



Hitchin

Land at Bedford Road, Hitchin

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

December 2025

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01 Introduction

01 Introduction

This Design & Access Statement has been produced on behalf of ARTE Developments LTD. In support of a Reserved Matters Application for 50 new homes on land east of Bedford Road and west of The Priory School in Hitchin.

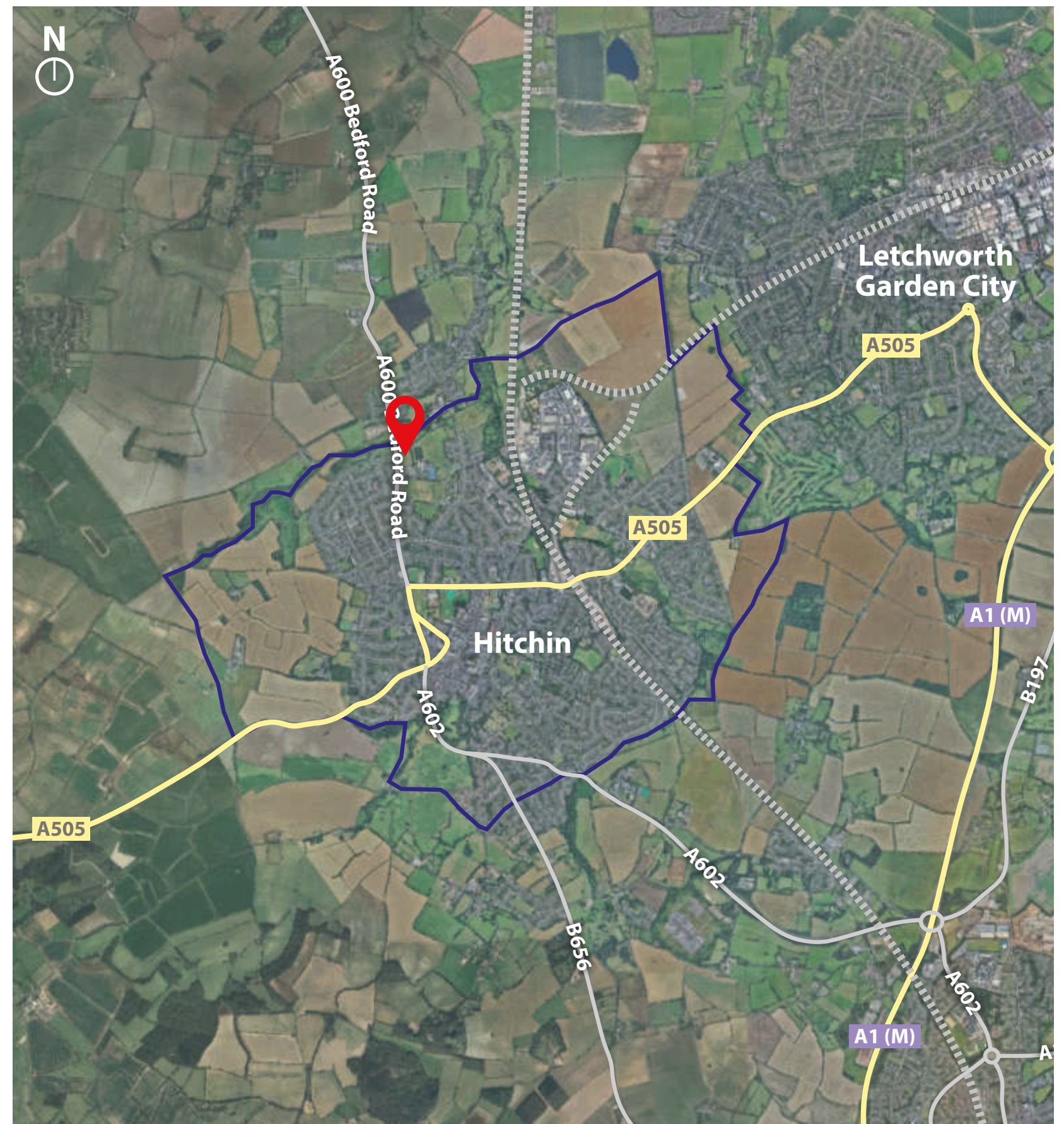
The site is located in Hitchin, a market town in the North district of Hertfordshire in the South East of England.

Hitchin is located approximately 40 miles north of London, 20 miles south-east of Bedford and 30 miles south-west of Cambridge and is between the city of St Albans and Letchworth Garden City.

The A505, A602 and Bedford Road provide main routes north-south and east-west through Hitchin reaching villages further afield such as Ickleford to the north, Stevenage to the south-east. Letchworth Garden City to the north-east and Luton to the south-west.

Key:

Hitchin Area Boundary
Site Location
Railway Track



Hitchin in relation to nearby areas, detailing main arterial routes and the site's location.



02 Site Context

02 Site Context

Site Location

The site is located to the north of Hitchin with its main access from Bedford Road which lines its western boundary. By car, the site is approximately 3.7 miles from the A1 (M) and approximately 1.2 miles to Hitchin train station, which is well connected to Stevenage and London in the south, and Peterborough and Cambridge to the north.

The site sits within the Green Belt as per the Local Plan 2011-2031.

The site is in close proximity to existing bus stops along Bedford Road which provides regular services to the town centre and surrounding towns. Hitchin town centre contains a variety of shops, eateries as well as a central market square.

It is bounded by Bedford Road along the west and the adjacent Priory School to the south-east. The River Oughton runs to the north of the site, through the Oughtonhead Nature Reserve, a popular area for locals.

The site is one arable field of approximately 1.71 hectares/4.23 acres. Currently it consists of grassland, low-quality trees and bushes to the north and western perimeter. A ditch runs along the northern boundary with scattered trees offering glimpsed views to adjacent residential properties, Burford Way Lodge, The Cottage and Oughton Barn. The southern boundary is formed by dense low level hedgerow which sits between the site and the Priory School grounds.

The site is relatively flat, however there is a change in level between the site and the school playing fields at the south-eastern corner.

Key:

Site Location

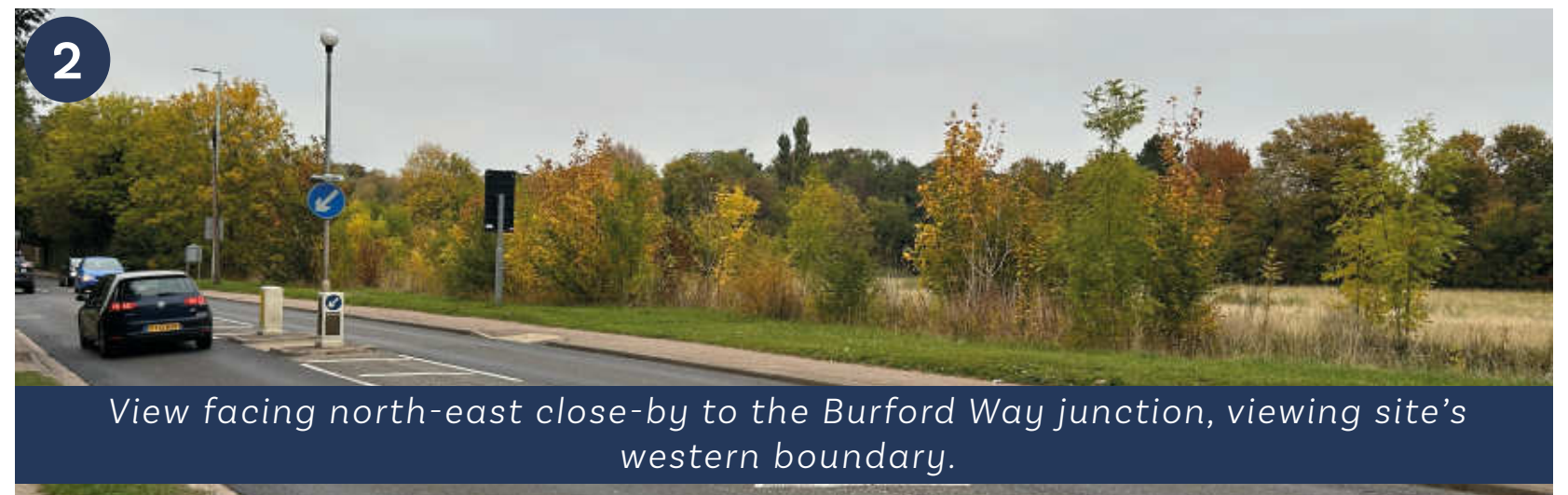
Railway Track



Site Location in relation to its surrounding area.

