



Beck Close, Ashbrook

Bugler Homes

Statement of Community Involvement

December 2025





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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines the pre-application consultation and engagement undertaken by the Community Communications Partnership (CCP) on behalf of Bugler Homes in relation to a proposal for land at Stevenage Road in Ashbrook, Hitchin, North Hertfordshire.
- 1.2. The revised scheme proposes **50 residential dwellings (Use Class C3)** on land at Beck Close, Stevenage Road, Hitchin, including **50% affordable housing**, , associated internal roads and parking, **public open space and a wetland park**, sustainable drainage, landscape and ecological enhancements (including biodiversity net gain), and provision of new and improved **walking and cycling connections** between Hitchin and Stevenage, together with all associated infrastructure and works.
- 1.3. The consultation process was designed to reach residents and stakeholders through a multi-channel approach, including:
 - A dedicated consultation website, which attracted **2,197 unique visitors**
 - Delivery of **500 leaflets** to properties around the site
 - A social media campaign that achieved **over 18,531 views** and **603 click-throughs** to the consultation site
- 1.4. We have also contacted elected representatives on North Hertfordshire District Council and given a presentation, (with a question-and-answer session), of the proposals to St Ippolyts Parish Council.
- 1.5. The consultation received **forty-five** written responses, with just under half of respondents (**47%**) expressing either support or a neutral position towards the proposals, and **29%** expressing clear support. While **53%** expressed opposition in principle, many of these respondents also provided constructive feedback on how the scheme could be improved, particularly in relation to traffic, access and environmental protection.
- 1.6. There was notably stronger support for the affordable housing element of the proposals, with **29%** expressing a positive or very positive view, compared with only **11%** expressing a negative view. Nearly half of respondents (**47%**) indicated a neutral position, suggesting broad acceptance of the principle of affordable housing on the site.
- 1.7. Feedback covered a wide range of topics, including the principle of development on green belt land, traffic and highway safety on Stevenage Road, the capacity of local schools and health services, detailed access arrangements to Kingshott School, and the potential effects on landscape, biodiversity and drainage along Ash Brook.
- 1.8. Supportive respondents consistently highlighted the strong affordable housing offer, new public open spaces, biodiversity enhancements and walking and cycling improvements as key benefits. Even among neutral and objecting respondents, there was widespread agreement that, should development proceed, it must be delivered with high-quality landscaping, robust drainage solutions and careful traffic management.
- 1.9. Overall, the consultation provided a clear picture of local priorities and concerns. The project team utilised this feedback to refine the proposals, including the access strategy, green infrastructure and drainage approach, and will explain these responses in more detail within the planning application documents.



2. Introduction

- 2.1. This report provides details of the programme of community engagement to be undertaken by the Community Communications Partnership ("the CCP") on behalf of Bugler Homes ("the Applicant"), in relation to their proposal of 50 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) on land at Beck Close, Stevenage Road, Hitchin, including 50% affordable housing, associated internal roads and parking, public open space and a wetland park, sustainable drainage, landscape and ecological enhancements (including biodiversity net gain), and provision of new and improved walking and cycling connections between Hitchin and Stevenage, together with all associated infrastructure and works.
- 2.2. Paragraphs 40-43 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) encourage engagement between applicant, local planning authorities and the local community. This is intended to enable "better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".
- 2.3. The Applicant and the CCP have proactively engaged with the community by distributing newsletters to residents around the Site, publishing a consultation website, and social media advertisements. Elected representatives were also contacted to inform them of the consultation efforts and seek their opinions.
- 2.4. The purpose of this Statement of Community Involvement is to outline the pre-application engagement undertaken and summarise the feedback received.

3. Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Openness

- 3.1. The Applicant and the Community Communications Partnership (CCP) are committed to undertaking consultation on the Beck Close proposals in a way that is open, inclusive, proportionate and accessible to all, in line with the principles set out in the North Hertfordshire Statement of Community Involvement.
 - North Hertfordshire District Council's SCI emphasises the importance of:
 - Early and meaningful engagement
 - Using a range of consultation methods to reach different audiences
 - Making information clear and accessible
 - Providing opportunities for people to participate in ways that suit their circumstances; and
 - Ensuring transparency in how consultation is undertaken and reported.
- 3.2. The approach adopted for the Beck Close consultation has been designed to embrace and reflect these expectations.

A multi-channel and inclusive consultation approach

- 3.3. To ensure that local people with different preferences, access needs and communication habits could engage with the proposals, a combination of digital and non-digital consultation methods was used.
 - A dedicated consultation website (www.buglerbeckclose.uk) hosted all information in one place, including plans, visual material and a user-friendly online feedback form. This allowed residents to view information and respond at any time, including evenings and weekends.



- 500 printed leaflets were delivered directly to homes closest to the site and along key corridors, including Ashbrook, the southern edge of Hitchin and parts of Little Wymondley. This ensured that residents who may not routinely engage online, or who prefer hard-copy information, were directly informed and given clear instructions on how to take part.
 - A targeted social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram promoted the consultation to adults across North Hertfordshire, including Hitchin, Ashbrook, St Ippolyts and surrounding villages. This helped reach working-age residents, families and younger adults who are more likely to engage digitally.
 - Direct engagement with local representatives, including ward councillors and St Ippolyts Parish Council, provided a further route for community views to be raised and explored, including from residents who prefer to engage through familiar, established local democratic structures.
- 3.4. Residents were able to respond in several ways:
- via the online feedback form,
 - by email,
 - by telephone, and
 - through discussion at the Parish Council meeting.
- 3.5. This reflects the North Hertfordshire SCI's emphasis on providing choice in how people engage, rather than relying on a single consultation method.

Accessibility of information

- 3.6. In line with the Council's SCI, the consultation materials were designed to be:
- Clear and easy to understand, with technical planning concepts explained in plain English wherever possible.
 - Logically structured, using clear section headings and consistent formatting.
 - Supported by illustrative plans and images, to assist those who find visual information easier to interpret than text alone.
 - Accompanied by clear contact details, so that residents could easily request further information, ask questions or provide feedback outside the online form.
- 3.7. The consultation ran over a defined period and remained live across weekdays, evenings and weekends, helping to ensure that people with work commitments, caring responsibilities or limited daytime availability were not excluded.

