

02.10 Area C

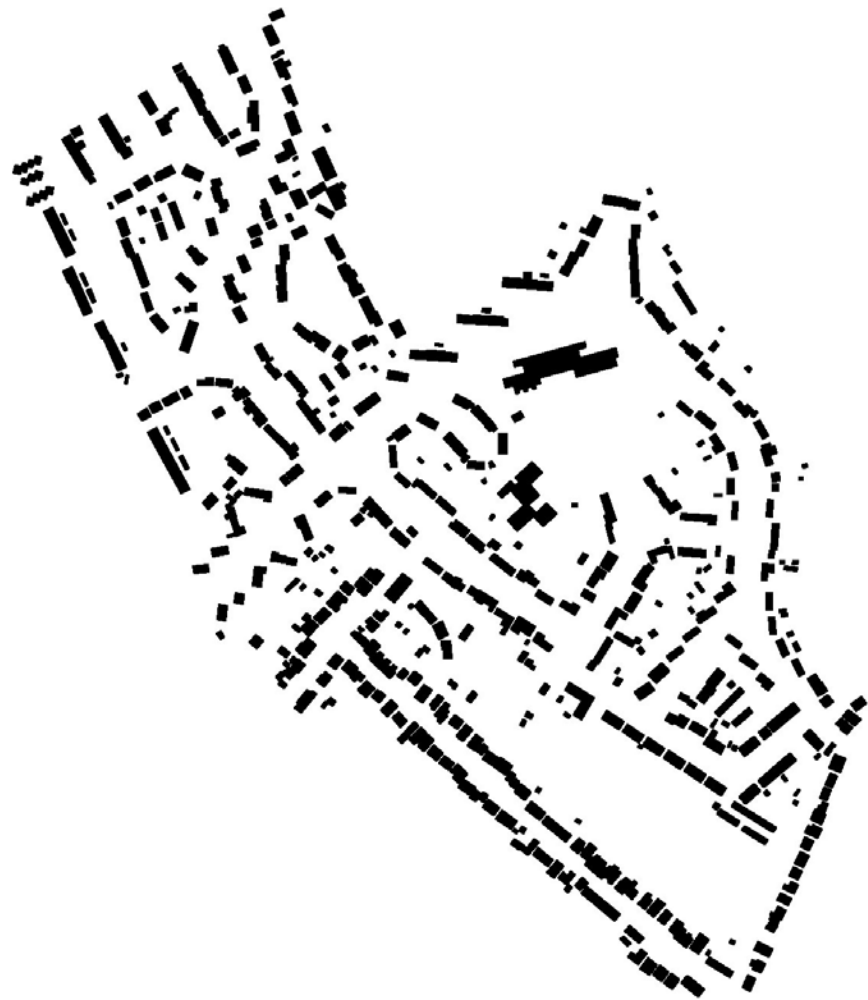
Batford

Batford is a village, located to the southeast of the site, along the River Lea. It is home to Sauncey Wood Primary School, Porters Hill Park, Porters Hill Park Allotments, Batford Memorial Hall and various residential properties. The area benefits from good public transportation links, including a bus route that connects to the centre of Harpenden.

Batford offers a diverse mix of dwellings, ranging from post-war council houses to Victorian terraces, semi detached, detached homes and more modern apartment blocks.

The predominate building material includes brick or plaster for the buildings. White PVC windows, brick cill detailing and predominately brown roof tiles have been used. The architectural styling is more uniform and materials distribution less varied. A small number of properties have been updated with modern finishes.

The area's topography is reflected in various elevation changes, and street parking is common, with stairs leading to pavements from the road in areas lacking private drives. Hedges are often used to create green buffers, enhancing the overall appearance of the neighbourhood.



- 1 Stepped Level Terrace Housing
- 2 Hedge lined streets to combat level changes
- 3 Variation of red brick housing with brown roof tiles seem to be consistent within the area



1.



2.



3.

02.11 Area C Spatial Typologies

The building line form shows diverse road typologies. Many properties feature frontage parking, with houses set back to accommodate it. Additionally, a number of garage courts have been identified throughout Batford.



Key

Building Line

Building Blocks

Parking/Garage Courts

02.12 Character Treatments

Boundary Treatments

Within Batford, there is a diverse range of boundary treatments, reflecting the unique styles and preferences of property owners.

The hierarchy and typologies of the streets can often be interpreted through the materials and finishes used for these boundaries, indicating variations in formality, security, and aesthetic appeal.

While some properties maintain a consistent approach to boundary treatments, others have undergone modifications, incorporating more robust and secure materials to enhance privacy and durability.

Despite these differences, a unifying characteristic across the various boundary styles is the prevalent use of hedges, large plants, and mature trees. These natural elements add a layer of semi-permeable screening, softening the streetscape while providing shade, greenery, and a sense of enclosure to the frontages.

Windows

Batford is characterised by a diverse collection of dwellings that have been built across various periods, resulting in a rich architectural tapestry. Many properties exhibit evidence of regeneration and retrofitted façades, reflecting an eclectic mix of styles rather than a uniform design approach.

Several façades feature asymmetrical window arrangements, which contribute to an unbalanced appearance on some elevations, adding to the area's varied visual character.

Further architectural interest is provided through the inclusion of Georgian-style bar windows, known for their slender glazing bars and classic proportions.

Additionally, windows with textured glass and decorative patterns add subtle ornamental detail, enhancing the overall aesthetic complexity of the buildings in Batford.



Maintaining clear and clean hedges



Overgrown hedges in the way of footpath



Proportions



Formal boundary treatments



Detailing



Ornamentation

Several properties within the area feature a variety of ornamental detailing elements that contribute to their distinctive character. Landscaping elements are frequently employed to enhance and enliven the elevations, adding texture and visual interest to the streetscape.

A range of materials is evident throughout the area, including brick, timber, and stone, often combined to create rich, contrasting façades. This variety is complemented by a range of colours, further enriching the architectural diversity.

Architectural features such as bay windows and arched entranceways are prominent on

many dwellings, providing both aesthetic appeal and a sense of traditional craftsmanship.

Conversely, there are certain undesirable elements present within some properties that should be avoided in the proposed scheme. These include a lack of symmetry and large, unadorned elevations, which detract from the overall visual harmony and character of the area. Ensuring that these unattractive aspects are not incorporated will be essential in maintaining the quality and cohesiveness of the new development.

Roof Style

Brown roof tiles are a prevalent roofing material throughout the Batford area, contributing to a cohesive local aesthetic. Many properties in the vicinity also feature chimneys, which add to the traditional character of the streetscape.

The architectural form commonly includes front-to-back gables, creating a dynamic roofline that enhances visual interest. Additionally, stepped roofs are a distinctive feature within the area, responding to changes in ground level.



