI by encouraging uptake of emerging initiatives such as the new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) which will largely supersede the Countryside Stewardship scheme. This will provide a key opportunity for enhancement of agricultural land within the county.

Figure 2.1: Bedrock geology

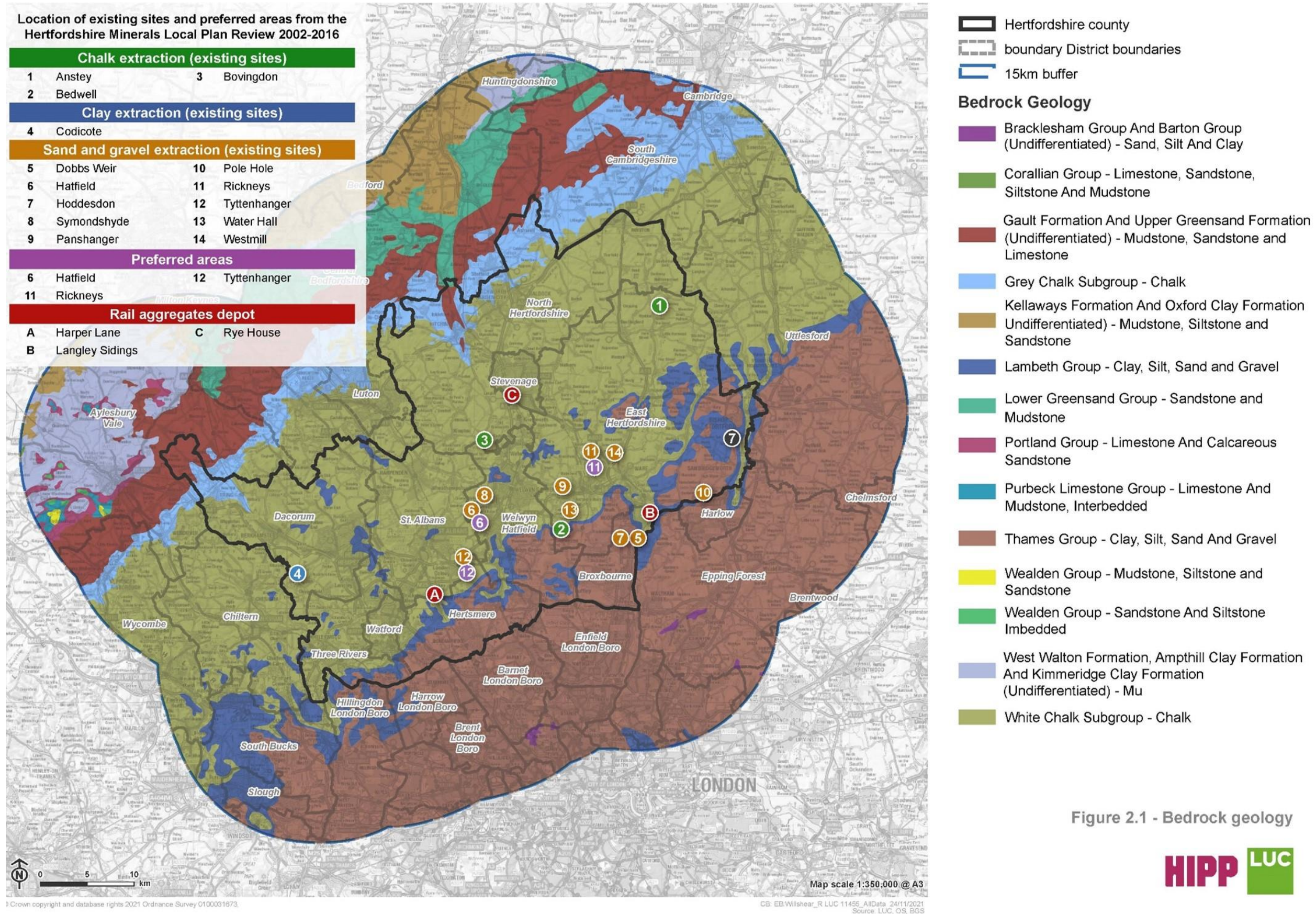


Figure 2.1 - Bedrock geology



Figure 2.2: Superficial geology

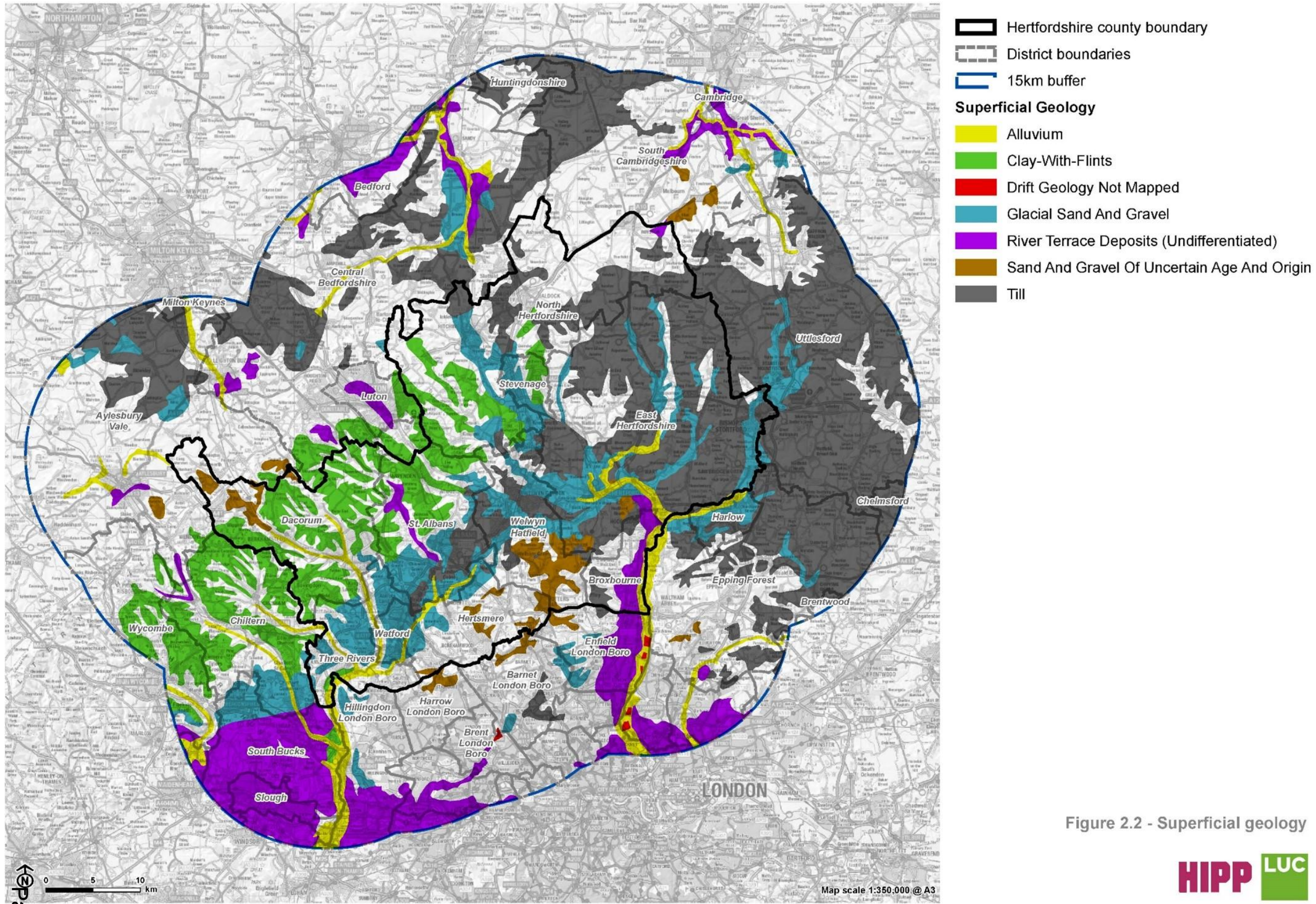
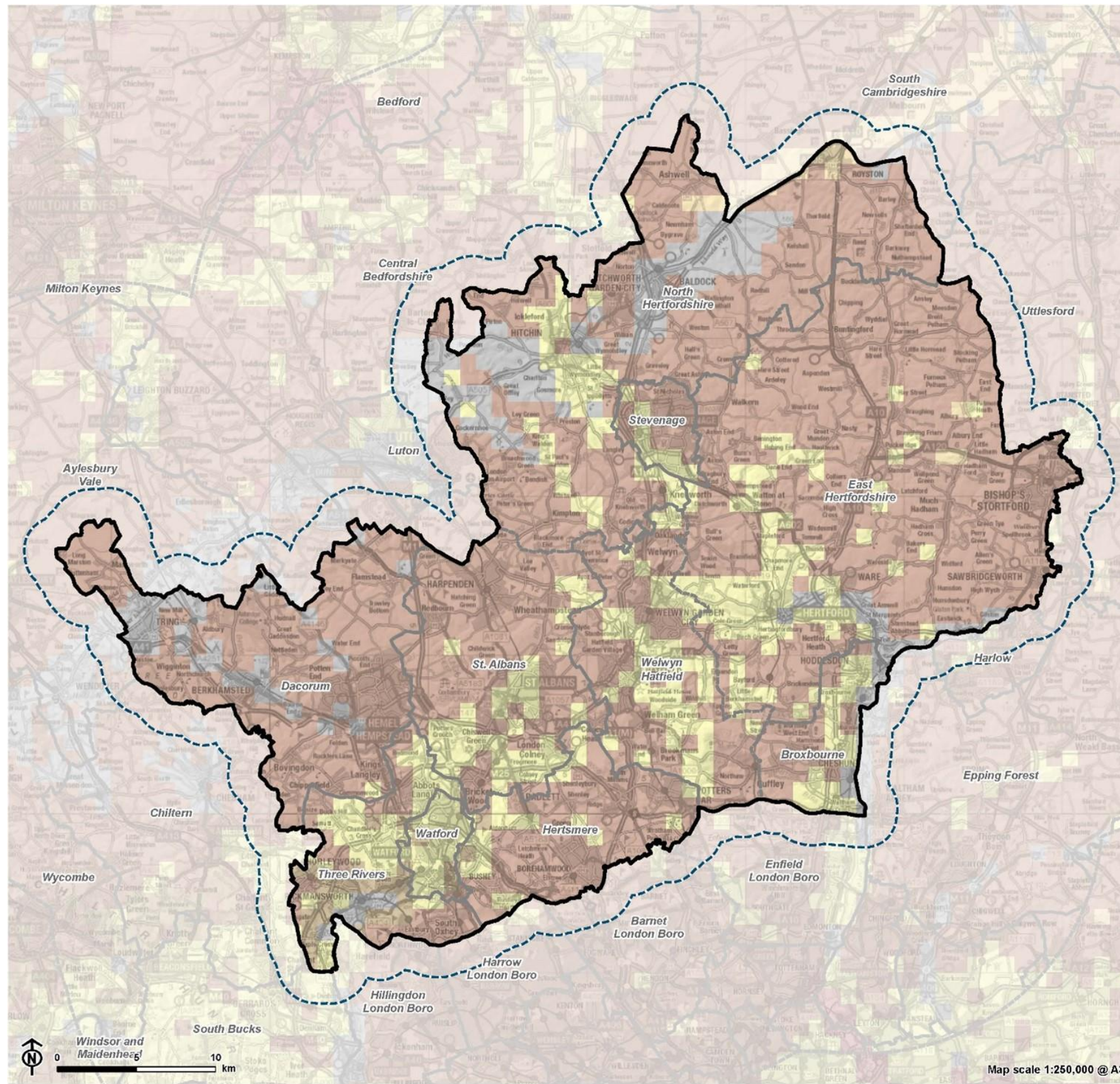


Figure 2.2 - Superficial geology



Figure 2.3: Soils



- Hertfordshire county boundary
- 2km buffer
- District boundaries
- Soil Group**
- LIGHTEST SOILS
- MEDIUM AND/TO LIGHT
- MEDIUM SOILS
- MEDIUM AND/TO HEAVY
- HEAVIEST SOILS
- MIXED or ORGANIC
- NA

Figure 2.3 - Soils



Figure 2.4: Woodland cover

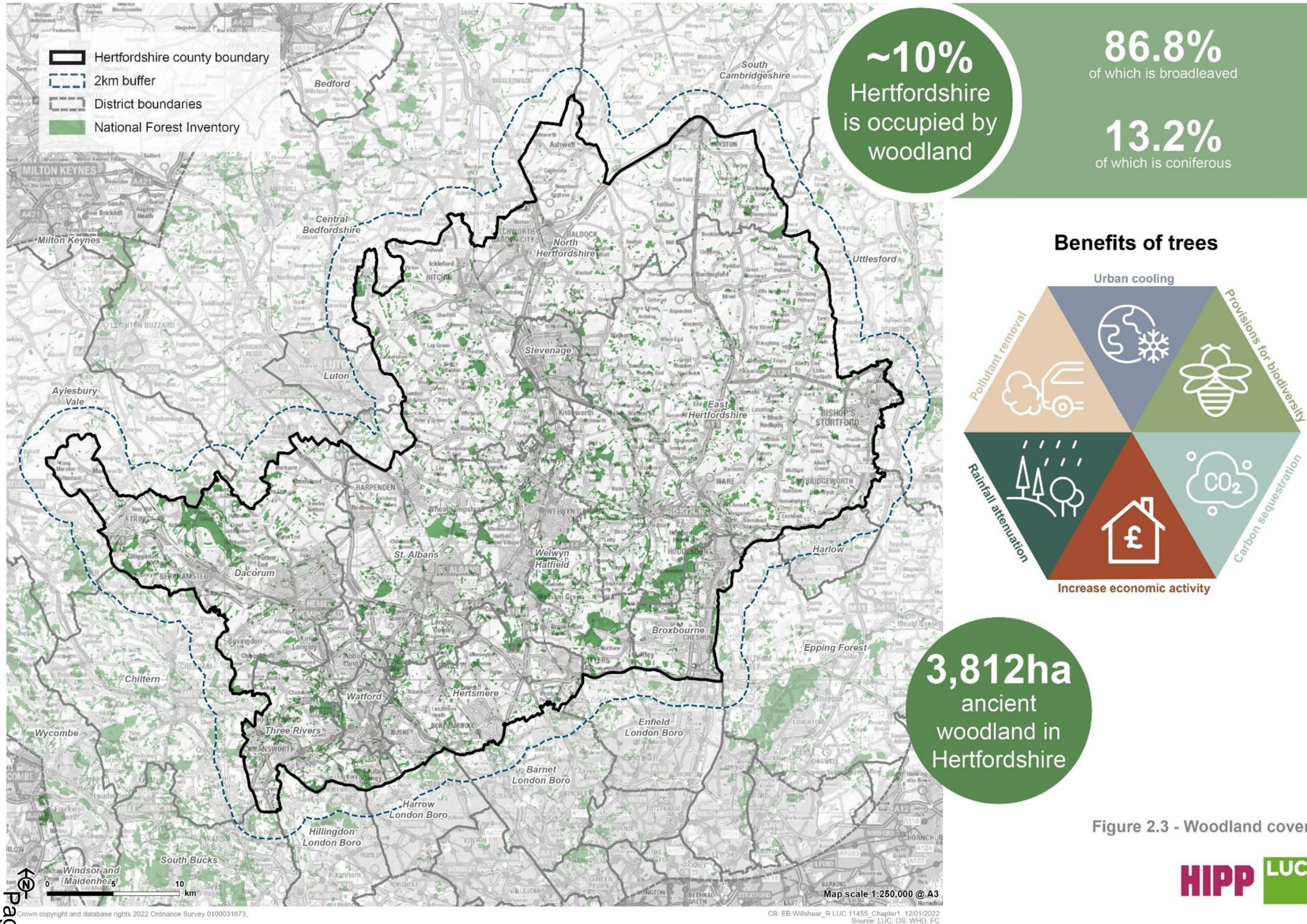


Figure 2.3 - Woodland cover



Figure 2.5: Agricultural Land Classifications

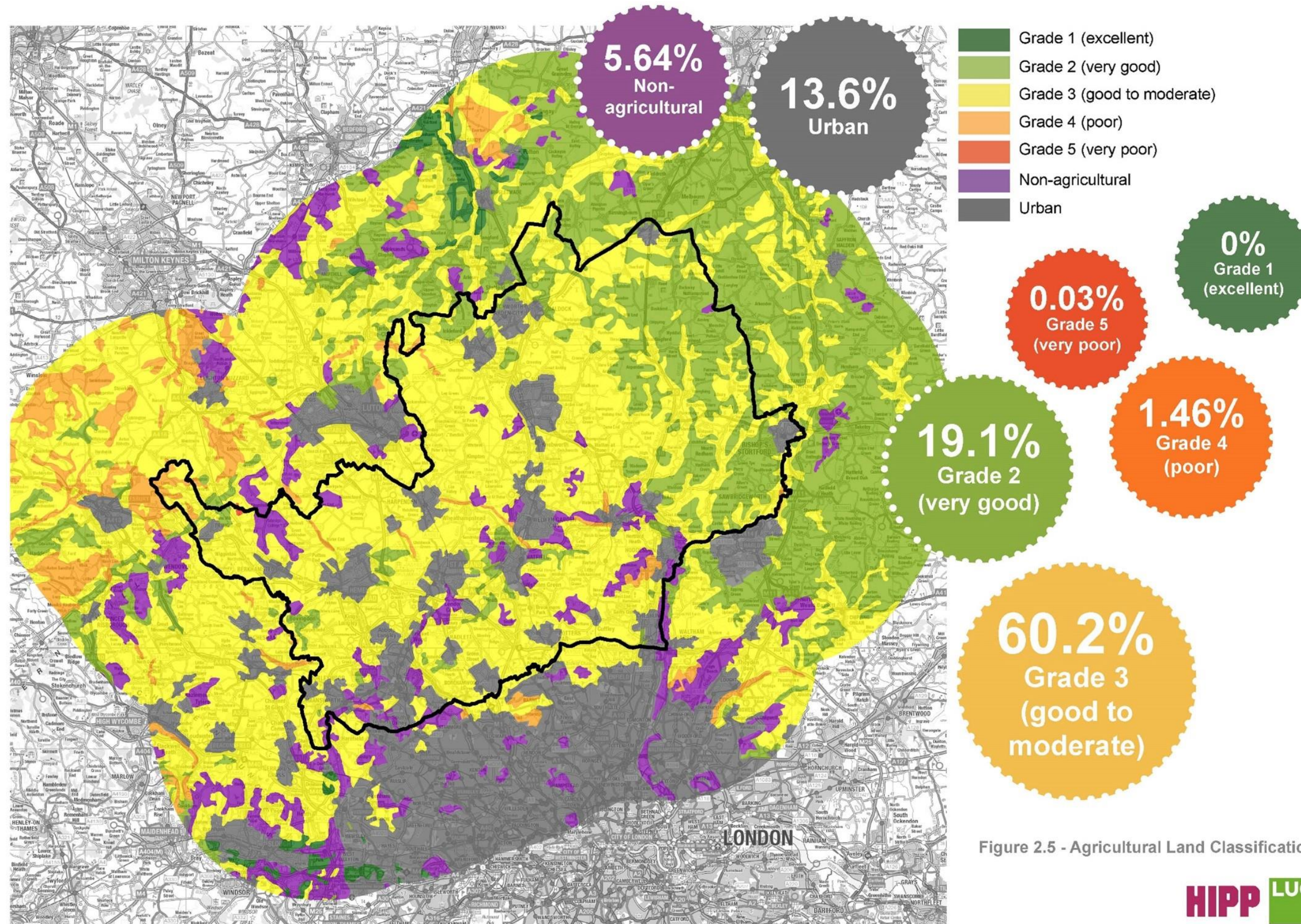
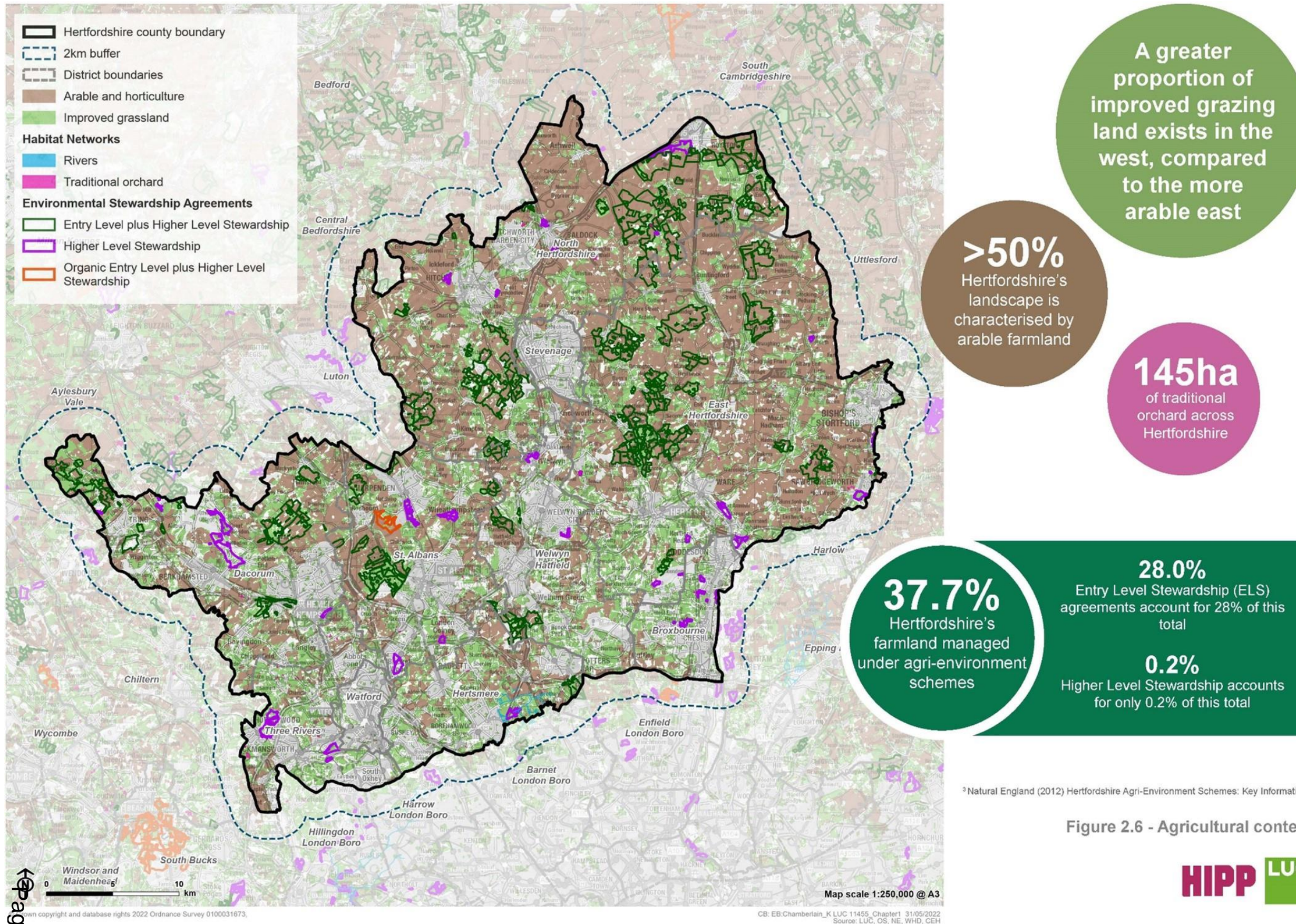


Figure 2.5 - Agricultural Land Classification



Figure 2.6: Agricultural context



³ Natural England (2012) Hertfordshire Agri-Environment Schemes: Key Information

Figure 2.6 - Agricultural context



Key factors influencing the need for GI

The effects of a changing climate

2.10 In the case of farming, certain agricultural methods contribute to global warming, but a changing climate can have significant effects on the viability of agriculture and food production. Future effects on the agricultural sector at the county level will include greater pressure on water availability and competing demands for water. This trend is evidenced by noticeable reductions in ground water levels in recent years. Other effects include the likelihood of a decline in agricultural productivity as a result of extreme weather events. New and emerging pests and diseases also have the potential to cause severe impacts on animals and plants [See reference 5]. These effects are likely to be complex as systems adapt in different ways and impacts at the local level are not easy to predict. While initially the benefits of warmer temperatures and longer growing seasons may be experienced, in the longer term these will become outweighed by reductions in water availability [See reference 6].

2.11 Effects of climate change on woodland and forestry may be even more severe than effects on agriculture, due to the sector's long production cycle [See reference 7]. In addition to drought stress and mortality, natural regeneration could be adversely affected by rising temperatures as recently planted trees take longer to establish. Drier conditions will also increase the risk of wildfire damage, and forest pests and pathogens are likely to increase [See reference 8]. The recent rapid spread of 'ash dieback' (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) disease across UK forests has highlighted the risk of such diseases to the country's tree cover and timber industry [See reference 9].

2.12 GI interventions in agricultural and woodland landscapes at the county level can help combat these challenges. For example, increasing the diversity of woodlands can make them less vulnerable to changes in temperature and pests. The introduction of greater diversity into agricultural systems (for example, incorporating trees and hedges into arable land) can also make farmland more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Woodland expansion and the need to shape the landscape as a carbon sink

2.13 GI can boost the capacity of a local environment to accommodate sustainable development and contribute to the delivery of sustainable land management. Woodland creation and expansion offers the potential to deliver benefits for carbon sequestration, the creation of wildlife corridors as well as a contribution to natural flood management, therefore helping to increase climate adaptation. Mitigation of climate change and carbon capture could provide an incentive for woodland creation across Hertfordshire. Potential locations for woodland creation include the M1 and A1 transport corridors, land within the Watling Chase Community Forest and the Lee/Stort river valleys to ensure the provision of strategic county linkages. The Emerging post-Brexit payment mechanisms for the agriculture sector suggests that agro-forestry is likely to play an important role in the expansion of tree cover. The opportunity therefore exists to maximise sequestration and carbon storage within the county through afforestation, agro-forestry, hedge creation, broadleaf management and habitat restoration.

Increased uptake of sustainable farming practices, including the move away from meat towards plant-based diets

2.14 The move towards sustainable, environmentally friendly farming practices which work with nature aim to deliver a range of environmental services beyond food production. There is growing evidence that conventional, intensive farming practises have led to environmental decline and in part contributed to the biodiversity and climate crises [See reference 10]. Farmland managed sustainably can help to address these issues whilst delivering a number of other ecosystem services (e.g. food production, access to nature, quality water, sufficient water).

2.15 Now is a time of great change in the agriculture sector, but one which provides huge opportunity to enhance the environment. The new ELMs is currently being rolled out in England and is based upon a system that rewards farmers for maximising the range of public goods delivered by farmland, including clean water, carbon sequestration and providing access for people to enjoy the countryside. The shift towards plant-based diets is also a trend with the potential to significantly impact agriculture in the UK. Approximately 25% of the population of the UK now a adopt a meat-free or meat-reduced diet. This trend is partly driven by increased consumer awareness of the negative environmental, health and animal welfare implications of meat and dairy consumption [\[See reference 11\]](#).

2.16 GI also offers a wide range of opportunities for local food growing, including community growing projects, traditional allotments, orchards and growing as an integral part of domestic, community, employment and education development. These initiatives offer the potential for a change in the diversity of food production with a move to much greater community involvement and a significant reduction in food miles for the food that is grown.

Theme 1: Summary of GI Priorities

2.17 1A: Expand tree coverage and enhance woodland connectivity within the county. Woodland creation and enhancement should include allowing natural regeneration to occur (for example through relaxing land management techniques, removing opportunities for grazing or reducing trampling) and the introduction of mixed, multi species and complex/diverse canopy plantations. This approach recognises the vulnerability of Hertfordshire oak, ash and beech. As a consequence, the creation of new woodland must be aligned with beneficial management of the existing woodland resource. Potential locations for woodland creation include the M1 and A1 transport corridors, land within the Watling Chase Community Forest and the Lee/Stort river valleys to ensure county linkages are provided. The potential for re-invention of a community forest and the provision of tree coverage to provide a vegetated buffer to settlements should also be explored.

2.18 1B: Integrate GI and sustainable farming practices to support biodiversity and encourage uptake of agri-environment schemes. Management of arable farmland should enhance soil health, carbon sequestration, manage soil erosion and address flood risk/water quality run off through regenerative farming and agro-forestry. These principles should involve the restoration and enhancement of the distinctive chalk scarp landscape. The restoration of hedgerow cover and pollinators within the county should also be explored. In order to achieve these aims, the opportunity exists for the introduction of farmland GI projects to encourage uptake of agri-environment schemes. This includes a framework to integrate into new and future land management schemes, including agri-environment payments (e.g. ELMs), Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), biodiversity off-setting and payment for ecosystem services.

2.19 1C: Enhance and remediate the landscape condition of deteriorating landscapes within the county. GI delivery offers the opportunity to focus on remediating the deteriorating landscapes of Hertfordshire – e.g. lowland agricultural landscapes characterised by a loss of hedgerows and trees, urban fringe influences and linear infrastructure. The potential exists to increase the health and resilience of the landscape to create high quality and functioning landscapes close to where people live. This should also form a key consideration in areas where new development is proposed. Opportunities to focus on providing a network of connected restoration of sand and gravel extraction sites should be explored in order to achieve wider GI objectives.

2.20 1D: Anticipate and plan for future climate change by introducing enhancements to the diversity of woodland and wider agricultural systems. Climate change has significant potential to alter the pressures placed on Hertfordshire's landscape. GI and the introduction of Nature based Solutions (NbS) should therefore be utilised as mechanisms to adapt to and combat future climatic change. This should include enhancements to the diversity of agricultural systems and woodlands with the aim of making them less vulnerable and more resistant to future change. The restoration of ecosystems should address these challenges, including by utilising the role of the landscape as a carbon sink. Consideration should also be given to re-wilding opportunities - working with nature to create richer, dynamic, more resilient landscapes with wider connections which link landscape-scale interventions across

Hertfordshire. This will help species and wildlife communities adapt to the pressures of changing microclimates and habitats.

Chapter 3

Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place

Why is this theme relevant to GI in Hertfordshire?

3.1 Hertfordshire has a unique and varied landscape which contains a range of historic assets, providing the county with a distinctive sense of time-depth. The diversity of this landscape plays an important role in the enjoyment and experience of the county's GI assets. The strategic management of this multi-functional network is essential in maintaining Hertfordshire's distinct landscape character and the setting and interpretation of heritage features.

Key assets

Landscape character

3.2 Hertfordshire has a diverse landscape character which is represented by six distinct National Character Areas (NCA) [See reference 12], as detailed below in Figure 3.1, and 173 local Landscape Character Areas (LCA) [See reference 13]. Although the local LCAs are not explored fully within this strategy, it is recommended that the relevant character information is consulted when developing proposals for GI to ensure design is context-led and appropriate to its setting. Stretching from the wooded chalk scarp of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the north-west, towards the floodplains of the River Lea and River Colne in the south-east and south-west, the landscape beyond the urban settlements is typified by an agricultural character. This mosaic of functional landscape; including chalk grasslands, rolling farmland, historic parkland and ancient woodland, is dissected by the

predominantly chalk river valleys which act as natural corridors for the movement of people and wildlife. Furthermore, Hertfordshire has a number of rare historic landscape types, including Co Axial Enclosure across Hertsmere, Dacorum and St Albans, as well as a small distribution of watercress beds within the county's river valleys.

Hertfordshire's National Character Areas (NCAs)

- NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland – A gently undulating, ancient landscape of arable farmland dissected by small river valleys with a distinct sense of wooded enclosure.
- NCA 87: East Anglia Chalk – A continuation of the Chilterns chalk ridge, comprised of a rolling landscape with large regular fields, few trees and expansive views to the north.
- NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands – A predominantly arable and productive landscape with a patchwork of semi-natural habitats and ecological designations which provide opportunities for human interaction with nature.
- NCA 110: Chilterns – An attractive mosaic of agriculture, woodland and chalk grassland dissected by chalk streams. The NCA is highly influenced by the proximity of major settlements, their fringes and growth areas.
- NCA 111: Northern Thames Basin – An area rich in geodiversity, archaeology and ecology which is characterised by its open arable landscape. Interspersed between the wooded plateau and river valleys is significant urbanisation.
- NCA 115: Thames Valley – A low-lying landscape characterised by hydrological features, semi-natural habitats and the corridor of the River Thames. Human influence and infrastructure provide urbanising features.

Landscape designations and Green Belt

3.3 7% of Hertfordshire is designated as Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). The Chilterns AONB comprises the north-western extents of the county, as shown in Figure 3.2, forming a significant GI asset within Hertfordshire. Special qualities of the AONB include panoramic views, nationally important chalk grassland, expanses of farmland, relative tranquillity, high woodland coverage, nationally important chalk streams, a diverse archaeological landscape, national trails, distinctive buildings and industrial heritage [See reference 14]. The importance of the AONB in providing access to high-quality natural environments has been recognised through recent proposals by Natural England to expand the AONB in response to the findings of the Landscapes Review (“the Glover Review”) [See reference 15].

3.4 Hertfordshire does not have any local landscape designations; however, this is not an indication that there are no landscape worthy of this designation across the county (as the application of local landscape designations across England is inconsistent due to past changes in national planning guidance emphasis) [See reference 16]. Although not formally recognised, landscape of high local value occur across Hertfordshire. The outputs of the county’s Landscape Character Assessment, alongside stakeholder engagement, can be a starting point for identifying these areas of high value.

Green Belt

3.5 51% of Hertfordshire’s rural landscape, excluding the north-east of the county, is protected as Metropolitan Green Belt. Green Belt is a planning designation, not a landscape designation, and is designed to minimise the potential for unchecked sprawl and coalescence of settlements, whilst retaining a sense of place and openness, safeguarding green space and enhancing the urban setting. This is particularly important for the county’s numerous market towns, new towns and garden village communities, where GI formed an essential tool within their masterplanning and settlement configuration. The Green Belt designation also provides a nod to Hertfordshire’s role in the

development of modern town planning. Consequently, tighter conditions for the release of land for development is created, ensuring the delivery of well-designed built form and GI which is sensitive to its surrounding visual and landscape setting.

Town planning heritage

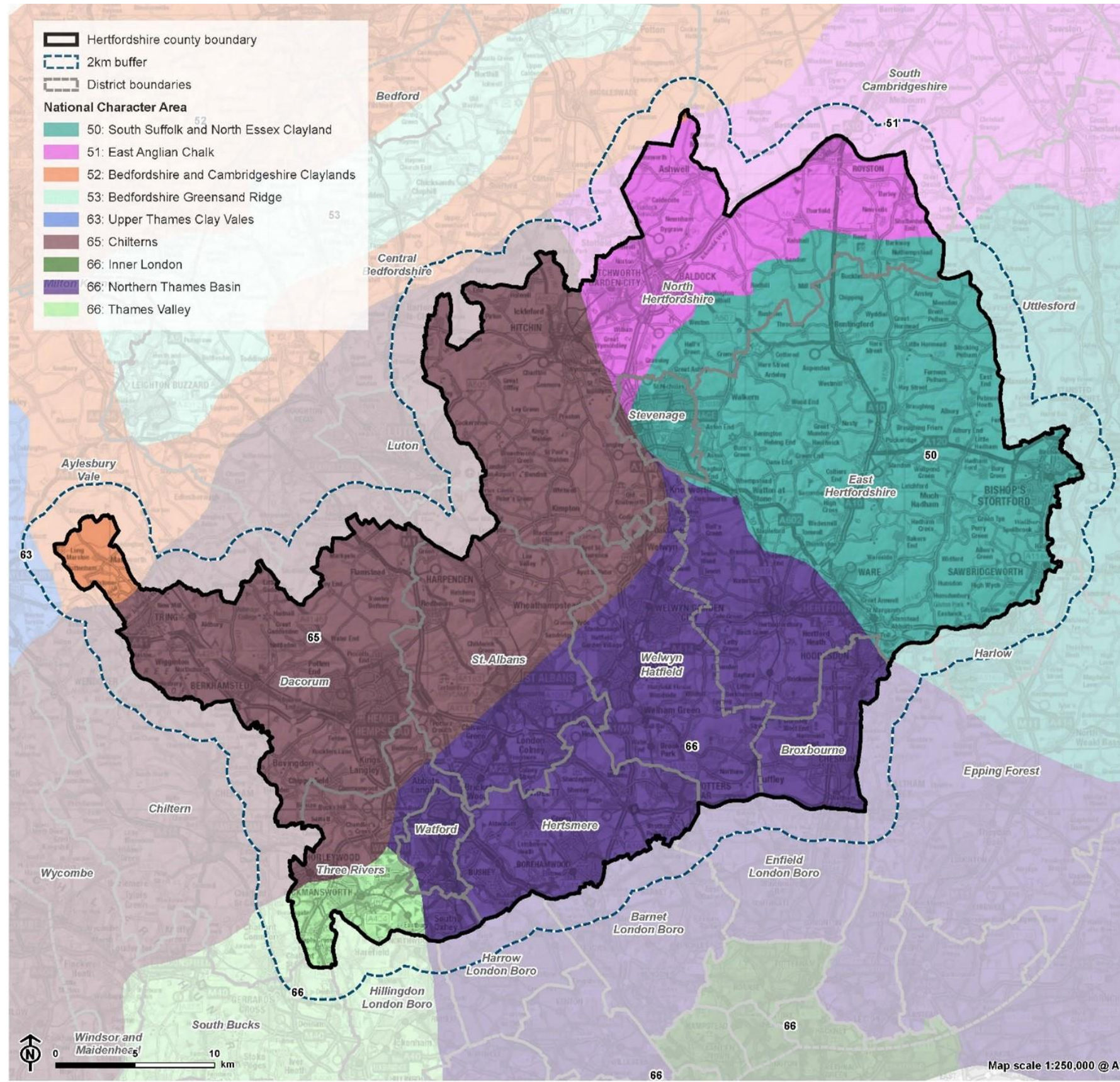
3.6 Hertfordshire has a particularly high concentration of planned and designed twentieth century urban greenspace assets which contributed a significant role in settlement masterplanning. Much of this heritage is highlighted by the Garden City movement and the presence of the world's first Garden City at Letchworth. Founded by Ebenezer Howard, the settlement is characterised by a mosaic of green spaces and GI which contribute to the character of the townscape. The Garden City at Welwyn also lies within Hertfordshire itself. The development of the New Town movement has also influenced the county, typified by the settlements at Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage and Hatfield. In addition, Hemel Hempstead features notable examples of formal landscape design which form part of the wider GI network e.g. the Jellicoe Water Gardens. Greenspace provision and the wider GI framework contributes to a strong sense of place within Hertfordshire, forming an integral component of settlement layouts.

Landscape condition

3.7 Landscape condition is determined from an evaluation of the relative state of elements within the landscape which are subject to change, such as survival of hedgerows, extent and impact of built development. Landscape condition is variable through the county with many local landscape character areas in moderate condition. Areas in poor condition include the Vale of St Albans, largely due to the presence of the M25 corridor, overhead pylons and associated urban fringe development. The historic character of the area is now somewhat degraded and characterised by an open and disjointed area with road and rail noise forming detracting features. Pirton Lowlands in North Hertfordshire is also in poor condition owing primarily to its character as a large

scale open, flat farming landscape with very little woodland cover and fragmented remnant hedges [See reference 17]. Both Ashridge and Tring Scarp Slopes in Dacorum are recognised as exhibiting good landscape condition due to their historical continuity and cultural pattern, high proportion of woodland cover and panoramic views.

