

# Land North West of Buntingford

MASTERPLAN DOCUMENT

DECEMBER 2021



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This masterplan document has been collaboratively developed with East Herts Council, Buntingford Town Council and other key stakeholders to ensure the delivery of a high quality, beautiful and sustainable place on Land North West of Buntingford.

The masterplan presents a site and context appraisal, assessment of relevant policies, design principles and a clear design 'vision' that will help to guide future planning applications and ensure best use is made of this sustainable site in accordance with the agreed design vision.





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# 1.0 Land North West of Buntingford Vision

This masterplan document has been collaboratively developed with East Herts Council, Buntingford Town Council and other key stakeholders to ensure the delivery of a high quality, beautiful and sustainable place on Land North West of Buntingford. By setting out a vision and key design principles, the masterplan aims to ensure the delivery of a high quality sustainable scheme that will enhance the local area and provide beautiful places to live, in accordance with the updated National Planning Policy Framework and policy DES1 (Masterplanning) of the East Herts District Plan.

## Design Vision

The design vision for Land North West of Buntingford is to create a high quality, landscape and design-led scheme for around 55 new homes (including 40% affordable homes), together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure, that provides an attractive green approach to the northwest of the town through appropriate landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting along Neale Drive, whilst providing attractive green spaces with native planting that create a strong landscape framework for the site. New homes will be in keeping with the local vernacular and will reflect the character of the surrounding area. The scheme will be designed to integrate with the existing homes to the east and will provide high levels of connectivity to encourage active travel (cycling and walking). New homes will adopt a dwelling-centric, fabric first approach which locks in carbon-savings for the life of the building with opportunities for renewable energy technologies to achieve further carbon savings; and electric vehicle charging points and water efficient measures provided to encourage sustainable living.

The design vision will be delivered through provision of the following key elements:

## High Quality Beautiful Design

- Create a beautiful traditional style scheme in keeping with the local vernacular, incorporating a materials palette that reflects local character.
- Provide a high-quality approach to the northwest of the town, through landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting along Neale Drive, to create a sense of arrival.
- Incorporate new hedgerow and tree planting throughout in order to provide a beautiful setting for new homes.
- Create a range of building types, heights and densities that respond positively to the site's topography and landscape features.
- Dual aspect buildings on key corner plots.
- Position buildings in order to mitigate potential noise from the A10 (buildings fronting onto the A10 and private amenity space to the rear).
- Create an east-west green corridor incorporating the existing oak tree in the southern part of the site.
- Provision of an attractive public realm through the use of appropriate surface treatments, street tree planting and soft landscaping.

## Movement and Connections

- Provide for a well-connected site and create a place that encourages active travel (cycling and walking) over car-based trips.
- Provide for cycle and pedestrian links with the town centre and the neighbouring scheme, including provision of a new cycle and pedestrian link with Baker Drive.
- Provide for an access to the Hertfordshire County Council land to the south in order to allow for its potential future use for education/sport and recreation.
- Provide active frontages within the scheme to influence driver behaviour and create a traffic calmed environment for residents.

## Landscaping and Green Space

- Provide a high-quality approach to the northwest of the town, through appropriate landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting along Neale Drive.
- Adopt a landscape-led approach that integrates with the proposed green space to the east of the site and retains existing landscape features.
- Provide attractive green spaces with native planting in order to create a strong landscape framework.
- Retention and reinforcement of existing landscape features, including the creation of an east-west green corridor incorporating the existing oak tree in the southern part of the site.
- Deliver a biodiversity net gain through appropriate planting that encourages wildlife, including planting within sustainable drainage features.
- Incorporate new hedgerow and tree planting throughout in order to provide a beautiful setting for new homes.
- Creation of an area of species rich wildflower meadow planting in the northern part of the site, providing opportunities for informal recreation and the creation of new wildlife habitat.
- Provide access to proposed green spaces to the east including provision of a green link with Baker Drive.

## Sustainability

- Provide new homes that adopt a dwelling-centric, fabric first approach which locks in carbon-savings for the life of the building with opportunities for renewable energy technologies to achieve further carbon savings.
- Provide for electric vehicle charging points in safe and accessible locations.
- Design buildings to minimise the use of mains water through the inclusion of water efficient appliances and rainwater harvesting.
- Provide secure and weatherproof cycle parking and storage facilities for all homes.

## 2.0 Planning Policy Context

### The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

Relevant national planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was first published in March 2012, and most recently updated in July 2021. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, with emphasis on three key objectives: social, economic and environmental sustainability. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in Paragraph 11.

Section 12 of the NPPF addresses design matters, with Paragraph 124 explaining that “good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.” It also highlights that **“the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve”**. Paragraph 130 further details design objectives that new development is expected to meet:

1. function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
2. visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
3. sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;
4. establish or maintain a strong sense of place;
5. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
6. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

### East Herts District Plan, 2018

The Land North West of Buntingford falls within the ‘Buntingford Settlement’ where policies BUNT1 and DPS2 apply. Policy DPS2 of the District Plan confirms that residential development within settlement boundaries is acceptable in principle.

