

Land Use Framework Plan

The Land Use Framework Plan establishes the spatial structure of the proposed neighbourhood and sets out how different uses combine to create a balanced, sustainable and well-connected community.

The framework ensures that residential areas, community facilities, education provision, green space and recreation are arranged in a coherent pattern that responds to the site's landscape, access points and relationship with the existing village.

1 SEN School Provision

A dedicated area in the northern part of the site is reserved for the new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN) school. The SEN school is intended to be operated by Omnia Foundation following their bespoke DfE approved therapy-first curriculum. Its location provides safe and convenient access from the primary street and is well integrated with adjacent green infrastructure. The school sits alongside outdoor learning spaces and is connected by pedestrian and cycle routes, enabling easy access for pupils, staff and the wider community.

2 Sport & Recreation

Sport and recreation facilities are provided as part of the wider open space network, including a full-size 3G sports pitch located adjacent to the SEN school. This arrangement enables dual use between the school and the community, supporting active lifestyles and strengthening local social infrastructure. Additional play areas, informal recreation spaces and walking/cycling routes are distributed throughout the neighbourhood, ensuring that leisure opportunities are accessible from all homes.

3 Open Space

Green infrastructure forms a continuous framework that shapes the layout of the development. Central greens, green corridors and landscape buffers define neighbourhood character, support biodiversity and create attractive routes for walking and cycling. Existing hedgerows and mature trees are retained wherever possible and integrated into the design to enhance ecological value and provide a strong sense of place. The green spaces also accommodate sustainable drainage features, creating multifunctional landscapes that manage water, support wildlife and offer visual and recreational amenity.

4 Residential

Residential development forms the core land use within the masterplan, arranged in a series of walkable clusters connected by a clear hierarchy of streets and green corridors. Homes are positioned to create active frontages, overlooked streets and a strong sense of neighbourhood identity. A mix of tenures and house types are distributed throughout the site to support social diversity, with higher densities located near key movement routes and focal spaces, and lower-density edges used to provide a softer transition to the surrounding countryside. The proposed housing will include 50% affordable homes.

5 Care Home

A 65-bed care home will be centrally located within the hybrid site to support accessibility and integration with surrounding uses. It will help meet identified local demand for specialist older persons' accommodation, contributing to housing diversification and reducing pressure on conventional housing stock. The development will support inclusive community growth while providing accessible care-led accommodation within a sustainable, well connected location.



Land Use Framework Plan (not to scale)

Green Infrastructure Framework Plan

A connected hierarchy of key green spaces forms the backbone of the neighbourhood.

Largely devoid of landscape features, the site presents an opportunity for ecological repair through the creation of a diverse network of green infrastructure and habitats. Meadows along key routes, a hedgerow lattice connecting adjacent GI corridors, wetland areas at low points and tree belts at boundaries will provide significant biodiversity enhancement.

Open Space & Play Provision

The proposal delivers a connected network of public open spaces including Wetland Park, Green Link, Meadow Edge and Bedford Road Park, providing accessible recreation and ecological value. Based on a projected population of 552, 10.47ha of open space is provided, exceeding the Fields in Trust requirement of 2.95ha, with provision for parks and gardens, amenity green space, natural and semi-natural areas, sports pitches and play spaces. A sequence of playable spaces and nature-based play features are distributed across the site to create diverse experiences for children and families.

Green Link

The Green Link follows the Icknield Way and forms a central park-like corridor through the site, featuring open meadows, swales, hedgerows and a primary play space. A new public right of way spur removes the existing dog-leg at Bedford Road, improving direct countryside connections. The route includes a 3m wide surfaced path with widened footways to encourage walking and cycling and enhance access to surrounding rural areas.

Sports Provision

Sports provision includes a synthetic turf pitch associated with the new SEN school, available for community use outside school hours. In addition, open meadow areas are designed with capacity to accommodate future sports pitches and recreational uses. Landscape buffers around pitches reinforce the green belt edge and reduce light spill, using meadow, ground cover and native tree planting.

Strategic SuDS

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems are integrated across the site within streets and open spaces, particularly in the Wetland Park and Green Link. Features include swales, ponds and above-ground conveyance routes that attenuate surface water while providing biodiversity and amenity benefits. SuDS elements are designed as multi-functional landscape features forming part of the wider green infrastructure network.

