

GA2, Land north of Great Ashby

Environmental Statement (ES) | Volume III - Non-Technical Summary (NTS) | November 2025



Introduction

This Non-Technical Summary ('NTS') presents a summary of the findings of an Environmental Statement ('ES'). It has been prepared on behalf of Picture Estates Limited who are the Applicant applying for planning permission.

The ES accompanies a hybrid planning application submitted to North Herts District Council for the Proposed Development at land known as 'GA2, Land north of Great Ashby' ('the Site'). A hybrid planning permission application seeks outline planning permission for one part of a site and full planning permission for another part of the same site under a single application. The outline component includes information about the scale and nature of a proposed development but does not include detailed information such as the appearance of the development. It allows for the Local Planning Authority to make a decision on the general principles of how a site could be developed.

The planning application has been submitted in hybrid. This means that detailed parts such as layout, appearance and landscaping would be submitted with a later application, at a later date.

An ES records the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). An ES allows the potential environmental impacts of a proposed development to be taken into consideration.

GA2, Land north of Great Ashby, otherwise known as 'the Proposed Development', would create a sustainable new neighbourhood to the north east of Stevenage.

This document is a non-technical summary of the findings of the EIA which are reported in the ES. The ES has been prepared to identify the environmental effects that could arise during the construction works and once the Proposed Development is completed and operational.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact

Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations') describe when an EIA is required by law. The EIA Regulations also describe what information must be included in an ES. The Proposed Development falls within the EIA Regulation category of 'urban development project' where the development includes more than 150 residential units.

A full description of the Proposed Development is provided in the 'Proposed Development' section of this document.

Site and Setting

Where is the Site?

The Site covers an area of approximately 62.9 hectares ('ha') and is located within the North Herts District Council boundary. Figure 1 shows the land within the planning application boundary. The blue line shows further land within the Applicant's ownership, in addition to the Site.

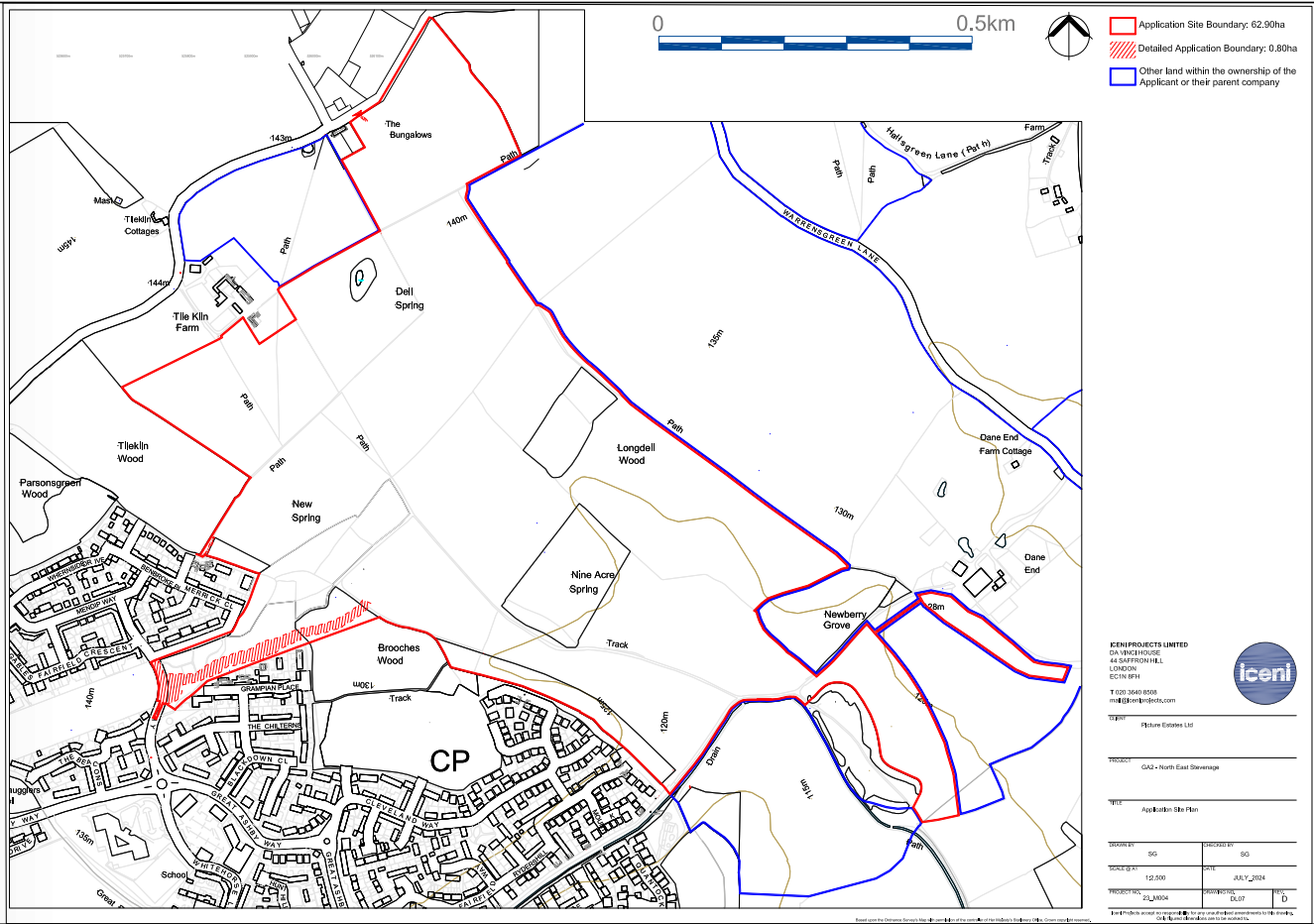
To the north of the Site, there are parcels of woodland and arable land. Tilekiln Farm lies immediately beyond a section of the northern Site boundary.

To the east of the Site, there are parcels of woodland and arable land.

To the south of the Site lies the parish of Great Ashby, where the local area comprises low density residential dwellings of typically one to three storey buildings. Areas of Ancient Woodland and a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) lie close to the southeast corner of the Site.

To the west of the Site, there is an area of Ancient Woodland next to the western boundary, with arable land lying further beyond the area of woodland. Ancient Woodland is that which has existed continuously since 1600 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Figure 1: Planning Application Boundary (shown in red)



What does the Site include?

The Site is made up of fields and areas of woodland. There are some footpaths and bridleways running through the Site.

What are the environmental sensitivities?

Air Quality

The Site is not located within or near to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The nearest AQMA is over 6.5km north-west of the Site.

Ecology and Arboriculture

The Site is dominated by arable habitats of limited ecological interest along with ancient woodlands, some limited grassland and hedgerow habitats.

The UK has some areas that are protected for their ecological importance. These have an impact on any development proposals within, or close to, any statutory designated sites.

The Site does not fall within any Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Natural Nature Reserves (NNR) or Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

There are no statutory designated sites located within the Site, or close to the Site boundary. The nearest statutory designated Site is Bennington High Wood (SSSI) situated 3.3km south east of the Site.

The nearest non-statutory designated sites are New Spring Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Brooches Wood LWS which lie partially within the Site, located within the easternmost section of the Site.

There are further LWS located in proximity to the Site, as set out below:

- Tilekiln Wood LWS, located immediately adjacent to the north west;

- Parsonsgreen Wood LWS, located immediately adjacent to the north west;
- The Warren LWS, located 35m to the south east; and
- Claypithills Spring Wood LWS, located 60m to the south.

Each of these designations comprise areas of Ancient Woodland and semi-natural woodland. Field surveys undertaken on the Site have identified parcels of Ancient Woodland that have not been listed under the national inventory, as shown in Figure 2 to the right.

Transport and Public Rights of Way Access

The nearest bus stop is located on Great Ashby Way, approximately 600m west of the Site. This bus stop is served by the SB7 service which provided access into Stevenage town centre. The nearest train station is located approximately 4.5km south west of the Site. It offers regular services to London, Cambridge, Peterborough, York, Leeds and Edinburgh.

