



Active
Travel
England

Active Travel England
West Offices
Station Rise
York
YO1 6GA
Tel: 0300 330 3000

Your Ref: 25/03080/HYA
Our Ref: ATE/26/00169/HYB
Date: 20/08/2026

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Spatial Planning Service, Active Travel England

To: *Planning Team - North Herts - North Hertfordshire District Council*

Application Ref: 25/03080/HYA

Site Address: GA2, Land North-East Of Great Ashby Stevenage, Hertfordshire

Description of development: *Hybrid application 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. Full application comprises the construction of vehicle access and an active travel link via Mendip Way, with associated landscaping and drainage works. The outline application, for which all matters are reserved except means of access, comprises the erection of up to 640 dwellings (Use Class C3), a site for a primary school, further land reserved for educational use (Use Class F1), a site for a community hub (Use Class F2), with associated infrastructure.*

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

Conditional approval: ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.

1.0 Background and Summary

Active Travel England (ATE) has been reconsulted on amendments to application 25/03080/HYA following a change to the description of development and the submission of amended and additional plans and documents. The amended description continues to comprise a hybrid residential-led development of up to 640 dwellings, educational provision and associated infrastructure, with the community hub now proposed within Use Classes F2/E. The full element continues to comprise the vehicle access and active travel link from Mendip Way, with the majority of the wider development remaining in outline with all matters reserved except access.

ATE previously responded on 17 February 2026 with **no objection subject to recommendations and conditions**. At that stage ATE concluded that deferral was not proportionate because the application was supported by a substantial evidence base and

the outstanding deficiencies principally concerned detail, certainty and enforceability rather than fundamental locational or structural deficiencies. The previous response sought conditions securing the walking and cycling improvements identified through the Accessibility Audit and requiring future Reserved Matters applications to demonstrate pedestrian and cycle priority and compliance with LTN 1/20.

The reconsultation package represents a material strengthening of parts of the active travel evidence. The revised submission includes an updated July 2026 Transport Assessment, revised Means of Access, Active Travel, Public Transport, Vehicular Movement, Access and Public Rights of Way framework plans, an updated Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement, together with additional accessibility and sustainable travel material.

ATE particularly welcomes the revisions made to the detailed Mendip Way access following transport officer comments. The cycleway radii have been amended to respond to LTN 1/20, staggered barriers and keep-left bollards have been removed, and crossing details have been updated to provide zebra crossing markings and Belisha beacon posts. The revised Active Travel Framework Plan also provides greater clarity by distinguishing primary segregated foot and cycle links from secondary shared links, together with connections to the existing bridleway and Merrick Close.

The overall active travel vision is therefore stronger and clearer than at the previous consultation. Nevertheless, much of the internal network remains subject to Reserved Matters and some important matters, particularly the detailed form of Public Rights of Way improvements, delivery of off-site interventions and final internal junction and crossing arrangements, remain to be secured. The applicant's own response to the Transport Officer confirms that widths and surfacing of proposed upgraded routes are not yet available and would be established through future Reserved Matters applications.

ATE therefore considers that the amendments reinforce, rather than fundamentally alter, the basis of its previous position.

2.0 Trip Generation, Assignment & Mode shares

The revised Transport Assessment, Revision N dated July 2026, incorporates a number of amendments following the original submission. These include corrected junction-arm naming, amended assessment of Junctions 9–12, additional assessment material and a Junction 12 sensitivity test, with the latest revision also reflecting the amended development description. These changes improve the robustness and consistency of the highway assessment but do not materially change ATE's previous concern regarding the way active travel demand is forecast.

The Transport Assessment continues to provide detailed peak-hour vehicle trip generation. The residential assessment is based on 650 dwellings, providing a slight overestimate against the proposed 640 dwellings, and forecasts 456 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak and 394 in the PM peak. By comparison, the active travel assessment relies substantially on Census commuting behaviour and accessibility analysis. The TA identifies an existing walking-to-work mode share of 4.6% and acknowledges that commuting accounts for only a proportion of total trips. Existing cycling-to-work mode share is reported as 1.3%, although the TA identifies substantially greater theoretical potential for cycling based on journey distance.

