

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY LG3 FRAMEWORK

Strategic masterplan document
February 2022

The Environment
Partnership

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Urban Practitioners

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1.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of the Strategic Masterplan Framework document is to

- Demonstrate conformity with Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability and national and local plan policy
- Clarify the key parameters and principles for which approval is sought as the main approval document
- Provide a quality design framework to secure design quality, support a coordinated high quality development and inform pre-commencement conditions and reserved matters

The Design and Access Statement (DAS) is referred to for contextual, guidance and illustrative purposes. The application does not seek approval for the illustrative masterplan.

The illustrative masterplan demonstrates how the proposed parameters and principles within the Masterplan Framework can be delivered within the site boundary.



Figure 1 Aerial of the LG3 site, including Letchworth Garden City and Norton

2.

SITE AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

THE SITE

- The site sits in between Letchworth Garden City and Norton, with the A1 sitting to the east.
- The site sits on a gradual gradient with the highest point at the north, where it also flattens out.
- The peripheral conditions vary a considerable amount, in both character and land use.
- LG3 is currently a greenfield site, with the Green Belt sitting at its eastern edge.
- Norton conservation area is just to the north of the site and includes St Nicholas Church and primary school.
- To the south of the site lies an industrial estate, although hidden by a young woodland.
- Along the site's western edge is residential housing comprising of low rise semi detached and terraced housing and blocks of flats.



Figure 2 Aerial of the LG3 site, including Letchworth Garden City and Norton

PRE-GARDEN CITY - 1700-1785

- The earliest cartographic source to depict the site comprises a map of **Norton** which dates to c.1700.
- In the early 18th century, Norton consisted of a **small parish** close to the large settlement of Baldock.
- The village itself comprised a relatively **small, linear settlement** with Nortonbury to the north east. Most of the parish consisted of agricultural land traversed by trackways and footpaths.
- St Nicholas Church was established in 12th century. A series of well-preserved medieval earthworks survive to the north east of the churchyard. Excavations have confirmed the presence of an early manor building, but this had been abandoned by 1350.
- A manor house was then established at Norton Bury in the early 14th century to the north east of the village.
- In c. 1700 the site consisted of **agricultural land** located close to the parish's southern boundary, which was demarcated by the Icknield Way.
- At this time, the site appeared to comprise a section of **arable fields**, with its relief clearly rising to the north and towards Norton. By c. 1785, the site remained arable.
- The village remained a **relatively small, linear settlement** with Nortonbury to the north east.

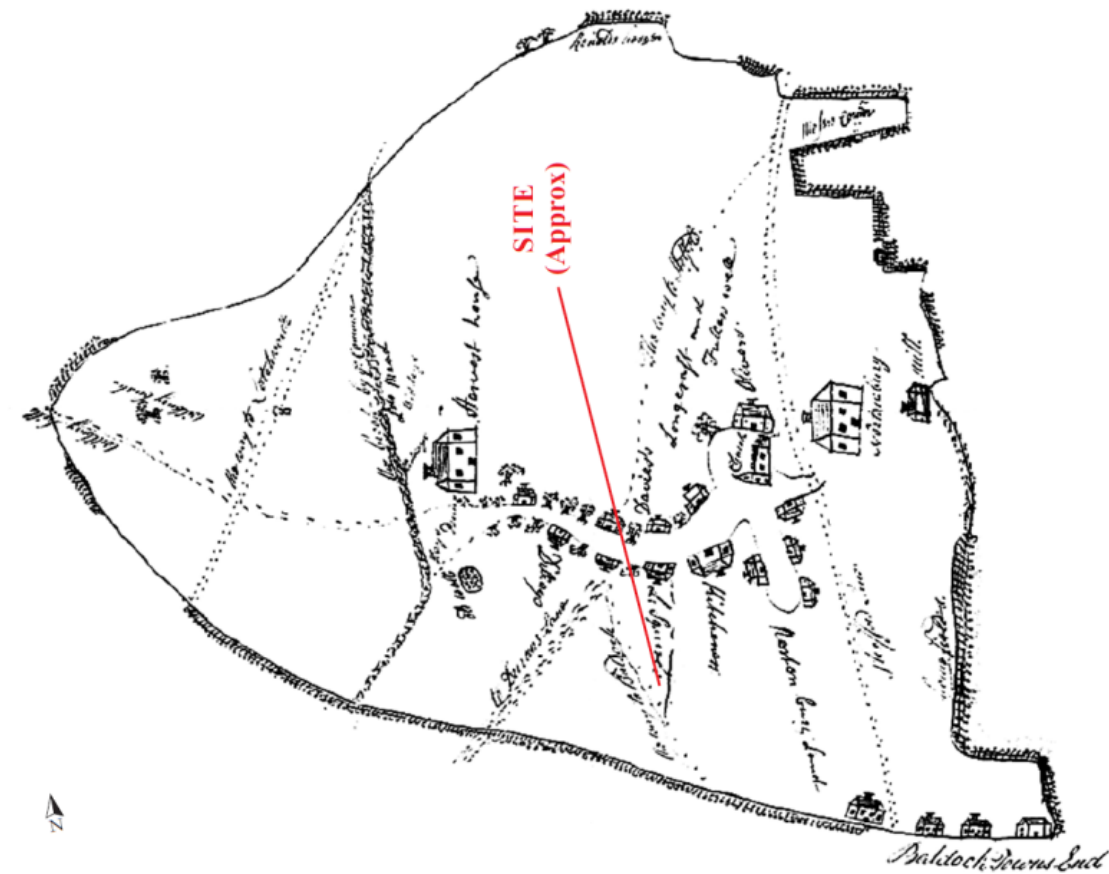


Figure 3 Site plan circa 1700s

PRE-GARDEN CITY - 1800-1898

- The **Ordnance Survey preliminary map**, which dates to c. 1800, does not depict any of the field boundaries shown in previous enclosure maps, except for a trackway along the western boundary of the site.
- By the 18th century, Norton remained a small village comprising a handful of thatched cottages concentrated within the village core. **A village green** was recorded in early 19th century, but this was subsequently built over by the original school in 1872.
- The **Ordnance Survey map of 1898** shows the site boundaries defined, as well as possible trackways along its northern, western and eastern extents.
- The small village of Norton is now well established to the north of the site around the junction of Norton Road and Croft Lane and extending along Norton Road to St. Nicholas' Church.
- The main houses in the village are the farms of Norton Hall and Payne's Farm. These are joined by St. Nicholas Church and a series of irregularly grouped cottages to form the village.
- Small waterbodies are present in the village at this time, particularly around the Croft Lane junction and the two farms. These have largely been erased, although evidence of one is still visible at Payne's Farm today.
- At this point the site formed part of the rural hinterland to Norton, located to the direct south of Norton Hall.

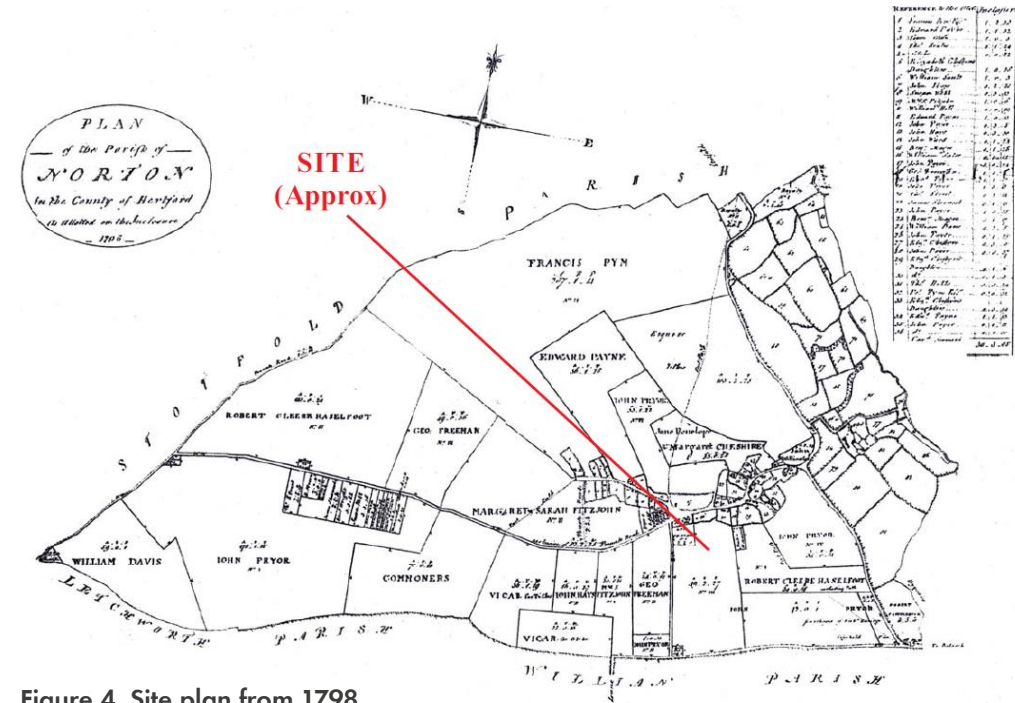


Figure 4 Site plan from 1798



Figure 5 1st edition Ordnance Survey map that dates to 1898

Location of the former village green

EVOLUTION OF THE GARDEN CITY - 1905

- Early estate plans confirm that the site lay within the **Norton Lands Estate**, possibly signifying that the site remained in the ownership of the rector of Norton along with Norton Hall Farm as late as 1903. The site remained as agricultural land as part of the Norton and Baldock Estate.
- This was **one of several farms acquired** by the Pioneer Company, which was then vested with First Garden City Ltd.
- Development commenced swiftly following the agreement of the masterplan, and by 1905 there had already been **delivery of key infrastructure and some housing and employment**.
- The plan shows the early progress that was made, including in 1908 with the application site and the adjoining land being used as **small holdings**.

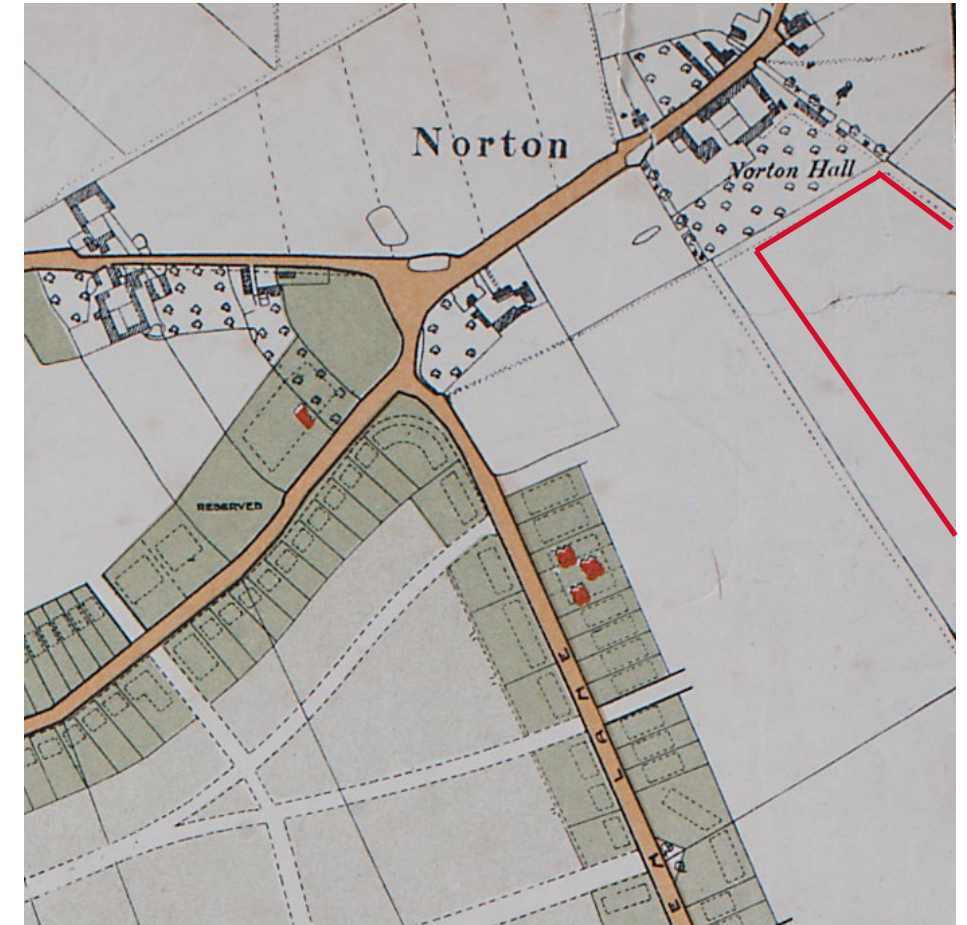


Figure 6 Estate Plan (First GC Ltd.) from 1905

EVOLUTION OF THE GARDEN CITY - 1918-1929

- The **first phase of the Garden City** development plan was nearing completion by the First World War.
- Of relevance to the LG3 site is the development of **Green Lane, Glebe Road and Common View** (Glebe Lands) that were largely completed by 1918.
- By 1929, much of the **former parish of Norton** had merged into **Letchworth Garden City**, although the character of the site's immediate vicinity remained agricultural.
- At this point many of the **present-day roads had been established**, including Green Lane to the west of the site.
- **Residential dwellings** lined many of the roads further westwards. The north-western corner of the site also contained rows of trees; part of an orchard to the immediate north beside Norton Hall Farm.
- Progress continued with the implementation of the plan, although there was **little change** on the application site and the adjoining land.



Figure 7 Estate Plan (First GC Ltd.) from 1918

EVOLUTION OF THE GARDEN CITY - 1936-1960

- The application site remained in **agricultural use** as allotments and small holdings, with the field boundaries largely as is presently the case, which remains an important characteristic.
- Once vested as part of First Garden City, the site was utilised for small holdings and the current **allotments** were introduced circa 1929
- The Estate Plan map from 1960 shows land to the west of the site (now Kristiansand Way) still as **agricultural land**.
- During the mid 20th century the settlement of **Norton is largely unchanged**.