Figure 3.1: National Landscape Character



- NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland
- NCA 87: East Anglia Chalk
- NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
- NCA 110: Chilterns
- NCA 111: Northern Thames Basin
- NCA 115: Thames Valley

Figure 3.1 - National Landscape Character



Figure 3.2: Landscape Designations and Green Belt

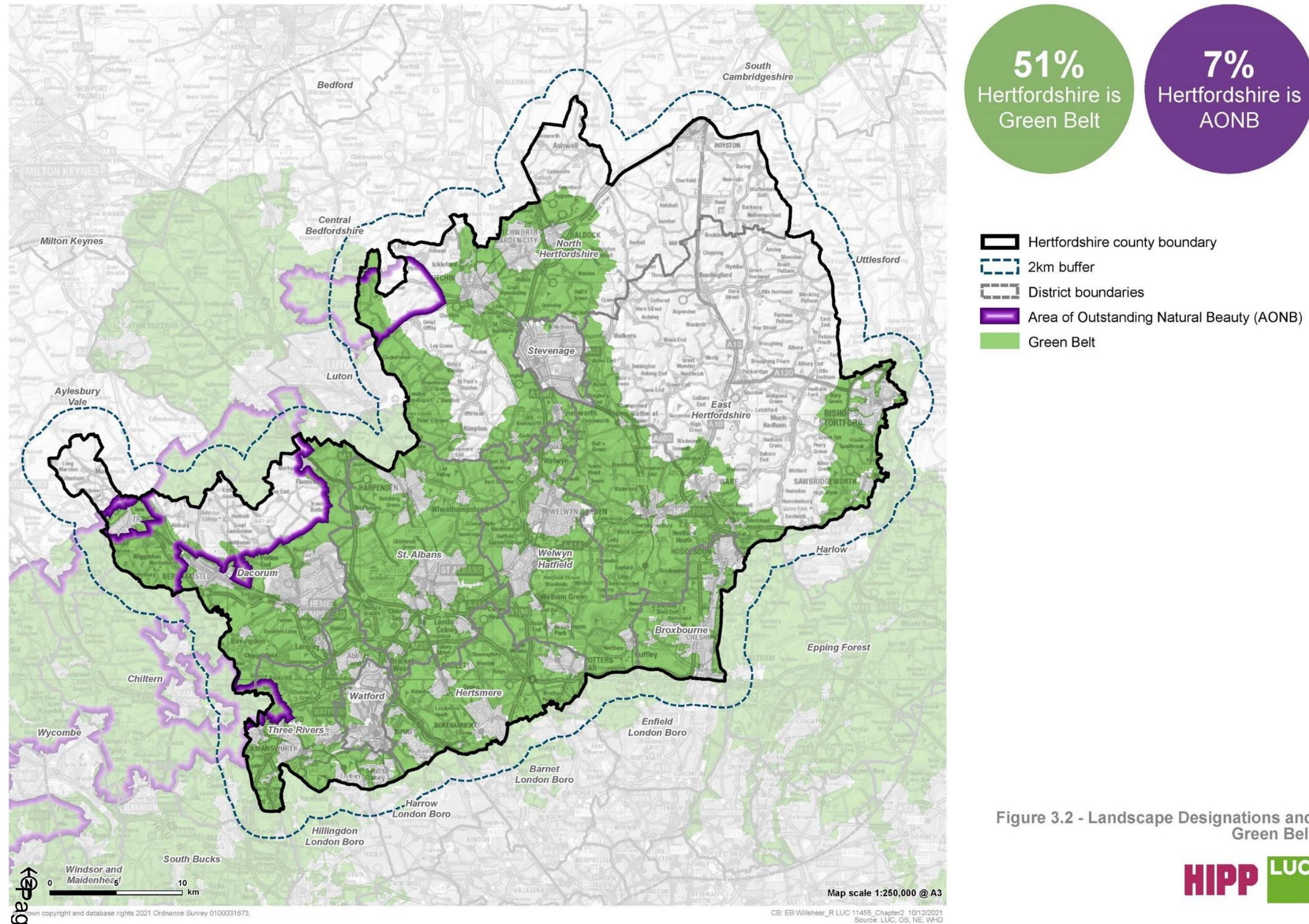


Figure 3.2 - Landscape Designations and Green Belt



Heritage and cultural designations

3.8 As shown in Figure 3.3, Hertfordshire accommodates a significant number of heritage and cultural designations which are afforded various levels of statutory protection. These features play a central role in reinforcing the time-depth of the county's landscape, as well as forming an important asset within the GI network to be enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. A total of 46 registered parks and gardens can be found across the county, most of which are accessible by the general public. This legacy provides one of the highest concentrations of historic parks and gardens in the country. A number of these, including Moor Park, Cassiobury Park and Ashridge Park, display the intact designs of iconic designers, including Capability Brown and Charles Bridgeman, who had a significant influence on the development of designed landscapes across Hertfordshire in the 18th Century [\[See reference 18\]](#).

3.9 An impressive, 113 Grade I, 484 Grade II* and 7,535 Grade II Listed Buildings are located within Hertfordshire, alongside a further 202 scheduled monuments, 201 conservation areas and a registered battlefield [\[See reference 19\]](#). Hertfordshire also has a number of its designated features on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register, denoting sites which are at risk of being lost due to neglect, decay or inappropriate development (see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.4). The GI network has an essential role to play in creating the setting for these features, together with managing their associated recreation pressures.

Heritage at Risk Register

The Heritage at Risk Register is a programme maintained by Historic England and helps to keep track of the state of England's historic assets, identifying sites which are most at risk of being lost due to neglect, decay or inappropriate development. These assets play an important part in creating a sense of time depth in the landscape, as well as reinforcing character and delivering spaces for visitors and recreation.

Non-designated heritage

3.10 The county contains a significant number of non-designated, albeit locally important heritage assets. These are recognised through a number of Local Lists which are identified and managed by each Local Planning Authority (LPA) across Hertfordshire. Currently eight out of the ten LPAs across Hertfordshire have adopted a Local List of Heritage Assets. Non-designated assets also include a number of heritage trails, such as Hertford, Hatfield Aerodrome, Wheathampstead, Chiltern, de Havilland Airfield, Leavesden Country Park and the emerging St Albans Heritage Trail. Hertfordshire is also home to substantial areas of ancient woodland which although is recognised within UK planning policy, is not given statutory protection. This forms an important historic feature and valued landscape component (see Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape and Theme 3: Nature Recovery for additional information).

Table 3.1: Overview of Hertfordshire's assets on the Heritage at Risk Register [See reference 20]

Type of Asset at Risk	District/Borough	Number at Risk
Conservation Areas	Stevenage	3
	Broxbourne	2
Listed Building Grade I	Dacorum	1
	North Hertfordshire	3
Listed Building Grade II*	Three Rivers	1
	Watford	2
	Welwyn Hatfield	1
	East Hertfordshire	1
	Dacorum	1
	North Hertfordshire	3
Registered Park and Gardens II*	East Hertfordshire	1
Registered Park and Garden II	East Hertfordshire	1

Type of Asset at Risk	District/Borough	Number at Risk
Scheduled Monument	St Albans	1
	East Hertfordshire	4
	North Hertfordshire	6

Figure 3.3: Heritage and Cultural Designations

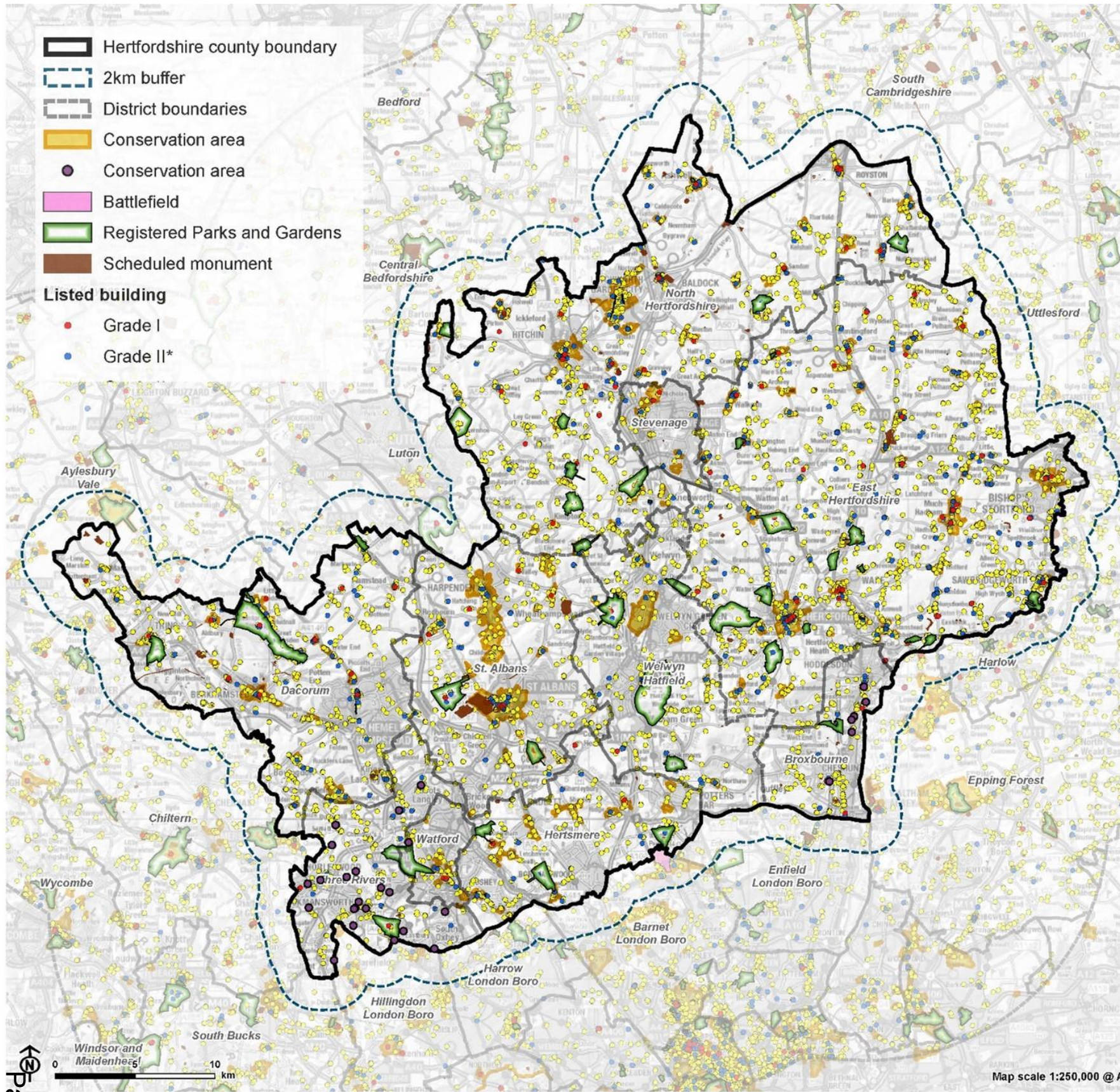


Figure 3.3 - Heritage and Cultural Designations



Figure 3.4: Heritage at Risk Assets

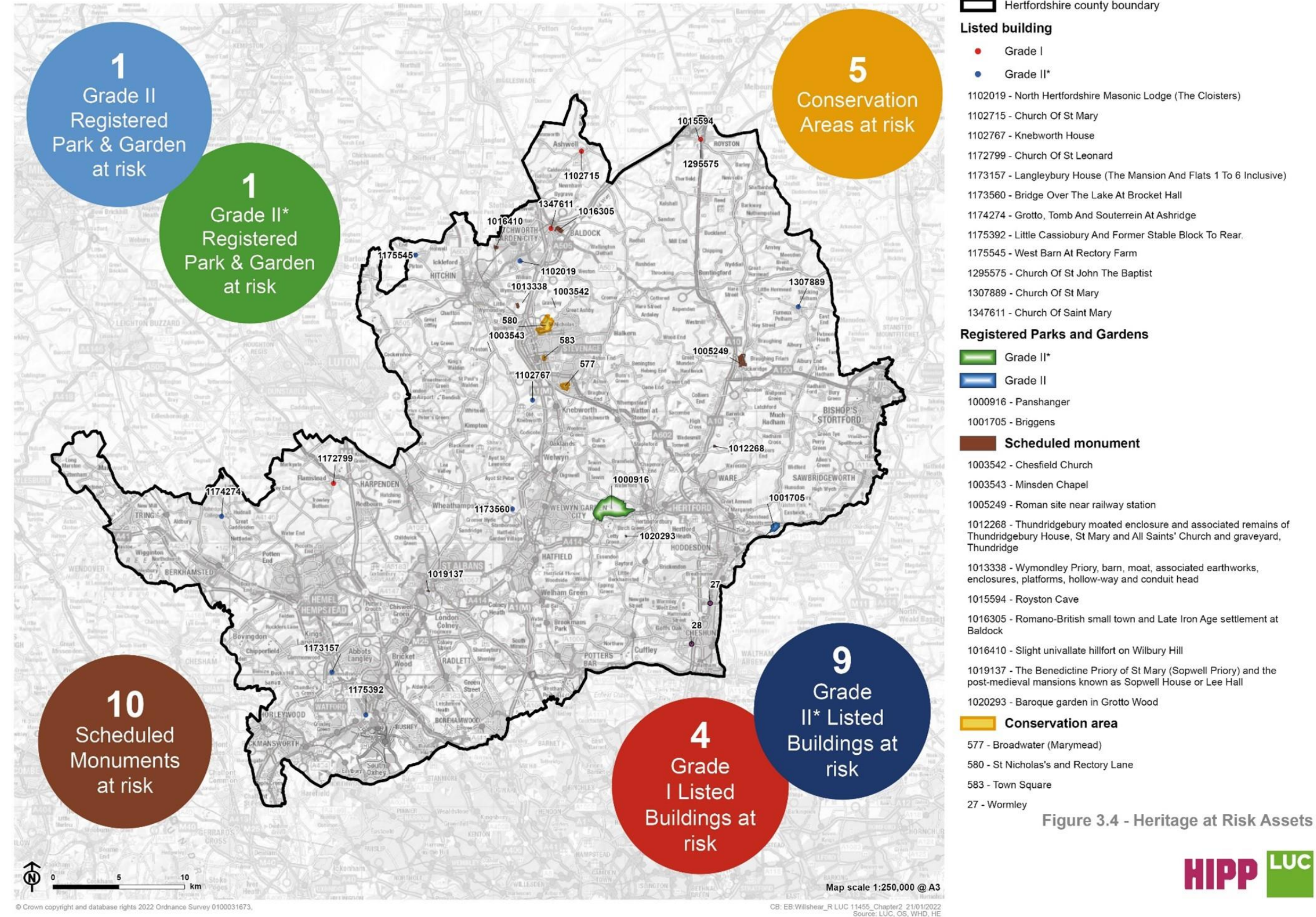


Figure 3.4 - Heritage at Risk Assets



Key factors influencing the need for GI

Protecting Hertfordshire's heritage assets

3.11 GI provides a tool for preserving and enhancing heritage assets, including the setting of built features (such as listed buildings and conservation areas). The historic legacy of the county provides a rich resource for conservation and interpretation as part of a multi-functional GI network. Parks and greenspaces, amongst other historical assets, all play valuable roles in their contribution to GI. This also links to the potential for managing recreation pressure experienced by archaeological features, cultural attractions and designed landscapes (see Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing).

Promoting local landscape character

3.12 Many of Hertfordshire's landscapes facilitate high quality interactions with nature and a distinctive sense of place, achieving high relative tranquillity and remoteness (see Figure 3.5). GI interventions should be landscape-led, drawing on an understanding of local character. The distinctive character of Hertfordshire, typified by distinct opportunities provides a framework for generating area-specific GI interventions. The Chilterns AONB is a significant asset for the county in performing this function and the proposed extension of the designation is an important opportunity to provide enhanced access to high-quality natural environments for communities in and around Luton and Hemel Hempstead. The newly designated land would benefit from increased protection, safeguarding the landscape for future generations.

3.13 Nature recovery and landscape are also closely related concepts. Principle 1 of the Nature Networks Evidence Handbook [See reference 21] states to 'avoid inadvertent degradation to landscape character, or significant changes which have not been well planned and agreed and can both reduce landscape resilience and lose stakeholder and community support for the project'. A Local

Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) should be informed by an understanding of place and consider future landscape changes. However, it is unlikely to consider fully other important aspects of Hertfordshire's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), including landscape patterns, settlements and built form, topography, and visual and sensory perception. This reinforces the importance of cross-team working and developing a united response to GI in tackling nature recovery, landscape recovery, climate change and other planning issues.

Integrating development

3.14 The current and future pressure for Green Belt release to make way for development is currently a prominent issue facing Hertfordshire due to forecasted population growth. This could have a significant impact on the landscape setting and openness experienced on the fringes of existing settlements. However, this also provides an opportunity for the improved integration of development using the GI network, alongside on and off-site compensatory improvements such as community orchards, new accessible greenspace and woodland planting. This requirement for good quality and sensitive design and planning could be achieved through the use of local GI strategies, design guides and design codes, such as the proposals at Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

Figure 3.5: Tranquility, night blight, the AONB and recreational routes

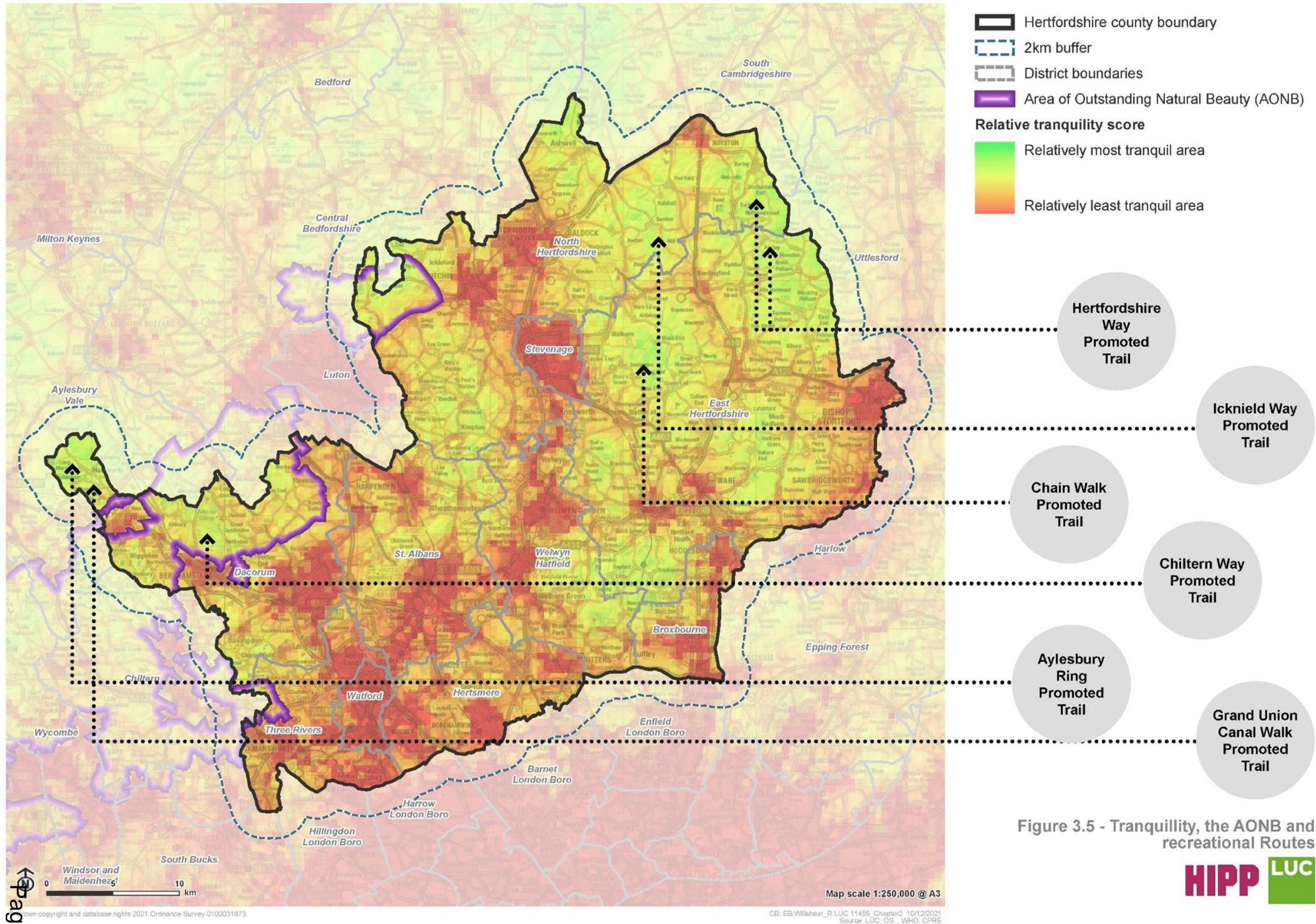


Figure 3.5 - Tranquillity, the AONB and recreational Routes



Theme 2: Summary of GI Priorities

3.15 2A: Utilise GI to promote access to high quality landscapes from urban areas as part of the extension to the Chilterns AONB. The Chilterns AONB is currently subject to proposals for a “boundary extension” in response to the findings of the Glover Review. This will form an important component of the GI network for communities around Luton and Hemel Hempstead. The designation would allow the area to benefit from greater protection, safeguarding the landscape for future generations.

3.16 2B: Expand and enhance the landscape framework which form an important feature of the character of Garden City communities. GI forms an essential component of the structure, use and character of Garden City communities. The retention and enhancement of greenspace provision and the wider GI framework within these settlements offers the potential to contribute to a strong sense of place within Hertfordshire. GI interventions should also reflect the existing and historic landscape character, and where possible enhance the setting of heritage assets.

3.17 2C: Utilise GI to enhance the beneficial use of Green Belt within the county. Appropriate GI interventions should be used to minimise the impacts of necessary Green Belt release on the wider landscape of Hertfordshire through both on-site and off-site compensation measures. This could be achieved through the delivery of strategic initiatives at the county scale, and/or through enhancements in close proximity to sites proposed for release or in land retained within the Green Belt itself.

3.18 2D: Undertake informed studies and assessments to understand the sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate future land use changes and any potential overlaps with the LNRS. A comprehensive understanding of landscape character and local distinctiveness at the county scale should be used to inform the siting of GI interventions. Proposals should respond to the distinctive landscape features and unique sense of place of the county, whilst seeking to improve landscape condition and tying in with the LNRS.

3.19 2E: Utilise GI as a tool for enhancing the interpretation, use and setting of heritage assets. This is particularly relevant within built-up areas where gradual urbanisation and development over the years can erode the townscape character and setting of heritage features. The sensitive enhancement or creation of open spaces and green features surrounding these assets should be explored to help revive them and integrate them back into the townscape.

Chapter 4

Theme 3: Nature Recovery

Why is this theme relevant to GI in Hertfordshire?

4.1 Biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. However, the UK has committed to become Nature Positive by 2030 [See reference 22], with the aim of reversing the current declines in biodiversity to enable species and ecosystems to recover. Strengthening the condition and connectivity of ecologically protected sites, supported by wider habitat restoration, creation and enhancement is therefore a principal focus within the county. The creation of habitat corridors within the landscape provides the opportunity for permeability allowing the movement of species, nutrients, seeds and genes and the creation of greater resilience to climate change. These aspirations are reflected in the recently published Wilder Future Strategy by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust [See reference 23] where the three top priorities include more land to be managed and protected for nature, more people standing up for wildlife, and nature playing a central role in helping to address climate issues and people's health and wellbeing.

Key assets

Designated sites

4.2 Protected sites provide the core of a resilient nature recovery network and form the areas where nature conservation efforts have traditionally been focussed. To be effective, these sites must be large enough to ensure functioning ecosystems. The county currently accommodates three

internationally significant sites (see Figure 4.1), as recognised by their designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as well as a network of 43 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Hertfordshire’s National Nature Reserve (NNR) (Broxbourne Woods) as well as the network of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) also provide vital stepping stones to link designated sites, particularly in St Albans, North Hertfordshire, Stevenage and Watford where they are more sparse. Table 4.1 sets out the total percentage of designated sites for each of Hertfordshire’s districts.

4.3 Hertfordshire’s southern border with London is highly designated. Stevenage, North Hertfordshire, Hertsmere and St Albans are less designated than the other Boroughs/Districts relative to their total area. Hertfordshire’s State of Nature Report notes that golf courses cover over 3,455 ha, some five times the land area of Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust nature reserves.

Table 4.1: Percentage of each of Hertfordshire's districts designated as RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, SSSI and Local Wildlife Sites

District	Percentage of District Designated as RAMSAR, SPA, SAC and SSSI	Percentage of District Designated as Local Wildlife Sites
Three Rivers District	1.26%	19.52%
Hertsmere District	0.41%	8.73%
Broxbourne District	13.43%	10.33%
Dacorum District	5.02%	10.11%
East Hertfordshire District	2.13%	7.54%
Welwyn Hatfield District	2.60%	15.43%
North Hertfordshire District	0.80%	5.60%

District	Percentage of District Designated as RAMSAR, SPA, SAC and SSSI	Percentage of District Designated as Local Wildlife Sites
Watford District	0.00%	13.78%
Stevenage District	0.00%	4.10%
St Albans District	0.45%	9.44%
Hertfordshire	2.2%	9.07%

Priority habitats

4.4 The composition and distribution of Hertfordshire’s habitats and species is greatly influenced by the county’s underlying geodiversity. The north of the county is dominated by surface chalk soils, making this an important area for chalk grassland. Acidic soils are found in the south of the county giving rise to the most wooded area of Hertfordshire as well as the majority of the county’s remaining heathland and acid grassland. The county includes a network of strategic assets such as Ashridge, the Whippendell and Broxbourne Woods which add to the network of locally significant tracts of ancient woodlands (see Figure 4.2). Only 1% of the total area of Hertfordshire is covered by wetland, compared to 3% wetland nationally [\[See reference 24\]](#).

4.5 Many local wildlife sites protect areas of ancient woodland. 36% of ancient woodland is ancient replanted woodland. Three main types of ancient woodland can be identified for Hertfordshire:

1. Ash/maple/hazel woodlands in the north and east;
2. Oak/hornbeam woodlands in the south, central and south-east; and
3. Beech woodlands in the west and chalk escarpment.

4.6 Hertfordshire is made up of the following:

- 3,812 ha Ancient woodland – One of the most biodiverse and irreplaceable habitats in the UK. Largely captured by Local Wildlife Site network.
- 12,989 hectares of Deciduous woodland – In southern and eastern England there is a high likelihood that there will be impacts on drought-sensitive tree species due to climate change.
- 211 hectares of Traditional orchard – Orchards can support a wide range of wildlife due to the mosaic of habitats they encompass including fruit trees, standing and fallen dead wood, scrub and hedgerows.
- 1,062 hectares Wood pasture parkland – Very high distinctiveness habitat.
- 209 hectares of Lowland calcareous grassland – Develop on nutrient-poor, base-rich substrates in the north of Hertfordshire.
- 2.15 hectares of Lowland acidic grassland – Only found at Knebworth Woods SSSI in Stevenage.
- 150 hectares of Lowland meadows – As the more productive deeper soils these grasslands have in more recent times been largely lost to agriculture.
- 826 hectares Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh – An increasingly rare habitat that is an important home for wading birds.
- 6.97 hectares purple moor grass and rush pasture – Found only at Lemford Springs Nature Reserve.
- 365 hectares of Lowland heathland – Since 1940 the area of heathland in Hertfordshire has declined by over 97%.
- 62 hectares of Lowland Fens – Can be found along the stretch of the River Lea, the River Gade and the River Chess.
- 6.55 hectares Reedbeds – Large-scale drainage schemes meant that extensive areas of reedbed were converted to agricultural land from the 17th century onwards.

4.7 The chalk rivers within the county are both internationally and nationally important and historically the lower stretches of many of these watercourses would have supported extensive wetlands. However, water abstraction, river canalisation, drainage and flood defence determine that only a few ancient fragments of wetlands currently remain intact, such as Thorley Wash. Figure 4.3 identifies the Key Biodiversity Areas within the county, as identified within the Biodiversity Action Plan [See reference 25]. The Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire aims to prioritise conservation efforts in areas where there is a concentration of important habitats, helping to make the most efficient use of resource. Analysis of the spatial distribution of these sites highlights the opportunity to enhance the connectivity between individual habitats as part of a landscape scale approach, specifically where sites border the major settlements and designated wildlife sites.

4.8 Much of Hertfordshire's priority and notable habitats are fragmented. This is in part attributed to the high proportion of intensively-managed agricultural land and urbanisation [See reference 26]. Table 4.2 indicates the number of habitat parcels per priority habitat and the average area of each parcel as a proxy measure for fragmentation. Traditional orchards are typically fragmented, as are deciduous woodland and lowland fens. Figure 4.4 illustrates the spatial distribution of Priority Habitats within the county.

- 14% of grassland/heathland species have gone extinct since 1970 and 48% have noticeably declined. This loss is primarily attributed to intensification of arable farming.
- 14% of woodland species have gone extinct and 35% have noticeably decline/The biggest threat to woodland biodiversity in Hertfordshire is a lack of beneficial woodland management.
- 7% of wetland species have gone extinct since 1970 and 47% have noticeably declined. Loss of wetlands is due to historical drainage, modification of floodplains and groundwater abstraction.
- 17% of the Hertfordshire Species of Conservation Concern associated with farmland are now extinct and 70% have noticeably declined since 1970. Farmland habitat is now unsuitable for most species due to changed management practices [See reference 27].

Table 4.2: Fragmentation of priority habitats

Habitat	Number of Habitat Parcels	Average Area (ha)
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	471	1.75
Deciduous woodland	14,300	0.91
Wood pasture and parkland	22	48.26
Good quality semi-improved grassland	855	1.44
Lowland calcareous grassland	74	2.82
Lowland dry acid grassland	5	0.43
Lowland fens	83	0.74
Lowland heathland	301	1.21
Lowland meadows	87	1.72
No main habitat but additional habitats present	756	1.05
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	7	0.97
Reedbeds	7	0.94
Traditional orchard	1,185	0.18

Figure 4.1: Designated Sites

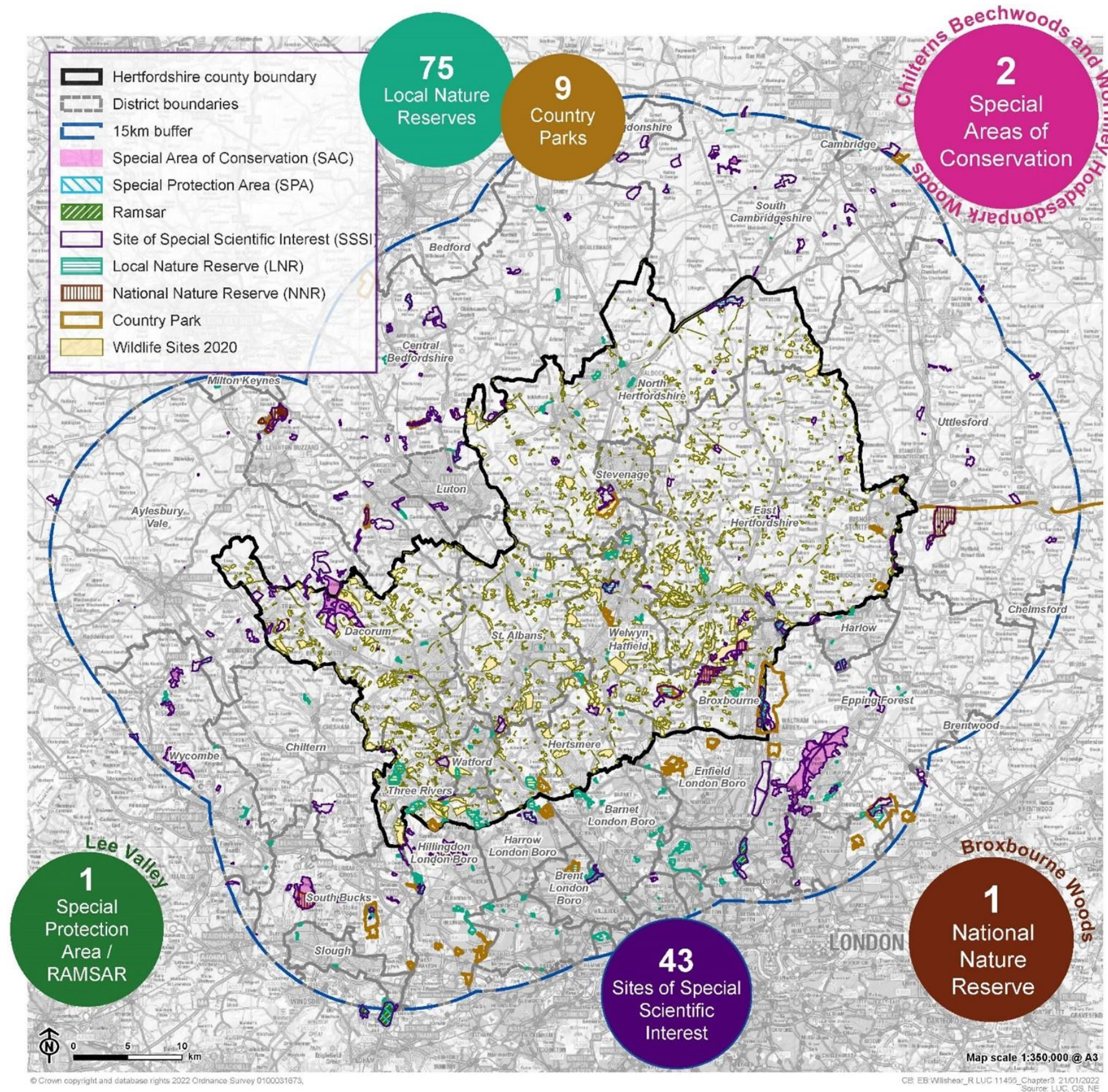


Figure 4.1 - Designated Sites



Figure 4.2: Ancient woodland

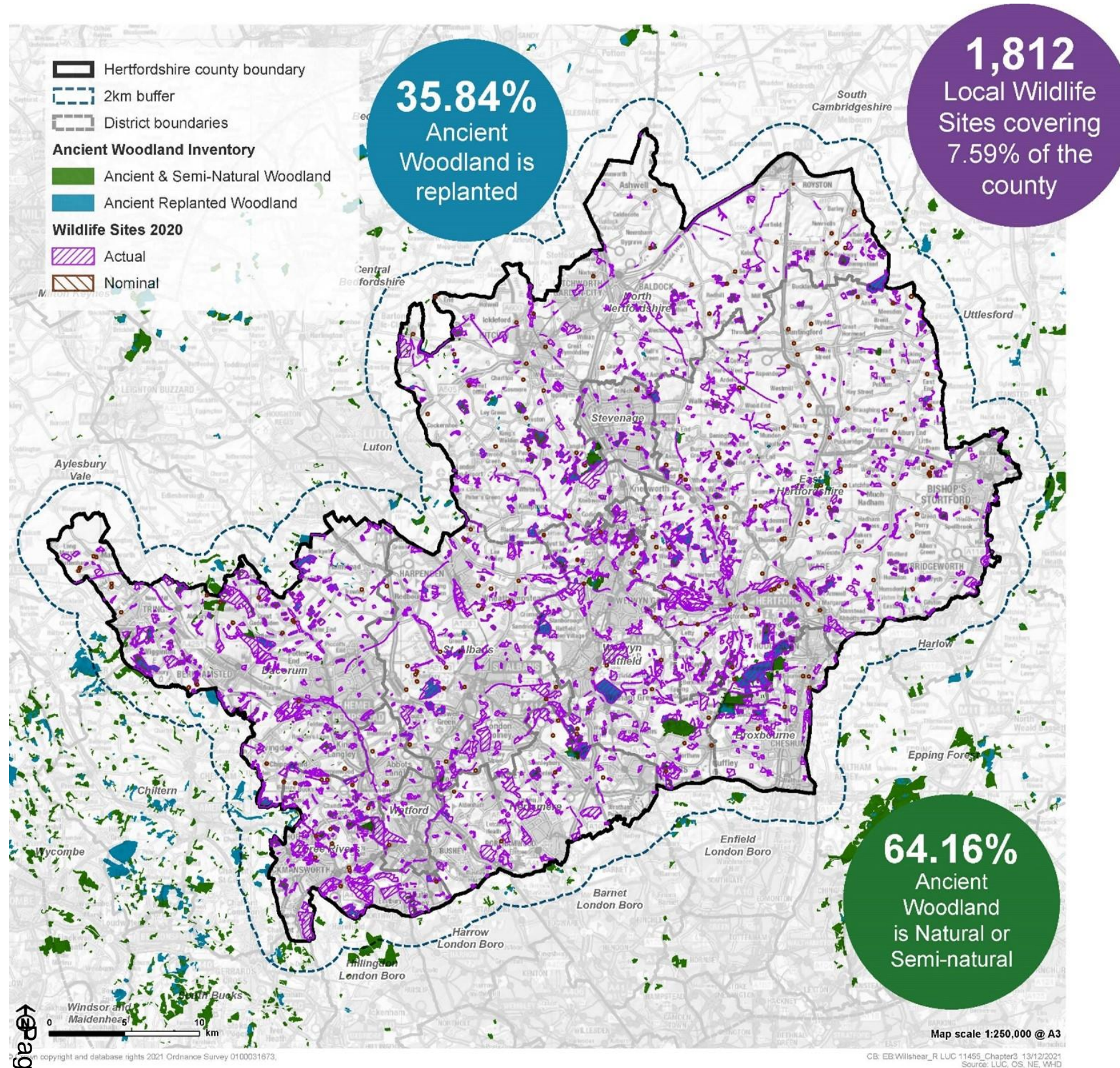
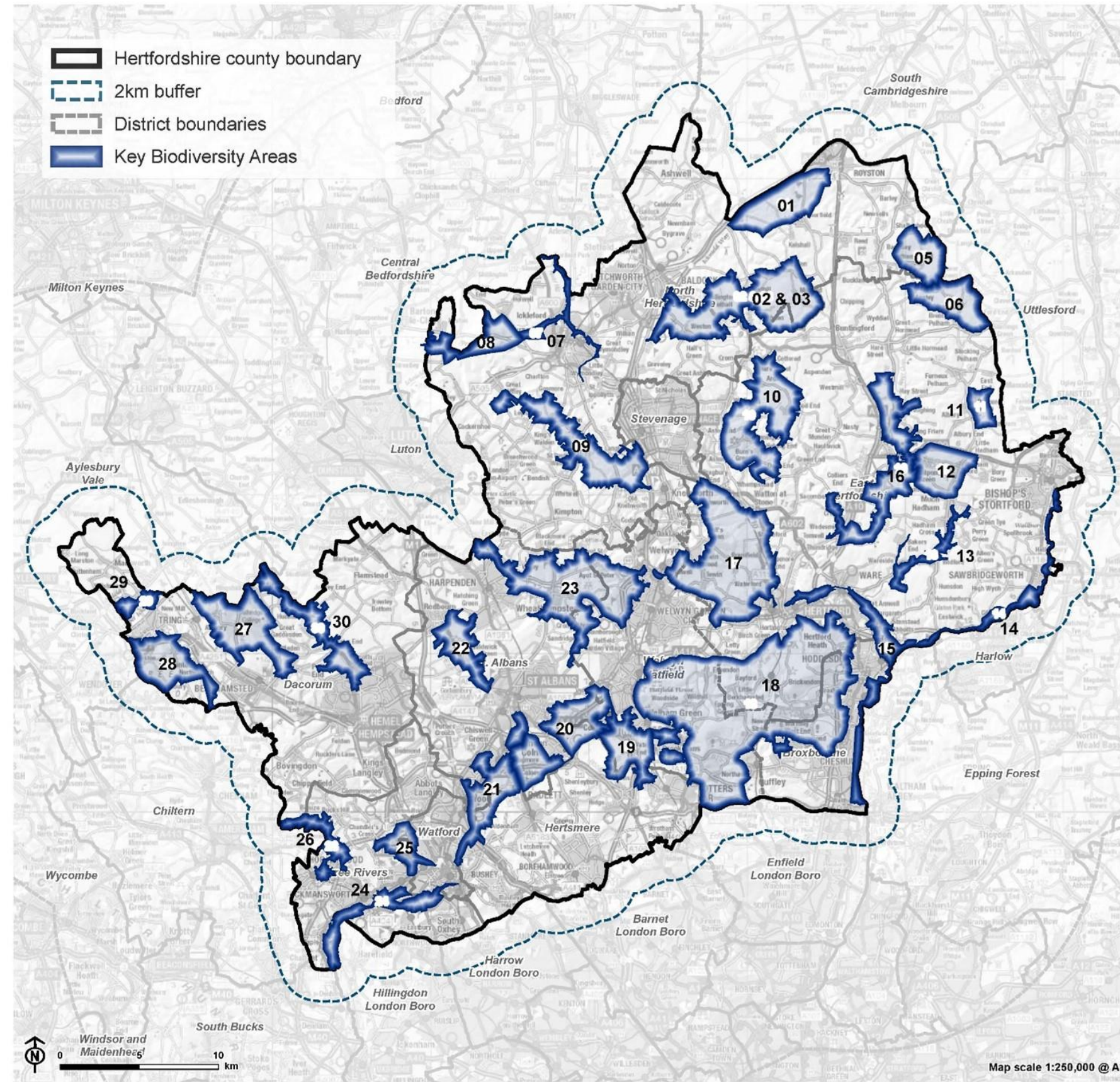


Figure 4.2 - Ancient Woodland



Figure 4.3: Key biodiversity areas



1. **Therfield Heath/ Coombe Bottom** – chalk grasslands
2. **Sandon/ Green End** – chalky boulder clay woodlands and meadows
3. **Clothall/ Wallington/ Weston** – chalky boulder clay woods and meadows
4. **Reed** - chalky boulder clay woodlands and meadows
5. **Cokenach Estate** – chalky boulder clay woodlands
6. **Scales Park/ Meesden/ Beeches Wood** – chalky boulder clay woodlands and meadows
7. **Hiz Valley Catchment (Ickleford/ Oughton Head/ Purwell)** - wet meadows and fens
8. **Hexton/ Pirton/ Great Offley** – chalk grasslands
9. **Great Offley/ Preston/ Knebworth** – oak-hornbeam woodlands
10. **Cottered/ Ardeley/ Benington** – oak-hornbeam and ash-maple woodlands and meadows
11. **Patmore Heath/ Upwick Green** – heath, grasslands and woodland
12. **Wellpond Green/ Westland Green**
13. **River Ash Valley** - woodlands and wetlands
14. **Stort Valley** – grasslands and wetlands
15. **Lea Valley** – wetlands
16. **Rib Valley** – wetlands and woodlands
17. **Lower Mimram/ Lower Beane/ Bramfield Plateau** – wetlands and woodlands
18. **Broxbourne Woods/ Hatfield Park** – oak-hornbeam woodlands, grasslands and heaths
19. **Mymmshall/ Water End** – woodlands
20. **Upper Colne Valley** – wetlands and heath
21. **Bricket Wood/ Moor Mill** – wetlands, woodlands and heath
22. **River Ver/ Gorehambury** – wetlands and woodlands
23. **Upper Lea Valley** – wetlands, woodlands and heath
24. **Mid-Colne Valley** – wetlands (gravel pits) and grasslands
25. **Whippendell Woods and surrounds** – woodlands, grasslands and wetlands
26. **River Chess Valley** - wetlands, grasslands, woodland and heath
27. **Ashridge/ Berkhamsted Common/ Aldbury** – beech woodland, heath, chalk grassland
28. **Tring Park/ High Scrubbs** – beech woodland, chalk grassland
29. **Tring Reservoirs** – wetlands
30. **Upper Gade Valley** – wetlands, grasslands and woodland

Figure 4.3 - Key Biodiversity Areas



Figure 4.4: Priority habitats

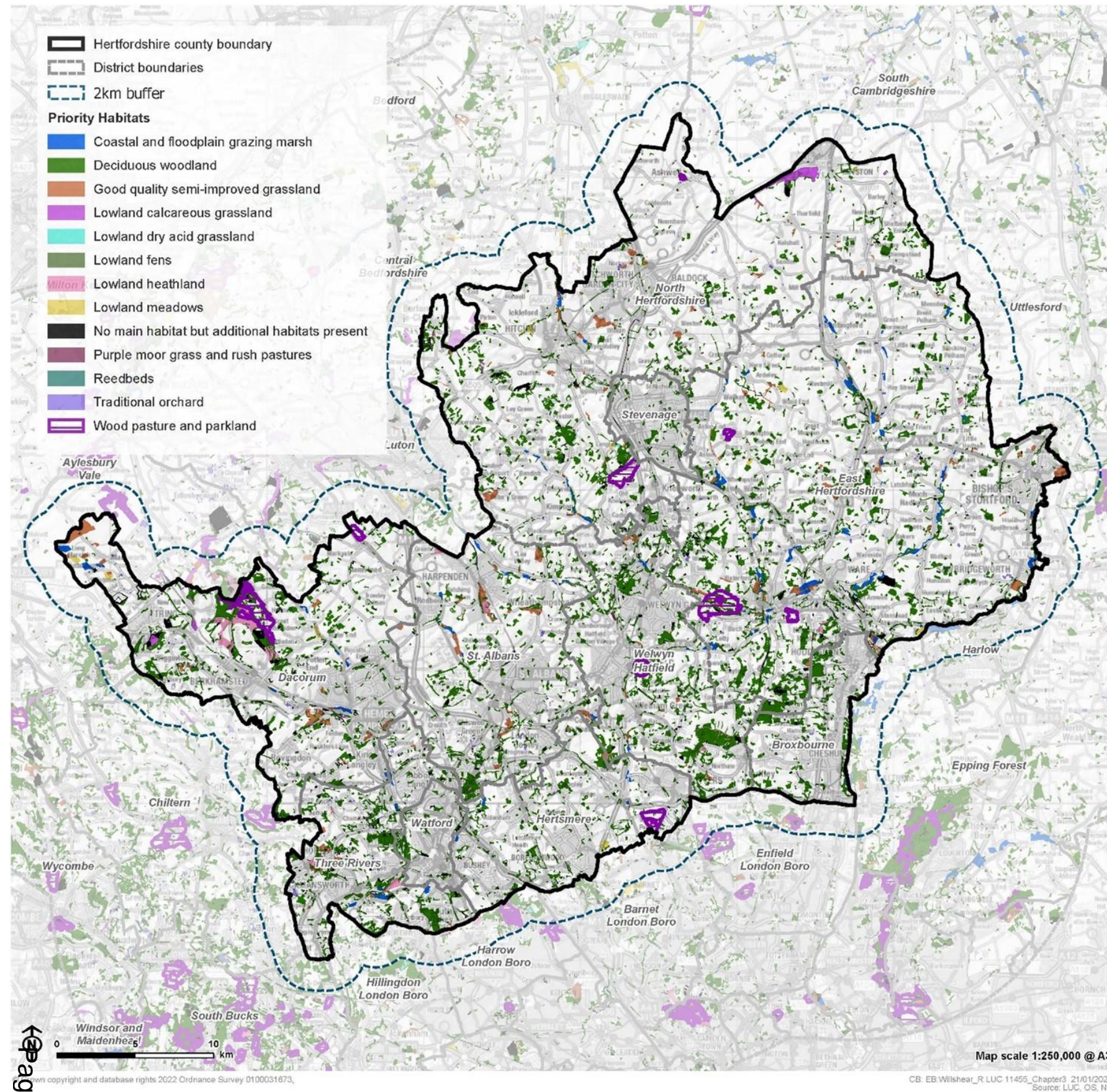


Figure 4.4 - Priority Habitats



Key factors influencing the need for GI

Urbanisation and intensive agriculture

4.9 Hertfordshire’s natural environment is currently under substantial pressure from extensive urbanisation and intensive agriculture. Hertfordshire’s State of Nature Report found that over the last 50 years, the county has lost on average three species every two years. Intensive agriculture often results in the loss of hedgerow extent as well as structural and species diversity. In addition, substantial housing pressures within Hertfordshire have the potential to affect wildlife directly through habitat loss and fragmentation, or indirectly through recreational pressure and disturbance as well as air and water quality impacts. Working with individual LPAs, the opportunity exists to adopt a number of mechanisms to future proof GI within the county. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), now a requirement through the Environment Act, is “an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before”. In addition to minimising loss of biodiversity, BNG should support restoration of ecological networks.

