

Integration with Great Ashby



November 2025

Ashby Woods

GA2 – Land north east of Great Ashby

Design and Access Statement

ICENI PROJECTS ON BEHALF OF PICTURE ESTATES LTD

Produced on behalf of
Picture Estates Ltd
by



Iceni Projects
Design & Landscape Team

North East Stevenage
Nov 2025 Rev D
Author: SG/JS

This DAS is produced to be viewed on screen. Should you wish to, you can print it at either A4 or A3, and either single or double sided.

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Planning Policy Context	6
3. Site Context	11
4. Site Constraints and Opportunities	41
5. Consultation	44
6. Vision and Principles	49
7. Development Proposals	59
8. Full and Unreserved Application	91
9. Illustrative Character	99
10. Sustainability Strategy and Future Proof	125
11. Delivery	128
A. Parameters and Framework Plans to scale	

Introduction



1. Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

- 1.1
- This Design and Access Statement ('DAS') has been produced on behalf of Picture Estates Ltd as part of the planning application, for the residential-led development at the land north east of Great Ashby (and the 'Site'). The development is proposed to be known as Ashby Woods.
- 1.2
- The adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 allocates the Site as a Strategic Housing Site for a new neighbourhood of approximately 600 homes, within Policy SP18.
- 1.3
- The document demonstrates how the Site could be comprehensively developed for residential, community and open space uses, in accordance with Policy SP18 and other policies within the Local Plan. It sets out a summary of the various baseline and technical studies that have been undertaken, and how they have informed the design of the scheme. It also sets out the setting and context of the Site, as well as the design rationale which leads to a set of development parameters associated with land use, amount, access and landscape for Ashby Woods. However, as the application is a hybrid, with much of it in outline, the majority of the plans in the DAS are either intended to form a framework for future detailed design decisions, or they are purely illustrative of what development on the Site could look like.
- 1.4
- A series of Parameter Plans have been produced and are submitted alongside the planning application and the Environmental Statement. Unlike the Framework or illustrative plans, the Parameter Plans seek to fix a series of key elements and parameters of the proposed development as part of the outline application, and the Parameter Plans also form the basis for the assessments made within the Environmental Statement.

- 1.5
- The DAS is set out in the following Sections:

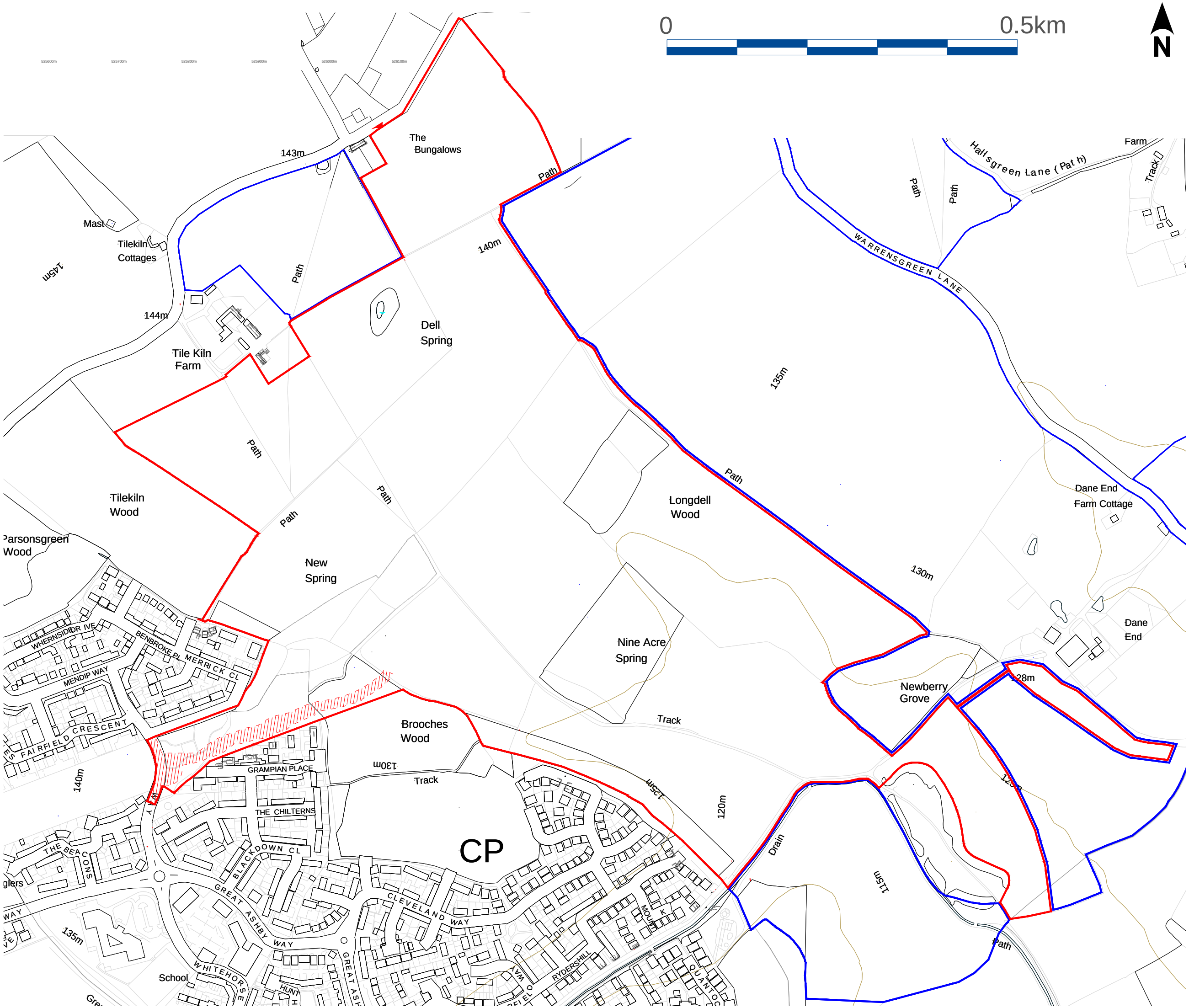
- Section 1:
- An introduction to the DAS and the application;
- Section 2:
- A summary of the planning policy context;
- Section 3:
- A summary of the technical considerations and background studies which have informed the proposals;
- Section 4:
- A summary of the opportunities and constraints to be considered within the development;
- Section 5:
- A summary of the development of the proposals as well as feedback from the consultations with stakeholders;
- Section 6:
- The design concepts and vision for Ashby Woods;
- Section 7:
- The framework for the development proposals, including the key parameters and framework plans;
- Section 8:
- Information on the design of the detailed and unreserved matters;
- Section 9:
- Indicative sketches of various character areas, showing how the framework and parameters could be accommodated within a detailed layout at the Reserved Matters stage;
- Section 10:
- Setting out the additional sustainable design principles for development; and
- Section 11:
- Phasing and implementation information.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.6
- The proposed development comprises:
- Up to 640 dwellings comprising a mix of 1 - 5 bedroom dwellings, including 40% affordable dwellings;
- A site for a 2-form entry (FE) primary school and a further reserved site for educational uses;
- A Community Hall;
- Vehicular access off Mendip Way, with emergency vehicle access off Warrengreen Lane;
- Pedestrian and cycle access off Mendip Way, Merrick Close, Back Lane, and bridleway Stevenage 102;
- A Green Infrastructure network incorporating the retained woodlands, hedgerows and trees, new areas of formal and informal public open space and planting, a Sustainable Drainage System ('SuDS'), active travel and recreational routes, and children's play areas; and
- A site for allotments.

1. Introduction

-  Application Site Boundary: 62.93ha
-  Full Application Boundary: 0.80ha
-  Other land owned by Applicant, their parent company, or its shareholders



▲ Figure 1.1 - Site Application Boundary, showing land forming part of the detailed and outline applications

Planning Policy Context



2. Planning Policy Context

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 2.1 The adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 allocates the land north east of Great Ashby off Mendip Way (‘the Site’) as a Strategic Housing Site for a new neighbourhood of approximately 600 homes.
- 2.2 **Policy SP18** states:

‘Land to the north-east of Great Ashby within Weston parish, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated as a Strategic Housing Site for a new neighbourhood of approximately 600 homes. A comprehensive and deliverable Strategic Masterplan for the entire allocation is to be prepared and agreed between the landowner/developer and the Council. Where applications have already been submitted to the Council a Strategic Masterplan should be agreed prior to the or as part of the grant of planning permission. Any application on part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole. Development proposals should provide the following planning and masterplanning requirements:

a Neighbourhood-level facilities providing approximately 500m² (net) of retail and food and beverage floorspace and other necessary medical and social infrastructure;

b Four hectares of land at the north of the allocation site, broadly bounded by Footpaths Weston 044 and Weston 027 and Dell Spring reserved for education use to accommodate 2FE of primary-age provision and 4FE of secondary age provision;

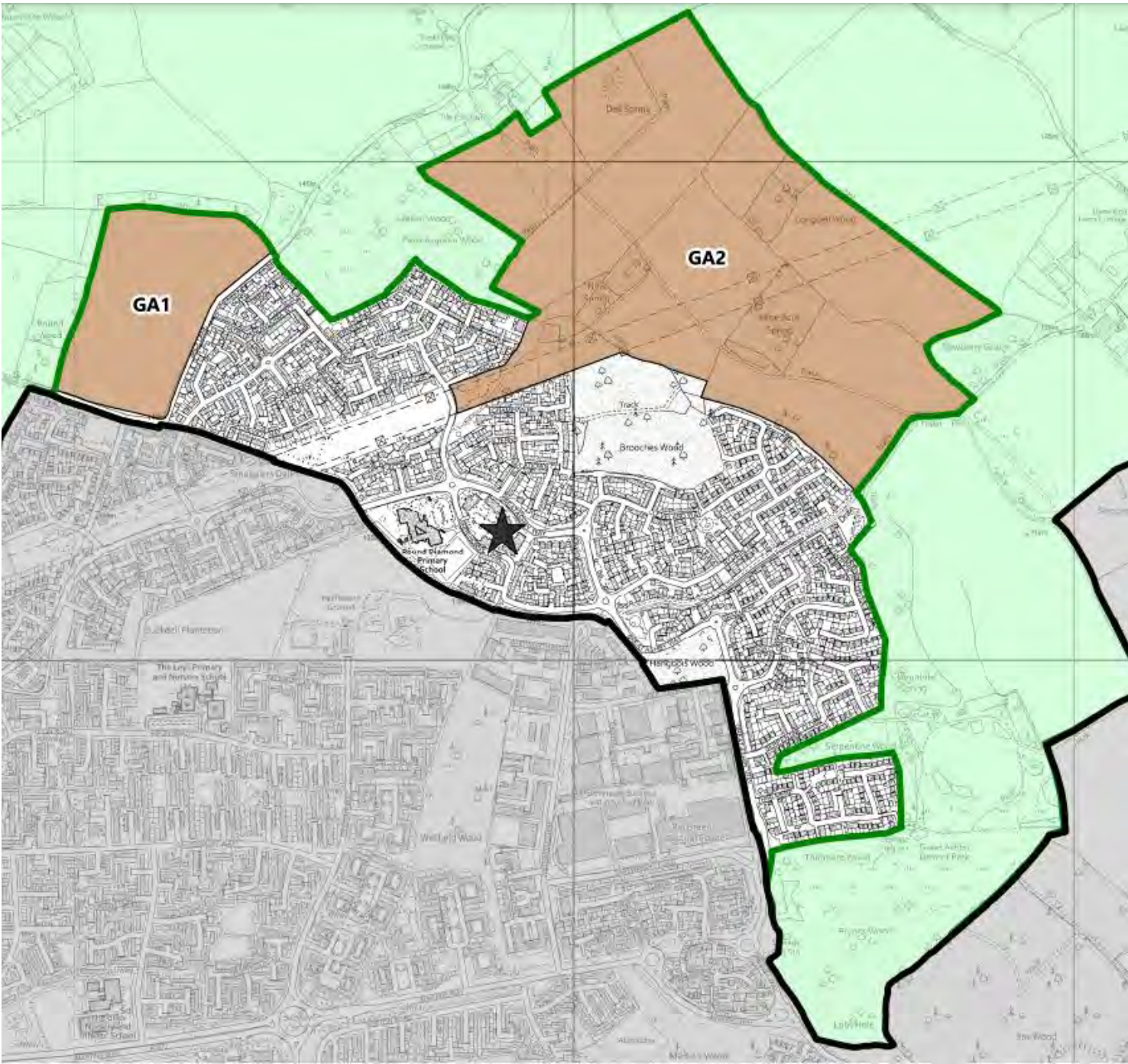
c Principal access from Mendip Way with:
 - provision for sustainable modes of transport having regard to the Stevenage Mobility Strategy; and
 - comprehensive integration into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks;

d Transport Assessment to identify and secure measures to manage traffic flows arising from the development along Back Lane;

e A detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery;

f At least 6 serviced plots for self-build development;

- g Structural planting along site boundaries as informed by detailed landscape assessments to reinforce the revised Green Belt boundary and mitigate landscape impacts;
- h Address existing surface water flood risk issues, particularly running south east from Dell Spring to Newberry Grove, through SuDS or other appropriate solution;
- i Appropriate mitigation, compensation and / or enhancement of key features of biodiversity including:
 - local wildlife sites at Tilekiln Wood, Parsonsgreen Wood, New Spring Wood, Brooches Wood and Claypithills Spring Wood;
 - identified protected species and priority habitats; and
 - retention of green infrastructure connectivity and corridors to the wider countryside;
- j Integration of existing public rights of way within and adjoining the site to provide routes to the wider countryside including
 - Footpaths Weston 027 and Weston 044 and Bridleway Weston 033 as features which help define the perimeters of the site; and
 - Footpath Weston 029 as a potential green corridor through the site;
- k Provision of a green infrastructure corridor beneath the current alignment of the pylon lines to respect statutory safety clearance requirements for residential development; and
- l Lower intensity development and/or green infrastructure provision to the north of the site to minimise harm to the setting of listed buildings ‘the proposed surface water drainage features will also be located within the green corridors, as will pedestrian and cycle routes. These corridors will connect the various parts of the development, allowing easy walking and cycling routes alongside green spaces. New planting will also be incorporated in these corridors, to benefit wildlife and to create an attractive environment, ensuring a connected network of habitats as well as movement routes for wildlife.’



▲ Figure 2.1 – The Site is allocated as site GA2

2. Planning Policy Context

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK, DECEMBER 2024

- 2.3
- Section 12 of the NPPF, ‘Achieving well-designed and beautiful places’, sets out that achieving well-designed and beautiful places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should deliver.
- 2.4
- Paragraph 135 defines a set of parameters to ensure that development proposals:
- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area over the lifetime of the development;
 - Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout, and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - Are sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - Establish or maintain a strong sense of place;
 - Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - Create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and which promotes health and well-being.
- 2.5
- Paragraph 136 establishes the need for new developments to ensure that new streets are tree-lined and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments, that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.
- 2.6
- Paragraph 138 requires that local authorities ensure that they have access to and make appropriate use of tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development proposals. These should include the use of Design Codes in line with the National Model Design Code, workshops, design advice, and assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life.
- 2.7
- Paragraph 139 requires development that is not well-designed to be refused, whilst significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies and/or is outstanding, innovative and helps raise the design standards in the area.
- 2.8
- Section 14, ‘Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding, and

- coastal change’, supports the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. It also helps shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience, encourages the reuse of existing resources, and supports renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructures.
- 2.9
- Paragraph 162 states the need for a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures.
- 2.10
- Paragraph 166 stipulates that local authorities should expect new developments to comply with local requirements and policies for decentralised energy supply, and take account of landform, layout, buildings orientation, massing, and landscape to minimise energy consumption.

NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE (JANUARY 2021)

- 2.11
- The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places. The fundamental principles for good design are:
- Fit for purpose;
 - Durable;
 - Brings delight;
 - It is relatively straight forward to define;
 - Can identify uses and users; and
 - It can assess the quality of detail, materials, construction, and its potential flexibility.
- 2.12
- Paragraph 20 identifies the components for places, other than buildings, being:
- The context for places and buildings;
 - Hard and soft landscape;
- 2.13
- Paragraph 21 defines the other elements critical to achieve a well-designed place, including:
- Physical infrastructure; and
 - Social infrastructure.
 - The layout;
 - The form and scale of buildings;
 - Their appearance;
 - Landscape; and
 - Materials and detailing.
- 2.14
- Paragraph 36 introduces the ten characteristics of a well-designed place. These are:
- Context, enhances the surroundings:
 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context.
 - Value heritage, local history, and culture.
- Identity, attractive and distinctive:
 - Respond to existing local character and identity.
 - Well designed, high quality, and attractive places and buildings.
 - Create character and identity.
- Built Form, a coherent pattern of development:
 - Compact form of development.
 - Appropriate building types and forms.
 - Destinations.
- Movement, accessible and easy to move around:
 - A connected network of routes for all modes of transport.
 - Active travel.
 - Well-considered parking, servicing, and utilities infrastructure for all users.
- Nature, enhanced and optimised:
 - Provide a network of high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play.
 - Improve and enhance water management.
 - Support rich and varied biodiversity.
- Public Spaces, safe, social, and inclusive:
 - Create well-located, high quality
- and attractive public spaces.
 - Provide well-designed places that are safe.
 - Make sure public spaces support social interaction.
- Uses, mixed and integrated:
 - Provide a mix of uses.
 - Mix of home tenures, types, and sizes.
 - Be social inclusive.
- Homes and Buildings, functional, healthy, and sustainable:
 - Healthy, comfortable, and safe internal and external environment.
 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces.
 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing, and utilities.
- Resources, efficient and resilient:
 - Follow the energy hierarchy of reducing energy use, efficient use of energy, and maximising renewable energy generation.
 - Careful selection of materials and construction techniques.
 - Maximise resilience.
- Lifespan, made to last:
 - Well-managed and maintained.
 - Adaptable to changing needs and evolving technologies.
 - Enable a sense of ownership.

2. Planning Policy Context

ADOPTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031

- 2.15 The Statutory Development Plan relevant to the site comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted November 2022. In accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act, full weight should be given to the policies within the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The design of the Site has been developed in response to the relevant polices of the Local Plan.
- 2.16 Relevant Local Plan policies are:
- SP8: Housing
 - SP9: Design and Sustainability
 - SP10: Healthy Communities
 - SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity
 - SP13: Historic Environment
 - T2: Parking
 - HS2: Affordable Housing
 - HS3: Housing Mix
 - HS4: Supported, sheltered and older persons housing
 - HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing
 - D1: Sustainable design
 - D3: Protecting living conditions
 - 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
 - NE10: Water conservation and wastewater infrastructure
 - NE12: Renewable and low carbon energy development
 - HE1: Designated heritage assets
 - HE4: Archaeology.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- 2.17 Several Council and County design guides were also considered and taken into account within the design and layout of the proposals. These include:
- Place & Movement Planning and Design Guidance for Hertfordshire (2024);
 - North Hertfordshire District Council Design SPD (July 2011);
 - Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD (November 2011);
 - Stevenage Design Guide SPF (October 2009);
 - Stevenage Design Guide SPD (January 2023)
 - North Hertfordshire Open Space Review and Standards (2016); and
 - North Hertfordshire Sustainability SPD (September 2024).

