Batchworth Community Council
Eastbury - Moor Park - Rickmansworth

Neighbourhood plan

Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan

covering Eastbury, Moor Park and Rickmansworth

2023-2038

THE PLAN
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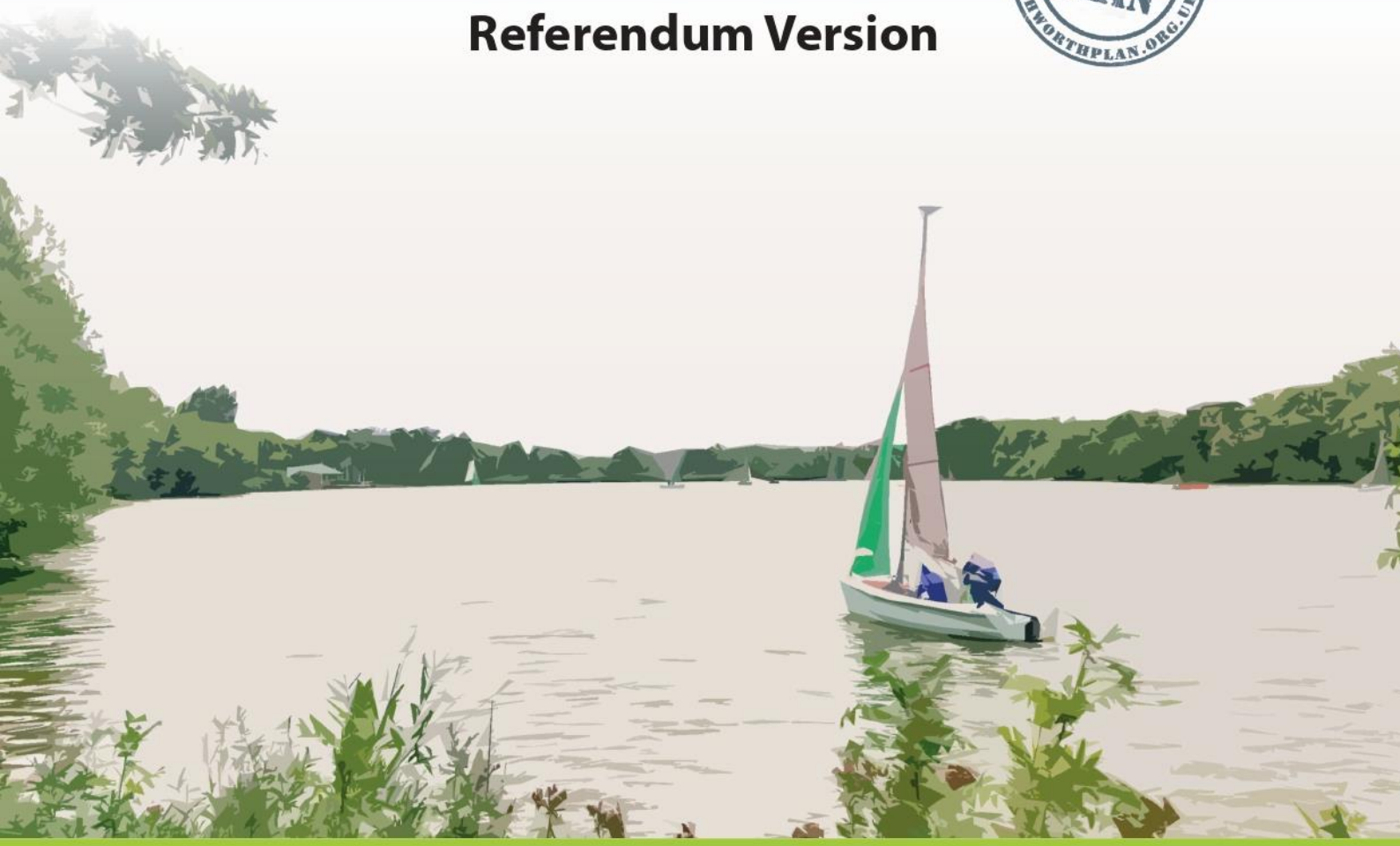
Referendum Version



January 2025

BATCHWORTH
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2023-2038

January 2025

Batchworth Community Council
Basing House
46 High Street
Rickmansworth WD3 1HP

https://www.batchworth-ecc.gov.uk/

General Enquiries:
01923 590201
clerk@batchworth-ecc.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Plan Enquiries:
07939 986242
neighbourhoodplan@batchworth-ecc.gov.uk

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Foreword

The Batchworth Neighbourhood Development Plan covers the areas of Eastbury, Moor Park and Rickmansworth within the parish boundaries of the Community Council. It has been driven by a resident led Steering Group set up by Batchworth Community Council, with the assistance of external consultants and involvement of residents and businesses in the area.

The Plan lays out a vision and set of objectives with the aim of encouraging development that will preserve and enhance the area's natural assets, identity, infrastructure and facilities over the period 2023-38. It includes policies that will help to ensure the area is developed in line with residents' wishes and takes into account challenges such as protecting the environment and responding to the climate change emergency. The Plan also includes aspirational projects that residents have said they would like to see undertaken to improve the lives of those living and working in the area.

We would like to thank members of the Steering Group, Batchworth Community Council and residents for the many hours of work that they have committed to developing this plan, Troy Planning + Design for the support they have given us, and Three Rivers District Council for their engagement throughout the process.

Miles Hosking
Chair
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Andrea Fraser
Chair
Batchworth Community Council

PART A: Scene-setting

"And then, one Thursday… a girl sitting on her own in a small café in Rickmansworth suddenly realised what it was that had been going wrong all this time, and she finally knew how the world could be made a good and happy place. This time it was right, it would work…"[1]

So begins The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Unfortunately, events overtook that girl and her idea was lost forever. The journey which Batchworth Community Council has committed to through production of a Neighbourhood Plan might not be as dramatic as the adventures of Arthur Dent and his space travelling colleagues, but it does provide an opportunity for all to become involved in helping to make Batchworth, as a whole, a 'good and happy place'.

The Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by consultation with the community who, like that girl in the café, came up with ideas to help effect positive change in the area and which are now expressed through policies and projects presented in this Plan.

[1] This quote is from the first page of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams, 1979, based on the BBC Radio 4 series created by Douglas Adams and aired in 1978.

1. Introduction

A new plan for Batchworth

1.1 This is the Neighbourhood Plan for Batchworth. It covers the entire Community Council area, as illustrated in Figure 1. It sets out the local community's aspirations for Batchworth over the period 2023 to 2038 and establishes policies relating to land use and development. These are policies that will influence future planning applications and decisions in the area. But the Neighbourhood Plan is much more than this. It represents the community's manifesto for the Batchworth area, bringing together more than just traditional planning matters.

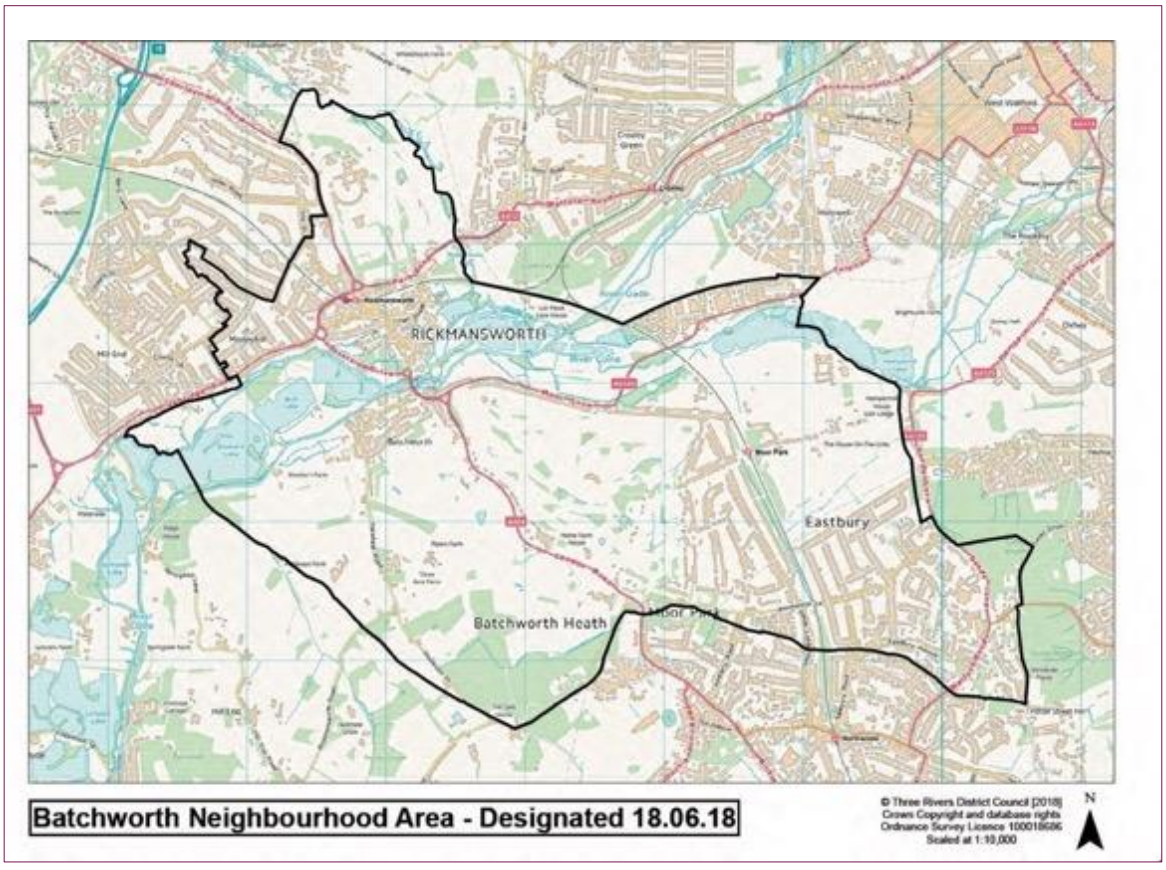

Figure 1: The designated Neighbourhood Plan area for Batchworth

1.2 The purpose of neighbourhood planning is to give local people and businesses a much greater say in how the places they live and work should change and develop over time. Neighbourhood planning is designed to give local people a very real voice in shaping the look and feel of an area.

1.3 Batchworth was formally designated as an area for neighbourhood planning purposes in June 2018. The Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee has surveyed, spoken to and listened to members of the community, and has used the issues, and opportunities, raised during that process to help inform the policies and projects presented in the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 There are a number of stages involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been subject to consultation and independent Examination. The last stage is the holding of a referendum, during which people of voting age residing in the Plan area are asked whether they think the Neighbourhood Plan should be brought into force ('made'). If people are in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan at referendum it then becomes part of the development plan for Three Rivers.

Alongside the Neighbouhrood Plan the following documents have been prepared. They are presented as free-standing documents to the Neighbourhood Plan but are referred to within it and should be used by applicants and decision makers:

Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code: This covers the entire Plan area and includes guidance and codes that should be used to inform new development as well as wider initiatives, such as improvements to the quality of the public realm and open spaces. It is referred to throughout the Plan, in policies and supporting text.

Rickmansworth Town Centre Concept Plan: This presents a high level vision and illustrative concepts for potential future change in Rickmansworth Town Centre

Structure of the plan

1.5 Following this introduction the Neighbourhood Plan comprises eight further sections. These are:

- Section 2: 'Batchworth today', presents an overview of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan, what existing planning policy says for the area, key issues and comments raised during consultation.
- Section 3: 'Batchworth tomorrow', presents the vision for the Plan area.
- Sections 4–8: These sections present the policies and associated projects for Batchworth.
- Section 9: Summarises identified projects and aspirations in the Neighbourhood Plan, and outlines the next steps in the plan-making process.

1.6 For the avoidance of doubt, within sections 4–8, each topic area includes some introductory and explanatory text, followed by one or both of the following:

Policy Box

The Neighbourhood Plan establishes land use and development management policies for Batchworth. These are contained in green shaded policy boxes, like this one. These cover matters where planning permission is required for development to take place. The policies do not apply to those schemes allowed under permitted development.

Project Box

The draft Neighbourhood Plan covers more than just traditional planning matters as it presents the community's vision for the area. Items that the community are seeking, but that cannot be delivered through planning policy, are identified and contained in blue shaded project boxes, like this one. These are included within the body of the report, rather than being presented in a separate chapter or appendix, because they relate to the objectives and form a clear and important part of the story. They comprise ideas to be explored and developed further, involving consultation, and may change over time.

2. Batchworth 'today'

The neighbourhood plan area

2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan area covers the entire Community Council area of Batchworth. It comprises a series of distinct areas (see Figure 2), each with their own identity, as introduced in the following sections. Some policies and projects identified within the Neighbourhood Plan relate to a specific area (e.g.: Rickmansworth Town Centre), but others cut across these and apply to all areas.

Basic facts and figures

2.2 Basic demographic facts about the Plan area are set out below:

- The resident population of the Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan area is 12,600 people. This is split almost equally between males and females.
- The predominant age band in the Plan area is 55-59 years.
- There are 5,100 households in the Plan area. This equates to an average household size of 2.5 people per household.
- Around 38% of all homes in the Plan area are owned outright, with another 31% of households living in homes owned with a mortgage or loan. Different forms of rental agreements comprise the majority of all other tenure types.
- Almost 60% of the resident population have obtained level 4 qualifications or higher, including degree level studies, higher national certificates and diplomas.
- More than 60% of the population are economically active. Around 50% of the economically active population work from homes, with another 20% working within 10km of home.
- Approximately 88% of the resident population are reported as being in good or very good health.

Source: ONS, Census 2021

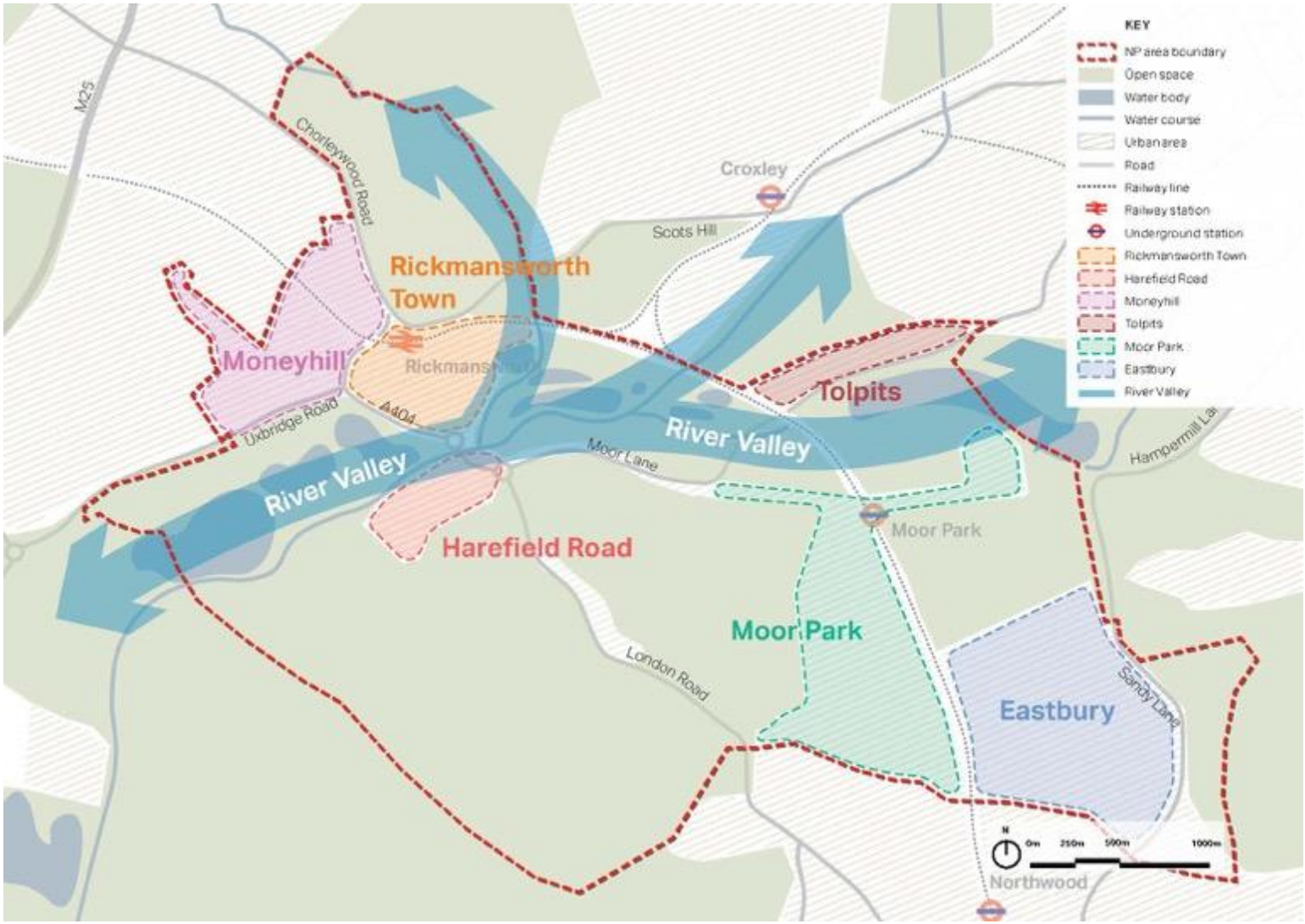

Figure 2: Character areas within Batchworth

Figure 3: Church Street, Rickmansworth

Rickmansworth Town

2.3 Rickmansworth is the principal settlement in the District. Rickmansworth Town includes the Town Centre, Rickmansworth railway station (with train and London underground services), residential properties and some social and community infrastructure. Rickmansworth Town Centre has a retail core with a historic High Street, part of which is designated as a conservation area. There is a civic complex located to the east of the centre, which includes Council Offices, the Library, Police Station and Theatre. The Library has been listed as an Asset of Community Value. The ambition outlined in the 10-year library strategy prepared by the County Council ('Inspiring Libraries: My Place 2022-2032') is for the library to be a vibrant, modern library which is a destination for the whole community.

2.4 The extent of the Town Centre is effectively defined by the surrounding highways (the A412 and Riverside Drive to the north, west and south) and by the riparian environment of the River Chess, River Gade and River Colne, and the Grand Union Canal.

2.5 Historically, the presence of the rivers led to growth in industry, including corn milling, silk weaving, paper-making and brewing. The rivers and canal system are now important for leisure, recreation and biodiversity, including the Aquadome Local Nature Reserve. The nearby golf courses are also attractors to the area.

2.6 The High Street (Figure 4) retains its original form and strong alignment, with historic buildings along this and also along Church Street lending it character. However, the shop facades, public realm, through traffic, parking and extensive visual clutter, including street signs, lights, poles and bollards, detract from the historic fabric of the High Street. Shops comprise the main use in the defined retail frontage in the Town Centre, though the proportion of retail uses in the Centre has been in decline over the last six to seven years.

2.7 Rickmansworth was formerly the home of several large companies, who had their regional base here. However, with the impact of Permitted Development Rights, there has been a loss of employment floorspace in the town.

2.8 The highway network (the A412 and Riverside Drive to the north, west and south) is the main access route to the rest of the neighbourhood area and wider afield. However, at the local level, it forms a barrier to movement in Rickmansworth Town and is a main source of noise and air pollution. The highway network, which creates a 'ring road' around the town centre, is designed in such a way that facilitates high speeds and has a relatively poor safety record, with numerous accidents recorded. The recycling centre is located along this main road and contributes to congestion along the highway network as well as restricting access to the waterfront.

2.9 In addition to the nature of the highway network, pedestrian links between the main Town Centre arrival points (station and car parks) are generally of a poor quality, being indirect and often appearing as an 'after-thought'. There is no real sense nor celebration of arrival or 'welcome' into the Town Centre.

2.10 The river corridor represents a unique setting for the town. This is though cut-off from the town and the relationship between the two is poorly defined. The topography also means it is an area of flood risk. The lack of greenery within the urban area exacerbates this risk, particularly that associated with surface water run-off.

2.11 To the south of Rickmansworth Town are the Bury Gardens which have a rich history dating back to the 1700s. The gardens were originally associated with The Bury Manor. However, and associated with limited Local Government funding, the Bury Gardens have suffered and have fallen into a state of disrepair, losing their original grandeur. Batchworth Community Council has put together a proposal to help restore the gardens and rename them 'Rickmansworth Memorial Gardens' so residents can begin to enjoy them again on a regular basis.

2.12 The heritage of the town is acknowledged through the designation of the Town Centre conservation area (designated 1993). This notes that the presence of water is a key feature, but that highway infrastructure has had a disruptive impact on the town, though the medieval core, around the High Street and Church Street, still exists. The heritage of the town extends beyond its built form: William Penn once lived in Rickmansworth and this drives tourism from the US to the area.

Figure 4: High Street, Rickmansworth

Figure 5: Moneyhill parade

Moneyhill

2.13 Moneyhill is predominantly a residential area to the west of Rickmansworth Town Centre. Although the area is in close proximity to Rickmansworth High Street and Railway Station it is separated from this by the presence of the highways network. Proximity to the Centre and station are an asset for the area but are also considered to be a challenge, with commuters travelling into the area from outside and parking here before continuing their journey by train or tube.

2.14 The main road that runs along the south of Moneyhill (Uxbridge Road) is heavily congested. It is the main route in the area providing access to the M25 but, when there are traffic problems on the M25, many drivers divert along the Uxbridge Road. The traffic dominated nature of this road is further exacerbated by the extent of parking along it, associated with Moneyhill Parade and spilling into surrounding residential streets. Although parking is provided in the Parade through the presence of 'service roads' either side of Uxbridge Road this remains a busy, car dominated environment which undermines the quality of the parade and the residential environment.

2.15 Moneyhill Parade is dominated by the presence of restaurants, cafes and hot/fast food takeaways. The over-concentration of these has an impact on traffic movements, encouraging journeys to these, but also limits the presence of other uses in the area which might support day-to-day activities. Moneyhill is in close proximity to the river valley and Aquadrome, with access to this to the south of the Uxbridge Road. However, and as noted above, the Uxbridge Road is an unattractive environment for walking (and cycling) and the access point is neither clear nor welcoming.

Figure 6: The Aquadrome

Harefield Road

2.16 The Harefield Road area in Batchworth is a small residential neighbourhood that is located on the south side of the river corridor and is detached from Rickmansworth Town Centre by a combination of the rivers and the presence of the highway network.

2.17 The dwellings in this area are of different architectural styles, housing types and sizes. Access to the waterfront is restricted by a combination of the Tesco Superstore and light industrial units along the riverside.