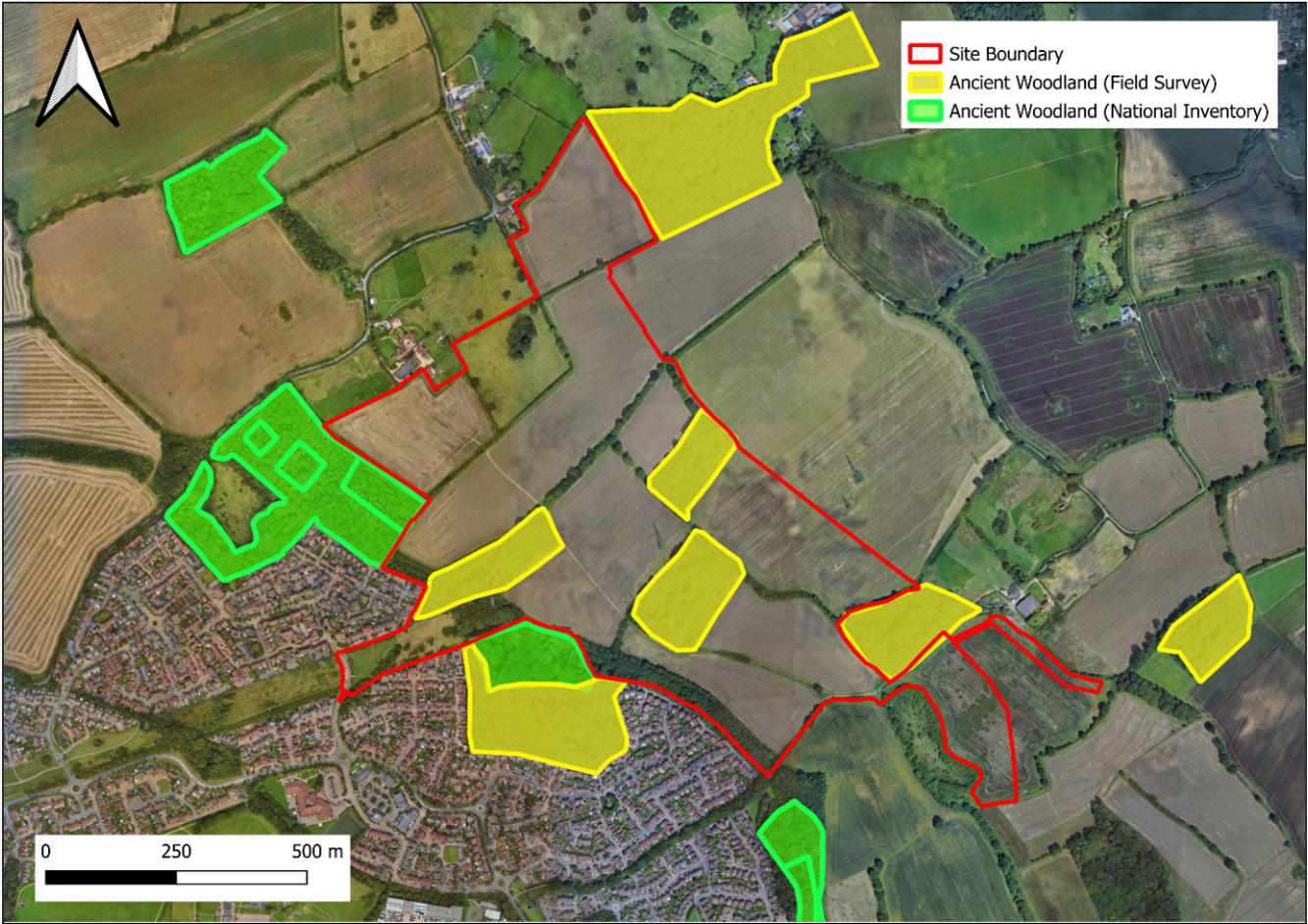
There are some Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that run through the Site. These include footpaths and a bridleway.

Water Resources and Flood Risk

The Site is located in Flood Zone 1, where there is a low risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Most of the Site is not at risk from surface water flooding, however there is a small section of the Site near to a watercourse that is likely to experience surface water flooding. There are also a few minor surface water flow routes that follow dips in the Site’s topography.

The Site is at risk of groundwater flooding and overlies a principal aquifer. The Site lies within Groundwater Source Protection Zone III. Principal aquifers are strategically important rock units that have high permeability and water storage capacity which are designated by the Environment Agency.

Figure 2: Ancient Woodland within and adjacent to the Site



Archaeology

No Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck sites have been identified on or within the vicinity of the Site.

The Site lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance which highlights the potential for archaeological remains. 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. Trial trenching undertaken at the Site in 2023 found little interest.

Built Heritage

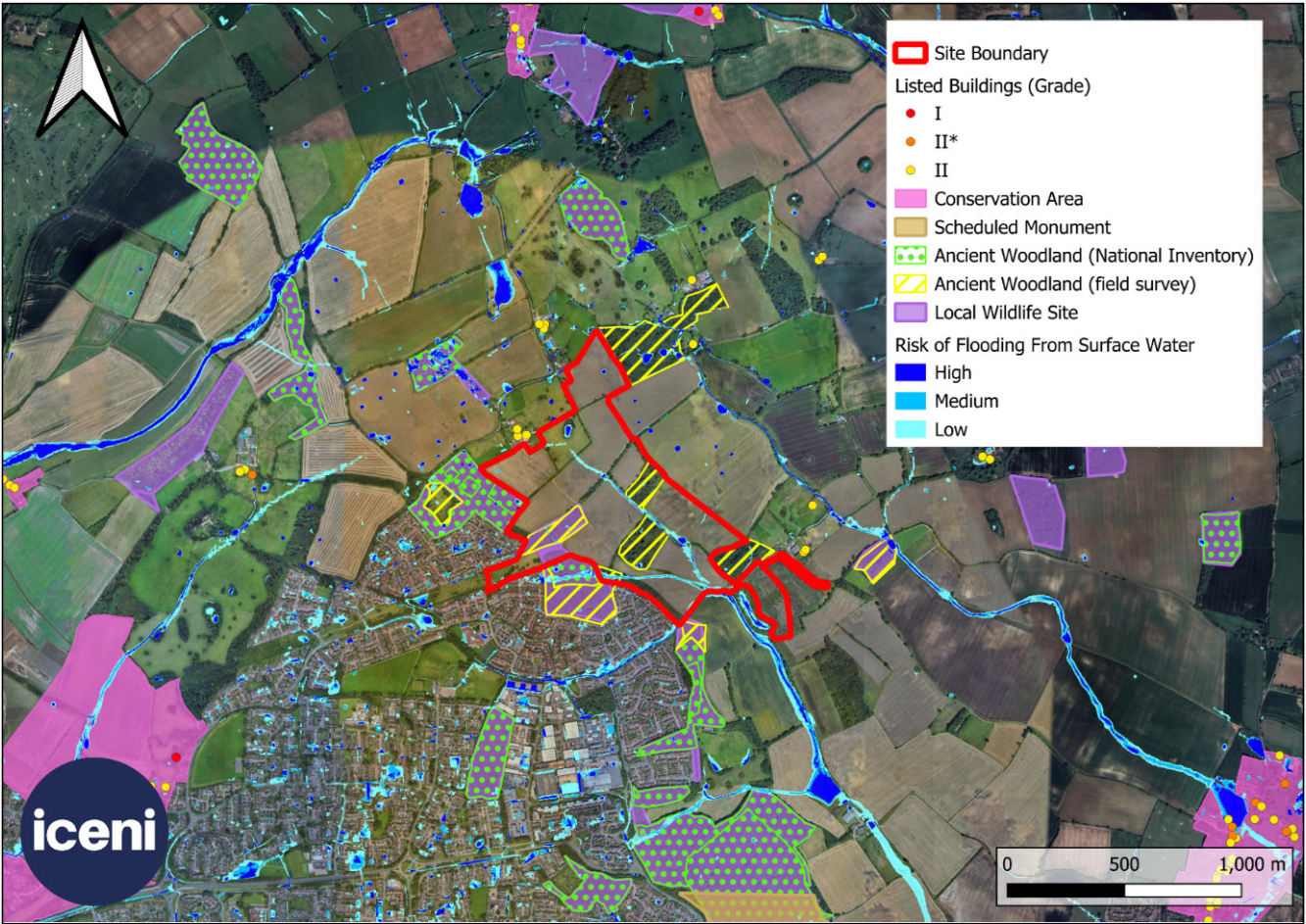
There are no heritage assets of national importance within the Site, such as listed buildings or Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest. There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Site.

