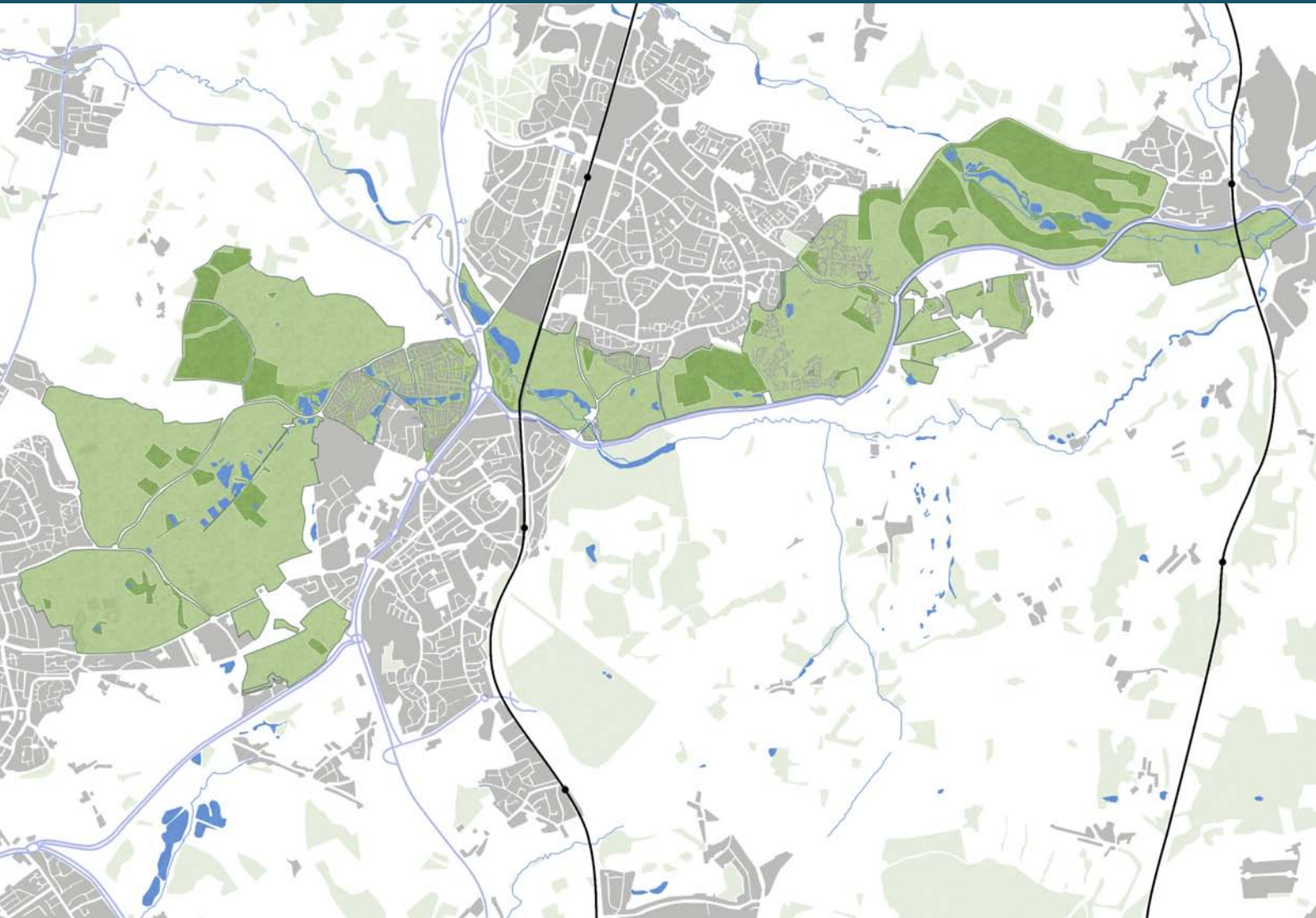




GASCOYNE CECIL
ESTATES

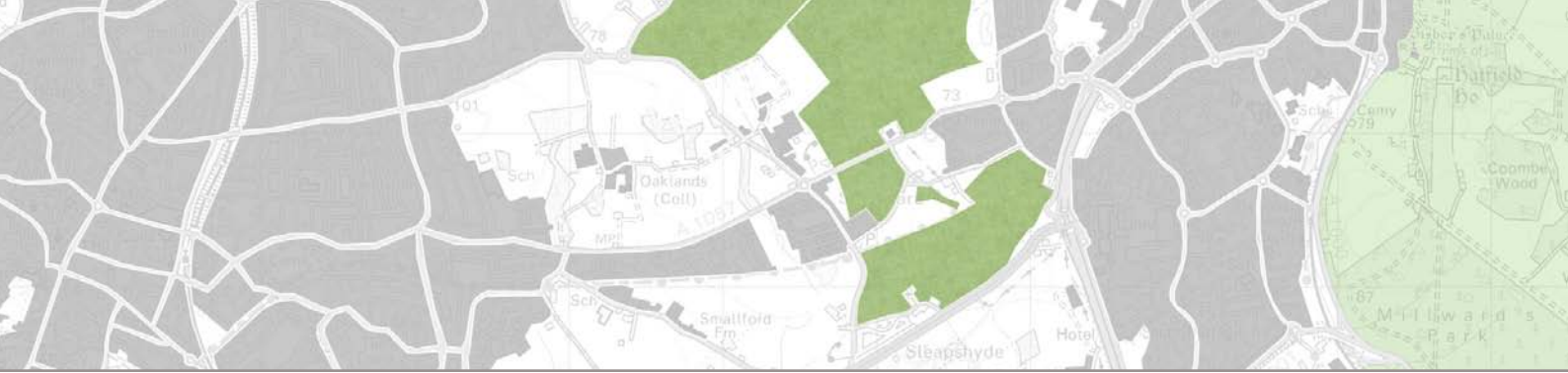


A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Central Hertfordshire

'Effective solutions to the delivery of high quality and sustainably maintained open space'









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Introduction

New development will always prove to be a contentious topic. Change will raise fears in terms of what the future might hold. Release of farm land or green field sites for development and the severance of links with the past will similarly present a difficult decision for landowners.

