

D.1

Design and Access Statement

Authored by Prior + Partners

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THE CROWN
 ESTATE

East Hemel

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The East Hemel Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared on behalf of The Crown Estate, the Applicant, in support of an Outline Planning Application (OPA). The OPA and its supporting documents have been assembled in response to site allocations H2, H3 and H4 in the emerging St Albans Local Plan 2041, as submitted for Examination in Public to the Planning Inspector. The Site forms part of the Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) growth area. The HGC Programme is an ambitious proposal which will transform and grow Hemel Hempstead and create attractive, sustainable new neighbourhoods to its north and east by 2050.

The DAS explains how the development addresses site context, policy requirements, and local aspirations, setting a framework for up to 4,000 homes, 53 ha of employment land, local centre uses, community facilities, green infrastructure, and new transport connections.

Context

This chapter outlines the strategic and local contexts informing development at East Hemel, including the regional context, past and present urban context of Hemel, as well as the socio-economic and policy contexts.

East Hemel is strategically located, benefitting from proximity to the M1 and good connectivity to Hemel Hempstead, St Albans, Milton Keynes and London. The site forms part of the Herts Innovation Quarter, positioning it within a wider regional programme of growth and enterprise. It is located within the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape and the Chilterns Beechwood Special Area of Conservation, which poses a responsibility to carefully consider the form of development, and to provide Suitable Alternative Natural

Greenspace to mitigate any potential impacts the development may have on the Chilterns Beechwood Special Area of Conservation.

Locally, East Hemel adjoins existing neighbourhoods of Leverstock Green and Woodhall Farm, as well as Maylands Industrial Estate. This setting provides both challenges of integration and opportunities for synergy, particularly in reinforcing Hemel's New Town heritage and long-standing structure of distinct neighbourhoods.

Site Analysis

This chapter records the important characteristics of the Site and highlights how these have informed the development of the masterplan.

The 356.8-hectare Site is defined by agricultural land, woodland belts, historic lanes, and farmsteads, bounded to the east by the M1. Its topography of dry valleys and rolling plateaus shapes views and drainage patterns. Ecological features include Westwick Row Wood and the Nickey Line, a disused railway now serving as a pedestrian and cycle corridor. Additional considerations include proximity to Buncefield Oil Terminal, heritage assets at Westwick Row and Wood End Farm, and localised surface water flood risk. Opportunities lie in repurposing historic features as community assets, enhancing biodiversity networks, and connecting into surrounding open spaces. These constraints and context, summarised adjacent, have informed the land available for development and the general

