

# HARLOW TOWN CENTRE

## Masterplan Framework

Interim Planning Guidance

Draft Final report

Harlow Council

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September 2021

**Harlow**  
Council  
*Working together for Harlow*

An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely Harlow New Town, showing a dense arrangement of buildings and streets. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be clearly visible. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

**“An organism which would go on changing and  
being rebuilt as the needs of the people altered”**

Sir Frederick Ernest Gibberd  
Masterplanner of Harlow New Town  
1908 - 1984

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*Note:*

*Please note that proposals for 4 Wych Elm are recommended for approval by officers. In this context, the scheme is treated as “consented” on relevant plans and indicative material. The final version of the masterplan framework will be updated accordingly once this scheme is determined at Planning Committee.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Status of the masterplan framework

- 1.1. The Harlow Town Centre Masterplan Framework (HTCMF) provides guidance to inform the future planning and design of Harlow town centre. The guidance is illustrated through a series of indicative plans and diagrams which communicate the principles.
- 1.2. The HTCMF will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The HTCMF will be treated as a transitional framework providing further guidance in respect of Policies RS2 and PR5 of the adopted Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP). The intention is still to prepare a policy framework for the town centre in accordance with Policy RS2 of the HLDP. This SPD should be read alongside policies in the HLDP, the National Planning Policy Framework and other key local guidance documents set out in this report.
- 1.3. The HTCMF was commissioned by Harlow Council in July 2021, but the content draws on two previous projects as follows:
  - The draft Town Centre Area Action Plan (HTCAAP), which was progressed to draft final status in 2020, but paused before Regulation 19 commenced; and
  - A more detailed masterplanning exercise which commenced in January 2020 with a view to informing potential funding bids, regeneration initiatives and the evolving HTCAAP.
- 1.4. HTCAAP and the masterplanning exercise were both paused during the Examination of the Local Plan in 2020. It was agreed town centre specific planning and design guidance was best progressed in a non-statutory format following

adoption of the HLDP. This has enabled a more rapid process of preparation and adoption than a formal planning policy document.

## Relationship with the Local Plan

- 1.5. HLDP provides the spatial planning policy framework to guide development and secure the regeneration of Harlow Town Centre for the period up to 2033 and beyond. HTCMF has been developed in broad conformity with the Local Plan, and does not seek to define new policies.
- 1.6. HTCMF builds upon a number of adopted policies in HLDP, as defined below:
  - PR5 - The Sequential Test and Principles for Main Town Centre Uses.
  - PR6 - Primary and Secondary Frontages in Town Centre.
  - PR7 - Sub-division and Internal Alteration of Town Centre Units.
  - PR11 - Evening and Night Time Economy.
  - H8 - Affordable Housing.
  - IN1 - Development and sustainable modes of travel.
  - L3 - Development Involving the Provision or Relocation or Loss of Public Art.
  - PR3 - Employment development outside employment areas and neighbourhood service areas.
  - L2 - Sporting, Cultural and Community Facilities.
  - PL12 - Heritage Assets and their Settings.
  - RS2 - Future Retail Floorspace.
- 1.7. HTCMF will assist in progressing the future review of HLDP alongside other evolving aspects of the evidence base. This is particularly relevant in relation to trends associated with town centre market sectors, the Covid-19 pandemic, and climate change.

- 1.8. **Emerging Town Plan (2021)**  
Harlow Council is currently preparing a Town Plan for the District which will establish a clear corporate position on the overarching long-term vision for Harlow beyond HLDP and key priorities for the area. The Town Plan should be considered in parallel with the HTCMF and HLDP.
- 1.9. **Relationship with the draft Town Centre AAP**  
As noted above, HTCAAP has played a key role in informing the HTCMF. The fundamental components of HTCAAP have been carried forward into this document, with more recent consents and shifting town centre trends informing updates to the indicative masterplan which illustrates the guidance.
- 1.10. HTCMF has distilled the key principles and thinking from the draft policies in the HTCAAP into more focused guidance in chapters 5 to 7 of this report. This guidance has been re-cast in a format which is suitable for endorsement as SPD. Specifically, it does not define policies or new allocations.
- 1.11. The draft HTCAAP went through a number of stages of production between 2014 and 2020:
- Evidence base and background research including consultation;
  - Synthesis of evidence and initial consultation;
  - Preparation of Issues and Options report and Sustainability Appraisal;
  - Regulation 18 consultation on Issues and

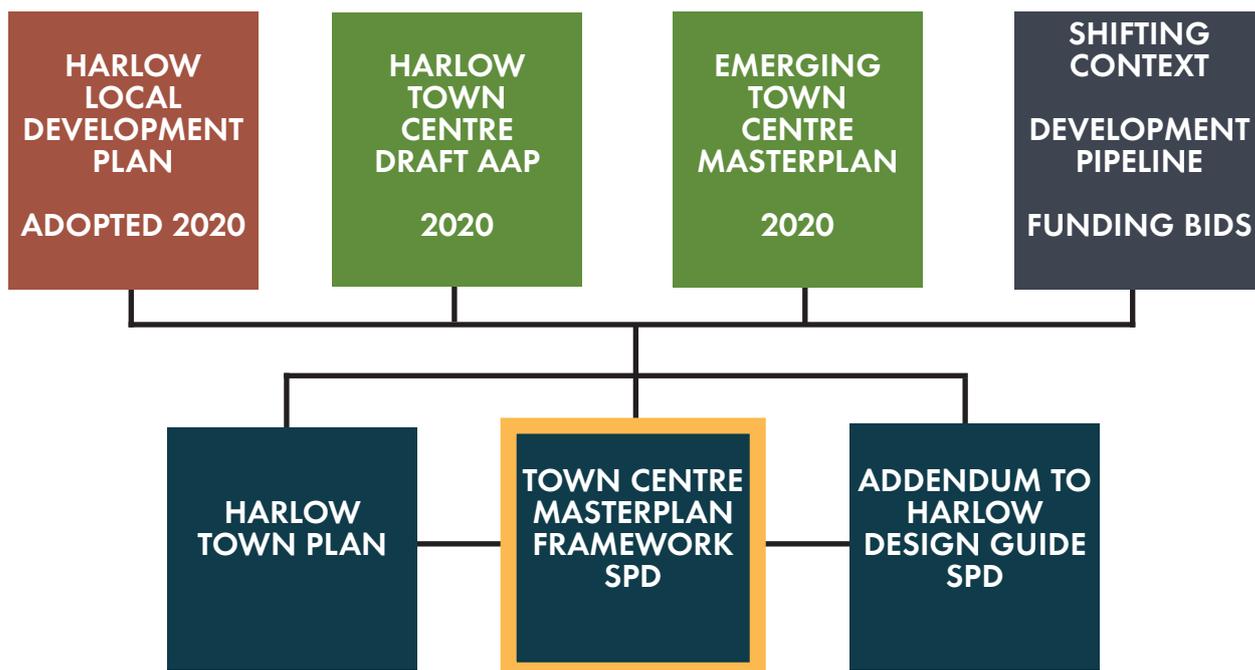


Figure 1 Overview of key documents and evidence which relate to the Town Centre Masterplan Framework

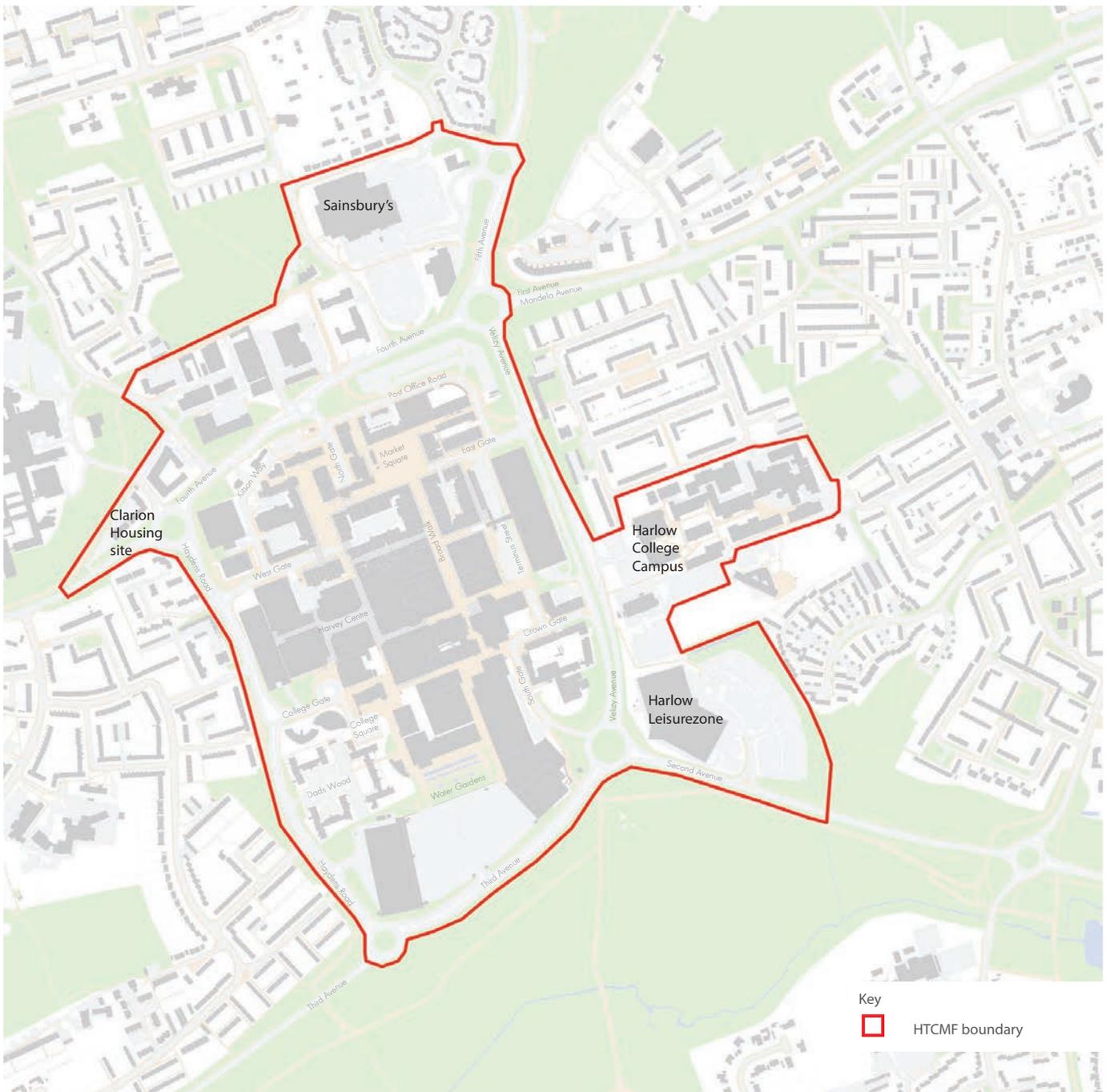
- Options Report; and
  - Preparation of draft Area Action Plan which was informed by the iterative development of the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 1.12. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between HTCMTF and other documents. HLDP forms the primary policy context, with previous work on the draft HTCAAP and masterplan informing HTCMTF. Evolving town centre trends, emerging development proposals and funding bids have also influenced the HTCMTF.
- 1.13. Alongside the HTCMTF, the Council is also preparing the Town Plan, and an addendum to the adopted Harlow Design Guide SPD. Key elements of the HTCMTF have influenced the final draft of the Addendum to the Design Guide SPD including the public realm strategy and building heights guidance (see chapters 6 and 7).

### HTCMF boundary

- 1.14. Harlow Town Centre and its environs have changed over the years and the town centre boundary was amended in the HLDP to reflect and align to the natural boundary that exists today but also to take account of potential changes in the future. The new boundary incorporates the current pattern of commercial, civic, leisure and educational uses and recognises sites of future change that are likely to have significant impact and opportunity on the town centre. Although Princess Alexandra Hospital has a relationship with the town centre, it is considered to be beyond the HTCMTF boundary. The new areas incorporated within the updated boundary include:
- Harlow College campus, which is an important education site incorporating Harlow College, Harlow Advanced

Manufacturing and Engineering Centre and Burnt Mill Academy Trust Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Academy which is a major trip generator for the town centre;

- Harlow Leisurezone, which is both a very popular leisure centre in the town and serves as a town centre car park for many visitors;
- The northern site which includes the Sainsbury's supermarket, which could have a stronger relationship with the existing centre and could come forward for redevelopment; and
- The former Clarion Housing site on the north-west edge of the town centre, which has recently been demolished, has planning permission for residential development and is likely to progress within the Plan period.



**Figure 2** Town Centre Area Action Plan boundary. The boundary as shown now coincides with the town centre boundary in the Local Plan. *Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627 (2021)*

### Previous consultation and community engagement

1.15. HTCMTF has been informed by previous engagement undertaken on HTCAAP including informal activities and formal consultation at the Regulation 18 Stage. The key points arising can be summarised as follows:

- **General support for the emerging HTCAAP** and its overarching vision for a sustainable town centre with a strong mix of uses.
- **Place greater emphasis on the relationship between the Town Centre and the wider area** by considering the opportunities the Garden Town could bring to the town centre; the role of Town Centre in the wider area; and the Town Centre's position within the UK Innovation Corridor.
- **Seek more opportunities for engagement with Essex County Council and Garden Town authorities.**
- **Emphasis on flexibility of policy guidance** to allow design to be led on a site-by-site basis.
- **Emphasis on quality** for all new proposals within the Town Centre.
- Support for the emphasis made on the **importance of culture and heritage** in achieving the HTCAAP's vision and outcomes.
- People were pleased to see the spatial objective to **retain the plan aesthetic of Gibberd's original masterplan.**
- **The southern part of the Town Centre** should be given enough focus within the HTCAAP to ensure it remains an attractive and viable part of the Town Centre.
- **Support for quality green space** in the town centre and for opportunities to connect green infrastructure.
- The document should make **recommendations for 'quick wins'** and set out a phasing plan for the package of measures.

- **Approach to movement received the most comments.** These related to the location of the bus station, recognising two sustainable transport corridors, pedestrian and cycling movement and the approach to parking. Work with ECC and Garden Town Board to explore way forward for the Sustainable Transport Hub and sustainable transport corridors.

### Structure of the document

- 1.16. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 provides a concise portrait of Harlow Town Centre and includes a historic overview and mapping of contextual elements. Chapter 3 summarises the existing policy context. The Vision for Harlow Town Centre is set out in Chapter 4 alongside Spatial Objectives and desired outcomes.
- 1.17. Chapter 5 identifies key guidance across a series of headings including overarching principles, movement, urban design, public realm and land use. These principles are supported by diagrammatic framework drawings, which layer up to inform an indicative masterplan framework for reference purposes.
- 1.18. Chapter 6 is focused on the public realm strategy in more detail.
- 1.19. Chapter 7 defines guidance around building heights. It defines the historic and evolving context for taller buildings in Harlow, and establishes principles to assist future planning for building heights.
- 1.20. Chapter 8 provides guidance for each Opportunity Area within the HTCMTF boundary.
- 1.21. Chapter 9 summarises recommendations to support the delivery of the HTCMTF.

# 2 PORTRAIT OF HARLOW TOWN CENTRE

## Town Centre position and context

- 2.1. Harlow Town Centre is positioned in close proximity to major transport corridors, including the A10, M25, A414 and the M11, which stretches from London to Cambridge and beyond towards Peterborough. Stansted Airport is located to the north of Harlow. The town centre is served by Harlow Town Railway Station alongside a network of local buses. The integration of transport planning with efficient mixed land uses and improvements to the public realm are essential for the regeneration of the town centre. Harlow has a strong relationship with Cambridge which lies just 50km north of Harlow and is part of the 'Core Area' within the UK Innovation Corridor.

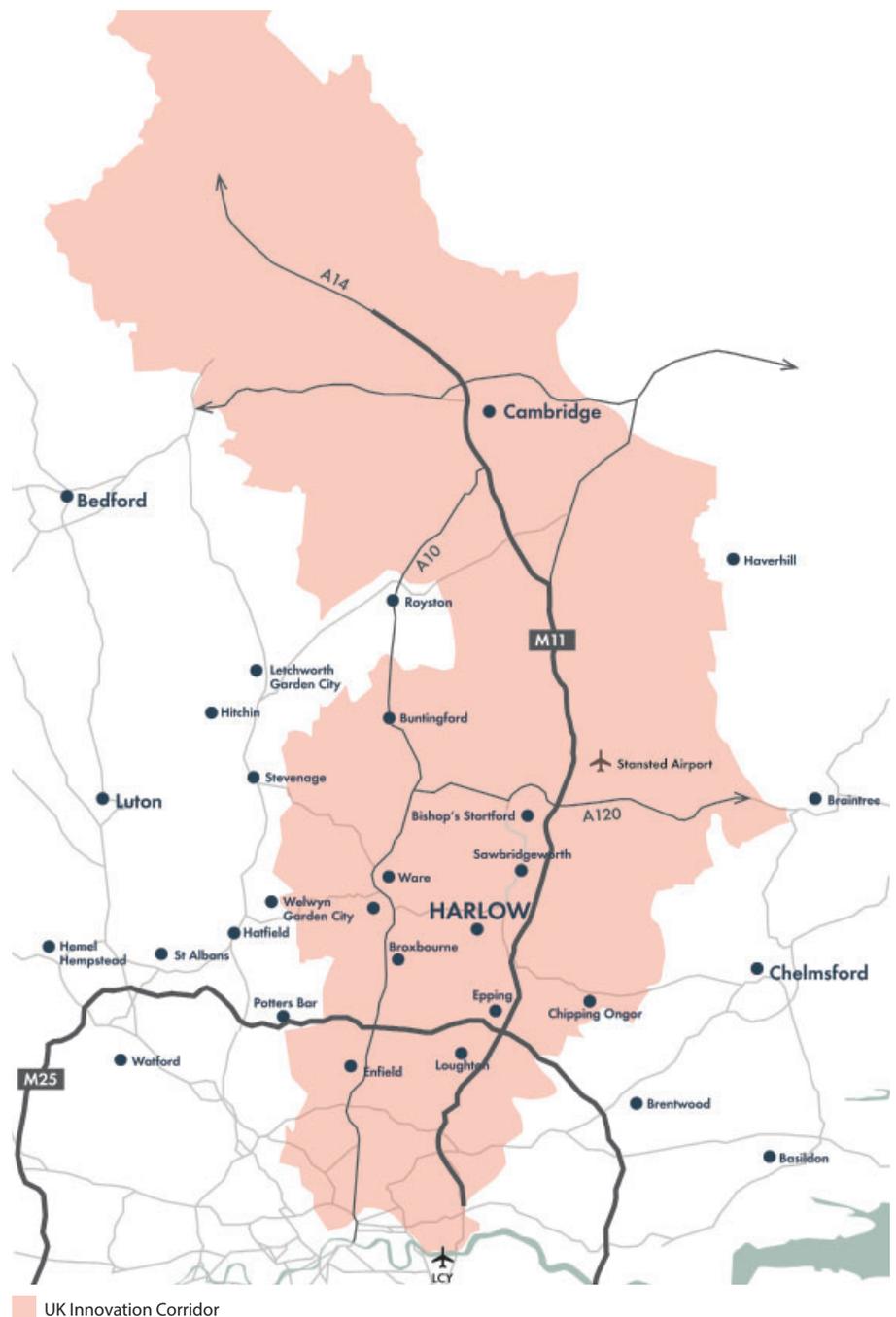
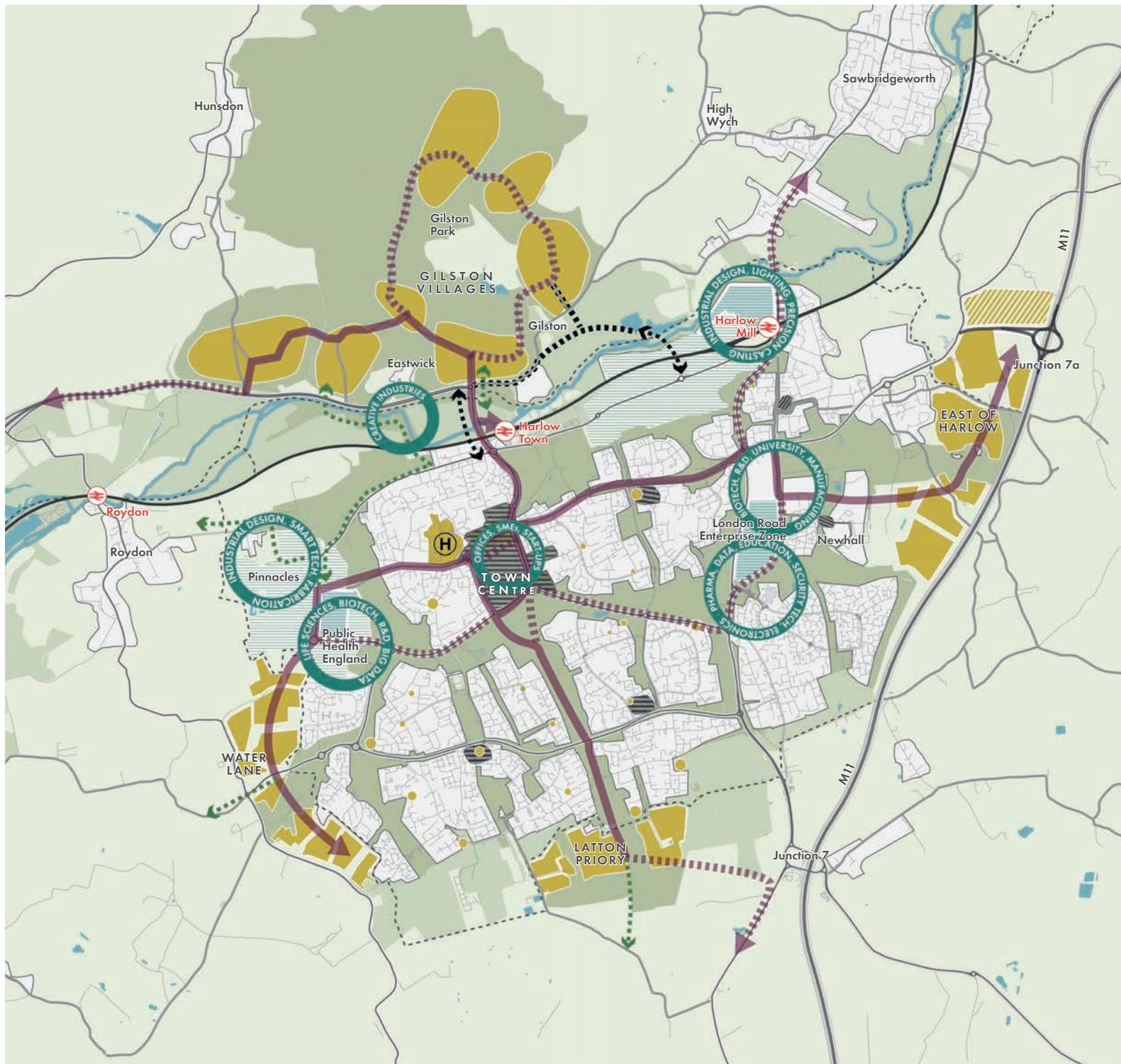


Figure 3 Regional context ©Allies and Morrison

## Growth context

- 2.2. The role and performance of the town centre requires broader consideration in the context of the proposed growth which is anticipated across the wider area and neighbouring districts.
- 2.3. Harlow Council, alongside Epping Forest District and East Hertfordshire District Councils have identified potential for 16,100 new homes at Harlow and Gilston Garden Town through their Local Plan processes (up to 2033), with an additional c.7,000 new homes identified in the Gilston area beyond this plan period.
- 2.4. The Strategic Site Assessment (September 2016) identified sufficient suitable sites in and around Harlow to accommodate around 16,100 new homes. These strategic sites fall across all three authorities and form the basis of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.
- 2.5. It should be noted, that in addition to the strategic sites, approximately 7,968 new homes will be developed within Harlow District from 2011 to 2033 either through completions and commitments, as well as through intensification and development of brownfield sites.
- 2.6. The existence of employment opportunities associated with Public Health England and Enterprise Zone status have significant potential to establish greater momentum in Harlow. Other positive drivers for growth include the Town's strategic role in the UK Innovation Corridor and investment in sustainable transport modes and an integrated walking and cycling network.
- 2.7. The town centre is no longer an established office market due to the size and quality of the existing stock. Landowners and investors have taken advantage of historic high vacancy rates and changes in permitted development rights resulting in all existing offices seeking or already been permitted change of use from office-to-resi. However, significant growth opportunities exist that could see some office uses being brought back into the town centre. Projects such as Harlow Enterprise Zone with a focus on MedTech, Life Science and ICT sectors alongside SME manufacturing space and the emergence of a national science hub for Public Health England provide an opportunity for the town centre to support the wider supply chain.
- 2.8. Residential growth and employment generation are expected to go hand-in-hand with growth in future town centre consumer demand and its regeneration which is an opportunity for Harlow Town Centre.
- 2.9. A preferred option has been identified for the relocation of Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) from its current site north of the town centre to a greenfield site east of Harlow, close to J7a on the M11 and the planned eastern HGGT – East of Harlow – New Garden Town Community.
- 2.10. This will enable the hospital to respond to population growth and increasing demand. The hospital is the largest employer in the district and serves an extended population of up to 500,000. The relocation away from the existing site will impact town centre employment figures and daily footfall and the Council will consider how some of these jobs may be reprovided. The existing site has been identified for approximately 500 new homes, which will support the town centre.

-  District boundaries
-  Employment clusters
-  Train stations
-  New homes (within existing neighbourhoods)
-  Garden Town communities
-  Land only to be developed for potential Princess Alexandra hospital relocation
-  Harlow Town Centre and local centres
-  Industrial areas
-  Enterprise Zones / PHE
-  Existing neighbourhoods and villages
-  Indicative Sustainable Transport Corridor
-  Indicative Sustainable Transport Corridor (potential extension)
-  New / improved road river crossing
-  New / improved pedestrian and cycle link
-  Potential road extension
-  Junction 7a
-  Potential Princess Alexandra hospital redevelopment



**Figure 4** Growth context showing all strategic site developments which will be delivered in the Plan period and beyond within the Housing Market area (Harlow District Council, Epping Forest District Council and East Herts District Council) Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627 (2021)

### Drivers for change

- 2.11. Harlow Town Centre used to be defined predominantly by commercial uses, but has evolved to a more-mixed use centre with a predominance of residential uses. Evidence suggests that retailers must exert significant effort to attract visitors over convenient out-of-town retail parks or malls. There is an ever increasing emphasis on prioritising “experience” over “convenience”.
- 2.12. The general trend of shopping moving towards online, rather than traditional visits to physical shopping areas means that town centres need to diversify to attract shoppers. Retail is a leisure activity which needs to be supported by diverse retail, F&B, and quality environments
- 2.13. In 2019 Harlow Council declared a climate emergency with a commitment to design for adaptation and climate resilience.
- 2.14. The pandemic has transformed perception of the role of public and green spaces in town and city centres. The Town Centre must have high-quality public realm that meets the needs of local users and visitors.
- 2.15. The impact of Permitted Development is apparent across towns and cities, and is particularly acute in Harlow. Further changes to PDR rights and use classes will affect town centre policies.
- 2.17. These reports were prepared during the early months of the global Covid-19 pandemic, at a point where commentators had started to identify potential impacts on market activity across many sectors. The reports highlighted a general view that less weight can be attached to previous market evidence for the purpose of comparisons and recommendations. This underlines the importance of ongoing market review and assessment of trends. Although the reports were progressed against an unprecedented economic backdrop, the 2020 Cushman and Wakefield sector reports provide a helpful context for the purposes of the HTCMF.

### Retail

- 2.18. The retail sector has evolved significantly with the following trends continuing to be relevant:
- Reducing store portfolios - large retailers are increasingly focusing on a smaller number of prime locations for their stores;
  - New, flexible store formats - shopping is becoming more leisure focused and activity based;
  - Shared space - greater collaboration between retailers in terms of sharing space;
  - The click-and-collect market - reduces ‘last mile delivery’ costs and can create additional sales volumes;
  - Improved digital capability - online interest has created ‘digital economy’ demands and opportunities which should be embraced;
  - Increase in pop-up shops and other uses enables retailers to lease space on a short-term basis and bring animation and vibrancy to the high street; and
  - Leisure and all-round experiences - importance of strong leisure ‘anchors’ increasingly evident. Leisure plays an important role in supporting the night time economy.

### Understanding the key sectors

- 2.16. Previous proposals in the HTCAAP were informed by a series of evidence base reports relating to the key town centre market sectors. The Council commissioned Cushman and Wakefield to prepare a series of focused reports examining the evolving context in 2020.

- 2.19. The 2020 retail study reviewed the 2017 calculation for retail need as set out in HLDP. Emerging indicative targets in the 2020 study suggest that a lower level of capacity growth might be appropriate in response of evolving trends. In the context of increasing online retail sales (30-40% of total retail sales by 2030) and the growing number of collapsed or 'at risk' retailers, Harlow Town Centre, like many centres in the UK, potentially has too much retail space overall.
- 2.20. Overall, there are clear opportunities for Harlow Town Centre to improve its retail (and non-retail) offer and attract a higher proportion of expenditure, including from the 16,000 additional homes associated with the Garden Town. Whilst we consider the 'scale of opportunity' is restricted by the high degree of competition from surrounding retail centres, the Town Centre benefits from a strong strategic location, a growing local population, and the town's strong and improving employment base. The scope for improvement will, however, largely depend on town centre regeneration and other interventions to deliver a higher quality, more secure environment and better accessibility (i.e. public transport, links to nearby communities).
- 2.21. Structural changes in the retail sector more generally, underline the importance of flexibility when planning for new retail in the Town Centre. For HTCMF, this will involve enabling poorer quality retail space to be replaced by alternative, non-retail uses in less prime areas whilst focusing new retail space in the more prime areas where it can drive footfall and, importantly, strengthen the retail circuit.
- 2.22. The 2020 retail study also recommends that the HTCMF is not overly restrictive in relation to use classes / retail types at ground floor level; instead, it should seek (where appropriate) to afford greater flexibility for a range of permissible use classes / retail types on a site-by-site basis (thereby allowing the market to determine what is and is not deliverable within the parameters set by the masterplan). Thus, it will be important for the Council to monitor the future delivery of comparison and convenience retail floorspace (etc) against the levels envisaged under the masterplan framework, and to adapt its strategy for the Town Centre accordingly.
- Residential**
- 2.23. The local housing requirement is being met through HLDP. However, there are opportunities to bring forward residential development in the Town Centre to re-invigorate and regenerate the town centre. This could increase footfall and provide a complementary residential offer to the rest of Harlow and the Garden Town urban extensions.
- 2.24. Housing delivery in the town centre could meet a range of housing needs, from higher density smaller units in the core town centre grading down to family-size units on the edges of the town centre.
- 2.25. The current housing market in the town centre is small and weak, with low values meaning development faces significant delivery challenges.
- 2.26. There is a role for the public sector in starting to unlock this market, either through direct provision of (for example) key worker housing tapping into requirements from employers in the town, using land assembly powers to piece together suitable development opportunities, funding improvements to the public realm

and safety and security or through unlocking sites through funding to address viability issues and ensuring that planning policy incentivises landowners to promote their sites for good quality residential provision in appropriate locations that reinforce rather than dilute the commercial core of the town centre. Taking these roles will begin to establish greater confidence and create a “town centre living” market but will take some time.

- 2.27. Housing delivery in the town centre will be influenced by delivery timescales and capacities for existing schemes in the pipeline, emerging schemes which can be delivered with public sector input and subsequent sites where schemes have not yet been proposed but require land assembly.
- 2.28. The phasing of other investments such as transport infrastructure improvements that could encourage values to rise in the town and increase the attractiveness for build to rent schemes (in the core town centre) and older people’s or multi-generational accommodation (on the town centre periphery).

### Business space

- 2.29. Harlow’s local economy is performing relatively well and has significant prospects for growth. At present, there is a sense that this growth is not benefitting the town centre where the employment base is relatively small and dominated by the public sector and the stock of good quality business accommodation is low. It is likely to be the case that regeneration in the town centre (in terms of – for example – better transport infrastructure, better public realm, a safer and more secure environment) to enhance the perception of the town centre is needed before economic growth can be achieved.
- 2.30. In the short term, there are opportunities for the Council to work with landowners to promote the use of surplus space for start-up businesses across a range of sectors, perhaps linked to the supply chain of other businesses in the Harlow area or to areas of specialism at

Harlow College. The Council could also work with the rest of the public sector to promote employment uses on public sector land, such as the CRATE scheme in Loughton. Providing opportunities for the creative industries could have significant benefits for the other commercial uses in the town centre by increasing levels of activity and footfall.

- 2.31. In the medium and longer term, and on the back of regeneration enhancements to the town centre, opportunities could exist for:
- Light manufacturing (such as maker spaces)
  - Urban logistics hubs
  - Offices, capturing some of the economic growth associated with the growth of Harlow in general and the LSCC corridor (though the scale of this market is likely to be limited by factors such as the lack of a direct rail link to the town centre)
  - Co-working space could be incorporated with affordable workspaces (as done at The Muse in Ilford), encouraging entrepreneurs and creative thinkers to meet under one roof.
  - The town centre is currently predominantly home to public and quasi-public sector businesses. We anticipate these sectors, coupled with administrative and support services, as well as health and social work, will continue to be the largest town centre employers and therefore, future business space providers must bear this in mind. Growth in these areas could be achieved as the town centre public services will be serving a wider catchment area as the Garden Town grows.

### Other potential uses

- 2.32. Cushman and Wakefield undertook analysis of other potential uses which might be appropriate in the town centre. This included consideration of projected growth in the Greater Harlow area. Based on a notional future population of 120,000 to 140,000 people, a number of comparator town centres were identified including Ipswich, Basingstoke, Reading, Cambridge and Guildford. These centres include a number of cultural and leisure

facilities which have potential to be delivered in Harlow town centre.

- 2.33. Gaps in the Harlow's current provision that could be opportunities for the future in the town centre, including a music venue, museum and mid-upper range food and beverage.
- 2.34. There are a number of sectors in Harlow town centre where the offer and size / number of occupiers could be enhanced, alongside opportunities for greater clustering and critical mass. Key opportunities include theatre, cinema, museum, art gallery and library.
- 2.35. The Council and development partners should work with stakeholders to identify opportunities to enhance provision alongside development proposals.

### SWOT analysis

- 2.36. Drawing on the sector analysis, the following summary analysis assists in distilling the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) impacting the future of Harlow Town Centre.

<b>Strengths</b> 	<b>Weaknesses</b> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harlow's strategic location</li> <li>• 30 minutes to London by train (Harlow)</li> <li>• Large and growing consumer catchment</li> <li>• Adequate town centre parking</li> <li>• The Water Gardens and Harvey Centre (shopping centres)</li> <li>• Harlow College Campus and Harlow Leisurezone</li> <li>• Public art and sculpture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less need for additional retail floorspace than forecast - risk of a fragmented town centre in the event of a downturn in retail performance</li> <li>• Lack of medium - large and higher end retailers</li> <li>• Lack of vibrant night-time offer</li> <li>• Limited commercial leisure offer</li> <li>• Location of train station</li> <li>• Poorly laid out and unwelcoming bus station</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> 	<b>Threats</b> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential development sites</li> <li>• Increase the resident population of both the town and within the town centre</li> <li>• Consolidation of town centre shopping area</li> <li>• Planning permission granted for major redevelopment of town centre west</li> <li>• Public Health England and Enterprise Zone (Harlow)</li> <li>• Role of the development of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town for the delivery of better, more sustainable accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential development coming forward without comprehensive approach to the delivery of the town centre.</li> <li>• Minor developments / investment delivered in isolation</li> <li>• Increasing competition from other centres (including Chelmsford)</li> <li>• Trends in retail sector (polarisation, multi-channel retailing, changing store formats)</li> <li>• Poor quality office-residential conversions</li> </ul>

## Historic overview

- 2.37. Before the planned development of Harlow New Town, the area was largely fields with dispersed farmsteads and manors. The commercial centre grew around Old Harlow's medieval market square and the more informal Churchgate Street to the south-east. The population grew from 1,514 people in 1801 to 3,471 in 1931, small in comparison to the 60,000 people for whom the new town was planned (later this increased to 90,000). In 2017 the population was 86,191 people (Office for National Statistics - mid-year population estimates, issued June 2018).
- 2.38. Frederick Gibberd's vision and masterplan for Harlow New Town reflected the New Town ethos of the 1940's, drawing inspiration from

the earlier Garden City movement and the drive to provide high quality and spacious homes with access to clean air and open space. Gibberd's masterplan was influenced by the area's distinctive landscape and environmental features, such as the River Stort in the north, the valley ridges and wooded areas in the south and other important ecological assets.

- 2.39. The 1952 masterplan was based on three fundamental principles - an essentially human environment (that the design should be based on the pedestrian); an urban atmosphere; and the principle of evolution. According to Gibberd, "the third predicted a flexible approach. The first two were basic to the concept of new towns."

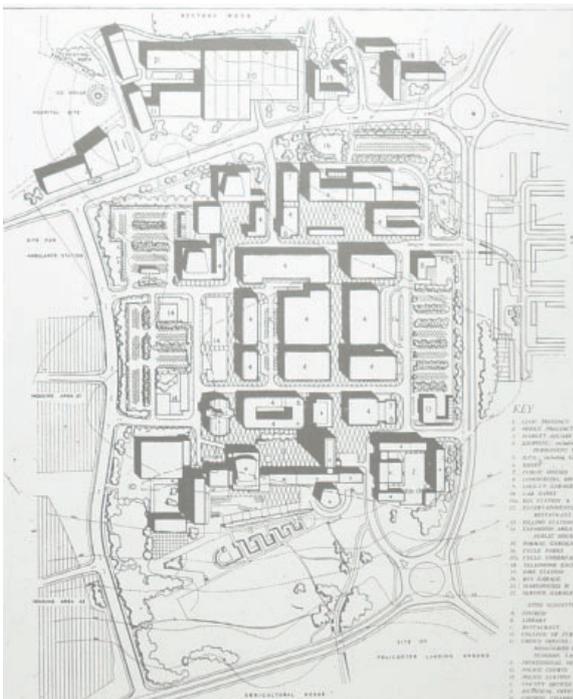
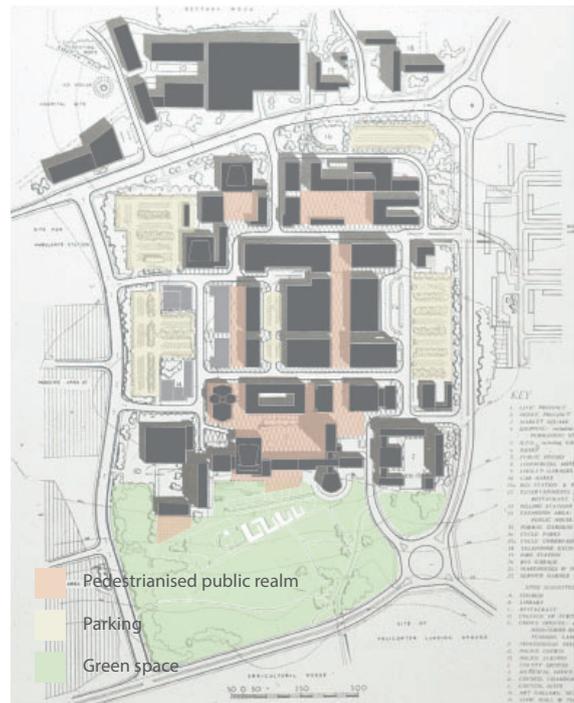
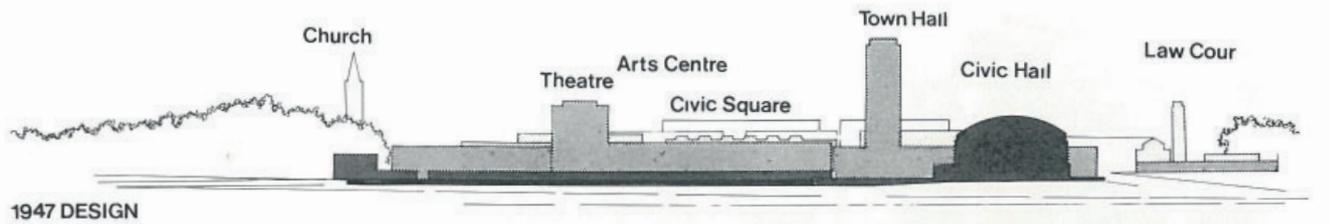
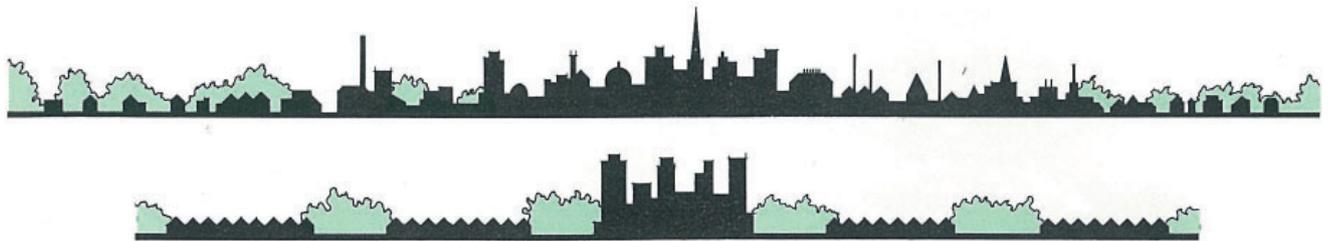
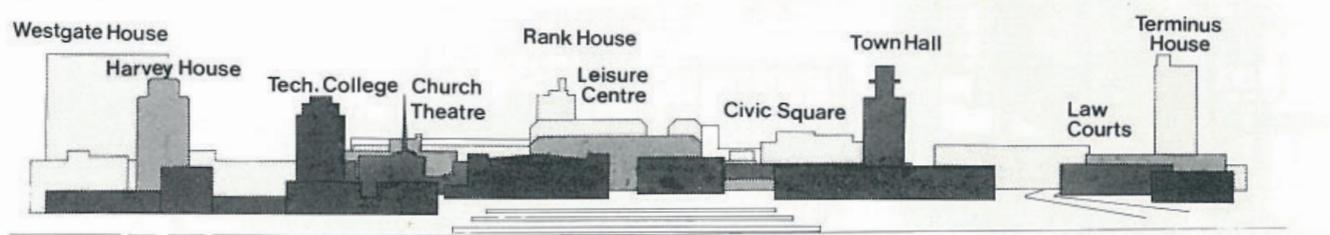


Figure 5 1952 masterplan of Harlow New Town





1947 DESIGN



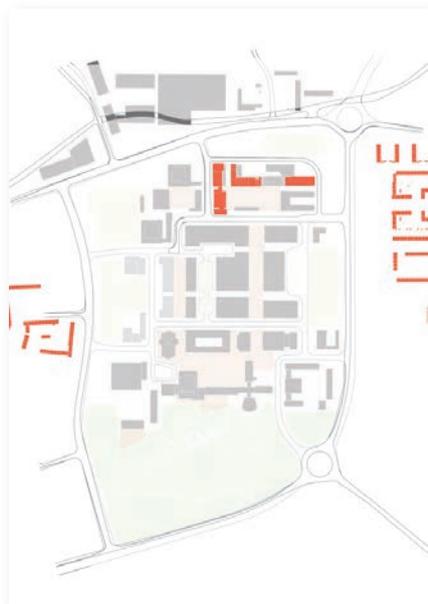
1977 DESIGN

Figure 6 Gibberd's vision of rationalising and separating the town and industry from surrounding residential neighbourhoods

## Evolution of Town Centre

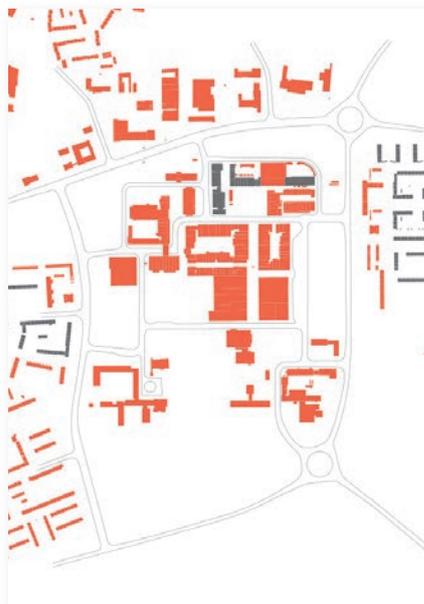
- 2.40. Since the conception of Harlow New Town, the Town Centre has undergone several stages of expansion. The diagrams below show its evolution from 1952 to today. The original plan intentionally separated residential areas from the Town Centre. This now has a negative impact on the current operation of the Town Centre, in contrast to historic market towns which are activated in the evening by people living in the centre.

**1952-1960**



The first buildings were completed around the Market Square.

**1960-1966**

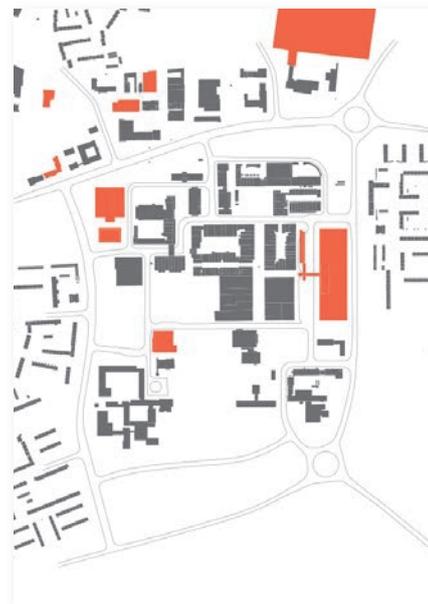


The area north of Fourth Avenue is built out including the Wych Elm area and Fire Station. The Market Square, Town Hall and Library have been built south of Fourth Avenue.

Car parks around the perimeter of the town centre act as arrival points.

The original Water Gardens are completed to the south with a large green area as the setting.

**1960-1975**



Multi-storey car parks and Joseph Rank House (as commercial uses) are developed on car park sites.

