

Growing Baldock

Green Infrastructure Strategy
(revised February 2026)



February 2026

Urban&Civic

Hertfordshire





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THIS REPORT IS TO BE VIEWED AS COVER PAGE IN SINGLE PAGE VIEW AND THE FOLLOWING PAGES IN TWO PAGE VIEW

Revision A - February 2026

- Greenway amended to reflect latest Parameter Plan
- Scaled indicative sports pitch layouts added to Appendix A for Eastern Park & Urban Open Land
- Note added to section 8.5 Productive Strategy regarding Baldock Allotment and Leisure Gardeners' Association Ltd. (BALGA)



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Aerial photograph of Baldock and Clothall Common

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2025) defines Green Infrastructure as:

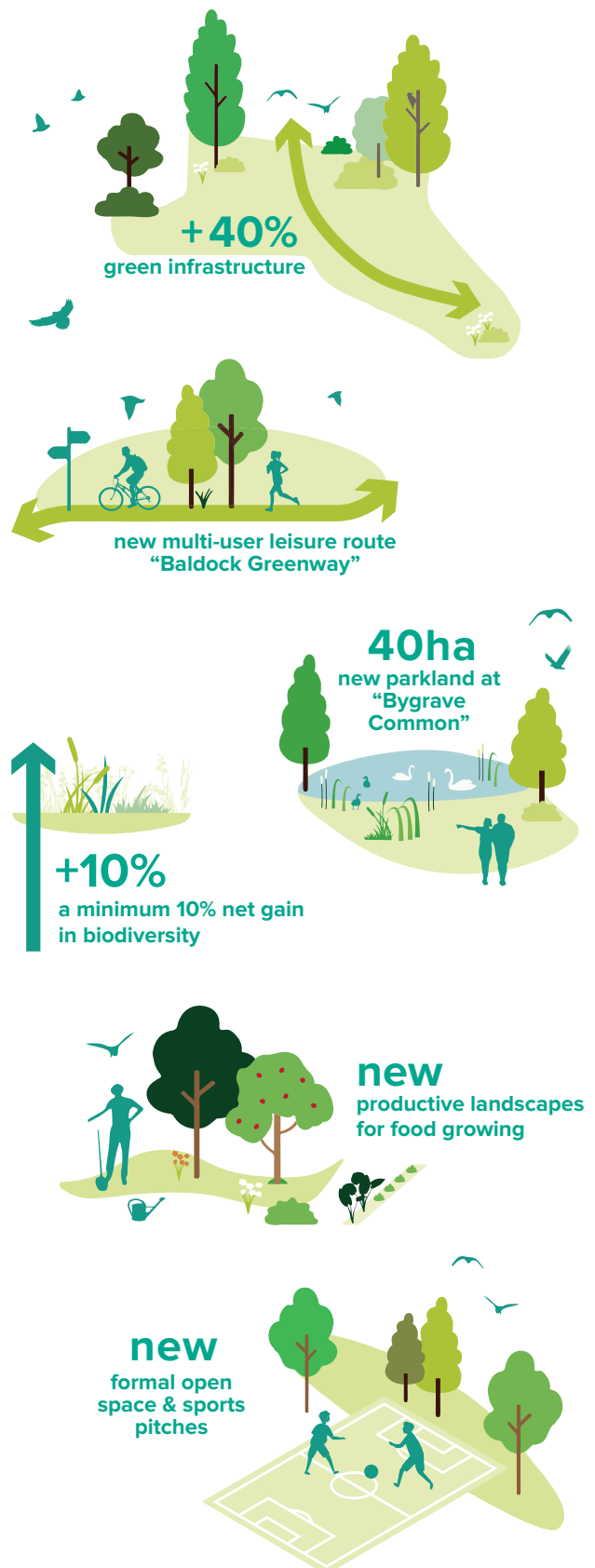
“A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity”

This Site-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out the Green Infrastructure Framework as part of the development proposal for Baldock, Hertfordshire. It has been produced to support the Outline Planning Application (OPA).

The Green Infrastructure Strategy provides an integrated approach towards the development of all Green Infrastructure elements within the Application Site and the surrounding area. It provides environmental context, rationale and guidance for further design codes at later detailed design stages and for future developers as to how Green Infrastructure should be taken forward within the Baldock development.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy forms part of a series of site-wide strategies submitted in support of the Outline Planning Application. It demonstrates how the various planning policy requirements, regional aspirations and local standards relating to biodiversity, open space, sports and playspace provision, food production, water, climate change adaption and connectivity will be met through the Baldock development through the promotion of multi-functional Green Infrastructure.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy demonstrates how the Baldock development will commit to delivering:





1 Introduction & Context

Formal Play Area in parkland - Houlton, Rugby

“ Green Infrastructure - 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. ”

National Planning Policy Framework, February 2025





1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy has been prepared by Bradley Murphy Design Ltd (BMD) on behalf of Urban&Civic Plc (U&C) to support the Outline Planning Application (OPA) for land to the north and east of Baldock, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' as illustrated on **Figure 1**.

This document sets out the Green Infrastructure framework, strategies and components of the Proposed Development at Baldock and should be read in conjunction with the Parameter Plan (UAC092-002 Rev Q) . Together, the Development Specification and Parameter Plan define the development for which outline planning permission is sought and which have been assessed through the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Increasing awareness of the need for new development to be sustainable, sensitive to local context and appropriate to local character is leading to a rise in the importance of a landscape-led approach in the planning and design process. Given the scale of the Site, it is important a '**landscape & nature led**' approach is taken and that an integrated, comprehensive and evidence-led analysis is undertaken to inform a robust GI Strategy.

This GI Strategy presents a holistic approach to natural environment, climate change adaption and resilience, biodiversity, open space, sports, play provision, productive landscapes and health and well-being by reflecting the existing interconnected nature of these elements. It is intended to present clear and concise guidance to ensure that a wide range of multifunctional Green Infrastructure elements are provided to maximise recreational, ecological and environmental amenity.

1.2 CONTEXT

The Site is approximately 220 hectares in size and located to the north and east of the historic market town of Baldock (population c.10,000), within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire. It benefits from a well-connected strategic location on the A1(M) and lies to the north of Stevenage and immediately to the east of Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin. The land to be developed comprises a series of parcels of predominantly agricultural land immediately adjoining the urban area.

The adopted North Herts Local Plan allocates land to the north and east of Baldock as a sustainable extension to accommodate up to 3,300 homes, employment, local centres, schools and community facilities, sustainable transport connections and green infrastructure. The Local Plan identifies the Site as a sustainable extension made up of a series of allocations: BA1 (North of Baldock) for 2,800 homes; BA2 (Land southwest of Clothall Road) for 200 homes; and BA3 (Land south of Clothall Common) for 245 homes.

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Figure 1. Aerial Site location

— Site boundary



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1.3 THE SITE

The Growing Baldock Site falls within the jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) and is allocated for development in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031). It comprises of four of the Local Plan site allocations namely, separated by rail and road infrastructure, with the following land uses:

BA1 - land bound to the west by the A507 North Road, to the north by the Millers Way Public Right of Way and to the south by the railway line; The land use in this part of the Site is predominantly arable farmland. The northern fields are open and large scale, principally as a result of a lack of enclosure, undulating chalk topography, few dwellings and a uniformity of land cover. The scale of the landscape south of Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road is smaller scale featuring grazing paddocks.

BA2 - land to south west of Clothall Road and north east of the Baldock Park Homes (Hillside Park) site and Weston Hills Local Nature Reserve; This area is a combination of grazing paddocks associated with Cambrai Farm and arable farmland, bound to the north west by the settlement edge of Baldock, Hillside Park mobile home site to the south west and by the A505 Baldock bypass to the south.

BA3 - land to the south of Royston Road and north west of the A505, wrapping around the eastern edges of existing housing at Clothall Common; This area features arable farmland bound by Wallington Road and the settlement edge of Clothall Common to the north and west and the A505 Baldock bypass to the east. The northern area, to the south of Royston Road and east of Clothall Common, is currently raised overgrown, unmanaged land created after the

construction of the bypass and is currently used by locals as informal open space, albeit it is not designated.

BA10 - land between the Hitchin-Cambridge railway line to the north and the B656 Royston Road to the south; The land use is predominantly arable farmland with a few grazing pastures to the west and interspersed with small farmsteads and industrial uses along Royston Road.

Three further areas of land are incorporated into the OPA boundary:

Urban Open Land

To the north of Clothall Road and east of Walls Field - designated under Policy G2 Strategic Green Space in the Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - this land is currently used as arable farmland.

Walls Field (Scheduled Monument)

Baldock has an important history, as a Roman settlement, which was centred on Walls Field to the east of the town centre. The scheduled monument forms part of the Site and is currently under intensive agricultural use.

Land to the west of North Road

A small parcel of land within HCC ownership west of North Road, adjacent to BA1 and south of the Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve (LNR).



Walls Field (scheduled monument) - arable farmland, crossed by public footpath Baldock 037



Urban Open Land - used as arable farmland, crossed by public footpath Clothall 001

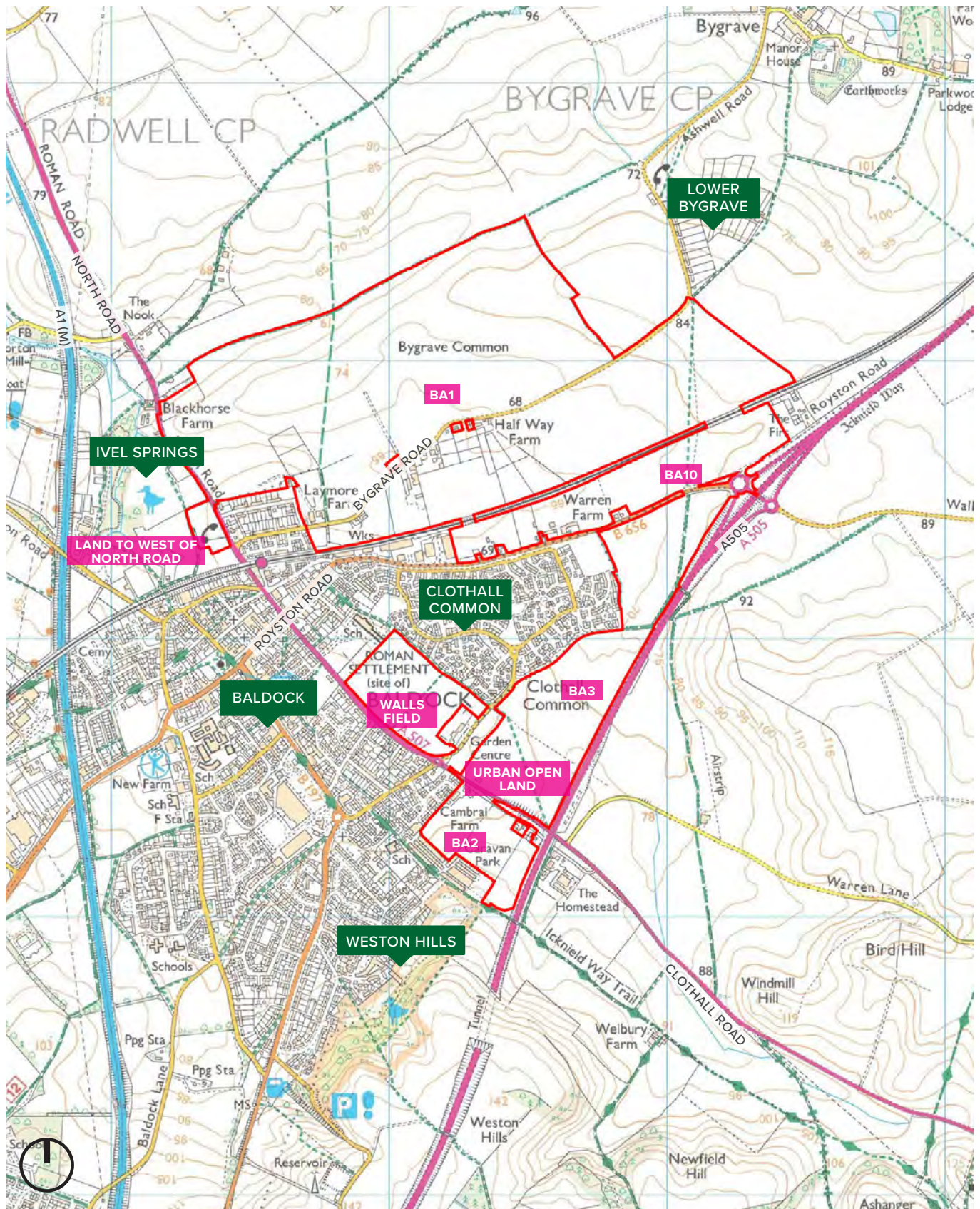


Figure 2. Site location

— OPA Site boundary



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1.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

Baldock Strategic Masterplan

The Growing Baldock Strategic Masterplan (SMP) was submitted to North Herts Council in March 2025 and approved in July 2025. The Strategic Masterplan establishes the masterplan principles and vision to guide the future development.

The Strategic Masterplan (SMP) is a requirement of the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022) under policy SP9, which required the preparation of a SMP for the Baldock Site allocations which will be a material consideration in the determination of the Outline Planning Application (OPA) for the Site.

The 'Composite Framework Plan' (refer to **Figure 4** opposite) brings together all the elements of the Baldock development and is the culmination of the Strategic Masterplan document. It sets the overall framework for development, fixing the broad locations for green spaces, built areas, connections across the railway and the centre of the new community, and help guide future planning applications.

This Green Infrastructure Strategy aligns with the Strategic Masterplan document and supports the Outline Planning Application (OPA), which is informed by the framework plans and principles.

Guiding Principles

The Baldock Strategic Masterplan sets out 'Ten 'Big Moves' that form the basis of the Strategic Masterplan - around which the development, and the principles that underpin it, are based - those of relevance to Green Infrastructure include:

- **Recharging the River Ivel** - The development can help address some of the problems facing the River Ivel, by draining surface water from the development into the aquifer, which will help to restore the Ivel.
- **A Healthy and Connected Town** – 'Baldock Greenway' to provide a continuous green loop around the development, connecting to wider walking routes including the Letchworth Greenway and the Etonbury Wheel.
- **Re-interpreting Baldock's History** - the creation of a 'Heritage Trail', a footpath around the development that connects and shares information about the features of archaeological interest, so that people can learn more about the history of human settlement at Baldock.
- **A New Life for Bygrave Common** - A new Bygrave Common is proposed for Baldock, reinterpreting the historic common land in this area, and creating a brand-new park for the community. Bygrave Common will incorporate some areas that are more informal and accessible to people and some that are dedicated to wildlife and biodiversity.



Figure 3. Baldock SMP Green Infrastructure - Key Framework Principles

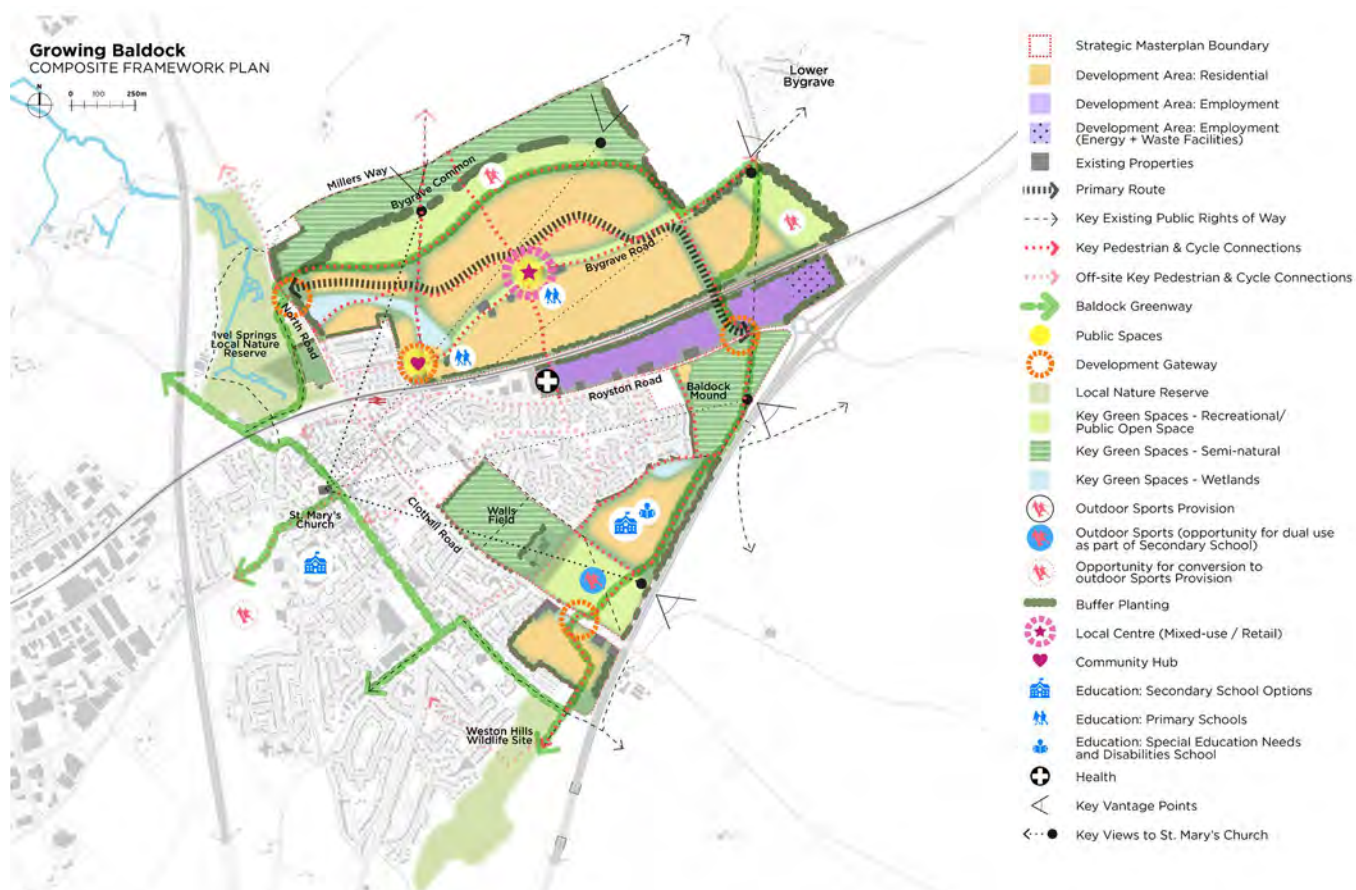


Figure 4. SMP Composite Framework Plan

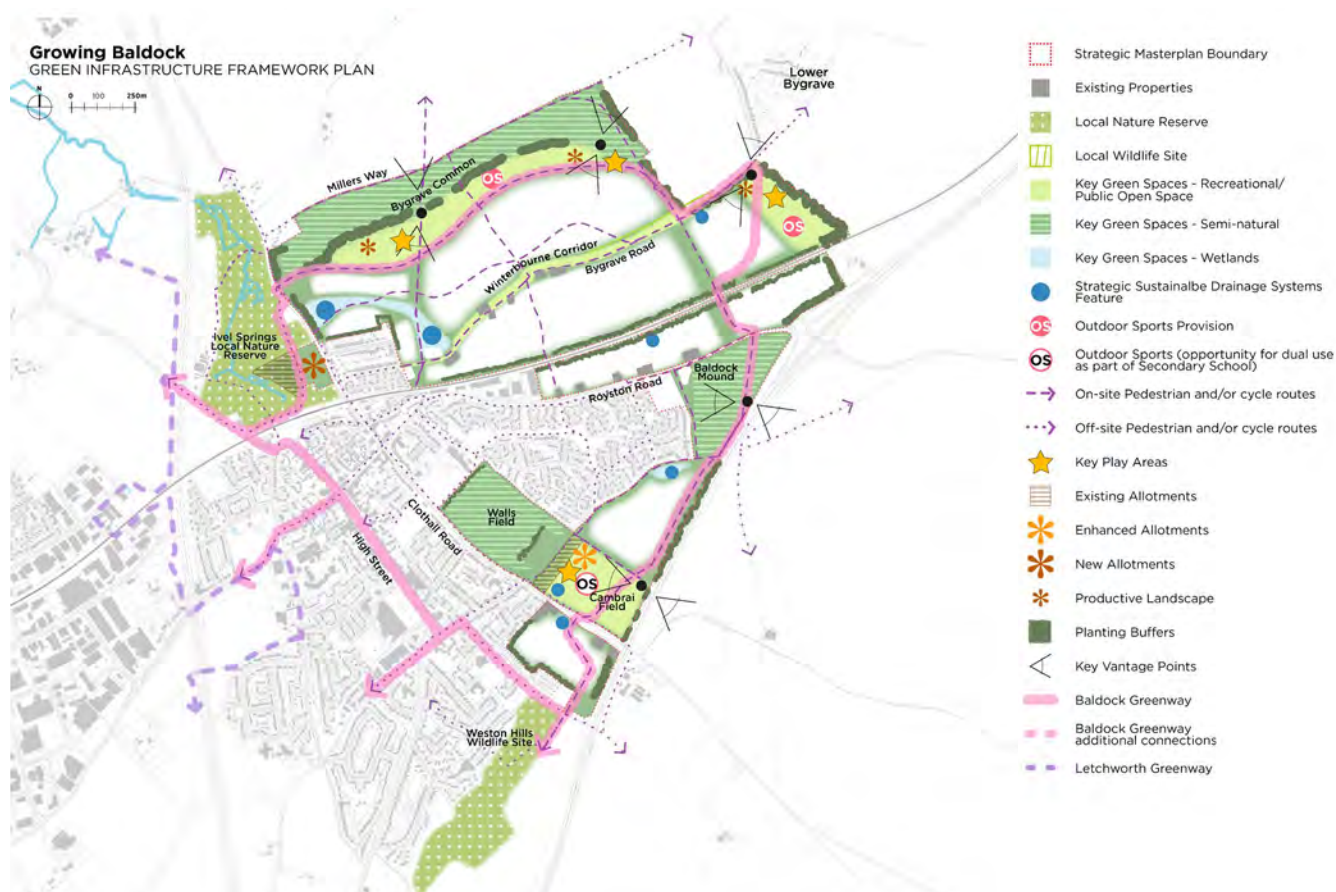


Figure 5. SMP Green Infrastructure Framework Plan



2 Green Infrastructure Policy Drivers

SuDS pond with wetland planting - Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire





2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY DRIVERS

2.1 NATIONAL POLICY DRIVERS

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework, (updated February 2025) defines green infrastructure 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”*.

It recognises the importance for people to be able to access high-quality open spaces and be provided with opportunities for sport and recreation (including playing fields) and for the protection, enhancement of existing and creation of new public rights of way to improve public access to the countryside.

It allows opportunities to be taken to secure biodiversity and environmental net gains, through new habitat creation, protection for ancient woodland and veteran trees and establishing ecological networks. It recognises the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services and that green infrastructure is an important part of the landscape setting of the built environment that can play an important role in achieving sustainable development.

25 Year Environment Plan

The 25 Year Environment Plan, ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ was published by the Government in 2018 (updated in February 2023) and sets out a framework to maintain and improve the environment for the next generation. The following six key areas have been identified around which action will be focused:

- Clean air
- Clean and plentiful water
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as drought and flooding
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

Natural England, the Government’s adviser for the natural environment, released in January 2023 the final version of its Green Infrastructure Framework, which serves to support the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Framework is underpinned by 15 principles, which have been used as a basis for planning and designing green and blue infrastructure at Baldock. The Green Infrastructure Principles (Natural England, 2023) identify five key principles for what good quality GI should be, these are;

- 1. Multifunctional;** GI should deliver a range of benefits for people, nature and places and address specific issues to meet the needs in the local area and sub-region as a whole.
- 2. Varied;** GI should feature a wide range of diverse types of green and blue spaces and environmental features.
- 3. Connected;** GI should operate and link as a living network for people and wildlife and nature as well as strengthening ecological networks and improving ecosystem services.
- 4. Accessible;** GI should allow people to experience and connect with nature. It should provide everyone, with access to high-quality green spaces that are inclusive, safe, well-managed, and accessible.
- 5. Character;** GI should be designed and managed to reflect the area’s character in such a way that it helps landscape conservation, enhancement, and/or restoration.

