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

**Date:** 26 October 2023

**Author:** Rebecca Elliott

**Lead Officer:** Zayd Al-Jawad

**Contact Officer:** Rebecca Elliott

Application No:	23/00526/RMM
Location:	Land to the North of Stevenage, off North Road and Weston Road, Stevenage.
Proposal:	Application for approval of reserved matters (layout, landscaping, scale, and appearance) for residential development of 243 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels A-C and commercial unit (Use Class E) pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM

Drawing Nos.:

BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5117 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5116 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5115 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5205-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5112 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5113 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5114 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5201-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5100 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5101 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5102 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5103 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5105 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5104 - R04; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-D2-L-5210-A-C06; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7513-Rev C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-DR-L-5215-A-C05; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-DR-L-5216-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-DR-L-5217-A-C05; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5220-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5203-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5202-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5201-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5200-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7514-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7511-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7510-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7405-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-1c-DR-L-5207-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-1c-DR-L-5206-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-1c-DR-L-5205-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5224-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5223-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5221-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1abc-DR-Y-3200-A-C02; 9313-KC-InF-Y; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0160\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0153\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0152\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0151\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0150\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0261\_P2; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0260\_P3; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0251\_P3; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0250\_P2; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0201\_P1; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0200\_P2; SNP-RMA-ZZ-04-DR-A-0103\_P9; SNP-RMA-ZZ-02-DR-A-0102\_P9; SNP-RMA-ZZ-02-DR-A-0101\_P1; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0163\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0162\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0161\_P4; P1708.TH.103; P1708.TH.104; P1708.TH.105; P1708.TH.106; P1708.WB.101; P1708.WB.102; P1708.WB.103; P1708.WB.104; P1708\_BMSA\_01-L; P1708.SS.101 - Rev H; P1708.SS.102 - Rev E; P1708.SS.103 - Rev C; P1708.SS.104 - Rev B; P1708.SS.105 - Rev C; P1708.SUB.102; P1708.TH.101 - Rev A; P1708.TH.102 - Rev B; P1708.PS.102 - Rev A; P1708.PS.106; P1708.PS.103; P1708.PS.104 - Rev A; P1708.PS.105; P1708.RE.101\_A; P1708.RE.102\_A; P1708.RE.103; P1708.RE.104; P1708.RE1.101; P1708.RE1.102; P1708.SA.101 - Rev A; P1708.SA.102; P1708.SC.101; P1708.SC.102; P1708.SC.103; P1708.SC.104; P1708.SRL.0006-C; P1708.PH.106; P1708.PH.107-A; P1708.PH.108; P1708.PhaseP.02-A; P1708.PS.101; P1708.LO.102; P1708.LO.101 - Rev A; P1708.LO.103; P1708.LA.102; P1708.LA.101; P1708.HU.104; P1708.HU.103; P1708.HU.102 - Rev A; P1708.HU.101; P1708.PH.105; P1708.PG.104 - Rev A; P1708.PG.103 - Rev A; P1708.M4A.102; P1708.M4A.101; P1708.M4.104; P1708.M4.103; P1708.M4.102 - Rev A; P1708.M4.101; P1708.M3.102; P1708.M3.101; P1708.M2A.101; P1708.M2.103; P1708.M2.102 - Rev A; P1708.M2.101; P1708.GAR.101; P1708.GAR.102; P1708.GAR.103; P1708.GAR.104; P1708.GAR.105; P1708.GAR.106; P1708.GAR.107; P1708.GAR.108; P1708.GR.101; P1708.GR.102; P1708.HP.101-A; P1708.HP.102; P1708.HP.105; P1708.HP.103; P1708.HA.101 - Rev A; P1708.HA.102; P1708.HA.105; P1708.CO.103; P1708.CO.102; P1708.CO.101 - Rev A; P1708.CH.102; P1708.CH.101; P1708.CA.105 - Rev B; P1708.CA.103 - Rev A; P1708.CA.102 - Rev C; P1708.CA.101 - Rev B; P1708.BR.102 - Rev C; P1708.BR.101 - Rev B; P1708.BM.104; P1708.BM.103; P1708.BM.102; P1708.BM.101; P1708.BLK7.108; P1708.BLK7.107; P1708.BLK7.106; P1708.BLK7.105; P1708.BLK7.104; P1708.BLK7.103; P1708.BLK7.102; P1708.BLK7.101; P1708.BLK6.108 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.107 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.106 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.105 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.104; P1708.BLK5.108 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.103 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.102 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.101 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.107 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.106 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.105 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.104; P1708.BLK5.103 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.102 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.101 - Rev A; P1708.BLK3.108\_A; P1708.BLK3.107\_A; P1708.BLK3.106\_A; P1708.BLK3.105\_A; P1708.BLK3.104; P1708.BLK3.103; P1708.BLK3.102; P1708.BLK3.101; P1708.BLK2.108\_A;

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P1708.01-ZB; P1708.02-N; P1708.12-T P1708.13-Q P1708.14-U  
P1708.15-S P1708.16-R P1708.17-S P1708.18-B; P1708.BIN.102;  
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P1708.BC.102; P1708.B4.102 - Rev A; P1708.B4.101; P1708.B3B.102;  
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P1708.AN1.101 - Rev A; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5109 - R04; BM1-  
OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5110 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5111 -  
R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5204-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1E-DR-C-5401 -  
R06; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5108 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-  
C-5107 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5106 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-  
DR-C-5203-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1E-DR-C-5400 - R06; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-  
DR-C-5200-R07; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5202-R04; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-  
DR-A-0100 P13; P1708.MA.103A; P1708.MA.104A; P1708.MA.105A;  
P1708.MA.106A

Applicant: Bellway Homes (North London) and Miller Homes Ltd

Date Valid: 05 July 2023

Recommendation: APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS.

## 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. This 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 two sets of electricity pylons running through the site, with 132Kv pylons toward the north of the site and 44Kv 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 adopted NHDC local plan for residential development. To the west the site faces onto North Road and the Wrenbridge employment site currently under construction, 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, Granby Road and respective cul-de-sac spur roads. 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 outbuildings 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 and the Green Belt.

## 2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning application 17/00862/OPM granted Outline consent 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. The application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement. The decision was issued on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 following completion of a Section 106 Agreement.
- 2.2 Application 21/01354/FP granted permission for access works (comprising a new access to land to the west of North Road) on North Road, Stevenage in association with the

Employment development on land to the west of North Road. The decision was issued on 1 April 2022.

- 2.3 Application reference 22/00781/RMM is currently being considered for the reserved matters application for the construction of a Country Park including access, layout and landscaping pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM.
- 2.4 Application reference 22/00806/RMM is currently being considered for the approval of reserved matters (layout, landscaping, scale, and appearance) for residential development of 115 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels D pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM.
- 2.5 Application reference 22/00808/RMM for the approval of reserved matters for Site Wide Infrastructure including Highways Infrastructure, Drainage and Surface Water, and Green Infrastructure pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM was approved by members at the committee meeting of 9 February 2023 and the decision was issued on 15 March 2023.
- 2.6 Application reference 22/00810/RMM for the approval of reserved matters (layout, landscaping, scale, and appearance) for residential development of 243 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels A-C and commercial unit (Use Class E) pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM was approved by members at the committee meeting of 9 February 2023 and the decision was issued on 15 March 2023.
- 2.7 Application reference 22/00850/NMA was granted for a non-material amendment to outline planning permission 17/00862/OPM to amend wording of conditions 4, (Approval of Details), 18 (Service and Delivery Plan) and 37 (Power Lines). The decision was issued on 17 October 2022.
- 2.8 Application reference 22/00840/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 36 (Flood Risk) attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM.
- 2.9 Application reference 22/00841/COND for the discharge of condition 14 (Construction Management Plan - Temporary Access) attached to planning permission 17/00862/OPM was approved on 31 March 2023.
- 2.10 Application reference 22/01099/COND for the discharge of conditions 7 (Method Statement Ecology) and 8 (Construction Environmental Management) attached to planning permission 17/00862/OPM was approved on 31 March 2023.
- 2.11 Application reference 23/00013/NOI as a notice of intent to ground the overhead power lines and install two terminal towers under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 and in accordance with the Overhead Lines (Exemption)(England and Wales) Regulations 2009, as permitted development was agreed on 6 February 2023.
- 2.12 Application reference 23/00011/CLPD for a Certificate of Lawfulness (Proposed) for the erection of a 3m high brick wall enclosure around proposed terminal tower 314A (subject to Section 37 of the Electricity Act) adjacent North Road was agreed on 22 February 2023.
- 2.13 Application reference 23/00014/TPTPO for works to trees covered by tree preservation orders to include the cutting back of mixed broadleaf trees (T47-T60) under TPO 71 along Bridleway 022 adjacent to No. 22 North Road and No.11 Granby Road was approved on 24 February 2023.
- 2.14 Application reference 23/00070/COND for the discharge of condition 9 (Biodiversity Monitoring Strategy) attached to planning permission 17/00862/OPM was approved on 11 April 2023.

- 2.15 Application reference 23/00086/TPCA for works to trees sited within the Conservation Area to include works to various mixed broadleaf hedgerows, mixed saplings and Elm saplings within the Conservation Area to provide minimum height clearance of 3.4m to 5.2m and minimum width of 3m to Bridleways 022 and 023 was agreed on 24 February 2023.
- 2.16 Application reference 23/00204/COND for the discharge of condition 6 (housing and infrastructure phasing plan) attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM was approved on 16 May 2023.
- 2.17 Application reference 23/00205/COND for the discharge of condition 22 (Highways infrastructure (d) bus stops) attached to planning permission 17/00862/OPM was approved on 11 April 2023.
- 2.18 Application reference 23/00206/COND for the discharge of conditions 27 (Archaeological trial trench) and 28 (Archaeological Mitigation) attached to planning permission 17/00862/OPM were approved on 04 July 2023.
- 2.19 Application reference 23/00215/COND for the discharge of condition 5 (phasing plan) attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM was approved on 31 May 2023.
- 2.20 Application reference 23/00216/COND for the partial discharge of condition 37 (power lines and pylons) attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM relating only to the technical specifications and general phasing plan was approved on 04 July 2023.
- 2.21 Application reference 23/00310/NMA for a non material amendment of reserved matters (layout, landscaping, scale, and appearance) for residential development of 243 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels A-C and commercial unit (Use Class E) pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM relating to make changes to the external appearance of blocks 1-4 in the local centre to include Juliet balconies and brick detailing; addition of block paving around the play area in the local centre; changes to parking area around block 1; changes to hard surface materials to commercial and rear parking area of block 1; addition of a disabled bay at block 1; erection of a new sub-station; and change in orientation of plots 60-62, 70 and 71 in the Bellway sales area to include change in house type from TH to MA was approved on 31 May 2023.
- 2.22 Application reference 23/00360/NMA is currently being considered for a non material amendment of reserved matters application 22/00808/RMM to amend condition 2 (approved plans) with regards to SuDS basins, drainage layout, planting, hardsurface materials, boundary treatments, landscaping and pedestrian routes.
- 2.23 Application reference 23/00377/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 35 (Drainage Strategy) relating to side wide infrastructure, attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM.
- 2.24 Application reference 23/00378/COND for the discharge of condition 26 (hard surface materials) relating to site wide infrastructure, attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM was approved on 17 July 2023.
- 2.25 Application reference 23/00430/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 35 (Drainage Strategy) relating to Phase 1A-C, attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM (Phase 1A-C).
- 2.26 Application reference 23/00431/NMA for a Non Material Amendment to reserved matters approval reference 22/00810/RMM to replace bay windows with flush windows on some dwellinghouses was approved on 06 July 2023.

- 2.27 Application reference 23/00509/COND for the discharge of condition 26 (Materials) relating to the Bellway Homes plots, attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM was approved on 13 September 2023.
- 2.28 Application reference 23/00529/S106 is currently being considered for the modification of Schedule 2 Clause 2.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7, Schedule 5 Clause 1.2, 1.5 and 2.1.1 and Schedule 7 Clause 2.1 to Section 106 Agreement (dated 01.09.2022) approved under planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM relating to the Country Park clauses.
- 2.29 Application reference 23/00551/COND for the discharge of condition 26 (Hard Surfacing Materials) relating to the Miller Homes plots, attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM was approved on 14 September 2023.
- 2.30 Application reference 23/00656/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 11 (Piling and Foundation) attached to planning permission reference number 17/00862/OPM.
- 2.31 Application reference 23/00667/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 7 (Bat and Swift Boxes) relating to Phase 1A-C attached to reserved matters permission reference number 23/00810/RMM.
- 2.32 Application reference 23/00668/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 13 (External Lighting) relating to Phase 1A-C attached to reserved matters permission reference number 22/00810/RMM.
- 2.33 Application reference 23/00669/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of Condition 14 (External Materials) relating to Phase 1A-C attached to reserved matters permission reference number 22/00810/RMM.

