

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

Date: 12 March 2026

Lead Officer: Alex Robinson

Author: Thomas Frankland

Application: 24/00058/FPM

Location: Land at Redcar Drive, Stevenage SG1 2EN

Proposal: Demolition of existing property known as Cartref and erection of 38 no. dwellings with associated road, parking, green spaces and ancillary works.

Drawings: 14122_P205G; 14122_P215A; P25-2066_DE_003; P25-2066_DE_004 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_005 Rev J; P25-2066_DE_006 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_007 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_008 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_009 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_010 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_011 Rev H; P25-2066_DE_012 Rev I; P25-2066_DE_014-01 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-02 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-03 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-04 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-05 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-06 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-07 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-08 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-09 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-10 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-11 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-11 Rev D (Traditional); P25-2066_DE_014-12 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-13 Rev D; P25-2066_DE_014-15 Rev D; P25-2066_EN_0001_S1; P25-2066_EN_0001_S2;

Applicant: Keepmoat Homes Limited

Agent: CC Town Planning

Date Valid: 30 January 2024

Recommendation Grant Planning Permission



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1. The site comprises a former block of flats to the south-west and a large area of public open space, including mature tree belt around the perimeter, on the corner of Redcar Drive and Clovelly Way. The site is bounded to the north by existing residential properties off Symonds Green Lane and Eastbourne Avenue. To the south-west is Meadway Playing Field, a large public open space with sports pitches and a play area. The site frontage onto Clovelly Way faces the roundabout and areas of landscaping on the opposite side of the road around the subway and cycleway connections. To the south of Redcar Drive and the site are the Rutherford Close light industrial and office park complexes.
- 1.2. The area is characterised by a mix of uses. The housing on Eastbourne Avenue and Clovelly Way comprises typical New Town terraces and semi-detached dwellings, while Symonds Green Lane, which lies in the Symonds Green Conservation Area, features more individual and detached house types. Redcar Drive leads to Meadway and then west under the A1(M) to the settlement of Fishers Green. The road is set to undergo extensive changes to facilitate the urban extension on Land West of Stevenage, which will involve the construction of up to 1500 dwellings.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1. The relevant planning history for the site is set out below.

Reference	Description	Decision
12/00234/FP	Change of Use of land and buildings from residential to temporary site accommodation (offices and storage) together with community meeting room.	Granted 25/07/2012
23/00457/PADEMO	Prior approval for the demolition of one detached dwellinghouse.	Refused 11/07/2023
23/00543/PADEMO	Prior approval for the demolition of a single dwelling house.	Refused 07/08/2023
23/00612/PADEMO	Prior approval for the demolition of one single domestic dwelling.	Granted 10/08/2023

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The application seeks full planning permission for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide 38 dwellings (a block of 12 flats and 26 houses) with associated roads, parking, green spaces and other ancillary works.
- 3.2. The application was originally submitted by the council as applicant. It was presented to the Planning and Development Committee on 29 October 2024, where the committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to conditions and a section 106 legal agreement.
- 3.3. Keepmoat Homes has since replaced the council as applicant and amended the scheme, with the changes primarily concerning the external appearance of the proposed dwellings and access arrangements. A number of changes have also arisen from changes in planning policy since the original resolution to grant permission. Whilst the application is for substantially the same development as was originally applied for – i.e. the overall number of dwellings, housing mix and broad site layout remain unaltered –

the changes are such that officers consider the committee ought to consider the application afresh.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

4.1. The application was publicised by site notice and press advert. Notification letters were also sent to surrounding properties.

4.2. The council received letters of representation from the owners/occupiers of 13 properties. The material issues raised in the representations are summarised as follows:

- Integrated swift bricks should be secured via condition;
- No pedestrian/cycle path from new estate heading south/south-east towards Woolenwick School and the train station;
- Access to the six houses off Symonds Green Lane is very narrow, and would surely be safer off Redcar Drive;
- The site, especially the corner near the roundabout is prone to flooding, hopefully the development has made provision for this;
- Concerns for security of No's 15-29 Eastbourne Avenue, perhaps the 50 year old fence to the front of these properties could be replaced?;
- The Meadway Playing Fields will suffer from the construction of the Land West of Stevenage access;
- Whilst Meadway Playing Fields are used as a sporting asset, those that would not use it for this purpose whilst games are taking place will suffer from a net loss of green space;
- A 'tip in favour' of housing provision should be the sole basis for loss of the open space;
- Increase in traffic numbers on Clovelly Way, especially during peak times. Suggest a mini roundabout be installed at the junction of Eastbourne Avenue and Clovelly Way;
- Construction traffic should not use Symonds Green Lane;
- The retention of as many trees as possible and the ancient hedgerow alongside the footpath from Symonds Green Lane is heartening to see;
- Loss of green space;
- Surely more appropriate brownfield sites in town that could be used;
- Access to the new housing is in the wrong place and will add to existing congestion;
- Loss of habitat within the green space;
- Increased noise and air pollution from more traffic;
- Amplification of road noise from loss of trees;
- Noise levels during construction will hinder ability to work from home;
- Development close to existing properties causing ground movement and damage;
- Existing properties directly overlooked my new housing next to/behind;
- Extension of Symonds Green Lane to access development will mean I can no longer park my car outside the front of my house;
- Increased traffic could cause damage to my front garden;
- Subsidence risk to my property because of works to trees;
- Impact on existing infrastructure, doctors, dentists, schools etc;
- Site overdeveloped and density should be reassessed;
- Cartref properties have already been demolished. Could they not have been refurbished and extended?;
- Symonds Green Land and Conservation Area were not designed for the level of cars using;

4.3. Full copies of all representations are available to view on the council's website.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1. A summary of consultation responses is set out below. Full copies of all representations are available on the council's website.

5.2. Sport England

5.2.1. No objection.

5.3. Thames Water

5.3.1. No objection. An informative is recommended relating to groundwater discharges to public sewers.

5.4. Affinity Water

5.4.1. No objection.

5.5. Hertfordshire Constabulary

5.5.1. No objection.

5.6. Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue

5.6.1. No objection, subject to a condition to secure the installation of fire hydrants.

5.7. HCC SuDS (Lead Local Flood Authority)

5.7.1. No objection, subject to conditions to secure development in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment, SuDS maintenance, and a verification report.

5.8. HCC Highways (Local Highway Authority)

5.8.1. No objection, subject to a financial contribution of £159,975 towards sustainable transport initiatives and conditions relating to access, crossings, footways, parking and construction management.

5.9. HCC Waste and Minerals

5.10. No objection, subject to a condition to secure a site waste management plan.

5.11. HCC Growth and Infrastructure

5.11.1. No objection, subject to a contribution of £356,114 towards new secondary education provision at the former Barnwell East site.

5.12. SBC Environmental Health

5.12.1. The submitted noise impact assessment anticipates elevated noise levels within residential gardens, which should be reduced as far as is practicable. Consideration should also be given to noise from nearby commercial properties and future residential development. Conditions are recommended relating to construction management, land contamination, and noise.

5.13. SBC Ecology Officer

5.13.1. Awaiting response.

5.14. **SBC Arboriculture Officer**

5.14.1. In principle, I have no objection to this development, as long as the protection measures detailed in the AIA are carefully adhered to, as well as the replacement planting shown.

5.14.2. A condition should be placed for the proposed works to the remaining (parts of) groups G1, G2, G6, G8 and G9. This is to ensure that they are satisfactorily pruned/cut in order to accommodate the proposed development.