2.18 Previously Harefield Road was a quiet country lane leading to farms on the fringe of Rickmansworth town. Now, HGVs use Harefield Road to avoid London Road. There has been an increase of traffic due to works associated with HS2 and commuters avoiding Denham and Maple cross in rush hour. An incident on the M25 or M40 leads to congestion back up towards Harefield.

2.19 Tesco is a large store that is a traffic generator in the area. This in turn restricts accessibility to the Aquadrome that lies on the other side of the River Colne.

2.20 Severe flooding occurs regularly on Harefield Road gathering at Woodcock Hill Cemetery and at the bottom of the road by Stockers Farm Road and Tesco. The water runs off the golf course and the fields further up the road. Current water waste pipes cannot cope with water run off volume and raw sewage frequently floods onto the pavements and in the road.

2.21 To the south of this area is Batchworth Heath which extends all the way to Moor Park.

Figure 7: Local centre, Moor Park

Moor Park

2.22 Moor Park is a large residential estate that was historically part of the grounds attached to Moor Park Mansion. Lord Leverhulme purchased the mansion and estate in 1919 and converted the main house and grounds into a golf and country club. The original Estate Company, Moor Park Ltd, commenced development in 1922 through to 1939, which initially spread south and west from Sandy Lodge Halt (now Moor Park Station) until 1939. Building continued in 1954 after the war time restriction on building materials was removed. The residential estate company is now called Moor Park (1958) Ltd.

2.23 Moor Park (1958) Ltd is operated by residents to maintain the estate, including the private roads, verges and open spaces. The management company is also responsible for enforcing certain restrictive covenants. Restrictive Covenants may be included in the deeds of properties within the conservation area and may limit and/or restrict some uses of the property.

2.24 The Moor Park Conservation Area (Figure 8) was designated in 1995 and a Conservation Area Appraisal was published in October 2006. The Conservation Area is almost wholly residential in character, comprising mainly detached houses. Merchant Taylors School, Sandy Lodge and Moor Park Golf course form part of the open land bounding the conservation area.

2.25 Moor Park benefits from its own railway station that serves the Metropolitan Line. Adjacent to the railway station and fronting Main Avenue is a small shopping parade and some flats.

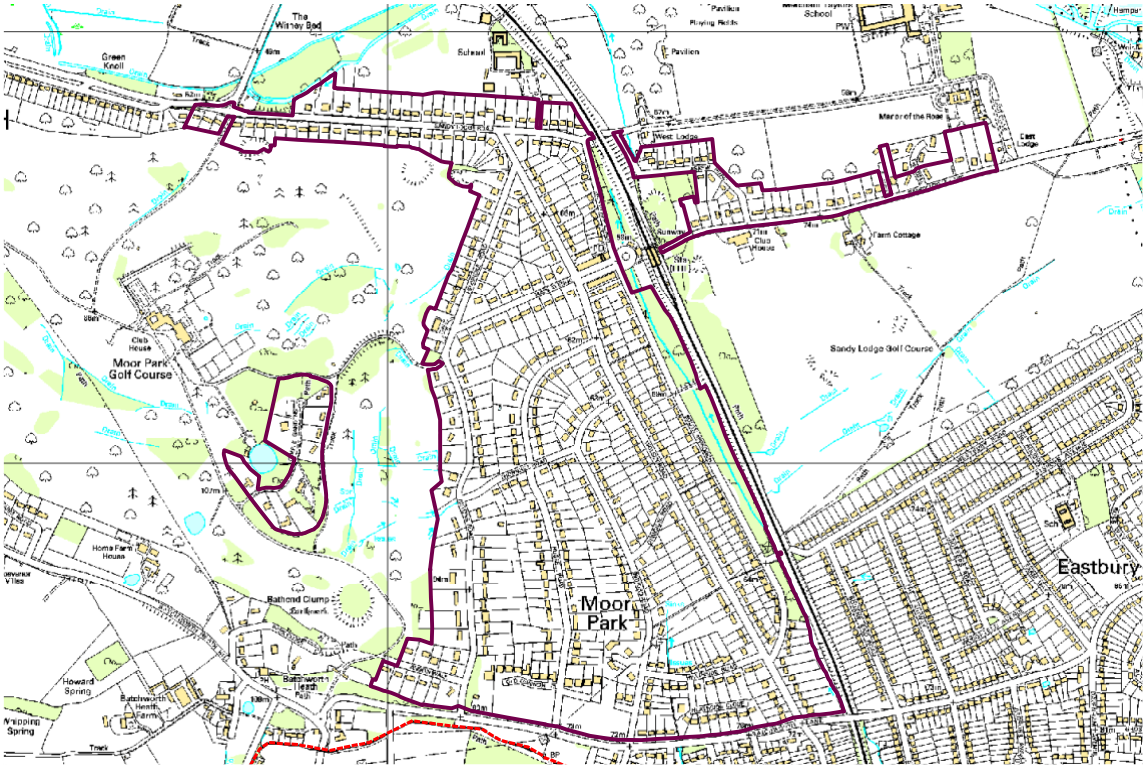

Figure 8: Moor Park Conservation Area boundary (source: Three Rivers District Council)

2.26 To the east of Moor Park, along the railway line, land is within Flood Zone 3, and is at risk of flooding; it is understood that this is exacerbated by surface water flooding associated with hard surfaces and drainage capacity.

2.27 To the west of Moor Park the A404 provides access to Rickmansworth Town. The junction to the A404 via Batchworth Lane is a point of congestion in the Batchworth Area, especially at peak times.

2.28 The Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve is located to the north of Sandy Lodge Road in Moor Park and to the south of Tolpits Lane. Currently there is no direct access to this for pedestrians, or those travelling by bike or by car. It is a tranquil environment that does not have many visitors due to the lack of access, though forms an important part of the green infrastructure network in the area.

Figure 9: Typical street scene, Eastbury

Eastbury

2.29 Eastbury is a residential area where growth and development took place in response to the opening of the Metropolitan Line railway station at Northwood in 1887. This part of 'Metroland', including 1930s detached and semi-detached housing, forms the overriding character of the area.

2.30 Eastbury Recreation Ground, located along Batchworth Lane and adjacent to Eastbury Farm Primary School is a well-used green space that has four tennis courts for public use.

2.31 The impact of flooding from surface water-run off is a concern: the area has experienced severe flooding causing homes to be evacuated due to limited drainage capacity and the increase in hard surfaces in the area because of residents paving over their front gardens.

2.32 There is a Public Right of Way along the southern boundary of Eastbury and which forms the boundary with the neighbouring London Borough of Hillingdon. This route is though poorly maintained and overgrown. Equally, routes exist alongside the railway line and behind residential properties.

2.33 Uniquely, NATO's Command Base, from which the Falkland war was controlled in 1982, is located to the east of Eastbury. In 2010 the Queen opened a new permanent joint Headquarters in the site and it is still used as a command base.

Figure 10: Employment premises within the Tolpits area

Tolpits

2.34 Tolpits Lane is the main route out of the district towards Watford. There are five industrial estates on Tolpits Lane. The area mainly serves as an employment area with light industrial units, and despite being designated as a key employment area, its role and function has been undermined given recent diversification which has seen other non-employment uses locate here, including a gym and overnight business accommodation, as well as a prior approval application approved in March 2016 for the change of use from office to 42 residential units at Kenwood House on Dwight Road.

2.35 Despite the change in use within Tolpits there are a lack of facilities and amenities within the area to serve the workers and residents. As a residential area, it is relatively isolated, with access effectively restricted to those who have a car. The nature of Tolpits Lane, with fast moving traffic and presence of HGVs is dangerous to both pedestrians and cyclists.

2.36 Schemes to widen access to Tolpits Lane have previously been investigated, and it appears in some places that land still exists to the side of the existing road to accommodate expansion of the carriageway.

Figure 11: Batchworth Lock

River Valley

2.37 The Neighbourhood Area is expansive and consists of very different built up character areas, with those in the north and south of the area separated from one another by the river valley and metropolitan green belt that runs through the middle of and around the settlements within the neighbourhood area.

2.38 The river valley, which includes parts of the Colne Valley Regional Park, consists of the River Gade, Rive Chess and River Colne and all three rivers meet in Rickmansworth. The Grand Union Canal runs along the River Colne and River Gade through Rickmansworth and connects major cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester. The river valley is designated as the Central River Valleys Landscape Area.

2.39 The Aquadrome is to the west of the Neighbourhood Area and consists of Batchworth Lake and Bury Lake. It is a designated as a Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site. Stocker's Lake is also a designated Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site. There are also several Local Wildlife Sites within the Neighbourhood Area, the biggest one being to the west of Moor Park encompassing Rickmansworth Golf Club and Moor Park Golf Club.

2.40 The countryside within Batchworth has a variety of landscapes, wildlife and habitats within a coherent network of Green Infrastructure to support the natural environment and human health. However, much of the green area also comprises golf courses, including, for example, Moor Park Golf Club, Sandy Lodge Golf Club, Batchworth Park Golf Club and Rickmansworth Golf Club.

What the community told us

2.41 The consultation exercises undertaken identified a range of issues of importance for addressing in the Neighbourhood Plan. Consultation exercises suggested that:

- The natural environment and biodiversity within the area should be protected and enhanced, with access to these, for leisure and recreation purposes, improved.
- Existing community facilities should be retained and supplemented by new facilities to support community cohesion and inclusiveness.
- Rickmansworth and Moneyhill centres are in need of revitalisation and would benefit from schemes that make these more attractive places for people to visit and spend time in.
- The design of new development should respond to the best characteristics and qualities of the area which give it a local identity and sense of place.
- Where new development for housing comes forward it should provide a wide range of housing types and sizes to provide choice and opportunity for all.
- Streets and spaces should be redesigned to create a more pedestrian and cycle friendly environment, reducing traffic speeds, congestion and concerns around safety. Efforts to make walking and cycling attractive propositions for short journeys, supported by increased use of public transport, would also help improve air quality in the area.
- There was concern around flooding, particularly the increasing risk of flooding from surface water run off resulting from increased development and paving over of gardens.

2.42 Concern was also expressed during consultation about the quantum and location of any future development in Batchworth. This Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to establish a development growth figure for Batchworth. Rather, that is being established by Three Rivers District Council through the new Local Plan. Instead, the Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to put in place policies that shape and influence any future growth, such that it best responds to the character and qualities of the local area and where the benefits from development, such as delivery of new infrastructure, can be maximised for the community.

2.43 It is important to note that some of the matters outlined above are addressed through planning policies in place at the national level and in the Local Plan prepared by Three Rivers District Council (both the adopted Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan). It is not for the Neighbourhood Plan to repeat these as, taken together, they present the suite of policies used to inform and determine planning applications in the area. Instead, the Neighbourhood Plan develops these further as appropriate to reflect local matters and, although some of the issues outlined above are not strictly 'land-use planning policy' matters, they do reflect the community's concerns and hopes for the area and are embedded in this Neighbourhood Plan through a combination of the vision and supporting projects. Local Plan policies of relevance to Batchworth are introduced in the following section.

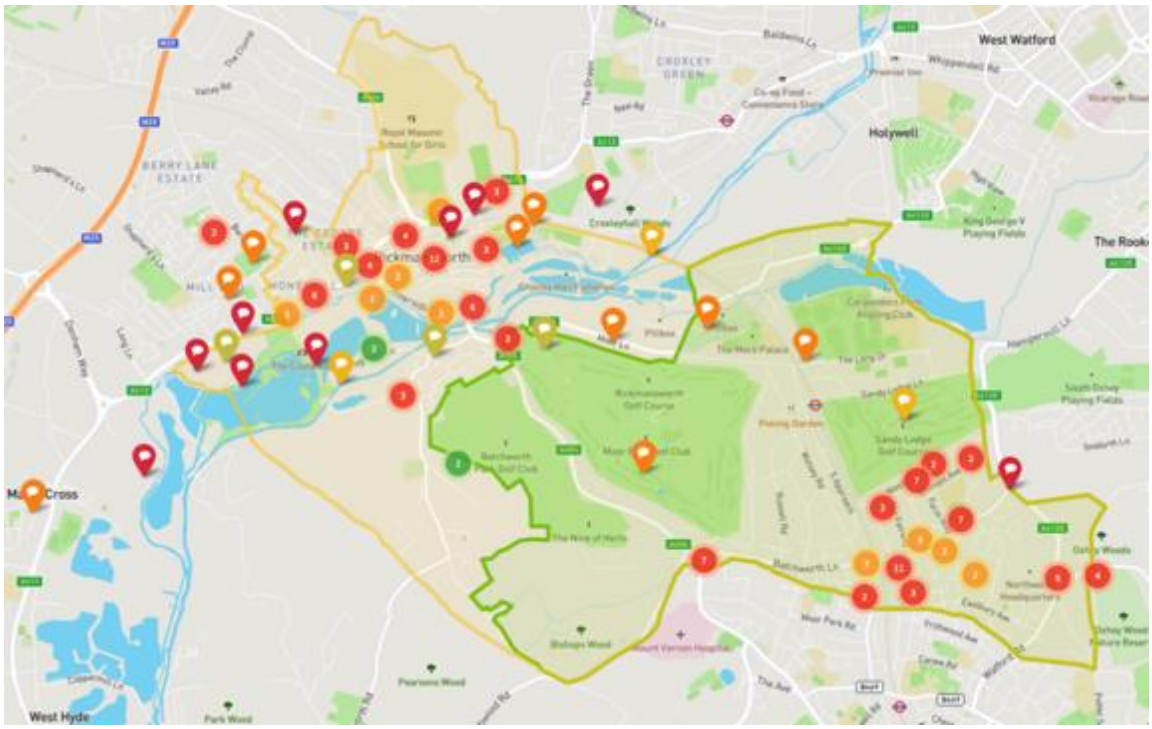

Figure 12: Extract from Commonplace online consultation platform used to gather ideas for the Neighbourhood Plan

The development plan

2.44 Neighbourhood Plans must be prepared in line with national guidance and legislation including the Localism Act (2011), the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012) (updated in 2015 and 2016), the Neighbourhood Planning Act, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

2.45 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in line with and examined under the December 2023 version of the NPPF. A new version of the NPPF was published in December 2024 during the course of the examination. However, transitional arrangements set out in the document explain that the policies in the updated NPPF will only apply to those neighbourhood plans submitted from 12 March 2025.

2.46 The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan. The development plan for Batchworth is the Three Rivers Core Strategy, which was adopted by the District Council in 2011. Strategic Policies of relevance for the Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan area include:

- CP1: **Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development** – Applicable to all development, this requires sustainable development principles to be satisfied through compliance with the policies of the Core Strategy and other relevant regional and national policy requirements.
- PSP1: **Development in the Principal Town** – Rickmansworth is identified as the 'Principal Town' within the Three Rivers district. The Core Strategy notes that new development will be directed towards previously developed land and appropriate infilling opportunities within the Principal Town. Specifically, Rickmansworth is to provide 15% of the District's housing requirements over the Plan period as well as maintaining the amount of existing employment floorspace and providing a slight increase in retail floorspace. Linked to this, policy CP6: **Employment and Economic Development**, identifies the town centre as a key employment area, and policy CP7: **Town Centres and Shopping**, notes that where there is an identified need for new town centre uses, then town and district centres should be the focus for this.
- PSP3: **Development in Secondary Centres** – Eastbury and Moor Park are identified as 'Secondary Centres'. The core strategy suggests that in such locations limited development may take place on previously developed land and appropriate infill sites. This policy also specifically refers to the need to preserve and enhance the local distinctiveness and the historic cores of Eastbury and Moor Park, as well as maintaining and enhancing employment opportunities within Secondary Centres.

2.47 The Three Rivers Local Plan is currently being updated, with consultation on an 'Issues and Options' draft undertaken between July and September 2017, followed by consultation on preferred policy options and potential site allocations between June and August 2021. A subsequent round of consultation on potential sites was undertaken in 2023. In October 2023 a further round of consultation on a 'Lower Housing Growth Option' commenced.

2.48 The most recent version of the Three Rivers Local Development Scheme envisages adoption of the new Local Plan in summer 2026. For the Neighbourhood Plan to remain relevant it is important that it aligns with the strategic direction established in the emerging Local Plan. This indicates that:

- **Sustainable Development** - All development will need to meet high sustainability standards, helping to generate wider benefits in terms of the quality of the environment and carbon reduction, be energy efficient, using renewable resources, and minimising the production of waste.
- **Employment** – It is important to continue to safeguard the existing allocated employment sites and allocate additional land for employment use as well as allowing mixed use schemes (mix of employment, residential, retail, leisure uses).
- **Social and Community Facilities/Health and Wellbeing** - The retention, enhancement and development of social and community infrastructure which makes a crucial contribution to the mental and physical wellbeing and sense of place and community should be strongly supported.
- **Climate Change** - Minimising our contribution to climate change by continuing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a key consideration, and sustainable construction requires the creation of adaptable buildings which are resilient to the effects of climate change and which also minimise the use of natural resources.
- **Green belt environment** - The main focus for development is making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land.
- **Green infrastructure** – There is a desire to conserve and enhance the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure, and to ensure its multi-functional benefits are achieved.
- **Design and heritage -**The promotion of high quality and sustainable design, and the protection of the elements that contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the District are important in contributing to the Vision for Three Rivers in the future, and meeting Council and community objectives to improve the environment, protect

the historic environment, deal with crime and anti-social behaviour and reduce, reuse and recycle waste

- **Transport and connections -** High quality connections, both physical by road, rail, bus, walking, cycling; or digital are vital to the District's future sustainability, economic prosperity and social inclusiveness. These connections provide access to education, employment, business, retail and leisure opportunities and can support sustainable lifestyles and opportunities

2.49 This Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by the Local Plan documents and the suite of supporting material providing evidence to this, all of which can be accessed via the Local Plan evidence base page of the Three Rivers Council website.

2.50 The Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Plan also forms part of the development plan for the area. Information on this is summarised in Appendix 4.

Wider challenges

2.51 This Neighbourhood Plan is set in the context of the 'Climate Emergency' declared by Three Rivers District Council in April 2019. A Climate Emergency & Sustainability Strategy was adopted by the District Council in May 2021. The District is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 for its own emissions and assisting the wider district as a whole to achieve net-zero carbon by 2045. A series of aims and objectives have been proposed by the District Council to support this, including the promotion of sustainable forms of development, promoting active travel, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and reviewing planning policies that encourage developers to build to zero-carbon standards.

2.52 Any Plan for the future must also consider the implications of the Covid pandemic and what this might mean in terms of changing lifestyles, ways of working, shopping and travelling.

2.53 With social isolation and homeworking measures put in place during the pandemic the need to travel quite so extensively on a daily basis for many people reduced. This resulted in improvements to air quality as well as quieter and safer streets for walking and cycling. At the same time, it increased awareness of the importance of local shops and essential services, and the ability of people to be able to access those, with matters such as resilience in regard to food supplies, for example, recognised. The measures also highlighted the importance of good quality broadband provision, the need for parks and spaces for people to exercise in, and the importance of well-designed homes and living spaces. Moreover, the importance of good social networks and community cohesion was highlighted, providing support to neighbours and those in need.

2.54 As part of this Neighbourhood Plan we have sought to future-proof growth and development, with the suite of policies and projects set out in the Plan responding to these challenges, including improved conditions for walking and cycling, retention and enhancement of important local green spaces and wildlife habitats, community facilities and strengthening of local centres.

PART B: Aspiration

3. Batchworth 'tomorrow'

Vision

3.1 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan sets out the vision for Batchworth. It has been informed through consultation and establishes the community's aspirations for the future of the area. The vision for Batchworth is set out below:

*The **richness of natural assets** in Batchworth will be strengthened, building its reputation as **the "Green and Blue Town"**. This will be reflected both in the protection and enhancement of open spaces, wetland areas and riparian environment, biodiversity and wildlife habits, but also through measures that deliver **high standards of sustainability** in new and existing buildings, and the way that we move around.*

*Infrastructure that supports walking and cycling, particularly for shorter, everyday journeys, will be provided, facilitating **safe and sustainable access for all** residents and visitors.*

*A wide range of recreational and community facilities will help make Batchworth **a thriving and healthy place to live, learn, work and play** for everyone, of all ages and abilities.*

*Through **public realm improvements** and business-friendly policy, local centres and employment areas at Money Hill, Tolpits and Rickmansworth Town Centre will be bolstered to create **flexible, socially inclusive, economic and social hubs** that respond to modern-day life and working patterns.*

*New residential development will embed high environmental standards and **quality of design**, and be delivered alongside appropriate infrastructure. Individual character areas, from Rickmansworth Town and Money Hill to Moor Park and Eastbury, will retain their **distinctive identities**, preserving existing built and natural heritage whilst encouraging innovative and sustainable design.*

Objectives

3.2 The objectives presented below provide a framework for the Neighbourhood Plan policies:

> ***Objective 1**: To enhance the richness and experience of green and blue assets in the area.*
>
> ***Objective 2**: To respond sensitively to the challenges of climate change and future proof Batchworth against its impacts.*
>
> ***Objective 3**: To strengthen community cohesion and inclusiveness by making Batchworth an attractive place for all to live and work in.*
>
> ***Objective 4**: To promote high quality design that helps build a sense of place, responding to the character and identity of individual areas in Batchworth.*
>
> ***Objective 5**: To improve access and movement for all.*

3.3 The policies, and projects, within this Neighbourhood Plan intend to deliver on the vision outlined above. The following five sections of the Neighbourhood Plan present these, ordered in response to the objectives.

3.4 **It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan is read as a whole. All policies should be viewed together alongside the wider development plan policies in the preparation and consideration of planning applications.**

PART C: Policies

4. Green and blue infrastructure

Overview

4.1 This chapter is framed around the following objective:

***Objective 1**: To enhance the richness and experience of green and blue assets in the area.*

4.2 It presents policies, and projects, that build upon the following ideas and opportunities identified through the consultation and engagement activities undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *Create a connected network of green corridors across the town by incorporating green infrastructure into the built environment through street planting and landscaping. This could include incorporation of street trees, wildflowers and raingardens, bringing biodiversity and environmental benefits into the urban environment, transforming and retrofitting 'grey' spaces to bring people closer to nature.*
- *Increase and improve access to green and blue spaces through a legible and well-maintained network of public rights of ways and cycle paths so that people can move to and from these in a safe, environmentally-friendly manner.*
- *Identify areas of green space of value to the community for long-term protection, including places for leisure and recreation, as well as important wildlife habitats and areas of biodiversity. These could include longer term protection of places such as Bury Gardens, the Eastbury Recreation Ground and others.*

Urban greening and biodiversity

4.3 The Environment Act (2021) and declaration of a Climate Emergency have raised the importance of biodiversity and natural habitats. The Wildlife Trusts, as set out in their 2018 report 'Towards a Wilder Britain', envisage creation of a Nature Recovery Network, with greenery integrated into all development and resulting in a net gain for wildlife. It is proposed that nature is brought back into the places where people live their lives, also having a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

4.4 Batchworth benefits from an extensive network of green, and blue, infrastructure (Figure 13), much of which is accessible and has value for wildlife and biodiversity, including local wildlife sites and nature reserves.

