

Growing Baldock

Green Infrastructure Strategy



October 2025

Urban&Civic

Hertfordshire





BRADLEY MURPHY DESIGN (BMD)
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE & ECOLOGY

Studio 3, Floor 18
Alpha Studios
Alpha Tower
Suffolk Street Queensway
Birmingham
B1 1TT
Company No: 7788475
www.bradleymurphydesign.co.uk

Project number	BMD.021.0045
Report number	004
Created by	ED
Checked by	JJ
Approved by	RW
Issue type	OPA
Issued	26.09.2025

This report is the property of Bradley Murphy Design Ltd and is issued on the condition it is not reproduced, retained or disclosed to any unauthorised person, either wholly or in part without the written consent of Bradley Murphy Design Ltd.



**THIS REPORT IS TO BE VIEWED AS COVER PAGE IN SINGLE
PAGE VIEW AND THE FOLLOWING PAGES IN TWO PAGE VIEW**



CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

- 1.1 Purpose of the Document
- 1.2 Context
- 1.3 The Site
- 1.4 Planning Context

2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY DRIVERS

- 2.1 National Policy Drivers
- 2.2 Regional & Local Policy Drivers

3 STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

- 3.1 Existing Green & Blue Infrastructure Network
- 3.2 Strategic Green Infrastructure Recreational Routes
- 3.3 Green Infrastructure Influences

4 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STANDARDS

- 4.1 Green Infrastructure & Open Space Standards
- 4.2 Formal Outdoor Sports Requirements

5 SITE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE BASELINE

- 5.1 Biodiversity & Arboriculture
- 5.2 Heritage & Archaeology
- 5.3 Landscape Character
- 5.4 Visual Context
- 5.5 Topography & Hydrology
- 5.6 Geology & Soils
- 5.7 Air & Noise
- 5.8 Green Infrastructure Connectivity

6 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 Green Infrastructure Opportunity Themes
- 6.2 Green Infrastructure Opportunity Summary

7 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

- 7.1 Green Infrastructure Vision
- 7.2 Green Infrastructure Framework
- 7.3 Open Space, Play & Recreation Proposals

8 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES

- 8.1 Biodiversity Strategy
- 8.2 Sustainable Drainage Strategy
- 8.3 Play Strategy
- 8.4 Sports Strategy
- 8.5 Productive Strategy

9 KEY SPACES

- 9.1 Bygrave Common Overall
- 9.2 Eastern Park
- 9.3 Urban Open Land
- 9.4 Weston End
- 9.5 Bygrave Common Ecological Area
- 9.6 Green Space east of Clothall Common
- 9.7 Walls Field
- 9.8 Baldock Greenway

10 MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

- 10.1 Management & Maintenance Options



Aerial photograph of Baldock and Clothall Common

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2025) defines Green Infrastructure as:

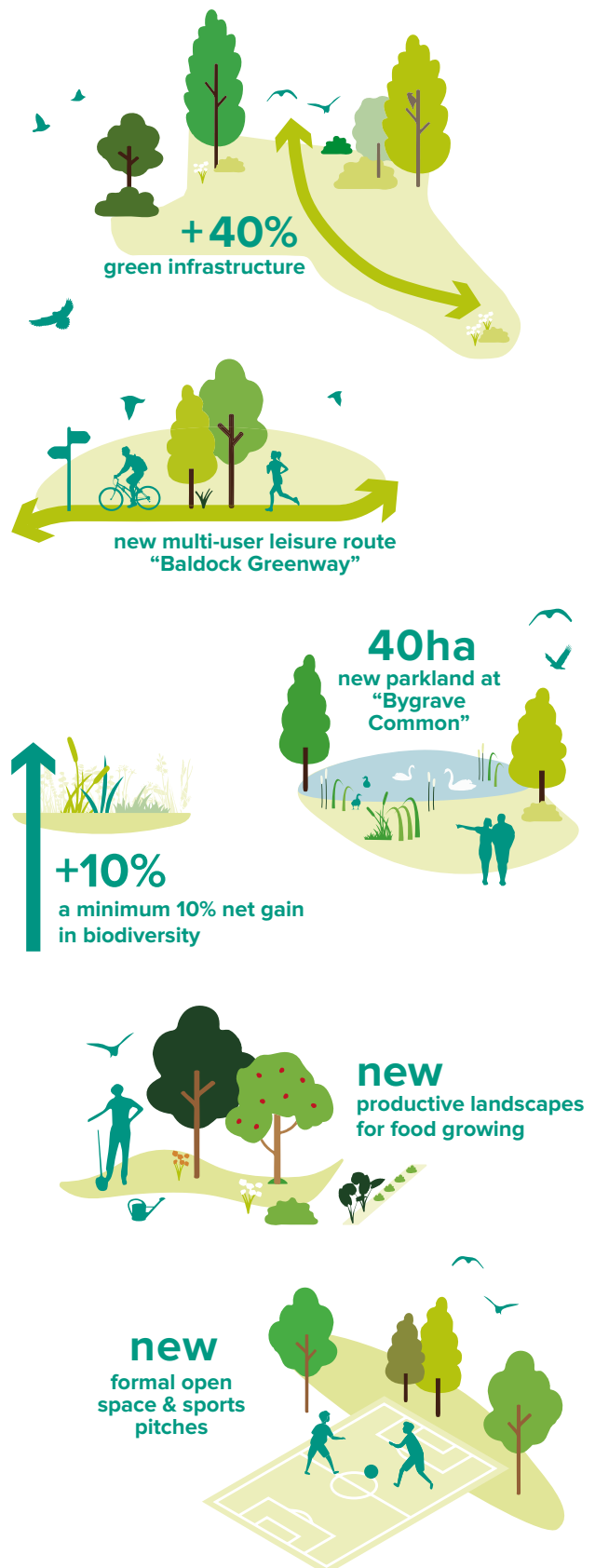
“A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity”

This Site-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out the Green Infrastructure Framework as part of the development proposal for Baldock, Hertfordshire. It has been produced to support the Outline Planning Application (OPA).

The Green Infrastructure Strategy provides an integrated approach towards the development of all Green Infrastructure elements within the Application Site and the surrounding area. It provides environmental context, rationale and guidance for further design codes at later detailed design stages and for future developers as to how Green Infrastructure should be taken forward within the Baldock development.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy forms part of a series of site-wide strategies submitted in support of the Outline Planning Application. It demonstrates how the various planning policy requirements, regional aspirations and local standards relating to biodiversity, open space, sports and playspace provision, food production, water, climate change adaption and connectivity will be met through the Baldock development through the promotion of multi-functional Green Infrastructure.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy demonstrates how the Baldock development will commit to delivering:





1 Introduction & Context

Formal Play Area in parkland - Houlton, Rugby

“ Green Infrastructure - A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. ”

National Planning Policy Framework, February 2025





1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy has been prepared by Bradley Murphy Design Ltd (BMD) on behalf of Urban&Civic Plc (U&C) to support the Outline Planning Application (OPA) for land to the north and east of Baldock, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' as illustrated on **Figure 1**.