2. Planning Policy Context

KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Housing

- 2.18 The site allocation facilitates the delivery of approximately 600 dwellings, to include at least six serviced plots for self-build development. In line with Policy HS2, 40% of the dwellings should be affordable; of which 65% should be affordable rent and the remaining 35% should be other forms of affordable housing.
- 2.19 Policy HS3 requires housing mix to provide a balanced community, and meet the needs of different groups. Housing mix will be informed by an analysis of the site in question, and recent housing need figures. This policy also requires housing to be provided at a density, scale and character appropriate to its location and surroundings.
- 2.20 Policy HS4, requires schemes in excess of 100 dwellings to provide an element of accommodation within Use Class C3 for older persons housing. Alongside, at least 50% of homes should be capable of being built to M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard; and 10% of the affordable units should be built to the M4(3) wheelchair standard.

Social Infrastructure

- 2.21 The site allocation requires the delivery of community infrastructure alongside housing to create a new neighbourhood. This includes the provision of around 500 sqm of neighbourhood facilities (including retail, medical and social uses) along with education provision (2FE primary school and a 4FE secondary school). The policy requires the education provision to be located to the north of the allocation.

Climate Change

- 2.22 Climate change is a long-term threat, which is directly influenced by human activity taking place today. North Hertfordshire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committee took action to address the causes of climate change across the district, including the delivery of sustainable development. This will be achieved through improving opportunities for travelling by active travel modes, using natural resources more efficiently and securing high quality sustainable design.
- 2.23 Proposals for decentralised energy schemes associated with the development of this strategy site will be encouraged subject to an assessment of the impacts (Policy NE12).

Transport

- 2.24 Successful development depends on a movement network that makes connections to destinations, within the site and beyond its boundaries to the existing communities.
- 2.25 The principles for movement to, from and within the Sites should be reflected in detailed movement frameworks that cover all modes including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, cars and service vehicles. Existing rights of way, cycling and equestrian routes should be maintained.
- 2.26 Proposals should encourage sustainable travel and seek to minimise traffic generation by creating accessible, safe and connected neighbourhoods; active travel should be at its core, in line with the commitment and objectives of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy, which aims to significantly increase the proportion of journeys undertaken on foot, by bike and by public transport. Sustainable travel patterns should become embedded at an early stage.
- 2.27 Provision of well-designed residential streets should reduce vehicle dominance and speeds to enable walking and cycling to be prioritised. Parking for cars and bicycles should be provided in line with Policy T2.
- 2.28 The Site should integrate fully with the surrounding highway network, with the principal access into the site provided from Mendip Way. Appropriate highway mitigation will need to be identified, with particular attention paid to Back Lane, which is a narrow minor road and could attract additional vehicle traffic from the site.

Landscape, Ecology and Heritage

- 2.29 The proposed development area within the Site has been removed from the Green Belt. The masterplan should look to install structural planting to reinforce a new boundary to the Green Belt, which aligns with this Site, and provide visual containment to the development.
- 2.30 Distinct areas of woodland lie between the Site and the existing development at Great Ashby. These should be sensitively incorporated into the development having regard to their status as local wildlife sites. These woods, and the connections from them to the wider countryside, will be integral to the green infrastructure of the site. This will also include integration of key rights of way.
- 2.31 A green infrastructure corridor currently runs through Great Ashby following the alignment of the overhead power lines. This should be extended through

the new development to provide a continuous link through the neighbourhood to the wider countryside. The width of the corridor will be informed by the health and safety clearance requirements imposed by National Grid (or any other relevant body).

Design

- 2.32 New development should be well designed and respond positively to its local context (Policy SP9).
- 2.33 A comprehensive and deliverable Strategic Masterplan for the allocation is to be developed. This should create a neighbourhood that positively reflects and responds to the landscape, townscape and historic character and plans for integrated and mixed-use communities. The masterplan should provide for a clear structure and hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets and well-connected footpaths and cycleways. It should create an accessible multi-functional green infrastructure network that supports healthy lifestyles, and ecological gain.
- 2.34 The Development should also ensure a hierarchy of linked, high quality and attractive public spaces and public realm that is safe, attractive and supports social interaction for all age groups. It should also be designed to last with clear stewardship, and a management and maintenance strategy.
- 2.35 The Site adjoins a number of Grade II listed buildings at Tilekiln Farm and care should be taken in the detailed design of any scheme to ensure this area retains an appropriate setting. Lower intensity development and / or green infrastructure provision should be located to the north of the site to minimise any harm to the setting of Listed Buildings.

Health and Wellbeing

- 2.36 A key element of sustainable development is the creation of strong, vibrant and healthy communities. Development proposals will be required to promote, support and enhance health and wellbeing in line with national planning policy. This includes the creation of a high quality, attractive and safe public realm to encourage social interaction and prioritise movement by foot and cycle, ensuring high levels of residential amenity, providing opportunities for formal and informal physical activity, recreation and play, improving the quality and quantity of green infrastructure and by protecting and enhancing public rights of way.

Site Context



3. Site Context

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

- 3.1 North Hertfordshire is a predominantly rural district covering approximately 375 square kilometres of land. It is characterised by a number of small to medium sized towns with a range of facilities, and smaller settlements located within open countryside. The main settlements within North Hertfordshire are Hitchin, Baldock, Royston and Letchworth Garden City, each representing a significant focus for employment and housing. Most of the Great Ashby estate on the edge of Stevenage lies in North Hertfordshire. There are also approximately 40 villages and hamlets. Although there is no one dominant centre serving the District, there is a high degree of interdependency between the various towns and villages, as well as with surrounding larger towns such as Stevenage, Luton, Milton Keynes, Cambridge, Welwyn Garden City and London.
- 3.2 The District is strategically positioned with good rail and road connections. It is less than 40 miles from central London.
- 3.3 In relation to housing, the North Hertfordshire Local Plan notes that almost one-quarter of homes in North Hertfordshire were detached houses. This proportion was slightly higher than both the Hertfordshire County and national figures. Conversely, the proportion of flats (including converted houses) was slightly lower. It also notes that the population is increasing, migration levels have been high in recent years, more people are living on their own, people are living longer and household sizes are becoming smaller, all of which creates a high demand for housing and places additional pressure on community facilities. In addition, the market cost of housing is increasingly out of reach for many households. There is also a need for more affordable housing.
- 3.4 There is a higher concentration of people working in the District that are employed in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, retail, motor trades, property, entertainment and recreation. However, many higher skilled residents commute out of the District for employment.
- 3.5 The natural environment of North Hertfordshire contributes to its character and distinctiveness. North Hertfordshire has a diverse range of green infrastructure and environmental assets of local, regional and national importance. Most of the rural area is farmland, although there is some woodland.

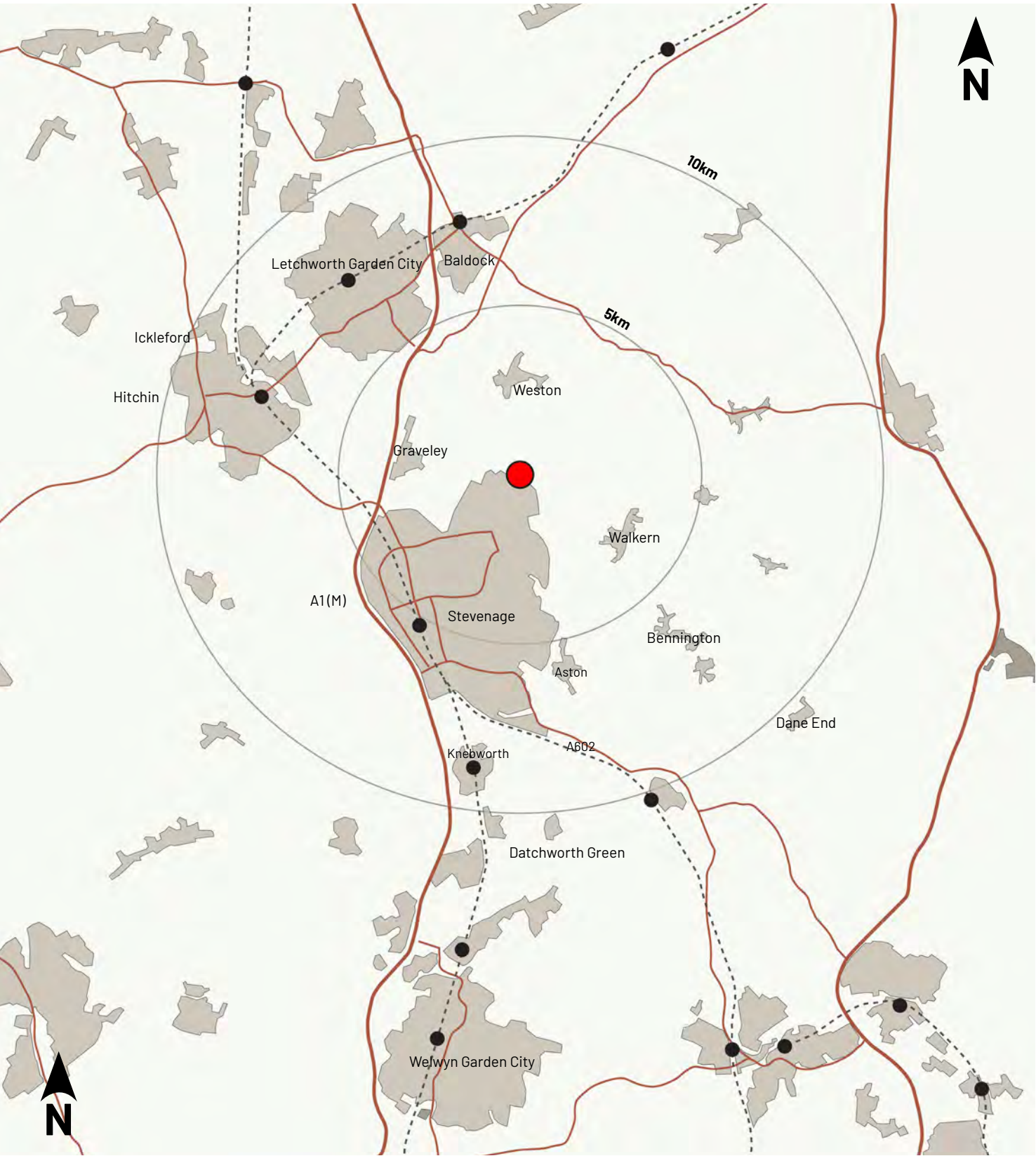
- 3.6 The settlements of Hitchin, Baldock and Royston are all historic market towns, each with their own distinctive character. Letchworth Garden City is based on Ebenezer Howard’s original concept of a self-contained settlement combining both town and country living.
- 3.7 The village of Weston lies around 1.5km north west of the Site. Weston is a medium sized village to the south of Baldock. The village sits on a plateau, which drops sharply away on the edge of Baldock as the Weston Hills. The village has a school, shop, village hall, public house and church, and some small businesses. The Weston Conservation Area covers the older parts of the village. The parish church of Holy Trinity is a Grade I Listed Building.

GREAT ASHBY

- 3.8 The civil parish and neighbourhood of Great Ashby lies on the outskirts of Stevenage, and to the south west of the Site. Development of the neighbourhood began in 1999 and the area now boasts approximately 2,200 dwellings with a population of approximately 5,700, a primary school, an inclusive community church, and a neighbourhood centre with local shops and a community centre. Great Ashby includes both private and social housing and has a thriving community.



▲ The development will form an extension to Great Ashby

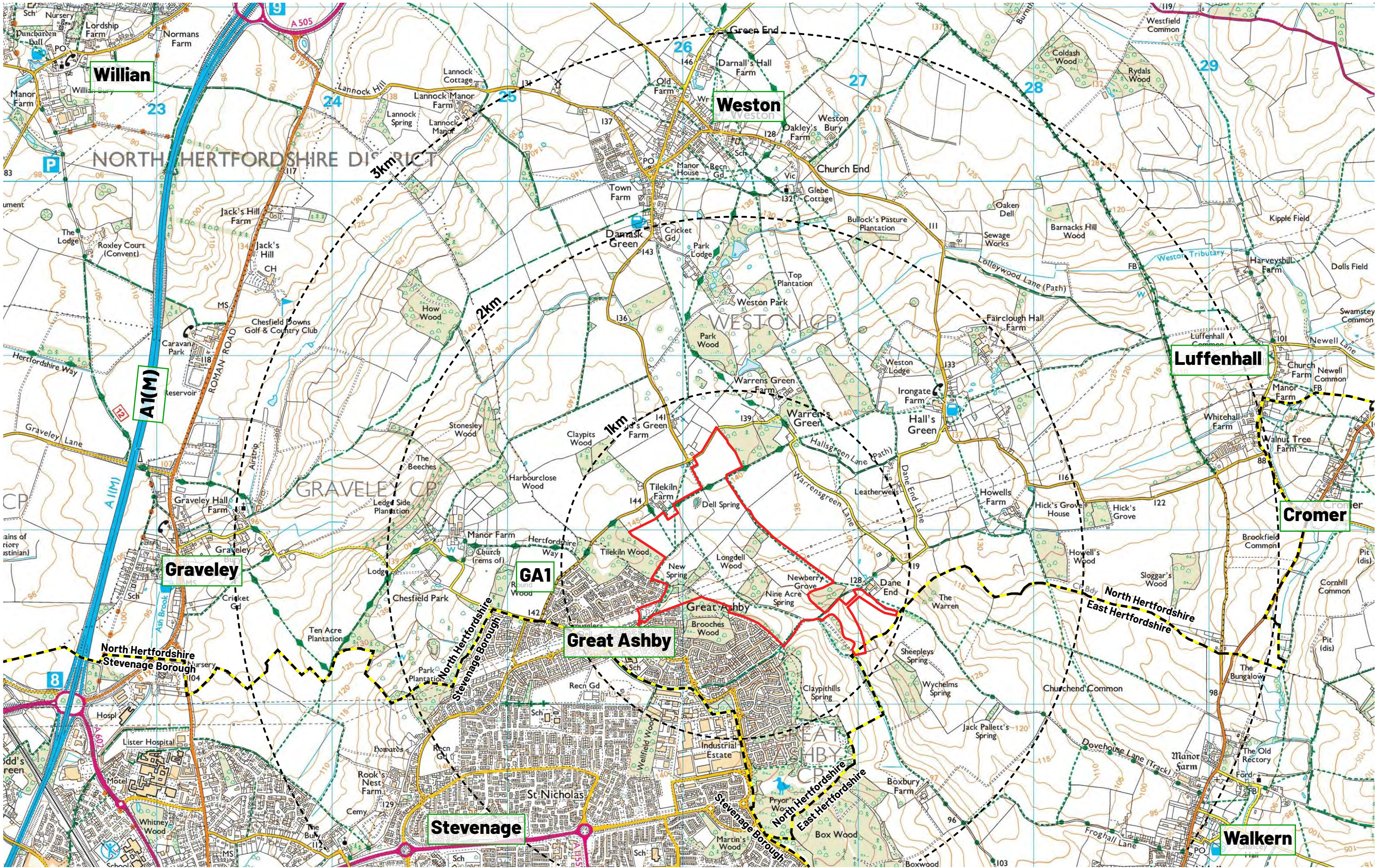


▲ Figure 3.1 - The Site within the context of North Hertfordshire

3. Site Context

SITE LOCATION

- 3.9 The Site is located on the north eastern edge of Great Ashby, which is a parish located on the north eastern edge of the town of Stevenage. The Site lies within the southern part of the Parish of Weston, with both the Site and Great Ashby located within the North Hertfordshire District. Great Ashby is contiguous with Stevenage to the south (which lies within Stevenage Borough).
- 3.10 Great Ashby is connected to Stevenage to the south and west by Great Ashby Way, which connects to the extensive highway network within Stevenage. The village of Weston lies around 1.5km north of the Site, with the non-designated Weston Park located between the Site and the village. Two further villages/hamlets, Walkern and Cromer, lie around 2-3km to the east and south east of the Site.
- 3.11 The Site lies to the east of Mendip Way, which links the houses in the north of Great Ashby to Great Ashby Way. Back Lane which lies a short distance west of the Site, links the north of Stevenage and Great Ashby to Weston. Around 400m north east of the Site is Warren Lane which connects several farmsteads to larger roads within the wider landscape.
- 3.12 The land to the north of Great Ashby, north west of Back Lane, is also allocated for housing within the Local Plan, and lies around 500m south east of the Site. That site (known site GA1) is allocated for 330 dwellings.



▲ Figure 3.2 – Site location

3. Site Context

LOCAL CONTEXT

- 3.13 The Site is separated from the adjoining houses on the north eastern edge of Great Ashby by blocks of Ancient Woodland as well as woodland belts dating from the late 20th century. Mendip Way recreational park lies within the Site, and is located within a corridor of open space underneath high-voltage overhead powerlines to the east of Mendip Way, south of the houses on Cromdale Walk and north of the houses on The Chilterns and Grampian Place.
- 3.14 The farmstead at Tilekiln Farm lies to the north west of the Site, south of Back Lane, with paddocks located to the west of the farm, and a pastoral field to the east, between the lane and the Site. The farmhouse at Tilekiln Farm is Grade II Listed, as are two barns associated with it.
- 3.15 Two semi-detached residential properties known as The Bungalows, lie to the north west of the Site along the south of the junction of Back Lane and Warrengreen Lane, with two further properties on large grounds, as well as Friend's Green Farm (including the Grade II Listed farmhouse, and two associated buildings/barns) located further north along the extension of Back Lane.
- 3.16 An arable field lies south of Warrengreen Lane, and wraps around The Bungalows, with Warrengreen Wood located north east of this field, bound by Warrengreen Lane to the north and east. The Grade II Listed Thatched Cottage is indented into the south eastern corner of the woodland. Large arable fields lie to the north east of the Site, with Warrengreen Lane and further arable fields beyond.
- 3.17 Newberry Grove is indented into the south east of the Site, with Dane End Farm, including the Grade II Listed farmhouse and associated granary, located beyond to the east, surrounded by paddocks/small pastoral fields. Dane End Cottage, also Grade II Listed, is located a short distance north of the farm. A series of smaller fields and woodland blocks lie to the south east of the Site, as well as an existing drainage basin. The Great Ashby District Park is located approximately 500m to the south east of the Site.
- 3.18 The Site comprises eight arable fields/parts of arable fields, two fields/parts of fields used for grazing, and two woodland blocks, as well as an area of recreational land located under the pylon and overhead powerline corridor, which leads east towards the Site from Mendip Way.