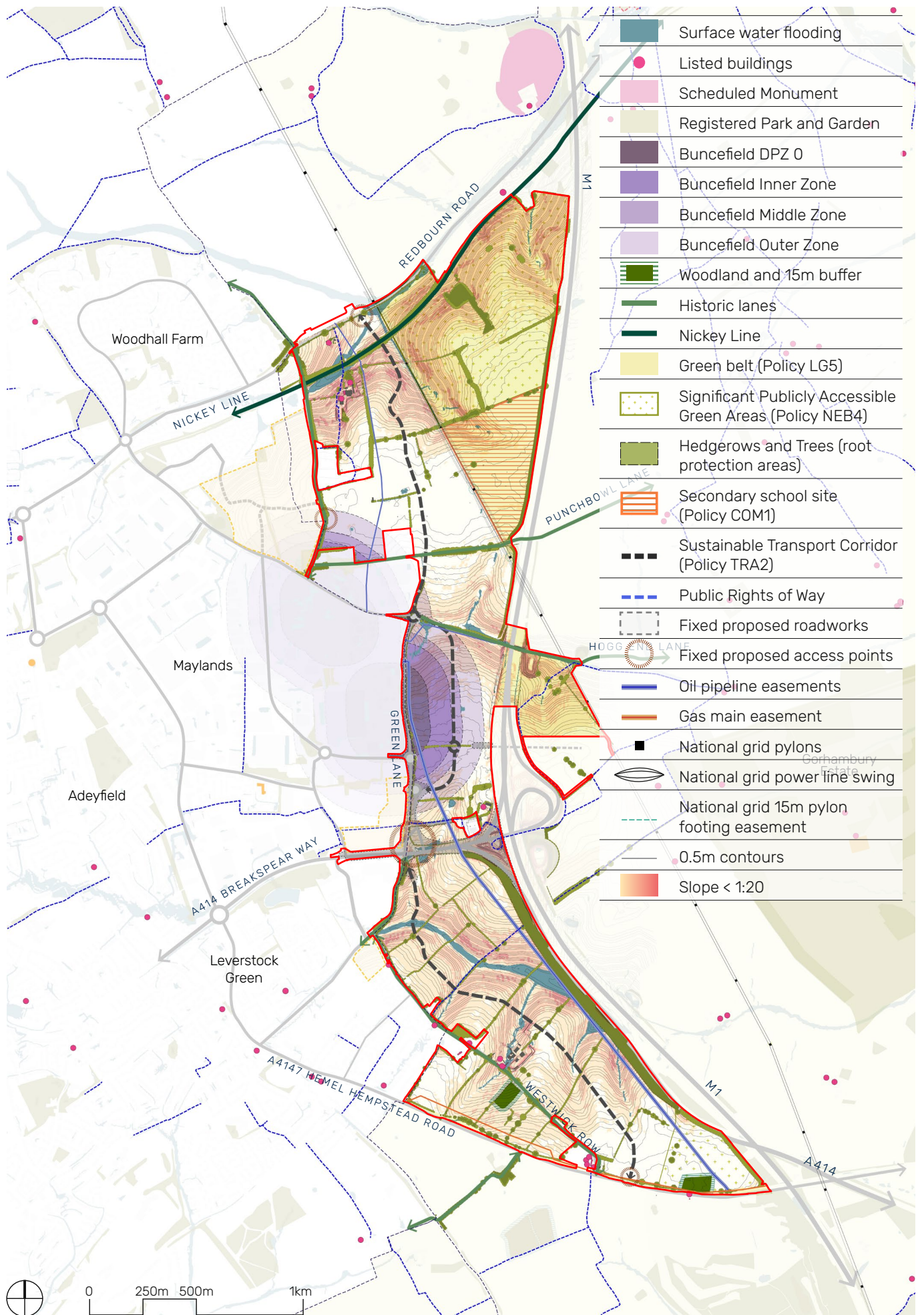
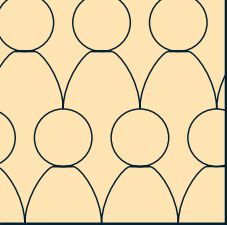


Fig 1.1 Fixed and flexible site constraints



distribution of an open space network.

Evolution of the Masterplan

This chapter builds on the site analysis by describing how the masterplan has evolved over time. The chapter includes earlier iterations of the masterplan, demonstrating how it has been progressively refined through a combination of community engagement, stakeholder input, technical studies, and design development.

The vision for East Hemel was developed by The Crown Estate in conversation with key stakeholders including DBC, SADC, HGC, HCC, Herts IQ and Community Stewardship Solutions. The vision was established to guide both the masterplan design as well as future design development, and the delivery of the project over time.

The overarching vision is for East Hemel to become "a blueprint for places for the next 100 years." It sets out to establish a better blueprint for UK places, shaping a new standard of living as a national benchmark and a process of place innovation for the Crown Estate. Designing for the next 100 years brings unique opportunities: investing in nature for

the benefit of people, place and planet, and building community wealth across multiple generations. The 100-year vision is supported by five guiding principles, described below.

The masterplan has further been shaped through extensive engagement with local residents, councils, and statutory consultees. A three-stage process of exhibitions, workshops, and design reviews tested options and refined proposals. Concerns have been raised around traffic, integration with neighbouring communities, infrastructure delivery and the and provision of open space among other topics. Engagement alongside technical studies led to design changes and refinement including strengthened green buffers, the location of schools and centres, the



Nurturing Our Natural World



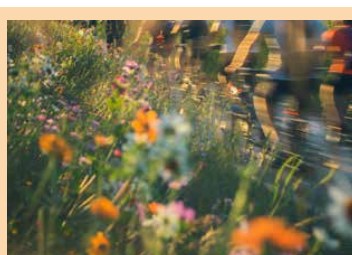
Promoting Community Ownership



Fostering Prosperity & New Economies



Celebrating Pride of Place



Connecting Places & People

Vision principles

identification of key routes into Hemel and the form of the Nickey Line crossing, for example.

Spatial Principles and Concept Masterplan

This chapter presents an overview of the key design moves that shape the masterplan and translate the vision into a place. It sets out the guiding design principles that underpin the structure of the proposals, forming the foundation for the masterplan framework.