This document sets out the Green Infrastructure framework, strategies and components of the Proposed Development at Baldock and should be read in conjunction with the Parameter Plan (UAC092-002 Rev Q) . Together, the Development Specification and Parameter Plan define the development for which outline planning permission is sought and which have been assessed through the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Increasing awareness of the need for new development to be sustainable, sensitive to local context and appropriate to local character is leading to a rise in the importance of a landscape-led approach in the planning and design process. Given the scale of the Site, it is important a '**landscape & nature led**' approach is taken and that an integrated, comprehensive and evidence-led analysis is undertaken to inform a robust GI Strategy.

This GI Strategy presents a holistic approach to natural environment, climate change adaption and resilience, biodiversity, open space, sports, play provision, productive landscapes and health and well-being by reflecting the existing interconnected nature of these elements. It is intended to present clear and concise guidance to ensure that a wide range of multifunctional Green Infrastructure elements are provided to maximise recreational, ecological and environmental amenity.

1.2 CONTEXT

The Site is approximately 220 hectares in size and located to the north and east of the historic market town of Baldock (population c.10,000), within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire. It benefits from a well-connected strategic location on the A1(M) and lies to the north of Stevenage and immediately to the east of Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin. The land to be developed comprises a series of parcels of predominantly agricultural land immediately adjoining the urban area.

The adopted North Herts Local Plan allocates land to the north and east of Baldock as a sustainable extension to accommodate up to 3,300 homes, employment, local centres, schools and community facilities, sustainable transport connections and green infrastructure. The Local Plan identifies the Site as a sustainable extension made up of a series of allocations: BA1 (North of Baldock) for 2,800 homes; BA2 (Land southwest of Clothall Road) for 200 homes; and BA3 (Land south of Clothall Common) for 245 homes.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



Figure 1. Aerial Site location

— Site boundary



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

1.3 THE SITE

The Growing Baldock Site falls within the jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) and is allocated for development in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031). It comprises of four of the Local Plan site allocations namely, separated by rail and road infrastructure, with the following land uses:

BA1 - land bound to the west by the A507 North Road, to the north by the Millers Way Public Right of Way and to the south by the railway line; The land use in this part of the Site is predominantly arable farmland. The northern fields are open and large scale, principally as a result of a lack of enclosure, undulating chalk topography, few dwellings and a uniformity of land cover. The scale of the landscape south of Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road is smaller scale featuring grazing paddocks.

BA2 - land to south west of Clothall Road and north east of the Baldock Park Homes (Hillside Park) site and Weston Hills Local Nature Reserve; This area is a combination of grazing paddocks associated with Cambrai Farm and arable farmland, bound to the north west by the settlement edge of Baldock, Hillside Park mobile home site to the south west and by the A505 Baldock bypass to the south.

BA3 - land to the south of Royston Road and north west of the A505, wrapping around the eastern edges of existing housing at Clothall Common; This area features arable farmland bound by Wallington Road and the settlement edge of Clothall Common to the north and west and the A505 Baldock bypass to the east. The northern area, to the south of Royston Road and east of Clothall Common, is currently raised overgrown, unmanaged land created after the

construction of the bypass and is currently used by locals as informal open space, albeit it is not designated.

BA10 - land between the Hitchin-Cambridge railway line to the north and the B656 Royston Road to the south; The land use is predominantly arable farmland with a few grazing pastures to the west and interspersed with small farmsteads and industrial uses along Royston Road.

Three further areas of land are incorporated into the OPA boundary:

Urban Open Land

To the north of Clothall Road and east of Walls Field - designated under Policy G2 Strategic Green Space in the Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - this land is currently used as arable farmland.

Walls Field (Scheduled Monument)

Baldock has an important history, as a Roman settlement, which was centred on Walls Field to the east of the town centre. The scheduled monument forms part of the Site and is currently under intensive agricultural use.

Land to the west of North Road

A small parcel of land within HCC ownership west of North Road, adjacent to BA1 and south of the Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve (LNR).



Walls Field (scheduled monument) - arable farmland, crossed by public footpath Baldock 037



Urban Open Land - used as arable farmland, crossed by public footpath Clothall 001