5.14.3. If this development was to go ahead, I believe that G2 (the large mature trees within) would need to be coppiced, in order to prevent excessive encroachment onto the proposed nearby dwellings. Substantial pruning would also be needed for all other (retained) groups, for the same reasons and to compensate for any loss of support caused by any of the removals.

5.14.4. Finally, in order all this work be carried out to a good standard and at the right time, I agree with the recommendation from the AIA report, that the client appoints a suitably qualified arboriculturist to act as an Arboricultural Clerk of Works (ACoW). The ACoW will be engaged to monitor and oversee the implementation of the works required.

6. **SBC Green Spaces Development Officer**

6.1.1. Awaiting response.

6.2. **BEAMS (SBC Heritage Consultant)**

6.2.1. Awaiting response.

7. **PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

7.1. **The National Planning Policy Framework**

7.1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans can provide for housing and other development in a sustainable manner. The latest version of the NPPF was published in December 2024 (with further minor amendments in February 2025).

7.1.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

7.1.3. The NPPF should be read as a whole (including its footnotes and annexes).

7.2. **The Development Plan**

7.2.1. For Stevenage, the development plan comprises the following documents:

- Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031
- Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD 2011-2026
- Waste Site Allocations DPD 2011-2026
- Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016

7.3. **Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031**

7.3.1. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in 2019. Weight must be given to the policies it contains according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

7.3.2. In addition, the council is required to regard the local plan policies most relevant to determining the application as out-of-date because the application involves the provision of housing and the delivery of housing in the borough was substantially below the housing requirement over the last three years. Those policies are:

Policy SP1: Climate Change
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 IT2: West of Stevenage safeguarded corridors:
Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans:
Policy IT5: Parking and access:
Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists:
Policy HO5: Windfall sites:
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 HC8: Sports facilities in new developments:
Policy GD1: High quality design:
Policy FP1: Climate change:
Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1:
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 NH10: Conservation areas:

7.3.3. According to the NPPF, the fact that these policies are regarded as out-of-date means that permission should be granted for the proposed development unless:

- i. the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

7.4. **Local Plan Review and Update**

7.4.1. The council concluded a full review of the plan in 2024, as required by regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

7.4.2. In response to the review, the council has proposed a partial update of the local plan. Weight must be given to the emerging policies in the partial update according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan;
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the policies; and
- c) the degree of consistency between the policies and the most recent revision of the NPPF.

7.4.3. At the time of writing, the partial update is undergoing examination by the Secretary of State. Given that the examination has yet to conclude, there remain unresolved objections to a number of emerging policies. The partial update is nonetheless at an advanced stage of preparation and the council considers the emerging policies within it to have a high degree of consistency with the NPPF. Where relevant, the weight to be given to emerging policies will be set out in the assessment section of this report.

7.5. **Other Material Considerations**

7.5.1. In determining planning applications, regard must also be had to other material considerations. This may include (but is not limited to):

- The Planning Practice Guidance
- The National Design Guide
- Written ministerial statements and directions
- Guidance published by Hertfordshire County Council
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Stevenage Borough Council supplementary planning documents

7.5.2. Planning decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.

8. **MAIN ISSUES**

8.1. The main issues in the assessment of the application are:

- Housing provision
- Affordable housing
- Loss of open space
- Visual amenities
- Heritage assets
- Pollution and residential amenities
- Highway impacts
- Flood risk and drainage
- Arboricultural impacts
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Climate change
- Equality and human rights
- CIL and planning obligations

8.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.3. **Housing Provision**

8.3.1. The proposed site is not allocated in the adopted local plan. As such, the site is therefore regarded as a 'windfall site'.

8.3.2. Policy SP7 identifies that there is a need to provide 7,600 new homes within Stevenage and allocates 1,950 new homes to be provided on windfall sites. Taking this into consideration, the proposed development would support the council's aim of delivering a number of homes which fall outside the designated sites.

8.3.3. Policy HO5 of the local plan stipulates that proposals should be on previously developed land or small, underutilised urban sites. The application site currently comprises an area of green public open space, laid to grass with an established tree belt around the edges, and a previously developed area of land in the west of the site (the buildings that stood on this part of the site have now been demolished under planning application reference 23/00612/PADEMO). The majority of the site is therefore not previously developed and thus is in conflict with Policy HO5. It is a matter of planning balance as to whether public benefits of the proposal outweigh this policy conflict.

8.3.4. Policy HO5 also requires windfall development to have a good level of access to local facilities. The site is located close to an established bus route, with a bus stop on Clovelly Way. Woolenwick Primary School is in close proximity to the south-east off Gunnels Wood Road. The nearest secondary school would be located in the Old Town approximately a 15–20-minute walk from the site. The site abuts a large principal open space, Meadway Playing Fields, which has sports pitches and a play area. Approximately a 10-minute walk to the north-east of the site is a small neighbourhood centre with a parade of shops. As such, the application site is considered to have an excellent level of access to local facilities and alternative forms of travel to the private car and therefore deemed to be within a very sustainable location.

8.3.5. The site is located within the West of Stevenage safeguarded corridor as defined by Policy IT2 of the local plan, which runs along this stretch of Redcar Drive and Meadway. Both roads will be subject to extensive works as part of the Land West of Stevenage planning application (Planning reference: 21/00356/FPM), has now been granted planning permission. Notwithstanding this, the redevelopment of this site would not prejudice the delivery of the neighbouring allocated site. The works to Redcar Drive shown are in accordance with the plans proposed for Land West of Stevenage and would connect with proposed pedestrian and cycle links that will form part of the large, allocated housing permission. It would also not overburden existing infrastructure, given that it would be CIL liable, and the purpose of the CIL payment is to mitigate infrastructure impacts. In these respects, the proposal accords with criteria (b), (d) and (e) of Policy HO5. The development would also be subject to s.106 financial obligations in order to further mitigate the development's impact on infrastructure.

8.3.6. It is possible that the development could have a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties but if this were the case, these impacts would arise from the detailed design of the development rather than being an inevitable consequence of the use of the land for residential purposes. Surrounding land contains a mix of uses which includes residential uses and the proposed development would be consistent with this. Therefore, strictly from a land use perspective, it is considered that developing the site for housing

would not have a detrimental impact on the environment or surrounding properties. The potential impacts arising from the detailed design of the development are considered later in this report.

- 8.3.7. Paragraph 61 of the NPPF states that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting housing supply, it is important that a sufficient amount, and variety, of land comes forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are met, and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. In addition, the overall aim should be to meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. As such, the proposed development would contribute to the aim of boosting housing supply without compromising the delivery of housing on allocated sites or placing an undue burden on local infrastructure.
- 8.3.8. Further to the above, the proposal would provide 38 dwellings, of which 12 (the flatted development) would be affordable housing, and there would be some economic benefit during the construction phase, and future occupiers would contribute to local services and facilities. Given the quantum of development, and the provision of affordable housing, it is considered that these benefits would be considerable and therefore attract great weight in favour of the proposal.
- 8.3.9. Policy HO9 of the local plan states that there is a structural imbalance in the existing housing stock (albeit in a limited manner) whereby there is a lack of smaller properties and larger aspirational homes in the borough. The lack of housing mix is exacerbated by changes in demographics leading to an increase in the number of single person households and couples needing homes. Due to growth requirements for the town, there is a need to provide a substantial number of additional homes in Stevenage. Higher density development is set out as a key requirement of national guidance and where appropriate, densities will need to be raised in order to meet these targets for new homes.
- 8.3.10. The provision of 7no. four bedroom dwellings, 19no. three bedroom dwellings, 6no. two bedroom flats and 6no. one bedroom flats is therefore considered to accord with Policy HO9.
- 8.3.11. Policy SP2 (Sustainable Developments) states permission will only be granted where proposals can meet a number of criteria. Included in these criteria are the following:
- g) promote journeys by bus, train, bike and foot and reduce the need to travel;
 - j) support facilities and services that encourage people to live, work and spend leisure time in Stevenage;
 - k) produce places and spaces that enable people to live a healthy lifestyle;
- 8.3.12. The proposal meets these criteria as mentioned previously.

