

Old River Lane Masterplan Consultation

June 2025



Illustrative sketch of proposals for Old River Lane



Cityheart

East Hertfordshire District Council, in partnership with Cityheart, has a vision to transform Old River Lane into a place that will serve both existing residents and future generations of Bishop's Stortford.

With new homes, public spaces and community facilities, we want to create a place that better reflects the unique historic character of the town centre and further bolster its offer to the community.

Following careful consideration of previous feedback from residents, we have made some changes to our masterplan and now want to share our thoughts with local people and hear your feedback again to help shape our developing proposals.

East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC) is the landowner of the Old River Lane site and is working alongside Cityheart to deliver a high quality, mixed-use scheme for Bishop's Stortford.

The team

Cityheart

Cityheart has been appointed by EHDC to develop the Old River Lane site. Cityheart transform places by working with the public sector to deliver projects that empower communities and create lasting value.

Howells

Architects

G.P. Planning & Development Consultancy

Planning consultants

CA

Transport Consultants

LCA

Community consultation

Our Ambition



Celebrate the history and character of the market town



Transform a former surface car park into a place that serves both existing residents and future generations of Bishop's Stortford



Deliver high quality new homes, public open spaces and active ground floors with an opportunity for a mix of community and retail-led spaces



An opportunity to support the growth of the town centre and enhance movement routes



Safeguard land that could allow an Arts Centre to be delivered in the future, subject to funding



Illustrative sketch of the masterplan









The site

The site is bounded by Old River Lane to the west, Bridge Street to the south, the Link Road to the east, and green space to the north. It is currently home to a closed office building and former car park that offer very little benefit to the local area.

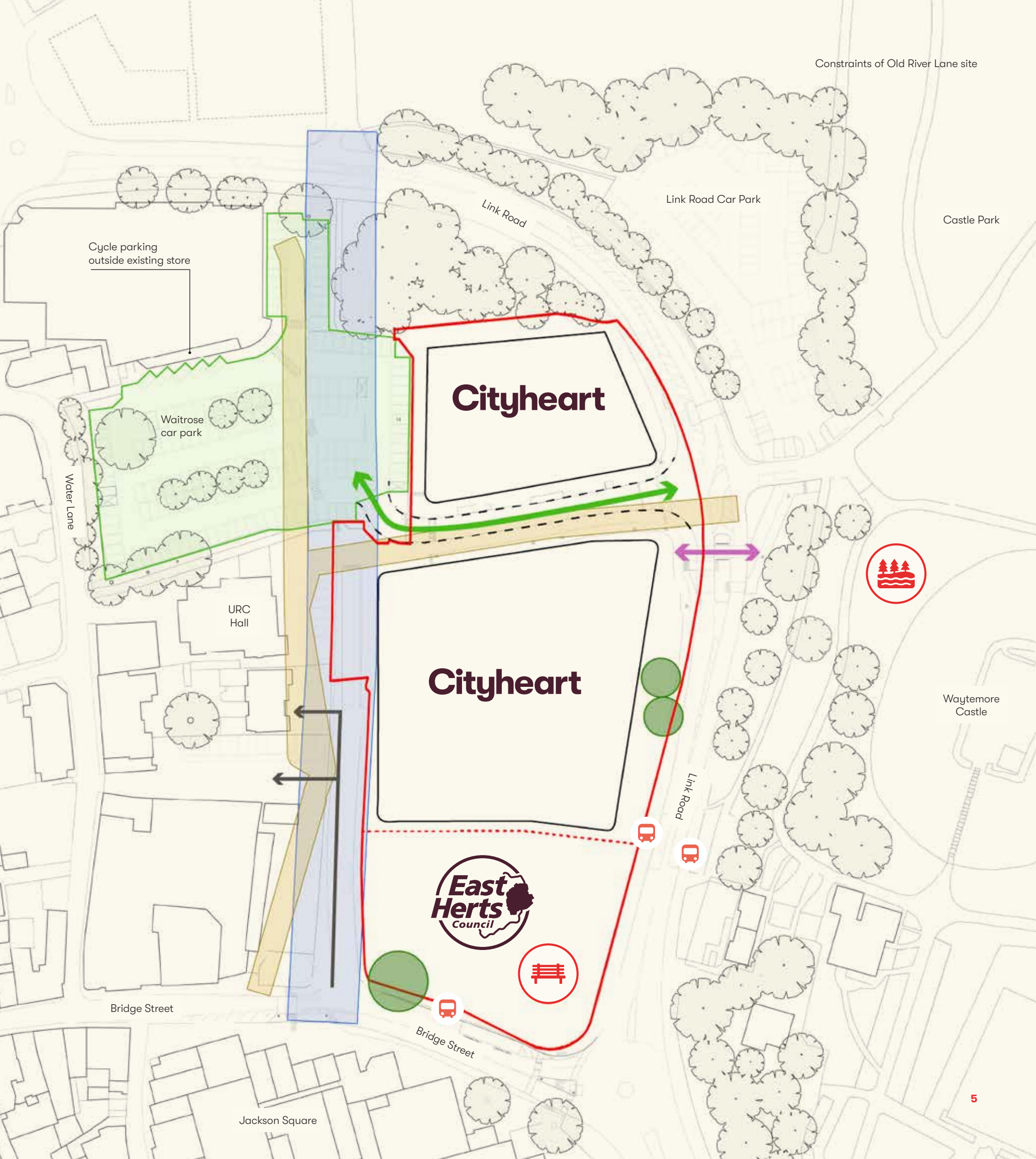
Located in a highly sustainable location with excellent connections to the town centre and train station, it is an ideal brownfield site to deliver new homes, including affordable homes, and has long been identified in the EHDC Local Plan to provide a mixed-use development.

