





# Part A



# 02 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 Hempstead, as well as the socio-economic and policy contexts. Each section highlights how the findings and context have informed the development of the masterplan.

# Strategic Context

## 02.1.1

## Regional Context

East Hemel benefits from a highly strategic location, with excellent regional and national connectivity. Located just north of the M1–M25 junction, East Hemel has immediate access to two of the UK's most significant vehicular arteries. The M1 provides a direct route both into central London and toward the Midlands and the North.

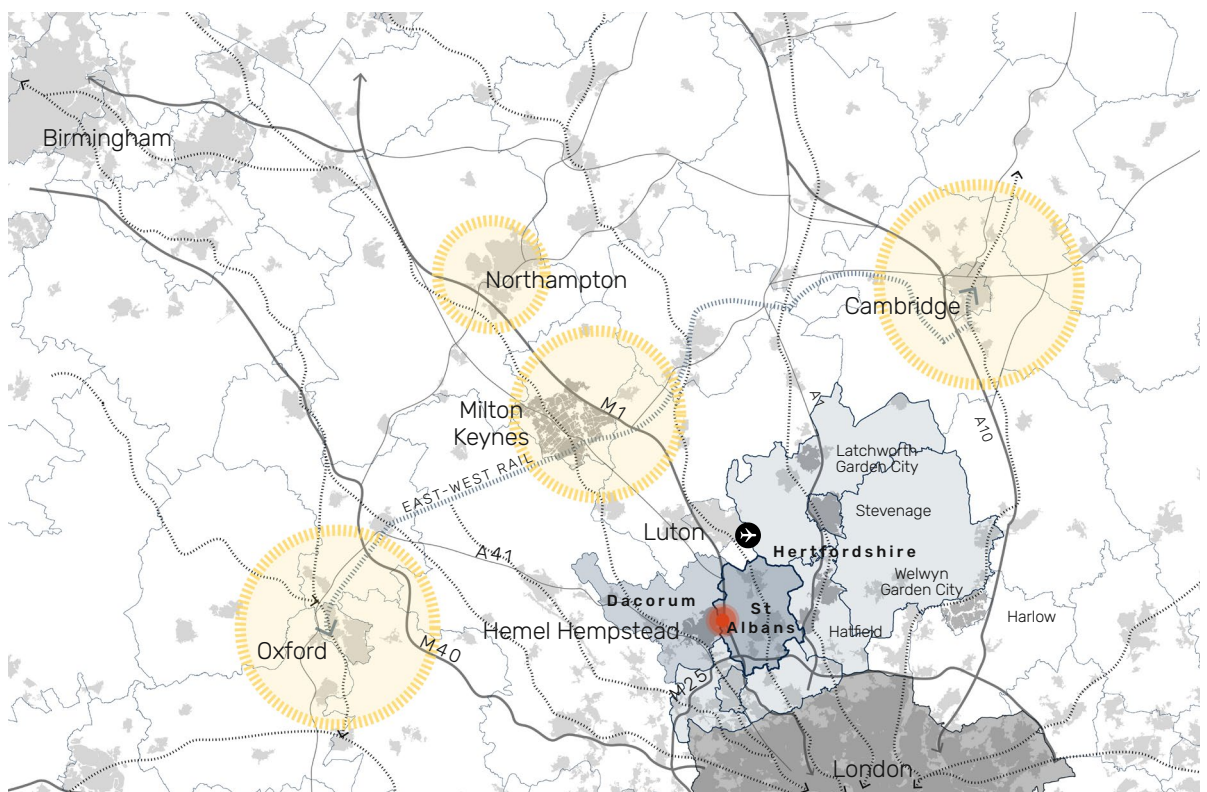
Rail connections further strengthen the Site's accessibility, with direct train services to both London and Milton Keynes via nearby Hemel Hempstead, Harpenden and St Albans City stations.

The future East–West Rail project—linking Oxford and Cambridge—will be accessible via nearby Milton Keynes, expanding the Site's connectivity even further. This improved

access positions Hemel Hempstead within the triangle between London, Oxford and Cambridge, an area of economic activity critical to the UK's prosperity.

### Masterplan Considerations

There is an opportunity to position the site within a strong and growing regional economy, thanks to excellent road and rail infrastructure and proximity to emerging knowledge hubs.



**Fig 02.1** Regional context

02.1.2

## Sub-Regional Context

### Herts Innovation Quarter

The Herts Innovation Quarter (Herts IQ) is an Enterprise Zone as a part of the UK Government's initiative to stimulate economic growth and innovation. It aims to create 3 million sq. ft. of commercial space to help grow Hertfordshire's economy. Herts IQ has a governing partnership of 7 organisations - Hertfordshire Futures, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), St Albans City & District Council (SADC), Dacorum Borough Council (DBC), Building Research Establishment (BRE), Rothamsted Research and The University of Hertfordshire.