Decorative hedgerow



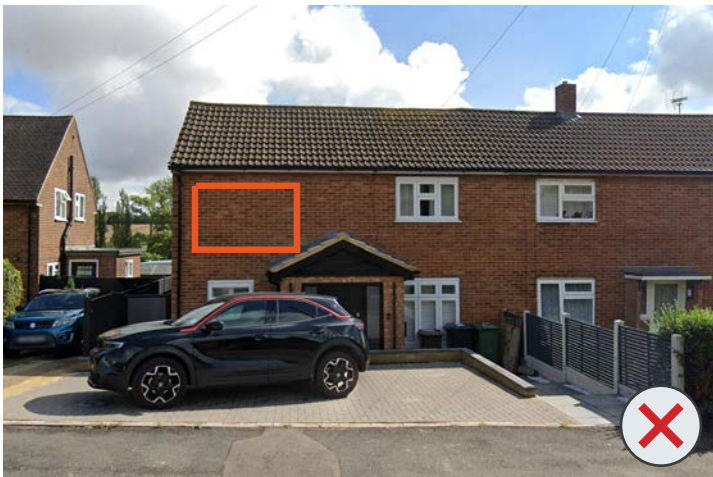
Stone cills



Batford Road



Arched entrances



Lack of windows



Holcroft Road

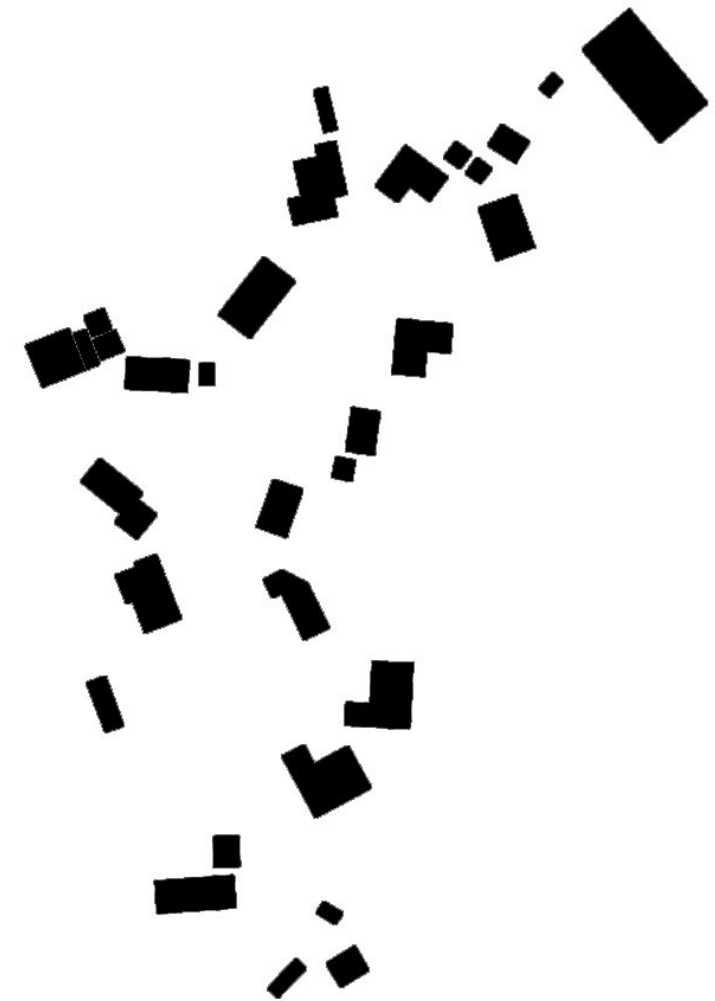
02.13 Area D

Sauncey Wood

Sauncey Wood is located to the east of the site, off Common Lane. It primarily consists of residential homes, often set on larger plots, offering a spacious environment.

The dwellings within this settlement feature a mix of materials, including brown, red and buff brick, with distinctive accent elements such as red and brown hanging tiles and arched windows. They appear to be constructed around the early 2000's in a Neo-Georgian architectural style. The facades are balanced, with evenly spaced windows and a central front door, framed by porticos.

Sauncey Wood is surrounded by greenery and vast landscaping mature trees, nestled within the greenbelt and is also adjacent to agricultural land.



- 1 Large symmetrical gable front home
- 2 Variation of materiality, use of timber as a decorative feature for the entrance.
- 3 Generous frontages allow for the inclusion of private gated access. Most of the homes also have ornamental shrubs and hedges to the front of the homes.



1.



2.



3.

02.14 Area E

Bower Heath Lane

Bower Heath Lane is located to the northwest of the site, surrounded by scenic views, opens fields and ample green space. The lane features several detached homes, with Kings Heath Park being a key development along this route.

Kings Heath Park is a residential park home estate designed for individuals aged 50 and over. It offers a peaceful, small community setting, surrounded by scenic countryside views and walking trails, while still being conveniently close to transport links and local amenities.

The properties in Kings Heath are detached, with main facade materials including cream render, red brick, and brown roof tiles. Accent features such as white PVC cills and windows are commonly used. The development is bordered by existing landscaping and trees, enhancing the natural surroundings.



- 1 Kings Heath Park
- 2 Tall maintained hedges on either side of Bower Heath Lane.
- 3 Generous front gardens with parking.



1.



2.



3.

02.15 Topography

Lower Luton Road, Wheathampstead

Long perimeter blocks, with almost all of the buildings run along the contours with short north to south connecting streets running against the contours.

Adjacent housing, Batford

Mixture of pavilion flats and housing, the majority of buildings align with the contours.

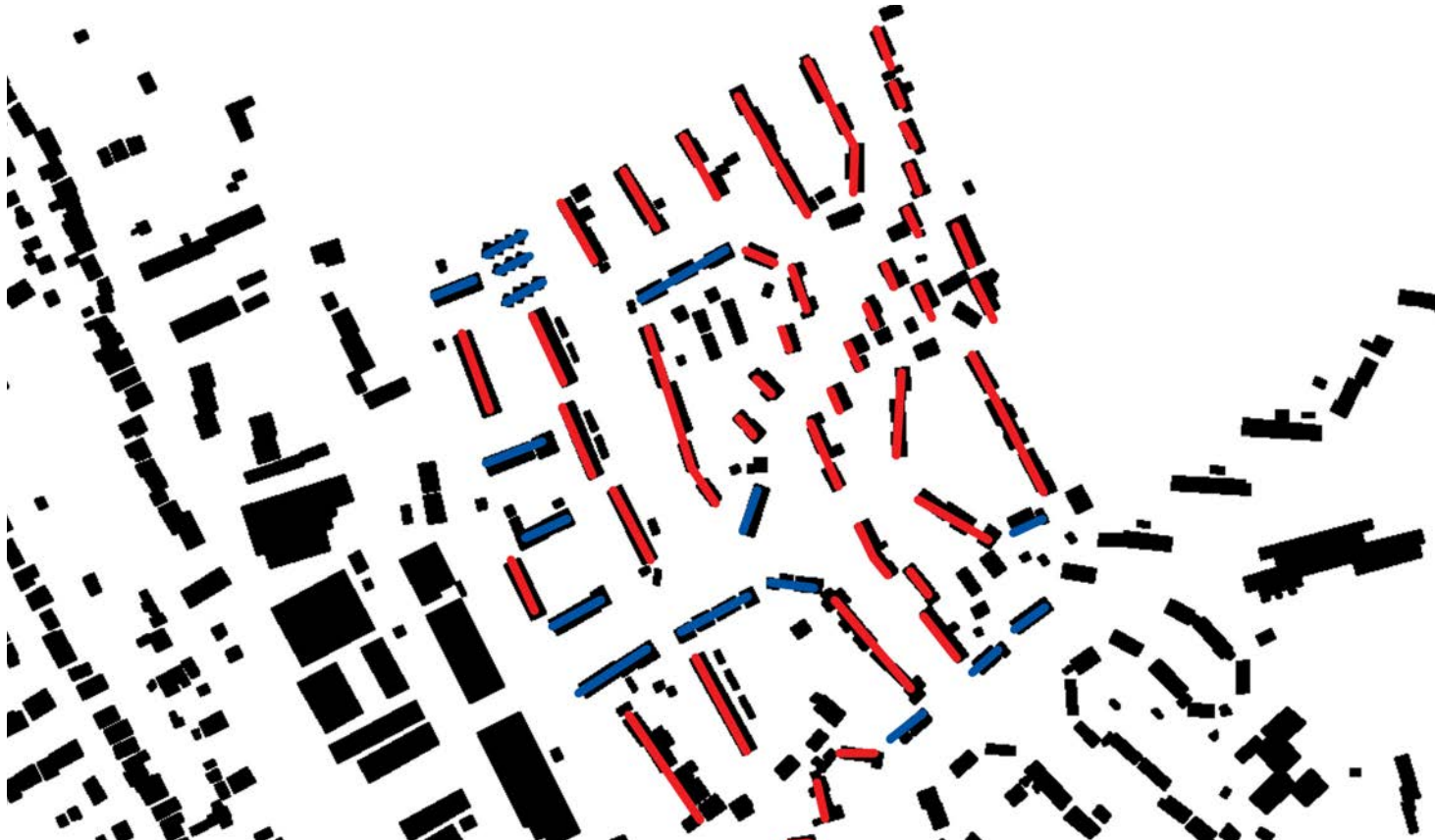
The access road is direct and steep with some properties directly fronting it on one side. To the north, the properties do not address the street but instead work with the contours.

A number of retaining walls feature in the Batford area, which in some cases create barriers to pedestrian movement.