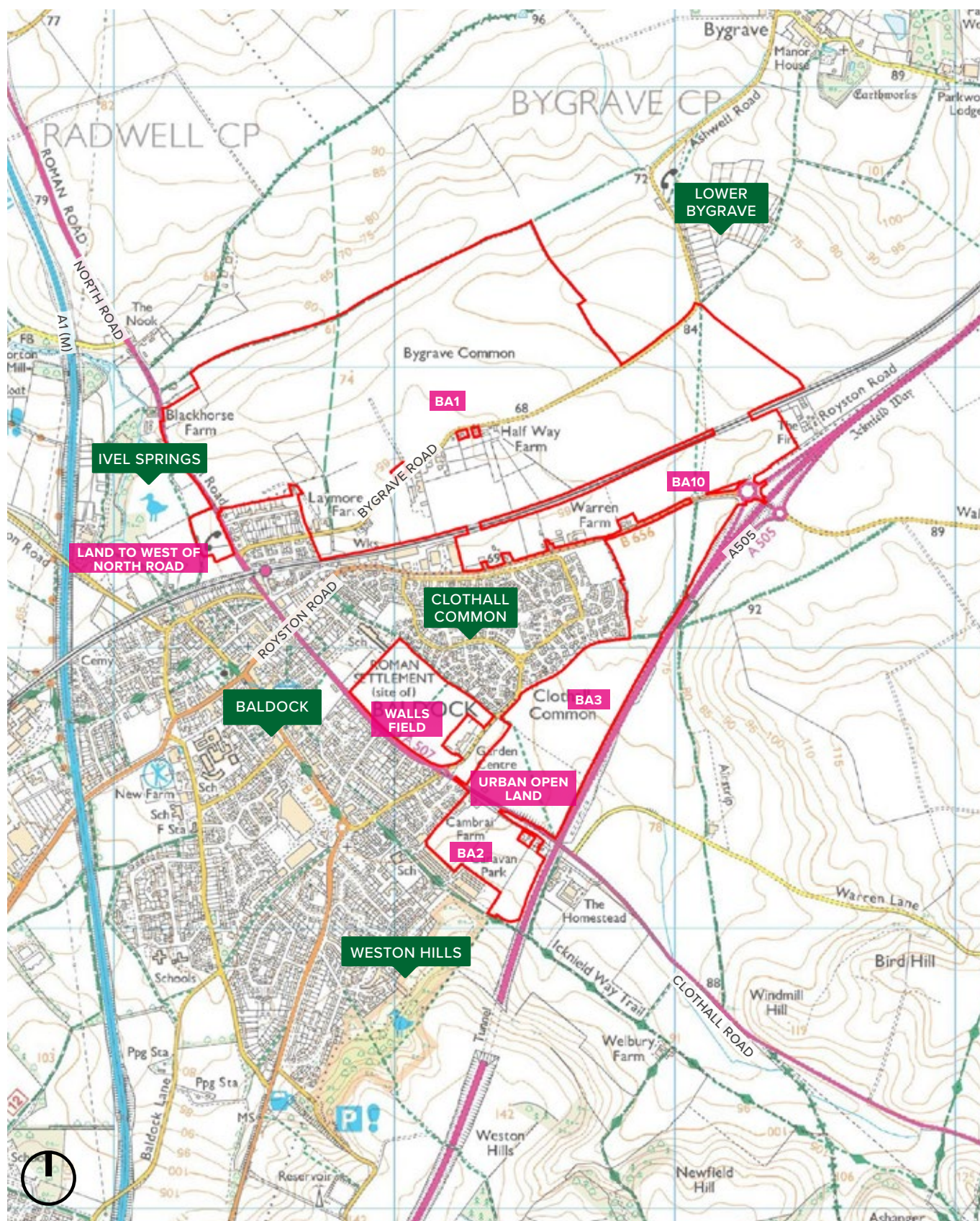


Figure 2. Site location

— OPA Site boundary



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

1.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

Baldock Strategic Masterplan

The Growing Baldock Strategic Masterplan (SMP) was submitted to North Herts Council in March 2025 and approved in July 2025. The Strategic Masterplan establishes the masterplan principles and vision to guide the future development.

The Strategic Masterplan (SMP) is a requirement of the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022) under policy SP9, which required the preparation of a SMP for the Baldock Site allocations which will be a material consideration in the determination of the Outline Planning Application (OPA) for the Site.

The 'Composite Framework Plan' (refer to **Figure 4** opposite) brings together all the elements of the Baldock development and is the culmination of the Strategic Masterplan document. It sets the overall framework for development, fixing the broad locations for green spaces, built areas, connections across the railway and the centre of the new community, and help guide future planning applications.

This Green Infrastructure Strategy aligns with the Strategic Masterplan document and supports the Outline Planning Application (OPA), which is informed by the framework plans and principles.

Guiding Principles

The Baldock Strategic Masterplan sets out 'Ten 'Big Moves' that form the basis of the Strategic Masterplan - around which the development, and the principles that underpin it, are based - those of relevance to Green Infrastructure include:

- **Recharging the River Ivel** - The development can help address some of the problems facing the River Ivel, by draining surface water from the development into the aquifer, which will help to restore the Ivel.
- **A Healthy and Connected Town** – 'Baldock Greenway' to provide a continuous green loop around the development, connecting to wider walking routes including the Letchworth Greenway and the Etonbury Wheel.
- **Re-interpreting Baldock's History** - the creation of a 'Heritage Trail', a footpath around the development that connects and shares information about the features of archaeological interest, so that people can learn more about the history of human settlement at Baldock.
- **A New Life for Bygrave Common** - A new Bygrave Common is proposed for Baldock, reinterpreting the historic common land in this area, and creating a brand-new park for the community. Bygrave Common will incorporate some areas that are more informal and accessible to people and some that are dedicated to wildlife and biodiversity.



