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

**Date:** 26 October 2023

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**Lead Officer:** Zayd Al-Jawad

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Application No:	22/00806/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 115 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels D pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM

Drawing Nos.:	BM1-NPA-V1-0S-DR-L-7511-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-0S-DR-L-7512-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5225-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5226-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5227-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5228-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5229-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5230-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5231-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-Y-3201-A-C02; M1-NPA-V1-0S-DR-L-7405-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5203-A-C05; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5204-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-SP-L-5235-A-C03; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5300 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5301 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5302 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5303 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5304 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C- 5305 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5306 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR- C-5307 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5308 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D- DR-C-5309 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5310 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA- 1D-DR-C-5311 - R02; P1708.22-G; P1708.32-G; P1708.33-G; P1708.34- F; P1708.35-G; P1708.36-F; P1708.37-F; P1708.D.BN1.101; P1708.D.BN1.102; P1708.D.BN2.101; P1708.D.BN2.102 - REV A; P1708.D.BN2.103 - REV A; P1708.D.BR1.101; P1708.D.BR1.102; P1708.D.BR1.103; P1708.D.BR2.101; P1708.D.BR2.102; P1708.D.BR2.103; P1708.D.BR2.104; P1708.D.BW.101; P1708.D.BW.102; P1708.D.BW.103; P1708.D.BW1.101; P1708.D.BW1.102; P1708.D.CH1.101; P1708.D.CH1.102; P1708.D.CU.101; P1708.D.CU.102; P1708.D.CW1.101; P1708.D.CW1.102; P1708.D.CW1.103; P1708.D.CW1.104; P1708.D.DN.101; P1708.D.DN.102; P1708.D.DR.101; P1708.D.DR.102; P1708.D.DR.103; P1708.D.DR1.101; P1708.D.DR1.102; P1708.D.DR1.103; P1708.D.DR2.101; P1708.D.DR2.102; P1708.D.DR2.103; P1708.D.DR2.104; P1708.D.DR2.105; P1708.D.DR3.101; P1708.D.DR3.102; P1708.D.DR3.103; P1708.D.DR3.104; P1708.D.DR3.105; P1708.D.FW1.101; P1708.D.FW1.102; P1708.D.GF1.101; P1708.D.GF1.102; P1708.D.GF1.103; P1708.D.GF1.104; P1708.D.GF2.101; P1708.D.GF2.102; P1708.D.GF2.103; P1708.D.GF2.104; P1708.D.GF2.105; P1708.D.GW1.101; P1708.D.GW1.102; P1708.D.GW1.103; P1708.D.GW1.104; P1708.D.HN1.101; P1708.D.HN1.102; P1708.D.HN1.103; P1708.D.HN2.101; P1708.D.HN2.102; P1708.D.HN3.101; P1708.D.HN3.102; P1708.D.HN4.101; P1708.D.HN4.102; P1708.D.HP1.101; P1708.D.KF1.101; P1708.D.KF1.102; P1708.D.KF1.103; P1708.D.KF2.101; P1708.D.KF2.102; P1708.D.KF2.103; P1708.D.PG1.101; P1708.D.PG1.102; P1708.D.PG1.103; P1708.D.PG2.101; P1708.D.PG2.102; P1708.D.PH.101; P1708.D.PH.102; P1708.D.PH1.101; P1708.D.PH1.102; P1708.D.RE.101; P1708.D.RE.102; P1708.D.RE1.101; P1708.D.RE1.102; P1708.D.RE2.101; P1708.D.RE2.102; P1708.D.RE2.103; P1708.D.RE3.101; P1708.D.RE3.102; P1708.D.RE3.103; P1708.D.RE4.101; P1708.D.RE4.102; P1708.D.RT.101; P1708.D.SC.101; P1708.D.SC.102; P1708.D.SS.101 - REV A; P1708.D.SS.101 - REV A; P1708.D.SS.103 - REV A; P1708.D.TH.101; P1708.D.TH.102; P1708.D.TH.103; P1708.D.TH1.101; P1708.D.TH1.102 P1708.D.WA1.101; P1708.D.WA1.102; P1708.D.WA2.101; P1708.D.WA2.102; P1708.D.WA2.103; P1708.D.WA3.101; P1708.D.WA3.102; P1708.D.WE.101; P1708.D.WE.102; P1708.D.WN1.101; P1708.D.WN1.102; P1708.D.WN1.103 - REV A; P1708.GAR.101; P1708.GAR.102; P1708.GAR.104; P1708.GAR.107; P1708.GAR.108; P1708.PhaseP.02-A.
Applicant:	Bellway Homes (North London) and Miller Homes Ltd
Date Valid:	06 September 2022
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 23/00526/RMM is currently being considered 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) amendments to Phase 1C Local Centre pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM.
- 2.29 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.
- 2.30 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.
- 2.31 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.

- 2.32 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.
- 2.33 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.
- 2.34 Application reference 23/00669/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of Condition 14 (External Materials) relating to Phase 1A-C (Bellway Homes plots only) attached to reserved matters permission reference number 22/00810/RMM.
- 2.35 Application reference 23/00737/COND is currently being considered for the discharge of condition 14 (External Materials) relating to Phase 1A-C (Miller Homes plots only) 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 residentially 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 sites 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 amendments being considered under reference 23/00526/RMM, and with Phase 1D (the Conservation Area) being considered under this reserved matters application 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 for the development of Phase 1D located in the St Nicholas and Rectory lane Conservation Area. The proposed plans have undergone negotiations with officers and the LPA's heritage consultants BEAMS. The revised plans submitted include for the erection of 115 dwellings, including aspirational homes, all highways matters outside of the infrastructure application within this Phase, and landscaping and boundary treatments contained within this residential parcel located due east of Phase 1B. The eastern boundary of this parcel would abut the proposed Country Park.
- 5.2 This phase is made up predominantly of detached dwellings, with some pairs of semi-detached houses. Being located in the Conservation Area the phase includes the requirement to provide aspirational homes, which are larger dwellings with larger external garden areas. Designs take on more rural and sympathetic features and these have been changes implemented with amended plans following extensive officer negotiations.

- 5.3 Parking is typically provided by way of driveways and garages, with access off shared surface roads. Boundary treatments are made up of black three or five bar railings and hedges. Additional planting is provided along the eastern boundary of the phase, approved as part of the infrastructure reserved matters 22/00808/RMM. This phase of the development includes for foot/cycleway connections with phase 1B, the southern bridleway and the proposed Country Park.
- 5.4 Vehicular access would be provided by one of the spur roads in Phase 1B, which would extend south easterly into Phase 1D, where it would split at a 'T' junction. This spur road has been agreed as part of the infrastructure RM (ref 22/00808/RMM). To the west of Phase 1D is a green link, providing a footway with tree planting to provide shade and several benches. This green link would provide a landscaped buffer between this phase and Phase 1B to the west.

## **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 –

### 3 Underwood Road

As relatively new residents to the area we object strongly to applications 22/00806/RMM, 22/00781/RMM, 22/00810/RMM and 22/00808/RMM. All applications are inconsiderate to the local residents, business, habitat and wildlife.

In terms of triple bottom line this is a classic example of profit coming before people and the planet. The land is currently green belt and would appear to contravene the NPPF (Section 13 paragraph 138/141/149) in terms of removing its status as Green Belt, as stated in a number of previous objections, including the local MP Mr McPartland. The land doesn't appear to be acknowledged as being the last parcel of Stevenage land which is arable, alive with grounded and flighted wildlife (such as Red Kites, Foxes, Hedgehogs and Deer all year round, making the area ideal for walkers, riders and runners). Additionally, the land is internationally known as Forster country in recognition of the local heritage.

The rate of Stevenage's expansion is baffling with the east and west of town in current development with upwards of 2,500 houses and flats. With a severe lack of current infrastructure, Stevenage is currently unsustainable with the centre of Stevenage being no more than a ghost town. The council is effectively trying to build an inner-city without any of the city facilities which will ultimately increase crime and disorder.

No thought has been given to the impact on the local hospital and they do not appear to have been consulted as whether they can accommodate a further 5,000 residents (as a minimum) as a result of all the current housing developments, let alone the impact of this proposed site. Similarly, no proposals regarding increasing policing and council facilities have been set out. Perhaps the main concern is with regards to people, with concerning plans to build a school, never mind houses, so close to 440kW power lines. Before purchasing our own property, I walked the field with an electromagnetic force meter (EMF) and I would have grave concern for the safety of children given the only people who state power lines are safe are those that maintain and own them - EMF decreases in distance and exists up to approximately 60-80m as per the national grid website. The lines also suffer significantly from 'corona discharge' on any damp day, confirmed on the national grid website. It is audible early most mornings as can be heard on a recording taken at 6am on 14.9.2022 (recording available). The recording was taken 100m from the pylon on a non-raining morning when there was moisture in the air. It is a lot worse in drizzle. This is a loud buzzing which resonates for over 200m. It is inconceivable that the Council thinks it is acceptable that people should live near that sound which only gets louder the nearer you get to the lines/pylon.



The traffic on Graveley Road should be remonitored, with previous data binned as skewed and biased, now we are close to 'normal again following the Covid-19 outbreak. It ought to be noted that there have been 27 accidents along the London Road, where the access road is proposed up to June 2021 - more updated information not being readily available. Bearing in mind that at least a year of had low traffic due to people working from home etc, this number is not insignificant. London Road is regularly at a standstill as a fall out from accidents on the A1M junction 8 and this does not appear to have been taken into consideration when assessing the current road structure and sustainability. Cycling to work I personally notice the backup at Thomas Alleyne School, the accidents, and those that use the road to bypass Coreys Mill A1(m) junction. This road cannot sustain the amount of traffic that will be generated. Additionally, there is an industrial estate being built opposite the proposed access roads which too will increase the traffic in terms of employees and goods movement. No proper traffic management has been proposed and this ought to be paramount for the safety of all residents and visitors.

