



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

**Joint Examination of the
Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-2032
and the
East Herts District Plan 2011-2033**

Birchall Garden Suburb/East of Welwyn Garden

Examination Hearing Statements

Matters and Issues

**Matter 7 - Historic Heritage and
Urban Design**

Matter 7 Historic Heritage and urban design

There are a number of historic heritage assets within or close to the site, some of which are of national significance. In preparing Local Plans the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to recognize that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires them to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

Issues

Heritage Assets

- 33) Is there an evidence base that has assessed the sensitivity of development to the nearby Heritage assets, including montages of the views affected (as recommended by the Heritage Impact Assessment produced for the Councils by Beacon Planning)?**

Response

- a) In line with the recommendations of the Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment (July 2016) (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **HIS3**, East Herts ref: **ENV/004**) Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts requested the site promoter to submit photomontages to assist with the assessment of the impact of the proposed development to nearby heritage assets. A total of 8 photomontages have been submitted to date. These cover views from four separate viewpoints including from the south and the east where key heritage assets are located.
- b) The photomontages are in the Welwyn Hatfield examination library (ref: **EX37**) and the East Herts examination library (ref: **ED171**).

- 34) If so, has the allocation had full regard to this evidence?**

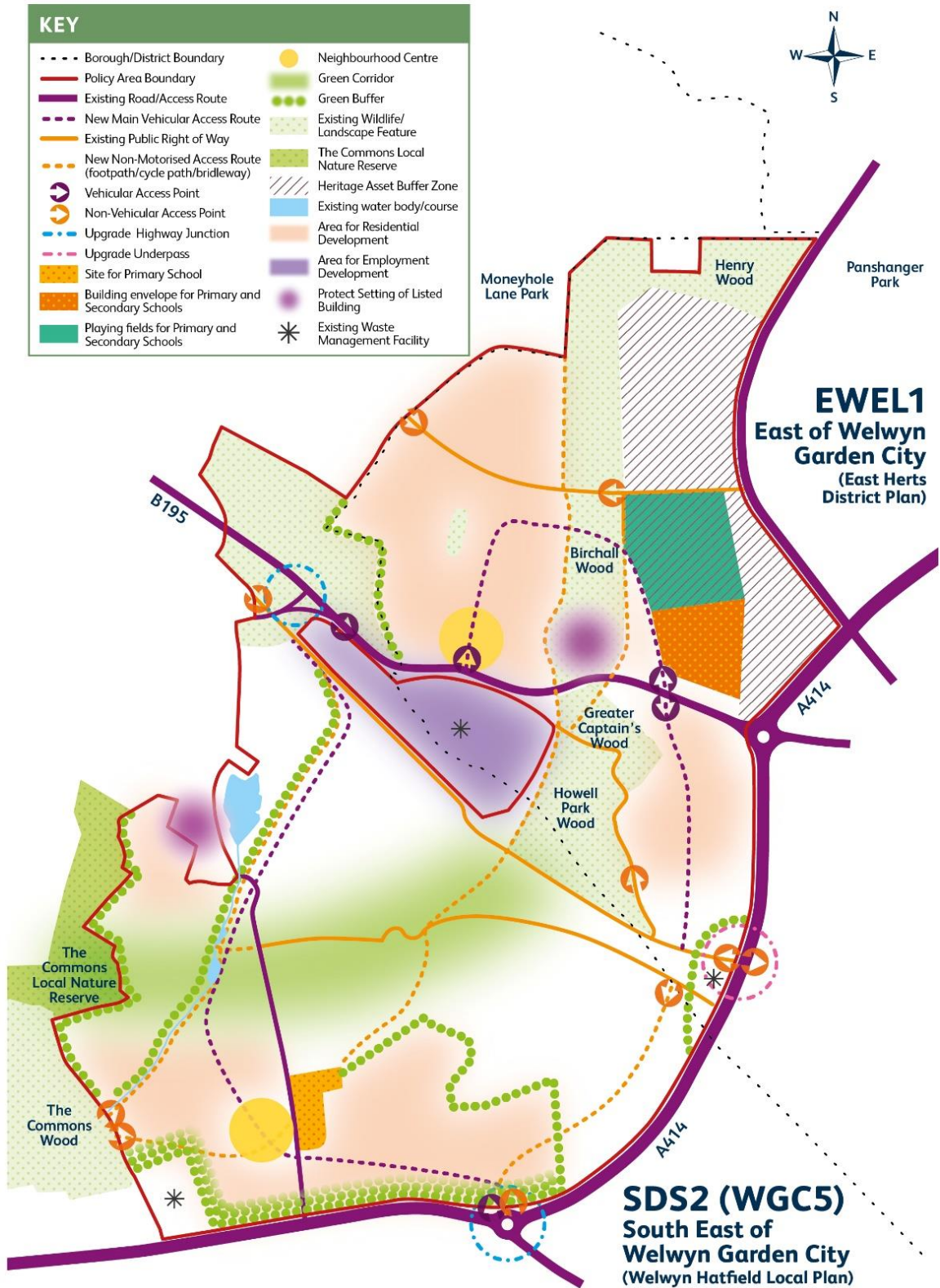
Response

- a) Birchall Garden Suburb has been allocated having full regard to the evidence including the Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment (July 2016) (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **HIS3**, East Herts ref: **ENV/004**) and photomontages submitted by the site promoter.
- b) Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts have signed a Statement of Common Ground with Historic England relating to Birchall Garden Suburb (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **EX30**, East Herts ref: **ED165**). Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts have proposed a number of modifications to their plans in response to Historic England's concerns and the findings of the Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment (July 2016).

- c) In their representation on the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan, Historic England expressed concerns relating to the part of Birchall Garden Suburb falling within Welwyn Hatfield. They stated that careful consideration should be given to the extent of the development and that, in their view, development extends too far south and would lead to an erosion of the setting of Hatfield House. Historic England proposed that development should be set back from the southern boundary of the site (the A414), that the boundary of the allocation be redrawn to reflect this, and that the indicative capacity of the site be reduced accordingly.