4.5 The Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) manages information on habitats, species and sites across the county as a whole. This includes an inventory of habitats and mapping of habitat networks. Three broad areas have been categorised, comprising:

1. Those areas containing habitats listed within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which should be protected and where development is avoided. Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain lists of species and types of habitats which are regarded by Natural England to be of principal importance for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England. A full list of these habitats can be found on the website of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). Development adjacent to or surrounding these areas should help support the enhancement of habitats through a positive approach to conservation management. Development that causes harm to these areas should normally be refused.

2. Those areas containing habitats which do not currently qualify under S41 of the NERC Act, but which have the potential to do so, through restoration and enhancement. Development should generally be avoided in these areas.

3. Those areas where there are deemed to be no habitats of significance, and thus which may be more appropriate locations for development. These areas may include potential for creating new habitats, corridors and links with existing habitat areas. Such opportunities should be identified and designed as part of a masterplan prepared as part of proposed development. This should take place early in the development process such that habitat creation is meaningful and cost-effective. In all cases, the total and permanent severance of habitat networks and corridors should be avoided.

4.6 Mapping of habitat corridors is regularly updated by HERC. Applicants should consult with HERC to understand the classification of their proposed site. Where opportunities for development and habitat creation or conservation exist, liaison with HERC will help indicate appropriate habitat types to be provided for.

4.7 Development should be planned to in such a way that avoids habitat loss and fragmentation, and opportunities should be sought to improve ecological connectivity, including through the creation, restoration and enhancement of linking habitats and 'stepping stones' through the landscape. Any development should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide measurable net gains for nature. This involves safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity already present, providing new areas of habitat appropriate to the ecology of the area and integrating biodiversity within new development.

4.8 The protection and enhancement of biodiversity assets is dependent on robust networks of Green Infrastructure which facilitate movement and genetic exchange. Provision of Green Infrastructure should ensure permeability for wildlife through development and provide sufficient beneficial habitat to support target species, independent of its connective function.

4.9 Lighting within and around development is expected to respect the ecological functionality of movement corridors. Certain species of invertebrate and mammal are highly sensitive to inappropriate lighting. In these circumstances surveys are expected to determine where these movement corridors are and measures put forward that demonstrate how these will be protected and enhanced.

4.10 In recognition of the Climate Emergency and the Environment Act coming into effect applicants are required to submit a biodiversity net gain plan as part of development proposals. Net gain should ideally be achieved through on-site measures and be demonstrated through use of the Natural England Biodiversity Metric (current version 4.0 or any updates to this published at the time an application is made). The greening of development sites can take a variety of forms and include the use of landscaping, green roofs, walls and sustainable urban drainage systems. Design guidance prepared by the London Wildlife Trust (March 2021, Urban Greening for Biodiversity Net Gain: A Design Guide) includes a range of design solutions that can be utilised to increase biodiversity value and augment existing habitats. Other good practice guidance includes that published by Ciria in 2019 and titled 'Biodiversity net gain: Good practice principles for development: A practical guide'. Applicants are encouraged to refer to this guidance.

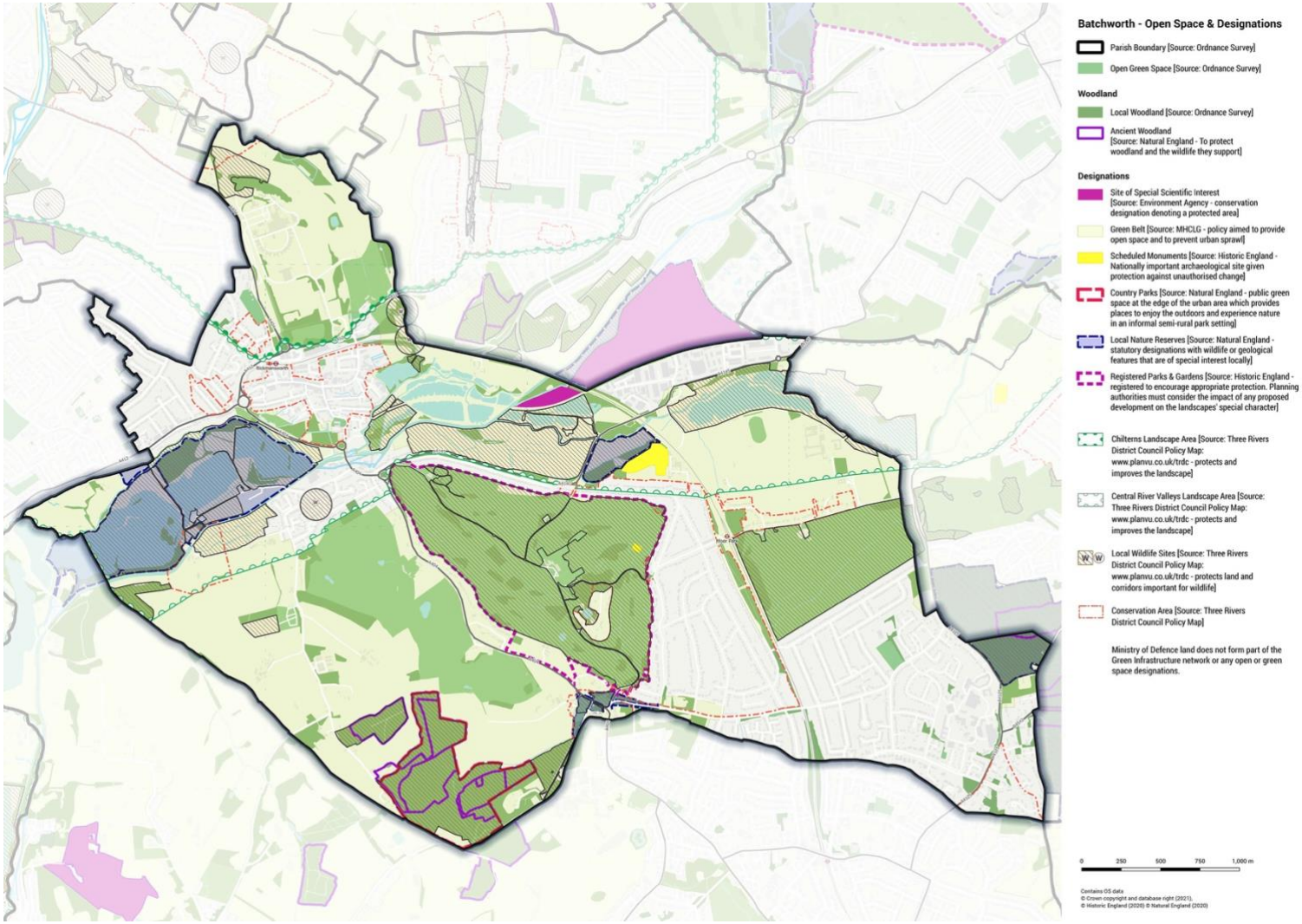

Figure 13: Green infrastructure network in Batchworth

4.11 Further information is presented in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code to which applicants are required to refer. This shows how new (and existing) development might help create connected green corridors (Figure 14) through:

- Provision of generous front and back gardens, with permeable surfaces and including the planting of locally native trees and shrubs.
- Alignment of back gardens where possible to provide for continuous wildlife corridors, with bird boxes or bricks in walls installed to enhance biodiversity and wildlife.
- Protection and enhancement of existing local green spaces, including provision of new spaces in development, and which should be carefully located in order to maximise their potential as a habitat for wildlife.
- Retention of and planting of new trees and hedgerows, supporting the resilience of green network.
- Protection and safeguarding of natural open spaces from necessary or potentially damaging human interaction.

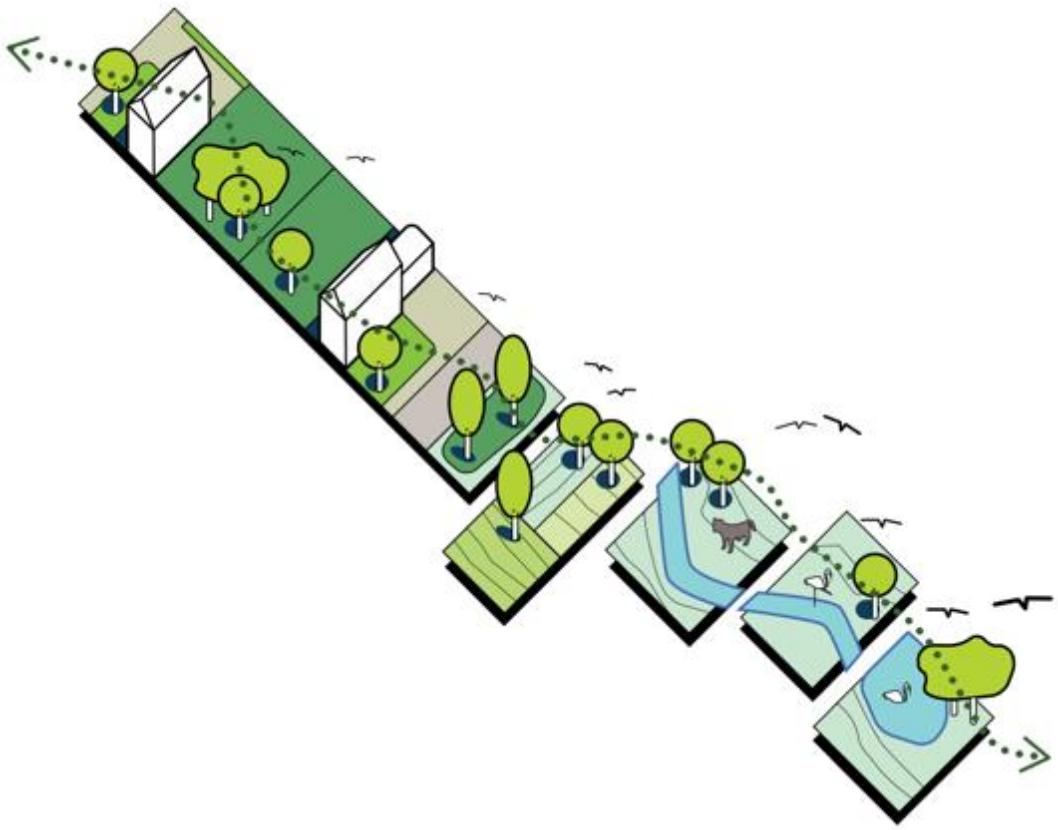

Figure 14: Extract from Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code illustrating how provision of green spaces in new and existing areas of development can help contribute towards delivery of connected green corridors and biodiversity benefits.

Policy BW GB1: Biodiversity

1. Development proposals must manage impacts on biodiversity and secure a minimum net biodiversity gain of 10% on-site, unless impractical given site constraints, as demonstrated through use of the most up-to-date version of the Natural England biodiversity metric (or any successor document to this) and submission of a biodiversity net gain plan submitted as part of planning application material. This should be informed by current site conditions and with any proposed habitat creation being appropriate to local context. This applies to all developments, including smaller sites, which should make use of the Small Sites Toolkit published by Natural England as part of the biodiversity metric. The management plan should show how biodiversity netgains shall be managed in perpetuity.
2. Where measures are proposed off-site these should be located as close as possible to the development site. The applicant will need to demonstrate these are deliverable and is expected to liaise with the ecologiocal advisors to the local authority to identify suitable locations in close proximity to the proposal site which would benefit from biodiversity net gain. Off-site measures should be in place before construction commences.
3. Existing priority habitats should be retained and buffered by complimentary habitats (minimum buffer 8m extending to 15m for woodland). Applicants are encouraged to include existing trees and hedgerows in their layouts, incorporating them within green areas, open spaces and alongside walking, cycling and horse-riding routes, referring to principles contained in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code.
4. Where new green infrastructure is to be provided, it is expected that this will provide permeability for wildlife through and around development. This should be functional as wildlife habitat in its own right not just as a link between habitats. The width of wildlife corridors should be proportionate to the requirements of target species. These should allow for movement of nocturnal wildlife, with the impact of lighting and glare minimised.
5. Where landscaping is to be provided, it is expected that native species appropriate to the area will be used wherever possible. Landscape design should help create distinctive places.
6. Where there is unavoidable loss or damage to habitats, sites or features because of exceptional circumstances, mitigation and compensation will be required.
7. All applicants will be expected to seek the advice of the ecological advisors to the local planning authority wherever proposals affect or have the potential to affect the natural environment and nature conservation assets, including valued landscapes and habitats.

4.12 The existing network of streets within Batchworth include, in places, mown grass verges. These provide scope to integrate street tree planting and other landscaping, including raingardens and planting of wildflowers. This would transform the nature of the urban environment, providing a link between the built area and surrounding green space, whilst also enhancing biodiversity and flood management. Replanting mown verges with wildflowers would also bring cost benefits, reducing the need for regular maintenance.

Project BW GB(a): Street Greening

1. The Community Council is keen to promote delivery of greener streets throughout Batchworth and hopes to work with partner organisations, including the District and County Council, to explore how underused green spaces and roadside verges might be better used to increase biodiversity value, provide new wildlife habitats and space for local food production.
2. Reuse of such space for raingardens and wildflower meadows is encouraged, and which would also help manage surface water run-off. These may act as a network of 'B-Lines' allowing bees, butterflies and other insect pollinators to extend their range. The associated management and maintenance regimes would be agreed with the relevant authorities.

Colne Valley Regional Park

4.13 The Colne Valley Regional Park extends from Rickmansworth south along the Colne (Figure 15) and brings together a diverse range of green and blue infrastructure features that have high biodiversity value as well as providing recreation benefits and opportunities to help adapt to the pressures of climate change. In particular, there is an opportunity for parts of the Colne Valley Regional Park to sequester carbon through appropriate planting and increasing wetland areas, involving the restoration of flood plains for example.

4.14 The Green Infrastructure study prepared for the Colne Valley Regional Park contains a 'Whole Area Schedule of Opportunities', which are further broken down by sub-area and available via the website of the Regional Park. Batchworth is within the 'North Colne' area. The Green Infrastructure study seeks to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape, as well as managing recreation hubs, such as the Aquadrome, for the enjoyment of all. It notes that sense of place should be reinforced, with gateways and links to local communities improved, and efforts to enhance biodiversity taken. Mapping of the opportunities of relevance to the Neighbouhrood Plan area as presented in the Green Infrastructure study, and a summary of these, is presented in Appendix 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.15 Proposals for development within or adjacent to the Colne Valley Regional Park should consider how improvements may be made to the Park, retaining the integrity of the Park environment, water bodies and habitats within it.

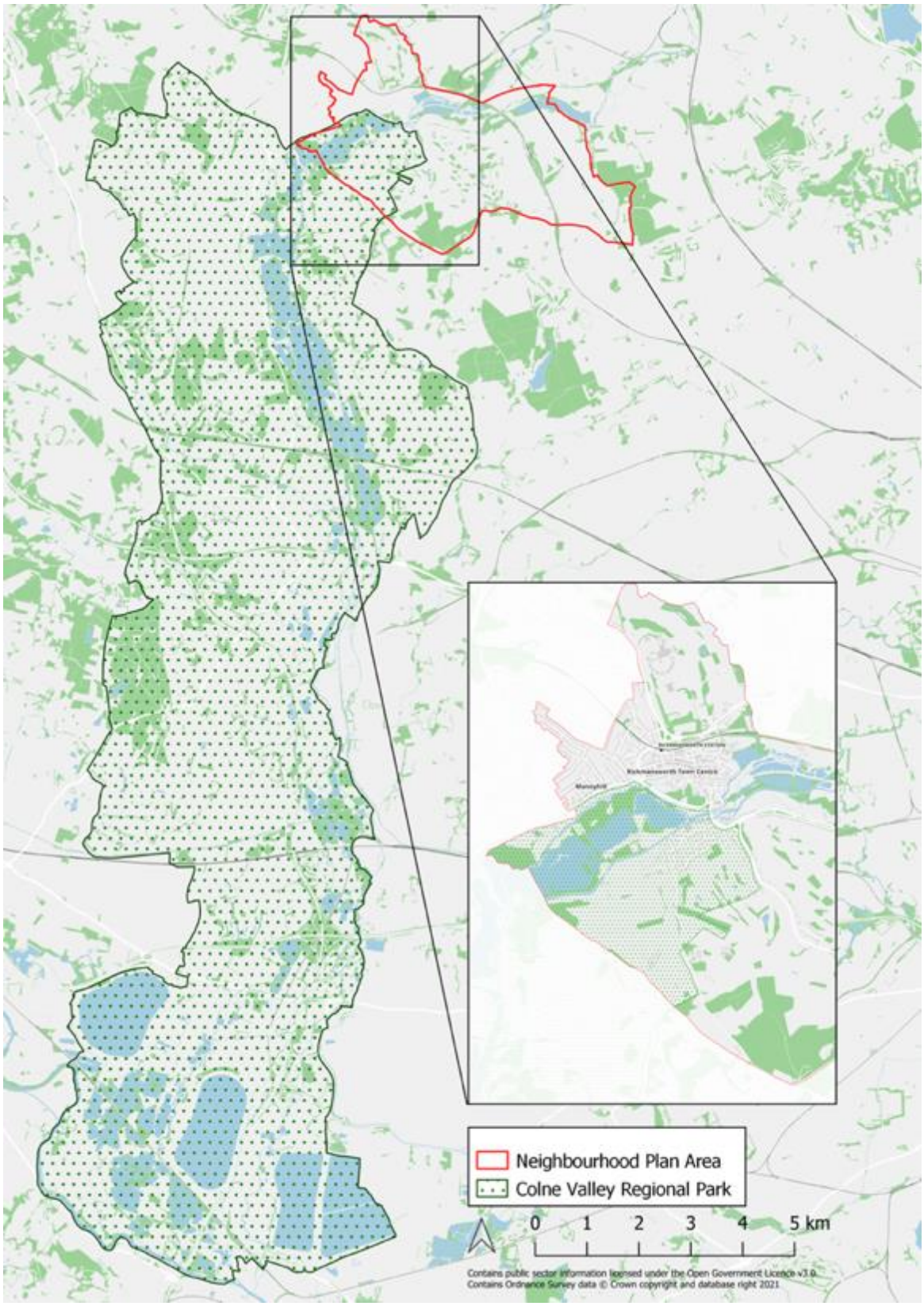

Figure 15: Map showing the extent of the Colne Valley Regional Park and those parts of the Park found within the Batchworth Neighbourhood Area.

Policy BW GB2: Colne Valley Regional Park

1. Proposals for development within or adjacent to the Colne Valley Regional Park should make a positive contribution towards the enhancement of and improvements to the Park in line with the Colne Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy and the North Colne area strategy contained within this (see Appendix 2). Development should:

    a) Maintain and enhance the environment and landscape character of the Colne Valley Regional Park, including waterbodies and water quality.

    b) Conserve and enhance biodiversity, including potential for connecting habitats.

    c) Contribute towards biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestering through new woodland, wetland, hedgerows, species rich grassland or restoration of wetland areas where appropriate.

    d) Encourage community participation, including volunteering and environmental education, and promote health and social well-being through accessible, high quality green space.

    e) Support access for leisure and recreation that promotes movement by non-motorised modes of travel.

Access to green and blue spaces

4.16 Batchworth is surrounded by attractive greenspaces, providing opportunities for leisure and recreation for all to enjoy, and benefits from an extensive pattern of lakes, grassland and woodlands along the Colne Valley.

4.17 There are multiple designated footpaths and bridleways extending out of Batchworth's urban areas into the surrounding green spaces; of significance are paths that cut across Stocker's Lake and Bury Lake, as well as the routes across Moor Park Golf Club and Batchworth Golf Club. The Grand Union Canal, River Colne, and River Chess also run through Batchworth and provide lots of opportunities for exploring nearby green and blue spaces.

4.18 The Neighbourhood Plan benefits from four key green (and blue) corridors that converge on the area and run through it, connecting with wider areas of countryside and nearby towns (Figure 16):

- **Chess Corridor:** links Chorleywood and areas to the west of the District with Rickmansworth. This corridor incorporates Sarratt Bottom and Frogmore Meadows Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Chorleywood Common and Chorleywood House Estate Local Nature Reserves.
- **The Gade and Grand Union Canal Corridor:** links Kings Langley and areas to the north of the District with Rickmansworth. This corridor incorporates the Whippendell Woods and Croxley Common Moor Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- **The Colne Corridor (including the Ebury Way):** links Maple Cross and areas to the south west of the District with Rickmansworth and across to Moor Park, Croxley Green, South Oxhey, Carpenders Park and into Watford. This corridor includes parts of the Colne Valley Regional Park, and the Aquadrome and the Withey Beds Local Nature Reserves.
- **The Moor Park, Batchworth Heath and Bishops Wood Corridor:** forms an arc linking the west of Rickmansworth to Moor Park and includes Batchworth Heath Local Nature Reserve and Moor Park registered park.

4.19 These corridors provide a series of linked and coherent green networks between Batchworth's key assets. New development should not compromise the integrity of the existing networks by causing fragmentation.

