

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

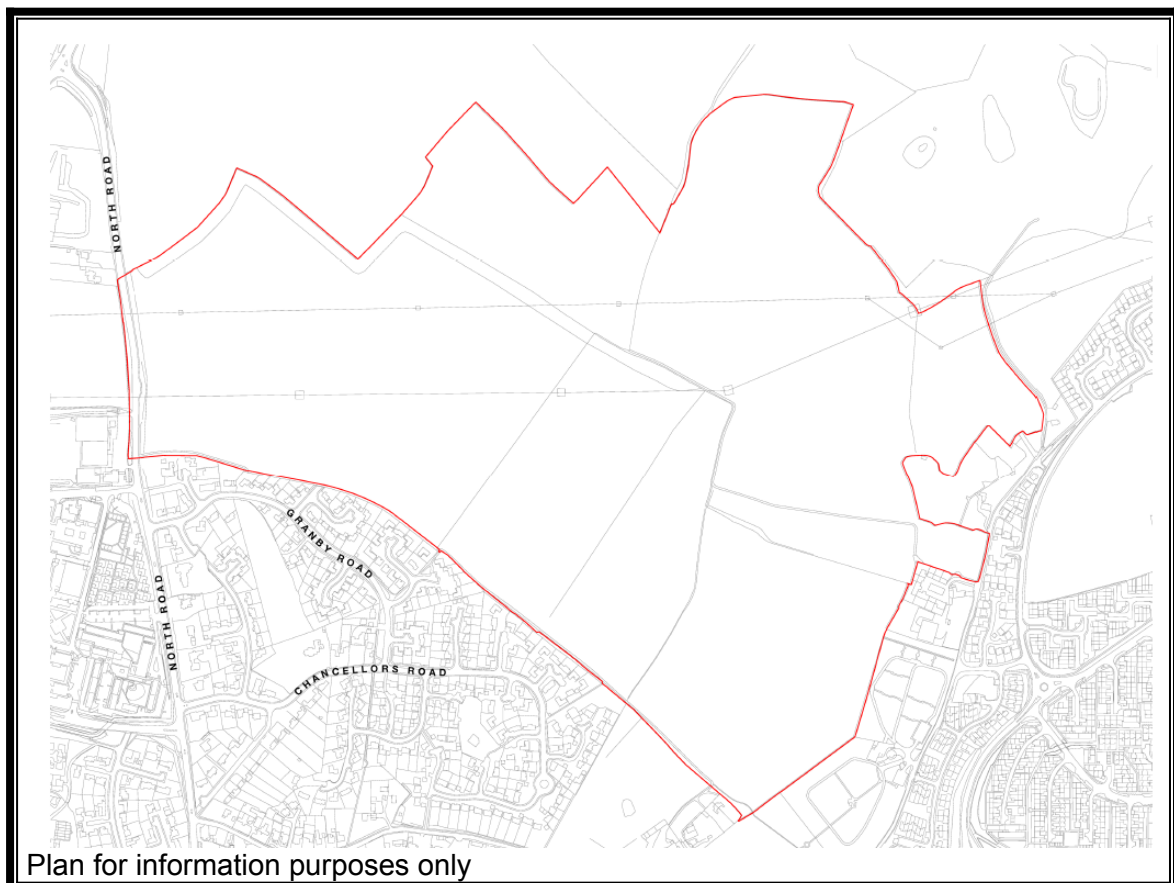
Date: 4 February 2020

Author: Dave Rusling 01438 242270

Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad 01438 242257

Contact Officer: Dave Rusling 01438 242270

Application Nos:	17/00862/OPM
Location:	Land to North of Stevenage
Proposal:	Outline application for the erection of 800 residential dwellings, creation of a new local centre, provision of a primary school, provision of landscaped communal amenity space including children's play space; creation of new public open space together with associated highways, landscaping, drainage and utilities works.
Drawing Nos.	UD01 Rev C, UD02 Rev L, UD03 Rev M, UD04 Rev L, UD05 Rev L, SK21 Rev K, SK28 Rev A, NPA 10651, 300, P02, NPA 10651 702 P03, NPA 10651 504 Rev P02, NSTV-WSP-00-XX-SK-CE-0002 P01.
Applicant:	Bellway Homes and Millar Homes
Date Valid:	8 December 2017
Recommendation:	GRANT OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site which measures approximately 75 hectares in area is located to the north of Stevenage and is situated to the east of North Road, to the north east of Granby Road and Chancellors Road and to the west of Weston Road and Great Ashby Way. To the north are agricultural fields. The site is agricultural land comprising a number of arable fields with semi mature hedgerows and trees. The site undulates with a ridgeline running along the northern boundary which adjoins trees. There are also woodland areas to the north east of the application site. There are two sets of electricity pylons running through the site, with 132K pylons toward the north of the site and 440K pylons within the centre of the site.
- 1.2 The northern boundary of the site adjoins the borough boundary with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). The land to the north of this is included in the emerging NHDC local plan for residential development. To the west the site faces onto North Road and agricultural land beyond, adjacent to which is the nearby Rugby Club and Lister Hospital. Along the south western boundary of the site is a public footpath/Bridleway which runs along the boundary with properties in Chancellors Road and Granby Road. There are also footpaths running through the site to land to the north. To the east of the site is Weston Road which contains the Cemetery to the south west and the nearby St Nicholas Church and adjoining listed buildings on Rectory Lane. Finally, also to the east of the site is Rooks Nest Farm which comprises a number of listed buildings including the grade II listed farm itself and associated outbuilding and Rooks Nest House which is a grade I listed building. The south eastern part of the site is located within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area.

2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 There is no planning history relating to this site

3 THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for residential development of up to 800 dwellings as well as the creation of a new local centre, provision of a primary school, provision of landscaped communal amenity space together with associated highways, landscaping, drainage and utilities works. The applicant is seeking approval at this stage for the means of access with all other matters reserved for later approval. Although in outline form, the application is supported by a masterplan and a series of parameter plans identifying design coding, building heights and showing the illustrative layout of the development, including how the development will impact on the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area.
- 3.2 The primary access to the site is to be taken from North Road via two vehicular access points from which the remainder of the road network for the site will be formed. The primary access road will form a loop within the residential development between the two main access points from which the rest of the road network will extend to provide permeable access to all parts of the site. A bus route would be provided along the primary access route through the site. The primary access route has been annotated such that it can be extended toward the northern boundary of the site to ensure that were the adjoining site in North Hertfordshire to come forward for development there would be connectivity between the two sites. As well as catering for vehicles, the primary access route would incorporate dedicated cycleways and footpaths. Additionally, a new cycle link is to be provided along North Road to Coreys Mill Lane in order to help improve cycle access from the site to Stevenage town centre.

- 3.3 The masterplan has been created in order to guide the location of the built development, whilst responding to the conservation area designation in the eastern part of the site. It is intended that the built development will be restricted to the western part of the site, with the eastern part of the site to become a publicly accessible open space/parkland. The intention behind this is to preserve the setting of the listed buildings to the east of the site and to retain views across this part of the site towards the Church of St Nicholas. The most eastern part of the residential development which lies within the conservation area has been illustrated as being low density in an attempt to ensure that the edge of the conservation area is preserved and enhanced. The layout of the developed part of the site has been designed to accommodate the 440kv electricity pylons within a landscaped corridor running east-west through the site. The other 32kv cables within the site would be grounded with terminal towers being provided. Following discussions with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) the scheme has been amended to incorporate a proposed new primary school centrally within the western part of the site. This would be funded by the developer. There would also be a small local centre providing flexible commercial floorspace (retail, restaurant/hot food, office and leisure facilities) and a play area located to the west of the proposed primary school, close to the entrances from North Road .
- 3.4 It is proposed to design the residential element using a traditional perimeter block approach in the form of buildings along the primary streets, framing open spaces in an attempt to promote legibility and connectivity. This would be designed to ensure safety and security by providing active frontages and surveillance. In terms of heights, the parameter plans indicate three distinct residential types having a range of heights. The majority of the properties would be 2 storeys having a maximum height of 9.5m, with 2.5 stories along the north western part of the site having a height of 11m. The final element would be three stories in height and this would be located around the main access road and toward the front of the site facing North Road. The three storey elements would have an indicative height of 12.5m.
- 3.5 With regard to densities, the higher density development of between 41-50 dwellings per hectare (dph) would be located toward the west of the site and around the access road, and the proposed Primary School and local centre, with medium density areas 31-40 dph toward the east and north east of the site. The lower density development 15-30 dph would be located to the south east of the site within the conservation area adjacent to the proposed area of public open space.
- 3.6 On the eastern part of the Site approximately 38 hectares of meadow would be provided to create a Country Park which would include various new areas of copse, hedgerow, and orchard planting and additional footpaths. On the western part of the site a landscaped corridor would be located along an east-west axis situated beneath the existing southernmost electricity lines. In addition, green/open space would be provided around the perimeter of the site and along the existing features such as shelter belts, hedgerows and ditches, with the additional planting of hedgerows and occasional trees.
- 3.7 Surface water storage is proposed within the greenspace using a network of cascading ponds/basins to serve the main area of proposed development, with an additional single pond/basin to the east to serve the smaller eastern sub component of the development. These will be designed to delay and reduce water flows and would use infiltration where available, before formal discharge to Thames Water and Anglian Water infrastructure for eastern and western catchments. The main network of proposed surface water storage features is along the central east-west corridor which runs across the western part of the site beneath the existing electricity lines. The indicative plans indicate four basins of various sizes.

- 3.8 The application comes before the planning committee for consideration as it is a major application.

4 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 As a major planning application the proposal has been publicised by way of letters to adjoining premises, the erection of site notices and a press notice. A further consultation was undertaken following receipt of amendments to the application. Following this publicity objections have been received from the occupiers of the following properties within Stevenage:-

38, Anderson Road
39, Angles Way,
75, Angotts Mead,
1, 5, Arnold Close,
84, Augustus Gate,
13, Bandleley Rise,
45, 47, 48, 55, 68, Basils Road,
33, 50, Beane Walk,
2, Beverley Road,
50, 150, Blenheim Way,
2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 29, 30, Boswell Gardens,
3, Brick Kiln Road,
67, Brixham Close,
37, Broadview,
14, Pinewood Court, 9, Broadwater Crescent,
2, Broom Walk,
52, Brunel Road,
22, Bude Crescent,
29, 65, Burymead,
13, Chambers Gate,
4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18, 41, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 109, 111, 112, 114, 117, 119, 123,
124, 126, 128, 129, 137, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, Morgan Close, Chancellors Road,
203, Chells Way,
1, 4, 6, Chestnut Walk,
1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, Chouler Gardens,
3, Wilton Cottages, 13 and 19, Church Lane,
13, Colts Corner,
68, Conifer Walk,
38, Cotswold Drive,
1, 3, 15, Daltry Close,
29, 37, Darwin Road,
1, Derby Way,
33, Devonshire Close,
12, Dewpond Close,
23, Doncaster Close,
66, Dryden Crescent,
167, Durham Road,
27, Elm Walk,
11, 21, Essex Road,
37, Exchange Road,
120, Ferrier Road,
65, Fishers Green Road,
52, Fortuna Close,
1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, Foster Close,
25a, 28, Franklins Road,
29, Fresson Road,
17, Frobisher Drive,

73, Furzedown,
 2, Gaylor Way,
 1, 2, 3, Gloucester Close,
 59, Gordian Way,
 22, 50, 142, 178, 208, Grace Way,
 1, 3, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16a, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 32, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 3
 Appletree House, Granby Road,
 6, Grasmere,
 44, Great Ashby Way,
 23, Green Close,
 23, Hadwell Close,
 1 Hammond Close,
 2, 45, Haycroft,
 22, 38, 44, 101, Hayfield,
 9, Headingley Close,
 36, 74, High Street,
 12, Tarrant Court, Ingleside Drive,
 16, Jackdaw Close,
 307, Jessop Road,
 2, Jubilee Road,
 13, 17, Julians Road,
 12, Kenmore Close,
 22, Knights Templar Green,
 45, Kymswell Road,
 1, 10, 12, 5, Lancaster Close,
 10, Langthorne Avenue,
 102, Leaves Spring,
 8, Leggett Grove,
 1, 6, Fieldcroft, 92, 110, 119, 130 Letchmore Road,
 1, Letchmore Villas,
 Unit 6, Leyden Road,
 80, Lime Close,
 20, Livingstone Link,
 62, Lomond Way,
 63, Longcroft Road,
 10, Lonsdale Court,
 209, 321, Lonsdale Road,
 1, 2, 6, 7, 13, 14, Matthews Close,
 5, 7, 9, Morgan Close,
 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, Newbury Close,
 33, Newcastle Close,
 2A, 8, 18, 19, 22, 27, 63, North Road,
 15, Orchard Road,
 14, Pinetree Court,
 16, Plash Drive,
 10, 11, Pound Avenue,
 10 Primrose Hill Road,
 19, Hillside House, 2, Quantock Close,
 8, 25, 68, Raleigh Crescent,
 2, Bury Cottages, 2, Nicholas Place, 2, The Priory, 1 The Close, Ashenhurst, 7,
 Clements Place, Brixham, Medbury, Revelin, Sheen Cottage, The Bury, The Old Bury,
 St Nicholas Church, Rectory Lane,
 4, Redwing Close,
 4, Riccat Lane
 1 Rooks Nest Farm Barns,
 95, 245, 514, 544, Ripon Road,
 10, 533, Scarborough Avenue,

57, Scott Road,
 2, Serpentine Close,
 39, 5, The Grove, Shephall Green,
 16, Shirley Close,
 21, Shoreham Close,
 41, 71, 75, Sish Lane,
 107, Skipton Close,
 3, Southwark Close,
 67, Sparrow Drive,
 75, 76, 69, Stanmore Road,
 37, Sutcliffe Close,
 16, 31, St Andrews Drive,
 14, 36, 54, St Albans Drive,
 6, Swale Close,
 19 Sweyns Mead,
 23, Symonds Green Road,
 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, The Brambles,
 3, The Grange,
 2, The Hedgerows,
 3, The Old Walled Garden,
 55, The Paddocks,
 65, Thirlmere,
 5, 7, 10, 16, 17, Thurlow Close,
 11, 135, Torquay Crescent,
 1, 14, 23, Trafford Close,
 1, 16 Trent Close,
 1, 4, 6, 9, 11 Turner Close,
 31, Townsend Mews,
 3, 31, 33, Trafford Close,
 16, 30, 40, 45, 55, Trent Close,
 144, Trumper Road,
 101, West Terrace, Six Hills House,
 1, Underwood Road,
 401, Vardon Road,
 45, Vinters Avenue,
 113, 23, 29, 36, Walkern Road,
 4, Wensum Road,
 1A, 2, 9, Rooks Nest Cottages, 4, 5, 8, 9, Rooks Nest Farm Barns, Keepers Cottage,
 23, 27, 30, 67, 79, Weston Road,
 72, Wheatlands,
 5, Whernside Drive,
 22, Whitehorse Lane,
 6, 25, 30, 47, 60, 70, 71, 72, 76, 79, 81, 90, 93, 95, 101, Whitney Drive,
 135, Wigram Way,
 5, 6, 7, Wilson Close,
 363, Wisden Road,
 1, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 20, Woodfield Road,
 162, 177, 200, 284, 428, York Road,
 Shepperton, Thornboro, Todds Green,

4.2 Objections have also been received from the following properties from outside of Stevenage:-

1 Ashwell Close, 1, 2 High Street, 10 Oak Lane, 11, 24, Ashwell Common, 32, 48,
 High Street, 41, Jacks Hill Park, Flint Barn, Graveley Hall Farm, Kate's Cottage, The
 Cottage, Church Lane, Oak House, Oak Lane, Old School Church Lane, Graveley,
 10 Clothall Corner, Baldock,

10 Minster Way, Bath,
 100 Wilbury Road, 20, 25, Gorst Close, 8, Highfield, 39, Pixmore Avenue, 144, 157,
 Pixmore Way, 2 Brookside, 21 Dents Close, 33, Broadwater Avenue, 40, Danescroft,
 33, Pasture Road, 42, Norton Road, 47, Whitechicks, 7, 54, Shott Lane, 56, Green
 Lane, 7, Bell Acre Gardens, Rushby Mead, 24, Woolston Avenue, Letchworth,
 11, 23, Grimstone Road, 4, 18, Tower Close, Ashwater House, Kimberley, Stevenage
 Road, Little Wymondley,
 11 Windsor Road, York Terrace, 27, Grantchester Road, Cambridge,
 14 Millard Road, Royston,
 18, Friars, 22, Lindsay Avenue, 4, Talbot Street, 75, Willian Road, 59, Strathmore
 Avenue, Lavender House, Bedford Road, Hitchin,
 65, Arlesey Road, Ickleford,
 7, Park Lane, Henlow,
 19, Goody Mead, Bennington,
 2 Church Green, Great Wymondley,
 2, The Cottage, Rustling End, 5, St Albans Road, Codicote,
 22, Roebuck Close, Hertford,
 33, Wicken Fields, Ware,
 33, Bunyan Close, Pirton
 37, Winifred Way, Caister –On- sea, Norfolk
 38, Templar Road, Oxford,
 45, Tennyson Road, Harpenden,
 5, Normans Lane, Welwyn,
 8, Queen Elizabeth Close, London
 9, The Close, Akeley,
 60, Rabournmead Drive, Northolt, Middlesex,
 Butts End, Fore Street, Weston
 Flat C, 52, Conyers Road, London
 Heron Cottage, High Street, Fen Drayton,
 Homewood, Park Lane, Knebworth
 Schillesrstr, 24 79183 Waldekirk, Germany
 The Queens College, High Street, Oxford
 University of St Andrews, School of English
 112, High Street, Walkern
 26 Danes Close, Stowmarket, Suffolk
 Department of English Language and Literature Åbo Akademi University Turku

4.3 A summary of the objections received are as follows:-

- The land is Green Belt, building on Green Belt is inappropriate
- Implications for highway safety, increased congestion through Gravely, the introduction of traffic lights will cause increased delays, the proposed mitigations are inadequate, the Transport Assessment does not give sufficient weight to the significant development proposed under NHDC's local plan. North Road has insufficient capacity to cope with the increased traffic. The A1(M) is regularly congested.
- Without the A1M motorway being increased in size, it would be suicide to contemplate this.
- Impact on air quality and climate change. Concern that the building and fabric approach to the dwellings as set out in the sustainability statement would indicate very significant CO₂ emissions arising from these dwellings and fails to address the real requirements for carbon neutrality by 2050. The development is counter to the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. Stevenage Borough Council has declared a climate emergency – this application makes no attempt to address this emergency by making the proposed dwellings or construction reduced or zero carbon.

- Loss of privacy and security to Keepers Cottage, Weston Road caused by introduction of a pathway in the proposed Country Park.
- Concern at the initial manner of notification of the application.
- Concern regarding the proposed Suds attenuation ponds and assurances are required that properties in Matthews Close will be protected from ground water run-off
- Ecological impacts of the development resulting in the loss of wildlife and habitat which supports many endangered species including the Skylark which are a species on the UK Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern.
- The history of Rooks Nest House will be taken away.
- The high density of development will cause unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality and residential amenity of the surrounding area, particularly Chancellors Park and Graveley village. This will reduce the attractiveness of Stevenage as a place to live for professional, managerial and entrepreneurial residents and undermine the objective of supporting a vibrant, successful and affluent town.
- Inadequacy of existing public transport facilities to serve the development.
- The development seems to be trying to maximise the profits of the developers as the residential units are mostly high density and those near to North Road are 3 and 4 stories high.
- The proposal is to build new houses within 400m of grade 1 listed Rooks Nest house which is a building of national historical importance famous throughout the world as the home of the novelist EM Forster.
- Adverse impact on Forster Country famous for its connections with novelist E M Forster.
- The development will compromise the security of 5 Rooks Nest Farm Barns.
- New bus routes would be required to serve the extra people.
- Inability of Lister Hospital and Doctors Surgeries to cope with the number of people this will bring to Stevenage.
- Damage to Roads.
- There are alternative brownfield sites such as the Icon building, Matalan site, Leisure Park, use of Tesco and Asda car parks.
- Development will put pressure on the small village school in Graveley which will not be able to cope with additional numbers.
- Concern of health risks from the nearby power lines.
- Loss of property value.
- The development needs to be assessed in conjunction with the proposed adjoining development in NHDC.

