



# HEMEL GARDEN COMMUNITIES

## A SPATIAL VISION

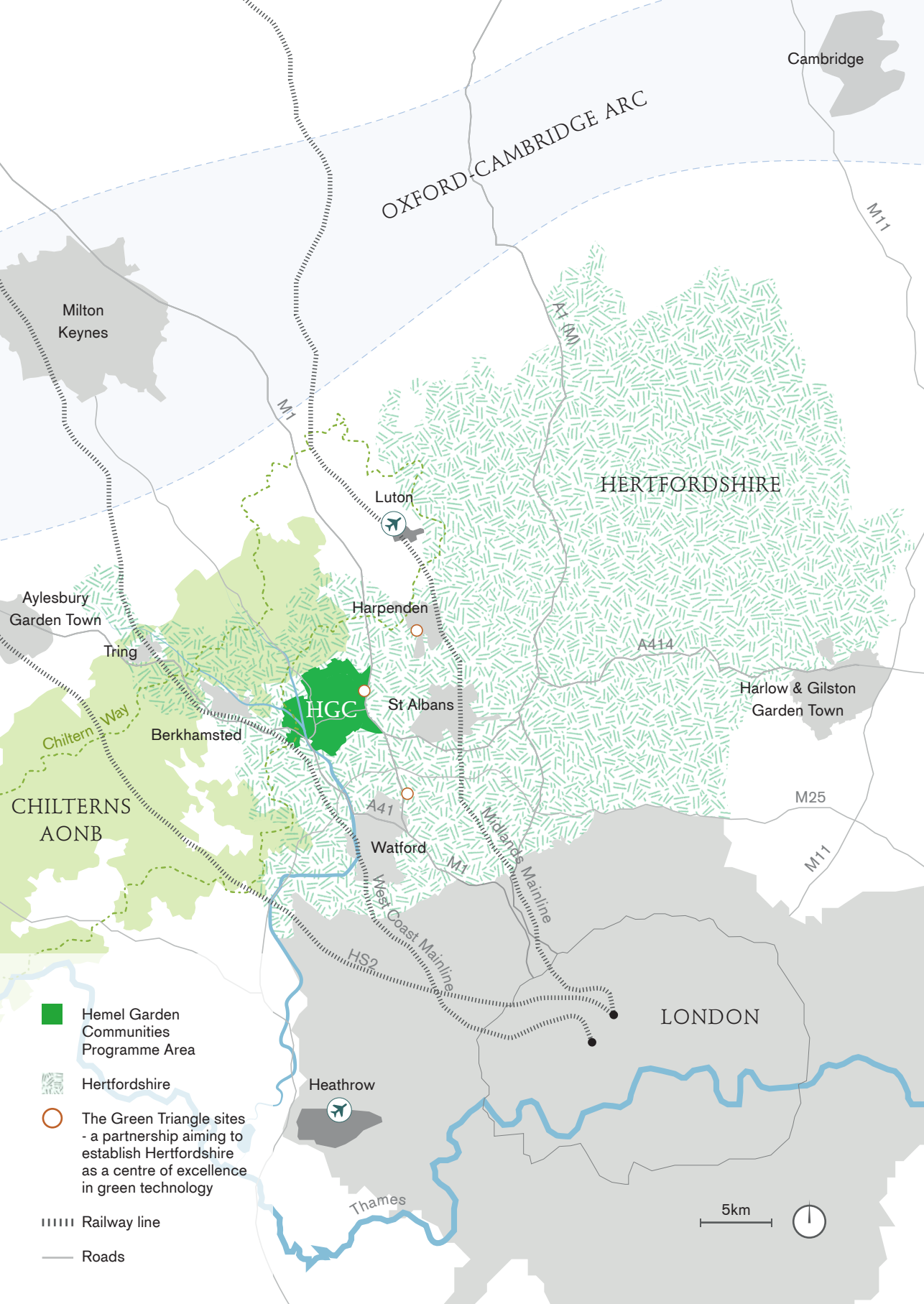
DK-CM for the Hemel Garden Communities Programme





Introduction	5
<b>THE VISION</b>	8
<b>FOUR PILLARS</b>	12
<b>1 A GREEN NETWORK</b>	17
<b>2 INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS</b>	25
<b>3 A SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY</b>	33
<b>4 ENGAGED COMMUNITIES</b>	41
Approach	49
Delivery	59
Appendix 1: Engagement Findings	65
Appendix 2: Case Studies	75
Credits	92





## INTRODUCTION

### What is Hemel Garden Communities?

Supported by Garden City Principles, Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) will take the best of the New Town heritage into the 21st century with over 11,000 homes, 10,000 jobs and Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter (Herts IQ) at its heart, anchoring the transformation of Hemel Hempstead and the wider area.

The HGC programme area covers the whole town of Hemel Hempstead, within the borough of Dacorum, as well as proposed growth areas straddling both Dacorum and St Albans districts to the north and east of the town and wider movement routes beyond. Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the HGC partners, are working with The Crown Estate and other stakeholders to deliver this ambitious development programme which will transform and grow Hemel Hempstead and create attractive, sustainable new neighbourhoods to its north and east by 2050. The HGC proposal has been recognised by Government, which awarded Hemel Hempstead 'Garden Town' status and a grant in 2019 to help develop garden communities of the future and transform the town.

### What is a Spatial Vision?

The Spatial Vision builds on Hemel Hempstead's strengths and explains how HGC will look and feel once the development and transformation is complete. It provides a framework of locally specific spatial principles to inform detailed masterplanning and further studies, and guide landowners and developers following the Dacorum and St Albans' joint Strategic (Sites) Design Guide.

The Spatial Vision is a high-level document that provides a series of aspirations for the future of HGC. It is made up of an overarching vision, which is then subdivided into four thematic pillars and two crossover themes. Each of these pillars includes an illustration and Spatial Principles, supported by contextual information, further guidance and precedents. The illustrations visualise different aspects of the Spatial Vision and the potential spaces and places it might inform, including visuals which draw attention to particular locations within Hemel Hempstead and the wider area as examples or to illustrate how a proposal could be developed.







# THE VISION

## **Hemel Garden Communities: creating a greener, more connected New Town.**

In the heart of the Golden Triangle between Oxford, Cambridge and London, Hemel Garden Communities will create new neighbourhoods and transform existing ones and the wider area, building on the best of its heritage and culture to become a greener, more connected New Town.

The vision is organised into four thematic pillars. Each pillar reinforces the aspirations to **promote healthy lifestyles** and **respond to the climate crisis**, which are the two crossover themes of the Spatial Vision.

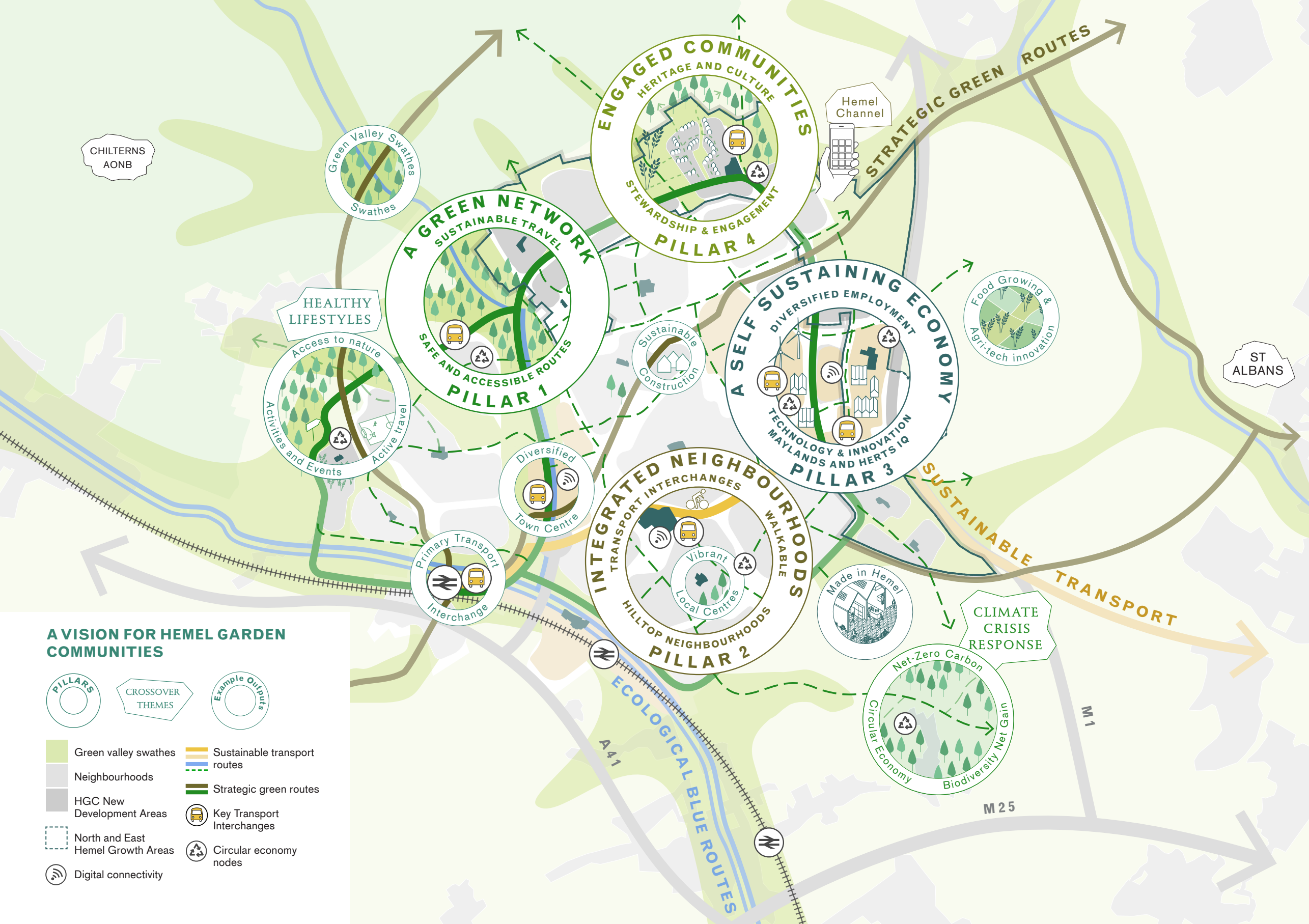
Hemel Garden Communities will be home to inclusive, **integrated neighbourhoods** connected by a **green network**, and thoughtfully designed places with **engaged communities**, all underpinned by digital connectivity, a **self-sustaining economy** and pioneering green technology driven by Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter.



## A VISION FOR HEMEL GARDEN COMMUNITIES



- Green valley swatches
- Neighbourhoods
- HGC New Development Areas
- North and East Hemel Growth Areas
- Digital connectivity
- Sustainable transport routes
- Strategic green routes
- Key Transport Interchanges
- Circular economy nodes





# FOUR PILLARS

## 1. A GREEN NETWORK

A network of green routes, travel and places will support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, climate resilience, environmental sustainability and the wellbeing of local communities.

Biodiversity net gain

Healthy communities and lifestyles

Hierarchy of green routes and places

Green valley swathes

Shift to sustainable modes of travel

Segregated cycle and e-mobility routes

Network of transport interchanges

Future-proofed buildings

Net zero carbon

## 3. A SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY

Innovation in sustainability, circular economy principles and digital connectivity will be key employment drivers in Hemel Garden Communities and provide a strong theme for the economic identity of the town.

Digital connectivity

Circular economy

Food growing spaces and systems

Local business startup spaces

Showcase diverse businesses

Active stewardship

Public art

Spaces for culture

## 4. ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

Connected and engaged communities will be active participants in the growth and transformation of Hemel Garden Communities. Cultural and heritage activity, public art, knowledge and skill exchange and enterprise will all play a role, now and in the long term.

## 2. INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Hemel Garden Communities will be made up of a series of walkable neighbourhoods, connected to each other with individual distinct identities, exemplar design and sustainability standards, centred upon lively, inclusive local centres.