Figure 8 Estate Plan (First GC Ltd.) from 1936

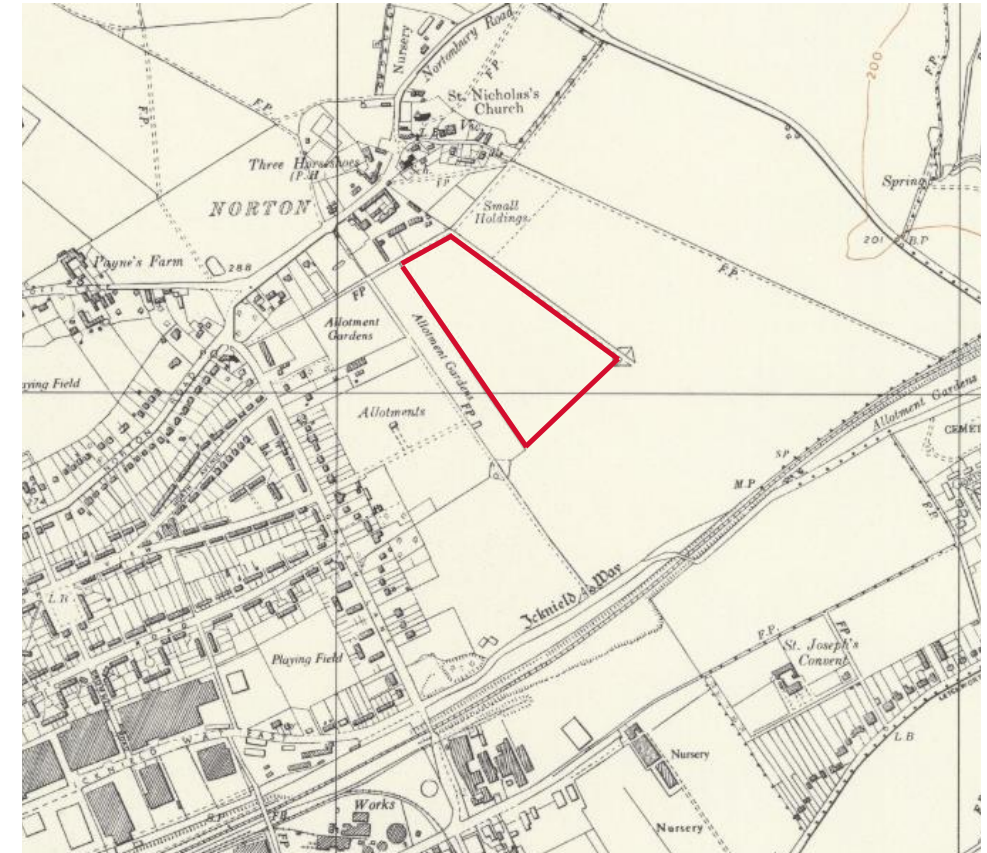


Figure 9 Estate Plan (GC Cooperation) from 1960

EVOLUTION OF THE GARDEN CITY - 1986

- In the second half of the 20th century industrial expansion in Letchworth extends east along the rail line corridor.
- Blackhorse Road/Flint Road **industrial** estate in the 1960s and 1970s creates a southern edge to the site and a shift in context.
- By 1992, **Kristiansand Way** to the west is developed as a new residential area with a different character to both the existing residential areas of Norton and Letchworth.

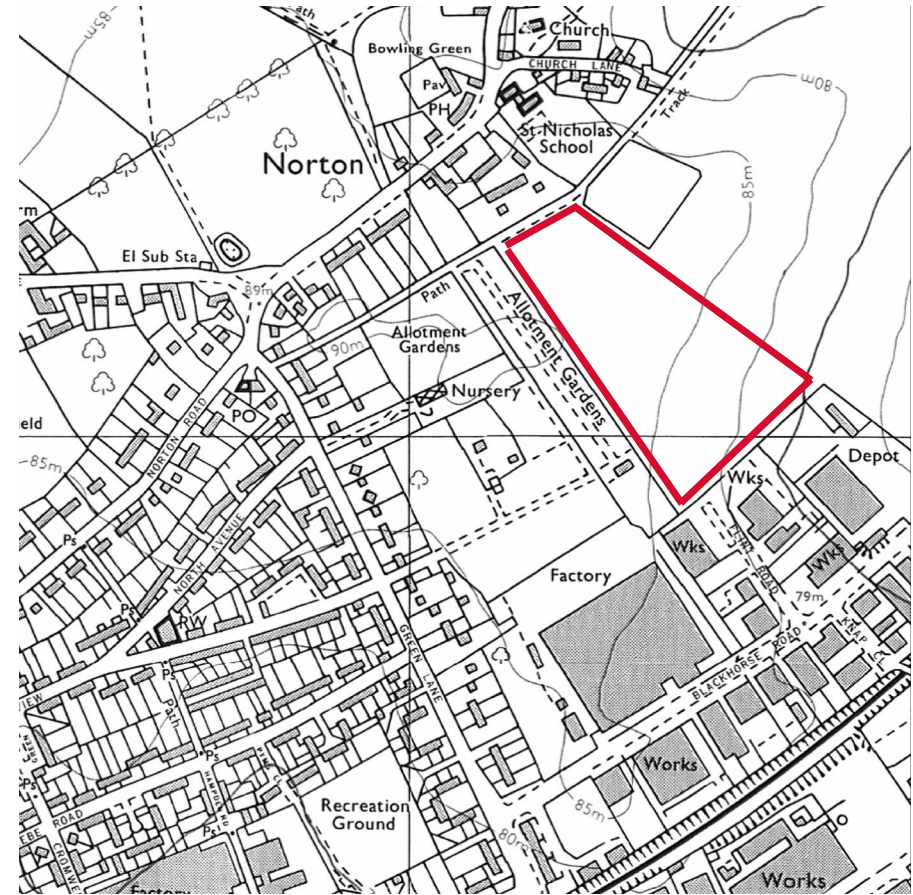


Figure 10 Estate Plan from 1986

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- The **site has remained greenfield** throughout its history, but has been influenced by changes of use around the site (farming to residential and industrial)
- The **growth** of Letchworth and Norton village have also influenced this evolution.
- This sequence of historical development summarises the context of growth around the site based on desk-based research and GIS map data as well as data from the Archaeological Solutions 2018 study, historical maps and analysis by The Environment Partnership and Conservation Area Appraisals.

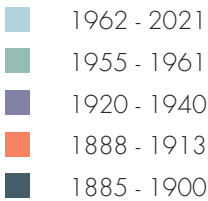


Figure 11 The densification of Letchworth GC and Norton from 1885 to the current day

EVOLUTION OF THE GARDEN CITY - CURRENT DAY

- The **land to the west of the site** (now Kristiansand Way) was developed in the 1980s, and Hartington Place more recently.
- The **development of Norton Hall Farm** in 1984 entailed the conversion of former barns, along with a series of new buildings. The growth of Letchworth Garden City meant that part of Norton's separate identity has been lost to the west. Its boundary to the south is defined by established landscaping and tree belts, which helps to create some visual separation.
- The **LG3 site** has changed little from the original field boundaries, except for the allotments in 1929 and the later incursion of part of the Blackhorse Road/Flint Road industrial estate in the 1960s and 1970s.
- **Tree planting** in the early 2000s has consolidated the field boundary of the LG3 site, further defining the boundaries of this field, as seen from the historic plans. This is an important characteristic of this site.



Figure 12 Site aerial with the peripheral characters labelled

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Landscape and Visual Assessment summarises the relevant key characteristics of National and Regional Landscape Character. Whilst these are relevant to the landscape and visual appraisal process they are less significant in terms of defining the Strategic Masterplan.

District and Local Landscape characteristics are more pertinent to the Strategic Masterplan and these are described in the North Hertfordshire Landscape Study within LCA 216 Arlesey – Great Wymondley. This relates to the area surrounding the Garden City to the north, west and south. The study area relevant to LG3 is described as large flat expansive and arable. The condition and robustness of the landscape is reported as moderate with relevant guidelines being:

- To encourage woodland planting, in small copses, around the fringes of sub-urban settlements;
- To promote the diversity of hedgerow species and

- the planting of standard hedgerow trees; and
- To maintain and extend the rights of way network.

Site specific landscape character is summarised in the LVA in terms of its context, topography, land use and vegetation, as follows:

The Site comprises approximately 5.1 ha of greenfield land to the west of Talbot Way. The Site is accessed from an existing field access off an agricultural track in the north-eastern corner of the Site. The Site is bound to the north by a public footpath (Letchworth Garden City Footpath 026), with residential properties off Norton Road beyond, to the north-east by agricultural fields, to the south by a small industrial estate and to the west by Norton allotments with residential dwellings beyond.

The land slopes down from a height of approximately 88m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the north-eastern corner of the Site to approximately 77m AOD in the south-eastern corner.

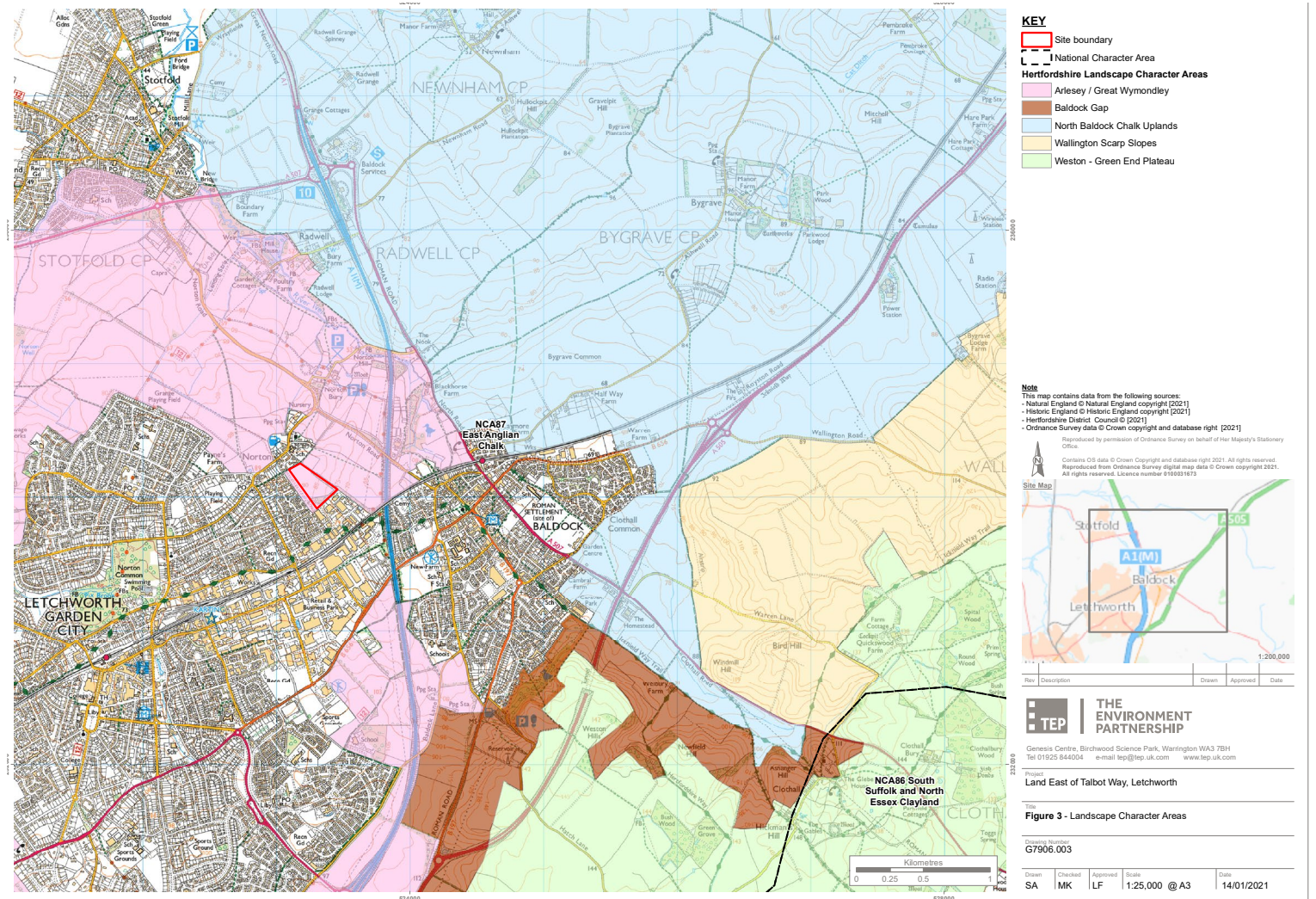


Figure 13 Plan visualising the the key national and regional landscape characters



The wider landscape to the east comprises a simple rural landscape of medium to large scale arable fields overlaid upon a rolling topography which slopes down to the wooded River Ivel valley to the north-east.

The Site comprises agricultural land which is currently laid to grass and which has been used for grazing in the recent past. The northern boundary to Letchworth Garden City Footpath 026 is defined by a post and wire fence, approximately 1.2m tall, beyond which lies a mixed species tree belt. There are some glimpsed views through the tree belt to the Church of St Nicholas and residential properties along Norton Hall Farm.

The western site boundary to the Norton allotments is defined by a mixed species native hedgerow, which is species-poor and dominated by bramble. The hedge is unmanaged and is approximately 1.6m in height. There are a few gaps in the hedgerow which are supplemented with post and wire fencing. Scattered hedgerow trees including species such as birch (*Betula pendula*) provide some softening of the built form beyond.

In the south-western corner of the Site lies an area of mixed species woodland incorporating species such as silver birch (*Betula pendula*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). The majority of this woodland appears to be semi-mature in age. The woodland provides visual and physical separation between the site and the industrial units on Flint Road and Blackhorse Road.

The eastern site boundary is defined by a similarly mixed species woodland belt.

The wider landscape to the north and north-east is dominated by large arable fields, although fields generally become smaller in close proximity to existing settlements. Field boundaries are generally defined by trees and hedgerows, with vegetated settlement edges at Letchworth and Norton. The field pattern is partly eroded, with some post 1950s hedgerow removal.

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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

- The site is located at the edge of settlement, bounded by development to the north, west and south, with open countryside (farmed/arable land) to the east.
- Fields here are of medium to large size with hedgerow boundaries, broadening to small woodlands in some field corners.
- A network of green corridors, including established hedgerows and trees, cross the landscape and townscape, providing habitats for wildlife and movement corridors for people (along footpaths, streets and railway).
- Local public green spaces such as the recreation grounds, cemetery, community orchard and allotments make a valuable contribution to the recreation, visual, ecological and drainage functions of the green infrastructure.
- Areas of private green space, including Church Fields and other open pasture land, also contribute to the visual, ecological and drainage functions of the green infrastructure. Whilst Church Fields may be a private space/grazing land it has a right of way running through it.
- Whilst not shown in detail on the adjacent plan, pocket green spaces, street trees, green verges and front gardens make a positive contribution to Letchworth's green infrastructure.