As a long term land owner with many long and historic associations within Welwyn Hatfield, Gascoyne Cecil Estate's approach to the management of its holdings remains constant:

- To enhance our environment and secure the long term prosperity both of the Estates and their extended communities.
- To preserve the best of what already exists, improving conditions where possible with new homes, high-quality public spaces and thriving businesses.

New development does not in itself have to be bad. Careful planning and design can overcome many of the shortcomings and criticisms of more typical residential developments.

Planning, however, should not stop with bricks and mortar and Gascoyne Cecil Estates strongly believes in the provision of equally high quality green infrastructure. This can ensure that Welwyn Hatfield maintains its rich vein of historic park landscapes and garden city principles.

This document presents a coherent plan for green infrastructure and the creation of a recognisable green corridor. If carefully and sympathetically delivered, such green amenity has the potential to ensure Welwyn Hatfield remains an attractive environment in which people still aspire to live, raise their families, work and play over years and decades to come.

Existing Planning Policy, Gascoyne Cecil Estates & the Green Belt

The adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) predates initiatives on delivering green infrastructure and therefore does not contain any policies that directly relate to or seek to deliver a comprehensive set of proposals for new green infrastructure across the district.

Outside of the main towns and larger villages, the countryside is protected by Green Belt policy, originally introduced to safeguard the urban sprawl of London (the Metropolitan Green Belt) and more recently, National Green Belt Policy was contained in PPG2 : Green Belts which set out the five purposes of including land in Green Belts, carried forward into the NPPF:

- Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Although Green Belts are often considered by the general public as a means of constraining new development, the use of land in Green Belts has a positive role to play and PPG2 identified the following objectives of Green Belts:

- To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban populations;
- To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- To retain attractive landscapes and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- To improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- To secure nature conservation interests; and
- To retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.

The objectives of securing new Green Infrastructure may also be viewed as sharing these same objectives of the use of land within Green Belts. This is particularly relevant within the new planning system introduced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that seeks to meet objectively assessed housing needs and green infrastructure provision may be viewed as a way of compensating for the loss of open countryside



to new development that seeks to meet identified housing needs.

This approach is aligned with Gascoyne Cecil Estates long term interests in protecting and enhancing the local environment by advocating careful land use and planning strategies prior to the introduction of Statutory Green Belt designations. Examples include the Estate's active support for the construction of the early phases of Welwyn Garden City and the imposition of legal safeguards such as restrictive covenants in an attempt to prevent coalescence between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield.

A similar situation arises today with the preparation of new Local Plans currently being prepared by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, East Herts District Council and St Albans District Council. These authorities are required to meet the full objectively assessed housing needs in sustainable locations. This will inevitably involve the expansion of the principal settlements of Hertford, Welwyn Garden City and St Albans with consequential implications for continuing to meet the five functions of including land within the green belt – principally the avoidance of coalescence.

In order to deliver the most sustainable pattern of future development around these settlements, a clear and well-structured approach to the delivery of new green infrastructure will both safeguard against coalescence whilst assisting in overcoming many of the negative perceptions associated with new development and Green Belt release. Opportunities exist to provide improved sustainable linkages and allow for outdoor recreation in a more coherent way..

Gascoyne Cecil Estates strongly believes that proposals for a Green Corridor linking the principal settlements of Hertford, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and St Albans presents a rare opportunity to deliver a coherent vision for the benefit of future generations.



The National Planning Policy Framework

“The overarching objective of the NPPF is to deliver sustainable development, the three dimensions of which are economic, social and environmental. Green infrastructure is defined within the NPPF as ‘a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.’

With reference to the NPPF and these key points;

A social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

An environmental role –contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and

communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions.

Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (but not limited to):

- making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;
- moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;
- replacing poor design with better design;
- improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure; and
- widening the choice of high quality homes.

The process should not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;

- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of

different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;

- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.

Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;

- promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);
- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and

focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and

- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.



National Planning Policy Framework

www.communities.gov.uk
community, opportunity, prosperity



Delivering sustainable development

Building a strong, competitive economy

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

28. Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other
- land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the
- character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres;
- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Promoting sustainable transport

29. Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. Smarter use of technologies can reduce the need to travel. The transport

system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel. However, the Government recognises that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.

30. Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should therefore support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport.

35. Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to

- give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
- create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones;

37. Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.

52. The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities.

Requiring good design

56. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

57. It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

70. To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments

75. Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.

Protecting Green Belt land

79. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential

characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

80. Green Belt serves four purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

89. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan;

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

99. Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed

through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

109. The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures

113. Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, 24 so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.

114 – local planning authorities are encouraged to set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, providing positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.

117. To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries;
- identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;
- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;
- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and
- where Nature Improvement Areas are identified in Local Plans, consider specifying the types of development that may be appropriate in these Areas.

The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Process

The previous Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy and current Local Plan process envisages a requirement for the provision of several thousand new homes with an additional requirement for additional sites which are necessary to ensure adequate employment provision.

Whilst the final proposals in respect of the Local Plan have yet to be presented, it is clear that if appropriate quantities of housing and employment sites are to be delivered significant pressure will be placed upon existing green belt land and the surrounding natural environment.

This has already been recognised within the emerging Plan Spatial Vision;

‘A planned release of a limited amount of land from the Green Belt adjoining Welwyn Garden City will have taken place, but only where our needs for growth cannot be met

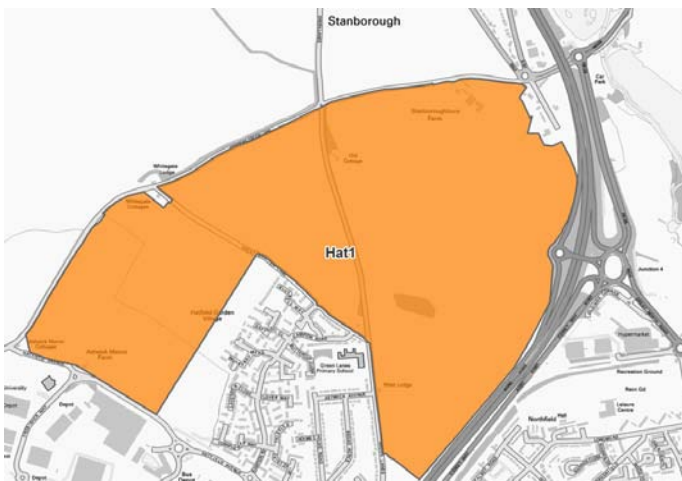
from within the existing towns and villages. Partnerships with Hertfordshire County Council, adjoining district councils and landowners will have delivered new and improved Strategic Green Infrastructure, increasing access and reinforcing the role of the Green Belt between Hatfield and Smallford and to the east of Welwyn Garden City.’