It is also common that front and rear garden include some level of retaining.



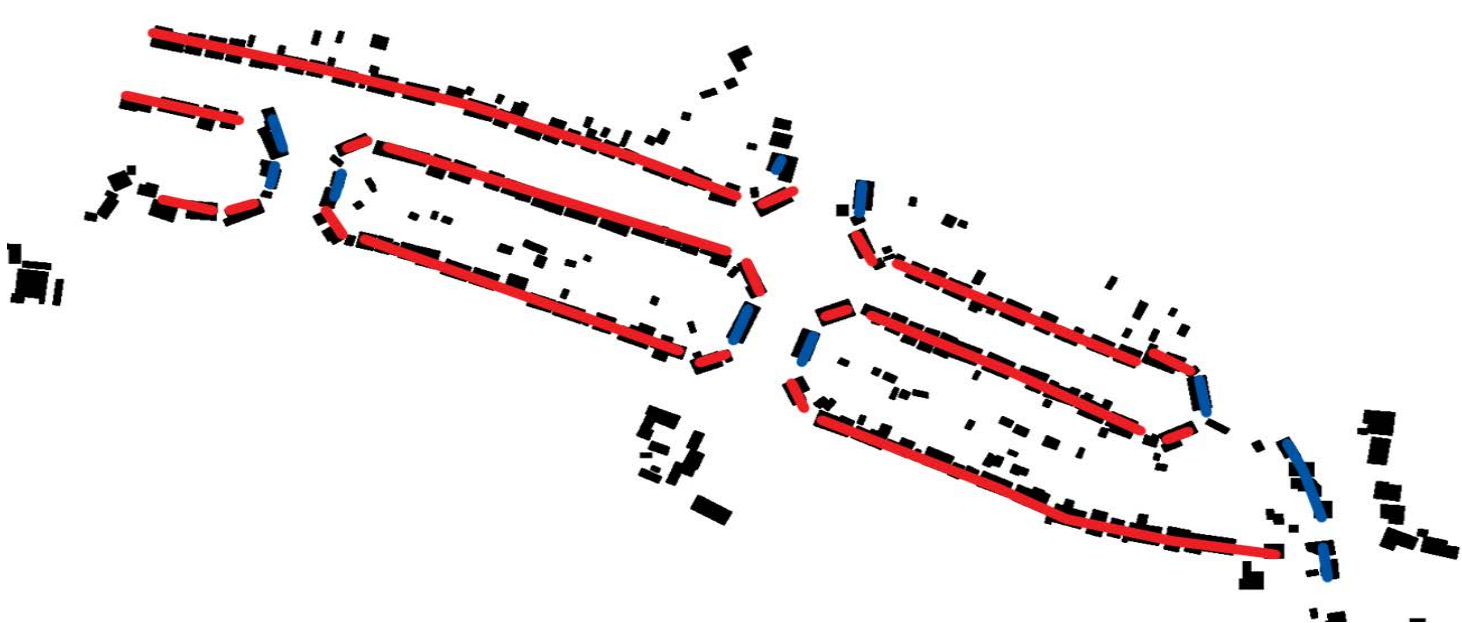
2.



Batford Area



2.



Lower Luton Road

- 1 Barley Rise
- 2 Porters Hill

Key



Aligned with contours



Aligned against contours

02.16 Contextual Conclusion

The five character areas surrounding the site present a diverse and layered urban and semi-rural environment, with a broad range of housing types, architectural styles, materials, and landscaping approaches.

Housing Types and Scale

The residential fabric across the areas includes a variety of dwelling types: Victorian terraces, post-war semi-detached and detached homes and newer suburban-style developments including apartments.

Character Areas A, B, and C show a higher density of housing, with a mix of apartments and smaller dwellings, particularly near Lower Luton Road and the edge of Batford.

Character Areas D and E shows lower density housing, featuring larger detached homes on more spacious plots (especially in Sauncey Wood and Kings Heath Park).

Materials and Architectural Styles

Across all areas, brick remains the dominant building material, with red, buff, and brown tones frequently used.

Character Areas A and B demonstrate greater material variation, including cladding, render, pebble dash, and decorative brickwork, reflecting a more mixed-use and historically layered streetscape.

Areas C to E show greater uniformity in material choices, with simpler brick or plaster facades and standardised features such as PVC windows and brown roof tiles.

Sauncey Wood (Area D) stands out with Neo-Georgian influences, such as symmetrical façades and classical detailing.

Landscape and Setting

Landscaping plays a crucial role in shaping the character of each area:

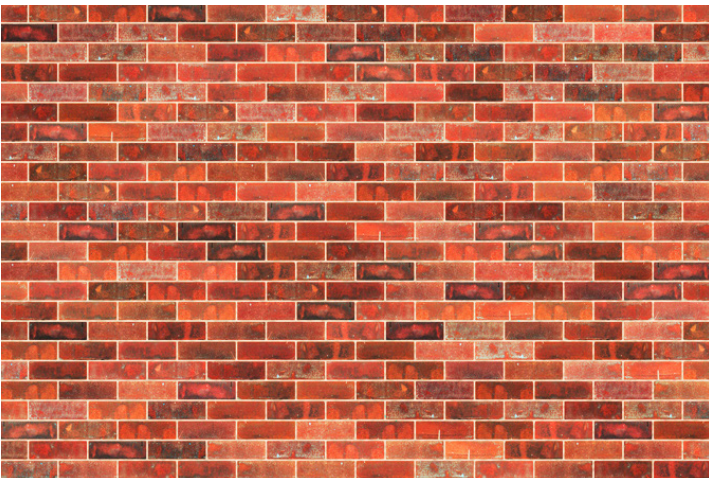
Character Area A and B benefits from mature trees along Lower Luton Road, creating natural visual and acoustic buffers.

Area C uses hedging and street-side planting to enhance its residential feel.

Areas D and E are notably more rural and landscape-driven, with greenbelt surroundings, large plots, and extensive tree cover contributing to a quieter, semi-rural atmosphere.

Overall Conclusion

The site is set within a diverse mix of residential and mixed-use areas, each contributing uniquely to the local character. Surrounding it are higher-density urban neighbourhoods with varied materials, as well as lower-density, landscaped housing at the rural edge. This range of contexts provides a valuable reference for new development, allowing it to draw on existing materials, scale, and landscaping approaches while creating a cohesive and well-integrated relationship with the surrounding community.



Red Brick - Multi



Render



Windows



Roof - incorporate solar pvs



Flint Stone



Decorative hedgerow

02.17 Land Use

Looking beyond the site edges, the land to the north and east of the site is primarily made up of agricultural land and woodlands.

To the south and west, residential developments extend into smaller communities. The area is well-connected to local amenities, with educational and medical facilities spread throughout.

Expansive woodlands and Green Belt areas offer scenic and peaceful pedestrian routes throughout the town.

Although not shown in this diagram, Rothamsted Park is a 56-acre public park in Harpenden. With a vast array of facilities including football pitches, cricket pitches, tennis courts, multi-use games area, playground, skatepark and natural trails.



Land Use Plan

02.18 Edges and Beyond

The site edges to the west, north and east are predominately existing hedgerows and mature trees. Providing the site with visual and noise protection.

The southern boundary currently lies against existing residential gardens of Batford. The southern boundary is also located against Porters Hill Park, a community playground with a sports pitch connected to Porters Hill Park Allotments.



