



Hartford's Neighbourhood Plan 2010-2030



March 2016

Foreword

Hartford is a lovely village in mid Cheshire with a unique heritage and a dynamic future.

Investment and change in the years ahead will only be worthwhile if they make a real difference to the lives of local people and the future of their community.

The Hartford Neighbourhood Plan is being led by the Parish Council who, following the Localism Act of November 2011, carried out an assessment to see if the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Hartford would help the community shape the village for future generations.

Following the assessment it was concluded that a plan was needed and at the Parish Council meeting in February 2012 the council resolved to form a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. This would comprise four members of the Parish Council, four members of Hartford Civic Society and co-opted members of the community.

(See Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference)

The Parish Council wanted the residents of Hartford to have a say in all aspects of the future of the village but more importantly it wanted local people to decide where new housing should go, what type was required and at what part of the population it was aimed, rather than leaving this decision to potential developers and Cheshire West and Chester Council.



Councillor Rita Hollens

Chair, Hartford Neighbourhood Plan Working Group,
on behalf of Hartford Parish Council

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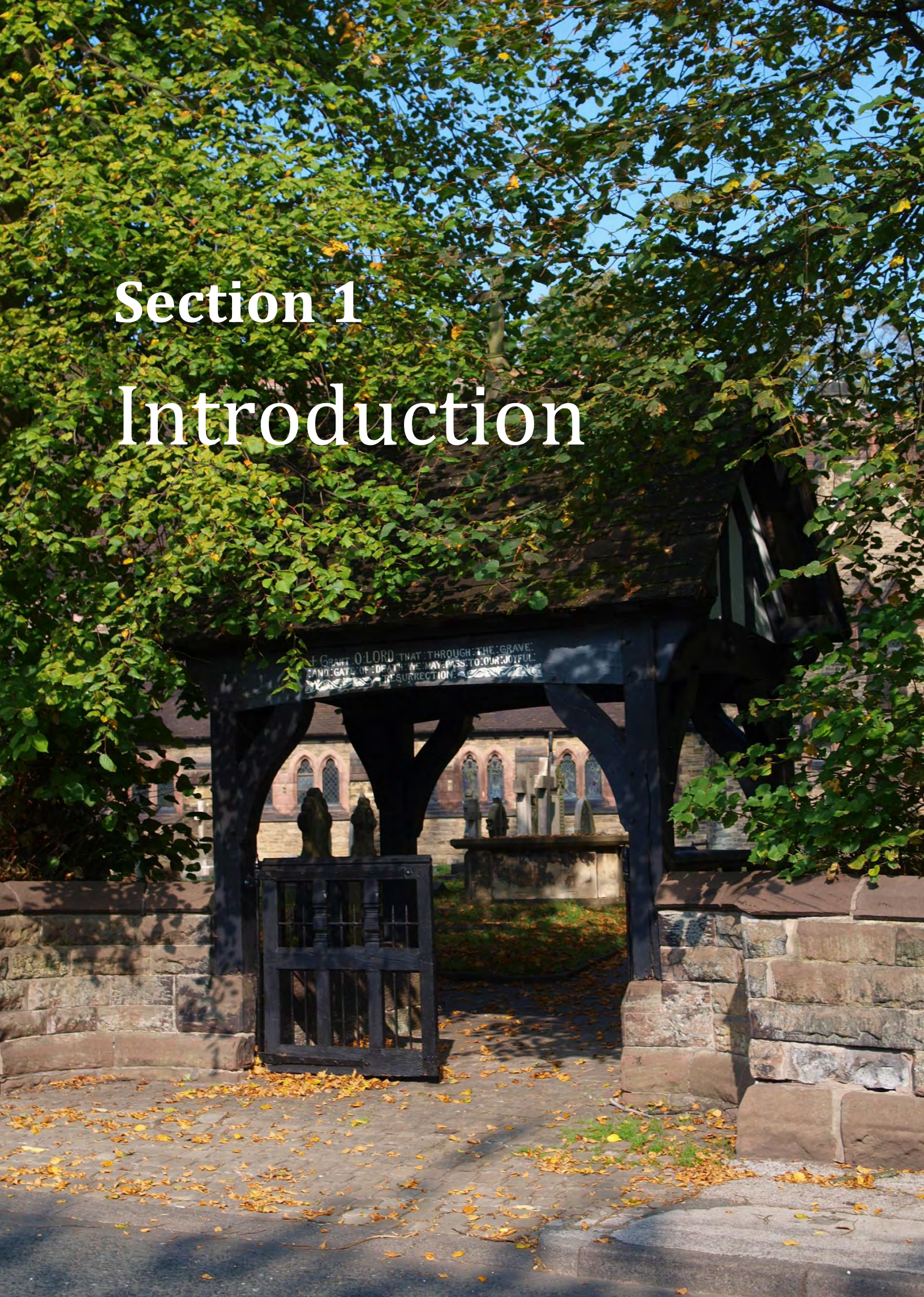


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Section 1

Introduction



1 Introduction

1.1 ABOUT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

1.1.1 The Hartford Neighbourhood Plan (the “Plan”) is a new type of planning document. It is part of the Government’s new approach to planning, which was passed in the Localism Act of 15 November 2011, which introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape future development.

This was an important change to the planning system; communities can use their Neighbourhood Plan to permit the development they want to see.

The Localism Act gives people more say in future applications for development within their community, where new homes should be built, who they should be for and what they should look like.

The period covered by the Plan is 2010 to 2030, which mirrors that of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. The Plan will be reviewed and updated during this period.

Once a Neighbourhood Plan is agreed at the referendum stage and is made (brought into legal force) by the Local Authority it becomes part of the statutory development plan.

1.1.2 The Plan provides a vision for the future of the village, and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision. These policies are in accord with higher level planning policies as required by the Localism Act.



Flats at Carriage Drive,
built on the site of the former
Mid Cheshire College car park

1.1.3 The Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with the residents of Hartford and others with an interest in the village. Information on progress is available on Hartford Parish Council website www.hartfordparishcouncil.org.uk.

1.1.4 A Consultation Statement provides an overview of the consultation, demonstrating that it fully accords with the requirements of the Localism Act. This consultation has included meeting the requirements of Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Plan has been amended where appropriate in response to consultation comments.

How the Neighbourhood Plan fits into the planning system

1.1.5 The Localism Act 2012 Neighbourhood Plan Regulations require policies in a Neighbourhood Plan to be underpinned by appropriate evidence. The policies in this Plan are based on research and investigations and relevant information has been set out in an “Evidence Base” document.

1.1.6 The Localism Act gives the community of Hartford the power to decide how the village develops. However it makes it clear that Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with higher level planning policy. Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to national policies and advice and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. They must also be compatible with European obligations. This is fully documented in the accompanying Evidence Base and Basic Conditions Statement.

1.1.7 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These three “golden threads” have been paramount in Hartford’s approach to producing this Neighbourhood Plan.

1.1.8 The Localism Act allows the Plan to provide for more dwellings than stated in the adopted Cheshire West & Chester Plan but it does not allow the Plan to provide for fewer.

1.1.9 Neighbourhood Plans must be compatible with European environmental obligations. Where a community identifies sites for development, it may be appropriate for a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken. A Screening Assessment,

This map shows the boundary of the area covered by the Hartford Neighbourhood Plan. Following consultation with adjoining parishes, the area map was submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council, and was designated on 6 March 2013. At this time it was the Parish Boundary of Hartford.

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undertaken as part of the plan-making process, determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required for this Plan.

1.1.10 Once the Plan is in place it will help to determine where any new housing should go and the size and style of development to suit the community.

What is in the Neighbourhood Plan?

1.1.11 Although deciding where new housing should go is an important part of the Plan, it is about much more than this. The Plan is a plan for the whole village. It looks at a range of issues, including:

- the safety of road users and pedestrians on our congested highway system.
- how walking and cycling around the village can be improved and made safer.
- how parking can be improved.
- that retail and business opportunities are supported.
- whether any new facilities are required.
- to improve quality of life for people.
- the protection of the conservation area.
- that the history and characteristics of the village are maintained and protected.
- what open space any new development should contribute to the village.
- the protection of areas of significant environmental value and green corridors around the village.

How this Plan is organised

1.1.12 The Plan is divided into five sections.

- **Section 1: Introduction.**

This explains the Neighbourhood Plan.

- **Section 2: About Hartford.**

This provides an overview of Hartford, the issues that the Plan addresses, and an overview of the initial stages of public consultation, explaining how these have influenced the Plan.

- **Section 3: Vision and Key Issues.**

This sets out the overall vision for Hartford supported by the six key issues.

- **Section 4: Development in Hartford.**

This explains where further new development could go.

- **Section 5: Policies.**

This sets out specific policies for each key issue.

1.2 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

What we did in producing each section of the Plan

- **Section 1: Introduction.**

- **Section 2: About Hartford.**

Worked with local people to understand likes and dislikes for the future of Hartford; investigated background information to understand Hartford (the “evidence base”); undertook new analysis of key issues; distilled information and views about Hartford into a vision.

- **Section 3: Vision and Key Issues.**

Supported the vision with a set of key issues; checked the vision and key issues with local people.

- **Section 4: Development in Hartford.**

Looked at where new development could go; investigated the effects of large scale development on the highway network, and sustainability of Hartford; developed options; produced a final view for Hartford’s future.

- **Section 5: Policies.**

Developed policies to support the vision.



Section 2

About Hartford

2 About Hartford

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 Understanding Hartford is the starting point for producing a good Neighbourhood Plan.

To do this the Plan must relate to the past, consider the present and use the opportunity to plan for the future.

Hartford's History

2.1.2 Hartford as a Cheshire village can be traced back as far as the Domesday Book of 1086 where it is mentioned as being part of the Barony of Kinderton, held by Gilbert de Venables.

Much of the history and development of the village can be found to have its origins in the local association with salt, and the chemical industry that sprang up to exploit this natural resource. The village is situated on what was the main salt route from Northwich to Chester. Chester Road, which runs through the centre of the village, follows the line of Watling Street, a Roman road.

In 1921 Brunner Mond was the principal landowner, having established a flourishing chemical industry on the back of the natural resources. The company believed in manufacturers' responsibility for the well-being of their employees and built houses for their



Walnut Cottages,
Chester Road

directors and managers in Hartford in a location upwind of the factories, and associated smells. The directors lived in The Crescent, senior managers in The Grange and middle managers in Walnut Lane.

Hartford Today

2.1.3 From its historical beginnings, and its early close relationship to the local chemical industry, Hartford has expanded rapidly and has become a magnet for commuters. The population has risen significantly, from 2,272 in 1961 to more than double that number, 5,556, in 2011.

Hartford is within commuting distance of Manchester and Merseyside via its road links to the M6 and M56, and is conveniently situated for both Manchester and Liverpool airports.



A London Midland service from Liverpool to Birmingham arrives at Hartford

Hartford also has a railway station, served by trains to Liverpool, Crewe and Birmingham. Although there is no longer a direct service to London, the capital can be reached from Hartford using connecting services from Crewe. About a mile away, Greenbank station, just outside the Parish, is a stop on the Mid Cheshire Line, which runs from Chester to Stockport and Manchester.

However, there are a number of difficulties for rail commuters, including lack of parking at stations, connections to work destinations, and times and frequencies of services.