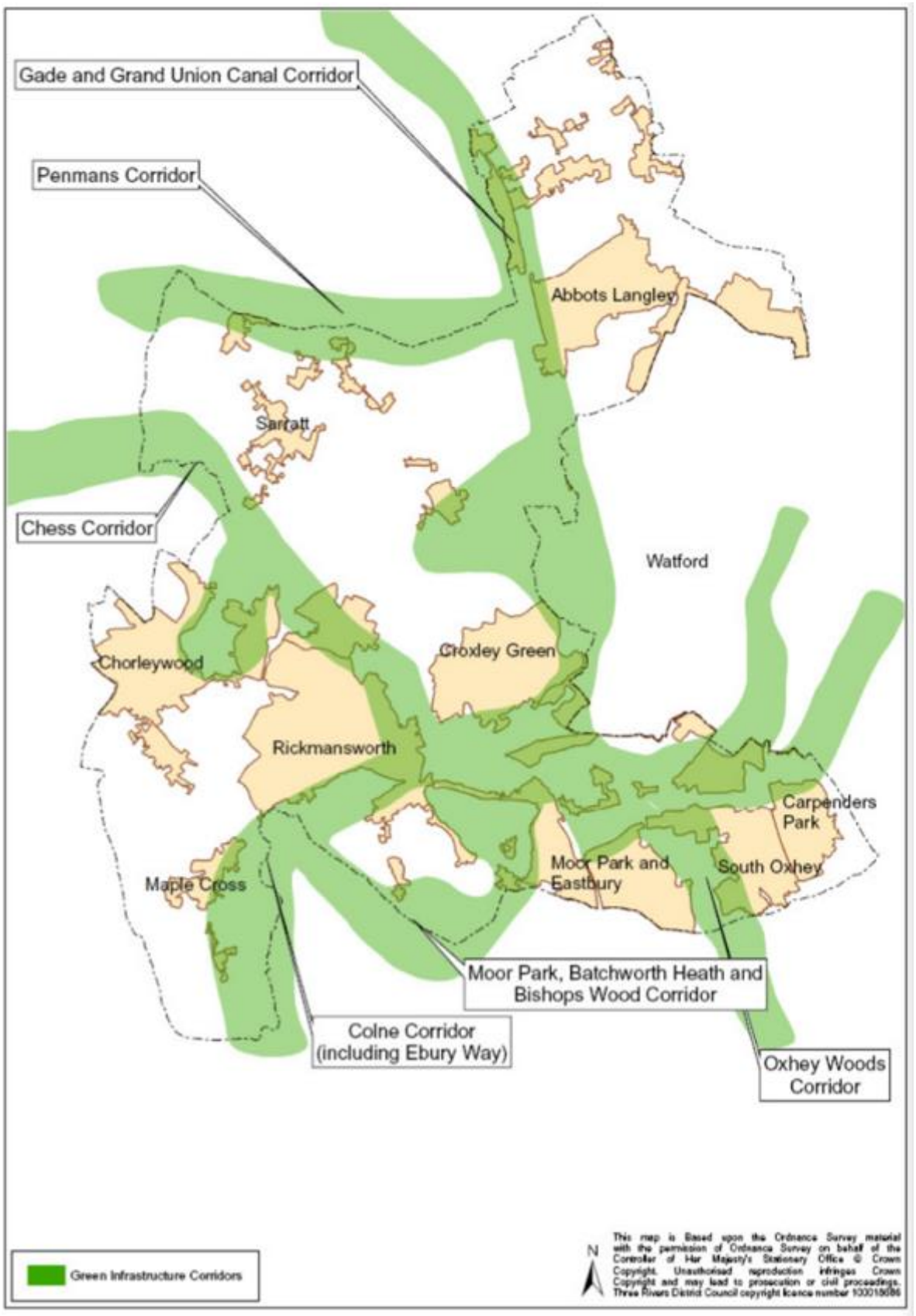

Figure 16: Green corridors in Three Rivers (source: Three Rivers District Council Green Infrastructure background paper)

4.20 Within the Neighbourhood Plan area the green corridors converge south of Rickmansworth at the confluence of the river valley and the route of the A404 / Riverside Drive (Figure 17). Despite this being the meeting point of the green corridors it represents a gap or missing link, where movement both along and to the corridor is disrupted. Opportunities for change or development will be supported where these help deliver improvements in connectivity to the corridor. This is not just limited to development proposals but could also include remodeling of the Riverside Drive/Church Street roundabout: a major highway junction which comprises a barrier to movement.

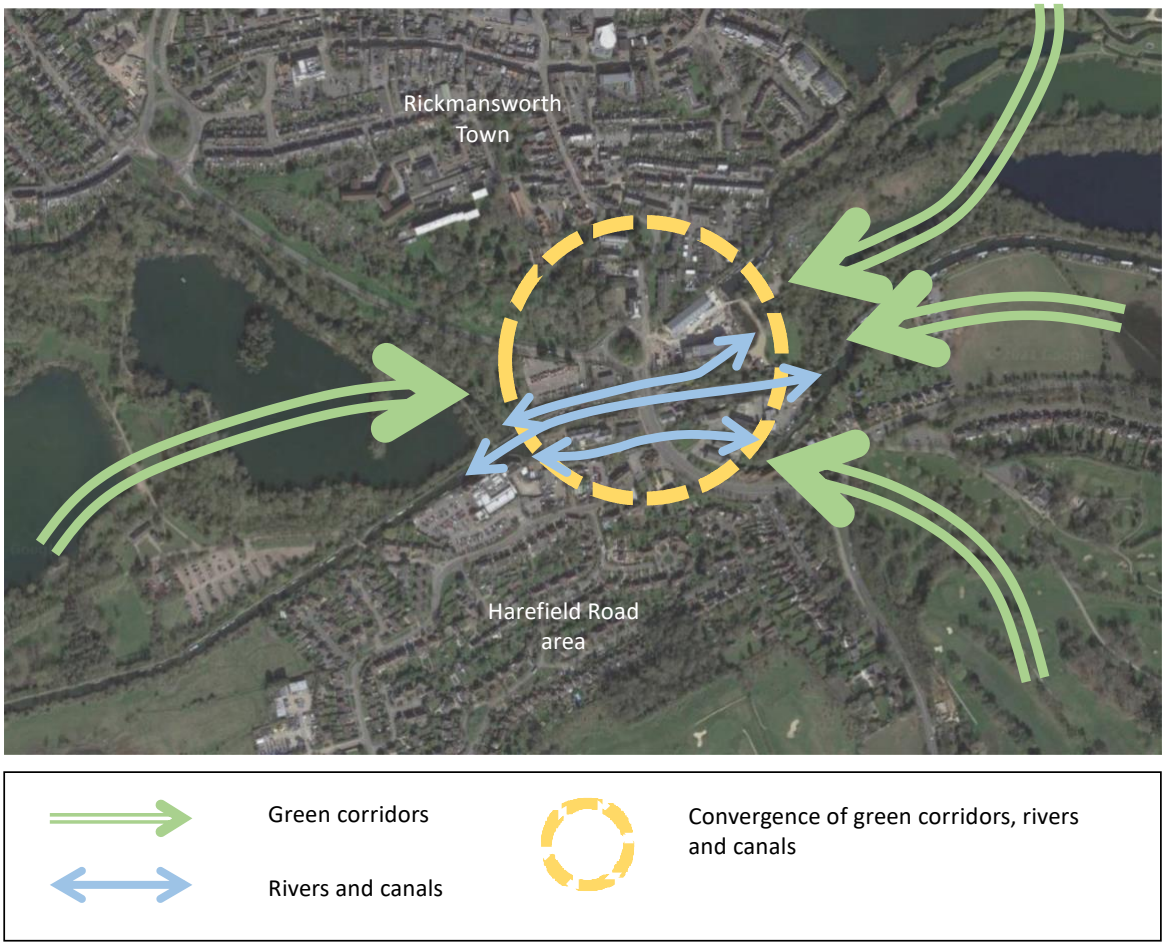

Figure 17: Image indicating the convergence of district wide green corridors south of Rickmansworth and the 'missing link' between these where opportunities for change, either through development or public realm programmes, could help reconnect these spaces (map source: Google maps)

4.21 The Neighbourhood Plan area benefits from a network of public rights of way and permissive footpaths, including the towpath alongside the Grand Union Canal. Hertfordshire County Council maintains a Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way. An interactive map is also available for general purposes on the County Coucnil website. The Public Rights of Way include footpaths, bridleways, byways and cycle paths. National Cycle Route 6 also runs through the Plan area, roughly following the route of the River Colne and providing a connection to St. Albans and beyond to the North, and Cowley and Windsor to the South.

4.22 All existing green public rights of way and other routes, including canal towpaths, providing access to and along the network of green and blue infrastructure in Batchworth (and connecting with the wider area) should be retained, incorporated and enhanced, wherever possible, within proposals for development.

4.23 Through consultation concern was expressed with regard to the sharing of the canal towpath by cyclists and pedestrians, and the conflict this can cause between different users. Wherever possible, interventions that seek to improve provision and resolve conflicts, whilst still providing access for pedestrian and cyclists, will be supported. Equally, development that is able to facilitate improvements to pedestrian and cycle connections to the green and blue infrastructure will be welcome. The network of routes is, in places, disjointed. Better continuity and legibility is sought, including opportunities that help break the barrier created by highways, particularly along Riverside Drive and Uxbridge Road, providing improved and new connections to the rivers, canal and Aquadrome, as well as along Moor Lane and Tolpits Lane, where access to the Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve is currently restricted to those who travel by car.

4.24 Any proposed new routes that complement the existing network of public rights of way in Batchworth, or improvements proposed to existing routes, should be delivered in accordance with best practice principles for design and maintenance. Sustrans, for example, recommends that cycle routes should include a smooth surface with good drainage properties and long-term durability. Handbooks for cycle route design and greenway management published by Sustrans are a source of best practice for implementing and maintaining routes for all. Other relevant guidance includes the HCC Roads in Hertfordshire: Highway Design Guide, which is available via the County Council website. Latest guidance published by the Department for Transport (Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 1/20) shall also be referred to and is currently being implemented by HCC.

Policy BW GB3: Access to green and blue infrastructure

1. All development should take opportunities afforded by site location to improve access to green and blue infrastructure that supports walking, wheeling and horse riding.
2. Wherever possible, such routes should connect, extend or improve existing conditions, allowing for continuous and direct access.
3. The design of routes should be appropriate to context and the environmental character of the area, as referenced in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code.
4. Routes should be suitable for use in all weather conditions, be well signed and clearly defined.

Project BW GB(b): Access improvements

1. The Community Council welcomes opportunities that improve and expand the network of footpaths and cycle routes that enable access to and through the extensive network of green and blue spaces for the benefit and enjoyment of all. The Community Council is keen to work with partner organisations to explore how this might best be achieved, including feasibility testing and production of appropriate traffic assessments. Opportunities identified for potential improvements include, but are not limited to:

    - New crossings along Riverside Drive, connecting Bury Gardens in Rickmansworth Town Centre with Riverside Gardens and The Aquadrome, including extension of and defining a series of circular Colne Valley walks that support walking links to the Park for leisure and recreation.
    - Remodelling Ebury Roundabout as a gateway into Rickmansworth, including new crossing points and way finding.
    - Remodeling of the Batchworth Roundabout to facilitate improved connectivity between Rickmansworth and the river corridor.
    - Enhance access to the Aquadrome from Uxbridge Road, potentially coupled with wayfinding and safer crossing points along the Uxbridge Road and which could also act as a potential gateway/traffic calming measure.
    - Improvements to the Colne Valley Trail through the Aquadrome and along the Canal, including improvements to the towpath, with new links to Rickmansworth town centre and station provided.
    - Provision of new links through the Tolpits employment area to the waterfront and to the Withey Beds Local Nature Reserve, capitalising on its locational benefits and facilitating safer routes for recreational purposes as well as those travelling to work by means other than by car.
    - The greening of existing streets and spaces, through tree planting and landscaping, including hedges, providing a connecting grid of green streets linking parks, open spaces and the river valley, including the introduction of storm-water storage or amelioration at appropriate locations to retain use of footpaths at all times. This could include use of grasscrete or similar as opposed to hard surfacing in areas used for parking, including that at Eastbury Recreation Ground.
    - Working with LB Hillingdon to improve maintenance of the public footpath demarcating the borough boundary between Eastbury and Northwood.

Local green space designations

4.25 Through consultation events on the Neighbourhood Plan the importance of local green spaces were identified, both in terms of providing opportunities for leisure and recreation (the importance of which was further emphasised during the Covid pandemic), but also in terms of the setting of Batchworth and their importance in retaining the sense of identity of the area.

4.26 Under the NPPF Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces which are of importance and value to the local community. The NPPF states that Local Green Spaces should only be designated where the green space is:

a. in reasonably close proximity to the community it services;

b. demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

c. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

4.27 The Local Green Spaces listed below and mapped in Appendix 3 are all considered to meet the criteria for designated outlined in the NPPF. More information on each site is presented in the Local Green Space report prepared alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

1. **Rickmansworth Park** - Large open green space bordered to the north by a double row of mature trees. It also has one tree that is at least 200 years old. The area is underutilised but forms the northern perimeter of the town.
2. **Bowls Club and Northway Garden** - The Bowls Club and Northway Gardens are situated to the north of the Town behind the Council offices. The site consists of a Bowling Green with adjacent grass area with seats and shrubs. The Bowls Club is next to the Northway Gardens which is a formal garden with rose beds, arches and paths. The wider site includes the Clubhouse and a Youth Centre. These do not form part of the area designated as Local Green Space.
3. **Bury Gardens** - Old garden area, now overgrown with mixture of trees, grass and brambles. Bisected by a tributary of the River Colne and part of the area's flood plain. It is in regular use by residents for walking and as a route from the town to the Aquadrome.
4. **Scotsbridge Playing Fields and Sports Club** - Recreation ground including a cricket and sports club. The wider site includes several buildings and areas of hardstanding, such as a nursery building, tennis courts and

pavilions. These do not form part of the area designated as Local Green Space.

5. **Fortune Common** - Grass area south of Scotsbridge playing fields next to the A412 and between the road and the Railway embankment. It forms part of the green corridor joining the Chess Valley to the Colne valley and the Aquadrome and Colne Valley Park. It forms the boundary between Rickmansworth and Croxley Green.

6. **Riverside Drive** - The area lies to the South West of the town between the town and the Aquadrome. The site is in two parts (north and south) which is bisected by the Riverside Drive part of the town ring road.

7. **Ebury Road Allotments** - Allotment area between the Town Ditch and Riverside Drive to the west of town. The area consists of 25 allotments and is administered by the Ebury Road Allotment Association.

8. **Eastbury Recreation Ground** - A rectangular area bordered by and accessible from Batchworth Lane including a children's fenced play area, an outdoor adult gym and a small woodland area. The remaining area is open mowed grassland on a slightly sloping site. The area is bounded on one side by the rear gardens of houses in Farm Way and on another by a strip of hedgerow which screens the rear gardens of Ross Way. The remaining boundary is shared with the site of Eastbury Farm Primary School which has a gated entrance to the area and a path leading to the carpark and entrance in Batchworth Lane. The wider site includes a small car park and four hard tennis courts. These do not form part of the area designated as Local Green Space.

9. **Grove Green on Batchworth Lane next to Grove Farm Park** - Small green space with boundaries of roads on three sides and hedgerow backing Grove Farm Park properties.

10. **Greenbroom Spring and The Grove Woods** - Woodland bounded by a golf course and farmland.

11. **Batchworth Allotments –** Well maintained and fully utilised area of allotments to the west of Rickmansworth town centre adjacent to the River Chess.

4.28 Initiatives which seek to increase biodiversity on the Local Green Spaces will generally be supported.

4.29 Designation as Local Green Space does not infer any maintenance regimes or burdens over and above those already in place.

Policy BW GB4: Local Green Space Designations

1. The following are designated as Local Green Spaces, as mapped in Appendix 3:
    i. Rickmansworth Park
    ii. Bowls Club and Northway Garden
    iii. Bury Gardens
    iv. Scotsbridge Playing Fields and Sports Club
    v. Fortune Common
    vi. Riverside Drive
    vii. Ebury Road Allotments
    viii. Eastbury Recreation Ground
    ix. Grove Green on Batchworth Lane next to Grove Farm Park
    x. Greenbroom Spring and The Grove Woods
    xi. Batchworth Allotments.
2. Proposals for development within designated areas of Local Green Space will be managed in a way that is consistent with national Green Belt policy.

Project BW GB(c): Bury Gardens

1. Bury Gardens is a historically valuable space in need of revitalisation, returning it to its former glory as a key green space in the centre of Rickmansworth.
2. The Community Council will champion and support initiatives that restore the gardens, returning them to their original form and quality for the use and enjoyment of all. This will include improved connections with the town centre and across Riverside Drive, and working with local artists to explore potential for integration of public art projects to enhance the experience and its relationship with the area.
3. Proposals for restoration will involve consultation with the local community, exploring opportunities for the use of the space and how it might be maintained for future generations.

5. Climate change

Overview

5.1 This chapter is framed around the following objective:

***Objective 2**: To respond sensitively to the challenges of climate change and future proof Batchworth against its impacts.*

5.2 It presents policies, and projects, that build upon the following ideas and opportunities identified through the consultation and engagement activities undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *Embed sustainable design principles such as high energy efficiency standards, maximising natural lighting and using eco-friendly materials, into all new development, bringing cost savings to all and reducing carbon emissions.*
- *Support the building of a network of community-owned renewable energy generation projects, taking advantage of the town's existing natural assets to produce green energy for the use of local businesses and residents. This might include a small solar farm or electricity-generating watermills in the existing waterways.*
- *Mitigate against increasing extreme weather events, developing a strategy that identifies opportunities for effective flood mitigation measures and embeds sustainable urban drainage solutions into streets, open spaces and developments.*

Sustainable design and construction

5.3 Most carbon dioxide emissions come from the demolition and redevelopment of existing buildings as well as through the heating, cooling and powering of buildings. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions and other air pollutants will contribute to efforts aimed at tackling the effects of man-made climate change. This is recognised by the declaration of the Climate Emergency by Three Rivers District Council in April 2019, as well as by the approval of the Climate Change Strategy by Three Rivers Annual Council in May 2021. At the same time, the Government is planning to introduce a 'Future Homes Standard', requiring new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and energy efficiencies. It is anticipated that the Future Homes Standards will be implemented by 2025 (within the period covered by this Neighbourhood Plan).

5.4 Future growth and development in Batchworth represents an opportunity to secure reduced emissions, potentially through the construction of highly energy efficient homes, the provision of decentralised energy networks and the retrofitting of existing homes to reduce their energy use and fuel bills. Buildings should be designed to maximise solar gain and incorporate technologies that maximise the use of energy from renewable sources.

5.5 All development in Batchworth will be expected to make use of the best available sustainable design and technology. Proposals for development are expected to minimise the use of resources, mitigate against and be resilient to the impact of climate change.

5.6 In all proposed developments, principles included within the Hertfordshire Building Future's Sustainable Design Toolkit, available online, should be considered. The Toolkit provides guidance and solutions for a range of building design matters. For energy efficiency and climate change, the Toolkit recommends that consideration should be given to air tightness, thermal bridging and passive solutions for ventilation, heating and cooling are all addressed through the design process.

5.7 Current sustainability standards for new construction will be used for assessing the sustainability of new, non-residential buildings. This includes those established by BREEAM (Non-domestic buildings, Technical Manual SD5076 4.1). For new homes, the Home Quality Mark developed by BREEAM is intended to provide an indication of the quality and environmental performance of those homes. Housebuilders are encouraged to use this assessment method. Information about the Home Quality Mark is available online.

5.8 The Community Council is particularly supportive of proposals for new buildings that achieve zero or near zero net energy consumption in line with the Passivhaus Standard (see box below and the glossary for more information). This also aligns with the Three Rivers District Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy (2021), which seeks to *"create adaptable buildings which are resilient to the effects of climate change, and minimise the use of natural resources over the intended lifetime of a development."*

Passivhaus development in the UK

The Goldsmith Street development in Norwich is an award winning scheme of 105 new homes all built to Passivhaus standards, benefitting from high insulation and low energy costs. The scheme is designed around a network of terraced streets, with all homes having their own front door and private garden. Parking is provided for but is primarily at the edge of the scheme, making for attractive streets for people to walk freely and safely within, whilst at the same time increasing social networks, inclusion and community cohesiveness. The homes are two and three storeys, reflecting the scale of surrounding Victoria terraces. The scheme was led by the Council and comprises entirely social housing.

In York, plans have been developed for a new 600-home zero-carbon development, including car-free streets, community gardens and allotments. All homes are to be provided with cycle parking and electric vehicle charging points. A fleet of shared cargo bikes will also be available for people to use. Homes are orientated to maximise solar gain and are fitted with solar panels. All homes are also fitted with energy-efficient air-source heat pumps. Buildings are timber-framed and the embodied energy of construction materials monitored as well as the energy consumption of individual homes, maximising energy efficiencies at all stages of the development process.

Policy BW CC1: Sustainable Design and Construction

1. The design and standard of any new development should aim to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction and be optimised for water and energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions. Encouragement is given to development that accords with Hertfordshire Building Future's Sustainable Design Toolkit.
2. Proposed schemes that follow the Sustainable Design principles set out in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code and which make optimal use of land through good design will be supported:
    a) Subject to topography, layout and good urban design principles, buildings should be orientated to maximise solar gain where appropriate to site topography and creating a consistent building frontage to the street.
    b) Solar access along the south facade of the building should be maximised, with appropriate shading elements and cross ventilation employed in new and existing buildings.
    c) Renewable energy technologies should be integrated within the development, including, as appropriate, ground source and air source heat pumps, photovoltaics, solar panels and other technologies. Wherever used, such technology should be designed to reflect the character and materials present with the immediate area, and, as appropriate, follow criteria outlined in Policy BW CC2.
    d) The use of low embodied carbon materials, assessed through a Life Cycle Assessment, should be prioritised.
    e) Swift and bat boxes shall be integrated into all new buildings.
3. Innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon homes, including construction to Passivhaus standards, is strongly encouraged where development also complies with other policies of the Development Plan.
4. Proposals for refurbishments and or the retrofitting of existing buildings will be required to take a low carbon approach, reducing embodied carbon and optimising the energy efficiency of the building, reducing heat loss and installing energy saving measures and renewable energy sources. Any alteration to an existing building must be carefully considered to ensure that potential adverse impacts are adequately mitigated.

Local energy generation

5.9 The NPPF (Paragraph 160a) stipulates that plans should provide a positive strategy to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.

5.10 Paragraph 161 of the NPPF advises that Local Planning Authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy. Community-led initiatives refer to projects which place an emphasis on local engagement, local leadership and control, and the local community benefitting collectively from the outcome.

5.11 There are many examples of community energy projects across the UK, including community owned renewable electricity installations such as solar photovoltaic panels, wind turbines or hydroelectric generation, or members of the community jointly switching to a renewable heat source such as a heat pump or biomass boiler.

5.12 Community-led energy projects refers to projects which place an emphasis on local engagement, local leadership and control, and the local community benefitting collectively from the outcome. They are noted here as being 'micro-generation' projects as defined by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) and related to output restrictions that limit their Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) to greater than or equal to 0.5 MW and less than or equal to 5 MW.

5.13 The Community Council welcomes the opportunity to work with parties who would like to explore renewable energy schemes in Batchworth, particularly community-led micro generation projects. Where such schemes are brought forward, they will need to comply with the wider policy framework, including landscape and design implications. In the Neighbourhood Plan area, innovative schemes that captialise on the network of waterways are encouraged, subject to impact on the natural environment and biodiversity value of these areas. This might include water source heat pumps or the use of new technology that facilitates generation of hydro-electric power, including river weirs and underwater turbines, where these do not impede navigation (either for boats or wetland wildlife), maintaining water levels.