Allotments

A new potential connection is provided to the existing Ryder Way allotments, improving pedestrian access and strengthening links between the development and established community growing spaces. This connection supports opportunities for future expansion and integration with the wider green network.

On- and Off-Site Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

The development enhances existing public rights of way and introduces new footpaths through open spaces, improving access to the countryside and local amenities. New and improved crossing points on Bedford Road and upgraded bus stops support safer pedestrian movement and sustainable travel. Key routes provide connections to Pirton, Ickleford village centre and Hitchin by foot and cycle.

Habitat to Be Retained / Enhanced

Existing boundary hedgerows and tree belts are retained where possible and reinforced with native scrub, shrub and tree planting. New habitats include wet woodland, meadow corridors, hedgerow networks and wetland planting around ponds and swales. These interventions strengthen ecological connectivity and reinforce the green belt edge.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The landscape strategy is led by green infrastructure and habitat creation, delivering ecological repair across a largely featureless site. Measures include species-rich meadows, native hedgerows, wetland planting and reinforced boundary habitats, all designed to enhance biodiversity value. Integrated SuDS and connected green corridors further contribute to biodiversity enhancement across the development.



Green Infrastructure Framework Plan (not to scale)

- Wet-woodland at low edge
- Meadow edges
- Bedford Road Buffer
- Green link through site
- Scattered trees
- Hedgerow lattice connecting to adjacent hedgerows

Landscape & Biodiversity Framework Plan

The Landscape & Biodiversity Framework Plan establishes how the site's existing landscape character, ecological assets and habitats will be protected, enhanced and integrated into the masterplan.

Based on the emerging site layout, the framework ensures delivery of measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), a coherent green structure, and a resilient long-term ecological network.

Character and Baseline Conditions

The site comprises gently undulating agricultural land contained by mature hedgerows and tree belts. Baseline habitats primarily include improved grassland, hedgerows, scattered trees and boundary vegetation supporting farmland birds, bats and invertebrates. Visual character is rural and open, with strong landscape edges forming a transition to countryside.

BNG Baseline Calculation (Defra Metric 3.1)

Baseline habitat areas are assessed using Defra Metric 3.1 to calculate pre-development habitat units for hedgerows, grassland and trees. This baseline forms the basis for evaluating habitat losses and designing compensatory enhancements within and beyond the site.

BNG Feasibility Report & Net Gain Plan

Feasibility assessment identifies opportunities within the masterplan to deliver ≥10% BNG through habitat creation, strategic planting, SuDS wetlands, species-rich grassland and strengthened hedgerow networks. The Net Gain Plan outlines where new habitats are located, how they will be phased, and how long-term stewardship will be secured.

Existing Landscape, Trees & Ecological Features

Mature hedgerows along the northern, eastern and western boundaries. Established tree groups forming natural screening and ecological corridors. Public Rights of Way and informal desire lines providing landscape connectivity.

Landscape & Habitat to be Removed

Limited sections of hedgerow removed to create access points and internal street connections. Small areas of agricultural grassland replaced with development parcels and community facilities.

Landscape & Habitat to be Retained

Boundary hedgerows and mature trees retained as the primary structural landscape framework. Green corridors on the layout align with existing vegetation to maintain habitat continuity.

Ecological Network Plan

A connected network linking retained hedgerows, new green corridors, SuDS features and central open spaces.

Corridors provide continuous north–south and east–west ecological movement through the site, aligned with the draft layout.