The Green infrastructure Framework is a voluntary framework that supports the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which stipulates that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising the impact on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.

The Green infrastructure Framework will complement mandatory mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), which form part of the requirements of the Environment Act.

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Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

The Green Infrastructure Framework is structured by five key standards, which set out the national ambition for green infrastructure in terms of quantity, quality, and type to enable everyone to benefit from good green infrastructure.

These standards will be voluntary and are referred to in the National Model Design Guide. National standards can then be applied through local strategies, plans and policies, engaging with communities and stakeholders, so that they respond to local context and needs.

S1 - GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Supports the National Planning Policy Framework's policy that local authorities should develop strategic policies for green infrastructure. At an area wide scale, the Green Infrastructure Strategy standard will see Local Authorities develop Delivery Plans to support the creation and enhancement of new and existing greenspaces.

S2 - ACCESSIBLE GREENSPACE Promotes access to good quality green and blue space within 15 minutes' walk from all homes.

S3 - URBAN NATURE RECOVERY Aims to boost nature recovery, create and restore rich wildlife habitats and build resilience to climate change. Incorporating nature-based solutions, including trees and wildflowers, into the design of towns and cities will increase carbon capture, prevent flooding and reduce temperatures during heat waves.

S4 - URBAN GREENING FACTOR This planning tool improves the provision of green infrastructure and increases the level of greening in urban environments. The standard is set at 0.4 for residential development, which means there is a target in place for approximately 40% of residential developments to have green and blue spaces, green roofs or green walls.

S5 - URBAN TREE CANOPY COVER Promotes an increase in tree canopy cover in urban environments. Trees are vital for capturing carbon and can mitigate flood risk as they absorb excess water during flooding incidents. The standard sets out that major residential and commercial development should be designed to meet locally agreed targets.



Everyone has access to a variety of good quality green & blue spaces within 15 minutes walk from their home



Support an uplift in the greening of residential neighbourhoods to at least 40%



Support an uplift in urban woodland/ tree canopy cover, in the region of 20-30% is recommended



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2.2 REGIONAL & LOCAL POLICY DRIVERS

North Herts Council Local Plan 2011-2031

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on Tuesday 8 November 2022.

The Site is allocated for development within the North Hertfordshire Council Local Plan 2011-2031.

Below is a summary of policies of relevance to Green Infrastructure, the Site and the surrounding context:

Policy SP1:

Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

Protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment including important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure (including the water environment).

Policy SP10:

Healthy communities

Protect, enhance and create new physical and green infrastructure to foster healthy lifestyles.

Policy SP12:

Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity

We will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced. We will a) protect, identify, manage and where possible enhance a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure.

Policy NE1:

Strategic Green Infrastructure

Planning permission will be granted provided that development a) protects, conserves and where possible enhances the strategic green infrastructure network b) avoids the loss, fragmentation, severance or negative impact on the function of the strategic green infrastructure network c) creates new strategic green infrastructure where appropriate and is accompanied by a plan for its long term maintenance and management and d) has suitable mitigation measures or appropriate replacement to satisfactorily address adverse impacts on the strategic green infrastructure network.

Policy NE2:

Landscape

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

- Respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area
- Do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the landscape character area in which the Site is located, taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this;
- Are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features; and
- Have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.

Policy NE4:

Biodiversity and geological sites

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations and features listed in Policy SP12. All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks and the water environment, and/or restore degraded or isolated habitats where possible.

Policy NE6:

New and Improved Open Space

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that make provision for new and/or improved open space which:

- Meets the needs arising from the development having regard to the Council's open space standards and other relevant guidance.

Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum Version: January 2021)

The Development Plan for North Hertfordshire indicates the Neighbourhood Plan (Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall). Below is a summary of policies of relevance to Green Infrastructure, the Site and the surrounding context:

Policy G2:

Strategic Green Space

The policy highlights the importance of the 'Urban Open Land' area of the Site and states:

- *"to conserve an important green lung at the heart of Baldock, applications for development should maintain the predominantly open character of the land lying between Hartfields School and the A505 Baldock bypass"; and*
- *"proposals that would improve the visual or recreational value of this land will be supported, particularly if they form part of a comprehensive strategy for improved public access and the conservation and interpretation of the scheduled area".*

Policy E2:

Green Infrastructure and Outdoor Recreation

The policy highlights applications to develop BA1, BA2, BA3 and BA10 should provide an appropriate amount and range of publicly accessible open space and Green Infrastructure which complies with the needs of, or exceeds, North Hertfordshire Council's standards

Policy E5:

Development north of the railway

The policy outlines a series of recommendations in relation to Site BA1:

- maintain a clear visual and physical gap between the expanded edge of Baldock and Lower Bygrave, of sufficient size to integrate development into the surrounding landscape and ensure a sympathetic transition towards Lower Bygrave;
- incorporate appropriate planting at the periphery of the new development;
- minimise adverse visual impacts on longer-distance views towards Baldock from public footpath Bygrave31, by giving careful consideration to the positioning and height of development, as well as to appropriate screening;

- relate sensitively to the edges of existing residential areas where the Site abuts them;
- retain and incorporate existing landscape and built features that contribute to the Site's history and character; and
- make provision for improved pedestrian and cycle access between Bygrave and Baldock, through a new footpath and cycleway using the route of Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road, designed in a way that maintains as much as possible of its rural character.

Policy E6:

Royston Road

The policy outlines a series of recommendations in relation to Sites BA3, and BA10:

- create a high quality and distinctive entrance to the town along Royston Road, using well-designed buildings and a consistent approach to landscaping and lighting;
- relate sensitively to the existing houses fronting onto Royston Road through the scale, massing and landscaping of the new development;
- incorporate a landscape buffer between development on Site BA10 and the railway line, and use building materials and colours that will help to soften the visual impact of the development in both near and long-distance views; and
- make the corridor a focus for sustainable travel and provide for an improved footpath and cycleway along Royston Road.

Policy E7:

Cambrai Farm and south of Clothall Common

The policy outlines a series of recommendations in relation to Sites BA2 and BA3:

- incorporate a landscape buffer between the edge of the developments and the Baldock bypass, using an appropriate mix of native species, to provide visual screening, an enhanced green corridor and noise attenuation;
- avoid new buildings on the part of BA3 that comprises raised land to the east of the existing properties on Aleyn Way and Merchants Walk, and to the south of Royston Road, which should be retained and enhanced as space for informal outdoor recreation; and
- reinforce the planting between Hillside Park mobile home site and new residential development on site BA2.



3 Strategic Green Infrastructure Context

Play area - Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire





3 STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

3.1 EXISTING GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

An analysis and understanding of the broad principles and aspirations set out in the Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategies will be used to lay the foundations for a strong green and blue infrastructure framework for Baldock.

A review of the following documents has been undertaken to understand, define and record the Green Infrastructure context of the Site and Baldock's surrounding landscape in order to guide future development and design principles:

- Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2022 (Part 1 & 2)
- Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2011
- North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2009

Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy

While the 2011 Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan is a starting point, it has been superseded by more recent strategies by LUC in 2022. The current Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022) provides a more up-to-date framework, recognizing the evolving policy landscape and incorporating a wider range of considerations.

The Hertfordshire GI Strategies (2011 & 2022) identify a number Green Infrastructure initiatives, priorities and projects. Those of relevance to the Site and Baldock are summarised below and illustrated on **Figure 6**:

- **Chalk Arc:** Restore, enhance and conserve distinctive chalk scarp and grassland landscape character
- **Green Links/Connections:** Reconnect PRoW network that has been severed by major barriers to aid the movement of people & wildlife
- **River Valley/Corridor:** Enhance & contribute to ecological quality, respond to water management flood risk & abstraction pressures and enhance habitat connectivity



The Wallington scarp slopes is an elevated, undulating, chalk scarp landscape to the south east of the Site, featuring areas of semi-improved species rich calcareous grassland.



The connection between public footpath (Bygrave 015) from Lower Bygrave to public bridleway (Clothall 003) has been severed and restricted by railway and Royston Road.



REVIVEL is a volunteer-based community organisation established to instigate action which will restore the flow to the upper River Ivel to sustain brown trout.

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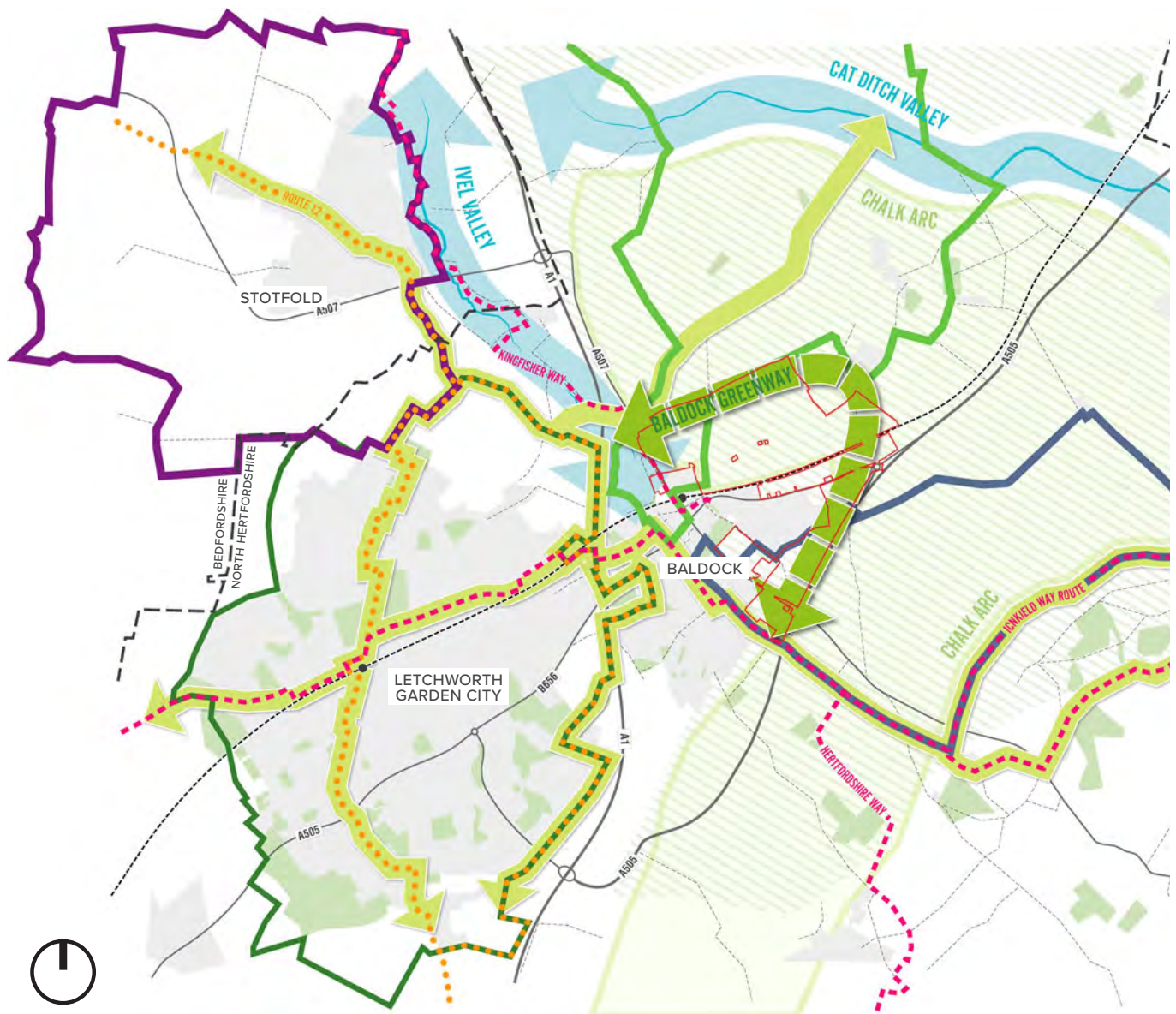


Figure 6. Strategic Green Infrastructure Context

Context:

- Site boundary
- - - County boundary
- Existing settlement
- Existing green space
- ● ● ● ● National Cycle Network Route 12
- - - Long Distance Footpath

Circular walks:

- Baldock > Ashwell (North)
- Baldock > Wallington (South)

North Hertfordshire GI Plan & Strategic Network:

- Etonbury green wheel
- Letchworth greenway
- Strategic GI links
- Baldock greenway

High biodiversity area for birds

Hertfordshire Strategic GI Initiatives/Projects:

- Chalk Arc
 - Restore, enhance & conserve chalk grasslands
- River Valley/Corridor
 - Enhance & contribute to ecological quality, respond to water management flood risk & abstraction pressures
 - Enhancing landscape habitat connectivity
- GI Connections
 - Reconnect PRoW network that has been severed by major barriers to aid the movement of people & wildlife



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3.1 EXISTING GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy 2009

The Green Infrastructure strategy provides recommendations and design principles for the proposed North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure network.

The majority of the Site is within an area identified as 'High Biodiversity Area for Birds' and running along the north, east and southern boundaries of the Site, an opportunity is identified for a new 'Baldock Greenway'. The Site is also the location of project ST8.2 – Peri urban greenway for Baldock, where there is an aspiration to link existing green transport connections.

Part 2 of the report includes a detailed extract of the proposed GI strategies and recommendations, specifically in relation to the Site and Baldock. The GI priorities identified within the strategy, of relevance to the Site and Baldock, are summarised below and illustrated on **Figure 7**:

- ensure the boundaries of the Site around Bygrave Road are properly buffered to mitigate the impacts of development on this 'green lane'. Bygrave Road should be retained as a linear habitat corridor;
- conserve the network of narrow sunken lanes and tracks which lead out from northern parts of the town such as Bygrave Road, as green corridors within the green infrastructure network;
- establish a network of wooded greenways in advance of built development, to connect landscape, development and areas of community green space;
- in relation to the A505, plant and reinforce a native (oak-hornbeam) wooded landscape buffer (with field maple, cherry and hawthorn understorey) to fulfil an attenuation function;
- enhance the green wedge at Walls Field to act as a green lung for the town. This scheduled monument site presents a key opportunity for a new community green space and as a 'common ground' for existing and new communities;
- recreational green spaces such as Walls Field should reference Baldock's rich cultural heritage and focus the imagination with reference to its historic importance as a Roman settlement and its connections with the Knights Templar; and
- the Proposed Development Site on the edge of Bygrave Common is a possible location for a new strategic semi-natural green space.

Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

In 2023, Hertfordshire began an ambitious journey: to reverse nature's long-term decline through a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This plan sets clear targets, priorities and actions to support habitats and species. It provides a shared framework so that everyone - across sectors and communities - can help deliver bigger, better, and more connected nature recovery projects.

The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire is currently out for public consultation (until September 2025). From a review of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) mapping, the following strategic priorities in relation to the Site and immediate context are summarised and illustrated opposite on **Figure 8**:

- A large proportion of the Site is located within the 'Herts Chalk Focus Area' where the priority is to support the delivery of new chalk grassland habitats, with calcareous habitats prioritised above all other habitat types
- The Green Space east of Clothall Common and Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site (LWS) are highlighted as 'Grass and Heath Focus Areas', where the priority is to manage existing grassland and heathland to maintain the biodiversity of existing good quality habitats and enhance poor quality sites.
- Both the Green Space east of Clothall Common and Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site (LWS) within the Site, are identified as 'Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity'

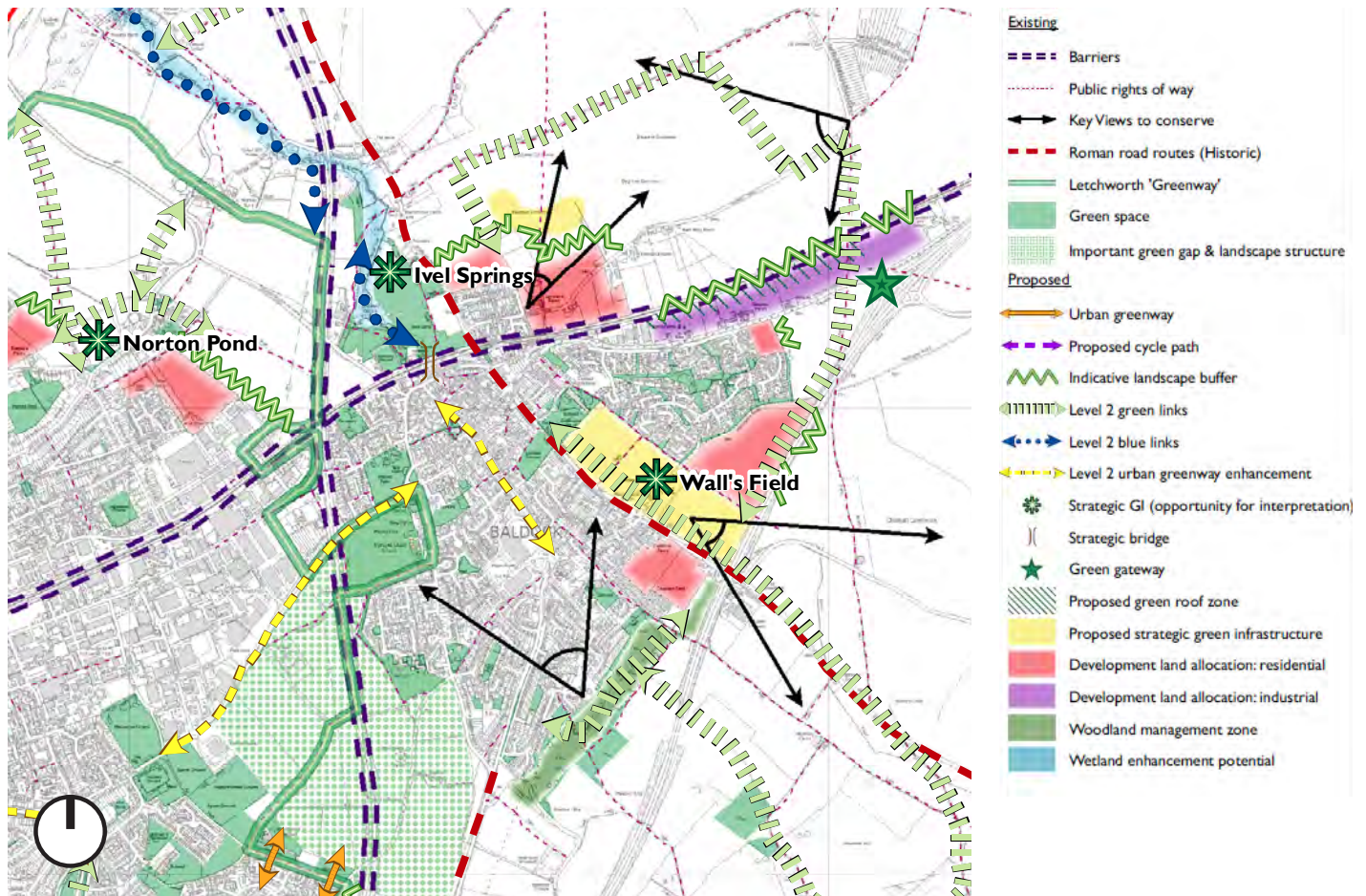


Figure 7. North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure - Extract of Baldock



Figure 8. Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Mapping - Extract



3.2 STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ACCESS & RECREATIONAL ROUTES

Access, recreational routes, and connections are critical to a successful Green Infrastructure network. This section identifies the existing strategic provision in terms of long distance waymarked routes and trails that are in close proximity to the Site and Baldock. This is explored further in **Section 5.8** for GI connectivity and the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network.

Strategic Greenways

Baldock is strategically located to the east of two existing strategic recreational routes, as illustrated in **Figure 9** opposite:

- Etonbury Green Wheel – 10.6 miles
- Letchworth Greenway – 13.6 miles

The **Etonbury Green Wheel** is being developed as a walking and cycling route around the settlements of Arlesey, Fairfield and Stotfold, passing through and beside areas of open space, landscape, heritage and wildlife interest. The entire Green Wheel is now in place and able to be used as a walking route. Further works are planned for the coming years to enable paths to be upgraded and promoted for cycling.

The **Letchworth Greenway** is a 13.6 mile (21.8km) route around the Garden City suitable for the enjoyment of walkers, runners and cyclists. The route also covers a number of local wildlife and nature spots for people to enjoy along the route.

As the North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy highlights, there is a strategic GI aspiration to create the '**Baldock Greenway**' that provides a multi-user route around and through the Site and the settlement of Baldock, which would connect to and support the Etonbury Green Wheel and Letchworth Greenway.

Circular, Long Distance Walks

Baldock features a number of circular walks and long distance trails that pass through the town and provide direct access to the wider countryside and surrounding villages.

Baldock North Circular: Baldock to Ashwell

19.6km (12.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Ashwell that starts at Baldock Railway Station and heads out of the town along North Road and Bygrave Road. It enters BA1 part of the Site at Laymore Farm and runs north along bridleway 002 which connects to Millers Way (bridleway 001) where it heads east towards Ashwell Road in Lower Bygrave.

Baldock South Circular: Baldock to Wallington

13.1km (8.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Wallington across the elevated Wallington scarp slopes. The route starts at Walls Field and heads north east along the northern edge of BA3 before crossing Baldock Bypass A505 and connecting to Clothall bridleway 028 heading north east towards Wallington. From Wallington the route follows the Icknield Way Trail towards Clothall in the south, before heading north west back to Baldock where it runs along the southern edge of BA2.

3 **Icknield Way National Trail:** Crossing six counties, the Icknield Way Trail is a 170 mile (274 km) route linking the Peddars Way National Trail in Suffolk with the Ridgeway National Trail in Buckinghamshire, which in turn links with the Wessex Ridgeway. The Icknield Way Trail, long distance footpath, borders the Site's southern-most boundary (BA2), running in an east to west direction, passing through Baldock and providing onward connection to Letchworth Garden City in the west - and joining with the Hertfordshire Way in the east.

4 **The Kingfisher Way:** 32km (20 miles) walk following the course of the River Ivel. From the source at Ivel Springs off North Road in Baldock through the towns and villages of the Ivel Valley to Roxton Lock where it joins the River Great Ouse. The route links the Icknield Way at Baldock with the Ouse Valley Way National Trails.

National Cycle Route NCR

- **National Cycle Route 12 (NCR 12):** runs through the western part of Baldock, passing between Letchworth Garden City and Baldock, along the A1(M) road corridor. Within the District, the route partially follows the alignment of the Letchworth Greenway, a radial route established for the town's centenary.

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Figure 9. Strategic Greenways and Recreational Routes

Estimated distances:

ETONBURY GREEN WHEEL - 10 MILES

LETCHWORTH GREENWAY - 13 MILES

BALDOCK GREENWAY - 6 MILES

Circular & long distance walks:

- 1 Baldock North Circular:**
19.6km (12.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Ashwell across vast Hertfordshire farmland fields in an area filled with clues to Britain's Iron Age and Roman past.
- 2 Baldock South Circular:**
13.1km (8.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Wallington across the elevated Wallington scarp slopes. Follows part of the Icknield Way.
- 3 Icknield Way:**
Crossing six counties, the Icknield Way Trail is a 170 mile (274 km) route linking the Peddars Way National Trail in Suffolk with the Ridgeway National Trail in Buckinghamshire, which in turn links with the Wessex Ridgeway.
- 4 The Kingfisher Way:**
32km (20 miles) walk following the course of the River Ivel. From Ivel Springs in Baldock through the towns and villages of the Ivel Valley to Roxton Lock where it joins the River Great Ouse.



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3.3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INFLUENCES

The Green infrastructure influences of the surrounding context can provide a strong basis for the future Green infrastructure framework of the Proposed Development as illustrated on **Figure 10**.

