



DAVID LOCK  
ASSOCIATES

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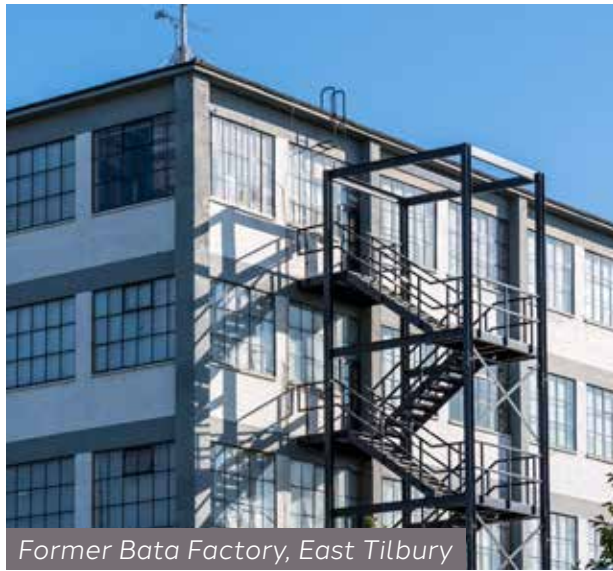
# THURROCK Design Charter

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 [thurrock.gov.uk](http://thurrock.gov.uk)

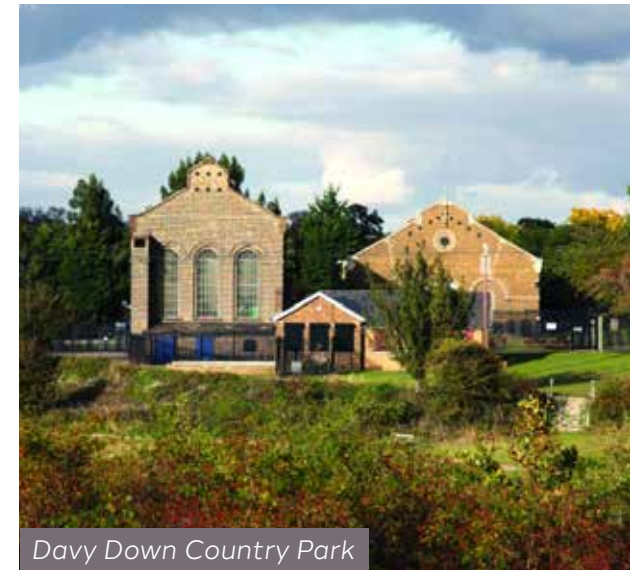




Former Bata Factory, East Tilbury



Port of Tilbury



Davy Down Country Park



Thames Path, Purfleet



High House Production Park



Bruyn's Court, S. Ockendon © Killian O'Sullivan



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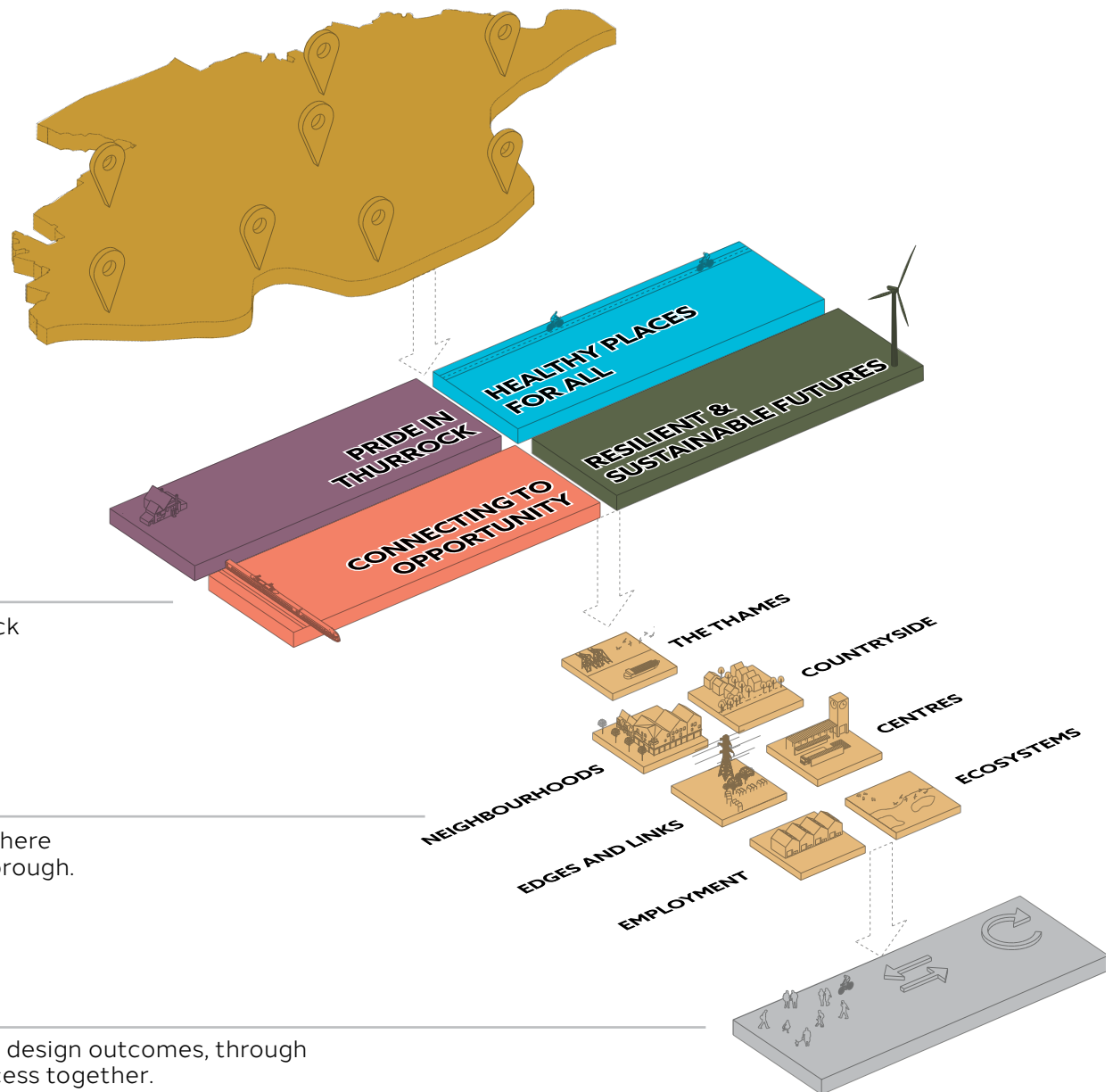
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Identifying some of the most important opportunities where good place design could make a big difference in the borough.

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How we can all work together to produce better quality design outcomes, through engagement and marrying the planning and design process together.



# The Importance of Good Design for Thurrock

Good design brings out the best in place, through a creative pursuit that recognises and builds on the needs and desires of local communities.

Good design not only provides creative solutions to complex problems, it helps us to experience and connect with the world in a meaningful way.

High-quality, considered design is essential to improving the quality of life of Thurrock's communities. Good design can help deliver revitalised services, build community wealth, empowerment, and economic prosperity. It can retrofit and enhance existing places, raising the quality of new places to provide new services and infrastructure, with access to new jobs, skills and education opportunities.

Good design enhances our natural environment and historic places, while delivering sustainability and resilience to climate change. Good design engages with people meaningfully, so that communities can shape the places around them.

Design is an iterative, collaborative process. While there are no 'right answers' but there can be poor outcomes. Design alone cannot fix every issue in our communities, but it has a valuable and enabling contribution to set the right conditions, through genuine and positive engagement, to ensure our neighbourhoods and places are well considered, where people feel at home and have access to a range of opportunities to live a fulfilling and healthy life.

## AIMS & STATUS

The Thurrock Design Charter sets a clear Council commitment to good design and place-making, identifying our aspirations around design and place quality to our stakeholders, communities, and developers; all those involved in design, development, place-making, and place-keeping.

The Charter stimulates better, more holistic design thinking ensuring development enhances the quality of our places and supports the well-being and prosperity of Thurrock's communities.

The Charter identifies high-level design principles and opportunities which set the vision for the forthcoming borough-wide **Thurrock Design Code**. Whereas the Charter outlines a broader vision for good design, the Design Code will provide a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for all development.

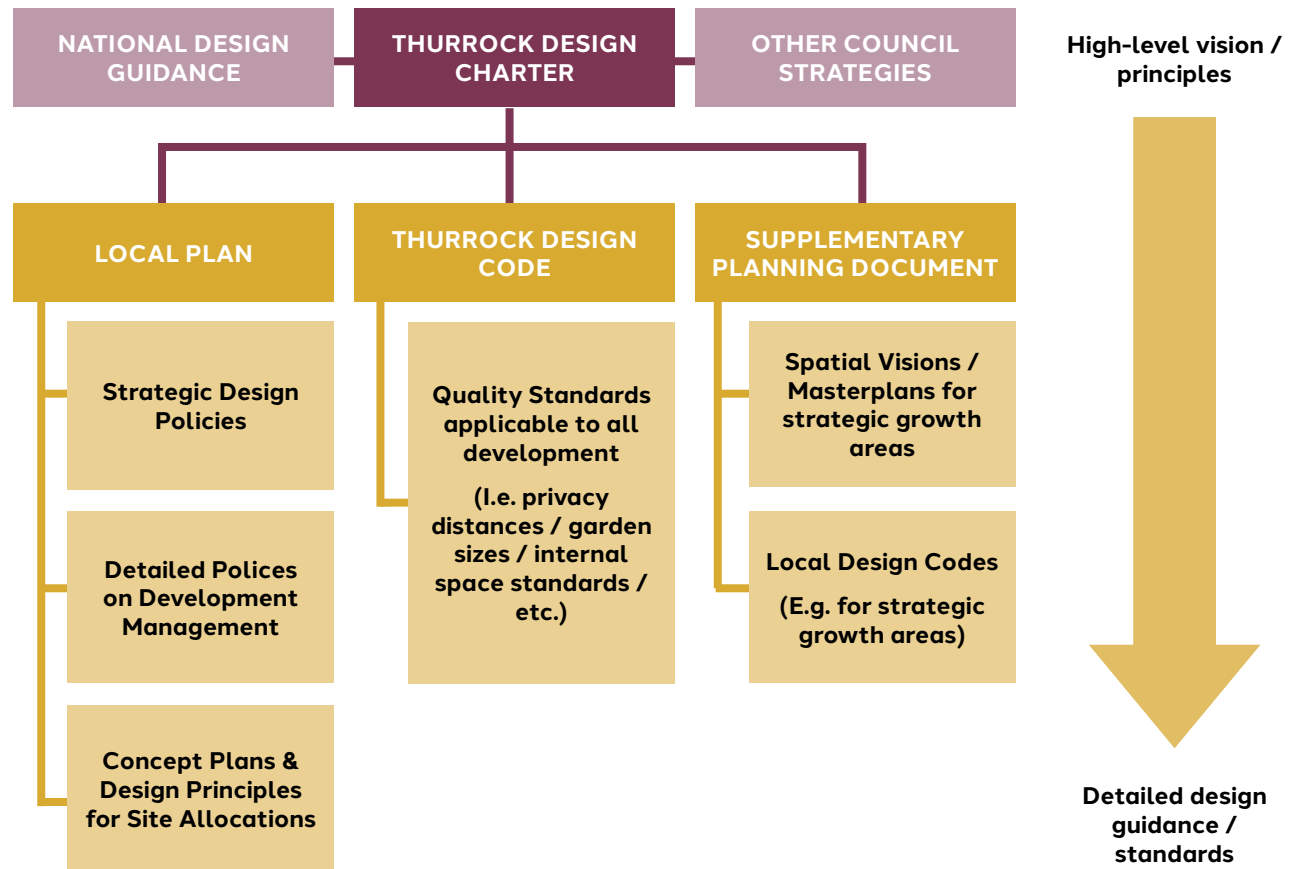
The Charter principles will be integrated with the emerging Thurrock Local Plan, with the Design Code to be adopted as part of the Local Plan to provide material weight to planning



applications, and ensuring good design is supported from policy to delivery.