There are a number of existing priorities and constraints that we have had to consider in developing the masterplan which have informed our approach.

These considerations include

-  **New cycle crossing** between the town centre and Castle Gardens
-  Ensuring access into Waitrose with **the creation of a new road connecting the Link Road** to the existing Waitrose car park
-  **Maintaining continued access to Cooper's and the houses** along Old River Lane
-  **Sewer easement**
-  **A watercourse running underneath Old River Lane**
-  **Existing mature trees**
-  **Provision of a new public square** in the south of the site
-  **Castle Gardens is subject to ongoing renovations**

In addition, Old River Lane is currently very busy and is dominated by cars. Pedestrians have to negotiate narrow footways and poor cycle connectivity, and the existing roads are wide and difficult to cross. We think there is an opportunity to significantly improve how people travel through and around the town centre through our proposals.



Masterplan Evolution

In 2023, Cityheart submitted an outline planning application to EHDC for the redevelopment of Old River Lane for 120 homes, approximately 65 Extra Care apartments, an arts centre and cinema, and commercial floor space at ground floor.

Our previous application included the demolition of the existing Water Lane United Reformed Church (URC) Hall and three homes along Old River Lane. Following community feedback, the council asked Cityheart to pause and review our proposals and made several key changes to our approach.

You said

The proposals will impact existing traffic issues in the area

We did

A key aim of our proposals is to encourage people to adopt more sustainable methods of transport.

We'll do this by investing in cycle routes to better connect Old River Lane to the existing network; installing new cycle parking directly on the site and make it more enjoyable to walk around the area through improvements to the pavements and public spaces.

A dedicated new access road to Waitrose car park from the Link Road will also help to ease congestion around Bridge Road and Old River Lane and will improve the connection between the town centre and Castle Gardens.

You said

Retaining the Water Lane Hall

We did

We heard how important Water Lane Hall is locally and have significantly reduced the development area so that it is no longer included within our site.

You said

We do not need another cinema in the area

We did

A new cinema no longer forms part of our proposals, and EHDC has instead proposed a larger public space that safeguards land for a future Arts Centre – subject to funding. We want to hear from local people about the types of events and activities that they would like to see here.

You said

Do not demolish any buildings

We did

Old River Lane has long been identified for development and presents an opportunity to deliver much-needed new homes, public spaces and active ground floor uses such as a cafe, shop or restaurant on a site that currently offers very little benefit for the local area.

We have carefully considered the different options for development here and retaining Charringtons House will significantly limit the potential of what can be delivered. By delivering a new building we will also be able to make better use of the site, delivering more affordable and energy efficient homes and ensuring the overall masterplan fits better with Bishop's Stortford Town Centre.