Lively local centres

New Town heritage

Heritage and culture shaping development

Shared community facilities



## SHAPING THE PILLARS

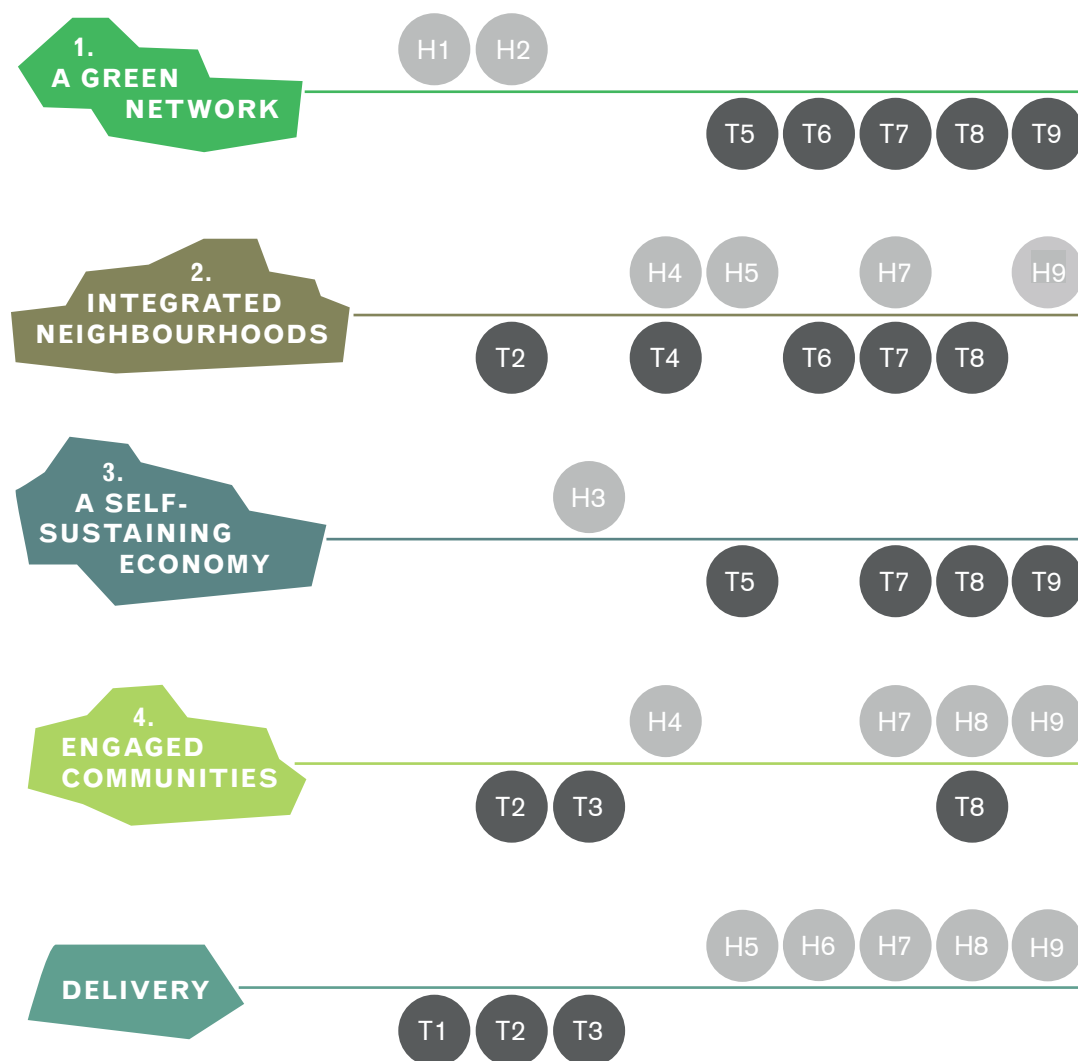


Diagram showing how the four Spatial Vision themes respond to the Hemel Garden Communities Charter and TCPA Garden City Principles

The HGC Programme's participation in the Government-supported Garden Communities initiative sets clear expectations for holistically planned, self-sustaining and characterful communities. The HGC Spatial Vision pillars were shaped by the HGC Charter Principles, which were themselves developed from the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) Garden City Principles, to articulate the HGC Programme's ambition for the specific context of Hemel Hempstead and the wider area.

### H

#### HGC Charter Principles

- 1 Connective Green Infrastructure
- 2 Transformative Mobility Improvements
- 3 Diverse Employment Opportunities
- 4 Vibrant Communities
- 5 Exemplary Design
- 6 Strong Corporate and Political Public Leadership
- 7 Empowering Communities
- 8 Innovative Approaches to Delivery
- 9 Active Local Stewardship

### T

#### TCPA Principles

- 1 Land value capture for the benefit of the community
- 2 Strong vision, leadership and community engagement
- 3 Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets.
- 4 Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable
- 5 A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes
- 6 Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food
- 7 Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience
- 8 Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods
- 9 Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport

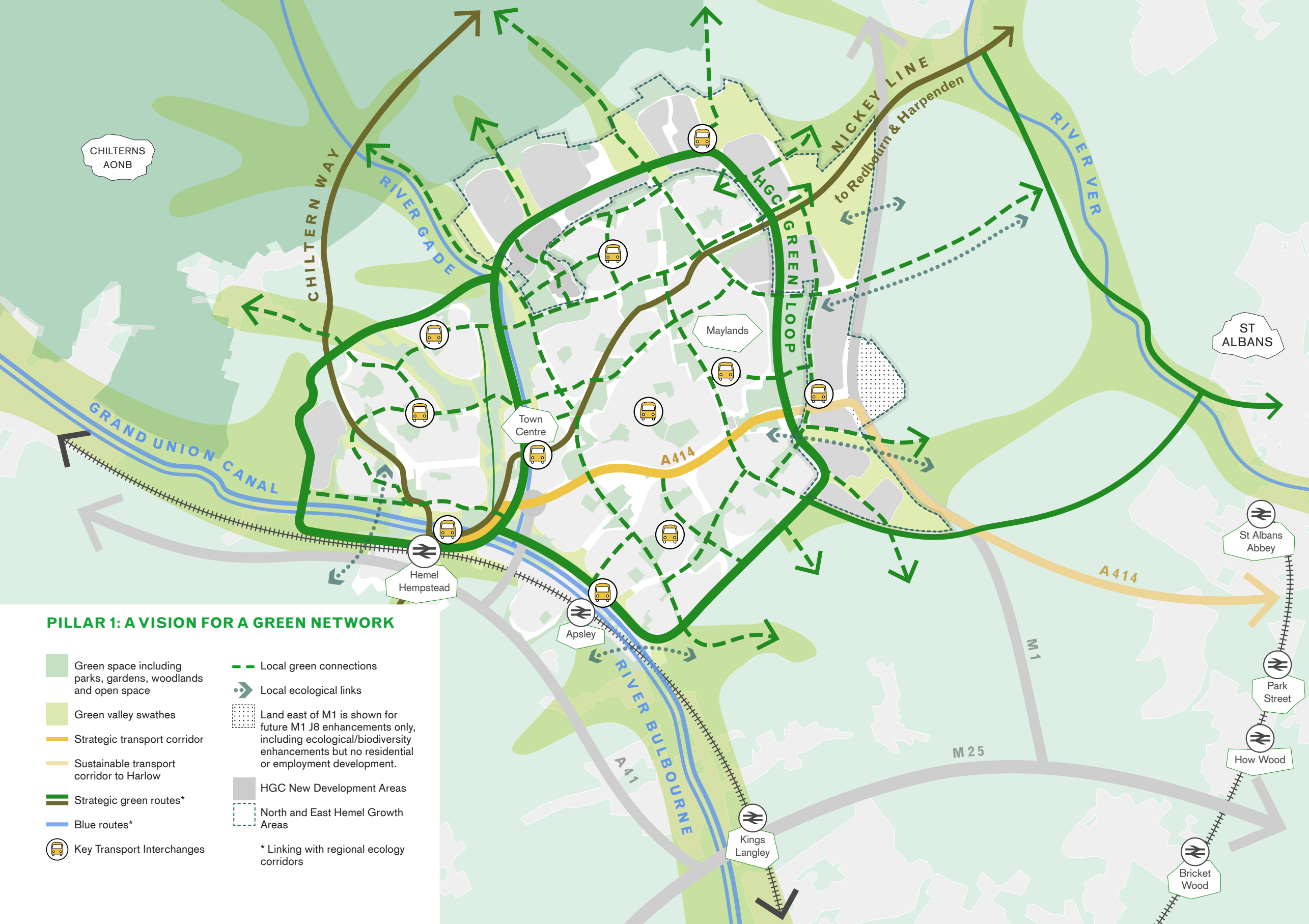


# 1. A GREEN NETWORK

The town's best natural asset is its abundance of green routes and spaces. These will be consolidated into a green network to support environmental sustainability and promote healthy communities through maximising opportunities for active, outdoor lifestyles. Green spaces in the valleys will be enhanced and extended, to provide hilltop communities with access to leisure, and adapted to support biodiversity and climate resilience.

The green network will make active and sustainable travel accessible to everyone and connect local centres and key places to the countryside, the Chiltern Hills and wider destinations across Hertfordshire, transforming lifestyles through greater engagement with nature, reducing energy demand and making a significant contribution to achieving net zero carbon.







## CONTEXT

The existing landscape character of the local area will be strengthened and Geoffrey Jellicoe's landscape-led New Town masterplan ambitions enhanced, with development placed away from green valley floors and on to the sides and tops of hills and higher ground. Neighbourhoods are richly integrated with green and blue spaces and a network of diverse but connected landscapes which provide desirable settings. As an exemplar of a green space, at Shrubhill Common one can move in a matter of moments from a manicured sports field with a play area, overlooked by family homes, into a woodland nature reserve that feels 'wild' and is home to a variety of wild flowers, on to an adventure playground and out to the countryside and Chiltern Way. The chalk stream rivers and the Grand Union Canal provide biodiverse routes lined with water.

## KEY CHALLENGES

A variety of key challenges will need to be overcome to achieve a significant shift where active and sustainable modes of travel will account for at least 40% of trips originating from and/or ending within Hemel Hempstead, and 60% of trips originating from and/or ending within the North and East Hemel Hempstead Growth Areas by 2050. Car dependency has resulted in severance to the green network caused by major road and highway junctions including the M1, Plough Roundabout and A414, and traffic pollution resulting in areas of poor air quality. In addition to the modal share target, Dacorum and St Albans have biodiversity net gain and net zero carbon targets. Further green network targets will be developed.

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

- HGC Transport Plan (including modal share targets)
- Mayor of London: All London Green Grid
- NHS Healthy New Towns: Putting Health Into Place
- TCPA: Healthy Town Framework
- Hertfordshire, Dacorum and St Albans Green Infrastructure Plans
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust: 'Hertfordshire State of Nature Report'
- Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA): 'SuDS manual'
- AECOM: Water, People Places: Guidance for masterplanning sustainable drainage.
- Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide (SDG): Principles 3.4, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, 7, 8



An existing green valley swathe in Hemel Hempstead. Photograph by @shu\_teaches via #hemelchannel.



Multi-modal transport corridor in London designed to prioritise public and active transport.



The 'Grown in Detroit' project links up private gardens and communal growing spaces into a network.



Gadebridge Park is a green valley swathe, seen here in a 1969 publication about Hemel Hempstead.



Shrubhill Common is an existing example of a green valley swathe in Hemel Hempstead that provides a good precedent for its scale, mix of types of green space and wider connectivity.



## SPATIAL PRINCIPLES

New development and transformational projects should contribute to the following spatial principles:

- 1.1 **Create a network of strategic and local green and blue routes** offering convenient connections between places and key locations within Hemel and beyond, connecting easily and legibly with public transport corridors and interchanges. The network will be formed by making new routes, and celebrating, enhancing and integrating existing routes such as the Nickey Line and Grand Union towpath.
- 1.2 **Build a strong green network to serve multiple users and functions** including commuter travel, school travel, and a network for leisure, replacing the private vehicle for short trips. The network will offer a choice of good quality, accessible, signposted routes, integrated with sports and play equipment. Dedicated leisure and health routes will also be created.
- 1.3 **Create, protect and enhance new 'green swathes'** in the valleys between neighbourhoods to help ensure natural drainage, carbon sequestration and to reduce the heat island effect, as well as providing residents with easy access to high quality local parkland and a rich variety of types of green space, including substantial areas of tree cover.
- 1.4 **Support and encourage community stewardship of places** within the green network, such as through initiating agreements for community management and maintenance or by supporting local groups and initiatives.  
> Pillar 4: Engaged Communities
- 1.5 **Increase biodiversity and retain, enhance and extend existing habitats.** In particular, grasslands, the chalk streams framed by chalk valleys, the southern 'dip slope' of the Chilterns, hedgerows and woodlands and their associated wildlife including protected species such as badgers, bats and great crested newts. > Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide: 8.2