02 Site Context

Site Imagery



02 Site Context

Site Imagery



Image locations in context to site.



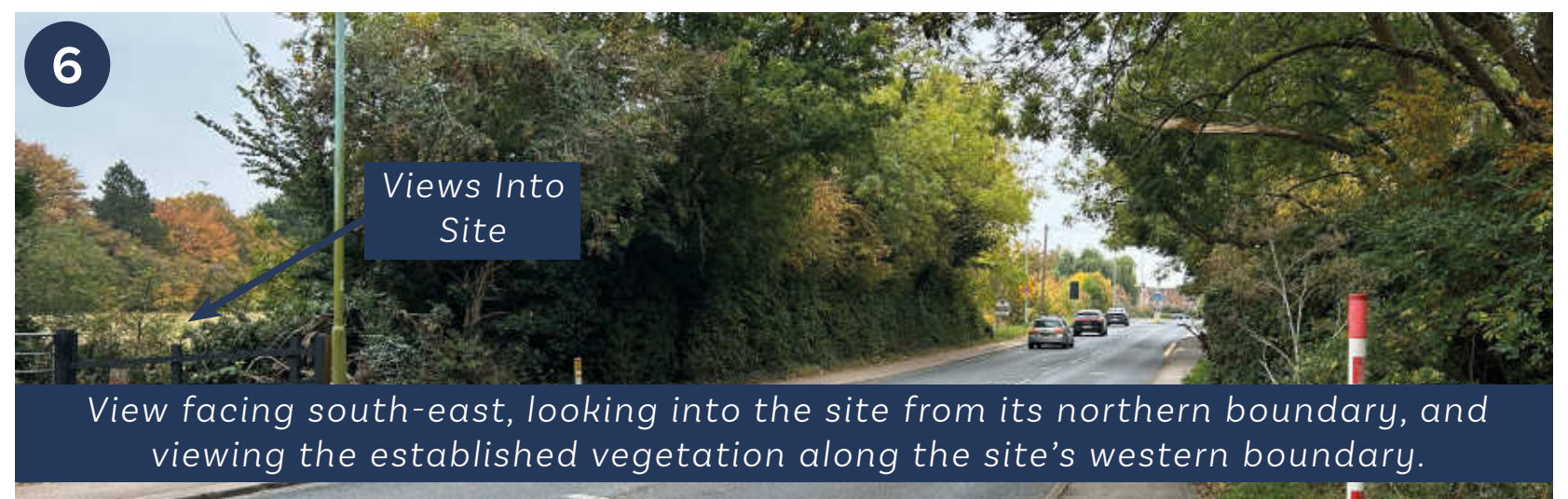
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View facing north-east, along the site's western boundary, looking into the site.



5

View facing south-east looking into the site from the site's western boundary, with a distant view of The Priory School.



6

Views Into Site

View facing south-east, looking into the site from its northern boundary, and viewing the established vegetation along the site's western boundary.

02 Site Context

Local Character



02 Site Context

Local Character



02 Site Context

Surrounding Context

An assessment was carried out of the urban character of Hitchin. This is important as the site's immediate built form context is predominantly residential, with a range of architectural characters from a varied history of development, which creates an eclectic character throughout the area.

Furthermore, this assessment seeks to assess and record the characteristics that provide the unique palette of building forms and details. This local distinctiveness should be incorporated into the detailed design of the new development and inform the public realm strategy, ensuring the architectural response reflects local character. This section reflects on the site's immediate surroundings, as well as historic features of the town centre and newer contemporary developments.

Range of roof forms including pitched, gable and hipped elements.

Hedgerow planting to Bedford Road.

Gable Element.



Limited defensible space to frontages.

Shared surface mews street.

Consistent building along Bedford Road.

Varying roof lines.



Mixture of shrub planting and formal hedgerows along Bedford Road.



Soldier course to window heads.

Brick coursing with plinth detail.



Prominent and repetitive gable elements.

02 Site Context

Surrounding Context

Decorative brick detailing above window opening to provide interest.



Parking bay runs limited and broken up with landscaping to soften appearance of hard standing.



Single materiality treated on apartments to offer continuity to the street scene.

Landscaping to provide defensible space to ground floor units.

Door canopies.



Red multi stock brick.



Parking courtyard typologies that are well overlooked by an active frontage.

Well overlooked parking courtyard with landscaping to break up parking dominance.



Soft landscaping delineated by metal railing to provide defensible space.

