

Framework Plan

Proposed North of Luton and
Sundon Rail Freight Interchange (RFI)
Strategic Allocations

March 2015

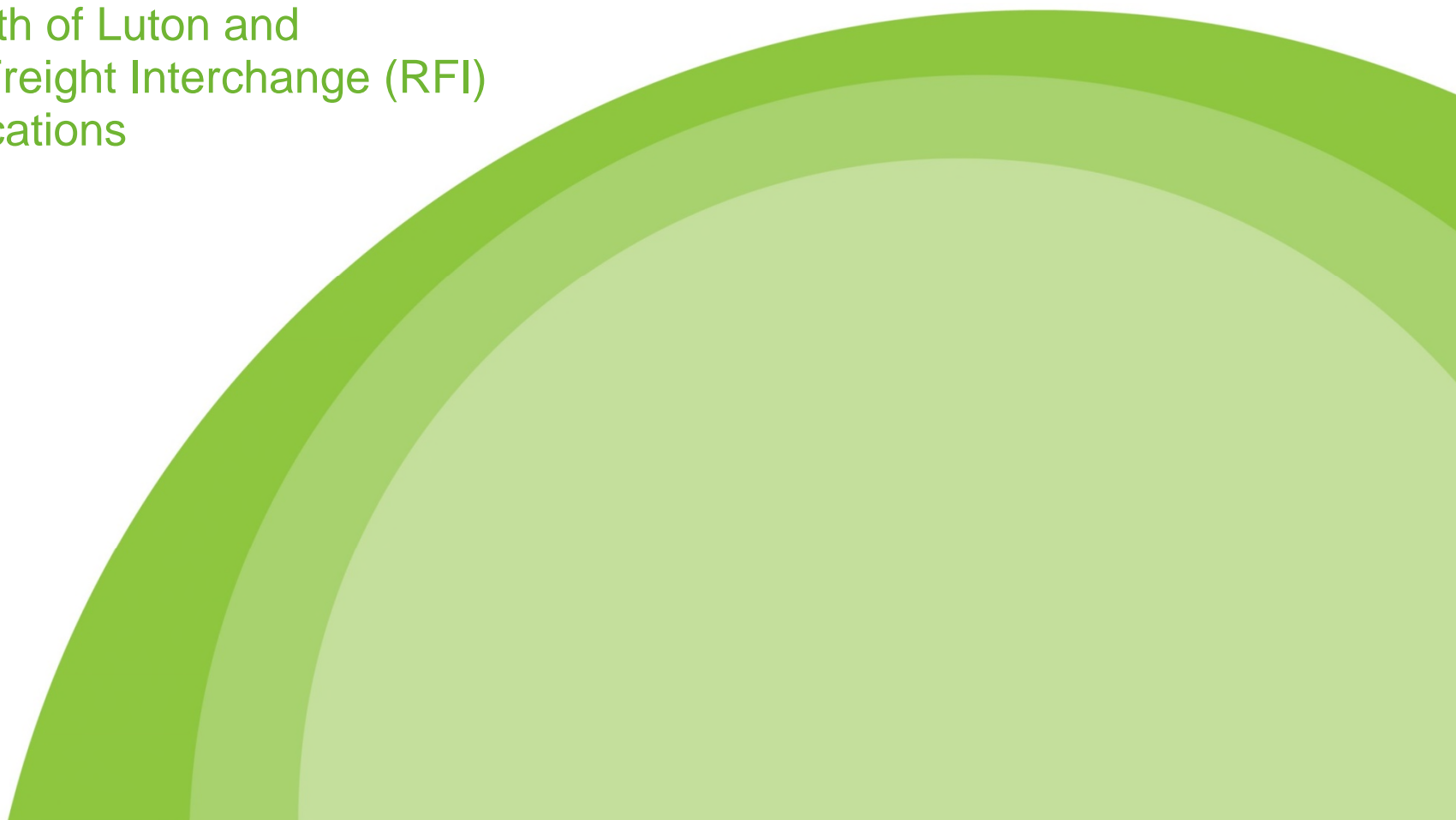


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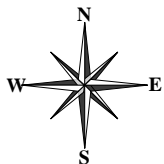
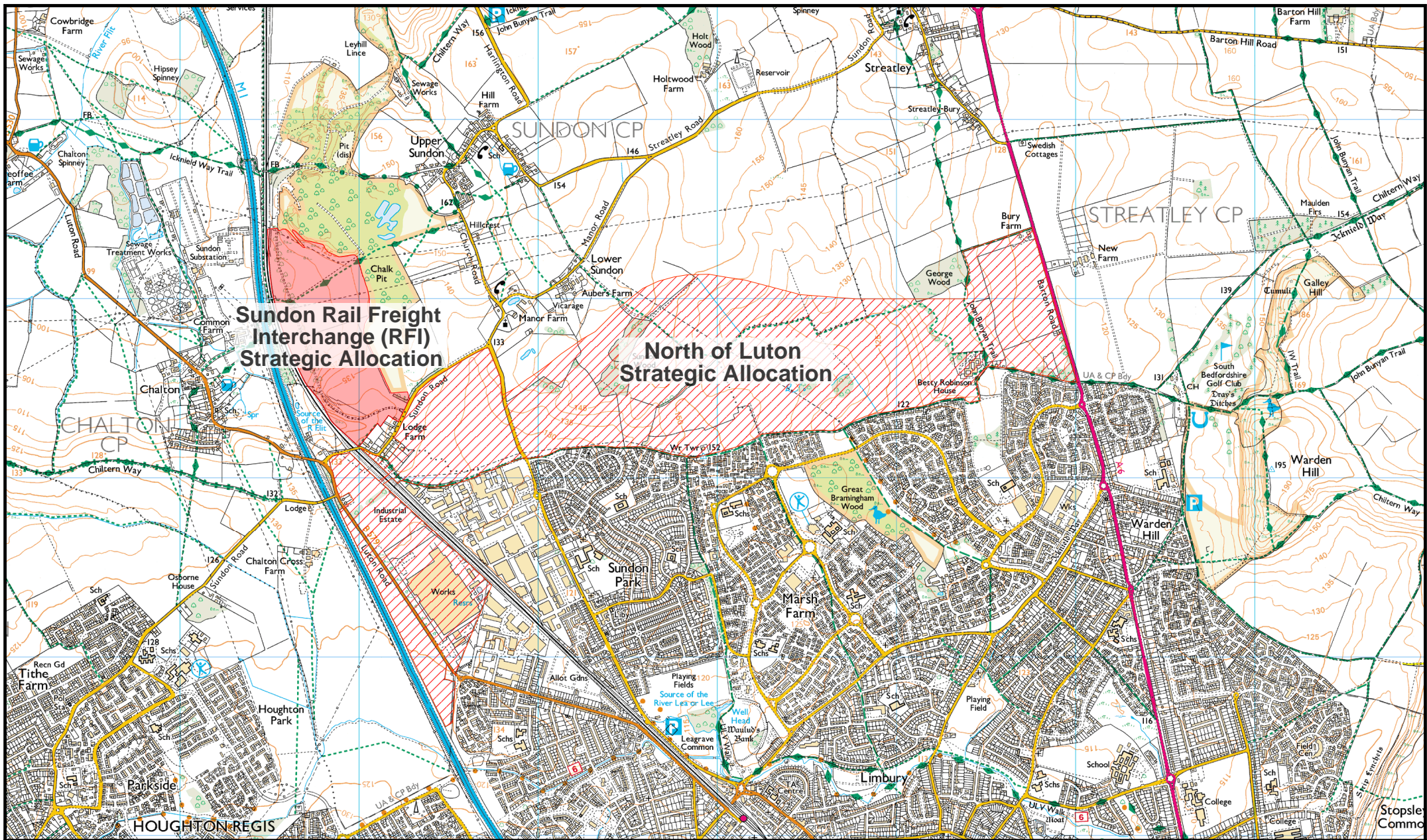
1. INTRODUCTION

This Framework Plan has been prepared by Central Bedfordshire Council (planning division) in consultation with the North Luton Consortium and Prologis to give further clarity and detail around the North of Luton and Sundon Rail Freight Interchange (RFI) strategic allocations identified in the Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy.