- d) The Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) (July 2016), prepared by Beacon Planning, indicates that the southern extremity of the proposed site allocation within Welwyn Hatfield would start to enclose the eastern views from Hatfield House with development, to the detriment of the Park. However, the HIA also indicated that there is scope for development which will need to be carefully considered and designed to integrate into the landscape. The HIA further mentions that the mitigation required will depend upon the extent and nature of development that comes forward, with the retention of open spaces and landscaping being suggested as a means of mitigating potential impacts.
- e) It is agreed with Historic England that the impact of the development on the setting of Hatfield House and Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden can be mitigated by stepping back development from the southern boundary of the site and providing an enhanced green buffer between the development and the A414. Accordingly a modification has been made to the Birchall Garden Suburb Strategy Diagram in order to increase the extent of the green buffer.
- f) In their representations on the East Herts District Plan and in subsequent discussions, Historic England also expressed concerns around proposed development north of the B195 between the woodland of Henry Wood and Panshanger Registered Park and Garden (land falling within East Herts). This parcel of land forms part of the setting of Birchall Farm and Panshanger RPG as well as being part of the former Cole Green Parkland, a Capability Brown designed landscape. There are also views across the valley to Essendon Conservation Area and Church. The HIA found that if Panshanger Registered Park and Garden was to be substantially enclosed by development up to or very close to its boundaries, this would further separate the heritage asset from the context in which it should be experienced and has potential to harm the heritage significance. The HIA recommended that a buffer zone be retained to the west of Panshanger Registered Park and Garden to help mitigate the impact of the development. The Development Concept Diagram in the HIA suggested an area of open space for this parcel of land with no built development.
- g) In order to protect the landscape context of Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and to protect the setting of Birchall Farm, it has been agreed to make a further modification to the Birchall Garden Suburb Strategy Diagram. The revised diagram differentiates between the built envelope of the primary and secondary schools and their playing fields. The built envelope has been located to the south of the primary and secondary school site close to the B195. Configuring the site in this way with the

playing fields to the north, will help to provide a stronger heritage buffer to Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and help conserve the setting of the Registered Park and Garden and Birchall Farm through protecting the openness of the surrounding landscape. Careful design of the school buildings and boundary treatment will be needed to help protect the setting of these heritage assets.

Figure 12 Birchall Garden Suburb



- h) It is agreed by Welwyn Hatfield, East Herts and Historic England that a masterplan approach is required to the site to ensure that harm to the historic environment is minimised. The following amendments to the policies SP19 and EWEL1 are agreed with Historic England in order to ensure that the potential impacts of proposals on heritage assets are adequately considered during the master planning stage, in line with the NPPF:

Paragraph 3

“A masterplan setting out the quantum and distribution of land use, key views to protect heritage assets, access, sustainable design and layout principles will be prepared by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and East Herts District Council, working with the landowner and other key stakeholders.”

