ARCHITECTURE

URBAN DESIGN & MASTERPLANNING

LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT

LAND NORTH EAST OF HARPENDEN BETWEEN LOWER LUTON ROAD, BOWER HEATH LANE AND COMMON LANE

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

MARCH 2026 | C6017 DAS 01

CREST NICHOLSON

Executive Summary

This Design and Access statement supports an outline planning application submitted by Crest Nicholson, for a mixed use development with all matters to be reserved except access.

Quality Assurance

ISO 9001 & 14001 Registered Firm

IDP is a practice of Urban Designers, Chartered Architects, Chartered Landscape Architects and Chartered Architectural Technologists. The opinions expressed within this document are those of appropriate qualified professionals, whose professional judgement is relied upon.

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Quality Control

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01

INTRODUCTION

01.01 Introduction

Purpose of this Document

This Design and Access statement satisfies the requirement in planning legislation for planning applications to be accompanied by a Design & Access statement.

Outline Application for demolition of existing buildings and structures and construction of a mixed-use development comprising residential dwellings (including affordable housing), children's home, elderly extra care facility, local centre (flexible retail/ health/ community use), sports pitches and associated building, green infrastructure and landscaping works (to include public open space and community growing space); primary school with early years provision, vehicular and active travel infrastructure (including pedestrian and cycle access) and diversion of Bower Heath Lane; drainage works; and related infrastructure. All matters reserved save for access from Lower Luton Road.

Summary of the proposal

A new, sustainable residential development, comprising

- Up to 500 modern, high-quality homes,
- Homes of a mix of sizes to meet local needs. Exact mix is to be confirmed but likely to include one to five beds.
- At least 40% affordable, offered for intermediate or affordable rent,
- 60-80 bed Extra Care facility for elderly residents,
- One children's home (likely to be four bed property)
- 2 Form Entry Primary School (inc a Nursery),
- A Local Centre that provides a flexible range of uses including retail, café, healthcare and community uses
- Generous open space (>50% of the site), including formal sports pitches and play areas
- Existing tree belts and hedgerows will be retained, and additional trees, hedges, and grasslands will be planted,
- Sustainable on-site drainage will protect the site from 100-year weather events, with an additional 40% capacity to futureproof against climate change,
- Sustainable homes with solar panels and charging points for electric vehicles,
- Homes in an accessible, edge-of-settlement location that is connected to nearby pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, enabling healthy, sustainable transport to local facilities.

This document will set out the key constraints to development, and demonstrate how these have been resolved to ensure a highly deliverable and sustainable new development can be delivered to meet the strong local needs and to the highest standards of design and placemaking. A design code will be provided at pre-commencement condition stage.

Development Vision

Our vision for the land at Lower Luton Road, Harpenden is for the creation of a new high quality residential development that will provide a truly mixed community supporting older people, young people and families and those seeking to construct their own unique homes. The development will be sustainable and distinctive yet sensitive to its landscape setting and proximity to existing residents.

Key principles include:

- A landscape design promoting best practice urban design place making principles and sustainability through retention and extensive enhancement of existing green infrastructure, ecology and biodiversity.
- Providing a range of new family homes offering a range of housing types and tenures ensuring a mixed, balanced and vibrant community is delivered to support local housing needs including homes for older people.
- A clear urban structure organised sensitively to work with the existing topography.
- A clear and attractive movement network maximising pedestrian and cycle connectivity for both new and existing residents ensuring that the proposal integrates with and enhances the existing community.

Crest Nicholson have assembled a highly professional team, with established reputations for providing high quality and deliverable development proposals, through decades of experience.

The team includes the following: -

Architecture & Urban Design:	**IDP**
Landscape Planning & Architecture:	**BMD**
Planning and EIA:	**Stantec**
Consulting Transportation Engineer:	**SLR**
Ecology:	**Aspect Ecology**
Heritage Consultant:	**RPS**
Acoustics Consultant:	**Create Consulting**

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LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT

01.02 Site Location - Regional

Harpenden

Harpenden is a town located in Hertfordshire, situated near the M1 and well connected by rail to London. Nearby towns include Luton, St Albans and Hemel Hempsted.