1.1. Context

- 1.1.1. Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) is planning for sustainable new development to help meet the housing and employment needs of a growing population in the housing market area spanning the boundaries of Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough. The purpose is to achieve the delivery of well located developments within high quality environments. The Council has assessed a number of alternative growth scenarios and sites through the Development Planning process¹. The evidence suggested that the best way to achieve a sustainable level of growth to meet the needs of both Central Bedfordshire and Luton in the longer term is to focus major new development where the need arises.
- 1.1.2. Land North of Luton will provide a mix of market and affordable housing, commercial development, new schools, accessible open space, and sports and leisure facilities. Land adjacent to Sundon Quarry, known as Sundon Rail Freight Interchange (RFI), will deliver a new sub-regional RFI adjacent to the Midland Mainline and complimentary commercial development. Both strategic allocations will also support the delivery of a major new east-west route from the new Junction 11A of the M1 to the A6. Given that there are interdependencies between both sites, the proposed areas for both the North of Luton and Sundon RFI Strategic Allocations are covered by this Framework Plan and their locations are shown on the following plan.

¹ The revised Pre-Submission [Development Strategy](#) for Central Bedfordshire (2014).



Date: 03 November 2014

Scale 1:28000

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1.2. Planning History

- 1.2.1. The history of the proposed strategic allocations goes back some years and they were first identified as a potential area of search in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Growth Strategy (2005). The proposals at Land North of Luton and Sundon RFI were carried through into the Joint Core Strategy for Luton and Southern Central Bedfordshire (2011) and following further assessment, they remain important sites in helping to deliver the growth requirements for both Central Bedfordshire and Luton in the Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy (2014).

1.3. Purpose of the document

- 1.3.1. This document is a high level Framework Plan which has been produced to show how the development specified in the [Development Strategy policies](#) could be brought forward. It is not intended as a rigid master plan and therefore maintains an element of flexibility. It will act as a guide to inform future masterplans and planning applications for the sites. As this is a significant development that will take a number of years to complete, there will no doubt be changes to policies and guidance during this time. Therefore, proposals will need to reflect the most up to date planning policies, strategies and guidance in place at the time any future masterplan or planning application is submitted.
- 1.3.2. The aim of this Framework Plan is to:
- Establish an overall framework which identifies the opportunities at both the strategic allocations to maximise their development potential.
 - Provide a level of certainty for communities, stakeholders and developers.
 - Explain the mechanism for consultation and the process moving forward.
 - Confirm the nature of any technical work required through subsequent masterplanning and planning applications.
 - Provide an indication of likely Planning Obligations to be provided as part of the development.

- 1.3.3 This document together with the accompanying Concept Plan² sets out a Vision for the development and Central Bedfordshire Council's expectations for any future masterplans and planning applications that may be submitted.

1.4. **Consultation**

- 1.4.1. The principle of development for both the Land North of Luton and Sundon RFI Strategic Allocations has been subject to extensive public consultation through the Local Planning process.

Joint Core Strategy for South Bedfordshire and Luton

- 1.4.2. Land to the North of Luton and Sundon RFI were first included as strategic allocations in the Joint Core Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and Luton. This document was prepared between 2007 and 2010 and was informed by four stages of extensive consultation. Development options, and subsequently preferred options, were consulted upon using community forums, exhibitions and workshops which were extensively advertised and well attended. Static displays were also available to view in key locations in South Bedfordshire and Luton. Formal periods of public consultation whereby documents were published and written responses could be submitted were also conducted and these opportunities were well advertised.

Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire

- 1.4.3. Following the withdrawal of the Joint Core Strategy in 2011, Central Bedfordshire Council prepared a new Development Strategy to guide development in Central Bedfordshire. Land to the North of Luton and Sundon RFI were included as locations for growth within this Local Plan and consulted upon through three stages of consultation. Initial engagement commenced in December 2011 with workshops and a period formal consultation where over 6,000 people and stakeholders were notified. Subsequent consultations in 2012 and 2013 involved formal periods of consultation whereby documents were published and written responses could be submitted, supported by exhibitions and further workshops. All consultation activities were well publicised and documents were readily available in public locations and on the Council's website.
- 1.4.4. This Framework Plan has reflected on the comments made through these Local Plan consultations.

² Note, no measurements should be taken from the diagram: any references to measurements in the text over-ride the diagram.

Developing the Framework Plan

- 1.4.5. In developing the Framework Plan the Council have engaged with technical specialists, stakeholders and officers on specific areas such as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), transport, heritage and open spaces. A formal period of consultation was also undertaken where local residents, business and stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on a draft plan and help structure the final content.
- 1.4.6. This formal period of consultation ran from 10 November to 15 December 2014, during which 350 people attended two exhibitions in Sundon and Marsh Farm, Luton. The consultation was extensive and proportionate to the scale of the development and was widely publicised amongst local residents and interested parties, including:
- A leaflet was distributed to around 10,000 local residents and businesses, of which around 1,500 were to all homes and businesses in the Central Bedfordshire parishes of Sundon, Streatley and Chalton, and 8,500 were sent to homes and businesses in the north Luton area. This leaflet set out key information including the purpose of the consultation, how to comment and information on two public exhibitions for example. Letters and emails were also sent to statutory consultees, and respondents to the most recent consultation on the Development Strategy.
 - The consultation was publicised in local media, including newspapers that distribute in the area, social media and in Central Bedfordshire Council's and Luton Borough Council's residents publications. Posters were also displayed in public locations in the surrounding area.
 - The consultation documents were available to view in public libraries in Central Bedfordshire and Luton and were also available to view and download from Central Bedfordshire Council's website.
- 1.4.7. Overall, there were 171 responses to the public consultation which were analysed and reported to the Council, together with the proposed amendments to the Framework Plan. The Framework Plan was considered by Central Bedfordshire Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2015 and was formally endorsed by Executive in March 2015.
- 1.4.8. Further consultation will be expected to take place in advance of the submission of planning applications on more detailed proposals for the sites as these evolve. This may include workshops and further public exhibitions.