Policy BW CC2: Renewables

1. Proposals for large-scale renewable energy developments will take into account and address any potential impacts on:

    a) residential / workplace amenity;
    b) the visual amenity of the local area, including landscape character;
    c) local natural resources, including air and water quality;
    d) the natural, built and historic environments;
    e) biodiversity;
    f) public access to the countryside;
    g) the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt land; and
    h) other site constraints

2. Proposals for individual and micro-scale community led initiatives, involving the generation of energy from hydro-electricity, solar photovoltaic and other technologies, as appropriate, will be supported subject to;

    a) satisfactory impacts on residential / workplace amenity;

    b) the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape, referring to the qualities and characteristics of the built and natural environment set out in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code;

    c) the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of heritage, natural or biodiversity importance;

    d) the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt; and

    e) other site constraints.

3. Proposals for energy generation from the river and canal network, including heating and cooling networks, will be subject to assessment of potential impacts including on flood risk, water levels, navigation and wetland wildlife. Consultation with and the gaining of any necessary licences or permits from the Environment Agency will be required.

Project BW CC(a): Community-led energy schemes

1. The Communtiy Council welcomes the opportunity to explore the potential for and feasibility of community-led renewable micro-energy generation projects in Batchworth.
2. Development 'led by' local communities include proposals which are promoted by the community, or which are conceived in partnership between a community organisation and a developer (commercial or non-profit), or another party.
3. Neighbourhoods looking to pilot the use of renewable energy technologies, including the retrofitting of existing buldings to maximise energy efficiencies, are also encouraged.

Flooding and drainage

5.14 Flood risk in Batchworth is concentrated along and at the confluence of the Rivers Colne, Rivers Gade and Chess, and where these interact with the Grand Union Canal. There are also extensive areas at risk from surface water flooding. The Environment Agency classifies the rivers in Batchworth as 'main rivers' (as mapped online) and recommends that where development is proposed next to a river it should include a green buffer strip (8 metres for fluvial rivers, 16 metres for tidal rivers) alongside the watercourse. This green buffer can take the form of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS), which will help reduce the risk of flooding as well as provide recreational and wildlife benefits.

5.15 SuDS are an approach to managing surface water run-off which seeks to mimic natural drainage systems and retain water on or near the site as opposed to traditional drainage approaches which involve piping water off site as quickly as possible. SuDS offer significant advantages over conventional piped drainage systems in reducing flood risk by attenuating the rate and quantity of surface water run-off from a site, promoting groundwater recharge and biodiversity benefits, as well as improving water quality and amenity value.

5.16 To help minimise and mitigate the risk of flooding from development the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) for Hertfordshire 2019-2029, available online, contains a series of policies relating to the use of SuDS. Furthermore, guidance for developers on the use of SuDS has been published by the County Council (Augut 2021) and is also available online. The Strategy and associated guidance should both be referred to in all proposals for major development, with proposals for smaller schemes encouraged to refer to these. The HCC LLFA Vailidation List and Surface Water Drainage Proforma should also be referenced and completed by applicants as appropriate. Solutions appropriate to the site and context should be designed and consulted upon with the County Council as the lead local flood authority (LLFA). This is to ensure that new development does not contribute to increased flood risk from surface water and that surface water arising from the development is managed in a sustainable way, prioritising the use of SuDS. Further guidance is set out in the CIRIA SuDS Manual which establishes four 'pillars of SuDS', being:

1) Water quantity: controlling the quantity of runoff to manage flood risk, maintain and protect the natural water cycle.
2) Water quality: manage the quality of the runoff to prevent pollution.
3) Amenity: create and sustain better place for people.
4) Biodiversity: create and sustain better places for nature.

5.17 As a way of potentially delivering biodiversity net-gain, support is given to the use of SuDS, both within new development but also as part of a wider response to climate change and resilience across Batchworth. This may include the use of SuDS as 'raingardens' within the public realm as part of wider highways projects. These are generally low maintenance, wildlife-friendly spaces that manage rainwater runoff from hard surfaces. They are also often referred to as bioretention facilities.

5.18 Hertfordshire County Council, in its role as the LLFA, is a 'statutory consultee' and local planning authorities are expected to consult them on surface water management for all major developments. The LLFA will ensure all schemes comply with the NPPF and supporting guidance, as well as seeking to secure SuDS schemes which demonstrate best practice and maximise water quality, amenity, biodiversity and other benefits for the local area. It should be noted that over the Plan period the role of the County Council may change should the Government implement proposed changes to the Flood and Water Management Act which will require the County to establish a SuDS Approval Body (SAB) to ensure that all developments make appropriate use of SuDS. Once the SAB is implemented, all qualifying developments will need to apply to the SAB for consent.

5.19 Herts CC has established a SuDS hierarchy (Figure 18) which should be followed in the design of new development. SuDS features appearing at the top of the hierarchy are preferred as they have the greatest benefits. The hierarchy should be used in descending order, with any obstacles to the use of SuDS methods clearly justified. If the 'lack' of space is given as a reason for not implementing SuDS then evidence will need providing to demonstrate this, with alternative layouts and consideration of other SuDS techniques having been considered.

	SuDS Features	Flood Reduction	Pollution Reduction	Biodiversity Benefit
Most Sustainable	Living roofs and walls	☒	☒	☒
	Basins and ponds	☒	☒	☒
	Filter strips and swales	☒	☒	☒
	Infiltration devices	☒	☒	☒
	Permeable surfaces and filter drains	☒	☒	☐
Least Sustainable	Tanked and piped systems	☒	☐	☐

Figure 18: SuDS Hierarchy (source: Herts LLFA Summary Guidance for Developers)

5.20 Different ways in which SuDs might be integrated into the urban environment are illustrated in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code (Figure 19). The location and design of SuDs will need to be considered at the earliest possible stage in the design process to ensure they are well integrated with wider design aspects, including highways, open space provision, and proposals for biodiversity net gain.

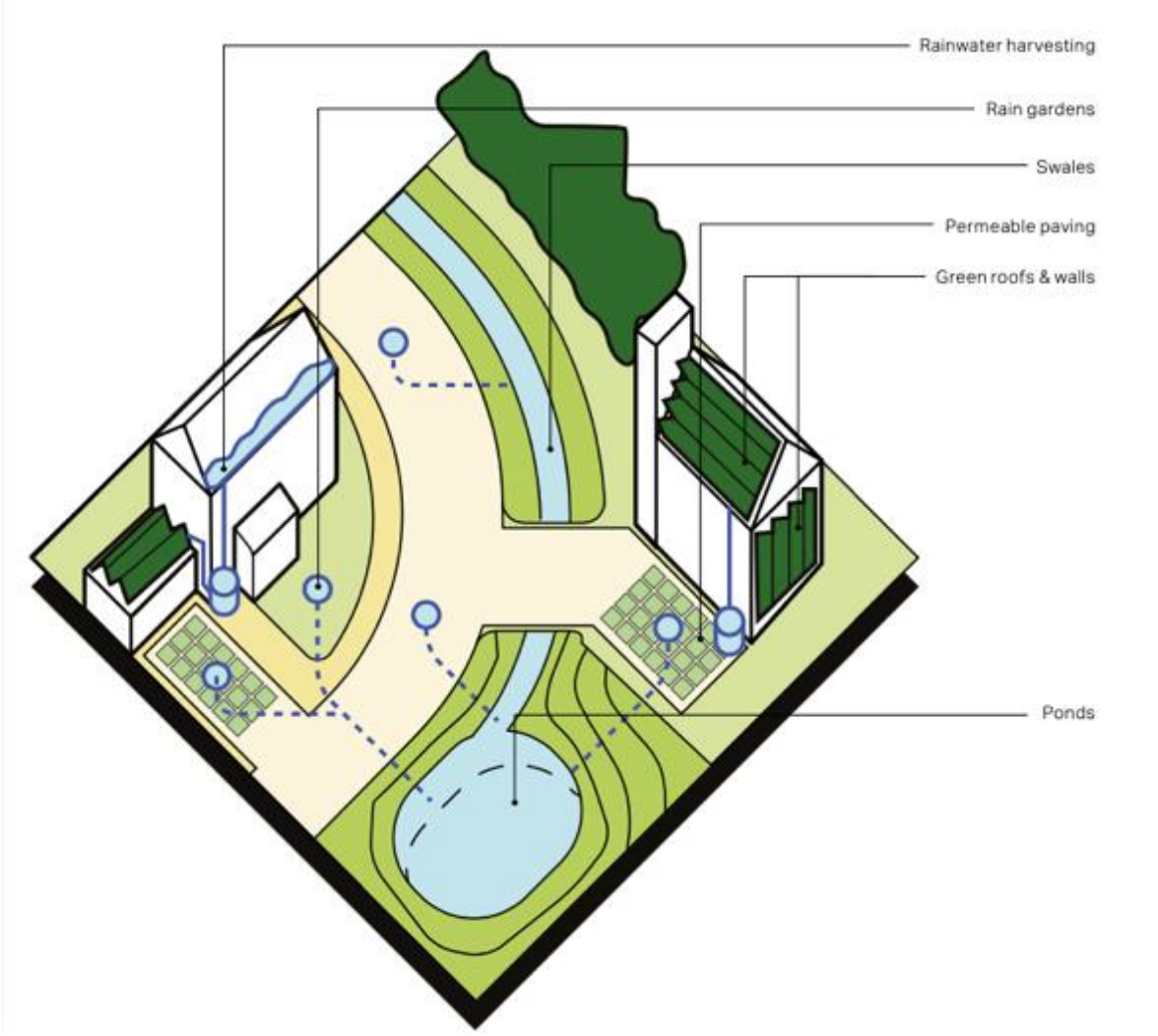

Figure 19: Extract from Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code illustrating how different SuDS techniques might be integrated in the urban environment

Policy BW CC3: Sustainable drainage

1. Where development is proposed in an area at risk of flooding having first satisfied the sequential and exception tests, mitigation measures giving priority to the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) must be included.
2. Where SuDS are proposed:
    a) The design of SuDS should reflect best practice guidance established in the LFRMS and follow the SuDS hierarchy as set out in the LLFA Summary Guidance for Developers or any successor document.
    b) SuDs must be designed to be multi-functional and deliver benefits for biodiversity, amenity, water quality and quantity (the 'four pillars' of SuDS).
    c) A source control approach should be prioritised to implement above-ground SuDS features, allowing surface water runoff to be captured, attenuated and treated as close to source as possible
    d) Swales and attenuation ponds should be designed so that water features and plants are visible from the surrounding area and avoid unattractive and over-engineered boundary treatments. Attenuation ponds on slopes should be avoided if they need deep embankments or bunding.
    e) Buffer strips of at least 8m to be provided alongside watercourses in line with guidance from the Environment Agency should be designed to maximise natural flood management and minimise erosion through planting.
    f) Where it is proposed to provide SuDS within the public realm, such as rain gardens and tree pits, these should be designed as an integral part of the green infrastructure and street network, responding positively to the character of the area. Where hard landscaping is needed the use of porous materials should be maximised to enable infiltration.
    g) Development that might result in surface water discharge to the canal will require prior consent from the Canal & River Trust.

5.21 Under Permitted Development Rights, homeowners are allowed to pave over a certain amount of their front garden (up to five sqm), without needing to apply for planning permission. Under these rights, planning permission is not needed if a new or replacement driveway (of any size) uses permeable (or porous) surfacing, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally. If, however, the surface to be covered is more than five square metres, planning permission will be needed for the laying out of traditional, impermeable driveways that do not provide for the water to run to a permeable area.

5.22 This is despite guidance from the DCLG and Environment Agency issued in 2008 (Guidance on the permeable surfacing of front gardens) that accompanied the introduction of these rights and which acknowledged the impact of paved front gardens. This notes for example that the paving of front gardens with impermeable surfaces can:

- Increase the risk of flooding.
- Carry pollutants into the drainage network, which damages wildlife and the wider environment.
- Create overflows from the foul sewerage network, passing untreated sewage into watercourses.
- Reduce the amount of water soaking into the ground and reaching natural aquifers, limiting the natural cooling effect, and thus contributing to a rise in local temperatures (the urban heat island effect).

5.23 The in-combination effects of too much paved surfacing is causing major issues within parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area, including parts of Eastbury and Rickmansworth, increasing occurrences of surface flooding and overflow from drains which are unable to cope with the additional pressures generated through additional rates of surface water run-off. This consequence is quite clearly acknowledged by DCLG and the EA in the aforementioned guide, who state:

'Although paving over one or two gardens may not seem to make a difference, the combined effect of lots of people in a street or area doing this can increase the risk of flooding'.

5.24 Where it is proposed to pave over front gardens, applicants are encouraged to maintain surfaces and materials used to ensure that water will soak into the ground rather than increase run off.

5.25 Within the Neighbourhood Plan, homeowners are encouraged to 'depave' areas of hard surfacing within their front gardens. This is an initiative that originated in Portland, Oregon. The concept is to work with the local community to return paved surfaces to permeable surfaces. The initiative was set up as a response to the growing problems created by the increasing area of land covered by paved surfaces, resulting in stormwater pollution, the degradation of water quality and riparian habitats, as well as the disconnection with the natural environment. In the UK, 'depave' has been trialled in Lambeth, with funding and support from the Council. Information on 'depaving' can be found on the Lambeth website.

Policy BW CC4: Paving of front gardens

1. Where it is proposed to pave over front gardens and the submission of a planning application is required, all proposals should:
   a) Seek to maximise the retained area of lawn and vegetation.
   b) Incorporate, as far as possible, Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS).
   c) Not direct run-off straight into the drainage system (both to avoid adding to flood risk and to ensure pollutants do not enter the main river system).
   d) Include new planting of non-invasive tree and shrub species.
2. In so far as planning permission is required for the installation of dropped kerbs and cross-overs to enable off-street parking, these will only be supported where appropriate on-site drainage is provided and where surface run-off rates do not increase those currently experienced.

Project BW CC(b): Raingardens

1. Alongside the provision of SuDS within specific development schemes, the Community Council is keen to see wider measures introduced that manage and mitigate flood risk, including that associated with surface water runoff.
2. The Community Council is keen to work with partners, including the County Council as highways authority and lead local flood authority, to explore opportunities for 'de-paving' extensive areas of hard-surfacing, and which might include the creation of rain gardens and tree-pits alongside or as part of the remodeling of the carriageway.

Project BW CC(c): Reinstating front gardens

1. Encouragement is given to homeowners to 'depave' areas of hardstanding and impermeable surfaces in front gardens, preferably reinstating natural materials, or replacing impermeable surfaces with porous material.
2. Guidance published by The Royal Horticultural Society (e.g.: RHS, Front Garden Guide) should be referred to when considering how best to redesign front gardens, particularly those incorporating parking provision.
3. The Community Council is keen to work with the County Council to explore whether an approach to 'depaving' might be included in future updates of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and whether opportunities might exist to help fund and deliver such change in order to positively influence the resilience and character of the area.
4. This approach is supported across the whole of the Community Council area.

6. Community

Overview

6.1 This chapter is framed around the following objective:

***Objective 3**: To strengthen community cohesion and inclusiveness by making Batchworth an attractive place for all to live and work in.*

6.2 It presents policies, and projects, that build upon the following ideas and opportunities identified through the consultation and engagement activities undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *Support delivery of a wide range of housing types and products that cater for the needs of our changing population, including homes for the elderly, young families, opportunities for self and custom build homes, new social and affordable homes.*
- *Prepare a masterplan for Rickmansworth town centre, establishing guidance around future forms and scale of development, and improvement to the quality of public spaces, creating thriving and vibrant places that foster social interaction and attract investment. Provision of new social and community facilities should be directed to our centres, with the Rickmansworth Library and Watersmeet Theatre becoming the heart of civic life and a 'public room' where a wide-range of events and activities take place.*
- *Provide flexible working spaces for small businesses and start-ups, responding to changing working patterns, and supporting environmental improvements to the Tolpits area, enhancing access, relationship with the waterfront, and providing a central hub supporting the growth of smaller businesses.*

Housing

6.3 The emerging Three Rivers Local Plan identifies a number of potential housing sites across the Neighbourhood Plan area. In addition, it is recognised that other sites are likely to come forward through windfall development. The emerging Local Plan also establishes a preferred mix of housing to be delivered, in terms of size and tenure. This mix is based on district-wide data. It is important to recognise local dynamics and pressures within the housing market. To this extent a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan area has been undertaken. Findings and recommendations are summarised below:

Population

6.4 The population profile of the Neighbourhood Plan area is relatively similar to that at the district and national levels, although it does have slightly more older residents. The older age brackets, identified in the HNA as 45-64, 65 -84, and 85 and over, have seen the fastest levels of growth in the area between the 2011 Census and the latest estimates in 2019. While only 3.7% of residents are over 85 at present, 45.2% are currently in the 45-84 cohort, and this is likely to increase the proportion of the population in older age groups over the Plan period and thus reinforce the trend towards an ageing population. The HNA suggests that older people could become the largest source of demand for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area, whether they intend to occupy the same dwellings that they currently live in or move into a home better suited to the size of their household and evolving needs.

Housing type

6.5 Currently, the mix of dwelling types in Batchworth is unbalanced, with 75% of all homes comprising either detached properties or flats. The HNA suggests that the limited number of homes of different housing types means that the current stock does not adequately cater for all groups or needs. Furthermore, recent development has exaggerated existing imbalances, with 81% of newly built properties being flats.

Housing size

6.6 In terms of size, the housing stock in Batchworth is skewed towards larger homes with 4 or more bedrooms (37%). There are similar numbers of 2 and 3-bedroom homes (25% and 22% respectively), and comparatively fewer 1-bedroom homes (13%). The percentages are rounded. In addition, there are a small number of studios and some homes where the number of bedrooms is not recorded on Census or Valuation Office information. When compared with patterns that exist across the district and country, Batchworth has a significant lack of 3-bedroom properties (22% of the stock in Batchworth compared to the national average of

43%). Recent development has helped to diversify the mix, with studio flats making up 13% of all new homes in Rickmansworth over the last decade. However, these have mainly taken the form of office to residential conversions, and concerns have been raised over the quality and size (in terms of floorspace) of these homes.

Housing mix

6.7 The HNA notes that the results of a life stage modelling exercise suggests that new development should be restricted almost entirely to 3-bedroom homes due to severe under representation in this category. However, it is recognised that this would unnecessarily restrict supply and that new development should help deliver a range of housing choice and opportunity. The HNA recommends that new housing should contribute to the following mix: 15% 1-bedroom, 32% 2-bedroom, and 53% 3-bedroom.

6.8 The HNA notes that a focus on mid-sized homes would help to achieve the aim of creating a 'lifetime neighbourhood' in which there are suitable housing options at all stages of life for those who wish to put down permanent roots in the area.

Affordability

6.9 Batchworth's current tenure mix highlights an undersupply of Affordable Housing when compared to levels at the district and national scale. Over the last ten years, only 6% of new housing has been for affordable rent and the current share of homes within this category has slightly decreased since 2011.

6.10 Batchworth has also seen home values increase significantly over the last ten years despite some short-term volatility. The average entry-level home now costs around £123,000 more than it did in 2011. The current median house price is £600,000 and the average growth rate for all housing between 2011 and 2020 was 48%.

6.11 In Batchworth, a household would need an income comfortably over the average to qualify for a mortgage even for an entry-level home in the area. The median house price would require an annual income more than twice the current average.

6.12 Private renting is also generally only affordable for higher earners. For example, the HNA shows that a single lower quartile earner would need to dedicate more than 70% of their gross earnings to rents in order to occupy a small flat. It also goes on to note that there is a relatively large group of households in Batchworth who might be able to rent privately but cannot afford home ownership. These households tend to be earning between £40,000 and £70,000. This 'can rent, can't buy' cohort would benefit from a range of affordable home ownership schemes such as First Homes and shared ownership.

6.13 DLUHC guidance on First Homes indicates that Neighbourhood Plan qualifying bodies will have discretion to increase the discount on the new First Homes product above the 30% level established in national policy where evidence indicates an increase is appropriate. The evidence in the HNA, as summarised above, suggest that this is the case, and that the highest possible discount level of 50% is necessary and strongly justified in Batchworth.

6.14 In Batchworth, affordable rented housing is generally affordable for households with two lower quartile earners, depending on their total household size. However, those households with a single lower earner are unable to afford any of the tenures considered, including the smallest socially rented units. Many such individuals will, if unable to secure a social rented dwelling or additional subsidy, need to live in a room in a shared house using housing benefit.

6.15 The HNA recommends that, in Batchworth, the delivery of affordable rented housing should be maximised. The HNA recommends that roughly 70% of Affordable Housing should take the form of rented tenures such as social and affordable rent (preferably the former), with the remaining 30% as affordable routes to home ownership, fulfilling the requirements of the new First Homes product and allowing for some shared ownership or other tenures.

6.16 Where affordable housing is provided in should be 'tenure blind', being built to the same quality as and indistinguishable from market housing. As far as possible, affordable housing should be retained as such in perpetuity.

Specialist Housing Need

6.17 In response to the ageing population, the HNA identifies the need for the supply of specialist housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

6.18 Planning Practice Guidance (Housing for Older and Disabled People) notes that there are a variety of specialist housing types that can meet the needs of older people. This includes, but is not limited to, (1) age-restricted general market housing, (2) retirement living or sheltered housing, (3) extra care housing or housing-with care, and (4) residential care homes and nursing homes.

6.19 The HNA uses two methods to determine the future need in Batchworth for specialist housing required during the plan period, equating to a range of need between 101 and 114 homes. These figures include housing at various levels of support as well as both market and affordable housing and can be broken down further by type and affordability, as shown in Table 1.

Type	Extra care housing Sheltered housing	28-50 homes 64-73 homes	Approx. 44% Approx. 66%
Tenure	Affordable specialist accommodation Market specialist accommodation	30-36 homes 65-84 homes	Approx. 45% Approx. 65%

Table 1: Breakdown of specialist housing need in Batchworth, taken form the HNA

6.20 Where specialist housing is to be provided it should meet the design criteria contained in this Neighbourhood Plan. Further guidance also exists which should be considered. This includes the principles of inclusive design outlined in Planning Practice Guidance (Housing for Older and Disabled People), as well as those principles set out in the HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) report which are applicable to housing for elderly people and age-friendly places. Planning Practice Guidance notes that:

'*accessible and adaptable housing enables people to live more independently, while also saving on health and social costs in the future. It is better to build accessible housing from the outset rather than have to make adaptations at a later stage – both in terms of cost and with regard to people being able to remain safe and independent in their homes.*'

6.21 In line with this, opportunities to provide flexible housing types that can be adapted over time in response to changing lifestyles will be supported.