Bullet point 10

Conservation and, where appropriate, Protection and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, including Panshanger Registered Park and Garden, Hatfield House, Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden, Birchall Farm and Holwellhyde Farmhouse, both on-site and in the wider area, through careful masterplanning and appropriate mitigation measures, having regard to the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment.

- i) Furthermore, a paragraph of supporting text will be added to both plans as follows:
- “Given the presence of designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the development a Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared. The Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment July 2016, prepared by Beacon Planning Ltd, considered the potential impact of development at Birchall Garden Suburb on heritage assets including Panshanger Registered Park and Garden, Hatfield House, Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden, Birchall Farm and Holwellhyde Farmhouse. The assessment made a number of recommendations to help conserve and enhance heritage assets including the need for an appropriate buffer to protect the setting of Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and the retention of open spaces and use of landscaping to mitigate the potential impact on the wider setting of Hatfield House. The masterplanning and subsequent development of the site will take place having regard to the findings of the heritage impact assessment.”
- j) The site promoter will be required to provide a Landscape and Views Impact Analysis alongside the submitted photomontages to inform the masterplan for the site.

- 35) **Would development in the south-eastern part of the site, in proximity to the A414, be visible from Hatfield House and its Historic Park and from the Essendon heritage assets? Would development in the north western and eastern part of the site be visible from Panshanger Park?**

Response

- a) The photomontages submitted by the site promoter illustrate the extent to which the proposed development would be visible from nearby heritage assets (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **EX37**, East Herts ref: **ED171**).
- b) Proposed buildings within the Welwyn Hatfield portion of the development would be visible from Hatfield House Historic Park and Garden as a thin ribbon of development set well below the skyline (see **EX37G** and **EX37H**).
- c) The upper levels of part of proposed development within Welwyn Hatfield would be visible from Essendon though set below the skyline (see **EX37B** and **EX37C**).
- d) From Panshanger Park the proposed school buildings would be visible below the distant skyline. The playing fields of the school would be visible in part as would the proposed local centre and housing beyond. New housing immediately south of Birchall Wood would be visible (see **EX37E** and **EX37F**).

36) If so, would the development be harmful to the settings of the heritage assets?

Response

- a) Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts consider that any harm caused to the setting of heritage assets as a result of the Birchall Garden Suburb development proposals can be mitigated through careful masterplanning of the site giving detailed consideration to the siting of development and use of appropriate landscaping.
- b) The Statement of Common Ground agreed between Welwyn Hatfield, East Herts and Historic England (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **EX30**, East Herts ref: **ED165**) provides for a number of modifications to the plans of Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts to further mitigate the impact. In particular two changes to the Birchall Garden Suburb strategy diagram has been agreed with Historic England.
- c) The first change relates to the Welwyn Hatfield part of the development and further mitigates the impact of the proposal on the setting of Hatfield House and Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden by stepping back development from the southern boundary of the site and providing an enhanced green buffer between the development and the A414. The precise form of this buffer will be determined through the masterplanning process having regard to further detailed evidence and in consultation with Historic England.
- d) The second change relates to the East Herts part of the development. In order to protect the landscape context of Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and to protect the setting of Birchall Farm the revised diagram differentiates between the built envelope of the primary and secondary schools and their playing fields. The built envelope has been located to the south of the primary and secondary school site close to the B195. Configuring the site in this way with the playing fields to the north, will help to provide a stronger heritage buffer to Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and help conserve the setting of the Registered Park and Garden and Birchall Farm through protecting the openness of the surrounding landscape. The masterplanning process will consider the design of the school buildings and boundary

treatment to help protect the setting of these heritage assets. This will be done in consultation with Historic England and the Local Education Authority to ensure that the proposals meet their requirements.

37) To what extent could the proposals harm the setting of Holwell Court and Holwellhyde Farmhouse? Has the impact of development on their setting been given adequate consideration in the formulation of the notional layout?