Figure 3. Baldock SMP Green Infrastructure - Key Framework Principles

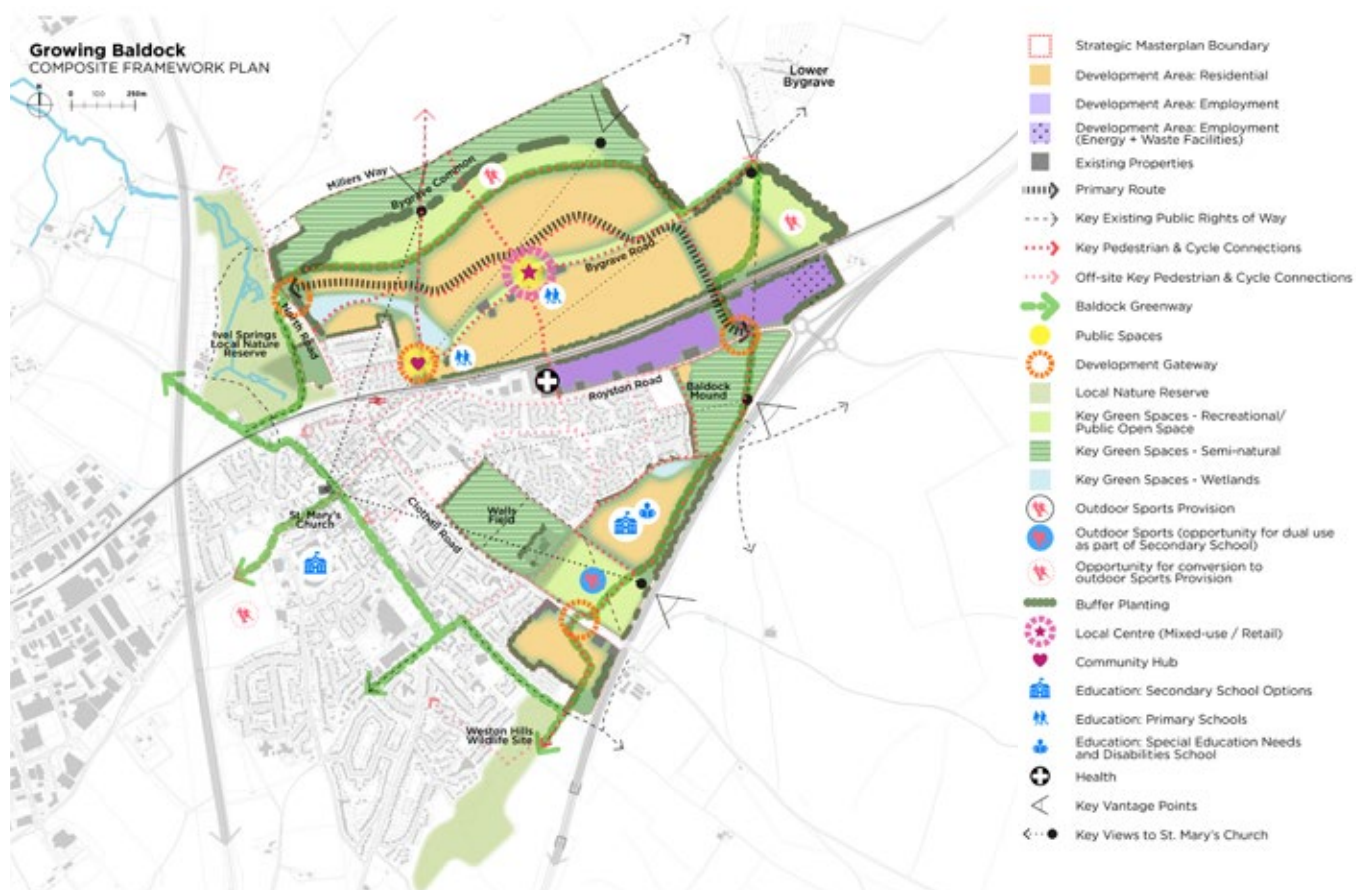


Figure 4. SMP Composite Framework Plan

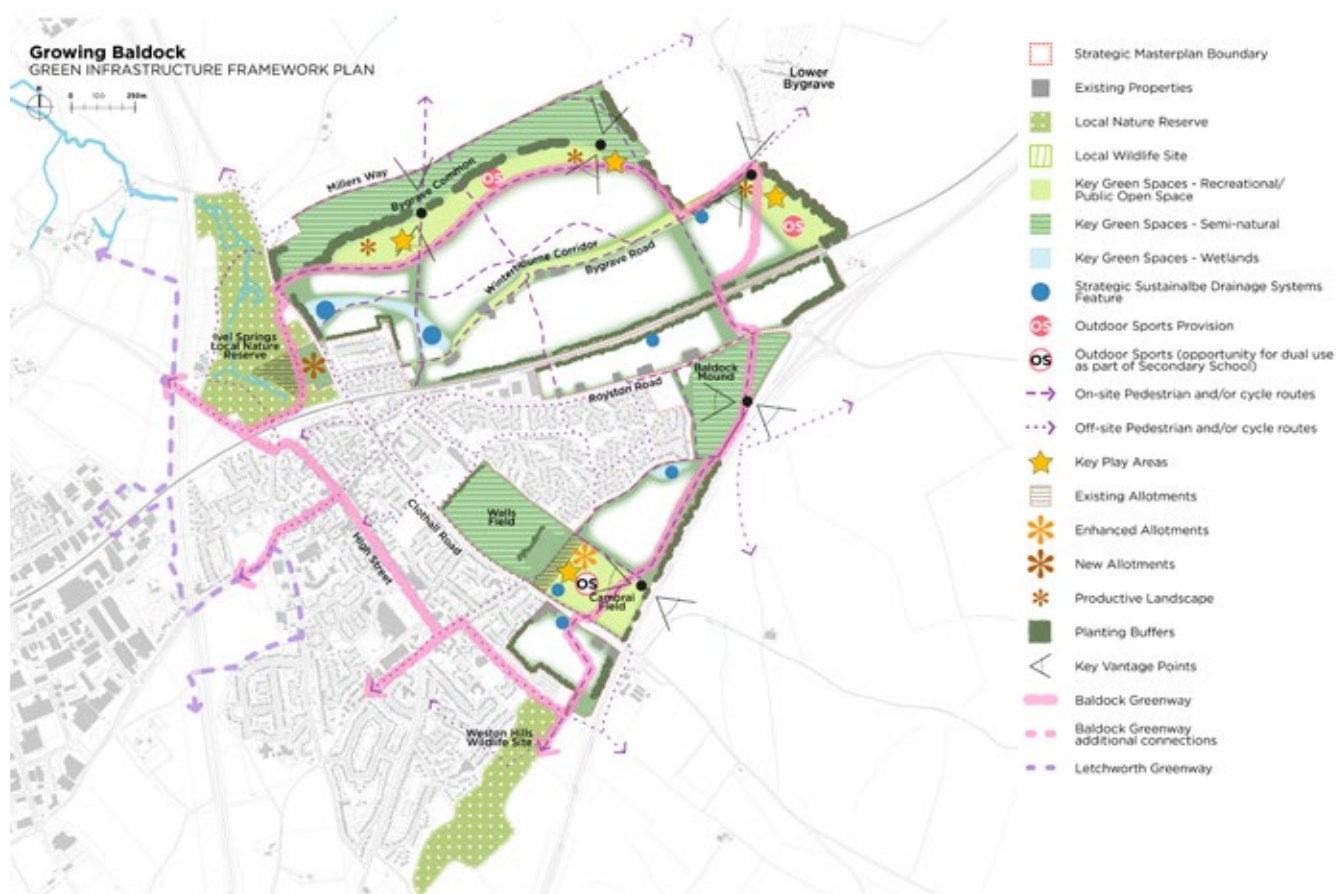


Figure 5. SMP Green Infrastructure Framework Plan



2 Green Infrastructure Policy Drivers

SuDS pond with wetland planting - Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire





2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY DRIVERS

2.1 NATIONAL POLICY DRIVERS

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework, (updated February 2025) defines green infrastructure as *“a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity”*.

It recognises the importance for people to be able to access high-quality open spaces and be provided with opportunities for sport and recreation (including playing fields) and for the protection, enhancement of existing and creation of new public rights of way to improve public access to the countryside.

It allows opportunities to be taken to secure biodiversity and environmental net gains, through new habitat creation, protection for ancient woodland and veteran trees and establishing ecological networks. It recognises the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services and that green infrastructure is an important part of the landscape setting of the built environment that can play an important role in achieving sustainable development.

25 Year Environment Plan

The 25 Year Environment Plan, ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ was published by the Government in 2018 (updated in February 2023) and sets out a framework to maintain and improve the environment for the next generation. The following six key areas have been identified around which action will be focused:

- Clean air
- Clean and plentiful water
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as drought and flooding
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

Natural England, the Government’s adviser for the natural environment, released in January 2023 the final version of its Green Infrastructure Framework, which serves to support the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Framework is underpinned by 15 principles, which have been used as a basis for planning and designing green and blue infrastructure at Baldock. The Green Infrastructure Principles (Natural England, 2023) identify five key principles for what good quality GI should be, these are;

- 1. Multifunctional;** GI should deliver a range of benefits for people, nature and places and address specific issues to meet the needs in the local area and sub-region as a whole.
- 2. Varied;** GI should feature a wide range of diverse types of green and blue spaces and environmental features.
- 3. Connected;** GI should operate and link as a living network for people and wildlife and nature as well as strengthening ecological networks and improving ecosystem services.
- 4. Accessible;** GI should allow people to experience and connect with nature. It should provide everyone, with access to high-quality green spaces that are inclusive, safe, well-managed, and accessible.
- 5. Character;** GI should be designed and managed to reflect the area’s character in such a way that it helps landscape conservation, enhancement, and/or restoration.

The Green infrastructure Framework is a voluntary framework that supports the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which stipulates that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising the impact on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.

The Green infrastructure Framework will complement mandatory mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), which form part of the requirements of the Environment Act.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

The Green Infrastructure Framework is structured by five key standards, which set out the national ambition for green infrastructure in terms of quantity, quality, and type to enable everyone to benefit from good green infrastructure.

These standards will be voluntary and are referred to in the National Model Design Guide. National standards can then be applied through local strategies, plans and policies, engaging with communities and stakeholders, so that they respond to local context and needs.

S1 - GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Supports the National Planning Policy Framework's policy that local authorities should develop strategic policies for green infrastructure. At an area wide scale, the Green Infrastructure Strategy standard will see Local Authorities develop Delivery Plans to support the creation and enhancement of new and existing greenspaces.

S2 - ACCESSIBLE GREENSPACE Promotes access to good quality green and blue space within 15 minutes' walk from all homes.

S3 - URBAN NATURE RECOVERY Aims to boost nature recovery, create and restore rich wildlife habitats and build resilience to climate change. Incorporating nature-based solutions, including trees and wildflowers, into the design of towns and cities will increase carbon capture, prevent flooding and reduce temperatures during heat waves.

