



PLANNING STATEMENT

In respect of

LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE ROAD, HITCHIN, SG4 7JX

On behalf of

BUGLER HOMES LTD

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Prepared by:	Imogen Seth / Wilf Foster
Authorised by:	Alun Evans
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bugler Homes Ltd ('the Applicant') in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of Land North of Stevenage Road, Hitchin, SG4 7JX ('the Site').
- 1.2 The application seeks planning permission for the following development ('the proposed development'):

"Erection of 50no. residential dwellings (including affordable), new public open space, associated parking, landscaping and access."

Planning Application Submission

- 1.3 This Statement assesses the Proposed Development against relevant national, regional and local planning policy, guidance and material considerations.
- 1.4 It should be read and considered in conjunction with the other documents, planning drawings and technical studies submitted in support of this planning application as set out below:

- Cover Letter, prepared by ROK Planning;
- Planning Application Form, prepared by ROK Planning;
- Site Location Plan, prepared by ON Architects;
- Existing and Proposed Drawings, prepared by ON Architects;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, prepared by Urban Edge;
- Air Quality Assessment, prepared by KP Acoustics;
- FRA and Drainage Strategy, prepared by DHA;
- Site Archaeological Report, prepared RPS;
- Preliminary Risk Assessment, prepared by Aviron;
- Noise Impact Assessment, prepared by KP Acoustics;
- Transport Assessment, prepared by DHA;
- Green Travel Plan, prepared by DHA;
- Sustainability and Energy Statement, prepared by Watkins Payne;
- Landscape Plan, prepared by Match;
- Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by CCP;
- Tree Survey/Arboricultural Report, prepared by Hayden's.

Structure of Planning Statement

- 1.5 The subsequent sections of this Planning Statement are structured as follows:
- **Section 2** – Describes the Site and context.
 - **Section 3** – Provides an overview of the pre-application engagement undertaken.

- **Section 4** – Provides a description of the proposals.
- **Section 5** – Sets out the relevant national and local planning policy context.
- **Section 6** – Provides an analysis of the main planning considerations against national and local planning policy.
- **Section 7** – Sets out the planning obligations.
- **Section 8** – Concludes the planning statement, outlining the key planning benefits of the proposals.

2. SITE CONTEXT

Site Description

- 2.1 The Site is located in Hitchin, and within the jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire. It is situated at the edge of the settlement, bounded by Kingshott School to the northwest and Ashbrook, a hamlet comprising a mix of industrial uses and residential dwellings, to the southeast. The surrounding area is characterised by the cluster of development to the north of Stevenage Road, of which the Site forms a part, and open fields beyond and to the south of Stevenage Road.
- 2.2 The topography of the Site slopes down from north-west to south-east. Levels also slope up from Stevenage Road towards the north of the Site.
- 2.3 The Site location is shown on Figure 1 below.

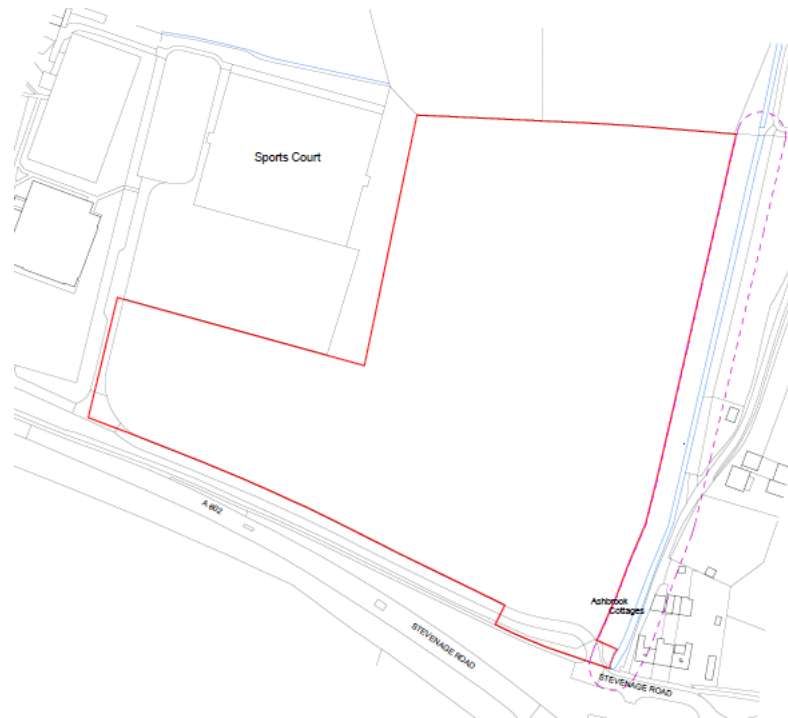


Figure 1 Site Location Plan

- 2.4 The Site is located in the Green Belt.
- 2.5 There are no listed buildings on or near the Site, and it is not within a Conservation Area.

Location and Accessibility

- 2.6 The Site is sustainably located, with bus stops within a short walking distance in Stevenage Road and with active travel options towards Hitchin. At the Ashbrook House bus stop, the 101 service runs between Stevenage and Luton (stopping at several

locations, including Hitchin, on route). This service runs frequently throughout the day, taking approximately 10 minutes to get from the Site to Hitchin Town Centre. There are also bus stops at Kingshott School with a variety of services to Stevenage and Watford.

- 2.7 Hitchin railway station is approximately 1.7 miles from the site. From this station, various locations are accessible, including Hertfordshire and London. There are also a number of bus stops within Hitchin, providing local and inter-urban services.
- 2.8 Hitchin is a market town with approx. 35,000 inhabitants. A range of services and amenities are available within Hitchin, including retail and café/ restaurants, schools and sustainable transport options. This limits the degree to which future residents would need to travel to access day-to-day services and amenities. Additionally, Stevenage is located approximately 5 miles from the Site and provides further access to a wide variety of amenities and services.
- 2.9 Therefore, the proposed development site is considered to benefit from a good level of accessibility and constitutes a sustainable location in transport terms for future residents.
- 2.10 Vehicular access to the Site is provided via an access road running parallel to Stevenage Road, leading from the entrance to Kingshott School to the junction of Stevenage Road / A602 (Ashbrook). This is shared with Kingshott School and serves as a secondary vehicular access to the school.
- 2.11 A strip of dense vegetation between the access road and Stevenage Road screens the Site from views to the south. In addition, the Site is situated between existing built development at Kingshott School and Ashbrook, providing further enclosure and screening from wider views.

Planning History

- 2.12 There is no relevant planning history on the Site.
- 2.13 The following section provides an overview of the pre-application engagement undertaken.

3. PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT

3.1 The proposed development has evolved over the course of pre-application discussions held with the Council. The list below provides an overview of the discussions that have taken place:

- Pre-application advice was requested from the Council in October 2020. Formal advice was received on the 3rd February 2021.
- A revised proposal was submitted to the Council in October 2024. A meeting was held on the 29th January 2025, and formal advice was received on 25th March 2025;
- A Highways pre-application meeting with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) was held on 9th December 2024.
- A further Planning pre-application meeting was held with the Council on the 1st October 2025.
- The written response was received on the 13th November 2025.

3.2 Key engagement and how the scheme has evolved is summarised in the paragraphs below.

LPA Pre-Application

3.3 The most recent proposal was presented to the LPA on 1st October 2025 and the subsequent advice letter was received on 13th November 2025. The pre-application was attended by Sam Diccoco (Team Manager, Development Management) and Paul Chaston (Senior Planning Officer, Major Projects).

3.4 The scheme presented to the Council consisted of the following:

- Erection of 51 residential dwellings;
- Provision of cycle and refuse storage at policy compliant levels;
- Creation of public open space and play space; and
- Construction of new access road into the Site, providing vehicular and pedestrian/cyclist access to the new dwellings.

3.5 The written response from the Council contained the following key points:

Principle of Development

- The development was considered to substantially harm the openness and purposes a) and b) of the Green Belt, with moderate to significant harm to purpose c) and moderate harm to purpose e).
- Additional harm is considered to be resultant from conflict with landscape harm, and general design and urban grain.

Design

- The previous concerns regarding the north-east corner of the site have been addressed
- All areas of the site are much better connected to the adjacent public footpath via the north-east corner of the site, and the main site entrance in the south-east corner of the site
- Encourage the creation of a dual-purpose parking court area which would double up as an active travel route through the site
- Concerns around the overprovision of on-site parking
- Significant tree planting and landscaping along the western edge of the green open space could be used to mitigate concerns regarding the orientation of the eastern plots

Transport

- Given the location of the site and the previous recommendations made by HCC Highways, it is considered likely that a policy compliant residential scheme could come forward with appropriate highways and transport mitigation to encourage modal shift and alternative modes of transport.

Housing Strategy

- Affordable housing provision would be 50%, which would exceed the minimum 40% Local Plan policy requirement.
- A reduction in the number of three-bedroom houses and the provision of more two-bedroom houses would therefore be considered favourably.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- The PEA should be updated to reflect the revised Site Plan.
- Any further design alterations should continue to account for the appropriateness of the 12m buffer zone required from H1.