### **3. THE OUTLINE APPLICATION AS APPROVED**

- 3.1 The outline application (reference 17/00862/OPM) was submitted to establish the principle of development at the site, with all matters reserved except for the means of access. The outline proposal sought permission for a 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 outline application was approved with 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, or spine road, forms a loop within the residential developed land between the two main access points. Beyond this, the highway network will extend into the residential parcels to provide permeable access to all parts of the site, including the proposed Country Park. A bus route is provided along the primary access route through the site, with a connection proposed to the neighbouring North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) NS1 designated residential site. The primary access route would also have dedicated cycle and footways, with access off an improved cycleway provision along North Road in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).
- 3.3 The residential development on site would be limited to the western side, with the eastern half of the site providing a fully accessible Country Park. The residential provision is separated into northern and southern parcels, with the primary school and local centre located centrally between. The layout of the developed part of the site accommodates the

440kv electricity pylons within a landscaped corridor running east-west across the site and to the south of the primary school and local centre. The northern 32kv cables within the site would be grounded with terminal towers being provided on the western and eastern parameters of the developed area of the site.

- 3.4 The outline application was approved in September 2022 with the S106 Agreement being signed at the same time. This agreement makes provision for financial and developer contributions towards (but not limited to) primary education, affordable housing, the Country Park, outdoor open space and children's play space, highways works, improved pedestrian and cycle connections along North Road and the NHS.

## **4. RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Following the approval of the outline application, the permission was conditioned such that further details were to be submitted by reserved matters applications for the siting, layout, landscaping and appearance of the development. Four reserved matters applications have been submitted for 1. Infrastructure; 2. Country Park; 3. Residential Phases 1A-C (Including Local Centre parcel); and 4. Residential Phase 1D (Conservation Area Parcel).
- 4.2 Application reference 22/00808/RMM as approved relates to the infrastructure reserved matters (RM) which proposes the main highway network of the spine road and primary spur road connections off the spine road, it also covers all foot and cycleway provision, open space (excluding the Country Park) and landscaping provision within the main non-residential areas of the site, the drainage proposals and the site's play spaces.
- 4.3 The Country Park is being considered under application reference 22/00781/RMM and would provide a 38-hectare accessible open space within Stevenage. The Country Park would be served by a car park and toilet block accessed from the proposed residential development to the north of the site. This area of development known as and referred to as Phase 2 is due to come forward as a RM within the second quarter of 2023. Access to the Country Park is shown on the respective infrastructure plan of the current infrastructure RM application. The Country Park also includes provision of two drainage attenuation basins, perimeter and other footpaths/cycleways, and furniture.
- 4.4 The developed area of the site is distinguished largely in two parts, the western and northern areas, known as Phases 1A-C, parcel C being the local centre, and then the eastern Phase 1D which is the area contained within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. All parcels in Phase 1 would equate to a total of 358 dwellings, which includes a provision of flats in the local centre, and larger aspirational homes in the Conservation Area. The Phase 1A-C residential area which excludes the Conservation Area has been approved under references 22/00810/RMM, with Phase 1d (the Conservation Area) still being considered under reference 22/00806/RMM.
- 4.5 The residential RM applications include all areas of open space and landscaping not contained in the infrastructure application; secondary roads and cul-de-sacs; parking areas; communal areas; cycle stores and bin stores (where appropriate).

## **5. THE CURRENT APPLICATION**

- 5.1 The current application is a re-submission of planning permission 22/00810/RMM for the erection of 243 dwellings, the provision of the local centre including commercial uses (Use Class E), all highways matters outside of the infrastructure application, landscaping and

boundary treatments contained within the western residential parcels Phase 1 A-C. This does not include any of the land within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area.

- 5.2 The current application, reference 23/00526/RMM, proposes changes to the approved scheme which include –
- Revised design of the local centre blocks 1 and 4, including a new public plaza and decking area overlooking the open space to the west;
  - Revised car parking layout within the local centre:
  - Minor highway changes to local centre road;
  - Inclusion of changes approved under reference 23/00310/NMA;
  - Inclusion of changes approved under reference 23/00431/NMA.
- 5.3 Parcel 1A is contained to the south western corner of the site, and would be viewed on the right-hand side of the site when entering off the southern North Road access junction. The parcel would extend along a stretch of the spine road, with vehicular access provided off three southerly directed spur roads. The first spur would turn a corner where it meets the PROW (Public Right of Way) on the southern boundary and would extend westwards following the line of the PROW where it turns 90 degrees to proceed northwards into a private driveway. The second spur would form an upside down 'T' at the PROW boundary with private driveways extending off the western and eastern arms. The third spur would be sited adjacent to a green link running from the spine road to the PROW. This spur would continue approximately two thirds of the length of the green link, finishing at a turning point.
- 5.4 This parcel of residential development proposes a mixture of houses and two blocks of flats (blocks 5 and 6) located at the junctions of the spur roads discussed above, creating gateway buildings. The houses would be a mixture of detached and semi-detached dwellings with either garages and driveways or allocated parking spaces. The properties would have modest frontages and policy compliant rear gardens.
- 5.5 The green link would provide a 3m wide shared surface for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as landscaped areas and a Local Play Area (LAP). This feature is being considered as part of the infrastructure application (reference 22/00808/RMM). East of the green link is Parcel 1B, the largest of the three parcels' proposed in this application. The area extends eastwards towards the conservation area and parcel 1D (reference 22/00806/RMM) and extending slightly north east around the south eastern corner of the spine road. Beyond this to the north is the eastern section of the main green corridor being considered as part of the infrastructure application.
- 5.6 Parcel 1B would also have vehicular access off three spur roads, two initially heading southwards and the third and most eastern spur extending east before turning to head southwards. The first and second spur roads have additional tertiary roads that extend off of them with a west to east connection joining the two together. Leading off this west to east link would be two southerly directed spurs which would also have upside 'T' designs with private driveways off each side.
- 5.7 The second/middle spur road mentioned forms part of the infrastructure application as a primary road and would continue into Parcel D which is sited within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. To the east of Parcel 1B is a second green link, longer in



length and provides a footway with tree planting to provide shade and several benches. This green link would provide a landscaped buffer between this phase and Phase 1D to the east.

- 5.8 The residential units that make up Parcel 1B would predominantly be terraced and semi-detached, with some detached properties proposed. One block of apartments (block 7) is proposed on the corner of the eastern green link sitting opposite block 6 in Parcel 1A. Properties would have similar modest frontages and policy compliant rear gardens. Parking arrangements include garages and driveways, tandem driveways, allocated parking spaces and small car parking courtyards for the apartment blocks.
- 5.9 The local centre is sited to the west of the central area of the developed part of the site. To the west is the green space adjacent to North Road and between the two access junctions approved as part of the outline permission. The local centre is accessed via its own spur connection road linking the main spine road from north to south. The area would consist of four buildings (blocks 1-4), with blocks 1 and 4 located to the west of the road, and blocks 2 and 3 to the east. This area is referred to as Parcel 1C. To the north east of this parcel is the local centre local equipped area of play (LEAP), local play area (LAP), multi-use games area (MUGA) and Skate Park being considered under the infrastructure reserved matters application.
- 5.10 Blocks 1 and 4 would consist of commercial uses at the ground floor, with some residential and then two floors of residential two-bedroom apartments above (building total of three storeys). Blocks 2, 3 and 4 would be solely residential offering one and two-bedroom flats over three storeys. Parking would now be provided in a larger parking area predominantly to the north of the buildings, and behind the grounding tower. Some parking would be to the south outside block 4. The parking on this western side of the road remains allocated to either retail or residential. The parking to blocks 2 and 3 sits to the front of both blocks, with external private amenity space proposed to one side of each block. A newly proposed public plaza is proposed between blocks 1 and 4.

## **6. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

- 6.1 As a major planning application the proposal has been publicised by way of letters to adjoining and nearby premises, as well as all third-party contributors from application 17/00862/OPM and 22/00810/RMM respectively, the erection of site notices and a press notice. Following this publicity, the below comments have been received –

18 Friars Road -

This will generate too much traffic through our village of Weston with the roads already being a high speed cut through and unsafe for children especially.

3 Underwood Road -

As the main application is agreed despite the huge amount of local objection there is little that remains to be voiced into the abyss that is the planning application system.

However, my main objections with the clearly well thought out plans is to ask why there appear to be laybys planned for the estate.

Laybys in my experience as a civil engineer and as a Stevenage resident only serve to host, car for sale, caravans, or unused sandwich wagons. Unless policed or 'noticed' they are simply a place to dump any vehicle without fear of fine.

15 Thurlow Close -

In relation to application 23/00526/MM, we would like to express our objection to the proposed plans for the following reasons:

1. Insufficient Parking: The parking arrangements, particularly for block 4, do not provide enough spaces for the residents, without any provision for casual parking. This will cause inconvenience and may result in unauthorized parking within the development.

2. Overcrowded Local Center Development: The proposed development for the local center appears cramped and overcrowded, with the two blocks tightly clustered together. This will have a negative impact on the overall aesthetic and functionality of the area, as well as the residents' quality of life. We also have concerns about the potential for overlooking between the buildings.

3. Incompatibility with Residential Development: This development is primarily intended for residential purposes, yet the large area allocated for parking resembles that of a retail park, which is not suitable for this context.

We kindly request that these issues be carefully considered and addressed accordingly. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

## **7. CONSULTATIONS ON THE ORIGINAL APPLICATION**

### **7.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority**

7.1.1 HCC highways were initially concerned about the interim (the temporary bellmouths to the sales area) before their reinstatement, as to the provision for the previously agreed continuous route and priority for pedestrians. However, a 4 October 2023 email from the transport consultants Odyssey to the Local Planning Authority, Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) confirmed that the temporary accesses are to be designed/constructed “much like where a residential driveway crosses a footway and the same access to the local centre apartment blocks 2 and 3 parking court” and “the shared footway / cycleway will maintain the priority along this route”. Therefore, HCC Highways withdraws its holding objection to the discharge of the Reserved Matter Application (RMA) for Phase 1 (Parcels A-C) of the permitted development (17/00862/OPM).

7.1.2 The previous 28 July 2023 response from HCC Highways also bulleted a number of points from the HCC Strategic Development Implementation team that will need to be addressed but it has been agreed with SBC that these items can be addressed in the S278 process and there is no need to prevent discharge of this RMA.

7.1.3 HCC as Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Note (AN) / highway informative to ensure that any works within the highway are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Act 1980:

7.1.4 AN1) Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the County Council website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

- 7.1.5 AN2) Obstruction of highway: 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 County Council website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.
- 7.1.6 AN3) Debris and deposits on the highway: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit compost, dung or other material for dressing land, or any rubbish on a made up carriageway, or any or other debris on a highway to the interruption of any highway user. 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 and use thereafter are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available by telephoning 0300 1234047.
- 7.1.7 AN4) Avoidance of surface water discharge onto the highway: The applicant is advised that the Highway Authority has powers under section 163 of the Highways Act 1980, to take appropriate steps where deemed necessary (serving notice to the occupier of premises adjoining a highway) to prevent water from the roof or other part of the premises falling upon persons using the highway, or to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, surface water from the premises flowing on to, or over the footway of the highway.
- 7.1.8 AN5) Works within the highway (section 278): The applicant is advised that in order to comply with this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. The construction of such works must be undertaken to the satisfaction and specification of the Highway Authority, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements. Further information is available via the County Council website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.
- 7.1.9 AN6) Roads to remain private: The applicant is advised that the new roads marked on the submitted plans (BM1-OC-RMA-XX-DR-C-2025 Rev 06) associated with this development will remain unadopted (and shall not be maintained at public expense by the highway authority). At the entrance of the new estate the road name plate should indicate that it is a private road and the developer should put in place permanent arrangements for long-term maintenance.
- 7.1.10 AN7) The Public Right of Way(s) should remain unobstructed by vehicles, machinery, materials, tools and any other aspects of the construction during works. Safe passage past the site should be maintained at all times for the public using this route. 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 overflows of cement & concrete) should be made good by the applicant to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority. No materials shall be stored or left on the Highway including Highway verges. If the above conditions cannot reasonably be achieved, then a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) would be required to close the affected route and divert users for any periods necessary to allow works to proceed, for which a fee would be payable to Hertfordshire County Council. Further information is available via the County Council website at

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/countryside-access/rights-of-way/rights-of-way.aspx> or by contacting Rights of Way, Hertfordshire County Council on 0300 123 4047.

- 7.1.11 AN8) Abnormal loads and importation of construction equipment (i.e. large loads with: a width greater than 2.9m; rigid length of more than 18.65m or weight of 44,000kg - commonly applicable to cranes, piling machines etc.): The applicant is directed to ensure that operators conform to the provisions of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 in ensuring that the Highway Authority is provided with notice of such movements, and that appropriate indemnity is offered to the Highway Authority. Further information is available via the Government website [www.gov.uk/government/publications/abnormal-load-movements-application-and-notification-forms](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/abnormal-load-movements-application-and-notification-forms) or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

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

- 7.2.1 The LLFA notes there have been amendments to the design and layout of the Local Centre, principally of apartment blocks 1 and 4 which front onto North Road (situated within Phase 1 Parcel C). As a result of the changes, there has been a minor increase in the floorspace from 659sqm to 661.5 sqm. The LLFA notes that the remainder of the parcels (1A, 1B and blocks 2 and 3 within Parcel 1C) remain as approved under application reference 22/00810/RMM (and as subsequently varied by non-material amendments 23/00310/NMA, dated 31 May 2023, and 23/00431/NMA, dated 30 June 2023). It appears that there may be additional permeable paving areas to offset this, however, the LLFA still expects all of the information to come forward that we have previously requested in our response to application reference 23/00360/NMA (19 September 2023) and to our Discharge of Conditions responses for application references 23/00430/COND (Condition 35 – Drainage Strategy for Phase 1 Parcels 1A-C, 19 September 2023) and 23/00377/COND (Condition 35 – Drainage Strategy for the Site Wide Infrastructure, 20 September 2023).

