

# Appendix 2 – Strategic Allocations

This Appendix sets out the proposals for Green Infrastructure in the strategic allocations identified in the emerging Local Plan. These provide the opportunity to deliver an integrated GI offer that includes SANG to avoid placing additional pressure on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and deliver the high quality green spaces that will help facilitate community cohesion between new and existing residents. The development of masterplans and concept frameworks for the following locations will be required to develop significant green infrastructure.

- **Latton Priory and Water Lane**
- **North Weald Bassett**
- **South of Epping (this is currently being completed and will be available in time for the public consultation)**
- **Waltham Abbey (this is currently being completed and will be available in time for the public consultation).**

## **1. Delivering Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)**

- 1.1 A key aspect of the development of the GI offer in the Masterplan areas is the delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) in order primarily to avoid placing pressure on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (the Epping Forest).
- 1.2 To successfully perform as avoidance and mitigation measures with a particular focus on the Epping Forest it is important that all spaces provided are inviting and comfortable for all people to visit and use. In master planning terms SANG will be provided as an integral part of the fabric of new strategic development sites. It will form part of a network of greenery and green setting for new developments and the proposed Masterplan area capacities have been assessed on this basis. It will not be acceptable to fill up the Masterplan area with built development and simply offer a field nearby for dogs, for example, to be exercised.
- 1.3 Each of the new Masterplan areas will be treated on its own merits but it is expected that an avoidance and mitigation strategy, illustrated by a Landscape Framework, will be prepared by joint working between all land promoters, developers and landowners involved in the development of the site and the provision of SANG to avoid a piecemeal approach. In the first instance this joint working should be demonstrated through the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding. More information in relation to the key components of a Landscape Framework are set out below, which incorporate a number of elements of the GI Strategy, This is to ensure that a coherent approach is taken to embedding SANG as part of GI provision rather than being isolated from it.
- 1.4 Whilst the starting point is for SANG to be provided within the Masterplan areas, in some locations there may be an opportunity to offer alternative areas of natural greenspace as SANG close to development sites. This can be considered where the land in question would provide effective avoidance or mitigation, is in the control of the site promoter/developer and where it would support the principles of GI and SANG provision, complimentary to the adjoining landscape to the development.
- 1.5 A fundamental part of the design approach is to articulate how the site will avoid or mitigate the impact of increased population on the Epping Forest so that development (and cumulatively the local plan as a whole) complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. To achieve the levels of avoidance or mitigation measures required through on-site provision of SANG any application should include the submission of a Landscape Framework, making the case that avoidance or mitigation would be achieved in accordance with local plan policy and guidance. This will include a combination of proposals for spaces; paths; habitat and

biodiversity improvement and complementary advantages that would attract leisure uses which would otherwise impact upon the Epping Forest.

- 1.6 The Landscape Framework will have the added advantage that sustainable drainage, public open space, green infrastructure, play and visual amenity can be convincingly described without having to provide full details at such an early stage.
- 1.7 The Landscape Framework may be aspirational in some aspects, indicating landscape and amenity benefits which may not yet be quantifiable but it must tie down certain fundamental aspects of provision in order to make a convincing case that avoidance or mitigation will be achieved.
- 1.8 The landscape framework needs to explain what elements will be provided. We suggest that as a minimum this should be submitted as a 1:500 plan annotated to explain the following issues:
  - Show the existing landform and landscape features of the site that will influence the design.
  - Show the location and dimensions of major green areas.
  - Show the broad concept for drainage for the major green areas (and any provision for taking surface water from within the development areas).
  - The broad treatment types applicable to each area of land and the management aspirations for each (for example: woodland; meadow; amenity grass; natural play).
  - Simple network of connections and circular walks and their hierarchy.
- 1.9 There are a number of elements which will need to be understood in order to ascertain whether the development is likely to achieve a reasonable level of avoidance or mitigation for the additional population pressures.
- 1.10 It therefore needs to be clear how each of the following matters will be dealt with. This is best shown on the Landscape Framework which should be accompanied by a table or list explaining briefly how the proposal intends to provide for each matter:
  - Good pedestrian connections with residential areas.
  - Linkages with other open spaces, streets, walking routes (and how these will be achieved).
  - Provision of attractive walking routes with appropriately surfaced paths.
  - Open sight lines along walking routes, avoiding overhanging vegetation.
  - Access for dog walking with off-lead areas and facilities to attract dog walkers.
  - Secure boundaries where needed.
  - Biodiversity enhancements.
  - Seating, litter and dog waste bins.

- Signage and interpretation.
  - Ongoing landscape management.
- 1.11 Since sustainable drainage (SUDS) and public open space (POS) are also fundamental to the success of any application, it is suggested that the following are also illustrated on the Landscape Framework:
- Play,
  - Tree groups,
  - Holding ponds,
  - Scrapes and swales,
  - Furniture and features,
  - Any underground constraints or legal constraints.
- 1.12 Current policies apply but locations, type and level of provision for these elements will help ensure that land is used efficiently whilst maximising the offer - not only for diverting trips from the Epping Forest but also to ensure that character of place and quality of life achieves their full potential through good design. Taking a Landscape Framework approach provides the opportunity at an early stage to identify where multi-functionality of provision can be achieved. For example SuDS features can also support biodiversity net gain objectives and create a natural interest feature which provides variety of landscape for the visitor. At the detailed stage it will be important to understand what sort of design specification is expected.
- 1.13 Avoidance or mitigation of recreational pressure on the Epping Forest will be most effective where the spaces provided are easily accessible to both new and existing populations. This can also help the layout of sites to knit well with existing townscapes and communities. However, above and beyond the avoidance and mitigation rationale, there will also often be a need to create soft and green edges to rural land. Locations for avoidance or mitigation land as part of the buffering of rural edges may therefore be considered appropriate but maximising the avoidance and mitigating impact will be the main criterion for such fundamental design decisions.
- 1.14 The suitability of land for creating avoidance or mitigation space needs to be considered in terms of its potential to become part of a strategic Landscape Framework. Sites where habitat can be enhanced will be part of that consideration, however ecologically sensitive sites are not usually considered appropriate places for increased human activity.
- 1.15 Each site will be considered on its individual merits but designated ecological sites are unlikely to be protected or enhanced by allowing additional recreational activities through them. Consequently such sites will not normally be considered as SANG avoidance or mitigation unless it can be demonstrated that additional recreational activities, and in particular dog-walking, would not cause harm to that site's interest features.

- 1.16 SANGS are not designed to address the other functions of green space. However, other functions may be provided within SANG, as long as this does not conflict with the specific function of seeking to avoid the impacts of new residents on the Epping Forest. For example, appropriately designed children's play opportunities could be provided if it is sympathetic to the character of that part of the SANGS within which it is to be provided.
- 1.17 SANG may be created from:
- existing open space of SANG quality with no existing public access or limited public access, which for the purposes of avoidance could be made fully accessible to the public.
  - existing open space which is already accessible but which could be changed in character so that it is more attractive to residents who might otherwise visit the Epping Forest.
  - land in other uses which could be converted into SANG
- 1.18 The identification of SANG should seek to avoid sites of high nature conservation value which are likely to be damaged by increased visitor numbers. Such damage may arise, for example, from increased disturbance, erosion, input of nutrients from dog faeces, and increased incidence of fires. If any sites of high nature conservation value are considered as SANG, the impact on their nature conservation value will need to be assessed and considered alongside relevant policies in the Local Plan. We do know that there are some sites of high ecological value within the District whose interest features would not be impacted by an increase in visitors.