The Playhouse is built next to the Church.

There is further development of businesses and light industry in the Wych Elm area.

**Figure 7** Plans showing the evolution of Harlow Town Centre  
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### 1975-1980



1980 marks the dissolution of the Development Corporation.

The Harvey Centre is extended to include a multi-storey car park and BHS department store between the Library and Church.

Redstone House is built opposite the Library to announce the end of the Broad Walk.

Vehicular connections across the Town Centre are lost between East Gate and West Gate and from College Square to Crown Gate.

### 1980-1995



Harvey Centre begins to fill out the area west of the Broad Walk and infill development bridges across North Gate.

### 1995-2017



The early 2000's saw a large amount of development to the south of the town centre alongside residential development in the centre at Dads Wood including Occasio House. There is a loss of the majority of green space in the town centre.

The Water Gardens development involved the relocation of the Water Gardens and demolition of the Town Hall to provide new retail and leisure uses and the addition of a multi-storey car park to the south of the Water Gardens.

Harlow Leisurezone is built south east of the town centre and there is major investment at Harvey Centre including a new cinema.

### Neighbourhood Infrastructure

2.41. Harlow is built on a simple infrastructure pattern with neighbourhoods separated by major roads and green wedges with this separation continuing for the neighbourhoods adjacent to the town centre.



Figure 8 Wider context - Town Centre location

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## Green Infrastructure

2.42. Natural landscape and green space can be easily reached by foot from the Town Centre, including the Town Park, although the centre itself lacks planting and open spaces. The

Green Wedge network was an essential part of Gibberd's vision for Harlow and often accommodates cycling and walking routes. The HTCMAF seeks to strengthen the relationship between the town centre and Town Park.



Figure 9 Wider context - Green space

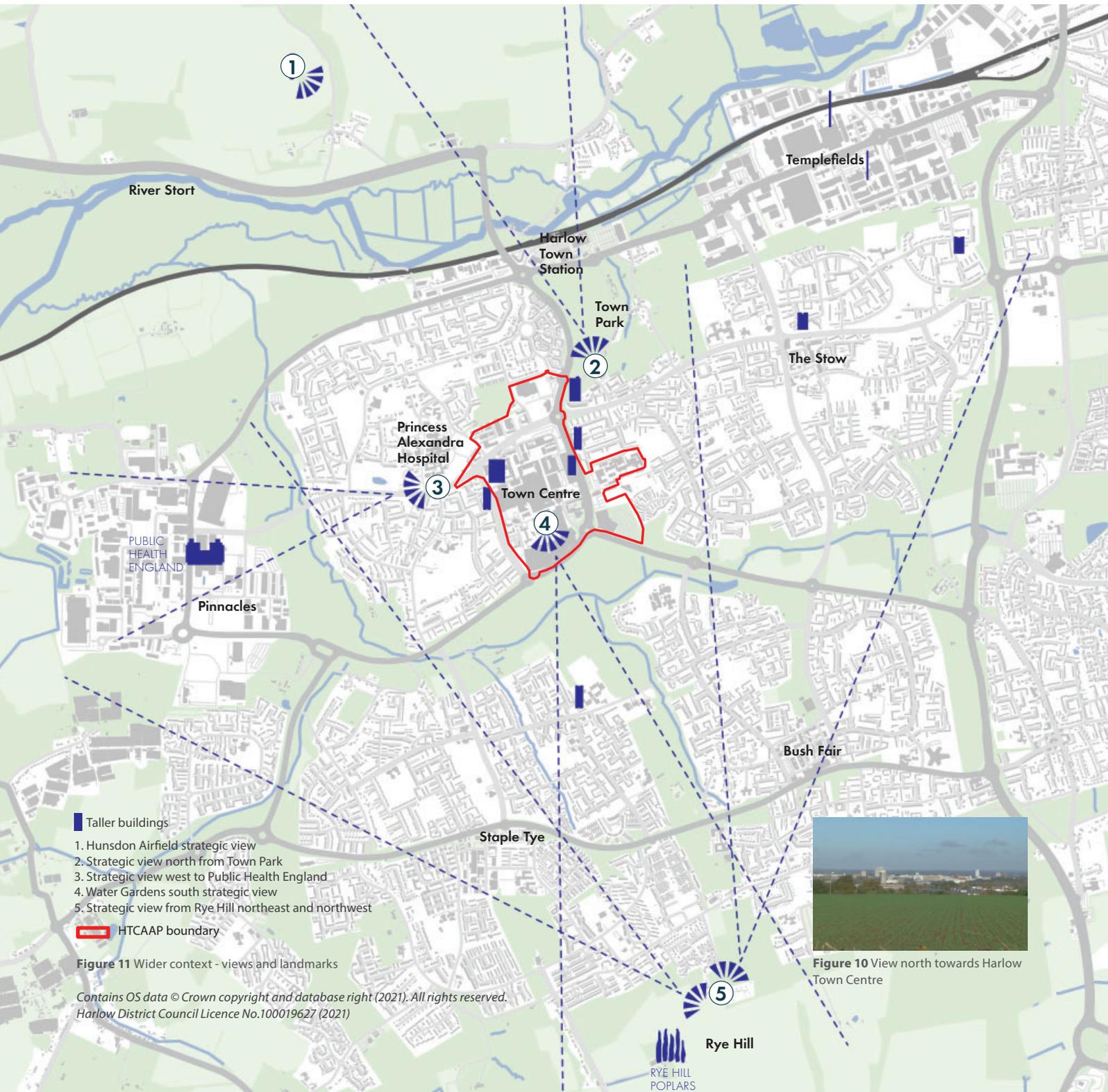
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HTCMAF boundary

## Landmarks

2.43. Views of landmarks aid legibility across Harlow. A row of poplar trees at the former Woodbridge Farm and the southern water tower are clear features on the horizon and can be viewed from

The Water Gardens looking south. The view back is shown in the photo below.



# 3 POLICY CONTEXT

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021

- 3.1. Proposals should make reference to the revised NPPF which sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

## Harlow Local Development Plan

- 3.2. The new Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP) guides future development in the District to 2033 and replaces the 2006 Harlow Local Plan. The plan sets out a long term planning vision which ensures that development is sustainable and meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors in the area. It is the basis upon which planning applications will be determined.
- 3.3. The HLDP, alongside national planning policy, forms the primary source of statutory policy guidance for Harlow Town Centre.
- 3.4. The HLDP includes a number of relevant strategic objectives for the regeneration of the Town Centre in Chapter 3. These cover the following areas, all of which reflect the Council's wider aspirations for achieving a town centre where everybody has an improved quality of life:
- High quality built environments connected to revitalised green spaces;
  - High quality design of new development;
  - Protecting and enhancing the historic environment;
  - Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
  - Identification of sites to meet local housing needs;
  - Range of high quality housing tenure and type;

- Diversifying and investing in the district's employment base;
- Economic revitalisation - reinforcing Harlow's reputation as a centre for Research and Development;
- Improving educational opportunities and skills base;
- Regenerating the town centre to provide a range of shopping needs;
- Enhancing sporting, leisure, recreational facilities and cultural opportunities;
- Education, healthcare and other community facilities to support residents;
- Reducing reliance on car travel by promoting sustainable modes of transport; and
- Improving transport links to community facilities.

- 3.5. Policy SD1 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development that accords with the HLDP will normally be supported unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 3.6. The main chapters regarding the redevelopment of the town centre are Chapter 9 - 'Retail Ambitions and Town Centre Redevelopment', and Chapter 15 - 'Prosperity'.

- 3.7. Other relevant strategic policies focus on the visitor economy, heritage, infrastructure and design. The HLDP also includes a number of Development Management Policies. Several policies are of specific relevance to the Town Centre including the following:

- PR5 - The Sequential Test and Principles for Main Town Centre Uses.
- PR6 - Primary and Secondary Frontages in Town Centre.
- PR7 - Sub-division and Internal Alteration of

- Town Centre Units.
- PR11 - Evening and Night Time Economy.
  - H8 - Affordable Housing.
  - IN1 - Development and sustainable modes of travel.
  - L3 - Development Involving the Provision or Relocation or Loss of Public Art:
  - PR3 - Employment development outside employment areas and neighbourhood service areas.
  - L2 - Sporting, Cultural and Community Facilities.
  - PL12 - Heritage Assets and their Settings.

### **Supplementary Planning Documents**

3.8. Key SPDs include the following:

- Harlow Design Guide SPD (2011) and Addendum (draft, 2021) - sets out design principles to guide future development in Harlow and to encourage a design-led approach to development.
- Open spaces, sport and recreation SPD (2007) - sets out the Council's approach to the provision of open space in conjunction with new housing development. This is due to be updated by the Council.
- Affordable Housing SPD (2007) - clarifies the Council's policies on affordable housing and sets clear guidelines about how the Council will determine the type and tenure of dwellings, as well as their design and layout. An updated version is due for adoption by the Council in 2021.

### HGGT strategies, guidance and frameworks

3.9. The HGGT partners are preparing a number of key documents which are relevant to Harlow town centre including the following:

- **HGGT Sustainability Checklist:** This is a material consideration which provides a practical overview of the key sustainability requirements.
- **HGGT Vision and Design Guide:** These documents set out the expectations and requirements that need to be met by developers to ensure the delivery of good quality villages and neighbourhoods, homes, jobs and infrastructure for new and existing residents. These guides will be used as a material planning consideration when considering planning applications/proposals and masterplans, and will provide assurances to communities and businesses about what they should expect from Garden Town developments.
- **HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan:** The purpose of this plan is to set out the infrastructure that will be required to deliver the planned level of housing and employment growth and covers a wide range of types of infrastructure. The plan also identifies how expected developer contributions from various sites will be apportioned.
- **HGGT Sustainable Community Transport Hub:** As part of the HGGT project, guidance is being produced for Sustainable Community Transport Hubs also known as Mobility Hubs. These hubs are a key part of the overarching strategy for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town in the context

of the emphasis on active and sustainable modes of movement. They will act as a focus for convenient interchange across a series of different scales.

- **HGGT Healthy Town Framework:** HGGT is preparing guidance for health infrastructure and the creation of creating healthy places.

# 4 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

## Vision

- 4.1. In the future, Harlow Town Centre will be a successful, sustainable place which serves as the commercial centre for the existing town of Harlow and the wider Garden Town. The town centre will play an important part in helping Harlow and Gilston to step up to a more active economic role within the UK's Innovation Corridor.
- 4.2. In order to do this, the town centre will have a diverse mix of shops and services; offer high quality office and employment spaces; civic and wide ranging leisure uses including cafés and restaurants; and a thriving evening economy and cultural offer. The town centre will also have a range of high quality homes that can support a mixed and balanced community.
- 4.3. The town centre will be accessible to all, by public transport, cycle, on foot and by car whilst helping the District to minimise reliance on private cars in the future. The town centre will be a healthy place for everyone, contributing to the well-being of the community and the protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment.

## Strategic Objectives

- 4.4. The following strategic objectives have been defined to help assess whether proposals and investment will help to deliver the vision. HTCMTF will have supported and created:



**A strong retail and leisure offer** which enhances the attractiveness of Harlow as a sub-regional shopping centre and remains competitive amongst other retail and leisure centres.



**A unified town centre** which re-balances the northern and southern areas.



A town centre which supports **wider economic growth** across the District providing shops, services and homes, and a diverse mix of commercial activity.



**A high quality public realm** and environment with active and engaging public spaces which supports health and wellbeing.



An **inclusive and accessible destination** with excellent transport links capitalising on Harlow's strategic location that enable and encourage local trips by sustainable and active travel modes.



**A strong cultural offer** which is supported by residents and visitors to the town centre.



**First class community facilities** which supports the population.



**A cohesive place**, supported by uses and design proposals which complement one another and work towards the overarching vision.



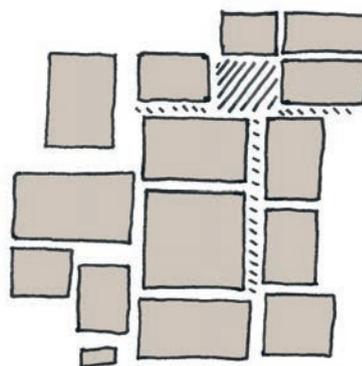
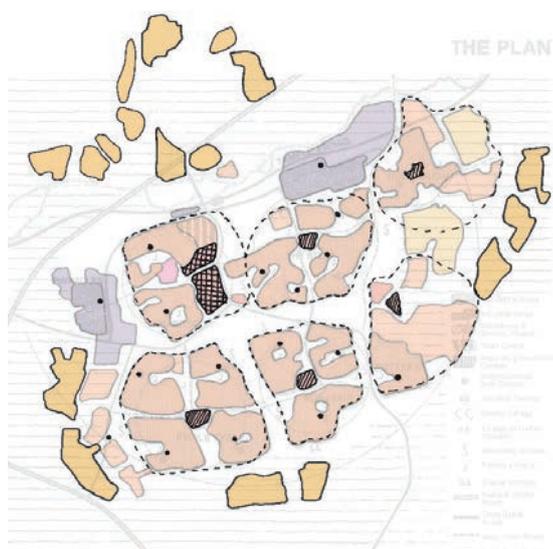
**A commitment to retain the ethos** and respond positively to the key elements of Sir Frederick Gibberd's Masterplan including the plan aesthetic, public art, heritage assets, positive architectural characteristics and continual evolution.



A town centre that is **increasingly resilient** to variable conditions resulting from **climate change** with environmental sustainability embedded throughout, as well as economic and social trends associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Spatial principles (continued)

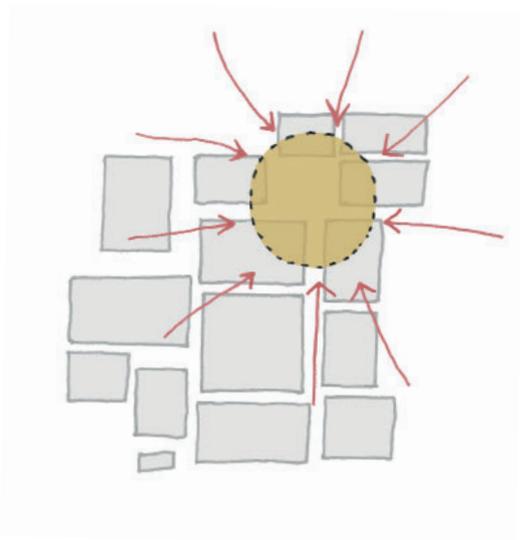


### 3 Garden Town

- 4.12. The future role and prosperity of the town centre is intertwined with the success of the Garden Town and wider movement proposals e.g. strengthening the links from the town centre to Harlow Town train station.
- 4.13. The town centre has the potential to be reinvigorated as a vibrant place set in the heart of the Garden Town and acting as the community and commercial hub that brings together the existing town and new villages.
- 4.14. Future developments in the town centre can play a key role in future-proofing multi-modal movement interventions, ensuring the town centre is accessible to the existing town and new Garden Town villages, whilst leveraging investment and embedding place-making aspirations.

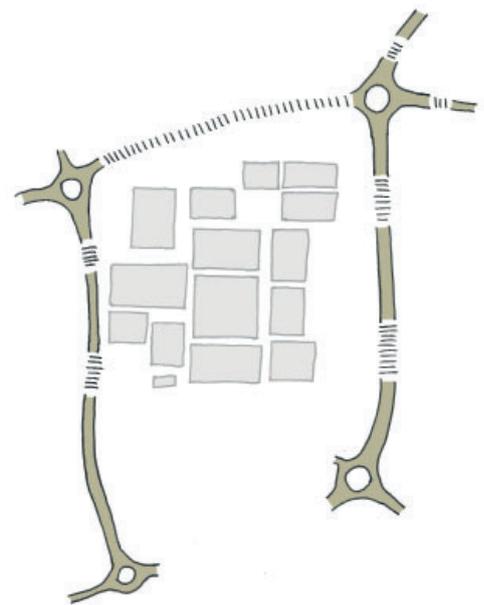
### 4 Respond to the urban structure

- 4.15. Running through the town centre is an original 'bone structure' (centred around Broad Walk, East Gate and Stone Cross), with a network of streets and spaces that follow the plan aesthetic.
- 4.16. The Masterplan 'repairs' the spatial conditions which are not currently working and supports spatial conditions which are currently successful (and should be retained and enhanced) or have potential to be so.



## 5 Rebalance the focus of gravity northwards

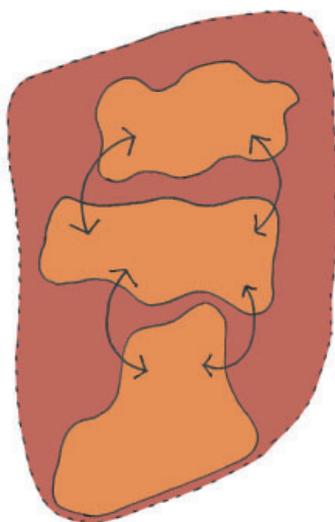
- 4.17. Accommodating uses which can help to shift the centre of gravity within the town centre northwards again.
- 4.18. This does not mean to make the southern and the western areas less active, but to bring the Stone Cross area up to this level with opportunities for a hospitality focus, supporting a balance across the town centre.



## 6 Transform the inner ring road into Boulevards

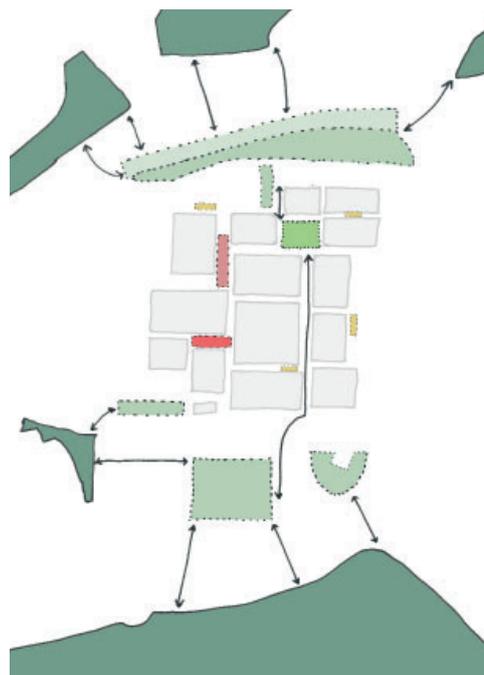
- 4.19. Changing the character of the inner ring road to a fronted boulevard on First Avenue with connections across to shift away from a dual carriageway and reversing the inward facing landscape that currently exists.
- 4.20. Adding at-grade pedestrian crossings increasing accessibility and priority given to pedestrians / cyclists to encourage sustainable and active travel to and from the town centre, whilst bringing the town centre closer to its adjacent neighbourhoods.

## Spatial principles (continued)



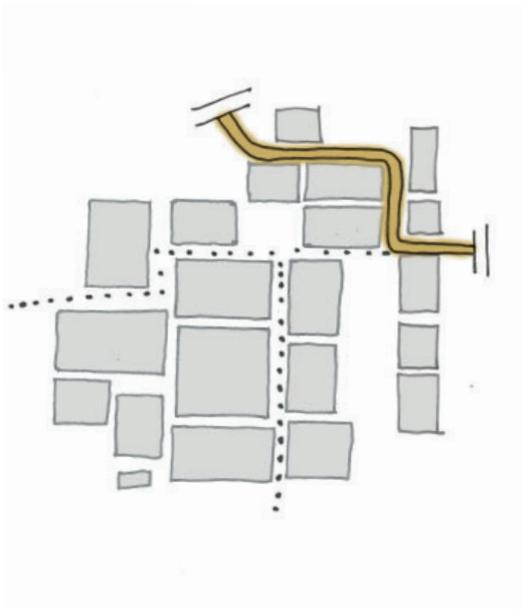
### 7 Establish a unified centre

- 4.21. Helping the town to operate as one centre rather than three separate areas.
- 4.22. At present, The Water Gardens and Harvey Centre act successfully as insular areas but have very different characters and do not have a relationship with one another or with the northern areas.



### 8 Connect to and draw in green spaces

- 4.23. A strategic area of green space along the northern edge of the town centre reflecting Gibberd's original Masterplan principles.
- 4.24. Stronger connections to the green spaces that surround the Town Centre, as intended in the original plan and which will facilitate and promote better sustainable accessibility to and from the town centre.



## 9 Improving access

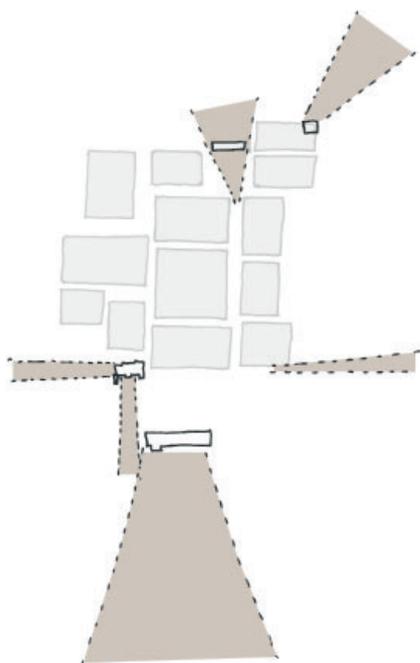
- 4.25. Improving public transport and creating first class transport connections whether it be on foot, cycle or vehicle to provide efficient, comfortable and a safe environment at all times of the day throughout the town centre.
- 4.26. Working with partners to connect the town centre to the proposed HGGT Sustainable Transport Corridors, bringing back multi-modal public transport through the town centre to raise the profile of the Post Office Road, Stone Cross and East Gate areas.



## 10 Establish street frontages and attractive approaches

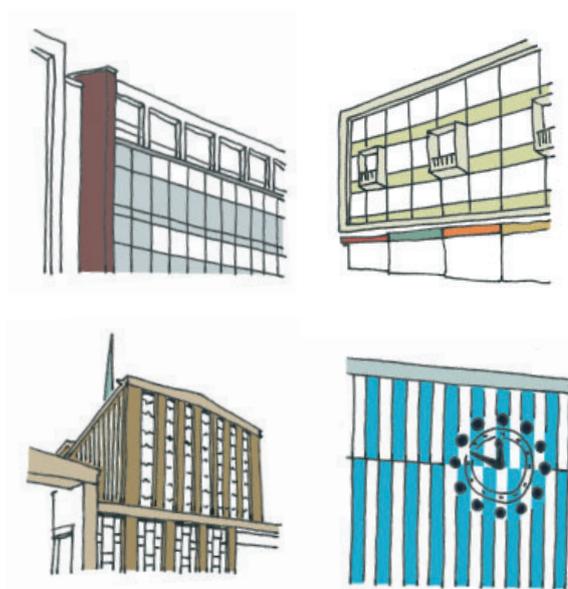
- 4.27. Addressing servicing approaches to the town centre, where possible, so that people are welcomed to Harlow Town Centre as they approach.

## Spatial principles (continued)



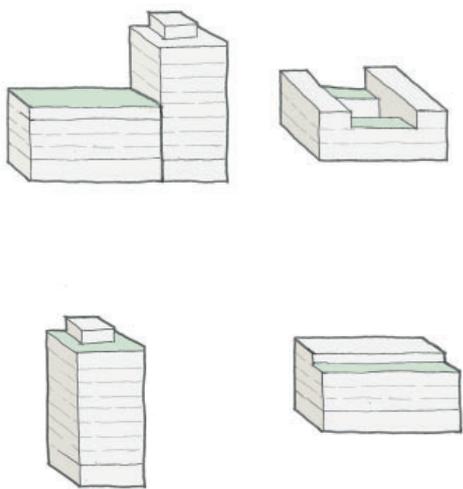
### 9 Frame views of key buildings and spaces

- 4.28. Improving the visibility of the Town Centre from the surrounding roads and framing views of key buildings such as the church to improve their setting.



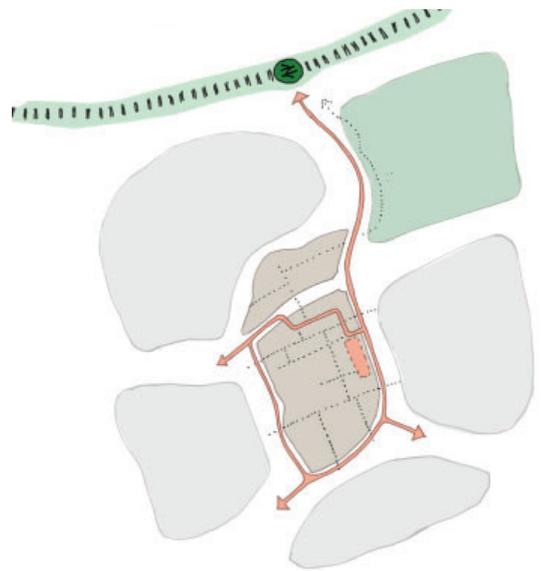
### 10 Celebrate and reflect design heritage

- 4.29. Celebrating and building upon the unique design heritage of Harlow and using this to inform future development proposals, whilst seeking opportunities to bring forward contemporary and innovative designs.
- 4.30. Exploring opportunities to take design cues for future development in the town centre considering regard to scale, massing, colours, materials and detailing of the original fabric, and the integration of public art and sculpture.
- 4.31. Identifying buildings and qualities of value which could be transformed through refurbishment, and retro-fit, to avoid the embodied carbon impacts associated with a new build.



## 11 Establish appropriate approach to building heights

- 4.32. Harlow town centre is experiencing significant development pressure, with a number of recent consents and emerging schemes incorporating proposals for taller buildings.
- 4.33. Although the Council is supportive of growth and transformation in the town centre, it is important that new buildings reflect the principles which characterise the form, geometry and typical locations of taller elements in the town centre, creating a context for high quality contemporary design and exemplary environmental performance.



## 12 Strengthen the connection to the railway station

- 4.34. The distance between the town centre and the railway station is a barrier to the performance of the town centre.
- 4.35. It is vital that proposals for the Sustainable Transport Corridor, and other associated local improvements to routes maximise the quality of the connection between the town centre and the railway station.



# 5 MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

## Overview

- 5.1. Chapter 5 sets out guidance and provides supporting illustrative material at the town centre scale across a series of key thematic topics and frameworks. These can be summarised as follows:
  - Overarching guidance
  - Movement
  - Block structure
  - Public realm
  - Land uses
  - Indicative masterplan
- 5.2. Further detail on public realm and building heights is set out in chapters 6 and 7 respectively. Chapter 8 then zooms into each Opportunity Area to provide specific guidance and illustrative material for each area.

Figure 12 Looking towards Terminus House

## OVERARCHING GUIDANCE

### Introduction

- 5.3. Harlow Town Centre is at an important juncture in the process of regeneration and place-making.
- 5.4. The future role and prosperity of the town centre is intertwined with the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) and wider movement proposals. The town centre has the potential to be reinvigorated as a vibrant place set in the heart of the Garden Town. Through the Garden Town proposals and the forthcoming arrival of Public Health England's science campus and headquarters in the district, there is a genuine prospect that the town centre could harness the benefits of major residential growth in the immediate vicinity of Harlow (16,100 new homes to 2033 with a further 7,000 at Gilston after 2033).
- 5.5. In this context, HTC MF encourages a comprehensive, long-term view, establishing a context for positive incremental change. A joined-up approach to growth, regeneration and placemaking is required to ensure the right conditions are created for a successful, sustainable and high-quality town centre environment.

### Town Centre Guidance Note 1: Growth and Regeneration

Development proposals will be assessed against the adopted planning policy framework including the HLDP. Guidance in the HTC MF will also be considered as a material consideration in tandem with adopted planning policies and alongside the Town Plan.

Development proposals for the town centre should demonstrate how they meet the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Spatial Principles set out in Chapter 4 and be in accordance with the relevant guidance in chapters 5 to 8 of the HTC MF.

Development proposals should avoid piecemeal development and instead adopt comprehensive approaches to growth, regeneration and placemaking which create the conditions for a successful and sustainable town centre with an emphasis on high quality streets, spaces and buildings.

As set out in HLDP (para 19.4), the Council will consider, if necessary, a more active intervention to deliver development sites and regeneration opportunities. This includes the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders if appropriate.

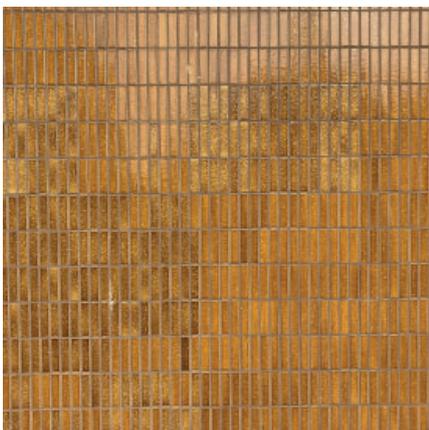
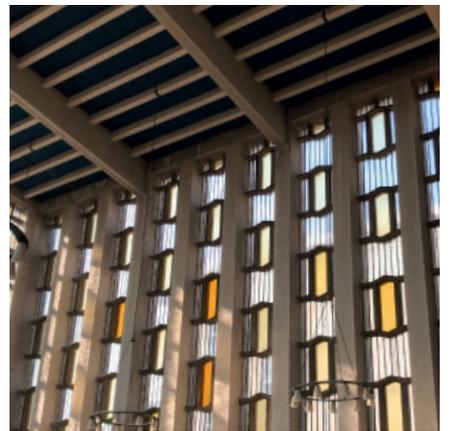


Figure 13 Harlow Town Centre

## MOVEMENT

### Introduction

- 5.6. The Council, working in partnership with Essex County Council has identified a clear priority of promoting a more sustainable pattern of movement in the town centre through a series of key moves and policy principles as part of an overall ambition that 60% of all journeys within the new Garden Town Communities, and 50% of all journeys across existing areas of Harlow, will be undertaken by sustainable (including active) modes.
- 5.7. The HTCMTF aims to help realise these strategic modal shift targets by promoting sustainable transport modes (see HLDP, Policy IN1) in and around the town centre, as well as the Garden Town and wider Harlow District. The provision of sustainable transport modes has a number of benefits, including:
- Better linkages to and from the town centre to the new Garden Town and wider Harlow District.
  - Reduction in the number of vehicles on the road thereby easing congestion levels and improving the effects of climate change by reducing carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions.
  - Cycling and walking to services can improve public health, physical activity, and quality of life.
- 5.8. The plans in the HTCMTF are intended to be indicative. From a movement and public realm perspective, it is important to highlight they explore key concepts. The detailed design of key streets and spaces including the boulevard streets, roundabouts and Sustainable Transport Hub will evolve as these projects are taken forward.

### Town Centre Guidance Note 2A: Walking

In order to encourage more walking in and around the town centre, development proposals should incorporate the following principles:

- Integration of walking routes beyond the town centre, drawing Green Wedges / Fingers and neighbourhood desire lines across the collar roads and across the town centre supported by a coherent set of public realm proposals and greening where possible;
- Safe, secure conditions for walking, with good over-looking providing natural surveillance;
- Surface-level crossings and dedicated footways as part of boulevard streets;
- Improvements to underpasses where these are retained;
- Improved walking connections, wayfinding and legibility from Harlow Town Railway Station to the town centre, including the scenic route via Harlow Town Park;
- Better integration of walking routes between Broad Walk and Velizy Avenue via the Sustainable Transport Hub;
- Strengthening of east-west connections to Harlow College, University Centre and the Leisure Zone; and
- Clearer views and improvements to legibility and routes at the junction of Cross Street, Broad Walk, the Water Gardens and the link between Water Gardens and the Green Wedge to the south.



**Figure 14** Plan showing key pedestrian routes Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### Town Centre Guidance Note 2B: Cycling

Cycling should be encouraged through the following principles:

- Step-change in the quality of cycling provision between the railway station, the town centre and beyond to Public Health England and other employment locations;
- Excellent and accessible cycling routes along the four boulevard routes which define the current boundaries of the town centre;
- Cycle provision east-west from Velizy Avenue to Haydens Road via East Gate and West Gate;
- Potential provision of a further east-west cycle connection via Crown Gate and Cross Street and St Paul's Church.
- Retention of a cycle connection along Terminus Street as part of any future enhancement of the Sustainable Transport Hub.
- Dedicated cycle connections across the boulevard streets, ideally as surface crossings, with potential for existing crossings to be re-purposed as cycle-only routes.
- Provision of cycle hub parking in strategic "interceptor" locations, adjacent to key spaces and streets, and near onward connections north-south or east-west, particularly the Sustainable Transport Hub.
- Provision of other incidental cycle parking spaces adjacent to key destinations in the town centre.
- Provision of high levels of private cycle parking for residential and non-residential uses in the HTCAAP area, making positive use of ground floor and internal courtyard / podium spaces as appropriate.
- Potential to encourage cycling excellence in Harlow town centre with an integrated cycle cafe and community facility as part of hubs including the bus interchange area.

### Town Centre Guidance Note 2C: Access for People with Disabilities

The Town Centre should be accessible for people with disabilities. This includes the provision of accessible commercial units and residential dwellings, as well as an accessible public realm.

Development proposals must be in accordance with HLDP Policy H5 and associated Building Control standards.

The provision of specialist housing developments will be supported on appropriate sites that will meet the needs of older people and other groups.



**Figure 15** Town Centre Cycling Framework Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### **Town Centre Guidance Note 2D: Public transport**

The Sustainable Transport Hub will be retained and developed to become a major transport hub for the town and form an important transport interchange for the Sustainable Transport Corridor. Legibility and links to the Sustainable Transport Hub will be protected and enhanced.

Sustainable Transport Corridors (STC) will support active travel in Harlow through a high-quality network of cycle and walking 'Super Greenways' that run along these. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will run on routes that connect key destinations including Harlow Town Railway Station, the HGGT settlements, key commercial locations and other locations including schools and local centres.

The east-west STC will connect from Velizy Avenue to Fourth Avenue via the Post Office road area, forming an interchange with the existing Sustainable Transport Hub to the north

of Terminus Street.

Changes to bus routing across the town centre must demonstrate how bus movements are to be balanced with aspirations for place-making to facilitate wider pedestrian and cycling benefits.

The Council will work closely with Essex County Council to future-proof the potential routing of the BRT and local services through and around the town centre. Public transport routes could follow any one of the boulevard routes which define the four sides of the town centre. The detailed approach and management of movement should be considered holistically, with a balanced approach to establish the character and emphasis on walking / cycling.



**Figure 16** Town Centre Public Transport Framework Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### Town Centre Guidance Note 2E: Parking and servicing

#### Car Parking

Vehicle Parking Standards for the town centre will be determined using Local Plan Policy IN3. The Council will work in partnership with the Garden Town to consider any specific standards. Overall, a low level of parking provision will be supported in new residential developments with appropriate justification on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

Proposals for residential uses should consider existing and future public transport accessibility and consider a clear parking strategy which considers the overall level of allocated and unallocated spaces in relation to the type and size of dwellings proposed. Proposals should consider the identification of unallocated parking provision within the consolidated town centre car parks, with the allocated provision forming part of the developments themselves. Alternatively, some unallocated parking could be provided as on-street parking within the new town centre streets. Early engagement with Harlow District Council will be encouraged in relation to this issue.

Through proactive use of Travel Planning and an integrated approach to the enhancement of public transport, the Council will seek to encourage a low level of dedicated parking for new commercial workspace in the town centre, potentially car-free.

The consolidation of surface car parking as decked structures or multi-storey car parks will be supported where they make more efficient use of town centre sites. These opportunities are set out in the relevant Opportunity Area policies.

#### Cycle and Powered two Wheelers Parking

Dedicated parking spaces for bicycles and, where appropriate, mobility aids (such as mobility scooters) and powered two wheelers should be considered as part of new developments.

Cycle parking should be more convenient than car parking and new developments should offer appropriate locations to park cycles including spaces outside the development site where appropriate. Development proposals should also provide supplementary changing and charging facilities.

#### Electric Charging Points

In new car parking areas, such as supermarket parking courts or multi-storey car parks, infrastructure should be put in place (via underground ducting) to allow for connection to electric charging points.

The level of provision of electric charging points should be appropriate to the development size and type, its level of parking provision and its context and location.

#### Servicing Arrangements

HLDP Policy IN2 should be considered. Servicing for retail areas should be via the rear of the units and must not have a detrimental impact on pedestrianised areas in the town centre. Servicing arrangements should protect gateway locations, the legibility for pedestrians entering the town centre and enhance the public realm and appearance of these areas. Proposals should demonstrate an integrated approach to the deliveries and collection points (including domestic residential deliveries), with potential to identify consolidated facilities at accessible points adjacent to hubs / key town centre gateways.



**Figure 17** Street typologies framework map - see chapter 6 for guidance.  
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## URBAN DESIGN

### Design

- 5.9. Despite its relatively recent evolution, Harlow Town Centre has an important story to tell in terms of its historic development, heritage, public realm and urban design. The town centre retains its authentic plan aesthetic, as well as a number of individual buildings and sculptures that date back to Gibberd's original masterplan. Opportunities exist to retain and enhance this grain and heritage through the HTCMEF.
- 5.10. The original plan aesthetic consists of a formal composition to the arrangement of the streets and spaces in Harlow. Buildings and public spaces have been laid out on an irregular rectilinear grid with aligning frontages and clearly defined corners. The ring road has contributed to a high degree of separation between residential neighbourhoods, the town centre and surrounding open spaces, including the Green Wedge to the south. In addition, a lack of clear hierarchy and absence of a typical structure reduces the overall legibility of the town centre from surrounding neighbourhoods. However, several central landmark buildings characterise views from the rural hinterland and act as a marker for the town centre.

### Town Centre Guidance Note 3A: Urban design principles

Development proposals should respond to HLDP Policy PL1, and consider the following principles:

**Plan aesthetic:** The retention and enhancement of the original “Plan aesthetic” of Harlow Town Centre. The layout of blocks, streets and spaces should have a formal composition, reflecting the prevailing irregular rectilinear grid. This should be strengthened by aligning frontages and retaining existing, and establishing new, clearly defined corners.

**Integration:** Address the sense of severance and separation between the town centre and the surrounding neighbourhoods through the introduction of a greater mix of uses, and the transformation of the collar roads into a more welcoming and accessible series of boulevards.

**Edges and thresholds:** Key edges of the town centre are poorly defined by weak parking or service areas and backs of buildings. These poorly defined spaces have a negative impact on the perception and identity of the town centre. As part of the creation of boulevards, proposals should seek to resolve and repair these thresholds to create safer and more legible views and points of arrival.

**Mix of uses:** A richer mix of uses in the town centre will be supported as a counter to the original zoning strategy. The blurring of boundaries, particularly through the growth of town centre living on upper floors, will play an important role in enhancing the vitality and resilience of the town centre. Flexibility in block design and dimensions will be encouraged to establish greatest flexibility for alternative future uses.

**Hierarchy of spaces:** As set out in chapter 8 (Opportunity Area guidance), parts of the town centre suffer from a confusing arrangement of

building frontages and spaces. The open grid of streets and spaces has resulted in areas where service areas or building backs open onto public spaces or thoroughfares. Opportunities for comprehensive redevelopment, the completion of urban blocks and public realm interventions to establish greater clarity or activity will be supported.

**Enclosure:** The general height of buildings in the town centre is two or three storeys. The Council will encourage denser forms of development across the town centre. Key streets and spaces could accommodate a general / shoulder height of four to six storeys. This will create a greater sense of enclosure, overlooking and natural surveillance of key streets and spaces. Key marker locations might also be appropriate for taller elements as set out in chapter 7 including a clear rationale and a high standard of design.

**Views:** Proposals should respond positively to the topography of the town centre and the surrounding landscape. Further guidance relating to building heights is set out in chapter 7.

**Sustainable design:** Development proposals must consider HLDP Policy PL3 in relation to the realisation of high standards of sustainable design, construction and energy usage. Reference should also be made to other sustainability guidance including the HGGT Sustainability Checklist, HGGT Vision and Design Guide, and the adopted Harlow Design Guide SPD. Opportunities for brown, biodiverse and/or green roofs and walls, and Modern Methods of Construction should be considered.

The Council will be proactive in encouraging schemes to engage in a process of design review with the HGGT Quality Review Panel.

**Public realm**

- 5.11. Within the town centre, many public spaces lack any sense of night-time or leisure uses which contributes to a significant lack of life and vibrancy in the evenings and, therefore, there are opportunities to improve the night-time economy. Similarly, low quality arrival points, poor legibility and the absence of frontages on some pedestrian routes has a very negative impact on the experience of being in the town centre.
- 5.12. There is a varying quality of public realm across the main shopping areas. The existence of street clutter, poor quality street furniture and poor paving create a negative perception. Service yards and associated access severs many central areas of public realm.
- 5.13. The HTCMTF therefore seeks to improve the quality of the public realm through a series of principles and specific set of projects to ensure that the town centre remains an attractive place to invest in and visit both in the day and at night. This also includes the protection of important buildings and assets in the town centre and the provision of public art.

**Landscape and green infrastructure**

- 5.14. As a planned New Town, Harlow benefits from networks of open spaces which provide for a range of leisure activities, strengthens the character and appearance of the town and contributes to the biodiversity of the district.
- 5.15. Feedback from discussions with the community has shown support for quality green space in the town centre and for opportunities to connect green infrastructure. Whilst natural landscape and green space can be easily reached by foot from the town centre, including the Town Park, the centre itself lacks planting and open spaces. Mature tree planting is often limited to car parking areas rather than public spaces or streets. There is a need for a concerted programme of tree planting and "greening" across the town centre. This intervention will enhance the experience of arriving, passing through or spending time in the town centre.
- 5.16. Town centre Guidance Note 3B provides overarching guidance for public realm and green infrastructure which is expanded in chapter 6.

### Town Centre Guidance Note 3B: Public realm principles

Development proposals will be supported where they accord with the Public Realm Strategy in Chapter 6 and protect and enhance the overall public realm of the town centre through for example improved landscaping, street furniture, lighting and surface treatments.

Proposals should consider the following overarching public realm principles:

**Setting the tone:** Avoid street clutter, poor quality street furniture and paving to improve the overall perception of the town centre

**Work with and enhance the New Town:** Embrace a simple, rational approach which is consistent with the overall plan aesthetic and the Modernist character of the original buildings in the town centre. Negative conditions including poor legibility, the confused arrangement of fronts and backs and exposed services will be improved.

**Public art and sculpture:** Harlow benefits from a unique collection of public art and sculpture, much of which is of national or international significance. The Council will work with Harlow Art Trust to protect and enhance the collection. This might entail refurbishment or repair of existing works and the careful curation of the collection – either retaining pieces in situ or establishing appropriate new locations. There might also be opportunities to commission new sculpture if this is of the highest quality and consistent with the typical ethos of the existing sculptures in the town. See HLDP Policy L3.

**Playful town centre and performance:** Opportunities to create the setting for informal,

playful activities which assist in creating safe and successful spaces will be encouraged. This could include sculpture as playable pieces. Designated sites for busking and performance will also be encouraged.

**Safety and security:** Residents and visitors should feel safe, secure and comfortable in the town centre. Proposals should meet “Secure by Design” guidance to achieve this.

The Council will be proactive in encouraging schemes to engage in a process of design review with the HGGT Quality Review Panel.

**Green infrastructure**  
Development proposals should seek to provide or contribute towards the provision of Green Infrastructure in the town centre and ensure a net gain in biodiversity as set out in HLDP Policy PL9.

Development proposals should not have a detrimental impact upon the green spaces identified in the Opportunity Area policies. Alternative green space may be considered appropriate subject to their location, quality of provision and quantity.

A strategic area of green space connecting Rectory Wood in the north to Fourth Avenue has been identified to establish a stronger relationship between the town centre and surrounding green spaces.

Proposals should seek to integrate proposals for Green Infrastructure including Sustainable Urban Drainage and ecology at an early stage in the design process.

**Heritage**

- 5.17. St Paul's Church is the only listed building in the town centre, however, several buildings have distinctive historic character, including a number from the original Gibberd masterplan which are still present. Some of these examples include features which are specific to New Town architecture and Harlow. The Water Gardens are Grade II listed, built between 1960 and 1963 to the designs of Gibberd, and along with their setting, contribute positively to the heritage of Harlow Town Centre. A number of sculptures also have a special historic character and identity which are an important part of the fabric. Some of these sculptures are listed in recognition of their significance.

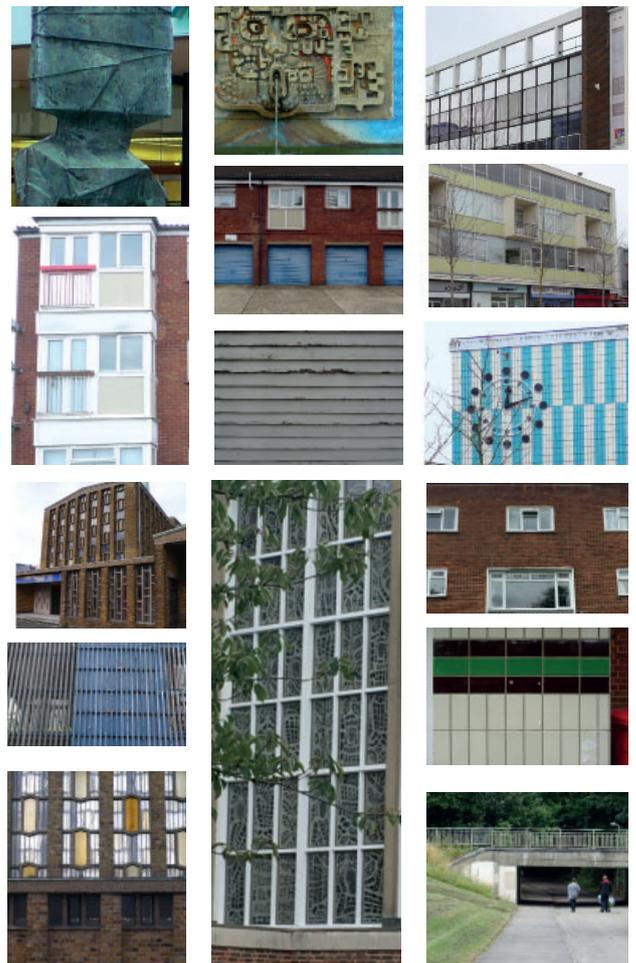


Figure 18 Features and materials specific to Harlow Town Centre

### Town Centre Guidance Note 3C: Heritage principles

Buildings, structures and sculptures which have a distinctive historic character, including a number from the original Gibberd Masterplan will be protected and should be interwoven into new development proposals where appropriate.