IVEL VALLEY

- Buffer and protect Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve (LNR) features and provide suitable alternative greenspace to reduce recreational pressures
- Recharging the chalk aquifer through infiltration on Site and controlled water management and distribution



NORTH BALDOCK CHALKLANDS

- Embrace, respect and celebrate the open, rolling chalk landform, carefully managing the coverage of new planting and transition to the surrounding rural landscape
- Restore open chalk grasslands, enhance buffer zones to existing hedgerow network and create new wooded areas, by delivering an interconnected nature recovery network
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network



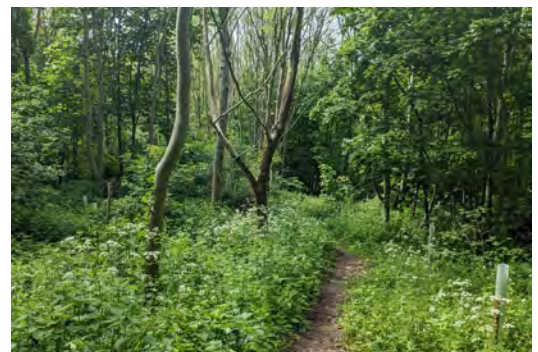
WALLINGTON SCARP SLOPES

- Expand the species-rich calcareous grassland habitats, introduce shelter belts and beech woodland, as part of the chalk arc Green infrastructure strategic initiatives
- Conserve and respect the openness, views and transition from the urban open land to the Wallington Scarp Slopes rural landscape



WESTON HILLS

- Buffer and protect existing LNR features and expand chalk grassland, beech woodland and scrub habitat mosaic within the wider Green infrastructure network



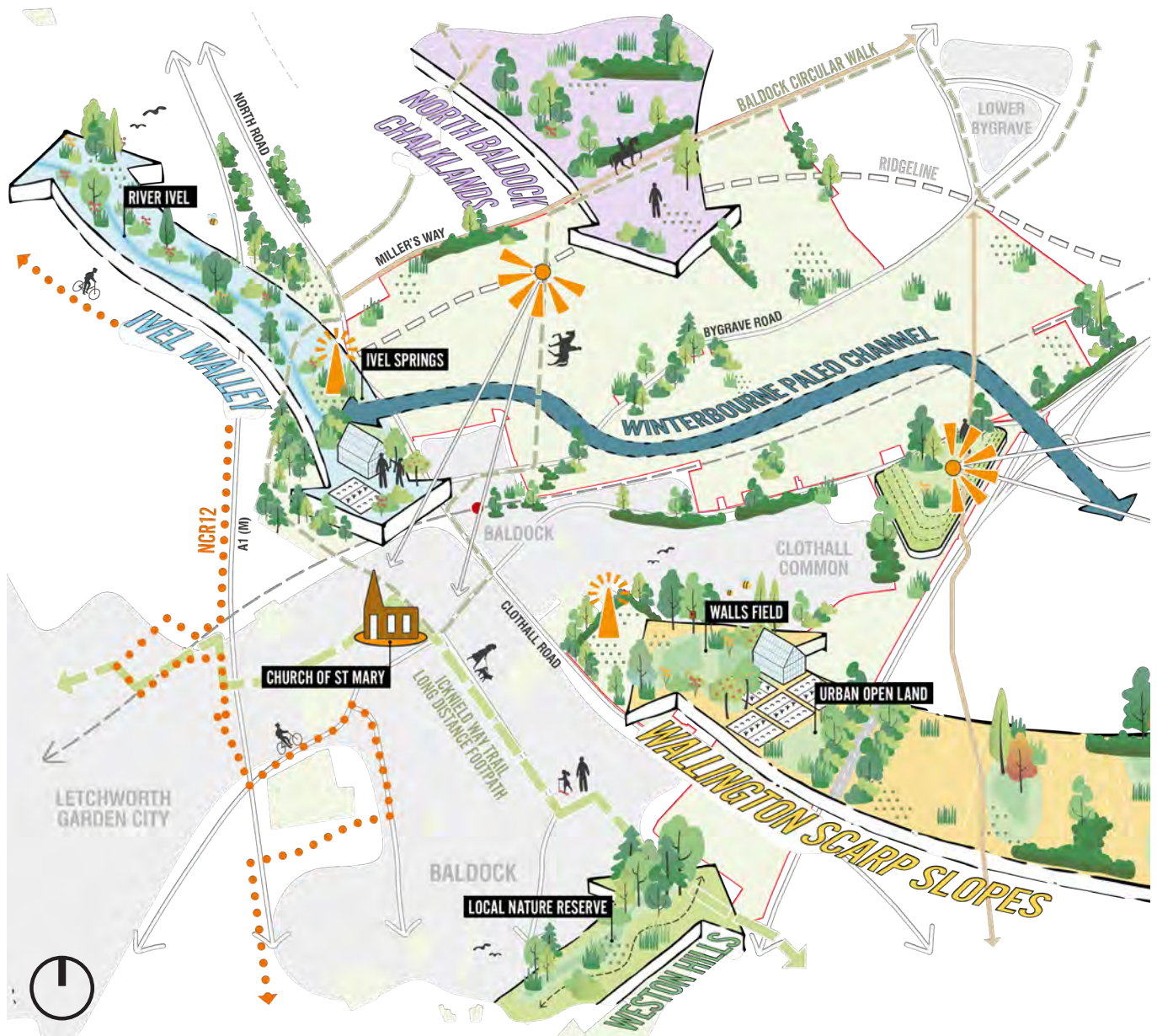


Figure 10. Green Infrastructure Influences



4 Green Infrastructure Standards



Wildlife friendly planting around Cricket Pitch - Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire





4 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STANDARDS

4.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards (AGS)

Detailed standards for accessible green space have recently been revised by Natural England as part of the Green infrastructure Framework. These Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt), now known as Accessible Green Space Standards (AGS) form one of the Green Infrastructure Framework Standards.

Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standards (AGS) – size and proximity criteria - is that everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature, to meet the Accessible Greenspace Standard size and proximity criteria as illustrated below in **Figure 11**, with an initial focus on access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home.

Following an analysis based on the latest AGS, and from reviewing the Natural England Green Infrastructure mapping, there is currently a good concentration and coverage of Accessible Greenspace typologies within and around the western and southern parts of Baldock.

The Growing Baldock Site presents an opportunity to bridge the gap of walkable AGS and address the Site and Baldock deficient greenspace criterion, including:

- **Doorstep Standard** – of at least 0.5ha greenspace within 200m
- **Local Standard** – of at least 2ha natural greenspace within 300m
- **Neighbourhood Standard** – of at least 10ha natural greenspace within 1km
- **Wider Neighbourhood Greenspace** - of at least 20ha natural greenspace within 2km



Figure 11. Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards

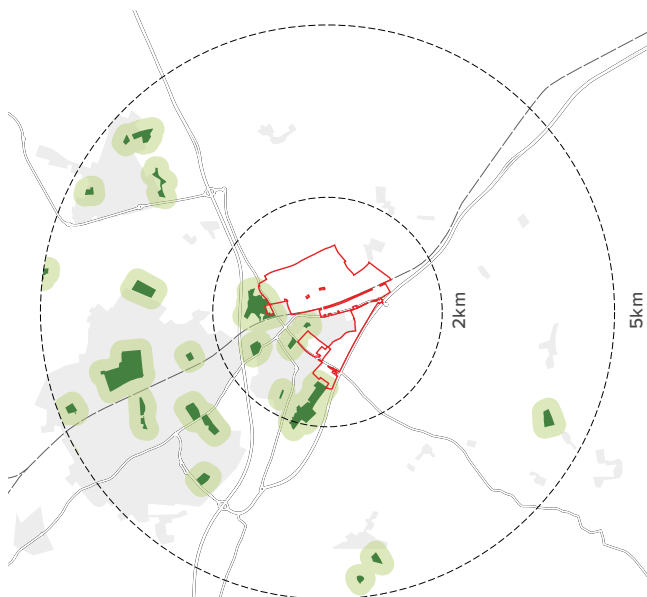


Figure 12. Doorstep Greenspace - 0.5ha within 200m

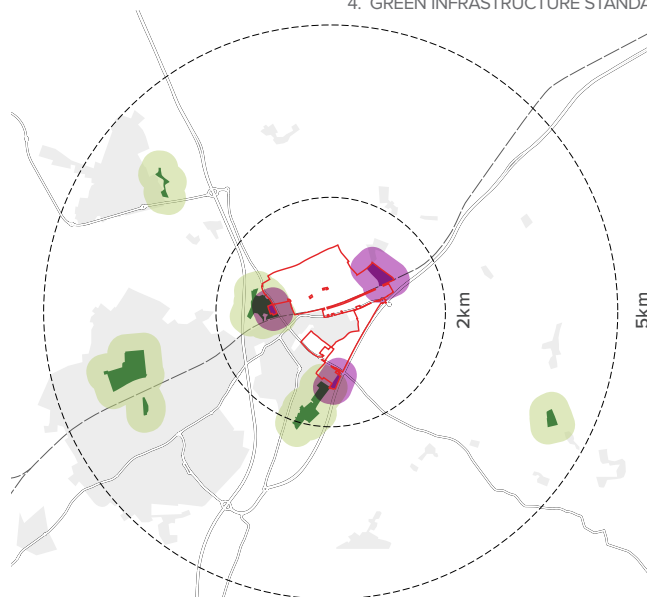


Figure 13. Local Greenspace - 2ha within 300m

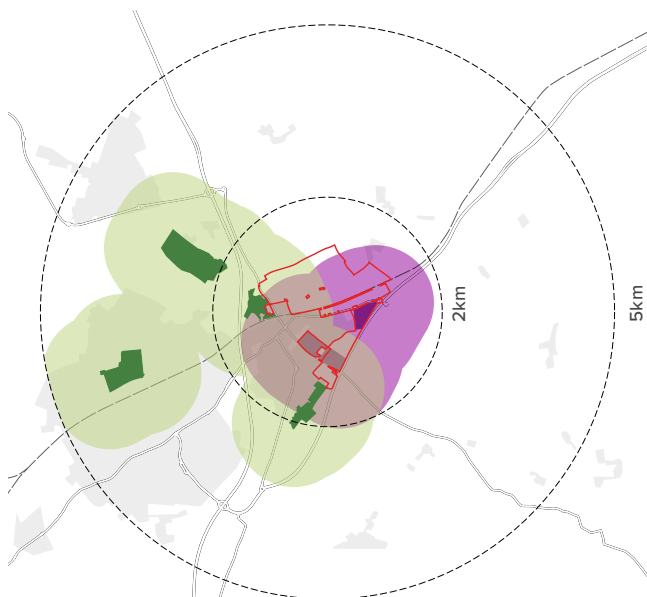


Figure 14. Neighbourhood Greenspace - 10ha within 1km

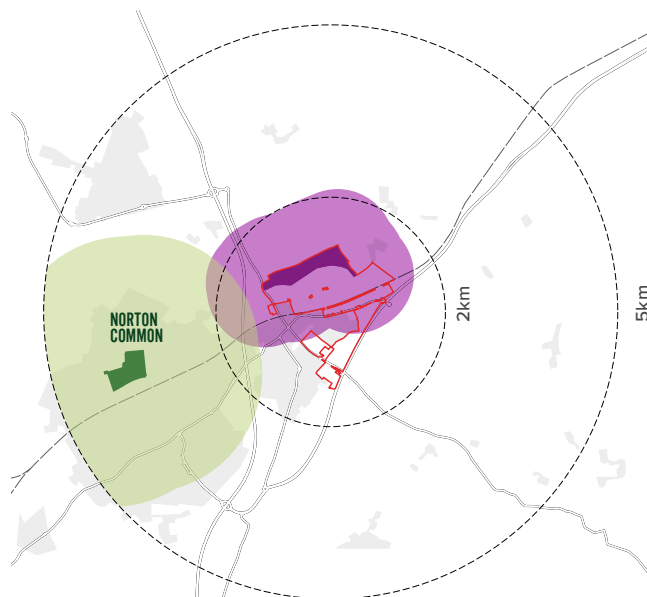


Figure 15. Wider Neighbourhood Greenspace - 20ha within 2km

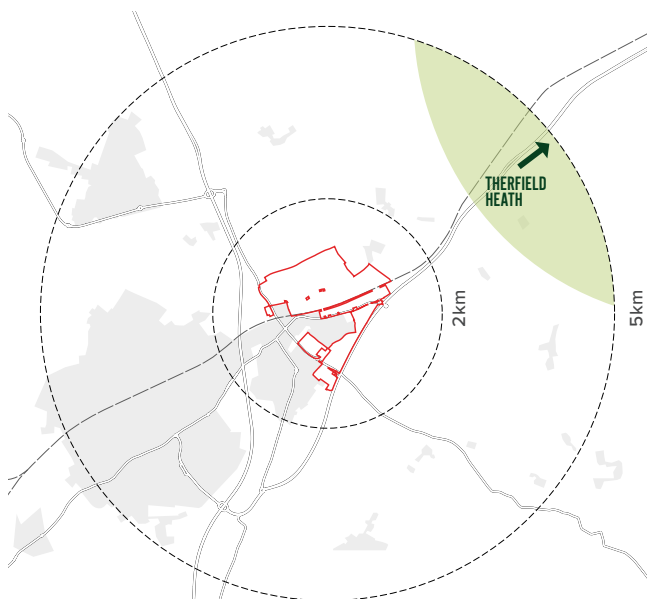


Figure 16. District Greenspace - 100ha within 5km

- Site boundary
- Existing accessible greenspace
- Existing catchment area
- Potential new accessible greenspace
- Potential greenspace catchment area

New Greenspace destinations within the Site as part of the Proposed Development provide the opportunity to address current Accessible Greenspace Standards (AGS) deficits including doorstep, local, neighbourhood and wider neighbourhood greenspaces within Baldock.



4.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

North Herts Council (NHC) Developer Contributions SPD

The North Herts Council (NHC) Developer Contributions (SPD) January 2023, sets out detailed guidance on the type and scale of developer contributions that will be sought to support new development, including the type and quantum of open space. Section 8.4 Open Space of the SPD highlights:

- North Herts Council Local Plan 2011-2031 Policy NE6: New and Improved Open Space states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that make provision for new and/or improved open space
- Policy SP9 Design & Sustainability of the Local Plan requires Strategic Masterplans to create an accessible multi-functional green infrastructure network that provides:
 - A key structuring and functional place-making feature supporting healthy lifestyles, sport, play and recreation linking into the wider green infrastructure network
 - A high-quality integrated network to support ecological connectivity, biodiversity net gain, climate adaptation and mitigation linking into the wider Ecological Network.

To guide and set baseline requirements for open space in new development North Herts Council currently use a combination of standards set within the **Developer Contributions (SPD) January 2023** based on **Fields in Trust Standards (2024)**. The Council currently recommends an occupancy figure of 2.4 persons per household for determining the future population yield, which in turn informs the level of open space provision for new development. Based on 3,200 homes and an average occupancy of 2.4 persons per dwelling suggests an indicative development population of 7,680 people. This approach to setting out the requirements for the levels of open space provision for Growing Baldock was agreed during the pre-application process with North Herts Council (NHC) in June 2025 and is summarised in **Table 01** below.

Refer to **Section 7.3** for the **Open Space, Play and Recreation Proposals**. As a reference and starting point for Growing Baldock, the open space standards generates requirements for the following levels of provision as part of the OPA:

Table 01

OPEN SPACE STANDARDS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT		
FIELDS IN TRUST (FiT) STANDARDS (2024)		
NHC DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SPD (JANUARY 2023)		
OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY	QUANTITY STANDARD (hectares per 1,000 population)	QUANTITY STANDARD (hectares per 7,680 population)
Outdoor Sports Facilities (NHC SPD) <i>Sports pitches (1.2ha) & other outdoor sports (0.4ha)</i>	1.6	12.29
Allotments (NHC SPD) <i>Allotments, Orchards and Community Gardens</i>	0.3	2.30
Provision for Children & Young People (FiT) <i>Equipped Play (0.25) & Informal Play (0.3)</i>	0.55	4.22
Parks & Gardens (FiT)	0.8	6.14
Amenity Green Space (FiT)	0.6	4.61
Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace (FiT)	1.8	13.82
TOTAL OPEN SPACE	5.65 ha	43.38 ha

Based on standard occupancy ratio of 2.4 persons per dwelling to estimate the population (3200 unit scheme x 2.4 = 7,680 population)

4.2 FORMAL OUTDOOR SPORTS REQUIREMENTS

North Herts Council (NHC) is in the process of updating its **Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan 2018** which sets out playing pitch needs across the district and will be used to inform new playing pitch provision.

The NHC Developer Contributions SPD notes that in the calculation of playing pitch/outdoor sports, Sport England's playing pitch calculator should also be used alongside Fields in Trust benchmark standards (1.2ha of sports pitches and 0.4ha of other outdoor sports are required per 1,000 population) to estimate demands that will be generated from the new development.

Paragraph 8.4.11 of NHC Developer Contributions (SPD) states *"All schemes should have regard to these standards as a guide when proposals are developed. The standards should not be treated as a cap for open space provision" and "any discrepancies between the requirements arising from the Fields in Trust standards vs the Sport England calculator will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to local circumstances, provision and priorities"*.

The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) is a planning tool which can help with estimating the additional demand for playing pitches that may be generated from a new population. It can be used to provide a consistent starting point for estimating this demand which can be refined locally as appropriate. The PPC is hosted on Sport England's Active Places Power website: www.activeplacespower.com.

Pre-application consultations were held with NHC and Sports England in June 2024 to inform the Baldock Strategic Masterplan and in April 2025 regarding the OPA. In April 2025 Sports England provided (by email) a Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) output that used the latest team data from the emerging NHC Playing Pitch Strategy for the playing pitch sports, based on an indicative development population of 7,680 people. **Table 02** below summarises the PPC results in relation to the estimated demand for new pitches (matches and training demand) and ancillary provision, used to inform the Growing Baldock OPA, refer to **Section 8.3 Sports Strategy** for more information on the proposals for outdoor sport as part of the Green Infrastructure Framework. North Herts Council view the Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) output as a starting point to be balanced with other factors.

Table 02

THE SPORTS ENGLAND PLAYING PITCH CALCULATOR (PPC) OUTPUT	
ESTIMATED DEMAND FOR NEW PITCHES (MATCHES AND TRAINING DEMAND) AND ANCILLARY PROVISION	
PITCH TYPOLOGY	NUMBER OF PITCHES
NATURAL GRASS PITCHES	TOTAL - 12.67
Adult Football	1.67
Youth Football	4.96
Mini Soccer	3.49
Rugby Union	1.12
Rugby League	0.17
Cricket	1.27
ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES	TOTAL - 0.75
Sand Based	0.22
3G	0.53

The Sports England estimated demand for new pitches are based on the following:

Natural grass pitches

Adult Football: 106 x 70m pitch
 Junior Football: 97 x 61m under 16/15 pitch
 Mini Football Pitch: 43 x 33m under 8/7 pitch
 Senior Rugby Union: 130 x 80m pitch
 Senior Rugby League: 122 x 74m pitch
 Cricket - Natural turf 8-pitch square and 2 winter sports pitches: 125.6 x 164.4m

Artificial Grass Pitches

Sand-dressed surface - 18mm sand-dressed pitch, fenced with sports lighting: 101.4 x 63m
 3G surface - 60m pile length pitch, fenced with sports lighting: 106 x 70m



5 Site Green Infrastructure Baseline



Aerial photograph of Baldock and Clothall Common





5 SITE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE BASELINE

5.1 BIODIVERSITY & ARBORICULTURE

Chapter 11: Ecology of the Environmental Statement (ES) relates to wildlife and biodiversity for the Site and its surrounding context. The key environmental and Site ecological context is summarised below.

Biodiversity

There are no statutory designated sites of nature conservation importance located within the Site itself. The Site does not lie within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for any statutory designated sites of nature conservation. The Site lies within 2km of two statutory sites of nature conservation importance:

- **Weston Hills** (Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site circa. 17ha) – Borders the Site at the south east boundary of BA2. Weston Hills is designated for its calcareous grassland habitat, beech and ash woodland and wildflower grassland that are managed for conservation purposes.
- **Ivel Springs** (Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site circa. 14.7ha) – Opposite BA1 of the Site at North Road. This site is designated for its mosaic of habitats including wildflower meadows, glades, chalk grassland, wetland and springs that are a key source for the river Ivel.

Ten non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation, six priority habitats and two notable habitats are located within 1km of the Baldock Site. The Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site (LWS), an area of semi-improved neutral grassland, is located within the centre of the Site, contiguous with Bygrave Road.

Site's Biodiversity Context

The existing landscape features provide opportunity to create a network of habitats throughout the Site and retain existing planting. The habitat network, enhanced and managed, has the potential to positively deliver BNG.

Habitats

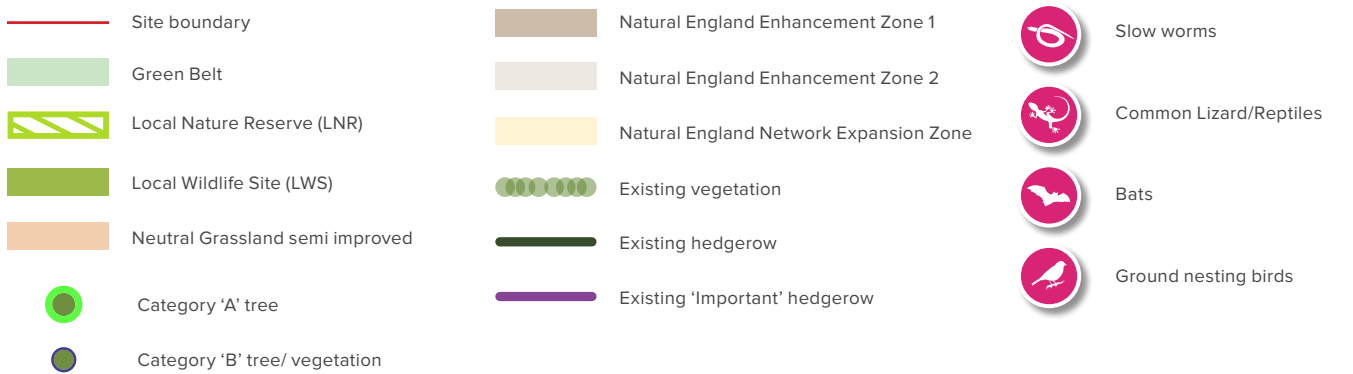
The majority of the Site is arable farmland of low ecological value, with a few notable landscape features limited to fragmented hedgerows, trees and woodland - associated with field boundaries and infrastructure corridors. The Site is made up of a range of habitats of varying quality and ecological value, including amenity grassland, dense scrub, hedgerows and trees, improved and semi-improved grassland and woodland (illustrated on **Figure 17**).

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Phase 1 habitat survey identified the following habitats and features worth retaining and a number of recommendations:

- The western edge of BA1 at North Road is within Natural England Network Enhancement Zone 2, where land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is less likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat. Action in this zone that improves the biodiversity value through land management changes and/or green infrastructure provision can be targeted here.
- Parts of BA2 are located within Natural England Network Enhancement Zone 1, which is land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat. Action in this zone to expand and join up existing habitat patches and improve the connections between them.
- Walls Field and Urban Open Land are identified as Natural England Network Expansion Zones, these are areas of land beyond the Network Enhancement Zones with potential for expanding, linking/joining networks across the landscape.
- Incorporation of the triangular part of the Site, south of Royston Road, which is the spoil from the A505 bypass - this has become a good environment for reptiles, featuring semi-improved grassland;
- Safeguard, buffer and improve Ivel Springs LNR and Weston Hills LNRs connectivity within the wider GI network, buffering and protecting existing features and providing alternative green space to reduce recreational pressures on higher value habitats;
- Retention and enhancement of Bygrave Road LWS;
- Integration of bat foraging corridors along railway and east of North Road;
- Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerow boundaries (Priority Habitat, including hedgerow at Walls Field (ref:H28) identified as 'Important' under The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- Retention of onsite trees, small woodlands and hedgerows into the masterplan where possible; and
- Creation of a network of wildlife corridors and natural green spaces to connect areas of habitat and ecological interest.



Figure 17. Biodiversity & Arboriculture Baseline





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5.1 BIODIVERSITY & ARBORICULTURE

Species

- A number of protected and notable bird species such as corn bunting are known to be present on the Site and there is some good habitat for bats particularly towards the edges of the Site, connecting to adjacent off-site habitats;
- Protected and notable species recorded on Site include common lizard, slow worm, bats and ground nesting birds; and
- Other notable species include small blue butterfly and sandrunner shieldbug.