2. VISION AND AIMS

2.1. Vision

- 2.1.1. The Vision³ presents a picture of the type of place that Central Bedfordshire Council wishes to create. Future masterplans and planning applications will be expected to show how they comply with this Vision.

2.2. The vision for North of Luton and Sundon RFI Strategic Allocations

- 2.2.1. The developments will be a sustainable series of residential character areas, separated by green corridors linking Luton with the wider countryside and building upon the existing strong sense of identity to be found within Central Bedfordshire's local villages and residential areas in Luton. The commercial area and Sundon RFI will be located at the western end of the development closest to the new M1 junction 11A. These areas of development will form distinctive places, whilst ensuring that they appropriately integrate and connect. The new character areas will:

- CONNECT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS ...

... by being places with easy access to the towns, villages, and the countryside which people will want to visit as part of their everyday lives, achieved by utilising existing routes and creating new ones to maximise connectivity. This will include good public transport and safe, convenient walking and cycling routes to encourage sustainable and healthy modes of travel.

- HELP FORM NEW COMMUNITIES ...

... by being places where people can experience a good quality of life and where neighbourhoods will have an attractive mix of housing and a wide range of local employment opportunities; provide new schools and other supporting community infrastructure; local centres with community facilities; public spaces that create a focal point for community activity and social interaction; and facilitating access to a

³ A *Vision* is a broad statement about how the area should develop and the qualities it should have over the long term.

range of multifunctional, quality open spaces including the Chilterns AONB, Sundon Historic Park as well as the countryside generally for the health and well-being of residents.

- CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE ...

- ... by including measures that will help the communities adapt to the changes caused by climate change and designing places that have a low impact on, or positively improve, the environment, health and well-being of the residents.

- HAVE AN EMPHASIS ON GOOD DESIGN ...

... by taking positive design cues from both Luton and the distinctive villages of the adjacent AONB and designing places that have character with a local distinctiveness that offers an opportunity to give people a sense of pride in their environment.

- PROVIDE FOR NEW BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES...

... by providing land and facilities that will allow for places that support the development of sustainable business growth and that help provide a wide range of local jobs and encourage training opportunities; and promote significant economic growth in the wider area through the delivery of the Sundon Rail Freight Interchange.

- CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE AONB, THE COUNTRYSIDE AND LOCAL HERITAGE...

...by respecting the landscape and encouraging improvements to the accessibility of the Chilterns AONB with particular attention to new and enhanced footpaths, bridleways, crossings, sensitive improvements to local lanes appropriate to their function and enhancing the opportunities for recreational use of the countryside generally; enhancing the value of ecological sites and protecting heritage assets.

2.3. Aims

2.3.1. All planning proposals that are made within the area covered by this Framework Plan should demonstrate how the Vision is to be achieved. Planning applications must also demonstrate how the following headline aims are to be achieved, where these aims are relevant to the application concerned:

1. To contribute positively to the delivery of a range of new housing to assist in resolving issues of affordability and housing supply in the wider area.
2. To mitigate the impact on existing local infrastructure by providing new supporting community infrastructure to meet the needs of the new development and which compliments existing facilities in the area.
3. To contribute to providing a range of new employment opportunities to help enable the diversification and enhancement of the local economy.
4. To deliver a significant Rail Freight Interchange of sub-regional importance on land adjacent to Sundon Quarry and associated access to the strategic road network to boost economic growth in the area.
5. To contribute to and enable a greater level of public access from Luton through the development to the Chilterns AONB.
6. To provide a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network which protects and enhances biodiversity and the historic environment; conserves water and manages its quality; and provides open spaces within and on the edge of the urban area suitable for recreation, sports and other informal activities, in accordance with the Council's overall requirements.
7. To provide a new strategic link road to the north of Luton which will contribute towards the creation of a key orbital road improvement which can link communities in the conurbation of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis.
8. To contribute to vehicular transport, particularly public transport, and walking and cycling links both around the area generally and to the wider facilities in Luton.

9. To provide and maintain sustainable and healthy environments through the mitigation of proposals which are likely to cause pollution or are likely to be exposed to potential sources of pollution.
10. To ensure that the proposed development will deliver buildings which are resource efficient and resilient to future climate change.
11. To follow best practice in the design and layout of the built environment, providing high quality development which ensures development proposals demonstrate a strong character, with public spaces that are safe, accessible, and pleasant to use and appropriate in scale. The buildings and layout will seek to improve social well-being and the quality of life for occupants and other users. The buildings and spaces at Sundon RFI will be designed to respect and enhance the surrounding landscape and biodiversity, particularly the adjacent County Wildlife Site (CWS) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Sundon Quarry. Buildings will be constructed from materials which minimise the degree of visibility on the skyline and public spaces will be functional, overlooked and landscaped to manage the space and create a human scale environment.
12. To have regard to the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB and take full account of the views both into and out of the area. Development closest to the AONB should represent the highest environmental and design standards whilst complimenting the character of the AONB. A reduction in the impact of infrastructure should also be sought, particularly overhead pylons and roads.

2.4. Phasing Delivery

- 2.4.1. CBC recognises that the process of preparing a new Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire may run in parallel with some of the planning applications within this area that will be submitted in due course. Nevertheless, the Council does not wish to discourage appropriate planning applications from being submitted and for development to be planned, provided that:

- The delivery of relevant critical infrastructure⁴ is secured;
- Where it can be demonstrated by means of assessment for any planning application that certain critical infrastructure is not required for a particular quantum of development, its early or phased delivery will be acceptable in principle;
- Any such planning applications are consistent with the overall vision for growth set out in the Development Strategy and this Framework Plan;
- Any such planning applications incorporate agreed measures of mitigation for the impacts caused cumulatively as a result of development.

⁴ *Critical infrastructure* is defined in the Development Strategy as infrastructure that must happen to enable physical development. Given the scale of the site a phased approach to critical infrastructure in line with development parcels is likely. The M1-A6 Strategic Link Road is being funded through S106 agreements and/or through other grant funding. The Council will support such bids for funding.

3. CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Introduction

- 3.1.1. This section of the Framework Plan sets out the physical constraints that are present both on the sites and in the surrounding area that are influential on the development; and identifies opportunities to be sought through the development.

3.2. Local context and features

- 3.2.1. The North of Luton strategic allocation lies immediately adjacent to the built edge of Luton, an area characterised by varying types of residential development ranging from low density to the east in Bramingham, to higher density at Marsh Farm and Sundon Park, and the Willowgate Trading Estate and General Motors facility to the west. Potential highway and footpath connections are present along the northern edge of Luton which provides the opportunity for new connections to the existing urban area.
- 3.2.2. The North of Luton site spans between the M1 Motorway to the west and the A6 to the east. The Midland Mainline also crosses through the development close to the western edge. Sundon Quarry lies to the north-west of the North of Luton site and along the eastern edge of the Midland Mainline. Overhead power lines traverse both sites and the development will need to provide the appropriate easement. Opportunities will be sought to channel the power lines underground to the benefit of improving the landscape, subject to viability.
- 3.2.3. The villages of Lower Sundon, Upper Sundon and Streatley lie to the north and east of the sites, and Chalton Cross, a small hamlet, lies between Sundon Quarry and the North of Luton site, to the east of the Midland Mainline. Opportunities for mitigation will need to be sought in order to protect these rural villages from the growth of the Luton conurbation and the RFI and employment proposals.
- 3.2.4. The area to the north of the sites is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Chilterns AONB) and this will be a critical factor in shaping the design and layout of the development. An area known as Sundon Historic Park lies adjacent to the northern boundary and forms part of a medieval and post medieval landscape, which whilst presently non-designated is still historically important. Dray's Ditches Scheduled Monument, a linear earthwork, is also located in the south east corner of the North of Luton site extending to the east of the A6, and will influence the design and layout of development in this area.