Whilst the above are general objections we also seek reassurances should the plans progress, specific to our own household, firstly, that the bridle path running along Granby/Underwood Road and Chouler Gardens would be suitably 'barriered' from the development in terms of rat runs and cut throughs, a hedge and intermittent trees as per NPA 10651 701 P02 seems considerate but not suitable for prevention with the Underwood Road access marked as existing pedestrian access on illustrative plans. Secondly that the exposure of the houses and apartments up to 12.5m in height, with regards to sight and sound, along the bridle path is considered in terms of the height of the natural barrier or tree line with respect to existing privacy. Lastly, the introduction of large amounts of pollution to the local area without any obvious offset to the carbon footprint deficit.

Whilst we are modern citizens proud to live in a progressive town, this particular development seems to also mirror another development north of the tree line by North Herts Council, reference NS1 (900 homes), quoted as integrating and adjoining the Stevenage development, then totalling 1700 homes in reality. This seems somewhat subversive, if true, and needs to be raised for the purposes of integrity and onward ethical scrutiny.

## 7 Mathews Close

Taking each of my objections and concerns in order:

### 1 - Drainage Plans

The proposed land for development of new houses, community buildings and "country park", will further exacerbate the existing issue of drainage / surface water, these are known and proven issues. It seems the water issue may potentially being dealt with, under the guise of a Country Park.

I live adjacent to the two areas designated to be dug out for overflow drainage. I have lived in my house for 25 years. What assurance is there for me as a private home owner, that the intended overflow areas will not overflow? In the event they do overflow, who is liable for the potential damage to my property and that of my neighbours'? For what duration does that liability last?

### 2 - Agricultural Land

It is a fact, we are in a climate emergency and we need to feed people. There is an ongoing war in Ukraine which is expected to last a further 10 years. There is a need in the UK for farming to be more productive and increase biodiversity. Why at such a time do SBC support the building of a country park stripping away further agricultural land, for a large amount will already go with the proposed building of a significant number of houses?

In fact, why do SBC intend to build houses on land which is currently agricultural and previously designated as greenbelt at all while there are various proposed areas for housing to be built on brownfield sites closer to the town centre and industrial areas especially as we are entering recession? Those brownfield areas should be developed first, before any more agricultural land is destroyed.

### 3 - Current Circumstances

I ask SBC re-evaluates their plans and give thorough consideration, to the current issues, namely: the economic climate in that the UK is entering a period of recession, there is Climate emergency and a world shortage of food. It seems SBC is adamant this scheme will go ahead, despite strong opposition, with an area of natural beauty being torn up for a large number of new houses, community buildings and "country park". Stevenage does not have an abundance of areas of natural beauty. As such, all brownfield sites should be developed first, before further agricultural land and countryside is torn up and SBC should consider the current economic and sustainability issues.

I should be grateful if my concerns and questions are answered, especially those in Part 1, thank you.

### 50 Grace Way

This proposal is set to destroy our natural open countryside, enjoyed currently by many people. Walking in nature is free and to deny this natural resource will have implications for our mental health. There is also the implications to the local wildlife, this is the only local place I know where you can still hear a lark singing. This will be gone forever.

The local roads are already busy and cannot support more traffic. It is often gridlocked around Lister Hospital which in itself will cause more problems when minutes count on getting ambulances to arrive in time to save lives.

GP practices and dentists are also at full capacity which is another issue for the area.

### 2 The Priory

Building work on this site and the adjoining areas is likely to be very disruptive to access to the remaining countryside beyond. It is vital that the various public footpaths and bridleways (Stevenage 015, 017, 018, 022, 023) remain open and usable by the public. Please ensure that this is a condition before construction starts.

### 71 Burymead

To destroy this beautiful part of our landscape when we need to preserve areas like this for wildlife and with the war in Ukraine and food shortages we need farmland to grow food in England, not to build further dwellings where no infrastructure especially when emergency services are stretched beyond limits it can cope, we also need to keep historic parts of this town and to increase traffic and other gases into the air would be an environmental disaster.

### 33 Kilner Close

Please leave our areas of natural beauty alone. We need green spaces. This area has historical importance.

How can you propose more houses when the area cannot cope with the numbers we currently have. Recently there was a 12 hour wait to be seen at lister. Spend the money improving the lack of services current on offer before increasing the local housing population.

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

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

#### Original Plans Consultation Response

- 7.1.1 In the pre application for the Phase 1A-C residential area of the North Road, Stevenage site HCC Highways Development Management had discussions with the designer regarding road widths and HCC's emerging Place and Movement Planning and Design Guide. The guide indicates that shared mews surfaces should be 5m wide in the interest of creating not only a sense of 'Place' and also safely controlling vehicle speeds. By way of compromise it was agreed in Phase 1A-C to have tight 5m wide entries to the Mews streets in the interest of controlling speeds safely, before flaring to 6m. It is considered that the current width of Phase 1D Mews streets will facilitate unsafe vehicle speeds.

#### Amended Plans Consultation Response

- 7.1.4 **Comments** HCC Highways originally had concerns as to the layout facilitating inappropriate speeds, the applicant has subsequently introduced greater horizontal deflection into the Phase 1D residential area. Therefore, after reviewing the swept path drawings and finding them acceptable, HCC Highways wishes to withdraw its objection to Reserved Matters Application (RMA) and now recommend approval.
- 7.1.5 **Recommendation** Notice is given under article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission. 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:
- 7.1.6 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.
- 7.1.7 AN2) 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.
- 7.1.8 AN3) 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 overspills 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.

- 7.1.9 AN4) 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 Stevenage Borough Council's Drainage Consultant**

- 7.2.1 To be reported.

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

- 7.3.1 Parcel D is part of a wider site with outline consent for residential development, a new local centre and an associated country park. Parcel D lies within the boundary of the St Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area, where new development should preserve, and ideally, enhance the character and appearance of that area. The scheme has been revised during the Reserved Matters application process.
- 7.3.2 BEAMS has a fundamental issue with the density of the development within parcel D, however as this was approved at the outline application stage and the developers have not been willing to lower the density, there is seemingly little that can be done to improve this. A regrettable situation.
- 7.3.3 Some changes have been made to the layout and appearance of the dwellings themselves, and some semi-detached dwellings have been introduced. The dwellings backing on to the Country Park boundary have been reoriented and landscaping / boundary treatments improved. Some properties feature dropped eaves / ridge height and chimneys have been introduced on some of the dwellings. Greater thought has been given to external construction materials.
- 7.3.4 Despite all these minor changes the development is still far too suburban in terms of house design, layout and density - it still has the appearance of a standard housing development, as seen throughout the country and relates poorly to the Conservation Area in which it lies.
- 7.3.5 NPPF Paragraph 197 requires local planning authorities to take account of the desirability of new developments making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. NPPF Paragraph 199 requires 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'.
- 7.3.6 NPPF 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'.
- 7.3.7 BEAMS advise that the proposal, whilst slightly improved in terms of design / detailing, is not sufficiently sympathetic to the character and appearance of the St Nicholas / Rectory Lane Conservation Area in which it lies. The proposal will therefore result in 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset.
- 7.3.8 NPPF 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. It is recommended the Local Authority, as decision maker weighs the harm identified against the public benefits of the proposal.

## **7.4 North Hertfordshire District Council**

7.4.1 Thank-you for consulting North Hertfordshire on the Reserved Matters application for site-wide infrastructure as a neighbouring authority. We have identified a number of reconciliation issues between the land covered by this application and adjoining land in North Hertfordshire allocated for development (site NS1) which we consider require further resolution. These include, but are not limited to:

- The nature and design of the principal connection between the two sites;
- Potential secondary and tertiary connection points between the two sites; and
- How the above might be affected or influenced by other connections and routes within the Stevenage site including but not necessarily limited to:
  - o The main spine / circular route within the Stevenage site;
  - o Routes and connections to / from the proposed Country Park; and
  - o Potential pedestrian and cycle connectivity along and across the southern boundary of the Stevenage site into the wider network within the town.

7.4.2 These issues have potential consequential implications for 22/00810/RMM. Beyond the general comments below, we have no specific comments on 22/00806/RMM. We have not provided comments on the detail of 22/00781/RMM at this stage. We may wish to comment further following further resolution of the potential approach to green infrastructure on site NS1. However, our general comments set out in this letter should be taken into account in your consideration of this application.

### **7.4.3 Policy context (applicable to all applications)**

Since the issuing of the outline permission for this scheme and the submission of these reserved matters applications to Stevenage Borough Council, North Hertfordshire has adopted its new Local Plan for the period 2011-2031. This is now part of the statutory Development Plan for the District. The North Hertfordshire Local Plan allocates land adjoining this scheme on site NS1. Following adoption of our own Plan there is greater certainty around the likelihood of this site being brought forward for development. The relevant policy requirements in the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan are a now significant material consideration for these applications that should be appropriately reflected in your determination of these applications alongside the Development Plan for Stevenage and other relevant material considerations.

7.4.4 Policy HO3 of the Stevenage Local Plan sets out the site-specific requirements for the site, with the introductory paragraph and first three criteria of particular relevance:

Land to the North of Stevenage, as defined by the policies map, is allocated for the development of approximately 800 dwellings. A Masterplan for the whole site will need to be submitted as part of an outline planning application. The Masterplan must be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site. Development proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can demonstrate that development can be expanded beyond the Borough boundary, and fully integrated with a wider, cross-boundary scheme;
- b. Satisfactory vehicular access is provided. At least two access points to and from the site will be required, which link effectively into the existing road, cycleway and pedestrian networks;
- c. The scheme is designed to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport...