National policy places great emphasis on good design in the planning system. The Charter builds on the ten characteristics of the National Design Guide, the principles of the National Model Design Code, as well as established best practice including Building for a Healthy Life, and Building with Nature Standards.

However the Charter goes further, setting out a wider agenda specific to the unique characteristics of Thurrock, and across all aspects of Thurrock Council’s work, allowing everyone involved to play their part. To this end, the Charter has been developed to align and link into the wider place mission of the Council, referencing and integrating with the emerging Local Plan, ‘Health and Well-being Strategy Refresh’, emerging ‘Thurrock Economic Growth Strategy’, as well as supporting and aligning with other Council strategies.



# Understanding Thurrock

Good design begins with a deep understanding of our places and communities.

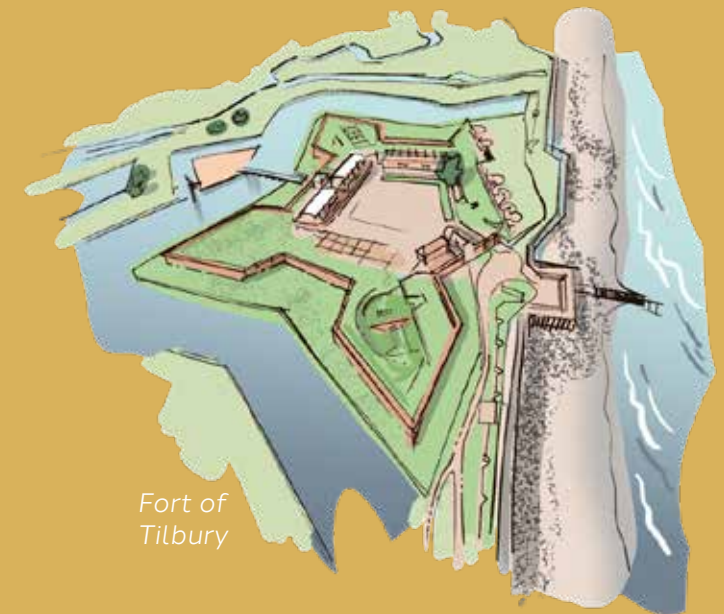
Properly responding to Thurrock's varied places, complex infrastructure, and unique environmental qualities is critical to improving the environment and quality of life of our communities.

Any development proposal must embody a 'whole-place' approach, looking beyond its site boundary to respond to its wider physical, environmental and social context. Site and context appraisal needs to be both evidence-based and informed through active and continuous engagement with communities throughout the design process. As well as considering the physical aspects of the natural and built environment, there must be an understanding of local communities, their needs, concerns, and desires.

The history of Thurrock is entwined with the story of the River Thames. Riverside settlements, defensive forts, ports, quarries, and industries have all left their mark and form the context for the design of new places. There is also a strong relationship to London and international relationships through a network of trade. Changes in the capital, along with the construction of national infrastructure have seen rapid growth in the borough since the mid-1900s.

The landscape is full of contrasts, from rich agricultural fields and fenland, to extensive marshes, former chalk quarries, and industrial

uses near the Thames. Much of the countryside is now protected by Green Belt status. Thurrock is a hard-working and productive landscape, full of visible agricultural and industrial influence, where industry sits side by side with nature. These natural spaces are vital places for biodiversity, to appreciate and enjoy the beauty of the Thames estuary landscape.



*Fort of  
Tilbury*



## Nature

Thurrock is home to some of the UK's most important coastal and marine habitats, such as Fobbing and Mucking Marshes, as well as diverse inland natural space such as fenland and river valleys.

These spaces link into a wider regional landscape along the Thames estuary of international significance as well as local value. More recently, the importance and opportunity for a regional approach to nature has been highlighted within the South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park) vision.



## Water

Thurrock is defined by its relationship to the Thames and its tributaries, including the Mardyke. Much of the borough sits within natural floodplains, demonstrating the significant flood risks that Thurrock contends with, but also creating rich areas of marshland and fenland.

While the Thames brings trade, industry, and connections to the borough, it also addressed important needs of public amenity, access, and nature conservation.



## Countryside

The countryside of Thurrock is diverse, from rolling hills to estuary marshes. It is a source of local pride but also serves a wider regional strategic purpose with much of the countryside designated as Greenbelt.

The green landscapes of Thurrock have a long history of agricultural and quarrying that still influences settlement patterns. Strategic projects and partnerships including the Thames Chase Community Forest all help contribute to the protection, enhancement and promotion of Thurrock's countryside.



## Green Space

Although there are some deficiencies in the quality and provision local green spaces and sports provision, Thurrock benefits from significant wider strategic green spaces include the Mardyke Valley, Chafford Gorges, Rainham Marshes and Thames Nature Reserve.

Some of these are of important heritage and environmental quality such as the Belhus Woods and Langdon Hills Country Parks, and there are great benefits in better connecting these spaces to existing communities.





*London International Cruise Terminal*

*St Clements  
Church*



## Ports & Infrastructure

Criss-crossed by major national infrastructure, Thurrock powers much of the wider region, and providing vital services to London and the South East. Our ports and docks are pivotal to Thurrock's ambitious growth agenda, exemplified by the Thames Freeport.

However, this infrastructure has the impacting of severing many of our places and is poorly integrated with existing neighbourhoods contributing to issues of noise, pollution, and congestion. There are opportunities to rethink the design of infrastructure to not only mitigate these effects but provide local benefits.



## Connections

Thurrock is well connected nationally to the strategic road and rail networks, and internationally through its three international ports and global commerce links.

However, local connectivity is severed by large pieces of infrastructure and the river Thames, with poor transport connections between neighbourhoods.





## Heritage & Culture

Thurrock has a long history of defence, trade, immigration, agriculture, economic and industrial change. This includes: landmark military forts at Tilbury and Coalhouse, ancient monuments from Roman and neolithic times, and international Modernist buildings at East Tilbury.

However, Thurrock's heritage and culture is not just our designated heritage assets but also in the qualities of our High Streets, landscapes, and neighbourhoods. New cultural landmarks such as the High House Production Park demonstrate how we can successfully save and grow from our heritage while creating new cultural industries for the future.



## Towns & Villages

The settlements of Thurrock are incredibly varied for a Borough of our size, from rural villages through to conurbations of towns linked together.

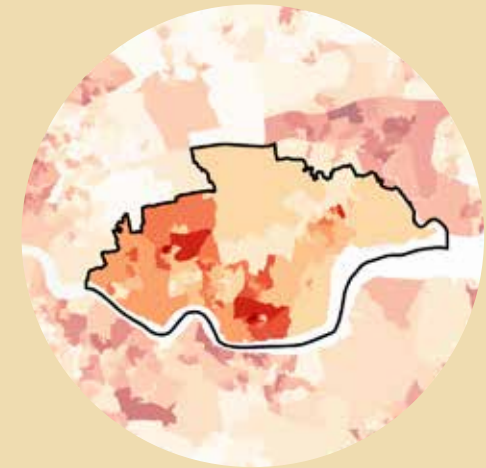
Settlement origins are varied, from historic ports, farmsteads, factory towns, through to post-war developments resettling populations from a war-torn East End, and out of town leisure developments like Lakeside shopping centre. As a result, the design and character of our places varies significantly create a variety of memorable identities and local landmarks.



## Communities

Population density varies significantly across Thurrock, from dense town centres such as Grays through to wide open fenland and villages in the north.

Thurrock has pockets of some of the wealthiest areas in the UK as well as some of the most deprived, reflecting both its significant local economy, as well as the legacy of structural changes to its major industries over time.



## Health & Well-being

There are significant variations in population health and well-being levels relating to this disparity in wealth, with higher rates of obesity and lower levels of physical activity than the UK average.

Life expectancy, the highest-level indicator of health inequality, for both males and females are significantly lower than both the East of England and England averages.

# Design Principles for Thurrock

The Design Charter sets out four principles against which the design of places in Thurrock should deliver good outcomes.



QEII Bridge

- 1 Pride in Thurrock**
- 2 Healthy Places for All**
- 3 Connecting to Opportunity**
- 4 Resilient and Sustainable Futures**

This chapter sets out:

**WHY** each principle is important to Thurrock

**OUTCOMES** that are expected from good design in each principle

These principles will form the framework for good design in Thurrock. Proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they deliver good outcomes for Thurrock's communities against these principles.





Orsett Village



Grays Riverside



Saxton Close, Grays



# Pride in Thurrock

## WHY?

Thurrock already has many beautiful places that communities rightly take pride in and identify with. Thurrock's places and communities are diverse and it is expected that any new development should deliver a positive sense of place to help communities develop a sense of belonging. This requires that Thurrock's communities are at the centre of the design process, helping to shape the places around them through genuine and continuous engagement ensuring developments enhance quality of life.

The borough has diverse built, landscape, and social heritage that needs to be protected and celebrated, including iron age earthworks, medieval churches, Victorian industry, and modern history. Making space for our heritage and culture is critical to building local pride, celebrating our people, heritage, and landscapes, and showcasing our collective story in a distinctive way.

With our ambitious economic growth agenda, Thurrock deserves all new development to be of a high-quality, sympathetic to local character, and delivering broader benefits beyond their site boundary to local communities. Regeneration has the potential to create memorable places and distinctive new identities that reference our collective story while not establishing innovative and new creative opportunities for local communities.



*Horndon-on-the-Hill*

# OUTCOMES

## 1.1 Engaging widely and considering everyone

Thurrock's communities must be the starting point for any design process, and they should feel a sense of belonging and ownership over the development of their local places. Creative and collaborative engagement using physical and digital methods tailored to diverse user groups, should be undertaken from the start of the design process. Proposals should show how they have responded to the needs, concerns, and desires of local communities. Thurrock is a diverse borough and development project teams should reflect and take into account this diversity in experience and identity.

## 1.2 Distinctive places, informed by their context

Proposals should respond imaginatively to their surroundings demonstrating how they have considered nearby green infrastructure, connectivity, views, landscape, character, culture and heritage as part of their underlying concept. A clear vision for each development, how it will fit into its context, and how it will deliver wider benefits for health and well-being, inclusion, and sustainability should be carried through all stages of design.

## 1.3 Designed for the long term

The successful stewardship and management of places is as important to local pride in Thurrock as their original design. This includes effective management and activation of spaces as well as good maintenance. An approach to stewardship should be set out at an early stage of design, and include opportunities to involve local communities pro-actively in the stewardship of their local places.