Engagement with different groups within the community

- 3.8. While this pre-application consultation did not involve formal demographic monitoring, the breadth of issues raised demonstrates that the process successfully engaged a wide cross-section of the local community, including:
- Families and school communities, through extensive feedback relating to Kingshott School, safeguarding, school access and road safety.
 - Older residents and long-standing local households, particularly in relation to concerns about Green Belt protection, urban sprawl and traffic.
 - People in housing need and aspiring first-time buyers, through strong interest in and debate over the provision of affordable housing.



- Residents with an interest in environmental protection, through detailed responses on wildlife, flood risk, drainage, biodiversity and landscape.
- 3.9. The consultation approach ensured that these different perspectives could all be expressed and recorded openly, rather than privileging any single viewpoint.

Openness and transparency

- 3.10. In accordance with the North Hertfordshire SCI, the consultation has been conducted on a transparent basis:
- The purpose of the consultation, the emerging nature of the proposals and the intent to use feedback to inform further design and technical work were clearly stated on the website and leaflet.
 - All feedback received through the formal channels has been summarised thematically and reported in full within this Statement of Community Involvement, including both supportive and opposing views.
 - No filtering or selective reporting of comments has taken place, ensuring that decision-makers have a clear and balanced understanding of local opinion.

Ongoing engagement

- 3.11. The Applicant recognises that meaningful engagement does not end when the formal consultation period closes. In line with the North Hertfordshire SCI's emphasis on ongoing dialogue:
- The project team will continue to engage with St Ippolyts Parish Council as the scheme evolves.
 - Residents who requested to be kept informed will receive future updates as the proposals progress.
 - Further opportunities for engagement will be provided as additional technical information becomes available and as the planning application moves forward.
 - The consultation website will remain live and the feedback section open for residents to provide feedback throughout the consultation process.
- 3.12. The website will be periodically updated with the latest project information.

Summary

- 3.13. The consultation for Beck Close has been carried out in a way that is:
- Proportionate to the scale of the development;
 - Inclusive, through the use of both digital and non-digital methods;
 - Accessible, through clear, plain-English information and multiple response routes;
 - Open and transparent, through full reporting of feedback; and
 - Fully aligned with the expectations of the North Hertfordshire Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.14. This approach has enabled local people from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances to understand the proposals and to share their views in a meaningful and constructive way.



4. Engagement with elected representatives and community stakeholders

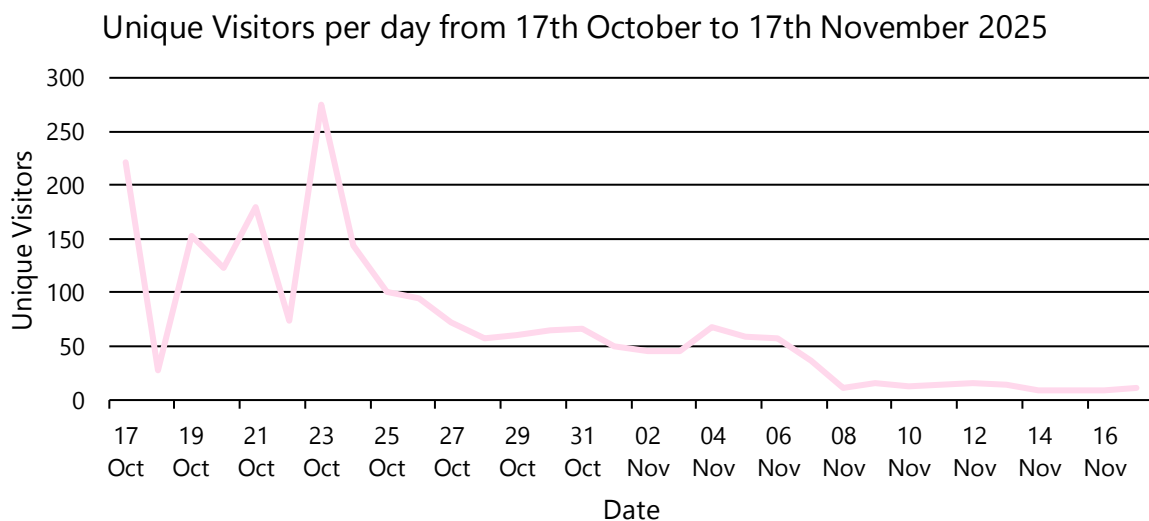
- 4.1. Local ward councillors on North Hertfordshire District Council were emailed information about the proposals and the consultation prior to the launch offering a meeting to discuss the proposals further. Ward councillors were invited to engage with the project team and the consultation materials. While no formal written responses were received at the time of writing, the project team remains available to meet elected Members as the proposals progress.
- 4.2. The Applicant gave a presentation at a public meeting of St Ippolyts Parish Council organised with the Clerk on 11 November 2025.
- 4.3. James Chell, Land Director at Bugler Homes, presented the proposals to members of the Parish Council and took part in a questions and answers session with councillors and members of the public to address the points that they raised.
- 4.4. Following this meeting, James Chell on behalf of the applicant sent a letter to St Ippolyts Parish Council providing an update and additional information on the details of the application in response to questions raised at the public meeting. A copy of the letter has been included in this report at [Appendix 4](#).
- 4.5. The applicant is committed to maintaining an ongoing dialogue with St Ippolyts Parish Council and to provide further updates as required as the application progresses.
- 4.6. James Chell on behalf of the applicant also met via teams with local residents Dr Tim Forshaw and Dr Joanne Forshaw to discuss active travel and road safety issues in the area. The discussion centred on their involvement in the campaign to introduce a pedestrian crossing at Blackhorse Lane and Stevenage Road, in the south of Hitchin and their interest in how our proposals would contribute towards delivering improvements in transport infrastructure.
- 4.7. The applicant is committed to maintaining ongoing dialogue with all interested local parties and will maintain dialogue and provide further updates to Dr Tim and Dr Joanne Forshaw as the application progresses.