8.4. **Affordable Housing**

- 8.4.1. Policy HO7 of the local plan stipulates that planning permission would be granted for residential development which would maximise affordable housing provision. Taking this into consideration, there is a requirement to provide 30% of new homes to be affordable

on sites that are not considered previously developed. A reduced provision of 25% is acceptable in policy on previously developed sites. Given the majority of the site is green space, the higher percentage affordable housing is required. In this regard, there would be a requirement to provide 11.4 affordable units, rounded up to 12. The 12 flatted units proposed on site have been designated affordable housing, in accordance with Policy HO7.

- 8.4.2. In the emerging partial update of the local plan, Policy HO7 is amended to increase the affordable housing target on greenfield sites to 40%. The proposed development would not meet this higher revised target and is therefore contrary to the emerging version of the policy.
- 8.4.3. The weight to be afforded to this conflict is a matter of judgement, having regard to paragraph 49 of the NPPF. In this case, although the plan update is at an advanced stage of preparation, the examination has yet to conclude which includes, importantly, consultation on the proposed main modifications to the plan and the inspector's final report. While there are no main modifications proposed to Policy HO7 itself, there are a number of other modifications which are likely to affect overall plan viability and therefore have an indirect bearing on affordable housing targets.
- 8.4.4. It is also a relevant that the adopted and emerging versions of the policy deal with precisely the same question. In contrast, a conflict with an emerging policy dealing with an entirely new issue would likely have more bearing on the overall decision because there would be no existing policy by which one could judge the proposal. As it is in this case, the adopted Policy HO7 remains a useful guide on the issue of the appropriate level of affordable housing to be provided on residential sites. The proposal complies with that version of the policy, wholly meeting the higher target despite part of the site in theory being eligible for the lower target. On this basis, the proposed level of affordable housing is considered to be acceptable and the conflict with the emerging version of Policy HO7 is afforded limited weight.
- 8.4.5. Turning to affordable housing tenure, mix and design, Policy HO8 states that planning permission will be granted where those dwellings:
- a) Are provided by the developer on site with at least 70% of the units being for rent and the remainder consisting of other tenures which is to be agreed with the Council's Housing team;
 - b) Meets the requirements of Policy HO9 (House types and sizes);
 - c) Are physically indistinguishable from other types of homes and are distributed across the site to avoid over-concentration in particular; and
 - d) Will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.
- 8.4.6. In this case, all of the affordable units would be provided on-site as affordable rent and secured as such in perpetuity. Whilst there would be no affordable units with three or more bedrooms, this broadly reflects the greatest need for affordable units, which is for one and two bedroom properties.
- 8.4.7. The units would be concentrated in a block of flats rather than distributed across the site, which represents a degree of conflict with Policy HO9. However, this arrangement provides benefits in terms of future management and an insistence on distributing affordable units across the site would likely require a reduction in the overall quantum of

housing delivered by the scheme. As such, on balance, this arrangement is considered to be appropriate.

8.5. **Loss of Open Space**

8.5.1. Policy NH6 of the local plan states that planning permission for development of any existing, unallocated open space (or part of any space) will be permitted where the loss of the open space is justified having regard to: the quality and accessibility of the open space; the existence, or otherwise, of any interventions to improve quality or access; whether the open space is serving its function or purpose; and whether alternate space(s) would remain available for community use. Reasonable compensatory provision should also be made in the form of: replacement provision of a similar type, size and quality; the upgrade of other, existing space; or exceptionally, a commuted sum to secure open space provision elsewhere.

8.5.2. The eastern half of the site is currently an unallocated area of public open space. Laid to grass, the circular shaped area surrounded by trees is used by dog walkers, and most likely occasions of non-structured play. It is of importance to note the proximity of Meadway Planning Fields immediately to the west of the site and the area of land the subject of this application. Meadway Playing Fields provides sports pitches as well as space to walk dogs, and also comprises a children's play area. The space is much better managed for recreation and useability than the open space within the red line. In respect of the council's local plan policies, it is noted that it will be inevitable that some open spaces will come under pressure from development proposals over the lifetime of this plan. Paragraph 14.35 of the Local Plan makes clear that the most valuable of open spaces should be protected and open spaces should only succumb to development where a positive outcome can be demonstrated.

8.5.3. Whilst the open space does provide an area for locals to use, it largely serves as a green space on this corner between the industrial and office uses to the south and residential development to the north. The tree-lined area provides a good green break between the built form. The application before the council does not seek to replace this open space nor pay a contribution towards open space provision elsewhere. However, the proposed plans do show a modest upgrade of a simple area of grass between Eastbourne Avenue and Symonds Green Lane with a new path, bench and soft landscaping. Whilst details of how this area will be managed have not been provided, further details can be secured in the section 106 agreement.

8.5.4. The limited quality of the existing open space which would be lost, together with the upgrade of the retained area of open space and the proximity of Meadway playing Field as an alternative open space is considered sufficient to justify the loss of the open space in this instance. Additionally, the provision of much needed housing, including affordable housing in this area and the redevelopment of an existing redundant site is considered to hold significant weight as a public benefit.

8.6. **Visual Amenities**

8.6.1. Policy GD1 of the local plan requires development to be respectful of and make a positive contribution to its surroundings. It also requires developments located on street frontages to incorporate high-quality boundary treatments and where relevant, to take account of the requirements of Policy EC5.

8.6.2. The application site is located within a mixed-use area, although it is predominantly residential given the extent of the Symonds Green and Scarborough Avenue estates to the north. Residential properties are located to the north of the site, off Eastbourne

Avenue and Symonds Green Lane. However, to the south are industrial units and offices, along with principal open space to the south-west. The residential properties are a mixture of pre-new town, new town and modern day, with the more traditional properties located along Symonds Green Lane which is also within a conservation area. Therefore, architectural styles in the area vary greatly.