The Council will actively encourage landowners and developers to consider options to work creatively with existing buildings, structures and sculptures where they contribute to the townscape character and identity of the town centre. Proposals relating to non-designated assets should refer to HLDP Policy PL12.

Buildings which have a distinctive historic character include:

- Market House
- Adams House
- 12 East Gate
- St Pauls Harlow (Grade II Listed)

Harlow has a unique collection of modern sculptures of national importance, with artworks by celebrated sculptors such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth located within the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. Through redevelopment

opportunities and national funding sources, the HTCMF presents an opportunity to guide investment to maintain and expand the town's collection. This could be through the creation of new pieces, the refurbishment of existing pieces, or the relocation of existing pieces.

Development proposals should consider cues from the features and typical palette of materials of Harlow's original New Town character to inform its building design. Buildings have colour accents and use is made of tile and other materials to complement brick, stone and concrete.

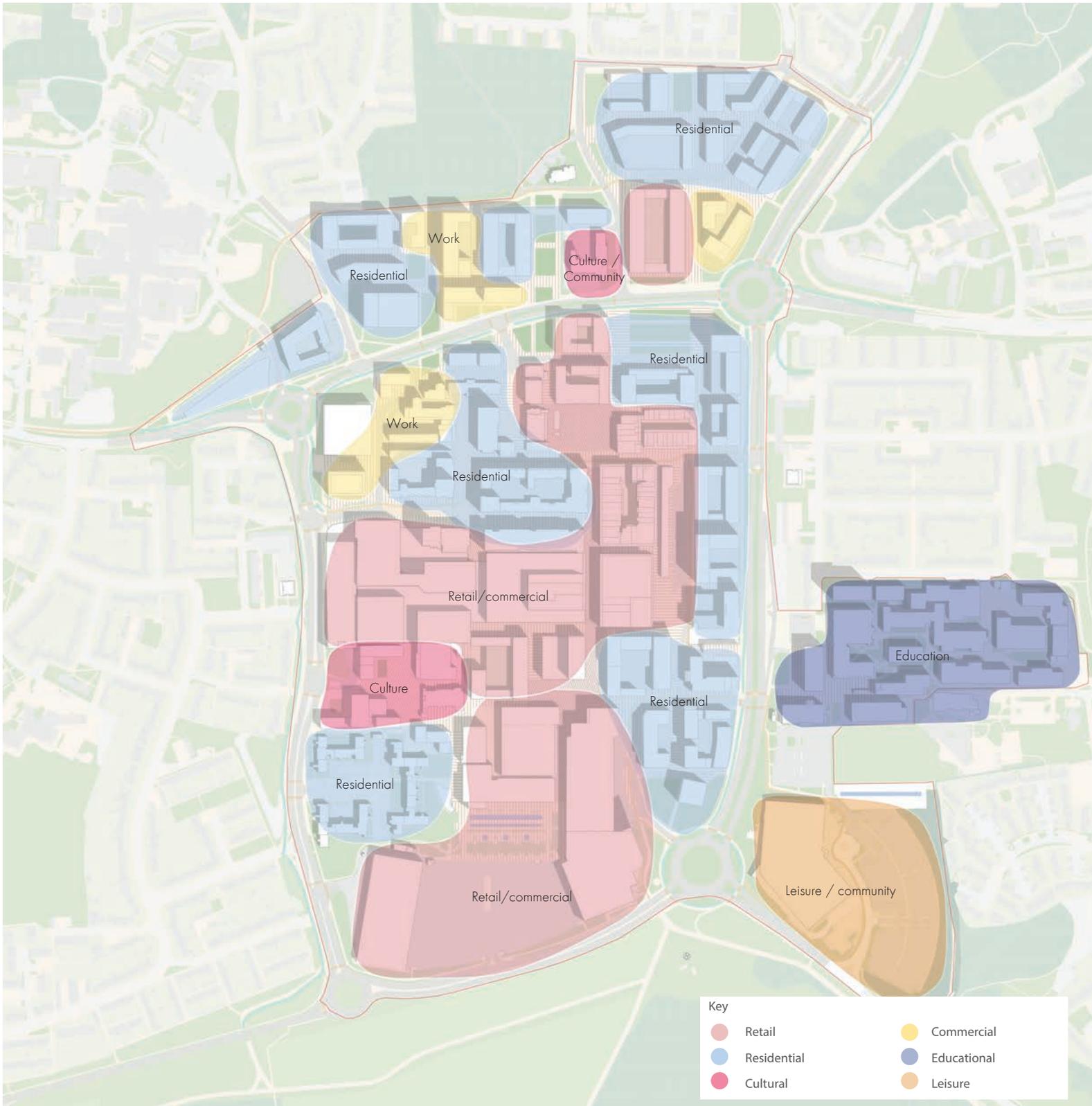
Features to consider include the vertical articulation of façades, large protrusions on façades and rhythm through the repetition of geometric shapes. The glazing on many buildings is encased by slender window frames which give a delicate distinctiveness to the façades and is fundamental to Harlow's character.

Reference to historic characteristics should be considered to positively inspire high quality, innovative and contemporary design, alongside high standards of environmental performance, and opportunities to balance embodied carbon associated with new construction.

## LAND USES

### Overview

- 5.18. The HTC MF supports a degree of flexibility around the precise mix of town centre land uses. Proposals should respond positively to guidance below, and the site-specific guidance in Chapter 8. Taken in combination, these set out the broad character and mix which is considered appropriate for different parts of the town centre.
- 5.19. These should not be treated as prescriptive, and the Council will require proposals to provide a clear narrative and justification for the proposed mix of uses in relation to property market demand and opportunities on a site-by-site, and phase-by-phase basis. Where appropriate, this could be informed by the preparation of a development brief.
- 5.20. Figure 19 illustrates the future indicative predominant ground floor uses across the town centre, with the illustrative masterplan framework as the basis of the drawing. The approach assumes a spine of active town centre uses from Water Gardens, via the Harvey Centre, Broad Walk, Stone Cross towards the Sainsburys area north of Fourth Avenue. This should include a focus on retail activity, but will also comprise hospitality uses including leisure, food and drink and community uses.
- 5.21. The areas identified for workspace are more speculative, and have greater flexibility for a mix of uses. Upper floors are likely to feature residential floorspace primarily, although workspace and other uses might be appropriate where they contribute to the vitality of the town centre.



**Figure 19** Plan showing proposed predominant future ground floor land uses  
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- Retail**
- 5.22. Population growth anticipated through the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will boost investment and stimulate regeneration in the town centre which will support the case for new retailers to locate to Harlow. The town centre will continue to be the principal focus for retail activity in the District.

#### **Town Centre Guidance Note 4A: Retail growth and flexibility**

Development proposals will be assessed against the adopted planning policies relating to retail provision in Harlow Town Centre. In this context, the Council will seek to deliver the majority of retail floorspace needs identified in HLDP Policy RS2 within the town centre. The Retail Hierarchy in HLDP Policy RS1 identifies the town centre as the best location for retail facilities for the district and the sub-region.

To ensure development proposals contribute towards a thriving and sustainable town centre, applicants must consider any new retail evidence and changes in economic circumstances and their associated impact on retail floorspace needs. The Council will seek to maximise retail floorspace within core retail areas (see RC1 and RC2 - see chapter 8) and respond to the existing retail frontage designations (see figure 20 which should be read in conjunction with HLDP Policy PR6).

Development proposals for new retail, commercial or leisure uses in the town centre should be responsive and demonstrate adaptability to shifting market trends and dynamics. Units should be capable of amalgamation and, sub-division, and the provision of mezzanine floors will be supported.



**Figure 20** Town Centre Existing primary and secondary frontages as set out in HLDP (2020) Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

**Employment**

- 5.23. The supply of office space has been eroded by Permitted Development conversions of office space to residential and the Council has adopted Article 4 Directions which remove the right to Permitted Development at sites in the town centre.
- 5.24. The relocation of Public Health England to Harlow and the progression of Harlow Innovation Park as part of the Enterprise Zone will bring significant benefits to the town centre alongside improved connections from the town centre to nearby employment sites.
- 5.25. There is potential to establish a more contemporary workspace offer in the town centre. The development of flexible workspace in the town centre could serve smaller businesses and micro firms and cater for a different market compared with existing supply across the District. Employment space in the town centre will bring more daytime footfall and balance of uses.

**Town Centre Guidance Note 4B:  
Employment**

High quality office and commercial floorspace which includes a range of units from large operators to single tenants, to more flexible co-working spaces, will be supported in the town centre. B2 General Industrial and B8 Storage/Distribution will not be accepted in the town centre.

Although residential development is likely to form the predominant upper floor use on many sites, workspace will be an acceptable alternative. Proposals will be encouraged to respond positively to the potential location of workspace.

The Council will be proactive in seeking to encourage affordable, start-up space for businesses in the town centre. Delivering flexible workspace in the town centre will require important pre-requisites, for example improvements to the quality of the town centre's environment and its amenity and leisure facilities. A careful approach to phasing will be necessary, having regard to factors such as potential occupier demand and avoiding market saturation. Civic office space will also be encouraged in the town centre.

### **Town centre housing**

- 5.26. The Council will encourage the introduction of new residential accommodation in the town centre.
- 5.27. Residential development must accord with HLDP policies and the nationally described space standards which form part of the Optional Technical Housing Standards set out in national planning guidance. In residential developments of more than 10 dwellings it will be expected that at least 30% affordable housing is provided in accordance with HLDP Policy H8.
- 5.28. New homes in the town centre should be of a high design quality in relation to internal space standards, environmental and sustainability performance and architectural character / materiality. Provision of flexible, accessible internal layouts will be encouraged as far as possible.
- 5.29. The Council will seek to maintain a strong retail core, but will take a flexible view of uses and activities on the ground floor in areas outside the designated retail frontages. A rich mix of uses will be embraced including retail and leisure, workspace, civic, cultural and community uses. The Council will also take a positive view of meanwhile (short-term) or temporary activities to animate key spaces or ground floors. Development proposals should be coordinated with public realm improvements which will set the tone for investment and high-quality development.

### **Town Centre Guidance Note 4C: Housing**

The Council will support the introduction of new residential accommodation in the town centre.

Residential development must accord with HLDP policies and the nationally described space standards which form part of the Optional Technical Housing Standards set out in national planning guidance. In residential developments of more than 10 dwellings it will be expected that at least 30% affordable housing is provided in accordance with HLDP Policy H8. Dual aspect units should be maximised and where dual aspect cannot be achieved national space standards should be significantly exceeded.

New homes in the town centre should be of a high design quality in relation to internal space standards, environmental and sustainability performance and architectural character / materiality. Provision of flexible, accessible internal layouts will be encouraged as far as possible. Proposals should follow the guidance on room sizes as set out in the Addendum to Harlow Design Guide.

The Council will take a flexible view of uses and activities on the ground floor in areas outside the designated retail frontages. A rich mix of uses will be embraced including retail and leisure, workspace, civic, cultural and community uses. The Council will also take a positive view of meanwhile (short-term) or temporary activities to animate key spaces or ground floors. Development proposals should be coordinated with public realm improvements which will set the tone for investment and high-quality development.

### **Civic, Community and Leisure**

- 5.30. There is a strong tradition of civic, community and leisure activities in Harlow Town Centre which continue to have a positive impact on the town centre offer, creating diversity and bringing a different audience to a town centre location.
- 5.31. Harlow Leisurezone is a very popular leisure centre and a significant non-retail attraction at the southern end of the town centre. Harlow Playhouse is a popular, well-used venue which will benefit from emerging funding proposals for the adjacent public spaces and development opportunities.
- 5.32. There is also limited creative business space at the Gibberd Gallery and Gatehouse Arts. These are both centrally located in the town centre but could have a far greater profile.

### **Town Centre Guidance Note 4D: Civic, Community, Leisure**

The Council will work with public sector partners to establish opportunities for the co-location of civic uses where this would allow the wider release of sites for development to support an overall regeneration strategy for key parts of the town centre, and the enhancement of civic facilities.

Civic and leisure facilities should play a key role in the activation and animation of ground floors and public spaces, potentially as temporary or meanwhile activities. For example, community, co-working, evening economy and cultural facilities might form part of an ensemble of ground / first floor uses clustered around key public spaces.

The existing town centre theatre will be protected and supported by joined-up initiatives to enhance the wider Playhouse Quarter.

The Leisurezone will be protected for sport and leisure uses which could include the enhancement of existing or incorporation of additional leisure activities (for example, a climbing wall).

Community and voluntary sector uses in the town centre should be retained and opportunities sought to improve their position and setting. Proposals for new community uses in the Town Centre will be supported. The loss of civic, community and leisure facilities will be determined in accordance with HLDP Policy L2.

The Council will work closely with partners including Harlow Art Trust to explore potential for new facilities in the town centre including gallery space and music venues.

### **Education**

- 5.33. Harlow Town Centre has clear strengths in education including Harlow College, BMAT STEM Academy and Harlow Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering Centre. These assets are poorly integrated and feel are physically separated from the core of the town centre by Velizy Avenue. Integrating existing education facilities into the town centre as well as identifying other locations and buildings across the town centre for educational facilities (e.g. a new library) is a key priority of the HTC MF.

### **Town Centre Guidance Note 4E: Education**

The Council will require development proposals to contribute to enhanced education provision in the District in line with the Council's adopted planning policy in the HLDP (see HLDP Policy IN6 and supporting implementation text). Early discussions with Essex County Council should be undertaken.

Opportunities to enhance provision and facilities at Harlow College will be supported, including the potential for new buildings and improved accessibility to the town centre. Partnership working will be supported, including opportunities for joint delivery of new facilities.

## INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

- 5.34. The adjacent drawing provides an illustrative vision for how the masterplan framework could come forward.
- 5.35. The framework establishes a notional block structure and approach to indicative buildings and plots which responds positively to the various layers of guidance in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. The indicative masterplan is illustrated in figure 21.
- 5.36. It is important to note that there is flexibility for individual schemes to adopt variations to this approach, where circumstances dictate an alternative which is demonstrated to be appropriate in relation to the adopted HLDP, and the guiding principles in the HTCMF.
- 5.37. Figures 22 and 23 illustrate the 3D context for the masterplan proposals. Figure 22 depicts the existing buildings and the future context associated with consented schemes. Figure 23 adds the indicative buildings proposed in the illustrative masterplan.



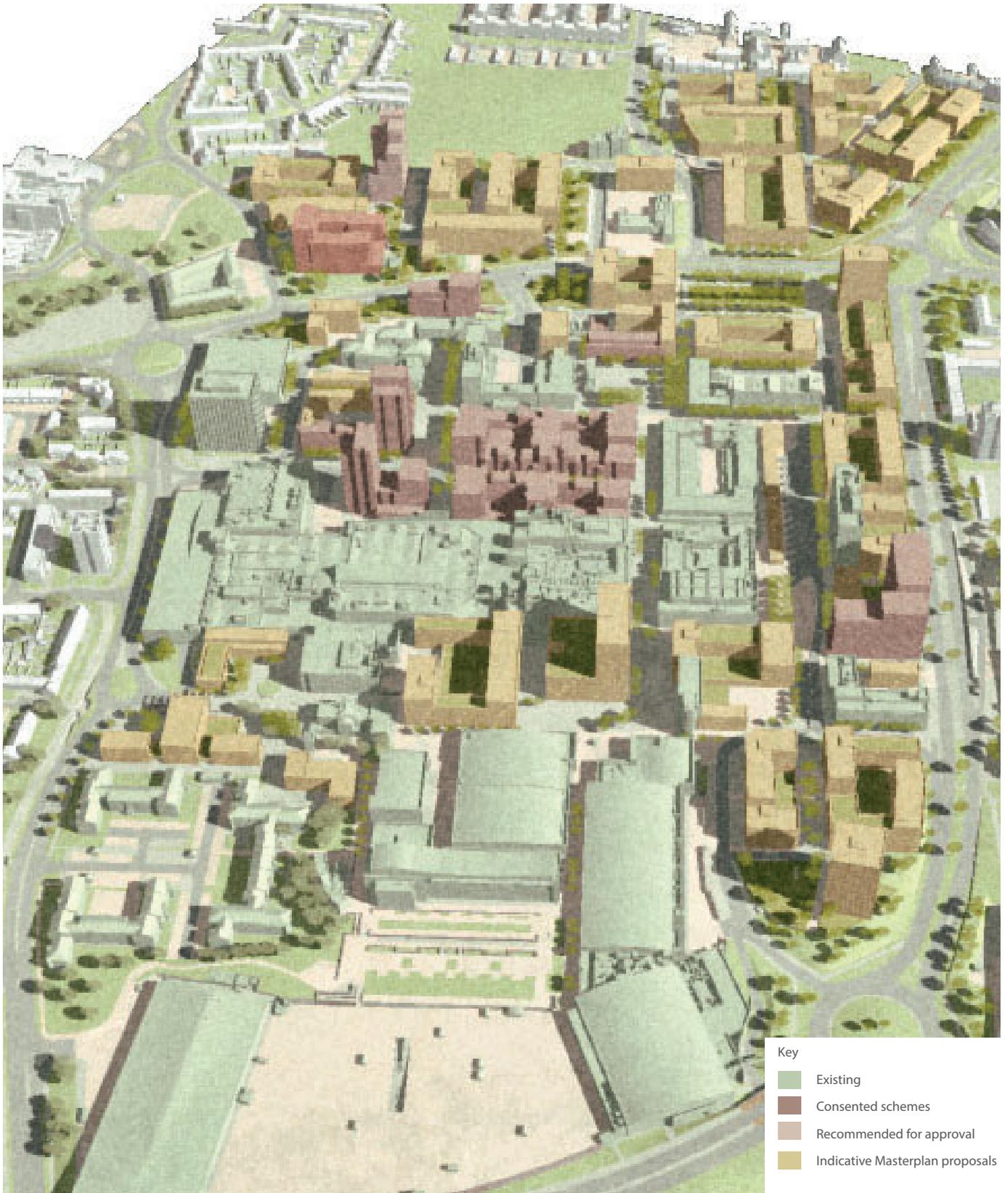
**Figure 21** Indicative Town Centre Masterplan

**EXISTING AND FUTURE TOWN CENTRE CONTEXT**

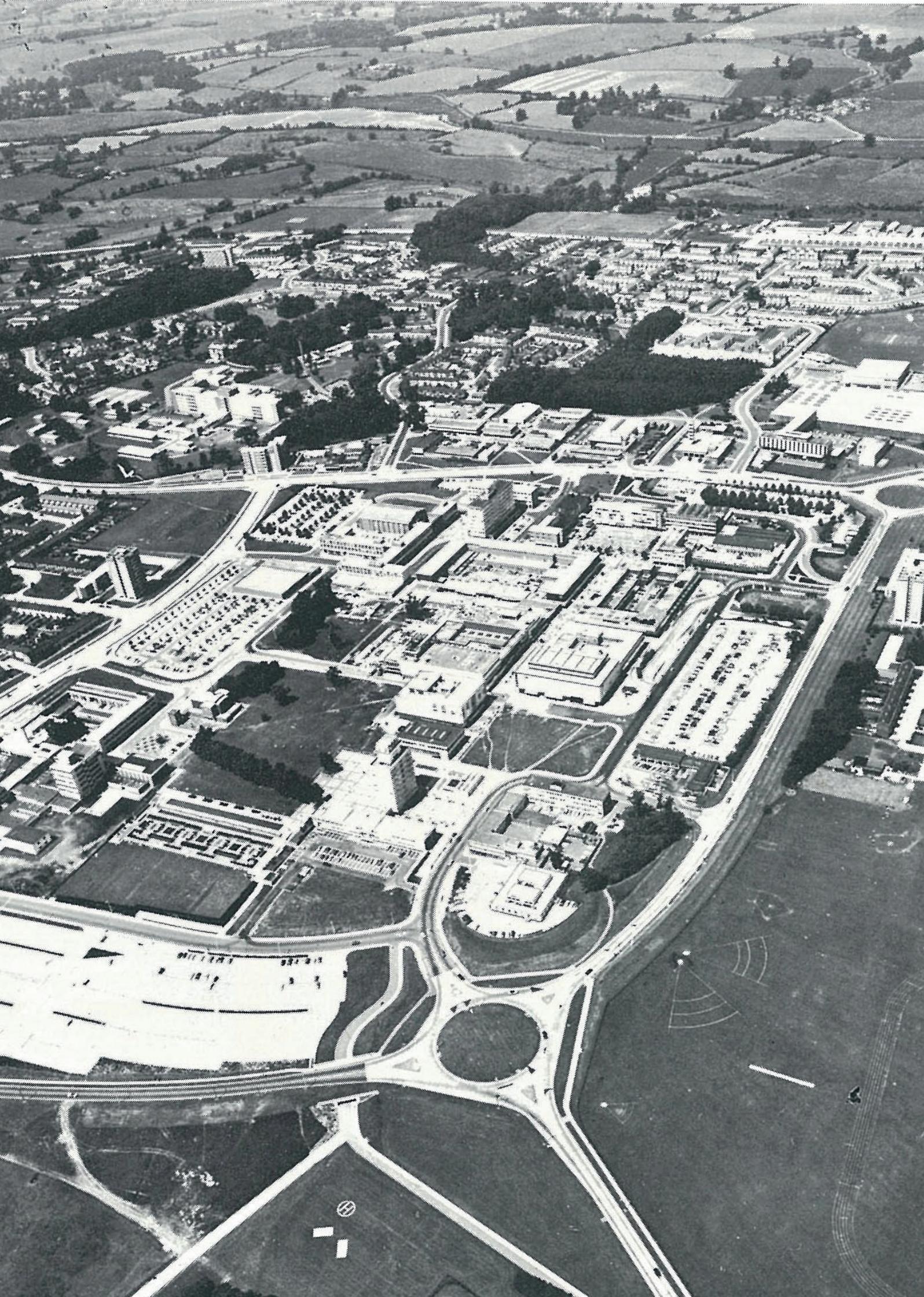


**Figure 22** Existing and consented schemes in 3D  
*Note: Please see note regarding the scheme for 4 Wych Elm on page 3.*

## INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK HARLOW



**Figure 23** Indicative future context - illustrating masterplan framework proposals alongside existing buildings and consented schemes  
*Note: Please see note regarding the scheme for 4 Wych Elm on page 3.*



# 6 PUBLIC REALM GUIDANCE

## Overview

- 6.1. Chapter 6 outlines a strategic approach to the public realm through a series of town centre-wide strategies and thematic guidance. The public realm proposals in the following section are illustrative - intended to guide design approaches and decision making - and will require further design evolution alongside development and highways proposals.
- 6.2. The public realm guidance should be read in parallel with the town centre-wide guidance in chapter 5, the building heights guidance in chapter 7 and the Opportunity Area principles in chapter 8.
- 6.3. This chapter is set out under the following headings:
  - Approach to the Public Realm;
  - Public Realm Vision;
  - The Harlow Urban Forest;
  - Priority Projects;
  - Street Typologies;
  - Key Streetscape Projects;
  - Open Space Typologies;
  - Play and Recreation; and
  - Public Realm Guidance.

**Figure 24** Historic aerial photograph of Harlow Town Centre, 1962. The photograph shows large green areas to the south and middle of the town centre with rows of existing mature trees

## APPROACH TO THE PUBLIC REALM

### Harlow's modernist identity

- 6.4. Harlow's New Town legacy and modernist aesthetic defines Harlow's character and design language. The formal composition and arrangement of streets and spaces create a legible plan aesthetic that is part of the design identity of the town centre and Gibberd's original masterplan.
- 6.5. In many instances, this design aesthetic has been altered or degraded over time. As Harlow looks to the future the public realm should be improved with contemporary interpretation of its modernist principles: clear, legible forms with strong, repeating geometric patterns. The façades of buildings such as St. Paul's Church or Adams House Clock stand as strong design precedents.

### Creating an attractive town centre

- 6.6. The first impression of the Town Centre is the overall lack of trees and greenery. Other New Town's such as Rotterdam's Lijnban invested in significant numbers of new trees and robust under-storey planting to great effect. Improvements to Harlow's public realm should adopt the same approach.

### Drivers for change

- 6.7. Drivers for change relating to the public realm include the following considerations:
- The pandemic has transformed perception of the role of public and green spaces in town and city centres. The Town Centre must have high-quality public realm that meets the needs of local users and visitors.
  - Harlow Town Centre is changing to a mixed use centre with a predominant residential land use. The public realm must meet the needs of new residents and support health and well-being.
  - Retailers must pull out the stops to attract visitors over convenient out-of-town retail parks or online shopping. The public realm must help to create an enjoyable retail experience.
  - In 2019 Harlow Council declared a climate emergency with a commitment to design for climate resilience. Public realm improvements must follow these sustainability principles.

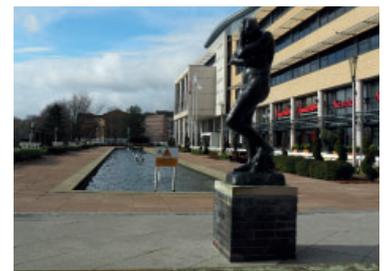


Figure 25 Historic and present day modernist design features in the Town Centre



**Figure 26** Lijnbaan, Rotterdam: Example of how the simple investment in planting and paving dramatically improves the New Town aesthetic.



**Figure 27** Lincoln Centre, New York City: Example of how contemporary interventions by Diller Scofidio + Renfro respect and thus comfortably integrate within the modern context by Philip Johnson and Dan Kiley



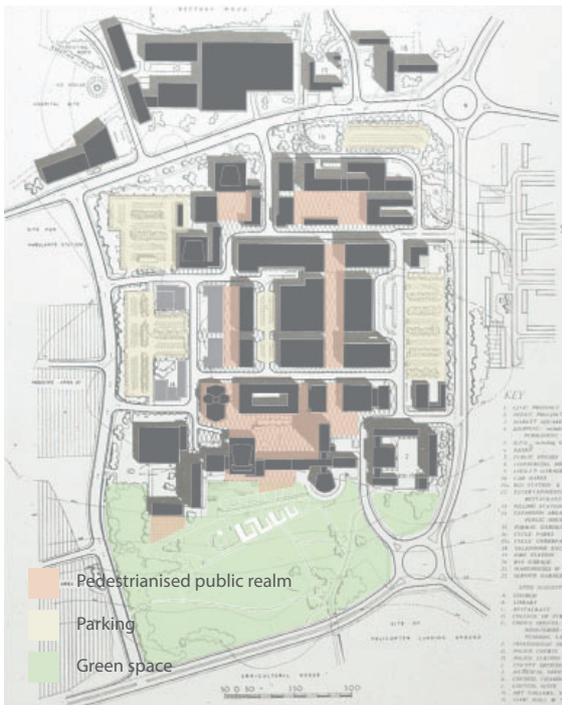
**Figure 28** Sergels Torg, Stockholm: Example of how a strong modernist vernacular can become the identity of a place and be embedded in popular culture.

**Historic landscape context**

- 6.8. Before the planned development of Harlow New Town, the area was largely fields with dispersed farmsteads and manors. The commercial centre grew around Old Harlow's medieval market square and the more informal Churchgate Street to the south-east. The population grew from 1,514 people in 1801 to 3,471 in 1931, small in comparison to the 60,000 people for whom the new town was planned (later this increased to 90,000). In 2017 the population was 86,191 people (Office for National Statistics - mid-year population estimates, issued June 2018).
- 6.9. Frederick Gibberd's vision and masterplan for Harlow New Town reflected the New Town ethos of the 1940's, drawing inspiration from the earlier Garden City movement and the drive to provide high quality and spacious homes with access to clean air and open space. Gibberd's masterplan was influenced by the

area's distinctive landscape and environmental features, such as the River Stort in the north, the valley ridges and wooded areas in the south and other important ecological assets.

- 6.10. The 1952 masterplan was based on three fundamental principles - an essentially human environment (that the design should be based on the pedestrian); an urban atmosphere; and the principle of evolution. According to Gibberd, "the third predicted a flexible approach. The first two were basic to the concept of new towns."



**Figure 29** 1952 masterplan of Harlow New Town



**Figure 30** 1966 Harlow showing significant provision of green open space in the south and middle of the town centre

Urban Centre



Urban Edge



Green Wedge



**Figure 33** Historic photographs showing different landscape conditions that formed part of Gibberd's original design



**Figure 31** 1980-1995 Harlow. Green spaces are replaced by the Harvey Centre development and car parking to the south

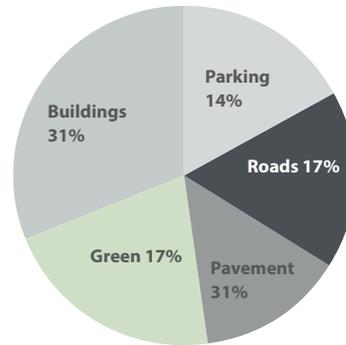


**Figure 32** 2017 Harlow. The Water Gardens retail and civic centre development significantly reduce open space provision

**Existing landscape context**

- 5.11. The green wedge network, created as part of Gibberd’s original vision for Harlow, enables access by foot to the natural landscape and green space from the town centre, but these links need strengthening to facilitate and promote better sustainable accessibility.
- 5.12. The Town Centre itself also lacks trees and greenery. Public realm improvements should focus on the transformation of the three dimensional character of the streets and spaces through new planting. Planting is essential to a wider green infrastructure strategy to reduce impermeable paved surfaces, introduce sustainable drainage practices, and reduce urban heat island effect.
- 5.13. The town centre generally lacks good quality public space and several public open spaces, such as Stone Cross square, that are currently underperforming. With exception of the Water Gardens (which is a privately managed open space) the town centre especially lacks public

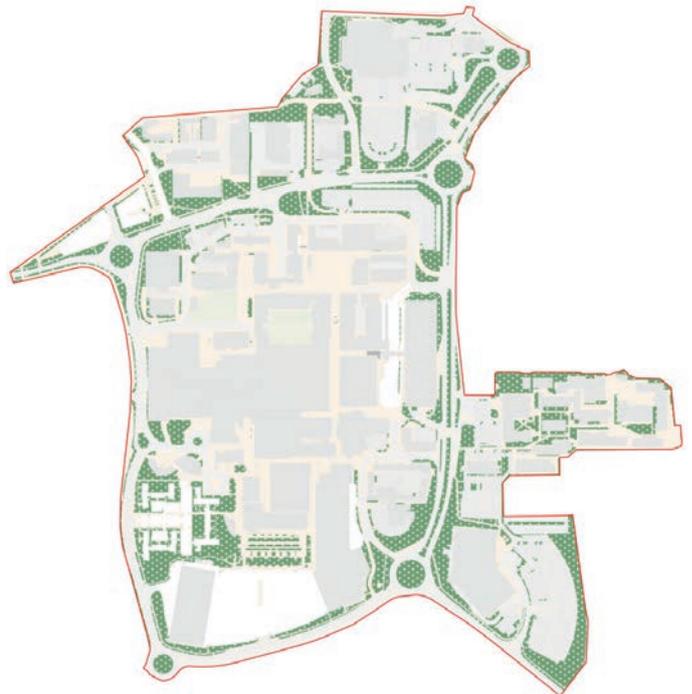
green open space. Existing ‘greenery’ across the town centre area is predominantly formed of verges or intermediate spaces that do not provide public open space amenity. Public realm improvements should provide focus on providing usable green open space that meets the needs of residents, workers and visitors.



**Figure 34** Analysis of existing surface types within the Town Centre area boundary showing a dominance of impermeable surface area.



**Figure 35** Plan showing existing trees within and directly adjacent to the town centre area. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 36** Plan showing existing green groundcover within the town centre. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 37** Plan showing the distribution of buildings, parking, roads, pavement and green areas within the town centre. This plan relates to Figure 34. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

**PUBLIC REALM VISION:  
from a grey urban centre...**



Figure 38 Illustration of existing Harlow town centre condition

...to a transformed urban forest

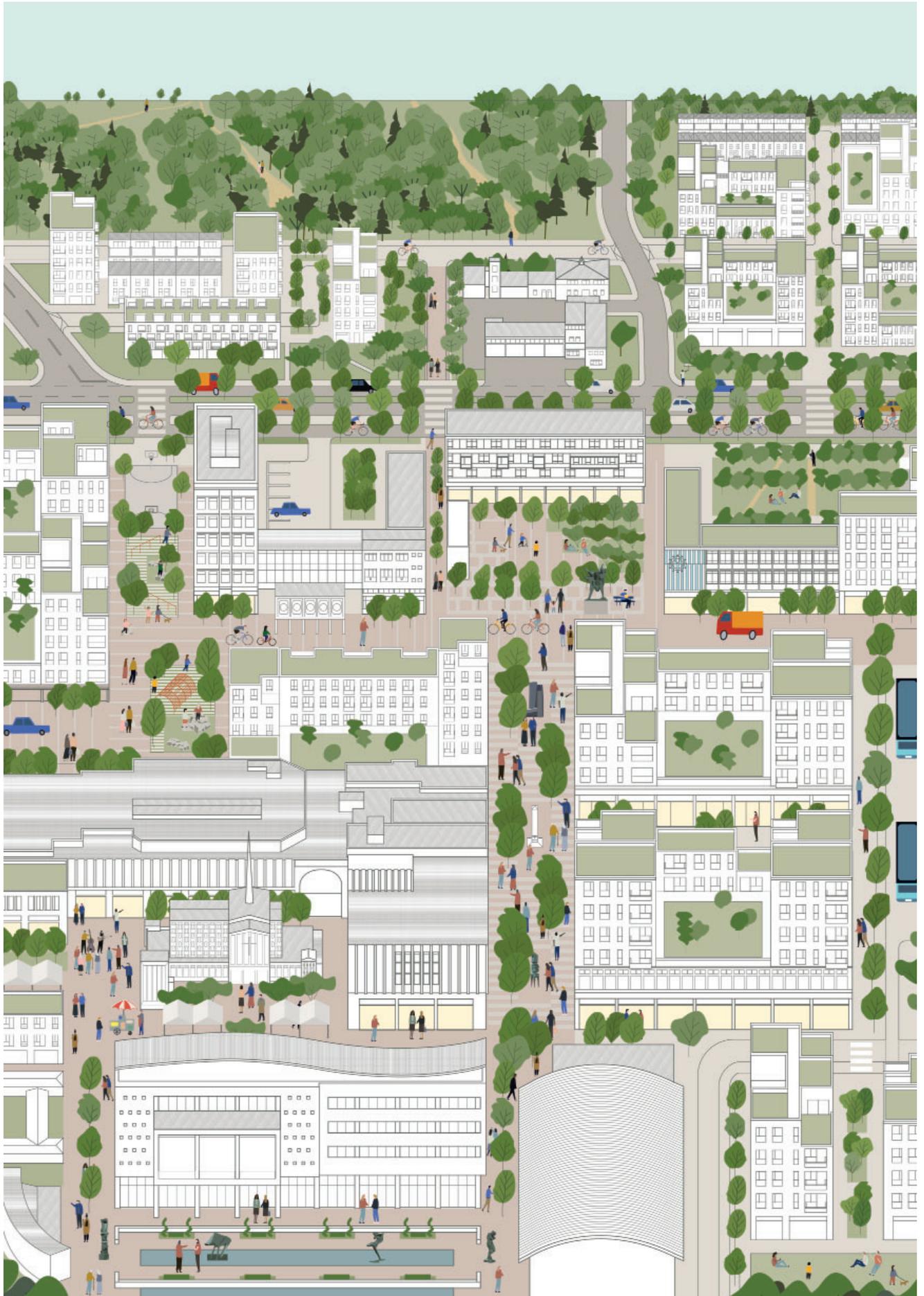


Figure 39 Aspirational illustration for a transformed Harlow town centre

## THE HARLOW URBAN FOREST

### Green infrastructure framework

- 6.14. Introducing high-quality, robust planting and retaining existing mature trees should be a priority for Harlow's public realm enhancements. Proposals should consider the 'urban forest' strategy which sets out a comprehensive green network across the town centre.
- 6.15. Planting approaches should follow the Miyawaki method - which prescribes dense planting of 'tiny forests' using native plants and tree species. Studies have shown this approach can help have huge benefits to biodiversity, people's mental health, and air quality. For example, studies by the Dutch WENR have shown an average Tiny Forest (200sqm) can sequester up to 250kg of carbon per year. Proposals for Harlow should consider the following principles:
- Retain all existing mature trees within the town centre, particularly those within the Post Office Car Park, which form part of the historic Harlow landscape proposals by Dame Sylvia Crowe
  - Create dense tree planting and understorey planting that will increase biodiversity, improve air quality and reduce urban heat island effect.
  - Use planting to encourage investment in streets and public spaces, joining different developments through a connected and green public realm.
  - Utilise planting to reinforcing key routes through the town centre and improve connections between open spaces. In particular, planting should help to strengthen walking and cycling connections from the town centre to surrounding landscapes, including the Town Park, Todd Brook and Rectory Woods.
  - Create variety in planting and use imaginative approaches to define difference between places. Planting approaches should compliment the character and function of the adjacent public realm.



**Figure 40** Historic photo of Market square. The original planting arrangement delineates market square from east gate-west gate and frames the public art



**Figure 41** Post Office Road Car Park, Harlow. The mature plane trees create a welcoming, park-like canopy that should be entirely retained.



**Figure 42** David H Koch Plaza, New York by OLIN. Uses planting to both direct movement along a busy pedestrian route and creates demarcated seating areas to dwell



**Figure 43** Central Wharf Plaza, Boston by Reed Hilderbrand. Tree planting is clustered to create a welcoming canopy with places to sit at their edges and a central corridor for pedestrian movement through the space



**Figure 44** The Harlow urban forest framework plan with public open spaces highlighted and proposed hierarchy between different green connections. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

**Tree planting**

- 6.16. Planting trees has the ability to transform the three dimensional expression of a place. The investment is in the ambient qualities of light, dappled shade, and the expression of the changing seasons. Trees come in a variety of shapes and sizes from cones to spheres, vase to umbrella. When tree form and leaf character is used deliberately, trees can redefine the character of a space or even of a neighbourhood. Tree planting in the Town Centre should be bold and contrasting. Each street or footway can have its own unique character defined by the trees used.
- 6.17. Trees should be planted in response to how they perform throughout the year. Microclimate and planting conditions are important and require careful considerations. The investment in the tree pit and underground infrastructure should be carefully designed and budgeted for to ensure healthy growth.



**Figure 53** Engineered tree pit with crates to support paving weight, encourage healthy root growth and accommodate utilities. ©Greenmax



**Figure 45** *Plantanus X Hispanica*



**Figure 47** *Gleditsia tricanthos 'inermis'*



**Figure 49** *Prunus avium 'Plena'*



**Figure 51** *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*



**Figure 46** *Liquidambar styraciflua*



**Figure 48** *Quercus robur*



**Figure 50** *Tilia cordata 'greenspire'*



**Figure 52** *Larix decidua*



**Figure 54** Plan showing proposed trees within the town centre. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

- 6.18. National planning policies strongly recommend SuDS for managing surface water runoff. In order to address the dominance of impermeable surfaces SuDS should be integrated into the design of the town centre public realm wherever practical.
- 6.19. In a wider context, SuDS are also important for mitigating flood risk in the surrounding landscape. The town centre sits atop a hill, with water flowing to the River Stort and Todd Brook (flood zones 2/3) and SuDS could therefore be used help to attenuate and infiltrate storm water. The map opposite highlights topography, drainage patterns and optimal locations for SuDS features at a broad scale. In tandem, proposals should also assess macro topographies to determine the most effective SuDS locations for each street or space.
- 6.20. Although SuDS proposals should focus primarily on sustainable stormwater management, SuDS features should also consider potential secondary benefits including: increased biodiversity, visual interest, the provision of seating, and integrated play.
- 6.21. Designs should consider use of: trees, low-level planting, rain gardens, swales, channels & rills, permeable paving and de-paving to achieve effective sustainable drainage. Any features should not obstruct pedestrian movement and should be robust and integrated to ensure longevity and reduced need for regular maintenance.

**Key spaces, character and function**



**Figure 55** Integrated planting along a retail street is designed not to obstruct pedestrian movement. Stationsstraat, Sink-Niklaas by Sweco Belgium



**Figure 59** Integrated planting with mixed species to maximise biodiversity benefits. More London by Townshend Landscape Architects



**Figure 60** Rain gardens with water inlets capture surface water runoff from the adjacent carriageway. 12th Street Avenue by City of Portland



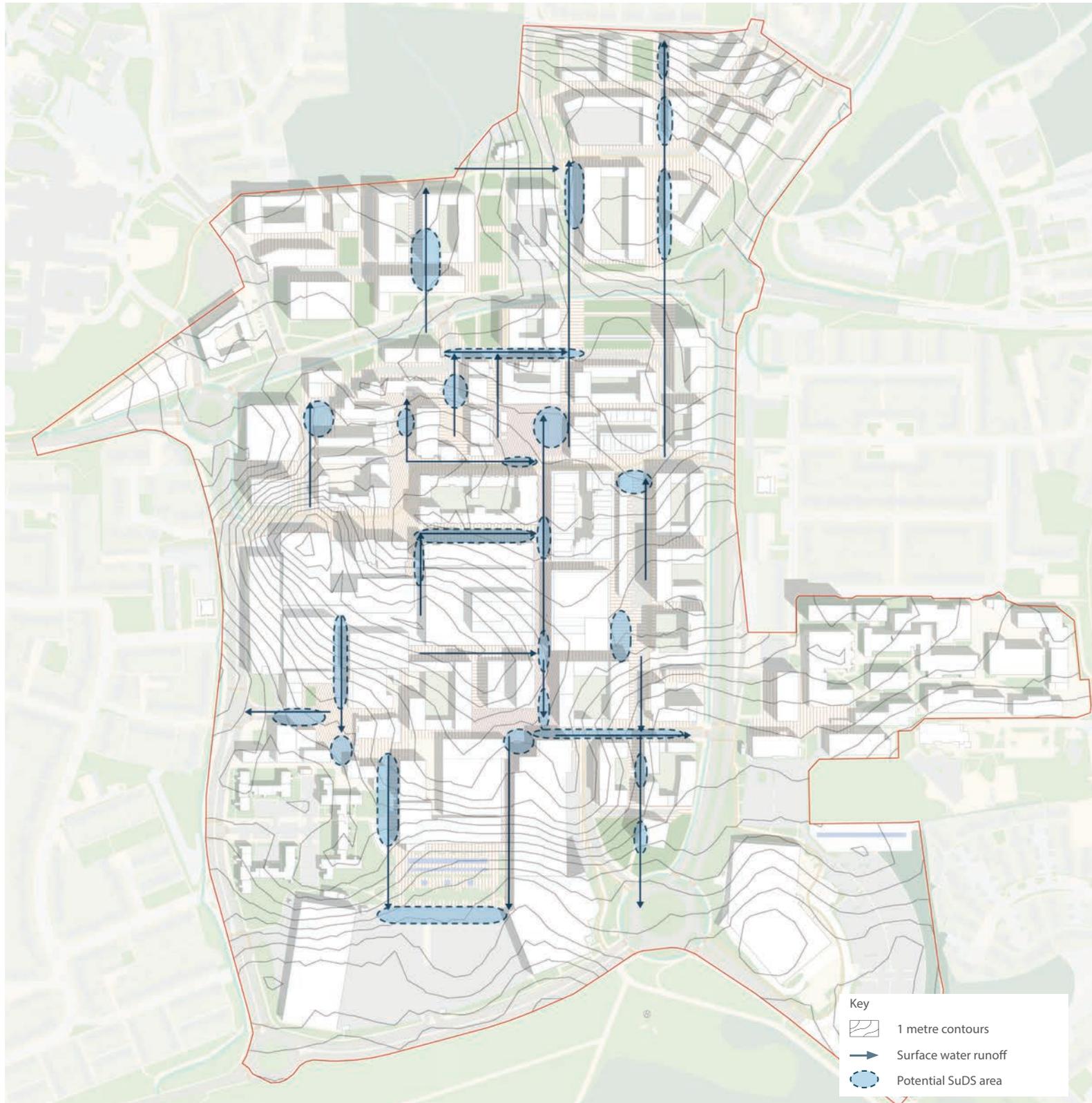
**Figure 56** Permeable paving can be positive where subsurface conditions restrict planting



**Figure 57** Example of depaving, planting and seating in combination. Mint Street Plaza by CMG Landscape Architecture



**Figure 58** SuDS features such as rain gardens can also provide opportunities for informal play. Bridget Joyce Square by Robert Bray Associates

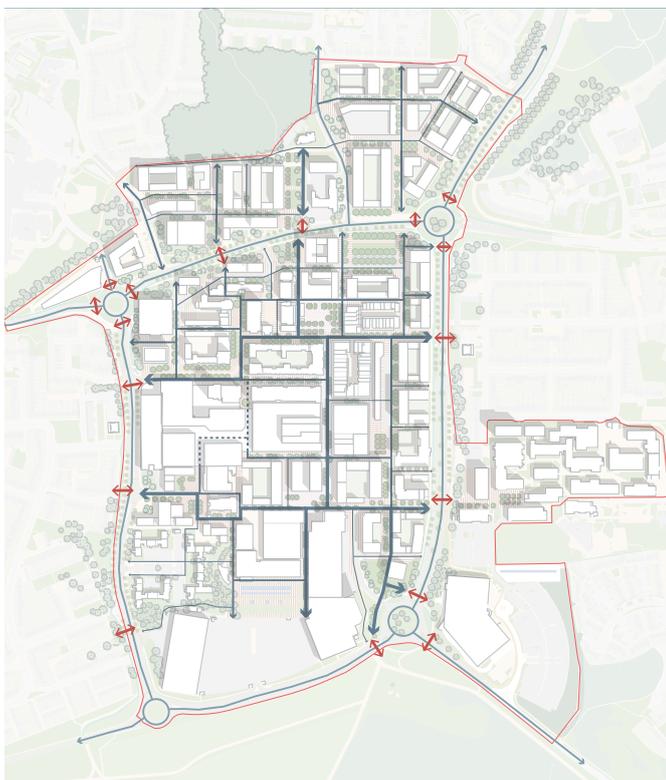


**Figure 61** Plan showing existing contours, surface water runoff and potential locations for focused SuDS improvements  
 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

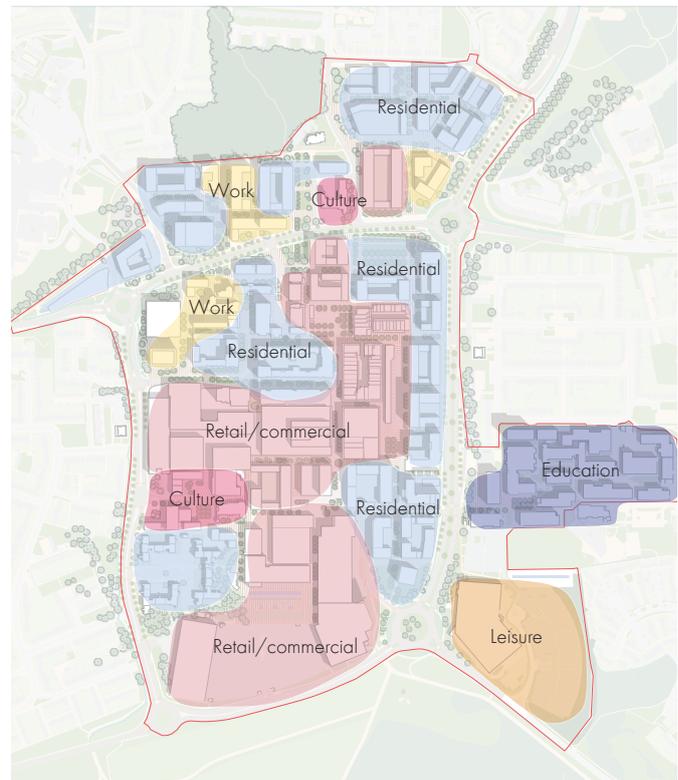
## PRIORITY PROJECTS

- 6.22. The Council has identified five principal public realm project areas (see Figure 63). These are the main focus for funding bids and investment, and represent immediate priority projects which are likely to be championed in the Town Plan. Specific public realm guidance is set out in the open space typologies section in this chapter.
- 6.23. The five main project areas can be summarised as follows:
- **Terminus Street - Connectivity:** Creation of a northern transport hub and gateway, providing first-class transport options in and out of the town centre that supports both the town centre and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.
  - **Stone Cross Square - Leisure & Hospitality:** A hub of leisure and hospitality activity with the infrastructure to support a range of events and activities; and high quality landscaped spaces to encourage outdoor dining/trading.

