Buntingford
PARKSIDE

Design & Access Statement

Buntingford, Parkside: Land South of Baldock Road

June 2024

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Hallam Land Management

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Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) is submitted in support of an outline planning application for Buntingford, Parkside to the west of Buntingford, Hertfordshire. The application is submitted by Hallam Land Management Limited.

The development proposed comprises an "Outline planning application for development of employment land (flexible use B2, B8, E(c) and E(g)), informal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from A507, with all matters reserved save for access", across a 13.28ha site.

Buntingford, Parkside has been designed as a comprehensive mixed-use scheme and is being pursued as seperate outline planning applications to be submitted for the northern and southern parcels, that can come forward independently of one another. This DAS conveys the proposals for the southern parcel, as a part of the planning application for land south of the A507 Baldock Road.

Buntingford
PARKSIDE

Purpose of the Design and Access Statement

The Design and Access Statement (DAS) is a tool to explain development proposals in a clear and legible way and document the evolution of the proposals from the original design concept to the development scheme submitted for consideration in the planning application.

The government's Guidance to Making an Application in the Planning System (2021) states that Design and Access Statements

"provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users".



Site boundary Southern Parcel

The DAS follows best practice guidance that seeks to create well-designed places using the following documents:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- Planning Practice Guidance, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- National Design Guide, 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- National Model Design Code, 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- Building for a Healthy Life, 2020, Homes England.
- Manual for Streets, 2007, Department for Transport.

Structure Of the DAS

The DAS presents the evolution of the application proposals in a logical way, first illustrating how the masterplan has evolved as a comprehensive scheme from initial concepts through to the illustrative masterplan, and demonstrating how engagement with local representatives and the public has informed the design.

The DAS then explores the matters of the planning application site, with an analysis and understanding of the site and its surrounding context, and exploring the Design & Access Matters, such as landscape, character, access and movement, layout, scale, and uses.

Design Concept for Buntingford, Parkside

This section explores the evolution of the design for Buntingford, Parkside setting out the initial thinking and principles for development, and how this translated into a masterplan informed by an understanding of the context, placemaking principles, and consultations and engagement. This reflects the design as a comprehensive scheme.

Outline Application for Land South of Baldock Road.

Context

A look at the physical, visual, social and economic context of the site and its surrounding context will identify challenges and opportunities posed, as well as the policy and guidance context within which the application is governed. This assessment influences the evolution of the design, in addition to consultation and engagement feedback.

The Design & Access Matters

This section details the application proposals, including setting out the land uses and quantum of development and green infrastructure proposed, access arrangements, layout and density of development, culminating in a proposed Development Framework Plan which sets out this information concisely and legibly.

Masterplanning and Placemaking

This section sets out our thinking on how the development components can be brought together in a way which demonstrates positive placemaking: reflecting the local design context, the character of the existing town, and how the application proposals can enhance and support the town.

Ensuring Design is Prioritised Throughout the Development Process

A range of technical analyses has informed the design of the proposal, which include, but is not limited to:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Ecological Impact Assessment;
- Employment Needs Assessment;
- Flood Risk & Drainage Strategy; and
- Utilities Assessment.

These details are set out in a suite of technical material submitted in support of the application.

‘Prioritising Design’

The DAS sets out how the evolution of the proposal has responded positively to its design context, and, together with the technical analysis, sets some key design principles which have shaped the proposal to date.

It is anticipated that key design parameters will be agreed upon through the determination process and that if the application is approved, planning conditions will require more detailed design guidance to be agreed upon prior to the submission of detailed (Reserved Matters) applications, which will be required to comply with these details alongside the design principles identified in the DAS and Development Framework Plan.

The following images illustrate exemplars of high-quality placemaking.





Team Valley, Gateshead



Old Road Campus, Oxford



Caldecotte Business Park



The Quadrant, Milton Keynes



Nottingham Science Park



Alconbury Weald

Overall design concept for Buntingford Parkside

Design Evolution

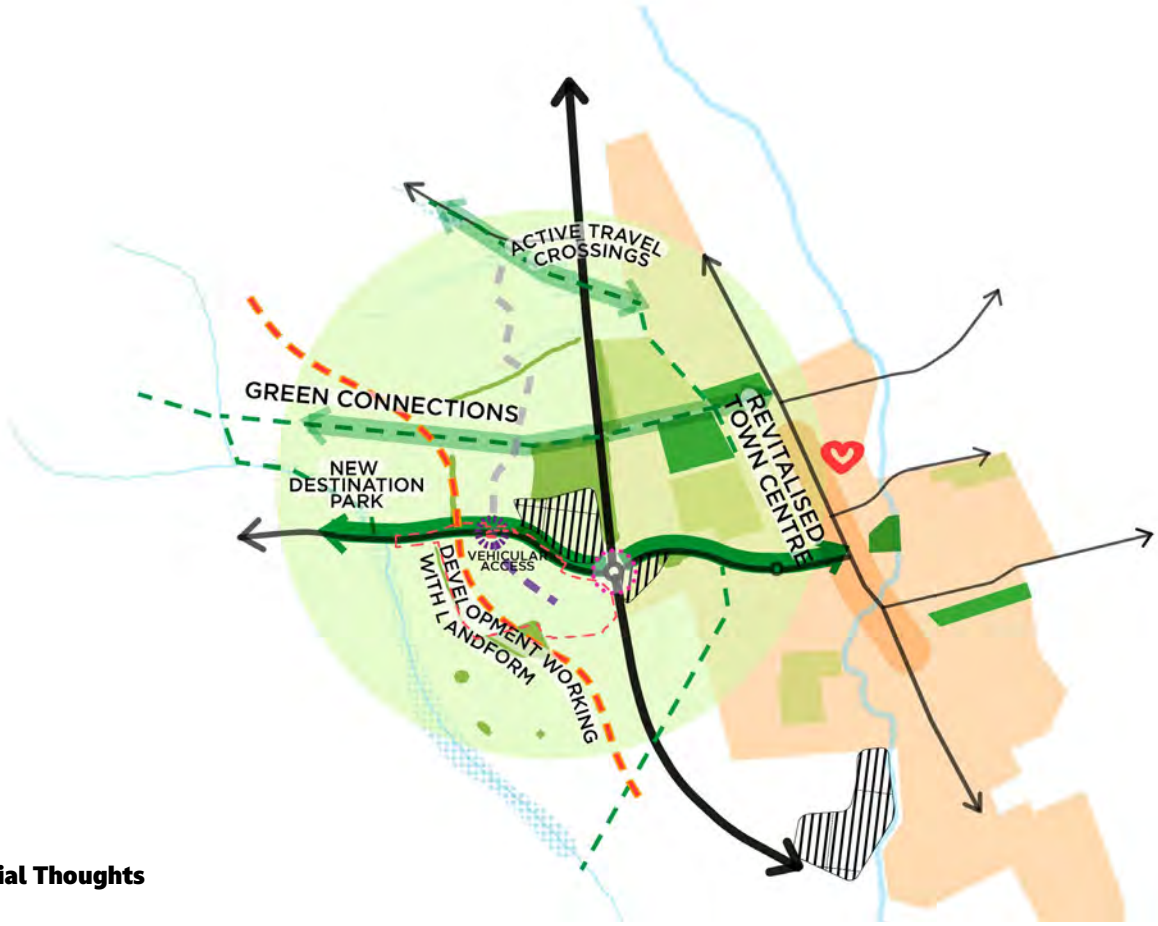
This section illustrates how the design has evolved through a series of stakeholder and public engagement events and meetings that helped to refine the design. The masterplanning approach has been to design Buntingford, Parkside as a comprehensive, mixed-use, scheme, and the evolution of the design reflects this.

