

Batchworth: Neighbourhood Plan



Consultation Statement

Volume 2 (of 4): Initial consultation events

November 2023

Batchworth Community Council



BATCHWORTH

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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**Policy and Project Ideas Paper
April 2021**

Batchworth Community Council



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Common acronyms and abbreviations:

BREAAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (a method for assessing, rating and certifying the sustainability of buildings)
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
EV	Electric Vehicle
HCC	Hertfordshire County Council
LGS	Local Green Space (used when referring to green spaces to be designated for protection because of the value of that space to the community)
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
MPE	Moor Park and Eastbury
MUGA	Multi-use Games Area
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NP	Neighbourhood Plan (the same as a NDP)
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
SCI	Site of Community Importance (not to be confused with 'Statement of Community Involvement' also used as a term by the Local Authority)
SUDs	Sustainable Urban Drainage systems
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
TRDC	Three Rivers District Council

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1. Introduction

This paper presents a summary of the ideas raised during the ‘Focus Group Workshop’ sessions held across the Neighbourhood Plan area in late 2020 and early 2021. Eight sessions were held in all, split equally between the north of the Neighbourhood Plan area (Rickmansworth and Money Hill) and the south (Moor Park and Eastbury). A further session was then held with businesses in the Moor Park retail area in March 2021.

The workshops were structured around findings from the ‘Commonplace’ consultation exercise. Headline findings are outlined in Section 2. Alongside the Commonplace exercise a series of leaflets were distributed by the Community Council to raise awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan, suggest ideas and encourage participation. Copies of the leaflets are presented in the appendix to this paper.

Focus group discussions were based upon themes emerging from the Commonplace exercise and framed around four main topics, comprising (1) open spaces, (2) civic and employment, (3) design and heritage, and (4) infrastructure. The summary of the Focus Group Workshops is presented in section 3 of this paper and is structured around the four main topics. It identifies potential policy areas as well as wider projects under each to be developed, investigated and tested further as the Plan progresses. For clarity, **policy ideas are highlighted in purple** in the text, and wider **projects and aspirations in green**.

For avoidance of doubt:

- Within a Neighbourhood Plan, policies must be related to ‘land-use’ and development matters, and can be created for any proposals or form of development requiring planning permission. Developments and interventions that do not require planning permission are not covered by policies, but can be addressed through wider projects and aspirations (see below).
- Neighbourhood Plans can cover more than just traditional planning matters as they present the community’s vision for the area. Items that the community are seeking, but that cannot be delivered through planning policy, can be identified and included in the Plan. They should be embedded in the main body of the Plan, though highlighted as such for purposes of clarity, as they relate to the vision and objectives for the area and form a clear and important part of the story. Projects might cover, for example, improved public transport services. They are ideas that will need developing and exploring further with other organisations and delivery partners.

It is also important to note that the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to effect positive change at the local level. There will already be planning policies in place at the national level and in the Local Plan prepared by Three Rivers District Council that address some matters of concern, in relation to the Green Belt and general approaches to flooding for example. These do not need repeating in the Neighbourhood Plan as, together, national policy, the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan, once made, will all be used to inform and determine planning applications and proposals for future change in Batchworth.

2. Commonplace Findings

Commonplace is an online consultation platform which is based around a map of an area onto which people can leave comments about specific issues or places. Comments left on the map (Figure 1) have been distilled into key topics summarised below. It should be noted that some comments were made on areas outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, the Neighbourhood Plan can only address matters within its boundary.

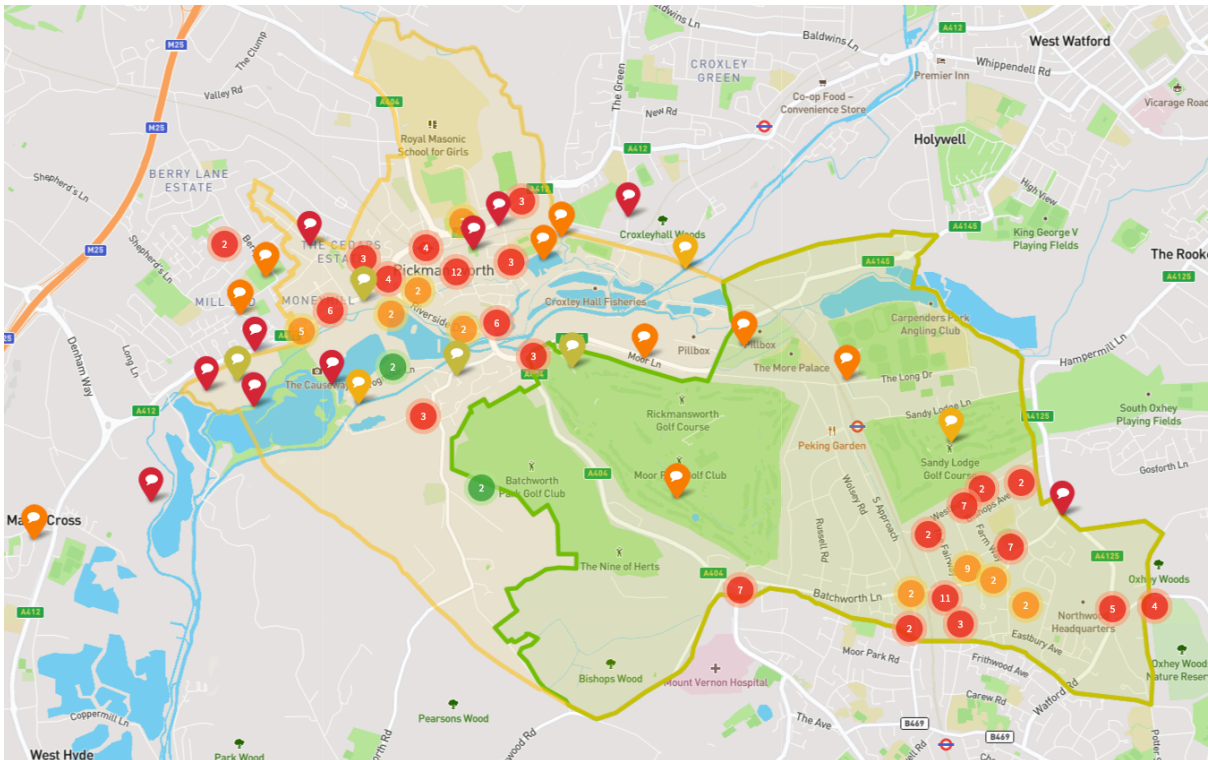


Figure 1: Extract from Commonplace exercise, showing distribution of comments received

Natural Environment and Biodiversity

Protection of the natural environment and biodiversity was one of the most commented upon issues. The maintenance and retention of existing green spaces was widely supported, with respondents identifying particular spaces in need of additional protection. While some spaces were highlighted because of the recreational benefits they afford e.g. Eastbury Recreation Ground, Rickmansworth Park and Riverside Drive, other spaces were identified because of their rich biodiversity e.g. green space “south of houses on Ebury Road”, green space “to the north of the allotments”, green space “at the bottom of Scotts Hill” and Greenbroom Spring woodland. Accessibility to these spaces was repeatedly highlighted as important and in need of improvement.