This means the revised evidence still does not provide an equivalent **all-day quantified forecast of trips by walking, wheeling and cycling to, from and within the**

development. The Transport Assessment recognises that non-commuting trips also need to be made sustainably, but this has not been converted into a clear set of person-trip forecasts by active mode. Accordingly, this element of ATE's previous assessment remains only partially addressed.

The Green Travel Plan approach nevertheless includes a number of positive measures. A Travel Plan Coordinator is proposed, residents would be made aware of the Travel Plan before occupation, and each household would receive a Travel Information Pack containing walking and cycling routes, public transport information, bicycle user groups and car-sharing information. The measures also include promotion of walking, cycling initiatives, Bikeability and local cycle networks. These provide an appropriate behavioural-change framework.

The updated TA states that the overarching aspiration is for **50% of all journeys to be made by sustainable modes** and recognises the importance of SMART targets. However, the precise target is still proposed to be agreed later between the Travel Plan Coordinator and the Council and may subsequently be revised following travel surveys. ATE notes that a combined "sustainable modes" target does not identify specific targets for walking, wheeling and cycling and therefore provides limited certainty regarding the level of active travel mode shift that would actually be achieved.

Similarly, while monitoring and review are identified, the submitted evidence does not clearly establish a set of predetermined trigger points and specific remedial interventions that would automatically apply where active travel targets are not met. The reconsultation therefore improves the wider transport evidence but does not fully resolve ATE's previous concern regarding active-travel-specific targets and enforcement.

RAG Rating: AMBER

ATE Recommendation: The final Travel Plan should be secured through condition and/or legal agreement and should include quantified walking, wheeling and cycling targets, appropriate baseline and all-day person-trip forecasts, defined monitoring periods and clear trigger-based remedial measures. These should be sufficiently specific to demonstrate how the proposed 50% sustainable travel ambition will translate into increased active travel.

3.0 Off Site Infrastructure

The revised submission provides a strong strategic framework for walking and cycling connectivity. The Active Travel Framework Plan now clearly identifies primary routes as segregated footways and cycleways, secondary shared-use routes, the existing bridleway connection towards Great Ashby and the shared pedestrian/cycle connection to Merrick Close. The DAS confirms that the primary route connects with the existing bridleway along the southern boundary, while the Merrick Close link provides an additional connection into the existing residential area to the west.

The detailed Mendip Way corridor remains a particular strength. The illustrative masterplan identifies a 3m cycleway and 2m footway entering the development, alongside additional pedestrian/cycle connections around the site. The subsequent revisions to radii, barriers and crossing arrangements also demonstrate that specific LTN 1/20 issues raised through consultation have been actively addressed.

The relationship between the site and everyday facilities is reasonably strong. The DAS identifies the existing Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre approximately 250m south of the Mendip Way access point and proposes new pedestrian and cycle links between the development and Great Ashby, including the upgrading of the Merrick Close public footpath to a footway/cycleway. The development itself would provide a primary school, community hub, allotments, play areas and extensive open space. The school is intended to be accessible by new pedestrian and cycle routes from both the development and the wider Great Ashby area.

The TA also assesses accessibility using 800m and 1,600m walking isochrones from two locations representing more remote parts of the site and identifies services and facilities within a wider 2km walking and 5km cycling catchment. Existing facilities close to the Mendip Way access include Round Diamond Primary School at approximately 210m and Busy Bees Nursery at approximately 260m, alongside local shopping and recreational destinations.

ATE nevertheless considers that, because the detailed residential layout is reserved, the evidence cannot yet conclusively demonstrate that **most future buildings will be within 800m of a range of everyday amenities measured along high-quality, inclusive routes**. The framework is capable of achieving this, particularly given the proposed on-site facilities, but compliance will ultimately depend upon detailed routing, gradients, crossings and layout at Reserved Matters stage.