Response

- a) Welwyn Hatfield considers that harm to the setting of Holwellhyde Farmhouse and Holwell Court can be mitigated through careful masterplanning of Birchall Garden Suburb giving detailed consideration to the siting of development and use of appropriate landscaping.
- b) The Birchall Garden Suburb Strategy Diagram (Figure 12 in the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan) indicates a need to protect Holwellhyde Farmhouse, which is a grade II Listed Building. In line with the requirements of Policy SP19 a masterplan will be prepared for the site consistent with the strategy diagram. Historic England has raised no objection in respect of the proposed masterplanning approach to ensure the conservation of Holwellhyde Farmhouse. Welwyn Hatfield will consult with Historic England as part of the masterplanning process in keeping with agreed commitment set out in the Statement of Common ground between Welwyn Hatfield, East Herts and Historic England (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **EX30**/East Herts ref: **ED165**).
- c) As part of the Statement of Common Ground between Welwyn Hatfield, East Herts and Historic England a number of modifications have been proposed which will provide additional protection in policy terms to the setting of Holwellhyde Farmhouse.
- d) Bullet point 10 of Policy SP19 and EWEL1 is modified as follows:

Conservation and, where appropriate, Protection and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, including Panshanger Registered Park and Garden, Hatfield House, Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden, Birchall Farm and Holwellhyde Farmhouse, both on-site and in the wider area, through careful masterplanning and appropriate mitigation measures, having regard to the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment.

- e) Furthermore, a paragraph of supporting text will be added to both plans as follows:
“Given the presence of designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the development a Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared. The Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment July 2016, prepared by Beacon Planning Ltd, considered the potential impact of development at Birchall Garden Suburb on heritage assets including Panshanger Registered Park and Garden, Hatfield House, Hatfield House Registered Park and Garden, Birchall Farm and Holwellhyde Farmhouse. The assessment made a number of recommendations to help conserve and enhance heritage assets including the need for an appropriate buffer to protect the setting of Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and the retention of open spaces and use of landscaping to mitigate the potential impact on the wider setting of Hatfield House. The masterplanning and subsequent development of the site will take place having regard to the findings of the heritage impact assessment.”

- f) Holwell Court, a Grade II Listed building set within a non-designated Historic Park and Garden, is located to the southeast of the Welwyn Hatfield part of Birchall Garden Suburb separated by the barrier of the A414. The Panshanger Park and Environs Heritage Impact Assessment (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **HIS/3**, East Herts ref: **ENV/004**) concluded that the development of Birchall Garden Suburb is considered to have a limited potential effect on the heritage significance of Holwell Court. To ensure that harm is sufficiently mitigated the potential impacts on Holwell House will be carefully considered through the masterplanning process for Birchall Garden Suburb in consultation with Historic England. Detailed consideration will be given to how the siting of development and use of landscaping can mitigate any harm from the development. A modification to policies SP19 and EWEL1 is proposed in the Statement of Common Ground between Welwyn Hatfield, East Herts and Historic England as follows to ensure that the setting of heritage assets is sufficiently protected:

Paragraph 3

A masterplan setting out the quantum and distribution of land use, [key views to protect heritage assets](#), access, sustainable design and layout principles will be prepared by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and East Herts District Council, working with the landowner and other key stakeholders.

Garden City principles

The original Garden City was founded on a set of principles that sought to establish a settlement that minimized its impact on the surrounding Countryside. A southern boundary known as the “Salisbury Line” was established beyond which it was not considered appropriate for the town to extend in a southerly direction.

- 38) Does the proposed new edge to Welwyn Garden City maintain the principles of urban containment upon which the Garden City was founded to the same extent as the original boundary?**

Response

- a) The first Plan for Welwyn Garden City was published in 1920. It makes no reference to the Salisbury Line and pre-dates the property transaction to which the Salisbury line reference relates.
- b) The plan for the town was based on the principles established in Ebenezer’s Howards book *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*, published in 1898 (and republished in 1902, under the title *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*). Its central concept of combining the best of town and country living is best captured in the famous *three magnet* diagram. Low density, attractive development in close proximity to the countryside, agricultural land and open space was central to the Garden City philosophy for creating a ‘town for healthy living’.