Emerging Principles

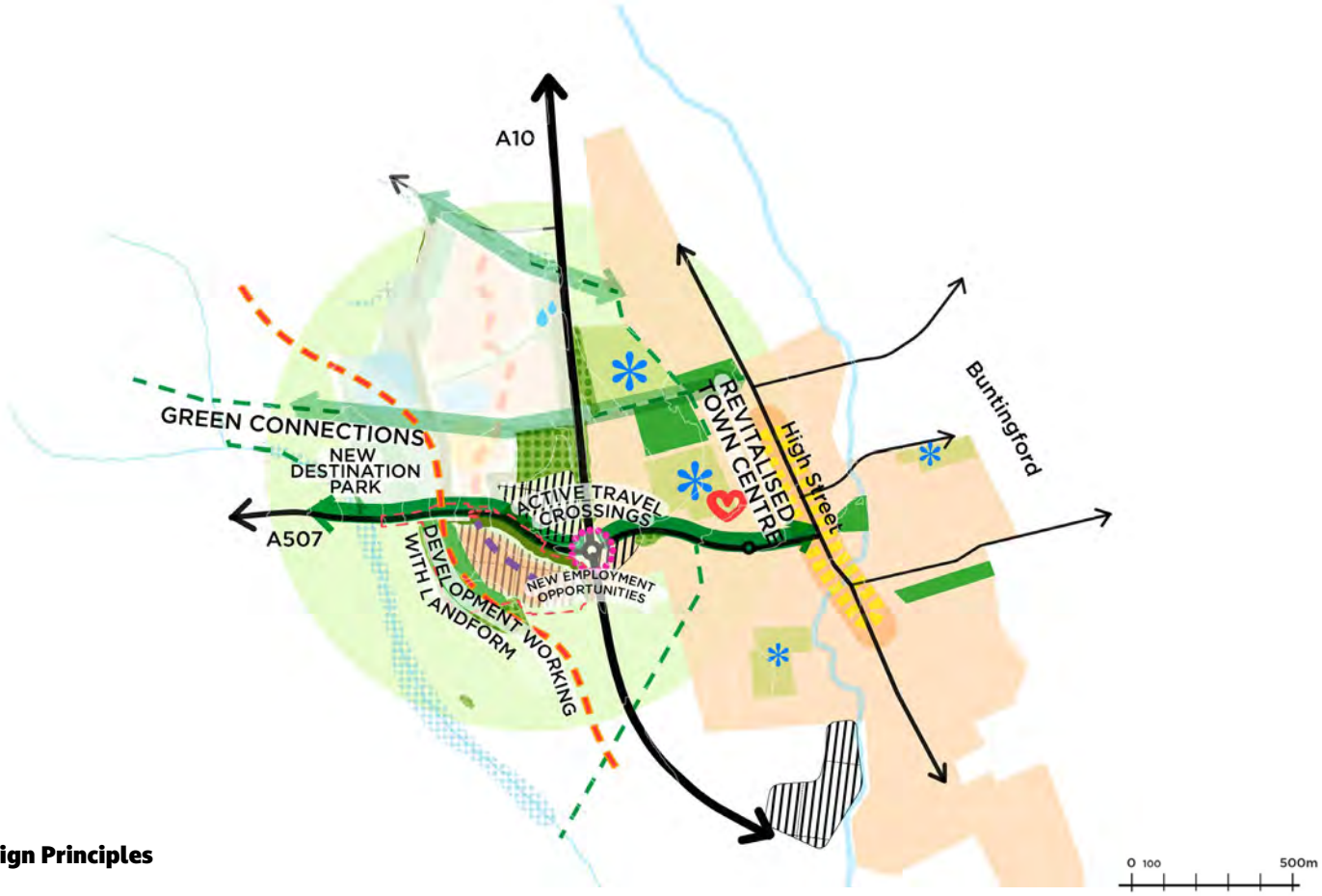
An analysis of the site and its context informed the initial thinking behind the masterplan, illustrated in this principles plan which informed the first draft masterplan.

The principles plan identifies the initial thoughts around the fundamental opportunities of the site and outlines key elements and features that will inform further iterations of the design. The proposals aimed to strengthen Buntingford, Parkside's relationship with the wider town through three key connections that prioritise active travel and serve as strong links.





Initial Thoughts



Design Principles

Stakeholder Consultation

The evolution of the masterplan has been an iterative process, ensuring the design responds to the context through a detailed site and area assessment as well as consultations to inform the design.

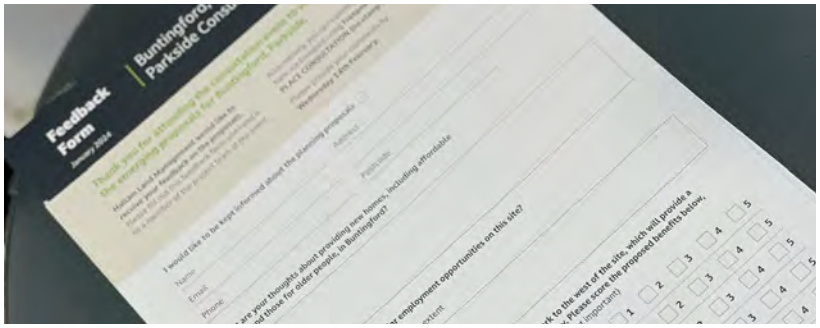
Engagement has taken place with East Herts District Council, Buntingford Town Council, Aspenden Parish Council, and Cottered and Throcking Parish Council, informing the masterplan evolution through positive discussions to ensure Buntingford, Parkside not only benefits the town and its surrounding communities but also to discuss where it can tackle local issues. Engagement has also taken place with members of the public, where an emerging masterplan, informed by meetings with local councillors, was presented at an in-person event in January 2024, and through a digital consultation platform.

Constructive discussions took place on the:

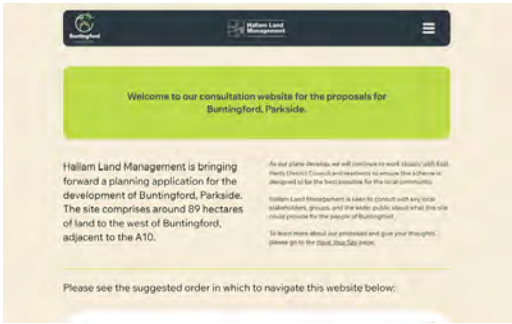
- 8th November 2023 with Buntingford Town Council,
- 19th December 2023 with Buntingford Town Council and Aspenden Parish Council,
- 31st January 2024 as a public exhibition in Buntingford, and the
- 26th February 2024 with Cottered Parish Council.

The key items discussed with local councillors are noted below.