What types of visitors needs should the SANG be designed to accommodate?

- 1.19 We know from both the 2017 and 2019 Epping Forest Visitor Surveys (the report of which will be published in due course) that the two main user groups who visit the Epping Forest on a very regular basis are dog-walkers and walkers. Consequently any SANG provision and its integration within the wider locality, including, for example, links into the local Public Rights of Way network will need to be designed to provide an attractive 'offer' that supports these activities.
- 1.20 The existence of the SANG needs to be well publicised in order to attract people to use it instead of the Epping Forest. Consequently, leaflets/ walk packs need to be provided in all new houses within the Epping Forest Zone of Influence to advertise the existence of the SANGS and to encourage their use.

Walking routes:

- 1.21 SANG need to supply a choice of circular routes of around 2.3km – 2.5km in length to cater for dog-walkers. Longer circular routes of at least 3km as part of the choice will be expected to support other walkers.
- 1.22 The provision of circular walking routes do not need to be entirely within the SANG itself but can include connected Public Rights of Way (PRoW), or the creation of

connections to existing PRow. The key consideration will be that a variety of routes are provided to dog-walkers and walkers.

- 1.23 Path type and surfacing can be varied. Both vehicular-sized tracks and narrow PRow type paths are acceptable.

Natural Play:

- 1.24 Natural play provision will be an important element of the design to support both the attractiveness of the SANG to families, but also to support the multi-functional approach to the use of GI that the Council is seeking to achieve.

Wayfinding

- 1.25 Routes should be shown on way markers and visitor boards of a design and in location which would not undermine the naturalness of the space.

Appearance:

- 1.26 A semi-natural looking landscape with plenty of variation will be required although it will not be necessary to reproduce the landscape types within the Epping Forest.
- 1.27 Sport facilities and formal public open space cannot be used as SANG.
- 1.28 SANG need to reproduce the quality of the experience that would be given by visiting the Epping Forest, so an air of relative wildness, even when there are significant numbers of visitors on site is important.

Catering for dog walkers:

- 1.29 A key component for SANG will be to allow pet owners to let dogs run freely. Therefore access on the SANG itself should be largely unrestricted, with both people and their pets being able to freely roam. This means that sites where freely roaming dogs will cause a nuisance or where they might be in danger (from traffic or such like) should not be considered for SANG.
- 1.30 In developing networks of footpaths opportunities to link with other large areas of open space which allow for free roaming dogs should be maximised to provide interest and diversity in the 'dog-walker' offer.
- 1.31 Areas with bike access are not suitable as SANG. Furthermore, SANG should not seek to deliver bike access within them. This is because high bike usage is not conducive to off lead walking of dogs and as such SANG sites would not attract one of the key impact groups to them. Opportunities for cyclists should instead be provided using the PRow outside of the SANG itself.
- 1.32 The information below provides a Site Quality Checklist for an individual SANG
- For all sites larger than 8ha there must be access to adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local use, i.e. within easy walking distance (c.400m) of the developments linked to it. The amount of car parking space should be

determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflect the likely visitor catchment of the SANG. As a first step consideration should be given to using existing, or planned, car parking opportunities in the vicinity of the site, subject to there being sufficient capacity to accommodate additional use.

- It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3-2.5km around the SANG. This could be by creating a 'figure of eight' approach which provides a shorter and longer route offer.
- If car parking is to be provided it must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
- Easy access to the site should be created via clear and 'logical' access points from the new development that the SANG is intended to serve and wherever possible, new points of access should be created to make it easy for the existing community to access the SANG.
- The SANG must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath/s.
- SANG must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users; they must not have tree and scrub covering parts of the walking routes.
- Paths must be easily used and well maintained and if surfacing is to be provided in order to support greater accessibility this should be done in a sensitive way so as to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.
- SANG must be perceived as semi-natural spaces with little intrusion of artificial structures. Visually sensitive way-markers, seating and natural play features, if appropriately designed, are likely to be acceptable.
- Access within the SANG must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.
- SANG must be free from unpleasant intrusions which would detract from its attractiveness as a place to visit.

## **2. Latton Priory and Water Lane**

- 2.1 Latton Priory and the Water Lane area are Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Communities that are proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan.

### **Landscape Context**

- 2.2 Latton Priory and the Water Lane area are strategic sites located within Epping Forest District and form two of the Garden Town Communities.
- 2.3 Latton Priory sits on a prominent ridge between Jack's Hatch and Church Langley which is identified as 'Farmland Ridge' in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment 2010 (EB709). The ridge forms the highest land point in the district and was a defining landscape feature in Sir Frederick Gibberd's planning of Harlow, with the town sitting in the dip in the landscape to the north of the ridge. There are views from the ridge south across gently undulating farmland towards the town of Epping and northwards towards Harlow - the centre of which is a prominent feature. However, in the surrounding residential areas it is mature trees rather than the built form which dominates the view. Trees are also the key component to the landscape character of the ridge with large blocks of ancient woodland defining the landscape.
- 2.4 Water Lane sits on the edge of an undulating landscape of predominately arable fields with mature hedgerows and veteran trees in a landscape which is designated as 'Farmland Plateau' in the Landscape Character Assessment 2010. This landscape is part of the historic field patterns and settlements identified within the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation Areas. As it is set on lower ground than Latton Priory, Water Lane is not as visually important to the setting of Harlow despite there being views back towards the town from it.
- 2.5 Harlow's Green Wedges were a major feature of Sir Frederick Gibberd's design for bringing the countryside into the town. The aim of the approach was to give residents the opportunity to experience the best of town and country living. The wedges relate directly to Latton Priory and Water Lane and the continuation of this landscape

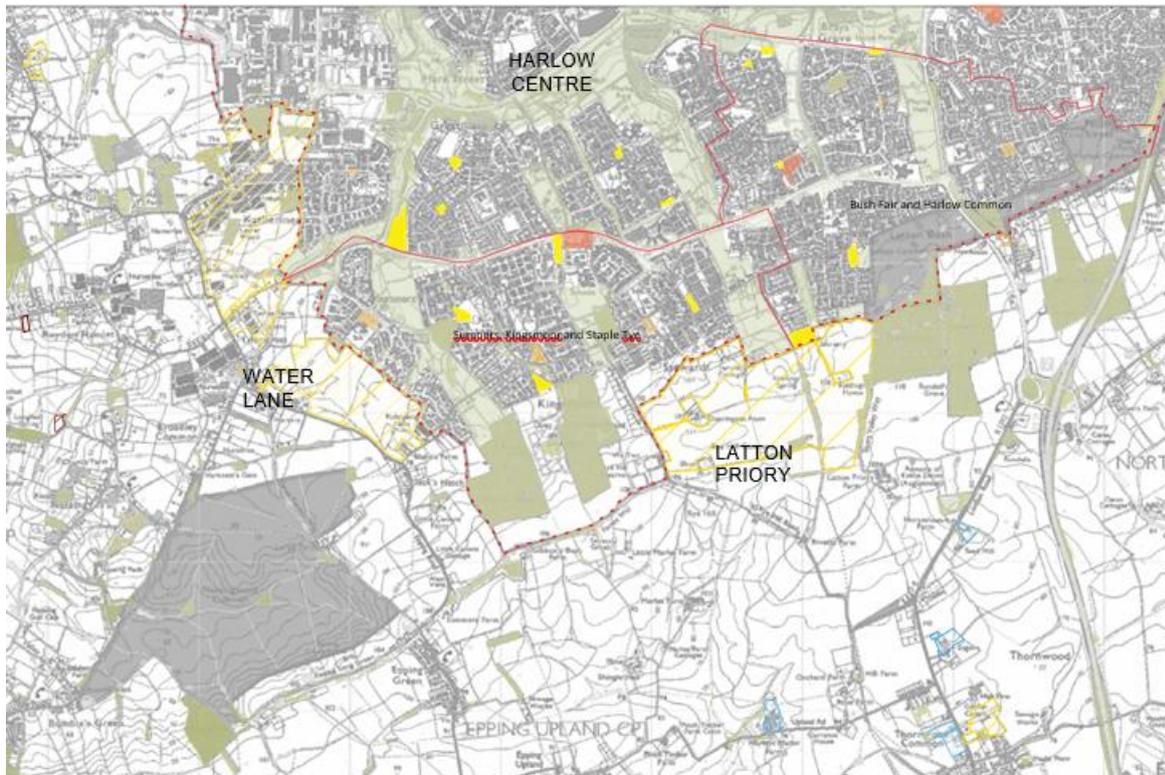
structure through the sites and its relation to the surrounding countryside and pedestrian rights of way will be key to creating an integrated landscape.