There are 11 listed buildings within 1km of the Site, all of which are Grade II listed. A Grade II listed building is a building of special architectural or historic interest, warranting preservation, and is considered nationally important.

Landscape
Some areas of the Site lie within Landscape Character Areas 220 and 221 (North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment). Some areas of the south-east of the Site lie within Landscape Character Area 39 (Middle Beane Valley).

Figure 3 below shows the environmental sensitivities around the Site.

Figure 3: Environmental Sensitivities



Background to the EIA Process

The Need for EIA

An ES records the findings of an EIA. An ES allows for the potential environmental impacts of a development proposal to be understood.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the ‘EIA Regulations’) describe when an EIA is required by law. The EIA Regulations also describe what information must be included in an ES. The Proposed Development is an urban development project within category 10 (b) of Schedule 2 of the EIA regulations, which because of its nature, scale and location, has the potential to create significant effects on the environment.

In an EIA, a specialist will determine the significance of an environmental impact relating to their topic area (for example, Socio-Economics, Landscape and Visual Impact or Noise and Vibration). They will do this by assessing who or what is being affected – this is known as receptor sensitivity. They will also assess how big the change is from the existing conditions at the Site – this is known as magnitude of impact. If needed, the specialist has then suggested mitigation measures. Mitigation measures will reduce, avoid or offset these environmental effects.

Residual effects are those effects that will remain after mitigation measures are put in place.

Approach to the ES

The Applicant submitted an EIA Scoping Request in March 2023 to the Council, to determine which topics would be included in the ES. The Council also requested the opinion of statutory consultees, including Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Throughout the ‘Scoping’ stage, discussions were had with the Council and the statutory consultees to review the technical chapters proposed and the assessment methodologies to reach an agreement on the approach to the EIA. Following these discussions, the Council

issued their opinion on the scope of the EIA in June 2023.

The Council confirmed that the below topics should be included in the ES as topics where there would be the potential for significant environmental effects:

- Socio-Economics;
- Air Quality;
- Transport;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Ecology;
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Water Environment and Flood Risk;
- Archaeology;
- Built Heritage;
- Waste;
- Human Health;
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases;
- Soils and Agricultural Land; and
- Utilities, Services and Infrastructure.

The Council agreed that the following topics could be scoped out of the EIA:

- Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing;
- Energy and Sustainability;

- Wind Microclimate; and
- Contamination.

The Applicant discussed the Scoping Opinion with the Council in July 2023. In August 2023, the Council agreed that Waste could be scoped out of the ES.

Structure

The ES is made up of three volumes, which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Structure of the ES Report

	Topic	Responsibility
Volume I: Main Text		
1	Introduction and EIA Methodology	Iceni Projects
2	Description of Site, Surroundings and Background	Iceni Projects
3	Utilities and Construction	Iceni Projects and Brookbanks
4	Description of Development	Iceni Projects
5	Alternatives	Iceni Projects
6	Air Quality	Waterman
7	Archaeology	Iceni Projects
8	Built Heritage	Iceni Projects
9	Ecology	CSA Environmental
10	Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Iceni Projects
11	Landscape and Visual Impact	Iceni Projects
12	Noise and Vibration	Waterman
13	Socio-Economics	Iceni Projects
14	Soils and Agricultural Land	Kernon Countryside Consultants Ltd
15	Transport	Woods Hardwick
16	Water Environment and Flood Risk	Woods Hardwick
17	Cumulative Effects	Iceni Projects (with input from the EIA team)
18	Residual Effects	Iceni Projects (with input from the EIA team)
Vol II	Technical Appendices	Various
Vol III	Non-Technical Summary ('NTS')	Iceni Projects (with input from the EIA team)

The Proposed Development

The Applicant has submitted a hybrid application for planning permission for the Proposed Development. The description of the hybrid planning application is as follows:

“Hybrid application for a for a residential-led development comprising residential (Use Class C3), educational use (Use Class F1), a community hub (Use Class F2) with associated new internal roads, access, parking, cycling infrastructure, landscaping and other associated infrastructure.

Detailed application comprises the construction of vehicle access and an active travel link via Mendip Way, with associated landscaping and drainage works.

Detailed permission is also sought for the creation of an emergency vehicle access point off Warrensgreen Lane, and active travel connection off Merrick Close.

The outline application area, for which all matters are reserved for future determination, comprises the erection of 640 dwellings (Use Class C3), a 2.1ha site for a primary school, a further 1.9ha land reserved for educational use (Use Class F1), a site for a community hub (Use Class F2), with associated infrastructure.”

The illustrative masterplan, which shows one way that the Proposed Development could come forward, is shown below. The masterplan was approved by NHDC in November 2024.

Figure 4: Illustrative Masterplan



The Proposed Development will provide up to 640 residential units and 6 self-build plots. Out of the 640 dwellings, 40% will be affordable.

Affordable housing is housing which is deemed affordable to those with a household income at or below the median, as rated by the national government or a local government by a recognized housing affordability index.

There will be a mix of size and tenure of the residential dwellings, which will include apartments and housing. The residential areas would be distributed throughout the Site.

The Proposed Development would provide a site for a primary school, to be delivered by Hertfordshire County Council, as well as additional land for education use. The proposed primary school area extends to 2.1ha and would accommodate a 2FE primary school. There is additional land reserved for education use, which extends to 1.9ha. The proposed primary school, as well as the additional land reserved for education use, are both situated within the north east of the Site, adjacent to Dell Spring.

The Proposed Development would provide a community hub immediately west of the proposed primary school, in the north eastern area of the Site, adjacent to Dell Spring. The community hub would extend up to 0.2ha (2,000sqm equivalent) and would be for flexible community use. The exact use of the community hub will be determined through future reserved matters applications. The different land uses are shown in the parameter plan in **Figure 5**.

How will flood risk and drainage be managed on the Site?
The Proposed Development will not increase the risk of flooding on the Site, or to neighbouring properties.

Surface water drainage will be managed through the discharge of water into an attenuation pond, ditches and

swales.

How will waste be managed?
Details of waste and servicing procedures will be refined at a later stage, during the submission of Reserved Matters applications. However, the residential waste collections are likely to be handled by NHDC’s standard waste collection services and commercial waste collections will be handled by a separate contractor to be appointed by the commercial operator.

How will the Proposed Development address climate change, sustainability and energy?
The Proposed Development will implement several design principles, such as:

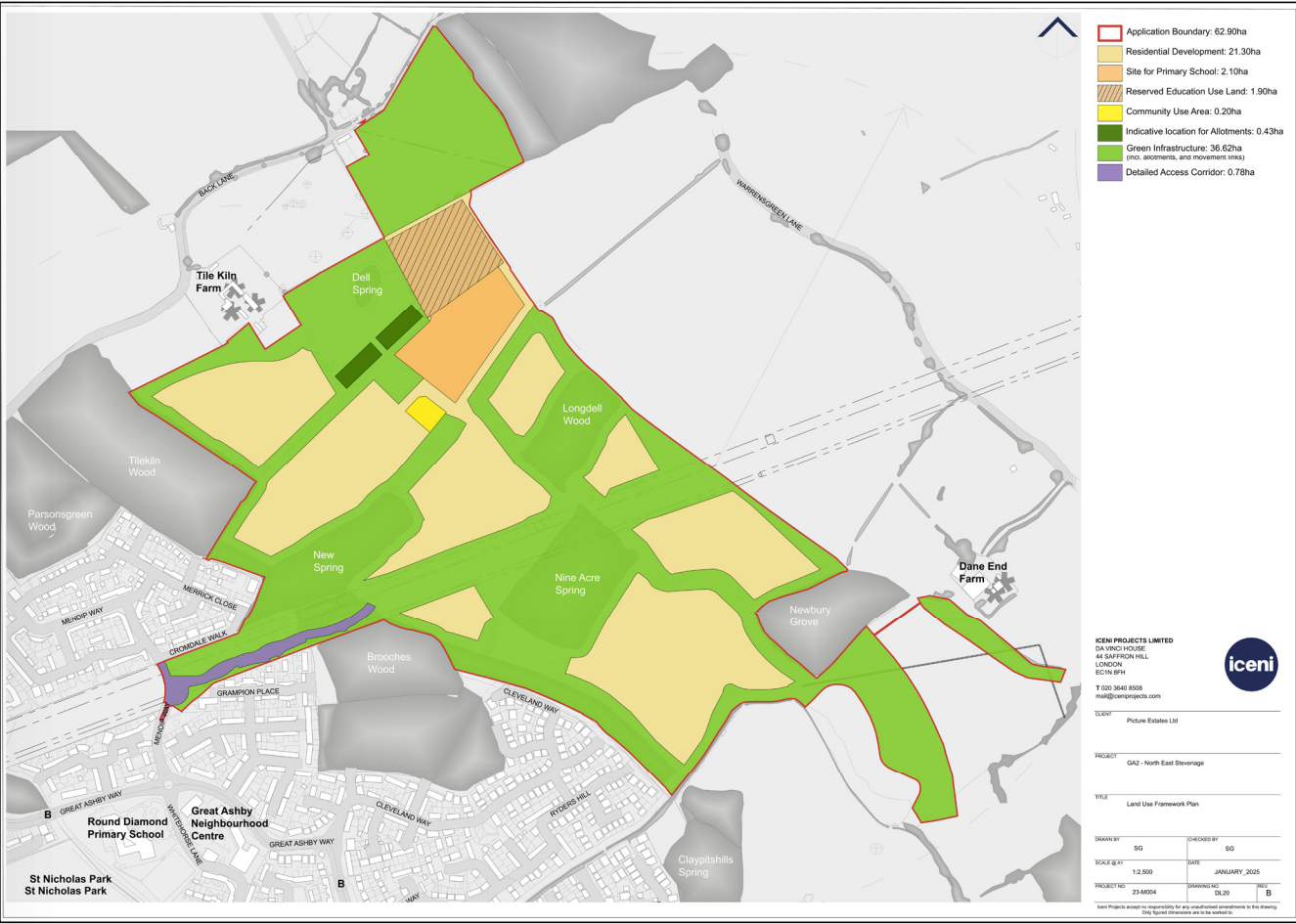
- The delivery of gas-free dwellings and non-residential buildings;
- Compliance with industry energy standards;
- Integration of renewable and low carbon technology to deliver efficient space and water heating;
- Embedding of circular economy principles;
- Compliance with industry water efficiency standards; and
- Encouragement of drought-resistant planting.

What information was the Environmental Impact Assessment based on?
The Environmental Impact Assessment was based on the Parameter Plans submitted with the outline planning application.

Construction
Construction Programme

Initial works are likely to commence in 2027 and the works will be undertaken on a phased basis. It is anticipated that construction works would take place

Figure 5: Land Use Plan



over a 5-year period. It is expected that the Proposed Development would be completed and operational by 2032.

What environmental management mitigation measures will be put in place?
The mitigation measures needed to prevent, reduce and / or offset significant adverse effects identified during construction works of the Proposed Development are detailed in **Chapter 6 to Chapter 16** of the Environmental Statement.

The Construction Environmental Management Plan ('CEMP') would identify and summarise potential issues

relevant to the enabling and construction works that would need to be undertaken on the Site. The CEMP would set out the standards, procedures and monitoring processes for dealing with and monitoring environmental issues. The CEMP would also include details on roles and responsibilities, control measures and activities to be undertaken to minimise environmental effects, as well as monitoring and record-keeping requirements. It will also provide a framework for engaging with local residents and communities and their representatives throughout the construction period.

Alternatives

The Applicant has considered options other than developing the Site.

The options considered by the Applicant are:

- Option 1: Alternative Site / Site Boundaries;
- Option 2: Do Nothing Alternative, i.e. leave the Site as it is; and
- Option 3: Alternative Designs.

Option 1: Alternative Site / Site Boundaries

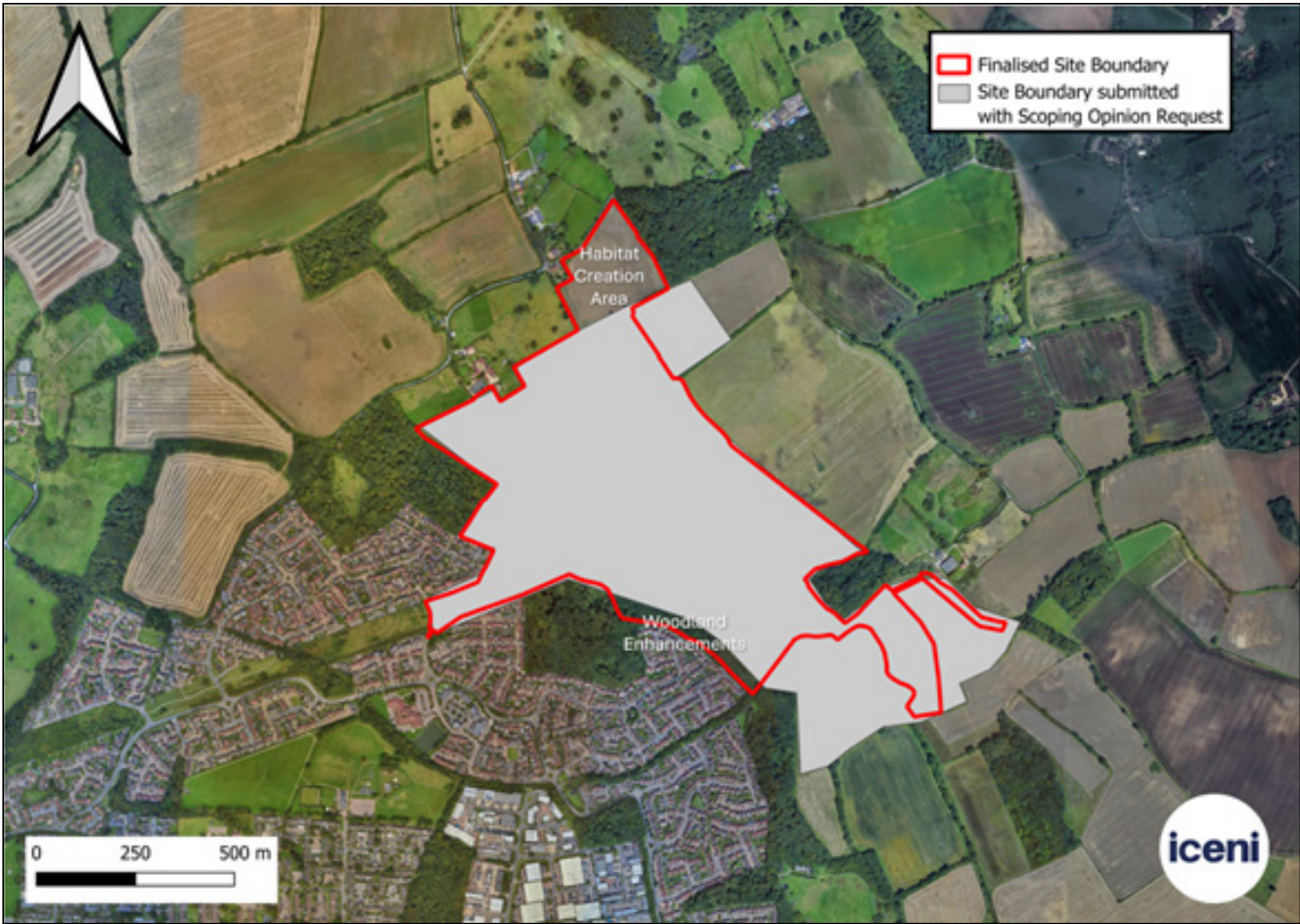
No alternative sites were considered by the Applicant due

to their interest in the Site. Minor amendments have been made to the Site boundary since an EIA Scoping Opinion was submitted, as detailed in **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 4**.

