

**Meeting:** Planning and Development Committee      **Agenda Item:**

**Date:** 16 December 2021

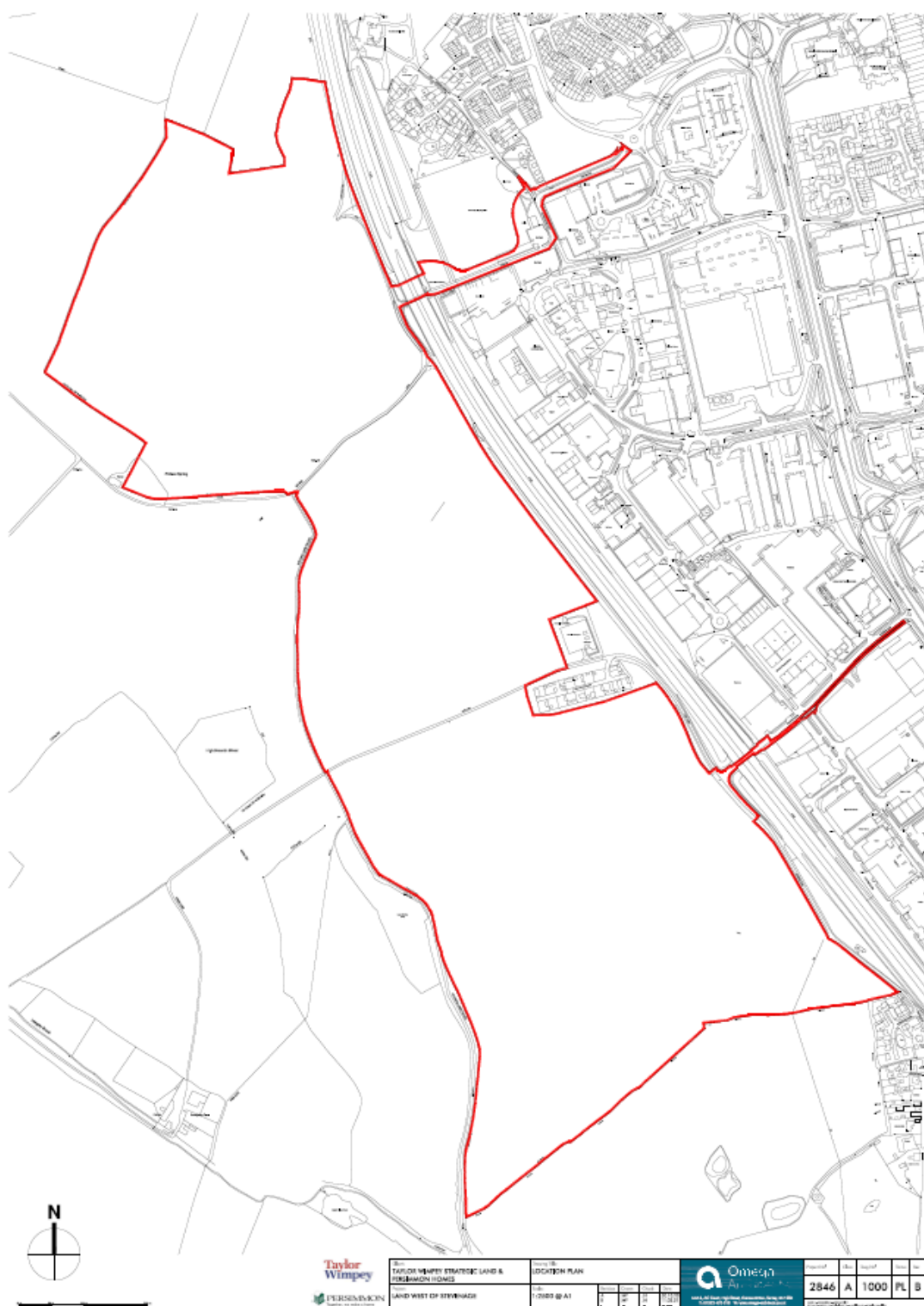
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Application Nos:	21/00356/FPM
Location:	Land to the West of Stevenage, Stevenage, Hertfordshire
Proposal:	<p>Full planning permission for the erection of 390 dwellings (including 117 affordable dwellings and 4 self-build plots), a cricket pitch and/or football pitches with temporary community shop (Use Class E/F2), public open space and amenity space (including Children's Play), associated landscaping and ecological enhancements, internal highways, parking, footpaths, cycleways, drainage, utilities, service infrastructure, acoustic bunding and fencing, improvements to existing access routes across A1(M) via Six Hills Way, Bessemer Drive, Redcar Drive and Meadway (including a new underpass at Meadway and associated accommodation/engineering works) and highway improvements along Chadwell Road.</p> <p>Outline planning permission for up to 1,110 dwelling units (including 30% affordable housing and self-build plots), principal employment area (up to 10,000 sq.m Use Class E(g) space), a residential care home (up to 72 beds) and up to 400sq.m Use Class E space, a mixed use local centre (Use Class C3 and up to 900sq.m of Use Class E/F2 Space), a neighbourhood square (including a mobility hub and up to 150sqm of Use Class E/F2 Space), a primary school (up to 3 FE), a mobility hub with flexible community workspace adjacent the Meadway underpass, a pavilion and mobility hub adjacent to the cricket and/or football pitches, public open and amenity space (including Children's Play), sports facilities (including informal multi-use games area), associated landscaping and ecological enhancement works, acoustic bunding and fencing, internal highways, parking, footpaths, cycleways, drainage, utilities, service infrastructure and future connections into safeguarded land in North Hertfordshire, and a new car park and pavilion at Meadway Playing Fields (with some matters reserved). This application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement.</p>

Drawing Nos.	2846-A-1000-PL-B; 2846-A-1201-PL-G; 2846-A-1202- PL-F; 2846-A-1203-PL-F; 2846-A- 1204-PL-D; 2846-A-1205-PL-F; 2846-A-1206-PL-G; 2846-A-1005 PL-J; 2846-A-1050 PL-N; 2846-A-1051 PL-N; 2846-A-1052 PL-N; 2846-C-1005 PL-J; 2846-C-1050 PL-N; 2846-C-1051 PL-N; 2846-C-1052 PL-N; 2846-C-1300 PL-E; 2846-C-1305 PL-C; 2846-C-1112 PL-D; 2846-C-1113 PL-D; 2846-C-1114 PL-D; 2846-A-1701 PL-F; 2846-A-1702 PL-F; 2846-A-1703 PL-D; 2846-A-1711 PL-F; 2846-A-1712 PL-F; 2846-A-1713 PL-D; 2846-A-1721 PL-F; 2846-A-1722 PL-F; 2846-A-1723 PL-D; 2846-A-1731 PL-F; 2846-A-1732 PL-F; 2846-A-1733 PL-D; 2846-C-1014 PL-E; 2846-A-3500 PL-B; 25502-02-010-2.1-B; 25502-02-010-2.2-B; 25502-02-010-2.3-A; 25502-02-010-2.4; 25502-02-010-2.5; 25502-02-010-03.1-B; 25502-02- 010-03.2-B; 25502-02-010-01.1-A; 25502-02-010-01.2-A; 25502-00-020-01.1-G; 25502-00-020-01.2-G; 19206/014/D; 19206/015/D;19206/016/D; 19206/017/E; 19206/019/H; 19206/029/B; 19206/035/A; 19206/036/B; 19206/GA-01/H; 19206/GA-02/G; 19206/GA-03/H; 19206/GA-04/F; 19206/GA-05/G; 19206/GA-06/G; 19206/TK01/E; 19206/TK02/D; 19206/TK03/C; JTSC009DG-D003-DRG- 007- P04; 2846-A-3000 PL-A; 2846-A-3005 PL-B; 2846-A-3006 PL-B; 2846-A-3010 PL-B; 2846-A-3011 PL-B;2846-A-3015 PL-B; 2846-A-3025 PL-B; 2846-A-3030 PL-B; 2846-A-3035 PL-B; 2846-A-3036 PL-B; 2846-A-3040 PL-B; 2846-A-3041 PL-B; 2846-A-3045 PL-B; 2846-A-3050 PL-B; 2846-A-3051 PL-B; 2846-A-3055 PL-B; 2846-A-3056 PL-B; 2846-A-3060 PL-B; 2846-A-3061 PL-B; 2846-A-3062 PL-A; 2846-A-3063 PL-A; 2846-A-3065 PL-B; 2846-A-3066 PL-A; 2846-A-3067 PL-A; 2846-A-3071 PL-A; 2846-A-3100 PL-A; 2846-A-3101 PL-A; 2846-A-3105 PL-C; 2846-A-3106 PL-B; 2846-A-3110 PL-B; 2846-A-3112 PL-A; 2846-A-3115 PL-B; 2846-A-3120 PL-B; 2846-A-3125 PL-B; 2846-A-3126 PL-B; 2846-A-3130 PL-B; 2846-A-3200 PL-B; 2846-A-3201 PL-B; 2846-A-3203 PL-A; 2846-A-3205 PL-B; 2846-A-3206 PL-B; 2846-A-3208 PL-A; 2846-A-3210 PL-A; 2846-A-3211 PL-A; 2846-A-3212 PL-B; 2846-A-3212 PL-A; 2846-A-3215 PL-B; 2846-A-3220 PL-A; 2846-A-3221 PL-B; 2846-A-3223 PL-B; 2846-A-3225 PL-B; 2846-A-3230 PL-B; 2846-A-3235 PL-C; 2846-A-3236 PL-A; 2846-A-3240 PL-B; 2846-A-3241 PL-A; 2846-A-3242 PL-A; 2846-A-3243 PL-C; 2846-A-3245 PL-B; 2846-A-3246 PL-A; 2846-A-3250 PL-C; 2846-A-3251 PL-A; 2846-A-3252 PL-C; 2846-A-3255 PL-C; 2846-A-3256 PL-A; 2846-A-3257 PL-B; 2846-A-3258 PL-B; 2846-A-3259 PL-A; 2846-A-3265 PL-B; 2846-A-3266 PL-A; 2846-A-3267 PL-A; 2846-A-3270 PL-B; 2846-A-3271 PL-B; 2846-A-3272 PL-B; 2846-A-3273 PL-B; 2846-A-3274 PL-A; 2846-A-3275 PL-A; 2846-A-3276 PL-A; 2846-A-3277 PL-A; 2846-A-3300 PL-B; 2846-A-3301 PL-B; 2846-A-3305 PL-B; 2846-A-3306 PL-B; 2846-A-3307 PL-A; 2846-A-3310 PL-B; 2846-A-3315 PL-B; 2846-A-3316 PL-B; 2846-A-3317 PL-C; 2846-A-3318 PL-C; 2846-A-3319 PL-B; 2846-A-3320 PL-A; 2846-A-3321 PL-B; 2846-A-3322 PL-A; 2846-A-3325 PL-B; 2846-A-3326 PL-C; 2846-A-3330 PL-A; 2846-A-3331 PL-A; 2846-A-3335 PL-A; 2846-A-3336 PL-A.
Applicant:	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Persimmon Homes Ltd
Date Valid:	07 April 2021
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



Plan for information purposes only

# 1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The site is approximately 78 hectares in area and is located to the west of Stevenage, within the district of Stevenage Borough Council. The site, which is largely undeveloped, comprises undulating agricultural fields which are punctuated by mature hedgerows and trees, public rights of way along with a National Grid gas compression compound (which will not form part of any formal planning application). Due to the topography, views to Stevenage Town Centre and Lister Hospital are possible from a number of vantage points within the site.
- 1.2 There are a number of existing footpaths, bridleways and Public Rights of Way that cross the site as well as run along its western boundary. The site is located to the north of the hamlet of Norton Green and the Knebworth Woods SSSI with the western boundary bordered by the A1(M) motorway. Beyond the motorway is the main urban area of Stevenage and more specifically Gunnels Wood Employment Area which comprises a mixture of industrial, commercial and warehouse development. Part of the site's western boundary (approximately midway) also adjoins the Dyes Lane gypsy and traveler site which is managed by Hertfordshire County Council (which also falls outside the application boundary).
- 1.3 To the east and north of the site is a further area of open land comprising agricultural fields. Land to the north and west of the site is also designated as "safeguarded land" under Policy SP8 of the draft North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 – Proposed Submission October (2016). Paragraph e ii of Policy SP8 seeks to safeguard the land in question to meet the longer term needs of North Hertfordshire in the period beyond 2026 subject to a future review of the Plan (North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications, November 2018).
- 1.4 There are a number of listed buildings within 1km of the site, the most significant of which is the Grade I listed Almshoebury Farmhouse. Within 500m of the site, the Grade II\* Dyes Lane Farmhouse lies 300m south-west of the site. The closest designated assets to the site lie to the north-east at Symonds Green, beyond the A1(M). These are Grade II listed buildings which include Oakfield Farm Barn, The Thatched Cottage and Willow Cottage. To the south of the site, at Norton Green is a Grade II listed farm house. To the east of the site, there are two Grade II listed buildings which lie either side of Gunnels Wood Road. These include Broomin Green Farmhouse and the former John Lewis Warehouse (now Costco).
- 1.5 To the site's south-west is a grade II listed cottage on the northern edge of Langley hamlet, 800m from the development site. There are also several other Grade II listed post-medieval structures, either side of the Village street. The closest scheduled monument is the Six Hills Barrows lying adjacent to the town centre of Stevenage. In terms of conservation areas, the nearest conservation area is Symonds Green.
- 1.6 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 which is the lowest level of flood risk with less than 1 in 1,000 years of annual probability of river or sea flooding. At the eastern side of the site, there is one Ordinary Watercourse located in close proximity to the tunnel from Meadway. In relation to groundwater, there are two aquifers with the site falling within Source Protection Zones 2 and 3 for potable drinking water.
- 1.7 The site is allocated under Policy HO2 of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 adopted May 2019 as a strategic housing site for approximately 1,350 dwellings and 10,000 sq.m of employment space.

## **2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 2.1 Planning application 01/00506/OP sought outline permission for the development of approximately 3,600 dwellings and business premises, shops and other uses, leisure, social and community facilities, open space and landscaping and provision of infrastructure, highways and public transport. This application was withdrawn in August 2013.
- 2.2 Planning application 01/00423/OP sought outline permission for the development of approximately 5,000 dwellings and business premises (B1 and B2); shops (A1, A2 and A3), leisure, social and community facilities (D1 and D2); open space and landscaping, provision of infrastructure, highways. This application was refused by the Secretary of State in October 2005.

## **3 THE CURRENT APPLICATION**

- 3.1 The current application seeks outline planning permission for up to 1,110 dwelling units (including 30% affordable housing and self-build plots), principal employment area (up to 10,000 sq.m Use Class E(g) space), a residential care home (up to 72 beds) and up to 400sq.m Use Class E space, a mixed use local centre (Use Class C3 and up to 900sq.m of Use Class E/F2 Space), a neighbourhood square (including a mobility hub and up to 150sqm of Use Class E/F2 Space), a primary school (up to 3 FE), a mobility hub with flexible community workspace adjacent the Meadway underpass, a pavilion and mobility hub adjacent to the cricket and/or football pitches, public open and amenity space (including Children's Play), sports facilities (including informal multi-use games area), associated landscaping and ecological enhancement works, acoustic bunding and fencing, internal highways, parking, footpaths, cycleways, drainage, utilities, service infrastructure and future connections into safeguarded land in North Hertfordshire, and a new car park and pavilion at Meadway Playing Fields (with some matters reserved).
- 3.2 The applicant is also seeking at this stage, full detailed approval for Phase 1 of the development. The detailed plans accompanying this application cover access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the erection of 390 dwellings (including 117 affordable dwellings and 4 self-build plots), a cricket pitch and/or football pitches with temporary community shop (Use Class E/F2), public open space and amenity space (including Children's Play), associated landscaping and ecological enhancements, internal highways, parking, footpaths, cycleways, drainage, utilities, service infrastructure, acoustic bunding and fencing, improvements to existing access routes across A1(M) via Six Hills Way, Bessemer Drive, Redcar Drive and Meadway (including a new underpass at Meadway and associated accommodation/engineering works) and highway improvements along Chadwell Road.
- 3.3 Although the majority of the development site is in outline form with an element of detailed proposals, the application is supported by a masterplan and series of parameter plans showing the maximum scale of development. An illustrative site wide masterplan with associated visuals is also set out in more detail in the Design and Access Statement which provides the strategic framework for the development over 4 phases. This is expected for a development of this scale and it is expected Reserved Matters will come forward for each relevant phase. The submitted Design and Access Statement sets out an agreed joint vision between the developers and Stevenage Borough Council for West Stevenage which is as follows:
  - West Stevenage to be a new neighbourhood with a great sense of place and its own distinct identity. It will be a development that embraces the principles of healthy living, sustainability and water sensitive design with high quality and well-designed buildings and public realm;

- A place shaped by the land and inspired by the landscape;
- A place that promotes physical health and mental well-being;
- A sustainable place, responding to climate change and the environmental challenges of this century;
- A place that connects to the rest of Stevenage with good transport links, pleasant walking and cycling routes and with convenient links to the countryside which is on its doorstep;
- A place with a network of tree lined streets and open spaces;
- A place of quality in the design of its buildings, their materiality and in the public realm – a model of excellence in its design approach and human scale;
- A green place teeming with flora and fauna, with nature walks and trails;
- A place where people choose to walk and cycle or use public transport rather than using the private car and one where it's easy to find your way around;
- A place of play and fun, where the streets are safe enough for children to meet and to play, and where a range of open spaces are provided for all ages to enjoy;
- A great place for everyone, including those with young families and the elderly,
- A place which supports peoples' day-to-day lives and provides access to a range of local work opportunities within easy walking distance and conveniently located for public transport;
- A place with a convenient and well-designed local centre creating a focus for local people and generating a great sense of community;
- A place that makes the most of its setting with spectacular views across the town and to the surrounding countryside;
- A place that the New Town pioneers would recognise and respect.

3.4 To further support the overall importance of delivering the joint vision, there are also a number of key principles the scheme has to meet in order to create a sense of place. It has to be a place that provides a range of services and facilities to residents and where people feel their basic day-to-day needs can be met without the need to travel, such as going to school, dropping around to the local shops, meeting up with friends, walking the dog, kicking the ball around, riding a bike and going for a jog. These activities should feel safe and easy to do in a new and compact part of the town. The neighbourhood would also provide opportunities to work, attracting new and growing businesses into the area to create a vibrant local economy and one which encourages commuters to public transport than the private car. It would also be a neighbourhood which supports home working through the provision of excellent infrastructure and flexible house design.

3.5 In addition to the above, the scheme would need to have high quality connections between all areas of the site and beyond so it is easy for residents to visit friends, go to school or to visit the neighbourhood centre for shopping or go to the doctors. A place which is well connected to the rest of Stevenage that encourages those wider communities from different neighbourhoods, to visit and enjoy the development and vice versa, whether this is on foot, by bicycle or using public transport. It also has to be a place which is well connected to the countryside and that facilitates easy and seamless connections to any future development of the town to the west of the A1(M).

3.6 The Design and Access Statement and parameter plans along with the overall Framework Masterplan are concerned with the following:

#### Land use

3.7 The Design and Access Statement sets out that the development would comprise up to 1,500 new dwellings. In addition, the local centre would consist of retail space (up to 500 sq.m) and potentially a GP surgery up to 400 sq.m) with residential apartments above. The land would also comprise 10,000 sq.m of employment floorspace along with the provision of an up to 72 bedroom Care home, with potential capacity for GP surgery if this is not provided within the local centre. The accompanying plans and

documentation also specifies the provision of an up to 3 forms of entry (FE) primary school, a neighbourhood square within the local centre and fronted by mixed uses, including the potential for a mobility hub and kiosk. There is also the provision of green infrastructure.

### Access and Movement

- 3.8 The Design and Access Statement indicates the access positions into the site along with the principal movements through the Framework Masterplan. This includes the provision of vehicular access points from Meadway and Bessemer Drive along with the provision of pedestrian and cycle access points. In terms of key routes through the development, these would include the following:
- Pedestrian and cycleway Greenway;
  - Primary Access Road / Main Street;
  - Secondary residential roads;
  - Informal pedestrian routes.
- 3.9 The scheme would also comprise the delivery of Mobility Hubs throughout the site. In total, there are three hubs proposed which would be located at the Meadway entrance to the site, within the neighbourhood square and adjacent to the cricket pavilion. These hubs are intended to promote the integrated modes of sustainable transport. They would include the provision of electric vehicle charging points, last mile delivery services, bicycle and potentially e-scooter hire, bus stops and interactive personalised travel planning.
- 3.10 The hub which would be located at Meadway would be incorporated into a building which encompasses flexible community workspace which would support residents who wish to work at home. The building could also function as space for community meetings and events.

### Building heights

- 3.11 This parameter plan, as detailed in the Design and Access Statement, sets out the maximum building heights proposed throughout the development. In terms of the neighbourhood square and local centre, this area would include mixed uses at ground floors with residential above and as such is a more concentrated part of the development, with building heights of up to 4-storeys being proposed here. At the vehicle entrance areas from Meadway and Bessemer Drive, it is detailed that building heights around these access points would be up to 4-storeys.
- 3.12 At the north-west edge of development, building heights would be a maximum of two storeys in this area due to visibility from the surrounding countryside and proximity to listed buildings. At the southern edge of the site, it is detailed that buildings would be a maximum of two-storeys, due to the visibility from the countryside, with topography falling to the south and therefore, views are more open when viewed from public vantage points.

### Density

- 3.13 This is set out in the Design and Access Statement that density is closely related to proposed building heights. It is identified that there are opportunities for increased densities relating to the neighbourhood centre as well as the key vehicle access points into the site. The density then reduces down in the far north-west of the development. The density would range from a low density of between 25-35 dwellings per hectare with higher density areas having 40-50 dwellings per hectare.

### Green infrastructure

- 3.14 The parameter plan and Design and Access Statement provide details of the open spaces around the development. It also identifies the positions for play spaces and what size these should be, along with proposals for blue infrastructure in terms of SuDs locations along with the design and the location of the landscaped bund which aligns the eastern edge of the development.

#### Phasing

- 3.15 The Design and Access Statement and associated parameter plan provide details of the proposed construction order of the scheme in terms of phasing. In terms of phase 1, this would include vehicle access from Bessemer Drive, residential areas around this along with the cricket green. This phase would also include part of the Greenway (formal cycle route) and Main Street which moves north towards the main centre and then continues up to the Meadway access.
- 3.16 Phase 2 would include all areas which are located south of Phase 1, and all non-residential uses including the primary school, local centre, employment areas, neighbourhood square and care home. Phase 3 would comprise all development located north of Phase 2 and up to Meadway access including public open space around Potters Spring. The final phase, phase 4, would consist of all development north of Meadway access and Potters Spring.

#### Phases 2 to 4 (Outline)

- 3.17 The Design and Access Statement and Framework Masterplan, with respect to the outline aspects of the development proposal, also sets out the open space strategy, play strategy, sustainability strategy, biodiversity strategy and SuDs strategy. There are also defined character areas which cover the North, Central and Southern sections of the development site.
- 3.18 In addition to the above, the Design and Access Statement sets out key design principles for the development which include vehicle, pedestrian and cycle routes, open space design, play, residential typologies, development edges, the neighbourhood centre, employment site as well as key spaces within Phases 2 to 4 of the development. In addition, it also sets out the design principles for the Meadway and Bessemer Drive underpasses. Whilst this report will provide greater details of the outline aspects of the proposal, the outline phases of the development will be considered in greater detail and the reserved matters stage.

#### Full application (Phase 1)

- 3.19 The first phase (Phase 1) is for the erection of 390 dwellings the proposed unit typology range detailed as follows:
- 19 no. 1 bedroom flats;
  - 73 no. 2 bedroom flats;
  - 3 no. 1 bed house;
  - 52 no. 2 bed house;
  - 155 no. 3 bed house;
  - 84 no. 4 + bed house;
  - 4 no. 4 bed house self-build plots.
- 3.20 This phase of development would comprise a number of development parcels located adjacent to the Bessemer Drive entrance and overlooking the east and the edges of the community green. There would also be development parcels either side of the main street and Greenway as it moves north towards the neighbourhood centre. This part of the development would also comprise the following:



- The existing underpass from Bessemer Drive to be upgraded with enhanced lighting proposals;
- Revised junction arrangement for Chadwell Road and Dyes Lane onto the new access road;
- The existing embankment aligning Chadwell Road;
- New landscaped acoustic bund at 4m high with 3m fence at top;
- Entrance road aligned by landscaped embankments, new pedestrian/cycleway Greenway located in close proximity to new dwellings to ensure surveillance;
- Dwellings to be orientated to overlook the community green which include sports facilities and cricket and/or football;
- LEAP (Locally Equipped Area for Play) space included within the community green;
- Existing hedgerow aligning field boundary to be retained around the edge of the community green and northwards to Dyes Lane;
- Route of road extending through Phase 1 broken to reduce vehicle speeds and create junctions of interest and focal buildings;
- Greenway crossing points to Phase 2 and will include verge on southern side performing SuDS role as rain garden / permeable verge;
- Pocket park and attenuation pond in south-east corner of Phase 1;
- Green corridor extending west towards Kitching Lane and existing Public Rights of Way (PROW);
- Main avenue extending northwards towards neighbourhood centre where dwellings are orientated to overlook the street / street corners, with a parking strategy and landscaped verges;
- 30m buffer to incorporate pedestrian routes, surface water attenuation, informal children's play and dwellings orientated to overlook this space;
- Existing route of Dyes Lane to be retained along with existing hedges which currently frame the existing Lane;
- Existing route of High Pressure Regional Gaps with 6m buffer on either side of pipeline;
- Main vehicle route to become High Street upon passing into central part of development, with reduced street width, minimised distances between footpath and buildings, and on-street parking integrated within hard verge;
- Density of dwellings would be tightened in the High Street area with increased provision of terraces, flats over garages (FOGs) along with enclosed parking courtyards which would also have natural surveillance over these courtyards;
- Provision of the access road to Phase 2 and school car park;
- Continuation of the Greenway towards the neighbourhood centre;
- Landscape buffer minimised in central area to just 5m ecological off-set from existing vegetation.

3.21 Building heights in Phase 1 are generally two and three storeys with the apartment buildings generally being three storeys. A detailed assessment of Phase 1 is set out in further detail in this committee report. This part of the development also comprises the delivery of a temporary community shop which will take the form of a temporary building located next to the car park on the community green. This facility would offer essential everyday goods to residents who occupy the first phase of the scheme. The building itself would be removed upon completion of the convenience retail space in the local centre, which is being delivered in Phase 2.

#### Access to the development site

3.22 The primary access points for all modes of transport (vehicle, pedestrian and cycling) serving the West Stevenage development site will be Bessemer Drive to the south which is a spur road of the A1072 Gunns Wood Road and to the north of Meadway / Redcar Drive. The development would comprise a Main Road which would connect

Bessemer Drive and travel through the site northwards to Meadway / Redcar Drive. Each phase of development would be served off the Main Road through a series of streets. The development would also incorporate new cycleways and footpaths which would connect to the wider network within Stevenage. There would also be a series of PROW upgrades and enhancements which would allow for further connection through the site to the countryside beyond the site boundary. These routes have been designed to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

- 3.23 The planning application has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and is accompanied by an Environmental Statement. This application comes before the Planning and Development committee as it is a major residential and non-residential application. In addition, Stevenage Borough Council also owns some of the land within the application site area. Furthermore, the scheme is also classed as EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) development.

## **4 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

- 4.1 As a major planning application the proposal has been publicised by way of letters to 414 premises, the erection of site notices across the site and a press notice. A further consultation following receipt of amended plans was also undertaken. Following this publicity, objections have been received from the following:-

- 39 Angotts Mead;
- 67 Brixham Close;
- 372 Boradwater Crescent;
- 366 Canterbury Way;
- 4 Corton Close, Stevenage;
- Courtlands, Stevenage;
- Nos. 24 Eastbourne Avenue;
- Eastbourne Lodge, Eastbourne Avenue;
- 14 Eastbourne Avenue;
- 39 Elbow Lane;
- 58 Ferrier Road;
- 31 Hastings Close;
- 16 Ivel Road;
- 406 Jessop Road;
- Minehead Way (No house number given);
- 3 Newlyn Close;
- Nos. 12 and 14 Norton Green;
- Norton Green Farm, Norton Green;
- 5 Nycolles Wood;
- Nos. 7 and 10 Pigeonswick Close;
- 407 Scarborough Avenue;
- 1 Southwold Close;
- 5 Southwold Close;
- Ends Well, Symonds Green;
- 1 Nursery Cottage, Symonds Green Lane;
- Oakfield Farmhouse, Southwold Close, Symonds Green Lane;
- 135 Torquay Crescent;
- 101 Verity Way;
- 18 Woodland Way;

A number of objections were also received from outside the Borough of Stevenage, details of those who made representations are set out below:-

- 11 Davis Row, Arlesey;
- 73 Mansfield Road, Baldock;

- 26 Northfields, Biggleswade;
- 16 Tansey, Biggleswade;
- Woodlands, Preston Road, Gosmore;
- 108 Birchwood Avenue, Hatfield;
- 29 Bearton Road, Hitchin;
- Bottom Cottage, Kimpton Bottom, Nr Hitchin;
- Rectory Farm, Steeple Claydon, Buckingham;
- 1 Meadow Way, Codicote, Hitchin;
- 78 Brampton Road, Hitchin;
- 1 Bradleys Corner, Hitchin;
- Thristley House, Gosmore, Hitchin;
- Thistley House, Thistley, Hitchin;
- Lane End, London Road, Hitchin;
- 24 London Road, Hitchin;
- 11 Midland Cottages, Hitchin;
- 25 Mill Way, Breachwood Green, Hitchin;
- 6 Milstream Close, Hitchin;
- 11 Peppercorn Walk, Hitchin;
- 23 Willow Tree Way, Hitchin;
- Verulam Road, Hitchin;
- 17 Newtown, Henlow;
- 101 Halleys Ridge, Hertford;
- 50 High Street, Kimpton;
- 15 Westland Road, Knebworth;
- 19 Westland Road, Knebworth;
- 35 Orchard Way, Letchworth;
- 16 Newells, Letchworth;
- 12 Felstead Close, Luton;
- Rear of 18 Surrey Street, Luton;
- 8 Mead Road, Radlett;
- 34 Fairfield Way, Great Ashby Way, Stevenage (NHDC);
- 2 Riverside Lane, Sawbrideworth;
- 54 Chapman Way, St Neots;
- 64 Carleton Rise, Welwyn;
- Nos. 1 and 24 Reynards Road, Welwyn;
- Applegarth Fore Street, Weston;
- 78 Medlar Street, Weston Turville;
- 47 Bradway, Whitwell;

#### 4.2 A summary of the objections received are as follows:-

- Unacceptable loss of public rights of way (including Bridleways);
- Unacceptable development in the Green Belt;
- Releasing the site from the Green Belt sets an unacceptable precedent which will result in significant loss of countryside and unacceptable urban expansion;
- Significant concern over the loss of sports facilities to deliver the proposed development;
- The development will have a significant impact on the Symonds Green Conservation Area;
- The development would generate an unacceptable level of urban sprawl;
- The development would have a significant impact on the SSSI and Norton Green Common;
- The development would have an unacceptable impact of two protected ponds in the common;
- Under SNAP (Stevenage and North Herts Action Plan, 2007) there were significant measures to be taken to protect the SSSI which need to be undertaken which

included the implementation of fencing, restriction of vehicles into the Stevenage BOAT 42 and Knebworth 42 and Kitchen Lane other for access for access to property;

- The SSSI protection measures should be funded by the developer;
- The developer should fund surveys of Norton Green Common along with maintenance contributions towards the ponds;
- There is no mention of Bridleway 98 in the applicants submission and how this would be incorporated into the development;
- The work to utilise the underpass at Norton Green is not appropriate for it being too narrow;
- The developer should provide sound proof fencing along the road above the underpass to reduce noise from A1(M) and allow walkers to hear approaching traffic on Chadwell Road;
- There needs to be appropriate landscaping for the approach up to Norton Green and the developer should provide a village sign in order to keep Norton Green's identity;
- The proposed fencing opposite Pigeonswick Close is not in keeping in the Green Belt;
- Unacceptable increase in noise pollution;
- Insufficient traffic screening measures / acoustic bunding proposed for existing residents residing in close proximity to Redcar Drive / The Meadway;
- New development and investment should be focused on brownfield sites and refurbishing existing properties;
- The development would have an unacceptable impact on wildlife and the natural habitat;
- The scheme fails to consider parking issues on Redcar Drive and by removing this road will move the parking problem onto surrounding residential roads which is unacceptable;
- The Council has a duty via condition to ensure that the existing sports pitches and its current configuration is retained and that no construction works will be allowed, including the use of the sports fields and its car park as a construction compound;
- The Council has to ensure the new club house and parking facilities are completed at the same time as the proposed new access from Meadway;
- The development would have an unacceptable impact on local residents quality of life;
- The application site should be retained for public enjoyment only;
- The development would result in an unacceptable loss of green space and countryside;
- The development would have an unacceptable impact on the environment;
- The development will have a detrimental impact on air quality and will result in a level increase in air pollution;
- The development would generate unacceptable levels of light pollution;
- The development would generate an unacceptable level of additional traffic and congestion on the highway network (including the A1(M));
- The development would prejudice highway safety;
- The proposed school is of an insufficient size to accommodate this development with Woolenwick School oversubscribed;
- Failure to provide suitable habitats for all wildlife;
- The proposal is considered to be overdevelopment of the site;
- Lack of affordable houses for local people;
- Unacceptable loss of established horse riding routes;
- Lack of consideration of local residents;
- The development will result in the loss of valuable agricultural land;
- Loss of safe and secure bridleways utilised by local residents and will be forced to use unsafe and dangerous routes in the areas;
- Removes public access to the area which is paid for by Council Tax payers and transferring this asset from the tax payer to the developers;

- Inadequate infrastructure to support this development such as GP surgeries, dental surgeries as well as insufficient capacity at Lister Hospital;
- There is no demand for additional housing in this area;
- Unacceptable loss of multi-functional recreational space;
- The bridleways are extremely important to the health and wellbeing of the horses as local roads pose a danger to both horses and their riders;
- There is a lack of provisions being made for cycling and walking within the development including links into existing byways, bridleways and footpaths;
- The extinguishment of Bridleway 35 and its replacement (additional recreational footpath routes) is unacceptable as it will seriously disadvantage cyclists and horse riders;
- The proposed development is not sustainable including energy efficiency;
- There will be a lack of public transport and local facilities to support the development so residents will likely travel by car;
- Unless the Council specifies every new home is Zero-Carbon, they are unlikely to be energy efficient homes until the Future Homes Standards are adopted into law by 2025;
- The Council has an opportunity to deliver a truly sustainable development, with low water usage, creation of a new Zero-carbon suburb that could be ground breaking, the current plans do not achieve this;
- The loss of on-street parking along the Meadway / Redcar Drive will force people to park on roads in Symonds Green which is not acceptable to local residents;
- The scheme does not address how the parking problem on Redcar Drive will be resolved;
- The proposal will remove vehicle access to Cartref and so there is significant concern the historic lane which is in a Conservation Area could be used as a new access into Cartref;
- The Council is proposing an additional development on Cartref which will further exacerbate traffic issues in the area;
- Unacceptable loss of trees which should be retained;
- Insufficient replacement tree planting;
- Significant concerns over pedestrian safety around the Meadway and Redcar Drive;
- Loss of rural views and an attractive visual environment;
- Will harm open views of Potters Spring;
- All the footpaths, Dyes Lane, Kitching Lane and Potters Spring area should be given special protection from development to help retain rural character;
- The Environmental Statement (ES) fails to make reference to key documents which are as follows:-
  - The Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan for Hertfordshire, 2011 (and in particular the "Reconnect" and "Urban GI" initiatives) ([hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://hertfordshire.gov.uk));
  - North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan 2009 (and in particular the proposed SNAP Green Infrastructure Network, which reinforces the "Reconnect" plan as well as adding SN10 = woodland buffering to A1M corridor). There is also a strategic view towards the development that needs safeguarding.
  - The Regional Landscape Character Assessment 2008/9, funded by Natural England with the Tier 1 authorities in the East of England at [www.landscape-east.org.uk](http://www.landscape-east.org.uk), including guidance on how to handle landscape sensitivity;
- The ES should comprise a comprehensive analysis of deprivation and parks/greenway provision due to recent findings following lockdown;
- The ES should also consider the impact and opportunities with regards to the residents in the neighbourhoods on Clovelly Way;
- The Green Infrastructure Plan and Landscape Proposals also fail to adequately take into account the initiatives encouraged by the Strategy & North Herts GI Plans, guidance for landscape management in the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, nor the Stevenage landscape sensitivity and Capacity Study;

- The Green Infrastructure Plan and Landscape Proposals should identify strategic greenway links linking to the wider GI network with attention made to reimagine Redcar Drive and Bessemer Drive as Green Routes linking Stevenage East/West under the A1(M);
- The scheme lacks substantial buffer planting to the A1(M) and there is too much grass proposed;
- There is a need for more incidental native/hedgerow planting throughout the development to include increased widths of certain areas for planting which could reduce density;
- The West Stevenage development is an uninspiring urban extension;
- The affordable housing will be brought up by housing management groups which will price our children through charging high rents;
- The development should really be delivering social housing for local residents;
- The developers will not install bird boxes despite what they state;
- Unacceptable loss of trees and vegetation;
- It appears the Council has already approved the closure of Public Rights of Way;
- Is the Council going to continue to extend the period of time the Public Rights of Way are closed off;
- Unacceptable access being created into the open countryside;
- All traffic should be directed through Stevenage;
- The amended proposals do not address any of the concerns which have been raised.

#### The Patchetts Green Bridleway Trust CIO

- 4.3 The Patchetts Green Bridleway Trust CIO objects to the application because it fails to take into account the route of the Stevenage Horse and Pony Route (SHPR) which the Trust and British Horse Society are seeking to complete. The 2008 Local Plan proposals map shows the route clearly passing through the development site. If the developer offered a greenway (legally a bridleway or restricted byway) orbiting the new site, it would provide a motor-free route for walkers, riders and cyclists, and could become a replacement route for SHPR. The plans show there is enough space for this and that it would work nicely with the other facilities planned. Please make it a planning condition or obligation for the developer to set out a route and to dedicate it as bridleway or restricted byway before the first house is occupied.

#### British Horse Society Access and Road Safety Representative

- 4.4 There are thousands of local horse riders and carriage drivers that regularly use the network of Bridleways, Byways and Un-classified roads that pass across the area of the proposed development. The existing public rights of way which will be affected by this development are Stevenage 024, Stevenage 035 Bridleway, Stevenage 036 Bridleway, Stevenage 038 Byway and Stevenage Unclassified Road UCR1.
- 4.5 This proposed development will be disastrous for riders and carriage drivers as the bridleways, byways and un-classified roads will become bisected by numerous roads and the routes will just become narrow corridors between houses and commercial buildings making them oppressive in nature.
- 4.6 In addition, this proposed development will create a dramatic increase in the amount of traffic on the local roads, which will render them increasingly hostile to horse riders and carriage drivers who are vulnerable road users. The recent coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated how important access to the countryside by use of public rights of way are to the physical and mental wellbeing of people and they need to be preserved by all to use.
- 4.7 As regards this proposed development, it is requested that the following is provided under a S.106 agreement with the developers:

S.106 funding towards the completion of the Stevenage Circular Horse and Pony Ride (which can be used by cyclists and walkers) and funding for some additional new Bridleways and Restricted Byways and the funds should be ring fenced in such a way that the British Horse Society can ensure that it is spent on these targeted projects.

- 4.8 The Horse and Pony Ride needs to be placed on the definitive map of Hertfordshire as of restrict byway status to ensure that it remains a public right of way which horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists and walkers can use in the future. S106 funding so that where new roads bisect the existing bridleways and byways controlled crossing points of Pegasus specification should be used to ensure that horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists and walkers can cross the road safely.
- 4.9 There is also a need for the continued safety of horse riders, carriage drivers and their horses which included local riding for the disabled groups, and, driving for the disabled groups which use horses and carriages to enable disabled people to gain access to the countryside.
- 4.10 In addition, the planning consent should also compel the developers that consideration must also be given to the safety of horse riders and carriage drivers who use the existing Bridleways, Byways and Un-classified roads during and after this proposed development which includes riders with disabilities such as riding for the disabled and carriage driving for the disabled prior to any construction works taking place:-

“Prior to any pre-construction or construction work being carried out, the surface of the bridleway should be improved to allow for the increase in footfall caused by the additional people from the development using it”

- 4.11 In addition, “Prior to an pre-construction or construction work being carried out the bridleway shall be permanently and securely fenced off from the development site with heavy duty post and three railed fencing with Equi-fencing on it so that the routes are clearly defined and any ridden horses are safe from any contact with motorised vehicles or from loose dogs running through the fence line”.
- 4.12 Barbed wire or metal stake fencing must not be used as they pose a serious danger to horses, horse riders and carriage drivers. A documents system should also be created by the developer to ensure that all contractors, sub-contractors and delivery vehicles are made aware that horse riders use the bridleway, byways and unclassified roads as well as local roads to gain access to them and are instructed to take great care when entering or leaving the site and also the local roads.
- 4.13 A documented system should also be created by the development to ensure that operators of all heavy machinery and vehicles are instructed to take great care when operating them and to stop and turn them off when horse riders and carriage drivers pass them. In addition, the surfaces of the bridleways, byways and unclassified roads must not be damaged in any way nor should any debris be disposed on it by the contractors. In the event of damage being caused to them, then the developers should be responsible for immediately fully repairing and restoring it.
- 4.14 Horse warning signs also need to be placed at points where the construction traffic crosses any of the bridleways, byways or unclassified roads. In addition, where construction traffic crosses the bridleways, byways or unclassified roads, all crossing points should be clearly signed that they are a cross route used by horse riders and carriage drivers. The crossing point surface must be reinstated immediately after all the construction work has been completed and the fencing replaced.

- 4.15 The developers must also consult the Access Department of Hertfordshire County Council and British Horse Society Access and Road Safety Representative to agree the fencing and surfacing of the bridleways, byways and unclassified roads.

The British Horse Society

- 4.16 There are a large number of horse riders and carriage drivers that regularly use the network of bridleways, byways and un-classified roads that pass across the area of the development. The existing rights of way affected by the development will be Stevenage 024 Bridleway, Stevenage 035 Bridleway, Stevenage 036 Bridleway and Stevenage Unclassified Road UCR1.
- 4.17 The proposed development will be disastrous for riders and carriage driveways, as the rights of will become bisected by numerous roads and the routes will just become narrow corridors between houses and commercial buildings making them oppressive in nature to use.
- 4.18 In addition, the proposed development will create a dramatic increase in the amount of traffic on the local roads, which will make them increasingly hostile to horse riders and carriage drivers who are vulnerable. The recent coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated how important accesses to the countryside by use of public rights of way are to the physical and mental wellbeing of people and these needs routes need to be preserved accordingly.
- 4.19 If the Council is minded to grant permission for the development, The British Horse Society request that funding towards the completion of the Stevenage Circular Horse and Pony Ride (which can also be by cyclists and walkers) and a dedicated multi-user underpass for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers under the A1 to link the network of bridleways, restricted byways and byways on the development side of the A1 with those on the east side of the A1. This should be provided under a S106 agreement.
- 4.20 In addition, funding should be secured through the S.106, for some additional new Bridleway and Restricted Byway with the funds ring fenced in such a way that The British Horse Society can ensure that it can be spent on targeted projects.
- 4.21 The British Horse Society sets out that there are still some sections of the Stevenage Horse and Pony Ride that needs to be placed on the definitive map by Hertfordshire as of restricted byway status to ensure that it remains a public right of way for which horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists and walkers can use in the future.
- 4.22 Further, there also needs to be S.106 funding and CIL funding so that where new roads bisect the existing bridleways and byways, controlled crossing points of Pegasus specification should be used to ensure that horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists and walkers can safely cross the road. The British Horse Society also need to ensure the continued safety of horse riders, carriage drivers and their horses, includes the local riding for the disabled groups and driving for the disabled groups.
- 4.23 In addition, if the Council is minded to grant permission, it should also compel the developers that consideration must also be given to the safety of horse riders and carriage drivers (including those who are disabled) who use the public rights of way network. Therefore, the Society requests the following measures are put in place:
- 4.24 Prior to any pre-construction work being carried out, the surface of the bridleway should be improved to allow for the increase in footfall caused by the additional people from the proposed development using it. This should be done in consultation with the British Horse Society to ensure that the correct surfacing will be used that will continue to allow horse riders and carriage drivers to use their horses in all four gates (i.e. walk,



trot, canter and gallop). In addition, any pre-construction or construction work being carried out, the bridleway should be permanently and securely fenced off from the development site with heavy duty wooden post and three railed fencing with Equi-fencing on it so that the routes are clearly defined and any ridden horses are safe from any contact with motorised vehicles or from loose dogs running through the fence line.

- 4.25 Barbed wire or metal stake fencing must not be used as they pose a serious danger to horses, horse riders and carriage drivers. In addition, a formal documented system is created by the developers that all contractors, sub-contractors and delivery vehicles are made aware that horse riders use the bridleways, byways and unclassified roads as well as local roads to gain access to them are instructed to take great care when entering or leaving the site and also the local roads.
- 4.26 In addition, the surface of the bridleways, byways and unclassified roads must not be damaged in such a way nor should any debris be disposed on it by the contractors. In the event of damage being caused to them, then the developer should be responsible for immediate repair and restoring the relevant public right of way. Furthermore, where construction traffic crosses the bridleways, byways or unclassified roads, all crossing points should be clearly signed that they are crossing a route used by horse riders and carriage drivers. The crossing points surface must be reinstated immediately after all the construction work had been completed and the fencing replaced.
- 4.27 The developers must also consult with the Access Department of HCC as well The British Horse Society to agree on the fencing and surfacing of the public rights of way.

#### CPRE Hertfordshire

- 4.28 CPRE has been at the forefront of objections to development in the Green Belt and opposed the release of the land affected by this at the Examination in Public of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2019. It is accepted that the adopted Local Plan now includes policy permitting the release of Green Belt in this location and the principle of the use of the land for residential development is thereby, established.
- 4.29 Attention is directed to the detail submitted, specifically phase one comprising 390 houses and associated provision. CPRE urges the Council to take the opportunity to establish a benchmark for high quality development in a highly sensitive area with a significant impact on the surrounding countryside and villages. It is understood a further Design Review Panel has been convened by the Council to consider this application, in line with Government guidance.
- 4.30 The establishment of the Design Review Panel is welcome and urge the Council to delay consideration of the application until the panel has assessed the proposal in detail. It would be unreasonably premature to determine the proposal in advance of receiving expert advice on an application which will have significant impacts on the countryside and surrounding villages.
- 4.31 The CPRE wishes to also raise the following significant concerns and urges the Council to seek considerable improvements to the present details application for the first phase of development.
  - 1. The primary concern is of a major opportunity lost with regard to the establishment of high quality and appropriate development with wide-ranging impacts on open countryside and rural villages. The applicant's Supporting Statement opens with the "Vision" which states that "West Stevenage will be a new neighbourhood with a great sense of place and its own distinct identity. It will be a development that embraces, the principles of healthy living, sustainability and water sensitive design with high quality buildings and well-design buildings and public realm".

2. The remainder of the Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement describe a wide range of aspirations relating to the achievement of planning goals and objectives which are expressed in general and unspecific terms and therefore unexceptional. Further investigation of the specific information provided in the application does not support the achievement of the initial expectation of the "Vision" in several significant areas.
3. The over-whelming impression of the plans submitted, both in terms of street layout and housing types, is of a standard housing estate with scant attention paid to principles of good urban design, sustainable transport, or the development of a coherent neighbourhood and sense of place. The recently published A Housing Audit for England (2020) undertaken by the Place Alliance and supported by the CPRE, identified the lack of design quality in developments on 142 greenfield sites throughout the country, and the criteria utilised in that study would be likely to provide a similar assessment when applied to this application.
4. The lack of ambition with regard to the standard house types proposed together with inadequate landscaping and drainage treatment is most disappointing, when there is the opportunity to provide an exemplar development as part of an extension to the original Stevenage New Town, demonstrating innovative design and provision which address the challenges of climate change in a sensitive and valued location.
5. It is most unlikely that the density of housing proposed will provide the level of population needed to support a viable local centre and the visual representations of shopping and other services and facilities suggest bland and banal buildings with uninteresting public spaces. Also particularly inadequate is the treatment of landscape and open space which arises from the lack of detailed consideration of landscape treatment throughout the proposed development, together with the uniformity of housing density, despite the assertions of the applicant's statement.
6. Landscape elements appear to have been added as after-thoughts and lack sensitivity and quality. A detailed landscape strategy is required which addresses and enhances the setting of the proposed development as well promoting biodiversity and sustainable drainage effectively.
7. Much play is made of the proposed development being an extension of Stevenage in terms of access to services and facilities and the contribution that the proposed development will make to the existing town centre. The inadequacy of the two road links to the east, under the motorway, is immediately apparent, as is the unattractive nature of the tunnels, and significant additional proposals are needed for sustainable transport links to reduce car dependency and improve accessibility.
8. The implications of the inadequate transport and access links to the east to facilitate usage of Stevenage services and facilities, and the lack of meaningful sustainable transport provision, means the proposed development will inevitably be car dominated. This will have major and detrimental impacts on the surrounding villages and lanes where congestion and danger to local residents will increase.
9. The proposed development fails in many respects to take account of climate change and carbon reduction requirements in terms of building design and resource use. Enforcement of the legislative requirements of the Road Traffic Reduction and Climate Change Acts, for example, is not generally presently undertaken and this is regrettable.
10. In declaring a Climate Emergency, Stevenage Borough Council has taken an important step in accepting the responsibility for tackling these issues, but, the aspirations of the "Vision" in these respects, as in the topics noted above, are not

translated in the development proposed, with its use of standardised housing units and car dominated layouts. Further proposals are needed to demonstrate how the legal objective of net zero carbon for development by 2050 will be achieved.

- 4.32 In summary, the CPRE considers the proposed low density proposal as detailed is a wasteful use of former Green Belt land and countryside. The NPPF requires the efficient use of land when there is a shortage, such as when Green Belt is released. The Housing Audit referred to above shows that low density frustrates good place-making and high quality design.
- 4.33 The CPRE advises that the housing densities and layout proposed will lead to urban sprawl which would be particularly inappropriate in this sensitive location, and the inevitably car dominated development as proposed will have damaging impacts on the surrounding highly valued open countryside and villages. The setting of the proposed development places a major responsibility on both the developers and the Council to seek the best possible quality of development.
- 4.34 The CPRE is committed to campaigning for truly sustainable development where development is permitted. It is hoped that the deliberations of the Design Review Panel will be made public and that the Council will seek significant improvements to the proposed development in the areas identified.
- 4.35 General comments on the scheme were also lodged by 14 Norton Green. They consider that the development should incorporate Chadwell Road in order to reduce roadways within the site. They also consider that this would allow for the sound mitigation measures could be placed close to the motorway where at the moment the area is wasted. They consider this could further improve the amount of green areas within the site. Further to this, they consider that there is an opportunity to continue the sound mitigation measures beyond the site in order to benefit the residents of Norton Green.
- 4.36 In addition to the above, they consider there is the good use and maintenance of Dyes Lane where at the moment this is poorly maintained. They also consider the additional entrance and underpass to the site to the north is well located to the benefit of the site in order to reduce pressure on the Bessemer Drive entrance. Moreover, the provision of a primary school and other local facilities are welcomed as they reduce pressure on facilities within Stevenage.
- 4.37 The location of the extended planning application to the north is also welcomed to protect the historic woodlands and SSSI areas to the west, south, and southeast. Solar power and solar thermal are said to be considered within the development but not included within any drawings or detailed plans. These should be included upon south facing roofs to minimise the energy consumption from other sources on the site.

#### Hitchin Forum

- 4.38 The Forum is opposed to the loss of the countryside and natural habitats and the effects of increased noise and disturbance on the adjoining countryside. The Forum is also concerned over the resulting loss of recreational access to the countryside, the need of which has been highlighted so starkly by the pandemic. The Forum is also very concerned that the removal of this site from the Green Belt sets a precedent that will result in future further loss of countryside and creeping urbanisation, west of the A1.
- 4.39 The Hitchin Forum also note the comments on linking up with North Herts District Council's proposed larger development to the North of Stevenage Borough Council's scheme, as contained in North Herts Council's letter. This letter acknowledges that North Herts District Council (NHDC) land is still Green Belt, and it not yet 'safeguarded' i.e. that is it taken out of the Green Belt so that it can be built upon, unless and until the

NHDC plan is approved. The Forum is opposed to the development of this land by NHDC for the same reasons as set out above (paragraph 4.36), and more so given the large size of the resulting combined development, which will result in increased urbanisation and congestion of traffic.

- 4.40 Please note that the majority of the comments which have been received have been summarised rather than set out verbatim. A full copy of the comments received can be viewed on the Council's website.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

### 5.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

- 5.1.1 The County Council as Highways Authority consider the development to be in accordance with National and local policies. Therefore, the Highways Authority's formal recommendation is that there are no objections to the development proposed subject to the recommended conditions and highway informatives as well as a Section 106 agreement to address sustainable transport.

### 5.2 Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Unit

- 5.2.1 Revised planning obligations are sought towards primary education mitigation in order to minimise the impact of development on Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) services for the local community. The contribution request has been reviewed in HCC's new Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions, adopted July 2021.
- 5.2.2 Contributions have been calculated based on the development mix and build trajectory. The development mix is based on figures provided as part of the hybrid application and from pre-application discussions.

Development Mix

Development Mix by Tenure and Size					
HOUSES			FLATS		
Number of bedrooms	A) Open Market	B) Affordable (Social Rent)	Number of bedrooms	A) Open Market	B) Affordable (Social Rent)
1	7		1	3	82
2	135	53	2	27	108
3	504	54	3		
4+	509	18	4+		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>190</b>

Year	Overall (1500 to enter)
2022	0
2023	20
2024	155
2025	155
2026	180
2027	180
2028	180
2029	180
2030	180
2031	132
2032	100
2033	38

5.2.3 Turning to the primary education contribution specifically, the contribution would be towards a new 3FE primary school on site. The contributions, based on the Hertfordshire Demographic Model, are £14,093,513 (indexation to be applied as of 1Q2020, BCIS All in TPI). This contribution also includes the cost of nursery provision at the new school. Based on the development mixes set out above, the peak forms of primary aged pupils modelled to arise from the development (based on the Hertfordshire Demographic Model) is 3.13FE. Therefore, it is also expected that the school site be transferred to HCC at nil cost.

5.2.5 The primary education contribution of £14,093,513 is to comprise two separate contributions. These are as follows:

- 1) Initial Primary Education Contribution of £9,681,600 towards a new on-site 2FE primary school, including nursery provision;
- 2) Further Primary Education Contribution of £4,411,913 towards further primary education provision and nursery provision on-site.

5.2.6 Triggers for payment are as follows:

- 10% of Initial Primary Education Contribution (£968,160) – Prior to the commencement of development;
- 60% of Initial Primary Education Contribution (£5,508,960) – Prior to the occupation of 20 dwellings;
- 30% of Initial Primary Education Contribution (£2,904,480) – Prior to the occupation of 250 dwellings;
- 100% of Further Primary Education Contributions (£4,411,913) – Prior to the occupation of 800 dwellings.

(All financial contributions listed above are to have indexation applied as of 1Q2020, BCIS All in TPI).

5.2.7 With regards to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), this development is situated within Stevenage's CIL Zone 1 and as such must pay the appropriate CIL charge. Notwithstanding this, HCC reserve the right to seek CIL contributions towards the provision of infrastructure as outlined in Stevenage Borough Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) through the appropriate channels.

5.2.8 **Monitoring Fees** – HCC will charge monitoring fees. These will be based on the number of triggers within each legal agreement with each distinct trigger point attracting a charge of **£340** (adjusted for inflation against RPI 1Q2021), with fees also required for work monitoring the land transfer of the school site in legal agreement. For

further information on monitoring fees please see section 5.5 of the Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions.

### 5.3 Historic England

- 5.3.1 The planning application proposes residential development comprising 390 dwellings with open space, leisure facilities and landscaping, on land west of Stevenage between Symonds Green and Norton Green. The application site lies within relative proximity to numerous heritage assets and therefore the proposed development has the potential to affect their settings. This includes heritage assets within Historic England's remit, namely Almshoe Bury Farm - a mid C13 timber-framed aisled house - latterly a farmhouse, listed grade I; and Dye's Farmhouse - a largely intact example of an early C17 timber-framed farmhouse, listed grade II\*.
- 5.3.2 Historic England note that the Symond's Green Conservation Area lies immediately to the north-east of the site, and that there are also various grade II listed buildings in relative proximity to the site. We also note the chapter 14 of the Environmental Statement (ES) entitled Historic Environment, which assesses the impact upon the setting of these highly graded listed buildings along with various other heritage assets including the Symonds Green Conservation Area, and concludes that the change to their setting would not result in harm to their significance.
- 5.3.3 Whilst it is appreciated that there may be various factors that might help to mitigate the visual impact - such as distance between site and heritage asset, rise and fall of the local terrain, intervening vegetation, we would have expected to have seen some graphical representations such as photomontages/ wire frame diagrams to demonstrate the effect and to substantiate the claims that have been made. We therefore recommend that your authority satisfies itself that it has sufficient information with which to understand and assess the impact of the proposal upon the setting of those heritage assets affected.

#### *Policy context*

- 5.3.4 The importance attached to setting is recognised by the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in guidance, including GPA3 *The Setting of Heritage Assets 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (published by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum, December 2017).
- 5.3.5 The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as, *'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'* (Annex 2).
- 5.3.6 Paragraph 194 makes clear that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

#### *Recommendation*

- 5.3.7 Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. It is considered that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 189 of the NPPF.
- 5.3.8 In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have

special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

- 5.3.9 Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice.

*Additional comments received 18 November 2021*

- 5.3.10 On the basis of the amended information, Historic England do not wish to offer any comments. It is suggested that the Council seeks the views of its specialist conservation and archaeological advisers, as relevant.

#### **5.4 Wood Environmental (Council's Conservation and Heritage Advisor)**

- 5.4.1 The Council's Conservation and Heritage Advisor reviewed the supporting information relating to the historic environment, specifically the impact on the built historic environment. Chapter 14 of Volume 2 of the Environmental statement deals with the historic environment, which is accompanied by Appendix 14.1. They advised that they visited the proposed development area and the identified designated assets in August 2020.

- 5.4.2 The Significance Criteria detailed between para 14.30 and 14.35 is consistent and compliant with professional standards. With regards to impact on setting of heritage assets the ES refers to Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 (GPA3): The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017, and states that the following 5 step process will be followed.

1. Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected,
2. Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated,
3. Assess the effects of proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful on that significance or the ability to appreciate it,
4. Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
5. Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

- 5.4.3 While the Council's Conservation and Heritage Advisor do not disagree with the comments and outcomes of the assessment, the above process has not been applied consistently, with some designated assets having several paragraphs devoted to the five steps, in others it is all covered in a single paragraph. They would expect each designated asset identified as potentially being affected by the proposals to be discussed consistently. They would also expect that for each designated asset a clear statement, as stated in the NPPF, saying what level of harm may be caused by the proposed development, and also referred to in the ES (para 14.16). The baseline and assessment of impact sections are not clearly separated making the following of the reasoning behind the recommendations for each asset difficult.

- 5.4.4 Recent judicial review has formalised the levels of harm that can be attributed to a heritage asset with regards to NPPF to only being Substantial Harm, Less than Substantial Harm and No Harm. (James Hall v City of Bradford, 2019). It must be clearly understood that both substantial and less than substantial harm, do constitute harm to, or to the setting of a designated heritage asset. Given that the ES summaries that there will be no harm to any of the identified designated assets there needs to be very clear statements as to why no harm will be caused. If it cannot be clearly stated that no harm is caused then it needs to be stated that there will be Less than Substantial Harm and then clearly defined this, even if the harm is very minor.

- 5.4.5 With regards to Appendix 14.1 it would benefit from additional photographs looking from the designated assets towards the proposed development site. This will help

demonstrate where views to the site are obscured or filtered. This is most appropriate for Almshoebury Farm, given its Grade I status. A plan showing where the photographs were taken from would also help in assessing any impact.

- 5.4.6 In summary, while the recommended outcomes appear reasonable, a slightly more focused wording to the ES chapter, ensuring that it closely follows the wording and processes of the NPPF and Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 (GPA3), with regards of establishing and defining harm would be beneficial to ensure that the planning committee have very clear justification in making any future determination of the application.

*Additional comments received*

- 5.4.7 Following a review of the addendum to the Environmental Statement, specifically paragraphs 78 to 91, the Council's Heritage Advisor states that they are satisfied that their comments have been addressed and the revision document provides a clearer account of the assessment process that was previously lacking. Therefore, the Advisor states that they have no further comments to make regarding the document.
- 5.4.8 The Heritage Advisor also notes Historic England comments, which whilst lacking in detail, further supports that the Environmental Statement is now acceptable with regards to built heritage and that there are no outstanding issues to address.

## **5.5 Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology**

- 5.5.1 Hertfordshire County Council's Archaeology Section was previously engaged on the Scoping Request for the development site as well as at pre-application stage. It was advised that archaeology be scoped into any Environmental Statement (ES), and recommended a programme of archaeological work that would inform the ES chapter submitted with the application.
- 5.5.2 The programme was to comprise a comprehensive geophysical survey and trial trenching evaluation of the entire proposed development, to be carried out prior to the determination of the planning application.
- 5.5.3 It is noted that a geophysical survey of the site had been undertaken. The results include a cluster of anomalies that may be associated with medieval activity identified in the 2002 trial trench evaluation. A small circular anomaly identified in the centre of the site may be a pre-historic plough-raised barrow. The ES suggests that overall, there is no indication of remains of greater than local significance, and that any remains will have been affected by later cultivation.
- 5.5.4 However, it remains necessary to test the results of the geophysical survey via a programme of archaeological trial trenching, potentially given that it is stated in the geophysical report that 'The data is dominated by geological anomalies reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the superficial deposits which overlie the chalk bedrock'. The survey had also detected quite a high level of background magnetic variation over most of the proposed development area.
- 5.5.5 As advised previously, the proposed development site comprises circa 81 hectares, which is primarily in arable use. The proposed development area has been subject to some (very) low level of archaeological evaluation in the past, with three trenches excavated in 2002. Two of these trenches identified archaeology with substantial quantities of medieval pottery (12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century) recovered from the first trench. It should be noted that this evaluation constituted just a 0.035% sample of the proposed development area – by way of comparison a comprehensive trial trenching a site is generally a 3% to 5% sample.



- 5.5.6 Recent archaeological excavations adjacent to the south east boundary of the site (at Norton Green) have uncovered Roman and medieval settlement activity of some density. A Roman road is present along the north-west boundary of the site, while, cropmarks of former field boundaries, as well as ridge and furrow, have been identified both in the north and south of the proposed development area. Archaeological evaluations outside the proposed development area to the north and west have identified areas of Bronze Age burial and ritual activity, Iron Age and Roman settlement, and possible abandoned medieval farmsteads.
- 5.5.7 Given the size and scale of the proposed development, its potential impact on in situ archaeological remains, and the archaeological potential of the landscape (including identified archaeological assets on site), HCC Archaeology recommend that a comprehensive trial trenching evaluation of the entire proposed development area be carried out prior to the determination of the planning application.
- 5.5.8 However, should the Council be minded to grant consent for the development, provision should be made, via appropriately worded conditions on any planning consent, to mitigate the impact of the development on *in situ* archaeological remains that may be present within the proposed development area. These conditions would cover the following:-
- A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation of the entire proposed development site, prior to the commencement of development; and
  - Such appropriate mitigation measures indicated as necessary by the evaluation. These may include:-
    - The preservation of any archaeological remains in situ, if warranted;
    - The appropriate archaeological excavation of any remains before any development commenced on the site;
    - The archaeological monitoring and recording of the groundworks of the development, including foundations, services, landscaping, roads, access etc (and also including a contingency for the preservation or further investigation of any remains then encountered);
  - The analysis of the results of the archaeological work, with provision for the subsequent production of report and an archive, and the publication of the results, as appropriate;
  - Such other provisions as may be necessary to protect the archaeological and historic interests of the site.

## **5.6 Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste**

### Minerals

- 5.6.1 According to British Geological Survey Data, the northern half of the proposed development site could be underlain with sand and gravel deposits. Adopted Minerals Local Plan Policy: Mineral Sterilisation, encourages the extraction of minerals (where there is known/found to be significant quantities) prior to non-mineral development taking place so that mineral resources are not needlessly lost.
- 5.6.2 HCC will not be asking for prior extraction to be explored and instead would encourage the opportunistic use of sand and gravel deposits within the construction of the developments, should suitable deposits be uncovered in the creation of the foundations, footings and/or SuDS.

## Waste

- 5.6.3 A Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) should be provided up front or as required by condition to collate information on and set out management strategies for waste arising during demolition and construction so that building materials from recycled and secondary sources can be used within the development. The total volumes of waste during enabling works (demolition) and construction works should be summarised.

## Waste Allocations and Waste Management Facilities

- 5.6.4 The Waste Site Allocations Development Plan document identifies a number of Employment Land Areas of Search (ELAS). It is considered that ELAS which are predominantly used for general industry (B2) and storage and distribution (B8) are potentially compatible with waste management uses.
- 5.6.5 ELAS 037, Gunnels Wood Employment Area, is located on the opposite side of the A1(M) to the development site. The potential for a waste management facility to come forward within ELAS 037 should be taken into consideration when the planning application is being considered.
- 5.6.6 According to HCC records, there are three waste management facilities located in Gunnels Wood Road employment area. These three sites include:-
- Stevenage Council Depot;
  - Alchemy Metals Ltd (Stevenage);
  - Stevenage Recycling Centre.
- 5.6.7 These facilities are safeguarded under Policy 5: Safeguarding of Sites of the adopted Waste Local Plan. The Borough Council should consider the potential impact the proposed development could have upon the existing safeguarded waste management facilities and the potential impact which could arise following subsequent occupation of such development.