Biodiversity Net Gain

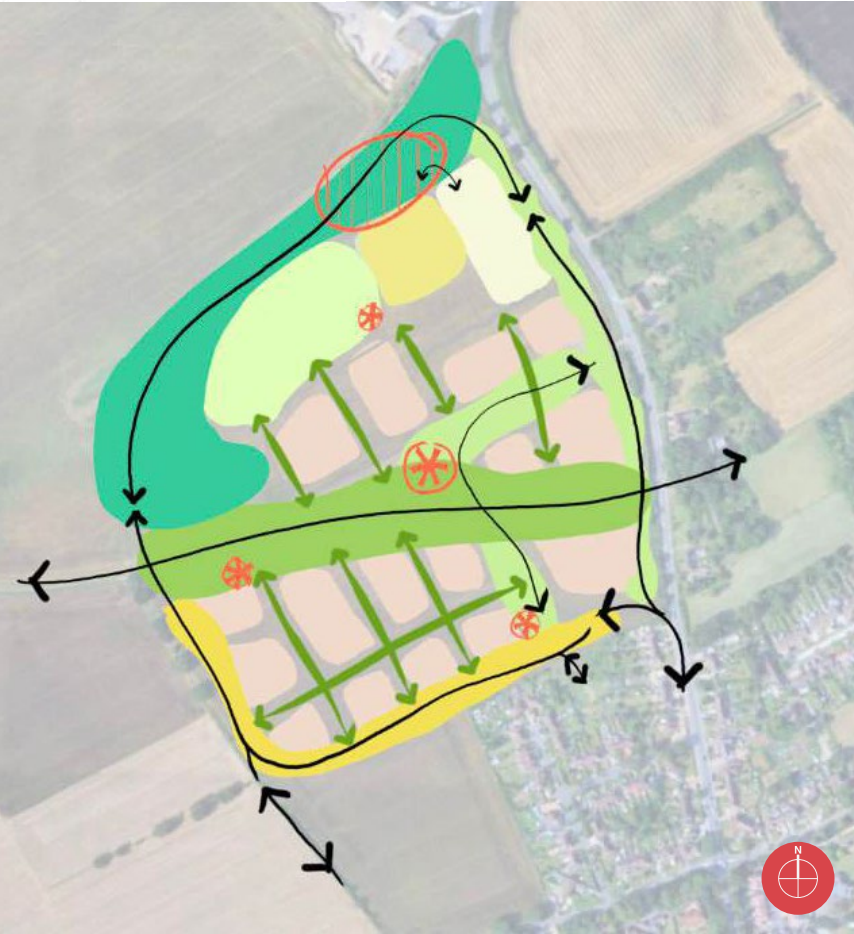
Delivery of species-rich grassland, native woodland blocks, hedgerow enhancements and wet habitat within SuDS. Installation of bird, bat and insect boxes across the scheme. Long-term ecological management secured through a management company.

Structural Landscaping

Reinforced landscape edges to the countryside, creating a softened village transition. A central green anchoring the neighbourhood's landscape identity. Northern open space integrating school grounds, playing fields and habitat edges.

No Build Areas

Ecological buffers along retained hedgerows. Landscape corridors safeguarded from built form to preserve habitat connectivity. SuDS wetlands protected as multifunctional ecological zones.



Landscape & Biodiversity Framework Plan (not to scale)

Movement Framework Plan

The Movement Framework Plan establishes a clear, legible and sustainable movement network.

Off-site Highway and Rights-of-Way Improvements

Targeted off-site works will improve junction capacity and safety on the adjoining main road, including visibility upgrades at the site access point. Existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) linking the settlement edge to open countryside will be enhanced through surfacing improvements, signage, and safe crossing points at highway interfaces.

Improved Bus Stops are proposed to be located along Bedford Road, close to the existing active travel link, which runs through the site. A new Pegasus crossing is proposed further south along Bedford Road.

Key Access Junctions

Vehicular access is proposed to be located at the south-eastern corner of the site off Bedford Road. A new Pegasus crossing is proposed from Bedford Road, this provides access to a new active travel link running from east to west along the southern portion of the site and connecting to the surrounding public footpath network.

An additional new pedestrian access point is also located centrally along Bedford Road, this runs south-westerly and meets with the aforementioned active travel link, connecting to the wider network of footpaths.

Primary Route

The primary access road runs from the southern access point off Bedford Road, where it forks into two, providing access to proposed housing in the south-western corner, and to the north where it serves further housing parcels, the proposed Care Home, the proposed SEN school and the proposed sports pitches. The primary access road serves secondary roads and lanes.

Secondary Routes

Secondary streets form a network of quieter residential streets feeding off the primary route. These are designed as low-speed environments with shared-surface principles, strong landscaping, and filtered permeability for walking and cycling. The secondary routes facilitate access to properties, parking courts and driveways.