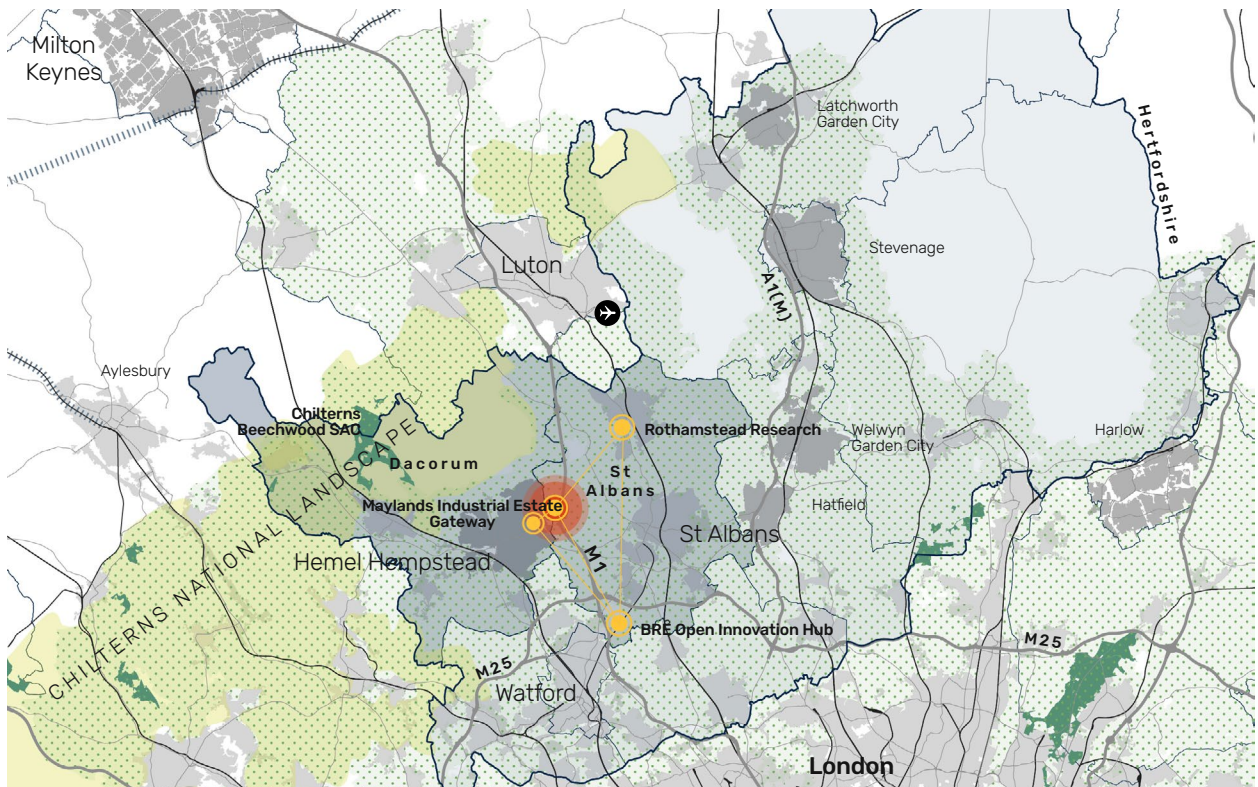
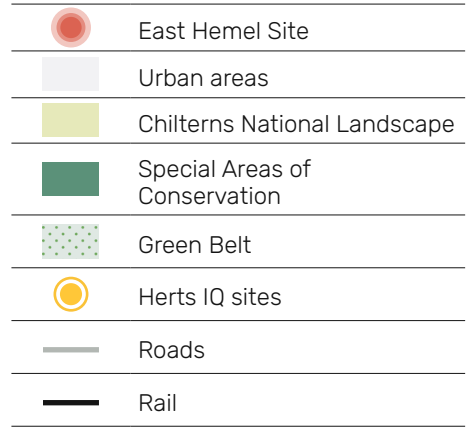


Fig 02.2 Sub-regional context

The Herts IQ is made up of seven sites, with East Hemel being the largest. Other sites include:

- Rothamsted Research in Harpenden, specialising in agricultural research
- BRE Open Innovation Hub in Watford, specialising in sustainable construction and the built environment
- Light industrial and office space at Prologis Park (built), Maylands Industrial Estate Gateway (in construction), Spencer's Park (in planning) and Maylands Avenue

Herts IQ has an innovation ambition, targeting agribusiness, agri-tech, offsite manufacturing, clean-tech, green-tech, offsite manufacturing and high growth high-value uses.

Herts IQ's core sites and wider HGC programme benefit from Hemel Hempstead's excellent road connectivity to London, the Midlands, and other regional economic centres such as Watford and Luton.

More generally, Maylands Industrial Estate Business Park is home to 650 businesses that employ over 20,000 people across a wide range of sectors.

### **Masterplan Considerations**

East Hemel's inclusion within the established Herts IQ network provides a supportive environment for the creation of a vibrant, mixed employment area.

### **Landscape**

The Site is located over 2km southeast of the Chilterns National Landscape and is within the impact risk zone of the The Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is located within the Chilterns National Character Area (110), defined by rolling chalk hills and wooded lowland landscapes. As a result, the Site sits within a distinctive area of dry valleys, gentle slopes and plateaus characteristic of the area.

### **National Landscape Character**

The Site is located within National Character Area (NCA) 110: Chilterns, defined by rolling chalk hills and wooded lowlands and one of several NCAs within a chalk outcrop stretching from East Anglia to Dorset and the South Downs. The area includes the lower-lying settlements of Luton, Dunstable, Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Chesham, Amersham and High Wycombe. It is also crossed by the M40 and M1 motorways.



**Fig 02.3** View towards East Hemel from higher ground east of the M1

The NCA is one of the most wooded lowland landscapes in the country, with woodland covering 14% of the NCA.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) published by Natural England (NE) recognise urban fringes and growth areas have the opportunity to create or enhance green infrastructure to ensure good access to countryside.

### **Masterplan Considerations**

Proximity to the Chilterns National Landscape imposes a responsibility to carefully consider the form and limits of new development, and location within the Chilterns Beechwood SAC impact zone poses a requirement to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to mitigate any potential impacts the development may have on the Chilterns. SANG is an area of land designated for recreational purposes that is designed to offset disturbance and pressures on sites that are protected for their habitat value under Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

The Site sits within a distinctive area of dry valleys, gentle slopes and plateaus characteristic of the area, and there is an opportunity to conserve and enhance this character. The SEO published by NE for National Character Area 110: Chilterns identifies opportunities for enhancement relevant to the Site:

- Conserve and enhance field boundary features and patterns (SE01)
- Improve access to and through landscapes with cycle paths and long distance footpaths, to increase recreational and educational opportunities for engagement with the environment (SE01 & SE04)
- Seek to conserve, enhance and increase characteristic broadleaved woodland and connect existing woodlands by increasing habitat connectivity (SE01)

- Ensure development minimises demands and impacts on the water resource, including incorporating features such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) (SE04)

## **Movement and Transport**

West Midlands Railway stations at Apsley and Hemel Hempstead provide direct connections to London and Milton Keynes within 30 minutes, supporting both commuter travel and broader regional connectivity. Thameslink stations at Harpenden and St Albans stations provide access into central London within 30 minutes and continue north on to Luton and Bedford.

The M1 motorway runs in a north-south direction and forms the eastern boundary of the Site. This major route serves as a strategic transport corridor, linking Hemel Hempstead to London in the south and to key destinations in the north. On the western side of the town, the A41 provides another crucial connection, linking to Aylesbury, the M25, and north London.