Road Connections

M1: the town is well connected primarily via the M1 motorway, links to London, Leeds and the Midlands.

A1081: provides local road links to surrounding towns.

Rail Connections

Harpenden Railway Station, is on the Thameslink Line, which offers frequent direct services to London St Pancras International and London Blackfrairs. The journey approximately takes 30-40 minutes.

To Luton: Direct services take around 15 minutes, convenient for those travelling to Luton Airport.

To Bedford: Direct services take around 25-30 minutes. Bedworth has good rail connections to the wider Midlands and the North of England.

To Brighton: Direct route to the city takes 1 hour 30 minutes.

Bus Services

The bus services are an essential component for local connectivity, buses to nearby towns like Luton, St Albans and surrounding villages.

During peak hours, these services tend to be frequent.

Walking and Cycling

Harpenden is well situated for walking and cycling, several green spaces within the town and surrounding countryside.

Regional Location Map

01.03 Site Location - Local

Harpenden

Harpenden, a town in Hertfordshire, known for its agricultural history. Throughout the changes, Harpenden has retained its small-town atmosphere, with various community events, local markets and outdoor activities. Town's proximity to the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

History of Harpenden

Harpenden, a town with rich history that evolved from rural agriculture settlements to becoming a commuter town.

Archaeological findings in the surrounding areas indicate settlements during the bronze age traces of roman occupation in the region. The land was largely farmed, known for its sheep farming. 14th-17th centuries saw the area focused on agriculture.

Early 20th century development transformed Harpenden from a village into a small town, new housing development and infrastructure improvements. Local landmarks in the town include St Nicholas Church and Rothamsted Research which are integral.