Condition of protected sites

4.10 Hertfordshire’s network of protected sites is currently somewhat fragmented. Table 4.3 indicates that 45% of SSSIs units are in unfavourable condition (shown in Figure 4.5). This is largely due to poor management and recreation pressures, examples of which can be found below:

- Great Hormead Park;
- Tewinbury;
- Wormley Hoddesdonpark Woods North;
- Castle Lime Works Quarry;
- Aldbury Nowers; and

- Bricket Wood Common.

Table 4.3: SSSI Condition in Hertfordshire

SSSI Condition	Number of Sites	Percentage of Sites
Favourable	74	55.22%
Unfavourable recovering	49	36.57%
Unfavourable no change	7	5.22%
Unfavourable declining	4	2.99%

4.11 The most recent assessment by Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust found that only 30% of Hertfordshire’s LWS are in positive conservation management relevant to their features of interests [See reference 28]. Furthermore, Figure 4.6 shows that many urban areas lie within SSSI Impact Risk Zones. Impact Risk Zones are a tool which allows a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks new development poses to SSSIs. They are reflective of the individual features of each site, meaning they define zones relating to the particular sensitivities of the designation. They also indicate the type of development which could potentially have adverse impacts on the SSSI. The settlements within Impact Risk Zones are sensitive to all types of planning application. When considering application for these areas, thought should be given to the lasting impacts on these sites. Below are some of the settlements across Hertfordshire which are most constrained by SSSI Risk Zones:

- Royston;
- Tring;
- Berkhamstead;
- Watford;
- Welwyn Garden City;
- Hoddesdon;
- Potters Bar and Brookmans Park;

- Cheshunt and Goff's Oak;
- South Oxhey; and
- Rickmansworth.

Recreational access and pressure

4.12 Minimal disturbance is recognised as a key environmental condition in the site improvement plans of all three of Hertfordshire's internationally designated sites. The Lee Valley SPA and Ramsar sits within the 4,000ha Lee Valley Regional Park which receives approximately 4.4 million visits a year. Bittern, gadwall, and northern shoveler are all under threat from public access and associated disturbances in Lee Valley SPA and Ramsar. Dacorum Borough Council's (DBC) Local Plan has triggered the need for an Appropriate Assessment of recreational impacts on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC. Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI (Ashridge Estate), of which the National Trust is the majority landowner, is the principal pressure point. Disturbance by visitors and soil compaction are resulting in adverse effects on stag beetle habitat, as well as other qualifying features of the SAC (including beech forest and semi-natural grasslands and scrubland). DBC is currently in the process of undertaking visitor surveying, parking transects, carrying capacity studies and biological condition surveying to identify potential mitigation measures [\[See reference 29\]](#).

4.13 A strategic solution is currently being determined to mitigate recreational disturbance impacts on Hatfield Forest SSSI and NNR [\[See reference 30\]](#) [\[See reference 31\]](#). Heavy footfall, exceeding the sites carrying capacity, have caused the ancient woodland mosaic habitat to fall into unfavourable condition. Visitor surveys have identified a zone of influence of 14.6km, which includes East Hertfordshire district. It's expected that strategic housing sites within this radius provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to absorb any further demand on this former royal hunting forest.

Nature recovery networks

4.14 The large proportion of both urban and agricultural land use in Hertfordshire compared to the UK average provides a challenge to nature conservation efforts which aim to prioritise habitat creation and the reconnection of fragmented landscape networks. The principles of the 2010 Lawton Review [See reference 32] of ‘more, bigger, better and more joined-up’ continue to underpin the emerging LNRS. In order to achieve resilient functioning ecosystems and allow wildlife to adapt to climate change, it will be necessary to increase the amount of existing habitat within Hertfordshire. An increase in the amount of existing habitat managed positively for conservation will also be required. It is noted that a lack of beneficial woodland management, rather than total woodland extent, forms the biggest threat to woodland biodiversity within the county. Further opportunities for enhancement of the ecological network are outlined below and shown in Figure 4.7.

Restorable Habitat

- Areas of land where the primary habitat is present in a degraded or fragmented form and which are likely to be suitable for restoration.
- There are restorable habitat opportunities in Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne Woods, north St Albans and north Berkhamstead.

Network Enhancement Zone 1

- Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.
- There are network enhancement opportunities in to the south-west of Stevenage.

Network Enhancement Zone 2

- Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is less likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.

Fragmentation Action Zone

- Land within Enhancement Zone that connects existing patches of primary and associated habitats which are currently highly fragmented.

Network Expansion Zone

- Land beyond the Network Enhancement Zones with potential for expanding, linking/joining networks across the landscape.
- There are expansion opportunities to the east of Royston.

Figure 4.5: SSSIs in unfavourable condition

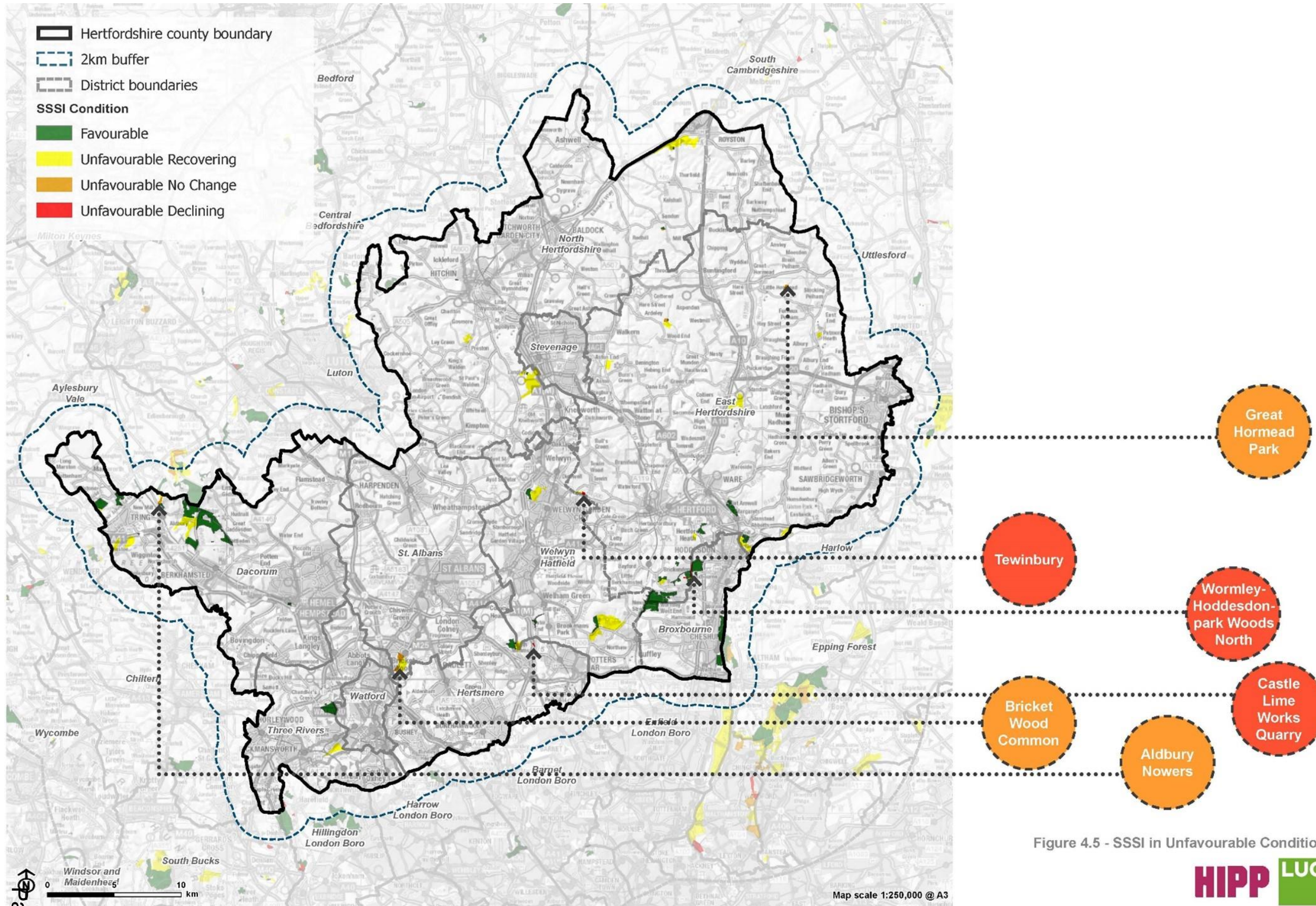


Figure 4.5 - SSSI in Unfavourable Condition



Figure 4.6: SSSI risk zones

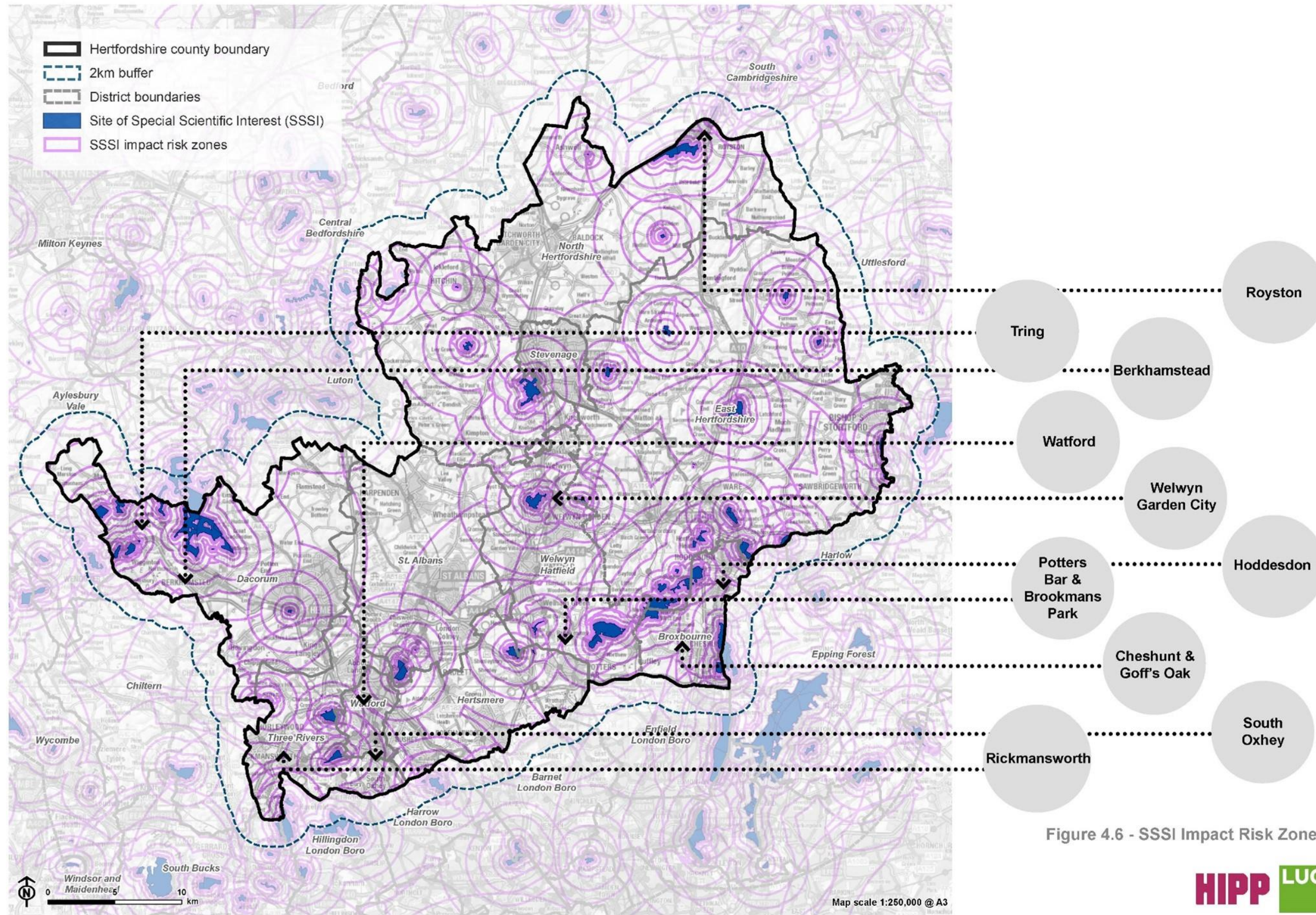


Figure 4.6 - SSSI Impact Risk Zones



Figure 4.7: Opportunities for ecological enhancement

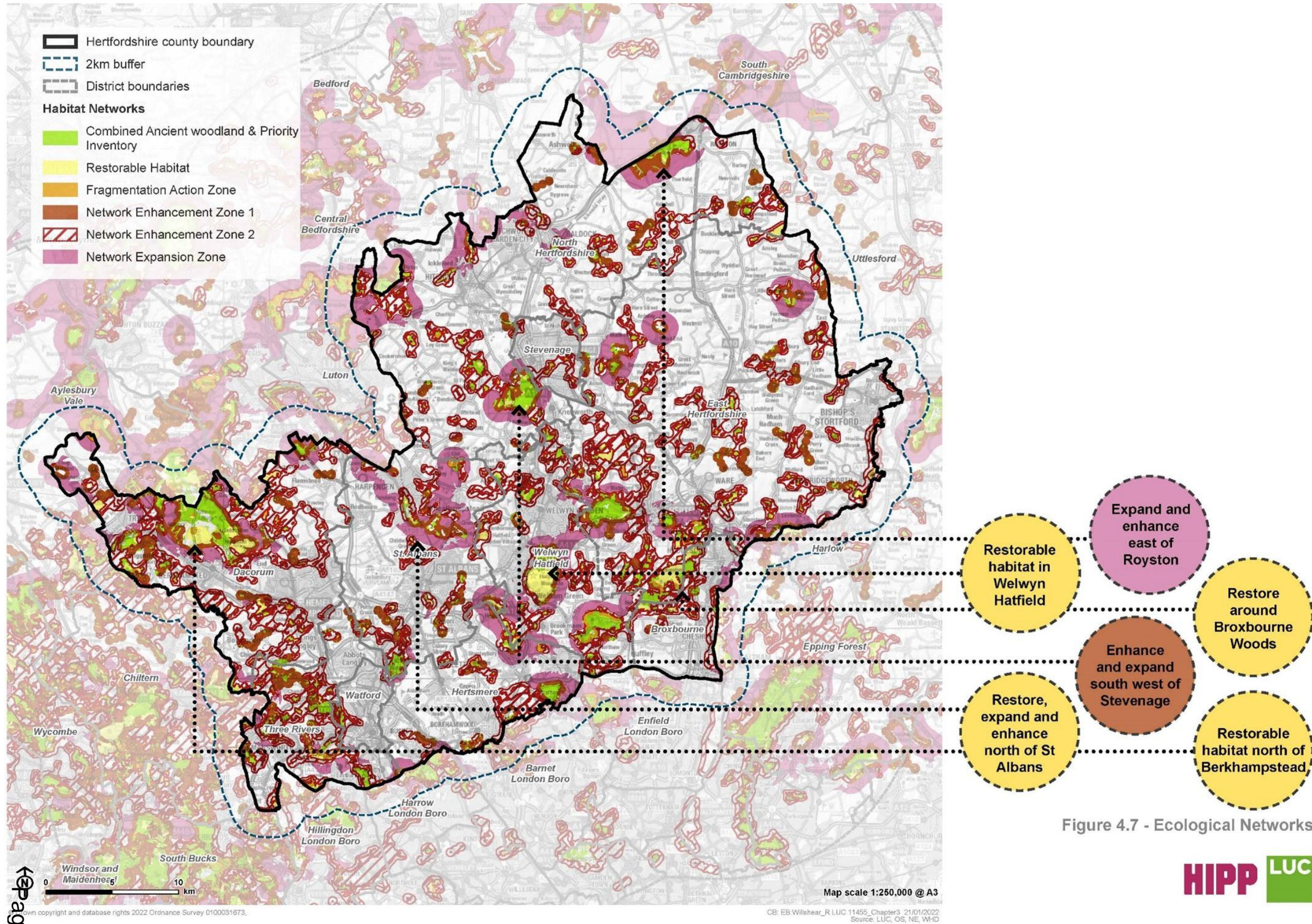


Figure 4.7 - Ecological Networks



Theme 3: Summary of GI Priorities

4.15 3A: Protect, enhance and connect habitats across the county to support species recovery and greater climate resilience. The Hertfordshire State of Nature Report found that in the last 50 years more than three species became extinct in the county every two years. Similarly, the average area of deciduous woodland in the County is 0.91ha - smaller than required to support viable populations of most woodland species. The potential also exists to enhance the connectivity along the chalk escarpment and restore fragmented sites. Action is required to become nature positive, whereby current declines in biodiversity are reversed, so that species and ecosystems begin to recover and are resilient to future climate change.

4.16 3B: Incorporate biodiversity into existing and future new developments in accordance with upcoming BNG requirements. Given the extent of growth and housing development planned for Hertfordshire over the coming years, BNG could provide a significant funding mechanism and driver for the creation and enhancement of habitats.

4.17 3C: Bring more of the county's LWS into positive management to support the wider network of statutory designated sites. Hertfordshire's network of LWS provide vital buffering and habitat connectivity between the statutory designated site network. Less than 12% of Hertfordshire's LWS are known to be under conservation management relevant to their features of interest. Monitoring is vital to gain a full picture of how well habitats and species are doing and target management interventions to ensure the coherence and resilience of ecological networks.

4.18 3D: Expand the ecological mapping resource to underpin the identification of future local nature recovery networks. Hertfordshire's future nature recovery strategy will have the advantage of being set within the wider context of the updated Strategy. The future LNRS will require that areas of particular importance for biodiversity, or those where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity, could make a particular contribution to other environmental

benefits, are mapped. Ecological mapping will ensure the LNRS remains current, relevant and forward-looking.

Chapter 5

Theme 4: Access and Connectivity

Why is this theme relevant to GI in Hertfordshire?

5.1 Sustainable transport connections are intrinsically linked with GI planning. Ensuring better access and connectivity in Hertfordshire is an important mechanism for improving residents' health and wellbeing. Use of the countryside as a 'Natural Health Service' through increased use of the wider PRoW network is highlighted as a specific aim within the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy. Improved opportunities for cycling and walking through the provision of well-connected travel corridors also have the potential to provide reductions in road traffic congestion and local air quality improvements by discouraging the use of private vehicles. In 2019 [See reference 33], 47.7% of CO2 emissions in the county were a product of the transport sector, which is a 10% increase from transport's share of emissions in 2009. Whilst this is reflective of nationwide trends, it highlights the important role of GI in providing access and connectivity for people.

Key assets

PRoW network and long distance footpaths

5.2 Hertfordshire has more than 3,100 km of PRoW, including over 200 promoted routes/long distance footpaths (see Figure 5.1) which stretch across a network of 5,220 individual routes. This connectivity is important as it provides access wider linkages to/from key destinations (see Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing) as well as other recreational benefits. The routes also promote

increased usage of sustainable transport by providing a safe network of routes for users. As recorded within the Definitive Map and Statement of Hertfordshire, public footpaths form the largest component of the PRow network (70%). Bridleways (21%), restricted byways (4%) and Byways open to all traffic (5%) comprise the remaining provision within the county. Rates of walking and cycling within Hertfordshire are highest within relatively small towns such as Baldock and Hertford [See reference 34]. However, these rates are generally low across the county, even in dense urban areas, such as Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead and Welwyn Garden City [See reference 35]. The spatial distribution of the PRow network also highlights that dense urban areas such as Stevenage and Broxbourne tend to contain fewer promoted routes than the districts of Hertsmere and St Albans.

5.3 National trail provision in Hertfordshire is limited to sections of The Ridgeway at the western extent of the county. Stretching from the World Heritage Site of Avebury to Ivinghoe Beacon lying to the north-west of London, the route crosses through the wooded landscape of the Chiltern Hills. The three settlements with the most direct off-road links to access the surrounding countryside are St Albans, Welwyn Garden City and Hemel Hempstead [See reference 36]. Stevenage has the greatest number of bridleways leading to rural areas. Overall, there are 23 settlements which do not offer links to the countryside via footpaths or bridleways.

Hertfordshire's promoted walking routes

- Hertfordshire Way;
- London Countryway;
- London Green Belt Way;
- Hertfordshire Border Walk;
- St Bernard's Way;
- Icknield Way Trail;
- Ashridge Estate Boundary Trail;

- North Chiltern Trail;
- Lea Valley Walk;
- Chiltern Way;
- John Bunyan Trail;
- Ivinghow Beacon Ridgeway Walk;
- Hertfordshire Chain Walk;
- Grand Union Canal;
- Welwyn Garden City Centenary Circular Walk;
- New River Path;
- Stort Valley Way;
- Abbey Line Trail;
- Chess Valley Walk; and
- Kingfisher Way.

Cycle provision

5.4 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Hertfordshire indicates that 30% of the available PRoW network within the county is accessible by cyclists. National Cycle Network (NCN) routes 1, 6, 12, 57 and 61 all pass through the county, with each district/borough containing at least one of these routes. In addition, off-road cycle tracks within the county stretch across approximately 38km. The county also accommodates sections of the Chilterns Cycleway, a 274 km circular route managed by the Chilterns Conservation Board. The districts with the greatest number of cycle routes are Dacorum and St Albans. However, Stevenage has particularly low rates of cycle usage in comparison to the extent of its cycle path network [\[See reference 37\]](#).

5.5 Data from the Department for Transport highlights that approximately 15.6% of adults (aged 16 or over) in Hertfordshire cycled (irrespective of length or

purpose) at least once per month in 2014/2015. This compares favourably to the national figure of 14.7% [See reference 38]. This trend is also supported by data suggesting that over 7,000 children and adults in the county completed formal cycle training in 2018 (up 16% on figures from 2017) [See reference 39]. The redevelopment of Watford High Street with increased pedestrian, cycling and bus provision provides an example of where initiatives have been implemented across Hertfordshire to improve local facilities for sustainable modes of travel.

Navigable waterways

5.6 The Grand Union Canal provides a navigable waterway in Hertfordshire, connecting Berkhamstead, Kings Langley, Watford and Rickmansworth in the west of the county. The Lea and Stort Rivers lie between London and both Hertford and Bishop's Stortford respectively. Management of access to the water along the towpaths of these assets is provided by the Canal and River Trust (Grand Union Canal).

Transport corridors in Hertfordshire

5.7 The county is well served by major north-south rail links radiating from London, but less well served with east-west links. Key north-south routes crossing the county include the M1 and A1(M); whilst the M25 runs east-west. The M11 lies to the east. It is estimated that there are four million road journeys daily in the county. In addition, there is a comprehensive A road network of 1,864 miles (3,818km). Every day 140,000 people commute out (nearly 100,000 to London) and 85,500 enter the county, mostly from London and Bedfordshire. An extensive commercial bus network also operates in the county, offering strong east-west connections.

5.8 Five railways pass through Hertfordshire, in addition to the London Underground. Over 11 million rail journeys are made per year in Hertfordshire (over 60,000 daily commuter journeys to London). There are also three major

airports adjacent to Hertfordshire: Luton, Stansted and Heathrow. A total of 11 train operating companies provide services in Hertfordshire and are responsible for the management of 50 stations. The stations range in footfall from 20,000 passengers per year at Park Street to over 8 million at Watford, and 23 stations each handle over 1 million passengers per year [\[See reference 40\]](#).

Figure 5.1: National walking and cycling routes

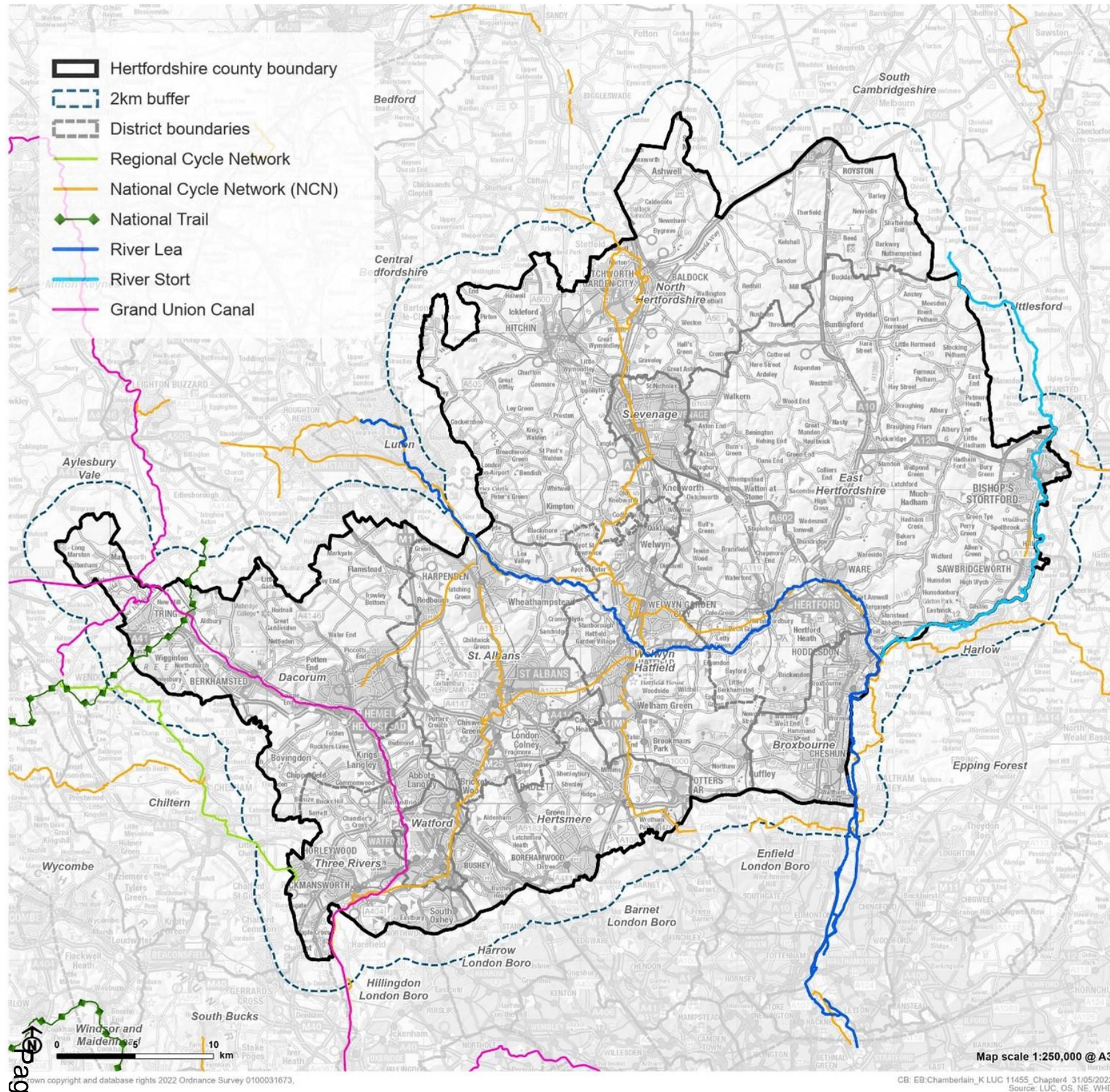


Figure 5.1 - National Walking and Cycling Routes



Key factors influencing the need for GI

Addressing future growth in transport infrastructure

5.9 There are significant problems attributed to the current road network within the county, including congestion on trunk roads, high modal share by private car and poor access to some major employment sites. These problems are expected to increase as the county experiences future population growth, which is expected to increase by 175,000 between 2018 and 2031²⁹. Higher demand for road travel across Hertfordshire will also exacerbate the already regular congestion and network disruption, resulting in unreliable journeys and limited resilience as well as harmful vehicle emissions and other environmental impacts.

5.10 Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018 – 2031 seeks to implement measures to increase the priority of pedestrians and cyclists relative to motor vehicles. This represents a shift away from the currently significant amount of journeys currently undertaken by private car. Providing increasingly sustainable connections for users and residents should alleviate the demand on the road network, whilst providing multifunctional benefits and greater linkages to the 15-minute neighbourhood concept.

Dominance of private transport

5.11 Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018 - 2031 outlines the 'Sustainable Travel Towns' scheme, which provides comprehensive packages and behaviour change initiatives within Hertfordshire. The project is aimed at achieving a significant modal shift to non-car modes and reduction in single occupancy car use. Approximately 60% of commuters within Hertfordshire drive to their place of employment. However, significant variations exist between districts. Commuters living in East Hertfordshire (62.7%) and Dacorum (66.2%) are most

likely to drive to work whereas this figure reduces to 50.9% and 53.5% in Watford and St. Albans respectively [See reference 41]. A number of Hertfordshire's rail lines are forecast to be over capacity by 2031 [See reference 42], albeit this figure does not consider the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the Midland Main Line with long distance services to St Pancras at 133% capacity, suburban West Coast Main Line services at 107%, Great Northern services to Moorgate at 104%, and Chiltern services to Marylebone at 100%.

Challenging severance and barriers to access

5.12 A number of PRowS are severed by busy roads which fragment sections of the network, forming barriers to wider connectivity within the county. Many PRowS terminate where they meet a primary road thereby forcing users either onto busy roads or to turn back. Road crossings are also not often provided and this demonstrates the poor connectivity of the network in some areas of the county. Whilst linear routes are beneficial for some, particularly for commuting routes, there is an identified deficiency in the number of circular routes for recreational use which support health and wellbeing³⁰. The opportunity exists to promote wider strategic linkages across the network. Hertfordshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan identifies a number of suggestions of issues relating to all users of the network, including minimising the number of obstructions, making structures easier to use, increasing the number of circular routes, and improving information available about the network and how to access it.

5.13 A number of other barriers exist to wider use of the PRow network in Hertfordshire, especially by cyclists and other non-walking users. Hertfordshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan identifies these main barriers with an action plan for strategic solutions. These barriers include obstructions that are found along paths for those with limited mobility (e.g. gates or vegetation), the poor condition of structures (e.g. gates or bridges), poor surface conditions, inconsistent signage on the network and road safety.

Linking active travel routes with key destinations

5.14 The PRoW network offers the potential to develop well-connected sustainable transport links between settlements and key destination sites. The establishment of promoted routes from regional transport connections provides the opportunity to address difficulties accessing key destinations and countryside sites without access to a private car³⁰. Sufficient bus and rail capacity and service levels are essential for strategic regional travel. However, consideration should also be given to enabling these services to better serve local inter-urban travel needs. Promoting travel options and facilitating accessible travel information provision, including open data initiatives, can increase the ease with which people, particularly disadvantaged groups, can access key services by using sustainable and green routes.

Use of sustainable transport to tackle socio-economic inequalities

5.15 The more densely populated wards within the county, such as Central Stevenage, Central and South Watford, South Oxhey and Central Cheshunt and Waltham Cross, exhibit the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation (see Figure 5.2). Safeguarding and improving the provision of local PRoWs in these areas may encourage sustainable forms of movement and help to tackle socio-economic inequalities. Although physical inactivity is one of a number of contributory causes to poor public health, particularly obesity, targeted active travel in more deprived wards could potentially help to address health inequalities.

Figure 5.2: PRow and IMD

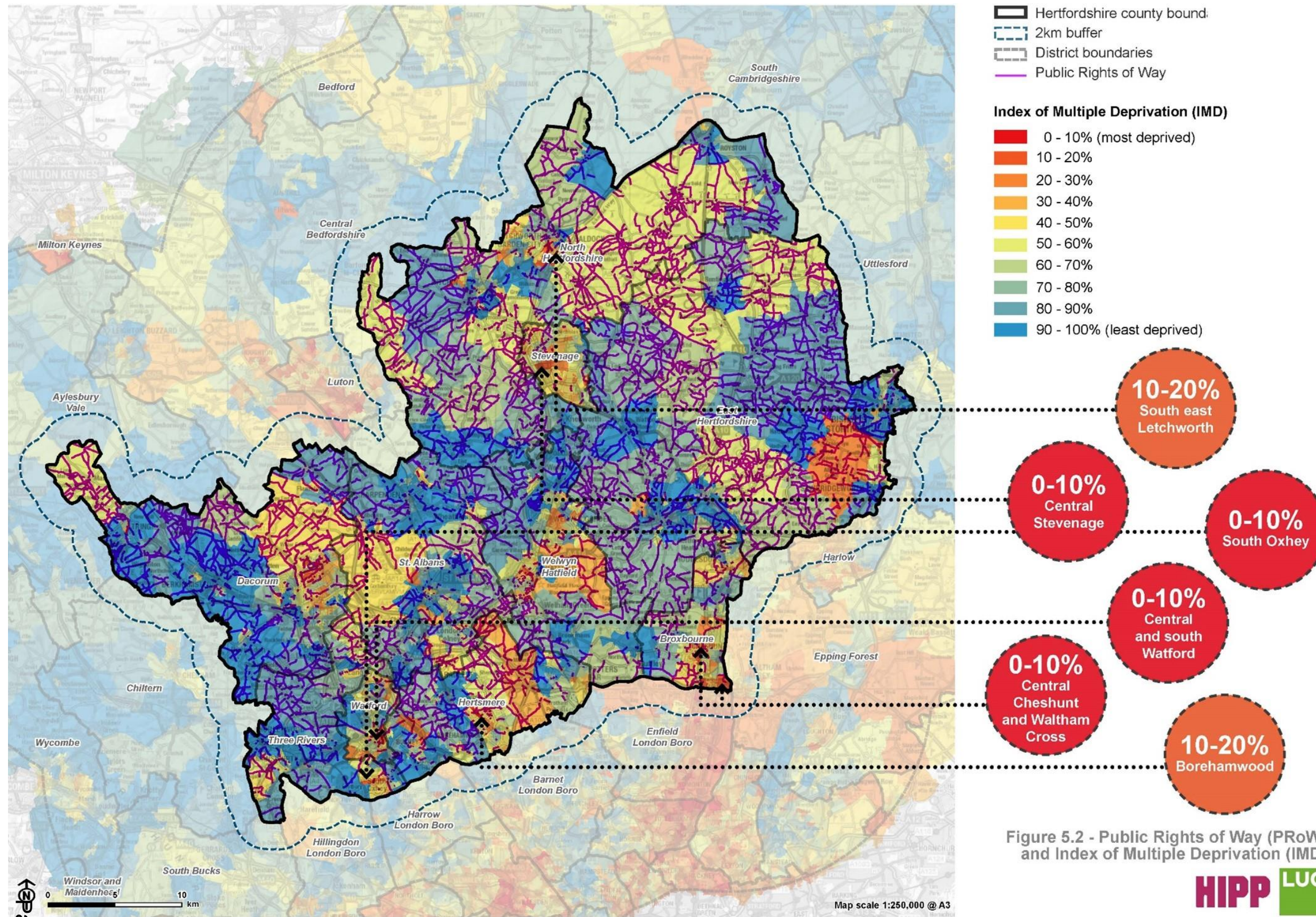


Figure 5.2 - Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)



Theme 4: Summary of GI Priorities

5.16 4A: Reconnect and create multi-functional links by addressing issues of network severance within the county. Consideration should be given to ensuring PRow connections in Hertfordshire are sustainable, equitable and accessible. This should involve tackling the issue of severance to ensure that PRow do not terminate once they meet a primary road. This issue is pertinent to large areas of Hertfordshire. The opportunity also exists to promote wider strategic linkages across the network, whilst also exploring the potential introduction of circular recreational routes which complement the network of active travel routes within the county.