Pedestrian & Cycle Gateways / Routes

The development is structured around a clear, safe and inclusive pedestrian network that prioritises walkability and permeability throughout the site. Pedestrian routes connect all homes to key destinations, including areas of open space, play provision, bus stops and existing active travel routes beyond the site.

A combination of footpaths, shared footway/cycleways and shared surface streets ensures safe and direct movement while reducing vehicle dominance. Well-located crossing points and gentle gradients support accessibility for all users, including those with mobility impairments, and integrate the site effectively with the surrounding settlement.

Street Design Principles & High-Level Specification

Streets follow a landscape-led design, with tree-lined avenues proposed and an organic road structure off a central spine. The layout is carefully designed to encourage low speeds and shared-surfaces to ensure the development is not vehicle dominated. Quality materials for the hardscaping are proposed, with clear hierarchy and way-finding.

Transport Infrastructure Phasing

Phase 1 will deliver the southern access junction, primary streets and initial pedestrian/cycle connections along with the upgraded PRoW. Phase 2 completes the southern access junction, secondary streets, and internal public transport loop. Later phases deliver remaining greenways and pedestrian route enhancements.



Early Stage Movement Framework Plan (not to scale)

Pedestrian Connectivity Digram

The proposed masterplan has been designed to make moving around Ickleford safe, convenient and green.

New footpaths, cycle routes, bridleways and public transport improvements support sustainable travel for everyday journeys, including school, work and leisure trips. The proposals respond directly to community priorities by addressing road safety and traffic management along Bedford Road, encouraging walking and cycling as safe and attractive alternatives for local travel.

Icknield Way

Running through the centre of the site, the historic Icknield Way Path will be enhanced as a wide, landscaped pedestrian and cycle corridor with a park-like character. New planting, informal play opportunities and seating will transform the route into a high-quality linear open space as well as a key movement corridor. The path will be directly connected to the wider Public Rights of Way network, providing strong links between Ickleford, Pirton and Hitchin.

New and Safer Crossings

Road safety is a key consideration of the proposals, responding to local concerns in Ickleford. In collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council, the masterplan introduces a range of measures to create a safer and greener movement environment for both new and existing residents. These include new pedestrian and cycle crossing points on Bedford Road, a Pegasus crossing to connect equestrians to the existing bridleway network, and carefully designed junctions to ensure safe access for all road users. Enhanced footpath connections, improved street lighting and clear signage will provide continuous, safe routes to the village, schools and bus stops.

Encouraging Walking, Cycling and Public Transport

A connected network of green routes will link all parts of Icknield Fields, connecting homes, the SEN school, sports pitches and open spaces. New and upgraded bus stops on Bedford Road will improve access to public transport, while secure cycle parking and storage will be provided throughout the site to support sustainable travel choices.

Landscape-Led Movement Network

The movement framework is fully integrated with the wider landscape-led masterplan. Tree-lined streets, green corridors and meadows will make every journey pleasant and safe, while supporting biodiversity and wellbeing.



Pedestrian Connectivity Diagram (not to scale)

Urban Design Framework

This Urban Design Framework establishes the guiding principles that shape the structure, character, and placemaking qualities of the proposed development.

Development Block Structure

The layout is organised into a series of walkable perimeter blocks arranged around a legible primary street network. Blocks vary in size to accommodate a mix of housing typologies, green corridors, and sustainable drainage features. The structure ensures strong connectivity between neighbourhood clusters, the central open space, and the wider landscape.

Density & Building Heights

The development is proposed to be low density throughout. Building heights are all proposed to be 2 storeys.

Gateways

Primary gateways are located at the main site access on the eastern boundary and at secondary entrances along the internal loop road. These are emphasised through enhanced landscaping, feature buildings, and widened public realm treatments to create a sense of arrival.

Landmarks

Landmark buildings are positioned adjacent to the central green, at the gateway, and at key junctions within the street hierarchy. These buildings use subtle variation or distinctive architectural detailing.

Focal Points

Main focal points include the central recreational green, the sports pitch complex, and the northern and southern pocket parks. These spaces form the social heart of the development and help orient residents through visual and physical connection.