The explanatory text for policy BUNT1 notes that:

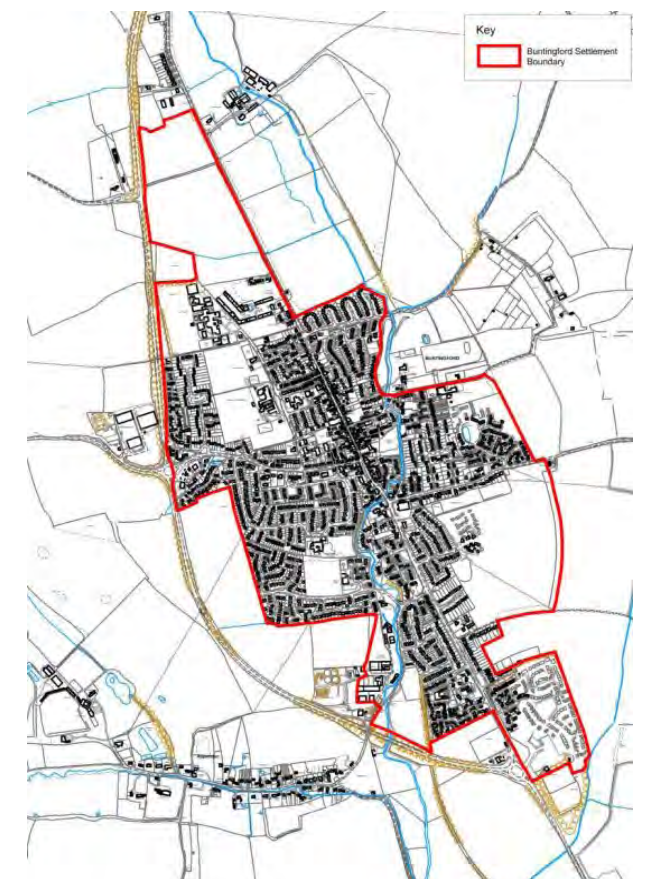
“...additional homes will be provided which will consist of a mix of dwelling types and sizes, including bungalows and specialist retirement accommodation, to ensure that Buntingford’s population is able to access a balanced housing market catering for all life stages. The provision of affordable housing as part of new residential and mixed-use development schemes will allow emerging households to be able to remain living in Buntingford in accommodation suited to their needs”.

Policy DES1 (Masterplanning) introduces a requirement to prepare a Masterplan setting out the quantum and distribution of land uses; access; sustainable high quality design and layout principles; necessary infrastructure; the relationship between the site and other adjacent and nearby land uses; landscape and heritage assets; and other relevant matters

### Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan, May 2017

The site’s location within the settlement boundary is also confirmed in the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan – where Policy HD1 confirms that new housing development (which it is inferred also includes class C2 development) is acceptable in principle, subject to such development meeting the following criteria:

- All new developments should be sensitive to the landscape and be of a height that does not impact adversely on views from the countryside. Where appropriate an LVIA will be required (policy HD2);
- Green energy principles will be encouraged and supported (policy HD3), and
- New housing design should respect the rural / semi-rural character of the area, having regard to the design code (policy HD4 / Appendix 4) and reflect local housing needs in terms of mix and tenure (according to the SHMA and other up-to-date evidence) (policy HD7)



Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan, May 2017

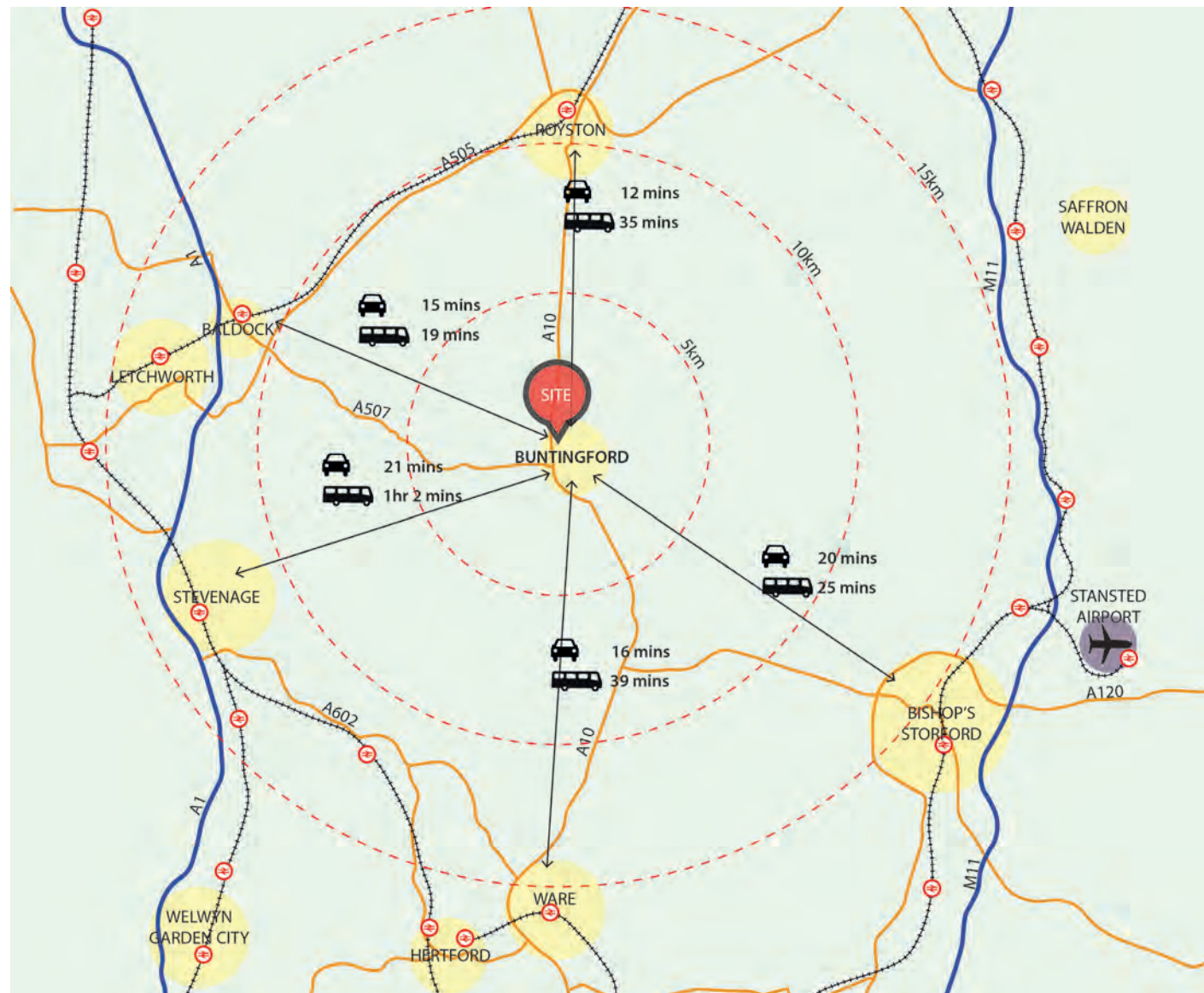


## 3.0 Site in Context: Strategic Location

Buntingford is located at the centre of a large rural area in the northern half of the District. The town has developed in a valley setting astride the River Rib and the Roman Road Ermine Street.

Being surrounded by an extensive rural hinterland enables Buntingford to function as an important rural service centre for the outlying villages in the north of the District and it has an extensive range of services and facilities that serve the day-to-day needs of its residents.

The site is located to the north west of Buntingford on land to the east of the A10 and west of Ermine Street.





# 4.0 Site in Context: The Site



## THE SITE

The site consists of two parcels of land, north and south of Neale Drive. The A10 runs along the western boundary and the recently completed Redrow Homes scheme at Ermine Street lies to the east.

The site consists of vacant land with boundary hedgerows and trees. The southern parcel features a mature oak tree, which will be retained as part of the scheme.



Views of the Site



Site Location



# 5.0 Sustainable Location

Buntingford functions as an important rural service centre for the outlying villages in the north of the District. It has a vibrant local community demonstrated by the numerous clubs and societies that are active in the town and it has an extensive range of services and facilities that serve the day-to-day needs of residents, within easy walking and cycling distance of the site.