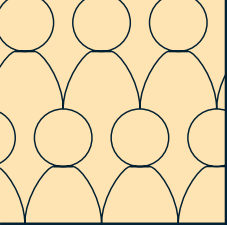
The Crown Estate is committed to doing things differently at East Hemel – a new community for a new generation that has been planned with a clear vision of creating a place for the next 100 years, and establishing a really wonderful place to live, work and play. Through the design process, a series of moves have been defined to shape a new place:

- **A place shaped by nature:** With two Country Parks across the two neighbourhoods, almost half the overall area is devoted to open space. East Hemel is focused on equitable access to nature, and building sustainably.
- **A place that provides a diversity of housing typologies and tenures:** Meeting local need and bringing new products to market, East Hemel will offer different ways of living as individuals and families; and intentionally builds thriving, diverse communities.
- **A place that will provide thousands of new jobs, contributing not only to the local but to the national economy:** Providing over 1.8 million sqft of diverse and differentiated employment space, East Hemel will provide a key new employment hub, attracting new businesses and investment and supporting economic prosperity in Hemel and wider Hertfordshire.
- **A place that promotes a revolution in how we move:** East Hemel will prioritise walking and cycling and public transport

and will provide a step change in how the car is accommodated within its neighbourhoods.

Six design principles have shaped the configuration of the masterplan. They align to the vision, establishing a framework for cohesive neighbourhoods. They illustrate how the vision translates into spatial strategies for the Site that respond to its context and characteristics. The design principles include:

- **Two big parks:** Country and Valley Parks preserve landscapes, create green links, and transform Wood End and Westwick Farms into cultural, leisure, and community hubs.
- **Connected green and blue:** The plan creates a connected green-blue network, preserving valleys, hedgerows, and historic lanes, offering accessible open spaces that support ecology, well-being, recreation, and community interaction.
- **Two new neighbourhoods for Hemel:** East Hemel develops three connected, distinct neighbourhoods—east, centre, and south—each with local centres, amenities, and facilities supporting vibrant, convenient daily living.
- **Intergenerational communities:** Each residential neighbourhood is formed of 5-minute, characterful communities with diverse housing and central spaces, promoting intergenerational living, localism, cohesion and stewardship.
- **Active and economically thriving:** East Hemel integrates homes, jobs, schools, parks, and sports hubs, with local centres and a major new employment area that creates jobs, attracts industries, and fosters innovation hub gateway.
- **An integrated part of Hemel:** A Sustainable Transport Corridor links East Hemel, promoting walking, cycling, public transport, complemented by walking and cycling routes, quiet lanes, local streets and spaces, and a landmark bridge.



These principles underpin the illustrative vision of a place shaped by nature, offering diverse homes, strong community infrastructure, and long-term employment opportunities.

Masterplan Framework

This chapter illustrates how the Concept Masterplan has evolved through the exploration of its component parts relating to green infrastructure, access and movement, land use and building heights. While the framework plans do not form part of the Outline Planning Application, they highlight the level of design thinking that sits behind the Parameter Plans.

The Masterplan Framework, summarised adjacent, is expressed in four key component parts:

- **Green Infrastructure Framework** for a strategic and integrated green and blue network defined by a Country Park in the north and a Valley Park in the south complemented by green corridors, play areas, and sports hubs.
- **Access and Movement Framework** that prioritises active travel and public transport connectivity while recognising the role of the private car, and integrates East Hemel into its wider context. It includes a Sustainable Transport Corridor connecting the entire Site, an improved A414 junction, a new active travel bridge, integration with the Nickey Line, mobility hubs, quiet lanes and the HGC Green Loop to support sustainable movement.
- **Land Use Framework** presents a distribution of land uses which co-locates activity and intensity in two local centres—including schools, community, commercial uses, and healthcare—supported by a network of smaller community cores within two residential-led neighbourhoods, and introduces a range of employment typologies to support a diversity of jobs and sectors.
- **Building Heights Framework** presents

an approach to heights and typology which supports sustainable urban living, transport orientated development and diverse communities