You said

Please protect existing trees

We did

We are proposing a landscape-led design that will protect existing high-quality trees and provide new planting and greenery across the site.

Our current masterplan

New homes

Between 145 and 180 new homes, including affordable homes. These will be high-quality by design and energy-efficient, ranging from 1–3 bedrooms in size.



Public square

A new south-facing public square that could host markets and seasonal events, as well as provide a place for people to relax and spend time in. This part of the proposals is being brought forward by EHDC and we want to hear how we can make this a place for everyone to enjoy.

02

Ground-floor retail & community uses

There will be new ground-floor spaces that face on to the public square that could be used for new shops, cafes or other commercial uses. We want to hear what local people would like to see here.



Reflecting the history of Bishop's Stortford

We want Old River Lane to be an extension of the market town, with a design that reflects the areas historic character. This includes a mix of building types with heights between 4–5 storeys, with varied roof profiles, materials, and corners. We would love to hear what aspects of local buildings (materials, colour etc.) you like and don't like, to help inform our thinking.

04

Improved cycle and walking routes

Investment in cycle and walking routes through and around the site to encourage active travel and improve connectivity to the town centre.



A new Waitrose access road

A new road through the site that will direct traffic away from Old River Lane and Bridge Street to help improve the connection between the town centre and Castle Gardens. The need for a new access road has been confirmed by transport assessments.