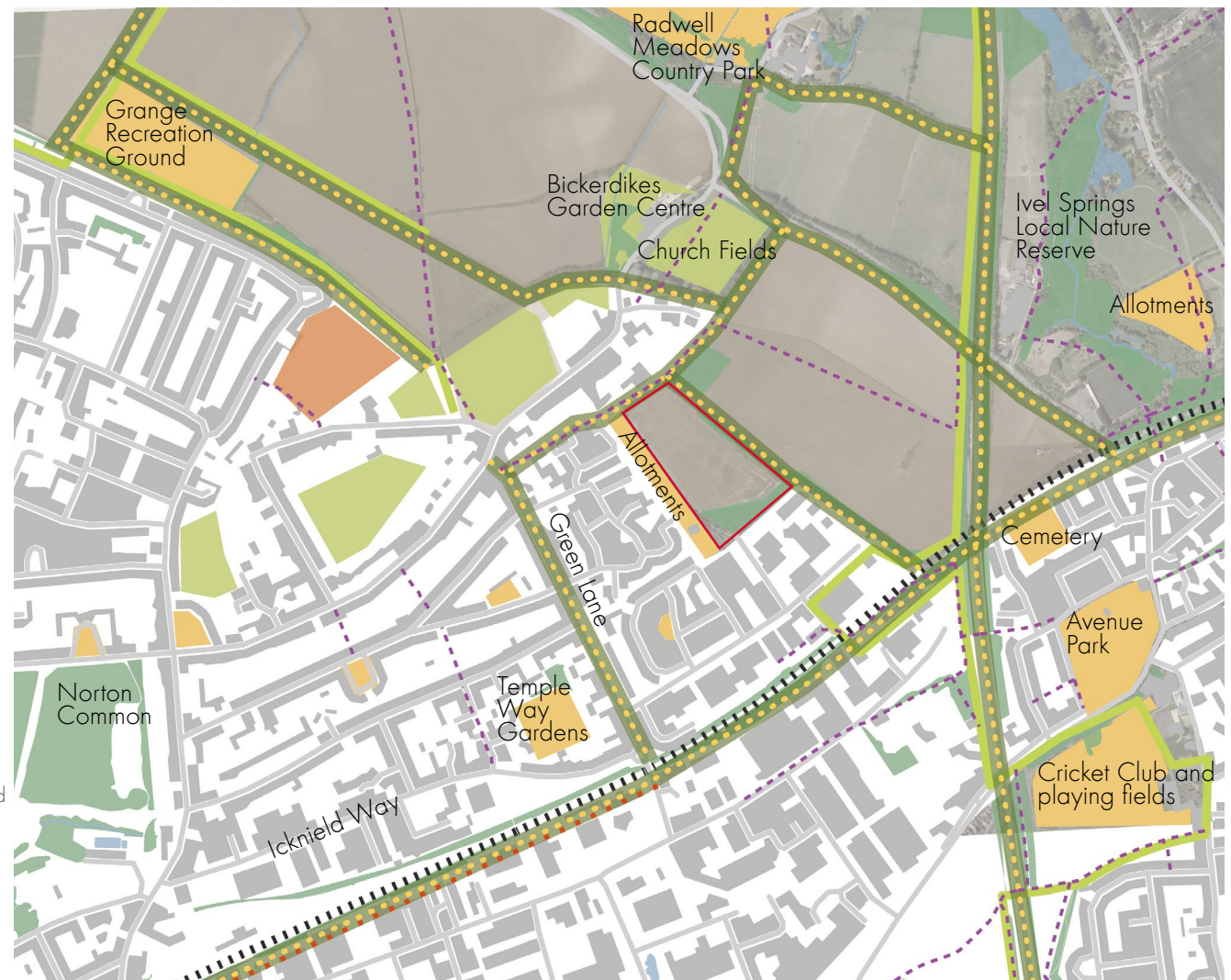


Figure 14 The existing green infrastructure surrounding the LG3 site

TOPOGRAPHY

- The site slopes to the south east with a flatter area occupying the highest part of the site in the north.
- The level change across the site is approximately 13m.
- Generally, the site is visually enclosed due to the vegetation along the boundaries, although there are some views to open countryside to the east and south east from the higher ground at the northern end of the site.
- The A1(M) and overhead power lines are evident in these views.

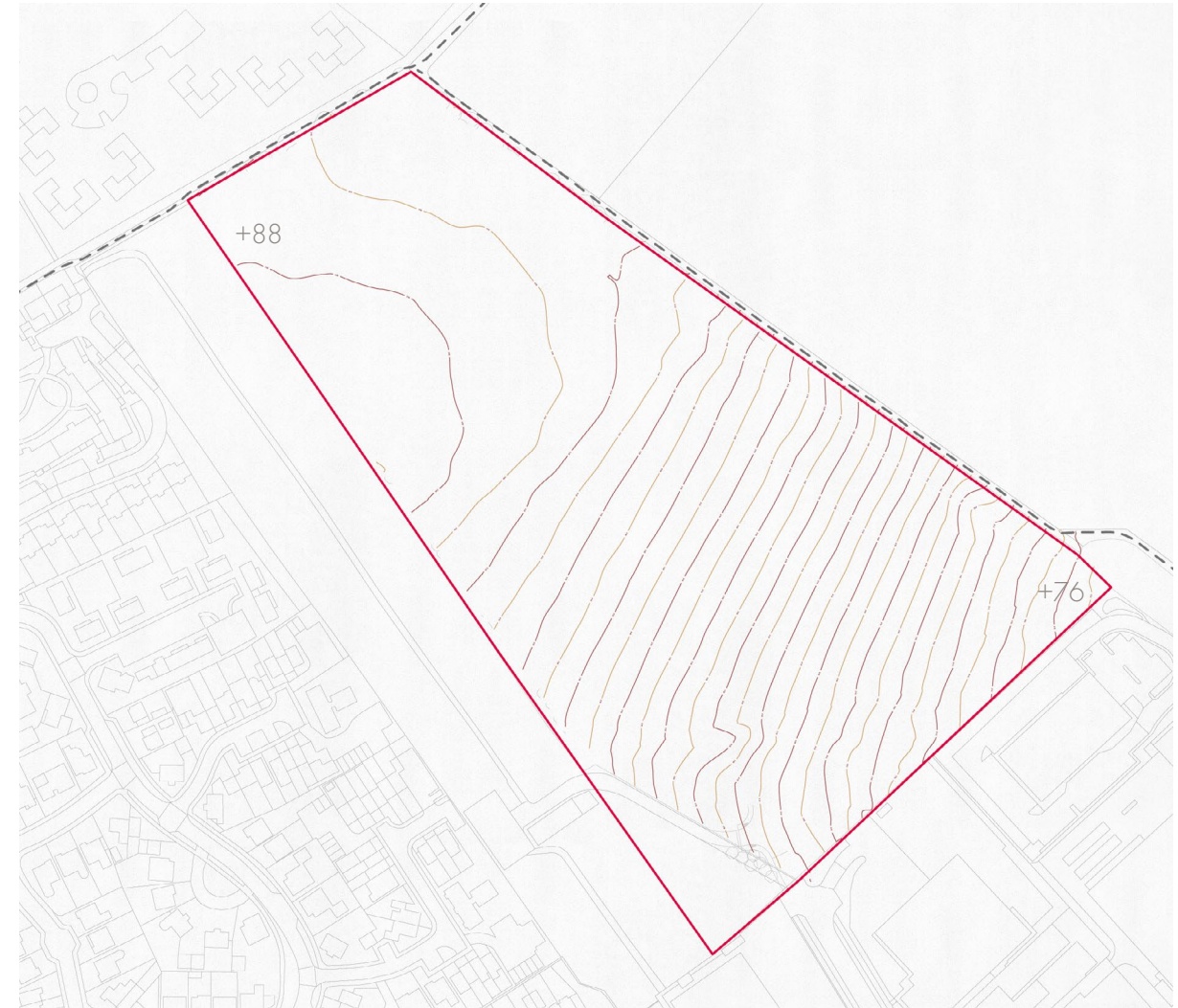


Figure 15 Plan showing the topography of the LG3 site

Character areas

Surrounding context is separated into the following character areas:

- Norton Conservation Area (historic core and rural fringe)
- Croft Lane Conservation Area
- Early Garden City Housing
- Open farmland
- 1980s housing
- 2000s housing
- Allotment gardens
- 1960/70s industrial

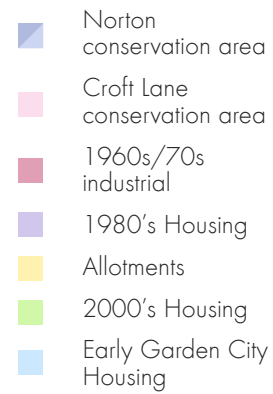


Figure 16 Plan showing the variation in character surrounding the site

Norton conservation area

- The Norton conservation area focuses on the pub, church, various historic buildings and two open green spaces.
 - The site sits adjacent, and acts as an extension, to the former village green. Thus playing a part in the rural setting of Norton.
 - Norton precedes the development of the Garden City but was acquired as part of the land assembly needed to bring the master plan forward.
 - Norton is a separate Conservation Area in its own right and its character differs from the planned Garden City master plan area.
 - Within the Conservation Area there are two broad character areas:

1. Historic core of the Conservation Area which extends from Norton Hall Farm at the western boundary through to St. Nicholas' Church; and

2. Rural fringe of the Conservation Area which takes in the fringe areas and green spaces/fields to the north and east.
- thatched cottages on Norton Road and Church Lane, which remain today.
 - Village subject to slow expansion in the 19th century, with an additional small cluster of house added around the school (Norton St Nicholas), although the church of St Nicholas remains a key member of the character of the village, although this is reduced by significant tree presence that obscures some views. Apart from the expansion of Letchworth



Norton Hall Farm - black timber cladding



Figure 17 Plan highlighting the Norton conservation area



Narrow lane and shared space - Church Lane



Modern infill development

Garden City through its planned stages of growth, Norton has since not seen significant change, except for limited infill development.

- The historic core of the Conservation Area is defined by primarily historic cottages, open green spaces, thick mature tree coverage and narrow country lanes (as set out in the Conservation Area Statement).
- The Conservation Area Character Assessment highlights the retained significance Church Lane and Norton Road as the main groups of buildings. In particular there is a cluster of historic buildings along Church Lane around the Church of St Nicholas. Alongside the importance of the buildings themselves are the spaces

between; key travel networks grew from the former village green which was a key component in the moulding of Norton.

- Assessment also highlights range of architectural styles. Predominance of smaller dwellings in a relatively dense arrangement. The low-rise cottage is a main typology within Norton; comprising of either brick or white roughcast frontages with pitched roofs. There is some consistency of layout and built form amongst these cottages, although the different ages of building are evident. Church Lane is narrow with shared space that struggles to meet modern requirements in terms of car parking, whilst its soft edges ensure a rural feel, despite the relatively dense development of this lane.
- This differs from the southern side Norton Road that incorporates the Norton Hall Farm development which

includes a series of converted former farm buildings and a series of blocks of bungalows and two storey black stained timber clad structures. These are arranged in groups in a formal arrangement amongst landscaped grounds.

- To the north of Norton Road are a series of two storey red brick houses on reasonable sized plots that back on to open farmland. These present a formal layout with consistent building lines. However, it is thatched cottages with roughcast walls that provide the overriding character for the core of the village, despite the southern section including more modern development.



Historic core - St Nicholas Church (Source: Conservation Area Statement by Wood)



Historic core - cottage (Source: Conservation Area Statement by Wood)



Historic core - Church Lane (Source: Conservation Area Statement by Wood)



Historic core - cottage (Source: Conservation Area Statement by Wood)

- The northern section of Norton Road is dominated by the Three Horseshoes Public House, which is a prominent two storey building with external white roughcast render.
- The Rural fringe / northern part of the Conservation Area is largely open land and there is strong structural planting throughout the village. An inherent sense of enclosure is found in areas enclosing lanes with widespread tree coverage delineating the plot boundaries, streets and spaces.
- This northern section includes a rectangular field recorded in historic maps as Church Field or Churchwick Field. The Conservation Area Statement highlighted that this field "contains well-preserved earthworks associated with a possible medieval manorial site (Fitzpatrick-Matthews, 2008). The banks are almost 1m high and form a square platform."
- A hollow way within this historic form follows the same alignment as the main medieval street running from St Nicholas Church to Norton Bury Manor which today is still visible and partly defined by veteran deciduous trees.



Rural fringe - eastern edge looking across Church Fields (Source: Conservation Area Statement by Wood)



Rural fringe - hollow way and banks at Church Fields (Source: Conservation Area Statement by Wood)

Messages for LG3

- Norton Conservation Area character largely emanates from before the development of the Garden City. Characteristics in the historic core provide useful precedents for the sites, for example rural cottages which follow an irregular building line and varied frontage. Rural lanes are prevalent too as are generous planting and green spaces. This widespread tree coverage and mature trees delineate plot boundaries, streets and open spaces creating a sense of enclosure and enclosing country lanes.
- The rural fringe of the conservation area is characterised by heavy planting between the end of plots and the beginning of open countryside/agricultural fields. This condition already exists on the site and should be reinforced.
- Recognising the former site of the village green to the north of the site could be drawn through in the creation of a new village green at the northern end of the site.
- Re-establishing and reinforcing connections to St Nicholas Church and Church Fields (a significant historic space with cultural associations) green space and wider footpath network
- Includes examples of smaller dwellings in close proximity along Church Lane near the church on the southern section of the village. Series of key buildings that define its character, such as the church, school and public house, as well as a series of rendered detached thatched cottages on Norton Road.
- Density of the village does vary, with high density housing on Church Lane with limited space and access width, along with lower density with examples of larger buildings on Norton Road.

Croft Lane conservation area

History

- Predates the Garden City, largely 19th century, with early 20th century additions

Built form and character

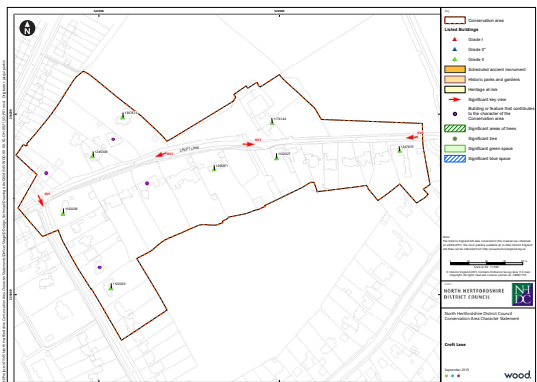
- Pre-Garden City typical of the agricultural context including two dwellings with thatched roofs. Detached homes on substantial plots.
- Additions that followed reflected original character including thatched cottages by Hignett
- Parker and Unwin provided some of the few examples of a thatched roof in Croft Lane, with traditional arts and crafts design and simple materials such as brick and render
- Traditional Letchworth style dwellings can be found at 5/7 Croft Lane (1906) by Lucas, rough cast render and tiled roofs. Infill development followed.

Streets and spaces

- Overriding character is of a traditional country lane.
- Relatively modest road width, with established hedge and tree lining and detached dwellings that sit back from the road influenced by the rural location and Letchworth arts and crafts design.
- Differs from the more formal layout found in the Garden City design principles and is more reflective of the town's heritage prior to the acquisition in 1902. Also reflected by the density, where traditional Garden City layout was prescribed to be circa 30dw/ha - Croft Lane is circa 4.5dw/ha, with some plots benefitting from 100m deep rear gardens.

Messages for LG3

- The Croft lane Conservation Area provides a **different character to much of the Garden City.** It includes **large plots** with a range of dwelling types that are of a **traditional** nature.
- The overall character is **more rural** than the remainder of Letchworth and the country lane is key characteristic, with established landscaping.



Wood Corner, Croft Lane



Figure 18 Plan highlighting the Croft Lane conservation area



Croft Lane - country lane

Early Garden City Housing

History

- Letchworth Garden City master plan formulated by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin. Zonal approach with walkable neighbourhoods, ensuring easy access to housing, industry, open space, farmland and town centre.

Built form and character

- Of relevance is approach to housing, particularly in area in the Letchworth GC Conservation Area
- Parker and Unwin incorporated relatively high-density housing, whilst retaining positive place making. This included the use of cul-de-sac arrangements such as those Birds Hill and Ridge Road, along with the incorporation of the village green concept
- Terraces of houses were carefully configured to ensure privacy, sunlight and space, with the greater proportion of

housing having good sized gardens, also enabling food to be grown. These groups of terraces were often served by small front gardens, with good spacing between plots or groups of dwellings.

- Smaller terraces often retain a constant front building line, although there are examples of a terrace being stepped back from the adjoining one to break up the street scene.
- There are also examples of groups of dwellings at right angles to help create interest as well as to maximise density in a sympathetic manner.
- The master plan provided a mix of housing of all sizes. Larger dwellings are generally set back within more generous plots, but still with consistent front building lines, with spacing between buildings being of significance in the formulation of the street scene.