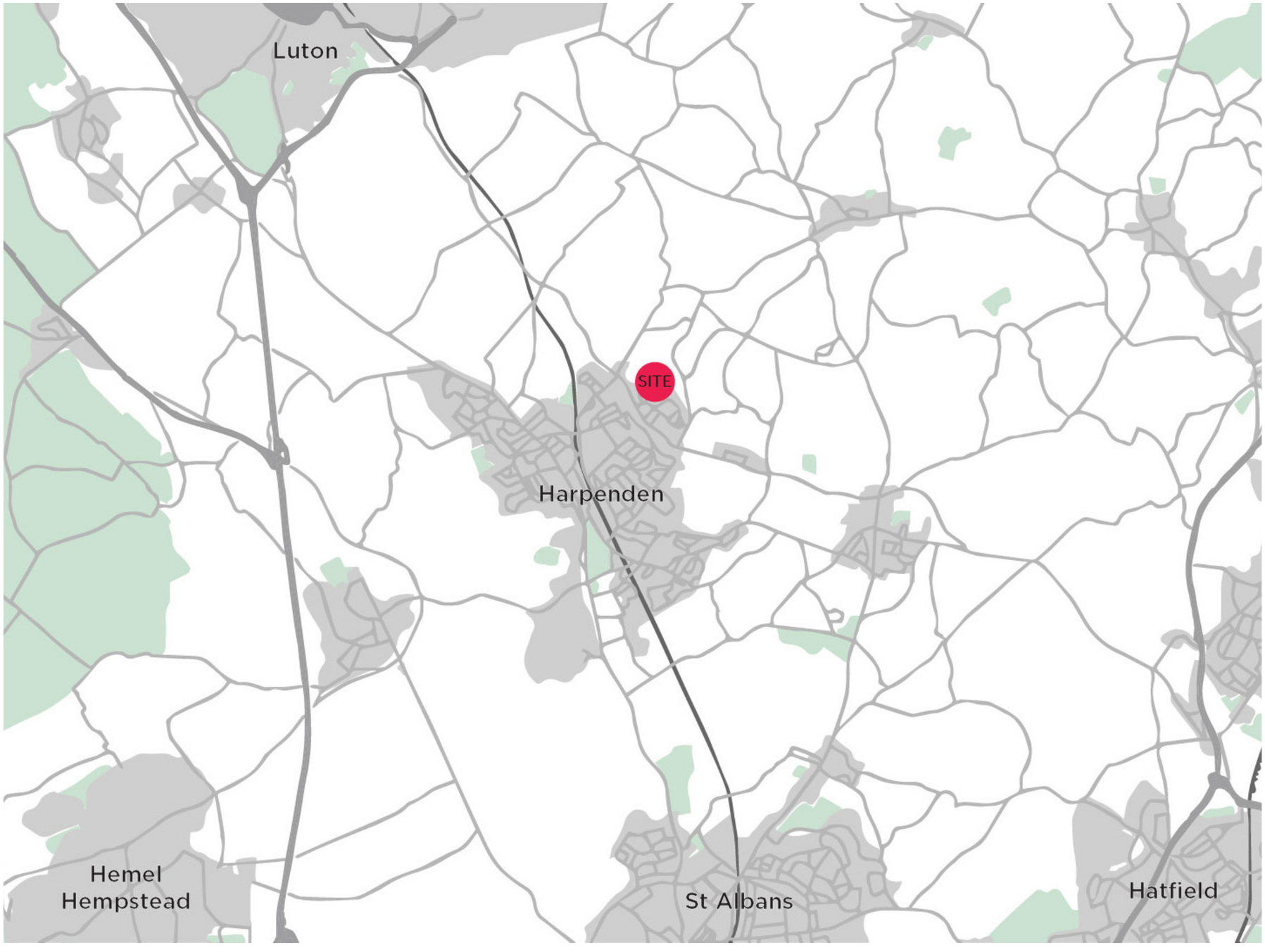
Current Day Harpenden

Harpenden is a desirable town that blends suburban living with easy access to London. It has an estimated population of 30,000 to 35,000 residents.

Harpenden is known for its vibrant community life, The Harpenden Village Day is a highlight of the year, bringing together locals for parades, stalls, and entertainment.

With a focus on outdoor activities, local culture, and a welcoming community, Harpenden remains one of Hertfordshire's most sought-after towns.

Harpenden is home to several highly regarded schools such as Roundwood Park School, St. George's School, and Harpenden Academy.



Local Location Map

01.04 The Site

Site Allocation

The proposed development is located within St Albans City and District Council. The site comprises 32.85 hectares of the wider North East Harpenden allocation. The land to the south west is under the control of Miller Homes. The land to the south east is under the control of M E Simons Trust & Wimms, the land located to the south of this is under the control of Sauncey View Lodge. It is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The emerging new Local Plan includes the Site within the North East Harpenden Broad Location B2 for:

- A comprehensive mixed-use development
- Residential (circa 750 homes, plus Extra Care provision)
- 2 Form Entry Primary School (inc. Early Years)
- Local Centre
- On-site sports provision
- Other green infrastructure
- Improvements to transport infrastructure, including links to Katherine Warrington Secondary School.

Crest's land comprises the largest portion of the allocation. Crest is committed to working collaboratively with all neighbouring landowners and promoters to achieve the SADC's aspirations for North East Harpenden.

In progressing a collaborative approach, a Joint Illustrative Masterplan has been developed between all parties.