## **5.7 Hertfordshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority**

- 5.7.1 It is understood the application seeks full and outline planning permission for a major development, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have assessed the following documents to support this application:
- Flood Risk Assessment produced by Mewies Engineering Consultants Ltd, report reference 25502-01-FRA-01 REV B, dated March 2021;
  - Design and Access Statement produced by Omega Architects, dated February 2021;
  - Additional documents submitted.
- 5.7.2 However, the information which has been provided does not provide a suitable basis for an assessment to be made of the flood risks arising from the proposed development. The LLFA therefore, objects to the grant of planning permission and recommend refusal on this basis for the following reasons.
- 5.7.3 Details of how surface water arising from a development is to be managed is required under the NPPF for all Major Planning Applications as amended within the NPPF from 6 April 2015. Therefore, for the LLFA to be able to advise the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that there is no flood risk from surface water, applications for full and outline planning permission include the following information.
- 5.7.4 The LLFA understand that as part of previous communications with the LLFA it has been discussed that half drain down times should be provided, SuDS features should

be used as multifunctional spaces to deliver a sustainably designed development. Therefore, no underground tanks and pipe storage should be considered as a primary approach. In addition, no pipe to pond design should be considered; from any hardstand or roads, two to three treatment stages should be considered; permeable paving should be used for any car parking areas; management and drainage of any proposed noise cancelling areas should be provided; maintenance of SuDS features should be considered for the lifetime of the development.

- 5.7.5 The LLFA acknowledge that the applicant has submitted a drainage strategy based on swales, filter trenches, attenuation ponds, infiltration basins and underground geocellular tanks providing storage for up to and including the 1 in 100 year rainfall event including 40% allowance for climate change. The proposed development site is located in Source Protection Zone 2 and 3 and it is proposed to infiltrate into the ground as the main surface water runoff discharge mechanism from the development site. The infiltration tests confirmed the potential for infiltrations at the north-eastern corner, south-eastern corner and western corners of the development site. Infiltration potential at different locations within the site was not confirmed.
- 5.7.6 The LLFA understand that the latest and most up to date drainage strategy has been provided in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment report. We would advise that the FRA should be updated to include the latest red line boundary of the proposed development. This should include all access points, access roads and underpasses. Moreover, the LLFA strongly advise that the submitted Design & Access Statement produced by Omega Architects should be updated to include the latest drainage strategy proposed in the submitted FRA.

#### Watercourses

- 5.7.7 The proposed drainage strategy has been divided into three drainage catchments with infiltration into the ground. We would advise the applicant should provide a hydrological catchment plan based on the existing topography of the site. We would advise the proposed development should mimic the existing hydrology arrangements on the site.
- 5.7.8 The LLFA acknowledges that the submitted FRA concludes there are no existing watercourses within the development site. However, along the existing Kitching Lane and Shepherds Lane there is a mapped ordinary watercourse, which has not been identified in the submitted FRA. Therefore, full information regarding this watercourse should be provided. It is possible that the watercourse is culverted at this stage. The LLFA would like to remind that any works proposed to be carried out that may affect the flow within an ordinary watercourse will require the prior written consent from Hertfordshire County Council under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991. This includes any permanent and or temporary works regardless of any planning permission.
- 5.7.9 The LLFA would recommend that an assessment of the entire site is completed to identify all watercourses and ditches that are crossing the development site or are flowing into the site. If appropriate evidence will be provided that they do not serve any drainage function, then they do not need to be included in any future drainage proposals. However, if proven otherwise, they have to be fully incorporated within the drainage strategy for the development site. In principle all ordinary watercourses should be fully incorporated within the proposed drainage strategy.
- 5.7.10 The applicant may want to consider deletion or diversion of any existing ordinary watercourses identified by HCC (mapped or unmapped). If the proposal would include the deletion of any of the existing ordinary watercourses, we recommend that full technical evidence is submitted to show that the watercourse does not serve any function, store or convey water. If the drainage strategy would include diversion of an ordinary watercourse, then we recommend that full technical assessment is provided

including cross sections of a watercourse, detailed calculations, detailed drawings and any other details of features that will impact the watercourse. Please note a deletion of an ordinary watercourse or its diversion requires a Land Drainage Consent.

- 5.7.11 The LLFA note in the vicinity of the proposed development site there is Langley Brook, which is a mapped ordinary watercourse. All possible impacts, including any indirect impact on this watercourse from the proposed development have to be properly assessed. Moreover, there are Potters Spring and Upper Kitching Spring areas located directly on the boundary of the site. There are potential existing ponds within these areas. Therefore, full assessment of impacts on those features from the proposed development should be provided. Any works proposed in the vicinity of these locations should be clarified.

#### Access points and roads

- 5.7.12 Following our assessment, we understand that the proposed development includes significant works for the access points from Meadway and Bessemer Way and the roads itself. As the LLFA, we are assessing flood risk and the suitability of the proposed drainage scheme within the red line boundary of the development site. Therefore, the applicant should provide full drainage details of how they intend to drain the proposed access points and underpasses from Meadway and Bessemer Way. As the proposed access points to the site and main roads are fully included in phase 1 of the proposed development and as part of the full planning application, we would advise that full drainage details should be provided at this stage.

- 5.7.13 The LLFA understand there is car parking proposed together with a pavilion at Symonds Green Lane with additional improvements at Redcar Drive to an existing roundabout. The applicant should clarify how these areas will be drained. The LLFA would advise the LPA that any off site mitigation works on adoptable highways, footways or cycleways should be supported by appropriate surface water drainage arrangements. Moreover, we would advise that any existing and proposed roads drainage arrangements should be fully clarified. It should be clarified how Kitching Lane and Dyes Lane will be drained. In Table 3 of the submitted FRA it has been summarised that around 45ha of the site will be developed, around 29.21ha is proposed as impermeable, while the actual site size is around 80ha. It seems that no strategic infrastructure and roads have been included in the table. Therefore, we would advise the applicant should clarify this aspect. It would be useful if the table could be updated to include the highlighted infrastructure.

#### Layout

- 5.7.14 The proposed development site is entirely a greenfield area. However, we have noticed the applicant is proposing to include multiple underground geocellular tanks and storage in oversized pipes. In line with Policy 18 introduced in our adopted LFRMS 2, proposals must demonstrate that the SuDS have been designed at or near the surface in line with the SuDS hierarchy. Underground attenuation features will only be acceptable where it is proven that alternate surface based methods are not appropriate or feasible. Therefore, as the LLFA, in principle for a greenfield site we would not accept any underground attenuation (tanks and oversized pipes). The applicant should consider that and update the scheme accordingly.
- 5.7.15 As set out above, table 3 summarised that around 29.21ha is proposed as impermeable area. We would advise that the proposed road area should be included in the comparison. In addition, paragraph 5.12 stated that plus 10% of urban creep will be added to consider any future development. However, based on the analysis of the numbers we do not believe that 10% has actually been added. This should be clarified by the applicant and the FRA should be updated accordingly. Moreover, the LLFA would strongly advise that a detailed drainage layout for the entire Phase 1

development and any dependant areas will have to be submitted for the entire red line boundary. Routes of exceedance will also need to be assessed and identified for rainfall events that exceed the 1 in 100 year plus climate change event.

- 5.7.16 In the submitted FRA the applicant proposed at plot soakaways, which may be considered, subject to detailed design. A big part of the submitted drainage strategy should consider a detailed design. However, no mention of at plot level soakaways has been provided. We would advise the applicant should clarify if plot level soakaways or any other SuDS features will be considered. As the LLFA, we would expect some level of surface water storage and treatment train to be provided at plot level to deliver a sustainable design within a strategic development site. At source management and treatment needs to be considered. Moreover, the LLFA would expect discharge at greenfield runoff rates for relevant rainfall events to be provided from each plot, care home, school or employment area. The drainage strategy should be updated accordingly, and any proposed SuDS features should be indicated on a detailed drainage layout.
- 5.7.17 Paragraph 5.16 of the submitted FRA refers to discrete drainage systems. We would be grateful if the applicant could provide further clarification on that matter, as we are unsure what this involves.
- 5.7.18 In the submitted Design and Access statement it has been indicated that some ponds or basins will be permanently wet. In the submitted FRA we have found very little information regarding this aspect. Therefore, the applicant should provide full information regarding this aspect. If any of the proposed SuDS storage features will be permanently wet, it should be clearly indicated on all the submitted plans. Moreover, we would like to remind that permanent water levels should be excluded from any available storage estimates within relevant SuDS features.
- 5.7.19 The LLFA have noticed that the applicant intends to provide major noise cancelling bunds. We note this aspect has been previously discussed with the LLFA and we have advised that the bunds have to be properly drained with attenuation and positive discharge. We note it has been stated that filter drains will be provided to capture any surface water runoff from the bunds. However, it has not been indicated on any submitted layout. Considering 1 in 3 slopes are being proposed, the applicant needs to clarify how those bunds will be drained from both sides. It needs to be clarified how the flows will be captured, slowed down, attenuated and positively discharged. Cross section drawings of the bunds and associated drainage should be provided.
- 5.7.20 The LLFA have noticed at manhole S65 there is an unrestricted flow assumed from 1ha area. The applicant should clarify this design. As the LLFA, we would expect every part of the site to be limited to greenfield runoff rates, so that at source management could be introduced. Moreover, we would like to highlight that any proposed parking or road areas should be properly drained and treated prior to the discharge into the strategic drainage network (piped network). The LLFA note some cross section and long section drawings of the proposed basins have been submitted. We would advise the applicant should consider forebays for all infiltration and attenuation basins. The applicant should also provide detailed drawings of all proposed SuDS features. This should include all swales, filter trenches and any proposed gabion walls.
- 5.7.21 The LLFA note there are sport facilities including sport pitches being proposed as part of the development. We would advise that any sport pitch areas should be positively drained. As a guide, the applicant should consider 50% runoff from any greenfield sport areas or pitches and 100% runoff from fully drained sport fields or any artificial surfaces. Play areas may also need to be drained. Following the LLFA's review of the submitted documents, they have noticed additional waterbodies identified on the Site Layout Masterplan drawing that were not shown on the drainage strategy drawing. The applicant needs to clarify this aspect.

### Phasing arrangements

- 5.7.22 The LLFA understand that the current drainage strategy has been designed based on three drainage catchments. The applicant should clarify how this corresponds with the proposed phases of the development. It should be clarified when each SuDS features will be delivered, as there are cross references between different drainage catchments and different phases of the development. Therefore, phasing arrangements for the drainage network implementation should be clarified together with the timing of implementation of the proposed strategic drainage network. We would advise the applicant should provide a plan with clearly identified drainage catchments and SuDS features actively draining each catchment. Moreover, we would like to highlight that delivery of SuDS structures required to drain phase 1 have to be clarified. This should include delivery of drainage for all road infrastructures.

### Treatment train

- 5.7.23 The applicant has stated that highways areas will have a minimum of two treatment stages. Treatment train provided from all hardstanding within the proposed development should be assessed. This is because the LPA needs to be satisfied that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact to the water quality of any receiving surface water body with regards to the Water Framework Directive.
- 5.7.24 The LLFA would like to advise that for phase 1, as it includes detailed design, a detailed assessment of the proposed treatment train has to be provided. We would like to highlight that each path of runoff conveyance should be separately assessed.

### Surface Water modelling

- 5.7.25 The applicant has submitted surface water drainage modelling with detailed parts of modelling undertaken in MicroDrainage. Overall, we would advise the submitted model should include better description and be clearly cross referenced with the submitted drainage layout. This should include clearly labelled nodes and manhole numbers for the entire phase 1 and the strategic network.
- 5.7.26 The applicant should ensure all model summaries for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year rainfall including 40% for climate change allowance are submitted. The applicant should provide actively drained catchment areas plan. This is to ensure that appropriate areas have been included in the modelling. Total areas (actively drained) from MicroDrainage modelling should be clarified.
- 5.7.27 The LLFA have noticed in the submitted model there are identified surcharges for the 1 in 1 year rainfall, floods for the 1 in 100 year rainfall including 40% for climate change allowance. We would like to remind that no surcharge should occur for the 1 in 1 year and not flooding for up to and including the 1 in 30 year. If any flooding will be identified for the 1 in 100 year rainfall event this should be shown on a plan with identified area, volume and flood depth. As the LLFA, we need to ensure the proposed development will manage all surface water runoff for up to and including the 1 in 100 year rainfall including 40% for climate change allowance. We would be particularly concerned if the design would consider flooding within the strategic network for any events up to and including the 1 in 100 year rainfall including 40% for climate change allowance and we would advise the applicant this approach should not be included in the design. The applicant should update the strategy accordingly.
- 5.7.28 In addition to the above, it has also been noticed that half drain down times have been estimated for some SuDS features. Half drain down times for basin 1A is 1684 minutes; for infiltration basin 1B is 1585 minutes; for infiltration basins 3A, 3B and 3C exceeds 7 days. We would like to remind that half drain down time should not exceed 24 hours. The submitted outcomes are not acceptable. Therefore, the applicant should

update the strategy and provide revised half drain down time estimates for all SuDS storage features. The LPA needs to be minded that the applicant needs to provide a drainage strategy following the design standards.

- 5.7.29 The LLFA note the applicant has provided catchment 3 modelling for the 1 in 500 year event. Half drain down times are exceeding 7 days. Moreover, it is stated that outfall is too low, and design is unsatisfactory. The applicant needs to clarify this and explain why 1 in 500 years model has been provided. Based on the review of the submitted model, the LLFA would like to advise FEH 2013 rainfall data should be used for all calculations. In the submitted model on page 185 it is stated that outfall is too low, and design is unsatisfactory. The applicant needs to clarify this and update the design for cascade summary for infiltration basin 3C.
- 5.7.30 The LLFA note infiltration coefficient has been considered for side and base of the proposed infiltration structures. We understand there is limited potential for infiltration on the development site. Therefore, the applicant should clarify why side and base have been considered and appropriate technical evidence should be provided in support. Usually we would expect only at base level infiltration to be modelled.
- 5.7.31 As part of the design the applicant considers significantly large, strategic SuDS features proposed on surface. We would advise that all on surface features have to be positively drained, which means they should be included in the actively drained areas in the model, as all rainfall falling on them needs to be considered and accounted for.

#### Additional comments

- 5.7.32 The LLFA understand that infiltration is being proposed as the main and only discharge mechanism from the proposed development site. We note infiltration testing was variable within the site and failed in most part of the trial pits. Testing undertaken at SA01, SA02 and SA08 have been considered viable. However, as infiltration failed in most part of the site, normally we would consider infiltration not being suitable. Moreover, in SA08 trials 2 and 3 have been extrapolated. Therefore, we would advise the applicant that BRE 365 Digest infiltration testing should be undertaken at the exact locations and depths that infiltration features are being proposed. Preferably the applicant should undertake some additional testing at this stage, but alternatively it could be conditioned for later detail design following all cut and fill works and any remediation works.
- 5.7.33 Moreover, detailed long term monitoring of groundwater should be undertaken within the entire site to understand its impact on the proposed drainage strategy. The LLFA note part of the site lies within a former landfill area. No mention of the former landfill has been included in the submitted FRA. The applicant needs to fully consider all implications related to this fact, as it may materially impact on the proposed drainage strategy.
- 5.7.34 The submitted geo-environmental desk study report covered small part of the development site (the former landfill only). Made ground has been encountered between 3 to 6 metres and possible ground contamination has been discovered. Moreover, groundwater has been encountered at up to 1.2 mbgl. Therefore, the applicant needs to clarify how infiltration will work without any risk of contamination considering there are infiltration features proposed within the former landfill area.
- 5.7.35 The applicant should provide a full assessment related to the possibility of sink holes and dissolution features appearing within the site. No reference has been included in the submitted FRA. Land stability issues have to be identified. Please note there are infiltration features proposed within the area. The LLFA understand major cut and fill activities are being considered as part of the delivery of the proposed development. The applicant should provide further information in relation to cut and fill activities

planned. The LPA needs to be minded of the environmental impact of any proposed activities.

5.7.36 A detailed maintenance and management plan should be submitted covering maintenance activities for all SuDS features for the lifetime of the proposed development. The applicant will need to satisfy the LPA that the proposed drainage scheme can be adopted and maintained for its lifetime. Underground and any mechanical features are likely to carry a higher risk as a result of poor maintenance.

5.7.37 The proposed development includes significant construction works for a longer period of time. Therefore, during construction surface water runoff management needs to be provided and the LPA needs to be satisfied that the proposed works will not increase any flood risk during construction.

#### Informative to the LPA

5.7.38 The LLFA recommend the LPA to obtain a maintenance plan that explains and follows the manufacturer's recommendations for maintenance or that it follows the guidelines explained in The SuDS Manual by CIRIA. A maintenance plan should also include an inspection timetable with long term action plans to be carried out to ensure efficient operation and prevent failure.

5.7.39 The LLFA would like to highlight to the LPA that for the full and outline planning applications the applicant intends to use the wider strategic drainage scheme. For the LLFA to advise the LPA that the proposed drainage strategy will not increase flood risk in the area it is essential that the applicant provides further details of the wider strategic drainage scheme. The applicant can overcome the LLFA objection by submitting information which covers the deficiencies highlighted above and demonstrates that the development will not increase risk elsewhere and where possible reduces flood risk overall and gives priority to the use of sustainable drainage methods.

5.7.40 If this cannot be achieved, the LLFA are likely to maintain our objection to the application. The LLFA ask to be re-consulted when the amended surface drainage assessment will be submitted. The LLFA will provide you with bespoke comments within 21 days of receiving formal re-consultation. Our objection will be maintained until an adequate surface water management scheme has been submitted.

## **5.8 Highways England**

5.8.1 Highways England has placed a holding objection the application until xxx 2022. This is because following a review of the updated Transport Assessment by Highways England's consultants AECOM, there is a need to remodel and mitigate trips using the A1(M), Junction 8 as well as undertake an exercise to reduce accidents to the junction. The detailed recommendation, which they have regarded as important, but not critical to the acceptability of the planning application are as follows:

- Confirmation to be provided that any merge/diverge assessments undertaken by the applicants Transport Consultant has been undertaken against the existing layout and the SMP (Smart Motorway Programme) flows have not been used in the junction capacity assessment;
- Clarification is required on why a combination of WebTRIS flows and COMET flows have been used rather than the COMET flows. Furthermore a comparison is required with regards to the WebTRIS flows compares with the COMET flows on the mainline;
- The growth factors used to calculate the relevant flows should be provided;
- Clarification should be provided on the flows used in the Merge and diverse Assessments;



- With regards to A1(M) Junction 8, further modelling works should be carried out to reduce any excessive queues, in order to demonstrate the potential impact on the offslip queues;
- With regards to A1(M) Junction 8, further work should be carried out to eliminate any excessive queues in both the 'without development' and 'with development' scenarios and to demonstrate the impact that this would have on queuing on the entry arms;
- Road safety mitigation measures should be identified at A1(M) Junction 8;
- A junction capacity assessment should be undertaken at A1(M) Junction 9.

5.8.2 A fully copy of the technical note from Highways England and AECOM can be viewed on the Council's website for consideration.

## **5.9 North Hertfordshire District Council**

5.9.1 The response highlights some of the key concerns relating to North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) safeguarded land. The comments provided do not cover other key issues such as climate change, ecology, biodiversity and landscape, but trust the Council will consider these issues in consultation with relevant statutory and advisory consultees when assessing the proposed planning application.

5.9.2 The site makes up part of allocated site Policy HO2 within the adopted Stevenage Local Plan, so there are no concerns regarding the principle of the proposed development. NHDC support the principle of development at the proposed location. In terms of context, the proposed site is located adjacent to the boundaries between the two authorities. The land next to the proposed site within North Hertfordshire is presently in the Green Belt. However, Policy SP8 of the North Hertfordshire emerging Local Plan 2011-2031 proposes that this land is removed from the Green Belt and safeguarded for potential future development pending a review of the Plan in line with advice in paragraph 140 of the NPPF. NHDC intention is to review the safeguarded land at the next local plan review.

5.9.3 Policy IMR2 of the new Local Plan states that an early review to determine whether the plan needs to either be partially or wholly updated is due to take place by the end of 2023. NHDC emerging Local Plan is clear that (without prejudice to that process) the current presumption is that review process will identify a need for a comprehensive local plan update.

5.9.4 As the proposed safeguarded land is located next to the proposed application site, NHDC presently anticipate any future use of it will rely upon primary and secondary access points in the West Stevenage site within Stevenage Borough. However, the difficulty is that given the currently unresolved status of the safeguarded land, NHDC are not in a position to clearly articulate likely outcomes for the adjoining land in NHDC, create a masterplan or combine the masterplanning for the two sites. The North Hertfordshire emerging Local Plan is still at Examination. It is anticipated that the examination will conclude before the end of the year with a decision on adoption to take place early 2022.

5.9.5 The extent of the proposed safeguarded land in NHDC mirrors that formerly referred to or identified in the (now revoked) East of England Plan and the previous withdrawn applications for development across the land within both SBC and NHDC. Although these former schemes provide some historic context as to the potential scale and nature of any development in North Hertfordshire, they cannot be relied upon in consideration of the current proposals.

5.9.6 Despite the above, NHDC would like to ensure the West of Stevenage site is designed and developed in a way which means both authorities can collaboratively plan and ensure that there are no cross boundary issues in the future which will prevent

development coming forward on the safeguarded site. This is consistent with Policies HO2 and IT2 of the adopted Stevenage Local Plan which require that any development in Stevenage should be designed to not prejudice further expansion into North Hertfordshire.

- 5.9.7 NHDC hope the Council takes their comments into consideration as they consider they are important to achieving sustainable, well designed places.

#### Masterplanning

- 5.9.8 To allow for positive planning and to ensure that the proposed planning application would not prejudice any future development as required by adopted Development Plan policy, it is recommended that an appropriate masterplan should be developed for the West of Stevenage site and secured through the current application by condition or legal agreement along with any requirements for future masterplanning work, design codes etc.
- 5.9.9 Policy SP8 of the adopted Stevenage Local Plan requires significant developments to be masterplanned to ensure the delivery of high-quality schemes. Policy HO2 requires a masterplan for the whole site which must be approved prior to the submission of the detailed development proposals for the site. Criterion a. of Policy HO2 requires that the applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary in the future, into safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire. The term “masterplan” is not defined in the Stevenage Local Plan or the extant Stevenage Design Guide SPD either in terms of documentation or process. NHDC officers are not aware of any standalone SBC guidance to this effect. This is therefore open to interpretation. Although land north of the proposed site is missing from the planning application, NHDC recommend that a masterplan should be completed to satisfy the criteria of Policy HO2.
- 5.9.10 A number of plans are submitted with the application including access and movement, Green Infrastructure and land use but these are not clearly drawn together in a single document clearly identifiable as a comprehensive masterplan. Creating a single and clearly identifiable masterplan document to be secured through the permission would help us understand the key parameters and principles of the planning proposal and establish an implementable vision for the West of Stevenage site. It would also ensure that there is sufficient design detail and quality in the approval documentation.
- 5.9.11 A clearly defined masterplan of this nature would help resolve some of the comments raised. Particularly, concerns regarding securing sufficient access to the safeguarded land now that land north of the site (but within the land allocation) is excluded from the proposal. A masterplan can ensure that despite this change, the proposal is consistent with policies, sustainable, well-designed and it would not prejudice any future development coming forward.
- 5.9.12 A scheme of this scale will take a number of years to implement following any grant of outline planning permission. NHDC presently anticipates that the proposed local plan review outlined above will take place within the lifespan of the current planning application. It is therefore recommended that SBC adopts a flexible masterplanning approach allowing key parameters to be revised and updated to accommodate the outcomes of (but not necessarily limited to):

1. Further detailed design work as phases of the currently proposed outline application are brought forward;
2. any evolution of proposals for development for the currently ‘missing’ land north of the application site; and / or
3. subject to review, (any evidence in relation to) the North Hertfordshire safeguarded land.

- 5.9.13 Should the safeguarded land come forward for development in the Local Plan review, there might be an opportunity to create a joint masterplan between the two authorities covering the entirety of the land west of Stevenage to deliver an integrated and coherent scheme and help resolve any connectivity and design issues. If the Council decided to adopt a flexible masterplan for this application at this stage, NHDC would be willing to provide further comments and assistance (e.g. on detailed wording of conditions) and work collaboratively with Stevenage Borough Council on this matter.
- 5.9.14 At this stage, and pending greater clarity on the matters above, it is important that the application and masterplan consider and resolve any existing or potential ransoms or impediments which may prevent movement and connections across the administrative boundary. If there are any ransom strips owned by Stevenage Borough Council or Homes England, these would need to be addressed in a S106 agreement/planning conditions.

#### Access, Transport and Movement

- 5.9.15 The proposed planning application does not include the whole of the site which is allocated in the Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan. This raises some concerns regarding access to the safeguarded land. Although the indicative plans accompanying the application show a potential primary route linking from the application site, delivery of this is currently reliant on land which does not form part of the application and for which there are no current proposals. NHDC concern is there is no mechanism to secure an access link or guarantee its delivery. In these circumstances and pending greater certainty (as per points above), the access parameter plans for the land within the application over which Stevenage Borough Council can exert control should allow for at least one primary access to the administrative boundary within the current application red line. Should the land which is missing come forward in the future, this could be resolved through an update to the masterplan as suggested above.
- 5.9.16 The masterplan parameters should also ensure there are multiple potential access routes for walking, cycling, public transport and vehicular which connect the proposed site to the safeguarded land. Should the safeguarded land be allocated for development in the next review, this would improve permeability between the two sites, encourage active travel in line with Local Transport Plan objectives and reduce reliance upon on any one individual access point. The masterplan should identify the primary and secondary routes to and from the safeguarded land. Also, key routes and connections should be compliant with national policy LTN1/20 which promotes sustainable travel. Within Policy LTN1/20 key routes should include segregated vehicle, cycle, and pedestrian routes as they are considered to be the best way to promote sustainable travel. Compliance with this policy can be demonstrated in a masterplan. Lower order streets should also promote active travel routes through greenways, shared surfaces and on carriageway cycling.
- 5.9.17 Lastly, it is important that any cross-boundary highway impacts are considered from the proposed development with any necessary contributions secured and appropriately worded to allow for appropriate mitigation to be delivered outside of SBC where required. Whilst most of the increase traffic will be directed through Stevenage, it is important that this application and any future application demonstrate how it has taken account of the cumulative transport impacts of this site and other large-scale, planned sites within both authorities. The application must also demonstrate how such cumulative impacts will be addressed and mitigated. Our authorities have previously discussed with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) the potential for a focussed transport strategy for the northern Stevenage and Wymondley area which can assess impacts from a number of proposed schemes in the area and co-ordinate (contributions towards) developer contributions.

## Education

- 5.9.18 In regard to education provision, we understand that the need for additional secondary school education infrastructure over the period to 2031 is now likely to be met within Stevenage through the re-use of the former Barnwell East site. This site is allocated in Stevenage's Local Plan and we understand that proposals to deliver a new secondary school here are well advanced. The Barnwell East site is some distance from the application site. However, the provision of this additional capacity may create a 'cascade effect' allowing early phase needs from this site to be met at existing secondary schools in the Borough.
- 5.9.19 However, the longer-term strategy for secondary education needs remains to be determined. NHDC's new Local Plan makes provisional allowances for further secondary provision in the wider Stevenage area, recognising that that the sites it has identified do not presently meet HCC operational preferences. The Plan makes clear this is an issue that will need to be kept under review. SBC, HCC and NHDC have previously agreed to continue working collaboratively on this issue. Peak demand for secondary education places arising from new development normally arises some years after development has commenced (or even completed). The demographics of new developments tend to be skewed towards those with younger families or couples without children but with intentions to start a family. It is therefore likely that that there will be greater clarity on this issue as the planning and implementation of this site is progressed.
- 5.9.20 Subject to the NHDC local plan review process outlined above, if the safeguarded site were to come forward, previous proposals and schemes for this site suggest it could provide in the order of 3,000 homes if fully utilised. A scheme of this size would be large enough to require and support the delivery of a secondary school. In such a scenario, NHDC would anticipate any school would be scaled to accommodate the demand from both the safeguarded site and the current application site to create a coherent new community. NHDC understand that Hertfordshire County Council retain aspirations to deliver further schools provision beyond that which can be delivered at Barnwell East on the North East side of Stevenage. However, the safeguarded site may provide a suitable alternative or additional location as part of a holistic strategy.
- 5.9.21 Although SBC operate a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Planning Practice Guidance allows for the parallel collection of s106 contributions where this can be justified. Given (i) the significant costs of delivering new schools (ii) the level of contributions towards secondary education suggested by the County Council's recently adopted toolkit for a scheme of this scale both in their own right and when compared to the likely CIL receipts for this scheme (iii) the range of matters those CIL receipts would be expected to cover (iv) the unresolved strategy for meeting education need that will arise over the lifetime of this development and (v) the long-term potential for additional education provision to be made within NHDC which could serve this development, we feel there is justification for HCC and Stevenage Borough Council to require S106 contributions alongside CIL for long term secondary school requirements. Any S106 contributions should be flexibly worded (within the parameters of the CIL regulations) to allow for the delivery of a secondary school within the wider area.

## Overall urban design

- 5.9.22 Should the safeguarded land be allocated for development in the Local Plan review, the proposed development will set the immediate urban context and therefore be a significant influence upon the design for any future use of the safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire. Therefore, NHDC recommend that Stevenage Borough Council use design codes and masterplanning to secure a high quality, well-designed scheme. NHDC request that they are involved with any consultations on design codes and masterplanning to help with the design process.

### Drainage

- 5.9.23 NHDC note that in the consultation response, Thames Water raised concerns that the existing foul water network infrastructure will not be able to accommodate the needs of the development proposal and they have requested that this needs to be addressed through a planning condition.

## **5.10 Environmental Health Department**

### Air Quality

- 5.10.1 Following a review of the documentation submitted, the development is unlikely to have a measurable negative effect on the Borough as a whole. Appropriate mitigation methods during construction to minimise the production of dust should be applied.

### Contamination

- 5.10.2 On contaminated land, where there may be a history of dumping, there are no records or had site of any records to this, the types of material, nor the extent. Therefore, the developers will have to exercise all due diligence at the time of works taking place to protect users, present and future, of the site.

### Noise

- 5.10.3 The proposed development is adjacent to the A1(M) and will be subject primarily to traffic noise, the outline planning application also includes a neighborhood centre and a school where plant noise which may affect residential dwellings is a consideration.
- 5.10.4 The Environmental Health Officers has reviewed the submitted information, specifically Environmental Statement, Land west of Stevenage, Volume 2 dated March 2021, Environmental Statement Addendum dated November 2021 and associated figures attached in Appendix G.
- 5.10.5 Appropriate Design Criteria have been selected and noise monitoring undertaken. The impact of plant noise associated with the proposed local centre and school, the potential future doubling in size of Luton Airport, construction activities and associated noise have all been considered. Noise modelling has been used to determine noise levels across the site (Appendix G).
- 5.10.6 Noise mitigation measures were found to be required. Specifically, section 11.96 (mainly) 4 metre high earth bund and 3 metre acoustic fence (minimum mass density 10 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) extensive noise barriers adjacent to the A1(M). This aspect of the Application may be approved.

### Noise - Full planning permission

- 5.10.7 The Figures in the report indicate properties which require “alternative” ventilation (acoustic trickle vents or mechanical ventilation) and glazing specifications; one property also requires a 2 metre fence (figure 11.14) However, as per Section 11.283 the Developer will be required to specify the proposed ventilation.

### Noise - Outline planning application

- 5.10.8 The proposed development involves residential dwellings, a school, a local centre and an employment area. Figures in the report indicate properties which require alternative (i.e. mechanical) ventilation, glazing specifications, and numerous dwellings adjoining

the A1M which require 2 metre fencing. However, as per Section 11.283 the Developer will be required to specify the proposed ventilation.

5.10.9 Mitigation measures in respect of the school are detailed in figure 11.15. Plant noise from the local centre and school have been considered and a cumulative noise level proposed. The proposed mitigation measures are all acceptable however this is an outline application and subject to change.

5.10.10 With regard to external amenity areas, a small number of dwellings exceed the upper guideline value of 55 dB LAeq by 2dB. The guidance in BS8233 and ProPg Planning and Noise (Element 3) advise that such elevated noise levels can be acceptable as the site is adjacent to the strategic transport network, i.e. the A1(M), subject to the residents having access to a relatively quiet publically accessible external amenity area, which is the case in this development.

#### Noise Conclusion

5.10.11 That the application from a noise perspective, is considered to be acceptable subject to conditions.

### **5.11 Council's Parks and Amenities Section**

#### Landscaping

5.11.1 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section have serious concerns regarding the current landscaping proposals, particularly as part of the permission sought for the first phase of 390 dwellings. Currently the proposed landscaping scheme within the **streetscape** consists mainly of grass and trees of limited variety which will give it a very sterile feel.

- There is currently minimal shrub planting proposed within the streetscape with only one proposed shrub species, *Euonymus japonicus 'bravo'*. (As per sheet 7 of the details landscaping drawing).
- Landscaping should be designed to provide an attractive amenity, helping to break up and green the built environment. It should show year-round interest and colour whilst also showing consideration for the long-term maintenance. The current design falls noticeably short in this regard.
- Shrub planting shall be pollinator friendly, drought tolerant and suitable for the location.
- Bulb planting should be incorporated into the design to add a flush of seasonal colour. The use of naturalising bulbs shall be desired.
- The landscaping needs to work harder in providing an attractive amenity that functions to provide environmental, social and economic benefit. The current design shows serious oversight and the developer must do better in mitigating the impact of the built environment, particularly as the area falls within a rural setting.

5.11.2 Given the size of the schemes, there is a clear absence of a landscaping strategy. The proposed design appears to include many grassed / turfed areas around parking bays which could cause maintenance issues. The Council's Parks and Amenities Section highly recommend that the amount of grass and/or planting around the parking bays be reduced. Any proposed planting that abuts a parking space must make allowances to provide enough space for vehicle access and egress, maintainability (when occupied) and maintaining good visibility. There also appear to be several proposed narrow grass strips in the design. Anything smaller than 1m width should be omitted as these could struggle to establishment and/or cause maintenance issues.

- 5.11.3 The design of the soft and hard landscaping must allow for plenty of space, especially in consideration for large turning vehicles. This is to protect landscaped areas from damage. Any area of open space shall be suitably protected from unauthorised vehicle access yet being mindful of providing access for maintenance. This could be achieved through the use of bollards, bunding, etc. Spindle (*Euonymus europeaus*) could be included into the ecological shrub mix.
- 5.11.4 The Council is increasingly mindful of the potential threats posed to the environment from imported pests and diseases as well as a result from climate change. All plant stock shall be evidenced to be UK sourced and grown in accordance to the relevant British Standards. Due to the size of the scheme, a minimum 24 month defects establishment guarantee on planting is required ensure suitable establishment of the landscape.
- 5.11.5 Any proposed bark mulching of planted areas shall require to be topped up when required to retain moisture and control weed growth. Planted beds shall also be designed to ensure bark mulch cannot wash off onto surrounding surfaces or block drainage etc.
- 5.11.6 Maintenance – It is Parks understanding that the maintenance of all the landscaping, play areas and features, SuDs, street cleansing, trees, hard landscape and sports facilities are to be undertaken by the appointment of a management company. We require further details of this arrangement and strategy to ensure that all elements continue to be maintained to a good and suitable standard in perpetuity, which shall also include for repairs and replacements. Any maintenance arrangement must have suitable safeguards in place to guarantee continued maintenance.

#### Trees

- 5.11.7 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section also have concerns about the proposed street tree planting as the current designs show a very limited species choice. As per my comments for the landscaping, this would give the feel of a very sterile environment and would limit the ability of the site to adapt to possible biosecurity threats from imported pests and disease, climate change etc. For example, a disease that affected *Acer spp.* would mean a loss of a majority of the street trees. Therefore, we need to see a much greater species and form choice within the proposed streetscape.
- 5.11.8 The current designs show proposals for a number of trees to be planted very close to roads and paths. This would make them liable to damage from vehicles, particularly those that are high sided. Consideration must be given to providing enough space for the trees to grow without causing issues to surrounding hard surfaces, vehicles, buildings etc. Consideration could also be given in some cases to fastigate tree forms.
- 5.11.9 Rather than 'instant trees', preference will be given to planting better quality tree stock (10-14 cm girth) to allow increased establishment success. Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) should be considered within the tree selection, both for the street and woodland mix.
- 5.11.10 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section note a proposed 12-month defect establishment period. For trees, the developer must incorporate a defect period of no less than 5 years to ensure satisfactory maintenance and establishment of the trees. Any trees that are required to be replaced during this period must include an additional 5 year guarantee after re-planting. We note the proposed use of *Alnus spp.* (Alder) in

the design. We recommend that these trees only be planted in open spaces and sited away from footpaths/ hard surfaces etc. as they can cause maintenance issues.

- 5.11.11 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section note the proposal to use tree tubes within the newly planted woodland areas. Any maintenance regime is to make allowance to ensure removal of tree tubes, stakes and protective fencing once suitably matured. Preference should be given to reducing plastic use with biodegradable alternatives. All tree planting is to be in accordance with the Amenity Tree Management Policy, 2021. The Council's Parks and Amenities Section require evidence that all the proposals align with this policy, including achieving 30% canopy cover, suitable dwelling foundations etc.

#### Meadway access arrangements/ Redcar Drive

- 5.11.12 There are currently considerable parking issues along Redcar Drive. The Council's Parks and Amenities Section require further details that show how this issue will be addressed and managed to ensure that the issue is not exacerbated. Utilisation of the parking for Meadway playing fields as alleviation shall not be acceptable.

- 5.11.13 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section require details of when the proposed access works will be delivered in relation to the development. Whilst we anticipate details being provided at a later stage, the Council's Parks and Amenities Section need to ensure that any pavilion replacement meets the requirements for now and future use – similarly with parking provision. There is also opportunity to improve the buildings energy efficiency (renewable if possible) and to incorporate suitable landscaping. We also require details on how disruption to the park will be minimised while facilities are being built e.g. temporary car park provision, pavilion facilities, timing etc. prior to the commencement of construction.

- 5.11.14 Whilst it is not clear in the current details, the proposed access works will likely result in the removal of trees and shrubs to accommodate the new layout. As per the Amenity Tree Management Policy, we shall seek CAVAT recovery for trees damaged or impacted as result. The Council's Parks and Amenities Section also seek a 3:1 replacement ratio for those trees lost.

- 5.11.15 The existing ancient hedgerow on Symonds Green Lane shall be retained and protected in full.

#### Bessemer Drive access arrangements

- 5.11.16 The proposed scheme must consider how it can address some of the issues for neighbouring Norton Green and Chadwell Road. Due to the limited access and manoeuvrability within Norton Green, issues can occur with HGVs causing damage to the Common. As such we expect access onto Chadwell Road to be limited for all heavy traffic (except only for access) to help address this issue. There is also very regular fly tipping issues along Chadwell road and Norton Green – there is an opportunity to look at how the scheme can be designed to help address this issue.

- 5.11.17 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section have concerns of the potential impact on Norton Green Common and the SSSI. There is currently very limited parking opportunity in Norton Green and increased traffic could result in further damage to the Common from unauthorised parking. Furthermore the development is likely to result in an increased footfall from nearby residents and visitors of the development which may have an impact on the SSSI and fragile habitats here. The proposals must show how it will work to help protect and ideally improve these areas.



### Play areas

- 5.11.18 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section have concerns to the proposed location of a LEAP play area situated next to cricket facility, particularly in relation to the safety of children and adults from ball strikes. The developer must ensure play areas are suitably located and designed to mitigate this risk. Stevenage is phasing out the provision of LAP facilities in favour of 'play landscapes'. These are play areas which are non-equipped, yet offer a variety of physical and imaginative play opportunities through well designed landscaping. This could include mounding, sensory planting, sculpture, boulders, meadows and more.
- 5.11.19 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section require details on the proposed delivery of the play areas in respect of the development programme. Currently there is a lack of detail in this regard. Play provision should ideally be delivered early within a development programme, prior to occupation so residents know what is available on offer. There is a lack of detail to what play facilities are due to be delivered. Whilst this can be agreed at a later stage, the developer must ensure that play areas are suitably designed and located. The play designs must allow for all items to be robust, safe, situated on a level and well drained area and consider its location in respect of residential areas, yet being mindful not to attract antisocial behaviour. The use of loose fill impact absorbent surfacing in equipped play areas will not be acceptable. Play areas must also be designed to be inclusive and provide a range of play opportunities – access to the facilities must also to be considered as part of the design.
- 5.11.20 All equipped play areas are to conform to BS EN 1176 & 1177 standards. An independent post-installation report is to be carried out by an accredited ROSPA inspector to ensure any play area conforms to the safety standards. Any issues raised in the report must be suitably addressed prior to opening. The developer must put into place the required maintenance arrangements and funding to ensure the play area continues to be safe and operational in perpetuity. The life span of any equipment and surfacing must be considered, along with the provision for replacements, repairs etc to be carried out when required.

### Cricket provision/ Village Green/ Pavilion

- 5.11.21 There insufficient detail submitted to be able to comment fully on these proposals. We note the proposals for the provision of an artificial cricket wicket. From experience, we have concerns regarding possible demand and use of an artificial wicket over a conventional grass wicket, but do appreciate that it aims to provide a facility that can be used by differing abilities, such as juniors. The proposed village green / cricket facility must be planned with future provision in mind. Consideration must be given for ensuring the space continues to provide value to the community in a range of possible circumstances. For example, ensuring that the facility can cater for possible alternative recreation uses as the demand for cricket and football ebbs and flows. This also applies to the pavilion building facilities, which must be designed to provide future proofed value to the community beyond just provision for cricket and football.
- 5.11.22 An assessment should be undertaken to determine the parking provision in relation to the demand for the facilities. There is currently no detail regarding a maintenance strategy for all of these facilities. Consideration must be given to the protection of the green from possible encampments or unauthorised vehicle access.

### General

- 5.11.23 There is a significant loss of biodiversity units calculated as a result of this proposed development. Working in partnership with the Herts Middlesex Wildlife Trust, we shall

seek adequate compensation for the providing and delivering a 10% net gain in biodiversity within Stevenage. The Council's Parks and Amenities Section seek details on the proposals for provision of a route for horses and ponies and how this links to the wider access network.

5.11.24 The Council's Parks and Amenities Section note there are proposals for acoustic bundling with fencing on top to provide screening from the motorway. However more detail is required to determine how this will be maintained. Furthermore, it's not clear what safety measures will be put into place to protect the motorway and the development land from unauthorised access. We note outline proposals for a BMX track around the landscaped buffered edge, along the bund. Whilst we support this idea in principle, at the relevant stage, we require further details of the design and how this is proposed to be managed and maintained.

5.11.25 As a result of this proposed development, we anticipate that it will increase the demand for allotments within the borough of Stevenage. Allotments are currently in very high demand and we shall seek an appropriate contribution towards delivering improvements to allotment sites within Stevenage, to which we anticipate the residents having access to. The Council's Parks and Amenities Section seek to determine that any areas of open space within the development is adequately safeguarded from further future developments.

**Note:-** These comments (dated 02 July 2021) are based on the originally submitted plans and not on the amended scheme which is currently before the Council. The Parks and Amenities Section at the time of drafting this report had not provided comments on the revised scheme.

## **5.12 Council's Arboriculture and Conservation Manager**

5.12.1 The avenue of trees in Meadway, currently located between the road and car parking bays are shown as proposed to be removed. The Council's Arboricultural Manager is of the view that these trees can be kept within the proposed layout. If necessary, perhaps the proposed road could be moved slightly. Retaining such an established avenue of trees by the entrance to the new site is, in the Arboricultural Managers view, very beneficial in lessening the adverse impact on the existing landscape.

5.12.2 Group G9 has special significance to us, colleagues of the Stevenage Direct Services; more specifically, the semi mature Silver Birch within. It was donated by and planted with one of our colleagues, whom sadly passed away a few months later. The Council have maintained this tree afterwards, ensured it established well and it is now a way to remember our lost colleague. If this tree had to be removed due to the development, can the developers be asked that it is relocated, in a suitable nearby location?

5.12.3 Trees numbers 56, 57, 58 and 59 on Meadway Lane are proposed to be removed. These Mature Oak trees are, in my view, the most prominent and valuable trees in this part of the lane and therefore their loss would not be desirable. If Meadway Lane is to be resurfaced as part of this development, I would urge caution when excavating within the RPA of the trees on both banks. The Arboricultural Manager would also recommend appropriate crown reduction works to compensate for any encroachment on existing roots.

5.12.4 Any tree loss on Council land, for the purpose of this development, should be compensated for at a ratio of 3:1 in line with our current policy. The cost for the council to plant a new tree (supply, plant and maintain until established) is £350/tree.

5.12.5 In order to comply with the department's policy (**Not adopted Local Plan Policy or NPPF requirement**) in terms of the 30% future canopy coverage for the new development, the Arboricultural Manager would like to see a plan to show (area measurements) how this is achieved.

### **5.13 Police Crime Prevention Design Officer**

5.13.1 The Police Crime Prevention Design Officer advised that on page 165 of the Design and Access Statement (DAS) that the applicant refers to the principles of the Police preferred minimum security standard that is Secured by Design (SBD), these, in essence don't exist, the only principle that we rely on in Hertfordshire is that developers should build to the SBD guidance and seek to achieve SBD accreditation.

5.13.2 In the same vein under Surveillance as well as natural forms (passers-by etc.), formal (CCTV etc.) we use the informal surveillance from nearby buildings via active rooms. These include Kitchens, dining rooms, lounges, utility rooms and studies/home offices. The Police do not count bedrooms/bathrooms or toilets as being active rooms as generally, the view from these is restricted. On the same theme the use of measures such as barbed wire or shutters may only be suggested in certain circumstances and never in a residential environment. Our advice is commensurate with the perceived threat level and tailored to be site specific.

5.13.3 The Police Crime Prevention Design Officer also notes that there is a suggestion to contact the local Crime Prevention Design Advisor (CPDA) to discuss this development. They would actively encourage the applicant to do so as there are substantive concerns around certain parts of the layout that could be resolved by such engagement. One of these concerns is around the apparent use of parking courts in parts of the development.

5.13.4 On the whole the Police Crime Prevention Design Service are not looking to object to this proposal. But, as yet, we are not in a position to fully support it.

### **5.14 Environment Agency**

5.14.1 As part of this consultation the Environment Agency (EA) has reviewed the following documents:-

- Geo-environmental Desktop Study Report, A090070-438, January 2018;
- Geo-Environmental Desktop Study, A117801/DTS/Report Issue 1, June 2020;
- Factual and Interpretative Geo-Environmental Report, A090070-438, March 2018;
- Supplementary Factual and Interpretative Site Investigation Report, A1178-1, August 2020;
- Flood Risk Assessment, 25502-01-FRA Rev B, March 2021;
- ES Appendix C Revised Flood Risk Assessment;
- 25502-01-FRA Rev D, November 2021

5.14.2 Based on a review of the submitted information, the Environmental Agency consider planning permission could be granted for the proposed development as submitted If conditions are imposed. The proposed development site is located upon principal and secondary aquifers and within groundwater source protection zones (SPZ2, SPZ3) designated for the protection of public water supply. It is highly vulnerable to pollution as contaminants that enter ground water at the site may migrate to the public water supply. The majority of the site is greenfield land and in agricultural use. However, a part of the site comprises a former landfill.

5.14.3 The EA consider that planning permission could be granted to the proposed development if planning conditions are imposed. This is in line with Paragraph 174 of

the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy SP11 of the Stevenage Local Plan (adopted 2019). The conditions would cover the following:-

- Remediation Strategy;
- Previously unidentified contamination;
- SuDS infiltration of surface water into ground;
- Piling/Boreholes/foundation design – details to be agreed.

5.14.4 The EA do have comments on the amended surface water drainage strategy as presented in the revised FRA. It is noted the proposal excludes infiltration SuDS from the former landfill area in order to avoid contaminated soils. However, the applicant will have to demonstrate that infiltration SuDS in other parts of the site will not be constructed in contaminated grounds. The applicant should also be mindful of previous comments regarding deep infiltration systems, for the information submitted it appears that some of the proposed infiltration basins may classify as 'deep' in this context. When the applicant considers the conditions in detail, the Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) should include historical plans of the site, an understanding of the sites environmental setting (including geology, hydrogeology, location and status of relevant surface water and groundwater receptors, identification of potential contaminants of concern and source areas), an outline conceptual site model (CSM) describing possible pollutant linkages for controlled waters and identification of potentially unacceptable risks. Pictorial representations, preferable scaled plans and cross sections, will support the understanding of the site as represented in the CSM.

5.14.5 In terms of land contamination investigations, these should be carried out in accordance with BD 5930: Code of Practice for ground investigations and BS 10175: Investigation of potentially contaminated sites – code of practice. Site investigation works should be undertaken by a suitable qualified and experienced professional. Soil and water analysis should be fully MCERTS (Monitoring Emissions to air, land and water) accredited.

5.14.6 Any further investigation, demolition, remediation or construction on site must not create pollutant pathways or pollutant linkages into the underlying principal aquifer to avoid generating new contaminated land liabilities for the developer. Clean drilling techniques may be required where boreholes, piles etc. penetrate through contaminated ground.

5.14.7 In relation to SuDS (Sustainable Drainage System), the EA consider infiltration SuDS greater than 2m below ground level to be a deep system and are generally not acceptable. All infiltration SuDS require a minimum of 1.2m clearance between the base of infiltration SuDS and peak seasonally groundwater levels.

5.14.8 Soakaways must not be constructed in contaminated ground where they could re-mobilise any pre-existing contamination and result in pollution of groundwater. Soakaways and other infiltration SuDS need to meet the criteria in the EA's Groundwater Protection Position Statements G1 and G9 to G13.

5.14.9 Only clean water from roofs can be directly discharged to any soakaway or watercourse. Systems for the discharge of surface water from associated hard-standing, roads and impermeable vehicle parking areas shall incorporate appropriate pollution prevention measures and a suitable number of SuDS treatment train components.

5.14.10 SuDS should be constructed in line with good practice and guidance which include the SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753) and the Susdrain website. Turning to dewatering, the removal/abstraction of water in order to locally lower water levels could have an impact upon local wells, water supplied and/or nearby watercourses and environmental interests. This activity was previously exempt from requiring an abstraction licence.

5.14.11 Since 1 January 2018, most cases of new planned dewater operations above 20 cubic metres a day will require a water abstraction licence from the EA prior to the commencement of dewatering activities. Turning to Good Practice, the applicant is recommended to consider the following:-

- Refer to the EA's Groundwater Protection webpages, which include the Groundwater Protection Position Statements;
- Following the Land contamination risk management (LCRM) guidance when dealing with land affected by contamination and for the type of information that the EA require in order to assess risk to controlled waters from the site. The Local Authority can advise on risks to other receptors, for example human health;
- Refer to the EA Land Contamination Technical Guidance;
- Refer to Position Statement on the Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice;
- Refer to British Standards BS 5930 Code of Practice for ground investigations and BS 10175 Investigations of potentially contaminated sites – Code of Practice;
- Refer to the EA's Piling and Penetrative Ground Improvement Methods on Land Affected by Contamination National Groundwater and Contaminated Land Centre Project NC/99/73. The selected method, including environmental mitigation measures, should be presented in a Foundation Works Risk Assessment Report, guidance on the production of which can be found in Table 3 of Piling into contaminated sites;
- Refer to the EA's Good Practice for Decommissioning Boreholes and Wells;
- Refer to the EA's Dewatering building sites and other excavations, environmental permits guidance when temporary dewatering is proposed.

5.14.12 In terms of water resources, increase water efficiency for all new developments potentially enables more growth with the same water resourced. Developers can highlight positive corporate social responsibility messages and the use of technology to help sell their homes. For the homeowner, lower water usage also reduces water and energy bills.

5.14.13 The EA endorses the use of water efficiency measures in new developments. Use of technology that ensures efficient use of natural resources could support the environment benefits of future proposals and could help attract investment to the area. Therefore, water efficient technologies, fixtures and fittings should be considered as part of new developments.

5.14.14 All new residential developments are required to achieve water consumption limited of a maximum of 125 litres per person per day as set out within Building Regulations. However, the EA recommend that in areas of serious of water stress, a higher standard of a maximum of 110 litres per person per day is applied. This standard or higher maybe a requirement of the Council.

5.14.15 The EA recommends that all new non-residential development of 1000sq.m gross floor area or more should meet the BREEAM 'excellent' standards for water consumption.

## **5.15 Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Water Officer**

5.15.1 It is requested a condition is imposed for the provision of fire hydrants. This is to ensure all dwellings, places of employment and community facilities are adequately covered with sufficient water in the event of an emergency.

## **5.16 NHS East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (Comments provided during pre-application)**

5.16.1 The proposed development will have an impact on several GP practices, which are either at capacity or will be arising from this development. Ultimately, their ability to absorb significant increase in patient population is very limited. For this reason, a financial contribution would be sought to make the scheme favourable to the NHS services commissioner and therefore, propose that a charge is applied per dwellings towards providing additional GP facilities in the area. The calculations provided are based on the impact the development will have based on the number of dwellings.

Persimmon – 602 dwellings

5.16.2 Based on the projected housing mix and the suggested occupancy headcount the total development could realise 2,434 new patients.

$2,434/2,000 = 1.217$  of a GP (based on a ratio of 2,000 patients per 1 GP and 199m<sup>2</sup> as set out in the NHS England “Premises Principles of Best Practice Part 1 Procurement & Development”)

$1.217 \times 199\text{m}^2 = 242.183 \text{ m}^2$  of additional space required

$242.183 \text{ m}^2 \times £5,410$  (build costs including land, fit out and fees) = £1,310,210.03

$£1,310,210.03/602 = £2,176.428 \sim £2,176$  per dwelling based on an averaged out cost over the 602 dwellings

5.16.3 The GP/GMS ask would therefore be:  $602 \times £2,176 = £1,309,952.00$ .

Taylor Wimpey – 602 dwellings

5.16.4 The housing mix suggests the occupancy could be 3,910 new patients.

$3,910/2,000 = 1.955$  of a GP (based on a ratio of 2,000 patients per 1 GP and 199m<sup>2</sup> as set out in the NHS England “Premises Principles of Best Practice Part 1 Procurement & Development”)

$1.955 \times 199\text{m}^2 = 389.045 \text{ m}^2$  of additional space required

$389.045 \text{ m}^2 \times £5,410$  (build costs including land, fit out and fees) = £2,104,733.45

$£2,104,733.45/898 = £2,343.801 \sim £2,344$  per dwelling based on an averaged out cost over the 898 dwellings

5.16.5 The GP/GMS ask would then therefore be:  $898 \times £2,344 = £2,104,912.00$ .

GP/GMS provision

5.16.6 The monies from both the above would be spent on a live and progressing project the NHS has involving the Stanmore Road Medical Group, specifically Stanmore Road itself. This will require reconfiguration and refurbishment of the existing site provision and the complete reconfiguration and refurbishment of a wing attached to it. This is in order to increase GMS capacity to help absorb the increase in patients arising from this development. There are 2 other projects that would involve an expansion of and internal reconfiguration to also increase patient access at Symonds Green Health Centre which would also take patients directly from this development and King George in the town centre.

5.16.7 The CCG therefore requests that the following be named benefactors in the S106 agreement:

- Stanmore Medical Group
- Symonds Green Health Centre
- The King George Surgery Group

5.16.8 Symonds Green in Filey Close SG1 2JW would be first in line to take a direct hit from this development. It has a Net Internal Area of 278.54 m<sup>2</sup> and a current patient list size

of 4,500 patients equalling a patient per m<sup>2</sup> ratio of approximately 16.16 patients per m<sup>2</sup>. The CCG works on the basis that 18 patients per m<sup>2</sup> is the desired ceiling before the practice starts to strain. IF for example the whole population from this development went there based on the mixed dwelling information of the Persimmon & Taylor Wimpey Homes as aforementioned we could be looking at 6,344 occupants of these dwellings/new patients.

- 5.16.9 If you added that number to Symonds Greens existing patient list it would equal 10,844 patients/278.54m<sup>2</sup> = 38.93 patients per m<sup>2</sup>. By no means therefore at what would be nearing double their capacity would Symonds Green be able to absorb such a number without any expansion. Without any expansion they could only absorb approximately 2000 patients and the remainder would have to go elsewhere. Stanmore Road Medical Group would be the next practice in line with their new extension BUT bearing in mind SG1 & others in truth they may not be able to absorb the whole balance and therefore King George would be the next in line. The CCG would wish all 3 to be named to give them the flex of investing in the right projects on existing sites to absorb the direct impact of this development.

NHS Community, mental health and acute care services.

- 5.16.10 In addition to the above, the impact on NHS community, mental health and acute care services has to be considered. Such a significant increased footfall will obviously put their existing services under considerable strain to the point they will not be able to provide an adequate service. Therefore:

**Persimmon - 602 dwellings**

Acute Care - £2,187.69 (based on current patient activity) per dwelling: 602 dwellings x £2,187.69 = £1,316,989.38

Mental Health - £201.38 (based on current patient activity) per dwelling: 602 dwellings x £201.38 = £121,230.76

Community Services - £182.03 (based on current patient activity) per dwelling: 602 dwellings x £182.03 = £109,582.06

**Total requested for Acute, Mental Health & Community: £1,547,802.20**

**Taylor Wimpey - 898 dwellings**

Acute Care - £2,187.69 (based on current patient activity) per dwelling: 898 dwellings x £2,187.69 = £1,964,545.62

Mental Health - £201.38 (based on current patient activity) per dwelling: 898 dwellings x £201.38 = £180,839.24

Community Services - £182.03 (based on current patient activity) per dwelling: 898 dwellings x £182.03 = £163,462.94

**Total requested for Acute, Mental Health & Community: £2,308,847.80**

**Note:-** Officers have engaged with the NHS on a number of occasions throughout the application process which discussions regarding the proposed on-site provision of a GP surgery. The NHS verbally advised that they wished to have a flexible requirement in the S.106 agreement that in the event they did not require the on-site GP surgery, they would seek a financial contribution in lieu. Officers have sought to get this confirmed in writing but to date, no formal comments on the planning application have been forthcoming.

**5.17 Sport England**

5.17.1 As a Statutory Consultee, Sport England raises no objection to this application as a statutory consultee which is considered to meet exception 4 of our adopted Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 99 of the NPPF subject to the following matters being addressed through a planning obligation (or planning conditions) with respect to the Meadway Playing Field site as set out in this response:

- Details of Replacement Pavilion and Parking;
- Minimum Specification for Replacement Pavilion and Parking;
- Phasing and Delivery of Replacement Pavilion and Parking.

5.17.2 As a non-statutory consultee, Sport England consider the proposals for making on-site sports facility provision as part of the community green are welcomed subject to the following matters being addressed through a planning obligation or planning conditions:

- Sports Pitch Feasibility Study and Construction Specification;
- Sports Pitch Maintenance;
- Artificial Cricket Wicket Design Specification;
- Landscaping Details;
- Pavilion and Parking Details and Minimum Specification;
- Phasing and Delivery;
- Management and Maintenance.

5.17.3 It is requested that provision is made for meeting the additional needs generated for other outdoor sports facilities through securing a financial contribution towards off-site provision secured through a planning obligation. An objection is made to the proposals for indoor sports facility provision to meet the needs of the proposed development in its current form due to the lack of confirmed provision. This position would be reviewed if it was confirmed that appropriate financial contributions would be made towards off-site indoor sports facility provision, secured through a planning obligation, as set out in this response.

5.17.4 A community use agreement for the primary school's sports facilities should be secured through a planning condition.

5.17.5 A planning condition is requested requiring details to be submitted and approved which demonstrate how Active Design principles have been considered in the design and layout of reserved matters applications (for the parcels covered by the outline application).

#### COMMENTS MADE AS A STATUTORY CONSULTTEE

5.17.6 It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years, as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). The consultation with Sport England is therefore a statutory requirement.

5.17.7 Sport England has considered the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (in particular Para. 97), and against its own playing fields policy, which states:

'Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- land allocated for use as a playing field



Unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.'

#### The Proposal and Impact on Playing Field

- 5.17.8 In summary, the proposal involves a hybrid planning application for a mixed use urban extension to the west of Stevenage that will involve a total of 1,500 dwellings. One of the proposed access improvements to the development would involve a new vehicular access road being constructed along the southern and eastern periphery of the Meadway Playing Fields. As well as encroaching onto the natural turf playing field, the proposed access road would displace the existing pavilion and car park that supports the playing field. To mitigate the impact of the development it is proposed that a new pavilion and car park would be provided to support the playing fields which would be located partly on the footprint of the existing pavilion and car park and partly on the playing field.

#### Assessment against Sport England Policy/NPPF

- 5.17.9 As the proposed loss of the pavilion and car park at Meadway Playing Fields would be replaced as part of the development, it therefore needs to be considered principally against exception 4 of the above policy, which states:

The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:

- of equivalent or better quality, and
- of equivalent or greater quantity, and
- in a suitable location, and
- subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements

- 5.17.10As set out in paragraph 59 of the Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, the requirement of exception 4 apply equally to the provision of ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and car parking. I have therefore assessed the proposals against the above policy to determine whether they meet exception 4.

- 5.17.11The proposals for the replacement pavilion and car parking form part of the outline planning application. Consequently, there is no confirmed details at this stage of the replacement pavilion and parking. It is proposed that if outline planning permission is granted that the detail of the pavilion and parking will be provided as part of a reserved matters application and that the Borough Council (as the landowners of the playing field) would be submitting the reserved matters application and delivering the agreed replacement facilities with funding provided from the applicant. An indicative scheme has been submitted to demonstrate how a replacement pavilion and parking scheme could be implemented in practice which is included in Appendix A of the Planning Statement Addendum.

- 5.17.12The indicative scheme shows that potential exists to provide a pavilion with a footprint that is slightly larger in scale than the existing pavilion and that a car park with a similar capacity to the existing car park could also be provided. In principle, I am satisfied that replacement facilities of equivalent or better quality and quantity could be delivered. As the replacement facilities would be maintained on the site and managed by the Borough Council as they are at the moment I am satisfied that the location and accessibility/management arrangements criteria would be met. In terms of phasing, this has not been confirmed as discussions are still ongoing regarding the timing of the delivery of the road infrastructure works but Sport England would expect a phasing programme that will ensure continuity of facility provision for existing playing field users and ideally the replacement facilities to be completed and operational before the existing facilities are demolished. This requirement can be secured through a planning permission.

7.17.13 Sport England are therefore satisfied in principle that the proposals in the outline planning application could meet the requirements of exception 4. However, to ensure that the replacement facilities meet the requirements in practice it will be necessary for a planning obligation to set out the minimum specification for the replacement facilities to provide a framework for assessing the acceptability of a reserved matters planning application against. A phasing programme will also need to be secured to deliver the replacement facilities.

7.17.14 The proposed access road and replacement pavilion/parking facilities would encroach onto the natural turf playing field area of Meadway Playing Fields. The access road would be aligned along the southern periphery of the playing field and would not affect the football pitches that are currently marked out. The encroachment would be relatively limited and the road would be sited partially on the car park and would not encroach any further north than the extent of the existing car park. The area affected is unlikely to be used for marking out playing pitches given the siting of the car park and the limited space to create part of a pitch on this peripheral area of the playing field. The indicative replacement pavilion and car park scheme would encroach onto the eastern part of the playing field and would affect the run-off area of one of the football pitches. However, the plan in Appendix A of the Planning Statement Addendum shows that the football pitch could be realigned slightly to the west without reducing its size in order to maintain an adequate run-off area.

5.17.15 Sport England are therefore, satisfied that the proposals would not have an adverse impact on playing pitch provision. While there would be a small net loss in natural turf playing field provision associated with the scheme, Sport England consider that the benefits of providing a new pavilion and car park that would be expected to be superior in at least quality to the facilities that they will replace would outweigh this impact in the context of the proposals not expecting to have an adverse impact on football pitch provision.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

5.17.16 In view of the above assessment, Sport England satisfied in principle that the proposed development would accord with exception 4 of Sport England's playing fields policy and that the small net loss in playing field provision would be offset by the benefits of a new pavilion and car park being provided. This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application as a statutory consultee. However, this position is strictly subject to the following matters being addressed through a planning obligation and/or planning conditions if planning permission is forthcoming as set out below:

5.17.17 A planning obligation (expected to be a section 106 agreement) or planning conditions should specifically make provision for the following:

*Prior to the commencement of any development permitted by the outline planning permission on the Meadway Playing Fields site (a plan should be included in a planning obligation defining the site), provision will need to be made for the details of the replacement pavilion and car parking facilities on the Meadway Playing Field site to be submitted and approved (in consultation with Sport England) and for the approved details to be fully implemented.*

5.17.18 This is required to ensure that the details of the replacement facility proposals on the Meadway Playing Fields site are submitted as part of a reserved matters application in order to ensure that fit for purpose replacement facilities are proposed which demonstrate that equivalent or better facilities in quantity and quality are delivered in practice as required by exception 4 of Sport England's policy as set out above. The indicative plans submitted with the current application for the layout of the site are supported by Sport England but as they are indicative at this stage they have limited

status other than to demonstrate how the replacement facilities could potentially be delivered in practice. There is no certainty that these indicative plans would provide the basis for a reserved matters application for the Meadway Playing Fields site. Consequently, a requirement to submit and approve details for the replacement facilities is necessary to ensure that a subsequent reserved matters application makes provision for delivering all of the facilities that are required to mitigate the loss of Meadway Playing Fields pavilion and car parking facilities.

- *The replacement pavilion and car parking facilities to meet the following minimum specification unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England:*
- *Pavilion: A pavilion of conventional construction that would accord with Sport England's and the Football Foundation's relevant design guidance on pavilions and clubhouses and would provide for:*
  1. *2 x team changing rooms with a minimum of 18 sq.m changing space (excluding showers, toilets and lobby areas) in each changing room.*
  2. *4 cubicle showers in each changing room*
  3. *2 WCs in each changing room*
  4. *2 washbasins in each changing room*
  5. *Officials changing room with a minimum of 6 sq.m changing space (excluding shower, toilet and lobby areas) plus one WC, one washbasin and one cubicle shower*
  6. *Separate male, female and accessible toilets for spectators/parents/coaches;*
  7. *Kitchen and external servery*
  8. *Entrance lobby/reception*
  9. *Plant room*
  10. *Cleaner's store*
- *Car Parking: Provision for at least 47 hard surfaced delineated car parking spaces including 2 disabled spaces*
- *Football Pitches: Space will need to be retained on the natural turf playing field for accommodating at least 2 x senior football pitches with dimensions (of each pitch) of 100 x 64 metres with a 3 metre unobstructed perimeter run-off area around each pitch*

5.17.19 As set out above, as the plans submitted with the current application are indicative, a minimum specification needs to be included in a planning obligation to ensure that the quantity and quality of the replacement pavilion and parking facilities proposed in a reserved matters application is equivalent or better than the existing facilities. Without this there is a risk that the replacement facility proposals that are brought forward at a later date would be inferior to the existing facilities due to a lack of clarity about what the minimum requirements would need to be. It should be noted that the above specification of pavilion facilities is based broadly on replicating the facilities in the existing pavilion having regard to the floor plan provided by the Council.