- 1.6 **Enable wildlife movement** through the green network, especially the river valleys and links to Ashridge, cross-Hertfordshire and cross-Buckinghamshire west/east migratory routes that are currently severed by transport arteries like the M1 and A414, and local ecological routes linking the town to the surrounding countryside. Ecological permeability should be built into new development. > Dacorum and St Albans Green Infrastructure Plans
- 1.7 **Create and maintain rich, wide and well-connected biodiverse buffers** to reduce air and noise pollution, including along transport routes such as the M1.
- 1.8 **Make the green network accessible to all** by creating routes and places that are safe and make it easier to navigate Hemel's undulating topography on foot or using personal mobility, and cater for a full range of accessibility requirements.
- 1.9 **Create sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS)** for water management, landscape design and placemaking. SuDS should bring water into residents' daily lives, for example by running alongside a linear pedestrian route, whilst forming part of a wider strategy for flood risk mitigation and facilitating a sustainable water cycle. > Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide 8.3
- 1.10 **Extend and enrich Hemel's existing network of adventure playgrounds** to provide access to adventure play to all neighbourhoods.  
> Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide 3.4
- 1.11 **Extend the existing network of productive landscapes** including allotments and community orchards, to serve all neighbourhoods and reflect the wider area's rich tradition of agriculture. Community-led initiatives and those which draw on the green technology specialism of the Green Triangle and Herts IQ, with a circular economy approach towards food, should be encouraged. > Pillar 3: A Self-sustaining Economy

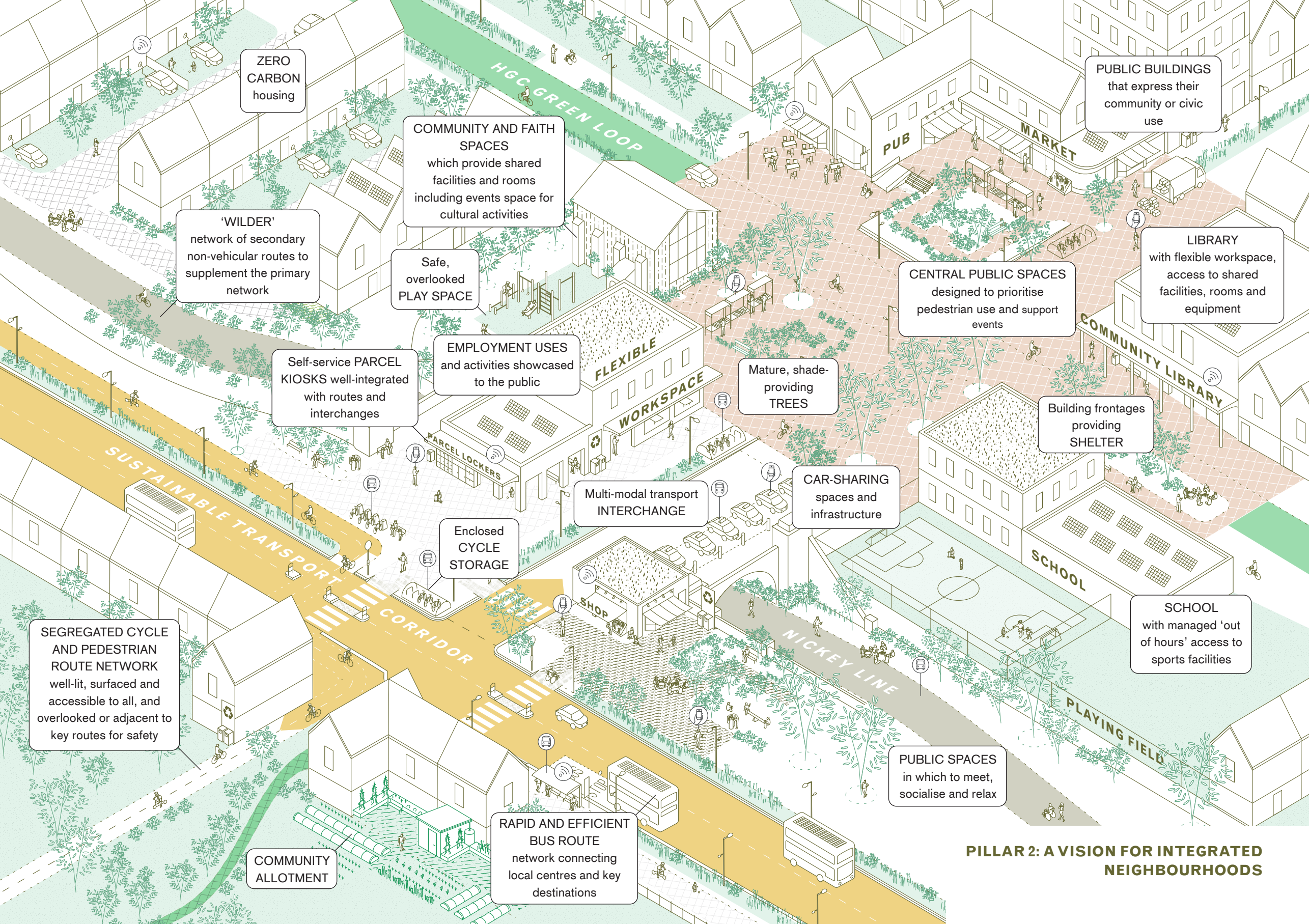


## 2. INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Hemel Garden Communities will be made up of a series of neighbourhoods, each with a distinct identity drawing on nearby heritage and landscape, cultural and architectural cues, developed to exemplar design and sustainability standards, and carefully integrated and connected to each other physically and socially.

Neighbourhoods will be centred upon lively, well-designed local centres serving a walkable residential area. These local centres will provide opportunities for social interaction and events, access to open space and play and a variety of services, shops and facilities that prioritises active and sustainable travel modes, maximising the physical and mental wellbeing of all members of the community.





ZERO  
CARBON  
housing

COMMUNITY AND FAITH  
SPACES  
which provide shared  
facilities and rooms  
including events space for  
cultural activities

PUBLIC BUILDINGS  
that express their  
community or civic  
use

'WILDER'  
network of secondary  
non-vehicular routes to  
supplement the primary  
network

Safe,  
overlooked  
PLAY SPACE

CENTRAL PUBLIC SPACES  
designed to prioritise  
pedestrian use and support  
events

LIBRARY  
with flexible workspace,  
access to shared  
facilities, rooms and  
equipment

Self-service PARCEL  
KIOSKS well-integrated  
with routes and  
interchanges

EMPLOYMENT USES  
and activities showcased  
to the public

Mature, shade-  
providing  
TREES

Building frontages  
providing  
SHELTER

Multi-modal transport  
INTERCHANGE

CAR-SHARING  
spaces and  
infrastructure

Enclosed  
CYCLE  
STORAGE

SEGREGATED CYCLE  
AND PEDESTRIAN  
ROUTE NETWORK  
well-lit, surfaced and  
accessible to all, and  
overlooked or adjacent to  
key routes for safety

SCHOOL  
with managed 'out  
of hours' access to  
sports facilities

PUBLIC SPACES  
in which to meet,  
socialise and relax

COMMUNITY  
ALLOTMENT

RAPID AND EFFICIENT  
BUS ROUTE  
network connecting  
local centres and key  
destinations

PILLAR 2: A VISION FOR INTEGRATED  
NEIGHBOURHOODS



## CONTEXT

Hemel Hempstead's New Town masterplan aimed to create a series of neighbourhoods with strong individual characters, and used swathes of green landscaping in the valleys to make clear distinctions between neighbourhoods and to connect them. Accordingly, neighbourhoods and their local centres are often found on hills or high ground. This principle will be followed in the design of new neighbourhoods as a way of strengthening Hemel Hempstead's identity and delivering a series of integrated 'garden communities'. It will also be important to maintain separation and distinction between HGC and neighbouring settlements, for example Redbourn and Harpenden, and masterplanning will need to ensure that positive relationships with these settlements are maintained or created.

The majority of people who live in Hemel Hempstead work locally; this self-sufficiency will be further supported, with new and strengthened neighbourhood-level facilities and amenities making it easy to work and access services locally, whilst maintaining good connections to London and nearby settlements. Strong digital connectivity across HGC will be essential to this.

Local centres will be positioned to support local economic activity and town-wide connectivity, encourage active and sustainable travel from centres' residential catchments and between centres and other places in the town. Local centres will vary in scale across HGC. Some centres will be of a scale that provides a comprehensive range of facilities and services, and others will have a more local, basic range of facilities along with a 'specialism', such as food growing and gardening. Each centre should complement and contrast centres in close proximity, including those in nearby settlements, and provide opportunities for local-level employment and cultural space. > Pillar 4: Engaged Communities

## KEY CHALLENGES

Although Hemel's neighbourhoods will be used as model for growing and regenerating the town, certain aspects of them will need to be significantly modified to meet twenty-first century challenges. The challenges to be met are tackling car dependency, responding to large portions of the housing stock aging at the same time, and diversifying local centres. Development of new neighbourhoods will also need to ensure that places and communities are integrated with each other and with established neighbourhoods.



The church of St. Stephen, Hemel Hempstead (1959) was designed such that it can be converted from church to community room simply by sliding a screen.



Magenta Court, Apsley, new social rent housing drawing on the area's canalside location and industrial heritage.



Maylands Infant & Junior Schools. Schools in HGC will be a strong part of their communities and offer managed 'out of hours' access to communities.



Marmalade Lane, Cambridge, is a UK co-housing scheme notable for its provision of shared spaces and facilities, including shared gardens and a flexible 'common house' with a playroom, guest bedrooms, laundry facilities, meeting rooms, and a large hall and kitchen.

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

- CoMoUK: Mobility Hubs Guidance
- CBRE Research: Multigenerational Housing
- Design Council: Inclusive Environments
- The National Custom and Self Build Association
- Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (Royal College of Art): Designing With People
- Design Og Arkitektur (DoGA): Innovating With People
- UNICEF: Child Friendly Cities
- Greater London Authority: Making London Child Friendly
- Integrated Transport Planning (ITP): HGC Transport Plan
- Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide (SDG): 1 A Distinctive Place, 2 A Compact Place, 3 A Place for All, and principles 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.3
- Public Health England Spatial Planning Evidence Review
- Hertfordshire County Council: Health & Wellbeing Planning Guidance & Health Impact Assessments



## SPATIAL PRINCIPLES

New development and transformational projects should contribute to the following spatial principles:

- 2.1 **Create new neighbourhoods and grow existing ones on hilltops and higher ground** following the established development pattern of the town and using lower ground and green routes to support the > Green Network.
- 2.2 **Establish and reinforce walkable relationships** between housing, community facilities and the wider > Green Network. Examples of this approach include:
- Providing safe, overlooked pedestrian routes from housing to nearby parks without needing to cross a road
  - Community facilities such as allotments or community halls situated within housing blocks, overlooked by dwellings
  - Providing smaller 'pocket' green spaces that provide amenities such as growing space or informal play.
- 2.3 **Support vibrant, accessible local centres** that:
- Directly connect into the green active and sustainable travel network
  - Serve a walkable, 360 degree residential catchment area
  - Provide public transport interchanges that are attractive, integrated public spaces
  - Contrast with but complement other local centres in close proximity in types of use, function, design and scale
  - Have a strong civic and social character and the amenities, shops, services and facilities to meet local community needs
  - Support start-ups and remote working hubs open to the local community
  - Include opportunities for showcasing activities within built facilities and events spaces
  - Include schools with managed out of hours use, especially for sports facilities, through community use agreements built around the needs of the individual school
  - Respond to emerging trends in home working and promote the sharing economy with provision of common and shared facilities
  - Support adaptability to changing service, employment, retail and transport requirements.

2.4

**Create neighbourhoods that are distinct from each other by:**

- Developing distinct architectural and urban forms and languages that respond to local context
- Providing each with a distinctive 'offer', such as facilities for a local sports club or association, a specific kind of productive landscape, or a particular housing delivery model
- Engaging directly with local communities and following the principles of Inclusive Design such that local need is served
- Supporting local-level cultural, community and enterprise initiatives through strategies, promotion and events, or by brokering sharing of facilities and amenities, to support community food growing, skill-sharing and development, and vulnerable groups.

2.5

**Create intergenerational and inclusive neighbourhoods by:**

- Providing public spaces, facilities and homes which are designed to be child-friendly, accessible and welcoming to the full range of potential users
- Supporting a diversity of housing delivery and ownership models, including self-build and custom-build models, potentially provided as serviced plots, affordable housing which is integrated with other tenures and housing types and includes accessible homes, housing specifically designed for older people and those with disabilities, and co-housing
- Building local-level community infrastructure with and for the communities it will serve, using participatory models and with funding in place to support community groups and individuals through the process, and create approaches that give communities the opportunity to take ownership of engagement and toward long-term local stewardship.  
> Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide: 3.1, 6.1

2.6

**Create energy-efficient neighbourhoods and homes** with sustainable energy infrastructure, such as heating and power generation and storage, in particular initiatives which hold an opportunity for community leadership or stewardship. Developments should be net carbon zero in line with the Local Plans, and should be future-proofed to adapt to changing energy technologies.