02 Site Context

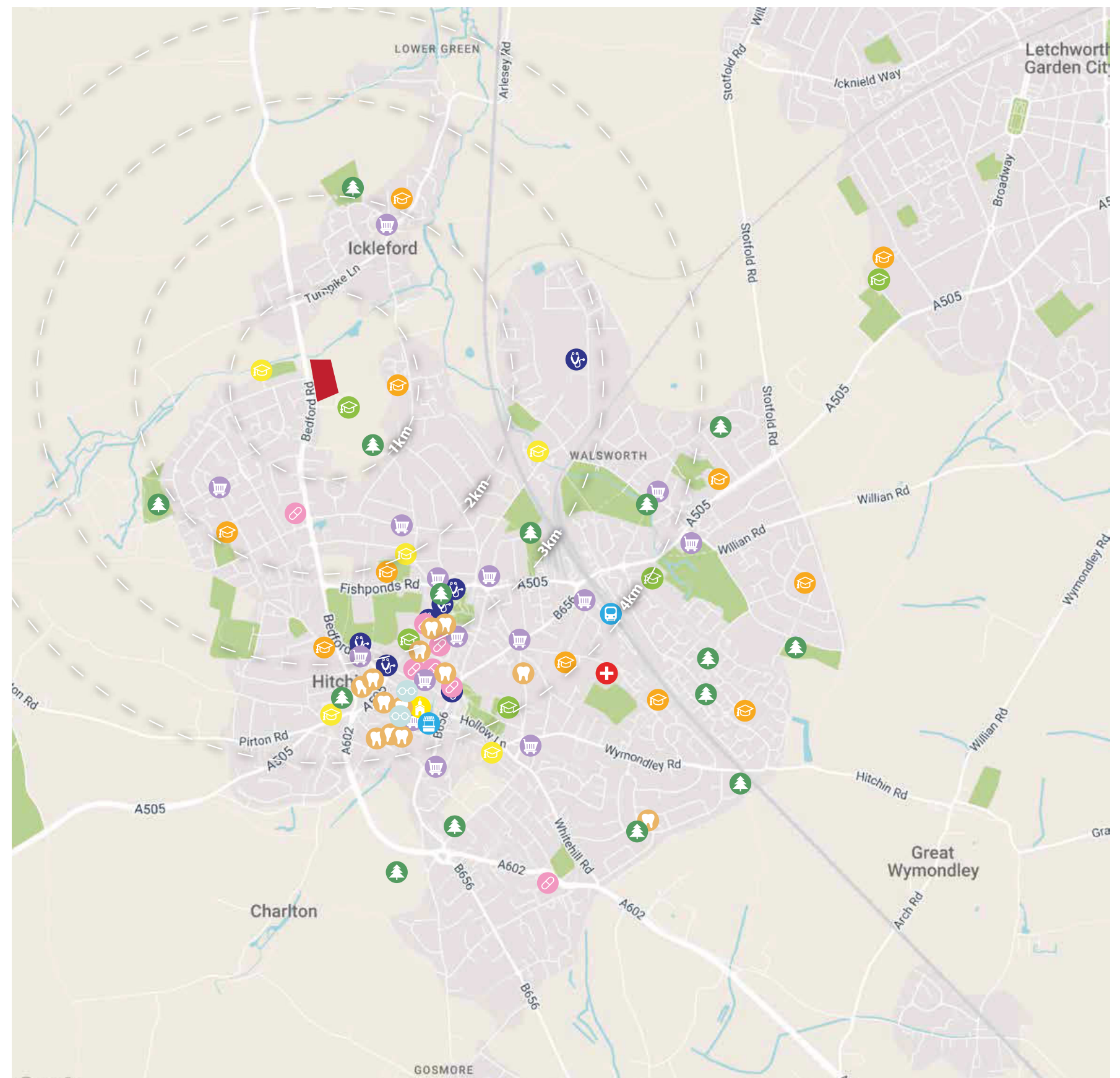
Local Facilities

Hitchin is rich in local facilities that serve the local community, the diagram produced to the right is not exhaustive of all facilities available. This exercise has demonstrated that the site is positioned in a sustainable location and that within a 4km radius of the site, it has access to nurseries, primary school's and secondary schools, as well as vital healthcare services such as opticians, doctors, dentists and pharmacies. Other facilities which reduce the need to rely on vehicular movement include supermarkets, convenience stores, a local market, church, train station and parks / recreational grounds nearby.

With the core facilities identified within the diagram, other facilities that are worth noting for entertainment and recreational purposes are the public swimming pool, the various after-school clubs such as a football club, netball club, scouts and climbing wall, as well as fitness centres, theatres and restaurants, reflecting a strong community presence within Hitchin.

Key:

- Site Location
- Convenience / Supermarket
- Park / Recreational Ground
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Pre-School / Nursery
- Doctors
- Pharmacy
- Dentist
- Private Hospital
- Market
- Church
- Train Station
- Opticians



Site location in relation to core local facilities.

02 Site Context

Connectivity & Movement

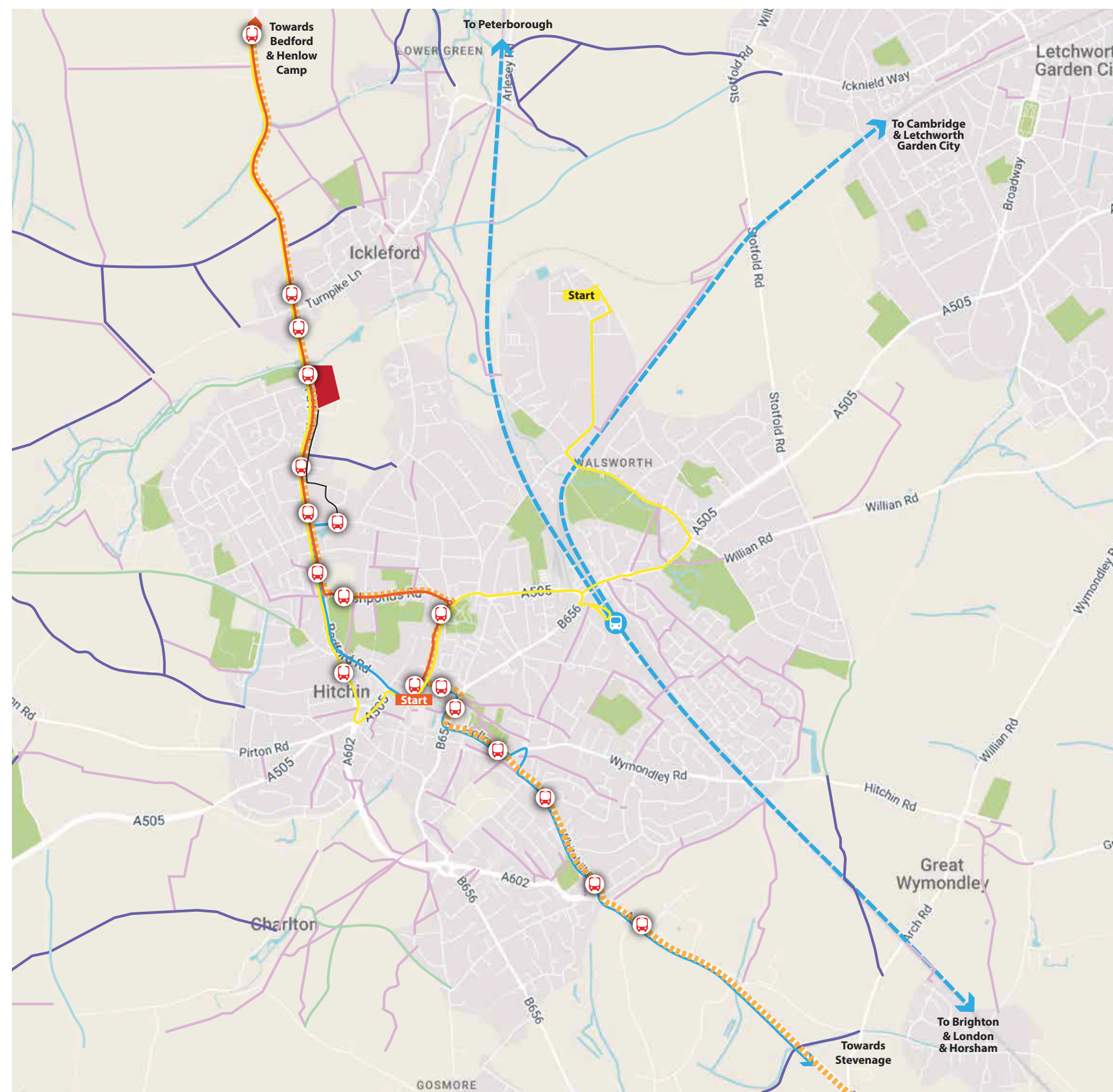
As the character of Bedford Road is generally residential in nature, there is a network of associated footways in the vicinity of the site that offers pedestrian connectivity. Footways are provided on both sides of Bedford Road with uncontrolled crossing points provided at regular intervals, with pedestrian splitter islands. To the south of the site adjacent to King Georges Park, a signal controlled crossing on Bedford Road is provided. Additionally, there are no dedicated cycle facilities on Bedford Road, however given the 30mph speed limit, it is considered safe for on-carriageway cycling.

Details on walking / cycling timings and distance to amenities is provided within the Transport Assessment, as well as the local bus services provided, and their intervals.

Hitchin benefits from a railway station, which provides services to Peterborough, Cambridge, Letchworth Garden City, Brighton, London and Horsham. Furthermore, bus services offer transport to the railway station, Bedford and Stevenage.

Key:

Site Location
Bus Stop
Route 74 (To Bedford)
Route 9a, b (To Bedford)
Route 9a, b, d (To Stevenage)
Route 89 (To Henlow Camp)
Railway Line
Train Station
Byway (Open to all traffic)
Restricted Byway
Bridleway
Footpath
Walking Route (To Bus Stop Route 9a)



Site location in relation to public transport and PRoWs.