Key

Red Line Boundary

Site Aerial

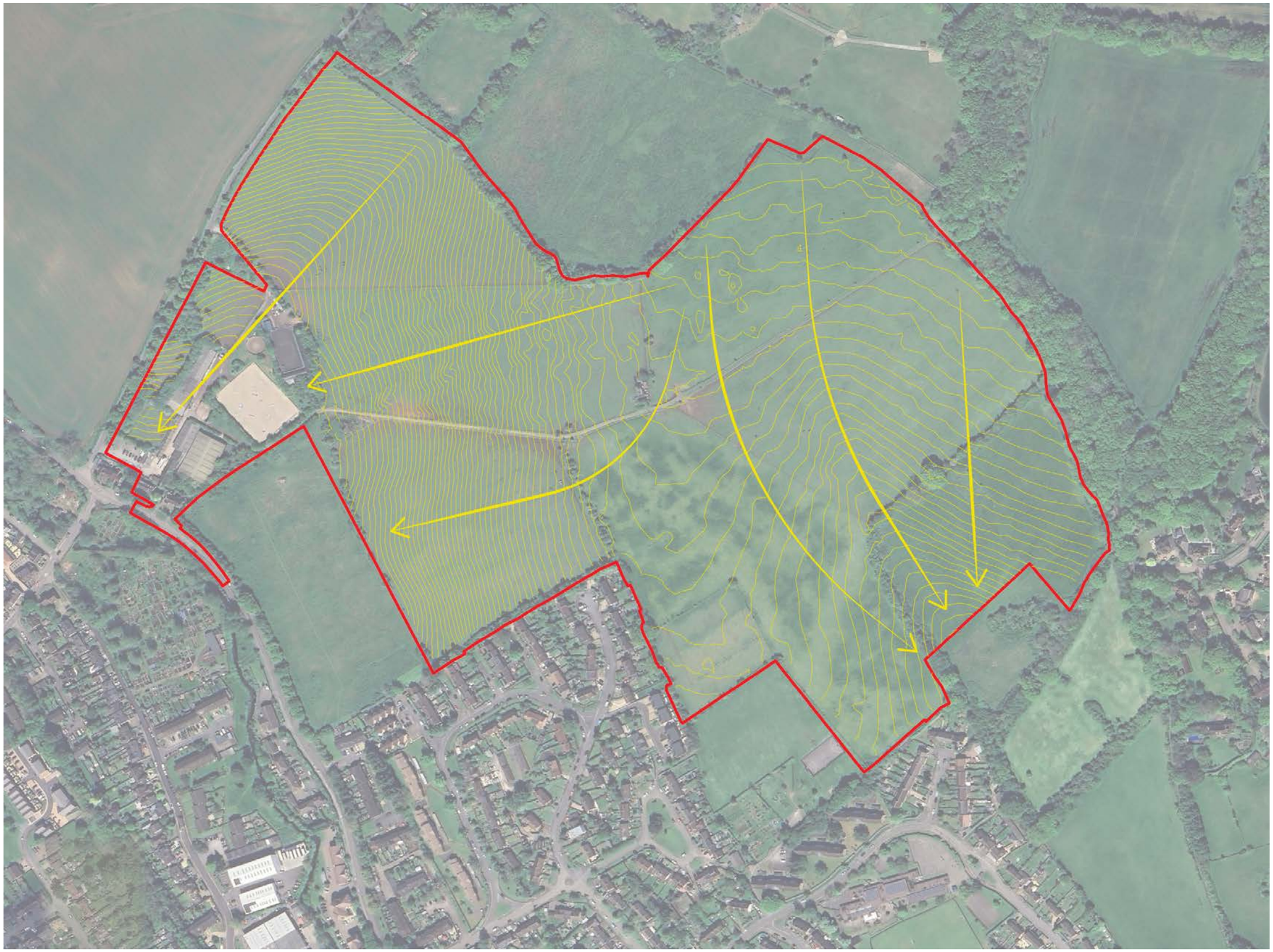
01.05 The Site with Contours

Lower Luton Road levels are circa 88m AOD, with an incline up to circa 124m AOD around the existing vegetation and visual ridge line, which sits roughly central within the red line site area. Gradient slopes vary between 1 in 10 to 1 in 18.

Past the ridge line the topography incline reduces to 1 in 30 to 1 in 50. The highest point of the site in the north east is circa 130m AOD.

Topography from the high point falls to the south and west.

The west of the site where the steeper topography is found is located within the 'Upper Lea Valley' landscape character area. The eastern boundary sits within the 'Blackmore End Plateau' character area.



Key

- Red Line Boundary
- Contours
- Direction of Fall

Site Aerial With Contours

01.06 Site Characteristics

The site was formerly designated as green belt land, with 50% of it recently released to allow for residential development. Mature trees and established hedgerows are spread throughout the area, naturally dividing the site into distinct zones and spaces.

The site features steep topography, which may present certain challenges and concerns during development.

The site is primarily agricultural / greenfield land. There is an active Equestrian Centre located in the western corner of the site, a number of the fields are used for horse grazing. A telecommunication mast and Electrical Substation is located near the centre of the site.

Currently, vehicular access is limited to a single entry point from Bower Heath Lane. There are several pedestrian routes—both formal and informal—that have become well-used over time by local residents.