- Concern that the level of affordable housing will not be delivered.
- Lack of Water.
- Lack of Sewerage.
- Impact on demand for car parking from people attending St Nicholas Church and changes to pedestrian traffic through the Churchyard.
- No need for the amount of housing proposed housing figures are overestimated. The ONS has reduced the number of houses required and now project that 5500 dwellings are required rather than the 7600 projection used for the Stevenage Plan. Thus there is no requirement to build on this land.
- The application breaches paragraphs 7, 8c, 9, 117, 118c, 119, 122, 123, 127, 190 and 192 of the NPPF.
- The people of Stevenage do not need these dwellings. These dwellings are primarily for people who work in London migrating into Stevenage.
- Regularly use the public bridle ways on this land to walk our dog and losing it forever would be a great pity.
- The Councillors are elected by local residents and must listen to their wishes of where new development should take place. It is not up to builders and developers to choose the most ideal and cheapest areas to build on a massive scale that allows maximum profits to them and their shareholders.
- The site was improperly removed from the Green Belt
- Contravention of Human Rights
- St Nicholas Church PCC feel that the plans for the development would be improved by providing parking access into the meadows via St Nicholas Church yard and suggest this could be done by purchasing the meadow opposite the church on Rectory Lane and creating a safe crossing point. This means of access to the new meadows via the historic church yard would encourage people to make the most of this new green space, whilst highlighting the oldest building in Stevenage.
- Inaccuracies on the planning application form.
- Loss of views of over the countryside and Chilterns in the west.
- Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 21b-006-2019031 indicates 'the NPPF takes precedence over the Local Plan. Thus a breach of a requirement (paragraph) of the NPPF in the application is sufficient to reject the application notwithstanding that the site has been earmarked for development by the Local Plan.
- Clear and convincing reasons must be given by the Planning officers for each breach of the NPPF which they decide to (fully or partly) ignore in their draft recommendation to the Planning Committee.
- The planning officer's reasons for ignoring the NPPF must go to those persons who raised that particular breach of the NPPF in their objection with the purpose of convincing that person or persons, giving sufficient time for the objector/s to study the reasons, to ask further questions regarding those reasons and to finally respond.

- In the event that any one relevant objector should not be finally convinced it naturally follows that the application cannot be recommended to the Planning Committee.
- From the objections lodged by various parties so far 23 paragraphs of the NPPF have been breached by this application at this point in time, Dec 5th, 2019. They are:-
- NPPF paras, 7, 8, 9, 14, 34, 61, 64, 108, 109, 117, 118c, 118d, 119, 122, 123, 128, 129, 132, 170, 170d, 174b, 175a, 184.
- Request that the Council consider making preservation orders on the trees and hedgerows.
- No Cycleways allowed for.
- Danger and disruption caused by lorries during construction.
- This proposal would mean the re-defining of the Stevenage boundary for second time.

4.4 Homes England

Homes England own land at North Road, Stevenage. This extends to approximately 6.40 ha. This single parcel of land is referred to as "Land West of North Road" in Policy EC1.

Homes England has no objection to the development of the neighbouring site to our own for residential development as allocated in the Local Plan; however, we wish to object to application 17/00862/OPM in its current submitted form. The application as it currently stands is contrary to Local Plan Policy. Whilst the application site is included within the allocation in Policy HO3: North of Stevenage; this policy is related to Policy IT1: Strategic Development Access Points. This states: "The preferred vehicular access points to strategic development sites from the existing road network are shown on the policies map: To land north of Stevenage from B197 North Road approximately 250 metres north of the junction with Granby Road; Planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate:

- a. That these preferred access points have been incorporated into the scheme design; and.
- b. For the development areas to the north and west of Stevenage, how they would integrate with any future phases of development beyond the Borough boundary. Alternative access points and solutions will be permitted where they are demonstrably preferable in highway terms."

Homes England objects to the application 17/00862/OPM in its current submitted form as the proposed access for the development that is the subject of the application does not take account of the allocation in Local Plan Policy EC1/4 that is being taken forward by Homes England. As currently designed, the proposed access has the potential to conflict with any access to our site; and is as such contrary to Policy EC1. The application is contrary to the requirements of Policy IT1 by failing to demonstrate that the access point has been integrated into the scheme design and fails to demonstrate successful integration into the existing infrastructure of the town as required by the supporting text to this policy.

Homes England's transport consultants will submit information that will illustrate how the access points can be designed to enable development of both sites without being in conflict and be demonstrably preferable to the access proposed in the application in the terms outlined in the supporting text to Policy IT1.

4.5 Luton Friends of the Earth

We objected to proposals to develop Forster Country in our submission to the Local Plan in 2013. It is astonishing to us that this heritage countryside, tourist destination and scene of beauty is still under threat, and has not been permanently protected.

Forster Country is the open farmland between Stevenage and the village of Graveley, seen from the memorial of author E. M. Forster, and from the house where he grew up, thinking it the most beautiful country in all of England. Forster and composer Elizabeth Poston lived in Stevenage. Forster's novel *Howard's End* was inspired by this area, and they campaigning to protect this gently rolling green land. On the centenary of his birth, 2000 people visited Stevenage to see it.

This application is unsustainable as it would contribute significantly to climate change. We are informed that these houses will emit approximately 64,000 tonnes of CO₂ in construction, and an average of 11,000 tonnes annually by the householders.

Planning rules state that Green Belt is only to be built on in exceptional circumstances. Green Belt has already been built on far more than exceptional circumstances. The circumstances are that Green Belt combines with the important heritage value of this site to protect it in perpetuity. To remove this land from Green Belt is therefore against planning law.

Historic England has stated that this land is a heritage asset and should not be built upon. This application would significantly contribute to the urban sprawl of Stevenage. The development is not needed as the Office of National Statistics (ONS) now shows that the UK population growth is slowing. There is a campaign, given the climate emergency, by Population Concern, David Attenborough and many others, to encourage people not to have more than two children. The Stevenage house-building need is 2,000 less than current plans. Development is too heavily weighted to the south-east and the London commuter belt, and should be more fairly shared proportionately across the UK. Here it puts unacceptable pressure on chalk streams, from which there is an unacceptable degree of abstraction, lowering the water table.

There is a book about Forster Country by Margaret Ashby. It would be an act of vandalism to pass an application which meant that from Forster's memorial "Only Connect" in St Nicholas churchyard at the entrance to these fields, you could no longer see the rolling green countryside they worked so hard to save, and which has become so well known. These fields are also good agricultural land, which could help to feed the town – there must be a greater emphasis on localism and self-sufficiency.

4.6 Friends of Forster Country

LACK OF SUSTAINABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT

Bearing in mind Stevenage Borough's (SBC) motion of June 2019 declaring a Climate Emergency and its consequent aim to be greenhouse gas (GHG) net zero by 2050 and also the Government's declaration of Climate Emergency and its aim to be GHG net zero by 2050 the construction of 800 houses on this site will act in the inverse direction to these aims as their construction will generate **64,000 tons of GHG** (80 tons per house) and their occupation will generate **12,000 tons annually** into the distant future (**1.2 million tons per 100 years**). This latter factor is expanded under Lack of Sustainability of Dwellings below.

As giving planning permission is an act of SBC then any GHG emissions that result from that act count towards the net emissions of SBC and are therefore subject to the terms of SBC's Declaration of a Climate Emergency and the aims thereof and must be declared in the SBC public report on annual CO₂ emissions.

The above amounts derive from a Historic Scotland study that a two-bed cottage generates **80 tons** of GHG in its construction.

The annual GHG production figure stems from a total UK figure of 400 million tons of CO₂ equivalent divided by the 2016 ONS UK household number of 27.5 million, giving **14.4 tons average per UK household annually**.

The National Planning Policy Guidance states:-

Addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles which the National Planning Policy Framework expects to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. To be found sound, Local Plans will need to reflect this principle and enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Addressing climate change implies a need for lower GHG emissions. This application has the direct opposite effect and is unsustainable.

A definition of sustainable is given in the NPPF 'Achieving Sustainable Development' which states:-

*International and national bodies have set out broad principles of sustainable development. Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present **without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**.*

*The UK Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future' set out five guiding principles of sustainable development the first of which requires **living within the planet's environmental limits to ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations**.*

The development of this site will speed up a Climate Emergency as a consequence of its inherent GHG emissions and thus will compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs as required in resolution 42/187 above.

In addition, this development acts in the direction of exceeding the planet's environmental limits as determined by UNGA Resolution 42/187.

We point out that at the SBC Local Plan Consultation and Hearing the GHG emissions of this development were not considered. If they had been it is most likely the Plan would have been declared '**unsound**' for the reason of being '**unsustainable**' as described above with the likely result that the Green Belt status of this site would not have been removed.

THUS, THIS APPLICATION IS NOT SUSTAINABLE

In addition and in particular this application **breaches NPPF 2019** in the following paragraphs:-

Para 7) The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Para 8c) an environmental role, to contribute to protecting our natural environment including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and **mitigating and adapting to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy**.

Para 9) Planning policies and decisions should take an active role in guiding developments to sustainable solutions.

It should also be noted that this site was improperly removed from the Green Belt. The 2012 NPPF para 79 is clear that Green Belt status is permanent. The decision of the Planning Inspector ignored this clear point.

This Application is in breach of NPPF 2012 and 2019 as above

BROWNFIELD SITES AND PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

We wish to make it clear that we consider that developed sites in Stevenage could be made available even though they do not appear on the register of previously developed sites.

FoFC have reviewed the SBC Brownfield Land Register. It is noted that the total area is 77.87 hectares and that 66% of this previously developed land is a single Town Centre site.

The following NPPF paragraphs should be read in the context that the application site HO3 is greenbelt.

Para 117 of the 2019 NPPF states:-

Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed need in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or brownfield land.

Para 118c *giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes etc*

Para 118d *promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained etc.*

Para 119 states:-

Local planning authorities, and other plan-making bodies, should take a pro-active role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for development needs, including suitable sites on brownfield registers, etc. This should include identifying opportunities to facilitate land assembly, supported where necessary by compulsory purchase powers, where this can help to bring more land forward for meeting development needs and/or secure better development outcomes.

FoFC contend that this has not been done to a sufficient degree

There are several previously developed sites within Stevenage which could be redeveloped to take most of the OAN of 800 houses in this application.

The Icon Building (about 27 hectares) has been under consideration for at least 2 years. The Matalan site in the Town Centre has already been proposed to take 526 new homes. The Leisure Park to the west of the railway station is also under consideration for re-development to include homes. This site is 12 hectares. The Tesco and Asda car parks could be made multi storey and would free up 3 to 4 hectares. All round these sites could release around 40 to 50 hectares which would provide space for 1800 dwellings at the reasonably low figure of 40 dwellings per hectare

This application has the effect of destroying precious Greenbelt land whilst use of alternative sites has not been properly considered.

This Application thus contravenes NPPF requirements

OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEED

This Application has been made in the context of the SBC Local Plan which was written in very different circumstances. At that time population growth in Stevenage between 2011 and 2031 was assessed by the Office for National Statistics as 10,994 representing a 13% increase. The Office for National Statistics is now predicting growth of 10.7% over the same period and the growth curve is trending downwards.

This reduction in growth is about 17% percent. At high level this represents a reduction in need for dwellings at about the same proportion. Thus the overall dwelling increase

figure for Stevenage would fall from 7,600 to 6,255, a reduction of 1,345. Such a reduction would obviate the need to remove virtually any Greenbelt from Stevenage. The NPPF states that The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.

We believe that to continue with a Plan that allows destruction of Greenbelt when the rate of increase in required dwellings is falling is wrong and that it contravenes the NPPF.

This Application thus contravenes NPPF requirements

HOUSING DENSITY

NPPF Paras 122 and 123 dictate the need for building at high density where there is an anticipated or existing shortage of land.

At a housing density of 100 dwellings per hectare (dph), which is well below that envisaged for the Icon building only 8 hectares would be required for 800 dwellings.

The Matalan site in the Town Centre has already been proposed to take 526 new homes. The Leisure Park to the west of the railway station is under consideration for re-development to include homes. This site is 12 hectares. Two hectares alone could accommodate 200 to 400 homes. The Tesco and Asda car parks could be made multi storey and would free up 3 to 4 hectares giving a further 300 to 800 homes depending on density and extent of release.

This Application is breach of NPPF 2019 as described above

CONSERVATION AREA

Impact on the St Nicolas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area, its setting, and the setting of Rooks Nest House

The St Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area was expanded in 2007 to include part of the area known locally as 'Forster Country'. The western boundary of the Conservation Area is the footpath that follows the top of a high ridge of land between Rooks Nest House and the open land that looks out to the Chilterns in the west and to Rooks Nest House in the east. This footpath affords users an appreciation of the setting of Rooks Nest House and enables any member of the public to enjoy the same view of the distant Chilterns shared with the house, and described in the novel *Howards End*:

*'The whole clan's here now--it's like a rabbit warren. Evie is a dear. They want me to stop over Sunday--I suppose it won't matter if I do. Marvellous weather and the **view's marvellous--views westward to the high ground.**'*

*'The great estates that throttle the south of Hertfordshire were less obtrusive here, and the appearance of the land was neither aristocratic nor suburban. To define it was difficult, but Margaret knew what it was not: it was not snobbish. Though its contours were slight, there was a touch of freedom in their sweep to which Surrey will never attain, and **the distant brow of the Chilterns towered like a mountain.**'*

*'They opened window after window, till the inside, too, was rustling to the spring. Curtains blew, picture-frames tapped cheerfully. [...] **She admired the view.** She was the Helen who had written the memorable letters four years ago.'*

Building within the Conservation Area (on parcel E) and immediately to the west (on parcels D2, B2, C2 and C3) will obscure these views both from Rooks Nest House and for the users of the footpaths that follow this ridge of land, causing substantial harm both to Rooks Nest House and the Conservation Area, and their setting. The view from the house out to the Chiltern ridge is symbolic of one of the central themes of the novel, which seeks to reconcile intimate, domestic and personal relationships with connections to the wider world. This theme of the novel is also recognised in the 'Only Connect' sculpture at the entrance to Forster Country from St Nicholas churchyard, at precisely *the* point where the landscape begins to open out. The loss of this view will

cause substantial harm to the Conservation Area and to users of the footpaths along this ridge. It will also cause substantial harm to the setting of Rooks Nest House, making it no longer possible to appreciate the view described in the novel.

We are in agreement with Historic England's comments in their letter commenting on the original application, that:

'the topography of the proposed development site means that Parcel E, the development within the conservation area, and that outside its boundary in its setting, will have a considerable harmful impact on the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area and its setting, and on the setting of the listed buildings within the conservation area, given the historic interest set out above. It will considerably erode or destroy the open character of the landscape as appreciated visually and spatially today. It will disrupt the long-distance views and diminish the sense of open space it is presently possible to enjoy, and therefore either weaken or eradicate the ability to appreciate the listed buildings and conservation area within their setting. In so doing, it would fundamentally erode and diminish the sense of rural place that, despite the encroachment of modern Stevenage, has remained remarkably intact in this location.'

(17_00862_OPM

CONSULTEE_COMMENTS_FROM_HISTORIC_ENGLAND-498883)

This application if adopted would cause significant harm to the conservation area and should be rejected

HERITAGE

Forster Country as a Heritage Asset

The NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as a 'building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).' (NPPF,2019). Assets identified by the local authority are referred to as 'non-designated Heritage Assets.' Applicants are required to describe the significance of all Heritage Assets (designated and non-designated), including the contribution made by setting, and the effect of the application on the significance of the Heritage Asset should be taken into account in determining the Application. Stevenage Council currently does not have a local list of non-designated Heritage Assets. The Council has recently invited residents to nominate buildings for local listing. But Heritage Assets can also include monuments, sites, places and landscapes (NPPF 2019). Forster Country is a landscape valued by local people for its connection with the writer E M Forster – such a connection is described as a historical value - and the network of footpaths which cross it also have communal value. Historical and communal value has weight when determining the significance of Heritage Assets, and indeed are recognised by the Council as one of the aspects to be taken into account when determining the significance of buildings on the local list. The significance of Forster Country is demonstrated by being included by name within the recently adopted Local Plan. We can see no reason why the Council would confine itself to buildings for a local list and believe that the local list should be expanded to cover monuments, sites, places and landscapes. None of the Heritage Impact Assessments undertaken to date have considered the impact of the proposals on Forster Country as a Heritage Asset in its own right, but only as part of the setting of the designated assets. We believe that Forster Country should merit consideration as a Heritage Asset when determining the impact of the proposals.

This application if adopted would destroy Forster country as a heritage asset and should be rejected

4.7 Stephen McPartland MP

I wish to make known my objection to the above planning application and write to you today to request that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) dismiss the application at this, the initial consultation stage. I am extremely concerned at the detrimental impact the proposed development will have on our local environment and heritage, as well as the families in the vicinity. I do not believe that the proposed development is aligned to guidance on approved development, as set out in the February 2019 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Particularly with regards to the building on precious Green Belt land and the permanent loss of the vital ecosystems which are sustained there.

This development will place huge pressure on the surrounding local services, particularly with regard to roads infrastructure and health provision. The developers confirmed in their Transport and Access Statement that “highway” access to the proposed development site will be provided solely from North Road. This is, in my opinion, a clear and blatant breach of national planning policy, with Chapter 9 108 of the NPPF saying that it should be ensured that “any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in capacity and congestion) or on highway safety can be ...mitigated to an acceptable degree”. In their Transport Assessment the developers provide mitigation in the form of re-timing traffic signals and providing new signals at roundabouts, but no new roads infrastructure on an already gridlocked area.

The NPPF, Chapter 9.109, states that developments should be refused if “the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe” I remain extremely concerned that there has been little consideration given to the impact of several hundred new vehicles accessing and exiting the site along a single carriageway road. Several local residents in their objections have already cited this issue, and I stand shoulder to shoulder with them as they are already well aware of the impacts of increased traffic on this road.

I am also concerned at the impact this development would have on the health services within Stevenage. Once again, several residents have already registered their objections on these grounds. In their review of the development, the East and North Herts NHS Trust calculate that around 1,920 new patients will be registered and that it will stretch the two closest GP surgeries, although they state correctly that no new patient will be turned away, they conclude that the development “will have an impact on primary healthcare provisions and its implications...would be unsustainable” if left unmitigated by the developers. Chapter 3.34 of the NPPF states that plans, if wishing to be successful, should “set out the contributions expected from the development...such as that needed for education, health, transport. There is no evidence that there is any provision for primary health services in the development, particularly as the concerns raised by the local NHS Trust are as recent as last month. It is not in line with national policy, has been with potential concern by the local NHS Trust, and is yet another reason why this project is unsustainable.

I have previously made known my concerns regarding the affordable housing provided by these large developments in line with local and national policy. In Stevenage Borough Council’s own Local Plan 2011-2031 they state from Policy SP7 that “at least 20% of all new houses...to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40%...where viability permits.” The developers state that their proposals will amount to 30% of the development; a total of only 240 homes. I believe that this is not in line with national planning policy, with Chapter 5.6.1 of the NPPF stating that the types of housing “needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning”. The Council’s own Local Plan states that “there is a lack of affordable homes.” The provision of only 240 more does nothing to alleviate the

increasing gap that Stevenage Borough Council claims to exist. Sadly, Stevenage Borough Council are again willing to approve a development that contravenes not only national policy but ignores their own mission statement with regard to providing more affordable housing for local people.

Locally the area is known as Forster Country and is the last remaining farmland within the borough of Stevenage. It was once home to the Edwardian author E. M Forster and was the inspiration for his 1910 novel Howard's End with his home, Rooks Nest House, still in the conservation area. This area is celebrated and promoted by the Friends of Forster Country group whom have been preserving the area, arguably a heritage asset as the site of a former home of one of Britain's most well-known authors, since 1988. This is without consideration of the 12th century church of St Nicholas and historic sections of Stevenage's early medieval villages. Chapter 16.184 of the NPPF states that heritage assets must be "conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution...to future generations." In the subsequent subchapter the NPPF goes on to advise that "plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment" of such assets. Historic England, the national body tasked with caring for and protecting England's historic environment, share my concerns as they have similarly objected to the this development saying that the development will considerably erode or destroy the open character of the landscape. It will disrupt the long distance views and diminish the sense of open space, and therefore either weaken or eradicate the ability to appreciate the listed buildings and conservation area within their setting." I agree whole heartedly with the above objection that the application, if successful, would irreversibly disrupt the character of the historic site and permanently damage the area's unique and beautiful heritage.