Recreation and Leisure

Two potential opportunities were raised by respondents: First, the opportunity to implement wild swimming at Bury Lake (in line with those organised at the Serpentine); and second, the

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need for an all-weather jogging track, upgraded play area and MUGA at Eastbury Recreation Ground.

Community Facilities

Respondents expressed a desire to preserve and enhance existing community assets across the neighbourhood area. This included the “café in the Park”, the Prince of Wales pub and the Bowling Club. Others raised the need for a community hall/centre to host meetings, classes, events etc.

Employment and Retail

Key retail areas, namely Rickmansworth Town Centre and Money Hill, were identified by respondents as in need of revitalisation, as was the Tolpits Business Park. Calls for the High Street to be pedestrianised were made, while both areas would seemingly benefit economically from schemes that improve the public realm, creating a more vibrant space that attracts both visitors and residents.

Heritage and Design

Several comments addressed concern about future development and the impact this will have on the character of the neighbourhood area – *“years of bad planning decisions are spoiling our local environment and with the new government planning rules this will get worse”*. Respondents identified the need to retain the area’s local character and heritage, putting in place protections for assets such as the Cedars Estate and 59/61 Harefield Road, whilst also stipulating design principles in respect of appropriate building heights and retaining front gardens.

Housing

Comments about housing focused on specific sites that should be used for development as they are currently under-utilised, including, for example, the old police station. One respondent opposed the development of flats, arguing that *“houses attract families that can afford to buy houses here, which creates a good sense of community”*.

Traffic Management

A large number of comments focused on issues surrounding traffic and congestion, with residents reporting feelings of being unsafe because of speeding cars and limited pedestrian infrastructure. Many respondents raised specific junctions or streets which were causing problems, including Rectory Road crossing, Batchworth Lane and Westbury Road. Several commentators raised aspirations for a 20mph speed limit across the neighbourhood area. Poor air quality was also identified as a knock-on impact of congestion that negatively effects well-being and quality of life.

Parking repeatedly came up as an issue, particularly in the context of non-residents taking up spaces on residential streets, as well as the danger created by parked cars at the Ebury Road

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approach. Several commentators raised the need for more stringent parking restrictions, at specific sites and more generally to combat these issues.

Cycle/Pedestrian Network

Related to concerns around traffic and speeding were aspirations for an improved pedestrian and cycle network across the area. Frustrations ranged from feeling unsafe due to inadequate street lighting at night, a lack of signage making it difficult to navigate, poor condition of surfaces and pavements not being wide enough. Commentors made reference to specific routes that were in need of enhancement, such as “the alleyway that leads to Ebury Way”, “cycling to Money Hill” and Tolpits Lane to Withey Beds. New routes identified included “to Croxley Green”, “a reverse direction cycle lane on Berry Lane” and across the Golf Course. A number of respondents raised the limited number of dog waste bins along certain routes as an issue.

Flooding

Many comments focused on the issue of flooding across the neighbourhood area, with concerns that it wasn't properly being addressed highlighted. The junction of Harefield Road was raised by several commentators as a particular site of concern, with most identifying the increasing surface water run-off from paved-over driveways as the main culprit for the area's issues.

3. Focus Group Workshops

Based on feedback received through Commonplace four main themes were identified and formed the basis of a series of focus group discussions, relating to (1) open space, (2) civic and employment, (3) design and heritage, and (4) infrastructure. Key messages from these are summarised in subsequent sections, along with emerging ideas for policies and projects within the Neighbourhood Plan.

(i) Open Space

Policy Ideas: Local Green Space Designations and green infrastructure

A number of sites were identified by the groups as important green spaces they would like to protect through application of the **Local Green Space designation**.

- In *Rickmansworth*, this included Rickmansworth Park, the Aquadrome, The Bury Gardens, The Bowls Club and Northway Garden, Scotsbridge Playing Fields, Fortune Common, Greenbroom Spring Woodland, Riverside Drive corridor and Elms Lake, Ebury Way and River Chess.
 - The allotments in Rickmansworth were identified as a potential Site of Community Importance (SCI)¹, Neighbourhood Plans cannot designate SCIs, but we suggest that the allotments could also be included as a Local Green Space designation and be afforded greater protection in doing so.
 - Bury Gardens in Rickmansworth was highlighted as an important green space in need of revitalisation, possibly as a cultural area or art park. Similarly, Riverside Drive, also in Rickmansworth, was identified as an area in need of a strategy for its enhancement and management, including new cycle lanes, play space, habitat protection, a community orchard and the rewilding of parts.
- In *Moor Park and Eastbury* (MPE), Eastbury Recreation Ground, the Withey Beds and “Batchworth Lane adjacent to Grove Farm Park” were identified as possible Local Green Space Designations. Eastbury Recreation Ground in particular was the subject of further discussion; with the proposed addition of adult gym equipment already planned for 2021, there was a strong desire to protect the remaining grassy space. The further addition of a MUGA and an all-weather exercise/jogging track around the ground was also raised. Also raised with regard to MPE were the open spaces (as well as lakes and waterways) on the land of Merchant Taylors’ School.

¹ Sites of Community Importance are established throughout the European Union under the EU Habitats Directive. They are sites considered to contribute towards the conservation of European species and habitats of particular importance.

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Analysis will need to be undertaken to establish their suitability for designation, using the criteria outlined in the NPPF. This may indicate whether the sites are appropriate for designation or not: it is important to note, for example, that some of the spaces suggested are quite large (e.g. The Aquadrome) and thus might not meet the criteria. Some sites will also benefit from various designations and protection already, and thus the designation as LGS may not be needed.

It was proposed that in addition to protecting existing green spaces, new development should incorporate **new public access open/play space** where possible, taking the pressure off of “central sites”. A policy supporting development proposals that provide such spaces could potentially be drafted, linking to open space standards required by Three Rivers but expanding this to address matters such as design, access and function.

Related to this is the idea of **identifying and retaining existing green corridors**. A policy that supports development proposals which retain and improve the connectivity of green infrastructure could be included. This might include recommendations about natural features such as tree lines and hedgerows that contribute to the network.

Policy Ideas: Setting, access and trees

In addition to the use of the Local Green Space Designation, other suggestions were made that could potentially be woven into policies, including:

- Particular concerns about the impact of **building height** on the setting of green spaces in *Rickmansworth* were raised. A policy supporting the regulation of building height around green spaces could be drafted. At the same time, it is recognised that some ‘taller’ buildings might be appropriate in particular locations. Again, this can be informed through policy.
- During the *MPE* Design and Heritage focus group session, the group expressed desire to **protect existing trees** (including those with TPOs). A policy that seeks to retain trees of value could be drafted, developing the Tree Resilience Strategy currently being prepared by Three Rivers District Council.
- Concern about the condition of existing walking and cycling routes was raised in focus groups for both areas, as were aspirations for new routes. A policy that supports **active travel** through the delivery of **new walking and cycling routes**, and/or improvements and maintenance of existing routes, would address these concerns and aspirations. For this to be a policy however it will need to be directly linked to a land-use / development matter. Otherwise, improvements or new routes can be identified as projects (see below). It might be more appropriate to link a policy or projects around active travel to the infrastructure topic area, so applying to the entire Neighbourhood Plan area, rather than just open spaces.