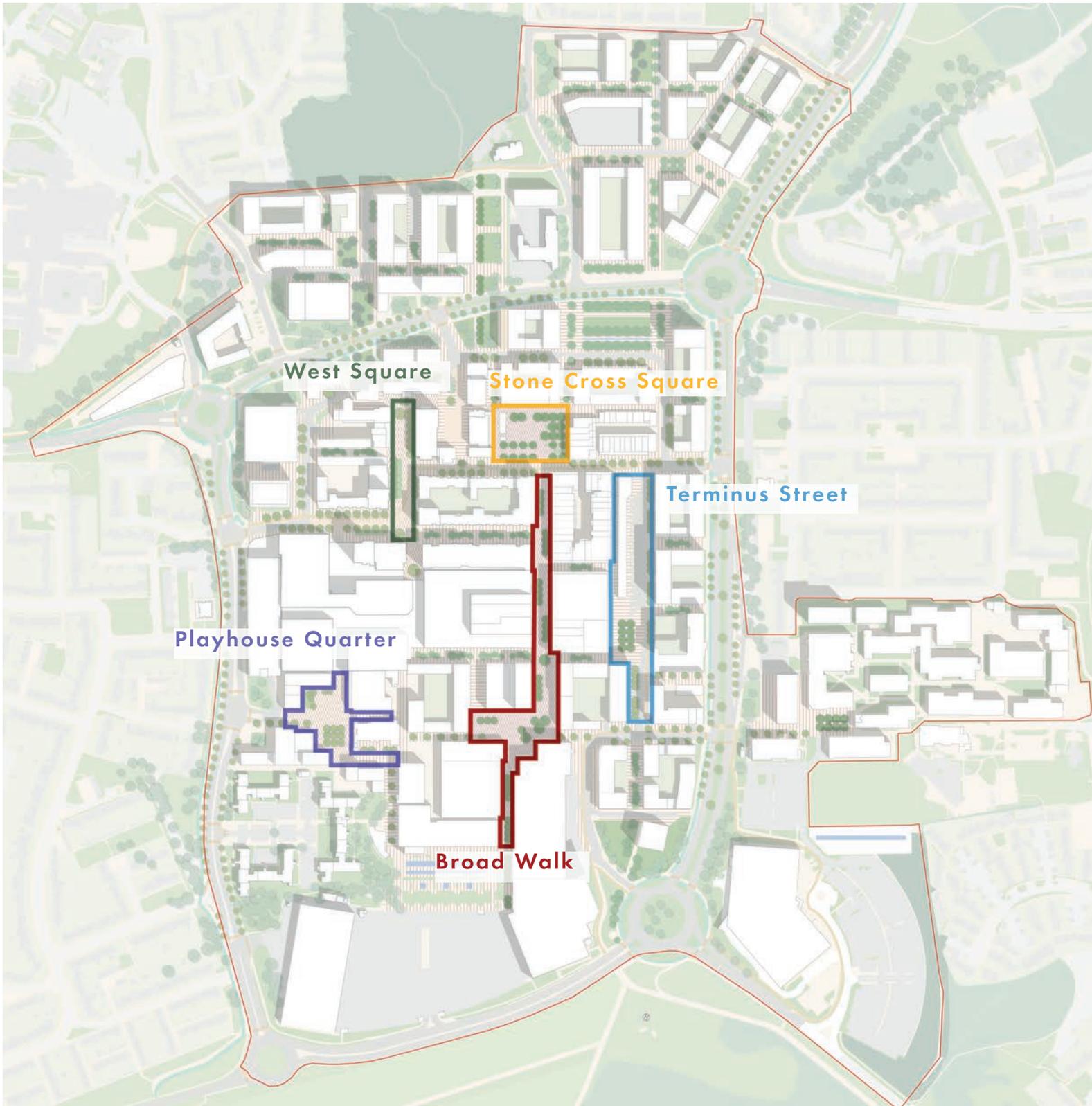
- **West Square - Greenery and amenity:** Creation of a northern, town centre garden complementing the Water Gardens in the south and providing high-quality green spaces for the existing and new town centre communities, employees and visitors.
- **Playhouse Quarter - Arts and Culture:** A hub of arts and cultural activity to support and diversify the offer of Harlow Playhouse, providing a high quality environment for the indoor and outdoor arts and cultural events and activities.
- **Broad Walk - Retail:** A hub of retail and commercial activity with the infrastructure to support traditional outdoor markets and street trading; and high quality public realm that encourages private sector and commercial inward investment to improve the quality of the retail offer.



**Figure 62** Plan showing key pedestrian routes Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 63** Plan showing proposed predominant ground floor land uses Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 64** Plan with key public 'rooms' highlighted Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## STREET TYPOLOGIES

- 6.24. The following pages establish the four 'typical' street conditions across the town centre, define each typology, and outline how one should approach the design of different routes, including allowance for servicing and maintenance. With reference to these principles, streetscape designs consider each street independently with designs tailored to the specific requirements and context. The street typologies set out opposite consist of:

### Boulevard streets

The roads currently forming a ring around the core town centre which should be redesigned to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

### Vehicular Streets

Key vehicular access routes through the town centre that should be designed as pleasant streetscapes that balance vehicles and pedestrians, while meeting localised vehicle requirements.

### Residential pedestrian

Typically associated with proposed residential-led development, these streets should provide linear green connections and high-quality residential amenity space.

### Commercial pedestrian

Hubs of retail and commercial activities with high-quality public realm that creates an attractive, welcoming, and safe environment.



**Figure 65** Example of a Boulevard Street with cycle infrastructure and swales running parallel to the carriageway. Eddington Avenue, Cambridge - Project by AECOM



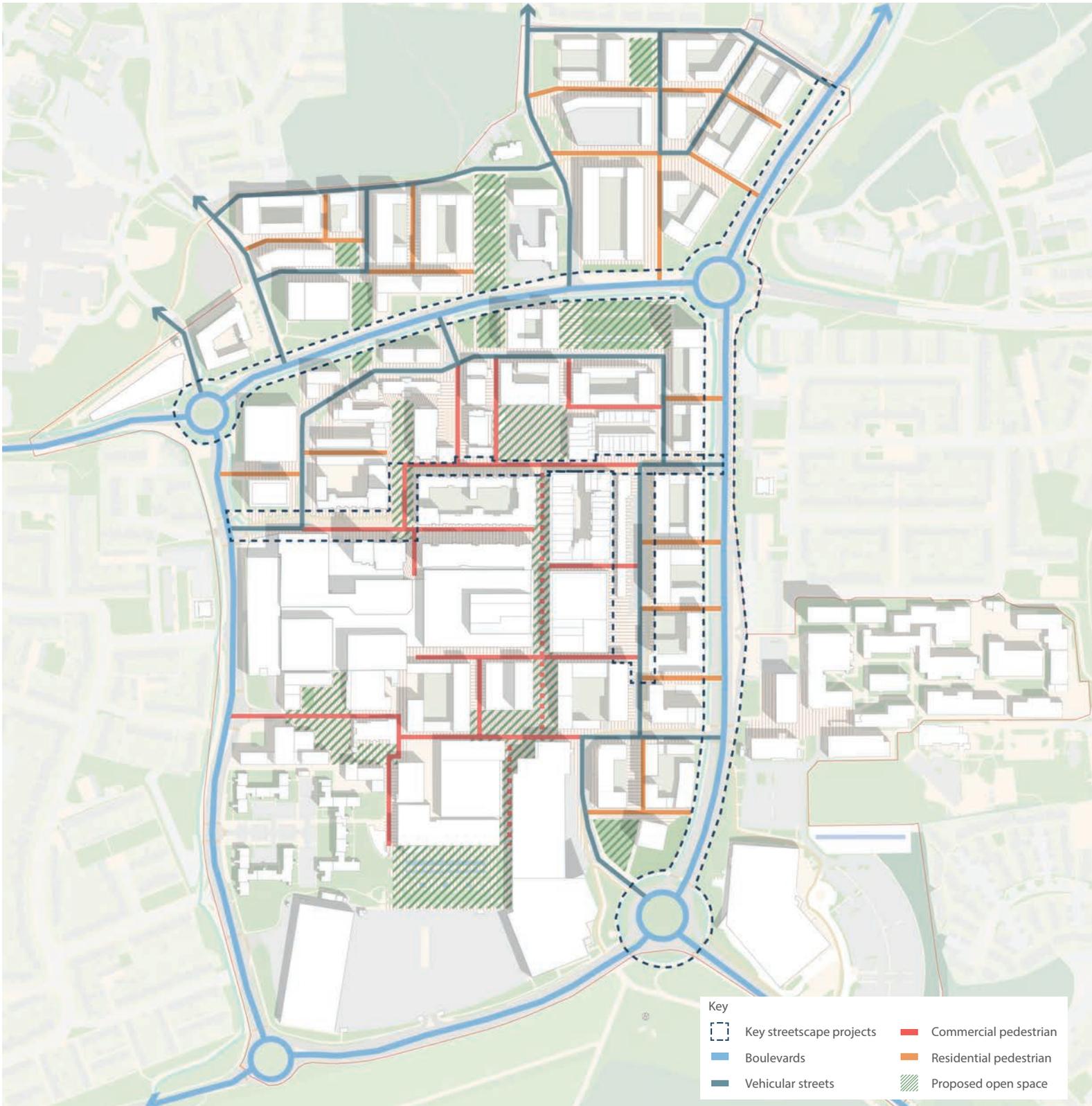
**Figure 66** Example of a vehicular street with integrated rain gardens. 12th Street Avenue by City of Portland



**Figure 67** Example of a Residential Pedestrian street with a generous central rain garden providing SuDS and residential amenity. North West Cambridge - Project by AECOM



**Figure 68** Commercial Pedestrian street example with high-quality paving materials and areas for seating and planting. Pitt Street Mall by Tony Caro Architecture



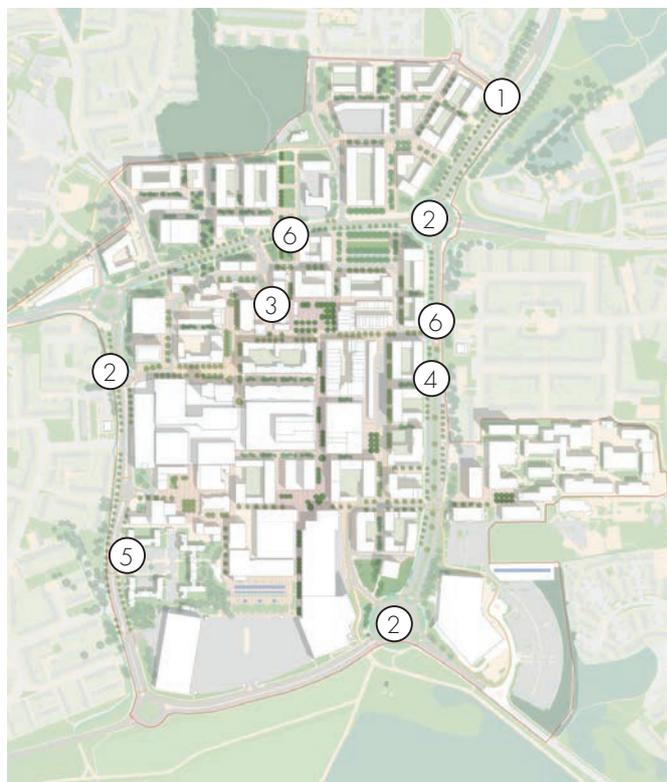
**Figure 69** Street typologies map. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### Boulevard Streets

- 6.25. Currently the roads surrounding the Town Centre form a ring which favours free vehicular movement to the detriment of pedestrian connectivity. The streetscape transformation should consider each street independently with consideration given to the existing and future contexts. The current avenues have generous right-of-ways in excess of 30 metres. Ample space exists to rationalise the cross section and junction designs - particularly to assist STC entrance thresholds into the town centre - while retaining unique features such as central reservations and tree planting. While opportunity exists to narrow lanes, the majority of improvements come from transforming the roads from grade-separated and free flowing streets with junctions and ample crossings. Note: the road and junction layouts shown are illustrative and are subject to further design evolution.
- 6.26. The boulevard streetscape projects should be designed to encourage permeability to and from the town centre and consider the needs of people including facilitating at-grade pedestrian crossings, improving the safety of underpasses (where at-grade crossings are not possible) and creating safe cycle routes. They should aim to improve the environmental quality of the street within the right-of-way through increased tree planting, improved habitat, and the introduction of active sustainable drainage measures.

#### Principles

- ① Fifth Avenue and Hammarskjold Road: replace the current round-about with a T-junction.
- ② Fourth Avenue and Velizy Avenue roundabouts: Create safe pedestrian crossings and cycle infrastructure with dutch-style roundabouts.
- ③ Fourth Avenue: create a street rather than a road by narrowing the carriageway and integrating dedicated cycle paths.
- ④ Velizy Avenue: transformed through the introduction of improved crossings, reduced lane widths, cycle lanes, new planting, and simplified junctions.
- ⑤ Haydens Road: introduce simplified junctions and traffic flow with improved crossings.
- ⑥ Underpasses: where retained, improve the safety and environment through, for example, better lighting, public art, and playable elements.



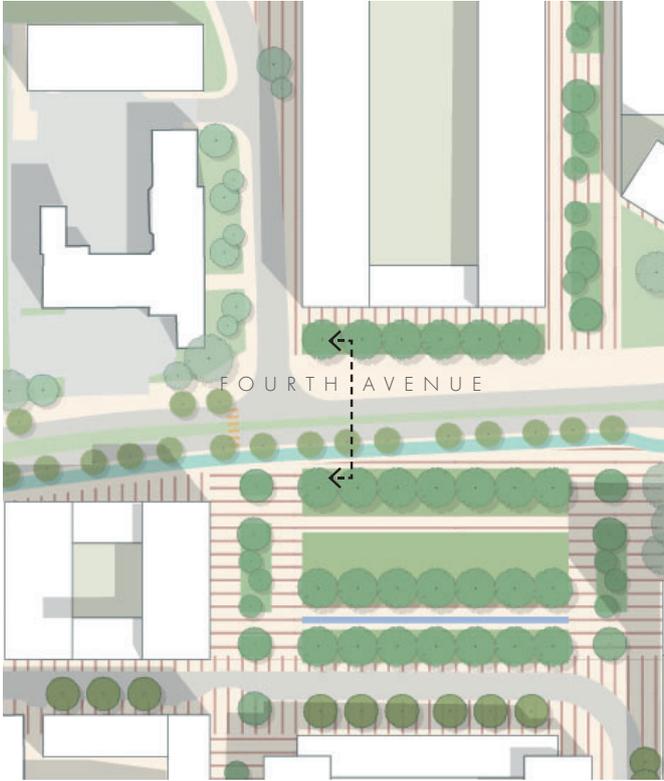
**Figure 70** Summary plan of principles for Boulevard streets Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 71** Eddington Avenue, Cambridge - Sustainable drainage with cycle lane. Project by AECOM



**Figure 72** Lighting artwork improvements to a bridge in Southwark which could be applied to the underpasses around the town centre



**Figure 73** Rotated plan extract of Fourth Avenue Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 74** Plan extract of Velizy Avenue Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 75** Proposed typical street section for Fourth Avenue

## Vehicular Streets

- 6.27. Vehicular streets should be considered as rationalised vehicular through-routes for vehicular access within the town centre. Please note, the routes shown opposite are illustrative and are subject to further design evolution.

Vehicular streets should be designed with adjacent uses in mind - i.e. with provision of servicing bays, bus stops, parking and cycle racks as required - and although these streets are 'vehicular' public realm designs should always seek to balance pedestrian and vehicular space, creating a pleasant environment for all users.

### Principles

- ① Design streets to meet the needs of adjacent uses with parking, servicing or bus stop bays provided as required.
- ② Where bus stops are located, provide good amenity (seating, planting and shade) for pedestrians.
- ③ Balance vehicular and pedestrian space and prioritise pedestrians/cyclists, where possible, with inclusion of crossings, raised tables, level surfaces and cycle lanes.
- ④ Intersperse generous planting between parking/servicing bays to mitigate urban heat island effect and increase sustainable drainage.



**Figure 76** Vehicular streets within the town centre Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



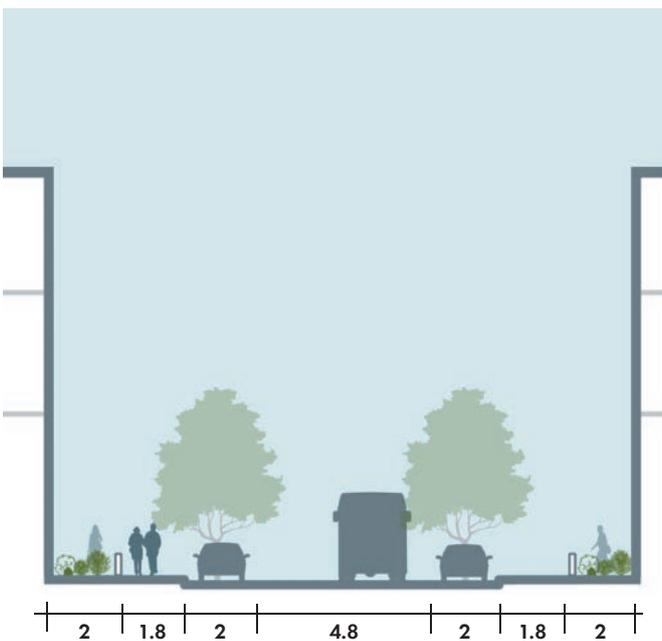
**Figure 78** Example planting along a vehicular street. 12th Street Avenue by City of Portland



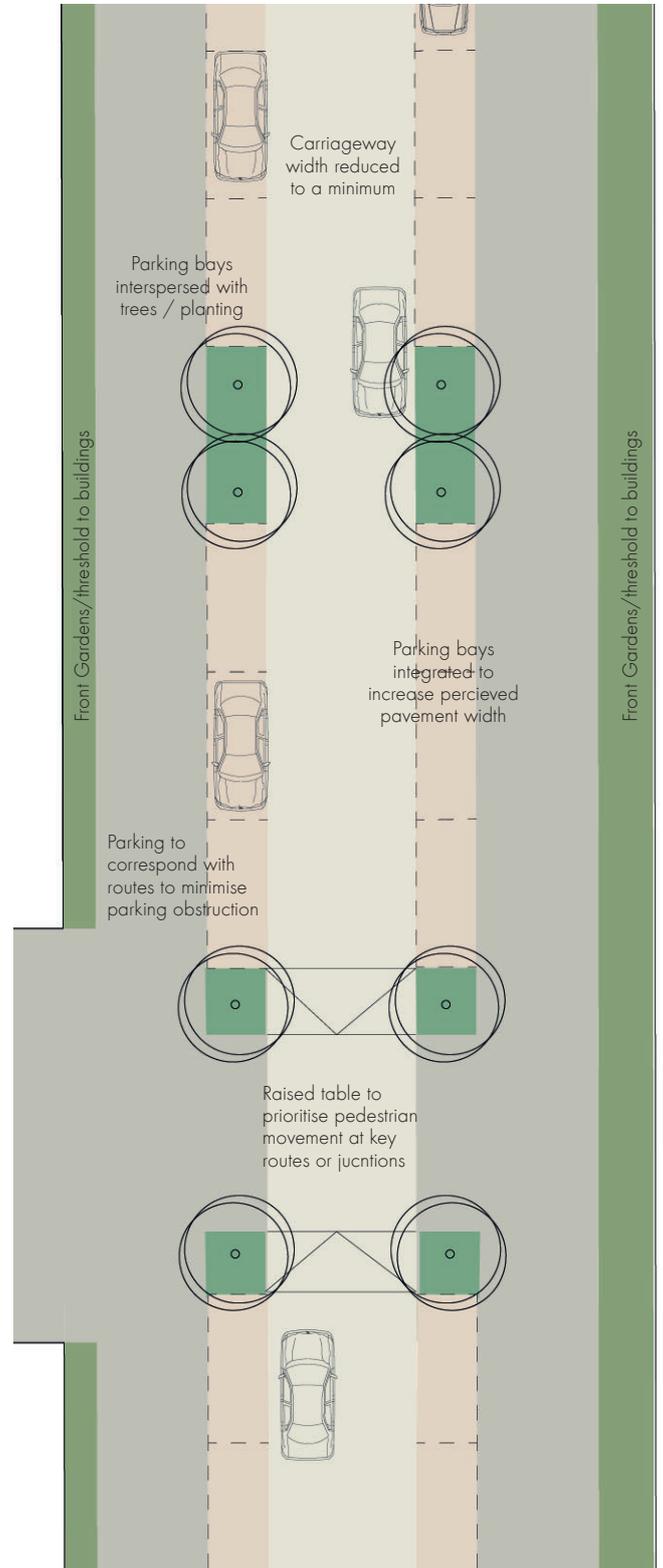
**Figure 77** Example pedestrian priority vehicular street with level surface, integrated parking bays and planting - Dujardin Mews, London by Karakusevic Carson Architects



**Figure 79** Example vehicular street Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 81** Typical section of a two-way vehicular street with parking bays



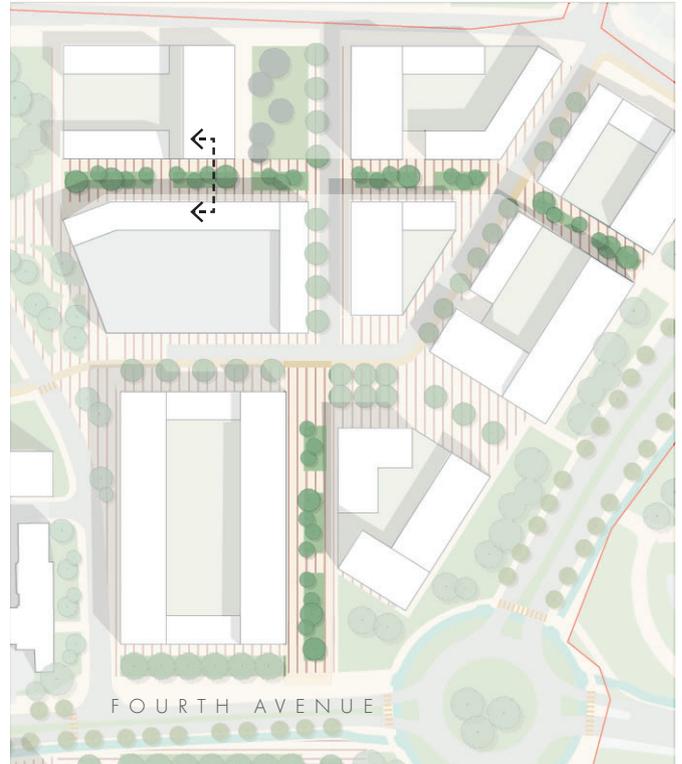
**Figure 80** Typical plan of a one-way vehicular street with parking bays and planting Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### Residential pedestrian

- 6.28. Residential pedestrian streets are typically associated with new residential-led development and should be considered as green linear connections, providing amenity for adjacent residential uses while providing attractive routes for walking and cycling.
- 6.29. Although 'pedestrian' some streets may require vehicular access for servicing/parking. In these instances, the streetscape should prioritise pedestrians with low traffic speeds.

#### Principles

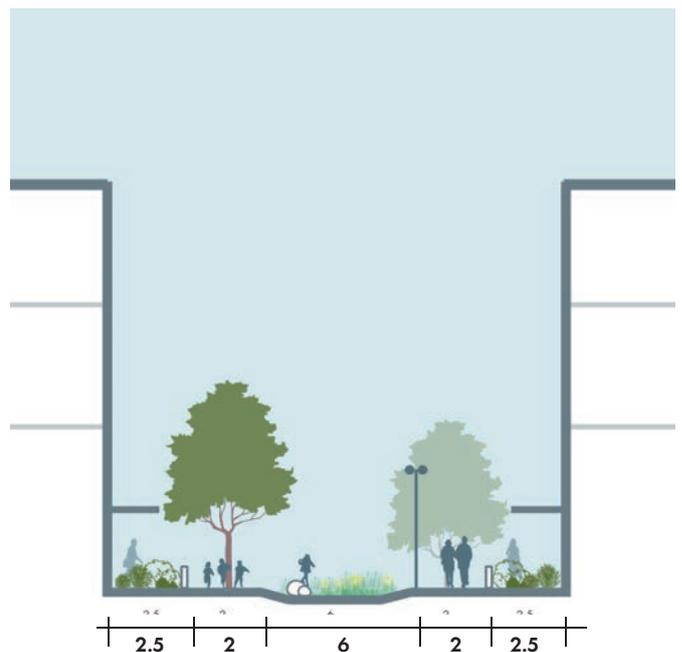
- Utilise mixed trees species composed in a loose arrangement to contrast with the planting structures of other vehicular streets.
- The character of the street should favour planting and sustainable drainage with good provision of space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Incorporate opportunities for incidental doorstep play and seating.
- Use lighting to create a safe pedestrian environment that considers adjacent residential homes.
- Consider access and servicing requirements for residential uses.



**Figure 84** Example residential pedestrian street: Sainsburys Northern Gateway Site. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 85** North West Cambridge Development masterplan, AECOM



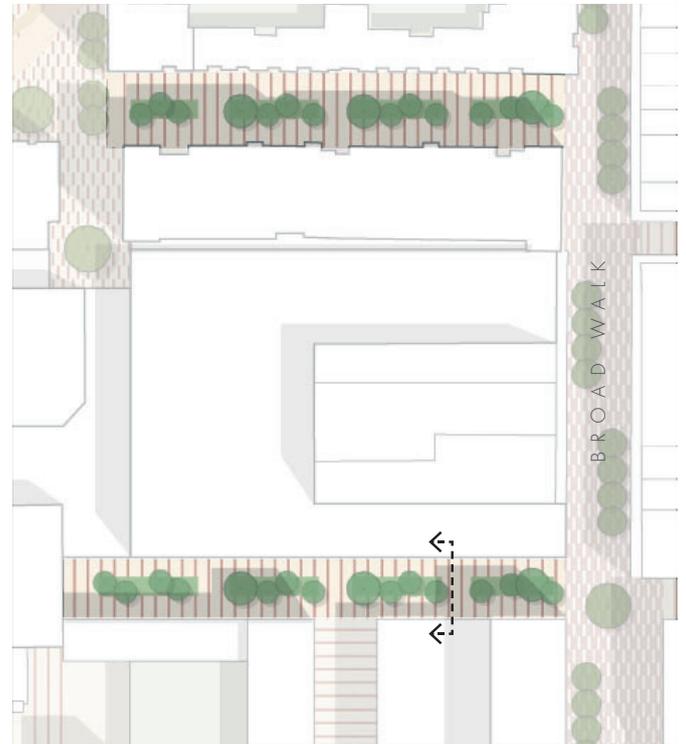
**Figure 83** Typical residential pedestrian street section

### Commercial Pedestrian

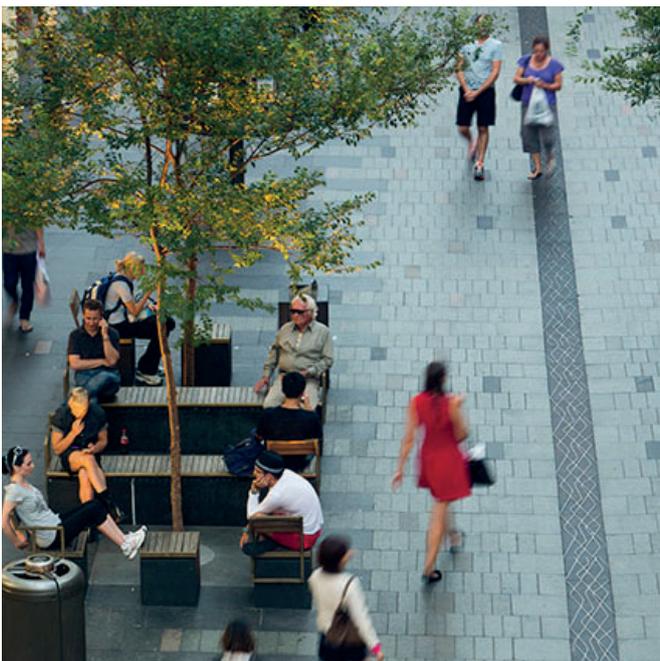
6.30. Commercial pedestrian streets should be hubs of retail and commercial activities with infrastructure to support outdoor markets and street trading. Designs for the public realm should be high quality; creating an attractive, welcoming, and safe environment that supports existing and future commercial uses.

#### Principles

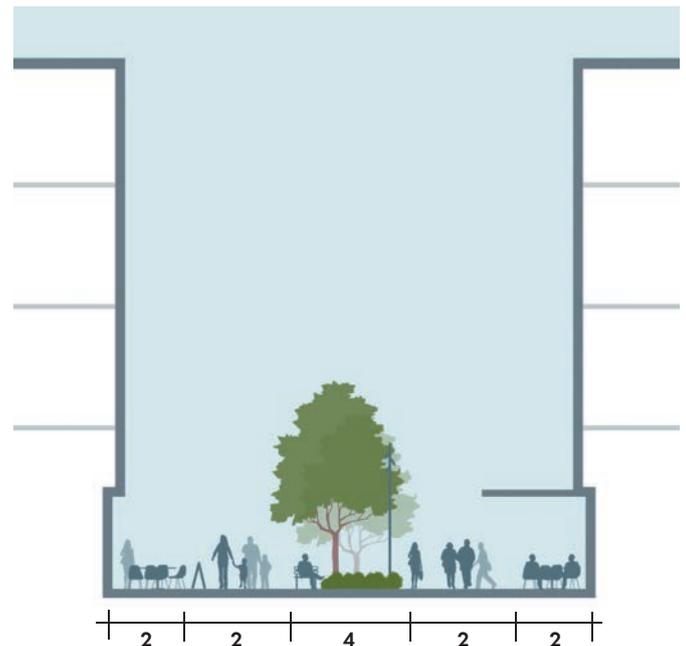
- Respond to the context and avoid homogeneity to create a varied and interesting retail environment that encourages private sector investment.
- Incorporate extensive tree planting, understorey planting and sustainable drainage features to transform the three-dimensional street envelope.
- Choose materials that are high-quality and accessible for all, with designs that reinforce the individuality of different streets.
- Use street lighting to ensure safety, a welcoming ambience after dark and support for night-time economy activities.
- Incorporate public seating, where possible, encouraging people to dwell and enjoy the retail environment.



**Figure 86** Example commercial pedestrian streets Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 88** Pitt Street Mall, Sydney by Tony Caro Architecture



**Figure 87** Typical commercial pedestrian street section

## KEY STREETSCAPE PROJECTS

### Terminus Street Interchange

- 6.31. The Interchange is the re-imagining of the Sustainable Transport Hub and its supporting public realm. Improvements around the Sustainable Transport Hub should improve the overall setting, visibility, security, and permeability for pedestrians. West College Square is a new pedestrian focused gateway to Harlow College. The current car park is replaced with a public space which opens out to Velizy Avenue and encourages grade crossing connections back to the Town Centre. The new space can incorporate cycle parking and sustainable drainage.

- ① **Principles**  
Redesign of Sustainable Transport Hub to improve the overall interchange experience. Significant pavement space should be provided along the future development of the car park to allow for ground floor active uses.
- ② Connections through to Velizy Avenue should be encouraged and crossings introduced to the bus stand arrangement.
- ③ Consolidate the access and circulation around the interchange to favour pedestrian crossings, pavements, and signalised junctions on Velizy Avenue.
- ④ Improve junctions on Velizy Avenue to improve sustainable transport entry/exit points and strengthen walking and cycling links to and from Harlow College.
- ⑤ Plaza linking University Centre Harlow and Building C including rainwater garden, cycle parking, around new development parcel.



**Figure 89** Summary plan of principles for Terminus Street interchange Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 90** Rueil-Malmaison, Paris



**Figure 91** Széll Kálmán Square

### East-Gate and West Gate

6.32. The proposal to create a cycle route linking East and West Gates is the opportunity to deliver significant public realm improvements as the first step in revitalising the north west quarter of the Town Centre. The intention should be to create a clear, unobstructed, shared surface east-west connection for all users.

#### Principles

- ① Shared pedestrian and cycle route with upgraded paving, street furniture, and street trees.
- ② Improved junction anticipating improved streetscape and cycle routes along Velizy Avenue and Terminus Street Sustainable Transport Hub upgrades.
- ③ Redesign West Square as a green recreation space. Mixed species trees should have a looser arrangement in contrast with the avenues along the pedestrian streets.
- ④ New entrance plaza to The Harvey Centre which welcomes visitors and anticipates new development to the north.
- ⑤ Avenue street tree planting at East Gate to animate blank back-of-house façades.



Figure 94 Barking Town Centre, London by AHMM & Muf



Figure 93 Shared Surface - New Road Brighton by Landscape Projects and Gehl



Figure 92 Summary plan of principles for East Gate and West Gate Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## PLAY AND RECREATION

- 6.33. Play is an essential way to make Harlow town centre welcoming for everyone, especially children and young people. Proposed public realm improvements should seek to provide a variety of play for young people of all ages and abilities, as well as promoting sports/recreation for adults. Public realm improvements will need to ensure of play is well-distributed across the town centre and safely accessible for young people (e.g. accessible without the need to cross busy streets and well-illuminated).
- 6.34. Play features should be interesting and imaginative and could be expressed in many ways, including: natural features (e.g. rocks, boulders or tree trunks), 'traditional' play features - (e.g. slides or climbing frames), and bespoke features (e.g. paving patterns, interactive artwork or water features).
- 6.35. The type and distribution of play should be informed by the following types:

### Doorstep Play

Doorstep play, for under 5s, should focus on both dedicated and incidental play, and should be located within 1 minute's walking distance. Proposed development will need to demonstrate sufficient on-plot provision of doorstep play.

### Local Play

Local play, for 5-11s should be formed within dedicated local play spaces within 5 minutes walking distance, providing 'equipped' play opportunities either through conventional play equipment or natural play elements.

### Neighbourhood Play

Neighbourhood Play, for 12-18 year olds, should provide more substantial equipped play and recreation facilities while accommodating children of different ages and genders. Neighbourhood play should be within 15 minutes walking distance of residential development.



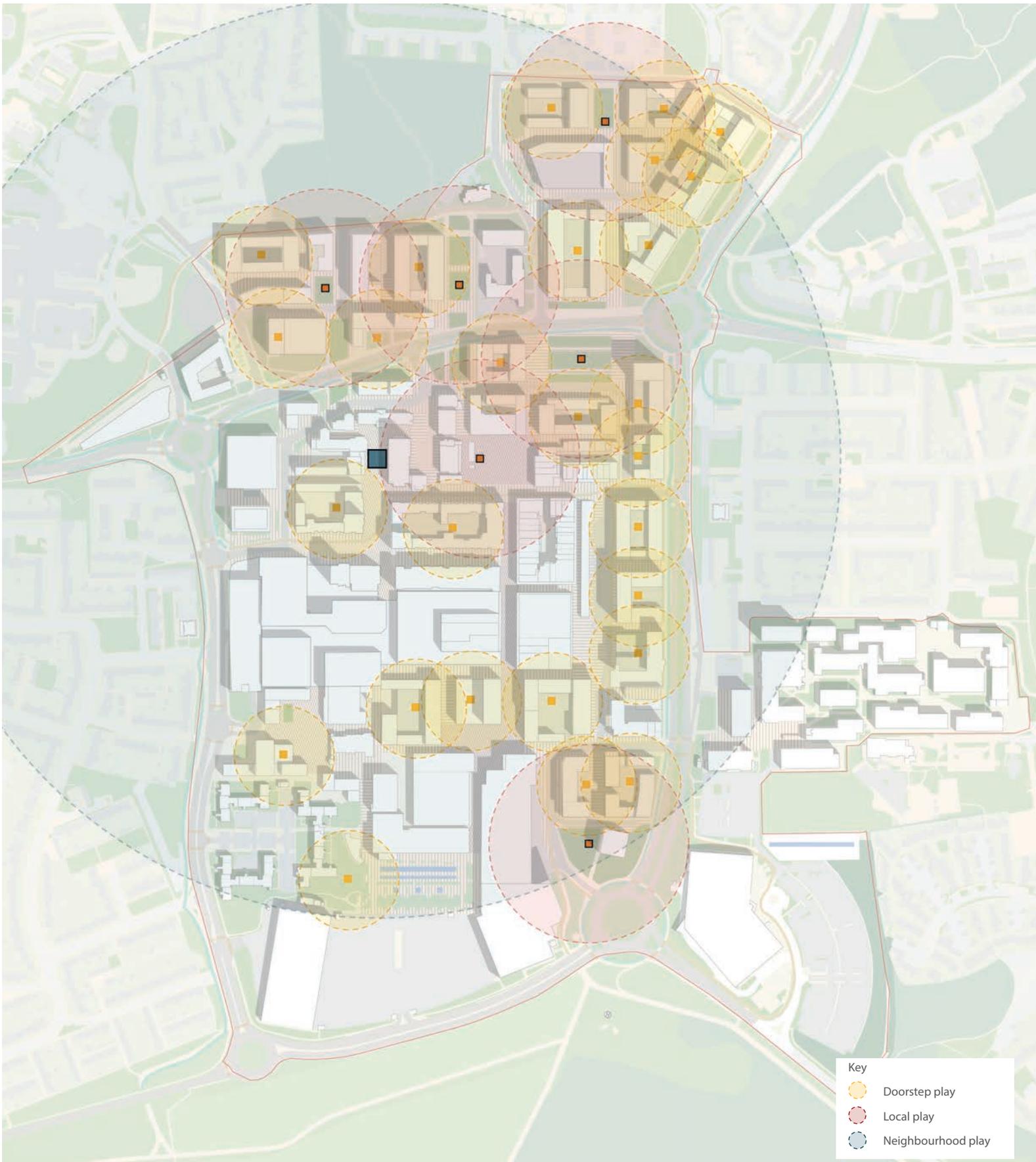
**Figure 95** Example of incidental doorstep play. St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow ©Townshend Landscape Architects



**Figure 96** Example of a water features as integrated local play. Neue Meile, Böblingen by bauchplan ).(



**Figure 97** Example of neighbourhood play. Martin Luther King Parc by Atelier Jacqueline Osty © Arnaud Dubois Fresney



**Figure 98** Plan showing indicative proposed play and recreation distribution Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

6.36. The following pages establish the open space typologies across the town centre. Each typology represents opportunities to nurture existing characteristics and uses. This, in turn, will help to provide a broad and diverse set of open spaces that will cater to residents and visitors alike. The typologies are as follows:

### Retail corridor

A hub of retail and commercial activity with designs that create an enjoyable retail experience.

### Plazas

A hub of arts and cultural activity that provides a high quality environment for the indoor and outdoor arts and cultural events and activities.

### Gardens

High-quality green spaces for the existing and new town centre communities, employees and visitors.

### Garden Square

Green public square with landscape amenity and infrastructure to support leisure and hospitality activities.

### Pocket Parks

New public green open spaces offering amenity and play areas for nearby residential uses.

### Recreation Space

Public open space with significant provision for children's sport and recreation.

Retail Corridor

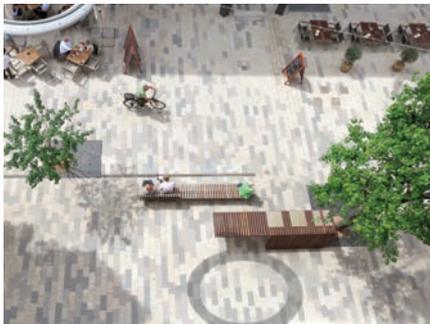


Figure 99 Neue Meile, Böblingen by bauchplan ).(

Plaza



Figure 101 Granary Square, King's Cross, London

Gardens



Figure 103 Jardin René et Madeleine Caille, Lyon

Garden Square



Figure 100 Central Wharf Plaza, Boston. Project by Reed Hilderbrand

Pocket Park

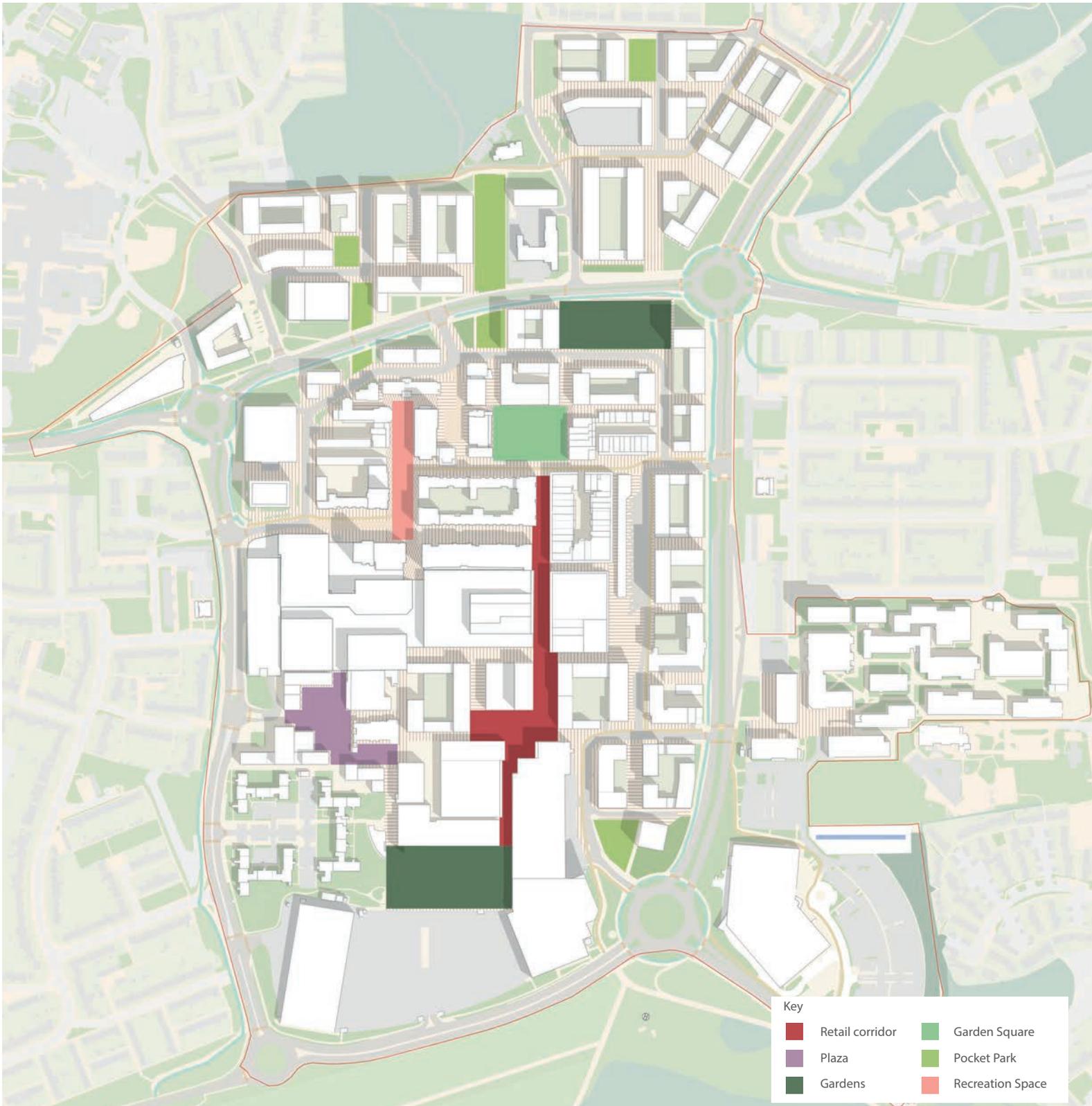


Figure 102 Reeves Play Park, London. ©Townshend Landscape Architects

Recreation Space



Figure 104 Martin Luther King Parc by Atelier Jacqueline Osty © Arnould Duboys Fresney



**Figure 105** Plan showing proposed open space typologies Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## RETAIL CORRIDOR

### Broad Walk

- 6.37. Broad Walk today consists of three disparate experiences in the north, middle, and south. Public realm improvements should seek to transform the character of the entirety of Broad Walk with designs that both animate the public realm and prioritise safety. Proposals should create a sequence of spaces, seating areas, and event spaces which will draw visitors along its full length. Increasing tree planting and understorey planting will transform the three-dimensional envelope. Improving the paving will create a unique identity for the street.