Illustrative Masterplan

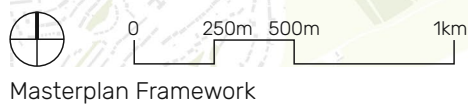
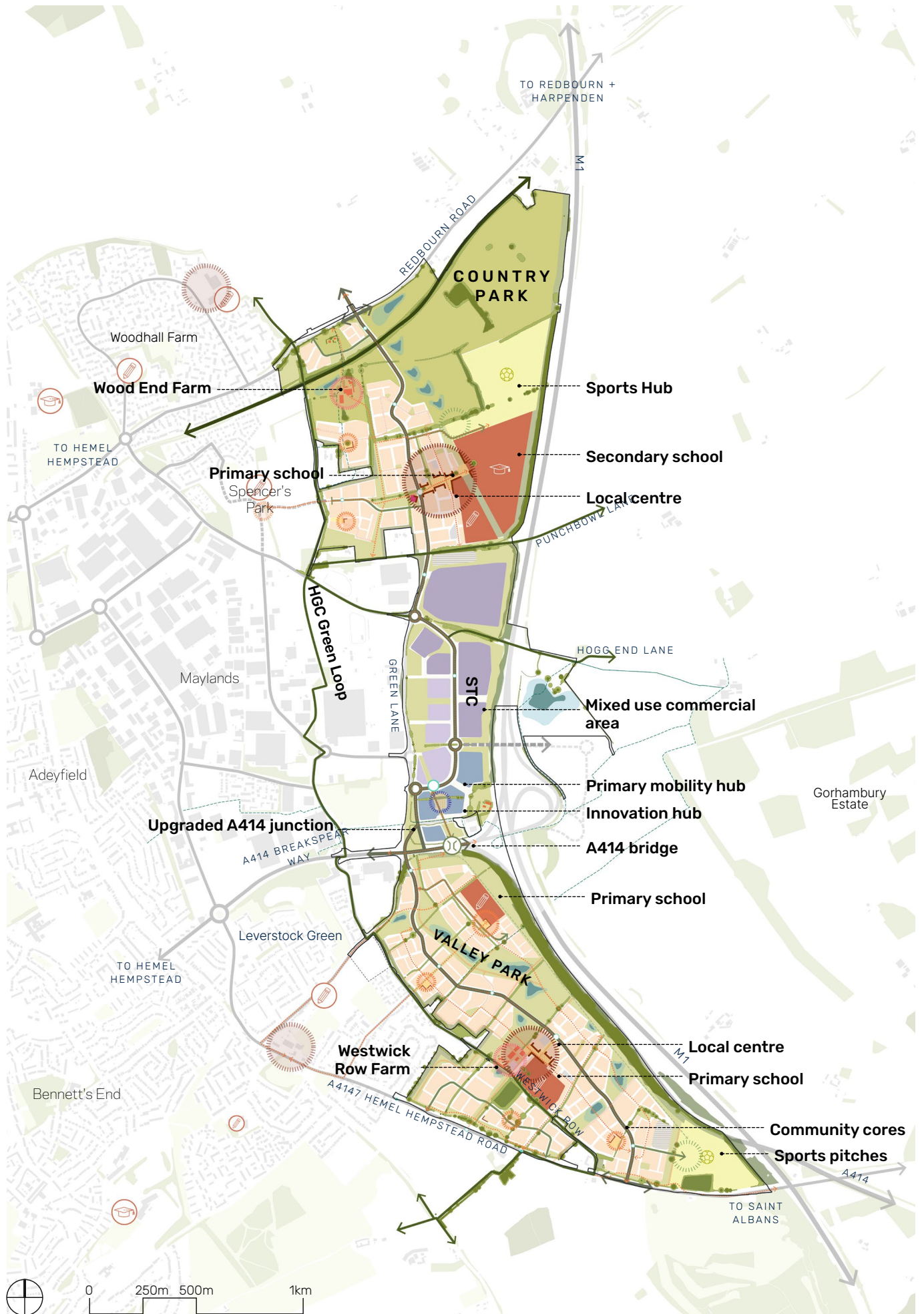
This chapter provides an overview of the Illustrative Masterplan. Though not directly informing the development of the Parameter Plans, it provides a detailed design that further tests the robustness and feasibility of the Masterplan Framework, and has been an important tool in articulating the ambition and potential for development at East Hemel.

The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how the site could be delivered within the agreed parameters.