- |   |                        |   |                |   |          |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------|---|----------|
|  | Allocation Residential |  | Green Wedge    |  | Key View |
|  | EFDC / Harlow Boundary |  | Woodland Cover |   |          |

## Communities

- 2.6 Latton Priory is located to the south of the Staple Tye and Latton Bush neighbourhoods within Harlow District. The emerging Local Plan proposes to allocate the site (SP5.1) for development including the provision of a minimum of 1050 new homes, traveller pitches, new employment opportunities, a new primary and secondary school and a new local centre. There is a policy requirement to provide strategic 'green infrastructure' comprising natural/semi natural open space, walking and cycling routes flood mitigation and wildlife space.
- 2.7 Water Lane (SP5.2) is located to the west of the existing Katherines, Sumners and Kingsmoor communities within Harlow District. The emerging Local Plan proposes to allocate the site for development including the provision of a minimum of 2100 new homes, a new primary school, traveller pitches, as well as local shops and services. There is a policy requirement to provide strategic 'green infrastructure' comprising natural/semi natural open space, walking and cycling routes flood mitigation and wildlife space.
- 2.8 Developing a cohesive urban and landscape structure that allows easy movement between communities, local centres/hatches and landscape destinations (such as parks, woodlands or play spaces) will be key to creating connected, healthy and sustainable communities. In this it is essential that existing communities are able to see the benefits of development in their own neighbourhoods and that new development feels like a cohesive part of the Harlow, where existing residents feel welcome.

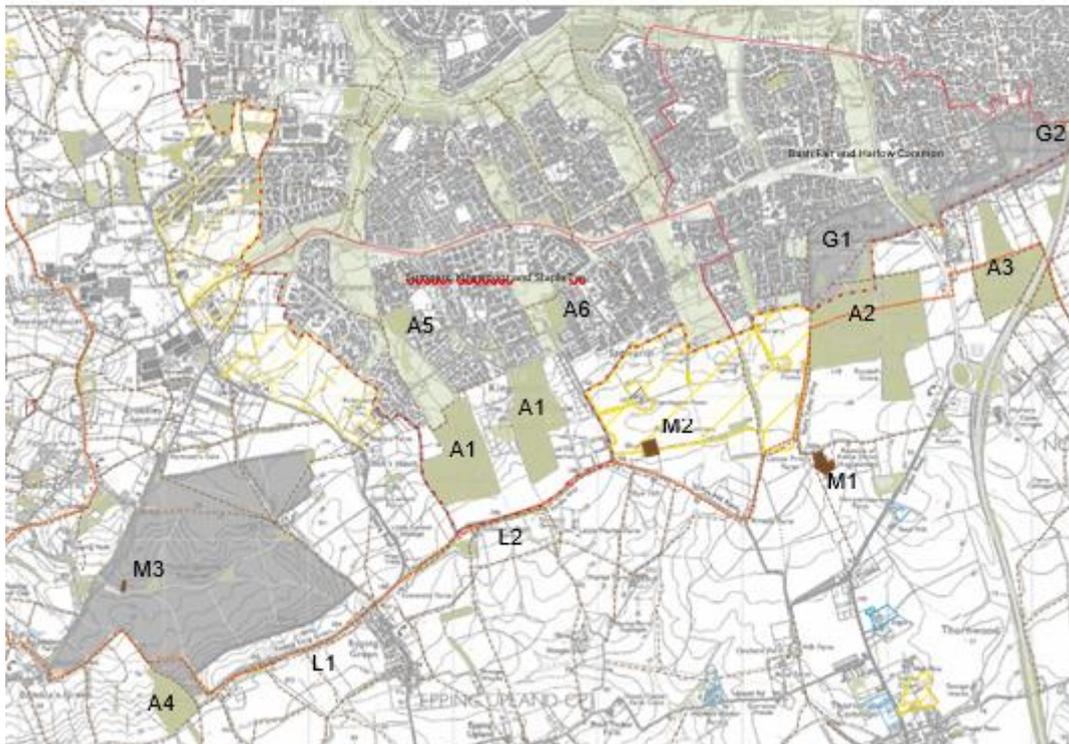


## Landscape and Ecology Assets

- 2.9 The Green Infrastructure Plan for Harlow identifies the landscape to the south and west of Harlow, within which the Latton Priory and Water Lane sites are located, as “a ‘heritage landscape’ which reflect key historic themes that are characteristic/distinctive of the Harlow Area”.
- 2.10 One of the defining features of this landscape is the significant blocks of ancient woodland that stretch from Copy Wood to Harlow Park Woods. Smaller relics of ancient woodland also appear within the urban form of Harlow at Burnett’s Wood and Maunds Wood. Within these various woodlands there are a variety of distinctive woodland characters such as the canopy of oak with coppiced hornbeam growing beneath it in Parndon Woods or the sparse canopy of elms with rich under-story and ground flora in Copy Wood. These habitats are a product of ancient ecologies intertwined with the cultural heritage of the area and provide a distinct experience of

nature in an urban context. As such they have significant local value. This is evidenced by the Green Infrastructure Plan for Harlow which identifies Harlow Woods as having a district wide draw.

- 2.11 To the east, Latton Common and Harlow Common provide freely accessible common land which are designated as LoWS in recognition of their grassland habitats. They represent significant vestiges of the once large tract of common land which stretched from Harlow Common to close to Maunds Wood. To the west Nazeing Common is another significant area of common land which, although accessible, is currently used as arable land.
- 2.12 Running east - west Epping Long Green is an ancient landscape feature which pre-dates the town of Epping. It consists of a broad strip of semi- improved neutral grassland and a footpath, bordered on both sides by ancient hedgerows. Epping Long Green was historically part of a network of drovers routes connecting, Waltham Abbey, Harlow, Latton Priory and surrounding villages. Together these natural green spaces define a distinctive landscape character while also offering a wide variety of culturally and ecologically rich places. Work to improve their legibility, access, habitat value and ecological connections would all contribute to strengthen a hugely valuable shared resource for current and future residents.
- 2.13 The Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study sets a standard for a quantum of Natural and Semi Natural Green space in Harlow as 3ha per 1000 residents. This is above the Natural England Standard of 2ha per 1000 residents. The same study showed that 'Sumner, Kingsmoor and Staple Tye' and 'Bush Fair and Harlow Common' currently have above 4ha per 1000 residents, including Harlow Woods, Latton Common and Harlow Common but excluded Marks Bushes.
- 2.14 For an approximate overview of quantum if the 46.9 ha of Marks Bushes was considered as the natural and semi natural green space for the 3,150 homes of Latton Priory and Water Lane then that would (based on 2.4 residents per household - which is the current household occupancy level in EFD) equate to 6.2 ha per 1000 residents.