7.4.5 The supporting text adds:

*9.23 This site forms part of a wider potential development opportunity which stretches beyond the Borough boundary. North Hertfordshire have consulted on delivering a further 1,000 homes*

*to the north of Stevenage. Any prospective developer should liaise with North Hertfordshire and adjacent landowners / developers to ensure that proposals on this site can be fully integrated with a wider scheme in the future. The approval of a Masterplan will be required prior to the submission of detailed development proposals for the site*

7.4.6 The supporting text to Policy IT1 of the Stevenage Local Plan states  
*8.4 The Borough Council and developers should continue to work closely with North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure the access arrangements for this site allow for integration with any subsequent schemes beyond the administrative boundary. The preferred long-term solution is a continuous link from the identified access point on North Road to a new or improved junction within North Hertfordshire at, or close to, the existing North Road / Graveley Road intersection approximately 150 metres north of the administrative boundary.*

7.4.7 The most relevant parts of the equivalent site allocation policy for adjoining site NS1 in North Hertfordshire read:

Policy SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage
<p>Land to the north of Stevenage within Graveley parish, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated as a Strategic Housing Site for a new neighbourhood of approximately 900 homes.</p> <p>A comprehensive and deliverable Strategic Masterplan for the entire allocation is to be prepared and agreed between the landowner/developer and the Council.</p> <p>Where applications have already been submitted to the Council a Strategic Masterplan should be agreed prior to the or as part of the grant of planning permission.</p> <p>Any application on part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole.</p> <p>Development proposals should provide the following planning and masterplanning requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Integration with adjoining development in Stevenage Borough including site-wide solutions for access, sustainable travel, education, retail, and other necessary medical and social infrastructure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...</li> <li>ii. travel provision designed having regard to the Stevenage Mobility Strategy and including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective links into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks; and</li> <li>• an upgraded junction at the intersection of Graveley Road / North Road...</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

7.4.8 The supporting text adds:

*4.218 The area north of Stevenage is currently undeveloped farm land in the parish of Graveley. Adjoining land within Stevenage Borough to the south has been identified for development and this provides an opportunity for a coherent extension of the town to the north. A masterplanning exercise for this site will need to consider the collective implications of these allocations and demonstrate appropriate solutions. This may lead to some facilities which will serve the whole development being located wholly within either North Hertfordshire's or Stevenage's administrative areas.*

*4.219 It is envisaged that principal access to the site will be in the form of a looped estate road, one end of which will be in Stevenage Borough. The northern end of this road will emerge at, or close to, the existing junction of the B197 at Graveley Road / North Road. A*

*new arrangement, possibly a roundabout, will need to be provided. Any transport proposals should consider the effects on adjacent networks and communities such as Graveley, and propose suitable mitigation; the analysis should also consider cumulative impacts.*

*4.220 The site will need to integrate provision for walkers, cyclists and public transport in line with the aims of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy. This will include connections to the wider sustainable travel network. These measures, along with wider transport and mobility proposals arising from development of the site, will be developed in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council and Stevenage Borough Council.*

- 7.4.9 It is clear that both plans envisage the 'end point' for the combined northern extension of town being comprehensively integrated and experienced as a single whole. In particular they envisage a shared primary route serving both sites. This is in keeping with good design and placemaking principles and reflects the fact that – notwithstanding the administrative boundary between the two sites – future residents' day-to-day experience of the sites would and should be as part of the town of Stevenage.
- 7.4.10 Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4 is a relevant material consideration with the following policies of particular importance:
- Policy 1: *Transport User Hierarchy*
  - Policy 5: *Development Management*
  - Policy 6: *Accessibility*
  - Policy 7: *Active Travel – Walking*
  - Policy 8: *Active Travel – Cycling*
  - Policy 9: *Buses*
  - Policy 12: *Network Management*, in particular: • Policy 14: *Climate Change Network Resilience*
  - Policy 19: *Emissions Reduction*, in particular:
  - Policy 21: *Environment*, in particular:
- 7.4.11 Other relevant material considerations – which were not published at the time the outline application was last considered by the Council's Planning Committee (December 2020) should also be appropriately taken into account. These include (but are not necessarily limited to):
- 7.4.12 **Revised NPPF:** The revised NPPF was published in July 2021 and includes a series of new and reinforced measures to improve design quality such as (but not limited to):
- The use of appropriate tools such as masterplans to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community (para 73);
  - Ensuring streets and transport elements reflect national policy on design (para 110); and
  - Use of the new National Model Design Code and the National Design Guide to inform decisions on applications in the absence of locally produced design guides or codes (para 129)
- 7.4.13 The **National Design Guide**, first published in 2019, is structured around ten key characteristics within which 29 principles are identified. Collectively they set out the Government's approach to good design. The NDC should be read as a whole, and all characteristics taken into account. However, for the purposes of these comments, the following are particularly highlighted:
- Principle B3 encourages the use of destinations to inform the framework of development;
  - Principle M1 seeks 'a connected network of routes for all modes of transport' and promotes a clear layout and hierarchy of streets and other routes.
  - Principle M2 supports a coherent, priority network for active travel;

- Principle N1 asks for a network of high quality, green open spaces embedded in a strategic GI system taking into account how spaces are connected

7.4.14 **LTN1/20 revised standards for cycling provision:** Published in July 2020 as part of the *Gear Change* strategy these (in broad terms, and subject to various considerations) seek the separation of cycling and pedestrian uses, the provision of segregated cycling facilities where possible and dissuades the use of shared footways. As part of the one-year review of *Gear Change* the Government have announced the creation of *Active Travel* England who, among other duties will act as a statutory consultee on larger planning applications to ensure they provide properly for cycling and walking. Of particular relevance are, for primary streets, Sections 4 *Design principles and processes* and 5 *Geometric requirements* and, for secondary streets, Section 7 *Quiet mixed traffic streets and lanes*.

7.4.15 The Borough Council should satisfy itself that the reserved matters applications under consideration (i) comply with relevant policy requirements and considerations at the point of determination to ensure an appropriately designed scheme within Stevenage Borough and (ii) facilitate the future delivery of a fully policy-compliant scheme on the adjoining NS1 site within North Hertfordshire.

7.4.16 **General approach to liaison and integration**

As above, Stevenage's Local Plan is clear that "*any prospective developer should liaise with North Hertfordshire and adjacent landowners / developers to ensure that proposals on this site can be fully integrated with a wider scheme in the future*".

There has been no proactive engagement with the District Council on these applications initiated by the applicant. North Hertfordshire convened a meeting to discuss integration issues with the Borough Council, County Council, the applicant, and representatives of the adjacent landowners. A number of issues were discussed, and it was agreed that a further workshop would be required with transport and landscape representatives. The District Council sought to arrange this, but the proposed date was declined by the applicant and no alternate has been proposed.

7.4.17 The applicant has identified to the Borough Council that it considers this engagement to be 'very informal', 'very late in the day' with proposals for NS1 'at a very early stage' with a 'need to treat comments accordingly'. They have further stated that substantive alterations would 'not be reasonable at this late stage and would unduly delay SBC's consideration' of the applications.

Inconvenience to the applicant is not a material planning consideration. It is not a valid reason to avoid pursuing alterations to the scheme which have a clear planning rationale and would assist in ensuring the scheme properly addresses policy requirements.

## 7.5 Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way

7.5.1 No comments received at the time of drafting this report.

## 7.6 Council's Arboricultural Manager

7.6.1 No further comments to add.

## 7.7 Council's Parks and Amenities / Green Spaces

### Original plans consultation response

7.7.1 We note that:



*“Single species hedge planting to houses has been provided throughout Phase 1D to define boundaries and provide privacy in relation to busier or more open areas of the development.”*

Whilst we agree in principle with this design which helps provide some continuity, it can give streets a more ‘clinical’ feel. Furthermore, we have concerns about resilience to pests, diseases, climate change etc. As such, we would like to see greater species diversity in this type of planting.

- 7.7.2 Consideration should be given to providing protection of those areas of landscaping on road corners, which could be vulnerable to damage from large vehicles (such as refuse/delivery lorries) and parking. Furthermore, some small/narrow areas within the design may struggle to establish which may be more suitable for hard landscaping.
- 7.7.3 All planted areas need to be accessible for maintenance by the Management Company. Some areas could have further opportunities for small/medium tree planting. Street tree varieties mainly consist of *Prunus*, *Carpinus* and *Acer spp*. However, we believe the scheme should provide greater diversity in tree species and forms within the streetscape to improve resilience where possible.
- 7.7.4 For those street trees proposed to be planted next to a road, enough space must be provided so as not to cause interference for large vehicles (e.g., refuse lorries) and/or street lighting. Please substitute Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) in the Mixed Species Hedgerow schedule with a suitable alternative, as this can out-compete other species.

#### Amended plans consultation response

- 7.7.5 No further comments to add.

### **7.8 Historic England**

- 7.8.1 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\*).
- 7.8.2 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.
- 7.8.3 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.

- 7.8.4 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.
- 7.8.5 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.
- 7.8.6 *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.
- 7.8.7 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’.
- 7.8.8 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.
- 7.8.9 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’.
- 7.8.10 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.
- 7.8.11 *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

- 7.8.12 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.
- 7.8.13 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.

### **7.9 Environment Agency**

- 7.9.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

### **7.10 Thames Water**

- 7.10.1 We have no comment to make regarding the consulted reserved matters.

### **7.11 Affinity Water**

- 7.11.1 No comments received at time of drafting this report.

### **7.12 Anglian Water**

- 7.12.1 No comments received at time of drafting this report.

### **7.13 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust**

- 7.13.1 No objections

### **7.14 UK Power Networks**

- 7.14.1 No comments received at time of drafting this report.

### **7.15 Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)**

- 7.15.1 I write with reference to the above reserved matters applications for residential development, including the Country Park, following the recent granting of outline planning permission. CPRE Hertfordshire has a long history of objection to the release of the Green Belt land known as 'Forster Country' for residential development, and continues to be concerned that the detailed proposals by developers are of insufficient quality and scope, given the significance of the area in landscape and heritage terms.
- 7.15.2 We believe there is a specific responsibility to achieve the highest possible quality of development when the land was previously designated as protected to preserve its rural character permanently. This responsibility is compounded by the environmental requirements of recent legislation, including Climate Change Acts, and given the length of time that has elapsed since the original application, it is appropriate to review key objectives and components of the proposed development at this reserved matters. Specific CPRE Hertfordshire concerns are as follows.