I have repeatedly joined local residents in opposing development of the Green Belt and was horrified that Stevenage Borough Council ignored the concerns of residents who to this day remain determined to preserve the local environment. The Council's reassurances that Green Belt within Stevenage would be protected are clearly only lip service, as they actively destroy our local environment.

I ask the local authority to consider the objections of local people carefully and to consider Chapter 12.128 of the NPPF which states that "applicants should work closely with those affected...(and)..take account of the views of the community." Housing needs must be met through Stevenage Borough Council ensuring other developments are built on brownfield sites in Stevenage. Thousands of homes already have planning permissions, but they are not being built. I ask that this application be dismissed outright and Stevenage Borough Council works on ensuring actual homes are built that already have planning permission, instead of destroying our local environment.

4.8 Ramblers Association

I represent the Ramblers Association (RA) as Footpath Secretary for the neighbouring area of Graveley and two other Hertfordshire parishes. I responded at the Local Plan Inquiry and will not repeat the arguments against housing put forward then. I note that the applicants have sensibly not attempted to alter any existing Rights of Way (RoW) but those routes will inevitably be less attractive to walkers when through an urban area. Amelioration could be by improvements to the RoW network i.e. extra paths and possibly seating beside paths. I know of one section of RA in the area who wish to have a site for a memorial bench. I suggest it would be easy to include such amelioration in the plans and my suggestions follow.

The applicants are proposing paths in the un-built areas under the national grid lines and in the eastern area of the site through proposed hay meadows. If people are to

have any confidence that the paths will be more than lines on a map or even temporary routes on the ground then those paths should have Right of Way status.

The status should preferably as Footpaths. My request for that status is twofold:-

The existing network of Bridleways has recently been improved after an initiative by the British Horse Society so those users have adequate provision.

I think local people using the open areas for recreation as intended would rather not share with cycles and horses.

There should be no problem finding pleasant sites suitable for seating, with open views, in the eastern area of the site with one's back to the cemetery.

4.9 Letters of support have been received from the following:-

10 Avondale Court, Upper Letchmore Road, St Albans
3, Ripon Road,
72, Whitney Drive,
82 Walkern Road

- I wish to lodge my support for the above planning application.
- Without doubt it will be a development of well built , well designed 2, 3, 4 bed houses and not flats leave that for the Town, more importantly a new school that is really needed in this area. I've walked my dog in this area for years and hardly ever bump in to more than two other walkers and yet to see a horse rider!!
- A much needed Housing Development rather than just blocks of high rise apartments. Development will also provide additional School.
- I agree that more housing and associated facilities are required in Hertfordshire. Suggest that the north half of the site is developed. The south east should remain open space for the people to use.
- Very important to leave an open space/park in between the new housing and the existing area to the south to keep the balance.
- The developer should give the new open space park/Forster country section to the Council to stop any infill development in the future.
- There need to be more homes in the area so young people have somewhere to live.

Porchester Planning Consultancy has responded on behalf of Croudace Homes Limited who has an option on land situated immediately to the north of this application site. They make the following comments:-

- It is well established that the development of a new sustainable extension at North Stevenage would make a major contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Housing Market Area in a sustainable way, involving land in both Stevenage and North Herts administrative areas. The relevant local plans reflect this strategic cross-boundary approach.
- It is also well known that for some years Croudace, Bellway and Miller Homes have been liaising in their proposals to deliver the new urban extension in a coordinated way.

- The Croudace proposals for the adjoining land have been master planned to fit in with the Bellway Miler development including:-
 - Coordination of points of access to the local highway network and provision for linkages to the road network proposed in the Bellway Miller scheme including appropriate provision for public transport.
 - Coordination and integration of densities, house types and sizes between the 2 schemes.
 - Provision of and linkages to the footpath, cycle and greenway network proposed within the Bellway Miller proposals.
 - Croudace therefore supports the outline planning application.
 - Clarification as a point of information is provided with regard to the site boundary
 - Comment is made on the provision of primary education provision
- 4.10 Please note that the majority of the aforementioned is not a verbatim of the comments which have been received. 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 proposal subject to the recommended conditions and a S106 agreement to address sustainable transport and highway informatives.

5.2 Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Unit

- 5.2.1 Following an assessment of the proposed development they are satisfied with the on-site provision of the Primary School and have agreed the location within the site. However, they have commented that in order to be suitable for use as a primary school, the new primary school site would need to meet HCCs school site land specification. As well as receipt of the land to construct the new school, HCC are also requesting a contribution of £8,118,954.00 toward the building of the establishment. HCC are also recommending that financial contributions should be secured towards secondary education and in particular towards the proposed new secondary school to be built on the site of the former Barnwell East School.
- 5.2.2 They are also seeking contributions based on the HCC developer toolkit toward library services and youth provision. In addition to this, they are also seeking a financial contribution toward additional waste and recycling facilities (£80,296.00) or the expansion of the existing waste and recycling centre (£45,328.00). Finally, it is recommended that a number of fire hydrants should be provided as part of the development. As such, the fire hydrants and the other requirements requested by HCC would be secured as part of any S106 Legal Agreement.

5.3 Historic England

- 5.3.1 We welcome the proposed approach to landscaping within 'St Nicholas' Fields', which it is proposed will reinstate the field boundaries depicted on the 1834 Tithe Map of

Stevenage, and incorporate an appropriate management regime aimed at restoring them to something like the rural meadows they may have been during the nineteenth century.

- 5.3.2 Our previous correspondence made comments on some aspects of the design code, which we consider remain relevant, and would refer you to again. Having reviewed the amended Design Code, we note that on page 16 it aspires to a layout that *“has been designed to provide a permeable network of pedestrian-friendly routes integrating the neighbourhood to the adjacent housing to the south and west and public spaces to the north and east”*, and public spaces that are overlooked. It also states *“homes on the western edge of the scheme shall all front directly onto a green corridor which provides a footpath on the alignment of the existing PRow which will be retained. The PRow provides a pedestrian connection to existing housing to the south via 'The Brambles'. To maintain the green character of this corridor, properties here shall have vehicular access to the rear, with parking in courts and mews.”* Unfortunately, the layout accompanying this statement (page 15) does not match up to its aspirations. The layout does not show “parking courts and mews” but instead, as with the previous version, depicts a number of cul-de-sacs, particularly in the centre of Parcel E, which do not promote permeability, and indeed are not forms of layout that reflect the government’s best practice guidance in Manual for Streets (see section 4.2). In addition, the two small green spaces on the western side of proposed layout appear not to be overlooked by anything.
- 5.3.3 Additionally, we note again from page 12 of the Design Code that *“St Nicholas’ End will include 5% ‘aspirational homes’ to reflect SBC housing requirements and rebalance existing housing stock”*. As we have previously highlighted, Policy HO3, criteria M, part i, of the Stevenage Local Plan (Adopted May 2019), states that *“as much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development”*. It is difficult to reconcile ‘5%’ with ‘as much as possible’. In addition, we again highlight that, even allowing for some variation in precise densities and numbers of ‘aspirational’ housing located within Parcel E, c.5% of 800 is c.40 residential units
- 5.3.4 The layout depicted in the Design Code shows c.95 residential units. This is therefore approximately double the density we would expect to see in this part of the overall development, for it to meet the requirements of Policies HO3 and HO9 of the local plan, and the requirements found in the NPPF (2019)
- 5.3.5 In particular, we consider that without reducing the density - as also set out in our previous letter - the development proposal as it stands cannot meet the requirement of NPPF paragraph 190 to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s (or assets’) conservation and any aspect of the proposal. With reference to our previous correspondence as well as the comments above, we also remain concerned that the layout depicted continues to fail to meet the requirements of paragraphs 127 and 192 of the NPPF.
- 5.3.6 Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice above and in correspondence dated 31 January 2018 need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 8, 127, 190, 192, of the NPPF (February 2019).
- 5.3.7 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, and section

72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 5.3.8 Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

5.4 Wood Environmental (Council's Conservation Advisor)

- 5.4.1 The proposals for North Stevenage are directed by policy HO3 of the Local Plan, adopted May 2019. This policy provided for the allocation of the development site and overarching policies to direct and manage impacts, together with other policies within the local plan relating to listed buildings. The policy test, together with the NPPF and statutory requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) act 1990 (PLB&CA) provide the policy and legislative framework for understanding the heritage concerns for this application.
- 5.4.2 The two statutory tests require the council to 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. (PLB&CA Act 1990 S66(1) and S72(1) of the same act requires the council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. The scheme proposed has no direct impact upon the fabric of listed buildings so the S66 (1) duty concerns the council having special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.
- 5.4.3 The enactment of these two statutory duties, and their lengthy consideration by the Council, is demonstrated through the sequence of works by the council to examine and manage heritage in the area of North Stevenage. This can be seen to have been undertaken following the review of Conservation Areas dating to 2005. In response to comments issued by Historic England largely concerning the allocation of the site these points are detailed in the next paragraphs.
- 5.4.4 Initial comments received from Historic England note the allocated site is partially within the Rectory Lane and St Nicolas Conservation Area, and outside the conservation area. The site allocation was examined by the Council for heritage impacts in an assessment document dated November 2015. The document follows the sequential points detailed in Historic England's advice note concerning Site Allocations in Local Plans. The document follows the five steps detailed by Historic England to produce an assessment and make sound decisions concerning site allocations. The conclusions reached in this document are based upon an understanding of the proposal site, and the heritage assets in the vicinity of the site and in the surrounding area. Much of the study focuses upon the revisions of the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area and changes to its boundaries. In 2007 the boundary was extended to the west to take into the conservation area the valley and agricultural land to the west of Weston Road. Revisions to the conservation area also included the removal of a large area of modern housing development around Chancellor's Road. The 2007 boundary changes were based upon a 2005 review of the conservation area boundary. This document in paragraph 4.31 suggests that the open fields to the north-west of the conservation area are an integral part of the landscape and hold a heritage significance. The boundary suggested in this document is the long-established woodland edge/hedge line, but the boundary is drawn further to the north and west of this hedge line to meet a footpath. It is this boundary which is adopted in 2007 as part

of the revisions to the conservation area appraisal. It should be emphasised, to avoid any confusion that this area of land has been incorporated into the conservation area properly and the document with revised boundary has been consulted upon and adopted.

- 5.4.5 The 2015 impact assessment examines the contribution made by the different elements of the landscape within the wider allocation area to the character, appearance and setting of the conservation area. Map 8 of this document parcels up this land and shows how it relates to the hedgerow to the north and west of Weston Road. Three of the parcelled elements are considered to be within the conservation area, parcels B, C, and D. Parcel B is described as beyond the hedgerows, within the conservation area and reflects the land described by BEAMS in 2005 as not contributing to the character of the conservation area beyond the hedge row.
- 5.4.6 The heritage impact assessment submitted by the applicant comes to the same conclusions as the earlier BEAMS study, that development behind the established hedge line will have an impact upon the conservation area but be more limited than development to the east of the established hedge line. This matches the area of development included in this application with additional policies to ensure impacts are minimised. The creation and consultation undertaken upon the revised conservation area show a lengthy period of consideration and management of heritage assets within the area.
- 5.4.7 Historic England make reference to the development site being within the setting of the Parish Church, of St Nicholas (grade I), Rooks Nest House (grade I) the Old Bury (grade II*) and Rooks Nest Farmhouse and outbuildings (separate grade II list entries). As detailed in the adopted conservation area appraisal, a major element of the significance of the landscape and conservation area are the references made to the landscape, Rooks Nest House, the church and the movement between these sites by EM Forster in Howard's End. Forster's other writings have discussed the changing landscape of Stevenage and the area is historically important and known as Forster Country. The links to Forster and his undoubted literary and cultural significance can only contribute to the significance of the area. It is these reasons why the conservation area was extended.
- 5.4.8 Historic England make specific reference to their concerns for the development of Parcel E, within the conservation area. The impact of the proposals are claimed to have a considerable, harmful impact upon the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area to such an extent that it would either weaken or eradicate the ability to appreciate the listed buildings and conservation area within the setting. No consideration is made within Historic England's comments of the detail included in the adopted policy to reduce harm, or any assessment of the individual assets to establish differing levels of harm. The harm is considered, by Historic England, to apply to all assets equally. The comments received from Historic England also do not distinguish between impacts upon listed buildings or the impact upon the conservation area.
- 5.4.9 It is clear that the site makes a minimal contribution to the setting of the grade I parish church. This is experienced as a heavily planted, defined churchyard which has views to the north, but not west towards the proposal site. Proposals to restore earlier landscape forms to the area north of the church have the potential to contribute positively to the setting of this listed building, rather than significantly impact upon its character due to loss of setting. This point was discussed in the local plan examination and accepted by the Inspector.
- 5.4.10 The Bury, grade II* listed, adjacent to the church has the significant contribution to its setting made by the presence of the church, and its characterful tree-covered churchyard immediately adjacent. The Bury also has a contribution to its setting made

by the fields to its north, which are terminated by the rears of houses fronting on to Matthews Close. This largely open field contains some trees, but views of the Chancellor's Road development can be seen beyond. The land to the north and east of The Bury also contributes to its character as do the tree-lined lanes with soft planted boundaries which lead to its location. The proposal site would be viewed from The Bury beyond the margins of the Chancellor's Road development. As such the North Stevenage site will have a lesser impact upon the setting of this designated asset than the Chancellor's Road development and specifically housing on Matthews Close. The development site would be visible beyond this area of existing housing and the planted boundary of the site, once it has developed will contribute greatly to screening the site. As such whilst there is an impact upon the setting of this heritage asset, when considered against the existing situation this can only be considered at the lower end of less than substantial harm for this asset. The proposals to manage the land to the north east of The Bury and restore historic land forms again offers a positive contribution to its character and setting.

- 5.4.11 Impacts upon the setting of Rooks Nest and Rocks Nest Farm and outbuildings are considered within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) heritage chapter and are demonstrated within the Landscape Value Impact Assessment (LVIA). Views west across the land towards Graveley from Weston Road adjacent to the farm and house show an agricultural landscape containing pylons for electrical transmission, the Lister Hospital, the north boundary of the Chancellors Road Development as well as the A1(M) and you hear noise from the north-eastern railway line.
- 5.4.12 The photomontages in the LVIA indicate the new development on the site will be visible in views from Weston Road. The growth of planting included in this application to screen views will result in an effective boundary developing over time, but one which will result in a change of character within the landscape from hedged, bounded fields to a deep woodland boundary of shrubs and trees. Once developed this boundary will aid in screening much of the modern development and infrastructure visible in long views, but will result in the foreshortening of long views. To an extent the growth of this boundary will remove elements of the modern landscape from long views, such as the A1(M).
- 5.4.13 Historic England have provided no comments regarding the positive contribution made to the proposal by the depth and potential effectiveness of the boundary treatment to the development and the contribution made by this boundary treatment to the setting of listed buildings.
- 5.4.14 The applicant's heritage assessment concludes that minor adverse impacts would affect the significance of Chesfield Park, an undesignated heritage asset, the conservation area and upon the listed buildings of Rooks Next, Rooks Nest Farmhouse and outbuilding, The Old Bury and the Church of St Nicholas, in total five listed buildings. The additional comments provided in reply to Historic England provide a more nuanced response and reflect a more detailed interpretation of the setting of the church and views from the churchyard.
- 5.4.15 The Environmental Statement includes details of mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated into the design of the scheme. These measures include the management of land north of the church, and west of Rooks Nest up to the hedged boundary of the development site. This land would be managed to restore its appearance in the later 19th century, thereby contributing to the setting of the church, the Bury and other heritage assets and making a clear positive contribution to the historic character of Rooks Nest. At the completion of the site, and in occupation, as the LVIA shows, the proposed screening will reduce the impact of the development over time, and together with the landscape and tree planting mitigation works reduce the significance of effect to slight adverse for the conservation area and Chesfield Park

and a minor adverse for Rooks Nest House, Rooks Nest Farmhouse and outbuilding, the Old Bury and the Church of St Nicholas, according to the EIA. However, the effect upon the Church of St Nicholas, is clearly less, according to the revised comments received from the applicant's heritage advisors.

5.4.16 Historic England reference particular concerns with the proportion of different house types within the adopted site. Policy HO3, in section D. requires North Stevenage to provide, to quote '**at least** 5% aspirational homes' in this part of the policy 5% is not a maximum, it is a minimum; the policy also does not specify that this is the only type of house that should be contained within the area. The details of landscaping, and in particular, boundary treatments are shown in the design and access statement.

5.4.17 Section M of Policy HO3 continues to provide design guidance against which the proposals can be judged. In terms of compliance with these points:

I, the aspirational homes, a minimum of 5%, are located within the conservation area. The LVIA included with the EIA includes details of landscaping and boundary treatment. The future assessments of impact show how the developed site will be screened from views within the conservation area.

II the scheme preserves existing hedgerows and provides for their reinforcement.

III the maximum heights proposed are respected.

IV Vehicular access is provided from the west of the site; no access is provided for cars from the east.

5.4.18 The scheme can therefore be seen to comply with these elements of the policy.

5.4.19 Outline of the development within the conservation area is provided in parameter plans, accompanying the Environmental Statement and within the design code. The design code focuses upon the landscaping and detail of layout within the conservation area. Specifically, an expansive, planted tree boundary to reinforce the existing hedge and housing at the east extent of the site faces inwards to present their rear gardens to the boundary. The greater scale of the plots enables more tree planting to be undertaken within the front and rear gardens to provide a depth to the coverage.

5.4.20 Housing fronting onto the boundaries of the conservation area, where it meets green spaces, to the north and east will receive special elevation treatments, as will housing in 'gateway' locations adjacent to existing properties. Detail of buildings is relatively broad within the design guidance and specifies that windows should be timber or UPVC. Detail of where timber and proportions of timber/UPVC windows within the conservation area should be secured and agreed by condition together with samples of proposed window types to ensure the glazing bars and detail of any UPVC windows are supplied and the identification of specific properties.

5.4.21 Policy NH10 requires development affecting conservation areas to have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant conservation area management plan.

5.4.22 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires the local planning authority to make a balancing judgement concerning development that will lead to less than significant harm to the significance of heritage assets. It is accepted that the development of part of the land within the conservation area, and the change in character to the boundary of the development site will result in some degree of harm to the setting of the conservation area and listed buildings on Weston Road, the extent of harm is low and can only be considered less than substantial. On the range of less than substantial harm, when the particular design and location of the scheme is considered in relation to the setting of heritage assets and the location of the development within the conservation area,

applied mitigation measures the less than substantial harm must be considered to be towards the lower range. This consideration of the setting of listed buildings and the conservation area is further reinforced by the results of the LVIA study that demonstrates the effectiveness of the boundary planting to reduce impacts in views from Rooks Nest farm and house.

5.4.23 The management of the remaining agricultural land within the conservation area and its restoration to a land form that reflects historic landscape patterns in the area offers a significant benefit to the setting of listed buildings and a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

5.4.24 It is recommended that were the Council to recommend granting permission a number of conditions ought to be imposed relating to samples of materials, window details, boundary treatment, details of the dwellings to be constructed in the Conservation Area and landscape design.

5.5 Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology

5.5.1 Raise no objection but recommend the imposition of conditions should permission to be granted.

5.6 Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste

5.6.1 Government policy seeks to ensure that all planning authorities take responsibility for waste management. This is reflected in the County Council's adopted waste planning documents. In particular, the waste planning documents seek to promote the sustainable management of waste in the county and encourage Districts and Boroughs to have regard to the potential for minimising waste generated by development.

5.6.2 The Council needs to be aware of the Policies in regards to waste management of the site, including the re-use of unavoidable waste where possible and the use of recycled materials where appropriate to the developments construction. Furthermore, Waste Policy 12: Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition require all relevant construction projects to be supported by a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP). This aims to reduce the amount of waste produced on site and should contain information including types of waste removed from the site and where the waste is taken to

5.6.3 The county council as Waste Planning Authority would be happy to assess any SWMP that is submitted prior to the development's commencement either at this stage or as a requirement by condition, and provide comment to the Borough Council.

5.7 Hertfordshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority

5.7.1 We have reviewed the Flood Risk and Drainage Technical Note prepared by WSP, reference 70061701, dated 15 January 2020 and can make the following comments.

In accordance with our previous letter dated 09 December 2019, we are pleased that the applicant has clarified details of the drainage strategy. As per the advice given in our Surface Water Advisory Service response dated 08 January 2020, we are pleased that the applicant no longer proposes deep-bore soakaways to be located in basins and that a justified alternative to drain basins 1 and 2 to Anglian Water sewer via pump, basin 3 to Anglian Water sewer via gravity at a combined discharge rate of 22.5 l/s and basin 4 to 25 deep-bore soakaways at approximately 1.20 l/s has been provided.