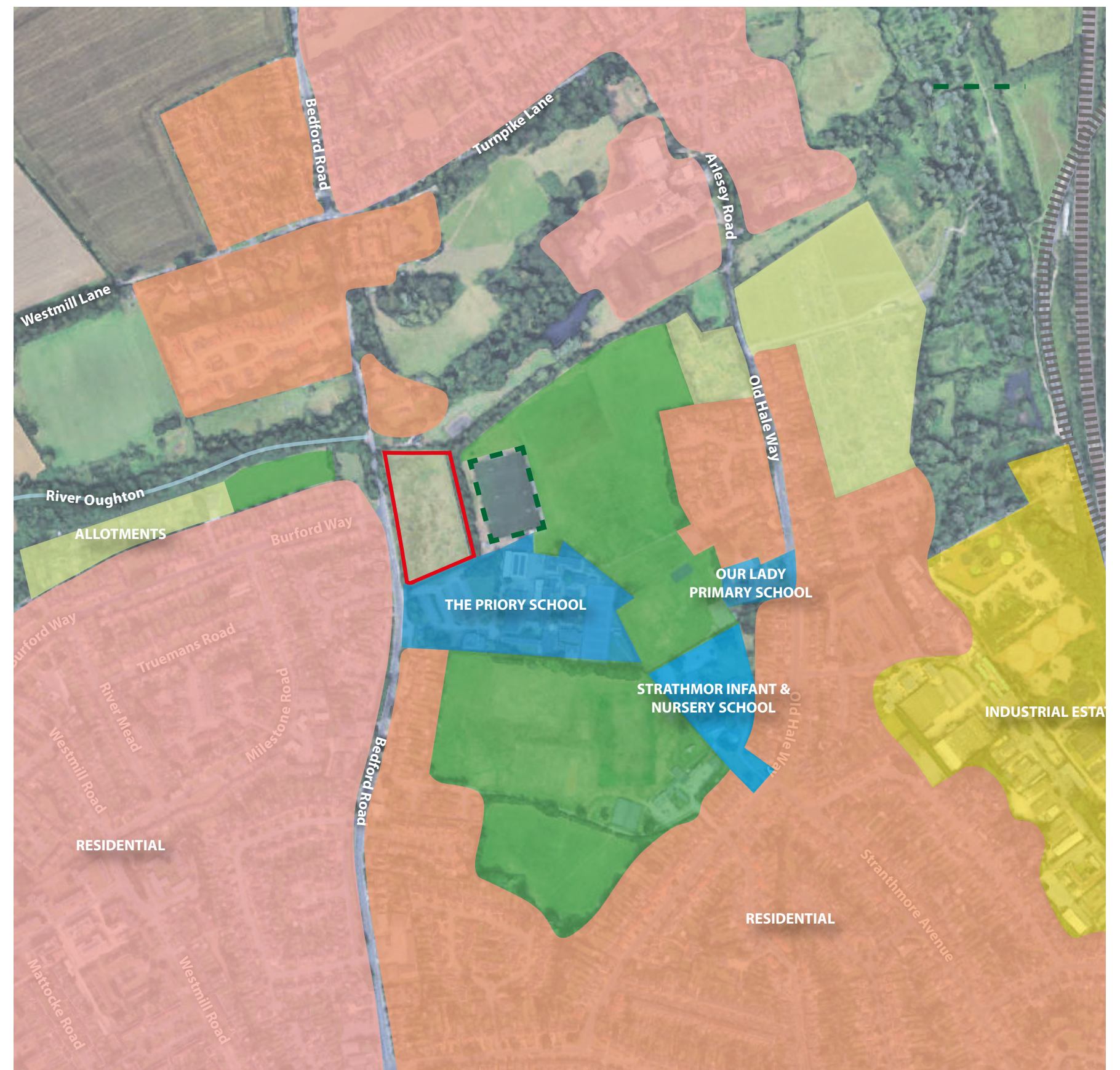
02 Site Context

Land Uses

The land uses of the surrounding context of the site has been analysed, and has revealed that a number of land uses surround the development, the majority of which is comprised of residential. These vary considerably in architectural styles and typologies featuring historic cottages, housing from the 1930's, 1960's to later 20th century developments. The Priory School and Our Lady Primary School with their associated playing fields are located towards the south and east of the site.

Key:

Site Boundary
Residential
Allotments
Education
5G Sports Pitch
Playing Fields
Industrial



Land uses diagram.



03 Site Analysis

03 Site Analysis

Flood Risk Assessment

This FRA has assessed the proposed development at Land east of Bedford Road, Hitchin, which will provide 50 new homes and associated infrastructure. The FRA has resulted in the following conclusions:

- The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is indicative of a 'low' risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.
- Based on the EA Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea mapping, the site is shown to be at 'very low' risk flooding from rivers and the sea under current day conditions and over the development lifetime.
- The site is considered to be at a 'medium' risk of surface water flooding; detailed flood modelling has been undertaken to assess and inform the proposed development, including developing a robust mitigation strategy for surface water flows originating from off site.
- The surface water flood modelling has demonstrated that the development would remain safe and would not increase flood risk elsewhere in design flood events up to and including the 1% AEP +40%CC.
- Records of sewer flooding have been noted within the vicinity of the development; however, these are not considered to pose a risk more onerous than the risk from surface water that has been quantitatively assessed.
- The site is considered to be at medium risk of groundwater flooding; a bespoke hydrogeological assessment would provide more clarity on this risk.
- No other sources of flood risk considered within this FRA pose a material risk to the proposed development.

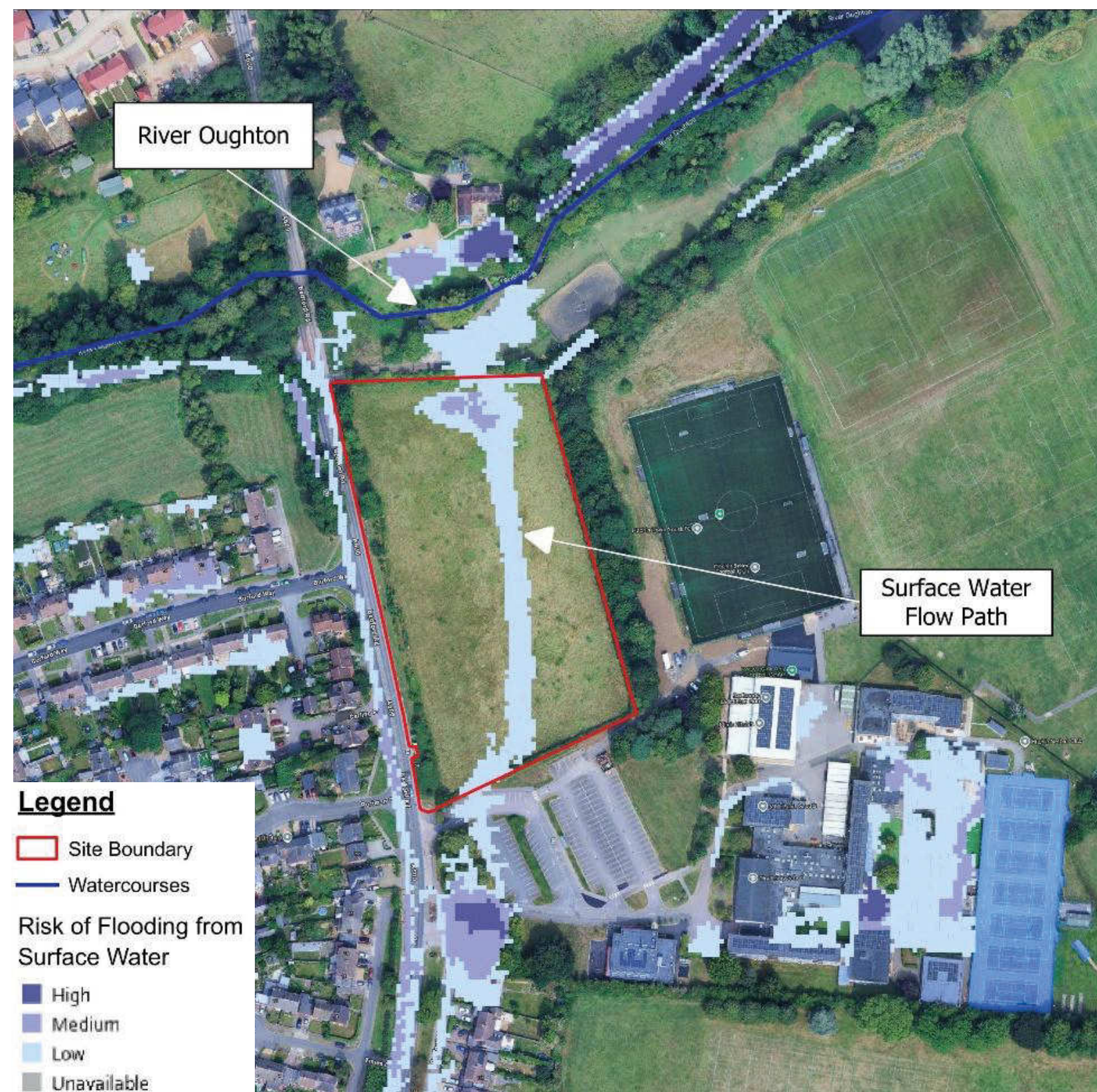


Figure 6 extracted from the Flood Risk Assessment (Risk of Flooding from Surface Water - Current Day).