Policy Ideas: Biodiversity net-gain

Support for enhancing biodiversity across the neighbourhood area was evident. A policy stipulating that all development should result in **net environmental and biodiversity gains** could be included to support this aspiration. Incorporated into this policy might be the

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requirement for **biodiversity management plans** to be established as part of the application process; this would require any proposal removing environmental features to clearly demonstrate how the biodiversity benefits clearly outweighs the negative impacts. Ideas that seek to **'reconnect' wildlife corridors** along the river front would be supported, particularly around Batchworth Lock and the crossing of the River Colne by the A404 where green spaces and wildlife corridors become fragmented. Proposals for new development could be encouraged to introduce green spaces that act as 'stepping stones' for wildlife and help reconnect the corridor.

Project Ideas: Accessibility

As outline above, **new and improved cycling and walking routes**, if not related to a specific development, could come forward as part of a project to improve access to open spaces around the neighbourhood area. This project could identify specific routes that would contribute towards this aspiration:

- In both focus groups, access to and through the public golf course was identified as currently insufficient. A formalised walking "trail" around greenspaces/woodland areas was a popular idea that could also become a tourism asset that allows people to explore the area's local biodiversity. This would likely need to be couched in terms of feasibility / discussion with golf course owners to explore the suitability of such routes. A similar trail/cycle route through Moor Park would give access to the area's heritage assets.
- Other specific cycle routes that were identified included "to the Aquadrome", "to and through Rickmansworth Park" and "along Riverside Drive". In MPE, the retention of the county boundary cycleway was flagged as important. It is currently blocked at several locations by trees, making it unusable, and requires maintenance.
- Similarly, the *Rickmansworth* group raised the poor quality of the canal towpath. A project might be to restore and enhance the existing tow path, while also identifying ways to **improve access to the waterways** in the neighbourhood area.
- Linked to the above, there was agreement in the *Rickmansworth* session that there is a current lack of signage on footpaths, detailing how to access particular places and the existing routes. A **project to improve wayfinding for active travel** would be an effective way to improve access throughout the neighbourhood area. Improved wayfinding was also discussed in the *MPE* group sessions.

Project ideas: Tree planting, training, community initiatives and nature conservation

Tree planting, both in the Town Centre and at the back of Westbury Road (at its boundary with the Golf Club to replace those that were previously removed), was widely supported [during both the *MPE* and *Rickmansworth Design and Heritage focus group*]. A project could be included within the NP to support this aspiration. This could be specific, supporting tree planting at some of the aforementioned sites, or more generally across the neighbourhood area.

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In the *MPE* session, there was support for facilitating greater involvement amongst the public with caring for and enhancing green spaces. Again, specific projects were raised the community could get involved in, including the placement of raised beds for local residents, in particular school children and people who are disabled, to plant and grow plants/vegetables, an Easter Bunny Hunt Trail in the woodland areas and creation of a peace garden for the elderly.

One comment suggested that existing open spaces should be “improved” by **rewilding green spaces** to enhance biodiversity. This might include minimising short-cut grass, adding nature trails, incorporating native species and growing wildflower meadows. Education boards and signposts should be used to inform residents about what wildlife to “look out for”. Disabled access to such spaces should be mandatory.

Road traffic was highlighted as a major risk for wildlife. One participant highlighted the need for “rope bridges” to allow squirrels to safely cross busy roads via the tree network. This could be part of a larger **nature conservation project** which identifies and protects key wildlife corridors and routes through the neighbourhood area.

(ii) Civic and Employment

Policy Ideas: Flexible Office Space

The focus groups (*both MPE and Rickmansworth*) recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to changes in the way people live and work, and that ultimately, some of these changes might be permanent. One aspect raised was the need for **flexible office spaces** for local residents who no longer feel the need to rent out entire office space but want somewhere outside the home to work, but without having to commute far to do so. Encouragement can be given to proposals for such spaces through the neighbourhood plan, with further thought needed as to where they will be most appropriate, though central locations would be favoured, with the foot traffic associated with these having spin-off benefits for other nearby businesses.

Policy Ideas: Tolpits

Tolpits Lane is a key area of commercial activity. It was suggested that encouragement could be given to a diversified employment offer and that access to the waterside should be opened up to make it a more attractive place to work.

Policy Ideas: Social and community facilities

Comments were made in both areas as to the need to retain and improve certain facilities:

- In *Moor Park and Eastbury*, this included ‘Eastbury Recreation Ground’, in which the ‘Play Area’ is in need of new equipment.
- in *Rickmansworth*, the Bowls Club and local play areas were identified as important facilities.

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These points could be included in a policy **protecting (and enhancing) community, leisure and social facilities** within the neighbourhood area.

- A full list of valued and important facilities across the neighbourhood area will help focus the policy and could be established through the next consultation. These could be designated as **Assets of Community Value**. Once listed as Assets of Community Value with the local authority, the local community will be informed if they are listed for sale within the five year listing period. The community can then enact the Community Right to Bid, which gives them a moratorium period of six months to determine if they can raise the finance to purchase the asset.
- This policy might also include support for the development of **new community and social facilities**; a number of ideas emerged from discussions including the need for a **community hall/centre**. Possible locations identified in the *Rickmansworth* [Open Spaces] focus group included the school grounds, the existing library, police station and Watersmeet in Rickmansworth Town Centre, and on Rickmansworth Golf Course; the deliverability of these sites would need to be considered. The need for a community space is considered to be particularly pressing in *MPE* where there is no such facility: converting one of the tennis courts at the Eastbury Recreation Ground into a **multi-use sports facility** was raised as a specific aspiration.

Policy Ideas: Town centre

Ideas for Rickmansworth centre and the Moneyhill parade were discussed. There was general consensus that both these areas were in need of **revitalisation**, with there being an opportunity to create a new civic heart for the area in Rickmansworth.

This could potentially be achieved through a concept masterplan and preparation of **design principles** that development in the area should respond to, covering the public realm, parking standards, acceptable use classes, green infrastructure, street furniture, pedestrianisation of the high street and more.