Policy BW CO1: Housing type, tenure and mix

1. Development will be expected to provide affordable housing in line with national and District level policy.
2. Provision of affordable homes should be split such that 70% takes the form of rented tenures, including social and affordable rent, while the remaining 30% comprises affordable routes to home ownership.
3. All qualifying developments in Batchworth are required to provide First Homes at a discount of 50%.
4. All affordable homes, including First Homes, must be designed such that they are tenure-blind (i.e.: they should be integrated into the design of the overall proposed development and be of an equal quality in terms of design and use of materials compared to the market housing element).
5. Subject to viability, new development should contribute towards delivery of the following mix of housing sizes:

   1-bedroom homes: 15%

2-bedroom homes: 32%
3-bedroom homes: 53%

6. Any proposals for homes of 4 bedrooms or more will need to be supported by information that demonstrates how this reflects the housing needs of the Plan area.
7. Proposals for development that meets the need of the ageing population (specialist housing) will be supported. Where proposed, approximately 44% of the homes shall comprise extra care housing, with 66% comprising sheltered housing. Of these, 45% shall comprise affordable specialist accommodation.
8. Where specialist housing is proposed it should be located within easy access of shops, facilities and public transport services. Housing should be well integrated within the wider neighbourhood and be designed in accordance with the HAPPI principles.
9. In so far as planning permission is required, proposals that would result in the loss of bungalows (and other homes suitable for an ageing population) will need to demonstrate how this is responding to local housing needs and does not result in a diminishing supply of homes suitable for an ageing population.
10. Proposals for new residential development are encouraged to meet and, where possible, exceed the nationally described space standards (March 2015, Technical Housing Standards), or successor document.
11. Support will be given to proposals for new homes that are designed to be adaptable to meet future accommodation needs of occupiers at different stages of their life.

Rickmansworth Town Centre

6.22 Rickmansworth is the principal settlement in the District. It provides the greatest range of shops and services in Three Rivers, but has seen a recent decline in retail floorspace, with change of use to office space and an increasing rate of vacancies. Maintaining the vitality and viability of the centre is essential to retaining the town's competitiveness and to provide access to services for local people. Although expanded through development of 'Metroland' in the 1920s and 1930s and thus having a strong commuting relationship with London, the town centre is intended to function as a viable mixed use centre, including office space alongside retail, civic and leisure functions.

6.23 The town has a rich history and unique environmental setting, where town meets country, though the highway network fractures this. Unblocking these barriers will reinforce the character and setting of the town. Equally, change, growth and development will help secure investment in infrastructure, particularly in relation to healthcare. Combined with improvements to the movement network this will provide enhanced access for all and spin-off benefits for the town centre. But change needs to be coordinated, securing the long-term future and success of the High Street, and responding to the day-to-needs of residents and businesses.

Challenges

6.24 The following challenges for the Town Centre have been identified:

6.25 **Retail catchment**: This is limited through the presence of road and rail infrastructure which divides the town and restricts access to the centre. There are few crossing points and those that do exist involve the use of underpasses and grade separated bridges. Neither are attractive nor conducive to movement. This means that more people choose to drive to the centre than otherwise might be the case, contributing to congestion, pollution and obesity. Furthermore, the use of the car means there is a need for more town centre parking space, which impacts on the use of land and quality of place. Land for parking represents one of the main uses in the centre. Although the importance of parking is recognised, it represents an inefficient use of land. As strategies are developed that respond to the Climate Change agenda, so different opportunities for access and movement should be explored.

6.26 **Visitor experience:** There is no real sense nor celebration of arrival in the town centre. Exits from the railway station lead onto the main highway network and underpasses into the centre. Pedestrian routes from car parks are convoluted in many places and often lead into service yards and the rear of properties, with views of bin storage being the welcome into the town centre. Although some bus routes penetrate the town centre, these are limited, with the focus being on the ring road and railway station. Walking routes are unattractive, as is the waiting environment.

6.27 **High Street public realm:** The High Street retains its original form and strong alignment, with historic buildings along this and Church Street lending it character. However, the street environment detracts from the retail experience. Through traffic, parking and extensive visual clutter, including street signs, lights, poles and bollards, detract from this being a place for people to spend time (and money) in. There are also conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, with several accidents recorded in and around the High Street and access points to and from town centre car parks. There is no real focus or central space in the centre, and a lack of places for people to sit, meet and relax. Footfall is centred on the High Street, falling dramatically beyond this.

6.28 **Highway network:** Not only is the highway network a barrier to movement, but also a cause of noise and air pollution. The 'ring-road' is designed in such a way that facilitates high speeds and is perceived to be relatively unsafe, with numerous accidents recorded. Accident hotspots include the roundabouts either end of Riverside Drive (with the A412 and A404). Space used by key junctions is inefficient and makes no provision for walking or cycling. Where space is provided, particularly for cycling, it is mixed with traffic and does not form part of a connected network. The network needs transforming to make cycling a viable and attractive proposition for people.

6.29 **Green infrastructure:** The nature reserve, golf courses and riparian environment represent a unique setting for the town. These are though cut-off from the town and the relationship between the two is poorly defined. The rivers are a result of the local geology, with topography defined by the Chiltern Hills AONB and the towns position at the southerly extent of the ice age. The topography means it is in an area of flood risk. The lack of greenery within the urban area however exacerbates this risk, particularly associated with surface water run-off. The soil is though fertile and suitable for integrating landscaping and biodiversity into the built form.

6.30 **Land use:** The retail focus of the town is along the High Street and Church Street. The offer is in decline, with an increasing number of shops changing use, with more vacancies and, through permitted development rights, loss of employment floorspace for small and medium enterprises. Although benefitting from a library, theatre and several community uses, these are scattered around the town and dated: there is no main focus for civic activities. There is no GP service within the centre. Creating a multi-functional civic centre would provide for the needs of the community and help draw people to the centre.

6.31 **History:** There is a lack of awareness of the history of the town – some of the developments that have taken place over the last 20/30 years have not responded well to the historic fabric of the town or its setting. There is little to celebrate the town being the one time home of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. Other cultural references to Rickmansworth are equally ignored (it is the setting for the opening of 'The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy' for example). These need capturing through a place-branding strategy that helps to realise the potential of the town.

6.32 **External pressures**: The need for new homes can be a positive for the town centre, increasing the customer base for the town. However, external growth will impact upon the town. Major growth at the Aylesbury Garden Town, including proposals for 16,000 new homes, will place significant pressure on the railway service, impacting on the potential for people in Rickmansworth to board the train in peak times. Alternative forms of transport are required. But new employment opportunities are also required, reducing the need to commute and to allow people to live and work locally.

6.33 There are also other challenges, associated with matters such as business rates and parking charges, which are outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Opportunities

6.34 Our Vision is for Rickmansworth to be a 'Twenty-minute Neighbourhood', where all services and facilities required for day-to-day needs are in easy walk and cycle of the home, where it is safe and easy for all people of all ages to access and move around the town, where a range of housing and employment opportunities are provided. We aim to foster social cohesion and civic pride, strengthen the civic role of the town centre at the heart of the community, being a place for social interaction and human-life, which in turn supports a vibrant and successful retail offer.

6.35 The civic role of the town will be strengthened through provision of multi-functional and flexible community space. The library will become the town's 'living room': high quality facilities, which can be used by a cross-section of groups, supplemented by new co-working space, will provide support to SMEs and start-ups looking for a place to stay and grow.

6.36 We see Rickmansworth benefitting from an improved network of streets and spaces, making this a more attractive place for people to spend time in. A public realm programme will be rolled out across the town, prioritising pedestrian and cycle needs over the motor car. The High Street will be reimagined as a 'sticky street': a place for people to meet and spend time in. But this goes hand in hand with breaking the barrier created by surrounding highways, with highway and junction space rationalised and at-grade crossings provided, reconnecting communities with the town centre and integrating the surrounding blue and green infrastructure into the town. This includes the greening of streets and spaces in the centre, through new tree planting and provision of rain gardens, making this a healthier and happier society, and managing the risk of flooding, particularly from surface water run-off. We will restore the meadows in the town and provide opportunities for new community gardens and local food production, making use of the highly fertile soil and enabling the community to have greater ownership of their town.

6.37 We envisage that land will be used more efficiently and effectively: we will unpick the road network to make movement more logical and reduce the negative impact of vehicles – both in terms of space and air quality – from the town centre. And by promoting walking and cycling, and a coherent public transport network, reduce unnecessary parking provision, reusing this space for homes, facilities and new public spaces. Where parking is provided, it will be well integrated in the environment, wrapped with active uses and local topography maximised to reduce land use. This, combined with improvements to the station setting, will celebrate the sense of arrival in the town centre, such that it becomes a more attractive and welcoming place for all.

6.38 Infrastructure for electric vehicles and 'mobility as service' will be provided, but will be visually unobtrusive. Coupled with provision of a cycle network, which becomes a highly attractive proposition because it is direct, well connected and safe, the need to travel by car will be reduced. This will enhance the experience of the town centre and 'convenience' of the 'high street' offer. The experience of the centre will also be enhanced through shop-front improvements and a Place-branding strategy, building on the history of the town and including heritage trails and walks linking the centre with the waterways and nature reserves. This will help unlock the tourism offer in the town.

6.39 All of this will be designed to a high quality, with sensitive development and interventions responding positively to the unique character and heritage of the town, with schemes subject to review by a design panel that champions 'better' for Rickmansworth.

6.40 The opportunities for Rickmansworth town centre are summarised below:

- The identity of the town centre should be enhanced with public realm improvements and new public art at gateway locations, creating a sense of arrival and welcome. This could be combined with a wayfinding strategy for visitors making use of a coherent brand and design palette reinforcing the character of the town.
- Creating a network of green routes and streets, combined with improved pedestrian routes and crossings, enhancing the pedestrian experience and legibility of the centre. This should include provision of a series of safer crossing points for pedestrian and cyclists along Riverside Drive as well as at the railway station.
- Street trees, planting beds, green walls and roofs should be used to soften the streetscape and help screen unsightly 'back of house areas'; such as servicing yards and bin storage.
- Revitalisation of Bury Gardens, responding to its historic and cultural role in the town centre, and which is accessible to all.
- Creating a civic hub strengthening the cultural identity of the centre, focused around the Watersmeet theatre and mixed-use redevelopment of the library to include community uses. This could include a new landmark building and civic square.
- Upgrading the quality and attractiveness of the public realm along the High Street, making this a 'sticky street' where people wish to spend time and money in the centre, including soft landscaping, removal of existing 'street clutter', and places to sit and relax. This could involve opportunities for partial pedestrianisation during the day or on different days of the week, but should only be considered if it can be shown by quantitative evidence to benefit local businesses and residents. The overall design of the public realm should allow for servicing and loading but where spaces can be used for outdoor activities, including dining, during the day, creating activity along the street (Figure 20).
- Improve quality and consistency of shopfronts within the town centre, protecting and rediscovering historic elements where currently lost or compromised.

6.41 The opportunities outlined above are developed in further detail in the Rickmansworth Town Centre Concept Plan, including detailed guidance on shopfronts, materials and the palette of street furniture that should be used within any public realm strategy.

Figure 20: Concept illustration showing potential public realm improvements along Rickmansworth High Street

Policy BW CO2: Rickmansworth town centre uses

1. Proposals for major development in the town centre (as defined in Figure 21) should incorporate a mix of uses consistent with the role, function and character of Rickmansworth town centre.
    a) Suitable town centre uses include those in Classes E, F and C of the Use Classes Order.
    b) Business and retail uses should be focused within the main retail area (as defined in Figure 21). Where residential uses are proposed in these areas they should be on the upper floors of a mixed-use scheme, with ground floors comprising retail or other complementary uses. Outside of these areas residential uses may be appropriate at ground floor level.
    c) Mixed-use schemes should be carefully designed to avoid noise and odour conflicts between uses.
    d) Temporary proposals for the use of vacant buildings within Use Classes E and F, including 'pop-up's, are encouraged.
    e) Proposals for development in the town centre involving streets and spaces that enhance the attractiveness of the public realm and which improve the quality of the pedestrian environment will be supported.

Policy BW CO3: Rickmansworth library and civic area

1. Development of the library site and civic area (as defined in the Local Plan) will be supported where it meets the following criteria:
    a) Provides a mixed-use building incorporating a library space, preferably on site or within an accessible ground floor location in the town centre.
    b) Space for other community uses can be included on the ground floor.
    c) Office and residential use may be appropriate but should be provided on upper floors.
    d) The height of the building reflects the prevailing height of adjacent buildings.
    e) A plaza is created, linking the library, civic offices and Watersmeet Theatre.
    f) New street tree planting and street furniture is provided, along with improved pedestrian crossings to the library and new plaza.

Policy BW CO4: Rickmansworth town centre design principles

1. Proposals for new development in Rickmansworth Town Centre should complement the special character of the centre, reflected in the height and massing of buildings, as well as the materials used, building styles and roof heights. The qualities and character of the town centre are set out in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code, which should be used to inform development proposals. Support will be given to those proposals which meet the design criteria below and take the opportunity to improve character as identified in the Design Code and Rickmansworth Town Centre Concept Plan:
    a) Create clear and consistent building lines with active frontages at ground floor level, following established building lines where they exist.
    b) Provide the principal points of access to buildings on the main street or public space onto which it fronts.
    c) Provide for clear, direct and well-overlooked pedestrian routes through or around the development site, connecting with the existing route network.
    d) Clearly define areas of public and private realm through well-defined building lines and enclosure of private space. Blank walls and exposed back land areas, including car parking and servicing areas, should be screened from view, preferably through the wrapping of these with active development edges, or with other solutions such as provision of green walls that improve the quality of the townscape.
    e) Avoid the creation of 'superblocks', allowing for the subdivision of land into different parcels which can come forward for change and development over time.
    f) Corner buildings should be well articulated and blank gable ends avoided.
    g) Respect the prevailing building height. Where building heights vary this change should be subtle and step up or down as appropriate between adjacent buildings.
    h) Incorporate generous floor to ceiling heights, particularly at ground floor level, to allow for flexibility and change of use over time.
    i) Support improvements to the quality of the public realm in the town centre, including improved walking, wheeling and other non-motorised routes and crossings.
2. Where relevant, applications for new development will be required to respect the ability for markets and other outdoor events to operate in the town centre.

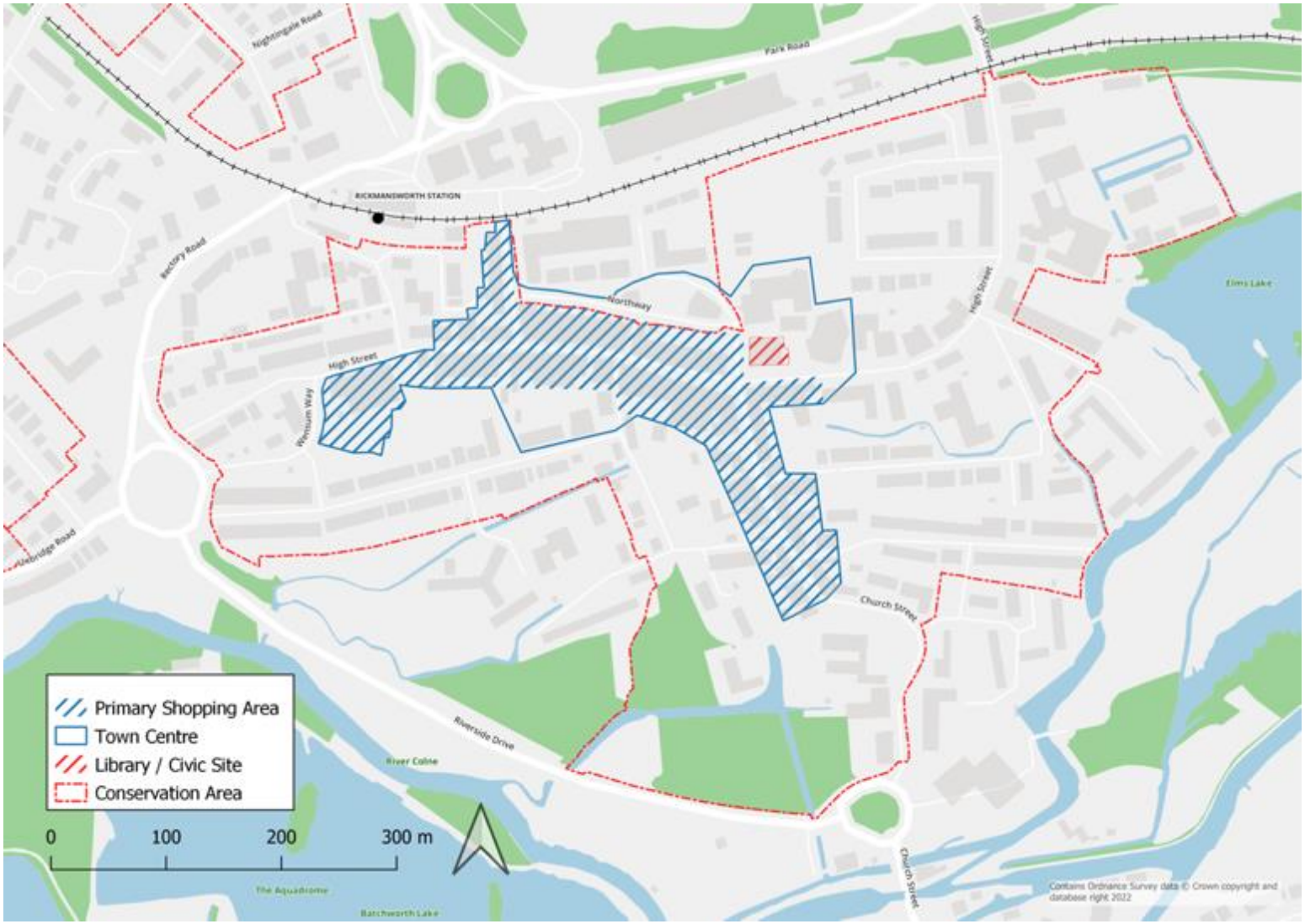

Figure 21: Plan showing the extent of the defined town centre boundary in Rickmansworth and, within this, the main retail areas.

Project BW CO(a): Place-branding

1. Place-branding is an effective means to market the offer of a particular place, attracting and supporting businesses and visitors, building upon local identity, sense of place and the special qualities that define the place.
2. In Rickmansworth, special qualities include the relationship with the rivers, canal and Aquadrome, its historic growth and associations. The creation of a place-branding strategy for Rickmansworth is supported and is an area that the Community Council would be interested in developing further with the community.
3. Place-branding can be used to 'market' the town centre but also form the basis of a consistent signage and wayfinding strategy used across the centre, strengthening local identity.

Project BW CO(b): Article 4 Direction

1. The Community Council is acutely aware of the important role that Rickmansworth plays in terms of the local economy of the area, providing access to employment, opportunities for small and medium enterprises, and attracting inward investment. At the same time, and with changes to the use class order and permitted development rights, there is a risk that its role could be undermined.
2. The Community Council is thus keen to work with the District Council to explore how the employment function of the town centre can be strengthened, and which might include investigating the potential for introducing an Article 4 Direction, requiring changes of use away from employment to be subject to a planning application. The extent of the area to be covered by such a Direction would be subject to further analysis but could include the town centre and immediately surrounding area, incorporating employment uses along the A412 and the eastern end of the High Street, and south towards the River Chess.

Project BW CO(c): Library and civic area

1. The Community Council is keen to take a proactive approach to the future planning and development of the library site and wider civic area in Rickmansworth, working with land owners, delivery partners and the wider community to prepare proposals that help meet the aspirations for this area.

Project BW CO(d): Town centre public realm improvements

1. The Community Council is keen to explore opportunities that improve the quality of the public realm and highway network in the town centre, and to work with partner organisations to test and deliver the projects outlined below and presented in more detail in the Rickmansworth Town Centre Concept Plan. Ideas outlined below would be tested and explored further with the community.

Greening

2. Opportunities should be taken that contribute to the greening of the urban environment. Subject to agreement of appropriate management and maintenance regimes, this includes but is not limited to:

   a) New tree planting as well as planting of wildflowers.

   b) Planting of green walls.

   c) Introduction of urban rills and other water features, including rain gardens, supporting sustainable urban drainage systems.

Streets and Spaces

3. Opportunities should be taken that improve the quality of the pedestrian experience in the town centre. These include but are not limited to:

   a) Potential for partial pedestrianisation of the High Street, which could take the form of a shared surface area, including 'multi-functional' areas that can be used at different times of the day (e.g.: after normal trading hours) or specific days of the week for servicing, parking, outdoor dining and other activities, including street markets.

   b) Rationalisation of street clutter and introduction of new areas of seating along the High Street.

   c) Defining gateway locations at the station and along Riverside Drive through introductions of street tree planting, public art and new crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists that provide safer connections to the High Street.

   d) Implementation of a wayfinding strategy across the town centre.

Local centres and community facilities

Local centres

6.42 The Moneyhill and Moor Park parades are important local centres, providing for day-to-day services in close proximity to the home. In both areas a mix of uses is considered appropriate, including:

- Retail.
- Restaurants and cafes.
- Offices.
- Workspace.
- Community uses.
- Residential.

6.43 In Moneyhill, opportunities exist to improve the quality of service and visitor experience to the local centre. At present, the environment is traffic dominated, with parking and servicing areas, the presence of the Uxbridge Road and lack of soft landscaping all combining to create a harsh environment. The arrangement of roads has resulted in creation of a central pedestrian space, with parking on one side and the busy Uxbridge Road on the other, which creates an unsafe and unattractive place to be as a pedestrian.

6.44 Scope exists to remodel the parade to make it more pedestrian and cycle friendly, potentially including:

- Reorganisation of parking areas and footpaths, providing more pedestrian space next to retail outlets, and where space may allow for spill-out activities and provision of street furniture.
- Introduction of new street tree planting to soften the landscape and define areas of parking which, coupled with rain gardens can help manage and mitigate the risk of flooding from surface water run-off.
- Use of different materials in the public realm to define the street, parking areas and pedestrian space.
- New crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists, improving connectivity across Uxbridge Road and to local bus stops.

Policy BW CO5: Moneyhill and Moor Park Local Centres

1. Uses that support everyday activity are appropriate in Moneyhill and Moor Park Local centres:
    a) Use classes E and F are appropriate uses and should be located on the ground floor.
    b) Ground floor uses should create an active frontage to the street, with main entrances located along and opening onto this.
    c) Residential use (Class C3) will be appropriate on upper floors, subject to being complementary with the ground floor use. Office uses may also be appropriate on upper floors. All uses on upper floors should include windows and balconies, as appropriate, that look out across the street and create variety and interest.
2. Proposals for the provision of new community facilities will also be supported.
3. Where new development is proposed it should:
    a) Create a strong and consistent building line that relates well to adjacent building.
    b) Include generous floor to ceiling heights at ground floor level that allow for change and flexibility over time.
    c) Be generally consistent with the prevailing heights of adjacent buildings.
4. Proposals for development should relate well to the street and, wherever possible, contribute to wider public realm improvements and supporting initiatives that improve the quality of the pedestrian environment. Proposals for uses that spill-out onto the street will be supported where there is sufficient space to allow this without causing obstruction to pedestrians.