06



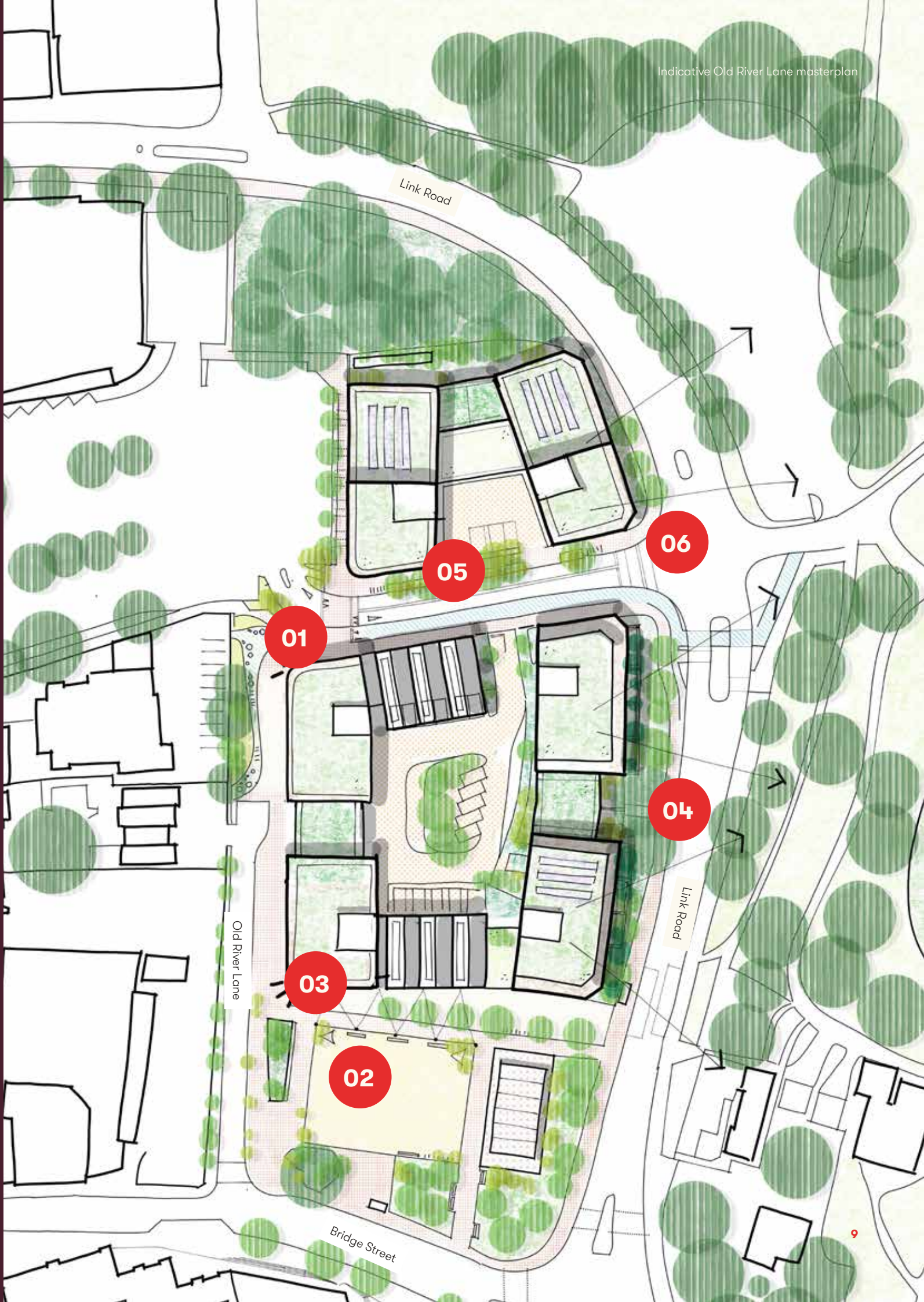
01



03



05



A closer look at our proposals

Public square and spaces

The public square is an opportunity to provide a significant new outdoor community space that can benefit residents of Bishop's Stortford.

This part of the masterplan is being brought forward by EHDC who heard a lot of useful feedback during its consultation in November 2024.



New seating and planting to create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre



Retaining existing trees and introducing new planting to better connect Castle Gardens to the town centre



Providing flexible spaces to host seasonal events such as markets and an outdoor cinema



Delivering much needed homes

There is a housing crisis, and this site offers the opportunity to deliver new homes that will support future generations on sustainable brownfield land.

Across the site we will be providing between 145 – 180 new high-quality homes, including affordable homes. We are in discussions with the council about what type of affordable homes the borough needs most, but our current thinking is that these will be split as 70% social rent and 30% intermediate rent. The new homes will be a mix of 1-3-bedroom in size which will benefit from the town centre location and short distance to the station.

Ground floor retail & community uses

We are proposing to deliver a mix of uses across the masterplan that will complement the existing offer in the town centre.

A key part of this is creating an active ground floor which will face on to the public square and offer new spaces for people to gather, and socialise. We want we want to hear feedback on what people would like to see here.

At the north of the site there is also an opportunity to provide a community or NHS facility. We are currently in discussions with the NHS to understand if there is a need for this locally.



Connectivity



Walking and cycling

Our masterplan has been designed to encourage people to adopt more sustainable methods of transport like walking and cycling, both now and in the future. We'll do this by investing in cycle routes to better connect Old River Lane to the existing network and making it more enjoyable to walk around the area through improvements to the pavements and public spaces.