Buntingford Library



Large Co-Op near the High Street



Playground less than 200m from the site



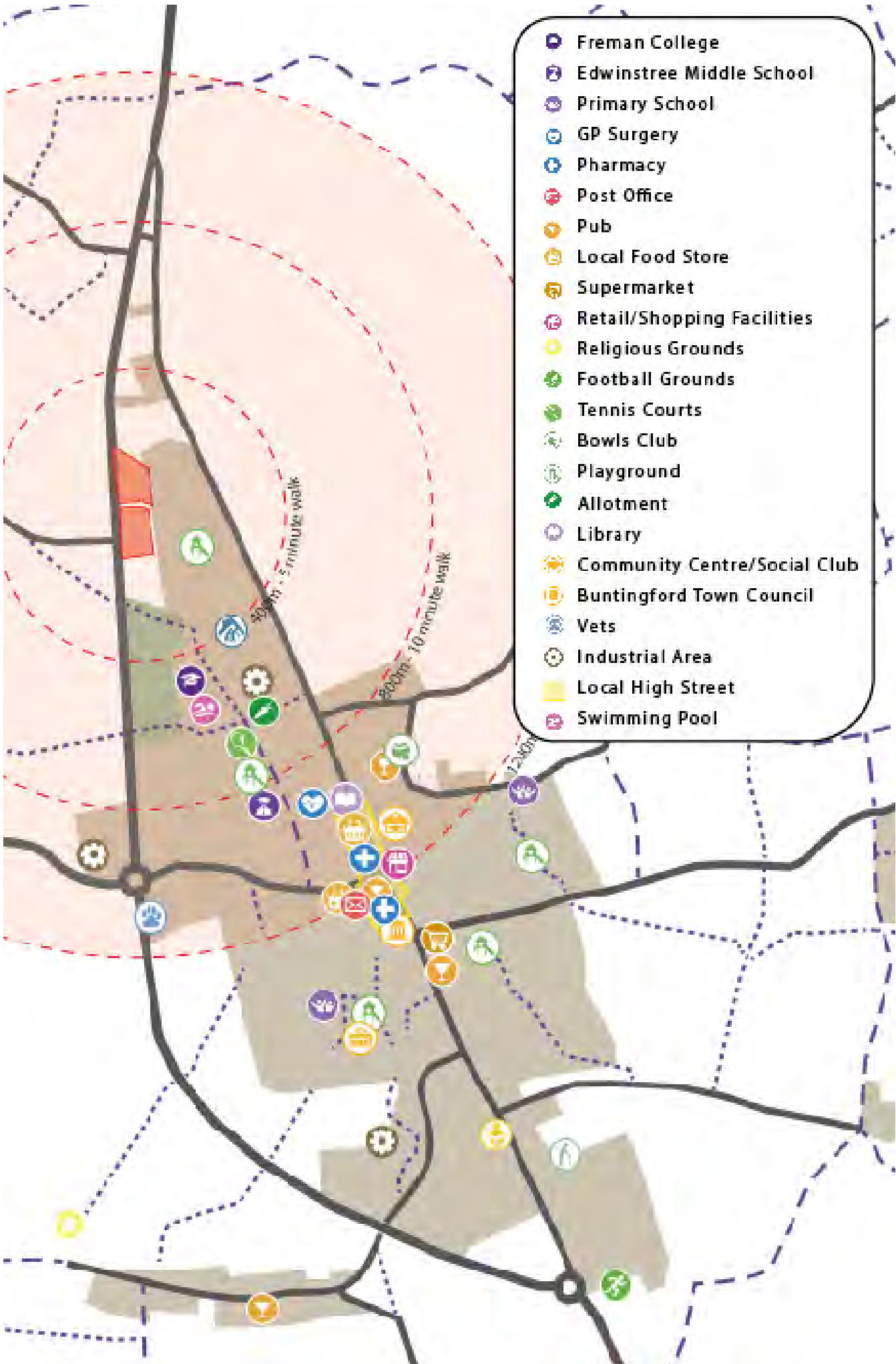
St Peter's Church



Pharmacy in the centre of the town



One of the pubs within the town





# 6.0 Connectivity

The site is located in a highly sustainable location within easy walking and cycling distance of the town centre and associated services and facilities. A 3m shared foot/cycleway on the northern side of Neale Drive provides a safe and convenient link with existing cycle and pedestrian infrastructure on Ermine Street.

Arriva busses provide services in and around Buntingford that connect with Hertford, Ware and other local towns and villages. Proposed bus stops on Neale Drive are located immediately adjacent to the site.

The Connectivity and Movement Plan diagram shows the site in the context of the existing public rights of way network, showing potential off-road walking routes, including Footpath 35, which provides a link onto Bowling Green Lane to the south.