### 3. A SELF- SUSTAINING ECONOMY

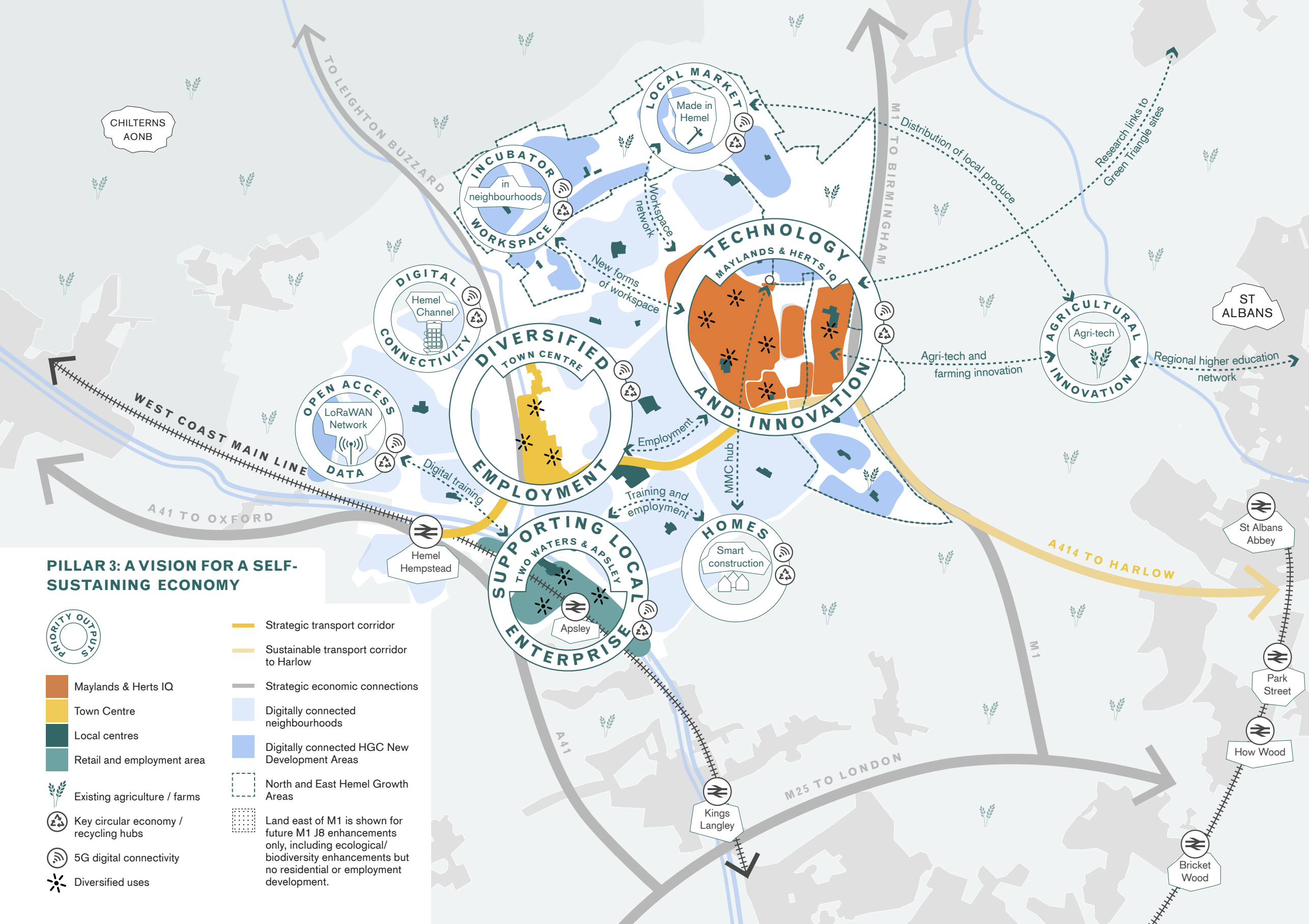
Hemel Garden Communities will be an exemplar self-sustaining green economy. The employment offer anchored by Maylands Business Park with 650 businesses and 20,000 employees will be diversified with the development of Herts IQ.

Herts IQ will bring companies collaborating in innovation in built environment technologies together on a campus, with a focus on agricultural and construction sectors, and research and development supported by the Green Triangle, a partnership aiming to establish Hertfordshire as a centre of excellence in green technology.

Existing local centres, retail parks and other employment areas will support new technologies to enable employment innovation and diversification. This will be consolidated with digitally-enabled homeworking and service provision, community based working spaces and facilities to support new enterprises.

Innovation in sustainability, circular economy principles, digital connectivity and open data networks will be key employment drivers in HGC and provide a strong theme for the economic identity of the town. HGC's improved sustainable transport connections will also enable wider regional economic activity in London, Hertfordshire, nearby towns and wider growth corridors including the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.





**PILLAR 3: A VISION FOR A SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY**



- Maylands & Herts IQ
- Town Centre
- Local centres
- Retail and employment area
- Existing agriculture / farms
- Key circular economy / recycling hubs
- 5G digital connectivity
- Diversified uses

- Strategic transport corridor
- Sustainable transport corridor to Harlow
- Strategic economic connections
- Digitally connected neighbourhoods
- Digitally connected HGC New Development Areas
- North and East Hemel Growth Areas
- Land east of M1 is shown for future M1 J8 enhancements only, including ecological/ biodiversity enhancements but no residential or employment development.



## CONTEXT

Hemel's New Town legacy is a high degree of economic self-sufficiency, where diverse employment opportunities integrated with residential neighbourhoods enable the majority of residents to work within the town. The town's most significant employment area, Maylands, is home to high tech engineering companies, Research and Development businesses and a growing logistics sector. Herts IQ, the county's Enterprise Zone, is building a cluster of smart construction and agri-tech businesses, including on a 55 hectare site to the east of Maylands that will provide an additional 8,000 jobs for the local community. This and other significant employment areas will consolidate the diversity of local enterprises and provide high skilled job opportunities, and will function as neighbourhoods, with their own local centres and strong connections to the wider Hemel Garden Communities. Further job opportunities will be generated in and around new local centres through the provision of community facilities, services and shops and supporting local business and social enterprises. HGC's digital connectivity and open data networks (such as Long range low-power wide-area network, LoRaWAN) will play a key role in its economic development as well as contributing to achieving net zero carbon, climate resilience and modal shift across the town and wider area. HGC will create a circular economy, localise supply chains, respond to changes in how people live, work and shop, and meet the health and wellbeing challenges of the 21st century.

Hemel town centre is well-used for leisure and socialising purposes with play-on-the-way activities for young families, and parks & gardens at key locations. Its retail and leisure offer is well-placed to respond to changing retail trends and offers further opportunities to diversify the town centre with a variety of workspaces, distinctive cultural offer > Pillar 4: Engaged Communities and local business showcasing > Pillar 2: Integrated Neighbourhoods.

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

- Mayor of London: Circular Economy Primer
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation: Circular Economy in Detail
- We Made That: Industrial Intensification and Co-Location Study
- UK Green Buildings Council: Resources
- Centre for Alternative Technology: Zero Carbon Britain
- Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide (SDG): Employment Uses Guidance and Design Principles 4.4, 4.7, 5.3, 5.10, 7.5, 8, 9.



Hemel Food Garden offers training and employment for people with learning disabilities within a social enterprise setting, and sells fresh local produce via a shop and cafe.



Gloucester Services offers road users an engagement with locally-produced food in an innovative, highly efficient building with a strong relationship to landscape.



Maylands Business Centre in Hemel provides hot-desking and small-scale office and industrial units plus a business development programme and networking spaces.



Blackhorse Workshop is London's first public workshop, for making, mending and learning.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Key challenges to be met are promoting economic activity which contributes to achieving the net zero carbon target and follows sustainable, circular economy principles as well as contributing to public value and placemaking. This will require changes to the urban fabric, including retrofitting existing buildings to improve their green credentials and reimagining and repurposing large-scale industrial buildings. A green economy requires new systems to link local land management, produce and wider environments to communities. New housing and employment development will need to be future-proofed to adapt to changing technologies and working practices. Upskilling and training to help ensure that Hemel's communities benefit from the self-sustaining economy will require partnership working with education providers and employers.

> Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide (SDG): principle 4.4, Part 3 Employment Uses Guidance



## SPATIAL PRINCIPLES

New development and transformational projects should contribute to the following spatial principles:

- 3.1 **Support a circular and inclusive economy** by:
- Maximising the use of local supply chains
  - Supporting local enterprises, skills providers and initiatives that will bring investment back to HGC and the surrounding area, or which bring forward forms of stewardship over the town's assets and spaces
  - Maximising use of low carbon and recycled materials, including supporting businesses which can demonstrate low carbon processes
  - Minimising waste and maximising its recycling potential.
- 3.2 **Support and promote green technologies**, particularly those which can be applied to developments within HGC. This includes modern methods of construction, including off-site manufacturing, and innovation in agriculture and food production or agri-tech.
- 3.3 **Diversify the offer of employment areas** in response to local need. For example, there is currently a strong need for further small (200-300m<sup>2</sup>) industrial and office spaces to provide 'move up' space for growing businesses in the area.
- 3.4 **Create and enhance places to meet, socialise and connect within employment areas**, performing a similar function to HGC's local centres. These should provide goods, services and spaces of leisure to working communities and nearby residents. Public space should be inclusive to all potential users, and prioritise the human scale, including the pedestrian experience of moving around, providing good outdoor spaces for lunch, breaks and informal interaction, access to nature, and good connectivity to the wider area. The highway network in such areas will be planned and/or modified and managed to enable access for goods vehicles while avoiding local centres and other sensitive street environments. > Pillar 1: A Green Network; > Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide 4.0, 5.3

- 3.5 **Diversify the town centre** to include businesses and organisations that provide experiences, enterprise, sociability and access to culture, and which are active in the local economy. This might include the creation of temporary or occasional spaces and events to test market and local appetite, for example a 'local' market or 'pop-up' use in an existing retail unit, before moving on to more permanent interventions. This diversification should be accompanied by supporting and encouraging more traditional 'anchors' within the town centre.
- 3.6 **Test new forms of office and networking spaces** within neighbourhoods, the town and local centres and employment areas. New typologies should be encouraged that provide the right degree of flexibility, communality and servicing. These new forms of workspace might be added to existing community facilities like libraries. > Pillar 2: Integrated Neighbourhoods
- 3.7 **Create public value from less public-facing forms of enterprise** such as distribution and fulfilment centres, and 'dark kitchens' (kitchens only providing for food delivery companies). This might include providing public amenities on-site (such as space for growing, sports equipment or small businesses) or off-site initiatives such as skills training, or using local supply chains.
- 3.8 **Support and encourage businesses to showcase their activities to the public** by making local products, services or associated activities visible to the public in creative ways. Showcasing can involve cultural commissions involving local artists and makers, and spaces, such as markets, ongoing support and promotion, and creation of networking and collaboration opportunities. Digital tools could play a vital role in this. > Pillar 4: Engaged Communities 4.2



## 4. ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

Hemel Garden Communities will connect and enrich the lives of Hemel's existing and new communities by providing welcoming, distinctive and attractive places, and by ensuring that communities are engaged in making them. The people of HGC will be engaged in development, in the transformation of the town, in their communities and in the wider region. Cultural activity, public art, knowledge exchange, enterprise and skill-sharing will all be involved in shaping and transforming the places of Hemel such that communities are engaged in the place now and in the long-term.







## CONTEXT

Hemel Hempstead has a rich heritage and culture that has shaped the town and its communities. There is a tangible legacy of buildings and spaces that speak of the town's agricultural and market heritage, of its history of industrial waterways and paper manufacturing, and of course development during the New Town era. But Hemel's culture also includes language, religion, social habits, music, food and practices; it is the expression of the town's communities.

Local culture was supported by the New Town Development Corporation through public art initiatives, setting up neighbourhood councils and funding neighbourhood-level newspapers. Many cultural initiatives were also established by the communities themselves, some of which - such as the Local History Society - survive today and play an ongoing active role in the cultural life of the town. A recent restoration of the Jellicoe Water Gardens supported by the Friends of the Water Gardens has also proven the endurance of this community spirit.

In this tradition, cultural activity and engagement will be embedded in the development of Hemel Garden Communities from the start, enabling conversations which celebrate and explore Hemel Hempstead and feed into the development process, whilst producing excellent public art and local-level projects in advance of the completion of the new neighbourhoods. Creative commissions will celebrate and draw out local character and develop skills, relationships, connections and local capacities. They will assist in the formation of heritage and cultural organisations prepared to welcome the communities of the future.

Some themes that are likely to be significant include:

- Hemel Hempstead's industrial heritage, including associations with rivers and waterways, and its contemporary reputation for innovation in manufacturing and the 'green economy'
- Agriculture, allotments and productive landscapes
- The heritage of Hemel Hempstead as a Roman settlement, chartered market town and particularly its history as a New Town; part of an ambitious postwar development programme and a longer history of town planning stretching back to the Garden City Movement which was particularly impactful in Hertfordshire
- Hemel and the surrounding area's complex and varied natural landscapes.