### **Masterplan Considerations**

There is an opportunity, particularly as part of the Hemel Garden Communities programme, to improve connections between East Hemel and surrounding rail stations, unlocking the regional connectivity they provide. There is also an opportunity to leverage proximity to the M1 Motorway to support employment growth.

# Hemel Hempstead Context

## 02.2.1

### Local Context

East Hemel is located on land to the east of Hemel Hempstead and west of the M1 corridor, forming an urban extension to Hemel, a historic market town and New Town with a population of c. 95,000.

Immediately adjacent to the Site are the residential neighbourhoods of Woodhall Farm and Leverstock Green, and Maylands Industrial Estate including Buncefield Oil Terminal. Its eastern boundary is the M1, east of which is arable farmland—much of which is in The Crown Estate ownership—as well as the Gorhambury Estate, a historically rich rural estate and Registered Park and Garden which has Roman, Elizabethan, and 18th-century heritage.

Southeast of the Site and connected to East Hemel via the A414 and A4147 is St Albans, a historic cathedral city with a population of c. 76,000. Northeast of the Site is Redbourn, a large village of c. 5,000 residents and further afield is Harpenden, a town of c. 31,000 residents. Redbourn and Harpenden are connected to East Hemel via the B487 as well as the Nickey Line, a disused railway line now a footpath and cycleway forming part of National Cycle Network.

### Growth Context

East Hemel sits within the Growth Area defined by the St Albans and Dacorum Local Plans for the expansion of Hemel Hempstead as part of Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) (see Section 02.4.5 for detail).










While an urban extension to Hemel Hempstead, the Site is predominantly located within St Albans District. As a result, SADC, DBC, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and HGC have all been engaged in pre-

application discussions for the OPA. A number of other planned developments are within the immediate surroundings, including:

- **Spencer's Park Phase 2**, part of the HGC growth area, has outline planning permission for 600 homes, a primary school, local centre uses, and 7,500 sqm of employment uses. It will also include new connections into the town that can be leveraged at East Hemel, and a community orchard. The scheme is under construction with first homes now occupied.
- **Westwick Row** is a proposed new development of 80 homes near Leverstock Green which The Crown Estate is delivering in partnership with TOWN. Westwick Row seeks to demonstrate best practice in sustainability and will explore the necessary changes in housing delivery to enable this. The intention is to incorporate learnings from this project into future activity at East Hemel and in other communities.
- **Prologis Park** is a development in construction for up to c. 7,000 sqm of industrial and logistics floorspace on the eastern edge of Maylands Industrial Estate Industrial Estate.
- **Land At Gaddesden Lane** is an outline application for up to 300 new homes as an urban extension to the village of Redbourn that has been submitted to St Albans City and District Council.

### Masterplan Considerations

As well as responding to existing context, the masterplan for East Hemel must consider the evolving context in which it sits, responding and integrating into proposed development plans adjacent to the boundary. Furthermore, the Environmental Impact Assessment must consider the cumulative impact of growth at East Hemel alongside other planned development.

	Urban areas
	Green spaces
	Registered Parks + Gardens
	Chilterns NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
	Conservation Areas
	HGC Growth Area
	Adjacent developments
	Roads
	Rail