Streets and spaces

- Housing layouts often include planned landscaped sections at the end of blocks of built form and deliberately land locked open areas to promote amenity, ecology and food production
- Range of densities, with the First Garden City Ltd Design Principles seeking a density of 12 dw/acre, along with requirements regarding light, facilities and room sizes.
- Gardens and trees play an important role in defining the character of the early housing areas. This includes structural tree planting on verges helping to create tree lined boulevards, inclusion of front hedges helping to line roads and to distinguish between roads and front gardens.
- Parker & Unwin promoted the importance of buildings addressing corners in a positive manner and ensuring that this maximised light



Westholm - village green serving cottages



Gernon Way and Pixmore Way



Figure 19 Plan highlighting the early garden city



Meadow Way - simple palette and arts and crafts detailing

as well as enhancing the appearance and relationship with the street.

- Each road had a set species of tree to help define its character, with rear gardens also having an abundance of trees and hedges.

Architecture

- Arts and Crafts dominates building style in early Garden City housing, with simple form, complementary materials and simple but beautiful detailing. This approach sought to create complementary variation, with modest variations between the detailing of groups of houses.
- This means that relatively simple buildings are enlivened by projecting gables, bay windows, pentice roofs, dormers and clever use of a small palette of materials.
- Roofs are a dominant feature often incorporating carefully positioned chimneys.

Glebe Lands

- Analysis primarily focuses on the Character Area Two, 'the Glebe Lands' in the NHDC CA report (2001).
- Greatest proximity to the application site reflects greatest relevance to this development, along with the main character components of early Garden City housing
- CA Character Statement highlights that the development of this area took place between 1905 and 1915 and incorporates linear roads, divided by a central axis.
- Range of densities, with examples of larger dwellings on substantial plots on the north western end of Glebe Road and parts of Green Lane, but a predominance of smaller workers cottages for much of this area, applying a density of circa 40 dw/ha, which is higher than the greater proportion of early densities, normally 30 dw/ha.

- Street layout is uniform, although some pairs and groups of houses that are set slightly back to neighbouring blocks, creating a break in the street scene by stepping.
- Examples of substantial terraces of up to 6 dwellings, incorporating mainly smaller dwelling types.
- Throughout Glebe Lands examples of early cul-de-sacs found in many Parker and Unwin street layouts, with groups of dwellings at 90 degrees to the main street
- Except for the larger properties to the west of Glebe Road, most dwellings have small front gardens, although many have strong front hedges. Balance and symmetry in the street scenes, with a predominance of structural planting mainly formed of hedges that create a sense of enclosure. Green Lane sees more formal structural tree planting.

- Built form reflects the arts and crafts influence found in most of early Letchworth, with simple details, but inclusion of chimneys that assists in reinforcing a symmetry to dwellings or groups of houses. Georgian style windows are accompanied by detailing such as string courses, rounded arch openings and bay windows.
- Many of the smaller worker cottages have no porches with simple flat canopies.
- Examples of gables and projections and dormer windows which add interest. The palette of materials is primarily painted rough cast render, although there are examples of unpainted pebble dash and brick exteriors. Roof tiles are primarily plain, with some examples of bonnet hips.



Larger detached dwelling - western end of Glebe Rd



Typical 2 storey housing, Glebe Road - front facing gables, simple rough cast render exterior, with tiled roofs and chimney feature. Strong front hedge boundaries enclosing front gardens

Challenges

- Clear issues regarding car parking, with a large amount of on-street parking and issues with bins particularly on terraced houses.
- Loss of front hedges and structural planting has had a harmful impact and the addition of front hardstanding have been harmful to the character of the street scene.
- There have also been some changes to the external appearance, including external colours, windows and doors that could be more sympathetic.

Messages for LG3

- Clear **values and principles** in the master planning of early Garden City housing.
- Importance of a **cohesive design** approach that includes a uniformity in terms of building line and the creation of street. Use of **focal points, tree lined routes, vistas and group design** is of importance and simple design approach (either contemporary or traditional) that reflects arts and crafts values. Interest should be retained by a positive approach to enhancements found in early GC design and through breaking up built form with open space and variations in buildings of groups.
- Inclusion of **deliberately land locked areas and versions of the village green** are also key Letchworth design values and should be considered.
- Overall, Glebe Lands is a positive example of early Garden City master planning, highlighting a considered approach to providing workers accommodation, with a **simple high-quality material palette** influenced by early garden City Arts and Crafts design. Simple detailing such as the use of front gables and chimneys can add to the impression of a high-quality street scene.
- Use of **landscaping** is a key component of the success of this area, including street trees to create formal avenues such as at Green Lane and strong front hedging on Glebe Road, North Avenue and Common View. Positively planned and positioned **village greens** too.
- **Uniformity in the street scene** is a clear characteristic, with some stepping between dwelling groups, but otherwise established building lines following the line of the main streets. Cul-de-sacs are integrated into the layout, reflecting early approaches by Parker and Unwin found in early phases of Letchworth.
- A combination of 2 storey and 2.5 storey buildings can provide **interest in the street scene**.
- There is a need to ensure **appropriate parking provision** and sustainable transport alternatives are carefully considered. Modern developments must also recognise the need to make suitable **arrangements for refuse and recycling** that is less harmful to the street scene.

Open farmland

- Estate purchased by the Pioneer Company and then vested with First Garden City Ltd was a series of modest sized farms.
- Land included in the application site is known as Norton Lands and was previously in agricultural use. This included open farmland and associated agricultural buildings and dwellings, which are now part of Norton and the surrounding area.
- Following the commencement of the development of the Garden city, the application site and its adjoining land were converted into small holdings. This was part of Thomas Adams’ initiative regarding local food production.
- Integrity of the site as an enclosed field was in-situ prior to the development of the Garden City and has been largely maintained, with 2 notable exceptions, which are the inclusion of enclosed allotments (still in place) and the development of Blackhorse Road and Flint Road industrial areas.
- Otherwise the site itself has remained open and in agricultural use.
- Land to the east of the application site has also remained in agricultural use and except for the impact arising from the upgrading of the Great North Road to the A1(M) there has been little change.
- Hedgerow has been largely protected and although intensively farmed, much of the land is included in the Natural England Countryside Stewardship Scheme and has meant that hedgerow has been managed in a specified way and margins protected.



Views from LG3 site - St Mary's church, Baldock (top)



Open farmland beyond the edge of Letchworth

1980's housing

Kristiansand Way

- Kristiansand Way developed by a volume house builder in late 1980s and includes 2 and 3 storey accommodation, primarily as dwelling houses with some apartments.
- Density of development is reflective of the First Garden City Design Principles that influenced the first phases of the master plan, at circa 30 dw/ha.
- Generally comprises formal blocks of groups of dwellings. This is particularly seen with arrangements of small terraced houses. Larger detached dwellings generally have a uniform arrangement of front building lines either reflecting the configuration of the spine road or cul-de-sacs
- Examples of some of the largest terraces of homes in Letchworth, with 7 dwellings in a single block.
- Character area incorporates an approach often found in the era, with a spine road that weaves through the development that serves a series of cul-de-sacs.
- Housing includes standard house types from this era, with a range of detailing, such as external render picking up early Garden City materials and wooden cladding.
- Can provide a confusing approach to detailing and architectural style through the development.
- Good quality landscaping approach, with street trees and front hedges, much of which has been retained and the quality of maintenance is high. The greater proportion of front gardens are small with limited front depth. Many of the smaller 2-bedroom terraced homes have little front garden at all, particularly those in the larger terraces.



Spine road with positive structural tree planting



Figure 20 Plan highlighting 1980s housing



Small 2 storey dwellings



Cade Close - cul-de-sac

- Car parking is well managed with garages and parking bays, although there remains on-street parking. There are some parking courts which are unwelcoming and under-used.

Cade Close

- Cade Close provides more flatted accommodation over 2 storeys with a predominance of red and brown brick, with brown tiled roofs and very simple detailing.
- As with Kristiansand Way there is a positive formal landscaping strategy, although in many areas a predominance of hard surfacing and examples of flank walls being visually dominant in the street scene.

Challenges

- Lack of cohesion in terms of architectural approach and there could be additional landscaping and softening of the street scene, with more consideration of flank boundary treatments.
- In some cases, there is a need for greater relief to the built form and more meaningful front gardens, although many of these reflect small early worker cottages.
- Parking courts do not benefit from being defensible space due to the siting of adjacent dwellings.

Messages for LG3

- Cohesive approach towards the design is of importance. Blend of 2 and 3 storey accommodation and houses of a range of sizes and apartments can be positively incorporated in a considered design and cul-de-sacs are a clear characteristic in the evolution of the Garden City.
- Development incorporates some of the largest groups of terraces in Letchworth, which has been incorporated into the layout, but does create the impression of an unbroken mass of built form.
- Landscaping should inform the earliest stages of the layout design.

2000's housing

Maddon Gardens

- Developed in 2014 by Barratt Homes - consists of 159 dwellings, which are both private and affordable. Prior to this the site was used for industrial purposes
- Predominance of 2 storey homes, with examples of 3 storey apartments and 2.5 storey houses. PV panels have been successfully incorporated
- Typical in terms of the approach to the design but seeking to pick up some influence from early Garden City design principles.
- Layout works well with the constraints of the site and includes a network of roads that excludes cul-de-sacs.
- Density of development is closer to the First Garden City Design Principles at 32 dw/ha, which reflects the predominance of detached and semi-detached dwellings,

with a smaller proportion of apartments and in particular terraced homes.

- Incorporates some Garden City layout principles, with tree lined streets on part of the site and small village green type layout
- Dwellings types are traditional and have incorporated some features such as render, chimneys on some buildings and Georgian style windows.
- Front hedging is provided on many dwellings and reflects some of the early Garden City housing seen at Glebe Lands.
- Positive pedestrian route to Kristiansand Way. The Blackhorse Road frontage of the housing is set back and includes positive planting.

Challenges

- Although, the layout itself works well, the grouping of dwellings could be undertaken to better effect, along with

greater variety in housing design.

- The apartment buildings are quite weak in their design and do not have the level of articulation found on most of the dwellings, which highlights their use for affordable housing. As such, it can be argued that the development has not been designed as tenure blind.
- Focal points have been incorporated, but these could be stronger.
- Examples of blank brick wall side boundaries. A missed opportunity for additional landscaping.
- Car parking remains a challenge with a large proportion of on street parking, which has also resulted in a relative.
- Greatest challenge is its interface with the adjoining industrial uses, which has not incorporated a buffer zone.



Green area fronting group of houses

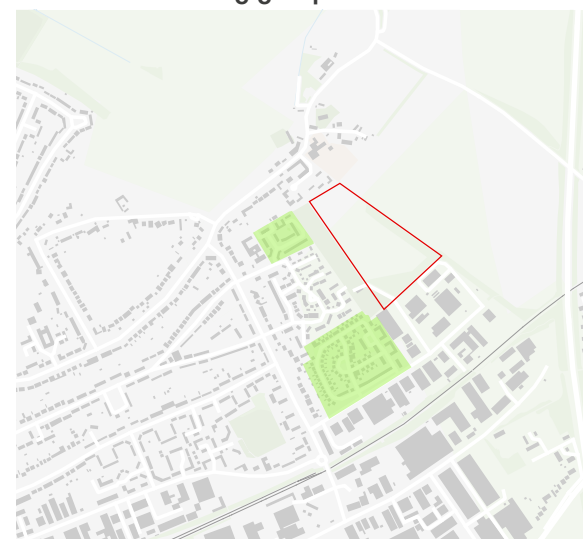


Figure 21 Plan highlighting 2000s housing



Central play/open space



Adjoining commercial uses

Hartington Place

- Hartington Place was developed in 2009 by North Herts Homes (now Settle) Housing association.
- Development was informed by a design competition which celebrated the centenary of the Exhibition Cottages Exhibition with the RIBA.
- Development incorporates contemporary design and provided a range of new technologies linked to sustainability at the time, such as passive solar gain, water recycling and the use of renewable energy. The buildings were more efficient than the Building Regulations in place at that time, built to the former Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.
- Development includes a range of 3 storey apartments and houses, which are predominantly rendered reflecting early Garden City materials.

- Density is 46 dw/ha, which is higher than the other character areas and is represented by the blocks of accommodation sharing modest communal gardens and providing a little separation to the street.
- Examples of sloping roof sections, again an early reference with a range of materials such as metal and timber and an example of a living green roof.
- Layout loops around a central open/play area which is strong defended and therefore usable area due to buildings facing on to it.
- Car parking is primarily roadside with the use of semi permeable surfacing.
- Scheme has been designed to be tenure blind and is predominantly affordable housing.
- Development has created a strong sense of place that

shows that a contemporary design approach influenced by early Garden City design principles can sit well within Letchworth. It has a strong identity and shows a unique design approach that has a clear identity.

Challenges

- Standout issue is the maintenance of the buildings that sees cracked and flaking render and wooden cladding that has bled onto the rendered areas.
- Car parking geo-textile membranes have not taken as well as hoped and there could be additional structural landscaping to soften the appearance and tie the development into established housing areas.

Messages for LG3

- A well designed and considered contemporary scheme can fit well into the Garden City. It demonstrates that design can evolve and be part of the story of Letchworth.
- The development is the highest density of the different character areas reviewed and higher, reflected in the modest garden provision, lack of substantive verges and limited front garden provision.
- If a contemporary scheme is considered the long-term performance and maintenance of materials needs to be carefully considered.

Allotment gardens

- The allotments have been in-situ since 1929 and the land was previously used for small holdings after the acquisition for the development of the Garden City in 1902.
- The allotments have a formal layout, served by an existing vehicular access from Flint Road.
- There is a car park and a group of 2 storey high industrial style buildings, used for the sale of ancillary items by the District Growers Association.
- The allotment has a central pedestrian route that gives some formality to the arrangement of the allotments.
- The allotments have strong planted edges, which define the boundaries of the site and act as a soft buffer to adjoining uses.

Messages for LG3

- The clear message for LG3 is to ensure the separate identity of the allotments is maintained and protected and the soft planted boundaries are of importance in this existing character.
- The present characteristics of the site have remained unchanged since they were introduced in circa 1929 and therefore need to be protected as such.



View to allotments and housing beyond



Figure 22 Plan highlighting the adjacent allotments

1960's/1970's industrial development

Blackhorse Road

- Blackhorse Road was developed through the 1960s and 1970s, in response to the need for employment provision to be made to meet Letchworth's growth.
- Layout of Blackhorse Road and Flint Road is formal with established front building lines, wide verges and the greater proportion of parking to the rear of the buildings.
- Buildings are two storeys high, although there are examples of some taller buildings.
- Verges are generally open, although not substantially planted in many cases apart from planned open areas, due to service provision.
- Planted soft buffers to the south and west, with clear routes to the Greenway at the eastern end of the road.
- Flint Road is a no through road off the eastern section of Blackhorse Road, which is at a right angle to the main road. This again displays a formal arrangement of detached business premises on separate plots.
- Blackhorse Road includes a transition between traditional employment buildings of the era and modern residential development.
- This is shown by the Maddon Gardens development (Character Area 5) and will further be the case by the LG3 development that will rely on Blackhorse Road and Flint Road for access.
- Despite being industrial in its nature, the greater proportions of the scale of the buildings are of reasonably domestic proportions and linked with the wide verges and formal layout present a less harsh appearance than most industrial developments of this era.