(Parking: map of area including Hartford railway station – see page 19)

Hartford is defined as one of the nine adjacent settlements to the town of Northwich, to which it maintains close links. However, Hartford has managed to retain a village and country feel because of the many green open spaces and green corridors that separate the village from adjoining parishes.

The importance of this was realised in the Vale Royal Local Plan, where provision was made to protect Hartford's Weaver Valley from inappropriate development by assigning it ASLEV status (Area of Significant Local Environmental Value).

This emphasized that:

- The ASLEV forms an important gap between the settlements of Hartford, Leftwich and Kingsmead;
- The ASLEV plays an important role in maintaining the views across the River Weaver Valley;
- The area is under particular pressure for future housing development. The ASLEV prevents the erosion of this important gap and assists in the prevention of the coalescence of the settlements.

Hartford is unique in that it is the only parish of its size in Europe with ten educational establishments within its boundary.

Over 6,000 students and pupils, and more than 700 staff, attend the ten educational establishments on a daily basis, generating severe traffic congestion at peak times. This is in addition to residents commuting to work by car. Hartford is an attractive village to live in, but is not a centre of employment. *(See Appendix 6.2.1 – Educational Establishments)*

Only two of the village schools have a catchment area; the remaining eight educational establishments attract most of their students and pupils from outside the area. This explains the traffic generation.



The attractiveness of Hartford as a place to live has given rise to significant development, and increase in its population. In spite of this there has been coherence, both in the variety of housing style and variation of dwellings, which has added to the character of the village.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF INITIAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION

2.2.1 Introduction

The Hartford Neighbourhood Plan belongs to the people of Hartford. It has been developed from local people's views of the village as it is today and how it could be in the future. Views have been sought using a variety of consultation approaches, including public meetings, exhibitions, events, working groups, projects, questionnaires and social media. *(See Consultation Statement)*

The consultation process has been ongoing throughout the Neighbourhood Plan work. Three main issues emerged:

- The need to establish a clear vision for the future of Hartford;
- The need to protect Hartford as a village;
- The threat to sustainability from over-development.

2.2.2 Initial Views

The overall conclusions from the consultation process are summarised below, with each list being ordered from the most to the least frequently mentioned subject.

2.2.3 The main things people like about Hartford are:

- The village identity and feeling part of a community;
- The character of Hartford with the variety of building styles;
- That Hartford is a safe place to live;
- The green open spaces within and around the village;
- The environment in the Weaver Valley, Vale Royal Wood and Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve;
- The activities and community groups that are available to all sections of the community;
- Hartford's links with the town of Northwich.

2.2.4 The main things that people dislike about Hartford are:

- Traffic congestion associated with the educational establishments;
- The lack of parking in the village centre that prevents people gaining access to the shops;
- The lack of parking at Hartford station that causes parking problems that relate to road safety on Chester Road, Fullerton Road and The Crescent as well as other areas;
- The lack of health services, especially a doctors' surgery.

2.2.5 The main things that people think should be changed or improved are:

- Public transport systems should be improved;
- Expansion of community and leisure facilities, especially for hard-to-reach residents (young people, older residents and those with disabilities);
- Footpaths and cycleways.

2.2.6 The main issues and needs that people think that the Neighbourhood Plan should address are:

- Protect the River Weaver Valley, Vale Royal Wood and Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve for the use of residents of Hartford and the wider community;

- Improve public transport and road safety;
- Protect the green corridors that surround the village;
- Seek ways to ensure that traffic congestion does not become more severe;
- Improve employment opportunities;
- Address parking difficulties in the village centre and at Hartford station;
- Improve housing provision to provide for young people and retirement accommodation for older residents;
- Engage with community and church groups to expand facilities for all sections of the community;
- Promote health and well-being to include a doctors' surgery;
- Do more to protect heritage assets.

2.2.7 The vision emerging from the consultation was one of a village wishing to protect its natural environment and preserve its heritage. Residents wanted solutions that would reduce traffic congestion, and housing development that would not increase the number of vehicles using the highway network at peak times of the day.

Residents wanted to protect and expand facilities and local shops. They also wanted better employment opportunities, and more housing for young people and those of retirement age.



Hartford Village Hall

Section 3

Vision Statement and Core Objectives



3 Vision Statement and Core Objectives

3.1 THE VISION STATEMENT

3.1.1 The Vision Statement was developed having considered key issues raised by residents in a series of consultations and community engagement events.

The vision, together with the National Planning Policy Framework's three required elements of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – formed the foundation of the Hartford Neighbourhood Plan.

3.1.2 The Vision Statement reflects the wishes and aims of the community by:

- protecting Hartford's built environment,
- promoting economic growth and social well-being,
- protecting green belt and the natural environment and
- ensuring future development within the settlement boundary meets the needs of the community.



Our vision for Hartford for the next 15-20 years is to maintain and enhance the quality of life for all sections of the community, ensuring that Hartford retains its village character but maintains its strong links with Northwich Town and its adjoining parishes.

To achieve this vision we will protect Hartford's built, historical and natural environment ensuring that our green spaces and widespread mature trees are protected.

We will promote nature conservation and protect areas of special environmental value.

We will allow sustainable economic and social growth and development and will seek to enhance facilities for all local people in order that the community can take further advantage of a full social and active life style.

We will oppose unsustainable housing developments within the Parish .

We will support developments that maintain and enhance our built environment and meet the aims of our vision for future generations.

To ensure that our village develops over the coming years we will support the local economy to expand by encouraging business and employment opportunities to people of all ages.

We will constantly monitor transport, safety and service issues to ensure that Hartford remains a safe place to live.

We will take forward the ethos of the Localism Act in producing our Neighbourhood Plan, embracing the concept of local distinctiveness that contributes to a sense of place and well-being for the community and future generations.

3.1.3 Hartford must maintain its character

The overwhelming view of local people is that Hartford has a village character. It is a pleasant place to live because it is safe and has a historic and natural environment. The overall vision must therefore be to maintain this character.

3.1.4 What makes a village a village?

The definition in all dictionaries, including the Oxford English Dictionary, gives the following description of a village: "A village is a group of houses and associated buildings larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town situated in a rural area"

3.1.5 Putting this definition together with the vision of maintaining Hartford's character as a village provides a set of principles for delivering the vision.

These are that Hartford must:

- retain its village character but maintain its strong links with Northwich and adjoining parishes;
- protect Hartford's built, historical and natural

environment;

- promote nature conservation and protect Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value;
- continue to act to ensure that the severe traffic congestion does not become more severe;
- support local economy to encourage a thriving community;
- seek to enhance facilities for all local people in order to secure the well-being of the community;
- continue to have open countryside and green corridors around it;
- support sustainable development that enhances the built environment and also considers the utilities infrastructure required to attain such development. This will achieve the vision of meeting the needs of all sections of the community now and for future generations.



St John's Church

3.1.6 Looking at these principles in more detail, achieving the vision means that Hartford must maintain its status as a village. This does not mean residents are opposed to any further development, but development within the settlement boundary should meet the needs of the community and be in accordance with policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and the CW&C Local Plan.

Hartford's built environment, particularly in the conservation area, is important to residents. They value it for its history and character, which therefore need to be respected and preserved.

Hartford values its relationship with Northwich Town and adjoining parishes. Residents also value the open countryside abutting the village and want to safeguard the green corridors that separate settlements and give them individuality and character.

Most residents live within a twenty minute walk of the Weaver Valley (with its protected ASLEV status) as well as Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve, Vale Royal Wood and Thorn Wood. These, along with other green areas within the village, must be preserved.

As previously mentioned, Hartford is unusual in that it has ten educational establishments within its boundary with over 6,000 pupils and students plus hundreds of staff who come into the village each day.



Hartford Bridge

Hartford expects considerable additional traffic from the new Urban Village at Winnington, as Hartford lies on the easiest route between it and the A556 Chester to Manchester dual carriageway. In addition, most residents in employment travel out of the village by car each day. The result is severe traffic congestion, which is of great concern to the community. It also presents a challenge if development is to be sustainable.

The vision is to seek ways in which development can meet the needs of the community, but with low levels of traffic generation, particularly in the periods of peak congestion

The idea behind localism is that decision making is passed to a more local level. The Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led framework providing guidance for the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. Hartford's Neighbourhood Plan promotes further development within the settlement boundary that is in accordance with policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and the CW&C Local Plan. It also supports investment to meet social and economic needs, whilst it ensures the conservation of the green belt, open countryside and green field areas around the settlement boundary. It is committed to meeting the needs of the community and its vision for the future.

The overall vision in the production of this Plan is to ensure that Hartford provides a social and economic environment in which residents can safely enjoy a healthy and happy lifestyle.

3.2 KEY ISSUES

Hartford's Neighbourhood Plan provides policies that will help to deliver the Vision. This has been achieved by consulting with residents, collating all comments, and identifying the key issues.

From the key issues the objectives have been identified. From the objectives the policies have been developed.

An overview of these key issues is set out below and includes information from background reports along with issues raised by local people at various consultation events.

A more in depth summary of the background reports is available in the Evidence Base Summary that accompanies this plan.

The six key issues are as follows:

- **Transport and Communications**
- **Local Economy**
- **Local Facilities**
- **The Built Environment and Character**
- **Natural Environment**
- **Housing**

3.2.1 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

A large proportion of the working population, commutes by car each day due to the lack of employment opportunities within the village. This added to over 6,000 pupils and students plus 700 staff attending the educational facilities cumulates in severe traffic congestion at peak times of the day.

Hartford has one station on the West Coast Main Line, serving Liverpool, Crewe (with connections to London) and Birmingham. Greenbank station, just outside the parish, is on the Mid Cheshire Line, from Manchester to Chester. The consultation with residents found that many prefer to commute by car, because of poor connections, unsuitable timetables, flexible working, journey times and cost.

Residents in their returned questionnaires complained about the lack of suitable bus and train services. More than 54% of residents used their car daily rather than using public transport.

2011 Census data told us that more than 75% of residents in employment used their car or van to

travel to work, whereas fewer than 4% used public transport.

The increase in the number of car journeys that are generated from major developments catering for families will contribute to severe traffic congestion on the highway network at peak times of the day. *(See Appendix 6.2.2)*

The development of Winnington Urban Village, and traffic from its 1,200 dwellings, will have an impact on the traffic congestion in Hartford. The link to the A556 and the motorway network is via Bradburns Lane, School Lane and the Chester Road junction, which is already at capacity.

The lack of sufficient parking spaces at Hartford Station results in problems with on-road parking on Chester Road, Fullerton Road, The Crescent as well as other areas of the village. This gives cause for safety concerns.

The questionnaire also highlighted residents' and businesses' concerns over inadequate infrastructure, failing utility services and the lack of fast broadband connections in certain parts of the village.



Traffic congestion in Hartford is already a serious problem and is set to get worse. Here a queue of vehicles, typical of those seen during the period of the morning "school run" has formed on Chester Road, heading towards Northwich.



Parking at Hartford railway station. The dark green area shows the extent of the car park provided at the station; the yellow markings indicate restrictions recently put in place on Chester Road and adjoining roads.

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3.2.2 LOCAL ECONOMY

The education sector is the biggest provider of employment in Hartford (but not necessarily for Hartford residents as it is known that most staff commute into the village).