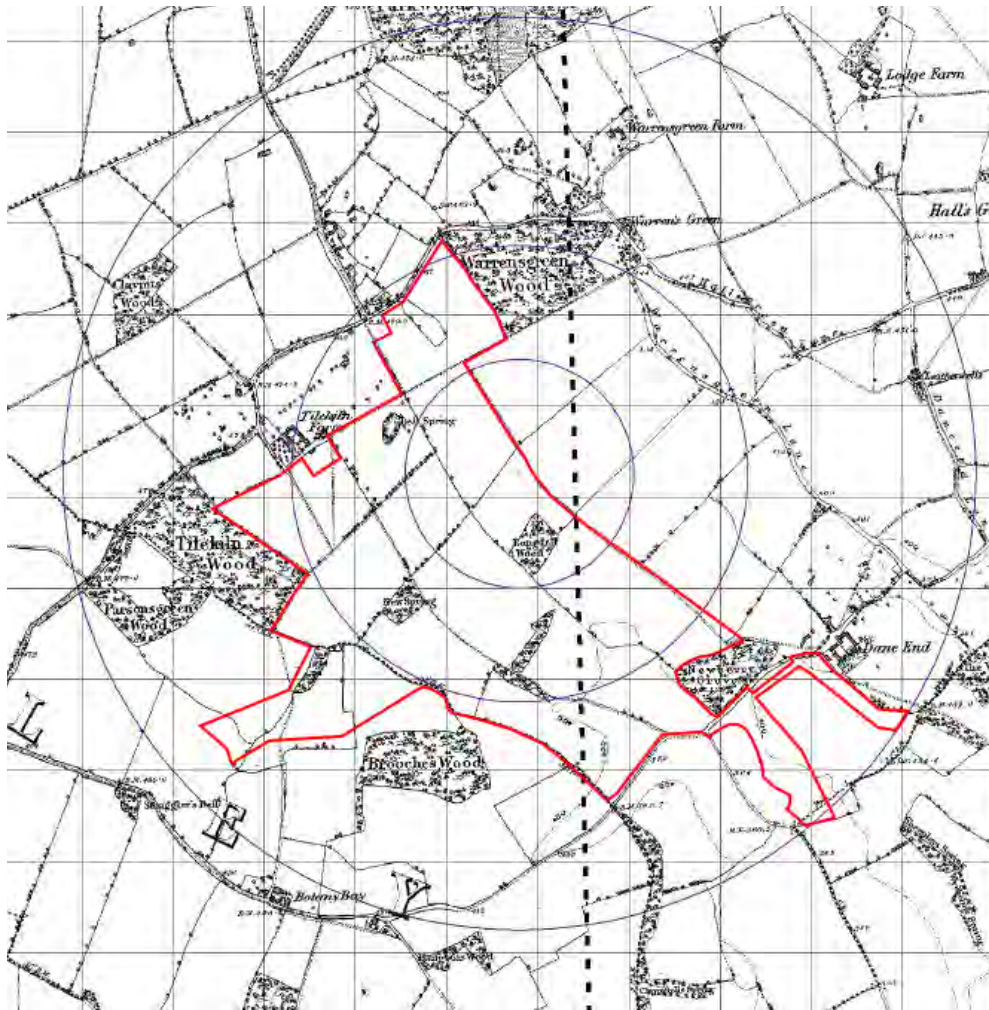


▲ Figure 3.3 - The key places around the Site

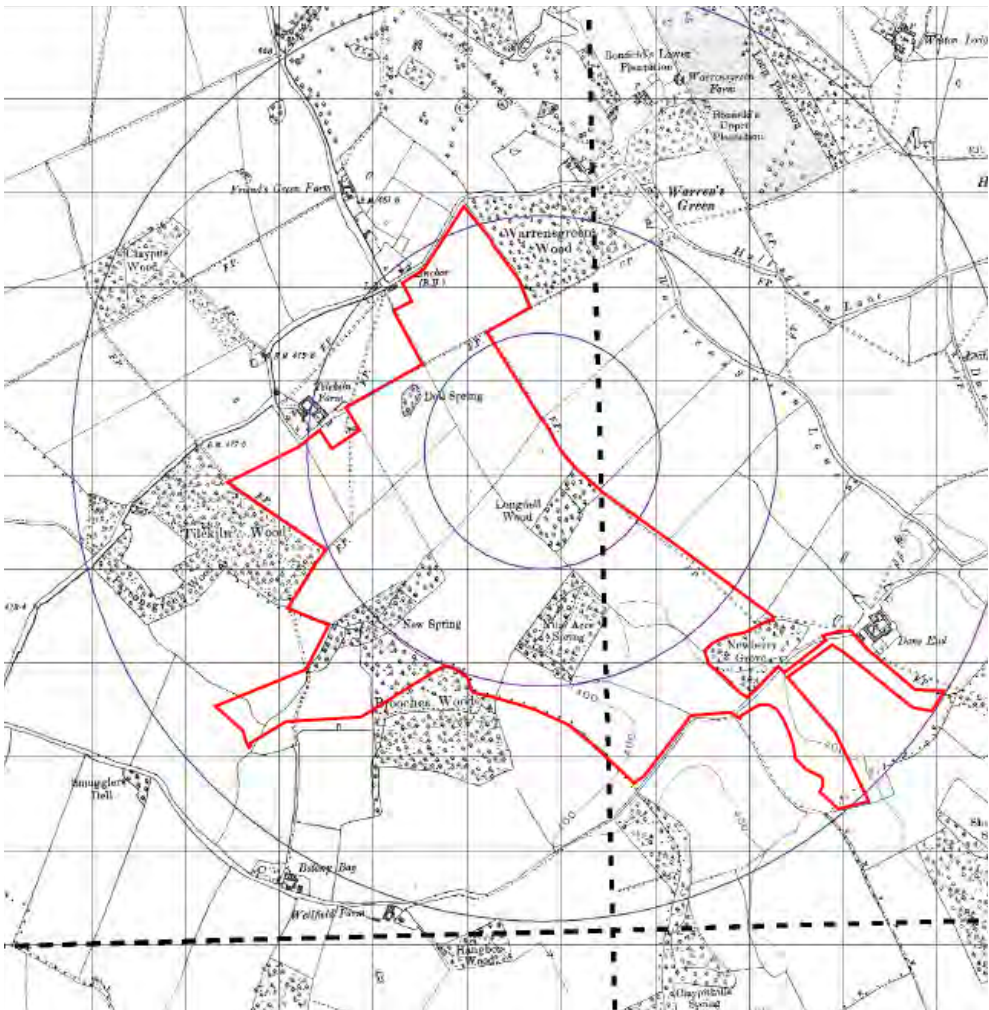
3. Site Context

HISTORIC GROWTH

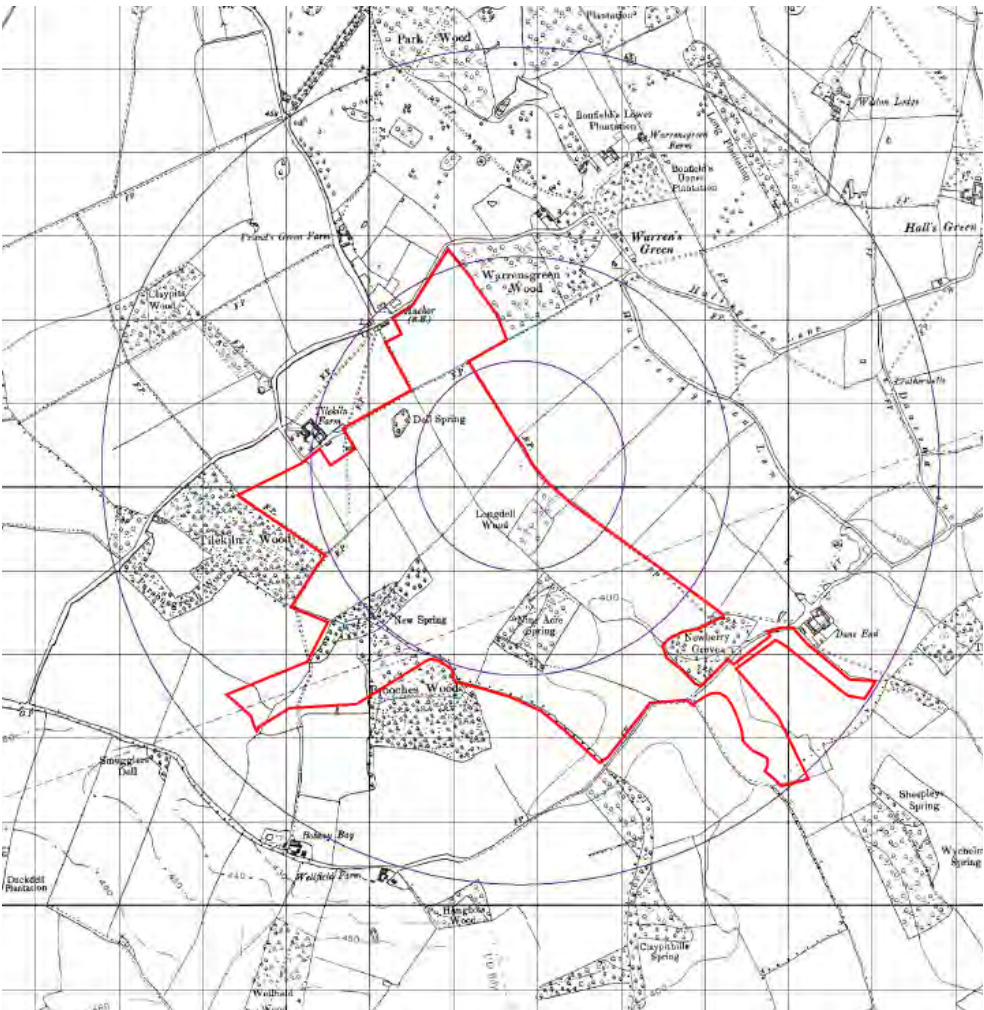
- 3.19 The name Stevenage itself has a Saxon origin, deriving from Stithenaece, meaning ‘stiff or strong oak’. The original Saxon settlement is thought to have been located on or near the site of the old church of St Nicholas and the ‘Bury’ in Stevenage. The Site lay within the manor of Weston, which was held by William de Ow in 1086. The great park at Weston, documented from 1231, lies around 1km to the north east of the Site.
- 3.20 A Map of Weston Parish, which dates to 1633 shows the Site, and denotes the areas as an open field known and Manlands Field. Notably, by this date the rough boundaries to the Site had been somewhat established, with the south western boundary clearly forming the parish line between Weston and Graveley. A number of small woodlands are shown to have existed by this date, including Tilekiln Wood, Newberry Grove, Dell Spring, and the south western portion of Longdell Wood. The field system shown on the Map of Weston Parish illustrates the early enclosure of the Site and agricultural use.
- 5.21 As evident on the historic Ordnance Survey (‘OS’) maps, the established field system has altered little throughout the 19th and early-mid 20th century, with the 1884 map suggesting no significant change since the middle of the century. Dell Spring is shown in its existing position to the north west of the Site, with New Spring labelled in the south. Tilekiln Farm and Dane End Farm are detailed in their existing positions, to the west and east of the Site respectively. The largest extent of alteration is found in the renaming of the Nine Acre Spring as a chalk pit and the alteration to the surrounding woodland on the 1924-25 OS Map.
- 5.22 By the 1970s, the land allocations and general appearance of the area had begun to change, with the development of Stevenage to the south east. Notably, the woodland of Nine Acre Spring had expanded beyond its north, east, and west boundaries to encompass the former Brewers Land Spring and alter the course of the nearby footpath. Moreover, numerous field boundaries had now been dissolved and double line electricity pylons erected across the Site in a north east to south west orientation.
- 5.23 Great Ashby was constructed (from the south eastern part of Graveley parish) to the south of the Site between 1999 and 2006, although no significant changes are depicted within the Site from 1979 onwards, as the Site attained its present configuration.