5.17 4B: Target improvements to the provision of active travel routes within areas currently exhibiting lower walking and cycling rates or containing fewer promoted routes. The opportunity exists to prioritise PRow and active travel improvements within denser urban areas such as Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead and Welwyn Garden City. Consideration should be given to the implementation of a range of scales of proposals, including the potential to develop linkages into the countryside from these settlements. These could include addressing local scale barriers to access through to wider strategic routes which encourage recreational access or active travel.

5.18 4C: Ensure the delivery of a strong network of active travel routes between developments and key services with the aim of delivering sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods within the county. Promote a significant modal shift to non-car transport modes by targeting the removal of barriers to the use of the PRow network as part of development proposals within the county.

Chapter 6

Theme 5: The Water Environment

Why is this theme relevant to GI in Hertfordshire?

6.1 Rivers are a key GI asset as they create natural corridors through the landscape and provide vital habitat for a number of species. Hertfordshire is an area of significant water stress with some catchments classified as over-abstracted and failing to meet good chemical or ecological condition. Planning for and making space for water forms a key component of managing future landscapes in the face of climate change, particularly through catchment sensitive land management practices and flood risk management.

Key assets

6.2 Hertfordshire's blue infrastructure consists of priority chalk rivers, historic canal navigations and urban rivers, that weave amongst internationally important wetlands, flooded gravel pits and lakes, in both rural and urban settings. Figure 6.1 illustrates this network of watercourses across the county. These are set within two river basin catchments – the Thames (majority of the county) and Anglian (covering parts of North Hertfordshire) and comprises six operational catchment areas (see Figure 6.2).

Flooding in Hertfordshire

The Environment Agency records data of historic flooding events from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water. A number of Hertfordshire's rivers have flooded in the past, including:

- River Rib and River Quin;
- River Ash;
- River Stort;
- River Beane;
- River Mimram;
- Small sections of the River Ver;
- Long stretches of the River Colne; and
- Large portions of the River Lee and its floodplain through Hertford and Broxbourne.

6.3 The River Lea Catchment Partnership [See reference 43], River Colne Catchment Action Network [See reference 44] and the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership [See reference 45] all operate in Hertfordshire to boost the natural capital and value of Hertfordshire's river catchments for people and wildlife. The priority issues facing the catchment areas are outlined in the Thames and Anglian River Basin Management Plans as follows:

- Colne: Changes to natural level and flow of water, pollution from waste water, transport infrastructure and rural areas, and the extent of physical modifications such as weirs and concrete channels.
- Lee Upper: Low flows in rivers, pollution from waste water and from rural and urban areas, and modifications, structures and changes to the natural form of rivers.
- Lower Lee North: Poor water quality from waste water treatment, pollution incidents and misconnections, pollution and poor water quality from urban run-off and historic land use and physical modifications for urbanisation and flood protection.

- Upper Ouse and Bedford: Negative impacts on habitats and ecological diversity caused by the physical modification of watercourses, invasive non-native plant and animal species and pollution (diffuse and point source).
- The **River** Lea Catchment Partnership [See reference 46], and the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership [See reference 47] all operate in Hertfordshire to .

6.4 One of the most distinctive and important characteristics of Hertfordshire's landscapes are its chalk rivers. Across the entire world, there are less than 200 chalk streams. Almost all of these are found in the UK and 10% are located in Hertfordshire itself [See reference 48]. Their stable temperature, mineral rich, and neutral pH, create unique conditions that support a huge range of plants and animals, including some of the UK's most threatened wildlife, including water vole and lamprey.

6.5 Gravel pits are common in the county's lower river valleys and comprise the single largest proportion of Hertfordshire's remaining wetland. Whilst many of these areas are of low biodiversity value, some of these sites such as Amwell Nature Reserve, the Colne Valley SSSI and parts of the Lea Valley are now excellent habitat for wildfowl and other birds. In some locations, the newly created gravel pit wetlands have created suitable conditions for reedbeds, attracting nationally important species such as bitterns [See reference 49].

6.6 Hertfordshire's blue infrastructure is a multifunctional resource which attracts a range of recreational activities. Of particular importance are Hertfordshire's canals, which include the Grand Union Canal, the Lee Navigation and the Stort Navigation (refer to Theme 4: Access and Connectivity).

Figure 6.1: Catchments and watercourses

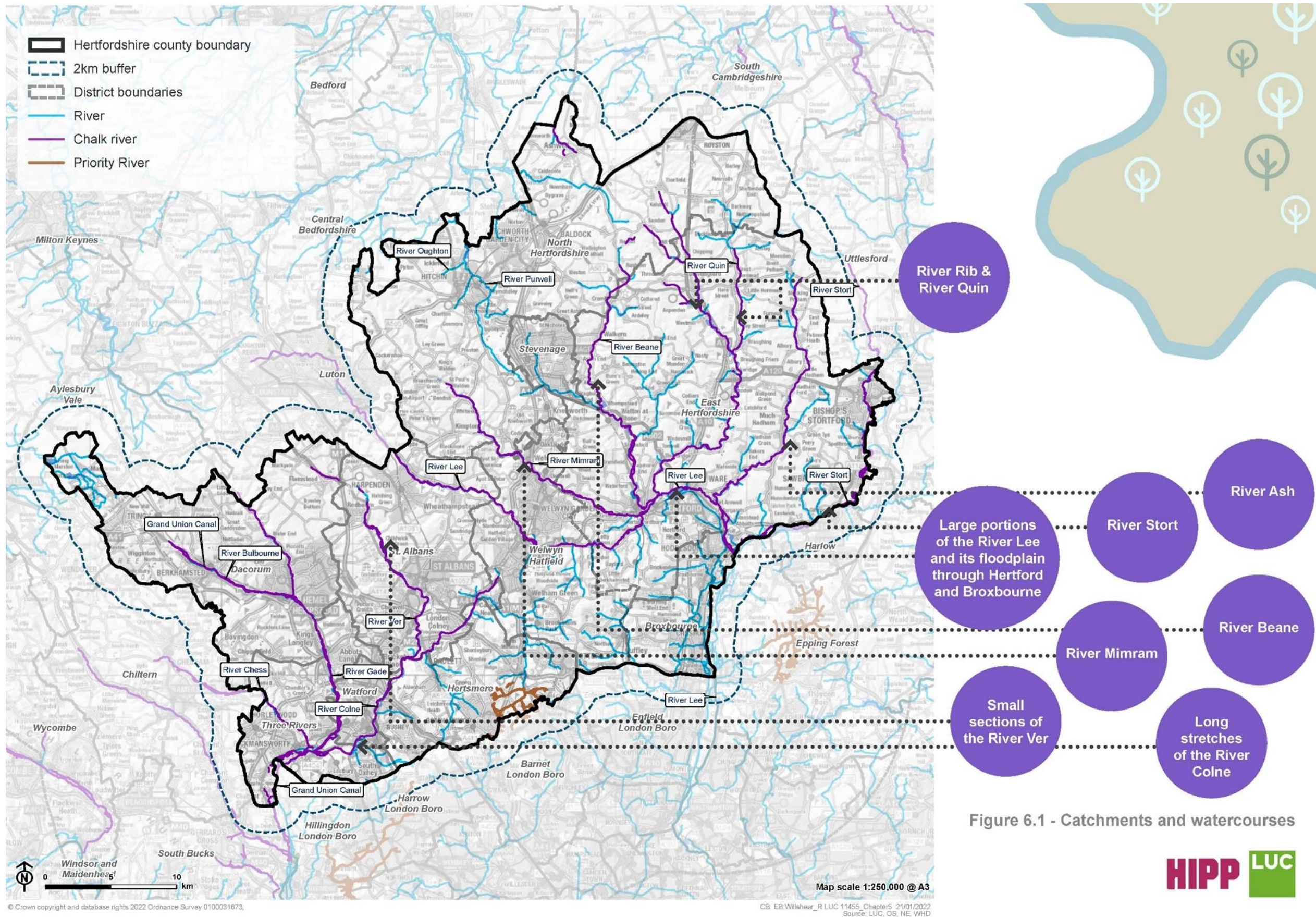
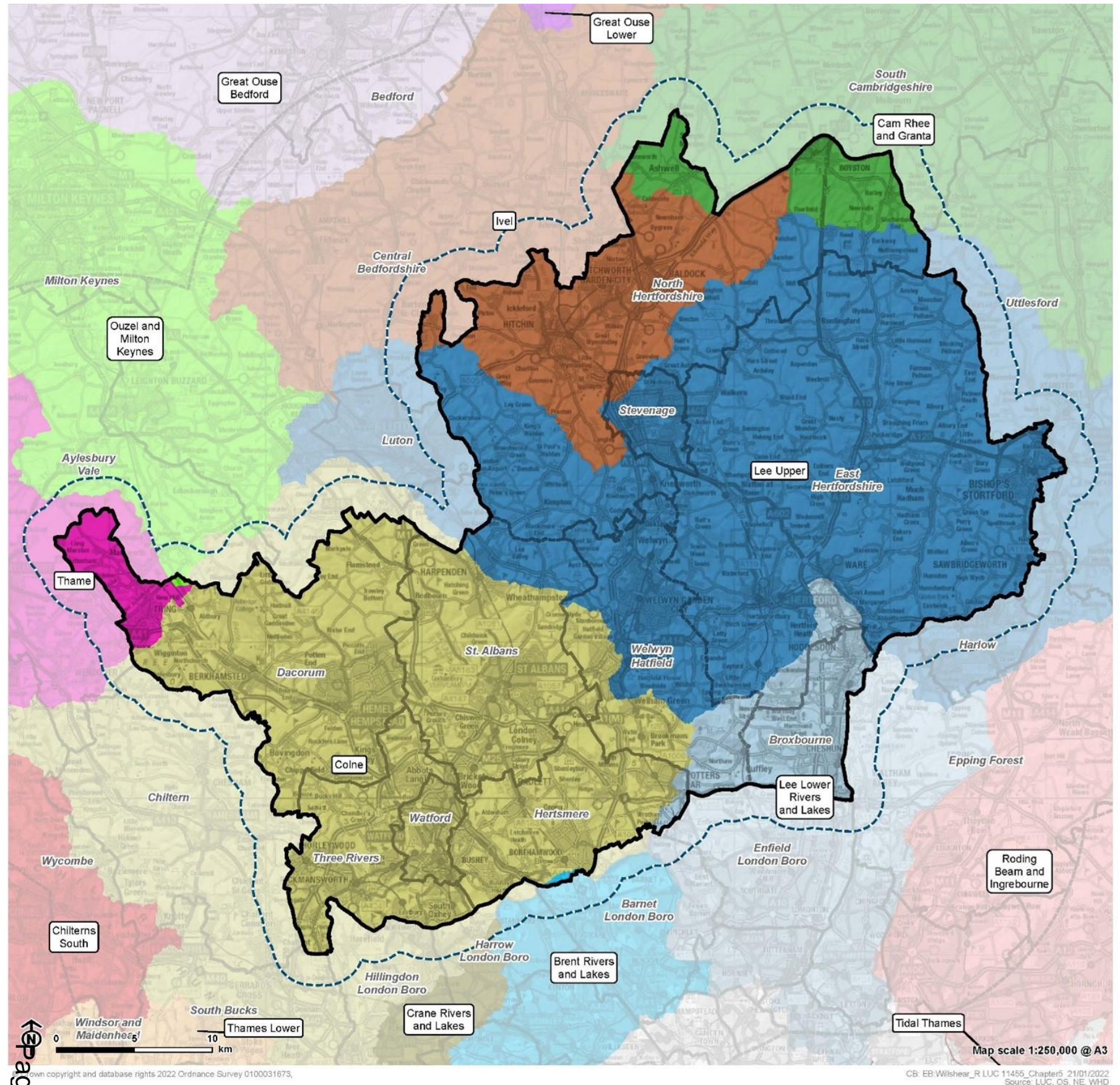


Figure 6.1 - Catchments and watercourses

Figure 6.2: Optional catchment areas



- Hertfordshire county boundary
- 2km buffer
- District boundaries

- Operational Catchment**
- Brent Rivers and Lakes
 - Cam Rhee and Granta
 - Chilterns South
 - Colne
 - Crane Rivers and Lakes
 - Great Ouse Bedford
 - Great Ouse Lower
 - Great Ouse Upper
 - Ivel
 - Lee Lower Rivers and Lakes
 - Lee Upper
 - Ouzel and Milton Keynes
 - Roding Beam and Ingrebourne
 - Thames
 - Thames Lower
 - Tidal Thames

Figure 6.2 - Operational Catchment Areas



Key factors influencing the need for GI

Water quality

6.7 Many of Hertfordshire's rivers are not achieving good ecological status and failing chemical status under the Water Framework Directive, primarily due to over-abstraction and physical modifications (see Table 6.1 and Table 6.2). Chalk rivers and their aquifers have historically been chosen as sites for abstraction points as their water is mineral rich and requires much less filtration than other sources.

6.8 Due to a combination of land management practices, land vulnerability and climatic factors, losses of nutrients from agricultural land is a key contributor to the pollution of surface and ground waters. Agriculture, however, is not the only contributor, urban and point sources of pollution, including effluents from sewage treatment works, also contribute to the pollution of these water bodies with nitrogen and phosphate. Over 50% of Hertfordshire falls within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. Figure 6.3 illustrates areas where the land use is causing pollution of the water. Actions should be targeted in these zones to address pollution so that extra treatment of raw wastewater can be avoided.

Table 6.1: Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment for ecological classification of surface waters 2019 Cycle 2

Catchment	Bad Ecological Status	Poor Ecological Status	Moderate Ecological Status	Good Ecological Status	High Ecological Status
Colne – includes the River Bulborne, Chess, Gade, Ver, Colne	1	5	20	0	0
Lee Upper – includes the River Ash, Beame, Miram, Lee, Stort	1	9	13	0	0
Lower Lee – includes the River Lee	1	9	16	1	0

Table 6.2: Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment for chemical classification of surface waters 2019 Cycle 2

Catchment	Failed Chemical Status	Good Chemical Status
Colne – includes the River Bulborne, Chess, Gade, Ver, Colne	26	0
Lee Upper – includes the River Ash, Beame, Miram, Lee, Stort	23	0
Lower Lee – includes the River Lee	27	0

Main issues preventing waters reaching good status in river catchments

Colne Catchment

- Physical modifications and over-abstraction are the main issues preventing waters reaching good status.
- The water industry is the sector primarily responsible.

Lee Upper Catchment

- Physical modifications and over-abstraction are the main issues preventing waters reaching good status.
- Agriculture and rural land management are the sectors primarily responsible.

Lower Lee Catchment (Rivers and Lakes)

- Physical modifications, over-abstraction and pollution from towns, cities and transport are the main issues preventing waters reaching good status.
- The urban and transport sectors are primarily responsible.

Flood risk

6.9 In Hertfordshire, the main source of flood risk is derived from surface water, rivers and other watercourses (fluvial) and, less frequently, groundwater. The pattern of flood risk is dispersed across the county with an estimated 30 to 60 thousand properties located in or near areas where there is a predicted high or medium risk of flooding from surface water **[See reference 50]**. Flood management and the potential integration of GI therefore requires careful consideration, particularly where rivers pass through urban contexts and are

heavily modified. Hitchin, Bishop's Stortford, Hempel Hempstead and Watford are Surface Water Management Plan Hotspots [\[See reference 51\]](#).

6.10 The existing level of flood risk in Hertfordshire is predicted to increase over time. Wetter winters and more intense rainfall may increase river flooding in both rural and urban catchments. More intense rainfall causes greater surface runoff, increasing localised flooding and erosion. Increased probability of intense summer rainfall may lead to incidences of flash flooding. There's a need to ensure that new major development does not contribute to increased flood risk from surface water and that surface water arising from the development is managed in a sustainable way e.g. by prioritising the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Water availability

6.11 Hertfordshire is located in the driest region in the country. The east of England receives only two thirds of the average UK annual rainfall. Chalk rivers and streams are particularly vulnerable to drier weather as they are reliant on rainfall to recharge the groundwater aquifers [\[See reference 52\]](#) [\[See reference 53\]](#). Drinking Water Safeguard Zones are established around water supplies which require additional measures to control pollution. For both groundwater and surface water zones, actions to address water contamination are implemented to try and avoid extra treatment. The distribution of drinking water safeguard zones within the county are displayed on Figure 6.4. Following two successive very dry winters and hot summers in Hertfordshire, the summer of 2019 saw catastrophic drying out of approximately 50km of chalk rivers and many wetland features on important nature reserves, such as the wetlands at King's Meads and ponds at Hertford Heath [\[See reference 54\]](#). The climate risk is exacerbated by over abstraction, further decreasing the water volume and flow in Hertfordshire's streams.

6.12 Since 2015, Affinity Water and the Environment Agency have been working together in the Colne and Lee catchments under the 'Revitalising Chalk Rivers' project [\[See reference 55\]](#). The programme has reduced groundwater

abstraction by 63 million litres of water a day since 1993 and implemented river restoration works to help over 120 km of chalk streams. Affinity Water is committed to further reducing groundwater abstraction by 36 million litres of water a day by 2025.

Figure 6.3: Water pollution

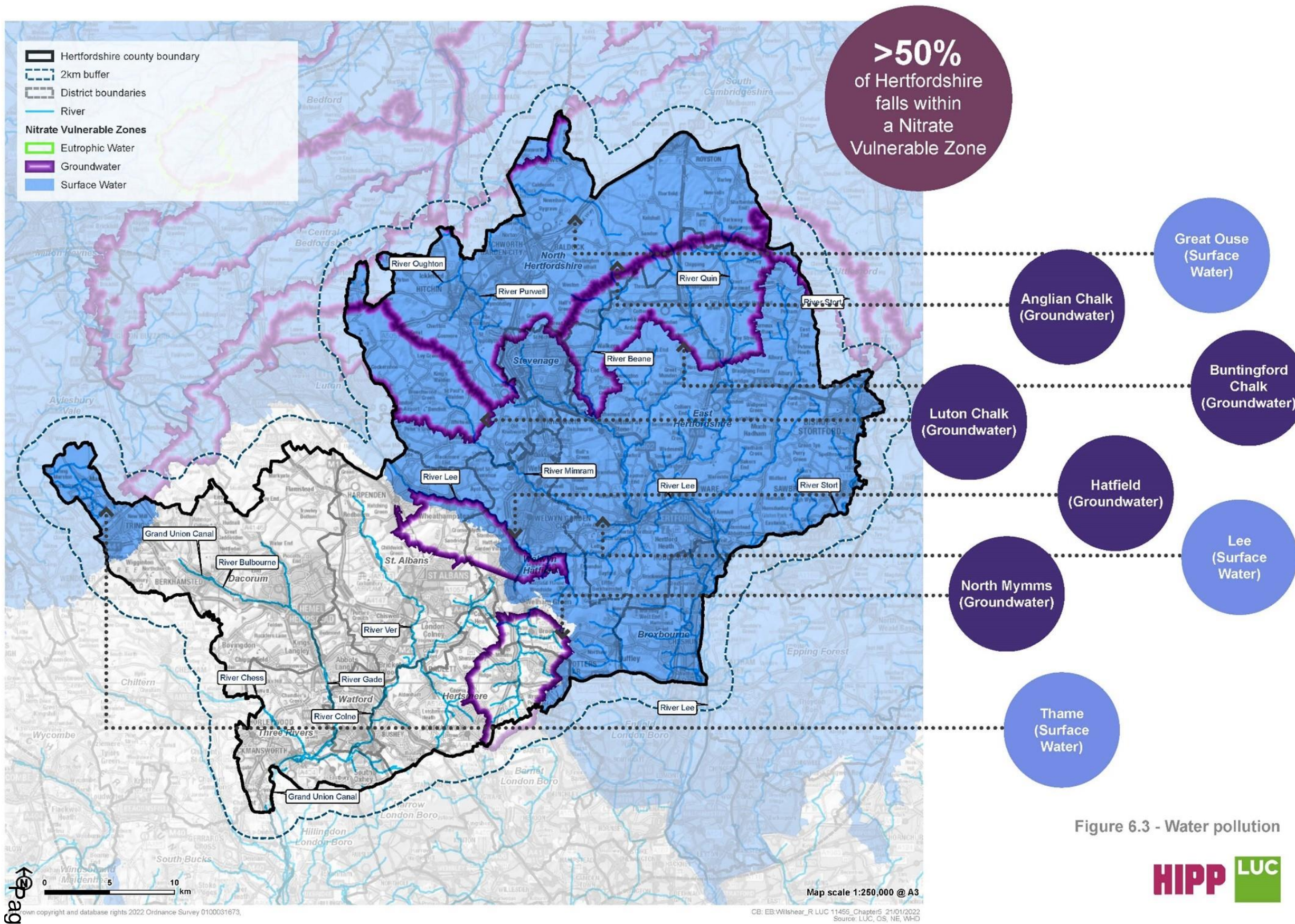


Figure 6.3 - Water pollution



Figure 6.4: Drinking water safeguard zones

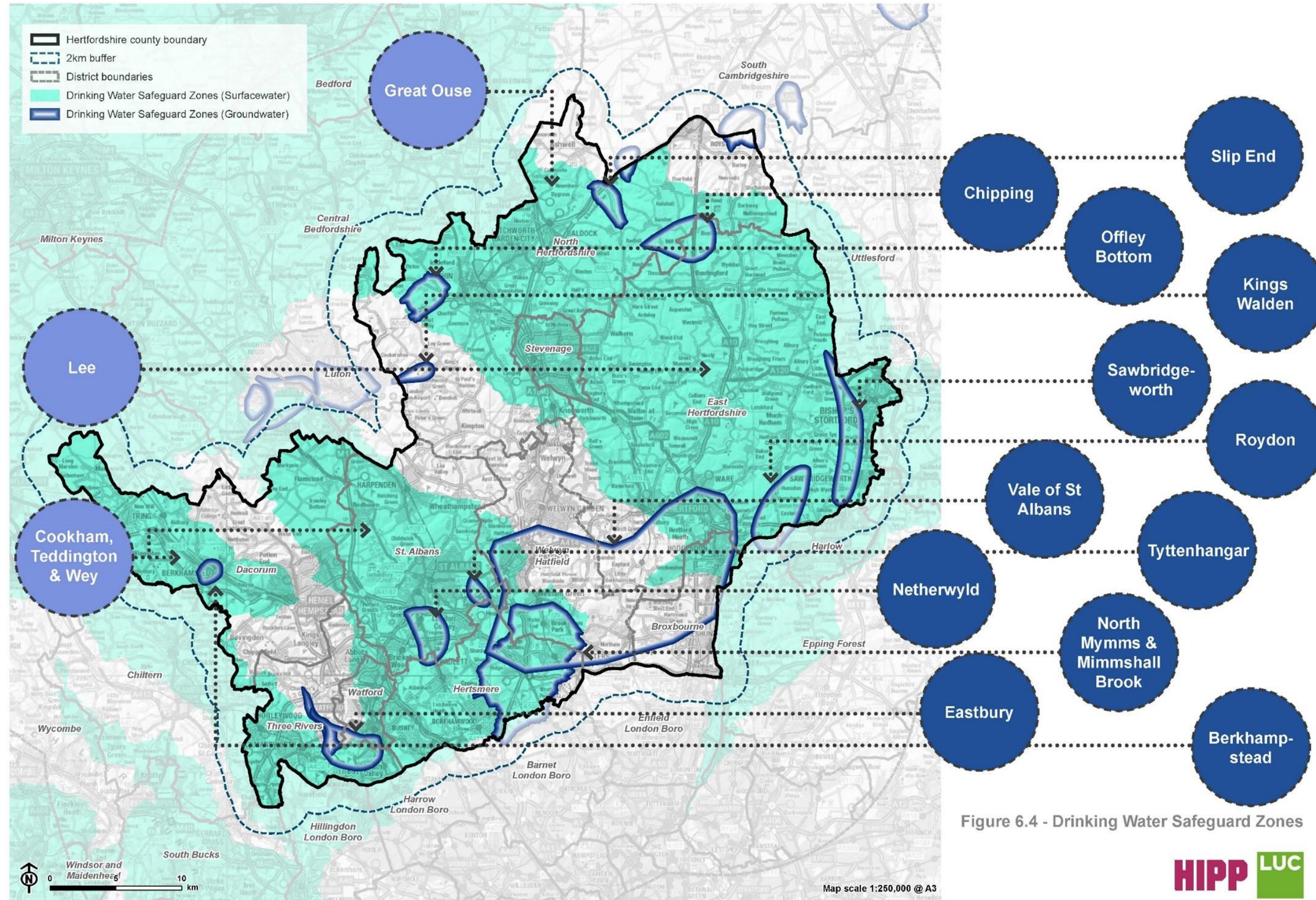


Figure 6.4 - Drinking Water Safeguard Zones

Theme 5: Summary of GI Priorities

6.13 5A: Deliver environmental enhancements to chalk streams within the county, ensuring improvements to ecological and chemical qualities. Hertfordshire's chalk streams form an internationally important asset, and their conservation should be considered at a landscape scale. Increasing connectivity and enhancing wetland habitat mosaics will help contribute to the objectives of the Thames River Basin Management Plan, River Catchment Management Plans and restore favourable SSSI and Water Framework Directive condition. Consideration should also be had for the importance of maintaining river levels within Hertfordshire's chalk streams. How the recommendations for water quantity, quality, as well as habitat quality, which are set out within the Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy [\[See reference 56\]](#), can be applied should be explored.

6.14 5B: Identify opportunities for increased recreational access to river corridors. Watercourses provide an effective corridor to reconnect communities with nature on their doorstep. New recreational routes should be opened up where there is capacity to do so without exceeding biodiversity sensitivity thresholds. Inspiration for multi-functional blue network can be taken from projects such as Rediscovering the River Colne.

6.15 5C: Integrate flood risk into the design of new developments. Future development in close proximity to the rivers within Hertfordshire could exacerbate existing pressures. For example, settlement growth is likely to increase pressures during periods of high river flows and could lead to flooding of developed land, particularly in already high-risk areas such as Hempel Hempstead and Watford. Proposals for additional natural flood storage should be coupled with biodiversity enhancement, for example wetland creation or SuDS.

6.16 5D: Incorporate and complement existing river partnerships and projects. The River Lea Catchment Partnership, River Colne Catchment Action Network and the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership are just some of the organisations already working to improve Hertfordshire's river catchments for

people and wildlife. The opportunity exists to provide linkages between the Strategy and these existing partnerships and projects, such as the Revitalising Chalk Rivers and the Chiltern Chalk Stream Project, in order to maximise knowledge sharing and efficient use of resources.

6.17 5E: Retrofit nature-based solutions for surface water run-off into urban areas. Although the use of SuDS and other nature-based solutions designed to reduce flood risk and water pollution are heavily scrutinised within new development proposals, existing urban areas, and their role in contributing to water-based pressures, should not be ignored. Adopting ‘grey to green’ schemes within urban areas, for example by reclaiming carriageway space from cars for greenery and people, should be explored across all of Hertfordshire’s urban areas. The potential for any greening opportunities should be considered alongside all routine highways upgrades, helping to enhance efficiency and value for money. Focus should also be had on how nature-based solutions can be used to tackle hotspots of water pollution, for example where run off from main roads enters watercourses, or where local surface water flooding is an issue.

Chapter 7

Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing

Why is this theme relevant to GI in Hertfordshire?

7.1 Good physical and mental health can have a major impact on quality of life and well-being for individuals, their families, communities and wider society. However, health inequities are mostly determined by social factors. There is a clear social gradient to life expectancy, with those living in deprived areas tending to not only live shorter lives but also experience more years in poor health [See reference 57]. Hertfordshire follows these trends, with 63% of the population aged 16 years+ either obese or overweight, with disparities between districts/boroughs. Physical inactivity in Hertfordshire has been estimated to cost the NHS an estimated £16.1 million. During 2013-2014, people in higher social grades within Hertfordshire were found to be more physically active (62%) than those in lower social grades (50.9%) [See reference 58]. These health challenges form key drivers for the Strategy and interlink with the emerging priorities of the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26.

Key assets

Open space and deprivation

7.2 Hertfordshire is a prosperous county [See reference 59], however, there are still areas of deprivation, disadvantage and social exclusion. Table 7.1 sets out the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ratings of Hertfordshire's publicly accessible open spaces [See reference 60] (also see Figure 7.1). Almost all boroughs/districts have areas of high deprivation where there appears to be a

deficit in open space which should be considered for a focus of resources. This deprivation could be attributed to severance from infrastructure corridors and the relative density of development in areas of the county.

Table 7.1: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rating of Hertfordshire's open spaces

IMD Rating	Open Space
0-10% (most deprived)	Borehamwood (Aycliffe)
10-20%	Stevenage (Bedwell and Poplars) Watford (Central and South Oxhey) Hemel Hempstead (Highfield and Grovehill) Hatfield (Roe Green) Letchworth (Radburn Way) Cheshunt (Churchgate)
20-30%	Watford (Holywell) Patchetts Green Borehamwood Hemel Hempstead (Bennetts End) St Albans (Townsend) Welwyn (Peartree and Panshanger) Cheshunt Stevenage (Bedwell)
30-40%	Stevenage Welwyn (Woodhall) Hatfield (South and Birchwood) St Albans (Sopwell) Hemel Hempstead (Cupid Green) Watford (The Rookery) Borehamwood Hoddesdon (Rye Park)

IMD Rating	Open Space
40-50%	Hoddesdon Cheshunt (Bury Green) Potters Bar (South) Borehamwood (Rowley Green) Watford (South Oxhey and Central) Hemel Hampstead (Warners End) Stevenage
50-60%	Watford (West and North) Bushey Hemel Hampstead (Paradise) St Albans (The Camp) Hatfield Welwyn (Hatfield Hyde) Hoddesdon Stevenage (Fishers Green) Hitchin Letchworth
60-70%	Baldock Bishop's Stortford Bushey Borehamwood (Well End) London Colney Hemel Hampstead (Adeyfield) Hatfield (Oxlease) Welwyn (Digsfield Park) Potters Bar (South)
70-80%	Borehamwood (Central) Bushey Watford (Garston and Leavesden Green) Welwyn (Handside) Baldock

IMD Rating	Open Space
	Ware Cheshunt (Hammon Street)
80-90%	Hemel Hempstead (South) Hemel Hempstead (Felden) Watford (Central and Watford Heath) Potters Bar (Little Heath) St Albans (Central) Harpenden (Hatching Green) Hertford (Central) Hitchin
90-100% (least deprived)	Letchworth (South) Hitchin (Oakfield) Bishop’s Stortford Welwyn (Digswell) Hertford (Pine Hurst) Cuffley Radlett St Albans (Marshalswick) Berhamstead Tring Chorleywood Rickmansworth

7.3 Table 7.2 sets out the IMD health ratings in Hertfordshire provide a comparison of understanding (also see Figure 7.2). In more deprived parts of the county, people have poorer health and wellbeing, living on average 7.4 years less than elsewhere. Some vulnerable and minority groups have significantly worse health outcomes than the majority of the population, particularly people with mental health problems and learning disabilities [See reference 61]. 70% of districts/boroughs have pockets where communities are within the top 20% of the most deprived in the country. These should be a focus for investment in securing GI and equitable access to open space.

Table 7.2: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) health ratings in Hertfordshire

IMD Health Ratings	Area
10-20%	Watford (Central) Borehamwood (North) Stevenage (Central and Poplars) Letchworth (North)
20-30%	Stevenage (Central) Welwyn (Peartree) Hemel Hempstead (Highfield) Watford (Holywell) Borehamwood
30-40%	Watford Chesunt (Churchgate) Welwyn (Panshanger) Hatfield (South) Stevenage (Pin Green)
40-50%	Stevenage (Bedwell) Hemel Hempstead (Warners End) Waford (North, West and Meriden) Letchworth Borehamwood (North)

Greenspace and health

7.4 Evidence shows that GI has a positive influence on population and individual level health and wellbeing. All social groups are likely to benefit, although some groups, including more socio-economically deprived and disadvantaged populations appear to disproportionately benefit from greener living environments [See reference 62]. In 2011, monitoring of air quality in

Hertfordshire found the mean concentration of fine particulate matter was higher in Hertfordshire compared with the mean for England; this was still the case in 2015 (although levels had fallen). By March 2019, 31 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) had been officially declared across Hertfordshire, with wider monitoring being undertaken outside of these areas [\[See reference 63\]](#).

Particular hotspots for poor air quality include the major roads that cross the county, including the M25, M1 and A1(M). Busy town centres also contribute to higher levels of air pollution. Hertfordshire is further impacted by Luton and Stansted Airports which lie close to the western and eastern borders of the county, which contribute to increased noise pollution for location populations.

7.5 Poor air quality can result in detrimental environmental health risks.

However, the contribution of GI to tackling air quality issues is poorly recognised in over half the district/borough Local Plans. One of the objectives in the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy 2020 is to have clean air for all by 2030. Key action plans will need to be developed and implemented to ensure these aims are met, albeit GI could help achieve this goal. Reducing the need for car use by improving infrastructure to support active travel and supporting vehicle-free zones in busy town centres will also help to meet these targets. In addition, ambitious projects such as re-establishing the historic Enfield Chase by creating 15 ha of woodland to buffer the M25 should be supported.

Recreational sites and visitor attractions

7.6 When the Countryside Management Services (CMS) at HCC was established in 1975, the approach was taken to manage the whole county as a country park connected by the wider PRoW network (refer to Theme 4: Access and Connectivity). Now part of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) team at HCC, CMS still exists as a conceptual brand but not as a separate entity. The strategic approach to management of the PRoW network was adopted as an alternative to focussing on the designation of individual sites. For this reason, Hertfordshire has relatively fewer country park assets. Those that are present include:

- Bishop's Wood Country Park – Three Rivers;

- Leavesden Country Park – Three Rivers;
- Aldenham Country Park – Hertsmere;
- Knebworth Country Park – North Hertfordshire;
- Stanborough Park – Welwyn Hatfield; and
- Southern Country Park – East Hertfordshire.

7.7 Hertfordshire includes sections of two regional parks, the Lee Valley Regional Park and Colne Valley Regional Park, which provide green buffers to the east and west of London respectively. Following the corridors of the River Lee and River Colne, both parks are regionally significant destinations for recreation and relaxation. These GI assets provide recreational resources combined with rich wildlife habitat. The county also accommodates a large network of common land and designated village greens which form locally valued areas of public open space. Hertfordshire's cultural assets also play an important role in attracting visitors into the county, including the Henry Moore Foundation, Knebworth House, Hatfield House, Warner Bros. Studios and Watford Palace Theatre **[See reference 64]**.

7.8 Buffering the northern fringe of London, Watling Chase Community Forest lies predominantly within the boundary of Hertsmere Borough. The Watling Chase Community Forest Plan identifies a series of objectives for the site, including increasing opportunities for sport and recreation, improving access to the countryside and creating new opportunities for nature conservation. However, landownership issues have precluded the development of the site into a functional unit in comparison to some of England's other 12 Community Forests, such as the Thames Chase Community Forest.

7.9 Other major open spaces and commons within the county include Heartwood Forest, Therfield Heath, Chorleywood Common and numerous other parks and green spaces. Owned and managed by the National Trust, the Ashridge Estate forms a significant landscape scale recreational asset within the county. Located at Welwyn Garden City, Shaw's Corner is another example of a National Trust property within the county. The Green Flag Award, the benchmark standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the UK,

was awarded to 49 sites across Hertfordshire in 2016. The majority of these sites are in the ownership of district/borough councils and have management plans produced by their owners or the Land Management team within the CRoW service which guide their use and development.

7.10 Developed with the aim of delivering accessible and good quality online information regarding the county's parks and open spaces, the ParksHerts Project provides a single web based point of access. The database facility provides details of over 140 parks and open spaces within Hertfordshire, from recreation grounds through to woodlands and award winning Green Flag sites. Parks Herts is supported by the Land Management Team within the CRoW service whose programmes include weekly groups for conservation volunteers who deliver practical conservation and access improvements.

Community initiatives and engagement with green space

7.11 The county currently accommodates a large number of community based initiatives, including growing projects and outdoor volunteering opportunities, which provide opportunities for individuals to remain active and encourage personal investment in their local space. These projects contribute to a vibrant community as well as enhanced health and wellbeing. Hertfordshire Health Walks is an example of a successful scheme, with over 65,000 walks held in 2018/2019 with a total of over 1,350 participants [\[See reference 65\]](#). Examples of other current initiatives are highlighted in below.

Current community growing and outdoor volunteering opportunities in Hertfordshire

Community gardens

- Countywide independent community garden initiatives: The Triangle Community Garden (Hitchin, North Hertfordshire), CDA Herts Community Garden (St Albans), Grow Cheshunt Community Project (Cheshunt, Broxbourne), Sunnyside Rural Trust Hemel Food Garden (Hemel Hempstead, Dacorum), Mudlarks (Hertford, East Hertfordshire), Digswell Community and Gardening Project (Digswell, Welwyn Hatfield).

Allotments

- Countywide private allotments available across the 10 districts/boroughs via local councils.

Community growing initiatives

- Incredible Edible St Albans offering monthly 'Come and Grow' sessions at two locations.

Practical conservation volunteering and green space management

- Countryside Management Service: Practical conservation volunteering, Friends of Greenspaces, Wood Wardens, Rights of Way volunteers.
- Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust: Practical Work Parties, Conservation volunteering, Community engagement and events.
- Groundwork: range of opportunities including community growing, practical conservation, greenspace management.
- Woodland Trust: practical conservation.

- The Conservation Volunteers: Green Gym (Watford).

Hertfordshire Health Walks

- 60 walks each week of between 30 – 90 minutes led by volunteers and coordinated by the Land Management team within the CRoW service. In 2018/19 over 65,000 walks were led across the County.

ParkRun

- 13x 5k and 8x junior events (2k) each week across Hertfordshire led by volunteers.