As shown in **Figure 6** below, the Site boundary submitted with the Scoping Opinion Request (shown with grey fill) included an additional parcel to the east of the Site and included a larger area within the southern section of the Site. The finalised Site boundary (shown with red line) includes an additional parcel to the north east of the Site, and an additional parcel to the south west of the Site.

The finalised Site boundary allows for a Habitat Creation Area in the north east of the Site, and woodland

Figure 6: Site Boundary Amendments



enhancement within the south west of the Site, to be brought forward within the Proposed Development. The alternative to this is for the Site to follow the boundary submitted with the Scoping Opinion Request, with no Habitat Creation Area and limited woodland enhancements. Under the alternative Site boundary, the Proposed Development would not be able to meet the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, a key benefit.

Option 2: Do Nothing Alternative

In the absence of the Proposed Development, it is reasonable to assume that the Site would largely remain in its present condition i.e. agricultural fields in arable use. In this 'Do Nothing' scenario, the Site would not be developed and thus there would be no loss in agricultural land.

In the absence of the Proposed Development, a number of benefits would not be realised, including:

- The provision of a significant number of new homes in an area which needs more housing and affordable housing;
- The provision of new community facilities, such as delivering a new community hub that would provide services to residents and communities in the local area;
- The provision of accessible public open space and green infrastructure which would provide services to surrounding residents and communities in the local area;
- The provision of a site for a new primary school to be delivered by NHDC; and
- The opportunity to expand bus services in the local area.

The 'Do Nothing' Scenario would not achieve the significant beneficial Socio-Economic effects as identified

in **Chapter 17** of this ES, namely the beneficial effect on the local housing market.

For the reasons summarised above, the 'Do Nothing' Scenario has been discounted.

Option 3: Alternative Designs

Design Consultation and Considerations

The design of the Proposed Development has been influenced by consultation with stakeholders including, but not limited to, the Environment Agency, highway authorities and Design Review Panels (DRP).

Details of the feedback from the DRP sessions and how it has influenced the design evolution of the Proposed Development are included within the Design and Access Statement.

The environmental studies and initial modelling undertaken for the Site have also informed the design of the Proposed Development, as have the constraints and opportunities of the Site.

Main Alternative Designs

Emergency Access

An alternative emergency access point was studied by the Applicant. The Proposed Development includes an emergency access point that connects to Warrensgreen Lane. The alternative design to this was the location of the emergency access point within the Dell Spring area, however this alternative was not taken forward to protect the landscape character and setting of the Tine Kiln Farm complex and the Grade II listed buildings located there.

Building Heights

The Proposed Development considered alternative heights and massing. The Proposed Development provides sensitive boundary treatment to respect the more open landscape character to the north and east of the Site. The alternative design to this was to have

taller buildings located closer to sensitive boundaries. This alternative design was not taken forward so that the Proposed Development could create sensitive edges to respond to the landscape character and retain attractive views where appropriate.

Gateway Park Access

The Proposed Development was originally going to be submitted in outline, with all matters reserved (layout, scale, appearance and landscaping) except for the highway design of the main point of access into the Site.

A hybrid application has instead been taken forward so that there is a sufficient level of detail for NHDC to assess the application. The detailed component for the Proposed Development now includes landscaping for all of the gateway park, including attenuation ponds, swales and planting.

The Proposed Development considered alternative layouts of the gateway park access corridors, specifically where active travel routes should be located in relation to the vehicle access route. The Proposed Development locates the active travel route along the Gateway Park access corridor to the north of the access road. The alternative design to this was the location of the active travel route to the south of the access road. Compared to the alternative design, the Proposed Development minimises the amount of road crossings between the existing Neighbourhood Centre and the new Community Hub and provides direct access to the park, which has transport and accessibility and socio-economic benefits.

Technical Assessments

Air Quality

Introduction

To establish baseline conditions at and around the Site, information has been taken from a review of NHDC’s and SBC’s Air Quality Annual Status Reports, published as part of the LAQM regime. This includes a review of NHDC’s and SBC’s monitoring data.

To assess the effects of the Proposed Development on local air quality, high sensitive receptors were identified. These high sensitive receptors comprise existing residential properties, and future residential properties and future users of the primary school that will be introduced as part of the Proposed Development. The construction of the Proposed Development would be undertaken in stages - the construction assessment therefore considered future residential and primary school users whilst construction is ongoing.

Construction

The main likely effects on local air quality during demolition and construction relate to nuisance dust and exhaust emissions from construction vehicles and plant.

A range of measures to minimise or prevent dust and reduce exhaust emissions generated from construction activities would be set out in a Construction Environment Management Plan and implemented throughout the demolition and construction phase. Therefore, it is considered effects due to dust emissions would be negligible.

Construction traffic movements would be agreed with NHDC and consideration given to the avoidance, or limited use of roads during peak hours. Considering these measures, the effect of construction vehicles on local air quality would be negligible.

Construction plant emissions would not have a significant effect on local air quality during the construction of the Proposed Development.

Operation

A detailed modelling exercise has been undertaken to assess likely effects on local air quality associated with changes to road traffic from the Proposed Development. The modelling indicates levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulates would not exceed nationally accepted limits at any of the nearby residential properties or within the Proposed Development in 2030. It is concluded that the effect of the Development on levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulates would be negligible.

Archaeology

Introduction

This chapter documents the assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development with respect to archaeology. The scope of the assessment has been agreed with the Archaeological Advisory Team at Hertfordshire Council and includes an assessment of both construction and operational phase

This ES chapter has been informed by an archaeological DBA, geophysical survey, and archaeological trial trenching, which scope have been designed in consultation with the Senior Historic Advisor at Hertfordshire Council. Industry best-practice and relevant guidance have been followed in conducting the assessment.

There are no listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens recorded within the Site boundary. The Proposed Development lies within an area where archaeological research has been carried out previously.

The archaeological trial trenching evaluation carried out to date on Site exposed limited archaeological assets of low sensitivity mostly localised in the north-west of the Site.

To fully inform the required mitigation measures, an additional phase of geophysical survey and archaeological trial trenching evaluation will be carried

out within the Habitat Creation Area/BNG, to be carried out post-determination and addressed through planning condition.

The construction of the Proposed Development will comprise below ground intrusions with the potential to have an adverse impact on surviving archaeological remains prior to the implementation of mitigation measures.

To manage potential adverse effects, the LPA, in consultation with Senior Historic Advisor at Hertfordshire Council, and in accordance with policies relating to the protection of the Historic Environment contained within the NPPF, may attach an archaeological pre-commencement condition of planning to permission for the Proposed Development.

If required, any potential adverse impacts to sub-surface archaeological remains during the construction phase could be successfully mitigated by a programme of archaeological mitigation (preservation by record). This could comprise a combination of limited excavation and recording, to be carried out prior to the commencement of below-ground works associated with the Proposed Development, and archaeological watching brief on intrusive groundworks during construction as needed

Any archaeological site-based work required would be agreed with the Senior Historic Advisor at Hertfordshire Council and undertaken before below ground impacts relating to construction commence. The method statements, or WSI, detailing any mitigation requirement, would be developed in consultation with the Senior Historic Advisor at Hertfordshire Council and submitted against the relevant condition followed by the reporting of the physical fieldwork. If significant archaeological remains are encountered during mitigation, assessment and publication of the results may also be required.

It is assumed that the effects of the other developments in conjunction with the Proposed Development would

not form an additional cumulative effect on any below ground archaeological assets.

Completed Development

Impacts to archaeological assets that may survive on the Site are limited to construction phase works. It is not anticipated that there would be any effects to archaeological remains once the Proposed Development is operational.

Built Heritage

Introduction

The Proposed Development presents the opportunity to continue the established pattern of urban expansion to the north east of Stevenage at Great Ashby. The assessment of effect has been based on a ‘worse-case scenario’ and any changes to the baseline would be increasingly reduced as the proposed mitigation reaches maturity. The development offers numerous public benefits through the provision of housing and community uses, these benefits would need to be considered against any adverse effects (harm) to heritage assets.