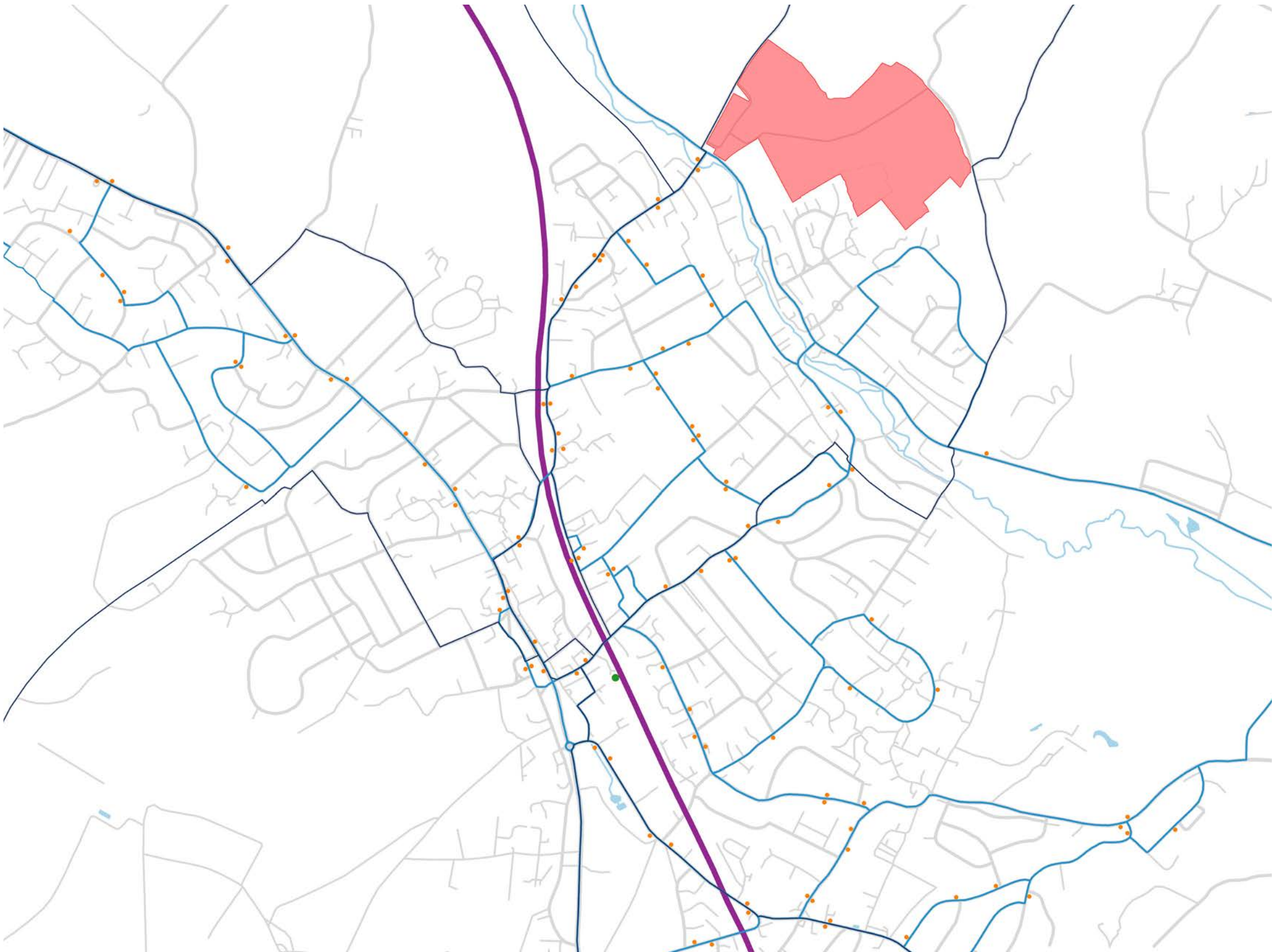
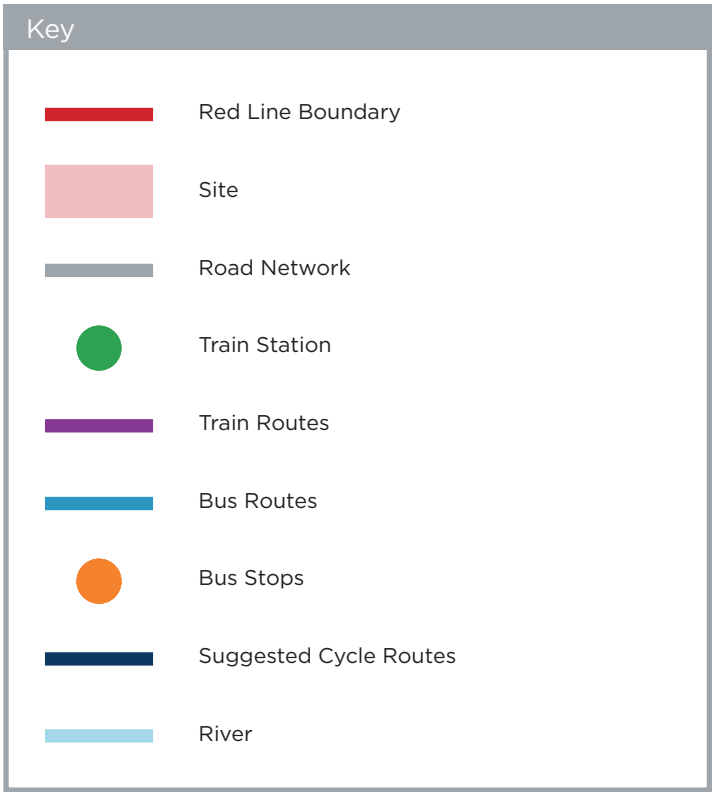
Edges and Beyond Plan

02.19 Connectivity

The site connects to the bus network via Westfield Road providing frequent routes to the town centre. This is only a short walk from the site.

Harpenden High Street is approximately a 5 minute drive, under 10 minute via the bus and a 30 minute walk away. The bus comes every 60 minutes.

Harpenden Train Station is approximately a 6 minute drive, under 10 minutes via the bus depending on the route and a 32 minute walk away.