Erith Lighthouse brought the diverse communities of Erith - and beyond - together in a single temporary building with a highly-curated programme of meals and events. The project aimed to build the capacity of local entrepreneurs and organisations.



Turf Projects provides gallery and workspace for artists, utilising what were vacant units in a Croydon town centre shopping mall.



Dacorum has a network of Friends Groups made up of local residents and other interested parties who dedicate their time and knowledge to work with the Council to improve their local park or open space.



City Club, a series of interventions commissioned by MK Gallery that revisit Milton Keynes' New Town heritage and which included a child-led walk through the city.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Recapturing the 'New Town' spirit in today's fast-paced world, with global climate and biodiversity challenges and more limited public sector resourcing, will be a significant challenge. The process must define the themes that 'ring true' in terms of local identity and culture, whilst acknowledging and celebrating diversity, and promote the accessibility of culture and ensure that the full range of communities and demographics is reached.

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

- Arts Council England: Arts and Place Shaping
- TCPA: Built Today, Treasured Tomorrow
- TCPA: I'd Love to Live There! Planning for Culture and the Arts.
- TCPA: Creating Successful New Communities Guide #9: Long-term Stewardship
- Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre: New Town Heritage Explorers
- Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide (SDG): Principles 3.3, 4, 10



## SPATIAL PRINCIPLES

New development and transformational projects should contribute to the following spatial principles:

- 4.1 **Support town-wide heritage and cultural organisations and events** especially those that are distinct to Hemel Hempstead and its surrounding areas, and which play a role in reaching the diverse communities of the place.
- 4.2 **Support the creation of new town-wide heritage or cultural programmes** for groups including local communities, businesses, community associations, sports clubs and vulnerable groups. For example, an annual 'Hemel Open' could each year celebrate the town by opening up factories, maker spaces and productive land to the public. > Pillar 3: A Self-sustaining Economy 3.8
- 4.3 **Support and promote heritage and cultural activities in the town centre.** This could draw on existing local initiatives and organisations, and include bringing underutilised spaces back into use, contributing to the diversification of the town centre.
- 4.4 **Provide space in buildings and public spaces for local-level heritage and cultural activities** within new and existing neighbourhoods to complement the cultural offer of neighbouring local centres, the town centre, and neighbouring towns and cities. This could be provided through a mixture of multi-use community space and bespoke cultural facilities.  
> Pillar 2: Integrated Neighbourhoods
- 4.5 **Support neighbourhood-level heritage and cultural activities and networks among makers, cultural providers, and community associations,** giving them a role in shaping the development of HGC and contributing to management and maintenance of spaces. Activity includes that provided by local organisations, societies, events, clubs and venues.  
> Pillar 3: A Self-sustaining Economy

- 4.6 **Build in cultural commissions which shape new development.** Where possible, cultural commissions could commence during the development as well as enrich the developed place, such as an artist residency within a place in advance of physical changes, with the ambition of work emerging from this period being tangible and present in the delivered projects and places.
- 4.7 **4.7 Deliver meaningful early activation and temporary projects** to promote community engagement or test longer-term interventions, such as pop-up uses or a new public amenity in an underused location. This could include collaboration with local employers. For example, a 'Herts IQ Canteen' could open as a temporary intervention providing locally-grown food for workers and visitors or demonstrating locally-developed innovations.
- 4.8 **Enable long-term stewardship of spaces, places and assets** by community associations and local societies, and a wider network of interested individuals and groups. Support for this approach can take the form of innovative funding models, community capacity building, effective dialogue and creation of stewardship bodies.



Hemel Hempstead mural by Rowland Emett



# APPROACH



## APPROACH

The development of the Spatial Vision began by assessing Hemel Hempstead and the surrounding area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Key strengths and opportunities reinforced a priority focus for four areas of placemaking that also related strongly to the TCPA and Hemel Garden Communities Charter Principles. The four areas provide the foundational > Four Pillars of the Spatial Vision giving a spatial expression to the already-established spirit of the HGC programme, whilst ensuring qualities that give it an identity are captured to form the basis for future development and transformation. Running through and supported by the Pillars are key themes of climate crisis response and healthy lifestyles.

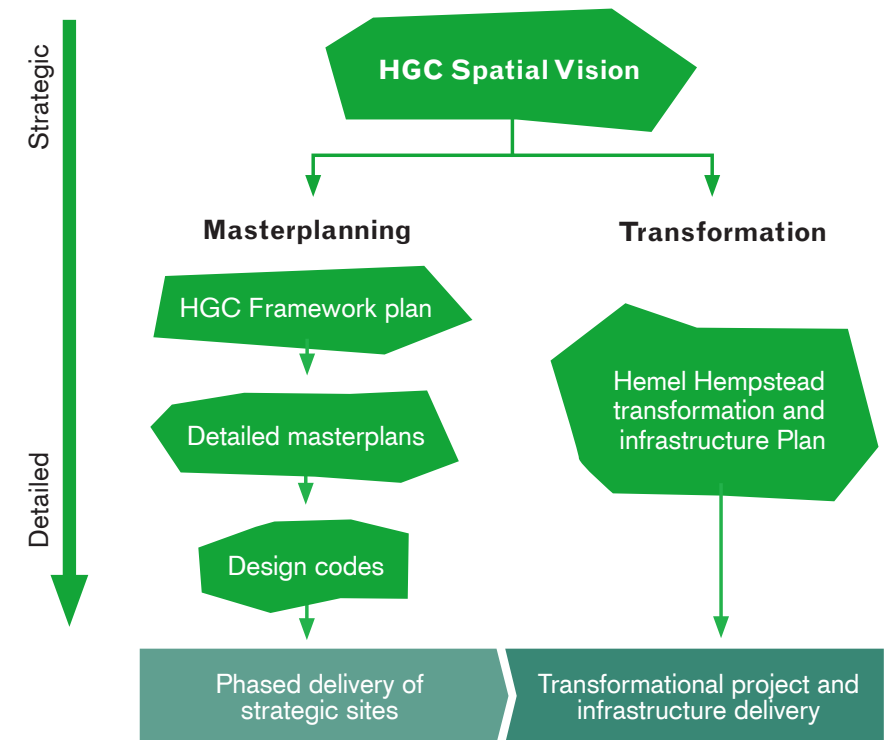
The Spatial Vision sits within a hierarchy of design guidance, most notably the Dacorum & St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide, which sets out a design process and a rigorous series of design principles to guide strategic development throughout Dacorum and St Albans. The Spatial Vision provides further, locally-specific guidance to inform the design process and help delivery of those principles. Principles from the SDG which particularly align with the aims of the Pillars are linked throughout.

The Spatial Vision has been enriched and shaped through engagement work with the communities of Hemel and the wider area > Engagement. In turn, the Spatial Vision has been aligned with the HGC Programme and existing proposals but is also shaping emerging strategies, plans and policies. It will also provide a strong foundation for future proposals, particularly those that will emerge from the Transformation Plan which will help develop the transformation agenda for the town of Hemel Hempstead.

In addition to the design team, an Expert Group made up of notable specialists in their fields was formed to provide input on key areas: transport, inclusive design, history, cultural commissioning, urban futures, Garden Cities, ecology and sustainability. Members of the Expert Group are listed at the end of the document.

A series of maps and drawings have been produced to illustrate the vision, supported by best practice, local context, case studies, photography and indications of further guidance. These visuals show a concept interpretation of the built and green form with a range of indicative proposals, which represent the Spatial Vision.

## ROLE OF THE SPATIAL VISION



Relationship of Spatial Vision to the next stages of the Hemel Garden Communities programme

HGC includes new development areas, allocated through Dacorum's and St Albans' Local Plans, and transformation proposals for the town and wider connections. The Spatial Vision is an overarching strategic document which will guide the future, more detailed masterplanning and transformation work shown in the above diagram.

The Spatial Vision sits within a hierarchy of design guidance supporting the Dacorum and St Albans Local Plans, including the joint Dacorum and St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide (SDG) which sets out a design process and a series of strategic design principles which apply to HGC development. The Spatial Vision provides further, locally-specific guidance to inform the design process and help delivery of those principles. Principles from the SDG which particularly align with the aims of the Pillars are linked throughout. More detailed design guidance developed by the Authorities in future will also apply to HGC.



## SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abundance and variety of green routes and spaces</li> <li>• Strong landscape character with green valley swathes</li> <li>• Strong built character with development typically on higher ground</li> <li>• Clear neighbourhood structure with local centres</li> <li>• Good connections between housing and green spaces</li> <li>• Large number of residents work locally</li> <li>• Strong history of local-level community activity and organisation</li> <li>• Established - and growing - reputation for green technologies, sustainable construction and agri-tech</li> <li>• Lively town centre with people visiting for pleasure/leisure as well as to access retail</li> <li>• Diverse cultural activity</li> <li>• Rich heritage including agricultural, industrial heritage and 'New Town' heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hilly environment has led to car dependency</li> <li>• Lack of integration between neighbourhoods and key destinations</li> <li>• Neighbourhoods 'all built at the same time' have led to housing stock aging at the same time</li> <li>• Health inequalities and areas of poor air quality</li> <li>• Some lack of awareness of existing cultural activities and initiatives amongst the wider public</li> <li>• Some lack of space for community activity and culture, and for communities to meet and socialise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build upon existing green routes and spaces to create a strong, integrated green network</li> <li>• Enrich and future-proof existing transport routes with sustainable transport routes and corridors</li> <li>• Diversify uses within the town centre, employment areas, local centres and retail parks to increase their resilience, adaptability and skill diversity</li> <li>• Enrich cultural activity</li> <li>• Develop food growing networks and agri-tech as aligned programmes</li> <li>• Maintain and enhance biodiversity, ensuring biodiversity net gain is achieved where biodiversity is affected by development</li> <li>• Secure and enhance ecological corridors through and around HGC into the open countryside</li> <li>• Diversify housing models and housing delivery to ensure adaptability</li> <li>• Build on active communities to create strong participatory model of developing HGC, pioneering innovative and inclusive community engagement</li> <li>• Establish better connections between existing initiatives, businesses and organisations, and build awareness</li> <li>• Build on Herts IQ's Enterprise Zone status to enhance digital connectivity and innovation across HGC</li> <li>• Declaration of Climate Emergency by Dacorum, St Albans and Hertfordshire Councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severance issues caused by transport routes and development</li> <li>• Cost of infrastructure to deliver effective sustainable movement routes</li> <li>• Risk of 'blurring' of settlements between HGC and surrounding communities</li> <li>• Challenge of achieving ambitious modal share target</li> <li>• Overarching challenge of meeting net zero aspirations</li> </ul>



What does living in Hemel mean to you? What will Hemel be like in 2030 and in 2050? These were the questions asked of the public in a pair of competitions during engagement activity in support of the Spatial Vision. Here are some highlights from the submissions.



Photo by John Kjorstad

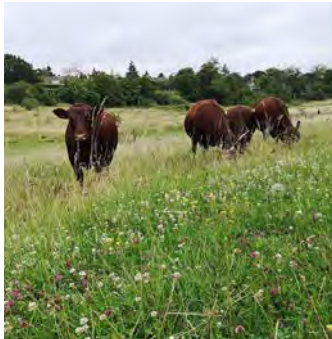


Photo by Anna's Funky Art



Photo by shu\_teaches



Photo by Harry Grange



Photo by John Kjorstad



Drawing by Enara Wijesinghe



Photo by Harry Grange



Photo by Kara Hutchinson



Photo by Anna's Funky Art



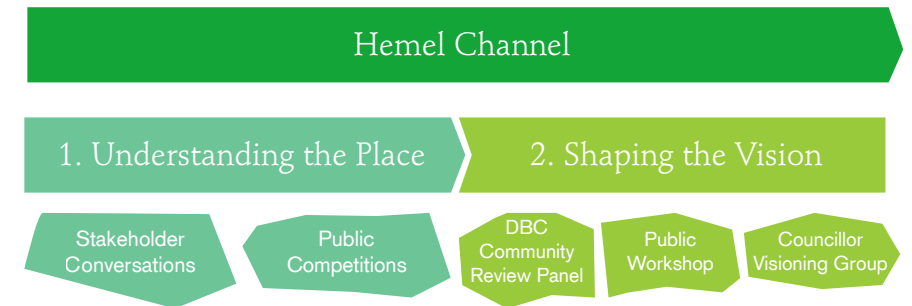
## APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Engaging communities and stakeholders was carried out through close collaboration between HGC Programme Team and DK-CM. We developed new approaches to engagement to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, including 'virtual' meetings and events where feedback was captured on digital whiteboards. This approach will be carried forward as HGC develops, to complement engagement carried out by more traditional and in-person methods.

As an overarching engagement method, the team established the 'Hemel Channel', an Instagram-based social media channel, to enable the public to assist with understanding the place and to create a space where the future of HGC can be discussed and shared, and communities kept informed of future developments in the HGC Programme.