### Principles

- ① Create a continuous public realm intervention connecting from East Gate south through Cross Street Square to the Water Gardens. Increase tree planting and ground level planting. Introduce seating areas, new sculpture, and areas for market stalls.
- ② Improve connection to Sustainable Transport Hub with tree planting and improved lighting around overhead walkway (potential to remove walkway).
- ③ Redesign Cross Street Square. Remove awkward level changes and ramps. Introduce new sculpture. Anticipate improved east-west route along Cross Street.
- ④ Improve east-west connections along Cross Street, reinforcing connections between Velizy Avenue/Harlow College and Playhouse Square.
- ⑤ Improve the connection between Broad Walk and Water Gardens. Remove walls and ramps which block views into the Water Gardens. Replace eastern planting beds which are incongruous to the original Water Gardens design and are separating the two spaces.



Figure 107 Neue Meile, Böblingen by bauchplan ).(

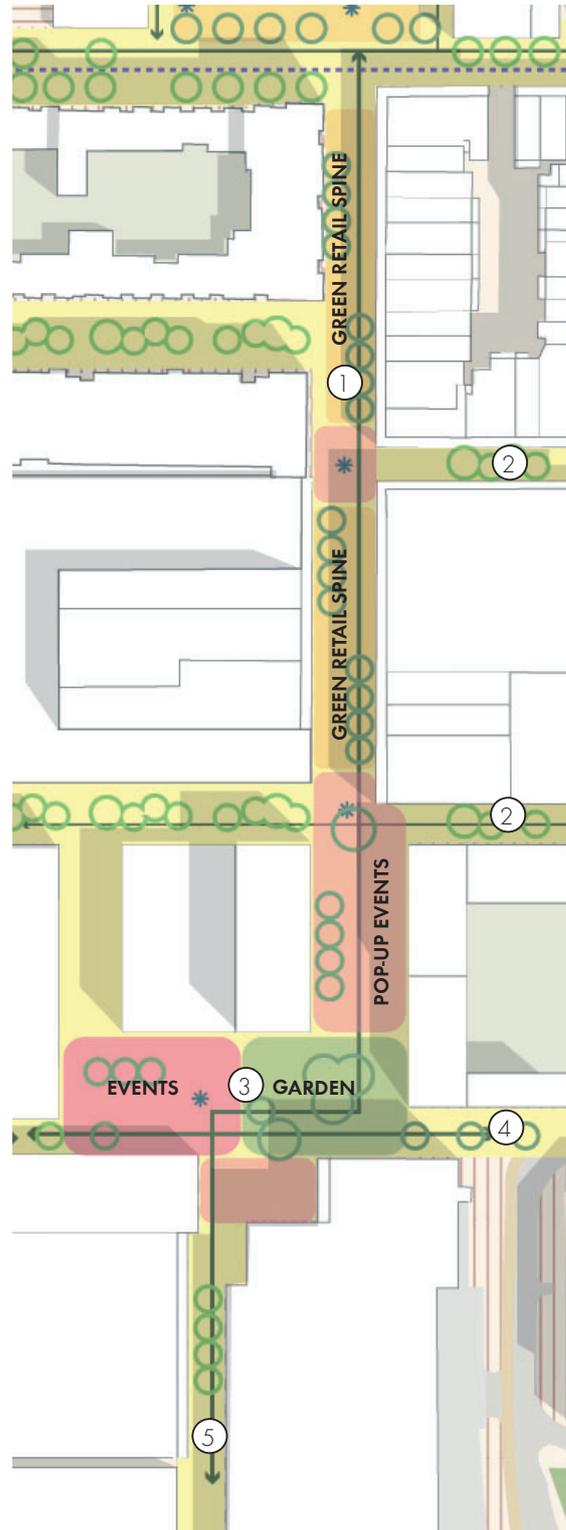


Figure 106 Proposed Broad Walk functional plan with principles Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## PLAZA

### Playhouse Square

- 6.38. Playhouse square should be considered a hub of arts and cultural activity that supports and diversifies the offer of Harlow Playhouse, providing a high quality environment for the indoor and outdoor arts and cultural events and activities. The space should also celebrate the Grade II listed St.Paul's Church - one of the town centre's greatest assets.

#### Principles

- ① Create a high-quality events space that can successfully host arts and cultural events, as well as providing a good place for everyday life and activities. Designs should consider incorporating an integrated water feature to bring interest and activity on non-event days
- ② Create a new setting worthy of St. Paul's Church including new planting, seating, and public art.
- ③ Redesign the service access to improve connection to Cross Street.
- ④ Improve well used pedestrian link from Cross Street to Water Gardens.
- ⑤ Improve pedestrian connections across Haydens Road and rationalise vehicle access to the Harvey Centre multi-storey car park.



Figure 109 Granary Square, Kings Cross is a large multi-purpose events space that hosts performances, installations and events but also provides an 'everyday' space with active edges, high-quality seating and water features



Figure 110 Gillett Square, Dalston, London by Hawkins\Brown

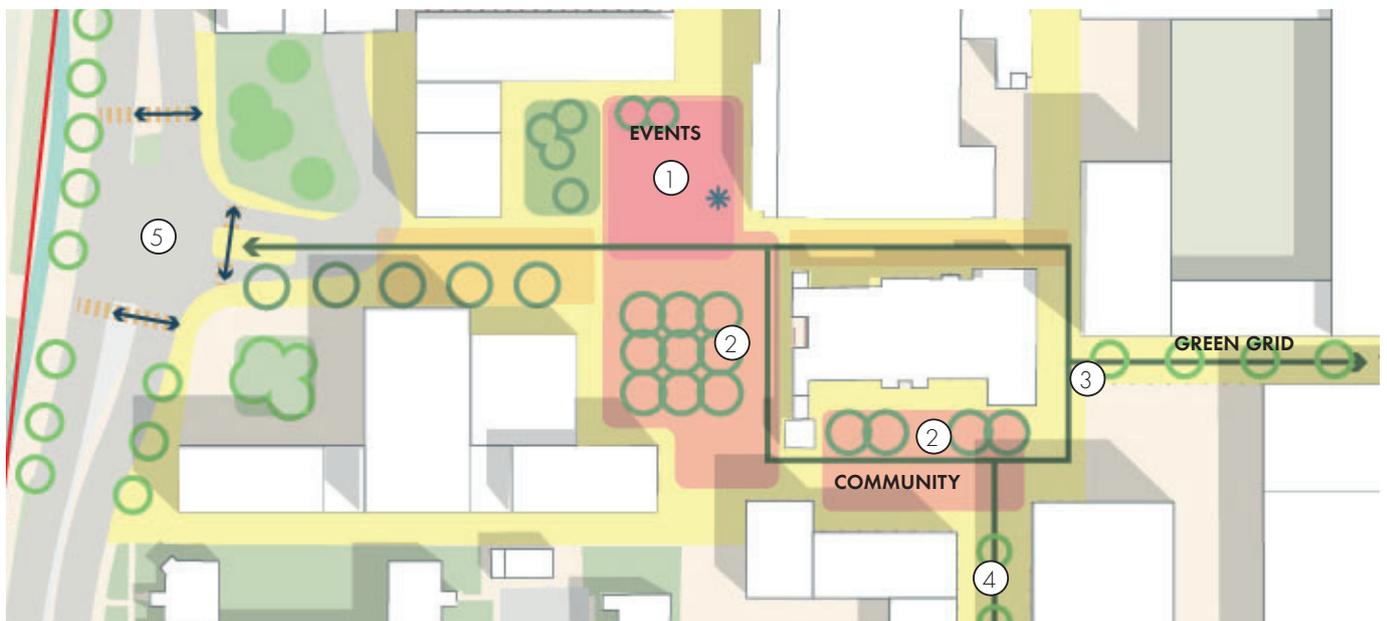


Figure 108 Proposed Playhouse Square functional plan with principles Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## GARDENS

### Post Office Gardens

- 6.39. The Post Office Road car park is the location of the largest grove of mature trees in the Town Centre and, as such, could be readily transformed into a new public open space with a welcoming tree canopy. The gardens should feature as a northern counter-point to the Water Gardens, creating a distinctive north-eastern gateway into the town centre. The space should open to the north, incorporating Fourth Avenue and encouraging a safe pedestrian crossing.

#### Principles

- ① Create a new garden square under the mature plane trees in Post Office Car Park. Designs should be multi-purpose but incorporating large areas of soft planting and lawn.
- ② Consider incorporating sculpture/artwork and a water feature taking inspiration from the water gardens, to the south.
- ③ Incorporate safe pedestrian crossings on Fourth Avenue.
- ④ Improve the streets and spaces around new developments with an emphasis on sustainable drainage and playable streets.



Figure 111 David H. Koch Plaza at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Project by OLIN



Figure 112 Jardin René et Madeleine Caille, Lyon

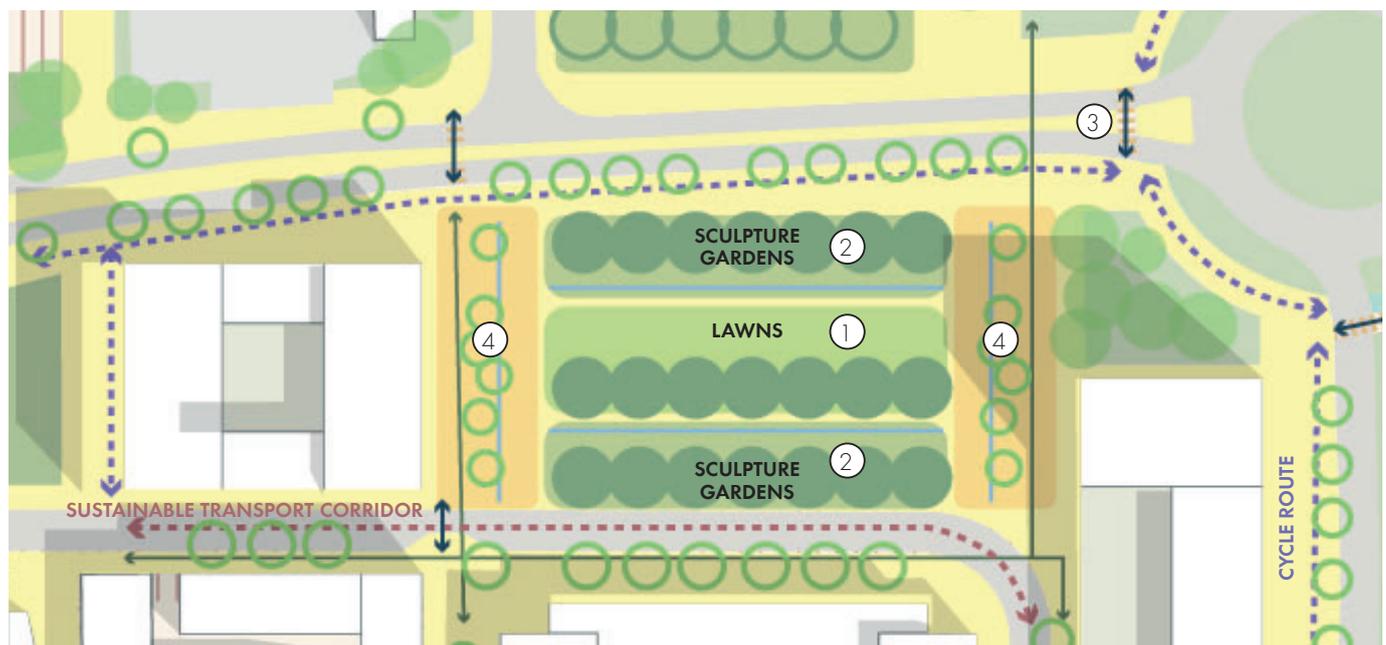


Figure 113 Proposed Post Office Gardens functional plan with principles Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## GARDEN SQUARE

### Stone Cross Square

- 6.40. Stone Cross Square should be designed to be safe and animated throughout the day, as both a multi-functional hub of leisure and hospitality activity and a gardens providing high-quality green amenity space for residents, workers and visitors. This area will be the hub of night life in the town alongside Playhouse Square.

#### Principles

- ① Create an active events space with infrastructure to support a range of activities.
- ② Introduce a garden-like space with mixed tree species and lush understorey planting as a place to dwell and socialise.
- ③ Provide planting and SuDS features in the north-eastern corner of the square to capture surface water runoff.
- ④ Introduce a row of trees at the southern edge of Stone Cross to delineate the space from East Gate and improve the setting of the Meat Porters sculpture.
- ⑤ Provide an integrated play feature next to the new community building and cycle hub.
- ⑥ Improve links to and from Post Office Road and the public realm along Post Office Walk.



Figure 114 Central Wharf Plaza, Boston. Project by Reed Hilderbrand



Figure 115 Windrush Square, London by Gross.Max ©Brixton Blog

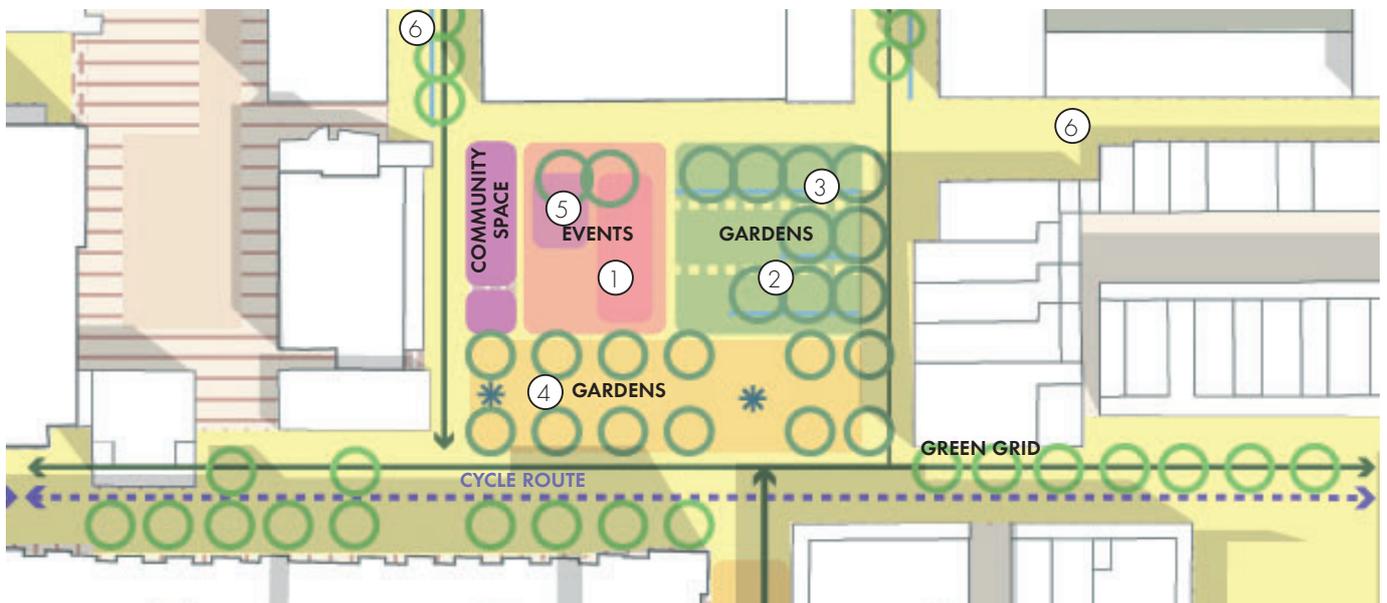


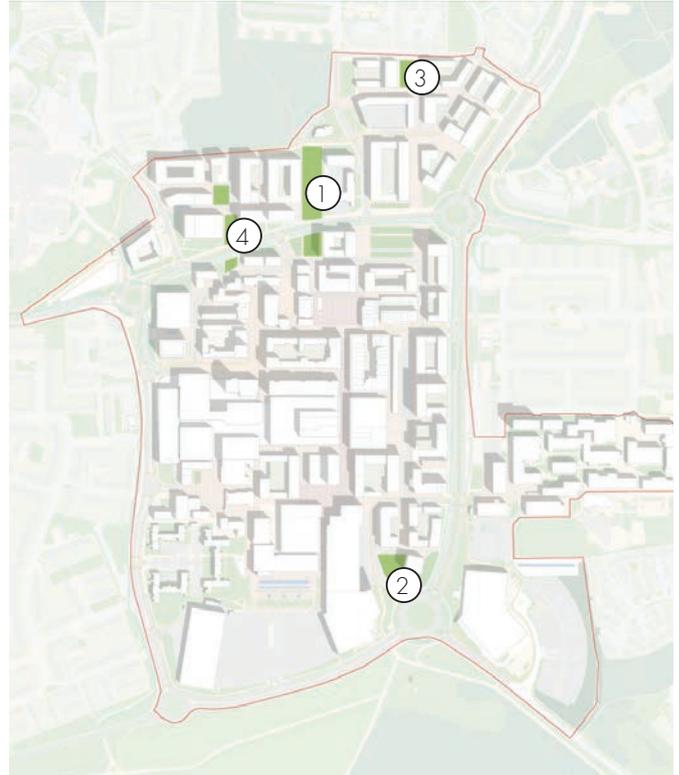
Figure 116 Proposed Stone Cross functional plan with principles Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## POCKET PARKS

- 6.41. Pocket parks are new public green open spaces offering local amenity and play areas for nearby residential uses. Each space should integrate generous planting and sustainable drainage features.

### Principles

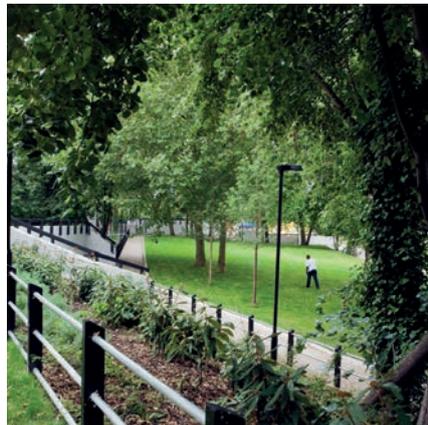
- ① Green link with cycling and walking connections between the Town Centre and Rectory Wood. Also a buffer between new development and the fire station.
- ② Green open space related to proposed development at South Gate Island. Designs should consider localised topography and enable connections towards Todd Brook.
- ③ New pocket park to support proposed residential development around the Sainsburys Northern Gateway Site.
- ④ New pocket park to support proposed development around Wych Elm.



**Figure 120** Plan highlighting proposed Pocket Parks across the town centre. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 117** Reeves Park, London with equipped play provision. ©Townshend Landscape Architects



**Figure 118** Alexandra Road Park. Multi-use green spine with dense planting, play areas and lawns. © J & L Gibbons



**Figure 119** Courtyard with planting and play features. St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow ©Townshend Landscape Architects

## RECREATION SPACE

### West Square

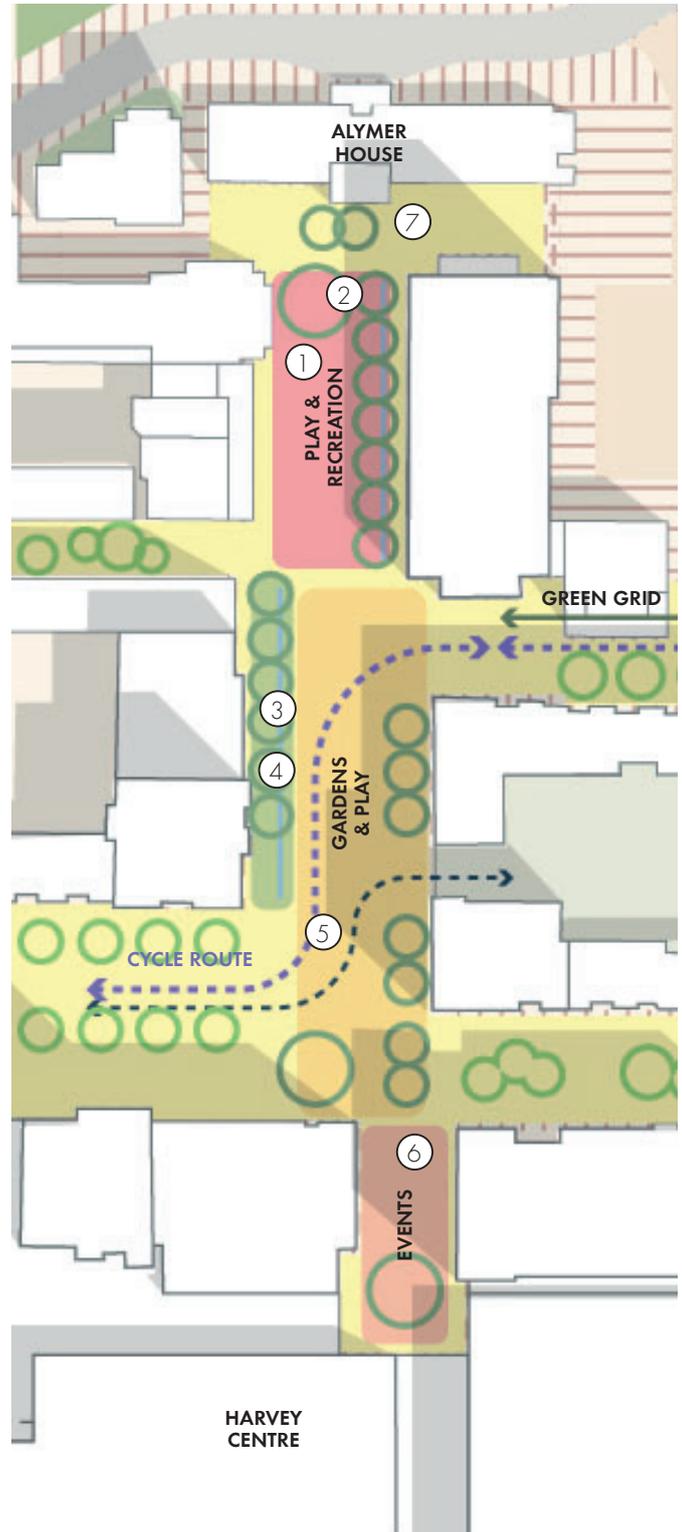
- 6.42. West square could provide a high-quality open space for play and recreation, particularly a place for 12-18 year olds. It should be a major play and recreation hub for young people across the town centre, as well as providing exercise/recreation opportunities for adults.

#### Principles

- ① Consider the creation of a generous activity space, framed by planting, with equipped play and recreation features e.g. basketball half court, skate plaza, and outdoor exercise equipment.
- ② Consider incorporation of 'secondary' play zones at the periphery of recreation spaces to ensure inclusivity for different ages and genders. This could be integrated e.g. within rain gardens or as part of paving designs.
- ③ Introduce mixed tree species and understorey planting, loosely arranged to contrast with planting along East Gate and West Gate. Planting should help to increase biodiversity and improve air quality.
- ④ Incorporate SuDS features, such as permeable paving and rain gardens, to manage surface water runoff, especially for recreation areas.
- ⑤ Create a clear and safe cycle route through West Square and managed vehicle access into proposed adjacent developments.
- ⑥ Create a new retail space and entrance to the Harvey Centre.
- ⑦ Improve the setting of Alymer House with trees and planting.



**Figure 121** Generous activity zone with running tracks and play equipment. Martin Luther King Parc by Atelier Jacqueline Osty © Arnaud Dubois Fresney



**Figure 122** West Square functional plan with principles Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## PUBLIC REALM ELEMENTS

- 6.43. The modern aesthetic of the Town Centre should establish the design precedent for the design of bold geometric paving patterns which help establish a public realm identity. Paving patterns should be repeating and geometric using materials of high contrast. Designs should avoid blended colour tone mixes. Small features should be introduced to create memorable moments. Material selection should favour natural stone or high-quality reconstituted stone paving.
- 6.44. High quality materials need to be laid well with skill and care and will rely on construction expertise. Training and skills development may be required as part of the roll out of the strategy.

### Principles

- Simple, clean, geometric paving patterns which relate to the modernist legacy. Designs should avoid blended colour tone mixes, faded effects between colour tones and overly-complex mixed paving sizes.
- Small, memorable details, such as: drainage channels, water inlets, utility covers and integrated signage should be used to reference Harlow's identity and could also be used to highlight special features.
- Material type, thickness, jointing and material sub-base should be considered where vehicle overrun is anticipated to avoid damage to paving materials. For footways, strengthened paving slabs are preferable to protective bollards, which can create streetscape clutter.
- Where possible, parking and loading bays should be integrated to increase the perceived footway width.

### Street Furniture



Figure 123 Sergels Torg, Stockholm by David Helldén



Figure 124 IBM Plaza, Honolulu by Surfacedesign Inc. ©Marion Brenner



**Figure 128** High quality, contrasting materials: granite and yorkstone



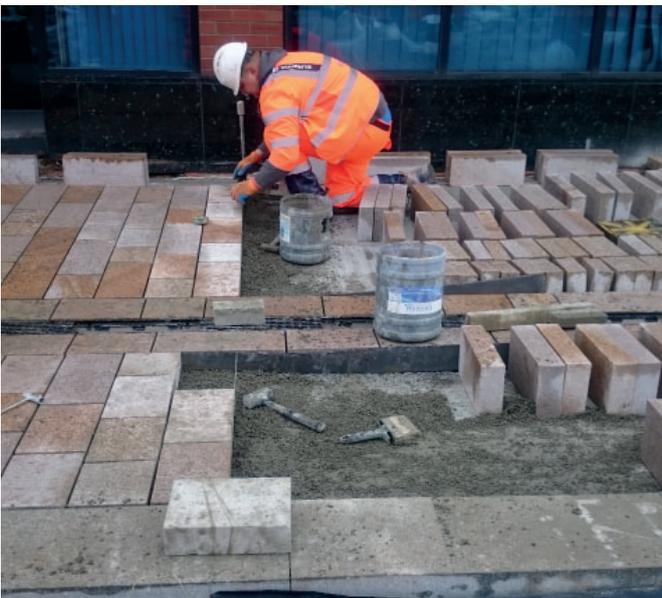
**Figure 127** Drain detail in BRFkredit plaza, Copenhagen © landskab.dk



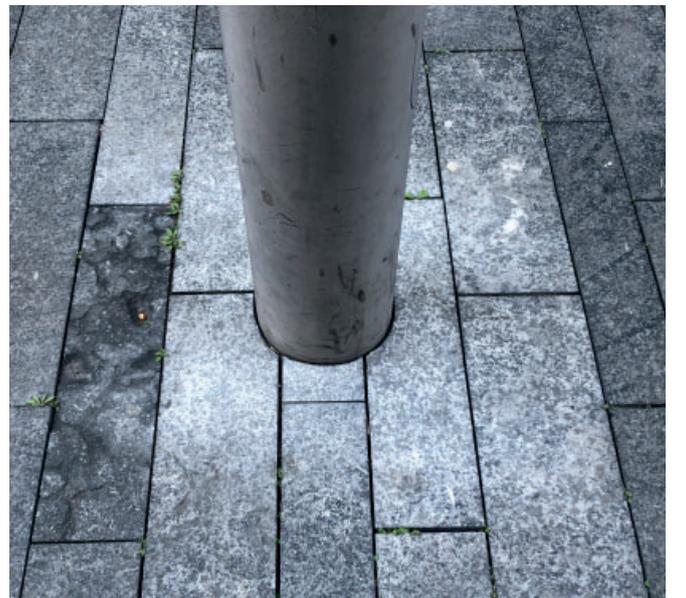
**Figure 130** Stevenage public realm improvements. The contrast is expressed between the granite benches and yorkstone paving. By LDA Design



**Figure 129** Drainage inlet cover highlights its purpose for SuDS stormwater capture. Haringey rain gardens by Robert Bray Associates



**Figure 125** Hull City of Culture 2017 public realm



**Figure 126** Example of careful installation and paving cutting

6.45. The public realm furnishing should be bold but contextual. Furniture selection should consider how it can contribute to the transformation of the function of the spaces. The furnishings palette should be high-quality, coherent and rationalised to minimise street clutter. Street furniture should be coordinated, with a consistent palette that complements Harlow's modernist character.

6.46. Micro play elements welcome and entertain children when visiting the town centre. Improvements will help to make all streets accessible and will compliment high quality materials proposed for the city centre.

### Principles

- Minimise duplication of street furniture by rationalising and combining elements.
- Make the colour and finish of all street furniture consistent.
- Use street furniture that is high quality.
- Integrate street furniture with components that can be easily maintained, repaired or replaced.
- Improve and maintain historic elements in the public realm such as the sculpture benches.

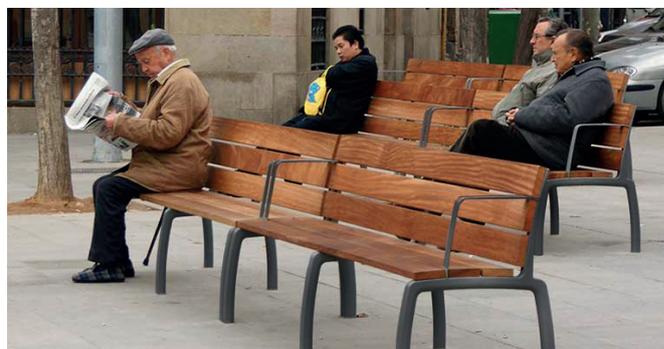


Figure 131 Standard seating with backs and arm rests. Kiwi bench by Escofet



Figure 134 Bollards ©Omos



Figure 135 Drinking fountain ©Urbidermis



Figure 132 Robust seating for retail streets. ©bauchplan ).(



Figure 136 Litter bin ©Artform Urban



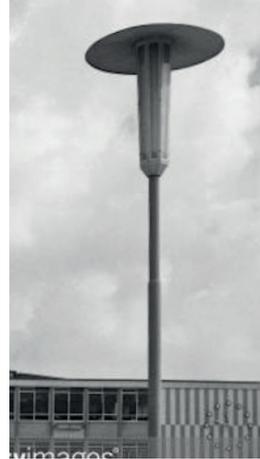
Figure 133 Cycle stand ©Marshalls

## Lighting

- 6.47. Lighting has the ability to transform character both day and night, with a view to supporting the night-time economy.

### Principles

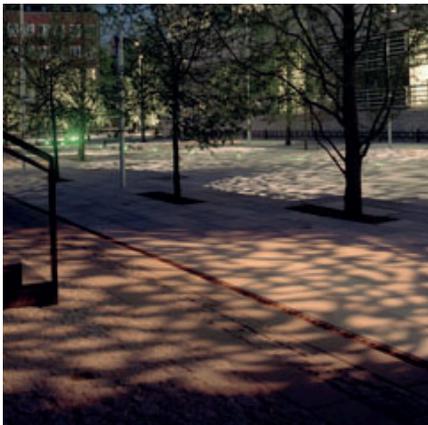
- Reference historic luminaires and consider re-introducing them as part of the town centre furniture palette.
- Use 'layered' and dispersed lighting to achieve the desired illuminance, rather than singular light sources floodlighting spaces.
- Use low energy 'smart' lighting technologies
- The spacing and mounting height of lighting should respond the hierarchy of different streets and spaces
- In spaces that host events, lighting columns should provide flexibility and could incorporate utility connections
- To avoid duplication of posts and reduce street clutter, lighting columns should generally be used for signage. Columns should ideally be parallel sided with flush access panels to enable easy signage attachment.
- Light columns adjacent to key junctions or pedestrian crossings should be a higher specification - to allow mounting of banners, signage, or traffic signals.
- Consider simple lighting effects such as pattern or catenary in key spaces and uplighting for trees.
- Incorporate playful lighting for underpasses to improve safety and create welcoming pedestrian and cyclist environments.



**Figure 140** Historic Harlow light column with large, distinctive luminaire design mounted on a tall column within Market Square



**Figure 141** Example of tall light columns complimented by low-level lighting. Kings Cross Square, London by Stanton Williams



**Figure 137** Simple lighting effect at Solbjerg Plads by SLA Architects



**Figure 138** Neue Meile Böblingen pedestrian zone - simple lighting in a key space © Bauchplan ),(



**Figure 139** Lighting at Joyces Court. © Dermoy Foley Landscape Architects

# 7 BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

## BUILDING HEIGHTS

### Setting the context

- 7.1. Gibberd established a key principle that the town should continue to evolve as the needs of people changed. The masterplan framework offers an opportunity to resolve aspects of the original masterplan which have constrained the success of the town centre (for example, the lack of greenery in the centre), and to address other challenges which have developed more incrementally as subsequent generations of development have taken place over the past seventy years.
- 7.2. In that context, the vision and spatial objectives (see chapter 4) establish a positive attitude towards change in the town centre which balance the need for evolution with a desire to maintain the fundamental characteristics of the town centre which are central to its identity.
- 7.3. For example, it is important that the green wedge structure remains, alongside the overall plan aesthetic, and visual links and relationships with the surrounding landscape. Similarly, health and wellbeing must be retained as core tenets for Harlow's residential neighbourhoods.
- 7.4. By embedding these fundamental characteristics, the masterplan framework promotes a contemporary identity which maintains a clear sense of continuity with Gibberd's vision and the wider New Town pillars of health, family, town and country. As such the guidance seeks to establish a flexible and responsive context for change whilst working within defined parameters.
- 7.5. At a time of unprecedented development pressure, it is important to consider what this means for building heights and taller buildings in the town centre. Taller buildings have played a historic role in demonstrating civic pride, and proposals for tall buildings should continue to fulfil this obligation. The Council is supportive of an ambitious level of change, but with this comes high expectations for design quality and a proactive approach to the management of applications for tall buildings.

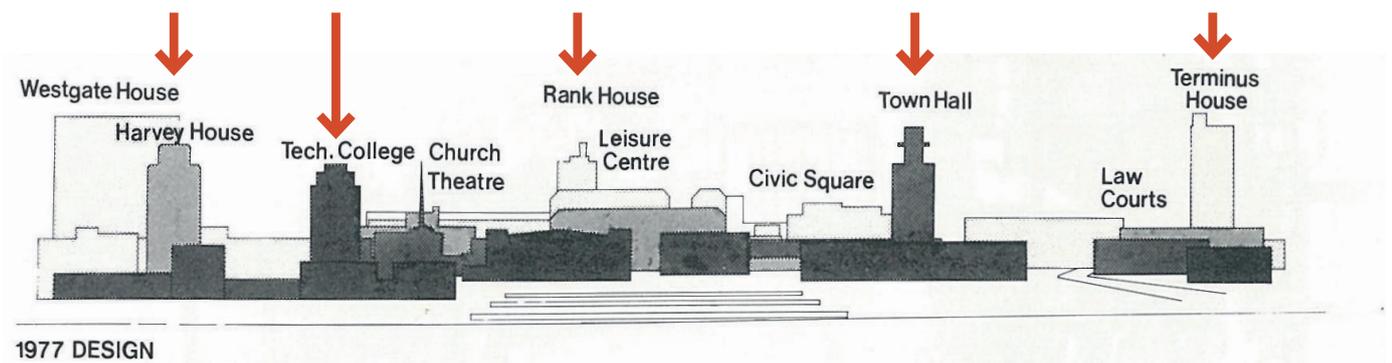
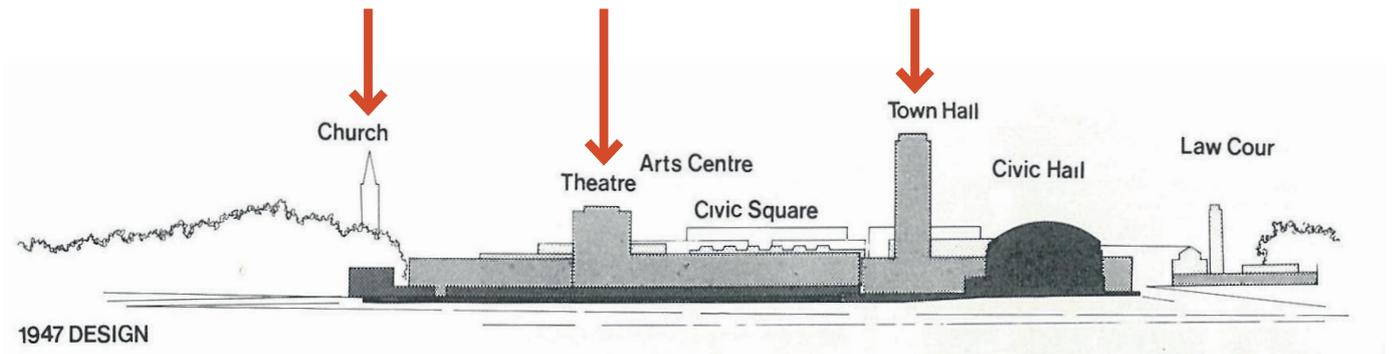


Figure 142 Tall building location: Frederik Gibberd original design

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

- 7.6. Historic evolution of taller buildings in Harlow**  
Harlow lies to the south of the valley of the River Stort set below the higher ground to the south and north. It was part of Sir Frederick Gibberd's original vision to contain the town within the natural landform pattern. Land to the east and west is more undulating.
- 7.7. The adjacent grid of images (figure 142) illustrates the heritage of tall buildings in Harlow town centre. Many of these elements remain as distinctive features in the skyline, but others such as the Town Hall have now been demolished. Figure 141 highlights the location in section of taller elements as envisaged in 1947, and latterly in 1977. A number of features are clear through initial years of development, and the updated masterplan in 1979.
- 7.8. 'The Lawn', completed in 1951, won a Ministry of Health Housing medal for its design due to its architectural style which also allowed each flat to have a south-facing balcony. There are now several high-rise buildings in the district which accommodate both commercial and residential use. The majority of those are situated within the town centre including Terminus House which is 14 storeys high and Joseph Rank House at 12 storeys. More recently applications have been submitted and in some instances approved for 11, 12 and 15 storey high buildings. Tall buildings can make a valuable contribution towards housing, activity and the wider public realm if they are designed correctly and positioned appropriately in the town centre.
- Typical typologies**
- 7.9. In broad terms, analysis indicates three distinctive building typologies typically exist in the town centre:
- Townscape buildings including perimeter blocks of 2-3 storeys;
  - Slab blocks of 5-6 storeys; and
  - Point blocks of 10-12 storeys.
- 7.10. The Addendum to the Design SPD indicates that, in the round, tall buildings are defined as structures that are more than 6 metres taller in height above that of surrounding buildings or that are over 30 metres in height ('The Lawn' for example is 35 metres in height). In this context, the majority of buildings which are considered tall are point blocks, although some slab blocks have a significant townscape presence.
- 7.11. There are also several examples of buildings which form "shoulder" blocks. Although these tend to sit beneath the tall building threshold, it is important consider their proportional relationship with adjacent taller elements, and their absolute height from a public realm perspective.

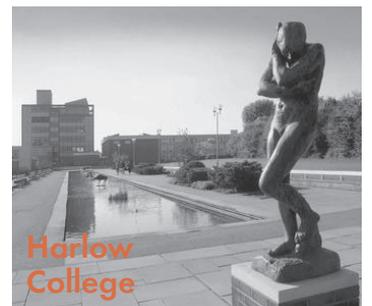
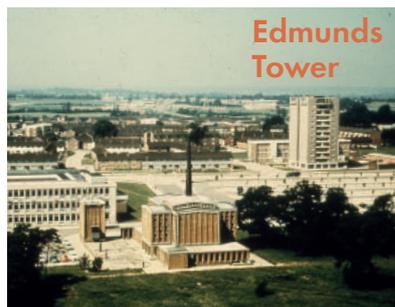
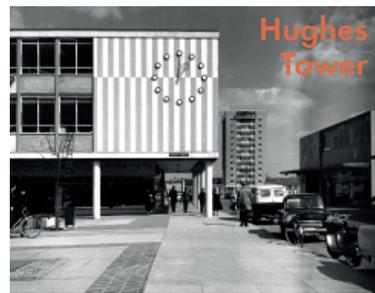
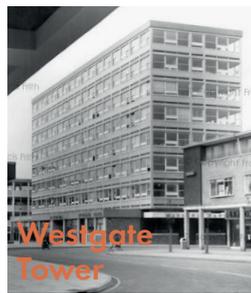


Figure 143 Tall buildings of Harlow

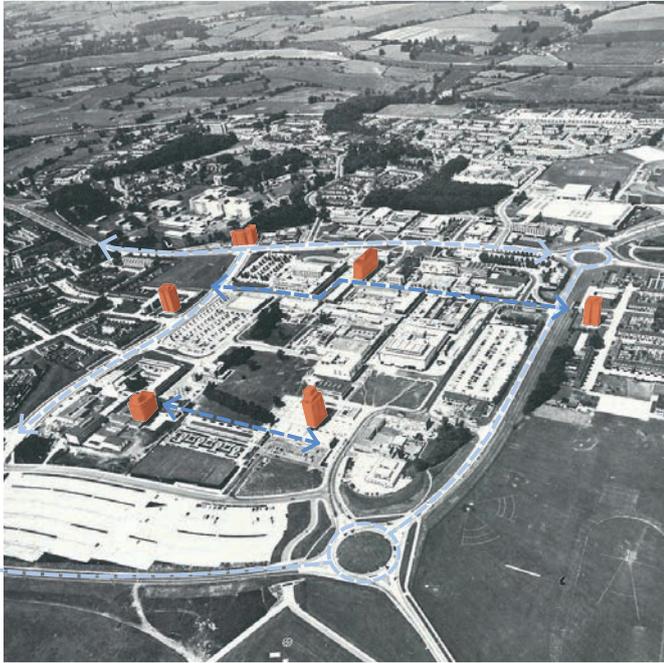


Figure 144 Tall building locations: 1962

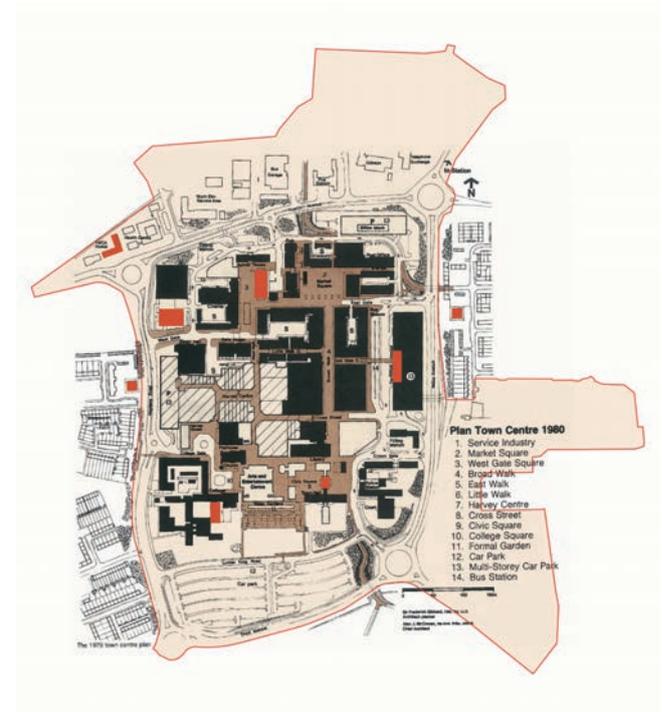


Figure 145 Tall building locations: The 1979 updated town centre masterplan

- 7.12. **Typical characteristics and positioning**  
Historically, taller buildings in Harlow town centre have been characterised as follows:
- They are positioned close to the perimeter route of the town centre. They tend not to be situated directly on roundabouts or junctions.
  - There is a tendency for tall buildings to be adjacent to East-West routes through the town centre.
  - Tall buildings are generally standalone elements that punctuate the skyline. They do not tend to be clustered.
  - Taller elements often indicate the thresholds between neighbourhoods and the town centre. They are not just situated within the core central area

- Towers visibly meet the ground – they are not buried within larger blocks.
  - They form vertical markers, illustrating a threshold, municipal buildings, amenity and public spaces.
  - There was a clear intention to delineate the Water Gardens. The Town Hall and Harlow College Tower outline the historic water gardens
- 7.13. The demolition of the original Town Hall and Harlow College tower, in combination with the re-configuration of the Water Gardens area have negated the final principle above. However, most of these defining characteristics are generally still present.



Figure 146 Tall building locations: Existing



Figure 147 Tall building locations: Concentrated development

7.14. Figure 145 highlights recently consented buildings. These include the following schemes:

- Strawberry Star: Comprising point blocks within slab blocks (8 to 16 storeys). These are set against shoulder blocks of 3-7 storeys. Views will also take in existing tall buildings at Westgate House and Joseph Rank House. Taken in combination, these buildings could be considered as a cluster.
- Wych Elm House: Arranged as a slab block with taller point block (11 storeys) against shoulder blocks of 7-8 storeys.
- Terminus House South: Formed as an “L” shaped tall building stepping from 9 to 11 to 13 storeys.

7.15. At time of writing, a number of further schemes with taller elements are coming forward, either as planning applications or emerging proposals at pre-planning stages. It is important that future proposals are assessed against a clear framework which is the purpose of this chapter.