- 8.6.3. The site is largely separated into two areas, six detached properties on the previously developed west of the site off Symonds Green Lane, and the larger development proposed on the open space to the east. This area is then characterised by two storey dwellings and a three-storey flat block at the eastern corner closest to the roundabout junction with Redcar Drive, Clovelly Way and Rutherford Close. The design and character of both areas is purposefully different to make a distinction between more traditional dwellings at the end of Symonds Green Lane and adjacent the Conservation Area, and the cul-de-sac of 32 properties off Eastbourne Avenue.
- 8.6.4. Looking firstly at the six dwellings located off Symonds Green Lane, these properties would for the most part present as high quality and traditionally-designed detached dwellings. The materials are a mixture of red brick and render, with grey roof tiles and detailing such as brick courses, arched brick lintels and simple pitched roof porch canopies. The dwellings all feature gable ends on the facade, with the two end dwellings being slightly wider and mirrored from each other to act as bookends. The properties have a mostly uniform front building line, turning slightly at the southern end to take account of the proposed road layout.
- 8.6.5. The dwellings on the eastern parcel would be more modern in their appearance, constructed of buff/light coloured brick with contrasting detailing on the front elevation and simple brick lintels. Most would have flat facades, but some would also feature forward-facing gable ends, with flat canopies over the entrances. The roofs would be completed in grey tiles.
- 8.6.6. The appearance of the proposed block of flats would be largely consistent with the houses on the eastern part of the site, featuring the same light buff brick, contrasting detailing, brick lintels, grey roof tiles, and a flat canopy over the entrance. The major difference between the flat block and the houses on this part of the site is that the flat block would be taller, being three storeys in height.
- 8.6.7. It is noted that the existing residential properties off Eastbourne Avenue and Clovelly Way are all two storey and whilst flattened development is visible in the area, this is also only two storeys. Notwithstanding this, given the proposed separation between the flat block and the houses, which would provide a degree of relief, and the screening afforded by the trees around the perimeter of the site, a taller building is not unacceptable in this location. Taller industrial and office buildings are also visible off Rutherford Close to the south and thus the proposal creates a suitable transition in building heights between the two areas of mixed uses.
- 8.6.8. The layout of the site retains approximately half of an existing mature band of trees running north to south, splitting the previously developed western part of the site from the open space in the east. This will provide a degree of green screening between both areas of dwellings. A band of trees fronting Clovelly Way, south of the proposed vehicular access up to the proposed flat block, would be felled and replaced by a single band of trees. The existing trees fronting Redcar Drive, which are sparser in their coverage are also proposed to be removed but this would be required in any event as part of the works for West of Stevenage. This loss has therefore already been agreed in principle. Whilst

unfortunate, the loss of trees is necessary to facilitate the development, in particular a drainage swale, and the plans do show a reasonable amount of replacement planting in the limited remaining space.

8.6.9. The loss of these trees will have a detrimental visual impact on the area, as will the loss of the green open space. The architectural quality of the proposed dwellings themselves is considered to be limited but ultimately not harmful to visual amenities. Balanced against this are the significant benefits arising from the delivery of housing and making an effective use of the land.

8.6.10. On this basis, the proposed development would be acceptable in terms of design. It would have an acceptable appearance in the street scene and would not unduly harm the visual amenities of the area such that a refusal would be warranted.

8.7. **Heritage Assets**

8.7.1. The site is located adjacent to the Symonds Green Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset. The grade II listed Oakfield Farm Barn is also within relatively close proximity to the site.

8.7.2. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a general duty on local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess when considering whether to grant planning permission for development affecting them.

8.7.3. Section 72 of the same Act places a general duty on local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas when exercising functions with respect to land or other buildings in those areas.

8.7.4. Policy SP13 of the local plan states the council's strategic aim of preserving and enhancing the most important areas and characteristics of Stevenage. It goes on to say that the council will use national guidance and legislation to assess planning applications affecting heritage assets.

8.7.5. National planning policy for proposals affecting heritage assets is contained in chapter 16 of the NPPF. This requires local planning authorities, in determining applications, to 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.

8.7.6. Great weight must be given to the conservation of heritage assets and the more important the asset, the greater the weight that must be given. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to the asset's significance.

8.7.7. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification. Where a development

proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

- 8.7.8. The application site is located adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the Symonds Green Conservation Area. The significance of the area is as the well-preserved remnant of a small agricultural hamlet with origins in the 11th century.
- 8.7.9. The grade II listed Oakfield Farm Barn is also within relatively close proximity to the site. Its significance is as a near-complete example of late 16th or early 17th century timber-framing, displaying carpentry detailing characteristic of Hertfordshire practice, and retaining evidence of later extension and adaptation for animal husbandry. It is the oldest building within the conservation area.
- 8.7.10. Falling outside the boundary of the conservation area, the proposed development would not have any direct impact on its appearance or on the fabric of the listed building. The assessment of impacts is therefore limited to the effect on setting only.
- 8.7.11. It is of note that the Symonds Green Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) SPD 2012 discusses the need to preserve the small settlement feel and character of Symonds Green, protecting the listed buildings and buildings of local importance from loss of historic features, especially where repairs and maintenance are required. Much modern development has taken place around Oakfield Farm Barn and as such the proposed new housing, located beyond modern development and largely screened by trees and hedging would not have a significant impact on the historical and architectural character/importance of the listed building. The harm would be less than substantial, at the lower end of the scale.
- 8.7.12. Similarly, whilst the site is not in the conservation area, the impact on its setting is important. However, given the level of development that has taken place around the conservation area and within it, the provision of the 38 dwellings proposed, along with the ancillary development would not in officers' professional opinion cause undue harm to the setting of the conservation area or its character. The open spaces to the north of the conservation area would not be compromised and these are the main focus of the conservation area's character and layout. The harm to its setting is considered to be less than substantial at the lower end of the scale and the council's heritage adviser agrees with this conclusion.
- 8.7.13. Taking account of the guidance contained within the NPPF regarding less than substantial harm, which in this instance is at the lower end of the scale, said harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Great weight is given to the conservation of the listed building and conservation area but balanced against the provision of market and affordable homes on a suitable site at a time when housing delivery is constrained, it is officers' opinion that these benefits do outweigh the less than substantial harm.

8.8. **Pollution and Residential Amenities**

- 8.8.1. Policy GD1 of the local plan requires that developments do not lead to an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses or the surrounding area. In the partial update of the local plan, this wording has been amended slightly to refer to "unacceptable" adverse impacts.

- 8.8.2. Policy FP7 says that development proposals should minimise and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Planning permission will be granted where it is demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on:
- a) the natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area, including noise and light pollution;
 - b) the health and safety of the public; and
 - c) compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.

Construction Impacts

- 8.8.3. To mitigate the impacts on construction on neighbouring amenities, a condition is recommended to secure a construction management plan. The management plan would control the hours during which noisy work may take place, hours of deliveries, external construction lighting, dust suppression, and construction vehicle emissions. Subject to this condition, it is considered that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on neighbouring amenities during the construction phase.

Natural Light and Visual Intrusion

- 8.8.4. The closest plots within the development to neighbouring properties would be plots 1 and 7. Both of these plots would be sited a sufficient distance from their nearest existing neighbour such that neither new plot would detrimentally affect the sunlight or daylight enjoyed by neighbouring properties.

Privacy

- 8.8.5. In terms of privacy, the most affected existing properties would be 5 Nursery Cottage and 29 Eastbourne Avenue (the closest properties to plots 1 and 7 respectively).
- 8.8.6. Looking firstly at the relationship between 29 Eastbourne Avenue and the proposed development, plot 7 is the nearest property and is set at a diagonal to No.29. As such it partially has a back to side relationship for the purposes of the council's separation distance guidance but this is open to debate. The distance from the rear elevation of plot 7 to the shared boundary with No.29 is between 10m and 15m given the diagonal setting. The angle at which the two properties sit is such that plot 7 does not look onto a main elevation with habitable room windows. Furthermore, at a minimum of 10m in length the garden meets the council's requirements to ensure privacy in gardens. Therefore, given the orientation of the properties, the back to side relationship isn't exact and the separation distance for this type of relationship is difficult to justify. Given the above, it is considered No.29 would retain an acceptable level of outlook and privacy.
- 8.8.7. To the north-west of the site where the red line extends south from the proposed community garden, 5 Nursery Cottages sits due north of this section of the site, separated by an existing access track and grass verge. Plot 1 is the nearest proposed dwelling and this property would sit parallel to No.5, albeit staggered further back to take account of the proposed access. As such, the proposed dwelling would not have a detrimental impact on the outlook and privacy of No.5 by virtue of the proposed separation between both properties.