## 1.4 Delivering wider benefits for Thurrock's communities

New proposals must show how their designs have considered the wider ambition and strategies of the borough, and how they can contribute to it. Proposals must also demonstrate how they will deliver benefits for existing communities in the local area, such as through new or improved connections, facilities, or spaces.

## 1.5 Celebrating our heritage and culture

Heritage in Thurrock is more than our designated assets. It embodies the spaces, landmarks, buildings and monuments that together tell our collective story. Proposals should use design to investigate and refer to aspects of an area's history that help provide a sense of place, and a distinctive identity. This may include its relationship to the Thames, our social history, past industrial activities, common local materials and landscape character.

## 1.6 Beautiful buildings with well-integrated built form

All proposals should be visually attractive, using well-composed built forms, details, and high-quality materials. Densities should be design-led, responding sympathetically to surrounding character while delivering creative architectural responses and sustainable forms of development. Taller buildings need careful consideration in terms of form and location, ensuring they are of higher design standard, create appropriate and logical landmarks, and enhance the character of places.

# Healthy Places for All

## 2

### WHY?

Our built, natural and social environment has a major impact on our overall health and well-being. Thurrock's population has a higher prevalence of long-term health conditions and lower life expectancies than the national average. As such it is vital that focus is given to addressing the wider determinants of health to improve population health and well-being, and reducing health inequalities. As we face the challenges of an ageing society, we must ensure that design and place-making empowers and enables healthy environments.

Well-designed, compact, attractive and well-connected places encourage walking, cycling, and wheeling by placing everyday services and facilities in easy reach. Social connections are better established around well-designed services, facilities, and public spaces, supporting good mental health and better enabling people to access support networks.

Planning and design can ensure good environmental health, such as better air and water quality, as well as mitigating noise and light pollution, in both our homes and outdoor spaces. Easy access to high-quality nature and open spaces a short distance from one's doorstep is also essential to physical and mental health.

Our homes and public spaces are often not designed to be adapted for independent living into old age or for those living with long-term health conditions. Well-designed places should provide a variety of places and spaces accessible and usable by all.

*Coalhouse Fort*





# OUTCOMES

## 2.1 Enabling and encouraging daily physical activity

Proposals should demonstrate how they have maximised opportunities for active travel in daily life, with safe, attractive, and convenient walking and cycling networks linking between facilities and places. Places must be designed for a diversity of physical activity, from formal sport to informal recreation. This must include safe and attractive facilities as well as safe and usable routes to access them. Public spaces and buildings must be designed with accessibility in mind and be adaptable for different abilities and age groups.

## 2.2 Access to safe, high-quality green spaces and public realm

Every community should have nearby access to a choice of high-quality green areas. Proposals should ensure that public spaces are delivered in the right places, with development centring around them to provide safety and overlooking, and with a plan for long-term stewardship. The public realm and streets should be designed for people first, not determined by minimum highways standards. All streets should include street trees, planting and sustainable drainage systems as a features. Integrating green and blue infrastructure helps deliver healthier streets that help improve wider environmental quality around heat stress, air and noise pollution.

## 2.3 Homes for all ages and needs

Homes should be diverse in type, tenure, and size, responding to Thurrock's housing needs. Designs should be tenure-blind across market, genuine affordable and social housing, and be adaptable to meet the requirements of a range of users including those with learning disabilities and/or mental health issues. Homes should be

designed to consider people at all stages of life and should support independent living. Homes for older residents should adhere to HAPPI housing standards. Ensuring homes are designed to be well ventilated, well insulated and can be heated in an affordable way is also critical to ensure homes protect and enhance the health of residents.

## 2.4 Growing communities

Communities should have convenient local access to a range of healthy food options, to support healthy lifestyles. Opportunities for personal and community food growing should be embraced within developments, such as designing in opportunities for allotments, orchards, community gardens, roof gardens, and individual outdoor spaces such as gardens, roof terraces, and balconies.

## 2.5 Infrastructure and facilities first

Early delivery of social and community infrastructure within new development, is vital to generating healthy and inclusive communities, where residents can feel part of a place with the services they need. Proposals should quantify what infrastructure is needed to support this goal (and wider policies), and be clear how this will be secured, phased, and stewarded for the future. This could also include opportunities for meanwhile uses, and temporary infrastructure. Phasing must be sensitive to local contexts and ensure minimum disruption to existing communities.

# Connecting to Opportunity

## 3

### WHY?

Connected places are prosperous places, offering opportunities both for those living there while also helping to unlock the benefits of growth and regeneration. Connected places allow communities to access education, employment, leisure, health, and culture in a manner that is efficient, inclusive, safe, affordable, promotes good health outcomes and improves quality of life.

While Thurrock is well-connected nationally and internationally by significant infrastructure, many of our local communities have historically suffered from poor connectivity and under-provision of services. This has led to inequalities and a lack of opportunities.

Designing walkable, compact neighbourhoods, combining homes and facilities with good active travel and public transport connections helps provide greater choice in terms of travel modes. This helps reduce the need and cost of private car ownership, and ensuring better accessibility to services for households with no

access to a private vehicle.

Good design helps provide the foundation for places that can deliver robust and inclusive economic prosperity, delivering on Thurrock's ambitious economic growth agenda.

By planning well-designed, denser, compact development around public transport and existing services we can improve and intensify neighbourhoods with more investment, reducing congestion and enhancing the quality of green spaces. Designing denser, compact development, also strengthens the case for future transport investment, making existing services more viable by providing a catchment population within walking distance.

*London Gateway*



# OUTCOMES

## 3.1 Connecting to services and facilities

Neighbourhoods should be designed to provide safe and secure walkable connections to everyday facilities. Less frequented facilities should be conveniently accessible by bicycle or public transport along routes that are safe both during the day and night, easy to navigate and direct. Provision of services in existing neighbourhoods should be strengthened through creative opportunities for development and investment, where this provides clear benefits to local communities and enhances existing local character.

## 3.2 Connecting to nature

Green infrastructure must be woven through all new developments, within streets, parks, open spaces and connections to wider natural habitats, in line with Building for Nature standards. Sustainable drainage systems should be designed to be multi-use and incorporate natural habitats, play, or spaces to rest. Access to nature, open space, the countryside, and outdoor leisure should be considered a fundamental part of any design proposals.

## 3.3 Connecting to jobs and opportunities

Convenient, attractive, and safe sustainable travel routes for walking, cycling or frequent public transport should connect homes with jobs, and education opportunities. Strategic proposals should consider how they can better integrate schools and wider education facilities, as well as appropriate employment spaces, within the heart of places to create attractive mixed-use communities where people can live and work.

## 3.4 Connecting to culture and leisure

Diverse forms of culture, events and leisure opportunities should be easily accessible by everyone, regardless of background, age, ability and location. New development should look to embed culture in the heart of new place, such as through meanwhile uses, temporary events, public art, spaces for cultural production and consumption, and children's play. Co-locating facilities in and around centres, including with schools, enables access, use and occupation by different users throughout the day and evening.

## 3.5 Connecting across barriers

A well-designed, safe, overlooked, and connected street network, that provides excellent and inclusive walking and cycling options, will ensure people can all get around our local area easily and conveniently. Proposals should show how they have maximised networks and future-proofed them for additional connections. Investing in infrastructure such as active travel and multi-modal bridges is an important part of addressing the severance between neighbourhoods caused by major infrastructure.

## 3.6 Walkable, compact forms of development

New development should make efficient use of land, preserving our open countryside as much as possible. Densities should be optimised in areas that are well served by local public transport, facilities, open spaces, and local services. By bringing people together in walkable compact neighbourhoods, we can better support the vitality of our town centres and provision of new transport connections.



# Resilient & Sustainable Futures

# 4

## WHY?

Thurrock is home to internationally significant wildlife, however biodiversity loss is having a major effect on our countryside and ecosystems, depriving communities of the value of local nature. Facilitating effective and sustainable nature recovery not only helps reverse this decline, but provides great opportunities to deliver wider green and blue infrastructure to support our local communities.

Thurrock is particularly susceptible to the effects of climate change, given the far reaching effects of potential rising sea levels within the Thames estuary. In line with the council's declaration of a climate emergency, we must do all we can to reduce negative impacts on our environment, and ensure our landscapes and settlements are resilient for the next generation. We must use resources wisely, and develop in ways that are sustainable, flexible, maximise passive strategies for heating and cooling, and consider creative opportunities for remediation and habitat creation.

The borough's history of industry has unfortunately led to local instances of ground extraction, contamination, and pollution. Ensuring industrial uses are well-designed and sensitively co-located would help prevent this harm in the future. At the same time, thinking about the construction process at the earliest design stage is critical to ensuring developments are low energy and long life. This could considering recycled and natural building materials, and low-waste and low impact construction methods.



*Fobbing Marshes*

# OUTCOMES

## 4.1 Delivering a net zero carbon future

All development should be designed from the outset for a zero-carbon future, against specific and clear environmental performance targets agreed at an early stage. Following the Net Zero energy hierarchy, proposals should start from a principle of re-use first, and only then consider demolition and rebuild of existing buildings. We will require efficient building operation through orientation, façade design, natural ventilation, passive heating, and cooling. Where there are opportunities to generate clean, sustainable energy on site or nearby they should be delivered.

## 4.2 Resilient and future-proofed development

We want to ensure that what we build today is robust, adaptable and easy to maintain. Proposals should demonstrate how buildings and developments can adapt to different seasons and ranges of weather using primarily passive methods. Spaces should be flexible and adaptable, so they can change over time with minimal resource investment. This includes both ensuring adequate storage for homes, as well robust material choices and infrastructure provision for public spaces so that they can be used for a variety of purposes.

## 4.3 Space for nature and biodiversity

All development must consider how to include a variety of new and improved natural habitats, and aim to exceed Biodiversity Net Gain targets. This ranges from small-scale interventions such as street trees and sustainable drainage swales through to extensive networks of landscapes. Opportunities to retain, enhance and connect locally distinctive habitats and species should be identified from the earliest stages of design, especially if this can help deliver on strategic ambitions for more connected green and blue infrastructure networks.

## 4.4 Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions to flood resilience, remediation, and water management should take precedent over engineered solutions, reducing overall maintenance requirements, providing new connected habitats, and reducing our reliance on major infrastructure. Examples include sustainable drainage solutions that enhance water quality and minimise flood risk, regenerative agriculture, restoration of former landfill to nature and landscapes where stewardship needs are minimal through the choice of habitat.