## **7.3 Council's Conservation Advisor BEAMS**

- 7.3.1 BEAMS has no further comments on this amended application which entails changes to the design of the local centre.

## **7.4 Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way**

- 7.4.1 No comments received at the time of drafting this report.

## **7.5 Council's Arboricultural Manager**

- 7.5.1 No further comments to add.

## **7.6 Council's Parks and Amenities / Green Spaces**

- 7.6.1 No further comments to add.

## **7.7 Historic England**

- 7.7.1 This is for the reserved matters pursuant to the outline planning permission 17/00862/OPM to include layout, scale, landscaping detailed design. The application site lies partially within the Lane and St Nicholas Conservation area and also within the setting of various listed buildings including the Church of St Nicholas (grade II\*), Rook's Nest House (grade I) and The Bury (grade II\*).

- 7.7.2 We provided a response to the outline planning application in 2018, where we raised various concerns to do with the density and layout of the development. We concluded that the proposed development would erode the essential open character of the landscape and diminish the sense of rural place that contributes to the experience and understanding of those heritage assets identified. We judged that the development would result in a level of less than substantial harm in NPPF terms and suggested that the harm might be mitigated by a more sensitive and contextual design approach and a reduction in density. We appreciate that the application was subsequently approved and that the principle of development of this site has therefore been established, however we remain concerned that the density and general design and appearance of the development would have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting as well as the setting of the listed buildings referenced above.
- 7.7.3 We previously advised that consideration should be given to incorporating a more vernacular form and design to the development using good quality local materials to better reflect the rural character of this historic area of Stevenage. We also advised that a reduced density on the southern portion of the site could help to mitigate the negative visual effects of the development and would help to avoid the creation of a suburban estate with standard house types. We are therefore disappointed to note that the submitted drawings show standard housing types that are laid out and arranged in unimaginative street patterns, and which seem to have much in common with the residential development that lies to the south-west of the site.
- 7.7.4 As per our previous advice we do not believe that this design approach is at all appropriate to the prevailing rural character, or that it best reflects the character and appearance of the conservation area. We are conscious that the density has been set by way of the approved parameter plans as part of the outline permission and this is somewhat regrettable. However we believe that the visual effect and impact could be improved if the generic estate design and layout was eschewed in favour of a more considered approach that created a greater sense of identity and place.
- 7.7.5 We therefore suggest that a scheme where buildings were arranged more informally around high-quality, functioning, landscaped spaces, and where the landscaping and planting was the defining characteristic rather than the houses, would be a more appropriate solution. Greater thought should also be given to the way that the scheme layout can help traffic management and car parking throughout the development so as to avoid any sense of busy suburban streets where the car takes priority over the pedestrian and dominates the neighbourhood(s). The design and appearance of the road surfaces and walkways will also be an important factor in ensuring that this can be achieved, as we previously advised.
- 7.7.6 *Policy context*  
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the planning system (paragraphs 7, 8, 10 and 11) which also identifies protection of the historic environment as an important element of achieving sustainable development. Further policy principles relating to the historic environment are set out in Chapter 16 of the NPPF.
- 7.7.7 In particular, it emphasises the importance of conserving heritage assets, which are an irreplaceable resource, in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (NPPF paragraph 189). Paragraph 194 states that 'in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.

7.7.8 Paragraph 195 requires the LPA to 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). This policy also says that the significance of the heritage assets ‘should be taken into account ‘when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset. Paragraph 197 requires local planning authorities to take account of the desirability of new developments making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

7.7.9 Paragraph 199 requires the planning authorities to place ‘great weight’ on the conservation of designated heritage assets, and states that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be, ‘this is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance’.

Paragraph 200 States 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’.

7.7.10 Paragraph 202 states 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.

#### 7.7.11 *Historic England’s Position*

We are unconvinced that the detailed design and layout of the proposed development has taken full account of the sensitivities of the historic environment and the nearby heritage assets. We believe that a more sympathetic solution is possible that better preserves the setting of the heritage assets and the conservation area as discussed above. We therefore urge you to seek specialist design guidance from your in-house conservation specialists and negotiate a revised scheme of development that achieves these aims.

#### Recommendation

7.7.12 Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 189, 197, 199 200, 202 of the NPPF.

7.7.13 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.

### 7.8 **Environment Agency**

7.8.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

### 7.9 **Thames Water**

7.9.1 Thank you for consulting Thames Water on this planning application. Having reviewed the details, we have no comments to make at this time. Should the details of the application change, we would welcome the opportunity to be re-consulted.

### 7.10 **Affinity Water**

7.10.1 No comments received at time of drafting this report.

### 7.11 **Anglian Water**

7.11.1 No comments received at time of drafting this report.

## 7.12 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

7.12.1 No objections

## 7.13 UK Power Networks

7.13.1 No comments received at time of drafting this report.

# 8. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

## 8.1 Background to the Development Plan

8.1.1 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).

## 8.2 Central Government Advice

8.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in September 2023. This largely made minor corrections to the earlier July 2021 version and revised policy with respect to onshore windfarms. The Council are content that the policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan should be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications. The NPPF provides that proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay (para.11) and that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted (para.12). This indicates the weight which should be given to an up to date development plan, reflecting the requirements of section 38(6) of the 2004 Act. The NPPF and the PPG, with which Members are fully familiar, are both material considerations to be taken into account in determining this application.

8.2.2 Since November 2018, housing delivery has been measured against the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) as set out by the Government planning policy and guidance. The results of the HDT dictate whether a local planning authority should be subject to consequences to help increase their housing delivery. Where an authority's HDT score is less than 85% of its housing requirement, the Council must incorporate a 20% buffer into its housing supply calculations in line with paragraph 73 of the NPPF. Where an authority's score is below 75%, the Council will be subject to the HDT's most severe penalty and must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The latest HDT results, published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (**now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)**) in January 2022 (DLUHC have not yet published the HDT results for 2022), identifies that Stevenage delivered 79% of its housing requirement which is above the 75% requirement. However, this is still less than 85%. Consequently, Stevenage Borough Council must include the 20% buffer in its 5 year housing land supply calculations, which it already does.

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

how to improve housing delivery. Consequently, Stevenage Borough Council has recently published its Action Plan (July 2022) to demonstrate how it seeks to maintain the supply of housing:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/monitoring/housing-delivery-test-action-plan-2022.pdf>

- 8.2.4 Turning to 5 year housing land supply, the Council recently published an Addendum Report in May 2022. The report set out that the Borough Council could demonstrate a housing supply of 5.91 years (including 20% buffer) for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027. However, since the Land West of Lytton Way appeal was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate for a development of 576 residential units (Appeal Reference: APP/K1935/W/20/3255692), the Council's Policy Department has confirmed the Council can now demonstrate a housing supply of 6.68 years (including 20% buffer).
- 8.2.5 The Council will also be commencing preliminary work into a potential review of its Local Plan, last adopted in May 2019. This is to ensure the policies within the Local Plan are up to date in accordance with the NPPF as well as ensuring the Council is delivering a sufficient supply of housing and employment.

### **8.3 Planning Practice Guidance**

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

### **8.4 Adopted Local Plan (2019)**

- 8.4.1 The policies set out below are relevant in the determination of this application:

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;  
Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage;  
Policy SP4: A Vital Town Centre;  
Policy SP5: Infrastructure;  
Policy SP6: Sustainable transport;  
Policy SP7: High quality homes;  
Policy SP8: Good design;  
Policy SP9: Healthy communities;  
Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution;  
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment;  
Policy SP13: The historic environment;  
Policy 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 NH8: North Stevenage Country Park;  
Policy NH10: Conservation areas;  
Policy TC11: New convenience retail provision.

## **8.5 Supplementary Planning Documents**

Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document October 2020  
Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2023.  
The Impact on Biodiversity SPD 2021  
Developer Contributions SPD 2021

## **8.6 Community Infrastructure Levy**

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

## **9. APPRAISAL**

9.1 The principle of the development of this site to provide up to 800 dwellings, a primary school, local centre, landscaped communal amenity spaces, highways, drainage and utilities have been established with the grant of outline planning permission which has also considered and agreed the means of access to the site from North Road.

9.2 Furthermore, reserved matters (layout, landscaping, scale and appearance) details pertaining to Phase 1A-C have already been approved under planning reference 22/00810/RMM for the erection of 243 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels A-C and commercial unit (Use Class E) pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM. The current application is for the same proposal, site area and number of dwellings. The changes being considered relate to a revised design of the local centre blocks 1 and 4 and seek to include revisions agreed under non-material amendment to 22/00810/RMM. Whilst the following report will look at the whole scheme again, the principle of developing this area of the site has already been established and thus the points above are the main emphasis of this application.

9.3 The main issues for consideration now are the visual impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area, impact of the development on the conservation area, impact upon neighbouring amenities, impact upon future amenities of residents, parking provision, highway implications, development and flood risk, impact on the environment, trees and landscaping, and ecology.

9.4 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

## **9.5 North of Stevenage Policy**

9.5.1 The site has two site specific policies that should be identified as key elements throughout the consideration of each RM application, and it must be ensured that all the RM's can be read in conjunction and don't contradict each other.

9.5.2 Policy HO3: North of Stevenage defines the boundary of the site and identifies its allocation for the development of approximately 800 dwellings. The policy states that 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) At least 30% affordable housing is provided in line with Policy HO7;
- g) Provision for supported or sheltered housing is provided in line with Policy HO10;
- h) Local facilities to serve the community are incorporated, including a GP surgery;
- 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 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 visual impact of development;
  - ii. Existing hedgerows should be maintained and additional screening implemented to reduce 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,
  - vi. Building styles and layout 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; and
- o) An appropriate buffer around existing power lines is incorporated.

9.5.3 Policy NH8: North Stevenage Country Park states that 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 and purposes of the existing policy designations.

9.5.4 Given the nature of this RM proposing the residential parcels A-C of Phase 1, Policy NH8 is not relevant in this case as matters pertaining to the Country Park are being considered under application reference 22/00781/RMM.

## **9.6 Visual impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area.**

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

- 9.6.2 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF sets out a number of requirements for new development, including that development:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of an area;
  - is visually attractive as a result of good architecture; layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
  - is sympathetic to local character and history;
  - establishes or maintains a strong sense of place;
  - optimises the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
  - creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 9.6.3 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF places great importance on the role of trees in helping to shape quality, well designed places “Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change”.
- 9.6.4 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that applicants “should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take into account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot”.
- 9.6.5 Policy SP8 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability which can deliver substantial improvements to the image and quality of the town’s built fabric. Policy GD1 of the Local Plan generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.
- 9.6.6 Policy HO3: North of Stevenage requires high quality not just in the provision of homes on site, but in the green spaces and landscaping and through sustainability of pedestrian and cycleway movements throughout the site.
- 9.6.7 The National Design Guide (2019) which was published by National Government is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It sets out that Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However, good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include:
- the context for places and buildings;
  - hard and soft landscape;
  - technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and
  - social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.
- 9.6.8 A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:
- the layout;
  - the form and scale of buildings;
  - their appearance;
  - landscape;
  - materials; and
  - their detailing.

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

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

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

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

9.6.11 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. Furthermore, the newly adopted revision of the Stevenage Design Guide (2023) has been updated to reflect the ten characteristics above and re-emphasises the need for high quality design and development.

9.6.12 The application seeks to provide 243 residential units in the southern half of the site (excluding the conservation area). Phase 2 would cover the northern half of the site, everything north of the spine road, local centre and primary school site. It is envisaged this Phase will undergo pre-application negotiations later this year before an application(s) is submitted. In addition to Phase 1A-C's provision of dwellings, Phase 1D is being considered under planning application reference 22/00806/RMM for 115 units, taking the total for Phase 1 up to 358 dwellings.

#### Layout

9.6.13 The layout of Phase 1 has emerged and been influenced by the approved parameter plans from the outline permission and following pre-application advice. It is considered the scheme has adapted positively as a result. The layout is informed by the infrastructure layout with much of the core area laid out for the primary school site and to address the constraints on site, namely the southern line of overhead lines and pylons which would sit within the central green corridor. Beyond this the site is split between the southern and northern parcels for residential development. The southern parcel, is then split further by the conservation area covering much of the eastern half of the site, including the area proposed as the Country Park.

9.6.14 The layout is further predicated on the existing public rights of way (PROW) that intersect the site. ROW numbers 22, 105 and 18 run along the southern boundary of the site from its western entrance off North Road to the east where it finishes within the site at the churchyard and continues through the church yard to Weston Road. Heading northwards from the intersection of 105 and 18 is ROW 17, and at an intersection along ROW 18 where the

properties of Mathews Close finish, ROW 23 travels north and then bears 90 degrees west where it meets ROW 17 before bearing 90 degrees to the right to head northwards up towards ROW numbers 7 and 8 which are located in North Herts, providing connections north and north west.