Light Pollution

- 8.8.8. In terms of light pollution, the separation between the proposed dwellings and existing neighbouring dwellings would be such that any external lighting would not cause a substantive nuisance.

Noise Pollution

- 8.8.9. The council's environmental health team advise that the site is subject to relatively high levels of environmental noise but that with appropriate mitigation, it can support residential development. Even with the proposed acoustic fencing, noise within residential gardens is likely to be elevated above typically acceptable levels but in these circumstances, development should be designed to mitigate the noise as far as reasonably possible, with the acceptability of any remaining noise being a matter of planning balance.
- 8.8.10. Having regard to the site's location adjacent to existing residential development and the weight placed on delivering new housing, officers consider elevated noise levels within gardens to be unfortunate but ultimately acceptable. A condition is recommended to ensure that noise in these areas is reduced as far as practicable.
- 8.8.11. A further clause in the same condition is recommended to ensure that internal noise levels for the development are within acceptable levels. Subject to this condition, future occupants of the development would enjoy an acceptable internal noise environment.

Air Pollution

- 8.8.12. The council's Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2019 shows that the development site is not located within or near to an air quality management area (AQMA). The council's environmental health team have not raised any concerns with respect to the operational impact the development would have on air quality.

Land Contamination

- 8.8.13. Policy FP5 of the local plan requires development proposals on brownfield sites to be accompanied by a preliminary risk assessment (PRA). This should demonstrate that any necessary remediation and subsequent development pose no risk to the population, environment or groundwater bodies.
- 8.8.14. The application is accompanied by a ground investigation report, which includes the results of intrusive sampling. This shows that risks from on-site contamination are generally low with the exception of elevated levels of certain metals and hydrocarbons. The report concludes that a detailed remediation strategy is required to deal with these contaminants.
- 8.8.15. The council's environmental health team are satisfied that subject to the recommended remediation, risks to the proposed development from contamination would be acceptable. Accordingly, a series of conditions are recommended to secure appropriate remediation and verification.

Living Space Standards

- 8.8.16. Policy GD1 requires residential development to provide adequate amenity space for future residents, which includes compliance with the nationally described space standard for internal areas

- 8.8.17. The submitted plans show that all of the proposed dwellings would meet the national space standards in terms of overall space and bedroom sizes. The quality of the proposed internal accommodation is therefore considered to be acceptable.
- 8.8.18. In terms of outdoor amenity space, all of the proposed houses would have private gardens, with the smallest measuring approximately 50m² and the largest measuring over 200m². The proposed apartment block would be surrounded by a landscaped area measuring in excess of 300m². The proposed development would therefore provide substantially more outdoor amenity space than is required by the local plan and accompanying design guidance.
- 8.8.19. In addition, the applicant is proposing to make a £50,000 contribution towards the provision of play equipment at Meadway Playing Fields, which lies immediately adjacent to the site to the west. This would provide enhanced facilities to cater for the recreational needs of young children living in the development in the future.

Accessibility

- 8.8.20. Policy HO11 of the local plan requires at least 50% of the dwellings within major residential developments to meet the Building Regulations optional requirement M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings.
- 8.8.21. The current scheme does not include details of how many dwellings would meet optional requirement M4(2). However, this aspect of the scheme may be secured by condition. Subject to this condition, the proposed development would be acceptable in terms of accessibility.

8.9. Highway Impacts

- 8.9.1. Policy IT4 of the local plan requires development proposals to be accompanied by an appropriate transport assessment. There should be no adverse impact on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impact on the highway network. Developments exceeding the relevant thresholds should also be accompanied by a travel plan.
- 8.9.2. Policy IT5 requires developments to provide parking in accordance with the Parking Provision SPD. Suitable provision should also be made for pedestrians, cyclists and passenger transport.

Access

- 8.9.3. The proposal would involve creating a new vehicular access off the end of Symonds Green Lane to serve plots 1 to 6. A new simple priority junction would then be created off Clovelly Way to serve the remainder of the development.
- 8.9.4. Clovelly Way is designated as a local distributor road, whereas Symonds Green Lane is designated as a local access road. Both are subject to a 30mph speed limit.
- 8.9.5. HCC, as local highway authority for the surrounding road network, has reviewed the proposed access arrangements and is satisfied that they would be acceptable in terms of highway safety and would not have any severe impact on the road network. Accordingly, the proposed access arrangements are considered to be acceptable.

Parking

- 8.9.6. The council's baseline residential parking standards are as follows:

Development	Parking Standard
C3 Dwellings	
1 Bedroom house	1 space per house
2 Bedroom house	1.5 spaces per house
3 Bedroom house	2 spaces per house
4 Bedroom house and larger	2.5 spaces per house
1 Bedroom flat	1 space per flat
2 Bedroom flat	1.5 spaces per flat
3 Bedroom flat	1.5 spaces per flat
4 Bedroom flat and larger	2 spaces per flat

- 8.9.7. The application proposes six one-bed flats, six two-bed flats, 19 three-bed houses and seven four-bed houses. The majority of the proposed parking is allocated, which means that visitor parking spaces should also be provided at a rate of 0.25 spaces per dwelling. The baseline parking requirement is therefore 80 spaces.
- 8.9.8. The application proposes a total of 78 car parking spaces, which is a minor shortfall against the council's standards. However, given the extent of the shortfall, at just two spaces, officers consider that it would be unlikely to have any severe impact on the road network. As such, the shortfall in parking spaces would not warrant refusal of the application.
- 8.9.9. The council's standards require that disabled parking for residential developments be provided at a rate of one space per wheelchair user dwelling. The application does not propose any wheelchair user dwellings and therefore no disabled parking spaces are required.
- 8.9.10. In terms of cycle parking, dedicated cycle stores to serve the proposed flats are shown on the submitted plans. Officers are satisfied that these would be large enough to accommodate the required 18 cycle parking spaces.
- 8.9.11. Cycle stores should also be provided for dwellings which would not have a garage. The submitted plans do not show any such stores. However, the generous gardens would be large enough for them to be provided. Accordingly, it is recommended that these stores be secured by condition.

Conclusion on Highway Impacts

- 8.9.12. In conclusion, the proposal departs from the council's parking standards through a slight under-provision of car parking spaces but it is considered that this would not have any unacceptable impact on the highway network such that refusal of the application would be warranted. Subject to a condition to secure additional cycle parking spaces for the proposed houses, the proposed parking arrangements are considered to be acceptable. In this respect, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy IT5 of the local plan.
- 8.9.13. The proposals for access, again subject to the imposition of suitable conditions, are likewise considered to be acceptable. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policy IT4 of the local plan.