1. Lower Luton Road
2. Existing Track entrance from Common Lane
3. PROW Entrance from Bower Heath Lane
4. View from the existing track of the west of the site
5. Equestrian Entrance from Bower Heath Lane
6. View overlooking the Miller Boundary
7. View from the north of the site overlooking towards the south
8. PROW connection to Batford through Turners Close

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

01.07 Planning Policy Position

Allocation Red Line and Landownership Plan

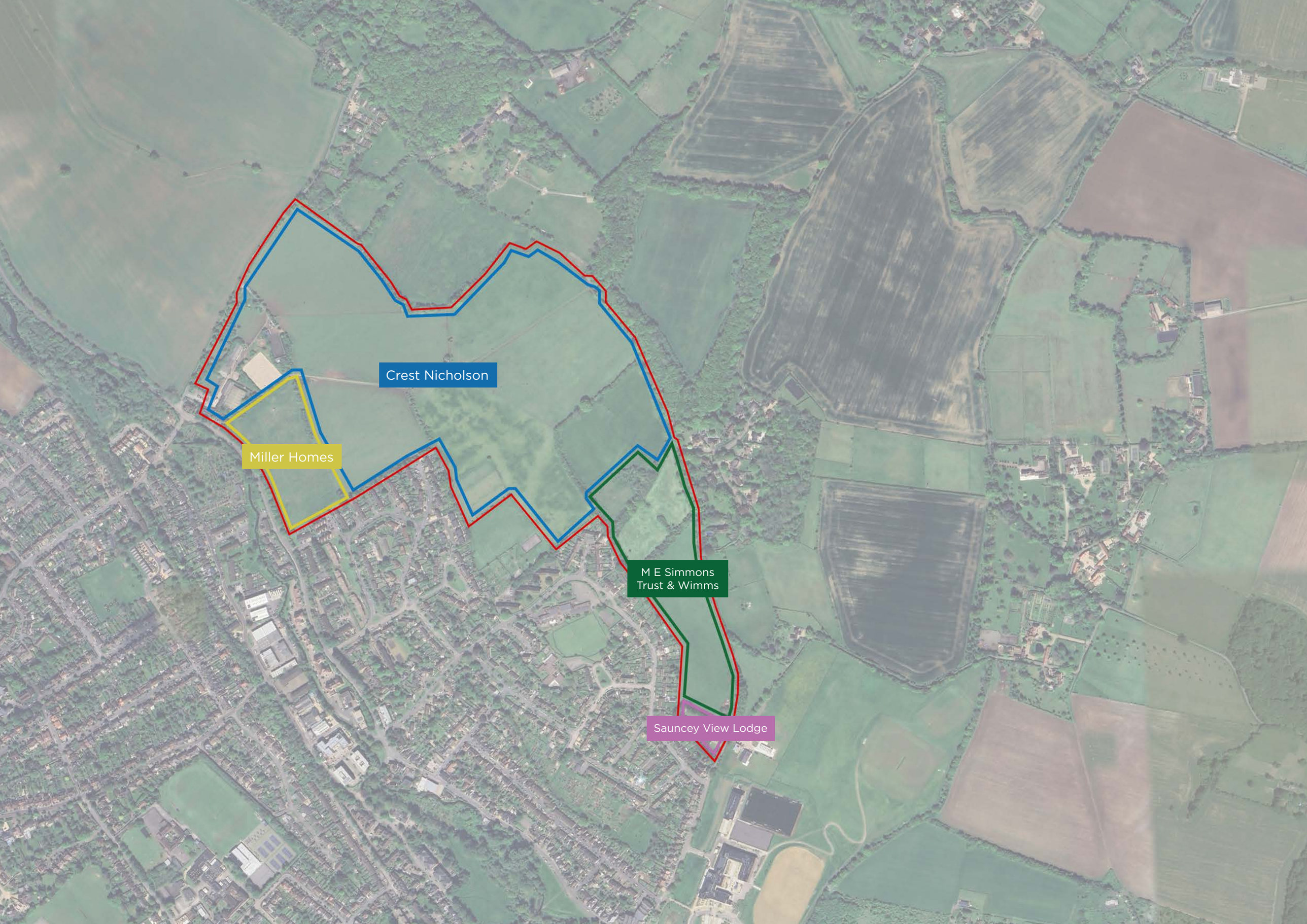
The emerging new Local Plan includes the site within the North East Harpenden Broad Location ('B2' under draft Policy LG1) allocation. Crest Nicholson's land comprises the largest portion of the North East Harpenden Broad Location (B2)