5. Public Consultation

Website

- 5.1. An online consultation website (www.buglerbeckclose.uk) was published on 17th October 2025 to provide residents with information about the proposal. Screenshots of the website are shown in [Appendix 1](#).
- 5.2. The site explains the location and context of the land off Stevenage Road, the scale and type of development proposed (including up to 50 new homes with 50% affordable housing), key design principles, green and play space provision, transport and access arrangements, and the planning rationale including reference to "Grey Belt" policy and local housing need.
- 5.3. The website includes illustrative plans and images, a description of proposed environmental and biodiversity enhancements, and a dedicated online feedback form inviting residents' views through multiple-choice questions and free-text responses. Contact details, a privacy notice and links to further information are also provided, with responses intended to inform the final proposals prior to submission of a planning application.
- 5.4. The CCP measured the website traffic for one month, between the dates of 17th October 2025 and 17th November 2025. In total, the website was viewed by 2,197 persons, with 221 visitors on the first day and a peak of 275 on 23rd October.



Leaflet

- 5.5. 500 leaflets were delivered to properties near the Site on 19 October 2025. The map below indicates the areas where leaflets were delivered. Deliveries were focussed on the residential streets on the southern edge of Hitchin (yellow), homes in the north/west of Little Wymondley (orange), and to the immediately neighbouring properties in Ashbrook (light yellow).

Leaflet distribution map



- 5.6. The two-sided colour print A4 leaflet presented the proposal with details about the 50 new homes (with 50% affordable housing) with gardens and parking, new public open space, play areas, wildflower meadows, ponds and walking/cycling connections between Hitchin and Stevenage, alongside biodiversity enhancements and a landscape buffer to Ash Brook. The leaflet described the site and its surroundings, explained that a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% is targeted, and invited comments via the consultation, email or telephone. It stated that the consultation would close on Friday 7 November while the website would remain available through the application process. The leaflet design is shown in [Appendix 2](#).

Social Media

- 5.7. From 17 October 2025 to 7 November 2025, the CCP ran a social media campaign, serving to direct viewers to the website. The audience was set to reach people aged 18 years old and older across North Hertfordshire, including Ashbrook, Hitchin, St Ippolyts, Little Wymondley and Great Wymondley.
- 5.8. The social media was advertised on Meta Platforms (Facebook and Instagram). The advertisement was viewed **18,531** times by **10,620** individual accounts. **603** click-throughs were recorded to the consultation website and there were 628 post engagements.
- 5.9. This approach served to engage residents across North Hertfordshire, reaching a wider cross section of local people and those who are most likely to participate and respond digitally.
- 5.10. This advert is shown in [Appendix 3](#).

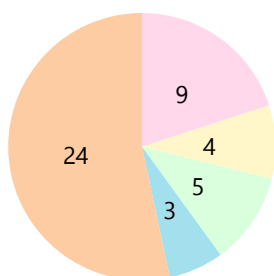


6. Public Response

Consultation Feedback

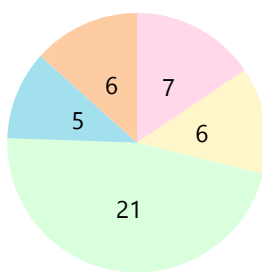
- 6.1. Forty-five individuals submitted feedback responses on the consultation website.
- 6.2. Almost all respondents (thirty-seven) live locally in the SG postcode area, with the great majority in SG4 covering Hitchin and nearby villages along the Stevenage Road corridor (including St Ippolyts, Ashbrook Cottages and Little Wymondley). A further three respondents live in the wider Hitchin area (SG5). The remaining five responses came from nearby North Herts and adjoining settlements, including Letchworth (SG6), Stevenage (SG2), Bassingbourn near Royston (SG8) and Biggleswade (SG18).
- 6.3. Across the forty-five responses, overall opinions were mixed. Importantly, a significant proportion of respondents (**29%**) expressed outright support for the proposals, with further respondents indicating neutrality (**18%**) rather than objection. This reflects a community that is divided on the principle of development but broadly engaged in shaping how it could be delivered responsibly. While **53%** expressed opposition in principle, many of these respondents also provided constructive feedback on how the scheme could be improved, particularly in relation to traffic, access and environmental protection.
- 6.4. Regarding the proposals to provide half of the new homes as affordable housing, **11%** of respondents said they felt "negative" or "very negative", whilst **29%** said they were "positive" or "very positive" about this aspect of the proposals. **47%** of the respondents said they felt "neutral" about the proposal for to provide half of the new homes as affordable housing.
- 6.5. On the plans for walking and cycling improvements, **36%** said they felt "positive" or "very positive", with **40%** stating they felt "negative or very negative" and **24%** stating they felt neutral on this element of the plans. Support for improved walking and cycling connections was conditional but meaningful. Many of the concerns raised related to a desire for greater clarity on route design, safety arrangements, surfacing and landscaping, rather than opposition in principle.

What are your overall thoughts on the proposals for Beck Close?



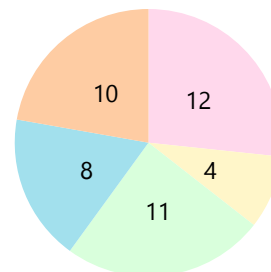
■ Strongly support
■ Support
■ Neutral
■ Oppose
■ Strongly oppose

What do you think about the proposal to provide 50% affordable housing?



■ Very positive
■ Positive
■ Neutral
■ Negative
■ Very negative

What do you think about the proposals for walking and cycling connections?



■ Very positive
■ Positive
■ Neutral
■ Negative
■ Very negative



Summary of Feedback Comments

6.6. As part of the online consultation, we asked respondents for their comments on each aspect of the proposals, on local issues that should be considered and for any general comments or suggestions about the proposals. We have summarised the comments received below, which have been grouped into key themes based on the responses received. The key themes that identified through the comments provided are:

- **The principle of development in the green belt**
- **Traffic and highway safety**
- **Walking and cycling connections**
- **Social and community infrastructure**
- **Impacts on Kingshott School**
- **Ecology, landscape and drainage**
- **Affordable housing and housing mix**
- **Design, character and amenities**
- **Conditions, phasing and implementation**

Principle of Development, Green Belt and Grey Belt

- 6.7. Many respondents objected in principle to building on green belt land, citing urban sprawl and the erosion of the gap between Hitchin, Little Wymondley and Stevenage.
- 6.8. Some said the land should remain open countryside and that the town was already “one field away” from nearby villages.
- 6.9. A few argued that the grey-belt tests were not met, particularly because of car dependency and limited existing infrastructure.