Paragraph 4.4 of the Emerging local Plan already makes the direct connection between new development and Green Infrastructure by stating:

‘To compensate for the loss of green field land we will seek improvements and additions to the network of green infrastructure’

Without wishing to pre-judge any outcome of the ECS / new Local Plan process, the draft allocation document previously considered the possibility of the following sites;

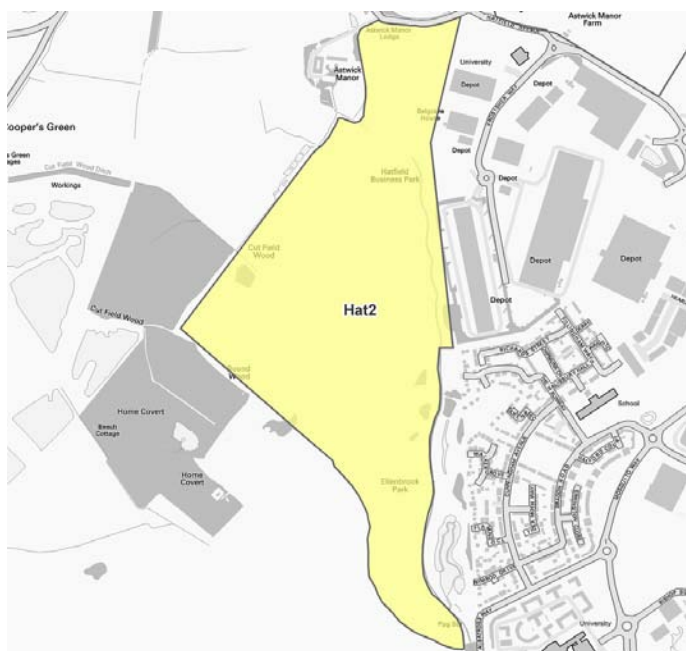
1. HAT 1 (Gascyone Cecil Estates / CEMEX)



2.WGC 1 (Gascyone Cecil Estates)



3. HAT 2 (Goodmans)

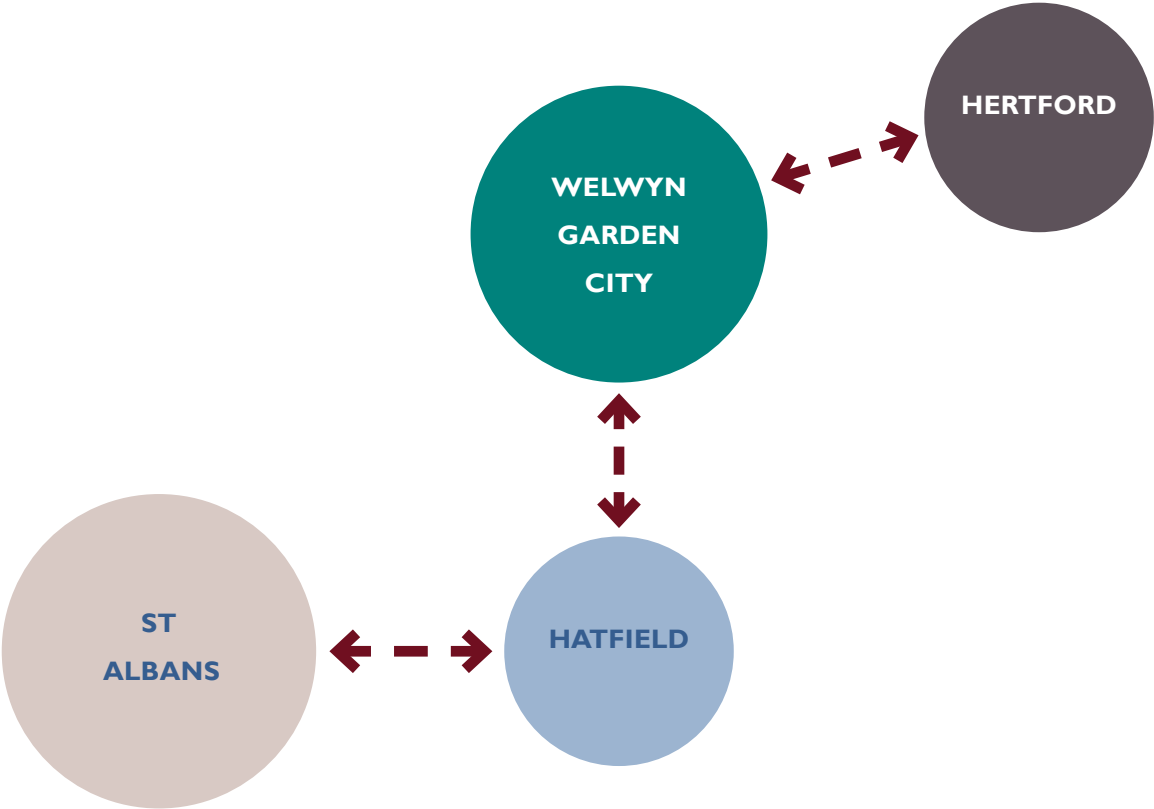


4.WGC5 (Lafarge)



Current pressures

Whilst these and / or other sites may or ,may not be ultimately adopted, it is clear when taking a broad view of the area, of both the constraints and opportunities which arise from development of these sites. Most pertinently, however, it is clear that large tracts of land are held by a relatively small number of mature organisations. With suitable consultation and negotiation it should therefore be feasible for land owners to work in close cooperation with the Planning Authority and deliver a coherent network of green infrastructure and perhaps most importantly safeguard both the local landscape and threats arising from coalescence.