Construction

The assessment has found that temporary adverse effects are likely occur as a result of the construction phase to the heritage assets of Tilekiln Farm House (Grade II) & Barn to East of Farmhouse at Tilekiln Farm (Grade II) & Barn Group around Courtyard at Tilekiln Farm (Grade II). This is due to the change in the appreciation of the value of these heritage assets due to the visibility of construction machinery and noise and dust arising through construction activity in their settings. Whilst adverse (harmful) due to the proximity of the Site to these assets, these effects would be temporary and reversible.

The impact to the remaining assets [Farm Buildings Next the Road at Friends Green Farm, Friends Green Farmhouse, & East Barn and Attached Outbuildings at Friends Green Farm, Dane End Cottage, Dane End Farmhouse & Granary at Dane End Farm, 4 meters to west of House (Grade II), and the historic hedgerows

within the site (NDHA)], would be comparatively less than those relating to Tilekiln Farm during the Construction phase, albeit temporary adverse (harmful) effects would still arise. There would be no impact to a number of assets [The Thatched Cottage, Barn at Warrensgreen]. This is primarily due to the greater distance between the remaining assets and the Site and the extent of landscape screening.

Any impact during construction would be mitigated through measures which include a phased approach to the development. This ensures that a sensitive approach is adopted, and the setting of heritage assets is carefully considered throughout the construction phase.

Operation

Whilst adverse effects (harm) would arise to the heritage assets at Tilekiln Farm, and Dane End Farm, these would be at low levels only. These effects have been reduced through sensitive design which includes buffers and setbacks between the Site and these assets and screening through the strengthening, and planting of, hedgerows with native species. The effect would continue to reduce as the vegetation matures and the development becomes embedded within the wider landscape, as well as with further detailed design within future applications.

There would be no impact to all remaining assets during the operational phase. The proposals are of high architectural quality and placemaking principles are proposed – incorporating areas of specific character, references to the local vernacular and a well-considered landscaping scheme. This ensures the development appropriately mitigates change within the wider area of heritage assets.

Where low levels of harm (adverse effects) are found, this will need to be balanced against the Proposed Development’s public benefits. These public benefits include the proposed primary school and increasing the housing provision to secure a stronger 5-year housing

land supply.

Ecology

Introduction

The method for this assessment is based on the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) in the UK and Ireland 2018 (Version 1.1 Updated September 2019), published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). These guidelines provide a robust framework for ecological assessment, which has been approved by all relevant national agencies. Methods for all surveys follow industry standards and are provided in the relevant appendices.

The Site is dominated by arable habitats of limited ecological interest along with ancient woodlands, some limited grassland and hedgerow habitats.

The Site supports a locally important assemblage of bats and birds, with relevant legislative protections also considered with regard to bats, badger, nesting birds, hedgerows and veteran trees.

Construction

Likely significant effects during construction phase include moderate adverse effects in respect of woodlands (including Local Wildlife Sites), hedgerows, bats and birds, with potential legal offences in respect of badgers.

Mitigation measures include embedded mitigation and additional mitigation including compensatory habitat creation/restoration, ancient woodland buffers, reinforcing wider habitat connectivity, a sensitive lighting design for bats and other wildlife, and provision of enhancement measures including bird and bats boxes trees. Relevant licensing will be secured in respect of badgers and off-site mitigation will be provided for farmland birds.

Operation

Likely significant effects during the operational phase

include moderate adverse effect in respect of LWSs, woodlands and bats. Mitigation measures include embedded mitigation and additional mitigation including appropriate long-term management and protection of retained woodlands, sensitive lighting and badger corridors.

Cumulative Effects

No significant cumulative effects are predicted.

Conclusion

Following the effective implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures proposed, there are no significant residual effects arising from the Proposed Development during construction or operational phases.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Introduction

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within North Hertfordshire, the East of England, and the UK more widely have been reducing over recent years. This trend is expected to continue into the future as the UK continues towards its target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Under the 2°C global warming scenario, it is anticipated that temperatures will increase. The East of the UK may be subject to around 4°C warming during the summer, whilst winter temperatures could increase by 1.5°C. Under this scenario, changes to rainfall patterns may result in wetter winters, and drier summers.

Construction

GHG Emissions

In order to minimise the production of GHG emissions during the construction of the Proposed Development, a number of mitigation measures will be put in place. This will include the embedding of circular economy principles within the design of the Proposed Development, and the procuring of materials in

consideration of sustainability credentials and embodied GHG emissions. In addition, lean design principles, and the preferential use of locally sourced, recycled and reused materials will be employed, where appropriate, within the construction of the Proposed Development. As a result of the embedding of these measures within the design of the Proposed Development, the Proposed Development will have a negligible (not significant) effect on the global climate with respect to GHG emissions during its construction.

Climate Change Resilience

During the construction of the Proposed Development, measures will be implemented to ensure risks to sensitive receptors, such as site staff, construction traffic and structures, will be mitigated. These measures will include, but are not limited to, day-to-day assessment of climatic conditions, and the undertaking of demolition and construction works in line with relevant legislation, regulations and best practice. Through the implementation of these measures, there will be a negligible (not significant) effect on sensitive receptors present on the Site during the construction of the Proposed Development as a result of the projected effects of climate change.

Operation

GHG Emissions

In order to minimise the production of GHG emissions during the operation of the Proposed Development, a number of mitigation measures have been embedded within the design. This includes, but is not limited to, the integration of extensive active travel corridors to promote the use of sustainable and active modes of transport, the delivery of electric vehicle (EV) charging facilities, the employment of a ‘fabric first’ approach to minimise energy demand within buildings, and the incorporation of renewable and low carbon technology to serve space and heating demand and to generate carbon-free electricity on-Site. These measures will aid in reducing the GHG emissions associated with the energy consumed

during the operation of the Proposed Development as well as those associated with transport. Through the embedding of these measures within the design of the Proposed Development, as well as the additional measures that may be implemented as the detailed design continues, the Proposed Development will have a negligible (not significant) effect on the global climate with respect to GHG emissions during its operation, even in the absence of projected grid decarbonisation.

Climate Change Resilience

During the operation of the Proposed Development, measures will be implemented to ensure risks to sensitive receptors, such as occupiers, visitors and structures, will be mitigated. These measures will include, but are not limited to, the incorporation of a site-wide surface water management strategy to mitigate the risk of flooding, the incorporation of native and drought-resilient species within the Landscaping Strategy to mitigate the potential effects of water scarcity, and the incorporation of measures within the design of the Proposed Development to mitigate the potential health risks associated with internal overheating. Through the embedding of these measures, as well as the additional measures that may be implemented as the detailed design continues, there will be a negligible (not significant) effect on sensitive receptors present on the Site during the operation of the Proposed Development as a result of the projected effects of climate change.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Introduction

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment considers the effects on the landscape character of the Site and surroundings, and the visual amenity of people in the area, identifying mitigation measures in order to avoid, reduce, or offset any significant adverse effects. The assessment also evaluates the residual effects after implementing these measures.

The proposed development will bring significant changes to the landscape and visual character of the Site

and the landscape adjoining it to the east and south, but more limited effects to the landscape to the north and the townscape to the west.

Construction

During construction, there will be noticeable adverse effects due to the presence of construction activities and equipment. However, these effects are temporary.

Operation

Once the development is complete, the new residential areas and green infrastructure will integrate into the surrounding landscape and townscape, although the change in land use and character of the Site will still result in some adverse effects. Over time, as the new vegetation matures, the visual impact will lessen, and the development will provide environmental and social benefits, such as new open spaces and recreational routes.

Overall, while there are some significant adverse effects as a result of the change in character of the Site, the proposed development also offers positive contributions to the landscape and community.

Noise and Vibration

Introduction

The assessment of the noise and vibration effects during the construction and operational phase has been established in accordance with published guidelines and best practice. To inform the assessment, baseline noise conditions were established through survey undertaken in May 2023 from Thursday 11th May to Tuesday 16th May 2023, thereby covering both a weekday and weekend period and is therefore consider robust on which to base the assessment. This baseline approach was agreed in advance with North Herts District Council.