- 9.6.15 The PROW are retained on site and the layout includes these within the green link areas, creating breaks within the built form through landscaped grass areas, or dense tree belts. Further green links are proposed creating new connections north to south from the spine road to the southern PROW, further increasing walking and cycling routes within the site and to the wider area. The residential parcels are then set within these links and work around shared surface roads and shared private driveways to reduce the priority levels given to the motor vehicle.
- 9.6.16 The residential units form patterns of units i.e. perimeter blocks which sit so that rear gardens are contained together facing inwards, with frontages facing outwards on the main boundaries and inner roads. This creates good surveillance in the area and prevents rear boundaries from being prominent in the street scene.
- 9.6.17 The layout and siting of the buildings has also been considered such that taller buildings are placed furthest from existing dwellings (to the south), within the Main Street and Local Centre. This provides a key distinctive character to this part of the new development, with lower density and scale dwellings proposed in the more sensitive areas.

#### Character Areas

- 9.6.18 The residential units have been designed to have character areas, to bring a mixture of features and materials forward, whilst respecting the context of the site with existing developments nearby and proximity to the Conservation Area. These character areas are presented in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) submitted in support of the application. This document outlines the design progression including site context and surrounding architecture.
- 9.6.19 The character areas follow on from the outline permission, informing the site layout, helping to provide legibility and a sense of place when travelling by foot, cycle or car. These areas are intended to have an individual personality and inform the scale, design and material treatment of the buildings proposed, creating appropriately individual senses of place and establishing a defined hierarchy of built form throughout the site. The character areas are identified as –
- Main Street and Local Centre (blue)
  - Green Edge (green)
  - The Neighbourhood (red)
  - St Nicholas' End (brown)



9.6.20 It is of note that the St Nicholas' End character area will not be discussed as part of this application as it refers to parcel 1D and is considered in its own right under planning reference 22/00806/RMM.

#### 9.6.21 Main Street and Local Centre

9.6.21.1 These character areas cover the houses in parcels A and B which front onto the main spine road and road which enters the site from the southern access junction off North Road. It also covers the local centre. This character area focuses on the entrance to the new development and brings modern features to the street scene. The properties are predominantly 2.5 and 3 storey townhouses and apartment blocks (blocks 5, 6 & 7). The area benefits from views over the central green corridor open space which includes the attenuation ponds. The character area is the central spine running through the development and fronts on to the tree lined spine road.

9.6.21.2 The modern design principles for the Main Street and Local Centre character area include the use of buff brick and white render, along with grey roof tiles. The fenestration would be contemporarily styled with full length glazing and finished in Anthracite grey. No window heads or cills are proposed to emphasise the modern design. The dwellings would have front or side facing gable roofs, with some properties incorporating small flat roof dormers in the roofscape. Porch details would be flat roofed. The approved details under reference 22/00810/RMM included some flat roof bay window features, however application 23/00431/NMA sought to remove some of these features due to conflict with building regulations requirements. Therefore, where necessary these bay windows have been removed as part of this application to ensure this application incorporates the most up to date plans.

#### 9.6.22 Green Edge

9.6.22.1 The green edge character area covers the southerly section of both parcels A and B, those areas closest to the PROW running along the southern boundary and the existing neighbouring developments off the Granby Road estate. This area takes note of its

landscaped setting overlooking open spaces and the PROW running through the site. The area is made up of 2 storey detached and semi-detached dwellings at a low to medium density. The houses would have parking by way of private driveways, with garages also provided set back to the side of the properties. The properties in this character area are accessed from the finish points of each spur road, via shared surface or private driveway.

9.6.22.2 The design of the dwellings in the Green Edge character area are traditional in appearance, including features such as pitched roof bay windows, boarding and pitched porch coverings. The materials palette includes traditional red brick with contrasting dark red brick detail brick, single brick band and quoins, gauged brick heads and stone cills to windows, and plain red or brown roof tiles. Properties would have front to back or hipped roof forms. Windows would be finished in UPVC casement windows with a mid-bar and in white.

#### 9.6.23 The Neighbourhood

9.6.23.1 The Neighbourhood character area is a blend of the Main Street and Green Edge areas. Properties form the middle sections of the parcels on the secondary and tertiary streets. Predominantly 2 storeys in height, the properties are a mix of detached, semi-detached and small rows of terraces. The layout of the dwellings is informal with different set-back distances from the shared surface roads. Parking provision is typically to the side/rear of the dwellings, with some parking bays to the front of properties in certain areas.

9.6.23.2 The elevations are more traditional in style but modern features proposed within the Main Street character area are incorporated, including flat roof porch canopies and bay windows. This character area has a mixed materials palette to take account of the transition between Main Street and the green Edge. Red brick is proposed for the elevations, with use of grey weatherboarding at first floor. The windows would have gauged heads but no cills are proposed. The roof scape would be a mixture of front to back, gabled and hipped finished in red or grey tiles. Plain upvc white casements are proposed.

#### Parcel 1C Local Centre

9.6.24 Proposed in three parcels, starting with the local centre located within the 'central' core of the site, this area would provide four blocks of apartments, with blocks 1 and 4 providing commercial space on the ground floor (approved with retail just in block 1). Each block would be three storeys in height.

9.6.25 Looking specifically at the revised designs of blocks 1 and 4 firstly, the amended design relocates the main retail floorspace across the two blocks and predominantly on the southern and northern elevations respectively, facing onto a newly proposed public plaza between the two buildings. Block 1 would still be sited to the north of the area, with block 4 due south of this. The revised designs incorporate a greater modern feel and vernacular with contemporary looking gable roof sections connected with flat roof elements, vertical framed fenestration with some flush Juliet balcony style railings and a mixture of brick types/colour to bring a visual contrast across the elevations particularly between the residential and retail areas.

9.6.26 The amended design of these blocks is considered to propose a much greater aesthetic and design concept in comparison to the approved scheme. The introduction of a public plaza between the two buildings allows the proposed retail units to open onto a purely pedestrianised area to the benefit of future businesses and users, as opposed to the approved design which opened onto the perimeter pathway of the approved buildings and next to areas of parking. Whilst the approved building is considered good design, the further impact of this proposal on creating an area with better use capacity for future residents is a big positive and helps integrate the nearby green open space to the west by proposing a deck canopy and stepped access to the open space. Bin and cycle storage has now been integrated into the building footprint rather than having external outbuildings in the street frontage.

- 9.6.27 Bin and cycle storage would be contained in the building at ground floor on the northern side of the block. Parking was previously approved along the eastern frontages of the buildings and to the northern side of block 1. The proposed plans would see a larger level of this parking provided to the north between the northern access and spine road and block 1. Additional landscaping has been provided within this area and the parking has been separated out between residents and retail for management. Residential parking would also be provided to the front of block 4 for these residents and a small amount of retail parking, including disabled spaces, would be immediately to the east of the plaza area.
- 9.6.28 On the eastern side of the local centre link road, blocks 2 and 3 are located adjacent to the primary school site and south of the proposed school access and LEAP, LAP, MUGA and Skate Park which are located to the northeast of the local centre. Both blocks are of the same design and layout, with block 2 facing southwards towards block 3. The two are slightly offset with block 3 located towards the west and block 2 towards the east. The proposed amenity spaces for each block on their respective open sides. Parking for both blocks would be located in one large communal area between the two buildings. Landscaping is proposed to the frontage of both blocks and around the perimeter of areas of the parking courts by way of hedging and tree planting and both amenity areas have tree planting and grass lawns.
- Parcel 1A
- 9.6.29 Parcel 1A incorporates dwellings from all three of the character areas, either facing onto the main spine road, the southern right of way or the secondary roads contained within the middle of the residential areas. The house types as identified in the character areas would include front to back roofs with side gables, or front gable roofs, either 2, 2.5 or 3 storeys high depending on the character area they fall in. The apartment blocks proposed would fall within the Main Street character area and face onto the main spine road.
- 9.6.30 These blocks would be an inverted 'L' shape wrapping around the corner of the spur road junction at which they are proposed. Their form is simplistic and modern with use of render and full height glazing to bring interest. Bin and cycle storage is either contained as part of the building or located in a detached outbuilding. Each block would have private amenity space to the south and rear along with dedicated car parking.
- 9.6.31 The landscape of the area incorporates hedging for property frontages, in particular along the main spine road to create a green and landscape driven development. The properties are laid out to create small shared private driveways off the shared surface highways proposed, with the parking predominantly to the sides of dwellings or the rear of apartment blocks. As such the visual appearance of the streets created is aesthetically pleasing to the eye.
- 9.6.32 Tree planting is proposed in front and rear gardens, or within tree pits in public areas such as near visitor parking bays, between parking areas or in verges, providing height in the landscaping and also pockets of shade in the street. The landscaping proposal would also tie in well with those of the green links and PROW boundaries as proposed in the infrastructure plans.
- 9.6.33 The development parcels have been designed to be small pockets of dwellings of apartment blocks set around a core green area made up of the rear gardens or communal areas. Visually this reduces the level of boundary treatments for rear gardens being seen within the street scene, and where corner plots would have some level of boundary treatment facing the road this is well landscaped to provide a level of screening against any hard finish.
- 9.6.34 The current application incorporates minor amendments already approved through the non-material amendment process, to encapsulate the most up to date plans in one application for future build out. As such, the plans show the amended temporary sales areas located within Phase 1A and accessed off the main entrance road, off the southern junction as agreed under



23/00310/NMA. This amendment includes revised access points off this road, with revised parking areas and ales home access points also.

#### Parcel 1B

- 9.6.35 The larger of the three parcels in Phase 1, parcel B covers the southern area of the phase, and leads into parcel 1D which lies within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. As with parcel A, the area incorporates dwellings from all three character areas, but predominantly has more of the Neighbourhood design within the wider middle section of the parcel, with the Green Edge character area running along the southern and eastern boundaries and the Main Street to the north.
- 9.6.36 The area is enclosed on the western, southern and eastern sides by good green links and landscaping, with pockets of landscaping and hedging to property frontages within the street scenes. The layout includes short passages of shared surface areas and shared private driveways similar to the cul-de-sac forms seen within the existing Granby Road estate to the south.
- 9.6.37 Parcel 1B incorporates a wider selection of house types, including more terraced properties than parcel 1A. Detached properties are typically sited along the southern and eastern boundaries at a lower density, with semi-detached dwellings making up the volume of the parcel. Parking is typically to the side of properties with fewer garages proposed, and some frontage parking is proposed in the far north eastern corner of the parcel. This has been scaled back in the amended plans following officer concern over the visual appearance of the street scene having an excessive level of hardstand.
- 9.6.38 As with parcel A, the apartment block proposed (block 7) is three storeys and located on the corner junction with one of the spur roads and a green link. The 'L' shaped layout faces northwards onto the spine road, providing amenity space and car parking to the south and rear.

#### Conclusion

- 9.6.39 In conclusion, it is considered the layout, scale and design of Phase 1 parcels A-C has presented a good balance between the new development coming forward and the existing siting and context of the site within the North Road area of Stevenage. The proposals have evolved following officer and consultee input to the benefit of the scheme. The proposed residential areas fit well within the constraints of the site and around the infrastructure being proposed to bring the development forward.
- 9.6.40 The proposals are considered to have taken full account of the current National Design Guide and criteria as laid out in the NPPF and local policy. The character areas create clear distinctive parcels whilst showing a legibility between each area and ensuring the site has an appealing mixture of designs and features, providing visual interest. It is considered that the proposal would have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the area, creating a well balanced and landscape led development.

### **9.7 Impact on the Conservation Area and other Heritage Assets**

- 9.7.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* imposes several 'statutory duties' for decision-makers, all of which are applicable to the proposed development:
- "Section 16(2): In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
  - "Section 66(1): In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the

building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.

- Section 72: In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.

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

9.7.3 Paragraph 197 of the NPPF (2021) states that ‘in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.’

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

9.7.5 Paragraph 201 sets out that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

9.7.6 Paragraph 202 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. In undertaking this balance, considerable importance and weight must be attached to the less than substantial harm.

- 9.7.7 Paragraph 204 sets out that Local Planning Authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred. With respect to paragraph 205, this sets out that Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.
- 9.7.8 In considering public benefits, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2019) (Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723) sets out that the National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. For reference, paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that “Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”
- 9.7.9 The planning practice guidance goes on to state that public benefits should flow from the development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed building which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. Consequently, while a range of benefits that help deliver sustainable communities could be relevant, the PPG provides examples of heritage based public benefits, as follows:
- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
  - Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
  - Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.
- 9.7.10 Turning to the adopted Local Plan, Policy SP13 relates to the historic environment. This states that the council will preserve and enhance the most important area and characteristics of Stevenage. The policy goes on to state that the Council will:-
- a. Have carried out Heritage Impact Assessments for development sites within, or adjacent to, conservation areas. Site specific mitigation measures have been incorporated to minimise the impacts of development.