-----> Current pressures of coalescence between existing settlements
14. Areas under review by Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy

Regional Access

Welwyn Hatfield is already blessed with a number of established footpaths and cycle routes as well as open space in the form of public and private park land. Whilst existing routes are viewed as a valuable resource to local communities, it is fair to say that much of the network is of variable quality and landscape similarly suffers from many of the problems one typically finds in urban fringe locations. Creation of a properly considered and well managed green corridor thus raises the prospect for significant environmental improvements together with new and / or enhanced linkages for walking and cycling.



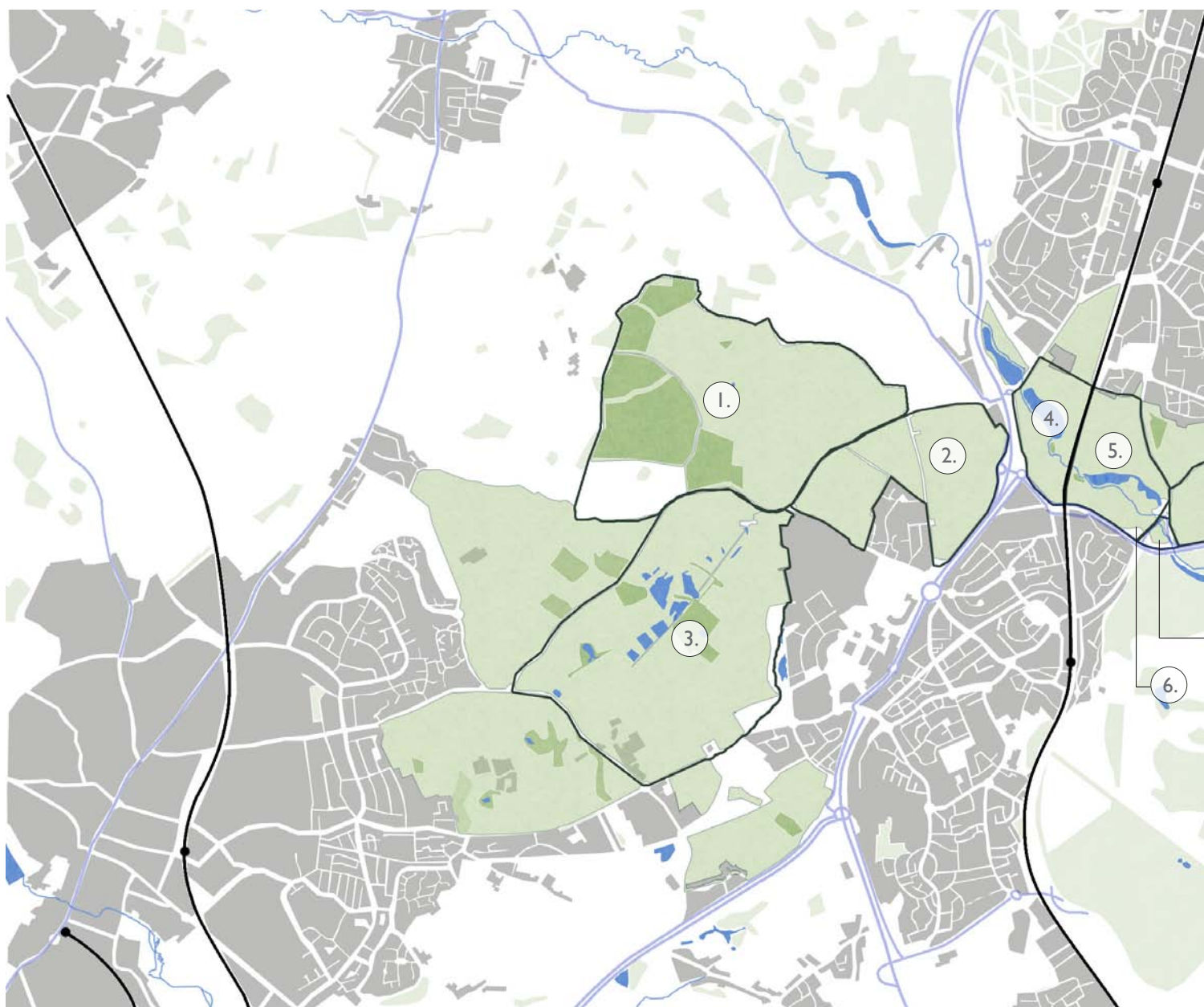
Agricultural production has been maintained in a number of locations. As settlements grow, it will prove increasingly difficult to balance agricultural practices with requirements for public access, a desire to improve planting and landscape management regimes. A challenge thus exists whereby landscape and biodiversity are improved whilst avoiding an unduly manicured or sanitised landscape.