Messages for LG3

- The development relies on Blackhorse Road and Flint Road for vehicular access, so the character of this area is of importance.
- The planted buffers to the south and west should be reflected in the planning of the new development, as well as ensuring positive links are provided



Wide verge, set on a formal front building line



Blackhorse Road slopes up to the west



Figure 23 Plan highlighting 1960/70s industrial development



Flint Road, which will be the main vehicular access to the site

Sustainable movement

The site has good connections via existing footpaths to allow access within a 10 minutes walk to most of Norton village, the community orchard, Norton Methodist Church and the Works Road industrial area.

The site also has access to the Letchworth Greenway route via Blackhorse Road just to the south of the site. This gives access to Baldock to the east, Radwell Meadows to the north and Standalone Farm to the west.

The National Cycle Route 12 also follows the same route as the Greenway in this part of Letchworth, and thus the site has access to this via Blackhorse Road. The NCR12 route enables cycle access to Baldock, Stotfold and south Letchworth, as well as into Letchworth town centre as the route splits from the Greenway on Gaunts Way and links south through Norton Common.

More direct walking and cycling routes into Letchworth town centre are possible along roads such as Common View, Glebe Road or Icknield Way.

Buses into Letchworth town centre run along Norton Road and Green Lane, both accessible from the footpath running east-west along the north of the site (PRoW 026).

A priority for the site is to support easy access into this surrounding network of footpaths, cycle routes and bus corridors in order to maximise the attraction of choosing sustainable modes.

The site sits within the 10 minute walking isochrone of bus stops on Green Lane and Norton Road. Around half of the homes on the site would be within 400m of one or both of these bus stops. The frequency of the 96/96A bus service from Norton Road is one bus every 1-2 hours.

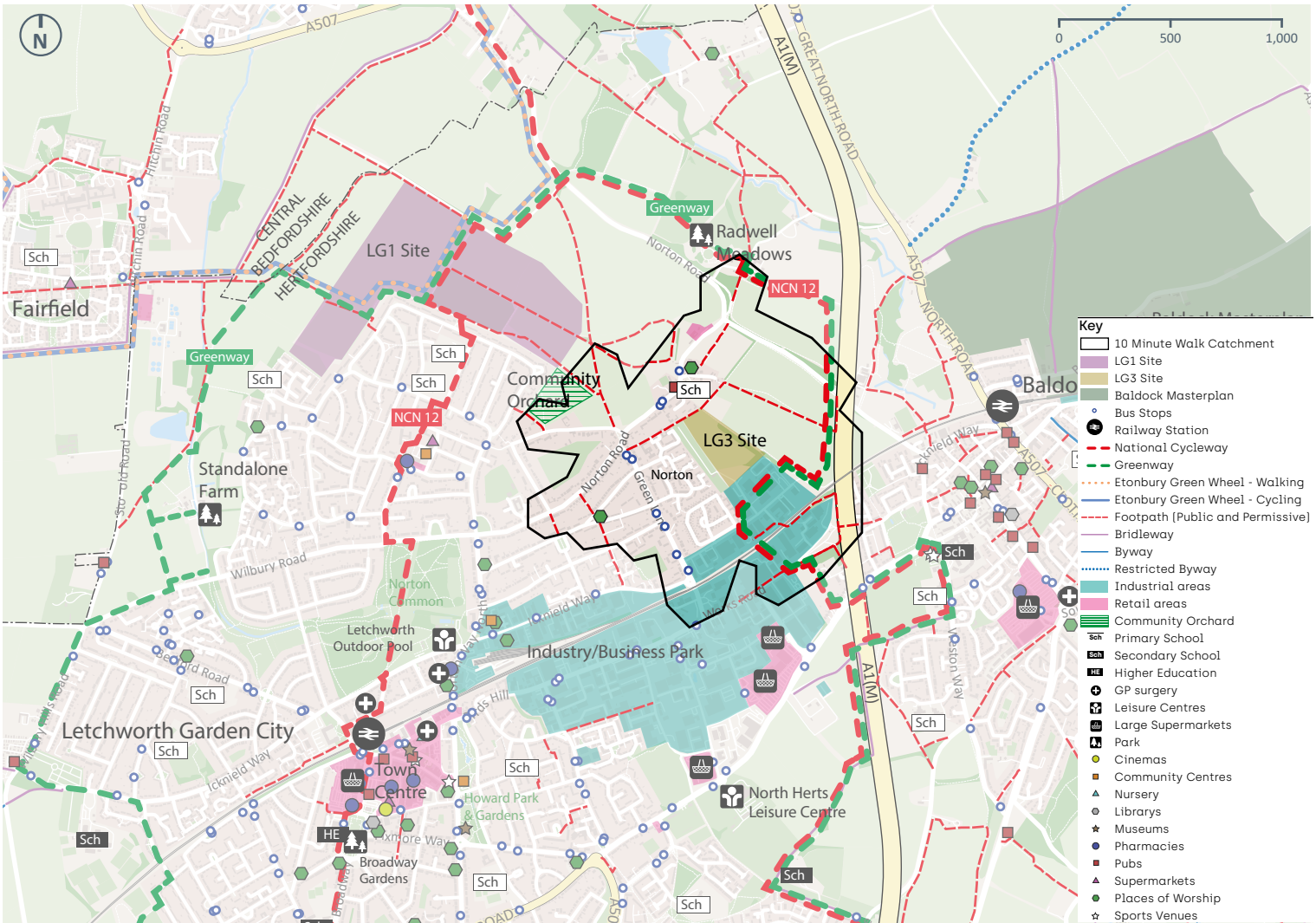


Figure 24 Transport plan highlighting sustainable movement connections, including a 10 minute walking isochrone from LG3

Key connections

Walking links

The site can access walking routes to the north and south of the site - footpath 26 and the Greenway route respectively.

Footpath 26 (PRoW 026) provides good access to Norton and Letchworth from the site:

- 500m from centre of site via footpath 26 and Church Lane to St. Nicholas Church, and 750m to Bikerdikes Garden Centre using the same route.
- 500m from centre of site via footpath to "Norton Road" bus stop on Green Lane which gives direct bus access into Letchworth town centre on bus service 96/96A in under 10mins.

Existing footpaths also provide off road access to Baldock:

- 2km from centre of site via footpath 26 and off road footpaths in Baldock to Baldock station; or
- 1.75km from the centre of the site to Baldock town centre via

the Works Road footbridge over the A1(M)

- The site is less than five minutes walk to Norton St Nicholas Primary School and a safe route to school will be encouraged by further enhancing the footpath access and linkages directly to the school to encourage walking and cycling. The disposition of the village green and new playground on the desire line to school will also encourage active travel and social interaction.

Cycling links

The National Cycle Route 12 passes very close to the southern edge of the site along Blackhorse Road. This gives good cycle access to Baldock, Radwell and Stotfold as well as Letchworth town centre:

- 4.5km via NCR 12 to Stotfold town centre
- 5.5km via NCR 12 to Letchworth town centre (or 3km via Norton Road and Norton Common)

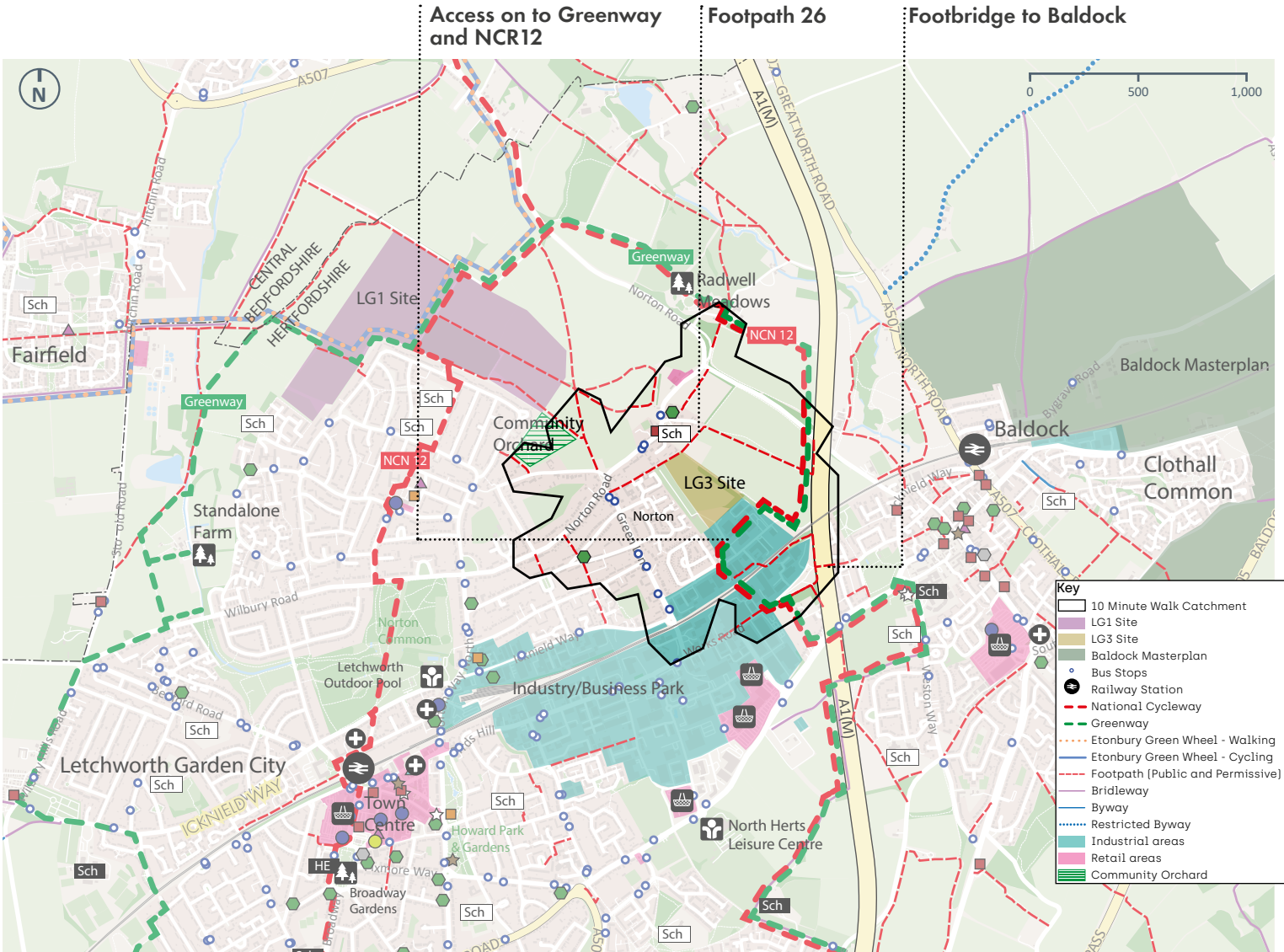


Figure 25 Transport plan highlighting sustainable movement connections, including a 10 minute walking isochrone from LG3

Sustainable transport - cycling

Cycling links

This plan illustrates the reach from the site by cycle. Taking in designated cycle routes as well as on-street cycling it is possible to reach well beyond Letchworth Garden City in 20 minutes.

Indeed, the villages of Weston, Bygrave, Newnham, Arlesey and Ickleford area all accessible within a 20mins cycle ride. Planned east-west cycle route improvements such as Baldock Road would also enhance access across the town to Hitchin.

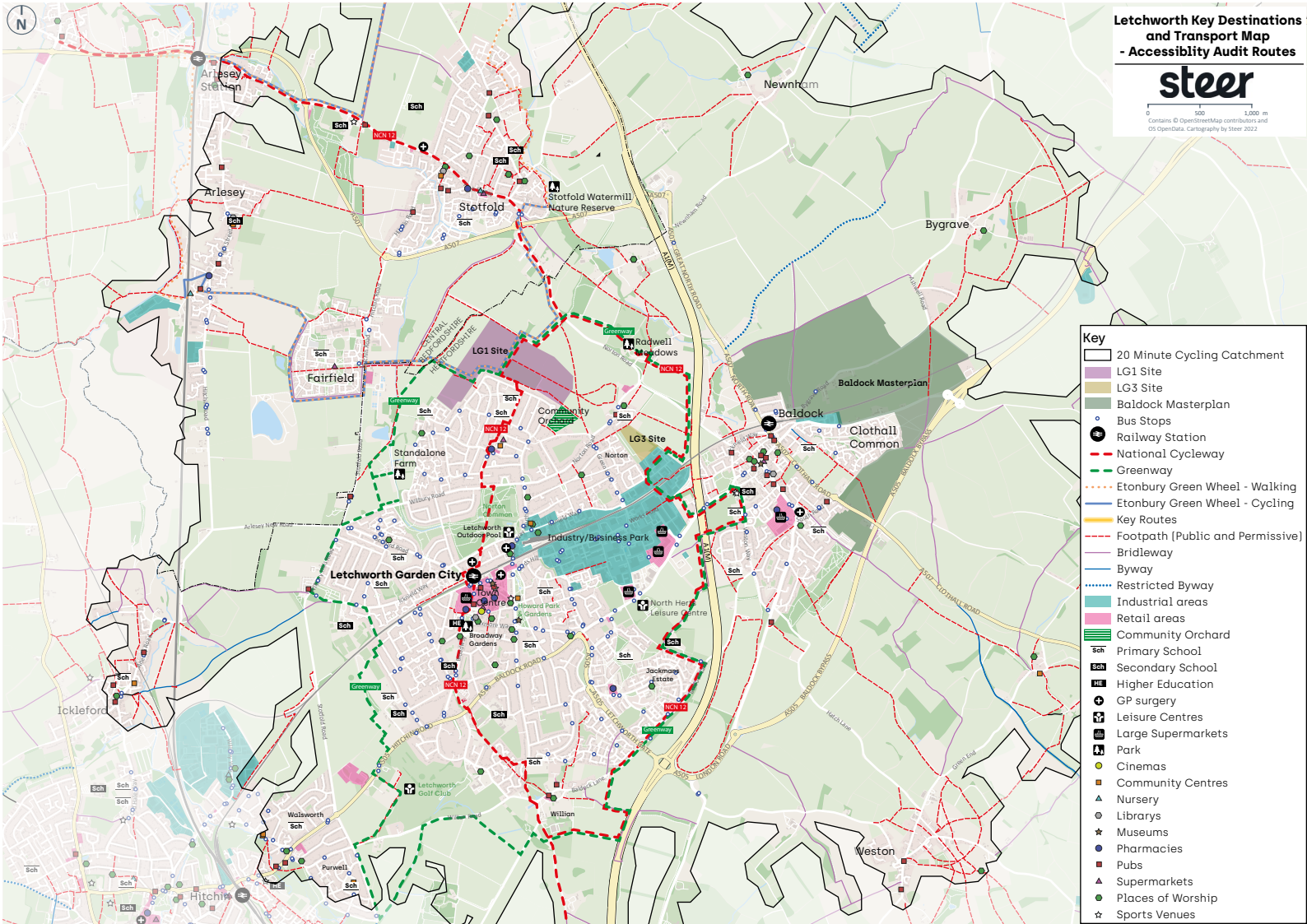


Figure 26 Transport plan highlighting sustainable movement connections, including a 20 minute cycling isochrone from LG3

Character of streets and routes

Letchworth Garden City lanes

The purpose of this note is to review the alignment for lanes in the Letchworth Garden City estate.