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

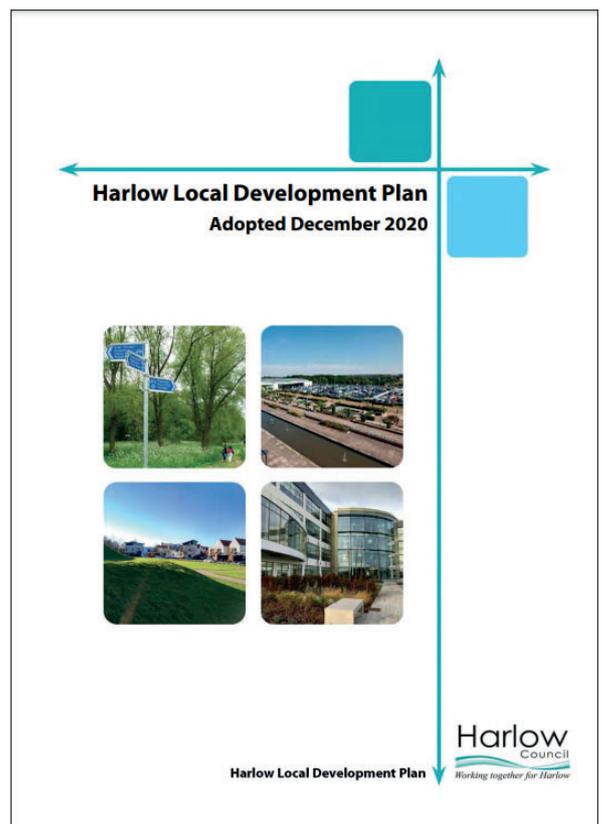
### GUIDANCE NOTES ON TALL BUILDINGS

- 7.16. The following guidance defines a clear framework for assessing and steering building heights and taller elements in the town centre. Proposals for taller elements should demonstrate their compliance and performance against each of these guidance points and other relevant HLDP policies.

#### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5A: Respond to the policy context

Policy PL1 of the Harlow Local Development Plan sets out the design principles for new development including the consideration of local context, urban form, green infrastructure and scale, height and massing. These key policies are supported and augmented in chapter 5 (town wide masterplan frameworks and guidance) and chapter 6 (guidance relating to public realm).

There is a basic expectation that all major schemes in the town centre would embrace this general guidance. Proposals for higher density and schemes which propose mid-rise and taller elements will be subject to additional scrutiny to demonstrate exceptional design quality.

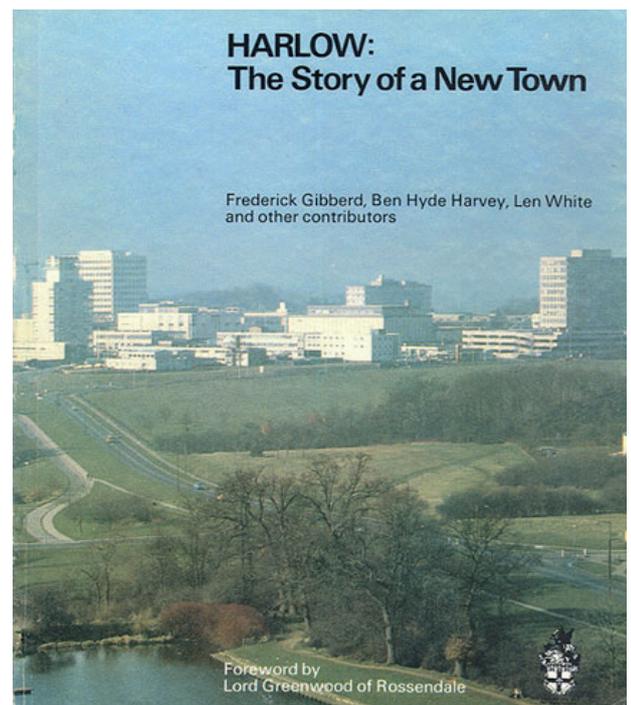


**TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5B:  
Consider context and assess sensitivity and suitability**

The Council will require any proposal for tall buildings to consider the relationship with the existing context, including prevailing building heights. As part of this, proposals should demonstrate that the location is appropriate in relation to an evaluation and assessment of suitability and sensitivity.

Proposals must demonstrate the suitability of the proposals in relation to excellent public transport and cycling accessibility, proximity to town centres or local facilities and access to green spaces.

Proposals must consider the sensitivity of the site in relation to any potential impact on designated and undesignated heritage assets, views, ecological assets, public spaces and green spaces.



# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

### **TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5C: Respond to key views and setting**

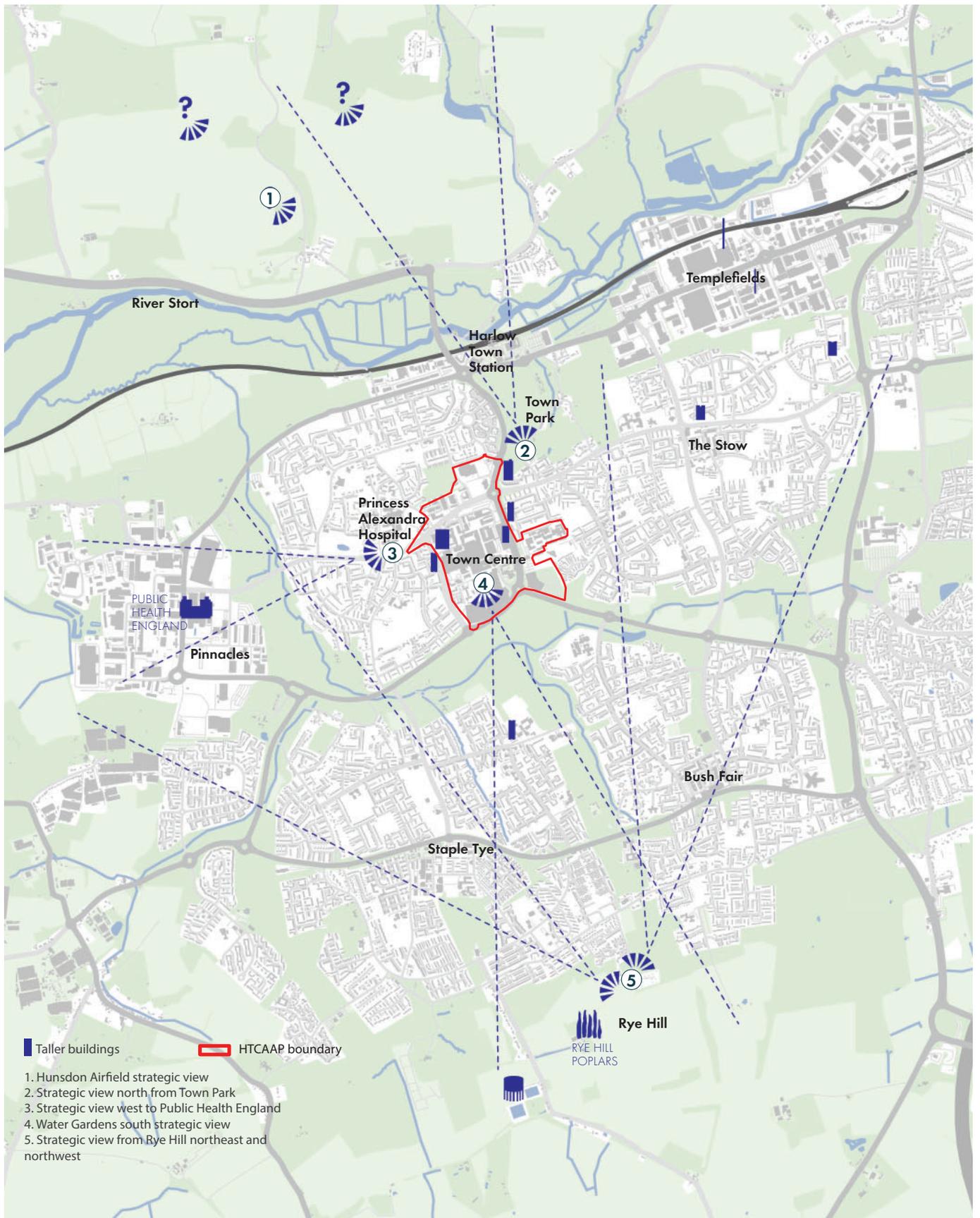
Development proposals must protect and enhance key views and vistas both within and out of the town centre as illustrated in figures 146 to 148. Opportunities to enhance and open these views will be supported. These include gateway views into the centre from the College, to Stone Cross and Crowngate Island.

As illustrated in figure 148, views towards heritage assets, historic buildings and their settings within the town centre should be protected unless the development proposal enhances these views. Any development in the foreground and background should be of exceptional design quality and contribute positively towards the composition and setting of these buildings. Key assets such as St Paul's will require careful consideration and assessment.

Long views out of the town centre towards green spaces are encouraged. The Council will support proposals that seek to establish and / or contribute positively to a long view between the town centre at North Gate towards Rectory Wood, along a proposed strategic area of green space (View 9), and from St. Paul's Church south towards Rye Hill (View 20).

The panoramic view south towards Rye Hill from the Town Hall and The Water Gardens (View 21) has historic significance as an important element of Gibberd's original vision for the town. This view must be protected and opportunities sought for its enhancement. Strategic views from Town Park are also important and should be protected and enhanced, potentially looking towards key markers in the town centre.

Applicants should provide their own information and studies relating to viewpoints and how they would be respected, including maps, CGI images and physical models – as appropriate – to demonstrate any visual impact from the proposed development. Where the development site is located on a gradient, the shortest elevation of the proposed development should be measured, to ensure maximum impact on the surrounding area is considered.



**Figure 148** Wider context - views and landmarks  
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# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY



Figure 149 Harlow is visible from the outer edges of the town, shown diagrammatically above. ©Allies and

### Key views (figure 148)

1. Long view from Harlow Town Park along Fifth Avenue towards landmark building
2. Panoramic view from Fifth Avenue towards landmark building and open space
3. Panorama from Fourth Avenue towards open space
4. Panorama across open space from Fourth Avenue
5. Market Square from northeast corner
6. Market House, Adams House and Square from north-west corner
7. Market House, Adams House and Square from southwest corner
8. Adams House and Square from southeast corner
9. Long view north towards Rectory Wood from along North Gate
10. Long view south from strategic green space towards North Gate
11. View east along West Gate towards Town Centre from Haydens Road
12. View north along Broad Walk towards Market Square
13. View south along Broad Walk
14. View east along Playhouse Square towards St. Paul's from Haydens Road
15. Panoramic view north of St. Paul's and open space
16. View west towards St. Paul's from Broad Walk / Cross Street space
17. View west from Harlow College along Cross Street towards St. Paul's
18. View north towards Sustainable Transport Hub
19. View south towards Third Avenue
20. View south towards Rye Hill from St. Paul's Church
21. Panorama towards Rye Hill

### Key gateway locations

- A. Post Office site
- B. Green gateway
- C. Market Square / Birdcage Walk
- D. Velizy Avenue to the Sustainable Transport Hub through Broad Walk
- E. Green route south to Green Wedge
- F. West through Cross Street



Figure 150 Indicative views and landmarks Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

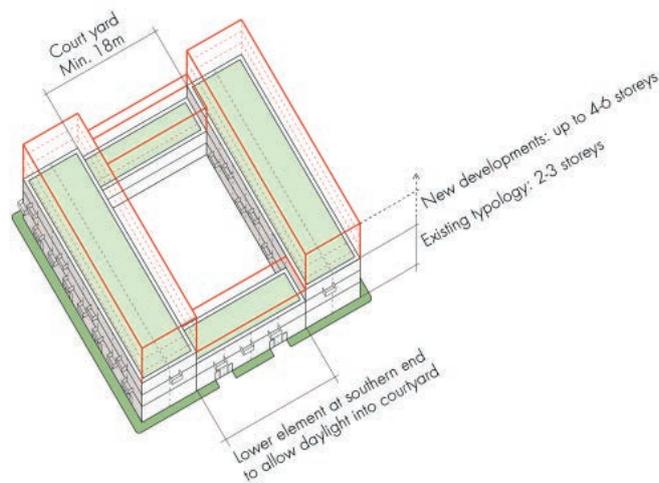


Figure 152 Perimeter blocks 2-3 storeys

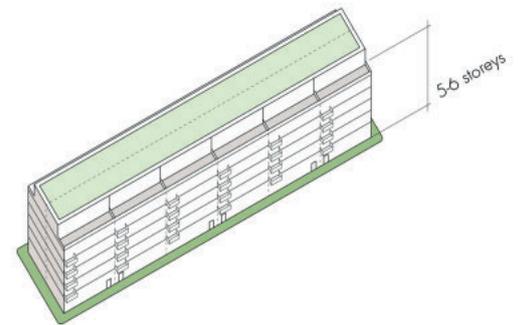


Figure 151 Slab blocks 5-6 storeys

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5D: Appropriate geometry, typologies and positioning

Proposals for schemes with a predominance of buildings in excess of 3-4 storeys should demonstrate that building form, massing and typologies are appropriate to the Harlow context.

The heights referenced in guidance note 5D relate to appropriate indicative heights, rather than a prescriptive maximum height. Proposals will be considered holistically on their merits in relation to this guidance, and the design criteria in notes 5F, 5G and 5H, the Addendum to the Design Guide and adopted policies in HLDP.

#### Simple geometry

In general, proposals should reflect a tradition of simple geometries with square or rectangular plan forms. However, instances where alternative geometries could be considered where proposals are of high quality design and respect context.

#### Appropriate typologies

Proposals should reflect the typical typologies and form of buildings in the town centre. The following diagrams highlight the fundamental guiding principles:

- **Perimeter blocks:** New development with suitable site dimensions should consider the perimeter block as appropriate typology. Upper heights of 4-6 storeys are possible, with heights dropping to 2-3 storeys along the southern and northern edges to achieve adequate daylighting

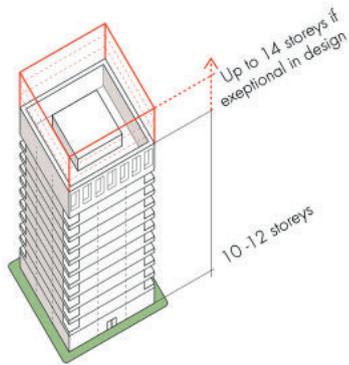


Figure 153 Point blocks 10-12 storeys

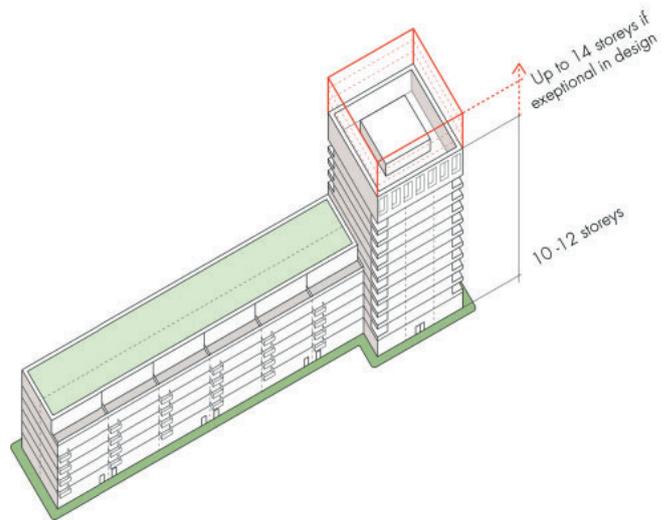


Figure 154 Point and shoulder block

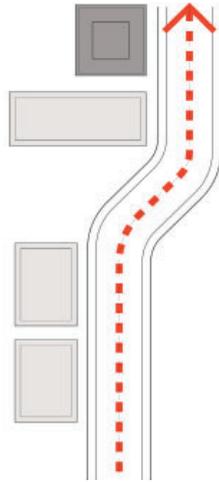
within the block. It is not appropriate to extrude a point block from the corner of a perimeter block.

- **Slab blocks:** Slab blocks of 4-6 storeys are an appropriate form of development in Harlow town centre. Where a tall element is considered appropriate, proposals might consider a single point block at the end of a slab block, with the slab element establishing a suitable shoulder height.
- **Point blocks:** Point blocks should continue to be the prevalent form of tall building in the town centre. Typically, heights of 10-12 storeys are likely to represent a suitable massing. However, more ambitious levels of up to 14-16 storeys might be appropriate subject to exemplary design and adherence to the various criteria identified below.

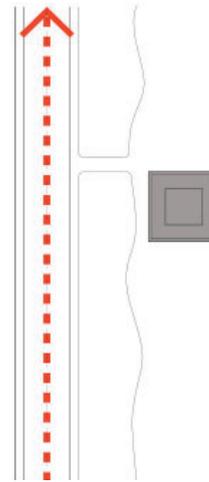
- **Appropriate shoulder height relationships:** First, shoulder blocks should not generally exceed 6 storeys as an absolute height. Massing which exceeds six storeys on buildings with a long horizontal elevation is likely to impact on the quality of the street environment. Secondly, the relative height of the shoulder block should not exceed 50% of the height of an immediately adjacent point block. Exceeding this relative height can result in an unbalanced massing which will undermine place identity.

# 7

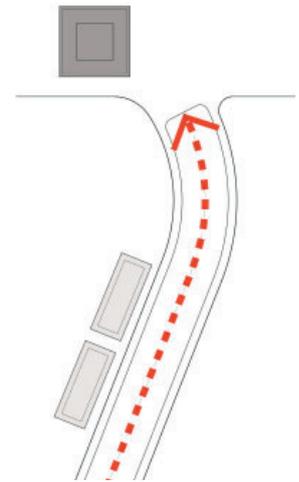
## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY



**Figure 155**  
Tall building obscured by foreground



**Figure 156**  
Tall building to the side of linear route



**Figure 157**  
Tall building at the end of curved route

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5D: CONTINUED

#### Positioning

Taller buildings in Harlow tend to be situated on the edge of a block, or as standalone elements. They tend not to be embedded in larger blocks, and historically have avoided clustering. The following diagrams illustrate some of the typical relationships which proposals should seek to emulate:

1. Tall building partially obscured by lower foreground buildings.
2. Tall building situated to the side of a linear route.
3. Tall building at the end of a curved route.

Proposals should, in general, avoid further clustering effects in the town centre. For example, proposals should generally avoid:

- Positioning of multiple tall buildings in close proximity on a single site or adjacent sites.
- Cumulative impacts where multiple tall buildings clash in the foreground or background of defined views.

In certain circumstances, it might be appropriate to make the case for a small cluster (estimated as two to three taller elements). In order to do so, proposals should demonstrate exceptional design quality of the building and the street environment, as well as achieving the required amenity standards as set out in HLDP (see Notes 5F, 5G and 5H). These criteria should be met by the proposal itself, and cumulatively across the wider Opportunity Area as a whole, demonstrating how the proposals contribute to the overall regeneration of the area and place-making benefits.

Building heights on the perimeter of the town centre and adjacent to the key boulevard streets (Velizy Avenue / Fourth Avenue) should seek to avoid a barrier between the town centre and adjacent neighbourhoods and must avoid any over-concentration of tall buildings in that area.

Proposals must also consider the spacing between buildings and views of the skyline.

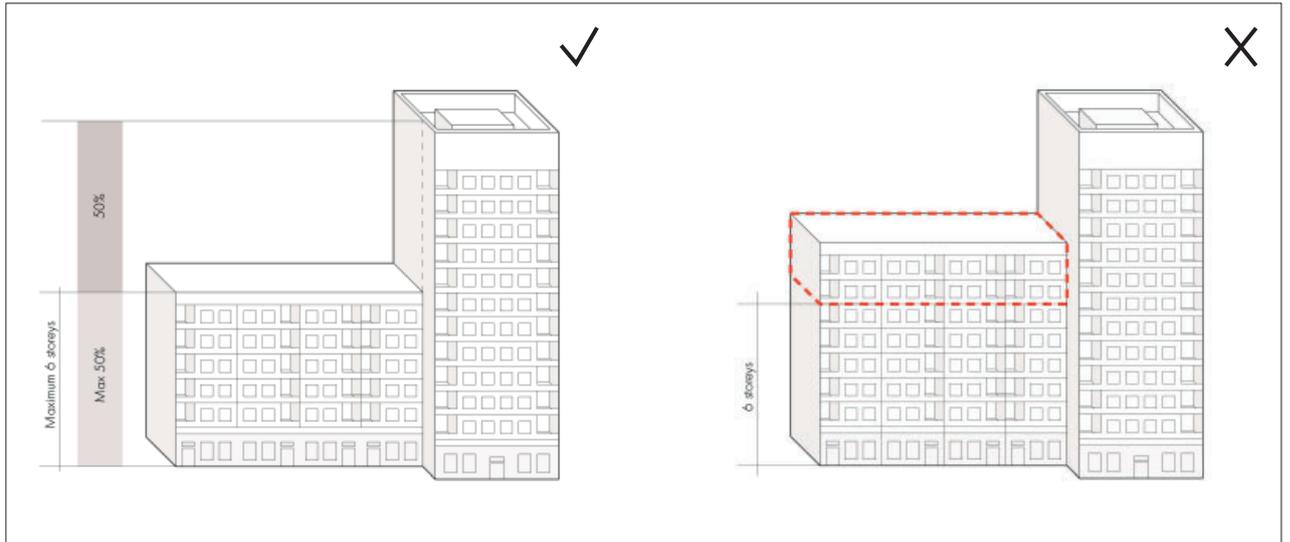


Figure 158 Appropriate shoulder height

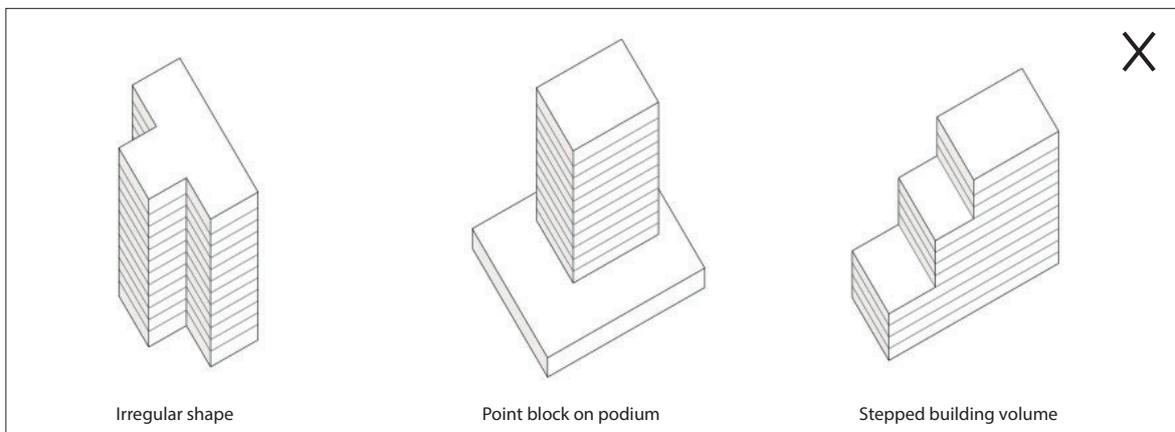
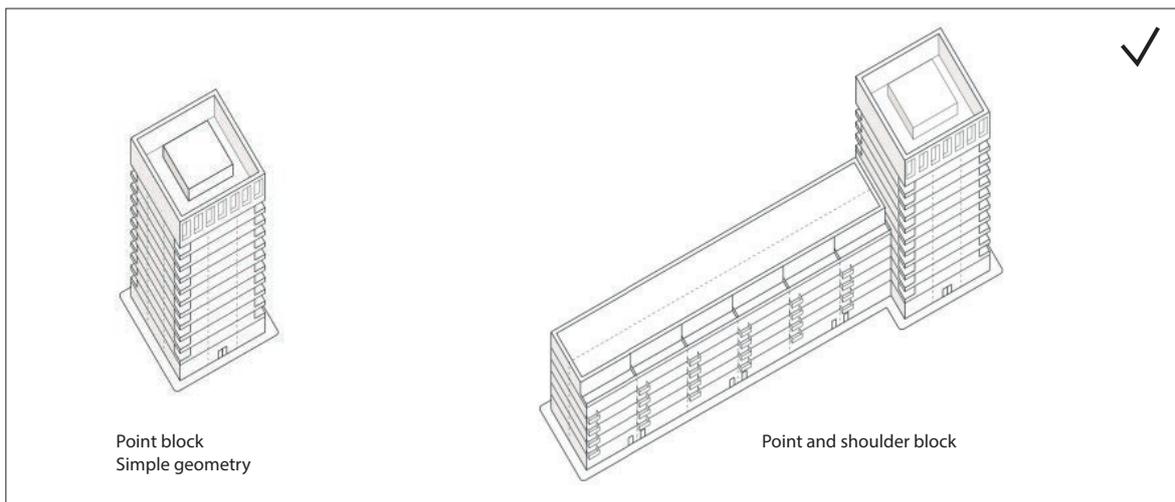


Figure 159 Appropriate geometry of tall buildings

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

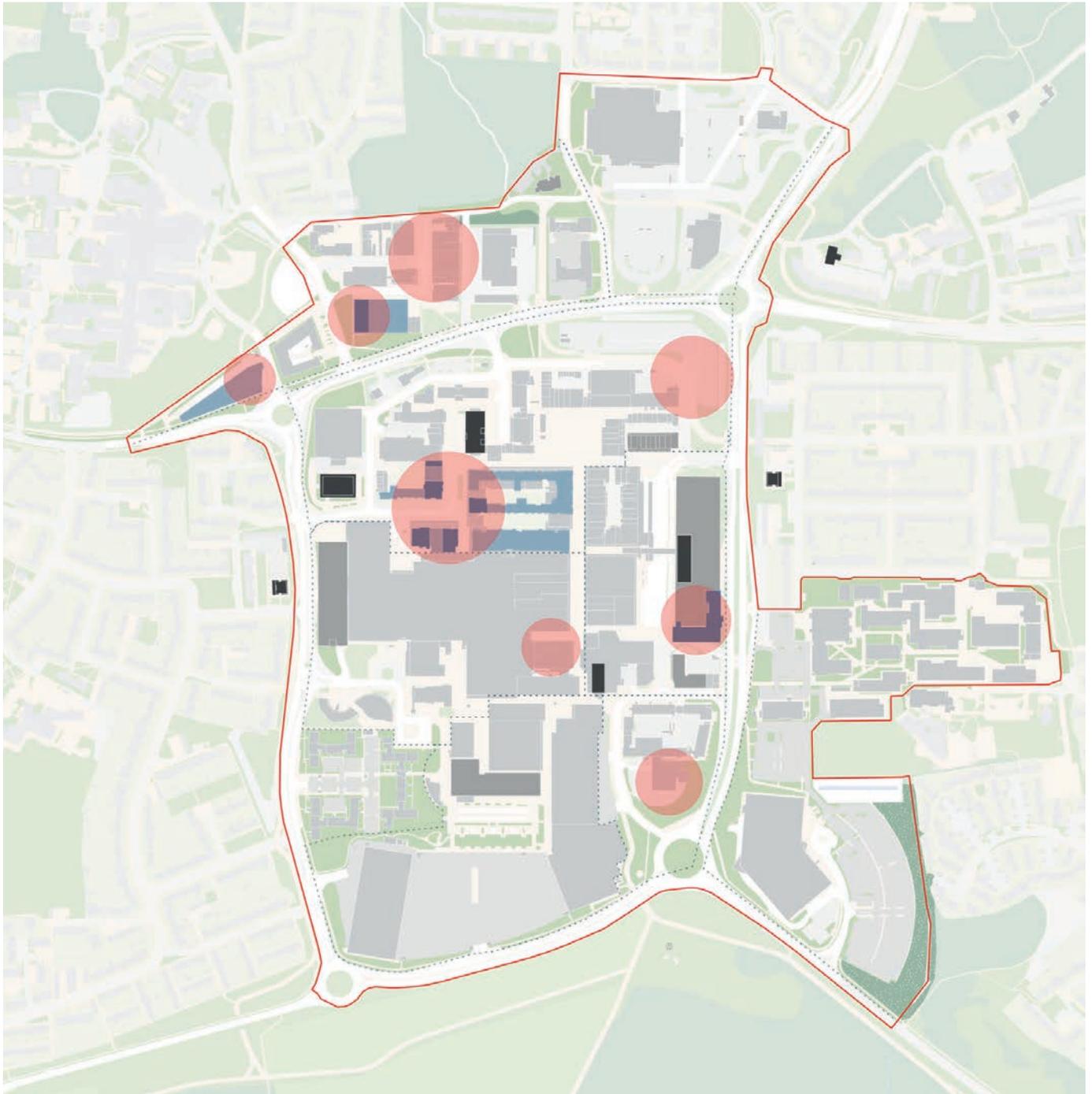
### **TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5E: Zones for potential tall buildings**

The adjacent tall building framework plan defines zones which have more obvious potential for taller elements based on the guidance above. Other locations might offer opportunities for mid-rise, high density schemes.

Additional zones for tall buildings might be appropriate in exceptional circumstances, but the various criteria and circumstances outlined in this chapter would need to be met to provide a convincing justification.

The boundaries of the zones are intended to be indicative. The location of a site within a potential tall building zone does not mean that any building in the zone can be tall.

Where specific local relationships require consideration, these are set out in chapter 8. As noted in 5D, clustering within a zone should, in general terms, be avoided – in that context, it is anticipated that each zone might accommodate a single point block, or point block alongside a shoulder block as defined above.



- Zones which might accommodate a single point block or point block alongside shoulder block
  - Concentrated tall buildings (shoulder block)
  - Concentrated tall buildings (point block)
- Existing buildings
  - Existing tall buildings (shoulder block)
  - Existing tall buildings (point block)

**Figure 160** Indicative tall building framework plan

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5F: Design criteria

It is **essential that new tall buildings make a positive contribution to their surroundings** through an appropriate form, setback, massing and architectural language. In some instances, for example the town centre, the developer may be required to produce a Massing Study as part of their planning application and through pre-application discussions, in addition to the other required analyses.

New tall buildings will be expected to **improve and enhance the character and appearance of the local area**, by providing an aesthetically-pleasing design and creating a landmark building. It should also however **celebrate the unique design heritage of Harlow and consider design cues from the immediate area and Harlow more generally** are followed through in regards to scale, massing, colours, materials and detailing of the original fabric, and the integration of public art and sculpture.

Development proposals should **consider cues from the features and typical palette of materials of Harlow's original New Town character** to inform its building design alongside opportunities for contemporary re-interpretation and innovation. Buildings have colour accents and use is made of tile and other materials to complement brick, stone and concrete. For example, features in the town centre include vertical articulation of façades, large protrusions on façades and rhythm through the repetition of geometric shapes. Glazing on many buildings is encased by slender window frames which give a

delicate distinctiveness to the façades and is fundamental to Harlow's character.

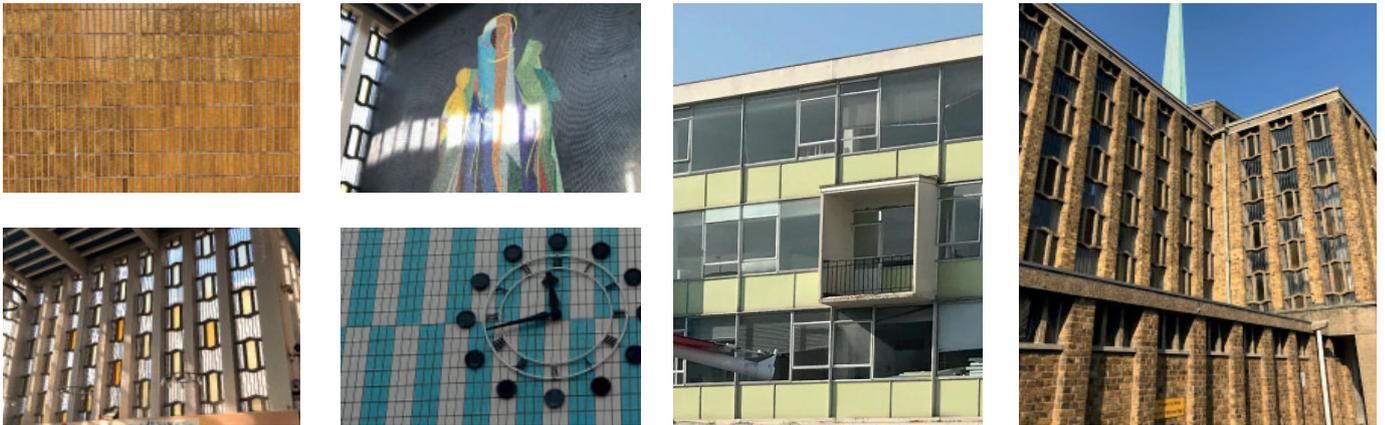
The materials of a tall building would be dependent on the design but **the Council would prefer colours that are harmonious with the context and prevailing townscape colours**. Brash colours which do not fit in with the local character should be avoided, as this visual approach usually dates quickly and erodes the local character. If a directly contrasting visual style, or aesthetic, to the local townscape is proposed, the contrast should have demonstrable design generators that relate to the local context.

Developers should also **consider the night-time aesthetic of proposed tall buildings**. Lighting in particular is a key design consideration, as it can greatly impact on long and near views. Lighting can be manipulated to the advantage of a tall building, to accentuate particular features.

As well as being of a suitable height and design for the local area, new tall buildings should take into account their visibility from further away. **Tall building design should pay attention to how the building will be viewed from a range of locations, both from nearby and from afar.**

*Note: Guidance Note 5F is derived from the Draft Addendum to the Harlow Design Guide SPD - this text might therefore require further minor updates following completion of the Addendum following consultation in Summer 2021*

HARLOW'S NEW TOWN CHARACTER



Examples of Harlow colours, materials and articulated elements. New tall buildings should celebrate Harlow's unique design heritage.

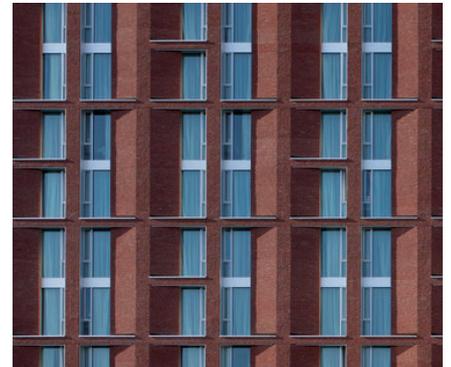
PATTERN, RHYTHM AND PROPORTION



St Paul's Church, Harlow



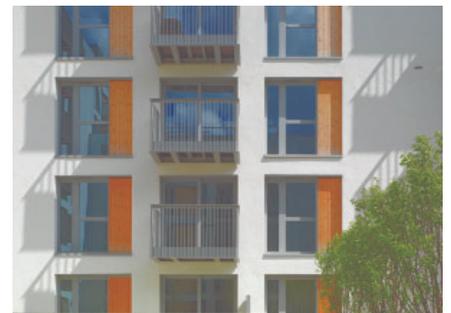
Maurice Wohl Neuroscience Institute, London by Allies and Morrison



Mint Hotel, Leeds by Allies and Morrison



Holland Green, London by OMA/ Allies and Morrison



Barrier East, London by Allies and Morrison

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

### HIGH QUALITY, DURABLE MATERIALS



Illustrative palette of high-quality material. Use of brick should not automatically qualify a proposal as being 'of architectural merit'

### COLOUR AND TONE



✗ Colour and tone should be curated and respond to context. © George Rex



✓ Colour is curated and expressed through crafted materials. Burtwood School by AHMM

### ARTICULATED ELEMENTS



Greenwich Plot 19-05 by Allies and Morrison



Europaallee, Zurich by Caruso St John



Sir Michael Uren Hub, London by Allies and Morrison



West Hendon by Allies and Morrison

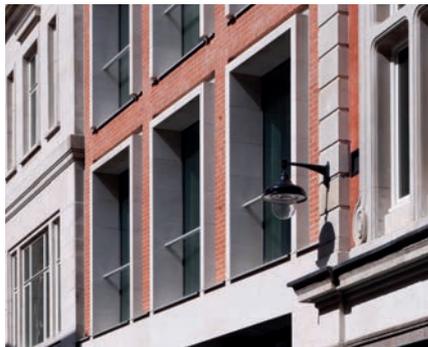


Falconhoven, Antwerp by Caruso St John

FACADE ARTICULATION AND DEPTH



Two Fifty One by Allies and Morrison



One Vine Street by Allies and Morrison



R7 Kings Cross, London by Morris and Co

ACTIVE FRONTAGES & PUBLIC REALM



Bankside 123, London by Allies and Morrison



St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow by Allies and Morrison



Turnmill, London Piercy&Company

CONSIDERED DETAILS



✓ Drainage downpipes are integrated within the facade design



✗ Materials with poor robustness, especially at ground level, can age poorly



✗ Lack of cills and cornices can result in poor weathering of stone and render

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

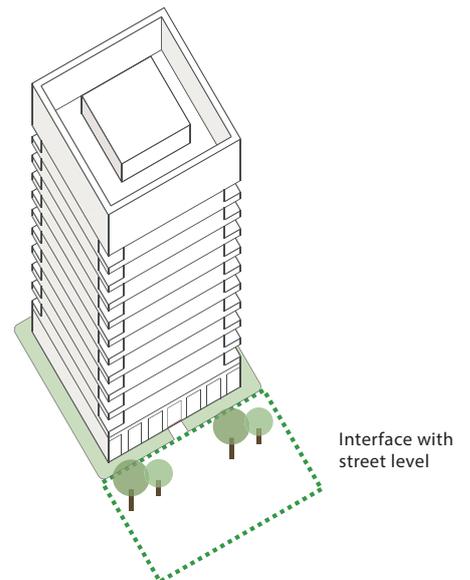
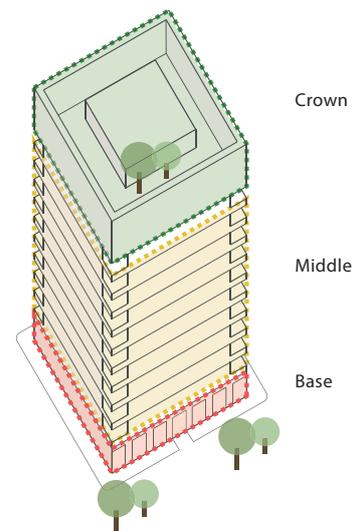
### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5F: CONTINUED

In order to create adequate natural ventilation, ensure sufficient daylight, create a greater choice of views and ensure flexibility in the use of rooms, it is **expected that 80% of flats in a tall building will be dual aspect.**

**Applicants should consider the implications of their proposals in relation to the impacts on embodied and operation Carbon.**

Proposals should incorporate a clear articulation of the design strategy in relation to the base, middle and crown of the building:

- **Crown: Provide opportunities for new inflection points in the skyline.** The extent to which it is iconic or sympathetic to the local character should depend on the role of the tall building in relation to its position and wider context.
- **Middle:** Comprises the main building volume. Its **design should consider the impact on wind flow, privacy, light and overshadowing.** The three-dimensional form should balance the internal programmatic requirements with outward elegance and appearance to and from surrounding buildings, streets and spaces.
- **Base: Creates a sense of belonging to one's home** which is important for the sustained care and longevity of the built fabric.



CROWN



Historic examples from Harlow demonstrating articulated building crowns



Contemporary example of an articulated building crown. Crane Building by Allies and Morrison

MIDDLE



Present-day examples from Harlow showing tone, pattern and rhythm of building middles



Contemporary example of a middle with rhythm, contrasting materials and occasional variation. Ortus by Duggan Morris ©Jack Hobhouse

BASE



Present-day examples from Harlow showing base articulation of a retail and residential building



Contemporary example of an articulated base, with contrasting tone and double height order

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5G: Design criteria - Street level

At the street-level, **tall buildings should have a successful human-scale interface which should be active and engaging** but with a contextual visual strength to anchor the building to the street.

Developers and designers should aim to **provide high quality public realm and human scale, active frontages, user friendly and legible entrances and approaches, sunshine zones, appropriately-sized open space, legible links with transport and pedestrian routes, and appropriate landscaping and amenity space.**

It is expected that tall buildings **provide increased adequate open space around the building**, especially in front of the building. Tall buildings should also provide good landscaping and amenity space linked, if possible, to the local green infrastructure network. Visual and spatial interaction with surrounding areas is encouraged. For more information on open space, please refer to the Amenity Space/ Gardens section of the Design Guide SPD addendum.

When assessing development proposals for tall buildings, **consideration should be given to the potential impact on the amenities of the surrounding area.** Specifically, careful considerations should be given to the potential impacts of particular issues, as follows (but not limited to):

- outlook/aspect;
- privacy (see the Privacy and Overlooking section of the Design SPD addendum);
- daylight/sunlight;
- noise;
- light glare;
- overbearing impact;
- effect of wind;
- effect on green infrastructure;
- increased sense of enclosure

Applicants must **submit a Daylight and Sunlight Assessment in accordance with BRE guidance**, including information to determine the existing and expected levels of daylight, sunlight and overshadowing on neighbouring properties, and the measures that will be taken to reduce the expected impact of the proposed development.

ACTIVE FRONTAGES



Broad Walk, Harlow



Goodluck Hope, London by Allies and Morrison



Redchurch Street, London by vPPR Architects

LEGIBLE ENTRANCES & APPROACHES



The Crane Building, London by Allies and Morrison



Europaallee, Zurich by Caruso St John



Upper Richmond Road, London by AHMM

HIGH-QUALITY LANDSCAPING AND AMENITY SPACE



Murrain Road, London by muf



North West Cambridge by AECOM



St Andrews, Bromley-by-Bow ©Townshend Landscape Architects

# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5G: CONTINUED

**Consideration should be given to the negative effects of the diversion and funnelling of wind arising from the effects of a tall building.** Windswept spaces must be avoided through architectural devices such as awnings and terraces, as well as through setbacks in the façade of the building.

The applicant will be expected to **provide a Quantitative Study Report to fully ensure safe wind conditions in and around the building and any surrounding highway**, covering impacts on all users of that space (including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists). The wind study should ensure safe conditions all year round for all users.

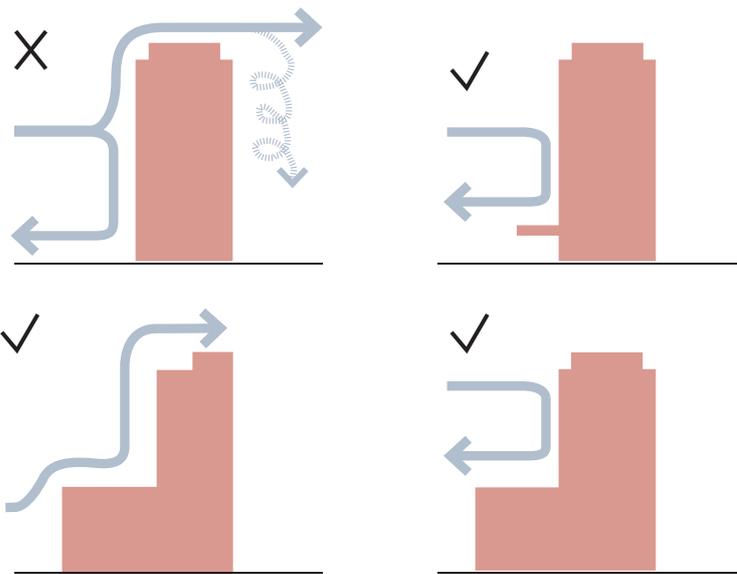
**Any wind mitigation measures should be wholly within the applicant's site boundary**, should be **permanent structures** maintained by the applicant, and **should not include trees or soft landscape**.

The impact of shadowing throughout the day and at different times of year will need to be assessed. In all instances, **consideration should be given to avoiding, minimising or mitigating through design or siting any elements of the proposal which could have a negative climatic impact on the surrounding area.**

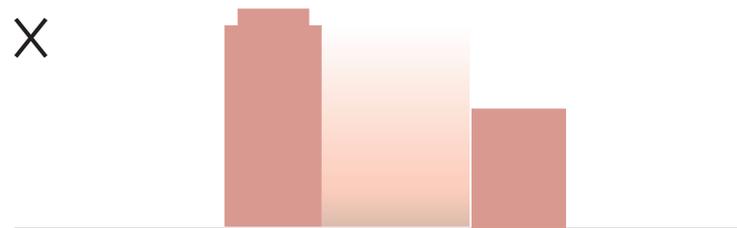
**Shadowing** can be difficult to remove completely, but it can be **minimised through appropriate siting of the building and through orientation, floor space dimensions and overall building height. Access to natural light as well as privacy issues for new and existing residents should be considered** during the design process. Redevelopment of an existing site could also present the opportunity to improve any existing issues of overshadowing / overlooking.

Tall buildings have a major **impact on a skyline**. It is important that this impact is positive with appropriately designed roofs and termination with the skyline.