5.17.20 However, there are some differences to reflect that the design and layout of the existing pavilion (which dates from the 1980s) would not meet current design guidance and it would therefore be inappropriate to replicate facilities that are not responsive to current community needs. For example, shower cubicles are now required rather than an open shower room. The football pitch requirement is intended to ensure that the detailed proposals for the replacement pavilion and parking scheme maintain existing pitch provision in view of the plan which shows how football pitch provision would be maintained being indicative at this stage.

5.17.21 This is required to ensure that all of the approved replacement facilities on the Meadway Playing Fields site are phased in order to provide continuity of facility provision for existing playing field users and to avoid a potential scenario where the replacement facilities are either not implemented or not implemented within an

acceptable timescale. This would meet the phasing requirement of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy as set out above. As there is uncertainty about the timing of the road infrastructure works and the implications for the Meadway Playing Fields site, it is suggested that the phasing proposals are discussed further with Sport England before a planning permission is issued as it may be necessary to review the above advice depending on the expected delivery programme for the works.

- 5.17.22 If your Authority decides not to secure the above requirements in a planning obligation and/or planning conditions, Sport England would wish to lodge a statutory objection to the planning application. If you wish to discuss the above planning obligation/condition requirements or use another mechanism in lieu of these, please discuss the details with the undersigned. Sport England does not object to such amendments, provided they achieve the same outcome and we are involved in any amendments. In view of the potential complexity of issues that require addressing in a planning obligation, it is requested that the Council consults Sport England on the draft of the relevant sections of the planning obligation if a resolution to grant outline planning permission is forthcoming as this would be the most efficient way to discuss and secure support for the content of a planning obligation rather than being overly prescriptive about the wording of an obligation at this stage. If your Council decides not to satisfactorily address the above requirements through a planning obligation or conditions, Sport England would wish to raise an objection to this application. Should the local planning authority be minded to approve this application, then given Sport England's subsequent objection and in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, the application should be referred to the Secretary of State via the National Planning Casework Unit

#### COMMENTS MADE AS A NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEE

- 5.17.23 The Government, within their Planning Practice Guidance (Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Section) advises Local Planning Authorities to consult Sport England on a wide range of applications. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>. This application falls within the guidance as it relates to the creation of one or more playing pitches and involves a residential development of more than 300 dwellings.
- 5.17.24 Sport England assesses this type of application in line with its planning objectives and with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Sport England's planning objectives are to PROTECT existing facilities, ENHANCE the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities, and to PROVIDE new facilities to meet demand.

#### Community Sports Facility Provision

- 5.17.25 In accordance with paragraph 98 of the NPPF, Sport England seeks to ensure that the development meets any additional community sports facility needs that are generated by the development. The occupiers of new development, especially residential, will generate demand for community sporting provision. The existing provision within an area may not be able to accommodate this increased demand without exacerbating existing and/or predicted future deficiencies. Therefore, Sport England considers that new developments should contribute towards meeting the demand that they generate through the provision of on-site facilities and/or providing additional capacity off-site. As advised in paragraph 98 of the NPPF, the level and nature of any provision should be informed by a robust evidence base such as an up to date Sports Facilities Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment.
- 5.17.26 The proposal comprises an hybrid planning application for 1,500 dwellings and supporting development on land to the west of Stevenage. The full application for

phase 1 of the development includes a community green that would be designed to accommodate a cricket pitch and junior/mini football pitches which would be supported by a pavilion and mobility hub building with ancillary car parking to the north west of the community green. The population of the proposed development is estimated to be around 3,540 people based on information provided in paragraph 15.72 of the Environmental Statement. In this context, I would wish to make the following comments on the community sports provision aspects of the planning application.

#### Evidence Base and Policy Context

5.17.27 The evidence base for community sport and local planning policy context can be summarised as follows:

- The adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011-2031) includes policy HC8 which supports residential developments where on-site sports facility provision or a commuted sum is made in accordance with the standards in the Council's Sports Facilities Assessment & Strategy. The site allocation policy (HO2) also specifically requires sports facilities to be provided on site in line with Policy HC8 including land to accommodate a new cricket facility;
- Stevenage Borough Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (2015) provides an assessment of current and future community sports facility needs to support the delivery of the local plan and development management. The assessment identified a range of quantitative and/or qualitative deficiencies for both indoor and outdoor sports facilities and identified priorities for addressing these needs. Policy HC8 and other relevant policies of the local plan have been informed by this evidence base and set out the priorities for how developments should make provision for sport. While needs have been identified for new facilities, there is an emphasis in the local plan and sports facility strategy on prioritising enhancements to existing facilities or the replacement of existing facilities in order to meet both current and future needs.

5.17.28 In view of the local planning policy and evidence base context, it is considered that in accordance with Government policy in paragraph 98 of the NPPF, a robust local basis exists for justifying the provision of outdoor and indoor community sports facility provision to be made by this development.

#### Outdoor Sports Provision – Community Green

5.17.29 The proposals for the community green have been developed in consultation with Sport England and the sports governing bodies in advance of the application being submitted. In accordance with paragraph 9.18 of the adopted Local Plan, an up-to-date assessment of demand for a cricket facility was prepared by the applicant to inform the need to make provision for a cricket facility as part of the development as required by policy HO2. The submitted Stevenage Cricket Pitch Needs Assessment Review was prepared by the applicant in consultation with Sport England and the ECB and Herts Cricket in advance of the application being submitted and this concluded that a single non-turf (artificial) pitch and outfield area which meets ECB guidance should be provided in the proposed development to serve the additional cricket needs generated by the development. However, the review also recommended that the cricket facility be future proofed to provide an ECB compliant 9 pitch fine turf square in the future if required.

5.17.30 The review recommended that a pavilion building be provided to provide toilets, refreshments and changing facilities to service both the cricket and football use of the facility as well as parking. A ball strike risk assessment was also recommended to inform the need for netting/fencing around the cricket facility in order to address potential conflicts with adjoining uses. The review was supported by Sport England

and the cricket governing bodies and the proposals in the planning application have been developed in response to the recommendations in the review. The plans in appendix B of the Planning Statement Addendum show how a single non turf pitch and outfield area could be accommodated and alternatively, how a 9 pitch fine turf squared could be accommodated in the future if required.

- 5.17.31 The layout of the community green has accounted for advice on ball strike risk set out in the Labosport boundary risk assessments included as appendices C and D of the Planning Statement Addendum. The layout has helped ensure that there will not be a need for ball strike netting/fencing around the periphery of the community green other than some potential low level fencing around the car park. Both Sport England and the cricket governing bodies are satisfied with the layout of the proposed community green as it demonstrates that a non-turf pitch and associated outfield could be accommodated as well as a 9 pitch fine turf square in the future if required.
- 5.17.32 In relation to football, it is proposed that the outfield area would be used for junior and mini football pitches during the winter when not required for cricket and indicative football pitch layouts are provided in appendix B of the Planning Statement Addendum. Sport England have consulted the Hertfordshire County FA who has advised that there is current demand for additional junior football pitches in Stevenage and that these could be accommodated on the cricket outfield area. The proposed indicative layouts show that three junior and mini pitches of different sizes could be accommodated if required.
- 5.17.33 With respect to the pavilion that would support the community green, this forms part of the outline component of the application as it is now proposed that a mobility hub will be provided as part of, or adjoining, the pavilion and the detail of the mobility hub has yet to be developed. A reserved matters application for the pavilion/mobility hub will therefore be prepared at a later date. In order to ensure that the facilities in the pavilion are suitable for supporting the use of the cricket pitch and football pitches, a minimum recommended specification has been prepared by Sport England in consultation with the ECB and the Herts FA which should be used to set out the minimum requirements in a planning obligation to provide a framework for a future reserved matters application for the pavilion.
- 5.17.34 The location of the community green in the centre of the southern community with good access by all transport modes is welcomed. This should ensure that the facility is accessible to residents of the development and the existing community in Stevenage.
- 5.17.35 Sport England is, therefore, supportive of the proposed community green as it would be expected to meet the additional cricket and junior/mini football needs generated by the proposed development and its layout is considered to be suitable in terms of meeting Sport England and governing body design guidance. However, this position is subject to the following matters being addressed through a planning obligation and/or planning conditions:

#### Sports Pitch Feasibility Study and Construction Specification

- 5.17.36 In order to assess the suitability of the community green to accommodate sports pitches, it will be important that the ground conditions and pitch specification to prepare the site as a playing field are given careful consideration due to the need to understand the implications of topography, soils, drainage, surface preparation etc. Without this there is a risk that the pitches will not meet needs because they will suffer from problems such as waterlogging and uneven surfaces. Furthermore, the specification and management of the proposed construction of the playing field must be overseen by a specialist consultant to ensure that this is designed and managed with relevant expertise. Detailed guidance on the issues that require consideration is

set out in Sport England's guidance 'Natural Turf for Sport'. The applicant has agreed to preparing this as set out in paragraph 5.36 of the Planning Statement.

- 5.17.37 Sport England would therefore request that a planning condition be imposed on any planning permission requiring the submission and approval of an assessment of the ground conditions of the area proposed for playing pitch use which would lead to a related detailed sports pitch construction specification being prepared for addressing ground condition constraints (such as gradients, drainage, surface quality and maintenance issues) that have been identified in the assessment which may restrict the playing capacity and performance quality of the playing field. This should be approved before any works commence on the playing field element of the development. It is requested that the following condition is used for addressing this matter (based on model condition 10a of our model conditions schedule

#### Sports Pitch Maintenance

- 5.17.38 Linked to the above requirement, there is a need to ensure that an appropriate maintenance programme for the new sports pitches on the community green is put in place to ensure that the pitches are maintained to a suitable standard following their completion. Without this, there is a risk that the quality of the pitches will quickly decline due to an inadequate or inappropriate maintenance regime being applied. It is therefore requested that a planning condition is imposed requiring details of the maintenance programme to be submitted and approved prior to first use of the pitches. It is requested that the following condition is imposed which is based on condition 10b of Sport England's model planning condition schedule.

#### Artificial Cricket Wicket Design Specification

- 5.17.39 Linked to the above requirements, a condition requiring the design specification of the new artificial cricket wicket (non-turf cricket pitch) to be submitted and approved. This is justified to ensure that the artificial wicket is fit for purpose and meets the ECB's performance and safety requirements. The condition will also need to make provision for the approved details of the artificial cricket wicket to be implemented prior to first use of the community green. The following planning condition is requested which is based on model conditions 5 and 9a of Sport England model conditions schedule:

*"No development of the community green shall commence until details of the design specification of the artificial cricket wicket have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The artificial cricket wicket shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to first use of the community green"*

*Reason: To ensure that the artificial cricket wicket is constricted to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy*

#### Landscaping Details

- 5.17.40 It is understood that the detailed landscaping of the community green will be addressed through a planning condition. The landscaping is important because the positioning of trees for instance around the periphery of the community green will influence whether the perimeter run-off area around the cricket outfield area and the football pitches will be maintained in practice as the minimum run-off areas need to be unobstructed for safety reasons. The Council is therefore requested to impose a condition requiring the landscaping of the community green to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of the community green and for Sport England to be consulted on the submitted details. Sport England is happy for the Borough Council to impose a standard condition to address this requirement.

## Pavilion and Parking

5.17.41 As it is now proposed that the design and layout of the pavilion and ancillary parking to support the community green and the related mobility hub will be addressed through a reserved matters application, it will be necessary for a planning condition to require the reserved matters to be submitted and approved prior to any development commencing. A planning obligation (expected to be a section 106 agreement) will also be needed to set out the minimum specification for the pavilion and parking in order to provide a framework for ensuring that the facilities proposed in a future reserved matters application are fit for purpose for supporting the proposed cricket and football pitches. This approach has been agreed by the applicant as set out in the Planning Statement Addendum.

5.17.42 The recommended specification has included minor amendments that would help future proof the design of the pavilion to accommodate cricket club use in the event that a fine turf square is constructed in the future which are identified in brackets below. Where additional facilities are required to support cricket club use beyond those required to support an artificial wicket and junior/mini football use in order to future proof the pavilion it is recommended that the pavilion is designed to allow space for a future extension if required. The facilities required in any such extension are set out below but Sport England would not expect the applicant to provide them as part of a reserved matters pavilion design although it would be helpful for the design to indicate an area that could be used to expand the pavilion to accommodate a future extension if required.

5.17.43 Pavilion: A pavilion of conventional construction that would accord with Sport England's and the Football Foundation's and England & Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) relevant design guidance on pavilions and clubhouses and would provide for:

1. 2 x team changing rooms with a minimum of 20 sq.m changing space (excluding showers, toilets and lobby areas) in each changing room (adjusted from 18 sq.m required for football to 20 sq.m required for cricket).
2. 4 cubicle showers in each changing room
3. 2 WCs in each changing room
4. 2 washbasins in each changing room
5. Officials changing room with a minimum of 6 sq.m changing space (excluding shower, toilet and lobby areas) plus one WC, one washbasin and one cubicle shower;
6. Separate male, female and accessible toilets for spectators/parents/coaches;
7. Clubroom/social area of at least 80 sq.m (adjusted from 50 sq.m required for football for 80 sq.m required for cricket)
8. Kitchen and external servery
9. Small office/first aid room;
10. Entrance lobby/reception
11. Plant room
12. Store for furniture
13. Cleaner's store;
14. Sports equipment and maintenance store (can be integral to pavilion or in a standalone building)

5.17.44 Additional Facilities required to support the use of the sports ground by a cricket club which could be incorporated into a future extension to the pavilion if required:

- Meeting Room
- Bar
- Dining/Tea Room
- Scoreboard and scorer's base
- Additional official's changing room



- Trophy store

5.17.45 Car Parking: Provision for at least 26 (or alternative figure required by the Borough Council) hard surfaced delineated car parking spaces including 2 disabled spaces and 2 van/minibus spaces; Cycle Parking: To be advised by the Borough Council

5.17.46 Phasing and Delivery: A planning obligation should make provision for the delivery of the community green and the supporting pavilion/parking in the first phase of the development as proposed in the planning application. It is recommended that the completion and availability for use of the facilities is linked to dwelling occupancy in the first phase in order to ensure that the community green sports facilities are available in practice to support the new community before occupation becomes too advanced.

5.17.47 Management and Maintenance: A planning obligation should make provision for the handover of the community green and its supporting facilities to the management body when all of the facilities are completed and available for use. Provision should be made for securing a long term maintenance contribution to cover the costs of maintaining the community green and the pavilion/parking facilities

#### Outdoor Sports Provision – Other Facility Needs

5.17.48 While the proposed community green will be sufficient for addressing the additional cricket and junior/mini football facility needs generated by the development, the development does not make provision on-site for meeting the other additional outdoor sports needs that it will generate a need for. For example, the Hertfordshire FA have identified a need for additional 3G artificial grass pitches in the Borough to meet current and future needs because existing provision is considered inadequate for meeting current needs and this has been evidenced recently through the Stevenage Local Football Facilities Plan (LFFP) that has been prepared by the Football Foundation in consultation with the Borough Council. The action plan in the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy and the more recent LFFP (for football facilities) has identified potential projects which could be implemented on a number of existing sports facility sites in Stevenage. In accordance with policy HC8 and paragraph 11.44 of the adopted local plan, a section 106 agreement should make provision for an appropriate financial contribution to be secured and paid within a reasonable timescale to secure off-site provision.

5.17.49 As set out in paragraph 11.43 of the Local Plan, the value of the contributions from housing developments should be equivalent to the value of the area of sports facilities that would otherwise be provided by the development. I would therefore be happy for a commuted sum to be secured based on the Council's approach set out in the local plan. This would be subject to Sport England being advised of the amount of the contribution that would be secured and the projects that a commuted sum would be used towards before the planning application is determined.

5.17.50 To assist the Council, an estimate of the demand generated for outdoor sports provision can be provided by Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator strategic planning tool. Team data from Stevenage Borough Council's Sports Facilities Strategy can be applied to the Playing Pitch Calculator which can then assess the demand generated in pitch equivalents (and the associated costs of delivery) by the population generated in a new residential development. Sport England have used the latest version of the calculator (including the latest team data for Stevenage) for estimating the demand generated by a new population in Stevenage of 3,540. In summary, this development would generate demand for the equivalent of 0.60 adult football pitches, 0.12 rugby union pitches, 0.05 hockey pitches (sand based artificial grass pitches) and 0.18 3G artificial grass pitches. The total cost of providing these pitches is currently estimated to be £311,815. In terms of changing room provision to support the use of this pitch demand, the calculator estimates that the total demand generated will be

equivalent to 1.88 changing rooms which would currently cost £346,473. Consideration should be given by the Council to using the figures from the Playing Pitch Calculator for informing the level of a financial contribution.

- 5.17.51 The Council is therefore requested to secure an appropriate financial contribution secured through a planning obligation towards off-site outdoor sports facilities for meeting the additional needs generated by the development which will not be met on-site.

#### Indoor Sports Provision

- 5.17.52 As indoor sports facilities are strategic facilities that serve large populations and as the population generated by the proposed development in isolation would not be sufficient to justify the provision of a conventional facility on-site (see below Sports Facility Calculator figures), it is considered that off-site provision in the form of a financial contribution towards the provision or improvement of off-site facilities would be acceptable on this occasion i.e. similar to the approach proposed above for additional outdoor sports needs that will not be met on site.

- 5.17.53 The Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 and the adopted local plan (paragraph 11.39) has prioritised the replacement of the Stevenage Swimming Centre and the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre as the strategic priority projects for meeting the current and future needs of Stevenage (including this development) and it would therefore be considered appropriate for contributions to be secured towards the delivery of these projects as they would also be located in the town centre which will be accessible by all travel modes to the application site. A similar approach to that set out above for outdoor sports in relation to identifying a contribution and the projects that the contribution would be used towards would be advocated.

- 5.17.54 Sport England's established Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) indicates that a population of 3,540 in Stevenage Borough will generate a demand for 0.26 sports halls (£692,083), 0.18 swimming pools (£756,731) and 0.05 rinks of an indoor bowls centre (£18,691). The attached WORD document provides more detail of the calculations. Consideration should be given by the Council to using the figures from the Sports Facility Calculator for informing the level of a financial contribution.

- 5.17.55 As there are no confirmed proposals at this stage for meeting the development's indoor sports facility needs, an objection is made to the planning application in its current form. However, I would be willing to withdraw this objection if it is confirmed that appropriate financial contributions, secured through a section 106 agreement as set out above, will be made towards the provision of these facilities and the expected level of the contributions is confirmed together with the projects that the contributions will be used towards.

#### Primary School

- 5.17.56 The proposed primary school would be expected to provide some sport and recreation facilities for meeting educational needs that could also be used by the community outside of school hours such as the playing field and the school hall. While these facilities are principally for school use and would be designed for primary school aged children and should not be considered as a substitute for dedicated community facilities, they would offer potential to complement provision made for dedicated community sports facility provision. While there is no detail of what would be provided on the school site, to ensure that the school's facilities are secured for community use

in practice, Sport England request that any planning permission makes provision for securing the community use of the sports facilities provided on the school site.

5.17.57A formal community use agreement would be the appropriate mechanism for securing community use. Without a formal community use agreement being secured there would be no certainty that the facilities would be accessible to the community in practice after they have been built. Model condition 16 from our model planning conditions schedule should be used as a basis for securing this through planning permissions. Any planning permission should also make provision for full details of the design and layout of the school sports facilities to be submitted as part of reserved matters.

#### Active Design

5.17.58Sport England, in conjunction with Public Health England, has produced 'Active Design' (October 2015), a guide to planning new developments that create the right environment to help people get more active, more often in the interests of health and wellbeing. The guidance sets out ten key principles for ensuring new developments incorporate opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activity. The Active Design principles are aimed at contributing towards the Government's desire for the planning system to promote healthy communities through good urban design. It should be noted that the active design principles have also been advocated by Hertfordshire County Council's Healthy Places Team (who Sport England works closely with) in their response to this planning application.

5.17.59It has been noted that Active Design principles have been considered in the masterplanning of the proposal and some of the concepts such as the mobility hub, the circular strategic footpath, the multi-functional principal open spaces, the public right of way improvement plan and the travel plan co-ordinator would be consistent with these principles. While the conceptual proposals for the later phases of the development that would be addressed through reserved matters are welcomed in principle, to help ensure that designing to encourage physical activity is given appropriate consideration in practice when the reserved matters applications are prepared, Sport England would request a planning condition to be imposed requiring details to be submitted and approved which demonstrate how promoting physical activity has been considered in the design and layout of the development. The Active Design guidance includes a checklist that can be applied to developments and it is recommended that the checklist is used to inform the provision of such details and included in a document such as a Design & Access Statement or Health Impact Statement.

### **5.18 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust**

#### Comments dated 21 April 2021

5.18.1 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) have reviewed the ecological information submitted in support of this application. In order to provide a full response HMWT will need to see the original biodiversity net gain calculation spreadsheet. Once HMWT have had sight of this, HMWT will be able to assess whether it has been correctly populated, and if it fulfils the requirements of the new Stevenage Biodiversity Accounting SPD.

5.18.2 HMWT initial thoughts are:

- Compensatory Skylark plots should be increased to 25 to allow a buffer for lack of uptake and provide a potential net gain in red listed species;
- A compensatory strategy for Corn Bunting and Yellow Wagtail will also be required;
- These compensation strategies must be fully set out in a compensation plan, with full costings and monitoring for in perpetuity delivery i.e. 30 years min.

- 5.18.3 Most of the other mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures look acceptable and will need to be secured by condition. Once HMWT have seen the metric, HMWT can provide conditions for all these elements.
- 5.18.4 HMWT greatest concern is the level of compensation required to provide a net gain i.e. a 10% increase in habitat units. To achieve a biodiversity net gain the developer will need to provide a biodiversity offset of 125.73 habitat units, or a commuted sum to SBC to provide this. The habitat will need to be better than that which is to be lost. The majority of this habitat is a priority habitat i.e. open mosaic habitat on previously developed land. This means that a similar habitat or better habitat will need to be created. SBC will need to be sure that they have the land capacity to deliver this before approving the application. If they do not, they will not be able to fulfil their planning function of biodiversity net gain and cannot reasonably approve the planning application. HMWT advise that SBC and HMWT get together as a matter of urgency to discuss exactly what will be required and how much commuted sum will be required.
- 5.18.5 However, if SBC do have the land available – and it is likely that they do (HMWT have already performed an audit of your land for you), the sum required to deliver net gain from this development would be substantial and transformative to the habitats, species and residents in the borough. Current government estimates for the cost of offsetting a basic habitat unit are up to 15k per unit. The Stevenage SPD and cost calculator has much more precise costings, and there would be an economies of scale implication for this size of offset, but the figures for priority habitat creation would be high. It is a fantastic and legitimate opportunity that Stevenage could secure for its parks and open spaces.

Comments 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021

- 5.18.6 The ecological consultant has been made aware that more work needs to be submitted to substantiate the habitat and condition statements in the Defra metric. Once this has been provided and accepted a habitat unit shortfall will be generated. This will need to exceed the existing habitat value by 10% in accordance with the Stevenage Biodiversity Accounting SPD.
- 5.18.7 SBC will then need to calculate an appropriate sum to create and manage the habitats required. These must be an improvement in terms of habitat quality than that which is lost. In this instance this means habitats that approximate the priority habitat to be lost, open mosaic habitats on previously developed land, will be required. Species rich lowland meadow interspersed with scrub and ponds is an appropriate habitat. Offsets must trade up in terms of habitat quality.
- 5.18.8 Alternatively the applicant could source and provide details of their own offset which should be within the Stevenage area. Onsite, all the management required to achieve the stated habitat and condition scores in the metric need to be captured in a LEMP. This must contain creation, management, and monitoring methodologies appropriate to the lines in the metric. Remedial measures or penalties if the habitats fail to achieve condition will be required.
- 5.18.9 Compensatory skylark plots should be increased to 25 to allow a buffer for lack of uptake and provide a potential net gain in red listed species. A compensatory strategy for red listed farmland birds, corn bunting and yellow wagtail, will also be required. These compensation strategies must be fully set out in a compensation plan, with full costings and monitoring for in perpetuity delivery i.e. 30 years min.
- 5.18.10 All buildings bordering open space will need to contain an integrated swift or bat box. This can be conditioned or plans changed to accomplish this. Hedgehog highways

must connect all gardens and open space. HMWT can supply conditions adapted from BS 42020 for all the elements above on request.

Comments dated 8 June 2021

- 5.18.11 HMWT have run the figures through the cost calculator and tied these to the figures generated by the development proposal. In order to accord with the SPD and deliver a net gain of 10% the development needs to provide a minimum of 125.73 habitat units offsite, or a commuted sum to SBC to do so on their behalf. The habitat provided must be better than that which is to be lost. The habitat to be lost is predominantly Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land – which is a priority habitat. It is unfeasible to recreate this habitat so a proxy for this habitat needs to be created, with roughly the same proportions of component habitats. The habitat must contain a realistic proportion of priority habitat to replace the priority habitat that is to be lost. In this case it has been calculated to be 55% lowland meadow, and 45% scrub in area – which roughly translates to the proportions of the habitat to be lost.
- 5.18.12 To achieve 125.73 habitat units from amenity grassland at the 55/45 ratio requires 13 ha of lowland meadow and 11.3ha of scrub. The cost to create this and manage it for 30 years, with contingency and monitoring has been estimated to cost £2,197,827 for the meadow, £260,697 for the scrub. Together this comes to £2,458,524. The costs for creating and maintaining the grassland comes from SBC grounds maintenance team's current hay meadow management costings (with disposal costs) and the costs for the scrub creation and maintenance comes from Nicholson's Nurseries.
- 5.18.13 HMWT advise that the Defra metric calculates the offsite habitat creation figures populated and the cost calculator populated with these figures. This calculator is derived from the Warwickshire Calculator but adapted for Hertfordshire. The alternative would be for the developer to propose an offset site to provide 125.73 habitat units, but this would need to be supported by all the elements described in the SPD. This is a reasonable estimate based on up to date figures and it should ensure that SBC will be able to deliver the necessary number of units to achieve a net gain.

Comments dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021

- 5.18.14 The principles of the skylark scheme is good, but require some form of monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure that it was delivered in perpetuity. Regarding yellow wagtail and corn bunting, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust would wish to see a compensation strategy that actually delivers compensation for these species which would then be enforced and monitored. It would have to be geographically appropriate and provide the right habitat in perpetuity.
- 5.18.15 It is good to see the provision of hedgehog highways and integrated boxes. But for clarity, these are to be integrated in the brickwork such as a habitat box, not free hanging.

Comments dated 03<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

- 5.18.16 Recommendation for a condition in line with BS42020 with regards to skylarks to imposed. In terms of corn bunting the best habitat compensation measures involve double drilling strips in the middle of fields (in known corn bunting population areas), together with arable margins for weed seeds. This is simple and relatively cheap. It could happen in the adjoining fields with the skylark plots.
- 5.18.17 In order to compensate for the above, the applicant would be able to combine with the measures for skylark and corn bunting on the neighbouring field and just allow the hedges (or at least one hedge) to increase in width by a couple of meters, and manage optimally for yellowhammers e.g. don't cut every year and allow to expand in volume

etc. This keeps compensation local and in the range of the birds that use the site already. The suggested condition could be adapted to include corn bunting and yellowhammer strategies.

#### Comments dated 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021

- 5.18.18 Following correspondence with the consultant, they sought confirmation that HMWT would be happy for the areas of double drilling for corn bunting to be provided in the same fields as the skylark plots. They have assumed that the double drilling would be at a size of 12x200m, as per the research. In terms of numbers, we identified corn bunting in three locations on the northern site boundary. The consultant suggested a total of 6 locations for the double drilling. HMWT confirm they are in agreement with this.
- 5.18.19 With regard to the monitoring strategy, the consultant advised that whilst the 30 year period fits with all previous discussions and retention of this mitigation 'in perpetuity', an annual monitoring and reporting strategy is quite onerous. The consultant therefore asked whether there was any room for this to be reduced to c. every 3-5 years? Perhaps to be supported by photographic evidence to be supplied by the landowner each year. HMWT advised that this needs to be checked every year to make sure it is being done properly. It doesn't really matter who does it, as long as they are neutral.

#### Comments dated 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021

- 5.18.20 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust don't think that there is much new information to comment on formally. However, one thing they have raised is that habitat management regimes or Landscape Ecological Management Plans should always link to the approved biodiversity metric and stated areas, habitat creation and habitat condition requirements within it. The LEMP that has been submitted does not do this. It should be viewed as the blueprint for what needs to be created to deliver measurable net gain.

#### Comments dated 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021

- 5.18.21 HMWT are pleased to see that the gardens are correctly attributed within the metric. HMWT also happy with the other habitat and condition scores in the metric. This means that the development is 121.1 habitat units short of providing a biodiversity net gain. The baseline score is 320.5, which must be exceeded by 10% to deliver a net gain in accordance with the Stevenage Biodiversity and Development SPD, and the Environment Act. This means that the development must deliver 352.55 HU. It currently delivers 231.45HU. This leaves 121.1 to deliver through a biodiversity offset or commuted sum. The habitat being lost is Open Mosaic Habitat (a priority habitat). This means that it must be compensated by a similar habitat – another priority habitat. This means that habitats approximating those lost, e.g. a lowland meadow and scrub mosaic with wet and bare areas, will be required in any compensation scheme. These are likely to be relatively expensive, particularly the lowland meadow element. HMWT suggest the Council's Officers work out how much these will cost as soon as possible so that these can be presented to the developer and start negotiating a S106. The Council's Parks and Amenities Team will need to be involved as well.
- 5.18.22 The Council will need a condition that states development can't go ahead until a biodiversity offset for 121.1 HU has been approved, or a financial agreement with the Council to deliver this offset on behalf of the developer.

### **5.19 National Grid**

5.19.1 No comment.

## **5.20 Natural England**

### Comments received 27 May 2021

5.20.1 As submitted, the application could have potential significant effects on Knebworth Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Natural England requires further information in order to determine the significant of these impacts and the scope for mitigation. The following information is required:

- Consideration of recreational pressure on Knebworth Woods SSSI and provide details on any mitigation measures to reduce these impacts.

5.20.2 Without the information, Natural England may need to object to the proposal. This application is in close proximity to Knebworth Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The application, as submitted, does not contain sufficient information to conclude that the development is not likely to damage or destroy the interest features for which the SSSI has been notified. Natural England's concerns are set out below.

5.20.3 Knebworth Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is noted as being one of the most important woodlands in the North Hertfordshire, and of a type that is nationally rare. The site is also notified for containing areas of both acidic and neutral grassland. The proposed new development is situated in proximity to this SSSI, which could have significant impacts on these interest features.

5.20.4 Given the size and location of the proposed development, Natural England is concerned about the potential impacts as a result of increased recreational pressure on Knebworth Woods SSSI. Further information should be provided on the potential impacts and details provided on any mitigation measures to reduce these impacts on Knebworth Woods SSSI.

5.20.5 Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, the Council are required under Section 28I (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

### Other advice

### Soils and Agricultural Land Classification

5.20.6 Based on the information provided with the planning application, it appears that the proposed development comprises approximately 78.3ha of agricultural land, including 48.4ha classified as 'best and most versatile' (Grades 1, 2 and 3a land in the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system).

5.20.7 It is recognised that a proportion of the agricultural land affected by the development will remain undeveloped. However, in order to retain the long term potential of this land and to safeguard soil resources as part of the overall sustainability of the whole development, it is important that the soil is able to retain as many of its many important functions and services as possible through careful soil management.

5.20.8 Consequently, Natural England advise that if the development proceeds, the developer uses an appropriately experienced soil specialist to advise on, and supervise, soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled and how to make the best use of the different soils on site. Detailed guidance is available in Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites and we recommend that this is followed.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain

5.20.9 Government policy is progressing to reverse the trend of biodiversity decline, which has continued to occur despite planning policy aimed towards no residual loss in biodiversity. This includes the revised NPPF which sees a strengthening of provision for net gain through development. Defra have also consulted on updating planning requirements to make it mandatory. This is following the publishing of Defra's 25 Year Environmental Plan, in which net gain through development is the first key objective.

5.20.10 Natural England therefore recommend the proposals seek to achieve biodiversity net gain. With careful planning, this should be achievable for this development given its scale and opportunity for extensive blue/green infrastructure. Applicants can make use of the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2, which is a clear and methodical calculation for net gain in biodiversity for individual planning proposals. The metric has been updated to include a wider range of habitat types and incorporate wider benefits of Green Infrastructure. Key principles underpinning the biodiversity net gain approach include:

5.20.11 Mitigation hierarchy – all development proposals should continue to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set in national policy (para 175a of the NPPF 2019), whereby if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

5.20.12 Compensation for loss of priority habitat should be based on the enhancement and/or creation of UK priority habitats, listed as required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Biodiversity net gain should be additional to any habitat creation required to mitigate or compensate for impacts. It is also important to note that net gains can be delivered even if there are no losses through development.

5.20.13 Impacts on statutory designated sites – including SSSIs and European sites (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites) will continue to be addressed through their existing legislative protections, i.e. the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations').

5.20.14 Irreplaceable habitats and protected species - biodiversity net gain is not applied to irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees, nor is it applied to protected species, which should be addressed separately through their existing legislative protections as outlined above. Natural England recommend that industry good practice principles for biodiversity net gain published by CIEEM, IEMA and CIRIA are used.

5.20.15 One method to ensure net gain is achieved is to compile a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (BMEP) or similar document that aims to protect and improve the local ecology. This can help to strengthen ecological networks and wildlife corridors. The BMEP can include measures for mitigating impacts on protected species and habitats, biodiversity compensation measures for any residual biodiversity losses that cannot be fully mitigated on site, as well as additional measures to achieve biodiversity net gain.

Updated comments received 21 July 2021



5.20.16 After receiving further evidence of the extent of recreation pressure on Knebworth Woods SSSI from the applicant's Ecological Consultant, Natural England have no objection to the mitigation measures outlined in the Environmental Statement being secured by the appropriate planning conditions.

Amended Comments received 02 December 2021

5.20.17 As submitted, the application could have potential significant effects on Knebworth Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Natural England requires further information in order to determine the significant of these impacts and the scope for mitigation. The following information is required:

- Consideration of recreational pressure on Knebworth Woods SSSI and provide details on any mitigation measures to reduce these impacts.

5.20.18 Without the information, Natural England may need to object to the proposal. This application is in close proximity to Knebworth Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The application, as submitted, does not contain sufficient information to conclude that the development is not likely to damage or destroy the interest features for which the SSSI has been notified. Natural England's concerns are set out below.

5.20.19 This application is in close proximity to Knebworth Woods SSSI and given the size and location of the proposed development, Natural England is concerned about the potential impacts as a result of increased recreational pressure on Knebworth Woods SSSI. Further consideration should be given to the potential impacts that could damage or destroy the interest features for which the SSSI has been notified.

5.20.20 The Ecological Statement Addendum is correct in stating that Natural England agrees that pre-existing issues relating to fly-tipping and vehicular damage are not the responsibility of this developer and should be addressed through other means. However, given the scale of development now proposed, there is a need for further more detailed assessment of potential impacts caused by urbanisation and recreational pressures.

5.20.21 Whilst Natural England considers that the mitigation measures outlined in paragraph 65 will have a role in reducing the number of visits to the SSSI, Natural England consider that there will be residual usage of the SSSI, and that given the scale of development there may be a need for additional offsite mitigation.

5.20.22 Please note that if the authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 28I (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, the authority has taken account of Natural England's advice.

Protected Landscapes

5.20.23 The proposed development is located within an area which Natural England is assessing as a boundary variation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Whilst this assessment process does not confer any additional planning protection, the impact of the proposal on the natural beauty of this area may be a material consideration in the determination of the development proposal. Natural England considers the Chilterns to be a valued landscape in line with paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Furthermore, paragraph 176 of the NPPF states that development in the settings of AONBs should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise impacts on the designated areas. An assessment of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal on this area should therefore be

undertaken, with opportunities taken to avoid or minimise impacts on the landscape and secure enhancement opportunities. Any development should reflect or enhance the intrinsic character and natural beauty of the area and be in line with relevant development plan policies.

- 5.20.24 An extension to an existing AONB is formally designated once a variation Order, made by Natural England, is confirmed by the Defra Secretary of State. Prior to confirmation, any area that is subject to a variation Order would carry great weight as a material consideration in planning decisions.

#### Local Wildlife Sites and Environmental Net Gain

- 5.20.25 Natural England advises that this site should seek to deliver net gains for biodiversity and the environment. Natural England note that Kitching Green Lane Local Wildlife Site ('LWS') lies partially within or in close proximity to the red line boundary. The application should seek to avoid impacts on any LWS and seek to deliver net gain which complements existing environmental features.

### **5.21 Affinity Water**

- 5.21.1 No comment.

### **5.22 Thames Water**

- 5.22.1 Following initial investigations, Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing foul water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development proposal. Thames Water has contacted the developer in an attempt to agree a position for foul water networks but has been unable to do so in the time available and as such Thames Water request that a condition be added to any planning permission.
- 5.22.2 The developer can request information to support the discharge of this condition by visiting the Thames Water website at [thameswater.co.uk/preplanning](https://thameswater.co.uk/preplanning). Should the Local Planning Authority consider the above recommendation inappropriate or are unable to include it in the decision notice, it is important that the Local Planning Authority liaises with Thames Water Development Planning Department (telephone 0203 577 9998) prior to the planning application approval.
- 5.22.3 The applicant is advised that their development boundary falls within a Source Protection Zone for groundwater abstraction. These zones may be at particular risk from polluting activities on or below the land surface. To prevent pollution, the Environment Agency and Thames Water (or other local water undertaker) will use a tiered, risk-based approach to regulate activities that may impact groundwater resources.
- 5.22.4 With regard to water supply, this comes within the area covered by the Affinity Water Company

### **5.24 Council's Traffic and Parking Enforcement Manager**

- 5.24.1 The Council's Traffic and Parking Enforcement Manager has the following comments in relation to parking enforcement matters having reviewed the Transport Assessment.

#### Proposed Meadway/Redcar Drive enabling works (repurposing Redcar Drive as a segregated footway/cycleway and construction of a new road)

- 5.24.2 The parking that currently occurs in Redcar Drive is likely to displace into the new road, which at 6.5m+ wide would be able to support parking on one side. Measures should be put in place to deter/mitigate this, for example yellow lines or clearway status.

#### 4.110 street characteristics

- 5.24.3 The Parking Enforcement Manager encourage the applicant to pursue street layouts that discourage the "informal" parking of cars in locations not intended for that purpose in order that the Parking Standards SPD is meaningful and to ensure that neither the quality of the public realm nor the safe and expeditious operation of the highway network is negatively impacted by inappropriate vehicle storage without the need for formal parking controls. The intended sensitive design of on-street parking is welcome, but experience shows that many drivers may be insensitive in their behaviour. Where it is noted that on-street parking on the main street is to be restricted, it would be helpful if the applicant could clearly state by what means: do they envision the use of formal parking controls to achieve this?
- 5.24.4 The draft new Parking Strategy which is scheduled to go to public consultation next month (**June 2021**) includes the possibility of making new streets Restricted Parking Zones (RPZ) where vehicles can only be left in designated parking bays. The Council's Engineering Section encourage the applicant to take this approach although it is not yet adopted by Stevenage Borough Council.

#### Parking on the verge or footway

- 5.24.5 If a nationwide ban on verge and footway parking is not implemented by government, provision should be made by the developer to ensure that it does not take place. If they do not implement an RPZ that prevents it, they should pursue the implementation of a Traffic Order putting in place a zonal Prohibition of Parking on the Verge or Footway throughout the development.

#### Commercial vehicle parking

- 5.24.6 The town wide overnight/weekend ban on parking commercial vehicles over 5T or seating over 12 passengers is written in such a way that it applies to all streets in the town and will therefore affect the new roads the developer builds. The developer is therefore responsible for erecting suitable signs in all new roads prior to their adoption as public highways. Details of the necessary signs can be provided at a later date.

#### Making and enforcement of parking controls

- 5.24.7 The Council's Parking Enforcement Manager would be happy to enforce such parking controls as are created but SBC is likely to lack the resources to make the necessary legal orders. The applicant should commission Hertfordshire County Council to make the necessary traffic orders and parking places orders. As well as the items mentioned above this must include the car club bays (4.126), disabled bays (1.141) and loading bays (4.150) and any other on-street parking controls. The applicant will be responsible for installing the necessary traffic signs and road markings for all such controls as are put in place, all to be in accordance with the legal requirements of TSRGD 2016 and with the timing of works being coordinated to correspond with the dates on which any Orders that have been made come into force.
- 5.24.8 The making and implementation of Orders should be timed so that they take effect prior to first occupation so as to prevent inappropriate parking from the outset.

### **5.25 Welwyn Parish Council**

- 5.25.1 The Parish Council have no comment to make regarding the development itself, nor the local infrastructure and facilities proposed to accompany it, other than to say that the routes in and out of the town from the development will be a great improvement on the West-East routes that currently exist and (regarding the overall development) the

inclusion of a care home, open spaces, sports pitches, leisure facilities and a primary school is commendable. Our concerns lie with the non-local traffic generated by the 390 for which full permission is sought now and in particular the 1100 (approximately) houses for which outline permission is sought now, and the likely impact on our parish. The attached paper summarises our view and concerns.

- 5.25.2 May the Parish Council be assured that further study into the anticipated southern travel from this new development and the use of and alternatives to the congested A1(M) will be examined and if necessary, mitigation strategies urgently deployed to prevent the over-exploitation of our parish side roads becoming the price for an absence of action over the A1(M) delay, with all the consequences of dirt, pollution, noise and road safety to an essentially rural area, that this brings.
- 5.25.3 We have not seen any detailed demographic data but apart from potential care home inhabitants, we can presume that potential owners are likely to have well-founded employment. The background reports could not reasonably be expected to detail the locations of such jobs but, despite the proximity to the Gunnelwood Road and related industrial areas and the numerous high-tech locations in the vicinity, as well as the town centre commercial premises, it is reasonable to assume that a proportion of the jobs would not necessarily be in Stevenage but might be located in other nearby towns such as Hertford, WGC, Hatfield or St Albans and even London.
- 5.25.4 The first deliveries of this development are proposed as Q2 2024 and 180 to 210 dwellings per annum thereafter, completing the development by 2031 as per the Local Plan timeframe. We have studied the Transport Assessment (Appendix 10.1) and the Framework Travel Plan (appendix 10.2) and we are also familiar with the Herts County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 and Growth & Transport Plan.
- 5.25.5 The proximity to Stevenage rail station and the good service that enjoys to London and to points to the north, suggests that good pedestrian/cycle routes to and from the station to the development, as part of sustainable transport strategy, will mean that most journeys to London will be by train and not by car, much as now. It is possible, but we would suggest less likely that travel to Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield would be by train, since although the line is direct and the service good, people own cars for other reasons and will want to use them for work access too. However, the absence of direct rail connection to St Albans and Hertford, we suggest, will mean such journeys are more likely to be by car. Thus journeys to work to the south of Stevenage from the new development are likely to result in an increase in road traffic. The question is by how much and why does this matter?
- 5.25.6 The Parish Council cannot answer the first question but the second is a major concern for us. One might reasonably expect the A1(M) to take much of this southbound traffic as Junctions 8 and 7 (especially Junction 7) are close by with and Appendix 10.1 concludes (ref: paragraphs 6.31 and 6.41) that on the basis of traffic modelling, no additional mitigation is required to address the added traffic contributed to the A1(M) from this development.
- 5.25.7 However you will be well-aware that the A1(M) section between Junctions 6 and 8 and indeed further south than Junction 6, is very congested at present (assuming that pre-Covid road travel levels return) and recent Department of Transport decisions over the implementation of the "smart" motorway being delayed for at least 3, possibly 5 years or even further, or even cancelled completely, mean that alternative routes will be sourced. It is the impact of these alternatives and the pressure contributed by developments elsewhere that will be a cumulative effect that causes us great concern.
- 5.25.8 The routes which concern us will use the improved local road infrastructure stemming from the development to:

- A. access the B656 at Codicote, thence Welwyn and via Link Road/Clock Roundabout/ Welwyn Bypass Road/A1000 to access WGC and Hertford Road to access Hertford and beyond, or the B197 to Stanborough and then Coopers Green Lane to St Albans or Green Lanes to Hatfield
- B. access the B197 at The Roebuck, thence Knebworth/Woolmer Green/Oaklands to Clock Roundabout, then as Route A above.
- C. access Bragbury Lane, thence Datchworth/ Burnham Green/Harmer Green Lane/New Road (Digswell) and then a variety of local roads to WGC or via Hertford Road to Hertford and points beyond.

5.25.9 All these alternatives have evolved to avoid the congested A1(M) – southbound in the mornings and northbound in the evenings - from Junctions 6 to 8. Some of these “alternative” routes were (pre-Covid) already at capacity during morning and evening commute. When we consider that within the same timescale as the Stevenage West development and others as part of the approved Stevenage Borough Local Plan, we will have:

- Major developments around Codicote and Kimpton and even Hitchin as part of the approved North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan.
- Increased housing around the outskirts of Welwyn on the B656, at Oaklands on the B197 and at Digswell, as part of the (yet to be approved) Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Local Plan.

5.25.10 All of which will throw added traffic onto the local roads of our parish, at peak time, through:

- Burnham Green and Digswell, where the country lanes are narrow with bends and once in Digswell, the roads are narrow and with either narrow or no pavements, despite Hertford Road being a major through-route.
- Oaklands and Mardley Heath where the B197 is already a major cause for concern and for which the A1(M) upgrade was to be a major relief leading to re-engineering of the road to improve safety by reducing speeds.
- Welwyn, where the Bypass is taking more than it should due to the A1(M) congestion and the village High Street is a major “rat-run” to avoid the congested Bypass!

5.25.11 There are currently no amelioration alternatives following the deferment of the A1(M) upgrade and no plans addressing these concerns.

## **5.26 Hertfordshire County Council Public Health**

5.26.1 No comment.

## **5.27 UK Power Networks**

5.27.1 Currently UK Power Networks (UKPN) operates a Primary and Grid substation site, a key piece of strategic electricity infrastructure for the area, opposite the proposed site. We have concerns for the future residents of the new development and how they will be impacted by the noise of both the Primary Substation and Grid site. Based on UKPNs experience, we believe noise complaints would be likely from new residents of the development and any such complaints could lead to abatement notices. If this development were allowed to proceed without a robust assessment of low frequency noise it could materially affect our rights under section 182 of the National Planning policy Framework (February 2019). UKPN would therefore object to the development unless an assessment based on procedure NANR45 is undertaken to assess the potential impact on any future resident's.

5.27.2 To be clear it is not UKPNs intention to prevent the development from going ahead, however, UKPN feel it needs to raise this matter now whilst there is opportunity to design suitable mitigation as required. As a suitable solution, UKPN recommends a condition be imposed if planning permission were to be granted.

## **5.28 Council's CCTV Section**

5.28.1 No comment.

# **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

## **6.1 Background to the development plan**

6.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that the decision on the planning application should be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014); and
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007).

## **6.2 Central Government Advice**

6.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021. This largely reordered the policy substance of the earlier 2012 version of the NPPF albeit with some revisions to policy. The Council are content that the policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan should be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications. The NPPF provides that proposals which accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay (para.11) and that where a planning application conflicts with an up to date development plan, permission should not usually be granted (para.12). This indicates the weight which should be given to an up to date development plan, reflecting the requirements of section 38(6) of the 2004 Act.

6.2.2 Since November 2018, housing delivery has been measured against the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) as set out by the Government planning policy and guidance. The results of the HDT dictate whether a local planning authority should be subject to consequences to help increase their housing delivery. Where an authority's HDT score is less than 85% of its housing requirement, the Council must incorporate a 20% buffer into its housing supply calculations in line with paragraph 73 of the NPPF. Where an authority's score is below 75%, the Council will be subject to the HDT's most severe penalty and must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The latest HDT results, published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (**now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**) in January 2021, identifies that Stevenage only delivered 64% of its housing requirement. This is significantly below the 75% target and renders the adopted Local Plan housing policies as out of date. Consequently, Stevenage Borough Council must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development in its decision making and give great weight towards the need to deliver housing.

6.2.3 The Council therefore, has to prepare an Action Plan to show how the Council is responding to the challenge of ensuring more homes are delivered in the Borough. It will have to be prepared in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance and analyse the reasons for under-delivery of new homes against the Government's requirements. It also has to set out clear actions on how to improve housing delivery. Consequently,

Stevenage Borough Council is considering its position in relation to preparing an action plan to enhance housing supply on deliverable sites.

- 6.2.4 In terms of 5 year land supply, the Council has recently published the Five Year Land Supply Update (August 2021) which reveals that Stevenage has a 5.85 year supply of housing. A copy of the statement is found on:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/monitoring/five-year-housing-land-supply-position-statement-august-2021.pdf>

- 6.2.5 The Council will also be commencing preliminary work into a potential review of its Local Plan, last adopted in May 2019. This is to ensure the policies within the Local Plan are up to date in accordance with the NPPF as well as ensuring the Council is delivering a sufficient supply of housing and employment.

### **6.3 Planning Practice Guidance**

- 6.3.1 The PPG contains guidance supplementing the NPPF and with which Members are fully familiar. The PPG is a material consideration to be taken into account together with the National Design Guide (2019) which has the same status as the PPG.

### **6.4 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 2019)**

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;  
Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage;  
Policy SP3: A strong competitive economy;  
Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre;  
Policy SP5: Infrastructure;  
Policy SP6: Sustainable transport;  
Policy SP7: High quality homes;  
Policy SP8: Good design;  
Policy SP9: Healthy Communities  
Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution;  
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment;  
Policy SP13: The historic environment;  
Policy EC1: Allocated Employment Site;  
Policy TC11: New Convenience Retail Provision;  
Policy TC13: Retail impact assessments;  
Policy IT1: Strategic Development Access Points;  
Policy IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors;  
Policy IT3: Infrastructure;  
Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans;  
Policy IT5: Parking and access;  
Policy IT6: Sustainable transport;  
Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists;  
Policy HO1: Housing Allocations;  
Policy HO2: Stevenage West;  
Policy HO7: Affordable housing targets;  
Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design;  
Policy HO9: House types and sizes;  
Policy HO10: Sheltered and supported housing;  
Policy HO11: Accessible and adaptable housing;  
Policy GD1: High quality design;  
Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities;  
Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities;  
Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new developments;  
Policy FP1: Climate change;  
Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1;  
Policy FP5: Contaminated land;

Policy FP7: Pollution;  
Policy FP8: Pollution sensitive uses;  
Policy NH2: Wildlife Sites;  
Policy NH3: Green Corridors;  
Policy NH4: Green Links;  
Policy NH5: Trees and woodland;  
Policy NH6: General protection for open space;  
Policy NH7: Open space standards;  
Policy NH9: Areas of archaeological significance;  
Policy NH10: Conservation areas.

## **6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents**

Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document October 2020.  
Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2009.  
Stevenage Borough Council Developer Contributions SPD March 2021.  
The impact of development on Biodiversity SPD March 2021.

## **6.6 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule**

- 6.6.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floorspace of a development.

## **7. APPRAISAL**

- 7.1. The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are its acceptability in land use policy terms; affordable housing, build to rent and section 106 planning obligations, impact upon the character and appearance of the area including the conservation area, whether the design of the development is of high quality design in accordance with policy, the effect of the proposed development on the setting and significance of heritage assets including designated heritage assets, impact upon amenity, whether the development would provide an acceptable living environment for future residents, means of access and highway safety, parking provision, impact on the environment, development and flood risk, trees and landscaping/open space, ecology, sustainable construction and climate change, impact on archaeological remains and loss of agricultural land.

## **7.2 Land Use Policy Considerations**

### Compliance with the Council's Housing Policies

- 7.2.1 The NPPF states at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF also stipulates that decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. In addition, the Framework also sets out that sustainable development needs to be pursued in a positive way and at the heart of the framework is a "presumption on favour of sustainable development".
- 7.2.2 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF 2021 requires that the planning system should deliver, inter alia, a mix of housing particularly in terms of tenure and price to support a wide variety of households in all areas. Paragraph 68 of the NPPF states that planning policies should identify a supply of specific deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period, and specific deliverable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and where possible, for years 11 to 15. NPPF Paragraph 74 states that "Local Planning Authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific



deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies".

- 7.2.3 Paragraph 119 of the NPPF stipulates that planning policies and decisions should promote the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes such as through the use of brownfield sites (previously developed land) and the development of underutilised land.
- 7.2.4 With respect to the five year land supply of deliverable housing, local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements, but the supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:-
- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market; or
  - b) 10% where the local planning authority wishes to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable sites through an annual position statement or recently adopted plan, to account for any fluctuations in the market during that year; or
  - c) 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply.
- 7.2.5 Turning to Five Year Housing Land Supply, the Council issued an Update Housing Land Supply Document in August 2021. This document was produced following the Appeal Decision for Land West of Lytton Way (APP/K1935/W/20/3255692). It sets out that the Council can demonstrate a Housing Land Supply of 5.85 years for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026, using the Liverpool methodology and guidance from the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 7.2.6 However, since the issuing of the Housing Land Supply Document, the Council received a copy of the Consent Order from the High Court signed by Mr James Strachan QC (Sitting as Deputy Judge of the High Court) which quashed the appeal decision APP/K1935/W/20/3255692 / Planning application 19/00474/FPM – Land West of Lytton Way, Stevenage. The decision was quashed on the ground that it was accepted by the Secretary of State of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that the inspector made an error of fact in regards to Five Year Housing Land Supply. Therefore, it was agreed by the Secretary of State of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that the Planning Appeal Decision by W Clark dated 20 August 2021 should be quashed.
- 7.2.7 Given the aforementioned, the Council can no longer demonstrate a Housing Land Supply of 5.85 years due to the quashing of the West of Lytton Way appeal decision. Despite this, the Council would be able to demonstrate a 5 year land supply of 5.20 years. The dwelling units to be delivered under Phase 1 as part of the overall development for West Stevenage before 31 March 2026 are included in the calculation of 5.20 years. Excluding these units from the calculation, the Council will only be able to demonstrate 4.59 years of housing land supply. As a consequence, the Council would no longer be able to demonstrate a 5 year land supply up to 31 March 2026. Therefore, the Council would under paragraph 11 of the NPPF (2021) have to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development in its decision making and give great weight towards the need to deliver housing.
- 7.2.8 In addition to the above, the site when it is delivered as a whole (1500 units), is considered an important element of the future housing supply for the town and will continue to do so due to the relatively long-scale delivery period which will ensure a consistent supply of housing for a period beyond the end of the current 5 year period. Therefore, if the scheme was not to be delivered in its entirety, the Council would unlikely be able to demonstrate a 5 year land supply beyond 31 March 2026. Given this, the proposed development is seen as fundamental in the Council being able to demonstrate it has a 5 year land supply for housing.

- 7.2.9 Turning to Housing Delivery, since November 2018, housing delivery has been measured against the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) as set out by the Government planning policy and guidance. The results of the HDT dictate whether a local planning authority should be subject to consequences to help increase their housing delivery. Where an authority's HDT score is less than 85% of its housing requirement, the Council must incorporate a 20% buffer into its housing supply calculations in line with paragraph 73 of the NPPF. Where an authority's score is below 75%, the Council will be subject to the HDT's most severe penalty and must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.2.10 The latest HDT results, published by MHCLG in January 2021, identifies that Stevenage only delivered 64% of its housing requirement. This is significantly below the 75% target and renders the adopted Local Plan housing policies as out of date. Consequently, Stevenage Borough Council must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development in its decision making and give great weight towards the need to deliver housing.
- 7.2.11 Given the aforementioned, as the Council has failed to meet Governments Policy requirement in relation to supporting the delivery of housing in line with HDT, in accordance with the NPPF, as the presumption in favour of sustainable development kicks in, the Council must approve applications for housing development unless its impacts clearly outweigh the benefits. The following sections of this report will, therefore, review the overall impacts this development will have in line with the policies set out in the NPPF and the Local Plan and whether the overall level of harm created by the development outweighs the benefits.
- 7.2.12 Turning to the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (2019), under Policy SP7: High Quality Homes, this policy identifies that 1,350 new homes will need to be delivered in a new neighbourhood on undeveloped land to the west of the town during the local plan period in order to meet the Council's Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN). Policy HO2: Stevenage West sets out that the site is allocated for the development of approximately 1,350 dwellings. This site, as set out under paragraph 9.12 of the Local Plan states that the allocation of Stevenage West provides the only opportunity within the Borough to accommodate a new urban extension, without compromising the Green Belt. As such, it is critical in terms of meeting the Council's Housing Target.
- 7.2.13 This development providing dwellinghouses on an allocated site would form part of the Council's planned delivery of housing over the plan period. In respect to Policy HO9 (House types and sizes) of the Adopted Local Plan (2019), as the proposed development seeks to provide a mixture of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings, it would be in accordance with this policy, especially due to the provision of a large number of apartments, and as such, it would add to the overall mix of housing which is required to meet the OAN over the local plan period. Furthermore, 50% of the dwellings within the development have been designed to be accessible and adaptable in accordance with Policy HO11.

#### Compliance with the Council's Retail Policies

- 7.2.14 Policy TC11 (New convenience and Retail Provision) of the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out that a new local centres would be permitted in each of the new neighbourhoods, which includes West Stevenage. The policy details that 500 sq.m of convenience retail floorspace is to be provided within the centre in order to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the development. This new local centre would become part of the Borough's retail hierarchy. The policy also stipulates that these centres, where possible, be co-located with other community uses such as schools and/or health or community facilities, where such facilities are being provided. Policy

HO2 reflects this policy and under criterion K states that “local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand”.

- 7.2.15 The Framework Masterplan and Parameter Plans detail the proposed location of the new local centre which would serve the development. It would be located centrally within the development and would comprise a new Primary and Nursery School, GP surgery and local facilities along with the proposed location of supported or sheltered housing in line with Policy HO10. The neighbourhood centre would be delivered within Phase 2 of the development. As such, the details provided with the application are only indicative with the detailed design of this part of the development being submitted as part of any future reserved matters application. In terms of the level of floorspace proposed, the scheme would seek to provide 500 sq.m of convenience floorspace in accordance with the adopted Local Plan. With regards to the delivery of the neighbourhood centre itself, this would be secured as part of any subsequent S.106 legal agreement. Separately, in order to restrict the use of the convenience store so it cannot be converted to an unacceptable use such as for example residential (due to the relaxation in Permitted Development Regulations / Use Classes Order), it is recommended a condition is imposed restricting the use of the convenience store accordingly.
- 7.2.16 Notwithstanding the above, it is noted that the proposed development is a hybrid application comprising 390 dwellings in Phase 1 (the detailed design phase). Given the proposed neighbourhood centre would not be delivered until Phase 2 (Outline phase), there would be no on-site convenience retail facilities for residents who would occupy the dwelling units as they come forward in Phase 1. Therefore, and to ensure residents do not have to travel off-site for their convenience shopping, it has been negotiated with the developers to provide a temporary shop within Phase 1. This temporary shop would then cease trading once the new neighbourhood centre and associated convenience store is opened. The aforementioned would be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement, including trigger points for timings of delivery and cessation of use.

#### Compliance with the Council's Employment Policies

- 7.2.17 Policy EC1: Allocated site for employment development of the adopted Local Plan (2019) set out the sites and areas, as defined in the Policies Map, which are allocated for employment development. This policy also sets out that planning permission would be granted where proposals fall within the specified use classed and, individually or cumulatively, meet or exceed the target floorspace provision. With regards to the application site itself, EC/6 sets out a requirement to provide 10,000sq.m of Use Classes B1(a), B1(b), B1(c) floorspace. Policy HO2 criterion b. reflects the requirements of Policy EC1 in relation to employment floorspace provision.
- 7.2.18 In relation to the proposed employment development, the outline application details the provision of 10,000 sq.m of employment floorspace in accordance with the Council's policies. The submitted parameter plans identify this site would come forward in Phase 2 as the land is owned by the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). Therefore, the plans submitted with this application showing details of the employment site are indicative only. Consequently, once the land is purchased from the HCA, any commercial owner of this employment site would be required to submit a Reserved Matters application for the detailed design of this area.
- 7.2.19 With regards to Use Classes B1(a) (Office), B1(b) (Research and Development) and B1(c) (Light Industrial), under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, these now all fall under new Use Class E (Commercial, Business and Service). Specifically, the aforementioned uses now fall under Use Class E(g). Given the new use class order allows, for example, offices to be converted into shops without requiring planning permission, any planning permission

issued would have to restrict the use of the premises within the employment site. As such, if Members were minded to grant planning permission, it is recommended a condition is imposed restricting the use of the employment site accordingly.

#### Compliance with the Council's healthy communities policies

- 7.2.20 Policy HC5 of the same document stipulates that planning permission will be granted for appropriate D1 healthcare uses. Other uses will only be accepted where they are required for ancillary facilities. Planning permission for new health, social or community facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site where:
- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
  - b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility; and
  - c. The facility is integrated with existing health, social or community facilities, where appropriate.
- 7.2.21 Policy HC8 of the Local Plan covers the provision of sports facilities in new developments and sets out that planning permission for residential development will be granted where on-site sports provision is made in accordance with the standards set out in the Council's Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy.
- 7.2.22 Policy HO2 criterion k requires the provision of local facilities, including the provision of a new GP surgery. In addition to this, criterion l of the same policy stipulates that sports facilities are provided on site, in line with Policy HC8, including, but not limited to a skate park or Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for children and land to accommodate a new cricket facility.
- 7.2.23 Dealing firstly with the provision of a skate park or MUGA, it is set out in the Framework Master Plan and accompanying Parameter Plans that the proposed MUGA would be provided in close proximity to the new Primary and Nursery School. This would be delivered in Phase 3 of the development, with final details of the MUGA being submitted as part of any future reserved matters application.
- 7.2.24 Turning to the provision of cricket facilities, the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires under Policy HO2(l)ii that the masterplan should provide "Land to accommodate a new cricket facility". The supporting text to this policy under paragraph 9.18 states that this requirement would be subject to an up-to-date assessment of cricket needs. Taking this policy requirement into consideration, this application is accompanied by a Cricket Pitch Needs Assessment prepared by Nortoft Planning (Dated February 2021). This assessment was commissioned by the applicants in order to update the cricket elements of the Stevenage Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 which includes within this document a playing pitch strategy in accordance with Sport England guidance.
- 7.2.25 The assessment identified that at Stevenage West, one cricket ground site would be required with:
- A single-turf (artificial) cricket pitch which meets ECB guidance plus outfield area large enough to provide, in the future, for an ECB compliant 9-pitch fine turf cricket square;
  - The outfield constructed to also provide for winter football pitches. The space on the site will determine what football pitch sizes can be marked out;
  - The site laid out and constructed to also ensure the requirements and impacts of informal open space use is accommodated;
  - The site constructed and long term maintenance specifications set according to the recommendations of a specialist agronomist (A professional in the science, practice and management of agriculture as well as advise on soil etc);
  - A suitably located and designed building to provide toilets, refreshments, and potentially changing facilities, if justified, to service both cricket and football pitch(es)

meeting the requirements of Sport England, the ECB, Football Association and Football Foundation;

- Additional sufficient appropriated located space for extending the building to provide for ECB compliant ancillary facilities including clubhouse with changing, should this be required in the future;
- Sufficient parking to service the pitches.

7.2.26 In addition to the above, the applicant has also undertaken a cricket ball strike assessment to assess the proposed uses of the site, both for a non-turf pitch and for a 9-pitch turf square. Furthermore, this assessment demonstrates that ball strike netting is not required for this site. However, landscaping features are to be put in place for ball run off and for safety purposes. In addition, the football pitch provision has been designed in consultation with Sport England and the Council's Parks and Amenities Section including associated facilities which are needed to support football.

7.2.27 Following the assessments which have been undertaken and the advice from Sport England, the masterplan has been devised to show the provision of a cricket pitch (including future proofing) as well how this space can also be utilised for football. The masterplan also shows the indicative location of the cricket pavilion where further details of its overall design and layout being dealt with through a reserved matters application.

7.2.28 In terms of the minimum specifications for the pavilion building and its overall delivery (see paragraph 5.17.18), this would be secured as part of a Section 106 agreement. Following consultation with Sport England on the most up-to-date masterplan, accompanying application drawings and associated documentation relating to sport, they have advised that they fully support the proposed cricket provision which will form part of the Community Green. However, this is subject to suitably worded conditions being imposed covering the following aspects:-

- Construction Specification of the Community Green;
- Sports Pitch Maintenance;
- Artificial Wicket Design Specification; and
- Landscaping specification.

7.2.29 In terms of the Meadway playing field pavilion and associated football pitches, in order to facilitate the proposed development, the existing pavilion will have to be demolished along with some of the land which is utilised for parking. This is in order to deliver the proposed two-way vehicular carriageway which would serve the development site along with the provision of a segregated pedestrian and cycle access route into the development site. The proposal as detailed in the application submission, seeks the delivery of a replacement pavilion at Meadway along with replacement football pitches. This replacement facility and associated football pitches would be secured as part of the Section 106 legal agreement.

7.2.30 Turning to the provision of the GP surgery, following negotiations with the NHS, they have agreed to potentially locate one of their practices in any future surgery at this site. However, they have also requested that if the on-site facility is no longer required, they would seek a financial contribution in lieu. This matter is considered in more detail in section 7.3 of this report.

### Education

7.2.31 The NPPF gives the highest level of national policy support to school provision and Local Plan Policy HO2 criterion j. identified the requirement of a new primary school. Paragraph 9.16 of the Local Plan sets out that due to the location of the site, to the west of the A1(M), means that new facilities will be required to ensure the residents can meet their every day-to-day needs, this will include the provision a primary school.