- 3.2.5. A number of footpaths and bridleways traverse the sites, including an important east west link known as the Theedway which runs along the current northern edge of Luton and the Chiltern Way which passes through the Sundon RFI site. The Icknield Way Path, a long distance route extending from Dorset to Norfolk and the locally significant John Bunyan Trail also pass through the east of the North of Luton site. Development should seek to retain and enhance these existing routes and there are opportunities for further footpaths, bridleways and cycleways between Luton, the developments and the wider countryside to improve connectivity.

3.3. Landscape and Topography

- 3.3.1. The existing landscape and topographical features will be a key influence on the layout of the development at land North of Luton and Sundon RFI. The site North of Luton is rolling chalk farmland being undulating in character comprising of a large scale and relatively open field network, providing open views to Sundon ridge and part of the Chilterns AONB. The topography of the site is varied with areas of height and a couple of steep slopes which will need to be considered within the overall layout.
- 3.3.2. Opportunities will be sought to retain and enhance existing features and respond to the topography of the sites creating a green infrastructure network which provides links from Luton to the open countryside beyond the northern boundary of the sites. Additional landscaping will be needed to mitigate against any impacts on the Chilterns AONB and its setting and this will be informed by landscape strategies required as part of any future detailed masterplans or planning applications.

3.4. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- 3.4.1. The Chilterns AONB designation runs south west to north east through the southern part of Central Bedfordshire. There are sites such as Sundon Hills and Sharpenhoe Clappers to the north which will attract visitors from the new development. The majority of the land North of Luton site lies outside of the AONB. In order to help protect this nationally important landscape the incursion into the AONB will be restricted to part of the M1-A6 strategic link road and the playing fields attached to one of the primary schools, both of which will be mitigated against using sensitive design and landscaping. The revised Green Belt boundary will follow the allocation boundary. The northern edge of the site will consist of green infrastructure to enable a proper transition between the urban area and the wider countryside. Residential or employment development will not be located within the extent of the AONB and any other development within the AONB should accord with AONB guidance and policies including the Chilterns

Buildings Design Guide, Chilterns Management Plan and Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns.

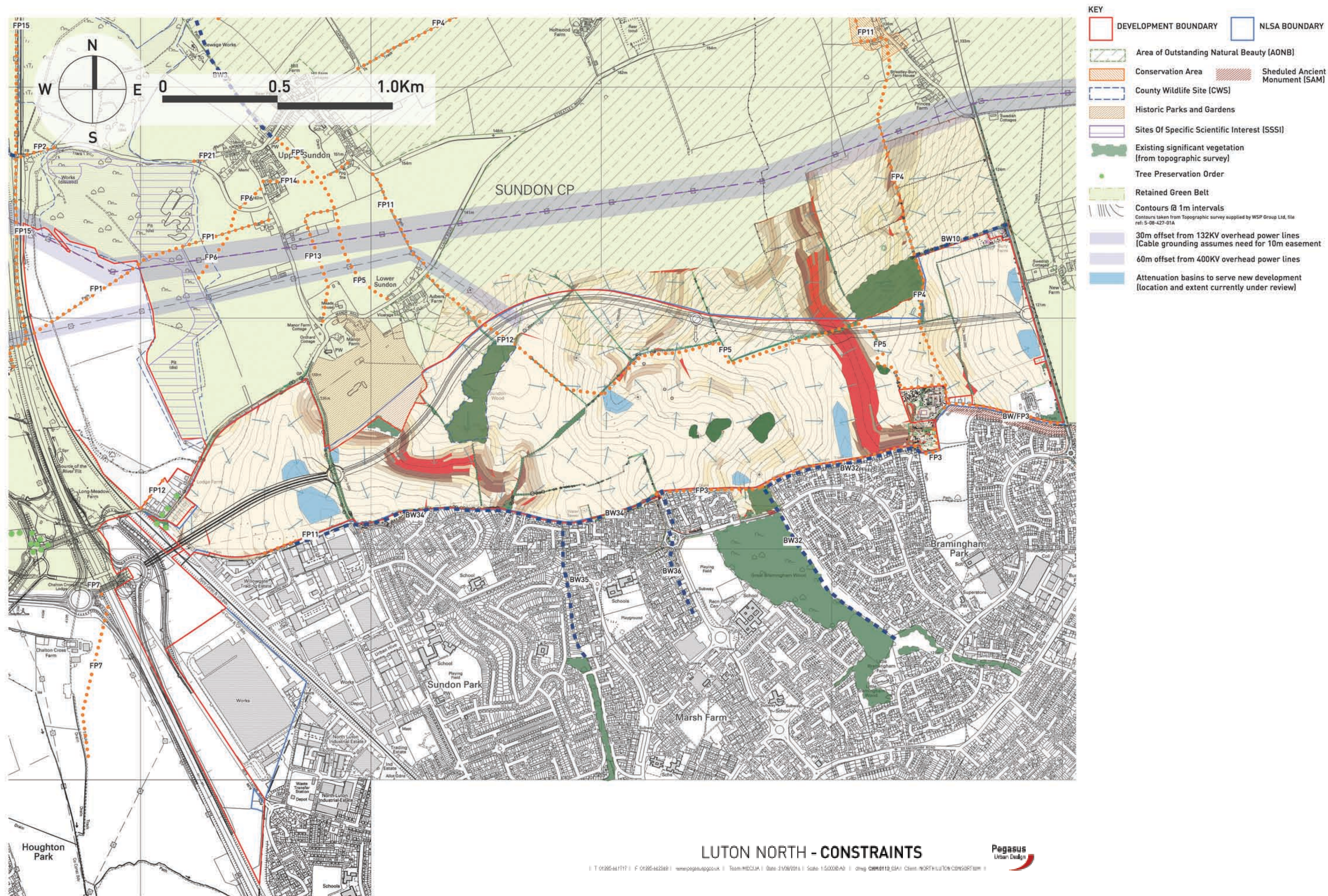
3.5. Ecology

- 3.5.1. The North of Luton site contains Sundon Wood County Wildlife Site (CWS) and George Wood CWS is located adjacent to the north eastern edge. There are also existing hedgerows and field boundaries which provide important wildlife corridors, as well as small areas of woodland and mature trees. Opportunities should be sought to provide an appropriate ecological buffer around these features to mitigate against any impacts on ecology and integrate them within the wider green infrastructure network.
- 3.5.2. Bramingham Wood CWS and a further District Wildlife Site are located to the south of the North of Luton site, within Luton itself. Opportunities should be sought to connect this area into a wider green infrastructure network.
- 3.5.3. Sundon Chalk Pits CWS, and within it the Sundon Chalk Quarry SSSI occupy the disused quarry that lies directly to the east of the Sundon RFI allocation. The SSSI comprises a variety of habitats containing important plant and animal species. The disused quarry is also designated as Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Chalton Scrub and Grassland CWS is located in the south western part of the Sundon RFI site, adjacent to the Midland Mainline. The development offers the opportunity to enhance and manage these areas, in particular the disused quarry, as part of a wider green infrastructure network to increase the ecological value of the site. The development will also need to respond to the sensitivities of these sites, particularly in terms of minimising light spillage, noise emission and hydrological changes, as well as pressure for access for recreational purposes from the residential land uses at land North of Luton.
- 3.5.4. Further ecological assessments will be required as part of future planning applications for both the North of Luton and Sundon RFI sites to identify any potential impacts and appropriate measures to avoid, mitigate or compensate for any impacts or losses arising from the construction, future occupancy and operation of the developments.