Country lanes were part of the characteristic of the land that now forms the Garden City Estate in 1902. The Estate was previously formed of three village settlements: Letchworth, Willian and Norton.

Each of these villages were linked to farming with associated agricultural buildings and dwellings, as the predominant use of the land was for agricultural use. Forming part of the original settlements were a series of country lanes, examples of which are still in situ and form an important part of the pre-Garden City story.

Three examples of these are set out here.

Commentary

We have given examples of three Letchworth Garden City lanes that predate the development of the Garden City. We have included two of the examples closest to the LG3 site at Church Lane, Norton and Croft Lane, as well as the largest example at Letchworth Lane.

Both Croft Lane and Church Lane are primarily straight with some gentle curves, but no significant kinks. Letchworth Lane is the largest example and beyond the scale of potential lane on LG3, but this is formed of two sections which have gentle curves and a significant kink midway.

For LG3, this provides some assistance if we are going to be influenced by pre-Garden City lanes. It indicates that the prevailing character comprises predominantly straight relatively short stretches with gentle curves, which could be incorporated in the secondary road in this development.

Church Lane, Norton

Church Lane was originally developed in the 18th century as part of the settlement of Norton. The development evolved until the acquisition as part of the Garden City development and includes a range of dwelling types and ages.

Church Lane today: In terms of the road alignment, there are two very gentle curves to the road, with the central section being straight.

Croft Lane

Croft Lane originally comprised a series of detached farm buildings and rural dwellings prior to the development of the Garden City. As can be seen from the following image from 1798, it was formed of a gentle curve.

Today, the Conservation Area component of Croft Lane is the straight section.

Letchworth Lane

Letchworth Lane was part of the original Letchworth settlement and is a link from Hitchin Road to Willian. This predates the Garden City development and is the largest of the original lanes in the Estate. This road presents as two primarily straight sections, with a significant kink and gentle curves.



Church Lane 1822



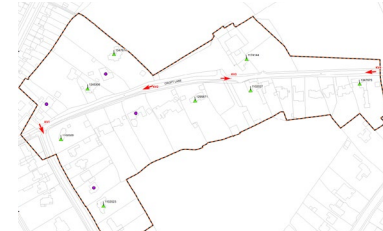
Croft Lane 1798



Letchworth Lane 1908



Church Lane today



Croft Lane today



Letchworth Lane today

SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Rising topography provides interest and attractive aspect
- Recent planting on southern section of site now maturing and screens views of industrial area to south of site
- Existing biodiversity value
- Boundary vegetation provides screening and enclosure
- Site is in close proximity to the facilities at Norton Village, including the church, primary school and pub
- Adjacent to open countryside with occasional long distance views out
- There is a network of local Public Rights of Way, including the Letchworth Greenway and the Icknield Way
- Ground investigation report reveals no contamination and that soils and geology will support a reasonable rate of infiltration.

Opportunities

- The highest ground is in the northern part of the site and it is also the flattest area. This could accommodate recreational open space which would also provide a buffer between the Conservation Area and the site
- Habitat creation - several opportunities to improve on site biodiversity and to secure the long term management of existing and proposed landscape features
- To introduce sustainable drainage across the site with basin at southern lowest point
- Opportunity to enhance connections to bus network through footpath improvements and support wider Sustainable Transport Strategy
- Opening up the site could help connect Norton to the Greenway at Blackhorse Road
- To draw and integrate the positive design characteristics from Letchworth and Norton village to create a contextually responsive and sustainable development
- To reinterpret and re-provide the lost village green on the primary school site to provide a new community destination space to support active design and strengthen the green corridor from the site to the school, village centre, bus corridor and wider GI network. Also opportunities for interpretation of archaeological findings.
- To create new site habitat through new woodland planting, street tree planting, wildflower areas and aquatic and marginal wetland planting around the attenuation basins and swales and enhancement of existing scrub and hedgerows
- Opportunity for retaining and enhancing the existing landscape structure and habitat prevalent around the sites edges to provide a strong landscape framework for the site to help embed new development and integrate with the wider area
- To create a wide green corridor along the east of the site that buffers the existing woodland to protect habitat connectivity and functionality and include additional planting, SUDS and pathways fronted by large gardens and landscaped boundaries
- To create east to west green streets that maximise the opportunity for solar gain, SUDS and habitat connectivity and landscape character
- To create a western green corridor that protects and buffers the existing scrub habitat and the site from the allotments to the west
- To create a transitional landscaped buffer area to the south of the site and protect residential and visual amenity from the adjacent employment area

Weaknesses

- Very different uses on each side of the site
- Main approach is through industrial and commercial land uses
- Limited access points and poor connectivity with nearby residential areas
- Quality and width of footpath 26 does not allow for more significant connection
- Site lies adjacent to the green belt and has the potential to affect views to and from the open countryside
- There is archaeological interest on the site. Zones 1 and 2 will require a programme of strip, map and record excavation. Zone 3 will receive full excavation with findings catalogued and protected
- Western boundary planting needs intervention

Threats

- Small and relatively isolated site means limited opportunities to support sustainable transport modes
- Direct straight routes through the site are not possible given the topography
- Allotment holders are wary of development and access into their space

The summary constraints and opportunities plan overleaf illustrates the spatial strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Constraints and opportunities

Summary constraints and opportunities plan

- Opportunity to create new village green
- A gateway and arrival space can be created
- To create a buffer to the existing woodland and to extend woodland to the east of the site and enhance habitat and rural edge
- The creation of east-west streets to benefit from the sun path and work with natural drainage
- The varying edge conditions require sensitive design, including the Norton conservation area
- LG3 sits adjacent to the green belt so so may obstruct views to and from the site



Figure 27 Plan highlighting constraints and opportunities



Footpath, northern boundary



View east of LG3 site



Existing residential to west



Planted eastern edge



Looking south across LG3 site



Planted edge, eastern boundary



View north from southern end of LG3



Allotments with existing residential beyond



Glimpse towards Norton from footpath



View to open farmland beyond



Zoom-in of St Mary's, Baldock to south

3.

SITE VISION AND PLACEMAKING PRINCIPLES

Site vision introduction

- The vision for the LG3 site is to deliver a sustainable neighbourhood to the north-east of Letchworth, adjacent to Norton Village. The proposals adopt a context-led approach, responding to the surrounding landscape character, and embracing a diverse placemaking strategy.
- The vision utilises and successfully integrates the Garden city character of neighbouring Letchworth with the rural, historic and landscape qualities of Norton Village to create a contextually responsive development. The landscape-led approach will embrace the existing green infrastructure and habitat, through retaining and protecting existing ecological assets and enhancing ecological corridors functionality and connectivity through habitats buffers and the strengthening of west and eastern landscape corridors which will embed the site into its semi-rural setting and protect existing biodiversity.
- The site will adopt a forward-looking strategy, optimising sustainability, and setting a high bar for design quality in this rural fringe location. The new neighbourhood will be stitched into the surrounding settlements, encouraging walking and cycling connections, and an attractive village green which will benefit Norton and the new community.
- The new community will be an interactive and sociable place to live, with an emphasis on attractive green streets and spaces for play and biodiversity.



Amenity space providing recreational opportunities for all residents



SUDS feature within residential amenity space



Permeable streets and spaces, Great Kneighton, Cambridge



2 storey houses in Westholm development

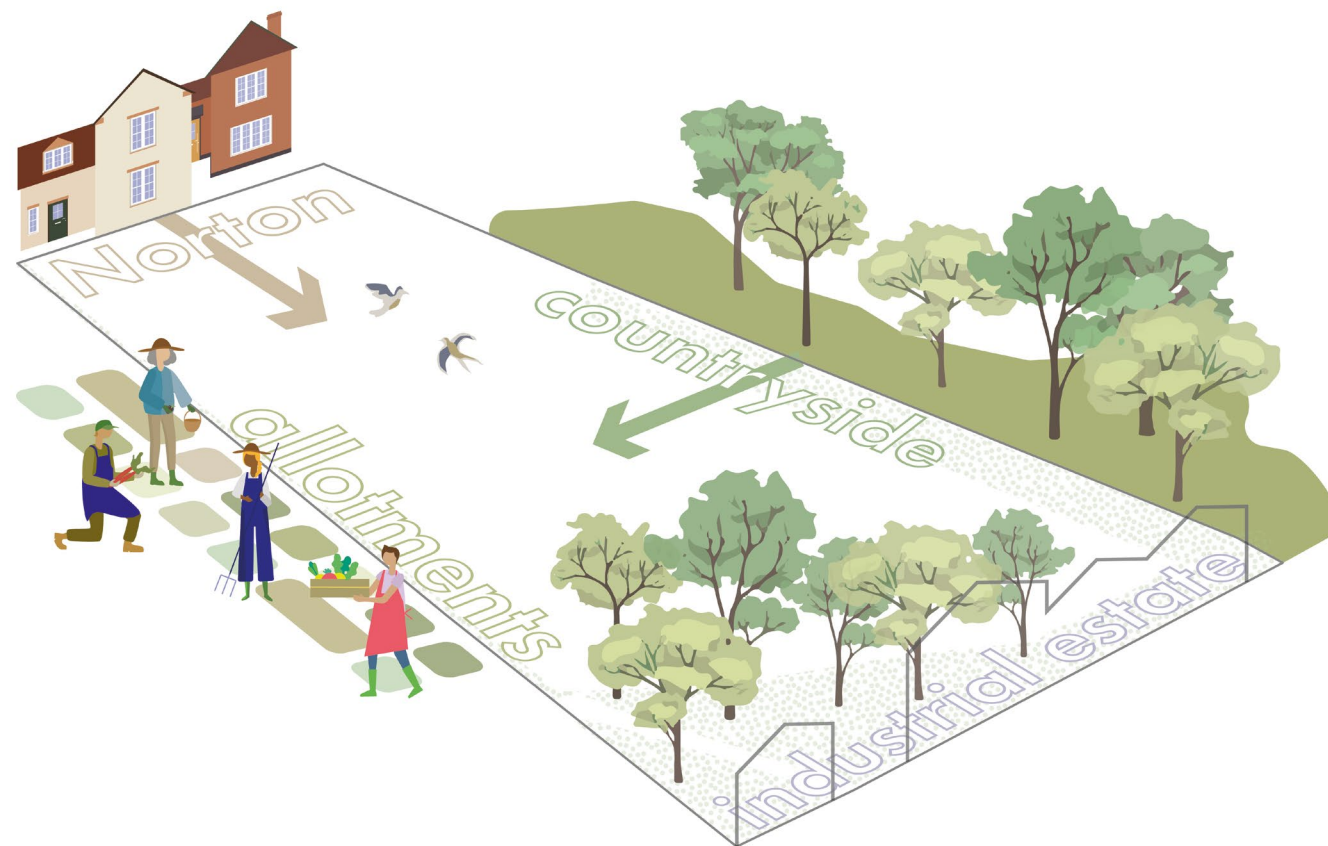


3 storey houses define the open space and provide natural surveillance, Kidbrooke Village, Greenwich

Site vision - Placemaking principles

1. Context-led - a design that responds to the landscape and built character of its setting, treading lightly by making best use of what is already on and around the site

- **Use existing green infrastructure and landscape setting as the basis for an attractive place to live:** Retaining and enhancing the existing landscape structure and habitat prevalent around the sites edges to provide a strong landscape framework for the site to help embed new development and integrate with the wider area. Retain and protect existing ecological assets and enhances ecological corridors functionality and connectivity through habitats buffers and the strengthening of west and eastern landscape corridors which will embed the site into its semi-rural setting and protect existing biodiversity
- **Taking the best from local character** and positively manage very different edge conditions.
- **Forestry / orchard / biodiversity** - emphasise strong contributions, particularly the southern woodland and biodiversity. Improve on-site biodiversity through habitat creation. Improve the species diversity and management of existing hedgerows.
- **Make best use of assets** on site including using timber arising from tree felling/ woodland adjustments - keep it all on site and use it.
- **Create an attractive green gateway** into the site; ensure tree loss is kept to a minimum where new vehicular access is formed. Ensure long term management of recently planted woodland.



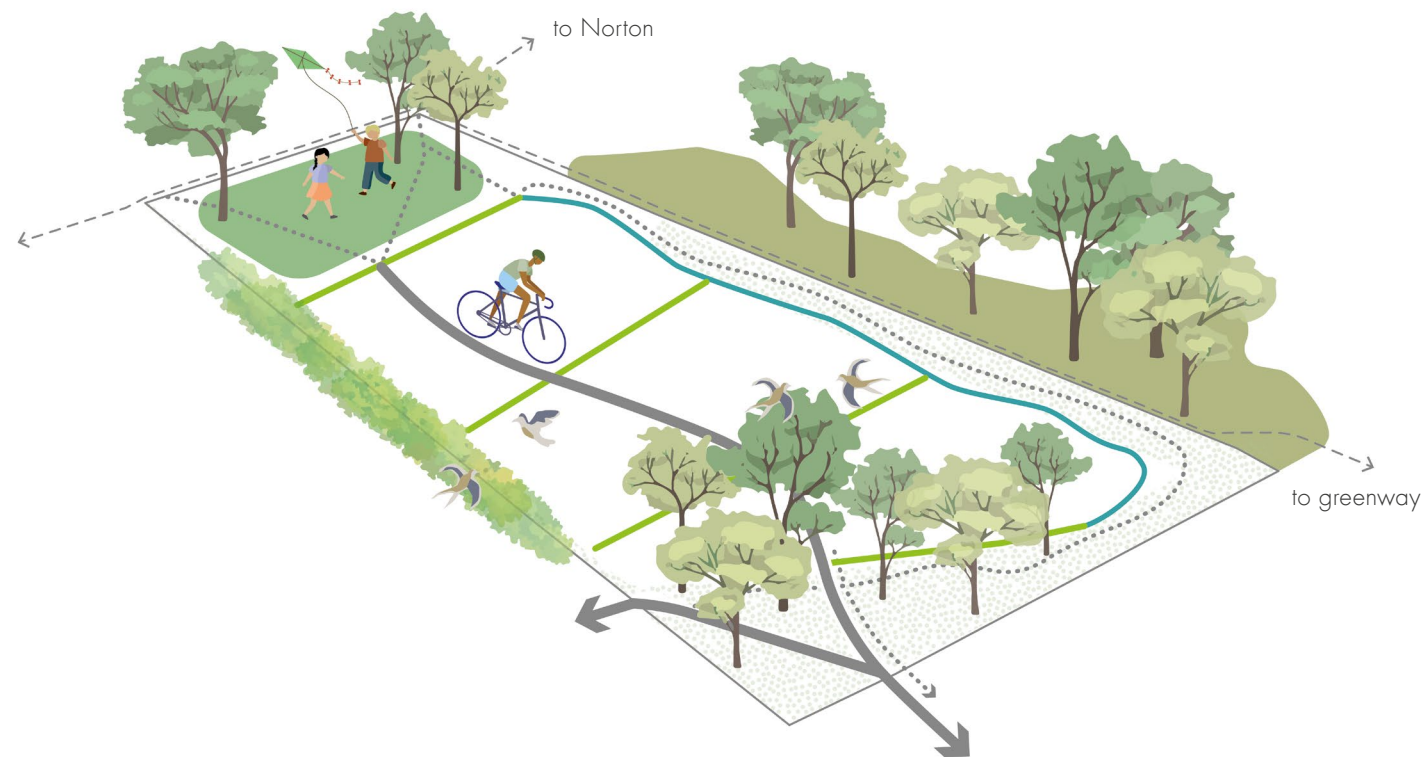
2. Forward-looking - a design which optimises sustainability and provides an exemplar for future development on the rural fringe

- **Establish an exemplar for future rural fringe development** - which learns the lessons from recent developments and supports the quality of the landscape setting and edge. Acknowledge and reflect Garden City design principles with creative reinterpretation in the light of contemporary living requirements.
- **Managing the rural edge and fringe** - a positive contribution to the landscape setting and biodiversity network. Establish a wide green corridor along the east of the site that buffers the existing woodland to protect habitat connectivity and functionality and include additional planting, SUDS and pathways fronted by large gardens and landscaped boundaries.
- **Create a place which is generously landscaped** with houses grouped to form a sequence of outdoor spaces which relate to each other and to the overall setting. To incorporate generous street tree planting to support climate adaptation and biodiversity.
- **Pursue a sensitive building height strategy** which responds to density, views and vistas, supporting the setting of conservation area, landscape context and coherent frontage design composition (with relaxed but legible rhythm, symmetries and building lines). 3+ storeys to be located on lower ground in the southern half of the site.
- **Maximise sustainability** by integrating solar gain and SUDS. Site layout and drainage strategy to work with the natural topography of the site. Sustainable urban drainage will include a strategic attenuation basin and series of strategic swales to mimic natural drainage patterns and include aquatic and marginal planting.