Hartford has some small industrial units (and an office) on a business centre on Chester Road, and also on a small centre off School Lane. There is a garage and a veterinary practice, a hotel, a cafe and two public houses offering bed and breakfast accommodation. There is no office block (following change of use from office to residential of both Sandiway House and the Business Centre in Whitehall,

on School Lane). One local resident cited the traffic issue as the reason for relocating his business away from Hartford. Administrative jobs are only those attached to the businesses described. There are agriculture, leisure and other businesses carried out on land and farm premises outside the settlement boundary, but these are not large employers. Census data also reveals that many residents work mainly at or from their home addresses.



One of the shops that thrives in Hartford



Age UK's offices stand at the entrance to Hartford Business Centre

3.2.3 LOCAL FACILITIES

This heading covers community, social, religious and sports facilities, as well as health care and education.

Members of the Hartford Neighbourhood Plan Facilities Group undertook an assessment of community facilities within Hartford, and this is available as part of the evidence base. This assessment supplements Cheshire West and Chester's "Open Space Assessment", published in January 2011. It confirmed that Hartford is well catered for in many areas, but there are certain gaps.



There are numerous clubs and societies in the Parish including facilities for football, cricket, tennis and bowls, which have been developed over decades by involved and committed residents. These are complemented by further facilities available at Mid Cheshire College campus and Moss Farm, Winnington.

Events, meetings and leisure activities are held in a variety of differently sized venues ranging from small and large meeting rooms at the Village Hall, to the Methodist Church Hall, which can cater for larger numbers. For bigger events, the Church Centre, Grange School Theatre and Mid Cheshire College can offer accommodation.

Health and well-being are important to the community. The consultation exercise showed that existing facilities were appreciated, but that there was a need for a doctors' surgery in the village.

There is a need to extend community and social facilities to all residents, with additional support to the elderly and people with special needs, and seek ways to provide better facilities for young people.

Hartford has two well-attended churches, St John's Parish Church and Hartford Methodist Church.



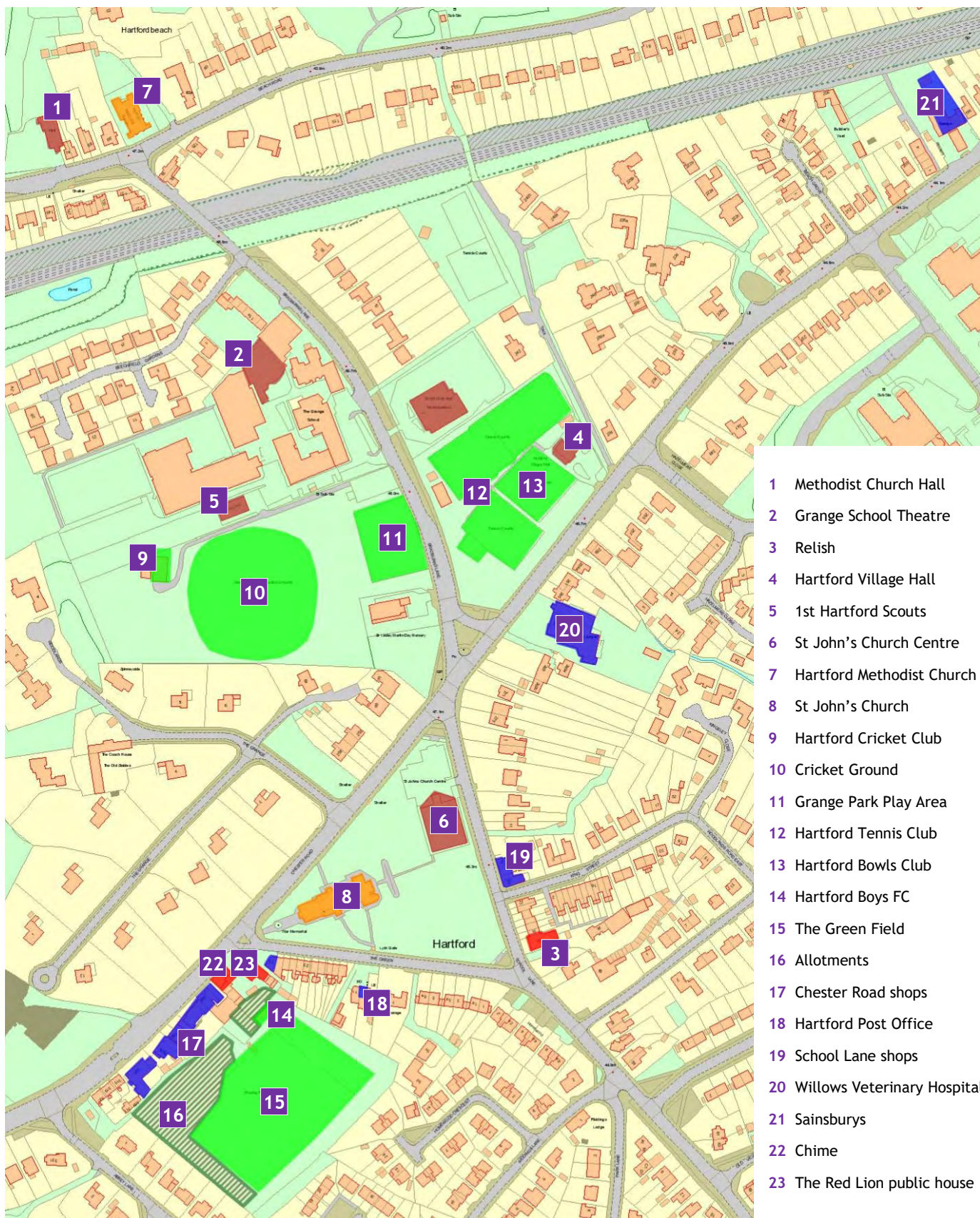
Hartford has many green open spaces in the village which are mainly owned and managed by the Parish Council. It also has two Parish Council owned children's play areas. Consultation with residents established that these areas, added to the mature trees that line many streets, are greatly valued

Education

The ten educational establishments within the parish offer a wide choice for the diverse needs of pupils and students:

- Hartford Manor Primary School
- Hartford Primary School, Riddings Lane
- Mid Cheshire College
- Hartford Church of England High School
- St Nicholas Catholic High School
- The Grange Senior School
- St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School
- The Grange Junior School
- Cloughwood Academy
- Greenbank Residential School

Only the first two of these have a Hartford catchment area; the remaining eight establishments attract pupils and students from adjoining parishes and other parts of Cheshire. There are also four private nurseries offering pre-school and early-years facilities.



- 1 Methodist Church Hall
- 2 Grange School Theatre
- 3 Relish
- 4 Hartford Village Hall
- 5 1st Hartford Scouts
- 6 St John's Church Centre
- 7 Hartford Methodist Church
- 8 St John's Church
- 9 Hartford Cricket Club
- 10 Cricket Ground
- 11 Grange Park Play Area
- 12 Hartford Tennis Club
- 13 Hartford Bowls Club
- 14 Hartford Boys FC
- 15 The Green Field
- 16 Allotments
- 17 Chester Road shops
- 18 Hartford Post Office
- 19 School Lane shops
- 20 Willows Veterinary Hospital
- 21 Sainsburys
- 22 Chime
- 23 The Red Lion public house

Facilities in the centre of Hartford.

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BUILT ENVIRONMENT & LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Broad character areas make up the built environment of the parish. These areas include the village centre, with the parish church and two groups of shops and facilities. This area sits within the protected Conservation Area, which includes the village hall to the East, the row of Edwardian properties on the South side of Chester Road, and The Grange, Walnut Lane and The Crescent to the North of Chester Road. Until the mid-20th century most dwellings had been built along the corridors into and out of the village, which is reflected in the character of these roads. Subsequent and significant development, building on the fields between Chester Road, School Lane and the bypass, is less distinctive, although there are variations in styles of the properties and there is a strong sense of coherence in the layout and arrangement of housing and the use of materials. The



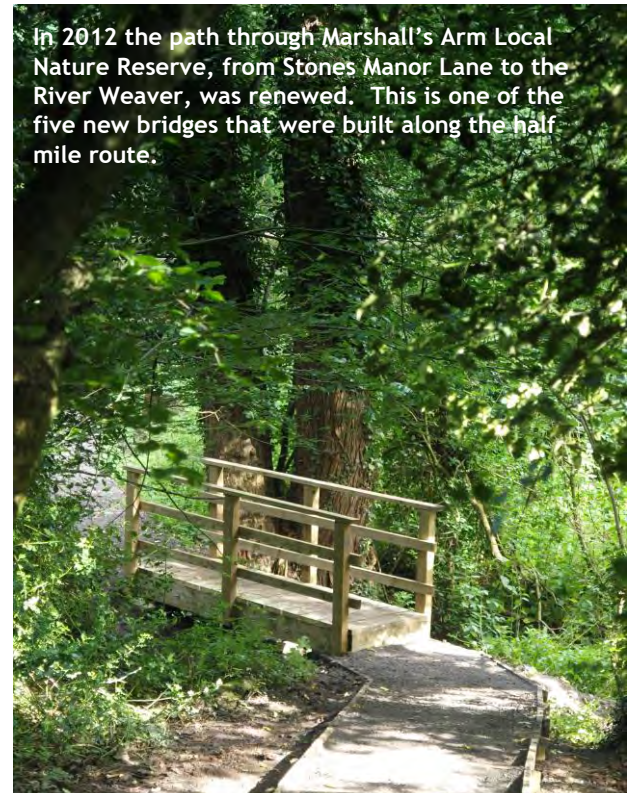
many mature trees within the settlement area are very important to the character of the built environment.

Understanding the characteristics of Hartford is important in designing new development. If this is within or next to the conservation area or heritage assets, it must make sure it preserves and enhances the character of the area. *(See Appendix 6.2.4)*

Consultation shows that residents appreciate the “village feel” of Hartford. It gives them a sense of place, which they value. Therefore they wish to protect the remaining green corridors which separate the village from other settlements and give it its distinctiveness.

3.2.5 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

Hartford has a high quality natural environment. It sits on a ridge above the River Weaver. Its valley is a distinctive area that is protected by policy NE12 in the VRB Local Plan by the status of ASLEV (Area of Significant Local Environmental Value).



At the present time policy NE12 of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan is retained. Policy ENV2 of the adopted Local Plan, relates to landscape and the identification of strategic gaps. Policy STRAT5 of the adopted Local Plan (Northwich) also states that the character and individuality of the settlements that form the wider built up area of Northwich are safeguarded.

In consultations with residents the area of the Weaver Valley, Marshall's Arm Nature Reserve, Vale Royal Wood and Thorn Wood featured highly in their wishes to protect the biodiversity and enjoyment of these areas. *(See Appendix 6.2.5)*

These areas attract a large number of people, not only from Hartford, but from other parts of Cheshire to walk, cycle and enjoy. This brings economic benefits to Hartford in terms of tourism.

3.2.6 HOUSING

Hartford's housing development and population growth have increased considerably over the years. Many residents expressed the view that the village infrastructure could not cope with further major housing developments. Traffic congestion would be a significant factor in lack of sustainability.

It is appreciated that there must be some further development. The Plan supports small scale future development, but it should be based on housing need, and be spread around the village. Steps to mitigate the effects of the increase in traffic should be taken.