A **concept masterplan** could be used to illustrate these principles and provide further guidance for developers. Consultation with TRDC, local business owners and residents would help establish a vision for these areas. A number of specific ideas were raised in conjunction with the aspirations for these areas including:

- Flexible office space/hub
- Build over the car park in Talbot Place to provide residential dwellings
- Improve the quality of street furniture
- Shop front design guidance
- Introduction of greenery into the town centre
- Need for a community centre (in Rickmansworth)
- Promotion of tech companies, start-ups, small businesses, business hub
- Pedestrianisation of Rickmansworth High Street during specific hours
- A roof over Solomon's Hill
- Retain alleyways as "escape routes" from the high street
- Building over the car park behind the high street
- Make better use of the spaces behind the high street (not just dustbins)

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- Improve facilities/infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists
- Resurface the high street
- Creation of a town square between Watersmeet and the library, providing flexible space for a market/events

Part of the Rickmansworth Town Centre revitalisation discussion focused on the **identification of potential development sites**. The group identified industrial/brownfield sites that might be appropriate including, the existing police station, Bowers Yard and the area behind St Mary's Church. These are good opportunities for intensification; however, rather than identify specific sites in the NDP, it is suggested that establishing area based policies and principles, illustrated through a concept masterplan, would help deliver policy objectives without needing to investigate and assess specific sites, whilst also providing an appropriate balance between certainty and flexibility for developers / applicants.

The role and future of the **Moor Park Retail Parade** was also discussed during a separate focus group discussion. Initiatives that help support a wider range of activities for community needs, including improvements to the quality of the public realm, would be welcome, though acknowledging that opportunities to increase footfall to the centre through improved walking and cycling connections should be a focus rather than drawing in car-based visitors from further afield. An illustrative concept plan indicating how public space might be rationalised and reconnected with surrounding areas could be prepared, which would form a project to be developed further but to which proposals for any development should be encouraged to help facilitate.

Project Ideas: Business Improvement Districts

In tandem with the revitalisation of the town centre/Money Hill, it was suggested that creating Business / Community Improvement Districts, would help drive improvements, bringing landowners and business owners on board whilst also providing additional funds for town centre-related projects.

Other Project Ideas

The following ideas were also suggested during the workshop sessions:

- Car parking and congestion around schools in *MPE* was raised as an ongoing issue. A project introducing **parking management and regulations** around pinch points would be an effective way to deal with these issues. This might also include a **cycle to school plan** to encourage/teach students and parents to safely cycle.
- A project to identify **"Gateways"** to the town, such as at Batchworth Lock and Rickmansworth Station. These gateways should be vibrant and welcoming spaces that entice visitors to stay. Design principles for these gateways could be devised and might include: Promoting mixed-uses, a high quality public realm, highlighting heritage assets e.g. William Penn/Museum by Batchworth Lock and improving connectivity to other parts of the neighbourhood area. These gateways would be an important part of turning through traffic into investment in Rickmansworth.

(iii) Design and Heritage

Policy Ideas: General policies and principles

A number of design-related issues emerged from discussions in both focus groups, including concerns around building height and parking (which emerged in multiple focus group discussions). Design guidance could be created around the following which could be embedded into policies in the Plan:

- A **general design policy** encouraging development proposals to respect the existing character and setting of the immediate area is a good place to start in this respect.
- A set of **design principles or codes** could be prepared as part of this drawing out existing characteristics (typologies, architecture style, streetscape, materials) that new proposals should respond to.

One participant raised the idea of a place making strategy focused on re-branding the area as the “Green and Blue town”. The design principles prepared could be framed around this vision, focused on how to accentuate the area’s natural green and blue assets. For example the following principles might be included:

- Incorporate green walls and roofs
- Encourage native planting and SUDs
- Use water as a design feature
- Enhance visual connections to waterways
- Promote heritage waterways materials such as brick, cast iron, brick arches, terracotta tiles (Batchworth Lock, the Almshouses)
- Promote design that celebrates heritage industry such as milling and brewing and embraces new micro industries
- Showcase renewable energy technologies and natural materials.

Policy Ideas: Heritage assets

It was suggested that historic feature and assets should be protected. This could be achieved by **preparing a Local List** which can be laid out in the NDP, adding to those buildings and assets already benefitting from statutory listing.

- It is noted that lists of locally important buildings already exist for Rickmansworth, Moor Park and Eastbury. These can be referenced in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Should the group wish to include additional buildings on the list that will need to be undertaken in accordance with criteria for inclusion established by Three Rivers DC.

Policy Ideas: Car parking

Major concerns were raised in *MPE* about the conversion of front garages into additional bedrooms/living space and the impact this has in terms of removing off-road parking, which

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then spills out onto the road, and which can exacerbate localised flooding problems. Principles around parking standards could be included within the **general design policy or a separate policy on front gardens and parking provision**.

Due to permitted development rights, there are limitations here in terms of what the Neighbourhood Plan can influence; but for development that goes beyond permitted development, stipulations that resist the displacement of off-road parking on to the street, requiring permeable surfaces to be used in areas with hard standing or demonstrating there is no increase to flood risk on neighbouring properties are all effective and viable policies that could be incorporated.

Policy Ideas: Energy efficiency

There was a strong desire across both groups to keep energy costs down where possible and implementing more sustainable approaches to design, responding to the Climate Change Emergency. A policy around meeting **energy efficiency standards** such as BREAAAM/Passivhaus² and future proofing developments can be included in the NDP. This could also include support for improving energy efficiency in historic buildings.

Similarly, there was support for greater incorporation of renewable energy technologies within development, including proposals that incorporate solar panels, EV charging points, ground source heat pumps, battery technology, triple glazing etc.

A policy stating minimum energy requirements from renewable or low carbon sources in new developments could be included as part of this.

Policy Ideas: Housing mix and type

Housing mix, affordability and the desire to respond to local need came up in conversations around design in both *MPE* and *Rickmansworth*. Some expressed support for retention of bungalows in the area.

Although affordable housing requirement thresholds are laid out in the Local Plan, this could potentially be further developed to include additional stipulations; for example, ensuring all affordable housing is tenure blind and in keeping with the latest evidence of housing need, and that any housing for the elderly is designed to conform to the principles of inclusive design and best practice guidance established by HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation).

The Housing Market Assessment work prepared by Three Rivers dates from January 2016. Not only is it now somewhat dated but the work was undertaken in partnership with neighbouring authorities and does not present requirements at the local level. A more granular level of information could be investigated, through application for the **Housing Needs Assessment** Technical package via Locality. This would allow more detailed policies to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

² Passivhaus is a 'fabric first' approach to development of low energy buildings which seeks to reduce the requirement for heating and cooling

Policy Ideas: Gated developments

It was suggested that gated developments should not be supported in Rickmansworth as they hinder connectivity. A policy emphasising a lack of support for such developments could be included in the Plan, perhaps embedded in general design principles.

Policy Ideas: Mitigating against light pollution

The extent of the built up area across both Rickmansworth and MPE means that light pollution has become an issue. To enhance the quality of 'dark night skies' across the neighbourhood area, and in the interest of reducing the impacts of artificial light on the wellbeing of wildlife and people alike, a policy could be included to provide guidance on street and outdoor lighting. This might include stipulating maximum limits on light intensity (lumens).