Construction

During the construction phase an increase in the prevailing conditions are predicted when works are undertaken at the shortest distance to the sensitive

receptors (residential housing, schools). With the introduction of a construction and environmental management plan (CEMP) levels would be reduced to an acceptable level. Construction traffic would be controlled through a construction logistics transport plan (CLTP) agreed with North Herts District Council to minimise any potential impact on the local road networks. This would cover routing and potentially avoidance of rush-hour periods.

Operation

The development is predominantly residential which is regarded as a ‘quiet’ land-use. Additional road traffic noise on the existing local road network due to the Proposed Development has been predicted and shown to result in predominantly negligible (less than 1dB which is imperceptible) increases. A relatively large increase in road traffic noise is predicted on Mendip Way which is the access route into the Proposed Development.

A new road off Mendip Way into the Proposed Development will introduce a new noise source in the area south of Cromwell Walk and north of Grampian Place. Landscaping between the new road and the residential housing can be used to reduce noise levels through screening.

Noise from other sources such as plant noise, servicing and delivery vehicles and the AGP (artificial grass pitch or external sports area) associated with the proposed school, would be controlled through planning conditions. Mitigation measures will be incorporated as part of the scheme to ensure operational noise is reduced to acceptable levels so as not to cause a nuisance. Plant noise limits have been recommended based on the measured noise levels.

Socio-Economics

Introduction

The socio-economic and health assessment in Chapter 4 presents an assessment of the potential socio-economic and health effects arising from the construction and the

operation of the Proposed Development. The socio-economic assessment focuses on North Hertfordshire and Stevenage, which are identified as the ‘Impact Area’ and draws on data from the East of England to compare.

Key receptors evaluated include temporary employment during construction, effects on existing uses and employment, local spending from new residents, demand for education, demand for healthcare and demand for community facilities, and changes in deprivation levels. Different methodologies are applied to each receptor to determine the significance of the effect. Receptor sensitivity and effect magnitude is categorised from high to very low, while the duration of effects is classified as short-term (less than 5 years), medium-term (5-25 years), or long-term (25+ years). The significance of effect is still assessed from major to negligible, with effects identified as either beneficial or adverse.

Existing baseline conditions are as follows:

- Demographic Profile - there is a higher proportion of younger people aged 0-14 in the Impact Area compared to the East of England and England. There is a smaller proportion of older people (aged 60 and over) within the Impact Area than the East of England and England.
- Deprivation Profile – North Hertfordshire is in the 20% of least deprived local authorities in the country.
- Economic and Labour Market Profile – The Impact Area has a higher working-age population in comparison to the East of England and England.
- Housing Profile – There is significant housing need in North Hertfordshire, with a persistent shortfall in housing delivery. House prices are also higher than the UK average.
- Social Infrastructure Audit – Primary school and secondary schools are operating below capacity,

although the GP practices in the Impact Area are operating above capacity.

The future baseline assumes that, although the Proposed Development would not be delivered, the surrounding cumulative schemes would be delivered and introduce new social infrastructure into the area.

Construction

The construction phase is estimated to support 300 direct jobs per year at the Site. This is a beneficial effect, although not significant, in the East of England.

Operation

Once completed and operational, the Proposed Development will provide up to 640 residential units (including 40% affordable provision), which could have a beneficial (significant) effect considering the existing housing market and housing requirements in the area. These new residents would boost the local labour market and also will be spending approximately £15.5 million per year within the Impact Area (not significant), which could support the vitality and viability of local centres, businesses and services.

Soils and Agricultural Land

Introduction

This chapter considers the impacts on agricultural land and soils. The effect on agricultural land is assessed against the quality of the land, which is measured by a system of Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). The highest quality land is Grade 1, the poorest quality is Grade 5, and Grade 3 (good to moderate quality) is split into two subgrades.

Planning policy defines land in Grades 1, 2 and 3a as the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Across England as a whole that amounts to about 42% of agricultural land. In this District it amounts to about 57% of agricultural land, so it is a common resource. This site is mostly of poorer quality land. Only 26% is BMV.

Construction

The better quality land lies in areas proposed for outdoor access and biodiversity. The soils in these areas are not, therefore, likely to be affected.

Agricultural land will be lost, but the soil resource will largely be preserved for use within the development. Because of the amount of better quality land involved the effect is considered to be a significant adverse effect, but in the local and regional context the impact is modest.

Operation

Effects on soils and agricultural land occur during construction, with no additional impacts during the operational phase.

Transport

Introduction

This chapter of the ES presents an assessment of the Transport related matters in regard to the Proposed Development. Potential impacts on transport both negative and positive are evaluated.

The current transport situation for all modes of travel to the area were accessed to determine whether the Proposed Development is viable in terms of transport.

The transport impact of the Proposed Development was carried out in a number of ways. A junction capacity assessment was undertaken, for 14 junctions in the area of the Site, including the site access using Junctions 10 software. The baseline data for this was traffic counts collected in June 2023. The traffic data for the future years was calculated by using growth factors from the TEMPro database.

An additional 3 junctions were assessed using traffic data from the Comet Model Local Plan Run 7.

An Accessibility Audit was also carried out to assess the safety and convenience of walking and cycling routes. Existing condition of the routes at the time of visit was

taken as the baseline.

Through the Travel Plan, monitoring for the Site in terms of the success of the sustainable travel targets will be undertaken.

Construction

The effects on transport during construction are overall considered to be negligible. The Construction Traffic Management Plan ('CTMP') will outline the measures that will be taken during construction to minimise the impacts of construction. This will include details on construction access and offsite movement, onsite traffic management, loading and unloading of plant and materials, types of vehicles and frequency of movements, delivery and construction operating hours.

Operation

The overall effect of the Proposed Development once operational is considered to be minor adverse, this is related to the increase in traffic that will have a minor adverse impact on delay and accidents and safety. However, the Proposed Development will also have a positive impact as it is proposing new pedestrian and cyclist links that will improve the accessibility and connectivity for existing residents of Great Ashby. The amenity of the area will be improved with the new open spaces and play areas.

All junctions except Junction 13 have been calculated to operate with a Ratio of Flow to Capacity ('RFC') of below 1.0.

Despite Junction 13 being calculated to operate with an RFC above 1.0, junction improvement works are not being considered due to the preference of the Highway Authority to encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

Following discussion with the Highway Authority, it has been concluded that no mitigation measures are required at this location, given that the worst case scenario has

been assessed, and has been overestimated beyond any reasonable realistic assumption.

It should be highlighted that given the proposed trip distribution and existing constraints on Calder Way/ Back Lane, the assessment overestimates the trips that would use Junction 13 and therefore the results represent the worse-case scenario and is unlikely to happen.

Water Environment and Flood Risk

Introduction

This chapter of the ES presents an assessment of water resources and considers the potential impacts of the proposed development on surface water features, groundwater features and flood risk.

The assessment is supported by a separate Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy which is also supported by a Desk Study & Ground Investigation Report and Technical Note on Surface water Flow Route Diversion prepared by GEA and PJA, respectively.

The study is confined to the redline site boundary extent and the Thames Water foul drainage network into which foul water flows from the site will discharge.

Construction

Impacts to water resources during construction would be temporary. In many cases, these impacts would be mitigated by rigorous surface water and groundwater protection measures, which are standard practice in the construction industry, resulting in no significant residual effects. It has been identified that Contamination of Water Resources from Construction could have significant, temporary adverse effects and will be closely monitored.

A dialogue with both Thames Water and the EA will be maintained to establish a monitoring system that ensures the quality of the surface water and groundwater resources are not being negatively impacted by construction works.

Operation

During operation of the proposed development there would be minor impacts resulting from changes in;

- Surface water drainage
- Increase in drinking water demand
- Increase in wastewater discharge rate
- Surface water flooding

With the implementation of the proposed surface water drainage strategy and the potential channel diversion in relation to the existing surface water flow route, there could be a beneficial effect to the development site and the downstream areas as the rate and volume of surface water runoff discharged from the Site would be managed. Once the strategy is in place, runoff from the site will be restricted to the Mean Annual Flood ('Qbar') rate for all storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year event plus 40% allowance for climate change. This means that flows from the more extreme events (anything greater than the 1 in 2 year event) will be controlled, representing a betterment to the existing situation where runoff rates for each event are equivalent to the greenfield rates associated with that specific storm event.