Figure 7.1: Indices of Multiple Deprivation

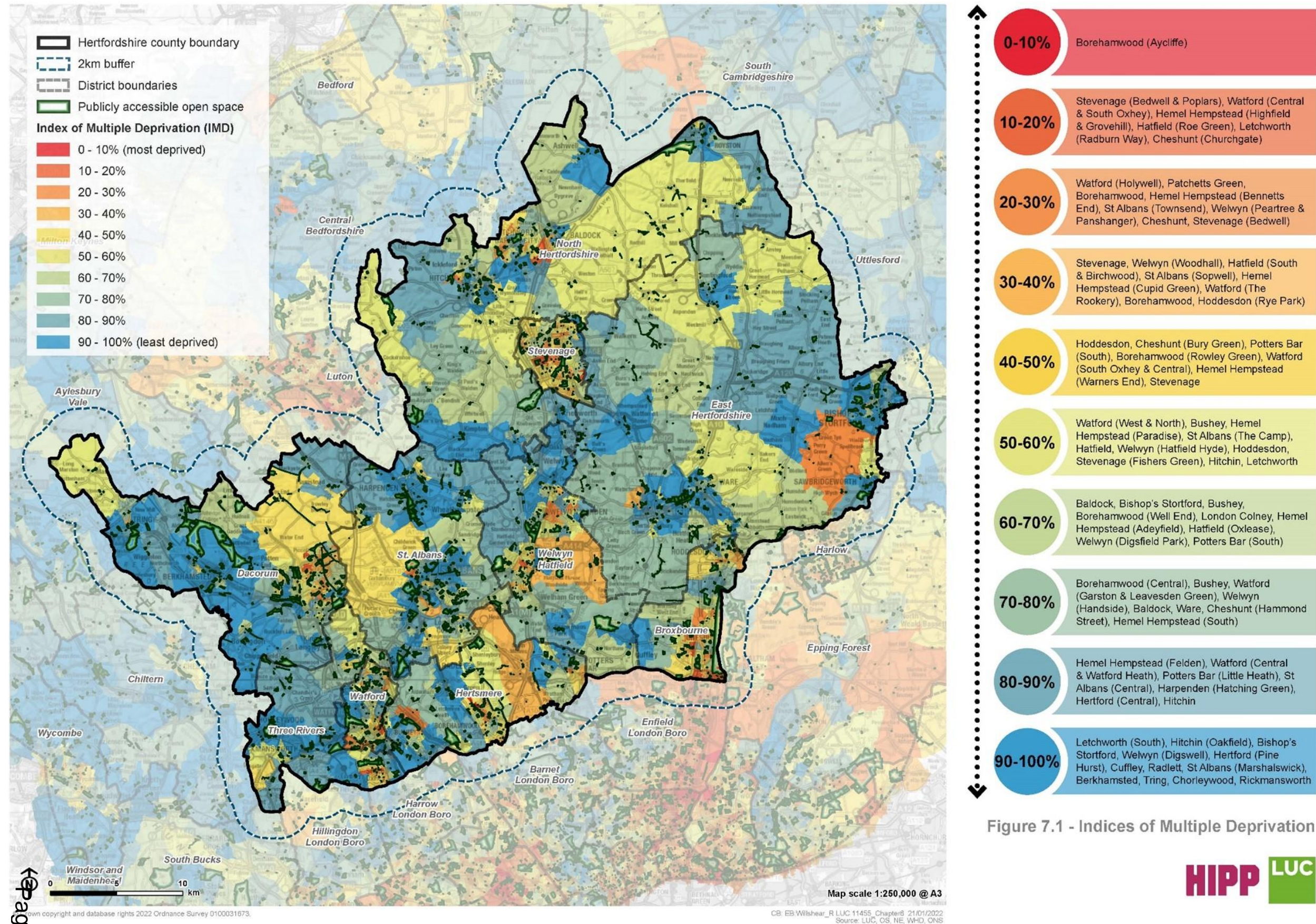
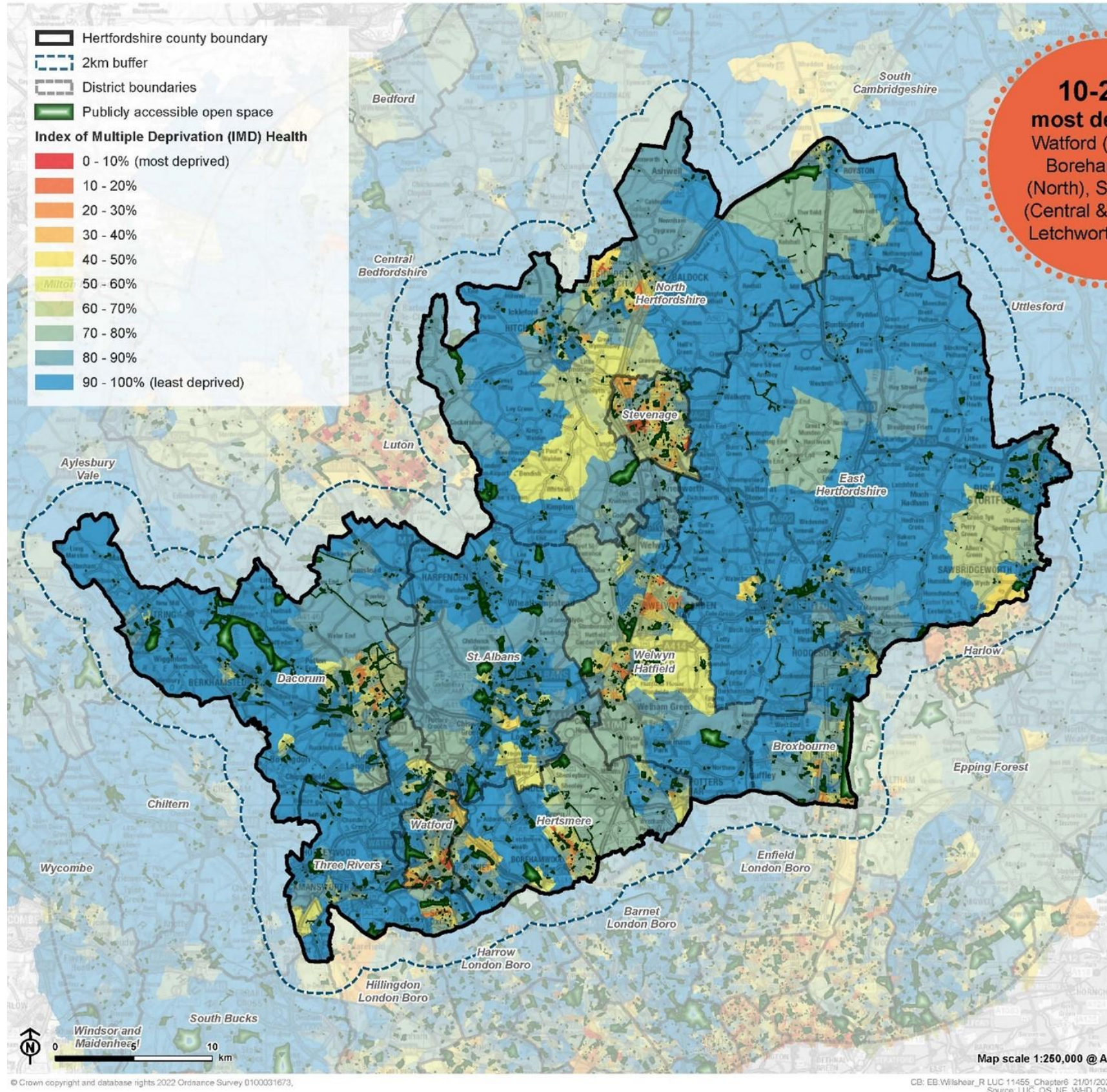


Figure 7.1 - Indices of Multiple Deprivation



Figure 7.2: Indices of Multiple Deprivation - Health



10-20% most deprived
 Watford (Central), Borehamwood (North), Stevenage (Central & Poplars), Letchworth (North)

30-40% most deprived
 Stevenage (Bedwell), Hemel Hempstead (Warners End), Watford (North, West & Meriden), Letchworth, Borehamwood (North)

30-40% most deprived
 Watford, Cheshunt (Churchgate), Welwyn (Panshanger), Hatfield (South), Stevenage (Pin Green)

20-30% most deprived
 Stevenage (Central), Welwyn (Peartree), Hemel Hempstead (Highfield), Watford (Holywell), Borehamwood

Figure 7.2 - Indices of Multiple Deprivation - Health



Key factors influencing the need for GI

Addressing open space accessibility and barriers

7.12 The need for equitable access to quality open space and nature has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. At a national scale, exercise levels were highest during lockdown in high income households, whilst low income households stayed the same. Use of parks and public green spaces increased in comparison to previous years; and although mental health declined overall, 9 out of 10 people felt the natural environment helped with their wellbeing [\[See reference 66\]](#).

7.13 The review of planning policies across the 10 LPAs found that whilst all have adequate or strong policy coverage in terms of using GI to meet open space standards, over 25% of districts/boroughs did not have strong policies that make provision for recreational facilities to meet local user and communities' needs. This presents an important opportunity to ensure that communities' needs are met with robust policies in place. This must be informed by a sound evidence base to ensure barriers to use are fully understood and addressed. Currently, adequate analysis of existing open space provision to meet present and future population growth is inconsistent across districts/boroughs. This varying evidence baseline will need to be addressed in order to ensure adequate strategic investment and provision for current and future needs are met across the county. An overview of benchmarking and standards within Hertfordshire, including the evolving work by Natural England regarding the Green Infrastructure Framework, is provided in Appendix B. Consideration should be given to adopting a Hertfordshire specific approach to be implemented by individual LPAs.

Recreational pressure

7.14 Where management objectives for people and wildlife co-exist, there is often the potential for conflict. This is particularly notable at two important biodiversity sites within the county, Ashridge Estate, a 2,000 hectare area of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, and Panshanger Park, a former quarry site managed by Tarmac in conjunction with several other organisations (including Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust) [See reference 67] [See reference 68]. Both sites have experienced intense recreational pressure as a consequence of COVID-19 lockdowns. Recreational usage of sites can result in significant negative effects on sensitive habitats and species but also lead to deliberate and accidental fires, litter, predation from people and pets, eutrophication, fly-tipping, trampling, traffic-induced air pollution and site management problems. One approach to manage these pressures are ‘Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces’ (SANGs). The aim is to redirect and encourage more visitors to enjoy SANGs in order to relieve pressure on protected sites for nature. The opportunity exists to create SANGs from the following scenarios:

- Existing open space of SANG quality with no existing public access or limited public access, which for the purposes of mitigation could be made fully accessible to the public;
- Existing open space, which is already accessible, but which could be changed in character so that it is more attractive to the specific group of visitors who might otherwise visit the SPA; or
- Land in other uses which could be converted into SANG.

A growing population

7.15 The population of Hertfordshire is expected to grow by 1.3 million people over the next 10 years, with the greatest increases forecast in Welwyn Hatfield (5.5%), East Hertfordshire (5.1%) and Dacorum (4%). To accommodate this growth, over 100,000 new homes and 100,000 jobs are planned by 2031, alongside the regeneration of Stevenage, Hatfield and Watford Riverwell town

centres [See reference 69]. Thirty major housing locations have also been identified across the county, each with over 550 new homes planned, including Gilston Garden Town in East Hertfordshire. Population growth, associated urbanisation and competing demands for land use may result in increased threats to the provision of accessible green space. However, this presents key opportunities to ensure that GI and equitable access to open space form primary considerations in development planning. Consideration should also be given to expanding the network of urban greening initiatives within the county as a key component of community focused GI. This is particularly relevant to higher density settlements within Hertfordshire.

Theme 6: Summary of GI Priorities

7.16 6A: Introduce improvements to the quality of greenspaces in the county, as well as urban greening more generally, to provide health improvements within areas of deprivation. Despite the relative affluence of Hertfordshire compared with the UK average, 70% of districts/boroughs within the county are characterised by communities within the top 20% of the most deprived in the country. These areas should provide a focus for future GI investment and the provision of health benefits through measurable improvements to air quality. Furthermore, GI should support the ambition to improve community cohesion and investment in local green spaces. Additional local analysis is needed to understand the relationship between deprivation and access to natural and semi-natural greenspace. The outputs of this will be a useful tool in considering how to improve areas for wildlife and people through forthcoming biodiversity net gain (BNG) contributions from developers.

7.17 6B: Embed GI and equitable access to open space policies in development planning in response to projected population growth and development pressures. It is crucial that the ambitious growth targets for the county are accommodated in a sustainable manner, harnessing opportunities for GI and offering a high quality of life for future residents. Improvements to urban greenspace should therefore be undertaken in a way that meets the needs of the local community and improves resilience to climate change. Areas of dense housing also offer the opportunity for the integration of urban greening

initiatives. A mandated requirement to use a GI-led design process would improve design quality, and result in better provision for green infrastructure at the strategic scale.

7.18 6C: Address visitor needs and recreational pressure on important wildlife sites through a strategic county-wide approach. Some of the county's most important recreational sites are exceeding their carrying capacity for people, damaging and degrading sensitive habitats and species. This is creating issues for LPAs such as Dacorum where they're required under the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) process to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of designated sites. An opportunity exists to evaluate the impact of recreational pressure on semi-natural green spaces and identify solutions to address these issues. This should be achieved by meeting HRA and wider green space provision requirements through a strategic county-wide approach. GI interventions can provide a range of solutions for addressing recreational pressure such as new country parks, revitalising Watling Chase Community Forest, new green space through development, enhancement of amenity provisions at existing sites, enhancement or creation of SANGs. Approaches should be underpinned by borough/district level visitor surveys to understand the demographic of visitors and drivers for usage.

7.19 6D: Explore community-based and sustainable food growth as a tool for addressing issues surrounding health, wellbeing and biodiversity. Local food growth can take shape in a number of different forms, including small-scale private growing, allotments, community gardens and market gardens. Opportunities to identify and support the emergence of market gardens should be of particular priority, not only due to their health and biodiversity benefits, but also the positive impact they can have on local food security and small-scale economic growth. A further assessment to quantify need/desire and identify potential spaces to host market gardens should be explored.

Chapter 8

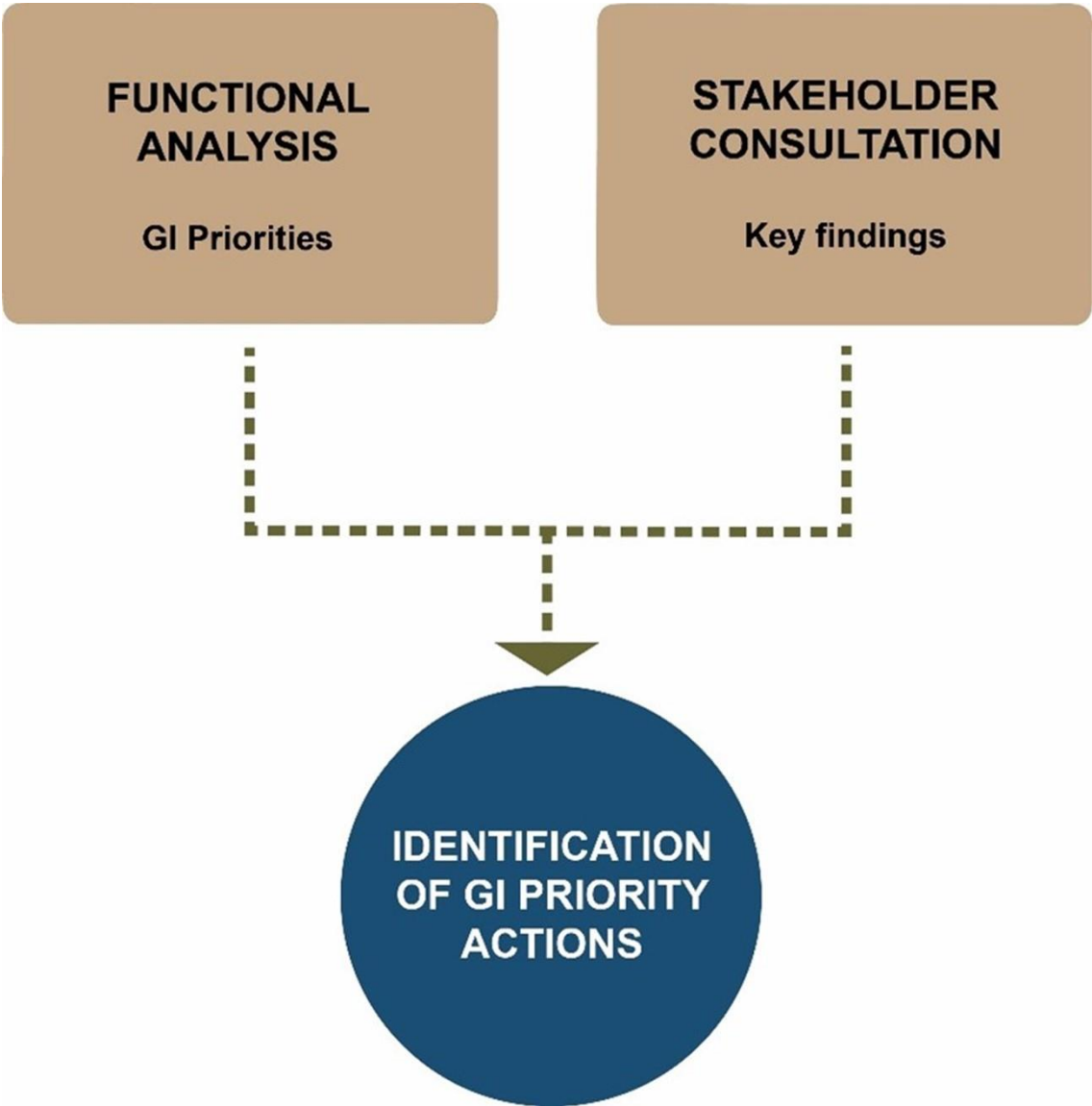
Identification of GI Priority Actions

In this chapter, GI Priorities identified by theme are brought together with the key findings of stakeholder consultation to understand commonalities. Utilising all information generated within the functional analysis and initial stakeholder consultation, a series of ten GI Priority Actions are identified.

8.1 Working in conjunction with the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HiPP), GI Priority Actions have been defined with the aim of delivering a range of multifunctional benefits through improvements to the GI network. These provide a list of improvements to repair, reconnect and restore GI across the county. Informed by the GI Priorities within each theme and the findings of stakeholder consultation (see Figure 8.1), their aim is to guide the direction of Hertfordshire's GI and set a framework for sustainable growth and development within the county. A breakdown of the GI Priorities for each theme are listed below in the following section. In order to ensure robustness, linkages are provided to the evidence base to indicate how GI Priority Actions have been derived. The following section summarises the findings of stakeholder consultation and the specific GI priorities which have informed the identification of GI Priority Actions.

8.2 Further detail regarding delivery and implementation of individual GI Priority Actions is provided in Part 2b: Green Infrastructure Priority Actions and Delivery. Each GI Priority Action is guided by its own vision which will be realised through a set of project specific objectives. Additional information is provided regarding each GI Priority Action, as well as potential delivery partners.

Figure 8.1: Identification of GI Priority Areas



Summary of GI Priorities for Themes

Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape

- 1A: Expand tree coverage and enhance woodland connectivity within the county;
- 1B: Integrate GI and sustainable farming practices to support biodiversity and encourage uptake of agri-environment schemes;
- 1C: Enhance and remediate the landscape condition of deteriorating landscapes within the county; and
- 1D: Anticipate and plan for future climate change by introducing enhancements to the diversity of woodland and wider agricultural systems.

Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place

- 2A: Utilise GI to promote access to high quality landscapes from urban areas as part of the extension to the Chilterns AONB;
- 2B: Expand and enhance the landscape framework which form an important feature of the character of Garden City communities;
- 2C: Utilise GI to enhance the beneficial use of remaining Green Belt within the county;
- 2D: Undertake informed studies and assessments to understand the sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate future land use changes and any potential overlaps with the LNRS; and
- 2E: Utilise GI as a tool for enhancing the interpretation, use and setting of heritage assets.

Theme 3: Nature Recovery

- 3A: Protect, enhance and connect habitats across the county to support species recovery and greater climate resilience;
- 3B: Incorporate biodiversity into existing and future new developments in accordance with upcoming BNG requirements;
- 3C: Bring more of the county's LWS into positive management to support the wider network of statutory designated sites; and
- 3D: Expand the ecological mapping resource to underpin the identification of future local nature recover networks.

Theme 4: Access and Connectivity

- 4A: Reconnect and create multi-functional links by addressing issues of network severance within the county;
- 4B: Target improvements to the provision of active travel routes within areas currently exhibiting lower walking and cycling rates or containing fewer promoted routes; and
- 4C: Ensure the delivery of a strong network of active travel routes between developments and key services with the aim of delivering sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods within the county.

Theme 5: The Water Environment

- 5A: Deliver environmental enhancements to chalk streams within the county, ensuring improvements to ecological and chemical qualities;
- 5B: Identify opportunities for increased recreational access to river corridors;
- 5C: Integrate flood risk into the design of new developments;
- 5D: Incorporate and complement existing river partnerships and projects; and

- 5E: Retrofit nature-based solutions for surface water run-off into urban areas.

Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing

- 6A: Introduce improvements to the quality of greenspaces in the county, as well as urban greening more generally, to provide health improvements within areas of deprivation;
- 6B: Embed GI and equitable access to open space policies in development planning in response to projected population growth and development pressures;
- 6C: Address visitor needs and recreational pressure on important wildlife sites through a strategic county-wide approach; and
- 6D: Explore community-based and sustainable food growth as a tool for addressing issues surrounding health, wellbeing and biodiversity.

GI Priority Actions

GI Priority Action 1: Create a GI Champion Programme and wider GI Delivery Board

8.3 GI Priority Action 1 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. Stakeholders highlighted that the lack of an overarching body or organisation to lead the delivery of strategic GI projects formed a significant barrier to the delivery of GI in the county. The cross-boundary nature of landscape-scale GI reinforces the need for this role as a mechanism to drive the successful delivery of projects.

GI Priority Action 2: Ensure greenspaces is meeting local needs for people and wildlife

8.4 GI Priority Action 2 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. The need for a strategic cross-district or borough approach to balancing needs for recreation and ecology were raised in light of Dacorum Borough Council's ongoing issues regarding Chiltern Beechwoods SAC and the Habitats Regulation Assessments process. It was recognised that other open green spaces across the county are underutilised which results in pressure on honeypot sites.

8.5 GI Priority Action 2 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place
 - 2A: Utilise GI to promote access to high quality landscapes from urban areas as part of the extension to the Chilterns AONB.
- Theme 3: Nature Recovery
 - 3C: Bring more of the county's LWS into positive management to support the wider network of statutory designated sites.
- Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing
 - 6A: Introduce improvements to the quality of greenspaces in the county, as well as urban greening more generally, to provide health improvements within areas of deprivation.
 - 6B: Embed GI and equitable access to open space policies in development planning in response to projected population growth and development pressures.
 - 6C: Address visitor needs and recreational pressure on important wildlife sites through a strategic county-wide approach.

GI Priority Action 3: Increase health, connectivity and accessibility of Hertfordshire's water environment

8.6 GI Priority Action 3 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. Chalk streams were highlighted as an internationally important asset. Rather than work to restore and protect them within administrative boundaries, the need for a landscape scale approach was stressed. Stakeholders signposted to previous projects illustrating how river corridors and catchments are an excellent way to reconnect communities with nature on their doorstep.

8.7 GI Priority Action 3 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape
 - 1B: Integrate GI and sustainable farming practices to support biodiversity and encourage uptake of agri-environment schemes.
- Theme 5: The Water Environment
 - 5A: Deliver environmental enhancements to chalk streams within the county, ensuring improvements to ecological and chemical qualities.
 - 5B: Identify opportunities for increased recreational access to river corridors.
 - 5D: Incorporate and complement existing river partnerships and projects.

GI Priority Action 4: Deliver landscape scale recovery through woodland planting and the development of the Woodland Arc

8.8 GI Priority Action 4 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. The Woodland Arc was noted as an existing sub-regional initiative which could help provide a context for tree planting priority areas.

8.9 GI Priority Action 4 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following theme and GI priorities:

- Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape
 - 1A: Expand tree coverage and enhance woodland connectivity within the county.
 - 1D: Anticipate and plan for future climate change by introducing enhancements to the diversity of woodland and wider agricultural systems.

GI Priority Action 5: Restore and reconnect distinctive chalk landscapes

8.10 GI Priority Action 5 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. Stakeholders stated the 'Chalk Arc' action from the 2011 Strategy was still worthwhile and needed. They drew attention to the need to resolve the issue of suitable grazing animals in order to achieve restoration and connectivity of chalk grassland.

8.11 GI Priority Action 5 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following theme and GI priorities:

- Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape

- 1B: Integrate GI and sustainable farming practices to support biodiversity and encourage uptake of agri-environment schemes.
- 1C: Enhance and remediate the landscape condition of deteriorating landscapes within the county.

GI Priority Action 6: Promote community action for nature recovery

8.12 GI Priority Action 6 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. The ‘Wilder St Albans’ project lead by Hertfordshire and Middlesex was raised as an example of supporting and enabling communities to take their own action for nature’s recovery by meeting them where they are and working from there. The need to evaluate the success of this project and roll out similar initiatives more widely was highlighted.

8.13 GI Priority Action 6 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 3: Nature Recovery
 - 3A: Protect, enhance and connect habitats across the county to support species recovery and greater climate resilience.
 - 3C: Bring more of the county’s LWS into positive management to support the wider network of statutory designated sites.
- Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing
 - 6D: Explore community-based and sustainable food growth as a tool for addressing issues surrounding health, wellbeing and biodiversity.

GI Priority Action 7: Produce an overarching county-wide GI Design Code for development

8.14 GI Priority Action 7 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. The use of local GI strategies, design guides and design codes were highlighted as a mechanism to achieve good quality design and inform GI delivery. A county-level design guide was also suggested as a means to provide GI enhancements and ensure a coherent and consistent approach to design across districts/boroughs.

8.15 GI Priority Action 7 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place
 - 2B: Expand and enhance the landscape framework which form an important feature of the character of Garden City communities.
 - 2C: Utilise GI to enhance the beneficial use of remaining Green Belt within the county.
 - 2E: Utilise GI as a tool for enhancing the interpretation, use and setting of heritage assets.
- Theme 3: Nature Recovery
 - 3B: Incorporate biodiversity into existing and future new developments in accordance with upcoming BNG requirements.
- Theme 4: Access and Connectivity
 - 4C: Ensure the delivery of a strong network of active travel routes between developments and key services with the aim of delivering sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods within the county.
- Theme 5: The Water Environment
 - 5C: Integrate flood risk into the design of new developments.
- Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing

- 6C: Address visitor needs and recreational pressure on important wildlife sites through a strategic county-wide approach.

GI Priority Action 8: Deliver and manage GI as a mechanism to improve air quality and public health

8.16 GI Priority Action 8 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. The findings from consultation emphasised the need to integrate GI into future design proposals as a mechanism to support the growing evidence for health and wellbeing benefits.

8.17 GI Priority Action 8 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 4: Access and Connectivity
 - 4B: Target improvements to the provision of active travel routes within more deprived wards within Hertfordshire.
- Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing
 - 6A: Introduce improvements to the quality of greenspaces in the county, as well as urban greening more generally, to provide health improvements within areas of deprivation.

GI Priority Action 9: Reconnect and create multi-functional links to facilitate the movement of people and wildlife

8.18 GI Priority Action 9 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. Stakeholders gave support to the 'Reconnect' project from the 2011 Strategy

and then need to keep the issue of severance on the agenda. Local Transport Plan 4 was noted as seeking to deliver active travel and encouraging behaviour change.

8.19 GI Priority Action 9 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 3: Nature Recovery
 - 3A: Protect, enhance and connect habitats across the county to support species recovery and greater climate resilience.
- Theme 4: Access and Connectivity
 - 4A: Reconnect and create multi-functional links by addressing issues of network severance within the county.
- Theme 5: The Water Environment
 - 5B: Identify opportunities for increased recreational access to river corridors.

GI Priority Action 10: Improve understanding of existing GI baseline and projects

8.20 GI Priority Action 10 is informed by findings of the stakeholder consultation. Stakeholders noted a lack of interactive mapping to provide access to progress updates. The opportunity exists for mapping of assets and projects, including delivery.

8.21 GI Priority Action 10 is also informed by the findings of the functional analysis and is relevant to the following themes and GI priorities:

- Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place
 - 2A: Utilise GI to promote access to high quality landscapes from urban areas as part of the extension to the Chilterns AONB.

Chapter 8 Identification of GI Priority Actions

- 2D: Undertake informed studies and assessments to understand the capacity of the landscape to accommodate land use changes and future development.
- Theme 3: Nature Recovery
 - 3D: Expand the ecological mapping resource to underpin the identification of future local nature recovery networks.
- Theme 5: The Water Environment
 - 5D: Incorporate and complement existing river partnerships and projects.

Appendix A

Key findings from stakeholder consultation – thematic analysis

Theme 1: A Resilient Landscape

- Consideration should be given to landscape resilience at the sub-regional scale, including opportunities for strategic scale GI within urban environments. The Woodland Arc is a sub-regional proposal which could help provide the context for tree planting priority areas. The Lee Valley and Colne Valley corridors are other successful sub-regional scale GI initiatives within the county.
- Enhanced knowledge and understanding of Watling Chase Community Forest and its objectives is required across the county. Cross boundary interest exists from the London Borough of Barnet to take the idea forward with enhanced active transport links. This community forest asset is also referenced in the Hertsmere Local Plan. Previous barriers to implementation include the complexities of land ownership and lack of landowner buy-in.
- Consideration should be given to the appointment of a GI Delivery Officer to co-ordinate partnerships and collaboration across the County and ensure the recommendations of the updated Strategy are taken forward. Existing partnerships for delivery at a strategic scale include the Countryside and Rights of Way team at HCC.
- Targeted training and education is required to increase awareness and understanding of GI amongst communities and landowners.

Theme 2: Heritage and Sense of Place

- A county-level Design Guide for GI enhancements would be useful to inform GI delivery and ensure a coherent and consistent approach across districts/boroughs. The guidance should outline GI typologies, essential amenities and recreational needs of local communities whilst ensuring effective engagement with historic environment specialists and other professionals.
- Consideration should be given to both recorded and unrecorded heritage assets, to ensure that GI contributes positively to the setting of these features.

Theme 3: Nature Recovery

- The requirement for a county-wide strategic approach to addressing recreational pressure on semi-natural green spaces was highlighted. The opportunity exists to consider designated sites to inform and meet HRA requirements and address wider green space provision. This should be underpinned by district/borough level visitor surveys as well as Natural England's People and Nature Survey.
- Lee Valley, Ashridge Estate (part of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC) and Panshanger Park are sites where habitats and species are facing acute recreational pressure and disturbance.
- The Woodland Arc (identified in the 2011 Plan) still offers great potential for successful GI delivery. Opportunities exist to enhance and connect woodland between Watling Chase and Thames Chase Community Forest, working with Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust and Essex Wildlife Trust. The Woodland Arc closely relates to the Green Arc.
- The Chalk Arc (identified in the 2011 Plan) also has continued potential, but the challenge remains the availability of suitable grazing stock.
- The network of grassland and wetland habitat within Hertfordshire has been detrimentally affected over the last 50 years. Whilst woodland area

has increased, species richness has decreased due to a decline in appropriate woodland management.

- Importance of the chalk streams in Hertfordshire.

Theme 4: Access and Connectivity

- The requirement exists to balance recreation and access to ecologically sensitive sites. Some areas within the county are under-utilised (due to access issues and perception of safety) which results in increased pressure on honeypot sites. Recreational opportunities such as country parks offer the opportunity to reduce impacts on the Chilterns SAC.
- More sustainable transport links are required across the county. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council continue to promote the Green Corridor project through the Local Plan process. The initiative will run east-west across the Borough linking and improving GI, including through major development sites where developer contributions will be used to facilitate delivery. Potential cycle connections from Stansted to Stortford, Harlow and on to the Lea Valley are under consideration through Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4).
- 'Reconnect' (identified in the 2011 Plan) has potential but needs significant investment. Major infrastructure, e.g. green bridges and underpasses, are required to address severance, particularly affecting south-north movement.
- Data suggests that the first COVID-19 lockdown saw a 400% increase in footfall on Hertfordshire's PRoWs. The National Farmers Union have reported issues of trespassing across private land.

Theme 5: The Water Environment

- Chalk streams form an internationally important asset for Hertfordshire and provide an opportunity to reconnect communities with nature on their doorstep. These assets should be considered at a landscape scale and not by administrative boundaries.

- The river valleys as a whole form important opportunity corridors. The River Colne Valley Regional Park is a huge success due to Heritage Lottery Funding, as is the Rediscovering the Colne project.
- Nature-based solutions are essential to address flooding and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
- SuDS can help to re-charge depleted groundwater bodies and sustain biodiversity.
- Issues regarding water pollution should consider all aspects, including urban, road, sewage, and agricultural sources.

Theme 6: People, Health and Wellbeing

- Increased evidence is needed to understand the economic benefits of GI to support the growing evidence for health and wellbeing benefits in order to encourage the integration of GI into future design proposals.
- Increased traffic along country lanes continues to increase air quality issues.
- The urban environment provides limited horizontal space on the ground for GI. Green roofs and green walls have great potential. We need to consider what type of GI is 'best' in urban areas, including consideration of all the benefits including cost of maintenance.
- Retrofitting GI into existing developments may be more of a challenge than into new developments, which will have GI built in through planning considerations. This may risk creating disparities in deprivation over time without intervention.

Appendix B

Overview of benchmarking and standards within Hertfordshire

B.1 The range of standards applicable to the county are summarised below. Standards will be applied at the strategic level within the Strategy in order to refine Priority Actions and provide recommendations on their application within the strategic context of Hertfordshire.

Local Nature Partnership Natural Standards

B.2 A Local Nature Partnership's (LNP) role is to ensure that the county's natural environment is fully considered in local decision making and that it delivers benefits for wildlife, people, landscapes and the local economy. The Hertfordshire LNP was set up in 2012 but has been inactive for a number of years.

Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards

B.3 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) aim to address the disparity in accessibility communities experience in relation to natural and semi-natural green space of various sizes. The concept was developed in the early 1990s to address recreational pressures around specific habitat types. The tool is a powerful mechanism in assessing current levels of accessible natural greenspace and planning for better provision. The standards recommend that provision should be made of at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per

Appendix B Overview of benchmarking and standards within Hertfordshire

1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

- No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace;
- There should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home;
- There should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km; and
- There should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.

B.4 These standards were updated in 2021 to include a Doorstep Green Space (0.5ha in size, 200m from home) and a Neighbourhood Space (10ha in size, 1km distance from home). Provision of this standard will be relevant across Hertfordshire.

SANGs

B.5 SANGs is the name given to a green space that is of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation in the context of a Special Protection Area. Its role is to provide alternative open space to divert visitors from visiting the SPA. SPAs within Hertfordshire include: the Lee Valley in Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire, and areas within a 400m buffer zone of the SPA.

BNG

B.6 BNG is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. The biodiversity metric is a habitat based approach used to assess an area's value to wildlife and measure change in biodiversity value following development. It is now a mandatory requirement for all new developments through the Environment Act and aims to provide "an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before".

Urban Green Factor

B.7 The Urban Greening Factor (UGF) is a policy initiative from the London Plan. It aims to increase green cover and be considered at the beginning of the design and planning for new buildings and developments. It is a tool that evaluates and quantifies the amount and quality of urban greening that a development scheme provides to inform decisions about appropriate levels of greening in new developments. The aims of the UGF include:

- To accelerate greening of the built environment – making sure London is greener as it grows; and
- To ensure better planned, better quality greening interventions that contribute to a functioning GI network.

B.8 The UGF works by attributing a score to various landscaping elements such as trees, green roofs and permeable paving. It does not take into account the losses or gains in biodiversity or the value of individual habitats. Its focus is instead on the overall ratio of built to natural landscaping. Zero is the lowest score, given to impermeable surfaces such as asphalt concrete and 1, the highest, given to natural vegetation on deep soils. An overall score is calculated for the whole site and a target can be set (typically 0.4 or 0.5 depending on the setting and ambitions for greening).

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework

B.9 The GI Framework is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It supports the greening of our towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape [See reference 70]. Natural England has been developing the Framework which is still a work in progress. As of December 2021, two elements of this Framework have been published – the GI Principles and GI mapping tools. These are designed to help local planning authorities and developers meet requirements set out in the National

Appendix B Overview of benchmarking and standards within Hertfordshire

Planning Policy Framework to consider GI in local plans and new development, and for local parks and green space managers and communities to plan and improve GI in their local area.

B.10 The full GI Framework will be available in Autumn 2022. This will include the core GI standards from which local authorities can set out their own local standards, for example, on accessible natural green space or urban greening. The GI Framework will not replace existing standards such as the Green Flag Award or ANGSt, but rather work in tandem. The Framework will also include a GI Design Guide and case studies to aid implementation.

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Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Part 2b: Green Infrastructure Priority Actions and Delivery

Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2022

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The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) provides a forum to discuss and, where appropriate, develop a shared view and agree joint work programmes on infrastructure and planning issues of common concern. A key objective is to work co-operatively within Hertfordshire and across the county borders according to the principles of localism and the duty to co-operate. The Partnership works together with Hertfordshire Forward, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Local Transport Body for Hertfordshire, the Local Nature Partnership and other appropriate organisations in areas of shared interest to develop and where possible and necessary agree joint approaches to common issues. The Chairman, or his or her deputy, represents the Partnership as appropriate on external bodies, including the Board of the Local Transport Body for Hertfordshire.



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Chapter 1

Delivery of Green Infrastructure Priority Actions

1.1 The justification for the development of 10 Green Infrastructure (GI) Priority Actions is provided in Hertfordshire GI Strategy Part 2a: GI Baseline, Analysis and Priorities. This detail is not repeated here for succinctness. The future delivery of the GI Priority Actions aims to repair, reconnect and restore GI across Hertfordshire. Each GI Priority Action is guided by its own overview which would be realised through project specific objectives. This chapter provides a breakdown of each GI Priority Action, with further detail outlined regarding delivery and implementation. For each GI Priority Action, the following information is presented:

- An overview of the GI Priority Action;
- Details of the proposed intervention;
- Key delivery risks;
- Potential delivery mechanisms;
- Potential key delivery partners; and
- Potential funding mechanisms.

1.2 This chapter aims to provide and support a framework for the delivery of each identified GI Priority Action. The list of GI Priority Actions is outlined below:

- GI Priority Action 1: Create a GI Champions Programme and wider GI Delivery Partnership;
- GI Priority Action 2: Ensure greenspace is meeting local needs for people and wildlife;
- GI Priority Action 3: Increase health, connectivity and accessibility of Hertfordshire's water environment;

- GI Priority Action 4: Deliver landscape scale recovery through woodland planting, management and the development of the Woodland Arc;
- GI Priority Action 5: Restore and reconnect distinctive chalk landscapes;
- GI Priority Action 6: Promote community action for nature recovery;
- GI Priority Action 7: Produce an overarching county-wide GI Design Code for development;
- GI Priority Action 8: Deliver and manage GI as a mechanism to improve air quality and public health;
- GI Priority Action 9: Reconnect and create multi-functional links to facilitate the movement of people and wildlife; and
- GI Priority Action 10: Improve understanding of existing GI baseline and projects.

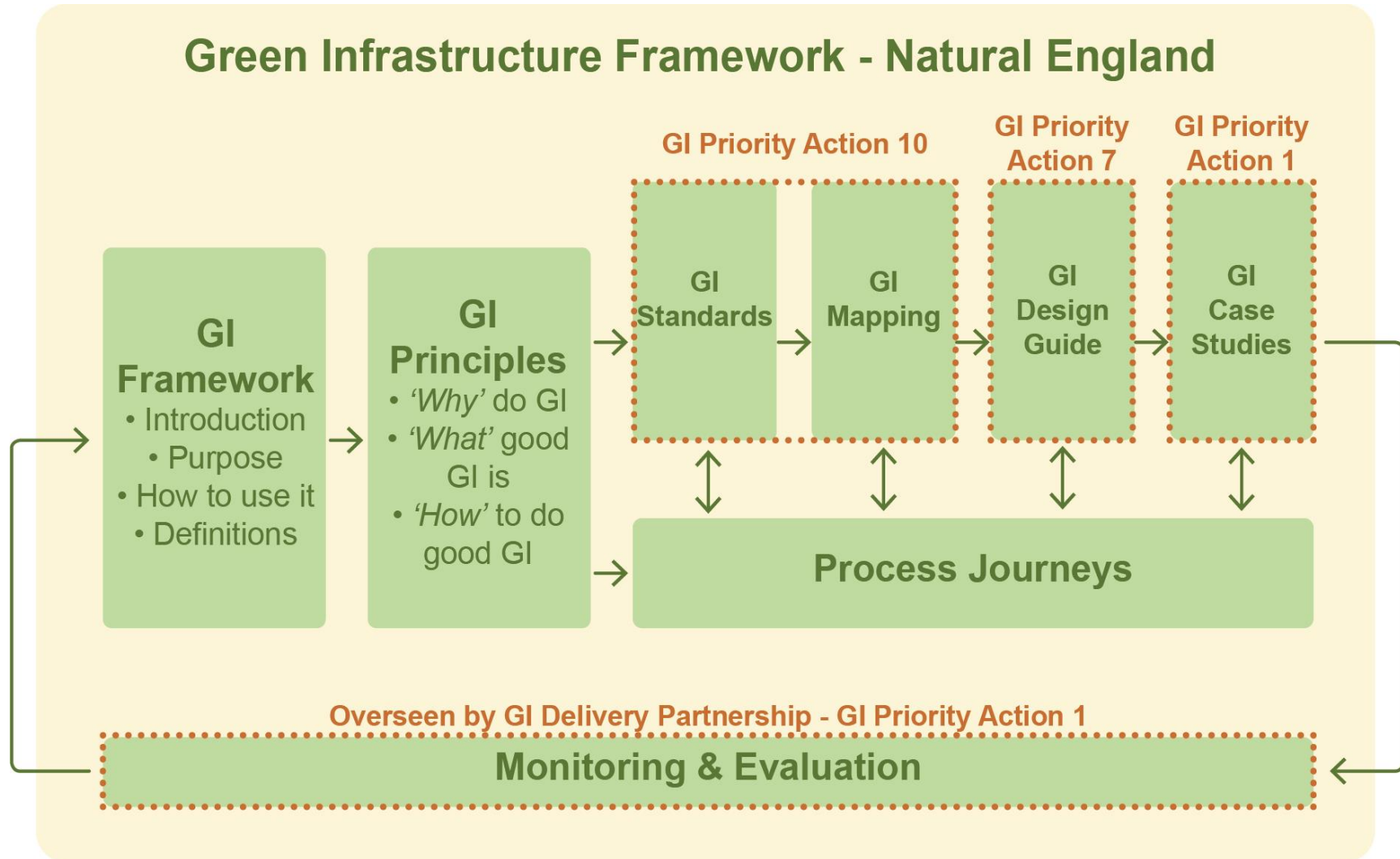
1.3 The development of the GI Priority Actions has cross referenced the emerging outputs from the Natural England GI Framework, including the Beta GI Mapping Tool (see Figure 1.1). The use of this data, in conjunction with other up to date data sources, should help provide the evidence base for the development of specific projects linked to each GI Priority Action. This will aim to maximise the creation or improvement of GI to ensure the delivery of a wide range of multi-functional benefits. The application of the Natural England GI Framework would also assist Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and developers in meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework **[See reference 1]** relating to the consideration of GI in Local Plans and new development.