Arboriculture

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) identifies trees and woodland on the Site and in its surrounding context. The key arboricultural context is summarised below:

- The majority of the Site is arable farmland with existing hedgerows and trees associated with field boundaries and farmsteads. There are no ancient natural woodlands, Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or veteran trees located on Site.
- The arboricultural tree survey identified multiple broad-leaved and coniferous trees on Site are category B (moderate quality) and category C (low quality). There was only one category A tree (high quality) identified (ref:T67), a Common Walnut on the north western boundary of BA2. It is recommended that category A & B trees should be retained and incorporated into the masterplan where possible.
- Identified existing native hedgerow field boundaries of moderate value (category B) should be retained and incorporated into the masterplan where possible including Site's northern boundary (ref H30 - BA1), North Road boundary (ref H35) and Clothall Road boundary (ref H4).
- Identified important linear groupings of vegetation of moderate value (category B) should be retained and incorporated into the masterplan where possible including the vegetation bordering Walls Field (G33) and the vegetation between Clothall Common and BA3 (G22 – G26).

Identified Opportunities

- Create a strategic nature recovery network that reconnects nature and provides greater permeability for species within, to and from the Site
- Reverse habitat fragmentation through creating ecological stepping stones & linear corridors to aid movement of wildlife
- Safeguard, buffer and improve LNR connectivity within the wider GI network
- Enhance and connect existing onsite fragmented habitats (hedgerow, scrub areas and grasslands) as part of an interconnected habitat mosaic within the GI network.
- Retain and enhance existing and proposed hedgerow/trees as foraging and commuter corridors for a variety of species.
- Opportunity for more biodiversity focused areas where public access is minimised to maximise biodiversity value.
- Opportunity to increase hedgerow, tree and scrub cover across the Site as part of the GI network and internally within the development areas.

Red kite



Skylark



Common pipistrelle



Badger



Grass snake





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5.2 HERITAGE & ARCHAEOLOGY

Heritage

Chapter 8: Built Heritage of the **Environmental Statement (ES)** relates to cultural heritage and built heritage designations. The key built heritage context is summarised below.

There are a number of heritage designations within or in close proximity of the Site boundaries (as illustrated on **Figure 18** opposite), these include:

- **Baldock Conservation Area:** The Site is located circa 100m beyond the boundaries of the Conservation Area. The Site forms part of the open landscape setting with the undesignated parts of the settlement providing separation between the Site and the Conservation Area - resulting in no appreciation of the landscape setting from within the designated parts of the town).
- **Two Scheduled Monuments:** The Site lies adjacent to Ivel Springs and the Site itself comprises the Romano-British small town and Late Iron Age Settlement off Clothall Road (referred to as Walls Field). Both of these are Scheduled Monuments, the settings of which are currently characterised by the surrounding settlement of Baldock, particularly at Clothall Road, and by their very nature, both are 'settlements' sites. These Scheduled Monuments are experienced as areas of open greenspace on the edges of Baldock, but are not visually tangible historic features (i.e. there is no visible built form or clear earthworks which give them prominence). The significance of these monuments stems principally from their archaeology.
- **Individual listed buildings:** Outside of the Conservation Area, there are four Grade II listed dwellings along North Road (namely, The Nook, Long Bailey, Blackhouse Farmhouse and The Compasses).
- **Grade I Church of St Mary, Baldock:** The church is situated in the centre of the Baldock Conservation Area, however the Built Heritage chapter of the ES describes it as a prominent feature in the area. The Built Heritage and Landscape and Visual chapters of the ES identified there to be visibility of the church spire from surrounding landscape to Baldock, including from the Site itself (north of Bygrave Road). The Built Heritage chapter of the ES highlights there is the potential for some improvement of views towards it and greater accessibility of these views (which are currently from private/inaccessible agricultural land).



Grade I Church of St Mary, Baldock in the centre of Baldock conservation area and town centre.



Walls Field (scheduled monument) - an arable field, crossed by public footpath Baldock 037 and off Clothall Road.

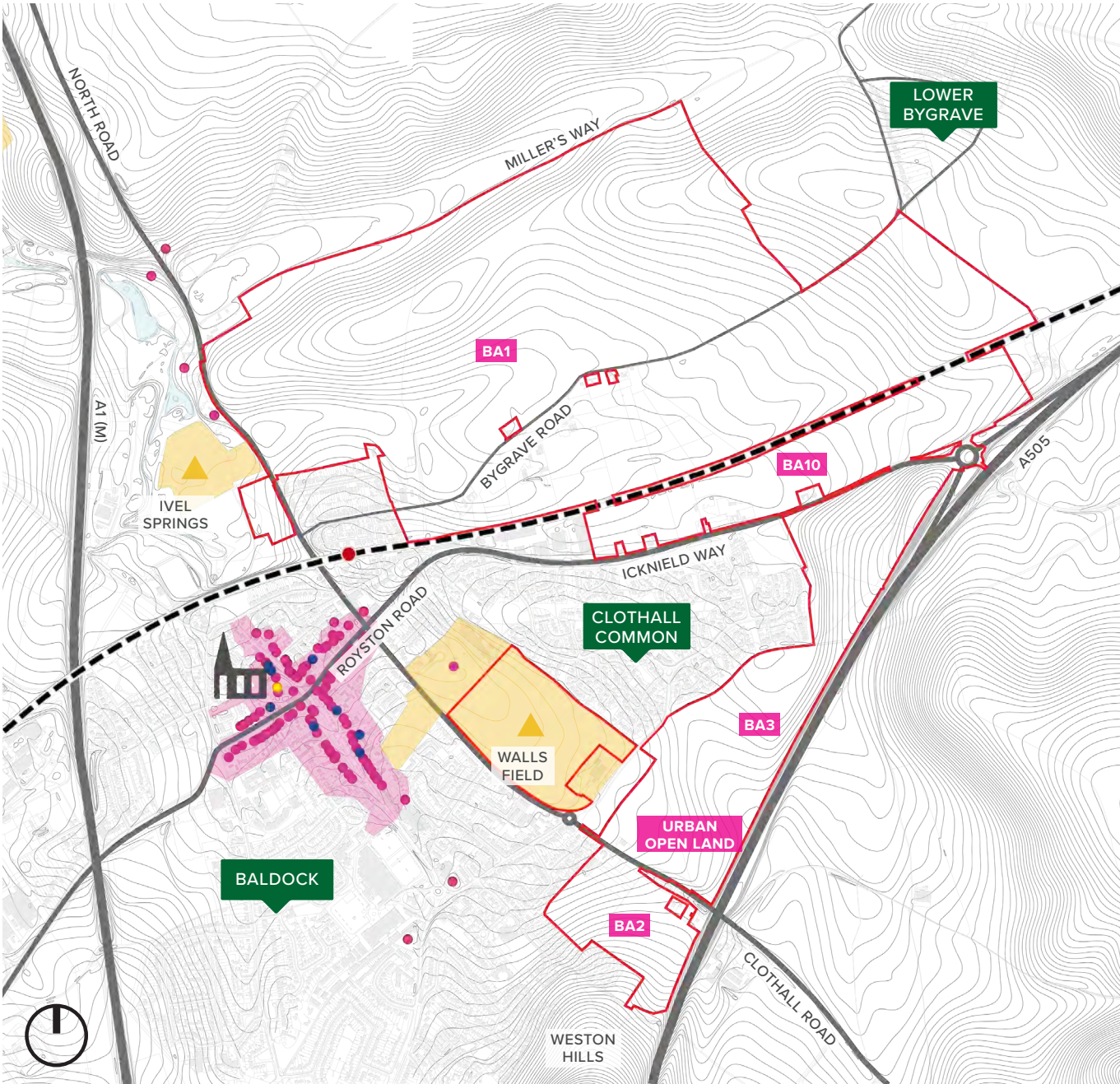


Figure 18. Heritage Baseline

- Site boundary
- Conservation area
- ▲ Scheduled monument
- 🏰 Church of St. Mary
- Grade I listed building
- Grade II* listed building
- Grade II listed building

There is the opportunity as part of the OPA for Baldock for the integration and interpretation of archaeology and heritage into green space. Refer to section 6.2 for further information on Green Infrastructure opportunities.



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5.2 HERITAGE & ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology

Chapter 9: Archaeology of the **Environmental Statement (ES)** relates to Archaeology. The section below summarises the findings (illustrated opposite on **Figure 19**), to ensure the historic landscape is fully understood and integrated into the proposals.

The Site's heritage plays an important role in defining various aspects of the Site, with several key cultural features present within the Site and in the immediate surrounding context. The cultural features provide a tangible link with the past and could contribute to the future sense of identity, character and distinctiveness of the development.

The Archaeology baseline concluded the large number of HER records present within the Site, reflect the importance of this local settlement landscape from the late Prehistoric and through the Roman and medieval periods.

Bygrave Common: The Bygrave Tithe Map of 1847, shows the vast majority of the Site is characterised by strip fields, being vestigial remains of a medieval agricultural system. Strip-field farming, also known as an open field system, was introduced during the Medieval period as a way for villagers to share land. The field would have been owned by a land owner and the villagers would rent strips in which to grow their own crops. The 1884 OS map shows the Site occupying open, unenclosed farmland with the northern part referred to as Bygrave Common.

Current Ordnance Survey mapping has a reference to 'Bygrave Common' within the BA1 area of the Site. Historic mapping illustrates this area historically as private land, rented by the locals as narrow strips for farming. This area was not publicly accessible 'common land' in the conventional sense (<https://www.gov.uk/common-land-village-greens>), as the community had no right of access or to roam freely. However, there is an opportunity to reference and reinterpret Bygrave Common as part of the development, forming a new public parkland to the northern part of area BA1, opening up this location to benefit the new and existing community of Baldock and surrounding areas.

Specific archaeological/heritage features identified in **Chapter 9: Archaeology** of the ES which have the potential to inform the

development of the OPA, specifically integrated and reinterpreted within the Green Infrastructure network, include the following:

- 1 **Prehistoric routeway** - crosses the Site along its assumed course from the Ivel Springs through to Bird Hill.
- 2 **Bronze Age barrow cemeteries** - clustered close to Half Way Farm, in the fields between the railway line and the Bygrave/Ashwell Road;
- 3 **Historic Winterbourne Channel** - Winter River Route an ancient stream-bed now infilled with soil;
- 4 **Roman high status/ritual site** - In its vicinity have been found Neolithic chalk pits, and what is believed to be a high status zone (possibly a religious area) of Roman date;
- 5 **Scheduled Romano-British small town and Late Iron Age settlement on Walls Field;**
- 6 **Scheduled settlement south of Blackhorse Farm** - seen as a multi-period cropmark site of probable Iron Age, Roman and Saxon date;
- 7 **Roman roadside settlement** - the presence of Late Iron Age and Roman roadside settlement evidence along North Road.
- 8 **Early medieval hamlet** - a 10th to 12th century AD hamlet recorded within the area of Bygrave Common, in the vicinity of a spring;
- 9 **Medieval Millers Way** - historic routeway;
- 10 **Medieval routeway linking Bygrave to Clothall** - historic routeway.
- 11 **Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age enclosures** - northern part of BA1
- 12 **Roman Field systems and Bronze Age barrows** - eastern part of BA1
- 13 **Iron Age Pit alignment and Roman settlement** - BA3
- 14 **Iron Age Pit alignment and Roman settlement** - BA2

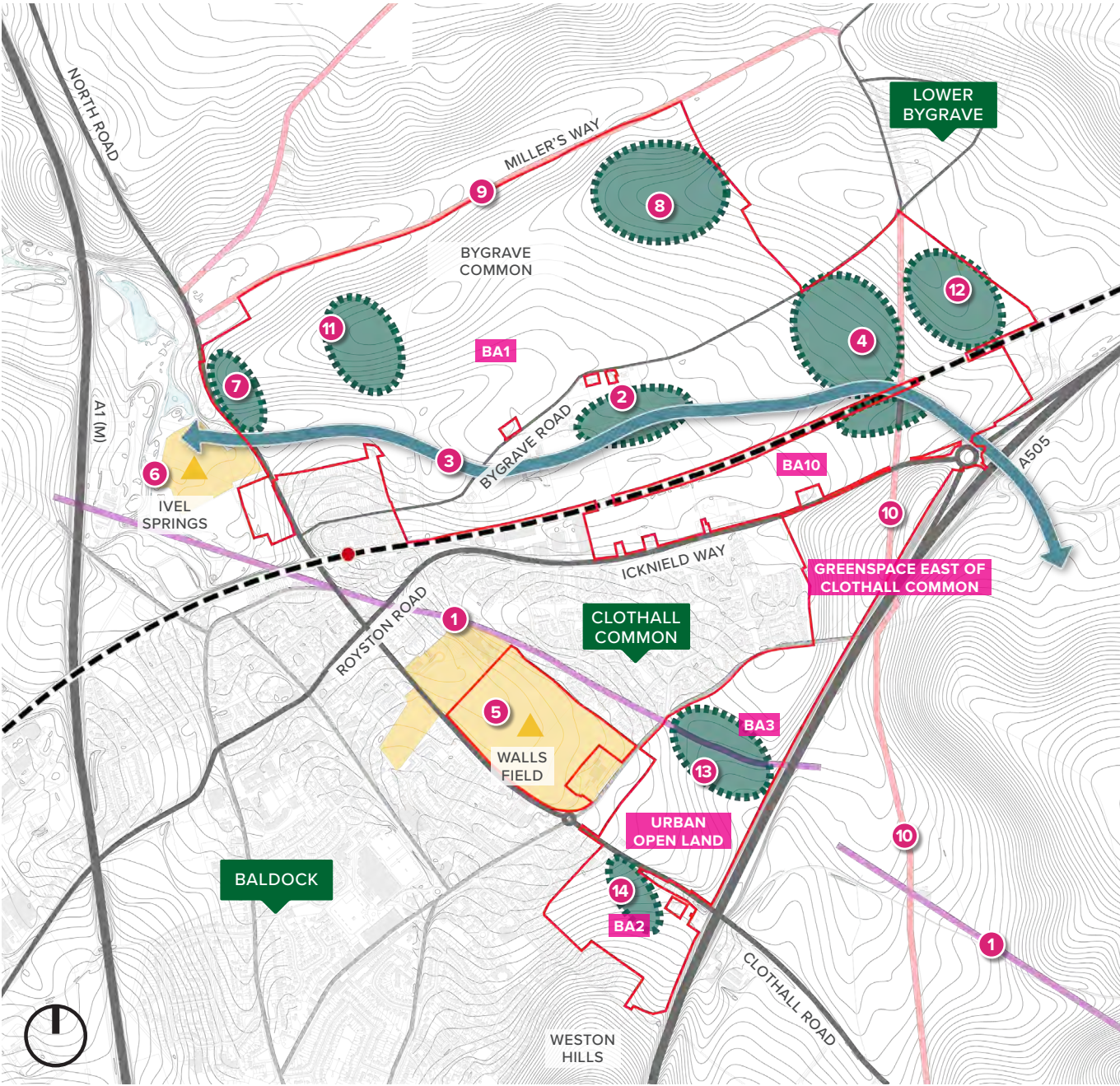


Figure 19. Archaeology Baseline

- Site boundary
- Areas of Archaeology Features
- Pre historic routeway
- Historic routeway
- Historic Winterbourne Channel
- Scheduled Monument

There is the opportunity as part of the OPA for Baldock for the integration and interpretation of archaeology and heritage into green space. Refer to section 6.2 for further information on Green Infrastructure opportunities.



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5.3 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA, produced to form **Chapter 7: Landscape & Visual of the Environmental Statement**) assesses the baseline landscape character. The section below summarises the findings of landscape character (illustrated opposite on **Figure 20**).

At a district level¹ the majority of the Site lies within **LCA 224: North Baldock Chalk Uplands** which is described as “rolling chalk landform, eroded by a complex network of shallow dry valleys. Small rounded chalk knolls common. Large scale arable fields often with remnant field boundaries, mainly well trimmed hawthorn hedges. The core has a pattern of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. Boundaries often based on older more organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries”.

The key characteristics and distinctive features of this character area, relevant to the Site, are summarised as follows:

- Rolling chalk landform;
- Small rounded chalk knolls;
- Large rectilinear fields in arable;
- Nucleated settlements;
- A1(M), A505, railway;
- Abuts suburban edge of Baldock;
- Pylons crossing the western edge; and
- Ivel valley.

The following principles for **North Baldock Chalk Uplands** (for landscape strategy and guidelines for managing change), which are seen to have the potential to facilitate the OPA, specifically with relation to the Green Infrastructure network, include the following:

Landscape Management Guidelines:

- **Sensitive design and creation of new woodland and tree planting** - hedgerows and woodland are limited within North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The introduction of extensive planting or large numbers of new hedgerows would be uncharacteristic
- **Promote the creation of habitat buffer zones** - between areas of arable farmland and areas of semi-natural habitat, including the creation of links between habitat areas
- **Promote hedgerow restoration** to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- **Promote the diversity of hedgerow species** and planting of standard hedgerow trees
- **Maintain and extend the rights of way network**

Built Development Guidelines:

- **Maintain the open character of North Baldock Chalk Uplands**
- **Retain the rural character of the area** ensuring any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the character area
- **Planting mitigation should be appropriate** to local character and not necessarily fully enclose development
- **Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerow**
- **Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow open lanes**



Existing hedgerow field boundary along the northern edge of BA1, along Millers Way a historic routeway and bridleway - Bygrave 001.



The ridgeline within BA1 of the Site provides elevated views back towards Baldock from bridleway Bygrave 002.

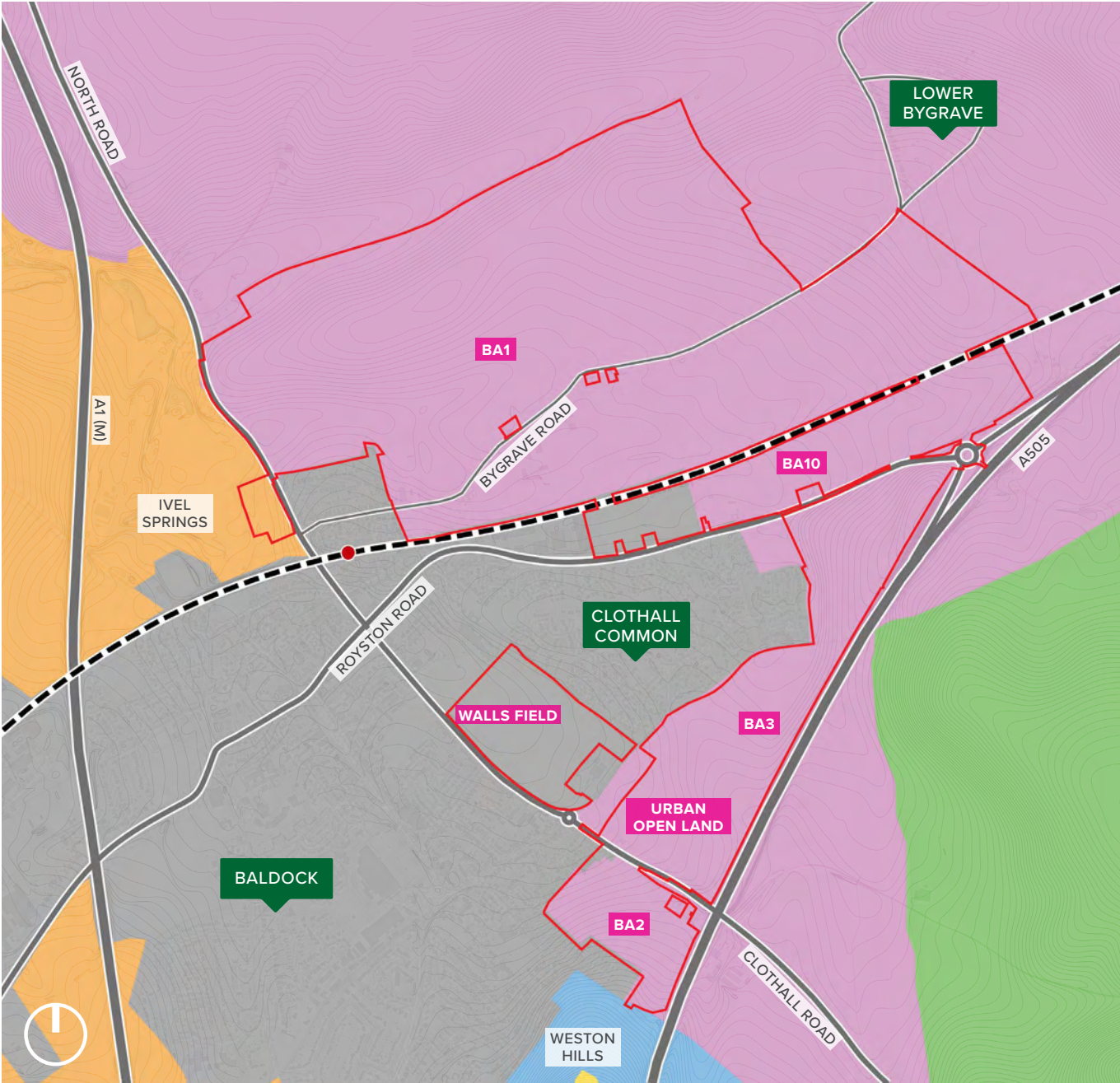


Figure 20. Landscape Character Baseline

— Site boundary

The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment 2011

- LCA 224: North Baldock Chalk Uplands
- LCA 216: Arlesey/Great Wymondley
- LCA: Urban - Baldock
- LCA 219: Baldock Gap
- LCA 223: Wallington Scarp Slopes

There is the opportunity as part of the OPA for Baldock for the integration and interpretation of landscape character into green space. Refer to section 6.2 for further information on Green Infrastructure opportunities.



5.4 VISUAL CONTEXT

The LVIA identifies visual receptors that currently share intervisibility with the Site and are of the greatest visual sensitivity to the type of development proposed

The following summarises the key visual context reported in the LVIA.

Baldock is a compact and historic market town, set within the rolling chalk landscape of north Hertfordshire. Visually, the settlement of Baldock lies in a 'bowl', with relatively distant views across the town from elevated positions on the surrounding chalk ridgelines and scarp slopes

The Site is visible from limited locations including the northern, outer residential edge of Baldock, from parts of Lower Bygrave to the north east and from residential areas bordering the Site. More extensive views of the Site and beyond to St Mary's Church are possible from the Public Right of Way network.

Existing, large, pale buildings along Royston Road (at Ashville Trading Estate) – along with the Letchworth retail and business park – serve as detracting features in views from the surrounding countryside, when looking back towards Baldock. Electricity pylon towers dominate the skyline in views from the north and west. Linear transport routes, including the Cambridge railway line and Baldock A505 bypass, sever views – with their alignments partly picked out by flanking existing vegetation, along with associated infrastructure (bridges over the A505, the Weston Hills tunnel and signage at the Royston Road junction).



Views of St Mary's Church spire in Baldock are strongest from the elevated locations on the Site's ridgeline to the north (**Key vantage point A**). The church spire 'rises' into the horizon on approach from the north as footpath users descend towards Bygrave Road.

Visual Considerations:

- **Avoid development on the northern exposed ridge (BA1)**, and minimise adverse impacts on longer distance views, where the landscape is rural, elevated, remote and is visually sensitive.
- **Retain and frame views of St Mary's Church spire** from key locations within the Site, including bridleway Bygrave 001, on the ridgeline, land east of Clothall Common and from the area of Urban Open Land.
- **Retain the Informal recreation land east of Clothall Common**, which provides elevated long distance views east to Wallington scarp slopes.
- **Retain an open landscape transition from Walls Field to the Urban Open Land** and beyond to the rural landscape.
- **Visually sensitive edges** – transition to the surrounding rural landscape and Green Belt – with strong views of surrounding rural context.
- **Incorporate landscape buffering along Site's boundary with A505 and railway line**, to minimise impacts of these visual detractors.
- **Use of woodland/hedgerow planting to mitigate views** and assimilate the development.