- b. Will use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets.
- c. Will protect areas of archaeological importance and other relevant heritage assets by applying the detailed policies set in this plan.

9.7.11 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”

9.7.12 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

9.7.13 The application site falls outside of but immediately adjacent to 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.

9.7.14 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.

9.7.15 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.”

- 9.7.16 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.”
- 9.7.17 Phase 1A-C falls outside the conservation area but immediately abuts its western boundary where parcel 1B adjoins parcel 1D (reference 22/0080/RMM). In respect of the current application, the assessment of harm relates specifically to the impact of the housing parcels on the setting of the conservation area only as assessed under approval 22/00810/RMM for this phase previously. As with the former approval, it is noted and as identified by the Local Plan Inspector, there is already significant built form in close proximity of the conservation area. Also, given the siting of parcel 1D and other built development within the Chancellors Road estate to the south of the site, it is considered the proposals would not harm the setting of the nearby listed building St Nicholas Church. Furthermore, given the distance from, and proposed screening of this Phase from properties on Weston Road to the east of the proposed Country Park, it is not considered the proposals require a further assessment of their impact on the listed buildings associated with Rooks Nest (House, Farm and Barns).
- 9.6.18 Paragraph 200 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that any harm to a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. In addition, where proposals that may cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, should be weighed up against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use. In undertaking that weighting exercise ‘considerable importance and weight’ must be given to the preservation of the significance of the listed building, including its setting. In determining the application, it must be noted that ‘less than substantial harm’ is not a ‘less than substantial planning consideration’.
- 9.6.19 Turning to public benefits, there is no definition of ‘public benefits’ on the National Planning Policy Framework or associated Planning Practice Guidance. All the guidance states (as set out in paragraph 10.5.7) that it “*should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large*”. There is also Case Law that deals with what is a material consideration, and this is pretty much whether it serves a “*proper planning purpose*” (see *latest commentary on this in Wright v Resilient Energy Severndale Ltd and Forest of Dean District Council*). Further, public benefit could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. The test therefore is whether the benefits clearly and convincingly outweigh the considerable importance and weight given to the heritage harm.
- 9.6.20 Historic England have provided comments on each RM application, having made representations on the outline application. They acknowledge that the application has been approved and that the principle of development of the site has been established. However, they remain concerned that the density and general design and appearance of the development would have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting.
- 9.6.21 It was highlighted in the outline application officer report that the level of harm perceived by Historic England was not supported by officers, nor the Council’s historic advisors and the Heritage Assessment undertaken by the applicants. Given the current application largely is looking at the revisions made to the local centre, it is reinforced here that the impact on the conservation area and heritage assets nearby will not be significant in its harm. The local

centre, being furthest west of the site, is of sufficient distance beyond existing and proposed built development to be acceptable and would offer less than substantial harm.

9.6.22 Subsequently, the development of parcels A and B in particular being outside of but adjacent to the conservation area, it is considered the layout and style of houses proposed to be acceptable. The principle of developing this area has been agreed, with revisions to the 1D parcel forthcoming as part of its respective application to take account of the conservation area and its setting. Taking account of the above, the NPPF guidance, local policy and conclusions of the Inspector following the Local Plan assessment, it is officers opinion that the proposals would have some level of impact on the setting of the conservation area, albeit less than substantial harm and on the lowest end of the scale.

9.6.23 Furthermore, the proposed development would bring about public benefits that hold significant weight including in the case of parcels 1A-C the delivery of much needed housing (including affordable housing) and the provision of an improved local centre and plaza providing key amenities for future residents and nearby existing developments. These would outweigh the less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale which would be caused by this development.

## 9.7 Affordable Housing

9.7.1 Criteria f) of Policy HO3 of the Local Plan (2019) states that the site should provide at least 30% affordable housing in line with Policy HO7, and this figure was secured through the S106 agreement attached to the outline permission granted, as seen in the table below. This figure (240 dwellings out of 800) is applicable to the whole site and would encompass a mixture of one and two bedroom apartments, and two, three and four bedroom houses.

Unit Size	% of affordable provision	No. of units
1 and 2 bed flats	60%	144
2 bed houses	25%	60
3 bed houses	10%	24
4+ bed houses	5%	12

9.7.2 In Phase 1, just over 50% of the total site affordable housing is being proposed, and a total of 51% of the number of houses within Phase 1 are proposed to be affordable, an overprovision in numbers and of smaller dwellings (1 and 2 bed flats) and under provision of houses (2, 3 and 4 beds). This imbalance is largely due to the higher proportion of the flatted requirement being met in the Local Centre, of which all are proposed as affordable, and no provision of affordable units being in parcel 1D (the Conservation Area) as this parcel seeks to meet the aspirational homes target set in Policy HO3. The below table shows the market vs affordable split.

Open Market		Affordable	
2 bed dwellings x 29 3 bed dwellings x 78 4 bed dwellings x 11		1 bed dwelling x 20 2 bed dwellings x 88 3 bed dwellings x 12 4 bed dwellings x 5	
TOTAL	118	Total	125

9.7.3 The remainder of the required affordable housing provision will be addressed as part of the Phase 2 reserved matters application due to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority later this year. Similarly, the site is required to provide 5% Aspirational Homes and 1% self-build plots. The aspirational homes, as mentioned above, are proposed within the Conservation Area parcel 1D. Furthermore, the self-build plots will come forward in Phase 2.

9.7.4 Given the large quantity of flats required under the S106 requirements, all seven apartment blocks proposed in Phases 1A-C are to be affordable units. The dwellings are then in small pockets of terrace or semi-detached dwellings, with at least 50% overlooking areas of green open space such as green links or the central green corridor. The layout and siting of the affordable units was agreed as acceptable by the Council's Housing Development team during the pre-application assessment. The proposals are considered to be acceptable on the provision that the remaining numbers and house type mix would come forward through the Phase 2 application.

## 9.8 Commercial Provision

9.8.1 Policy HO3 states under criteria h) provision of local facilities is a requirement of the site. The new Local Centre design proposes commercial units within the ground floor of block 1 and partly within the ground floor of block 4. The orientation of block 1 has been turned 90 degrees such that the main front elevation faces southwards towards block 4. Within block 1 it is proposed to have two units, the larger being 278.8 sqm in floor area and the smaller unit 99.4 sqm. There is also back of house areas of 139.4 sqm proposed. Block 4 has the northern end of the ground floor proposed as commercial at a floor area of 143.9 sqm. The total provision of commercial space would therefore equate to 661.5 sqm, approximately 11 sqm more than approved under reference 22/00810/RMM.

9.8.2 The revised siting and layout of block 1 would retain the extensive front elevation of shop frontage with shop windows on the eastern, western and main southern elevations. The inclusion of retail provision with one unit in the ground floor of block 4, also provides good shop frontage and similar window openings on the respective eastern and western elevations and then also the northern elevation, facing onto the proposed plaza. The plaza area has been depicted to provide an outside seating area for a possible proposed café which is a strong benefit to this outside area.

9.8.3 The proposed amendments to the local centre design were stemmed from commercial concerns that the approved design would restrict views of the units at ground floor from North Road. Mainly due to the location of the grounding tower and enclosure just south of the northern junction off North Road. The revised siting and orientation of block 1, is considered to appropriately address and deal with this issue. Consequently, the proposals are considered to meet the requirements of Policy HO3.

9.8.3 Furthermore, Policy SP4: A Vital Town Centre expressly states that a local centre shall come forward in the north of Stevenage development with an anchor store and other small-scale retail shops sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the residents of the new

neighbourhood. Given the layout of the largest unit, and the size of the two smaller units proposed (being good) it is considered the overall provision is sufficient to meet the needs of the development and would not warrant a reason to refuse the application.

## 9.9 Impact upon Neighbouring Amenity

9.9.1 In assessing the impact on neighbouring amenity, the Council's Local Plan (2019) and Design Guide (2023) sets out standards which should be met to safeguard the privacy and outlook of adjoining properties from new development. In this regard, when assessing developments of 2 storeys or more in height, the recommended separation distances are as follows:

No of Storeys	Type of Separation	Min. distance (metres)
Between existing and new 2 storey or a mix of 1 and 2 storey dwellings	Back to Back	25m
	Back to Side	15m
Between new 2 storeys or a mix of 1 and 2 storey	Back to Back	20m
	Back to side	12m
Over 2 storeys between existing and new dwellings	Back to Back	35m
	Back to Side	25m
Between new dwellings over 2 storeys in height	Back to Back	30m
	Back to Side	20m

9.9.2 Further to the previously approved application for these phases, the proximity of proposed properties along the southern edge of Phases A and B have been re-assessed given their proximity from and relationship with the existing properties of Granby Road and its associated spur roads/cul-de-sacs which back on to the site. These relationships have not changed following approval in March and the distances between the proposed dwellings facing on to or with side elevations facing the PROW and landscaped buffer are all in excess of the Council's adopted separation distances for privacy and outlook. Furthermore, given these separation distances the proposed dwellings would not cause any undue loss of light to the existing properties along this boundary.

9.9.3 There are several areas of additional landscaping proposed along the PROW and within the green buffer between the PROW and built development along this area of parcels A and B, to bolster the existing landscaping conditions, that would increase the screening within these areas to the benefit of existing and proposed properties. As such, it is considered the proposed development would not adversely affect the amenities of the existing residential properties off Granby Road and its associated spur roads/cul-de-sacs.

## 9.10 Impact upon the Amenity of Future Residents

### 9.10.1 Internal Space Standards

9.10.1.1 The adopted Local Plan outlines prescribed space standards for new dwellings, as set out in the Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) document 'Technical housing standards - nationally described space standards' 2015. These are as shown below for one to four bedroom dwellings.



Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 / 37	N/a	N/a	1.0
	2p	50	58	N/a	1.5
2b	3p	61	70	N/a	2.0
	4p	70	79	N/a	
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	

9.10.1.2 The minimum internal sizes of the proposed different apartment block and dwelling type units have been annotated on their respective proposed floor plans. These plans have also been assessed to ensure they do meet the respective standards. Each unit, depending on its layout, bedroom numbers, etc as a minimum meets the above required standards.

9.10.1.3 Room size standards for bedrooms are also considered in the technical standards, determining how many persons the unit can accommodate and in terms of acceptable living environments. These standards state that a double bedroom should be 11.5 square metres minimum with a minimum width of 2.75m and that where a second (or more) bedroom(s) is proposed it should have a minimum of 7.5 square metres and width of 2.15m. A second double should be at least 2.55m wide with the same 11.5 square metres minimum floor space. The bedroom sizes of the proposed units meet the minimum standards.

## 9.10.2 External Amenity Space

9.10.2.1 The Stevenage Design Guide SPD (2023) recommends that where possible external amenity space should be provided for residential properties. For houses this is a minimum area of 50 square metres and typically 10m in depth. For flats this is an external amenity space of 10 square metres per flat. The only exception to this is where flats are developed in very central locations, where public open space is easily accessible and higher densities are required. The Design Guide specifically states that private open space should be located conveniently for use by residents and in a position that is not overlooked by neighbouring buildings; normally to the rear of the building, and in the case of flats the private space will usually form part of the garden or communal amenity space, and not an area of landscaping.

9.10.2.2 In respect of the dwellinghouses proposed, each unit has an enclosed garden of a minimum of 50 square metres and a depth of 10m although on occasion the plot is not completely uniform in shape due to parking arrangements etc. The layout of parcels A and B have been designed to ensure the proposed dwellings meet the required separation distances for privacy levels and outlook, although these are discussed further below in this report.

- 9.10.2.3 Looking then at the apartment blocks which propose only flat units, blocks 1 and 4 in the local centre do not propose any external amenity space because of their location within and the function of the local centre, and their proximity to the attenuation basin and grounding tower facility within the green space to the west of the buildings. Whilst the provision of private external amenity space is preferred, in this case there are merits of having a large amount of open space in close proximity of the local centre for use by future residents. Furthermore, all other blocks have a level of private external amenity space.
- 9.10.2.4 Blocks 2 and 3 are also located in the local centre, on the eastern side of the main spur road which runs north to south. Each block here has an enclosed communal garden on one side of the building. For block 2 it is located to the west of the building, closest the road, and measures approximately 110 square metres in area. This equates to 10 square metres per flat with 11 flats proposed in this block. In respect of block 3 the communal space is located to the west of the building and closest the proposed school site. This area measures approximately 140 square metres for 10 flats and is thus slightly over the required 10 square metres per flat.
- 9.10.2.5 Moving on to parcel 1A, there are two apartment blocks in this area, blocks 5 and 6. Block 5 sits on the eastern side of the first spur road serving this area of residential development. The block faces northwards onto the spine road with the private communal garden being sited to the rear and thus south of the building, making the area much more attractive in terms of its orientation and light. This area is proposed as being approximately 170 square metres in size, with 10 flats being proposed in the building. The provision for block 5 therefore exceeds the requirement of the Design Guide.
- 9.10.2.6 In terms of block 6, this block is located west of the third spur road and middle green link area separating parcel 1A from 1B. The block has a similar layout to block 5 (and 7) in that it faces northwards towards the spine road, with parking and amenity space to the rear and thus to the south of the building. Due to some amendments to neighbouring dwelling plots to provide adequate rear garden and bin storage provision outside of the associated garage, the parking area for block 6 has been slightly revised and this has taken a small amount of the amenity space proposed for this block. An area of private space is still proposed however, at approximately 130 square metres for a provision of ten flats this is still in excess of the adopted standards.
- 9.10.2.7 Turning lastly then to block 7, this is proposed in parcel 1B and sits on the opposite side (eastern side) of the spur road and green link to block 6. A handed layout (excluding the bin and cycle store provision) of block 6, the external space is also to the rear and south of the building making the external amenity space much more likely to be used as it will have sunlight for much of the day. As with all the amenity spaces, some trees are provided to ensure a level of shade in these southerly facing areas. The size of the amenity space at block 7 would measure approximately 175 square metres for a provision of 10 units, again well in excess of the standards.
- 9.10.2.8 In conclusion therefore and giving due weight to the provision of open spaces close to the local centre and the density of flats in this area, the proposed garden areas per dwelling and private communal spaces for the apartment blocks are considered acceptable, far exceeding the Council's requirements in places. The proposed Phases 1A-C would therefore provide adequate outdoor amenity space for future residents.
- 9.10.3 Separation Distance, Privacy and Outlook
- 9.10.3.1 As mentioned above the Council's adopted Design Guide and Appendix C of the adopted Local Plan set out the acceptable separation distances between new and existing residential developments, in terms of privacy and outlook.