Traffic and Highway Safety

- 6.10. Traffic and road safety on the A602/Stevenage Road were among the strongest concerns.
- 6.11. Residents described heavy congestion and difficult turning movements at peak times, especially around school drop-off and pick-up.
- 6.12. The Beck Close / Ashbrook Cottages junction was viewed as a dangerous “pinch point”, worsened by parked vehicles (including those associated with the nearby MOT garage).
- 6.13. Several respondents asked for a full road safety audit and traffic modelling, specifically covering peak periods (e.g. 8:00–9:30 and 15:00–16:30).
- 6.14. Specific suggestions included considering a roundabout or traffic lights at the junction and ensuring any access design did not block through traffic or create long tailbacks.
- 6.15. While these concerns were strongly expressed, they also provide a clear and consistent framework for the transport strategy that is being developed to support this application. The feedback has helped to inform our approach to improve road safety and active travel improvements as part of the application.



Walking and Cycling Connections

- 6.16. Views on the proposed walking and cycling links were mixed.
- 6.17. Supporters welcomed the idea of safer off-road routes and saw improved walking and cycling as “very important” given how unsafe the road currently felt.
- 6.18. Others doubted that many residents would realistically walk or cycle, noting that Hitchin town centre was about 1.5 miles away, that the route was hilly and that people would still need to carry shopping.
- 6.19. Several asked for much clearer detail and mapping of the proposed routes, surfaces, lighting and whether they would cross school land or existing rights of way.
- 6.20. There were concerns about any path running close to the fast A602; one respondent suggested additional tree and hedge planting between the route and the road, and others warned against creating layouts that encouraged cyclists to ride on narrow pavements.
- 6.21. In response to the request for additional information on walking and cycling improvements, the applicant will issue further information on the submission plans to consultation respondents and update the consultation website. A further leaflet will also be circulated to residents.

Social and Community Infrastructure

- 6.22. Many comments focused on pressure on local services.
- 6.23. Respondents repeatedly stated that schools, doctors and dentists in Hitchin were already at capacity.
- 6.24. People queried which school catchments the new homes would fall into, and whether extra places and health facilities would be provided.
- 6.25. Some argued that no further major housing should go ahead until there was a clear plan for additional education, healthcare and community infrastructure.

Impacts on Kingshott School

- 6.26. Some responses from people linked to the school raised specific issues.
- 6.27. The existing school entrance was described as already dangerous and congested; several asked what concrete measures would be taken to improve safety at this access point.
- 6.28. There were worries about privacy and safeguarding if new houses could overlook playing courts or school grounds, and calls for robust boundary treatment, tree planting and secure fencing.
- 6.29. Noise from both construction and future traffic was seen as potentially disruptive to lessons and games, particularly for neurodivergent children. One respondent suggested that there should be no construction access via the school and no heavy works during school hours.

Ecology, Landscape and Drainage

- 6.30. The ecological and landscape value of the site was stressed by many.
- 6.31. Respondents described seeing a wide range of wildlife (including deer, bats, owls, kingfishers, badgers and newts) using the field, hedgerows and Ash Brook corridor, and were concerned that development would fragment an important habitat link.
- 6.32. Some questioned the credibility of the claimed biodiversity net gain and asked for clear evidence and long-term management plans for the wetland park, meadows and planting.



- 6.33. A number mentioned that the brook and adjacent land flooded recently and wanted more information on how flood risk would be addressed. One detailed response asked whether the wetland park would form part of a sustainable drainage system, how this would affect downstream flood resilience, and requested a commitment to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act, including clarity on adoption and maintenance.
- 6.34. There was a specific suggestion to incorporate “hedgehog highways” in garden boundaries.

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

- 6.35. Views on the 50% affordable housing element were more balanced.
- 6.36. Roughly half of respondents were neutral, with a slightly greater number expressing positive views overall.
- 6.37. Several welcomed more affordable homes, recognising it as a meaningful response to local house need, particularly for first-time buyers and downsizers wishing to remain in the area.
- 6.38. Others argued that “affordable housing is not affordable to local people” in practice and questioned the long-term social impacts. One respondent suggested limiting the affordable proportion (for example to 25%) due to concerns about changing the character and perceived safety of the area.
- 6.39. A few respondents supported new housing in principle, but wanted the overall number of homes reduced to a scale more in keeping with St Ippolyts parish.

Design, Character and Amenities

- 6.40. Several comments related to design quality and fit with the local area.
- 6.41. Some respondents described the illustrative housing as “bland and uninspiring” and wanted a design that reflected the rural edge and village context more strongly.
- 6.42. Concerns were raised about loss of open views over the countryside towards Hitchin, potential overlooking of neighbouring homes and the school, and the impact of additional streetlighting on dark skies and wildlife.
- 6.43. Respondents asked that the layout maintain and strengthen the landscape buffer along Ash Brook, keep building heights and densities lower around the site edges, and ensure enough on-plot parking to prevent overspill onto Stevenage Road and nearby streets.
- 6.44. These comments point toward refinement of appearance, layout and landscape treatment rather than a rejection of development in its entirety and will directly inform the next stage of the design process.

Conditions, Phasing and Implementation

- 6.45. Several points were made about how any development should be managed if it proceeded.
- 6.46. Several respondents called for a detailed construction traffic management plan, including routing HGVs away from sensitive areas, avoiding school opening and closing times, and preserving safe access for existing residents.
- 6.47. One proposed that, if the houses were built, a condition should require full fibre-optic broadband to be provided not only for the new properties but also for the existing houses at Ashbrook.



- 6.48. Others asked who would be responsible for the long-term maintenance of public open spaces, paths and drainage features, and how this would be funded.
- 6.49. A small number of neutral or cautiously supportive respondents said that, once the principle was settled, they would prefer the scheme to be delivered promptly with good-quality landscaping rather than leaving the land in an uncertain state.