- 7.2.32 Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Growth and Infrastructure Unit (GIU) following the undertaking of demographic modelling of the proposed development, identify the requirement to deliver a new 3 form entry primary school. As such, the applicant would be required to provide a financial contribution (see section 7.3 of this report) towards the delivery of the school as well as the transfer of land. This would be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement. Based on the pupil yield modelling, the transfer of the primary school site to HCC would need to take place at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.2.33 With regards to secondary education, it has been agreed by HCC GIU that this would need to be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) item. Consequently, HCC GIU would have to make a bid to Stevenage Borough Council in order to secure monies towards the delivery of a new Secondary School which is to be located at the former Barnwell East Secondary School site (Policy HC9). Currently, there are no planning applications or planning approvals for a new Secondary School on this site. However, HCC GIU has advised officers that the Department for Education (DfE) is still looking to deliver a free school on this site.
- 7.2.34 In terms of timeframes around the delivery of the primary school, HCC GIU have confirmed that the delivery of the new primary school as part of the Stevenage West development is required to be opened as early as possible due to the site location, some distance from existing Stevenage primary schools. However, given that it takes time for developments to be built-out and for the dwellings in them to be constructed and occupied the initial primary pupil yield likely to arise from the development will be relatively low. There is currently some, limited, existing capacity at those primary schools nearest to the Stevenage West development. Therefore, in advance of the new school opening on-site it is currently anticipated that the low levels of initial primary pupil yield arising from the Stevenage West development can be accommodated within the limited existing capacity at the primary schools nearest to the Stevenage West development.

#### Community Use Agreement for the Primary School

- 7.2.35 The Primary School, whilst no details have been provided at this time, is likely to accommodate some sport and recreational facilities which meet the education needs of future pupils. However, and as advised by Sport England, these facilities could be used by the community outside of school hours such as the use of the playing fields and the school hall. As such, Sport England have requested that if the Council is minded to grant planning permission, provision will be required for securing the community use of the sports facilities provided on the school site.
- 7.2.36 As such, a formal community use agreement is the appropriate mechanism to ensure the relevant facilities are available to the wider community outside of school hours. In this regard, and as suggested by Sport England, a condition could be imposed to any planning permission issued securing the use of these facilities for the wider community. In addition, conditions can be imposed requiring full details of the design and layout of the school facilities which will need to be submitted as part of any subsequent reserved matters application.

#### Supported and Sheltered Living Accommodation

- 7.2.37 Policy HO10: Sheltered and Supported Housing of the Local Plan (2019) sets out that on large developments in excess of 200 units, an element of sheltered and / or supported accommodation within Use Class C3 should be provided where practicable and consistent with the criteria set out in this policy, as well as part of the housing mix requirements of Policy HO9. For reference, the Criteria of Policy HO10 are as follows:
- a. The site is well served by passenger transport;

- b. There is good access to local services and facilities such as neighbourhood centres;
- c. Appropriate levels of amenity space and car parking for residents, visitors and staff are provided; and
- d. The proposal is appropriate to its locality.

7.2.38 Policy HO2 criterion i. states that provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10. As you will note from paragraph 7.2.13 of this report, the Framework Masterplan and Parameter identify the proposed co-location of the neighbourhood centre, primary and nursery school along with the proposed location of the Support and/or Sheltered living accommodation. In addition, the plans submitted with the application identify the location of a bus stop which would be located in close proximity to the neighbourhood centre. The accommodation itself would also be delivered within phase 2 of the proposed development. In relation to the detailed design of the accommodation, as this part of the development is in outline, any future operator of the accommodation would need to submit a reserved matters application for a Council decision.

### Conclusion

7.2.39 In summary, the overall mix of uses proposed for the site is considered consistent with policy and is therefore acceptable in principle. Issues regarding impact on the environment and infrastructure are considered in more detail in the following sections of the report below.

## **7.3 Affordable housing and Section 106 Planning Obligations**

7.3.1 Policy HO7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) which governs affordable housing, stipulates that planning permission will be granted for residential development which would maximise affordable housing provision. There is a requirement to provide 30% of new homes to be affordable. As the proposed development seeks to deliver up to 1,500 dwellings, there would be a requirement to provide 450 affordable dwelling units as part of this development.

7.3.2 Policy HO7 continues that “planning permission will be refused where these targets are not at least achieved unless:

a) Developers robustly demonstrate that the target cannot be achieved due to site-specific constraints resulting in higher than normal costs, which affect its viability; or

b) Meeting the requirements would demonstrably and significantly compromise other policy objectives.”

7.3.3 Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate target will apply. In terms of the exact tenure, mix and design, this is guided by Policy HO8 of the Local Plan. The policy sets out that where affordable units have been secured through Policy HO7, the Council will expect at least 70% of units to be for rent. The remainder will be for other tenures which are to be agreed with the Council’s Housing Team.

7.3.4 The proposed development would seek to deliver a policy compliant level of affordable housing. In terms of overall affordable housing mix, the applicant has offered the delivery of 70% of the units to be Affordable Rent (80% of local market rent) and the remainder would be intermediate housing (Shared Ownership Housing). In addition, the legal agreement shall allow a Registered Provider or the Borough Council to provide all of the units as Social Rent, however, the site wide provision of 30% affordable housing will still need to be achieved.

- 7.3.5 In regards to the delivery of the affordable housing units in every phase, the first trigger will require that no more than 50% of the Market dwellings shall be occupied until 50% of the affordable housing units for that phase have been completed and transferred. The second trigger will set out that no more than 80% of the market dwellings shall be occupied until all of the affordable units within Phase 1 have been completed and transferred. This is considered reasonable as it allows for a level of cash flow following the sale and occupation of a number of dwellings in order to deliver the affordable housing units. However, what the agreement does do is ensure the developer cannot occupy a certain number of units at each trigger point until the affordable housing units have been completed and transferred.
- 7.3.6 For the outline phases of the proposed development, the S.106 legal agreement would require the provision of between 20% to 40% of the total number of affordable housing to be delivered within each respective phase. The overall level of affordable housing across all phases would equate to 30% across the site in accordance with Policy HO7 i.e. 450 dwellings. This would ensure that all phases of the proposed development would have an acceptable level of affordable housing provided so that they are evenly spread across the development site as a whole. In terms of triggers of delivery of the respective number of affordable units in each phase, this would be as set out in paragraph 7.3.5.
- 7.3.7 In addition to affordable housing, financial contributions are also required in accordance with the Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions and contributions to Stevenage Borough Council. Based on an assessment of the development, the following contributions would be sought:-

<b>Stevenage Borough Council</b>		<b>Financial Contribution</b>
Biodiversity Enhancements		Approximate financial contribution of £2,458,524.00.  (Based on the originally submitted scheme)
Community Green and cricket pavilion		To be determined and agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair
Meadway Sports Pitches and Pavilion		£400,000 (only payable if not paid to the Council pursuant to an easement)
<b>Hertfordshire County Council</b>		
Primary Education – Towards the new primary school.		Transfer of 3 hectares (ha) of land and a financial contribution of £14,093,513 or, for the developers to deliver the primary school (to a HCC agreed specification and standards) and to transfer the school to HCC.
Highway Mitigation measures		See paragraph 7.3.30 onwards
<b>Sports England</b>		
<u>Indoor Sport</u>		
- Sport Hall		£692,083.00
- Swimming Pool (Replacement Facility)		£756,731.00
- Rinks of an Indoor Bowls Centre		£18,691.00



<b>Outdoor Sport</b>	
- Football Pitches/Rugby Union Pitches/Hockey Pitches and 3G artificial grass pitches	£311,815.00
- Changing Room Provision	£346,473.00
The financial contributions sought are approximate based on the housing mix for Phase 1 and the indicative housing mix for Phases 2 to 4.	
Total (Approximately and subject to agreement of unknown contributions to be agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair)	£2,526,063.00
<b>NHS and CCG</b>	
If the proposed on-site GP surgery is not required, then a financial contribution in-lieu would be sought.	Approximate financial contribution - £3,414,864.00
<b>NOTE:-</b> All financial obligations would be index linked.	

7.3.8 Turning to the recently adopted Developer Contributions SPD (2021), this SPD introduces a new requirement that developers of major development when signing an agreement with the Council, will need to:

- Attempt to fill 5% to 10% of construction jobs on-site associated with the development with Stevenage Residents;
- Attempt to fill 1 apprenticeship position per 10 construction jobs on-site with a Stevenage Resident or Student (cap requirement of 10 apprenticeships);
- Report whether or not these requirements are met; and
- Provide a financial contribution in lieu of not achieving either or both targets.

An Employment and Skills Plan shall be secured as part of the S.106 agreement.

7.3.9 In terms of monitoring, the Council's Developer Contributions SPD sets out that the Council will seek a monitoring fee of 2.5% of the value of the contributions being monitored. The fee would be capped at £25,000. The monitoring fee itself would be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement. In addition to this, Hertfordshire County Council's recently adopted Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions (2021) sets out a requirement for monitoring fees. These will be based on the number of triggers within the legal agreement with each distinct trigger point attracting a charge of £340 (adjusted to inflation against RPI 1Q2021).

7.3.10 With regards to the provision of Skylark Plots (these are considered in more detail in section 7.12 of this report), the legal agreement would secure the provision of approximately 25 plots/nests on the Skylark Compensation Land (land which falls outside the application site, but it one of the landowners who will be a party to the legal agreement). The agreement will also secure the provision of an overall Skylark Compensation Strategy and Skylark Management Plan. The S.106 obligations shall also secure off-site mitigation in respect of Corn Bunting and Wagtails.

7.3.11 Part of the proposed development seeks the delivery of a temporary shop on part of the Community Green. Paragraph 7.2.13 of this report stipulates that the temporary shop is required to ensure future residents are not travelling off-site for general day-to-day groceries. This is because the neighbourhood centre would not be delivered until

Phase 2 of the development. As a consequence of this, the temporary shop would need to be provided at the earliest opportunity for when the first residents begin to occupy the development. As such, and as part of the S.106 agreement, the temporary shop would need to be delivered prior to first occupation of the dwellings within Phase 1. The shop would thereafter, have to remain in-situ until the neighbourhood centre, specifically the convenience store, is opened. In this instance, the temporary shop can be removed and the ground on which it is sited made good. This requirement would also be secured as part of the Section 106 legal agreement.

- 7.3.12 The proposed construction works associated with the construction of a new carriageway and segregated cycle and pedestrian route would require the demolition of the existing Meadway pavilion and associated car parking area. In addition, the associated sports pitches are likely to be used, in part as a temporary construction compound for contractors to undertake works associated with the new underpass. Consequently, the S.106 Agreement would have a mechanism added to ensure that a replacement pavilion at Meadway along with the associated car parking and football pitches are delivered within an acceptable timeframe. In terms of timeframes specifically, the aforementioned would be provided following the completion of all highway works which affect Meadway Playing fields. With regards to responsibility of re-provision, this would be down to Stevenage Borough Council. This is because there is a separate agreement in place between the Council and the developers in terms of an easement of Meadway in order to deliver the highway work. Part of this easement includes a financial contribution of £400,000 towards the re-provision of the Meadway facilities which shall also be secured through the S.106 Agreement if not paid pursuant to the easement.
- 7.3.13 In relation to the proposed Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) and open space, the S.106 agreement would require the developers to secure a bond and maintenance contributions. This is to ensure that the proposed SuDS system and open spaces which would form part of this development which covers multiple phases are delivered and properly maintained as and when each phase of the development is delivered. In addition, the legal agreement would also secure the delivery of the SuDs, open space and biodiversity measures.
- 7.3.14 In regards to areas of open space, SuDs and the biodiversity measures, as a number of these areas are not being adopted, the S.106 legal agreement will secure the requirement of a Management Company to be set up in order to manage and maintain the areas mentioned above. The trigger for delivery of biodiversity in each phase of the development would be agreed through the drafting of the S.106 legal agreement.
- 7.3.15 Following negotiations with the NHS, they have agreed to the provision of a 400 sq.m GP surgery which would be provided in the ground floor of the Care Home building or within the Local Centre. This new facility would be secured as part of any legal agreement if the Council is minded to grant planning permission. However, should the GP surgery no longer be required to be provided on-site by the NHS, then a financial contribution in lieu would be required. The NHS CCG have advised this contribution would indicatively be £3,414,864 (based on current projected dwelling-mixes) where monies would go towards the expansion of existing GP surgeries which fall within the Stanmore Road Medical Group. These surgeries include Stanmore Medical Group, Symonds Green Health Centre and the King George Surgery. However, the relevant formula would be inserted into the S.106 agreement, specifically for the outline phases of development and the housing mix provided is only indicative.
- 7.3.16 In regards to the financial contribution of £3,856,650.00 for Acute, Mental Health and Community as requested by the NHS, whilst the applicant does not dispute there is a need to support and finance these fundamental services; the financial contribution which has been sought does not accord with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) 2010 (as amended). For reference, Regulation 122 states:-

*A planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission for the development if the obligation is –*

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
- (b) directly related to the development; and*
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.*

- 7.3.17 The main area of contention is around the “*Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development*” test. In this regard, the NHS has not provided a formula to demonstrate how they arrived at the financial contribution they have sought. This is a requirement in order for the applicant to establish whether or not what is being sought by the NHS is “reasonable”. To date, the NHS has not been willing to provide the formula on how they have calculated the contribution they have sought for acute, mental health and community costs.
- 7.3.18 Further to the above, the financial contribution needs to be necessary such as funding a key piece of infrastructure or developing services to support the development. The NHS to date has not specified how these monies would be spent, only that the existing service is under considerable pressure and requires the financial contributions accordingly.
- 7.3.19 Given the aforementioned, the financial contribution towards acute, mental health and community costs does not accord with the three tests set under Regulation 122. Therefore, the Council cannot require the developer to contribute towards the aforementioned financial obligation in this instance, as to do so would be contrary to the CIL Regulations.
- 7.3.20 As set out under paragraph 7.2.11, the Local Plan (2019) requires the provision of a neighbourhood centre comprising 500 sq.m of convenience retail floorspace. To ensure the neighbourhood centre is delivered to a serviced condition, there would be a requirement to incorporate a clause into the S.106 agreement. This clause would set out the neighbourhood centre would be delivered prior to occupation of the final dwelling in phase 2.
- 7.3.21 One of the key areas of recreation is the provision of a publicly accessible Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) within Phase 2 of the development. To ensure the MUGA is delivered within a reasonable timeframe and remains open to the general public (except during periods of maintenance for example), a clause would need to be imposed as part of the Section 106 legal agreement. The exact trigger for delivery would be finalised through the drafting of the S.106 agreement. The developers will also be required through the S.106 Agreement to ensure into an agreement to secure community access to the MUGA and other recreational parts of the development.
- 7.3.22 Policy HO2 in the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires the provision of 1% of the new dwellings to be delivered on the site to be provided as self-build plots. As such, the S.106 agreement would require the applicant to deliver 1% of the plots on each of the given phases to be dedicated as self-build plots. However, if after 24 months (which is industry standard) from the date of the commencement of marketing of a self-build and custom housebuilding plot provided has not been exchanged, then the restrictions around the self-build plots would be released.
- 7.3.23 Policy IT2 (West of Stevenage) of the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out that the area around Meadway, as shown on the policies map, is safeguarded. The policy goes on to state that “*Planning permission will only be granted for any development proposals which would not physically inhibit or otherwise prejudice comprehensive development of land to the west of Stevenage within North Hertfordshire District in the period beyond 2026*”. Policy HO2(e) stipulates that the applicant would need to demonstrate

that the development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary in the future, into safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire. Criterion e.ii. of draft policy SP8 (Housing) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Schedule of Main Modifications (2018) states “*Safeguarding land to the west of the A1(M) at Stevenage, as shown on the Policies Map, to meet longer term development needs, in the period beyond 2026 subject to a future review of this plan*”.

- 7.3.24 Given both the Council’s adopted Local Plan (2019) and the North Herts Draft Local Plan require land to be safeguarded for any future development for West Stevenage, the S.106 agreement would secure the relevant safeguarded land to ensure this development does not inhibit any future development being delivered in land which falls within North Hertfordshire and the potential transfer of the safeguarded land to a Local Authority, subject to the approval of the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair.
- 7.3.25 A significant part of the open space comprises the Community Green which includes the provision of the cricket wicket and/or football pitches. It is understood that the developers are seeking for this land to be transferred to Stevenage Borough Council to manage and maintain this space. As such, a financial contribution would be required to cover the costs of maintaining this space for a period of time. However, as the specifications for the Community Green such as plating have yet to be agreed, the financial contribution has not yet been finalised. Therefore, it is recommended that delegated powers be given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair to negotiate and agree the final financial contribution for the Community Green.
- 7.3.26 With regards to the delivery and potential transfer of the cricket pavilion, this is to be agreed as part of the S.106 obligations subject to the details being agreed with the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the chair as well as Sport England. Turning to the financial contributions for Outdoor Sport provision, as advised by Sport England, this development would generate demand for the equivalent of 0.60 adult football pitches, 0.12 rugby union pitches, 0.05 hockey pitches (sand based artificial grass pitches) and 0.18 3G artificial grass pitches. The total estimated cost of providing these pitches is currently estimated to be £311,815. In terms of changing room provision to support the use of this pitch demand, the calculator estimates that the total demand generated will be equivalent to 1.88 changing rooms which would currently cost £346,473.
- 7.3.27 Turning to Indoor sport, the Sports Facilities Calculator indicates that a population of 3,540 in Stevenage Borough will generate a demand for 0.26 sports halls (£692,083), 0.18 swimming pools (£756,731) and 0.05 rinks of an indoor bowls centre (£18,691). The financial contributions detailed for Outdoor and Indoor Sport are only indicative based on the overall housing mix put forward and this mix could change. In addition, no details have been provided by Sport England as to how these monies would be spent in order to meet the CIL Tests. As a consequence of this, it is recommended that the final details of this obligation and financial obligation to be secured, be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair.
- 7.3.28 The Section 106 Agreement would also need to secure a strategy for the delivery of the tunnel lighting at Bessemer Drive and Meadway, and for such measures (including any agreements necessary to secure the delivery and maintenance to be completed prior to each relevant Phase of development). In addition, it would also need to secure a financial contribution to ensure the tunnel lighting strategy can be adequately maintained to ensure it provides an attractive and safe environment for future users. As details provided are currently indicative at this time, it is recommended that the final details of this obligation and financial obligation to be secured, be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair.

7.3.29 The agreement would also need to secure a trees and planting obligation, including replacement tree planting removal on SBC land of a 3:1 ratio with a cost of £350 per tree. The first aspect of the obligation is to require all tree and planting where possible, to be sourced from UK nurseries. This is in order to reduce any potential pathogens or diseases affecting any future soft landscaping strategy associated with the development. In addition, the scheme would require the removal of some trees on land owned by Stevenage Borough Council. At the moment, the landscaping strategy provided by the applicant is only indicative, therefore, a formula would be embedded into the Section 106 agreement. This would ensure that where there is a shortfall in replacement planting, the applicant would pay a financial contribution in order for the Borough Council to replant a number of trees within close proximity to the site to mitigate any trees which have to be removed.

7.3.30 In regards to on-site and off-site mitigation measures for highways in order to make the development acceptable in planning terms, the costs of the highway works are detailed in the table below as identified by the applicants Transport Consultant:

<b>Mitigation measure</b>	<b>Financial obligation</b>
On-site 'Greenway Network	£1,145,000
<u>Off-site footway/cycleway improvements</u>	
Norton Green / Six Hills Way (including lighting improvements in underpass).	£81,000
Bessemer Drive (Including fully signalled crossings at junction with A1072 Gunnels Wood Road and lighting improvements in underpass)	£330,000
Meadway (including Lighting improvements in underpass)	£240,000
<u>Additional wayfinding on wider Stevenage Cycle / Footway network</u>	
Bridge Road, Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way corridors (to tie into committee town centre improvement scheme)	£50,000
Public Rights of Way improvement Plan	£830,000
Delivery of Local Bus Service - Operating costs for 15 year period including drivers wages, maintenance, etc	£2,610,000
Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) in local centre, school, employment and community uses	£60,000 – Assumes 10 x installations @ £6,000 per installation.
Promotional Public Transport Ticketing (one month Stevenage PlusBus)	£87,000 – one per household at £58.00 per ticket
Car Club Fleet – Purchase pf up to 6 x zero emission electric vehicles	£120,000
Communal Electric Vehicle Charging Points	£665,000 for up to 70 no. fast charge sockets throughout the site at £9,500 per unit.

7.3.31 The Highways Authority has advised that in terms of first strand (works to be undertaken under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980) to include:

- Access to Bessemer Drive and Meadway to include junction improvement schemes and the introduction of a LTN 1/20 compliant segregated pedestrian / cycleway;
- New tunnel underneath the A1(M) north of Meadway to facilitate vehicular movements to/from the site; and
- All off-site highway works.

7.3.32 In terms of Second Strand (S.106), HCC has a recently updated guide to planning obligations. The Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions was approved in July 2021. An assessment of the development in line with this Guide is set out in further detail below.

7.3.33 The ES addendum which accompanies the application notes that financial support will be required for the Bus Service for at least two years once the development is complete (Approximately 15 years in total). Taking this into consideration and as advised by HCC Highways, for Phase 1, one bus will be required up until occupation of Phase 2, when a trigger for further contributions for a second bus should be activated. As such, the trigger for delivery of the bus service is set out as follows:

- Commencement of Phase 1 - £175,00 per annum for a maximum of 7 years of bus service contributions;
- Commencement of Phase 2 / Future Phases – Provision of two buses at £175,000 x 2 buses, and this will be required for 2 years subsequent to the completion of the final phase.

7.3.34 Separately, the Highways Authority request that a £6,000 (per use) Travel Plan evaluation and supporting fee is secured accordingly. In terms of a Sustainable Travel Voucher, the following items come under the auspices of the aforementioned voucher:

Bus Vouchers	
Arriva North Herts Plus Monthly	£70 per month x 3 = £210
Bus vouchers	£70 per month x 3 = £210
Printing cost of vouchers	£3
Reimbursement process/design of vouchers	£10
Sustainable Travel campaigns (e.g. a new bus service campaign)	£14
Overall costs	
390 homes – Phase 1	£92,430
1,100 homes – Phases 2 to 4	£260,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>£353,130</b>

7.3.35 In addition to the above, the County has used costings available for Beryl bikes as this is an established hire scheme in operation within the county. The 400-minute bundle (currently offered by the company), costing £20 is considered most appropriate as a means of encouraging the use of hire bicycles and allowing residents to use the links being implemented as part of the development. Over three months, this would equate to a cost of £60. Should a Beryl bike scheme extend to Stevenage the above would apply. However, the Highway Authority would seek that taster vouchers are supplied whomever the operator may be.

7.3.36 With regards to Electric Car Hire, as set out above, the developer is seeking to provide an electric car club for hire within the development for up to 6 vehicles. The Highway Authority has used knowledge of electric car club schemes in operation in Hertfordshire to determine the below cost of providing a voucher for residents to try the scheme. To hire a vehicle this is approximately between £3 – £5 per hour, although operators generally have daily rates. Most vehicles are booked for 4-hour blocks via an app of their website. Should the vehicles be hired once a week for a reasonable time period of 4 hours, this will cost £20, although prices may vary. The Highway Authority

consider it is reasonable to provide three months' worth of car hire, thereby giving a scheme cost of £240.

7.3.37 Taking the above into consideration, the total costs of Sustainable Transport Voucher equates to £537 which equates to a total financial obligation of £805,500. The Highways Authority have requested that all such contributions are included within the Section 106 agreement. In addition, it is also recommended that a schedule of Section 278 works should also be incorporated into the Agreement. This is in order to secure the highway improvement works which are required to ensure the development is acceptable in planning terms. Following discussions with the applicants, they have agreed to the obligations which have sought by the Highways Authority.

7.3.38 Turning to the impact on the Knebworth Wood SSSI, Natural England have recently amended their comments. Natural England was originally in support of the application subject to mitigation measures being secured by condition. However, they have now advised that they have substantive concerns with respect to the potential recreational pressures the development could generate on the SSSI.

7.3.39 Given the above the applicants and their consultants have re-engaged with Natural England in order to try and address the concerns which have been raised. As part of this process, the applicants have agreed that any mitigation measures requested by Natural England, including financial obligations, can be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement. Therefore, it is recommended that the final details of any mitigation measures and/or associated financial obligation to be secured to mitigate the developments impact on the SSSI, be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair.

7.3.40 Notwithstanding the above, in the event Natural England continue to object to this application and do not consider suitable mitigation measures can be secured, or imposition of appropriately worded conditions will overcome their concerns in relation to the developments potential impact on the SSSI, then this application will be referred back to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision.

7.3.41 In terms of education, the S.106 legal agreement would seek to secure the delivery of the primary school and nursery. The primary education contribution of £14,093,513 is to comprise two separate contributions. These are as follows:

- 1) Initial Primary Education Contribution of £9,681,600 towards a new on-site 2FE primary school, including nursery provision;
- 2) Further Primary Education Contribution of £4,411,913 towards further primary education provision and nursery provision on-site.

Triggers for payment are as follows:

- 10% of Initial Primary Education Contribution (£968,160) – Prior to the commencement of development;
- 60% of Initial Primary Education Contribution (£5,508,960) – Prior to the occupation of 20 dwellings;
- 30% of Initial Primary Education Contribution (£2,904,480) – Prior to the occupation of 250 dwellings;
- 100% of Further Primary Education Contributions (£4,411,913) – Prior to the occupation of 800 dwellings.

(All financial contributions listed above are to have indexation applied as of 1Q2020, BCIS All in TPI).

7.3.42 Currently there are discussions taking place between Hertfordshire County Council and the developers as to whether the developers deliver the primary school themselves (to

a HCC agreed specification and standards set out within the S.106 legal agreement) and transfer the school to the County Council, or, whether the land is transferred to the County Council for them to construct along with an agreed financial contribution. Regardless of which option is eventually decided upon, the primary school needs to be delivered at the earliest opportunity.

7.3.43 In regards to off-site biodiversity improvements, and as advised by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the development is 89.06 habitat units (not 121.1 habitat units – HMWT miscalculation) short of providing a biodiversity net gain. This means that habitats approximating those lost, e.g. a lowland meadow and scrub mosaic with wet and bare areas, will be required in any compensation scheme. It was originally calculated that the financial contribution would be approximately £2,458,524. However, this was based on the originally submitted scheme and a revised financial obligation along with a programme of biodiversity improvements works have yet to be agreed with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in conjunction with the Council's Parks and Amenities Section. Therefore, it is recommended that delegated powers be given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair to negotiate and agree the final financial obligation and biodiversity improvement programme for sites within Stevenage.

7.3.44 It is noted that the British Horse Society Stevenage seek a financial contribution towards the delivery of a Circular Horse and Pony Route. However, and as set out in further detail in paragraphs 7.16.31 to 7.16.33, there is not a policy requirement in the adopted Local Plan (2019) to deliver a Circular Horse and Pony Route. Notwithstanding this, the applicant is seeking to deliver a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan which has been negotiated with Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Rights of Way Team (HCC CROW). There is also the provision of multi-user routes not only through the site, but also on the site perimeter which have been prepared through extensive negotiations with HCC CROW Team. These improvements would be secured via condition and as part of any Section 106 agreement in terms of the schedule of Section 278 and Section 38 Highways Act 1980 Agreements.

7.3.45 In summary, the applicant has agreed to secure a number of financial obligations which would mitigate the impact on infrastructure such as roads, education, and biodiversity. In addition, there would be obligations in the agreement to secure the areas of open space, the GP surgery, provision of a Management Company, temporary shop, replacement pavilion, skylark plots, employment plan, SuDS bond, the safeguarded land, the neighbourhood centre as well as suitable mitigation measures be put in place for the SSSI.

## **7.4 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area**

7.4.1 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that "The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve". It goes on to state that "good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities".

7.4.2 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF sets out a number of requirements for new development, including that development:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of an area;
- is visually attractive as a result of good architecture; layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- is sympathetic to local character and history;
- establishes or maintains a strong sense of place;



- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
- creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

7.4.3 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF places great importance on the role of trees in helping to shape quality, well designed places “Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change”.

7.4.4 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that applicants “should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take into account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot”.

7.4.5 Policy SP8 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability which can deliver substantial improvements to the image and quality of the town’s built fabric. Policy GD1 of the Local Plan generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.

7.4.6 Policy HO5: windfall sites require residential development on unallocated site to not have a detrimental impact on the environment and on surrounding properties. The Council’s Design Guide SPD (2009) generally reflects the aforementioned policies whereby it seeks development to respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, massing, height and design. As such, it encourages good design as it can enhance the appearance of places.

7.4.7 The National Design Guide (2019) which was published by National Government is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It sets out that Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However, good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include:

- the context for places and buildings;
- hard and soft landscape;
- technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and
- social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.

7.4.8 A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:

- the layout;
- the form and scale of buildings;
- their appearance;
- landscape;
- materials; and
- their detailing.

7.4.9 The Guide further iterates that all developments are made up of these components put together in a particular way. As such, the choices made in the design process contribute towards achieving the ten characteristics and shape the character of a place. For reference, these ten characteristics are as follows:-

- Context – enhances the surroundings;
- Identity – attractive and distinctive;
- Built form – a coherent pattern of built form;
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around;
- Nature – enhanced and optimised;
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive;
- Uses – mixed and integrated;
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable;
- Resources – efficient and resilient;
- Lifespan – made to last.

7.4.10 Paragraph 40 of the National Design Guide states that well-designed places are:

- Based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design;
- Integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them;
- Influenced by and influence their context positively; and
- Responsive to local history, culture and heritage.

7.4.11 This part of the application has been assessed against the key policy criteria on good design, as well as how the scheme meets the four key objectives in the National Design Guide on what is considered as a well-designed place. In order to understand the key features of the site and its surrounding context, the applicant submitted a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). A detailed analysis of the findings in the LVIA is set out in Section 7.11 of this report. However, it demonstrates the impact the development could have on the landscape character of the area as well as an assessment on visual receptors. The scheme detailed in the assessment would seek to retain existing landscape features, including trees which are of high quality.

7.4.12 Dealing specifically with heritage assets, the baseline assessment found a number of heritage assets which fall within the area of search. However, the LVIA identified that due to the limited intervisibility between the site and these assets due to the topography of the land and existing landscape features combined with the nature and scale of the proposed development, it was concluded that there are unlikely to be noticeable changes to the visual contexts of many of these assets. In terms of impact on the setting of heritage assets, this is considered in greater detail in section 7.5 of this report.

7.4.13 The impacts on the landscape were identified as being low, due to the nature of the site and the surrounding and the residual impacts on the landscape character in the first year of development would be low. Even after 15 years, the development is likely to have a low level of effect and will remain low. Following an assessment of the LVIA, the conclusions reached in terms of impact on the landscape are seen as reasonable, given the nature of the site and its context in terms of it being set against the urban built form of Stevenage as well as the A1(M). The LVIA demonstrates an understanding of the site context and the key features which define the site.

7.4.14 This section of the report will deal with the relevant characteristics excluding nature and movement. These aspects will be dealt with in the relevant sections of the committee report. It will predominantly focus on how the development integrates into its surroundings, influence of the site context and how it tries to respond to overall site constraints.

7.4.15 This application is a hybrid application with full details for Phase 1 including the access road from Meadway and Bessemer Drive and outline form (all matters reserved) for phases 2 to 4 (including the Cricket Pavilion and Meadway Pavilion). An assessment of the individual phases is set out in the following sections of the report below.

### Parameter Plans

7.4.16 The application is supported by a suite of Parameter Plans which illustrate one way the proposed development could be delivered. The parameter plans which have been submitted include the following:-

- Land use;
- Access and Movement;
- Building heights;
- Density;
- Green infrastructure;
- Phasing.

7.4.17 The detail of the aforementioned parameter plans are set out in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.14 of this committee report. Each respective phase of the development would need to demonstrate how it would accord with the set parameter plans, with the plans themselves secured by way of condition. This condition would ensure that the maximum limits of the development as detailed in the Parameter Plans can be controlled accordingly.

### Phase 1 and Access Road (Full Details)

7.4.18 The Design and Access Statement sets out that Framework Masterplan is broken down into three distinct characters. These three areas are the northern area, central area, and southern area. Phase 1 of the development site falls within the southern character area of the site. With regards to soft and hard landscaping as well as public realm, this has been assessed in detail in Section 7.11 of this report. As such, this section of the report will focus on the overall setting and design principles for the built form of Phase 1 in line with the aspirations set out in the National Design Guide.

7.4.19 Dealing firstly with setting, this part of the development allows for long range views from the cricket green to the south with a green corridor introduced leading south focussing on prominent tree groups to the south of the site. This part of the development has been designed in order to create focal/landmark buildings as viewed from the arrival point to the scheme from Bessemer Drive and at the key junction base of the proposed Greenway with links east to west to Bessemer Drive.

7.4.20 The key design principles focus on the creation of event space (i.e. the Community Green) with the plateau looking south. This part of the development also seeks to incorporate a number of green routes which would connect the site not only to the wider countryside, but also through to the main urban area of Stevenage. Looking at the provision of routes in more detail, the scheme comprises the provision of a Green Way which would hit a key nodal junction with the Community Green with routes to Bessemer Drive, Norton Green and the neighbourhood centre. The road hierarchy is then structured to allow for the provision of more informal streets towards the outer edges of Phase One.

7.4.21 There are three main routes within Phase 1, firstly, there is the Primary Access Road which is transitional as it moves from Bessemer Drive through to the neighbourhood centre. Secondly, there is the Bessemer Arrival and Community Green where the road is flanked by embankment due to the significant change in land levels with new dwellings located on the southern side stepping down the slope in order to create natural surveillance. Thirdly, there is the tree lined avenue where the street width narrows as you traverse north towards the neighbourhood centre.

7.4.22 The above routes also help to define the street typologies which make up Phase 1. The primary street comprises the Bessemer Arrival would be a wide tree lined

boulevard with landscaped embankments and verges. The Central Avenue, which also forms part of the primary street would be an enclosed street by residential properties on both sides, would have a more formal arrangement with planted verges on both sides of the road and footpaths. The final part of the primary street is the High Street, this would evoke a more traditional street arrangement with a reduced street width, integrated linear parking for visitor parking which are punctuated by tree planting areas with increased building heights.

- 7.4.23 The secondary streets are smaller streets which serve larger residential areas, but with a reduced street width and the provision of footpaths on one side. Some of the streets also comprise on-street parking courts / squares which are aligned by the proposed semi-detached and terraced houses which are positioned on both sides of the square. The parking area itself is broken by soft landscaping features to ensure it does not appear car dominated. The edge streets are also at a reduced width with one side with footpath or the provision of a shared surface area.
- 7.4.24 In terms of residential typology, the applicant has undertaken a character assessment of Stevenage and number of surrounding villages. This has been employed to help define the different typologies across the development, including Phase 1. The residential typology of the southern area includes details such as weatherboarding elements, durable traditional brick as well as roof detailing. The Design and Access Statement sets out that the street typologies, along with the building typologies, materials, detailing and planting, along with parking and street furniture help to create the relevant character areas, in this case the site falling within the southern character area, being distinctive but at the same time having a coherent approach across the site as a whole. These aspects (excluding aspects on landscaping such as street furniture and planting as these are considered in more detail in section 7.11 of this report) have been considered in further detail below.
- 7.4.25 As detailed in paragraph 3.17 of this report, Phase 1 of the development would have a varied building typology. It would comprise a mixture of 1 and 2 bedroom houses and flats, along with the delivery of 3 and 4+ bedroom dwellings (including the self-build plots). With regards to the 92 no. 1 and 2 bedroom flats, these would be set within 10 separate residential blocks which are positioned across the site and are between two and three storeys in height. In terms of the dwellinghouses, they are predominantly detached and semi-detached with a number of terraced/cottage style properties as well. Further, the scheme also comprises integrated coach houses (Flats Over Garages / FOGS). These properties would range between two storeys to three storeys. The overall heights of the buildings are considered to reflect the overall range of building heights reflected across Stevenage.
- 7.4.26 Looking at the proposed dwellinghouses, these would be constructed from a mixture of buff and red brick with a number of the residential units finished with either weatherboarding and/or off-white render. This is in order to add variety and interest into the visual appearance of the dwellinghouses with the specific use of certain material such as weatherboarding to help define key buildings. The dwellinghouses would also have a mixture of exposed porches in the form of either a flat roof storm porch or light weight pitched roof canopies on their principal elevations. A number of properties also comprise bay-windows, brick door/window header detailing, Juliette windows in order to create interest in architectural composition of the dwellinghouses. The roofs of the dwellings, which are predominantly gable-end, would be clad in either slate or clay effect tiles. Some of the properties also comprise flat roof dormer windows within the roof space to serve bedrooms which help to further modulate the dwellings.
- 7.4.27 In relation to the residential flat blocks, these would be located across Phase 1. In terms of their location, at the southern end of the site, there would be two blocks which are located in close proximity to the main access road, footpath and cycle path access from Bessemer Drive. A third block is located at the eastern side of the site in close

proximity to the bund with a further block located at the south-eastern corner located opposite the SuDs feature. Within the central area, two blocks would be located off a spur road positioned directly opposite the cricket pavilion / Community Green with a further block located northwards towards Dyes Lane.

- 7.4.28 There would be a further three residential flat blocks positioned adjacent to the main road as you travel northwards from the Community Green towards the neighbourhood centre, with one block falling within the northern section in Phase 1. The flat blocks are predominantly three-storeys in height with gable-end roofs. They would generally be constructed from buff or red brick with weatherboard detailing. These blocks also comprise the provision of external balconies which are supported by a steel frame with glazed balustrades or Juliette windows. The roofs of the blocks would be finished in either slate or clay effect tiles. Turning to the proposed FOGS (Flats Over Garages), these have been located across the site where access is required to a rear courtyard. They are generally positioned between two and three storey town houses with garages located below. The FOGS generally reflect the architectural style and external appearance of the dwellinghouses which they are connected to.
- 7.4.29 Given the aforementioned, the overall range of building heights and variation of architectural detailing on the residential properties, combined with the pepper potting of the various house types across Phase 1 would help to add variety and interest in the street scene. In terms of siting, the residential properties are generally set in a perimeter block/back-to-back arrangement with their respective frontage oriented towards the main highway. Properties located on prominent corners are architecturally designed to be key buildings which help to define the entrance into a street. They have also been designed to turn the corner in order to create dual active frontages to allow for active surveillance.
- 7.4.30 The dwellings have also been laid out to ensure they face onto the street in order to create active frontages (give life to the façade) as well as make a clear distinction between public fronts and private backs, as set out in the landscaping strategy. They also ensure continuity in the streets with clearly defined building lines and positioned in order to create a sense of enclosure. The properties located at the edges of the site where they front onto the landscaped western edge which also forms the boundary with the Green Belt, these properties have been laid out in a way which further reinforces this important boundary. Further, the spatial layout of the development has been designed to reflect the traditional pattern of development which defines the urban characteristics of Stevenage. The properties have also been spatially laid out to ensure important gaps are created to allow views towards key visual markers within the development site. Further to the above, the properties fronting the Community Green have been orientated towards this Green to not only frame this key area of space, but also continue the important design principle of giving life to the façade.
- 7.4.31 Taller buildings have also been positioned on prominent corners, vistas and highly visible locations as well as along the High Street as they are seen as integral in helping to define the streetscape. As already mentioned, these buildings would have differentiating materials, but, would have increased heights in order to further enhance their importance within the street. They also help to add variety and interest to the roofline as well as further define the spatial layout of the development.
- 7.4.32 In terms of parking, it is clearly understood by practitioners that having right angle (perpendicular) parking to the respective frontages of residential properties creates car-dominated streetscapes. It is also acknowledged that parking arrangements have a major impact on the quality of a development. Once the level of parking provision has been confirmed, the main consideration is how to incorporate parking in the development without allowing it to dominate everything around. Therefore, parking should be behind, under, above or to the side of the building or sensitively incorporated into the street.

- 7.4.33 It should be noted that the car parking approach has been given particular consideration due to its impact on the quality of a development. The car parking arrangement introduced has been designed sensitively as possible to avoid having a car dominated streetscape. The proposal has a varied approach to the provision of parking where some of the properties within the development are served by on-street parking courts/square which are broken up by the provision of soft landscaping and tree planting areas. There are also the private parking courts which serve the flatted development and these are generally located to the rear and as such, not readily visible from the public realm.
- 7.4.34 Further to the above, some of the residential dwelling units would be served by traditional brick built garages with up and over garage doors. However, some of the properties within the development comprise undercroft parking areas which are created through the construction of timber support archways with double-pitched roofs positioned to either the side or between buildings. The scheme also comprises areas of on-street parking for visitors in designated areas along with frontage parking. The coach houses / FOGS also have parking located to the rear with the parking accessed via a small road which runs underneath the flyover part of the coach house. This again helps to screen the parking areas away from the public vantage points.
- 7.4.35 The car parking approach for this development, is therefore, varied with the deliberate attempt to clearly define these spaces and so prevent indiscriminate parking. Importantly, the parking strategy has been designed in line with the landscaping strategy which has been produced by the architects.
- 7.4.36 In terms of the appearance of the principal road, the Bessemer Arrival as detailed earlier comprises a wide street with a continual built form on the southern side where the road meets the Community Green. The flats blocks have been positioned as key gateway buildings helping to frame the arrival space as you enter the site from Bessemer Drive. The buildings overlook this area in order to create an active frontage. The gateway blocks, being key buildings, would have contrasting materials to that found in the other buildings in this area. Also, with the use of weatherboarding on the gable-ends in a dark stained colour help to create a strong visual presence.
- 7.4.37 The Avenue, which was mentioned earlier in the report, would also have a continual built form where the road meets the Community Green. The larger buildings i.e. the flat block and larger house types, would be key gateway buildings in order to help frame the road. The High Street would comprise a mixture of house types in order to create a varied roof form in terms of height with an emphasis on height in the provision of two and a half and three storey dwellings. The dwellings would be pushed closer to the back edge of the footpath to help provide the traditional High Street feel for the road with the dwellings generally within terraces or larger blocks with parking generally to the rear and away from the street in linear courts. There would also be a variation in the materials used to create a varied streetscape to help further define the High Street aspect of the proposal.
- 7.4.38 With regards to the properties around the Community Green, there is the provision of taller properties in order to make the most of the longer views to the south. This also helps to create a strong edge to this key space with the properties finished in a mixture of materials in order to heighten the different characteristics to the adjoining areas. In addition, focal buildings have been carefully positioned around the edge of the Green with differing materials to act as wayfinding.
- 7.4.39 The Green Corridor (greenway) which would comprise the main pedestrian/cycleway through the development, would have residential properties closed to the back edge of the Greenway with front doors directly accessing the pedestrian/cycle route where this is possible. This allows for natural surveillance of this corridor and gives users a sense

that the space is safe to walk and cycle along. Corner buildings have also been carefully positioned to ensure front doors are orientated to the greenway. As such, the units have been positioned so as to encourage occupiers of the dwellings to utilise the extensive walking and cycle network, rather than jumping into a private motor-vehicle. The residential dwellings which frame the corridor would predominantly be two-storeys with a mixture of terrace, semi-detached and detached properties with a coherent materials approach for the dwellings which help to frame the greenway.

- 7.4.40 The linear edges of the site, including the bund, would have properties generally facing towards and overlooking the key landscaped areas of the site's edges. These areas would have a combination of road frontage and direct frontage with parking located behind. There would also be pedestrian access to these frontages to allow for links to be incorporated into the landscaped areas. The buildings which form the liner edge, specifically the bund would be larger blocks or terraces where fronting onto open spaces with detached and semi-detached properties where space is more enclosed and closer to the bund.
- 7.4.41 In terms of the countryside edge, the properties here would generally be detached with parking to the side in order to provide a softer country edge. There would also be gable features in order to evoke a building form which is found in rural villages with the properties predominantly two-storeys. The materials here would be warmer with the use of red brick and darker stained weather boarding in order to further create a sense of rurality to this part of the development.
- 7.4.42 Turning to the proposed bin stores, garages and cycle stores, these structures are of a limited size and scale against the backdrop of the built form of the development. In addition, these parts of the development have been designed to reflect the overall visual appearance of the main buildings so as to not appear out of character. As such, these elements would have an acceptable appearance as viewed from the public realm.

#### Self-build plots (Phase 1)

- 7.4.43 Policy HO2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) stipulates that at least 1% of the dwelling units being provided within the development should be for self-build plots. Turning specifically to the self-build plots within Phase 1, these would be provided in two locations. Two plots would be located north of the Community Green and two plots would be located north of the Greenway. The plot areas have been devised to allow for surface parking to be provided within the frontage areas or to the side with large secure gardens to the rear. In terms of boundary treatment, this would be provided in order to match the treatment in the surrounding area of development.
- 7.4.44 In terms of the design, materials, colours and overall appearance of the individual houses, the Design and Access Statement specifies that these aspects would be influenced by the defined character area within which the plots are located. This is in order to reinforce the area within they are located. Each of the plots would be fully serviced in relation to connections with utilities including foul and surface water drainage. There would also be a loosely defined code that should be adhered to for each plot in terms of design and appearance. However, full detailed drawings would be required by way of Reserved Matters, with the applicant of the self-build plot showing how they comply with the code.
- 7.4.45 Turning to the code itself, it would require principle elevations (main elevation) to be oriented towards the frontage road. It should have a minimum garden depth of 10m with a minimum distance of 1m from the boundary. Habitable windows should be oriented to avoid overlooking adjacent plots and existing neighbouring dwellings. Buildings must be no taller than three storeys and no shorter than two storeys (except garages). The gross internal floor area and footprint would have to be agreed by the

Council. In terms of visual treatment, the predominant materials must reflect those used in the construction of the development within Phase 1.

- 7.4.46 Parking spaces, including garages, would be required to accord with the Council's Parking Standards with all parking provided within the plot boundary. In terms of the architectural expression and detail of the self-build plots, the code would be flexible to allow for variety in the building design, whilst also respecting the relationship with the surrounding area and the local character area within which they are located. This includes features such as dormer windows, entrance porches, fenestration detailing, bay windows, building design as well as garage door design. Finally, the code would require servicing (such as meter boxes) and refuse stores along with the location of flue and vent pipes in order to avoid clutter within the predominant facades.

Phase 2 to 4 (including the Cricket Pavilion and Meadway Pavilion) (Outline – All Matters Reserved)

- 7.4.47 Whilst this part of the application is in outline, the applicant has submitted indicative plans to show how these phases could be built out in the future. However, it is important to note that the precise detail and appearance of the development within phases 2 to 4, including its overall scale and layout would be addressed at the reserved matters stage. Notwithstanding this, the Design and Access Statement does set out a number of design principles for the later phases of the development scheme. This has been considered in further detail below.
- 7.4.48 As referenced in paragraph 7.4.13 of this report, the Design and Access Statement sets out that the Framework Masterplans is split into three main character areas. The northern character, in terms of setting and design principles, this part of the site is characterised by a natural bowl which is formed by the topography at the bottom hill. This is where the masterplan shows the potential location for two ponds which could be located either side the Meadway entrance. There is also the Potters Spring tree group which forms a dominant presence over the open field along with the open edge to the north-west where there are wider views of the valley. There is a strongly defined tree line at the northern edge of the site with land rising towards the south and Kitching Lane.
- 7.4.49 In relation to key design principles for the northern character area, there would be the provision of a wider tree lined Avenue from Meadway where it allows for views up towards Potters Spring. The greenway which would follow the line of Kitching Lane would run directly from Meadway towards the local centre. The greenway itself would be segregated from the trafficked highway with links to large areas of open space and PROW routes. This part of the scheme would comprise additional landscape tree planting to the north-western edge to help screen the development with the potential provision of east to west routes through tree-lined avenue and corridors to eastern edge.
- 7.4.50 In terms of routes, the Greenway would continue northwards from Meadway entrance and key open space towards the North Herts Land which is identified for further development. In terms of the primary access road, this would encompass a wide section of greenway which would link into Meadway. This would run alongside the trafficked road in a segregated format and incorporate swales as well as allow views on the approach from Meadway towards Potters Green. With regards to the key areas of open space within the northern character area, these are considered in more detail in section 7.11 of this report.
- 7.4.51 Turning to residential typologies, the Design and Access Statement sets out the building design would be more traditional as this area enjoys views towards Stevenage as well as views towards the countryside. Therefore, a reflection of the more traditional building in Stevenage Old Town and the wider villages of St. Ippolyts, Preston and



Whitwell are seen as being the appropriate style of properties in this area. In terms of materials, there would be the potential use of traditional brick, contrasting brick, weatherboarding, terracotta tile and slate tile roofs.

- 7.4.52 This part of the scheme would also comprise the delivery of a Mobility Hub at the Meadway Arrival point (see paragraphs 7.11.47 and 7.11.48 for more detail) in order to help define the arrival space as well as help to encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of travel. The central character area is the more level area of the site with a level of screening from existing trees. There is a focal tree group located centrally which is to be retained with a strong western edge which is defined by a tall hedgerow along Kitching Lane. The key design principles for this part of the development are the extension of the Greenway connecting to the northern and southern character areas. The main street will be segregated away from the greenway.
- 7.4.53 The neighbourhood square would include a vehicle free meeting space set around a multi-functional kiosk. There would also be direct pedestrian and cycle links to Kitching Lane and the wider countryside along with the provision of ground floor retail/GP (subject to agreement with the NHS) and community spaces with the centre itself. There would be an area of vehicular parking to serve the centre along with a drop-off area along with electric vehicle charging facilities as well as loading bays for the proposed mixture of uses. The Primary School and associated nursery would take its entrance from the main square in order to create activity in this area. The commercial hub would be located adjacent to the green space within the neighbourhood centre and it has been positioned to as to allow for direct connection with the potential development area to the west in North Herts land.
- 7.4.54 The main routes within the central area comprise primarily pedestrian/cycle routes with limited incursions by motor-vehicles providing access to the school and parking within the neighbourhood square. The two main routes in the central area therefore are the High Street and greenway. The High Street has been devised following the analysis of building density of Stevenage Old Town. The street would have a reduced width in order to create a sense of a denser, intimate area of development with a greater predominance of hard landscaping with a verge on one side of the street providing integrated parking, SuDS and trees. The greenway would be a continuation of the route between the northern and southern areas of the development.
- 7.4.55 In terms of residential typologies, the street scene would need to reflect the greater density of this part of the development and therefore, a requirement for tighter built form with a variety of roof scapes. As such, the Design and Access Statement stipulates that for the Neighbourhood Square, there would be a strong presence in providing enclosure to the square and ensuring high levels of surveillance and active frontages. The materials would be a mixture of weatherboarding, traditional brick and simple eaves detailing.
- 7.4.56 The Neighbourhood Centre, including a mixture of uses (school, retail units and GO surgery) and the Neighbourhood Square itself, would also comprise the co-located Care Home. This would allow for the area to remain active, vibrant and form the heart of the development itself.
- 7.4.57 In regards to the proposed location of the self-build plots within the outline phases of the development, these would be dealt with as part of any future reserved matters application. These plots, as those detailed in Phase 1, would also have to accord to a loose Design Code. This is to ensure that any future development of the self-build would reflect the established character area within which they would be sited.

#### Employment Area

7.4.58 Located in close proximity to the entrance of the site from Bessemer Drive, would be the main employment area. It has been positioned to allow easy and direct access into Stevenage without vehicles having to travel through the development site. In addition, this part of the scheme has been positioned to allow for connections into the proposed pedestrian and cycle network which form part of the main residential development. Furthermore, it has been positioned within walking distance to the neighbourhood centre as well.

7.4.59 The illustrative masterplan demonstrates that up 10,000 sq.m of floorspace can be provided in accordance with the Council's policy. The buildings are proposed to be no more than two-storeys in height along with associated parking. The Design and Access Statement set out the buildings proposed will be split indicatively as follows:

- Office – approximately 3,532 sq.m across 2 buildings;
- Research and Development – approximately 3,556sq.m across 3 buildings;
- Light industry – Approximately 2,912 sq.m across 2 buildings.

7.4.60 Details of the proposed employment area would form part of any subsequent future reserved matters application which is submitted to the Council.

#### Aspirational Homes

7.4.61 As set out under Policy HO2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019), there is a requirement to provide at least 5% Aspirational Homes in line with Policy HO9. The evidence base supporting this policy is the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015). The Council's expectation is for these houses to be detached, provide at least 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, be clustered in small groups at a low density. It was also discussed at the pre-application stage that these homes should be located within those parts of the site which benefit from views out over the countryside.

7.4.62 The above is reflected in the Density Parameter Plan which accompanies this application as well as being detailed in the Design and Access Statement. These identify the lowest density residential areas as being on the open southern and north-western edges to the proposed development. These parts of the site are located within Phase 2, 3 and 4 and consequently, the detail of the proposed Aspirational Homes will be picked up through the subsequent reserved matters applications for these respective phases.

#### Proposed temporary shop

7.4.63 The proposed temporary shop would be located within the Community Green which forms part of Phase 1. The shop unit would be rectangular in shape with a floor area of approximately 36 sq.m) measure approximately 12.16m in length, span 2.97m in width with an overall height of 2.38m. It would be steel framed with a flat roof and uPVC doors and windows. There would be a roller shutter operated serving hatch. Internally, the unit would have a shop floor, kitchen and WC.

7.4.64 The design and visual appearance of the shop reflect its temporary nature. It would have the appearance of a temporary container or porta-cabin, which it would be. Whilst the design of the building would contribute nothing to the character and appearance of the area, it is acknowledged this is a temporary structure and therefore its visual impact on the area would also be temporary.

7.4.65 On this basis, it is considered the proposed temporary shop is acceptable in this regard. In relation to the timings for the provision of the temporary shop and its removal, this is considered in more detail section 7.3 of this report.

#### Summary

- 7.4.66 Given the aforementioned assessment with respect to Phase 1, the overall design approach which includes an assessment of the height, mass, architectural detail, spatial layout (including clearly defined streets), spacing, setting and materials, would result in a high quality residential development in terms of its overall built form. It would consist of a legible network of streets that link well into the existing network and the countryside beyond with the location of well-designed key marker buildings. In addition, the residential dwelling units have been positioned to help frame key nodal points, vehicle, pedestrian and access routes and carefully address key open spaces within Phase 1.
- 7.4.67 In regards to the outline phase and masterplan, this would seek to deliver a legible network of streets (including cycle and pedestrian routes) which are carefully interconnect not only to Phase 1, but to the existing network within Stevenage as well as the wider countryside beyond the western boundary. The introduction of the segregated cycle and pedestrian routes would enhance connectivity of the site to Stevenage Town Centre and the main employment area of Gunnels Wood Road. The scheme also seeks to utilise existing PROW in order to enhance routes for not only pedestrians and cyclists, but horse riders as well.
- 7.4.68 The masterplan and associated Design and Access Statement shows that the height, massing and buildings respond well to the existing topography of the site as well the site's surrounding context. The ranges in building heights across the three main character areas ensure variety and interest into the built form along with the use contemporary materials. The use of perimeter block arrangement, although in outline form, is an efficient use of the site and allows for the creation of high quality spaces which have active frontages as well as reflect the traditional character of parts of Stevenage.
- 7.4.69 In terms of architecture, as Phases 2 to 4 are an outline aspect of the application, no specific details have been provided. However, the masterplan and supporting Design and Access Statement seek to ensure the highest quality materials and architectural expression is delivered across each of the latter phases. It also carefully draws upon the established character of residential development across Stevenage as well as the outlying villages, which help to further enhance a level of visual variety and interest across the development site. The overall density of development as detailed in the masterplan also carefully reflects the sites urban eastern edge and countryside western edge.
- 7.4.70 In terms of phasing, as is expected with such a development, it would be delivered in phases. As such, subsequent reserved matters applications for each phase or certain buildings within the defined phase would be submitted in the future. Such applications would be required to adhere to the minimum standards detailed in the masterplan and accompanying Design and Access Statement which provides details of the placemaking approach to each phase. In addition, the masterplan has been designed to be flexible and adaptive to ensure a high quality form of development as well as ensuring connections with any future development on North Herts land can be adequately addressed. The Masterplan and Design and Access Statement also demonstrate one way in which the employment area, neighbourhood centre, the care home as well as the primary school, which are key policy requirements for this development, can also be delivered.
- 7.4.71 Finally, it is evidenced that the development has been designed based on the understanding of the site's context as well as the key features which define the application site. Furthermore, the scheme has been designed to assimilate itself into its surroundings and positively responds to the site's constraints. Furthermore, the development, based on the submitted application before the Council, would be in accordance with national and local planning policy in respect to delivering good design.

## **7.5 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area/Setting of heritage assets.**

7.5.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* imposes several 'statutory duties' for decision-makers, all of which are applicable to the proposed development:

- "Section 16(2): In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
- "Section 66(1): In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
- "Section 72(1): the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area".

7.5.2 Case law (South Lakeland, 1992) has determined that 'preserve' means 'to do no harm'. However, if harm is identified, the NPPF provides a means of weighing either 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the proposal. In doing so, case law has emphasised the need to give "considerable importance and weight" to preserving listed buildings or the character and appearance of conservation areas (Barnwell Manor, Case No: C1/2013/0843). However, the presumption 'to preserve' is not irrebuttable and "can be outweighed by material considerations powerful enough to do so" (Forge Field (Case Nos: CO/735/2013; CO/16932/2013) and a decision maker that has followed the process set out in the NPPF, in respect to weighing harm and benefits, can reasonably be expected to have complied with the 'statutory duties' of the 1990 Act (Mordue, Case No. C1/2015/1067).

7.5.3 Paragraphs 199 to 202 of the NPPF (2021) have to be considered in the determination of this planning application. As established through case law, if there is any harm to designated heritage assets, great weight has to be given as to the impact the development may have on these assets. Dealing with Paragraph 199, it stipulates that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss, or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 200 sets out that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

7.5.4 Paragraph 201 sets out that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. In reference to paragraph 202 of the NPPF (2021), this sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

7.5.5 Paragraph 203 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required to having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

7.5.6 Paragraph 204 sets out that Local Planning Authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred. With respect to paragraph 199, this sets out that Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

7.5.7 In considering public benefits, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2019) (Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723) sets out that the National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. For reference, paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that “Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”

7.5.8 The planning practice guidance goes onto state that public benefits should flow from the development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed building which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. Consequently while a range of benefits that help deliver sustainable communities could be relevant, the PPG provides examples of heritage based public benefits, as follows:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.

7.5.9 Turning to the adopted Local Plan, Policy SP13 relates to the historic environment. This states that the council will preserve and enhance the most important area and characteristics of Stevenage. The policy goes on to state that the Council will:-

- a. Have carried out Heritage Impact Assessments for development sites within, or adjacent to, conservation areas. Site specific mitigation measures have been incorporated to minimise the impacts of development.
- b. Will use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets.
- c. Will protect areas of archaeological importance and other relevant heritage assets by applying the detailed policies set in this plan.

7.5.10 Additional to the above, Policy SP13 of the Adopted Local Plan relates to the historic environment. This states that the council will preserve and enhance the most important area and characteristics of Stevenage. The policy goes on to state that the Council will:-

- a. Have carried out Heritage Impact Assessments for development sites within, or adjacent to, conservation areas. Site specific mitigation measures have been incorporated to minimise the impacts of development.
- b. Will use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets.
- c. Will protect areas of archaeological importance and other relevant heritage assets by applying the detailed policies set in this plan.

7.5.11 Policy NH10 Conservation Areas states those development proposals within, or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document.

#### The Symonds Green Conservation Area

7.5.12 The application site is located 106m west of the Symonds Green Conservation Area, which falls within the urban area of Stevenage. The conservation area is centred around the Green, the ponds and the Crooked Billet public house which is currently undergoing renovation works. These provide an attractive focal point to the area and depict its rural character.

7.5.13 Within the Conservation Area are three Grade II listed buildings, which include the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Oakfield Farm Barn and the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Thatched Cottage and Willow Cottage. In the latter half of the 20th century, Newlyn Close, Dunwich Farm and Southwold Close were developed and this area has a leafy and regular character and appearance. The 20th century properties are laid out in a cul-de-sac arrangement with higher densities which have significantly altered the character and appearance of the conservation area.

#### Listed Buildings

7.5.14 There are a number of listed buildings within 1km of the site, the most significant of which is the Grade I listed Almshoebury Farmhouse. Within 500m of the site, the Grade II\* Dyes Lane Farmhouse lies 300m south-west of the site. The closest designated assets to the site, as detailed in paragraph 7.5.10, lie to the north-east at Symonds Green, beyond the A1(M). These are Grade II listed buildings which include Oakfield Farm Barn, The Thatched Cottage and Willow Cottage. To the south of the site, at Norton Green is a Grade II listed farm house. To the east of the site, there are

two Grade II listed building which lie either side of Gunnels Wood Road. These include Broomin Green Farmhouse and the former John Lewis Warehouse (now Costco).

- 7.5.15 To the site's south-west is a grade II listed cottage on the northern edge of Langley hamlet, 800m from the development site. There are also several other Grade II listed post-medieval structures, lie either side of the Village street.

#### Scheduled Monument

- 7.5.16 The closest scheduled monument is the Six Hills Barrows lying adjacent to the town centre of Stevenage. This is located 911m to the east of the development site. The Six Hills Roman Barrows form the largest surviving group of Roman burial mounds in England, with Roman Barrow monuments in general being a rare monument form. Originally, the Six Hills Barrows would have had a close relationship with the Roman road, designed to be highly visible in a rural environment to any travellers on the road.
- 7.5.17 The monuments are now located within the urban expanse of Stevenage, surrounded on all sides by modern buildings severely limiting the surviving setting of the monument, containing the setting to the grassy area within which the monuments lay.

#### Non-designated heritage assets

- 7.5.18 The Council has recently published for consultation its revised Design Guide SPD which also includes a list of local heritage assets. To the south of the site within Norton Green, four cottages and a former public house are identified as non-designated heritage assets. There are also a number of properties in Symonds Green which also lie within the conservation area. These include a former farmhouse of likely Victorian origin, Symonds Green lodge and the Crooked Billet.
- 7.5.19 Kitching Lane is also designated in its own rights as a non-designated heritage asset as the Environmental Statement (ES) sets out that this route, as shown on historic maps, appears to be running in the same place as it has been since before 1730. Historic records also show that the northern part of the site as potentially marking the route of a Roman road with evidence showing Roman activity in this area. The road, as detailed in the ES is likely marked by a hedgerow on a bank in part, so is also identified as a non-designated heritage asset.

#### Historic Landscape

- 7.5.20 Evidence which supports the ES identifies that the application site has been subject to a considerable amount of changes overtime. There are vestiges or ridge and furrow with part of the site previously forming part of large open fields in the medieval period. However, any evidence of the ridge and furrow has been lost due to the level of cultivation which has taken place on this site over the years.
- 7.5.21 The ES also sets out that a large part of the site was common land in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century i.e. Chalk Dell Common. Kitchen Wood, which is west of the site which is now Kitching Lane, was much more extensive than it is currently. To north lies 'Lady Field' which was likely a medieval field with ploughed out ridge and furrow which is observed in this area along with crop marks. Shepherd's Lane is marked running east to west at the north of the site. This appears to have been lost, but there is an existing PROW which follows its original course.
- 7.5.22 Most of the change to the site was post-war, with the construction of the A1(M) and development of Stevenage as a New Town severing any link with a rural context to the east. There is also the provision of a caravan site adjacent to the southern part of the development site. Where the site has remained in operation for agricultural use, evidence shows substantial field rationalisation since the 1960's which has led to the

removal of many post-medieval field boundaries. The site now consists of three large fields with no defining features. Therefore, the site is identified as having no special landscape of historic interest.

#### Impact Assessment

- 7.5.23 Turning to the impact on Symonds Green Conservation Area, this is particularly well screened from the development site. This is due to the A1(M) being raised above the level of the conservation area effectively forming a physical screen. Consequently, the development is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the significance of the conservation area, including the listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets which fall within it. Furthermore, the screen of vegetation and trees on the western edge of the site also prevents inter-visibility with the site from any part of the conservation area.
- 7.5.24 The most significant designated asset which might be harmed by the development is the Grade I listed Almshoebury Farm farmhouse located 1km to the north-west of the site. The building has a high grading due to the good level of preservation of the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century building which was built as a manor house. The listing details of this building confirm that it comprises a timber frame with rendered walls and tiled roof. There is also an early 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed and weatherboarded barn lying approximately 75m from the farmhouse and this is grade II listed.
- 7.5.25 Whilst there is an open agricultural landscape around the aforementioned listed buildings which enhances their appreciation, the pattern of fields has significantly changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, large areas of woodland between the site and the farm in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which appears to have been lost. However, given the considerable distance between the development site and the listed farm buildings at Almshoebury, the north-western parts of the development site provide only very limited enhancement of the farmhouse's significance.
- 7.5.26 The Grade II\* Dyes Lane farmhouse lies 300m south-west of the site and has a Grade II listed barn in close proximity. The former farmhouse, known as 'Sunnybank Farm', is a good example of a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse of timber framing, render and tiles. The barn is also 17<sup>th</sup> century and weatherboard over timber frame with a brick plinth. The farmhouse sits in the Langley Brook valley and the land rises steeply to its north with woodland still topping the ridge line west of the site. Given the topography and woodland which is to be retained, makes it unlikely that any change within the development site would be visible or cause harm to their significance.
- 7.5.27 In terms of the Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century brick and tile farmhouse in Norton Green, it is identified that this farmhouse has a limited setting as defined by buildings west and north along with vegetation and Chadwell road to its east. As such, the proposed development would not cause harm to the significance of this heritage asset. In terms of the former Grade II John Lewis Warehouse which is occupied by Costco, this building is surrounded by 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial and industrial units. Further, as the site is separated from this building due to the presence of the A1(M) and the wider employment area of Gunnels Wood Road, the scheme would cause no harm to the significance of this heritage asset. The same can be said for the Grade II Broomin Green Farmhouse which is already affected by the raised intersection which effectively screens the farmhouse from views to the west.
- 7.5.28 In terms of the listed buildings which sit within close proximity of Langley hamlet, these lie within 800m from the site. This area includes the single Grade II listed cottage along with several other Grade II listed post-medieval structures. The key settings of these buildings are the fields which immediately surround the hamlet. There are longer distant views to the western ridge line at the edge of the site boundary, but the existing woodland acts as a screen which prevent any views of development within the site. In



addition, as the site is located a significant distance from these buildings, the proposal is unlikely to cause harm to the significance of the heritage assets which are located in Langley.

- 7.5.29 The Six Hills Barrow scheduled ancient monument is located in close proximity to Stevenage Town Centre. The barrows are surrounded by modern development and located a significant distance from the development site. As such, the proposed development will not cause any significant harm to the immediate setting of the Six Hills Barrows.
- 7.5.30 In terms of the impact of the development on the non-designated heritage assets, the properties which lie within Symonds Green are screened by the presence of a large tree belt along with other houses and A1(M) which lie between them and the development site. Consequently, none of the non-designated heritage assets in Symonds Green would be detrimentally affected by the development. In terms of Kitching Lane, this is located outside the development site's boundary, so would remain in-situ with the hedgerows which define the edge of the PROW being retained. In terms of the northern boundary potentially marking the route of a Roman road, this would be incorporated into the development as part of a wider landscaping strategy.
- 7.5.31 Looking at the non-designated heritage assets within Norton Green, these are all surrounded by existing development with the buildings themselves facing east. Given this, the proposed development would not harm their setting as a result.
- 7.5.32 Following an assessment of the proposed development, it can be deduced that there would be No Harm to the significance of any heritage assets which fall within the zone of influence from this development.