Views of St Mary's Church spire from the Urban Open Land to the south east of Baldock (**Key vantage point F**).

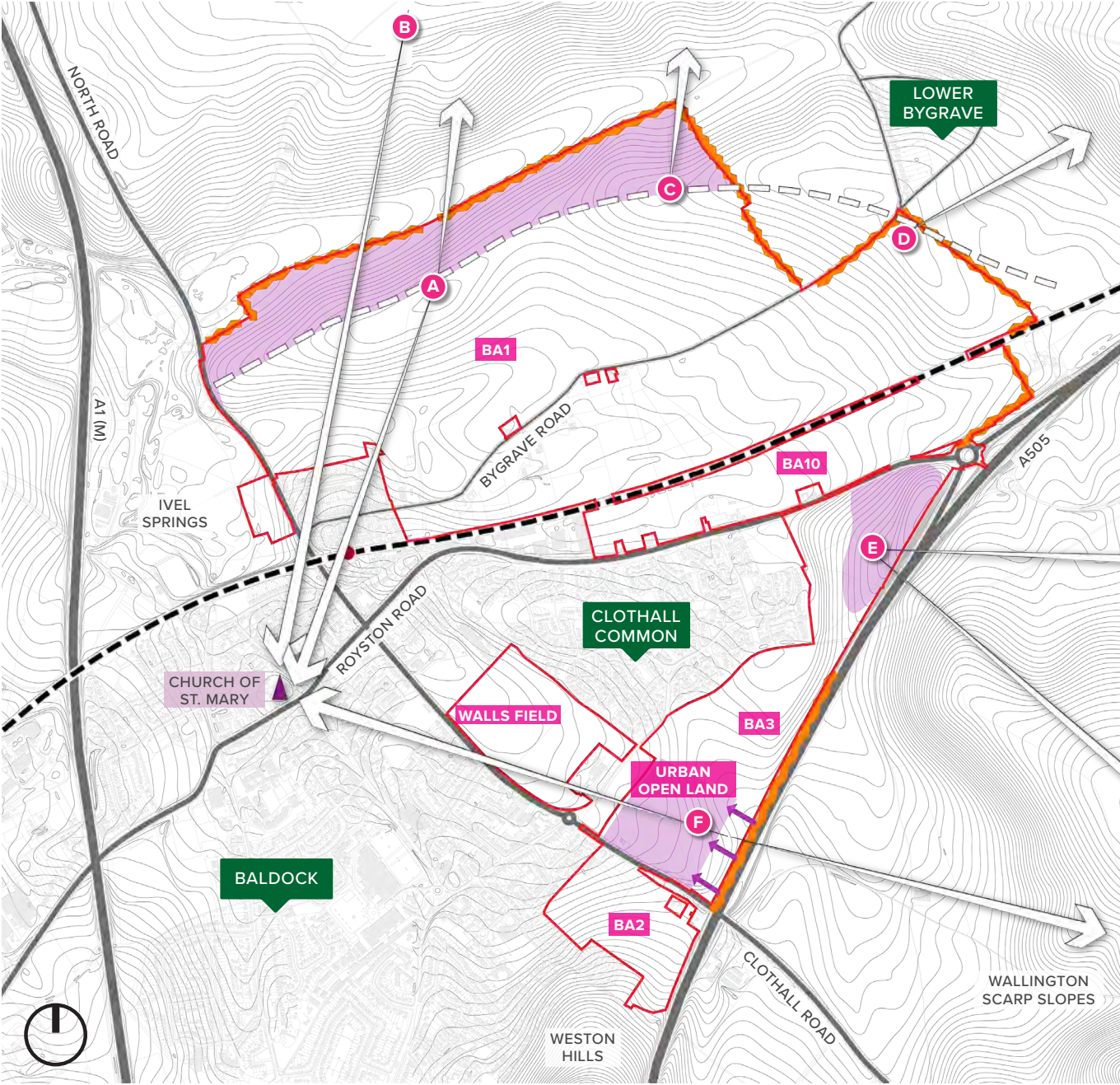


Figure 21. Visual Context Baseline

- Site boundary
- Key ridgeline
- ← Key long distance view
- Visually sensitive area
- Visually sensitive edge
- A Key vantage points



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5.5 HYDROLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

Hydrology, Drainage & Flood Risk

The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy within the Environmental Statement (ES) technical appendices relates to Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage. The following summarises the baseline context and key findings reported in **Chapter 10 Hydrology and Flooding** of the **ES**.

The Site and immediate context are drained by a limited network of local streams and ditches. The only watercourses are beyond the Site, including Cat Ditch to the east and Ivel Springs and ponds to the west. Cat Ditch is a perennial chalk stream but has had no flow for at least three years due to over abstraction (at Slip End and Cat Ditch).

The Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore suitable for development. There are no surface water sewers on the Site. The Site is identified at very low risk of flooding from groundwater or artificial sources.

The majority of the Site is at also at very low risk of surface water flooding, with the exception of two areas on the southern part of the Site and an area adjacent to North Road and Bygrave Road in the northern part of the Site. The risk of flooding and master planning implications for these areas are shown in **Figure 22** opposite and summarised in the following points:

- 1 Land to south of railway line** – the area to the south of Merchants Walk is most susceptible to flooding in the lowest area in this part of the Site. Contouring could be adjusted in this area to contain flooding and integrate it into a future SuDS feature to provide attenuation volume, water treatment and amenity space
- 2 East of Clothall Road** - an area of less significant flooding would not prohibit development but would be better suited to integration into a landscaped area, which would also improve the drainage of Walls Field Scheduled Monument to the west
- 3 Land between the railway line and Bygrave Road** – some shallow and low probability flooding anticipated in this area, potentially caused by an existing field boundary and elevated levels restricting flows
- 4 Land to the north of Bygrave Road** – area of flooding identified north of Bygrave Road caused by raised bund to Laymoor Farm, which then overtops the bund and combines with an overland flow path to create an area of flooding at the lowest point east of North Road. This area is best integrated into a new open SuDS feature(s)

Topography

A desk study of the onsite Topography has been undertaken by BMD, to inform Baldock OPA for the Site.

- The Site and the immediate surrounding landscape is characterised by the rolling chalk landscape of North Hertfordshire.
- The northern part of the Site is large scale, open, rolling chalk landform featuring rounded ridges and valleys running in an east-west direction (circa +60 to +75m AOD).
- Between Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road and Royston Road, the landform becomes flat and even (at circa +60m AOD), rising only gently eastwards.
- The localised elevated landform south of Royston Road and east of Clothall Common (at circa +85m AOD) was artificially created after the construction of the A505 Baldock bypass.
- Closer to the settlement edge of Baldock the landform becomes flatter, particularly land south of Clothall Common, Walls Field and the Urban Open Land around Clothall Road.
- The northern part of the Site is defined by a ridgeline of natural chalk running east-west, dropping in the west towards Ivel valley/River Ivel.
- Future development proposals for the Site will need to respond to localised variations in topography, in particular the ridgeline in the northern part of the Site.

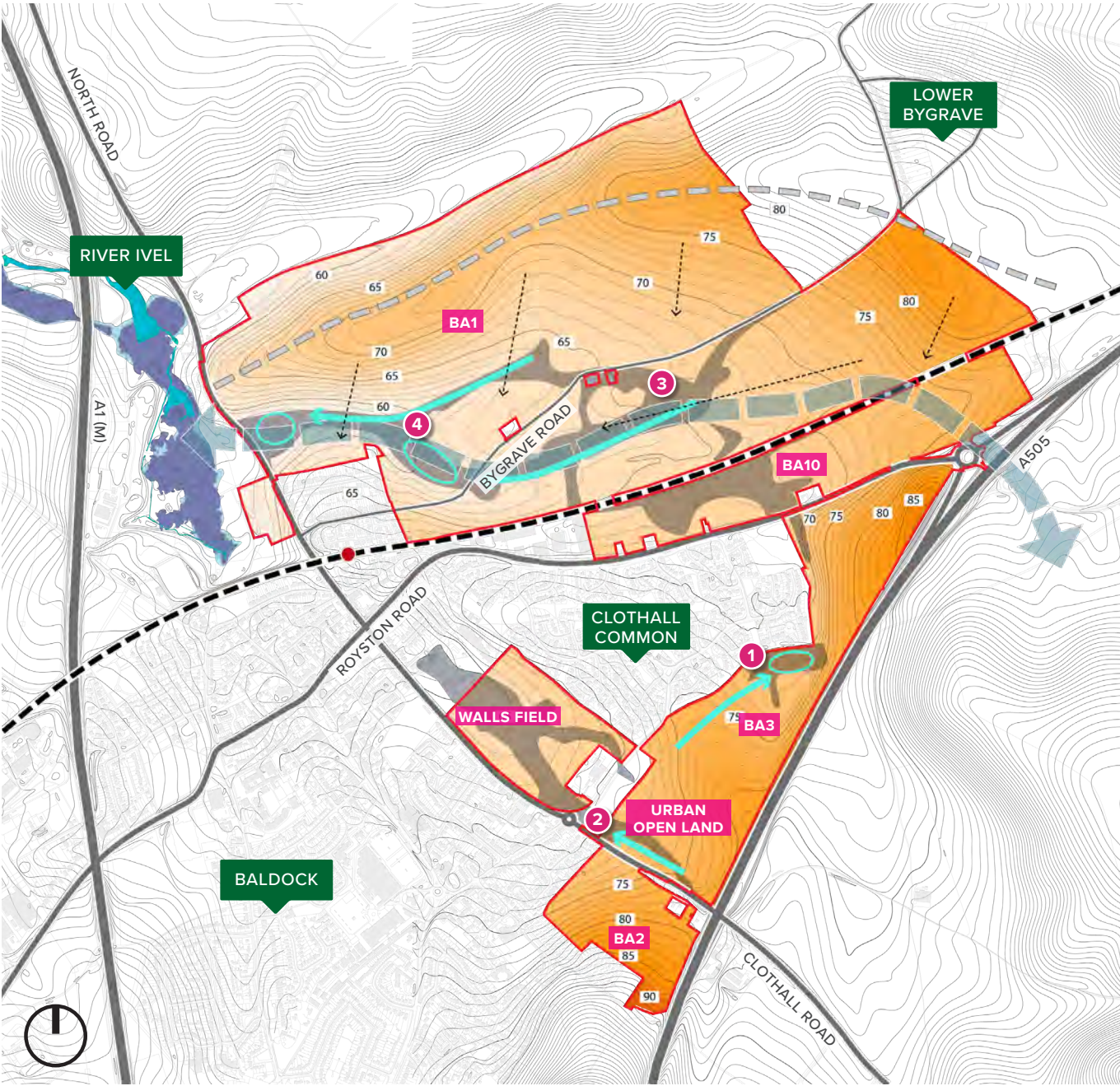
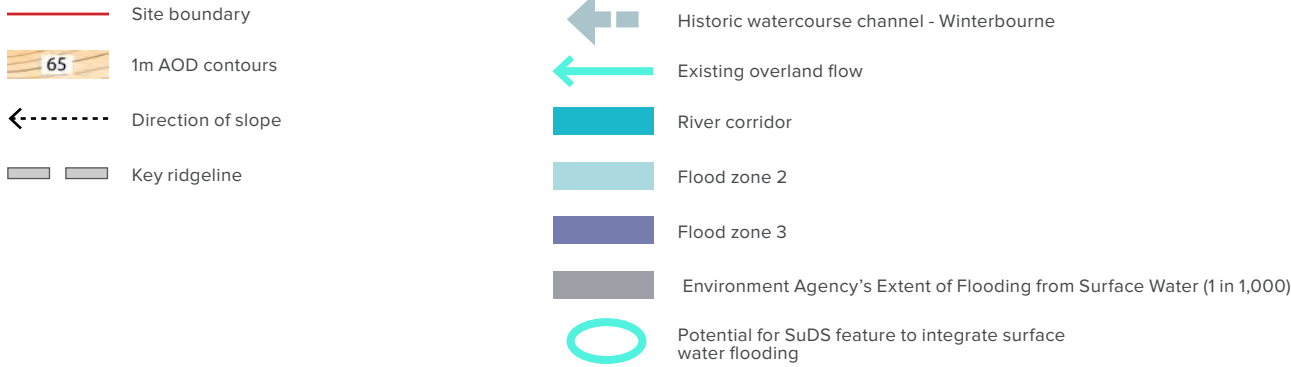


Figure 22. Hydrology & Typography Baseline





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5.6 GEOLOGY & SOILS

The Site and the immediate study area are located within National Character Area (NCA) 87, East Anglian Chalk, where the underlying and solid geology is dominated by Upper Cretaceous Chalk, a narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west to north-east across southern England, continuing in the Chilterns and along the eastern edge of the Wash.

The chalk bedrock has given the NCA its nutrient-poor and shallow soils. The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment, describes the geology and soil of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands, which the Site and immediate study area are located within, as chalk overlain by free draining calcareous to neutral loamy brown soils. There are thin drift deposits of Boulder Clay and glacial gravel on the upper slopes.

Overlying soils are predominantly freely draining lime-rich soils, supporting a landcover of arable with grassland at higher altitudes (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes>). Also present are small areas of shallow lime-rich soils over chalk, supporting a similar landcover.

5.7 AIR & NOISE

The following summarises the baseline context and key findings reported in **Chapter 5 Noise and Vibration** and **Chapter 6 Air Quality** of the **ES**.

Air

Existing air quality conditions were considered through analysis of DEFRA mapping of pollutant concentrations in the UK and local monitoring and modelling studies. This identified two Air Quality Management Areas in North Hertfordshire, both of which are at too great a distance (c.8.5KM) from the Site to be affected by development of the Site.

Local monitoring confirms that average measured concentrations of NO₂ and PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} in the vicinity of the Site were all well below the limit value/objectives. It is anticipated that these levels will reduce over time, due to the progressive introduction of improved vehicle technologies and increasingly stringent limits on emissions. Consequently, the air quality conditions indicate that the Site is suitable for sensitive land users and there are no obvious constraints to the Application Site.

Noise

The main existing constraint on the development with respect to noise sensitive uses is noise from road traffic. The principal roads affecting the Site are the A1(M) which runs around 300m to the west and the A505 which is adjacent to the south-east of the Site. The railway line running though the Site also imposes a noise constraint.

Considerations for the OPA & Green Infrastructure network:

- Potential impact of rail/road noise on residential areas is factor in distribution of land uses and green space/landscape buffers;
- Acoustic design process required to consider site layout, landscaping, building orientation, façade design and location of external amenity areas.

“ ‘Landscape character’ embraces topographic features, geodiversity, wildlife and habitats, land use, sights, cultural associations, history, and memories. Understanding how the landscape is perceived, experienced, and valued by people is critical in planning and designing new green infrastructure and integrating existing green infrastructure assets. ”

Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide Natural England, 2023



Leisure routes through green corridor - Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire



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5.8 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY

BMD undertook a GI connectivity review of the Site and the PRoW network in the surrounding area, which included a desktop review of the strategic PRoW network (based on the Definitive Map for Hertfordshire). The assessment also involved a field survey, walking the routes and recording the following:

- Evidence of user groups/capacity for different user groups
- Condition/quality of the route
- Issues affecting functionality/connectivity of these routes

As the North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy highlights, there is a strategic GI aspiration to create the **'Baldock Greenway'** that provides a multi-user route around and through the settlement of Baldock, which would connect to and support the Etonbury Green Wheel and Letchworth Greenway.

Public access of the Site is currently restricted to the existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) network and includes:

BA1 North of Baldock – Public bridleway Bygrave 001, along the Site's northern boundary, is a historic route referred to as 'Millers Way'. Public bridleway Bygrave 002 runs north to south, from Bygrave Road at Laymore Farm, extending north to restricted byway Bygrave 014 beyond the Site. Both bridleways form part of the North Baldock Circular. There is also public footpath Bygrave 015 on the eastern extent of BA1, which runs north to south from Ashwell Road, across farmland and over the railway line to Royston Road

BA3 Land south of Clothall Common – Public bridleway Clothall 003 runs from Royston Road, south through the Site towards the A505, where it forks with one part continuing over the A505 and the other staying within the Site and becoming bridleway Clothall 027, heading west towards Clothall Common.

Urban Open Land and Walls Field – The Urban Open Land features public footpath Clothall 001. Walls Field features public footpath Baldock 037 which forms part of the Baldock South Circular. Public footpath Baldock 036 runs along the north eastern boundary of Walls Field at the interface with Clothall Common settlement edge.

Beyond the Site and surrounding Baldock, there is a wider recreational PRoW network used by the community for leisure. Baldock benefits from a number of circular strategic recreational paths around the town, however, the quality of access, restrictions to certain user groups and legibility of (and to) these routes from the town (and gaps within the routes themselves) could be enhanced as part of off-site interventions.

These existing strategic recreational routes are described in detail in **Section 3.2** and illustrated on **Figure 6** and the adjacent **Figure 23**.

- **Baldock North Circular: Baldock to Ashwell** – a 12.2 miles circular walk which starts in the town and extends through the BA1 Site to Ashwell
- **Baldock South Circular: Baldock to Wallington** – a 8.2 circular walk from Baldock to Wallington across the elevated Wallington scarp slopes.
- **The Kingfisher Way** - a 20 mile walk from Baldock to Stotfold, following the course of the River Ivel.
- **Icknield Way National Trail** - The Icknield Way Trail, long distance footpath, borders the Site's southern-most boundary (BA2), running in an east to west direction, passing through Baldock and providing onward connection to Letchworth Garden City in the west - and joining with the Hertfordshire Way in the east.
- **National Cycle Route (NCR)** - National Cycle Route 12 (NCR 12) runs through the western part of Baldock, passing between Letchworth Garden City and Baldock, along the A1(M) road corridor.
- **Letchworth Greenway** - a 13.6 mile circular route around the Garden City suitable for the enjoyment of walkers, runners and cyclists. The Greenway passes through the western and south western edges of Baldock, at its closest points crossing Norton Road to the west of Ivel Springs and along Weston Road, passing Knights Templar Sports Centre.

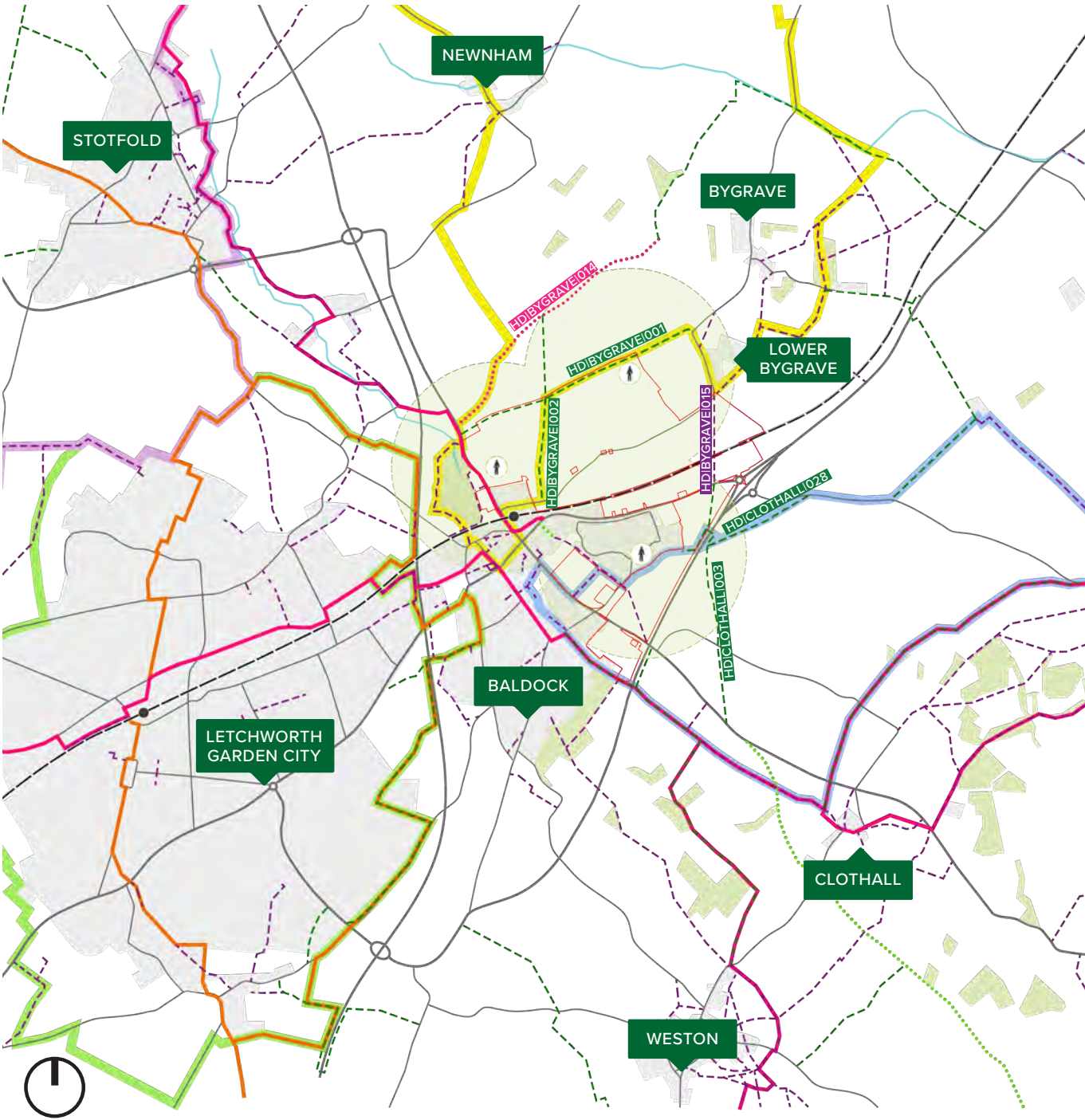
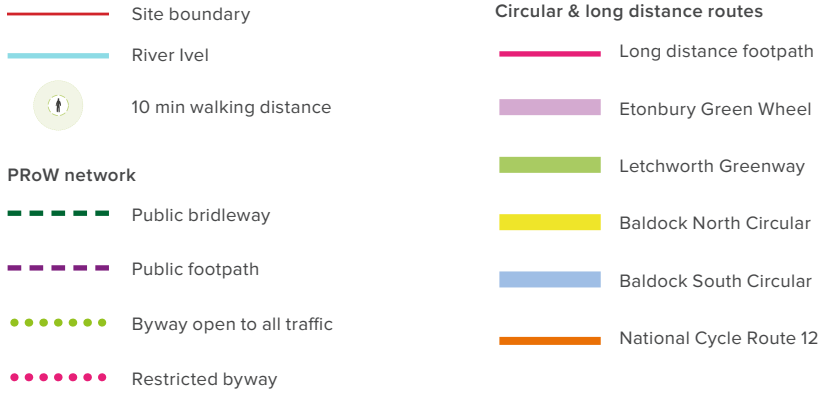


Figure 23. Green Infrastructure Connectivity





6 Green Infrastructure Opportunities

Informal route across Weston Hills LNR - Baldock



6 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY THEMES

Inherited Assets

Understanding the context and existing Site features of value, which have helped shape and guide the design of the landscape and framework plan.



Figure 24. Inherited Assets Opportunity



Key vantage point from ridgeline in BA1

- Retain and incorporate existing key views from elevated areas – particularly towards St Mary's Church spire
- Respect, embrace and work with the undulating chalk landform
- Protect, restore and enhance high value vegetation/habitats
- Safeguard, buffer and improve Ivel Springs and Weston Hills LNR connectivity within the wider landscape
- Reference, interpret and celebrate some of the area's heritage within the landscape

Wild Infrastructure

Prioritising nature rich beautiful places that meet Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) targets, delivered through a range of retained, enhanced and created habitats.



Figure 25. Wild Infrastructure Opportunity



Therfield Heath an area of Common Land (SSSI & LNR) on chalk escarpment, Hertfordshire

- Create a nature recovery network that reconnects nature and provides greater permeability for species within, to and from the Site
- Reverse habitat fragmentation through creating ecological stepping stones & linear corridors to aid movement of wildlife
- Safeguard, buffer and improve Ivel Springs and Weston Hills LNR connectivity within the wider landscape



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6.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY THEMES

Heritage

Celebrating and referencing Baldock's heritage - embracing the context, history and character of Baldock to positively influence the landscape design and place, giving a greater sense of identity and ownership.