3.6. Heritage

- 3.6.1. The area has a rich heritage, some of which remains visible on the landscape to this day. There is evidence of numerous Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and medieval finds and features across the area indicating a long history of human activity and occupation.

- 3.6.2. The area contains a Scheduled Monument known as Dray's Ditches, located on the south-eastern corner of the area. It is an Iron Age linear earthwork overlaying Bronze Age occupation which extends east towards Warden Hill and is also on the Heritage at Risk register.
- 3.6.3. Sundon Wood contains a number of significant archaeological earthworks associated with woodland management which date from the medieval period onwards. Opportunities for their retention and protection within any enhancement or access plan should be sought.
- 3.6.4. At Upper Sundon there are earthwork remains of a shrunken village. This is a medieval site with well-preserved earthworks including hollow ways, property boundaries, ridge and furrow, headlands and field boundaries and the site is significant in area.
- 3.6.5. At Lower Sundon there are earthworks indicating features associated with the former Sundon House. The earthworks are very overgrown but indicate hollow ways, close boundaries and house sites along with landscape features around the house. However it is known to be locally significant. The adjacent Sundon Park is the site of a medieval deer park with boundary earthworks and is very important distinctive parkland. Opportunities will be sought to integrate this asset within the wider Green Infrastructure network.
- 3.6.6. The Theedway, alternatively known as Thiodweg, is an ancient route-way and was significant in Saxon Bedfordshire. It became a prominent feature in the landscape and its line is the northern limit of Luton. The historic boundary of Luton was further north and the associated hedgerow is protected as an important hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. The current urban fringe of Luton is largely unattractive forming a hard interface between town and country. The development provides the opportunity for a new green corridor that will improve the route of the Theedway, making it more attractive as an east-west path and it will also provide separation between the new development and existing residents. This green corridor will also contribute to the protection of Dray's Ditches to the far east of the site. The width of this green corridor will vary along its length in response to adjacent uses, topographical features and the presence of other ecological or heritage assets.
- 3.6.7. To the south of the scarp, the rolling chalk farmland does have some small enclosures near to settlements but is dominated by arable cropping within large geometric parliamentary enclosure fields. Again the field boundaries are characterised by short flailed, gappy hedges.



4. FRAMEWORK PLAN PROPOSALS

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. The Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy identifies the two strategic allocations which will accommodate:

- Land North of Luton - approximately 3,200 new dwellings, 13 hectares of employment land, new retail and community facilities, open spaces, green infrastructure and associated development to 2031; with the potential for an additional 800 homes and 7ha of employment land beyond 2031.
- Sundon RFI - a separate but adjacent strategic allocation for a rail freight interchange with a further 40 hectares of associated employment land.

4.1.2. Both allocations will facilitate the delivery of a new strategic Link Road between the M1 and the A6.

4.1.3. This section of the Framework Plan sets out how the policy requirements will be delivered on the two sites. The Concept Plan included in Appendix 1 shows the Council's general expectations on how the aims of the urban extension may take physical form. Future masterplanning and planning applications are expected to deliver a comprehensive and sustainable development which will adhere to the principles in this Framework Plan.

4.2. M1-A6 Strategic Link Road

4.2.1. The development will provide a new strategic Link Road between the M1 and A6 which will benefit the wider transport network and provide access to the development. It will also form part of a wider east-west orbital route around the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation, linking to the A5-M1 link road scheme via the new M1 Junction 11A. This will contribute to alleviating through traffic from the conurbation, freeing up capacity on the highway network within the towns as well as addressing issues in the surrounding villages. A strategic link road from the A6 to the A505 is not required to support the North of Luton and Sundon RFI developments. The feasibility of providing this will be pursued separately with neighbouring local authorities as it is likely to require substantial funding and is beyond the remit of this Framework Plan.

4.2.2. The strategic Link Road linking the new M1 junction 11A and the A6 will be delivered in a phased manner in line with the Development Strategy. The section between the new junction on the M1 and the link to Sundon RFI will

cross the Midland Mainline in order to facilitate access to employment land and enable the development of the RFI. The road will extend across to the A6 where it will join a new roundabout. A number of potential routes for the Link Road have been explored in developing these proposals, all of which have been subject to public consultation. The preferred road position has been informed by technical and engineering studies and is shown on the Concept Plan. This proposed route maximises the amount of developable land, in order to make sure that the right amount of development can be accommodated on the sites and ensures that the new homes, employment and community uses relate well and form a natural extension to the existing Luton area. As a consequence a short stretch of the road passes through the southern extent of the Chilterns AONB. The Link Road passes through undulating terrain and the route has been designed to limit the impact of both the road and its traffic from view points in and around the AONB. The design should seek to achieve an earthworks balance which will avoid the need for importing or exporting material thereby minimising the amount of HGV traffic associated with construction of the road. Other measures to minimise the impact include new landscaping and extending existing woodland areas, and sensitive highway design and lighting, for example.

- 4.2.3. The principle of a Link Road has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) through both the emerging Development Strategy and the adopted Local Transport Plan (LTP). The detailed road alignment will be determined through the planning application process and will be informed by future technical work including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 4.2.4. The Link Road will provide a more direct route to the M1 and as a consequence the Council will restrict HGV movements in the surrounding villages where possible.

4.3. Bridges and entrance from the M1

- 4.3.1. The site will be accessed from the west by a new Junction 11A on the M1 which is committed by the Highways Agency and has been future proofed to accommodate growth to the north of Luton (including Sundon RFI). The design of the junction will need to be amended to connect to the Link Road. The Link Road will cross the Midland Mainline and a new bridge will be constructed, the principle of which is supported by Network Rail.
- 4.3.2. The full extent of the Link Road from the M1 to the A6 will be required in order to accommodate the total amount of development. Any development proposed in advance of the Link Road being completed will need to demonstrate it is acceptable in planning terms.