The Hemel Channel acted as a central communications platform to keep members of the public up to date with throughout a two-phase programme of engagement activities. The first phase engaged communities and stakeholders to gain a greater understanding the place, and the second phase enabled these groups to contribute to shaping the Spatial Vision in a hands-on way.

Hemel Channel



Engagement diagram. The Hemel Channel, Councillor Visioning Group and overall approach will continue in later phases of HGC development.

### Phase 1. Understanding the Place

The project team engaged with a broad range of communities of Hemel Hempstead and the surrounding area to explore and characterise the place and to create a picture of the town generated by the people who live, work and play here. Activities included a series of competitions inviting entries from children and adults showcasing what they find special about Hemel and the surrounding area and how they image its future. The project team reached out to schools as part of this process, and held a live sketching session on Instagram. In parallel, the team held a series of 1:1 conversations with key stakeholders to understand their aspirations for the future of the area.

### Phase 2. Shaping the Vision

The team held a series of events aimed at different groups, to allow the communities of Hemel and the surrounding area to influence the emerging Vision. The events comprised:

- An interactive session with the Dacorum Community Review Panel, to explore emerging themes and opportunities
- A 'virtual' Public Workshop, attended by 40 members of the public and key stakeholders, where the key Pillars and themes of the Vision were explored and reworked
- A Councillor Visioning Group, including Councillors from Dacorum, St Albans and Hertfordshire County Council, was convened to input into the Vision and its Pillars.

> Appendix 1: Engagement Findings



DELIVERY



**Partnership working**

The Hemel Garden Communities partners include Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The three Authorities and the LEP have agreed a strategic approach to the programme through a Memorandum of Understanding and work collaboratively with The Crown Estate, a significant stakeholder and major landowner.

The stakeholders listed above played an active role in shaping the Spatial Vision, and strong collaboration between them and other stakeholders will ensure that the Spatial Vision principles are achieved as the programme is developed and delivered.

**Phased delivery**

The HGC programme area covers development and transformation proposals for Hemel Hempstead, including the proposed HGC New Development Areas and wider transport routes. The main catalyst for transformation of the wider town and its connections is defined as North and East of Hemel Hempstead Growth Areas, where East of Hemel Hempstead is in St Albans district and includes the delivery of Herts IQ. All other development proposed for Hemel Garden Communities within Dacorum's Local Plan will also support and shape the transformation agenda.

These proposals include a range of sites, some of which have been allocated in the adopted Local Plans whilst others will be allocated in emerging or future Local Plans or are simply windfall. The new development will be delivered in phases via the development management process, with the HGC Programme partners working collaboratively and putting in place the appropriate planning and legal mechanisms to ensure that each phase contributes towards the Spatial Vision's aspirations for the quality of new growth and the transformation and integration with the existing town. The status of the Spatial Vision is consolidated through the Authorities' emerging and future Local Plan policies and the joint Dacorum and St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide.

**Funding**

The partners and The Crown Estate are dedicating resources to planning Hemel Garden Communities. The Authorities are also working with Government and other agencies to secure further funding to support the programme and delivery of the required infrastructure.

The Programme will be seeking additional funding from other landowners and developers to support programme and delivery costs, including developer contributions.

**Further studies and supporting work**

The HGC Programme is undertaking further studies and work to support the delivery of Hemel Garden Communities. This includes:

- Transport Plan
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Framework Plan
- Transformation Plan
- Programme Delivery Plan
- Drawing on best practice through participation in the Government's Garden Communities programme, which provides support from Homes England and enables the partners to share ideas with other Garden Communities being planned across the UK and learn from Town and Country Planning Association guidance and support Collaborative work with neighbouring Garden Towns including Aylesbury and Harlow and Gilston
- Collaborating with wider Authority teams and the partners on crossover themes such as the Climate Crisis Response and Healthy Lifestyles.

The following pages identify specific items required to support the delivery of the four Spatial Vision Pillars. The Authorities and HGC Programme Team will work with the developers to ensure these studies, strategies and proposals are delivered and monitor their delivery. The Spatial Vision itself will be reviewed within five years to ensure it responds to changing contexts and the HGC Programme as it develops.



## PILLAR 1: A GREEN NETWORK

- **Green infrastructure strategy**  
- equivalent to All London Green Grid 'shades of green space' with consideration to their ecological, environmental, sports and leisure and other functions. The network can be made through the upgrading of existing paths (and their visibility and access), and adding 'modes' to existing transport routes such as a pedestrian path along a country lane
- **Transport Plan** (In progress), identifying physical interventions and methods to support behaviour change in a shift to sustainable modes, and including health and wellbeing and air quality objectives
- **Ecological and biodiversity gain strategy**, to include ecological assessment and a plan for ecosystem resilience and adaptation, and enhancing ecological movement through and across HGC, in the face of a changing climate
- **Sustainable agriculture and food growing strategy**, including seeking to promote understanding of and engagement with nature amongst communities
- **Water management and flood risk study**, facilitating a sustainable water cycle
- **Integrate NHS Healthy New Towns principles** in proposals
- **Autonomous logistics and delivery service strategy**, including supporting development of the underpinning technology and a pilot project
- **Local Walking and Cycling Plan**

## PILLAR 2: INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS

- **Character study** for 'local distinctiveness' within Hemel Hempstead to inform the design of new neighbourhoods
- **Energy strategy** to support net zero carbon, energy efficient new buildings, and retrofitting of existing buildings, and delivery of solar bulk buy scheme
- Develop a **community engagement and participation methodology** that embeds inclusive design processes and supports local-level community voices based on inclusive design principles of Continuity, Ownership, Legacy and Trust, includes early activation projects and builds towards community stewardship and ownership of places and organisations
- **Circular economy and sustainable construction strategy** (zero waste, adaptability, longevity, reuse and recycle)
- **Local centres study** to understand a locally-specific approach to scale and geographic location
- **Approach to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities within communities**, aligned with Dacorum and St Albans emerging Local Plans and Hertfordshire County Council guidance and strategies, to be integrated throughout other strategic studies for HGC Programme

## PILLAR 3: A SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY:

- **Economic strategy** building on the principles of the circular economy (designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems). This should include strategies for reuse of existing building fabric, for low-carbon development and production, for sharing and distributing resources, and to support local economies and supply chains, including co-operative ownership models of common assets
- **Workspace emerging trends study and response strategy**, exploring topics including: future of high streets and Hemel's town centre, new types of business and social activity, reinforcing the diversity of HGC's economy, COVID-19 impacts and emerging trends in workplace provision
- **Digital connectivity strategy** and proposal for a LoRaWAN (Long range low-power wide-area network) delivery
- **'Made in Hemel'** - a rigorous study into industries, manufacturers, crafts and makers in the wider HGC area to support the creation of local supply chains

## PILLAR 4: ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

- **Engaged Communities Strategy** to:
  - build a fresh understanding of existing and emerging heritage and cultural activity
  - plan for future needs in response to the development and transformation agenda
  - build local and community capacity
  - embed a strategic approach to arts and culture aligned with development timescales, to support and critique the transformation and to enable the results of commissions to be appropriately integrated with final developments
- **Developer/landowner statements** setting out their approach for engaged communities and stewardship arrangements spanning short-, mid- and long-term
- Develop **site-by-site strategies** that respond to the wider principles and make a contribution to community capacity-building, arts, and stewardship.





# APPENDIX 1: ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS



As summarised in > Approach, engagement activity was in two phases. A summary of the conversations held during the second phase is included below. For time reasons some questions were only asked of the smaller, more focused Community Review Panel (CRP) group, and this is noted in the text. For ease of reading the summary is broken down by the themes that emerged from these sessions and which now structure the Spatial Vision. References are provided that connect these community-generated ideas to the principles of the Spatial Vision, to make clear how the vision has developed directly from these conversations.

## 1: A GREEN NETWORK

### **What are the important green/blue routes, and spaces, in and around the town? What do you use them for?**

Many existing green routes are seen as important in the town and understood as an important network of Rights of Way, whether providing routes for commuting or for leisure. It was noted that the maintenance and character of some of the routes, together with some critical 'breaks' such as along the Nickey Line, makes them currently more popular for leisure uses than commuting, though this view was not universal. > 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

Routes that connect Hemel Hempstead up to neighbouring settlements are considered particularly vital, such as providing an easy way of accessing neighbouring train stations without needing to drive. > 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

There is a strong desire for improvements to promote greater use of the Grand Union Canal, particularly as it allows off-road access to Berkhamsted and Kings Langley. > 1.1

Some paths, such as along the River Gade, have seen significant increases in use during the Covid-19 pandemic, and this increased usage is seen as a positive, showing the need for these spaces in daily life. > 1.1, 1.2, 1.8

Beyond connectivity, there is support for a growth in the amount of allotment and growing space in the town's green spaces, and a recognition that properties without gardens have a particularly strong need for

rich, diverse public open space. There should be better and increased connections between local centres and green spaces, both within and beyond the town. > 1.1, 1.2, 1.11

There is widespread support for a green network that promotes biodiversity. People recognise that a single thin thread or hedgerow is not enough to become a real habitat or route and also that 'not all green spaces are biodiverse', with calls for clear distinctions between spaces for play, for example, and places that prioritise wildlife habitats, though sometimes these things overlap to the benefit of both too. > 1.5, 1.6, 1.7

### **What's needed to make a green/blue route better and encourage more use? What are the current barriers to using them? What are the current barriers to replacing the car with other forms of mobility?**

There is broad recognition that different users of routes can come into conflict and this can limit use, for example cyclists and pedestrians, and that paths need to be carefully designed to manage the needs of different users, including for equestrian users, tricycles and cargo bikes. Ideas for avoiding unusable muddy paths - without too many hard surfaces - were discussed. Generally, not all paths need to be the same, and Hemel has space for 'off-road' paths that feel quite remote but also lit, hard routes close to existing roads and pavements. > 1.8

It is generally recognised that the landscape and topography of Hemel Hempstead - which is very undulating in places - is a barrier to more cycling. Green networks should be designed to respond positively to this, such as through creating paths that minimise steep inclines, and by providing infrastructure and/or services for e-bikes and e-scooters, powered forms of personal mobility that have recently seen strong growth, widening the number of people that can use bikes and scooters for daily journeys. > 1.8



Seating is understood as part of mobility, providing a place to rest as part of a journey. > 1.8

The road network is understood as a barrier to wider use of walking, cycling and other forms of sustainable personal mobility, both in terms of its presence dominating existing off-road routes (for example, how to navigate around a car-dominated roundabout) and because the car is seen as a convenient means of travel that prevents wider adoption of other means. Traffic calming measures, tighter speed restrictions and a layout that prioritises pedestrian and bicycle movement over private vehicles are seen as potential solutions. > 1.2, 1.8, 2.2

There is a need for richer and more diverse greenery along existing routes, with attendees recognising that wildflower meadows, hedgerows and wild areas are good in terms of maintenance and limits the potential of litter to 'spoil' a place. > 1.5, 1.6

The integration of water conservation measures, flood mitigation and swales in green spaces was discussed. > 1.9

Good maintenance and better promotion of existing and new routes are both seen as vital. > 1.2, 1.4

### **What forms of personal mobility are best suited to Hemel Hempstead? What do people already use?**

Whilst there is a vibrant communities of walkers and cyclists in Hemel Hempstead, it is generally thought that the growing trend toward e-bikes and e-scooters will be particularly impactful in this town thanks to its undulating topography. Such innovative means of personal mobility should be encouraged and supported, and infrastructure such as charging points, secure overlooked parking, etc., should be provided. Bicycle hire schemes are also considered a good idea. > 2, Delivery

Security around bikes and similar vehicles is a key concern, and users recognise that this is not simply a question of good quality security measures, such as racks, but is also overwhelmingly about choosing the right busy and overlooked places to situate this equipment. > 2

## **PILLAR 2: INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS**

### **What is distinctive about the existing neighbourhoods of Hemel? What are your favourite neighbourhoods or local centres in Hemel Hempstead and what do you like about them?**

A number of features are seen as distinctive, such as the neighbourhoods' relation to green space, walkability, human scale, and the presence of allotments. It is felt that some recent developments in the town have lost this human scale, and often do not provide the same connections to green space of older neighbourhoods, and that these are issues for future development to overcome. > 1.3, 2.1, 2.2

It is felt that some neighbourhoods are a little similar to each other, particularly the various 'New Town' era neighbourhoods, and that more could be done to promote distinctiveness and difference, including orientation and more 'distinctive' or particular community facilities. > 2.4

It is widely understood that a distinctive positive quality of Hemel Hempstead's neighbourhoods is the significant areas of green space that often sit between them, also the smaller and more incidental green spaces between homes. Part of the valuing of these places is the potential for play that they provide, and also the fact that so many of the green spaces accessible to Hemel Hempstead's neighbourhoods are local nature reserves with an abundance of wildlife, such as Long Deans, Shrub Hill Common and Halsey Fields. 1.3, 1.10, 2.1, 2.2

Boxmoor, with a wide range of independent shops, relation to green space (including pubs & restaurants that also face that green space) is a popular local centre. The Boxmoor Trust that manages the open spaces nearby is a real asset to that place.