View along Ermine Street looking north



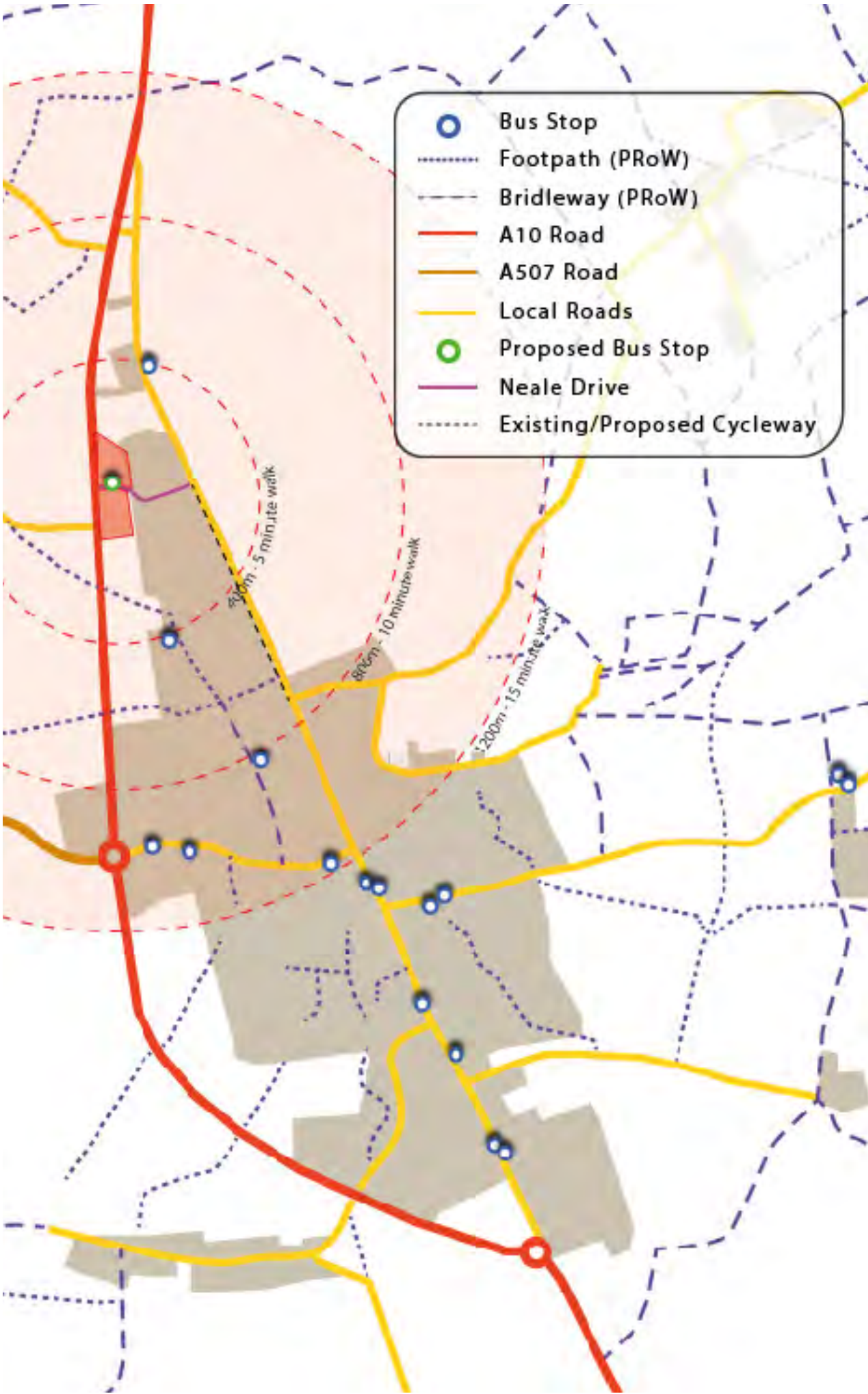
Buntingford PRow network



Public right of way from Ermine Street



Bus stop along the High Street



Connectivity & Movement Plan



# 7.0 Character Assessment

The town has a varied roof line, particularly along the High Street within the historic core. There are a mix of housing types and the scheme will be designed to reflect this variation.

Other notable features that are present within the town are historic frontages with a large opening for movement and vehicles and predominantly portrait orientation windows

The character of the site itself is also heavily influenced by the recent Redrow Homes scheme to the east.

The photographs below provide examples of some of the architectural styles within the Town. The Buntingford Town Evolution diagram shows the evolution of the Town with the historic core shown in maroon and more recent schemes, including the Redrow Homes scheme to the east of the site, shaded pink.



- Site Boundary
- Up to 1900
- Up to 1925
- Up to 1950
- Up to 1982
- Up to present day

Buntingford Town Evolution



# 8.0 Site Opportunities and Considerations

The Opportunities and Considerations diagram provides a summary of the key considerations for the site and its surrounding context, based upon detailed site surveys and analysis that have been undertaken to inform the master planning process.

The diagram also identifies site opportunities that have helped to inform the evolving design. These include the existing oak tree within the southern parcel and access from the A10.