- 7.15.3 With regard to the reserved matters applications for the residential and other development, the primary concern is of a major opportunity lost with regard to the establishment of high quality and appropriate development on land that was originally designated to be protected from inappropriate development permanently. The Applicant's Planning Statement relating to planning application number 22/00806 (RMA: Phase 1 Parcel D) notes the promotion of three 'Character Areas' for new housing.
- 7.15.4 The over-whelming impression of the plans submitted, both in terms of street layout and housing types, is of standard housing estates with scant attention paid to principles of good urban design, sustainable transport, or the development of a coherent neighbourhood and sense of place. The recently published 'A Housing Audit for England (2020)' undertaken by the Place Alliance and supported by CPRE, identified the lack of design quality in developments on 142 greenfield sites throughout the country, and the criteria utilised in that study would be likely to provide a similar assessment when applied to this application.
- 7.15.5 The lack of ambition with regard to the standard house types proposed together with inadequate landscaping and drainage treatments is most disappointing, when there is the opportunity to provide an exemplar development as part of an extension to Stevenage Old Town, demonstrating innovative design and provision which addresses the challenges of climate change in a sensitive and valued location. The increasing requirements to take account of environmental issues, as evidenced by the enactment of the Climate Change Acts and related legislation, should encourage innovation and higher standards.

## **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 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;

## **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 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 and other heritage assets, 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.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 **North of Stevenage Policy**
  - 9.4.1 The site has two site specific policies that should be identified as key elements will come out 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.

9.4.2 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.

9.4.3 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.

9.4.4 Given the nature of this RM proposing the residential parcel D 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.

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

9.5.1 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”.

- 9.5.2 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.
- 9.5.3 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”.
- 9.5.4 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”.
- 9.5.5 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.
- 9.5.6 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.
- 9.5.7 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.
- 9.5.8 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.



9.5.9 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.

9.5.10 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.

9.5.11 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.

9.5.12 The application seeks to provide 115 residential units in the south eastern part of the site, which falls within the Conservation Area and due east of Phase 1B (part of approval reference 22/00810/RMM for 243 dwellings across Phases 1A-C). 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 1D's provision of dwellings, Phase 1A-C has been approved under reference 22/00810/RMM with a revised local centre design being considered under reference 23/00526/RMM, taking the total for Phase 1 up to 358 dwellings.

#### Layout

9.5.13 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 will 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.

9.5.14 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.

- 9.5.15 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.
- 9.5.16 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. The exception here is the aspirational homes, proposed only in this phase of the development to reduce density levels and provide more individually designed houses in the Conservation Area. The layout creates good surveillance in the area and prevents rear boundaries from being prominent in the street scene.

#### Character Areas

- 9.5.17 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.
- 9.5.18 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)



- 9.5.19 It is of note that the areas relating to Main Street and Local Centre, Green Edge and The Neighbourhood will not be discussed as part of this application as they refer to parcel 1A-C and have been / are being considered in their own right under planning references 22/00806/RMM and 23/00526/RMM respectively.

#### St Nicholas' End

- 9.5.20 The St Nicholas' End character area is fully contained within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area which also covers land to the north east, east and south east of this area. Predominantly this would cover the area proposed as the Country Park for the development and as allocated in the Stevenage Local Plan, as well as land off Rectory Lane and Weston Road.
- 9.5.21 The overall policy requirements for the North of Stevenage site (HO3) includes the provision of at least 5% aspirational homes in line with Policy HO9. As advised in the Stevenage Local Plan to qualify as aspirational, houses should be:
- Built in small groups in suitable suburban and edge-of-town locations;
  - Low density, typically between 8 and 15 dwellings per hectare;
  - Detached with at least four bedrooms and two bathrooms;
  - Sited in large plots with a built footprint generally in excess of 100 sqm and rear gardens of at least 200 sqm; and
  - Set back from the road and provided with at least two off-street parking spaces.
- 9.5.22 The Local Plan does also recognise that on larger sites, such as this one, the requirement could result in a significant number of aspirational homes that might not be desirable in a single location. A lower proportion of homes will be acceptable in these instances. In this case it is proposed to provide a total of 28 (5%) aspirational homes, sited in three groupings along the most easterly side of the parcel. It is noted that one of these units has a garden slightly under the recommended 200 sqm, but otherwise meets the criteria fully. Given the shortfall is minimal, the provision is considered acceptable.

- 9.5.23 Additionally, St Nicholas' End character area is mainly detached family dwellings, with only a small number of semi-detached dwellings (a negotiation of the Council's historic advisors). Of the 115 dwellings proposed in this area the break-down of bedrooms is as follows –
- 2 bed dwellings x 6;
  - 3 bed dwellings x 39;
  - 4 bed dwellings x 44; and
  - 5 bed dwellings x 26.

#### Parcel 1D Conservation Area

- 9.5.24 Contained fully within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area, this parcel of development would be bound on the west by the green link separating parcel 1B, to the south by the PROW which stretches the length of the southern boundary of the site and existing properties off Chancellors Road, Granby Road and various cul-de-sac beyond that. To the east the site abuts the proposed Country Park with a significant landscaping buffer/screen along the extent of this boundary. To the north, this parcel would be bounded by the main central green corridor (as approved under the infrastructure RM reference 22/00810/RMM) as it intersects with the Country Park to the east.
- 9.5.25 The parcel, given its proximity to the proposed Country Park and within the Conservation Area, has a greater emphasis on landscaping and green infrastructure. All four boundaries of the parcel are met with green areas, whether these be green connections within the site for pedestrians and cyclists, or landscaped green areas, such as the extensive belt of tree and shrub planting along the eastern boundary with the proposed Country Park. The aspirational homes street scene incorporates larger areas of green at the property frontages, including an increased number in public trees along this vista.
- 9.5.26 The property frontages within the parcel also incorporate a greater volume of hedgerows and use of more sympathetic boundary treatments such as three or five bar railings. The area is low rise built form with two storey dwellings only, at a lower density than phases 1A-C, largely due to the aspirational houses larger plots and the site being within the Conservation Area. The properties would be accessed by shared surfaces and private driveways lowering the overall highway hierarchy in this area.
- 9.5.27 The proposed house types and their layout have undergone amendments following concerns raised by Historic England and the Council's historic advisors, BEAMS. The layout in particular of the aspirational homes now take on a more cluster feel within the street, rather than straight lines of properties just facing the road. This has created a greater sense of place in these small clusters with greater areas of shared green space and trees. In terms of house types, the parcel now includes a greater number of house types, to incorporate a greater material palette, as well as the opportunity to include greater numbers of rural elements and features on the dwellings.
- 9.5.28 These include the provision of chimneys, half-hipped and hipped roof designs, gable projections, bay windows, lower eaves heights and pitched roof dormer window style fenestration. The materials palette largely consists of red brick (with some buff) and grey, red or brown roof tiles, with some instances of tile hanging and cream render on frontages. The materials plan proposed shows the material make up of each dwelling and its position within the parcel. This ensures a good mixture of house types and materials within the area to prevent repetition and to create a well-balanced street scene. Final details of materials would be controlled through imposition of condition to ensure high quality of materials in this area.

#### Conclusion

- 9.5.29 In conclusion, it is considered the layout, scale and design of Phase 1 parcel D has presented a good balance between the new development coming forward and the existing siting and context of the site within the Conservation Area and 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.

- 9.5.30 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. St Nicolas' End as one of the character areas proposed for the larger site, creates a clear distinctive parcel in the Conservation Area, whilst showing a legibility with the green edge and neighbourhood character areas in parcel 1B. This ensures 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.

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

- 9.6.1 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".

- 9.6.2 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).

- 9.6.3 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.'

- 9.6.4 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.

- 9.6.5 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.
- 9.6.6 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
- 9.6.7 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.
- 9.6.8 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”
- 9.6.9 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.

9.6.10 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.

9.6.11 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

9.6.12 The outline application was accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) which assessed the proposals at outline stage on the designated heritage assets. The current application has been supported by a Heritage Technical Statement (HTS) which summarises the outline application HIA findings in order to consider the potential impact of the reserved matters application being considered here.

9.6.13 Of note, and quoted in the HTS submitted is recent guidance provided by Historic England which introduced the concept of ‘interests’ to assess the significance of heritage assets (HEAN 12: Statements of Heritage Significance – Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019)), with reference to the following criteria:

- Architectural and artistic interest: Interest form the design or general aesthetics of a place. Derived from conscious design or fortuitously through evolution. More specifically, it relates to the science of design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration. Artistic interest is an interest in other human skill, such as sculpture.
- Historic interest: An interest in past lives and events. It tends to be illustrative or associative. Providing a material record of the nation’s past, it can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and it can symbolise wider value such as faith or cultural identity.
- Archaeological interest: Deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity that is worthy of expert investigation.

9.6.14 The application site forms the western boundary of the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area, which spans the length of Rectory Lane and fields to the south, along Weston Road to the west of the road and extends northwards with the boundary following the extent of the site boundary. The Conservation Area includes a number of listed buildings and the roads mentioned above form part of an historic road system that led from the former Great North Road and continued to the village of Weston, past Chesfield Park. E M. Forster spent some of his childhood at Rooks Nest House (Grade I listed) and the arable fields to the west of the house are known as ‘Forster Country’ by many as a result.