(iv) Infrastructure

Policy Ideas: Sustainable and active travel

A sustainable transport/active travel policy facilitating the use of walking and cycling instead of driving was supported in the focus group sessions to reduce traffic, noise and air pollution and encourage healthier lifestyles.

As noted above in relation to comments made during the open space workshop comments, for this to be a policy, any improvements would need to be directly linked to a land-use or development matter, e.g.: encouraging proposals to link with existing routes, provide secure bike housing facilities on-site and providing safe and adequate routes through the development site. Otherwise, improvements or new routes should be identified as projects.

Policy Ideas: New mobility solutions

In the *Rickmansworth* focus group, there was support for incorporating sustainable infrastructure and design into the public realm i.e. charging points, shared e-mobility. **A policy that welcomes proposals for communal e-vehicle charging points and shared mobility infrastructure within the public realm** would support this aspiration. Similarly, the policy can include requirements for all new development proposals to include EV charging points and facilities for cycle parking.

Policy Ideas: Flood risk

In both *Rickmansworth* and *MPE*, it was suggested that all new development should meet necessary drainage requirements to mitigate against flooding. A policy laying out requirements for **flood mitigation and management measures** could be important here, including the incorporation of SUDs in new open space. Attention can be drawn to desired management techniques such as attenuation ponds, raingardens, green walls/roofs, retention tanks and tree planting within this policy. Limitations on the paving over of front and back gardens might also be included to limit surface run-off (though would need to recognise national policy and guidance in respect of permitted development rights etc).

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SUDs should also be recognised for their biodiversity value and thought should be given to how biodiversity gain can be maximised when incorporating the above methods.

Policy Ideas: Local energy generation

The potential for **Local renewable energy production** was raised in both sessions, with participants highlighting the natural assets available to the community that would support such projects.

Specific opportunities identified include the **re-introduction of watermills on the locks/river** to power local units with renewable energy. In doing so, they could also become a valuable heritage/cultural learning opportunity that attracts visitors and investment into the area.

Similarly, the **placement of wind turbines on the floodplain/alongside Batchworth Golf Club** and **solar arrays on the golf course** were identified as opportunities. Biodiversity management plans should be included in any proposal for renewable energy generation to ensure wildlife is protected.

Policy Ideas: Broadband

Broadband provision was a large topic of conversation in the *MPE* focus group session, particularly in the context of more people working from home through and potentially beyond the pandemic. A policy that stipulates that proposals for new development should be capable of receiving **high speed and reliable mobile and broadband connections** can be included within the NDP. However, the delivery of fast and reliable services is outside the control of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Project Ideas: Flood mitigation and management

Beyond the general flood mitigation and management policy outlined above, a number of **locally-specific flooding-related projects** were identified throughout the focus group sessions. These included:

- Strengthening the banks of Chess River, particularly around the top of Scotsbridge Meadows;
- Preparing mitigation strategies for a number of areas across the neighbourhood area, including Harefield Road, Park Road and the fields on Tolpits Lane; and
- Creating a marina along Moor Lane, accessed via the canal, which it was suggested would reduce flood risk in the area by expanding capacity and open up more land for residential development through residential waterside moorings.

Also with regard to flooding, there was additional concern amongst the *Rickmansworth* group that the EA data on Rickmansworth was incorrect and out of date. **A new flood risk study/historical tracker** might be commissioned to ensure up-to-date data. This could be submitted alongside the NDP. A **map/short-list from Three Rivers** indicating mitigation measures to be used to prevent the 2016 flood event re-occurring could be included, either within the project itself or as an appendix.

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

Project Ideas: Traffic and movement

Concern about **future proofing the town for the inevitable rise in electric vehicles** was raised in the *Rickmansworth* group – especially once the ban on new petrol vehicles comes into play in 2030. Though communal EV charge points (on-street/forecourts) can be encouraged through NDP policy (see above), a project, working alongside the relevant bodies might be more effective and widespread. Included in this also might be a strategy to encourage electric bike use, with secure storage and charging facilities in town and the potential for a shared-E-bike system.

A project putting up **signage to encourage drivers to turn-off their vehicles when stationary ('idling')**, particularly when collecting children from schools would help improve air pollution. A related idea raised is to have digital signs that let drivers stuck in traffic know how long journeys take by bike compared to car at busy times.

A project that identifies potential **"safe passageways"** and looks to enhance and improve these to facilitate safe travel along these routes for all modes of transport was raised. In particular, the "safe passageways" should provide more room on highways for cyclists and pedestrians. This would be achieved alongside HCC and would likely require CIL money. Examples given included:

- Batchworth Lane where vehicles, cycles and people all meet.
- Local Transportation to adjoining locations i.e., Rickmansworth.
- South Approach, Moor Park
- A request for a safe cycle route from MP&E to Rickmansworth was raised.
- Connect Rickmansworth Station to the London Loop and National Cycle Network.
- Cycle route between Rickmansworth Town and Croxley Green.

A **Traffic Management project** that improves the efficiency of the road network for all users and can identify junctions/pinch points where congestion is most problematic can also be included in the NDP.

- This was raised in the *MPE* session with a traffic calming scheme on Batchworth Lane & Westbury cited as an example project. A "no right turn" option off of Tolpits Lane into Moor Park at certain times of day would also help alleviate traffic in *MPE*.
- Equally, the *Rickmansworth* group cited the traffic on Money Hill as detrimental to the area. Further analysis and consultation will need to be completed to confirm where other improvements are needed.

The need for an **improved bus route** to serve adjoining areas such as South Oxhey, Carpenders Park, Watford and Rickmansworth was raised in both sessions. This could be an aspiration of the NP, working alongside the Highways Authority to identify appropriate new routes, increase the level of service and improve facilities. A policy might also be included to ensure that new development integrates with and provides appropriate access to existing routes and bus stops.

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

Project Ideas: Parking Restrictions

Concern was raised in multiple sessions regarding the increase in the number of cars “lining the kerb”, likely a consequence of households owning multiple cars or turning garages into extensions. While parking principles can be established through design policies, a project to increase **parking restrictions** on the street might also be a solution. One resident raised the idea of having a parking permit system (like inner-London Boroughs) or, where the issue is most pronounced such as Eastbury and Westbury Roads, having one-hour parking bay restrictions put in place. This would have to be undertaken in association with the relevant partner authorities and subject to separate consultation.