Key Frontages

Active frontages are prioritised along the primary internal street, overlooking the central open space, and framing the sports pitch. Housing facing outward toward the landscaped edges provides passive surveillance while maintaining a clear distinction between public and private realms.

Vistas and Key Views

Street alignments are designed to capture long views towards open countryside, internal greens, and landmark buildings. Curved and deflected street geometries create unfolding vistas, enhancing the spatial experience while preventing monotony.

Edges and Interfaces

The north, south and west form soft landscape interfaces with the agricultural land, incorporating green buffers, drainage ponds, and ecological corridors. The eastern edge addresses the existing village settlement pattern with a transitional built form that respects neighbouring scale and character.

Public Spaces

A hierarchy of public spaces includes the central green, sports pitch area, linear green corridors, pocket parks, and wetland/SuDS features. These are linked through walkable green routes that support recreation, biodiversity, and sustainable urban drainage.



Illustrative Layout Plan (not to scale)

Sustainability & Energy Framework

Sustainability is embedded in every aspect of the design, from site layout to building performance.

The proposals aim to create a low-carbon and resilient community that meets contemporary standards and anticipates future requirements. Refer to the Energy and Sustainability Strategy provided by Watkins Payne for further details.

Layout and Orientation

Homes have been positioned to optimise natural light and solar gain. Streets are aligned to make best use of daylight and to support natural ventilation. Building depths and window placements are designed to balance daylight, privacy and energy efficiency.

Building Fabric and Energy

High levels of insulation, air tightness and efficient heating systems will minimise energy demand. The use of photovoltaic panels, heat pumps and other renewable technologies will be explored at the detailed design stage.

The Energy Statement accompanying this application will set out in detail how the proposed homes will meet or exceed the relevant building regulation standards.

Water and Materials

All water fixture and fittings will be specified to minimise water consumption. This will include the specification of low flow taps and dual flush toilets. The development will target a water consumption rate of 105l per person per day. Construction materials will be selected for durability, low embodied carbon and potential for recycling. Preference will be given to suppliers with strong environmental credentials.

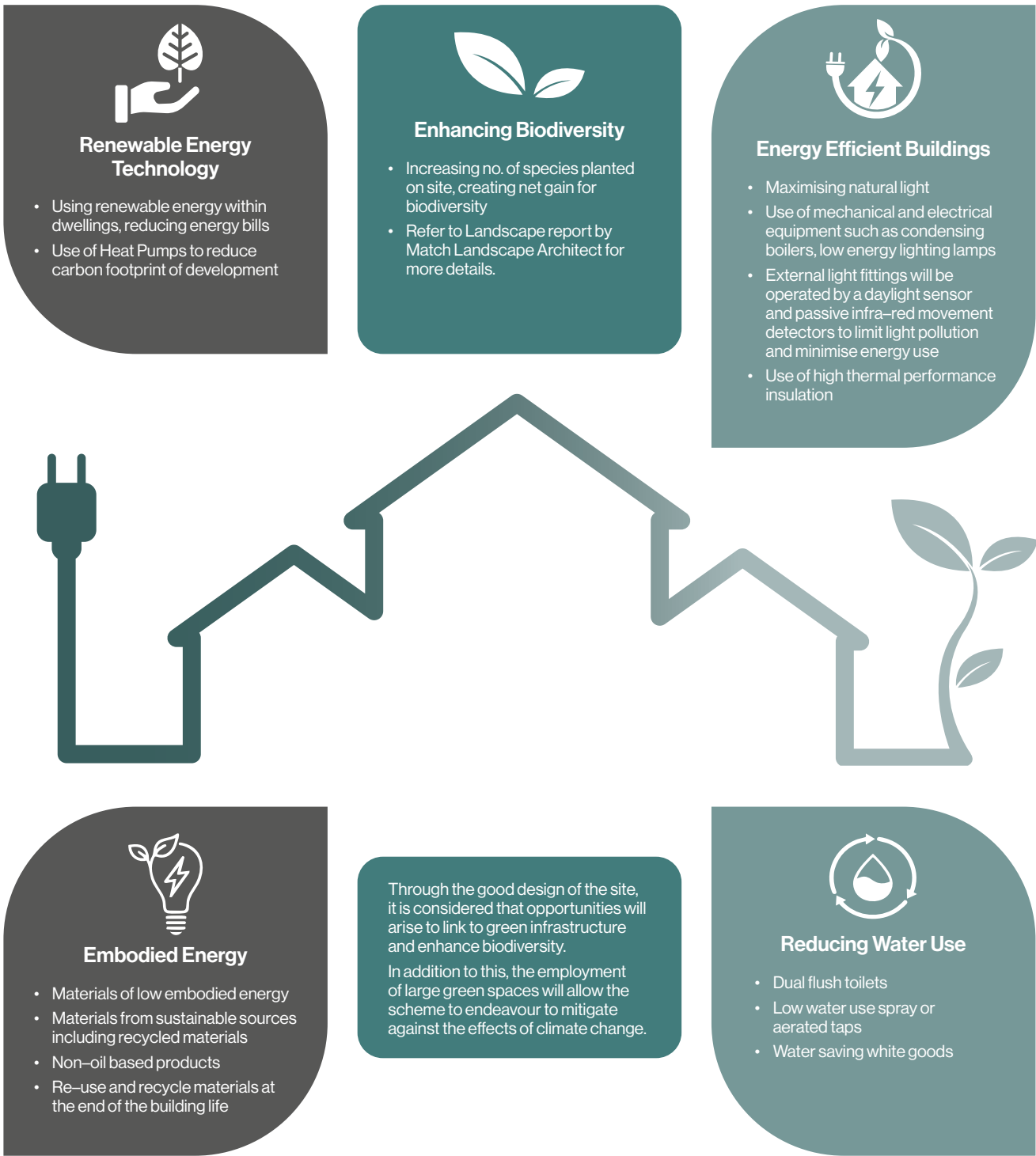
The environmental impact of materials used on site will be minimised where possible by specifying locally supplied, low-impact and recycled materials. It is proposed that 100% of the timber used in the development will be from FSC or PEFC sources.