Email and Telephone Correspondence with Community

- 6.50. Three persons responded to the consultation by direct email.
- 6.51. The first person expressed interest in the proposed walking and cycling route. He noted the attractiveness of the site but highlighted the busy Stevenage Road as the main drawback. As a member of a local group working with the Council on walking and cycling improvements, he referred to existing safety concerns and an ongoing safety survey, and asked how the proposed "walking and cycling route between Hitchin and Stevenage" would operate in practice. He sought clarification on its alignment, standard and how it would provide a safe route.
- 6.52. The second email was sent by a couple who wrote as nearby residents to raise a series of questions. They asked whether the new homes would be "premium" housing with little or no affordable housing, what the detailed access proposals were and how these would affect congestion on Stevenage Road at peak times, and what provision was planned for extra demand on local services and utilities (including water, sewerage, gas and electricity). They also queried any potential wider implications for domestic property insurance. A member of the CCP answered this email with details about housing mix and affordability; access and traffic; utilities, drainage and flood risk and the pre-application phase status of the proposal.
- 6.53. The third email was an invitation from St Ippolyts Parish Council to present the proposal at their meeting on 10th November 2025. The Applicant's project team accepted this invitation and attended. After the meeting, the CCP offered to provide more details to the parish council as specifics of the plans are finalised.



7. Design response to community feedback

7.1. As part of the consultation process, a wide range of views were expressed by residents and community stakeholders. These comments have been carefully reviewed alongside technical assessment and pre-application advice from North Hertfordshire Council. The scheme has since been refined to directly respond to the key issues raised. The table below summarises the principal concerns and the corresponding design and technical responses now embedded within the proposals.

"You Said, We Did" – How the Scheme has Evolved

Theme	You Said	We Did
Principle of development, Green Belt and Grey Belt	Objection in principle to building on green belt.	An independent assessment by a professional Planning Consultancy has concluded that the Site meets the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) to be defined as 'Grey Belt'.
	Land should remain open countryside and not be developed.	The scale of development has been reduced from an initial 60 homes to 50 homes throughout the design process / evolution, ensuring a more proportionate form of development in this location.
	The proposals do not demonstrate sufficient environmental mitigation	The proposals now include large areas of new public open space, a wetland park, SuDS basins and habitat creation and landscape buffers, with areas of ecological significance reserved for open space rather than housing.
	The separation between Hitchin and surrounding villages must be protected	Structural landscape buffers retained trees and reinforced boundary planting have been strengthened around the edge of the site and along the Ash Brook corridor to maintain visual separation and semi-rural character.
	Grey-belt tests not met, particularly because of car dependency and limited existing infrastructure.	The proposals demonstrate compliance with the NPPF 'Golden Rules' for Grey Belt, including 50% affordable housing, environmental enhancements and new walking, cycling and public transport improvements, supported by the sites close proximity to local amenities and good public transport connections.
Traffic and highway safety	Traffic and road safety on the Stevenage Road (A602) were among the strongest concerns. This is a busy and dangerous road at peak times.	The impacts of the proposed development on the local highway network have been assessed through a trip distribution exercise and junction capacity assessment. These confirm that the proposals will cause no material harm



		to highway network operations. In addition, a 20mph speed limit is now proposed for the Ashbrook cul-de-sac via a Traffic Regulation Order.
	Heavy congestion and difficult turning movements at peak times, especially around school drop-off and pick-up.	A Transport Assessment will be submitted with the planning application, which will include details on the safe and suitable access to the proposed site. This will include a robust Travel Plan, and Travel Information Packs for residents with initiatives and incentives to encourage sustainable and active travel.
	The Beck Close / Ashbrook Cottages junction is a dangerous "pinch point" worsened by parked vehicles	The access layout has been refined to ensure safe visibility splays, appropriate carriageway widths and safe turning movements, informed by advice from Hertfordshire Highways. The site access point has been designed in accordance with the Place Movement Planning and Design Guidance for Hertfordshire and Manual for Streets guidance.
	Consideration should be given to introducing a roundabout or traffic to ensure access design did not block through traffic or create long tailbacks.	A priority junction arrangement is now proposed from the Ashbrook cul-de-sac, with a security barrier controlling access to the school and ensuring no through traffic is created through the site.
Walking and cycling connections	Clearer mapping routes, surfaces and lighting required.	The proposals now include a fully developed Active Travel Plan, which includes detailed engineering of routes within the layout, not just indicative alignment.
	Safety concerns along the Stevenage Road (A602).	We are proposing to fund part of the off-road cycleway, new signalised crossing over the A602, and footpath improvements defined in the North Hertfordshire Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). These improvements would be secured through Community Infrastructure Levy and s106 contributions. To further encourage active travel, all new homes will also include safe and secure cycle storage.
	Routes should safely connect to existing paths and settlements.	Walking and cycling connections to the existing Public Right of Way walking routes towards Little Wymondley and Hitchin are now indicated in the proposals.
Social and community infrastructure	Local schools, GPs and dentists are already under pressure.	Hertfordshire County Council has confirmed that there is currently pupil capacity in local primary schools in Hitchin. For example, there are plans to reduce the number of reception places at



		Kimpton Primary School due to a fall in demand for places. Contributions towards education and healthcare will be secured via planning obligations where required.
	No further growth should occur without infrastructure delivery.	The proposals now include details of a coordinated infrastructure package, including transport improvements, flood mitigation, public open space and environmental investment.
Impact on Kingshott School	Traffic near the school is already dangerous.	There will be no change to the primary access to Kingshott School directly from Stevenage Road. The existing access road will be maintained in its current position to serve the school, with the proposed site access forming a priority controlled junction in favour of the school.
	Overlooking and safeguarding were raised as key issues.	The south-west corner of the site has undergone a density reduction, with increased set-backs, bungalow provision, and enhanced landscape buffers directly responding to school safeguarding concerns.
	Noise and disruption from construction could affect pupils	A Construction Transport Management Plan will control construction routes, hours and vehicle movements, specifically to avoid peak school times
Ecology, landscape and drainage	The Ashbrook corridor is an important wildlife habitat.	A 10-metre Ash Brook easement is now formally defined, with no development permitted within this corridor.
	Flooding is a serious local concern.	Flood Zones have now been formally mapped, with no residential development located within them. These areas in Flood Zones 2 and 3 will be used for green and blue infrastructure, including a wetland habitat and SuDS drainage.
	Biodiversity net gain information lacked clarity.	A formal ecology baseline, habitat strategy and wetland creation plan now demonstrate measurable biodiversity enhancement.
	Hedgerows, trees and wildlife corridors should be retained	Existing hedgerows, and trees within Root Protection Areas, will be retained, with extensive new native planting, landscape buffers and habitat corridors introduced.
Affordable housing and housing mix	Affordable housing must be genuinely accessible to local people	The proposals deliver 50% affordable housing, with the mix now fully defined as part of the proposals.
	Downsizers and first time buyers should be included	The proposals have been amended to include 5x affordable, wheelchair accessible bungalows, suitable for wheelchair users. Alongside this, 4x 2-bed and 21x 3-bed affordable homes suitable for young couples and families are