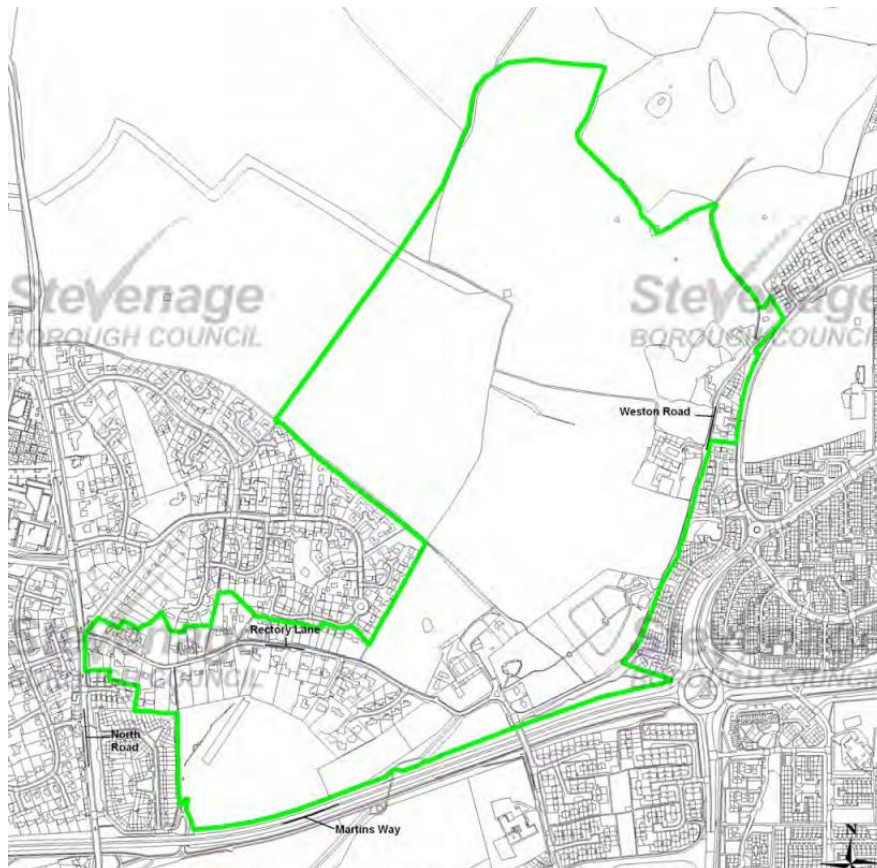


9.6.15 The HTS submitted succinctly states the heritage assets considered to be affected by the proposed development of Phase 1D, which is agreed by officers. This may be through visual and/or non-visual impacts on their setting. These assets are as follows –

- St Nicholas/Rectory Lane conservation area;
- Rooks Nest House Howards (GI listed – NHLE 1176972);
- Rooks Nest Farmhouse (GII listed – NHLE 1101154);
- L-shaped building west of Rooks Nest Farmhouse (GII listed – NHLE 1031558);
- The Old Bury (GII\* listed – NHLE 1348098);
- Church of St Nicholas (GI listed – NHLE 1176923); and
- Chesfield Park (non-designated heritage asset).

#### *St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area*

9.6.16 The boundary of the conservation area is shown on the plan below taken from the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012). Due regard is therefore given to the Management Plan which 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.



9.6.17 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.

9.6.18 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.”

9.6.19 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.”

#### 9.6.20 *Listed Buildings*

9.6.20 The red line area of the proposed Phase 1D is fully sited within the St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area, at its north western edge above the existing Chancellors Road and Granby Road estates which do not fall within the conservation area boundaries. In close proximity of the site red line plan are the following listed buildings –

- Rooks Nest House (Howards), Weston Road (Grade I)
- Rooks Nest Farm and Barns, Weston Road (Grade II)
- Church of Saint Nicholas, Rectory Lane (Grade I)
- The Old Bury, Rectory Lane (Grade II\*)

9.6.21 Rooks Nest House is located on the west side of Weston Road and is to the east of the Site with its garden/curtilage sharing a boundary with the Site. The house is a two storey plus attic 17th century timber frame building (or earlier), re-fronted in red brick in the 18th century. The principal range is three bays wide with pitched clay tile roof and two dormer casement windows and a timber porch over the ground floor entrance. The house was the childhood home of E. M. Forster and the house and landscape described in his novel ‘Howards End’ is based on Rooks Nest House and the countryside around it.

9.6.22 The Heritage Technical Statement submitted provides a good analysis of the setting of Rooks Nest House stating that ‘the house’s setting is comprised of its garden curtilage, the properties along Weston Road, including Rooks Nest Farmhouse (GII listed) which features

in Howard's End and with which the house has historical connections, and the agricultural land to the north west of the property which include land within the Site. The relationship of the house with Rooks Nest Farm and the agricultural land are key elements of the setting of Rooks Nest House and contribute to its significance'.

- 9.6.23 It further adds 'the garden of Rooks Nest House is largely surrounded by mature vegetation, which limits intervisibility between the Site and the heritage asset. In addition, the rural character of the agricultural land which forms its setting has changed since the late-19th century when Forster was familiar with the area. In particular, the pattern of hedgerows which has been largely lost or diminished, the 20th century buildings of Stevenage have encroached into many of the views, two overhead electricity lines cross the area, with three pylons to the north of Rooks Nest House, and constant traffic noise is also audible which betrays the proximity of major road networks and urban development. These 20th century elements of the landscape around the asset undermine its historically rural setting'.
- 9.6.24 Rooks Nest Farmhouse and Barns (the L-shaped buildings to the west of the farmhouse) are also located on the west side of Weston Road, to the east of the site. The farmhouse is similarly 17<sup>th</sup> century with 18<sup>th</sup> and/or 19<sup>th</sup> century additions. The house is two-storey featuring a tiled gable roof. The L-shaped outbuilding is also 17<sup>th</sup> century, mid-to-late, with 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. The timber framed building with feather edge board cladding on a brick plinth comprises two barns set at a right angle to one another with feature plain roof tiles.
- 9.6.25 The two listed buildings have group interest and a historic literal association with Rooks Nest House with the farm being mentioned in 'Howards End'. Their setting is also similar to Rooks Nest House and their relationship with the land and house contribute to their significance. The same overhead powerlines and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings of the town which have encroached on the land detract from their setting.
- 9.6.26 The Church of St Nicholas is a Grade I listed building of 12<sup>th</sup> century origins (the west tower and nave) and 13<sup>th</sup> century aisles. The 12<sup>th</sup> century chancel was rebuilt circa 1330. Further additions occurred in the 1800's with further enlargements in 1912-14. The church has architectural interest as a medieval ecclesiastical building and artistic interest from its interior and statuary. Historically its interest is being a focus point for the early development of Stevenage.
- 9.6.27 The HTS again offers a good outline of its significance stating 'The setting of the church is defined by its churchyard which extends east and south-east of the building, the listed buildings in its setting with which the church has group value and the agricultural land to the north, which includes land within the Site. Each of these elements contributes positively to the setting and so significance of the church. It should be noted that the mature trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the churchyard result in the immediate setting of the church having an enclosed character, with its wider setting to the north being open countryside. Elements which detract from its setting include the 20th century buildings of Stevenage which have encroached into many views of the church from within the site, the overhead electricity lines and pylons which cross the area and the constant traffic noise which is also audible and betrays the proximity of major road networks and urban development. These 20th century elements of the landscape around the asset undermine its historically rural setting'.
- 9.6.28 The Old Bury (Grade II\* listed) lies to the west of the church and is late 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The two-storey house is timber framed behind white plaster, with a tiled roof with cross gables and tall chimney stacks. The building has historic interest in its understanding of the settlement of Stevenage with architectural interest because of its age. The buildings setting is comprised of its garden curtilage, the church, churchyard and nearby cottages, as well as the agricultural land to the north east which includes land within the site. Its setting and historic relationship with the above-mentioned buildings contribute to its significance.

- 9.6.29 Similarly to the above-mentioned listed buildings, 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings of Stevenage which have encroached into many of the views of the area and the overhead power lines are considered to detract from its setting. Proximity of major roads and their noise also add to elements around the asset which undermine its historic rural setting.

*Chesfield Park (Proposed Conservation Area)*

- 9.6.30 North Herts District Council, following adoption of their Local Plan (2022) have undertaken assessments to designate new Conservation Areas, one being Chesfield Park, a non-designated historic parkland, to the north east of the site and St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. As such, at present, this would be a non-designated heritage asset. The significance of this land has been included in the Heritage Technical Statement and shall be covered in this report. The extent of the proposed Conservation Area is shown below (Image taken from the Heritage Technical Statement by Savills).



- 9.6.31 The Proposed Chesfield Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Plan (August 2022) published by North Herts District Council describes the historic development of the various heritage assets at Chesfield. The non-designated heritage asset of Chesfield Park comprises elements of a designed landscape, fields and meadows, and pockets of dense woodland. The land use is predominantly pastoral and is in private ownership. The significance of the park is derived from its association with the demolished 17th century house which stood on the site and its historic and landscape interest with its landscape design being largely unaltered. The parkland is physically enclosed by the dense tree banks and woodland areas resulting in a low level of intervisibility between the parkland and its setting. As with the St Nicholas Conservation Area and listed buildings the setting has been undermined by the 20th century buildings of Stevenage which have encroached into its setting, the overhead

electricity lines and pylons which cross the area and the constant traffic noise which is also audible and betrays the proximity of major road networks and urban development.

- 9.6.32 Therefore, the significance of the proposed Chesfield Conservation Area is derived in the variety of its building types and their ages which evidentially show the development of the area over time and help create a strong sense of place in the landscape.

#### *Impact Assessment*

- 9.6.33 In response to comments received by Historic England (HE) and the Council's historic advisors BEAMS, whereby both consultees advised that the development should have a more informal layout and should demonstrate vernacular differentiation in the housing types, the proposals for Phase 1D have been amended. Paying particular attention to the site's eastern boundary as this is where the greatest visual effect of the proposals occurs in views across the Conservation Area.
- 9.6.34 Along this eastern edge, the aspirational home plots and buildings have been re-aligned and reorientated in order to facilitate a more informal layout, including greater vertical elements in the road design assisting in lowering vehicle speeds as required by the local Highway Authority. These changes would ensure a greater distinctiveness within the site to its benefit. In addition to this and following negotiations with BEAMS, the house designs have been changed to include a greater range of house types, architectural features such as chimneys, roof types, fenestration and surrounds detailing and a greater inclusion of materials to enhance the distinctiveness.
- 9.6.35 These changes would result in this parcel of the development being less standardised, whilst retaining some legibility within the wider Phase 1 development of the site. Furthermore, changes to the roof forms and heights across this parcel, along with the dense tree belt approved as part of the infrastructure RM (22/00808/RMM) would more greatly restrict views from the Country Park, as well as lessening the suburban appearance of the parcel.
- 9.6.36 Aside from the concerns raised about the proposed dwellings in this parcel being too standardised, both HE and BEAMS noted the level of density to be unacceptable. However, the development density within the site was agreed in the approval of the outline application permission (17/00862/OPM) which stated 15-30 dwellings per hectare (dph). At 24dph the density of this parcel is below the maximum albeit slightly higher than the minimum. The balance to be reached here is the provision of the stated 800 dwellings on site across all phases, but also the level of constraints in place, including but not limited to the overhead powerlines to be retained, the position of the vehicular accesses off North Road, and the provision and location of the primary school.