Consultation with local people revealed concerns about the affordability of houses in Hartford particularly for young people. This is reinforced by census data showing age ranges in Hartford.

Concern was also expressed regarding the range of housing types available – the perception is that many new developments are skewed towards larger dwellings. However, the data indicates that there is a significant need for housing for older residents who would wish to “down-size”, thus releasing their family homes for younger buyers.

A review of available housing data shows that in Hartford there is:

- A high level of home ownership and correspondingly low proportions of social and private rented housing;
- A wide choice of large family housing;
- A lack of properties for older residents;
- A lack of affordable homes.



Section 4 Development in Hartford

4 Development in Hartford

4.1 GRANGE FARM; HOLLIES FARM

4.1.1 When work started on the production of the plan the aim was to help determine where new housing in Hartford should be built, as well as the size and style of new developments.

This Plan needs to be consistent with the Local Plan, which assesses housing need and land availability. Northwich Urban Area, Northwich and the nine adjoining settlements that include Hartford, are scheduled to deliver at least 4,300 new homes over twenty years (from 2010 to 2030).

The decision, made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and announced on 18 November 2013, has essentially determined the shape of Hartford for the future. The development of

Grange Farm and Hollies Farm will greatly influence the future of the village. Because the developments were outside the original built form, a new settlement boundary has been drawn and extended to include the two new developments. This is consistent with paragraph 5.73 of the Local Plan, which states:

"The Council will identify settlement boundaries for the four urban areas, key service centres and local service centres through the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocation and Detailed Policies Plan. Where there is a need to accommodate development on the edge of a settlement boundary, then the boundary will be drawn to reflect this."

(see the map on page 35)

The Parish Council will seek to liaise with the developer of the major sites at Grange Farm and Hollies Farm to bring benefits to the local community. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are aimed at ensuring that future development will not be detrimental to the sustainability of Hartford.

Looking across the allotments towards the Green Field



Section 5 Policies



5 Policies

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 This section sets out the Policies of the Plan which, together, will support and deliver the vision for Hartford's future.

The policies are grouped under topics that support the specific issues.

- Transport and Communications
- Local Economy
- Local Facilities
- Built Environment and Local Distinctiveness
- Natural Environment
- Housing

5.1.2 Each policy has its own section. The sections are structured in the same way:

- The specific issues;
- The objectives supporting the specific issue;
- The policies aimed at achieving these objectives.



Milepost, Chester Road

5.2 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Communications
- Commuting and school traffic that contributes to severe traffic congestion at peak times of the day;
- Parking facilities at Hartford Station;
- Public transport services;
- Infrastructure;
- Winnington Urban Village.

COMMUNICATIONS

Provision of superfast broadband is an important priority identified by the community of Hartford and is an aspiration of this Neighbourhood Plan. Superfast broadband provides a sustainable alternative which will help to reduce the need to travel. This is reflected in CW&C's aspirations to roll out the provision of superfast broadband to all parts of Cheshire through the Connecting Cheshire Partnership. Superfast broadband is currently not available in all parts of the village but is needed to enable more people to work from home and serve the needs of local businesses. There is a need to upgrade and expand the BT network to cater for new development.

OBJECTIVE

The documentation in the evidence base from professional traffic consultants indicates that Hartford's traffic at peak times of the day is identified as severe. The objective is to prevent the traffic congestion on Hartford's highway network becoming significantly more severe.

POLICY

TC1 Major development will not be permitted where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

For the purpose of this Neighbourhood Plan, "major development" means development involving any one or more of the following:

- the provision of dwellinghouses where –*
 - (i) *the number of dwellinghouses to be provided is 10 or more;*
 - (ii) *the development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectares or more and it is not known whether the development will provide 10 or more dwellinghouses;*

- (iii) *the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1 000 square metres or more;*
- (iv) *development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more.*

OBJECTIVE

Due to lack of station car parking spaces train users have to park in the roads surrounding the station. This creates many road safety issues. The main objective is to work towards improved parking at Hartford station.

Bus services are very limited and restricted in the Neighbourhood Plan area. There is a great need to enhance the public transport system to and from the village. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group will work with the community and partners to encourage operators to improve bus services for the community and reduce the dependency on the private car.

COMMUNITY ACTION

The Parish Council will seek opportunities to improve public transport and car parking. The Parish Council will also encourage developers to discuss the travel and parking impacts of their proposals with Cheshire West and Chester Council at an early stage.

OBJECTIVE

Improve the pedestrian environment and ability to move around by other means than the private motor car.

POLICY

TC2 The provision and/or improvement of safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes through new developments and into the centre of the village will be supported.

COMMUNITY ACTION

The Parish Council will oversee the preparation and regular updating of a village travel plan for Hartford, which will promote a holistic, joined up strategy to transport and parking. Where applicants are required to produce a travel plan to support a planning application the Parish Council will encourage them to work together with the Parish Council to contribute to the Hartford Travel Plan, rather than producing a stand-alone travel plan.



5.3 LOCAL ECONOMY

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- The promotion of the local economy;
- Parking in the centre of the village;
- Protection of shops and business;
- Support of employment opportunities.

OBJECTIVE

Support sustainable economic growth that will protect and maintain existing businesses in Hartford and attract new inward investment.

POLICIES

LE1 The provision of off street parking facilities for use by people shopping in Hartford's local centre will be supported.

LE2 The loss of retail (A1 and A3) use in the ground floor of existing shops within the village will be resisted to ensure the long term vitality and viability of the village centre and meet the day to day needs of the local community.

LE3 Within Hartford's settlement boundary, new business uses and the growth and expansion of existing business uses will be supported, subject to such uses respecting the character of the area, highway safety and the living conditions of neighbours.

OBJECTIVE

To encourage local employment opportunities

COMMUNITY ACTION

The Parish Council will seek to encourage existing and new local businesses to employ local people and set up apprenticeships. There are opportunities at Mid-Cheshire College available to new developers. Local employment and apprenticeships are strongly supported by the Parish Council.

5.4 LOCAL FACILITIES

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Health and well-being;
- Available services;
- Education;
- Green open space;
- Extension of facilities;
- Doctors' surgery.

OBJECTIVE

Ensuring that the current level of service enjoyed in the village is maintained (*see Evidence Base, page 31*) and meet the need to extend community and social facilities should the population increase significantly. These facilities must continue to support elderly people, people with special needs and young people.

POLICIES

LF1 The delivery of the social, recreational, cultural, health and educational services the community needs will be supported.

OBJECTIVES

The health and well-being of all residents of Hartford is of prime concern, and can be affected in many ways to include their physical environment, lack of access to green spaces and access to facilities and services. At the present time there is no doctor's surgery, dentist or other health care facility in the village. There is an overwhelming desire in the community that the D1 Old Farm House, at Grange Farm, is renovated to provide medical facilities. Open space includes formal managed open space, sports grounds, as well as natural and semi-natural open space. It is important to promote a diversity of services and facilities within Hartford that will address differing and increasing health and social needs of the community.

LF2 The provision of high quality open spaces, and sports and recreation facilities that meet the needs of the community will be supported.

5.5 BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- The Settlement Boundary;
- The Conservation Area;
- Heritage assets;
- Standard of design of properties;
- Views in and out of the village;
- The character of the village;
- Allotments and green open spaces;
- Open countryside and green belt.

OBJECTIVES

Protect and enhance local distinctiveness by ensuring that all development is in keeping with the existing character of the village in relation to design and style of present dwellings (see Evidence Base). Within Hartford there are numerous Grade II and locally listed heritage sites that form a unique and significant legacy that must be protected. The Conservation Area, open countryside around the village, green open spaces must be protected, as must important views out of the village.

Hartford's heritage helps to make the Parish special. The distinctiveness not only gives local people a sense of belonging and identity, and a feeling of pride in a place, but it can also help to attract investment to an area. Heritage can also be a powerful tool for delivering regeneration and providing space for business, community facilities and other activities. All Heritage Assets are identified on the map in Appendix 6.2.4 and in the Evidence Base.

The green belt, open countryside, heritage assets as well as the conservation area are important features valued by the community. They need to be protected.

POLICY

BELD1 All development proposals must be of a high standard of design and reflect the scale, density and character of the surrounding built environment. Designs should respect their context. Proposals affecting the setting of heritage assets should demonstrate consideration of the impact on the significance of such assets and their settings.



Aerial view of the centre of Hartford. The Green Field is to the right of the picture, Chester Road running top to bottom.

5.6 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Weaver Valley
- Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve
- Trees and woodlands
- Greenbelt
- Open countryside
- Designated ASLEV land
- Green corridors
- Views and Vistas
- Green open space within the village
- Walking and cycling.

OBJECTIVES

Green spaces, identified in Appendix 6.2.5, outside the settlement boundary but within the Parish, and within close proximity to the community are areas of greenbelt and open countryside, together with land that has the added protection of ASLEV designation.

The objectives in the Natural Environment policies are to ensure that these areas continue to be protected from inappropriate development.

These green spaces form corridors between Hartford and adjoining villages that provide valuable linkages between settlements and are also essential components of the green infrastructure of the Borough.

In addition to improving sustainability and linking areas with nearby rural settlements and countryside, green corridors represent an important chance to promote sustainable transport by cycling and walking assisting the aims of health and well-being.

The green areas around Hartford have important landscape character that is essential in making a place unique and gives a locality its "sense of place". Landscape character is influenced by particular combinations of visual, natural and historical elements.

(See Appendix 6.2.5).

Landscape has:

- Economic value providing the setting for economic activity in attracting tourism.
- Social and community value as an important part of people's lives, contributing to a sense of identity and wellbeing.
- Environmental value as a home for nature, woods, ponds, wetlands and wildlife.

From detailed consultation with the community during the Neighbourhood Plan process and evidence from the Village Design Statement the specific issues that give Hartford character and make these areas particularly valued and important to the community are as follows:

5.6.1 The Weaver Valley

The Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) describes the characteristics of Hartford's mid Weaver Valley as a distinct valley with a relatively narrow, flat floodplain and steep, wooded, valley sides and a series of steep sided tributary valleys that support a distinctive clough wood land, much of which is ancient.

Recreational opportunities are provided by public footpaths alongside the river/navigation, and the river itself which supports boat traffic.

The area is popular with walkers, runners, cyclists, anglers, canoeists, wildlife observers and birdwatchers. Narrow boat enthusiasts are an increasing part of the tourist trade to this part of the village.

In consultation with the community the character of this stretch of the River Weaver was very much valued by residents as an asset to the parish.

(See Appendix 6.2.5)

5.6.2 Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve

Marshall's Arm was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1998 and covers 14.5 hectares, including a cut off meander of the old river, Greenbank Wood, Middle Wood and Clough Wood. There are many different habitats, including broadleaved and ancient woodland, open water, swamp and grassland, which are home to a variety of different plants and animals.

In consultation with residents this Nature Reserve featured very highly in the aspirations of the community. Concern was expressed as to the possibility of any adjoining development introducing

measures that would harm the natural environment of Marshall's Arm.

(See Appendix 6.2.5)

5.6.3 Trees and Woodlands

The many woods within the Parish, including Vale Royal Wood, noted for its wildflowers and bluebells, and Thorn Wood, for a wide variety of native species of woodland trees, bring landscape character to Hartford making it distinct.