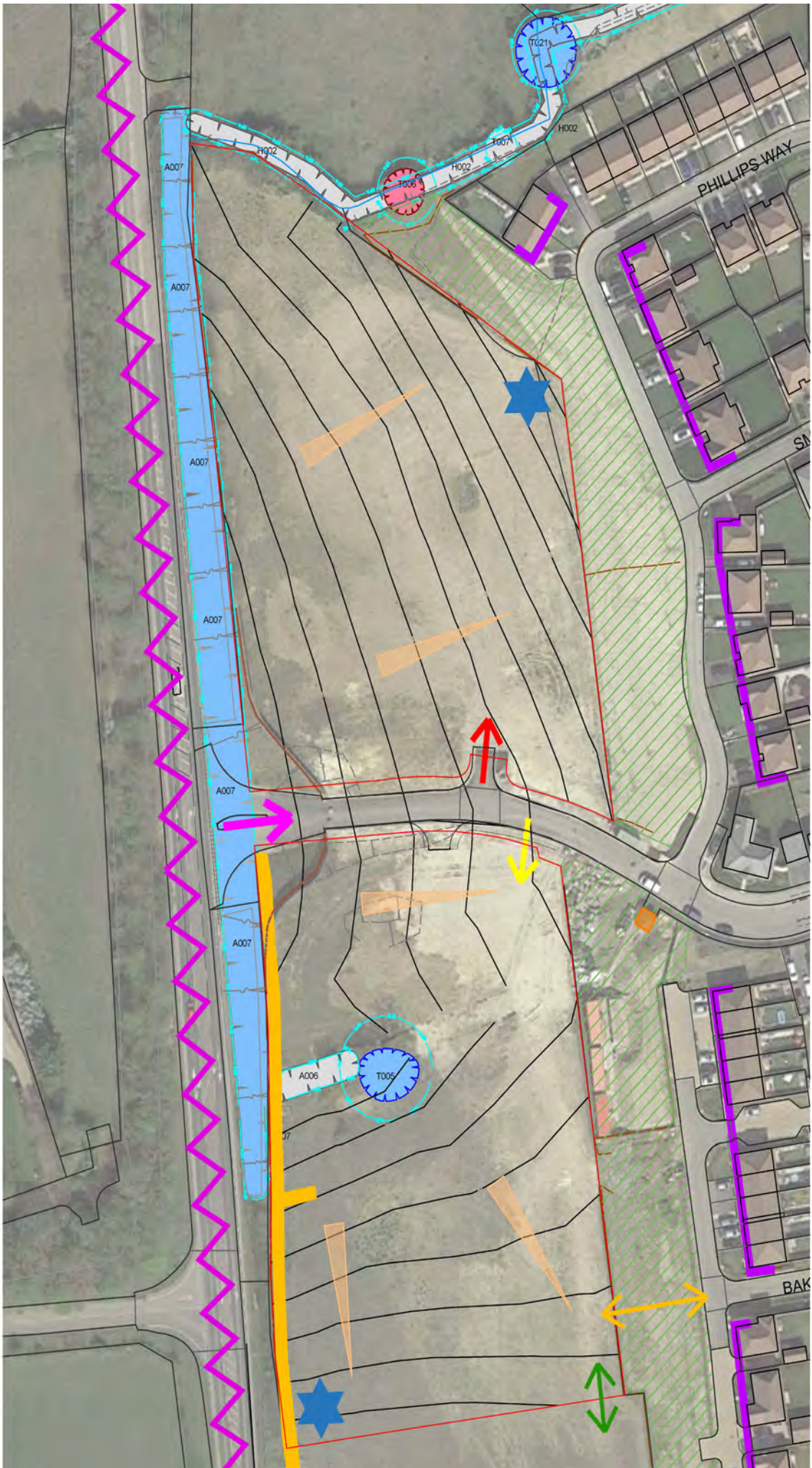


View from the new access point from the A10, looking east



View west looking at the category B oak tree in the middle of the southern parcel

- Site Boundary
- Access from A10 - new northern gateway to town
- Main access point into the northern parcel
- Potential access point into southern parcel
- Potential pedestrian & cycle connections
- Potential all traffic access to the sports & recreation land
- Sub station
- Adjacent landscape features from Redrow scheme
- Category B tree
- Category B hedgerow
- Category C hedgerow
- Category U hedgerow
- Root protection area
- Existing development frontage which overlooks the site
- Topography contours (5m intervals)
- Direction of slope
- Lowest point of the site-potential area for SuDs
- A10 noise
- Alignment of cable & easement
- Fence



Opportunities and Considerations Diagram



## 9.0 Sustainable Construction

- The scheme will be designed to function as a highly sustainable addition to the Town, utilising existing footpath links and providing new foot and cycleway connections to maximise the potential for people to walk and cycle along attractive routes, providing connectivity with key destinations within Buntingford.
- The scheme will create a Green Infrastructure network incorporating existing landscape features, new landscaping and SuDS features, which will be designed to provide new habitat.
- All new homes will include a dwelling centric, fabric first approach which locks in carbon savings for the life of the building.
- Further carbon savings through building centric, renewable energy technologies will be confirmed during the detailed design process, including installation of carbon saving technology such as photovoltaic (solar) panels and air source heat pumps.
- Provision will be made for electric vehicle charging points in safe and accessible locations as part of the detailed design, in accordance with planning policy.
- Buildings will seek to minimise the use of mains water through the inclusion of water saving measures and equipment (i.e. water efficient appliances) and rain water harvesting. New homes will be designed so that mains water consumption will meet a target of 110 litres or less per head per day and opportunities to include grey water recycling will be considered as part of its detailed design.
- During construction a Waste Management Plan will be prepared to identify means of reducing waste, and appropriate methods of disposal of waste to minimise harm to the environment. Post construction, the scheme will make provision for the storage and collection of recycling waste.





# 10.0 Design Evolution

The following sequence of diagrams show the key principles that have helped to shape the design concept, taking into account the site context, policy requirements and opportunities and considerations set out in the previous sections.

**1. The site today** comprises vacant land between the A10 and the recently completed Redrow Homes scheme, which lies to the east. Access is provided from Neale Drive, which runs through the middle of the site. The site will provide an important approach to the town from the northwest and this is reflected in the scheme design.



**2. The site is located within the 'Buntingford Settlement Boundary'** where new homes are acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with relevant policies within the East Herts District Plan and the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan. These policies have been taken into account as part of the design evolution.





## 10.0 Design Evolution

**3. Retention of existing landscape features**, including planting along the A10 and the green space to the east of the site are important elements for the scheme design. These features provide a strong landscape framework for the scheme.



**4. The Landscape Framework** will be enhanced through new tree and hedgerow planting in order to create a high-quality green approach to the northwest of the town and provide a beautiful setting for people to live. This includes the retention of the existing oak tree within the southern parcel and the creation of a green corridor in this part of the site.





# 10.0 Design Evolution

5. In order to **mitigate potential noise from the A10** buildings will be designed to front onto the A10 with private amenity space positioned to the rear of buildings adopting principles of good acoustic design. This requirement begins to create a framework and structure for the buildings.



6. The site falls gently towards the east and southeast. **Sustainable Drainage Features** are positioned within the lower lying parts of the site using the site's existing topography to manage on-site surface water. The site **topography** also provides an opportunity to consider single storey buildings within the northern part of the site and 2-storey buildings and apartments elsewhere.





## 10.0 Design Evolution

7. The site's location off the A10 to the northwest of the town creates an opportunity to create a **high-quality approach to the northwest of the town**, through appropriate landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting along Neale Drive, with buildings positioned to front onto the A10, the proposed green space to the east and the land for potential future education/ sport and recreation use to the south.



8. The site topography and surrounding context provide the opportunity to incorporate a **range of building types, heights and densities**, which will help to provide for a range of housing needs, including single storey homes to meet the needs of an ageing population, whilst responding positively to the site's landform and visual context.





## 10.0 Design Evolution

9. The main site access is from Neale Drive. In order to **encourage cycling and walking**, the new residential streets will be designed to provide **high levels of connectivity** throughout the scheme. Connectivity will be provided with the shared foot/cycleway on Neale Drive, together with a new cycle/pedestrian link providing connectivity with Baker Drive and the existing community to the east. The scheme also provides for an access to the potential future education/ sport and recreation land to the south.