4. Summary of ideas

The table presented below brings the comments summarised above together:

Topic Area	Policy / Project
Open Spaces	<i>Local Green Space Designations, including: Improvements to Bury Gardens Improvements to Riverside Drive Improvements to Eastbury Rec</i>
	<i>Open Space and Green Corridors</i>
	<i>Setting of Green Spaces (Building Heights)</i>
	<i>Tree Maintenance and Protection</i>
	<i>Biodiversity Net-Gain</i>
	<i>Access to green spaces and waterways</i>
	<i>Tree planting</i>
	<i>Community Planting</i>
	<i>Rewilding and Nature Conservation</i>
Civic and Employment	<i>Flexible Office Space</i>
	<i>Tolpits Lane: Diversification and setting</i>
	<i>Community Facilities</i>
	<i>Rickmansworth Town Centre</i>
	<i>Money Hill Parade</i>
	<i>Business Improvement Districts</i>
	<i>School Travel</i>
	<i>Gateways to Rickmansworth</i>

Table continued overleaf /

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

Design and Heritage	<i>General Design policies and principles</i>
	<i>Local Heritage Assets</i>
	<i>Parking</i>
	<i>Energy Efficiency</i>
	<i>Housing Mix and Type</i>
	<i>Mitigating Against Light Pollution</i>

Infrastructure	<i>Sustainable and Active Travel</i>
	<i>New Mobility Ideas (EV / Mobility as a Service³ etc)</i>
	<i>Flood Risk</i>
	<i>Local Energy Generation</i>
	<i>Broadband</i>
	<i>Flood Mitigation and Management</i>
	<i>Traffic and Movement improvements</i>
	<i>Parking Restrictions</i>

³ Mobility as a Service (Maas) is defined by the Government as a term used to describe digital transport service platforms that enable users to access, pay for, and get real time information on a range of public and private transport options. These platforms may also be linked to the provision of new transport services. MaaS envisages users buying transport services as packages based on their needs (e.g.: car clubs and car sharing, cycle hire, bus journeys) instead of buying the means of transport (e.g.: owning a car). See Government Office for Science, December 2018, Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in the UK: change and its implications

5. Developing the ideas

A vision for Batchworth

Based on the policy and project ideas outlined above, a Vision for Batchworth has been drafted. This is:

*The **richness of natural assets** in Batchworth will be strengthened, building its reputation as **the “Green and Blue Neighbourhood”**. 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

A broad set of objectives will help deliver the Vision, providing a framework into which policies, and projects, can be organised and understood. Under each objective, we have set out some “bitesize” ideas that can be used to engage with the public and gauge their opinion on the direction of the Plan. These are framed in the context of “What if we...” to help draw on people’s imagination and sense of community.

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

What if we...:

- *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 wildflowers and raingardens, bringing biodiversity and environmental benefits into the urban environment, transforming and retrofitting ‘grey’ spaces to bring people closer to nature.*
- *Increase 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.*

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

What if we...:

- *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 into 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.*

Objective 3: To improve access and movement for all

What if we...:

- *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 to make walking and cycling attractive propositions.*
- *Plan for an improved public transport service, alongside other emerging technology, such as 'mobility as a service' and micro-mobility hubs⁴, 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.*

Objective 4: To strengthen community cohesion and inclusiveness by making Batchworth an attractive place for all to live and work in.

What if we...:

- *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, and new affordable homes.*
- *Prepare a masterplan for Rickmansworth town centre identifying opportunities and presenting guidance in respect of the mix of uses in the centre, building types and forms, movement and public realm improvements.*
- *Encourage new community and social activities and uses to locate in the local centres that create footfall, new life and activity throughout the day. This could include reconfiguring and strengthening the Rickmansworth Library and Watersmeet Theatre as the heart of civic life, being a 'public room' for all where a wide-range of events and activities take place.*
- *Enhance the quality of the public realm in local centres through planting, pedestrianisation and the establishment of places to sit and relax; creating thriving and vibrant places that foster social interaction and attract investment.*
- *Provide flexible working spaces that attract small businesses and start-ups, proactively responding to changing working patterns (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) where fewer people feel the need to commute to the office every day. At the same time, supporting*

⁴ Micro mobility hubs are places where people can access personal transport solutions, including hire bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters. They comprise docking and charging stations. They are often located at public transport stations or in close proximity to town / local centres, major cultural attractions or commercial areas.

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

environmental improvements to the Tolpits area, enhancing access, relationship with the waterfront, and providing a central hub supporting the growth of smaller businesses.

- *Establish a business improvement district that helps to co-ordinate and lead on activities and initiatives that revitalise local centres and employment areas.*

Objective 5: To promote high quality design in new development that helps build a sense of place, responding to the character and identity of individual areas in Batchworth

What if we...

- *Establish guidance on the appropriate scale, height, materials and architectural style for each character area to ensure that their distinctive identities and Batchworth's wider diversity is retained within new development.*
- *Establish guidance 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 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. Gateways include Batchworth Lock and Rickmansworth railway station.*

Appendix A: Leaflets

The pages overleaf include copies of the leaflets distributed to raise awareness of the Neighbourhood plan and encourage participation in the process.

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

LEAFLET 1 (FRONT):

Neighbourhood Plan

Batchworth Community Council
Eastbury - Moor Park - Rickmansworth

FIND OUT MORE

- Visit our website and sign up to the newsletter www.batchworthplan.org.uk
- Take part in our online focus groups - further details will be announced in the near future
- Locality - <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/neighbourhood-planning/>
- Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>
- Three Rivers District Council - <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/service/neighbourhood-planning>

CONTACT US

Please feel free to leave your comments on the website: www.batchworthplan.org.uk
Or email us at: info@batchworthplan.org.uk
Or write to us at: **Batchworth Plan Steering Group, Basing House, 46 High St, Rickmansworth, WD3 1HP**
Or phone us on: **05603 876152 (local rate number)**
Translations of this material are available on request to the above.

A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR COMMUNITY ...

A Neighbourhood Plan will give the community of Rickmansworth Town and Moor Park & Eastbury Wards (residents & businesses) a say in its own future, laying out how and where land should be developed to best deliver sustainable growth that benefits the whole community.

This leaflet explains more about the process and how to make sure your views are put forward.

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

LEAFLET 1 (BACK)

A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - WHAT IS IT?

A Neighbourhood Plan is a document that sets out the planning policies and spatial and infrastructure priorities for the designated Neighbourhood Area. Planning Policies are used to decide whether to approve planning applications.

It is written by the local community, the people who know and love the area.

Local people can create a plan that allows them to develop planning policies that reflect the priorities of the area and have real legal weight. The whole community decides at a referendum vote whether the local authority should bring The Plan into force.

Why do we need one?

There is enormous pressure for development across the UK to provide housing, employment, community facilities and infrastructure. Some of the demand for new development will HAVE to be met in the Batchworth area. The Neighbourhood Plan is required to set out how it will facilitate development - not stop it. It cannot be a 'not in my back yard' device.