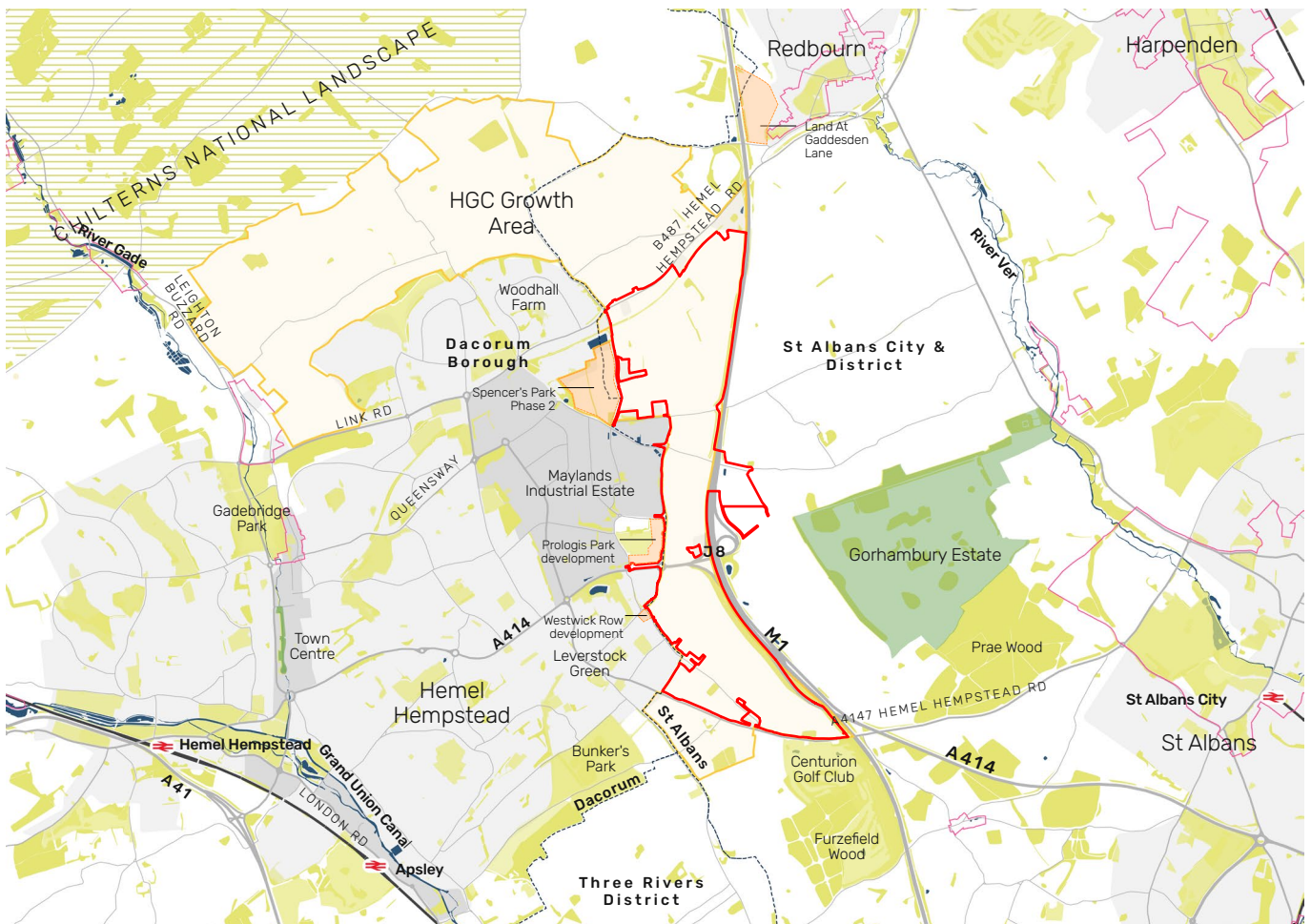


Fig 02.4 Local context

## 02.2.2

# Historic Context

The earliest reference to Hemel Hempstead dates to AD 705, when the district of *Hamele* was granted to the Bishop of London. By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, the Site was within the Manors of Redbourn and Westwick, with Hogg End Lane their likely boundary. *Hamelamestede* is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as a settlement of 23 households. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Hemel developed along the Gade valley into a wealthy agricultural market town.

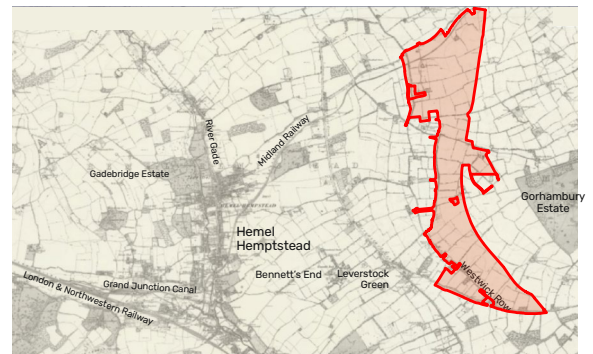
The town continued to grow during the Victorian industrial area, key to which were its strategic connections. Hemel became served by Sparrows Herne Turnpike road (1762), the Grand Union Canal (1798) the London and Birmingham Railway (1837), and the Midland Railway Branch Line (Nickey Line) (1877), which saw the town extend into three distinct areas – Hemel Hempstead town as the commercial centre, Boxmoor, around the station, as a commuter node and Apsley, along the canal, as an industrial area. By the second world war, these areas had coalesced and the town had a population of c. 20,000.

Hemel Hempstead was designated as a Mark One New Town in 1947 as part of the post-World War II initiative to address housing shortages through a ring of proposed new towns around London. Hemel would ultimately be planned and land acquired for a population of 60,000. Development was carried out by the Hemel Hempstead New Town Development Corporation with construction of the first neighbourhoods starting in 1949 and first occupation in 1950. The peak construction period was 1949–1961, though development continued into the 1990s. Connections to London and the North were further improved with the construction of the M1 in 1959.

### Masterplan Considerations

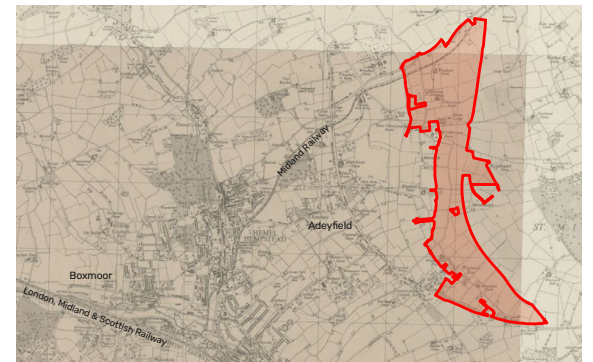
Traces of Hemel's history—from rural farmsteads, lanes, and field structures, to the industrial heritage of the Nickey

### 1880s - Market town



**Fig 02.5** Ordnance Survey 1873-1878. Source: National Library of Scotland

### 1940s - Industrial growth



**Fig 02.6** Ordnance Survey 1945-65. Source: National Library of Scotland

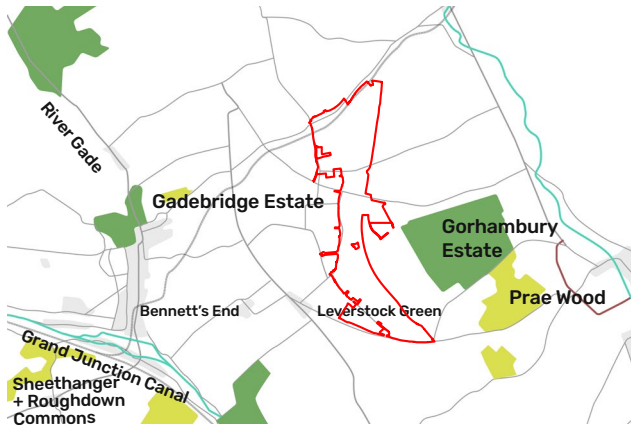
### 1950s - New Town first wave



**Fig 02.7** Ordnance Survey 1951-1955. Source: National Library of Scotland

Line, to its contemporary context of New Town development, can be found at East Hemel. There is an opportunity, through the masterplan structure all the way to detailed design and activation, to reflect and celebrate this heritage at East Hemel.