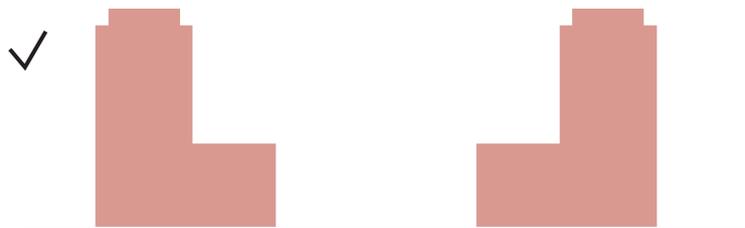
All rooftop plant and machinery, service bays and air conditioning should be screened, for example with Green Infrastructure, to avoid an unsightly appearance. **Designers should, therefore, incorporate a contextual and aesthetically balanced termination of the building.**



Canopies (b), setbacks (c) and podia (d) can mitigate wake and downwash effects of excessive wind (a)



Canyons may result in the urban heat island effect



Setbacks and wider street can mitigate the excessive heat

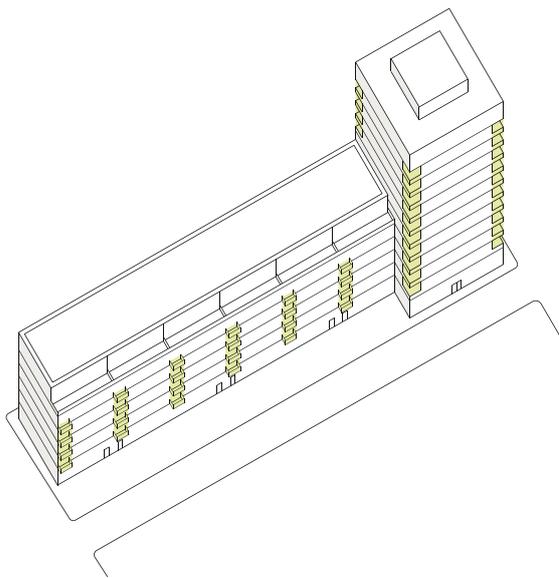
# 7

## BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY

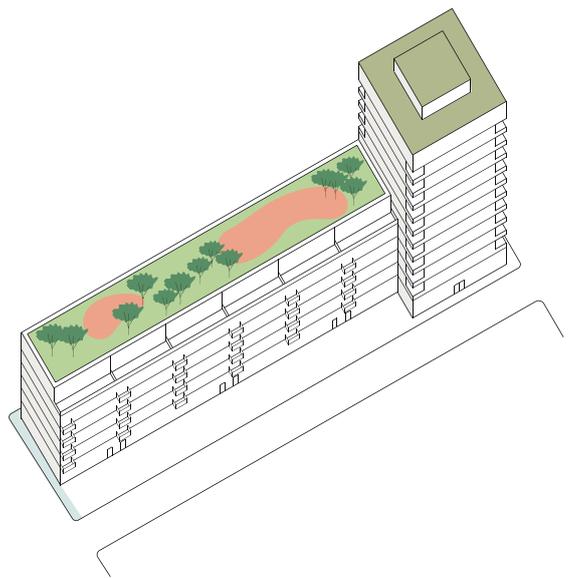
### **TC GUIDANCE NOTE 5H: Meeting amenity standards**

Proposals must demonstrate that amenity standards have been incorporated and delivered as part of proposals. The Council will expect clear statements in relation to the following:

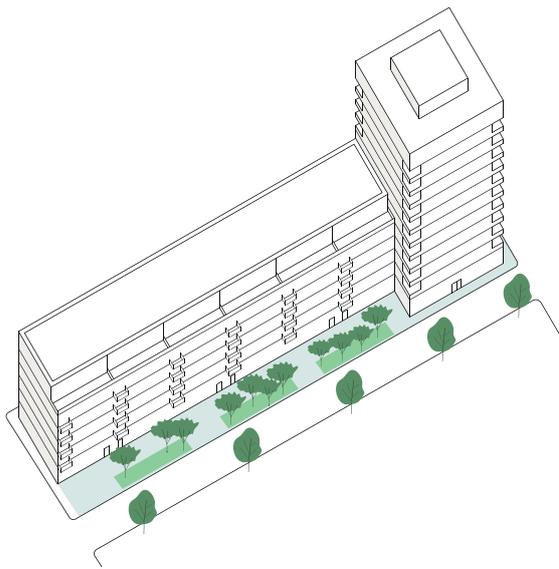
- private and communal amenity space.
- play space.
- urban greening.
- cycle parking.
- provision of adequate car parking which does not impact on ground floor frontages.
- realisation of immediate public realm aspects, and potential contributions to broader area strategies as set out in chapter 6.



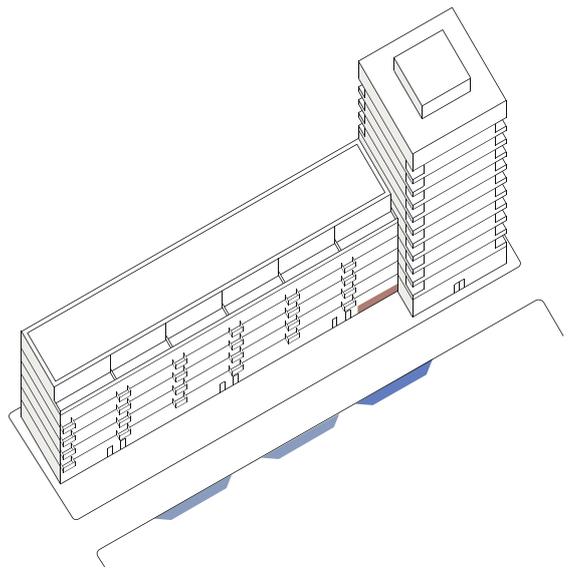
Private amenity



Communal amenity and play provision



Public realm improvements

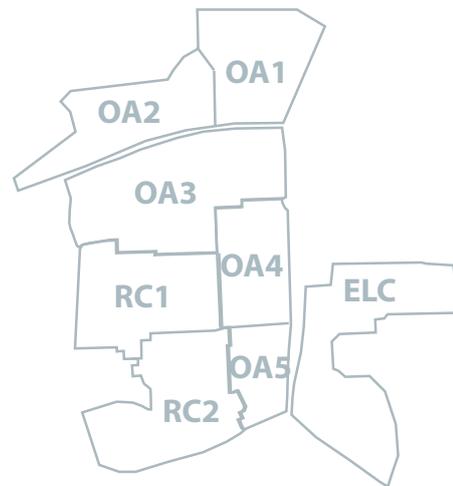


Cycle parking, accessible parking & servicing bays

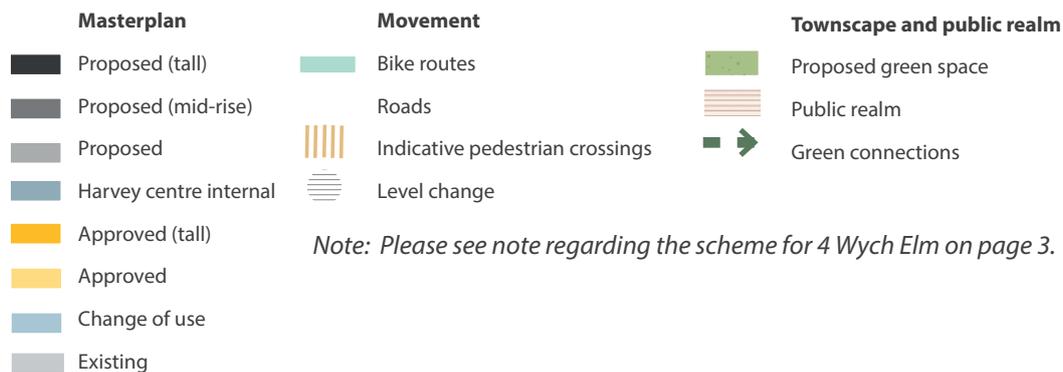
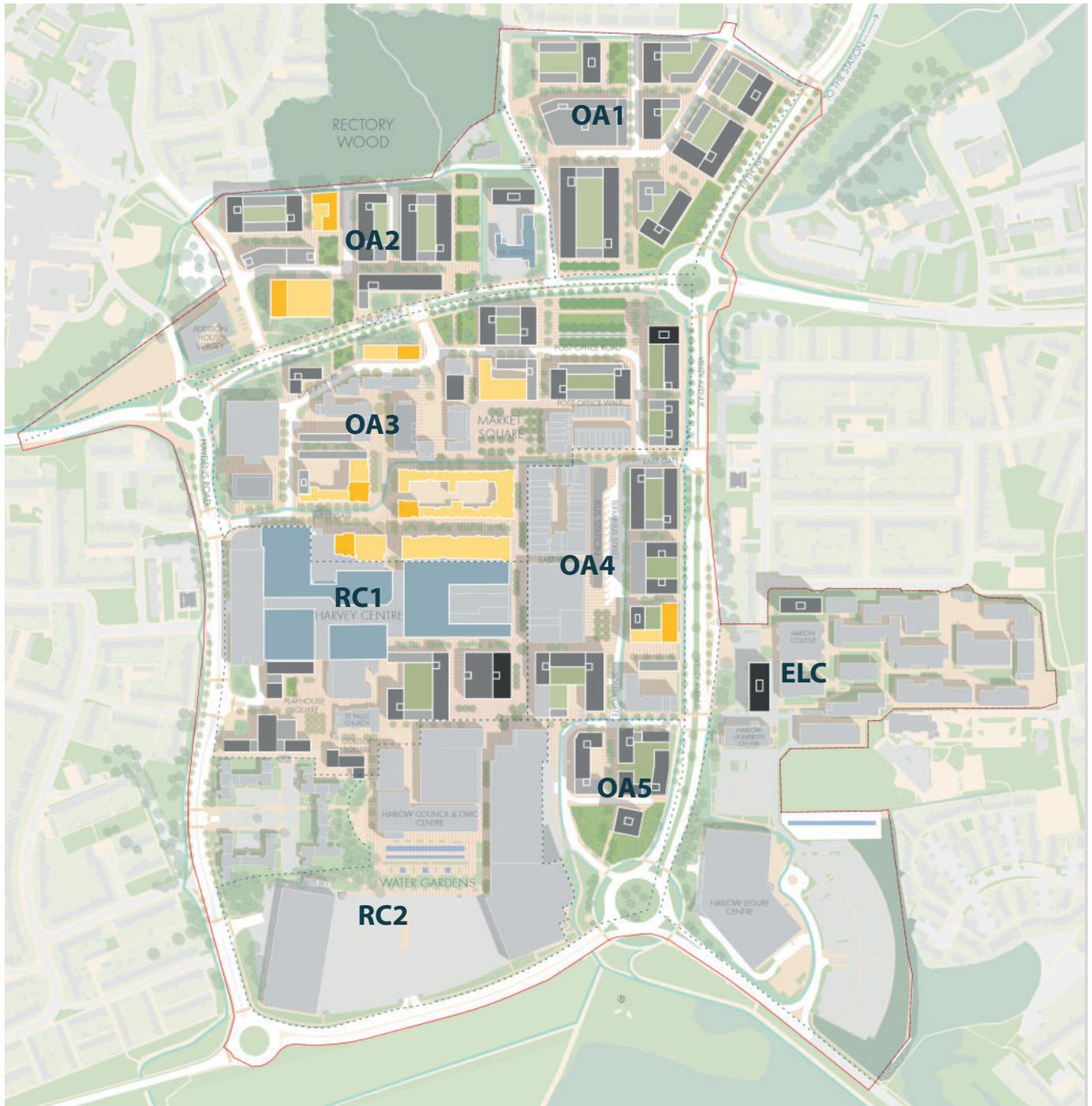
# 8 OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## Overview

- 8.1. This section sets out guidance for each of the Opportunity Areas within the HTCMTF:
- Opportunity Area 1 (Sainsbury's Northern Gateway Site)
  - Opportunity Area 2 (Wych Elm)
  - Opportunity Area 3 (Town Centre North)
  - Opportunity Area 4 (Terminus Street)
  - Opportunity Area 5 (Crown Gate Island)
  - Retail Core 1 (Harvey Centre)
  - Retail Core 2 (The Water Gardens)
  - Education / Leisure Core (Harlow College Campus and Leisurezone)
- 8.2. Development proposals within each opportunity area must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which incorporates the key principles.
- 8.3. The Opportunity Area guidance should be read alongside the vision statement and overarching objectives in chapter 4, and the area-wide guidance in chapters 5-7.
- 8.4. As set out in chapter 5, the HTCMTF supports a degree of flexibility around the precise mix of town centre land uses. Proposals should respond positively to guidance notes 4A to 4E in chapter 5, and the site-specific guidance in Chapter 8. Taken in combination, these set out the broad character and mix which is considered appropriate for different parts of the town centre.
- 8.5. The guidance for each opportunity area makes reference to potential uses that might come forward within each site alongside indicative development capacity. Indicative ground and upper floor uses are also illustrated alongside an indicative 3D view of how development might come forward.



- 8.6. The indicative uses in chapter 8 should not be treated as prescriptive, and the Council will require proposals to provide a clear narrative and justification for the proposed mix of uses in relation to property market demand and opportunities on a site-by-site, and phase-by-phase basis.
- 8.7. Indicative building heights have been illustrated in line with the guidance in chapter 7. Consented schemes have been used in the illustrative images for each Opportunity Area.



**Figure 161** Indicative Town Centre framework plan Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2018). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## OPPORTUNITY AREA 1 - SAINSBURY'S NORTHERN GATEWAY SITE

### Context

- 6.8. The Sainsbury's Northern Gateway Site is a key site on the approach to the town centre from Harlow Train Station. It is located to the north of Fourth Avenue and east of Fifth Avenue, and currently accommodates a food store and car parking area. The existing site is underutilised, and there are opportunities through redevelopment and public realm projects to establish a gateway to the town and improve the arrival experience for those travelling on foot and by bike.
- 6.9. The guidance will help to better integrate the area to the north with the town centre, which is currently separated by the busy inner-ring road. This would benefit the regeneration of the wider town centre, particularly the market area.
- 6.10. This is considered to be a longer-term proposition, subject to discussions with landowners and current operators on the site.

### Indicative capacity estimates

- 6.11. The following development capacity is estimated:

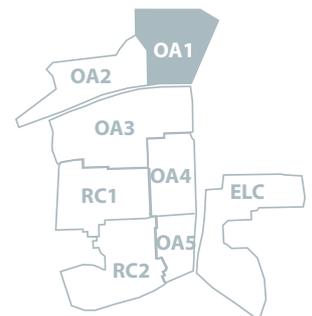
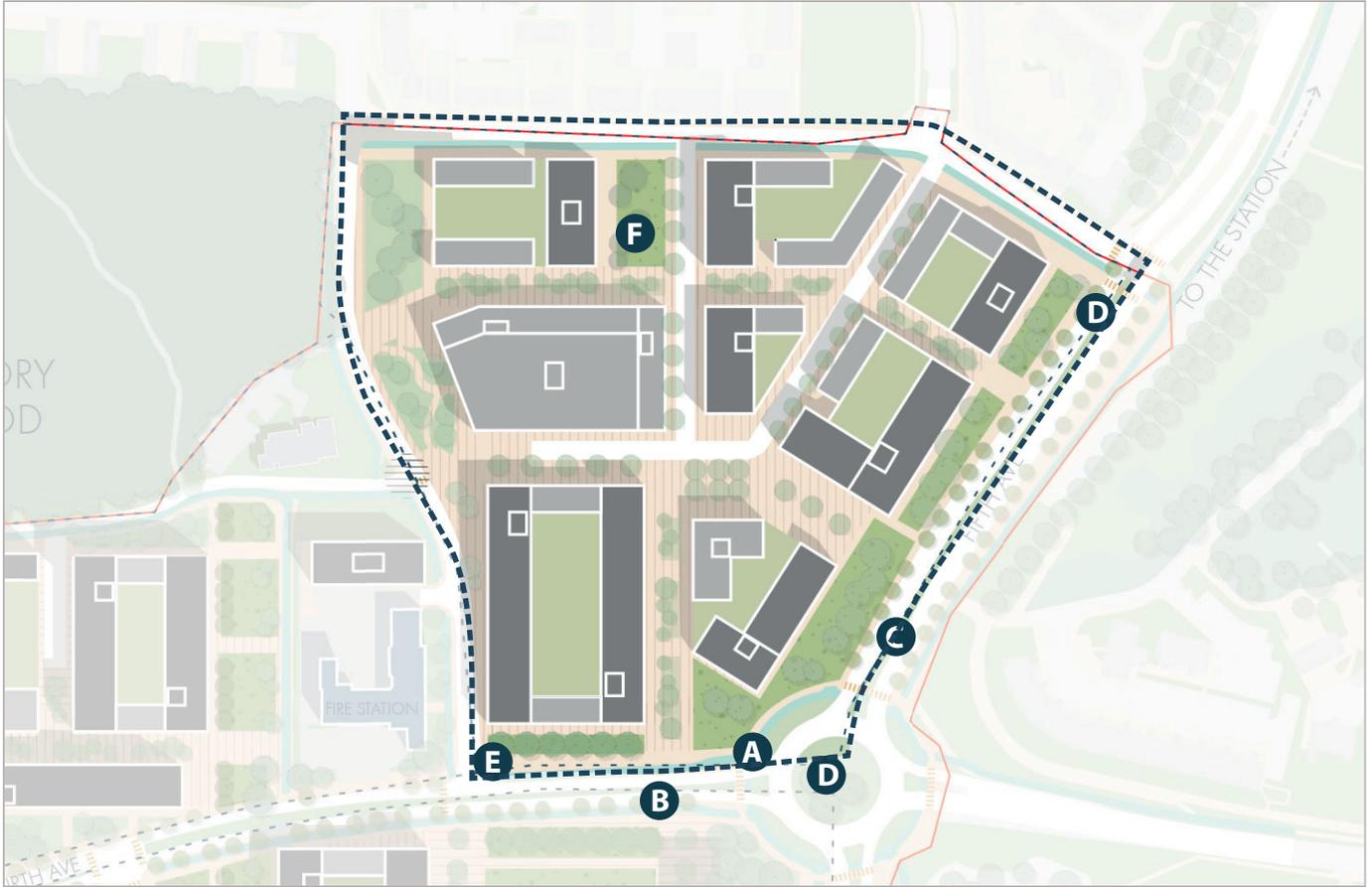
Residential GEA (sqm)	57,200
Estimated residential units	570
Flexible active GF (sqm)	6,600
Workspace (sqm)	-
Education (sqm)	-
Community (sqm)	-
TC parking (sqm)	13,500
Estimated parking spaces	540

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 6: Opportunity Area 1

Sainsbury's Northern Gateway Opportunity Area has been identified for residential development and the provision of a retail convenience store. Leisure, entertainment, community and civic uses with ground floor entrances onto both Fourth Avenue and Hodings Road will also be supported. Opportunities to provide a more efficient use of space through the provision of a multi-storey car park will be supported subject to its location and height.

Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals must provide a high quality public realm with active frontages which address Fourth Avenue and Fifth Avenue at the junction with Velizy Avenue.
- B. Development proposals must facilitate the transformation of Fourth Avenue into a boulevard character with a coordinated approach to planting and pedestrian crossings.
- C. Development proposals must improve walking and cycling connections to surrounding neighbourhoods, the Town Park to the east and towards the town centre.
- D. Development proposals must not prejudice potential highway and junction improvements including a possible new junction between Fifth Avenue and the Northern Gateway site (Hammarskjold Road) and potential reconfiguration of the Velizy Avenue / Fourth Avenue junction.
- E. Development proposals should facilitate the provision of at-grade entrances off of Fourth Avenue.
- F. Proposals should incorporate local open space to serve the new residential community.

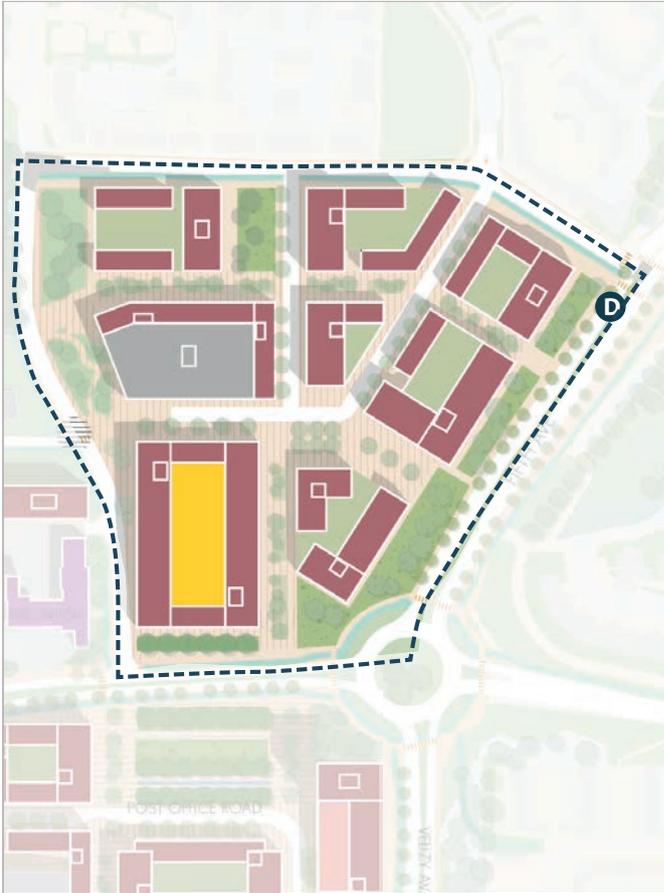


**Figure 162** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for Opportunity Area 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



### UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



- | Land Uses  | Movement   | Townscape and public realm   |
|--|--|--|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residential           | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:teal; border:1px solid black;"></span> Bike routes        | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Proposed green space  |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residential Parking | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Roads            | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightbrown; border:1px solid black;"></span> Public realm   |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Flexible active GF     | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-bottom: 1px dashed orange;"></span> Indicative pedestrian crossings | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> <span style="display:inline-block; width:5px; height:10px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Green connections |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:red; border:1px solid black;"></span> Workspace                 | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-bottom: 1px dashed grey;"></span> Level change                      |  |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Education            |  |  |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Community              |  |  |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:grey; border:1px solid black;"></span> TC Parking               |  |  |

**Figure 163** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Opportunity Area 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 164** Indicative 3D view for Opportunity Area 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



## OPPORTUNITY AREA 2 - WYCH ELM

### Context

- 6.12. The Wych Elm site is located to the north of Fourth Avenue and currently accommodates a bus depot and Harlow Central fire station. The site could be used more intensively and there are opportunities through redevelopment and public realm projects to better integrate the town centre with the area to the north, which is currently separated by the busy inner-ring road. This would benefit the regeneration of the wider town centre.
- 6.13. It is likely that the existing bus depot and fire station uses would need to be relocated for the site to come forward for development. This will require finding suitable alternative sites and funding for replacement facilities, and should be considered within the broader growth of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.
- 6.14. Subject to the relocation of existing uses, the Wych Elm area could be suitable for higher density residential development. This area has the potential to accommodate taller development as set out in the guidance in chapter 7 (including guidance notes 5D and 5E).

### Indicative capacity estimates

- 6.15. The following development capacity is estimated:

Residential GEA (sqm)	37,500
Estimated residential units	370
Flexible active GF (sqm)	3,000
Workspace (sqm)	7,700
Education (sqm)	-
Community (sqm)	2,000

Consented schemes total: 342 residential units plus associated flexible retail and amenity

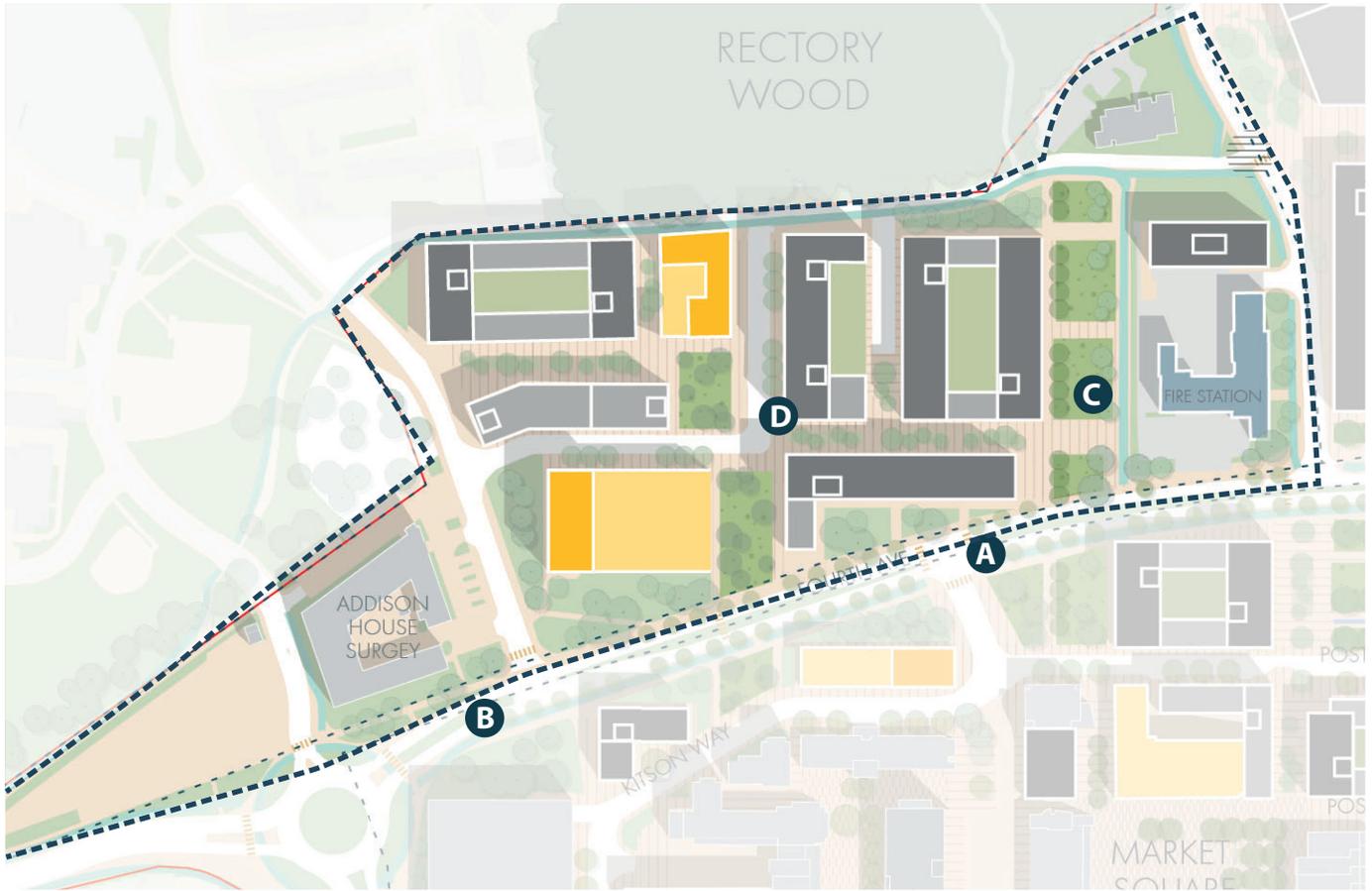
### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 7: Opportunity Area 2

Wych Elm Opportunity Area has been identified for residential development with community, civic and other uses supported at ground floor in order to provide active frontages along Fourth Avenue. Proposals should adopt a comprehensive approach and seek to facilitate the re-location of the existing ambulance, bus depot and fire station to suitable and viable locations.

A new strategic green space which will link Rectory Wood to the town centre is illustrated on the framework plan. Development proposals should incorporate and safeguard this green space as part of their layout and design.

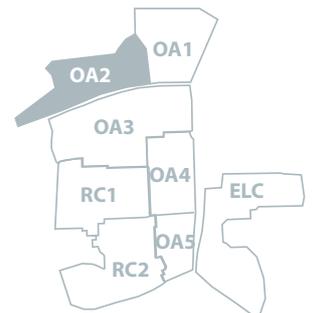
Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals must provide a high quality public realm with active frontages which address Fourth Avenue.
- B. Development proposals must facilitate the transformation of Fourth Avenue into a boulevard character with a coordinated approach to planting and pedestrian crossings.
- C. Development proposals must improve walking and cycling connections to surrounding neighbourhoods, Rectory Wood to the north and towards the town centre.
- D. Development proposals must demonstrate how they have responded and incorporated the strategic green space into their masterplan in terms of pedestrian and cycle connectivity, the creation of new landscaping and green spaces, and through the design of buildings and public realm.



Masterplan		Movement		Townscape and public realm	
	Proposed (very tall)		Bike routes		Proposed green space
	Proposed (tall)		Roads		Public realm
	Proposed		Indicative pedestrian crossings		Green connections
	Approved (tall)		Level change		
	Approved				

Note: Please see note regarding the scheme for 4 Wych Elm on page 3.



**Figure 165** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for Opportunity Area 2 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



### UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



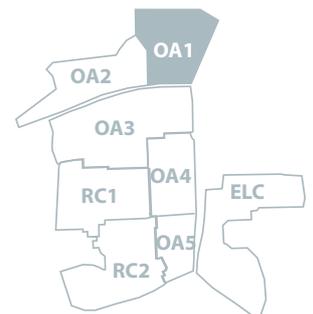
Land Uses	Movement	Townscape and public realm
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #8B4513; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Residential	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #3CB371; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Bike routes	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #6AA84F; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Proposed green space
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #4682B4; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Residential Parking	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></span> Roads	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #D2B48C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Public realm
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Flexible active GF	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-left: 1px dashed black;"></span> Indicative pedestrian crossings	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #006400; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Green connections
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #FF8C00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Workspace	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-bottom: 1px dashed black;"></span> Level change	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #00008B; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Education		
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #800080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Community		
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color: #808080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> TC Parking		

**Figure 166** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Opportunity Area 2 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 167** Indicative 3D view for Opportunity Area 2 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

*Note: Please see note regarding the scheme for 4 Wych Elm on page 3.*



## OPPORTUNITY AREA 3 - TOWN CENTRE NORTH

### Context

- 6.16. Town Centre North takes in land north of the Harvey Centre and the market area which currently accommodates commercial uses, car parking and a Royal Mail distribution facility. There are opportunities through redevelopment and public realm projects to enhance the vitality of the area by encouraging a mix of uses, supporting a balance across the town centre. The roundabout at the junction of Velizy Avenue / Fourth Avenue currently gives priority to cars and does not support active travel. This area could be an impressive and enticing gateway to the town centre, with opportunities for new retail and leisure activities.

### Indicative capacity estimates

- 6.17. The following development capacity is estimated:

Residential GEA (sqm)	34,700
Estimated residential units	350
Flexible active GF (sqm)	7,500
Workspace (sqm)	2,800
Education (sqm)	-
Community (sqm)	-

Consented schemes total: 667 residential units plus associated flexible retail and amenity

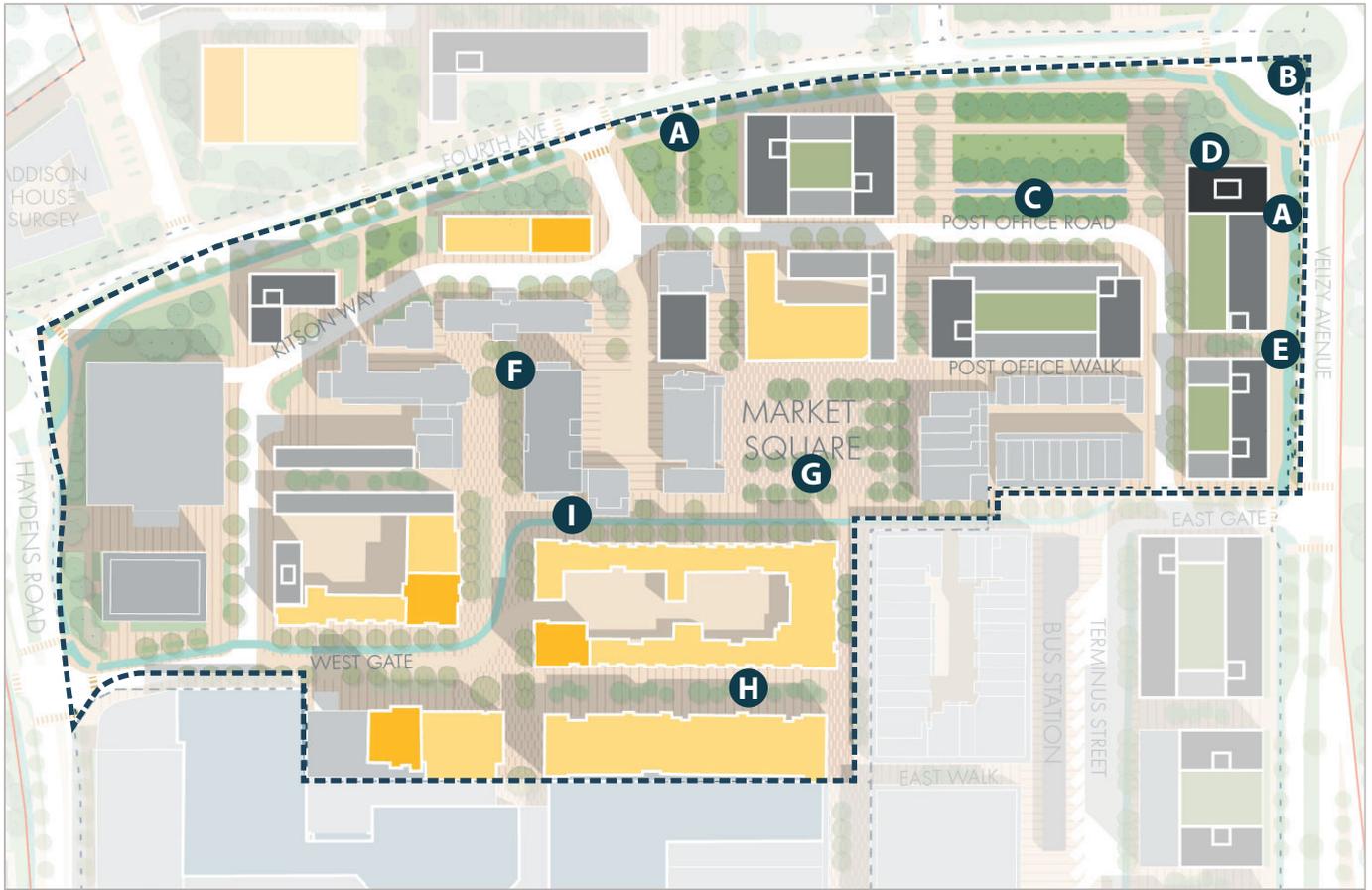
### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 8: Opportunity Area 3

Town Centre North Opportunity Area has been identified for a mix of uses but with a focus on residential development fronting Velizy Avenue to the east; modern, flexible office space fronting Fourth Avenue and at Post Office Walk; and a mix of retail and active uses at ground floor with residential above across the south and west of the area. Stone Cross has the potential to become a high quality destination for leisure and hospitality.

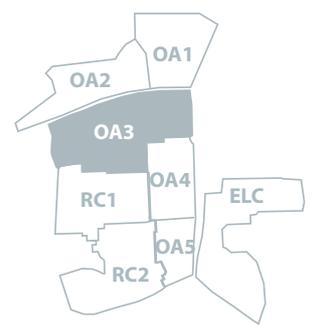
An STC public transport corridor connecting Velizy Avenue to Fourth Avenue has been identified which should be integrated within any adjacent development proposals. Liaison should be undertaken with Essex County Council at an early design stage.

Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals must facilitate the transformation of Fourth Avenue and Velizy Avenue into a boulevard character with a coordinated approach to planting and pedestrian crossings.
- B. Development proposals must not prejudice future highway and junction improvements including the potential reconfiguration of the Velizy Avenue / Fourth Avenue junction.
- C. New development on the Post Office site fronting Fourth Avenue should look to retain the mature trees, replace the existing surface car park with a new public space - to provide balance against proposed tall buildings and provide residential amenity - and create a pedestrian gateway into the town centre.
- D. Development proposals for the Fourth Avenue / Velizy Avenue junction must be of exceptional design quality and seek opportunities to provide a landmark building (either adjacent to the junction or closer to Stone Cross).
- E. Development proposals must provide a high quality public realm with clear and active frontages which address Velizy Avenue.
- F. Development proposals should seek through reconfiguration of the existing street and block structure, the creation of a new green gateway at West Square (see chapter 6).
- G. Development proposals should seek opportunities to enhance the public realm at Stone Cross through the use of tree planting and enhancement of gateway connections through to Post Office Road, Bird Cage Walk and the underpass. Stone Cross will be the focus of a leisure and hospitality quarter.
- H. A new east-west pedestrian connection connecting the Harvey Centre entrance to Broadwalk will be safeguarded with active frontages adjoining the route
- I. Cycling should be accommodated on the East Gate West Gate link. Development proposals should seek opportunities to enhance this route through public realm and streetscape improvements including shared surface treatments, street tree planting along the route and enhancements to West Square and the Harvey Centre entrance plaza.



Masterplan		Movement		Townscape and public realm	
	Proposed (very tall)		Change of use		Proposed green space
	Proposed (tall)		Existing		Public realm
	Proposed		Opportunity Area		Green connections
	Approved (tall)		Bike routes		Roads
	Approved		Indicative pedestrian crossings		Level change

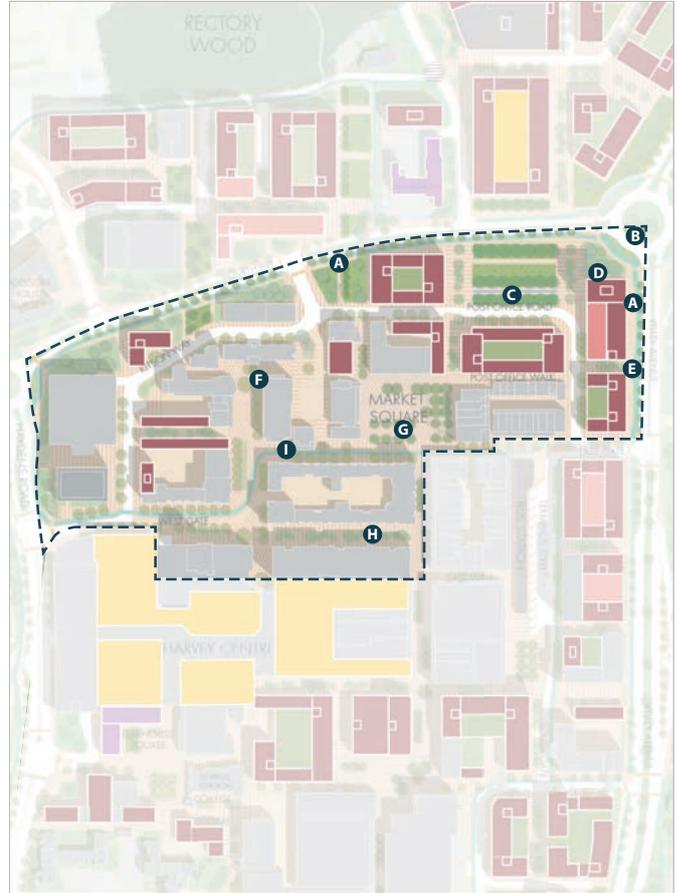


**Figure 168** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for Opportunity Area 3 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



## UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



### Land Uses

- Residential
- Residential Parking
- Flexible active GF
- Workspace
- Education
- Community
- TC Parking

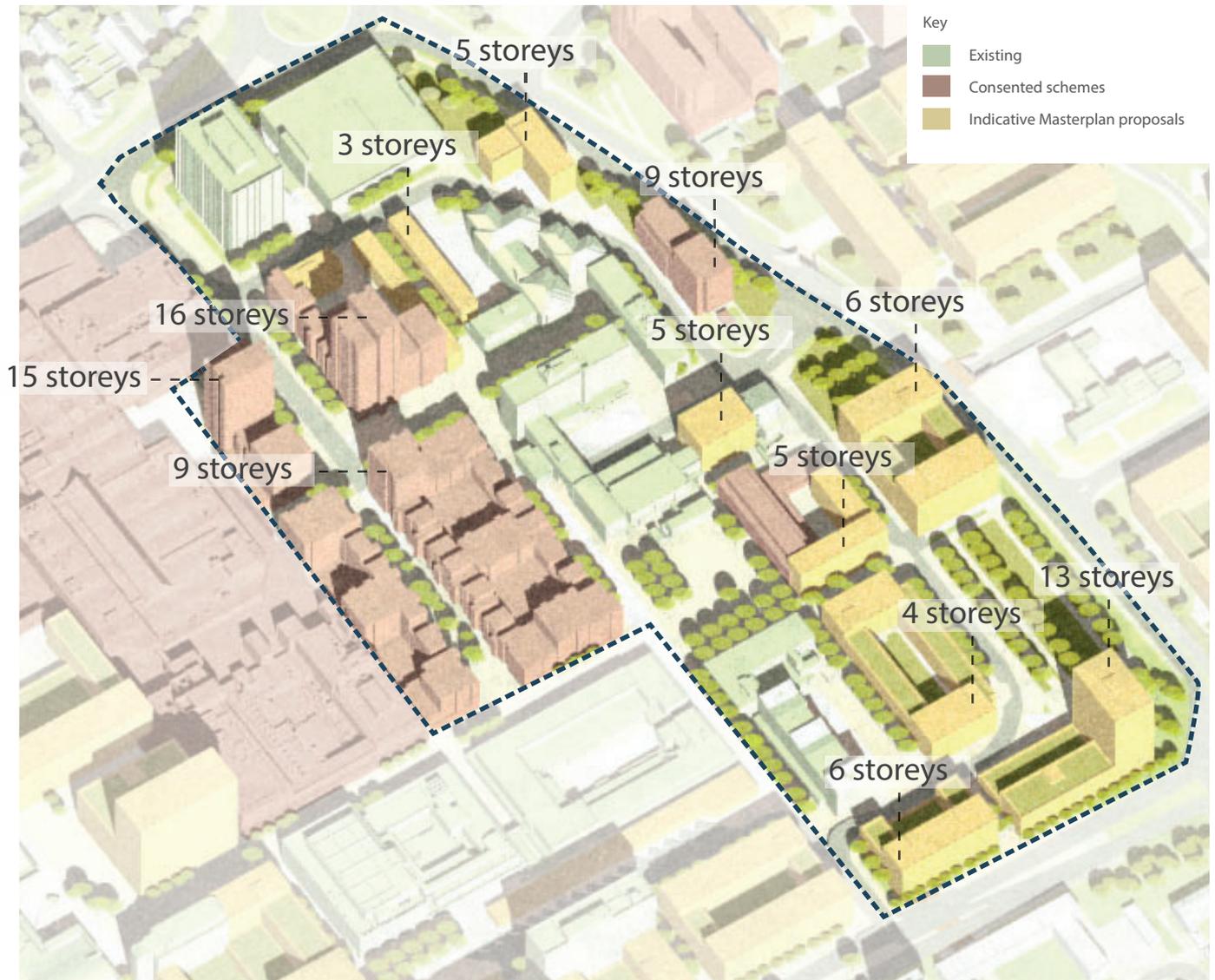
### Movement

- Bike routes
- Roads
- Indicative pedestrian crossings
- Level change

### Townscape and public realm

- Proposed green space
- Public realm
- Green connections

**Figure 169** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Opportunity Area 3 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 170** Indicative 3D view for Opportunity Area 3 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## OPPORTUNITY AREA 4 - Sustainable Transport Hub

### Context

- 6.18. Opportunity Area 4 includes Terminus Street, the Sustainable Transport Hub and Terminus House. The site is a key gateway into the town centre and there are opportunities through redevelopment and public realm projects to strengthen its strategic role. It is important to consider the site's potential to support a higher quality and more efficient public transport network which ties in with the Sustainable Transport Corridor and wider growth anticipated with the development of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

### Indicative capacity estimates

- 6.19. The following development capacity is estimated:

Residential GEA (sqm)	21,900
Estimated residential units	220
Flexible active GF (sqm)	4,00
Workspace (sqm)	5,800
Education (sqm)	-
Community (sqm)	-

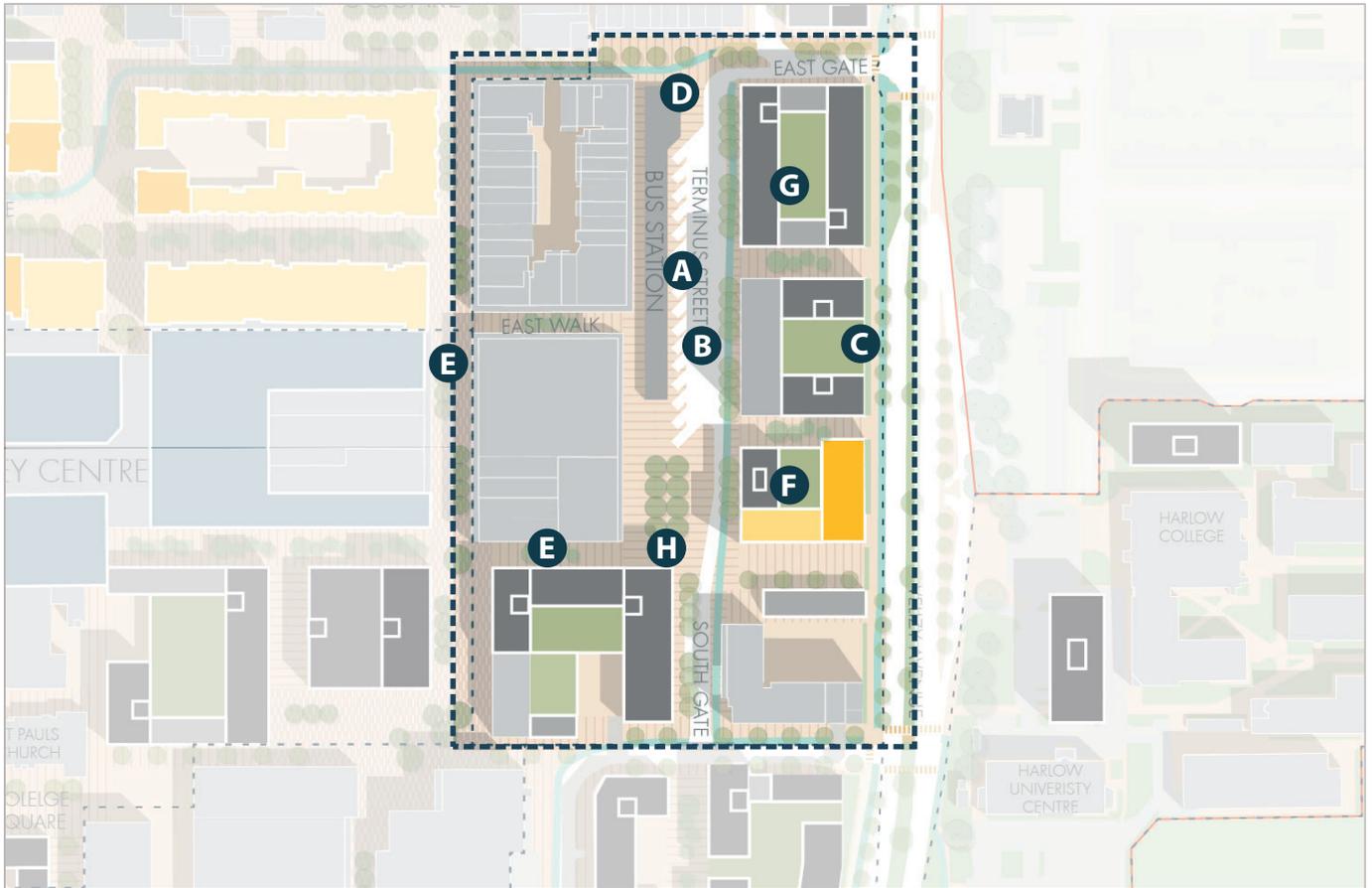
Consented schemes total: 150 residential units plus associated flexible retail and amenity

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 9: Opportunity Area 4

Terminus Street has been identified for a mix of uses with a focus on retail, community and leisure uses to the west of Terminus Street and residential to the east fronting Velizy Avenue. Retail uses fronting Broad Walk will be maintained at ground floor to support the primary frontage in this location. A more flexible approach to uses on the ground floor fronting Terminus Street which could include a variety of retail, office, commercial leisure and community uses will be supported. These blocks have also been identified for residential use above ground floor.