- 3.6 The comments received from North Hertfordshire District Council (“NHDC”) have served to steer the evolution of the development, as can be seen through the final design.
- 3.7 Additionally, the application is supported by a full suite of supporting documentation in accordance with the NHDC validation checklist, as agreed with Paul Chaston (Senior Planning Officer, Major Projects).
- 3.8 The following section sets out the engagement and consultation activities held as part of the pre-application process.

Place Services Consultation

3.9 As part of the pre-application process, external consultation was received from North Hertfordshire Place Services, a summary of which is provided below:-

- Welcomed the removal of the 4no. dwellings from the east of the power line reducing the landscape and visual effects of the scheme, and forming a more coherent layout
- Ensure adequate passive surveillance of the Public Open Space, through reintroducing frontage and reorienting dwellings per National Grid guidance
- Recommended to introduce soft landscaping to the parking courtyards
- Improvements to the legibility of the road hierarchy within the development required

Engagement and Consultation Activities

- 3.10 The Community Consultation Partnership (CCP) supported early engagement with local stakeholders throughout 2025.
- 3.11 Local ward councillors on North Herts District Council were emailed information about the proposals and the consultation prior to the launch offering a meeting to discuss the proposals further. No communications have been received from councillors to date in response to the invitation.
- 3.12 The Applicant gave a presentation to members of the Parish Council on the 10th November 2025 and took part in a questions and answers session with councillors and members of the public to address the points that they raised. The Applicant has followed this up with a number of clarifications and further technical detail to supplement the information discussed during the Parish Council briefing.

Public Consultation

- 3.13 An online consultation website was published on 17th October 2025 to provide residents with information about the proposal. 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.
- 3.14 On 19 October 2025, 500 leaflets were delivered to properties near the Site. 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).
- 3.15 From 17th October 2025 to the 7th 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. 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.

- 3.16 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.
- 3.17 The aim of the public consultation was to inform and engage with members of the community and individuals with an interest in the Site and surrounding area. It was important to identify levels of support for the proposals and to sound out any areas of concern to help inform and shape the plans prior to submission.
- 3.18 The Applicant, and members of the professional team, have met with representatives of Kingshott School on a number of occasions throughout the preparation of the masterplan.
- 3.19 Further detail is included within the Statement of Community Involvement prepared by The CCP and submitted as part of this application.

Highways Scoping

- 3.20 During the meeting with Hertfordshire County Council, highways comments were provided in relation to the principle of access and transport impacts. The highways comments included within the written response informed a highways scoping note, prepared by DHA.
- 3.21 Key points raised by the Highways Authority include the need to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and improve connectivity from the Site. The revised layout of the streets, removing loop roads, ensures a better sense of place is created, emphasising the pedestrian experience.
- 3.22 The Highways Authority requested further information regarding trip generation and use of the site access by the school and the public. It was confirmed that this information would be provided as part of a full planning application.
- 3.23 The following section details the proposed development.

4. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Description of Development

4.1 The description of development reads as follows:

“Erection of 50no. residential dwellings (including affordable housing), new public open space, associated parking, landscaping and access.”

Detailed Parameters of the Development

4.2 The detailed parameters of the development are set out below:

- Erection of 50no. residential dwellings;
- Creation of new public open space and play space;
- Cycle and refuse storage; and
- Construction of new access road into the Site providing vehicular and pedestrian/cyclist access to the new dwellings.

4.3 The proposed unit mix is as follows:

Type	No. of units
2 Bed	10
3 Bed	23
4 Bed	17

Design and Layout

4.4 The proposed development comprises a mix of bungalow-style single-storey and two-storey houses.

4.5 The contemporary palette of materials used such as red brick, weatherboarding and tile roof have been drawn from those typically seen in the local vernacular, enhancing the architectural heritage and identity of this part of North Hertfordshire.

4.6 The massing and site layout has been designed to respond to the pre-application discussions, and advice from North Hertfordshire District Council and Place Services.

4.7 Further detail on the evolution of the massing, scale and height, and character of the design is included in the Design and Access Statement, prepared by ON Architecture and submitted as part of this application.

Sustainability

- 4.8 The proposed development seeks to deliver sustainability in a number of ways as illustrated by the following key parameters:
- Highly efficient building fabric and MEPH proposals, including a specified MEPH plant which includes individual air source heat pumps;
 - Provision of EV charging;
 - Efficient building construction and high efficiency ventilation and lighting.
- 4.9 Further sustainability details are included within the Energy and Sustainability Statement prepared by Watkins and Payne, submitted as part of this application.
- 4.10 As outlined, the Site is considered to be in a sustainable location. Notwithstanding, the proposal includes an active travel plan to further improve the connectivity of the Site. A new signalised crossing, off road cycleway and improved footpaths are proposed as part of the scheme.
- 4.11 The Planning Policy Context is detailed within the following section before the proposed development is assessed against this context in Section 6.

Access, Parking, Servicing and Waste

Servicing

- 4.12 Servicing and refuse collection will be accommodated by the proposed access routes. The access road is suitable for the accommodation a 11.4m long refuse vehicle, and any smaller vehicles such as a large parcel van or food delivery vehicles.
- 4.13 Vehicle tracking has been undertaken that demonstrates that the proposed site layout can be safely navigated by all relevant vehicle types and that they can enter and egress the site in a forward gear.
- 4.14 Bin stores will be positioned to ensure carry distances for residents do not exceed 30m and drag distances for refuse workers do not exceed 10m from the bin stores to the kerb.

Parking

- 4.15 As the proposed plans demonstrate, each dwelling would benefit from a provision of 2no. car parking spaces. Additional visitor spaces are provided throughout the development, in accordance with local standards.
- 4.16 As a result of pre-application discussions, off-street car parking has been sensitively integrated into the layout, with allocated spaces provided adjacent to each dwelling, as

well as a parking court towards the south-east of the Site and garages adjacent to some houses.

- 4.17 Each dwelling will be provided with secure cycle parking spaces within the rear gardens of properties, in accordance with local standards.

Landscaping and Public Realm

- 4.18 The proposed development is centred around the provision of new public open space and high-quality landscaping throughout the Site.
- 4.19 Accordingly, the inclusion of pedestrian routes, SuDS features, landscaping, and "play-on-the-way" elements help soften the scheme's visual impact and provide significant public benefit to the local area.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires any planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Local Development Plan

- 5.2 The relevant Development Plan for North Hertfordshire comprises the following documents:

- North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (2022)
- The Mineral and Waste Local Plan for Hertfordshire.

- 5.3 The most recent update to the Council's 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) (published November 2025) confirms that NHDC cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS, with only 2.6 years against their adopted housing requirement. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11d) of the NPPF is triggered.

- 5.4 The Site falls within the St Ippolyts Neighbourhood Plan area, which was designated in July 2018. The Parish Council website confirms that no additional work has been undertaken on preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan since this stage.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan

- 5.5 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan is the overarching document in the Local Development Plan and sets out fundamental visions and development management policies for the North Hertfordshire area up until 2031. The following policies apply in relation to the development scheme:

- SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
- SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
- SP6: Sustainable Transport
- SP8: Housing
- SP9: Design and Sustainability
- SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity
- T1: Assessment of Transport Matters
- T2: Parking
- HS2: Affordable Housing
- HS3: Housing Mix
- HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing
- D1: Sustainable Design
- D3: Protecting Living Conditions
- D4: Air quality

- HE4: Archaeology
- NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure
- NE2: Landscape
- NE4: Biodiversity and Geological Sites
- NE6: New and Improved Open Space
- NE7: Reducing Flood Risk
- NE8: Sustainable Drainage Systems
- NE9: Water Quality and Environment
- NE10: Water Conservation and Wastewater Infrastructure

Local Plan Review

- 5.6 Policy IMR2 of the Local Plan committed the Council to undertake an early review of the Plan by the end of 2023 at the latest. The outcome of this exercise was that a full review of the NHLP will be undertaken.
- 5.7 In January 2024, Cabinet approved a full review and update of the North Herts Local Plan. To date there has not been any further published progress towards the preparation of a new Local Plan.

Other Material Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 5.8 The Council has also published several Supplementary Planning Documents ('SPD') to support local plan policy. The following are relevant to this application:
- Sustainability SPD;
 - Community Infrastructure Levy and Planning Obligations SPD; and
 - Design SPD.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy. The NPPF was originally published in 2012 and replaced all previous planning policy statements and guidance notes. The NPPF was revised most recently in December 2024.
- 5.10 At the core of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development, including supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations, and contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

- 5.11 In addition to the NPPF, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) in March 2014. The NPPG is a web-based resource which delivers planning procedures and practical guidance in an accessible format and is continually updated when necessary.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires any planning application to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 This section therefore assesses the proposal against the development plan policies and examines relevant material considerations where relevant.
- 6.3 The assessment discusses each of the main planning matters relevant to the proposed development, before summarising the main technical matters which are dealt with in detail in the supporting reports.
- 6.4 The section is ordered as follows:
 - 1. Principle of Development within the Green Belt;
 - 2. Character and Openness;
 - 3. Housing Mix and Tenure
 - 4. Quality of Accommodation;
 - 5. Design and Layout;
 - 6. Landscaping and Open Space;
 - 7. Biodiversity and Ecology;
 - 8. Neighbouring Amenity;
 - 9. Transport Considerations;
 - 10. Travel Plan;
 - 11. Flood Risk and Drainage;
 - 12. Archaeology;
 - 13. Energy and Sustainability;
 - 14. Air Quality.