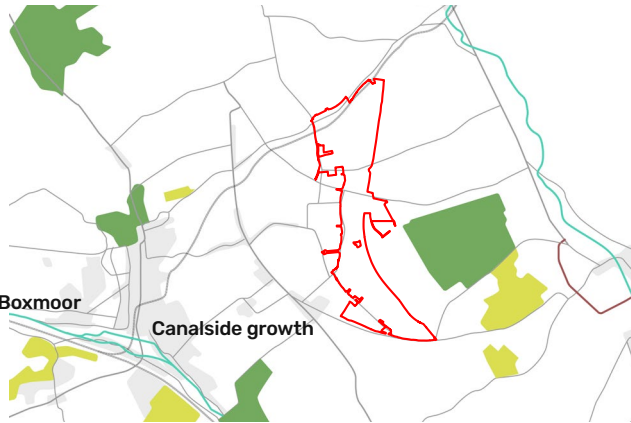
**1880s- Market town**



**1960s - New Town second wave**



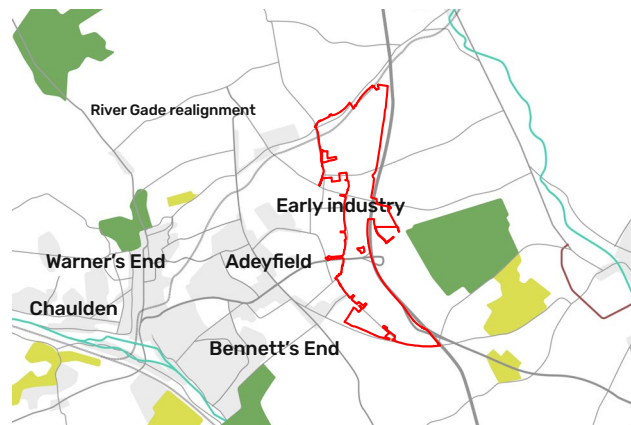
**1940s - Industrial growth**



**1970s - New Town third wave**



**1950s - New Town first wave**



**2000s - Contemporary growth**



**Fig 02.8** Historic growth of Hemel Hempstead and St Albans

### 02.2.3

## New Town Masterplan

Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe was commissioned by the Hemel Development Corporation to develop a masterplan for the New Town 1947. His vision was for a "town in a park" with ample of green space. The masterplan envisaged:

- 6 new neighbourhoods: Adeyfield, Bennetts End, Chaulden, Warners End, Gadebridge and Highfield
- A new town centre with shopping area
- Water Gardens along the River Gade
- Industrial areas in the north east and south of the town
- A new railway station at Two Waters

Important masterplan principles included:

- Neighbourhood units served by local centres in walking distance, co-locating schools, shops, and community facilities
- Investment in amenity and social infrastructure: schools, churches, pubs, community centres, parks, playing fields
- Development on valley sides and higher

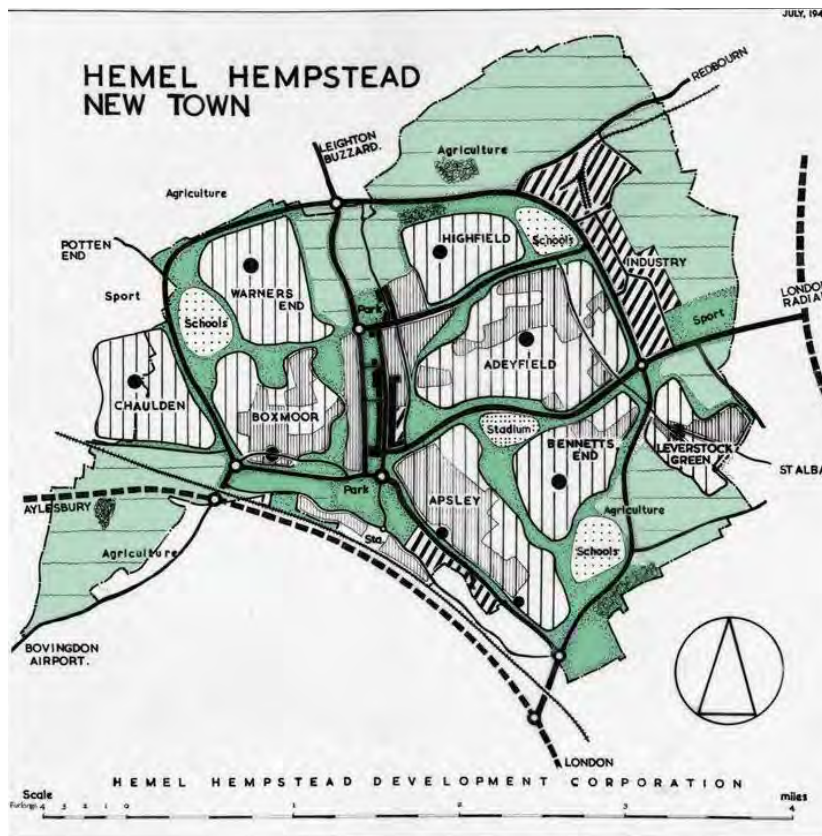
ground, leaving valley floors as green connectors between neighbourhoods

- Self containment - employment supporting residential growth
- Social housing
- Pedestrian-friendly centres
- Wide range of architecture and typologies
- Segregated zoning of uses
- Car-centrist design of the street network

Jellicoe's original masterplan was revised in 1949, 1951 and 1961 as population projections grew and other modifications made.

### Masterplan Considerations

Jellicoe's masterplan introduced clear structuring principles in forming neighbourhoods and relating to topography which should be carried forward into continued growth at East Hemel. However, it also left a challenging legacy of inward looking and disconnected (cul-de-sac) road networks which limit opportunities for active travel connections into surrounding neighbourhoods.



**Fig 02.9** 1949 Revised Master Plan. Source: *Hemel Hempstead New Town Historic Context Study (2023)*



**Fig 02.10** Historic photos of Hemel New Town. Source: *Hastie & Fletcher (1997)*

02.2.4














# Urban Structure

As a result of its historic growth coupled with its 20th century New Town expansion on the basis of clear masterplan principles, Hemel Hempstead has a very distinctive urban structure defined by:

- Historic market town core centred around the Old High Street
- Victorian development in Apsley and Boxmoor reflect growth associated with the arrival of the Grand Union Canal and railways
- New town centre focussed around Marlowes with the hospital adjacent
- New town neighbourhoods on slopes, each served by a local centre:
  - 1950s - Adeyfield, Bennetts End, Chaulden, Warner's End
  - 1960s - Boxmoor, Gadebridge, Highfield, Leverstock Green
  - 1970s - Grovehill, Woodhall Farm
  - Green corridors, generally located within valleys, as well as arterial roads

separate neighbourhoods, with parks associated to each neighbourhood centre

- Secondary schools and sports generally located within green areas separating neighbourhoods
- Maylands Industrial Estate is a major employment area for the town served by the M1 and A414

	Old High Street
	Victorian neighbourhoods
	New town centre
	Employment areas
	First wave neighbourhoods
	Second wave neighbourhoods
	Third wave neighbourhoods
	Local centres
	Secondary schools
	Sports facilities
	Strategic open spaces
	Gorhambury Estate
	HGC Growth Area