#### Assessment of Heritage Balance and Public Benefit

- 7.5.33 Paragraph 200 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that any harm to a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. In addition, where proposals that may cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, should be weighed up against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use. In undertaking that weighting exercise 'considerable importance and weight' must be given to the preservation of the significance of the listed building, including its setting. In determining the application, it must be noted that 'less than substantial harm' is not a 'less than substantial planning consideration'.
- 7.5.34 Turning to public benefits, there is no definition of 'public benefits' on the National Planning Policy Framework or associated Planning Practice Guidance. All the guidance states (as set out in paragraph 10.5.7) that it "*should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large*". There is also Case Law that deals with what is a material consideration, and this pretty much whether it serves a "*proper planning purpose*" (see *latest commentary on this in Wright v Resilient Energy Severndale Ltd and Forest of Dean District Council*). Further, public benefit could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. The test therefore is whether the benefits clearly and convincingly outweigh the considerable importance and weight given to the heritage harm.
- 7.5.35 Following an assessment of the proposed development, the Environmental Statement (ES) submitted with the application demonstrates that whilst the nearest assets are considered to be susceptible to harm, the ES has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the level of harm would be insusceptible on the ground. The two assets which are the most sensitive in terms of impact, are the Grade I and Grade II\* listed Almshoebury Farm farmhouse. As these are continuing farmhouses, these are

influenced by a wider area than traditional assets where these assets also having inter-visibility with the site. However, this is tempered by the valley bottom position at Dyes Lane and distance of intervening vegetation with Almshoebury. Therefore, the updated assessment identifies that there is No Harm to the historic setting of any heritage assets, including the most sensitive assets detailed above.

7.5.36 Turning to the scheme's overall public benefits, these are deemed to be significant which weigh in favour of the proposed development. The scheme would provide 1,500 new homes (including 30% affordable) which would help the Council to continue to meet its NPPF requirement in terms of supply and delivery of new homes. The scheme would also deliver a significant number of affordable homes, especially due to the Council having under supplied in terms of delivery of affordable housing based on current evidence.

7.5.37 The development would also provide new commercial and office spaces along with retail and community spaces. These bring wider benefits to the local economy through the provision of new employment and training opportunities to local people. They would also support the local economy with increased expenditure from future employees of this part of the development. The development would also bring forward a number of construction jobs over the projected construction phase of development. The scheme would also provide a new primary school and sporting facilities which will not only benefit future residents of the development, but the wider community in general. Furthermore, the residents who live in the development would generate additional expenditure into the local economy through the use of local services, amenities and facilities.

7.5.38 The scheme would also introduce new areas of public open spaces along with enhanced opportunities for walking and cycling. This would be achieved through the proposed upgrading and enhancement of existing cycle and pedestrian routes which would connect into new routes which would run through the site as well as out to the wider countryside beyond. The development would also deliver new sport and recreational facilities and from the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts, these would help to fund identified infrastructure projects in the Council's IDP (2016) including the LCWIP. The legal agreement would also help to fund an expansion of the bus services, enhance sustainable transport through the creation of new off-site cycle and pedestrian routes as well as create enhanced connections to the wider countryside beyond the site boundaries.

7.5.39 Following consultation with Historic England and based on the information provided in the ES addendum, they no longer raise any concerns with the proposed development in terms of impact on setting. In terms of the Council's Conservation and Heritage Advisor, the ES addendum addresses all the points which have been raised and clearly identifies the level of harm. Furthermore, there is sufficient information provided in order for the Council to make a judgement on the level of impact the development would have on the historic setting of heritage assets.

### Summary

7.5.40 In summary, the development would cause no harm to the setting of the Symonds Green Conservation Area nor the setting of the listed buildings as set out in paragraphs 7.5.31 to 7.5.32 and 7.5.35 of this report. In addition, there would be no harm to the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument or upon the setting of non-designated heritage assets. Furthermore, this scheme would seek to deliver a strategic housing development as identified in the Local Plan, along with new employment opportunities, community facilities, recreation and sporting facilities along with new areas of public open space (including children's play), education facilities along with the provision of much needed affordable housing.

7.5.41 In addition to the above, the scheme would also deliver a 72 bedroom care home in order to meet the needs of older persons as identified in the evidence base supporting the Local Plan. Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the historic environment and would accord with Policies SP13 and NH10 of the adopted Local Plan (2019), the NPPF (2021) and associated Planning Practice Guidance.

## 7.6 Impact upon amenity

### Impact on amenity of existing residents

7.6.1 The nearest residential properties which would be affected by this development would be located within Norton Green, specifically the houses within Pigeonswick Close. Based on the submitted masterplan, the nearest dwellinghouses of the proposed development would be located approximately 127m from the properties within Pigeonswick Close. Given the level of separation, it is not considered the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the amenities of the nearest existing residential properties.

### Impact on amenity of future residents (Phase 1)

7.6.2 Looking at the amenity provision for future residents, the Council's Design Guide SPD (2009) sets out standards which should be met to safeguard the privacy and outlook of adjoining properties from new developments. The standards for proposed dwellings are set out in the table below.

No. of storeys	Type of separation	Minimum distance (metres)
Between new 2 storeys or a mix of 1 and 2 storey.	Back to Back	20m
	Back to Side	12m
Between new dwellings over 2 storeys in height	Back to Back	30m
	Back to Side	20m

7.6.3 Following a review of the plans which accompany this application, all of the residential properties have been positioned to accord with the separation distance standards set out in the Design Guide SPD. As such, there would no issues with regards to privacy or outlook. However, the properties where their respective rear windows face onto the flank elevation of a neighbouring property have been designed not to comprise any side windows which would serve habitable rooms. Furthermore, the development has been designed so that the properties looking onto the side of a neighbouring property would only overlook a driveway and garages, which are not private spaces. This ensures that the privacy of properties is protected and at the same time there is still sufficient space for an acceptable outlook.

7.6.4 In relation to the proposed town houses and Flats over Garages (FOGS), the dormer windows are predominantly positioned on the front roof slope which would overlook a particular road combined with sufficient separation distances between those properties and any properties located opposite. In addition, any properties comprising dormer windows at the rear are positioned so as to meet the Council's separation distance standards for properties over 2 storeys in height.

7.6.5 Turning to the proposed apartment blocks, these have been oriented and designed to ensure windows (kitchens and bathrooms) overlook parking courtyards with the bedrooms and living rooms overlooking open spaces. This ensures that the apartment blocks do not directly overlook the private spaces of neighbouring properties.

7.6.6 With respect to the provision of outdoor amenity space, the Design Guide (2009) recommends the minimum garden space for a terraced or semi-detached dwelling should be 50 square metres. Each dwelling should normally have a minimum garden

depth of 10m. Larger detached houses will generally be required to provide a larger garden area. In flatted developments, a minimum useable communal area of 50 square metres for schemes up to 5 units, plus an additional 10 square metres per additional unit over 5 should be provided. However, the guidance does state that upper floor flat dwellers rarely have access to garden space. It is most desirable, therefore, in new developments where there is no communal space that effort is made to provide balconies or roof gardens for the occupants of these units.

- 7.6.7 In relation to flatted developments, where private open space is required, the Council would normally aim to achieve a minimum useable communal area of 50 square metres for schemes up to 5 units, plus an additional 10 square metres per additional unit over 5. Based on the number of flatted units proposed (92) across 10 blocks, there would be a requirement to provide 680 sq.m of private amenity space. The proposed development does not seek to provide any amenity space for the residential blocks of flats.
- 7.6.8 Notwithstanding the above, the blocks of flats would have easy and direct access to areas of open space such as the Community Green, Green Corridor (which also incorporates area of play), Linear edges and Countryside Edges, woodland areas, Local Areas of Play, Locally Equipped Areas of Play, pocket parks as well as the wider countryside. Therefore, with access to these areas of public space, they would compensate for the lack of private amenity space. In addition, some of the apartment blocks comprise external balconies, which would provide private areas of amenity space for residents of these blocks as well.
- 7.6.9 Turning to the proposed dwellinghouses, following an assessment of the proposed development, all of the dwellinghouses across the site would have sufficient private amenity space in accordance with the Council's Guidance. Furthermore, the majority of private garden spaces serving the dwellinghouses exceed the Council's requirements in terms of both area and length.
- 7.6.10 With regards to dwelling unit internal space standards, Policy GD1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) stipulates that new dwellings should accord to the standards set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). Following an assessment of the proposed development, all of the proposed dwelling units (including the bedrooms) across the development site accord with National NDSS requirements.
- 7.6.11 In relation to the provision of outdoor sport and children's play space, it is noted that the proposed development would provide areas of children's play within the development. Therefore, in accordance with CIL regulations it would not be reasonable to seek financial contributions towards children's play. However, to ensure these areas of children's play are delivered for use by future residents, a mechanism would be embedded into the Section 106 agreement requiring these areas of play to be brought forward in an acceptable timeframe. In addition, the legal agreement would set out how these areas of play will be managed and maintained for future residents.
- 7.6.12 With respect to outdoor sport, the proposed development seeks, as part of the community green, the provision of cricket pitches and/or football pitches which would be delivered as part of Phase 1 of the development. The scheme also seeks to deliver a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) within the outline phases of the development. To ensure these outdoor sport facilities are provided for future residents, then as per the requirements for Children's Play, a Section 106 agreement would seek to secure the relevant sports facilities within acceptable timeframes. It would also set out details for the management and maintenance of these spaces over the lifetime of the development.
- 7.6.13 Given the aforementioned assessment, it can be concluded that future residents of the dwellings would have an acceptable living environment.

#### Impact on amenity of future residents (Phases 2 to 4)

- 7.6.14 Looking at the masterplan in more detail, the remainder of the scheme has been submitted in outline form only. Consequently, there is limited detail at this stage to assess the impact these parts of the proposal would have on future residents in terms of living space standards, amenity provision, outlook, privacy, sunlight and daylight. As such, these aspects would be assessed at the detailed design stage as part of any reserved matters application.

#### Noise impact on existing and future residents

- 7.6.15 With respect to noise, Policy FP8: Pollution Sensitive Uses stipulates that planning permission for pollution sensitive uses will be granted where they will not be subjected to unacceptably high levels of pollution exposure from either existing, or proposed pollution generating uses. Taking this policy into consideration, it is appreciated the application site does sit within close proximity of the A1(M) motorway as well as London Luton Airport flightpath. As such, these noise sources could have an impact on the future amenities of the future residents of the development as well.
- 7.6.16 Given the aforementioned and following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Section, they have advised that the Noise Impact Assessment and associated amendment in the Environmental Statement (ES) which has been submitted in support of this application is deemed to be acceptable. This is because the assessment recommends a 7m acoustic barrier in the form of a landscaped bund (4m high) with a 3m high acoustic fence between the sites eastern boundary and the A1(M) in order to reduce road noise. There is also a requirement to provide appropriate glazing and ventilation in order to create an appropriate level of protection to future noise sensitive receptors.
- 7.6.17 In view of the above, the Council's Environmental Health Section has recommended a number of conditions be imposed on any grant of permission. This is to ensure that the amenities of future residents are protected by nearby noise sources. In terms of the impact on existing residents, specifically during the construction phase of development, suitable mitigation measures can be put in place as part of a detailed Construction Management Plan. This can also be secured by way of condition if the Council is minded to grant planning permission.
- 7.6.18 Turning to the concerns which have been raised by UK Power Networks, the substation they are referring to in their comments is located on Cavendish Road adjacent to the Council's Waste Transfer site. Given the substation is located on the otherwise of the A1(M), any noise generated from this substation would be masked by noise which is generated by the traffic. In addition, road noise is identified as having a low frequency, which is why the glazing specification for the residential units have been designed based on this frequency.
- 7.6.19 In terms of external noise within amenity areas, the use of the proposed bund between the substation and the proposed homes, there is the maximum form of mitigation which is being put in place that would screen noise from the substation and road traffic. Further to this, the noise recordings which formed part of the modelling work for the suggested mitigation measures would have captured all background noise, including the substation. Therefore, and as confirmed by the Council's Environmental Health Section, through the detailed measures provided, the noise which would be generated from the substation will be appropriately mitigated against accordingly.

### **7.7 Means of access and highway safety**

7.7.1 Section 9 of the NPPF (2021) sets out the policy framework for promoting sustainable transport with the overarching principles set out in paragraphs 104 and 105. Paragraph 104 stipulates that transport issues should be considered at the earliest stages, in this instance, development proposals, so that:

- a) the potential impact of development on transport networks can be addressed;
- b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised-for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodate;
- c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and
- e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.

7.7.2 Paragraph 105 states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the needs to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in.....decision making.

7.7.3 When the Council assesses a site that maybe allocated for development in plans, such as this one, Paragraph 110 of the NPPF sets out that a Council should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be-or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
- c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code, and
- d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

7.7.4 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Paragraph 112 of the Framework sets out that applications for development should:

- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second-so far as possible-to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
- b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;

c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;

d) all for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles, and

e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

7.7.5 Paragraph 113 of the Framework sets out that all developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a statement or transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed. Policy SP2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) stipulates that planning permission will be granted where proposals promote journeys by bus, train, bike and foot and reduce the need to travel. Policy SP5 sets out that new development will be required to contribute fairly towards the demands it creates, so the Council will work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and Highways England to deliver additional highway capacity.

7.7.6 Policy SP6 of the Local Plan sets out a requirement for new development to support the provision of sustainable transport schemes as identified in the local transport plans and strategies. In addition, this policy sets out that planning permission be refused where development proposals fail to provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport. Further to this, this policy sets out a requirement for new development to make reasonable on-site, off-site or financial contributions in accordance with Policy SP5 including, but limited to:

i. The creation or improvement of routes to, from or in the vicinity of the site;

ii. The provision of crossings, underpasses, bridges or other appropriate means of traversing significant barriers for pedestrians and cyclists;

iii. The implementation of parking control measures within on in the vicinity of the development site, and/or

iv. The implementation of other transport schemes identified in the Council's delivery plans.

7.7.7 Policy IT1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) which relates to strategic development access points, sets out that the preferred vehicular access points from the existing road network, in this instance, land west of Stevenage is at Bessemer Drive and Meadway. This policy goes onto state that planning permission will be granted were proposals demonstrate that the preferred access points have been incorporated into the scheme design; and for the development area of west of Stevenage, how this would integrate with any future phases of development beyond the Borough boundary. Policy IT2 which specifically relates to west of Stevenage safeguarded corridors, it is set out in this policy that the areas around Meadway.....are safeguarded. As such, planning permission will only be granted for development proposal which would not physically inhibit or otherwise prejudice comprehensive development on land to the west of Stevenage within North Hertfordshire in the period beyond 2026. Policy IT3 which covers infrastructure, sets out that planning permission for sites over 200 dwelling or more...will be granted where applicants satisfactorily demonstrate how infrastructure needs arising from the proposal is met. This will have to be demonstrated through:

a) An infrastructure assessment at outline stage and / or;

b) A detailed infrastructure phasing and delivery plan at reserved matters or full application stage.

This policy also sets out that where appropriate, conditions, legal agreements or other mechanisms will be used to ensure that development is phased to coincide with the delivery of infrastructure.

7.7.8 Policy IT4 sets out the detailed requirements for transport assessments and travel plans. This policy specified that planning permission will be granted where a development would not have an adverse impact upon the highway network; reflects the principles of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy; provision of a satisfactory Transport Assessment or Statement which demonstrates that there would be no residual cumulative impacts of development are not severe, and, where a Transport Assessment is required, this is accompanied by an acceptable (green) travel plan.

7.7.9 Policy IT5 deals specifically with parking and access. In terms of access, a major development proposal must show how it will be served by passenger transport as well as make provisions for pedestrians and cyclists. Policy IT6 which covers sustainable transport, sets out that planning permission will be granted where proposals facilitate the creation or, or improvement of, or reasonably contribute towards, in relation to this application, public transport provision to and from the strategic site; enhanced inter-urban bus provision including direct services to employment sites as well as new or improved bus services and facilities within 400m of major developments.

7.7.10 Policy IT6 sets out the detailed requirements for new and improved pedestrian and cyclist links including the provision of wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists in and around Stevenage.

#### On-site infrastructure

7.7.11 The proposed development seeks to be well-connected and permeable in order to encourage walking and cycling to destinations within the development site. These new routes would also be designed to encourage healthy activity as well improve personal security and safety. The local streets would be designed as corridors which are permeable, legible and multi-functional spaces, where pedestrians and cyclists would be afforded higher priority than vehicular traffic. Therefore, the Movement and Access Strategy detailed in the TA comprises the following:

- The creation of a high quality environment within the site that provides direct connections to origins and destinations within and through the site and beyond that are permeable, coherent, safe and reflect desire lines for movement;
- The provision of key landmarks as well as easy to understand wayfinding both within and on key routes to / from external destinations to provide legibility;
- The protection and enhancement of PROW network both within and in the immediate vicinity which will be integrated into the network of new infrastructure within the development site.

7.7.12 The Movement and Access Strategy seeks to deliver a walkable neighbourhood with interconnected streets and where the daily needs of the community in terms of work, play, education and shopping are within walking distance to minimise any reliance on the use of the car.

7.7.13 Walking and cycling routes have also been designed to be actively overlooked in order to reduce the fear of crime. Crossing points have been designed to tie in with desire lines of movement with refuge islands provided where appropriate. The formal cycleways within the site, also referred to in the TA as 'Greenways' (also referred to as Greenway Active Travel Corridors), will take the form of segregated off-highway two-way routes that are in general, 3m in width (1.5m in either direction) and would be



separated from footways which would have a width of 2.5m. Crossing points would be provided as shared surfaces with a detailed transition from segregated to shared surface. All of the formal footways and cycleways would be constructed to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Highway specification. The Greenway Active Travel Corridors will have restricted byway status permitting access for horse riders as well as pedestrians and cyclists.

- 7.7.14 The Greenways have also been designed to provide convenient and direct routes to the proposed green spaces and semi-natural spaces which form the site edge. These would incorporate existing landscape features such as hedges and trees in order to create green corridors. Footways would be provided on both sides of all primary, secondary and tertiary streets. However, on some of the tertiary streets where there are no identified pedestrian desire lines, then footways have been omitted.
- 7.7.15 Hedges and fences to adjoining properties would be set back at least 0.5m from footways and cycleways inter-visibility splays of 2m x 2m. These would be provided at crossovers and path junctions in order to maintain pedestrian safety. Where cycle traffic crosses a road, footway or PROW, visibility splays of 2.4m x 31m would be maintained.
- 7.7.16 All formal footways and cycleways would be lit and drainage would either be integrated on the footway / cycleway or drainage may be dealt with through a combination of French drains, rain gardens, natural ditches and swales. The footways and cycleways have also been designed to have suitable gradients in line with HCC guidance.

#### Off-site infrastructure

- 7.7.17 In terms of off-site infrastructure, the TA sets out a requirement to provide a direct, cohesive and attractive connections by foot and cycle to Stevenage Town Centre (including Bus and Rail) as well connections to the surrounding areas. Given this, the TA provides detail for three key strategic corridors in order to meet the objective set out above.
- 7.7.18 At the northern section, the key strategic corridor is Meadway/Redcar Drive towards the districts of Symonds Green/Fishers Green, the Old Town, Pin Green, The John Henry Newman School, the Thomas Alleyne's School, the Lister Hospital and the Sainsbury's foodstore. The central corridor is Bessemer Drive towards the Gunnels Wood Employment Area, rail and bus stations. The southern corridor is Chadwell Road, Norton Green and then Six Hills Way towards North Herts College (Stevenage Campus), Monks Wood, the town centre as well as the rail and bus stations.
- 7.7.19 On these corridors, the development proposes a number of measures to improve the user experience of pedestrians and cyclists. These include pavement widening, lighting, signage and markings, minimising conflicts with and separation from vehicular traffic where possible as well as improved crossings incorporating priority over vehicles. In addition, the TA details the provision of a wider package of wayfinding improvements to the Stevenage cycleway network. On the Meadway / Redcar Drive corridor, apart from a new vehicle access via a tunnel under the A1(M) (to be constructed prior to occupation of Phase 2), would be the provision of a segregated and traffic free pedestrian and cycleway route. At the junction with Symonds Green Lane, the traffic free connection splits north / south to continue onwards into the wider cycle network. The existing carriageway would be reconstructed to provide a continuous 3.0m wide two-way stepped cycle route and a 2.0m wide footway alongside enhancements to the existing landscaping and retention of the existing trees / hedgerow that bounds the existing carriageway.
- 7.7.20 The southern leg continues along the Meadway (ancient land) to connect into Crompton Road and the existing infrastructure on the western side of A1072 Gunnels

Wood Road. The northern leg extends to a traffic signalled controlled crossing that would be provided by the development on the site and links directly into the new Meadway Playing fields pavilion and onwards towards Symonds Green Neighbourhood Centre.

7.7.21 From the proposed traffic signal controlled crossing, the pedestrian and cycle route would continue along the southern side of Redcar Drive through an enhanced landscape to a new Copenhagen crossing (blending the pavement into the road signalling to drivers they are entering a pedestrian area) over Rutherford Close when it continues onto the existing Stevenage cycleway network (also a continuation of the Greenway Active Travel Corridor) with onward connection to Gunnels Wood Road, Bridge Road West and the Old Town. On Bessemer Drive, the scheme would incorporate a continuous 4m wide two-way cycle route with 2m wide footway where it connects into the existing Stevenage cycle network. The cycleway has been positioned on the southern side of Bessemer Drive in order to reduce conflict with vehicle traffic and avoid the need to remove the existing mature trees which are provided within the verge on the northern side of the carriageway. Further, to accommodate the increased traffic associated with the development and to regulate traffic queues, the Redcar Drive / Clovelly Way / Rutherford Close 4-arm roundabout would be modified (further details provided later in the report).

7.7.22 To the south of the site, a 4m wide shared footway / cycleway would extend from the upgraded footpath 42 southwards along the western side of Chadwell Road to Pigeonswick Close. To the north of the Close, there would be the provision of a raised table which would firstly, provide priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicular traffic, but secondly, can also act as a gateway feature into Norton Green. The shared pedestrian / cycleway would then connect into the existing Stevenage cycle network which continues along the southern side of Six Hills Way to connect into Gunnels Wood Road and onwards towards the town centre.

#### Public Rights of Way

7.7.23 In addition to the provision of formal pedestrian and cycle routes, the development proposed to deliver a comprehensive improvement plan to the PROW network within and leading to and from the site. The PROW improvement plan comprises the following:

- Retention and upgrade of Footpath 42 (FP42) to form part of the Greenway Active Travel Corridor network;
- Retention and improvement to Bridleway 98 (Dyes Lane / Chadwell Road) to include segregated facilities from vehicular traffic on the southern section of Chadwell Road between Norton Green and FP42 and the upgrade of Chadwell Road to Quiet Lane designation between FP42 and the Main Street to The Site off Bessemer Drive with supporting infrastructure / signage.
- The extinguishment of Footpath 36 to be replaced by the Greenway Active Travel Corridor route through the development site as well as the provision of additional recreational footpaths that will connect Dyes Lane and Kitching Lane;
- The retention of existing rights of way over the un-metalled unclassified county road UCR1m Kitching Lane and Bridleway (Reference: 98 and then 5/37) Dyes Lane as per existing with improved surfacing and provision of natural margins;
- The extinguishment of Bridleway 35 to be replaced by the provision of additional Bridleway or Restricted Byway routes through open space within the site and around the perimeter of the site as well as the Greenway Active Travel Corridor parallel to the main street;
- No changes to the Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) 38, Kitching Lane, south of Dyes Lane;

- Additional recreational footpaths to the south of The Site with direct connections to Bridleway 98, Byway Open to All Traffic 38 and the main Greenway Active Travel Corridor route through the heart of The Site.

7.7.24 The TA details that where the footpaths / Bridleways are to be upgraded to form part of the Green Way network, these would be finished in asphalt with concrete edging. On secondary routes, this would be finished in a rolled stone with the use of the timber edging. Unbound routes would be maintained accordingly where they would continue to act as light usage routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

7.7.25 The masterplan, supporting plan and TA set out that the overall aim is to provide a 6.0m wide corridor for all retained / enhanced PROWs within the site whereby existing hedgerow and other landscaping features being retained. This corridor would include a minimum 2.0m wide surface route (footpath) and 3.0m wide surface route (Bridleways) with natural grass margins on both sides. The width and surfacing of both Kitching Lane (UCR1) and Dyes Lane (Bridleway 98) west of the main street / primary access road, would allow two vehicles to safely pass within the boundaries of the land which is designated as a PROW.

7.7.26 A new Bridleway / Restricted Byway is proposed from the Main Street / Primary Access Road running west to Kitching Lane, to facilitate access to the Upper Kitching Spring woodland. This is to ensure there is accessibility for all users of these routes, a minimum width of 900mm would be provided between posts or other hazards / obstructions on the retained / enhanced PROW. Any gates to be installed would also meet minimum width standards in order to meet accessibility requirements for all users.

7.7.27 With regards to both Kitching Lane and Dyes Lane, these are subject to lawful rights of access and used by adjoining owners. These rights would be preserved to the west of the main street / primary access road with suitable alternatives incorporated as part of the new road layouts within the development. A safeguarded zone of 10m in width is retained alongside both Lanes.

### Passenger Transport

7.7.28 Turning to public transport, a fundamental aspect of the Movement and Access Strategy as detailed in the TA is that all dwellings are within 400m walk distance of public transport services. Phase 1 would deliver a 20 minute frequency all day, every day with an in/turnaround/out working via the Bessemer Drive access utilising a single vehicle. Future development phases would maintain the 20 minute frequency all day, every day with an additional bus. The construction of the new Meadway A1(M) underpass will facilitate the one-way loop service between the development and town centre through the completion of the main street linking Meadway with Bessemer Drive. The developers will provide financial support for the service for at least two years following the completion of all the development as detailed in this application submission.

7.7.29 The TA details that consultation had been undertaken with HCC Public Transport Team where agreement had been reached on the provision of a circular service between the site and the new Bus Interchange at Stevenage Town Centre. The bus route itself has been designed to be fully integrated into the wider bus network and would also accommodate flexible ticketing options with rail operators. The overall aspiration as detailed in the TA is to provide the following:

- High specification vehicles with appropriate branding, climate control, executive seating, DDA wheelchair accessibility, WiFi and USB charging;
- Printed bus network guides for distributions amongst residents;
- Inclusion of services on the operators UK website;

- Flexible ticketing / multi-journey products with other services on the network, purchased either on-bus or on the operators website;
- Joint promotion of services with associated rail networks, including PlusBus;
- Customer assistance by telephone, email and postal letter as well as a dedicated disability helpdesk;
- GPS/AVL tracking system on vehicles to deliver real time passenger information through on-street display and smartphones;
- ERG smartcard capability on every vehicle for smart ticket products.

7.7.30 Within the site, the bus stop infrastructure would be provided at cost by the developers and incorporate the relevant width footway, passenger waiting facilities, flag, timetable and mapping. There would also be the provision of real time information (also incorporated within the local centre, school, employment buildings and community uses), Kassel kerbs and associated bus marking.

#### Mobility Hubs

7.7.31 The TA and ES detail that the local centre, where outline permission is sought, would include the provision of a mobility hub. The hub would only include short-term cycle parking provision, it would also incorporate standard and cargo bike hire, potentially e-scooter hire, car/van club hire, electric vehicles, ultra-fast charging points, interactive travel mapping and bike repair / retail opportunities. These facilities, with the addition of last mile delivery facilities and refreshment kiosk, would be replicated at the pavilion adjacent to the cricket / football pitches off the Main Street. In addition, a hub would also be delivered adjacent to the Meadway A1(M) underpass that would incorporate the same facilities as the pavilion plus the addition of flexible community workspace.

#### Access

7.7.32 The plans and Transport Assessment (TA) submitted with the application identify that the development would be served by two main vehicular access points. At the southern end of the site, vehicle access would be taken from Bessemer Drive and this would also serve Phase 1 of the development. In addition, there would be a newly created shared cycle and pedestrian route which run alongside the vehicular access. This would connect the proposed development in Phase 1 to the existing and well established pedestrian and cycle network which runs along Gunnels Wood Road.

7.7.33 At the northern of the site, the proposed development would be accessed from Meadway for all forms of transport as well as pedestrian and cyclists. In terms of vehicular access, the proposed development comprises an upgraded road which connects to the roundabout on Clovelly Way/Redcar Drive/Rutherford Close. This road would then travel westwards along Meadway with the road then running northwards through a new tunnel which is to be constructed under the A1(M). The northern vehicular access via Meadway would then run southwards through the development site and would connect to the southern vehicular access at Bessemer Drive. The new carriageway would be 6.5m width and been designed to accommodate two-way traffic.

7.7.34 In terms of pedestrian and cyclist access, the scheme would seek to connect to the existing pedestrian and cycle network on Clovelly Way, adjacent to the employment site at Rutherford Close. This would then run parallel with the vehicular access travelling westwards and then through the existing tunnel under the A1(M). This pedestrian and cycle route would then travel southwards to then connect to the southern route which comes through Bessemer Drive. The route at the Meadway has also been designed with an enhanced connection to the Gunnels Wood Road employment site via Cavendish Road. It would also connect to the existing tree lined shared pedestrian / cycle route which runs along the Meadway situated between Rutherford Close and Costco / Cavendish Road. This would allow for a further

sustainable connection to Gunnel Wood Road. The segregated cycleway and footway will be constructed to a combined width of 6m (2m footway and 4m cycleway).

- 7.7.35 The pedestrian and cycle route at Meadway would also have a crossing point to connect with the proposed replacement pavilion and sport pitches at Meadway Playing Fields. It would also form a new connection with the pedestrian / cycle route (Symonds Green Lane) which runs past Cartref going north into the Symonds Green Conservation Area.
- 7.7.36 All of the vehicular, pedestrian and cycleway routes have been designed to incorporate the relevant pedestrian visibility and vehicle inter-visibility spays in accordance with the Department for Transport (DfT) Manual for Streets. In addition, the cycleways have also been designed in accordance with LTN1/20 (Cycleway Infrastructure Design) along with the design standards set by HCC Highways. Moreover, they would also be lit routes in accordance with the HCC Guidance.

#### A1(M) underpass

- 7.7.37 Policy HO2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) identifies that the existing tunnel at Meadway under the A1(M) in its current configuration is not suitable to serve the access and connectivity needs for all road users associated with the delivery of the proposed development. Therefore, the developers and their consultants have actively engaged with Highways England (HE) to identify the most appropriate infrastructure to serve the development.
- 7.7.38 Following a review of the options put forward as detailed in the TA, the best option based on HE guidance is to retain the existing underpass for pedestrian and cycle access. However, for two-way vehicular traffic, is to construct a new underpass. In addition, this option also allows for greater flexibility for the future delivery of land beyond the site boundary in North Herts which is a key requirement of Policy HO2.
- 7.7.39 The width of the tunnel structure between the supporting walls would comprise a two-way carriageway which would be a minimum of 6.70m in width with 0.5m rubbing strips. Whilst technical approvals would be required by HE, it will take some time before the tunnel is constructed and comes on-line. Therefore, as an interim, the Meadway / Redcar Drive enabling works and main street works would be constructed to within 40m of the existing A1(M) at which point there would be a temporary route constructed to connect the new carriageway to the existing carriageway as it passed under the existing underpass. This route would be used for construction traffic in order to deliver the dwellings in Phase 2 as well as being temporarily used as part of the bus loop.
- 7.7.40 Once the new underpass is operational, remedial works would be undertaken to the existing underpass to deliver the final footway / cycleway solution. In terms of the main road / primary access route at Bessemer Drive, that would be delivered as part of Phase 1 and would also be utilised for construction traffic as well as the bus route.

#### Street hierarchy

- 7.7.41 The streets which would be delivered as part of this development have been designed to fulfil a variety of functions. They have been designed to not only distribute motor-vehicle traffic across the development site including access to buildings and public open spaces for all road users, they also seek to provide a high quality network of connections for pedestrians and cyclists. The streets have been designed to be permeable and legible where pedestrian and cyclists are given greater priority over the motor-vehicle.

7.7.42 The streets have also been designed to control the speed of vehicles which is essential in order to protect more vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists. This is achieved through the incorporation of natural speed attenuation which includes changes to surface treatment at features such as squares, gateways, junctions, crossings and interface with key public open space to create focal points and to further promote legibility.

7.7.43 The target maximum speed for most of the main street is 25mph, 20mph with the Central Section (i.e. High Street and High Street transition areas close to the Local Centre. The speed would also reduce down to 20mph on secondary streets and 15mph on tertiary streets. In accordance with HCC Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and Manual for Streets, the street network, as detailed in the TA are as follows:

- The Main Street
  - 6.5m carriageway to accommodate the movement of buses;
  - 3.0m wide segregated cycleway / 2.5m wide footway where the Greenway Active Travel Corridor is adjacent to footways otherwise 2.0m footways interspersed with verges;
  - Frequent junctions with a medium movement and place function;
  - 20mph speed limit;
  - High levels of pedestrian and cycle activity;
  - Dropped kerb accesses to limited number of frontage residential properties in Central Section;
  - On-street parking restricted to maintain free-flow of movement, particularly for buses.
- Secondary streets
  - Variable width (minimum width of 4.8m to maximum width of 5.5m) carriageway;
  - 2.0m footway on both sides (one side where no desire line) – interconnected such that ‘dead end’ routes are, where possible, avoided;
  - Medium movement and place function;
  - 20mph speed limit;
  - Medium / high pedestrian and cycle activity;
  - Frequent dropped kerb accesses to private driveways to frontage residential properties;
  - On-street parking designed sensitively to minimise visual intrusion and ensure that safety is maintained.
- Tertiary streets
  - Variable width (minimum of 4.0m to maximum of 6.0m) carriageway;
  - 2.0m footways on at least one side OR shared surface route, designed to keep traffic speeds below 20mph;
  - ‘low’ movement and ‘high’ place functions;
  - frequent and informal accesses to private dwellings.
- Employment Area Streets
  - Medium movement and place function;
  - 20mph design speed;
  - Medium levels of pedestrian and cycle activity;
  - Min 6.0m carriageway and appropriate kerb radii to accommodate swept path movement of servicing and delivery vehicles;
  - 2.0m footways on both sides (one side only with 0.5m service margin opposite where no desire line exists);
  - On-street parking designed sensitively to minimise visual intrusion and ensure high safety standards.

- 7.7.44 In regards to phasing, the main street would be delivered in two sections, tied into the delivery of the access enabling works detailed earlier in this report. Phase 1 of the delivery of the main street would extend from Bessemer Drive in a westerly and then northerly direction through to, and including, the proposed junction that serves the Primary School area in the central section of the site. The TA sets out that the main street would be completed prior to the first occupation of Phase 1 which would also include the respective secondary and tertiary streets within that respective phase.
- 7.7.45 Phase 2 of the main street would extend in a westerly then southerly direction from Meadway to connect into the Phase 1 part of the development. The TA details that the Phase 2 main street works would be completed prior to occupation of Phase 2 development (the first reserved matters application for that part of the site for which outline planning permission has been sought). The reason for early delivery of Phase 2 of the main street is firstly, to facilitate the introduction of the looped bus service through the site at an early juncture to capture the maximum levels of patronage. Secondly, it provides an alternative construction traffic access route for latter phases of development, thereby, significantly reducing the level of HGV traffic which would travel through Phase 1 of the development.

#### Potential expansion into North Herts Land

- 7.7.46 Policy HO2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires the applicant to demonstrate that the development can be extended beyond the Borough boundary in the future i.e. the safeguarded land within North Hertfordshire. In order to demonstrate how the scheme complies with this policy requirement, the masterplan and supporting documentation (including the TA) provide specific details of how the scheme would create future connections into the North Hertfordshire site. This is considered in more detail below.
- 7.7.47 The proposed development would seek to extend the Greenway network i.e. the segregated footway / cycleway links up to within 1.0m of the boundary with the North Herts land. This would form part of the central spine Greenway through the heart of the site with direct connections to the local neighbourhood centre, primary school and employment based uses. This infrastructure is proposed to be delivered by no later than 2027.
- 7.7.48 The scheme would also comprise the delivery of a single carriageway two-way road that will junction with the main street in the north-western section of the site and would extend within 1.0m of the boundary with the North Herts land. The aim is also for this piece of infrastructure to be delivered by no later than 2027. In addition, the potential for the central north junction to be constructed as a roundabout in order to accommodate footway/cycleway provision is also provided in detail in the TA.
- 7.7.49 The TA also sets that there is the potential to construct a new roundabout to the west of and not impacting on the construction of the new A1(M) vehicular underpass at Meadway with only minor impact on the alignment of the main street / primary access road and to be designed to meet highway standards. The proposal also has the provision of a safeguarded corridor on land to the west of and adjacent A1(M) with a minimum width of 24m order to deliver a single carriageway or dual carriageway connection between the main street / primary access and the boundary to the North Herts land plus Greenway corridor and verges.
- 7.7.50 Further to the above, the TA sets out that provision is made for a sustainable corridor to facilitate the potential to bore an additional underpass to the A1(M) to facilitate a dual carriageway link eastwards following the alignment of the Meadway / Redcar Drive to Clovelly Way and Gunnels Wood Road.

#### Swept Path Analysis and visibility splays

7.7.51 The TA comprises a number of plans showing details of swept path analysis across the site. These plans demonstrate that large vehicles such as refuse collection vehicles can safely manoeuvre within a respective street and exit in a forward gear. Turning to visibility splays, the proposed vehicular access and egress points across the development have all been modelled to demonstrate they have adequate vehicle-to-vehicle and pedestrian inter-visibility splays in line with the DfT Manual for Streets and Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC), Roads in Hertfordshire Design Guide. Therefore, vehicles entering and egressing from respective streets should not prejudice the safety of pedestrians and cyclists as well as vehicles generally utilising the highway network.

#### Traffic Generation (Construction Period)

7.7.52 The proposed development would be delivered over phases with the first completions on the site being delivered by the end of 2024, thereafter, the developers would be deliver a combined delivery rate of between 180-210 dwellings per annum with the final dwellings being completed in 2031. The build programme details in the application submission would comprise the following elements:-

- The construction of the built development;
- Associated infrastructure to support the build programme such as external works, roads, cycleway / footway / footpath infrastructure, services etc.;
- Earthworks and landscaping.

7.7.53 The main impacts in terms of transport will be mainly HGV movements on the access roads to and from the site. The traffic generation associated with the construction phase of the development is related to the following on-site activities and includes:

- Site and ground preparation, including bulk excavation works;
- Deliveries to the construction site;
- Any other plant or equipment required;
- Movement of construction personnel to and from the site.

7.7.54 The overall level of HGV movement will vary throughout the construction phase of development etc. However, the delivery of materials would result in a peak of between 40 – 60 two-way HGV trips per day. ES details no HGV access to the site before 0700 hours or after 1900 hours Monday to Friday and not outside hours of 07:00hours and 13:00 hours on Saturdays. No construction work would take place on a Sunday. These would generally take place outside of the network peak hours and spread evenly across the day over an hourly period, approximately 4-6 HGV two-way trips. In terms of vehicle movements, during Phase 1 of the development, vehicle movements would be concentrate on the Bessemer Drive access. However, as detailed earlier in the report, it is proposed that during Phase 1, the main street through the site would be constructed, at least to base course level, through to Meadway. This would then facilitate the transfer of construction vehicles to Meadway / Redcar Drive.

7.7.55 The above would allow Bessemer Drive to be used primarily by residents and the end users at the southern end of the site. In terms of managing the construction process in detail, a Construction Management Plan (including details of fencing and protection measures, including measures to maintain safety for horse riders and carriage drivers on existing bridleways) would need to be submitted. This can be secured by way of condition if the Council was minded to grant planning permission. In terms of workforce movements, it is predicted there would be approximately 200 vehicle movements over a daily period during peak acting on the site. The Construction Management Plan would provide further details on shift patterns in order to minimise the impact on the highway network).



### Traffic Generation (Operational Period)

7.7.56 Looking at traffic generation, the TA incorporates details of proposed traffic generation for weekdays. The assessment also comprises a future year assessment model in order to inform the potential future impact of the development on the surrounding highway network. The peak periods the assessment focussed on were 07:00-10:00AM and 16:00-19:00PM. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions at the time the TA was prepared, it was agreed with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Highways and Highways England (HE), any traffic data and queuing data which would have been collected would be under representative of the typical operational conditions on the surrounding network. Therefore, the assessment of development related traffic on the operation of the highway network are based upon the Countywide Model of Transport (COMET) model which is owned by HCC Highways and maintained by their consultants WSP.

7.7.57 The COMET model consists of a SATURN Highway Assignment Model (HAM) (Is a computer model that calculates transport assignment of road network) and an Emme based Variable Demand Model (VDM) (a complete travel demand modelling system for urban, regional and national transportation forecasting) and Public Transport (PT) model. The COMET model has a base year of 2014 and a forecast year of 2036.

7.7.58 Focusing on the proposed demand by the proposed development, the COMET model database of surveyed sites has also been used to forecast the travel demand associated with the development. These sites were selected based on criteria which reflect the nature of the project. In this instance, the mix adopted which the COMET modelling has been undertaken:

- Residential (mixed size and tenure) – up to 1,600 dwellings;
- Employment – up to 10,000 sq.m of mixed use office, research and development and light industrial;
- Primary School – 3 Form Entry (up to 360 pupils).

7.7.59 In addition to the above, the TA also details the model utilised to predict the amount of traffic which would be generated by the development was also via TRICS (Trip Rate Information Computer System). The TRICS database of surveyed sites has also been used to forecast the residential travel associated with the proposed development. These sites were selected based on criteria which reflect the nature of this project. The total forecast for the residential trip generation of 1,500 units for the AM and PM Peak is detailed in the table below:-

<b>Time period</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
AM Peak hour	293	1,192	1,485
PM Peak hour	957	405	1,362
Daily	5,507	5,674	11,181

7.7.60 Based on the aforementioned, it is forecasted that the residential element of the development would generate 1,485 AM Peak and 1,362 PM Peak two-way trips. This equates to 8.25 trips per minute in the AM Peak and 7.56 trips per minute in the PM Peak. Turning to the overall modal split of the in person trips generated by the proposed development, the TA utilises 2011 Census data. A summary of the Census data is set out as follows:

- Vehicle driver – 65.8%
- Vehicle passenger – 6.3%
- Public Transport – 11.3%
- Pedestrian – 13%
- Cycle – 3.6%.

7.7.61 It is important to note that Vehicle Driver also includes taxis and motorcycles as well as driving a van or car. Similarly, public transport includes underground, train and bus. This data has been utilised to feed into the model in order to determine a base line for the estimated method of travel to work. The total forecast residential modal trip generation based on 1,600 units for the AM Peak is detailed below:-

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
Vehicle driver	192	784	976
Vehicle passenger	19	75	94
Public Transport	34	134	168
Pedestrian	38	156	194
Cycle	10	43	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>1,192</b>	<b>1,485</b>

7.7.62 In terms of the total forecast for the residential trip generation of 1,600 units for the PM Peak is detailed in the table below:-

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
Vehicle driver	629	266	895
Vehicle passenger	60	26	86
Public Transport	109	46	155
Pedestrian	125	53	178
Cycle	34	14	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>1,362</b>

7.7.63 Based on the aforementioned, it is forecasted for vehicle drivers, the development would generate 976 AM Peak and 895 PM Peak two-way trips. This would equate to 5.42 trips per minute in the AM Peak and 4.97 trips per minute in the PM Peak. Turning to the employment provision as detailed in the accompanying TA, based on the TRICS database of surveyed sites to forecast 10,000 sq.m of employment floorspace, it is set out in the TA that the AM and PM Peak two-way trips generated by this development is detailed in the table below:

<b>Time period</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
AM Peak hour	207	31	238
PM Peak hour	46	203	249
Daily	958	971	1,929

7.7.64 Based on the aforementioned, it is forecasted that the residential element of the development would generate 238 AM Peak and 249 PM Peak two-way trips. This equates to 1.32 trips per minute in the AM Peak and 1.38 trips per minute in the PM Peak. Turning to the overall modal split of the in person trips generated, these have been identified from the TRICS selected sites which yield the following:-

- Vehicle driver – 74.3%
- Vehicle passenger – 17.7%
- Public Transport – 2.0%
- Pedestrian – 5.2%
- Cycle – 0.8%.

7.7.65 The following table provide a breakdown of the AM Peak hour modal split of person trips for the proposed employment development:-

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
Vehicle driver	176	24	200
Vehicle passenger	11	1	12
Public Transport	6	1	7

Pedestrian	10	5	15
Cycle	4	0	4
Total	207	31	238

7.7.66 The following table provide a breakdown of the PM Peak hour modal split of person trips for the proposed employment development

Mode	Arrivals	Departures	Total
Vehicle driver	31	154	185
Vehicle passenger	8	27	35
Public Transport	2	8	10
Pedestrian	6	9	15
Cycle	0	5	5
Total	46	203	249

7.7.67 Based on the aforementioned, it is forecasted for vehicle drivers, the employment aspect of the development would generate 200 AM Peak and 185 PM Peak two-way trips. This would equate to 1.11 trips per minute in the AM Peak and 1.02 trips per minute in the PM Peak.

7.7.68 The assessment submitted as part of the TA report looks at the 3 form entry (FE) primary school. The number of pupils is based on a typical 1FE of 30 places per year group. Primary Schools typically have seven year groups for reception to year six. A typical 3FE primary school has 630 pupils. The development is estimated to generate 575 primary school age pupils with the residual 55 pupils would be external trips. The database has identified the following AM Peak and PM Peak level of trips generated by this development as detailed in the table below:-

Time period	Arrivals	Departures	Total
AM Peak hour	63	17	80
PM Peak hour	2	4	6
Daily	121	117	238

7.7.69 Taking the above data into consideration, there would be 80 two-way trips in the AM Peak and 6 trips in the PM Peak. This equates to 13.3 trips per minutes in the AM Peak but approximately 1 trip every 10 minutes in the PM Peak. The modal splits of person generated trips as detailed in the TA are as follows:-

- Vehicle driver – 41.2%
- Vehicle passenger – 6.3%
- Public Transport – 3.6%
- Pedestrian – 47.3%
- Cycle –1.6%.

7.7.70 In relation to the residual trips to the primary school, the TA identified that in the AM Peak, there are 26 outbound trips and 7 inbound trips with a total of 33 trips in the AM Peak. In the PM Peak, there would 1 outbound trip and 2 inbound trips, with a total of 3 trips. Turning to the residual non-residential uses and as detailed in the application submission, the development would also comprise a residential care home, local centre and community buildings. The TA details that in trip generation terms, any community and local neighbourhood centre facilities within the site would not generate any residual external trips onto the surrounding highway network.

7.7.71 Taking into consideration the data provided, a summary of the total combined trips which are generated by the proposed uses are detailed in the tables below. The table below details the total combined trips generated by the various uses within the site (Residential, employment and education), including both the AM and PM Peak hours.

<b>Time period</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
AM Peak hour	563	1,240	1,803
PM Peak hour	1,005	612	1,617
Daily	6,586	6,762	13,348

7.7.72 It can therefore be identified that at the AM Peak, there would be a total of 1,803 two-way trips and 1,617 two-way trips in the PM Peak. This would equate to a total of 10.01 trips per minute in the AM Peak and 8.98 trips per minute in the PM Peak. In terms of persons movement of travel in the AM Peak as a combined total for all uses, this is set out in detail in the table below.

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
Vehicle driver	394	815	1,209
Vehicle passenger	34	77	111
Public Transport	42	136	178
Pedestrian	78	169	247
Cycle	15	43	58
Total	563	1,240	1,803

7.7.73 In terms of persons movement of travel in the PM Peak as a combined total for all uses, this is set out in detail in the table below.

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Total</b>
Vehicle driver	661	422	1,083
Vehicle passenger	68	53	121
Public Transport	111	54	165
Pedestrian	132	64	196
Cycle	34	19	53
Total	1,006	612	1,618

7.7.74 Taking the aforementioned data into consideration, there would be for vehicle driver as the predominant mode of transport, 1,209 two-way trips in the AM Peak and 1,083 in PM Peak. This equates to a total 6.71 trips per minutes in the AM Peak and 6.01 trips per minute in the PM Peak.

#### Highway Impacts

7.7.75 Looking now at trip distributions and utilising the COMET model, it can be concluded that the proposed development would result in both the AM and PM peaks an increase in traffic levels within Stevenage Town Centre and wider areas. The models show that there is a small increase in delays on the road network. To further understand the impact of the scheme on the wider highway network, the TA details further modelling of a number of key junctions using PICADY (**P**riority **I**ntersection **C**Apacity and **D**ela**Y**) (Software package for predicting capacities, queue lengths and delays) software. In addition, ARCADY (Generally used for roundabouts) and LINSEG (traffic light controlled junctions) models have also been used for various junctions. The junctions modelled are as follows:-

- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Bessemer Drive;
- Redcar Drive / Clovelly Way / Rutherford Close;
- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Clovelly Way / Bridge Road West;
- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / A1155 Fairlands Way;
- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / A1070 Six Hills Way;
- A1(M) Junction 7;

- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Martins Way / A602 Hitchin Road; and
- A1(M) Junction 8.

7.7.76 The modelling generally shows most of the junctions would function at an acceptable level, but with additional queuing lengths and limited delays. However, in regards some of the junctions during the AM and PM Peak periods, the capacity of these junctions deteriorate and require mitigation measures to be put in place, especially for Bessemer Drive and Redcar Drive / Meadway as the main access routes into the site. In addition, there would be a pronounced impact on Bridge Road West. The mitigation measures are considered in further detail in the following sections of this report below.

#### Accident and Collision data

7.7.77 Personal Injury Accident (PIA) data as detailed in the TA was obtained from HCC Highways for the most recent 5 year period (1 January 2015 – 31 December 2019). The TA also sets out the predicted accident rates on the local highway network and slip roads onto the trunk road i.e. Junctions 7 and 8 of the A1(M).

#### Mitigation measures

7.7.78 In order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development and in accordance with HCC's Local Transport Plan 4, the following measures are recommended to be put in place:-

- Measures to reduce the need to travel include the provision of super-fast broadband provision and a range of local services and facilities within a walkable and cyclable neighbourhood;
- Travel Plan measures and incentives including community website, travel information packs, car sharing promotional strategies;
- The development of a comprehensive network of on-site 'Greenway Active Travel Corridors' (Traffic-free segregated pedestrian and cycle routes) and recreational footpaths connecting key land uses on and off-site - Greenway Active Travel Corridors will be segregated from traffic and have restricted byway status permitting access for horse riders as well as pedestrians and cyclists;
- A Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (phased upgrades to existing network on and around the site);
- Cycle parking provision in accordance with the Council's adopted Parking SPD (2020) for all uses within the site;
- The inclusion of a Mobility 'Hub' within the local centre that will incorporate short-term cycle parking provision, standard and cargo bike hire, potentially e-scooter hire, car/van club hire electric vehicles, ultra-fast charging points, interactive travel mapping and bike repair / retail opportunities;
- Additional 'Hubs' replicated within the pavilion building adjacent to the cricket and / or football pitches and at the Meadway A1(M) underpass with the addition of last mile delivery facilities and refreshment kiosk (the latter also providing flexible community workspace)
- A phased implementation of a circular service between the Site and the new Stevenage Town Centre bus station operating a 20-minute frequency all day, every day.
- Inclusion of electric vehicle charging in accordance with SPD standards for all land uses within the Site
- Speed attenuation measures on the internal street network.

7.7.79 In addition to the above, there would be a suite off-site works which are proposed which include the following:

- Norton Green / Six Hills Way Pedestrian and Cycle improvements;
- Bessemer Drive Pedestrian / Cycle improvements;

- Meadway Pedestrian / Cycle improvements;
- Additional wayfinding on the wider Stevenage Footway / Cycleway network;
- Bessemer Drive access enabling works;
- Meadway / Redcar Drive access enabling works;
- Bessemer Drive / A1072 Gunnels Wood Road proposed signalisation;
- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Clovelly Way / Bridge Road West capacity improvements and bus priority measures;
- Redcar Drive / Clovelly Way / Rutherford Close junction improvement works;
- A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Six Hills Way junction improvement works.

7.7.80 Through the mitigation measures detailed in the TA and ES, it can be demonstrated that the highway links and junctions would either continue to operate within capacity with queues and delays that can be accommodated within the available road space. In addition, the signalisation of the junction at Bessemer Drive and Gunnels Wood Road would provide an improved and safer crossing facility for pedestrians and cyclists, address the effects of queues and delays on Bessemer Drive without creating residual impact on the operation of the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road.

7.7.81 In terms of the mitigation measures for the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Clovelly Way / Bridge Road West capacity improvements and bus priority measures include the widening of the Clovelly Way approach to the roundabout to provide an extended 2-lane flared approach. In addition, the proposal includes the widening of the Clovelly Way exit from the junction and the reallocation of road space on the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road to provide a dedicated bus route.

7.7.82 The mitigation measures to the Redcar Drive / Clovelly Way / Rutherford Close roundabout include the widening of the Clovelly Way (east) approach to provide an extended s-lane flared approach. The embedded mitigation would address the effects of queues and delays on Clovelly Way without creating residual effects, but also provide improvements for public transport, with an improved width and exit taper to the existing bus lay-by, benefitting existing local bus routes as well as the new route that will serve the site.

7.7.83 The proposed measures to the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Six Hills Way roundabout to include the reallocation of road space and alterations to road markings to create two flared ahead lanes (the offside lanes also accommodating right turning traffic) on both the Six Hills Way (east) and Six Hills Way (west) approaches as well as to provide two marked lanes on the circulatory carriageway.

7.7.84 In relation to pedestrians and cyclists, there would be significant enhancements to ensure there are safe and accessible routes to and from the development site to the existing and well-established pedestrian and cycle network of the town. The development would also seek to deliver attractive, well-connected and permeable routes (including a sustainable Greenway) which run into and across the development site as well create a safe environment for users. The scheme also provides super-fast broadband coupled with visitor parking to allow people to work from home as well as facilitate home deliveries.

7.7.85 The travel plan provided also seeks to provide a number of measures which would encourage future residents to use alternative forms of transport other than the private car. The neighbourhoods would also be walkable with interconnected streets with peoples' day to day needs being provided within walking distance. There would also be the enhancements and upgrades to the proposed PROW across the site in order to further enhance connectivity across the site through to the wider countryside.

7.7.86 As part of the detailed design and Section 38/278 process for the Bessemer Drive enabling works, the Meadway / Redcar Drive enabling works and the Main Street and secondary streets to be offered up for adoption, the necessary Traffic Orders for

Restricted Parking Zones (RPZs), traffic signs and road markings would be in place to enforce parking controls; with the making and implementation of Orders timed to take effect prior to first occupation of the relevant phases of development.

- 7.7.87 With regards to the potential impact of the development on the A1(M) motorway, through consultation with Highways England, until very recently, Highways England have not raised any concerns with respect to the proposed development. However, their position has changed very recently with respect to the delivery of the Smart Motorway. It is important to note that the highway modelling work which forms part of the evidence of the adopted Local Plan (2019) in relation to delivery of residential and employment growth identified in the Local Plan, is underpinned through the delivery of a Smart Motorway which demonstrated that the A1(M) had sufficient capacity to support the towns growth.
- 7.7.88 Highways England have informed the Council that the Smart Motorway is paused until 5 years' worth of safety data which can prove an all lane running is safe. As such, there is a significant risk that the Smart Motorway may not be delivered; indeed it is no longer a committed scheme. As a consequence, Highways England have requested that new modelling is undertaken by the applicants Transport Consultant with no reference given to the Smart Motorway Programme (SMP) in terms of capacity. Therefore, until this additional modelling works has been undertaken and consideration that suitable mitigation measures can be put in place, Highways England have placed a holding objection to the application.
- 7.7.89 Given the above, the applicants Transport Consultant (Milestone Transport Planning) has issued a Technical Note (December 2021) to address all of the points. This Technical Note has been issued to Highways England in order to try and address the concerns raised. The note does demonstrate that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the overall operation of the A1(M). However, this note does sets out that the developers will work with Highways England to draw up a mitigation strategy, specifically for Junction 8 roundabout. As such, at the time of drafting this report, Highways England were yet to respond to the Technical Note which has been issued.
- 7.7.90 As such, if revised comments from Highways England are received between the publication of this report and the Planning and Development Committee, an update will be provided at the Committee accordingly. Notwithstanding, in the event Highways England do not respond on the Technical Note before the Planning and Development Committee is held, it is recommended that delegated powers be given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chairman of Planning Committee, to allow outstanding issues identified by Highways England to be resolved and where required, to impose appropriately worded conditions and / or obligations within the S.106 agreement in order to mitigate any impact on the A1(M). Furthermore, as it is a holding objection, no decision will be issued by the Council as Local Planning Authority until this has been formally lifted by Highways England. However, if the concerns raised by Highways England cannot resolved and suitable mitigations measures cannot be put in place as advised by any future correspondence by Highways England, then this application will be referred back to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision.
- 7.7.91 Turning specifically to the impact on the local highway network, HCC as Highways Authority has been actively involved during pre-application and post submission stages of the application process. The Highways Authority consider that the amended proposal provides good quality pedestrian and cycle links which allows for viable alternatives other than the private car. In addition and based on the Masterplan (and also the PROW improvement plan), the Highways Authority is content that there is good permeability within the site and the provision of facilities such as the commercial area, employment area and primary school will reduce the need to travel for some

residents. In addition, for those wishing to access public transport, there will be a new bus service which will run through the site. The proposed footway/cycleway links outside of the site are considered by the Highways Authority as feasible options for those wishing to walk or cycle to the town centre or railway station.

- 7.7.92 The Highways Authority also supports the concept of the Mobility Hubs which have been put forward as they are intended to promote the integrated use of sustainable modes of transport. The concept of mobility hubs is also considered by the Highways Authority to potentially enhance surveillance. As such, it is recommended by HCC Highways that through the Section 106 agreements, details as to the operation of these facilities in terms of staffing, hours of operation and how the hire schemes would work. The Highway Authority is particularly interested, for example, the Meadway entrance mobility hub that these can enhance the level of surveillance to/from the site and thereby the attractiveness of using non-car modes of travel.
- 7.7.93 In terms of trip generation, the Highways Authority has examined the figures presented in the TA and is content to accept that these represent a robust forecast of development trips. In addition, the vehicle trips have been distributed onto the adjoining local highway network using an agreed distribution methodology. Whilst approving the methodology for the modelling exercise, the Highway Authority has engaged in detailed discussions with the applicant's transport consultant on the resulting outputs from the COMET model and also via detailed technical comments on the localised junction models.
- 7.7.94 The Highway Authority notes that a number of junctions are also subject to mitigation measures which have been checked via the modelling submission. The Highway Authority has also called for a matrix estimation process to be undertaken on selected junctions where flows from the COMET model needed to undergo a balancing exercise to correct junction flows (between surveyed flows and those generated by the COMET model), where it was identified that the model was not representing actual conditions on the ground. Such measures are normal when using flows from a strategic model and may be necessary at times, subject to detailed checks of localised model performance.
- 7.7.95 To this end, as part of the checking process from the submitted March 2021 TA and the submission in November 2021 of the ES Addendum, the Highway Authority has been in contact over a number of exchanges with the applicant's transport consultant in order to refine the technical assessment work and where needed, improve the accuracy via methodological changes (including lane simulation and using a matrix estimation process where appropriate). In the review of the junction modelling exercise, the Highway Authority has exercised Engineering judgement when examining the mitigation schemes and the resulting modelling outputs.
- 7.7.96 It is noted that subject to minor changes, the mitigation proposed on the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / A1070 Six Hills Way junction is acceptable to the Highways Authority as set out within the Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. Paragraph 112 of the NPPF goes on to state five key points that applications for development should promote in order to prevent a severe impact on the local highway network. Given that the mitigation proposed for this junction is considered acceptable in safety terms, the Highway Authority is content to accept the impact of development traffic will not present a residual cumulative severe impact. The latter must also take into account the extensive package of wider mitigation works the applicant is promoting, including a package of sustainable transport measures.
- 7.7.97 The Highway Authority is content that the modelling exercise presented by the transport consultant now represents a robust assessment of the local highway network, with the proposed mitigation accepted subject to the Road Safety Audit process. Taking into account the Local Plan growth up to 2036 and the addition of the



development trips on the local highway network, it is considered that in the context of the highway mitigation schemes proposed by the applicant and the comprehensive package of sustainable transport measures, that as per paragraphs 111 and 112 of the NPPF, the residual cumulative impacts on the road network are not severe as identified by HCC Highways.

7.7.98 With regards to the proposed site access arrangements on Bessemer Drive and Meadway as detailed in the application submission, the Highways Authority is content with the proposed arrangements subject to Section 38 and Section 278 Highway Act 1980 agreements. With regards to all off-site works identified in paragraph 7.7.79, the Highways Authority has advised that all these works would also need to be secured as part of a Section 278 agreement.

7.7.99 Turning to the A1(M), National Highways (Highways England) and HCC Highways have identified road safety issues at A1(M) Junction 8, including the adjoining local highway network. At this stage, an improvements scheme has not been put forward by the applicant. However, HCC as Highways Authority is prepared to accept a planning condition which requires the submission of a Safety Scheme Study and implementation of any necessary improvement works. Following discussions with National Highways, HCC as Highways Authority has been informed that National Highways support the approach with regards to the aforementioned suggested condition.

7.7.100 In regards to Phase 1, the Highways Authority advises that in addition to the off-site works being undertaken via Section 278, the developer has offered up part of the site for adoption as part of a Section 38 agreement. These potentially include roads, footpaths, cycleways as well as the main bus route along with the works associated with the Right of Way. In terms of site layout, the Highways Authority raised no concerns with respect to the manoeuvrability of vehicles such as emergency and refuse vehicles.

7.7.101 In terms of the proposed Public Rights of Way (PROW), no objection has been raised with respect to the overall principle which has been put forward as part of the application submission. However, HCC Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Team advise that it is important to properly define the type of the routes, as this has implications for access through the application site. As such, the Highways Authority recommends the applicants continue to engage with HCC's CROW team to secure the correct legal definition for the proposed routes as well as agree the required specification. Notwithstanding, the Highways Authority advises that with the imposition of appropriately worded conditions, they are content to accept the works proposed within Phase 1, subject to the appropriate legal processes being undertaken. It is important to note that the PROW across the development site as well as connections to existing PROW have been designed as multi-user routes, including routes for horse riders and horse carriage drivers as required by HCC Countryside Rights of Way (CROW).

7.7.102 With regards to phasing, how the development is phased and what infrastructure needs to be in place and at what time is of critical importance to the Highway Authority. The delivery of infrastructure, both on and off site is of key importance to establishing travel patterns and ensuring that residents can make full use of links to and from Stevenage from first occupation. Whilst only the southern end of the site will be developed for Phase 1, further information will be needed on how the bus service will operate. Information on how links towards the Meadway can be facilitated on a temporary basis prior to the full build out being achieved also needs clarification.

7.7.103 In terms of the triggers for the implementation of the off-site mitigation works, the following are anticipated to be as follows:

- i. Norton Green / Six Hills Way Proposed Footway / Cycleway Improvements – prior to occupation of Phase 1;
- ii. Bessemer Drive Proposed Footway / Cycleway Improvements – prior to occupation of Phase 1;
- iii. Meadway Proposed Footway / Cycleway Improvements – prior to occupation of Phase 3 (c. 811 residential units);
- iv. Additional wayfinding on wider Stevenage cycle / footway network – prior to occupation of Phase 2 (c. 390 residential units);
- v. Bessemer Drive access enabling works – prior to occupation of Phase 1
- vi. Meadway / Redcar Drive access enabling works incl. new A1(M) underpass – prior to occupation of Phase 2 (c. 390 residential units);
- vii. Bessemer Drive / A1072 Gunnels Wood Road signalisation – prior to occupation of Phase 1;
- viii. A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Clovelly Way / Bridge Road West – prior to occupation of Phase 3 (c. 811 residential units);
- ix. Redcar Drive / Clovelly Way / Rutherford Close – prior to occupation of Phase 2 (c. 390 residential units); and
- x. A1072 Gunnels Wood Road / Six Hills Way – prior to occupation of Phase 3 (c. 811 residential units)

7.7.104 The Highways Authority has confirmed that they are in agreement with the schedule of works detailed above. It is noted that from Figure ESA 4 – Revised Phasing Plan illustrates that for Phase 1, the construction of the main spine road through the development and the through connection to Bessemer Drive is shown. However, subject to clarification, for Phase 1 the link through to Redcar Drive / Clovelly Way / Rutherford Close is assumed for construction purposes.

7.7.105 An important point which requires clarification so that the Highway Authority may understand is how much of the spine road will be constructed in the first phase. The Highway Authority will wish to understand how the bus may serve Phase 1 and turn within the site (and moving forward into future phases). Similarly, it appears that for Phase 1 (390 homes) that the applicant will rely on one access point, with all footway/cycle connections to be made via Bessemer Drive.

7.7.106 It is further assumed that residents (and other users) may still wish to use the Meadway during the first phase of the development and how this may be facilitated (including during future construction phases), is one that requires clarification. This would also apply to Phase 2 before the full Meadway works are completed. The treatment of the Rights of Way within the site is also one that needs to be clarified through a revised Phasing Plan, including through all development phases, with details of planned closures and/or protection of the Right of Way routes through protective fencing/additional signage etc.

7.7.107 Turning to public transport, the Highways Authority advise that Phase 1 can be run with one bus at a 20-minute frequency with an 'in/turnaround/out' working. To be agreed subject to detailed discussions is a minor drop in frequency to 30 minutes (evenings/Sundays) according to likely demand. It is noted that a one bus operation over seven days a week is c.£175k p.a.

7.7.108 Phases 2 and 3 will necessitate an additional bus to maintain a 20-minute frequency. The Highway Authority would expect this to work in a one-way loop (clockwise from Bessemer Drive), and HCC would expect the buses to serve the main/spine road of the development. For Phase 1, the Highway Authority notes that the applicant should provide clarification as to how this will work in practice with respect to turnaround within the site, and also provide clarification as to what point will be the full clockwise loop using the spine road be available.