		included, which will be available through shared ownership or affordable rent.
	Housing numbers should be reduced if affordable levels are maintained.	The total number of homes on site has been reduced initially from 60 to 51, which has subsequently been reduced to 50 to accommodate affordable accessible bungalows, retaining the 50% affordable provision.
Design, character and amenities	The illustrative design appears generic.	A refined architectural approach has been introduced, which includes using materials that reflect the existing local housing character
	Building heights should be kept low at the rural edge.	The proposals are now exclusively 1 and 2 2-storeys, with 7x single storey bungalows located on sensitive edges, particularly adjacent to Kingshott School.
	Open countryside views should be protected where possible.	Building massing has been pulled back and stepped down to 1-storey on key edges, with strengthened green buffers, along the Ash Brook and school boundaries.
Conditions, phasing and implementation	Construction traffic must be carefully controlled.	A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be secured by condition.
	Long-term maintenance of green space and drainage must be guaranteed.	A Landscape and SuDS Management Strategy will be secured to ensure long-term management and funding.
	Modern services such as EV charging and broadband should be included.	The scheme now includes EV charging within allocated and visitor parking spaces and modern utility provision.



8. Conclusions

- 8.1. The consultation process for the Beck Close proposals engaged the community through a combination of leaflet drops, social media, a dedicated project website with online feedback form and a meeting with St Ippolyts Parish Council.
- 8.2. Feedback covered a wide range of topics, including the principle of development on green belt land, traffic and highway safety on Stevenage Road, the capacity of local schools and health services, detailed access arrangements to Kingshott School, and the potential effects on landscape, biodiversity and drainage along Ash Brook. Respondents also raised practical points about construction management, long-term maintenance of open space and drainage features, and the design and character of new homes at the edge of Hitchin. These issues have informed the technical and design process in the scheme's evolution and will be considered within any future planning conditions or obligations.
- 8.3. Among those who supported the proposals, there were some consistent messages. Supporters tended to emphasise the need for more homes locally and considered the site to be a reasonable location for "grey belt" development, provided that traffic, access and environmental issues were carefully managed. They generally welcomed the high proportion of affordable housing, new public open space, play areas and wetland/wildflower features, and some saw the proposed walking and cycling routes as a valuable opportunity to improve non-car travel between Hitchin and Stevenage. Supportive respondents coupled their support with requests for particular attention to road safety, school access, drainage and high-quality landscape treatment.
- 8.4. While views were divided on the principle of development, the consultation demonstrated strong engagement and a high level of constructive input. Supportive respondents highlighted the acute need for housing, the strength of the affordable housing offer, and the opportunity to secure new green infrastructure, biodiversity enhancements and improved walking and cycling connections as part of a comprehensive scheme.
- 8.5. With over 2,000 website visits, more than 600 online engagements and formal feedback from 45 respondents, the consultation achieved a strong level of public visibility and participation for a site of this scale.
- 8.6. Overall, the consultation provided a clear picture of local priorities and concerns. The project team will use this feedback to refine the proposals, including the access strategy, green infrastructure and drainage approach, and will explain these responses in more detail within the planning application documents.



9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Website

Home Page



Beck Close, Ashbrook

Bugler Homes is consulting on plans for a new neighbourhood on the Stevenage Road in Ashbrook.

The proposal include:

- 51 new homes, with 50% affordable housing
- New public open spaces and a wetland park
- New safe walking and cycling connecting linking Hitchin and Stevenage
- Improved access to Kingshott School, improving traffic flow on the Stevenage Road.
- Environment and Biodiversity improvements to protect and improve wildlife habitats
- A landscape-led design that respects the countryside





Location



Where is Beck Close?

The site is a single field of around 4 hectares off the Stevenage Road to the south east of Hitchin. We have called it Beck Close the Ash Brook runs along the eastern edge of the field

- **West:** Kingshott School and its playing fields
- **South:** The Stevenage Road (A602) to the south,
- **East:** The Ash Brook watercourse, with paddocks, light industrial and residential buildings beyond it.
- **North:** Open countryside and farmland.

Hedgerows and mature trees surround the site, and the Ash Brook provides an ecological corridor along the eastern edge. The site is served by an existing entrance from Stevenage Road, adjacent to Kingshott School.

The sites setting, between existing development (the school and light industrial areas mean it can be integrated into the existing urban edge without intruding into the open countryside.



New Homes



Indicative image of a similar development by Bugler Group, showing the quality and character of design we are seeking to achieve at Beck Close.

New Family Homes

We are bringing forward proposals for up to 51 new homes with a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom family houses.

- 50% of the homes will be affordable homes, exceeding the council's policy requirements, to help meet local need.
- The mix reflects local demand for 2 and 3 bed homes for local families.
- The homes have been sensitively designed to form a sensitive, attractive new neighbourhood that integrates with the local landscape.

All houses will be tenure blind and include gardens and parking spaces.

Sustainable Homes

Bugler Homes are committed to delivering high quality, energy efficient and sustainable homes.

All homes will include solar panels, EV charging points and high-quality insulation to keep bills low.

Homes will be designed in accordance with Circular Economy and Whole Life Cycle Carbon principles, reducing their lifetime carbon footprint and using less energy to build and to live in.



Green Spaces

[Home](#)
[Location](#)
[New Homes](#)
[Green Spaces](#)
[Transport & Access](#)
[Grey Belt](#)
[Local Needs](#)
[Feedback](#)

Green And Play Spaces

New green spaces will be created for the wider community to enjoy. Our landscape led approach includes:

- Retention of existing hedgerow and additional hedgerow planting
- A landscape buffer protecting Ash Brook
- Creation of new habitats including wildflower meadows, ponds and habitat piles, to support complex ecosystems
- Bird and bat boxes across the site
- Sensitively designed lighting to protect nocturnal wildlife

The approach will deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, improving the environment from its present condition.