03 Site Analysis

Arboriculture Assessment

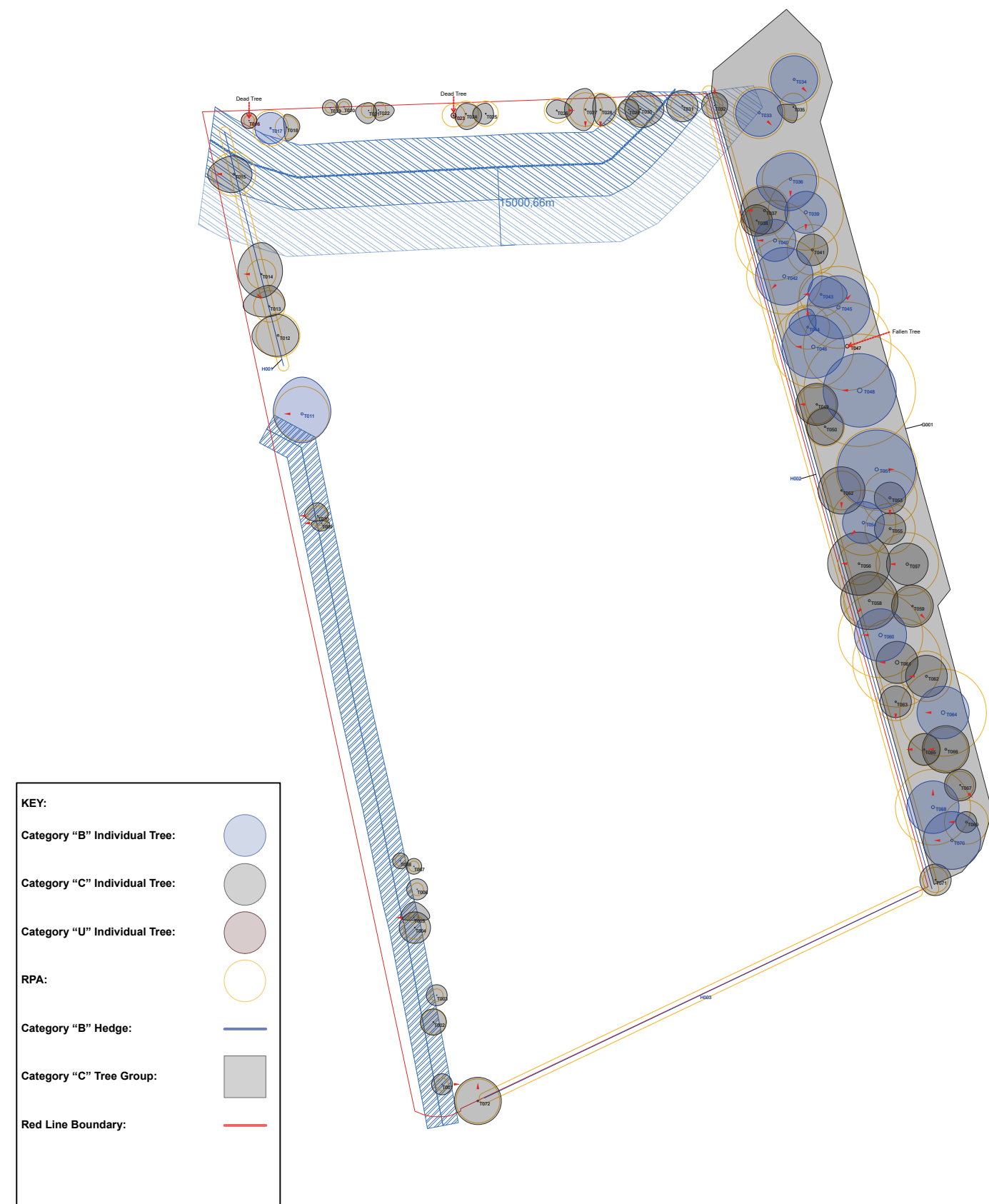
Within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment undertaken by Green Willow Associates, the site is described as predominantly made up of flat, open grassland. Its boundaries are flanked with a variety of young - semi-mature, mainly broadleaf species trees. Access into the land is via a metal gate located at the southwest boundary corner accessed via Bedford Road.

The survey area within and immediately outside of the redline boundary includes 72 individual trees, 1 group of trees and 3 hedgerows.

Trees with a stem diameter below 75mm have been omitted from the survey.

- 19 trees have been awarded Category B (trees whose retention is considered desirable and are of moderate quality).
- 50 trees have been awarded Category C (trees that could be retained and are considered of low quality).
- 3 trees have been awarded Category U (trees for removal, as they are in such a condition that any existing value would be lost within 10 years).
- 3 hedgerows have been awarded Category B (retention is considered desirable and is of moderate quality).
- 1 group has been awarded Category C (trees that could be retained and are considered of low quality).

Notable trees within the eastern woodland belt separating the site from the playing ground of The Priory School, have been individualised to improve the visual representation of RPAs of larger trees situated within the woodland belt group.



Tree constraints plan.

03 Site Analysis

Archaeology & Heritage Impact Assessment

In terms of relevant designated heritage assets, no designated World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield sites or Historic Wreck sites lie within the vicinity of the study site.

The study site is not located within an Area of Archaeological Significance as defined locally by North Hertfordshire District and Hertfordshire's Historic Environment Team.

Based on current evidence, a low to moderate archaeological potential has been identified at the site for unstratified Palaeolithic finds, for later Prehistoric evidence, for evidence of a Roman rural landscape, and for Saxon or Medieval land division and agriculture. A possible localised potential could be considered for a World War Two mortar emplacement foundation. All other past periods of human activity are considered to retain a low potential. There is a possible very localised potential for palaeoenvironmental remains associated with alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary. Past ground disturbance is likely to have been generally widespread but shallow as a result of historic plough activity, and the likelihood of survival of archaeological remains, if present, would be anticipated as good.