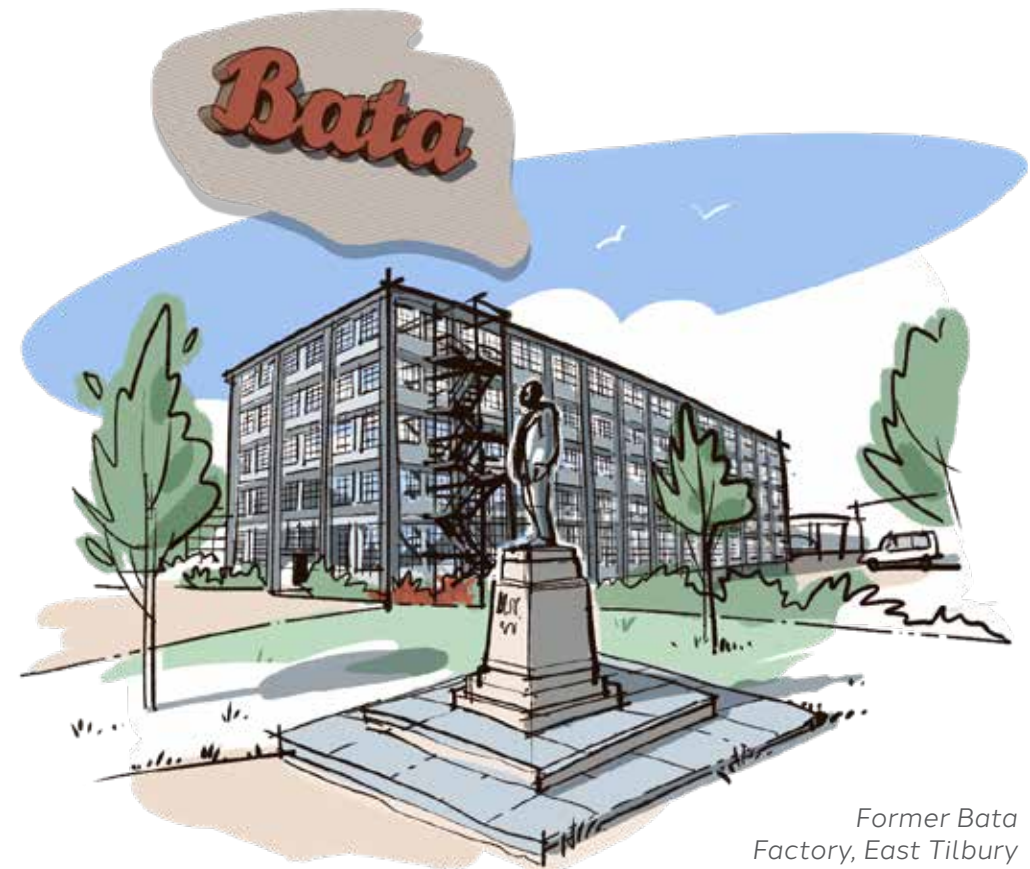
## 4.5 Embedding circular economies

The full life-cycle of material use, from construction and consumption through to re-use and disposal, must be considered as part of the design process. Proposals should show how they can re-use materials, adapt existing buildings, and provide everyone the opportunity to recycle and reduce waste. Local procurement of materials for construction will be encouraged where it reduces the embodied carbon of new construction.

# Key Design Ideas for Thurrock

This section of the Design Charter illustrates a series of potential design opportunities on seven strategic areas where a step change in design quality could deliver big differences to quality of place and overall outcomes for communities. Design teams should take inspiration from these design approaches where the areas of opportunity intersect with their proposals.

The themes and ideas of these studies will be supported by the emerging Design Code and Local Plan, and future design guidance.



*Former Bata  
Factory, East Tilbury*

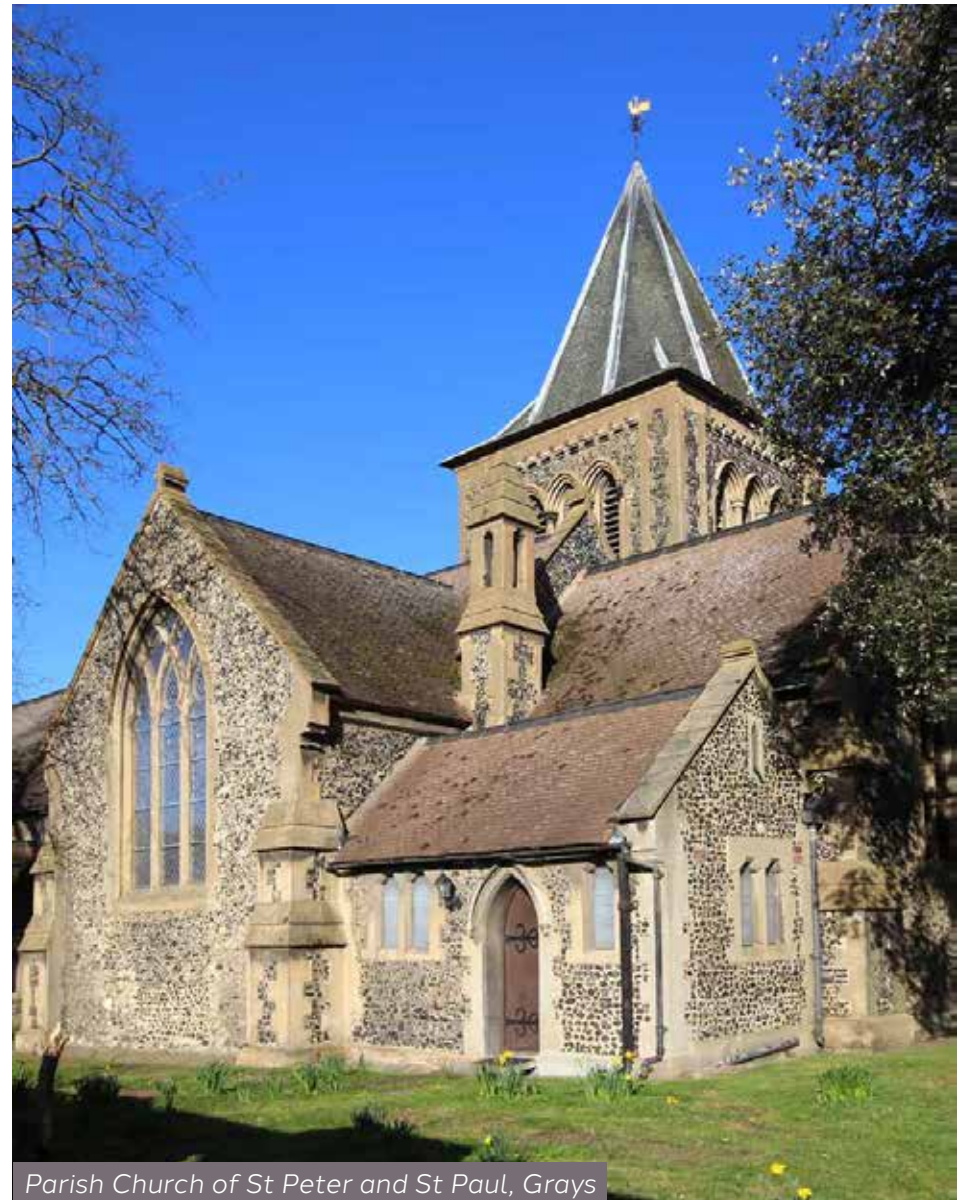




Mardyke Valley



The Echoes, Grays © Killian O'Sullivan



Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Grays

# THE THAMES

## CELEBRATING THE THAMES IN THE FUTURE DESIGN OF PLACES

Proposals should recognise and respond to the profound effect the River Thames has on Thurrock, and make the most of the opportunities presented to create exceptional designs that respond to this setting in order to deliver a distinctive sense of place.

The river and its frontage is a place in its own right, but is fragmented by industry and infrastructure, and poorly accessible in places. Opportunities to provide further public access through footpath connections should be pursued. The Thames and other waterways are crucial to the sense of place and distinctiveness of the borough.

The diagram shows how some of the opportunities, conditions and landscapes that exist along the Thames in Thurrock could be incorporated and considered in the future design of successful places.

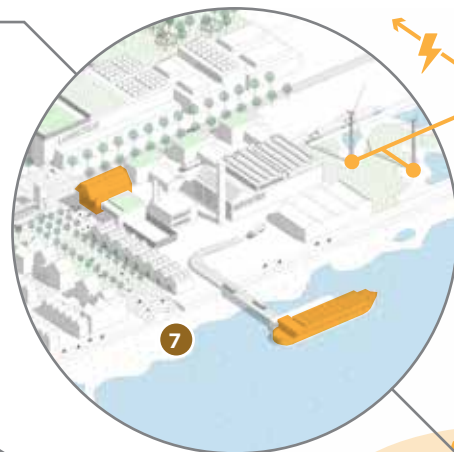
### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE THAMES

1. Enhancing and delivering the Thames Path, addressing severance of access to the Thames due to the ports, and integrating links to town centres and settlements
2. Restoring tributary habitats to provide space for nature, leisure links and flood resilience
3. Opening up connections between the town centres, settlements, and the river front
4. Creating new vibrant public spaces and parks along the river front
5. Consider how water traffic and cross-river links such as ferries and water taxis can be integrated and future-proofed
6. Restoring wetland habitats to provide carbon sinks and sequestration, flood resilience and biodiversity net gain
7. Innovative approaches to the design of employment and national infrastructure should provide benefits and quality places for local residents, as well as acting as landmark gateways to the UK
8. Creating opportunities for clean energy generation wherever possible
9. Connect and celebrating our tangible and intangible heritage assets along the river, such as forts and our social history of the ports, helping to tell the rich history of Thurrock



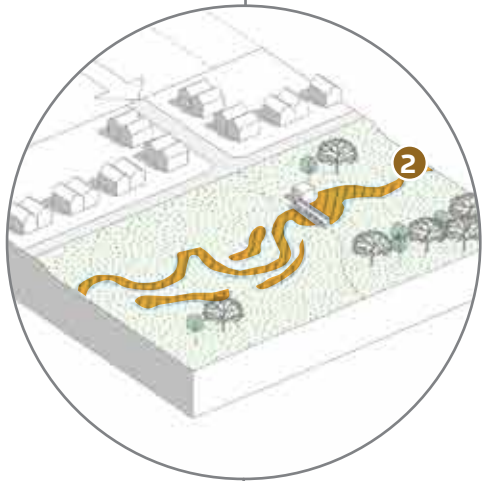
### GLOBAL GATEWAYS

Trade and international connections will continue to play a vital part in the future of the Thames in Thurrock. The places and infrastructure around these uses should look to the future, and reflect the highest-quality design standards, as the UK's gateway to the world.



### NATURE RECOVERY

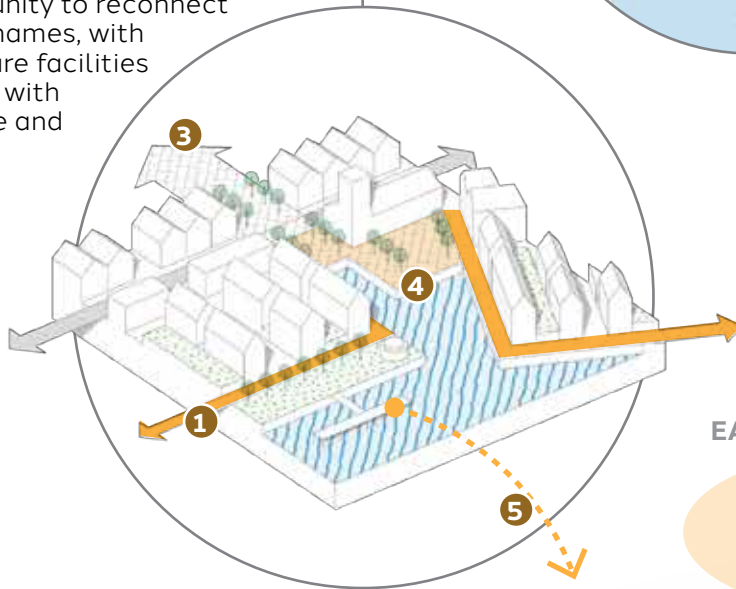
The tributaries of the Thames, such as the Mardyke, are vital ecosystems corridors and provide natural connections between places and the estuary. Designs should seek to restore these connected habitats and consider their role as potential green links for nature and people.