Figure 26. Heritage Opportunity



A plinth-mounted toposcope atop Lantern Pike, Peak District

- Create a 'Heritage Trail' that connects and celebrates the area's rich heritage, potentially using public art installations or 'toposcopes' at key vantage points to indicate the direction and distance, to notable landscape features which can be seen from that point.
- Reinterpret the historic 'Winterbourne' channel, which is a winter river route and ancient stream-bed now infilled with soil, as part of the Site's new sustainable drainage features.
- Reference and reinterpret 'Bygrave Common' as part of a new public open space parkland. Historic and current mapping has a reference to this area as 'Bygrave Common', previously used for strip field farming. The field would have been owned by a land owner and the villagers would rent strips in which to grow their own crops

Movement & Access

Improve accessibility, connectivity and safety as part of the walking, cycling and horse riding network in Baldock, which connects to the surrounding wider network.



Figure 27. Movement & Access Opportunity



Stratford Greenway is a multi user path for cyclists, walkers, horse riders and wheelchair users and part of the National Cycle Network.

- Deliver a dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway
- Provide a range of movement links through the new development that will support active travel, healthy lifestyles and provide access to the surrounding countryside
- Improve connectivity between Baldock and Letchworth through strengthening active travel links to recreational, community and employment facilities



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6.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY THEMES

Key Green Infrastructure Destinations

A series of new, connected, community green spaces that support a range of recreational uses. Spaces where people meet, socialise, relax, exercise, grow, play sport and connect with nature.

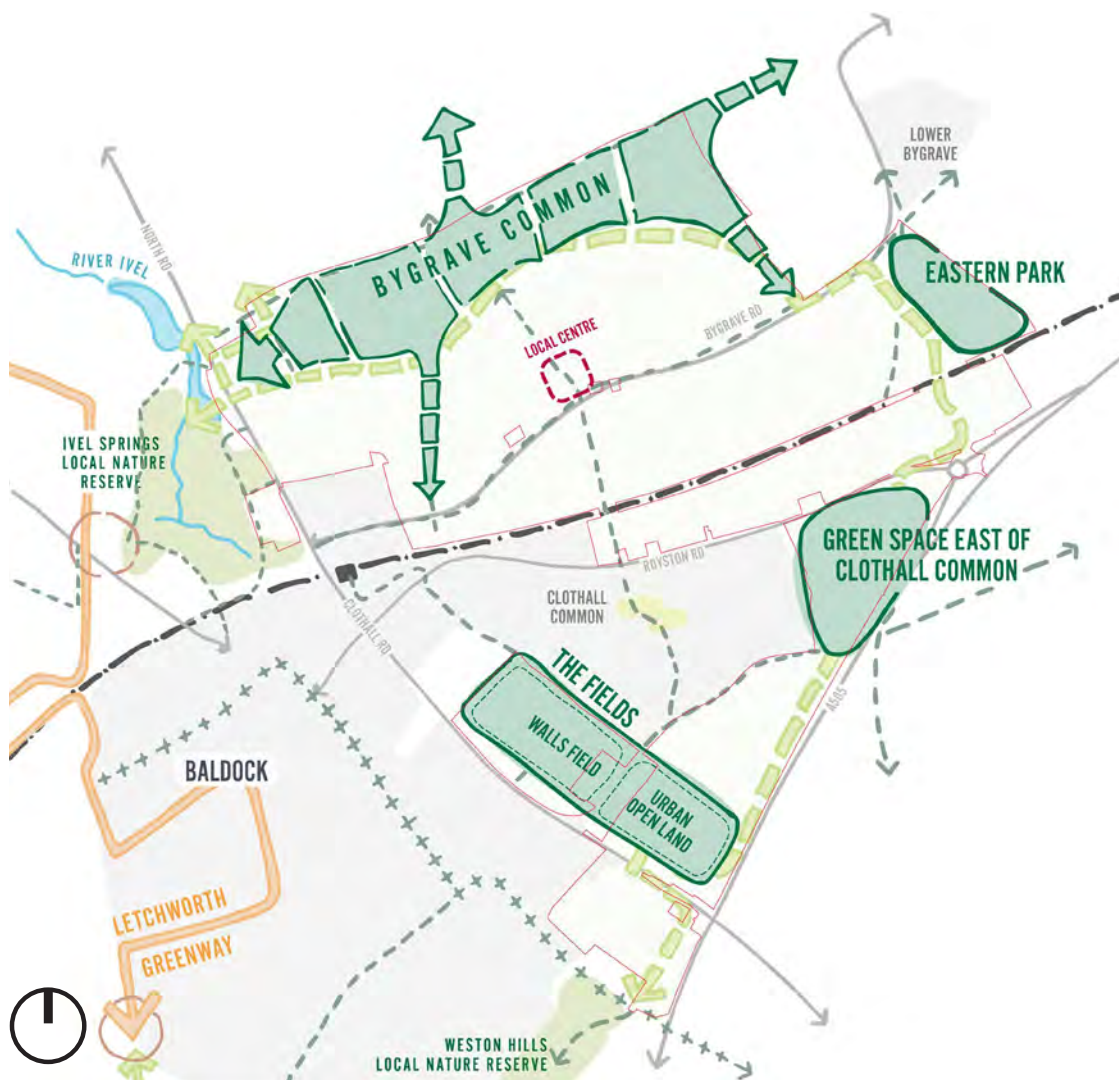


Figure 28. GI Destinations Opportunity



Alconbury Weald Swynford Park - featuring allotments, sports courts and play equipment.

- A series of new, connected, community green spaces that provide publicly accessible open space for children's play, sport, social interaction & food production
- New parks defined and characterised by the existing setting, landscape, heritage and ecology

Landscape Character

Creating new landscapes characterised and influenced by the surrounding Ivel Valley, chalk uplands, Wallington scarp slopes and Weston Hills.



Figure 29. Landscape Character Opportunity



Example of the proposed landscape character within a wildflower meadow

- Deliver a range of characters that are influenced by the surrounding landscape
- 'Landscape character' embraces the existing topographic features, biodiversity, wildlife and habitats, land use, sights, sounds, touch and smells, cultural associations, history, and memories



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6.2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY

Green Infrastructure (GI) Destinations

- Opportunity to create a series of connected open spaces, all unique in character, that respect, embrace and work with the undulating chalk landform and landscape character.
- Opportunity to safeguard, buffer and improve connectivity to the Ivel Springs and Weston Hills LNR, as part of the GI Framework.

1 Ivel Springs LNR: The creation of a substantial new parkland in the north of Site (Bygrave Common) would relieve the recreational pressures on Ivel Springs. Development of a sustainable drainage strategy - optimising infiltration of surface water drainage whilst minimising over-land outfall - has the potential to recharge the chalk aquifer. Opportunity to expand North Road Allotments and orchard area, into the small part of the Site adjacent to North Road, currently used informally by the local community.

2 Weston Hills LNR: Improve connectivity between Weston Hills and the wider PRoW network, particularly through BA2 as part of the Baldock Greenway, that would enhance the north/south movement.

3 Bygrave Common: There is the opportunity to reference and reinterpret Bygrave Common as part of a new public park for the community of Baldock. Retain, respect and enhance the northern undulating chalk landform, elevated ridgeline and key views. Within Bygrave Common there is the potential for more ecologically focused areas, where public access is minimised to maximise biodiversity value.

4 Eastern Park: The creation of a new local park to serve the north eastern community of the Proposed Development through co-located sports, play and productive spaces. Noting this area's archaeological features, this park could provide the opportunity for heritage landscape interventions by the way of play area themes, interpretation and layout/ species planted in this park.

5 Green Space east of Clothall Common: Opportunity to designate this area of land as a public open space/nature park managed for informal recreation and access to nature for the local community. Celebrate this key vantage point and reference Baldock's rich cultural heritage, as part of a heritage trail around Baldock.

6 Walls Field: Opportunity for a new community green space and as a 'common ground' for existing and new communities.

Taking Walls Field out of intensive agricultural use would be beneficial to preserve the archaeology associated with the Scheduled Monument. Opportunity to convert Walls Field into a meadow grassland, managed for biodiversity, amenity and heritage purposes. Opportunity to reference Baldock's rich cultural heritage, as part of a heritage trail around Baldock, linking all heritage open spaces and features.

7 Urban Open Land:

Opportunity to expand and enhance the existing allotment facilities at Clothall Road. Opportunity to enhance the existing PRoW network through the Urban Open Land and out to the countryside to the east - as part of the Baldock Greenway. Opportunity to create a publicly accessible, recreational focused parkland for outdoor sports, play and productive uses that would maintain the openness and respect the transition from urban to rural beyond.

Green Infrastructure (GI) Connectivity

- Opportunity to deliver a dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway.
- Opportunity to provide a range of movement links through the new development that will support active travel, healthy lifestyles and provide improved access to the surrounding countryside.
- Opportunity to Improve connectivity between Baldock and Letchworth through strengthening active travel links to recreational, community and employment facilities.
- Opportunity to create a 'Heritage Trail' that connects and celebrates the area's rich heritage, potentially using public art installations or toposcopes (at key vantage points to indicate the direction and distance, to notable landscape and/or heritage features, which can be seen from that point.)
- Opportunity to reinterpret the Winterbourne palaeo channel as part of the Site's waterstory and potential SuDS network.

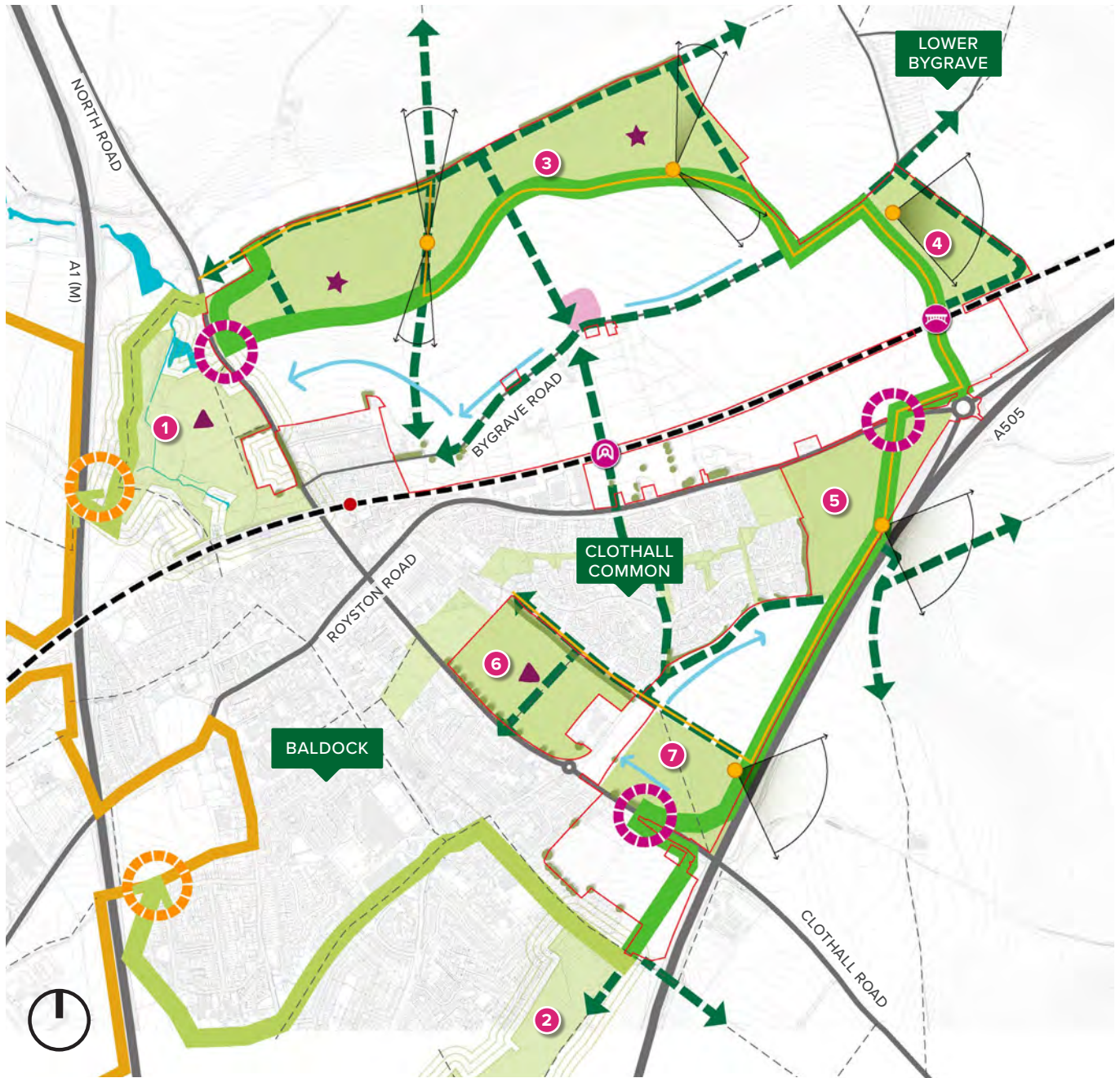


Figure 30. Green Infrastructure Opportunity Plan





7 Green Infrastructure Framework



BALGA North Road Site Allotments - Baldock





7 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

7.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VISION

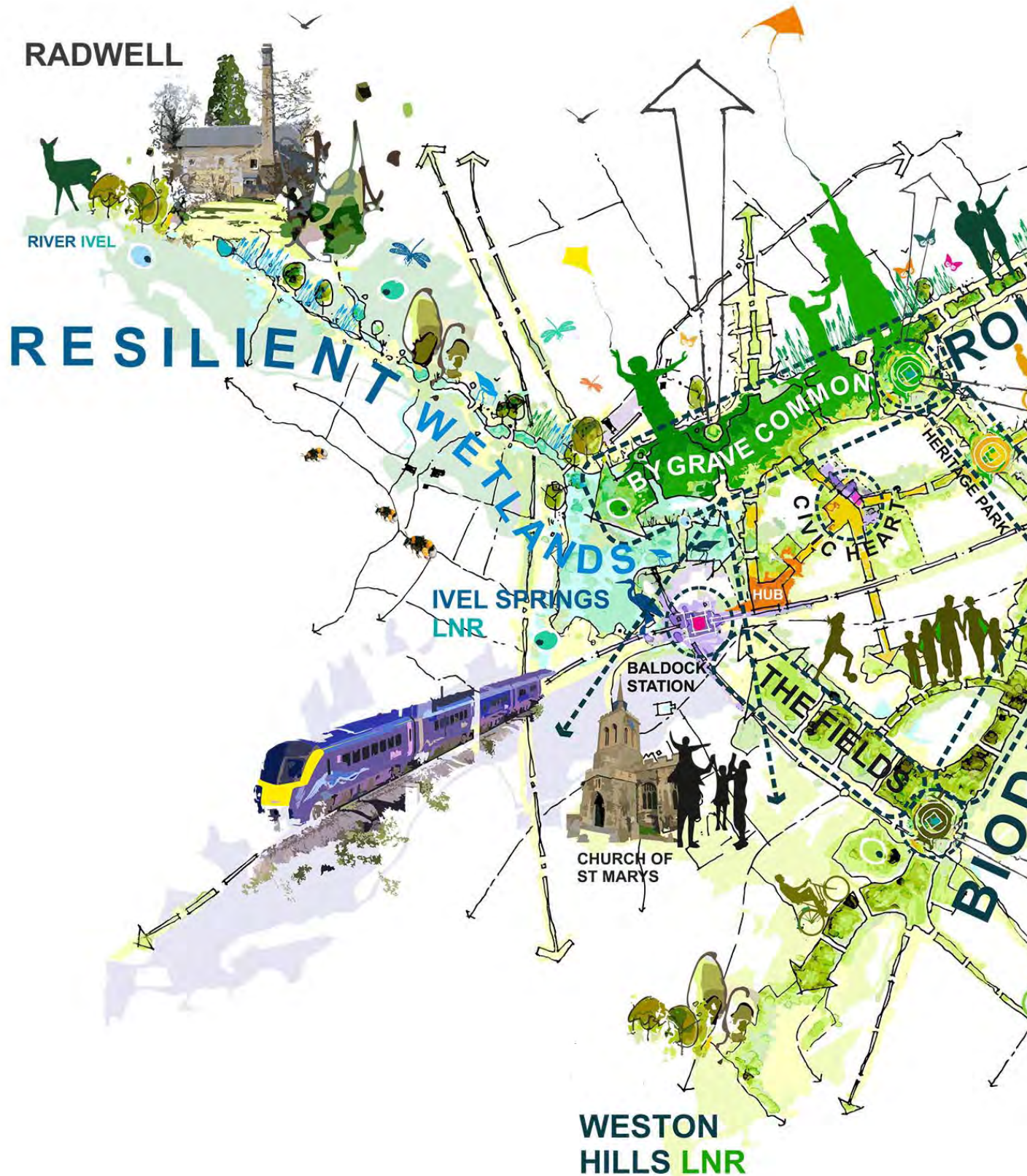


Figure 31. Green Infrastructure Vision Plan



ROLLING CHALKLANDS



BIODIVERSE GRASSLANDS



RESILIENT WETLANDS



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7.2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

The Green Infrastructure framework supports the landscape led design process undertaken for Baldock. The framework will:

- **Create a Strategic Nature Recovery Network** - buffer existing Local Nature Reserves (LNR) at Ivel Springs and Weston Hills, creating a strategic Local Nature Recovery Network (LNRN) as part of Bygrave Common. The LNRN will be supported further by core ecological stepping stones and green links, designed to aid the movement of wildlife through and beyond the Site
- **Deliver Key Open Space Destinations** - create a series of connected parklands that celebrate their unique landscape character and provide opportunities for play, sport, food production, historical interpretation and sustainable drainage features. Dedicated open space destinations include: Bygrave Common, Eastern Park, Green Space east of Clothall Common, Urban Open Land and Walls Field
- **Provide Access for All** - dedicated walking, cycling and (where possible) equestrian movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway, supported by a network of green links and active travel routes providing direct active travel connectivity to key open spaces and destinations such as sports pitches and parks
- **Bring the Past to Life** – embedding the heritage of the Site in landscape and green infrastructure through provision of a heritage trail through Bygrave Common, vantage points within strategic green spaces providing views to Baldock, and reinterpretation of historic winterbourne channel
- **Integrate SuDS** – to be integrated into and core component of strategic green infrastructure including the sustainable drainage corridor, to deliver drainage, placemaking and ecology function, as well as restoring the alignment of the winterbourne channel
- **Establish GI within parcels** – residential and commercial parcels will incorporate regular, smaller scale open spaces and landscaped areas located along and connected by AT routes. These spaces may include equipped play, play on the way, community growing space, SuDS and active travel connections. Design Coding will further articulate the approach to green infrastructure within parcels.

The Green Infrastructure framework plan, **Figure 32**, illustrates the proposals for option 2 at the Urban Open Land, where BA3 delivers the most residential units. For the instances where either options 1 or 3 are delivered, the GI strategy has the capacity to flex to suit the different land use options.

For options 1 & 3, where a secondary school is delivered on BA3, the 3G sports provision within the school grounds on BA3, grass pitches and pavilion on the Urban Open Land, and with play redistributed throughout the rest of the residential development, to ensure natural surveillance.

Further information on options 1, 2 & 3 and how these affect GI strategies and key spaces can be found in **Chapters 8 & 9**.



Figure 32. Green Infrastructure Framework Plan - Option 2

— Site boundary

GI Destinations:

- ① Ivel Springs (offsite)
- ② Weston Hills (offsite)
- ③ Bygrave Common
- ④ Eastern Park
- ⑤ Green Space east of Clothall Common
- ⑥ Walls Field
- ⑦ Urban Open Land

- ⑧ Baldock Greenway
- ⑨ Green Lane
- ⑩ Green Links
- ● Sustainable Drainage features



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7.3 OPEN SPACE, PLAY & RECREATION PROPOSALS

The Proposals for Baldock are compliant with open space requirements, details of which can be found in the previous **Section 4.1**, with the exception of Outdoor Sport Facilities.

As part of the design process, we have tested and measured open space requirements based on the Parameter Plan and Illustrative Masterplan for all 3 options. The following table and plan demonstrate that the illustrative proposals for Baldock will achieve the open space required for the maximum option of units (3,200).

The slight under provision of the quantum area of Outdoor Sports Facilities is in part as a result of the Site constraints - biodiversity and heritage designations, under ground archaeological features and the undulating topography, which collectively limit the locations sport can be located. Refer to **Section 8.4 Sports Strategy** for further information.

BALDOCK HYBRID STANDARDS - OPTION 2 - 3,200 UNITS			
OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY	1,000 population	7,680 population*	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
Outdoor Sports Facilities (NHC SPD) Grass & 3G pitches, sports pavilion, buffer planting	1.60 ha	12.29 ha	11.67 ha
Allotments (NHC SPD) Allotments, orchards, community gardens	0.30 ha	2.30 ha	2.30 ha
Provision for Children & Young People (FiT)			
Equipped play	0.25 ha	1.92 ha	1.92 ha
Informal play	0.30 ha	2.30 ha	2.30 ha
Parks & Gardens (FiT)	0.80 ha	6.14 ha	39.28 ha
Amenity Green Space (FiT)	0.60 ha	4.61 ha	4.61 ha
Natural & Semi-Natural Greensapce (FiT)	1.80 ha	13.82 ha	45.35 ha
TOTAL	5.65 ha	43.38 ha	107.43 ha

* Based on standard occupancy ratio of 2.4 persons per dwelling to estimate the population (3200 unit scheme x 2.4 = 7,680 population)

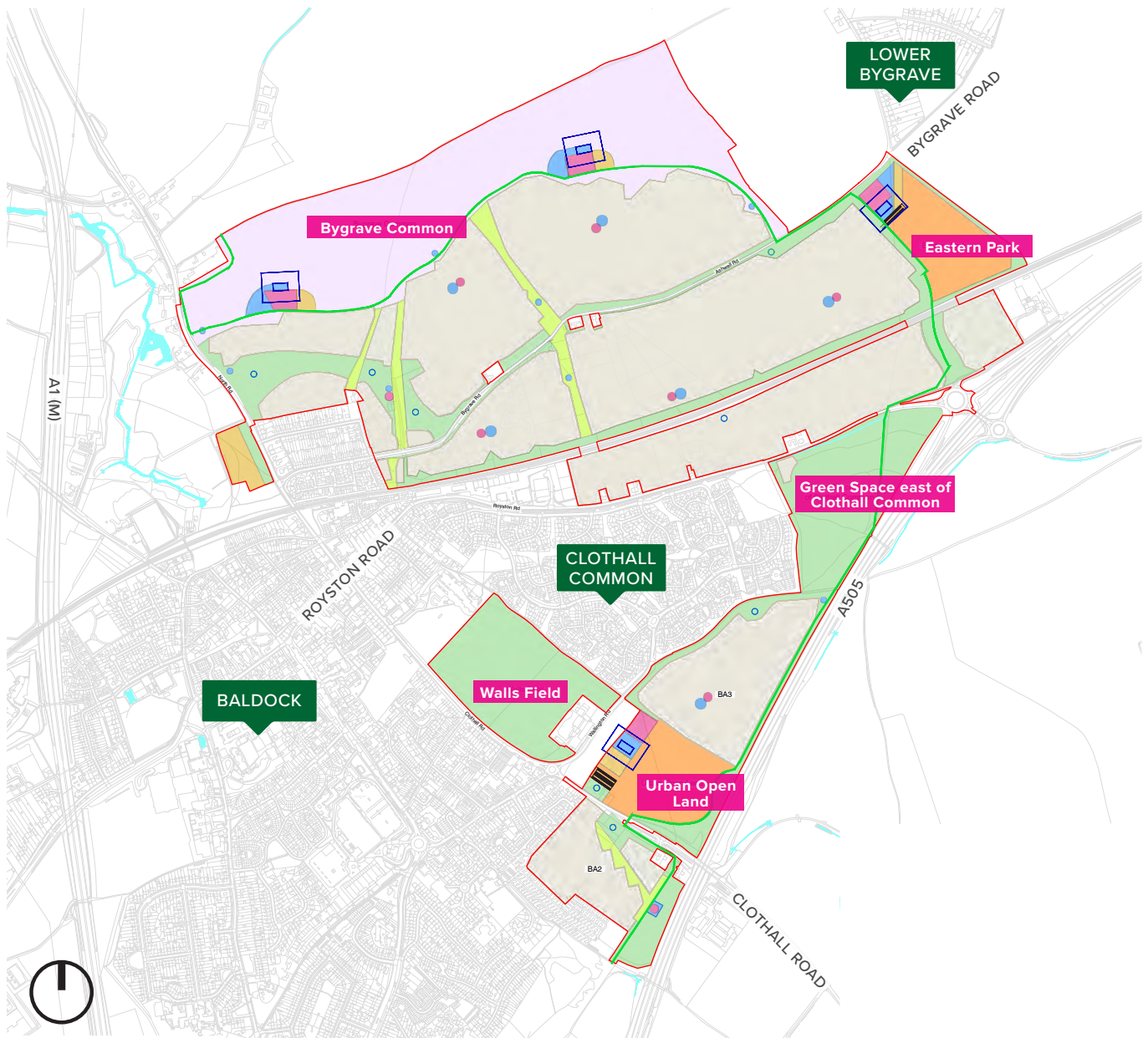


Figure 33. Indicative Open Space, Play & Recreation Plan - Option 2

— Site boundary



8

Green Infrastructure Strategies



Bridge crossing SuDS ponds - Houlton, Warwickshire



CHANGE
IF NOTHING
CHANGES.
LEAD
THE WAY!