### Ancient Woodland

- **A1** – Harlow Woods (Parndon Wood, Hospital and Ridsen’s Wood, SSSI (45 Ha)
- **A2** – Mark Bushes Complex Ep90 (46.9 Ha)
- **A3** – Harlow Park Ep98 (19.5 Ha)
- **A4** – Copy Wood LoWS 43 (9.1 Ha)
- **A5** – Burnett’s Wood Ha10 (2.8 Ha)
- **A6** – Maunds Wood Ha19 (3.5 Ha)

### Grassland

- **G1** – Ha29 Latton Common
- **G2** – Ha38 Harlow Common

### Ancient/Species-rich Hedgerows and Green Lanes

- **L1** – Epping Long Green West, LoWS 55 (6.3 Ha)
- **L2** – Epping Long Green East, LoWS 67 (9.1 Ha)

### **Scheduled Monuments**

- **M1** – The site of the Augustinian priory of St John the Baptist, now Latton Priory Farm
- **M2** – Medieval Moat.
- **M3** – World War Two bombing decoy, encompassing a subterranean and an above ground earth-covered shelter

### Heritage

2.15 The landscape in which Latton Priory and Water Lane sit provide a rich diversity of landscape and built heritage assets, from Ancient Green Lanes, through to the Scheduled Monument of Latton Priory and Ancient Woodland. A clear network of footpaths and way- finding are key to allow these assets to be an integrated part of the network of landscape assets.



## Amenity Green Space and Public Parks and Gardens

- 2.16 The Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study assesses the quantity, quality and value of the open space and green infrastructure in Harlow District, and forms part of the Evidence base for Harlow District Council's emerging Local Plan. Amenity Green Space and Public Parks and Gardens are assessed separately but here, given the similarities of the provision and the potential for overlapping functions, they are grouped together as this gives a more nuanced picture of provision.
- 2.17 The Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study sets a standard for a quantum of Parks and Gardens and Amenity Green Space in Harlow as 2ha per 1000 residents. The same study showed that 'Sumner, Kingsmoor and Staple Tye' are currently over this allocation at 2.8 ha per 1000 residents while 'Bush Fair and Harlow Common' has less provision at 1.68 ha per 1000 residents. Of this it should be noted that the shortfall in 'Bush Fair and Harlow Common' is compensated for by the proximity of Latton and Harlow Commons.
- 2.18 Amenity spaces and parks are of mixed quality, with 11 of the 25 parks in the Harlow Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study falling below quality standards. More of these lower quality parks are located to the south.



Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground

## Allotments

- 2.19 The standard for allotments identified in the Open Space Strategy is 0.2 hectares per 1,000 population (Fields in Trust Standard). The Council's Open Space Strategy shows that allotments are generally well provided across the District and similarly the Harlow Green Infrastructure Strategy shows a similar position. The Council's study sets an access standard of 400m from homes.
- 2.20 Allotments and food growing are key components of the network of green spaces that will provide the green social infrastructure that can aid the development of cohesive and healthy communities. To do this any new allotment provision should, through their location and allocation, serve new and existing communities. While limited public access can help build a strong community within allotments it also limits the public engaging with food growing. Therefore proposals should look to expand the variety of productive landscapes and to look to engage new users with them.

- 2.21 The Netteswell Common Allotments are located within the existing green wedge that will be extended into the Latton Priory Garden Town Community. The shortage of provision at Sumners, Kingsmoor and Staple Tye will be addressed through enhancements to the green wedge, as will improved walking and cycling connections.

### Provision for Children and Young People

- 2.22 Based on Fields in Trust Standards the Open Space Strategy sets a standard for a quantum of provision for children and young people of 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population. The current provision in adjacent Harlow communities consists of almost exclusively traditional equipment in fence play areas. The condition of the equipment is mixed.





Note: Outdoor sport and playing fields are not part of this study but are shown to give an understanding of their significant role in the green wedges.

#### Parks

P1 - Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground 10.6 ha

P2 - Partridge Road Recreation Space 1.1 ha

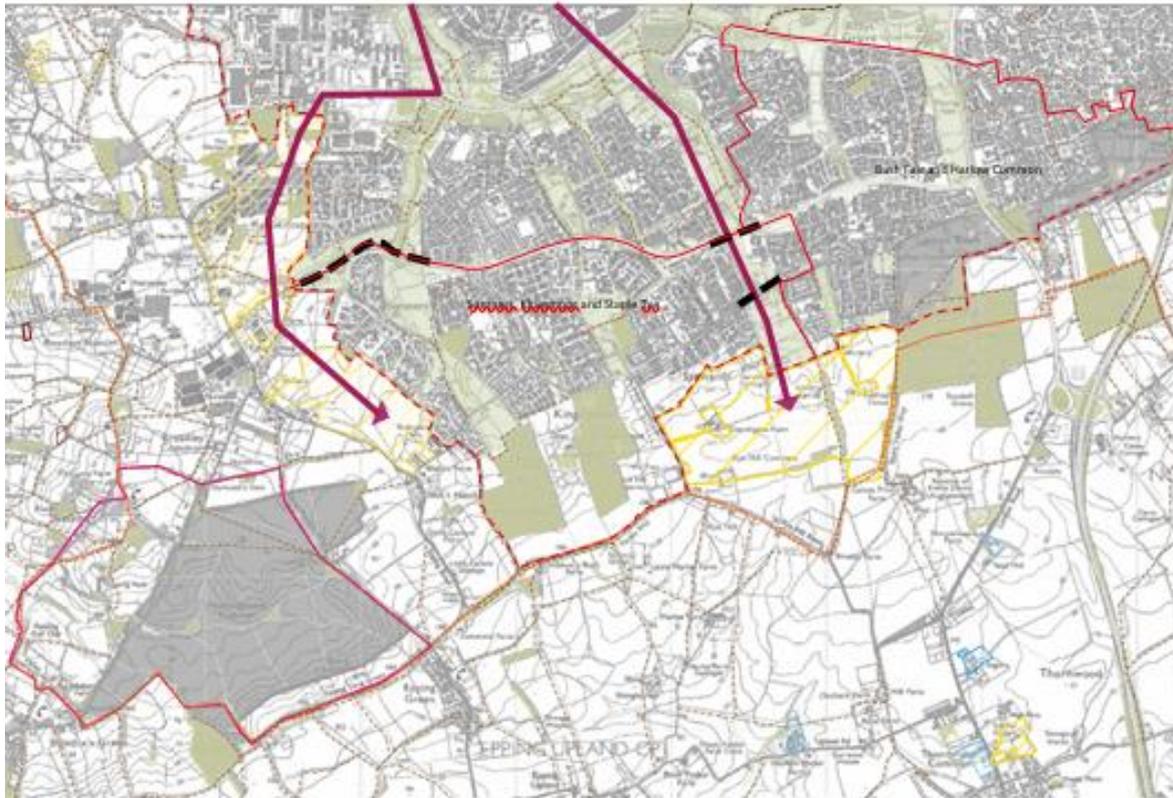
P3 - Carsole Road Open Space and Carsole Recreation Ground 10.1 ha

P4 - Sycamore Field 4.6 ha

P5 - Katherines Way Playing Field 2.4 ha

## Movement

- 2.23 There is an established network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that runs through the surrounding countryside. These routes are well used but as with routes across the district there is room for improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding.
- 2.24 Regional walks such as the Nazeing Country Walk and the Stort Valley Way highlight the draw of the local landscape. And with three Forest Ways to the west there is a good opportunity to link into this wider network. There is significant room to improve accessibility, legibility and way-finding through the Green Wedges especially where roads cross the wedges and where the wedges link into Latton Priory and Water Lane.
- 2.25 The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will be served by a network of Sustainable Transport Corridors (STCs) which will provide rapid transit, walking and cycling routes from the proposed garden town communities through existing communities to Harlow town centre and its train stations. Two arms of the proposed Sustainable Transport Corridors will terminate in Water Land and Latton Priory respectively. There is potential to continue the walking and cycling component of these routes to connect Latton Priory and Water Lane, providing Water Lane residents with an active route to the secondary school in Latton Priory.