The vision

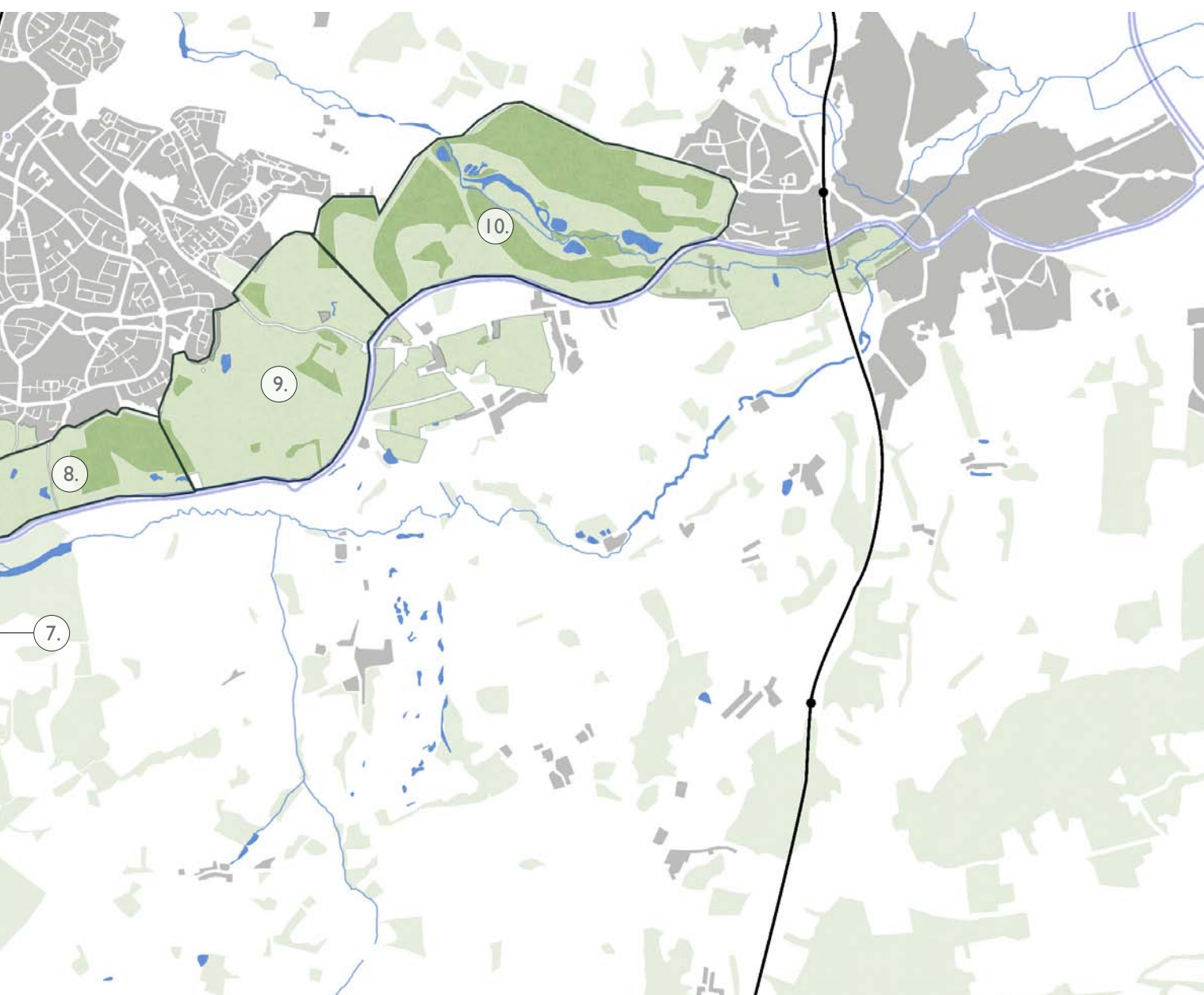
As illustrated within the diagram below, Gascoyne Cecil Estates advocate the creation of a green corridor which would provide enhanced levels of public access within rural landscapes alongside the provision of other green spaces of varying sizes. This would include large formal greens and

smaller spaces designed for immediate neighbourhood use. Wherever possible opportunities would be taken to enhance existing landscape features and / or strengthen the sense of separation between existing settlements.



Clearly, this document does not seek to pre-judge the matter of negotiations between individual owners and the Planning Authority. It is hoped however, that if individual parties can be convinced of the merits of a viable green corridor then many of the opportunities could be delivered with long term

benefit for future generations. The following proposals relate principally (but not exclusively) to land which is owned and controlled by Gascoyne Cecil Estates.





www.bgs.ac.uk

1) CEMEX (Suttons Farm) / GCE (Symonshyde)

The site comprises a parcel of land within the Metropolitan Green Belt between Hatfield and St Albans. Hatfield Quarry comprises a large expanse of land subject to mineral extraction and comprises areas of both active and restored land. The current extraction area at Symondshyde consists of some 67 hectares of land located approximately 2km north of the quarry complex and north of Coopers Green Lane, as shown on the attached OS extract plan.

Sand and gravel from the extraction area is transported via a network of linked conveyor belts leading to the quarry complex where materials are washed, graded and stockpiled or bagged for export. The company has ancillary facilities at the quarry complex comprising a washing plant, batching facilities for ready-mix, and a sand bagging operation.

The surrounding area is fairly sparsely populated although there are residential properties in the vicinity of the site at Beech Farm 300m to the north, Oak Farm approximately 120m to the west, and Oaklands Lane approximately 400m south east of the quarry complex. Following completion of mineral operations opportunities exist for restoration renewed agrivultural operations and public access which compliment neighbouring Ellenbrook Country Park (see below).



The wood is owned by Gascoyne Cecil Estates but is managed by the Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service. Twenty years ago oak, ash and elm trees were felled and were replaced by softwoods; scots pine and European larch. The trees are thinned after 15 years and harvested after 60 years. Only 12 acres called Hammond's Wood has been left natural, the trees are coppiced hornbeam and a few ash and oaks. Coppicing has been reintroduced recently to preserve the wood. It also provides a better habitat for wildlife. Existing local bridleways are already well utilised.



www.walkingbritain.co.uk

2) Stanborough Garden Village;

The proposed development would provide approximately 25% green space, including parkland, allotments and neighbourhood play facilities. This integrated network of green space is intended to integrate seamlessly with the wider 'green corridor'. 'The centerpiece of Stanborough Garden Village is a system of lakes. These will be designed to function as part of the wider Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme, whilst supplementing the adjacent parkland and public open green space. These lakes will add to the 'sense of place' within the development whilst also creating memorable views shared by Stanborough and Hatfield Garden Villages residents.



3) Ellenbrook Country Park

Ellenbrook Country park has already been created following the successful regeneration of the former Hatfield aerodrome. The 400-acre country park on the former aerodrome site lies between Hatfield and St Albans and would be integrated at the western end of the green corridor. The site has already been converted into parkland with footpaths, hay meadows, a bridleway and woodland. It has retained the taxiway for heritage and access purposes and benefits from information panels, picnic benches and seating. Approximately half of the remaining park land will then be used for cattle grazing with Longhorn Cows introduced into the park.