8 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES

8.1 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Mitigation by Design - Habitats & Biodiversity

Extensive habitat restoration across the Baldock Site will improve habitat quality, structural diversity, and biodiversity through the creation, restoration, and expansion of neutral grasslands, woodland blocks, and species-rich hedgerows.

Enhanced habitat connectivity is central to the design, establishing wildlife corridors that link fragmented habitats and facilitate species movement, dispersal, and genetic exchange - particularly important for bats, badgers, and hedgehogs.

Natural and semi-natural open space typologies are positioned adjacent to sensitive sites such as Ivel Springs and Weston Hills LNRs, reducing edge impacts from development and reinforcing landscape-scale ecological resilience.

Targeted enhancement of degraded features will boost their value for nesting and foraging birds and bats, with management informed by baseline survey results.

Mitigation by Design - Species

Targeted ecological design will deliver conservation benefits tailored to the needs of key species recorded on-Site.

Bats will benefit from new roosting boxes and strengthened commuting and foraging routes via enhanced hedgerows and woodland edges. These improvements will support prey availability and secure movement corridors, boosting bat activity and diversity.

Farmland birds, particularly corn buntings, will be supported through rough grassland and scrub mosaics (northern part of Bygrave Common & at Green Space east of Clothall Common) designed for nesting and foraging. Dedicated management regimes and the provision of new nesting opportunities will aid breeding success.

Reptile species, such as common lizards and slow worms, will be supported through the installation of hibernacula and refugia in appropriate grassland areas, offering essential shelter and overwintering habitat to stabilise populations.

Corn Bunting Mitigation Strategy

Off-site mitigation areas have been identified for corn buntings to compensate for habitat loss at the Baldock Site, recognising the species' local importance.

Three key mitigation sites (Potential Park, Ashwell End, and Hinxworth) were surveyed and found suitable for supporting enhanced breeding habitat for corn buntings.

Proposed measures include 5m wide wildflower-rich field margins, beetle banks, and appropriate cropping regimes to maximise nesting and foraging potential.

2023 survey results confirmed these sites support viable corn bunting populations, with minimal population change since earlier assessments. Monitoring data from 2023 recorded stable or slightly increased territory numbers, especially at Ashwell End and Hinxworth, supporting the efficacy of these sites.

Ongoing habitat management will maintain high-quality breeding conditions at these locations, effectively offsetting impacts from the Baldock development.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The BNG assessment for the OPA will be illustrative and based on the Parameter Plan, informed by the GI Framework and some assumptions within the Illustrative Masterplan. As more detail comes forward at each stage as per the tiered approach, the BNG will be updated to reflect further information.

The scheme will deliver policy compliant BNG which is 10%, however given the opportunities within retained habitat and extensive landscape proposals we will aspire to achieve beyond this.

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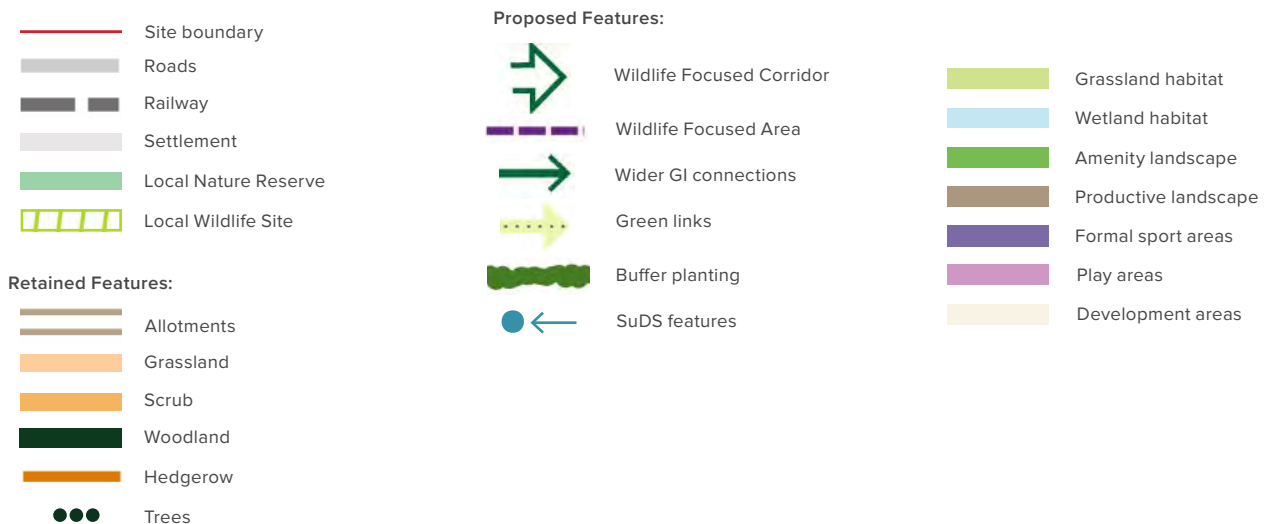
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Figure 34. Biodiversity Strategy Plan - Option 2





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8.2 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE STRATEGY

The proposed surface water drainage for the Badock scheme (refer to **Drainage Strategy Report** by akt for further information) will be designed in line with the guidance and recommendations contained in The SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753) but will also consider the most appropriate SuDS measures in the context of the River Ivel and the chalk aquifer.

The drainage proposals will include a linear, open space corridor, focused on the movement of people, water and wildlife - whilst reinterpreting the historic Winterbourne channel as part of the Site's waterstory. This linear corridor incorporates Bygrave Road, passes through the development, accommodates sustainable transport links (pedestrian and cycle) and will vary in width and character along its length. The linear open space will also facilitate multiple uses including proposed landscape planting to enhance biodiversity value along the linear open spaces, and will provide opportunities for informal recreation and play.

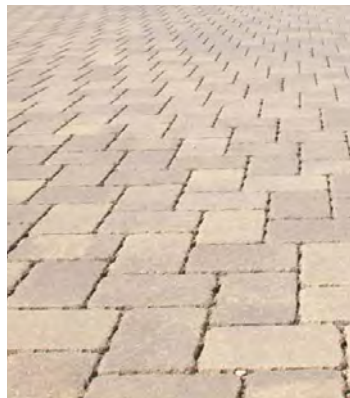
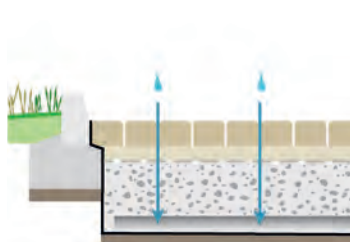
The philosophy for the proposed SUDS strategy is to dispose of surface water by infiltration wherever possible. The proposals include:

- Individual soakaways to the residential plots
- Permeable paving to driveways and residential parking areas
- Infiltration basins to collect runoff from residential parcel roads and footpaths
- Permeable paving to employment land car parking areas
- Infiltration basins to collect runoff from employment land buildings, roads and pavements
- Swales and bio-retention areas to partially convey runoff from roads and footpaths to the infiltration basins along with traditional piped systems

The Drainage Strategy Plan opposite, **Figure 35**, illustrates indicatively how SuDS features can be integrated into the design, managing surface water, by using infiltration basins and swales.

Further SuDS features, as part of the Proposed Development, will include permeable paving, soakaways to residential plots, filter strips, rain gardens and bio-retention areas. The exact location, shape and size of SuDS will be resolved through future Design Codes (Tier 2) and Reserved Matters Applications (Tier 3).

Permeable paving

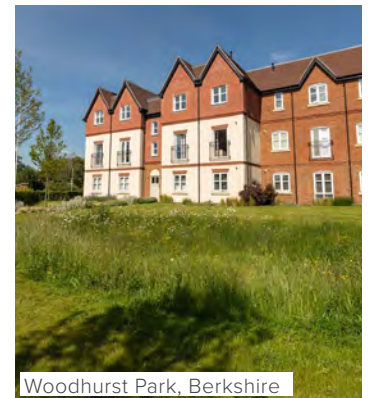


Swales/Rain Gardens



Watercolour, Surrey

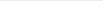
Infiltration basin



Woodhurst Park, Berkshire



Figure 35. Indicative Drainage Strategy Plan

-  Existing & proposed vegetation
-  Indicative infiltration basins
-  Indicative developable area
-  Indicative swales/Rain gardens
-  Direction of flow





8.3 PLAY STRATEGY

The Proposed Development provides the quantum of play required as per the **‘The North Herts Council (NHC) Developer Contributions (SPD) January 2023,’** and the **‘Fields in Trust Standards (FiT) 2024’.** The play strategy will not only ensure that play meets the minimum size and walking distances required, but will cater for all ages, offer opportunities for social interaction and provide a range of experiences. The exact location, shape and size of play areas are Indicative only and will be resolved through future Design Codes (Tier 2) and Reserved Matters Applications (Tier 3).

The play strategy illustrated in **Figure 36,** demonstrates four combined NEAP/LEAP play areas that are located along the Baldock Greenway and close to peoples homes for sustainable access. These combined NEAP/LEAP play areas are also co-located next to youth provision and community growing spaces.

LEAPs and informal play will also be evenly distributed throughout the residential parcels, ensuring the minimum area and walking distance of equipped play is provided for the rest of the development.

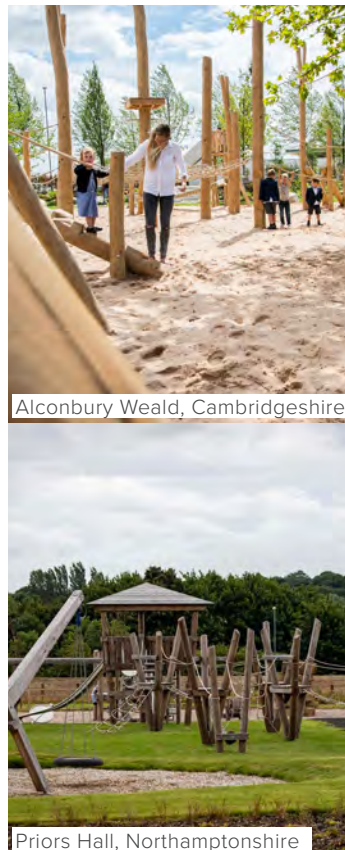
Informal play will be provided through landscape design elements such as: changes to levels, boulders, logs and other engaging natural features to create incidental play opportunities, as well as within pocket parks in development areas. Informal play elements included along key movement routes such as the green links and Baldock Greenway, can provide play on the way, and will also be incorporated next to equipped play areas, ensuring all ages of play are catered for in one location.

This strategy illustrates one option for how play could be delivered at Baldock, based on option 2 where BA3 delivers the most residential units. For the instances where either options 1 or 3 are delivered, the play strategy has the capacity to flex to suit the different land use options.

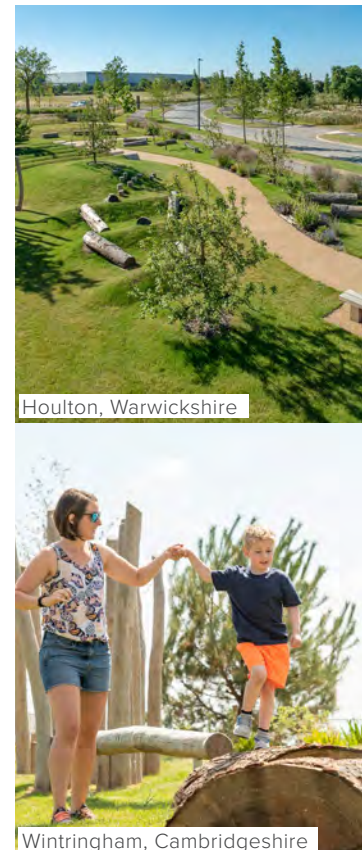
Formal Combined NEAP/LEAP



Formal LEAP



Informal Play



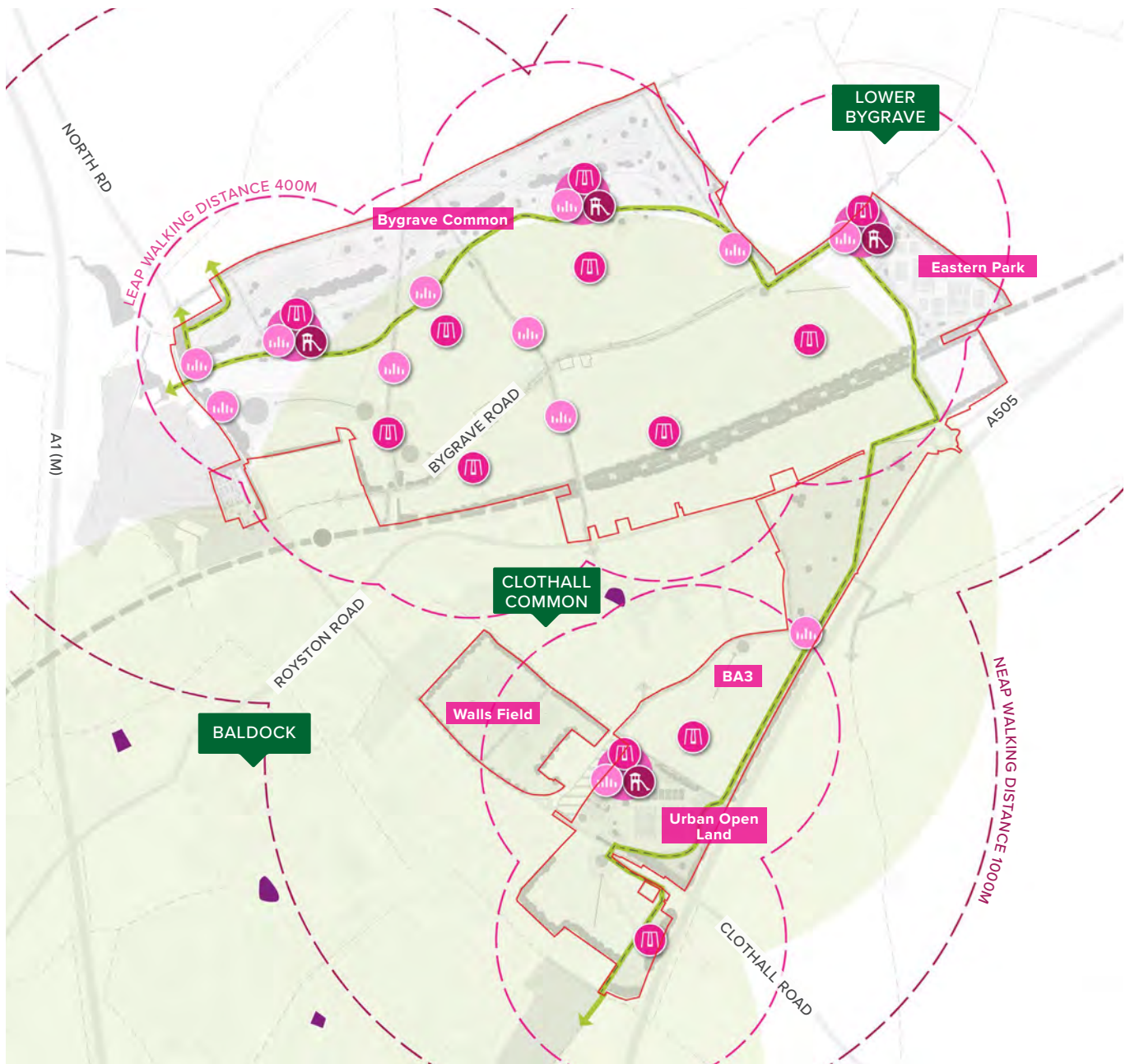


Figure 36. Indicative Play Strategy Plan - Option 2

Existing Play Provision:

- Existing play areas
- Existing play walking distance



Proposed Play Provision:

- NEAP/LEAP
 Combined NEAP/LEAP
 - Including MUGA
 - 1000m walking distance from home
- LEAP
 LEAP
 - 400m walking distance from home
- Informal Play
 Informal Play
 - informal natural play interventions interspersed along key movement routes



8.4 SPORTS STRATEGY

The sports strategy for Baldock has been developed alongside **North Herts Council (NHC)**, and **Sport England** as part of the pre-application process. Guidance from both NHC and the issue of the '**20250409 Playing Pitch Calculator Outputs Baldock Allocations 3200 dwellings 7680 population**' from Sport England have determined the following strategy.

The suitable locations in which to provide formal sports provision are limited due to the constraints at Baldock such as, the ecological importance of Bygrave Common and Green Space east of Clothall Common and the archaeological importance of Walls Field.

The sports strategy for Baldock will deliver sports hubs at Eastern Park and the Urban Open Land. These will be supported by car parking, a sports pavilion/club changing rooms and co-located facilities such as play areas and community growing areas. Proposed bunds featuring pollinator planting and trees will provide buffers between proposed and existing residential development and the formal sports pitches.

The sports strategy at Baldock has been tested to suit the different land use options at BA3. **Figure 37** is based on option 2, with residential and an SEND school proposed on BA3, resulting in the sports provision being located on the Urban Open Land. For both options 1 & 3, the 3G pitches will be located within the school grounds on BA3 for joint community use, with grass pitches on the Urban Open Land for school use only. For all 3 options the formal sports at Eastern Park will provide be unlit grass pitches.

Alongside the formal sport provision, active design principles such as active travel routes, green links and the Baldock Greenway will prioritise sustainable travel and provide opportunities for outdoor gym equipment, walking, running and cycling routes, all encouraging healthy active lifestyles.

See table opposite for a breakdown of pitch type and quantum for all options, and refer to **Chapter 9** for illustrative examples of pitch layouts at Eastern Park and the Urban Open Land.

Formal pitch provision - Grass



Adult pitches with cricket pitch



Mini pitch

Formal pitch provision - 3G



3G all weather pitch



Tennis/Netball courts

MUGA/Sports Pavilion



Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire



Meon Vale, Stratford-upon-Avon



Figure 37. Indicative Sports Strategy Plan - Option 2

Existing Sports Provision:

- Not publicly accessible to local residents (private clubs/schools)
- Sport accessed through private membership and/or hire fees
- Publicly accessible
- Existing sport walking distance

Proposed Sport Provision:

-  Football
-  Cricket
-  Netball
-  Tennis
-  Outdoor gym equipment
-  Cycling routes
-  Multi-use Games Area (MUGA)
-  Baldock Greenway

PLAYING PITCH CALCULATOR - SPORT ENGLAND		
PITCH TYPE	REQUIRED 7,680*	PROPOSED Options 1, 2 & 3
TOTAL - 3G Adult Football	0.75	2
TOTAL - Grass	12.67	10
Adult Football	1.67	2
Youth Football	4.96	3
Mini Soccer	3.49	4
Rugby Union	112	0
Rugby League	0.17	0
Cricket	1.27	1
ADDITIONAL - Netball/Tennis	-	6

* Based on standard occupancy ratio of 2.4 persons per dwelling to estimate the population (3200 unit scheme x 2.4 = 7,680 population)

**Please refer to Appendix A for
Scaled Indicative Pitch Layouts**



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8.5 PRODUCTIVE STRATEGY

The Proposed Development provides the quantum of productive area (allotments, growing spaces and orchards) required as per the **‘The North Herts Council (NHC) Developer Contributions (SPD) January 2023,’** and meets the minimum walking distances required.

The strategy for productive landscapes at Baldock is to extend existing formal allotments at North Rd and Clothall Rd, to utilise facilities and infrastructure associated with the existing plots.

The strategy illustrates three community growing spaces, co-located next to play areas, MUGAs and sports facilities to create active and multifunctional destinations. These community growing spaces will provide raised community beds, fruiting orchard trees with spaces and seating for informal social activities. The strategy will be supported by opportunities for informal foraging and edible trails along key pedestrian movement routes such as the Baldock Greenway.

The strategy plan, **Figure 38**, illustrates option 2, where BA3 delivers the most residential units.

For the instances where either options 1 or 3 are delivered with a secondary school on BA3, the formal allotments proposed at the Urban Open Land can change shape to stretch along the existing plots at Clothall Rd, keeping ownership boundaries between school land on Urban Open Land straightforward.

The area of public open space identified off North Road lies directly adjacent to Ivel Springs LNR and the existing North Road allotments managed by Baldock Allotment and Leisure Gardeners’ Association Ltd (BALGA). U&C have been directly consulting with BALGA who have expressed interest in the future extension of the North Road allotments in this area of public open space. Any proposals for ‘productive landscapes’ (either allotments and/or orchards set within grassland) would be seen as a natural extension to an existing current land use. The detail design of this space will be subject to future design codes, regulatory plans and reserved matter applications, therefore this area of green space is still subject to further detailed design.

Formal Allotments



Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire



Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire

Community Growing Spaces



Houlton, Warwickshire



Woodhurst Park, Berkshire

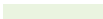
Informal Foraging/Edible Trails





Figure 38. Indicative Productive Strategy Plan - Option 2

Existing Productive Provision:

-  Formal allotments
-  Existing allotments walking distance



Proposed Productive Provision:

-  Formal allotments
-  Community growing spaces
-  Informal foraging/edible trails



9 Key Spaces



Taplow Riverside, Berkshire





9 KEY SPACES

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This chapter sets out to clearly illustrate the location, function, character and the management and maintenance of the key green infrastructure spaces within the Proposed Development.

The following pages indicatively show how Baldock can accommodate the key landscape design features, whilst ensuring all open space, landscape character, visual and ecological requirements are met.

Section 9.3 illustrates alternative layouts for the Urban Open Land options 1, 2 & 3.



Figure 39. Key Spaces Plan

Parks & Gardens

- 1 Bygrave Common Overall
- 2 Eastern Park
- 3 Urban Open Land
- 4 Weston End

Natural/Semi Natural Open Space

- 5 Bygrave Common Ecological Area
- 6 Green Space east of Clothall Common
- 7 Walls Field

Linear Open Space

- 8 Baldock Greenway
- Green Lane
- Green Links
- Sustainable Drainage Corridor



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9.1 BYGRAVE COMMON OVERALL

Bygrave Common will deliver a new destination public parkland and natural landscape that is over 40ha in size and forms part of a new Local Nature Recovery Strategy that reconnects nature and provides greater permeability for species within, to and from the Site.