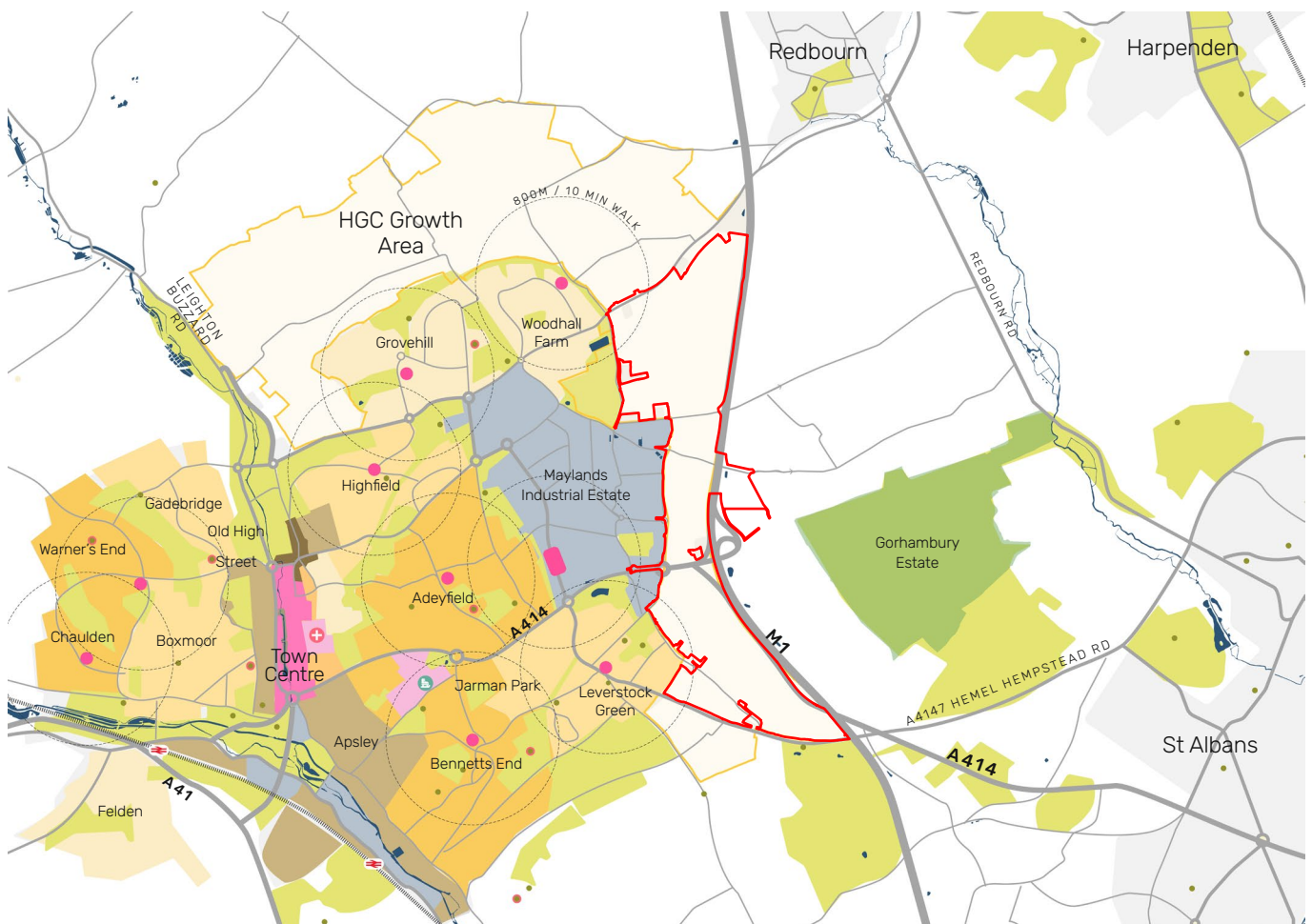


Fig 02.11 Hemel Hempstead urban structure

## Surrounding neighbourhoods

The neighbourhoods adjacent to East Hemel are Leverstock Green, Maylands Industrial Estate and Woodhall Farm. Leverstock Green and Woodhall Farm are residential neighbourhoods and represent two distinct eras of Hemel's New Town development. Maylands Industrial Estate is employment-led and is a major commercial area for both Hemel and Hertfordshire.

### Leverstock Green - Second Wave New Town Neighbourhood

Leverstock Green is a historic village centred around Leverstock Green Way. Originally a traditional village settlement, it was later developed as part of the New Town expansion during the mid-1950s to 1960s, with infill housing built through the 1980s.

The village retains several mediaeval and Victorian buildings which contribute to the area's distinct historic character. Much of the post-war housing consists of semi-detached and detached homes, whereas more recent developments have introduced a broader mix of housing types, including terraced homes and modern apartments.

Playing fields and the primary school are co-located in the local centre. A secondary school is shared with Bennett's End neighbourhood. The new local centre complements the historic core, together providing a church, two pubs, dentists, nursery, library and community hall, and eight shops along an arcade with flats above: restaurant, food store, butchers, cafe, bakery, pharmacy, post office, salon.



Fig 02.12 Leverstock Green centre



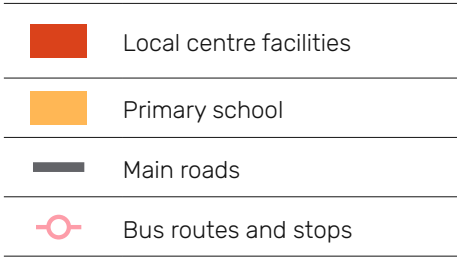
Fig 02.13 Typical residential character



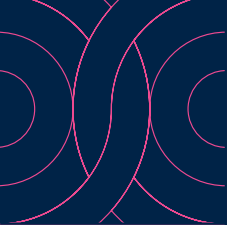
Fig 02.14 Leverstock Green fields



Fig 02.15 New development at Leverstock Green centre



**Fig 02.16** Leverstock Green urban structure



### **Woodhall Farm - Third Wave New Town Neighbourhood**

Woodhall Farm was constructed as part of the New Town expansion in the early 1970s, with infill development continuing through to the 1990s. It reflects architectural and planning styles typical of this era, particularly in the approach to residential layout and building design.