Once again the wooded areas are valued by the community not only for walkers, recreation and wildlife but for community involvement that give residents a sense of place.

Trees and hedgerow within the village make a significant contribution to both the built and natural environment that helps define the character and distinctiveness of Hartford.

(See Appendix 6.2.6)

5.6.4 Green Belt

Green Belt land refers to an area that is kept for an open space, most often around villages and large towns. The main purpose is to protect the village or town from urban sprawl and to protect the identity of settlements. Green Belt also plays an important role in protecting designated areas for forestry and agriculture as well as providing habitats for wildlife. Green Belt offers additional benefits by providing access to open space which offers opportunities for outdoor activities that promote health and wellbeing and gives unique character to an area.

Hartford's Green Belt areas are valued by the community for their importance in preserving and maintaining the character of the village.

Given the importance of Green Belt CW&C's Local Plan (part 1) seeks to maintain these areas of Green Belt as the development identified in the Plan can be met without Green Belt release.

(See Appendix 6.2.7)

5.6.5 Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value

The areas of Significant Environmental Value (ASLEV) designated by VRBC in the Local Plan for Hartford are identified as areas that are of value to the local population in order to maintain the identity and integrity of the settlement and warrants protection from inappropriate development.

There are three specific areas outside the settlement boundary of Hartford that carry this additional protection.

The ASLEV designation and associated policies have been retained by the adopted Local Plan (Part One)

These are identified on the map at appendix 6.2.8.

Hartford, Weaverham and Winnington

This is an area between the settlements of Hartford and Weaverham bounded by Winnington Avenue, the railway line and Hartford village. *(See Appendix 6.2.9)*

The ASLEV forms an important gap between Hartford and Weaverham and assists in preventing the coalescence of the two settlements. Within the designation there are a number of features of landscape interest and a statutory designation (Beach-Hill Wood) which add to the local value of the site. The area is well wooded in parts (Beach-Hill, Back and Royalty Wood) which is highlighted as desirable for the "Community Urban Fringe" type landscape identified in the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment November 2008.

Although the area does lie within the Green Belt it was felt by VRBC that there was a need for additional protection.

During consultation residents expressed the value of this area and the benefit of Thorn Wood for outdoor activities and how the area contributed to the character of Hartford.

Hartford, Gorstage and Cuddington

This is an area between the communities of Hartford and Cuddington bounded by the railway, Littledales Lane, Norley Road and the A556.

The Hartford Cuddington ASLEV falls within the "Norley" landscape type of the Land Assessment of Cheshire which is an area of medium scale mixed farmland on the eastern edge of the sandstone outcrop and the sands and gravel area.

The sloping topography enables open views across the landscape in an east west direction and forms a green "wedge" between the settlements of Hartford and Cuddington/Sandiway.

Whilst this area does lie within the Green Belt and certain types of development may be considered appropriate, these could adversely affect the character of the area. This promotes the need for the additional protection through the area's designation as an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value.

Hartford and Leftwich (Weaver Valley)

This area of Open Countryside lies between Hartford and the River Weaver, bounded by the A556, the river Weaver and Greenbank Wood.

The topography is sloping (downwards, towards the River Weaver) and this creates the opportunity for views both up slope from the river and downslope from Hartford.

The area was Open Countryside with the added protection of ASLEV because it was deemed that the designation of ASLEV would assist in preventing the erosion of the area to development and the loss of an important gap between Hartford and Leftwich and important landscape and environmental features.

At the present time with planning approval granted for 350 dwelling on the land sloping down to the River Weaver there only remains a small section of land that carries the protection of ASLEV.

The Neighbourhood Plan consultation reinforced the desire to protect this area from further development that would encroach onto the flood plain and decrease views of the river valley.

The social and economic value of this area was identified and one that added character and distinctiveness to Hartford.

5.6.6 Open Countryside

The remaining green open space around the settlement boundary is the land to the north east of the A556 and the railway line. This area is very important to the village due to its associated ancient history relating to the evolution and development of the village. This land is designated open countryside. Now mainly farmland, it supports two ancient woods, Hey's Wood and Vale Royal Wood, noted for its variety of wild flowers and display of bluebells in spring. *(See Appendix 6.2.6)*

There is a network of footpaths that open up the area to families with young children, walkers and joggers. One side of this area borders the River Weaver with its recently commissioned pedestrian and cycle paths that enable residents and visitors to walk or cycle to Northwich one way or in the other direction to Winsford and onward to Middlewich.

The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment states that "landscape character is influenced by particular combinations of visual, natural and historic elements together with settlement patterns and built components. Intangible aspects such as tranquillity

and sense of place also have a strong influence upon the way landscape is perceived."

This area of open countryside has a fundamental impact on the community and their quality of life whilst meeting the main three objectives of economic, social and environmental value that in consultation rank highly for protection against inappropriate development.

(See Appendix 6.2.8)



Bluebells at Vale Royal Woods

5.6.7 Views and Vistas

Despite the elevated position of the village there are few locations where one is able to get a long distance view out to the surrounding areas. Exceptions include the Hartford Campus which provides an open view of Jodrell Bank, the Peak District and the Pennines.

There are however other vantage points that provide a more local outlook on to the adjacent farmland and open countryside that contribute to maintaining the village feel and local distinctiveness. These include:

- Hodge Lane over countryside towards Thorn Wood and Weaverham.
- Beach Road over open fields towards Hartford Golf Course and Winnington.
- Littledales Lane over countryside towards Cuddington and Sandiway.

5.6.8 Green open space within the village

Hartford village has many tree lined streets with green approaches to estates and roads that bring a unique character to the village. This has been enhanced in recent months with the addition of a village green as part of the Grange Farm development.

In the consultation process there was an overwhelming response from residents in their appreciation of the abundance of mature trees, open green and cultivated areas of the village that gave them a sense of place.

The majority of the amenity open green space within the village is owned and maintained by the Parish Council.

A map showing the green areas within the village is on page 21 of this Neighbourhood Plan with further details of all sport and recreation facilities on page 31 of the Evidence Base.

To ensure the sustainability for the future of these valued green open spaces the Parish Council has started the process, under the Localism Act, of applying to CW&C for Community Asset Registration.

POLICIES

NE1 The protection of ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees, and the planting or extension of woodland for amenity use will be supported.

NE2 Major development must include landscaping proposals that complement the distinctive character of its surroundings.



5.7 HOUSING

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Over development;
- Infrastructure;
- Sustainability;
- Style of housing;
- Traffic;
- Parking;
- Development of the right type which meets people's needs.

OBJECTIVES

Develop a vibrant and prosperous neighbourhood by delivering homes that meet the needs of local people and protect and enhance the quality of Hartford's built environment.

Ensure that any development will not contribute to further traffic congestion on the highway network at peak times of the day and severely impact on the economic, social and environmental aspects of the village.

Ensure that existing utilities infrastructure is protected and adequate new infrastructure is provided for any development.

New development should create a sustainable and mixed community. Particular consideration must be given to housing suitable for the ageing population and housing affordable by young people.

POLICIES

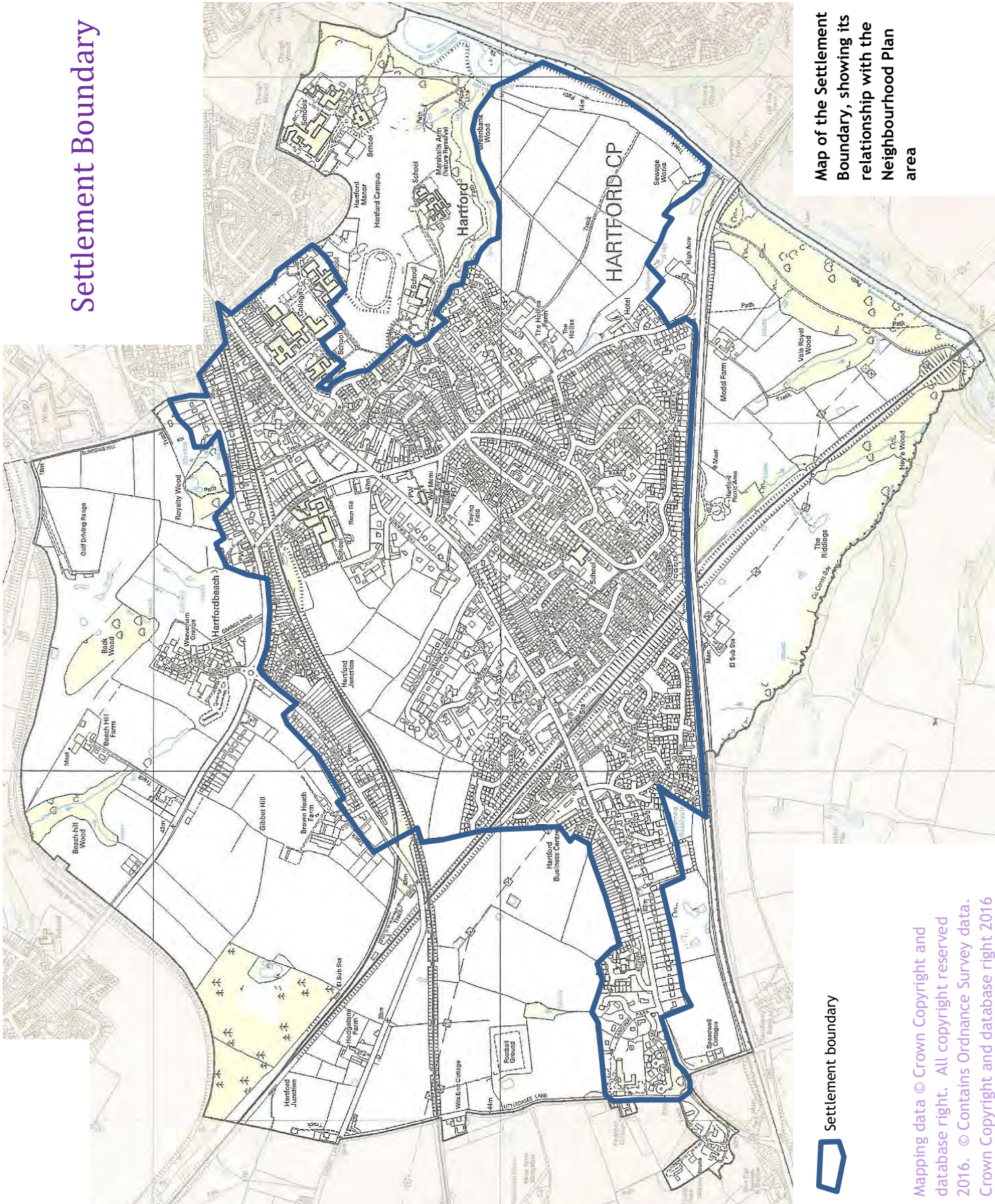
H1 The provision of a mix of housing types and tenures on major residential development sites will be supported.

H2 Residential development on previously developed land and other sustainable sites within the settlement boundary shown on the Settlement Boundary Map, will be supported.

COMMUNITY ACTION

The Parish Council will seek to encourage new residential development to create sociable and inclusive neighbourhoods and will, wherever possible, seek to ensure that new development strengthens the existing community. The support of developers in achieving this aim will be welcomed.