Community facilities

6.45 The provision of social and community infrastructure in Batchworth, such as sports and community halls, is important to sustaining and meeting the day-to-day needs of local residents. These will provide access to essential services and facilities, strengthening social networks, supporting community cohesion and helping to maintain a high quality of life.

6.46 Policy DM12 of the Three Rivers Development Management Policies DPD seeks to protect existing facilities from development pressures and to provide new or enhanced facilities wherever possible. The provision of facilities will meet local needs and reduce the need to travel further afield.

6.47 Through consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan respondents identified a need for a new community space in Eastbury, as well as new or improved space in Rickmansworth. Proposals for such uses will be supported where they make effective use of land, involving, where possible, the reuse of previously developed land or buildings, and are designed to cater for a wide range of uses and activities, providing for the community.

Policy BW CO6: Community facilities

1. Proposals for new or improved community facilities, including a new community centre in Eastbury and a new or improved community centre in Rickmansworth will be supported and should:
    a) make effective and efficient use of land and buildings, avoiding loss of green space where possible;
    b) include provision of flexible space that can be used for a variety of community uses;
    c) be provided in locations that capitalise on opportunities to promote walking, cycling and use of public transport where possible;
    d) maximise, as far as possible, the provision of charging points and cabling for electric vehicles;
    e) be easily accessible to all users, ages and abilities; and
    f) respond positively to local character, design policies and guidance set out in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code.

Employment

6.48 Within Three Rivers, the Neighbourhood Plan area plays a major role in supporting employment and economic development. Both Rickmansworth Town Centre and Tolpits Lane are classified as key employment areas in the Three Rivers Local Plan. Tolpits Lane is an allocated employment area in the Local Plan and protected for employment uses. Other uses which are complementary to employment will be supported.

6.49 The South West Herts Economic Study Update (2019) found that economic productivity in South West Herts (Three Rivers, Watford, and Dacorum) has now fallen below the UK average (average Gross Value Average [GVA] per job has fallen £1,000 and is now 2% lower than the national average). Despite this, the Study states that *"South West Herts has a highly entrepreneurial population with business start-up rates well above the national and regional average (particularly in ICT and professional services)"*. The Study adds that *"this suggests a need for flexible and affordable workspace to support the growth of these businesses"*. Strong support will therefore be given to the provision of small-scale businesses premises, ideally on flexible rental arrangements. It is envisioned that Rickmansworth Town Centre, and Tolpits Lane to a lesser extent, can accommodate this demand.

6.50 The study also noted that several sites, including those at the Tolpits Lane employment area, are coming under pressure for changes of use to residential. Tolpits Lane provides more than a third of Three Rivers total occupied employment space. Any loss of employment use classes would result in displacement of businesses and erode capacity in one of the key sites in the district. Pressure for change of use to residential should thus be resisted as far as possible, with the area protected for employment uses. Three Rivers District Council has introduced an Article 4 Direction for the Tolpits Lane employment area that will require a planning application to be submitted for changes of use in this area.

6.51 Furthermore, employment studies note that access to Tolpits Lane is heavily dependent on car use. Public transport options are extremely limited: for those travelling from Rickmansworth Town Centre, the easiest route using public transport involves a bus journey and a 25-minute walk. Efforts should be made to better connect Tolpits Lane industrial estate with the local public transport network.

6.52 Recent UK-wide research (JLE, July 2020, The Impact of Covid-19 on Flexible Space) found that the Covid-19 pandemic (and its associated uncertainties) temporarily put growth in the strong flexible leasing market on hold. However, the research states that this demand will return and will evolve into *"a spectrum of options that provide various levels of real estate flexibility, experience and choice for tenants and landlords alike"*. In the medium to long-term, this analysis predicts that over 30% of all office space will be consumed flexibly by 2030. For Batchworth, retention and development of a diverse range of flexible workspaces and leasing arrangements should be supported, catering for a variety of businesses.

6.53 Proposals for new employment development should reflect good practice design principles with regard to access, frontages, general arrangement of use and relationship with surrounding uses.

6.54 Land at Tolpits benefits from proximity to the traffic-free Ebury Way trail and to Croxley Common Moor. However, the current arrangement of buildings and spaces has resulted in businesses turning their back on these significant assets. Where opportunities arise, development should seek to address this, opening the area up to the surroundings, providing enhanced access but also enhancing the quality of the business environment which may, in turn, make this a more attractive place for continued economic investment. This is intended to avoid blank walls or unsightly servicing and storage areas fronting onto the Moor. The Moor is valued for its diverse range of natural landscapes and for the opportunities it provides for leisure and recreation. Development adjacent to the Moor should be sensitively sited and designed such that it does not cause overbearance.

6.55 Equally, the area would benefit from the presence of local amenities and services to support the operation of business and provide facilities for employees. This might extend to a café and shop, as well as potentially providing meeting and networking space for business events. Provision of such a facility should be easily accessible to all, including those on foot, with the surrounding public realm designed to make this an attractive place to visit and spend time in. Proximity to and visibility from nearby green space would also allow for use by those utilising the wider walking, cycling and horse riding routes for recreational purposes.

Policy BW CO7: Employment

1. Development proposals that provide small-scale retail, office and research and development employment opportunities, (Classes E(g)(i), E(g)(ii), E(g)(iii)), particularly on flexible terms to support small and medium sized businesses, will be supported. This could either be through the following:
    a) conversion of existing buildings across the Neighbourhood Plan area, subject to the impact of provision on the highway network and parking; or
    b) provision of new buildings or conversion of existing buildings within the extent of the built-up area.
2. The design of any new development will need to respond positively to the defining characteristics of the area within which it is located and reflect the associated principles set out in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code that are applicable to that area. Proposals that create new employment opportunities will be supported where:
    a) Their size, materials and design respects the immediate surroundings which they are to be located whilst enhancing the location to make it attractive for new businesses;
    b) They are well integrated with and complement existing businesses;
    c) They do not impact on the local environment and the amenities of adjacent residential properties or other land uses;
    d) They do not result in a material increase in large and heavy vehicle traffic on non-strategic routes; and
    e) Where appropriate, they enable active travel through delivery of new walking and cycling routes.
3. Development proposals for flexible workspaces that are designed to accommodate local green ventures will also generally be supported.
4. Within the Tolpits area, support will be given to proposals that reconfigure or provide new or replacement premises that better address Croxley Common Moor and provide access to the traffic-free Ebury Way trail. The scale and massing of development shall be sensitive to the setting of Croxley Common Moor. Proposals for an accessible hub within the Tolpits Lane area providing a café, shop and or meeting room will be supported.
5. Development proposals located within the Tolpits Lane area must contribute towards improving public transport and active travel options.

Policy BW CO8: Design principles for B2-B8 Employment uses

1. Where appropriate, proposals for B2-B8 led employment schemes should reflect the following principles:
    a) Buildings should front onto the edge of the development plot.
    b) The most active uses should be located on the ground floor, fronting the street.
    c) Service yards and loading spaces should be located to the rear of buildings. Such areas should be shared, making more efficient use of space, particularly on smaller sites.
    d) Multiple points of access should be provided to service yards to support operational needs and provide flexibility for future change.
    e) Vehicular routes to and through employment areas should be designed to minimise HGV movements, connecting with the strategic road network in as efficient away as possible.
    f) Public spaces and meeting places for employees should be well integrated into the development, including useable and attractive green spaces that are accessible by foot and well overlooked.
2. Landscaping should provide a buffer to industrial uses which might impact on the surrounding landscape or adjacent development.

7. Design

Overview

7.1 This chapter is framed around the following objective:

***Objective 4**: To promote high quality that helps build a sense of place, responding to the character and identity of individual areas in Batchworth.*

7.2 It presents policies, and projects, that build upon the following ideas and opportunities identified through the consultation and engagement activities undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *Establish guidance on the appropriate scale, height, materials and design of development, responding to the distinctive identities in each neighbourhood. Guidance could also be established in respect of car parking in residential areas that minimises the impact of the car on the quality of the street environment.*
- *Promote independent design review of proposed new developments to support delivery of good design.*
- *Identify opportunities to improve "gateways" to the area, such as Batchworth Lock and the railway station, that celebrate arrival to, and welcome visitors. This could include public realm improvements and improved routes and connections that encourage people to spend time in these areas.*

Character and quality

7.3 Good design has a major role in contributing to quality of life and creating attractive, liveable places. This goes beyond the look of buildings and considers: the mix of uses and activities that help create lively and interesting places; the local character and distinctiveness of a place, reflected through its landscape and building materials for example, contributing to healthy lifestyles by making it easy for people to walk, wheel or make use of other non-motorised means of travel; fostering a sense of community through well designed, functional and attractive public spaces; and enhancing the quality of environment.

7.4 The achievement of high quality design is a core principle of the NPPF. It states, at paragraph 131, that 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps makes development acceptable to communities'. The importance of the design of the built environment and its contribution to making better places for people is emphasised. It goes on to note that 'Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development' (paragraph 132).

7.5 In short, good design will help create high quality, safe and successful places where people enjoy living, working and visiting. This is emphasised in the National Design Guide, which should be referred to by all involved in the planning system when shaping, responding to and considering applications for planning permission. This recognises the importance of local character and the role of the community in the design process. It states that:

'Local communities can play a vital role in achieving well-designed places and buildings and making sure there is a relationship between the built environment and quality of life' (paragraph 17).

7.6 For the purpose of this Neighbourhood Plan a Neighbourhood Design Code has been prepared (see Appendix 1). This is reflective of the NPPF which encourages the use of codes and guidelines to help deliver quality outcomes for new development. Production of the Neighbourhood Design Code also responds to the new National Model Design Code (January 2021) and the clear expectation from central Government that 'codes and guides are used to inform development proposals to provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage and reflect local character and preferences'.

7.7 The Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code presents a set of principles and codes, advocating a character-led approach to the design of development which responds to and enhances the existing townscape. This is broken down by character area, with key qualities and opportunities for enhancing character within each of these identified. These should be referenced by applicants for development. They reflect good practice principles, including those established in Building for a Healthy Life (Design for Homes, June 2020, Building for a Healthy Life: A Design Toolkit for neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces), which should also be utilised by applicants. Furthermore, the adopted Local Plan establishes a series of standards in respect of back-to-back distances, privacy and overlooking, all of which are to be used when preparing and detemining planning applications.

7.8 It is to be noted that residential areas in Batchworth benefit from and are typically characterised by the presence of green verges. Where development takes place, contractors should park carefully, with applicants and homeowners being responsible for repairing any damage caused to the grass verges as a result of the works.

7.9 The river valley, including canal network, comprises an important and unique character area in Batchworth, though some development turns its back on this asset. Wherever new development comes forward in Batchworth it should respond to local character and, as far as possible, take opportunities to enhance character. Along the river valley this includes providing opportunities that open up access to the rivers and canal, and which also incorporate routes alongside the river and canal for public use. These should include active development frontages that relate to the water environment, with windows, doors and balconies opening out onto this. Where possible, new spaces should be created to enable people to enjoy the river corridor, including places to sit and relax.

7.10 Equally, the river corridor and wider green space associated with this helps define the separate character areas within Batchworth, contributing to the sense of identity and openness between places. Proposals for new development should be sensitive to this and avoid encroaching into green spaces, particularly that between Moor Park and Rickmansworth, and which might lead to the coalescence of those places.

7.11 Reference to context is not intended to promote the copying of or use of pastiche solutions. It means responding to what is around as inspiration and influence and it could be that a contemporary solution is equally in harmony with the surroundings.

Policy BW DE1: High quality design

1. New development in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan area shall:
    a) Be based upon a design-led approach to development underpinned by good practice principles and reflecting a thorough site appraisal.
    b) Respond positively to guidance and principles established in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code, including but not limited to prevailing building heights, materials, development frontages, plot widths, boundary treatments and street enclosure. Proposals that depart from this will need fully justifying.
    c) Demonstrate how schemes respond to local character and, wherever possible, contribute towards improvements to character, as indicated in the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code.
    d) Include new green and public space as appropriate.
    e) Help create places that are easily navigable, where local landmarks and landscape features aid wayfinding.
    f) Incorporate a well connected and legible network of streets and other routes that aids safe walking and wheeling.
    g) Retain the quality and openness of the public realm and accessibility through the area by avoiding the creation of 'gated developments'.
    h) Clearly define public and private areas, creating development blocks with active street frontages that aid natural surveillance. Care should be taken to avoid creating 'back of house' views of development from public spaces, including streets, green spaces, the canal and river network.
    i) Sensitively incorporate waste and recycling storage with limited visual impact on the appearance of the street.
    j) Incorporate street planting where appropriate, prioritising the use of native species.
    k) Provide parking on-plot and set-back from the main building line to reduce the visual dominance of parking. Where provided on-street, parking bays shall be aligned with the footpath and interspersed with street trees and areas of planting.
    l) Take opportunities to improve access to green spaces, rivers and canals, including new routes alongside these where appropriate that have active development frontages.
    m) Through the design, scale, massing and siting of development, retain the sense of openness and separation between Moor Park and Rickmansworth, avoiding the coalescence of those places.

2. Innovative schemes that respond to and reinterpret local design cues, and which demonstrate an imaginative sense of place whilst respecting surrounding context, are welcome.
3. In so far as planning permission is required, proposals for electricity substations, telecoms equipment and other utility-related infrastructure shall respect the surrounding context and avoid visual intrusion and impact upon residential amenity.
4. All development proposals should be informed by the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code and make reference to principles established in Building for a Healthy Life.

Design review

7.12 The NPPF states (at paragraph 138) that Local Planning Authorities should have access to and make use of tools and processes to assess and improve the design quality of development, including making use of design review arrangements.

7.13 Design review is a way of assessing the design quality of new developments by an independent panel of experts to support high standards of design. Guidance on the Design Review process can be found via the Hertfordshire Design Review website. The requirement for design review shall be determined by Three Rivers District Council.

7.14 In Batchworth, it is envisaged that major applications for development, as well as smaller schemes in sensitive or important locations, such as within conservation areas or adjacent to rivers and canals, should be subject to design review. This might include residential, commercial and mixed-use development proposals, infrastructure, community facilities, public realm and open space proposals.

7.15 Design review should take place at the pre-application stage to inform the design process and again following submission of the application, helping to inform officer recommendations. The final proposals submitted should show how comments made during the design review have influenced the proposed development.

Project BW DE(a): Design Review

1. Emerging schemes for major development should be assessed through design review. Design review of smaller schemes is also encouraged, including those in sensitive or important locations.
2. It is envisaged that schemes will be referred to the Hertfordshire Design Review Service.
3. Encouragement is given to early engagement with the Design Review panel, allowing scope for input into emerging designs. The final schemes submitted to the District Council should include a report on the design review process and show how the scheme has responded to this. Design Review of live applications is also encouraged.

Gateways

7.16 There are a number of gateway or arrival points within the Neighbourhood Plan area and which help signify the start of or entry to a particular place. They welcome the visitor and create a sense of place, reflecting local character and identity.

7.17 However, more could be done to improve the quality of many of the gateways, signifying and celebrating the sense of arrival. Gateways, and potential opportunities for enhancement of these, include:

Rickmansworth Station

7.18 Although located a short distance north of the High Street, the arrival point at the station is unwelcoming, with station car parking and major highways infrastructure dominating the visitor experience. Pedestrian routes from the station are poorly signed and, between the station and High Street, require pedestrians to walk via a car park and through a pedestrian underpass. Improvements could be made through rationalisation of vehicle space outside the station, creating an enlarged pedestrian area allowing for orientation, with consistent use of signage and materials improving pedestrian links from the station to the High Street. This should include feature lighting and art work as appropriate to enhance the surroundings, particularly through the pedestrian underpass.

Riverside Drive and Rectory Road (The 'ring-road')

7.19 The ring-road creates a highways dominated barrier to the town centre, cutting it off from the river valley, parks and surrounding neighbourhoods, and discouraging movement by foot, or bicycle, between these. Opportunities exist to enhance the gateways to the town centre at the Ebury Roundabout and Batchworth Roundabout, to the west and south of the town centre respectively. Opportunities for enhancement to the gateways could include:

- Rationalisation of road space, slowing traffic and providing enhanced crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists, with the palette of materials used being consistent with that used in any town centre / High Street improvement works, creating unity.
- New planting and public art, helping to create a distinctive sense of place.
- Rationalisation of street clutter as part of a wayfinding strategy, minimising visual clutter and obstruction to pedestrians, whilst at the same time creating clear links for visitors.

Rickmansworth Park to Solomon's Hill

7.20 This comprises an important pedestrian link, providing a crossing over the busy A412 into the town centre. However, this is very much a 'back of house' area. It is illegible and uninviting, and feels unsafe. Combined, these impact on the attractiveness of walking as the default travel mode for short journeys. This route runs past the multi-storey car park and supermarket car park, via a 'caged-in' footpath towards the rear of residential and commercial buildings where waste and recycling storage areas are found.

7.21 Breaking the barrier caused by the A412 and providing further at-grade crossings for pedestrians may help provide an alternative route, but links through to the High Street are indirect. Public realm works, including lighting and art work may help enhance the quality of the existing route, its safety and attractiveness to users. Greening and other screening strategies could also be employed to hide bins and service areas from view.

7.22 Wider, transformational opportunities would come through development along the route, with the route being integrated within and overlooked by active frontages, creating a wider, more direct and convivial route and gateway into the centre.

Batchworth Lock

7.23 Batchworth Lock is an important point of arrival into the area via the canal or those using the towpath. The area retains the original canalside buildings, some of which have been repurposed for use by the Canal Centre. It is a place for learning, providing education activities for primary-age school children, and plays host to an annual festival (as part of the wider Rickmansworth festival).

7.24 The main walking routes to the Lock from Rickmansworth town centre are alongside the A404, with space for pedestrians limited and enclosed behind roadside barriers. Opportunities to rationalise road space, increasing that available for pedestrians, combined with wayfinding, would strengthen links.

Policy BW DE2: Gateways

1. Any development in gateway locations (as identified in paragraphs 7.18 – 7.24) is expected to enhance the sense of arrival through:
    a) Provision of public space that enables orientation and which supports social use and interaction as part of the network of public spaces in the area.
    b) Alignment and connectivity with existing routes, including new and or improved crossing points, for people walking, wheeling or using other non-motorised forms of travel.
    c) Improved wayfinding through provision of a legible development structure, signage, planting and public art.
    d) Integrating and enhancing existing features of value, both natural and built.

Project BW DE(b): Gateway improvement schemes

1. The Community Council will work with partner organisations, including land owners as appropriate, to explore opportunities to improve wayfinding and legibility across the Neighbourhood Plan area, and particularly within Rickmansworth, which strengthens the sense of arrival and sense of place.

8. Access and movement

Overview

8.1 This chapter is framed around the following objective:

***Objective 5**: To improve access and movement for all*

8.2 It presents policies, and projects, that build upon the following ideas and opportunities identified through the consultation and engagement activities undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *Make streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians, allowing short journeys currently made by car to be replaced by bike or on foot, rebalancing road provision and creating safe and attractive routes that allow movement by all ages and abilities for everyday trips. Streets and junctions to be reconfigured along best-practice Dutch-style principles (by which it is meant that routes are well connected, forming part of a cohesive network, are direct, safe, attractive, and comfortable.) to make walking and cycling attractive propositions.*
- *Plan for an improved public transport service, alongside other emerging technology, such as 'mobility as service' and micro-mobility hubs, promoting these as attractive alternatives to private car use and ownership.*
- *Preserve and enhance existing river and canal towpaths to ensure that they remain integral corridors of movement for Batchworth. This will include 'breaking the barrier' created by highways infrastructure around Rickmansworth for example, making these streets easy to cross and facilitating improved access to the waterfront.*

8.3 Ideas and policies in respect of improved access to green spaces and waterways are covered in Section 4.

Active and healthy travel

8.4 The Three Rivers Local Plan acknowledges that within the district there is a high dependency on the car. The Local Plan thus promotes the need for more sustainable modes of transport and to reduce the environmental impacts of travel. This is also noted in the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) which seeks to encourage a switch from the private car to sustainable transport (e.g.: walking, cycling and passenger transport) wherever possible. LTP4 establishes a transport hierarchy which prioritises opportunities to reduce the need to travel and plan for the needs of vulnerable road users (such as pedestrians and cyclists). This is aligned with national guidance: the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment strategy (July 2022), for example, points to the importance of and need for new infrastructure investment to support active travel.

8.5 The Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan Area covers a large area with distinct neighbourhoods. Although travel by car will continue, efforts are required that facilitate a movement to greener and healthier travel solutions, including walking and cycling. Within the distinct neighbourhoods, efforts should be made such that walking and cycling become attractive propositions for short, day-to-day trips. This is good for the environment, for health and social well-being (as shown, for example, through the Healthy Streets Initiative developed by Living Streets), and for the economy (as demonstrated, for example, in the Health Economic Assessment Toolkit developed by the World Health Organisation).

8.6 But there are also opportunities to support a move to walking and cycling over longer distances, linking neighbourhoods and communities together, and maximising the attractiveness of the areas green infrastructure. However, direct connections that support quick , safe and easy journeys by foot and by bike from A to B are also required. But the current movement network is vehicle dominated and many of the roads in the area do not support movement other than by car or other motorised vehicles.

8.7 Encouragement for walking and cycling needs to go hand in hand with changes to the way we currently plan for and use the car. Providing more road space and plentiful car parking simply encourages demand, creating additional traffic and supporting the growth of lower density development that is dependent on car movement.

8.8 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to create the conditions that encourage safe, attractive and efficient travel by alternative modes, and which provide people with the choice and opportunity to travel by foot or by bike: a choice that doesn't fully exist at the moment. Indeed, providing for good walking and cycling conditions, as well as improved public transport services, has been shown to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions from vehicles, bringing environmental benefits (as

shown in research prsented by CIVITAS and available online). This includes giving support to measures that reduce traffic speeds in Batchworth, particularly around schools, making these safer places for all. Encouragement is given to introduction of the 'Sustainable Travel Recognition and Accreditation for Schools (STARS)' scheme, which seeks to change the way that children travel to school, promoting a shift towards walking and cycling.