4) Stanborough Lakes

Stanborough Park, also referred to as Stanborough Lakes, is a 126-acre (0.51 km²) park on the south western fringes of Welwyn Garden City. The lakes are a popular public amenity space and would sit at the heart of the 'green corridor' linking Stanborough Garden Village with proposed new linkages along the River Lea.

www.gofishing.co.uk

The park features two lakes, which were opened in 1970. These are man-made and were created as a by product of gravel extraction contemporary with construction of the A1/M. It should be noted however that the thought of a riverside park had been considered as early as 1949.

The Boating Lake (the northern lake) at Stanborough covers an area of 11.3 acres (46,000 m²). It is a shallow lake with several small islands. The boating lake is fed by water from the River Lea at its north end and from a spring. Excess water flows over a weir back into the river at the south end.

The Sailing Lake (the southern lake) is the larger of the two lakes and covers an area of 15.3 acres (62,000 m²). This lake has no islands but is deeper than the boating lake. Unlike the Boating Lake the Sailing Lake is fed by springs and ground water. Prior to creation of the present lakes, the River Lea used to flow through part of the Sailing Lake but it was re-directed to the west side. Many watersport activities now take place here, including sailing, windsurfing and angling.

Opportunities exist to improve the existing landscaping and provide improved screening of the A1/M. Previously this was achieved through a screen of Lombardy Poplar trees in the Southern Car Park. Two existing railway bridges provide opportunities to strengthen linkages with land on the Eastern side of the main railway line.



5) Land and buildings at Woodhall Farm.

The East Coast Main line runs across the proposed corridor upon a substantial embankment and separates Stanborough Park in the west from Woodhall Farm in the East.

Fortuitously, there are two bridges within this formation, constructed in traditional blue engineering brick, carrying the railway over the River Lea and an existing footpath / farm access. Whilst the northern of the two bridges provides an existing route there is presently no formal access via the southern bridge. Clear evidence of informal use is present and a clear opportunity exists to formalise access.

River / Flood plain; The river Corridor provides a largely inaccessible stretch of land. This encompasses valuable wildlife



habitat, flood meadow and tree cover. Clear opportunities exist to improve the management regimes throughout this area and to enhance biodiversity whilst balancing opportunities of increased public access. Given the recent increases in winter rainfall, the flood meadows represent an opportunity to alleviate and balance increased flood risks.

Arable land; The existing arable land is of relatively poor quality and field boundaries ensure that this remains a difficult and inefficient piece of land for modern farming practices. Existing public access places further stress upon agricultural operations as it struggles to deal with many of the challenges typical of urban fringe locations. The creation of a green corridor provides an opportunity to put much of the cultivated land back to grass. This could be grazed under a suitable management regime. Visual impact arising from development along the southern fringes of WGC could be considerably softened by effective tree planting.

Woodhall buildings

Woodhall Farmhouse and Cottage adjoin a substantial range of brick and timber farm buildings. The farmhouse is a substantial Victorian farmhouse. The Cottage is listed and dates from the 16th Century. It is notable for its steep plain tile roof with coped gable ends and impressive external chimney stack. It carries a stone armorial plaque said to be of Hutchinson family who held the Manor of Woodhall for most of the 18th Century. Both properties continue in residential occupation.

The farmstead has been occupied by a number of businesses on short term tenancies for the last twenty to thirty years. The farmstead would benefit from substantial refurbishment. Creation of the green corridor and enhanced access would provide an opportunity to find a new use for these buildings – either related to leisure uses or alternatively as a higher quality location for small businesses.



www.artyweddings.co.uk



6) Bush Hall

The site is located to the north of the A414. Bush Hall is located in the hamlet of Mill Green on the edge of Hatfield Park. The application site is bounded to the south west by the A414, with a residential area beyond which is within the settlement of Hatfield and to the south by the A1000, which is known also as Chequers Road. There is open countryside to the north and west of the application site, with a tributary of the River Lea situated directly to the north.

The site forms an area of approximately 7.4ha and is occupied predominantly by Bush Hall Hotel, which is a Grade II Listed Building. This building is a large 17th century two storey red brick property with dormer windows.

The most recent use of the building was as a hotel, however the hotel ceased operations in December 2009 and is now closed to the public. Planning consent for a significant refurbishment and extension have been granted but work has yet to commence. Prior to its closure the hotel currently comprised of Bush Hall with its Coach House which together had 25 bedrooms, stables, a number of modern extensions, various outbuildings and a car park for 140 spaces for guests and staff which was located to the front of the main building. There were also facilities for recreational activities, a go kart track which occupies much of the field to the north east of Bush Hall. In this same general location is a helicopter landing pad.

To the north east of Bush Hall lie two residential properties, The Old Mill House and Turbine Cottage. The Old Mill House is a Grade II Listed building.

The site is predominantly flat and has some tree cover. A line of trees runs north to south of the site which lie to the west of Bush Hall. A further tree belt runs east to west on the southern boundary of the site. A tributary of the River Lea together with a network of associated drainage channels passes to the north and along the north western boundary of the application site. One tributary passes through the site which has been canalised in part which powered the Paper Mill which was previously on the site, but has since been demolished.

The access to the hotel and site is gained from Chequers Road where the vehicular driveway leads to the front of the hotel and to an existing area of hardstanding which was formerly used as the hotel car park sited to the south west of the principle building.

Hatfield Park is located to the south of the application site beyond the A1000 and Chequers Road, which forms a physical divide between Bush Hall and Mill Green. Opportunities exist to improve both pedestrian and cycle linkages with Mill Green and routes into Hatfield. Consideration could be given to alternative means of crossing the A1000 / Chequers into Mill Green and beyond.

7) Mill Green

Mill Green village suffers from isolation having been surrounded by an increasingly busy road network. Whilst the museum continues as a popular attraction, providing an attractive centre piece to the village, there are significant areas of land which provide opportunities to enhance the village and form an attractive setting at the heart of the green corridor.