4.4. Direct highway link to Sundon RFI

- 4.4.1. A direct connection from the Link Road to Sundon RFI will be created to accommodate vehicle movements for the RFI which will be 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. This will minimise any impact on the existing road network around Chalton, Lower Sundon and on Sundon Historic Park. The ability to provide this direct link will be dependent on the detailed design of the Link Road which will be determined through detailed masterplanning and planning applications.
- 4.4.2. The Link Road will cut through the current Sundon Park Road, severing this north-south connection between Luton and Lower Sundon. Vehicular traffic will be re-routed via a new local road connection to the RFI junction on the Link Road. Sundon Park Road will become a north-south route for cyclists and pedestrians to enable access to homes and facilities with an appropriate at-grade pedestrian and cycle crossing point provided over the Link Road. If this direct link cannot be provided, access to the RFI will be via the western section of the Link Road and a new junction on Sundon Park Road. In this scenario Sundon Park Road will remain as a route open to vehicle movements.

4.5. Green Infrastructure Network: A network of green spaces

- 4.5.1. The layout of the development has been structured around a network of Green Infrastructure, as shown on the Concept Plan. This network responds to the topography of the land and incorporates existing Rights of Way, landscape features and ecological assets including areas of woodland, hedgerows and designated wildlife sites. In addition to these natural features, the green network will also incorporate recreational uses such as the Open Access Land at Sundon Quarry, new allotments, children's play areas and sports pitches, and have a functional use in managing surface water through infiltration as part of a wider Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS). This network will also be complimented a GI strategy along highway corridors to ensure a well connected network of green spaces. The amount of open space being provided meets the Council's overall standards as set out in the adopted Leisure Strategy.
- 4.5.2. The proposed north-south green links connect existing green spaces in Luton such as Great Bramingham Wood and Bramingham Park to the countryside within the AONB to the north. These links incorporate Sundon Wood, George Wood and existing pockets of woodland present to the north of Great Bramingham Wood. Green bridges will provide crossing points over the new Link Road. This will enable the movement of people and animals across the Link Road and vegetation along the bridge will assist in mitigating against any landscape impacts.

- 4.5.3. The proposed east-west green link along the northern edge of the site connects Sundon and George Woods and includes the area of AONB which lies within the site. A further east-west link incorporates the Theedway which lies along the northern edge of Luton. This corridor will retain and enhance the existing route and create a multifunctional Green Infrastructure corridor where new development will front onto it and create a more positive environment, whilst protecting the amenity of neighbouring residents and preserving Dray's Ditches Scheduled Monument.
- 4.5.4. Keech Hospice is an existing palliative care facility located in the south-eastern corner of the North of Luton site. The Hospice is set within its own grounds, offering a peaceful setting for its patients. A green buffer will be provided around the hospice in order to protect its function and setting and maintain separation from existing and proposed residential development. Opportunities for improved access to the Hospice will also be considered through the detailed masterplanning and planning application process. The Council and developers of the sites will continue to engage with the Hospice about their future aspirations.

4.6. The Chilterns AONB

- 4.6.1. In order to protect the Chilterns AONB no built development is located within its extent, with the exception of a small stretch of the Link Road and open space provision associated with the central primary school, as shown on the Concept Plan. The school buildings and external spaces including playing fields will be sensitively designed to respect the AONB and in accordance with the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, Chilterns Management Plan and Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns. Consideration will be given to maintaining the openness of the playing fields and measures to integrate development within the landscape setting .
- 4.6.2. The northern boundary of the site will be sensitively landscaped using planting to provide an appropriate edge to the development and the wider Luton area. This will include extending Sundon and George Woods. This will minimise the visual impact of the development on the landscape and on Lower and Upper Sundon. It will also assist in mitigating against the Link Road and primary school site. The amount of landscaping will increase in the development parcels in close proximity to the AONB. The north eastern parcel of land is particularly sensitive and will require mitigation in terms of landscaping, design and layout to reduce the visual impact especially when viewed from Galley Hill and Warden Hills.
- 4.6.3. The north-south green corridor links occurring at intervals through the site, combined with the landscaped edges, will visually break the development up into a number of smaller parcels and help protect the skyline from a range of

viewpoints. Other measures will include consideration of topography in relation to the layout and densities of development parcels, roof materials and the choice of street lighting.

4.7. Protection of CWS, SSSI and other ecological features

- 4.7.1. Along the eastern edge of Sundon RFI and the northern edges of the land parcels located to the south of Sundon Quarry, an appropriate ecological buffer will be provided to mitigate any impacts on the SSSI and CWS that are likely to arise as a result of construction, operations and future recreational pressure.
- 4.7.2. Existing features such as Sundon Wood, George Wood and other areas of undesignated woodland will be extended to form part of the Green Infrastructure corridors. This will also buffer these important features from the development and enhance the ecology of the area.
- 4.7.3. Further ecological surveys will be required as part of any detailed masterplans or planning applications, including extended Phase 1 Habitats Surveys.

4.8. Protection of heritage assets

- 4.8.1. Appropriate mitigation will be provided between Dray's Ditches and the development in order to protect the Scheduled Monument. This will form part of the wider Green Infrastructure corridor along the northern edge of Luton. There is the potential for deposits associated with Drays Ditches to extend to the north of the Scheduled Monument designated area. Early evaluation of the area and a mitigation and enhancement strategy will therefore be required to determine the extent of the Scheduled Monument and any measures required to preserve it in situ. The green corridor will need to be of a sufficient width to incorporate the scheduled area and its immediate setting.
- 4.8.2. Measures will be put in place to preserve the historic landscape around and including Sundon Historic Park, which lies just beyond the site boundary. A Green Infrastructure corridor will be provided along the edges of the development that adjoin Sundon Historic Park in order to protect the setting of the historic landscape in this location. This Green Infrastructure corridor will also help protect the village setting of Lower Sundon. Mitigation strategies will be required as part of any future planning applications.
- 4.8.3. A programme of evaluation to establish the location, extent, nature, date and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present will be required before the development proposals are finalised through any planning applications.

4.9. A well connected development into Luton and Central Bedfordshire

- 4.9.1. The development will be well connected to both Luton and the surrounding towns and villages in Central Bedfordshire. The new highway network will connect to four existing routes within Luton (Northwell Drive, Sundon Park Road, Toddington Road and the A6). New cycle routes will be connected to the current cycle network and existing Rights of Way (footpaths and bridleways) will be retained and enhanced.
- 4.9.2. A new spine road will run through the heart of the development and a well connected network of new primary, secondary and tertiary streets will provide attractive walking and cycling routes throughout the development between community facilities, residential areas, places of employment and green spaces.

4.10. Impact on the existing highway network

- 4.10.1. High level transport modelling of the area has been undertaken in order to inform the emerging Development Strategy. This looked at the potential impact of the existing highway network if the developments were built without any mitigation measures on existing roads or public transport. This has highlighted the areas of highest impact, particularly on some of the north-south routes which will be further considered as the masterplans and planning applications develop.
- 4.10.2. Additional transport evidence at a more refined level will be needed as part of any detailed masterplanning or planning applications to mitigate the impacts. This more detailed work will seek to provide a transport solution for the full masterplan as well as during the phased build-out of the masterplan. Improvements to physical infrastructure such as the new road and associated junctions between the M1 and A6 will need to be supplemented by sustainable transport enhancements, travel planning and the consideration of how we will travel in the future. The transport solution will need to be a combination of hard and soft measures to make best use of the existing infrastructure and any proposed improvements.
- 4.10.3. Detailed transport assessments will be prepared in consultation with Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council and will identify mitigation measures on the existing highway network to ensure the development has an acceptable impact in highway and transport terms.