### **What local-level facilities are relied upon in Hemel Hempstead? (CRP only)**

Hemel Hempstead's former arts centre is missed, but equally there were calls for more local-level facilities and amenities to support culture more broadly, with space for community groups, sports teams, theatre companies etc., and 'multi-functional' space generally, considered vitally important. > 2.3, 2.5, 3.5, 4

Good access to these facilities, including easy booking, is considered very important.

It is understood that there are many schools in Hemel Hempstead's neighbourhoods and these are often closely related to local centres. It is felt that the facilities at these schools could be more widely used by the community outside of school hours. > 2, 2.3, 2.5

Initiatives like Sunnyside Rural Trust and DENS, the latter of which provides a 'first port of call' for people facing poverty, homelessness and social exclusion are strongly valued.

### **How should transport interchanges look and feel?**

It is felt that, as people spend a lot of time at transport interchanges, they should be better integrated with their context and with local centres. Facilities should be provided to help 'pass the time' and routes and directions should be clearer. > 2.2, 2.3

Interchanges with a strong relation to another programme, such as the former bus interchange next to Hemel Hempstead's market square, are considered particularly good examples.

Places like bus stops need thought, care and love in their design. > 2

## **PILLAR 3: A SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY**

### **What facilities do you need for a successful and sustainable workplace?**

There is widespread understanding that workplaces and workspace should become more flexible and take into account new patterns of working, home working, resource sharing etc., and that this might benefit local centres and indeed the town centre. Current trends may also see local and small businesses becoming better integrated into communities, rather than congregating in commercial areas or the town centre, and this should be welcomed and encouraged, particularly to help local centres to thrive. > 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 4.2

For Maylands to thrive in the context of these trends it is felt that it needs to diversify its offer even further, provide some public and social facilities - building on some good existing cafes - and ensure good public transport links. Croxley Green is noted as a good, well-designed local business park. > 3.4

Companies based and working in Hemel Garden Communities should offer something back to the communities in which they work, including training and support for local initiatives. > 3.1, 3.8

There was widespread support for a focus on a 'green' economy and the idea of Hemel as a leader in this area, particularly in terms of 'celebrating and supporting the local' and local supply chains. Innovation in vegetable-based plastics and biodegradable materials was discussed, as were smart construction and agri-tech as things to encourage. It was considered vital that all such initiatives should have local relevance and see local benefits. > 3.1, 3.2

### **How could local businesses and employment areas be more sustainable?**

A balance between large and small firms is seen as a good thing, for reasons of diversity and a good mix. We should be thinking of businesses and institutions in Hemel Hempstead 'like an ecosystem'. > 3.3, 3.5, 3.6



People felt that 'good' local green businesses should be celebrated and rewarded for their efforts, and their products promoted in this way. Could there be a local award for excellence in the green economy? Similarly, it is felt that many local people are not aware of organisations like Herts IQ and these things should be more widely known. > 3.8, 4.2

Businesses should engage in investing in skills and training locally in order to improve their own sustainability and invest in their future workforces, as well as working to improve employment equality and access to jobs. > 3.1, 3.6, 3.7

Members of the CRP group were particularly keen that themes of rewilding, veganic food production, zero-carbon technologies and innovation in construction generally should become tangible themes associated with Hemel Hempstead. The town should be a hub for sustainable innovation.

## PILLAR 4: ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

### **What is the best art, community event or performance that is in or happened in Hemel? (CRP)**

Music and street theatre were prominent in people's minds, as well as performances by local choir groups and memories of 'big names' at the former arts centre.

The Water Gardens were noted by several people as a key piece of 'art' in the town, as they are widely loved and understood as a notable piece of garden design and landscape architecture.

### **What of Hemel Hempstead's culture should be more celebrated?**

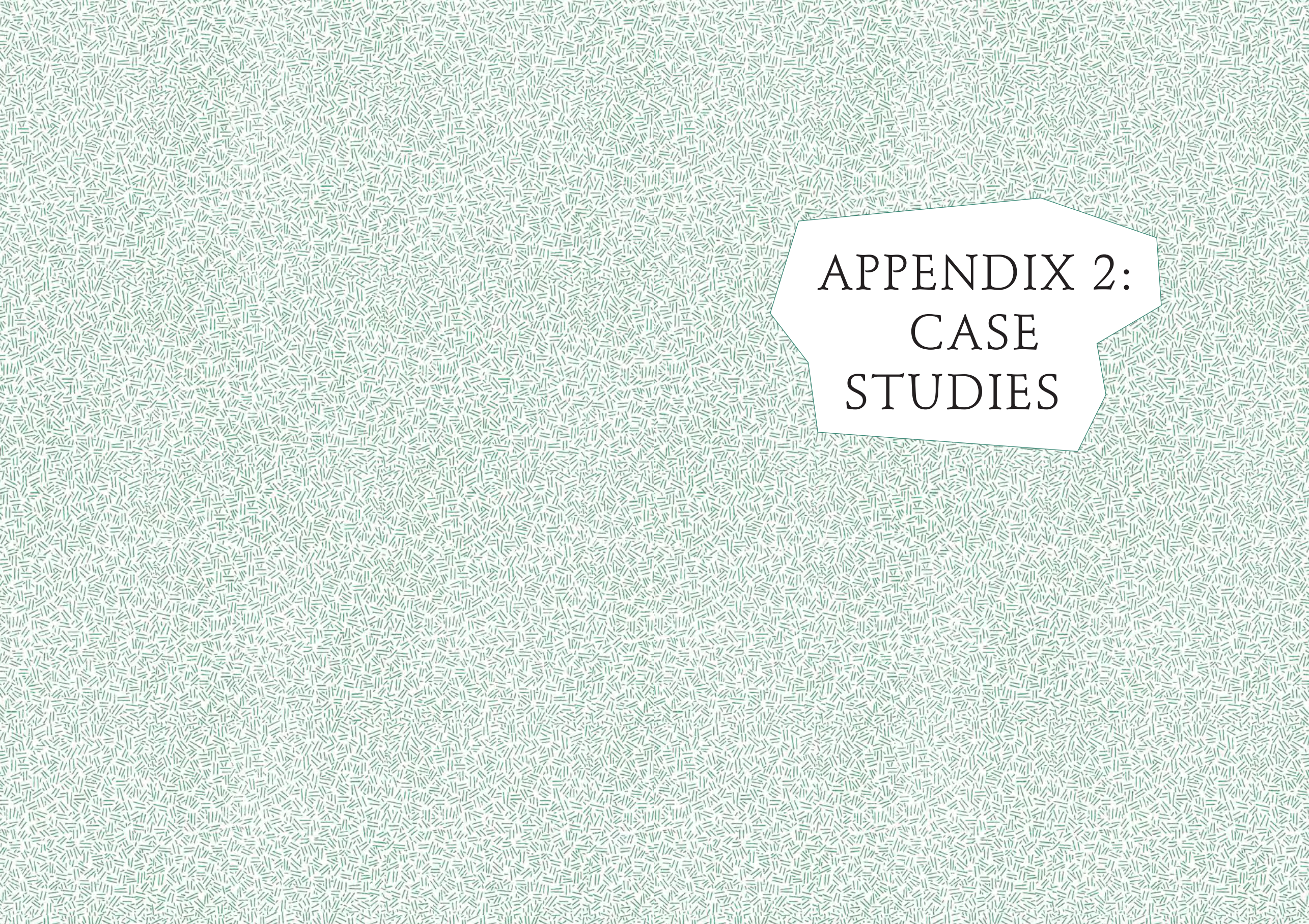
Local talent and culture should be supported and space for it provided, though being able to attract 'big name' acts too is also desirable.  
> 4.1, 4.4, 4.5

The public art that already exists in Hemel, particularly as a legacy of the New Town era, is valued. Could the ambition of this era be rediscovered today, and indeed what remains of this past era be better celebrated and treated? > 4.6

The history of Hemel Hempstead as a productive place, of manufacturing and agriculture, should be better celebrated, for example hemp growing, iron foundries, brick kilns, and the connection with Kodak ('the national centre for colour slide processing'), watercress and paper mills, often joined up by the industrial waterway of the Grand Union Canal.

Some very ancient wonders, such as the medieval 'heretical' wall paintings discovered at 130-136 Piccotts End, should be more widely known about and celebrated.





## APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDIES



PILLAR 1: A GREEN NETWORK



Around Lyon is a cohesive programme of green infrastructure improvements, undertaken in cooperation with infrastructure, drainage and tree departments. Through this programme Lyon has diversified its tree population by over 68% since the mid 1990s, with over 80% of the newly planted trees being of local provenance. By capitalising on its rich history of agriculture and growing, Hemel could similarly contribute to local economies and lower carbon emissions by using local planting stock.



The Friends of Arnold Circus in Tower Hamlets, London, have a service level agreement with the Local Authority that allows the community to take over the care, programming and maintenance of the estate’s gardens whilst the council retain overall responsibility.



Ecoquartier Vauban is a suburb of Freiburg in Germany. The development follows the principle of ‘filtered permeability’ whereby active forms of mobility, including walking and cycling, have access to a comprehensive network of paths and routes.



This ‘green bridge’ across the A556 in Cheshire was the centrepiece of a Highways England project to make the most environmentally-friendly road the agency had ever built. The project’s green measures earned it a prestigious Green Apple Award for Environmental Best Practice last year. The project was delivered by Highways England as part of the Northern Powerhouse initiative.





The 'Grown in Detroit' initiative links up private gardens, communal growing spaces and former vacant plots into a district wide network of productive spaces. Members of the programme share seeds, knowledge & skills, plus resources and space to grow and sell local produce, bringing together communities of all ages. The programme is managed by Keep Growing Detroit, a non-profit organisation. This has transformed the appearance of vacant public space, and supported the development of fresh produce markets, keeping revenue within the local community.



The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway connects Cambridge, Huntingdon and St Ives. In the first year of operation 2.5m trips were made. The busway integrates green infrastructure along its length.



Ebbsfleet Get Active is an initiative to encourage active travel in Ebbsfleet Garden City. It features range of projects including a free app where users receive 'BetterPoints' which they can swap for vouchers to spend locally.



An initial 'design framework' by 5th Studio proposed a series of upgrades, access improvements, allocations and connections to create a linear park from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park through to the Thames, following the river Lea. At times the park swells to include other facilities and landscapes, at other times it is simply a path. 5th Studio worked with Jonathan Cook Landscape Architecture to deliver a series of interventions to create the park along with a design manual to inform other complementary projects.



## PILLAR 2: INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES



Clay Field by Riches Hawley Mikhail is a cluster of 26 sustainable homes in a rural Suffolk village. Homes evoke rural and agricultural building types and are grouped into clusters around a series of sociable spaces including a dedicated play area.



Flat House by Practice Architecture is a zero-carbon dwelling in a rural context which makes extensive use of natural hemp as a building material. The project is a high quality, beautifully-detailed prototype home which is at ease in its rural and agricultural context.