Transport & Access

[Home](#)
[Location](#)
[New Homes](#)
[Green Spaces](#)
[Transport & Access](#)
[Grey Belt](#)
[Local Needs](#)
[Feedback](#)



Transport and Access

Transport arrangements have been carefully considered to encourage walking and cycling and reduce car dependency.

- Each home will have dedicated parking, meeting local standards.
- The development will contribute to a new **safe walking and cycling route between Hitchin and Stevenage**, improving local connections and reducing car dependency.



Grey Belt

[Home](#)[Location](#)[New Homes](#)[Green Spaces](#)[Transport & Access](#)[Grey Belt](#)[Local Needs](#)[Feedback](#)

Grey Belt

The land is currently within the Green Belt, however under the Government's new **Grey Belt policy**, land that is less environmentally or visually sensitive can be released for development where significant community benefits are provided.

Our assessments indicate the site makes only a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes and is suitable for development, in accordance with the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework:

- Does not risk merging towns
- Makes only a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes
- Has no impact on historic setting or areas of special ecological, archaeological or heritage importance.
- Meets unmet housing need
- Delivers community benefits in the form of affordable housing and green infrastructure.

The proposals have been carefully designed to respect the countryside and create a beautiful and green environment for people to live. To maintain separation from surrounding villages and avoid urban sprawl the plans include significant new planting and green open spaces.



Local Needs



Meeting Local Need

There is an urgent need for new and affordable homes in North Hertfordshire.

- The Council currently has a **3.7-year housing land supply**, well below the national requirement of five years.
- Over **1,900 households** are living in unsuitable accommodation and cannot afford a home of their own.
- The Council's evidence shows a need for around **354** new affordable homes per year – yet only **98** were delivered in 2022/23.

By providing 50% affordable housing, well above the Council's 40% target, this development will make a significant contribution to meeting local needs.



Appropriate Development

We have shaped the proposals to ensure they meet policy requirements for appropriate development:

Location: The site adjoins existing development and is well connected by road, bus routes and walking/cycling paths to Hitchin and Stevenage.

Sensitive Design: Ample public open space, landscaping, ecological buffers are included to ensure the plans are suitable for the sites location.

Green Infrastructure: Hedgerows and Ash Brook will be retained and enhanced, with a new Wetland Park and play areas creating community and biodiversity benefits.

Grey Belt: The proposals balance the need for homes with the protection of the wider Green Belt.





Feedback

[Home](#)[Location](#)[New Homes](#)[Green Spaces](#)[Transport & Access](#)[Grey Belt](#)[Local Needs](#)[Feedback](#)

Feedback Form

Beck Close, Stevenage Road, Hitchin

Bugler Homes is consulting on plans for up to 51 new homes with 50% affordable housing, new green spaces and a wetland park, and safe walking and cycling connections.

We'd like to hear your views before a planning application is submitted.

Please complete this form below to share your views.

***** indicates required fields

About You

Name *

First

Last

Address

Postcode *

Email

Your Views

What are your overall thoughts on the proposals for Beck Close? *

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose

What do you think about the proposal to provide 50% affordable housing? *

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Negative
- ☐ Very negative

Comments:



What do you think about the proposals for walking and cycling connections? *

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Negative
- ☐ Very negative

Comments:

Are there local issues you think the design should take into account?

Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the proposals?

Would you like to be kept updated on the project? *

- ☐ Yes – please add me to your mailing list
- ☐ No

Your comments may be included (anonymously) in a report submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council. Your personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection laws.

Privacy Notice:

Your responses will be used to help shape the final proposals for Beck Close. Comments may be summarised in a report submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council as part of the planning process. Any personal information you provide will be kept secure, used only for this purpose, and processed in accordance with the UK GDPR. If you opt in to receive updates, your contact details will only be used for this purpose and you can unsubscribe at any time. Read our full policy [here](#).

Contact Us:

- info@buglerbeckclose.uk
- 020 4538 7200

Submit

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Appendix 2: Leaflet

HAVE YOUR SAY

Beck Close,
Stevenage Road, Ashbrook



Bugler Homes is consulting on plans for a neighbourhood on the Stevenage Road between Hitchin and Ash Brook.



OUR PROPOSALS INCLUDE:

- 51 new homes, with 50% affordable housing
- New public open spaces
- Safe walking and cycling connections linking Hitchin and Stevenage
- Biodiversity improvements to protect and enhance local wildlife
- A landscape-led design that respects the countryside edge



SUSTAINABLE, FAMILY-FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD

- Mix of 2, 3 and 4-bedroom homes across a range of tenures
- Each home with a garden and parking
- Solar panels, EV charging points and energy-efficient design
- New play areas, wildflower meadows and ponds
- Safe walking and cycling routes connecting Hitchin and Stevenage



Visit our website: buglerbeckclose.uk
info@buglerbeckclose.uk | 020 4538 7200





HAVE YOUR SAY

Beck Close, **Stevenage Road**, Ashbrook



ABOUT THE SITE

The site is around **4 hectares**, bordered by Kingshott School & playing fields, the Stevenage Road (A602), the Ash Brook watercourse and light industrial and residential uses. Existing hedgerows and Ash Brook will be protected and enhanced, with a green buffer between new homes and the countryside.



GREEN AND PLAY SPACES

New green spaces will be created for the wider community to enjoy.
Our landscape led approach includes:

- Retention of existing hedgerow and additional hedgerow planting
- A landscape buffer protecting Ash Brook
- Creation of new habitats including wildflower meadows, ponds and habitat piles, to support complex ecosystems
- Bird and bat boxes across the site
- Sensitively designed lighting to protect nocturnal wildlife

The approach will deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, improving the environment from its present condition.



WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

Visit our website to learn more and share your feedback. The consultation closes on Friday 7 November.
The website will remain open throughout the application process.

Visit our website: buglerbeckclose.uk
info@buglerbeckclose.uk | 020 4538 7200





Appendix 3: Social Media

**The Community Communications Partnership**
Sponsored · 

...