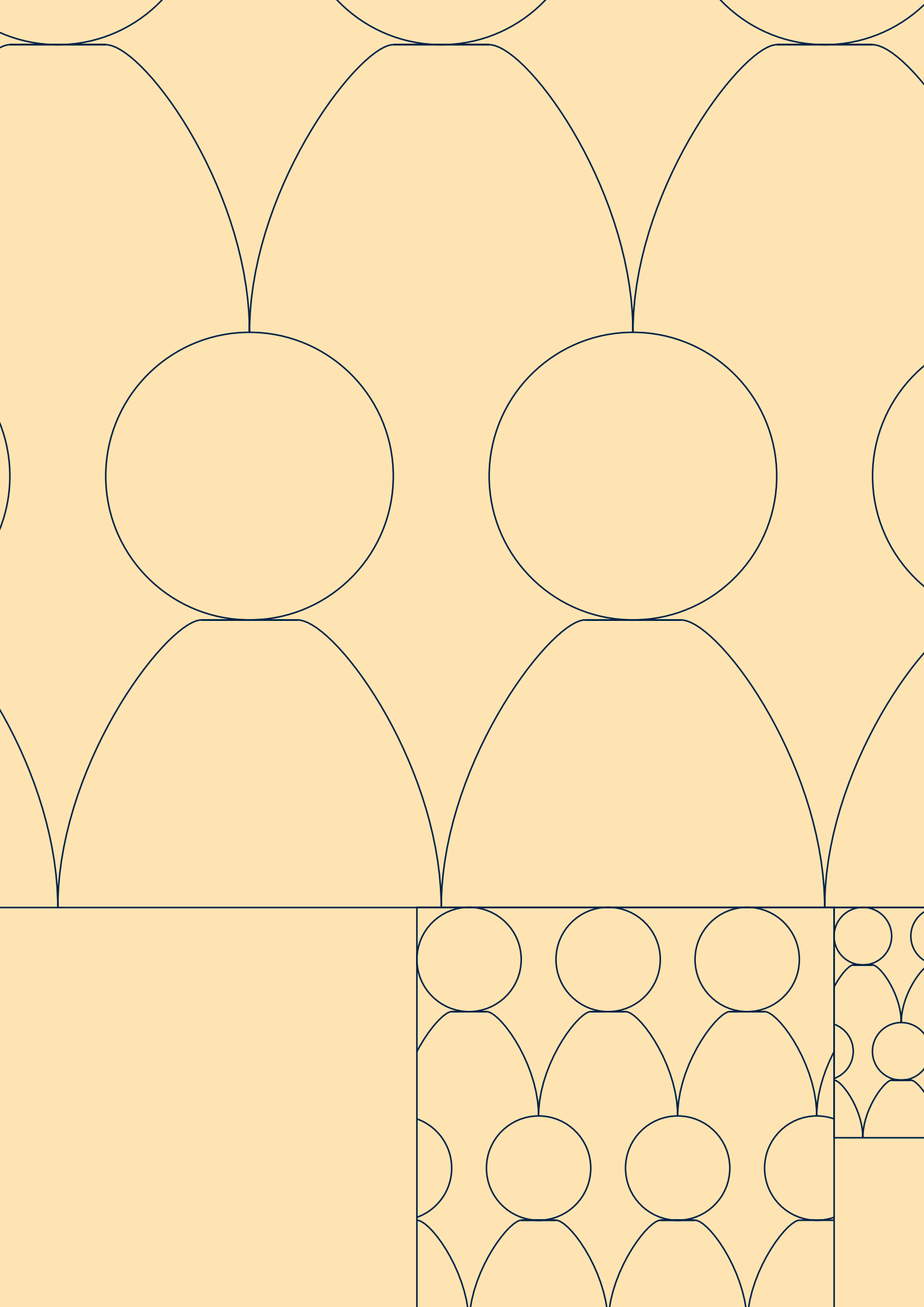
The Northern Neighbourhood is residential-led, anchored by a secondary school, local centre, and the Country Park. The Southern Neighbourhood is structured around the Valley Park, with a local centre, primary schools, and strong pedestrian links to Leverstock Green. The Central Area focuses on employment, with flexible plots for logistics, research, and innovation uses. Across the site, historic farmsteads are retained as community hubs, while green infrastructure and sustainable transport connections unify the whole development.

Conclusion

The East Hemel DAS sets out a robust, context-led framework for growth. It responds to housing and employment needs while embedding sustainability, heritage, and community at its core. By structuring development around green infrastructure, active travel, and neighbourhood centres, it creates the conditions for a lasting, high-quality extension to Hemel Hempstead. The Outline Planning Application establishes clear parameters for delivery, while retaining flexibility for detailed design to evolve with future community needs and innovation.