## Opportunities

2.26 Opportunities identified are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites as set out in section 4:

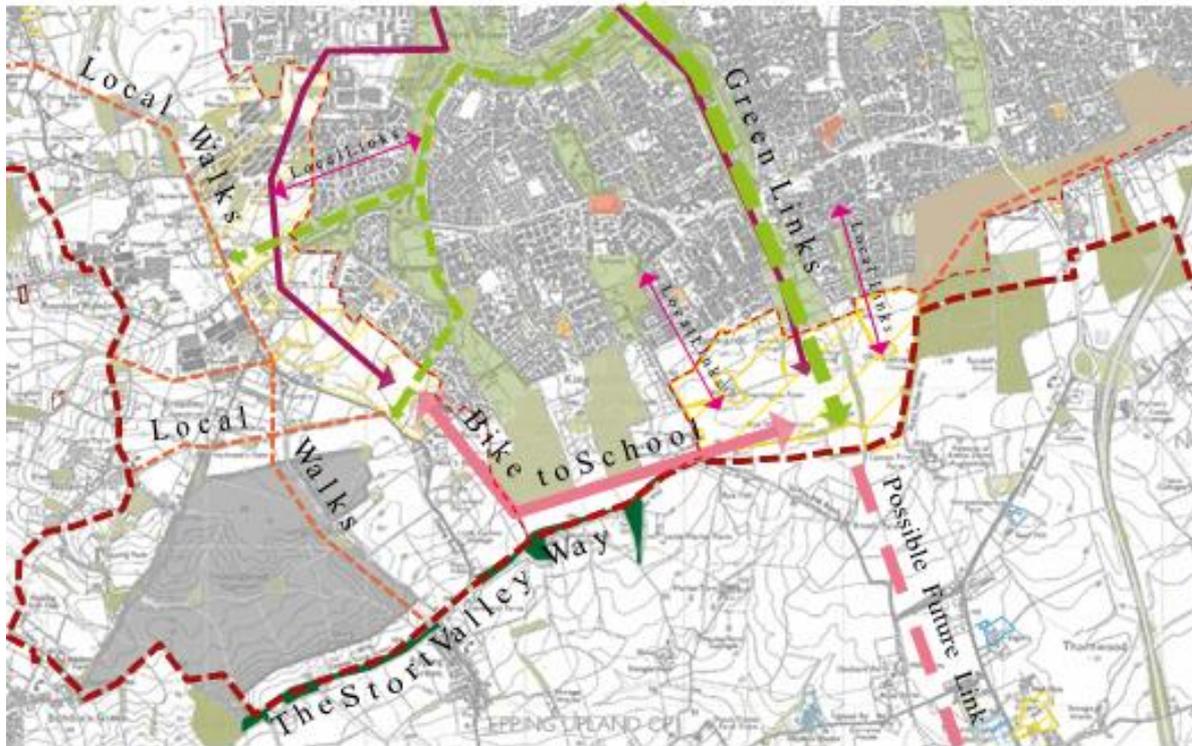
- 1 - Connecting into the big landscape attractors of the Lea and Stort Valleys
- 2 - Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside
- 3 - Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG
- 4 - Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

### **Connect into the big landscape attractors**

- 2.27 The Stort Valley Way offers an opportunity to link into a strategic route that ties into the Stort Valley. Alongside this the green wedge directly to the north of Latton Priory provides a direct route into Harlow's green spaces, Harlow Town Centre and beyond that the Stort Valley. Prioritising these routes is key to the integration of the site into its context and the promotion of the Stort Valley as an accessible recreational landscape.

### **Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside**

- 2.28 Easy, safe and attractive walking and cycling connections between neighbourhoods and open spaces are key to building a successful network of green spaces. To deliver these connections improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding will be needed. Key areas to address will include:
- Green wedges that currently run out to the countryside need significant improvements, to provide high quality connections into the Green Wedge network and on to Harlow town centre and the stations. Alongside this proposed urban structures need to facilitate local links into existing green spaces and local centres.
  - Continue the walking and cycling component of the proposed STC routes to connect Latton Priory and Water Lane, including to provide Water Lane residents with an active route to the secondary school in Latton Priory.
  - Develop a series of local walks that link communities with local countryside and Natural Green Space assets. Routes should be planned to give a series of routes that are of an optimal distance for dog walkers and to provide variety in walking routes.



Walthamstow Wetlands by Kinnear Landscape Architects Provides an example of a legible and accessible route with a signage incorporated into it.

## Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG

### **Local GI Overview**

- 2.29 In line with the rest of the District an analysis of existing open space provision shows that high quality Natural and Semi Natural Green Space already exists with a higher quantum provided than National Standards although this cannot necessarily be relied on to support the needs of new communities where it would affect the ecological interest features of that space.. Other open space typologies, including parks, play and allotments are of average or poor quality and are generally under provided.
- 2.30 As identified there is a high quality local network of Natural and Semi Natural Green Space which can be revealed and enhanced. This network can also be significantly added to through the provision of SANG.