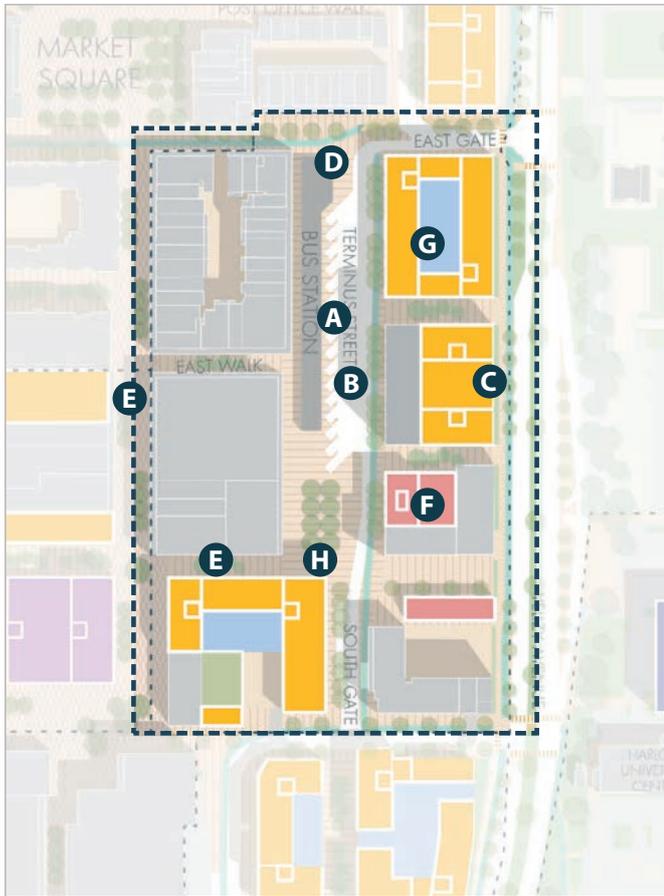
Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals must not prejudice the delivery of future interchange facilities at the Sustainable Transport Hub including the provision of suitable bus stops, the circulation of buses and the potential for two-way movements. Early liaison with the Essex County Council and bus providers is essential.
- B. Development proposals must contribute towards creating a safer, greener, more attractive bus street/area through high quality public realm improvements, active frontages and natural surveillance.
- C. Development proposals must facilitate the transformation of Velizy Avenue into a boulevard character with a coordinated approach to planting, pedestrian crossings and active frontages.
- D. Development proposals must safeguard and look at opportunities to improve pedestrian gateway connections to Broad Walk from Velizy Avenue and the Sustainable Transport Hub.
- E. Development proposals should facilitate improvements to the public realm at Broad Walk through the use of tree planting, materials and surface treatments ensuring that they complement the Water Gardens and Market Square improvements.
- F. A reduced level of car parking in a new smaller footprint, with direct surface level access will be supported in this area subject to measures being put in place or contributions towards improving public transport provision to the town centre.
- G. A comprehensive and transformational development of Terminus House car park for residential-led redevelopment may be supported subject to it; being fully integrated with surrounding development; creating frontages to Terminus Street and Velizy Avenue; achieving a safe pedestrian environment; and maintaining key gateway entrances into the town centre.
- H. Development proposals must demonstrate cycle connectivity with the East-West Gate cycle/public transport link.

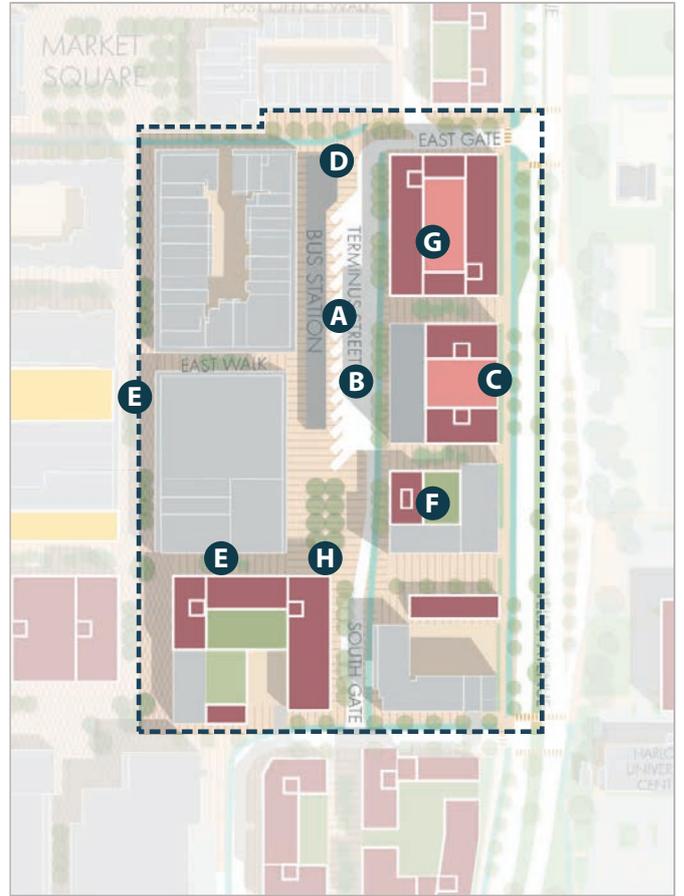


**Figure 171** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for HTC11 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



## UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



### Land Uses

- Residential
- Residential Parking
- Flexible active GF
- Workspace
- Education
- Community
- TC Parking

### Movement

- Bike routes
- Roads
- Indicative pedestrian crossings
- Level change

### Townscape and public realm

- Proposed green space
- Public realm
- Green connections

**Figure 172** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Opportunity Area 4 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 173** Indicative 3D view for Opportunity Area 4 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## OPPORTUNITY AREA 5 - CROWN GATE ISLAND

### Context

- 6.20. Crown Gate island is situated to the southeast of the town centre, bordered by Velizy Avenue, Crown Gate and South Gate and currently occupied by the Police Station and Job Centre. The site is a key gateway into the town centre with good connections to / from the main shopping area. There are opportunities through redevelopment and public realm projects to strengthen this, creating an impressive and enticing gateway.

### Indicative capacity estimates

- 6.21. The following development capacity is estimated:

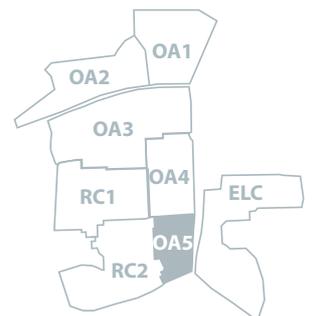
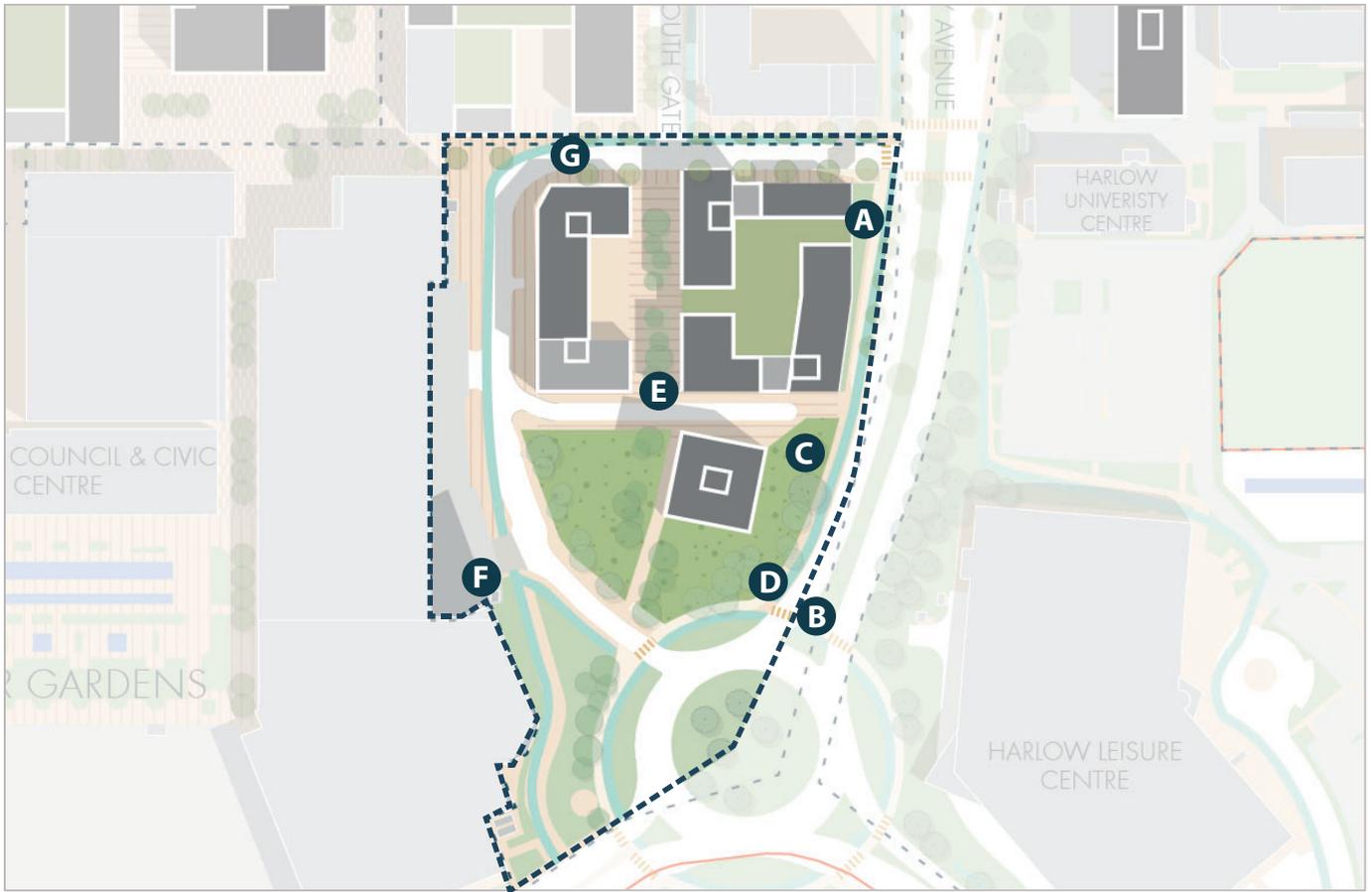
Residential GEA (sqm)	22,200
Estimated residential units	220
Flexible active GF (sqm)	2,200
Workspace (sqm)	-
Education (sqm)	-
Community (sqm)	-

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 10: Opportunity Area 5

Crown Gate Island Opportunity Area has been identified for a mixed-use civic quarter which should be delivered in a comprehensive way with consolidation or relocation of existing uses to suitable and viable sites. A mix of civic, community and retail uses provided at ground-floor alongside civic and/or residential uses above will be supported in this area.

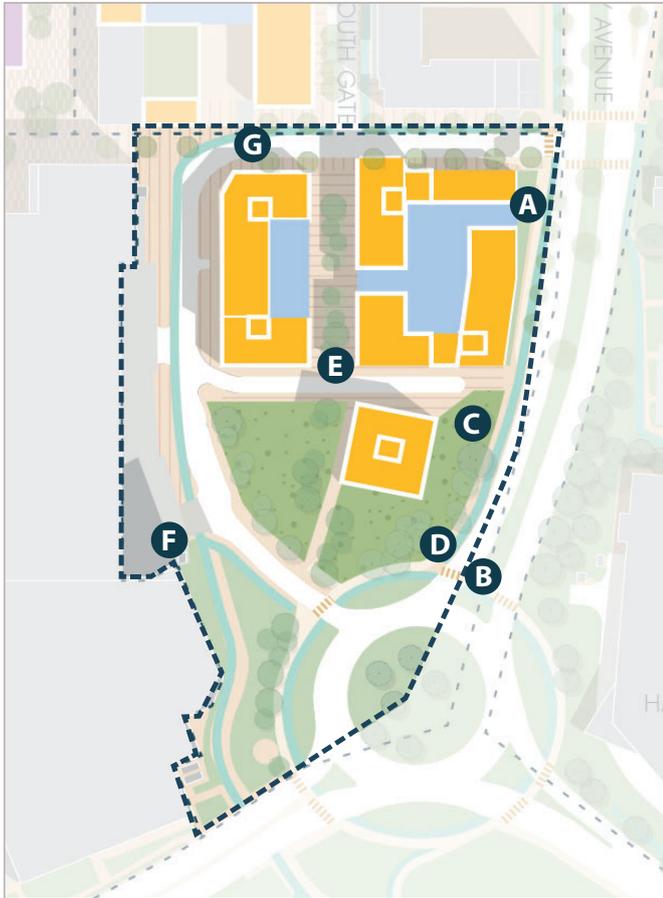
Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals must facilitate the transformation of Velizy Avenue to a boulevard character with a coordinated approach to planting and pedestrian crossings.
- B. Development proposals must not prejudice future highway or junction improvements including the potential re-configuration of Third Avenue /Velizy Avenue junction to enhance connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists.
- C. Development proposals must provide a high quality public realm with active frontages which address Velizy Avenue.
- D. Development proposals for the Third Avenue / Velizy Avenue junction must be of exceptional design quality and seek opportunities to provide a landmark building.
- E. Development proposals should safeguard and seek opportunities to enhance a new green gateway route (South Gate) for pedestrians and cyclists through the centre of the Opportunity Area. The route should maintain connections from the southern part of the town centre to the adjacent Green Wedge and Harlow Leisurezone.
- F. Development proposals must integrate with the adjacent Water Gardens area, ensuring a coordinated and improved approach to servicing arrangements with the potential for sharing servicing space where possible.
- G. Development proposals must safeguard an east-west cycle connection via Crown Gate and Cross Street to St Paul's Church.

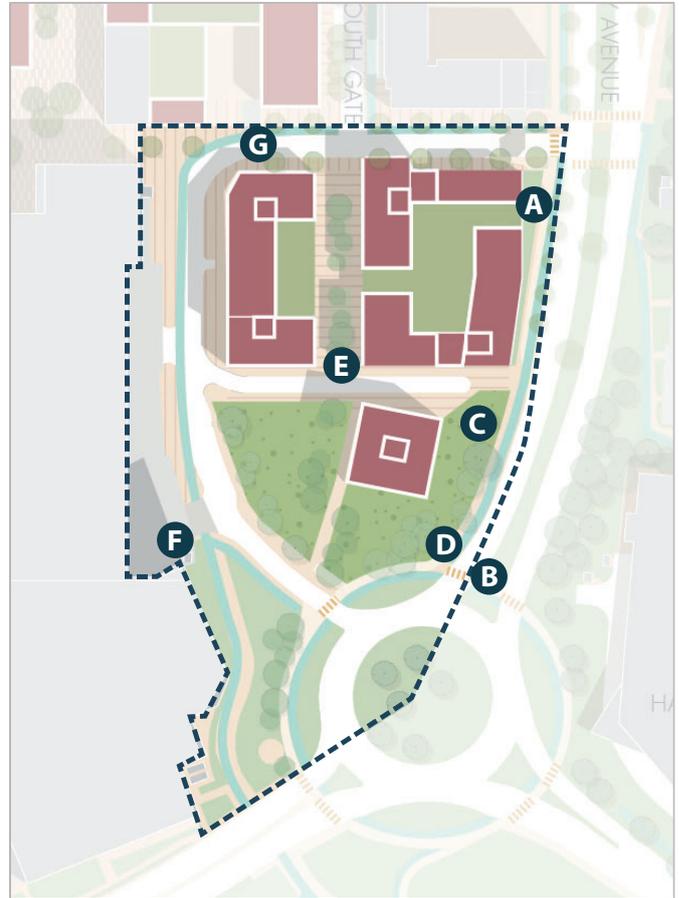


**Figure 174** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for HTC12 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



## UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



### Land Uses

- Residential
- Residential Parking
- Flexible active GF
- Workspace
- Education
- Community
- TC Parking

### Movement

- Bike routes
- Roads
- Indicative pedestrian crossings
- Level change

### Townscape and public realm

- Proposed green space
- Public realm
- Green connections

**Figure 175** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Opportunity Area 5 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 176** Indicative 3D view for Opportunity Area 5 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### Context

- 6.22. Retail Core 1 comprises Harlow Playhouse, St. Paul's Church, Occasio House and The Harvey Centre, which is Harlow's main shopping area. The changing nature of retail means there is an opportunity to consider the diversification of its offer to better meet consumer needs and expectations. The size of the BHS unit restricts retailer demand and / or potentially limits the end-user to the 'value' end of the market.
- 6.23. St. Paul's is a Grade II Listed building and important local landmark. Its setting currently detracts from its distinctive historic character. There are opportunities through redevelopment and public realm projects to improve the setting of the church and create and enhance views towards it. The church and Harlow Playhouse provide a focus for community and cultural life and a natural gateway into the town centre from the west. Additional cultural buildings would strengthen this area's role as a focus for cultural activities.

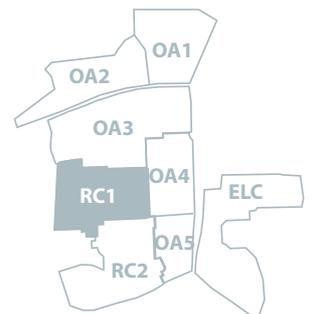
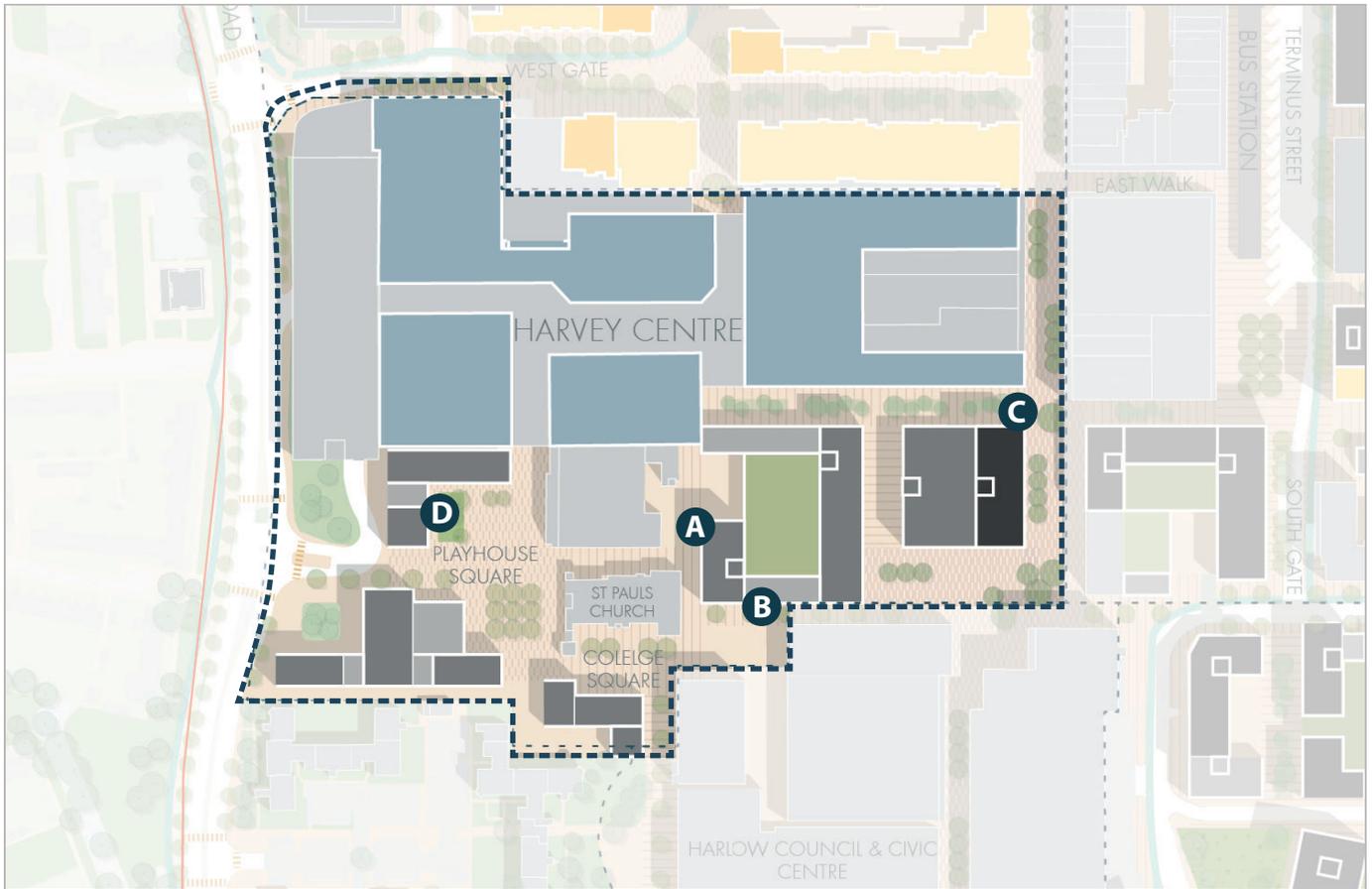
Residential GEA (sqm)	29,500
Estimated residential units	290
Flexible active GF (sqm)	28,000
Workspace (sqm)	100
Education (sqm)	-
Community (sqm)	7,100

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 11: Retail Core 1

The Harvey Centre Retail Core Area 1 will be protected for the continued operation of retail and commercial leisure uses, with reference to the adopted primary and secondary frontage designations. Leisure, community, office and residential uses will be supported on upper floors, particularly where these enhance the overall vitality and viability of the town centre. Proposals should seek to improve and open up the Harvey Centre.

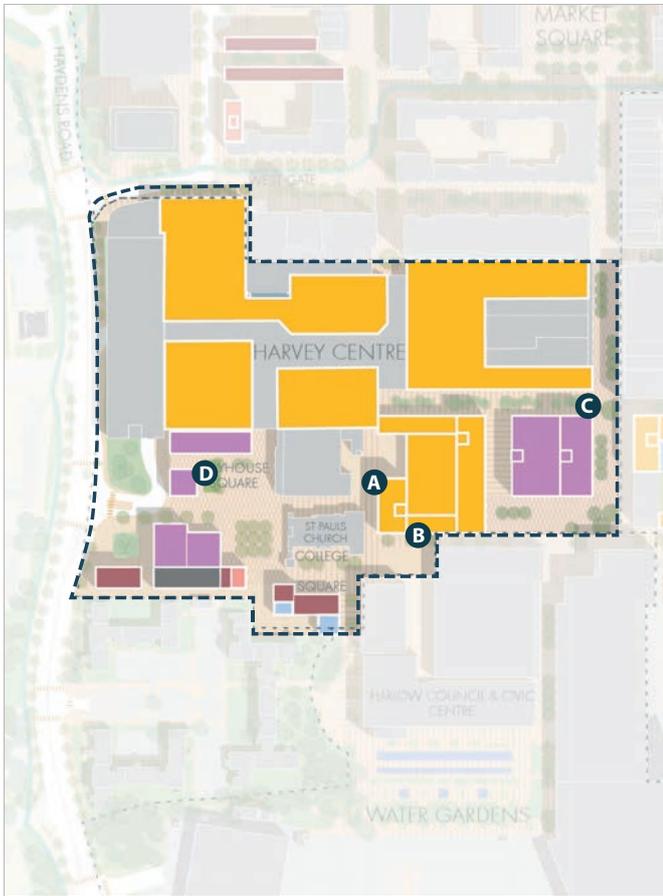
Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals should seek to create active frontages, provide opportunities for natural surveillance and eliminate poorly defined "back-streets" through the town centre.
- B. Development proposals which front onto Cross Street, including the former BHS site, must improve the existing pedestrian east-west route, create active and enhanced frontages along Cross Street and open-up views towards St. Paul's Church. Retail or mixed retail/commercial leisure uses at ground floor with residential above will be supported as will a potential enlarged theatre venue on the current library site.
- C. Development proposals for the redevelopment or reconfiguration of the existing library will be supported subject to an appropriate alternative site for the library being available and permission secured. Development proposals for the redevelopment of the library should look at opportunities to open up views and pedestrian connections to Broad Walk.
- D. Development proposals should facilitate or contribute towards improvements to the public realm at Broad Walk, St Paul's Church and at the College Square drop-off area through the use of tree planting and amenity green spaces, materials, public art, seating and surface treatments complementing the Water Gardens and Market Square improvements. Development proposals in this area should maintain pedestrian gateway connections through to Cross Street and the town centre from surrounding neighbourhoods to the west.
- E. Infill development to the south of the Harvey Centre and west of Harlow Playhouse will be supported for flexible active ground floor uses including retail, office, commercial leisure and community uses, with residential above. Re-development of Occasio House for residential use will be supported.

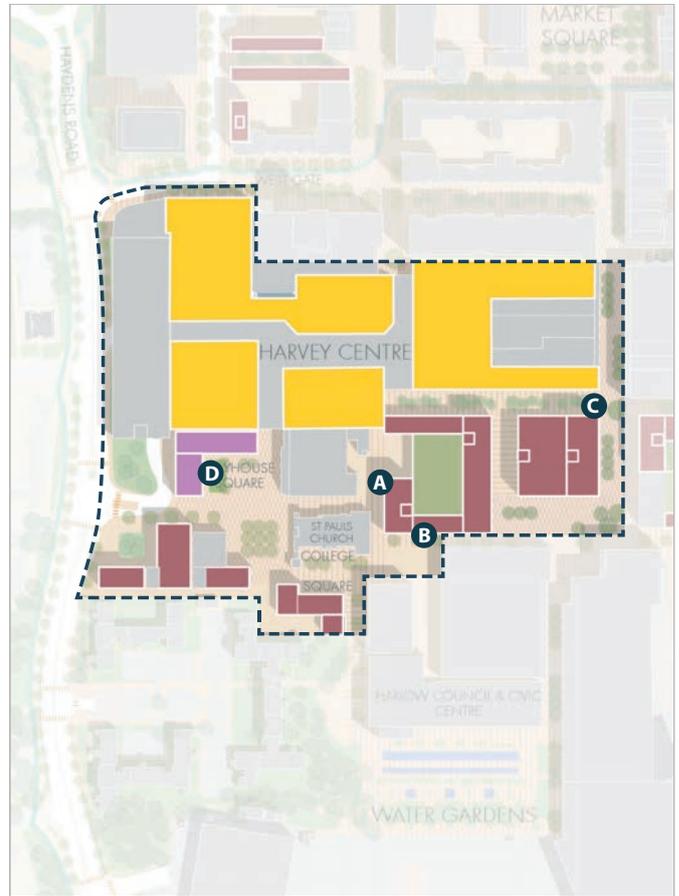


**Figure 177** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for Retail Core 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

## GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



## UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



### Land Uses

- Residential
- Residential Parking
- Flexible active GF
- Workspace
- Education
- Community
- TC Parking

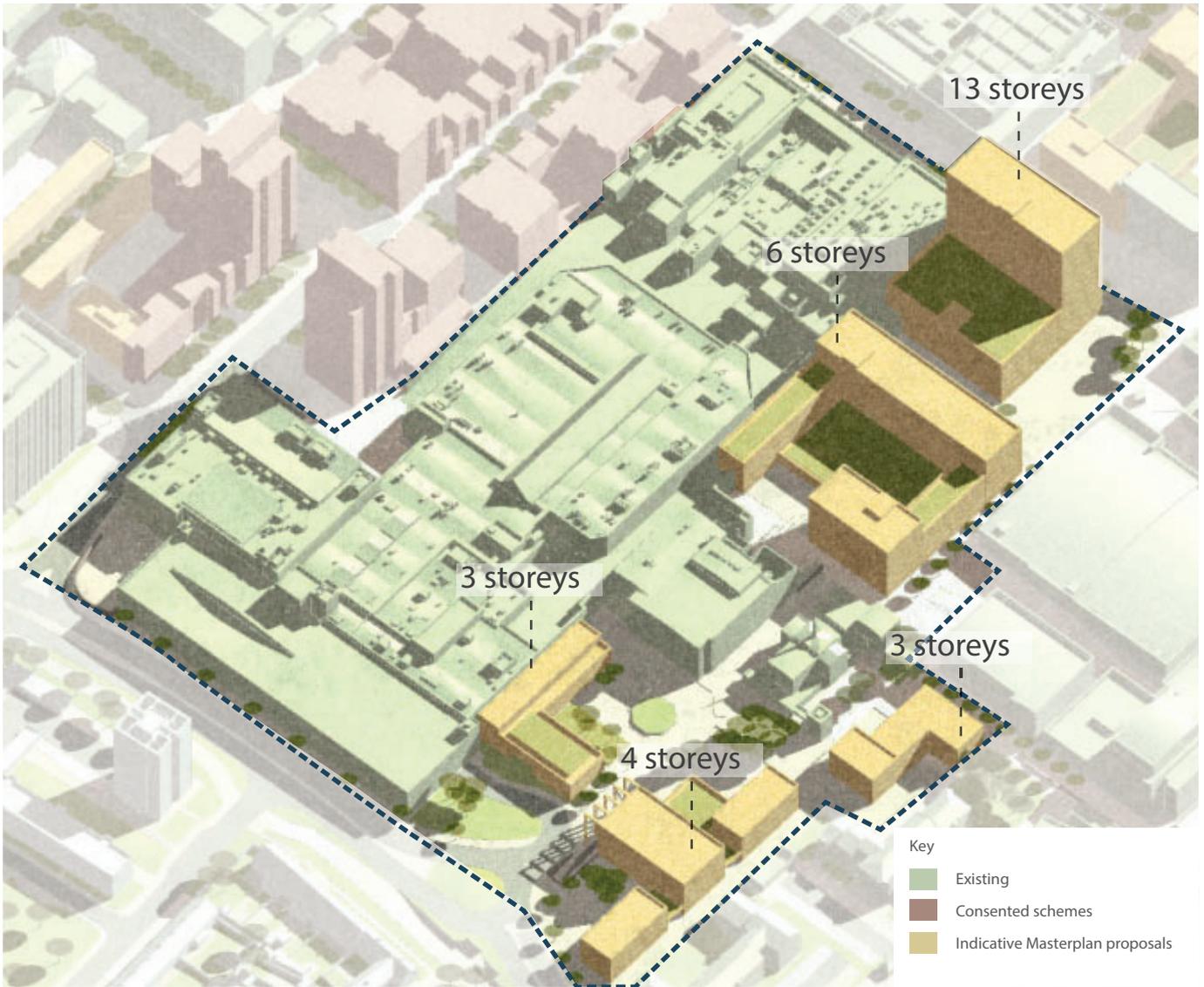
### Movement

- Bike routes
- Roads
- Indicative pedestrian crossings
- Level change

### Townscape and public realm

- Proposed green space
- Public realm
- Green connections

**Figure 178** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Retail Core 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627



**Figure 179** Indicative 3D view for Retail Core 1 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

### Context

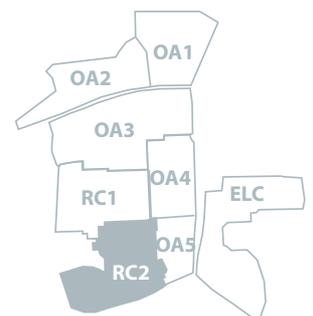
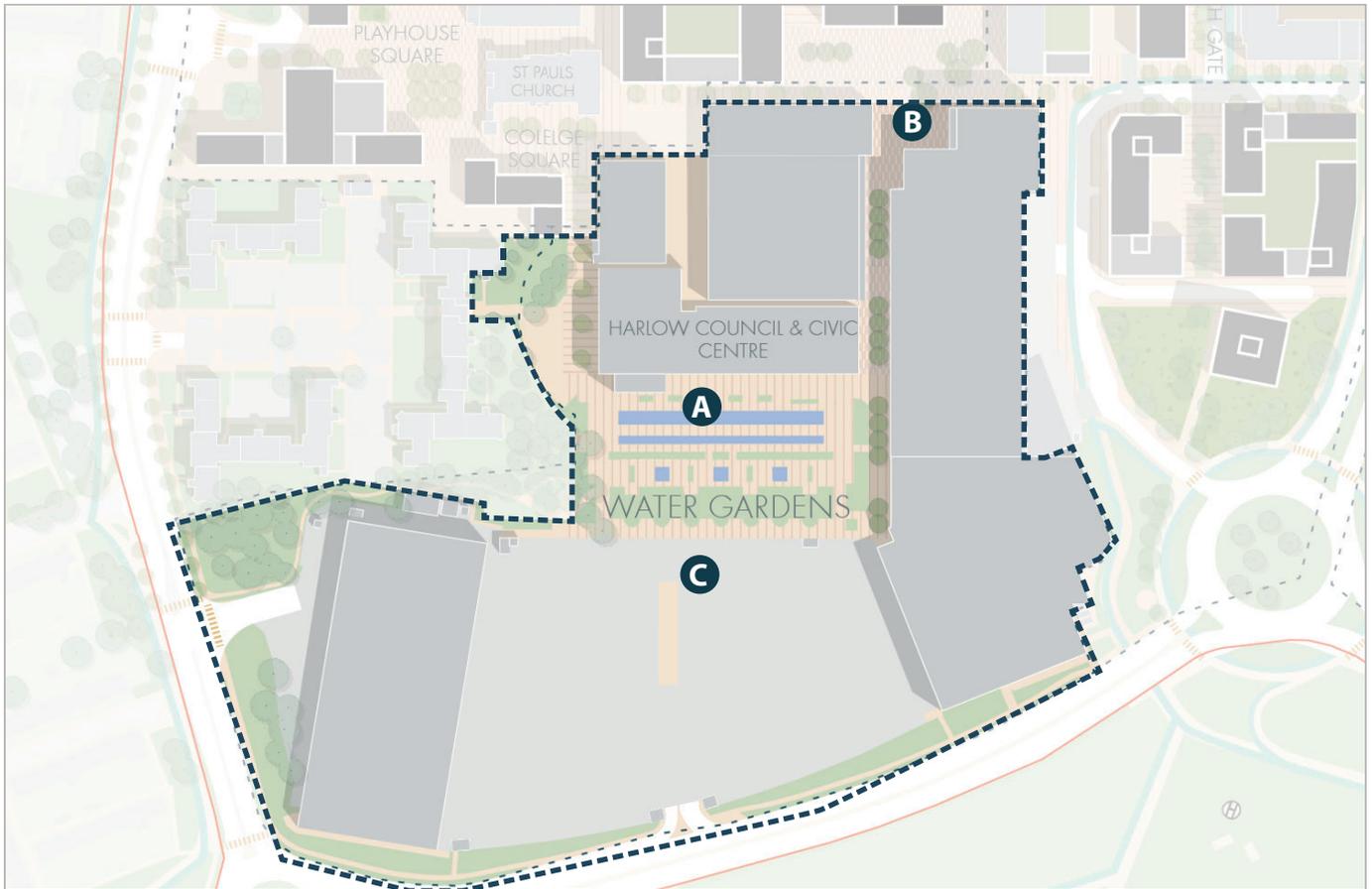
- 6.24. Retail Core 2 comprises The Water Gardens which is an edge-of-centre shopping destination with food and beverage uses and extensive car parking.
- 6.25. No immediate proposals have been identified for Retail Core 2 although there are longer-term opportunities (beyond the plan period) to enhance the area, including upgrades to the parking structure and to introduce new flexible typologies to create a stronger relationship to Haydens Road.

### TC GUIDANCE NOTE 12: Retail Core 2

The Water Gardens Retail Core Area 2 will be protected for the continued operation of retail and commercial leisure uses, respecting the primary and secondary frontage designations.

Development proposals must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the area wide guidance, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals should enhance and safeguard the setting and identity of Gibberd's original Water Gardens concept and the key view south to Rye Hill.
- B. Development proposals should maintain Cross Street Square and facilitate improvements through public realm enhancements and improved pedestrian connections to Broad Walk and east-west along Cross Street.
- C. Opportunities to enhance the Water Gardens area by upgrading the parking structure, improving the public realm, introducing more landscaped areas with links to the Green Wedge and creating a stronger gateway for pedestrians and cyclists will be supported. Opportunities to introduce new flexible uses on first floors and above creating active frontages at Haydens Road will be considered. This includes residential, office and commercial leisure uses.



**Figure 180** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for Retail Core 2 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

**Context**

6.26. Harlow College and Leisure Zone are important education and leisure uses at the southern end of the town centre. Both facilities front Velizy Avenue which is currently a poor pedestrian environment with few crossings, dominated by vehicular movement. There is an opportunity to improve this through public realm enhancements, alongside strengthening the offer of Harlow College through the introduction of complementary uses, to ensure this area of the town centre is sustained.

Residential GEA (sqm)	10,500
Estimated residential units	100
Flexible active GF (sqm)	-
Workspace (sqm)	-
Education (sqm)	5,700
Community (sqm)	-

**TC GUIDANCE NOTE 13:  
Education / Leisure Core**

Harlow College Campus and Leisurezone have been identified as an education and leisure core. Development proposals must prioritise the continued operation of the area for education and leisure uses, as key activities for the ongoing vitality of the town centre.

Development proposals within the Education / Leisure Core must be of the highest design quality, providing a site-specific design response which, alongside the strategic and development management policies, incorporates the following key principles:

- A. Development proposals must facilitate the transformation of Velizy Avenue to create a boulevard character with a coordinated approach to planting and pedestrian crossings.
- B. Development proposals for new education and ancillary buildings at Harlow College and leisure uses at the Leisurezone will be supported. Development proposals which make more intensive use of the surface car parks with an improved public realm alongside infill development will be supported. This is subject to measures being put in place which improve public transport provision for the College and Leisurezone.



**Figure 181** Indicative Town Centre framework plan for Education and Leisure Core.  
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## GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



## UPPER FLOOR LAND USES



### Land Uses

- Residential
- Residential Parking
- Flexible active GF
- Workspace
- Education
- Community
- TC Parking

### Movement

- Bike routes
- Roads
- Indicative pedestrian crossings
- Level change

### Townscape and public realm

- Proposed green space
- Public realm
- Green connections

**Figure 182** Indicative Town Centre land use plans for Education and Leisure Core  
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**Figure 183** Indicative 3D view for Education and Leisure Core. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2021). All rights reserved. Harlow District Council Licence No.100019627

# 9 DELIVERY

## Overview

- 9.1. The Masterplan Framework establishes a framework to guide future development during the current plan period to 2033 and beyond. Given the length of this timescale and the potential for change and uncertainties facing the property markets relevant to Harlow Town Centre, a flexible approach to land use planning will be important as set out in earlier chapters. This will serve to maximise delivery prospects and ensure that the future regeneration of the town centre can adapt to emerging market trends and 'needs' as they evolve.
- 9.2. Effective delivery will require the co-ordination of Development Sites and a complex set of interrelated factors such as viability, market capacity and phasing. It will also be necessary to ensure that existing and planned infrastructure (physical and social) can support the development proposed for the town centre and its increasing resident population. This will also need to be phased to link with the growth in population and infrastructure delivery associated with the Harlow Gilston Garden Town initiative.

## Delivery partnerships

- 9.3. The Council intends to work closely with Central Government, Homes England, the HGGT partners and other key delivery agencies to progress the HTC MF, relevant aspects of HLDP and emerging priorities in the Town Plan. A range of supporting strategies and initiatives will be developed relating to the co-ordinated planning and development of public estate assets, joined-up proposals for transport and infrastructure, initiatives and strategies related to the successful performance of Harlow as a town centre, and branding / marketing initiatives.
- 9.4. The Council is also considering the establishment of a regular landowner and developer forum to support a joined-up and coordinated approach to development and regeneration in the town centre.

## Council-led delivery

- 9.5. The Council also has a lead role to play in terms of forward funding short term and longer term public realm projects that set high quality standards and contribute towards a step-change in the town centre's physical environment, which is an important pre-requisite for growth by helping to create the conditions necessary to attract and retain investment. The delivery of these improvements needs to be planned and delivered in harmony with the growth in greater Harlow that the Harlow Gilston Garden Town project will bring. This is because the successful future of the town centre will significantly benefit from attracting custom from new Garden Town residents as well as the existing Harlow population. To help ensure new Garden Town residents are persuaded to use Harlow town centre rather than competitor locations, it is critical that improvements to the town centre are delivered

in a coordinated way with the Garden Town's growth trajectory.

- 9.6. Where there is a compelling case in the public interest, the Council will consider the use of its compulsory purchase powers to assemble sites within the Town Centre as set out in the HLDP.
- 9.7. For those Development Sites where the Council is able to take a more proactive role in implementation, a number of potential roles could be adopted by the Council including disposal, contractual partnership, joint venture or direct delivery.

#### **Site-specific guidance**

- 9.8. The Council will consider the preparation of a more detailed masterplan and / or site-specific Development Briefs to supplement the HTC MF / Town Plan and HLDP. Working in partnership with stakeholders, the local community and development partners, Development Briefs will provide an opportunity to establish specific parameters around uses, design and infrastructure, which advance the more general principles and indicative illustrative material in the HTC MF. Development Briefs will be led by the Council, but where appropriate, these documents will be prepared jointly in partnership with landowners or development partners. Key sites which would benefit from Development Briefs include Wych Elm, the Post Office site, Crown Gate Island and the Sustainable Transport Hub area.

#### **Quality review**

- 9.9. The Council expects major town centre development schemes (including streetscape, highways and infrastructure proposals) to engage with the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel. Early review will play a key role in securing the commitment to quality

as set out HTC MF and the Council's addendum to the Design Guide SPD.

#### **Funding**

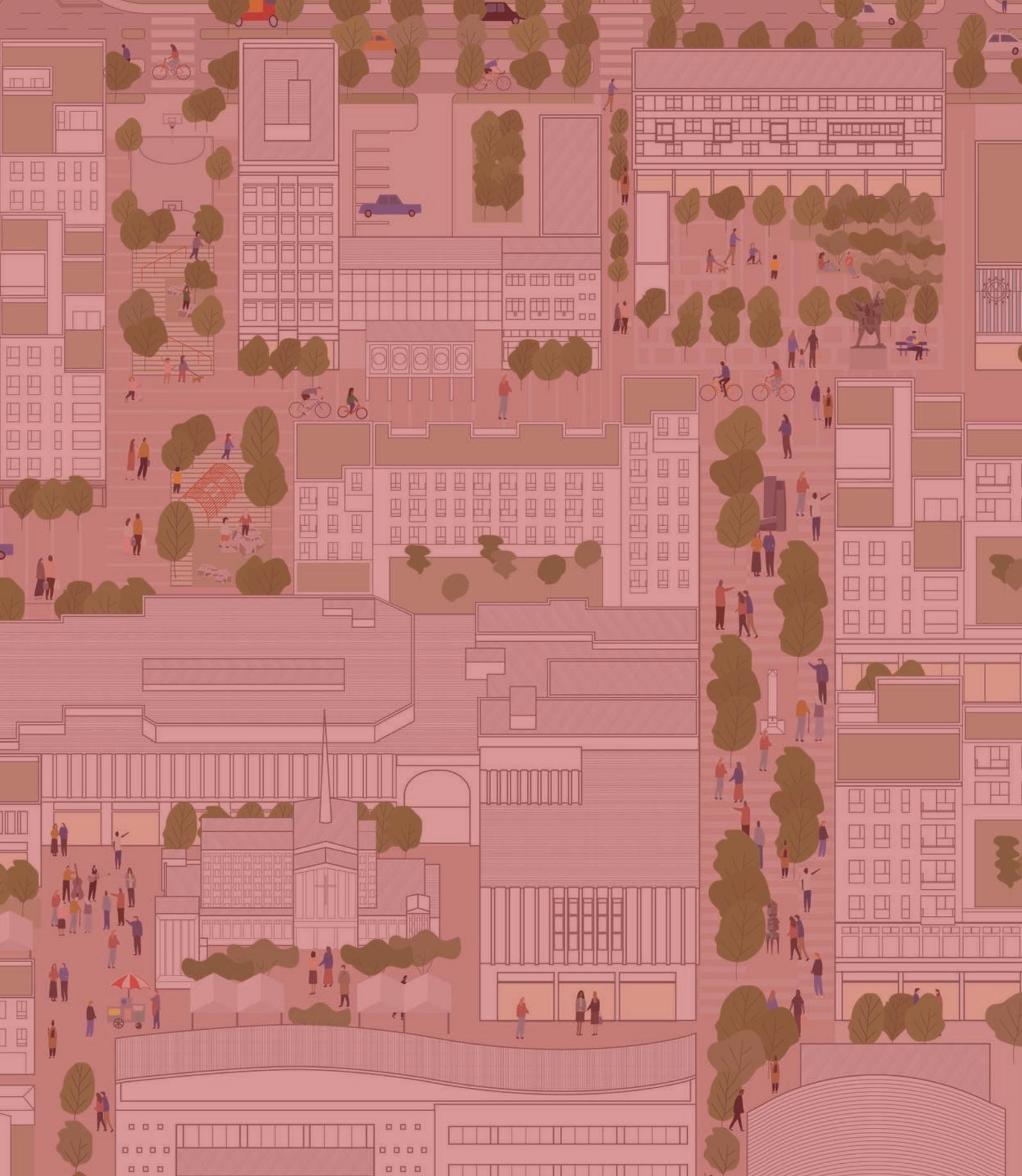
- 9.10. The Council will continue to explore opportunities for funding bids to Central Government and other funding partners. Joint Venture Partnerships will also be considered.

#### **Planning contributions**

- 9.11. Council policies establish a clear framework for planning contributions. Town centre priorities are identified below for reference which place particular emphasis on sustainable transport in and around Harlow Town Centre:
- Sustainable Transport Corridors across the HGGT and wider District including the east west STC link via Post Office Road.
  - Improving walking and cycling infrastructure between the town centre, Harlow Town Railway Station and local neighbourhoods.
  - Cycle hubs or cycle parking across the wider town centre.
  - Electric charging points.
- 9.12. The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will include projects identified for the Town Centre, including those set out in this Masterplan Framework, and where appropriate apportion costs to development sites coming forward in Harlow. The IDP is a living document and will continue to be updated as new projects come forward.

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Council  
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