Gascoyne Cecil Estates undertook a charrette with residents of Mill Green during September 2011. This exercise was well attended and produced consensus and support for a number of initiatives. These included;

- Refurbishment of listed buildings and restoration of the Green Man Pub.
- Noise abatement and planting along the A414 boundary.
- Improved landscaping and creation of a new village green adjacent to the River Lea
- New footpaths and linkages
- Community allotments
- Limited additional housing (circa 12 units).

The charrette is fully described within two separate charrette booklets.

These enhancements should be adopted as a part of the wider delivery of the green corridor.





8) Creswicks / Ascots Lane / Mill Green Golf Course

Gascoyne Cecil Estates is promoting a housing site located to the North of the power pylons traversing land between Creswicks plantation and Ascots Lane. This site (denoted within WHBC ECS documentation as WGCI) is envisaged as a high quality development of circa 250 houses. Design of the housing seeks to retain existing water courses and mature trees, establish attractive sustainable drainage solutions, improve wildlife habitat and linkages with exiting ponds and margins.

South of the pylons, the Estate considers the area as suitable for a mixture of formal recreational space (for example a suitable home for a relocated Cricket Club), informal grass land and additional woodland planting. This would provide valuable amenity space and focal point for the new and existing residential neighbourhoods. Opportunities also exist for improved habitat and linkages for pedestrians and cyclists within the wider green corridor.

Land to the south of Ascots Lane and East of the A1000 is predominantly occupied by Mill Green Golf Course. Mill Green Golf Course was successfully established during the 1980's and restored land which had previously served for a variety of purposes testing earth moving equipment and training wartime personnel.

Today, set in over 200 acres of Hertfordshire countryside, Mill Green Golf Club combines an excellent golf course and a valuable part of the green landscape.

By far the most important Wildlife Sites in this area consist of a linked series of habitats around an ancient spring-fed swamp at Commons Wood. This is regarded as unique in this part of the county. Other sites in the area are limited, but the Creswick Plantation and nearby wet habitat is of local value, as also are the old settling ponds at Holwell Hyde Farm. All of the practical work on this nature reserve is undertaken by Commonswood Nature Watch, a local friends group and other volunteers working with the Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service.



Masterplan prepared by David Lock Associates

9) Lafarge / Birchall Garden suburb

The vision (promoted by Lafarge Tarmac) is to extend Welwyn Garden City to create a distinctive new Garden Suburb of up to 2,500 family homes with gardens surrounding an extensive area of landscaped open-space. It is proposed that several architectural teams will create a new development with architecture which reflects the local vernacular.

Set within a green frame, Birchall Garden Suburb aims to create tree lined streets, wildlife corridors, increased biodiversity and transform a previously landfilled area into a community asset as part of a new central park. Direct links by public transport and for cycling to the town centre would connect the new Garden Suburb directly to the life, culture and economy of Welwyn Garden City.

The present masterplan proposes housing south east of Welwyn Garden City along the A414. It is hoped that this aspect of an otherwise promising masterplan might be revisited. Relocation of some of the development proposed for the Southern sector of this scheme would reduce visual intrusion when viewed from Hatfield Park and Essendon whilst maintaining the vision for a clear green corridor and visual separation between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield.

Should the development proceed in its current form, there is a potential for negative effects on The Commons Local Nature Reserve which lies between the Broad Location and the Halls Grove neighbourhood of WGC. Wooded local wildlife sites also lie to the north of the Broad Location around Birchall. In addition, the Draft Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (WHBC, 2012) identified small areas of wetland and various hedgerows, trees and grass.



www.panshangerpeople.org.uk

10) Panshanger Country Park

Earl Cowper, who later became Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, acquired the Cole Green estate c. 1700.[1] He remodelled the estate in 1704 and made alterations to the house in 1711. The 5th Earl Cowper commissioned Samuel Wyatt and then William Atkinson to design a new house in a slightly different location in Regency-Gothic style; construction work started on site in 1806. The park was landscaped with advice from Humphry Repton, starting in 1799. Following the death of the 7th Earl Cowper in 1905, the estate was inherited by Lady Desborough and, after she died in 1952 with no heir,[4] the estate was sold in lots by auction the following year but there was no interest in the house itself and it was demolished between 1953 and 1954.

Today, Panshanger Park is owned by Lafarge Tarmac who extract sand and gravel from the site. Although Panshanger House was demolished, the orangery, nursery garden wall and stables remain along with a number of other cottages and estate buildings, all of which are listed by English Heritage.

Panshanger Park has been an operational quarry for the last 40 years. The site has been subjected to extensive mineral extraction and phased high quality restoration. Through a phased approach, land is restored as part of the on-going process. Land from which minerals have not been extracted is also managed to increase biodiversity in line with the Hertfordshire BAP.

To ensure that the restoration process was sympathetic to its surrounding environment, a Management Plan was drawn up and agreed as part of a revised planning permission in 2003. The Management Plan reflects historic aspirations for the site identified through original works by Humphrey Repton and provides the basis for working with harmonising historic restoration with amenity, agriculture, conservation and the parks historic heritage.

Habitats at Panshanger Park include lakes, grassland, wet woodland, hedgerows and reedbeds.

There is a network of permissive paths and definitive rights of way for people to enjoy, walkers are able to appreciate a variety of wildlife, birds and insects along the routes.

A newly opened path joins the other permissive paths and bridleways accessible from Thieves Lane car park and Panshanger Lane.

Walkers now have a variety of circular walks to choose from at the north east end of the park. Two information boards have been installed, one at Thieves Lane car park and one within the Park, to provide details of the routes available.

Lafarge works closely with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Hertfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency as part of a Management Committee for Panshanger Park.

The site was the focus for a series of mini-charrettes hosted and facilitated by the University of Hertfordshire during July 2013. These workshops aimed to provide a strategic vision for Panshanger Park in the 21st Century. Feedback from these workshops is now assisting Lafarge Tarmac in refining their future management proposals. If the greater vision for a green corridor can be realised, Panshanger could play a valuable part in a wider network of strategic open space.



www.tripadvisor.co.uk

11) East of Hertford

This paper is not concerned with proposals beyond those which have been described between Hertford and St Albans. Should the proposals which are described within this paper be adopted, potential would exist to extend the value of the facilities and linkages by integration with other pre-existing green infrastructure. By way of example, existing routes afford cyclists and walkers access to the Lee Valley East and South of Hertford. Once through the town, one has direct access to the Lee Valley. The Lee Valley offers all kinds of walking in Hertfordshire, Essex and London. There are 26 miles of riverside trails to enjoy and quiet, car-free walking routes through nature reserves and peaceful urban spaces.