Settlement Boundary



 Settlement boundary

Map of the Settlement Boundary, showing its relationship with the Neighbourhood Plan area

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A photograph of a blue arch bridge spanning a valley in winter. The bridge has a prominent blue steel arch and a matching railing. The ground is covered in snow, and bare trees are visible on the slopes. In the foreground, a wooden fence and some snow-covered plants are visible. The sky is clear and blue.

Section 6 Appendices

6 Appendices

6.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

6.1.1 Introduction

Hartford Parish Council has agreed to work with Hartford Civic Society to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

The terms of reference outline the aims and responsibilities of the main partners involved in the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Hartford.

The Neighbourhood Plan must meet the wider ambitions for growth and sustainability in the Local Authority's development plan.

6.1.2 Mission Statement

To preserve and enhance the built, natural and historical environment of the local area and the distinctive character of Hartford whilst allowing for sustainable economic and social growth and development.

6.1.3 Membership of the Working Group

The working group will be made up of 4 Parish Councillors and 4 members of Hartford Civic Society.

Members of the community will be co-opted onto the working group to undertake various work streams involved in producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

6.1.4 The aims of the Working Group

- To develop and oversee a process that will result in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Hartford.
- To review and consolidate its Parish Plan and Village Design Statement in line with the new Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- To engage all sections of the community in working together to develop the Hartford Neighbourhood Plan.
- To identify all the important aspects of life in Hartford that contribute to our quality of life in order to plan for the future.

6.2 MAPS

6.2.1 Educational Establishments

6.2.2 Footpaths, National Cycle Network, Railways (passenger routes), Traffic Queue Lengths

6.2.3 Businesses

6.2.4 Heritage assets

6.2.5 Natural Environment: Weaver Valley, Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve

6.2.6 Natural Environment: Trees and Woodlands

6.2.7 Natural Environment: Green belt

6.2.8 Natural Environment: ASLEV Land, Open Countryside

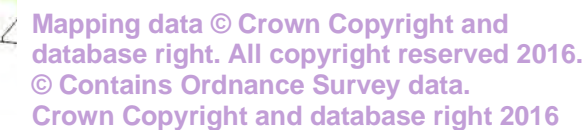
Hartford Viaduct, the southernmost extent of the Parish of Hartford. This structure carries the West Coast Main Line over the River Weaver.



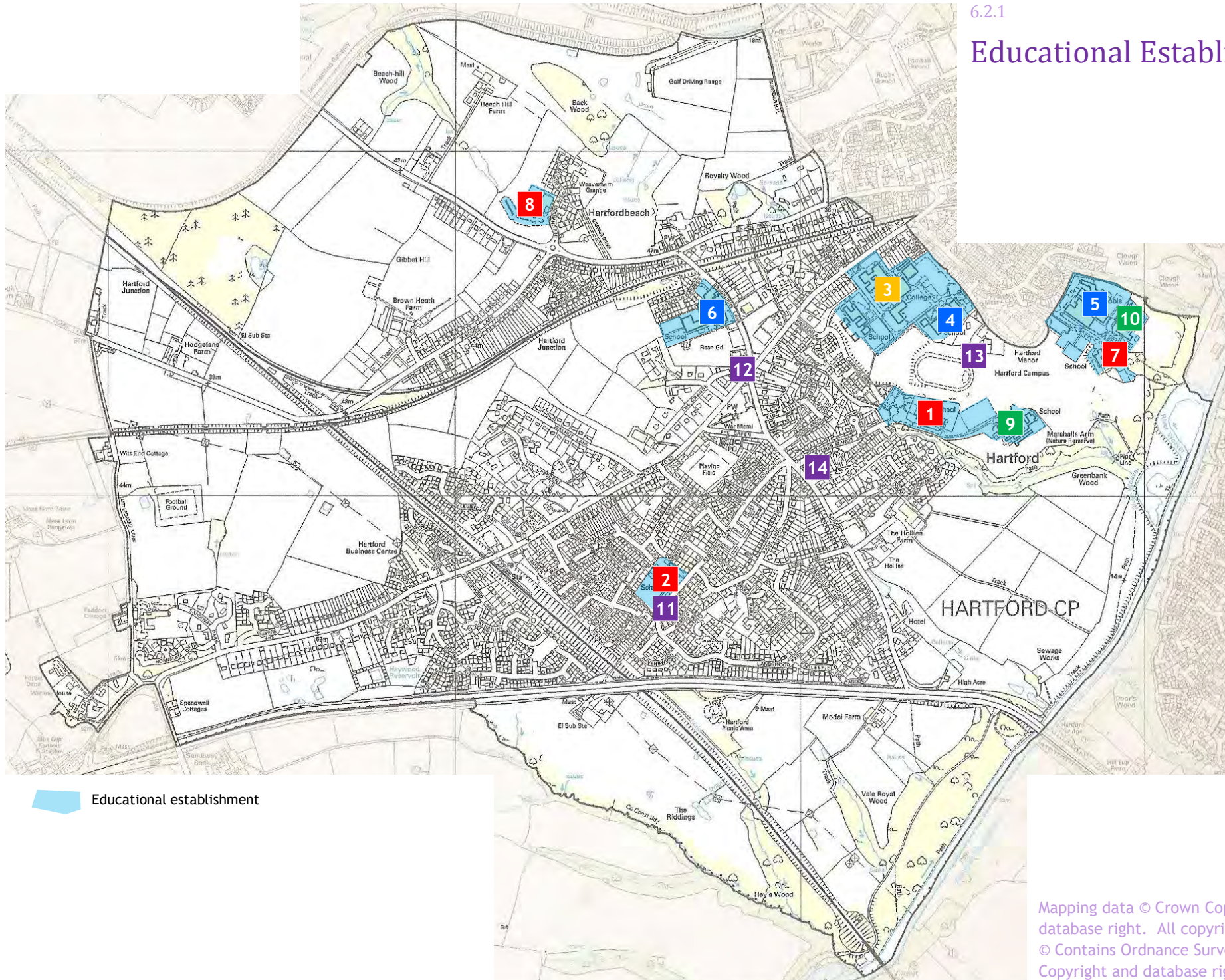
Maps of Hartford used in the following appendices (and that on page 35): © Crown Copyright and database right. All copyright reserved 2016. © Contains Ordnance Survey data. Crown Copyright and database right 2016

The conservation area boundary shown on maps 6.2.4 (Grade II listed) and 6.2.4 (locally listed) is incorrect.
The boundary shown on this map is correct as of May 2016.

The boundary shown on this map is correct as of May 2016.