✕

Bugler Group is consulting on plans for Beck Close, a sustainable family friendly neighbourhood in Ashbrook near ...see more



buglerbeckclose.uk
Affordable family homes

Learn more

 Like

 Comment

 Share



Appendix 4: Letter to St Ippolyts Parish Council



Bugler Homes Ltd,
Bugler House, 25 High Street,
Rickmansworth,
Hertfordshire, WD3 1ET.
01923 777988
www.buglerhomes.co.uk

Susan Mears
Clerk to St Ippolyts Parish Council
St Ippolyts Parish Council
PO Box 287
Hitchin
Herts
SG4 7WT

VIA EMAIL ONLY

8th December 2025

Dear Susan Mears,

Re: St Ippolyts Parish Council Meeting dated 10th November 2025 (Land North of Stevenage Road, Hitchin / Bugler Homes Limited)

Thank you to St Ippolyts Parish Council for allowing me to meet with you and present information relating to the Bugler Homes development proposals for land to the North of Stevenage Road, Hitchin.

It was a useful and informative discussion. The feedback was constructive, and highlighted areas where further technical input / analysis was required.

I made a list of the questions raised during the meeting and I have prepared responses below which I hope will clarify a number of points:

1. How will vehicles access the site?

Vehicular access is provided via the existing access from the Ashbrook cul-de sac to the south-east of the Site, via a gated priority junction arrangement. This will continue to serve the Kingshott School as a secondary access, with a security barrier controlling access. The site access point has been designed in accordance with the Place & Movement Planning and Design Guidance for Hertfordshire (Part 3) and the proposal has been discussed with Hertfordshire County Council Highways.

It is proposed that the speed limit for the Ashbrook cul-de-sac is reduced to 20mph via a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). Visibility splays of 2.4 x 25m in each direction will be provided from the access, in accordance with Manual for Streets guidance.

A Transport Assessment will be submitted with the planning application, further detailing safe and suitable access to the proposed development.

Homes designed and constructed with care and attention to detail.

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Registered in England No. 4185040 | VAT No. 790 2516 30



2. How does the scheme encourage active travel and use of public transport?

The proposed development encourages sustainable forms of travel such as cycling, walking and using public transport through improvements to existing walking and cycling routes, including an improved link to PRow 15, which forms an additional route to Hitchin. The North Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan also proposes improvements to the inter-urban route from Hitchin to Stevenage and a primary cycle route along Stevenage Road. These improvements will be supported through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and s106 contributions.

There is good access to public transport, with existing bus stops located approximately 350m from the access on Stevenage Road (Ashbrook House). An upgraded crossing point is proposed, including dropped kerbs and tactile paving, along with improvements to local bus services.

The proposal incorporates the implementation of a robust Travel Plan and the provision of Travel Information Packs for residents. These information packs will contain initiatives and incentives to encourage the uptake of sustainable and active travel modes. Additionally, within the curtilage of each dwelling, safe and secure cycle storage will be provided.

3. How will the development impact traffic on Stevenage Road and highway safety?

The impact of the proposed development on the operation of the local highway network has been assessed through a trip distribution exercise and junction capacity assessments. This shows that the trip generation associated with the proposed development will have a negligible impact on the operation of the local highway network. The proposed site access design has been demonstrated to be safe and suitable for the proposed development, and it is not considered that the proposals would materially exacerbate the local highway safety record.

Additionally, as outlined above the proposed development encourages and helps to facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport which will additionally reduce any impacts on traffic to Stevenage Road as it will reduce resident dependency on car-borne trips.

4. How will the proposed development impact Kingshott School?

There will be no change to the primary access to Kingshott School directly from Stevenage Road to the north-west of the Site. Additionally, the existing access road to the south-east will be maintained in its current position to serve the school, with the proposed site access forming a priority junction with this to the north.



5. What will be the s106 contributions that arise from the scheme and how will these benefit the local community?

S106 contributions have been discussed with Hertfordshire County Council as part of pre-application discussion. These are likely to include contributions towards the delivery of local infrastructure improvements including the development of a safe walking and cycling route between Hitchin and Stevenage via Little Wymondley. Additionally, improvements to the access on the southern end of Ippolyts 015 PRow and to footway surfaces through repairs or replacement will be secured via the s106 agreement.

It is anticipated that there will be s106 contributions relating to other improvements to local infrastructure, to be agreed with the District and County Councils, as part of the planning application process. It is highlighted that the proposed development will also deliver several on-site infrastructure benefits, including the provision of significant new areas of public open space.

In addition to the above, 50% of the homes will be delivered as affordable housing.

6. Are there enough school places in Hitchin for additional children?

It has been confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council that there is currently capacity in primary schools across the county, and Hitchin itself. For example, there are plans to reduce the number of reception places at Kimpton Primary School, near Hitchin, from 30 entrants to 15 due to a fall in demand for places.

7. How has the site been assessed as being 'Grey Belt'?

An independent assessment by a professional planning consultancy has found that the Site would meet the criteria as set out in the NPPF to be defined as 'Grey Belt'. This means it does not contribute significantly to purposes a), b), or d) of the Green Belt. As such, in planning policy terms, development of the Site is not 'inappropriate', providing it meets the 'Golden Rules' (including the provision of 50% affordable housing).

I hope that the above provides the additional information required. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there are any other questions.

Yours sincerely,



James Chell
Bugler Homes Limited



Attached Active Travel Plan

ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

Following a meeting with the Parish Council on the 10th of November 2025, various queries were raised regarding connectivity and travel. The adjacent plan shows how these issues are addressed.

As part of the North Hertfordshire Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), areas of the A602 near the site are highlighted to benefit from improvements. A new signalised crossing, off road cycle way and improved footpaths are proposed as part of the scheme. Please see the Transport Assessment for further information.

- Key**
- ① Proposed vehicular access road
 - ② Potential pedestrian link
 - ➡ Public Right of Way
 - ➡ Existing footpaths
 - ➡ A602
 - ➡ Proposed vehicular access route
 - ➡ Proposed pedestrian access routes
 - ➡ Potential Footpath link
 - ➡ Link road to Kingshott School
 - ➡ Proposed off road cycle way (LCWIP)
 - ➡ Proposed signalised crossing (LCWIP)
 - Ⓜ Aithbrook House Bus Stop
 - Ⓜ Kingshott School Bus Stop



Connectivity Strategy Plan

Not to scale