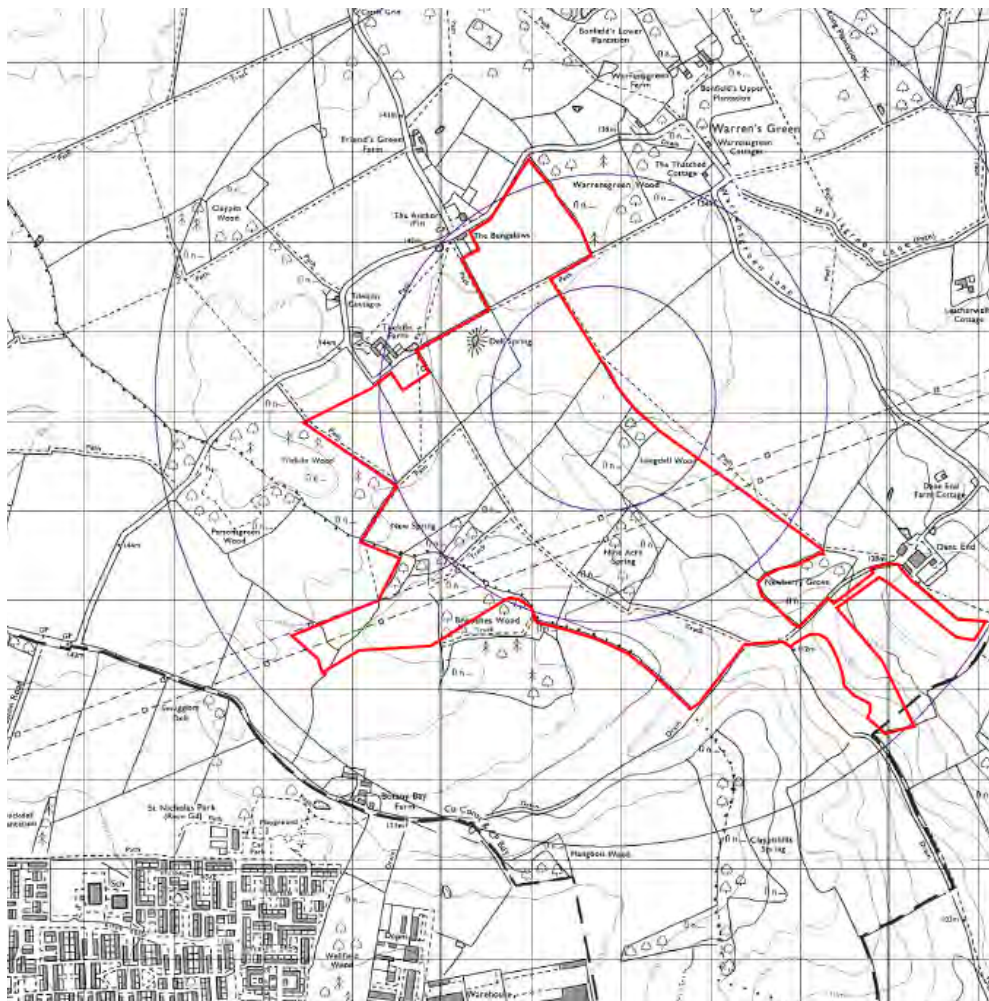
▲ 1884 Ordnance Survey



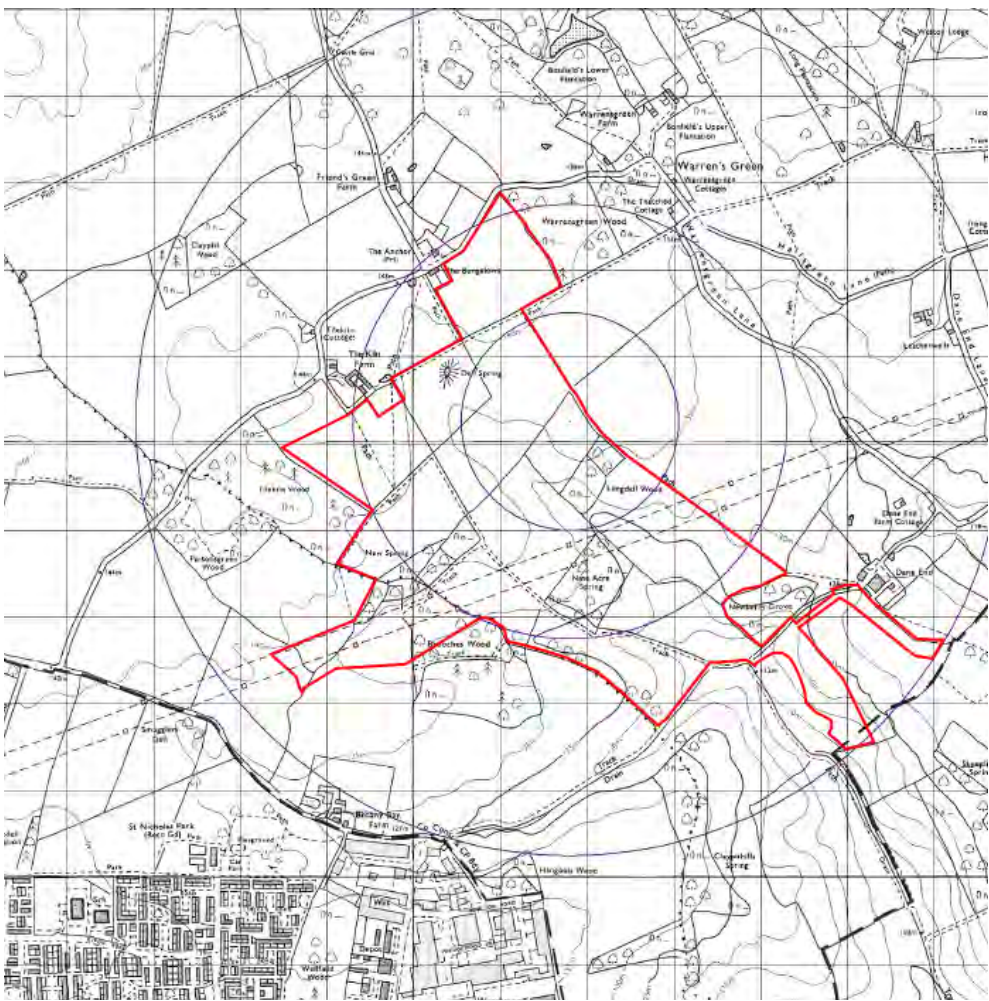
▲ 1924-1925 Ordnance Survey



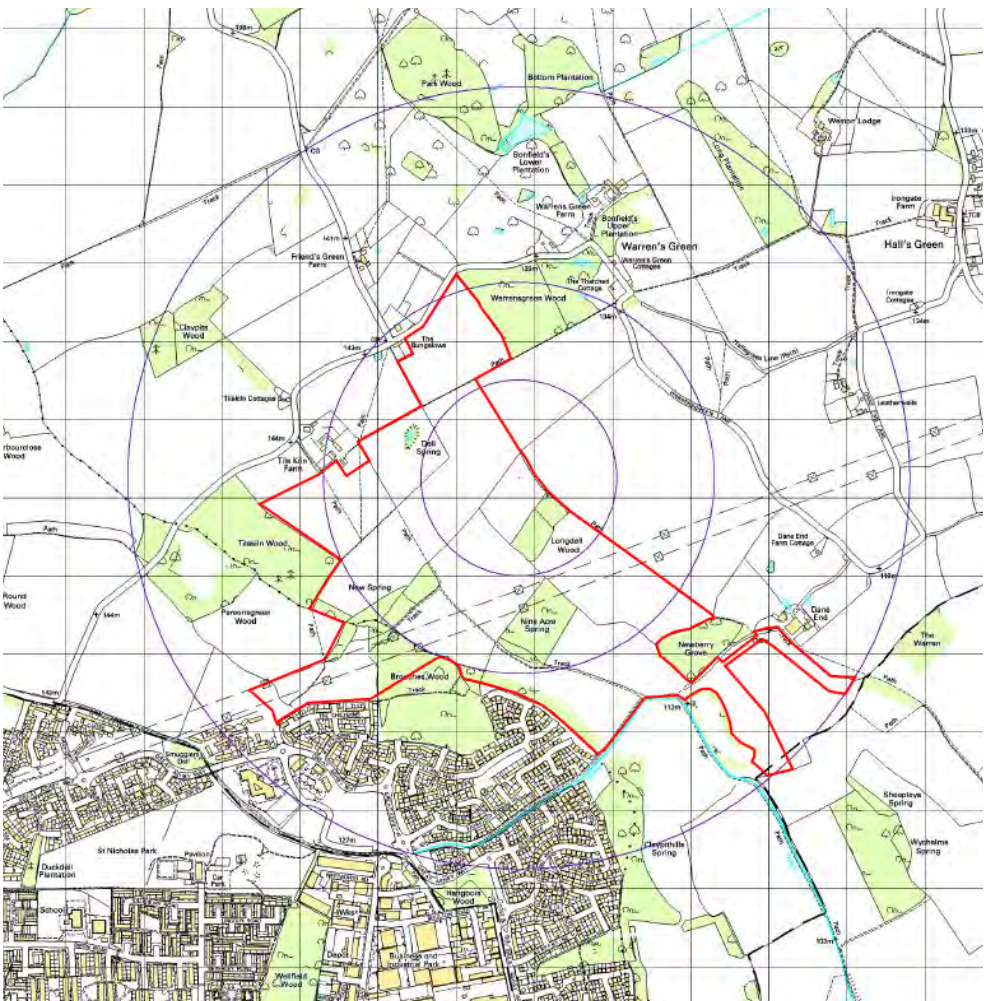
▲ 1970 Ordnance Survey



▲ 1979 Ordnance Survey



▲ 1994 Ordnance Survey



▲ 2006 Ordnance Survey

3. Site Context

HERITAGE

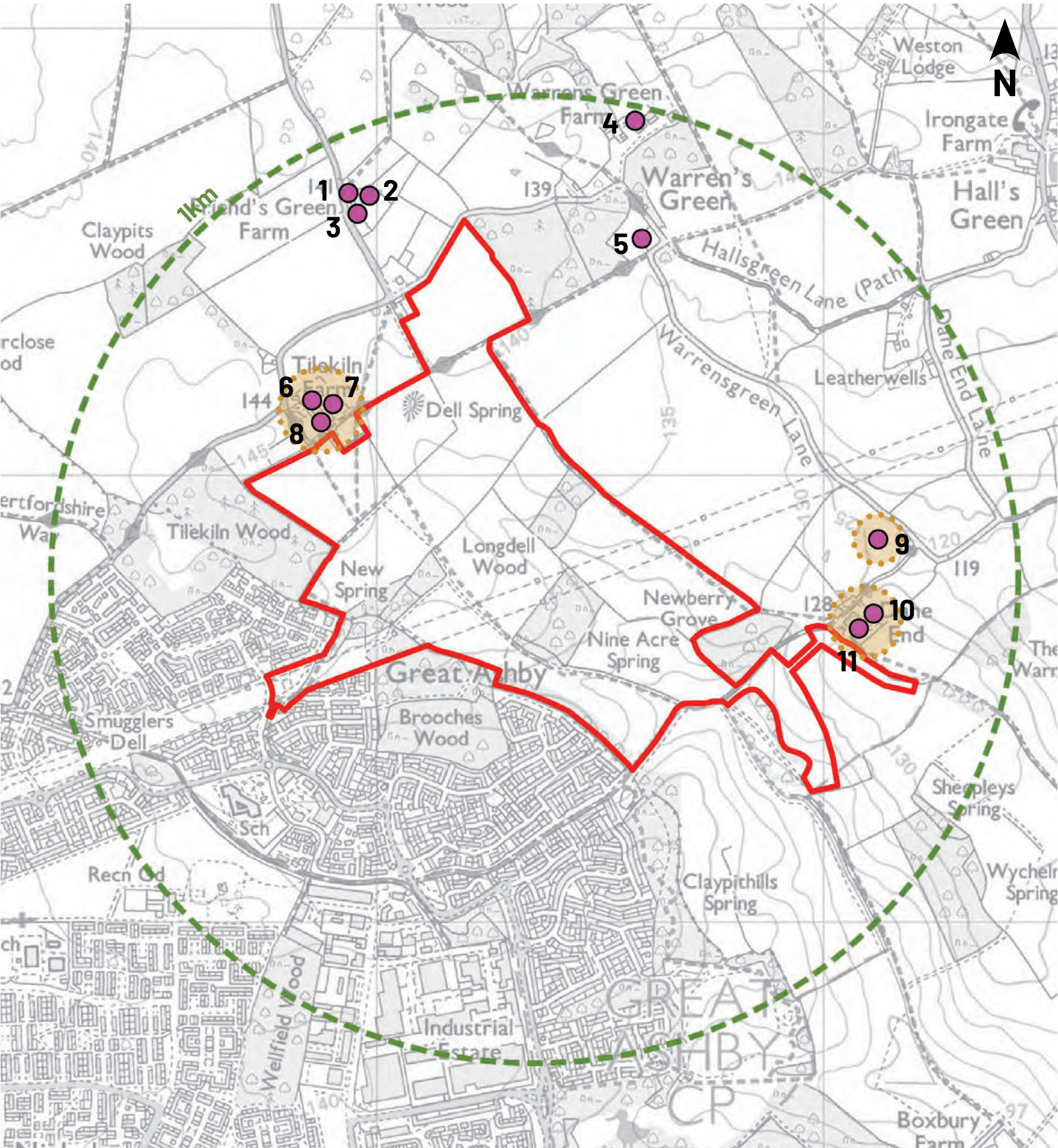
3.24 The Site is not covered by any designations for heritage value or interest, however, there are several Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the Site, as shown on Figure 3.4. The Heritage Impact Assessment sets out a series of opportunities and influences which the design of the proposed development has responded to, including those set out below:

3.25 **Influences:**

- Respect the rural character of the setting of Tilekiln Farm.
- Open the north western Site boundary allow views in and out of the Site.

3.26 **Opportunities:**

- Strengthen the landscape boundary to the north of the Site adjacent to Tilekiln Farm.
- Potential to set development back from Tilekiln Farm behind the landscape buffer.
- Potential to reflect a more rural character within the north of the Site near Tilekiln Farm.
- Strengthen landscape near Dane End to reduce the visibility of development in the wider rural setting of the house.



- Site Boundary
- Listed Building
- Heritage assets with greater sensitivity to change

Listed Buildings

1. Farm Buildings Next the Road at Friends Green Farm (Grade II, List UID: 1347436)
2. East Barn and Attached Outbuildings at Friends Green Farm (Grade II, List UID: 1102482)
3. Friends Green Farmhouse (Grade II, List UID: 1102522)
4. Barn at Warrensgreen (Grade II, List UID: 1308229)
5. The Thatched Cottage (Grade II, List UID: 1102495)
6. Barn Group around Courtyard at Tilekiln Farm (Grade II, List UID: 1102484)
7. Barn to East of Farmhouse at Tilekiln Farm (Grade II, List UID: 1102485)
8. Tilekiln Farm House (Grade II, List UID: 1102483)
9. Dane End Cottage (Grade II, List UID: 1308310)
10. Dane End Farmhouse (Grade II, List UID: 1347416)
11. Granary at Dane End Farm, 4 meters to west of House (Grade II, List UID: 1102518)

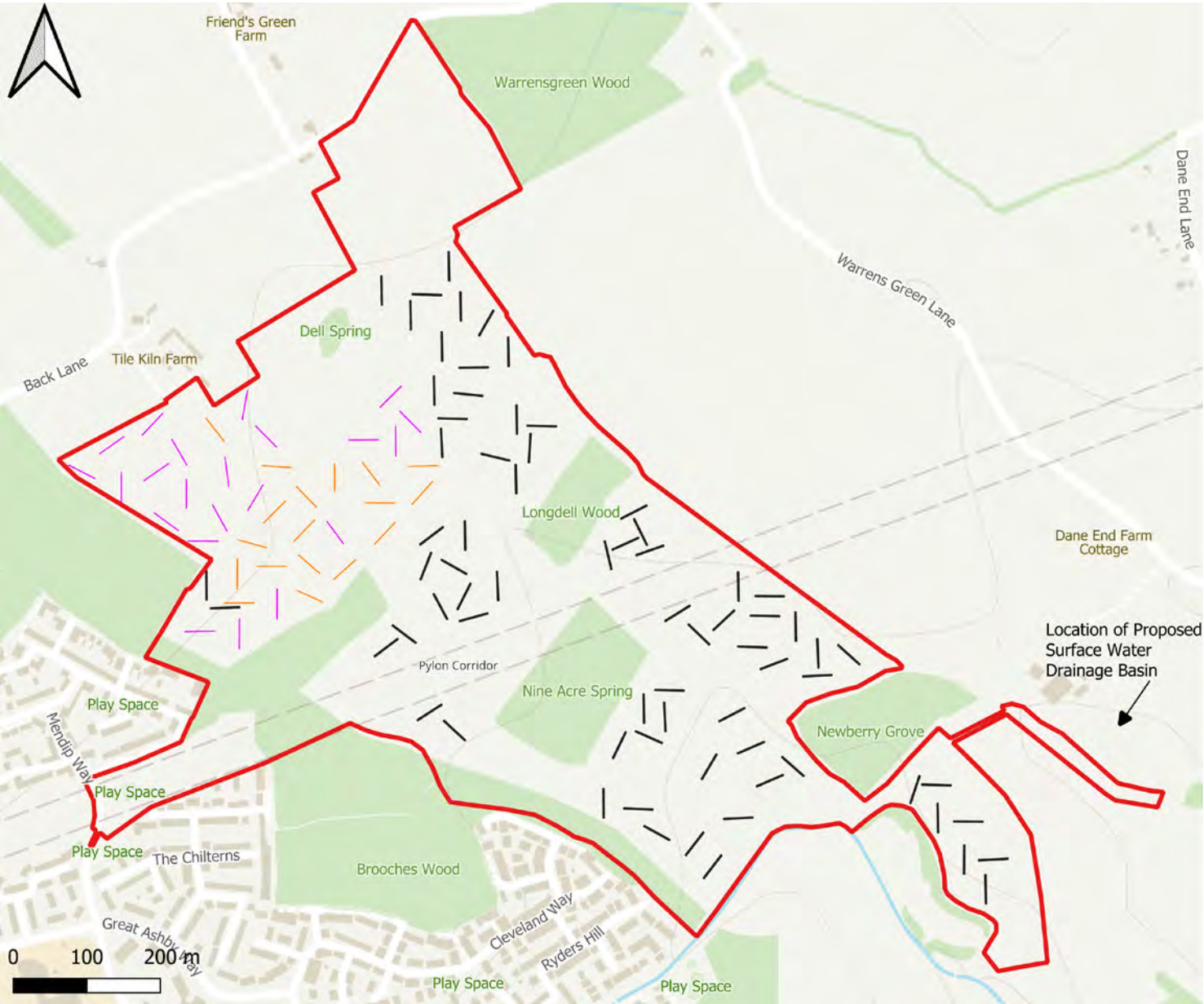
▲ Figure 3.4 - Listed Buildings within 1km of the site

3. Site Context

ARCHAEOLOGY

- 3.27 The Site lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance, which highlights the potential for archaeological remains, particularly associated with later prehistoric and the early medieval settlement in Hertfordshire. There are a number of Areas of Archaeological Significance across North Hertfordshire which, although not nationally recognised or designated, are considered to be of local importance.
- 3.28 A Desk-Based Assessment has been undertaken. The Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (‘HER’) data has revealed there are known archaeological sites within 1km of the study area of the Site, and thus predicts and informs the likely archaeological survival on Site.
- 3.29 Whilst early prehistoric material is recorded in north east Hertfordshire, there is very little in the way of evidence of an associated settlement. The settlement becomes more evident in the region around modern Stevenage in the later Iron Age, when it becomes characterised by enclosed farmsteads dispersed throughout the landscape. Previous surveys within the study area have produced evidence of later prehistoric activity, as well as evidence related to the late Bronze age through to the middle Iron Age, as well as evidence relating to late Iron Age and a Roman enclosed settlement. Most notably in relation to the Site, previous trial trenching within the Site in relation to a previous planning application, recorded an isolated late Iron Age to early Roman rubbish pit containing large pieces of locally made, grog tempered, Belgic-style pottery and burnt material.
- 3.30 The majority of excavations in the study area and wider landscape around Stevenage have generally produced evidence for Late Iron Age and Romano-British period sites. The evidence for late Iron Age to Roman period activity recorded in the north west of the Site may be representative of a previously unrecorded area of Late Iron Age activity in and around the Site environs.
- 3.31 At Land at Roundwood, Back Lane, medieval field to post-medieval boundaries containing late medieval and post medieval pottery and tile were recorded. The 2008 Tilekiln Farm trial trenching uncovered a medieval landscape immediately to the south of Tilekiln Farm, with a potential settlement focus. The focus itself comprised at least four ditches which contained a high quantity of medieval pottery.

- 3.32 The Desk-Based Assessment concluded that there is a high potential for prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains on the Site, and that these remains are likely to be of a local area or sub-regional significance.
- 3.33 Following initial consultation with the Senior Historic Advisor at HCC, an archaeological pre-determination evaluation was undertaken across the Site in September 2023, consisting of 72 trial trenches excavated by an archaeological contractor.
- 3.34 A small number of archaeological finds and features were identified on the Site, however the overall significance of the material is considered to be low, having no impact on the overall Masterplan and site layout.
- 3.35 As a result of the findings of the trial trenching and considering the nature of the proposed development, it is anticipated that in advance of construction, further assessment of the Site will be undertaken, in line with National and Local Planning Policy. Potential adverse impacts to sub-surface archaeological remains during the construction phase will be successfully mitigated by a programme of archaeological excavation and recording where remains of higher significance are present, or by an archaeological watching brief where remains of lesser significance are present, or a combination of both where necessary. This is to be secured via an appropriately worded pre-commencement condition and in consultation with the Senior Historic Advisor at HCC.



- Site Boundary
- Archaeological Feature 2008
- Blank Trial Trenches 2008
- Iron Age Romano British 2008
- Medieval 2008
- Trial Trenches 2023

▲ Figure 3.5 – Location of 2008 and 2023 Trial Trenches

3. Site Context

LOCAL CHARACTER AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Settlement context

- 3.36 There are a number of characteristics of surrounding settlements that provide inspiration for the Great Ashby growth allocation. These hamlets, towns and villages contain forms of housing, streets and spaces that exhibit qualities that can strengthen the identity of the development at the Site.
- 3.37 Places to consider in terms of their character include the New Town expansion of Stevenage, and the Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn, as well as the rural villages. Character is defined in a variety of ways across the settlements, including:
- Their urban structure and ‘grain’, their routes and spaces, the pattern of plots and buildings;
 - Their density and mix – the amount of development and the range of uses, height and massing;
 - Their landscape setting, including form, distribution, ecology and natural features; and,
 - Their appearance, where details and materials offer the opportunity to delight.
- 3.38 These aspects taken together, will influence the physical character of the new neighbourhood, including its patterns of movement of people and vehicles, with routes and linkages being as important as the physical characteristics of the development’s setting.