- 7.7.109 In terms of the provision of a Construction Traffic Management Plan, the Highways Authority advises this needs to be in place before each subsequent phase of development is commenced. It has been agreed that this can be secured by way of condition. In terms of the Travel Plan, the Highways Authority has advised that the overarching Framework Travel Plan is acceptable. However, they advise that the plan should be updated prior to first occupation to ensure that the specifics of the phasing of the development can be incorporated and all relevant transport information can be updated accordingly. This can be secured, as advised by the Highways Authority, by way of condition.
- 7.7.110 In terms of the residential development, this will require a Full Travel Plan and £6,000 evaluation and support fee which will need to be secured as part of the Section 106 agreement. The Travel plan will need to set out details to promote sustainable transport measures, an appointed travel plan co-ordinator and an appropriate monitoring programme. In support of the travel, there would be relevant Sustainable Transport Travel Vouchers (see section 7.3 for further details).
- 7.7.111 Travel plans that are created for schools are for nursery, primary, middle, secondary and independent schools. The primary school will require its own School Travel Plan. School Travel Plans are subject to a separate charging schedule. This attracts an evaluation and support fee of £1,500 PA for 7 years for each school (primary and secondary) works out at £10,500 per school. The Full School Travel Plan should provide an analysis of transport conditions at the proposed site and how pupils are expected to travel. This should include maps of catchment area and expected home locations of pupils and maps of the main access routes from these areas. It should set targets, measures and objectives for the new site (to be included in S106 conditions). Furthermore, it should identify measures to be taken during the build and promotion of the new school to mitigate car use, facilitate sustainable travel, address road safety concerns and progress the targets set in the travel plan.
- 7.7.112 The detail provided in the draft Travel Plan for the school in only high level information, however, this is acceptable to the Highways Authority. However, they recommend the inclusion of a condition requiring an updated Travel Plan for the school prior to occupation. With regards to the other uses, again the Highways Authority each relevant use will require an updated Travel Plan prior to occupation and again, will be secured via conditions.
- 7.7.113 In regards to mitigating the impact of the development on the highway network, these are provided in detail in paragraphs 7.3.30 to 7.3.37. With these mitigation measures in place, with the detailed measures delivered in a timely manner combined with the use of appropriately worded conditions, the Highways Authority consider the development would be acceptable and as such, is content with the principle of the development and the wider access strategy.
- 7.7.114 Given the aforementioned assessment, providing the suggested conditions are attached to any permission issued and the relevant obligations are secured, then it is not considered the proposed development would prejudice the safety and operation of the highway network. Moreover, the scheme seeks to deliver pedestrian and cycle connectivity across the development site which would connect to the existing infrastructure within the urban area of Stevenage. In addition, the scheme would also deliver a new bus loop which would run through the site and connect the site to Stevenage Town Centre, bus interchange and railway station. As such, the scheme builds on the objectives of Hertfordshire County Council's LTP4, the policies contained in the adopted Local Plan (2019), the NPPF (2021), PPG along with the Council's Mobility and Cycle Strategies.
- 7.7.115 However, it is appreciated there is a conflict in policy with respect to the National Highways with respect to Junction 8 as set out in the recent comments by Highways

England. However, discussions have been taking place to overcome these concerns and it is noted the Highways Authority who have engaged with the National Highways to secure an appropriately worded condition. This condition should help to alleviate the concerns which have been raised. However, any updated comments from National Highways will be reported at the Planning and Development Committee if such comments are received in advance. In the even these comments are not received, then a post committee process is set out in paragraph 7.7.90 of this report.

## **7.8 Parking Provision**

- 7.8.1 Policy IT5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the parking standards set out in the plan.

### Residential parking provision

- 7.8.2 The Council's Car Parking Standards SPD (2020) sets out the maximum amount of off-street parking for residential developments based on the number of bedrooms. It also sets out the requirements for non-residential developments based on floorspace. The proposed development in Phase 1 would comprise the following accommodation schedule:-

- 19 no. 1 bedroom flats;
- 73 no. 2 bedroom flats;
- 3 no. 1 bed house;
- 52 no. 2 bed house;
- 155 no. 3 bed house;
- 84 no. 4 + bed house;
- 4 no. 4 bed house self-build plots.

- 7.8.3 Taking into consideration of the above, there would be a requirement to provide 755 off-street parking spaces. In relation to visitor parking, the Parking SD sets out a requirement of 0.25 spaces per dwelling. Where parking is to be allocated, which is the case for the majority of the parking being provided in this development, these visitor spaces will be in addition to the overall level of parking required to serve the development. Taking this requirement into consideration, the proposed development within Phase 1 would require 98 spaces. In total, there would be a requirement to provide 853 off-street spaces. Given the site is not located within a residential accessibility zone; the maximum level of off-street parking would be required to serve this development.

- 7.8.4 With respect to disabled parking, where communal parking is proposed, a minimum of 5% of the total number of spaces should be designated for use by disabled people. This is in accordance with the guidance set out in Manual for Streets. The parking for the proposed development within Phase 1 would be broadly in line with the Council's adopted parking standards.

- 7.8.5 With regards to the provision of garages, the Council's Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020), these would only be counted as parking spaces where they met the minimum requirements of 6m by 3m. This requirement is in line with Manual for Streets and Roads in Hertfordshire Guidance as it would be a sufficient size to park a car as well as for storage purposes. In addition, for the purposes of cycle parking, they are also classed as a secure area to store bicycles.

- 7.8.6 Turning specifically to cycle parking, the Parking SPD sets out the following requirements for long term parking:-

- 1 space per 1 bedroom unit;
- 2 spaces per 2 bedroom unit; and

- 3 spaces per 3 and 4+ bedroom units.

There is also a requirement to provide 1 space per 40 units in relation to short term parking. Based on the overall mix of housing being provided within Phase 1, there would be a requirement to provide 995 secure long-term cycle parking spaces. In addition, there is also a requirement to provide 10 short-term cycle parking spaces across Phase 1.

7.8.7 Following an assessment of the accompanying plans supporting this application, it would deliver a policy compliant level of vehicle parking within Phase 1 of the development proposal. In addition, where garages are to be provided within this development, they accord with the relevant standards set out in the Parking SPD (2020). Furthermore, the development which comprises a mix of garages, secure cycle parking areas within flatted blocks, secure bike stores within rear garden area and bicycle stands which are pepper potted across Phase 1, would ensure there would be sufficient secure and short-term cycle parking areas to serve the development in accordance with the Council's standards.

7.8.8 Turning now to Electric Vehicle (EV) charging, the Council's adopted Parking SPD (2021) states that the Council would like new developments to abide by the following requirements:

- All new car parking should be designed to fulfil a Passive Electrical Vehicle Charging Point standard. This will mean that the underlying infrastructure is provided for connection to the electricity network but it will need to be activated through the installation of a charge point to be used in the future as technologies evolve and uptake increases.
- The blend of access to charging points provided within new developments (i.e. public, restricted access, open access, shared) should be determined having regard to a travel plan.
- A minimum of 20% of new parking on a site should have access to an active EV charging point.
- A flexible approach to the requirement for speed of charging will be taken due to the pace of change of this technology. Ultra-fast charging points will become expected at short term, non-residential parking spaces as technology improves to make the use of electric vehicles more efficient.

7.8.9 The detailed proposal for phase 1 identifies that all of the dwellinghouses with private driveways and garages would have an active EV charging point. In addition, the communal parking areas for the flatted areas of the scheme would also comprise EV charging facilities. Furthermore, the scheme would also incorporate the underlying infrastructure to allow for additional parking spaces in the future, such as those on-street, could allow for the provision of EV charging connection points to be installed. Therefore, the proposal would deliver a policy compliant level of EV charging facilities.

7.8.10 In assessing car parking provision associated with the outline aspect of the development as detailed in the masterplan, as it is in outline form is not possible at this stage to determine the number of parking spaces which would be required. The parking requirement will be calculated based on the number of bedrooms per dwelling (including the care home) and currently the precise mix of dwellings and the detailed layout of the outline aspect of the scheme is not yet known. As such, car parking provision for the outline elements of the scheme will be assessed at the reserved matters stage in accordance with the Council's adopted car parking standards at the time.

7.8.11 In summary, subject to conditions to secure the delivery of the policy compliant level of parking provision (including disabled parking, cycle parking and EV charging facilities),

the overall parking strategy for the proposed development in phase 1 is deemed to be acceptable. In terms of the later phases of development, these would be assessed in more detail as part of any future reserved matters application which are submitted to the Council for its decision.

## **7.9 Impact on the Environment**

### Land contamination

- 7.9.1 Policy FP5 of the Local Plan (2019) specifies that planning permission will be granted for development on brownfield sites if an appropriate Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) is submitted which demonstrates that any necessary remediation and subsequent development poses no risk to the population, environment and ground water bodies.
- 7.9.2 The application site is greenfield land which is utilised for agricultural purposes, however, a former landfill site is present in the south-eastern corner which is raised approximately 1.5m to 10m above ground level. Given this, the applicant submitted a Preliminary Geo-Environmental Risk Assessment and Ground Investigation Report with details set out in the Environmental Statement. The report sets out the level of contamination exceeds residential criteria in the central, eastern and northern parts of the site for certain PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons).
- 7.9.3 The concentrations identified do not exceed criteria whereby the material is suitable to be retained below buildings, hardstanding or clean cover. Where the hotspot of contaminant has been identified, the report recommends further investigations of this area and that the material be excavated and removed from site. Elevated levels of zinc, PAHs and petroleum hydrocarbons have been recorded in ground water samples across the site and may pose a risk to controlled waters. The report suggests a detailed risk assessment is undertaken and remediation works would be required.
- 7.9.4 Given the above, the report recommends that a Remediation Strategy is recommended to ensure appropriate measures are adopted to control potential risks due to contamination. In addition, the report recommends that foundations would be advanced by piles to the underlying suitable strata. Where applicable, a proprietary compressible material should be incorporated into the foundation design to protect against heave and shrinkage. In addition, Ground Gas protection measures are likely to be required. Furthermore, de-watering maybe required during excavations due to the presence of groundwater in parts of the site.
- 7.9.5 Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Section, they consider the findings of the report to be acceptable. However, if permission were to be granted, it is recommended conditions are imposed relating to remediation, potentially unidentified ground contamination to remediated against as well as foundation design details. This would ensure that the contaminants do not pose a risk to human health

### Groundwater

7.9.6 The application site is located upon a principal and secondary aquifers and within groundwater source protection zones SPZ2 and 3 which are designated for the protection of public water. It is highly vulnerable to pollution as contaminants that enter groundwater at the site may migrate to the public water supply. The majority of the site is greenfield land and in agricultural use. However, a part of the site comprises a former landfill. Given this, the Environment Agency recommends that in order to protect groundwater quality from further deterioration, the following needs to be adhered too:

- Remediation Strategy for the contaminated sections of the site;
- If contamination not previously identified is found to be present during construction, the applicant will be required to submit a further remediation strategy;
- Submission of a detailed scheme for surface water disposal, including any details of any infiltration based system; and
- Piling/Boreholes/foundation designs.

7.9.7 It is recommended that the above requirements, as well as those suggested to deal with general contamination, can be secured by conditions if the Council was minded to grant planning permission. These conditions will ensure that groundwater is not detrimentally affected by contaminants which have been identified on-site.

#### Air quality and air pollution

7.9.8 Policy FP7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that all development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Looking at air quality and air pollution specifically, the development is not located within or in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). In terms of the impact of the development on air quality, the air quality assessment undertaken by the applicant's consultant focuses on both the demolition/construction phase and operational phase of the development. Dealing with the construction phase, it is noted that there would be activities which will affect local air quality. These include dust emissions and exhaust emissions from plant, machinery and construction traffic.

7.9.9 In order to mitigate the construction phase, the applicant would look to develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan that includes community engagement. They would also look to implement a Dust Management Plan (DMP) which would form part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will also include the recording of any complaints and to identify causes in order to take action. They would also monitor the site daily through visual inspections which will also include receptors outside of the respective construction sites. There would also be regular inspections to ensure compliance with the DMP along with planning the site layout in order to locate dust generating activities as far as possible from nearby receptors. There would also be the use of solid screens around dusty activities and stockpiles along with keeping scaffolding and barriers clean.

7.9.10 There would also be a requirement to remove all dusty materials from the site as soon as possible along with the introduction of speed restrictions. In addition, there would be a requirement for vehicles to switch off engines when stationary, avoid the use of generators where possible, and produce a logistics and sustainable travel plan in order to reduce the number of construction vehicles on the road. They would also put in place measures relating to cutting, sawing and grinding to reduce dust emissions along with the use of enclosed chutes, conveyors and skips and use of suitable dust suppression measures on site. There would also be a number of other measures implemented during the demolition and construction phases of development.

7.9.11 Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Section, they do not raise any concerns with the proposed mitigation measures to be put in place during construction. However, a condition would be imposed requiring the submission of a

CEMP to ensure the overall measures taking place during construction do reduce any impact in terms of air quality on the local environment. With regards to the operational aspect of the development, the air quality modelling undertaken by the applicant demonstrates that air quality would meet the annual and hourly NO<sub>2</sub> objectives throughout the proposed development and at adjacent off-site receptors. The modelling has indicated that the emissions from the operational traffic would give a very limited rise in NO<sub>2</sub> emissions which in accordance with IAQM/EPUK guidance is identified as having a negligible impact at all receptors in the area. As such, the air quality objective across the masterplan and the need for additional mitigation has not been identified as being required. The Council's Environmental Health Section has confirmed that the operational aspect of the development would not have a detrimental impact in terms of air quality.

#### External lighting

7.9.12 In terms of light pollution, Policy FP7: Pollution of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires all development proposal should minimise, where possible, reduce....light...pollution. Applications for development where pollution is suspected must contain sufficient information for the application to make a full assessment on impacts. Planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on:

- a. the natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area which includes light pollution;
- b. health and safety of the public; and
- c. The compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.

7.9.13 The application is accompanied by an External Lighting Strategy prepared by MEC (Report reference: 25502-04-ELIA-01 Rev A, dated November 2021). The lighting strategy covers the following:

- Lighting classes and design standards;
- Trees and landscape;
- Ecology and surrounding properties;
- Underpass entrance along Bessemer Drive and Meadway;
- Mitigation included within the designs.

7.9.14 The lighting specification has also been designed to meet Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Lighting standards as the majority of the roads, cycle tracks and footpaths are being offered up for adoption. The lighting strategy for this development has been designed to co-ordinate with the hard and soft landscaping strategy for this development, specifically foliage clearance from the trees so they do not interact or adversely shade the roadways for example. The site would also comprise large areas of green space and around the boundaries of the site, especially as these boundaries are dark. As such, lighting columns have been positioned in correspondence with the applicant's ecologists to ensure these areas are not significantly affected by illumination from the columns.

7.9.15 In terms of lighting specification, the columns in the sensitive areas would be no more than 4m in height with a sensitive light illumination to ensure it reduces the impact on light sensitive species such as bats. With the wider development in terms of residential streets, the lights have been carefully positioned so they would not cause a nuisance to future residents of the development.

7.9.16 Turning specifically to the underpass entrances along Bessemer Drive and Meadway, The existing Meadway underpass would be converted to a cycle path and footpath. The Bessemer Drive underpass would comprise both the vehicular access to Phase 1 as well as the start of the Greenway (Cycle and Pedestrian route). A new underpass



would also be constructed for vehicles only from Meadway with the lighting to this underpass designed and installed to the HCC Highway and Highways England specifications.

7.9.17 Given these underpasses would form the main vehicle, cycle and pedestrian access points into the development, they need to be well lit in order to provide a safe environment for drivers as well as pedestrians and cyclists. However, Highways England who maintain the underpasses have advised that no lighting, material or structures can be fixed to the ceiling or the walls of the underpasses and no lighting installations proposed can impact or hinder any inspections/maintenance work required on the underpasses.

7.9.18 The cycleway/footpaths would be offered up for adoption to HCC along with the carriageway so lighting would need to accord with HCC's adoptable standards. However, HCC have advised that they would only adopt column mounted lighting, therefore, any lighting installed with the underpasses such as LED up-lighters would have to be adopted by Stevenage Borough Council.

7.9.19 Focussing on the Bessemer Drive access, the proposal comprises the proposed installation of column lighting on either side of the entrance to the tunnel at a low height as to not cause glare nuisance to drivers. The light has therefore, been designed to evenly spread the light through the underpass and avoids light columns being installed within the underpass. In addition, this would mitigate any impact in terms of the route for cyclists and pedestrians is not compromised. The proposal also seeks the use of uplighters on the cycle/pedestrian route, but the details provided are indicative.

7.9.20 The Meadway pedestrian/cyclist underpass, as set out in the indicative plans, through the provision of uplighters along the edge of the underpass located in a way which does not prevent Highways England from maintaining and inspecting the tunnel. However, as the lighting strategy is indicative for Meadway and Bessemer Drive, the final detailed design of the underpass lighting still needs to be agreed by Stevenage Borough Council's Engineering Department who have been involved with discussion in terms of adopting the underpass lighting. The final design of the lighting will also need to be agreed by HCC Highways and Highways England. Therefore, it is recommended a condition is imposed requiring full details of the underpass lighting be submitted to the Council for its approval.

7.9.21 In addition to the above, in order to secure the provision of the underpass lighting before any of the residential aspects of the development are occupied within any given phase, as well a financial contribution towards the ongoing maintenance of the lights by Stevenage Borough Council, these aspects will be secured as part of a Section 106 agreement which the developer has agreed to enter into. At this time, the financial contribution is not known as the lighting specification is yet to be agreed, therefore, it is recommended that delegated powers are given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulatory in consultation with the Chair to negotiate and secure the financial obligation for the underpass lighting. This is to ensure that the light specification is to the highest of standards, creates a self and welcoming environment, and, can be maintained accordingly.

7.9.22 In terms of the lighting strategy which has been put forward as part of this application, no objections have been raised by HCC as Highways Authority, Highways England, Environmental Health or Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

## **7.10 Development and flood risk**

7.10.1 The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 within the Environment Agency's flood risk map. Flood Zone 1 is defined as land having less than 1 in 100 annual probability of flooding. Therefore, all developments are generally directed to Flood Zone 1. In

terms of surface water flooding, the risk of surface water flooding has been identified as being very low. Where there are pockets of low to high risk from surface water flooding, these areas would be mitigated as part of the overall drainage strategy. Given the application which has been submitted to the Council is classified as a Major, in line with the Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the applicant has submitted a Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment. This is assessed in further detail below.

- 7.10.2 The original drainage strategy, as detailed in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage which forms part of the ES, has been set out into three separate catchment areas along with the care home site, school site catchment and employment site (which are all in outline form). Catchment 1 has an impermeable area of 6.72 hectares (ha) will be conveyed to the proposed attenuation pond, filter trench, geo-cellular tank, swales and infiltration basins. The attenuation tank would have a storage volume of 1,140m<sup>3</sup> where the water would discharge via a pumping station into the infiltration basin. The surface water would be pumped south of the station and would connect into the gravity system prior to discharging into the infiltration basin.
- 7.10.3 With regards to catchment 2, surface water flows from the impermeable area of 10.10ha will be conveyed to the proposed infiltration basis and swales. In relation to catchment 3, the impermeable area of 9.57ha would be conveyed to swales, attenuation pons and infiltration basins. In relation to the school site, employment site and car home, surface water flows generated by a combined impermeable area of 2.82ha would be collected utilising a piped network and stored within permeable paving and geo-cellular storage.
- 7.10.4 In addition to the above, the use of water butts would be used to store run-off from roofs prior to discharge into the drainage system. Furthermore, the landscaping strategy seeks the provision rain gardens and areas of permeable paving (including private driveways and shared spaces) in order to control surface water runoff. With regards to foul water from the site, this would be via a proposed connection point into the existing foul sewer network within Bessemer Drive.
- 7.10.5 The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been assessed by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and at the time of writing this report, objection had been raised (See section 5.7 of this report). In order to overcome the LLFA's concerns, the applicant has submitted a revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and associated drainage strategy as well as a revised Design and Access Statement. At the time of writing this report, the LLFA had been re-consulted but to date, no comments have been received. The key areas where concerns were raised and have been sought to be addressed are as follows:
- Provision of consistent red line plans;
  - Provision of hydrological catchment plans;
  - Consideration given to the mapped watercourse along Kitching Lane and Shepherd Lane;
  - Cover the impacts to Langley Brook, Potters Spring Kitching Spring;
  - Detailed drainage designs for Phase 1 include off-site (Section 278) highway areas and main road which form part of Phase 1;
  - Details on how Kitching Lane and Dyes Lane will be drained;
  - Update the impermeable areas calculations to include off-site highway areas and sports/cricket pitches;
  - Routes of exceedance to be included on Phase 1 designs;
  - Avoid the use of cellular storage but providing a suitable justification where it has been proposed;
  - Additional information provided with regards to plot level surface water treatment;
  - Provided details of the noise bund which have been appended to the FRA;

- Updated surface water modelling in order to resolve identified issues raised by the LLFA;
- Forebays to be provided for all infiltration and attenuation basins;
- Provision of phasing plans for key drainage infrastructure;
- Phase 1 plans which show minimum of 2 treatment stages are achieved;
- Provision of active drainage catchment area plans;
- Remove surcharges for the 1 in 1 year rainfall event;
- Resolved half drain down times for infiltration basins and where this has not been achieved, have demonstrated the basin can accommodate 1 in 100 year event with a 40% allocation for climate change plus a 1 in 30 year storm event within 24 hours;
- Provided additional information on the landfill area and how this has been taken into consideration;
- Provided a detailed maintenance and management.

7.10.6 The drainage strategy has also been revised to take into consideration comments which have been raised by the Environment Agency as well as pick up on the amended landscaping strategy for Phase 1. The drainage strategy has also been designed to pick up on the site levels in order to direct overland surface water flows away from the dwellings following the natural topography of the land. The proposal would also incorporate a surface water drainage system which will intercept runoff which is generated by the development. This would help to minimise the risk of flooding to new buildings as well as reduce the incidence of overland flows. Further, the strategy for drainage would convey flows to swales, filter trenches, attenuation ponds and basins on-site. The surface water flows generated from the development to include the 1 in 100 year return, plus 40% climate change, which is to be stored on-site and discharged at source via infiltration.

7.10.7 Surface water which arises from the development, when it comes to discharging, consideration is given the SuDs hierarchy which has to be adhered to. The hierarchy states that the options detailed below must be adhered to in order of sustainability or evidenced otherwise before moving down to a less sustainable discharge method. For reference, the hierarchy is as follows:

- Discharge at source;
- Discharge to watercourse;
- Discharge to sewer

7.10.8 In regards to discharge at source, the geological assessments and surveys of the site identify that infiltration will be feasible and therefore, is deemed to be the preferred method to discharge the site. In addition, the soakage tests undertaken by the consultant in accordance with BRE (Building Research Establishment) Digest 365 (Soakaway design) standards were undertaken which further demonstrated that infiltration was a viable method. Along with additional soakage testing, matters such as groundwater monitoring and dissolution features will be have to be considered at the detailed design stage for the proposed drainage strategy.

7.10.9 Turning to the discharge to watercourse and discharge to sewer, in accordance with the hierarchy, there are opportunities as identified in the FRA to discharge surface waters further up the hierarchy i.e. discharge at source. In terms of sewers themselves, records from Thames Water have shown the presence of a public sewer which is for public foul water which is located in Bessemer Drive.

7.10.10 In order to calculate the drainage requirements for the site, an understanding is required of the proposed land uses. The site has been divided into 3 catchments, the northern catchment, central catchment and southern catchment. The site is 100% Greenfield and the post development land use has been measures from the proposed layout. In regards to the school, employment site and care home, the discharge rates

are based on permissible rates into the site wide drainage system which in turn will drain to infiltration areas. This set out in the table below from the submitted FRA.

**Table 3: Land Use Summary (development area)**

Catchment	Development Area	Impermeable Area + 10% Urban Creep (not highlighted areas)	Soakage/ Discharge Rate	Max Storage Requirements
Catchment 1	Residential Catchment 1 + 50% cricket pitch	6.841ha	$3.71 \times 10^{-5}$ m/s	7,593.6m <sup>3</sup>
Catchment 2	Residential Catchment 2	11.15ha	$2.08 \times 10^{-4}$ m/s	9,909.3m <sup>3</sup>
Catchment 3	Residential Catchment 3	14.932ha	$3.10 \times 10^{-6}$ m/s	23,179.6m <sup>3</sup>
Catchment 2	School (building, pitch, playground)	1.20ha	5 l/s	1,046.0m <sup>3</sup>
Catchment 1	Employment	1.27ha	5 l/s	1,123m <sup>3</sup>
Catchment 2	Care Home	0.35ha	5 l/s	229.0m <sup>3</sup>
Total (dev area)		35.73ha	-	43,080.5m <sup>3</sup>

7.10.11 The discharge rates for the school, employment land and care home have all been set to 5 litres per second (l/s) rather than applying greenfield rates of 2.5l/s per hectare. The FRA justifies this by stating that the 5l/s is deemed to be the practicable minimum to avoid blockages within the flow control systems. This is because these areas would discharge into a wider drainage system which in turn, the surface water flows will be controlled and managed across the development site. For reference, the Greenfield QBAR (peak rate of flow from a catchment for the mean annual flood) rate for each mixed use area is detailed below:-

- School – 1.1l/s;
- Employment – 4 l/s;
- Care Home – 7.6l/s.

7.10.12 The offsite S.278 areas which fall within the red line and the proposed sport pavilion (which is in outline) are all included in the FRA's land use considerations. These areas are detailed as having impermeable areas. The increased areas of permeability over the existing are as follows:-

- Bessemer Drive – 0.11ha increase;
- Meadway – 0.2ha increase;
- Sport Pavilion (Meadway) – 0.02 ha increase.

7.10.13 In relation to urban creep allowances, urban creep is the conversion of permeable areas to impermeable areas overtime e.g. extensions to existing buildings such as through permitted development. The FRA sets out that over time lifetime of a development, urban creep can increase impermeable areas by as much as 10%. Therefore, an allowance of 10% for increased in the impermeable areas due to urban creep over the lifetime of the development are included in the drainage calculations in the FRA for the residential areas. The total calculated impermeable area would be 32.92ha based on a 10% increase to proposed values. The values are set out in the table under paragraph 7.10.10.

7.10.14 In regards to climate change, this is likely to influence change on rivers and watercourses which is likely to increase the frequency of flood events and the overall volume of water that passes the site. When considering surface water runoff from the site, the increase in peak rainfall intensity will vary over the lifetime of the development.

Where a development has a lifetime beyond the 2080's, there is an expect increase of 40% (hence the climate change plus 40% allowance which is sought by the LLFA).

7.10.15 The drainage strategy for this site has been drawn up based on the data identified in the applicants FRA. The strategy itself also includes details from the framework masterplan, land use tables, soakaway results, discharge rates and storage requirements. As such, and in accordance with the National SuDs standards, the scheme would seek to discharge, as referenced earlier in the report, through infiltration.

7.10.16 The proposed residential development, as set out under paragraph 7.10.10 3 catchment areas. Each of these defined catchment areas will have its own surface water drainage system in order to attenuate flows prior to discharging into the ground. In regards to the mixed use areas, these will have their own drainage system which would discharge into the site wide network.

7.10.17 All of the storage volumes for the development, as detailed in the FRA have been using the MicroDrainage Source control module (A civil engineering tool for working on surface water and external drainage calculations). All the relevant storage values detailed in the FRA have been generated from the critical storm duration for the 1 in 100 year storm event plus a 40% uplift for climate change. In addition, a 10% urban creep allowance has also been added into the models.

7.10.18 With regards to the detailed aspects of the drainage strategy, where feasible, the attenuation basins will have base areas set below the invert level of the outfall to ensure permanent water is provided for ecology purposes. All features would have a designed in treatment flow. The National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems that deal with SuDs cover a range of sustainable approaches to surface water drainage management including:

- Source control measures including rainwater recycling and drainage;
- Filter strips and swales, which are vegetated features that hold and drain water downhill mimicking natural drainage patterns;
- Filter drains and porous pavements to allow rainwater and run-off to infiltrate into permeable material below ground and provide storage if needed; and
- Basins and ponds to hold excess water after rain and allow controlled discharge that avoids floods.

7.10.19 Each of the five SuDs considered listed above, are discussed in detail within the FRA with reference to their suitability for the proposed development. This is set out in the table below which has copied from the FRA.

**Table 7: Suitability of SuDS techniques**

	COMPONENT	SUITABILITY	REASON
Source Control	Rainwater Harvesting	Yes	Water butts will be used to store run-off from roofs prior to discharge into the drainage system. Any storage not to be included in calculations.
	Green Roofs	No	This would not be appropriate given the scope and scale of the development.
	Bio-retention Systems/ Rain Gardens	Yes	These will be used as standalone SuDS across the site but offer limited attenuation capacity. Further comments below.
Proprietary Systems	Proprietary bio-retention systems	No	More appropriate SuDS features can be accommodated within the development and are preferred.
Infiltration Devices	Permeable Paving	Yes	Permeable paving will be utilised across the site on all private roads, drives and parking areas outside the adoptable highway boundary.
	Infiltration trenches/ Soakaways	Yes	Larger infiltration basins will be the final features prior to discharge at source in the ground.
Filtration	Open Swales, Filter Strips/ Drains	Yes	Swales and Filter strips will be the main conveyance route through the site and provide connectivity and treatment.
Retention/ Detention	Detention Basin, Attenuation Pond/ Tanks	Yes	A number of attenuation basins will be used across the site to provide storage and treatment.  A single geocellular tank will provide surface water storage for a constrained area of the site.

7.10.20 The FRA sets out that there would be on plot surface water treatment across the site as a whole with rain gardens being proposed for dwellings and also within the open space and adjacent to the highways. Further details of the drainage strategy for each of the respective catchment areas are set out below.

#### Catchment 1

7.10.21 Surface water flows from an impermeable area of 8.111ha will be conveyed via a series of attenuation features. The attenuation system within this area is catering for an area of residential along with the employment area which is in outline form. The drainage features in this catchment are as follows:-

- Employment area (on plot attenuation) – storage volume of 1,123m<sup>3</sup>;
- Geo-cellular tank 1A – storage volume of 855.03m<sup>3</sup>;
- Swale 1A – storage volume of 393.70m<sup>3</sup>;
- Swale 1B - storage volume of 498.10m<sup>3</sup>;
- Attenuation basin 1A - storage volume of 181.20m<sup>3</sup>;
- Attenuation basin 1B - storage volume of 2,956m<sup>3</sup>;
- Filter Strip 1A - storage volume of 82m<sup>3</sup>;
- Filter Strip 1B – storage volume of 71.3m<sup>3</sup>;
- Infiltration Basin 1A - storage volume of 2,555m<sup>3</sup>.

7.10.22 The FRA specifies that there would be a series of attenuation ponds and swales to be provided to ensure the water flows go through the appropriate treatment trains prior to reaching the infiltration basin in the south-western corner. The employment area has an impermeable area of 1.27ha with attenuation provided in the employment site with a permissible discharge rate of 5l/s with a maximum storage of 1,123m<sup>3</sup>. This is in order to accommodate for all events up to the 1 in 100 year with a climate change allowance of 40%.

7.10.23 The Geo-cellular tank is proposed on the eastern boundary of the site and adjacent to the access from Bessemer Drive. This was a significant concern of the LLFA as they do not support the provision of underground storage tanks and all greenfield must promote the use of SuDS features. However, as set out in the FRA, at the location where storage is proposed, there are significant land level differences which make the provision of the SuDS very difficult. This is further hindered by the proposed of the proposed access road from Bessemer Drive which, due to the significant and immediate level differences, would require a cut into the embankment which would result in further differences and earth works. Bunds to control noise are also proposed in this location and the area is also within the landfill zone. As such, and due to the varying constraints, the only viable solution for attenuation purposes is the provision of the underground tank.

7.10.24 In terms of the drainage regime, SuDS have also been considered but again due to the constraints as set out above, the provision of a pond is not feasible without a significant area of land being required in order to deliver such a feature. This would likely result in a substantial level of land being removed for development purposes and would undermine the Local Plan policies for this site, especially given the access point to this part is fixed due to the position of Bessemer Drive. Furthermore, infiltration cannot be undertaken in this area due to the landfill and as such, it can be reasonably justified that the only solution is to provide the Geo-cellular tank. However, in order to maintain the principles of SuDS, the flows from the attenuation tank would not be discharged directly into the sewer, they would be pumped into the site wide drainage network and pass through an attenuation base and infiltration basin to ensure suitable treatment flows.

7.10.25 In terms of the pumping station itself, the principle of the facility appears to have been accepted by Thames Water who would look to adopt the station. This is detailed in a letter set out in the FRA. Separately, a large area of catchment 1 is located within the landfill and based on the EA advice, no infiltration features are proposed in this area and all SuDS features will be lined to prevent contamination issues. The half drain down times for infiltration 1A would not exceed 24 hours.

#### Catchment 2

7.10.26 Surface water flows from the impermeable area of 12.72ha will be conveyed via a series of attenuation features. The attenuation in this area is catering for an area of residential development, the care home and the school. Details of catchment features are as follows:

- Care Home (on plot attenuation) – storage volume of 229m<sup>3</sup>;
- School (on plot attenuation) – storage volume of 1,046.0m<sup>3</sup>;
- Swale 2A – storage volume of 17.60m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 2B – storage volume of 8.5m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 2C – storage volume of 957.50m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 2D – storage volume of 3,231.70m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 2E – storage volume of 878.30m<sup>3</sup>;
- Attenuation Basin 2A - storage volume of 207.40m<sup>3</sup>;
- Infiltration Basin 2A - storage volume of 4,608.30m<sup>3</sup>.

7.10.27 There would be a series of attenuation ponds, swales and filter trenches which would ensure all surface water flows go through the appropriate treatment train prior to reach the infiltration basin in the south eastern corner. The school, as specified in the FRA, has an impermeable area of 1.2ha which includes the playground and playing fields with attenuation provided within the school site at a controlled rated. The permissible discharge would be 5l/s with maximum storage of volume of 1,046m<sup>3</sup> which is required to accommodate for all events up to the 1 in 100 year plus climate change allowance of 40%.

7.10.28 The care home, as specified in the FRA, has an impermeable area of 0.35ha which with attenuation provided within the care home site at a controlled rate. The permissible discharge would be 5l/s with maximum storage of volume of 229.0m<sup>3</sup> which is required to accommodate for all events up to the 1 in 100 year plus climate change allowance of 40%. The half drain down times for infiltration 2A would not exceed 24 hours.

### Catchment 3

7.10.29 Surface water flows from the impermeable area of 14.932ha will be conveyed via a series of attenuation features. Details of catchment features are as follows:

- Swale 3A – storage volume of 120.5m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 3B – storage volume of 452.5m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 3C – storage volume of 35m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 3D and 3E – storage volume of 219.3m<sup>3</sup>
- Swale 3F – storage volume of 148.7m<sup>3</sup>;
- Attenuation Basin 3A - storage volume of 4375.3m<sup>3</sup>;
- Attenuation Basin 3B - storage volume of 1172.20m<sup>3</sup>;
- Attenuation Basin 3C - storage volume of 4751.80m<sup>3</sup>;
- Infiltration Basin 3A - storage volume of 9996.90m<sup>3</sup>.
- Infiltration Basin 3B - storage volume of 1907.40m<sup>3</sup>.

7.10.30 There would be a series of attenuation ponds, swales and filter trenches which would ensure all surface water flows go through the appropriate treatment train prior to reach the infiltration basin in the south eastern corner. The half drain down times for Infiltration Basins 3A and 3B exceeds 24 hours. Given this, the LLFA initially raised concerns over this drain down time but was agreed following negotiations with the LLFA that if any of the basins exceed the 24 hour drain down time, then these should be modelled to contain the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change plus 1 in 30 year event to occur in within 24 hours.

7.10.31 Infiltration Basins 3A and 3B have been modelled for both events detailed above which provided a peak water level for the pond from the two events and cumulative level of storage has therefore, been calculated in the FRA. Each of the two basins have been designed to accommodate the 100 year and 30 year events as per the recommendations of the LLFA.

### Off site (Bessemer Drive, Meadway and Pavilion Area)

7.10.32 There are a number of works which are proposed to Bessemer Drive and Meadway which form part of Phase 1 of the development. The existing pavilion along Meadway will also be replaced by a new building along with associated car park. Based on the limited increase of impermeable area, significant attenuation as set out in the FRA is not required and not feasible due to land constraints. Further, the respective highway areas will be subject to detailed design through the Section 278 of the Highways Act (1980) process. The pavilion itself would be subject to a future reserved matters application with the replacement building being delivered by the Council. Notwithstanding, the FRA details the likely requirements for each of the areas specified. This is set out in the table below taken from the FRA.



**Table 11: Off site area – proposed attenuation requirements**

Location	Impermeable area (increase)	Attenuation Requirements
Bessemer Drive	0.11ha	Accommodate filter trenches along the route to capture additional overland flows with connection to the existing highway drainage network
Meadway	0.2ha	Accommodate filter trenches along the route to capture additional overland flows with connection to the existing highway drainage network
Sports Pavilion (Meadway)	0.02ha	Permeable paving to be provided across the new car parking area which will provide sufficient storage for the additional contributing area. Drainage to outfall to existing drainage network

### Noise Bunds

7.10.33 In terms of the noise bunds, at their base, there would be the provision of filter trenches to capture overland flows. The proposed bunds themselves would be heavily planted so surface water runoff would be limited. There would no formal connection between the filter trenches and the attenuation features.

### Additional matters

7.10.34 The FRA is accompanied with a site wide phasing plan and drainage infrastructure plans as requested by the LLFA. These plans show when certain features are required to be delivered in each phase. It is important to note that Phase 1 would deliver a significant amount of the initial infrastructure for the development site. In regards to the additional waterbodies, these are proposed across the site for landscape and ecology purposes. These are not to be connected to the surface water drainage network and would be fed by overland flows from adjacent areas.

7.10.35 In terms of surface water runoff during the construction phase of development, this would need to be managed in order to not increase any Flood risk or potential for contaminants is managed. Therefore, the FRA sets out that a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be prepared and agreed by the Council which can be secured via a condition.

### Surface Water Quality

7.10.36 Surface Water Quality is governed through the SuDS Manual CIRIA document C753 which details the minimum treatment indices which is appropriate for contributing hazards for various land use classification i.e. pollution mitigation. Surface water runoff from roofs for residential dwellings is deemed to be a low pollution hazard whilst commercial areas and non-residential parking will have a medium pollution level. In order to treat very low through to medium pollution hazard levels, the proposed filter trenches, swales, permeable paving, attenuation ponds and infiltration basins would provide sufficient treatment in line with CIRIA document C753. With regards to highways, these will have at least 2 trains of treatment before discharging from the site.

### Exceedance and flow routing

7.10.37 The levels and features which will be designed within the development site would be undertaken in accordance with Best Practice in order to ensure overland flow on the site is routed safely away from the dwellings and to areas of low risk. Any surcharging and subsequent flooding of sewers on or in the vicinity of the site would be mitigated against through the detailed drainage design along with the raising threshold levels 100mm above general ground levels. As such, the risk of flooding on the site from exceedance event is deemed to be very low.

## Maintenance and Management

7.10.38 With regards to maintenance and management of SuDs systems, there would be an integrated approach as is required by the NPPF and by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The maintenance and management plan which accompanies the FRA ensures that there is a clear understanding of drainage responsibilities and that a maintenance regime is implemented for all new drainage systems for the lifetime of the development. In addition, the FRA provides a detailed maintenance schedule of the various proposed assets. This is to ensure they adequately function.

## Foul water strategy

7.10.39 The disposal of foul water from the site will be via a proposed connection point into the existing foul sewer network within Bessemer Drive. The right to connect to the sewer within the site will be through Section 106 of the Water Industries Act 1991. In terms of capacity, Thames Water has confirmed there is capacity in the network to serve the new development. In terms of foul water flows, the majority will drain into Thames Water infrastructure via a gravity sewer system. However, where flows cannot achieve a gravity connection, these would go to a pumping station located at the south-west corner of the development site. Foul water would then be pumped northwards and would connect into a gravity system.

7.10.40 For any run of sewers that are required outside of the site boundary, consent would have to be gained under Section 98 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. All foul sewers within the site will be offered up for adoption to Thames Water and this would be dealt with at the detailed design stage of delivering the foul sewer system.

7.10.41 Following consultation with Thames Water, they have identified an inability of the existing foul water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development proposal. As such, they have advised that if the Council is minded to grant planning permission, a condition should be imposed accordingly. This condition will allow for network reinforcement when it comes to foul water in order to avoid sewerage flooding or potential pollution incidents.

## Summary

7.10.42 In conclusion, the application submission and associated FRA has demonstrated that all development will be located within Flood Zone 1, so is a compatible use on this site. The risk of surface water flooding has been identified as being very low. Where there are pockets of low to high risk from surface water flooding, these areas would be mitigated as part of the overall drainage strategy. The risks from all other sources of flooding are also low as identified in the FRA.

7.10.43 All surface water from the development would be conveyed, stored and treated within the proposed SuDS features on site. There would be a total storage volume of 43,080.5m<sup>3</sup> to be provided within the development which would be able to cater for the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change. In addition, infiltration basins 3A and 3B would also contain the 1 in 30 year event as 24hr half drain down time are exceeded. Water quality of the site would be carefully managed and treated accordingly and the FRA provides details of how foul water would be managed from this development.

7.10.44 With the above measure in place, the scheme has been designed to ensure that it does not create any Floodrisk events on site or to the wider area. At the time of drafting this report, the LLFA were re-consulted on the amended drainage strategy and FRA which sought to address all of the concerns raised. To date, no comments have been provided by the LLFA. Therefore, if the Council was minded to grant planning permission combined with the fact that the Council has to determine applications within a reasonable timeframe as detailed in the NPPF and accompanying Planning Practice

Guidance, it is recommended appropriately worded conditions are to be imposed to ensure an acceptable drainage strategy can be delivered as part of this development

7.10.45 In addition to the above, it is also recommended that delegated powers are given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulatory and the Chairman of the Planning Committee that in the event the LLFA do provide comments on the revised strategy with a suggested list of conditions, then these conditions would be imposed accordingly before any planning permission is issued by the Council. However, if the LLFA raise a substantive objection to the amended drainage strategy which has been submitted and this cannot be resolved, then it is recommended that this application is referred back to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision.

## **7.11 Trees and Landscaping/Open Space and public realm**

7.11.1 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (2021) states that when determining planning applications local planning authorities should apply the principle, in respect of veteran and ancient trees, that if a development results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats it should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. Policy NH5 of the Local Plan (2019) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within development sites and should include new planting where appropriate.

### Trees in the main development site

7.11.2 The ES Statement is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and associated Tree Survey. The tree survey identified the following trees within the influence of the application:

- High Value (Category A) – 5 no. individual trees, 7 no. groups of trees, and 1 no. hedgerow;
- Moderate Value (Category B) – 21 no. individual trees, 7 no. groups of trees and 1 no. hedgerow;
- Low Value (Category C) – 11 no. individual trees, 5 no. group of trees, and 11 no. hedgerows.

7.11.3 There are no trees within the site which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and there are no areas of the site which fall within a conservation area. In addition, there are no ancient woodlands located within the site or immediate surrounding area which would be affected by the proposed development. There is a single veteran Oak tree identified within the tree line which adjoins the south-western boundary. This tree would be retained within the open green space located towards the edge of the proposed development.

7.11.4 The scheme would also seek to provide new areas of tree and hedgerow planting which will compensate for the limited loss of trees and will generally be planted within the new areas of open space. In terms of tree and hedgerow removal itself, the scheme would require the removal of discrete sections of field boundary and removal of low value understorey trees within a group of trees. The detailed assessment of tree removal is summarised in the table below together with recommendations for replacement planting. The trees which are to be removed are generally low value (Category C) trees with the scheme itself seeking to safeguard the high and moderate value tree stock.

<b>Tree no. category</b>	<b>Description of works and tree removal</b>	<b>Proposed replacement planting.</b>
G1	Removal of approximately 0.2ha	The creation of a landscaped

	<p>of low value self-seeded trees and understorey shrubs in order to accommodate the construction of the main road, shared cycle / pedestrian route as well as associated connections.</p> <p>There would be the removal of 2 no. low value trees in order to accommodate the construction of the noise bund.</p>	<p>buffer with appropriate planting mix to the main road and shared cycle route / pedestrian route.</p> <p>There would also be enhancement woodland planting within the retained areas of G1.</p>
H6 and H7	<p>Removal of approximately 70m low value hedgerow sections to accommodate new main road and shared cycle/pedestrian route.</p> <p>Removal of discrete section of hedgerow to accommodate pedestrian foot link.</p>	<p>Enhancement hedgerow planting to improve the arboricultural value of the retained sections of hedgerows H6 and H7 to ensure long-term green infrastructure solution.</p> <p>Planting of new street trees within the adjoining development parcels.</p>
T20, G7, T15	<p>Removal of 2 no. low value trees and group of self-seeded trees and understorey shrubs to accommodate construction of residential development parcels, buildings and internal roads.</p>	<p>Planting of new street trees within the adjoining development parcels.</p>

7.11.5 In regards to the impact of the proposed development in relation to retained trees, it is noted that parts of the proposed development could potentially encroach into the root protection areas (RPAs) of any retained trees. These include the construction of new roads, footpaths and cycleways and drainage channels. In order to mitigate the impact on the trees, the ES and supporting Arboricultural Report sets out the requirements to provide tree protection fencing in accordance with BS5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction) in order to protect the trees during construction. Where construction works do fall within the root protection, there are requirements to undertake a reduced dig surface construction (cellular confinement system) with permeable surfacing along with no dig techniques.

7.11.6 In relation to the outline aspects of the proposal (Phases 2 to 4), there will be scope to refine the layout of the proposed development including the location of new roads, cycleways and footways, in order to reduce the level of impact on the retained trees along with the adoption of a no-dig technique. Such works which have to take place within the Root Protection Areas would be detailed within an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS).

7.11.7 Turning to the AMS specifically, it sets out the practical and robust strategy for the protection of retained trees during site preparation and construction phases of the development in accordance with BS5837:2012. The scope of the AMS would generally cover the following:

- A schedule and specification of any trees;
- Specifications for barriers and ground protection;
- Procedures for any specialist construction techniques and any supervised excavations within the RPAs;

- Phasing of work;
- An auditable system of site monitoring; and
- Tree Protection Plan.

7.11.8 The AMS can be secured by way of conditions which would be imposed if the Council was minded to grant planning permission. With regards to the development at the outline stage, the provision of an AMS should be provided as part of any subsequent reserved matters application.

Trees affected by the Section 278 Highway Works.

7.11.9 The ES is also accompanied by a revised Arboricultural Impact Assessment relating to trees which would be affected by the proposed highway works associated by the development. Specifically, this report relates to the enhancement works to Meadway, Redcar Drive, Clovelly Way, Bessemer Drive and Chadwell Road. In total, the development would result in the removal of thirty-five individual trees, three groups of trees, two hedges and the partial removal of two further hedges and eight groups of trees/scrub. The trees have been recommended where a) it is necessary and unavoidable to site development within proximity to existing trees, such that they cannot be confidently retained in the long-term as living features, and/or b), where the amenity value of the tree will be significantly reduced as a result of the proposals, particularly if already of a low retention priority.

7.11.10 Given the level of trees which need to be removed, there would be a requirement for mitigation planting in order to provide suitable replacement canopy cover as well as off-set any harm to the visual amenity. As such, the proposal is accompanied by a landscaping strategy, which is assessed in further detail (see paragraphs 7.11.62 to 7.11.80) which would mitigate the overall losses associated with the proposed highway works.

7.11.11 The proposal also requires some level of pruning and will be limited to crown lifting of trees in order to maintain or provide sufficient clearance over pedestrian footpaths. In addition, the Arboricultural Report recommends the removal of dead branches from the canopies of adjoining trees which are to be retained in order to mitigate the risk of future tree related hazards occurring. The overall removal of deadwood and crown lifting would be carried out in accordance with BS3998:2010 (Tree Work). These works would be undertaken by a competent tree contractor, to ensure cuts are performed correctly and positioned so as to avoid future defects or physiological issues, to facilitate growth and maintain aesthetic value.

7.11.12 As part of the overall highway works, there would be requirements to replace existing hardsurface areas within RPAs of retained trees. In order to prevent any harm, the Arboricultural Report sets out a requirement for the removal of existing wearing courses to be undertaken sensitively, with the existing sub-bases left un-disturbed and remain in-situ which would then be used for replacement wearing courses. This is in order to minimise ground disturbance and the potential harm to occur should sub-bases be occupied by tree roots. A detailed methodology would need to be agreed prior to the commencement of any works as part of any AMS. This requirement, as suggested above, should be secured via condition if the Council is minded to grant planning permission.

7.11.13 The arboricultural report also sets out that there are a number of small areas where existing footpaths and carriageways would need to be widened adjacent to retained trees, with works occurring within their RPA's. The scale of the works within the RPAs in relation to excavation are minor and taken place on the edge of the RPA or within areas immediately contiguous to carriageways, where roots are predicted to be low in diameter and more dynamic in nature. Consequently, the Arboricultural Report recommends that through the adoption of the principles set out in BS5837:2012

concerning manual excavation techniques and root pruning, it is considered that such an approach would cause any undue harm for the respective trees future health or vitality. The detailed methodology of managing these works can also be secured through the AMS.

7.11.14 In terms of tree protection of the highway related works, as per the recommendations under paragraph 7.11.5, there will be the requirement to install protective tree barriers around the trees retained as a safeguard from the constructions works. Following consultation with the Council's Arboricultural Manager on the accompanying ES and supporting Arboricultural Assessments, they have advised that the avenue of trees in Meadway, currently located between the road and car parking bays can be kept within the proposed layout. The Arboricultural Manager has advised that if necessary, the proposed road could be moved slightly retaining such an established avenue of trees by the entrance to the new site is in order to lessen the impact of the development.

7.11.15 Whilst the concerns of the Arboricultural Manager are noted, the road alignment has been pushed to the limits of the land made available by the Borough Council (as reflected by the redline boundary) in order to try to keep the trees. In addition, the proposals would effect a significant extent of their RPAs which is beyond the suggested threshold for acceptability put forward within BS5837:2012. Accordingly, this precludes technical confidence in their capacity to tolerate the proposed works. However, the proposals as shown in the indicative landscaping plan will include compensatory planting. In addition, where these trees cannot be compensated within the easement, the applicants have agreed to pay a respective financial contribution towards replacement tree planting. For reference, the Council's replacement tree policy is a 3:1 ratio and the cost for the council to plant a new tree (supply, plant and maintain until established) is £350/tree. The overall contribution will be calculated once the detailed design of the landscaping scheme has been agreed with the relevant financial contribution be secured as part of any Section 106 agreement.

7.11.16 With regards the Arboricultural Managers Comments regarding the donation of a tree by an officer at the Council which falls within Tree Group G9, it is noted that the indicative plans for the replacement Meadway Pavilion and Car Park show the removal of this tree group. However, it will ultimately be the responsibility of Stevenage Borough Council to deliver a replacement pavilion and associated car park. As such, any future reserved matters application submitted can seek to retain trees which are of sentimental value.

7.11.17 In regards trees numbers 56, 57, 58 and 59 on Meadway Lane are proposed to be removed. These Mature Oak trees are, the Arboricultural Manager advises that these are the most prominent and valuable trees in this part of the lane and therefore their loss would not be desirable. Following negotiations with the applicants, they have agreed to commit to review the need to remove these trees when they detailed landscape design of the Meadway Ancient Land improvements are considered in Phase 3 of the development proposal.

7.11.18 With regards to the proposed resurfacing of Meadway Ancient Lane as part of this development, the Council's Arboricultural Manager would urge caution when excavating within the RPA of the trees on both banks. They also recommend appropriate crown reduction works to compensate for any encroachment on existing roots. The applicant has confirmed agreement to this when it comes to works within the Ancient Land when they seek to deliver Phase 3 of the development.

7.11.19 The Council's Arboricultural Manager advises that in order to comply with their policy in terms of the 30% future canopy coverage for the new development, the Arboricultural Manager requests a plan is submitted to demonstrate how this is achieved. It is important to note that this is not a policy required in the adopted Local Plan (2019) or the NPPF (2021). In addition, if such a policy was to be adopted, then it

would not be feasible to deliver a development which would meet the requirements of Policy HO2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) in terms of housing numbers, employment provision along with the delivery of a primary school, neighbourhood centre, 72 bedroom care home, cricket pitches as well as extensive areas of open space. Notwithstanding, the indicative landscaping strategy does demonstrate a significant level of tree planting in line with local and national planning policies and guidance.

#### Landscape and visual impact effects of the development

7.11.20 The NPPF (2021) states in paragraph 174 that in relation to planning decisions, these should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by:

a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plans.

7.11.21 Paragraph 171 of the Framework that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in the framework, take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure, and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

7.11.22 Paragraph 172 of the NPPF stipulates that great should be considered in conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which have the highest status of protection.

7.11.23 Policy SP12 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) aims to preserve, create, protect and enhance locally important linear features including historic lanes and hedgerows which pre-date the New Town and structural green spaces along major routes in the town. The policy also seeks to create multi-functional green space and sports facilities as an integral part of developments. Policy GD1 of the Local Plan seeks to create, enhance or improve access to areas of public open space, green infrastructure and biodiversity and other public realm assets.

7.11.24 The application, as detailed in the ES, is accompanied by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and this deals with the landscape character i.e. the effects of the proposed development upon discrete character areas and/or character types comprising features possessing a particular quality or merit. It also deals with visual context, the effects of the proposed development on views and visual receptors, and upon the amenity value of the views.

7.11.25 The LVIA, which comprises a Landscape Character Assessment, identifies the site as being situated within the Almshoe Plateau character area. This is a gently undulating plateau which is an open and exposed landscape with views out in all directions. There are large arable fields with localised hedgerows and also includes small deciduous woodland copses. Almshoe Bury farmstead is located to the north. There are also distinctive features which include Kitching Lane Recreational Route, Landfill site to north of Norton Green, and Almshoe Bury Farm.

7.11.26 The site itself does not lie within an area designated at a national or local level in recognition of the site sites landscape quality or value. The assessment concludes that the site as lying within an 'Improve and Restore' area reflecting the degraded former landfill areas of the site and the influence of the urban fringe land uses and the transport corridor in the form of the A1(M). The landscape features on the site are not rare and generally replicated within the wider local landscape. In addition, given there

are no listed building on site either, the landscape of the site is also considered as having a localised low/medium value.

7.11.27 The Assessment identifies that there are opportunities to improve PROW (These improvements are considered in detail in Section 7.7 of this report) as well as conserve existing woodland blocks, trees and hedgerows. The ES also sets out opportunities to retain and enhance recreations routes within the landscape, improving green corridors along with characteristic planting along the A1(M) to soften the noise and visual impact of the development. This aspect is considered in more detail on the following section of this report.

7.11.28 In order to determine what the degree of change that would arise from the development, it is important to understand the existing situation in terms of visual amenity and the availability of views within the local area. The ES sets out that a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) which illustrates the extent to which the site maybe visible. The ZTV demonstrates that whilst there are potentially many views from the east, the urban built form of Stevenage beyond the A1(M) and the combined tree planting, limit the potential views towards the site. The ZTV also shows the potential for views stretching over 5km to the north and west of the site. The visual envelope of the site is therefore, deemed to be considerably limited.

7.11.29 To the north, whilst there are several footpaths present, the undulating topography and the punctuation of vegetation in the landscape allow only for short distance views of the site. From longer distance views from Almshoe Bury, there is the possibility of the site's north western boundary which has limited vegetation.

7.11.30 In relation to the east, as established the eastern views of the site are not possible due to the urban nature of Stevenage and the presence of the A1(M). When viewed from Meadway and Bessemer Drive, with the A1(M) being at a raised level along with the existing vegetation, these serve to limit views to the site. From Norton Green, there are glimpsed views facing west across the site are possible within the immediate view. However, due to the sites topography, this would restrict the potential for distance views.

7.11.31 To the south, due to the lack of a strong, defining southern boundary, some views are possible. Knebworth 042 footpath allows for uninterrupted views to the southern part of the site for most of the route to the Knebworth 043 Byway. From this point, distant views are also possible to the southern section of the site.

7.11.32 From the west, distant views of the western site boundary vegetation are possible from Langley 011 footpath close to the settlement of Langley. There are also additional glimpsed views of the western part of the site are also possible from footpaths 021 and 005 close to Langley Bottom. Short distance views are also possible; however the woodland block which forms part of the site's western boundary does assist with screening views.

7.11.33 The Landscape Assessment also takes into consideration receptor sensitivity i.e. the site and Almshoe Bury Plateau. A number of receptors have been considered which include users of PROW, users of Meadway and of the A1(M). In addition, views from residents of Langley, Norton Green and Dyes Lane Caravan park.

7.11.34 Following an assessment of the proposal, it will result in a level of impact upon the landscape. However, the scheme has been designed to respond to the topography of the application site with the provision of green and blue infrastructure to minimise the loss of habitat and important landscape features which contribute to the character of the site. In addition, an appropriate buffer in order to mitigate noise from the A1(M) with the provision of native trees and shrub planting provide visual screening and additional infrastructure. In addition, the proposal incorporates landscape buffers which would



serve as multi-functional spaces with the provision of recreation, ecological enhancements and improved public access. The scheme would also incorporate areas of formal and informal open space.

7.11.35 The Framework Masterplan and accompanying Design and Access Statement also show the provision of a network of green infrastructure which would weave through the development site with existing landscape features retained and incorporated. The interconnected green features of the scheme have been designed to be multi-functional with space for recreation, water management, ecological enhancements and connectivity. The existing PROW are to be embedded into the proposal which would improve connections across the site to the wider area. The scheme also proposes additional routes in order to provide a network of well-connected and accessible routes.

7.11.36 The landscaping approach with the provision of a combination of hedgerow and tree planting along the site's north-western boundary, would allow for key views out across the valley from the development, whilst also screening views of the new built form as seen from the site's highest point. The scheme has also been sensitively designed in terms of building heights to mitigate against the potential landscape and visual impacts. The taller buildings have been located towards the east of the site, as well as being focused in the neighbourhood centre. Buildings along the site's edge would be lower density with the residential development being between 2 and 3 storeys. Furthermore, as set out in the ES addendum, the landscaping scheme also comprises street lined trees, creation of enhanced woodland areas as well as strategic placement of areas of trees within the site, which contribute a more clearly defined tree skyline.

7.11.37 Taking the aforementioned into consideration, it can be concluded that the nature of the site would change and would be lost of built development. However, this site is largely made up of arable land and the former landfill with the site already influenced visually in context with the A1(M) and the urban built form of Stevenage. The development would not result in the loss of key landscape features which would result in a detrimental change to the understanding of the character area within which the application site is located. In addition, there are no features which are deemed to be vulnerable or as being particularly rare from a landscape character perspective.

7.11.38 The supporting assessments undertaken by the applicant as detailed in the ES is influenced by the substantive provision of areas of green infrastructure which protects and enhances the site's boundaries along with the provision of publicly accessible open space. The overall design approach to the development which is before the Council is what would be expected from a strategic development of this size and scale in context with its surroundings. In addition, the surrounding landscape context has already changed by recent developments at Norton Green to the south east of the site. The scheme has been sensitively designed to ensure the built form is set away from the western boundary in order to retain the existing hedgerows and woodland along with the additional hedgerow planting which forms part of the development's overarching landscape strategy.

7.11.39 In terms of effects on visual amenity, it is not considered that the proposed development would have a negligible residual impact, including residents from Norton Green and Dyes Lane Caravan park. The surrounding network of footpaths would still provide views out over the wider valley countryside to the west, with the provision of additional access to new area of public open space providing new long-distance views such as those at Potters Spring. The proposal also forms a gateway from the urban centre as you transition to the countryside beyond the A1(M), with the retained woodland blocks and combined new tree planting in order to soften views of the built form as well as enhance the site's overall biodiversity. The scheme would involve a limited loss of hedgerows and trees in order to facilitate the delivery of the

development, with mitigation planting being provided as part of the wider landscaping strategy.

7.11.40 Where the development would be visible from wider viewpoints, the scheme would not be an incongruous feature as it would be set against the backdrop of the existing urban area of Stevenage. As such, it would form a natural extension to the town and therefore, will not impact upon important views or vistas and it is not considered to be conspicuous or prominent. Consequently, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development would not result in significant landscape and visual effects. The site does not lie in any designated areas of national or local importance, such as an AONB. The proposed development would assimilate itself into its immediate surroundings with a sensitively designed layout, scale and form along with the retention, enhancement and addition of trees and hedgerows. There would also be the provision of bunding alongside the A1(M) in order to provide noise and air quality mitigation.

7.11.41 Based on the amended scheme which is before the Council, the overall impact the development would have on the landscape has been reduced with greater landscape benefits through a significantly enhanced landscape approach to the proposal which is before the Council. The landscape benefits of the scheme can be argued as moderately significant, as identified in the ES addendum.

#### Landscaping, open space and public realm (Phases 2 to 4 – Outline)

7.11.42 Policy NH7: Open Space Strategy of the adopted Local Plan states that planning permission for residential development will be granted where:

- a) on-site open space provision is made in accordance with the standards and thresholds set out in the Council's Open Space Strategy;
- b) Any such provision results in usable and coherent areas of an appropriate size; and
- c) Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure the long-term maintenance of the open space.

Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate standards will apply. Where an applicant successfully demonstrates that (any element of) the required provision cannot be reasonably achieved on site, a commuted sum will be sought.

7.11.43 The Council's current standards for open space are set out in the table below:

	Borough-wide standard per 1,000 population (ha)	Minimum thresholds for on-site provision	
		Development population	Open space size <sup>(126)</sup>
Parks and gardens	0.88ha	5,000	4.40ha
Amenity greenspace	0.92ha	240	0.22ha
Allotments	0.14ha	4,200	0.59ha
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	1.78ha	1,000	1.78ha
Children and young people	0.82 sites	900	1 site

7.11.44 In regards to children's play paragraph 14.46 of the Local Plan states that play areas constitute an important element of the provision. The National Playing Field Association (NPFA) guidelines for play areas are expected to be met where the provision threshold is exceeded. This requires a minimum size of 400m<sup>2</sup> in order to create usable spaces. This may not be achievable in smaller or high density developments. Where this can be proven, contributions in lieu may be acceptable.

7.11.45 In terms of calculating development populations, the following population rates are used as a baseline, as taken from the adopted Local Plan, in order to help to determine the provision of open space:

Dwelling size	Private housing	Affordable housing
Studio or 1-bed	1.4 persons per dwelling	1.2 persons per dwelling
2-bed	1.9	2.2
3-bed	2.5	2.9
4+ bed	3.1	3.9

7.11.46 Taking the above into consideration, the development would generate a population of approximately 3,831 which does not trigger the need for parks and gardens or allotments and therefore, any provision provided will go beyond the policy requirement. Based on the population projection, the following open space would be required:

- Parks and Gardens – 0ha;
- Amenity Greenspace – 3.5ha;
- Natural and Semi Natural Green Space – 6.8ha;
- Children and young people – 3 sites.
- Total requirement – 10.3ha and 3 sites.

7.11.47 Taking the above requirements into consideration, the details submitted within the Design and Access Statement, accompanying Framework Masterplan are indicative in relation to the outline phase of development. However, it does provide a detailed overarching strategy for delivery of landscaping, open and public across the whole development. In regards to the open space strategy, the scheme would seek to exceed the requirements of Policy NH7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019). The total open space provision would be approximately 27.6 hectares (ha) across the whole site with the following approximate breakdown:-

- Approx. 3.55ha with the estimated area for the community green (incorporating the cricket pitch) at approx. 2.2ha with 1.35ha of central open space/community gardens next to the school;
- Over 11ha of amenity greenspace, which includes Potters Spring open space (approx. 2.7ha) with the provision of multi-functional greenspaces including pocket parks and green spaces around the houses incorporating play and exercise trails, incidental sitting and play areas, recreational routes such as Langley Greenway, viewpoint such as Roman View and Langley Prospect, with sitting areas such as those by the southern pond and the drainage pond at the south-west corner;
- 13.1ha of natural and semi-natural greenspace, including areas of bunding, offsets to adjacent wildlife sites and SuDS features;
- 1 Multi Use Games Area (MUGA);
- 3 Locally Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP);
- 6 or more Local Areas of Play (LAP) as part of pocket parks and generally around the site.

7.11.48 In terms of the play strategy, the outline phase of the development, along with Phase 1, would have the required level of at least 3 formal play areas which are at least 400m<sup>2</sup>. Further to this formal provision, the Design and Access Statement is supported by a Landscape Typology Report which provides a detailed approach for play and exercise within the landscape and housing areas. The adopted approach utilised would avoid the provision of LAPs, but develop a series of joint linear exercise and play trails around the site, with frequent local play, exercise, sitting areas and occasional pocket parks. Through this approach, children are treated as small adults and both parents would be part of the activity of the site.

7.11.49 The more formal play facilities would form part of Phase 1, which will be considered in more detail. This includes the provision of a LEAP on the Community Green. Park run exercise routes and play trails will also be used for the site. Turning specifically to the outline phase of the development, the Design and Access Statement sets out that Framework Masterplan is broken down into three distinct characters. These three areas are the northern area, central area, and southern area. In addition, the Design and Access Statement sets out the landscape strategy for blue and green infrastructure. The key spaces in terms of blue and green infrastructure which fall across the three character areas are as follows:

- Community Green;
- Community Orchard/Community Garden;
- Potters Spring Open Space;
- Bessemer Arrival;
- Meadway Arrival;
- Langley Prospect;
- Northern Woodland Play;
- South West SuDS;
- Southern Woodland Play;
- A1(M) landscape buffer;
- Langley Greenway.

#### *Northern Character Area*

7.11.50 In terms of the Northern Character Area – Potters Spring, this feature is retained and incorporated into the space as a focal point. There would be the provision of dual

pedestrian and cycle route through the space linking to the wider recreational links to the west. There would also be the creation of open gardens with views of site woodland and the provision of serpentine paths for dog walkers and Park Rub routes. The open space can be used for kick about, picnics, kites along with the provision of sitting areas and views. There would also be the provision of incidental play and informal woodland play features near to Potters Spring along with the provision of new trees and glades.

7.11.51 The Northern Woodland Play would potentially incorporate buffer planting to the north-eastern part of the site along with a bund planting area close to the A1(M). There would also be the potential for woodland play and informal natural play opportunities/trim trail. This area would also include SuDS with opportunities for education and learning as well as the provision of linear paths alongside buffer planting with the A1(M).

7.11.52 The Langley Prospect edge of the site seeks to provide additional planting along the western boundary in order to assist in filtering the development from external view points out across the valley to the north-west. There would also be the potential provision of sitting areas with open views of the valley and also be a destination point at the corner of Langley Greenway. The area could also include incidental play, a trim trail station as well as additional tree and shrub planting.