### CONNECTED WATERFRONTS

The river has long been used for industry and connections to a wider world, with a rich heritage of wharves and jetties, and gaps between towns and the river front.

There is an opportunity to reconnect our towns to the Thames, with public spaces, leisure facilities and footpath links, with a distinctive skyline and urban form.



LONDON GATEWAY

EAST TILBURY

TILBURY

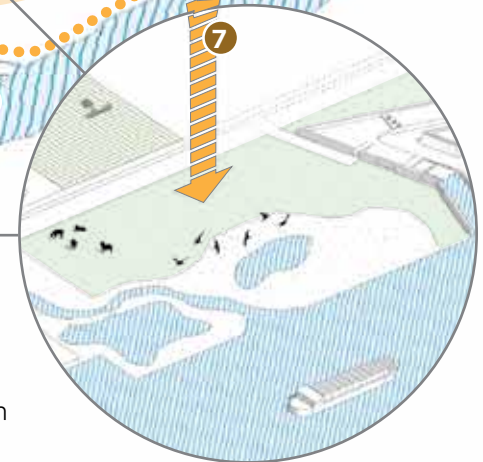
GRAYS

PURFLEET

LONDON

### CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The Thames Estuary is on the front line of climate change. Flood defence can go hand in hand with providing space for resilient natural habitats and carbon sequestering in restored wetlands.





# NEIGHBOURHOODS

## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Bringing services, facilities, nature and green space closer to people's homes can offer everyone greater choice, a healthier lifestyle through active travel, better access to facilities, and help bring communities together socially. With ongoing changes and interventions, existing neighbourhoods can be transformed over time to offer a richer mix of facilities, spaces and access to nature, reducing inequalities and enhancing health, opportunity and quality of life for all.

Many of Thurrock's existing neighbourhoods are under-provisioned for services and dominated by highway infrastructure, making getting around without a car inconvenient, unpleasant, or unsafe. With simple interventions, this can change.

The diagram explores how a typical existing neighbourhood may change to improve quality of life and service provision in the future through investment, sensitive development and regeneration.

### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS

1. Gentle densification of development located close to public transport routes to support greater footfall and viability of new local services
2. Street transformations of major roads to include trees, generous pavements, and safe cycling networks
3. Providing opportunities for new links to improve pedestrian permeability of areas
4. Opening up and integrating existing green features, such as streams, into neighbourhoods
5. Providing community growing, such as orchards and allotments, supporting local community shops
6. Traffic calmed streets to provide alternative quiet and safer walking and cycling routes
7. Mobility hub for buses with secure bike storage, providing EV and cycle charging points
8. Regenerating smaller industrial estates in residential areas to provide a mix of new, local businesses, with improved safe pedestrian access and buffers to surrounding residential areas
9. Infill development to sensitively intensify centres and key locations, stepping down to blend with existing built form, provide affordable homes and specialist accommodation
10. Simplifying space-intensive highway arrangements, such as oversized roundabouts, to provide better junctions and public spaces
11. Linear park and trim-trail along street to school
12. Car parking better integrated within attractive streets, close to front doors but not car dominated, separated by street trees and contributing to traffic calming



Co-working hubs and local employment space

Mews-style infill development

Buffers to major infrastructure, addressing noise and air quality

Co-located sports facilities shared between schools and the community

New health and wellness centre

Day care centre and local community hub

Local shops and facilities in walking distance

1

2

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# COUNTRYSIDE

## RELATING SENSITIVELY TO THE THURROCK COUNTRYSIDE

Thurrock's countryside has a diverse character and provides space for agriculture, leisure, nature and many other uses. Much of it is protected by Green Belt designation and is important in preserving the openness and character of rural areas and the setting of historic villages.

Preserving and enhancing the quality of, and access to, our Green Belt is vital. Design has a role in ensuring new development forms attractive edges to settlements, facilitates better access and use of the countryside, and considers local landscape character as well as strategic views in and out of places.

The diagram sets out how new development at the edges of towns and villages can deliver benefits to existing communities, enhance their settlement, protect rural character, and be inspired by their countryside edge setting in different contexts.

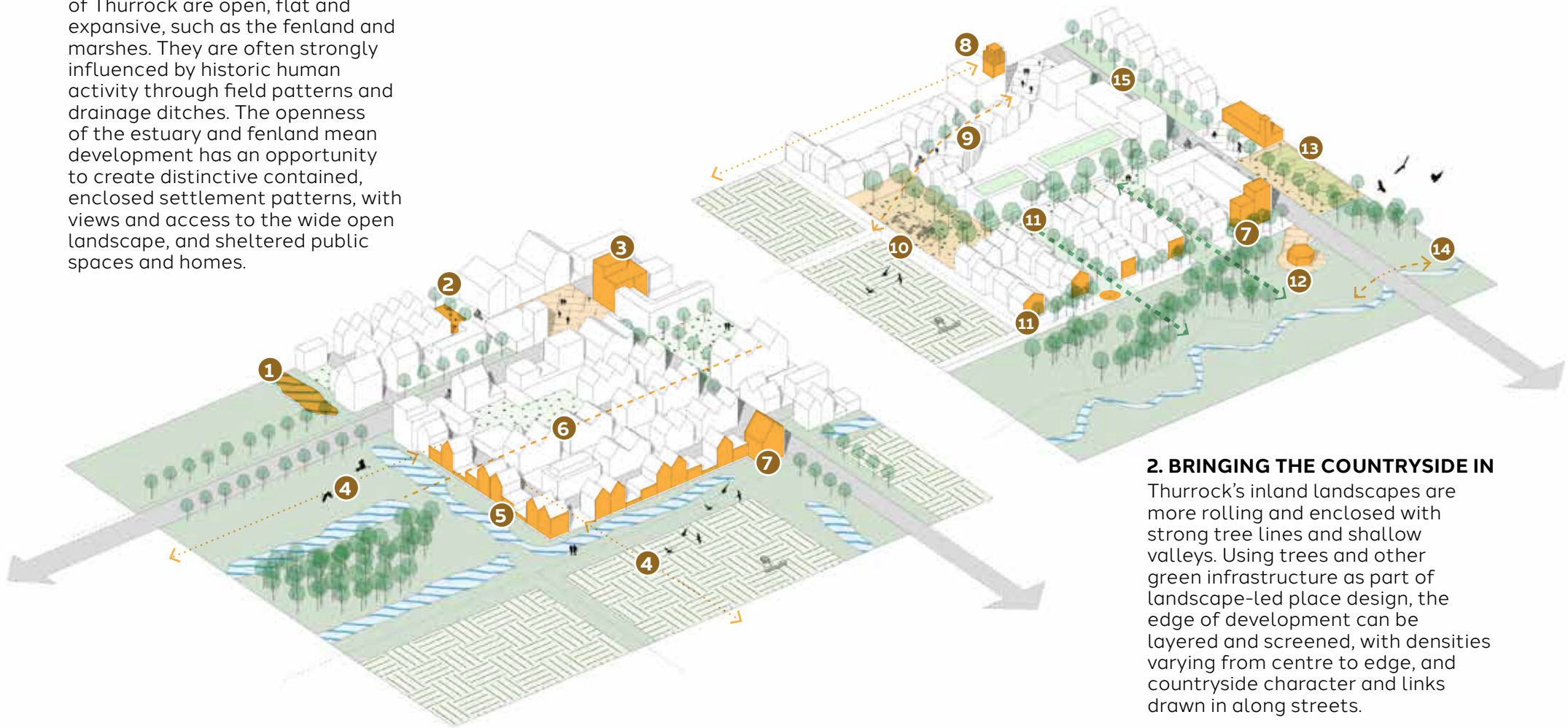
### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES AT THE COUNTRYSIDE EDGE

1. Strategic sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) throughout, delivering wider water management benefits and draining to the countryside edge
2. Variety of public green open spaces with opportunities for biodiversity, amenity and food production
3. Varied density and built form throughout, with a clear centre and heart to places to create a memorable and distinctive townscape
4. Views out to the open countryside, from homes and public spaces
5. Distinctive, high quality built form with active frontages that form a clear and attractive edge to settlements
6. Using historic field boundaries to provide a clear structure to development and landscape
7. Architecturally distinctive buildings at key locations to articulate gateways and local landmarks
8. Considering high-quality skyline features within long views to help define a place within its context
9. Green cycling and walking links from countryside edges to centres along historic desire lines and paths
10. Well-connected parks to soften countryside edges
11. Layers of green infrastructure screen development views, providing amenity space, biodiversity net gain and a natural gradient of density towards the countryside edge
12. Access and activation of natural green open spaces, with facilities and footpaths
13. Locating school playing fields as part of green infrastructure networks
14. Drainage and nature corridors through infrastructure
15. Street trees, swales, and rain gardens within streets linked to open countryside



## 1. OPENNESS AND ENCLOSURE

Many of the countryside landscapes of Thurrock are open, flat and expansive, such as the fenland and marshes. They are often strongly influenced by historic human activity through field patterns and drainage ditches. The openness of the estuary and fenland mean development has an opportunity to create distinctive contained, enclosed settlement patterns, with views and access to the wide open landscape, and sheltered public spaces and homes.



## 2. BRINGING THE COUNTRYSIDE IN

Thurrock's inland landscapes are more rolling and enclosed with strong tree lines and shallow valleys. Using trees and other green infrastructure as part of landscape-led place design, the edge of development can be layered and screened, with densities varying from centre to edge, and countryside character and links drawn in along streets.

# GOOD NEIGHBOURS

## CONSIDERING EDGES AND CO-LOCATING DIFFERENT USES

There is a huge diversity of land uses within Thurrock, from quiet neighbourhoods, to major industry, nationally significant infrastructure, all the way to wide open natural spaces. This brings challenges as to how these different uses, including sensitive residential areas, meet and relate to each other and can create environmental issues and severance that are detrimental to communities living nearby.

Edges between different uses and facilities are critical interfaces that present opportunities to think creatively about how different uses meet and how they co-locate, bringing overall benefits in addressing severance to ensure people have good access to local facilities, while providing space for natural habitats and networks for wildlife. Where buffers are proposed to noisy uses or busy infrastructure, these should primarily be designed to be effective screening, and not as low quality public open space, at the expense of higher-quality open space located in a more central and accessible locations within neighbourhoods.

The diagram illustrates potential approaches and opportunities for different types of edges, and places of potential co-location commonly seen in Thurrock.

### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES AT EDGES OF DIFFERENT USES

1. Co-locating shops and centres where neighbourhoods and employment meet to serve both residents and workers
2. Opening up active travel connections between old and new neighbourhoods to create spaces and centres that serve both
3. Integrating clean local energy generation in appropriate locations
4. Creating amenity space, such as sports pitches, at edges and buffers where this is part of a considered approach to place design
5. Delivering connected habitat creation and enhancement for biodiversity net gain and nature recovery
6. Using trees and planting to screen sensitive uses, and supplemented with bunding and acoustic treatments, where necessary, to achieve functional buffers to noisy uses.
7. Addressing severance by providing new pedestrian and cycle links over major infrastructure that are safe, accessible, well-lit, and inclusive.