9.10.3.2 Based on the table shown in paragraph 9.9.1 you can determine the distances required between the proposed plots specifically. Based on the plans submitted in support of the application the back-to-back and back to side relationships proposed outside of the local centre all meet as a minimum these separation distances. Therefore, adequate levels of privacy and outlook are proposed for future residents. This could change should future residents wish to alter and/or enlarge their property by undertaking works deemed permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO). In particular for two storey dwellings, should works be undertaken to create a loft conversion then a third storey/second floor is introduced, and these would be unlikely to meet the separation distances because of the additional floor being created.

9.10.3.3 Consequently it is considered reasonable and necessary to impose a condition on any approval removing these permitted development rights to ensure satisfactory separation distances are maintained for the proposed dwellings, as well as ensuring the high-quality design of the development is not compromised by large box dormers which can be allowed for loft conversions under Class B of Part 1 of the GPDO.

9.10.3.4 Looking specifically at the local centre and in particular blocks 1 and 4, the separation distance between the southern and northern corresponding elevations of blocks 1 and 4 respectively, the distance measured here is approximately 15m. Most of the flats proposed in these two blocks are dual aspect and at first and second floor level it is difficult to discern what would be a typical front, side or rear elevation. Something more obvious on a house.

9.10.3.5 Given the flats are positioned on the first and second floor at this intersection the adopted standards would seek a distance greater than 15m for a back-to-back relationship. The elevations would have bedroom or living space windows facing the opposite elevation. Using professional judgment and the merits of this case, it is noted that the windows would not overlook a private amenity space such as a garden area. Furthermore, the 15m distance is an acceptable minimum for outlook purposes from a window. Typically, more dense residential settings would have reduced separation distances than those expected of houses with greater private amenity space around them. Based on these points, it is officers' opinion that the 15m separation distance is acceptable in this higher density local centre area and that sufficient harm would not result from this reduced first and second floor separation in this relationship and location such that a reason for refusal is warranted.

#### 9.10.4 HO11 Category 2 Housing

9.10.4.1 Policy HO11 of the Local Plan requires 50% of all dwellings provided to be Category 2 compliant in respect of wheelchair accessibility and adaptability (M4(2)). The requirements of Category 2 include –

- 1) Reasonable provision must be made for people to –
  - a) gain access to: and
  - b) use, the dwelling and its facilities.
- 2) The provision made must be sufficient to –
  - a) meet the needs of occupants with differing needs, including some older or disabled people; and
  - b) to allow adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of occupants over time.

9.10.4.2 Document M then goes on to discuss the different areas in which dwellings should meet Category 2. This includes –

- Step-free approach route;
- Additional stepped route;
- Private parking space (private dwelling);
- Communal parking space (flatted development);
- Communal entrances and circulation;
- Private entrances and circulation;

- Doorways;
- Habitable room sizes and layout;
- Sanitary facilities;
- Utilities and controls.

9.10.4.3 The information and plans submitted in support of the application show that 41% of the dwellings in Phase 1 would be HO11 compliant both internally and externally, and that a further 19% are internally compliant with these standards (totalling 60%). At present this is deemed acceptable, with Phase 2 being able to address the left-over requirement.

## **9.11 Highway Implications**

9.11.1 In respect of the main highways proposals for the site, these have been considered in the infrastructure RM reference 22/00808/RMM. The current application looks at the secondary and tertiary spur roads and cul-de-sacs proposed, visitor laybys, parking provision, and foot/cycle way connections to main infrastructure links.

9.11.2 The highway network proposed includes all small spur road and private driveway systems funnelling off the main primary road network (which consists of the main spine road, local centre link road, two north eastern spur road connections, the country park south eastern spur road, the south eastern spur road which runs through parcel 1B into parcel 1D and the main foot and cycleway connections). There are five additional spur roads proposed off the main spine road, heading south into parcels 1A and B. Three are proposed in parcel A and two are proposed in parcel B, with the third forming part of the infrastructure application.

9.11.3 The initial roads into the parcels would have designated footpaths on each side of the road, for at least the first 45 – 65m after which distance, they become shared surfaces of approximately 6m in width. This width accommodates the normal 2m footways on each side and a narrower highway width. Manual for Streets states that ‘in traditional street layouts, footways and carriageways are separated by a kerb. In a street with a shared surface, this demarcation is absent, and pedestrians and vehicles share the same surface. Shared surface schemes work best in relatively calm traffic environments. The key aims are to:

- encourage low vehicle speeds;
- create an environment in which pedestrians can walk, or stop and chat, without feeling intimidated by motor traffic;
- make it easier for people to move around; and
- promote social interaction.’

9.11.4 Where the shared surfaces or designated footpaths meet an area of open space/green link in these areas, appropriate connections are made to allow residents of these areas to have direct connections to these green spaces, local play areas and more direct access to the centre of the site, namely the local centre, central green corridor and beyond this the primary school site. This central green corridor and southern PROW also lead to the proposed Country Park.

9.11.5 Where the shared surfaces or roads are shorter and typically meet the southern PROW the areas split off to create small private driveways serving up to six dwellings. There is also provision within the roads and shared surfaces for visitor layby parking. This is set off the main road/shared surface area to prevent parking in these areas.

9.11.6 Each property would have parking provision in the form of tandem or double bay parking, a single garage and driveway space, allocated space(s) to the front of the dwelling or allocated space within a parking court (typically for the apartment blocks). In terms of the local centre, parking here is arranged in larger car parks, with designated retail/commercial parking separate from the residential parking for blocks 1 and 4. The management of these parking areas will be controlled by the Management Company required as part of the S106 agreement, and with signage in the respective areas.

- 9.11.7 The application has been supported by various swept path tracking plans to adequately show the manoeuvrability of a fire tender, refuse vehicle and delivery vehicle within the estate roads to the satisfaction of the local highway authority.
- 9.11.8 Within the local centre, a turning area is proposed to the north west of block 1 for use by the commercial/retail units and possible service vehicles associated with these uses, as well as providing maintenance access to the UKPN grounding pylon.
- 9.11.8 The proposed highway works are largely as agreed under reference 22/00810/RMM with small changes to the crossover locations and parking arrangements in the local centre area and the re-location of the temporary sales areas accesses off the southern road entrance. Confirmation of the bell mouth style access points to each of the Miller Homes and Bellway Homes sales areas respectively, with full reinstatement of full height kerbing on removal of the sales areas has been supported by the local highway authority and agreed as acceptable. Furthermore, the changes made in the local centre did not present any additional comments with plans showing sufficient detail to meet points previously negotiated in the previous RMM application.

## 9.12 Parking Provision

- 9.12.1 Manual for Streets recognises that a design-led approach should be taken regarding the provision of car parking spaces, which should take into account the expected levels of car ownership. Where insufficient car parking is provided, this can lead to poor parking behaviours which can negatively affect the quality of development in terms of its visual appearance and cars parking on the roads and footways can lead to problems for pedestrians and emergency service access.
- 9.12.2 As the parking authority, the Council's supplementary planning document 'Parking Standards and Sustainable Transport' was adopted in 2020 and provides the Council's stance on parking levels within the borough whilst also putting forward strategies to reduce private car use with a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport.
- 9.12.3 **Car**
- 9.12.3.1 The car parking provision for the site is a 100% provision as the site does not fall within a residential zone allowing for reductions in numbers based on sustainability.

The current standards require –

Description	Car parking requirement	
a) General needs		
i) 1 bedroom	1 space per house	1 space per flat
ii) 2 bedrooms	1.5 spaces per house	1.5 spaces per flat
iii) 3 bedrooms	2 spaces per house	1.5 spaces per flat
iv) 4+ bedrooms	2.5 spaces per house	2 spaces per flat

- 9.12.3.2 Where the stated figures include a decimal place, provision should be rounded up to the nearest whole number. This calculation would usually happen at the end of the calculation. Where a property has a garage to be considered part of the parking provision, the garage should measure a minimum of 3m by 6m internally to allow for parking of a large vehicle and storage.

- 9.12.3.3 Where the local centre has provision for commercial/retail uses, parking provision is broken down and for Class E uses is typically 1 space per 30 square metres, although this does vary depending on the use within Class E proposed. Sufficient space should be provided in the local centre for the commercial use, but also for possible school trips and users of the local facilities.
- 9.12.3.4 The total of Phases 1A-C proposes 553 car parking spaces, this is inclusive of all residential, commercial and visitor parking requirements. Where necessary this has included rounding up of provision numbers based on the table above. The provision of visitor parking is based on 0.25 spaces per dwelling. Where parking is allocated, these spaces are in addition to the total residential figure, and where parking is unallocated, visitor spaces can be forfeited.
- 9.12.3.5 Based on the Council's adopted standards the proposal does provide a slight overprovision of total spaces required. This is equivalent to the number of spaces and overprovision approved in March under reference 22/00810/RMM. Some of this margin is associated with the possible Use Class E uses at the local centre allowing for different uses here and also parking by users of the primary school.
- 9.12.3.6 Furthermore, total car parking space numbers are equated with half numbers being rounded up at the end of the sum and not rounded up prior to multiplying the number of flats or houses vs the space requirement (i.e. 67 2 bed flats at 1.5 spaces each would be calculated as  $67 \times 1.5$ , not  $6.7 \times 2$ ). However, the developers have taken the approach that the total number of spaces (residential and visitor) would be slightly over the maximum with residential numbers rounded up for each dwelling where appropriate.
- 9.12.3.7 As a result, more spaces would be available off-street for visitors and therefore 'visitor' spaces on-street would be fewer than the total visitor numbers based on the standards. In this case, this approach is considered acceptable and the additional provision for such a large development would help prevent displacement and bad parking behaviours to the betterment of the development.

#### 9.12.4 **Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

- 9.12.4.1 In line with the Council's aspirations for a modal shift, the SPD requires 20% of all parking provision to have active electric vehicle charging points (EVCP), with the remaining 80% having passive infrastructure in place to allow easy set up for future installation of EVCP's.
- 9.12.4.2 It is noted from the Design and Access Statement that 208 of the 553 parking spaces proposed in this phase of the development are proposed to have access to an active EVCP in accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document S. This would include 100% provision for all allocated spaces of dwellinghouses, including garages, driveways, driveways, front or courtyard parking. Further details of the proposed 13 amp wall mounted or pedestal points can be sought through the imposition of a condition. However, the proposed provision far exceeds the Council's current 20% requirement and is therefore acceptable.

#### 9.12.5 **Disabled Parking**

- 9.12.5.1 The adopted parking standards SPD does require a minimum 5% of the parking provision, for communal parking, to be made available as disabled parking. Therefore, provision should be made for the apartment blocks and the local centre parking. The local centre parking requirement would therefore equate to two disabled parking spaces, which is shown on the respective layout plans for the local centre.
- 9.12.5.2 In respect of the apartment blocks parking areas, parking spaces are not expressly shown as being disabled, but over 5% provision is made within each area of parking for spaces that

are HO11 compliant and are therefore accessible spaces meeting the requirements of a disabled space with additional door swing space. This is deemed acceptable to meet the SPD requirement.

### 9.12.6 Cycle

9.12.6.1 Taken from the Council's Paring Standards and Sustainable Transport SPD, the below table shows the current cycle parking provision requirements for C3 residential use. The 4<sup>th</sup> column shows the long-term provision, and the fifth column shows short-term provision (i.e. for visitors). Long-term provision should be secure and covered by way of a garage, shed or designated cycle store. The latter two typically in the rear garden of the dwellinghouses.

C3-C4	Residential (without garage)	1-bed	1 space per unit	1 space per 40 units
		2-bed	2 spaces per unit	
		3-bed	3 spaces per unit	
		4-bed		
	Houses in multiple occupation (without garage)	1 space per bedroom		

9.12.6.2 For the proposed dwellinghouses specifically, where these would be served by a garage, said garage would be a minimum 3m by 6m in accordance with the SPD, and this would provide ample space for car parking and storage/cycle parking. For all other dwellinghouses provision is made through a lockable shed in the rear garden, with rear garden access readily available without the need to pass through a garage or through the house itself.