Masterplan Framework





01
Introduction

Introduction to this Document

01.1.1

Form of Application

An Outline Planning Application (OPA) for up to 4,000 new homes, 53 ha of employment land and a range of supporting facilities, services and infrastructure has been submitted to St Albans City and District Council and Dacorum Borough Council for determination.

Although the Proposed Development lies within St Albans' District, the Application has been submitted to both authorities because a small amount of the proposed highway works in the western part of the Application area extend into Dacorum Borough.

The development proposed within the Application is in accordance with the draft Local Plans of both local authorities, which have allocated the land for development as part of the wider Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) Growth Area.

The Applicant is The Crown Estate who own the majority of the land which is the subject of the Application.

01.1.2

Role and Structure of the DAS

The East Hemel Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared on behalf of The Applicant in support of the OPA. The DAS has been developed to adhere with National Planning Practice Guidance:

The PPG paragraph 29 states: *"A Design and Access Statement is a concise report accompanying certain applications for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the Application Site and its setting and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users."*

Paragraph 31 states that *"A Design and Access Statement must: (a) explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development; and (b) demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account. A development's context refers to the particular characteristics of the application site and its wider setting. These will be specific to the circumstances of an individual application and a Design and Access Statement should be tailored accordingly. Design and Access Statements must also explain the Applicants' approach to access and how relevant Local Plan policies have been taken into account. They must detail any consultation undertaken in relation to*

access issues, and how the outcome of this consultation has informed the proposed development. Applicants must also explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the proposed development have been addressed.”

One of the roles of the DAS is to demonstrate to the planning authority and other stakeholders that the parameters of the Proposed Development are sound and able to create a high quality place in line with the Applicant’s aspirations, which have been informed by a robust understanding and appraisal of the Site and its surroundings as well as by significant stakeholder and community engagement.

This DAS supports an OPA for three allocations in the emerging St Albans Local Plan 2041, as submitted for Examination in Public to the Planning Inspector:

- H2 East Hemel Hempstead (North)
- H3 East Hemel Hempstead (Central)
- H4 East Hemel Hempstead (South)

The OPA is for all matters reserved with the exception of the A414 and B487 accesses. The detailed component describes the proposal for the A414 Breakspear junction access and the A487 Hemel Hempstead Road (Redbourn Road) junctions access.

To explain the components of the application, the DAS comprises eight chapters in two parts:

Part A

Part A traces the design development process which has informed the Parameter Plans and Development Specification proposed in the Outline Application:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** provides an overview of the Application and the DAS

- **Chapter 2: Site Context** describes the strategic and planning context for the Proposed Development
- **Chapter 3: The Site** describes the Site itself, including the context, constraints and opportunities which have informed design proposals
- **Chapter 4: Masterplan Development** describes the evolution of the design in relation and response to community engagement and design reviews
- **Chapter 5: Vision and Concept** outlines the vision and principles that underpin the design, and introduces the Masterplan Framework
- **Chapter 6: Masterplan Framework** describes the component layers of the Masterplan Framework, demonstrating how each has informed its relevant Parameter Plan. The component layers include:
 - Green Infrastructure Framework
 - Access and Movement Framework
 - Land Use Framework
 - Building Heights Framework

Part B

Part B provides supporting illustrative material which has helped shape design thinking but does not directly inform the Parameter Plans.

- **Chapter 7: Illustrative Masterplan** provides an overview of the illustrative, detailed material that supports and illustrates the proposals, and is an important tool in articulating the ambition and potential for development at East Hemel.
- **Chapter 8: B487 Corridor** provides an overview of the joint approach between East and North Hemel to access from and treatment of B487 Hemel Hempstead Road (Redbourn Road).

Introduction to East Hemel

01.2.1

The Applicant and Team

The Crown Estate is a significant national landowner with a unique and diverse portfolio that includes urban centres and development land across the country. The Crown Estate is an independent commercial enterprise that is accountable to Parliament and guided by its unique purpose to 'create lasting and shared prosperity for the nation'. All net revenue profit is returned to the Treasury for the benefit of the public finances.