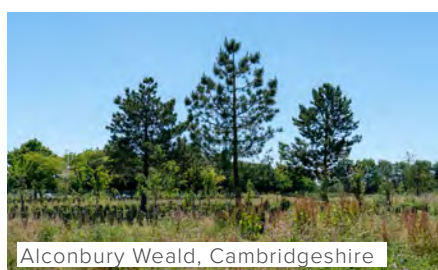
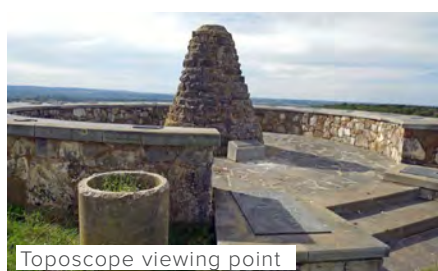
The overall strategy for Bygrave Common is to provide recreational focused activities alongside the development edge and the Baldock Greenway, with the northern part of Bygrave Common providing a range of ecological focused habitats. For more information on the Bygrave Common Ecological Area see **Section 9.5**.

This proposed parkland destination will provide the existing and new residents of Baldock ample space to relax, play, exercise and socialise, alongside the opportunity to experience nature through a range of habitat typologies and biodiversity enhancements .

- 1 Utilise the existing key vantage points at Bygrave Common as part of a 'heritage trail', to provide views towards St Mary's Church spire in Baldock and out to the surrounding landscape.
- 2 Create a destination park, through the co-location of play (NEAP & LEAP), MUGAs and community growing spaces (raised beds & orchards) whilst respecting archaeological constraints and providing natural surveillance.
- 3 Dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway.
- 4 Provide informal natural play and fitness interventions interspersed along key movement routes.
- 5 Retain and enhance existing hedgerows and field margins, and create a new open chalk grassland habitat, featuring areas of scattered trees & scrub to support a range of species as well as encouraging species to move through the wider landscape.
- 6 Retain Millers Way historic route and alignment as a grass track as part of the existing public right of way.
- 7 Creation of native scrub and tree planting as part of a wooded landscape buffer along the ridgeline to aid the transition in character out to the wider landscape, species movement and softening views of proposed built form.



Figure 40. Bygrave Common Illustrative Plan





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9.2 EASTERN PARK

Eastern Park will deliver a new local park, serving the north eastern community of Baldock, ensuring to also provide an important buffer between the proposed residential development, formal sports pitches and existing properties at Lower Bygrave.

- 1 Utilise the existing key vantage points at Eastern Park as part of a 'heritage trail', to provide views out to the surrounding landscape.
- 2 Creation of a destination park, through the co-location of play (NEAP & LEAP), MUGA and community growing spaces (raised beds & orchards) close to people's homes.
- 3 Provision of grass sports pitches supported by a sports pavilion and car park.
- 4 Dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway.
- 5 Proposed landscape mounds/bunds, featuring pollinator and buffer planting to provide a buffer between the proposed residential development, formal sports pitches and existing properties at Lower Bygrave.



Figure 41. Eastern Park Illustrative Plan





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9.3 URBAN OPEN LAND

The green infrastructure proposals at the Urban Open Land will create a new local park to serve the south eastern community of Baldock, whilst maintaining a sense of ‘openness’ and creating a transition from urban to rural.

Figure 42, illustrates the proposals for option 2 at the Urban Open Land, where BA3 delivers the most residential units. For the instances where either options 1 or 3 are delivered, demonstrates the 3G sports provision within the school grounds on BA3, grass pitches and pavilion on the Urban Open Land, and with play redistributed throughout the rest of the residential development, to ensure natural surveillance.

- 1 Create key vantage points as part of a ‘heritage trail’, to provide views out back towards Baldock and out to the surrounding landscape.
- 2 Provision of 3G outdoor sports pitches, supported by a sports pavilion and car park if option 2, no secondary school on BA3 is delivered.
- 3 Create a destination park, through the co-location of play (NEAP & LEAP), situated adjacent to community spaces to provide natural surveillance, if option 2, no secondary school on BA3 is delivered.
- 4 Dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway.
- 5 Sensitively designed sports provision, landscaped mounds and lighting for ecological benefits and to retain openness between Baldock and the surrounding landscape to the east.
- 6 Opportunity to expand and enhance the existing allotment facilities at the BALGA Clothall Rd site.





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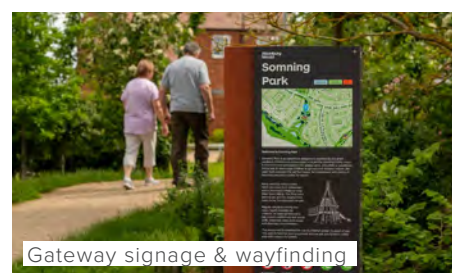
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9.4 WESTON END

Weston End will serve as a gateway local park destination, connecting to Weston Hills Local Nature Reserve. The retained and proposed landscape will provide an attractive setting for a new playground, overlooked by residential properties and with onward connections to the rest of the Proposed Development.

- 1 Dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway.
- 2 Provision of a LEAP play area that serves the new residents at BA2, that is overlooked by residential properties and situated alongside the Baldock Greenway.
- 3 Opportunity for fitness interventions interspersed along the Baldock Greenway, informal natural play integrated within proposed landscape mounding and buffer planting.
- 4 Retention of existing habitats and proposed landscape mounds/bunds, featuring pollinator and buffer planting to provide a buffer between the proposed residential development and the A505.
- 5 Create an attractive gateway setting with signage and wayfinding to signal the entrance to both the Weston Hills LNR and the Proposed Development.





9.5 BYGRAVE COMMON ECOLOGICAL AREA

Bygrave Common will provide a new habitat mosaic, as part of a new Local Nature Recovery Strategy that reconnects nature and provides greater permeability for species within, to and from the Site.

Proposed Species & Habitats

Species-rich calcareous grassland, seeded with a native wildflower and fine grass mix (e.g. *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Koeleria macrantha*, *Festuca ovina*), to promote invertebrates including bees, butterflies (e.g. chalkhill blue, marbled white) moths, and hoverflies.

Scattered scrub and native standard trees, such as hawthorn, blackthorn, and field maple, offering structural heterogeneity, berry-producing resources, and nesting opportunities for farmland and scrub-edge birds including corn bunting, linnet, yellowhammer, and whitethroat.

Hedgerow enhancement and infill, using native, locally characteristic species (e.g. dogwood, hazel, spindle), managed to achieve dense, layered structure for cover and movement of small mammals, reptiles, and bats, while providing nectar and fruits.

Tussocky grassland margins and south-facing slopes, left unmanaged or lightly managed to support thermoregulation, foraging, and hibernation for reptiles such as common lizard and slow worm.

Linear features and wildflower margins, providing navigational and foraging routes for bats, likely species include common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and noctule.

Management & Maintenance for Ecological Benefits

Scrub and tree management to ensure a dynamic balance between open grassland and structural diversity. Rotational cutting and selective coppicing to prevent encroachment, with retention of flowering shrubs and berry-bearing species for invertebrates and birds

Hedgerow management on a 2–3 year cycle using traditional methods (e.g. coppicing, laying) outside of the bird nesting season

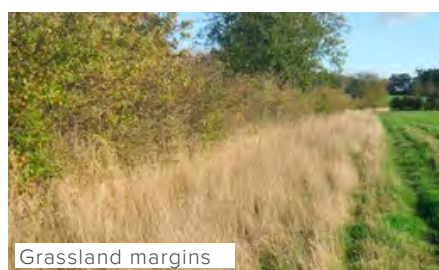
Targeted monitoring and ecological surveys, including fixed-point floristic assessments, invertebrate transects (e.g. pollinator counts), and reptile refugia surveys to inform an adaptive management plan to refine cutting regimes and identify habitat gaps.

Low-impact public access, incorporating surfaced recreational routes and strategic signage to direct footfall away from sensitive grassland and scrub-edge areas.

Calcareous grassland management through late summer cutting (post-seeding), with arisings removed to maintain low fertility conditions that favour wildflower dominance. A rotational mosaic of cut and uncut areas will be maintained to support overwintering invertebrates and reptiles.

Ongoing habitat creation and enhancement, particularly within hedgerow gaps and around the margins of grassland blocks, to create a resilient, interconnected ecological network across the Site and the wider countryside.

- 1 Create a new open chalk grassland habitat, featuring areas of scattered trees & scrub to support a range of species as well as encouraging species to move through the wider landscape.
- 2 Existing hedgerow retained, enhanced and gapped up where necessary with native species rich hedgerow and hedgerow trees.
- 3 Creation of native scrub and tree planting as part of a wooded landscape buffer along the ridgeline to aid the transition in character out to the wider landscape, species movement and softening views of proposed built form.
- 4 Provide a range of informal mown routes and surfaced footpaths for recreational use.
- 5 Retain Millers Way historic route and alignment as a grass track as part of the existing public right of way.





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9.6 GREEN SPACE EAST OF CLOTHALL COMMON

The Green Space east of Clothall Common is an existing habitat mosaic that acts as a key ecological stepping stone as part of the wider Baldock Green Infrastructure strategy.

Proposed Species & Habitats

The enhancement of Clothall Common as part of the Site's GI strategy focuses on increasing biodiversity value through habitat diversification and sensitive management. The area is proposed to support:

- Species-rich neutral grassland with native wildflowers (e.g. *Centaurea nigra*, *Rhinanthus minor*, *Leucanthemum vulgare*) to enhance floral diversity and attract pollinators like bumblebees, butterflies (e.g. small skipper), and hoverflies,
- Scattered scrub and hedgerows to support nesting birds such as whitethroat, dunnock, and song thrush, and provide shelter for reptiles and small mammals,
- Habitat for reptiles, particularly common lizard and slow worm, through the retention and creation of south-facing banks, log/brush piles, and unmanaged tussocky swards,
- Bat foraging habitat, supported by flower-rich meadows and linear features like tree lines and hedgerows.

Management & Maintenance for Ecological Benefits

To maximise the ecological value of Clothall Common, the following long-term management practices are proposed:

- Scrub management, maintaining a balance between open grassland and structurally diverse shrub cover. Scrub will be coppiced or thinned on rotation to prevent encroachment while retaining value for nesting birds,
- Hedgerow management on a 2–3 year rotation using traditional techniques (e.g. coppicing or layering), avoiding nesting season to protect breeding birds,

- Monitoring and adaptive management, with regular ecological checks (e.g. floristic diversity assessments, reptile presence surveys) to inform refinement of the maintenance regime,
- Minimised disturbance, by directing public access along defined paths and using signage/fencing where needed to reduce trampling pressure on sensitive areas,
- Rotational cutting of grassland, with a late summer cut (after seeding) and removal of arisings to maintain nutrient-poor conditions suitable for wildflower dominance. Some areas will remain uncut annually to provide overwintering habitat for invertebrates.

1 Utilise the existing key vantage points as part of the 'heritage trail', to provide views out to the surrounding landscape.

2 Existing grassland and scrub habitat mosaic to be retained and enhanced encouraging species to move through the wider landscape.

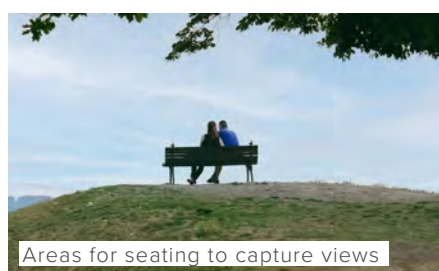
3 Dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network through and around Baldock as part of the Baldock Greenway, retaining the existing width and surface treatment of the public right of way, to minimise impact on the ecological area.

4 Informal recreational routes indicated with mown paths located on existing desire lines to control movement, ensuring the preservation as an ecologically rich area.

5 Opportunities for seating within mown amenity grass situated at accessible distances for all users.



Figure 45. Green Space east of Clothall Common Illustrative Plan





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9.7 WALLS FIELD

Walls Field presents a key opportunity for a new natural/semi-natural space, taking Walls Field out of intensive agricultural use and transforming it into wildflower meadows will help preserve the archaeology associated with the Scheduled Monument and provide ecological and recreational benefits.

Proposed Species & Habitats

The primary ecological proposal is the establishment of a low-nutrient, species-rich grassland seeded with native wildflower and fine grass mixes. This habitat is intended to support a diverse invertebrate assemblage, including pollinators such as meadow brown, marbled white, and various solitary bee species. The floral composition will prioritise shallow-rooted species to avoid disturbance to sub-surface archaeological features.

Scattered non-invasive native trees, such as field maple (*Acer campestre*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), will be sensitively planted in low densities, with locations informed by archaeological constraints. These will provide shelter and foraging opportunities for birds and invertebrates without compromising the integrity of the Scheduled Monument. In turn this will lead to increased use by breeding birds and provide a stepping stone for other protected species such as reptiles and bats.

Recreational use will be integrated through mown pathways and informal access routes, maintaining large buffer zones around ecologically sensitive and archaeologically significant areas. This approach ensures accessibility while preserving ecological and heritage features.

Management & Maintenance for Ecological Benefits

Meadow cutting regime, involving a single annual cut in late summer, with arisings removed to maintain low soil fertility and encourage floral diversity. Some areas may be left uncut on rotation to support overwintering invertebrates.

No fertiliser or deep cultivation, in line with Scheduled Monument requirements. All works will be surface-based with seed drilling limited to shallow scarification or plug planting where appropriate.

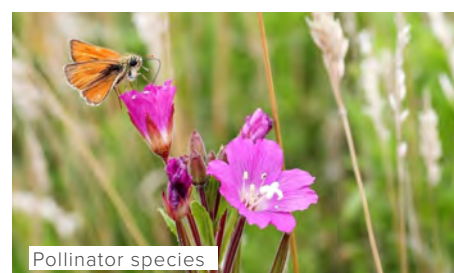
Tree and scrub management, ensuring only appropriate species are used and that no deep rooting species are introduced. Trees will be monitored regularly and pruned as necessary to avoid excessive canopy spread or root penetration.

Public access zoning, with well-defined mown paths and signage to limit footfall in core wildflower and archaeological areas. Visitor infrastructure (e.g. benches or signage) will be kept to the periphery where possible.

Monitoring, including annual fixed-point photography and botanical quadrat surveys to assess sward development, floral richness, and habitat condition. Findings will inform adaptive management.

Heritage liaison, ensuring all habitat works align with Scheduled Monument guidance, and that any interventions are agreed with Historic England or relevant bodies in advance.

- 1 Ecological enhancement that respects the archaeological sensitivity of the Scheduled Monument and its biodiversity potential through species-rich wildflower meadow creation, light recreational access, and non-invasive native tree planting.
- 2 Retained existing public right of way footpath.
- 3 Informal recreational routes indicated with mown paths to control movement whilst increasing amenity value of Walls Field Scheduled monument.
- 4 Opportunities for seating and wayfinding/ interpretation boards (as part of Baldock heritage trail), situated at key locations to reference cultural heritage of Baldock and the existing scheduled monument.





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9.8 BALDOCK GREENWAY

Baldock is strategically located to the east of two existing strategic recreational routes, Etonbury Green Wheel and Letchworth Greenway. As part of the Proposed Development, a dedicated walking, cycling and horse riding (where possible) movement network will be provided through and around Baldock, with the potential to connect offsite to the existing Etonbury and Letchworth routes.

The strategy for the Baldock Greenway has been developed alongside **North Herts Council (NHC)**, **Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)** and the **British Horse Society (BHS)**. As part of this pre-application process, it was raised that there was currently a gap in the equestrian network between Clothall and Bygrave. During the Green Infrastructure Audit of the PRoW, undertaken for SMP stage, it was identified that Royston Rd and the railway had deterred users crossing and causing further disconnections in the PRoW network.

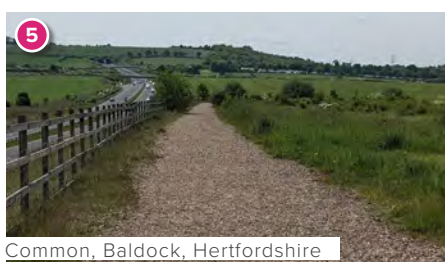
The Baldock Greenway provides the opportunity to reconnect this gap in the equestrian network through controlled horse rider access, and provide safe crossing points for all users at Royston Rd and across the railway.

The function, width and surface treatment of the Baldock Greenway will vary along its length, creating a route with varied character that responds to its surroundings.

Running in part along the Baldock Greenway and destination parks, the **Baldock Heritage Trail** will celebrate, reference and interpret the area's rich history by connecting key heritage features within the development and linking to the wider area through a network of waymarked trails. Surfaced paths, connecting important assets and highlighting the area's heritage, through interpretation using either boards / signage, wayfinding, landscape features and / or public art.



Figure 47. Baldock Greenway Illustrative Plan





10 Management & Maintenance



Community Gardens - Woodhurst Park, Berkshire





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10.1 MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE OPTIONS

The development will seek to establish a sustainable long-term approach to the maintenance and management of green infrastructure and other community assets. The design of open spaces and green infrastructure must therefore consider the long-term management and maintenance of the landscape, not just its design at 'day one'. Urban&Civic are exploring long term management options for areas of green infrastructure (i.e. Land Trust, Wildlife Trust or an Estate Management Company). The below options are different approaches that could be considered at Baldock. Detailed Landscape and Management and Maintenance Plans will be submitted as part of more detailed planning applications.

Adoption by the Local Authority

- Leavesden Country Park is a 38 hectare park in Hertfordshire, owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council
- With significant investment in the park from Three Rivers District Council, Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, National Lottery Heritage Fund, YMCA and Sport England, it has moved from a dog walking space into a destination attraction
- The rejuvenated park, provides a home to Leavesden HIVE (Heritage/Information/Volunteering/Education), full time Park Ranger, a Friends of Leavesden Country Park group and Leavesden Hospital History Association
- The park is managed in accordance with the Leavesden Leavesden Country Park, Management Plan 2021-2031



Stewardship by the Land Trust

- Beaulieu, Chelmsford is a 3000+ new homes development by developers Countryside and L&Q
- The Land Trust have taken on the long-term ownership and management of the green infrastructure on the Site
- By the end of the 20-year build-out, the Land Trust will manage the 72 hectares of parks and open spaces incorporated into the original masterplan
- The Land Trust will take care of the estate parkland indefinitely on behalf of, and in partnership with, the Beaulieu residents and the wider local community through the collection and administration of a service charge



Stewardship by the Wildlife Trust

- The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire owns and manages Trumpington Meadows country park and nature reserve
- Grosvenor Property UK and the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) in 2022 agreed the terms for a financial endowment to the Wildlife Trust to secure the future of the 148-acre country park and nature reserve within a 1,200 home neighbourhood in Cambridge
- The Wildlife Trust has maintained the country park and nature reserve since 2015 but its partnership with Grosvenor and USS goes back to 2008, when the trust was selected to help shape the green spaces at Trumpington Meadows. The endowment will pay for the trust to undertake the maintenance of the park for an indefinite period



Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge

Strategic Management Company

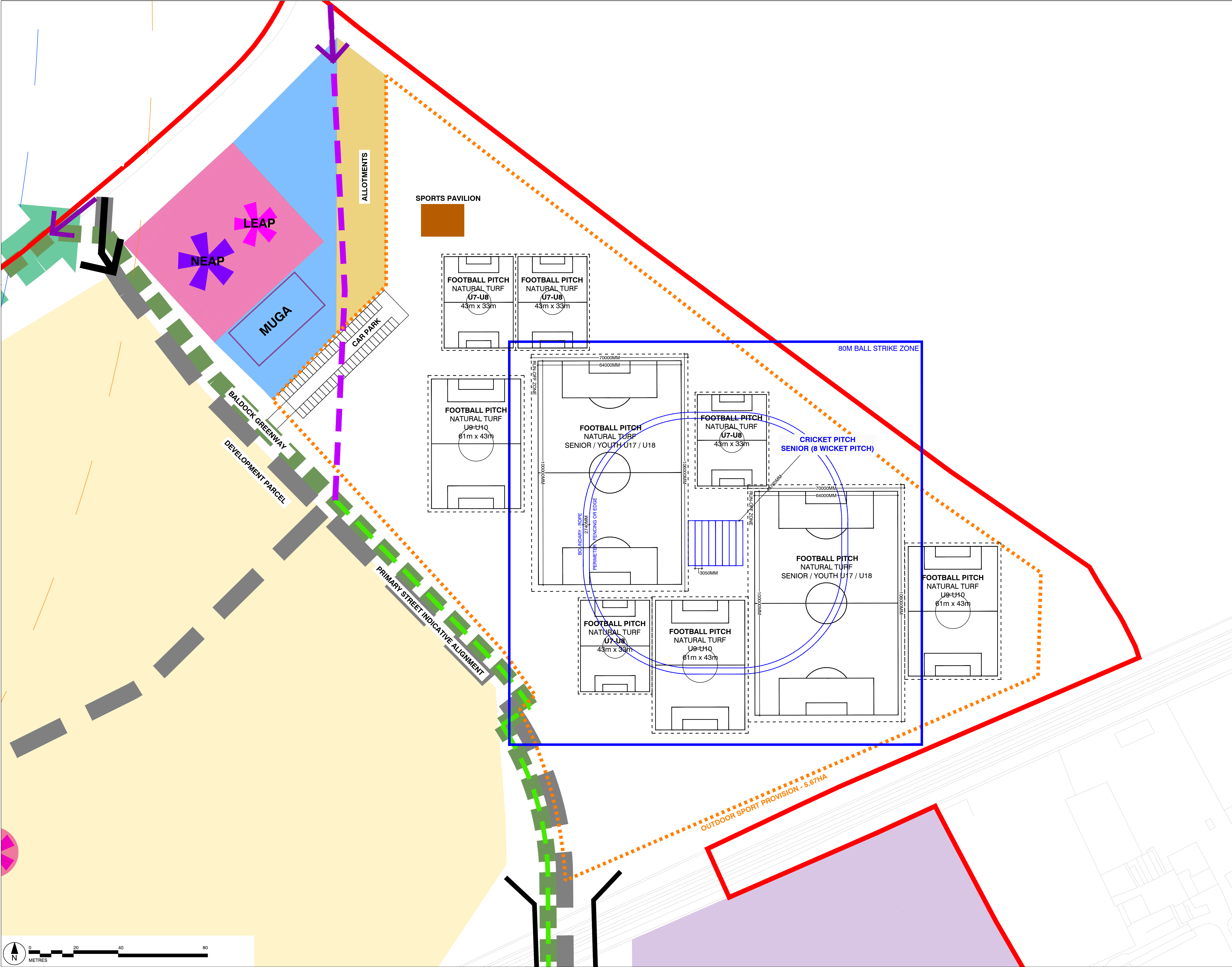
- Alconbury Weald is 6,500+ strategic residential development, located north west of Huntingdon, in Cambridgeshire and is being delivered by Master Developer Urban&Civic Plc
- Over the next 15 - 20 years, Alconbury Weald will deliver new homes, employment, green space, education, transport links and amenities for the community to enjoy
- The management and maintenance of the open spaces, landscape and green infrastructure is funded through an annual service charge to residents, which facilitates a private management company to maintain these spaces



Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire



A Appendix A



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- URBAN OPEN LAND SPORTS HUB 5.67HA:**
- 2NO. NATURAL TURF SENIOR FOOTBALL PITCHES
 - 3NO. NATURAL TURF U9-U10 PITCHES
 - 4NO. NATURAL TURF U7-U8 PITCHES
 - SPORTS PAVILION
 - CAR PARKING SPACES

Rev	Description	Date
1	Purpose of Issue	
INFORMATION		
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Client		
Urban & Civic		
Project		
BALDOCK		
Drawing Title		
Indicative Pitch Layout - Eastern Park		
Drawn	Checked	Approved
HR	ED	UJ
Job No.	Scale	Sheet Size
21.045	1:750	A1
Drawing Number	Revised	
BMD.21.045.DR.005	-	



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URBAN OPEN LAND SPORTS HUB 6.00HA:

- 2NO. 3G ADULT FOOTBALL PITCHES
- 6NO. DUAL USE TENNIS & NETBALL PITCHES
- SPORTS PAVILION
- CAR PARKING SPACES

Rev	Description	Date

Purpose of Issue

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Client

Urban & Civic

Project
BALDOCK

Drawing Title
Indicative Pitch Layout - Urban Open Land

Drawn HR	Checked ED	Approved JMJ	Issue 30/01/2026
Job No. 21.045	Scale 1:750	Sheet Size A1	Revised -
Drawing Number BMD.21.045.DR.006			

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