The principles of the emerging allocation are:

- A comprehensive mixed-use development
- Residential (circa 750 homes, plus Extra Care/ Retirement provision)
- 2 Form-Entry Primary School (inc. Early Years provision)
- Local Centre (inc. Medical Centre and commercial development)
- On-site sports provision
- Other green infrastructure
- Improvements to transport infrastructure (inc. links to Katherine Warington school)

Key

- Site Allocation Boundary
- Crest Nicholson
- Miller Homes
- M E Simmons Trust & Wimms
- Sauncey View Lodge


Crest Nicholson
Miller Homes
M E Simmons
Trust & Wimms
Sauncey View Lodge

01.08 Relevant Planning Policy

Relevant national and local policy and guidance

SADC's adopted Development Plan comprises:

- District Local Plan Review 1994 Saved and Deleted Policies Version (July 2020), and supporting Maps;
- Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2033 (2018); and
- Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2023).

The NPPF (February 2025) is a material consideration.

SADC is preparing a new emerging draft Local Plan. The Regulation 19 version is the latest version and weight can be given to it due to the advanced stage in preparation (i.e. it is progressing towards Stage 2 Hearing in Autumn 2025). The Draft Local Plan comprises:

- Draft Local Plan 2041 – Reg.19 Publication (September 2024); and
- Draft Policies Map.

Adoption of the new Local Plan is anticipated to take place in March 2026.

01.09 The Wider Allocation

St Albans' Council are in the process of preparing their new Local Plan, which includes this site. There are three additional parties to the allocation, whilst we are looking at the Crest site, the other sites need to be taken into consideration.

Crest Nicholson is committed to working collaboratively with all neighbouring landowners and promoters to achieve the Council's aspirations for North East Harpenden. In progressing a collaborative approach, a Joint Masterplan has been developed between all parties as part of the work for the Local Plan representations. This demonstrates how North East Harpenden could successfully deliver the draft policy requirements for Broad Location B2. In addition, Crest commit to the futureproofing of the land in its control and embed flexibility at the site boundaries to ensure that development is not prejudiced on the remainder of the allocation.

Crest have actively engaged with Miller Homes to prepare a framework masterplan. A number of meetings have been held to discuss Miller Homes' Plans for their land and to share information.

01.10 Our Vision

What we want to see

The vision for the development is to create a highly legible and distinctive place that is well-connected, sustainable, and responsive to its landscape. A clear street hierarchy, intuitive layout, and strong sense of identity will support ease of movement and placemaking.

The plan should embrace the natural topography, using it to shape character and enhance views, while also incorporating small parks and amenity spaces to provide residents with accessible, enjoyable green areas. A network of green routes will link to the surrounding Green Belt, supporting active travel and fostering a strong connection to nature.

Design will focus on enhancing biodiversity by retaining key landscape features and integrating blue infrastructure, such as sustainable drainage systems. A high-quality community hub at the heart of the development will create a focal point for social interaction and local activity.