▲ There is no overriding building style in Stevenage



▲ Strong building frontages mark streets in the Old Town



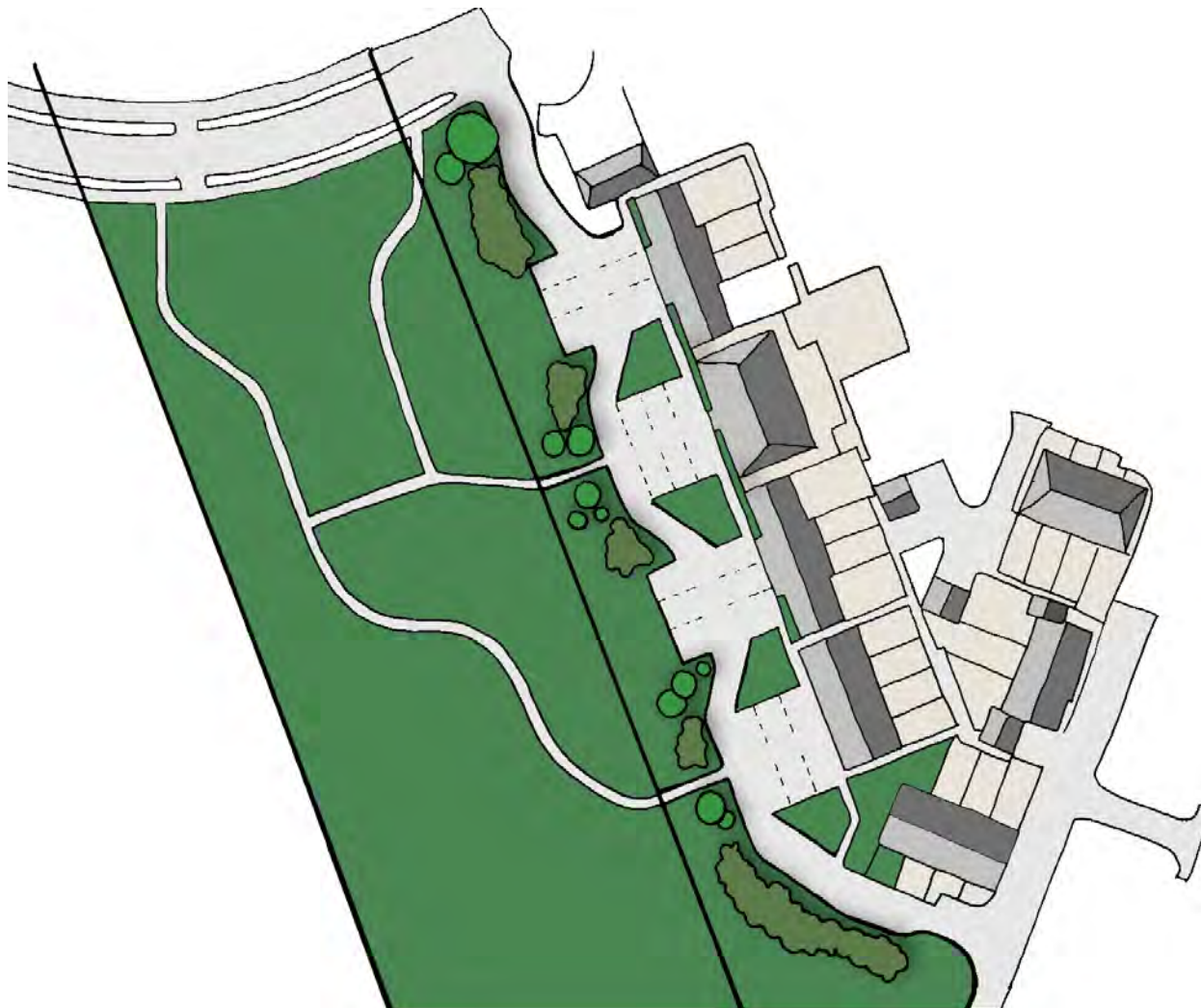
▲ The historic village has been subsumed into the New Town



▲ Great Ashby dates from the late 1990s, but includes the characteristic red brick evident in Stevenage

3. Site Context

Great Ashby: Cromdale Walk



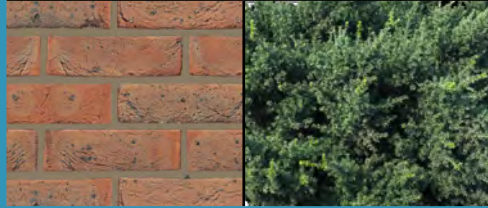
CHARACTERISTICS

- Characteristics and setting similar to the Site.
- Set along a green edge.
- Edge of development abutting the pylons.
- The landscape setting draws attention away from the pylons.
- Higher density housing along the edge.
- A non-linear street pattern intended to manage speed.
- The edge street has features that compliment the green space, such as street trees and block paved surfaces.

Cromdale Walk is located to the north west of the Site and is also influenced by the electricity pylons and their off-set corridor. The use of soft landscaping and footways as part of street spaces contributes to reducing the visual impact of the pylons and the car dominated layout.

Due to its proximity to the Site, the higher densities along Cromdale Walk play a role in shaping the approach to density for the Site.

The use of planting mitigates the appearance of the intrusive features such as pylons, and is composed at various scales to accommodate the swing of cables and the servicing of pylons. Through integrating play and leisure footpaths within the pylon area, it enables the space to be used for connecting the community and avoids long views along utility corridors that emphasise the severance caused by the pylon corridor.

Key features		
	Multi-tone red brick	
	Natural grey slate	
	Light orange buff brick	
	Shrub planted buffer	

New Stevenage: Grass Meadows

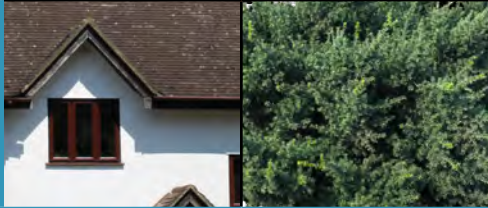


CHARACTERISTICS

- Soft landscaping features.
- Single carriageway width.
- Plots facing inwards onto central area.
- Gable roofs.
- Symmetrical design properties.
- Half brick and exposed wood with stucco.
- Green edge.
- Uniform heights.

Grass Meadows is a cul-de-sac that represents the evolution of Stevenage New Town. The arrangement of low density detached houses is in a loose-grained composition, facing inward onto a central area with no boundary fencing at the front of the plots. Instead, there are defined lawns and ornamental shrub planting. This design introduces an informal space at the centre and encourages interaction between residents living in the cul-de -sac. Additionally, the narrowing of the lane in Grass Meadows prevents parked cars from blocking the lane, thus creating attractive frontages.

Valuable attributes from Grass Meadows include its approach to carriageway widths and the frontages of plots within smaller parcels. The interaction between hedgerows and plots is a common theme on the Site, and Grass Meadows demonstrates how to use mature hedgerows to define the edges of plots and to front onto them.

Key features		
	Multi-tone red brick	
	Ornamental timber	
	Gable feature on eave	
	Shrub planting	

3. Site Context

Rural: Graveley High Street



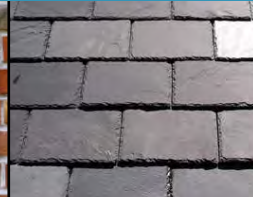
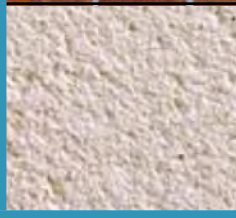
Graveley is a village within a rural setting between Stevenage and Baldock. The village high street runs through Graveley with a number of streets and lanes branching off.

The varying frontage sizes and setback distances demonstrate the evolution of plots within the village and display no specific design period. However, its architectural quality contributes to the richness of the character of the village and its function as a high street; terraced cottages, multi-toned red brick, and clipped hedges.

The high street influences the Site in terms of the varied boundary treatments, scale, and landscaped frontages, which show an approach to softening edges and responding to a rural setting without disrupting character. The variety of building form, including use of materials, colour, massing and boundary treatments, show consideration to how architectural styles and requirements evolve and how places have endured over time.

CHARACTERISTICS

- A high street through a rural village setting.
- A primary route within a rural nature with informal plots and irregular densities along it.
- The buildings have a minimal set back and face directly onto the street.
- Consists of red brick terraced housing with red brick and irregular window patterns that add architectural character.
- The street widens at points, creating opportunities for incidental landscaping, parking, and spaces for social interaction.

Key features			
		Multi-tone red brick	
		Natural grey slate	
		Roughcast render	
		Flint panel within brick	

Old Stevenage: Stanmore Road



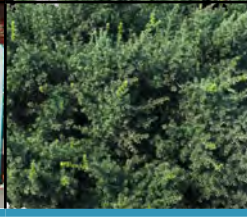
Stanmore Road is located in Old Stevenage and represents development from the Edwardian period. Stanmore Road is located within 800m of Stevenage High Street and is an example of housing within an urban centre.

The streets are linear with continuous frontages and plot sizes. At the time of development, cars were a rare commodity and were not considered as part of housing development, however over time this led to parked vehicles becoming a central feature of the street.

Stanmore Road influences the proposed development as it represents qualities of Old Stevenage and its heritage. The densities are higher than proposed for the Site, however with modern solutions to parking arrangements, the feature of linear and continuous frontages will contribute to the higher density areas of the Site.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Linear street with on-street parking.
- Massing is uniform along Stanmore Road.
- Dwarf walls with masonry pillars.
- Set back with mixture of hard landscaping with soft landscaping features.
- Wide frontages.
- Edwardian style building.
- Glazing frames and sailing jetty feature.
- Mix of mono pitched bay windows and double height bay windows.

Key features			
		Multi-tone red brick	
		Ornamental timber	
		Picket fence	
		Shrub planting	

3. Site Context

Layout lessons learnt for the Site

3.39 These local examples provide the opportunity to create a positive and coherent identity for the development that all can enjoy. They encourage a neighbourhood character that suits its context, its history, how we live today, and how we are likely to live in the future. They show:

- **Good practice from places that have endured over time**
 - This is demonstrated through formal frontages that are arranged on straight streets, allowing for efficient plots and buildings. These highway standards allow circulation. The variety of building form and distribution, including use of materials, colour, massing and boundary treatments, show consideration to how architectural styles and requirements evolve.
- **Reflecting on which places encourage walking**
 - Retaining public rights of way and integrating them into local residential streets demonstrate examples of active travel. The integration of these with footway connections to the town centre include Stevenage 102, and Great Ashby 011.
- **Response to utility corridors such as pylons**
 - The use of planting mitigates the appearance of the intrusive features such as pylons, and is composed at various scales to accommodate the swing of cables and the servicing of pylons. Through integrating play and leisure footpaths within the pylon area, it enables the space to be used for connecting the community and avoids long views along utility corridors that emphasise the severance caused by the pylon corridor.
- **Response to landscape preservation such as hedgerows**
 - Preserved hedgerows are associated with public rights of way and they provide a green corridor that links across residential areas towards further landscapes, such as the woodlands of Chells Manor.

- **Allowing different parts of the development to respond to different locations’ characteristics, such as edges to countryside and local centres**
 - The use of varied boundary treatments, scale and soft landscaped frontages show an approach to softening edges and responding to the countryside setting without disrupting character.
- **Provide clues to enriching housing appearance and streetscape quality, making them visually attractive, and to delight occupants and visitors**
 - Quiet cul-de-sacs in natural settings and residential pockets within larger grain urban blocks are examples of layouts that are dictated by building form and landscape, rather than the movement network. The variety of building types and uses such as terraced rows, detached houses and a mix of traditional materials and colours, support this.



▲ Utility corridor utilised as leisure space



▲ Homes overlooking green space, along a woodland edge

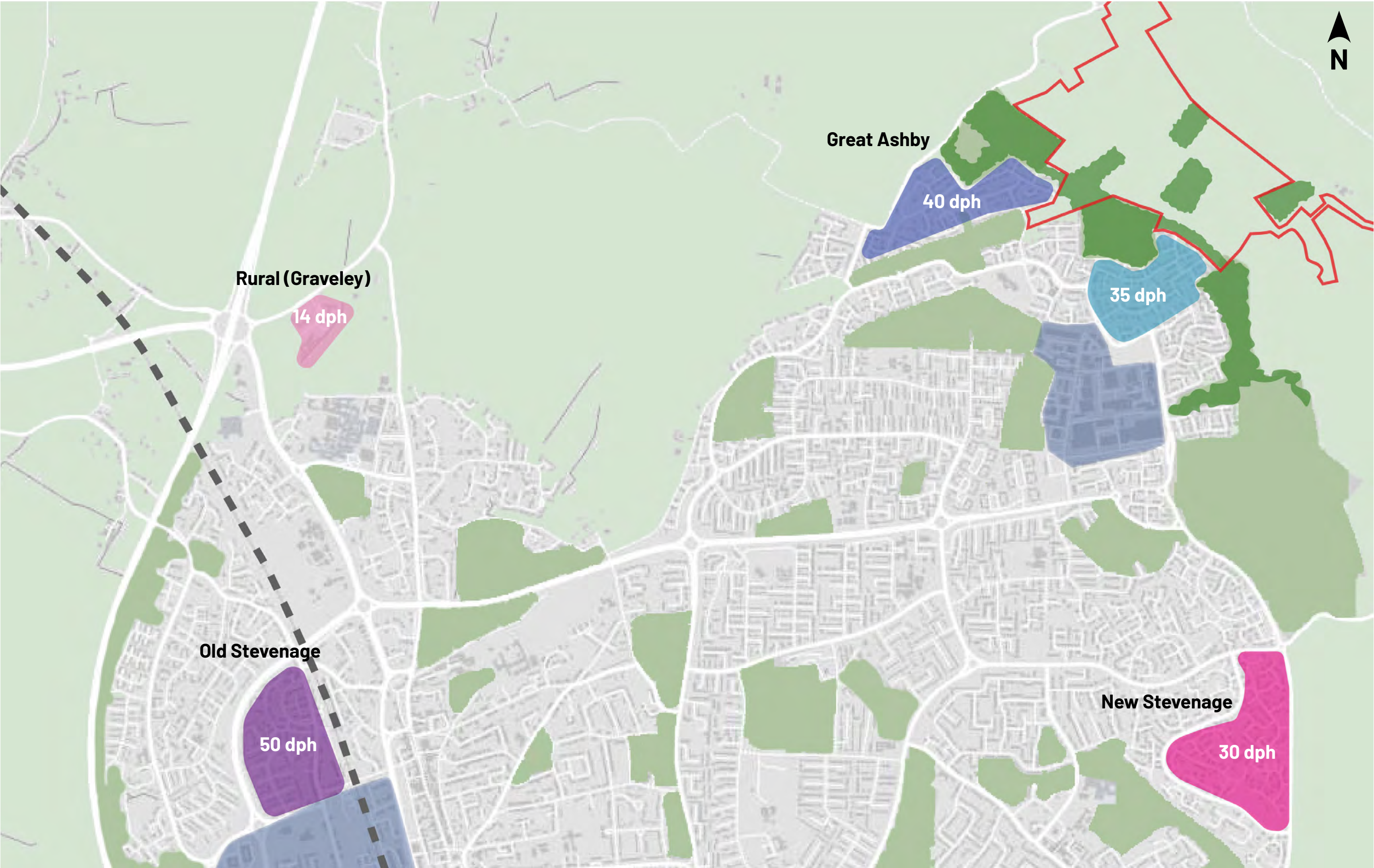


▲ Frontages that have endured over time

3. Site Context

Area Density Study

- 3.40 Historically, the first generation of New Towns in North Hertfordshire were developed in large areas of open space and consisted of densities of 15 - 16 dph (dwellings per hectare). Although New Towns were proven to be successful, over time they have experienced major problems as lower densities are expensive to maintain and result in a lack of accessible infrastructure. Since then, the evolution of New Towns has been revised to better suit the demands of 21st century lifestyles, particularly as we move away from car dependency.
- 3.41 The Stevenage Supplementary Design Guidance, 2023, supports the need for higher density settlements that should balance retaining open space as this remains a key feature of Stevenage’s character. The introduction of higher densities will help to achieve sustainability objectives and in turn, will provide social and health benefits to residents.
- 3.42 Appropriate densities for the Site have been assessed based on its existing context and demand for services and amenities in the area. The adjacent diagram summarises our interpretation of the densities of some of the established residential neighbourhoods in Great Ashby, Old Stevenage and Chells. Densities in the area vary with the lowest being circa 30 dph, occurring where larger family housing is the prominent typology, ranging up to circa 50 dph, where the presence of flats is more noticeable.
- 3.43 The range of densities along the border of the Site illustrates the adjoining context within Great Ashby, and what would be appropriate for the Site.



▲ Figure 3.6 - Density study areas

3. Site Context

ECOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE STATUTORY AND NON STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

- 3.44 There are no statutory ecological designations covering any part of the Site or within 10km of its boundary. No national/local statutory designations were identified within 3km of the Site. Eleven non-statutory designations were identified within 1km of the Site, as set out in the table alongside.
- 3.45 Ancient Woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland inventory are located adjacent to the Site, including Tilekiln Wood, Parsonsgreen Wood, Brooches Wood and Claypithills Spring, all of which are identified as Local Wildlife Sites. A further LWSs, New Spring Wood, is designated for its ancient woodland interest.
- 3.46 In addition, habitat surveys have confirmed a large proportion of other woodlands within and adjacent to the Site as likely ancient in origin. These include Nine Acre Spring, Longdell Wood, Newberry Grove and Warrengreen Wood. Further Ancient Woodlands are located to the north west and south east of the Site.
- 3.47 The Site and surroundings are not covered by statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape designations for value or quality, although several of the woodlands on and around the Site are Ancient Woodlands, as illustrated on Figure 3.7. There are no Tree Preservation Orders on the Site or in the immediate surroundings.

Name	Location	Special interest or qualifying features
New Spring Wood LWS 22/009	Within the Site	Ancient woodland comprising pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i> and ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> with some hornbeam <i>Carpinus betulus</i> and hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> coppice.
Brooches Wood LWS 22/008	Partially within and adjacent to the Site	Ancient woodland. Divided into two compartments by a central ride. The south compartment is comprised largely of planted conifers. The north is mostly old secondary woodland of mainly mature ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> .
Tilekiln Wood & Parsonsgreen Wood LWS 22/010	Adjacent to Site	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak/hornbeam coppice-with-standards woodland with areas cleared and replanted with conifers, mostly larch <i>Larix sp.</i> and Pine <i>Pinus spp.</i>
Claypithills Spring Wood (Stevenage) LWS 22/007	Adjacent to Site	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak/hornbeam coppice woodland. Ground flora supports a good diversity of woodland indicators.
Claypits Wood (N. of Stevenage) LWS 22/011	c. 0.4km north	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak/hornbeam woodland with some suckering elm <i>Ulmus sp.</i>
The Warren (N.E. of Stevenage) LWS 22/047	c. 0.4km south east	Ancient semi-natural hornbeam coppice woodland with pedunculate oak and ash standards.
Wellfield Wood LWS 22/005	c. 0.5km south	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak/hornbeam coppice woodland replanted with mainly beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> , sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> , birch <i>Betula spp.</i> , poplar <i>Populus sp.</i> , field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> and various conifers.
Box Wood & Pryor's Wood LWS 22/006	c. 0.7km south	Ancient woodland. Notable for having a diversity of bird species and records of hazel dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i> .
Martins Wood	c. 1.0km south	Ancient woodland with pedunculate oak, hornbeam coppice and a mature ground flora.
Halls Green Grassland LWS 22/030	c. 0.7km north	Small area of old neutral pasture with a good diversity of flora. The grassland is variable, with dwarf thistle <i>Cirsium acaule</i> (a chalk grassland species) present and some wet acid grassland flora and two ponds.
Harbourclose Wood LWS 21/029	c. 0.7km north west	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak/hornbeam/ash/field maple woodland of mainly neglected coppice.
Stonesley Wood LWS 21/033	c. 0.9km north west	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak/hornbeam/ash and field maple woodland. Ground flora supports indicator species.