Principle of Development within the Green Belt

- 6.5 Strategic Policy SP1 (part c) of the Local Plan states that planning permission should be granted, for proposals that:
 - i. deliver an appropriate mix of homes, jobs and facilities that contribute towards the targets and aspirations in this Plan;*
 - ii. create high-quality developments that respect and improve their surroundings and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices;*
 - iii. provide the necessary infrastructure required to support an increasing population;*
 - iv. protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment including biodiversity, important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure (including the water environment); and*
 - v. secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development, including on climate change;*

- 6.6 Throughout this Planning Statement, compliance with each limb of Strategic Policy SP1 is demonstrated, from Housing Mix, to Quality of residential development and infrastructure improvements.
- 6.7 Policy SP5 of the Local Plan states that development will only be permitted in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development, or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated. This Policy is considered out of date.
- 6.8 In accordance with paragraph 155 of the NPPF, the development of homes in the Green Belt are by definition “inappropriate” and should not be permitted except where:
- a) *The development would **utilise Grey Belt land** and would not fundamentally undermine the **purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt** across the area of the plan;*
 - b) *There is a **demonstrable unmet need** for the type of development proposed;*
 - c) *The development would be in a **sustainable location**, with particular reference to [paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework]; and*
 - d) *Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘**Golden Rules**’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below. [emphasis added]*
- 6.9 As part of the Local Plan review, North Hertfordshire undertook a Green Belt Review (2018) that assessed land throughout North Hertfordshire within the context of the Green Belt and its purposes. The Site was not specifically identified throughout the assessments but was included within strategic parcel 10b.
- 6.10 While the overall evaluation of the parcel indicates a significant contribution, it is important to note that parcels under assessment are very large, meaning some parts of this parcel of land may serve the purposes of the Green Belt to a greater degree than others.
- 6.11 The individual assessment of Sites, separately of the Green Belt Assessment, is supported in principle from planning appeal ref. APP/W4223/W/25/3367017 (Medlock Road) (**Appendix A**), in which the inspector noted that:
- “The GMGB concludes that this parcel contributes either moderately or strongly to the different Green Belt purposes. However, the site’s relatively small size and its position in comparison to the entire parcel suggests an assessment at a site specific level to be most determinative in this instance.”*
- 6.12 As such, an individual assessment of the Site’s contribution to the Green Belt is summarised below, in accordance with NPPG paragraph 003.

a) Utilisation of Grey Belt land & impact on Green Belt purposes

- 6.13 The NPPF defines Grey Belt as being ‘land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.’
- 6.14 The Site is located within the Green Belt, which serves five purposes as set out within paragraph 143 of the NPPF:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

Purpose A – Unrestricted Sprawl

- 6.15 Purpose A of the Green Belt is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. Paragraph 005 of the NPPG sets out considerations for informing this judgement. As demonstrated below, the Site is considered to make a weak contribution to Purpose a).

Contribution	Illustrative Features	Response
<i>Strong</i>	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features:- • be adjacent or near to a large built up area • if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)	The Office of National Statistics (ONS) list of built-up areas for England, as published in the 2021 UK Census data, which classifies LBUA as areas with a population of 75,000-199,999. On this basis, Hitchin (population of c. 30,000) is not a LBUA and purpose a) is not relevant. Notwithstanding, the development is in line with existing cluster of development comprised of Kingshott School and Ashbrook and does not extend beyond into the Green Belt nor result in an incongruous pattern of development.
<i>Moderate</i>	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to	The existing cluster of development comprised by Kingshott School and Ashbrook fully encloses the Site, such that it represents an ‘infill’ form of development.

	this purpose a, such as (but not limited to): • having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development • be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development • contain existing development • being subject to other urbanising influences	
Weak/none	Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that: • are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area • are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development	Given the fact that the Site is enclosed by existing development (including Kingshott School, residential dwellings at King's Oak, and Ashbrook), it is considered that there would be a weak contribution to purpose a).

Purpose B – Merging of towns

- 6.16 The purpose of part b) is to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. As demonstrated below, the Site affords a weak contribution to Purpose b).

Contribution	Illustrative Features	Response
<i>Strong</i>	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: • forming a substantial part of a gap between towns • the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns	The PPG is explicit that this pertains to towns, not villages. The Site does not form a substantial part of a gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.

Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): • forming a small part of the gap between towns • being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation.	Due to its size and positioning in between existing development on either side, the Site does not form a material a gap between Hitchin and Stevenage and therefore is not considered to perform moderately on purpose b).
Weak/none	Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that: • do not form part of a gap between towns, or • form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation	The Site does not make any material contribution to a gap between towns and is enclosed by both physical development (on both sides) and a well established field boundary marked by a hedgerow that forms a physical boundary to the rear. As such, there is no material spatial or visual contribution to purpose b).

6.17 This assessment is further supported by a recent appeal decision (**Appendix B**) in Bromsgrove District Council ref. APP/P1805/W/24/3356219. The appeal site is located in an undeveloped gap between various settlements in the Birmingham Metropolitan Area (see map in Figure 2 below). The inspector noted the following with regards to purpose b):

“Although the appeal site sits within the triangle between the above mentioned settlements, it only forms part of the separation between Wythall and Major’s Green. This separation is made of a large gap, of which the appeal site comprises only a relatively small portion. Moreover, it is some distance away from either settlement and separated from them by fields and paddocks. There would, therefore, be no visual loss of separation between Wythall and Major’s Green. Whilst I am mindful that the parcel, as a whole, may make a strong contribution to Purpose (b), the same cannot be said for the appeal site on its own given its location and modest scale.”