Key Points	Action
Improvements to local schools.	Hallam Land Management are in discussions with Hertfordshire County Council about expansions needed at Edwinstree Middle School and any improvements that may be needed to Freman College. Buntingford, Parkside will promote active travel to schools through its sustainable transport offering.
Improvements to the local Health Centre.	Onsite provision has been made for a doctor's surgery, and discussions will take place with East Hert's District Council and the NHS to identify the need and requirements.
Concerns regarding traffic along the A507, traffic levels and impacts in the surrounding area.	Hallam Land Management will undertake a transport assessment and model traffic on the surrounding road network. Discussions will also take place with Hertfordshire County Council to understand what highway improvements can be made in the wider area.
Concerns around the capacity of the sewage network.	Onsite sustainable drainage is being considered as a part of the design to mitigate the impacts on the local water network and mitigate flooding. Discussions are ongoing with Thames Water regarding foul sewer capacity. The applicant is also investigating the option to provide a Water Treatment Works on-site.
If solar panels are brought forward, their design should support biodiversity and enable underlying plant growth. Queried whether housing in Buntingford, Parkside will feature solar panels.	All new homes will meet the Future Homes Standard, and could include solar panels.



Consultation feedback form



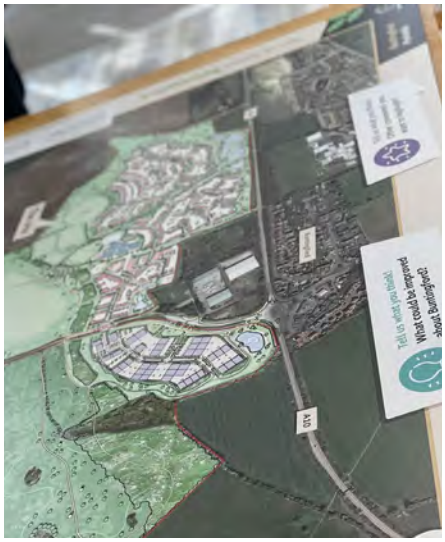
Consultation website







Consultation Masterplan







Public consultation event

Public Consultation Feedback

The public consultation was open for just over 6 weeks following an in-person public exhibition, that presented the components of the design concept, from the green and blue spaces, through to movement and community amenities, building up to the illustrative masterplan that was presented as a comprehensive, mixed-use scheme, including the northern and southern parcels. The key items raised in the consultation, and discussed in detail in the Statement of Community Involvement, are summarised below and constructively inform the masterplan evolution.

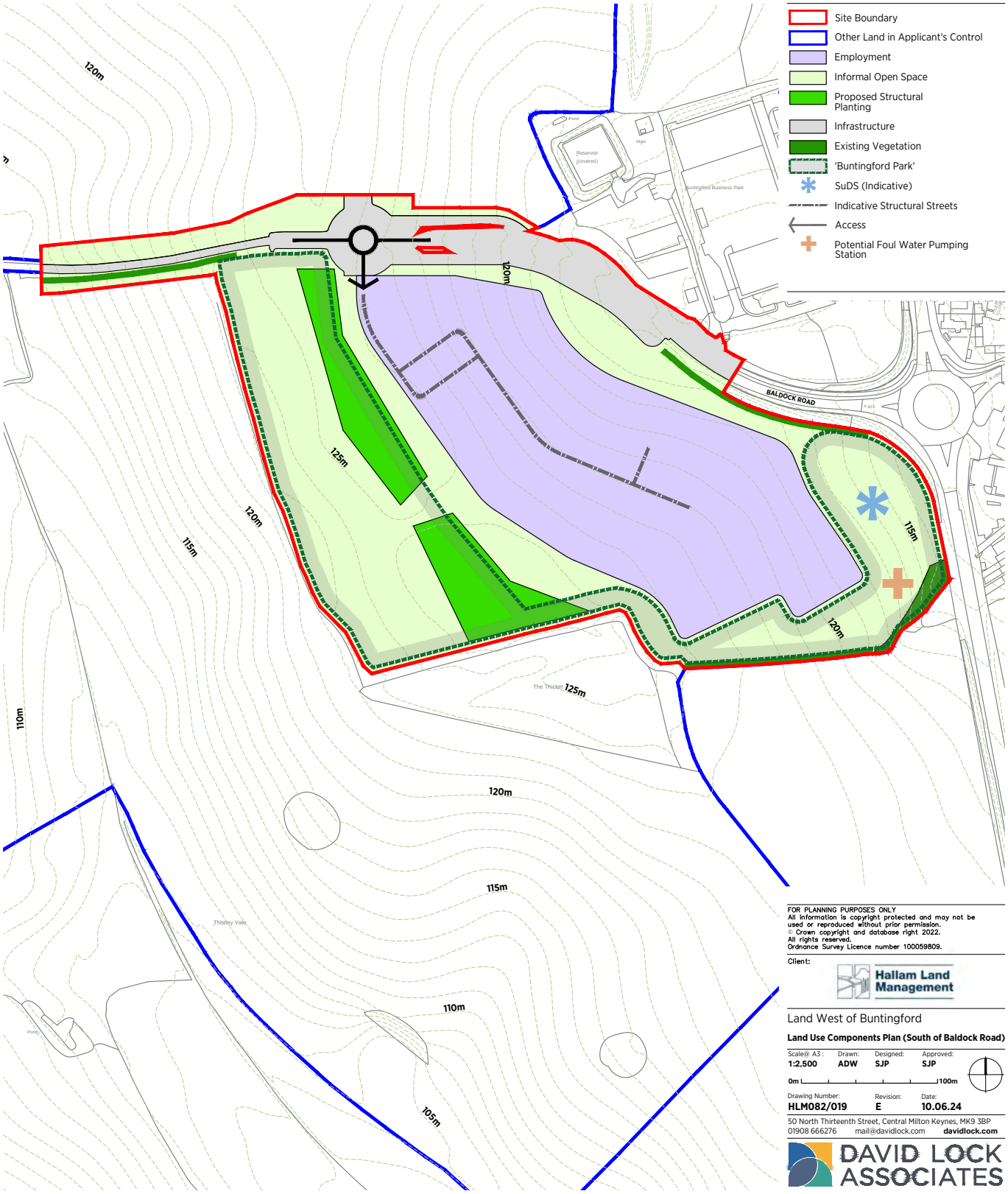
Key Points	Action
Impact on existing infrastructure and how this will impact existing residents.	Development west of the town and associated accessibility of the A10 will limit the transport impacts on the High Street, and through the provision of strong active travel connections between the existing town and Buntingford, Parkside, existing and new local services will be readily accessible on foot and bicycle to all.
Transport issues.	Appropriate access will be provided to the proposals that will cater for the associated vehicle movements and will also serve to provide high-quality connection by sustainable modes. The offsite impact of proposals will also be investigated through a detailed Transport Assessment, and should it be required, offsite mitigation will be set out in this report.
Concerns around the preservation of the Green Belt and the biodiversity net gain of the development.	A significant proportion of the land will be delivered as publicly accessible green infrastructure and the establishment of Buntingford Park to include many amenities for the whole town (e.g. allotments, playing fields etc). Buntingford, Parkside will make provision for at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity value.
Sustainability measures.	In recognition of the climate emergency, the development will incorporate a range of measures to reduce carbon emissions, mitigate the effects of climate change, and ensure the long-term resilience of the development to the effects of climate change.
Principle of development.	Further growth is required in Buntingford in recognition of the shortfall in housing land supply, recognised limited employment opportunities in the town, and in support of the review of the East Hertfordshire District Plan which is due to get underway in the coming months.
Location of development and coalescence.	Through the provision of strong active travel connectivity, the development can be integrated into the town. Hallam Land Management recognise the importance of the existing smaller settlements of Throcking, Cottered and Aspenden retaining their identity. Buntingford Park will establish a significant formal buffer between Buntingford and these smaller settlements.
Drainage system, flooding risks, and sewage.	A detailed assessment of the site has identified no significant flood risk to the site. We are aware of ongoing issues with the existing foul sewer network that serves Buntingford. A connection to the existing public sewer is achievable and once planning permission is granted we will be able to work with Thames Water to deliver their obligation to accept flows from new developments. The applicant is also investigating the option of providing a Water Treatment Works on-site.
Concerns surrounding the design of new homes and the aesthetic of the local area.	Detailed design will include a review of the unique townscape characteristics of Buntingford and inform elements of the architecture and public realm design. There is an opportunity to re-interpret some of the best local vernacular and design elements and embed them in the development of new buildings.