▲ Figure 3.7 – Ancient Woodland and LWS near the Site

3. Site Context

TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.48 The landscape around the Site is dissected by a network of tributaries leading to the River Beane, located approximately 2.5km to the east of the Site. These watercourses shape numerous valleys in this heavily undulating landscape.
- 3.49 The Site can be split on two distinctive areas based on the topography: the relatively flat plateau to the north west of New Spring, and strongly undulating hills to the south east.
- 3.50 The Site is relatively level in the west, with the land here located on a plateau at around 135-145m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD'). The Site slopes down relatively steeply to the east, with two localised valleys occurring within the south east of the Site, and low points here of 120m AOD. There is an approximate 25m fall across the Site from the north to the south east. Care will need to be taken in the detailed design of the development within the far south of the Site, to accommodate the relatively steeply sloping land here.



▲ Figure 3.8 - Topography of the Site

3. Site Context

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT

- 3.51 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken in order to assess the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The findings have influenced the layout and design of the proposed development, to minimise landscape and visual effects where possible, and to create a place that is reflective of its setting.
- 3.52 The northern part of the Site has limited structural vegetation, focused mainly along the boundaries of the medium scale fields. Limited structural vegetation and the flat topography contribute to a sense of openness within this area.
- 3.53 The central part of the Site contains the most structural vegetation. Small blocks of woodland scattered across the area, and hedgerows, create an enclosed landscape character.
- 3.54 Further to the south east, structural vegetation mainly consists of field boundary vegetation. A woodland belt lies adjacent to the western boundary of the Site, separating Great Ashby from the fields.
- 3.55 A double row of overhead powerlines carried by tall pylons dissect the Site from west to east. The pylons extend from the west of Stevenage towards Howells Farm to the east, creating a corridor which strongly influences the character of the Site.
- 3.56 There is well developed network of Public Rights of Way across the Site, which are proposed to form the basis of the Green and Blue Infrastructure corridors within the Site, alongside existing field boundaries and woodland blocks.



▲LLCA 01 - Historic Plateau



▲LLCA 02 - Chalk Plateau



▲LLCA 03 - Enclosed Hills



▲LLCA 04 - Tributary Valley

3. Site Context

- 3.57

A series of Local Landscape Character Areas (‘LLCAs’) have been identified on the Site as shown on Figure 3.9, where parts of the Site are similar in character. These will aid in informing the design response to the landscape character on-site.
- 3.58

A series of landscape opportunities and influences have been identified, based on the landscape character of the Site and surroundings, as well as on the assessment of potential effects. These are illustrated on the plan at Figure 3.9, and include:

- 3.59

Influences:
 - Long distance views towards the Site from the elevated footpaths to the north west.
 - Near distance views from Tilekiln Farm (including Listed Buildings) towards the Site. Potential to reduce the impacts through sensitive design to reflect the rural character of the area.
 - There is a transitional area between the more level land at LLCA 02 and the strongly undulating land within LLCA 03. Both character areas are relatively open, and there is an opportunity for hedgerow with tree planting to mark the Green Belt boundary to the north west of the Site, whilst retaining the more open character of the area.
 - Long distance views along the powerline corridor due to limited intervening vegetation and the undulating topography.
 - Views from the upper floors of Dane End (Listed Building) available above the surrounding farm buildings. Potential to extend woodland block to further limit views of the new development.
 - A 15m off-set will be incorporated around the Ancient Woodlands.
 - Appropriate buffers will be maintained to mature trees and hedgerows, which will be retained and incorporated into the layout of the proposed development wherever possible.

- 3.60

Opportunities:
 - Opportunity for a hedgerow with trees to mark the field boundary, to reduce views of the proposed development from the footpaths to the north west.
 - Blocks of woodland, hedgerows and trees divide the Site into parcels, and therefore, only parts of the proposed development will be present in views, as opposed to the entire extent of the development.
 - Potential for continuation of the green corridor under the pylons to provide recreational space and ecological benefits.
 - Sensitive design of the proposed development to reflect the rural landscape character along the western and northern parts of the Site, which could be achieved through lower density housing, as well as ensuring built form is of an appropriate scale, mass and materials.
 - Incorporating new vegetation to limit some of the views experienced by the residents and recreational users to the north and east of the Site.
 - Sensitive boundary treatment to respect the more open landscape character of the northern Site boundary.
 - Retaining attractive views (such as long distance views to the south from Weston 044) where appropriate, through sensitive siting of development.
 - Increasing the recreational value of the Site by retaining the existing Public Rights of Way, and enhancing recreational opportunities though the implementation of new green spaces available to the public, as well as play and fitness areas.
 - Enhancing biodiversity through new planting.
 - Retaining and enhancing the vegetation on the Site boundaries to integrate the proposed development into the surrounding landscape.



▲ Parts of the Site are more visually contained, due to the boundary vegetation, woodland, and topography

3. Site Context



▲ Figure 3.9 - Landscape influences and opportunities

3. Site Context

ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.61

Ecological Assessments have been undertaken on the Site. The initial surveys recorded a range of habitats on the Site, as shown on the plan in Figure 3.10. Arable land covers a large proportion of the Site, with large field margins occurring within several of the fields.
- 3.62

The majority of woodlands on and adjacent to the Site are considered ancient in origin. Four ancient semi-natural woodlands occur within or partially within the Site, including on-site section of Brooches Wood, New Spring Wood, Nine Acre Spring and Longdell Wood. New Spring Wood and Brooches Wood are additionally designated as Local Wildlife Sites.
- 3.63

All Ancient Woodlands within the Site are broadleaved and are broadly similar in composition, comprising canopies of predominantly oak, ash and beech, with hornbeam and field maple. Notable exceptions to this include dominant beech to the east of Nine Acre Spring on exposed chalk substrates, and small-leaved lime along the western boundary of Newberry Grove. Other canopy trees recorded include sycamore, silver birch, wild cherry, purple beech, elm, grey willow and European larch. Shrub layer species varies across the woodlands, although typically includes hazel (including old stools), common hawthorn, elder, holly, and dog rose. Other shrub species recorded included blackthorn, broom, gorse, goat willow, dogwood, cherry plum, and spindle.
- 3.64

A network of hedgerows bound and divide many of the fields, particularly in the north of the Site. The hedgerows are of mixed management with some being intensively managed and stock proof, and others being old and outgrown with significant gaps. A number of hedgerows comprise associated ditches. Many hedgerows comprise associated mature/semi-mature trees, predominantly oak and ash. All hedgerows within the Site comprise predominantly native woody species and are categorised as habitats of Principal Importance and are of intrinsic ecological importance. The majority of hedgerows are also likely to be species-rich and qualify as 'Important' under the Hedgerow Regulations.



▲ Figure 3.10 - Habitats present on the Site

3. Site Context

- 3.65 The pond known as Dell Spring is located within a grassland field in the north west of the Site. It is surrounded by a number of scattered mature trees on the banks of the steep-sided depression, predominantly mature oak and beech. Some of these trees are storm damaged, thereby creating veteran features, potentially of importance for associated fauna such as invertebrates and bats. A further three scattered mature oak trees are present within the field, two of which are of special importance given their significant size and age.
- 3.66 An artificial wet ditch lies along the south of the Site. The banks are artificially constructed of concrete slabs with little, if any, aquatic/marginal vegetation recorded in association with the channel or banks.
- 3.67 The hedgerow network and woodlands provide important potential foraging and navigational opportunities for bats.
- 3.68 Badgers are active across the Site and within the local area. The Site continues to provide significant foraging and sett digging opportunities for badgers.
- 3.69 Wooded habitats at the Site and surroundings, including woodland, scrub and hedgerows, provide suitable habitat opportunities for dormice, with key plants, hazel, bramble and honeysuckle recorded across the area along with a range of other associated shrubs/trees.

- 3.70 The Site provides suitable habitat for farmland and woodland birds, with trees, woodlands and boundary hedgerows providing nesting and foraging opportunities. In addition, arable habitats provide opportunities for ground nesting farmland birds, namely skylark, as recorded within the Site and surroundings previously.
- 3.71 The majority of the Site, being dominated by intensively managed arable land provides limited opportunities for reptiles. However, the arable field margins, hedgerow bases, woodland edges and areas of longer grassland (such as in the area of the existing SuDS feature) provide suitable basking, foraging and refuge opportunities for common reptiles, as well as connectivity to similar habitats in the wider landscape.
- 3.72 The on-site and adjoining ponds have been surveyed for their suitability to support Great Crested Newts, and none were found to be suitable, or to contain Great Crested Newts. The majority of the Site, being dominated by arable habitat, provides suboptimal opportunities for amphibians during their terrestrial phase. However, field margins, hedgerows and woodlands which cross the Site provide suitable dispersal corridors, foraging and hibernation opportunities for any Great Crested Newts which may be present within the Site or surrounding area.
- 3.73 The arable habitats which dominate the Site are unlikely to support a locally important assemblage of invertebrates. Field margins, hedgerows,

grassland and Ancient Woodland present within the Site have the potential to support a range of invertebrates, including important saproxylic invertebrates or invertebrate assemblages associated with woodland habitats.

3.74 As of 12 February 2024, Biodiversity Net Gain ‘BNG’ is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) for all relevant developments in England and enforces a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity units relative to the site’s baseline biodiversity value. Arable land which covers much of the Site is of limited ecological interest, with greater biodiversity value associated principally with woodland habitats, as well as grassland, scrub, hedgerows, arable field margins and ponds. In accordance with the mitigation hierarchy, the scheme design will be required to avoid all losses of irreplaceable habitats, with losses of any priority habitat avoided as far as possible. Residual losses of non-priority and low distinctiveness habitats will need to be compensated for through appropriate habitat creation and restoration to ensure the BNG objective can be met. The iterative scheme design process has been informed by the application of the relevant Biodiversity Metric published by Natural England, to provide a quantitative assessment of losses or gains in biodiversity, with due consideration for wider BNG best practice and guidance.



▲ Most of the Site is in arable use, with several woodland blocks also occurring

3. Site Context

3.75 A series of ecological opportunities, influences, and mitigation measures have been identified, based on the various surveys and assessment of potential effects. These include:

3.76 **Influences:**

- Avoidance of any further woodland losses to the development footprint.
- Maintaining a minimum 15m buffer from all woodlands regardless of confirmed Ancient status, comprising landscaping dedicated for nature conservation (i.e. no formalised recreational use) and, where appropriate, defensive thorny native planting. Design of development blocks to prevent all ‘backing on’ of private gardens to woodland to prevent dumping of garden waste.
- Robust tree, woodland and hedgerow protection, including protective fencing prior to any major works within the vicinity of woodlands.
- Careful design of walking routes and scheme as a whole to minimise as far as possible directing recreation into or close to woodlands. Where necessary and achievable, exclusion of access to particularly sensitive areas of woodland should be considered.

3.77 **Opportunities:**

- High quality designed recreational spaces, including adequate provision of non-woodland habitats (amenity grasslands, play spaces and dog walking routes) to divert as much recreational pressure from woodland as possible.
- Information provided (leaflets to residents) and signage installed at all entrances to woodlands to highlight the sensitive nature of habitats, and celebrate their value, to encourage good stewardship of habitats by new residents
- Inevitable pressure upon woodlands to be combatted through long term woodland management to maximise their condition and resilience.

- Creation of mosaic of habitats both within the Site and on adjacent land to address any mitigation or compensation requirements (such as for woodland fragmentation); deliver BNG objectives; and provide qualitative ecological/biodiversity benefit, targeting creation of priority habitats, including:
 - Woodland and scrub habitats to further extend the woodland network on-site;
 - Species-rich grassland, targeting appropriate seed mix to the soils, which vary locally from chalky clay/flints to acidic and neutral; and
 - Ponds.
- Restoration of woodland habitats within the area through long term woodland management.
- Restoration of chalk pit to the centre of the Site through scrub removal and ongoing management.
- Inclusion of species-rich habitats into SuDS design, including wet grassland, willow carr and ephemeral ponds.
- Creation of new permanent wildlife ponds away from SuDS network.
- ‘Hedgehog cut-outs’ to be cut/built into bases of new timber fencing erected between private gardens to enable small mammals and other wildlife to disperse through the development site and forage.
- Incorporation of native plants and those of wildlife importance in to landscaping scheme as a whole to provide foraging opportunities for birds, invertebrates and bats.
- Improved connectivity of green infrastructure with new hedgerow planting and infill planting.
- Provision of new bat roosting and bird nesting opportunities within new buildings and retained mature trees.



▲ There are several mature trees at Dell Spring, within an area of grassland

3. Site Context

ARBORICULTURE

- 3.78 A survey has been undertaken of the trees and hedgerows on the Site, to the assess their arboricultural condition and value, and to inform the layout of the proposed development. The plan at Figure 3.11 shows the results of this survey. No trees on the Site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
- 3.79 The survey included 141 trees, groups of trees, hedgerows, and woodlands. The majority of trees and woodland were assessed as being of high to moderate quality, with the hedgerows being of moderate to low quality.
- 3.80 The most important arboricultural features at the Site are the many parcels of mature woodland, most of which are Ancient.
- 3.81 Mature and veteran oak trees, common ash and common beech were also present across the Site, some within field boundaries and hedgerows, but some are located within more open grown locations within the field interiors. They more often than not have large-diameter stems (some hollowing) and some are of pollard/lapsed-pollard form.
- 3.82 Situated away from the Ancient Woodland and field boundaries are some particularly important veteran and Category A oak and ash trees, located within the north of the Site. These include T8, T9, T10, T7, T12, T13, T14, T15, T16, T31, T32, T33 and G4 (Dell Spring). T33, a mature English oak with some veteran tree features, has been acknowledged as a ‘notable tree’. The term ‘notable’ carries no weight within the NPPF but is a term that recognises a mature and often exceptional tree that may stand out in the local environment and has the likelihood of becoming a future veteran or ancient tree.
- 3.83 The approach of providing all woodland at the Site with at least a 15m buffer from development will allow for the potential for shading and encroachment from tree canopies, and how this may impact the development in the future.

IMPORTANT HEDGEROWS

- 3.84 The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 aims to control the removal of most hedgerows, and in particular ‘Important Hedgerows’ without permission from the LPA. There is a series of criteria setting out what comprises an Important Hedgerow, including that it has existed for at least 30 years, as well as several ecological and historical criteria.
- 3.85 Considering the OS map from 1884, it is likely that all the hedgerows on and adjacent to the Site are Important, as they were likely part of a field system that existed before 1845.



▲ Figure 3.11 – Trees, hedgerows and woodland on Site

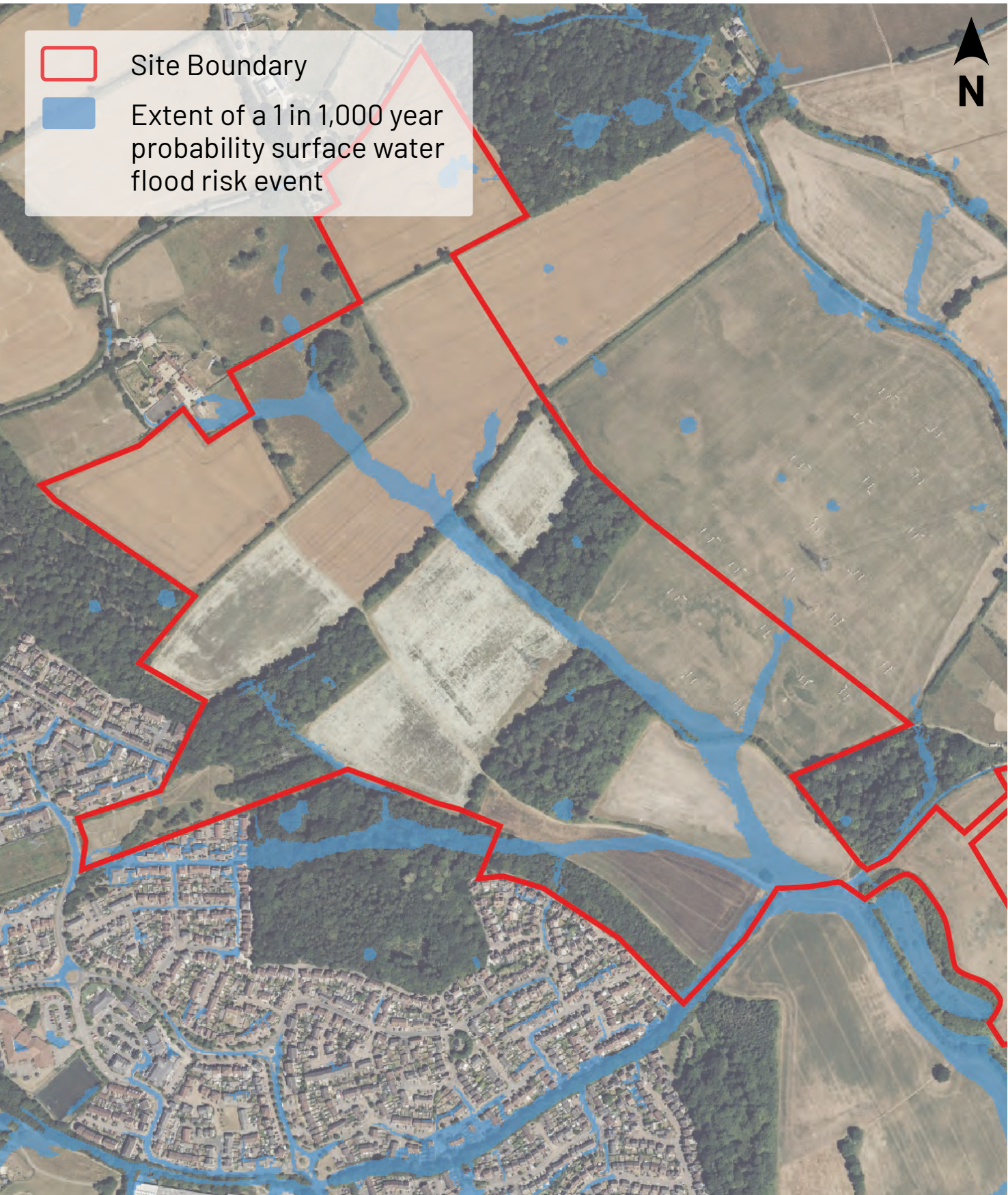
3. Site Context

FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

- 3.86 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared for the Site and proposed development, based on the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems ('SuDS').
- 3.87 The Site is situated in Flood Zone 1, land which has less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. The nearest watercourse is the River Beane, a tributary of the River Lea, and is located approximately 8.5km to the east of the Site.
- 3.88 The potential for overland flows has been considered, to ensure that neither the development nor adjacent land and/or property is placed at an unacceptable risk of flooding. From the EA Surface Water Flood map for the Site (Figure 3.12) it can be seen that the majority of the Site is not shown to be within the extent of any surface water flooding. There are however surface water flow routes through the Site which correlate with the natural valleys on the Site. The proposed surface water drainage strategy takes in to account these surface water flow routes. The blue and green corridors on the Site predominantly follow the natural flow routes, and where this is not possible, surface water flows have been diverted towards the proposed drainage features.
- 3.89 Consultation with Thames Water have indicated that currently there is insufficient capacity within the sewer network and at the receiving treatment works for this development. Modelling will be undertaken by Thames Water to determine the necessary mitigation works, which they will then undertake, as Thames Water are obligated to provide consented development with a suitable foul drainage solution.
- 3.90 Based upon the topography of the Site, it is anticipated that all foul water flows from the Site will be pumped to a suitable connection point.