A central park acts as a community hub, co-located with a primary school, nursery, and community centre. A secondary school, shared with the nearby Grovehill neighbourhood, is situated between the two.

The internal street pattern is based around a cul-de-sac layout branching off a main spine road—Shenley Road—which connects the neighbourhood to Redbourn Road at two access points. The residential layout is informal, with homes typically not following a clear building line, and variable spacing between properties. This informality contributes to a looser urban form.

A local centre is located on the edge of the neighbourhood and includes a large-format food store, two medical centres, and an arcade of five shops, including a dry cleaner, convenience store, pharmacy, and takeaway. A large surface car park serves the local centre, supporting accessibility for residents and visitors.



**Fig 02.18** Woodhall Farm centre



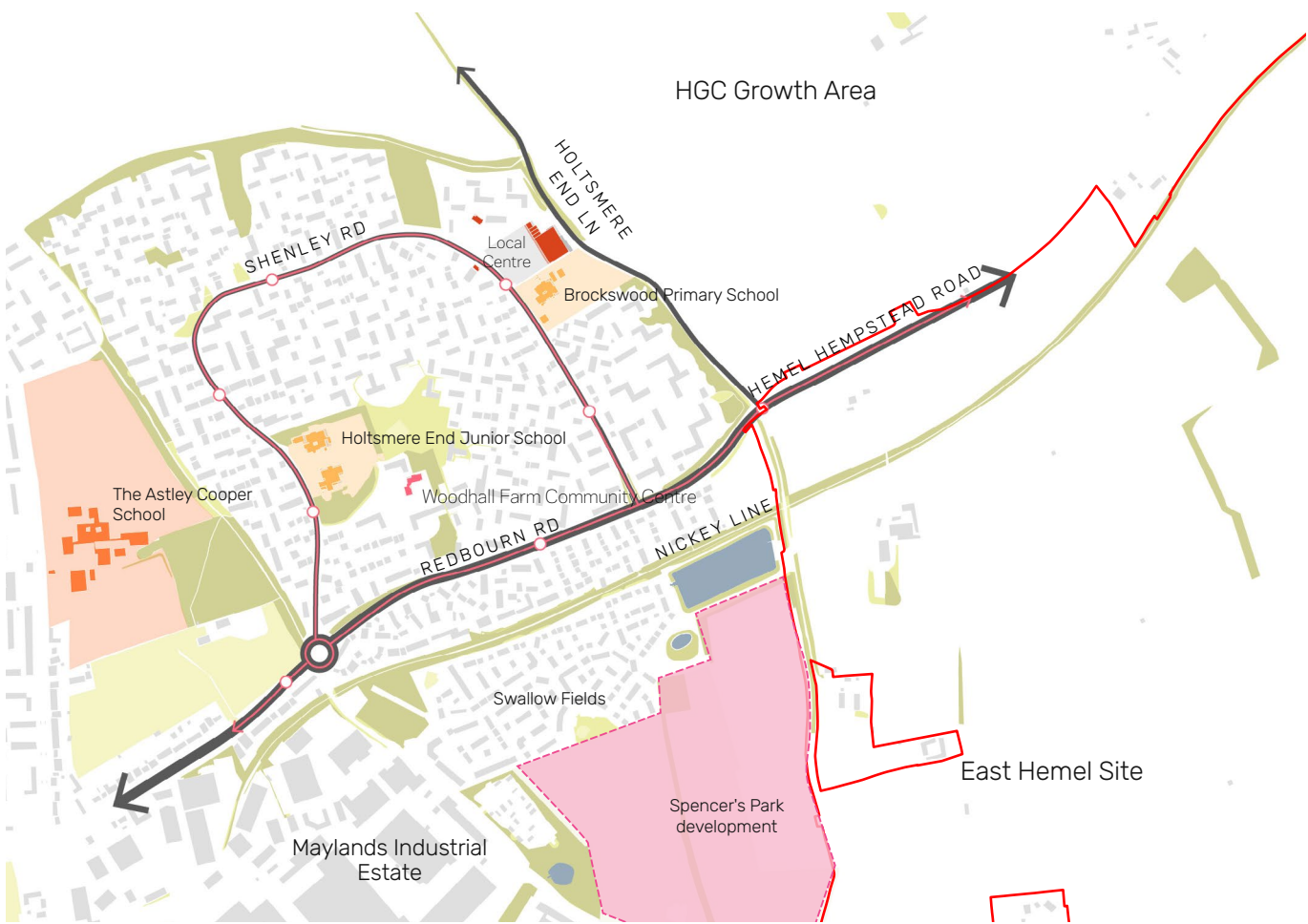
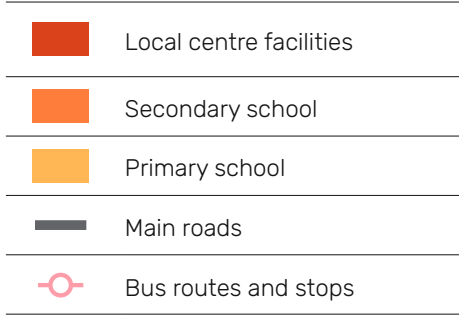
**Fig 02.19** Typical residential character



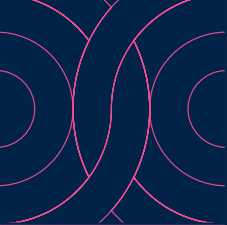
**Fig 02.20** Shenley Road



**Fig 02.21** New development at Swallow Fields



**Fig 02.22** Woodhall Farm urban structure



### Maylands Industrial Estate

Maylands Industrial Estate was originally designated as the primary employment zone for the New Town. As the town expanded, it grew in parallel, supporting the economic development of the wider region.

The area is predominantly characterized by large-format warehouses, logistics facilities, and workshop complemented by business park-style offices, creating a varied yet industrial focused environment. Around Maylands Avenue, the area takes on a more mixed-use character, with a broader range of businesses and services. A residential cluster lies to the south of Wood End Lane, developed primarily during the 1980s and 1990s, with ongoing development continuing to add housing to the area. This residential presence introduces a degree of mix within what remains a largely employment-focused zone.