8.10. **Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 8.10.1. Policy FP2 of the local plan requires development proposals to be accompanied by an appropriate flood risk assessment. The use of SuDS should also be maximised so as not to increase flood risk and wherever possible, reduce flood risk. Suitable flood resilience measures must also be incorporated into schemes.
- 8.10.2. In the emerging partial update of the local plan, Policy FP1 deals with sustainable drainage and Policy FP2 deals solely with flood risk. Emerging Policy FP1 places much greater emphasis on the use of green, surface SuDS features and adherence to the surface water discharge hierarchy than the policies in the adopted local plan. Emerging Policy FP2 largely replicates national policies for flood risk and in that sense is similar to the adopted version of the policy. It is considered that both of the emerging policies should be afforded moderate weight in assessing the current application.
- 8.10.3. The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1, which means it is at a low risk of fluvial flooding. It is at low risk from other sources of flooding.
- 8.10.4. The proposed drainage scheme for the site comprises areas of permeable paving with underground pipes and attenuation. A swale is also proposed along the southern boundary of the site.
- 8.10.5. The attenuation would discharge run-off to the Thames Water surface water network at a rate of 2L/s. This is higher than the 0.84L/s calculated greenfield run-off rate but is nonetheless a very low rate and Thames Water has confirmed that this rate is acceptable.
- 8.10.6. HCC, in their capacity as lead local flood authority, have reviewed the proposals and confirmed that they are acceptable, subject to conditions relating to construction and management of the drainage system. Subject to these conditions, the development is considered to be acceptable in flood risk and drainage terms.
- 8.11. **Arboricultural Impacts**
- 8.11.1. Policy NH5 of the local plan requires that existing trees be protected, retained and sensitively incorporated into developments. Where loss of existing trees is demonstrably unavoidable, planning permission will be granted where sufficient land is reserved for landscaping and appropriate replacement planting is provided.
- 8.11.2. The site is currently bounded on almost every side by belts of trees, with a historic hedge running the length of the western boundary along the footpath to Symonds Green Lane. A further area of trees separates the previously developed part of the site from the eastern parcel of open space.
- 8.11.3. In total, the submitted tree survey identified 23 arboricultural features on the site, including 14 individual trees and nine groups of trees. Two of the individual trees are of high quality (category A) and all of the groups on the site's boundaries are moderate quality (category B).
- 8.11.4. In total, the proposed development would result in nine of the identified arboricultural features being removed in their entirety, including one category A individual tree, one category B individual tree and five of the category B boundary groups. All four of the remaining groups would be partially removed by up to 55%.
- 8.11.5. The application proposes the planting of a total of 42 replacement trees. This is significant but it would not compensate for the proposed losses and the development would result in a considerable net loss in tree cover across the site.

8.11.6. However, given that the site is predominantly a greenfield site with a large extent of existing tree cover, a net loss of trees is likely to be unavoidable to facilitate the redevelopment of the site. The council's Arboricultural Manager was consulted on the application and has advised that the proposed tree works are acceptable, subject to the proposed replacement planting being implemented and the works being carried out to an acceptable standard. Given this, whilst the overall loss of trees is regrettable, it is considered acceptable in this instance.

8.11.7. It is recommended that an arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan be secured by condition, to ensure that retained trees will be adequately protected during construction works. Subject to this condition, the proposed development would accord with Policy NH5 of the local plan.

8.12. **Ecology and Biodiversity**

8.12.1. Policy SP12 sets out the council's strategic objective to protect the green infrastructure, natural environment and landscape of Stevenage. The loss of green infrastructure or assets of biodiversity importance as a result of development should be mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for. Any identified impacts on priority habitats or species should likewise be avoided, mitigated, or compensated for.

8.12.2. Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sets out that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the 'biodiversity gain condition' requiring development to achieve a net gain of 10% of biodiversity value. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not apply in some circumstances.

8.12.3. In this instance, the application was submitted before biodiversity net gain became a legislative requirement and it is therefore exempt from the statutory biodiversity gain condition. As the council's biodiversity net gain SPD has also since been revoked, there is no planning policy basis to secure a biodiversity net gain for the scheme.

8.12.4. The application is supported by a preliminary ecological appraisal, which presents the results of a desk study, field study, preliminary bat roost assessment, and reptile survey. These investigations revealed no direct evidence of reptiles, hedgehogs, badgers, invertebrates, or amphibians, despite the site providing suitable habitats. Likewise, no evidence of bat roosts was discovered. However, there was some evidence of bats using the site for foraging.

8.12.5. The report recommends that any lighting at the site be installed according to best practice for the protection of bats. It also recommends that construction work be carried out in accordance with an environmental management plan, including protection for all retained habitats, a construction programme which avoids ecologically-sensitive periods (e.g. bird nesting season) and vegetation clearance protocols.

8.12.6. Officers are satisfied that these recommended measures would be sufficient to adequately protect any species present on the site. Accordingly, conditions are recommended to secure the construction environmental management plan and lighting design. Subject to these conditions, the proposed development would have an acceptable ecological impact, in accordance with Policy SP12 of the local plan.

8.13. **Climate Change**

- 8.13.1. Policy FP1 of the local plan says that planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to address climate change. New developments are encouraged to include measures such as:
- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely future 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.
 - Contributing towards reducing flood risk through the use of SuDS or other appropriate measures.
- 8.13.2. In the emerging partial update of the local plan, detailed climate change policies are set out under a new dedicated chapter, with the revised Policy FP1 dealing with sustainable drainage. The majority of the new policies provide support for various measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, without placing any firm requirements on new developments.
- 8.13.3. The notable exception to this is new Policy CC1, which would require major development to be net zero carbon in operation. However, there are significant unresolved objections to this policy and so it should be afforded limited weight in assessing the current application.
- 8.13.4. The application documents do not include firm details of performance in terms of carbon emissions. However, they do state that the development will utilise air source heat pumps for heating and hot water, and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery. Photovoltaic panels may also be considered for on-site renewable energy generation. The stated intention is to exceed the energy performance requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations, albeit the extent of this improvement is not specified.
- 8.13.5. In the event that planning permission is granted for the development and in the absence of firm details at this stage, it is recommended that details of energy performance be secured by condition. Subject to this condition, the proposed development would make an acceptable contribution to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, in accordance with Policy FP1 of the local plan.

8.14. **Refuse and Recycling**

- 8.14.1. Policy GD1 of the local plan requires developments to make adequate provision for the collection of waste.
- 8.14.2. The submitted plans show two bin stores to serve the proposed flat block, including capacity which greatly exceeds the council's minimum standards.
- 8.14.3. Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would make adequate provision for the collection of waste. In this respect, the proposal accords with Policy GD1 of the local plan.

8.15. **Planning Obligations**

- 8.15.1. In accordance with the council's CIL Charging Schedule, the development would be liable for CIL at a rate of £100/m² of new residential floorspace created by the development. Any CIL receipts from the development would be spent on infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of new development within the borough, generally replacing the need for bespoke section 106 contributions to serve this purpose on a site-by-site basis.
- 8.15.2. However, in this instance, some additional contributions are necessary to mitigate the site-specific impacts of the development. HCC Growth and Infrastructure have requested a contribution of £356,114 towards the provision of secondary education facilities at the former Barnwell East site, on the basis that CIL receipts would not be sufficient to provide for these facilities. Officers agree that this request is justified having regard to the CIL regulations, in particular that it is necessary to provide for new education infrastructure to serve residents of new development in the borough, including the application site. As such, it is recommended that the requested contribution be secured as part of a section 106 agreement.
- 8.15.3. HCC Highways have also requested a contribution of £159,975 towards a bus corridor scheme to link new development to the north and south of Stevenage to Lister Hospital, the Old Town, Gunnels Wood Employment Area, and the GSK campus. This contribution is sought in addition to bus stop improvements on Clovelly Way which would be secured as part of the section 278 highways agreement associated with the development. They maintain that the contribution is necessary because the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies the North-South Bus Corridor as essential to support development growth and this site forms part of the demand requiring that investment
- 8.15.4. Officers do not consider this contribution to comply with regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations. For a contribution to be "necessary", the development must be unacceptable without it. In this case, the applicant has already demonstrated that the scheme is adequately served by existing public transport provision. Local bus services (notably the SB8 and SB9) provide reasonable coverage and frequency, and the proposed s278 works will further improve pedestrian access to these services. While additional investment could enhance the network, this is not the same as the development causing an unacceptable impact or relying on new transport infrastructure to function acceptably. On the evidence available, the development would remain acceptable without the requested contribution.
- 8.15.5. Because the scheme is not strategic, there is no site specific local plan requirement for new transport infrastructure or targeted service enhancements. The only potentially relevant policy is Policy IT5, which requires major developments to demonstrate how they will be served by passenger transport and allows for obligations "where appropriate." In this case, the applicant has already demonstrated compliance with IT5 through existing bus services and improved access via s278 works. Since the development plan does not require the specific improvement for which the contribution is sought, refusing the application in its absence would be difficult to justify.
- 8.15.6. Although enhanced public transport provision is always beneficial, the test under Reg 122 is not whether the contribution is desirable, but whether it is required to make the development acceptable. Given the site's existing public transport accessibility, the improvements secured through the s278 works, the absence of a policy requirement for the specific enhancement requested, and the operation of the tilted balance, officers cannot conclude that the development would be unacceptable without the contribution.