The Crown Estate's unique position underpins their ability to operate in a different way. The Crown Estate is a trusted brand, with a reputation for excellence and known for quality, longevity and integrity. Acting in the public interest and investing for the long term, they have the power to convene and catalyse.

The East Hemel project team includes:

- Turner & Townsend** | Project Managers
- David Lock Associates** | Planning Consultant
- Prior + Partners** | Masterplanner
- Gillespies** | Landscape Architects
- SLR** | Transport and Highways Consultant
- Expedition / Useful Projects** | Engineering and Sustainability Consultant
- Michael Sparks Associates** | Commercial Architect
- Temple** | Ecology Consultant
- Cotswold Archaeology** | Heritage Consultant
- Avison Young** | EIA Consultant
- Savills** | Development Consultant
- Kevin Murray Associates** | Engagement Consultant
- Camargue** | Communications Consultant
- AECOM** | Cost Consultant

01.2.2

Planning Application Boundary

The OPA and its supporting documents have been assembled in response to site allocations H2, H3 and H4 in the emerging St Albans Local Plan 2041, as submitted for Examination in Public to the Planning Inspector.

The Site forms part of the HGC Growth Area. The HGC Programme is an ambitious proposal which will transform and grow Hemel Hempstead and create attractive, sustainable new neighbourhoods to its north and east by 2050.

The Site comprises approximately 357 hectares of land to the east of Hemel Hempstead. The Site sits predominantly within the ownership of The Crown Estate, though also includes some land within the ownership of National Highways and Hertfordshire County Council as highways authority. As a major single landholding, East Hemel represents an opportunity to create exemplary new neighbourhoods, catalysing a long-term sustainable extension to Hemel Hempstead.

The Site is, in the main, within the administrative boundary of St Albans City & District Council (SADC); however, a small area of the application site falls within the administrative boundary of Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) immediately to the west of the Site [c. 1.2% of the Site area].