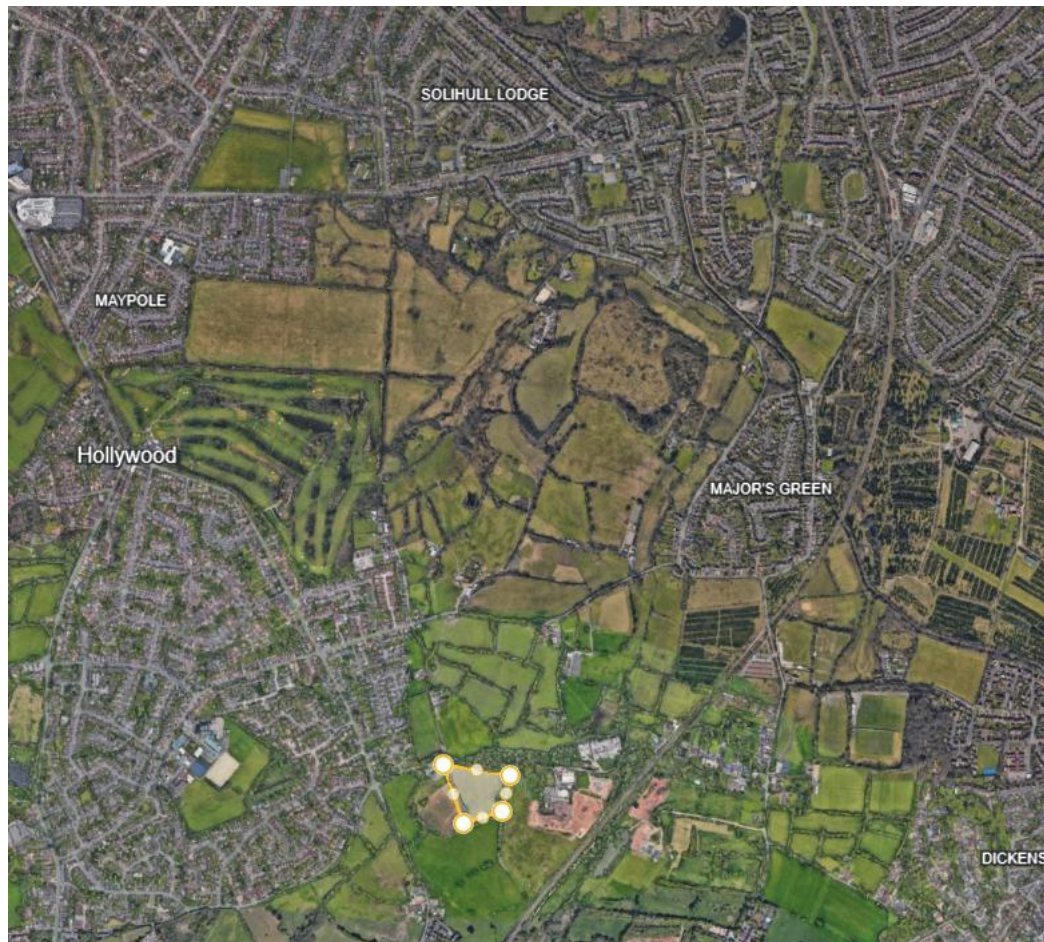


Figure 2 Appeal ref. APP/P1805/W/24/3356219 – aerial map of appeal site

- 6.18 The decision confirms that, while the Green Belt Assessment should be considered as a starting point, this relates to the contribution of large parcels of land. Individual sites must also be assessed on their own merits, taking account of their scale and relationship to the wider parcel and context.
- 6.19 The inspector's findings on the relative size of the appeal site and the gap between towns is instructive. They note that the "appeal site comprises only a small portion" of the overall gap between Majors Green and Wythall, which measures approx. 1.35km. The gap between Hitchin and Stevenage measuring approx. 3.3km, representing a much larger area. As such, it is concluded that the Proposed Development comprises an even smaller portion of that gap and would similarly not be harmful in terms of purpose b).
- 6.20 The LPA has drawn the Applicant's attention to other development in the local area, which may have a cumulative impact on the gap between towns. In particular, the LPA has referenced the allocated site adjacent to Little Wymondley for 300 homes (WY1). While it is noted that each application must be determined on its own merits, it is understood that there is not an extant planning permission currently on site WY1, nor is it clear that this is likely to come forward in the foreseeable future. Examples of solar farms within the local area were also referenced. These are not considered to be comparable in terms of spatial

or visual impacts to a housing development and are not considered to have a significant impact on the substantial gap between towns.

- 6.21 Similarly, a recently allowed appeal (**Appendix C**) in Beaconsfield (Appeal ref. APP/N0410/W/24/3347882) confirms that the gap between Beaconsfield and Woburn Green, which is 668 metres, is considered to be significant, and that the proposed development, which would reduce the gap to 589 metres, would not materially reduce the gap.
- 6.22 As noted above, the gap between Hitchin and Stevenage is very substantial at 3.3km, with the proposed development measuring approx. 250m across. It is therefore clear that the application proposal would not significantly reduce the gap between towns.

Purpose D – Historic Towns

- 6.23 There are no historic towns within proximity of the development. As such, the Site is not considered to contribute to this purpose of the Green Belt.

Conclusion on 'Grey Belt' land

- 6.24 As shown above, the Site does not contribute significantly towards any of purposes a), b) or d) of the Green Belt and therefore meets the definition of Grey Belt land, as per Appendix 1 of the NPPF.
- 6.25 Part a) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF requires that “development would utilise grey belt land **and** would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan”. As such, the remaining Green Belt purposes are also addressed below.
- 6.26 Although these are taken in turn, it is highlighted that the assessment of the remaining purposes is taken together. This significance of this point is noted in the decision by the Secretary of State in the appeal at Marlow Film Studios (appeal ref. APP/K0425/W/24/3351904; **Appendix D**), which states that purpose c) is omitted from the definition of Grey Belt land and therefore that “a site could contribute ‘strongly’ to that purpose and still be ‘grey belt’”. It goes on to stress that the change in wording from ‘limited’ to ‘not strong’ within the definition of grey belt land in the NPPF is a signal that the Government is even more eager to change the previous Green Belt policy than is envisaged in the consultation draft”.
- 6.27 Additionally, it is important to note that the assessment of the remaining Green Belt purposes is made with reference to the *development* proposed, rather than the land – which differs from the initial assessment of purposes a), b), and d). As such, it must take account of the impact of the specific development proposals, including any mitigation provided by the layout, density, scale, and landscaping of the scheme.

Impact on Green Belt purposes (taken together)

Purpose C – Encroachment

- 6.28 The land to the north/north-east of the Site is more open in character and does not relate to any public highway or other built form.
- 6.29 There is a clear physical feature in the form of the field boundary and hedgerow (which fall outside the site boundary). This established field boundary functions as a hard edge between the extent of the proposed development and the larger, more open agricultural land to the north, which would be unlikely to be suitable for development. The boundary is visually robust and long-standing and therefore forms an appropriate limit to any future outward growth.
- 6.30 The scheme has been carefully designed to respect this defensible boundary, ensuring that built form does not project northwards into the open landscape and therefore avoids undermining Purpose C of the Green Belt.
- 6.31 The proposed development will further reinforce this transition by incorporating native hedgerow enhancement, tree planting, and open space provision along the north-eastern boundary. These measures will strengthen the existing physical edge and create a clear, landscape-led buffer between the new development and the wider countryside.
- 6.32 Accordingly, the scheme consolidates the existing development pattern without extending development into land that clearly functions as open Green Belt. This approach ensures that the development remains contained, respects the established boundary framework, and avoids any perception of encroachment.
- 6.33 As such, it is not considered that the proposed development would significantly undermine purpose c) of the Green Belt.

Purpose E – Urban Regeneration

- 6.34 Development on this Site would not impact on the likelihood of existing brownfield sites coming forward given the significant unmet need for housing in North Herts. As such, the development would not materially harm this purpose of the Green Belt.

Conclusion on 'Green Belt' purposes overall

- 6.35 It is not considered that the very limited harm in respect of purpose c), which is adequately mitigated through the design, layout and scale of the proposed development, would fundamentally undermine the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan. Given its nature as an 'infill' form of development between Kingshott School and Ashbrook, the remaining Green Belt around the nearest towns of Hitchin and Stevenage would remain intact and materially unharmed.

6.36 This conclusion is further supported by an appeal decision in Leighton Buzzard (Appeal Ref. APP/A1910/W/24/3345435) (**Appendix E**) which confirmed that:

- a. *“Even though there is moderate harm to purpose (c), the evidence before this Inquiry does not indicate that the appeal site has a wider strategic role in the functioning of the Borough’s Green Belt as a whole. Therefore, in utilising ‘Grey Belt’ land, the appeal proposal would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the Borough’s development plan.”*

Summary of exception criteria (a) of paragraph 155

6.37 The above Grey Belt assessment details the Grey Belt requirements in turn and demonstrates that the proposed development utilises Grey Belt land and does not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

b) Demonstrable Unmet Need

6.38 Footnote 56 of the NPPF clarifies that “unmet need” as per part b) of paragraph 155 is defined as follows:

“...in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Tests was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years...”

Housing Land Supply

6.39 The Council’s most recent (November 2025) Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update confirms that it could not demonstrate a Five-year housing land supply (5YHLS), noting a supply of just 2.6 years against their adopted housing requirement.

6.40 In the November 2025 update, the council has a demonstrates a deficit of 3,347 dwellings over the five-year period of 2025/26 – 2029/30.

6.41 The total requirement for housing delivery from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2030 in North Herts is 6,976 dwellings. This incorporates the objectively assessed housing need annual rate of 1,120 dwellings per year, the annual shortfall of 209 dwellings, totalling 1,044 dwellings per year, and the 5% buffer amounting to 332.

6.42 Therefore, it is apparent that there is a substantial demonstrable unmet need for housing in North Herts.

c) Sustainable Location

- 6.43 Within the NPPF, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Site is close to the edge of Hitchin and is located approximately 1.4 miles (6-minute drive or 32-minute walk) to Hitchin Station, providing regular access to Hertfordshire and London. Likewise, the Site is located off Stevenage Road and has easy access to A602 and connections to the A1(M).
- 6.44 Furthermore, there are a number of services and amenities in proximity to the Site located in Hitchin Town Centre (approx.1 mile from the Site), including a range of shopping facilities, cafes, restaurants, and traditional pubs. The centre of Stevenage is also located approximately 5 miles (11-minute drive) from the Site providing access to further services and amenities.
- 6.45 Ashbrook itself has a car repair, servicing and MOT garage. Furthermore, Kingshott School offers a number of publicly accessible facilities, including:
- Public swimming
 - DW Soccer School
 - Super Camps
 - A range of facilities to hire (meeting room, drama room etc.)
- 6.46 The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, developed in partnership between Hertfordshire County Council and North Herts District Council, identifies key walking and cycling corridors that will improve active travel connectivity across the district, including safe, routes that link Ashbrook directly with Hitchin.
- 6.47 In addition, it is anticipated that the proposed development would make important improvements to local transport infrastructure, to be secured by s106 agreement. As such, it satisfies paragraph 110 of the NPPF, which states that “significant development should be focused on locations which are **or can be made sustainable**, though limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes” [emphasis added].
- 6.48 Potential measures have been discussed with Hertfordshire County Council Highways, thus, the proposed location is considered to represent a sustainable location which accords with national planning policy and ambitions.
- 6.49 As such, the Site accords with national planning policy and ambitions with regards to encouraging sustainable modes of travel and is considered to satisfy limb c) of the NPPF exception.

d) ‘Golden Rules’

- 6.50 Paragraph 156 of the NPPF states that where major development involving housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt, the following requirements (‘Golden Rules’) should be met:

- a) *affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;*
- b) *necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
- c) *the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.*

6.51 These are addressed in turn below.

Affordable Housing

6.52 Policy HS2 of the Local Plan states that, for sites providing 25 or more dwellings, the target percentage of affordable dwellings is 40%, comprising 65% rented tenures and 35% other types of affordable housing. It notes that this is required to meet the considerable need for affordable homes in the district based on assessments of local housing needs.