The site has been separated into a number of sub-catchments with the estimated potential storage volumes required for each sub-catchment for storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% for climate change event. The final discharge rates of surface water run-off from the site are below Greenfield run-off rates. The total discharge rate to surface water sewer from the entire site should not exceed 22.5 l/s as agreed in principle with Anglian Water.

As the proposed scheme has yet to provide the final detail and in order to secure the principles of the current proposed scheme they are recommending the imposition of conditions to any grant of planning permission.

5.8 Highways England

5.8.1 Highways England raises no objection to the proposal.

5.9 Environmental Health Department

5.9.1 Environmental Health Residential Team

Have no comments to make at this outline stage.

5.9.2 Environmental Health Commercial Team

I have looked at the documents relevant to air quality and considered them with regard to the local environment. I am satisfied with the approach taken in the environmental statement on air quality, and its findings that while the development will inevitably have an effect on surrounding air quality, this will be minimal, and commensurate with its size and nature.

5.10 Council's Parks and Amenities Section

5.10.1 We note and welcome the removal of *Clematis vitalba* from the hedgerow mixes. The developer may like to consider adding *Euonymus europaeus* (Spindle) into the mix as a native species option.

We require further clarification and details of the open spaces that the developer is looking to offer the adoption of the maintenance to SBC. For those areas offered for adoption, the Council shall have full discretion as to which areas of landscaping it shall and shall not adopt.

We also require clarification on the design and maintenance of the proposed play area. This will require further details, plans and specifications for us to provide comment.

For those areas proposed for adoption by SBC that contain a SUDS feature, we require details on the proposals for these areas for maintainability and must consider providing information on the gradient/ profile and accessibility for maintenance machinery (e.g. mowers). As per previous comments SDS will not adopt any physical pipes, drains, culverts, gratings etc. Is the proposed single pond within the country park expected to be mostly dry or is this area proposed to hold water all year round?

All open spaces that are proposed for adoption must be accessible for maintenance. It's not clear at this stage how accessible some of the areas may be and also what safeguards are proposed to be put into place to prevent unauthorised vehicular access.

Following previous discussions and comments, we require full details and plans on the proposed dedicated area of car parking for visitors to the country park/ main open space.

We also require the details and specification in regards to a proposed path route within the main open space to improve accessibility for all. It is not clear from the plans as to which pathways are to be improved for access and hard surfaced. This shall include the proposed width and specification of these pathways.

- 5.10.2 Have also confirmed that they would be willing to adopt the Country Park and be involved in discussions with the applicant as to how this should be designed. They have also agreed a maintenance sum to be provided to be used over a 20 year period to undertake maintenance of the country park once it has been created by the applicant and handed over to the Council for adoption.

5.11 Council's Arboriculturist

- 5.11.1 Having analysed this application to the level of detail available so far, I do not have any serious concerns from an arboriculture view point. The relatively small amount of trees to be removed in order to allow for access to the site is mainly young to semi-mature stock and there should be compensated for with enough new planting.
- 5.11.2 My only concern so far is the close proximity of the proposed houses to the tree belt to the North West side of this development. I'm not sure what the exact distance between the proposed houses and the tree belt is currently, but, due to the ultimate height of the trees within this copse, a larger gap would be needed. The height at maturity of the tree belt could be up to 30 metres, therefore, I would allow at least some two thirds of this distance to the proposed buildings.

5.12 North Hertfordshire District Council

- 5.12.1 I have looked at the amended drawings. This site is allocated for residential development in the recently adopted Stevenage Local Plan and the land immediately to the north is also allocated for residential development in the North Hertfordshire emerging Local Plan 2011 – 2031.
- 5.12.2 The emerging local plan still has a further session of Hearings before it will be ready for adoption and the Plan, therefore, currently carries moderate weight. It is anticipated that the emerging local plan may be ready for adoption in approximately 12 months. In the event that the site allocation NS1 remains for the development of 900 houses when the local plan is adopted, I am particularly keen to see that both sites function well together for the future residents. Policy SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage (emerging Local Plan 2011 – 2031), among other things states as a requirement:

“b. Integration with adjoining development in Stevenage Borough including site-wide solutions for access, education, retail and other necessary social infrastructure.”

- 5.12.3 In the Adopted Stevenage Local Plan, Policy H03 – North of Stevenage requires, among other things:

“a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme.”

I consider the amended drawings improve the cross-boundary provision of the scheme from that previously shown. A primary access road is indicated to lead to the boundary with the NS1 site and I can see no objections to this. To the east of the site a further connecting road is shown. I would prefer it to be less “site edge” than shown and

slightly further west in order to give greater flexibility to how the two sites could connect at the eastern half.

- 5.12.4 Two potential pedestrian links are also shown and I am pleased to see these. They are located to encourage easy pedestrian access through to the proposed school, local centre and equipped play area. I would like to see the commitment to these pedestrian links secured either through a S106 Agreement or condition, in a way that would ensure the provision of the pedestrian link across site boundaries, in the event that NS1 remains as an allocated site in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031.
- 5.12.5 I have looked at the Building Heights plan and I do have a concern to raise about proposed building heights of up to 11 metres immediately adjacent the north site boundary and of up to 12.5 metres high a short distance from the north site boundary. I consider these to be excessive for an edge of town location, even taking into account the proximity of the proposed NS1 site, which would be located between H03 and the Green Belt. I consider these heights would result in the development having a harmful effect on the open character of the Green Belt and the setting of the nearby village of Graveley
- 5.12.6 I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the amended scheme and trust you will take the above into account in your considerations of the application.

5.13 Police Crime Prevention Design Officer

- 5.13.1 Thank you for inviting me to comment on this planning application. I am pleased to see that on page 30 the applicant has taken measures to address issues around crime, disorder and the fear of crime. However I do have substantive concerns around the intention to site parking at the rear of the dwellings this is contrary to the guidance in the Secured by Design Homes 2019 on page 22 section 16.3 which explains why rear parking area are discouraged. My concerns can be mitigated by the applicant engaging with the Police Crime Prevention Design team with a view to seeking to achieve the Police preferred minimum security standard that is Secured by Design for this development in addition this would also satisfy compliance with Approved Document Q of Building Regulations.

5.14 Environment Agency

- 5.14.1 The site lies within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3 (SPZ3). SPZ's are defined areas around a public water abstraction point. They indicate how long it will take for a pollutant to travel from the water below ground to the source. They also show the area around the source which needs protecting from potential pollutants.
- 5.14.2 This site is within the Total catchment SPZ3 – this is the area around a supply source within which all the groundwater ends up at the abstraction point.
- 5.14.3 We are currently operating with a significantly reduced resource in our Groundwater and Contaminated Land Team in Hertfordshire and North London Area. This has regrettably affected our ability to respond to Local Planning Authorities for some planning consultations. We are not providing specific advice on the risks to controlled waters for this site as we need to concentrate our local resources on the highest risk proposals.
- 5.14.4 We recommend that the requirements of the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance are followed. This means that all risks to ground water and surface waters from contamination need to be identified so that appropriate remedial action can be taken. This should be in addition to the risk to human health that the Council's Environmental

Health Department will look at. It is expected that reports and Risk Assessments to be prepared in line with the Environment Agency Guidance.

5.14.5 In order to protect groundwater quality from further deterioration:

No infiltration-based sustainable drainage systems should be constructed on land affected by contamination, as contaminants can remobilise and cause ground pollution;

Piling, or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods, should not cause preferential pathways for contaminants to migrate to groundwater and cause pollution; and

Decommissioning of investigative boreholes to ensure that redundant boreholes are safe and secure, and do not cause groundwater pollution or loss of water supplies, in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.14.6 They recommend a number of sources of information and advice which the applicant should refer to in dealing with land affected by contamination.

5.15 Thames Water

5.15.1 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 have contacted the developer in an attempt to agree a position for foul water networks but have been unable to do so in the time available and as such Thames Water request that a condition be added to any planning permission. With regards to water supply, this area is covered by The Affinity Water Company.

5.16 NHS East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

5.16.1 Should the development of 800 dwellings go ahead based on an occupancy of 2.4 it will create circa 1,920 new patient registrations.

5.16.2 Despite premises constraints, GP Practices are not allowed to close their lists to new registrations without consultation with, and permission from, the East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group. We expect such applications to increase as the new developments in the area go live. Even when surgeries are significantly constrained East and North Herts CCG and NHS England would not wish an individual patient to be denied access to their nearest GP surgery. Patient lists are therefore only closed in exceptional circumstances.

5.16.3 However, when a large number of new dwellings and registrations is planned the preferred option is to try and find a way to absorb those significant demands upon surgeries by providing additional resources, e.g. re-configuring, extending or relocating the practice to provide sufficient space to increase clinical human resources and clinical services and thus keep the patient lists open. A developer contribution under these circumstances is considered fair and reasonable.

5.16.4 'Constrained' means a practice working to over-capacity for the size of their premises and the clinical space available to provide the required services to their patients. A practice in this situation would usually need to be re-configured, extended or even relocated to absorb a significant number of new registrations.

5.16.5 Patients are at liberty to choose which GP practice to register with as long as they live within the practice boundary and NHS England cannot prescribe which surgery

patients should attend. However the majority of patients choose to register with the surgery closest and/or most easily accessible to their home for the following reasons; quickest journey, non-car dependent (public transport or walking distance), parking provision if a car journey is necessary, easy access during surgery hours, especially for families with young children and for older adults.

5.16.6 Therefore, a financial contribution is sought towards the provision of GP Practices of £566,242.56. It is proposed to focus the monies on on the King George Practice Group and/or the Stanmore Medical Group of practices within whose patient registration boundaries this development directly falls. This may include the digitalisation of patient records to release rooms to increase clinical capacity by way of reconfiguration and any associated works. A trigger point of on occupancy of the 50th dwelling is requested. NHS England and the East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group reserve the right to apply for S106 money retrospectively and the right to amend and request that this be reflected in any S106 agreement.

5.16.7 In addition, it is vital to consider the impact of developments and additional residents on community and mental healthcare. Therefore, a financial contribution of £2,072,760.00 would be sought towards acute, mental health and community costs. In terms of mental health and community health costs, £301,192.00 would be focused towards Stevenage Health & Wellbeing Centre. In terms of acute costs £1,771,568.00 would be focused towards Lister Hospital which includes undertaking refurbishment works.

5.17 Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

5.17.1 Stevenage Council inadvertently neglected to advise us of the amendments to this application and we are grateful that you have agreed to accept this late response.

We objected strongly, at the Examination in Public of the new Local Plan, to the removal of this site from the Green Belt and will not repeat those arguments here, except to say that we consider the decision to do so a retrograde step which will cause irreparable damage to the social, cultural and historic importance of 'Forster Country'.

5.17.2 In our objection letter to the original version of this application, we expressed concern at the prematurity of the application, sustainability issues, the transport assessment and the loss of best and most versatile land.

5.17.3 We accept that following the adoption of the Stevenage Local Plan, this site is now partially removed from the Green Belt, designated for housing and covered by Policy HO3 in that Plan. However, having considered the revised documents accompanying the application, our concerns regarding sustainability, transport assessment and the loss of best and most versatile land remain and we expand on them below.

Sustainability:

5.17.4 In assessing its sustainability, this site cannot be considered in isolation. Apart from other proposed residential development in Stevenage, there are also substantial developments proposed in both North Herts and East Herts which are in close proximity. Cumulatively, these will have a significant effect on social infrastructure and transport movements.

5.17.5 Consideration of this is not adequately done in the analyses accompanying the application and the Council should require a clear statement on these impacts before determining the planning balance.

- 5.17.6 Since the submission of the original application Stevenage Council has adopted a zero carbon target by 2030 and conformity with the Climate Change Act 2008. The applicant's response is to state, in paras. 0.4.13 and 14 of the Addendum to the Environment Statement, that *"Rather than considering the effects of climate change in a standalone chapter, the issues of mitigation (carbon reduction) have been considered ... by each specialist consultant and where relevant presented within the ES."* However we have been unable to find much of substance which addresses the issue of climate change in the amended Environment Statement or examples of proposed mitigation. We note that both The Friends Of Forster Country and Luton Friends of the Earth have made detailed responses on climate change and the implications of Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework and we endorse their comments.

Transport Assessment

- 5.17.7 The approach to the transport requirements generated by the development inevitably feed directly into sustainability and climate change. The amendments do little to address that point apart from the potential inclusion of charging points for electric cars. A much more ambitious approach including designs, infrastructure and supportive measures and targets to shift to sustainable travel patterns is required with respect to planning for a climate emergency. Some inspiration may be drawn from developments shortlisted in the 2019 Awards of Transport for New Homes (winner due to be announced 20th November –

<http://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/transport-for-new-homes-award-shortlist-announced/>). As mentioned above, the application pays little regard to the impact of the close proximity of other proposed developments in both Stevenage and North Herts in its modelling.

- 5.17.8 At the present time the junction between North Road, Chancellor's Road and Coreys Mill Lane is congested, with the resulting queue often constant, blocking right turning vehicles. All roads from the proposed development exit on to North Road and will exacerbate this problem. The NHS Trust have pointed out that almost all traffic from Lister Hospital also exits on to North Road and have questioned whether the proposed access points to the development are in the correct place. Rather than demonstrate adequate proposals to address these problems the Transport Assessment continues to state that *"No other highways improvements are proposed to mitigate the development's impacts, as it is considered that such improvements would encourage increasing use of the car."* (para.7.3.12).
- 5.17.9 We also note the concerns expressed by Thames Water, the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority regarding inadequate information on disposal of foul water and flooding mitigation measures, all of which also impact on sustainability.
- 5.17.10 The amended Framework Travel Plan says the *"The local centre will not generate vehicle trips and as such it is suggested that a separate travel plan for the local centre is not required."*(para 1.1.6). There is no demonstration of how the conclusion that people would only access the local centre on foot or by bicycle was reached. That assumption proved not to be the case at the Great Ashby local centres in Canterbury Way and Whitehorse Lane, so why should it be different here where the situation is identical?
- 5.17.11 At present the pedestrian links from Great Ashby to Lister Hospital, John Henry Newman School and Sainsbury's are not direct. This could easily be rectified by providing a dedicated footpath from Weston Road across St Nicholas Meadow to the proposed development but only informal recreational paths are shown on the master.

Best and most versatile land

- 5.17.12 The use of best and most versatile land for agricultural purposes has a clear and long-term impact on sustainability and the economic and environmental objectives of the NPPF.
- 5.17.13 Para 10.1.3 of the amended Environmental Statement now acknowledges that over half of the site falls into Grades 2 and 3a Agricultural quality (i.e. best and most versatile land) of which 46% will be lost. No evidence has been presented as to how this loss can be mitigated because *“its inclusion in the Local Plan, in the knowledge that it would incur a loss of best and most versatile agricultural land must still be considered consistent with the guidance in NPPF.”* (para. 10.1.5).
- 5.17.14 We fail to see how this is effective use of land, as required by section 11 of the NPPF, particularly para. 118(b), or is in conformity with either the Government’s ‘Guide to Assessing Development Proposals on Agricultural Land’ published in January 2018 or the 21 July 2019 revision of National Planning Practice Guidance, which is clear that best and most versatile soil ‘is an essential natural capital asset.’(Reference ID: 8-001/2-20190721).
- 5.17.15 For the above reasons we consider that the Council should reject this application.

5.18 Sport England

- 5.18.1 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. 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.
- 5.18.2 The proposal is an outline planning application for a residential led development to the north of Stevenage which would comprise of up to 800 dwellings and include a local centre, primary school and public open space. The population of the proposed development is estimated to be up to around 1,872 based on information provided in the Environmental Statement. This additional population will generate additional demand for sports facilities. If this demand is not adequately met then it may place additional pressure on existing sports facilities, thereby creating deficiencies in facility provision. To exemplify this, you may be aware that Sport England’s Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) can help to provide an indication of the likely demand that will be generated by a development for certain facility types. The SFC indicates that a population of 1,872 in Stevenage Borough will generate a demand for 0.13 sports halls (£333,746), 0.10 swimming pools (£367,090), 0.06 artificial grass pitches (£58,609 for 3G surface, £52,968 for sand based surface) and 0.02 indoor bowls centres (£42,906).
- 5.18.3 In accordance with the NPPF, Sport England seeks to ensure that the development meets any new community sports facility needs arising as a result of the development. In its current form, the development does not appear to make provision for formal outdoor sport or indoor sport facilities. The development proposes a children’s play area but it is expected that that this will be designed for informal play. A primary school is also proposed which would have its own sports facilities for meeting educational needs. However, this would not necessarily be suitable or accessible for meeting the needs of the new community. In this context, I would wish to make the following comments on the community sports provision aspects of the planning application

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

The Stevenage 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 Stevenage Local Plan (2011-2031) includes policy HO3 which provides policy guidance for this development. In relation to sport, paragraph 9.27 advises that sports facilities should be provided in line with policy HC8 and that the evidence identifies a need for a skate park or alternative youth facilities to be provided on-site. Criterion (j) of the policy specifically requires a skate park or MUGA to be provided on-site.

Stevenage Borough Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (2015) provides a robust 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.

In view of the local planning policy and evidence base context, it is considered that in accordance with Government policy in paragraph 96 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.

- 5.18.5 The principal changes to the application involve the revision of the master plan to relocate the proposed primary school and local centre to the western part of the site. There are a number of other amendments including the removal of the previously proposed multi-use games area and its replacement with a children's play area.
- 5.18.6 While there is limited detail of what would be provided on any school site, to ensure that the school's facilities are secured for community use in practice, I would request that any planning permission makes provision for securing the community use of the sports facilities provided on the school site. A 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.
- 5.18.7 I have considered the amendments and consider that they would not change Sport England's position on the planning application as the amendments are not directly relevant to the issues raised in our original response dated 18th January 2018.
- 5.18.8 Following clarification from the applicant that they are prepared to pay the monies and the suggestion for how it should be used, Sport England have made the following further response:-
- 5.18.9 The proposal to make a financial contribution of £743,742 towards delivering the proposed new leisure centre in Stevenage town centre on the Stevenage Swimming Pool/Bowes Lyon Youth Centre site is welcomed. The financial contribution proposed

would accord with the advice provided in our original response to the planning application dated 18th January 2018 as Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator estimates the cost of meeting the demand generated by the planning application for swimming pools, sports halls and indoor bowls halls would equate to this figure. In terms of the project that the contribution would be used towards, the new leisure centre in the town centre would be the appropriate project as this is a strategic project intended to meet Stevenage's current and future indoor sports facility needs and would accord with the Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy.

5.8.10 Subject to this proposed financial contribution being secured through a section 106 agreement, index linked and ring fenced towards the delivery of the leisure centre project, I can therefore confirm that Sport England withdraws its objection to the planning application in relation to indoor sports provision.

5.18.11 The proposals in the planning application to create a country park are welcomed as this would provide new opportunities for physical activities such as walking and cycling for both the residents of the proposed development and the existing population of Stevenage. It is acknowledged that the country park would require significant investment to deliver and that a country park of this scale would not usually be provided to meet the needs of a development of 800 dwellings. It is therefore understood why the applicant has focused on the delivery of the country park rather than offering off-site financial contributions towards the delivery of outdoor sports projects.

5.18.12 However, as set out in previous correspondence, the development will generate considerable additional demand for formal outdoor sports facilities which if not met, will place pressure on existing facilities in the Stevenage area. Despite the potential benefits of the country park to informal recreation, it will not address the additional pressures generated for football, rugby, cricket etc pitches for instance. In our capacity as providing advice on how the development would meet formal outdoor sports provision, I would therefore have to advise that the proposed financial contribution of £111,577.00 towards the delivery of the country park would not meet the additional demand generated for outdoor sports facilities or be an acceptable substitute. It should be noted that when making comments on this matter, Sport England consults with and gives weight to the views of sports governing bodies (such as the FA, ECB and RFU). The governing bodies would not support the use of a contribution towards the delivery of a country park instead of formal sports facility provision.

5.18.13 I would therefore advise that Sport England maintains its objection to the planning application in relation to outdoor sports provision but acknowledges the potential benefits offered by the proposed country park in relation to opportunities for encouraging physical activity.

5.19 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

5.19.1 The development clearly demonstrates a substantial net gain in biodiversity of 27%. In accordance with the ecological report conditions requiring an ecological management plan and construction environmental management plan should be attached to the decision to secure the measures proposed to deliver this ecological gain.