S4 - URBAN GREENING FACTOR This planning tool improves the provision of green infrastructure and increases the level of greening in urban environments. The standard is set at 0.4 for residential development, which means there is a target in place for approximately 40% of residential developments to have green and blue spaces, green roofs or green walls.

S5 - URBAN TREE CANOPY COVER Promotes an increase in tree canopy cover in urban environments. Trees are vital for capturing carbon and can mitigate flood risk as they absorb excess water during flooding incidents. The standard sets out that major residential and commercial development should be designed to meet locally agreed targets.



Everyone has access to a variety of good quality green & blue spaces within 15 minutes walk from their home



Support an uplift in the greening of residential neighbourhoods to at least 40%



Support an uplift in urban woodland/ tree canopy cover, in the region of 20-30% is recommended



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

2.2 REGIONAL & LOCAL POLICY DRIVERS

North Herts Council Local Plan 2011-2031

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on Tuesday 8 November 2022.

The Site is allocated for development within the North Hertfordshire Council Local Plan 2011-2031.

Below is a summary of policies of relevance to Green Infrastructure, the Site and the surrounding context:

Policy SP1:

Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

Protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment including important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure (including the water environment).

Policy SP10:

Healthy communities

Protect, enhance and create new physical and green infrastructure to foster healthy lifestyles.

Policy SP12:

Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity

We will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced. We will a) protect, identify, manage and where possible enhance a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure.

Policy NE1:

Strategic Green Infrastructure

Planning permission will be granted provided that development a) protects, conserves and where possible enhances the strategic green infrastructure network b) avoids the loss, fragmentation, severance or negative impact on the function of the strategic green infrastructure network c) creates new strategic green infrastructure where appropriate and is accompanied by a plan for its long term maintenance and management and d) has suitable mitigation measures or appropriate replacement to satisfactorily address adverse impacts on the strategic green infrastructure network.

Policy NE2:

Landscape

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

- Respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area
- Do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the landscape character area in which the Site is located, taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this;
- Are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features; and
- Have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.

Policy NE4:

Biodiversity and geological sites

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations and features listed in Policy SP12. All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks and the water environment, and/or restore degraded or isolated habitats where possible.

Policy NE6:

New and Improved Open Space

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that make provision for new and/or improved open space which:

- Meets the needs arising from the development having regard to the Council's open space standards and other relevant guidance.

Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum Version: January 2021)

The Development Plan for North Hertfordshire indicates the Neighbourhood Plan (Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall). Below is a summary of policies of relevance to Green Infrastructure, the Site and the surrounding context:

Policy G2:

Strategic Green Space

The policy highlights the importance of the 'Urban Open Land' area of the Site and states:

- *"to conserve an important green lung at the heart of Baldock, applications for development should maintain the predominantly open character of the land lying between Hartfields School and the A505 Baldock bypass"; and*
- *"proposals that would improve the visual or recreational value of this land will be supported, particularly if they form part of a comprehensive strategy for improved public access and the conservation and interpretation of the scheduled area".*

Policy E2:

Green Infrastructure and Outdoor Recreation

The policy highlights applications to develop BA1, BA2, BA3 and BA10 should provide an appropriate amount and range of publicly accessible open space and Green Infrastructure which complies with the needs of, or exceeds, North Hertfordshire Council's standards

Policy E5:

Development north of the railway

The policy outlines a series of recommendations in relation to Site BA1:

- maintain a clear visual and physical gap between the expanded edge of Baldock and Lower Bygrave, of sufficient size to integrate development into the surrounding landscape and ensure a sympathetic transition towards Lower Bygrave;
- incorporate appropriate planting at the periphery of the new development;
- minimise adverse visual impacts on longer-distance views towards Baldock from public footpath Bygrave31, by giving careful consideration to the positioning and height of development, as well as to appropriate screening;

- relate sensitively to the edges of existing residential areas where the Site abuts them;
- retain and incorporate existing landscape and built features that contribute to the Site's history and character; and
- make provision for improved pedestrian and cycle access between Bygrave and Baldock, through a new footpath and cycleway using the route of Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road, designed in a way that maintains as much as possible of its rural character.

Policy E6:

Royston Road

The policy outlines a series of recommendations in relation to Sites BA3, and BA10:

- create a high quality and distinctive entrance to the town along Royston Road, using well-designed buildings and a consistent approach to landscaping and lighting;
- relate sensitively to the existing houses fronting onto Royston Road through the scale, massing and landscaping of the new development;
- incorporate a landscape buffer between development on Site BA10 and the railway line, and use building materials and colours that will help to soften the visual impact of the development in both near and long-distance views; and
- make the corridor a focus for sustainable travel and provide for an improved footpath and cycleway along Royston Road.

Policy E7:

Cambrai Farm and south of Clothall Common

The policy outlines a series of recommendations in relation to Sites BA2 and BA3:

- incorporate a landscape buffer between the edge of the developments and the Baldock bypass, using an appropriate mix of native species, to provide visual screening, an enhanced green corridor and noise attenuation;
- avoid new buildings on the part of BA3 that comprises raised land to the east of the existing properties on Aleyn Way and Merchants Walk, and to the south of Royston Road, which should be retained and enhanced as space for informal outdoor recreation; and
- reinforce the planting between Hillside Park mobile home site and new residential development on site BA2.



3 Strategic Green Infrastructure Context

Play area - Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire





3 STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

3.1 EXISTING GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

An analysis and understanding of the broad principles and aspirations set out in the Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategies will be used to lay the foundations for a strong green and blue infrastructure framework for Baldock.

A review of the following documents has been undertaken to understand, define and record the Green Infrastructure context of the Site and Baldock's surrounding landscape in order to guide future development and design principles:

- Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2022 (Part 1 & 2)
- Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2011
- North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2009

Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy

While the 2011 Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan is a starting point, it has been superseded by more recent strategies by LUC in 2022. The current Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022) provides a more up-to-date framework, recognizing the evolving policy landscape and incorporating a wider range of considerations.

The Hertfordshire GI Strategies (2011 & 2022) identify a number Green Infrastructure initiatives, priorities and projects. Those of relevance to the Site and Baldock are summarised below and illustrated on **Figure 6**:

- **Chalk Arc:** Restore, enhance and conserve distinctive chalk scarp and grassland landscape character
- **Green Links/Connections:** Reconnect PRoW network that has been severed by major barriers to aid the movement of people & wildlife
- **River Valley/Corridor:** Enhance & contribute to ecological quality, respond to water management flood risk & abstraction pressures and enhance habitat connectivity



The Wallington scarp slopes is an elevated, undulating, chalk scarp landscape to the south east of the Site, featuring areas of semi-improved species rich calcareous grassland.



The connection between public footpath (Bygrave 015) from Lower Bygrave to public bridleway (Clothall 003) has been severed and restricted by railway and Royston Road.