9.12.6.3 For the apartment blocks and commercial uses, cycle storage is proposed in cycle stores, either attached to or forming part of the building footprint, or within a detached outbuilding. These are of a size and design sufficient to meet the cycle parking standards above. Furthermore, at the local centre, short term cycle parking is proposed in the form of Sheffield stands which is acceptable by the local highway authority.

### 9.13 Development and Flood Risk

9.13.1 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.

9.13.2 The drainage solution as proposed at outline application stage was for the site to discharge directly to the existing sewer infrastructure by using a pumped connection. The outline application also proposed 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 was agreed with Anglian Water and has also been agreed by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) subject to the imposition of several conditions to deal with the delivery of the drainage and future maintenance.

9.13.3 These proposals are as submitted and have been and are being assessed through the infrastructure reserved matters application, as well as discharge of condition applications for those conditions imposed on the outline permission.

- 9.13.4 In respect of this application, the drainage details cover the residential areas in terms of surface water run-off and how this meets and merges with the overarching site drainage. Areas of permeable hardstand are proposed for the local centre parking areas, as well as all the apartment block parking areas.
- 9.13.5 The engineering drawings submitted for the residential parcels highlight the high and low points within the road network to show where the run-off will head. Where possible these would lead to SuDS features such as swales. However due to the ground levels on the western part of the site this wouldn't be possible. It is proposed therefore to have double gully capacity of drains at necessary points in the road network to take the surface water to the nearest connection on site for transfer within the basin system and pumping station.
- 9.13.6 The proposals have been assessed by the Lead Local Flood Authority. They note the amendments made in respect of the local entrance and those details already approved under separate non-material amendment cover. It appears as though additional permeable paving is now being proposed in comparison to 22/00810/RMM. Additionally, further details are being sought for approval in respect of discharge of condition applications of which further information has been requested by the LLFA. This further information will need to be assessed, but in part the details included in this RM have not changed from those already approved for Phases 1A-C and are therefore considered acceptable.

#### **9.14 Trees, Landscaping and Biodiversity**

- 9.14.1 Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2021) states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- 9.14.2 Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment seeks to protect and enhance green infrastructure and the natural environment in Stevenage. The policy requires new development to include multi-functional green space as an integral part of its design, and would permit the creation of other new open spaces.
- 9.14.3 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that 'Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.'
- 9.14.4 Policy NH5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within the development site and should include new planting where appropriate. Furthermore, criteria n) of Policy HO3 states that the scheme for the development of the North of Stevenage allocated site shall incorporate 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.



- 9.14.5 The proposed development includes a significant level of new green spaces which would be available to the public and within which biodiversity and ecology would be enhanced. It also proposes a much-enhanced landscape including a large planting schedule of trees and shrubs throughout the site, but more intensively along the eastern boundary of parcel 1D and the Country Park. These proposals have been agreed under the infrastructure application reference 22/00808/RMM.
- 9.14.6 The site as a whole would provide the 38 hectare Country Park of landscaped open space, planted to create smaller, hedged hay meadows with improved public access. However, this key element is being considered under its own reserved matters application 22/00781/RMM. The main principles of the residential soft landscaping are to enhance the overall character of the development, integrate with the overarching landscape setting proposed by the public open space and nearby Country Park, and to provide an attractive and varied setting to the dwellings and street scene, within both public and private amenity spaces.
- 9.14.7 The Design and Access Statement explains that the landscape design approach has been developed to respond to the defined character areas and to compliment the architectural style of each area.
- 9.14.8 Phase 1A and B – within these parcels tree planting is proposed within the street, in front gardens of dwellings and within shared amenity spaces of each apartment block. A mixture of single and mixed species hedge planting is proposed through-out the two phases. Single species hedging is proposed to both houses and the apartment blocks, defining the residential boundaries and helping to provide privacy. Predominantly the length of the spine road frontage would be single species hedge planting, as well as properties fronting the southern PROW. Where properties face the wider green infrastructure of the site, these boundaries would have a mixed species hedgerow planted. Shrub planting has been proposed within shared amenity spaces around the apartment blocks and within front and side garden areas of the houses, as well as lawned grass areas.
- 9.14.9 The revised local centre layout would see additional trees and planting along the northern boundary with the access road and within the now larger area of parking to the north of block 1. Planting within the green space to the west has also been updated to provide additional screening to the grounding tower enclosure and close to the proposed stepped access down to the balancing pond. Similar levels of landscaping pockets would remain around the perimeters of the parking areas, alongside footpaths within the parking areas, and within the frontages of blocks 2 and 3. The planting schedule includes additional planting mixes in this location to differentiate the local centre from the other phases. The use of larger species trees has been incorporated in this area to provide an overall structure. These are placed in the shared amenity spaces, with smaller street trees within car parking areas.
- 9.14.10 The main street and apartment blocks have hedge planting to define the main boundaries, with further shrub planting to provide green buffers, in particular around the ground floor of the apartment blocks. Shrub species near parking areas have been chosen to be robust whilst providing visual amenity. The species of tree, hedge and shrub have taken account of comments received by the Council's Green Spaces Officer and the Tree Manager.
- 9.14.11 The outline planning permission required the submission and approval of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (Biodiversity) and a Method Statement for Ecology as part of the discharge of conditions. This has been submitted and approved in consultation with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. As part of this process and in accordance with comments provided by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust the development would make provision for swift and bat boxes across all three phases, details of which have also been approved through discharge of condition and which will be bound to this application if approved. Furthermore, a sensitive lighting corridor is proposed along the southern boundary to preserve a bat commuting route.

9.14.12 The Council's Arboricultural and Conservation manager has assessed the application and has no further comments to add. The proposed tree, landscaping and biodiversity proposals for this application are considered to be acceptable and will support the wider infrastructure planting and landscaping proposals to the benefit of the area both visually and in terms of wildlife habitat.

### **9.13 Other Matters**

#### Sustainable construction and climate change

9.13.1 Policy FP1 of the adopted 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.

9.13.2 The outline application was supported by a Sustainability Statement which included information on building performance and indicated that buildings would be designed to achieve low carbon energy emissions through use of passive solar design in order to minimise heat loss in winter and overheating in summer by using natural light and ventilation as much as possible. This could be managed through appropriate glazing. The statement also covered high performance building fabric and systems such as hybrid heating and cooling, high efficiency LED lighting, and intelligent lighting.

9.13.3 Much of the above-mentioned systems and building techniques can be incorporated but no details have been provided specific to Phases 1A-C at this time. It is considered acceptable therefore to impose a suitably worded condition to seek further details to be agreed.

#### Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

9.13.8 Consideration has been given to Articles 1 and 8 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is not considered that the decision would result in a violation of any person's rights under the Convention.

9.13.9 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

9.13.10 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

9.13.11 The Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are: age; disability;

gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.

- 9.13.12 In terms of inclusive access, the proposed buildings would include level access with 41% being HO11 and M4(2) compliant both internally and externally making them accessible and/or adaptable, with a further 19% being compliant internally. Furthermore, route connections between the residential parcels and the wider infrastructure would incorporate level access and crossings where applicable. The development makes provision for disabled parking, and sufficient width footpaths at apartment blocks and the local centre.

#### Impact on Archaeological Remains

- 9.13.13 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*".
- 9.13.14 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*".
- 9.13.15 The impact of the proposed development of the HO3 allocated site of North of Stevenage was assessed as part of the outline application process and the decision notice issued included the imposition of conditions relating to archaeology in accordance with comments received by the Hertfordshire County Council Archaeological Team at the time. These conditions have been discharged with agreement of HCC Archaeology and the necessary works are being carried out on site in accordance with the details agreed.

#### Air Quality

- 9.13.16 Similarly to the above, the impact of the proposed development of the site on air quality was assessed as part of the outline application, through the Air Quality Assessment and cumulative impact assessment in respect of the effects of both construction and operation of the proposed development on the application site and surrounding area. The impact was deemed minimal by the Council's Environmental Health Team and thus no further study of this is deemed necessary for the consideration of the infrastructure for the site.

#### Bin Storage and Collection Points

- 9.13.17 The proposed development has been supported by a refuse layout plan showing the bin drag distances for houses, as well as bin collection points and storage areas. In respect of the proposed apartment blocks, an acceptable level of bin storage provision is proposed in integral or separate storage areas, located such that kerbside collection is possible.

## **10. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 10.1 In summary, the proposals for Phases 1A-C which in the case of this application looked largely at the revised design of blocks 1 and 4 in the local centre, to include the provision of a plaza amenity space, commercial uses and residential flats, and also dwellings and apartments, and secondary and tertiary road network in phases 1A-B are considered to be acceptable on balance. The proposed application takes account of revisions made to the already approved

application reference 22/00810/RMM by way of non-material amendment applications. These in addition to the local centre design changes are considered to further enhance the scheme.

- 10.2 In addition to the proposed changes from 22/00810/RMM the scheme continues to propose to extend the highway network proposed under the infrastructure RM with the further spur roads, shared surfaces and private driveways. Foot and cycle way connections are also shown to link up with the proposed green links and main thoroughfares proposed as part of the infrastructure plans.
- 10.3 Similarly, the impact on the heritage assets St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area, and nearby listed buildings, is not considered to be affected further than assessed under approval 22/00810/RMM. Due regard has been given to Section 66 of the Listed Building Act 1990 in terms of considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects the setting of the conservation area and listed buildings, where special regard, with respect to this application, is given to the desirability of preserving the settings which they possess. As set out in section 9.6 of this report, it has been demonstrated that the development would cause, at the lower end of the scale, less than substantial harm to the setting of the conservation area and to a lesser degree the settings of the listed buildings. Consequently, regard must be given to paragraph 202 of the NPPF which stipulates 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. These public benefits are considered in section 9.6 of the report and in further detail below as part of the Planning Balance exercise.
- 10.4 Taking the above harm into consideration, the proposal does have a number of planning benefits which weigh in the scheme's favour. The proposals would see allocated housing on site come forward in a well-designed and contextual manner. The proposals would also provide an improved design and layout for the local centre with a public plaza area, commercial space and facilities for future residents laid out in a more user-friendly manner.
- 10.5 The proposed level of useable and accessible green open space would be enhanced by the proposed landscaping scheme for the residential parcels and the addition of swift and bat boxes within all three parcels.
- 10.6 Therefore, it is concluded that the benefits the development would bring as a whole would be substantial. The proposals are considered to meet the requirements of the relevant local plan policies, especially HO3, but more broadly in terms of design and quality also.
- 10.7 Further to the above, it has been demonstrated that whilst the development would cause, at the lower end of the scale, less than substantial harm to the setting of the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings, the substantial benefits the development would bring would outweigh the harm that is caused.
- 10.8 Turning to design, the proposed character areas and house/apartment block types have followed the necessary ten characteristic approach as set out in the National Design Guide, as well as in the recently adopted Stevenage Design Guide (2023). The plans largely follow the approved parameter plans approved as part of the outline application, and streets created would be suitably landscaped and where appropriate would share surfaces between pedestrians and motor vehicles. Furthermore, the proposed changes to the local centre design are considered to significantly elevate the visual appearance of this hub within the development, creating a contemporary and well laid out local amenity.