3. Stitched-in - a design which enhances existing sustainable connections and has an internal structure to support links to this network

- **Supporting connections into existing network** - linking the site to Norton and Letchworth Garden City: explore opportunities to open up further connections such as a new entry into the school and future links across the allotment gardens.
- **Prioritises active travel over other modes of transport** incorporating direct commuter routes to the school and bus corridor and more tranquil recreational routes to the green space network
- **Providing a new village green between Norton and Letchworth** that provides both a transition and a focus within the local area. The village green will act as a hub for the community and a transitional space adjacent to the Conservation Area.
- **Creating a new gateway multi-functional green space** to define the arrival point to the new development.
- **Create east to west green streets** that maximise the opportunity for solar gain, SUDS and habitat connectivity and landscape character.
- **Establish a western green corridor** that protects and buffers the existing scrub habitat and the site from the allotments to the west.



4. Interactive and sociable - a design which supports social interaction and community building

- **Create community spaces** designed to encourage social interaction. Provide a range of play opportunities for children.
- **Provide a range of house types** including maisonettes, terraced, semi-detached and detached homes. The housing will create a series of locally responsive building typologies using local architectural language and materials. The scheme will provide 40% affordable units.



4.

LAND USE FRAMEWORK

Land use

Development area

- Any development on the site must respect and protect existing habitats around the edges of the site.
- Appropriate buffers to existing habitats must be respected and new development must not breach these.
- In particular, the eastern and southern edges of the site preserve existing woodland areas.
- The northern edge of the site provides an **open space** (ca. 0.44 ha with a LEAP) to serve as a **public amenity** for the development and for existing neighbourhoods. It also serves as a **buffer** to protect the distinction of the Norton village conservation area.
- The western edge has a scrub corridor to **interface with the adjacent allotment gardens**.



Figure 28 Plan showing the land use framework

5.

GREEN

INFRASTRUCTURE

FRAMEWORK

Green infrastructure

- The green infrastructure framework, like the land use framework, is closely related to the existing landscape character and the topography of the site. The **existing woodland** is maintained and enhanced along the east and south edges. A **village green** is proposed at the north edge to provide outdoor amenity to the wider area, and to create a buffer from the Norton Village conservation area. The **entry green** creates a generous first impression of the neighbourhood as one emerges from the main access point through the southern woodland. The existing hedgerow and scrub corridor mediates the back gardens with the adjacent allotments to the west.
- On-site **biodiversity gain** will be delivered through new woodland planting with native ground flora, scrub planting, diversification of hedgerows, new hedgerow trees, wetland planting and the creation of species rich wildflower meadows. The long-term management of the green infrastructure will ensure the delivery of defined landscape and biodiversity objectives over a minimum 25 year period.
- A buffer of 12m will be maintained adjacent to northern boundary existing hedgerow (priority habitat) to accommodate a corridor for habitat connectivity and functionality. Similarly, existing hedgerows along the west and existing woodland on the eastern and southern sides of the site will have a buffer of c 6m. No housing will be located within the buffer; gardens may be permitted.
- The worked example of 120 dwellings gives rise to a population yield of 266 people, based on the proposed unit mix and the Council's population factor. The table below shows the quantity of different types of open space required by the Fields in Trust Standards.
- The proposed development will meet the standards for multifunctional open space and provision for play for children and young people on site. Allotment provision will be made by investment into the existing adjoining Flint Road site. This will be via a Section 106 obligation that will see improvements to the WC facilities and the central pathway.
- The worked example presented in the illustrative masterplan includes a variety of open spaces for recreation and play. The primary open space is located at the flattest, northern-most portion of the site and is approximately 0.44ha in size. This space would



Figure 29 Plan showing the green infrastructure and ecology framework

be used for informal outdoor activities and will include formal planting, seating, tree planting, amenity grass and meadow or neutral grassland. It would also accommodate an equipped play area of approximately 0.07ha and a 30m buffer between the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property. The open space affords some views towards open countryside to the east and will ensure separation between the proposed development and the Norton Conservation Area.

- A secondary open space would be provided close to the site entrance creating a green gateway with trees, seasonal planting and the potential for a small wetland habitat and infiltration basin.
- Doorstep play would be provided in a variety of locations through the development to engage the youngest children.
- The existing woodland would be managed to ensure its long term health and development with public access on lightly surfaced paths and improvements to ground flora to encourage biodiversity. Natural play features such as stepping logs and balance beams could be placed within the woodland.
- The total provision of multifunctional open space shown on the illustrative masterplan is 2.27 ha; this exceeds the Field in Trust Standards.

Biodiversity

- The site predominantly comprises an intensively grazed improved grassland field in the centre, a broad-leaved plantation woodland at the south-east and south of the site, and hedgerow at the north of the site.
- The intensively grazed nature of the improved grassland limits the likelihood of notable species being present within this habitat whereas the scrub, woodland and hedgerow habitat areas offer ecological connectivity around the periphery of the site in addition to suitable foraging and shelter opportunities for a wide range of species. Impacts to designated wildlife sites are considered unlikely owing to the distance and ecological barriers present between the development site and any relevant wildlife site.
- To mitigate the loss of woodland and scrubs, the scheme proposal includes new woodland extension to the east boundary and along footpath 026 to the north; a native species-rich scrub strip to the western boundary adjacent to the allotment; species rich meadow grass in the open field to the north and water bodies in the form of SUDS along the woodland edge to the east. To mitigate the impact to notable and protected species such as bats, birds, badger, reptiles, GCN and hedgehog, new bird box, bat box, hedgehog passages, water bodies



Figure 30 Plan showing the biodiversity and landscape framework

- and editable vegetation will be included in the proposal at the detail design.
- Further tree survey, AIA and BNG calculation have been undertaken since the initial planning application was submitted. Any impact to the woodland and hedgerow habitat has been minimized as far as possible. Consultation will be undertaken with North Hertfordshire District Council in relation to the loss of woodland to facilitate access. Where loss cannot be avoided, replacement planting may be required at a rate of 1:10.
 - Ricardo Energy & Environment has undertaken a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site, to inform the outline planning application for the residential development. The PEA was updated in January 2023. A Biodiversity Impact Assessment Report (BIA), was also prepared and updated in February 2023.
 - The up to date survey data (Jan 2023) has been put through the most up to date version of the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 Calculation Tool. This enables the change in 'Woodland and forest', 'Grassland' and 'Heathland and shrub' pre-development and post development to be measured and provides a

- 'total net unit change' for each of these categories. It should be noted that due to the proposals being submitted as an outline application, and therefore likely to be subject to change throughout the planning process, the results of this BNG exercise should be treated as indicative at this stage.
- Overall, the proposed residential development would result in a net gain of biodiversity of 2.88 Biodiversity Units achieved through the enhancement of maintained habitats on site and the creation of a mosaic of habitats within the development area. Implementation of a rigorous management plan would result in a biodiversity net gain of 15.89% on site.
 - Several faunal enhancements are proposed under the scheme, which are anticipated to provide further net gains for biodiversity, in addition to the habitat provision. Such faunal enhancements include the provision of bat boxes which will provide new roosting opportunities for bats in the area; bird nest boxes will increase nesting opportunities for birds at the site; the placement of a number of habitat piles sourced from vegetation clearance works will provide habitat opportunities for a variety

of invertebrates, which in turn could provide a prey source for a range of other wildlife; and insect hotels and bee bricks to provide new nesting opportunities for non-swarming solitary bee populations.

Table: Open Space Standards (Fields in Trust) and Proposed Open Space Provision

Type of Open Space	Fields in Trust Standard (2021) (hectare per 1,000 population)	Quantity required (ha) for 266 people	Masterplan Provision (ha)
Natural and Semi-natural open space	1.8	0.48	1.46 ha - exceeds standards Woodland: native woodland with positive management Scrub corridor: species rich, native scrub planting to enhance existing hedgerow; hedgerow tree planting Swales and attenuation features
Parks and Gardens	0.8	0.21	0.44ha - exceeds standards Village Green: comprising amenity grass, flower rich meadow grass, tree planting, woodland edge planting, ornamental planting, paths, seating and equipped play
Amenity Greenspace	0.6	0.16	0.3 ha - exceeds standards Gateway Green: comprising amenity grass, tree planting, seasonal pond, paths and seating Communal Gardens: comprising seating areas, doorstep play, tree and hedge planting Green streets: comprising tree planting, raised planters, food growing, doorstep play, benches Green verges: meadow grass and large trees
Children's play	0.25	0.06	0.07 ha - meets standards LEAP within the Village Green
Playing pitch	1.2	0.32	Existing site provision
Outdoor sports	1.6	0.43	Off site provision
Allotment	0.2	0.05	S106 improvement plan
MUGA	0.3	0.08	Off site provision
Total	6.75	1.79	2.27 ha - exceeds standards

Sketch scheme for Northern Open Space - Village Green



Focal seating space with feature tree and views across the village green Clear road crossing points

Figure 31 Illustrative plan showing the proposed village green to the north

Sketch scheme for Entrance
Green Space



Figure 32 Illustrative plan showing the proposed entrance green space

6.

MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Access and movement

- The access and movement framework proposes a **primary street** springing from the only feasible vehicular point to the site. It curves gently, with verges and structural planting to create a softer street scape and a main 'avenue' for the neighbourhood. It terminates at the proposed open space amenity at the north of the site.
- The current framework adjusts the previous road hierarchy by swapping the order of the previous secondary and tertiary routes to create more double-sided residential streets running in the east-west direction, and to increase the number of homes with southern exposure. The current **secondary streets** are conceived of as 'garden streets' with integrated SUDS and multi-layered landscaping that is connected to the eastern edge woodland for continuous biodiversity corridors. Secondary streets connect to the primary street through staggered t-junctions to improve pedestrian safety, reinforce road hierarchy, and create opportunity for special corners to enhance townscape character (see urban design framework).
- The **edge lane** runs along the eastern edge of the site as a rural lane to better integrate the settlement with the woodland and greenbelt beyond. This route is partially curved and is narrower in section than the other streets on site, drawing on the character or the rural lanes found in Norton and Letchworth. The route narrows further in two of the central sections to prioritise non-vehicular modes. It is characterised by looser building alignments and dense tree planting, and would have a more rural surface materiality to it. The **edge lane** is single sided and has a more rural character, although acting to enclose the village green. Its path follows a straight and defined edge while being composed of a shared surface.
- The **pedestrian routes** will tie in the new development with the existing PROW 26 to the north and the permissive path to the east. The main southern entrance should have a well-designed pedestrian access to improve safety, create a sense of address and a pride of place for those heading home through the woodland. Informal paths will wind through the woodland to provide alternate, recreational paths to residents. Potential connections along the western edge to the allotments are possible, but have been declined by current stakeholders.
- The development facilitates improvements to PROW 26, through new surfacing from Green Lane to Church Lane, which will include low level lighting, ensuring that it will be far more usable. A design scheme for the upgrade will be agreed. It will also provide a new pedestrian access to the rear of Norton St Nicholas School meaning that LG3 residents and other nearby residents will have safer sustainable access.