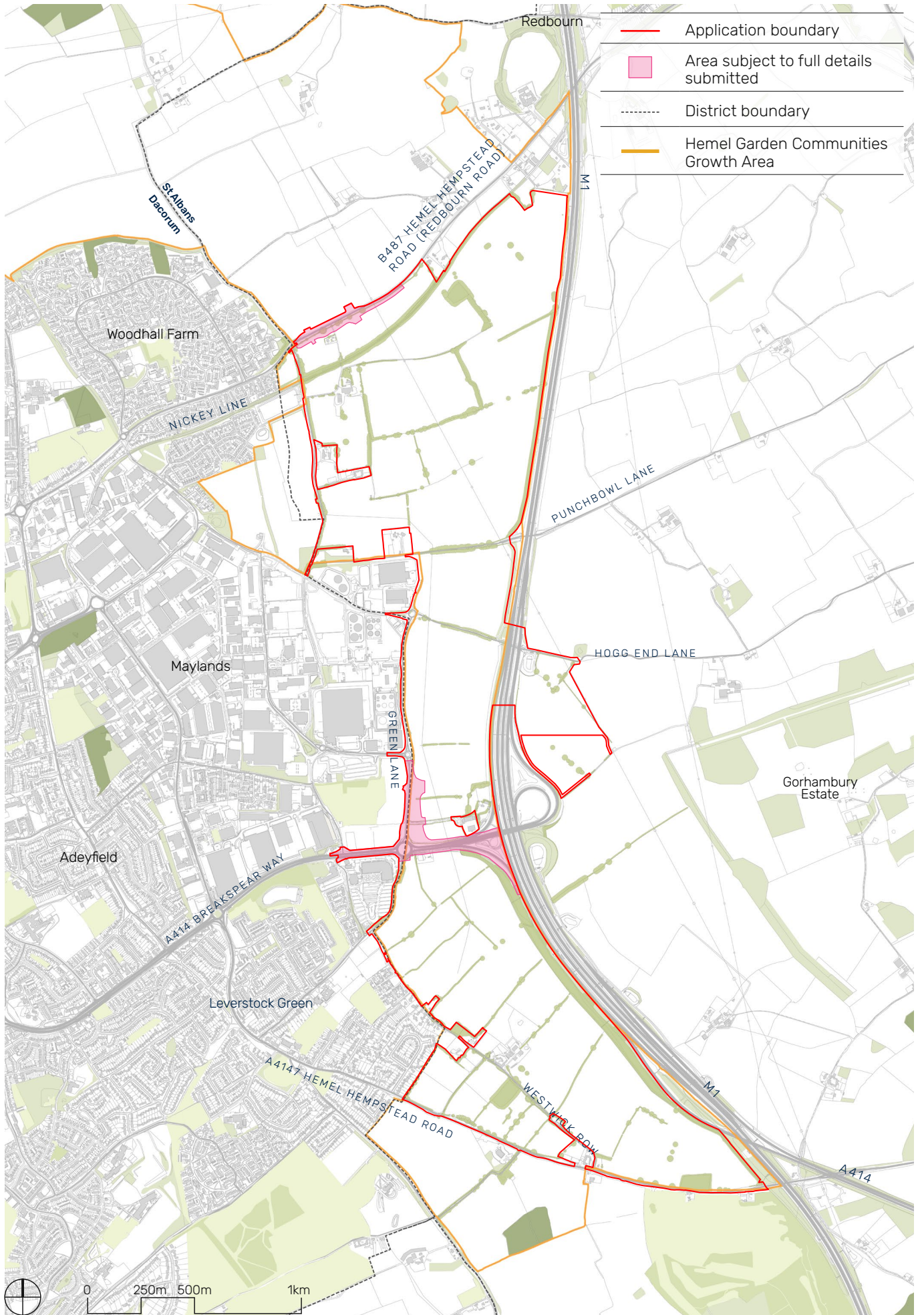


Fig 01.1 Site Red Line Boundary

01.2.3

Description of Development

A full Description of Development is contained within the Development Specification. In summary, the OPA seeks outline consent for:

"Urban extension comprising two new neighbourhoods and a new employment zone. The development to include new dwellings (including affordable housing and specialist accommodation for older people); new employment and industrial floorspace and ancillary facilities, a sports hub and Sports Pitches; green infrastructure and landscaping works (to include a country park, formal and informal open space, amenity space, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, managed woodland, ecological areas); early years, nursery, primary and secondary education facilities; local centre uses (to include retail, community and employment uses; health and fitness, gym and other cultural and recreational uses; medical centre; transport mobility hubs; drainage works (including foul and surface water drainage infrastructure); ancillary infrastructure works; vehicular and active travel infrastructure; improvements to the Nickey Line and delivery of a proportion of the Hemel Garden Communities Green Loop; land for Gypsy and Traveller pitches; provision of an active travel bridge over the A414; safeguarded land for M1 Junction 8 improvements; ground remodelling, acoustic bund, engineering and demolition works. All matters reserved save for access from the A414/Green Lane junction and access from the B487/ Hemel Hempstead Road (Redbourn Road)."

Within the DAS, the OPA is presented in four key formats:

Parameter Plans

Parameter Plans are formal application documents that along with the Development Specification fix parameters for layout and design. These parameters are sufficiently high level to allow appropriate flexibility in the

detailed design and layout of the development. Consent is being sought for the components shown on the Parameter Plans.

The Masterplan Framework

The Masterplan Framework is the overall masterplan structure which has directly informed the Parameter Plans relating to green infrastructure, access and movement and land use. The masterplan framework itself does not form part of the OPA, but highlights the design thinking behind the Parameter Plans. To aid the consideration of the OPA it illustrates one possible scenario for the disposition of uses, movement network and landscape framework that could be delivered in accordance with the parameters set out within the Development Specification and Parameter Plans.

The Illustrative Masterplan

The Illustrative Masterplan, depicted in **Fig 02.2**, provides a visual impression of one way that the Development could come forward, and demonstrates that a sustainable, innovative and distinctive place can be delivered within the parameters for which consent is sought. The illustrative masterplan is not a formal application document; consent is not being sought for the details illustrated.

Access Plans

Access Plans are included as the OPA seeks detailed permission for new access arrangements from the A414 and B487 (Redbourn Road) into the Site.

Other **illustrative material** is included in the form of sketches, drawings, diagrams and photographs to help illustrate the context, describe the Site and show how the development could look. These images have no formal planning status in the OPA.

- ① Country Park
- ② Valley Park
- ③ Local centres
- ④ Primary schools
- ⑤ Secondary school
- ⑥ Nickey Line
- ⑦ Sports hubs
- ⑧ Sustainable Transport Corridor
- ⑨ Pedestrian / cycle bridge over the A414
- ⑩ Employment area
- ⑪ Innovation hub



Fig 01.2 East Hemel Illustrative Masterplan