7.11.53 In terms of the Meadway Arrival point, there would potentially be the provision of entrance planting along with the creation of SuDS features in order to increase access to nature/treatment of SuDS basins/edges/habitat enhancements. There would also be a link to the east through to Meadway itself and the provision of buffer planting. In addition, there would also be improved routes into the town centre with enhanced pedestrian access. There is also the opportunity to provide public art/way finding at this part of the development of site along with the creation of a tree lined avenue into the development. This part of the proposal also seeks the delivery of a Mobility Hub with flexible community workspace.

7.11.54 Turning to the arrival space at Meadway, specifically for pedestrians and cyclists, there is a requirement to provide natural surveillance into the underpass in order to improve the safety of users. Therefore, the Mobility Hub would also act as an arrival building just south of the site entrance which would help to animate this space and create a sense of arrival as you enter the site from Meadway. The building itself (referred to as Meadway Pavilion) would be one of the three proposed hubs for pedestrians and cyclists entering and exiting the site. The building and arrival square could be utilised, as detailed in the Design and Access Statement, for the provision of bicycle storage, delivery drop offs/lock ups, e-scooter or e-bike collection. The building could also provide flexible workspace which could be provided in the upper floors giving a sense of prominence upon arrival. The building itself could be designed to be integrated into the bund and would help to create a key gateway feature as you enter the site.

#### *Central Character Area*

7.11.55 The proposed Community Gardens would be a key central space serving the development. It would include a community garden, flower gardens, a LAP, the MUGA as well as a Community Orchard. The space, whilst indicative, would be designed as place for people to meet and chat along with the creation of an edible garden to encourage healthy living. This part of the proposal would be located in close proximity to the school, community buildings and main square.

7.11.56 The Landscape buffer which would run along the eastern edge of the site would comprise a bund with roadside planting in combination with native planting which would also act as a screen. There would be provision of linear pedestrian links through this part of the site along with scattered play features along the route allowing people

to stop and exercise. There is also the potential to deliver a BMX track utilising part of the bund as well.

#### *Southern Character Area*

7.11.57 The Community Green is the largest area of open space within the development and would comprise the cricket facilities and associated pavilion. As this area is the key central space which falls within Phase 1, this part of the proposed open space strategy would be assessed in greater detail in the 'Landscaping, open space and public realm (Phase 1 – Detail)' section. In addition, the pocket park and play/trim trail stations would also form the bulk of the landscape and play strategy within Phase 1, so would also be considered in further detail in the above section.

7.11.58 Turning to the south western SuDs, this space would provide a landscape off-set with the provision of a SuDS basin with associated ecological and biodiversity benefits. Native tree and shrub planting would also be incorporated in this area in order to provide a buffer to the western edge of the site. This part of the scheme would also potentially incorporate an area of woodland play and informal play areas. There is also an indicative provision of recreational footpath links to the wider network of footpaths around the site.

7.11.59 The Bessemer Arrival point is the southern access point into the development. This area would comprise the main road at gradient up to level site due to the significant level differences. This part of the proposal would also comprise a segregated cycle and pedestrian route with the provision of new planting positioned so as to not block views from housing to the underpass.

7.11.60 The Southern woodland, which partly falls within Phase 1, comprises a play and exercise trail along with the provision of play opportunities along a scattered woodland edge. The indicative strategy also details the potential for the creation of informal logs to be used to sit on/stop and wait along with the creation of woodland/hidden art and sculptures. This area would also provide offset from the existing Norton Green Development as well create an intersection with pedestrian connectivity.

#### *Meadway and Bessemer Drive Underpass Proposals*

7.11.61 The main entrances to the site as detailed throughout the report will be through Meadway and Bessemer Drive. The existing Meadway underpass will be converted for pedestrians and cyclists with Bessemer Drive comprising vehicular access along with a segregated pedestrian and cycle route through the tunnel. As these underpass routes would have an increased level of foot traffic and cycle traffic their overall environment is important in terms of it feeling safe and welcoming for the user.

7.11.62 The developers have undertaken extensive dialogue with Highways England who maintain the underpasses and they have advised that no lighting can be installed on the walls or ceiling. In addition, no lighting infrastructure can affect future inspections and maintenance of these tunnels. The design of the underpass lighting as recommended by the Council's Urban Design Consultants, needs to be welcoming and aesthetically pleasing as the tunnels are the two main entrance points into the site.

7.11.63 The cycleways/footpaths through both of the tunnels would be offered up for adoption to HCC as Highways Authority and therefore, the underpasses have to be lit to their specifications. However, HCC have advised that they would not adopt any lighting other than column mounted lanterns. Therefore, any other lighting specifies to be installed within the tunnels such as LED up-lighters will be adopted by Stevenage Borough Council.

7.11.64 The Bessemer Drive underpass would have to be lit to the HCC adoptable specification in order to tie in with the main on-site link road. This can be achieved through the provision of column lighting on either side of the entrance to the underpass. These would be carefully positioned so as to not cause glare to motor-vehicles travelling along the A1(M). The Meadway pedestrian/cyclist underpass would need to be lit to HCC adoptable specifications in order to tie in with the Greenway which would be achieved through the use of uplighters.

7.11.65 Turning to the uplighters which are to be installed within the tunnels and to be maintained by Stevenage Borough Council, the details provided in the application submission are only indicative. However, it is set out that the lighting mitigation for the underpasses would be as follows:

- Lighting solutions will be selected in order to reduce light pollution. There would be specifically designed luminaires to minimise upward spread of light. The optics within the lanterns will control the distribution of light to avoid overspill, sky glow and glare;
- Glare will be kept to a minimum by ensuring the main beam angle of all the lights directed towards any potential user of the underpass;
- Restrict lighting to the take area using horizontal cut-off optics and zero tilts;
- Operate a curfew and minimise the duration of any lighting.

7.11.66 The final detailed design of the lighting strategy for the underpasses can be secured by way of an appropriately worded condition. In addition, the timing of the delivery of the underpass lighting, on-going maintenance of any lighting managed by Stevenage Borough Council as well as suitable financial contributions towards the maintenance of these lights, would be secured as part of a S.106 legal agreement.

#### Landscaping, open space and public realm (Phase 1 – Detail)

7.11.67 The landscaping scheme which was originally submitted with the planning application had a number of fundamental design issues. These issues included the following:

- Minimal shrub planting with the streetscape with only one shrub species proposed;
- The landscaping design lacked tear-round planting to create an attractive environment and break up the overall built environment;
- Significant areas of grass and turn around parking bays which would cause maintenance issues;
- Provision of narrow strips of grass in the design which would also be a maintenance issue and would struggle to establish as an area of green space;
- Lack of landscape protection features such as for example bollards or bunding;
- There was very limited tree species choice regarding the street tree planting which would create a sterile environment and would limit the site from being able to adapt to possible biosecurity threats from imported pests and diseases, climate change etc.;
- The position of a number of the trees would be susceptible to damage from motor-vehicles and there was not sufficient space for some of the trees to grow, especially without causing issues to surrounding hard surfaces, buildings etc.;
- The landscaping strategy should comprise the provision of fastigate trees;
- A real lack of detail of the children's play facilities and the issues around the LEAP near the cricket ground along with the delivery of more imaginative play such as the use of boulders, mounding, sensory planting, sculptures, meadows etc.;
- A lack of an overarching landscaping strategy for Phase 1;
- Insufficient detail of the proposed Community Green associated with the cricket facilities, including details of maintenance.

7.11.68 Since the original submission, there have been extensive negotiations with the developers and the Council's appointed Design and Landscape Consultants in order to significantly improved the overall landscaping scheme across the development site, specifically Phase. This amended landscaping scheme, which is also accompanied by a detailed landscaping strategy, is considered in further detail below.

7.11.69 Phase 1 falls within the Southern Character Area as detailed in the Framework Masterplan. The Design and Access Statement sets out that the key space for this part of the development is the Community Green which will have a multi-functional purpose. The green itself would provide a cricket pitch to ECB standards as well as a formal area of play in the form of a LEAP. This space could also be used for football when the cricket pitch is not in use. Furthermore, the space has been designed with informal spaces for kick about / community events and picnics. The space itself would be bordered by a circle of trees to help frame the green with the provision of serpentine benches in order to view games.

7.11.70 The existing vegetation on-site would be incorporated into the Community Green which will be managed as part of the overall landscaping strategy. The scheme also seeks to create a 'Hanami' (which literally means blossom viewing) grove of cherry trees. The central green would be enclosed by park fencing with a hornbeam hedge with a ball stop fence incorporated. This space would also be interconnected to the cycle and pedestrian route to the south. This part of the development also seeks the creation of pocket parks along with trim-trail stations. These areas would comprise informal play / LAP and will be places to stop and learn with interpretation boards scattered along the corridor of spaces at key strategic points. Where the woodland areas are to be created, informal play would be introduced in and around woodland planting areas. There would also be the provision of informal footpath links to the wider strategic footpath network located beyond the site boundary.

7.11.71 With regards to the proposed areas of play which are located along the edge of the cricket green, the applicant has undertaken a detailed ball strike assessment which has been assessed by Sports England. This assessment demonstrates that these play areas are located safely outside the ball strike zone. In addition, through the use of landscaping and low level fencing, this would control ball run off to ensure cricket ball do not run out into, for example, the play areas.

7.11.72 This part of the development site would also comprise the delivery of a community pavilion, albeit the building itself is in outline so would be subject to a reserved matters application. The community pavilion would provide the necessary facilities to support the sporting pitches. The minimum specifications (as requested by Sport England) the Pavilion requires to support the use of the sports pitches for junior/mini football and recreational/low level completion (using an artificial wicket) with adjustments for future proof the building are as follows:

- 2 x team changing rooms with a minimum of 20 sq.m changing space (excluding showers, toilets and lobby area) in each changing room;
- 4 cubicle showers in each changing room;
- 2 WCs in each changing room;
- 2 washbasins in each changing room;
- Officials changing room with a minimum of 5 sq.m changing space (existing shower, toilet and lobby area) plus one WC, one washbasin and one cubicle shower;
- Separate male and female and accessible toilets for spectators/parents/coaches;
- Clubroom/social area of at least 80 sq.m;
- Kitchen with external servery;
- Small office/first aid room;
- Entrance lobby/reception;
- Plant room;
- Store for furniture;



- Cleaner's store;
- Sports equipment and maintenance store (can be integral to pavilion or in a standalone building).

7.11.73 The aforementioned a specification for the Community Pavilion, including detailed triggers as to when the Cricket Pavilion will be required, is to be secured via a Section 106 agreement. This is to ensure the pavilion building has the relevant facilities in accordance with Sport England requirements when a future reserved matters application is submitted to the Council for its approval. With regards to the operational aspects of the pavilion building, it can operate as a dual-use with the provision of community space/facilities which can be utilised outside the hours of sporting use. Adjacent to the Community Pavilion, an area of land has been safeguarded for the temporary shop (as set out in paragraph 7.2.13 of this report).

7.11.74 The main cycleways and footpath routes into the development would be enclosed on one side, an urban coppice and on the other side with hedge. The cycleway and footpath themselves, would be segregated by a mature retained hedgerow along the central stretch of the route along with a retained woodland on the Community Green. There would also be serpentine corridors to the south of the southern end of the route where the cycleway and footpath are separated by a planting strip with differentiating levels due to topography.

7.11.75 Street trees would be a key design feature for the development in order to create a sense of plant within the housing areas as well as help define key routes. These trees also help to provide shade and due to the species mix, provide a mixture of colour and greenery year round. The south-eastern corner of Phase 1 comprises the creation of a woodland area which would be a multi-functional space along with the provision of SuDS features. This woodland area would also form part of the landscape bund which is to be constructed along the eastern boundary of the development site. The bund would have a 1:4 in gradient on the housing side to allow for the creation of pedestrian trails through meadows and sitting areas. The steepness of the levels have been reduced on the bund through the use of gabions (stone with wire baskets) with the steeper profile on the motorway side.

7.11.76 The infiltration basins have been carefully designed with gentle gradients and will be planted with indigenous shrubs and small trees, thereby creating a sense of character along with a visual benefit. These basins form part of the overall open space network on the site and would come under the control of a management company. The revised scheme also includes large groups of wild bulbs in order to provide colour. These would be planted in large groups over a wider area along with the concentration of bulbs on the main entrance into Phase 1. These would also be planted alongside and are in conjunction with the wildflower meadows.

7.11.77 The landscaping plans have also been updated which show the detailed location of trees, plants and other landscape elements would be located and these are coded against a schedule of species. The plans and accompanying landscape strategy provide details of tree pits which would be used for the trees located in for example the High Street, roadside avenues and parking courts. The overall level of tree planting in the revised landscaping scheme has been significantly increased which help to clearly define the landscape as well help the site respond to climate change.

7.11.78 The landscaping strategy emphasises the provision of year round planting covering all four seasons in order to create a high quality environment for future residents. The site will include a woodland matrix of native species and they would be set within biodegradable plant tubes. The strategy also identifies the provision of specimen and avenue trees which will provide a point or group effect and include a mix of trees such as Maple, Birch, Cherry and Mountain Ash. Roadside trees would include large specimens such as Acer, Lime, Sorbus, Cherry, Hornbeam and Turkish Hazel.

7.11.79The scheme also details the provision of a mixture of trees which would be planted within the areas of open space, including the Community Green. In term of plant sock, these are to be sourced and grown in the UK according to relevant British Standards with reference to reducing the potential for imported pests and diseases. There would also be significant shrub planting throughout the development site and form part of the planting strategy for the wider open space network.

7.11.80In regards to the overarching approach to play, the overall approach is to create a play landscape throughout the development. This includes the creation of linear trails of varying difficulty and would follow a joint adult / child trim and play trail which would form part of a wider strategy which does include fenced areas of play as well. The Design and Access Statement sets out that the extended play will include climbing boulders, mounding, meadows, fallen trees, ropes, balancing walls and consider of all open spaces to provide steps, climbs and bike trails and dens. All spaces have been designed to relevant British Standards.

7.11.81The amended application also comprises a detailed Landscape Typology Report which forms part of the overarching landscaping strategy for Phase 1. This document provides a strategic approach to the landscape and open spaces for Phase 1. The design approach is set out to create as follows:-

- Create a strong landscape framework by means of new woodland planting groups with clearly defined linking avenues, green corridors, sustainable transport routes and greenways;
- Create and design the landscape character areas of the Community Green and entrance spaces;
- Provide a distinctive character for each of these spaces, by means of their layout, planting and design; and
- Use a common theme for the hard landscape to function as a co-ordinating feature but with local defined differences.

7.11.82The report itself is also accompanied by indicative detailed landscaping plans. The report and associated plans provide details of planting strategy including species mix, siting and location of individual trees (including specimen trees), tree pit designs along with the location of shrub beds, wildflower meadows, detailed landscaping of the swales, infiltration basins and rain gardens. The report and associated plans also provide further detailed design of the pocket parks and areas of play as well details of the private garden areas and landfill area.

7.11.83Turning to hard landscaping, the aforementioned provides a schedule of the materials to be used for footpaths, roads, cycleways, driveways and other associated hard landscaping features. The cycleways, footpaths and roads which are offered up for adoption would generally be constructed from macadam with the use of granite setts on edging and thresholds on some of the roads. In terms of broader use of materials, these would include granite slabs, brick paviours in varying colours, clay paviours, herringbone clay paviours, asphalt with rolled gravel, textured patios, gravel, concrete paths, rolled crushed hogging on informal paths and mulch. There would also be the use of impact absorbing safety surfacing with a number of the play areas.

7.11.84Details have also been provided with respect to street furniture, there would be a mixture of bench styles and seating areas along with details of bollards, fencing within the public realm (e.g. knee high post and rail, wrought iron fencing / Parking railings etc.), cycle parking, scooter racks, protective tree grilles, refuse bins, wayfinding features, signage and POS information boards, play equipment (including imaginative play).

7.11.85 Given the aforementioned, the amended landscaping scheme for the proposed development is a significant improvement to the originally submitted landscaping scheme. It would seek to deliver a high quality, landscaping and public realm and would create a sense of place. In addition, the landscaping would provide appropriate canopy coverage, provide year round variety and colour with the use of native species from UK nurseries. The materials used would create variety and interest across the development site and these materials along with the soft landscaping, would create a high quality public realm.

7.11.86 However, the reason for the plans to only be indicative is because it has taken a significant amount of time to negotiate a significantly enhanced development which meets not only the objectives set out in the agreed joint vision, but also the objectives set out in the National Design Guide. As such, there are a number of issues with the strategy which still need to be addressed, as well as areas which still need to be worked up in greater detail, and these include, but not limited to:

- Issues with the location of some of the planting in context with the proposed buildings;
- Some of the pavements being too narrow which would restrict access for a person in a wheelchair or pushing a buggy;
- Disconnect of some of the pathways as they run through the streets;
- Designing out desire lines across areas of open space;
- Creating a robust boundary treatment strategy for public and private spaces;
- Use of certain surfacing materials in certain areas of Phase 1 which are not suitable;
- Further break up of some of the hard surfacing areas and car parking areas with the use of soft landscaping features and to ensure these areas are functional;
- Positioning of some landscaping features in context with property windows to ensure sufficient levels of natural surveillance;
- Further details around some of the open space areas, including the Community Green, woodland areas as well as the SuDS features (including the Dam and Bridge);
- Un co-ordinated information in terms of hard landscaping with respect to landscape plans, highway plans and architectural plans with the materials palette needing more work;
- Clarification on areas which are to be adopted and un-adopted which is not clear from the submitted details;
- The design and treatment of the spaces around Bessemer Drive including the landscape around the underpass to ensure these are safe, well-used routes to other parts of Stevenage, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists and vulnerable groups. This is essential to avoid West Stevenage becoming an isolated annex;
- Treatment of some of the internal connections within the site as well as external connections;
- the inclusion and detail surrounding rain gardens in the streets and other water management measures within the site;
- Maximisation of tree planting;
- Detailed design of the edges of spaces and around the Meadway;
- Detailed design around the Cricket pitch;
- Co-ordination of the refuse and collection strategy;
- Co-ordinated cycle strategy which need to be carefully designed as part of the overall design of the development;
- Further details of the play spaces to ensure they are safe and accessible.

7.11.87 Given the above, and as advised, it is recommended that appropriately worded conditions are imposed in order to address some of the issues which have been identified in the indicative landscaping strategy. Notwithstanding this, the developer has also agreed to continue to engage with the Council and its consultants as they do

wish to deliver a well-designed, high quality and co-ordinated landscaping scheme following Planning Committee if the Council is minded to grant planning permission.

7.11.88 With the agreed commitment from the developers, it is recommended that with authority given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, to amend any conditions imposed where the developers are able to adequately address any of the concerns raised with the indicative landscaping plans and overall strategy prior to the issuing of any final planning permission.

7.11.89 Taking the aforementioned into consideration and through the use of appropriately worded conditions, it can be concluded that the development would comprise a high quality, well designed landscape which would not only help to create clearly defined character areas, but also help create a sense of place, and is visually attractive. In addition, the development would create a place that is safe, inclusive and accessible and which promotes health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. The materials used would be robust to ensure the longevity of the development in visual terms. Moreover, the scheme has been designed with a clear understanding of the site's defining characteristics and has been sensitively designed taking into the wider historic context of the area outside of the site's boundaries. As such, the scheme would assimilate itself into the site. Finally, the detailed design of Phase 1 would set a benchmark for the delivery of the wider landscaping features across the later phases of development.

7.11.90 The scheme would, therefore, through conditions to finalise the details of the development, accord with the policies set out in the adopted Local Plan (2019), the Council's Design Guide SPD (2009), the NPPF (2021) and PPG (which includes the National Design Guide).

## **7.12 Ecology and Biodiversity**

7.12.1 National Planning Policy on biodiversity and conservation is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This emphasises that the planning system should seek to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity wherever possible as part of the Government's commitment to halting declines in biodiversity and establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular. Paragraph 174 states:-

"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land,

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible,

help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated, and unstable land, where appropriate.”

7.12.2 Paragraph 180 goes on to state ‘when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

a) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

b) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

c) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

7.12.3 Policy SP12 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out a requirement to create, protect and enhance key areas of open space and biodiversity value. In addition, the policy sets out a requirement to preserve, create, protect and enhance locally important linear features as well as to create and protect multi-functional green spaces. Furthermore, the policies sets out requirements to mitigate, or as a last resort, compensate for the loss of green infrastructure or assets of biodiversity. Policy NH2 of the Local Plan sets out a list of wildlife sites and stipulates permission will be granted for proposals that do not result in the substantial loss or deterioration of wildlife site and contribute towards in maintenance.

7.12.4 Policy NH3 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) provides planning permission will be granted where a scheme does not have an adverse impact upon green corridors, it sensitively integrated or incorporates them into the site layout and provide suitable replacement planting as well as contribute towards improvements to green corridors. Policy NH4 of the Local Plan designates Meadway to Fishers Green and Symonds Green as a Green Link. The policy provides that permission is granted where proposals, amongst other requirements, does not affect the wildlife value of the Green Link.

7.12.5 The Council’s recently adopted Biodiversity SPD (2021) requires all major and minor applications other than the following exemptions currently suggested by the Government to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity:

- i. Permitted development;
- ii. Householder development, including extensions;

- iii. Nationally significant infrastructure, which falls within scope of the Planning Act 2008;
- iv. Some brownfield sites with marginal viability and substantial constraints. It is expected that full details to be set out in secondary legislation, but considerations are likely to include where sites contain a high proportion of derelict land and buildings and only a small percentage of the site is undeveloped, land values are significantly lower than average, and the site does not contain any protected habitats; and
- v. Developments that would not result in measurable loss or degradation of habitat, for instance change of use of or alterations to building.

7.12.6 The application is accompanied with an Ecological and Biodiversity Impact Assessment which forms part of the Environmental Statement (ES). The methodology of the assessment focused on the following:-

- Consider the activities and biophysical changes likely to be associated with the proposed development and its zone of influence.
- Identify the baseline conditions within the zone of influence, with particular reference to those important ecological features that are likely to be affected.
- Describe and assess the potential effects on the structure and function of the systems on which these features depend, in the absence of mitigation.
- Describe any mitigation needed to avoid or minimise adverse effects and explain how such actions have been incorporated into the scheme.
- Describe any compensation needed where an effect cannot be reduced to an insignificant level.
- Set out the net anticipated effects of the proposed development, complete with mitigation.

7.12.7 As set out in the Assessment, habitat surveys were undertaken on the site to record habitat types and dominant vegetation, including invasive species and a reconnaissance survey for evidence of protected flora and fauna or habitats of supporting such species. A desktop study was also undertaken from the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) and from the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).

7.12.8 In addition to the above, in order to determine the overall impact of the development on biodiversity with respect to no net loss, a Biodiversity Metric Calculation was undertaken using the current Biodiversity Metric (Natural England's Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Beta). The assessment identified that there are no statutory consideration designations present on the including nature consideration designations of importance (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SACs) or Ramsar (wetland of international importance)). However, there is one SSSI (Knebworth Woods) within 0.5km of the development. In terms of non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites, there are twelve sites within 1km of the site. These are as follows:-

- Kitching Green Lane;
- Upper Kitching Spring;
- High Broomin Wood;
- Symonds Green;
- Garston Meadow;
- Fishers Green Wood;
- Crabtree Spring;
- Homefield Farm;
- Six Hills Common;
- Rush Green Airfield;
- Elder Way Flood Meadow;
- Pastures north of Burleighcroft Wood.

7.12.9 The HERC provided 309 records of 51 notable species including arable species, open mosaic habitat species, woodland and hedgerow species. In terms of invasive species, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed, these were not recorded at the site. The site is identified as being dominated by arable land of which three fields are in active cultivation. There are narrow field margins at the site are dominated by common arable weeds with or adjacent to the crop, with no notable species recorded.

7.12.10 The open mosaic habitat on the previously developed land (former landfill site) has been identified which includes a mix of dense bramble, scrub, tall ruderal and short-grazed grassland. There is also small ephemeral pools, with vegetation including short rush, hard rush and hairy sedge. Areas of willow scrub have also been identified. The grassland habitats within the mosaic are short-grazed with rabbits being well established within areas of the site. Horses have also been tethered in parts of this area which has resulted in overgrazing.

7.12.11 The assessment identifies that there are three woodland areas which fall within the site boundary with most of the site bound by hedgerows, trees and scrub. Detailed field surveys were also undertaken which covered the following species:-

- Bats;
- Badgers;
- Dormice;
- Wintering birds;
- Breeding birds;
- Reptiles;
- Great crested newts; and
- Invertebrates.

7.12.12 With regards to bats, the assessment identified that no trees which were scheduled for removal as set out in the arboricultural report were found to have potential to support roosting bats. However, it was identified that a small number of trees which are to be retained, had low to moderate potential to support roosting bats. Monitoring which also undertaken identified a total of 8 confirmed species using the site. However, whilst it was identified from the survey work that the site supported a good assemblage of bat species, activity levels were low for all apart from the common species.

7.12.13 With regard to badgers, there were no main badger setts recoded. However, there were a couple of outlier setts identified as well as a disused outlier sett. There was evidence of territorial latrines and evidence of foraging and dispersal, with some limited sett digging within the hedgerows. In relation to dormice, no evidence of dormice were identified during the survey work undertaken by the applicants ecologist.

7.12.14 In relation to birds, the wintering bird surveys and breeding bird surveys identified 50 bird species making use of the site, with 30 species exhibiting breeding behaviour. A number of key bird species were also identified such as skylarks (20 breeding territories), yellow wagtail, corn bunting, linnet, mistle thrush and yellow hammer. In addition, Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species song thrush and tree sparrow were both identified in the winter survey.

7.12.15 Turning to reptiles, the survey identified a single common lizard along the southern boundary. However, the site has been concluded to fall short of local importance due to the limited extent of suitable habitat present. In relation to Great Crested Newts (GCN), these are known to be present within 250m of the site. In addition, GCN's have also been located between 250m to 500m within a further three ponds. Given the distribution of GCN within proximity of the site and their overall distribution, there are potentially species which likely use small areas of the site such as hedgerows, principally along the southern boundary. Based on the evidence, the amphibian

population for the site is regarded as being of local importance. In relation to invertebrates, the field surveys identified a number of invertebrate species, 7 of which have conservation status. Consequently, the site is also identified as being of local importance for invertebrates.

7.12.16 In order to mitigate as far as possible the impact on the open mosaic habitat, targeted landscaping is proposed on the eastern side of the noise bund in the form of mosaic of species-rich wildflower grassland, native scrub, scattered trees and exposed substrate. Turning to bats, detailed design of the landscaping areas and management of these spaces will be secured via condition. This is to allow for the provision of bat hop-overs with no artificial lighting provided in these areas. The proposal also seeks to ensure retained hedgerow areas are not affected by artificial lighting and the loss of foraging habitats would be mitigated through increasing the quality of the retained landscaped features. In addition, precautionary measures will take place when trees are to be removed.

7.12.17 Further to the mitigation measures, the applicant has agreed to provide enhancements such as the provision of integrated roosting features into new buildings and structures. These enhancements can also be secured through conditions, including the provision of a site wide EMEMP (Ecological Mitigation and Environmental Management Plan). In relation to the existing badger setts, given the potential for sett damage and loss, the applicant would be required to secure a licence from Natural England. In addition, the following precautionary measures will be implemented, and secured by condition:

- Pre-construction badger survey and monitoring for signs of new sett digging;
- Covering any open excavations with wooden boards, or fitting them with appropriate escape ramps, to prevent badgers falling into them and injuring themselves or becoming trapped;
- Monitoring of site for any new sett excavation during prolonged remediation, construction or landscaping works;
- Night working within 30m of any active existing or new setts will be avoided to prevent noise disturbance and night-time illumination near to setts.

7.12.18 In terms of mitigating the impact on badgers during the operational phase of development, the following measures will need to be put in place:

- The lighting scheme for the site would need to be sensitively designed so as to not illuminate the vegetation which covers badger setts, or excessively illuminate features which are likely to function as 'badger corridors';
- Protective shrubs (i.e. prickly/thorny species) will be planted around retained badger setts to deter interference from dogs and local residents.

7.12.19 The measures detailed above can be secured through condition in relation to landscaping with details also included within a site EMEMP. Looking at nesting birds, sections of hedgerow or trees will need to be undertaken outside of the nesting season (March – August inclusive), or immediately following confirmation by a suitably qualified ecologist that no active nests are present. This would also be secured by condition to ensure nesting birds are not detrimentally affected during any site clearance works in order to implement any approved development.

7.12.20 The landscaping strategy would include abundant seed, fruit and nut bearing species to provide a high quality foraging resource for birds. In addition, there would be the creation of wider habitat such as flowering lawns and meadow areas, scrub planting and a small community orchard. These would also be accompanied through the creation of wet and dry SuDS features and wildlife ponds in order to attract an abundant invertebrate species which are an important foraging resource for birds. In terms of new nesting opportunities, these would be secured through the provision of integrated bird nesting features such as swift boxes.



7.12.21 The above measures can be secured via detailed landscaping designs along with a site wide EMEMP through an appropriately worded condition. With regards to mitigating for the loss of the 20 skylark territories, a total of 25 skylark plots will be provided within two fields adjacent to the west of the site. These fields cover a total area of c. 70 hectares and will allow for the skylark plots which are a minimum of 16m<sup>2</sup> and appropriately spaced. These plots, including their overall specifications as detailed in the ES would be secured as part of a Section 106 legal agreement. This agreement will also secure the provision of suitable replacement plots for corn bunting, wagtails and yellow hammers. In terms of the corn bunting and yellow wagtail, the legal agreement would secure six corn bunting strips (12m x 200m) within two fields adjacent to the west of the site. In addition, two hedgerows within these fields would be allowed to grow out to provide additional habitat opportunities for yellow hammer.

7.12.22 Turning specifically to the Skylark Plots, these would be created to the following specifications:

- Fields would be sown with a winter cereal and plots would be created during sowing by temporarily turning off the seed drill;
- A minimum 50m buffer will be maintained between the skylark plots and edge of the field/public footpaths;
- Plots would be located mid-way between tram lines;
- Plots would measure no-less than 3m wide by 6m long, with a minimum area of 16m<sup>2</sup>;
- Plots would be no larger than 24m<sup>2</sup>;
- Plots would be created at a density of 2 plots/ha;
- Once created, the plots would not be mechanically weeded between 01 April and harvest;
- Rotation of skylark plots would be an option, but the total number of plots (25 no.) must be maintained at all times.

7.12.23 In regards to the corn bunting strips, these are to be created to the following specifications:

- Fields to be sown with a winter cereal and strips will be created during sowing by double drilling;
- A minimum 100m buffer to be maintained for the crop edge;
- Plots would measure 12m wide by 200m long.

7.12.24 In relation to the hedgerows for yellowhammer, these would be allowed to increase in width by circa 2m. In terms of hedgerow management, this would be reduced with a cut no more than every other year to allow the increase in volume. With respect to reptiles, the ES specifies that any field margins, hedgerows and woodland habitats to be lost or damaged by construction works, will be subject to a precautionary clearance approach to allow reptiles to disperse safely into adjacent retained habitat. Clearance should only take place between March to September, during warm and dry conditions when reptiles will be active and able to safely disperse, subject to nesting bird constraints. The clearance works would be undertaken in a staged manner, with a gradual vegetation height reduction from 200mm to ground level.

7.12.25 Cutting direction would be undertaken in a strategic manner at the furthest point from the retained suitable reptile habitats, gradually moving towards retained areas of the site. Experienced contractors will move ahead of the clearance works in order to conduct a hand search of any potential refugia for reptiles. Any reptiles found would be captured in accordance with Government Guidance and relocated to an adjacent area of retained habitat.

- 7.12.26 Reptile mitigation measures would be secured via a planning condition. In addition, appropriate management of existing and newly created habitats for reptiles at the site will be set out within the site wide EMEMP (Ecological Mitigation and Environmental Management Plan). This will ensure these areas are suitable habitat for reptiles in the long-term. In relation to amphibians, mitigation measures would be secured through a licensing framework via Natural England and also be set out in further detail in the EMEMP. In addition, a detailed condition setting out requirements to provide a mitigation strategy to reduce the impact of the proposed construction on amphibians could also be imposed.
- 7.12.27 In relation to invertebrates, the new landscaping provision across the site which includes deadwood habitats within woodland and mosaic of species rich wildflower meadows, native planting / scrub along with tree planting would provide a range of opportunities for invertebrates. This again can be controlled via an appropriately worded conditions relating to landscaping as well as the provision of an EMEMP.
- 7.12.28 Turning now as to the residual impacts of the development, using the Metric calculator, it has been identified that there would be a net loss in Biodiversity, specifically due to the 7.99 hectare open mosaic habitat (OMH) on the previously developed land (landfill / made ground) which is a priority habitat. Given this, despite the substantive level of new planting (including trees) combined with the SuDS attenuation wildlife ponds, open mosaic habitat (bund), woodland, meadows (including flower meadows), amenity grassland, non-native planting, scrub and orchard planting, there will still be a net loss of biodiversity in terms of habitat area of -27.79% (-89.06 units).
- 7.12.29 As the loss in biodiversity units cannot be mitigated for within the site, off-site enhancements will need to be sought for a financial contribution (See section 7.3 for further details. Such monies would allow for the creation or enhancements on off-site habitats within Stevenage. It is important to note that if the OMH was not made ground and was classed as regular greenfield, there would be a lower baseline score. As such, if the OMH made ground weighting was removed to reflect a more traditional greenfield site, this would swing to a net loss of -27.79% to a net gain of 14%. In addition, if the OMH was excluded from the calculations, leaving only the arable fields and retained wood, the development would achieve a net-gain of +60.95 units (+47.72%). This demonstrates that the development has been designed to work hard in order to provide a valuable habitat for wildlife.
- 7.12.30 Given the above, despite the net loss, the proposal will result in a significant enhancement to the diversity of habitats within the site. The proposed scheme has been carefully designed to create a greater variety of higher distinctiveness habitats which are all connected from a network of grasslands, meadows, scrub, ditches and enhanced hedgerows. As such, whilst there is a loss of biodiversity units as detailed in the calculator, the scheme will result in a much-improved ecological network across the site.
- 7.12.31 For all remaining important ecological features, these would be secured through the detailed design of the landscaping areas, relevant planning obligations, and conditions along with the enshrined within the Ecological Mitigation, Enhancement and Management Plan (EMEMP) which would cover the whole site. With all these mitigation measures and combined financial obligations, there residual adverse impacts would be mitigated against.
- 7.12.32 Following consultation with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, subject to the relevant mitigations measures being put in place and through a financial contribution in order to achieve 10% net-gain which can be secured as part of a Section 106 agreement, they consider the proposed development to be acceptable from an ecological and biodiversity perspective.

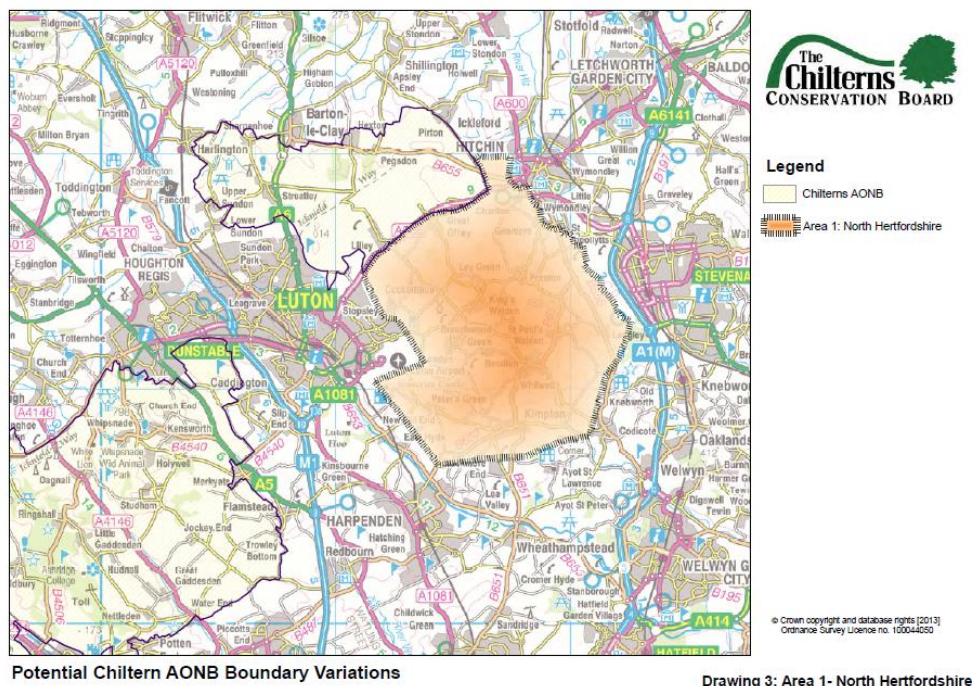
## Impact on the proposed extension to Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

7.12.33 Following further re-consultation with Natural England, they have advised in their comments dated 02 December 2021, that the proposed development is located within an area which they are assessing as a boundary variation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As such, consideration has been given to the Chilterns AONB in the following section of this report.

7.12.34 The Chilterns AONB was designated in 1965 and covers 324 square miles of countryside, stretching from the River Thames in southern Oxfordshire up through Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. A previous review of the boundary in 1990 resulted in an enlargement of the AONB.

7.12.35 The Chilterns AONB Conservation Board (CCB) is an independent body established by Parliamentary order in July 2004. The Board's purposes are given in Section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and are conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB, and increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB. The CCB has a statutory duty to publish a Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB.

7.12.36 Under the CROW Act 2000, Natural England can make orders to designate AONBs or vary the boundaries of existing ones. However, it is a matter for a Conservation Board such as the CCB to review the boundary of their AONB. The CCB submitted a proposal to amend the boundaries of the Chilterns AONB in October 2013 to Natural England. In making the application, the CCB prepared and submitted a document entitled 'The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the AONB'. The CCB considered that the landscape to the south of the A505 within North Hertfordshire was of similar quality to an AONB and therefore, included a proposal that the AONB boundary be amended to take this into account (See plan below).



7.12.37 To change an existing boundary Natural England must issue a variation order and consult each local authority affected by the proposed order (or variation order), then publish the proposal in local newspapers of each affected local authority, consider all representations made against the proposals and make any necessary modifications, then finally submit the order to the Secretary of State for Defra, including any unresolved representations or objections. The Secretary of State for Defra can confirm, refuse, modify or vary any order by Natural England to vary the boundary of an AONB.

7.12.38As the application by Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB has shown, the process to modify the boundary could take at least 4 years once Natural England agree to consider an application. In this regard, and as confirmed on the 24 June 2021, Natural England announced that the Chiltern AONB is to be considered for boundary expansion. Given this, Natural England advise that an assessment of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal on this area should therefore, be undertaken, with opportunities to avoid or minimise impacts on the landscape and secure enhancement opportunities. In addition, they also set out that any development should reflect or enhance the intrinsic character and natural beauty of the area, with reference given to paragraphs 174 (see paragraph 7.12.1) and 176 of the NPPF (2021).

7.12.39In terms of paragraph 176, and for reference, it states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

7.12.40Notwithstanding the above, it is important to note that the site would not fall within the proposed expansion to the Chilterns AONB. This is because the land in questions falls within North Hertfordshire District and the land which falls within the Borough of Stevenage has not been identified as forming part of the AONB. Further to this, and as specified in Natural England own letter, they are assessing a boundary variation and as Natural England have advised in their own letter *"this assessment process does not confer any additional planning protection"*. They also state in the letter *"an extension to an existing AONB is formally designated once a variation order, made by Natural England, is confirmed by the Defra Secretary of State"*.

7.12.41Futher, the designation process, even as set out in Central Government's announcement on the proposed expansion to the Chilterns AONB, will take several years as there is an extensive consultation process which has to take place with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the Secretary of State for Defra could potentially modify or refuse parts of the variation order to expand the AONB. Therefore, a detailed and comprehensive assessment as to the impact the development could have on an un-adopted AONB expansion is considered unreasonable in this instance. Furthermore, the NPPF policies in relation to AONB's only relates to those areas which have been formally designated as such, so there are no policies to hang an assessment on with respect to an area which "may" or "may not" become an AONB.

#### Impact on Knebworth Wood SSSI

7.12.42Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that the green infrastructure, natural environment of Stevenage will be protected and managed, and the Council will positively acknowledge its influence on Knebworth Woods SSSI and Lea Valley SPA.

7.12.43It is acknowledged that the proposed development will potentially have an impact on Knebworth Woods SSSI due to its proximity to the development site. As such, and in order to mitigate the impact of the development on Knebworth Woods SSSI, best practice construction measures will need to be implemented to avoid/minimise the generation of litter, dust, noise and vibration. In addition, measures will need to be implemented to avoid/minimise potential for fuel and chemical spills. These measures would be set out within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the development and this will be secured via condition. With regards to the operational aspect of the development, the scheme would provide a well-designed natural

greenspace and greenway for pedestrians along with a cycle network within the site which would significantly exceed Local Plan requirements. The proposal also comprises a significant provision of children's play, trim trails, running routes as well as cricket and/or football facilities and a MUGA. The extensive provision of open space within the development site would reduce visitor rates to the accessible areas of the SSSI. Additionally, the ES sets out that appropriate signage encouraging the use of open space within the site along with leaflets to educate residents on the sensitive habitats would be provided and how they can minimise their impact.

7.12.44 Further to the above, dog waste facilities would be provided within the site to prevent dog fouling building up of nutrients in the grassland habitats. In relation to the trees and woodland habitats, local wildlife site edged etc., these would be protected in accordance with current British Standards and as detailed in the applicants Arboricultural Impact Assessment. In addition, these areas would also be protected during the construction phase through the CEMP. In terms of improvements to these areas, the scheme would provide a new woodland edge habitat which would border the local wildlife sites to the west. With regards to the overall planting scheme and management of these areas, this would be secured via detailed designs which would be captured through an appropriately worded condition imposed to any permission issued.

7.12.45 With the above measures put in place, Natural England advised in their comments dated 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 that they had no objection to the development subject to mitigation measures which are outlined in the ES to be put in place in order to mitigate the impact the development could have on the SSSI. However, Natural England in their latest comments has now retracted their position and have now requested further consideration is given in terms of the recreation pressure on Knebworth Woods SSSI. They now advise that whilst the mitigation measures will have a role in reducing the number of visits to the SSSI, they consider that there will be residual usage of the SSSI, and given the scale of the development, there may be a need for additional off-site mitigation.

7.12.46 Following a discussion with the applicant, they have re-engaged with Natural England to understand what their concerns are in more detail. This is because the applicants have confirmed in writing that they are willing to offer up any mitigation measures which would help reduce any residual impact this development would have on Knebworth Woods SSSI. In addition, they have agreed to work with Natural England to agree any conditions they may wish to have imposed as part of any planning permission.

7.12.47 Given the above, it is recommended that delegated powers be given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee to negotiate and secure any financial obligations which may be required to mitigate the impact this development could potentially have on the SSSI. In addition, the imposition of suitable safeguarding conditions, with authority given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, to amend or add to the suggested draft conditions set out in this report which ensure protection measures are put in place with respect to the SSSI.

7.12.48 Notwithstanding, in the event Natural England continue to object to this application and do not consider suitable mitigation measures can be secured, or imposition of appropriately worded conditions will overcome their concerns in relations to the developments potential impact on the SSSI, then this application will be referred back to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision.

## **7.13 Sustainable Construction and Climate Change**

7.13.1 Policy FP1 of the Local Plan (2019) stipulates that planning permission will be granted for development that can incorporate measures to address adaptation to climate change. New developments will be encouraged to include measures such as:

- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely variations in temperature;
- Reducing water consumption to no more than 110 litres per person per day, including external water use;
- Improving energy performance of buildings;
- Reducing energy consumption through efficiency measures;
- Using or producing renewable or low carbon energy from a local source; and
- Contributing towards reducing flood risk through the use of SuDS or other appropriate measures.

7.13.2 The planning application is accompanied by an Energy Statement prepared by Energist (date 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021). This strategy only covers the proposed dwellinghouses which are to be constructed in Phase 1. The strategy sets out a fabric first approach as this does not require people to change their behavioural patterns because the buildings are designed with the following measures in place:-

- Energy efficient building fabric and insulation to all heat loss floors, walls and roofs;
- High-efficiency double-glazed windows throughout;
- Good air tightness results;
- Efficient building services including high-efficiency heating systems;
- Low-energy lighting throughout;
- Bespoke psi values to limit thermal bridging (Calculations to achieve an accurate, highly efficient, and cost-effective fabric performance for new-build developments as thermal bridging accounts for 20-30% of total building heat loss).

7.13.3 The proposed measures would seek to reduce the developments carbon footprint by 8.3% (50,706 kg/CO<sub>2</sub>) per annum. The development would also include the installation of solar PV panels and solar thermal which would be used to generate the domestic hot water. In addition, the PV panels can also provide some of the electricity into the dwelling unit. The report also sets out the potential use of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) which can be used to heat some of the spaces within a dwellinghouse.

7.13.4 It is important to note that during the course of the development, the prevailing Building Regulations are being updated for new developments to meet The Future Homes Standard. This has more stringent emissions targets as well as changes in the carbon factor for all fuels, which makes electricity a more favoured source of energy. These standards are currently timetabled to be in force by Summer 2022. The proposed amended regulations will require a more stringent 31% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>.

7.13.5 One of the key methods to reduce the carbon footprint will be to ensure all dwellings have an ASHP's installed. This would reduce the level of CO<sub>2</sub> by approximately 32%. The second method the applicant is looking at is the introduction of a waste water heat recovery system and ensuring there are enough solar PV panels to meet new compliance targets. This would also reduce the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in accordance with upcoming guidance. Whatever the developers decide, the new Building Regulations once adopted will place more stringent requirements to reduce the carbon footprint of buildings.

7.13.6 The Future Home Standards which complements the Building Regulations overall objective is that from 2025, all new homes built from this year will produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than homes delivered under current regulations. The standards set out a mandatory space requirement for hot water storage, no more combi-boilers (no new home will be able to connect the gas network from 2025), heating systems to run at lower temperature and significant improvements to insulation and airtightness.



- 7.13.7 Given the above, as time progresses with the construction of the development, the new dwellings will have to meet more stringent Building Regulation requirements in order to significantly reduce buildings CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In order to further reduce the development's carbon footprint, the applicant has agreed to install a significant number of car charging points across the development. There would be one active charge point per dwelling, providing 1500 private car charging points across the site. In addition, the applicant would also install communal car charging points allocated to visitor parking areas (in areas agreed with HCC Highways). In addition, to this, there will be a further 66 communal charging points on the commercial land, plus a further 8 communal charging points located at the primary school.
- 7.13.8 In terms of water consumption, the applicant has agreed to put in place a number of water efficiency measures. This would ensure that water consumption would be 110 litres per person, per day. The kitchen taps would be restricted with a flow rate of 7 litres per minute and other taps would be restricted to 4 litres per minute. The toilet cisterns would have a dual flush system of 6/3 litres and showers would be restricted to 8 litres per minute. Baths would have a restrictive volume of 170 litres, fitted dishwashers at 1.25 litres per setting and washing machines at 8.17 litres per Kg.
- 7.13.9 Taking the aforementioned measures into consideration, it has been demonstrated that for Phase 1 of this development, the proposed development would accord with Policy FP1 of the Council's adopted Local Plan (2019). Therefore, it is recommended a condition is imposed requiring the new dwelling units being delivered in phase 1 to put in place the detailed measures specified in the accompanying energy statement. This would ensure that these new units are adaptable to climate change.
- 7.13.10 Turning to the commercial units, including the sheltered living accommodation, as these would be delivered through later phases of the development, the measures in terms of adaptability to climate change are not known at this time. However, a condition would be imposed if permission were to be granted to any permission issued. This condition would ensure that all future reserved matters applications which cover a respective phase of the development provide detailed measures to demonstrate how that respective phase meets the requirements of the policy at the time, as well as the Council's aspirations to be Net Zero by 2030. These requirements would have to be approved by the Council before development on that respective phase can commence.

## **7.14 Impact on Archaeological Remains**

- 7.14.1 The NPPF paragraph 128 states that "*In determining applications...Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation*".
- 7.14.2 Paragraph 129 notes that "*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal*".
- 7.14.3 With regards to the impact on archaeological remains, the approach set out in the Environmental Statement (ES) is deemed to be acceptable. This is because the proposed development, whilst it is a circa 75 hectares of primary arable use, the proposed development areas has been subject to some very low archaeological evaluation with three trenches excavated in 2002. Two of the trenches identified

archaeological remains, with substantial quantities of medieval pottery (12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century) recovered from the first trench. However, it should be noted that this evaluation constituted just a 0.038% sample of the proposed development area where by way of comparison a comprehensive trial trenching evaluation of a site is generally 3% to 5% sample.

7.14.4 The evaluation followed a geophysical survey which was not carried out to modern standards. Only small pockets of the development area were actually surveyed, with 'scanning', not an effective way to prospect for archaeological remains, used over the remainder. Recent archaeological excavations adjacent to the south east boundary of the site (at Norton Green) have uncovered Roman and medieval settlement activity of some density. A Roman road is present along the north-west boundary of the site, while cropmarks of former field boundaries, as well as ridge and furrow, have been identified both in the north and south of the proposed development area. Archaeological evaluations outside the proposed development area to the north and west have identified areas of Bronze Age burial or ritual activity, Iron Age and Roman settlement, and possible abandoned medieval farmsteads.

7.14.5 Consequently, given the size and scale of the proposed development, there is the potential it could have an impact on *in situ* archaeological remains, and the archaeological potential of the landscape. Therefore, HCC Archaeology have advised that a comprehensive geophysical survey and trial trenching evaluation on the proposed development area should be undertaken. As such, in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on any potential archaeological remains within the development site, it is recommended that if the Council was minded to grant planning permission, a number of pre-commencement conditions could be imposed. As set out in paragraph 5.4.8 of this report, the following provisions would be secured by these conditions:-

- A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation of the entire proposed development site, prior to the commencement of development; and
- Such appropriate mitigation measures indicated as necessary by the evaluation. These may include:-
  - The preservation of any archaeological remains *in situ*, if warranted;
  - The appropriate archaeological excavation of any remains before any development commenced on the site;
  - The archaeological monitoring and recording of the groundworks of the development, including foundations, services, landscaping, roads, access etc (and also including a contingency for the preservation or further investigation of any remains then encountered);
- The analysis of the results of the archaeological work, with provision for the subsequent production of report and an archive, and the publication of the results, as appropriate;
- Such other provisions as may be necessary to protect the archaeological and historic interests of the site.

## **7.15 Loss of agricultural land**

7.15.1 A substantial part of the application site is farmland and paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by "recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystems services, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land" (paragraph 170b). Footnote 53 of paragraph 171 of the NPPF sets out that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality.



- 7.15.2 The NPPF defines the best and most versatile agricultural land as “land in grade 1,2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification” as set out in Annex 2 in the NPPF. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) sets out a need to protect and enhance valued soils taking account of the economic and other benefits of the “best and most versatile” agricultural land.
- 7.15.3 The existing site has an agricultural classification according to Natural England Records of Grade 3 “Good to Moderate”. The proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 48.4 hectares of subgrade 3a and 3b land. The development is therefore identified, as detailed in the Environmental Statement, as having a moderate to major adverse significance. The development would affect two farm holdings, both of which are large arable based farming enterprises. The development itself, however, would not affect essential parts of farming infrastructure. This is because no farm buildings are affected by the development, nor, would issues around farm severance would arise.
- 7.15.4 Further, the development would not affect the continued viability of either farm enterprises. Therefore, it can be deduced that there would be a low magnitude of impact on the farm holdings of low sensitivity. Thus, the loss of land from these two farm holdings is therefore, assessed to be of negligible adverse significant, and as such, is not significant in EIA terms. Consequently, Natural England have not raised any objection to the loss of the agricultural land which would be lost following the implementation of this development.

## **7.16 Other matters**

### Refuse and Recycle Facilities

- 7.16.1 The Design Guide (2009) states, provision should be made within new development for the storage and collection of waste from a site. The submitted plans indicate that there would be sufficient refuse facilities which would serve the proposed residential properties and commercial premises. As such, a condition can be imposed requiring these facilities to be delivered in accordance with the details specified in the application. In terms of the outline aspect of the hybrid application, further details for general waste and recycle facilities would be dealt with by any subsequent reserved matters application, which would have to be submitted in the future.

### Crime Prevention

- 7.16.2 In regards to crime prevention and designing out crime, whilst the concerns of the Crime Prevention Officer are noted, an informative can be imposed with respect to Phase 1 to seek accreditation for the development which is ‘Secure by Design’. With regards to the outline element of this hybrid application, matters regarding ‘Secure by Design’ can be dealt with at the reserved matters stage of the application process for each relevant phase of development.

### Equalities Impact

- 7.16.3 Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.16.4 Officers have had full regard to this duty in the assessment of this application and the Committee must be mindful of this duty *inter alia* when determining all applications. The consultation process has served to notify all relevant adjoining parties likely to be impacted by the development. However, additional regard has been given to any potential impact upon the protected characteristics outlined in the Equalities Act 2010 Section 149 and the provisions contained therein. It is considered that due regard has been given to the impact of the scheme on all groups with the protected characteristics schedule.

7.16.5 The proposed development would comprise a policy compliant mix of dwellings to cater for the diverse needs of the area. The proposed development would provide not only the 30% of affordable homes; it would also seek to deliver a residential care home which would be located in close proximity to the neighbourhood centre. This centre would incorporate facilities to meet the day to day needs of all residents who would occupy this development. The development would also comprise a new 3FE Primary School and Nursery to ensure there is early years provision for future residents in line with Council policy.

7.16.6 The scheme as set out in the Design and Access Statement has also been designed to allow for access for all, in line with the approved Part M of the Building Regulations 2015. In addition, the roads and footpaths within the site have been designed to meet required standards in terms of gradients. In addition, access between footpaths and parking spaces to access doors would also accord Part M of the Building Regs. In addition, all external spaces serving the dwellings would be designed to accommodate ambulant disabled and wheelchair access. Internally, all dwellings have been designed to Part M4(1) (Visitable dwellings) of the Building Regulations 2015 as well as being in line NDSS. In addition to this, 50% of all proposed dwellings are required to meet AD Part M4(2) (Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings) which is also a requirement of Policy HO11 of the adopted Local Plan. Following a review of the application submission, 50% of the dwellings which are to be delivered as part of this development would accord with the aforementioned requirements.

#### Community Infrastructure Levy

7.16.7 As indicated above, the Council adopted CIL on 1 April 2020 and the CIL Charging Schedule specifies a payment for new floorspace in line with the following rates (plus appropriate indexation):

Development Type	CIL Rate (£ per square meter)	
	Zone 1: Stevenage Central, Stevenage West Urban Extension and North of Stevenage Extension	Zone 2: Everywhere else
Residential		
Market housing	£40/m <sup>2</sup>	£100/m <sup>2</sup>
Sheltered housing	£100/m <sup>2</sup>	
Extra care housing	£40/m <sup>2</sup>	
Retail development	£60/m <sup>2</sup>	
All other development	£0/m <sup>2</sup>	

7.16.8 CIL is a non-negotiable charge. The exact charge will be determined by the Council's CIL officer after an application has been granted in accordance with the CIL Charging

Schedule and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). Opportunities for relief or exemption from the CIL charge exist and will be taken into account in the calculation of the final CIL charge.

7.16.9 CIL replaces the need for S106 agreements to specify financial and/or land contributions for non-site-specific infrastructure projects. This allows infrastructure to be planned on a borough-wide scale rather than on a site-by-site basis as mitigation against the impacts of individual proposals. A CIL Form 1: Additional Information has been submitted along with the application.

7.16.10 With regards to how the CIL monies are spent, the ultimate decision lies with Stevenage Borough Council and the allocation of funding amount of £75,000 or over will rest with the Planning and Development Committee. Service providers who would not receive contributions through the Section 106 agreement for this development, including but not limited to those at Hertfordshire County Council and Stevenage Borough Council, will be able to bid for funding in due course.

#### Statement of Community Involvement

7.16.11 The applicant has submitted with this application a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This statement details how the development team engaged the wider community prior to the formal submission of a planning application. It is important to note that this took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, so the applicant was restricted on the method of consultation with local residents.

7.16.12 On the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the pre-submission scheme went through a virtual design review by Design South East. The applicant presented the scheme to the Design Review Panel which went over the emerging vision and masterplan principles. A report was issued by Design South East which in summary, set out the following key points:-

- The approach to the site must be led not by constraints but by opportunities;
- An overall landscape vision should lead the layout;
- This vision must relate to this site, that it is to be site specific, and not relate to any other development;
- The development needs to evolve from the topography, views and the landscape context of the countryside, also the listed features beyond the site;
- The relationship with the rest of Stevenage being key, there must be visual links and connections to both the town centre, and to the surrounding countryside;
- The links should be attractive and welcoming, providing a convincing relationship between the site and its surroundings; and
- The spine road should be reconfigures as a main street, and, prioritise pedestrians and cycles over cars, a series of linked spaces and events.

7.16.13 Through extensive negotiations with officers and the Council's appointed consultants, an overarching masterplan and joint vision (see paragraph 3.3) for the site was agreed. This agreed masterplan and joint vision formed part of the public consultation process which was held virtually. The applicant, therefore, set up a dedicated project website in order to host the exhibition, and it also provided a useful platform for any updates to the project, including updates to the planning application as it progressed. The website content was structured around the following:

- Introduction;
- Background;
- Vision and Design Evolution;
- Masterplan;
- Community Benefits and Timelines;
- Have Your Say.

7.16.14 The website was launched on 11 September 2020 and ran for 3-weeks. The website itself was advertised through a community newsletter which was delivered to approximately 300 properties and 120 businesses in the vicinity of the site, also to elected representatives at Stevenage Borough Council. The community newsletter also set out details for those who do not have the internet how to ascertain paper copies of the exhibition material along with how to make comments. A separate newsletter was also delivered to all the properties on the Dyes Land Gypsy and Traveller site.

7.16.15 During the consultation, the website had been viewed 320 times. A summary of comments raised during the virtual exhibition were as follows:-

- Insufficient need for a development of this scale in Stevenage;
- Vacant housing stock and brownfield sites should be developed before greenfield land;
- Impact of construction of new access on Meadway Playing Fields and existing parking provision on Meadway;
- Concern over the capacity of the proposed vehicular access points and impact on surrounding community;
- Existing congestion issues on Bessemer Drive and Clovelly Way will be exacerbated;
- Concern over the potential uptake of sustainable travel modes;
- Requests for an open air lido for swimming, tennis courts, basketball nets and skate park;
- Concern over noise and air quality impact associated with increased congestion on the local road network;
- Impact upon the residents of the Dyes Lane Gypsy and Traveller Site;
- Query over construction programme and phasing;
- Proposed dwellings should be of a traditional, country style and built at a low density;
- Concern over impact upon wildlife, including habitats and protected species.

7.16.16 As detailed above, prior to the submission of the application, whilst the Covid-19 pandemic restricted the applicants ability to hold public and face-to-face events, extensive consultation has been undertaken with local residents. In addition, the information provided in the Statement of Community Involvement identified the issues raised and how the developer has sought to address these concerns as part of the application submission. In addition, this report provides a detailed analysis of the proposed development taking into consideration the concerns raised by residents as set out above.

#### Public Health

7.16.17 Whilst there is no statutory requirement for the applicant to prepare a Health Impact Assessment, the applicant has undertaken such an assessment which forms part of the Environmental Statement (ES). The assessment has been undertaken adapting the Rapid Health Impact Assessment tool developed by the NHS London Health Urban Development Unit and assesses the extent to which the proposed development satisfies specific criteria. The assessment is split into topic areas which then assesses the potential impact of the development on these specific topic areas. For reference, these topic areas are:

- Housing quality and design;
- Access to health care and other social infrastructure;
- Access to open space and nature;
- Air quality, noise and neighbourhood amenity;
- Accessibility and active travel;
- Crime reduction and community safety;

- Access to healthy food;
- Access to work and training;
- Social cohesion and lifetime neighbourhoods;
- Minimising the use of resources, and
- Climate change.

7.16.18 Following a review of the assessment, the scheme is providing 1500 new homes which have been designed in accordance with the requirements which are set out in the adopted Local Plan (2019). The proposed development also makes the provision for a GP surgery (if it is established by the NHS that on-site provision is required). There would also be a new primary school and community facilities which form part of the wider masterplan.

7.16.19 The scheme would seek to deliver approximately 29 hectares of open space, including equipped play spaces and multi-use games area. There would also be the provision of a new cricket and sporting facilities which supports both cricket and football. The green infrastructure has also been designed to accommodate running routes in order to further enhance the health and well-being of future residents.

7.16.20 In regards to air quality, noise and neighbourhood amenity, a Construction Environmental Management would be used, and secured by condition, to manage impacts such as noise, dust, vibration and odours. The ES also sets out detailed mitigation measures which regards to reducing noise on residential properties and the proposed primary school. Turning to active travel, the proposed development has been designed to encourage walking and cycling with well-connected streets and green spaces. The development has also been designed to connect into the existing extensive cycle network in order to help further encourage active forms of travel. Further, the scheme also seeks to provide access to public transport through the provision of new bus stops positioned within easy access.

7.16.21 The development proposals have also been designed to incorporate high levels of natural surveillance with controlled access to private spaces, rear gardens and parking courtyards in order to reduce the potential for crime and fear of crime. In relation to access to healthy food, the proposal seeks to provide a community orchard to help encourage healthy eating. There would also be the provision of a local convenience store which will be accessible by foot and by bicycle.

7.16.22 In terms of employment, the development would provide a designated area of employment which would be located within close proximity to the residential part of the scheme. The development would also provide new construction jobs which, through the appropriate mechanism, will secure the provision of new apprenticeships for local residents.

7.16.23 The scheme in terms of its layout has been designed to highly permeable thereby removing physical barriers that might preclude social cohesion. Opportunities are also being provided through the provision of outdoor spaces in the central area which could be used for community events. The development also makes efficient use of the land to deliver the necessary level of housing as well as ensuring materials used in the construction are sustainably sourced with materials recycled where possible.

7.16.24 In relation to climate change, the proposed development has been designed to meet the requirements of Policy FP1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) as well as those detailed in Building Regulations. The proposal also seeks to provide an uplift in tree planting along with the retention of trees in order to boost biodiversity. The scheme would also adopt the provision of a sustainable drainage system which would also further enhance biodiversity. It also includes the provision of EV charging facilities in order to encourage the take up of EVs.

7.16.25 The assessment has therefore, demonstrated that from a planning/built environment perspective, the proposal has been designed to have a positive impact upon the health and wellbeing of existing and future residents.

#### Fire Safety Strategy

7.16.26 Following consultation with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue, they have recommended that if planning permission were to be granted, a condition should be imposed. This condition should require details of a scheme for the provision of adequate water supplies and fire hydrants which are necessary for firefighting purposes at the site. These measures would then need to be put in place prior to the first occupation of any part of the development.

#### Green Belt

7.16.27 Under the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1998, it was identified under Policy that 65,000 new dwellings had to be delivered, of which 5,700 dwellings were allocated to Stevenage at the time. Specifically, the County Structure Plan stated that land should be allocated in the local plan review for a strategic housing development at West Stevenage and the Green Belt boundary was to be reviewed for that development.

7.16.28 Following a Green Belt review undertaken by the Council, The Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991 – 2011 (adopted 2004) (now superseded by the 2019 Local Plan) set out the boundary of the West Stevenage site where the land was to be released from the Green Belt. This was in order to deliver the housing requirements identified in the Hertfordshire Structure Plan.

7.16.29 The adopted Local Plan (2019) identifies this site as providing the only opportunity within the Borough to accommodate a new urban extension, without compromising Green Belt land. In addition, the site is seen as critical in terms of the Council meeting its housing need. Further to this, the site at West Stevenage would also provide around 10,000 sq.m of additional employment land, as the Local Plan identifies that there is a significant shortfall in employment land across Stevenage. Consequently, the site has been outside of the Metropolitan Green Belt for a number of years due to the aforementioned factors.

7.16.30 It can therefore be concluded, that as the site is not located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, the proposed development cannot be classed as inappropriate or deemed to harm the Green Belt which falls outside the development site boundary. As such, a case of very special circumstances is not required in this instance.

#### Horse and Pony Route

7.16.31 It is noted that a number of representations have been made in relation to an existing horse and pony route which would be affected by this proposed development. In addition, reference has been made regarding obligations being sought towards the provision of horse and pony routes to be bridleways along with an expansion of the horse and pony route within the countryside.

7.16.32 Taking the above into consideration, it is noted that under the Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991 to 2011 (adopted 2004 Policy L23: Horse and Pony Route of the 2004 plan stated the following:-

*Any reduction to the existing and proposed horse and pony route, as shown on the proposals map, will not be permitted. Where appropriate, in new developments planning obligations will be sought for the provision of horse and pony routes as*

*bridleways. Any development which adversely affects the route will not be permitted unless a satisfactory alternative route is provided.*

7.16.33 However, the adopted Local Plan (2019) no longer has any respective policies relating to the horse and pony route. As such, there are no policies within the adopted Local Plan to require the developer to upgrade and/or expand horse and pony routes. Notwithstanding this, this development does seek to retain and in some areas, enhance Public Rights of Way (PROW) which currently traverse the application site. The scheme also includes the provision of new and enhanced connections for cyclists, walkers and horse riders to the wider countryside. A detailed assessment on the PROW including new connections and enhancement of existing connections to the countryside are set out in detail in section 7.7 of this report. Furthermore, conditions regarding construction management are being imposed and through these conditions, appropriate measures can be secured to protect horse riders and carriage riders as well as other users of the PROW.

#### Socio-economic

7.16.34 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In order to achieve sustainable development, means that the planning system has three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued coherently. These three objectives are social, economic and environmental. At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which for the purposes for decision making, means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay.

7.16.35 Section of the NPPF (2021) outlines Central Government's policies for housing which seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes as set out in paragraph 60. Section 6 of the Framework sets out the Government's policies for building a strong, competitive economy and indicates in paragraph 81 that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Section 7 of the NPPF (2021) indicates that planning policies and decisions should support the role town centres which play at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and need to change.

7.16.36 Section 8 of the NPPF details the Governments objectives for the promotion of healthy and safe communities which also includes reducing the fear of crime. This section also covers the requirement to ensure the delivery of educational facilities as well as high quality areas of open space. Section 9 sets out that planning system should actively manage patterns of growth to support walking, cycling and public transport use with significant development focused at sustainable locations. Section 12 of the Framework details Central Government's policies for the creation of high quality buildings and places further to which there is an emphasis on good design which is a key aspect of sustainable development.