Facilities within the Lee Valley allow a gentle family stroll, a guided walk or a lengthy hike. Many paths are surfaced for all-weather walking and easy pushchair or wheelchair use, and with an abundance of wildlife habitats



Objectives of the Green Corridor

The Green Corridor presents a holistic solution for the creation of an enhanced environment within the districts of East Hertfordshire and Welwyn Hatfield - an accessible, green environment that delivers valuable benefits to community and of which Hertfordshire can be justifiably proud..The possibilities of a green corridor provide a counterpoint to concerns about uncontrolled 'sprawl' development.

Key objectives of the corridor might be summarised as;

- **Safeguarding against coalescence between principal the settlements of Hertford, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and St Albans by the designation of a defined Green Corridor providing permanent separation..**
- **Safeguarding existing green space and providing increased public access and linkages.**
- **Strengthening the existing network of cycle routes in order to encourage sustainable travel and opportunities for outdoor leisure.**
- **Strengthening of local communities, including children's independent mobility, reducing car dependency and the sense of personal alienation/separation.**
- **The establishment of a site survey regime and improved understanding of our environment**
- **Opportunities for additional woodland planting and screening.**
- **Initiation of appropriate woodland management regimes**
- **Establishment of an appropriate agri-environmental management policy. Explore potential for grazing where appropriate.**
- **Development of a site access strategy alongside introduction of new footpaths and cycle paths.This should be consistent with HCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.**
- **Exploration of possible enhancement and connectivity of bridle paths**
- **Establishment of a discreet regime of protection in order to preserve and enhance the river Lea and flood meadows.**
- **Protection and enhancement of habitats for specific species.**
- **Controlled access to the river**
- **Provision of open areas**
- **Preservation of heritage assets / listed buildings within the identified corridor.**
- **Delivery of community space and facilities at Mill Green**
- **Broad integration of existing established management policies for Ellenbrook Country Park and Panshanger park.**

Funding, Delivery and Management

Funding

Fully detailed costings can only be prepared having undertaken detailed design. Potential exists for works to be undertaken incrementally against a phased programme of works. What is clear is that a number of funding options already exist including;

CIL

SI06

Park charges

Licensing fees

Other statutory grants

Management

Creation of the green corridor is only part of the challenge. Numerous examples exist where millions of pounds of both private and public money have been spent creating new facilities only for management regimes to fail in maintaining the vision. One-off costs of creation are often easier to consider than the challenges which come from future maintenance and aftercare. With these challenges in mind Gascoyne Cecil Estates intend to address long term stewardship through;

Estate Management practice;

Gascoyne Cecil Estates benefits from extensive experience managing 'green' infrastructure arising from its custody and management of Hatfield Park Estate. Its spectrum of operations spans from conservation of the built environment through to agriculture and forestry. As in many areas of estate policy, Gascoyne Cecil Estates already tries to balance conservation policies with viable agricultural operations: modern farming methods dictate that the estates are now more intensively farmed, yet GCE also recognises that its approach to agriculture plays an important part in the overall appearance of the local landscape. Gascoyne Cecil Estates already has stunning areas of woodland under its management which continue to make a huge contribution to the local landscape as well as providing a rich habitat for wildlife. The oldest oak within Hatfield Park has been aged at 1200 years' old – a tribute to successive generations' management. GCE justifiably take great pride in this natural heritage and encourage natural regeneration and pollarding. Hatfield offers a remarkably diverse collection of trees, from delicate shrubs to ancient oaks, formal avenues to sturdy stock-proof hedgerows. In addition, Gascoyne Cecil Estates enjoys a good working relationship with a wide variety of talented external consultants and local community groups and other stakeholders. All of these existing skills and expertise would be used to ensure that the creation of a green corridor would be delivered to its full potential and was a facility of which the wider community could be proud.

Hertfordshire Open Spaces Trust;

Gascoyne Cecil Estates considers the kind of open spaces and access network described within this document as being crucial to the future social landscape, delivering a range of significant benefits for residents and businesses. Safe and accessible open space allows communities to come together and individuals to develop and relax through physical activity and recreation. Gascoyne Cecil Estates are presently establishing a Hertfordshire Open Spaces Trust. This trust will be founded specifically to hold land for charitable purposes for the benefits of the community and residents of Hertfordshire. The trust will have the ability to hold land as urban public realm, green spaces, wildlife habitat and for public access. Critically the Trust will have an ability to provide long-term sustainable management of public open spaces across the County.

Key Stakeholders

The creation of a green corridor provides an opportunity for co-working between a number of key potential stakeholders. These would include;

Gascoyne Cecil Estates

CEMEX

Lafarge

Goodmans

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Hertfordshire County Council

Natural England

The Environment Agency

What Next?

These proposals aren't the end of the story and simply form the first part of an ongoing consultation exercise.

Provision of a green corridor will inevitably take time. Delivery could be achieved in phases. The concept stands the best chance of being delivered efficiently if residents and stakeholder organisations are actively involved.

This paper has been produced to facilitate further debate and consideration on part of the Emerging Core Strategy and local planning process.

Assuming these proposals find broad support, The estate will be happy to promote the vision and discuss the broad plans with local organisations and other stakeholders, Councillors and Planners in order to further refine opportunities.

As these discussions evolve, public meetings would be proposed at an appropriate point in the Local Plan process. In the meantime please do not hesitate to contact Gascoyne Cecil Estates at Hatfield Park Estate Office.

For more information please contact;

Peter Clegg, Chief Executive

Anthony Downs, Director Planning and Development

Hatfield Park Estate Office

Hatfield

AL9 5NQ

Tel: 01707 287000



GASCOYNE CECIL
ESTATES



'Preserving the character, value and benefits of Hertfordshire's open space.'