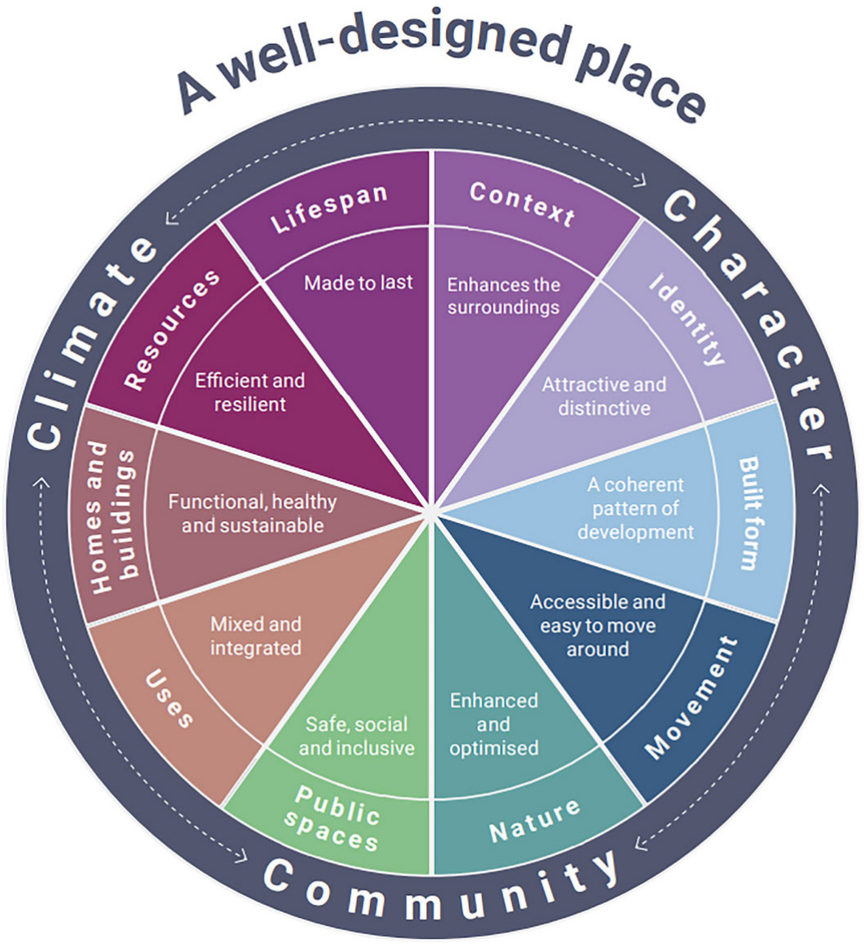
Throughout, the layout will seek to maximise passive solar gain, supporting energy efficiency and long-term sustainability.

What we want to avoid

The design should steer clear of creating an illegible layout that makes wayfinding difficult and undermines the user experience. It is essential to avoid delivering a place with no distinct identity, which risks becoming just another generic housing estate.

We aim to prevent over-engineered streetscapes and retaining structures that dominate the public realm, as well as car-dominated environments that limit walkability and social interaction. Public spaces must not be poorly designed or underused, and should instead be visually appealing and functional.

A lack of connectivity to surrounding areas is to be avoided, as is the creation of inactive frontages, such as a school edge lined with fencing rather than engaging building façades. Finally, active travel routes should be direct and inviting — not convoluted or compromised by challenging topography.



The ten characteristics of well-designed places

CONTEXT

Homes, spaces and functions that reflect the distinctive characteristics of the area.

PUBLIC SPACES

Intentional public spaces, that have a function and not just 'left-over' spaces. Spaces will support healthy lifestyles and encourage walking and cycling.

IDENTITY

Designs that will be memorable and create a unique and distinctive identity for the neighbourhood.

BUILT FORM

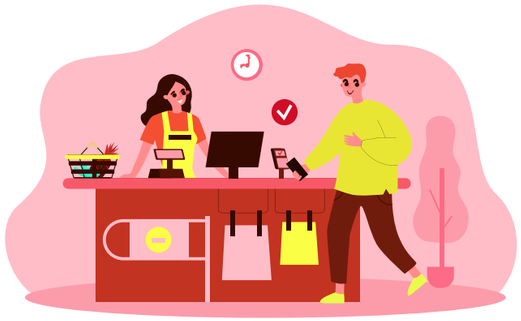
Sensitively arranged buildings that reinforce the hierarchy of spaces, appropriately proportioned and create activity to spaces.

MOVEMENT

A clear and legible movement structure that favours sustainable modes and encourages healthy lifestyle choices

NATURE

Retaining natural features and maximising the potential for enhanced ecology.



USES

Building and space uses to deliver upon local needs and enhance the lived experience.

HOMES & BUILDINGS

A mix of home types to encourage the creation of a mixed community across all ages and means.

RESOURCES

Using available resources wisely, limiting unnecessary travel and waste through considerate management practices.

LIFESPAN

Considering the appropriate lifespan of the buildings, maximising robustness and end of life recyclability.

02

APPRECIATING THE CONTEXT