Overall, the site likely retains only a modest archaeological potential, and it is unlikely that there would be any remains present that would present a material design constraint or consideration. It is however possible that development of the site could result in adverse impacts to remains of a likely low significance. As a result, it is possible that the archaeological advisor to North Hertfordshire District may request further archaeological work. Given that archaeology is very unlikely to present a design and masterplanning consideration, it is suggested that such works could reasonably be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

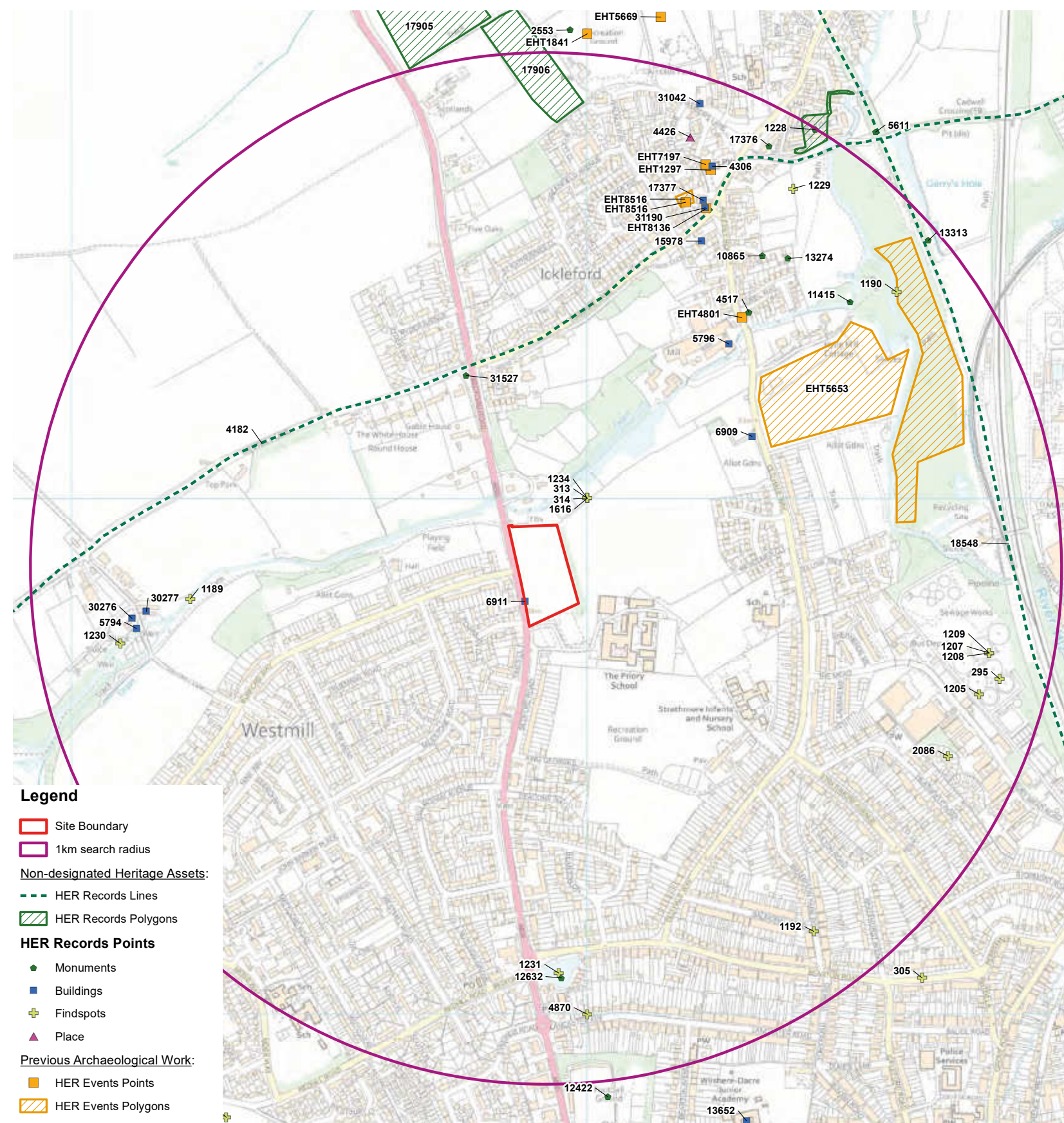
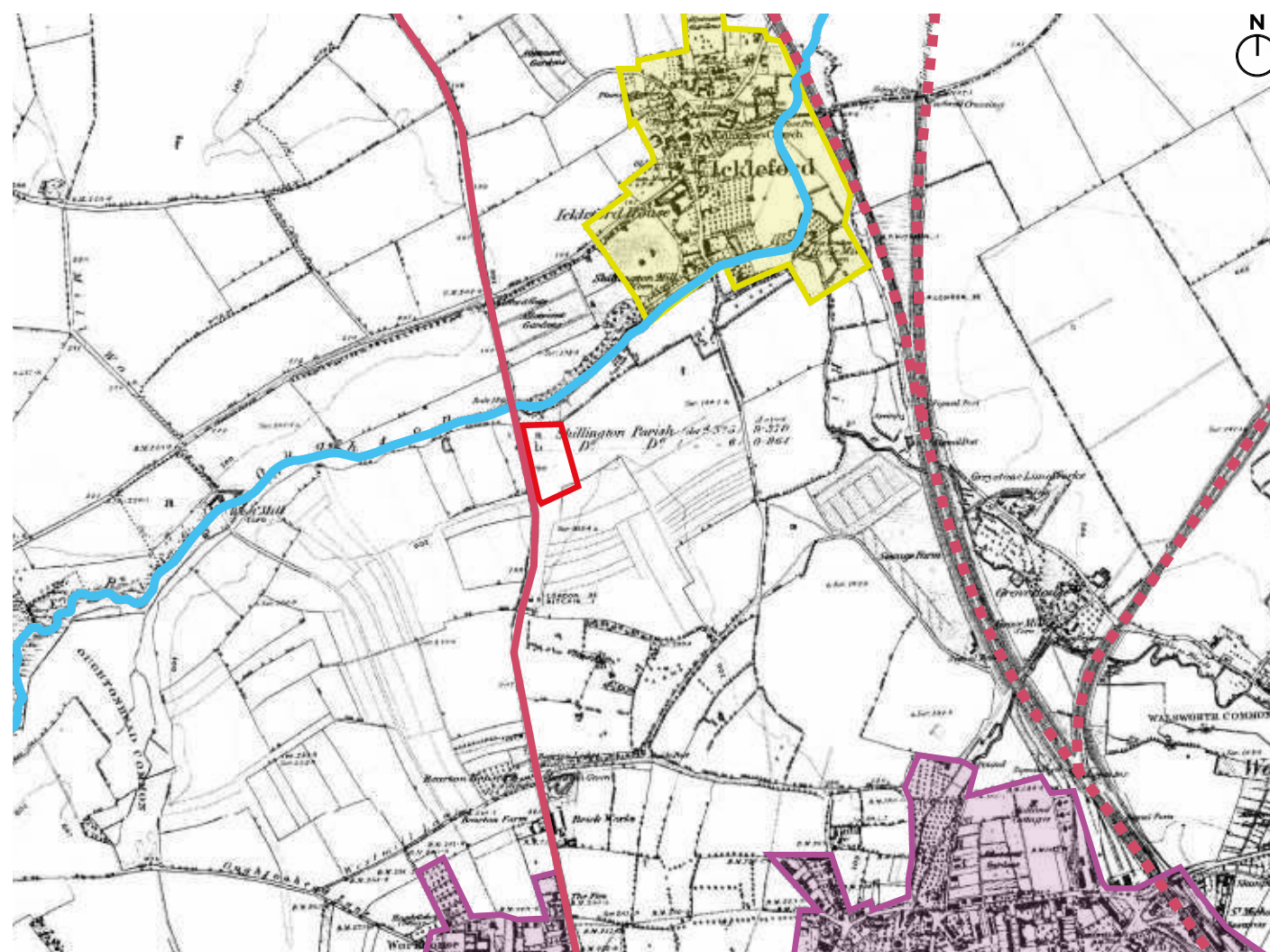


Figure 2a HER Plot (Data from Hertfordshire HER).

03 Site Analysis

Archaeology & Heritage Impact Assessment

Sourced from the previous Design and Access Statement produced for the site, a historical analysis was undertaken, which illustrates how Hitchin grew as a settlement, and demonstrates that the site is a logical extension to the existing market town. As the gap between Hitchin and Ickleford was bridged according to the 1980's historical map.