Development Framewok Plan

The development framework plan illustrates the vision for Buntingford, Parkside outlining the land uses and quantum of development, site access and movement, the proposed layout, scale and density and landscaping elements.

The site is being brought forward as separate outline planning applications but has been designed as a comprehensive proposal.

Development Framework Plan



Part 1
Context

Policy and Design Context

Design Influences

The National Design Guide

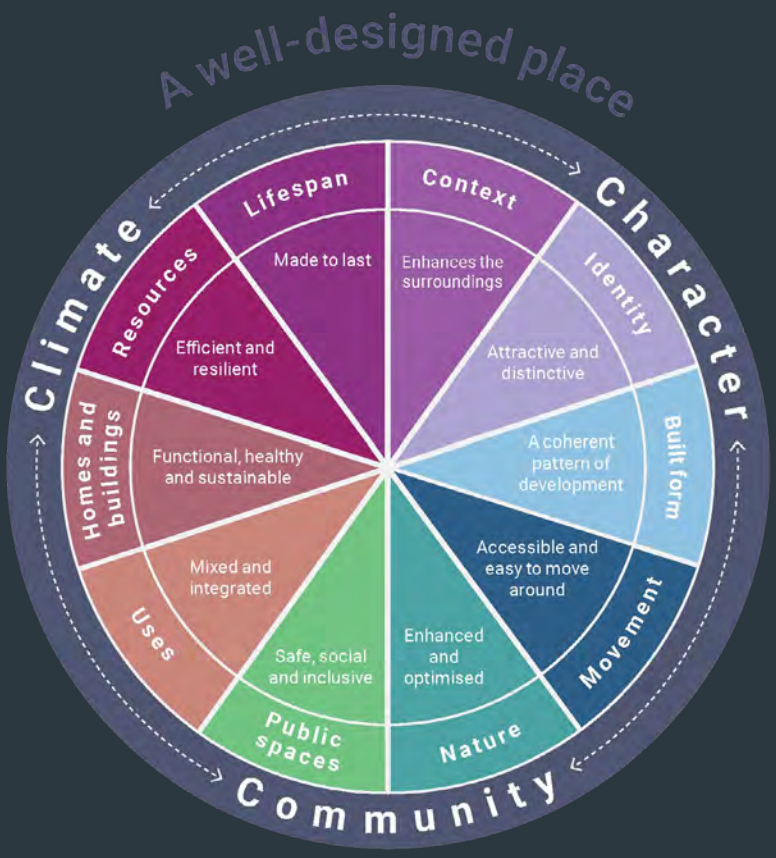
2021 – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The National Design Guide demonstrates how well-designed places can be achieved. It builds upon the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to set out the basic principles of good design using 10 characteristics.

The NDG states that:

"Well-designed places and buildings come about when there is a clearly expressed 'story' for the design concept and how it has evolved into a design proposal" which "inform and address all ten characteristics".

- CONTEXT
- IDENTITY
- BUILT FORM
- MOVEMENT
- NATURE
- PUBLIC SPACES
- USES
- HOMES AND BUILDINGS
- RESOURCES
- LIFESPAN



Building for a Healthy Life

2022 - Homes England

The Building for a Healthy Life toolkit highlights the qualities of successful places through 12 considerations to inform design and placemaking decisions from the beginning of the design process. It stems from the original Building for Life 12, seeking to create healthy places for people and nature. The guidance, produced in partnership with Homes England and NHS England allows stakeholders to assess the quality of the scheme, using a traffic light system, against the quality of each of the considerations listed throughout the guide.



Streets for a Healthy Life

2022 – Homes England

Prepared to be read as a companion to Building for a Healthy Life and the Manual for Streets, Streets for a Healthy Life looks to illustrate best practices in street design. The guide identifies the principle functions of streets and uses them as categories to critique case studies to highlight how the functions of streets change according to the street typologies.



Draft Hertfordshire Place and Movement Planning and Design Guidance

2023 – Hertfordshire County Council

The draft P&MPDG supports the Local Transport Plan by ensuring proposals achieve sustainable design. The detailed guidance is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: Setting the Scene and the Development Management Process in Hertfordshire;
- Part 2: What Sustainable and Responsible Development looks like – The Hertfordshire Vision;
- Part 3: Pre-Planning Design Requirements; and
- Part 4: Detailed Design and Specification.

This guidance seeks to strengthen the relationship between transport, land-use planning, and the environment to promote sustainable development that reduces car dependency in favour of walking, cycling and public transport. A consultation on the draft guidance closed in 2023, and so it may be subject to change.

Policy Context

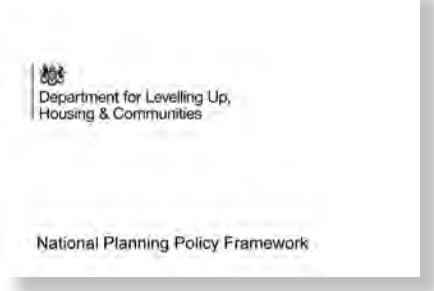
The Planning Statement provides an in-depth assessment of the planning policy context and accompanies the planning application. This section seeks to highlight the key policy documents applicable to the Design & Access Statement and illustrate how they have guided the design evolution of the proposals being put forward.

National Planning Policy Framework

2023 – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the strategic planning policies for England seeking to encourage sustainable growth and development. It acts as a framework for local planning authorities to produce their local plans that tackle the needs, wants, and priorities of the local area and its communities.

At the heart of the NPPF is the "presumption in favour of sustainable development" that looks to ensure policies within the local plan effectively promote sustainable development patterns and efficient use of land.



East Hertfordshire District Plan

2018 – East Hertfordshire District Council

The District Plan outlines the council's planning framework, illustrating how it plans to grow and develop across the 2011-2033 period. It sets out a series of policies from district-wide to site-specific policies covering a range of topics from housing and economic development to environmental quality and climate change.

The Buntingford, Parkside site is not allocated in the district plan, but all relevant policies are still applicable to the site. Buntingford, Parkside is an opportunity to deliver much-needed infrastructure and employment that benefits Buntingford.



Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan

2017 – Buntingford Community Area

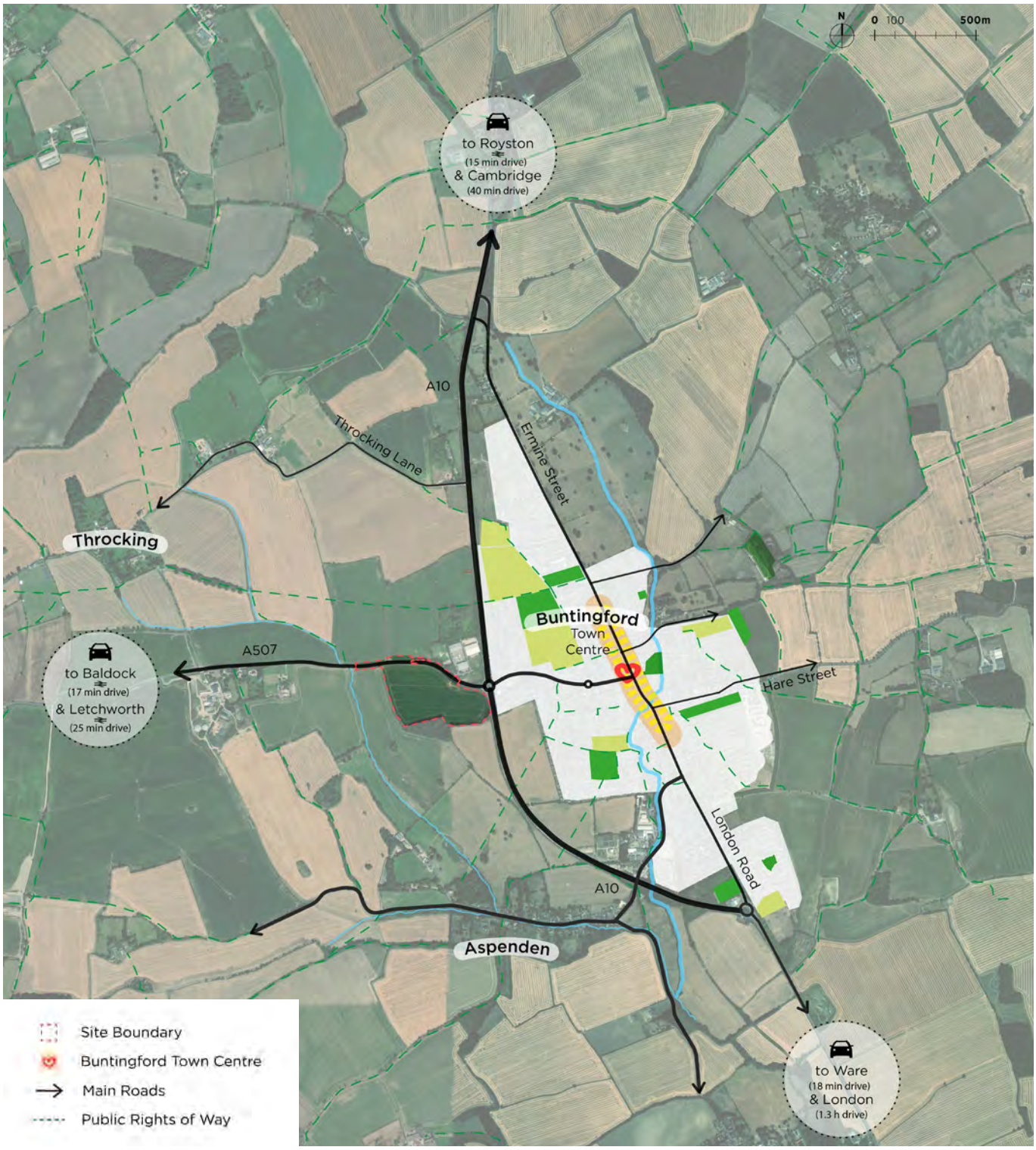
The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan outlines the wider communities vision to shape the future growth of the area. The plan, composed of six parishes, is incorporated into the East Hertfordshire Development Plan, and is aligned with the policies set out within it. The neighbourhood plan is used in decision-making for development within the plan area.



Site Context

Site Location

Buntingford is a market town towards the northern edge of the East Hertfordshire district. It is surrounded by open countryside, acting as a centre for numerous outlying villages that serves everyday needs. The historic town centre lies on a plateau in the valley of the River Rib, along the former Roman Road, Ermine Street, of which a section of the road is still named, and many remnants of the town's history as a key stop on the route between London and York, remain.

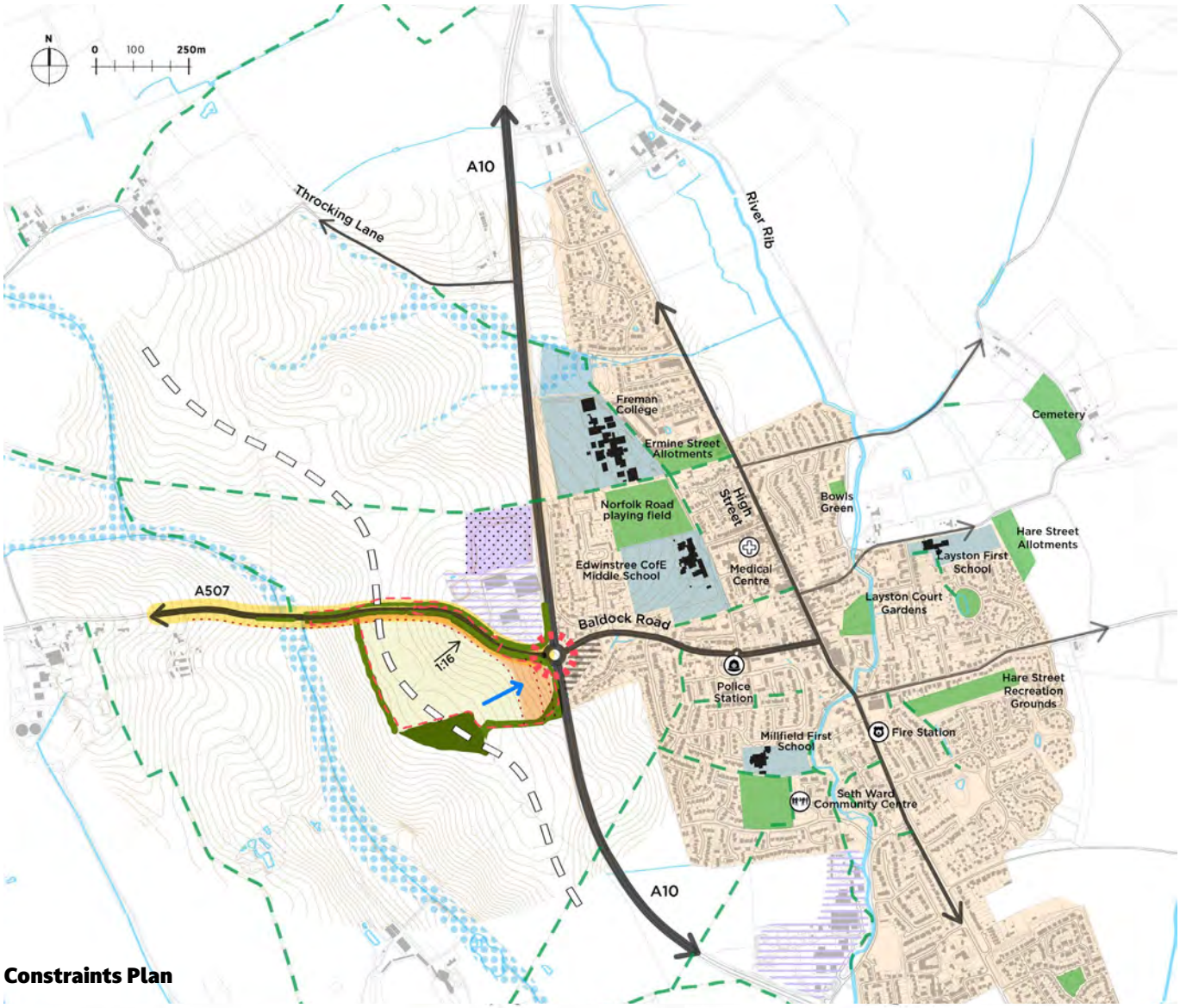


Site Context Plan

Description of the Site

The site, west of Buntingford and south of the A507 Baldock Road, is 13.28ha in size. Baldock Road (A507) runs along the length of the northern boundary, connecting Buntingford to Baldock. The A507 is characterised by dense hedgerows and vegetation that screen views into the site from the A507. North of this sits the Buntingford Business Park and an underground reservoir, connected to Buntingford via a shared footway/cycleway.