Educational Establishments



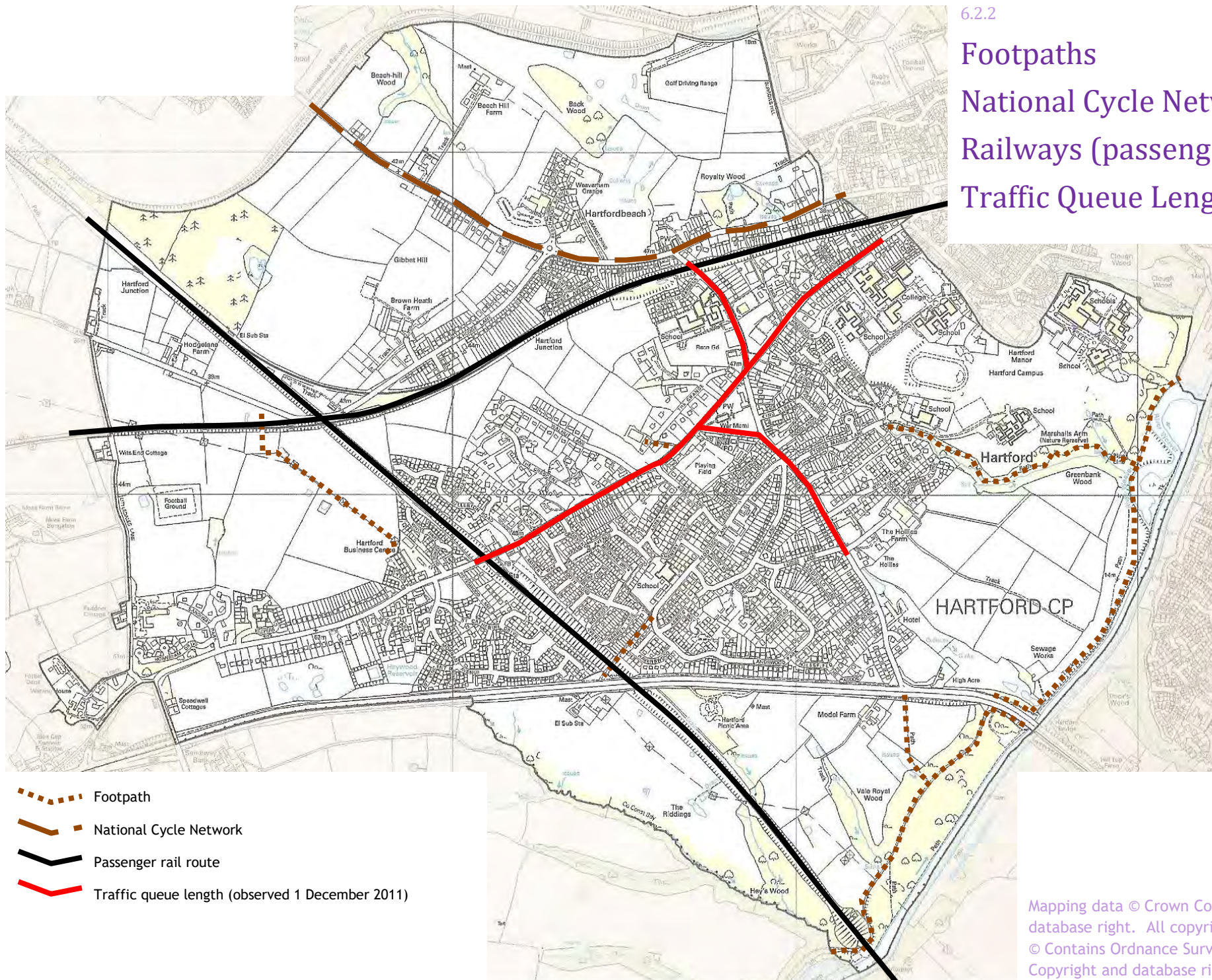
6.2.2

Footpaths

National Cycle Network

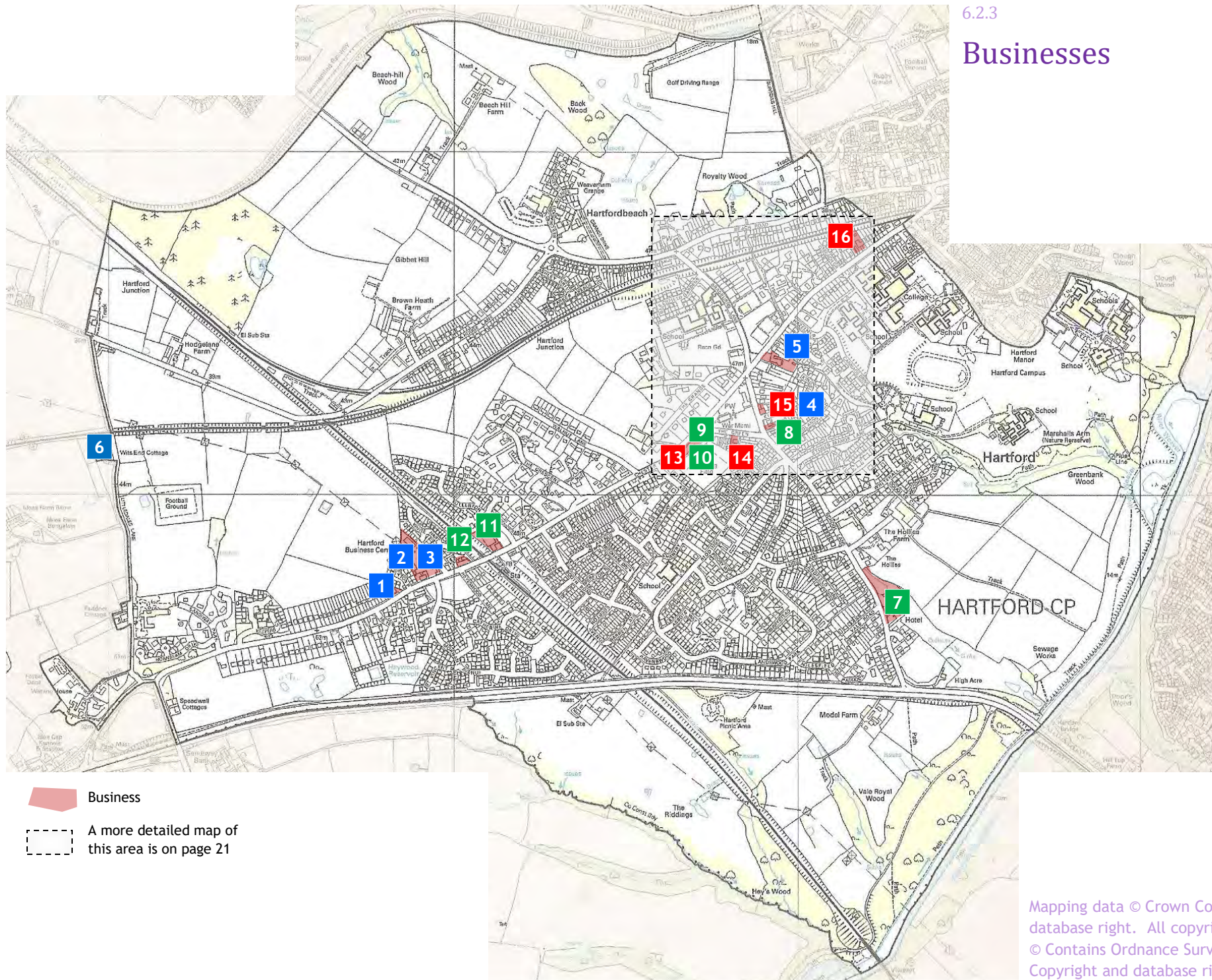
Railways (passenger routes)

Traffic Queue Lengths

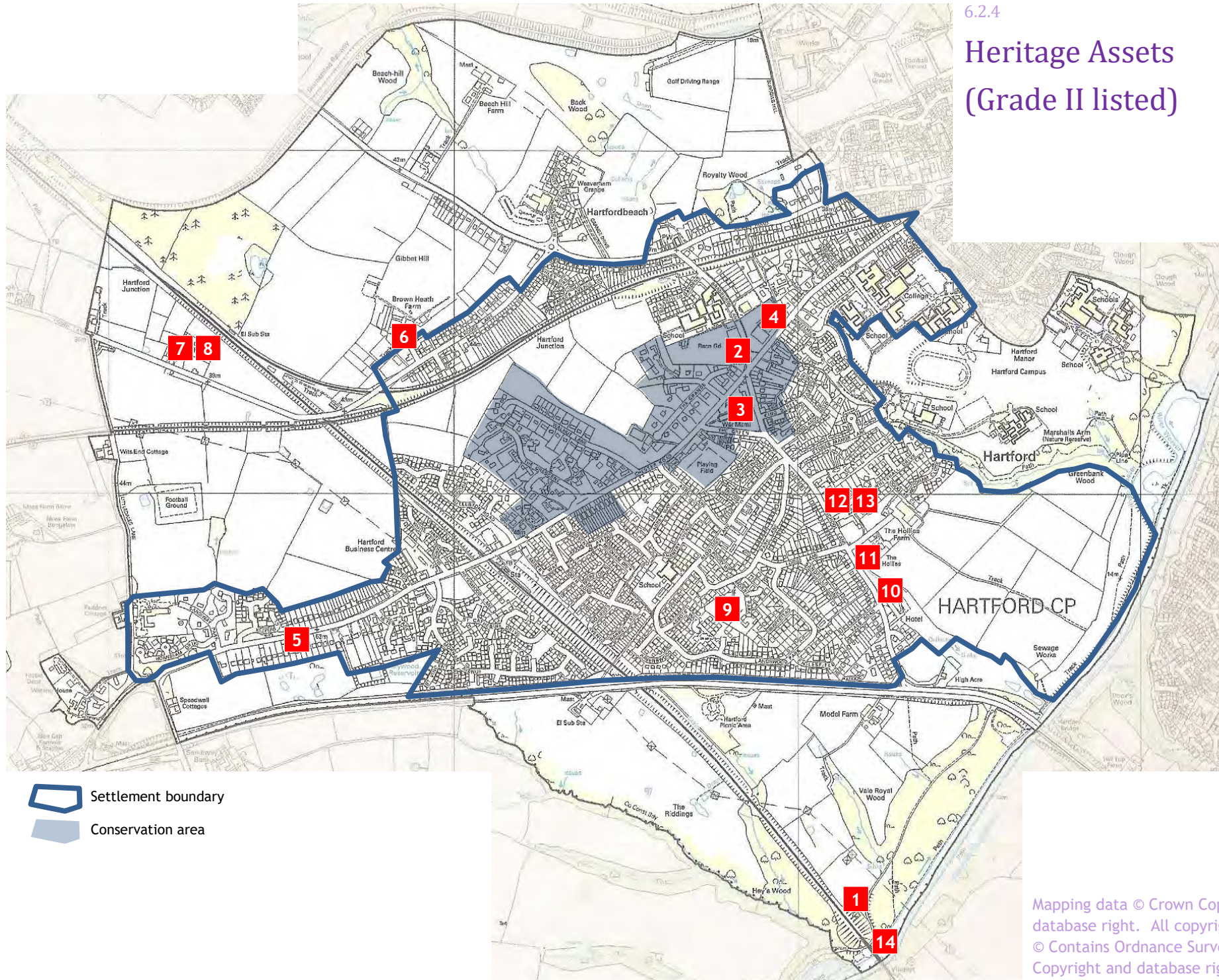


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Businesses



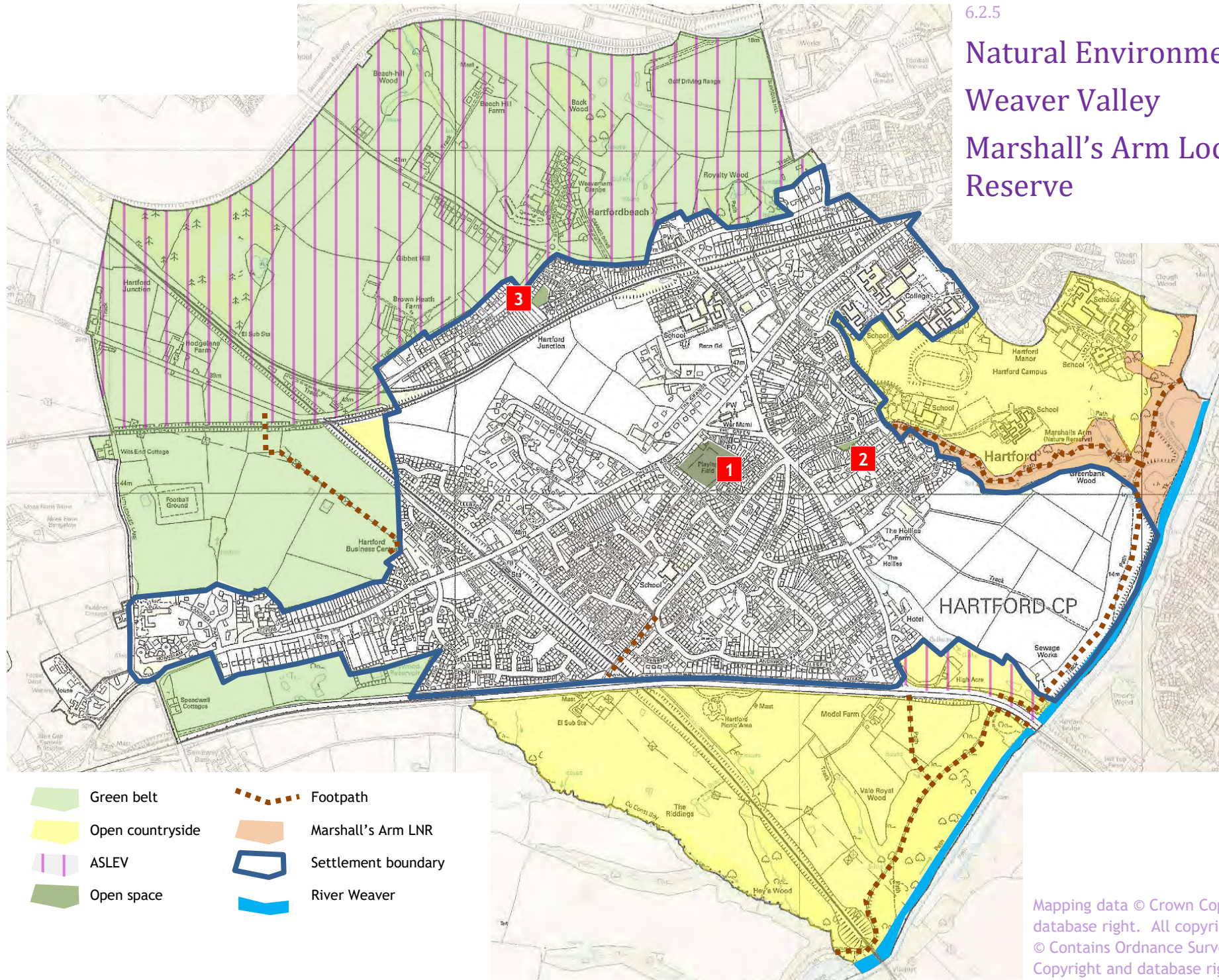
Heritage Assets (Grade II listed)