4.11. Sustainable Transport

- 4.11.1. The site's location on the edge of the urban area means that there are significant opportunities for connections to Luton and surrounding settlements by public transport, walking and cycling routes. The opportunities for sustainable transport are the key measure in mitigating against any impact on the highway network.
- 4.11.2. It is therefore crucial that the development north of Luton provides a range of sustainable transport choices for the new community from the outset. This will include opportunities to link to existing public transport routes and attractive walking and cycling options which link to local services and provide access in the north to the countryside and Chilterns AONB, and in the south through Luton where there is already an extensive sustainable transport network. Opportunities will be sought to encourage connections to main destinations in Luton such as the Arndale Centre, Airport and the three train stations, as well as encourage a link to the Luton Dunstable Guided Busway. Sustainable transport strategies will identify opportunities for non-car based travel and transport assessments will build on previous assessments and those undertaken by Luton Borough Council to identify where there will need to be new bus priority measures to improve journey times. It will also look at how the development will link to the most important bus routes to ensure these are capitalised upon. The Council will continue to work with Luton Borough Council to ensure opportunities for sustainable transport are realised.
- 4.11.3. Densities will be higher along the key routes within the development and along links into Luton in order to support public transport opportunities, and community facilities will be located along these key routes to maximise accessibility.

4.12. Location of community uses

- 4.12.1. The development will facilitate the provision of the necessary facilities to support the new community subject to the viability of the scheme. This includes a new community hub; primary and secondary schools; and open spaces containing play areas, playing pitches and allotments, for example.

4.13. A central community hub

- 4.13.1. Community facilities aspiring to health facilities, community hall and retail will be centrally located within the development to be accessible to residents. The neighbourhood centre will compliment the existing network of

neighbourhood centres within Luton, such as Marsh Farm, Bramingham and Sundon Park, and it will be attractive to both new and existing residents in Luton and the villages of Sundon and Streatley to the north.

4.14. New schools

- 4.14.1. The development will facilitate the delivery of education facilities to cater for children living in the new development in line with Central Bedfordshire Council's policies on identifying new pupil places. This will be in line with the scale of the development and there is currently an anticipated need for three new primary schools, with early year's provision and a secondary school with sixth form places to meet the need arising from 3,200 and 4,000 homes. Indicative locations for the primary schools are illustrated on the Concept Plan and they are distributed across the site in the west, centre and east. It is possible that one of the primary schools will be co-located with a secondary school. The Concept Plan identifies two potential locations for the secondary school: the centre of the site adjacent to the community hub and to the east of the site adjacent to the A6. Based on high level evidence, the Council's specialist officers and Members have expressed a preference for the central position adjacent to the community hub. However, both locations require further technical assessment to address the impact on housing numbers, landscape and access. The exact location will be dependent on the outcomes of this technical work and determined through further detailed masterplanning.

4.15. Recreational spaces

- 4.15.1. New recreational open spaces will be provided in accordance with the standards in the Central Bedfordshire Leisure Strategy and accommodated within the wider multifunctional green infrastructure network.
- 4.15.2. Playing pitches will be required as part of the development and some of this provision will be provided at the secondary school, for community use outside of school hours.
- 4.15.3. Children's play areas and sites for young people will be provided across the development. Fewer but larger play areas that cater for all age groups will be required on individual sites, and will be located at key points, such as intersections, close to school sites, and as a part of multi-functional open spaces.

4.16. Distribution of homes

- 4.16.1. The development will provide approximately 3,200 homes to the year 2031 with the potential for an additional 800 homes beyond the plan period in accordance with the Development Strategy policy. The exact number of homes will be determined at planning application stage. A mix of house types and tenures will be provided, including older persons accommodation and up to 30% affordable housing in accordance with the Council's policy target in the Development Strategy to meet the needs of both Central Bedfordshire and Luton.
- 4.16.2. Densities will vary across the site and will be appropriate to neighbouring areas. Density will reduce to the north of the site in the vicinity of the Chilterns AONB providing a transition from town to countryside and enabling a softer edge to the built up area of Luton than at present. Higher density development will also be focused on the principal routes through the development in order to support public transport.

4.17. Character Areas

- 4.17.1. The development will be split into distinctive neighbourhoods of primarily residential use contained within and set apart by the multifunctional network of Green Infrastructure.

4.18. Main employment areas on Land North of Luton

- 4.18.1. The main employment areas are located to the west of the site, between the M1 and Midland Mainline to benefit from access to the new Junction 11A and relate to the existing employment areas at the Willowgate Trading Estate and the General Motors facility. This complements the proposed employment areas on the opposite side of the M1 at North Houghton Regis, creating a new employment hub on the M1 corridor. A small amount of employment space may also be located along the direct highway link to Sundon RFI. A range of employment generating uses could be accommodated and this flexibility ensures the area remains attractive to a wide range of potential businesses and industries. There is the potential for around 1,000 new jobs to be provided in this location.
- 4.18.2. There may be further opportunities for small scale employment uses in the neighbourhood centre and close to the A6 corridor.

4.19. Sundon Rail Freight Interchange

- 4.19.1. The Rail Freight Interchange itself will be an intermodal facility of approximately 5 ha providing pick up and drop off access to 4 rail sidings adjacent to the Midland Mainline, and there will also be 40ha of distribution facilities accommodated within a range of different sized buildings. The RFI and associated employment area is expected to create around 2,000 new jobs, based on standard employment densities and experience with similar developments elsewhere. The first phase of the strategic Link Road between the new Junction 11A and the new direct link to Sundon RFI will enable vehicle access to the site.
- 4.19.2. Rail Freight Interchanges are encouraged in the NPPF (paragraph 31) to support sustainable development and Network Rail have confirmed they are supportive of an RFI in this location. There are long term markets for this kind of development and sites which can be easily rail linked are scarce and should be seen as national strategic assets.

5. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

5.1. Urban Design Principles

- 5.1.1. Any planning application within the two strategic allocations and the areas associated with these will be required to demonstrate how it incorporates and positively responds to the following design principles.
- 5.1.2. Central Bedfordshire Council has an adopted Design Guide⁵ which represents the Council's policy on the urban design aspects of development in its area. It is technical guidance which sets out the key principles and standards that will deliver the Council's aspirations for high quality development and will be a material consideration in determining future planning applications and informing detailed masterplanning. The Design Guide will be applied appropriately and flexibly.
- 5.1.3. Development proposals should value the heritage assets, villages, open spaces and the vernacular forms found in the area and aspire to including the best from those sources of inspiration, with a modern take to suit modern living and working requirements. The potential to add value and variety by introducing more modern development, particularly in relation to new commercial and community facilities will need to be balanced against the need to reflect the character of the surrounding settlements and the Chilterns AONB. Consideration will also be given to the scale, massing and form of the development in responding to the constraints and opportunities present on the site.
- 5.1.4. A range of residential densities is expected across the site. There will be a requirement to provide lower density traditional family houses reflecting an expectation for good sized homes and gardens and high privacy standards. It is expected that housing of higher density will provide a choice of a wide range of housing types and tenures across the area. Higher density housing will be carefully located in areas that support the viability of central community hubs and public transport routes. There will be an expectation that planning applications will ensure through their design approach, the delivery of inclusive rather than exclusive places.