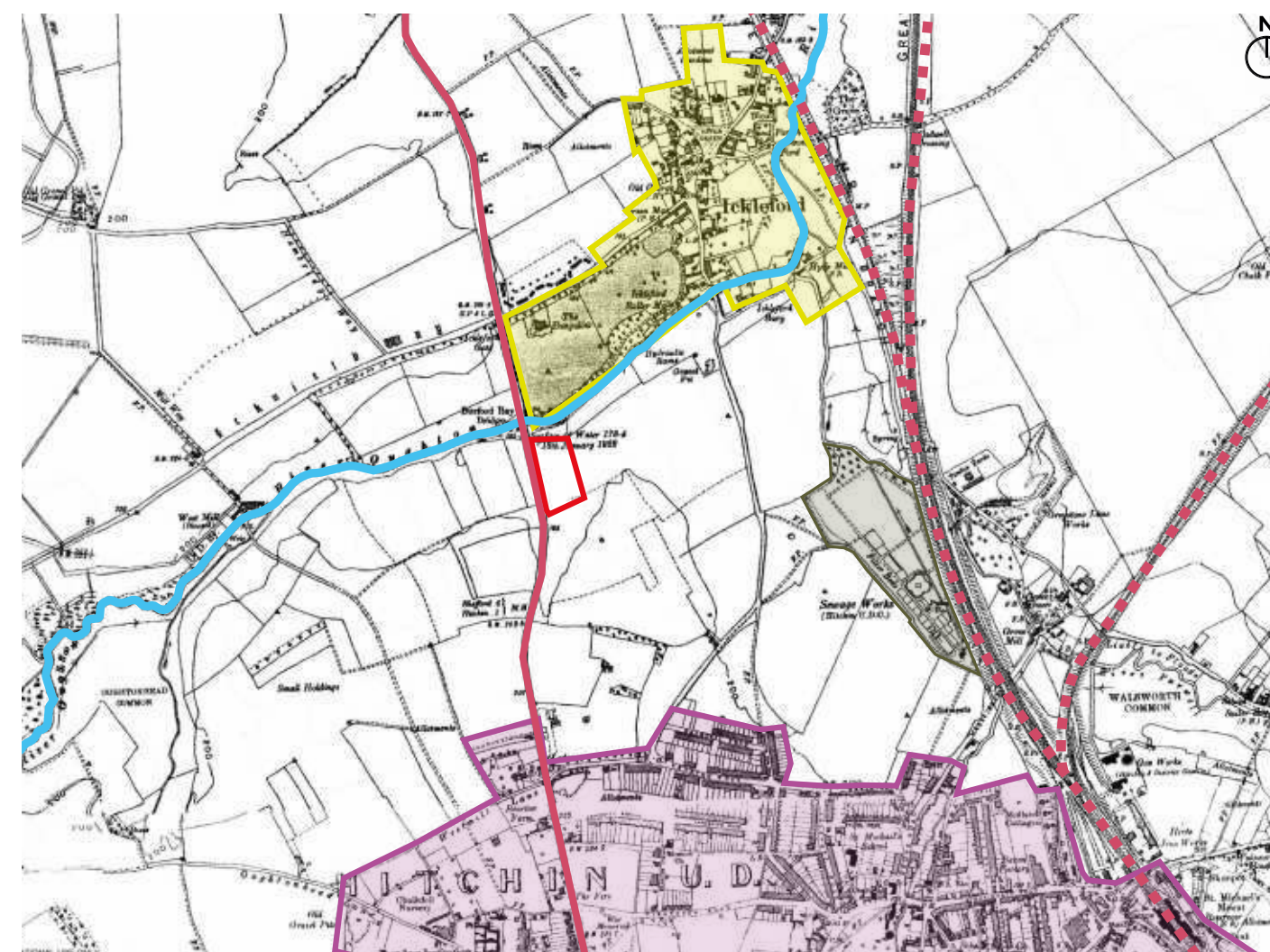
Historic Map - 1880

As the historic map shows, the site was located within entirely arable fields among no existing settlements or buildings. The construction of Hitchin railway station on 7th August 1850 which was a catalyst for expansion of surrounding settlements and in particular Hitchin. The improved connectivity to Leicester in 1851 and London in 1868 enhanced the reputation of Hitchin which led to a rise in population. This created an anchor point in Hitchin around which future expansion was structured.

Key:

Primary Road
Train Line
River Oughton

Ickleford
Hitchin

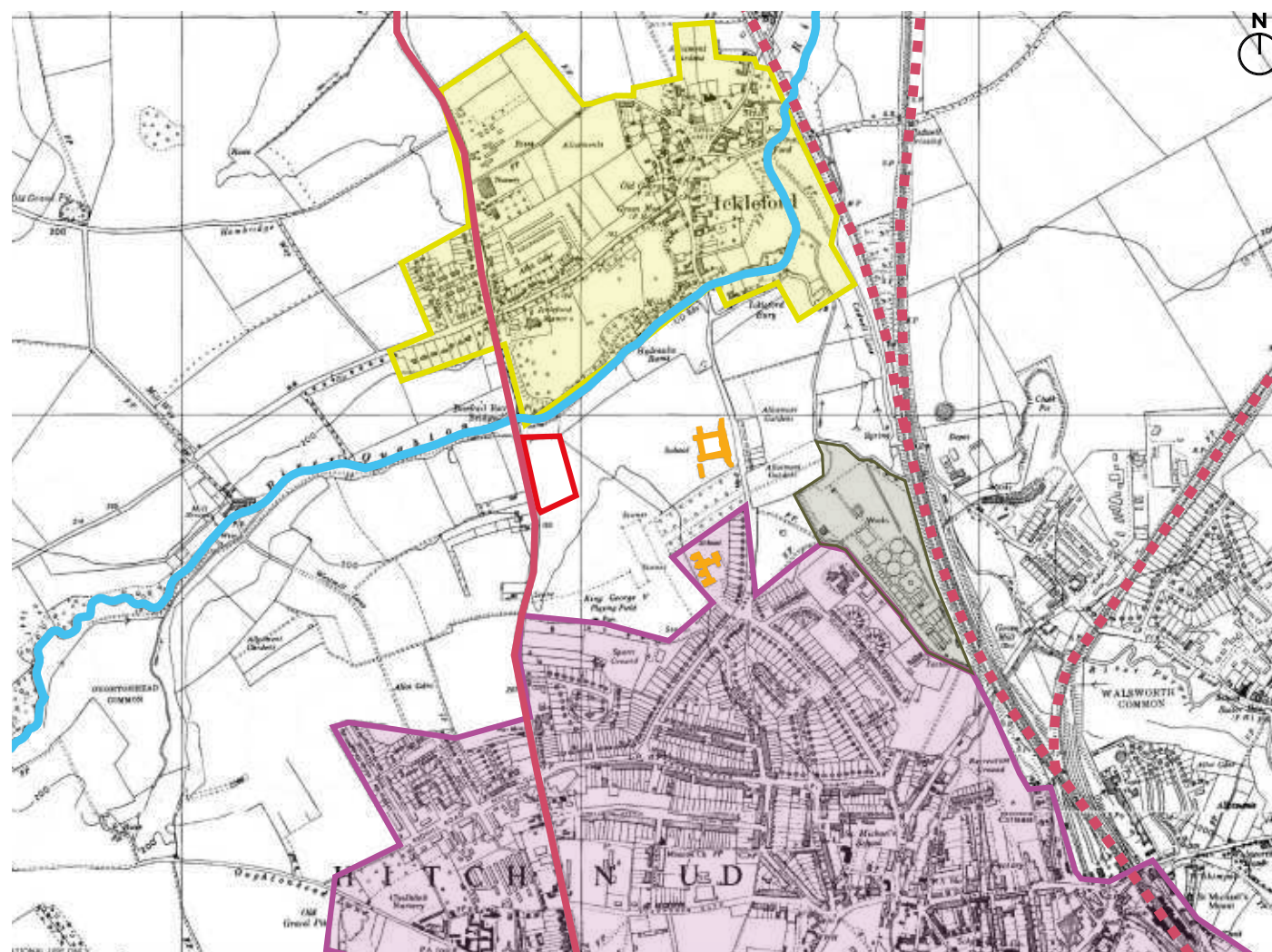


Historic Map - 1920

The increase in population through the early 1900's led to diversification of its economic base however remained an attractive market town due to competing with the growth of nearby towns such as Letchworth Garden City and later development of Stevenage.