**INDUSTRY**

Green walls and roofs  
Solar panels on large units  
Woodland screening with habitats  
Effective green bunding and barriers

**MAJOR ROADS**

Effective noise barrier, screened with vegetation  
Green habitat bridges, addressing severance

**RAILWAY**

Solar power roofs on stations  
Active travel bridges, addressing severance  
Screening railways through planting

**PYLONS**

Linear parks along route  
Long distance paths and green links  
Community gardens and allotments  
Planting near pylons

**AGRICULTURE**

Natural habitats & hedgerows  
New countryside walks  
Blue infrastructure, such as swales and ponds

**LOGISTICS**

Running loops & outdoor gyms  
Screening to loading bays  
Using roofs for community facilities, such as sports provision

**EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS**

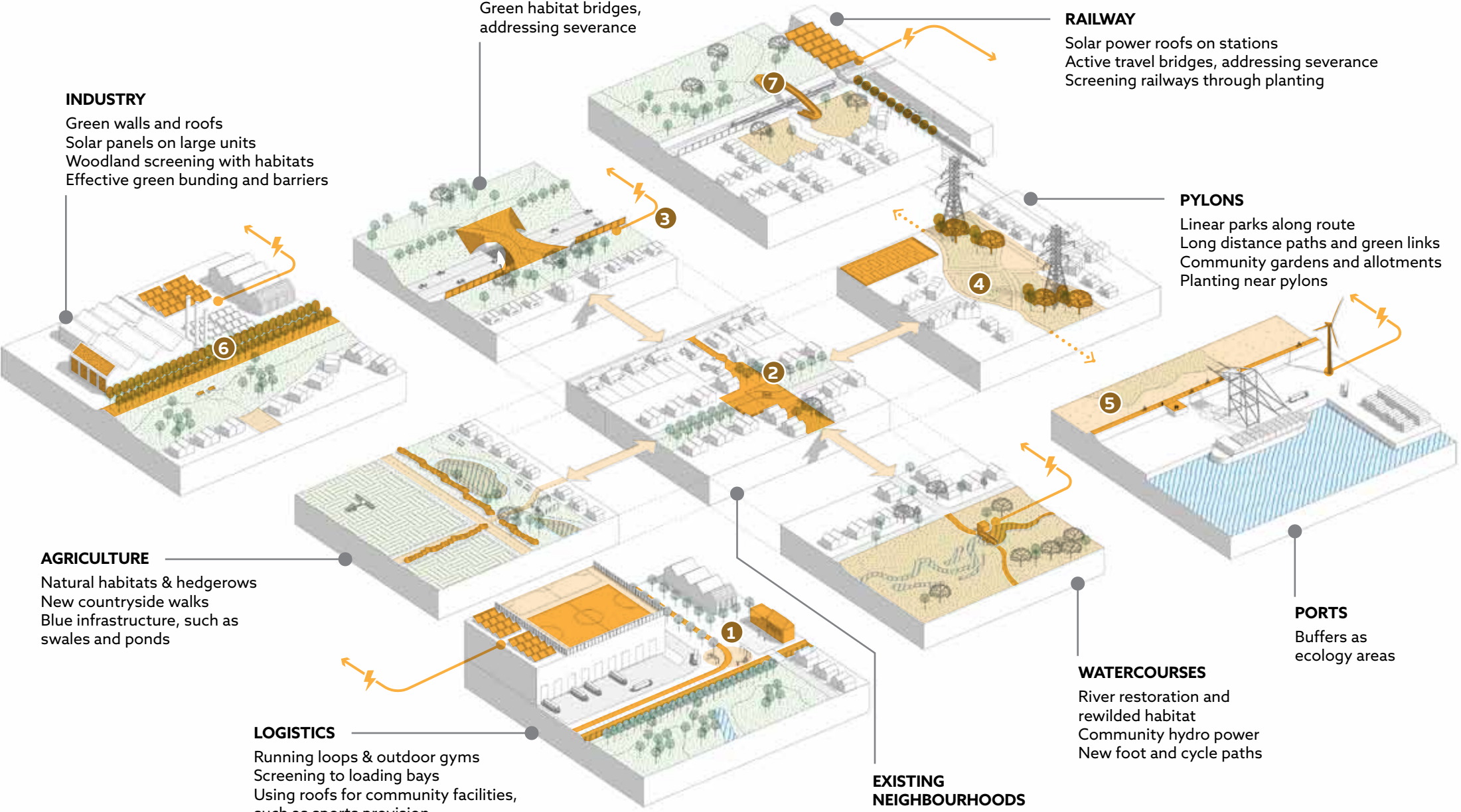
Locating facilities both at the centre and edges of places to serve multiple communities

**WATERCOURSES**

River restoration and rewilded habitat  
Community hydro power  
New foot and cycle paths

**PORTS**

Buffers as ecology areas





# TOWN CENTRES

## VIBRANT, ACCESSIBLE, AND WELL-CONNECTED CENTRES

We have the potential to strengthen our local and town centres, as the nuclei around which transport hubs, mixed-use development, and distinctive public spaces can grow more sustainably. By creating denser, walkable, more compact centres based around active travel, public transport, and the co-location of new services and facilities, urban sprawl can be limited and precious green spaces and countryside better protected. These approaches provide the foundation for the economic prosperity of our centres, helping increase footfall and local population, supporting the vitality of the local economy and its ability to deliver new uses, including evening and night-time uses, cultural and community functions.

Vibrant centres such as at Grays, Lakeside, and within the future of Purfleet, must host a wide variety of uses and be brought together through high quality public realm. Uses should be both for those living in the immediate area, and for those in a wider catchment who will be able to access them via sustainable transport options.

The diagram shows how the ingredients of a connected place based around a transport interchange can come together successfully.

### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIBRANT CENTRES

1. Providing a mix of new houses and apartments within comprehensive mix of uses, supporting a diverse new town centre community
2. Streets designed for people first with continuous footways at junctions
3. Active frontages, along ground floors with opportunities for 'spill-out space' to activate streets
4. Continuous, connected safe cycling network
5. Focal points created around community and cultural spaces
6. Natural habitats and surface water management integrated into public green spaces
7. Flexible spaces for community events and markets in high quality public realm for all seasons and uses
8. Co-locating wider social infrastructure within new typologies of schools in central locations
9. Sports and leisure provision in accessible locations close to existing communities and public transport provision
10. Offices, workshops and co-working spaces providing a mix of different employment types
11. Enhancement and reuse of distinctive local heritage to become key landmarks in our town centres
12. Reuse and retrofit of existing buildings to new uses
13. Design-led densification that delivers sustainable development, supporting local services and better public transport, while being sensitive to local character
14. Space for night-time / evening economy uses
15. Balconies, roof terraces and podiums to provide a range of communal amenity space for new residents
16. Step-backs and height variations on taller buildings, to integrate with existing built form

## MOBILITY HUBS

Clear and simple interchange between modes

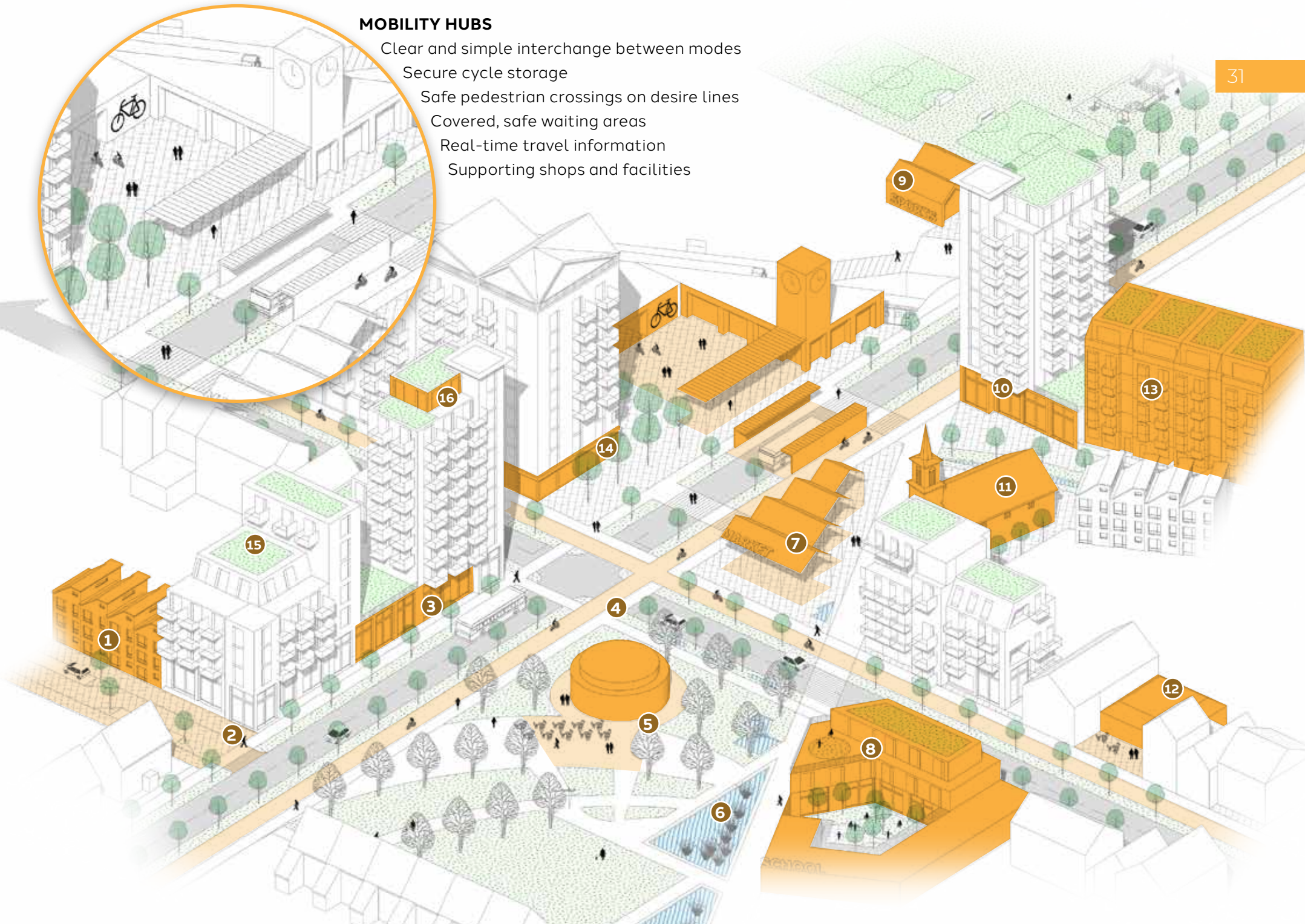
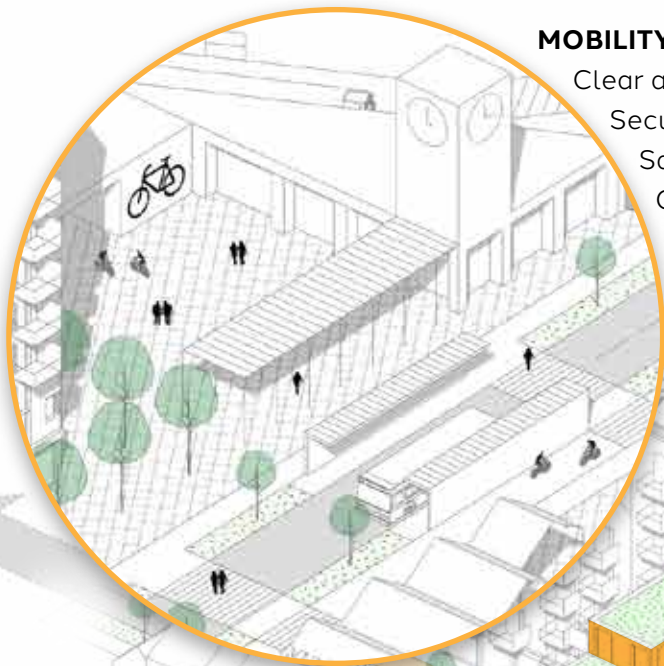
Secure cycle storage

Safe pedestrian crossings on desire lines

Covered, safe waiting areas

Real-time travel information

Supporting shops and facilities



## EMPLOYMENT AREAS

### CREATING PLACES FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

Thurrock is an economic powerhouse, with a wide variety of employers, with very different space needs. There is an important logistics sector, dominated by large warehousing needs, reflected in our Ports and associated employment areas. Employment areas should be well-designed, efficient, functional, and considered as environments where design adds value to economic growth, well-being of staff, better integration with the surrounding community, and benefits the environment.