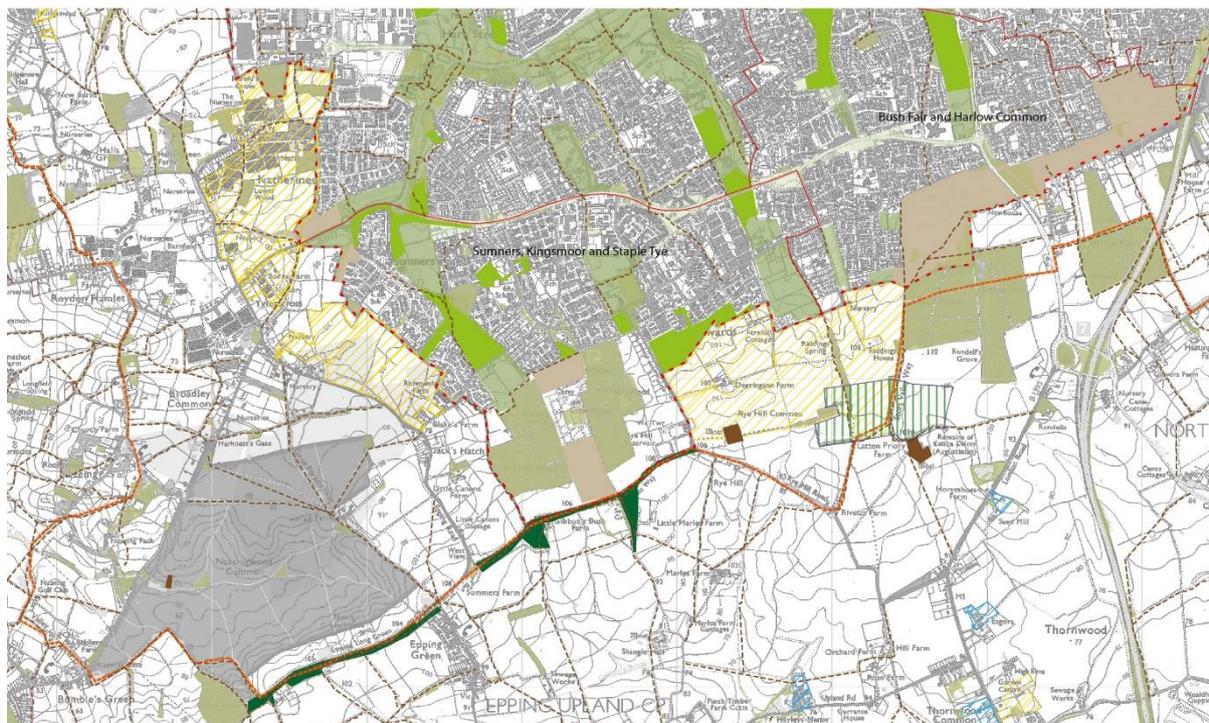
### **Reveal and Enhance**

- 2.31 Key moves to reveal and enhance the existing Natural and Semi Natural Green Space offer include the following:
- Complete the ecological corridor from the Long Green Lane to Marks Wood. Where suitable look to lift canopies and clear scrub to allow views into woodland areas.
  - Enhance habitats through improved management including to the grassland Harlow and Latton Commons and woodlands.
  - Look for overlap between people and ecology such as leaving some large felled trees in woodlands or retaining low branches on appropriate trees when pruning for play opportunities.



### **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space**

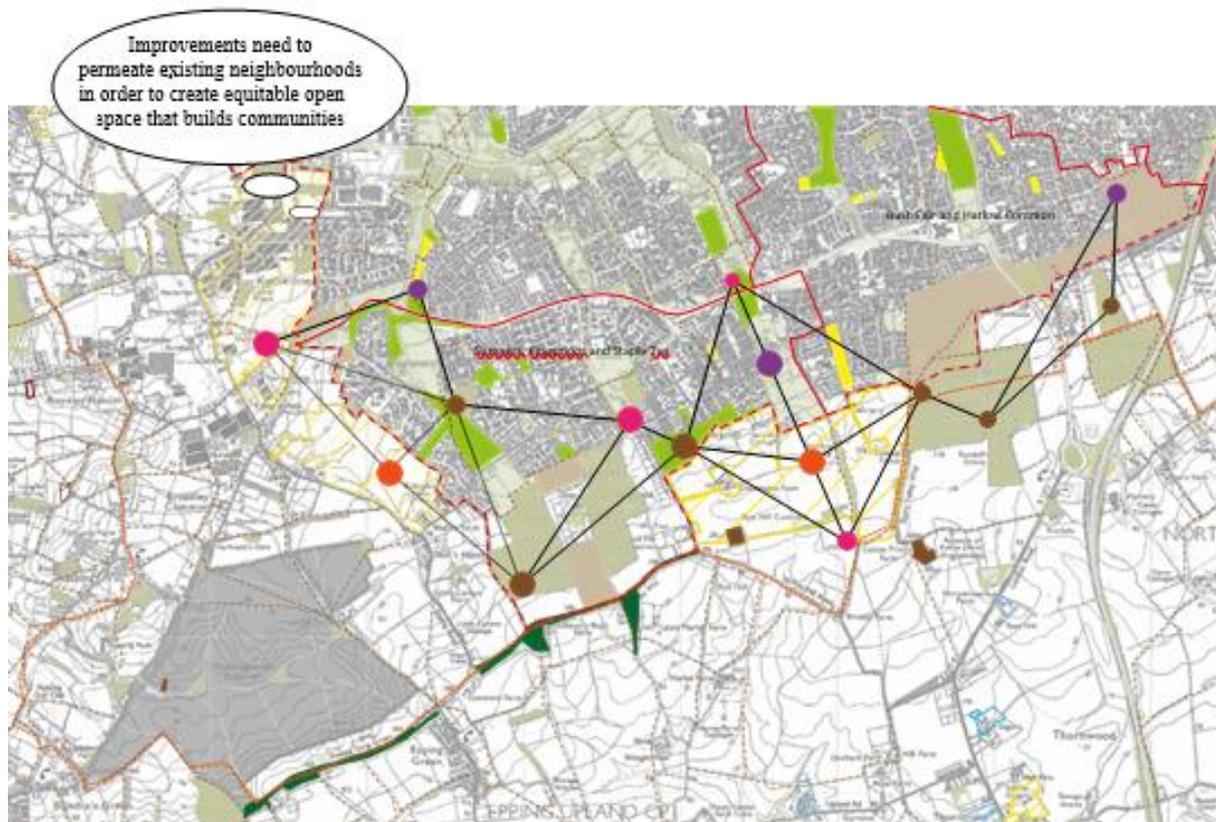
- 2.32 outwork has commenced on a SANG proposal for Latton Priory. Habitat proposals for the SANG provision as well as how it relates to existing paths and habitats are also being developed. The proposed SANG offer is the subject of ongoing discussions with stakeholders. In addition, at the Examination Hearing on 21 May 2019, representatives of the site promoters for Latton Priory indicated that additional land was available to provide a wider SANG offer.
- 2.33 This work also sets out green space connections to the green wedge and to the west towards Epping Long Green. Green Spaces outside of the SANG will be developed along with the emerging masterplan.



## Complimentary Network

2.34 Provision of open space will be provided and master planned through the new development. This should be designed in a way to encourage use by both new and existing communities. Provision should be developed through the masterplanning process to ensure a balance of open space typologies across the wider area. Alongside this, improvements outside the site allocation boundary should also be undertaken in conjunction with EFDC and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town officers. This is essential to support an integrated offer for both new and existing neighbourhoods to build community cohesion.

- 2.35 Key existing spaces that need to be addressed in qualitative terms are Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground, Paringdon Road Recreation Space, and Parsloe Road Open Space



**Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside**

- 2.36 Landscape should be considered as forming part of the social infrastructure in order to build cohesive communities through engaging more people with outdoor space and creating opportunities for social interaction.

- 2.37 Interventions in Natural and Semi natural open space should look to deepen people's understanding and appreciation of natural green spaces and to inspire new people to visit these places.
- 2.38 Potential areas where this could be achieved are: Woodlands, Commons, Green Lanes, Ancient Monuments Potential interventions could include: Bird Hides, Natural Play, Low key interpretation, Art.
- 2.39 Alongside improvements to their structure, parks and amenity space should be activated with initiatives that encourage social interaction and which link to wider societal themes such as loneliness, obesity, and encouraging healthy eating
- 2.40 Key Locations where this could be achieved are: Green wedge north of Latton Priory, Parsloe Road Open Space. Initiatives could include: Multi-sensory planting, intergenerational and natural play, art, food growing.
- 2.41 Productive Landscapes should move beyond food in allotments to encourage wider participation and engagement between communities.
- 2.42 The key Location where this could be achieved is: Netteswell Common Allotments. Other potential Locations include: Rye Hill Road Recreation Ground, Parsloe Road Open Space



Drapers Field Kinnear  
Landscape Architects



Ladders and Apples  
Alex Findlay

Play Hill in Wildflower  
Kinnear Landscape Architects



Forest Play  
Flights of Fantasy Creative  
Play

Cast Local Chair Helen Goodwin



### **3. North Weald Bassett SANG proposals**

#### **Landscape Context**

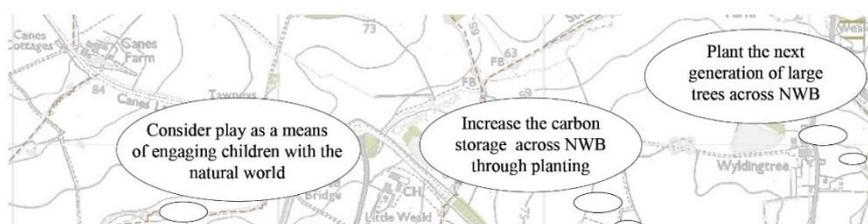
- 3.1 North Weald Bassett sits in an area characterised as 'Ridges and Valleys' by the Chris Blandford Landscape Character Assessment, which forms part of the EFDC local plan evidence base.
- 3.2 The landscape is characterised by a patchwork of arable fields, with mature hedgerows. Mature trees are also a key defining feature of the landscape both within hedgerows and in fields. This landscape pattern provides for a number of open and framed views to the surrounding landscape.
- 3.3 North Weald airfield, which is defined by a strong fenced perimeter, is a significant presence in the landscape as is the M11 to the west.