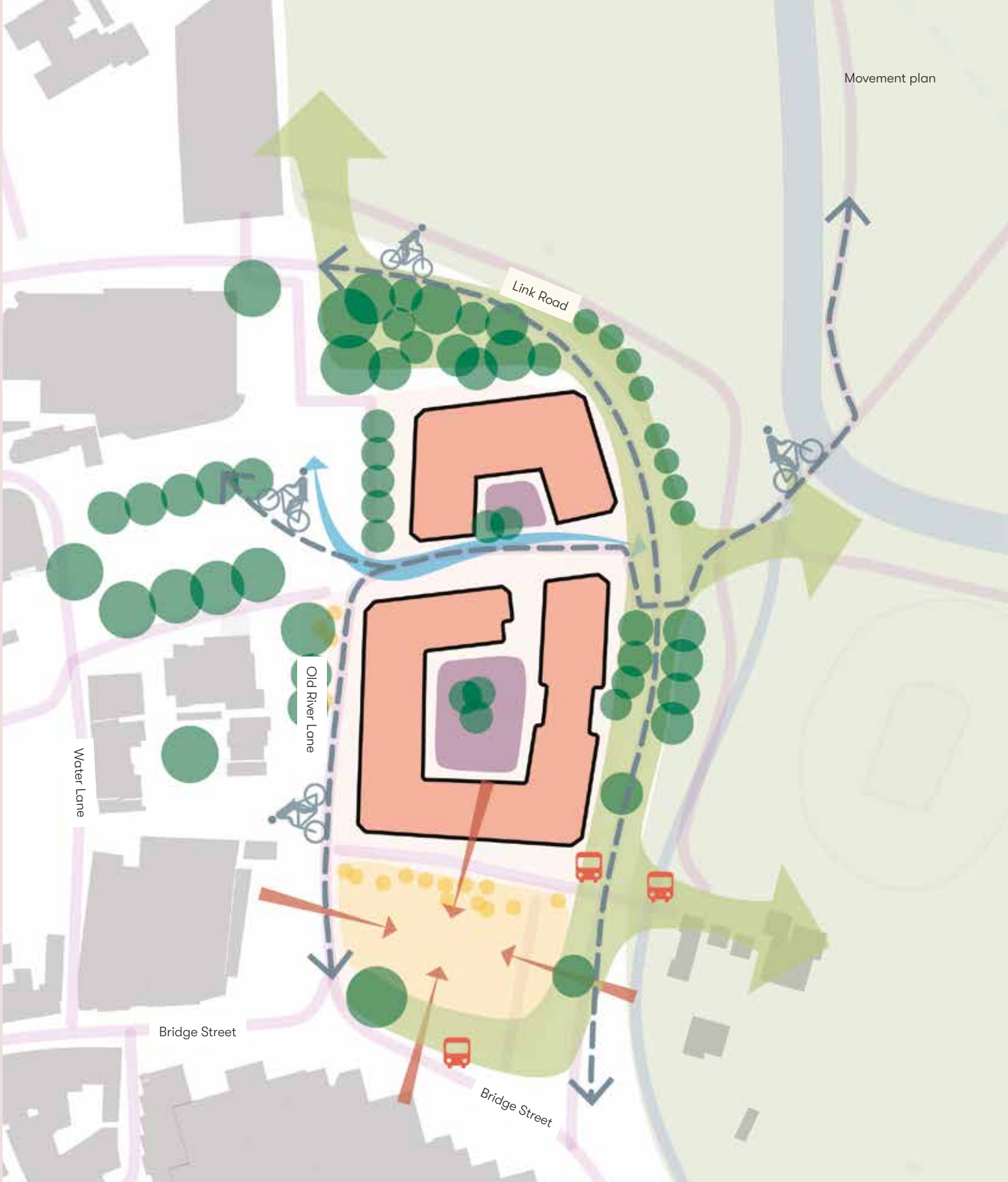
Traffic and access

We are proposing to create a new access road to the Waitrose car park from the Link Road. This new access will help to alleviate traffic along Bridge Street and Old River Lane. Coopers and the existing homes will maintain access via Old River Lane, but it will otherwise become prioritised for pedestrians and cyclists.



Parking

There is already a significant amount of public parking available across the road in the Northgate End Multi-Storey Car Park. We will be a primarily car-free development with only a small number of parking spaces provided, taking advantage of the good transport connections and facilities nearby. We will also be providing new cycle parking to help support people to travel here sustainability.



Key

- Cycle routes
- Improved green connections
- New Waitrose access road
- Existing bus stops
- Parking and servicing

Have your say

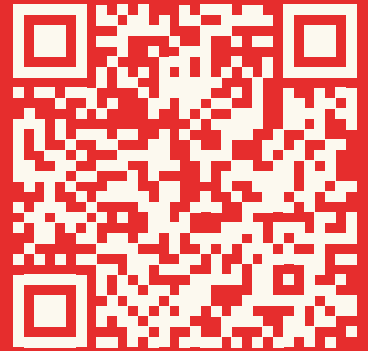
It is really important that we hear your feedback so that we can better understand local priorities for the area and use this to help inform our masterplan as it develops.

Scan the QR code to fill in the feedback form online which will close on Sunday 13 July 2025. You can also get in touch with any feedback or questions at:

🖱️ olddriverlanedevelopment.co.uk

✉️ olddriverlane@thisislca.com

☎️ 0800 096 7217



Scan here to share
your feedback

Next steps

WE ARE HERE

**July 2024 –
November 2024**

EHDC Public Square
consultation

June 2025

Masterplan public
consultation

Early Autumn 2025

Public consultation on
detailed designs

Autumn 2025

Target submission of planning
application to EHDC

Illustrative sketch showing how the masterplan connects to key community and cultural buildings around the town centre