Employment areas need to be responsive to change, flexible and practical, but also need to be attractive for people to work in, and support healthy lifestyles, an increasingly important consideration for employers and investors. This can contribute to employee retention, reduced sickness rates and improved job satisfaction.

Design must recognise and respond to changes in working patterns such as working from home, and shift work. It should ensure spaces are well-designed for their purpose and context, i.e., co-working spaces, business centres, flexible units, small workshops, as well as last-mile logistics. The public realm should bring places together and provide safe environments at night for shift workers.

The diagram imagines how the components in a mixed employment area might work together in Thurrock.

#### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLACES OF WORK

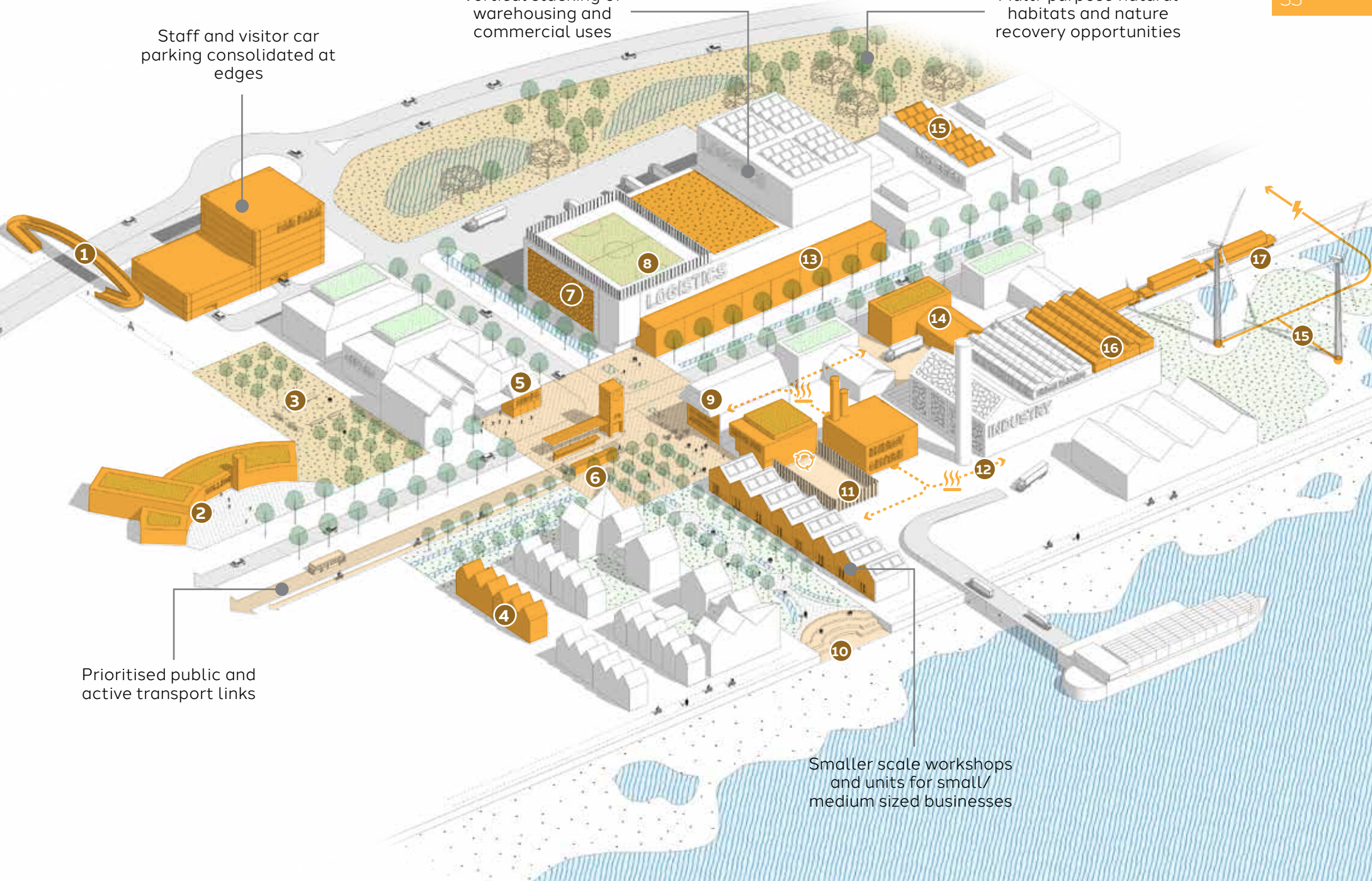
1. Active travel connections into employment sites, connecting communities to jobs and addressing severance
2. Opportunities for incorporating learning spaces, including skills academies, to better integrate educational opportunities with employment
3. Gardens and orchards for staff breaks and meetings
4. Effective buffers with nearby residential uses, providing mitigation while reducing severance.
5. Shops and facilities for workers at accessible locations
6. Mobility hub within a central meeting space
7. Green walls and roofs
8. Sports, recreation, health and well-being facilities
9. Opportunities for co-working hubs
10. Focal point public spaces with potential for improved access to the river around the ports
11. Shared reuse and recycling hub to limit waste
12. Heat sharing networks and energy centre recovering heat from nearby uses
13. Small units 'sleeving' larger buildings
14. Multi-purpose flexible units facing street
15. Solar and wind power opportunities
16. Urban and vertical agriculture
17. Maximising sustainable freight transport opportunities



Staff and visitor car parking consolidated at edges

Vertical stacking of warehousing and commercial uses

Multi-purpose natural habitats and nature recovery opportunities



Prioritised public and active transport links

Smaller scale workshops and units for small/medium sized businesses

# LANDSCAPES

## ECOSYSTEM CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NATURE, LANDSCAPE AND PEOPLE

The hardworking landscapes of Thurrock are intensively used and are the source of the borough's environmental quality and biodiversity. They provide environmental protection, flood mitigation, agriculture, amenity space for a large local population, infrastructure provision and space for nature.

The connected ecosystems of Thurrock must be considered as a fundamental part of the design of places, and all opportunities to connect and enhance them taken. Incorporating nature-based solutions and habitats within towns and urban areas, as well as in the countryside.

The diagram explores some of the many ways that healthy, connected ecosystems can work with each other and provide essential, sustainable services to people. Good design should enhance and work with nature to ensure connected ecosystems can continue to provide these benefits.

### DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANDSCAPE

1. Creating and connecting into long-distance paths and regional parks
2. Green bridges providing habitat links over major roads and railways
3. Opportunities for community growing and urban food production
4. Making space and safeguarding marginal green spaces for wildlife refuges and 'sinks'
5. Integrating opportunities for children and young persons' play in imaginative and creative ways
6. Celebrating our heritage and their setting
7. Delivering urban nature restoration through regeneration
8. Integrating leisure and sport activities while preserving the ecological value of green open spaces
9. Integrating opportunities for allotments and local growing in residential areas
10. Surface water management and natural water filtration through sustainable urban drainage systems
11. Doorstep access to nature from residential areas
12. River re-wilding and restoration
13. Long-distance green corridors for nature and people
14. Space for clean, renewable, local energy production
15. Procuring local extracted material for local construction materials, and ensuring former quarries are restored
16. Designing new habitats as effective carbon sinks
17. Enhancing access along the Thames, integrating with new flood defences
18. Wetland habitats for biodiversity and natural flood protection



## SOURCE

Habitat restoration and restoring links severed by infrastructure is the priority to ensure healthy ecosystems downstream.

## COUNTRYSIDE

Land is intensively used across Thurrock's countryside for agriculture, leisure and industry.

## TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES

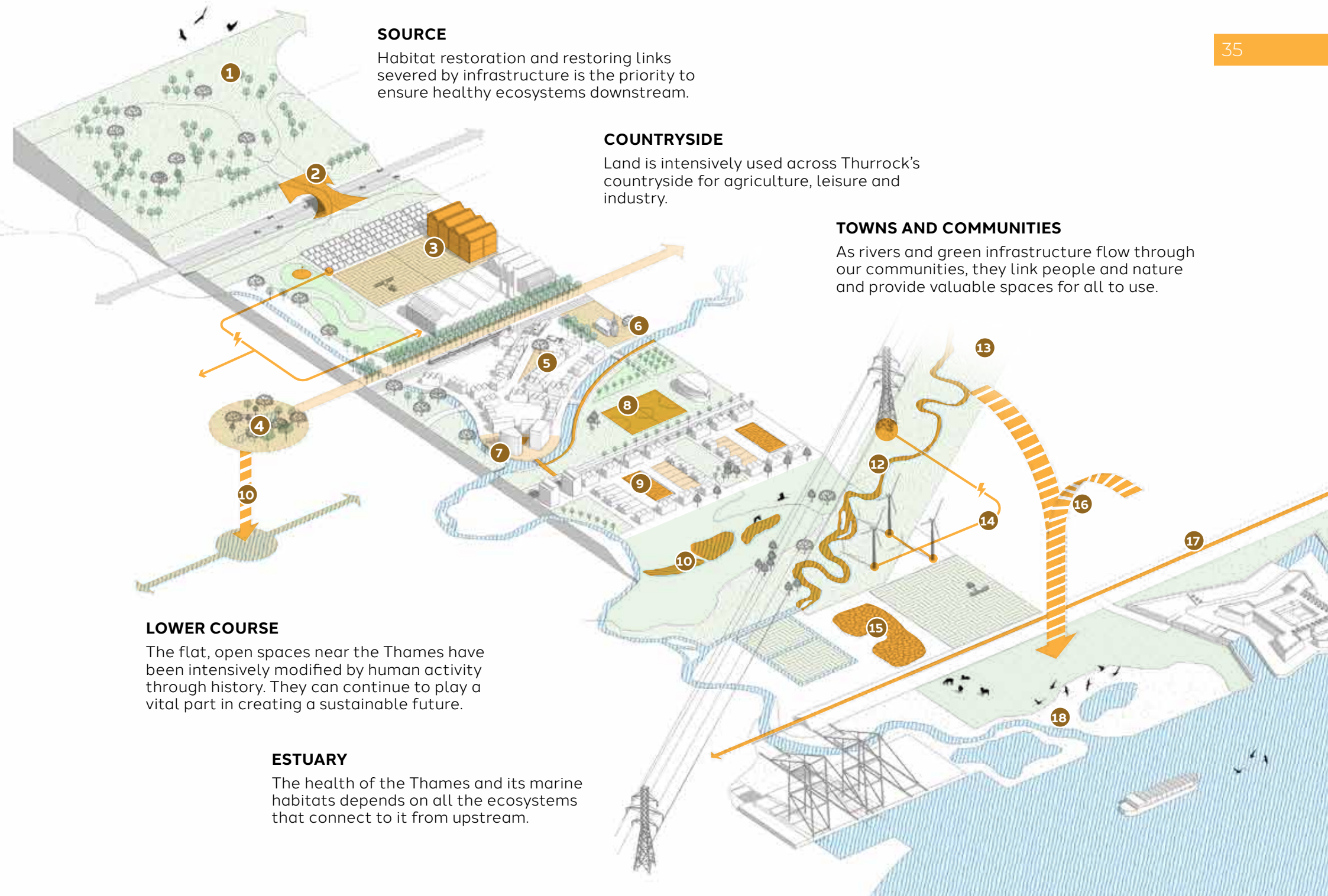
As rivers and green infrastructure flow through our communities, they link people and nature and provide valuable spaces for all to use.