It therefore fails the “necessity” test under Reg 122, is irrelevant, and should not be sought.

- 8.15.7. Financial contributions are also required in line with the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Documents (2025). In this regard, only a contribution to be made towards the Local Training Fund if target employment of Stevenage residents is not met as follows:
- £4,000 per number of targeted jobs not filled by Stevenage residents;
 - £2,000 per number of targeted apprenticeships not filled by Stevenage residents or students; and
 - £500 per apprenticeship position as an administrative fee towards the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions;
 - If a major development could not provide suitable apprenticeship opportunities due to the quick construction of the development project, and the resultant lack of suitable opportunity to provide apprenticeships, they should pay a lesser fee of £1,000 per number of targeted apprenticeships not created rather than the £2,000 fee.
- 8.15.8. These targets do not add a requirement for additional jobs that would add a financial burden to the developer or contractor. The targets merely add a requirement that a portion of the jobs will be targeted to local residents. The in-lieu payments do not add a significant financial burden to the developer or contractor and will only be required if the developer or contractor does not meet the employment targets.
- 8.15.9. In addition, the applicant is proposing to make a £50,000 contribution towards the provision of play equipment at Meadway Playing Fields. This would be secured within the s106 agreement.
- 8.15.10. The proposed 12 affordable flats should also be secured as part of the section 106 agreement, along with a management company to facilitate maintenance of common areas of the development such as the drainage system, landscaping and internal roads.
- 8.15.11. It is recommended that the wording of the s106 agreement to secure the above contributions be delegated to the Director for Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of the Planning and Development Committee. In the event that any of the above contributions are ultimately not secured (e.g. in the event that they are subsequently considered not to be CIL Reg 122 compliant), the application would be referred back to the committee to consider afresh.
- 8.16. **Equality and Human Rights**
- 8.17. Consideration has been given to articles 1 and 8 of the first protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. In this case, it is considered that a decision to grant permission would not violate any person’s rights under the Convention.
- 8.18. When determining planning applications, it is also important to rigorously consider any equalities implications of the decisions that may be taken. This requires proper appreciation of any potential impact of the proposed development on the council’s obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 8.19. 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 protected characteristics and persons who do not; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics and persons who do not. 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.

- 8.20. In terms of inclusive access, at least 50% of the proposed dwellings would be designed to optional requirement M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings. No disabled persons' parking would be provided but since the application does not propose any wheelchair user dwellings, disabled persons' parking is not considered to be necessary. Level access would however be provided across the site, which would be of benefit to wheelchair and pushchair users.
- 8.21. It is therefore considered that a decision to grant permission would not conflict with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1. The local plan policies most relevant to determining the application are considered to be out-of-date by reason of the council's latest Housing Delivery Test result. Accordingly, paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged and permission should be granted for the development unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole. This does not however override the statutory requirement to determine the application in accordance with the development plan.
- 9.2. The proposed development would deliver one clear public benefit, which is the provision of 38 good quality dwellings, of which 12 would be affordable, at a time when housing delivery in the borough is constrained. This carries great weight in favour of granting permission.
- 9.3. Balanced against this, the proposal would result in the loss of a significant area of open space, along with many of the trees currently upon it. It would also result in less than substantial harm, at the lower end of that scale, to the grade II listed Oakfield Farm Barn and Symonds Green Conservation Area. These harms carry significant weight against the proposal.
- 9.4. However, the harm to the listed building and conservation area is outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. Similarly, the harm arising from the loss of open space and trees is outweighed by the provision of good quality housing, having regard to the quality of the open space and the availability of higher-quality alternative spaces in the area.
- 9.5. Subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable in all other respects, including its effects on neighbouring residential amenity, parking, highway safety, flood risk, and ecology. These matters are considered neutral in the overall planning balance.
- 9.6. The application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the proposal is considered to accord with the development plan when read as a whole. Although the NPPF is a material consideration, the fact that the development accords with the development plan

means it is not necessary to carry out the balancing exercise set out under paragraph 11(d). Accordingly, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the conditions set out below and the completion of a section 106 agreement to provide for:

- Affordable housing
- Management company for administration of common areas
- Employment and skills plan
- Secondary education contribution of £356,114
- An appropriate trigger for s278 off-site highway works

10.2. That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the council's appointed solicitor, to agree the wording of the s106 agreement.

10.3. That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning and Development Committee, to amend or add to the conditions subject to which permission would be granted, where such amendments or additions would satisfy the relevant national policy tests and would most effectively deliver the development which the Committee has resolved to approve.

Conditions

General

1. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority:

14122_P205G;
14122_P215A;
P25-2066_DE_003;
P25-2066_DE_004 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_005 Rev J;
P25-2066_DE_006 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_007 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_008 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_009 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_010 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_011 Rev H;
P25-2066_DE_012 Rev I;
P25-2066_DE_014-01 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-02 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-03 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-04 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-05 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-06 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-07 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-08 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-09 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-10 Rev D;

P25-2066_DE_014-11 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-11 Rev D (Traditional);
P25-2066_DE_014-12 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-13 Rev D;
P25-2066_DE_014-15 Rev D;
P25-2066_EN_0001_S1;
P25-2066_EN_0001_S2;

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

2. The development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

3. The materials used in the external surfaces of the development shall be those listed on the application form and the approved plans.

REASON: In the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

4. At least 50% of the dwellings comprising the development shall meet the Building Regulations optional requirement M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings.

REASON: In the interests of accessibility and housing choice.

5. No demolition or construction activities (including any associated collections or deliveries) shall be carried out except between the hours of 07:30 to 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays. For the avoidance of doubt, no such work shall be carried out on Sundays or bank holidays.

REASON: In the interests of the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

6. No external lighting shall be installed or operated at the site other than in accordance with *Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2023) Guidance Note 08/23 Bat and Artificial Lighting at Night*.

REASON: To prevent harm to protected species.

7. The development shall be carried out in accordance with *Residential Development Redcar Drive Stevenage Flood Risk Assessment* dated September 2025. For the avoidance of doubt, all dwellings comprising the development must have a finished floor level raised a minimum of 300mm above any flood level and 150mm above the surrounding proposed ground.

REASON: To mitigate flood risk.

8. In the event that any previously unidentified contamination is found when carrying out the development, work to implement the development must cease immediately and the contamination must be reported in writing to the local planning authority as soon as reasonably practicable. Work shall not resume until the results of an investigation and where necessary, a remediation scheme, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with any approved remediation scheme.

REASON: In the interests of human health.