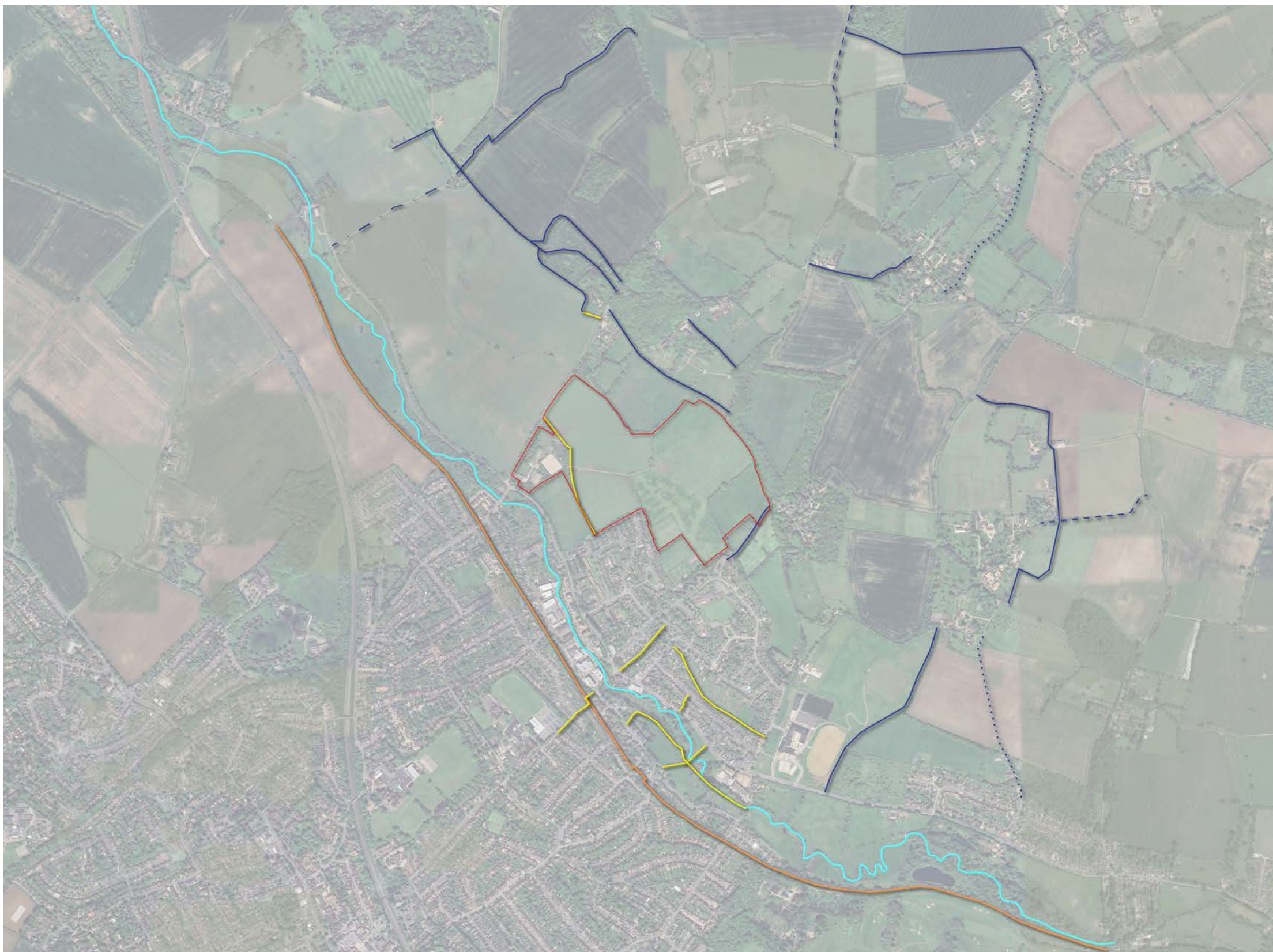
Vehicle and Pedestrian Movement

02.20 Existing PROW's

An overlay illustrating the existing public rights of way surrounding the site, including footpaths, bridleways, and byways that offer connectivity and access throughout the area.

Key

Red Line Boundary

Harpenden PROW

02.21 Existing Cycle Routes

The St Albans City and District Cycling Map outlines the designated and recommended cycling routes across St Albans, Harpenden, and the surrounding smaller towns. These routes have been identified as safe and suitable for cyclists, whether for exploring the local landscape or commuting to nearby towns. A number of well-connected cycle routes are in close proximity to link the site to the wider community.

Key

Red Line Boundary

NCN Cycle Routes

02.22 Facilities and Amenities

Harpenden offers a diverse range of public services, facilities, and amenities. The accompanying diagram indicates the location of these facilities in relation to the site, with most being within a 30-minute walk (1 mile radius).

Harpenden is known for its strong sense of community, where residents support one another. Local community centres provide a variety of activities for people of all ages to enjoy

Key



Public Transport



Educational



Medical Services



Grocery Shop



Restaurants

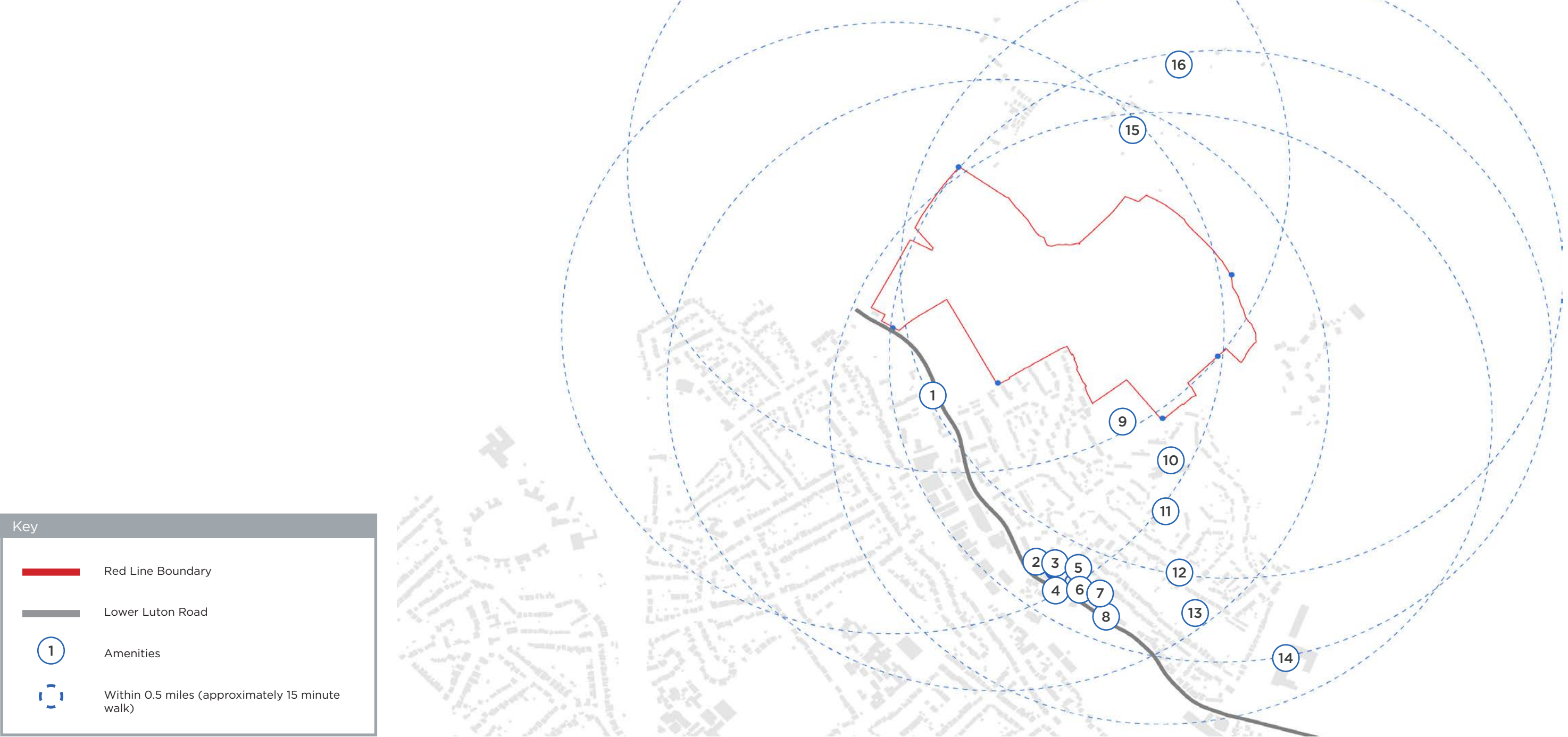


Industrial



02.23 Local Amenities

Within a 15-minute walk from the site's main entrance, residents have access to a variety of facilities and amenities, including local supermarkets, community halls, and a nature reserve, offering a diverse range of conveniences right at their doorstep.