5.20 National Grid

5.20.1 As it's a large housing development, this is what I'd want to see. The positioning is good, however; I'm concerned with the situation of the shrubbery in and around the OHL. Planting too close to the towers could hinder our maintenance process on the lines. Guidance notes relating to development near power lines and tree planting guidance has been forwarded with the response.

5.21 Natural England

- 5.21.1 Confirm that based upon the information provided, Natural England advises the Council that the proposal is unlikely to affect any statutorily protected nature conservation sites. However, advise that they have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species and suggest the Council should apply standing advice on protected species and advise their standing advice should be applied to this application as it is a material consideration.

5.22 Wymondley Parish Council

- 5.22.1 I am writing on behalf of Wymondley Parish Council to object strongly to the above outline application for substantial development on Green Belt land. The Council's objections fall into five broad categories, (which were raised in 2016, in response to the Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) Local Plan), namely:

Protection of the Green Belt

As you are undoubtedly aware, current Government planning policy (and associated guidance and legislation) are based on the premise that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, there should be no development on Green Belt land.

The recently-made Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan is underpinned by that fundamental principle, and the Parish Council therefore strives to protect the Parish from the effects of inappropriate development both within the Parish and in its neighbouring areas.

One of the key aims of earmarking areas of land as Green Belt is to prevent urban coalescence. The Council therefore struggles to see how a development such as the one outlined in this application – particularly when considered in the light of an adjacent Green Belt development on the other side of the A1(M), (proposed by North Herts District Council (NHDC)), can possibly be construed as appropriate.

Taken in isolation this application flies in the face of current Government policy for protection of the Green Belt and prevention of urban coalescence; and when its potential effects are considered together with those of the adjacent proposal, there can be no doubt that the openness of the Green Belt will be annihilated and the resulting urban sprawl will cause significant harm, not only to the Green Belt, but to the character and environment of Wymondley Parish's neighbouring villages.

In the absence of any evidence demonstrating exceptional or special circumstances for building on the Green Belt, (or removing this area from the Green Belt), we submit the application must fail.

Flood Risk

There has been no adequate Flood Risk Assessment carried out, as evidenced by the response of the Lead Flood Authority (HCC) and their subsequent objection to the proposal - and a similar stance by Thames Water.

The above proposed development sits wholly within the catchment area for the Ash Brook water course, which runs through Little Wymondley and is prone to flooding. The course of Ash Brook, for much of its length through the village, is designated Flood Risk 3 (High) by the Environment Agency.

Ash Brook and adjoining land in Little Wymondley has a Flood Risk frequency of 1 in 4 (McCloy Consulting Flood Alleviation Survey commissioned by HCC following flooding in Little Wymondley in February 2014, published August 2015).

Any further pressure upstream of this already overburdened drainage facility will lead to further flooding within our Parish – and is therefore wholly unacceptable.

Traffic Flow

There has been no assessment of the impact of potentially 1600 additional vehicles on the already congested roads and highway. Junction 8 of the A1(M) is gridlocked for much of the day, and further vehicles (particularly HGVs and/or construction traffic) will only compound the problem - leading to delays, pollution and increased use, (and resultant dangers), of local lanes as “rat runs”. (Chantry Lane, Stevenage Road, A1(M), J8 and the Corey’s Mill roundabout are already congested and gridlocked at peak times).

Air Quality

There has been no adequate Air Quality Assessment carried out. Monitoring of NOX levels at Junction 8 on the A1(M) and the A602 bordering Wymondley currently show readings exceeding the EU recommended maximum. There are also Public Health concerns regarding the emissions of PM2.5 and PM10 sized pollutants.

The inevitable increase in traffic flow mentioned above will undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on the already unsatisfactory Air Quality within the Parish and the surrounding area; and exacerbate the associated harm to health. The Council finds this unacceptable. It also notes that the proposed development includes facilities for children, e.g. a primary school and play space which, it follows, would inappropriately be situated in an area subjected to increased emissions and the related effects.

Both SBC and NHDC have recently declared a Climate Emergency. This being so, development proposals which will undoubtedly increase traffic volumes, (and the associated pollution and detrimental impact on the already poor air quality in the locality), cannot possibly benefit public health or be compatible with efforts supposedly being made to tackle such an emergency – and should therefore be refused.

Duty to Co-operate

While accepting that SBC cannot be held responsible for development in areas for which NHDC is responsible, (and vice versa), both Local Authorities have a duty to co-operate to ensure the bigger picture is considered when dealing with planning applications. It cannot be sufficient to look only at a “snapshot” of the area, while failing to consider the knock-on effects on the surrounding environs, particularly if there are neighbouring development proposals.

The Council believes that insufficient cognisance has been used, in that the impact and effect of proposals from adjoining authorities have not been properly considered. When taken together these will undoubtedly place unsustainable additional burdens on infrastructure and negatively impact on residents’ quality of life – neither of which are acceptable nor justifiable.

Wymondley Parish Council therefore strongly objects to the outline application for the reasons set out above

5.23 Graveley Parish Council

- 5.23.1 Graveley Parish Council retains strong objections to the planned building of up to 800 homes on land north of Stevenage, as detailed in our comments dated January 2018.

With regard to the amendments, Graveley Parish Council welcomes the proposal to upgrade the junction of North Road and Graveley Road as this continues to be a site of frequent serious accidents. As all vehicles from the new houses will exit the development onto North Road, there will be considerably more traffic on this road, much of which will come down to the junction with Graveley Road. Graveley Parish Council strongly supports the proposed traffic lights system and this option would be better for traffic flow.

Graveley Parish Council also questions the removal of the GP surgery - already it is difficult to get doctor's appointments at nearby surgeries so the provision of a new surgery to serve the new houses is the preferred option.

The threat for Graveley (a small and historic village) of coalescence with Stevenage is high, and Graveley Parish Council would like to see maximum screening with trees and shrubs on the northern 'Graveley edge' border.

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 February 2019. This largely reordered the policy substance of the earlier 2012 version of the NPPF albeit with some revisions to policy. At the time the revised NPPF was published, the Stevenage Local Plan was subject to a Holding Direction by the Secretary of State following an Examination in Public in 2017. On 25 March 2019 the Secretary of State withdrew the Holding Direction on the understanding that the Council would adopt it as part of the Development Plan. The Council are content that the policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications.
- 6.2.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is itself a material consideration. Given that the advice that the weight to be given to relevant policies in the local plan will depend on their degree of consistency with the NPPF, it will be necessary in the determination of this application to assess the consistency of the relevant local plan policies with the NPPF. The NPPF applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 6.2.3 In addition to the NPPF, advice in Planning Practice Guidance must also be taken into account. It states that, where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the application to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless otherwise specified.

6.3 Adopted Local Plan

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage;
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 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 HO3: North of Stevenage
Policy HO7: Affordable housing targets;
Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design;
Policy HO9: House types and sizes;
Policy HO11: Accessible and adaptable housing;
Policy GD1: High quality design;
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 NH5: Trees and woodland;
Policy NH6: General protection for open space;
Policy NH7: Open space standards.
Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision

6.4 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document January 2012.
Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2009.
Rectory Lane/St Nicholas Conservation Area Management Plan July 2012.

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1. The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are its acceptability in land use policy terms; housing policies and planning obligations; the conservation area and nearby listed buildings; the impact on the character and appearance of the area generally the impact on both existing amenities; the effect of the proposals on the highway network and the adequacy of parking provision, trees and landscaping, ecology, climate change and flooding and Archaeology.

7.2 Land Use Policy Considerations

- 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 61 of the NPPF 2019 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.
- 7.2.3 Paragraph 67 of the NPPF (2019) 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. Paragraph 73 of the same document 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".
- 7.2.4 Paragraph 117 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.
- 7.2.5 Turning to the adopted Local Plan (2019), Policy HO3 is relevant to the assessment of this application and allocates the site for residential development of approximately 800 dwellings. This policy also states the following:-

"A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site.

Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme;
- b. Satisfactory vehicular access is provided. At least two access points to and from the site will be required, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- c. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- d. At least 5% aspirational homes are provided in line with Policy HO9;
- e. Plots to accommodate at least 1% new homes are made available for self-build purposes;
- f. 30% affordable housing is provided in line with policy HO7;
- g. Provision for supported or sheltered housing is made in line with Policy HO10;

- h. Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery, subject to demand;
- i. A primary school is provided in line with the most up-to-date evidence of need;
- j. A skate park or MUGA for children is provided on-site;
- k. A full archaeological assessment is undertaken;
- l. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken;
- m. The proposal seeks to preserve or enhance the conservation area, including the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The following mitigation measures should be incorporated;
 - i. As much of the requirement for aspirational homes (criteria d) as possible should be met on the part of the site that lies within the conservation area. Development within this area should also be heavily landscaped to reduce the visual impact of development;
 - ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce the visual impact of the development;
 - iii. Tall buildings will not be permitted. Building heights will be a maximum of two storeys within the eastern part of the site;
 - iv. No vehicular access to the site will be permitted from the east of the site, across the open fields;
 - v. Existing Public Rights of Way are retained and designed into the development, where possible, and diverted where necessary; and
 - vi. Building styles and layout within the conservation area to the east of the site should reflect the key features of the conservation area.
- n. The scheme incorporates a network of green infrastructure, with an emphasis on high quality landscaping within and around the development to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding greenfield/Green Belt land;
- o. An appropriate buffer around existing power lines is incorporated; and
- p. Electric car charging points are provided at an easily accessible location within the site

As part of any development proposal, we will require the open space to the east of the boundary to be retained as such, either via a Legal Agreement or through the transfer of land to the Borough Council."

7.2.6 In documenting the background to the aforementioned policy, the Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2016 and the Examination in Public was undertaken between January and March 2017. Following the Examination a number of modifications were undertaken with no significant changes to policy HO3. The Inspector's Report was issued in October 2017 and following amendments to the wording of four of the main modifications, was considered to meet the criteria for soundness in the NPPF. The Local Plan was adopted in May 2019 following the release of a holding objection by the then Secretary of State for Housing and Communities and Local Government.

7.2.7 In assessing the application site at the Local Plan Stage the Inspector concluded that:-

“In summary, there is a pressing need for housing within the Borough that cannot be met outside of the Green Belt. The value of the Green Belt has been thoroughly assessed by the Council and although it found that here a significant contribution comes from preventing the merging of settlements, there would still be a gap between settlements, even if the site in North Hertfordshire is allocated in their Plan and subsequently developed. Taking into account all of these factors I find that this site would be the most suitable, along with others, to meet the housing need in Stevenage. As such, exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt”.

7.2.8 Additionally, in assessing the application site specifically, the Inspector acknowledged that it is the intention that the site would be integrated with the proposed residential site on adjacent land that is beyond the Borough boundary in North Hertfordshire, which is allocated in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan. She acknowledged that the application site is such that it will incorporate a range of services and facilities and would not be dependent on the other site being redeveloped.

7.2.9 In accordance with the local plan, the western part of the application site is proposed for development of up to 800 houses with the eastern part of the site retained as Green Belt. The eastern part, comprising more than half of the application site, would be retained as open space to provide a Country Park and would be enhanced with additional landscaping and be available to the public. Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity or to improve damaged or derelict land. The creation of a Country Park would accord with the advice in the NPPF as it would increase public access to this part of the Green Belt. Additionally, it is intended that this land would remain open with no buildings or structures proposed.

7.2.10 As submitted, and as subsequently amended, the application follows the guidance in policy HO3. In particular the development provides the following:-

- The masterplan identifies that connections are proposed across the site boundary to the north into the adjacent land that is proposed to be allocated for residential development in the North Herts Local Plan, currently under preparation. A primary vehicular route able to accommodate a bus route is proposed through the site and into the adjacent land, with an additional secondary vehicular access and two potential additional pedestrian and cycle connections. This will ensure permeability between the two sites.
- Satisfactory access has been demonstrated. Two access points will be provided from North Road creating a through link within the site for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles creating a safe approach ensuring the site links in effectively to the existing road network. The position of each of these access points have been amended slightly to take into account the following considerations:

The southernmost access has been amended so that it allows for an inclusion of a crossing facility that connects the extended bridleway within the site with the bridleway opposite on North Road.

The northernmost access point has been re-positioned to allow for a change to the orientation of the internal access road created by the siting and design of the 132kV overhead pylon termination tower to be erected within the site.

- In terms of the use of sustainable modes of transport, provision has been made for the extension of existing bus routes through the site and as requested by HCC a financial

contribution will be made towards this provision. A cycle path will also be provided along North Road, linking into the existing network at Corey's Mill Lane. Existing public rights of way will be retained and new permissive paths provided to retain and enhance pedestrian connectivity to the wider area.

- 5% of the residential units will meet the majority of the aspirational home criteria.
- 1% of plots will be available for self-build purposes.
- 30% of units will be provided as affordable housing - split 70% for affordable rent and 30% for shared ownership.
- Following discussions with the Council's Housing Team it has been deemed that there is no requirement to provide sheltered housing as part of the development.
- With regard to local facilities, up to 650sqm of non-residential floorspace is proposed within Use Classes A1 / A2 / A3 / A4 / A5 / B1 / D1 / D2. This will create a local centre. At the request of the NHS the provision of a GP surgery has been omitted in lieu of a financial contribution.
- Land for a 2FE primary school is to be provided. The primary school site has been relocated within the site to address comments made by HCC education. HCC has advised that the proposed school site is acceptable. A financial contribution towards the construction of the primary school will also be provided.
- A children's play area is to be provided as part of the development. This will be located in the local centre adjacent to the primary school. It is envisaged that this could incorporate some skate park equipment; the details of which would be agreed at the reserved matters stage.
- An archaeological assessment and Food Risk Assessment have been provided as part of the application.
- With regard to the impact on the conservation area and the setting of adjacent listed buildings; it is proposed to incorporate the majority of the aspirational housing within the conservation area as detailed in the Design Code and Illustrative Layout for Parcel E. The majority of the existing hedgerows will be retained and supplemented by extensive new planting, including copses, hedges and trees. Building heights are restricted to two storeys on the part of the site within the conservation area. No vehicular access is proposed from the east of the site across the open fields. The existing Public Rights of Way have been retained and incorporated into the proposed scheme. An assessment of the impact of the development upon the relevant heritage assets is set out elsewhere in this report.
- With regard to landscaping and green infrastructure, significant open space and landscaping is provided within the development, including a proposed Country Park, a landscaped corridor and open spaces throughout the residential parcels. The network of open space would connect into the existing network within the surrounding area.
- In terms of protection around the power cables a development buffer is provided around the retained 440kv power lines creating a landscape corridor will include drainage basins.
- Electric car charging points will be provided within the development.

7.2.11 With respect to the five year land supply of deliverable housing, the NPPF advises that 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.

7.2.12 The SBC Housing Update, published in November 2019 as an addendum to the SBC Authority Monitoring Report (2019), states that the Council can demonstrate a 6.07 year land supply for housing. As the site under consideration in this report is considered to be 'deliverable' in line with the definition included in the revised NPPF (2019), the houses to be delivered by this scheme before 31 March 2024 are included in the calculation of the 6.07 years figure. Excluding this site from the calculation, the Council can demonstrate a 5.48 year housing supply. The site is considered an important element of the future housing supply for the town and will continue to be due to the relatively long-scale delivery which will ensure a consistent supply of housing for a period extending beyond the end of the current five year period.

7.2.13 This development providing housing on an allocated 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 deliver a mixture of 1 and 2 bedroom flats and 2, 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings, it would be in accordance with this policy as it would add to the overall mix of housing which is required to meet the objectively assessed need over the local period.

7.2.14 Policy HO7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) which relates to affordable housing, stipulates that planning permission would be granted for residential development which would maximise affordable housing provision. Taking this into consideration, there is a requirement to provide 30% of new homes to be affordable. In this regard, there would be a requirement to provide 240 affordable units.

7.2.15 Turning to affordable housing tenure, mix and design, Policy HO8 states that planning permission would be granted where those dwellings:

- a. Are provided by the developer on site with at least 70% of the units being for rent and the remainder consisting of other tenures which is to be agreed with the Council's Housing team;
- b. Meets the requirements of Policy HO9 (House types and sizes);
- c. Are physically indistinguishable from other types of homes and are distributed across the site to avoid over-concentration in particular; and
- d. Will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.

7.2.16 In addition to the above, paragraph 64 of the NPPF (2019) stipulates that for major developments involving the provision for housing, planning decisions should expect at least 10% of the homes to be made available for affordable home ownership (this includes shared ownership, equity loans, other low cost homes which are 20% below local market value and rent to buy). However, the aforementioned 10% requirement is part of the overall affordable housing contribution for the site.

7.2.17 The applicant has confirmed that the development would comprise of 30% affordable units. As such, the development would be policy compliant in this instance. With

respect to the exact location of the affordable units, the affordable housing tenure mix and size of the units, this would need to be agreed with the Council's Housing Development Section.

- 7.2.18 In addition to affordable housing, financial contributions are also required in accordance with the Hertfordshire County Council tool kit, toward NHS facilities indoor and outdoor sports facilities, contributions to Stevenage Borough Council for the maintenance of the Country Park (although the precise figure is yet to be agreed) and the provision of the Primary School within the development site. Based on an assessment of the development, the following contributions would be sought:-

Affordable Housing and Developer contributions

Stevenage Borough Council		Financial Contribution
Contribution toward maintenance of Country Park		£1,500,000.00-£2,000,000.00
Total (based on current figures provided)		£1,500,000.00-£2,000,000.00
Hertfordshire County Council		
Provision of new 2FE primary school and Nursery.		Gifting of 2.2ha of land and contribution of £8,118, 954.00.
Secondary Education – towards the delivery of a new secondary free school at the former Barnwell East Secondary School.		Contribution of £7,955,384.00
Childcare Services		To be provided within the new Primary School
Library Service – to support the re-provision of Stevenage Central Library as part of the redevelopment of Stevenage Town Centre.		In accordance with the HCC Toolkit.
Youth Services – for the re-provision of the Bowes Lyon Young People's Centre to provide a life-skills training kitchen, including group work area which will enable a greater number of young people to learn independent living skills.		In accordance with the HCC Toolkit.
Sustainable Transport – financial contributions towards the continuation of the bus service.		£400,000.00
Travel Plan monitoring contribution		£6,000.00
HCC Waste facilities		£43, 216.00
Total		£16,523,554.00
NHS England and East & North Herts CCG		
GMS GP provision.		£566,242.66
Acute, mental health and community costs.		£1,771,568.00
Total		£2,337,810.66
Sport England		
Indoor sports facilities		£743,742.00

Toward New Leisure Centre at Stevenage Swimming Pool/Bowes Lyon youth centre site (or alternative facilities) including maintenance contribution.	
Outdoor Sport facilities	
Toward the creation of the Country Park	£111,577.00
Total	£855,319.00
Overall Total	£21,216,683.00-£21,716,000.00
NOTE:- All financial obligations would be index linked.	

7.2.19 In addition, to the above, there would be a requirement to secure fire hydrants on the application site. Following negotiations with the applicant, they have agreed to pay the necessary financial contributions sought by the Council. In addition, they also agree to the obligations sought by Hertfordshire County Council with respect to the following:-

- Primary Education;
- Library Services;
- Youth Services;
- Sustainable Transport;
- Travel Plan Contribution; and
- Provision of fire hydrants.
- Contribution toward Waste Facilities

7.2.20 Notwithstanding the above, whilst the applicant is prepared to pay a contribution toward Secondary Education, they are still querying the method of indexation required by HCC. At the time of drafting this report, negotiations were taking place between the two parties and an update of these negotiations will be provided to the Committee at the meeting.

7.2.21 Additional to the above, whilst the developer is prepared to pay the NHS requirement toward GP provision, they do not agree to the financial contribution sought by the NHS in terms of the acute, mental health and community contribution which has been requested. 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.*

7.2.22 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 developer with the formula on how they have calculated the contribution they have sought for acute, mental health and community costs.