6.53 The most recent assessment of local housing need is comprised by the North Herts and Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Part II Updated, published in November 2023. This finds an acute shortage of affordable housing in the district, with 1,908 households currently living in unsuitable housing and unable to afford their own housing. Over the Plan period (2022-2031), the overall need for affordable housing is estimated to be 3,190 affordable dwellings, equating to 354 per year.

6.54 The number of affordable completions for 2022-23, as per the most recent Authority Monitoring Report, was 148 dwellings. This is significantly below the annual identified need. Given the ongoing shortfall in affordable housing delivery, the overall need is likely to be significantly higher than that noted in the last assessment.

6.55 The proposed development provides 25no. affordable dwellings, representing 50% of the total, in accordance with the Golden Rules set out above. This is comprised of 13no. affordable rented houses and 12no. shared ownership houses. This significantly exceeds the target requirement as per Policy HS2, which would equate to 20no. dwellings (13no. affordable rented and 7no. shared ownership dwellings). It would make an important contribution towards the local unmet need for affordable housing, of which a significant amount is urgently required to meet current needs.

S106 & CIL

6.56 Given the scale of the development, it is acknowledged that S106 contributions will be required towards infrastructure given the absence of CIL in NHDC. The precise nature and scope of these contributions will be subject to discussions with the Council. However, it is anticipated based on the Council's published Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document that these may include contributions towards education and services

within the local area. The proposed 50% affordable housing would also be secured by way of a S106 agreement.

- 6.57 As noted above, it is expected that significant contributions will be made towards local infrastructure as part of the proposed development, to be finalised subject to discussions with the district and county Council.

Green Spaces

- 6.58 The proposed development delivers a significant area of green space (approximately 1.5ha) in full compliance with both national policy and North Hertfordshire standards.
- 6.59 Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that improvements should, “contribute positively to the landscape setting of the development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan.” In the case that there is a lack of prescriptive standards “development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development (these include Natural England standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria).”.
- 6.60 The scheme incorporates a generous level of publicly accessible green infrastructure, which has been designed to exceed the expectations of both national policy and local planning standards. The overall layout prioritises the provision of informal open space and children's play areas in line with North Hertfordshire's adopted benchmarks as outlined in the North Hertfordshire Open Space Review & Standards 2016. This is discussed further in the following sections.
- 6.61 The scheme responds positively to these standards through a landscape-led approach, ensuring that future residents will benefit from high-quality, well-distributed green space throughout the development.

Conclusion on principle of development in the Green Belt

- 6.62 It is demonstrated in the above sections that the proposed development at Stevenage Road would utilise Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt land within the surrounding area.
- 6.63 In addition, there is a clear unmet need for housing, including (especially) affordable housing within the local area. The Site is in a sustainable location and would contribute towards improving local sustainability through upgrades to local cycling and pedestrian routes and local bus services.
- 6.64 Furthermore, the proposed development would meet the Golden Rules requirements as set out in paragraphs 156-157 of the NPPF, including the provision of 50% affordable housing and new open green space. Paragraph 158 of the NPPF states, “A development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given considerable weight in favour of the grant of the permission”.

- 6.65 Therefore, the proposed development would be appropriate development within the Green Belt, as per paragraph 155 of the NPPF, in line with Strategic Policies SP1 and SP5.

Character and Openness

- 6.66 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that *“the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”*
- 6.67 NPPF paragraph 153 states that when considering any planning application, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.
- 6.68 Case law has established the openness may be conceived as having two components, one spatial and one visual. In terms of spatial openness, it is not considered that the proposed development would have a harmful impact given that the Site is adjacent to built development to the east and west, confined by a road to the south, contained by a hard landscape edge to the north, and that a large area of open Green Belt and countryside would remain to the north.
- 6.69 Furthermore, significant landscaped buffering is proposed across the Site, linking to public open space and green infrastructure within the Site. This helps to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development.
- 6.70 The sensitivity of the Site within the surrounding landscape and potential impacts to Green Belt openness have been assessed in the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal, prepared by Enplan.
- 6.71 The LVIA concludes that while there are likely to be some visual impacts of the construction process, both the impacts of the construction process and the completed scheme are considered to be not significant.
- 6.72 In terms of landscape character, it was concluded that the magnitude of change on the landscape character in this area is considered to be Moderate adverse and Not Significant on completion of the development.
- 6.73 Overall, it is considered the scheme would not have significant impact on openness, either in terms of the remaining Green Belt or the wider landscape area. As such, it would comply with paragraph 153 of the NPPF and Policy SP5 of the North Herts Local Plan.

Housing Mix and Tenure

- 6.74 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF requires local authorities to plan for a mix of housing, informed by demographic trends and the needs of different housing groups which plays an integral part of successful placemaking.

6.75 Policy SP8 (Housing) of the Local Plan sets out that planning permission for new homes will be granted where an appropriate range of house types and sizes are provided taking into account a number of factors.

6.76 In accordance with this Strategic Policy, Policy HS2 (Affordable Housing) and Policy HS3 (Housing Mix) highlight key considerations, with Policy HS3 stating that:

“planning permission for new homes will be granted provided that an appropriate ranges of house types and sizes are provided taking into account:

- i. the overall targets of this plan;*
- ii. the findings of the most up-to-date evidence including the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Council’s Self Build Register and other relevant evidence of housing need;*
- iii. the location and accessibility of the site; and recent completions, existing permissions and sites in the five year supply.”*

6.77 The table below sets out the general need identified in Figure 9 of the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire SHMA: Part II Update (2023) against the proposed housing mix:

Type	SHMA indicative mix			Proposed housing mix
	Affordable	Market	Total	
1 Bed	14%	7%	10.5%	-
2 Bed	31%	15%	23%	20%
3 Bed	46%	48%	47%	46%
4 Bed	9%	30%	19.5%	34%

6.78 On this basis, the provision is considered to be appropriate with reference to the most up to date SHMA, and therefore in accordance with Policy SP8 of the Local plan.

6.79 Policy HS3 also requires consideration to be given to the location and accessibility of the site and recent completions, existing permissions, and sites in the five-year supply.

6.80 In respect of the location and accessibility of the Site, it is demonstrated that it is accessible and would thus be suitable for the proposed mix of 2-, 3- and 4-bed housing. Regarding existing permissions, the proposal is in accordance with the mix considered to be acceptable in comparable recent schemes, including a development for 43no. dwellings (11x2-bed, 10x3-bed, 22x4-bed), granted permission with ref. 23/00563/FP.

6.81 Finally, in terms of five-year supply, NHDC’s current housing land supply position is just 2.6 years. As such it is evident that there is a substantial need for all dwelling types but particularly family-sized dwellings as proposed.

Housing Quality

- 6.82 Local Plan Policy HS5 requires proposals for major residential development to demonstrate that a minimum of 50% of homes can be built to M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable Standard, with 10% of affordable units built to M4(3) Wheelchair User Standards.
- 6.83 In accordance with Policy HS5, 25no. homes will be designed to M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable Standard, with 5no. dwellings designed to fully accessible M4(3) Wheelchair User Standards.
- 6.84 Furthermore, the proposed units all meet national space standards, as well as providing external amenity in excess of minimum standards.
- 6.85 All dwellings are dual aspect and will provide excellent levels of natural light, privacy and outlook.
- 6.86 A Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared by KP Acoustics and submitted as part of this application. In the first instance, the surveyed and predicted noise levels have been assessed to determine the minimum sound reduction requirements of the external building façade elements to achieve suitable internal noise levels, based on the requirements of local and national policy.
- 6.87 With regards to internal acoustic conditions, it is confirmed that new dwellings will satisfy the criteria in BS 8233 and ProPG through the provision of suitable glazing specifications across the development.
- 6.88 As such, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Local Plan Policy HS5, and national policy in relation to housing quality.

Design and Layout

- 6.89 National, regional and local policy places emphasis on the design of new developments, requiring new schemes to respect the architectural character of the surrounding area and to minimise amenity impacts on neighbouring properties.
- 6.90 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF places significant weight on the design of development, stating that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of an area, is visually attractive and is sympathetic to local character in terms of its architecture.
- 6.91 Policy D1 of the Local Plan notes that permission will be granted provided that development proposals:
- a) *Respond positively to the site's local context,*
 - b) *Take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme, to:*

- i. *create or enhance public realm;*
- ii. *optimise the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);*
- iii. *reduce energy consumption and waste;*
- iv. *retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new*
- v. *planting;*
- vi. *maximise accessibility, legibility and physical and social connectivity both internally and with neighbouring areas;*
- vii. *future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle;*
- viii. *design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and*
- ix. *minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision;*
- c) *Have regard to the Design SPD, and any other relevant guidance;*
- d) *Within Letchworth Garden City have regard to the Letchworth Garden City Design Principles contained in Appendix 5; and*
- e) *For residential schemes, meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency standards.*

6.92 Strategic Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) of the Local Plan requires development to have consideration for the detailed policy requirements set out in the Local Plan and have regard for the Design SPD.