The A10 runs along the eastern boundary, connecting with the A507 at Baldock



Constraints Plan

- Site Boundary
- Existing Settlements
- Main Roads
- Road Barrier including roadside vegetation
- Vehicle dominated roundabout
- Employment Land
- Local Plan Employment Allocation
- Out of Town Retail uses
- Education
- Key Open Spaces
- 1m contour lines
- Ridgeline
- Existing hedgerows/trees
- Public Rights of Way
- Surface Water Flooding
- Water Flow
- Medium-High Noise Risk
- 1:18 Land Slope Gradient more than 1:20

Roundabout just beyond the northeastern boundary of the site. This acts as a gateway to Buntingford from villages and towns in central Hertfordshire, and connects Buntingford to London and Cambridge by car, with railway stations along the route connecting to those respective destinations.

Towards the southern half of the site, this eastern boundary moves away from the A10, bounded by agricultural land, and defined by mature hedgerows and trees.

The western edge of the site is defined by a row of hedgerow tree planting that runs south to a small patch of woodland, The Thicket.

The site itself is and has been agricultural in use, with a topography that slopes downwards towards the east and the A10.



Parcel south of the A507 Baldock Road, looking southeast.



Parcel south of the A507 Baldock Road, looking southwest.

Landscape Context

This section provides a summary of the landscape features relevant to the evolution of the design and masterplan.

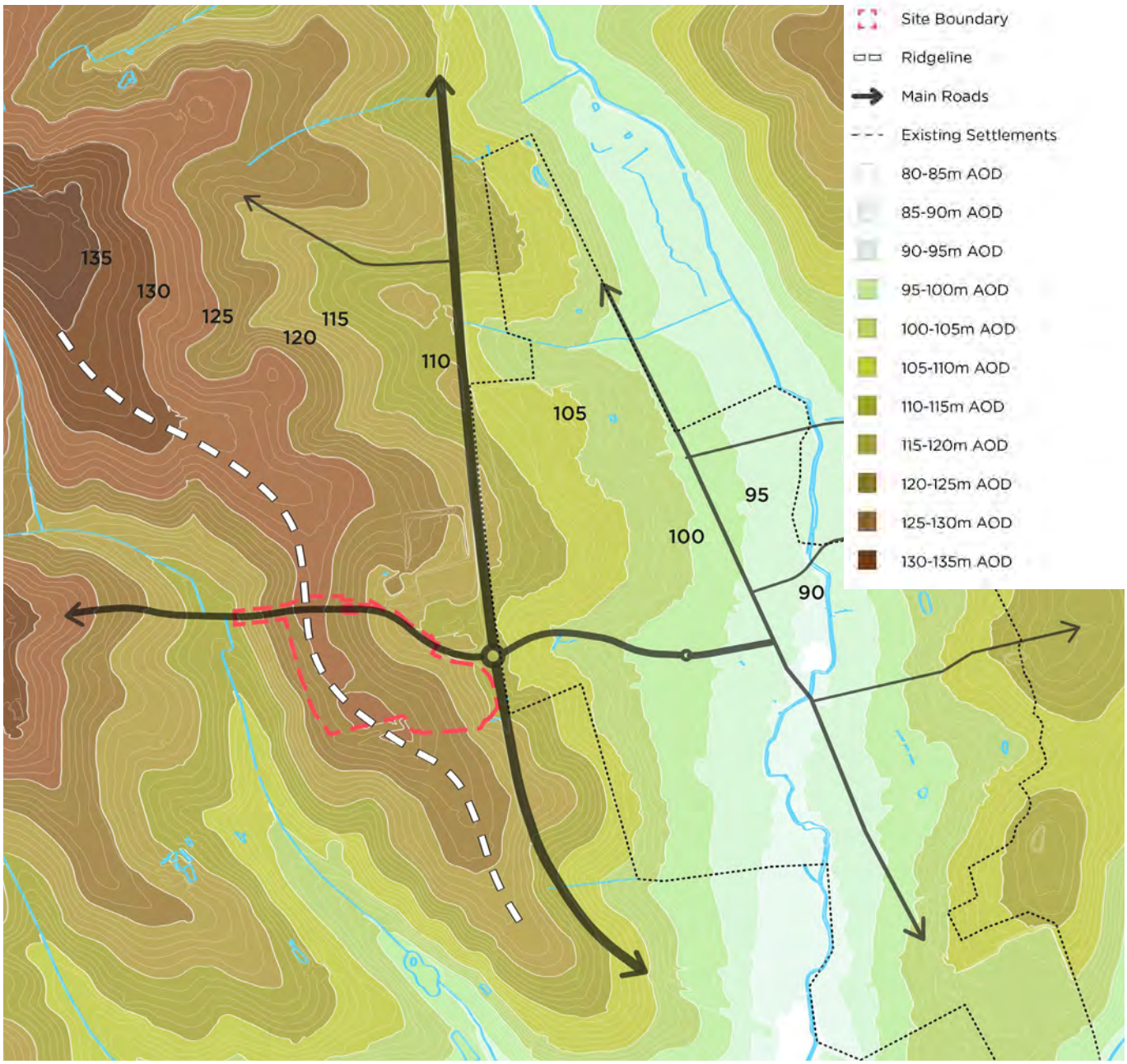
The site is 13.28ha in size, characterised by arable land on the eastern slopes of the local valley of the brook.

The site is situated in the local Cherry Green Arable Plateau Landscape Character Area, which is predominantly an arable landscape, with limited woodland cover, organic lanes, and an isolated and remote feel.

The site does not feature a high landscape quality or condition and is characterised by its individual elements. Whilst the site does not display a high scenic quality, there are medium to long-distance panoramic views.



Parcel south of the A507



Existing Topography Plan.

Topography

The site experiences a gently undulating topography, situated on the western slope of the River Rib Valley, along a local ridge between the River Rib to the east and the Thistley Vale Brook to the west. The site gradually slopes downwards towards the east and the topography peaks towards Tire Hill on the north, along Baldock Road.



Topography of the site from Baldock Road

Water and Drainage

The proposed site is identified as lying outside of the fluvial and tidal flood risk zone according to the Environment Agency's (EA) published flood map for planning. Flood zones associated with the Thistley Vale Brook are located immediately west of the site, however, due to the site's topography the risk to the site from fluvial flooding is low.

In line with the EA flood map, a very minor area of potential surface water flooding has been identified within the A507 road corridor.

Whilst it is anticipated that the risk to the site is low, further mitigation measures have been considered as a part of the development proposals.