## LOWER COURSE

The flat, open spaces near the Thames have been intensively modified by human activity through history. They can continue to play a vital part in creating a sustainable future.

## ESTUARY

The health of the Thames and its marine habitats depends on all the ecosystems that connect to it from upstream.





# Making it happen

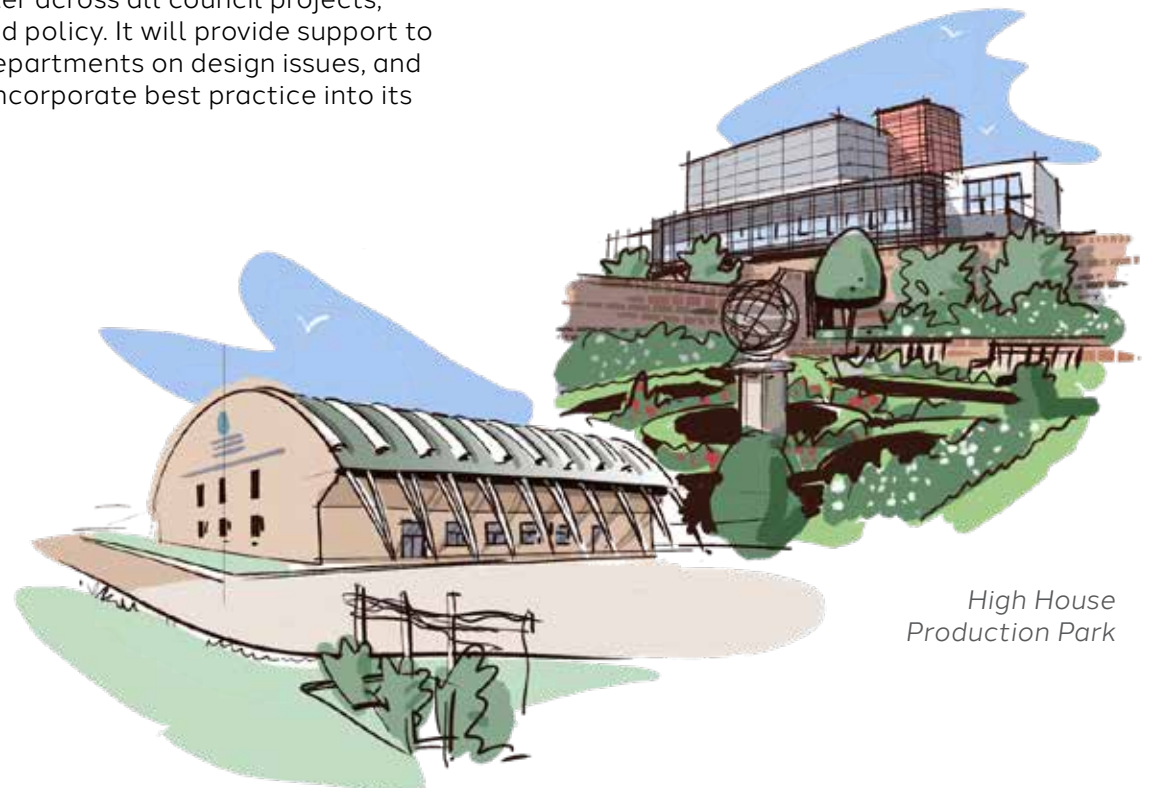
**Thurrock Council is committed to delivering good design, and to working with partners, applicants and stakeholders collaboratively to support and enable good design.**

This section sets out:

- How communities should be placed at the heart of the design process, steering good design through continuous engagement
- How Thurrock Council will take forward the Design Charter throughout its future work
- What we expect from partners, applicants and stakeholders working on development proposals, and the tools and processes we will offer to support our partners

Thurrock Council will support ambitious developers to deliver high-quality design and place-making, through a comprehensive design process that considers the places and people of Thurrock, and delivers on the principles set out in this Charter.

The Place & Design Team at Thurrock Council is a dedicated team with the remit of improving design quality and fulfilling the aims of the Design Charter across all council projects, strategies and policy. It will provide support to all council departments on design issues, and continually incorporate best practice into its work.



*High House  
Production Park*

## WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER GOOD DESIGN

**Collaboration is critical, and we want to support applicants and stakeholders through the design process to deliver better design outcomes for Thurrock.**

To this end, we have set out how clear expectations as to what we expect to see within a comprehensive design process as part of any development proposal.

We will encourage everyone involved in the design of our places to embrace the following principles in the way they go about design and development of proposals:



### Getting the right design team in place

- Putting together the right skills and team to best respond to the particular constraints and challenges of each project, making the most of the opportunities of each site
- Embracing multi-disciplinary and collaborative working, to create complete places that are designed by a holistic team that deliver the wider benefits to the area
- Ensuring design teams reflect the diversity of experience and identity of Thurrock's communities, bringing in local knowledge, experience and skills where possible.

### Site and context appraisal as the starting point of design

- Thinking beyond the application boundary, understanding the strategic role of the site, its local setting, and key views to and from
- Integrating with wider strategic green and blue infrastructure and landscape opportunities
- Appreciating the distinctive character and features of the wider area, and considering how these can be integrating into a memorable design
- Thinking carefully about site boundaries and how the proposals relate to adjacent land uses
- Understanding local community needs and priorities (including health, well-being, equalities and inclusion)

### Engagement with Thurrock's communities at all stages

- Identifying and engaging meaningfully with a wide range of stakeholders and the local community from earliest stages to post-occupancy
- Using engagement as a critical tool to understanding places, acknowledging that local communities and stakeholders are experts in their areas
- Recognising that engagement can take any number of methods, but must be wide, frequent, accessible and tailored to each unique site and project.

### Following a clear, structured, iterative, and robust design process

- Developing a clear concept and vision, considering how the design can deliver wider benefits
- Justifying design decisions through evidence
- Demonstrating a range of options and assessing them transparently against a clear criteria
- Factoring in multi-disciplinary pre-app discussions and Design Reviews

### Demonstrating how proposals deliver on the Charter's principles

- Aligning design proposals to the outcomes across all principles in the Charter
- Discussing and agreeing at an early stage how sites and projects can most effectively deliver good outcomes for Thurrock's communities
- Communicating clearly with Thurrock's communities on how the design of proposals will deliver on the Charter's principles

## PLANNING & DESIGN SUPPORT SERVICES

**The council offers the following services to support applicants, developers, and communities in securing the best design outcome for development proposals.**

### *Local Plan & Design Code*

The forthcoming Local Plan and Design Code will set out formal design policy for application determination, building on the vision of the Design Charter. They should form the basis of an initial review of design quality expectations.

The Local Plan will set out strategic and detailed design policies, as well as specific design principles to allocations. The Design Code will set out a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for all development. The Code will also provide more guidance on the design process itself, including what we would expect from a site appraisal, and guidance on undertaking effective community consultation.

Local Plan design policies, this Design Charter, and the Thurrock Design Code will align with national guidance (encapsulated within the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code), and established best-practice (including Building for a Healthy Life and Building for Nature standards).

### *Pre-application advice*

Pre-application discussions should be the starting point for all proposals. Come to us at an early stage to discuss your proposal and we will advise you on what you would need to do to have the best chance of achieving planning permission. We will be able to ensure that wider council teams, such as public health, transport, and others are able to feed into early discussions to ensure integrated thinking and better design outcomes.

Although there is a cost to applicants, you will benefit from a better-quality application and a clearer route to the determination of your planning application. The iterative nature of design means that, particularly for larger applications, a number of pre-application reviews are advised as you progress your design proposals.

### *Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)*

These are voluntary agreements between the applicant and the Thurrock Council that set out the actions, resources and time-scales for handling a particular planning application. They can be used to support good design through a continuous and iterative process of officer engagement across the council, and will include dedicated design workshops.

They can be used for any type of planning application but usually for large-scale, complex proposals. They can be used at any stage from early brief development through to conditions and reserved matters.

Fees for PPAs depend on size and complexity of the proposal, and are regularly updated and published on Thurrock Council's website.

### *Design Review*

Design Review is an independent and impartial evaluation of proposals best undertaken at pre-application. It is a collaborative process, where constructive feedback can be given to improve the design quality of proposals. Design review panel comments have formal weight in determining applications.

We require that Design Review is undertaken for proposals that have significant impacts in relation to design or public interest. Further guidance and detail on the criteria for projects we expect to go to Design Review would be included within the forthcoming Design Code.



Lakeside Shopping Centre



## PUTTING COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF PLACES

**People are at the heart of places, and their engagement at all stages of the design is critical to ensuring places deliver benefits to local people, meet their needs and wishes, and promote a sense of belonging. This goes beyond tick-box consultation and should be integrated comprehensively into the design process. A good design and engagement process encompasses:**



Thameside  
Nature  
Discovery Park

- Use engagement to inform the initial brief, collaborating with local communities and stakeholders to properly investigate the site and its context, highlighting issues and opportunities that may not be immediately visible.
- Building out a design and project team that responds to this initial engagement and reflects the diversity and experiences of the local communities where development is proposed.
- Using co-design opportunities, such as design charettes, workshops, and digital tools, to explore what is desired and needed by local communities, and how this can be integrated within emerging designs.
- Testing and iteration of options with communities and stakeholders, and ensuring views are factored into a transparent and robust assessment of those options.
- Discussions and engagement with local communities and groups around the potential for long-term community management and stewardship of places and spaces.
- Demonstrating at the application stage how the community have meaningfully shaped the designs through submitted planning applications materials.

Engagement should include all groups equitably and should reach beyond groups that typically get involved in planning issues. Involving these under-represented groups, especially younger people and those with learning disabilities or mental health needs, will yield a better and more representative design solution that is more widely owned by its community.

Thurrock Council is committed to following comprehensive and deep consultation when developing policies and regeneration proposals, based on the principles of engagement, empowerment and equality. This includes the use of a range of methods, including digital process, and the recent Design Charettes undertaken by the Princes Foundation in support of the developing Local Plan. These consultations remain critical to ensuring Thurrock continues to develop into a great and inclusive place.



RSPB Rainham Marshes