Waste and Recycling

Dedicated waste and recycling storage will be provided for all homes in accordance with local policy.

Future Adaptability

The masterplan allows for future adaptation as technology, lifestyle and climate evolve. Homes will be designed to accommodate home working, electric vehicle charging and digital connectivity. The flexible layout ensures that future changes in transport or energy systems can be accommodated without major disruption.



Housing Need & Diversification

The masterplan delivers a balanced and inclusive housing offer designed to meet identified local needs and support community diversity.

The layout accommodates a broad mix of home types, tenures and sizes distributed across the neighbourhood to ensure a socially integrated development.

Diverse Housing Mix

A range of one to five bedroom, including maisonettes, terraces, semi-detached and detached dwellings, is incorporated across the block structure to provide choice for households at different life stages.

Affordable housing provided within the scheme with a tenure-blind design and alignment with local authority requirements. Provision includes a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership units.

Selected plots accommodate adaptable, accessible, or age-friendly homes, supporting residents with mobility needs and promoting independent living.

Providing Older People's Housing

The proposed 65-bed care home will be centrally located within the hybrid site to support accessibility and integration with surrounding uses. It will help meet identified local demand for specialist older persons' accommodation, contributing to housing diversification and reducing pressure on conventional housing stock. The development will support inclusive community growth while providing accessible care-led accommodation within a sustainable, well connected location.

Responding to Local Need

The range of typologies, tenure mix, and accessible homes directly aligns with local housing strategy evidence, supporting balanced population growth, affordability and long-term community sustainability. Overall, the masterplan ensures that the neighbourhood provides an inclusive and varied housing offer, meeting current and future needs while creating a resilient and mixed community.

The total requirement for housing delivery from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2030 in North Herts is 6,976 dwellings. This incorporates the objectively assessed housing need annual rate of 1,120 dwellings per year, the annual shortfall of 209 dwellings, totalling 1,044 dwellings, and the 5% buffer amounting to 332. Therefore, it is clear that there is a substantial demonstrable unmet need for housing in North Herts.



Illustrative Layout (not to scale)

Land at Pound Farm

Hybrid Application



Hybrid Masterplan