#### **Natural and Semi Natural Green Space and Landscape and Ecology Assets**

- 3.4 There are a variety of lowland mixed deciduous ancient woodlands, located mainly to the south of North weald Bassett. These woodlands include original and replanted

ancient woodland which BAP Habitats designated as Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK); and Ancient Woodland (Essex).

- 3.5 Woodlands include a variety of flora which provide a variety of distinctive woodland characters including: virtually pure hornbeam coppice (Reynkyns Wood); blocks of Scotts Pine (Birching Coppice Complex); and Hornbeam/Pedunculate composition with scattered Rhododendron (Birching Coppice Complex).
- 3.6 The woods provide a valuable cultural heritage. Ongar Park Woods (part of the Birching Coppice Complex) was historically part of the same woodland lying within the boundary of Ongar Great Park, one of the earliest deer parks dating back to the 11th century.
- 3.7 These woodlands provide a significant natural resource within easy reach of North Weald Bassett. There is an opportunity to connect people to these ancient woodlands, through improved physical connections and legibility, to bring them into people's consciousness. This would need to be carefully managed to ensure that their ecological interest features are not harmed.
- 3.8 There are a variety of species rich grasslands, wetland and reedbeds that are also located in the area including relatively recent flood alleviation works.
- 3.9 There is significant potential to connect people to these landscape assets drawing out cultural and ecological heritage while building new relationships between local people and their environment. Carefully considered Natural play opportunities, seating, low key interpretation and art, could engage local people to connect with these areas.
- 3.10 The provision of SANG should complement the existing network of Natural Green space to provide a more coherent and attractive network.



- **A1** – Roughtalleys Wood, LoWS 114
- **A2** – Roughtalleys Wood, LoWS 108
- **A3** – Birching Coppice Complex, LoWS 116 (138.2 ha)
- **A4** – Ongar Park Woods LoWS 129 (6.8 ha)
- **A7** – A7 Reynkyns Wood LoWS 145 (3.0 ha)

**BAP Habitats** – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK); Ancient Woodland (Essex)

- **A5** – Ongar Radio Station LoWS 130 (10.8 ha)

**BAP Habitats** – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK)

**Selection Criteria** - HC28 – Small Component Mosaics

- **A6** – Tylers Green Grasslands LoWS 130 (10.8 ha)
- **A9** – Weald Common LNR LoWS 124 (1.2 ha)

**BAP Habitats** - Species-rich Grasslands (Essex)

- **A8** – Church Lane Flood Meadow LoWS 118 (3.5 ha)
- **BAP Habitats** – Lowland Fens, Reedbeds (UK). Reedbeds (Essex)

## Heritage

- 3.11 North Weald Bassett has an interesting variety of built and landscape heritage. The woodland remnants of Ongar Great Park, one of the earliest deer parks dating back to the 11th century, exist to the south of the town, while ancient woodlands with distinctive coppiced trees are landscape remnants of the formerly common practice of coppicing timber on rotation.
- 3.12 Immediately to the south of North Weald Bassett is the North Weald Redoubt Scheduled Monument. It was constructed in the 1890's as a mobilisation centre as part of a comprehensive military scheme known as the London Defence Positions drawn up to protect the capital in the event of enemy invasion. It was reused as a radio station after the First World War and has a remarkable level of survival. To the west, on the edges of Thornwood, lies the moated site known as Marshalls which is likely to have been constructed between 1250 and 1350, and which is also a Scheduled Monument.
- 3.13 There is significant potential to connect and illuminate this landscape and built heritage for example relating the Marshalls moated site with that at Latton Priory.

## Parks and Amenity Green Space

- 3.14 The Council's Open Space Strategy shows that there is a undersupply of amenity green space in North Weald Bassett and that there are no parks. The existing amenity green space consists primarily of short cut grass and therefore has the potential to be enhanced in terms of its amenity, biodiversity and community offer.
- 3.15 The recreation ground is the main amenity green space within North Weald Bassett and includes play and sports facilities as well as a community hub.
- 3.16 In the context of development the recreation ground offers the potential, particularly if additional land from within the site allocation is provided, to be upgraded into an urban park. This would be positive initiative in terms of creating a space that that would support community integration, by providing a place where people from new and existing communities can come together. Any such initiative should be of the



## Allotments

- 3.20 North Weald Bassett, in line with the District as a whole, has an adequate supply of allotments in relation to Fields In Trust standards. Engagement with the North Weald Bassett community in the development of the emerging masterplan should test the supply of allotments to ensure that provision continues to meet community needs.
- 3.21 Alongside this food growing opportunities should be developed in a wider sense. Allotments and food growing are key components of the network of green spaces that will provide the green infrastructure that can aid the development of cohesive and healthy communities. To do this new allotment provision should, through its location and allocation, serve new and existing communities. While limited public access can help build a strong community within allotments it also limits the public engaging with food growing. Therefore proposals should look to expand the variety of productive landscapes and to look to engage new users with them.

## Movement

- 3.22 There is an established network of both Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and informal routes that run through the surrounding countryside. These routes are well used but as with routes across the District there is room for improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding. Such improvements should focus on promoting links between the

existing community, the emerging masterplan areas, the surrounding countryside and between settlements.

- 3.23 There is considerable community support for a wider active travel (walking and cycling) network to connect North Weald Bassett to both Latton Priory and Epping. As set out in the main body of this document the Council support active travel and will look to work with landowners/developers, the community and other stakeholders to secure these opportunities. The route of the Epping-Ongar Railway line between North Weald Bassett and Epping could present a significant opportunity for such a link.
- 3.24 The Essex Way, which runs 82 miles across Essex from Epping to the coast at Harwich, lies just to the south of North Weald Bassett. The development and enhancement of the PROW network provides a good opportunity to link into this wider network.
- 3.25 Significant barriers to movement exist in both the M11 and the A414. Nevertheless the Council will work with landowners, developers and stakeholders to explore ways of circumventing these barriers.

### Opportunities

- 3.26 Opportunities identified are in line with the key principles for the development of strategic sites as set out in section 4:
- 1 – Connecting into or creating landscape attractors.
  - 2 – Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside
  - 3 – Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANGS
  - 4 – Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside

### **Connect into the big landscape attractors**

- 3.27 Due to the distance between North Weald Bassett and the Stort and Lea Valleys it is not envisaged that these will serve as significant attractions – unless accessed by car. However, the promotion of wider strategic footpaths including a route north to tie into Latton Priory and to heritage assets in the locality should be pursued.