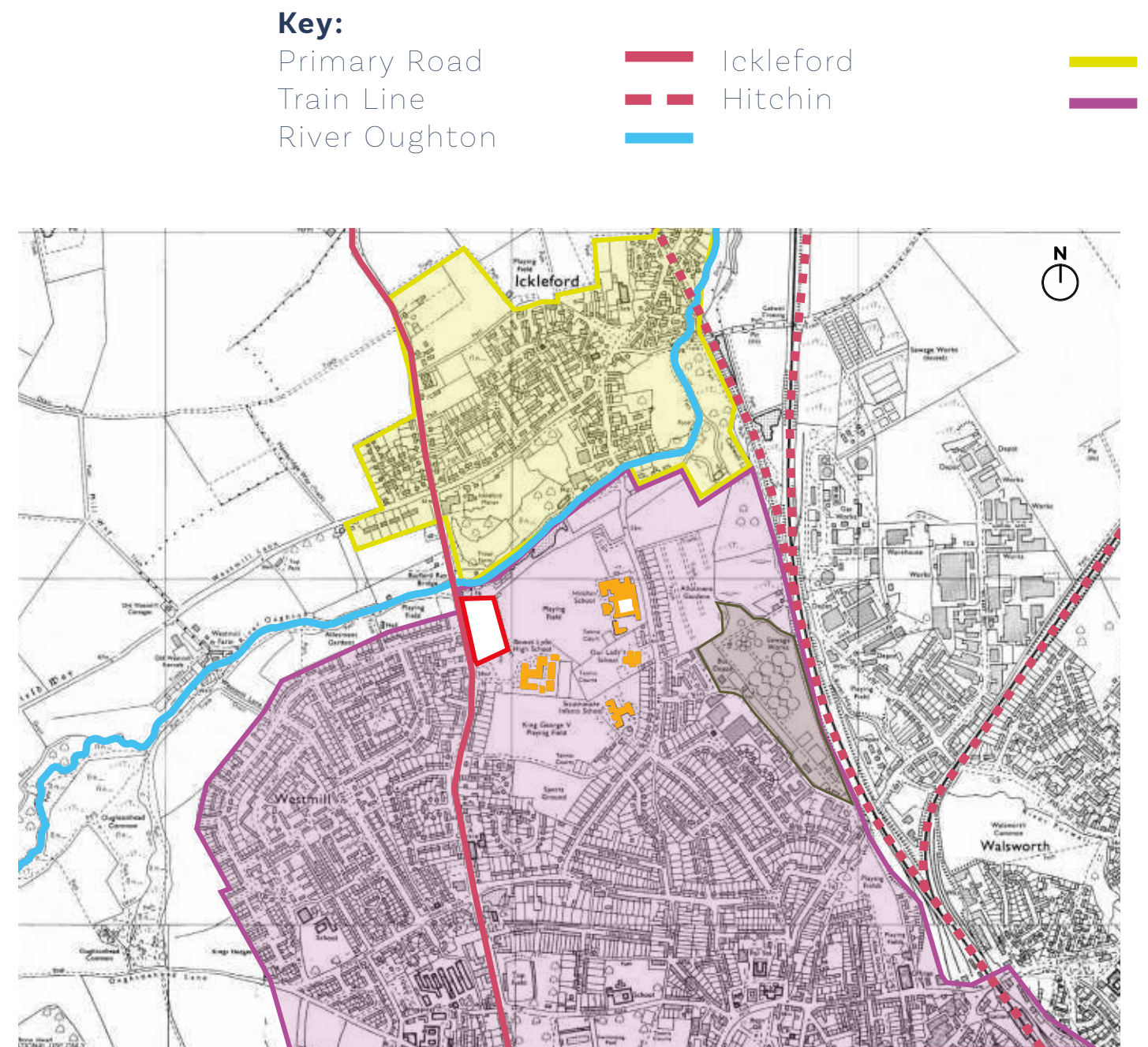
03 Site Analysis

Archaeology & Heritage Impact Assessment



Historic Map - 1960

The latter half of the C20th brought significant change with the arrival of motorways, particularly A1(M) which shortened journey times to Luton. Hitchin and surrounding towns began to expand as well as the arrival of local schools.



Historic Map - 1980

Towards the end of the C20th Hitchin had developed a strong commuter town due to its strategic position between Cambridge and London as well as its good transport infrastructure. Later C20th expansion saw the development of larger estates and infill developments within Hitchin and Ickleford, new schools and extensions.

03 Site Analysis

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was required to demonstrate that the scale of development is appropriate on the edge of the built-up area of Hitchin.

The site has a gentle fall from south to north (approximately two metres over a distance of 175 metres) and while it is a remnant of a former network of fields between Hitchin and Ickleford, it is now enclosed by the built-up area of the town. The site is enclosed by mature vegetation and this be retained in full except on the Bedford Road frontage where a new edge to the street is proposed to be created.

The landscape effects of built development are found to be slight/moderate as a result of the low sensitivity of landscape elements. The magnitude of change is considered to be medium but the new homes will not be uncharacteristic of the edge of the town and the retention of existing landscaping has an important role to play in addressing the impact of two storey houses.

There is capacity for new built development due to the mix of ages and styles in the surrounding buildings, with an effect on the townscape character judged to be slight/moderate and neutral. The effect on the scheme on the local landscape character is deemed to be slight/moderate, mainly due to the Green Belt designation and even though there is no impact on a conservation area, scheduled ancient monument or listed building, while the effect on the wider landscape is assessment as slight due to the negligible magnitude of change.

The assessment considers the cumulative effects of the scheme and concludes that there is a slight/moderate and neutral cumulative landscape effect and a slight and adverse visual effect, with the latter to be expected when an open field is replaced by a street of new homes.



Viewpoint A: View from north adjacent access to Oughtonhead Common.



Viewpoint B: View from north-eastern corner of site looking south-west to Bedford Road.



Viewpoint D: View from properties 307 - 311 Bedford Road (10) looking north-east.

Above viewpoints retrieved from Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, where further details can be found regarding mitigation measures and impacts of development.

03 Site Analysis

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

An Ecological Impact Assessment was carried out to provide information on the potential impacts of new development at the Site.

The ecological surveys conducted in 2025 highlighted a number of potential ecological constraints within the Site, those were identified as the below:

- The Oughtonhead Common Nature Reserve, a statutory designated site valued for its local biodiversity and recreational use lies adjacent to the north-west of the Site.
- The River Oughton is present within 25m of the Site.
- The hedgerows along the boundaries of the Site represent important habitat for numerous species and are classified as a Habitat of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of NERC Act 2006.
- Reptile surveys carried out in 2025 identified that the Site supports a low population of common lizard and that the bund to the west of the site, containing bramble scrub and long modified grassland habitats, is important for this species.
- The Hedgerow, long grassland and scrub present at the Site have the potential to provide suitable nesting habitats.
- An Ash tree on-site contains a potential roosting feature for individual bats in the form of a partially healed wound hole on its eastern aspect.
- No evidence of badgers or setts were recorded onsite, however, there is a suitable habitat available for sett building and foraging within the Site.
- The on-site scrub, hedgerows and dry ditch provide suitable habitat for hedgehog.

Mitigation measures to minimise impact are detailed within the Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by MKA Ecology.



Baseline UK Habitat Classification Map