The cycling evidence identifies Stevenage Station and the wider Stevenage cycle network as accessible by bicycle, with National Cycle Route 12 approximately 5km from the site. Importantly, the Accessibility Audit does not simply identify destinations but audits the quality of routes using WRAT and LTN 1/20 Cycling Level of Service tools. Priority off-site interventions include widening and resurfacing the bridleway to approximately 3m, vegetation clearance and lighting improvements, improvements along the Mendip Way/Great Ashby route, and works to cycling routes serving schools, the employment area and the route towards Stevenage Station.

The principal outstanding issue is **delivery certainty**. The revised DAS continues to describe these as potential improvement options that will be agreed with the Council as the development progresses. The TA similarly records that the final interventions and extent of the developer contribution remain matters for further agreement. ATE therefore considers the identification of appropriate interventions to be satisfactory, but their delivery should not be left solely to later discussion.

Public transport provision has also been strengthened. The revised Public Transport Framework Plan commits to agreeing the number and position of stops at Reserved Matters stage so that homes are within **400m of a bus stop, reduced to 300m in steeper parts of the site**. The Planning Statement proposes three stops and a half-hourly SB12 service linking the development with Lister Hospital, Stevenage Old Town, John Henry Newman School and Stevenage Interchange, with an interim arrangement proposed during early phases. This is positive. However, while the distance-to-stop criterion can be secured through Reserved Matters, the submission identifies the proposed service as half-hourly and does not demonstrate compliance with any separate ATE Toolkit criterion requiring a specifically defined high-frequency service. This should therefore be treated separately from the spatial accessibility commitment.

RAG Rating: AMBER

ATE Recommendation: The priority walking and cycling interventions identified through the Accessibility Audit should be secured through the appropriate Section 106/S278 mechanism, including scope, timing and delivery responsibility. Reserved Matters should demonstrate route-based compliance with the 800m accessibility criterion and the 400m/300m public transport catchments, alongside continuous, inclusive and LTN 1/20-compliant connections to Great Ashby, schools, employment areas, public transport and the wider Stevenage cycle network.

4.0 Masterplanning and Permeability

The reconsultation provides further confidence regarding the intended hierarchy of movement through the development. The revised Vehicular Movement Framework establishes a principal street network, modal filtering and identified single-lane pinch points. Importantly, the DAS states that within the Community Hub the principal street will be restricted to specified vehicles and active travel, with **no private vehicular route through the civic space in front of the primary school**. This represents a positive application of the transport user hierarchy and materially supports the creation of a people-focused central area.

The revised masterplanning also responds to earlier design criticism that the scheme had been overly highway dominated. The Design Review Panel had specifically sought more direct and convenient active travel routes, and the DAS states that the masterplan was subsequently amended to provide more direct, convenient and attractive routes, redesign the spine street and strengthen the Community Hub around the school, hall and Dell Spring.

The placemaking approach is further supported by the co-location of the primary school, civic space, community hall, play area and allotments. The illustrative Community Hub proposes pedestrian and cycle access, active frontages, passive surveillance and high-quality landscape treatment. The wider DAS also expressly adopts Active Design principles, including walkable communities, connected active travel routes, mixed uses and high-quality streets and spaces.

These revisions provide a stronger basis for concluding that the scheme can prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and establish a distinctive, walkable neighbourhood. However, the distinction between framework and detailed design remains important. The DAS acknowledges that the illustrative layouts are not prescriptive and that the exact layout, streets, parking and open spaces will be determined at Reserved Matters stage. Detailed side-road treatments, continuous priority, crossing arrangements and the design justification for secondary shared-use routes therefore remain unresolved.

ATE considers these matters capable of being appropriately controlled through the Design Code and Reserved Matters process, but this control is essential to ensure the strong strategic principles are not diluted at detailed design stage.

RAG Rating: AMBER

ATE Recommendation: A Design Code and subsequent Reserved Matters applications should secure direct and coherent pedestrian and cycle routes, appropriate segregation, pedestrian and cycle priority at side roads and junctions, low vehicle speeds, modal filtering and high-quality overlooked public spaces. Any shared-use provision should be clearly justified and designed in accordance with LTN 1/20 and inclusive-design requirements.