- 10.9 In terms of the amenity of future residents, the proposals meet all the required standards as set out in national and local policy in respect of living space standards and external amenity space. Aside from blocks 1 and 4 which have been addressed separately, the separation distances to maintain privacy and outlook are also acceptable in meeting national standards. With regards to the impact of the development on the amenity of existing residents, it can be demonstrated that the development would not have a detrimental impact on the residential properties along Granby Road, and surrounding spur road and cul-de-sac estates in terms of privacy and outlook. There will of course be disruption due to the nature of the site now being a development site with mechanical vehicles being used and likely levels of noise and dust occurring. However, these will be controlled through agreement of a Construction Management Plan.
- 10.10 The proposal would provide an acceptable level of car parking albeit slightly over the required provision, and this would include residential and commercial/retail parking, visitor spaces, disabled spaces, EVCP and cycle storage of a satisfactory provision.
- 10.11 In summary, the proposed residential development of Phases 1A-C is reflective of the masterplan, is considered to be of high-quality design and layout and would make positive contributions to link with the wider infrastructure proposals. The character areas and different design elements would bring distinctive character to the development whilst providing legibility between these areas. The identified less than substantial harm to the setting of the conservation area and nearby listed buildings is outweighed by the benefits as detailed above. Furthermore, the proposals would provide a good sense of place and level of amenity for future residents whilst preserving amenity levels of existing residents. Parking, landscaping and drainage provisions would all meet the requirements of policy and consultees. Therefore, there are sufficient material considerations, subject to conditions that planning permission should be granted.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 That outline planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following :-
- 11.2 The imposition of suitable conditions, with authority given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, to amend or add to the suggested draft conditions set out in this report, prior to the decision notice being issued, where such amendments or additions would be legally sound and most effectively deliver the development that the Planning Committee has resolved to approve. These suggested conditions are as follows:-
- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5117 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5116 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5115 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5205-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5112 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5113 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5114 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5201-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5100 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5101 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5102 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5103 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5105 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5104 - R04; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-D2-L-5210-A-C06; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7513-Rev C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-DR-L-5215-A-C05; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-DR-L-5216-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1a-DR-L-5217-A-C05; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5220-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5203-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5202-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5201-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5200-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7514-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7511-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7510-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7405-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-1c-DR-L-5207-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-

1c-DR-L-5206-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-1c-DR-L-5205-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5224-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5223-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1b-DR-L-5221-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1abc-DR-Y-3200-A-C02; 9313-KC-Inf-Y; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0160\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0153\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0152\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0151\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0150\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0261\_P2; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0260\_P3; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0251\_P3; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0250\_P2; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0201\_P1; SNP-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0200\_P2; SNP-RMA-ZZ-04-DR-A-0103\_P9; SNP-RMA-ZZ-02-DR-A-0102\_P9; SNP-RMA-ZZ-02-DR-A-0101\_P1; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0163\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0162\_P4; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0161\_P4; P1708.TH.103; P1708.TH.104; P1708.TH.105; P1708.TH.106; P1708.WB.101; P1708.WB.102; P1708.WB.103; P1708.WB.104; P1708\_BMSA\_01-L; P1708.SS.101 - Rev H; P1708.SS.102 - Rev E; P1708.SS.103 - Rev C; P1708.SS.104 - Rev B; P1708.SS.105 - Rev C; P1708.SUB.102; P1708.TH.101 - Rev A; P1708.TH.102 - Rev B; P1708.PS.102 - Rev A; P1708.PS.106; P1708.PS.103; P1708.PS.104 - Rev A; P1708.PS.105; P1708.RE.101\_A; P1708.RE.102\_A; P1708.RE.103; P1708.RE.104; P1708.RE1.101; P1708.RE1.102; P1708.SA.101 - Rev A; P1708.SA.102; P1708.SC.101; P1708.SC.102; P1708.SC.103; P1708.SC.104; P1708.SRL.0006-C; P1708.PH.106; P1708.PH.107-A; P1708.PH.108; P1708.PhaseP.02-A; P1708.PS.101; P1708.LO.102; P1708.LO.101 - Rev A; P1708.LO.103; P1708.LA.102; P1708.LA.101; P1708.HU.104; P1708.HU.103; P1708.HU.102 - Rev A; P1708.HU.101; P1708.PH.105; P1708.PG.104 - Rev A; P1708.PG.103 - Rev A; P1708.M4A.102; P1708.M4A.101; P1708.M4.104; P1708.M4.103; P1708.M4.102 - Rev A; P1708.M4.101; P1708.M3.102; P1708.M3.101; P1708.M2A.101; P1708.M2.103; P1708.M2.102 - Rev A; P1708.M2.101; P1708.GAR.101; P1708.GAR.102; P1708.GAR.103; P1708.GAR.104; P1708.GAR.105; P1708.GAR.106; P1708.GAR.107; P1708.GAR.108; P1708.GR.101; P1708.GR.102; P1708.HP.101-A; P1708.HP.102; P1708.HP.105; P1708.HP.103; P1708.HA.101 - Rev A; P1708.HA.102; P1708.HA.105; P1708.CO.103; P1708.CO.102; P1708.CO.101 - Rev A; P1708.CH.102; P1708.CH.101; P1708.CA.105 - Rev B; P1708.CA.103 - Rev A; P1708.CA.102 - Rev C; P1708.CA.101 - Rev B; P1708.BR.102 - Rev C; P1708.BR.101 - Rev B; P1708.BM.104; P1708.BM.103; P1708.BM.102; P1708.BM.101; P1708.BLK7.108; P1708.BLK7.107; P1708.BLK7.106; P1708.BLK7.105; P1708.BLK7.104; P1708.BLK7.103; P1708.BLK7.102; P1708.BLK7.101; P1708.BLK6.108 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.107 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.106 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.105 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.104; P1708.BLK5.108 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.103 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.102 - Rev A; P1708.BLK6.101 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.107 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.106 - Rev A.; P1708.BLK5.105 - Rev A.; P1708.BLK5.104; P1708.BLK5.103 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.102 - Rev A; P1708.BLK5.101 - Rev A; P1708.BLK3.108\_A; P1708.BLK3.107\_A; P1708.BLK3.106\_A; P1708.BLK3.105\_A; P1708.BLK3.104; P1708.BLK3.103; P1708.BLK3.102; P1708.BLK3.101; P1708.BLK2.108\_A; P1708.BLK2.107\_A; P1708.BLK2.106\_A; P1708.BLK2.105\_A; P1708.BLK2.104; P1708.BLK2.103; P1708.BLK2.102; P1708.BLK2.101; P1708.01-ZB; P1708.02-N; P1708.12-T P1708.13-Q P1708.14-U P1708.15-S P1708.16-R P1708.17-S P1708.18-B; P1708.BIN.102; P1708.BIN.101; P1708.BC.105; P1708.BC.104; P1708.BC.103; P1708.BC.102; P1708.B4.102 - Rev A; P1708.B4.101; P1708.B3B.102; P1708.B3B.101; P1708.B3A.102; P1708.B3A.101; P1708.B2A.102; P1708.AN1.101 - Rev B; P1708.B2A.101; P1708.B2.102; P1708.B2.101; P1708.AN1.101 - Rev A; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5109 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5110 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5111 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5204-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1E-DR-C-5401 - R06; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5108 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5107 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1A-1B-DR-C-5106 - R05; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5203-R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1E-DR-C-5400 - R06; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5200-R07; BM1-OC-RMA-1C-DR-C-5202-R04; SNP-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0100 P13; P1708.MA.103A; P1708.MA.104A; P1708.MA.105A; P1708.MA.106A

**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the soft and hard landscaping details submitted, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

- 3 All planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved landscaping details as agreed under condition 2 of this approval shall be carried out for each phase of the development hereby consented in the first planting and seeding seasons following the first occupation of the development hereby permitted or, the completion of the approved development whichever is the sooner.

**REASON:-** To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

- 4 All hard surfacing comprised in the approved landscaping details as specified in condition 2 of this approval shall be carried out for each phase of the development hereby consented prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted or, the completion of the approved development, whichever is the sooner.

**REASON:-** To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

- 5 Any trees or plants comprised within the scheme of landscaping, which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

- 6 No tree shown on the approved landscaping scheme, shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped within five years of the completion of development without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure the protection of those trees which should be retained in the interests of visual amenity.

- 7 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details approved under discharge of condition reference 23/00667/COND pertaining to bat and swift boxes, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The boxes shall be installed/integrated on the building/dwelling elevations as identified on Drawing number BM1-NPA-V1-1ABC-DR-Y-3200-A-C02 prior to occupation of the respective dwellings on which they are installed/integrated.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the development contributes to improving the ecology and biodiversity of the area.

- 8 Prior to the first occupation/use of the buildings/dwellings and development hereby permitted, the approved refuse/recycle stores and bin collection points for that building/dwelling/area shall be constructed in accordance with the details submitted with this planning application and shall be permanently retained in that form unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure that there is sufficient waste storage provision in accordance with the Council's standards is maintained for all dwellings and the development as a whole on site in perpetuity.

- 9 Prior to the first occupation/use of the buildings/dwellings and development hereby permitted the approved cycle parking stores for that building/dwelling shall be constructed in accordance with the details submitted with this planning application and shall be permanently retained in that form unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure that adequate cycle parking provision for the apartment buildings/local centre is provided on site in accordance with the Council's standards.

- 10 Prior to first occupation/use of Block 1 and/or 4 within phase 1C, with any non-residential use, where there is a need for external plant and machinery/kitchen extraction equipment (excluding equipment required under fire safety regulations) details shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** In the interests of visual amenity and to assess any impact on the amenities of residential properties in close proximity.

- 11 Notwithstanding the provisions of Classes A, B and C of Part 1, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revising, revoking or re-enactive that Order with or without modification) no internal or external alterations shall take place to any garage, which would preclude its use for housing motor vehicles and/or bicycles, no loft conversions including dormer windows / roof extensions, or roof lights and openings shall be constructed on the dwellinghouse(s) hereby permitted unless permission is granted on an application made to the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To enable the Local Planning Authority to fully consider the effects of development normally permitted by that Order to safeguard the amenities of the neighbouring properties from overlooking / loss of privacy and to ensure sufficient parking is available.

- 12 Prior to the first occupation of the non-residential units of Phase C hereby permitted (retail, leisure, office, commercial), details of the hours of operation of the non-residential units hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The non-residential units shall thereafter be occupied solely with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the detriment of the amenities of adjoining occupiers or users of the area generally.

- 13 Prior to relevant works in each respective phase or sub-phase of development, details of any external lighting to be installed, including but not limited to, street lighting, car park lighting and any proposed lighting (Non-advertisement) on Blocks 1 and 4 in Phase 1C hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved external lighting shall be provided before that phase of development is occupied.

**REASON:-** To ensure the development does not prejudice the amenities of adjoining occupiers, visual amenities of the area, protection of bats and to not prejudice highway safety.

- 14 Before any above-ground work is commenced on any individual phase or sub-phase of the development hereby permitted, samples of all external finishing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include:

- i. Facing and roof materials;
- ii. Juliette balcony and/or dormer window treatment;
- iii. Window material details;
- iv. External rainwater goods where permitted.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be retained.

**REASON:-** To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.

- 15 Prior to the first occupation or use of Phase 1C of the development hereby permitted, the proposed access, onsite car and cycle parking, servicing / loading, unloading / turning /waiting area(s) for the relevant phase(s) shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan(s) and retained thereafter available for that specific use, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

- 16 The temporary sales areas for Bellway Homes and Miller Homes Ltd as identified on Drawing numbers P1708.TH.109, P1708.TH.110, P1708.BMSA.01.L, BM1-OC-RMA-1E-DR-C-5400-R06, BM1-NPA-V1-1a-D2-L-5210-A-C05, and BM1-NPA-V1-1a-D2-L-5210-A-C06 shall be removed and the relevant areas completed to the satisfaction of the approved plans for these areas by such time as the dwellings noted as sales homes/visitor homes are to be occupied or the sales areas are no longer required, whichever is the soonest, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.



**REASON:-** For the avoidance of doubt.

- 17 The play areas approved for the development shall be provided within each respective phase in accordance with the Phasing plan P1708.PhaseP.02-A hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure each phase has adequate play space provision provided.

### **Pro-active Statement**

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage and 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 (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

### **INFORMATIVES**

#### **1 Hertfordshire Highways**

AN1) Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN2) Obstruction of public highway land: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to 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/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN3) Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN4) Avoidance of surface water discharge onto the highway: The applicant is advised that the Highway Authority has powers under section 163 of the Highways Act 1980, to take appropriate steps where deemed necessary (serving notice to the occupier of premises adjoining a highway) to prevent water from the roof or other part of the premises falling upon persons using the highway, or to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, surface water from the premises flowing on to, or over the footway of the highway.

AN5) Construction standards for works within the highway. The applicant is advised that in order to comply with this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter

into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. The construction of such works must be undertaken to the satisfaction and specification of the Highway Authority, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN6) Roads to remain private: The applicant is advised that the new roads marked on the submitted plan (BM1-OC-RMA-XX-DR-C-2025 Rev 06) associated with this development will remain unadopted (and shall not be maintained at public expense by the highway authority). At the entrance of the new estate the road name plate should indicate that it is a private road and the developer should put in place permanent arrangements for long-term maintenance.

AN7) The Public Rights of Way(s) should remain unobstructed by vehicles, machinery, materials, tools and any other aspects of the construction during works. Safe passage past the site should be maintained at all times for the public using this route. 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 or concrete) should be made good by the applicant to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority. No materials shall be stored or left on the highway including highway verges. If the above conditions cannot reasonably be achieved, then a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) would be required to close the affected route and divert users for any periods necessary to allow works to proceed, for which a fee would be payable to Hertfordshire County Council. Further information is available via the County Council website at <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/countryside-access/rights-of-way.aspx> or by contacting Rights of Way, Hertfordshire County Council on 0300 123 4047.

AN8) Abnormal loads and importation of construction equipment (i.e. large loads with: a width greater than 2.9m; rigid length of more than 18.65 sqm or weight of 44,000kg – company applicable cranes, piling machines etc.): The applicant is directed to ensure that operators confirm to the provisions of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Tyres)(General) Order 2003 in ensuring that the Highways Authority is provided with notice of such movements, and that appropriate indemnity is offered to the Highway Authority. Further information is available via the Government website [www.gov.uk/government/publications/abnormal-load-movements-application-and-notification-forms](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/abnormal-load-movements-application-and-notification-forms) or by telephoning 0300 123 4047.

## 2 **Thames Water**

With regards to surface water drainage, Thames Water would advise that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water, we would have no objection. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required.

## 12. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.

2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision adopted October 2020, Stevenage Design Guide adopted January 2023, The Impact of Development on Biodiversity adopted March 2021, Stevenage Borough Council Developer Contributions adopted March 2021.
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 September 2023 and Planning Policy Guidance March 2014.