6.93 The North Hertfordshire Design SPD outlines the foundations for good design. The key urban design principles identified as underpinning all development throughout the district are as follows:

- 1) *Character (sense of place and history)*
- 2) *Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)*
- 3) *Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)*
- 4) *Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)*
- 5) *Legibility (ease of understanding)*
- 6) *Adaptability (ease of change)*
- 7) *Diversity (ease of choice)*
- 8) *Quality of Private Space (useability)*
- 9) *Sustainability (reducing carbon and increasing efficiency)*

6.94 Specific design guidance is given for St. Ippolyts in section 5.17 of the Design SPD.

6.95 The proposed site layout is considered to respond positively to local context. It provides an appropriate sensitive density that is in keeping with the edge of settlement location. The proposed typology, consisting of a mix of predominantly semi-detached and short rows of terraced houses is also in accordance with existing development to the west in Hitchin.

6.96 The proposed layout is informed by pre-application discussions surrounding the site constraints. These discussions included limiting development to the west of the electricity

pylons which cross above the Site from north to south, and the presence of Ash Brook along the eastern site boundary.

- 6.97 This approach also softens the impact of the proposed built form on views from Stevenage Road, focusing the development on the generous new public open space and SuDS ponds provided around the entrance to the Site. Appropriate buffering is also provided to the western boundary to the Site, ensuring a neighbourly relationship with Kingshott School.
- 6.98 It is considered that the proposal for 50no. dwellings can be comfortably accommodated on site whilst providing a high-quality scheme which will offer an acceptable standard of living for future occupants. As the proposed site plan demonstrates, each dwelling is located within a spacious plot with large gardens and car parking spaces. Circulation space is also provided across the Site.
- 6.99 The proposed development comprises a mix of house types, including detached, semi-detached and short terraces. The proposed houses are single-storey or two-storeys in height, minimising the bulk and massing of the development and aligning with the neighbouring development at Ashbrook and King's Oak.
- 6.100 The Design SPD notes that, in St Ippolyts, there is variety in materials and types of buildings throughout the village. As such, the design and materials used have been carefully considered to be sympathetic to the local context, incorporating a range of design features/ characteristics.
- 6.101 The proposed materials are in line with the established character of the area. A contextual study is undertaken in the Design and Access statement, which provides more detail on local precedent.
- 6.102 Finishes will be of a high quality and ensure durability for the lifetime of the development, promoting circular economy and whole-life cycle principles. This is further detailed in the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.103 Overall, the proposed development is considered to be in keeping with the local character, in accordance with Local Plan Policy SP9, D1 and the North Hertfordshire Design SPD.

Landscaping

- 6.104 Strategic Policy SP12 of the Local Plan aims to ensure that whilst significant growth is being accommodated during the plan period, the natural environment is being protected and enhanced, and in doing so, the Council will seek to:

“Protect other open spaces and support provision of new and improved open space.”

- 6.105 Policy NE1 of the Local Plan predominantly pertains to the protection of existing strategic green infrastructure, while Policy NE2 focuses on the impact of development on the

Council's Character Areas. Both policies require development to have consideration for the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.

- 6.106 Landscaping proposals have been integrated as part of the overall design approach from the outset. Various areas of landscaping are proposed, as set out in the Landscaping Design and Access Statement, prepared by Match Landscape Architects and submitted alongside this application.
- 6.107 The submitted landscaping plan sets out a coordinated approach to the delivery of public open space within the corridor beneath the overhead power lines, demonstrating how this constraint has been positively integrated into the scheme. The proposals include a linear public open space incorporating a pedestrian and cycle route (POW), a woodland walk, and a series of SuDS features designed to respond to the site's identified flood zones and surface-water management requirements.
- 6.108 The landscaping strategy forms an essential component of the overall design approach, ensuring that key site constraints, namely the overhead electricity cables, flood-risk considerations, and the spatial requirements are effectively accommodated and turned into placemaking opportunities. The location, form, and function of the public open spaces have therefore been deliberately structured to align with Local Plan policy expectations for high-quality green infrastructure, accessible recreation, and integrated surface-water management.

Open Space

- 6.109 Policy NE6 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that make provision for new and improved open space.
- 6.110 In accordance with Policy NE6, the North Hertfordshire Open Space SPD (2016) and the North Hertfordshire Validation Requirements, an Open Space Assessment has been conducted.
- 6.111 The North Hertfordshire Open Space SPD (2016) sets out minimum open space requirements for new residential development. The SPD confirms that open space should be provided on-site where it is expected to be usable, of meaningful scale, and capable of long-term management.
- 6.112 As the development comprises 50 residential units, it does not exceed the Policy NE5 threshold of 200 units. Accordingly, on-site provision is not necessarily required. Notwithstanding, the Site has been designed to maximise the public open space and form an integrated network responding to site constraints such as overhead power lines, SuDS attenuation features, and relationship to adjoining land uses, ensuring that spaces are functional, usable and accessible.

- 6.113 As per the North Hertfordshire Open Space SPD, a population multiplier of 2.4 persons per dwelling is typically applied. On this basis, a comparative analysis of the quantitative standards has been undertaken, a summary of which is provided in the table below:

Type of Open Space	SPD Standard per 1,000 people	Required provision for 50 dwellings	Proposed provision	Percentage above standard
Parks and Gardens	1.08ha	0.13ha	0.97ha	+646%
Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace	2.0ha	0.24ha	0.5064ha	+111%
Amenity Green Space	0.6ha	0.07ha	0.1057ha	+51%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1.6ha	0.19ha	0ha	N/A
Children's Play Space	0.25ha	0.03ha	0.0324ha	+8%
Allotments	0.24ha	0.03ha	0ha	N/A

- 6.114 Particularly, the SPD highlights that the Council will only seek on-site outdoor sports provision and allotments where the scale of development produces a usable quantum of space and where there is an identified need.
- 6.115 It is considered that the required provision for outdoor sports facilities would not represent a usable quantum and therefore has been omitted from the proposal.
- 6.116 The same consideration has been applied to the allocation of open space for allotments. Notwithstanding, this has been included in the proposal as informal community growing areas and edible landscaping. Adequate open space is provided so that allotments could be established by residents later.
- 6.117 The proposal delivers a hierarchy of open spaces, including amenity greenspace, naturalised SUDS, and children's play areas, in full compliance with Policy NE6 of the Local Plan, and the North Hertfordshire Open Space SPD.

Biodiversity and Ecology

- 6.118 Policy NE4 of the Local Plan states that "*Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity.*", noting that development should deliver measurable biodiversity net gains.
- 6.119 The proposed development will ensure a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is achieved in accordance with current legislation – 2021 Environmental Act.

- 6.120 A BNG Assessment was completed by UrbanEdge, which confirms that with the implementation of the Proposed Site Layout Plan and achievement of the condition of the proposed habitats, the development proposals will achieve:
- A net gain of +6.88 habitat units, equivalent to +88.93%; and
 - A net gain of +0.28 hedgerow units, equivalent to +16.96%.
- 6.121 Furthermore, Policy NE4 states that applicants should submit an ecological survey commensurate to the scale and location of the development and demonstrate that adverse impacts can be avoided or minimised.
- 6.122 As such, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been carried out by Urban Edge Consulting. The report concludes that the majority of the survey area is of low ecological value.
- 6.123 The assessment highlights that Ash Brook watercourse is suitable for otter and water vole. It recommends that a 10m buffer is provided around the brook bank to ensure that there is no adverse impact on potential habitat. This is incorporated into the proposed scheme.
- 6.124 The appraisal report also notes that the Site contains habitats suitable for reptiles. As such, further surveys are recommended to determine likely presence or absence. No other ecological constraints to development of the Site are identified in the report.
- 6.125 A variety of ecological enhancements including habitat creation and the creation of new ponds are recommended and are incorporated into the scheme, with the provision of new SuDS ponds to the south-eastern corner of the Site that will provide significant ecological and drainage benefits.
- 6.126 This is considered to accord with the requirements of Policy NE4 of the adopted Local Plan.

Neighbouring Amenity

- 6.127 Policy D3 (Protecting living conditions) of the Local Plans states that *“Planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.”*
- 6.128 Supporting text of Policy D3 notes that such harm may arise from may arise from traffic generation, parking, loss of daylight and sunlight, noise, overlooking, pollution (including light pollution) and dominance as well as other issues.
- 6.129 The proposed development is not considered to result in any material impact on the amenity or privacy of neighbouring properties. The proposed houses benefit from a generous degree of separation from nearby residential properties. As such, there are not

considered to be any adverse impacts in terms of overlooking, overbearing or loss of natural light to any neighbouring properties or uses.