8.9 Within Batchworth, streets should be redesigned to recognise that they are places too, that they comprise the majority of public space in the town and should therefore be safe and attractive for all people of all ages and abilities to use, and should provide opportunities for people to meet, sit and enjoy being in. New or improved walking and cycling infrastructure should reflect best practice principles, including those published by the Department for Transport (July 2020, Cycle Infrastructure Design, LTN 1/20), thus becoming an attractive proposition for all to use.

8.10 Alongside provision of safe street conditions and junctions for walking and cycling is a need to increase the provision of cycle parking, particularly within town centre and local centres, railway and tube stations. Safe and secure parking facilities should be accommodated within the public realm, though designed such that provision responds positively to the character and quality of the built environment. Covered cycle parking is also encouraged, particularly within new commercial development, which should also provide shower and locker facilities for cyclists.

8.11 High quality walking and cycling routes should be integrated within new developments. But the quality and attractiveness of the network is only as good as the missing links or gaps in the routes. The Community Council thus proposes that CIL payments received from development are directed to an improved area wide network or walking, wheeling and other non-motorised travel routes for the benefit of existing and new residents. Key routes for improvement are those that make short, everyday journeys easy and enjoyable. This includes improving links to parks, the town centre, schools, healthcare and other community facilities. The County Council has prepared a joint Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Three Rivers District and Watford City Councils. This includes three priority routes that radiate out from Rickmansworth. These should be supported by improvements to localised routes that connect with these to form a coherent route network.

Policy BW AM1: Active and healthy travel

1. Proposals for major residential and commercial development are expected to include plans which make clear how they satisfy the following active travel criteria:
    a) Provide new walking, wheeling and other non-motorised travel routes that are direct, safe and convenient to use and designed for use by people of all ages and abilities.
    b) Demonstrate how such proposals will integrate satisfactorily into existing adjacent walking and wheeling networks, without reduction of capacity or safety of those routes.
    c) Provide development layouts with active frontages which allow for the natural surveillance of routes through overlooking.
    d) Reflect best practice principles for active travel design with the design of new cycle routes as appropriate to the site, incorporating the guidance set out in DfT Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 1/20, or successor guidance. The Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code, and principles established in Building for a Healthy Life, shall also be utilised by applicants to inform the design of safe, attractive and effective active travel infrastructure.
2. Proposals for residential development shall provide secure cycle storage assigned to the dwelling and located within or immediately adjacent to the property, fully enclosed and at ground-level. Proposals for flats should include communal areas for cycle storage.
3. Proposals for commercial, leisure and community uses should support and enable active travel through inclusion of safe, secure, dry and convenient cycle parking and changing facilities where appropriate.
4. New streets provided within areas of growth and development must be designed to balance the needs of competing users and avoid conflicts between motor vehicles, bus users, pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and other non-motorised forms of travel.

Project BW AM(a): Active travel network

1. The Community Council is keen to work with partner organisations, including the District and County Council, to prepare an area-wide strategy for the design and delivery of infrastructure that supports a safe, coherent and attractive walking and cycling network. This should incorporate, as far as possible, the ideas identified in Project BW GB(b): Access improvements and which supplement the routes identified in the LCWIP. Alongside this, the provision of wayfinding and intepretation boards would help with orientation and enhance accessibility across the area, including to the Aquadrome, canal network, town centre and residential areas.

E-vehicles, technology and new transport solutions

8.12 The emerging Three Rivers Local Plan encourages the delivery of infrastructure to support the use of low carbon transport, including a requirement for electric vehicles charging points to be provided as part of new development in accordance with an extensive set of standards provided.

8.13 Technological solutions associated with mobility are evolving at a rapid pace. With the District Council declaring a climate emergency in April 2019, it is important that new development embraces new ideas that provide wider choice and opportunity for people to access a range of greener transport options.

8.14 The House of Commons cross-party Science and Technology Select Committee reported that, if the UK is to meet climate change targets, then transport solutions are required (2019, Clean Growth: Technologies for meeting the UK's emissions reduction targets). It reports that 'in the long-term, widespread personal vehicle ownership does not appear to be compatible with significant decarbonisation'. Improvements in public transport, walking and cycling are supported. It is thus important that new development embraces new ideas that provide wider choice and opportunity for people to access a range of greener transport solutions.

8.15 It is recognised that people in Batchworth will continue to own cars, and that they will continue to be used for some journeys. The provision of new technology and mobility solutions is though intended to provide wider choice and opportunity for all, reducing reliance on private car ownership and use, contributing to an improved environment.

8.16 In Batchworth, support will be given to projects and proposals that embed new technologies, providing a wider range of choice and opportunity for all. Such technology should be designed such that it does not cause obstruction within the public realm (e.g.: e-vehicle charging points and cables placed on the footway which impede pedestrian movement).

8.17 Where mobility is provided as service, through car sharing and docking points for bikes and other forms of personal mobility solutions, such as e-scooters, these should be located within a convenient walk of the home and main destination (such as the town centre, railway station and places of work), encouraging their use. Where provided in the public realm, these should replace existing car parking provision, encouraging a modal shift away from use of the private car.

8.18 All new homes should be supplied with charging points as stipulated in Building Regulations.

Policy BW AM2: E-Vehicles, technology and micro-mobility

1. Proposals for communal e-vehicle charging points within the public realm for shared, personal and micro-mobility transport solutions are welcome.
2. Where proposed, such infrastructure should be located sensitively to ensure that there are no harmful impacts upon pedestrian circulation or the immediate appearance of the street scene and wider townscape. Infrastructure should be designed to minimise visual clutter, hindrance and hazard to pedestrians and other street users.
3. Wherever possible, public EV charging infrastructure, such as cabling, should be provided in such a way that it can be expanded in the future to provide additional charging points and be upgraded to incorporate faster charging technology.
4. Proposals for e-vehicle infrastructure and or mobility hubs will be supported in the following broad locations, subject to compliance with wider policies in the Development Plan:
    i. Within town and local centres.
    ii. Close to stations.
    iii. Within public car parks.
5. All new homes shall be fitted with e-vehicle charging points.

9. Projects and Next Steps

Community Infrastructure Levy

9.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge levied on development which is payable to the local authority and is intended to be spent on infrastructure projects across the Three Rivers District Council administrative area that help address the demands placed on it resulting from growth. This might include, for example, spending on new transport infrastructure, health and educational facilities, open spaces and sports facilities.

9.2 A portion of CIL is payable to Batchworth Community Council for spending on local projects in the Neighbourhood Plan area. When the Neighbourhood Plan is made the Community Council will receive 25% of all CIL monies paid to Three Rivers District Council in respect of qualifying development within the Neighbourhood Plan area. In regard to what this money can be spent on, the CIL Regulations (2019) (at para 59C) state:

"A local council must use CIL receipts passed to it… to suport the development of the local council's area, or any part of that area, by finding:

a. The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or

b. Anything else that is concerned with addressing he demands that development places on an area."

9.3 The Three Rivers District Council CIL Charging Schedule was approved in February 2015 and took effect on 1 April 2015. All applications for development that are above the necessary thresholds will be subject to this charging schedule, or any subsequent updates to it. Payment is linked to an instalments policy, related to the scale and commencement of development. Since December 2020, CIL Charging Authorities are required to publish Annual Infrastructure Funding Statements which will set out the infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure which the Council intends to wholly or partly fund by CIL.

9.4 Through consultation and work on the Neighbourhood Plan a series of projects have been identified which the Community Council is keen to direct the neighbourhood portion of CIL towards. These are referred to through the Neighbourhood Plan. These projects will be kept under review by the Community Council.

9.5 Alongside CIL, the District Council will continue to negotiate Section 106 agreements with applicants which can provide funds or works to make development more acceptable in planning terms. The Community Council will liaise with the District Council as to the most appropriate form of Section 106 agreement relating to applications within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Hertfordshire County Council has also published guidance on infrastructure contributions (July 2021) which outlines the scope and range of infrastructure towards which the County may seek contributions from developers and landowners in order to make development acceptable in planning terms.

Projects

9.6 Projects identified through work on the Neighbourhood Plan are embedded in the main body of the Plan, forming a key part of the narrative and expression of the community's manifesto for the area. For comprehensiveness, and ease of reference, they are collated and summarised here:

Project Title	Project Summary
BW GB(a): Street Greening	To make better use of underused green spaces and roadside verges to increase biodiversity value, provide new wildlife habits and opportunities for local food production.
BW GB(b): Access improvements	To improve connections, by foot, cycle and other non-motorised modes, to the network of green and blue infrastructure across the Plan area.
BW GB(c): Bury Gardens	To promote the restoration of Bury Gardens as a key green space in Rickmansworth.
BW CC(a): Community-led energy schemes	To expore the potential for micro-scale, community led renewable energy schemes in the Plan area.
BW CC(b): Raingardens	To explore oportunities for integrating raingardens within street space to manage surface water run off.
BW CC(c): Reinstating front gardens	To support and encourage homeowners to reintroduce natural surfaces into front gardens where they have previously been paved over for parking.
BW CO(a): Place-branding	To suport initiatives that help market the distinctive qualities of Rickmansworth town centre to attract inward investment.

BW CO(b): Article 4 Direction	To work with the District Council to explore the potential for introducing an Article 4 direction in the town centre, to minimise loss of employemnt floorpsace.
BW CO(c): Library and civic-area	To take a proactive approach to shaping the future of this area such that it reflects community aspirations.
BW CO(d): Town centre public realm improvements	To continute to develop and explore ideas that improve the quality fo the public realm within the town centre.
BW DE(a): Design Review	To encourage independent design review of proposals for development to improve the design quality of new development.
BW DE(b): Gateway improvement schemes	To work with partners to improve wayfinding, the experience of arrival and sense of place.
BW AM(a): Active travel network	To support the creation of a well connected and coherent network of safe routes for walking, cycling and other non-motorised means of travel.

Reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan

9.7 Notwithstanding the defined period of the Neighbourhood Plan to 2038, it is recognised that, with further changes to and review of the Local Plan likely, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed periodically. This will enable the Neighbourhood Plan to remain 'current' and in conformity with the Three Rivers Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework, including the most recently published one in December 2024, as well as any further changes and directions resulting from the wider challenges of climate change.

PART D: Supporting information

Appendix 1: Design Guidance

The Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code is presented as a free-standing appendix to the Neighbourhood Plan and must be referred to by all applicants for new development in Batchworth.

Design Codes are presented for a series of identified character areas to which all applicants for development are expected to refer.

The Rickmansworth Town Centre Concept Plan further develops the Batchworth Neighbourhood Design Code, illustrating high level ideas and potential strategies for change in the town centre. Applicants for development in the town centre are expected to refer to the Concept Plan.

Appendix 2: Colne Valley Regional Park

This appendix includes an extract of mapping from the 'North Colne' area presented in the Colne Valley Regional Park Green Infrastructure Study as referenced in Policy BW GB2. Potential opportunities identified on the map of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan area are summarised below:

- NC001 / NC101: Improve walking and cycle connections between Rickmansworth Station and the Regional Park.
- NC002: Maintain and enhance the natural environment of Rickmansworth Aquadrome, and support improved wayfinding as a key visitor destination.
- NC102: Improve access to Stocker's Lake, celebrating the landscape, character and heritage, whilst also protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- NC104: Improve walking and cycle access to the Regional Park from surrounding areas, including Money Hill.
- NC106: Improve the quality of the Grand Union Canal towpath, and minimsing conflicts between users along this. Providing wayfinding and improved visual connections at key points.
- NC201: Maintain and enhance nature reserves and important biodiversity sites for wetland.
- NC206: Support woodland management and creation, and improved opportunities for recreational access to woodland where appropriate.

Further information is available via the website of the Regional Park.

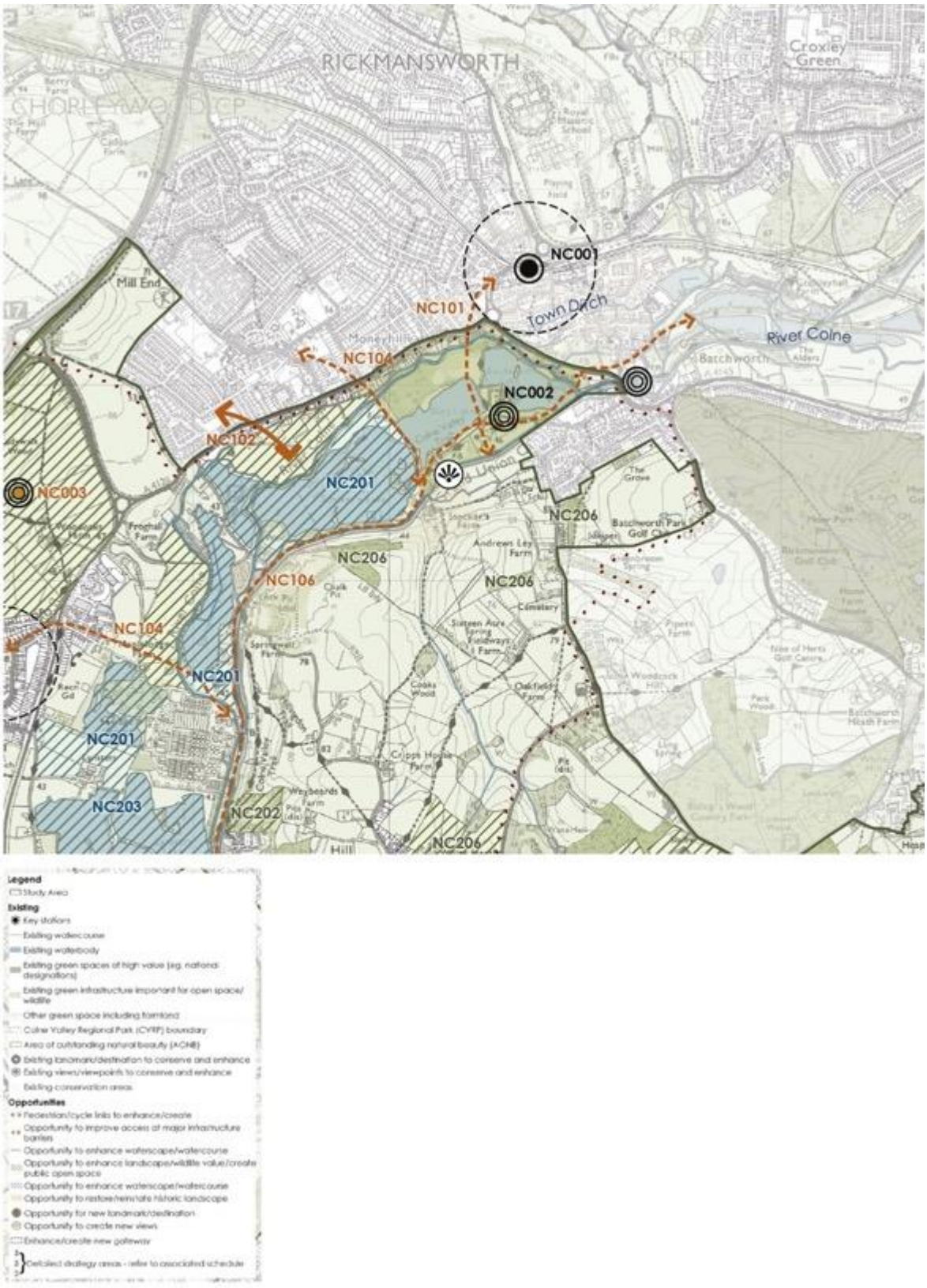

Figure 22: Extract from North Colne Area strategy, Colne Valley Green Infrastructure study (source: Colne Valley Regional Park)

Appendix 3: Local Green Space Designations

This appendix includes mapping of all Local Green Space designations as listed In Policy BW GB4.

Figure 23: Rickmansworth Park

Figure 24: Bowls Club and Northway Gardens

Figure 25: Bury Gardens

Figure 26: Scotsbridge Playing Fields and Sports Club

Figure 27: Fortune Common

Figure 28: Riverside Drive

Figure 29: Ebury Road Allotments

Figure 30: Eastbury Recreation Ground

Figure 31: Grove Green

Figure 32: Greenbroom Spring and The Grove Woods

Figure 33: Batchworth Allotments

Appendix 4: Waste and Minerals

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for the Plan area. In addition to the suite of documents adopted by Three Rivers District Council, the Development Plan for the area also includes the adopted Minerals Local Plan 2002-2016 and the adopted Waste Planning Documents (Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2011-2026 and the Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011-2026).

Minerals

The Neighbourhood Plan Area falls entirely within the 'Sand and Gravel Belt' (SAGB) as identified in Hertfordshire County Council's Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016. The 'Sand and Gravel Belt' is a geological area that spans across the southern part of the county and contains the most concentrated deposits of sand and gravel throughout Hertfordshire.

HCC, as the Minerals Planning Authority, identifies the entirety of the Sand and Gravel Belt as a Mineral Safeguarding Area. Where planning applications for non-minerals development are submitted to the District and Borough Councils they may not be determined until the County Council has been given the opportunity to comment on whether the proposals would unacceptably sterilise mineral resources.

Waste

The Neighbourhood Plan Area contains two safeguarded waste management facilities: The Batchworth Council Depot and the Rickmansworth Recycling Centre. Operational waste facilities are safeguarded under Waste Policy 5 of the Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document due to their important contribution to the strategic network of waste management provision in the county.

Consideration should be given to the 'Agent of Change' principle (NPPF, paragraph 193) which states that planning decisions on new developments should ensure integration with existing business such that they do not have unreasonable restrictions placed upon them.

Glossary of Terms

Adoption – The final confirmation of a development plan by a local planning authority.

Affordable Housing - Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers). A full definition is available in the NPPF.

Brownfield Site – See Previously Developed Land.

Conservation Area - an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is preserved by local planning policies and guidance.

Development Plan - Includes the adopted Three Rivers Local Plan and any future adopted Local Plan which may replace it, and Neighbourhood Development Plans which are used to determine planning applications.

Evidence Base - The background information that any Development Plan Document is based on and is made up of studies on specific issues, such as housing need for example.

Greenfield Site - Land where there has been no previous development, often in agricultural use

Green Infrastructure – A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Includes those parts of an area which are occupied by natural open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments and the like.

Housing Associations / Registered Social Landlords / Registered Providers – Not-for-profit organisations providing homes mainly to those in housing need

Independent Examination - An assessment of a proposed Neighbourhood Plan carried out by an independent person to consider whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan conforms with the relevant legal requirements.

Infrastructure – Basic services necessary for development to take place, for example, roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

Infill Development – small scale development filling a gap within an otherwise built up frontage.

Listed Building – building of special architectural or historic interest.

Local Planning Authority - Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, county council, a unitary authority or national park authority. For Batchworth this is Three Rivers District Council.

Made – Terminology used in neighbourhood planning to indicate a Plan has been adopted.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – Since 2018, this has been the Government department with responsibility for planning, housing, urban regeneration and local government. Was known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) from September 2021 to July 2024. Previously known as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Neighbourhood Development Plan – A local plan prepared by a Town or Parish Council (or Forum) for a particular Neighbourhood Area, which includes land use topics**.**

Passivhaus Standard - Passivhaus is the world's leading fabric first approach to low energy buildings. The core focus of the Passivhaus standard is to dramatically reduce the requirements for space heating and cooling, whilst also creating excellent indoor air quality and comfort levels.

Permitted Development – comprises certain categories of minor development as specified in the General Permitted Development Order, which can be carried out without having first to obtain specific planning permission.

Planning Permission - Formal approval granted by a council (e.g. Three Rivers District Council) in allowing a proposed development to proceed**.**

Previously Developed Land - Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Public Open Space - Open space to which the public has free access.

Public Realm - Those parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) available, for everyone to use. This includes streets, squares and parks.

Section 106 Agreement – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal.

Soundness – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified (founded on robust and credible evidence and be the most appropriate strategy), whether the plan is effective (deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored), and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy.

Stakeholder – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and national organisations and government departments

Sustainable Development – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) – Sustainable drainage systems slow the rate of surface water run-off and improve infiltration, by mimicking natural drainage in both rural and urban areas. This reduces the risk of "flash-flooding" which can occur when rainwater rapidly flows into the public sewerage and drainage systems, overwhelming the capacity of those systems and their ability to cope with the increased flow of water.

Urban Design – The art of making places. It involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, to create successful development.

Use Classes Order – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) regulations 2020 puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'. These regulations came into force on 1st September 2020 and effectively nullify the former use class definitions used within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

It is generally the case that you will need planning permission to change from one use class to another, although there are exceptions where the legislation does allow some changes between uses. It should be noted that the recent regulation changes led to former Use Class A (shops, financial and professional services and food and drink establishments) becoming part of the new Use Class E.

B2 use class: Refers to general industry.

B8 use class: Refers to storage and distribution.

C1, 2, 2A, 3, 4 use class: Refers to hotels and residential institutions, secure residential institutions, dwellings, and House in Multiple Occupations (HMOs)

E use class: Refers to shops, restaurants, financial and professional services, indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms), health or medical services, creche, nursery or day centre principally to visiting members of the public, an office, research and development, or any industrial process that can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to amenity. The breakdown of uses in Class E is:

E(a): Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food.

E(b): Sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on premises.

E(c): Provision of (i) Financial services, (ii) Professional services (other than health or medical services), or (iii) other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality.

E(d): Indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms or use as a swimming pool or skating rink).

E(e): Provision of medical or health services (except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner).

E(f): Creche, day nursery or day centre (not including a residential use).

E(g): Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity, including (i) offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions, (ii) research and development of products or processes, (iii) industrial processes.

F1: Learning and non-residential institutions, including (a) provision of education, (b) Display of works of art (otherwise than for sale or hire), (c) Museums, (d) Public libraries or public reading rooms, (e) Public halls or exhibition halls, (f) Public worship or religious instruction (or in connection with such use), or (g) Law courts.

F2: Local community uses, including (a) Shops (mostly) selling essential goods, including food, where the shop's premises do not exceed 280 square metres and there is no other such facility within 1000 metres, (b) Halls or meeting places for the principal use of the local community, (c) Areas or places for outdoor sport or recreation (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms), or (d) Indoor or outdoor swimming pools or skating rinks.

Sui Generis: 'Sui generis' is a Latin term that, in this context, means 'in a class of its own'. Certain uses are specifically defined and excluded from classification by legislation, and therefore become 'sui generis'. Public houses, wine bars, or drinking establishments (previously Use Class A4) are classified as Sui Generis.

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Batchworth Community Council

Neighbourhood Plan for Batchworth, 2023-2038

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Batchworth Community Council
Basing House
Rickmansworth
WD3 1HP

www.batchworth-ecc.gov.uk
www.batchworthplan.org.uk/