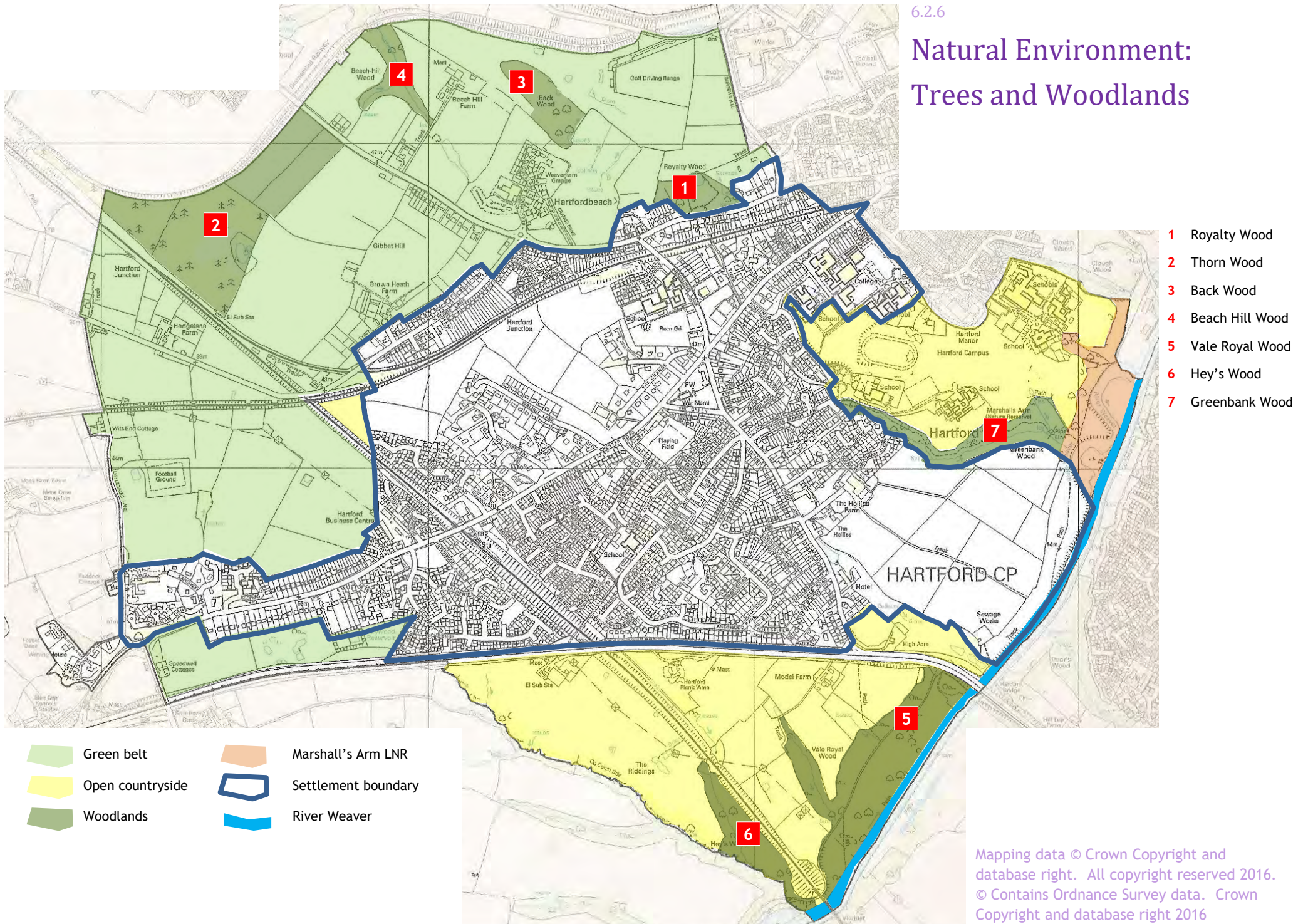


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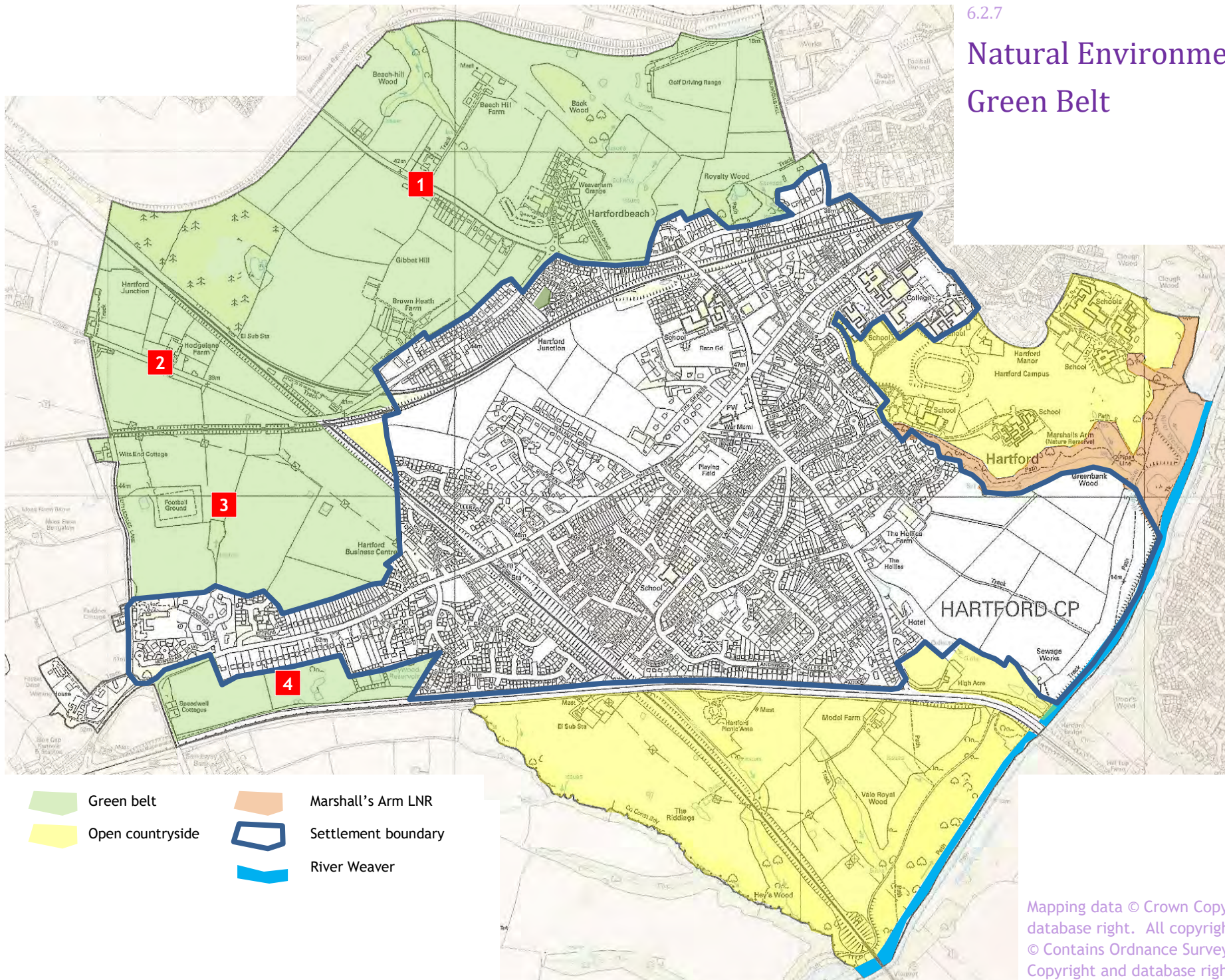
Natural Environment: Weaver Valley Marshall's Arm Local Nature Reserve



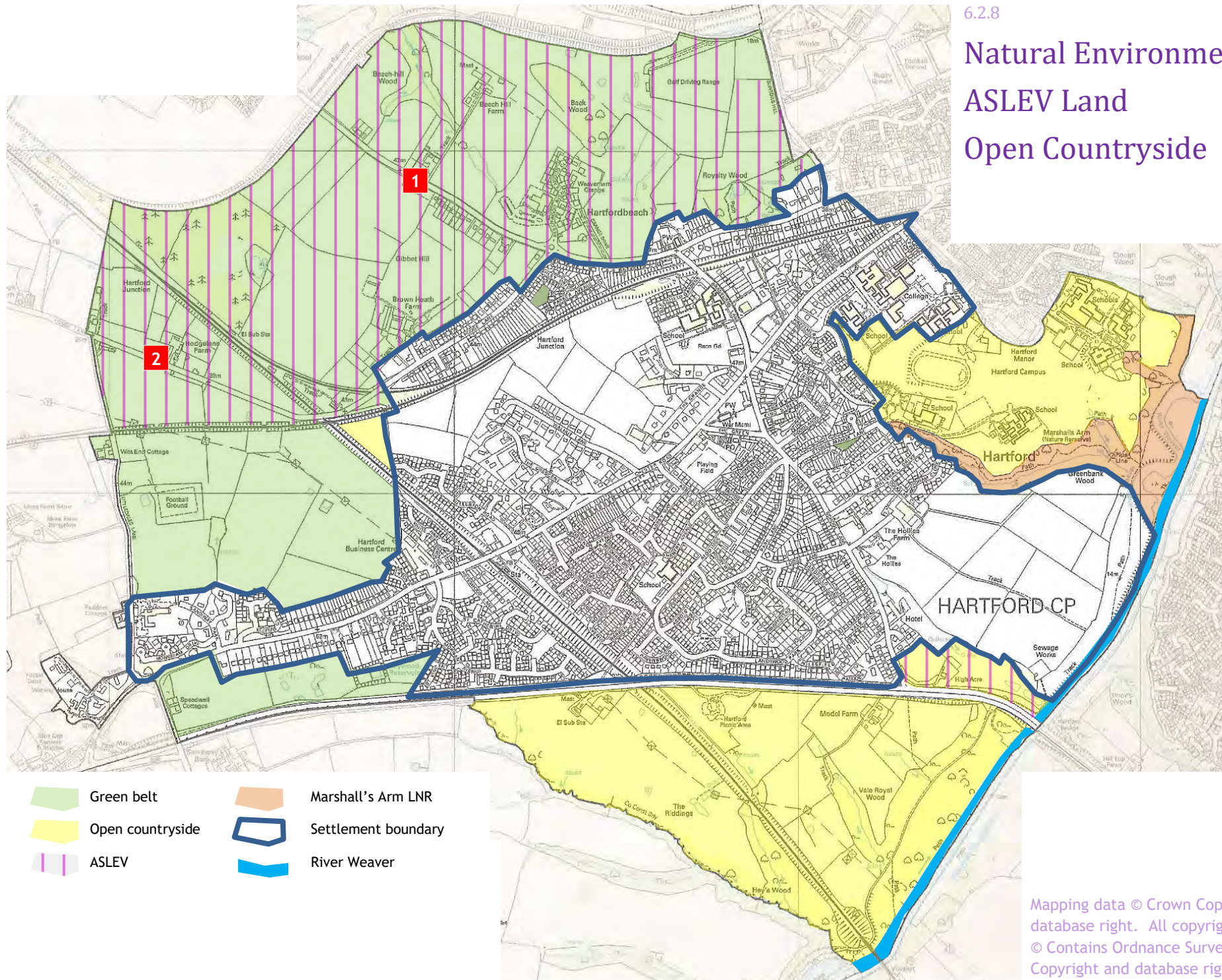
Natural Environment: Trees and Woodlands



Natural Environment: Green Belt



Natural Environment: ASLEV Land Open Countryside





Hartford's Neighbourhood Plan 2010-2030

Neighbourhood Plan

This Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting consultation reports are considered to comply with Section 15(2) of part 5 of the 2012 Neighbourhood Plan Regulations.

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