Prior to Commencement

9. Prior to the commencement of the development (including site clearance), a construction management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of all of the following:
- a) Phasing of the development (including highway works)
 - b) Hours of working (including timing of collections and deliveries)
 - c) All plant and vehicles required for construction and demolition
 - d) Vehicle routing and parking
 - e) Traffic and pedestrian management (including any necessary footway closures)
 - f) Construction and storage compounds
 - g) Site enclosure
 - h) Measures to keep the highway clear of dirt and debris (including wheel washing facilities)
 - i) Site lighting (including any necessary off-site light spill mitigation)
 - j) Noise, vibration, dust and smoke mitigation measures
 - k) Vermin control

The development shall then at all times be carried out in accordance with the approved construction management plan.

REASON: In the interests of the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and highway safety.

This condition must be a pre-commencement condition in order to be effective.

10. Prior to the commencement of the development (including site clearance), a site waste management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved site waste management plan.

REASON: In the interests of the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

This condition must be a pre-commencement condition in order to be effective.

11. Prior to the commencement of the development (including site clearance), a construction environmental management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of all of the following:
- a) Buffer zones and protection measures for all retained habitats
 - b) A construction programme which avoids ecologically-sensitive periods (e.g. bird nesting season)
 - c) Vegetation clearance protocols to minimise risks to protected and notable species

The development shall then at all times be carried out in accordance with the approved construction environmental management plan.

REASON: To prevent harm to protected species.

This condition must be a pre-commencement condition in order to be effective.

12. Prior to the commencement of the development (including site clearance), an arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan.

REASON: To prevent harm to trees worthy of retention.

This condition must be a pre-commencement condition in order to be effective.

13. Prior to the commencement of the development (including site clearance), a remediation strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved remediation strategy.

REASON: In the interests of human health.

After Site Clearance / Groundworks

14. Prior to the commencement of the development (excluding site clearance and groundworks), a scheme for the provision of fire hydrants shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved fire hydrants shall then be provided prior to occupation of the development.

REASON: In the interests of fire safety.

15. Prior to the commencement of the development (excluding site clearance and groundworks), details of the energy performance of the dwellings comprising the development (specified in terms of the dwelling emission rates calculated according to SAP 10.2) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The dwellings shall then be constructed to meet the approved energy performance criteria.

REASON: In the interests of climate change mitigation.

16. Prior to the commencement of the development (excluding site clearance and groundworks), details of cycle parking facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved cycle parking facilities shall be provided prior to occupation of the development and permanently retained thereafter.

REASON: To ensure sustainable transport is adequately promoted.

17. Prior to the commencement of the development (excluding site clearance and groundworks), details of bird and bat boxes to be provided within the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved bird and bat boxes shall be installed prior to occupation of the development and permanently retained thereafter.

REASON: To ensure that the ecological impacts of the development are adequately mitigated.

18. Prior to the commencement of the development (excluding site clearance and groundworks), a noise mitigation scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall ensure that the following noise levels will not be exceeded:

Room Type	Daytime (07:00 to 23:00)	Night-time (23:00 to 07:00)
Living rooms	35 dB LAeq, 16hour	-
Dining rooms	40 dB LAeq, 16hour	-
Bedrooms	35 dB LAeq, 16hour	30 dB LAeq, 8hour 45dB Lamax – no more than 10 times per night

Where mechanical ventilation is proposed it should, in normal operation, achieve compliance with NR20 in bedrooms between 23:00 to 07:00 and NR25 in all habitable rooms between 07:00 to 23:00.

Noise levels in external amenity spaces provided for the sole use of the occupiers of the dwellings shall not exceed 55dB LAeq,16hr. However, where this is not practicable it must be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation measures achieve the lowest reasonable levels.

The development shall then be constructed in accordance with the approved noise mitigation scheme.

REASON: In the interests of the living conditions of occupiers of the development.

Prior to Occupation

19. Where any part of the development is required to be carried out in accordance with a remediation scheme, a verification report (setting out the remedial measures actually undertaken on the site) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to occupation of the development.

REASON: In the interests of human health and the nearby public water supply abstraction.

20. Prior to occupation of the development, all accesses, crossings, roads, footways, and parking, servicing and manoeuvring areas shall be laid out in accordance with the approved plans. Those areas shall thereafter be permanently maintained in a manner fit for their intended purpose.

REASON: In the interests of the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and highway safety.

21. Prior to occupation of the development, a noise compliance report, demonstrating that any agreed noise mitigation measures have been implemented, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: In the interests of the living conditions of occupiers of the development.

22. Prior to occupation of the development, a SuDS management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be operated at all times in accordance with the approved SuDS management plan.

REASON: In the interests of flood mitigation.

23. Prior to occupation of the development, a SuDS verification report, including a survey of as-built features, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The verification report shall demonstrate that the approved SuDS scheme has been implemented as approved.

REASON: In the interests of flood mitigation.

24. Prior to occupation of the development, the refuse and recycling storage facilities shall be provided as shown on the approved plans. The storage facilities shall be permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON: To ensure waste is properly disposed of.

Post-Completion

25. The approved soft landscaping shall be implemented in full in the first planting season following completion of the development. Any trees or other plants comprised in the landscaping works for the development, which within a period of five years from completion of the development are removed, become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: In the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

INFORMATIVES

1. 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.
2. It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the County Council website at <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.
3. 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.

4. Building Regulations

To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk or phoning us on 01438 879990.

To make a building regulations application please apply through our website portal at <https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/contact-us/> payment can be made online or by phoning the above number after the application has been uploaded. Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control for fees guidance on 01438 879990.

Hertfordshire Building Control can also be contacted by post at Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd, 4th Floor, Campus West, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6BX.

Once a building regulations application has been deposited with relevant drawings and fee building work may commence. You will be advised in their acknowledgement letter of the work stages we need to inspect but in most instances these are usually: excavation for foundations; damp proof course; concrete oversite; insulation; drains (when laid or tested); floor and roof construction; work relating to fire safety; work affecting access and facilities for disabled people; and completion.

Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control on 01438 879990 before 10.00am to ensure a same day inspection (Mon - Fri).

5. Community Infrastructure Levy

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020.

This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk

6. The construction works and operation of the proposed development site should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices, thereby significantly reducing the groundwater pollution risk. It should be noted that the construction works may exacerbate any existing pollution. If any pollution is found at the site then the appropriate monitoring and remediation methods will need to be undertaken. For further information we refer you to CIRIA Publication C532 "Control of water pollution from construction - guidance for consultants and contractors".

Being within a water stressed area, we expect that the development includes water efficient fixtures and fittings. Measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling help the environment by reducing pressure for abstractions. They also minimise potable water use by reducing the amount of potable water used for washing, cleaning and watering gardens. This in turn reduces the carbon emissions associated with treating this water to a standard suitable for drinking and will help in our efforts to get emissions down in the borough.

7. The developer is strongly encouraged to achieve Secured by Design (SBD) accreditation for the development. The Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor can be contracted by telephone on 01707 355227.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item. Online copies may be obtained at <https://publicaccess.stevenage.gov.uk/online-applications/>
- 11.2. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan>
- 11.3. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update 2025
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-partial-update/submission-to-secretary-of-state>
- 11.4. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD 2025; Design Guidance SPD 2025; Developer Contributions SPD 2025.
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-library>
- 11.5. Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan LTP4 2018-2031
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/ltp4-local-transport-plan-4-complete.pdf>
- 11.6. Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and the Planning Practice Guidance.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- 11.7. Representations made by statutory consultees and other interested parties referred to in this report. Online copies can be found on Public Access (see paragraph 10.1).