5.0 On-Site Facilities

The reconsultation materially improves the position on cycle parking compared with the original submission. The July 2026 DAS now identifies residential cycle parking requirements based on the North Herts Design Code. One-bedroom dwellings would provide one secure space with additional secondary/communal provision; two-bedroom dwellings would provide two secure spaces; and larger dwellings would provide two secure spaces alongside increasing levels of secondary provision. Communal stores are identified as an option within higher-density areas.

This represents a significant improvement over the previous position, where detailed cycle parking provision could not be established from the submitted evidence. The TA additionally confirms an intention to provide sufficient and secure cycle parking for residents and visitors.

Nevertheless, the outline nature of the application means that final locations, access arrangements, dimensions, security, weather protection and convenience relative to dwelling entrances have not yet been demonstrated. The evidence also does not provide equivalent detailed provision for the primary school, community hub and other non-residential uses, nor does it clearly identify provision for adapted and non-standard cycles. Consequently, ATE cannot yet conclude that the entire development provides the requisite quantity and quality of cycle parking and trip-end facilities in accordance with the principles of LTN 1/20.

The previous RED position on this matter can therefore reasonably be improved, but the matter is not yet fully resolved.

RAG Rating: AMBER

ATE Recommendation: A condition should require Reserved Matters to demonstrate the quantity, type, location, security and accessibility of cycle parking for each land use, including residential visitors, the school and community uses. Provision should accommodate adapted and non-standard cycles and should be convenient, secure and readily accessible in accordance with LTN 1/20 principles.

6.0 Recommended Planning Conditions and Obligations, if applicable

ATE has reviewed the amended application alongside the original submission and its previous consultation response. The July 2026 reconsultation provides additional clarity and makes a number of substantive improvements relevant to active travel. In particular, the detailed Mendip Way access has been amended in response to LTN 1/20 concerns; the active travel framework more clearly distinguishes segregated primary routes and secondary connections; the Public Transport Framework now establishes a 400m/300m bus-stop accessibility principle; the internal movement framework provides stronger modal filtering and protection of the Community Hub from through private traffic; and the revised DAS now establishes quantifiable residential cycle parking standards.

These amendments strengthen the basis upon which ATE previously concluded that the development has the potential to achieve acceptable active travel outcomes. They do not, however, remove the need for controls at subsequent stages. The principal outstanding matters remain the absence of a comprehensive all-day walking, wheeling and cycling trip forecast; the lack of mode-specific active travel targets and predetermined remedial

triggers within the Travel Plan; certainty over the delivery, funding and timing of the off-site walking and cycling package; detailed LTN 1/20 compliance across the internal street network; and final cycle parking arrangements for all land uses.

Overall ATE Position: AMBER – NO OBJECTION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS / CONDITIONAL SUPPORT.

ATE does not consider that the amended submission warrants a deferral. This is consistent with ATE's previous position of 17 February 2026, when it was concluded that the outstanding issues related primarily to detail, certainty and enforceability rather than fundamental locational or structural deficiencies. The reconsultation has, if anything, provided greater design certainty: specific changes have been made to the Mendip Way access to address LTN 1/20 requirements, a clearer active travel hierarchy is now shown, public transport catchments have been explicitly incorporated into the framework and residential cycle parking standards have been identified.

ATE therefore considers that the remaining deficiencies are capable of being satisfactorily addressed through appropriately worded planning conditions, Section 106/S278 obligations, the Design Code and subsequent Reserved Matters approvals. Deferral would only become proportionate if those mechanisms were unable to secure the necessary active travel infrastructure or if the identified Accessibility Audit improvements were not capable of being delivered.

ATE consequently recommends that any permission secures the priority off-site walking and cycling interventions, an appropriately ambitious and enforceable Travel Plan, the 400m/300m public transport accessibility principle, detailed pedestrian and cycle priority throughout the internal network, and high-quality cycle parking for all land uses. Subject to these safeguards, ATE considers the application capable of delivering active travel outcomes consistent with the ATE Planning Application Assessment Toolkit and LTN 1/20.