1. Noah's Ark Pre-School and Nursery



2. Kingfish Fish and Chips Takeaway



3. Co-op Food



4. Esso and Tesco Express



5. The Malta



6. Shezzo's



7. Batford Methodist Church



8. Batford Springs Nature Reserve



9. Batford Memorial Hall



10. Holcroft Road Allotments



11. Batford Nursery



12. Sauncey Wood Primary School



13. Porters Hill Park



14. Katherine Warrington School



15. Hornbeam Wood Hedgehog Sanctuary & Rescue



16. Four Oaks Farm

02.24 Ecological Designations

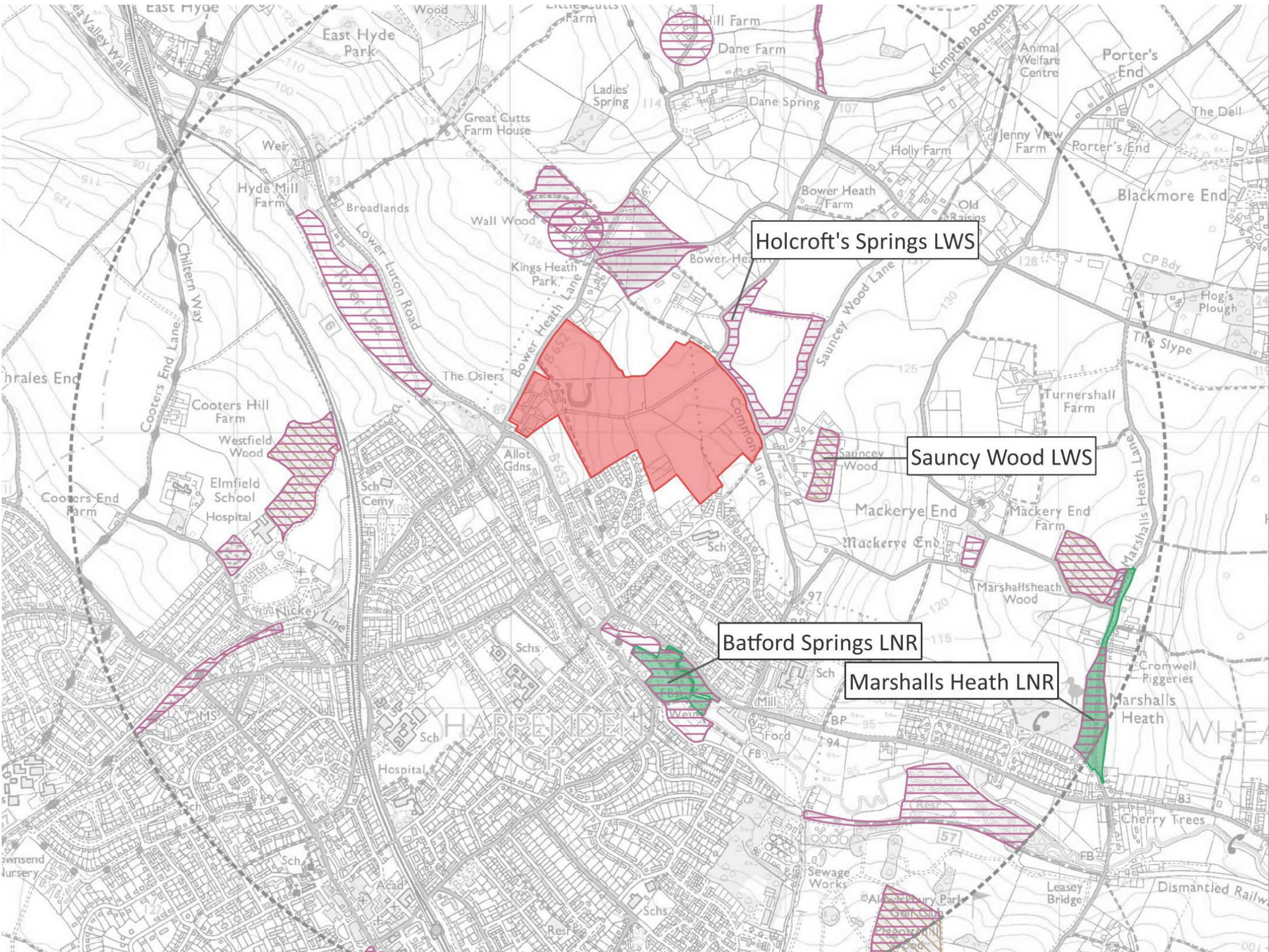
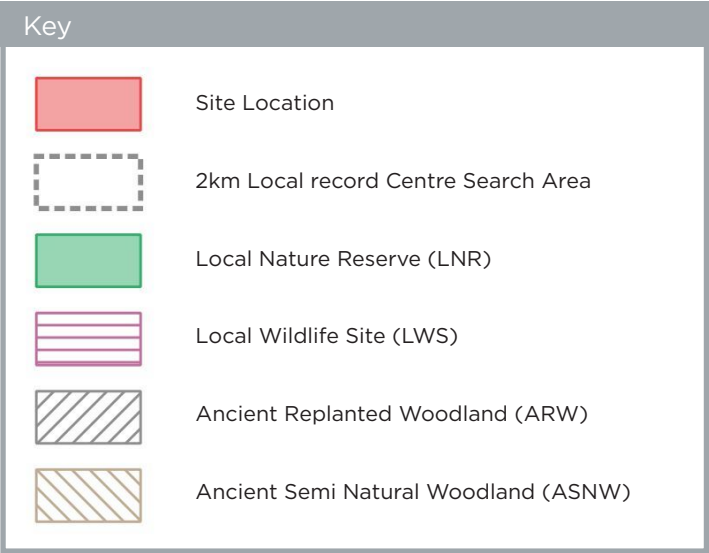
Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

Plan 6818/ECO2 identifies statutory and non-statutory ecological designations within the local area surrounding the site. The closest statutory designation is Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located approximately 0.5 km south of the site. This reserve is designated for its natural springs, which feed chalk streams and ponds. The next nearest is Marshalls Heath LNR, around 1.4 km to the east, known for its rich biodiversity, with over 1,300 recorded species, including more than 40 nationally threatened species.

The nearest non-statutory ecological designation is Holcroft's Springs Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located just across Common Lane, along the site's northeastern boundary. This site may contain ancient Pedunculate Oak and Hornbeam woodland, although it is not officially listed as ancient woodland by Natural England.

Other nearby LWSs include Sauncey Woodland (0.2 km east), and Bower Heath Common and White Gables, Bower Heath Lane (both 0.2 km north). These sites are designated for features such as ancient woodland, acid grassland, and buildings supporting protected species.

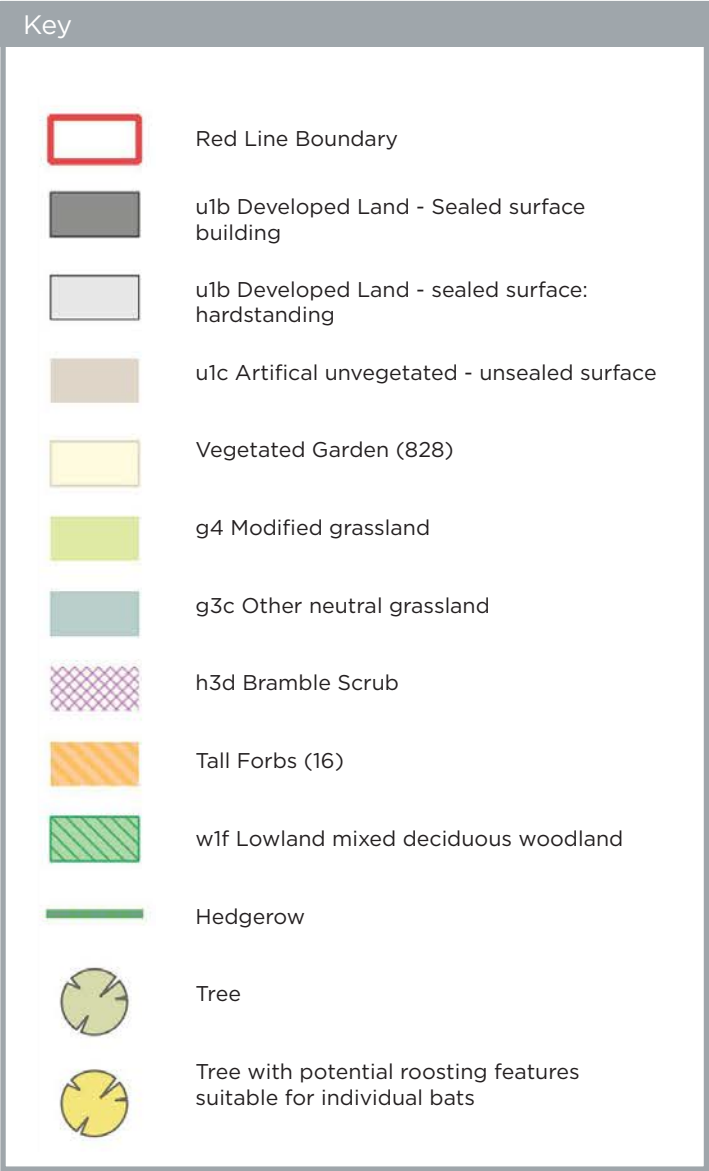
Natural England's Impact Risk Zones (IRZs), designed to flag potential risks to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) from development, do not cover this site—indicating no immediate statutory risk.



Plan 6818/ECO2

02.25 Habitats and Ecological Features

The site primarily consists of horse-grazed fields classified as 'other neutral grassland'. As part of a functioning riding school, the fields are grazed in rotation, resulting in varying sward lengths across different areas. Smaller sections of the site, particularly in the western corner, feature modified grassland, woodland, tall ruderal vegetation, gardens with vegetation, buildings, and hardstanding. Along the eastern boundary, there are strips of woodland and tall herbaceous vegetation. Native hedgerows line most of the site's perimeter and several internal field boundaries. A number of individual trees are also present, mostly in the centre and west of the site.