### **Access between existing and proposed communities and into the surrounding countryside**

- 3.28 Easy, safe and attractive walking and cycling connections between neighbourhoods and open spaces are key to building a successful network of green spaces. To deliver these connections improved accessibility, legibility and way-finding. Key areas to address will include:
- A green Loop to link new green space with key existing local green spaces and attractors particularly North Weald Common and the North Weald Redoubt and the Recreation Ground. Wayfinding and easy links through North Weald Bassett will be key to achieving this.
  - A series of wider routes with improved legibility and access would provide longer walks and provide connections that link to strategic routes such as the Essex Way to the south.

### **Complimentary network of green open spaces tying together new and existing communities, including the provision of SANG**

- 3.29 The proposed network of paths described above aims to provide improved access to existing green spaces where this would not affect their ecological interest features.

### **Reveal and Enhance**

- Build ecological links between established habitats.
- Where suitable look to lift canopies and clear scrub to allow views into woodland areas.
- Enhance habitats through improved management including to the North Weald Common.
- Explore the idea of tree planting to North Weald Common to establish future large field trees
- Look for overlap between people and ecology such as leaving some large felled trees in woodlands or retaining low branches on appropriate trees when pruning for play opportunities.

### **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space**

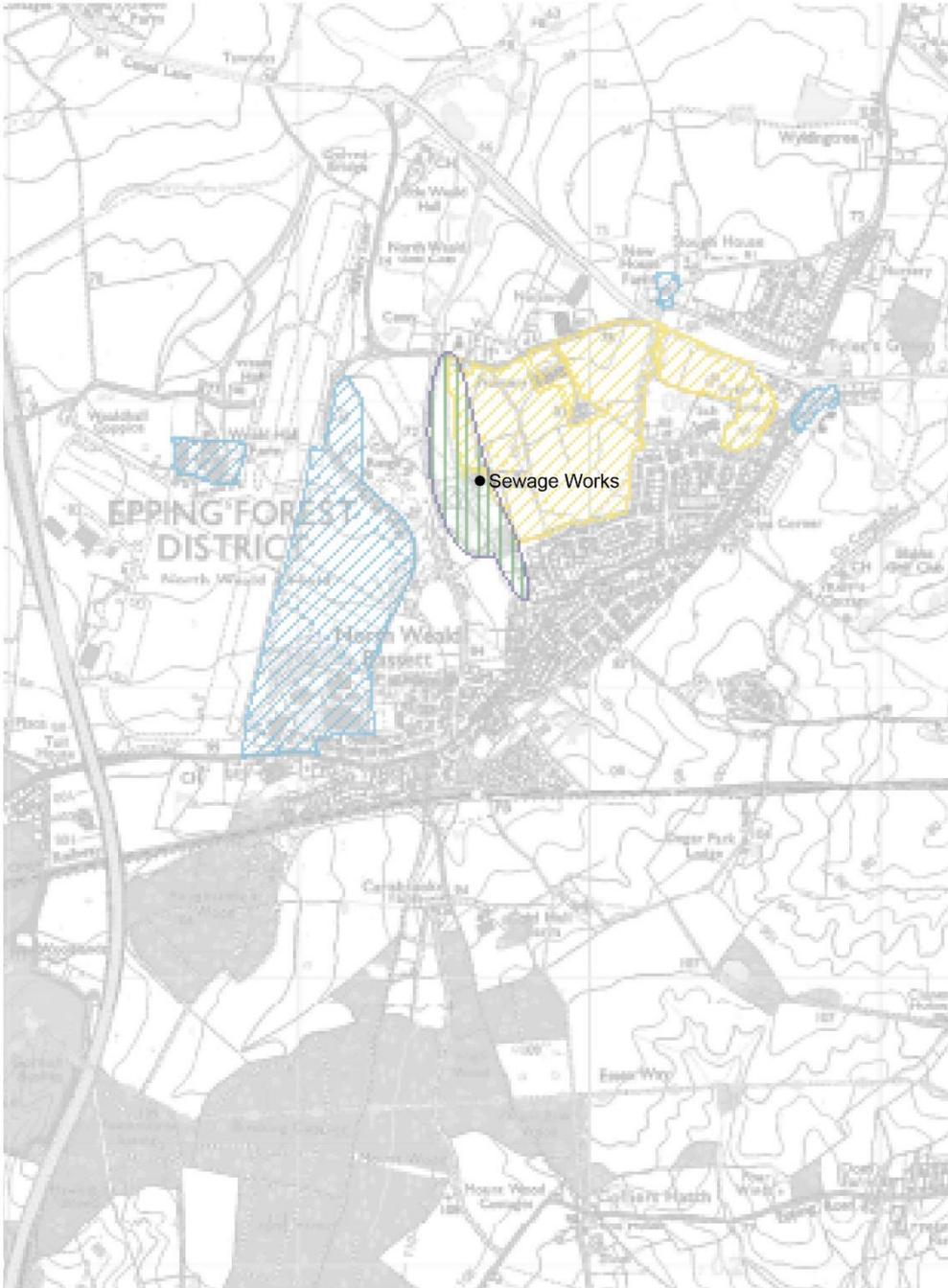
- 3.30 The provision of SANG can complement the existing network of Natural Green space offer in North Weald Basset. The location of the proposed space, set in a flood plain and between the emerging Local Plan's commercial and residential allocations, offers a myriad of opportunities both for the creation of distinctive and valuable habitats as well as the opportunity to allow people to connect with these habitats.
- 3.31 The Council owns a portion of the proposed SANG and, in its landowner role, is currently engaging with the site promoters of the residential led Masterplan to better understand how this land could be effectively integrated into the SANG offer in North Weald Bassett.
- 3.32 Upon agreement between the parties on the size, location and typology of SANG, in line with Section 1 above, the Council, as local planning authority, will engage with Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest on the effectiveness of the approach.

## **Timescales**

- 3.33 The residential led Masterplan in North Weald Bassett has made good progress. Topic based meetings on sustainable transport, provision of green space, land drainage and design have been carried out and the Masterplan has been to a Quality Review Panel.
- 3.34 Background work is currently being undertaken to support the development of the North Weald Airfield masterplan. The Council as local planning authority is in discussions with the landowner to agree a Planning Performance Agreement to manage the process.
- 3.35 The provision and delivery of SANG is a priority for the residential Masterplan site in North Weald Bassett.

## **Moving Forwards**

- 3.36 The Council, as local planning authority, and the site promoters/land owners of the residential Masterplan Area are committed to the delivery of an appropriate SANG offer in North Weald Bassett.
- 3.37 The parties are engaging proactively to bring forward suitable proposals to fulfil the requirement for SANG which can be endorsed through the Masterplan process.



- Allocation Residential
- Allocation Commercial
- Proposed Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space

### **Complimentary Network**

3.38 Provision of other open space typologies will be master planned through the new development. This should be designed in a way to encourage use by both new and existing communities and be developed through the master planning process to ensure a balance of open space typologies across the wider area. Any approach should include improvements outside the site allocation boundary to develop the wider network. Some key spaces to consider will be:

- The development of the recreation ground to include high quality play and urban park facilities to become a focal point for new and existing communities.
- Consideration of broadening the food growing theme to outside of the allotment.
- Potential to develop existing basketball court and facilities for young people in existing play areas by the common.

### **Activation and interpretation projects to engage a wider range of people with the countryside**

3.39 This will involve initiatives including sensitively integrated play, art and interpretation. Key opportunities that will be considered will include those identified landscape and heritage assets set out earlier in this section.