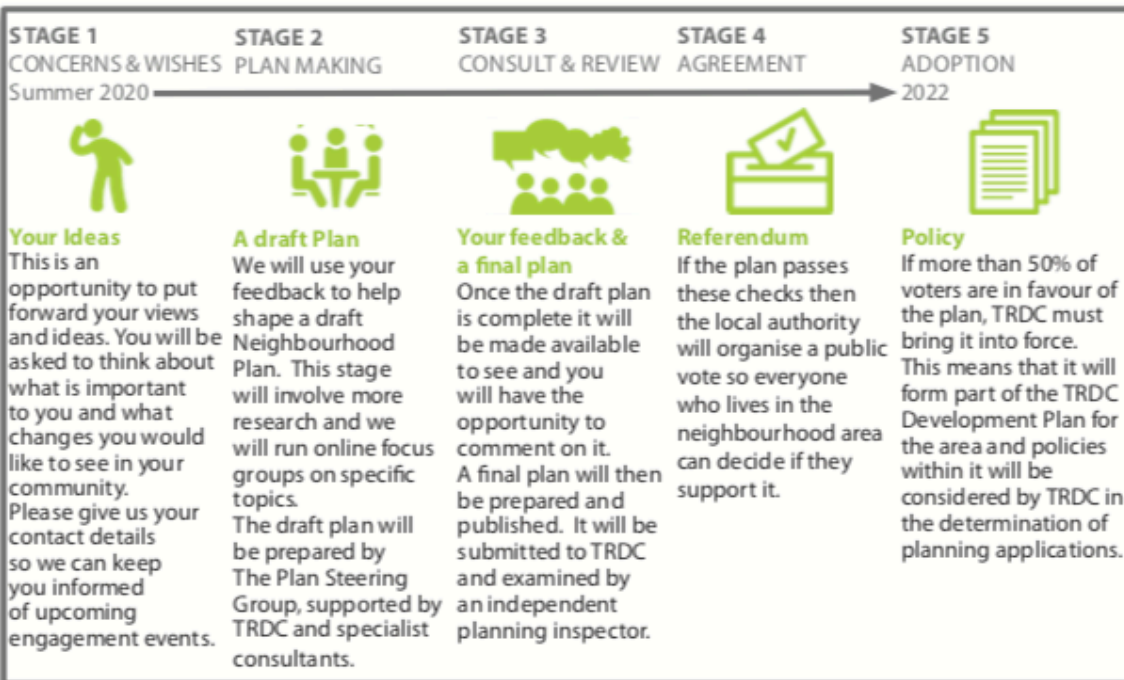
If adopted, the existence of a Plan will ensure that

Batchworth Community Council will be entitled to receive 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies from development in the Neighbourhood Area. This is a charge levied on developments, which is used to fund social and physical infrastructure projects in the area. Currently Batchworth Community Council only receives 15% of CIL monies. The additional 10% would make a significant difference.

The broad policies which any Neighbourhood Plan must comply with, are set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework and in Three Rivers District Council's (TRDC) Local Plan (under review).

Your Community Council are keen to bring local views to bear when deciding how the Neighbourhood Plan is progressed and will ensure this process is community led. Consultation will initially be done remotely using online focus groups, email, etc due to the Coronavirus epidemic but the Steering Group also plan to hold meetings in 2021 once restrictions have been lifted.

The process for devising, agreeing and adopting a Neighbourhood Plan can be seen below.



WHAT TO DO NEXT:

The process for creating our own Neighbourhood Plan starts here.....

We would like to hear your views on matters which you consider important in shaping development in your community.

Please email info@batchworthplan.org.uk or visit www.batchworthplan.org.uk for further ways to get involved.

Examples of the type of matters to consider:

- The strengths and positive features of your neighbourhood - things that you value and would like to keep.
- The negative features of your neighbourhood - things that you don't like and would like to get rid of or improve.
- Those things that your neighbourhood doesn't have which you would like, and when.

BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

POLICY AND PROJECT IDEAS

LEAFLET 2 (FRONT AND BACK):

A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR COMMUNITY...

The Neighbourhood Plan can be about more than planning policies. It can also be used to express your vision for the future, articulate priorities for strengthening the unique qualities of Batchworth and can identify the community's priorities for how and where money should be spent.

Have your say

You can put your ideas straight on the **interactive map** at:
<https://batchworth.commonplace.is>

You can register your interest for a **focus group** here:
<https://www.batchworthplan.org.uk/focusandsteering-group>

If you prefer, you can leave your comments by:

Email
Neighbourhoodplan@batchworth-ecc.gov.uk

Post
**Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group,
 c/o Batchworth Community Council
 Basing House
 46 High Street,
 Rickmansworth,
 WD3 1HP**





We would like to hear your ideas...

- What do you like about your neighbourhood?
- What don't you like about your neighbourhood?
- What would you change?

Focus Groups

Each of the two wards, Rickmansworth Town and Moor Park & Eastbury, will have a focus group.

We are currently recruiting residents and local businesses to take part.

Due to COVID-19, all sessions will be held virtually. Each session will comprise a two-hour meeting on one of the following topics:

- Open spaces
- Design & Heritage
- Civic & Employment
- Infrastructure

Do you have experience or knowledge of these topics? Perhaps you know the local area well or are passionate about creating a sustainable and liveable neighbourhood?

Find out more on our website.



Eastbury - Moor Park - Rickmansworth



Neighbourhood plan

Dear Resident

Now is the time to get involved with the Batchworth Neighbourhood plan. Our previous leaflet informed you of what a Neighbourhood Plan is, what it can influence, the stages involved in drawing it up and the process by which The Plan is adopted.

It is vitally important that residents and local businesses get to have a say in the development process.

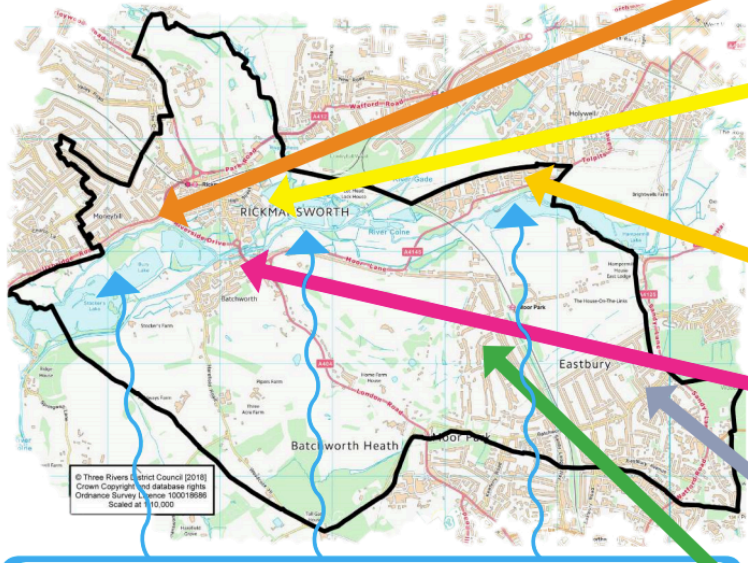
This leaflet outlines some of the topics already brought to our attention for potential inclusion in The Plan and informs you of ways that you can have your say. We have reviewed the Government 'Planning for the future' White Paper, taken advice and will be accounting for changes proposed in our discussions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group



EMERGING IDEAS FOR THE BATCHWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - PRESENTED BY CHARACTER AREA



MONEY HILL

- Introduce parking management & traffic calming
- Improve public space & mix of uses on the parade
- Improve access to river & lakes