7.16.37 Turning to the adopted Local Plan (2019), this report provides details of the various planning policies which relate to socio-economic requirements of development, including the requirements of design and the delivery of sustainable and healthy communities.

7.16.38 The Environmental Statement (ES) details the social-economic impacts of the development with regards to the construction phase and operational phases. In terms of the construction phase, it identifies the development would be constructed over a period of between 10-12 years. Consequently, there would be construction related jobs

over the course of the construction phases of the scheme. There would also be indirect effects through the supply of materials from local businesses and expenditure in wages in the area which would contribute to the Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy.

7.16.39 In terms of the level of construction jobs created, the ES details that approximately 290 FTE jobs could be created during the construction period which would support approximately 145 FTE positions in the supply chain. This based on a build-out projection of 195 dwellings per annum. In addition, there would be further direct and indirect employment would be generated by the construction of the proposed employment buildings, local centre and primary school.

7.16.40 The ES details that those employed in the construction of the development are likely to be drawn from the Hertfordshire Labour Market. Separately, there would be a requirement to employ people from Stevenage into some of the construction jobs as well as apprenticeships as required by the Council's Developer Contributions SPD (2021) (See section 7.3 of this report for further details). This requirement would be secured as part of any Section 106 legal agreement.

7.16.41 In regards to the operational phase of development, it is expected that the proposed development would generate approximately 3,540 persons which would represent an increase in the total population of Stevenage by 4.2%. However, it is important to note that a number of these properties are also likely to be owned by existing residents of the town as well as those buying their first home or those who are downsizing.

7.16.42 Given the levelled increased in population, the income and spend of the new residents in the local economy will increase local GVA which will have a positive indirect effect upon the local economy. The ES sets out, based on analysis of the market (Arcadis Housing Design Consultancy Report – *Building Homes and Making Places – The Economic Benefit of Better Housing*, 2017), that approximately £316,000 is generated by every single new house for the national economy. This would equate to approximately £474,000,000.00 from this development alone.

7.16.43 The development itself would provide a significant level of new housing, including of supported living accommodation to the current housing stock. In addition, the number, types, tenure of the new homes would have a beneficial impact in terms of contributing towards the housing need of the town. In addition, the associated provision of a policy compliant level of affordable housing would significantly enhance the opportunities for people to meet their requirements, such as living close to their place of work.

7.16.44 In terms of the employment aspect of the proposal, including the GP surgery and primary school, it is anticipated the development would generate approximately 265 new jobs. In terms of health and wellbeing, the provision of a new GP surgery (dependent on the requirements of the NHS), this surgery would help to support the new population which would be generated by this development proposal. In addition, the scheme also seeks to provide formal and informal areas of open space which will have a beneficial impact on the health and well-being of future residents.

7.16.45 The development would also comprise a 3FE primary school and associated nursery which would support the potential level of pupils which would be generated by this development. This as such, would also have a beneficial impact on the future residents of this development.

7.16.46 In summary, the proposed development would result in an increase in the town's population, but this would be beneficial adding prosperity and vitality to the town. The additional homes and employment would expand the range of and type of accommodation and jobs available which will also be beneficial for the town. Overall, the scheme would have a positive, permanent impact on the economy with moderate beneficial effect to existing and future residents.



### Consideration of alternatives

7.16.47 It is necessary to set out whether there is a duty to consider alternatives under the following:

- The Habitat Regulations;
- The EIA Regulations;
- Domestic Law.

7.16.48 The Habitats Regulations includes an obligation to consider whether there are alternative solutions if the outcome of the appropriate assessment is 'negative' i.e. of the conclusions drawn from the appropriate assessment is that the proposed development will (notwithstanding any conditions/mitigation etc) adversely affect the integrity of any European Site(s) in question.

7.16.49 It has been demonstrated that an Appropriate Assessment in this case is not necessary and that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites. This is because there are no such sites which fall within or lie within close proximity to the development. Consequently, there is no obligation on the council under the Habitats Regulations to have regard to alternative proposals.

7.16.50 The Council also has to determine where there is a duty under the EIA regulations to consider alternatives. Under these Regulations, the Council is only required to have regard to the main alternatives studied by the applicant under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017. The Council cannot grant planning permission for an Environmental Impact Assessment application unless it has first 'taken the environmental information into consideration'. This 'environmental information' included the Environmental Statement, which EIA Regulations 2017 (Schedule 4) 'a description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects'.

7.16.51 Alternative sites were not considered given the site is allocated in the adopted Local Plan (2019). Consideration of alternatives would be important if there were clear planning objections to a specific proposal, which indicate that it might be relevant to consider whether there is a more appropriate alternative site elsewhere. In considering an application, the availability of alternative sites for a proposed development is capable of being a material consideration.

7.16.52 The courts have given some guidance on when it is necessary to consider alternative sites. In ***R (Luton BC) v. Central Bedfordshire Council*** [2015] EWCA Civ 537 the Court of Appeal said as follows:

"71 (iii) Planning legislation does not expressly require alternative sites to be taken into account (paragraph 36), but a legal obligation to consider alternatives may arise from the requirements of national or local policy (paragraph 37) (iv) Otherwise the matter is one for the planning judgment of the decision-maker (paragraph 36). In assessing whether it was irrational for the decision-maker not to have had regard to alternative sites, a relevant factor is whether alternative sites have been identified before the decision-maker"

7.16.53 There is accordingly, no obligation from legislation to take into account alternative sites. National and Local Policy in this case does not provide an obligation to consider alternative sites.

7.16.54 However, through the Scoping Opinion issued by the Council, consideration of alternatives should go beyond in terms of different forms of layout and design, and extend to include development of other land, the partial development of the application site and a 'no development' scenario. This is considered in further detail below.

7.16.55 Dealing firstly with the site itself, the Local Plan (2019) allocates this site for housing and employment. The evidence base which supports the Local Plan that the proposal for the land west of Stevenage forms a key component of the overall growth strategy for the town up to 2031. The Sustainability Appraisal which was undertaken as part of the Local Plan process identified that the economic and social benefits that would arise from the development of the land would significantly outweigh the environmental consequences associated with the use of a greenfield site beyond the urban area. The Local Plan, therefore, allocated the site for a mixed-use community comprising of at least 1,350 new homes, 10,000 sq.m of employment floorspace along with a primary school and associated community and recreational facilities. Assessments of the three scenarios are set out in the table below.

Scenario	Assessment
Development of another site	The evidence which has been published in support of the Local Plan confirms that other available and deliverable sites comprising brownfield first principle, then greenfield sites beyond the boundary of Stevenage do not exist. It has been necessary based on the evidence that Green Belt land had to be released in order to meet the Council's Housing and Employment requirements. As such, further requirements to release Green Belt would not be possible without a further review of the Local Plan. This is unlikely to be acceptable in National Policy terms given the sequentially preferable sites which fall outside the Green Belt, such as the land at West Stevenage being released from the Green Belt under the previous Local Plan. This scenario would fail to accord with the NPPF and Governments objectives of promoting sustainable development and therefore, such a scenario would have a major adverse impact.
Partial development of the site	The partial delivery of the site would result in the under delivery of necessary housing and employment land as identified in the evidence base supporting the Local Plan. In addition, with a reduced number of housing, it would undermine the deliverability and feasibility of the primary school, employment site as well as supporting community and recreational facilities which would be required to serve the development. This scenario would fail to accord with the NPPF and Governments objectives of promoting sustainable development and therefore, such a scenario would have a major adverse impact.
No development	The additional requirement to deliver new homes and employment as identified in the Local Plan would not be met. This scenario would fail to accord with the NPPF and Governments objectives of promoting sustainable development and therefore, such a scenario would have a major adverse impact.

7.16.56 In this application, and based on the above assessment, there are no significant adverse effects, no clear planning objection to the proposed development and no ground to refuse planning permission. On this basis as a matter of planning judgement,

there is no need to consider any additional alternatives to the site which is before the Council. In addition, as clearly demonstrated, there are no well worked up alternative sites that have been presented to have a real possibility of coming about.

7.16.57 In summary, there is no requirement in this application under the Habitats Regulations, EIA Regulations or other domestic law/policy to consider alternatives.

#### Cumulative impact and in-combination effects

7.16.58 There are not considered to be any significant cumulative or in-combination effects with a number of mitigation measures which are to be put in place (These have been detailed throughout the relevant sections of this report). The scheme has been designed to assimilate itself into the wider landscape with a landscape buffer alongside the motorway to provide noise and air quality mitigation. The scheme also seeks the provision of additional tree planting and hedgerow planting. The scheme would have a limited localised impact upon the landscape character with the site being contained through existing woodland planting and hedgerows and the surrounding topography.

7.16.59 The scheme would have a minor to moderate impact for users of the network of footpaths with negligible impact upon transient users of Meadway within moderate impact on the residents of Dyes Lane Caravan Park. The scheme would result in the loss of agricultural land with this being classified as subgrade 3a and 3b land. The loss of the agricultural land has been identified as moderate in the ES. In addition, the loss of this land would not result in the severance of farmland or significantly infringe upon existing agricultural activities.

7.16.60 The potential environmental effects upon water resources have been assessed in the ES with a sequential approach applied. This has shaped the development layout to minimise any risk of flooding and all development is located outside EA Floodrisk Zones. The drainage strategy has been designed to manage overland flow of surface water with multiple attenuation features being adopted.

7.16.61 The ES also details the impact on the highway network as being negligible on all aspects of the highway network assessed during the construction phase. In addition the proposed transport measures, including cycling and public transport provision, would help to encourage a modal shift from the private car. Further, there would be no significant air quality issues with the scheme also incorporating existing habitats and the provision of new habitats, including sustainable drainage systems and open spaces, which would provide potential gains.

7.16.62 The development would have no effects on the historic environment in terms of respective heritage assets overall setting subject to the implementation of mitigation measures. Finally, the socio-economic impacts of the development show the provision of new job creation as well as expenditure into the local economy.

7.16.63 It is therefore, considered that there would be no significant cumulative or in-combination environmental effects arising from the development, subject to appropriate mitigation.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

8.1.1 In summary, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development is in accordance with the policies set out in the Stevenage Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Adopted May 2019) for this strategic housing site, with the site itself already accepted in the Local Plan as being suitable and sustainable in terms of delivery a mixed use development. The proposed development would deliver very substantial and numerous benefits including a significant level of housing, affordable housing, self-build plots and aspirational homes. The development would also deliver accessible employment land,

provision of a well-designed new community, with support for pedestrians and cyclists, new infrastructure such as a school, potential health facilities, shops and other community uses. As such, the development is fundamental in the Council meeting its overall identified housing and employment needs which are to be delivered over the Local Plan period.

- 8.1.2 The development would comprise a suite of sustainable transport measures in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car. This includes mitigation measures through new roads, junction improvements and delivery of future sustainable transport measures, including buses. The development would also deliver a significant amount of open space which the spaces being multi-functional along with the provision suitable play provision as well as a cricket pitch and pavilion in accordance with the Local Plan. The proposal has also been designed to ensure that safeguarded access is provided to the land in North Herts in order to allow for future delivery of development within the boundary of North Hertfordshire Council.
- 8.1.3 Controls on the development, through conditions, future reserved matters submissions and clauses through the S106 agreement would ensure the provision of a policy compliant scheme that is designed to a very high standard. Contributions through CIL tariff and S.106 agreement would ensure off-site works and the impacts of the development are properly delivered in the appropriate timescales.
- 8.1.4 The above assessment set out in section 7 of this report is considered to amount to the LPAs Statement of Reasons under the EIA regulations, with the conditions set out below in conjunction with the S.106 obligations addressing the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment that are likely to arise as a result. In addition, none of the matters raised through the publicity and consultation process amount to material considerations outweighing the assessment of the main issues set out above, noting that conditions and obligations are recommended to mitigate any harm caused by the development.
- 8.1.5 Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed development accords with the policies set out in the adopted Local Plan (2019), the Council's Design Guide SPD (2009), the Council's Parking Standards SPD (2020), the Council's Biodiversity Impact SPD (2021), the Council's Developer Contributions SPD (2021), the NPPF (2021) and PPG (Including the National Design Guide). Consequently, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That outline planning permission be GRANTED subject to the applicant having first entered into a S106 agreement to secure/provide contributions towards:-
- Securing the provision of 30% of the residential units to be for affordable housing;
  - Delivery of open space, SuDS and Biodiversity along with the securing of a bond;
  - Off-site provision of replacement habitats for Skylarks, Corn Bunting and Wagtails;
  - Transfer of serviced land and proportionate financial contribution towards a 3FE Primary School (or the construction of the school by the developers and transfer);
  - Transfer of land or a financial contribution for GP Provision and relevant triggers as agreed by the Planning Committee;
  - Annual financial contribution towards the operation of a bus service;
  - Schedule of Section 278 Highway Works;
  - Securing the provision of travel plans for the residential areas, employment site and school;
  - Securing the provision of self-build plots (1% of the dwelling plots in each phased);
  - Landscaping and planting to be secured from UK nurseries;
  - Financial contributions towards replacement tree planting on Borough Council Land;

- Biodiversity Enhancement Contribution;
- Employment and Skills;
- Replacement pavilion at Meadway Playing Field;
- Financial contribution towards the build out costs of a cricket outfield, non-turf cricket pitch and delivery of a cricket pavilion;
- Securing the establishment of a management company for the development site;
- Delivery of the neighbourhood centre;
- Delivery of the temporary shop;
- Safeguarding land to deliver the development in North Herts and potential transfer of land to a local authority;
- Secure potential mitigation measures to reduce any potential recreational pressure on the SSSI which may arise from this development;
- Appropriate Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council Monitoring Fees.

9.2 With delegated powers be given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee to negotiate and secure the financial and non-financial obligations detailed above (including triggers where appropriate) as part of the Section 106 Agreement in order to mitigate the developments on infrastructure as well as secure the planning benefits which this scheme seeks to deliver. In addition, the imposition of suitable safeguarding conditions, with authority given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, to amend or add to the suggested draft conditions set out in this report, prior to the decision notice being issued, where such amendments or additions would be legally sound and most effectively deliver the development that the Planning Committee has resolved to approve.

## **1. Approved Parameter Plans**

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved parameter and phasing plans unless otherwise agreed in writing:

2846-A-1201-PL-G; 2846-A-1202-PL-F; 2846-A-1203-PL-F; 2846-A-1204-PL-D; 2846-A-1205-PL-F; 2846-A-1206-PL-G.

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

## 2. Approved Plans for Phase 1

The development hereby permitted for Phase 1 shall be carried out in accordance with the plans/drawings listed below unless otherwise agreed in writing:

2846-A-1000-PL-B; 2846-A-1201-PL-G; 2846-A-1202- PL-F; 2846-A-1203-PL-F; 2846-A- 1204-PL-D; 2846-A-1205-PL-F; 2846-A-1206-PL-G; 2846-A-1005 PL-J; 2846-A-1050 PL-N; 2846-A-1051 PL-N; 2846-A-1052 PL-N; 2846-C-1005 PL-J; 2846-C-1050 PL-N; 2846-C-1051 PL-N; 2846-C-1052 PL-N; 2846-C-1300 PL-E; 2846-C-1305 PL-C; 2846-C-1112 PL-D; 2846-C-1113 PL-D; 2846-C-1114 PL-D; 2846-A-1701 PL-F; 2846-A-1702 PL-F; 2846-A-1703 PL-D; 2846-A-1711 PL-F; 2846-A-1712 PL-F; 2846-A-1713 PL-D; 2846-A-1721 PL-F; 2846-A-1722 PL-F; 2846-A-1723 PL-D; 2846-A-1731 PL-F; 2846-A-1732 PL-F; 2846-A-1733 PL-D; 2846- C-1014 PL-E; 2846-A-3500 PL-B; 25502-02-010-2.1-B; 25502-02-010-2.2-B; 25502-02-010-2.3-A; 25502-02-010-2.4; 25502-02-010-2.5; 25502-02-010-03.1-B; 25502-02- 010-03.2-B; 25502-02-010-01.1-A; 25502-02-010-01.2-A; 25502-00-020-01.1-G; 25502-00-020-01.2-G; 19206/014/D; 19206/015/D;19206/016/D; 19206/017/E; 19206/019/H; 19206/029/B; 19206/035/A; 19206/036/B; 19206/GA-01/H; 19206/GA-02/G; 19206/GA-03/H; 19206/GA-04/F; 19206/GA-05/G; 19206/GA-06/G; 19206/TK01/E; 19206/TK02/D; 19206/TK03/C; JTSC009DG-D003-DRG- 007- P04; 2846-A-3000 PL-A; 2846-A-3005 PL-B; 2846-A-3006 PL-B; 2846-A-3010 PL-B; 2846-A-3011 PL-B;2846-A-3015 PL-B; 2846-A-3025 PL-B; 2846-A-3030 PL-B; 2846-A-3035 PL-B; 2846-A-3036 PL-B; 2846-A-3040 PL-B; 2846-A-3041 PL-B; 2846-A-3045 PL-B; 2846-A-3050 PL-B; 2846-A-3051 PL-B; 2846-A-3055 PL-B; 2846-A-3056 PL-B; 2846-A-3060 PL-B; 2846-A-3061 PL-B; 2846-A-3062 PL-A; 2846-A-3063 PL-A; 2846-A-3065 PL-B; 2846-A-3066 PL-A; 2846-A-3067 PL-A; 2846-A-3071 PL-A; 2846-A-3100 PL-A; 2846-A-3101 PL-A; 2846-A-3105 PL-C; 2846-A-3106 PL-B; 2846-A-3110 PL-B; 2846-A-3112 PL-A; 2846-A-3115 PL-B; 2846-A-3120 PL-B; 2846-A-3125 PL-B; 2846-A-3126 PL-B; 2846-A-3130 PL-B; 2846-A-3200 PL-B; 2846-A-3201 PL-B; 2846-A-3203 PL-A; 2846-A-3205 PL-B; 2846-A-3206 PL-B; 2846-A-3208 PL-A; 2846-A-3210 PL-A; 2846-A-3211 PL-A; 2846-A-3212 PL-B; 2846-A-3212 PL-A; 2846-A-3215 PL-B; 2846-A-3220 PL-A; 2846-A-3221 PL-B; 2846-A-3223 PL-B; 2846-A-3225 PL-B; 2846-A-3230 PL-B; 2846-A-3235 PL-C; 2846-A-3236 PL-A; 2846-A-3240 PL-B; 2846-A-3241 PL-A; 2846-A-3242 PL-A; 2846-A-3243 PL-C; 2846-A-3245 PL-B; 2846-A-3246 PL-A; 2846-A-3250 PL-C; 2846-A-3251 PL-A; 2846-A-3252 PL-C; 2846-A-3255 PL-C; 2846-A-3256 PL-A; 2846-A-3257 PL-B; 2846-A-3258 PL-B; 2846-A-3259 PL-A; 2846-A-3265 PL-B; 2846-A-3266 PL-A; 2846-A-3267 PL-A; 2846-A-3270 PL-B; 2846-A-3271 PL-B; 2846-A-3272 PL-B; 2846-A-3273 PL-B; 2846-A-3274 PL-A; 2846-A-3275 PL-A; 2846-A-3276 PL-A; 2846-A-3277 PL-A; 2846-A-3300 PL-B; 2846-A-3301 PL-B; 2846-A-3305 PL-B; 2846-A-3306 PL-B; 2846-A-3307 PL-A; 2846-A-3310 PL-B; 2846-A-3315 PL-B; 2846-A-3316 PL-B; 2846-A-3317 PL-C; 2846-A-3318 PL-C; 2846-A-3319 PL-B; 2846-A-3320 PL-A; 2846-A-3321 PL-B; 2846-A-3322 PL-A; 2846-A-3325 PL-B; 2846-A-3326 PL-C; 2846-A-3330 PL-A; 2846-A-3331 PL-A; 2846-A-3335 PL-A; 2846-A-3336 PL-A.

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

## 3. Three Year Time Limit – Detailed (Phase 1)

The part of the development for which full planning permission (Phase 1) has been granted shall be begun within a period of three years, failing which the permission shall be of no effect.

**REASON:-** To comply with the requirements of Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

#### **4. Details of Reserved Matters – Outline (2 to 4)**

For phases 2 to 4 of the development for which Outline permission is granted as outlined in the application submission, no development in relation to Phases 2 to 4 shall commence until detailed plans for those phase(s) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These plans will show the layout (including car parking provision, access and servicing arrangements, and waste management), scale (including existing and proposed levels), design and external appearance of the phase to be constructed and the landscaping (including, hard and soft landscape, street furniture etc), to be implemented (hereinafter referred to as “the Reserved Matters”) on that phase. The development shall only be carried out as approved.

**REASON:-** To comply with the requirements of section 92(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 and to ensure that high standards of urban design and a comprehensively planned development are achieved. To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

#### **5. Details of Reserved Matters – Outline (Non-residential Uses and Care Home).**

For the non-residential uses and care home for which Outline permission is granted as outlined in the application submission, no development in relation to mobility hubs, cricket pavilion, primary school and associated nursery and replacement Meadway pavilion shall commence until detailed plans for those building(s) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These plans will show the layout (including car parking provision, access and servicing arrangements, and waste management), scale (including existing and proposed levels), design and external appearance of the phase to be constructed and the landscaping to be implemented (hereinafter referred to as “the Reserved Matters”) on that phase. The development shall only be carried out as approved.

**REASON:-** To comply with the requirements of section 92(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 and to ensure that high standards of urban design and a comprehensively planned development are achieved. To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

#### **6. Time Limit for Reserved Matters – Outline**

All applications for the approval of the Reserved Matters for each phase or combination of phases (excluding Phase 1) shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than 10 years from the date of this Outline permission, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The commencement of each phase shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of the last reserved matter of that phase to be approved, whichever is the later, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To comply with the requirements of section 92(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**7. Maximum number of residential units**

The maximum number of residential units on the site shall be restricted to 1500 units, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**8. Limits on employment floorspace**

For the non-residential employment site (Use Class E(f)) hereby permitted under this permission, no more than 10,000 sq.m of gross internal area (GIA) of floorspace shall be provided unless otherwise agreed in writing through a reserved matters application pursuant to condition 4.

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**9. Limits on primary school and nursery**

The primary school and nursery shall be up to 3 Form of Entry (3FE) with a maximum site area of 3.0 hectares(ha).

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**10. Maximum size for the care home / supported living**

The maximum number of beds within the care home / supported living building(s) shall be seventy two (72).

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**11. Neighbourhood centre and square**

The neighbourhood centre and square hereby permitted, shall be up to no more than 400sq.m Use Class E space, a mixed use local centre (Use Class C3 and up to 900sq.m of Use Class E/F2 Space) and a neighbourhood square (including a mobility hub and up to 150sqm of Use Class E/F2 Space).

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**12. Cricket Pitches / Pavilion**

The cricket pavilion hereby permitted, shall have a maximum floor area of [TBC] with the cricket pitch being up to 9 wickets in accordance with ECB Standards.

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**13. Housing**

All reserved matters applications relating to residential development shall be accompanied by an updated accommodation schedule, setting out the type, size, tenure, accessibility and adaptability, as well as a cumulative total based on previous permissions. Plot numbers shall be consistent from over version to the next to ensure each plot can be individually identified across the lifetime of the development. The housing mix as detailed in each subsequent reserved matters application shall include details of market and affordable housing as well as the self-build plots.



**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure an acceptable mix of housing, including affordable housing and self-build plots are delivered in accordance with the policies contained in the adopted Local Plan.

**14. Mezzanine floorspace**

At no times shall mezzanine floorspace be constructed in any employment uses without the express grant of permission from the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

**15. PD restrictions – Employment Land**

Notwithstanding the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that order) the non-residential units within the employment site shall be used for Use Classes E(g) only of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and for no other purposes (including Use Class C3 – Residential and Class E - retail shop, café, restaurant or other services falling within that Use Class), unless agreed in writing or approved by way of separate planning permission

**REASON:-** To ensure the retention of appropriate employment uses and because highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above uses.

**16. PD restrictions - Neighbourhood Centre**

Notwithstanding the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that order) the non-residential units within the neighbourhood centre shall be used for Use Classes E (Including GP Surgery) and F2 only of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and for no other purposes (including Use Class C3 – Residential or for employment based uses such as offices, research and development and light industrial as well as other services falling within Use Class E), unless otherwise agreed in writing or approved by way of separate planning permission

**REASON:-** To ensure the retention of active frontage, appropriate infrastructure is retained to support the residential community and because highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above uses.

**17. PD restrictions on satellite equipment**

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no external telecommunications equipment or infrastructure shall be erected to any built development within the development site, other than those expressly authorised by this permission.

**REASON:-** To retain the high quality external design promoted by this development.

**18. Telecommunications/Satellite Strategy**

Prior to occupation of each phase(s) of development within the application site, details of any associated communal telecommunications infrastructure and plant shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details approved and maintained as such thereafter.

**REASON:-** To ensure satisfactory appearance and facilitate equitable access to telecommunications services.

**19. PD restrictions on dwellinghouses**

Notwithstanding the provisions of Classes A, B and C of Part 1, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revising, revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no internal or external alterations shall take place to any garage, which would preclude its use for housing motor vehicles and/or bicycles, no loft conversions including dormer windows / roof extensions, or roof lights and openings shall be constructed on the dwellinghouse(s) hereby permitted unless permission is granted on an application made to the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To enable the Local Planning Authority to fully consider the effects of development normally permitted by that Order to safeguard the amenities of the neighbouring properties from overlooking / loss of privacy and to ensure sufficient parking is available.

**20. Control of emissions**

Prior to the first occupation of the non-residential units to be used within the neighbourhood centre hereby permitted a scheme for the installation of equipment to control the emission of fumes and smell from the premises including any air conditioning equipment, for that relevant phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of these units. All equipment installed as part of the scheme shall thereafter be operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

**REASON:** To protect the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining properties.

**21. Noise Levels – Mechanical Equipment or Plant**

Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the individual and cumulative rating level of noise emitted from plant and/or fixed machinery at the development hereby approved shall be no greater than the existing background noise levels at the positions of nearby existing residential properties. The Noise levels should also achieve appropriate noise limits at the positions of new properties in the development. The measurements and assessments shall be made in accordance with British Standards 4142 + A1:2019 Method for rating industrial noise affecting mixed residential and industrial areas. Before any plant is used a report / impact assessment demonstrating that the plant will meet the design requirements, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of amenity for future occupiers of this development and the neighbouring buildings.

**22. No plant/equipment affixed to external face of buildings**

Unless agreed through the approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Condition 4, through the detail approved under application for Phase 1 or through any future application in relation to Phase 1, no plant or equipment shall be affixed to any external face of a building or added to the roof of the building.

**REASON:-** In the interests of amenity.

**23. Noise Mitigation Measures**

Prior to the commencement of development (excluding operations consisting of site clearance, demolition, earthworks, archaeological investigations, investigations for assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, and the temporary display of site notices or advertisements) in any given phase, a scheme in accordance with current relevant standards shall be submitted for approval to the Local Authority which specifies the noise mitigation measures. The scheme shall be based on Environmental Statement, Land west of Stevenage, Volume 2 dated March 2021, Environmental Statement Addendum dated November 2021 and associated figures attached in Appendix G. Following approval, the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details, and shown to be effective, and shall be retained in accordance with those details thereafter.

**REASON:-** In accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7 and to protect the residential amenity of future residents

#### **24. Hours of operation**

Prior to the first occupation of the non-residential units of each phase hereby permitted (retail, leisure, office, commercial), details of the hours of operation of the non-residential units for the relevant phase hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The non-residential units shall thereafter be occupied solely with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the detriment of the amenities of adjoining occupiers or users of the area generally.

#### **25. Construction hours of working**

No demolition, construction or maintenance activities audible at the boundary and no deliveries of construction and demolition materials shall be undertaken outside the hours 07:30 hours to 18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays, 08:00 hours to 13.00 hours on Saturdays and shall not operate on a Sunday or Bank Holiday, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction and maintenance of the development does not prejudice the amenities of occupiers of nearby premises due to noise pollution.

#### **26. Construction Traffic Management Plan**

Prior to the commencement of the development for which full planning permission is granted, a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) relating to Phase 1 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the construction of the development for which full planning permission has been granted shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved CTMP unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall be prepared in accordance with the Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS) standard.

Pursuant to the above, prior to the commencement of any parcel/phase or sub-phase, a detailed CTMP for that parcel/phase or Sub-Phase, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the construction of any Parcel/Phase or Sub-Phase shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved CTMP for the Parcel/Phase or Sub-Phase unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The CTMP shall address the following matters:-

- (i) Details of construction phasing programme (including any pre-construction enabling works and highway works);
- (ii) Management of construction traffic and deliveries to reduce congestion and avoid school pick up/drop off times, including number, type and routing;
- (iii) Demolition and construction works between the hours of 0730 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 0830 and 1300 on Saturdays only.
- (iv) Details of servicing and delivery, including details of site access, site set-up and general arrangements for storing plant including cranes, materials, machinery and equipment, temporary offices/welfare facilities and other facilities (including welfare facilities), construction vehicle parking, loading, unloading and vehicle turning areas.
- (v) Clear access strategy for construction vehicles that avoids conflicts with pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and existing and future residents;
- (vi) Details of the provisions for temporary car parking during construction which shall be provided prior to the commencement of construction activities;
- (vii) Construction vehicle numbers, type and routing;
- (viii) Details of fencing, hoarding and scaffolding provision;
- (ix) End of day tidying procedures;
- (x) Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking);
- (xi) Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- (xii) Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- (xiii) Control measures to manage noise and dust (including the public highway);
- (xiv) Disposal of surplus materials;
- (xv) Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and access to the public highway.
- (xvi) Details of the access and highways works from the local highway network necessary to accommodate construction traffic, including details of any temporary access works.
- (xvii) Details of consultation and complaint management with local businesses and neighbours.
- (xviii) Mechanisms to deal with environmental impacts such as noise and vibration, air quality and dust, light and odour;
- (xix) Details of any proposed piling operations, including justification for the proposed piling strategy, a vibration impact assessment and proposed control and mitigation measures;
- (xx) Details of a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) detailing actual waste arising and how waste is managed (i.e. re-used, recycled or sent off site for treatment or disposal) and where it is sent to. Further updated should be provided throughout the

life of the development at an interim of two months or sooner should the level of waste be considered significant by the developer.

(xxi) Traffic Management requirements.

(xxii) Details of any works to or affecting Public Rights of Way within and in the vicinity of the site. These shall demonstrate how safe (for all users including horse riders and horse carriage drivers) and unobstructed access will be maintained at all times or be temporarily closed or extinguished.

(xxiii) Where works cannot be wholly contained within the site, a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway, including extent of any hoarding, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements and proposed traffic management.

(xxiv) Measures to be implemented to ensure wayfinding for both occupiers of the site and or those travelling through it.

**REASON:-** In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way in accordance with Policies 5, 12, 17 and 22 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

## **27. Construction Environmental Management Plan**

Prior to the commencement of any development within each phase of development (excluding operations consisting of site clearance, demolition, earthworks, archaeological investigations, investigations for assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, and the temporary display of site notices or advertisements) a Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan. The plan will include the following information:

- i) Procedures and protocols to prevent or manage the exposure of construction workers, visitors to the construction area, and users of neighbouring areas to contaminated materials;
- ii) Measures to limit dust generation during excavation, handling and storage of potentially contaminated materials;
- iii) Boundary monitoring of dust, volatile organic compounds and asbestos fibres during excavation and soil handling at points of greatest sensitivity;
- iv) Appropriate procedures for handling and treatment of groundwater;
- v) Measures to protect workers from vapours and dermal contact if hydrocarbon contamination is excavated, for instance, during piling;
- vi) Measures required under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and associated code of practice;
- vii) Good practice operation and containment measures for storage of fuels or liquid chemicals to conform with government regulations and pollution prevention guidance (PPGs) issued by the EA;
- viii) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities, identification of biodiversity protection zones, practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction, the location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features, identify the times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works, responsible persons and lines of communication, use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

**REASON:-** To ensure the implementation of the development does not harm ecological features during the construction phase and to minimise disruption to neighbouring properties and the environment.

## **28. Remediation Strategy**

No development approved by this planning permission shall commence (excluding site clearance, surveys, site investigations, trenching, utility works) shall take place until a remediation strategy that includes the following components to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site shall each be submitted to and approved, in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

1. A Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) including Conceptual Site Model (CSM) of the site indicating potential sources, pathways and receptors, including those off site.
2. The results of a site investigation based on (1) and a detailed risk assessment, including a revised CSM.
3. Based on the risk assessment in (2) an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken. The strategy shall include a plan providing details of how the remediation works shall be judged to be complete and arrangement for contingency action. The plan shall also detail a long term monitoring and maintenance plan as necessary.
4. No occupation of any part of the permitted development shall take place until a verification report demonstrating completion of works set out in the remediation strategy (3). The long term monitoring and maintenance plan in (3) shall be updated and be implemented as approved.

**REASONS:-** To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses.

## **29. Previously Unidentified Contamination**

If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

**REASON:-** To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses.

## **30. Piling/boreholes/foundation designs – details to be agreed.**

Piling or any other foundation designs and investigation boreholes using penetrative methods shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses.

### **31. External lighting**

Prior to relevant works in each phase of development, details of any external lighting to be installed on any building(s) hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved external lighting shall be provided before that phase of development is occupied.

**REASON:-** To ensure the development does not prejudice the amenities of adjoining occupiers, visual amenities of the area, protection of bats and to not prejudice highway safety.

### **32. Hedge/shrub clearance outside bird nesting season**

All areas of hedges, scrub or similar vegetation where birds may nest which are to be removed as part of the development within each phase(s), are to be cleared outside the bird-nesting season (March - August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check the areas to be removed immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, no vegetation clearance or other works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until all young have fledged the nest.

**REASON:-** Nesting birds are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As amended).

### **33. Bird and Bat Boxes**

Prior to relevant works for each phase of development, a strategy for the siting and maintenance of permanent nesting and roosting boxes within the façade and roof ledges of built structures and/or trees shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Nesting and roosting boxes shall be provided in accordance with the approved strategy prior to occupation of the relevant buildings.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the development contributes to improving the ecology and biodiversity of the area.

### **34. Skylark, Corn bunting and Yellowhammer Compensation Strategy**

No development shall take place (including any ground works, site clearance) until a method statement for skylark, Corn Bunting and Yellow Hammer compensation strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The content of the method statement shall include the:

- a) purpose and objectives for the proposed works;
- b) detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives;
- c) extent and location of proposed works shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;
- d) timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction;
- e) persons responsible for implementing and maintaining the measures;
- f) initial aftercare and long-term maintenance;
- g) monitoring strategy to include an annual report for a minimum of 30 years.

The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details implemented in the first planting season after the approval of the method statement and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

**REASON:-** In order to mitigate the developments impact on nesting Skylarks, Corn Bunting and Yellow Hammer and to provide a suitable replacement habitat for Skylarks, Corn Bunting and Yellowhammer.

**35. Mitigation Strategy for the Knebworth Woods SSSI**

The mitigation measures as detailed in Chapter 13, paragraph 13.171 of the Environmental Statement (Prepared by JB planning, dated March 2021) shall be implemented in accordance with the specified measures prior to the first occupation of any building in any given phase(s) of the development hereby permitted.

**REASON:-** In order to mitigate the developments impact on the Knebworth Woods SSSI.

**36. Phase 2 Protective Species Survey (Outline)**

All reserved matters applications shall be accompanied by up to date phase 2 protected species surveys relevant to that phase. No survey shall be more than two years as of the date of the application submission unless it can be otherwise demonstrated to remain relevant/valid and shall ideally be carried out in the survey season immediately prior to the submission of the application.

**REASON:-** In order to mitigate any impact on any flora and fauna (including those protected by Law) identified as part of any subsequent survey work.

**37. Tree protection measures (Phase 1)**

No development, including site clearance, shall commence until the trees, woodlands and hedges as specified in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Tyler Grange (dated 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020, report reference:- 11358\_R03) and Appendix B to the Environmental Statement Addendum - Arboricultural Technical Note prepared by Aspect Arboriculture (dated November 2021) to be retained on the site have been protected by fencing in accordance with the details specified in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction'. All protective measures, including the fencing and ground protection, must be put in place first, prior to any other work commencing on each relevant phase (this includes vegetation clearance, ground-works, vehicle movements, machinery / materials delivery etc.) and shall thereafter be maintained in place in good functional condition until the development of that phase is entirely complete and until, with the exception of soft landscaping works, all contractors, equipment and materials have left the site, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Once erected, the Local Authority Tree Officer shall be notified so the fencing can be inspected and approved. The Root Protection Area (RPA) within the protective fencing must be kept free of all construction, construction plant, machinery, personnel, digging and scraping, service runs, water-logging, changes in level, building materials and all other operations, personnel, structures, tools, storage and materials, for the duration of the construction phase.

**REASON:-** In order to protect trees which are to be retained as part of this development.

**38. Tree Protection measures (Outline)**

Each reserved matters application submitted where trees are affected by the development in that particular phase(s) shall be supported by an Arboricultural Method Statement in accordance with British Standards for the protection of trees which are to be retained where such a scheme accords with the relevant British Standards. The approved scheme for the protection of existing trees shall be implemented in each respective phase before development commences in any given phase and be maintained in full until the development is completed, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.



**REASON:-** In order to protect trees which are to be retained as part of this development.

**39. Tree Protection Measures**

Within the areas to be fenced off in accordance as required under condition 38, The Root Protection Area (RPA) within the protective fencing must be kept free of all construction, construction plant, machinery, personnel, digging and scraping, service runs, water-logging, changes in level, building materials and all other operations, personnel, structures, tools, storage and materials, for the duration of the construction phase.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the retained trees are not damaged or otherwise adversely affected during site operations

**40. Archaeology**

No development (including demolition) shall take place within any given phase(s) of development until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing for that particular phase(s). The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significant and research questions; and:

1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;
2. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording as suggested by the evaluation;
3. The programme for post investigation assessment;
4. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording;
5. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation;
6. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation;
7. Nominations of a competent person or persons/organisations to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

**REASON:-** In order to protect potential heritage assets of archaeological interest.

**41. Archaeology**

The development in any given phase(s) shall commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 40.

**REASON:-** In order to protect potential heritage assets of archaeological interest.

**42. Archaeology**

The development shall not be occupied in any given phase until the site investigation and post investigation assessment for that particular phase of the development has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 40 and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

**REASON:-** In order to protect potential heritage assets of archaeological interest.

**43. Energy and Sustainability Statement (Phase 1)**

The sustainability measures as specified in the Energy Statement prepared by Energist dated 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (Revision C) shall be implemented in accordance with the details specified prior to the first occupation of the building(s) within Phase 1 of the development hereby permitted.

**REASON:-** To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change and to avoid overheating and minimising cooling demand.

**44. Energy and Sustainability Statement (Outline)**

Each reserved matters application submitted shall include an Energy and Sustainability Statement detailing requirements of how the building(s) in each respective phase(s) are adaptable to climate change (detailing renewable energy technologies as well as detailing measures to control overheating and cooling demand in the building(s), to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall also include a management and maintenance strategy/schedule for the operation of the technologies, a servicing plan (if applicable) and a noise assessment (if applicable). The measures for adaptation to climate change as well as managing overheating and cooling shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change and to avoid overheating and minimising cooling demand.

**45. Refuse and Recycling (Phase 1)**

No development shall take place, above slab level, in Phase 1 until a detailed general waste and recycle storage strategy, fully co-ordinated with the hard and soft landscaping, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to first occupation on any building(s), the general waste and recycle strategy shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure there is sufficient general waste and recycling provision to serve the future occupiers of the development.

**46. Refuse and Recycling (Outline)**

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition x, shall include details of general waste and recycling facilities which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The general waste and recycling facilities shall be in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the building(s) in the particular phase(s).

**REASON:-** To ensure there is sufficient general waste and recycling provision to serve the future occupiers of the development.

**47. Public art and sculptures**

Prior to the commencement of any above ground works in a phase of development, a public art programme for that phase in accordance with the Council's Cultural Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The public art shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the relevant phase(s) of development.

**REASON:-** To ensure the delivery of high quality public art within the public realm.

**48. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Phase 1)**

Prior to the commencement of development in Phase 1, above slab level, a landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by the local planning authority. The content of the LEMP shall deliver the agreed number of onsite ecological units as included in the approved Biodiversity Net Gain assessment (Proposed site habitat units of 231.45 as detailed in letter dated by the Ecology Partnership, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021, Environmental Statement Addendum dated November 2021 and the CSA Ecology Report 2019) and include the following:-

- a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed from a landscape and ecological perspective;
- b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management;
- c) Aims and objectives of management;
- d) Appropriate management options achieving landscape and ecological aims and objectives;
- e) Prescriptions for landscape and ecological management actions;
- f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five year period) clearly marked on plans;
- g) Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan;
- h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measure. The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery;
- i) Details of species specific measures as identified in the ecological report, definitively stated and marked on plans.

The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that the conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity and landscape objectives of the originally approved details.

The landscaping and habitats management scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** In order to improve and enhance biodiversity within the development site and the surrounding so as to offset its impact.

#### **49. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline)**

All reserved matters applications shall be accompanied by a landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) which is relevant to the respective phase the reserved matters application relates to. The content of the LEMP shall deliver the agreed number of on-site ecological units as included in the approved Biodiversity Net Gain assessment (Proposed site habitat units of 231.45 as detailed in letter dated by the Ecology Partnership, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021, Environmental Statement Addendum dated November 2021 and the CSA Ecology Report 2019) and include the following:-

- a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed from a landscape and ecological perspective;
- b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management;
- c) Aims and objectives of management;
- d) Appropriate management options achieving landscape and ecological aims and objectives;
- e) Prescriptions for landscape and ecological management actions;
- f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five year period) clearly marked on plans;
- g) Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan;
- h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measure. The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery;
- i) Details of species specific measures as identified in the ecological report, definitively stated and marked on plans.

The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that the conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity and landscape objectives of the originally approved details.

The landscaping and habitats management scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** In order to improve and enhance biodiversity within the development site and the surrounding so as to offset its impact.

#### **50. Biodiversity Net Gain**

Prior to the commencement of development, which shall include operations consisting of site clearance, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, the erection of a site office, the creation of a site compound, the creation of temporary means of access, shall not take place unless approved by the Council until a Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme sufficient to compensate for the agreed Biodiversity Metric assessment baseline of the development site plus a 10% uplift in habitat units, minus the habitat unit score of the approved onsite landscape scheme, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council (“the Approved Scheme”). The Approved Scheme shall be approved with the purpose of ensuring that the Development shall result in a measurable Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and SBC’s ‘The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD’.

The Approved Scheme shall either include: -

- 1) the identity an appropriate receptor site or sites;
- 2) include a management plan for the provision and maintenance of such offsetting measures for not less than 30 years from the date of implementation of the Scheme, as set out in ‘The impact of development on Biodiversity SPD’ SBC 2021;
- 3) include the provision of contractual terms to secure the delivery of the offsetting measures; or
- 4) provide for a fixed sum contribution to be paid to Stevenage Borough Council based on using the Stevenage Financial Contribution Calculator. The fixed sum shall not exceed [TBC] The Borough Council shall use the contribution to enhance and secure long term management of biodiversity within the vicinity of the Application Site.

If point 1) above applies to implement the Approved Scheme and not to carry out any changes to the Approved Scheme without the written consent of the Council.

**REASON:-** To deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain, in conjunction with the onsite habitat creation, in accordance with NPPF.

#### **51. Active Design principles**

For each parcel/phase of development for which Outline permission is granted, no development in relation to that parcel/phase shall commence until details have been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to demonstrate how Active Design principles have been met.

**REASON:-** To promote healthy lifestyles through physical activity and to accord with Development Plan policy.

#### **52. Artificial Wicket Design Specification**

No development of the community green shall commence until details of the design specification of the artificial cricket wicket have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The artificial cricket wicket shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to first use of the community green”

**REASON:-** To ensure that the artificial cricket wicket is constricted to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy.

**53. Sports Pitch Maintenance**

Prior to first use of the sports pitches on the community green, a schedule of playing field maintenance including a programme for implementation for a minimum period of [five] years starting from the commencement of use of the development [or other specified time period] shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. Following the commencement of use of the development the approved schedule shall be complied with in full.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the playing field is first established as a functional playing field to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy

**54. Sports Pitch Feasibility Study and Construction Specification**

No development of the community green shall commence until the following documents have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England:

A. A detailed assessment of ground conditions (including drainage and topography) of the land proposed for the playing field which identifies constraints which could affect playing field quality; and

B. Based on the results of the assessment to be carried out pursuant to (i) above, a detailed scheme which ensures that the playing field will be provided to an acceptable quality. The scheme shall include a written specification of soils structure, proposed drainage, cultivation and other operations associated with grass and sports turf establishment and a programme of implementation.

The approved scheme shall be carried out in full and in accordance with a timeframe agreed with the Local Planning Authority. The land shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the scheme and made available for playing field use in accordance with the scheme.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the playing field is prepared to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy.

**55. Community Use Agreement for the Primary School**

Use of the Primary School shall not commence until a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to any sports facilities associated with the Primary School and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational establishment users/non-members, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise than in strict compliance with the approved agreement.

**REASON:-** To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Development Plan Policy.

## **56. Replacement Meadway Playing Fields and Pavilion building**

Prior to the commencement of the replacement pavilion and car parking permitted by the outline planning permission on the Meadway Playing Fields site (a plan should be included in a planning obligation defining the site), provision will need to be made for the details of the replacement pavilion and car parking facilities on the Meadway Playing Field site to be submitted and approved (in consultation with Sport England) and for the approved details to be fully implemented. The details will need to include a phasing programme which demonstrates how the replacement pavilion and parking facilities will be phased to ensure continuity of operational pavilion and parking provision for existing users of the site. The phasing programme will be expected to ensure that the replacement pavilion is completed and operational prior to the existing pavilion being demolished. The agreed programme will need to be fully implemented.

**REASON:-** To secure an acceptable re-provision of existing sports facilities and to ensure sufficient ongoing health benefits to the community.

## **57. Hard and Soft Landscaping (Phase 1)**

No development shall commence (excluding site clearance, surveys, site investigations, archaeological trenching, utilities works in Phase 1 until details of a hard and soft landscaping scheme including materials palette, street furniture, sustainable drainage features, and children's play for Phase 1 in accordance with the objectives detailed in the National Design Guide and the aspirations set out in the joint vision for the development hereby permitted is submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The quality of design and materials shall be no less than that indicated on the illustrative landscape plans, illustrative landscape strategy, illustrative Landscape typology and the Design and Access Statement..

These details shall include plans at 1:200 or as otherwise agreed in advance with the local planning authority to cover all areas including areas offered for adoption and unadopted areas, to show:

a) proposed finished levels and/or contours; car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas; hard surfacing materials including kerbs and edging (identifying all materials, colours, finishes and heights); location and details (materials, dimensions etc.) of minor artefacts and structures (including all Street furniture, wayfinding, artwork, play equipment (location and layout – details to be provided as set out in Condition 59), refuse, cycle and/or other storage units, signs, lighting, CCTV installations and water features etc.); proposed services and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage, power, communications cables, pipelines indicating lines, manholes, supports). To be fully co-ordinated with the planting proposals (item b).

b) proposed planting for all open spaces, bunding, sustainable drainage features, streets, circulation routes etc., as well as planting to front gardens of properties and communal areas to apartment buildings; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes, proposed densities and number of plants, to include details of species within any proprietary wildflower seed mixes which should be selected as appropriate to the ground conditions and proposed location; an implementation programme for proposed areas of planting within each phase should be set out. Details should be provided of measures to promote biodiversity enhancement to include planting of native and wildlife attracting species and other measures (e.g. log piles, bee posts etc) to be coordinated with the wider ecological enhancements to the scheme. Planting plans to show locations of proposed light columns (including those within both adopted and private management areas), above and below services (existing and proposed).

c) plans and details setting out proposed topsoil and subsoil for all areas of planting to be substantially in accordance with the strategy set out in the Topsoil Strategy (Prepared by Cooper Landscape Planning reference 327, dated November 2021) including details of existing and proposed soil specifications as appropriate to the site and as required to enable successful establishment of plants and wildflower areas. Plans shall include proposed minimum soil volume of all tree pits proposed within or adjacent to hardstanding (e.g. within car parks, streets, squares etc). Details shall be provided to illustrate the proposed design and soil to be used within planted rain gardens and swales and cross section/details of tree pits showing proposed fixing (stakes, guys etc.), provision for watering and aeration, drainage provision if required, proximity to services and specification of root barriers where required and details of proposed structural soil stabilisation where trees are proposed in or adjacent to hard surfaces and details for structures such as garden walls.

d) boundary treatments indicating the type, positions, height design, and materials of boundary treatments to be erected. Details to be provided for boundaries to all residential properties and to areas of open space. To include clearly identified means of access including details of gates etc.

All planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved landscaping details shall be carried out within the first available planting season following the completion of each relevant phase of development. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting, or replacement planting, any tree or plant is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree, plant or area of grass of the same species and specification as that originally planted shall be planted in the same place as soon as is reasonably practicable within the appropriate planting season.

All hard surfacing comprised in the approved landscaping details as approved shall be carried out prior to the first use of the site or the completion of the development within Phase 1, whichever is the sooner

**REASON:-** To ensure satisfactory landscape treatment of the site which will enhance the character and appearance of the area. . In order to create a safe and high quality environment in order to encourage use of the cycle and pedestrian routes by future occupiers of the development and to achieve the objective of delivering sustainable development.

## **58. Hard and soft landscaping (Outline)**

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4, shall include details hard and soft landscaping which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The general hard and soft landscaping shall follow the principles established in Phase 1 and be in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the building(s) in the particular phase(s).

**REASON:-** To ensure satisfactory landscape treatment of the site which will enhance the character and appearance of the area and in order to create a safe and high quality environment in order to encourage use of the cycle and pedestrian routes by future occupiers of the development and to achieve the objective of delivering sustainable development.

## **59. Play areas and fitness trail**

Prior to first occupation of any phase of the development hereby permitted, details of all proposed play equipment shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval. Proposals should broadly follow the strategy set out within the Design and

Access Statement and should follow best practice guidance. For each phase details should include the following:

- a. Details of proposed equipment and layout for all 'incidental' play shall include proposed location, surfacing (if required), associated seating, fencing (if required) etc.
- b. Details of proposed equipment and layout for all 'equipped' play areas (LEAPs etc), to include proposed location, safety surfacing and fall zones (if required), seating, fencing (if required) and associated seating, bins etc. Details shall include any proposed grassed areas, planting, within any particular play area. Equipped play areas shall be designed to include accessible play equipment and a wide range of activities for children of differing ages and abilities.
- c. Fitness equipment/trim trail – details of proposed location and type of equipment proposed and any associated surfaces. The trim trail shall include clear signage/instructions on proposed use of each item proposed.
- d. Details of proposed running/fitness routes and associated signage/wayfinding shall be provided.
- e. Details of the proposed management and maintenance of play equipment shall be clearly set out including programme of monitoring, repair and replacement of any surface or equipment.

Upon approval, incidental play features/areas shall be provided in the agreed location as part of the agreed programme for each area of open space. The provision of equipped play areas (LEAPs etc) shall be provided in accordance with the stipulations within the S106 agreement.

**REASON:-** In order to deliver high quality areas of play and to encourage active and healthy living.

#### **60. External materials**

Before any above-ground work is commenced on any individual phase of the development hereby permitted, samples of all external finishing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include:

- i) Facing and roof materials;
- ii) Balcony treatment;
- iii) Window material details;
- iv) External rainwater goods where permitted.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be retained

**REASON:-** To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.

#### **61. Fire Hydrants**

No works above building foundations shall take place until a scheme for the provision of adequate water supplies and fire hydrants, necessary for firefighting purposes at the site, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the scheme has been implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure adequate water infrastructure provision is made on site for the local fire service to discharge its statutory firefighting duties.

#### **62. Service and Delivery Plan**



Prior to the occupation of each phase of the development, the applicant shall submit a Servicing and Delivery Plan for that relevant phase(s). This plan is to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Servicing and Delivery Plan shall contain the delivery and servicing requirements, waste collection points for the proposed use, a scheme for coordinating deliveries and servicing for the proposed development, areas within the development site that will be used for loading and manoeuvring of delivery and servicing vehicles, and access to from the site for delivery and servicing vehicles. The details shall include waste vehicle circulation route and constructed in accordance with the approved details. Thereafter the routes shall be maintained in accordance with those approved details.

**REASON:** In the interest of maintaining highway efficiency and safety.

**63. Cycle Parking (Phase 1)**

The cycle parking strategy for Phase 1 as detailed in the application submission shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of any building, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure adequate and high quality cycle parking provision.

**64. Parking Provision**

Prior to the first occupation or use of Phases 1 of the development hereby permitted, the proposed access, onsite car and cycle parking, servicing / loading, unloading / turning /waiting area(s) for the relevant phase(s) shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan(s) and retained thereafter available for that specific use, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

**65. Existing Underpass Upgrade Design**

No development shall commence (Excluding site clearance, surveys, site investigations, archaeological trenching, utilities works) in Phase 1 until a detailed design for the enhancement of the existing underpasses at Bessemer Drive and Meadway has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council Highways and Highways England. This shall include details and specification of artistic lighting, artwork (if acceptable to the Highway Authorities), finishes and damp mitigation measures. The approved underpass design shall thereafter, be installed in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** In the interests of creating a safe and attractive route for users of the underpasses and to encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport away from the private car.

**66. Bessemer Drive Entrance Space**

No development shall commence (Excluding site clearance, surveys, site investigations, archaeological trenching, utilities works) in Phase 1 until a detailed design for the cycleway and footway is developed with appropriate gradients to encourage cycling and walking as primary means of transport (to other parts of Stevenage) for cyclists of all ages and abilities.

**REASON:-** To encourage active, sustainable transport in line with the agreed vision.

**67. New Access – Phase 1**

No development shall commence on site above slab level until the vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist access from Bessemer Drive into Phase 1 shall be provided and thereafter retained at the position shown on the approved plan drawing number 19206/019 Rev H, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**68. A1(M) Junction 8 Safety Study**

Prior to the commencement of Phase 1 of the development, a study of road traffic incidents in the vicinity of the A1(M) Junction 8 shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority and National Highways. The study shall identify an appropriately scaled improvement works and delivery schedule.

Prior to occupation of Phase 2, all works identified in the A1(M) Junction 8 Safety Study will be completed.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway pedestrian and cyclist safety in accordance with Policies 5, 7 and 8 of the Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**69. Main Street Works – Phase 1**

Prior to first occupation of Phase 1 of the development, the completion of the Main Street will extend from Bessemer Drive in a westerly and then northerly direction through to, and including, the proposed junction that serves the Primary School access in the Central Section of the Site.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interest of highway pedestrian and cyclist safety in accordance with Policies 5, 7 and 8 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**70. Public Transport Infrastructure**

Prior to the commencement of each phase of the development, details of the public transport infrastructure shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This infrastructure shall comprise of but is not limited to the following:

- Details of bus stop facilities to include raised height kerbs and shelters and real-time information signs, where agreed;
- Bus priority measures where appropriate within the Main Road; and
- A programme for the delivery of the public transport infrastructure.

The public transport infrastructure required to serve a particular Phase, as approved by the Local Planning Authority, shall be implemented in accordance with the approved programme for delivery of that phase.

The future locations of all bus stops serving a Phase should be determined prior to the occupation of any buildings within the Phase and be clearly marked on site during construction of the internal roads to ensure visibility for prospective purchasers and users.

**REASON:-** To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**71. Monitoring**

Prior to the commencement of any development the submission and agreement of a mechanism of continual review of the transport impacts of the development to include (but not restricted to) the installation of traffic counters upon each access, travel plan monitoring and regular dialogue between Developer, Local Planning Authority and Highway Authority. The findings of this work shall be shared between all interested parties with a view to remedying any problems arising directly from the construction or occupation of the development.

**REASON:-** To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

## **72. Travel Plan**

At least 3 months prior to the first occupation of the development, a detailed Full Travel Plan for Phase 1, based upon the Hertfordshire Council document 'Hertfordshire Travel Plan Guidance', shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented at all times.

**REASON:-** To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

## **73. Travel Plan - Outline**

For each reserved matters application, at least 3 months prior to the first occupation of the development, a detailed Full Travel Plan for Phase 1, based upon the Hertfordshire Council document 'Hertfordshire Travel Plan Guidance', shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented at all times.

**REASON:-** To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

## **74. School Travel Plan – Outline**

Within three months of the first use of the school, a Modeshift STARS School Travel Plan should be prepared and submitted to the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council, and be fully approved by the School Travel Plan Team via the Local Planning Authority in writing. Thereafter, the Travel Plan shall be implemented in full throughout the life of the school.

**REASON:-** To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised.

## **75. Phasing Plan**

Notwithstanding the information contained in the Transport Assessment or ES Addendum, no development shall commence in respect of any development parcel of strategic engineering element until a Site Wide Phasing Plan, which accordance with the Section 106 triggers has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority for written approval. The Phasing Plan shall include the sequence of providing the following elements:

- a) Development parcels;
- b) Major distributor roads/routes within the site, including timing of provision and opening of access points into the site;

- c) The local centre, mobility hubs, convenience store and community facilities;
- d) Strategic foul surface water features and SuDS;
- e) Open space, allotments and orchard;
- f) Strategic electricity and telecommunications networks;
- g) Environmental mitigation measures.

No development shall commence, apart from enabling works and strategic engineering elements, unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority until such time as the phasing plan has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved phasing contained within the Phasing plan unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure suitable, safe and satisfactory planning and development of the site in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018).

#### **76. Bus Service**

Phase 1 of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed bus stops and turning area have been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Phase 1 shall not be occupied until those stops have been constructed in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure suitable and satisfactory planning and development of the site in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018).

#### **77. Rights of Way (Part A)**

Notwithstanding the details indicated on the submitted drawings, no works shall commence on site unless otherwise agreed in writing until a Rights of Way improvement plan for the off-site and on-site Rights of Way improvement works has/have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the highway improvement works are designed to an appropriate standard in the interests of highway safety and to protect the environment of the local highway corridor and in accordance with Policies 5 and 21 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018).

#### **78. Rights of Way (Part B)**

Prior to commencement (where appropriate) and/or prior to the first occupation/use of the development hereby permitted the off-site and on-site Rights of Way improvement plan works (including any associated highway works) referred to in condition 77 shall be completed to the written satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the highway improvement works are designed to an appropriate standard in the interests of highway safety and to protect the environment of the local highway corridor and in accordance with Policies 5 and 21 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018).

#### **79. Stopping up order**

No development shall commence until such time as a Stopping Up Order to remove all highway rights over the land required for the diversion of Chadwell Road as illustrated on drawing number 19206/019 Rev H have been successfully removed.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in accordance with Policy 12 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**80. Maintenance of streets**

Prior to the occupation of any dwellings within any parcel of development, full details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in relation to the proposed arrangements for future management and maintenance of the proposed streets within that parcel. Following the provision of such streets, the streets shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved management and maintenance details until such time as an agreement has been entered into under section 38 of the Highways Act 1980 or a Private Management and Maintenance Company has been established in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure suitable, safe and satisfactory planning and development of the site in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018).

**81. Phase 2 Street Works – Outline**

The Phase 2 Main Street Works will be completed prior to the first occupation of Phase 2, i.e. the first reserved matters application for that part of the site which outline planning permission is sought with this application.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in accordance with Policy 12 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**82. Phase 3 Street Works – Outline**

The Phase 3 Main Street Works will be completed prior to the first occupation of Phase 3, i.e. the first reserved matters application for that part of the site which outline planning permission is sought with this application.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in accordance with Policy 12 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**83. Phase 4 Street Works – Outline**

The Phase 4 Main Street Works will be completed prior to the first occupation of Phase 4, i.e. the first reserved matters application for that part of the site which outline planning permission is sought with this application.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in accordance with Policy 12 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

**84. Detailed Highways Plans – Outline**

Prior to the commencement of the development, full details in relation to the design of estate roads (in the form of scaled plans and / or written specifications) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to detail the following:

- a. Roads;
- b. Footways;
- c. Cycleways (compliant with LTN 1/20);
- d. External public lighting;
- e. Minor artefacts, structures and functional services;
- f. Foul and surface water drainage;
- g. Visibility splays;
- h. Access arrangements, including temporary construction access;
- i. Hard surfacing materials;
- j. Parking areas for vehicles and cycles;
- k. loading areas; and
- l. Turning and circulation areas.

No development in Phase 2 (or future phases) shall be occupied until the detailed scheme has been implemented. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans.

**REASON:-** To ensure satisfactory planning and development of the site in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018).

#### **85. Foul Water**

A phase of the development shall not be occupied until confirmation has been provided that either:-

1. All foul water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows for that phase of development; or
2. A development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed (which can be varied/amended by agreement) with the Local Authority in consultation with Thames Water to allow development to be occupied.

Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed, no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan.

**REASON:-** Network reinforcement works are likely to be required to accommodate the proposed development. Any reinforcement works identified will be necessary in order to avoid sewage flooding and/or potential pollution incidents.

#### **86. Surface Water Drainage**

No development shall take place (including site clearance) on any phase until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site based on the approved drainage strategy and sustainable drainage principles, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The drainage strategy should demonstrate the surface water run-off generated up to and including 1 in 100 year + climate change critical storm will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site following the corresponding rainfall event. The submitted details for each phase shall include:

- a. How the development shall limit surface water runoff from the site to a 1 in 100 year flood event plus an allowance of 40% for climate change;
- b. Inclusion of SuDS in line with the CIRIA SuDS manual with all phases to follow the SuDS hierarchy for inclusion of SuDS features;
- c. Demonstration of a drainage strategy, which has reviewed all viable options promoting above ground storage such as the use of rain gardens, permeable paving, tree pits, swales, filter drains, attenuation basins etc;
- d. Ensure all infiltration basins provide half down drain times within 24 hours unless otherwise agreed with the LPA;
- e. Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including their location, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs and all corresponding calculations/modelling to ensure the scheme caters for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% allowance for climate change event;
- f. Plans indicating flood exceedance routes, both on and off site in the event of a blockage or rainfall event that exceeds the designed capacity of the system;

- g. A management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime. Including: details of land ownership; maintenance responsibilities; a description of system; the identification of individual assets, services and access requirements; details of routine and periodic maintenance activities.

Each of the approved phase(s) of development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal and storage of surface water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

#### **87. Infiltration Testing for Drainage Scheme**

No development shall take place (including site clearance) on any phase until additional infiltration testing on the site in accordance with BRE Digest 365 Standards and geotechnical investigations to confirm the feasibility of discharge via infiltration and groundwater levels on site w submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All testing should take account of proposed depths for associated infiltration devices.

**REASON:-** To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal and storage of surface water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

#### **88. Details of Constructed Drainage Scheme**

Upon completion of the drainage works for each phase in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements, the following must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- a. Provision of a verification report (appended with substantiating evidence demonstrating the approved construction details and specifications have been implemented in accordance with the surface water drainage scheme). The verification report shall include photographs of excavation and soil profiles/horizons, installation of any surface water structure (during construction and final make up) and control mechanism.
- b. Provision of a complete set of as built drawings for the site drainage.
- c. A management and maintenance plan for the SuDS features and drainage network.
- d. Arrangements for adoption and any measures to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal and storage of surface water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

## **INFORMATIVES**

## **Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority**

AN1) Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN2) Obstruction of public highway land: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to willfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN3) Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN4) S106 Agreement. A Section 106 agreement will be required for the following:

- i. Approved Travel Plan(s), with individual monitoring fees (and contributions for remedial actions should targets be missed), in accordance with the current HCC Travel plan guidance document for business, residential and education development (March 2020). Individual Travel Plans will be required for each land-use which is of sufficient size to require the preparation of such a plan;
- ii. Bus Contribution;
- iii. Sustainable Travel Voucher; and
- iv. Specified Growth and Transport Plan schemes.

AN5) Construction standards for works within the highway: The applicant is advised that in order to comply with this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. The construction of such works must be undertaken to the satisfaction and specification of the Highway Authority, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

## **Community Infrastructure Levy**

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020.



This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB. please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at [www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL) or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at [CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk)

### **Thames Water**

The proposed development is located within 15 metres of Thames Waters underground assets and as such, the development could cause the assets to fail if appropriate measures are not taken. Please read our guide 'working near our assets' to ensure your workings are in line with the necessary processes you need to following if you're considering working above or near our pipes or other structures:-

<https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/planning-your-development/working-near-or-diverting-our-pipes>

Should you require further information please contact Thames Water by email:- [developer.services@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:developer.services@thameswater.co.uk) or Phone 0800 009 3921 (Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm) or write to: Thames Water Developer Services, Clearwater Court, Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8DB.

### **Police Crime Prevention Design Advice**

The proposed development should achieve Secured By Design (SBD) accreditation in order for it to comply with current Building Regulations. The Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor by telephone on 01707 355227 or email [mark.montgomery@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:mark.montgomery@herts.pnn.police.uk)

### **Environmental Health**

Construction sites may cause the disturbance of rats and other vermin. Developers have a duty to manage the treatment of rats, vermin and pests on the site. Where suitable controls are not in place Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949 and nuisance and public health legislation will be used.

During the construction phase the guidance in BS5228-1:2009 (Code of Practice for noise control on construction and open sites) must be adhered to.

### **Building Regulations**

To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at [building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk](mailto:building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk) or phoning us on 01438 879990.

To make a building regulations application please apply through our website portal at <https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/contact-us/> payment can be made online or by phoning the above number after the application has been uploaded. Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control for fees guidance on 01438 879990.

Hertfordshire Building Control can also be contacted by post at Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd, 4th Floor, Campus West, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6BX.

Once a building regulations application has been deposited with relevant drawings and fee building work may commence. You will be advised in their acknowledgement letter of the work stages we need to inspect but in most instances these are usually:

- Excavation for foundations
- Damp proof course
- Concrete oversite
- Insulation
- Drains (when laid or tested)
- Floor and Roof construction
- Work relating to fire safety
- Work affecting access and facilities for disabled people
- Completion

Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control on 01438 879990 before 10.00am to ensure a same day inspection (Mon - Fri).

### **Pro-active statement**

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

## **10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision adopted October 2020 and Stevenage Design Guide adopted October 2009.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 adopted 2019.
4. Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 adopted May 2018.
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Planning Policy Guidance March 2014.
7. Community Infrastructure Levy 2010 (as amended).