- 7.2.23 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. As such, a request to use monies to refurbish toilets and updating communal spaces is not considered to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. In addition, no mental health and/or community healthcare projects to which any contributions might be applied have been identified.
- 7.2.24 Given the aforementioned, the financial contribution towards acute, mental health and community costs do not accord with the three tests set under Regulation 122. Therefore, the Council cannot reasonably require the developer to contribute towards the aforementioned financial obligations in this instance.
- 7.2.25 With regard to the requirements of Sport England, the applicant is willing to pay the contribution requested toward indoor sport (sports halls (£333,746), swimming pools (£367,090) and indoor bowls centres (£42,906). However, rather than spend the monies on the three separate areas, it is proposed that the monies would be combined (total £743,742.00) to be spent on one project, namely, toward New Leisure Centre at Stevenage Swimming Pool/Bowes Lyon youth centre site (or alternative facilities). Sport England has confirmed their agreement to this.
- 7.2.26 With regard to the requirement toward artificial grass pitches (£58,609 for 3G surfaces and £52,968 for sand based surface) the applicant is willing to pay the monies (total £111,577.00). However, rather than using the monies toward playing pitches, the applicant has requested that this money be used toward the creation of the Country Park. However, Sport England is maintaining an objection in this regard as they consider it would not meet the additional demand generated for outdoor sports facilities or be an acceptable substitute. Whilst the objection is noted and having regard to the advice in policy HC8 of the adopted plan relating to sports facilities in new developments, the Council considers this to be a reasonable request and is supportive of using the money for this project. Furthermore, it is considered that there are accessible pitches nearby in Canterbury Way and St Nicholas Park as well as the nearby Rugby Club. Additionally, there is the possibility of using facilities at the new primary school and the applicant is agreeable to entering into a community use agreement in respect of the use of any sports facilities provided by this facility.
- 7.2.27 The final element of the proposal seeks to introduce a new local centre within the development providing up to 650sqm of flexible commercial floorspace comprising retail, food and drink, office and leisure facilities (Use Classes A1 / A2 / A3 / A4 / A5 / B1 / D1 / D2). This would accord with Policy TC11 of the Adopted Local Plan which states that new Local Centres will be permitted in each of the Stevenage West and North of Stevenage new neighbourhoods each in the order of 500sqm, to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new neighbourhood. Additionally, this is supported by Policy HO3.
- 7.2.28 Having regard to the aforementioned, it is considered that, subject to compliance with criterion (m) of the policy which addresses heritage assets, the application is in accordance with the requirements of Policy HO3 of the Adopted Local Plan and would provide the necessary infrastructure to secure the delivery of the development. Furthermore, it would not result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would provide local facilities to serve the new development. Finally, the provision of the quantum of residential development provided will ensure that the Council is able to meet the housing targets set out in the adopted local plan. In view of this, it is considered that the application is acceptable in land use policy terms and would also accord with the guidance in the NPPF regarding the delivery of housing as set out above.

7.3 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area/Setting of heritage assets

- 7.3.1 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework'), indicates that applicants should provide a description of the significance of any heritage assets affected by their proposals (including any contribution made by their setting). This paragraph also states that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact.
- 7.3.2 Section 66(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* requires that special regard shall be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting in determining the application. Section 72(1) of the same Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The Courts have concluded that Section 66(1) and 72(1) establish a strong presumption against planning permission being granted for any development that would harm the setting of a listed building or would fail to preserve or enhance a conservation area.
- 7.3.3 Paragraphs 193 to 196 of the NPPF (2019) 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 193, 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 194 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.
- 7.3.4 Paragraph 195 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 196 of the NPPF (2019), 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.
- 7.3.5 Paragraph 197 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.
- 7.3.6 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.

7.3.7 Policy NH8 of the local plan relates to the North Stevenage Country Park and states:-

“Within that part of the Rectory Lane and St Nicholas Conservation Area which lies within the Green Belt, proposals that facilitate improved public access and/or the creation of a country park will be supported in principle where they also support the aims of and purposes of the existing policy designations”

7.3.8 Finally, Policy NH10 Conservation Areas states that 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.

7.3.9 The application site falls within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area, therefore, due regard is given to the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012). The SPD sets out that this part of the town was occupied since the Saxon period where it is thought the settlement stood in the area around the parish church of St Nicholas. In the 12th Century, a flint and stone church was constructed and the tower is now the earliest remaining part of the church, dating around 1125AD.

7.3.10 The settlement around the church grew and the oldest remaining building is the Old Bury (grade II*). In addition there are a number of listed buildings in the surrounding area including Rooks Nest House (grade I) and Rooks Nest Farmhouse and outbuildings (separate grade II list entries). Rooks Nest House was the home to EM Forster for a period of time and the surrounding area has become known locally as Forster Country.

7.3.11 In assessing the proposed allocation of the site in the Adopted Local Plan, the Inspector referred to the Council's assessment of the contribution that the heritage assets made to the area as part of the evidence base for the plan. She also went on to state:-

“There is no doubt that the landscape contributes to the setting of the listed buildings to some degree. However taking the listed buildings in turn, St Nicholas Church has a sizeable churchyard that is heavily wooded and contains numerous monuments. When walking around the churchyard, one gets a sense of enclosure within the well planted churchyard. There are glimpsed views of the fields to the north of the Church through the trees, but in terms of views of the wider landscape these are only achieved by leaving the churchyard.”

“The Church building and in particular its tall spire are visible from a wide area, and the appreciation of its contained, heavily wooded churchyard reflect its central role within the Parish. However, the setting of the building that is experienced from the allocated site is that of a confined, wooded churchyard, with glimpsed views to land outside the churchyard. The wider landscape is within the setting of the Church, but due to the nature of the churchyard, site HO3 contributes little to its significance, compared to the land immediately north of the churchyard. Additionally, built development on the site would be located some distance from the Church and churchyard and would certainly not hinder the ability to appreciate it or its setting. Indeed there is modern built development much closer to the Church than this proposed development would be.”

“Rooks Nest House Howards is located on Weston Road, a narrow lane. It is set back from the road within maturely landscaped gardens which enclose it and significantly limit views of it. To the west of Rooks Nest House Howards and the adjacent Rooks Nest Farm (listed grade II) are agricultural fields. Nevertheless, this is an agricultural landscape of open fields as a result of modern farming practices. Consequently, much of the historic character of these fields has been lost, with the removal of field boundaries and hedges and so it appears different to how it would have done when EM Forster resided here. Also visible in this landscape is the housing development to the south of the allocated site, the extensive Lister Hospital complex to the west and numerous tall electricity pylons that straddle the fields.”

7.3.12 Finally, the Inspector went on to conclude:-

“Overall, whilst built development here would increase significantly, I am confident that the site could be developed in a manner that protects the significance of the designated heritage assets. Also, for the reasons set out above, exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.”

7.3.13 As set out elsewhere in this report, the application has been supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) (as required by the Inspector). The HIA submitted by the applicant comes to the same conclusions as the earlier BEAMS study, that development behind the established hedge line will have an impact upon the conservation area but be more limited than development to the east of the established hedge line. This matches the area of development included in this application site.

7.3.14 It is noted that Historic England have raised concerns in respect of the application and in particular the development of Parcel E, within the conservation area. They consider that the impact of the proposals are claimed to have a considerable, harmful impact upon the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area to such an extent that it would either weaken or eradicate the ability to appreciate the listed buildings and conservation area within the setting. However, whilst significant weight has been accorded to these concerns, officers have reached different conclusions based on the advice of its Advisor and the heritage assessment undertaken by the applicant.

7.3.15 Contrary to the views of Historic England, it is considered that the site makes a minimal contribution to the setting of the grade I parish church as this is seen as a heavily planted, defined churchyard which has views to the north, but not west towards the proposal site. Furthermore, the proposals to restore earlier landscape forms to the area north of the church will contribute positively to the setting of this listed building, rather than have any harmful effect on its significance. This point was considered in the local plan examination and accepted by the Inspector.

7.3.16 The principal element of the setting of the grade II* listed Bury, is the presence of the adjacent to the church. The field to its north, which is terminated by the rears of houses fronting on to Matthews Close also contribute to its setting. This largely open field contains some trees, but views of the Chancellor's Road development can be seen beyond. The land to the north and east of The Bury also contributes to its character as do the tree-lined lanes with soft planted boundaries which lead to its location. The proposals to manage the land to the north east of The Bury and restore historic land forms, again offers a positive contribution to its significance. The development would be experienced from The Bury in views beyond the existing Chancellor's Road housing and that on Matthews Close and the site will be screened by the margin planting.

7.3.17 With regard to the impact upon the setting of Rooks Nest and Rocks Nest Farm and its outbuildings, views west across the land towards Graveley from Weston Road

adjacent to the farm and house show an agricultural landscape containing pylons for electrical transmission, the Lister Hospital, the north boundary of the Chancellors Road development as well as the A1(M). As part of the proposal it is intended to introduce significant planting to the east of the development site which will screen views and result in an effective boundary developing over time. The likely impact of this has been demonstrated on the LVIA submitted with the application. Whilst this will result in a change of character within the landscape from hedged, bounded fields to a deep woodland boundary of shrubs and trees, once developed it is considered that this boundary will aid in screening much of the modern development and infrastructure visible in long views, including the A1(M). It is the Council's view that the harm to the heritage assets is less than substantial and towards the lower range of such harm.

- 7.3.18 In assessing the impact of developments on designated heritage assets, Paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires the local planning authority to reach a balanced judgement concerning development that will lead to less than significant harm to the significance of heritage assets, giving considerable importance and weight to any harm. It is accepted that the development of part of the land within the conservation area, and the change in character to the boundary of the development site will result in some degree of harm to the setting of the conservation area and listed buildings on Weston Road. However, for the reasons previously referred to, the extent of harm is considered to be less than substantial and towards the lower end of such harm.
- 7.3.19 It is considered that the management of the remaining agricultural land within the conservation area and its restoration to a land form that reflects historic landscape patterns in the area offers a significant benefit to the setting of listed buildings and a contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The management of the remaining land in this way offers a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and will contribute significant benefits to the setting of St Nicholas' Church, Rooks Nest, Rooks Nest Farm and the Old Bury. The restoration of the landscape to a form that would be recognised by Forster, rather than its present appearance of large-scale, modern fields, offers a significant benefit to the character of the undesignated heritage asset of Forster Country.
- 7.3.20 As discussed, the proposal site makes a minimal contribution to the defined and planted churchyard containing the grade I listed church of St Nicholas; the development site only becomes apparent when leaving the churchyard and entering the farmland to the north of the church. The grade II* listed The Bury will have a limited setting impact from the proposal site due to the presence of the Chancellor's Road development. The LVIA indicates the boundary planting would be effective in screening the development in views beyond the Chancellor's Road development. The management of the retained farmland to the north east of the church will make a significant positive contribution to the character of the two listed buildings.
- 7.3.21 The development will cause harm to the character of the conservation area through building on land within the area, however, the scheme design will provide for larger scale housing in generous planted grounds to reduce such harm together with the planted boundary screening the development from the more significant elements of the conservation area such as Rook's Nest house. The restoration of the farmland remaining within the conservation area to a form recognised by Forster will make a significant positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Together with the design and boundary works within the development area the contribution of the restored farmland will outweigh the harm to the conservation area.
- 7.3.22 The development site and its planted boundary will result in a change to the landscape character in views from Rooks Nest and Rooks Nest Farm and outbuildings. The current long view contains numerous features of a modern landscape. The LVIA shows

that views will be foreshortened from these locations due to the planting of the boundary that will develop over time. This change will result in harm to the setting of the listed buildings, but this harm must be considered to be at the lower end of less than substantial harm. When the management of the fields adjacent to the farm and Rooks Nest House is considered the heritage benefits of the restoration of this land to a form that would be recognised by Forster will positively contribute to the setting of the listed buildings on Weston Road.

7.3.23 Forster Country is considered to be an undesignated heritage asset. The landscape, as it currently stands is a range of modern prairie fields with modern infrastructure making up much of the views. The construction of the proposal site will remove open agricultural land and replace it with housing and will foreshorten some of the views across this landscape. The recreation of a land form recognisable by Forster near to Rooks Nest and the parish church will contribute to the significance of this undesignated heritage asset and offer a heritage benefit.

7.3.24 As well as the public benefit referred to regarding the proposed Country Park and landscape improvements, the proposal will deliver much needed housing, including affordable and Aspirational housing along with the provision of a new primary school, contributions toward secondary education, health and sports facilities.

7.4 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

7.4.1 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF 2019 stipulates that planning decisions should ensure development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area, not just in the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also sets out that development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. In addition, the NPPF sets out that development should establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit. It also stipulates that development should optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate mix of development and finally, create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

7.4.2 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that “permission should be refused for development of poor design that fail to make available opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions”.

7.4.3 Policy GD1 of the adopted local plan 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.

7.4.4 As the application has been submitted in outline form, there is little detail available for consideration such as the design of the houses, appearance, detailed landscaping etc. However, the Master Plan and Design Code submitted with the application clearly demonstrates how the layout of the parcels of land would be delivered with the lower density/aspirational properties located in the Conservation Area, with the higher density properties located to the west of the site. It is, therefore, considered that following these design principles the development would be able to deliver a layout of development which would respect other development nearby and comply with both national and local design policy. In terms of the comments of North Hertfordshire District Council regarding building heights, it is considered that the introduction of suitably designed properties toward the northern part of the site would not look out of

character, given the proximity to other developments. Nevertheless the precise detail and appearance of the buildings will be addressed at the reserved matters stage.

7.5 Impact upon Neighbouring Amenity

- 7.5.1 As referred to above, the application has been submitted in outline form with only the means of access for approval. Consequently, there is little detail at this stage to assess the impact the proposal would have on the amenities of adjoining properties. Whilst it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the principles set out in Policy HO3 of the adopted local plan, the detailed layout of the housing and the design and appearance of the dwellings along with the landscaping details would be assessed at the reserved matters stage. The existing premises located on the various spur roads off of Chancellors Road such as Daltry Road, The Brambles, Chouler Gardens, Thurlow Close would be most affected by the development. The indicative master plan identifies that the development on the southern part of the site, adjacent to these properties, would be separated by a landscaped area which incorporates a footpath. The impact of any new development upon these adjoining properties would be assessed at the detailed stage when the precise siting and design and appearance of dwellings will be known, but officers are satisfied that an acceptable relationship can be achieved.
- 7.5.2 Similarly, with regard to the concern of properties in Weston Road backing onto the proposed Country Park, at this stage the proposed footpaths are only indicative and the precise position will be agreed at the detailed design stage. It is at this point the impact upon the privacy and security of these properties will be assessed but officers are satisfied that an acceptable relationship can be achieved.
- 7.5.3 As to the amenities afforded to future occupants of the development, this too would be assessed at the detailed design stage, but there is sufficient information to be able to conclude that acceptable standards can be achieved.

7.6 Highway Safety

- 7.6.1 The plans and Transport statement submitted with the application identify that vehicular access to the site would be taken from two new junctions off the B197 North Road, with the primary access road forming a loop within the Proposed Development with a north spur that provides the potential for a connection out of the Site through to the adjoining land parcel to the north.
- 7.6.2 It is identified that main streets and secondary access routes would spur off from the primary access route and permeate the development parcels, leading to lanes and private drives. Within the proposed development, the primary route would include design features to act as traffic calming measures. Footways and cycle paths within the scheme would provide permeability and continuity between the site and existing pedestrian facilities. The scheme design retains the existing network of footpaths and bridleways, and provides additional footway/cycle links both within the site and from the site to surrounding areas.
- 7.6.3 As set out earlier, the primary vehicular access to the proposed development will be from North Road via a new signalised T-junction, the location of which is shown on the land use and access parameter plan. The proposed detailed arrangements are shown on the access plan submitted with the application. These arrangements include a left-turn lane into the site from the north and a right-turn lane into the site from the south, as well as a left-turn lane and right-turn lane out of the site.

- 7.6.4 A secondary vehicular access to the site is proposed further south along North Road. This would be a signalised T-junction similar to the primary vehicular access, but without a left-turn lane in from the north and only a single lane exit from the site onto North Road. The primary vehicular access has been designed to allow for the potential integration of the site with the draft North Hertfordshire allocation immediately north for 900 dwellings. This site access would form part of an internal loop road within the North Stevenage site and the North Hertfordshire District draft allocation, connecting with North Road via an improved North Road/Graveley Road junction.
- 7.6.5 Prior to any North Hertfordshire development immediately north of Stevenage coming forward, the two North Stevenage accesses on North Road will be linked internally, to allow for new bus services to travel through the site, such that the majority of dwellings are within 400m of a bus route. This will be for phases of development beyond 300 dwellings (or equivalent level of traffic-generating uses). In the event of the North Hertfordshire allocation coming forward, the North Stevenage secondary access could become a bus-only access, or buses plus development of up to 300 dwellings on the North Stevenage site.
- 7.6.6 The above vehicular accesses will provide pedestrian and cycle access to the site. There will be controlled Toucan crossings for pedestrians and cyclists on the site access arm of each junction, linking in with a new continuous 3.5m wide shared footway/cycleway along the eastern side of North Road. This will continue south, to connect with the existing Stevenage cycle network at Coreys Mill Lane. On the North Road southern arm of the secondary (southern) access, there will be a controlled pedestrian crossing, to connect with a new 2m wide footway on the western side of North Road.
- 7.6.7 Pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the proposed development and the town centre, including the railway station, will need to travel along North Road. The section of North Road between the site and Chancellors Road has a footway of about 1.5m wide. Whilst in good condition, the width of this footway could present a challenge to providing the level of pedestrian and cycle connectivity between the development site and the town centre to the south in which to walk and cycle, particularly during peak traffic hours. The development therefore proposes a new shared footway/cycleway along the eastern side of North Road. This will extend from north of the proposed northern access to immediately north of the junction with Chancellors Road, and is deliverable within land under the control of the developer and/or the public highway.
- 7.6.8 A new Toucan crossing is proposed at the location of the existing informal pedestrian crossing, immediately north of Chancellors Road. It is intended that this will connect the new shared footway/cycleway on the eastern side of North Road with the existing Stevenage cycle network at Coreys Mill Lane, and, therefore, effectively extend the Stevenage cycle network to the site. This will significantly enhance the pedestrian and cycle accessibility of the site to the rest of Stevenage, including the main employment areas, town centre and railway station, all of which are within a reasonable cycling distance. The new facility will also improve accessibility for existing residential areas east of North Road by providing a controlled pedestrian and cycle crossing across North Road.
- 7.6.9 The proposed walking and cycling improvements will support the Stevenage Mobility Strategy set out in SBC's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (March 2017). This seeks improvements to the walking and cycling network in Stevenage by providing new links where there are missing gaps in the network, better access to the railway station, improved lighting and visibility at underpasses, more policing and more cycle parking at key locations, such as the town centre and railway station. The IDP advises that new developments will need to be appropriately connected to existing walking and cycling networks. Through the proposed cycleway and Toucan Crossing along North

Road, the North Stevenage development will be connected to the Stevenage cycle network, and so meets this objective.

- 7.6.10 The site's vehicular accesses on North Road will be provided with signal-controlled pedestrian crossings on the site access arms. The southern junction will also include a crossing of North Road which will link with a new footway proposed by the development along the western side of North Road. This will provide a pedestrian connection between the site, the rugby club and the Lister Hospital via Lister Close.
- 7.6.11 With the pedestrian and cycle improvements described above, there will be good quality pedestrian and cycle infrastructure available in the vicinity of the site to accommodate the demand for walking and cycling generated by the proposed development, and encourage travel by these modes for many day-to-day journeys instead of using the car.
- 7.6.12 The existing east-west routes of bridleway 22, bridleway 105 and bridleway 18 are accommodated along the southern site boundary where further hedgerow planting and low level lighting is proposed to retain this existing bat commuting corridor. The north-south existing route of bridleway 23 (and the short connecting section of bridleway 8 on the northern boundary) are also retained, with the proposed residential development broadly located to the west of this footpath, such that open views will remain to the east. Footpath 17, which originates on the southern boundary of the Site at the Brambles and routes north across the central area to the Site's northern boundary, would be incorporated into the central part of the Site layout.
- 7.6.13 As indicated earlier, a Transport Assessment (TA) has been submitted with the application. This has provided a trip generation profile for the existing site and the proposed changes were provided as part of the submitted document with the application applying the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Welwyn Hatfield and Stevenage Hitchin (WHaSH) transportation model. The trip generation and distribution were discussed and agreed by HCC and the applicant's transport consultants at the pre-application stage. The WHaSH model is a strategic transport model developed by HCC that addresses the weekday AM and PM peaks in the Stevenage and Hitchin urban areas, the A1(M) between junctions 2 and 9 and the Welwyn and Hatfield urban areas.
- 7.6.14 Through highway discussions it was agreed that HCC's (WHaSH) SATURN model and HCC's Paramics model of Stevenage be applied to assess the impact from the development for 2031 weekday peak travelling periods (AM peak travelling period 8.00 – 9.00 am and PM peak travelling periods of 5.0 – 6.0 pm). It includes a 2031 'Reference Case' model scenario, which forecasts 2031 traffic flows including background traffic growth, and developments that have planning permission and committed transport improvements but excludes the North Stevenage development along with any other developments allocated in the Local Plan.
- 7.6.15 To address this shortfall of data the HCC Paramics model for Stevenage was used in conjunction with the WHaSH Model to review the Traffic Impact. The Paramics software is a "micro-simulation model" that accepts detailed analysis of the operation of the local highway network, such as junction operation, and uses outputs from the WHaSH model. It includes a 2021 'Reference Case' scenario, which forecasts flows in 2021 including background traffic growth, committed developments and committed transport improvements.
- 7.6.16 Using the combination of both of the above models the assessment is able to reassign existing trips away from routes that become congested with the addition of development trips. Such existing trips may choose alternative routes based on the changes in journey experience caused by the North Stevenage development. The

above methodology using the WHaSH and Paramics models was agreed between HCC and the applicant during pre-application scoping discussions on the TA using Trip end Model Presentation Programme (TEMPro) traffic growth factors to derive the 2031 'Reference Case' forecast flows without the North Herts District Council, North Stevenage development.