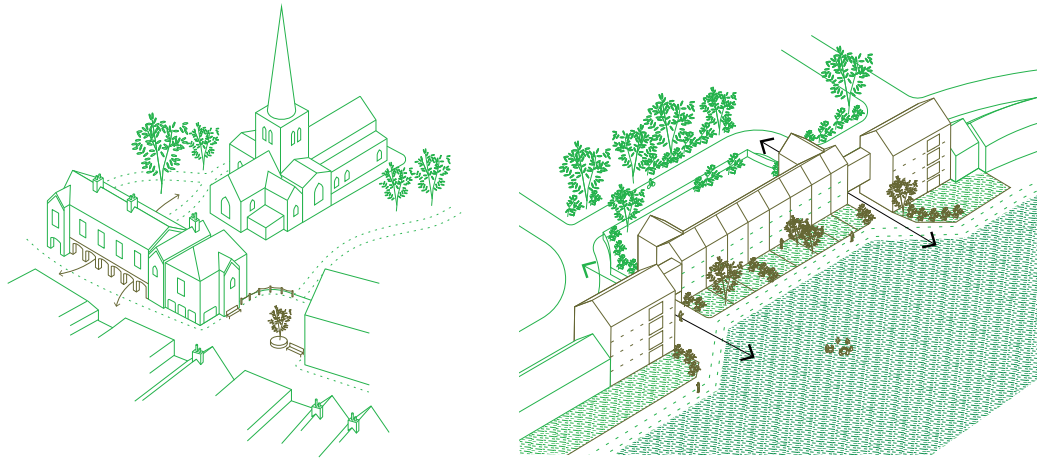


Marmalade Lane is an innovative developer-led co-housing scheme in South Cambridgeshire, notable for its provision of shared spaces and facilities. These include extensive shared gardens as the focal space of the community, with areas for growing food, play, socialising and quiet contemplation, and a flexible 'common house' with a play room, guest bedrooms, laundry facilities, meeting rooms, and a large hall and kitchen for shared meals and parties. A separate workshop is located elsewhere on site. Residents have a stake in the common parts and contribute to the management of the community. <https://www.molearchitects.co.uk/projects/housing/k1-cambridge-co-housing/>

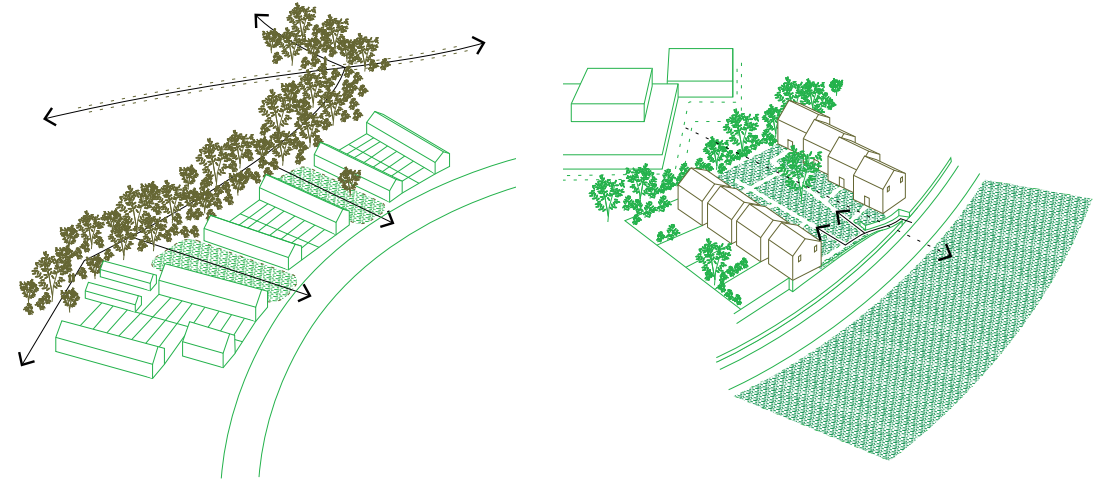


**Local Precedent:** The church of St. Stephen was built in 1959 to provide a church and community hall for Chaulden, one of the new neighbourhoods created as part of the Hemel Hempstead New Town. The 'sanctuary' of the church can be separated off from the main space to make the interior suitable for a wide range of community uses. A charming and very well-loved pre-fabricated building, it is also a potential precedent for how community spaces might be designed for sharing in the future.

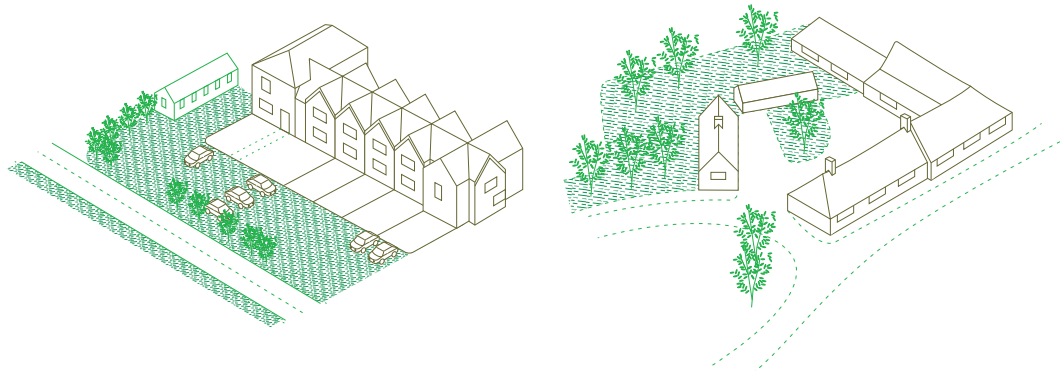




**Local Precedent:** The old market place in Hemel Old Town exploits its high location to provide long, wide views over the wider town and landscape. At Keens Field the housing frames long views and footpaths across the adjacent green swathe.



**Local Precedent:** In places like Chambersbury Lane and Jocketts Road, houses and landscapes are designed to support easy walking routes and connections to a wider green network, helping these communities stay connected by sustainable travel.



**Local Precedent:** At Piccotts End, the houses have a strong collective quality and a mix of shared and individual open spaces. Local farmyards such as Westwick Row provide another good local example of how buildings might be arranged to achieve a 'collective' character.



PILLAR 3: A SELF-SUSTAINING ECONOMY



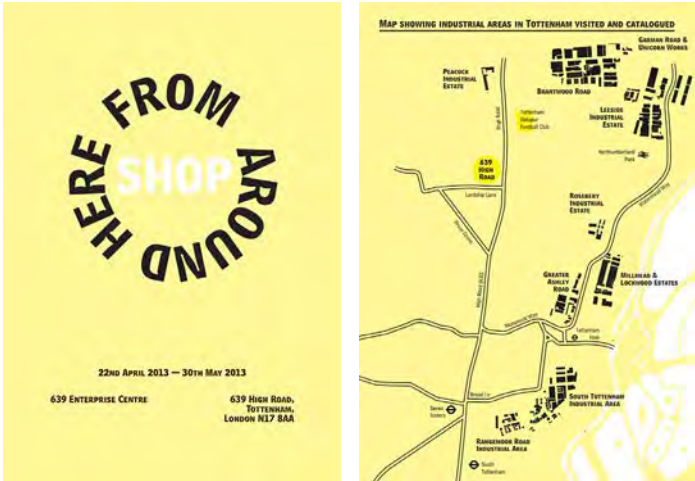
Blackhorse Workshop is London’s first public workshop for making, mending and learning. In the spirit of the public library, the workshop lends resources such as wood and metal working equipment, offers workshops, space for assembly and construction and is a social space open to all. The project explores what a public-facing programme can offer in an industrial context.



Gloucester and Tebay Services are independent, family-run service areas on the M5 and M6. They promote local produce to travellers and invest a percentage of profits back into the local community. Gloucester Services is run as a partnership with local regeneration charity, Gloucestershire Gateway Trust.



Dokk 1 is a large new citizen services’ building built in Arrhus harbour with the mission of being a ‘flexible and dynamic sanctuary for everyone in search of knowledge, inspiration, and personal development.’ Providing workspace as well as access to resources, it reflects futurist Greg Lindsay’s vision that ‘the workspace of the future looks a lot like a library.’



From Around Here, Tottenham, involved an extensive mapping of everything made, produced, crafted and developed in the Tottenham area, and culminated in a temporary exhibition and shop selling local products and a comprehensive catalogue of local producers. The work has gone on to inform investments into these industries and shape regeneration briefs.



## PILLAR 4: ENGAGED COMMUNITIES



The Business Improvement District (BID) for Camden Town, Camden Town Unlimited, aims to enhance the commercial environment for local businesses and to enrich the offer of the area as a place to stay and dwell as well as a retail environment. The programme is particularly notable for its events, public realm improvements and focus on the environment, ensuring that the streets and retail areas of Camden Town are durable, diverse and delightful enough to draw visitors and customers.



Open City is a charity that works with architecture and urban design to make our built environment more accessible and inclusive. In addition to running the pioneering 'Open House London' annual festival during which 800 buildings are opened to the public, the charity runs self-guided tours, guided tours, a publishing and podcast programme.



**Local Precedent:** Hemel Food Garden offers training and employment for people with learning disabilities within a social enterprise setting, and sells fresh local produce via a farm shop and cafe. The project is an initiative of Sunnyside Rural Trust.



Botkyrka Konsthall, an established public-funded art venue, developed a long-term residency programme - and ultimately its new gallery and home - in the context of Fittja in Stockholm, a postwar neighbourhood with an unusually high demographic and ethnic mix. The programme played a key role in understanding the demographic shifts in the neighbourhood and in helping to modify social policy to support community activity there. It also attracted a long list of international practitioners to Fittja to explore its complexities and imagine potential futures.





Company Drinks, initiated by the artist Kathrin Böhm, formed a new company producing drinks in Barking & Dagenham, involving 1,200 local people in the production of drinks and making a real contribution to local culture. Company Drinks has generated an innovative, sustainable local organisation with a local supply chain, and one that has embedded in the long-term history of the area and in the lives of its communities, in effect producing an open, inter-generational and cross-cultural public space as part of its activities.



Erith Lighthouse brought the diverse communities of Erith - and beyond - together in a single temporary building with a highly-curated programme of meals and events. The project aimed to build the capacity of local entrepreneurs and organisations.



Radical Essex is a programme of events, online mapping and publishing that celebrates hitherto neglected narratives of the county of Essex, especially its history as a place of testing radical social and environmental ideas. The project aims to play to the natural strengths and particularities of the place. The project is an ongoing collaboration between Focal Point Gallery, Visit Essex and Firstsite.



Inspired by a visionary leisure complex in Milton Keynes that was never built, MK Gallery commissioned 'City Club', a series of interventions in the wider city that revisit the ambitions of the 'lost' building in the public realm of the city, including this child-led tour of the New Town instigated by artist family Townley and Bradby and associate artist Georgie Manly.





Turf Projects provides gallery and workspace for artists and was set up as a charity to address the lack of affordable space for artists in Croydon town centre. The flagship space is a previously-vacant retail unit in the Whitgift Centre, the town centre's largest shopping mall. The programming of the space often produces work which explores the particular identity and culture of Croydon, especially its postwar development.



**Local Precedent:** This mural by Rowland Emmett was commissioned during the 'New Town era' to celebrate Hemel Hempstead and neighbouring communities. It is still in place today and serves as a reminder of the connections and culture of this place.



Escape Vehicle #9 (2018), Heather and Ivan Morison. The artwork was commissioned by Into Nature, an art biennial in the Netherlands. The project enables visitors to spend the night in one of the country's most ancient landscapes, and the pavilion provides passive heating and cooling, as well as prompting visitors to imagine how future people will inhabit the landscape.



**Local Precedent:** The Friends of Jellicoe Water Gardens are a voluntary group whose aim is to encourage the use and enjoyment of the Jellicoe Water Gardens by local people and visitors and help develop and maintain a safe, beautiful and wildlife-rich environment. The Friends run events and gardening days, host a dedicated website for the gardens and collaborated with Dacorum Borough Council on an extensive recent restoration of the gardens, supporting and promoting the project and assisting with the project's successful Heritage Lottery bid.



## CREDITS

The Spatial Vision for Hemel Garden Communities was produced in 2020-2021 by DK-CM for the Hemel Garden Communities Programme.

Graphic identity by Europa.

The production of the Vision was supported by an invited group of experts:

John Dales, Urban Movement

Rama Gheerawo, Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art

John Grindrod, author of 'Outskirts' and 'Concretopia'

Diana Ibáñez López, Create London

Greg Lindsay, NewCities

Katy Lock, Town and Country Planning Association

Natalie Simmons, Jonathan Cook Landscape Architects

Maria Smith, Buro Huppold

### Image Credits

The producers of this Vision have made every effort to contact copyright holders and will be happy to correct, in subsequent editions, any errors or omissions that are brought to their attention.

P7 Sarah Wingfield; P21 @shu\_teaches via Hemel Channel; P21 ©TFL; P21 ITP; P21+P78 Keep Growing Detroit; P21+91 S.Hastie, 'Hemel Hempstead, The Story of Newtown Development', 1997 (book); P29+81 DK-CM; P29 Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, 'The Development of Hemel Hempstead', 1952 (book); P29 (HGC); P29+P81 Mole Architects, Photo: David Butler; P37+86 (HGC); P37+P85 Frank Whittle Partnership Architects; P37 (HGC); P37+84 Blackhorse Workshop, Assemble; P45 DK-CM; P45+90 Harold Offeh, Turf Projects Photo: Tim Bowditch; P45+91 (HGC); P41+83 City Club, Photo: Miles Umney; P76 Jacques Léone, Métropole de Lyon; P76 Emmett Russel Architects; P77 Friends of Arnold Circus; P77 (HGC); P78 Cambridge Science Park; P79 5th Studio; P80 Mikhail Riches, Photo: ©Tim Crocker; P80 Practice Architecture & Material Cultures, Photo: Oskar Proctor; P84 Oodi, Helsinki Central Library; P85 Gort Scott and Abake; P86 Camden Town Unlimited; P87 Luke O'Donovan; P87 Botkyrka Konsthall; P88 Company Drinks & Create; P88 Erith Lighthouse, DK-CM; P89 Focal Point Gallery; P90 Studio Morison.