**10.** The principles set out within the previous diagrams help to create a **Design Framework** for the site that forms the basis for the Masterplan and design aspirations set out in the following section. The Masterplan will form the basis for the future scheme design.





# 11.0 Masterplan Engagement

As part of the masterplan preparation a public consultation website was hosted between 17 September and 11 October 2021 to provide the local community with an opportunity to engage in the masterplan and provide comments on how the scheme should be brought forward to ensure the delivery of a high quality, beautiful and sustainable scheme. The consultation website was advertised via a leaflet that was distributed to around 350 homes within an agreed consultation zone and was also advertised via the Buntingford Town Council website and Facebook page. During the consultation there were 303 unique visitors to the website and 34 feedback forms were received. In addition to being able to engage with the masterplan via the website, the consultation leaflet also included a contact telephone number and a postal address for anyone who was unable to access the website.

The following provides a summary of the key messages from the feedback received:

- Support for the principle of development and acknowledgement that it complies with the Buntingford Neighbourhood Plan.
- Support for the creation of a green approach along Neale Drive and the need to “finish-off” the north-western part of the town.
- Support for the provision of bungalows.
- Suggestion that apartments should be positioned adjacent to the A10.
- Comments surrounding the need for new homes and the need for genuinely affordable homes for people living in Buntingford.
- The need to consider the impact of traffic on the town and for highway improvements associated with the Redrow scheme to be delivered.
- The need to ensure that there is sufficient community infrastructure alongside the provision of new homes (NB. improvements towards health and education will be secured at the planning application stage).
- The need to ensure that sustainable construction techniques are considered at the detailed design stage.

The need to consider an access to the HCC land to the south of the site, including the potential for this land to come forward for a Special Educational Needs School.

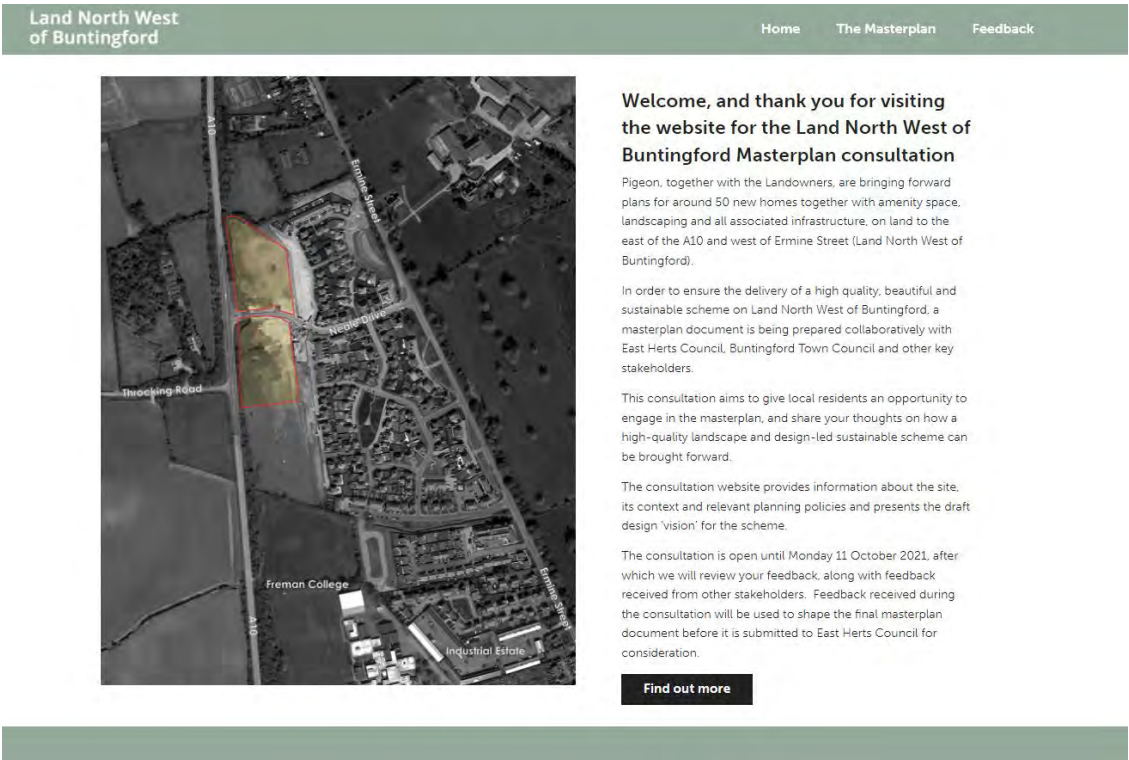
As part of the masterplan preparation, the scheme was also presented to the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel on the 27 September 2021.

Following completion of the formal masterplan consultation and receipt of feedback from the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel, further meetings were held with the Shaping Buntingford Steering Group on 21 October and 7 December 2021. During these meetings, updated draft plans were presented to the Steering Group to enable the masterplan to be finalised prior to submission to East Herts Council.