1.4 Figure 1.1 is based on an existing diagram published on the Natural England GI Framework's website **[See reference 2]**. The diagram indicates how a number of GI Priority Actions identified within this Strategy relate to and will help to achieve various elements of Natural England's GI Framework. At present, a number of these elements of the framework are unpublished, including the GI Standards, GI Design Guide and GI Case Studies. The Process Journeys element of the Framework is intended to be published in Autumn 2022 and is aimed to assist LPAs in the embedding of GI within decision making and

policy development. The guidance will set out the recommended steps for developing GI policy, including visioning, building partnerships, gathering evidence, planning strategically, designing interventions and adopting policies for ongoing management and monitoring.

1.5 The creation of a GI Champion Programme and wider GI Delivery Partnership are proposed to form the foundation of future GI project delivery in the county, as outlined within GI Priority Action 1. The GI Delivery Partnership, responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the GI network at the county-scale, would be accountable to the HIPP. The overarching county GI Champion would be responsible for oversight of the Strategy, with the aim of delivering good quality networks of multi-functional GI at the strategic scale. Each GI Priority Action highlights the role of the GI Champions and the LPA in the delivery of the specific GI intervention.

Figure 1.1: Summary of how the GI Priority Actions relate to the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework



GI Priority Action 1: Create a GI Champions Programme and wider GI Delivery Partnership

Action overview: Establish an overarching GI Champion for the county to provide oversight of the Strategy. The role would complement individual GI Champions at the district or borough level to promote delivery within the planning context. Each role would review the governance of GI assets (management and maintenance of existing assets and delivery of new GI) across Hertfordshire. If considered necessary, job specifications for existing posts would be revised to create the GI Champion role at the county as well as at each district or borough level. Each GI Champion would also become a member of a newly created GI Delivery Partnership responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the GI network across Hertfordshire. This would become a network where progress on GI delivery is shared, where existing and new partnerships are co-ordinated and collaboration across the county is promoted.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

1.6 It will be essential to ensure 'buy-in' to the Strategy at both the county and district or borough contexts. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that GI Champions should be introduced at both administrative contexts. This could be achieved either by amending existing job descriptions to add new roles and responsibilities as required or by seeking volunteers to become a GI Champion

from members of staff who are interested in assuming this role. Additionally, and in time, it may be necessary to create dedicated GI Champion job posts. However, this would be dependent on funding availability at the county and district or borough contexts.

1.7 The county GI champion – would work alongside district or borough GI Champions to oversee and co-ordinate cross boundary GI projects or initiatives, such as the Colne Valley and Lee Valley Regional Parks. Reflecting the scope of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), the role would also oversee the delivery of GI projects relating to minerals and waste restoration, highways green estate management and Public Rights of Ways (PRoWs) within Hertfordshire. A key responsibility of the county GI champion would be to coordinate and consult with various stakeholder groups, as highlighted in **Figure 1.2**. Acting as the primary port of call for stakeholders concerned about GI, the role would help to create an efficient two-way channel for advice to be communicated. This information would then be disseminated to the relevant district/borough GI champions. It would also encourage collaboration at both the county and district or borough scale with statutory agencies, charities, community groups and tenants of the rural estate. The County GI Champion would help to assign responsibility of particular projects to district or borough GI Champions and aim to deliver GI training to local authority policy staff and elected members. The role would also be responsible for sharing best practice and successful case studies in order to promote GI delivery within the county.

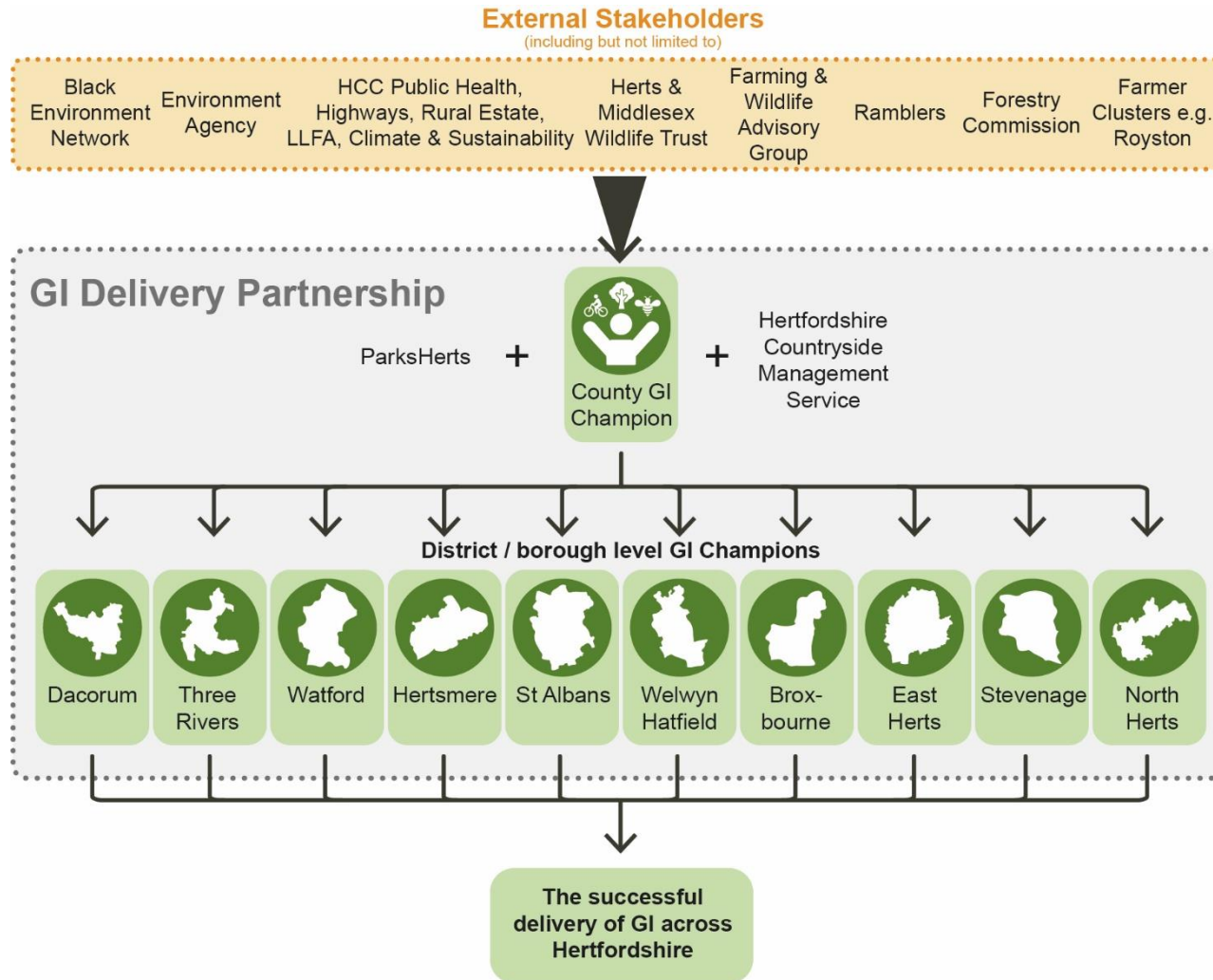
1.8 The exact relationship between the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and GI Strategy is yet to be defined. However, complementary overlap will inevitably exist as LNRS operationalises the nature conservation, biodiversity and ecology objectives of the GI Strategy. As a consequence, it is recommended that the county GI champion oversees the implementation of both the landscape recovery and nature recovery agenda to ensure the achievement of one is not detrimental to the goals of the other. The organisation of the county GI champion within HCC's internal structure should also aim to promote strong links with HCC's Sustainable Growth Directorate.

1.9 The district or borough GI Champion – would oversee delivery of GI projects or initiatives in their administrative area, in conjunction with HCC Service Heads

(as appropriate). The district or borough GI Champion would work with other district or borough council policy staff to ensure that GI principles are woven into Local Plans (as well as other plans or strategies as necessary). To secure 'buy in' across district or borough departments, the district or borough GI Champion would deliver training to relevant staff and elected members regarding the importance of GI and the need to consider GI principles in their day-to-day work or decision making.

1.10 It is recommended that each GI Champion liaises with district or borough LPAs over the wording of proposed Local Plan GI policies and priority projects that could be added to charging schedules (Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Infrastructure Development Plans (IDP) etc). All GI Champions, in collaboration with representatives from the Hertfordshire Land Management team within the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) service and ParksHerts, would form the GI Delivery Partnership (see Figure 1.2) where they would collaborate to report on progress, agree Priority GI Actions, objectives and reflect on the results of monitoring and evaluation. The GI Delivery Partnership would ensure that there is a strong connection between planning and delivery functions within the borough and district LPAs – understanding and strengthening these connections to ensure the effective delivery of GI aspirations and investment in identified projects and wider initiatives. A diversity of backgrounds and interests between the district or borough GI champions would be beneficial for delivering a multifunctional GI network across Hertfordshire (e.g. representatives from landscape, ecology, planning, transport, and health and wellbeing).

Figure 1.2: Structure of the proposed GI Delivery Partnership across Hertfordshire



Key responsibilities of the GI Champions

- Co-ordinate training in GI for district, borough or county staff and elected members. This would include promoting greater understanding of GI, its role and function and how it can be delivered through the planning system. Training should be provided to assist planners (policy and development managers) and inform them of how they should use this Strategy to guide the process of Local Plan GI policy formation and the review of planning applications. The GI Champions should also highlight the importance of GI to elected members, with the aim of securing ‘buy in’ to the Strategy. Yearly progress reports and refresher sessions could also be provided to staff to keep the Strategy relevant.
- Work with district or borough policy planners to demonstrate how the principles of multi-functional GI can be embedded both within specific GI policies and woven as a golden thread into a range of ‘traditional’ policies (e.g. housing, transport etc) to support wider delivery of GI. This includes over-seeing the implementation of a number of different agendas and ensuring the delivery of one planning goal is not detrimental to the achievement of another, for example the fulfilment of a nature recovery goal should not be damaging to landscape character and amenity priorities. The effectiveness of future Local Plan policies could be tested through the ‘Mainstreaming GI’ tool kit developed by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). This tool kit also provides a set of ‘exemplar GI policies’ that could be utilised.
- Working together to co-ordinate the creation of a county-level Design Guide (see GI Priority Action 7) for GI enhancements to inform GI delivery and ensure a coherent and consistent approach across districts or boroughs. This could include guidance on the design of strategic scale GI, the design of small-scale GI within new development and guidance on retrofitting GI into existing built areas. The opportunity also exists for the county GI Champion to work alongside the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel to promote the delivery of GI interventions.
- Through training of county and district or borough level staff, demonstrate how GI can be delivered ‘on the ground’ when an effective policy

framework is followed. Promote the importance of existing delivery partnerships (such as Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), ParksHerts, HCC Highways and Tree Officer group), engagement with local communities in the management of GI (learning from existing approaches and best practice) and local promotion of the GI network. It would be vital for the GI Champion positions to provide understanding of delivery partners and organisations that LPA officers or local action groups can consult with to help in the delivery of GI.

- Co-ordinate the development and delivery of a GI Communication Strategy which promotes the benefits of GI to the wider community or landowners to secure buy-in. The document should accommodate different approaches to landscape management across districts and boroughs whilst seeking to provide information to people about what is going on around them and why this is happening. Examples include leaving grass uncut in places or sowing wildflower meadows which may make areas look unkempt but provide vital spaces for wildlife. The approach should also convey to landowners how to engage with these processes and include references to examples of existing landowner initiatives within the county.
- Working in conjunction and embedded within the Building with Nature Awards, pursue the creation of a yearly awards process for best GI project or wildlife enhancement initiative within Hertfordshire. This would help to reward best practice, allow for promotion of successful schemes for people to learn from and keep the Strategy current and visible.

Key delivery risks

- Achieving corporate buy-in across district and borough local authorities to ensure the GI Champions programme is supported and resourced;
- Local authority funding and staff capacity;
- Establishment of effective public and private partnerships; and
- Co-ordination of, and buy-in across, multiple county, district or borough local authority department staff and existing or new partnerships.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- Amendment to existing job specifications for appropriately selected posts across county and district or borough contexts or delivered by interested staff volunteering to take on each role; and
- Creation of dedicated GI champion posts where funding is available.

Potential key delivery partners

- County and district or borough local authorities (including but not limited to Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, Highways, Rural Estate, Local Lead Flood Authority, Climate and Sustainability Partnership);
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Black Environment Network, Ramblers and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group;
- Farming clusters;
- Supportive capacity offered by charities, Community Interest Companies (CICs) and other community organisations; and
- Statutory and non-statutory authorities, including Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Historic England.

Potential funding mechanisms

- County and district or borough local authority staffing budgets (where possible); and
- Sponsorship of yearly awards by local businesses, land owners or charities with the aim of raising the profile of the GI Delivery Partnership.

GI Priority Action 2: Ensure greenspace is meeting local needs for people and wildlife

Action overview: Through the implementation of a Parks Delivery Framework and the development of further strategic documents, build a comprehensive and coordinated understanding of greenspaces across the county. The approach should complement robust open space assessments and gap analysis or deficiency mapping undertaken at the district or borough level, providing a greater understanding of greenspace pressures across Hertfordshire. The aim would be to develop a county-wide framework for the identification of projects which would protect, create and enhance greenspace assets. In addition to implementation, the scheme would provide a mechanism for overarching county-wide monitoring of greenspace delivery.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

1.11 The need for equitable access to quality open space and nature has been highlighted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In areas where the provision is limited, it is also important that open space is well designed and managed to a high quality. The review of planning policies across the 10 districts or boroughs (see Hertfordshire GI Strategy Part 1: Setting the Scene – A Strategic Review of GI in Hertfordshire) found that whilst all have adequate or strong policy coverage in terms of using GI to meet open space standards, 30% of district or boroughs did not have strong policies that make provision for recreational facilities to meet local user and community needs. This presents an

important opportunity to ensure that communities' needs are met with robust policies in place. This must be informed by a sound evidence base to ensure barriers to use are fully understood and addressed.

1.12 Currently, adequate analysis of existing open space provision to meet present and future population growth is inconsistent across the districts or boroughs of Hertfordshire. Although open space assessments have been developed at the district or borough level, wider pressure points require consideration at the county level. This issue, in addition to gaps in the evidence baseline, should be addressed in order to ensure adequate strategic investment and provision for current and future needs are met across Hertfordshire. The opportunity exists to adopt a county-wide approach to addressing the challenge of long-term management and sustainable funding which can be implemented across individual districts or boroughs.

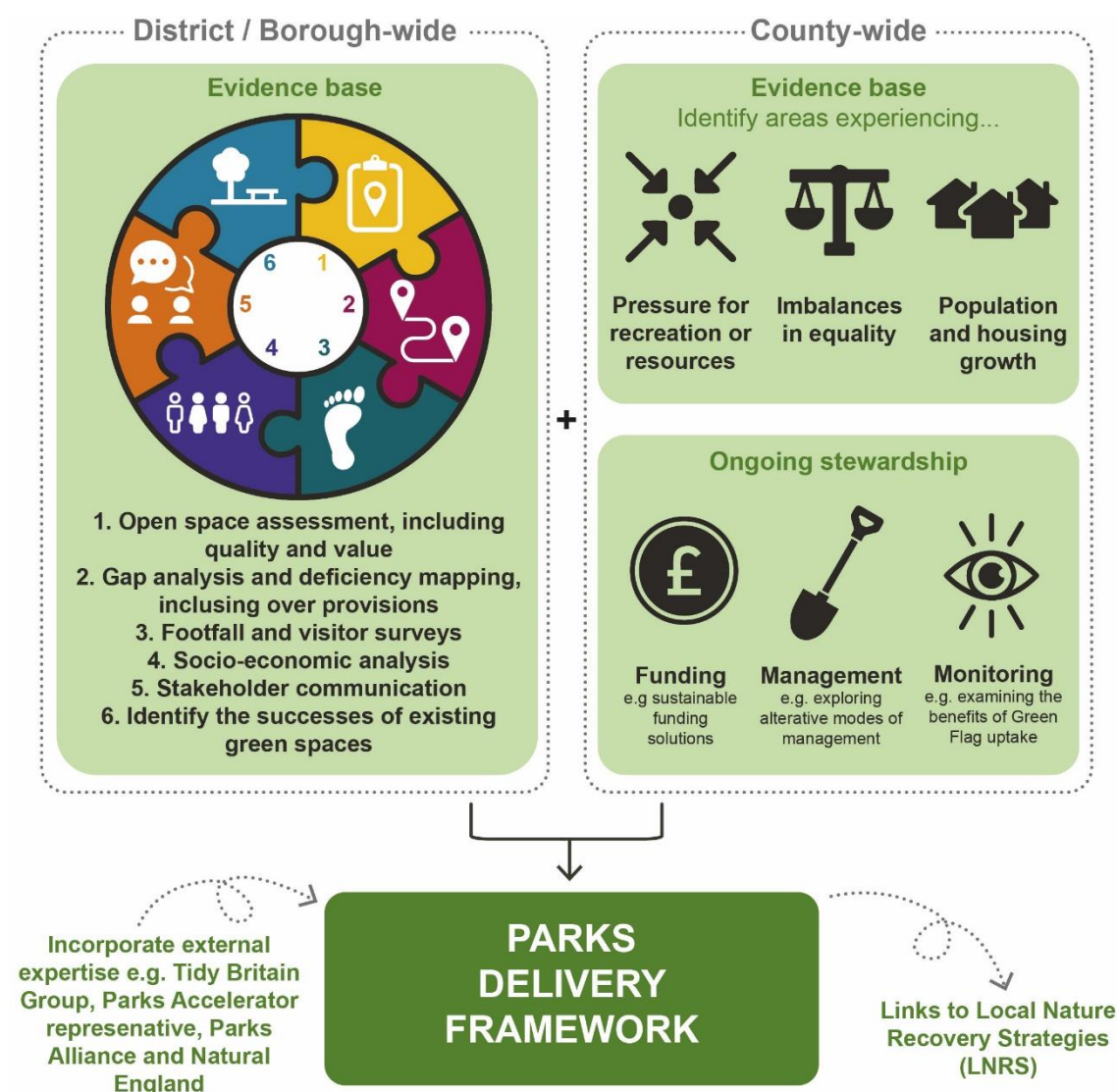
1.13 This Parks Delivery Framework (see Figure 1.3) should:

- Assess whether local needs are being achieved and where investment is required – in the improvement of existing greenspace, creation of new greenspace at local scales or strategic scales as well as the alleviation of pressures or shortfalls in key growth areas. The approach would develop a county-wide alliance to help identify funding opportunities and investment for the long-term management of greenspaces.
- Evaluate the impact of recreational pressure on semi-natural greenspaces and identify solutions to address existing and future pressures, informing the delivery of a new Hertfordshire Recreational Access and Mitigation Strategy. The document would function as a tool for evaluating the current and future recreational impact on greenspaces as well as existing sensitive sites, including woodland, heathland and grassland habitats. Potential sites and strategic options which offer the potential to re-direct pressure away from 'honey pot' sites of biodiversity importance. The document would also explore other strategic options such as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) where impacts from development affect European designated sites and the potential development of country parks. The aim would be to address issues such

as ownership and management which fall beyond the remit of the Strategy.

- Utilise the findings of district or borough level visitor surveys at selected sites to understand the demographic of visitors, drivers for usage and gauge people's experience of the space they are visiting.
- Review, recognise and publicise successes of existing greenspace management to highlight and share best practice. The approach would explore the potential for alternative modes of greenspace management, including the delivery of a strategic approach to help provide sustainable funding solutions for greenspaces within the county.
- Identify alternative uses and functions for parks such as flood management, for example Verulamium Park and Sopwell, as well as other ecosystem service such as carbon sequestration, habitat provisions, local food growth and income generation.
- Identify challenges impeding the delivery of GI through greenspace management and develop solutions to address these challenges (learning from best practice).
- Provide a link to the future LNRS to recognise the key role that managing greenspace for ecology can aid in nature recovery, whilst recognising the need to limit disturbance to sensitive sites or habitats. Opportunities to connect parks with other types of GI should also be explored.
- Within new development, ensure that greenspace provision is aligned with the Strategy (i.e. delivery of GI interventions within a particular location or proximity to key GI network). There are clear opportunities to deliver improvements for nature by linking with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements (either through on site or offsite credits).
- Seek opportunities for external expertise to feed into the Parks Delivery Framework, for example from Tidy Britain Group, a Parks Accelerator representative, Parks Alliance or Natural England.
- Provide a framework for the future monitoring and evaluation of greenspace delivery.

Figure 1.3: Formation of the Parks Delivery Framework



Key delivery risks

- Reliant on the supply of up to date data, including open space assessments, supplied by district or borough local authorities.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- ParksHerts Group, Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, Hertfordshire Land Management team within the CRoW service,

development of the Hertfordshire Recreational Access and Mitigation Strategy and BNG.

Potential key delivery partners

- County and district or borough local authorities; and
- External expertise (as required) – Tidy Britain Group, a Parks Accelerator representative, Parks Alliance or Natural England.

Potential funding mechanisms

- Natural Investment Readiness Fund;
- Neighbourhood CIL;
- Levelling Up Parks Funds; and
- BNG – onsite or offsite credit scheme.

Role of the county GI Champion

- Actively champion GI projects across the county, operating strategically and decisively;
- Engage with national initiatives as well as prepare bids for significant funding. The role should also promote land assembly, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) as well as actively engage as part of negotiations with developers and water companies;
- Develop the county-wide framework for the identification of projects which would protect, create and enhance greenspace assets; and
- Collate and disseminate information regarding funding opportunities and investments promoting the long-term management of greenspaces.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Ensure that GI is effectively policy is encompassed within Local Plan practice and operational management;
- Responsible for developing public/private partnerships, seeking funding opportunities and influencing regeneration/housing proposals;
- Ensure that gap analysis or greenspace deficiency mapping undertaken at the district or borough level is up to date in order to inform the delivery of future proposals;
- Highlight and share best practice relating to existing greenspace initiatives as well as challenges impeding the delivery of GI at the district/borough scale; and
- Coordinate the implementation of BNG contributions as part of natural and semi-natural greenspace improvements to ensure areas of socio-economic, health and greenspace deprivation are prioritised.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Provide the GI Champions with evidence base information relating to the analysis of existing open space provision as well as growth and development pressures in order to inform where GI investment is required. This information should be informed by up to date population projections and demography data as well as an in-depth knowledge of existing and future requirements for greenspace provision within the county.

GI Priority Action 3: Increase health, connectivity and accessibility of Hertfordshire's water environment

Action overview: Deliver environmental enhancement in vulnerable river valleys and catchments. The aim should be to deliver benefits such as flood alleviation, landscape resilience, climate change adaptation and nature recovery to restore wetland habitat and conserve nationally important chalk rivers. Adding to the multi-functionality of river corridors, recreational access should also be improved where it is feasible and appropriate to do so at specific sites.

Action area of focus: County-wide, with specific focus on east and south Hertfordshire

The details

1.14 Hertfordshire's river valleys form an important anchor for wider GI across the county. However, concerns regarding future flood risk and ongoing river quality issues are driving the need to transform the way that these 'blue corridors' are managed. Many of Hertfordshire's rivers are not meeting obligations for good ecological and chemical status under the Water Framework Directive. The opportunity exists to provide multiple benefits for people and nature – especially as large-scale development is brought forward in identified growth areas. The chalk rivers in Hertfordshire form an important freshwater habitat with approximately 85% of the global habitat occurring in the UK, located predominantly in the south of England. However, increased water abstraction for new residential and agricultural development continues to threaten this habitat and significantly reduce water flows.

1.15 Landscape-scale river corridor restoration, regeneration of the canal network and the creation of links between these features and the wider water environment can help to ensure landscapes are both more resilient to climate change and richer in biodiversity. Opportunities exist to shape ‘re-wilded’ multi-functional blue corridors so that they provide access to the natural environment on the doorsteps of communities located along these routes. By creating space for water and the construction of greenspaces and wetlands within these corridors, it is possible to break up heavily modified watercourses and initiate the process of re-naturalisation. If strategically located, this would help to alleviate surface water flooding during large rainfall events, a key issue for Hertfordshire. River restoration must be carried out on a catchment-scale, including upper catchment schemes (which slow the flow of water downstream) as well as re-wilding river channels and landscapes to de-intensify farming.

1.16 Future identified projects should align with, and take their steer from, the priorities, themes and objectives of relevant Environment Agency river basin management plans and Catchment Partnership websites. Effort should be focussed on delivery of interventions identified in existing plans and projects including:

- The River Lea Catchment Partnership [\[See reference 3\]](#);
- River Colne Catchment Action Network [\[See reference 4\]](#);
- Thames River Basin Management Plan [\[See reference 5\]](#);
- The Revitalising Chalk Rivers Partnership Project [\[See reference 6\]](#);
- The Farming 4 Clean Water Project [\[See reference 7\]](#);
- Catchment-based Approach – Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy 2021 [\[See reference 8\]](#); and
- Strategic Regional Water Resource Solutions: Standard Gate One Final Decision for Grand Union Canal Transfer [\[See reference 9\]](#).

1.17 Increasing connectivity and enhancing wetland habitat mosaics would help contribute to the objectives of the Thames River Basin Management Plan, River Catchment Management Plans and restore favourable Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Water Framework Directive condition. Working in

partnership with Hertfordshire Land Management team within the CRoW service, new recreational routes should be established where there is capacity to do so without exceeding biodiversity sensitivity thresholds. Inspiration for a multi-functional blue network can be taken from projects such as 'Rediscovering the River Colne' which seeks to bring the River Colne into the heart of Watford Town whilst improving the riparian environment along its route. Additionally, recreational access routes (such as Beane, Ver, (St Albans to Watford Abbey Flyer), Chess Valley Way, Pollards and Poplars (Stort Valley)) and riverside site based recreational routes (like Oughtonhead Common) should be introduced where appropriate.

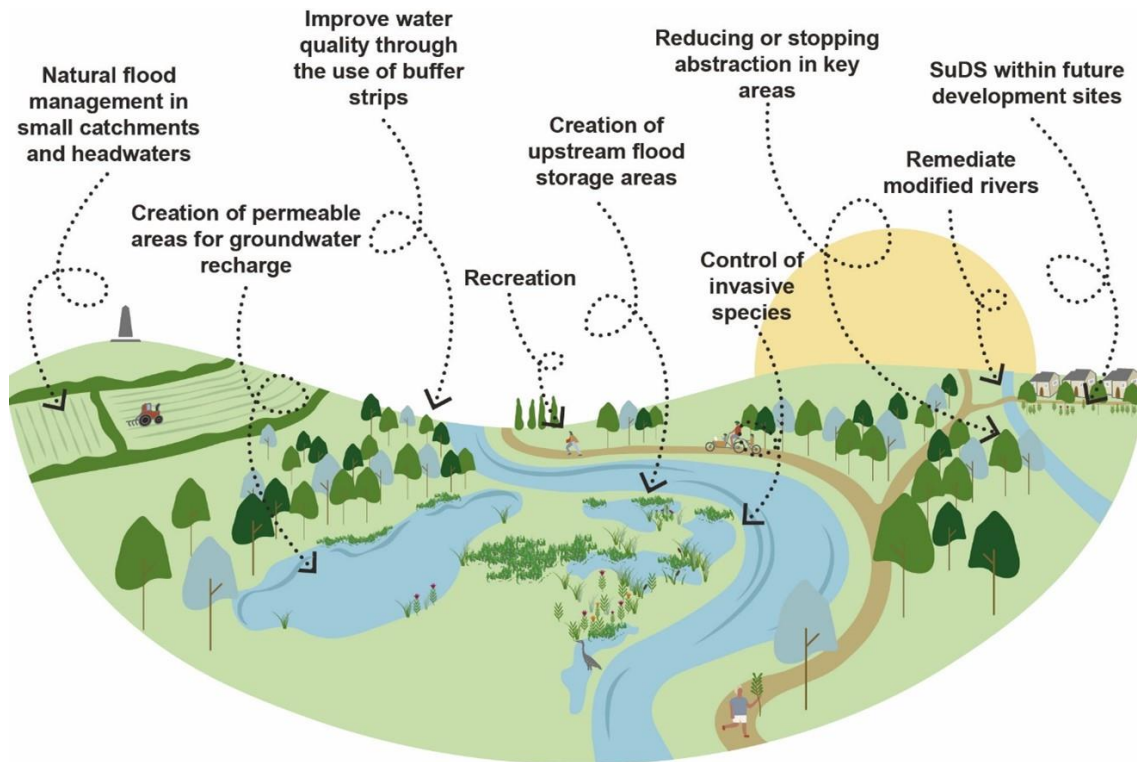
1.18 As summarised in Figure 1.4, the key priorities should address the following:

1. Natural flood management in small catchments and headwaters: Particularly in steeper areas, to reduce runoff rates and flood risk downstream. This can provide multiple benefits to channel biodiversity enhancement. This would require a partnership approach with future Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) potentially offering a funding route.
2. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within future development sites: Settlement growth is likely to increase pressures during periods of heavy rain and could lead to flooding of developed land, particularly in already high-risk areas such as Hemel Hempstead and Watford. Proposals for additional natural flood storage should be coupled with biodiversity enhancement, for example wetland creation or SuDS. The requirement for well-designed SuDS should be reinforced in new development to reduce surface water impacts from hard standing areas and reduce nitrogen runoff in sensitive areas.
3. Creation of upstream flood storage areas: Areas located upstream and at the confluence of watercourses may be appropriate flood storage areas. This could help to filter run-off pollutants from local upstream agricultural landscapes and help to improve water quality further downstream. The opportunity exists to support this initiative through Section 106 (S106)

payments. Consideration should also be given to the restoration or potential creation of ponds on agricultural land.

4. Creation of permeable areas for groundwater recharge: Aquifer recharge should be promoted by using long term water sinks to capture and infiltrate water, slowing run-off rates across the landscape through sustainable cultivation techniques, and capturing and storing peak flows.
5. Reducing or stopping abstraction in key areas: Reducing or stopping abstraction in key areas – for agriculture or for domestic use – would help restore and sustain chalk streams, and the important habitats they support. Affinity Water are promoting a ‘Save Our Streams’ campaign in the south of England which could be supported and other similar schemes could be introduced.
6. Recreation: Multi-functional river corridors should be created by increasing recreational access routes and riverside site based recreational routes (such as Oughtonhead Common) where there is capacity to do so without exceeding biodiversity sensitivity thresholds.

Figure 1.4: Overview of recommended enhancements to Hertfordshire's water environment



Key delivery risks

- Constrained floodplains due to development can restrict the scope of corridor restoration and some measures (such as 'daylighting' rivers) can incur significant costs; and
- Securing land owner support (e.g. for flood storage opportunities on a landscape scale).

Potential delivery mechanisms

- Project inclusion in district or borough IDPs to support planned growth;
- ELMs (including Local Nature Recovery (LNR) scheme) and Landscape Recovery Scheme; and
- Strategic off-site BNG.

Potential delivery partners

- Environment Agency, Water companies, Internal Drainage Boards (IDB), Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Rivers Trust, Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB), Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative, Rediscovering the River Colne (Groundwork), Canal and Rivers Trust, River Catchment Partnerships, Hertfordshire Land Management team within the CRoW service and landowners.

Potential funding mechanisms

- CIL contributions for development to pay into major or local river infrastructure enhancement projects;
- S106 payments if deemed to meet the test required to make development acceptable (if in immediate vicinity of a river corridor requiring improvement);
- Ecosystem development or payment for ecosystem services (including through green investment);
- Neighbourhood CIL;
- ELMs;
- BNG – onsite or offsite credit scheme; and
- Water company grant funding (e.g. INNS Out).

Role of the county GI Champion

- Adopting a strategic and catchment-based approach, identify and promote GI projects that support flood management, river restoration and multi-functional river corridors.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Working in partnership with relevant organisations and the local authority, identify potential environmental enhancement projects for each district or borough, with a specific focus on delivering multi-functionality.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Ensure the requirement for SuDS as part of new development is integrated within local planning policy;
- Utilise planning obligations as a mechanism for delivering GI projects relating to the water environment; and
- Support the inclusion of GI projects in district or borough IDPs to support planned growth.

GI Priority Action 4: Deliver landscape scale recovery through woodland planting, management and the development of the Woodland Arc

Action overview: Deliver landscape scale recovery for nature through woodland planting. This could include the creation of linkages and landscape buffers at strategic sites in order to provide alternative semi-natural greenspace, habitat mosaics and enhanced resilience to climate change. The proposals should be informed by the principles established within the Hertfordshire County Council Tree and Woodland Strategy. Enhanced woodland management should also be promoted as a mechanism to support landscape scale woodland recovery, ensuring that existing woodland is rich in biodiversity and better able to withstand intense weather events.

Action area of focus: County-wide and focus on south Hertfordshire (e.g. Hertsmere, Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne, southern extent of East Hertfordshire)

The details

1.19 National targets to increase the UK's tree cover as part of net zero goals require all areas of the country to identify areas where woodland can be expanded or created. Woodlands provide multiple functions, including an effective carbon store, recreational benefits, health and wellbeing resource and

habitat linkages. Key opportunities for GI within the county involve the potential enhancement and reconnection of woodland sites through the introduction of additional broadleaf woodland planting schemes. Woodland creation in Hertfordshire should also aim to promote natural regeneration and the establishment of mixed, multi species and diverse canopy plantations. These interventions recognise the vulnerability of the county's oak, hornbeam and beech woodlands as well as Hertfordshire's significant ash populations. Community orchards are a historical habitat that bring together vital landscape, ecological and community benefits.

1.20 The creation of new woodland must be aligned with beneficial management of the existing woodland resource, whilst also promoting local distinctiveness and landscape character. Woodland creation and enhancement proposals should therefore consult the relevant information contained within the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment to guide their design. The Hertfordshire County Council Tree and Woodland Strategy identifies lack of investment in landscape management as a significant issue affecting Hertfordshire's woodlands. As a consequence, it would be necessary to ensure that woodland creation delivered via the planning system is funded and maintained in perpetuity. A decline in the species associated with woodland habitat in the county is also partially attributed to human recreational disturbance. As a consequence, greater investment in wider greenspace management should be used to redirect visitor and recreation pressure away from key biodiversity sites such as Broxbourne Woods and Chiltern Beechwoods. The current moratorium on planning determinations in Dacorum Borough Council and adjacent LPAs is a reflection of the need under Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRA) to identify acceptable solutions to this issue.

1.21 The Woodland Arc forms an existing sub-regional initiative which could help provide a context for tree planting priority areas within Hertfordshire. This intervention continues to offer great potential for successful GI delivery. The opportunity also exists to enhance and connect woodland within the following locations:

- Along major transport corridors (such as the M1, A1, A10 and A414);

- Developed land in the south of the county within the Watling Chase Community Forest area; and
- The Lee and Stort Valley (linking to the Green Arc – see Hertfordshire GI Strategy Part 1: Setting the Scene – A Strategic Review of GI in Hertfordshire).

1.22 The key challenge in delivering large-scale woodland creation or community woodlands lies in ensuring suitable sites are selected and adherence with the principle of the ‘right tree in the right place’ and the wider sustainability principles outlined within the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) [See [reference 10](#)]. The potential also exists to compile comprehensive woodland opportunity mapping (see GI Priority Action 10) to help guide future woodland expansion. This would function as a mechanism to identify habitat gaps and potential sites through desktop review. The steps required to deliver successful woodland planting in Hertfordshire are detailed in the following section and summarised in Figure 1.5, including as part of the England Woodland Creation Offer. Working in partnership or collaboration with organisations, offers the opportunity to access specialist services or expertise as well as various funding sources. Additional mechanisms for securing woodland creation include the following:

- Planting as part of wider site design (led by robust, GI-led design guidance) or through the BNG process;
- Ecosystem development/payment for ecosystem services (e.g. carbon credits – buying and selling gas emission allowances to reduce an organisation’s environmental impact); and
- Alternative management structures (e.g. transfer of management responsibility of GI assets from a local authority to a charitable trust).

Overview of the steps required to deliver successful woodland planting in Hertfordshire (see Figure 1.5)

Strategies for identifying location

- District/borough level GI strategies;
- Hertfordshire County Council Tree and Woodland Strategy;
- District/borough level woodland and tree strategies; and
- Emerging LNRS.

Datasets for identifying locations

- Working With Natural Processes (WWNP);
- Natural England Habitat Network and Priority Habitats;
- National Forestry and Ancient Woodland Inventories;
- Agricultural land classification; and
- Opportunities for nature-based solutions (e.g. flooding, amenity, carbon sequestration, air quality, nature recovery).

Routes for delivery on public land

1.23 Engage with community groups and neighbourhoods who could be interested in hosting and helping to deliver new woodland.

- Urban Tree Challenge Fund;
- Local Authorities Treescapes Fund;
- Woodland Carbon Code as a validation tool/carbon credits;

- BNG and developer contributions;
- Woodland Trust community tree packs;
- The Tree Council; and
- Charitable trusts.

Routes for delivery on private land

1.24 Engage with landowners through a ‘woodland call for sites,’ ensuring they are aware of the 100% capital and management grants available.

- England Woodland Creation Offer;
- Woodland Creation Planting Grant;
- ELMs;
- Farming in Protected Landscapes;
- BNG, both on-site and off-site;
- Woodland Trust MOREwoods and MOREhedges; and
- Woodland Carbon Code as a validation tool/carbon credits.

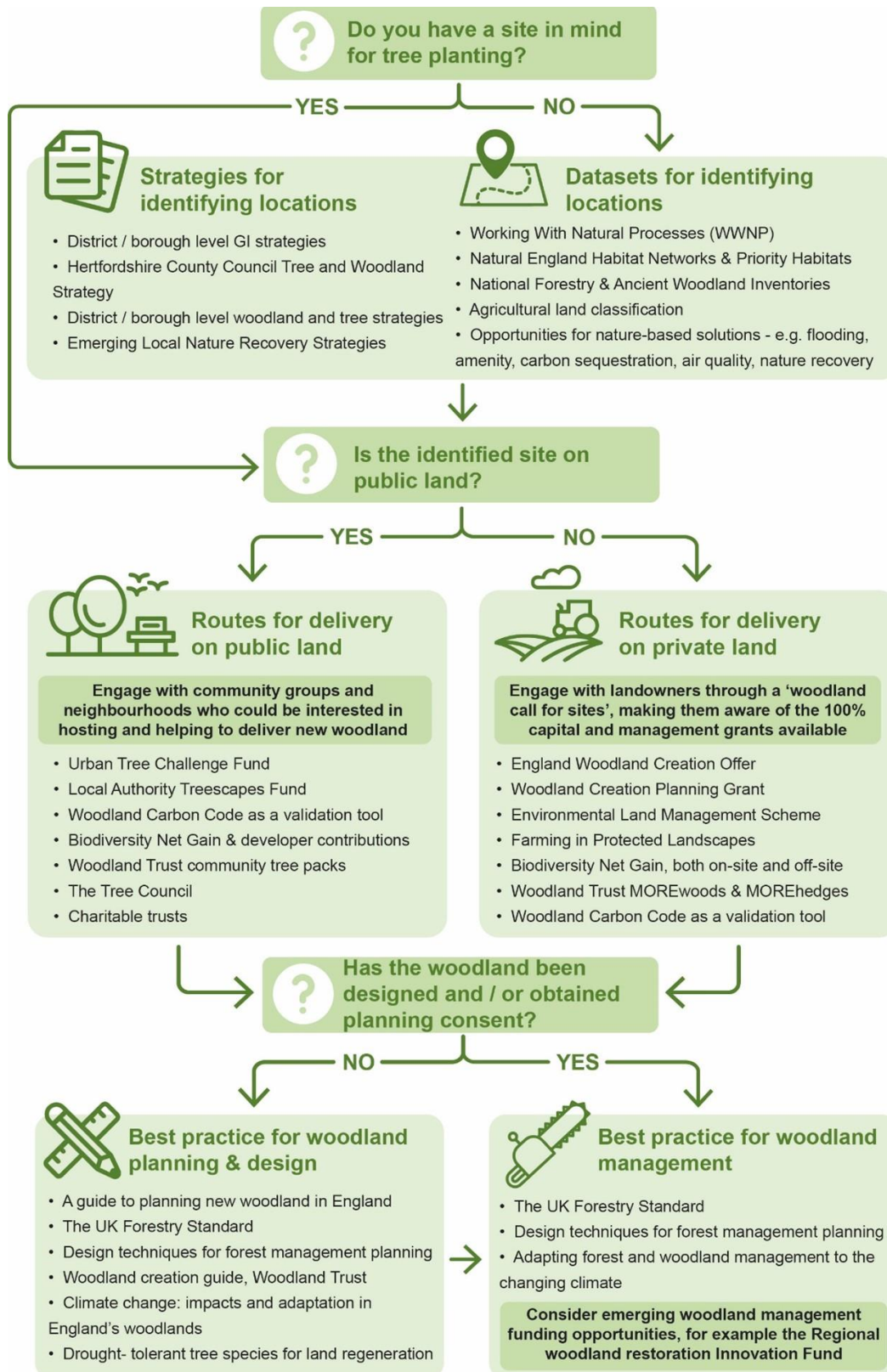
Best Practice for woodland planning and design

- A guide to planting new woodland in England;
- The UK Forestry Standard;
- Design techniques for forest management planning;
- Woodland creation guide, Woodland Trust;
- Climate change: impacts and adaption in England’s woodlands; and
- Drought-tolerant tree species for land regeneration.