#### *Density*

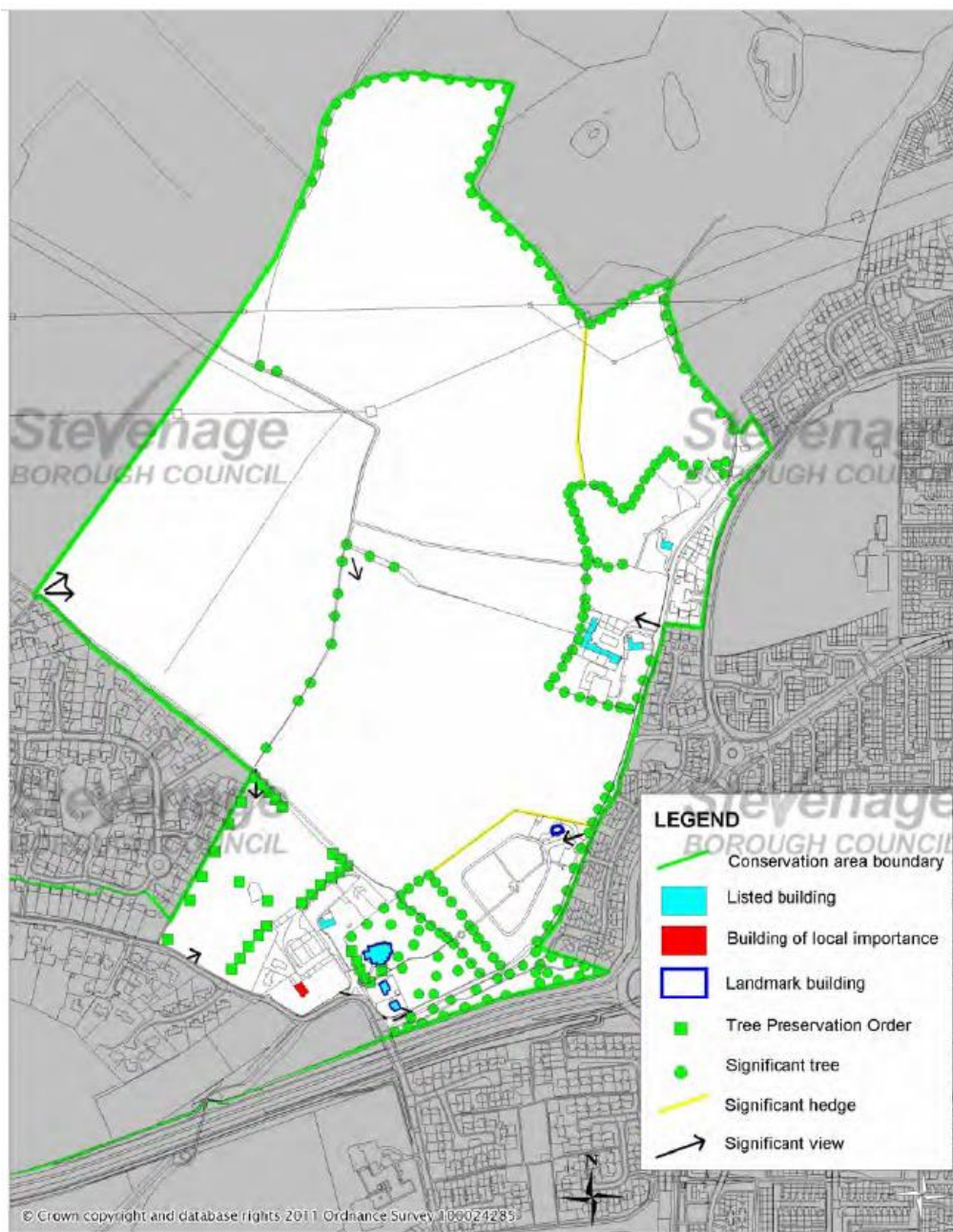
- 9.6.37 Phase 1D largely consists of detached dwellings and all 28 aspirational homes proposed within the development, 27 of which have gardens exceeding 200 sqm in area. Whilst the density seems high, given the size of this parcel the overall layout and provision of 115 dwellings is considered acceptable and it is not considered the proposals would present additional harmful impacts on the noted heritage assets.

#### *St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area*

- 9.6.38 The St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) (2012) breaks the Conservation Area down into two distinct character zones. Zone 1 is the smaller southern area of the Conservation Area, covering Rectory Lane and the southerly fields adjoining this road. Zone 2, in which the site lies, is the northern section of the conservation area and includes St Nicholas Church and respective listed buildings, Weston Road up to and just beyond Rooks Nest House, northwards up to the boundary with Chesfield Park and



then westerly to the boundary within HO3 defined by PROW 017. Zone 2 is illustrated in the figure below taken from the CAMP.



**Figure 7 Character zone 2: Weston Road, Church, Bury and fields to the north**

- 9.6.39 The CAMP identifies possible threats to the Conservation Area, with the expansion of housing on surrounding land as the greatest threat. The impact was extensively covered during the Local Plan process as has been demonstrated by the Inspector's response as highlighted under paragraphs 9.6.18 and 9.6.19 of this report. The above figure shows the significant views from the most westerly point of the field and edge of the Conservation Area to the west. Given the outline approval, these views would be negatively impacted by the introduction of built form in this area.
- 9.6.40 The housing parcel 1D would fill the westerly area up to the light grey line running southwest to northeast just past the centre of the rectangular area shown above and edged by the line of significant trees. Furthermore, much of this field is already screened by the existing field boundary which will be significantly enhanced by additional planting agreed through the infrastructure reserved matters permission (22/00808/RMM).

- 9.6.41 In respect of the changes implemented in the amended plans submitted, the house types have been changed to incorporate greater variety and this is strengthened by a greater materials palette being presented to increase individuality within the parcel. Additionally, the house designs now incorporate a greater range of chimney additions, decorative features such as porch brackets, soffits, fascias and barge boards, as well as more rural and less visually obtrusive roof forms such as hip and half-hip (or barn hip) roofs.
- 9.6.42 These are all features that the CAMP discusses as being functional and decorative, greatly adding to the attractiveness of the area. There is a balance here in seeking such architectural and design features to preserve and enhance the architectural and historic character of the Conservation Area, whilst acknowledging that the land has outline permission to provide a total of 800 dwellings, 115 of which would be within Phase 1D the parcel sited within the conservation area.
- 9.6.43 This balance has been noted by HE and BEAMS. It is officers' opinion that a wider view should be taken when establishing whether sufficient change has occurred through the amendments to be acceptable, and to not substantially harm the heritage asset. HE and BEAMS both note that the density and layout are too suburban for the Conservation Area. However, it cannot be overlooked that the development of HO3 to the west and north of the Conservation Area will create a new suburban edge to the northern boundary of the borough. Currently, that suburban edge stops at the Chancellors and Granby Road estate. Therefore, it would be exceedingly difficult for this parcel not to have some suburban character to it, simply because of where it is sited.
- 9.6.44 Consequently, the changes proposed, along with the significant screening proposed along the eastern boundary of Phase 1D is considered to enhance the proposals from those originally submitted as part of this application. It is concluded that harm will be caused to the Conservation Area simply because of the houses being introduced, albeit this harm has been considered less than substantial at the lower end of the scale. Given the details now being considered go above and beyond the outline parameter plans the Inspector made their conclusions on, the harm is still considered to be less than substantial, as advised by BEAMS.
- 9.6.45 At this stage, the balanced judgement, is that the public benefit of a good and well designed mix of dwellings in this parcel and more widely within the development of HO3 as a whole, would outweigh the harm caused.

#### *Listed Buildings*

- 9.6.46 Looking firstly at the listed buildings sited on the eastern edge of the Conservation Area and total site boundary, these buildings take some of their significance from their rural and agricultural setting. However, the wider setting of these buildings has been eroded over time by suburban development and the presence of overhead electricity lines/pylons, as well as major road networks. These factors have eroded the historic rural character of the buildings' settings as heritage assets and also undermine the tangible aspects of the wider area's historic connection to E M Forster.
- 9.6.47 It is considered the proposed development of Phase 1D would impact the wider setting of these buildings by virtue of the wider introduction of built form within the site, which would be visible from longer range views from the west, in particular areas of the gardens and buildings which do not benefit from the mature landscaping along this western boundary of the proposed Country Park / site. The spread of the proposed development is recognised in context with the existing suburban development to the east, north and south of the buildings. This is also in addition to the overhead electricity lines and pylons which intersect the site.
- 9.6.48 Consequently, the proposals have been amended and would result in lower height dwelling ridges, as well as lessened roof scapes by virtue of the roof design changes previously

mentioned. Furthermore, the changes have proposed a more informal layout by changing plot layouts and dwelling orientation, which is considered to positively benefit the scheme and lessen the visual impact of the development on the setting of these heritage assets. This is in addition to the extensive and dense tree bank which has been agreed along the eastern boundary of the parcel in question, providing a significant screen across the vista of the proposed Country Park from the eastern positioned listed buildings.