Plan 6818/ECO3

02.26 Landscape Context

Landscape Character

The Site's is heavily influenced and characterised by the valley slopes and plateau landform associated with the Lea Valley. The topography is a defining characteristic of the Site, with the land gently rising from the Lea Valley in the northwest towards Blackmore End plateau in the northeast.

At a district level the published Landscape Character Assessment: **Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements - St Albans District (2000 & 2005)**, identifies Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

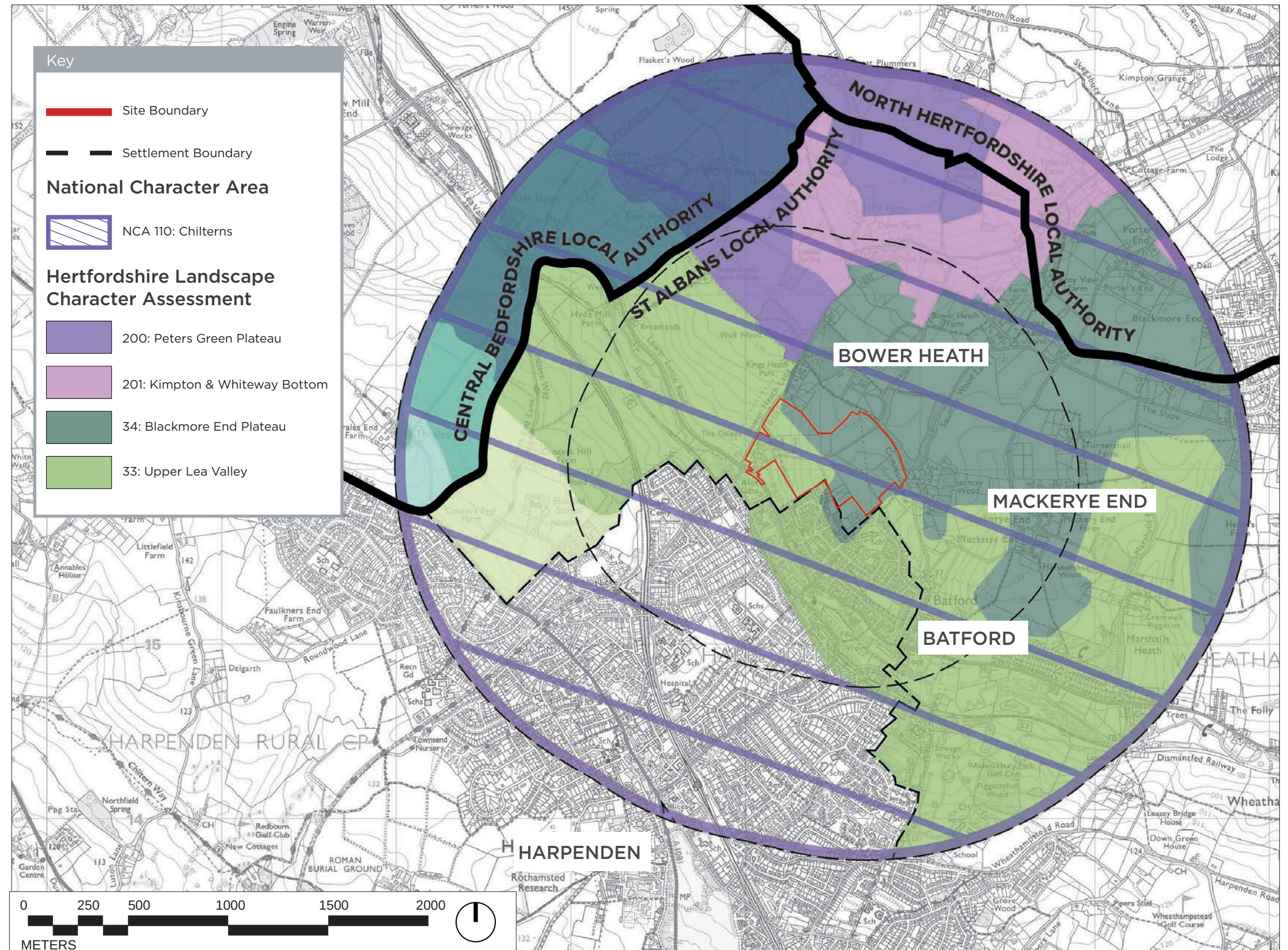
The western part of the Site is located within **LCA 33 Upper Lea Valley** and the eastern part of the Site is located within **LCA 34 Blackmore End Plateau**.

LCA 33 Upper Lea Valley is described as “a marked valley form with a narrow river corridor. Arable cropping dominates on the slopes. A good number of estate woodlands creates a mature wooded feel to the east. Parklands are a notable feature making use of both slopes and river valley”. The LCA is characterised by strong valley slopes and the intrusive built edges of the settlement of Harpenden.

LCA 34 Blackmore End Plateau is described as “an elevated plateau with extensive arable fields. The area has a tranquil and remote feel with good opportunities for informal recreation.” The LCA is characterised by an elevated plateau area dominated by large arable fields, featuring linear and discrete woodlands, scattered throughout the area.

Key recommendations and a summary of the management objectives for **LCA 33 Upper Lea Valley** and **LCA 34 Blackmore End Plateau**, most relevant to guide future development of the Site include:

- Improve and expand the network of woodland and tree planting across the top of valley slopes and plateau, assisting in visually screening and softening built development edges.
- Promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas.
- Creation of wetland landscape features such as ponds, scrapes and linear swales / ditches for both wildlife and amenity value.
- Maintain and extend the rights of way across the area.



Landscape Character

Landscape Character & GI Influences

The Green infrastructure (GI) and landscape influences of the surrounding context can provide a strong basis for the future landscape framework of the Proposed Development, as illustrated on the plan opposite.

As highlighted in the **St Albans District Green Infrastructure Plan (2011)** and **Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022)** the Site straddles an area where the priorities are associated with woodland enhancement, chalk valleys and the Lea River valley corridor.

The plateau woodlands area should focus on landscape initiatives that create small scale woodlands to link with the surrounding woodland habitats, rather than mass woodland planting. The chalk valleys area should focus on initiatives that conserves key green infrastructure assets on-site as part of the movement, habitat and physical landscape network.

PLATEAU WOODLANDS

- Expand tree coverage and enhance woodland connectivity within Hertfordshire
- Create small scale woodlands to link woodland habitat across the plateau and top of valley slopes
- Promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas.

CHALK VALLEY SLOPES

- Create permanent pastures & wildflower meadows on valley slopes
- Connect the fragmented habitat network, through reinstating and creating a new habitat mosaic of wetlands, grasslands and woodlands, in addition to linear features such as hedgerows and sustainable drainage features.

LEA VALLEY

- Restore and enhance the quality of the river valley network and associated wetland habitats
- Improve recreational linkages between the Harpenden and the Lee Valley (NCR6)



Green Infrastructure (GI) and Landscape Influences

02.27 Visual Context

Key Views

The ‘**Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment**’ of the **Environmental Statement (ES)** by **Bradley Murphy Design (BMD)** identifies views toward the Site with the potential to be impacted by the Proposed Development.

As described in the **Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements - St Albans District**, within **LCA 33 Upper Lea Valley**, there are extensive views into the area from the adjacent plateau areas and views along the valley are locally interrupted by belts of trees and small woodlands around the parks. Visual sensitivities are localised and comprise the built edge of the existing settlement of Harpenden. **The LCA 34 Blackmore End Plateau** is only locally visible from the surrounding area as a result of its elevated topography. It is generally a coherent landscape, with some areas unified and contained, while others are downgraded by the impact of extensive arable farming with open and exposed views over the area.

Most views of the Site are constrained to its immediate vicinity, including close range views from public footpath Harpenden 035 (refer to Viewpoint A) running through the Site, public footpath Wheathamsptead 060 off Common Lane to the north of the Site, Porters Hill Park to the south of the Site and from existing properties in Batford, that side or back onto the Site.

Further afield, there are partial cross valley views of the west facing, upper valley slopes of the Site, where it transitions to the plateau, from elevated vantage points (refer to Viewpoints B and C).

The western part of the Site, is located in the low lying Lea valley, and is generally not visible from the wider landscape - due to the extent of screening provided by intervening mature hedgerows, trees, woodland, landform and built form.