- c) A brief history of the Garden City is set out in the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area Appraisal 2007 (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **HIS/1**). This includes both Louis de Soissons illustrations of the original 1920 plan for the town (page 6) and the later 1949 plan (page 7) for a larger town following Welwyn Garden City's formal designation as a New Town in 1948. Ebenezer Howard's view was that towns have a finite size beyond which they should not expand, with growth instead being directed to a ring of new villages. The plans for the town however did not identify a boundary beyond which it should not expand. This did not effectively take place until the formal designation of the Green Belt.
- d) The Note on the Salisbury Line (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **EX32**) sets out that the Salisbury Line relates to a land purchase agreement between the Gascoyne Cecil Estate and the Welwyn Garden City Company in 1946, which would allow for the expansion of Welwyn Garden City. The note also sets out that the agreement was subject to further variations such as to allow for the building of the QE2 hospital in Welwyn Garden City.
- e) The concept of an 'original boundary' is therefore open to interpretation as the town has been expanded a number of times since its inception. The existing Green Belt boundary defines the extent of the town as it is today. The history of the Green Belt in Welwyn Hatfield is briefly set out in the Green Belt Topic Paper (Welwyn Hatfield ref: **TPA/2**). The inner boundary around Welwyn Garden City was firstly formally defined in the 1993 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and it has remained unaltered in the subsequent two Local Plans. The existing Green Belt boundary, in the main, follows the property boundaries of development in Welwyn Garden City reinforced in some locations by narrow woodland or tree/scrub belts. The new Green Belt boundary will ensure consistency with Local Plan strategies for meeting the requirements for sustainable development and will be defined using physical features, which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent, consistent with paragraph 85 of the NPPF.

39) Some of the residential areas appear isolated and remote from the urban area of Welwyn Garden City? How does this fit in with Garden City principles.

Response

- a) Birchall Garden Suburb comprises two areas of residential-led mixed use development separated by a large area of informal public open space. The open space will be delivered on an area of land which has previously been filled and has not been promoted for any form of built development.
- b) The proposals have been developed such that the new suburb is fully integrated. Whilst some parts of the suburb are more remote from the existing urban areas of Welwyn Garden City, the development has been planned so that it is sustainable. The site will deliver two new primary schools, a new secondary school (in the East Herts part of the development) a new neighbourhood centre in the East Herts part of the development and a small neighbourhood centre in the Welwyn Hatfield part of the development, each in an accessible location to meet the day-to-day retail needs of new residents, together with an employment area, community facilities, including healthcare (within the East Herts part of the development) and leisure facilities. Sustainable transport measures will link the site to the centre of Welwyn Garden City.

- c) Ebenezer Howard's vision for garden cities was to provide people with decent places to live away from the poor living conditions of cities and rural poverty in a place that combined the best features of towns and the best features of the country with jobs, health, social and recreational facilities close at hand - a town designed for healthy living.
- d) Garden City principles are recognised as a basis for good planning. The challenge is to consider how Garden City principles can be updated to reflect the current needs of the town over the next plan period. Taking into account the outcomes from a stakeholder workshop involving the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), developers, landowners, residents' groups and associations from Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, the Welwyn Garden City Society and the Advisory Team for Large Applications, a series of Garden City Principles has been derived by Welwyn Hatfield to guide the masterplanning of strategic developments such as Birchall Garden Suburb.
- e) In accordance with Policy SP19 and Policy EWEL1 a masterplan which will form the basis of an SPD will be prepared to ensure that the site is planned comprehensively. The masterplan will ensure that development is consistent with the updated garden city principles which are set out in Section 14 of the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission (page 131) and which include:
- Land value capture and long term stewardship of high quality green infrastructure, biodiversity, open spaces, allotments and landscaping.
 - A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance.
 - Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains.
 - Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities will be incorporated into walkable, vibrant, sociable, healthy neighbourhoods with a clear sense of place and a clustered, identifiable hub.
 - Integrated and accessible transport systems should be integrated into the design of new neighbourhoods from the outset, ensuring that walking, cycling and public transport are attractive, to encourage healthy lifestyles.
- f) In particular, the SPD for the development will address access and movement to, within and from the site including the improvement of pedestrian links, cycle paths, passenger transport and community transport initiatives. The development will provide substantial areas of formal and informal open spaces which will provide north-south and east west connections, including upgraded routes for walkers and cyclists, including the Lea Valley Path and Cole Green Way. The Birchall Garden Suburb Strategy Diagram sets out the broad framework for access and movement into, around and out of the site. Further the masterplan will provide additional detail about the delivery of a strategic green infrastructure corridor through the development which will contribute to wider ecological networks and support access for residents of the development and the wider community to open space and the broader countryside surrounding the town.