- 9.6.49 As a result of the proposals bringing further built development within the wider semi-rural setting of these buildings, it is considered there would be little to no impact on the immediate setting of, or the relationship of each building with its respective listed neighbours, or the group as a whole. The outline permission derived that the development of this land would result in less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale) on the setting of these buildings. The current reserved matters application to develop Phase 1D does not introduce any additional harmful elements which would in officer opinion impact the setting of these assets. It is considered therefore that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale) on the setting of Rooks Nest House, Rooks Nest Farm and Barns.
- 9.6.50 Looking then at the impact on the listed buildings located to the south east of the site, namely St Nicholas Church (GI) and the Old Bury (GII\*), the site forms part of the assets' wider semi-rural settings, defined by the open fields to the north of the two listed buildings and their respective curtilages. The settings have been eroded by the modern suburban development on Chancellors Road, which dominates views to the west and north-west from the immediate vicinity of the assets, and which has eroded the historic relationship of these buildings with their once rural wider setting. Similarly, as with the listed buildings on the western edge of the site, the diminishment of their settings has been compounded by the overhead electricity lines/pylons and major road networks.
- 9.6.51 The proposed development would impact the wider setting of St Nicholas Church and The Old Bury through the introduction of additional built form in long range views towards the site from the assets' immediate settings, and through the increased urbanisation of the assets' semi-rural wider settings. These views would be long-range and would also be seen in conjunction with the existing suburban development of the Chancellor's Road estate which is physically in closer proximity of the assets. This existing suburban development to the west of the listed building, and accumulatively suburban sprawl of the New Town of Stevenage to the south and east also, has undermined the previously rural character of the wider area. As with the impact of the proposals on the listed buildings located off Weston Road, the impact of the proposed development would be legible as incremental extension of modern suburban development into the semi-rural wider setting of the listed buildings, and a continuation of the existing pattern of development within its immediate and wider setting.
- 9.6.52 The proposals would impact the wider setting of the assets, in particular the longer range views and further urbanisation of the wider context of the listed buildings. It is considered there would be little to no impact on the immediate setting of the church or the Old Bury or their relationship to each other and adjacent listed buildings (not considered) which contribute to the historic group value. The resultant impact has been considered to be mitigated to some degree by the same points raised in respect of the other assets discussed in this section. Namely, the extensive landscaping on the eastern edge of the parcel, the design amendments, introducing further architectural features considered to be positive examples of the Conservation Area in which the site falls, and through the changes implemented by the layout changes and house orientations, in particular those along the eastern edge of the parcel. Consequently, the proposed development is considered to result in less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale.

*Chesfield Park*

- 9.6.53 The significance of the neighbouring Chesfield Park is considered to derive from its historic and landscape interest, with its design and layout being largely unaltered. The boundaries of the park are surrounded by dense woodland, creating a strong sense of enclosure and green screening, ensuring a low level of intervisibility between the park and its immediate setting. The openness of the neighbouring fields, which comprise this setting, is juxtaposed to the enclosed character of the park, allowing for the difference in the landscape to be read and which contributes to appreciation of the asset's significance.
- 9.6.54 The proposed development site of HO3 as a whole forms a small part of the wider setting of this non-designated asset, meeting the south west and south east boundaries of the park. Views of this area are somewhat restricted though given the dense tree belts around the park, and that sense of enclosure mentioned. There are some small breaks in this vegetation where views south across the proposed Country Park would reach Phase 1D, however, these are considered to be minimal, and already negatively impacted by the overhead power lines/pylons and the existing suburban development of Chancellors Road and Granby Road estates to the south of the site.
- 9.6.55 Given the proximity of the proposed residential parcel from the non-designated asset, in addition to the points raised above, the impact of the development is considered to be less than substantial harm on the lower end of the scale.

*Assessment of Heritage Balance and Public Benefit*

- 9.6.56 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'.
- 9.6.57 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 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.
- 9.6.58 Based on the impact assessments made above it is officer's opinion that the provision of 115 dwellings in this western area of the Conservation Area would cause a level of harm to the identified designated heritage assets. In each case this harm has been assessed by officers as being of less than substantial harm on the lower end of the scale.
- 9.6.59 The assessments made also identify features and built form in the area which has already negatively detracted from the significance of the Conservation Area and listed buildings in the area. Firstly, the presence and siting of two rows of overhead powerlines and associated pylon towers heading east to west across the site. Secondly the encroachment and sprawl of buildings within the town of Stevenage which have grown since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notable the Lister hospital to the west of the site, but also numerous residential estates and commercial buildings. Also, the increase in road infrastructure around the site.



- 9.6.60 In addition to the introduction of built form in this phase of the development, it is important to note that enhanced landscaping along the eastern boundary of the proposed country park would significantly enhance the visual screen present along this juncture in the field in question. Lessening the harm caused to some degree.
- 9.6.61 Turning then to the public benefits that would come forward from the proposals, the development of this land would secure the provision of allocated housing, including 28 aspirational homes which would meet fundamental Local Plan policies. Furthermore, the parcel would continue to provide new and good links between existing infrastructure and the rest of the proposed development site, as well as the proposed Country Park to the east.
- 9.6.62 These proposed pedestrian and cycle connections would provide greater provision for increasing sustainable travel through modal shift and would create connections both east/west and north/south in this area of the borough. The proposals would also create future connections to the NHDC allocated site NS1 due north of the site. These are considered beneficial to the public.
- 9.6.63 Whilst the cumulative impact of the various elements of the proposals being considered have been assessed as causing less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale, the proposal is considered as a whole to deliver a number of significant public benefits which in officers professional opinion outweighs this harm.

## 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 throughout parcels 1A-C. Given phase 1D is in the Conservation Area and provides the sites full requirement of aspirational homes, no affordable housing is proposed in this parcel. 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.

## 9.8 Impact upon Neighbouring Amenity

- 9.8.1 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

9.8.2 The proximity of the proposed properties in this parcel have been assessed given their proximity from and relationship with the existing properties of Granby Road, Chancellors Road and their associated spur roads/cul-de-sacs which abut the site to the south. The relationships and distances of these existing dwellings and 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.

9.8.3 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 Phase 1D, to bolster the existing landscaping conditions, which 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, Chancellors Road and their associated spur roads/cul-de-sacs.

## 9.9 Impact upon the Amenity of Future Residents

### 9.9.1 Internal Space Standards

9.9.1.1 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	

9.9.1.2 The minimum internal sizes of the proposed 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.

9.9.1.3 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.

## 9.9.2 External Amenity Space

9.9.2.1 The Stevenage Design Guide SPD (2023) recommends that where possible external amenity space should be provided for residential properties. For dwellinghouses this is a minimum area of 50 square metres, except for aspirational homes and this is greatly enhanced to a minimum of 200 sqm. In respect of the dwellinghouses (excluding aspirational homes in this phase) proposed, each unit has an enclosed garden of a minimum of 50 square metres and a depth of 10m.

9.9.2.2 Looking then at the proposed aspirational homes, 28 in total, and located along the eastern side of the parcel being closest to the proposed Country Park boundary, these properties all have gardens of good shape and with at least 200 sqm but for the exception of one. The 28<sup>th</sup> meets all other requirements of an aspirational home, but has a rear garden size of approximately 190 sqm. Given the total size of the garden, this 10 sqm diminishment is not considered detrimental with the property still benefitting from a large rear garden and all other requirements of the other aspirational homes in this phase.

## 9.9.3 Separation Distance, Privacy and Outlook

9.9.3.1 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. These distances are shown in the table in paragraph 9.9.1

where the relationship of the proposed dwellings was assessed with regard the existing neighbouring properties of Chancellors Road and Granby Road.

9.9.3.2 Based on the plans submitted in support of the application the back to back and back to side relationships proposed 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.

9.9.3.3 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.

#### 9.9.4 HO11 Category 2 Housing

9.9.4.1 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.

9.9.4.2 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.

9.9.4.3 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.

## 9.10 Highway Implications

9.10.1 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.

- 9.10.2 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). From the main spur road that enters Phase 1D from 1B, there are six other clear spur roads in this parcel. Two are set immediately left and right off the main spur where the parcel borders the green link between phase 1B and the current phase. A third is located again off the right of the main spur before it hits a 'T' junction. The fourth spur heads right, with the left spur of the 'T' junction splitting off to provide the sixth tertiary road in this phase.
- 9.10.3 The main spur road which forms part of the infrastructure RM has designated footpaths on each side of the road. These stop at the 'T' junction at the south-eastern end of the road. All other roads in this phase comprise 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.'
- 9.10.4 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.
- 9.10.5 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.
- 9.10.6 Each property would have parking provision in the form of tandem or double bay parking in front of a single garage or double garage in the case of the aspirational homes. There are a small number of plots in this phase where parking is just by provision of tandem or double parking spaces.
- 9.10.7 The shared surface is proposed to be finished in compressed asphalt for the length of the roads and including all private shared driveways and individual dwelling driveways and garage frontages. This is largely what has been agreed for the other residential parcels, however, given the drive for a higher quality of finish in the Conservation Area, it is disappointing that more of these areas are not proposed as block paving. A finish more prominent when thinking about shared surfaces in general. Therefore, it is considered further thought needs to be given to the hardstand finishes for this phase. As such it is considered reasonable and necessary to impose a condition requiring further details instead of the finish details proposed on plan currently.
- 9.10.8 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. Furthermore, alterations to the road layout of the fifth spur road which heads north east through the aspirational homes now includes a greater presence of vertical sections previously required by the local Highway Authority to

prevent vehicle speeding in this area of shared surface. The local Highway Authority has provided revised comments based on the changes made and now support the proposals.

## 9.11 Parking Provision

9.11.1 Manual for Streets recognises that a design-led approach should be taken regarding the provision of car parking spaces, which should consider 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.

9.11.2 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 All the garages proposed in this phase, single or double, meet the minimum internal requirements set out above, allowing them to be considered in the parking provision for each respective property in which they would serve.

9.12.3.4 The total number of spaces required for Phase 1D would be 325 including visitor spaces. The number of spaces proposed would be 366, broken down as 344 spaces provided in garages or on driveways and 22 unallocated spaces, largely being on-street laybys. This would be a much reduced number of 'visitor' bays than required in the SPD, with an over provision mainly on the aspirational homes where nearly every house would have four spaces (a double garage and two parking spaces in front of these).

9.12.3.5 This overprovision has been a component of the other residential parcels also, with an understanding that the greater number of off-street parking spaces reduces the need for on-street visitor bays, allowing for visitors to park at the specific properties they are visiting. It also provides less availability for non-resident parking in the development, although it is

appreciated this cannot be completely stopped. The concept of this parking proposal is considered acceptable in this case given the location of the development in the borough and its proximity to the Lister Hospital.

#### 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 115 active EVCP will be provided, which equates to one per dwelling in this phase, in accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document S. 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

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. There is no communal parking proposed in this phase, with no apartments or retail parking involved and thus no designated disabled spaces are required or shown in this phase.