REVIVEL is a volunteer-based community organisation established to instigate action which will restore the flow to the upper River Ivel to sustain brown trout.

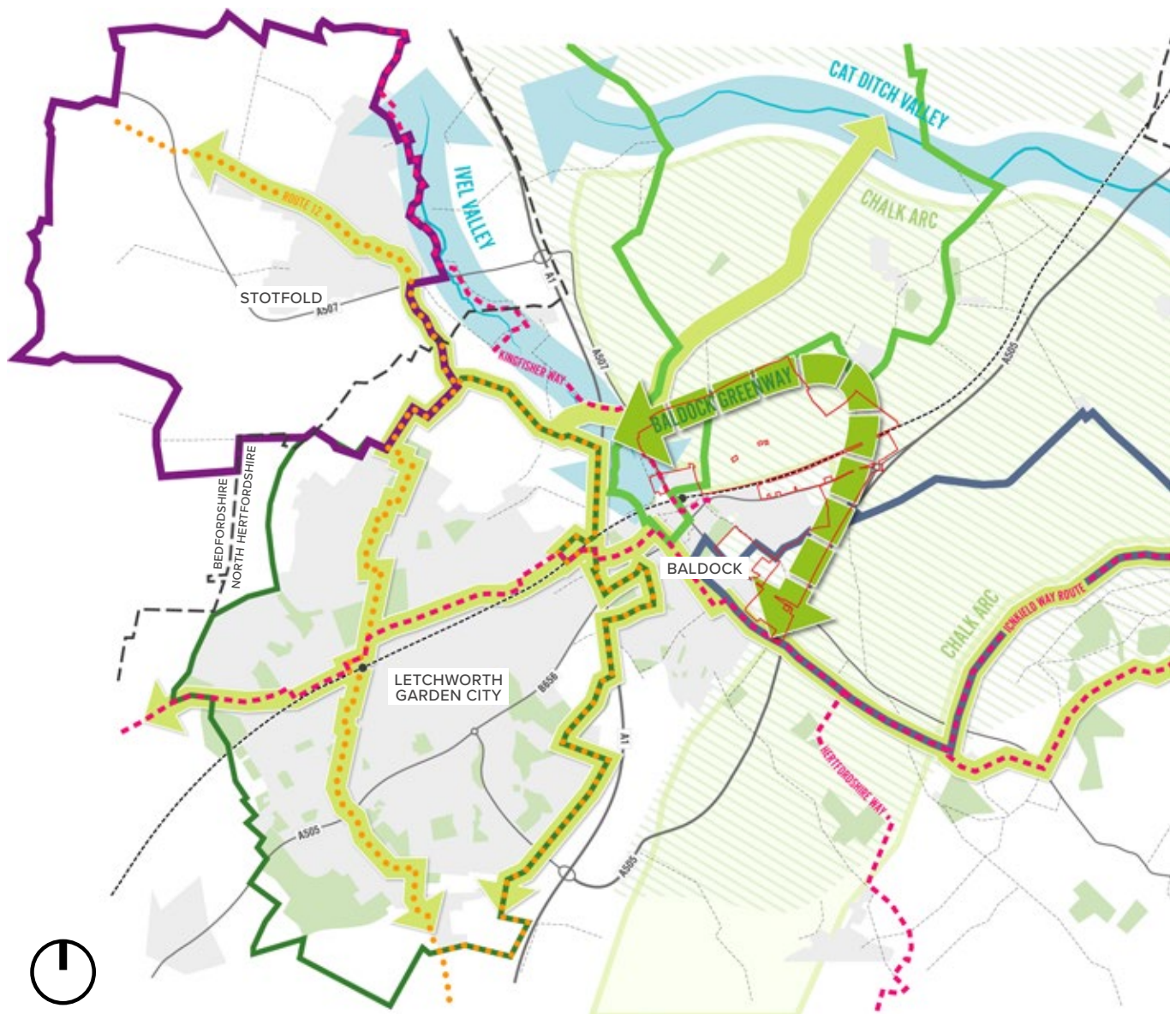


Figure 6. Strategic Green Infrastructure Context

Context:

- Site boundary
- - - County boundary
- Existing settlement
- Existing green space
- ⋯ National Cycle Network Route 12
- - - Long Distance Footpath

Circular walks:

- Baldock > Ashwell (North)
- Baldock > Wallington (South)

North Hertfordshire GI Plan & Strategic Network:

- Etonbury green wheel
- Letchworth greenway
- Strategic GI links
- Baldock greenway

High biodiversity area for birds

Hertfordshire Strategic GI Initiatives/Projects:

- Chalk Arc
 - Restore, enhance & conserve chalk grasslands
- River Valley/Corridor
 - Enhance & contribute to ecological quality, respond to water management flood risk & abstraction pressures
 - Enhancing landscape habitat connectivity
- GI Connections
 - Reconnect PRoW network that has been severed by major barriers to aid the movement of people & wildlife



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

3.1 EXISTING GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy 2009

The Green Infrastructure strategy provides recommendations and design principles for the proposed North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure network.

The majority of the Site is within an area identified as 'High Biodiversity Area for Birds' and running along the north, east and southern boundaries of the Site, an opportunity is identified for a new 'Baldock Greenway'. The Site is also the location of project ST8.2 – Peri urban greenway for Baldock, where there is an aspiration to link existing green transport connections.

Part 2 of the report includes a detailed extract of the proposed GI strategies and recommendations, specifically in relation to the Site and Baldock. The GI priorities identified within the strategy, of relevance to the Site and Baldock, are summarised below and illustrated on **Figure 7:**

- ensure the boundaries of the Site around Bygrave Road are properly buffered to mitigate the impacts of development on this 'green lane'. Bygrave Road should be retained as a linear habitat corridor;
- conserve the network of narrow sunken lanes and tracks which lead out from northern parts of the town such as Bygrave Road, as green corridors within the green infrastructure network;
- establish a network of wooded greenways in advance of built development, to connect landscape, development and areas of community green space;
- in relation to the A505, plant and reinforce a native (oak-hornbeam) wooded landscape buffer (with field maple, cherry and hawthorn understorey) to fulfil an attenuation function;
- enhance the green wedge at Walls Field to act as a green lung for the town. This scheduled monument site presents a key opportunity for a new community green space and as a 'common ground' for existing and new communities;
- recreational green spaces such as Walls Field should reference Baldock's rich cultural heritage and focus the imagination with reference to its historic importance as a Roman settlement and its connections with the Knights Templar; and
- the Proposed Development Site on the edge of Bygrave Common is a possible location for a new strategic semi-natural green space.

Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

In 2023, Hertfordshire began an ambitious journey: to reverse nature's long-term decline through a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This plan sets clear targets, priorities and actions to support habitats and species. It provides a shared framework so that everyone - across sectors and communities - can help deliver bigger, better, and more connected nature recovery projects.