▲ The existing drain south of the Site



▲ Figure 3.12 - Surface water flood routes on the Site

3. Site Context

UTILITIES

- 3.91 The most obvious utility infrastructure on the Site, which is likely to influence the design of the development, are the two overhead electricity lines which cross the Site from west to east. These comprise a 400kV National Grid line (in the north), and a 132kV UKPN (line in the south). Although initial information on safe design and planting distances to these lines have been received from the power companies, the detailed design of the scheme will need to be developed through further consultation with the utility companies.
- 3.92 In order to supply the proposed development, a load of 4,113kVA is required. A Point of Connection application was made and a response from UK Power Networks was received, advising that a 11,000V High Voltage Connection can be provided from the Verity Way Primary substation on Coventry Close, and that approximately 3km of off-site works will be required. Further reinforcement works are also required, entailing two transformer upgrades. An indicative cost for the works has been provided to the Applicant.
- 3.93 Affinity Water have confirmed the likely point of connection and available capacity for the development. A point of connection has been confirmed at the 180mm HPPE Water Main within Mendip Way, however, the modelling undertaken by the utility company has confirmed that the existing network does not have sufficient capacity to supply the proposed development site without upstream reinforcement works. Affinity Water have indicated what reinforcement works are required, and that the cost associated with this will be covered via their infrastructure charge which will be levied against each new property connected to the network.
- 3.94 In relation to telecommunications, Openreach are currently providing Fibre to The Premise for all residential developments that consist of more than 20 dwellings, therefore it is expected that this development would qualify for a full fibre to the premise network. The Openreach FTTP network is already fully complaint with the upcoming changes to building regulations for 'Gigabit' ready homes.
- 3.95 It is not proposed to extend the piped gas network into the Site, nor to provide the proposed dwellings with direct gas connections.
- 3.96 While there are several utilities located within Mendip Way, no other utilities except the overhead electricity lines, cross the Site or are located underground within it.



▲ Figure 3.13 - Utilities on the Site

3. Site Context

NOISE

- 3.97 A baseline noise survey has been undertaken to establish noise levels on the Site. During the daytime period the measured noise levels are considered to be of negligible noise risk to residential development as they do not exceed 50dB LAeq,16h. During the night-time period, the measured noise levels are considered to be low risk.
- 3.98 At all of the four long term noise monitoring locations at the Site, no specific dominant noise source was noted – just general ambient noise typically associated with a rural location such as birdsong, occasional distant road traffic noise, insects and vegetation noise, together with the occasional walker.
- 3.99 Noise levels measured during the weekday and weekend period were broadly comparable. Birdsong was considered to be the primary source of noise on the Site. Measured background sound levels (dB LA90) were low, especially during the night-time, and this is considered reflective of the rural location.
- 3.100 Design influences in relation to potential noise concerns are set out below:
- 3.101 The change in prevailing noise levels at the location of the new access road from Mendip Way into the Site will be a potential risk area, given the relatively low prevailing noise levels. Maximising the buffer between the new access road and existing receptors should be considered, together with landscape options to screen noise from this source where possible. This will however be dependent on the predicted overall noise level from the new access road into the Site.
- 3.102 Where possible it is considered that new roads within the Site should not be located adjacent to the Site boundary, as introducing a new noise source where existing prevailing noise levels are low, with no screening, may have an adverse effect.
- 3.103 Noise from the proposed school playground/playing fields should be an early design consideration. Strategic location to maximise screening or provision of inherent mitigation may be required to ensure the potential for adverse effects on existing sensitive receptors is minimised.

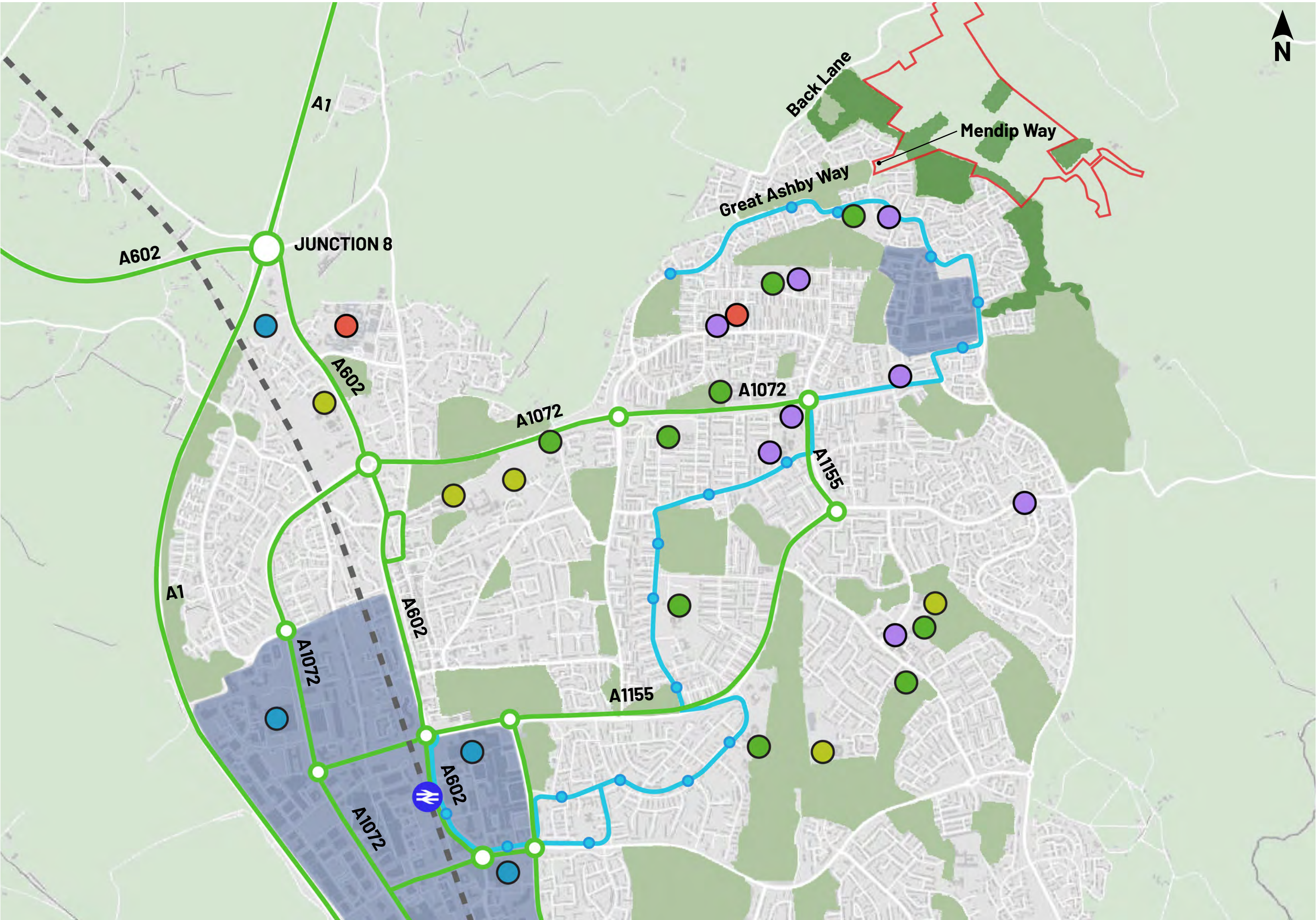
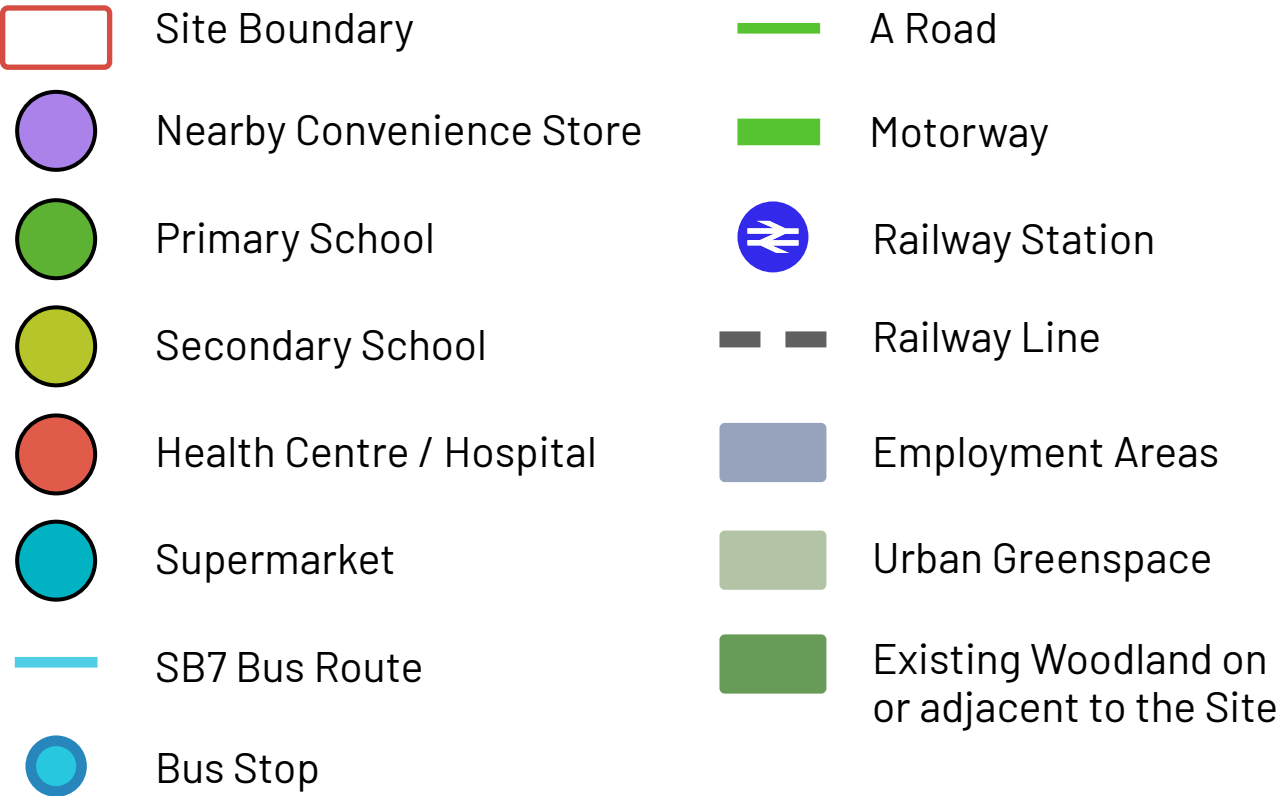
AIR QUALITY

- 3.104 A baseline air quality study has been undertaken to provide an overview of the existing air quality conditions and to identify any potential air quality constraints in relation to the site. Overall, it was considered that air pollutant concentrations were not a constraint to development at the Site.
- 3.105 The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). There are two AQMAs located nearby, including NHDC Air Quality Management Order No.1 2012 located approximately 6.6km north-west of the Site, and NHDC Air Quality Management Order No.2 2016 – Paynes Park Roundabout located approximately 7.5km north-west of the Site.
- 3.106 Air quality monitoring is undertaken by both North Hertfordshire District Council and Stevenage Borough Council. Within recent years, the annual mean NO₂ objectives were not exceeded at any monitoring sites within 6.5km of the Site, with the exception of two diffusion tubes within Stevenage in 2019.
- 3.107 The Site is located close to a number of existing air quality sensitive land uses, including residential properties within 20m of the Site's western perimeter. Therefore, there is the potential for dust nuisance during construction which would require mitigation and commitment to best practice methods to ensure effects from construction remain insignificant.
- 3.108 Within the wider locality, there are a number of non-residential receptors, such as Busy Bees Nursery and Round Diamond Primary School that are also located within 1km of the Site. However, construction traffic and construction plant emissions will be temporary and short-term.
- 3.109 Design influences in relation to air quality include:
- The provision of sustainable travel options.
 - The use of tree and green planting to provide buffers between pedestrians and traffic.
 - The provision of energy and thermal efficient housing.

3. Site Context

MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT

- 3.110 The proposed development provides the opportunity to connect into existing transport and movement infrastructure, and embed positive behavioural choices from the outset. The County Council’s Local Transport Plan sets a clear user hierarchy – all opportunities should be taken to reduce the need to travel, with active travel (walking and cycling) prioritised ahead of passenger transport, and then private vehicles.
- 3.111 By road, Stevenage is primarily accessed by the A1(M) which runs in a north-south direction along the western outskirts of the town. The A1(M) enables access to Welwyn Garden City, Edgware and Letchworth Garden City. The A602 runs through Stevenage, and to the north west it provides access to Hitchin, while to the south east it provides access to the southern outskirts of Stevenage, Watton at Stone and Ware. The A505 is accessible to the north of the Site and facilitates access to Royston, Sawston and Great Abingdon.
- 3.112 Within the immediate vicinity of the site, Mendip Way operates under a 30mph speed limit. Pedestrian footpaths and street lighting are provided on both sides of the carriageway. In addition regular pedestrian crossing points and dropped curbs are provided to enable safe and convenient pedestrian travel.



▲ Figure 3.14 – Main vehicle connections and Local Facilities

3. Site Context

Services and Facilities

- 3.113 The neighbourhood centre in Great Ashby is located around a 15-20 minute walk from the centre of the Site. Within it is:
- Round Diamond Primary School
 - Busy Bees Nursery School
 - A convenience store
 - Takeaway
 - Pharmacy
 - Community Hall
 - Veterinary Surgery
 - Post Office
 - Other shops and services, including hair salon and barber.
- 3.114 The neighbourhood centre is also served by local bus services, and the bus routes are proposed to be extended into the Site, to allow easy access to the neighbourhood centre by public transport.
- 3.115 Larger retail and service areas are located within the Old Town, the Town Centre, and at the various retail parks within the town, with supermarkets also located within these areas. Planning permission has recently been granted for a new supermarket within the south of the Pin Green area, located 1km south west of the Site.
- 3.116 Stevenage Train Station is near the Town Centre within the west of the town, as is the bus station, with both located 4.7km from the Site.
- 3.117 The nearest secondary school is at Nobel, approximately 2.5km south of the Site, with further secondary schools located around 3-3.5km south west of the Site. North Hertfordshire College is located within the west of Stevenage, around 5km from the Site.
- 3.118 Lister Hospital lies within the north west of the town, around 3.6km from the Site, with the nearest Doctor’s Surgery located at St Nicholas Health Centre, approximately 1.6km from the Site.
- 3.119 The Pin Green industrial/employment area is located within 1km of the Site to the south, with further large employment areas located within the west of the town, around 5-6km from the Site. Large employment areas such as London, Cambridge, Peterborough and Stevenage are all accessible by bus or rail.



▲ Great Ashby Community Hall



▲ Convenience store in Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre



▲ There are several shops within the Neighbourhood Centre



▲ Nursery at the Neighbourhood Centre



▲ Stevenage Bus Station



▲ Stevenage Train Station



▲ Pin Green Employment Area



▲ Shops and services are located within the Old Town



▲ Shops and services are located within the Old Town

3. Site Context

Public Transport

3.120 The Site is located in close proximity to ‘The Beacons’ bus stop which is situated 400m to the west of the Site access and is accessible within a 4 minute walk or a 2 minute cycle (from the proposed Site access off Mendip Way). ‘The Beacons’ bus stop is served by route SB7 which facilitates access in and around Stevenage. ‘The Beacons’ Bus stop is sheltered and includes a sign post highlighting the location of the stop, the bus routes being served, and copies of the relevant route’s timetable.

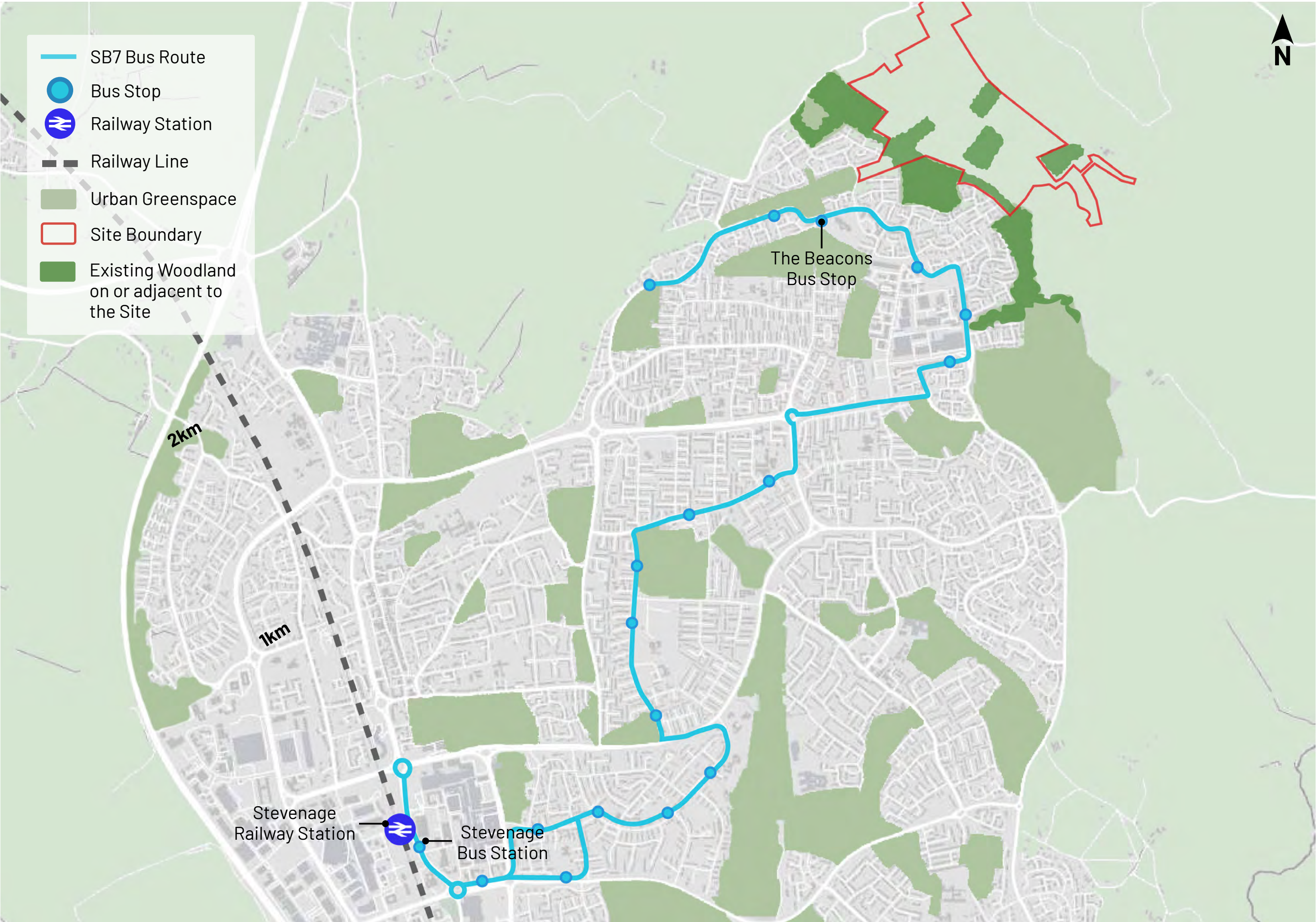
3.121 To access a wider range of bus services, Stevenage Bus Station provides access to an extensive network of bus routes. Stevenage Bus station is located approximately 5km to the south of the Site and can be accessed within a 19 minute cycle or a 13 minute bus journey from ‘The Beacons’ bus stop (using route SB7). Bus services from Stevenage Bus Station provide access to the several destinations, including:

- Hertford (Route 384 / 390)
 - Hatfield (Route 635)
 - Pin Green (Route SB11 / SB10)
 - Poplars (Route SB6)
 - Chells (Route 856)
 - Martins Wood (Route SB3)
- St Nicholas (Route SB2)
 - Great Ashby (Route SB7)
 - Hitchin (Route 635/ Route 80)
 - Luton (Route 100)
 - Broadwater (Route SB4)
 - Weston (Route 391).