Best practice for woodland management

- The UK Forestry Standard;
- Design techniques for forest management planning;
- Adapting woodland and forest management to the changing climate; and
- Consider emerging woodland management funding opportunities, for example, the Regional woodland restoration Innovation Fund.

Figure 1.5: Overview of the steps required to deliver successful woodland planting in Hertfordshire



Key delivery risks

- The 'right tree in the right place' is vitally important in order to ensure that other valuable habitats such as species-rich grasslands and heathland reach establishment. Management and maintenance beyond the initial establishment phase must therefore be integrated into proposals.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- ELMs (including LNR scheme) and Landscape Recovery Scheme.

Potential delivery partners

- Land Management team within the CRoW service, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, major landowners (including large estates, not for profit orgs, public sector and water companies) and Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Potential funding mechanisms

- Planning and development opportunities (e.g. woodland creation delivered alongside new sites and BNG (onsite or offsite credit scheme));
- National tree planting grants (England Woodland Creation and Maintenance Grant, Woodland Tree Health Grant, Woodland Management Plan Grant, Woodland Creation Planning Grant, Urban Tree Challenge Fund and Local Authority Treescapes Fund);
- Woodland Trust MOREwoods and MOREhedges;
- ELMs;
- Natural Investment Readiness Fund;
- Evergreen Fund;
- Alternative management structures (e.g. community owned woodlands or trusts);

- Charitable giving (e.g. the 'Co-forest initiative'); and
- Ecosystem development/payment for ecosystem services (e.g. agri-environment schemes, emerging payment system for landowners and farmers or carbon offsetting schemes such as the Woodland Carbon Code).

Role of the county GI Champion

- Consistent with the principles of the Hertfordshire County Council Tree and Woodland Strategy, identify and promote strategic initiatives for woodland creation, management and linkages (e.g. in pursuit of a Woodland Arc); and
- Collaborate with others to guide in-house woodland management to deliver an appropriate range of societal, environmental and economic objectives.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Promote the role of residents, local businesses and communities in the establishment of trees and woodlands through the use of grant schemes and volunteering opportunities;
- Disseminate and recommend the use of guidance material to ensure adherence with the principle of the 'right tree in the right place;'
- Oversee the implementation of both the landscape recovery and nature recovery agenda to ensure the achievement of one is not detrimental to the goals of the other; and
- Collaborate with others to guide in-house woodland management to deliver an appropriate range of societal, environmental and economic objectives.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Ensure that woodland creation schemes delivered via the planning system allow for landscape management of the scheme as part of the establishment phase and beyond; and
- Continue to apply group Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) where appropriate.

GI Priority Action 5: Restore and reconnect distinctive chalk landscapes

Action overview: Restore, enhance and conserve chalk scarp and grassland landscape character, primarily to the north of the county. The intervention should promote landscape linkages across the county and within designated landscapes by promoting appropriate land management and habitat creation.

Action area of focus: North Hertfordshire, St Albans, Dacorum and Three Rivers

The details

1.25 Chalk grassland is a nationally important, specialised and fragile habitat, valuable for landscape and historical value as well as wildlife. Chalk grassland within Hertfordshire is largely restricted to the chalk escarpment in the north and west of the county. Strategic core areas include Tring, Luton-Hitchin and Royston-Baldock. The presence of nationally important chalk grassland also forms one of the ‘special qualities’ of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), located at the north-western extents of the county. The importance of the AONB in providing access to these natural environments has been recognised through recent proposals by Natural England to expand the AONB in response to the findings of the Landscapes Review (“the Glover Review”). Hertfordshire’s remaining nationally rare and important chalk grassland sites are likely to provide a focal point for Hertfordshire’s Local Nature Recovery Network. Biodiversity is influenced by the structure and management of the landscape, and it is this structure that gives an area a particular sense of place. The spatial patterns in the landscape and the resulting historic and

current land use, govern the habitats and species that can thrive. Better outcomes can therefore be achieved by planning for recovery of the whole landscape, rather than discrete habitats within it.

1.26 Hertfordshire's chalk grasslands are now one of the most vulnerable and poorly connected habitats in the county, primarily as a result of the conversion of land to arable farming. Restoration of grazing management is also considered essential on the remaining chalk grassland sites if their conservation value is to be enhanced and maintained. However, traditional grazing management of chalk grassland is often not profitable for farmers or landowners. Key to the success of this GI Priority Action would be collaborating with landowners to identify solutions to conserve farming traditions and reintroduce appropriate livestock grazing. The proposed extension of the Chilterns AONB designation also offers the opportunity to provide a framework for the delivery of area and habitat specific GI interventions within the county. Any proposals should be developed in consultation with the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment to ensure the special qualities of these landscape features are protected and reinforced.

1.27 Options to enhance chalk grassland across the county are summarised in Figure 1.6. Potential interventions include working with existing farming enterprises to support conservation grazing, maintaining and using sheep in an arable rotation or fostering missing links with the local food economy including developing niche markets for products where possible. A demonstration farm or the establishment of a forum to share management resources; including equipment, advice and experience could also help promote the benefits of a low input livestock and mixed farm. In addition, road verges also have potential to provide links between fragmented grassland sites. The A505 corridor in particular is important, containing an almost continuous strip of chalk grassland road verge across North Hertfordshire. As such, it is a priority for management.

Enhancing chalk grassland across Hertfordshire (see Figure 1.6)

- Better outcomes can be achieved by planning for recovery of the whole landscape, rather than individual habitats;
- Grazing is an important management tool for chalk grassland, therefore, options may include the use of sheep in an arable rotation; and
- Road verges have the potential to provide links between fragmented grassland sites.

Figure 1.6: Enhancing chalk grassland across Hertfordshire



Key delivery risks

- Few graziers exist in the area and appropriate management requires necessary knowledge and skills;
- Absence of local abattoirs;
- Need to demonstrate profitability or benefits to landowners;
- Perception that livestock farming (e.g. methane) is detrimental to the environment;
- Concern from dog owners regarding increased number of livestock and potential conflicts;
- Requires clear partnership working and liaison with many landowners and stakeholders; and
- The transition to ELMs represents a significant reduction in the overall agricultural funding budget.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- LNRS; and
- Private landowners.

Potential delivery partners

- Private landowners, Hertfordshire Land Management team within the CRoW service, Chilterns AONB, HCC Highways, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group East and Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Potential funding mechanisms

- ELMs; and
- Offsite developer contributions.

Role of the county GI Champion

- Work with experts to identify and disseminate strategic and practical solutions to conservation grazing, including potential funding mechanisms;
- Promote and advocate for a change in landscape management to provide biodiversity benefits on land owned by the local authority; and
- Support the identification and promotion of approaches that lower verge/soil fertility to enhance biodiversity.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Identify and engage with local private landowners who are interested in grazing their land for enhanced biodiversity benefits;
- Engage and consult with local residents with knowledge of opportunities for improved and ongoing verge management;
- Work with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust as well as colleagues within HCC to identify road verges that could be cut less often;
- Oversee the implementation of both the landscape recovery and nature recovery agenda to ensure the achievement of one is not detrimental to the goals of the other; and
- Support the identification and promotion of approaches that lower verge/soil fertility to enhance biodiversity.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Promote and advocate for a change in landscape management to provide biodiversity benefits or the creation of wildlife-rich areas (where appropriate).

GI Priority Action 6: Promote community action for nature recovery

Action overview: Encouraging and facilitating local communities and school groups to take responsibility for large or small actions for wildlife in their area. This intervention recognises the tangible difference this approach can make to buffering and connecting priority habitats as well as enhancing people's perception and engagement with nature.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

1.28 Nature networks offer a multitude of benefits to people. However, these are only sustained in the long-term if people are engaged in their design, planning and delivery. To understand how local communities can be best empowered to deliver nature recovery at a local scale, a survey should be conducted of local authorities as well as local friends groups, environmental volunteer networks and the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The survey would seek to understand what existing initiatives exist by local authorities and community groups, how effective projects have been and what barriers prevent community action. The survey would also function as a mechanism to evaluate the output and effectiveness of community engagement initiatives. Findings from the survey would be used to direct investment in local level nature-based project and create a new web-based plan, with the aim for this to be a live record of action and proposals.

1.29 People can often be at a loss about what they can practically do to support nature. Quarterly Community Action for Nature workshops or webinars would provide an opportunity to learn from experts and access advice on complex

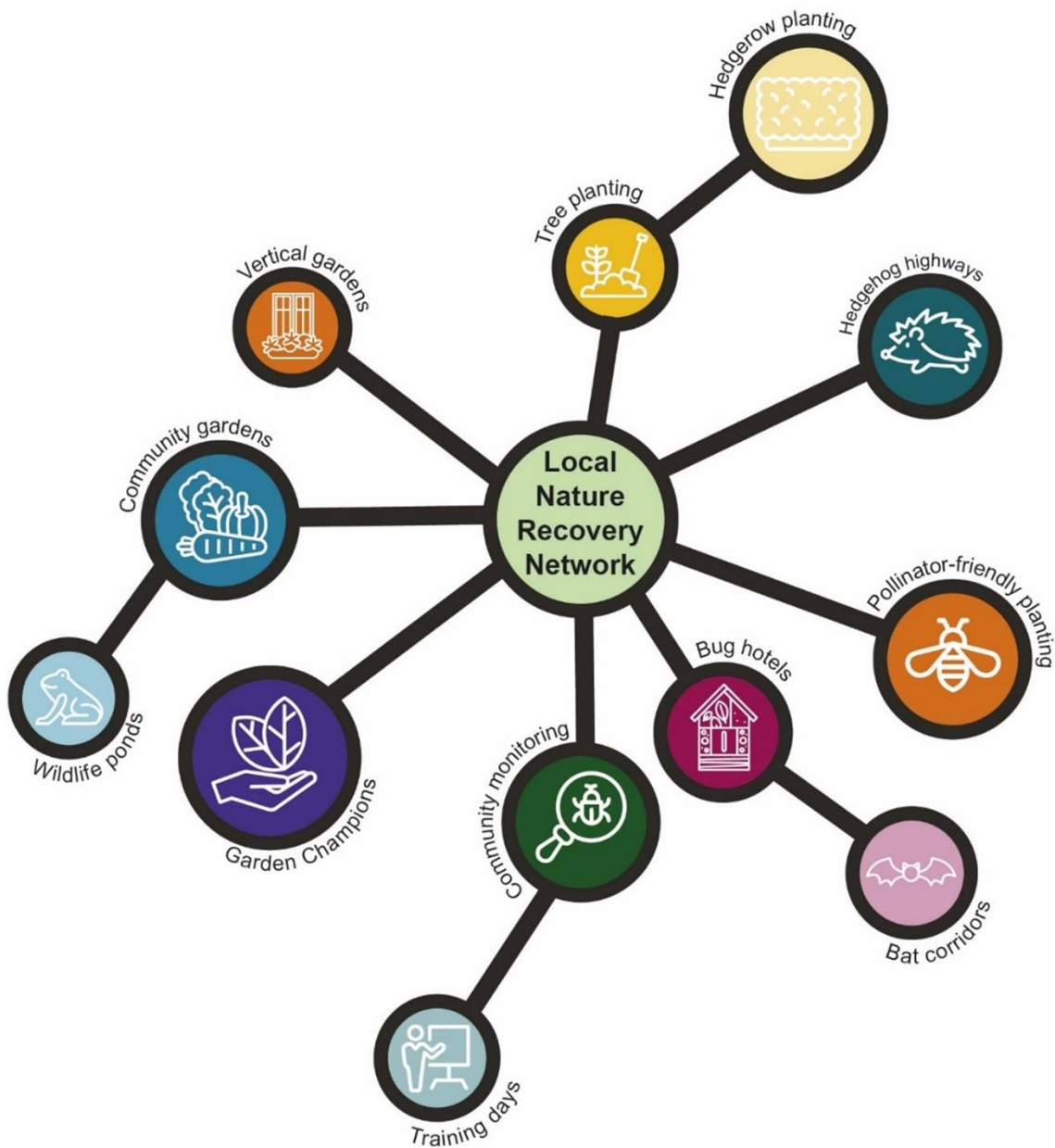
issues, such as tree-planting. This intervention would also bring together people across the county who are already taking action on nature-related topics, forming a mechanism to share best practice and lessons learnt. This would help to maintain enthusiasm and generate new projects and ideas. The outputs would also recognise and celebrate the work of existing groups who are actively engaged in improving and caring for local GI, including friends groups and volunteers. These groups should be the starting point, helping to empower and build on their work done to-date. Skills and knowledge needs would be identified through the results of the survey. Outputs from this action would then be used to inform the design and implementation of the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Network, as detailed in the following section and in Figure 1.7. Providing a voice and sense of empowerment in the community offers people a stronger commitment to their local area. As a consequence, the community would be more likely to contribute to local activities and participate in the longer-term care and investment in a place.

Community-based actions which could help to enhance and connect the Local Nature Recovery Network

- Hedgerow planting;
- Tree planting;
- Community orchards;
- Hedgehog highways;
- Pollinator-friendly planting;
- Vertical gardens;
- Community gardens and market gardens (subject to an assessment of need, desire and space);
- Wildlife ponds;
- Garden Champions;
- Community monitoring;

- Training days;
- Bug hotels; and
- Bat corridors.

Figure 1.7: Community-based actions which could help to enhance and connect the Local Nature Recovery Network



Key delivery risks

- The survey requires central co-ordination and usefulness of output depends on response uptake;
- Relies on continued good will of volunteer networks to implement nature recovery projects;
- Dependent on effective collaboration with communities and local business;
- Lack of smaller scale local grants to deliver community nature recovery projects; and
- Acknowledgement that community-based action is sometimes not guided by expert advice and therefore fails to achieve objectives.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- LNRS;
- CIL contributions to deliver community-based nature recovery projects; and
- Promote and expand the use of ParksHerts website to communicate key accessible GI assets to the public.

Potential delivery partners

- District and borough local authorities, Hertfordshire Land Management team within the CRoW service, ParksHerts, HCC Highways, Local environmental action groups, schools, volunteer networks, local businesses and Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Potential funding mechanisms

- Natural Investment Readiness Fund;
- National Lottery Heritage Fund; and

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions.

Role of the county GI Champion

- Design, collate results and share findings of community action for nature survey;
- Organise Community Action for Nature workshops; and
- Coordinate with future LNRS leads to ensure Hertfordshire's nature network delivers for people as well as wildlife.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Disseminate community action for nature survey and gather ideas for workshops;
- Signpost volunteers to the relevant guidance/best practice; and
- Provide a conduit for local environmental and community groups to feedback to the GI Delivery Partnership on barriers and opportunities for grassroots level action. This includes where Environmental Forums are already established at the district or borough level.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Provide the GI Champion with access to evidence regarding development of the LNRS so that community events are tailored and targeted to delivering on LNRS priorities; and
- Provide financial and logistical support for holding Community Action for Nature workshops.

GI Priority Action 7: Produce an overarching county-wide GI Design Code for development

Action overview: Overseen by the county GI Champion, produce a county-level GI Design Code in accordance with best practice set out in the National Model Design Code [See reference 11] and the Building with Nature standard, a GI-led design process tool. The document would be accessible to all and complement resources provided by Building Futures, specifically the Sustainable Design Toolkit, to promote a GI-led design approach for new development. The aim would be to deliver improvements to the design of new developments across the county in relation in GI provision. The outputs should provide consideration of local character and the integration of GI Standards to inform the development of well-designed GI in design coding. This approach is highlighted as a recommended step for developing GI policy as part of the 'process journey,' developed as a component of the Natural England GI Framework.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

1.30 Sensitive and good quality design is required throughout the county to tackle cross-cutting issues identified in this Strategy. Projected population growth and increased development has the potential to change the character of settlements and the wider landscape. However, this presents an opportunity to incorporate GI as an integral component of new development. This should be achieved through the production of a county-wide GI Design Code to produce high level principles which can be utilised by districts or boroughs in the first

instance. These principles can then be adapted into more detailed guidance at a masterplan or site-specific scale.

1.31 Principles embedded as part of a GI Design Code would be expected to include details on the design of GI assets, urban greenspace, play spaces, and SuDS to inform a consistent approach to development across the districts or boroughs. The GI Design Code should also incorporate measures of protection and enhancement for biodiversity and the historic environment. By “designing in” GI earlier in the planning process, and through landscape-led design practices, costs can be better managed and GI form a key element of the county’s wider placemaking strategy. Clear design parameters would also reinforce distinctiveness of place and help communities decide which GI interventions are incorporated in future developments in their area. This work should also complement the design codes emerging in Gilston as part of the Strategic Landscape Masterplan and Village 1 Masterplan work being led by East Herts District Council (EHDC).

1.32 The information required to deliver a successful GI Design Code in Hertfordshire is summarised in further details below and illustrated in Figure 1.8. The GI Design Code would be required to build on the existing ‘Sustainable Design Toolkit’ developed by Building Futures, culminating in a simple to use ‘Developer Checklist’ that clearly conveys the types of onsite GI developers should provide as part of development proposals. Working with Building Futures, the opportunity exists to either update the existing toolkit to reflect this information or prepare the checklist as an addendum to the existing resource. The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment should also be consulted when providing design recommendations for more rural locations to ensure the appropriate landscape context is delivered.

1.33 District or borough GI Champions should liaise with the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel to promote the delivery of impartial design advice and guidance relating to the integration of GI features into future development proposals. Representation on the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel should also potentially be sought from the county GI Champion. Building with Nature Standards should also be incorporated into the GI Design Code and the existing resources developed as part of Building Futures. This would provide a valuable

mechanism to facilitate these measures, ensuring GI is incorporated effectively into development. The toolkit would help to deliver good practice, providing a framework for designers to ensure they consider a wide range of GI elements.

1.34 Key principles of a GI Design Code should also include a connected network of streets, good public transport and the promotion of walking and cycling routes. These can serve as multi-functional GI networks with active travel playing a key role in the delivery of sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods (see Hertfordshire GI Strategy Part 2a: GI Baseline, Analysis and Priorities). A county-wide GI Design Code should establish these principles and identify strategic corridors in which improvements can be made. Strong placemaking leadership is required at the district or borough level, which the GI Champion should seek to ensure through strategic engagement. The county GI Champion would support the development of the GI Design Code to help prioritise GI in achieving well-designed places at various scales of development. The Parks Delivery Framework (see GI Priority Action 2), the Recreational Access and Mitigation Strategy (see GI Priority Action 2) and consultation with historic environment specialists should also inform the development of the GI Design Code to ensure that the recreational needs of the local communities, protection of semi-natural spaces and protection of heritage assets are all considered as part of the process.

Delivering a successful GI Design Code in Hertfordshire (see Figure 1.8)

1.35 To ensure the successful delivery of multifunctional GI across the Hertfordshire, the Hertfordshire GI design code should be facilitated by the following mechanisms:

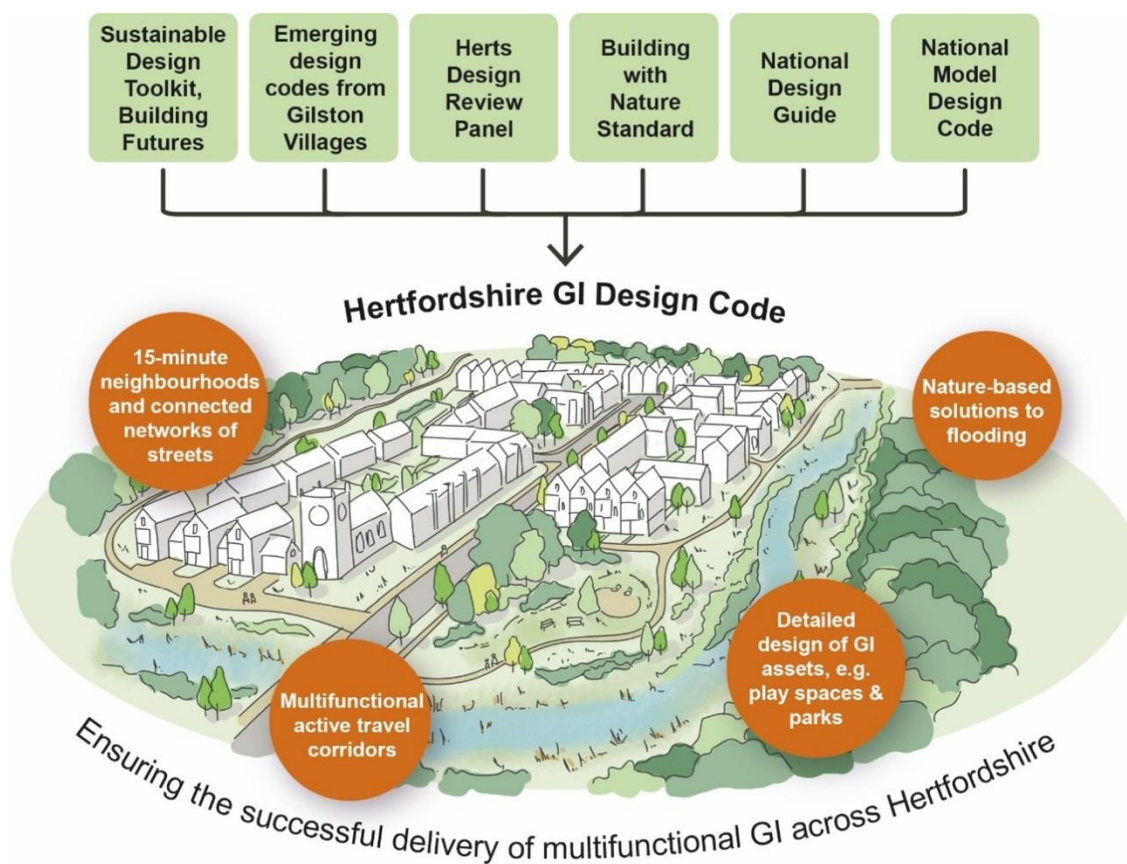
- Sustainable Design Toolkit, Building Future;
- Emerging design codes from Gilston Villages;
- Herts Design Review Panel;
- Building with Nature Standard;

- National Design Guide; and
- National Model Design Code.

1.36 These mechanisms will facilitate the delivery of the key principles of the Hertfordshire GI design code, which include:

- 15-minute neighbourhoods and connected network of streets;
- Multifunctional active travel corridors;
- Detailed design of GI assets, examples include play spaces and parks; and
- Nature-based solutions to flooding.

Figure 1.8: Delivering a successful GI Design Code in Hertfordshire



Key delivery risks

- Identifying or allocating funding to produce the GI Design Code;
- Although newly supported by central government, future changes in policy could potentially reduce the relevance of design codes; and
- Complexity of adopting a GI Design Code due in part to extensive consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- Adherence with national guidance;
- Achieving adopted status – the GI Design Code should be adopted by all district and borough local authorities;
- Supplementary planning documents on the subject of design to signpost and highlight the use of a GI-led design process;
- Building with Nature assessment of new development;
- Development Checklist; and
- Strategic Development Masterplans; and Hertfordshire Design Review Panel.

Potential delivery partners

- Districts or boroughs local authorities, Building Futures (including the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel), Hertfordshire Development Management Group, Building with Nature, Building Futures and Hertfordshire Environmental Resource specialists.

Potential funding mechanisms

- Potential future allocations of government funding; and

- County and district or borough local authority staffing budgets (where possible).

Role of the county GI Champion

- Responsible for providing strategic oversight relating to delivery of the GI Design Code and the county's wider placemaking strategy; and
- Consider providing representation on the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel to promote the successful delivery of GI across the county.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Promote the use of the county-wide GI Design Code and Developer Checklist as a mechanism to inform a consistent approach to development across each district or borough; and
- Consult with Hertfordshire Design Review Panel to promote the integration of GI features into future development proposals.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Develop Local Plan policies and supplementary planning documents (where appropriate) to promote a GI-led design process;
- Consult with the county and district or borough GI Champions in the preparation of a 'Developer Checklist' which conveys the types of onsite GI developers should provide as part of development proposals;
- Utilise the GI-led design approach to complement other policy planning policy initiatives, such as BNG, by providing a framework by which to appraise a site and identify opportunities; and
- Use the Building with Nature Standards to structure or inform future supplementary planning documents to promote the delivery of GI.

GI Priority Action 8: Deliver and manage GI as a mechanism to improve air quality and public health

Action overview: Focus on creating tangible and measurable improvements (working alongside air quality programme managers) to air quality in locations that are within or around areas of deprivation. This should be achieved by identifying and promoting urban greening opportunities within the county.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

1.37 The potential exists for the Strategy to support the delivery of the Hertfordshire Air Quality Strategy and Implementation Plan [See reference 12] to investigate opportunities to reduce urban traffic impacts, whilst linking to Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan [See reference 13]. Further connections to GI and urban greening should also be established as part of the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Public Health Strategy. Interventions focusing on projects in areas of deprivation would help secure the most benefits to people and their wellbeing. This not only applies to ensuring communities have accessible local greenspace but would also require that areas subject to high pollution are more effectively mitigated.

1.38 Improvements to air quality and public health through GI should therefore be incorporated into local planning policies and formally recognised by districts or boroughs to enable improved delivery from the outset. Public health and indices of deprivation data such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment [See

reference 14] should be used as a basis in policies to identify areas to prioritise for urban greening interventions (see Figure 1.9). This process would assist in reducing disparities in deprivation, ensuring GI is retrofitted into communities with existing pollution issues and not solely built into new developments. This process should be supported and monitored by the county and district or borough GI Champions.

1.39 Urban greening opportunities should be identified in town centres, including street tree planting, segregated bike lanes (i.e. located adjacent to roads and separated by greening) and pocket parks. The installation of green walls, screens and roofs as part of development (including retro-fitting on existing built form) may be more suitable interventions where there is a lack of available space for vegetation. The choice of greening would therefore depend on built form, climatic conditions and existing vegetation, as well as specific pollution issues in specific geographical areas. SMART monitoring of interventions should be established from the outset of any intervention or opportunity, in line with wider approaches to monitoring GI assets and their ecosystem services.

1.40 Consideration should also be given to expanding the network of urban greening initiatives throughout the county as a key component of community-focused GI. This is particularly relevant to higher density settlements within Hertfordshire and in areas where Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have been established. Developer contributions such as CIL and S106 would play a key role for allocating funding for urban greening when new development is approved. However, investment in greening projects and accessible local greenspaces can also be sourced through alternative financing routes (see Chapter 2) or via initiatives such as The Sustainable Hertfordshire Central Fund. Once investment has been established, communities of interest to particular assets should be identified and integrated into the management of GI in their area.

Policies and strategies for identifying urban greening locations and their benefits (see Figure 1.9)

Policies and strategies to guide the identification of locations for urban greening

- Hertfordshire Air Quality Strategy;
- Local Transport Plan (LTP4);
- Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026;
- Hertfordshire Public Health Strategy; and
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Areas to assess urban greening

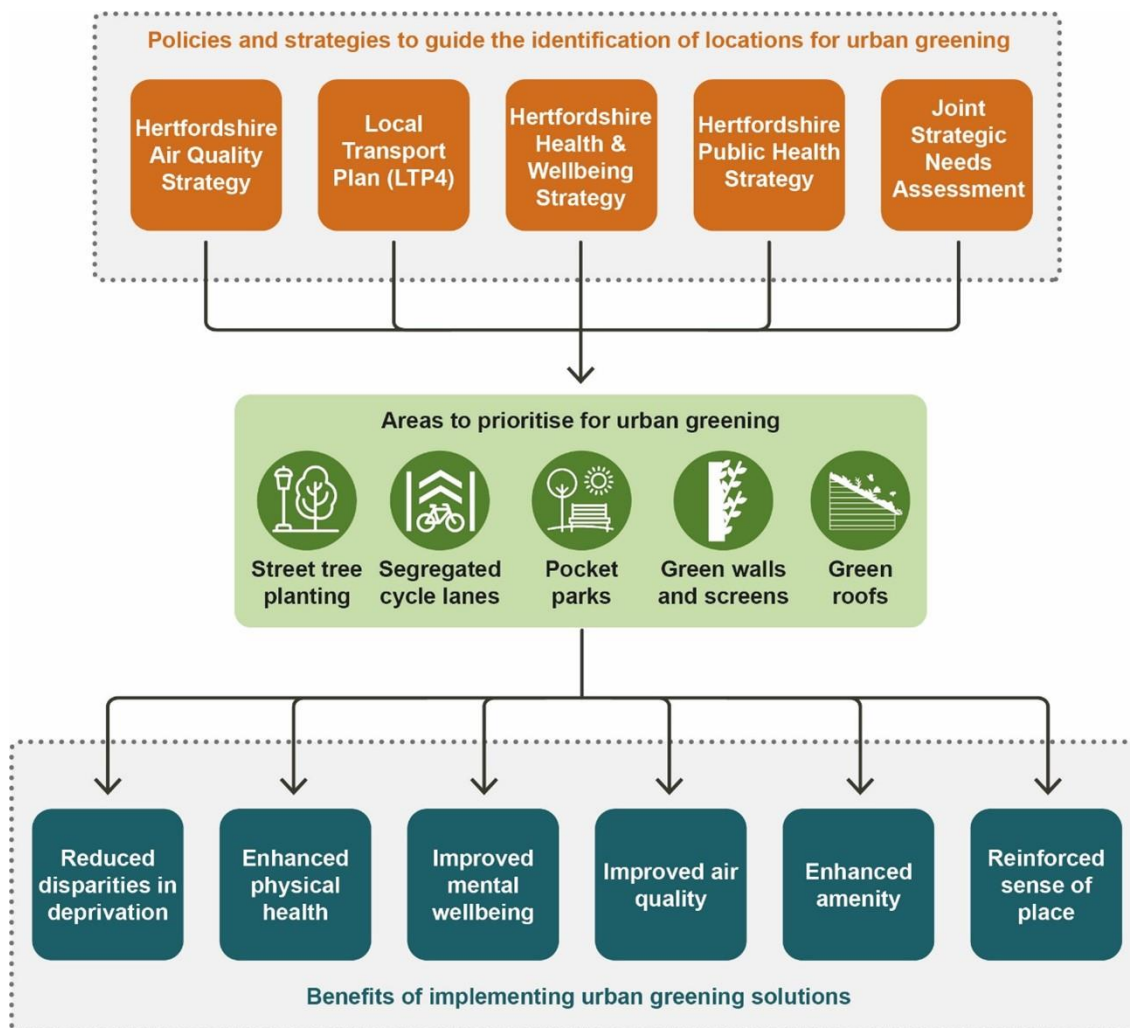
- Street tree planting;
- Segregated cycle lanes;
- Pocket parks;
- Green walls and screens; and
- Green roofs.

Benefits of implementing urban greening solutions

- Reduced disparities in deprivation;
- Enhanced physical health;
- Improved mental wellbeing;
- Improved air quality;

- Enhanced amenity; and
- Reinforced sense of place.

Figure 1.9: Policies and strategies for identifying urban greening locations and their benefits



Key delivery risks

- Increasing lack of traditional public funding resources to deliver GI;
- The process and delay of adopting effective GI local planning policies across the 10 district or boroughs;

- Resources required for ongoing maintenance and monitoring; and
- Ensuring long term retention of interventions beyond the scope of planning conditions.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- Hertfordshire Air Quality Strategy and Implementation Plan;
- Hertfordshire Public Health Strategy;
- GIS mapping and software;
- District or borough implemented Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs); and
- Working in partnership with LPA Air Quality Programme managers.

Potential delivery partners

- HCC Air Quality and Public Health staff, Local Access Forum, Hertfordshire Tree Officer Group, HCC Highways, HCC Transport and Active Travel staff, NHS, Public Health England, and National Highways.

Potential funding mechanisms

- CIL contributions for development to pay into greening projects;
- S106 payments if deemed to meet the test required to make development acceptable;
- Alternative funding mechanisms such as charitable trusts or the Sustainable Hertfordshire Central Fund;
- Incorporated within wider urban public realm improvements; and
- Local community volunteers and action groups.

Role of the county GI Champion

- Monitor and provide strategic oversight, establishing linkages to GI as part of the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Public Health Strategy.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Review existing evidence relating to public health and indices of deprivation to identify priority locations for the delivery of urban greening interventions within each district or borough;
- GI Champions should be aware of existing and emerging best practice guidance in relation to urban greening, including tree planting in urban areas, species selection, SuDS placement and design, green roof and green wall specifications and incorporating active travel into streets; and
- Support the SMART monitoring of GI interventions and share lessons learnt and best practice with the county GI Champion.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Embed the requirement for air quality and public health into local planning policy; and
- Utilise planning obligations as a mechanism for allocating funding for urban greening initiatives.

GI Priority Action 9: Reconnect and create multi-functional links to facilitate the movement of people and wildlife

Action overview: Focus on improving the connectivity of active travel infrastructure across the county. This should seek to deliver an increase in the coverage and quality of the PRow network, other walking and cycling routes and use of redundant features – such as former railway lines for active travel routes and green corridor links.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

For people

1.41 This intervention should be aligned with the Strategic Transport and Rail Team to deliver Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan and net zero aspirations across the county to improve active travel infrastructure. This includes increased use and improved quality of the PRow network, redundant railway lines that can be re-commissioned to walking and cycling routes, or the introduction of wider cycle infrastructure.

1.42 Consideration should be given to ensuring PRow connections in Hertfordshire are sustainable, equitable and accessible. This should involve tackling the issue of severance to ensure that PRow do not terminate once they meet a primary road. This issue is pertinent within large areas of Hertfordshire, alongside other barriers to use of the network including route obstructions and

wayfinding. The opportunity also exists to promote wider strategic linkages across the network, whilst also exploring the potential introduction of circular recreational routes which complement the network of active travel routes within the county. However, all proposals should ensure alignment with the action plan for strategic solutions included within Hertfordshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) [See reference 15].

1.43 Input into the strategic objectives identified through district or borough Local Plans should include GI provision within relevant housing allocation policies. This includes where these come forward in areas where opportunities exist to link to and strengthen existing GI assets and corridors. Districts or boroughs should also seek to utilise LCWIPs to implement corridor improvements.

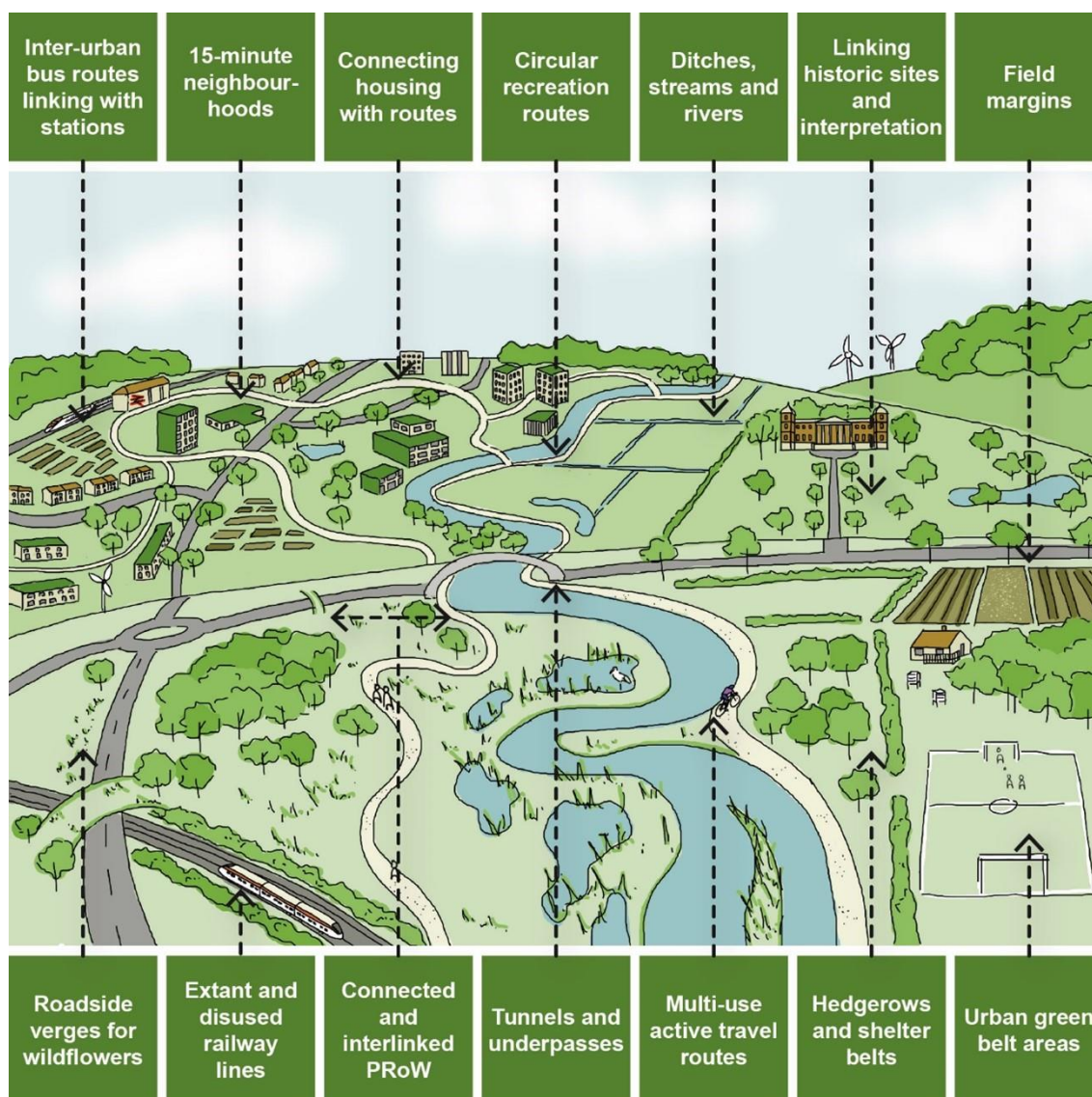
1.44 In existing urban areas and town centres, the county and district or borough GI Champions should promote the possibilities of GI. This could include links to the 15-minute neighbourhood concept, optimising urban greening, providing segregated pedestrian and cycle routes, improved walking and cycling routes in general, inter-urban bus routes and the provision of connections to rail and bus stations. Opportunities to link historic sites as part of promoted routes should also be pursued.

For nature

1.45 Infrastructure such as roads, railways and canals can often result in habitat severance and fragmentation. However, if managed sensitively, the linearity of these routes offer the opportunity for the provision of vital wildlife corridors that link habitats and reduce the isolation of populations (see Figure 1.10). For example, a change in the landscape management approach aimed at delivering roadside verges for wildflowers offers the potential for enhanced floristic diversity. Other vital green links include, hedgerows, railway tracks, tunnels and underpasses, rivers, streams, ditches, field margins and urban green belt areas. Many of these features provide multi-functional benefits for people and can be strategically planned to maximise the benefits of their ecosystem services. Green bridges create a safe crossing point for wildlife movement across busy

traffic routes such as roads and railways. These are usually planted with a variety of local trees or shrubs and other vegetation and provide wider benefits such as landscape integration. These features are largely absent in the county, other than examples such as the cut and cover tunnel at the A505 Baldock Bypass, which was created to preserve the skyline. Consideration of how GI networks and wildlife corridors apply to Hertfordshire should be understood and applied by the county or district/borough GI Champions.

Figure 1.10: Summary of how linear GI features, green links and connections relate to the wider landscape



Key delivery risks

- Reliant on a broad and strategic planning approach with buy-in from multiple stakeholders;
- Dependency on CIL and S106 developer contributions;
- Significant legal challenges associated in making alterations to the existing PRoW network which would need to be overcome; and
- Management and maintenance costs of infrastructure and the PRoW network.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- LCWIPs;
- Masterplanning exercises (e.g. through strategic developments);
- Highways Integrated Transport Projects (ITP); and
- Updates to the Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Potential delivery partners

- Hertfordshire Strategic Transport and Rail Team, HCC Highways, National Highways, Department for Transport and Local Access Forum.

Potential funding mechanisms

- CIL contributions for development to pay into enhancement projects;
- S106 payments if deemed to meet the test required to make development acceptable;
- BNG – onsite or offsite credit schemes; and
- Allocations of Levelling Up funding, specifically in urban areas.

Role of the county GI Champion

- Promote the multi-functional benefits of utilising GI interventions within active travel initiatives. The role should support the general principles of Hertfordshire's ROWIP, whilst also promoting modifications (where appropriate) to enable enhanced GI connectivity;
- Encourage Elected Members to lobby where proposals would lead to increased severance of the network;
- Liaise with colleagues in HCC Highways to promote and advocate for a change in landscape management to provide biodiversity benefits (where appropriate); and
- Coordinate a wildlife corridor response from borough or district GI Champions to help form a strategic map of Hertfordshire's wildlife corridors.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Working with the Land Management team within the CRoW service, identify localised interventions at the district/borough to restore fragmented sections of the PRow network as well as opportunities to introduce urban greening initiatives;
- Act as an advocate for inclusion of wildlife-sensitive management in grounds maintenance contracts or with in-house teams; and
- Identify existing and potential future wildlife corridors across each district or borough which can be fed back to the county GI Champion to form a strategic wildlife corridor map.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Commission LCWIPs as a mechanism to implement corridor improvements; and

- Consult with colleagues in HCC Highways to promote and advocate for a change in landscape management to provide biodiversity benefits (where appropriate).