Utilities

Introduction

The following text summarises the utilities ES chapter, particularly focusing on existing and proposed electricity infrastructure both currently within the vicinity of the site and new infrastructure required to service the development.

Construction

Existing electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure is present at the access to the site. The asset owners and have been consulted, and relevant constraints have been confirmed. These constraints have been utilised when designing the access to the

site, thereby ensuring that the design is deliverable and can be constructed in a safe manner. It is likely that other localised diversions will be required in order to facilitate the site access, but these are expected for residential developments of this scale and can be delivered during the S278 construction. The provision of new site capacity can be provided from the existing networks surrounding the development; however the electricity connection does require the installation of some offsite cables. These cables will be installed within public footpaths and roads and works will be planned so as to minimise any disruption in conjunction with local highways.

Operation

New utility infrastructure networks will be maintained and managed by the chosen network adopter as part of their statutory obligations who will ensure that networks are maintained and operational and provide consistent service to residents.

Residual Effects, Mitigation and Cumulative Effects

Cumulative Effects

The EIA Regulations require an Environmental Statement to describe the likely effects of a development on the environment when taken cumulatively with other environmental effects and any current or prospective ('reasonably foreseeable') development in the vicinity of the Site.

There are two types of cumulative effect, which are commonly known as 'Type 1' and 'Type 2' effects respectively. These are generally defined as follows:

- The combined effect of individual effects, for example noise, airborne dust or traffic on a single receptor (defined as 'effect interactions'); and,
- Type 2: The combined effects of nearby development schemes which are either consented

or under construction which may, on an individual basis, not be significant but, cumulatively, have a likely significant effect (defined as 'cumulative effects').

Cumulative Effects (Type 1)

Given the findings of the ES as presented overleaf, it is not considered that any additional significant environmental effects are identified when considered in-combination with each other.

Cumulative Effects (Type 2)

The list of cumulative schemes agreed with the Council, to be included for assessment are shown in **Figure 7**. There would be significant cumulative environmental effects during the construction phase of the proposed Development, as follows:

- Major adverse permanent cumulative effect on BMV land (Soils and Agricultural Land).
- There would be significant cumulative environmental effects during the operation phase of the proposed Development, as follows:
- Moderate adverse long-term cumulative effect on healthcare provision (Socio-Economics), this is expected to be mitigated by planning contributions.

Summary of Mitigation and Residual Effects

In summary, environmental effects during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development include the following:

Construction

- Moderate adverse effect on Tilekiln Farm House, & Barn to East of Farmhouse at Tilekiln Farm & Barn Group around Courtyard at Tilekiln Farm due to Sight and noise relating to the operation of construction equipment;
- Major adverse landscape effects on the landscape character of the Site;
- Moderate adverse visual effects on the residents of Great Ashby and Tilekiln Farm, and the users of the Hertfordshire Way;
- Major adverse visual effects on the users of the ProW network within the Site; and
- Moderate adverse effect on Tilekiln Farm, The Bungalows, Mendip Way, Grampian Place, Cromdale Walk, Future Proposed (residential/ school) due to noise.

Operation

- Major to moderate adverse landscape effects on the landscape character of the Site during operation year 1 winter;

- Moderate adverse landscape effects on the landscape character of the Site during operation year 15 summer;
- Major to moderate adverse visual effects on the users of the PRow network within the Site during operation year 1 winter;
- Moderate adverse visual effects on the users of the PRow network within the Site during operation year 15 summer;
- Major adverse effect on Mendip Way South due to road traffic noise; and
- Moderate beneficial effect on the local housing market due to Provision of housing to increase supply - 640 new homes.

Although it is likely that some adverse effects may be experienced during the construction phase of the Proposed Development, they will only be temporary in nature and mitigated as far as possible by best practice guidance. Once the Proposed Development is operational, the positive impacts associated with bringing this Proposed Development forward are considered to outweigh any negative effects.

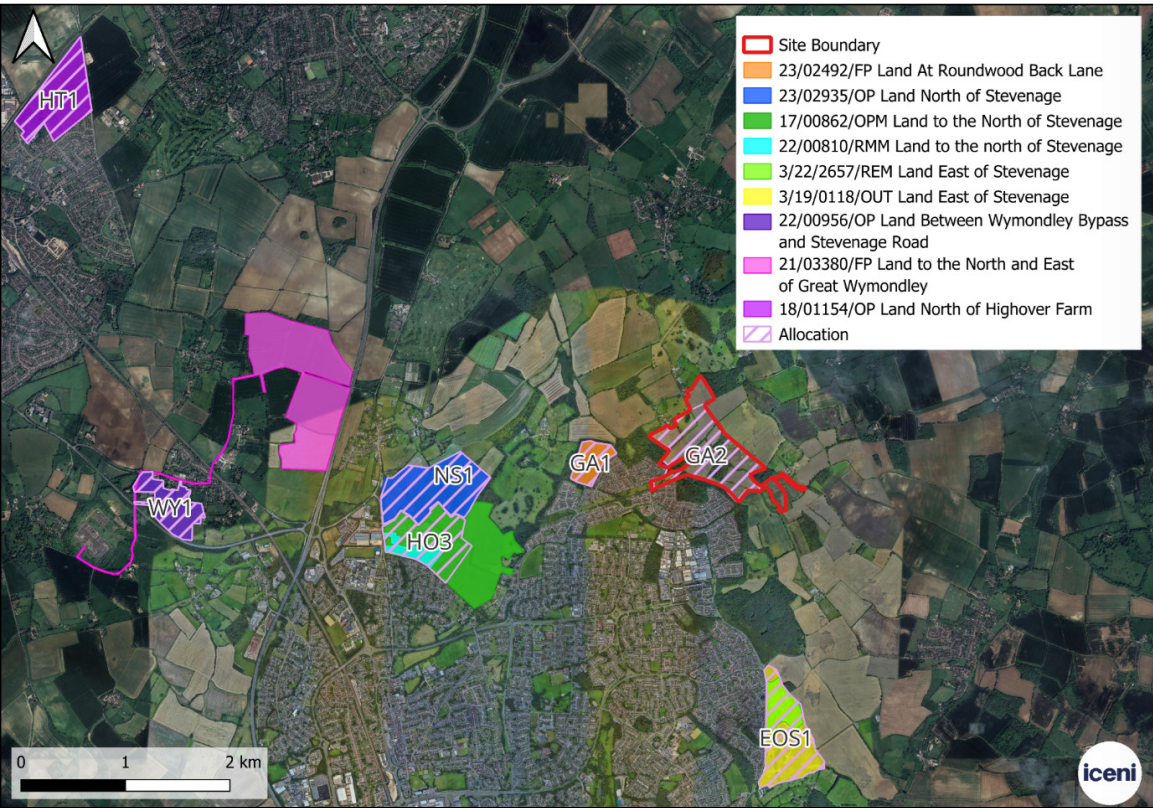
Availability of ES Volumes

All volumes of the ES (including the NTS) are available to view online on the North Hertfordshire District Council website at the following link: <https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/>

All volumes of the ES (including the NTS) can also be viewed at the Council's offices. If you need help in locating the ES, please do get in touch. The contact details are:

Telephone: 020 3640 8508 ; Email: impact_management@iceniprojects.com

Figure 7: Cumulative Schemes Considered



Archaeology | Built Heritage & Townscape | Delivery | Design | Engagement | Icení Futures | Impact Management | Place | Planning | Transport

Birmingham: The Colmore Building, 20 Colmore Circus Birmingham, B4 6AT

Edinburgh: 14 - 18 Hill Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3JZ

Glasgow: 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LW

London: Da Vinci House, 44 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8FH

Manchester: WeWork, Dalton Place, 29 John Dalton Street, Manchester, M2 6FW

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