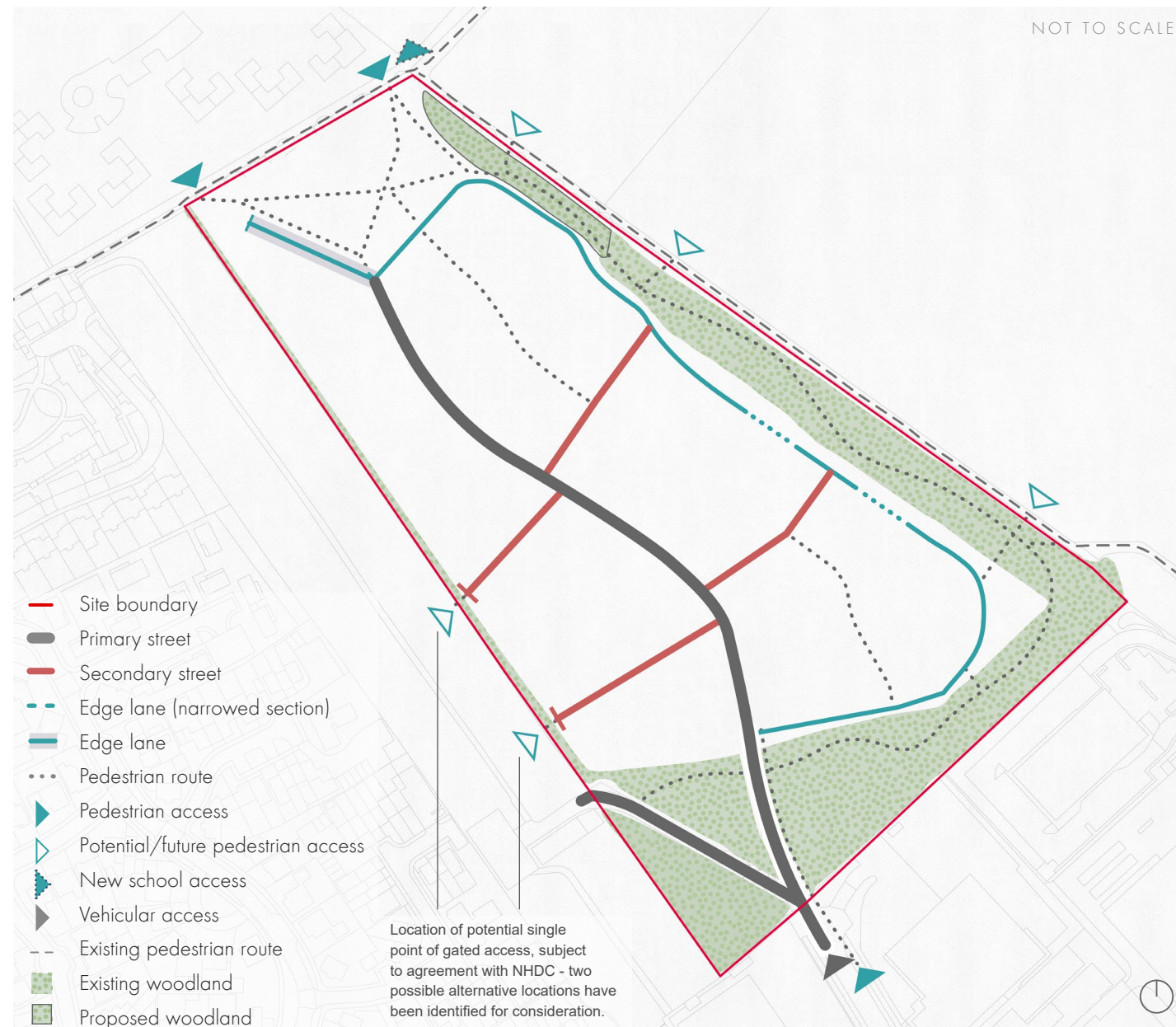
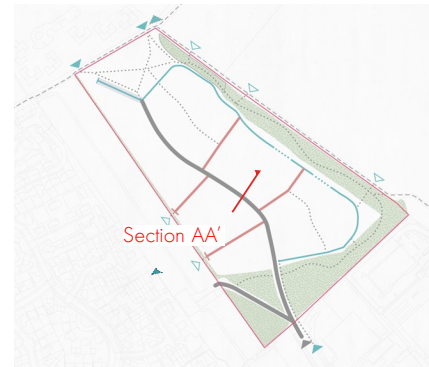
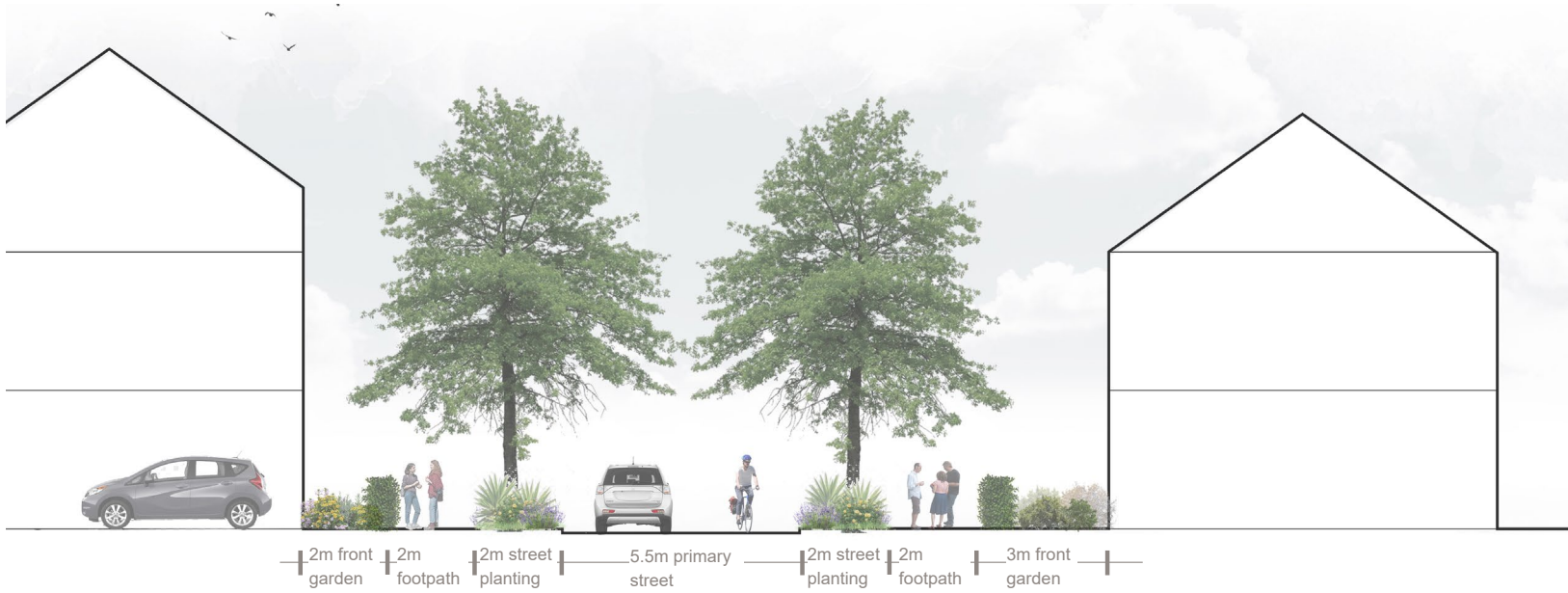
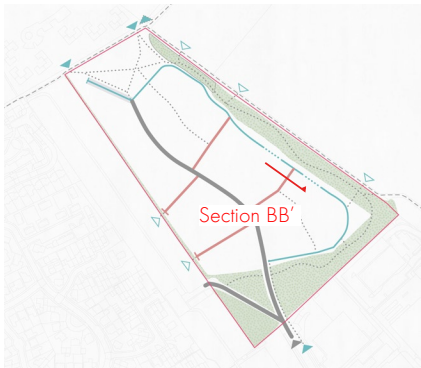


Figure 33 Plan showing the access and movement framework

Section AA' - Tree lined avenue
(primary street)

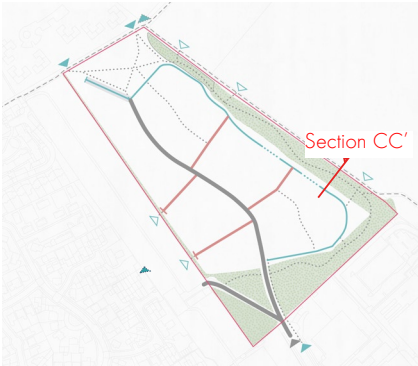


Section BB' - Shared surface green street (secondary street)



Section CC' - Rural woodland edge lane (edge lane)

Section shows one of the two central sections where the route narrows to prioritise non-vehicular modes. Outside of these section road lane would widen to 5.5m and the 2.5m planting would not be present.



7.

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Urban design

- The urban design framework organises the residential blocks into **perimeter blocks**. Each block conceals the rear of buildings within the block, ensuring that all streets are fronted by building frontages.
- Most of the frontages are comprised of main house facades, generally aligned in groups of 3-4 to help enclose the street in a relaxed semi-urban manner. They help frame both the primary street ('the avenue') and the secondary street ('garden streets'), as well as the 'village green' and the 'entry green'.
- The **Avenue** will form the main street through the site. The frontage design will provide a consistent building line with, dwellings of a similar typology and size plotted the same distance apart to create rhythm and order with a consistent distance and setbacks from street edge to frontage. Secondary streets will act as green streets to connect into the eastern woodland corridor. Here buildings will be set back to allow green landscaped areas to characterise the street. The rural frontage to the east will provide a more irregular and stepped frontage but still within a discernible building line. Dwellings will predominantly be formed of larger detached and semi-detached properties of varying

size with unity of building scale, massing and composition and architectural treatment. A feathered edge carefully integrating the built form into the woodland character will be provided through generous plot, street and peripheral edge landscaping along the woodland edge.

- The **village green frontages** will need to positively frame and enclose the village green. Building design should be considered as a group with a distinctive and consistent frontage character through plot design and architectural treatment
- **Rural frontages** will be comprised of more generous front gardens and looser building alignments to feather-in the woodland character with residential buildings along the eastern edge of the development.
- **Apartment buildings** are located on the lower half of the site and are positioned to form visual anchor points for the primary street and marker buildings for the adjacent streets; their main entrances, overall massing and orientation, roof silhouette, façade design, parking solutions, and ground level interface with the public realm must all be carefully considered and well designed.



Figure 34 Plan showing the urban design framework

- **Special corner / marker buildings** buildings are a common urban feature throughout Letchworth. They anchor shorter internal street views and are an opportunity to creatively address the transition between two street frontages. **Marker buildings** are buildings in visually prominent locations or on street corners addressing key routes. They anchor or terminate important views and so play an important role in wayfinding within the neighbourhood. The positioning and design expression of these buildings will be given particular consideration at reserved matters to ensure the appropriate treatment is provided. Marker buildings may be slightly taller than other buildings with distinctive architectural composition or elevational treatment. All buildings on corners should be designed to appropriately address both street frontages: treatments may turn the corner, or where one facade is considered primary, the secondary facade must still contribute to the visual amenity of the adjacent route. Standard 'in-row' housing types and blank walls are prohibited from special corners.
- Streets that terminate at a development boundary should create **green views** at that boundary, to avoid abrupt change or hostile conditions at the edge.
- Areas of open space will create **long views** of houses and buildings.
- Across the 6 residential parcels, 120 homes can be accommodated giving rise to an overall site density of 22 dwellings per hectare.

8.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

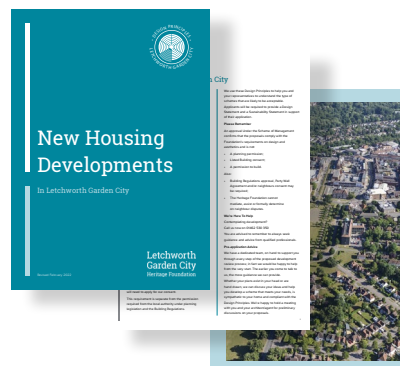
Letchworth design principles

As part of the research to inform the proposals for the LG3 site, the team has reviewed seven recent schemes in Letchworth to understand what aspects have been delivered well and those aspects that need to be more strongly embedded in design guidance.

This analysis is also informing a focused review of LGCHF New Housing Development guidance.

One of the key findings from the review was a set of “must-have” requirements. These are the things that make Letchworth distinct and a great place to live. They are:

1. Landscape First
2. Real Sustainability
3. Reasonable Density
4. House Grouping
5. Large Buildings Do More
6. Variety Brings Vitality
7. Joy In The Ordinary Details



‘New Housing Developments’ document



Scheme-wide design principles

Landscape First



- include robust green infrastructure
- multi level planting
- substantial trees
- habitat continuity and biodiversity

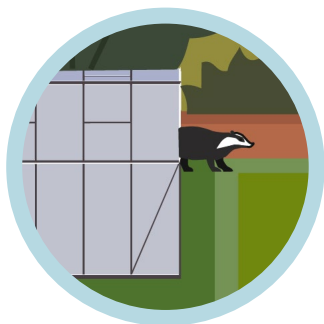
Landscape and planting design principles

- **Structural planting** should be provided in verges or front gardens along the primary street to create a green, semi-rural environment.
- Tree specimens with large sizes at maturity (+15-20m) should be planted in the open spaces (village and entry greens) and form part of the landscape design related to large buildings.
- **Garden streets** will create east-west habitat continuity, and must integrate SUDS design with the landscape.
- Streets terminating at the western edge should have **green views** at the street focal point.
- **Hedges** should be provided in most front gardens and be the preferred boundary treatment.
- A tree strategy for private back gardens should be proposed to create **backdrop planting** for the quintessential Letchworth condition of homes surrounded by greenery. Plants should be evident in the background, midground and the foreground as one moves through the street.
- **SUDS** should be exploited as a landscape element in garden streets, and help extend biodiversity from the boundaries deep into the development site.



Figure 35 Plan showing the proposed scheme wide landscape and planting design principles

Real Sustainability



- prioritise sustainability objectives
- balance environmental, social, and economic criteria

House Grouping



- combine simple building types to create uplifting forms
- create great public realm in between

Large Buildings Do More



- ensure design effort proportional to building size
- planting and landscaping to match scale of building

Reasonable density



- anticipate space for SUDS and landscaping
- account for real vehicular needs

Variety Brings Vitality



- enhance sense of address for residents
- introduce generous, creative spirit to building elements: doors, windows, rooflines, materials

Joy In The Ordinary Details



- get all the mundane details right: bins, bikes and cars
- strive for excellence in the things that affect everyday life

Density design principles

- Density across the whole site to be 22-25 dph
- Gross average density across the development blocks only to be 40-45dph
- Building heights to be generally 2-3 storeys with apartment blocks up to 3.5 storeys max.

Parking design principles

- Generally resident parking should be accommodated on plot. For apartment blocks, most of the parking should be concealed behind the block with additional space integrated into on-street provision.
- A maximum parking ratio of **1.88** is to be achieved across the site, with the visitor parking ratio of **0.23**

Architectural and materials design principles

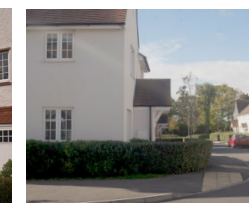
- The scheme must promote positive architectural features and high quality materials.
- Materials should take reference from high quality housing and character in Leichworth Garden City.
- Apartment buildings are to be located diagonally from each other across development blocks to maximise external views in the south east direction, and to stagger them across the slope of the land.
- Apartment buildings should form visual anchor points for the adjacent streets; their main entrances, overall massing and orientation, roof silhouette, façade design, parking solutions, and ground level interface with the public realm must all be carefully considered and well designed.



Good corner design at Wissen Drive



Good variety and composition of openings at Wissen Drive



Good use of hedges at Maddon Gardens

Rural edge lane specific design principles

The lane running along the north eastern side of the site provides an opportunity for a slightly different character to the rest of the scheme. This lane should have a more rural edge character to reflect its position and to draw on similar lane characters found elsewhere in Norton and Letchworth Garden City. This should be reflected in both the street design and the design of the buildings that front on to it.

Street design and character design principles

- The street should be narrower than other streets in the scheme and should communicate a clear prioritisation of walking and cycling in its design.
- The street should be single sided and shared surface to define and enclose village green,
- Large structural planting should be included that obscures long views down the street. High quality planting should ensure defensible boundaries.
- A looser, rustic carriageway edge (i.e. no kerbs) should be adopted. Direct access to recessed on plot parking should be designed in.
- The road surface material should be different to other streets in the scheme and should communicate a more rural and less vehicular route.

Building design principles

- The front gardens of building fronting on to this route should be more generous, and homes should have a looser alignment, with a building line that is staggered through. This approach is to create a rural edge that blends with the existing woodlands and SUDS design.

Materials

- Materials should take reference from both the high quality housing and character at the rural edge of Letchworth Garden City, and the rural character of Norton.



Figure 36 Plan highlighting some of the proposed rural edge lane design principles

9.

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

Illustrative masterplan

This illustrative masterplan demonstrates how the proposed parameters and principles within the Masterplan Framework can be delivered within the site boundary. This is for illustrative purposes only, the application does not seek approval for the illustrative masterplan.

- 01 Native tree planting
- 02 Village Green with equipped play area
- 03 Connection to PRoW 026
- 04 Additional buffer planting to green belt boundary
- 05 Potential footpath link to open countryside
- 06 Communal garden
- 07 Secondary street, loop road
- 08 Existing woodland, improved management
- 09 Natural play within the woodland
- 10 Garden street
- 11 Primary street with meadow verge and avenue trees
- 12 Improved boundary hedgerow and scrub planting
- 13 Private garden
- 14 Footpath through woodland
- 15 Gateway green space
- 16 Vehicular access to allotments
- 17 Open space with SUDS feature
- 18 Vehicular access to development



Figure 37 Illustrative masterplan