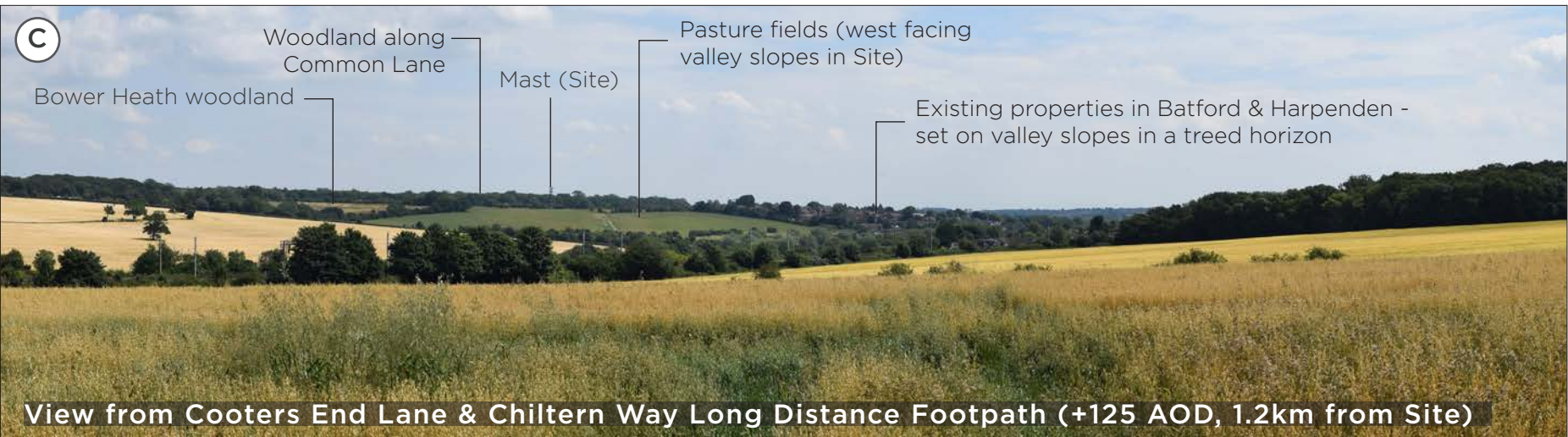
Close Range View - from walkers on public footpath (Harpenden 034) running through the Site



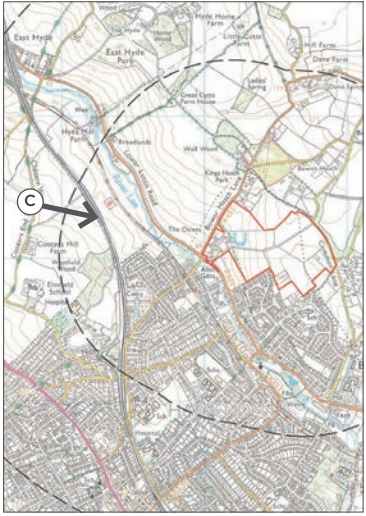
Middle Distance View - Cross valley view from Harpenden



Distant View - Cross valley view from Cooters End Lane



Viewpoint Photographs



Viewpoint Locations

Visual Analysis

The visual analysis of the Site, as part of the LVIA, identifies those visual receptors that currently share intervisibility with the Site and are of the greatest visual sensitivity to the type of development proposed.

The following summarises the key visual context and sensitivities, reported in the LVIA ES Chapter.

- The upper parts of the valley slopes and the ridgeline (c. +121m AOD), where it transitions to the plateau are the highest areas of visual sensitivity. These parts of the Site are open and exposed in cross valley views from the west.
- The Site's ridgeline forms the transition between the landscape character of Upper Lea Valley slopes to the Blackmore End Plateau.
- The edge of the plateau and ridgeline affords open distant views out to Luton Airport, to the north, and cross valley views out to Harpenden and the wider countryside, in the west .
- The Site's west facing slopes are visible in cross valley views, however landform falls towards Lea Valley and is seen in the context of existing residential development in Batford and Harpenden.
- The Site's plateau landform falls to the south eastern corner and is more wooded in context due to the woodland, tree and hedgerow features internally and on the Site boundaries, forming visual enclosure.
- The existing Greenacres Equestrian Centre is the lowest lying part of the Site and least visually sensitivity, due to the combination of low lying landform, existing vegetation and connection with the existing settlement edge of Harpenden.



Drawing Title

02.28 Green Belt Context

The Site is located within the administrative area of St Albans, where over 81% of the district comprises land in the Green Belt.

The NPPF (February 2025) requires Local Planning Authorities to review and amend Green Belt boundaries, where necessary, to meet housing needs.

The St Albans District Council - Draft Local Plan 2041 Regulation 19 Publication (September 2024) looks to allocate the Site as a **‘Broad Location’, site B2 North East Harpenden**, under Policy LG1, proposed for primarily residential development. Draft Policies Map 1 of 4 (North-West) identifies the land to the north of the track, internally within the Site, remaining as Green Belt, with the rest of the Site removed from the Green Belt as part of a Broad Location site.

Removal of the Site from the Green Belt, for residential development, would provide infill between the existing north eastern settlement edge of Harpenden. Removal of the Site from the Green Belt will accord with the **SACDC Green Belt Review Sites and Boundaries Study (2014)**, if development is focussed in the southern and western parts of the Site, adjacent to the Batford area of Harpenden.

The northern extent of the Site would remain Green Belt and provided as public open space, providing a new, strong, defined edge to the Green Belt and creating a cohesive settlement edge to Harpenden.

The ‘Green Belt Review’ by Bradley Murphy Design (BMD), accompanying this planning application, provides a review of the Site against the Green Belt purposes, with consideration of the development Site and the potential for release from the Green Belt - to

highlight any landscape mitigation that may support Green Belt release.

This BMD Review considers the Site as a whole, in terms of its potential to be considered as Grey Belt, its potential capacity to accommodate a sustainable landscape-led development, consideration of the Site’s contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, along with consideration of the potential for harm to the strength of the wider Green Belt (should the Site be removed from the Green Belt).

For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

The Grey Belt assessment concluded:

- The Site can be considered ‘Grey Belt’ - it does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes a, b and d.
- Limited footnote 7 constraints, and the harm would not provide strong reason to restrict development

The Proposed Development amounts to “not inappropriate” in the Green Belt:

- it will not fundamentally undermine remaining Green Belt
- it will address unmet housing need
- it meets the Golden Rules
- is in a sustainable location

Sensitive landscape-led masterplanning of the Site would enable the implementation of a strong Landscape Framework (as illustrated on the opposite page), to form the basis of the Proposed Development. This includes:

- retention of trees (including TPO), mature hedgerows and existing wooded vegetation along the Site’s outer and internal boundaries, providing a strong edge to the Green Belt, preventing any negative urban influence or weakening of the Green Belt beyond
- improvement to the network of woods within the open plateau landscape in the north / northern eastern part of the Site, by planting on the tops of the slope, emphasising the valley form and screening the built edges of development and this edge of the settlement
- ensuring the Proposed Development is set back behind the existing track that runs east / west centrally through the Site, forming a new green corridor and area of open space (to prevent perceptions of urban sprawl) - creating enclosure, visual unity and an enhanced, defensible Green Belt boundary to the settlement edge
- providing a complementary and substantial landscape treatment along the northern edge, facing onto the Green Belt, to reduce impact on the surrounding landscape - softening views of the development and ensuring that the planting and built form ties into the character and appearance of its surroundings
- existing settlement within Harpenden and Batford are set on the valley slopes within a wooded skyline and the Development Proposals designed to accommodate sufficient green infrastructure to assimilate with this character in the long term - this requires the planting of woodland, landscape buffers and trees, to maintain the character of the skyline
- development on the Site should create a transition from urban to rural character - using height, materials, density and landscaping to create a permeable edge to the north, north east and north west

The outer boundaries of the Site would be formed of predominantly durable features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent, including existing vegetation, woodland, mitigation planting and Bower Heath Lane and Common Lane.

It is proposed the revised Green Belt boundary would comprise Bower Heath Lane to the north west, the existing track that runs east / west centrally through the Site to the north and Common Lane to the north east.