The key changes to the masterplan that have followed the engagement activities described above are:

- Creating enhanced east-west connections through the scheme to encourage active travel (cycling and walking) over car-based travel.
- Creation of a larger area of amenity space as part of an east-west green corridor around the existing oak tree in the southern part of the site.
- Reconfiguring the southern part of the site to create a more clearly defined southern edge that responds positively to the land to the south.
- Repositioning the apartments in the south-western corner of the site to create increased separation with the A10.
- Relocating car parking for the apartments so that it creates a buffer between the new homes and the A10.
- Introduction of more varied roof heights and building form, together with increased density within the southern part of the site so the scheme better reflects the character of Buntingford.
- Provision of access (including footway provision) to the Hertfordshire County Council land to the south in order to provide for its potential future use for education/sport and recreation.

The feedback received during the masterplan engagement has helped to shape the scheme and is reflected in the updated Design Framework and Illustrative Layout presented in the following sections. All comments received during the masterplan engagement have been fully considered and, where appropriate, have helped to shape the masterplan. Where comments have been received that are not directly related to the masterplan, these will continue to be considered as the scheme is taken forward, as part of a future planning application.





## 12.0 Design Framework

The Design Framework for the site is based upon the following key design aspirations:

- Provide a high-quality approach to the northwest of the town, through landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting along Neale Drive;
- Provide attractive green spaces with native planting in order to deliver biodiversity net gain and create a strong landscape framework, including the creation of an east-west green corridor around the existing oak tree in the southern part of the site;
- Position buildings in order to mitigate potential noise from the A10 (private amenity space positioned to the rear of buildings);
- Provide for a well-connected site and create a place that encourages active travel (cycling and walking) over car-based trips;
- Provide for an access to the Hertfordshire County Council land to the south in order to facilitate its potential future use for education/sport and recreation.
- Incorporate new hedgerow and tree planting throughout in order to provide a beautiful setting for new homes;
- Create a range of building types, heights and densities that respond positively to the site's topography, landscape features and visual context;
- Create an attractive traditional style scheme in keeping with the local vernacular, whilst incorporating a high-quality materials palette, which respects local character.
- Provide new homes that adopt a dwelling-centric, fabric first approach which locks in carbon-savings for the life of the building with opportunities for renewable energy technologies to achieve further carbon savings.
- Provide for electric vehicle charging points in safe and accessible locations and design buildings to minimise the use of mains water through the inclusion of water efficient appliances and rainwater harvesting.

The above design aspirations and the Design Framework diagram form the basis of the scheme design, and will help to inform subsequent stages of detailed design.





# 13.0 Landscape Strategy

The scheme adopts a landscape-led approach with existing landscape features together with new hedgerow and tree planting creating a strong landscape framework.

By conserving and enhancing the site’s existing landscape features, the scheme will provide a high-quality approach to the northwest of the town, through appropriate landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting along Neale Drive.

This landscape-led approach will help to integrate the site with the proposed green space to the east and will help assimilate the scheme into the existing environment and also the wider landscape setting.

Attractive green spaces will be created through native planting in order to create a strong landscape framework for the site. This will include the creation of an east-west green corridor around the existing oak tree in the southern part of the site and the creation of an area of species rich wildflower meadow planting in the northern part of the site providing opportunities for informal recreation and the creation of new wildlife habitat.

New planting and the use of native species together with appropriate planting that encourages wildlife, including planting within sustainable drainage features, will help to deliver a biodiversity net gain, whilst also helping to provide a beautiful setting for the new homes.

All areas of greenspace will be well overlooked by properties to ensure that they are attractive and safe to use.

The proposed green spaces will be designed to provide the following benefits:

- New wildlife habitat and biodiversity net gain;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) with appropriate planting to encourage wildlife;
- Create amenity value and a beautiful place for new residents; and
- Provide a high-quality approach, through appropriate landscape design and new tree and hedgerow planting.

Long-term management and maintenance of the public realm will be via an estate management company thus ensuring that all non-private landscaped areas are maintained to a suitably high standard.

SuDS and Wildflower areas



Street Trees



Boundary native tree and shrub planting





# 14.0 Illustrative Layout

The Illustrative Layout shows how the scheme could be brought forward to deliver the key design aspirations for the site in accordance with the Design Framework. It shows how the site could be brought forward to deliver a high quality landscape and design-led scheme for around 55 new homes (including 40% affordable homes), amenity space, landscaping and associated infrastructure.

The Illustrative Layout shows the creation of a strong landscape framework and how this combined with the provision of an east-west green corridor in the southern part of the site and an area of species rich wildflower meadow planting in the northern part of the site will create a beautiful setting for new homes.

New tree and hedgerow planting along the A10 and Neale Drive provide for a high quality green approach to the northwest of the town, whilst helping to reinforce the site's landscape framework.

The use of appropriate surface materials, street tree planting and soft landscaping, provide for an attractive public realm that provides for high levels of connectivity, encouraging active travel (cycling and walking) over car-based trips. The Illustrative Layout provides for a new cycle/pedestrian link with Baker Drive to the east together with potential links to the proposed green space to the east. Provision is also included for a future access to the education/sport and recreation land to the south.

A range of building types, heights and densities that respond positively to the site's topography and landscape features are shown, including provision for bungalows within the northern part of the site reflecting the character of the existing bungalows on the Redrow scheme to the east, and two storey homes and apartments elsewhere, helping to meet different housing needs.

Dual aspect buildings are shown on corner plots and at key positions in order to provide natural surveillance for existing and proposed areas of amenity space.