No other sources of flooding have been identified which are considered to pose a risk to the proposals.

The development proposals include a site-wide drainage strategy which will sustainably manage surface water run-off from the proposals and mitigate flood risk to the site and surrounding area. The strategy looks to mimic the existing greenfield nature of the site by considering the existing site constraints and topography as part of the design.



Business Park, Bristol



Leather Works, Sormonne France (© Gautier Deblonde)



Pebble Mill Medical Campus

Ecology

The following provides a summary of the baseline ecological conditions. Further details can be found in the Ecological Impact Assessment, submitted with the planning application.

The site is characterised by arable land with hedgerows, with no nature conservation designations applied to the site or adjacent land.

The site features woodland and hedgerow tree edges along its southern and western peripheries. There are no ancient woodlands or other tree designations on-site or on the immediately adjacent land.

The fields feature narrow arable margins, characteristic of the wider landscape, but given their limited extent and absence of rare and notable plants, they are not ecologically significant. Hedgerows on site are well-established and managed to prevent encroachment onto the A10 and A507. The network of hedgerows has locally important ecological value.

The Thistley Vale Brook runs west of the site, and is identified as a 'Priority Habitat'. The habitats on-site provide limited opportunities for bats, limiting them to hedgerows and woodlands. A 2023/24 winter bird survey identified that the site supports a limited diversity of bird species, and the site is of local ecological importance for birds. Desktop studies have taken place to identify mammals, reptiles, and other ecological features on-site, and on-site surveys will take place in 2024.







Ecology precedents.

Landscape and Visual Considerations

This section provides a summary of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the Buntingford, Parkside site. The full report is submitted as a part of the planning application.

The site sits as a part of a landscape that is characterised by a mix of intimate and enclosed spaces and open, long-distance, panoramic views. The site reflects this, with the undulating topography limiting views in areas, and in others creating an elevated vantage point. Partial long-distance views can be seen from elevated land in the north and east.

The Thicket, an area of woodland sits along the southern boundary, and is linked to field boundary vegetation, providing enclosure to the parcel, limiting views to the south and west.

The LVIA identifies the site exhibits a low to medium sensitivity to visual effects, and efforts should be made to visually contain development and reinforce green infrastructure throughout the site.

The LVIA report set out a series of key landscape design principles that guide the detailed design. These are summarised below:

- To strengthen green infrastructure, responding to the landscape character and topography.
- To extend woodlands and enhance the biodiversity of trees and vegetation.
- To locate development in enclosed areas of the site.
- To improve the quality and character of the landscape.
- To enhance the environmental and amenities values of the site.
- To ensure a built-form that is of a sensitive massing and scale to the landscape and townscape context, particularly from views to the central and western portions of the site.



The site as viewed from Baldock Road.

Local Character

On the site, and within its immediate proximity, there are no Listed or Locally Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas or other statutory designations. This reflects the history of the site as open agricultural fields.

Buntingford, itself, has a particularly rich heritage, especially within the core of the town, which is designated as a conservation area. Buntingford has its roots as far back as the Iron Age, but gained prominence as a Roman settlement along the historic Ermine Street between London and York, now The High Street and Station Road. Its position here established Buntingford as an important coaching town with a weekly market that continues to this day, and inns and coach houses, of which many remain along the High Street. This history led to Buntingford's growth being focused along a north-south axis, linear along the High Street, as well as later growth, west, along Baldock Road.

Buntingford was formerly the terminus of the Buntingford branch line which linked the settlement to south Hertfordshire and London. This closed as a part of the Beeching cuts.

The settlement experienced little development for decades, with growth largely focused along the High Street for a significant period until the 1970s to 2010s, bringing with it new development, architectural styles and new facilities and amenities.

Employment in Buntingford is characterised by small businesses within industrial estates, with few large employers. Three sites dominate much of the employment provision in Buntingford – The Buntingford Business Park, situated just north of the Buntingford, Parkside site, The Park Farm Industrial Estate, and the Watermill Industrial Estate. These sites are dominated by light-industrial units that provide a range of services for the town and the outlying villages.



1883 - 1884



1948 - 1950



1978 - 1981



1988 - 1992



2010



2024

Buntingford Character















Employment Character



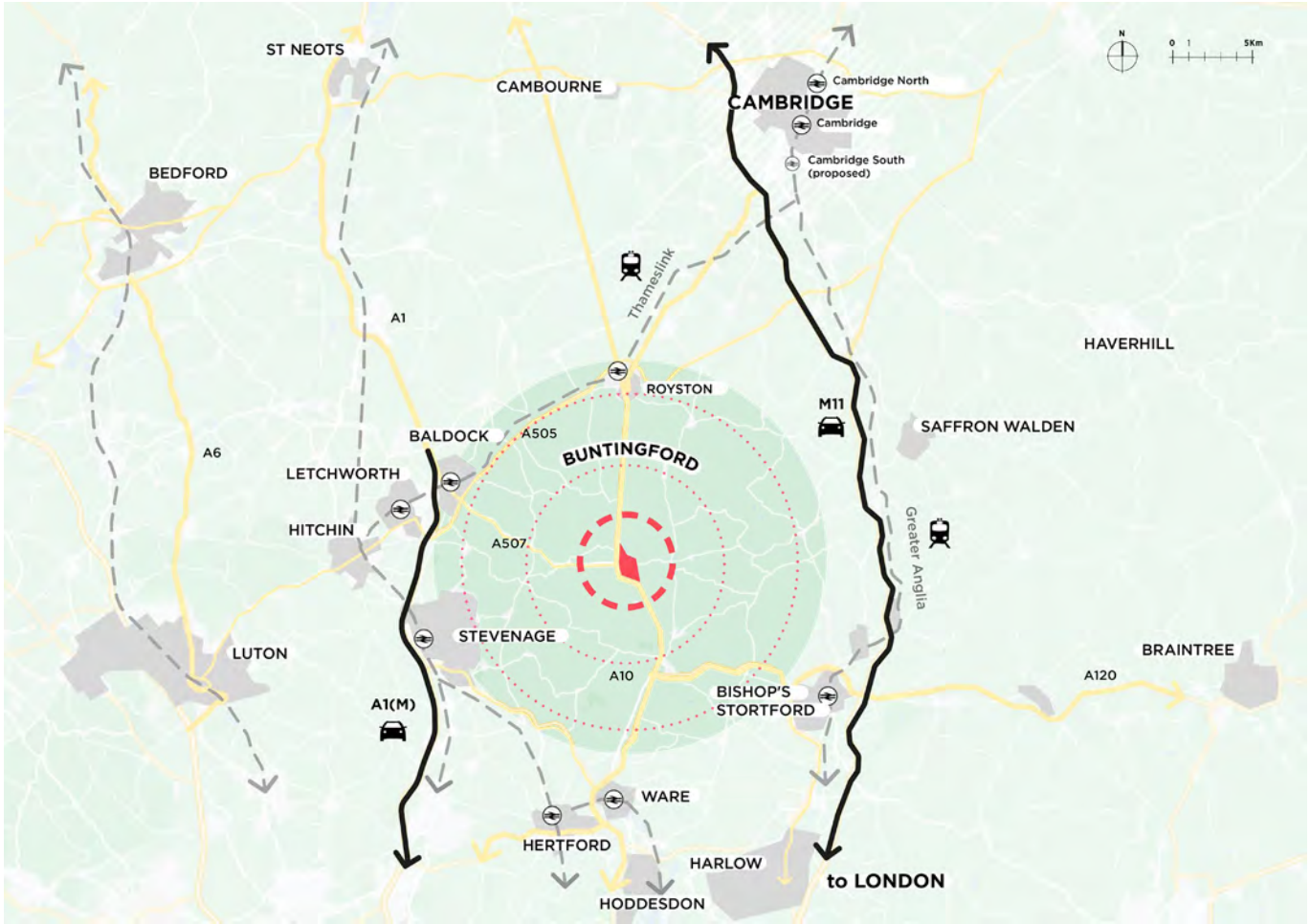
Access and Movement

A transport assessment has been prepared separately. This section highlights its key findings as well as identifying key opportunities the transport context creates.