7.6.17 The above assessment is based on the assumption that, as growth proceeds, the balance of mobility shifts away from driving cars and towards mobility through technology, active travel, public transport and car-pooling. As such, a sustainable transport route is to be gated through the development giving priority for buses to gain access to the North Road from the development.

7.6.18 In assessing existing traffic flows, the site at present is greenfield land and stands vacant. Therefore, the trip generation for the current land use of the site is considered nil. With regard to the development proposed, the applicant undertook extensive pre-application discussions with HCC as Highway Authority. Trip generation and distribution assumptions were reviewed and agreed through this process. All assumptions that was included in TA provided the applicant's transport consultant and the following trip generations were agreed:

7.6.19 The vehicle trip generation for the 800 residential units per journey purpose is as follows:

7.6.20 The vehicular trip rates were sourced from the industry standard TRICS database (version 7.3.2), with the TRICS category 'Mixed Private / Affordable Houses' being used for this development, which incorporates sites with a mix of affordable and privately-owned houses, within edge of town. The associated peak hour trip rates are indicated in the resulting vehicular trip generation table – Multimodal Trip Generation of the Transport Assessment this demonstrates that the proposed scale of development is anticipated to generate a total number of trips:

AM Travelling Peak Period (08:00 – 09:00): 120 arrivals, 285 departures resulting in 405 two-way trips

PM Travelling Peak Period: (17:00) – 18:00): 274 arrivals, 159 departures resulting in 433 two-way trips

7.6.21 This equates to an average of 7 additional vehicle movements on the adjacent road network every minute during the above mentioned peak travelling periods.

7.6.22 With regard to the impact of the proposal on the highway network, the proposed development is expected to commence in 2021 with completion programmed for 2026. In line with the DfT Guidance on Transport Assessments, the future assessment year has been considered as five years after the date of the planning application. Therefore the assessment has been based on 2021 start with 2026 as the future completion.

7.6.23 In assessing the impact of the development on the Graveley Road/North Road junction it is proposed to undertake improvements to this junction by introducing signalisation. The capacity of the proposed signalisation of the Graveley Road/North Road junction has been tested using LINSIG, with 2031 AM and PM peak travelling period flows obtained from the Paramics modelling. The results of this indicate the degree of Saturation to be below 85% which are considered to be acceptable up to the 2031 peak travelling period flows with development.

7.6.24 As indicated previously, within the TA, the applicant has provided a series of proposed mitigation measures which include improved pedestrian facilities on North Road, together with improvement and diverted bus service into the site and the

implementation of a Residential Travel Plan. These are considered adequate to mitigate the impact of development.

- 7.6.25 The highways mitigation proposed to be provided as part of the proposed development would be sufficient to mitigate the cumulative impact of both the proposed development and the North Herts District Council allocated development. These include the following:-

The re-timing of the traffic signals at A1(M) junction 8;

The re-timing of the traffic signals at the Sainsbury access junction on Hitchin Road;

The re-timing of the traffic signals at the Fairlands Way/Lytton Way and Gunnels Wood Road/Martin Way roundabouts;

The provision of new signals at the Fairlands Way/St. Georges Way roundabout;

The upgrade of the Graveley Road / North Road junction to a signalised T-junction.

- 7.6.26 The modelling indicates that this mitigation will reduce queue lengths on the A1(M) northbound off-slip at Junction 8, and deliver significant savings in journey times across Stevenage for the 2031 PM peak scenario including development compared to the 2031 reference case. With the application of the lower background traffic growth rates to 2031 as predicated by SBC's Mobility Strategy, it is considered that the highway network in Stevenage would operate with even fewer delays and queuing.

- 7.6.27 In terms of highway safety, a review has been undertaken of the personal injury collisions that have occurred on the local road network near the site. This is included in the original TA and related to the period of October 2013 to September 2018. The data obtained and indicated shows that the Graveley Road/North Road junction has a higher than normal number of accidents. These accidents are predominantly slight in nature, although some serious accidents (4) have occurred at the junction. The new development will increase the level of traffic using this junction and given the number of accidents that have occurred at this location, it is considered that the proposed signalised control will reduce the number of collisions happening and would not present a significant risk with regard to road safety on the wider highway network.

- 7.6.28 With regard to the proposed internal road layout as part of the planning submission, swept path drawings have been submitted and tested along the main access and principal access road for a 12 metre long bus and a 12.2m length waste collection vehicle. This has demonstrated that these vehicles can enter the development and turn around within the internal access roads and egress in a forward gear.

- 7.6.29 In terms of accessibility, the nearest bus stops to the site is located along North Road to the north and south of the development site. These stops are served by Arriva service 55, which serves Letchworth town centre, the Lister Hospital, Stevenage town centre and Stevenage railway station. During the first phase of the build out, once the dwellings are occupied the northern stop adjacent to the development is to be temporally relocated closer to the new north junction of the development.

- 7.6.30 The frequency of Service 55 is every 20 – 25 minutes from early morning to after the evening peak hour, Monday to Friday. There are services every 30 minutes on Saturdays from early morning to early evening. There are services every 2 hours on Sundays from mid-morning to early evening. The journey time from the North Road bus stops to Stevenage railway station, town centre and bus station is about 10 – 15 minutes. This service runs along North Road past the development site. The existing weekday frequency of Route 55 varies from 17 to 38 minutes, with an average (mean)

frequency of about 26 minutes. The first service into Stevenage town centre calls at North Road at about 6.50am, and the last service from Stevenage town centre calls at North Road at about 6.54pm. The bus strategy for North Stevenage involves extending the duration of service 55 so that it runs earlier in the morning and later in the evening. It is intended that the first service into Stevenage would call at the North Stevenage site at about 6am, and the last service from Stevenage town centre would call at the North Stevenage site at about 10pm. The extended service would make service 55 convenient for rail commuters.

- 7.6.31 In addition to extending the service's duration, it is proposed to introduce an additional bus vehicle onto the service 55 route: this will enable service 55 to run into the North Stevenage development whilst maintaining an overall bus frequency of circa 20 minutes during peak periods. It is intended that extending the duration of service 55 will take place from first occupation of new housing on the North Stevenage site. The point at which buses are able to run into the development site has yet to be established (it will depend on the development's master-plan layout and build-out sequence). It is intended, however, that buses should enter the site circa the 100th house occupation. It is intended that the footway along North Road would be improved to enable future development residents to walk to the North Road bus stops. In addition, temporary bus stops could be provided on North Road adjacent to the site access junctions. These stops would allow buses to stop on North Road nearer to the development site. The temporary bus stops would be removed once service 55 was able to enter into the development site. The layout of the North Stevenage development will be designed to ensure that the majority of residents within the development will be located within 400m of bus stops (which is about a 5 minute walk).
- 7.6.32 With regard to the aforementioned public transport improvements, it has been agreed that the developers will make a financial contribution of £400,000 to fund these improvements. The contribution will be paid to Hertfordshire County Council as a number of staged payments which will be secured through the s106 Agreement. It is intended that the County Council will procure bus services for the North Stevenage site and the diversion of service through the site from North Road would ensure that the use of bus as a means of transport more would be attractive to users of the site.
- 7.6.33 The applicant has also provided a Residential Travel Plan (TP) for the proposed development. The Plan sets overall outcomes, targets and indicators for the entire site aimed at:-
- Reducing the level of car traffic generated by the development;
 - Provide a choice of travel modes for residents', pupils, staff and visitors;
 - Promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable, vibrant communities; and
 - Encourage a permeable development which will promote walking and cycling trips on routes that are safe, logical, convenient and attractive.
- 7.6.34 The travel plan has been agreed in principal by HCC as highway authority and will be funded by a £6,000 Evaluation and Support Fee and would be secured by section 106.
- 7.6.35 To conclude on the highway implications of the development, a Transport Assessment has been submitted with the application which has assessed the highway implications of the development. Subject to the imposition of a number of improvements to the existing highway network and the proposed accesses to the site and improvements to the bus services which adjoin the site, the proposal is considered to be acceptable. HCC as highway authority has fully assessed the Transport Assessment and consider

that the development is acceptable in highway safety terms and would not have a severe impact upon the highway network.

- 7.6.36 With regard to the comments raised by Homes England (HE) in respect of the site they own to the west of the application site, negotiations are taking place between HE and the applicant to ensure the appropriate access can be provided to serve both developments. Members will be updated of the outcome of these discussions at the Committee Meeting.

7.7 Parking Provision

- 7.7.1 In assessing car parking provision associated with the development, as the application is in outline form it is not possible at this stage to determine the number of car parking spaces which would be required. This is worked out on the number of bedrooms per dwelling and currently the precise mix of dwellings and the detailed layout of the development are not yet known. This will be assessed at the reserved matters stage in accordance with the Council's adopted car parking standards.

7.8 Development and flood risk

- 7.8.1 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. Notwithstanding this, the application which has been submitted to the Council is classified as a Major, therefore, in line with the Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the applicant has provided a Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy.
- 7.8.2 The drainage solution for the site is to discharge directly to the existing sewer infrastructure by using a pumped connection. There would also be a series of drainage basins within the developed area of the site and a basin and a series of boreholes within part of the proposed Country Park. This has been agreed with Anglian Water and has also been agreed by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) subject to the imposition of number of conditions to deal with the delivery of the drainage and future maintenance.
- 7.8.3 Having regard to the above and following consultation with the Environment Agency and the LLFA, it has been confirmed that the applicant has provided an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme.

7.9 Trees and Landscaping/Open Space

- 7.9.1 A key element of the proposal is the provision of approximately 38 hectares of landscaped open space on the eastern part of the site, where the existing agricultural fields will be kept free of built development and managed and planted to create smaller, hedged hay meadows with improved public access.
- 7.9.2 In terms of existing trees and hedges, the vast majority of trees and hedging are proposed to be retained within the development. The exception to this would be the loss of hedging fronting North Road (approximately 13m) in order to accommodate the proposed new access points and the necessary visibility splays. However, this vegetation will be replaced with native trees and shrubs in order to provide an appropriate framing of the entrance points whilst respecting the visibility splays associated with the new junction arrangements. There is also a requirement to make pedestrian and vehicular access points through the woodland running through and along the northern boundary of the site. This is necessary to serve the northern part of the application site or to safeguard future pedestrian and vehicular linkages to the site

to the north within North Hertfordshire should this site come forward as part of the North Hertfordshire District Plan review process.

- 7.9.3 In terms of the landscape design measures proposed as part of the development, although indicative at this stage, it is intended to include the provision of a native tree and shrub planting belt along the eastern edge of the proposed residential parcel E located within the Conservation Area. This will be supplemented by an enhancement of the existing hedgerow to the east that is located adjacent to this edge of residential parcel E, and the planting of a number of tree copses which will be aligned broadly parallel with this existing hedgerow. A larger tree copse is also proposed within the northern section of this edge. The combination of these planting proposals will effectively visually integrate this edge of the proposed housing into the receiving landscape over time. The trees proposed are estimated to have an established height sufficient to curtail views of the roofs of the eastern housing parcel within 15-20 years.
- 7.9.4 A further native tree and shrub planting belt and a copse of native trees is proposed along the eastern edge of the most northern housing parcel which is located to the north of the existing woodland shelter belt. This will provide a vegetative buffer to the north eastern edge of this proposed housing parcel.
- 7.9.5 Another native species planting belt is proposed to the northern edge of the proposed development to supplement the existing hedgerow and in order to provide a green edge to this section of the site boundary and to filter views to this edge of the proposals in views from the north.
- 7.9.6 Extensive additional native species hedgerows with trees and an orchard are proposed in conjunction with the establishment of a series of hay meadows within the proposed County Park. These measures will enhance both the landscape character and biodiversity of this part of the site. The extensive existing woodland belt that extends from east to west within the site will be retained which screens the majority of the buildings within the proposed development in views from the north.
- 7.9.7 A network of trees will be planted either side of the roads within the proposed development in order to provide an attractive streetscape. A combination of hedges and trees is proposed between the existing houses on the northern edge of Stevenage and the southern edge of the proposed housing to create a linear green corridor which will define the existing footpath/bridleway corridor and filter views between the existing and proposed houses.
- 7.9.8 A series of attenuation ponds/basins are proposed along the centrally located area of green space under the high voltage electricity pylons and cables, which will be planted with appropriate species of marginal/emergent planting around their fringes with complementary groups of low level native trees and shrubs. These features will provide opportunities for informal amenity for local residents which will be enhanced by a series of proposed paths. It is also proposed to ground the northern electricity pylons and cables within the proposed built footprint of the development which will result in beneficial landscape and visual effects within this part of the site. It is proposed that the planting of the various landscape features within the new Country Park area of the site and those along the most northerly boundary of the site will take place in advance of the construction of the houses within the eastern and northern parts of the site. This will allow these areas of planting to begin to become established by the time that the construction of the houses is complete within these parts of the site.
- 7.9.9 It is acknowledged that there will be temporary effects on both the landscape character and visual amenity during the construction phase of the project due to the presence of contractor's vehicles, plant and equipment and the consequent noise and dust arising from the construction activities including the undergrounding of part of the northern

overhead electricity lines. These effects are taken into account within the assessment and will be mitigated as far as possible through best practice measures that would be set out in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan. This would minimise the impacts of traffic, noise, dust and lighting, and would limit construction operations to standard working hours.

- 7.9.10 Overall within the housing site and the Country Park it is proposed to plant over 2,000 new trees including 60 orchard trees, 36,000 shrubs, 0.06 hectares of hay meadow which will enhance the visual appearance of the development, biodiversity and aid with climate change. It is also proposed to retain over 2 hectares of woodland, over 392 linear metres of hedgerow and 120 trees. It can also be made a requirement that any planting should comprise native planting from UK nurseries.
- 7.9.11 Finally, there have been a number of requests made to have a Tree Preservation Order placed on the trees within the site. As set out above, the majority of the trees and woodland within the site are proposed to be retained with the exception to provide the necessary vehicular and pedestrian access points within the development. Whilst a Tree Preservation Order could be placed on the trees, the applicant has offered to provide a landscape management plan for the existing and proposed trees within the site. This would set out the necessary management of the existing trees and can be secured through a S106 agreement and would ensure that trees cannot be removed or pruned unless agreed by the local planning authority. This would be similar to a TPO and could involve other interested parties such as the Woodland Trust for example who would be involved in the decision making process. Additional to the above, as a large part of the site lies within the Conservation Area then any substantial trees would automatically be protected by this Conservation Area status.
- 7.9.12 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the landscaping proposals for the site are acceptable and set out the broad planting proposals which would be considered at the reserved matters stage. The requirement for a landscape management plan to maintain and manage existing trees and woodland at the site could be secured through a S106 agreement.

7.10 Ecology

- 7.10.1 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) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."

- 7.10.2 As part of the application submission an Extended Phase I Habitat Survey was originally undertaken in 2008 and updated in 2013 when the site boundary was extended to 119ha. An update to the Extended Phase I Habitat survey was undertaken across the current site boundary in May 2015 to inform the Environmental Statement. Habitats and obvious features within the site were mapped to assess the potential presence of protected and priority species in accordance with the Institute of Environmental Assessment methodology (IEA, 1995). This involved a walkover of the survey area. Hedgerows were also assessed and the potential for the site to support protected or notable species was also assessed. This included an assessment (from ground level) of all mature trees on site which were inspected for their potential for supporting roosting bats and/or Barn Owls. A badger survey was also undertaken.
- 7.10.3 Following the Extended Phase I Habitat Survey, and subsequent correspondence with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in 2015, it was considered that only the following species would be scoped into the assessment:-
- Badgers;
 - Bats;
 - Breeding birds;
 - Brown Hare.
- 7.10.4 Other species, such as dormice, great crested newts and reptiles were scoped out, again under agreement of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife trust, as the habitats were deemed to be unsuitable and minimal records were returned within the locality.
- 7.10.5 In July 2017, an updated walkover was undertaken to assess the current ecological conditions of the site and to identify whether any of the habitats or farming management practices had altered significantly. This was repeated in August 2019.
- 7.10.6 In respect of birds, through these surveys a number of visits were made to the site during the breeding season. Walking routes were used and field boundaries and farm tracks were walked. Buildings, semi-mature and mature trees were examined. With regard to Bats, surveys were also undertaken and no bat roosts were identified on site during the survey. The results indicated that species commute and forage across the site. Common Pipistrelle were the most frequently recorded species across the site, particularly along the southern boundary and eastern edge. Given the level of pipistrelle activity on the site, it is likely that there are roosts within the residential properties that surround the site on three sides, from which bats use the site for foraging and to commute to the wider landscape. However, it is considered that the large open fields offer limited potential for bats, with the monoculture of crop limiting the availability of food sources. However, it is considered that the hedgerows and mixed plantation woodland will provide suitable foraging habitats and connectivity with adjacent habitats.
- 7.10.7 Whilst it is accepted the proposals will result in the loss of arable fields, a significant area of public open space will be created and enhanced for wildlife. This area is 38ha in size and extends across the eastern side of the site. At present, this area comprises large arable fields, intersected by a hedgerow. It is proposed to reinstate traditional hay meadows and native, species rich hedgerows, which will be managed to maximise species diversity. Whilst it is recognised that a species rich grassland may take some time to establish, it is considered that there will be instant benefits to wildlife as a result of relaxing the intensive farming regime. A Management Plan for this area will be produced which will set out methods to ensure that the meadows are managed with wildlife in mind, for example mowing to be conducted at times to ensure minimal disturbance to ground nesting birds. The Management Plan can be required as part of a S106 legal agreement.

- 7.10.8 Additional habitats will be created, including a number of waterbodies associated with the proposed drainage strategy and it is proposed within the Country Park that 880m of native, species-rich hedgerows will be planted, and around 1.91ha of shrubs and trees will be planted. In addition, the existing hedgerows and shelterbelt will be enhanced and supplemented with additional planting, where necessary. This will lead to a significant, long-term positive effect on habitats, which once established may be of County importance.
- 7.10.9 In terms of Badgers, at present, all the badger setts lie outside of the proposed development areas, so will not be directly impacted by any construction. However, where trenches are left open, a means of escape must be provided.
- 7.10.10 The applicant acknowledges that the predicted loss of approximately 65ha of arable land may result in the loss of some bird territories, in particular Skylark. However, given the high value habitat that the Country Park and hedgerows will provide, it is considered that on balance there will be no significant effect to the birds during the construction phase. In the long-term there is likely to be a significant positive effect on the bird assemblage due to more sensitive management practices, additional nesting opportunities, and the establishment of optimum habitats.
- 7.10.11 With regard to bats it is considered that there will be minimal impact to bat roosts on site. The trees to be removed to allow for site access from North Road are to be re-assessed for bats prior to felling. However, Impacts may occur via construction activities, such as lighting and noise. Depending on the time of year, these impacts may cause a change in bat behaviour and how they move and forage across the site. As these impacts are likely to be temporary (i.e. dusk/dawn) and short term, they are not considered to be significant. Notwithstanding the above, the proposals to create the Country Park and incorporating two green links across the development area will ensure bats can continue to move across the site and create foraging sites.
- 7.10.12 Finally, in assessing the impact on Brown Hare, in the absence of mitigation habitat clearance could not only reduce the availability of habitat for brown hare, it could result in the death/injury to leverets. However, it is considered that the provision of the Country Park would provide a suitable environment for these species and it is considered that the loss of the arable fields will not have significant effect on the population of the species.
- 7.10.13 The use of the Biodiversity Impact Calculator as recommended by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust indicates that there will be a gain to biodiversity, with this achieved for both habitats and linear features. As such, it is considered that the development is ecologically sustainable and meets the requirements of NPPF. The management plan will ensure that this biodiversity value is met and maintained in the long-term. Furthermore, the creation of the Country Park, retention of the majority of hedgerows, trees and plantation woodland across the site and enhancement measures, in the form of incorporating bat tiles and/or tubes and a variety of bird boxes into the design of buildings, will provide additional roosting and nesting opportunities.
- 7.10.14 Having regard to the above assessment and following consultation with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, it is considered that a substantial net gain in biodiversity would occur as part of the development.