RICKMANSWORTH TOWN

- Respect heritage assets through good design
- Improve flood management
- Improve Bury Gardens
- Improve public space & shop facades
- Reinvigorate town centre & increase community uses
- Break barrier created by ring road

TOLPITS LANE

- Improve pedestrian & cycle routes
- Introduce traffic management
- Incorporate local facilities for employees, residents & school

BATCHWORTH

- Improve links & routes to Rickmansworth Town centre and The Aquadrome

EASTBURY

- Introduce flood management
- Better access to and management of rights of way
- Improve local green space at Eastbury Rec
- Upgrade equipment in playground

MOOR PARK

- Retain special character of Conservation Area
- Improve access to Withey Beds nature reserve
- Consider alternative routes for school run
- Improve London Rd/Batchworth Ln junction

THE RIVER CORRIDOR

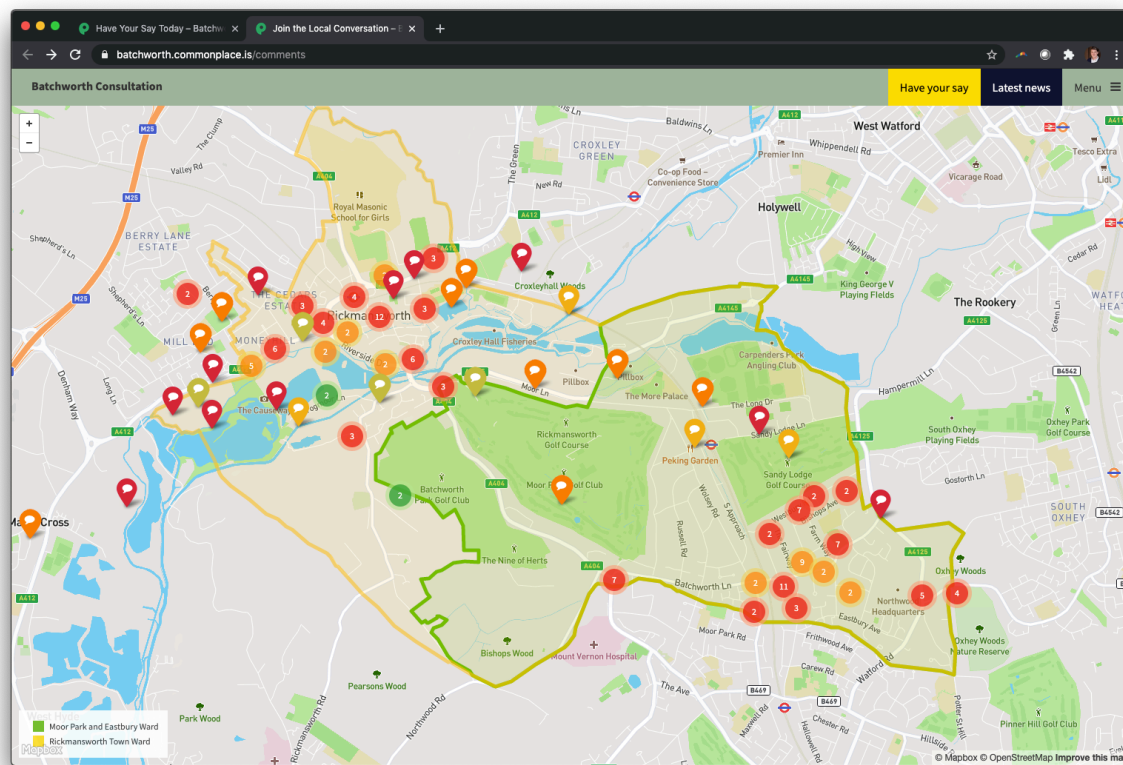
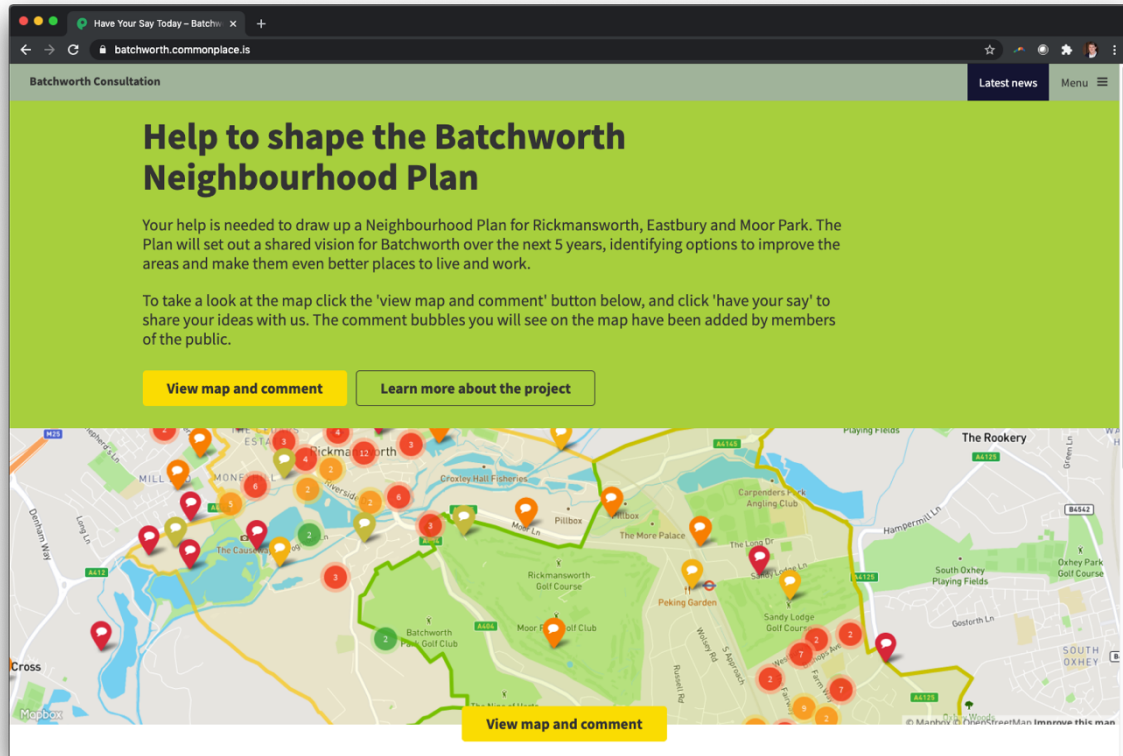
- Retain special character of the river corridor and canal basin

This map illustrates the possible policy areas and projects that may be developed through the Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan

You may have a different view and ideas or want to elaborate on these - if so, we really want to hear from you. Have your say on the **interactive map** at www.batchworth.commonplace.is

Appendix B: Commonplace

Screenshots of the Commonplace consultation portal are presented below:



Batchworth Community Council
Neighbourhood Plan
Policy and Project Ideas Paper, April 2021

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

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

Batchworth Community Council
Neighbourhood Plan
Consultation Statement
Volume 2 (of 4): Initial consultation events
November 2023

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

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