The site is accessible to Buntingford via the A507 and Baldock Roundabout. This comprises a vehicular carriageway, with hedgerows on either side. Agricultural access to the site currently exists along the A507. Directly opposite to this is T-junction access for the Buntingford Business Park, where a shared pedestrian/ cycleway runs east into Buntingford along the northern edge of the A507, linking the employment site to the town with at-grade informal crossings across the A10.

There is a strong case for a network of walking, cycling and public transport routes within the site itself, and also onwards into Buntingford, by providing safe, accessible and attractive connections along the A507 and across the A10.

The A10 runs along the eastern edge of the site, providing a convenient connection between London and Cambridge. The A10 is highly accessible, due to its proximity via the A507. The A10 has no pedestrian footpaths, with vehicles travelling up to 60mph. Ensuring the A10 does not pose a significant barrier to active travel movement between the site and Buntingford will be key to the design.



Wider Connectivity Plan



Existing Transport Plan

Site Boundary
Existing Settlements
Existing Main Roads
Bus Route 386
Bus Route 331
Bus Route 18
Bus Stop
Cycleways

Economic and Social Context

Buntingford is a small market town that plays an important role as a key service centre for the outlying rural villages in the north of the East Herts District.

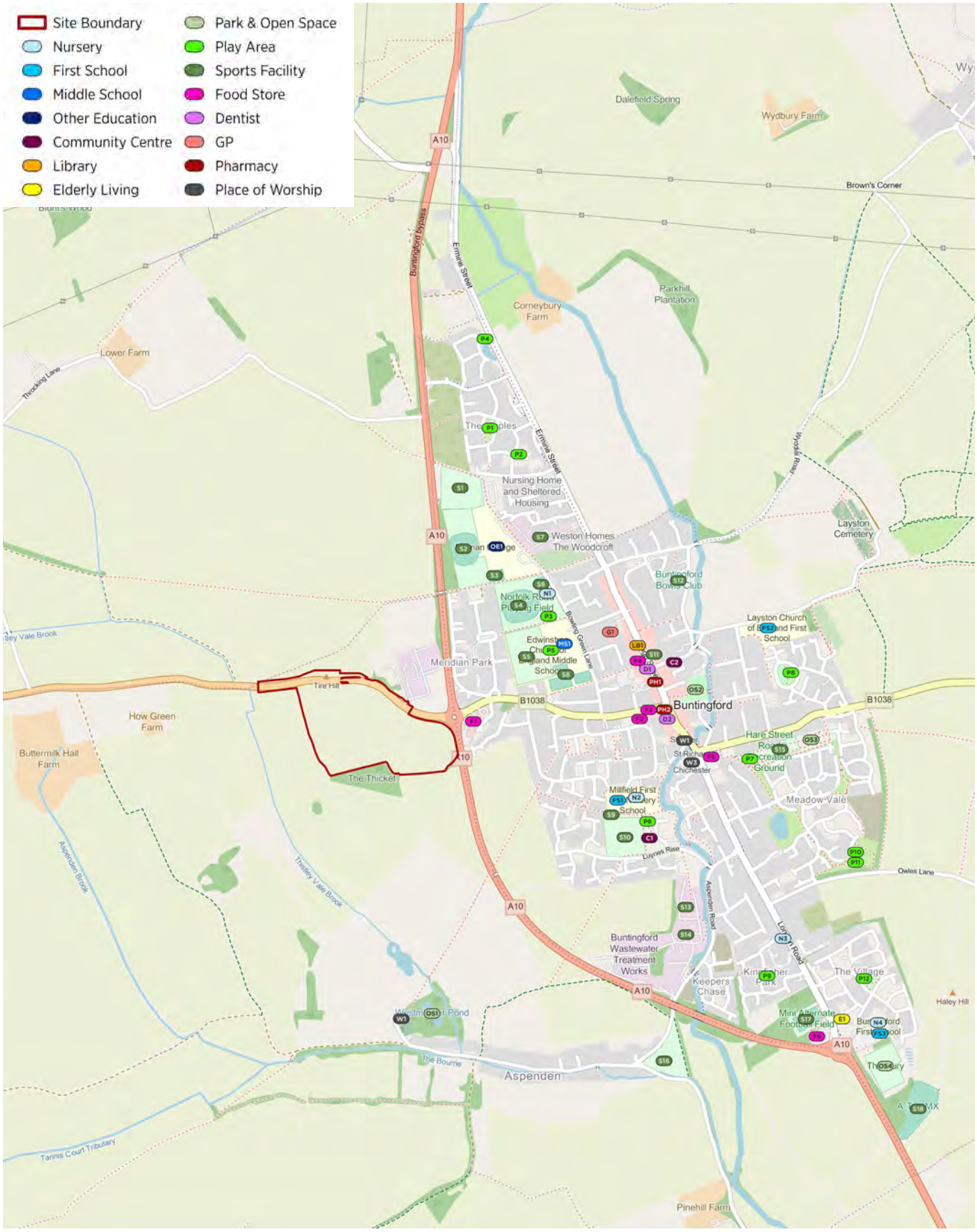
The district is experiencing a growing population. Its proximity to London has added pressures, with a high number of young families and first-time buyers migrating from London to East Herts. This growing population is coupled with an ageing population. East Herts has a higher-than-average population aged over 65, representing 18.7% of all residents, a 32% increase from the 2011 Census, and of whom 89% are living in an under-occupied property. For all households in Buntingford, 73.5% are under-occupied, compared with 70.6% across the district. The need to house Britain's ageing population is a growing one, and the elderly population is expected to grow.

Furthermore, East Herts is experiencing affordability pressures, with a median-priced house costing 12.29 times a median salary, beyond the reach of most residents. Property prices in East Herts have increased 62% since 2011, far higher than neighbouring authorities, and this issue is particularly acute in Buntingford. The level of homelessness in the East Herts district has remained relatively consistent over the past five years between 477 households in 2022/23 and 565 households.

In recent years, Buntingford has seen a loss in employment provision, with a significant proportion of this loss in available floorspace accounted to the closure of the Sainsbury's Distribution Depot in 2002. A lack of employment opportunities has caused a high level of out-commuting, and with job growth estimated to increase by 38,000 across the district by 2031, there is a need for new employment provisions in Buntingford.

Local Facilities

Buntingford acts as a key service centre for the surrounding villages, as identified in the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan. The High Street offers a wide range of facilities and services including a cycle shop, hairdressers, and butchers, as well as local supermarkets, pharmacies, pubs and community facilities. Most of the town's facilities and services are based here, but the town also has several employment sites and industrial estates that offer a range of services, as well as a range of sports facilities distributed throughout the town.



Local Facilities Plan