The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire is currently out for public consultation (until September 2025). From a review of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) mapping, the following strategic priorities in relation to the Site and immediate context are summarised and illustrated opposite on **Figure 8:**

- A large proportion of the Site is located within the 'Herts Chalk Focus Area' where the priority is to support the delivery of new chalk grassland habitats, with calcareous habitats prioritised above all other habitat types
- The Green Space east of Clothall Common and Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site (LWS) are highlighted as 'Grass and Heath Focus Areas', where the priority is to manage existing grassland and heathland to maintain the biodiversity of existing good quality habitats and enhance poor quality sites.
- Both the Green Space east of Clothall Common and Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site (LWS) within the Site, are identified as 'Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity'

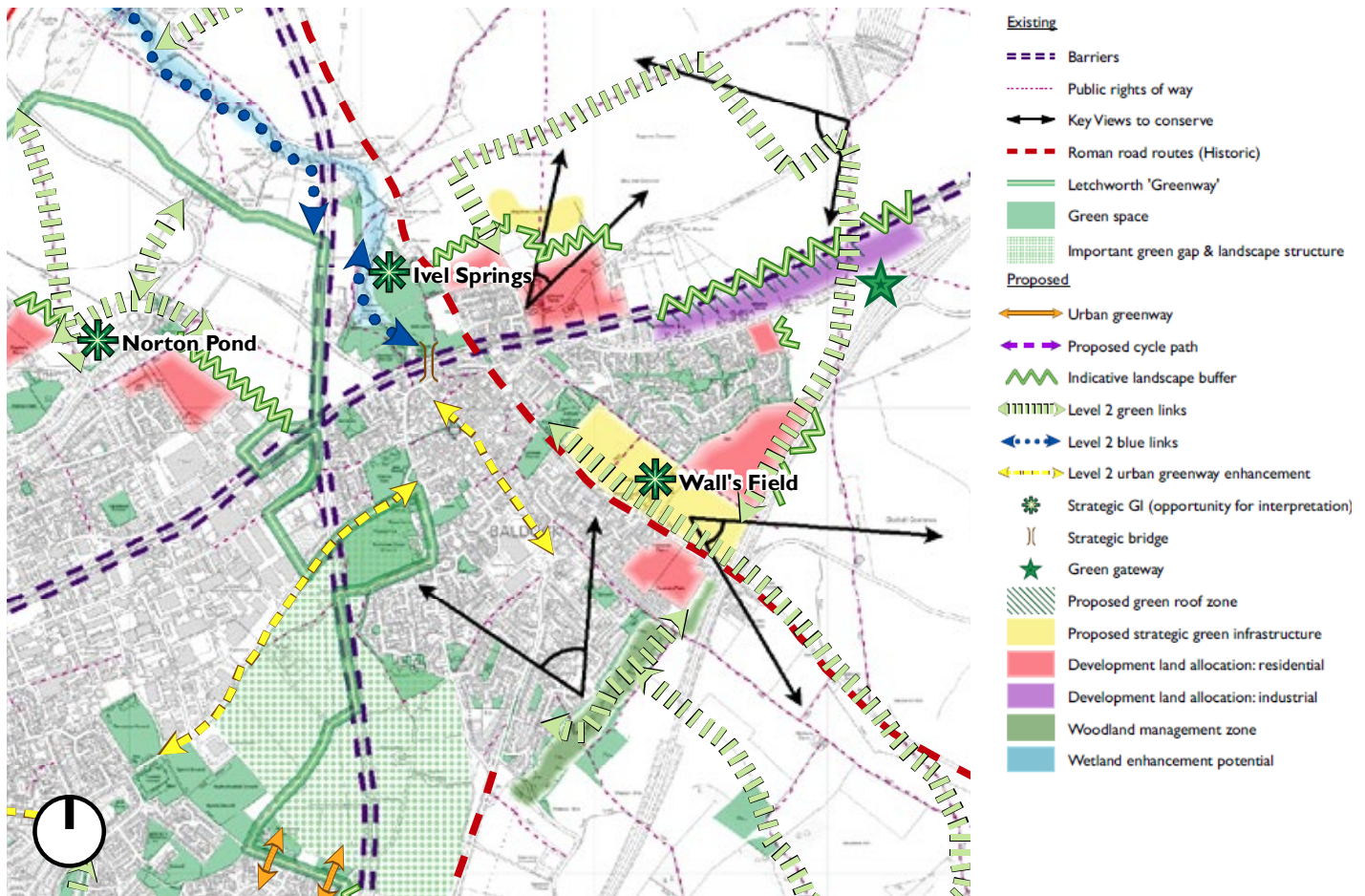


Figure 7. North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure - Extract of Baldock



Figure 8. Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Mapping - Extract



3.2 STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ACCESS & RECREATIONAL ROUTES

Access, recreational routes, and connections are critical to a successful Green Infrastructure network. This section identifies the existing strategic provision in terms of long distance waymarked routes and trails that are in close proximity to the Site and Baldock. This is explored further in **Section 5.8** for GI connectivity and the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network.

Strategic Greenways

Baldock is strategically located to the east of two existing strategic recreational routes, as illustrated in **Figure 9** opposite:

- Etonbury Green Wheel – 10.6 miles
- Letchworth Greenway – 13.6 miles

The **Etonbury Green Wheel** is being developed as a walking and cycling route around the settlements of Arlesey, Fairfield and Stotfold, passing through and beside areas of open space, landscape, heritage and wildlife interest. The entire Green Wheel is now in place and able to be used as a walking route. Further works are planned for the coming years to enable paths to be upgraded and promoted for cycling.

The **Letchworth Greenway** is a 13.6 mile (21.8km) route around the Garden City suitable for the enjoyment of walkers, runners and cyclists. The route also covers a number of local wildlife and nature spots for people to enjoy along the route.

As the North Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy highlights, there is a strategic GI aspiration to create the '**Baldock Greenway**' that provides a multi-user route around and through the Site and the settlement of Baldock, which would connect to and support the Etonbury Green Wheel and Letchworth Greenway.

Circular, Long Distance Walks

Baldock features a number of circular walks and long distance trails that pass through the town and provide direct access to the wider countryside and surrounding villages.

Baldock North Circular: Baldock to Ashwell

19.6km (12.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Ashwell that starts at Baldock Railway Station and heads out of the town along North Road and Bygrave Road. It enters BA1 part of the Site at Laymore Farm and runs north along bridleway 002 which connects to Millers Way (bridleway 001) where it heads east towards Ashwell Road in Lower Bygrave.

Baldock South Circular: Baldock to Wallington

13.1km (8.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Wallington across the elevated Wallington scarp slopes. The route starts at Walls Field and heads north east along the northern edge of BA3 before crossing Baldock Bypass A505 and connecting to Clothall bridleway 028 heading north east towards Wallington. From Wallington the route follows the Icknield Way Trail towards Clothall in the south, before heading north west back to Baldock where it runs along the southern edge of BA2.

3 **Icknield Way National Trail:** Crossing six counties, the Icknield Way Trail is a 170 mile (274 km) route linking the Peddars Way National Trail in Suffolk with the Ridgeway National Trail in Buckinghamshire, which in turn links with the Wessex Ridgeway. The Icknield Way Trail, long distance footpath, borders the Site's southern-most boundary (BA2), running in an east to west direction, passing through Baldock and providing onward connection to Letchworth Garden City in the west - and joining with the Hertfordshire Way in the east.