Train Service

3.122 The nearest railway station to the Site, Stevenage Train Station, is located in the western extents of Stevenage approximately 5km to the south of the proposed Site. Stevenage Train Station is served by predominantly London North Eastern Railway (LNER), Great Northern and Thameslink Trains. Key destinations accessible from Stevenage Train Station include: Brighton, London Kings Cross and St Pancras, Moorgate, Horsham, Peterborough, Harrogate, Cambridge, Leeds and Letchworth Garden City.

3.123 Walking and cycling routes from the Site access to Stevenage Train Station are safe, direct, adequately lit (appropriately for the environment) and naturally surveyed (active frontages or fairly busy roads are within clear sight). Where possible, cycleways provide a direct and traffic-free route to the Train Station.



▲ Figure 3.15 – Bus routes in the vicinity of the Site

3. Site Context

Walking and Cycling

3.124 A number of Public Rights of Way bound and/or run through the Site.

3.125 These are shown on Figure 3.16 and outlined below:

- Bridleway Weston 033 (also known a Bay Lane) which runs south west to north east along the south eastern boundary of the Site. This provides an east to west connection from Dane End Farm, through the Site and Great Ashby passing close to the District Centre, St Nicholas Park and the Pin Green employment area. This is a key connecting corridor and, in conjunction with the development of Site GA1, provides the opportunity to have a continuous link from the Hertfordshire Way and Back Lane to Warrens Green Lane.
- Footpath Weston 029 which runs north west to south east through the south western half of the Site, connecting Tilekiln Farm to Bridleway Weston 033 (above) and linking to Footpath Weston 031/Walkern 022, which provides an onward connection to the Beane Valley east of Stevenage.
- Footpath Weston 044 which delineates the north eastern boundary of GA2.
- Footpath Weston 027 which delineates the north western boundary of GA2 linking Back Lane and Tilekiln Farm to Warrens Green Lane.
- Footpath Great Ashby 011 which connects from Great Ashby District Centre across the pylon/proposed access corridor to the south western edge of the Site.
- Footpath Weston 026 connecting from Merrick Close along the eastern edge of Tile Kiln Wood, traversing the northern end of GA2 to the junction of Back Lane and Warrens Green Lane.



▲ Figure 3.16 - Public Rights of Way on or adjacent to the Site

3. Site Context

Accessibility Study

- 3.126 In accordance with Chapter 12 of NHC General Guidance on Transport in Masterplans (Draft, 2023), nearby facilities and services were mapped and walking isodistances applied for 800m and 1,600m. Due to the size of the Site, two centroids were located in the two most remote parts of the Site, one in the north and one in the south. Figure 3.17 has combined the results of both the northern and south centroid analysis to create a combined walking distance.
- 3.127 In accordance with Paragraph 12.5 of NHC General Guidance on Transport in Masterplans, cycling isodistances were also calculated for a 2km and 4km radius. These are estimated to take 10 and 20 minutes to cycle respectively. The results of this analysis are inset to Figure 3.17.
- 3.128 Destinations included on Figure 3.17 include:
- Educational Facilities

- Round Diamond Primary School

- Busy Bees at Stevenage (Nursery)

- Martins Wood Primary

- Trotts Hill Primary School

- Almond Hill Junior School

Convenience Stores / Shops

- Budgens

- Shell Garage

- Co-Op Food

Outdoor / Leisure Spaces

- Mendip Way Playground

- North Shore Open Space Park

- The Great Ashby District Park

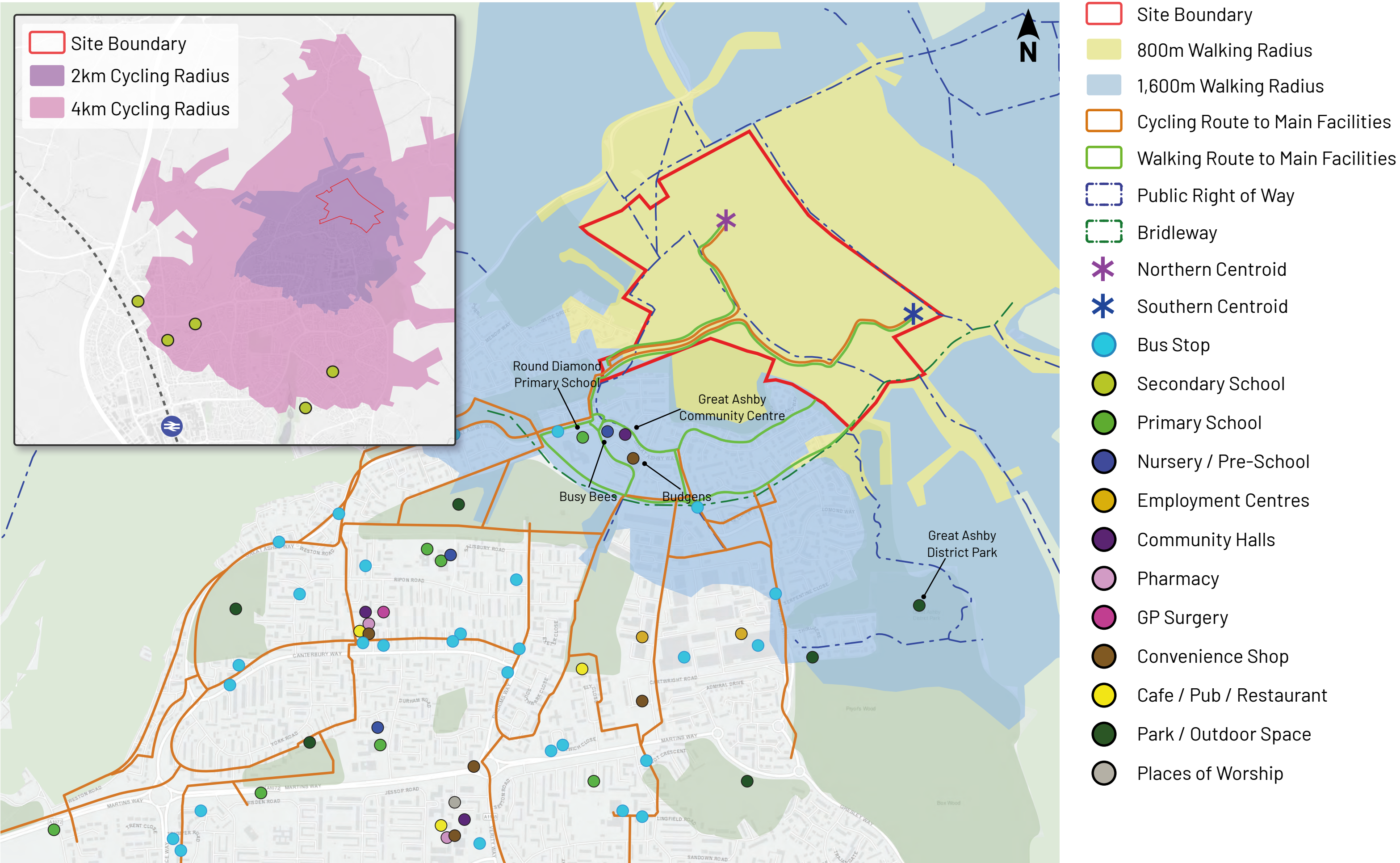
- St Martins Wood Play Area

- Pryors Wood

- Sishes Wood

Other Amenities

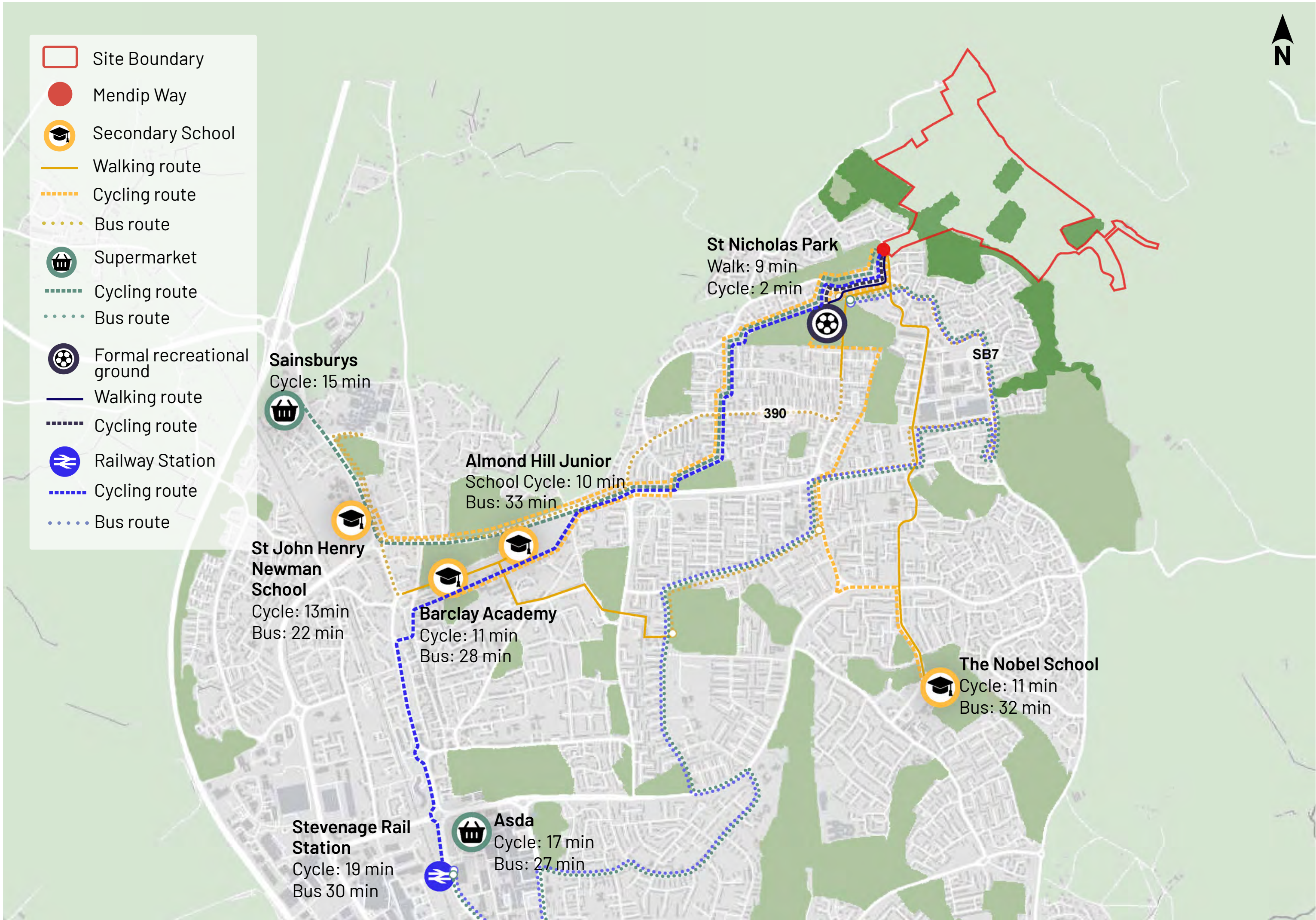
- Great Ashby Community Centre; Fortunes Palace Chinese takeaway; Jhoots Pharmacy; No Bull Fitness; Employment / Industrial Centre; The Oval cluster of amenities; the Neighbourhood Centre, Whitehorse Lane; and Canterbury Way cluster of amenities.



▲ Figure 3.17 - Combined walking and cycling analysis to facilities and services

3. Site Context

- 3.129 The plan alongside illustrates the routes to the secondary schools, supermarkets, formal recreational ground, and the train station.
- 3.130 The formal recreation ground at St Nicholas Park is a 9 minute walk, or 2 minute cycle from the Site entrance on Mendip Way.
- 3.131 Secondary schools are accessible via a combination of buses and walking, and are around half an hour from the Site.
- 3.132 There are several large supermarkets in Stevenage, with one accessible via a 15 minute cycle, and others in the town centre accessible via a 30 minute bus journey.
- 3.133 The train station is a 19 minute cycle from the Site access, or a 30 minute bus ride.
- 3.134 It is proposed to bring the bus route into the development, to reduce walking distances and times to the bus stop at The Beacons.



▲ Figure 3.18 - Routes to nearby facilities

Site Constraints and Opportunities

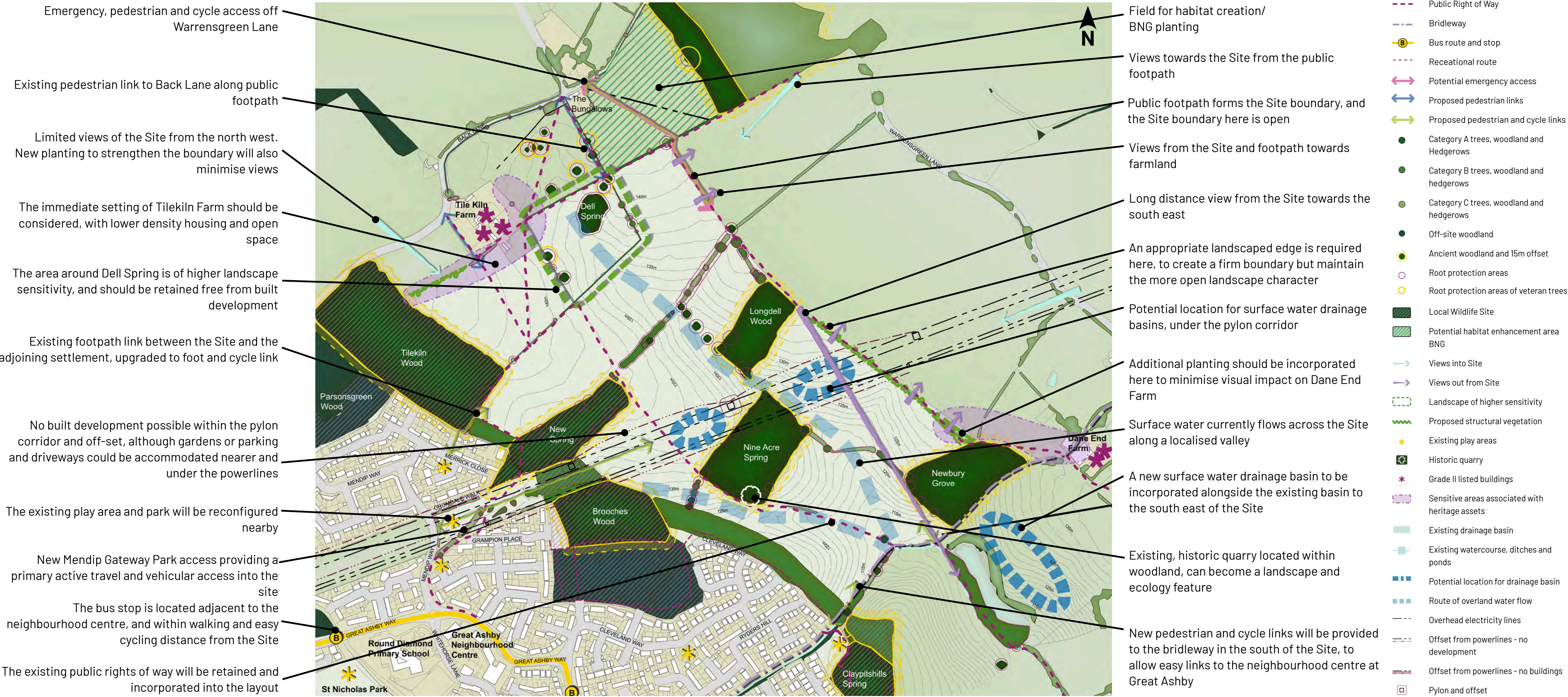


4. Site Constraints and Opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

- 4.1 The plan on the following page combines the various opportunities and constraints to development at the Site, which have been ascertained from the baseline and technical studies.
- 4.2 This plan formed the basis for design options and decisions going forward. However, good design sometimes requires compromises to be made to achieve the most beneficial results overall, and whilst the baseline information influences the final proposals, other considerations were also taken into account as the design of the scheme evolved.
- 4.3 The effects of the proposals on the baseline conditions is considered in detail within the Environmental Impact Assessment. The process of designing the scheme was iterative, and where the initial research and studies highlighted potential significant effects, the design has evolved to avoid or mitigate these effects, wherever possible.

4. Site Constraints and Opportunities



▲ Figure 4.1- Opportunities and Constraints to development at the Site

Consultation



5. Consultation

- 5.1

While the design team have been in constant dialogue and consultation with officers at NHDC, further consultation has also taken place with the public and interested parties. The design team also took part in a independent Design Review Panel, where the proposals were considered by other designers and planners, in order to test the solutions.
- 5.2

The Illustrative Masterplan that was presented at the consultations and Design Review Panel in May and June 2024, is shown at Figure 5.1.



▲ Figure 5.1 - The masterplan as presented for public consultation and at the Design Review Panel