Significant infrastructure includes the Buncefield Oil Terminal, which straddles Three Cherry Trees Lane, as well as Woodwells Cemetery, located nearby and serving the wider community. Recent developments such as Prologis Park have introduced new industrial and logistics units along Breakspear Way. These form part of Herts IQ.

### Masterplan Considerations

The Site has the opportunity to continue Hemel's structure of distinct neighbourhoods served by local centres, creating two new neighbourhoods. It also will expand Maylands Industrial Estate, further adding to the strength and diversity of employment offer in the town.

Opportunities to stitch into existing neighbourhoods are identified at Boundary Way, Green Lane, Pancake Lane and Blackwater Lane. The urban form in both Leverstock Green and Woodhall Farm are generally impermeable, resulting in places which are difficult to walk around and which can be disorienting; East Hemel has the opportunity to learn from this to create highly walkable neighbourhoods and centres.










Fig 02.24 Maylands Avenue



Fig 02.25 Office and industrial buildings



Fig 02.26 New Prologis Park development

	Commercial		Residential
	Mixed Use		Roads
	Office		Bus routes and stops
	Industrial		



**Fig 02.27** Maylands Industrial Estate urban structure

02.2.5

## Landscape and Open Space Context

### Designations

The Site is located over 2km southeast of the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB). There is one international statutory designated site within 15km of the Site: Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, 7.8km northwest of the Site. The Site also falls within the Impact Risk Zone of Ashridge Commons and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Roughdown Common SSSI (closest at 4.2km west of the Site), and Bricket Wood Common SSSI.

In accordance with SADC policy, all major residential developments within the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC Zone of Influence are required to deliver on-site SANG provision that meets Natural England’s guidance.

The Site is currently within the Green Belt, but the boundary has been submitted for review through the emerging SADC Local Plan. It is expected that the majority of the site will be

removed from the green belt once the new Local Plan is adopted, with the exception of the area in the north east of the Site to the east of the overhead pylon lines.

The Registered Gorhambury Park and Gardens sit approximately 850m east of the Site across the M1 motorway.

Aubreys Fort to the northeast of the B487 is a scheduled monument with a densely vegetated woodland edge which screens it.

Long Deans Nature Reserve is located to the southwest on Bunkers Hill, in close proximity to Bunkers Park. It is a County Nature Reserve (non-statutory) and it is recognised as a key neutral grassland with notable habitat value.

There are 37 non-statutory sites designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the Site. Westwick Row Wood LWS is located within the Site boundary and the Nicky Way Dismantled Railway LWS runs east-west through the north of the Site.

The closest registered ancient woodland is Blackwater Wood, approximately 200m south of the Site across the A4147.

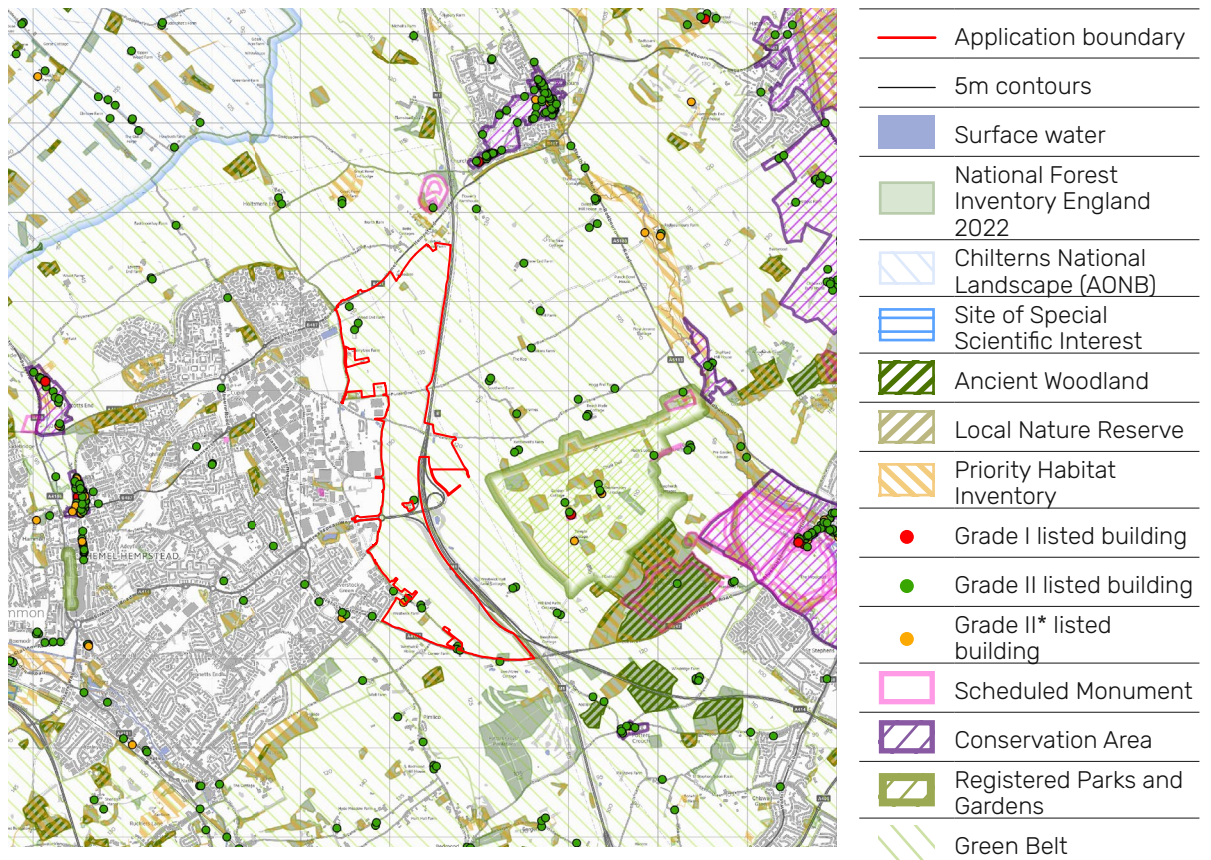


Fig 02.28 Landscape designations



**Fig 02.29** Bunkers Park



**Fig 02.30** View from the Scheduled Monument Aubreys Fort



**Fig 02.31** View from Grade II listed building in Gorhambury Estate