GI Priority Action 10: Improve understanding of existing GI baseline and projects

Action overview: Create an interactive GI map (including ecological designations, park management, open space usage, existing and proposed projects and environmental pressures) with the aim of providing a comprehensive evidence base on county-wide GI delivery, needs and priorities. This mapping resource would be used to support districts and boroughs to inform Local Plan making and by the third sector when co-ordinating project delivery. In addition, the interactive outputs would aim to assist local authority planners in applying the Natural England GI Framework when developing GI policy.

Action area of focus: County-wide

The details

1.46 The aim of this intervention would be to deliver a comprehensive interactive mapping resource of functional GI, providing a consistent baseline across Hertfordshire. The evidence gathering exercise should place specific emphasis on understanding how well the GI in the county functions. An assessment of assets against identified needs and local priorities would therefore form a component of the GI evidence analysis.

1.47 The Beta GI Mapping Tool, the emerging evidence base provided by the Natural England's GI Framework, would form the basis of the digital outputs.

This data would be supplemented with locally specific information, current projects and initiatives as well as emerging core GI standards relating to accessible greenspace or urban greening, as detailed in the following section and illustrated in Figure 1.11. Woodland opportunity mapping (see GI Priority Action 4) should also be integrated as a mechanism to help guide future woodland expansion. The biodiversity baseline mapping commissioned by HCC should also be included. The addition of this local data would aim to enhance local understanding and locally relevant issues. The outputs would support the GI Design Guide (see GI Priority Action 7), best practice case studies and 'process journeys', with the intention of embedding GI informed decision making across local authority departments and facilitating the sharing of information with external stakeholders.

1.48 Key assets, designations and GI projects would be mapped to enable districts or boroughs to use the GIS datasets to inform their own policy mapping and wider evidence base. This would allow for a clear link to be made between the Strategy (and the assets identified within it) and Local Plans. In addition, the mapping resource should be supplemented with informed studies and assessments to understand the sensitivity of the county's landscape to potential land use change. Consideration should also be given to the delivery of an update to the existing county-wide Landscape Character Assessment [See reference 16] to help define the landscape baseline and help shape future development, providing a foundation for the delivery of GI within the county. The outputs of these two studies could be utilised as an evidence base, alongside stakeholder and community engagement, to adopt a series of local landscape designations across Hertfordshire which will help protect landscapes of particular local value. These non-statutory designations can be especially useful for LPAs seeking to manage growth, implement GI, protect valued landscapes, and guide positive landscape change.

1.49 The development of the comprehensive mapping evidence base would help LPAs in assessing quality, quantity and connectivity of current GI assets. Gaps in provision, inequalities in distribution and opportunities for enhanced GI would also be identified in order to inform the 'process journey' and develop GI policy. The recommended steps for developing GI policy, as detailed within the Natural England GI Framework, are detailed in below. Once the evidence base

is compiled, the next step in developing GI policy would require LPAs to plan strategically by setting benchmarks and standards through local policy and guidance.

1.50 The digital outputs would allow for improved county-wide understanding of ecology, parks management, visitor usage of open space and environmental pressures. The deliverables would enable users to plan for the creation and enhancement of GI at a strategic scale, whilst providing a key tool in aiding implementation, reporting and monitoring of identified GI Priority Actions. Furthermore, this information would be used as a tool for development managers, spatial planners and other local authority departments to use as a means of assessing development impacts or determining suitable locations of housing or employment allocations in Local Plans (and help to inform on or offsite GI delivery requirements). The data would be inputted as part of Authority Monitoring Reports (AMR) to inform indicators and a means to record or measure loss and gain across the GI network. Appropriate levels of data would also be provided to key local organisations or charities and delivery partners to support engagement, co-ordination and delivery of identified GI projects.

Steps involved in the compilation of the data forming the evidence base

Hertfordshire's Interactive GI Map Inputs

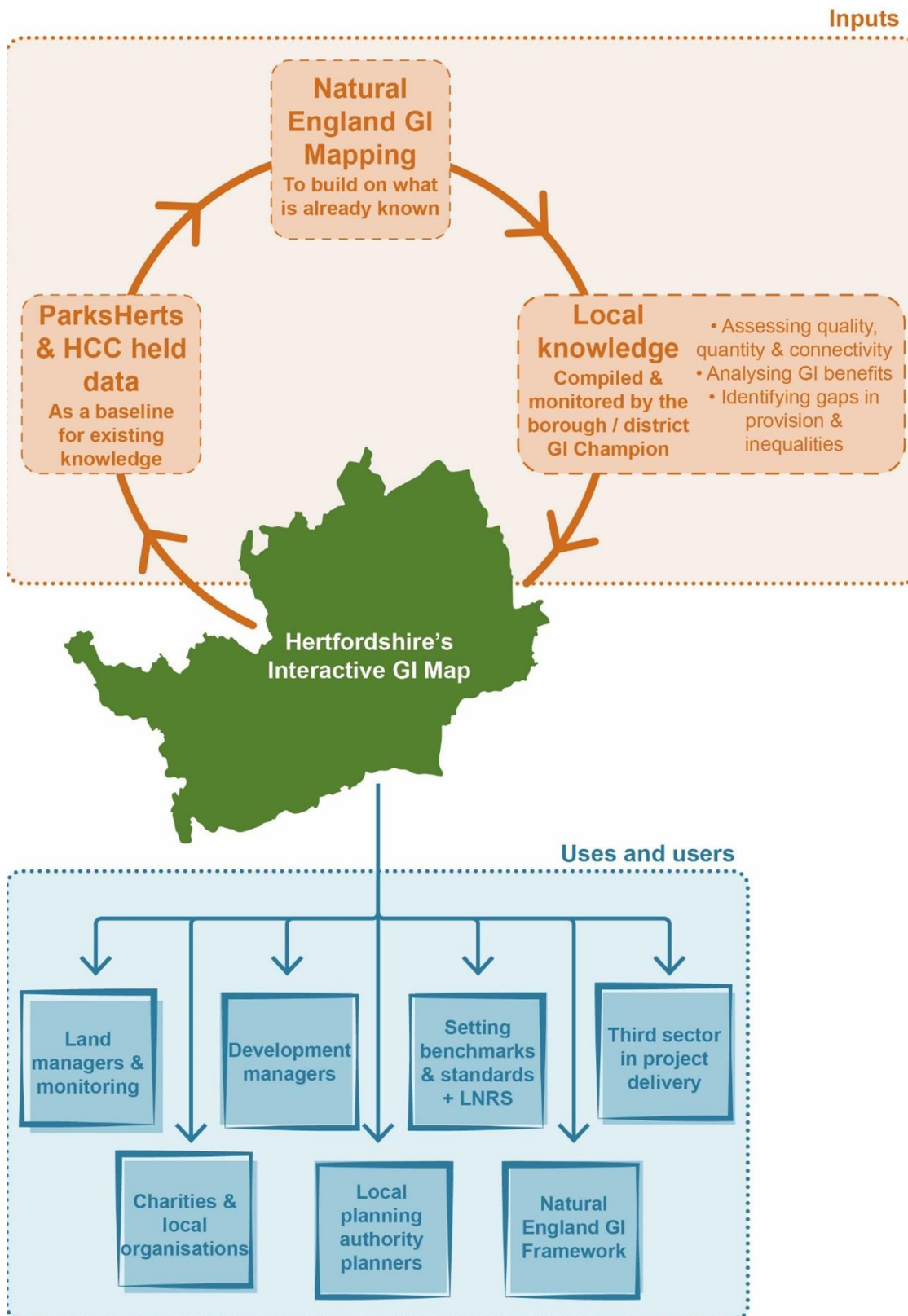
- ParksHerts and existing Hertfordshire County Council held data:
 - As a baseline for existing knowledge.
- Natural England GI Mapping:
 - To build on what is already known.
- Local knowledge:
 - Compiled and monitored by the borough/district GI Champion.

- Assessing quality, quantity and connectivity.
- Analysing GI benefits.
- Identifying gaps in provision and inequalities.

Hertfordshire's Interactive GI Map Uses and Users

- Land managers and monitoring;
- Charities and local organisation;
- Development managers;
- LPA planners;
- Setting benchmarks and LNRS;
- Natural England GI Framework; and
- Third sector in project delivery.

Figure 1.11: Steps involved in the compilation of the data forming the evidence base

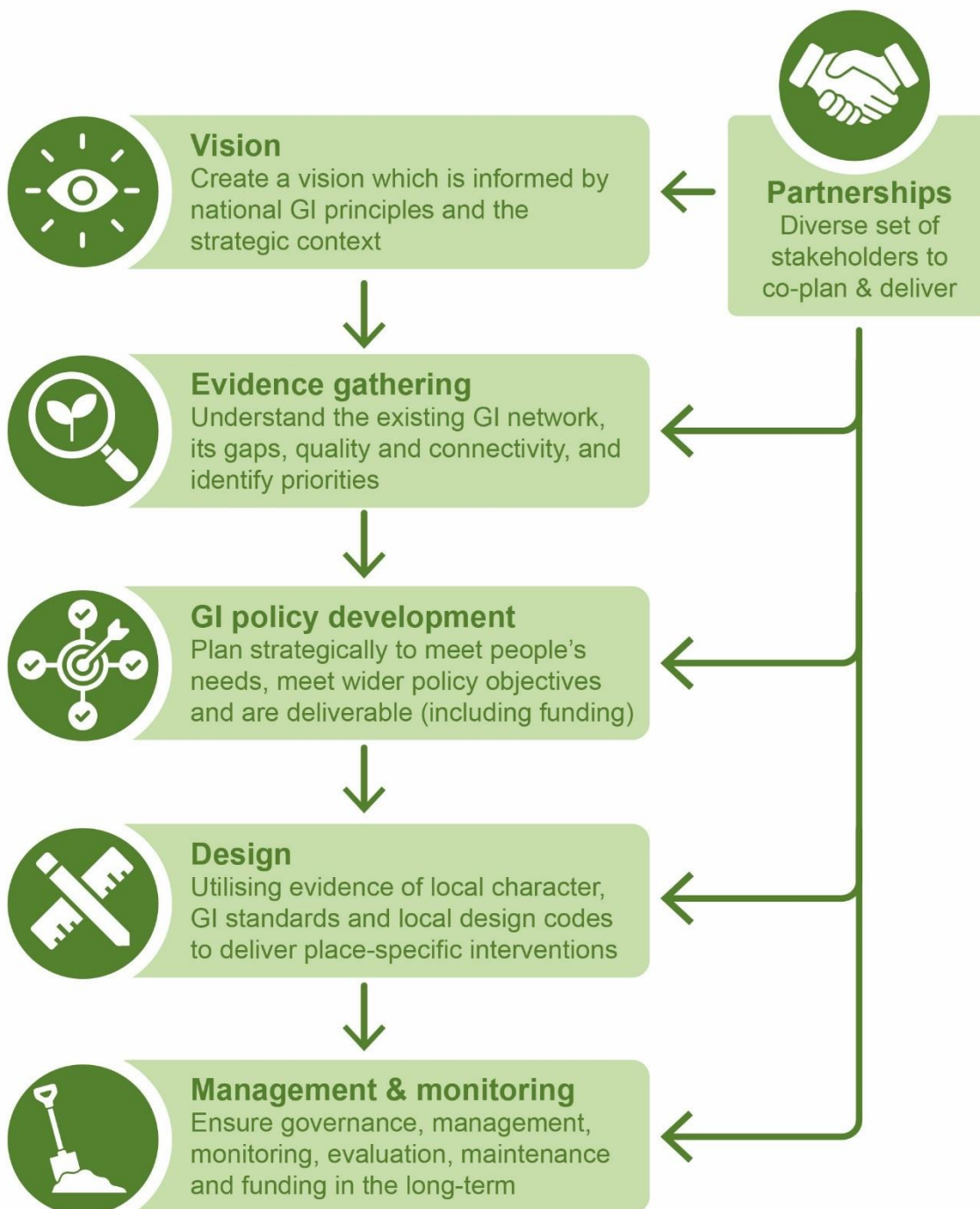


Recommended steps for developing GI policy, as outlined within the ‘Process Journey’ forming a component of the Natural England GI Framework

Partnerships – Diverse set of stakeholders to co-plan and deliver the following:

- Vision – Create a vision which is informed by GI principles and the and the strategic context.
- Evidence gathering – Understand the existing GI network, its gaps, quality and connectivity, and identify priorities.
- GI policy development – Plans to strategically meet people’s needs, meet wider policy objectives and are deliverable (including funding).
- Design – Utilising evidence of local character, GI standards and local design codes to deliver place-specific interventions.
- Management and monitoring – Ensure governance, management, monitoring, evaluation, maintenance and funding in the long-term.

Figure 1.12: Recommended steps for developing GI policy, as outlined within the 'Process Journey' forming a component of the Natural England GI Framework



Key delivery risks

- Requires a dedicated GIS resource within HCC to ensure the mapping resource is kept up to date.

Potential delivery mechanisms

- Promote and expand the use of ParksHerts website to communicate key accessible GI assets to the public; and
- Amendment to existing job specifications for appropriately selected posts at HCC.

Potential delivery partners

- ParksHerts Group, Hertfordshire Land Management team within the CRoW service and district or borough local authorities.

Potential funding mechanisms

- County and district or borough local authority staffing budgets (where possible).

Role of the county GI Champion

- Responsible for oversight of the mapping resource, ensuring its effective use is promoted and data remains up to date; and
- Commission informed studies and assessments, including a county-wide landscape sensitivity study and update to the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment.

Role of the district or borough GI Champion

- Responsible for collating data regarding current projects and initiatives in relation to their specific district or borough.

Role of the Local Planning Authority

- Utilise the mapping resource to help meet the requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework to consider GI in the development of Local Plans, policies and GI strategies; and
- Apply the mapping outputs as a mechanism to assess development impacts or determine suitable locations of housing or employment allocations in Local Plans (helping to inform on or offsite GI delivery requirements).

Chapter 2

Mechanisms for GI delivery and funding

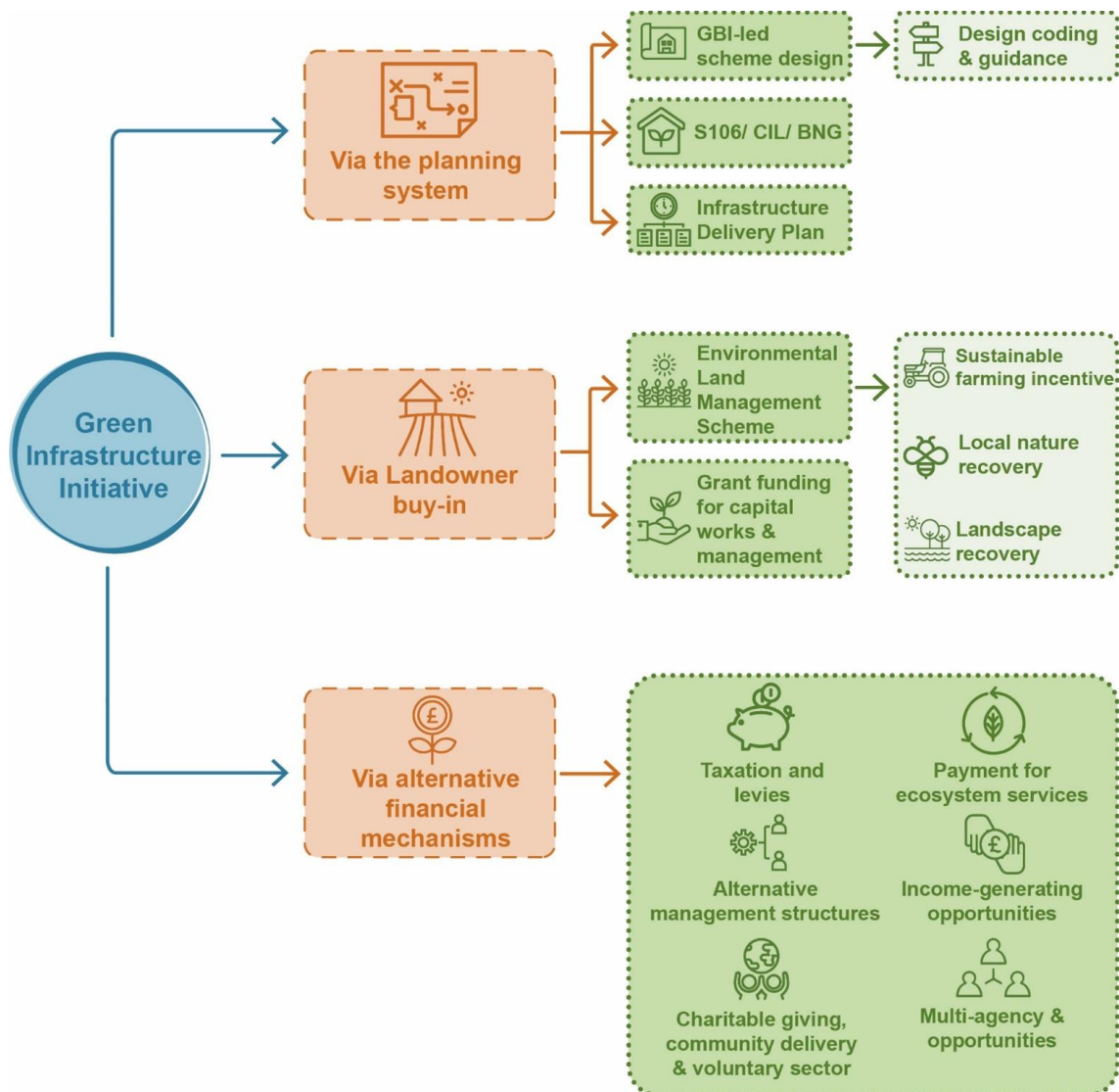
2.1 In recent years, there have been far fewer public resources available for funding the delivery, management and maintenance of GI. It is now rare to find local authorities relying on the traditional models of the past - whereby local government funded and maintained the GI network. This is leading to a visible disconnect between the needs of the GI network to address climate change and support nature recovery on the one hand, and the financing mechanisms available to do so on the other. One solution is to piece together a number of alternative mechanisms in order to deliver and maintain GI in Hertfordshire. Not all mechanisms would be appropriate for all types of GI interventions. However, the categories set out below outline how some of these tools might be used in the local context.

2.2 This chapter provides an overview of the following delivery routes and how they might apply to Hertfordshire's GI network:

- Delivering GI through the planning process;
- Strengthening GI through ELMs; and
- Alternative financing routes for GI in Hertfordshire.

2.3 The potential delivery mechanisms are summarised in Figure 2.1 and explained in the following section.

Figure 2.1: Summary of potential delivery mechanisms



Delivering GI through the planning process in Hertfordshire

2.4 Significant new development is planned for the county in the coming years (see Hertfordshire GI Strategy Part 1: Setting the Scene – A Strategic Review of GI in Hertfordshire). It is therefore vital that high-quality, tailored GI is delivered alongside these developments – both as an integral component of the masterplanning process for new housing or employment land, as well as

through contributions to the surrounding GI network. This would boost the ability of the county to accommodate change, provide a high quality of life and environmental resilience. New development can fund GI either directly through levies or planning obligations. Two important mechanisms for delivering this are outlined below:

- Design guidance and coding: The principles set out in this Strategy should be fully integrated into any emerging design guidance and design coding work. By “designing in” GI earlier within the planning process, and through landscape-led design practices, costs can be better managed and GI can sit at the heart of a wider placemaking strategy.
- Delivery of GI through planning gain or levies: S106 agreements and CIL offer the opportunity to contribute towards the funding of infrastructure associated with new developments. This might include the creation of greenspace. The opportunity also exists to deliver improvements for nature by linking with BNG requirements (either through on site or offsite credits).

Strengthening GI through Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs)

2.5 As highlighted in Hertfordshire GI Strategy Part 2a: GI Baseline, Analysis and Priorities, over half of Hertfordshire’s landscape is characterised by arable farmland. The move towards sustainable, environmentally friendly farming in the county would be vital in strengthening the GI network – resulting in farming practices which work with nature and help to deliver a range of environmental services beyond food production. However, the management of agricultural land lies beyond the remit of the planning process. As a consequence, GI could be delivered through the following interventions:

- Effective long-term management of carbon-rich soils and wetland habitats;

- Implementing landscape scale natural flood management and reconnecting floodplains;
- Promoting woodland creation, natural regeneration and hedgerow planting and management; and
- Encouraging greater uptake of ELMs by HCC and partner organisations, albeit the transition to ELMs represents a significant reduction in the overall agricultural funding budget.

2.6 Now is a time of great change in the agriculture sector, but one which provides huge opportunity to enhance the environment. ELMs is currently in the process of being rolled out in England. The scheme is based upon a public money for public goods model which provides an opportunity to move away from an intensive production-only approach – and a subsidy system that rewards farmers based on the size of their landholding – to one which recognises and rewards farmers for maximising the range of public goods delivered by farmland. This includes:

- Clean water;
- Sequestering carbon; and
- Providing access for people to enjoy the countryside.

2.7 There are three tiers in ELMs, as listed below:

1. Sustainable Farming Incentive – Intended to be accessible by all land holders to ensure good environmental practices are conducted as a baseline standard.
2. Local Nature Recovery – Encouraging land managers to work collaboratively for local nature recovery and deliver local environmental benefits.
3. Landscape Recovery – Long-term, land use change projects (e.g. woodland, peatland and wetland restoration).

2.8 Private investment would also supplement public money to deliver environmental enhancements. This might include through the voluntary carbon market, water quality, nitrate neutrality and habitat provision (e.g. through off-site BNG). It is important to explore and promote these opportunities to enable Hertfordshire's farming community to tap into available markets, alongside public money from the emerging ELMs. Appropriate support for the farming community is required to ensure the successful delivery of these interventions.

Alternative financing routes for GI in Hertfordshire

2.9 In 2021, a coalition of public and private partners called the South West Partnership for Environment & Economic Prosperity (SWEEP) produced a report named Alternative Funding Mechanisms for Green Space [See reference 17]. The document is designed to assist individuals, organisations and authorities in delivering and managing greenspaces. The contents of the report informs the categories set out below. Importantly, the approach outlined in the report looks beyond public sector funding and planning mechanisms for the financing and funding of GI. It outlines a number of innovative mechanisms which require collaboration with the private sector, local communities and local business. The alternative funding mechanisms include:

1. Income-generated opportunities and loans and taxation:

- Sponsorship/naming rights;
- Events of special uses;
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF);
- Business Improvement Districts;
- Location specific tax;
- Concessions; and
- Rental charges.

2. Alternative management structures:

- Endowments;
- Community asset transfers; and
- Non-profit distributing organisations (NDPOs).

3. Planning and development opportunities:

- Property assets/investment portfolios;
- Private sector;
- Land sales; and
- Planning obligations.

4. Charitable giving and voluntary sector involvement:

- Subscription schemes;
- Investment crowd-funding;
- Donations/philanthropic partnerships;
- Community/volunteer groups; and
- Corporate volunteering.

5. Ecosystem development/payment for ecosystem services:

- Renewable energy tariffs;
- Utility and rights-of-way leasing;
- Offsetting; and
- Water management.

6. Multi-agency opportunities:

- Grant funding;

- Innovative use of public budgets;
- Shared-use agreements; and
- Special designations.

Income generating opportunities

How does this work?

2.10 Under this mechanism, GI can be used for commercial purposes to generate income. For example, through the provision of services, including sports events, nature recreation/tourism or settings for cafés. Local food festivals or farmers markets can help support local people and demonstrate the relationship between land management, biodiversity and people. This can include sponsorship opportunities, such as sponsoring an activity in a space. It can also provide one-off events, such as weddings or natural burials. It can involve charging the public for using facilities such as parking, tennis or pools, or by selling products (e.g. firewood). This model can offer substantial, long-term funding. However events should be limited at ecologically sensitive sites (e.g. ancient and semi-natural woodland sites or areas with ground nesting birds) to reduce disturbance and degradation. It also requires skill and expertise to develop a business model. It also risks excluding certain groups from using the GI network if not managed carefully.

Case studies

2.11 The Heart of the Forest cooperative [\[See reference 18\]](#) within the National Forest (Leicestershire) was formed through the collaboration three companies with a passion for trees. Seed funding was provided by the National Forest Company the company which runs an annual music and arts festival within the forest. Three partners produce high quality, sustainable charcoal. All proceeds

from sales help support the group to meet running costs and to provide sustainable income for charities within the forest.

Loans and taxation

How does this work?

2.12 This mechanism uses local and national taxation to allocate funding to GI interventions. This might include location-specific taxes or business levies. Service charges on new developments – which pay for the management and maintenance of the on-site GI network – are one increasingly common example of this approach. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Park Improvement Districts are another. In the US, the use of tax-increment financing (TIF) [See reference 19] is a more ambitious approach but there has been little experimentation of this approach in the UK. This model can help businesses to see GI improvements as an investment – for example if improvements lead to increased footfall in town centres. However these businesses must be persuaded of the benefits. There is also a risk of excluding those who would benefit most from living near greenspace if not managed carefully.

Case studies

2.13 The Land Trust [See reference 20] is a non-profit entity that manages residential service charges at several sites across England. This management is driven by five key charitable objectives – which focus on long term benefits to the community and the environment, as well as providing great spaces to visit and enjoy. In 2019-20 the Trust estimated the social value created at these sites to be nearly £2.5 million, rising to over £16 million when the uplift in property prices is taken into consideration.

2.14 The Greening the BIDs [See reference 21] initiative across London supported 15 GI audits and part-funded demonstration projects with the aim of

catalysing urban greening in central London. Key objectives included reducing the Urban Heat Island effect and tackling flood risk.

Alternative management structures

How does this work?

2.15 This mechanism allows a local authority to transfer control for the management of specific GI features to structures such as charitable trusts. This approach opens access to new sources of funding and can allow for a more strategic approach to finance to achieve stable annual funding. The benefits of this mechanism are that land ownership can remain with the local authority but that wider management boards can bring together skills and expertise. This can help to provide access to new funding sources and provide opportunities for more long term, strategic thinking. However, this may result in limited oversight by local authorities in how the space is managed. It may also make it harder to work in partnership with the delivery of other local authority services.

Case studies

2.16 As a response to budget cuts of 90% over seven years, Newcastle Council worked with the National Trust to research this possibility of transferring the operation, delivery and maintenance of a large proportion of the city's parks and allotments to a new Charitable Trust. In November 2017, the Newcastle Parks Trust [[See reference 22](#)] was created to develop and care for the parks for future generations.

2.17 This model also builds on the earlier example of the Milton Keynes Park Trust [[See reference 23](#)]. This was established by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation as part of the establishment of the post-war New Town – to own and manage the strategic open space in the town in perpetuity.

It took a 999 year lease of 4,500 acres and was given an endowment at the time of £20 million – mainly in the form of commercial property.

Charitable giving and voluntary sector

How does this work?

2.18 This mechanism harnesses the work of local communities and volunteers in greenspace, including seeking out corporate or philanthropic investment. This model can be powerful in supporting regeneration initiatives and creating a sense of community ownership – contributing to the long term sustainability of GI. However, it can be unpredictable, requests for donations can be off-putting if not managed correctly, and it relies on highly motivated individuals or groups.

Case studies

2.19 Heeley People's Park [\[See reference 24\]](#) in Sheffield is the largest community run park in the country. Instead of being paid for or managed by Sheffield City Council, it has been maintained by local people and businesses since 1996. The 3.5 hectares of land the park occupies lay derelict until the mid-1990s, when a local group came together to protect the interests of the community. The park is run by the Heeley Development Trust on a 125-year lease from Sheffield City Council. It is run by the Trust's staff and a community of volunteers.

Payment for ecosystem services

How does this work?

2.20 Under this mechanism, the environmental services and benefits provided by GI can be utilised to generate income. It is a relatively new area of financing and is one way of helping to boost investment by a range of public and private actors in the natural environment. This might include the production of renewable energy or offsetting through carbon credits or tools to offset impacts on biodiversity. It can also include funding for water management to reduce flood risk through SuDS. This model can be a useful way of reducing costs and funding ongoing maintenance for certain types of intervention. However, it requires upfront investment and work to make a viable case for investment.

Case studies

2.21 The River Lyd Nature Bid project [See reference 25] in Devon saw farmers and landowners in the Lyd catchment submit bids to an online auction to obtain grant funding for projects aimed at improving water quality. Examples of projects included woodland planting, aeration or sub-soiling of grassland, cover crops for arable areas, watercourse fencing, field buffer strips, installing ponds or wetland features. Demand for the scheme outstripped supply, thanks to a clear and simple application process.

2.22 A somewhat different demonstration of this model is the Powering Parks [See reference 26] initiative in Hackney (east London) which uses heat pumps to collect ambient heat stored in the ground, water or air and then concentrate it so that it can be pumped into nearby buildings – either run by the local authority or nearby buildings. The initiative began at Abney Park cemetery but created a replication package for use by other park managers – including an online early-stage feasibility model.

2.23 The Forest Carbon [\[See reference 27\]](#) initiative is one of many ways to use carbon credits for organisations to offset their environmental impact.

2.24 Finally, Triodos Bank is working with a number of partners [\[See reference 28\]](#) to link investment in nature-based solutions to economic and social outcomes – to make this kind of investment a recognised commercial proposition. The bank selected four projects to receive funding as part of a pilot scheme to become ‘investment ready.’ They include the restoration of wetlands in Devon and natural flood management in the Wyre catchment.

Multi-agency opportunities

How does this work?

2.25 This mechanism involves working in partnership or collaboration among multiple organisations. It pieces together different funding sources, including grants. This model creates opportunities for large-scale change through new infrastructure. Special designations (e.g. for landscape in particular) can allow access to alternative funding sources. However the funding available is often for specific short-term uses and rarely funds core capacity. The time commitment for putting together detailed applications and identifying co-funding can also be onerous.

Case studies

2.26 The planned Clyst Valley Regional Park [\[See reference 29\]](#) in Devon is an area almost the same size as Exeter. It is protected through Strategy 10 of East Devon District Council’s Local Plan and will be high quality greenspaces linked by trails and public transport. The project was in large part driven to provide access to nature while protecting local sensitive habitats. The capital for projects will often arrive from a variety of sources: national government, grants from charities, developer contributions and other places.

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Agenda Item 11

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: District Plan Executive Panel (DPEP) Membership

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – To assist with the progression of the new District Plan, the District Plan Executive Panel (DPEP) is proposed to be reconvened. This paper discusses the purpose of the Panel and proposes the format and membership arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE to recommend to Council that:

- a) **The District Plan Executive Panel is reconvened as a sub-group of Executive for the specific purposes of advancing the new District Plan;**
- b) **Three Members are drawn from the Executive to sit on the DPEP, namely Cllrs Vicky Glover-Ward (Chair), Ben Crystall and Joseph Dumont, with Cllr Tim Hoskin nominated as a substitute for Green Party members and Cllr Chris Wilson for Cllr Joseph Dumont, and**
- c) **The Council's website is updated to reflect the formation and purpose of the Panel and forms the primary source of information pertaining to the Panel.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the arrangements and membership for the reconvened DPEP.

2.0 Background

2.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to complete a review of their local plans at least once every 5-years from the adoption date of a plan to ensure that plans remain relevant and take account of changing circumstances. Members resolved to undertake an update of the East Herts District Plan at its Executive meeting on 3 October 2023, with a view to formal work commencing in January 2026 (subject to secondary legislation).

2.2 Since that time, officers have been taking preparatory steps to facilitate progress on the new District Plan, including:

- Agreeing a revised timetable for the preparation of the District Plan in the form of a Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- Undertaking a 'Call for Sites', the initial outcome of which was discussed at the Executive meeting on 11 February 2025.
- Agreeing a 'Strategic Vision' to chart a clear and ambitious course for the district's future, informing policies and decision-making that will shape East Herts in the years to come.

2.3 Planning Policy officers presented an indicative programme of work for the new District Plan to the Council's Leadership Team on April 8, 2025. This was informed by an initial discussion with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth. **Appendix A** sets out the anticipated programme of work expected to be considered by the Executive over the course of the coming 12 months, and also the extent of evidence that is likely to be required to inform the policies of the new District Plan, much of which will need to be considered by Members.

2.4 The current adopted District Plan was enabled by a District Plan Executive Panel (DPEP) consisting of a sub-group of Executive Members whose remit was to make recommendations to Council, via the Executive, on matters associated with the District Plan. For details on how DPEP will operate, see paragraph 3.4 below. For the reasons set out below, the intention is to reconvene the DPEP in advance of formal work on the new District Plan starting in early 2026.

2.5 The Constitution (paragraph 8.5.2) sets out that the DPEP will be appointed annually by the Executive and formal membership will be drawn from the Executive only, but that all members will be invited to the meetings and may speak at the DPEP.

3.0 Reasons

3.1 The process of preparing a statutory District-wide plan is a lengthy and complex exercise for a Council, but essential in planning for the future needs of a place. The process, which can take several years from start to finish, requires a wide range of evidence to support it and is subject to public engagement and independent examination through various stages and procedures that are set out in law. Some of these stages are yet to be fully established because they are to be rolled out later this year through new procedures introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA), which proposed a new approach to plan-making.

3.2 These factors mean that it is highly likely there will be an ongoing, continuous need to inform members of progress, both on the plan's preparation and on feedback from the community. From previous experience, this would become time consuming for the Executive meeting, which clearly needs to consider other Council business as well.

3.3 As a sub-group of the Executive, the DPEP provides a means of ensuring there is a forum for considering the District Plan in a comprehensive and consistent way. The current adopted District Plan used DPEP as a means of focusing discussion on progression between 2007 and 2017, with the Panel being employed eleven times in 2015 and 2016 as the Plan approached its critical stages. During this time, DPEP considered reports on many aspects of plan-making, including evidence, duty to co-operate, delivery and compliance with various stages of the process. A similar agenda for DPEP is envisaged this time.

3.4 The Executive has previously nominated three Executive Members to sit on the DPEP, with all other Members able to attend sessions to allow a discussion of the matters on the agenda and questions to be raised with Planning Policy officers who will be present to address these. There is flexibility to convene meetings as and when they are required. Meetings are open to the public, and agendas and minutes will be made available on the Council's website. Items considered by the DPEP are then discussed at Executive and full Council.

3.5 Planning policy officers have discussed potential membership with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, which has resulted in nominations for:

- Cllr Vicky Glover Ward (Chair)
- Cllr Ben Crystall
- Cllr Joseph Dumont

Substitutes

- Cllr Tim Hoskin
- Cllr Chris Wilson

The nominations and substitutes ensure Panel involvement from both parties that form the administration.

3.6 As mentioned in para 2.4, it is anticipated that DPEP would establish itself with the commencement of formal plan-making in early 2026 and be convened on a regular basis through the 30-month period anticipated timeline for producing the District Plan. However, as the programme of work is already gathering momentum and becoming of interest to our communities, there may be scope for DPEP to be used later in 2025, and it is prudent to consider the format of DPEP now to allow for earlier meetings, should they be required.

3.7 As with other formal committees, DPEP would be managed through the Democratic Services team, and meetings and agendas would be available on the Council's website.

4.0 Options

4.1 The Council could choose not to establish a separate committee forum for the District Plan.

5.0 Risks

5.1 If DPEP was not to be reconvened, the progression of the new District Plan would be primarily delivered through the Executive, which may limit the amount of debate and discussion on the issues the Plan raises across the District for all Members.

5.2 DPEP adds a further layer of meetings into the committee hierarchy, but the separate discussion of matters relating to the new District Plan in a dedicated forum is intended to reduce the time that these items would take at Executive, thereby giving more time to other Council matters at the Executive meetings.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 The DPEP page will be updated on the Council's website, and terms of reference established for the meetings. The Planning Policy team will maintain close communication with the Portfolio Holder to establish a programme for DPEP as meetings become required.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be carried out of the updated District Plan in accordance with The Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development and infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Financial

The District Plan is being updated from existing budgets, including reserves that have been safeguarded for this purpose.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices, and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – Anticipated Programme of Future Executive Reports and Evidence Requirements for the new District Plan

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Appendix A: Anticipated Programme of Future Executive Reports and Evidence Requirements for the new District Plan

Executive
June 3

- Statement of Community Involvement
- Endorsement of Green Infrastructure Study (Herts County Council)
- DPEP membership

Council
23 July

Executive
July 8

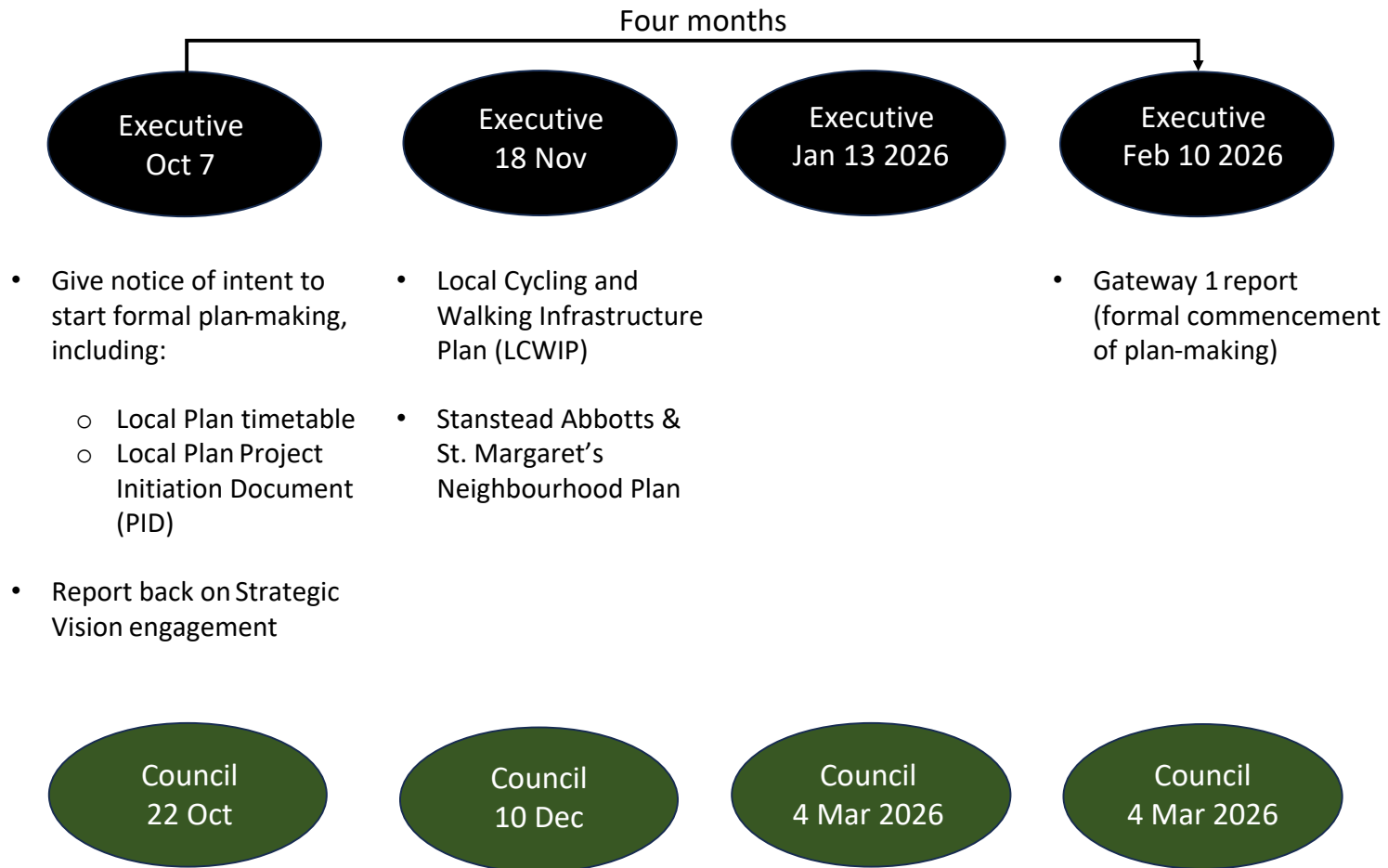
- Bishop's Stortford Employment Study
- Hatfield Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) Governance
- Gilston Monitoring Framework
- Stocking Pelham Neighbourhood Area designation

Council
23 July

Executive
Sept 9

- Sport and Open Space Strategy
- District Design Code
- District-wide Employment Land Review

Council
22 Oct



New District Plan - Evidence Documents

District Plan Documents

Local Development Scheme
Strategic Visioning Document
Statement of Community Involvement
Sustainability Appraisal
Habitat Regulation Assessment
Plan Viability