- 6.130 The design also incorporates a number of measures to ensure any potential impacts are appropriately mitigated. The proposed boundary treatment, which comprises a diverse scrub mix of containerised and bare-root native species, together with retained trees and hedgerows, provides an effective multi-functional buffer between the sports pitch and neighbouring residential properties.
- 6.131 The dense, multi-layered structure ensures year-round cover as well as a variety of canopy heights, creates a formal boundary that screens views of the sports pitch, while also providing meaningful noise and light mitigation.
- 6.132 Overall, it is considered that a good level of residential amenity will be provided for residents and the noise impacts associated with the development will not result in adverse noise impacts upon the amenity now or of future occupiers.

Transport Considerations

- 6.133 Strategic Policy SP6 of the Local Plan focuses on delivering accessibility improvements, and promoting the use of sustainable modes of transport, through encouraging development in sustainable locations, assessing proposals against transport policies within the plan, and requiring applicants to submit associated transport assessments.
- 6.134 Furthermore, Policy T1 of the Local Plan states that permission will be granted provided that:
- a) Development would not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts upon the highway network;*
 - b) Mechanisms to secure any necessary sustainable transport measures and / or improvements to the existing highway network are secured in accordance with Policy SP7;*
 - c) Suitable Transport Statements, Transport Assessments and / or Travel Plans along with supporting documents are provided where required; and*
 - d) For major developments, applicants demonstrate (as far as is practicable) how:*
 - i. the proposed scheme would be served by public transport;*
 - ii. safe, direct and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided; and*
 - iii. comprehensive integration into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks will be secured.*
- 6.135 Vehicular access is provided from the existing access point from Stevenage Road, adjacent to Ashbrook. The supporting information from DHA demonstrates that this provides suitable access and visibility from the junction with the A602/Stevenage Road.

- 6.136 A Transport Assessment prepared by DHA is submitted with the application and should be referred to when assessing transport and highways considerations. A summary of the key elements is provided below.

Parking

- 6.137 Policy T2 of the Local Plan outlines the parking requirements for proposed developments. Parking for residential development is expected to be provided in accordance with the minimum standards set out in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan.
- 6.138 Appendix 4 of the Local Plan sets residential parking standards for both car parking and cycle parking. This is as follows:
- **2+ bedrooms:** 2 car parking spaces per dwelling minimum + 1 secure covered cycle space per dwelling (none if garage or secure area provided).
- 6.139 Each dwelling will be provided with two allocated vehicle parking spaces. A total of 13 visitor spaces are also proposed, in accordance with the North Hertfordshire District Council: Vehicle Parking at New Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 6.140 One Electric Vehicle (EV) charging point will be provided per dwelling, in accordance with Building Regulations (Part S).
- 6.141 Off-street car parking has been sensitively integrated into the layout, with allocated spaces provided adjacent to each dwelling, as well as a parking court. The strategy seeks to reduce the visual dominance of parking in the streetscene through careful placement, boundary treatments, and soft landscaping. This approach helps retain and reinforce the character of the Site and its surroundings.
- 6.142 Cycle parking is provided in accordance with the standards set out in the Appendix 4 of the Local Plan, within the curtilage of each dwelling.

Access

- 6.143 Vehicular access to the site is proposed from the existing Kingshott School access road to the south-east. The existing access road 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. It is proposed that the school gates will be repositioned to the west to facilitate this arrangement.
- 6.144 The site access has been designed in accordance with the Place & Movement Planning and Design Guidance for Hertfordshire. The main site access road will have a carriageway width of 5.5m, with 1.8m wide footways on both sides tying into the existing footway infrastructure on the Ashbrook cul-de-sac. It has been classified as a Local Access Road,

which the HCC guidance states is intended to serve fronting residential properties within low-speed environments.

- 6.145 Individual dwellings are accessed via a central access road with a footway present on one side of the carriageway. Shared surface arrangements are provided off the access road, serving up to 20no. dwellings in each case.
- 6.146 Safe and legible pedestrian pathways are incorporated throughout the Site, ensuring walkability and promoting sustainable modes of travel within the development.
- 6.147 These will connect the development to existing pedestrian infrastructure along the A602 and Stevenage Road leading into Hitchin and Little Wymondley. The site is within a 10-minute cycling distance of Hitchin town centre, including the town's railway station, which has ample cycle parking. National Cycle Route 12 is accessible within a 2.9km distance, which is well within the maximum recommended cycling distance by CIHT.

Servicing

- 6.148 Servicing for the proposed development would primarily include waste management, post and deliveries. Vehicles associated with these deliveries include cycles, motorbikes and cars/ vans.
- 6.149 The access road is suitable for the accommodation a 11.4m long refuse vehicle, fire tender, pantechicon and estate car, as demonstrated by swept path analysis in the submitted Transport Assessment.
- 6.150 Bin stores will be positioned to ensure carry distances for residents do not exceed 30m and drag distances for refuse workers do not exceed 10m from the bin stores to the kerb.
- 6.151 A Delivery and Servicing Management Plan, which would be conditioned, would set out the typical operational requirements and would be overseen by the site management company.
- 6.152 The Transport Assessment prepared by DHA should be referred to when assessing the arrangements for servicing and delivery vehicles to and from the Site.

Summary

- 6.153 In summary, the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on highway capacity or safety, would promote sustainable travel choices and would include an appropriate level of cycle parking.
- 6.154 It is therefore considered that the proposed pedestrian and cycle access, delivery and servicing strategy, and waste management strategy comply with the objectives of the NPPF and the requirements of local policy.

Travel Plan

- 6.155 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF (2024) states that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable through limiting needs to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.
- 6.156 Paragraph 117 of the NPPF (2024) continues, and states that all developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan.
- 6.157 An interim Travel Plan prepared by DHA has been submitted to support the application.
- 6.158 The core objective of a Travel Plan is a strategy for managing travel needs and transport provision within an organisation or site. It seeks to improve access to a development or site by sustainable modes of transport. It therefore contains both physical and behavioural measures to increase travel choices and reduce reliance on single-occupancy car travel.
- 6.159 The Travel Plan involves the development of a set of mechanisms, initiatives and targets that together can enable an organisation or site to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment, whilst also bringing a number of other benefits.
- 6.160 The plan will be implemented prior to occupation of the residential units and details provided to the Council. The Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC) will be responsible for the day-to-day management, coordination, promotion, and implementation of the Travel Plan. Additionally, the TPC will be a point of contact for the Council, and for any occupants who have queries about their travel.
- 6.161 The proposal therefore meets the aims and objectives of policies T1 and SP6 of the Local Plan, and the strategic aims of the NPPF.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.162 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 6.163 Policy NE7 of the Local Plan requires proposals for new development to adequately address flood risk concerns and water management. Furthermore, Policy NE8 highlights the requirement for proposals to include SuDS.
- 6.164 The EA identify that the Site is predominantly located within Flood Zone 1. A small part of the eastern edge of the Site falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3, due to the presence of the Ash Brook to the east. The proposed development is designed to ensure that all built form will be located entirely within Flood Zone 1 so the residual risk will be low. This mirrors the site topography. The Site is not at risk from any other source of flooding.

- 6.165 A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by DHA and is submitted with the planning application. The Assessment concludes the development proposals can be suitably drained and will not increase the risk of flooding either on or off site. As such the proposals accord with the requirements of the NPPF, PPG and the National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in respect of securing a suitable and sustainable drainage strategy for the development.
- 6.166 Additionally, a surface water drainage strategy has been prepared by DHA and submitted as part of this application, which takes into account local guidance and SuDS manual, with the aim of to improving water quality. A Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) has been provided as part of the surface water drainage layout to deal with the surface water generated from the development to ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.
- 6.167 The design of the surface water drainage system has been integrated into the landscape and masterplan and contributes to placemaking and environmental enhancement by keeping surface water runoff at or close to the ground surface. The adopted SuDS approach maximises benefits for amenity by incorporating into the masterplan via a network of footpath to create multi-functional places and landscapes.
- 6.168 Local Plan Policy NE9 requires development proposals to make appropriate space for water, include buffer zones, as applicable. This is furthered in Policy NE10 which states that development will be granted planning permission, provided that it does not result in the deterioration of any watercourse.
- 6.169 A 10m buffer has been provided around the bank of the Ash Brook to ensure that there is no adverse impact on water quality. This buffer exceeds the recommended 5m buffer zone for ordinary watercourses.
- 6.170 The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in flood risk and drainage terms, and in line with national and local policy, with particular regard to policies NE7, NE8, NE9 and NE10.

Archaeology

- 6.171 Local Plan Policy HE4 requires planning applications to be supported by a desk-based assessment, with a subsequent archaeological field evaluation should it be deemed necessary.
- 6.172 An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) has been prepared by RPS Tetrattech, and submitted alongside this application.
- 6.173 The DBA confirms that no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck sites have been identified within the immediate vicinity of the study site. It is concluded that the redevelopment proposals will have no direct archaeological impact upon relevant designated heritage assets.

- 6.174 However, the available information indicates an archaeological potential within the study site for the later prehistoric periods, the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods, for remains considered most likely to be of low, i.e. local significance.
- 6.175 Therefore, further archaeological mitigation measures in association with redevelopment impacts have been recommended, and in accordance with the NPPF, and proportionate to the impact of the development, it is recommended that these works can follow the granting of planning permission, secured by an appropriate planning condition.