⁵ [Central Bedfordshire Design Guide](#) (2014)

- 5.1.5. The Framework Plan anticipates that each neighbourhood will be designed using design codes to ensure that all land (including open spaces, green infrastructure and landscaped areas) is used efficiently, designed for a stated purpose, provides variety and is distinctive.
- 5.1.6. The buildings and spaces at Sundon RFI will be sensitively designed to respect and enhance the surrounding landscape and biodiversity, particularly the adjacent CWS and SSSI at Sundon Quarry, as well as existing residential properties in close proximity to the site. Buildings will be constructed from materials which minimise the degree of visibility on the skyline and public spaces will be functional, overlooked and landscaped to manage the space and create a human scale environment. Careful consideration will be given to operational lighting and boundary treatments.
- 5.1.7. SUDS will be designed to manage surface water in a locally appropriate way to deliver wider social and environmental benefits⁶.

5.2. **Sustainability**

- 5.2.1. Development proposals should demonstrate low environmental impacts and high resilience to a changing climate. Planning applications will be required to address a range of environmental issues proactively and demonstrate that the schemes will comply with Building Regulations as a minimum.

5.3. **Benefits of Development**

- 5.3.1. Once completed the development will meet the aims of this Framework Plan (as set out in section 2.3) and deliver the following benefits:
 - The creation of a high quality new development that provides a range of new house types and tenures including market housing, shared equity, affordable rented, and social housing to assist in resolving issues of housing supply and affordability in the area.
 - The creation of new job opportunities through a range of employment generating uses to diversify and enhance the local economy.

⁶ Central Bedfordshire Council [Sustainable Drainage Guidance SPD](#) (2014)

- A strategic Link Road connecting the A6 to the new junction 11A of the M1; and linking to the A5 via a new link road being delivered as part of the North Houghton Regis development, thereby avoiding the need to travel through Luton.
- New community facilities, new schools and local retail provision.
- Provision of a multifunctional network of new open spaces that will protect and enhance biodiversity and the historic environment; manage water, and provide new recreational facilities including sports pitches, children's and young person's facilities and other informal areas.
- New walking and cycling routes connecting the urban area of Luton to the development and to the Chilterns AONB.
- A Rail Freight Interchange of sub-regional importance which will reduce road freight movements in the local area and in the wider sub-region and create new employment opportunities.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT MITIGATION

6.1. Introduction

- 6.1.1. Infrastructure will be required as part of the development of the North Luton and Sundon Rail Freight Interchange Strategic Allocations to support the new community and mitigate the impact upon the surrounding area.

6.2. Infrastructure

- 6.2.1. The following strategic transport infrastructure will be provided to enable the delivery of the North Luton and Sundon RFI Strategic Allocations:

- A remodelled connection to the M1 Junction 11A;
- A strategic Link Road from the M1 Junction 11A to the A6;
- A Rail Freight Interchange providing an intermodal facility for pick up/drop off access to four new sidings on the Midland Mainline, to enable employment development at Sundon RFI.

- 6.2.2. Other infrastructure will be provided to support the level of development proposed. The following list of facilities gives an indication of the infrastructure associated with the North Luton and Sundon RFI sites:

- Education Facilities – as justified by the scale of development. This is anticipated to include three primary schools including early years, a secondary school and sixth form place provision.
- Healthcare – Any necessary facilities will be dependent upon a Health Impact Assessment that will be undertaken in association with the planning application(s) for the North of Luton Strategic Allocation provided in conjunction with the NHS/Clinical Commissioning Bodies.
- Sustainable Transport Measures – provision of pedestrian and cycle routes linking to existing routes which improve connectivity to Luton; the Chilterns AONB; Upper and Lower Sundon, Streatley, Chalton; and networks; and the provision of public transport connecting to the existing network.

- Leisure and recreation – to meet the overall adopted standards in Central Bedfordshire Council’s Leisure Strategy.
- Community – facilitate the provision of community facilities including community hall, library outreach facilities, hub for access to public services, health services, performance spaces and faith facilities, with the potential for multi-use buildings to create community hubs.
- Open Space – such as parks and gardens, informal open space, provision for children and young people (play areas), outdoor sport pitches and courts, allotments, and potentially a cemetery and community gardens.
- Strategic Landscaping and a network of green infrastructure corridors – strategic landscaping will be required specifically at gateway points into the site, along the route of the Link Road, along the northern edge of Luton to protect and enhance the existing urban area, and in sensitive locations adjacent to the Chilterns AONB, SSSI and CWS.
- Affordable housing – there will be provision of affordable housing to a level commensurate with the scale of the development proposed and in accordance with the policies of Central Bedfordshire Council. The overall quantum of affordable housing to be provided will be determined through an informed process of viability testing of the scheme.
- New utilities and drainage infrastructure – extended into the proposed developments and installed throughout development phasing. In some cases this may require off-site reinforcement and/or upgrades to existing infrastructure to provide sufficient capacity. Developers and the Council will liaise with Broadband providers to facilitate Next Generation Broadband access in line with the Development Strategy.
- Other requirements needed to specifically mitigate the impacts of application proposals which emerge through the master planning and planning application process.

6.3. Mitigation

- 6.3.1. Any planning application will be required to demonstrate that it is providing an acceptable mitigation package. Mitigation will take the form of one or more of:
- On-site provision by the developer;
 - Off-site mitigation by the developer;
 - Transfer of land from the developer to Central Bedfordshire Council;
 - Off-site financial contributions paid by the developer to CBC for it to deliver mitigation;
- 6.3.2. Central Bedfordshire Council propose to adopt its CIL Charging Schedule in 2015.. The technical evidence has indicated that CIL will not apply to the large urban extensions due to the high cost of on-site infrastructure provision. On-site infrastructure requirements and any mitigation packages will therefore be negotiated through a S106 and S278 Agreement having regard to:
- The requirements of Policy 61 for Land North of Luton and Policy 64 for Sundon RFI;
 - Highway impacts;
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 204);
 - The Central Bedfordshire Planning Obligations Strategy (in place at such time an application is determined);
 - The Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy;
 - The financial viability of development proposals; and
 - Other material considerations that may emerge during the master planning and planning application process, including relevant Green Infrastructure Plans.

7. IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1.1. It is envisaged that the principal developers for both sites may make planning applications in the early part of the plan period. As part of any approval of outline planning applications to deliver the developments, there will be a requirement for detailed overarching and neighbourhood level masterplans to be prepared throughout the development process. These will be expected to be in accordance with the Framework Plan and both the masterplans and planning applications will involve pre-application consultations.
- 7.1.2. The development of these strategic allocations is expected to take place over a period of 20 years. Therefore the developments will need to be phased in an appropriate and efficient manner, having regard to technical evidence such as highway capacity and the need to deliver the necessary community facilities to support the evolving development. Detailed phasing will be determined at the later masterplanning stages.

APPENDIX 1: CONCEPT PLAN

Included separately on the website



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