#### 9.12.6 Cycle

9.12.6.1 Taken from the Council's Parking 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 the small number of dwellinghouses in this phase that do not have a garage(s), provision is made through a lockable shed in the rear garden, with rear garden access readily available without the need to pass through the house for access.

#### 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. 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. In particular for this eastern parcel of phase 1, due to ground level changes the run-off largely heads south east, either towards the PROW or the proposed Country Park. Measures are proposed that would direct this run-off to appropriate avenues for infiltration.
- 9.13.6 The proposals have been assessed again in this case by the Council's drainage consultants, as the application was initially submitted during a period where the LLFA were not providing comments to LPA's. Comments from the Council's consultants are still due. However, by virtue of the input of the LLFA on all other matters on site now, flood measures have now been agreed under condition 36 of the outline permission, and the site SuDS drainage details are being assessed at this time with full engagement by the LLFA, it is considered the measures proposed in this application are fully cohesive with these final drainage designs. Therefore, subject to agreement by the Council's drainage consultants and the requirement for further conditions, the drainage proposals are 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 will 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 As with the provision in Phases 1A and B, the use of hedging for front garden boundaries is prominent, as well as pockets of greenery and tree planting around the perimeter of the parcel, and along the green link frontages. In particular in this phase is the greater number of street tree planting along the aspirational home spur roads, with a notable cluster at the central point of this area.
- 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 would 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 and Green Spaces Officer have both commented on the application initially with some comments on landscape placing and species proposals. These have been taken on board and integrated/changed as necessary. They have both confirmed that they have no further comments to make in respect of the amended plans submitted. The proposed tree, landscaping and biodiversity proposals for this application are therefore considered to be acceptable and would 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 Phase 1D 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 a certain percentage being HO11 and M4(2) compliant both internally and externally making them accessible and/or adaptable. Furthermore, route connections between the residential parcels and the wider infrastructure would incorporate level access and crossings where applicable.

### 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.

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

- 10.1 In summary, the proposals for 115 dwellings in Phase D of the southerly evolution of the site in general have been amended to take account of shortcomings in terms of design and plot layout following consultation with Historic England and BEAMS. It is noted that the density is still greater than either of the above parties would wish to see, but this has been led by the already approved parameter plans of the outline permission which discussed this area specifically, as well as the provision of 800 homes across the site. On that basis the number and type of dwellings proposed in Phase 1D is considered acceptable on balance, with this area having a lower density than the other parcels in Phase 1.
- 10.2 The scheme proposes to extend the highways network approved under the infrastructure RM with additional spur roads, shared surfaces and private driveways. Foot and cycle way connections are also shown to link up with the infrastructure approved green links and main thoroughfares and also the proposed Country Park to the east of the site.
- 10.3 The impact of the proposals on the heritage assets St Nicholas and Rectory Lane Conservation Area, and nearby listed buildings, has been fully assessed given the siting of the proposed parcel in the Conservation Area. 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 Conservation Area and the setting of the listed buildings, where special regard, with respect to this application, is given to the desirability of preserving the settings which they possess.

- 10.4 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 would 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.
- 10.5 Taking the above harm into consideration, the proposal would see the public benefit of allocated housing on site coming forward in a well-designed and contextual manner, in particular the provision of aspirational homes as required through the Local Plan.
- 10.6 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 this phase.
- 10.7 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.
- 10.8 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.
- 10.9 Turning to design, the proposed character areas and house 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 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 dwelling designs and layouts are considered to significantly elevate the visual appearance of this parcel within the development, to the benefit of the parcel as a whole but also in reducing the impact the provision of these houses would have visually on the Conservation Area and nearby heritage assets.
- 10.10 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. 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 Chancellors Road, 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 attached to the outline permission.

- 10.11 The proposal would provide an acceptable level of car parking albeit over the required provision, and this would include largely garage parking with driveways in front, visitor spaces, an EVCP at each property and cycle storage of a satisfactory provision.
- 10.12 In summary, the proposed residential development of Phase 1D is reflective of the masterplan, is considered to be of high quality design and layout and makes positive contributions to link with the wider infrastructure proposals. The character area and different design elements would bring distinctive character to the development whilst providing legibility with the neighbouring parcel 1B. The identified less than substantial harm to the setting of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings are outweighed by the benefits as detailed above.
- 10.13 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 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-NPA-V1-0S-DR-L-7511-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-0S-DR-L-7512-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5225-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5226-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5227-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5228-A-C03; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5229-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5230-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-L-5231-A-C02; BM1-NPA-V1-1D-DR-Y-3201-A-C02; M1-NPA-V1-OS-DR-L-7405-A-C01; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5203-A-C05; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-DR-L-5204-A-C04; BM1-NPA-V1-ZZ-SP-L-5235-A-C03; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5300 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5301 - R04; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5302 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5303 - R03; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5304 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5305 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5306 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5307 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5308 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5309 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5310 - R02; BM1-OC-RMA-1D-DR-C-5311 - R02; P1708.22-G; P1708.32-G; P1708.33-G; P1708.34-F; P1708.35-G; P1708.36-F; P1708.37-F; P1708.D.BN1.101; P1708.D.BN1.102; P1708.D.BN2.101; P1708.D.BN2.102 - REV A; P1708.D.BN2.103 - REV A; P1708.D.BR1.101; P1708.D.BR1.102; P1708.D.BR1.103; P1708.D.BR2.101; P1708.D.BR2.102; P1708.D.BR2.103; P1708.D.BR2.104; P1708.D.BW.101; P1708.D.BW.102; P1708.D.BW.103; P1708.D.BW1.101; P1708.D.BW1.102; P1708.D.CH1.101; P1708.D.CH1.102; P1708.D.CU.101; P1708.D.CU.102; P1708.D.CW1.101; P1708.D.CW1.102; P1708.D.CW1.103; P1708.D.CW1.104; P1708.D.DN.101; P1708.D.DN.102; P1708.D.DR.101; P1708.D.DR.102; P1708.D.DR.103; P1708.D.DR1.101; P1708.D.DR1.102; P1708.D.DR1.103; P1708.D.DR2.101; P1708.D.DR2.102; P1708.D.DR2.103; P1708.D.DR2.104; P1708.D.DR2.105; P1708.D.DR3.101; P1708.D.DR3.102; P1708.D.DR3.103; P1708.D.DR3.104; P1708.D.DR3.105; P1708.D.FW1.101; P1708.D.FW1.102; P1708.D.GF1.101; P1708.D.GF1.102;

P1708.D.GF1.103; P1708.D.GF1.104; P1708.D.GF2.101; P1708.D.GF2.102;  
P1708.D.GF2.103; P1708.D.GF2.104; P1708.D.GF2.105; P1708.D.GW1.101;  
P1708.D.GW1.102; P1708.D.GW1.103; P1708.D.GW1.104; P1708.D.HN1.101;  
P1708.D.HN1.102; P1708.D.HN1.103; P1708.D.HN2.101; P1708.D.HN2.102;  
P1708.D.HN3.101; P1708.D.HN3.102; P1708.D.HN4.101; P1708.D.HN4.102;  
P1708.D.HP1.101; P1708.D.KF1.101; P1708.D.KF1.102; P1708.D.KF1.103;  
P1708.D.KF2.101; P1708.D.KF2.102; P1708.D.KF2.103; P1708.D.PG1.101;  
P1708.D.PG1.102; P1708.D.PG1.103; P1708.D.PG2.101; P1708.D.PG2.102;  
P1708.D.PH.101; P1708.D.PH.102; P1708.D.PH1.101; P1708.D.PH1.102;  
P1708.D.RE.101; P1708.D.RE.102; P1708.D.RE1.101; P1708.D.RE1.102;  
P1708.D.RE2.101; P1708.D.RE2.102; P1708.D.RE2.103; P1708.D.RE3.101;  
P1708.D.RE3.102; P1708.D.RE3.103; P1708.D.RE4.101; P1708.D.RE4.102;  
P1708.D.RT.101; P1708.D.SC.101; P1708.D.SC.102; P1708.D.SS.101 - REV A;  
P1708.D.SS.101 - REV A; P1708.D.SS.103 - REV A; P1708.D.TH.101; P1708.D.TH.102;  
P1708.D.TH.103; P1708.D.TH1.101; P1708.D.TH1.102 P1708.D.WA1.101;  
P1708.D.WA1.102; P1708.D.WA2.101; P1708.D.WA2.102; P1708.D.WA2.103;  
P1708.D.WA3.101; P1708.D.WA3.102; P1708.D.WE.101; P1708.D.WE.102;  
P1708.D.WN1.101; P1708.D.WN1.102; P1708.D.WN1.103 - REV A; P1708.GAR.101;  
P1708.GAR.102; P1708.GAR.104; P1708.GAR.107; P1708.GAR.108; P1708.PhaseP.02-A.

**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 No development above slab level of any building in this phase, shall take place until details of the proposed swift and bat boxes, their construction and integration into the respective buildings/dwellings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The boxes shall thereafter be installed/integrated on the building/dwelling elevations as identified on Drawing number BM1-NPA-V1-1ABC-DR-Y-3201-A-C02 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt  
**REASON:-** To ensure that the development contributes to improving the ecology and biodiversity of the area.
- 8 No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until the respective cycle parking has been provided on site by way of garage or garden shed as shown on Drawing number: P1708.22.G.  
**REASON:-** To ensure that adequate cycle parking provision is provided on site in accordance with the Council's standards.
- 9 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.
- 10 Before any above-ground work is commenced on 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.
- 11 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.
- 12 No development shall take place above slab level within this sub-phase of the development until details of the proposed renewable energy measures to address adaptation to climate change in accordance with the Sustainability Briefing Note have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These measures shall then be implemented and permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.  
**REASON:-** To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change through provision of energy and water efficiency measures.
- 13 Notwithstanding the details submitted in respect of the hardstanding finishes, prior to any development within this sub-phase above slab level, details of the hardstand finishes to be used within the Conservation Area, including all shared surfaces, private shared driveways and driveways shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To ensure the development is of a high quality and has a positive visual impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

### **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**

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#### **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.