4 **The Kingfisher Way:** 32km (20 miles) walk following the course of the River Ivel. From the source at Ivel Springs off North Road in Baldock through the towns and villages of the Ivel Valley to Roxton Lock where it joins the River Great Ouse. The route links the Icknield Way at Baldock with the Ouse Valley Way National Trails.

National Cycle Route NCR

- **National Cycle Route 12 (NCR 12):** runs through the western part of Baldock, passing between Letchworth Garden City and Baldock, along the A1(M) road corridor. Within the District, the route partially follows the alignment of the Letchworth Greenway, a radial route established for the town's centenary.



Figure 9. Strategic Greenways and Recreational Routes

Estimated distances:

ETONBURY GREEN WHEEL - 10 MILES

LETCHWORTH GREENWAY - 13 MILES

BALDOCK GREENWAY - 6 MILES

Circular & long distance walks:

- 1 Baldock North Circular:**
19.6km (12.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Ashwell across vast Hertfordshire farmland fields in an area filled with clues to Britain's Iron Age and Roman past.
- 2 Baldock South Circular:**
13.1km (8.2 miles) circular walk from Baldock to Wallington across the elevated Wallington scarp slopes. Follows part of the Icknield Way.
- 3 Icknield Way:**
Crossing six counties, the Icknield Way Trail is a 170 mile (274 km) route linking the Peddars Way National Trail in Suffolk with the Ridgeway National Trail in Buckinghamshire, which in turn links with the Wessex Ridgeway.
- 4 The Kingfisher Way:**
32km (20 miles) walk following the course of the River Ivel. From Ivel Springs in Baldock through the towns and villages of the Ivel Valley to Roxton Lock where it joins the River Great Ouse.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

3.3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INFLUENCES

The Green infrastructure influences of the surrounding context can provide a strong basis for the future Green infrastructure framework of the Proposed Development as illustrated on **Figure 10**.

IVEL VALLEY

- Buffer and protect Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve (LNR) features and provide suitable alternative greenspace to reduce recreational pressures
- Recharging the chalk aquifer through infiltration on Site and controlled water management and distribution



NORTH BALDOCK CHALKLANDS

- Embrace, respect and celebrate the open, rolling chalk landform, carefully managing the coverage of new planting and transition to the surrounding rural landscape
- Restore open chalk grasslands, enhance buffer zones to existing hedgerow network and create new wooded areas, by delivering an interconnected nature recovery network
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network



WALLINGTON SCARP SLOPES

- Expand the species-rich calcareous grassland habitats, introduce shelter belts and beech woodland, as part of the chalk arc Green infrastructure strategic initiatives
- Conserve and respect the openness, views and transition from the urban open land to the Wallington Scarp Slopes rural landscape



WESTON HILLS

- Buffer and protect existing LNR features and expand chalk grassland, beech woodland and scrub habitat mosaic within the wider Green infrastructure network



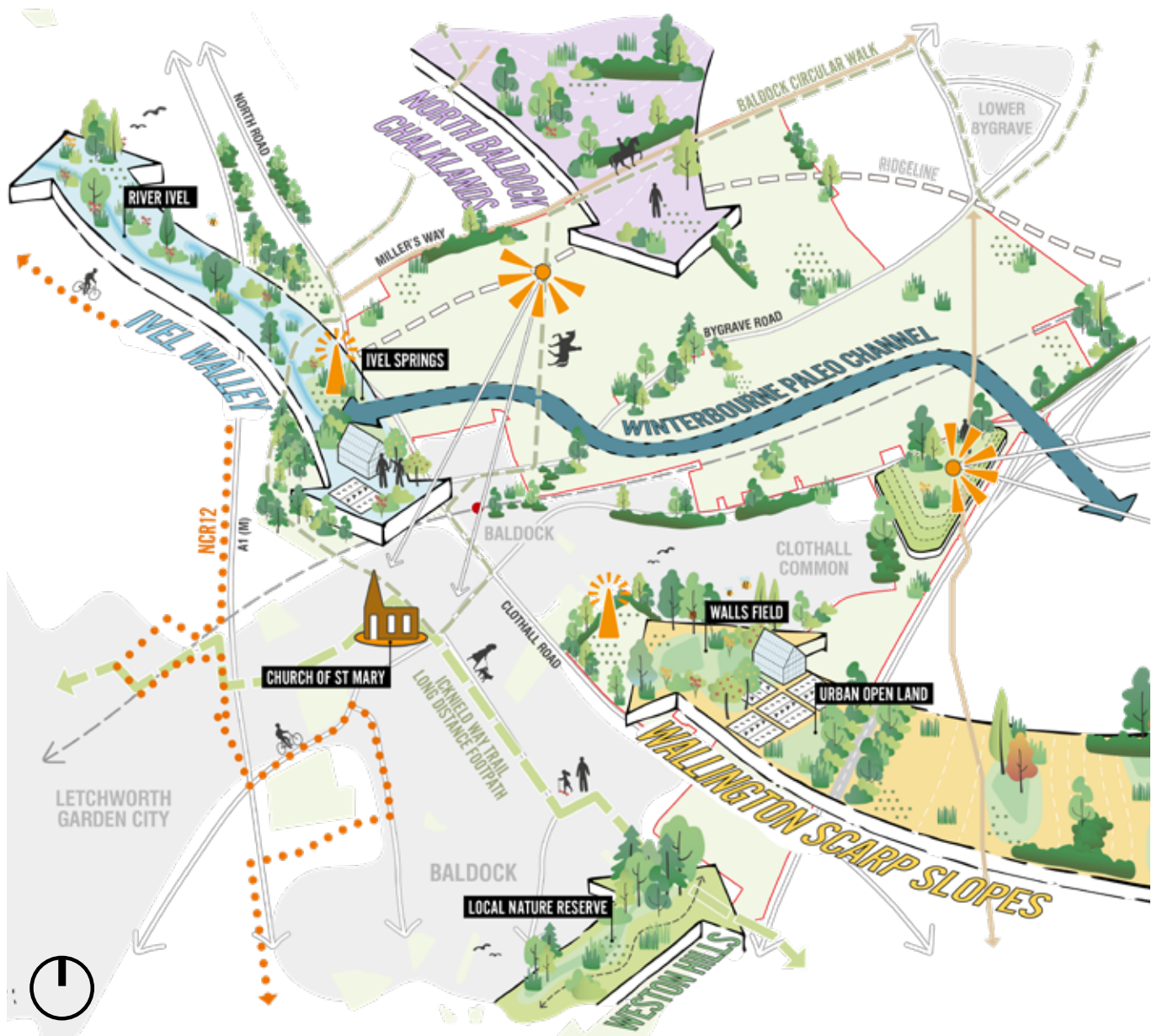


Figure 10. Green Infrastructure Influences