7.11 Sustainable Construction and Climate Change

- 7.11.1 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.

7.11.2 The applicant has provided a sustainability statement with the application, including building performance. This indicates that the buildings would be designed to achieve low energy carbon emissions by using passive solar design in order to minimise heat loss in the winter and overheating in the summer by using natural light and ventilation as much as possible. The applicant would look to install appropriate glazing to help manage solar gains and losses. High performance building fabric will be used on the buildings to maximise thermal performance and minimise heat leakages and avoid the need to retro fit renewable energy generators. Other features could be introduced such as using hybrid heating and cooling system, high efficiency LED lighting, intelligent lighting and options. These measures are considered to be appropriate and accord with the Council's sustainability requirements. The precise detail of this would be assessed and secured at the reserved matters stage.

7.11.3 Added to the above and set out elsewhere in this report, it is proposed to create a Country Park and introduce a significant area of native, species-rich hedgerows and around 1.91ha of shrubs and trees will be planted. In addition, the existing hedgerows and shelterbelt will be enhanced and supplemented with additional planting, where necessary. With these measures in place it is considered that the development would help to mitigate against climate change as advised in the NPPF.

7.12 Impact on Archaeological Remains

7.12.1 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"*.

7.12.2 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"*.

7.12.3 As part of the application, archaeological reports were submitted relating to the historic environment. These include an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA), geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation. The latter was conducted in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). The geophysical survey identified anomalies which are thought to represent archaeological remains. These were mainly concentrated in the north-west part of the site and the eastern part of the site. Initially the red line in the plan only included the area of proposed housing in the current planning application. At the time the applicant confirmed that the area to the east beyond the red line has been identified for open space and would not be developed, and simply managed as a green area. However, following a request from HCC for additional information the applicant provided supplementary archaeological

information. This describes in sufficient detail all works that are proposed in the eastern part of the site, the area of proposed open green space.

- 7.12.4 Following an assessment of the information submitted with the application and following further consultation with HCC Historic Environment Advisor, the details submitted are considered to be acceptable, subject to the imposition of conditions.

7.13 Other Matters

Air Quality

- 7.13.1 An Air Quality Assessment and cumulative impact assessment has been carried out to assess the effects of both construction and operation of the proposed development on the application site and surrounding area.

- 7.13.2 This has concluded that there would be the potential for some temporary effects due to dust emissions during the initial construction phase, most particularly for those existing dwellings located close to the northern boundaries of the application site, but such effects would be mitigated through appropriate controls to be agreed with the LPA. The overall effect would be not significant. Additionally, traffic generated by the proposed development and the cumulative developments are considered to have negligible impacts on concentrations of NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} when the development is completed either singularly or collectively. Again the overall effect would not be significant

- 7.13.3 The Air Quality Assessment has been assessed by the Council's Environmental Health Section who are satisfied with the approach taken on air quality and consider that while the development will inevitably have an effect on surrounding air quality, this will be minimal, and commensurate with its size and nature.

Objectively Assessed Need

- 7.13.2 A number of objections have referred to the objectively assessed need. These state that at the time the Local Plan was assessed the population growth in Stevenage between 2011 and 2031 was higher. These comments indicate that The Office for National Statistics is now predicting lower growth of 10.7% over the same period and the growth curve is trending downwards.

- 7.13.3 In response to this, current Government guidance advises that when setting out housing need, the 2014-based ONS household projections should still be used (PPG Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20190220). The use of the older dataset provides stability for planning authorities and communities, ensures that historic under-delivery and declining affordability are reflected, and offers consistency with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

Agricultural Land

- 7.13.4 With respect to the objections raised in respect of the loss of agricultural land, this issue has previously been raised in assessing the allocation of the site in the Local Plan. The Adopted Local Plan Policy HO3 identifies this site as suitable for development, despite the quality of the agricultural land. Insofar as this allocation is primarily on agricultural land, including that of best and most versatile quality, its inclusion in the emerging Local Plan, in the knowledge that it would incur a loss of best and most versatile agricultural land must still be considered consistent with the guidance in NPPF. The benefits of the development outweigh the loss.

Impact on Property Values/Loss of Views.

- 7.13.5 A number of residents have raised concerns about the impact that the development would have on property values. However, despite the concerns raised, it has long been established through planning case law that in the assessment of planning applications, it is the conventional tests of impact on planning policies and amenity harm to neighbouring uses or the character of an area as a whole that is the deciding issue and not any possible consequential effects on nearby property values. Further, there is no evidence that there would be any material effect on existing property values. Similarly, the right to a view is not deemed to be a material planning consideration.

Impact on Heath from Pylons

- 7.13.6 A number of objections have been received expressing concern at the implications for health caused by building developments close to Pylons. Whilst there have been studies undertaken to look into this, there is no firm evidence that electric and magnetic fields are likely to be harmful.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 In summary, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable and would accord with Policy HO3 of the Adopted Local Plan and would provide the necessary infrastructure to secure the delivery of the development. Furthermore, by providing a Country Park on the eastern part of the site and the residential development to the west, it is considered that the proposal would not result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 8.2 In terms of the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings, it has been demonstrated through the Master Plan that the layout of the site incorporating a substantial Country Park and open space to the east that the development would result in less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. This falls at the low end of the less than substantial range. This harm would be significantly outweighed by the public benefits of the proposed development. The Master Plan submitted as part of the application demonstrates that the development can be delivered in a manner which would not harm the character and appearance of the existing built environment which adjoins the site or residential amenity.
- 8.3 Looking at the impact on the highway network, a Transport Assessment has been submitted with the application. This has demonstrated that with the introduction of improvements to the highway network, the development would have an acceptable impact which would not prejudice the safety and operation of the existing road network. With regard to sustainability, through the provision of new cycle and pedestrian connections and the funding of an expanded bus service, the development would be sustainability connected to the wider urban area of Stevenage.
- 8.4 Finally, the development has addressed issues relating to drainage and flooding, ecology, sustainable construction and climate change, and archaeology.
- 8.5 Given the above, the proposed development is considered to accord with the Policies contained within the adopted Local Plan (2019) the NPPF (2019) and PPG (2014).

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:-

- The provision of 30% affordable housing;
- The provision of a 2FE Primary School including nursery provision;
- Indoor sport;
- Secondary Education;
- Library services;
- Youth services;
- Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure;
- Securing of the travel plan and a monitoring fee;
- Trees and Plants from UK nurseries;
- Secure the provision of a maintenance company for the development of the open space and play area;
- Secure the provision of the Country Park and the transfer of the land to SBC;
- A contribution toward the future maintenance of the Country Park;
- Secure a Landscape Management Plan;
- GP Provision;
- Community use agreement to use the school facilities
- Provision of fire hydrants; and
- Associated Section 278 Highway Works.

The detail of which is to be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in liaison with the Council's appointed Solicitor and subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in broadly accordance with the following approved plans: UD01 Rev C, UD02 Rev L, UD03 Rev M, UD04 Rev L, UD05 Rev L, SK21 Rev K, SK28 Rev A, NPA 10651, 300, P02, NPA 10651 702 P03, NPA 10651 504 Rev P02, NSTV-WSP-00-XX-SK-CE-0002 P01.
REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be begun either before the expiration of seven years from the date of this permission, or before the expiration of two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved, whichever is the later.
REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
3. Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the Local Planning Authority before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
4. Approval of the details of the layout, scale, appearance and the landscaping of the site (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be obtained from the Local Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of any part of the development.
REASON:- To comply with the provisions of Regulations 6 and 7 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 2015.
5. No development, including site clearance, shall take place until a phasing plan, identifying the areas of the site to be developed under each phase for the delivery of housing, infrastructure, open space and the Country Park, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the phasing plan.
REASON:- To identify which areas of the site are to be developed at each stage and to ensure that the development is delivered within an acceptable timeframe.

6. No more than 300 properties shall be occupied until a housing and infrastructure phasing plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and assessed in conjunction with the appropriate sewerage and water company to allow additional properties to be occupied. Where a housing and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed, no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed housing 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 so as not to increase the risk of sewage flooding and/or potential pollution incidents.

7. No development shall take place (including any demolition, ground works, site clearance) until a method statement for dealing with ecology at the site prepared in accordance with BS 42020:2013, D.2.2 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The content of the method statement shall include :-

- a) purpose and objectives for the proposed works;
- b) detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including, where relevant, type and source of materials e.g. species in planting schemes and species mixes for wildflower meadow, to be used);
- 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 the works and funding details;
- f) initial aftercare, long-term maintenance, monitoring and requirement for remedial action should management be judged to be failing;
- g) disposal of any wastes arising from works.
- h) Number, model and location of integrated bat and bird boxes in built environment.

The planting works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details in the first planting season relating to the agreed phasing after the approval of the method statement and shall be retained in that manner thereafter and other agreed ecology measures shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved method statement within the first suitably available season relating to the agreed phasing, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In order to improve and enhance biodiversity within the development site and the surrounding so as to offset its impact.

8. No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following:-

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
- b) Identification of biodiversity protection zones.
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In order to improve and enhance biodiversity within the development site and the surrounding so as to offset its impact.

9. No development shall take place, including demolition, ground works and vegetation clearance, until a biodiversity monitoring strategy has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The purpose of the strategy shall be to ensure the implementation and establishment of each of the phases of the proposed Country Park before phased adoption by the Local Planning Authority to encourage a net increase in biodiversity. The content of the Strategy shall include the following:-

- a) Aims and objectives of monitoring to match the stated purpose.
- b) Identification of adequate baseline conditions prior to the start of development.
- c) Appropriate success criteria, thresholds, triggers and targets against which the effectiveness of the various conservation measures being monitored can be judged.
- d) Methods for data gathering and analysis.
- e) Location of monitoring.
- f) Timing and duration of monitoring.
- g) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- h) Review, and where appropriate, publication of results and outcomes.

A report describing the results of monitoring shall be submitted to the local planning authority at intervals identified in the strategy. The report shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed with the local planning authority, and then implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The monitoring strategy will 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.

10. No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted other than with the written consent of the local planning authority. Any proposals for such systems must be supported by an assessment of the risks to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure that the development does not contribute to, is not put at unacceptable risk from, or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants.

11. Piling or any other foundation design using penetrative methods shall not be permitted within the development other than with the express 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 risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To protect groundwater environment, including groundwater. Some piling techniques can cause preferential pathways for contaminants to migrate to groundwater and cause pollution. A piling risk assessment should be submitted with consideration of the EA guidance. This groundwater monitoring programme should incorporate mitigation measures to the adopted design should piling works be noted to be adversely impacting on groundwater quality beneath the site.

12. A scheme for managing any borehole installed within the development for the investigation of soils, groundwater or geotechnical purposes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall provide details of how redundant boreholes are to be decommissioned and how any boreholes that need

to be retained, post-development, for monitoring purposes with be secured, protected and inspected. The scheme as approved shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the Residential Development Plot.

REASON: - To ensure that the development does not contribute to, is not put at unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilise contaminants. This is in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework and adopted local plan policy FP5: Contaminated land.

13. No removal of trees, scrubs or hedges shall be carried out on site between 1st March and 31st August inclusive in any year, unless a pre-works survey of the vegetation to be removed and surrounding vegetation, is undertaken immediately prior to removal by a suitable qualified Ornithologist, and approved confirmed by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- Nesting birds are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As amended).

14. Prior to the commencement of development (including site clearance) a Construction Management Plan for the construction phases shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the works of construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved statement and Hertfordshire County Council's specifications. The Construction Management Plan shall address the following matters:-

- (i) Details of construction phasing programme (including any pre-construction enabling works);
- (ii) Hours of operations including times of deliveries and removal of waste which should avoid school pick up/drop off times;
- (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) The site set-up and general arrangements for storing plant including cranes, materials, machinery and equipment, temporary offices and other facilities, construction vehicle parking and loading/unloading and vehicle turning areas;
- (v) Access and protection arrangements around the site for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users;
- (vi) Details of the provisions for temporary car parking during construction which shall be provided prior to the commencement of construction activities;
- (vii) The location of construction traffic routes to and from the site, details of their signing, monitoring and enforcement measures;
- (viii) Screening and hoarding;
- (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;
- (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 Fishers Green to accommodate construction traffic.
- (xvii) Details of consultation and compliant 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.

REASON:- To minimise the impact of construction vehicles and to maintain the amenity of the local area.

15. The development hereby permitted shall not commence except for works related to the construction of one of the proposed accesses until one of the proposed accesses from the North Road has been constructed to accommodate construction traffic to the minimum standard of base course construction for the first 50 metres and the join to the existing carriageway has been constructed to the current specification of Hertfordshire County Council and to the Local Planning Authority's satisfaction.

REASON: To ensure suitable, safe and satisfactory planning and development of the site.

16. Prior to occupation of the first dwelling the southern access shall be provided, and prior to occupation of the 300th dwelling hereby permitted, the northern vehicular accesses shall be provided and thereafter retained at the position shown on the approved in principle drawing number General Arrangement drawing number NSTV-WSP-00-XX-SK-CE-0002 revision P01. The principal access road shall be provided 6.75 metres wide complete with 10.0 metres radius kerbs. Arrangement shall be made for surface water drainage to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.

REASON: To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway.

17. Prior to the occupation of each phase of development full details (in the form of scaled plans and written specifications) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to illustrate the following:

- i) Roads, footways.
- ii) Cycleways.
- iii) Foul and surface water drainage.
- iv) Visibility splays.
- v) Access arrangements.

- vi) Parking provision in accordance with adopted standard.
- vii) Bus Stops.
- viii) Turning areas.

REASON:- To ensure suitable, safe and satisfactory planning and development of the site in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

18. Prior to the occupation of each phase of the development, the applicant shall submit a Servicing and Delivery Plan. 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 route shall be maintained in accordance with those approved details.

REASON: In the interest of maintaining highway efficiency and safety.

19. Prior to the completion of the primary road as identified on drawing ref: UD02 Rev L, the following passenger transport infrastructure shall be constructed in accordance with a detailed scheme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority:-

The provision of road infrastructure both within the development site and on the wider routes that the proposed public transport services will travel to facilitate delivery of the strategy. This infrastructure shall comprise of but is not limited to the following:

Provide temporary bus stops along North Road during the first phase of the buildout of the development i.e. to serve the dwellings that are not more than 400 metres from the temporary bus stops.

High quality bus stop facilities along the bus service route within the development to include raised height kerbs and shelters that are within 400 metres of all residential areas, Real time information signs at key stops.

The future locations of all bus stops within the development should be determined prior to commencement of works and clearly marked on site during construction of the internal roads to ensure visibility for perspective purchasers.

REASON: To ensure proper management of the revised layout in the interests of highway safety and efficiency.

20. Prior to the first occupation of each phase of the development, full details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in relation to the proposed arrangements for the future management and maintenance of the proposed streets within the development. 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 satisfactory development of the site and to ensure estate roads are managed and maintained thereafter to a suitable and safe standard.

21. Prior to the occupation of each phase of the development, the visibility splays to be provided shall be agreed with Hertfordshire County Council and such splays shall thereafter be maintained at all times free from any obstruction between 600mm and 2.0 metres above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.

- REASON:** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.
22. Prior to the commencement of development a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation of the proposed development site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation.
23. No development shall commence in each phase of the development until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation detailing a programme of archaeological mitigation, as appropriate given the results of the archaeological evaluations, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing.
REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation
24. The development in each phase shall take place in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 23.
REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation
25. The development of each phase shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 24 and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.”
REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation
26. Prior to the occupation of each phase, details of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in that phase to include provision for 10% of the car parking spaces to be designated for plug-in Electric Vehicles have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Electric Vehicle Charge Points shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and thereafter permanently retained.
REASON:- In order to provide facilities to charge electric vehicles and to help reduce the impact of vehicle emissions on the local environment.
27. Prior to the first occupation of the non-residential units to be used within class A3/A4 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 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.
28. 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 shall be used for Use Classes A1 /A2 /A3/ A4/ B1/ D1/ D2 only of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and for no other purposes, unless agreed in writing or approved by way of separate planning permission
REASON:- To protect the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining properties.
29. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved surface water drainage assessment carried out by

Flood and Drainage Technical Note, reference 70061701, dated 15 January 2020 and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

1. Limiting the surface water run-off generated by the critical storm events so that it will not exceed the surface water run-off rate of 23.7 l/s during the 1 in 100 year event plus 40% of climate change event.
2. Providing storage to ensure no increase in surface water run-off volumes for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + climate change event providing a minimum of 20,750 m³ (or such storage volume agreed with the LLFA) of total storage volume in swales, attenuation basin and deep-bore soakaway.
3. Discharge of surface water from the private drain into the Anglian Water sewer network and 25 deep-bore soakaways.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be 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.

30. No development shall take place 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 scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

1. Detailed drainage plan including location of SuDS measures, pipe runs and discharge point.
2. Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including cross section drawings, their size, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs.
3. Detailed, updated post-development calculations/modelling in relation to surface water for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year return period including a + 40% allowance for climate change.
4. Exceedance flow paths for surface water for events greater than the 1 in 100 year including climate change allowance.
5. Final detailed management plan to include arrangements for adoption and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

REASON:-To prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off the site.

31. No development shall take place until a sensitivity study to determine how the existing surface water flow path in the east of the site can be managed has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The sensitivity study should demonstrate a viable method of managing the flow path during storm events up to and including the 1 in 30 year event. The scheme shall subsequently

be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed. The study should consider:

1. Viable method of a positive discharge for the flow path and the proposed discharge rates.
 2. The required attenuation volumes for all return periods up to and including the 1 in 30 year event.
 3. Consultation with the LLFA and LPA regarding any proposals and the requirements they may have. 1. To provide betterment to the existing surface water flow path on site to reduce flood risk in north Stevenage.
REASON:- To provide betterment to the existing surface water flow path on site to reduce flood risk in north Stevenage.
32. No development shall take place within the development parcels on the phasing plan to be submitted pursuant to condition 5, within which the proposed underground cable corridor runs as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan SK21 Rev K, until a scheme, including timetabling, for under grounding the 132Kv overhead power lines and removal and replacement of pylons as shown on this drawing, has been implemented or unless otherwise agreed on writing by the local planning authority.
REASON: The approved parameters plans are based on the assumption that the 132kV overhead power lines will be undergrounded

INFORMATIVES

Hertfordshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority

Any works taking place within and/or over the culvert or within 3m of the top of the bank of the ordinary watercourse will require prior written consent from Hertfordshire County Council regardless of any planning permission. Any works proposed to be carried out that may affect the flow within an ordinary watercourse will require the prior written consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991. This includes any permanent and or temporary works regardless of any planning permission.

Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

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>

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 wilfully 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>

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>

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 38 and 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 noted below:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

Rights of Way: Before commencement of the proposed development, the applicant shall contact Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Service <http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/envplan/countrysideaccess/row/> (Tel: 0300 123 4047, email at row@hertfordshire.gov.uk) to obtain their requirements for the ongoing maintenance of the surface of the Public Right of Way that routes through the site along the proposed development.

The Public Right of Way should remain unobstructed by vehicles, machinery, materials, tools and any other aspects of the construction during works. The safety of the public using the route and any other routes to be used by construction traffic should be a paramount concern during works, safe passage past the site should be maintained at all times. The condition of the route should not deteriorate as a result of these works. Any adverse effects to the surface from traffic, machinery or materials (especially overspills of cement & concrete) should be made good by the applicant to the satisfaction of this Authority. All materials should be removed at the end of the construction and not left on the Highway or Highway verges. If the above conditions cannot reasonably be achieved, then a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order would be required to close the affected route and divert users for any periods necessary to allow works to proceed. A fee would be payable to Hertfordshire County Council for such an order.

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 January 2012 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 February 2019 and Planning Policy Guidance March 2014.