Energy and Sustainability

- 6.176 Policy D1 of the Local Plan outlines the key design principles of the Local Plan, including elements of public realm, SuDS, energy consumption, accessibility and visual impact.
- 6.177 North Hertfordshire District Council adopted the Sustainability Supplementary Planning document (SPD) in September 2024. This sets out best practice and requirements for residential developments of between 10 and 99 dwellings, which include demonstrating compliance with policy and Building Regulations (Part L).
- 6.178 The SPD applies a tiered approach, with each level reflecting progressively higher standards of sustainable design and performance. Developments must demonstrate how they meet the minimum Bronze requirements, while Silver and Gold tiers encourage enhanced measures such as improved energy efficiency, biodiversity gains, and reduced embodied carbon.
- 6.179 The proposed development represents a highly sustainable form of development, seeking to incorporate renewable energy and energy efficient measures where possible to reduce the carbon emissions of the scheme beyond the minimum Part L requirements.
- 6.180 An Energy and Sustainability Statement has been prepared by Watkins and Payne, and submitted alongside this application. The statement sets out that the development proposes the following energy efficiency measures:
- Enhanced building fabric performance (meeting or surpassing Part L standards)
 - Low g-value glazing to reduce solar gains
 - High-efficiency mechanical and electrical services
- 6.181 The Energy and Sustainability Statement demonstrates how the proposal would align with each of the requirements of the SPD. Accordingly, the proposal is expected to reach silver target level for 'Optimising Passive Design & Fabric Performance' and bronze for the remaining categories, with a number of silver criteria being met.
- 6.182 Furthermore, it is confirmed that the proposed development would therefore achieve a minimum of 63.39% and maximum of 75.40% reduction in regulated CO₂ emissions against the Part L compliant baseline

6.183 On the basis of the above, the proposed development is in line Policy D1 of the Local Plan, the Sustainability SPD, and National guidance, and is therefore considered acceptable in terms of energy, and sustainability.

Air Quality

6.184 Policy of D4 of the Local Plan sets out the local framework in respect of air quality. The policy requires policies to:

- a) Give consideration to the potential or actual impact on local air quality, both during the demolition/ construction phase and as a result of its final occupation and use;*
- b) Propose appropriate levels of mitigation to minimise emissions to the atmosphere and their potential effects upon health and the local environment; and*
- c) Carry out air pollution impact assessments, where required, to determine the impact on local air quality of the development.*

6.185 An Air Quality Assessment has been prepared by KP Acoustics and submitted as part of this application.

6.186 The assessment has been undertaken to assess both construction and operational impacts associated with the proposed development.

6.187 As assessment of the potential dust impacts has been carried out and concludes that during the construction phase, releases of dust and PM₁₀ are likely to occur during site activities. However, through good practice and the implementation of suitable mitigation measures, the impact of dust and PM₁₀ will be effectively minimised, and the residual dust impacts are expected to be negligible.

6.188 Additionally, a review of air quality monitoring data and the surrounding land-uses indicates that concentrations of NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} at the Site are well within the relevant long and short-term air quality standards. On this basis, the proposed development will not introduce new exposure to poor air quality.

6.189 Overall, the assessment concludes that the air quality is not considered a constraint to the development of the Site, as proposed and therefore it should not be a material consideration in relation to the planning application at the Site.

6.190 As such, the proposed development complies with Policy D4 of the Local Plan.

7. PLANNING BALANCE

Presumption in favour

- 7.1 Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.” It continues:

“(d)where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework 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.”*

- 7.2 As detailed earlier in this report, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. As such, in line with paragraph 11(d), planning permission should be granted unless any policies for protecting areas provide a clear reason for refusal or any adverse impacts of doing so would “significantly and demonstrably” outweigh the benefits. These two tests are addressed in turn below.

Footnote 7 considerations (Green Belt)

- 7.3 In respect of point i. and, as detailed in this Statement and within the supporting reports, the proposed development has been assessed as follows:
- The Site comprises Grey Belt land and proposed development is appropriate development within the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 155;
 - The development will be safe from flooding and not increase flood risk elsewhere, in accordance with paragraph 181; and
 - There are no impacts to national landscapes or designated heritage assets, in accordance with paragraphs 190 and 212-221.
- 7.4 While the Site is considered Grey Belt, and therefore there is no requirement to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances (VSC), it is considered that VSC would nevertheless exist given the nature and extent of the planning benefits identified (against the absence of harm in planning terms).
- 7.5 The proposal will deliver the following benefits:

- The provision of 50no. dwellings, meeting an acute identified local need for housing in North Hertfordshire;
- A development which meets the Golden Rules, including:
 - The provision of 25no. affordable homes (50% of the total), making a significant contribution to local affordable housing need;
 - Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
 - The provision of green spaces that are accessible to the public.
- A mix of housing, including a majority of family homes, meeting the highest priority need;
- A landscape-led design which is sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and integrates with the character of the Site and wider locality;
- 1.5ha of new public open space integrated within the development, benefitting existing and future local residents;
- A net gain in biodiversity of 88.93%, including ecological enhancements throughout the site;
- Significant new tree planting, contributing to local visual and ecological enhancement;
- Provision of new SuDS features, enhancing the natural environment and improving surface water drainage;
- Off-site highways improvements, including the provision of new and upgraded bus stops and other works to upgrade existing highway and pedestrian/cycle routes;
- Improvements to local infrastructure via s106 contributions, which as discussed with HCC may include:
 - Contributions towards sustainable travel improvement scheme, including junction upgrades;
 - Improving the access on the southern end of St Ippolyts;
 - Surface improvements through repairs or replacement, as well as achieving increased width through maintenance could be achieved which would be a benefit to users;
 - Improvements to existing bus stops on Stevenage Road and provision of pedestrian crossings;
 - Provision of tactile paving and bus shelters where appropriate.
- Significant economic benefits including construction spend locally, job creation and training opportunities, and additional expenditure in the local economy.

7.6 Paragraph 158 of the NPPF states: “*A development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission.*” This applies to all development, not only those considered Grey Belt.

7.7 It has been confirmed through a recent High Court ruling in Buckinghamshire that the weight afforded by paragraph 158 applies to any Green Belt development that complies with the Golden Rules (not only that which is on Grey Belt land). That ruling quashed a dismissed appeal (ref. APP/N0410/W/24/3347882) (**Appendix C**) on the basis that compliance with the Golden Rules (e.g., delivering 50% affordable housing) must be afforded ‘significant weight’ regardless of whether a site is classified as Grey Belt. The appeal was subsequently allowed. The High Court’s statement of reason concludes:

“The secretary of state agrees that whether a development complies with the golden rules, and the effect thereof on whether planning permission should be granted, does not depend on whether a development is “grey belt” development.

As the inspector’s decision failed to consider and address whether the site was compliant with the golden rules, the decision also appeared not to consider the effect of paragraph 158, and therefore obviously relevant material considerations were not taken into account”.

- 7.8 In accordance with the above, the proposed development’s compliance with the Golden Rules must be awarded significant weight as per paragraph 158.
- 7.9 The planning assessment section of this Statement confirms that the proposed development would comply with the Development Plan in all other respects and that it would not result in any material harm in planning terms. As such, any harm would be clearly outweighed by the very significant benefits identified above, notably the provision of housing and affordable housing to meet an acute identified local need. Therefore, the proposals would meet the VSC test outlined in paragraph 153, if applicable.
- 7.10 It is demonstrated that the policies referred to in footnote 7 do not provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.

‘Tilted balance’

- 7.11 Part ii. of paragraph 11(d) applies the ‘tilted balance’, such that development should be granted permission unless the adverse impacts of the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. As outlined already, any harm in planning terms would not outweigh the very significant benefits identified. As such, the tilted balance is satisfied.
- 7.12 Overall, it is demonstrated that paragraph 11(d) is engaged in the assessment of this application and that the proposed development should be granted accordingly.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bugler Homes Ltd, in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of Land North of Stevenage Road.
- 8.2 The applicant seeks planning permission for the following development:
- “Erection of 50no. residential dwellings (including affordable housing), new public open space, associated parking, landscaping and access.”*
- 8.3 The planning statement and accompanying documents provide a comprehensive assessment of the proposal against the relevant national and local planning policies, demonstrating that the development has been carefully designed to respond positively to its context and the local planning objectives.
- 8.4 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that:
- “The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”.*
- 8.5 The development would contribute to meeting the acute local housing shortage while respecting the character and amenity of the area.
- 8.6 The design of the development is of high architectural quality, optimising a sustainable site for housing, while respecting the existing character of the area, in accordance with Local Plan objectives.
- 8.7 The proposed development would deliver very significant public benefits, not least a significant contribution to meeting an acute need for housing and affordable housing within the local area, that would weigh heavily in favour of the proposals.
- 8.8 Overall, this planning statement demonstrates that the proposal has been thoroughly assessed in accordance with national and local policy. As such, it is not considered that there is any reason to refuse to grant planning consent for the proposed development. On this basis and, having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, it is concluded that planning permission should be granted.