



Land North East of Harpenden between Lower Luton Road, Bower Heath Lane and Common Lane

Outline Planning Application

On behalf of **Crest Nicholson**

Document Control Sheet

Project Name: Land North East of Harpenden between Lower Luton Road, Bower Heath Lane and Common Lane

Project Ref: 35429/A5

Report Title: Planning Statement

Doc Ref: v2

Date: 9 March 2026

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Prepared by:	BM	Planning Associate	BM	28/11/2025
Reviewed by:	AJ	Planning Director	AJ	16/12/2025
Approved by:	AJ	Planning Director	AJ	19/12/2025
For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

Revision	Description	Author	Date	Quality Check	Date	Independent Review	Date
v2	Red Line Update	SC	18/02/26	AJ	26/02/26	AJ	09/03/26

The conclusions in the Outline Planning Application are Stantec's professional opinion, as of the time of the Report, and concerning the scope described in the Report. The opinions in the document are based on conditions and information existing at the time the scope of work was conducted and do not take into account any subsequent changes. The Report relates solely to the specific project for which Stantec was retained and the stated purpose for which the Report was prepared. The Report is not to be used or relied on for any variation or extension of the project, or for any other project or purpose, and any unauthorized use or reliance is at the recipient's own risk.

Stantec has assumed all information received from Crest Nicholson Chiltern (the "Client") and third parties in the preparation of the Report to be correct. While Stantec has exercised a customary level of judgment or due diligence in the use of such information, Stantec assumes no responsibility for the consequences of any error or omission contained therein.

This Report is intended solely for use by the Client in accordance with Stantec's contract with the Client. While the Report may be provided by the Client to applicable authorities having jurisdiction and to other third parties in connection with the project, Stantec disclaims any legal duty based upon warranty, reliance or any other theory to any third party, and will not be liable to such third party for any damages or losses of any kind that may result.

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Planning History	7
3.0	The Site and Surrounding Area	10
4.0	The Proposal	12
5.0	Planning Policy	17
6.0	Housing Considerations	22
7.0	Planning Analysis	24
8.0	Summary and Planning Balance	52

Appendices

Appendix A: Planning Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Crest Nicholson (hereafter referred to as the 'Applicant') in support of an Outline Planning Application submitted in respect of Land North East of Harpenden between Lower Luton Road, Bower Heath Lane and Common Lane (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'), as shown on the Site Location Plan (reference 001_01 Rev A).

1.2 The Description of Development is as follows:

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. An Environmental Statement has been submitted with the application under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (as amended). ('The Proposed Development')

Background to the Site

1.3 The Application Site is located within the administrative area of St Alban's District Council ('SADC') in Hertfordshire ('HCC') and comprises circa 32.94 hectares of land. The Site is primarily agricultural / greenfield land. There is an 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 are located near the centre of the Site. An unnamed track bisects the northern and southern areas of the Site. It runs along the middle of the Site from the west to east. The track links B652 Bower Heath Road and Common Lane.

1.4 The Site is located adjacent to the north-east built-up boundary of Harpenden and is bounded by the B652/ Bower Heath Lane to the north west and fields directly north. Common Lane runs adjacent to the eastern boundary. To the south of the site is Porters Hill Park and the residential area known as Batford. The B653 /Lower Luton Road and fields are located on the western boundary.

- 1.5 The Site is currently designated Metropolitan Green Belt, albeit the majority is proposed for removal from the Green Belt through the emerging SADC Local Plan.

Emerging Local Plan and Site Allocation

- 1.6 SADC is preparing a new Local Plan that is currently at Examination. The Regulation 19 version (listed below) is the latest version ('draft Local Plan'). Stage 2 of the hearing sessions took place in October and November 2025. As the draft Local Plan is at an advanced stage, weight can be given to its policies. The draft Local Plan comprises:

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

- 1.7 The current Local Development Scheme (2024) anticipates adoption of the new Local Plan in March 2026. However, this has slipped and will likely be later in 2026.

- 1.8 The Site comprises the central part of the wider North East Harpenden allocation (Policy B2) within the draft Local Plan. 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.

- 1.9 Policy B2 of the draft Local Plan seeks:

- A comprehensive mixed-use development
- Residential (circa 738 homes, including 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 Warington Secondary School

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

- 1.11 In progressing a collaborative approach, a Joint Illustrative Masterplan was prepared in conjunction with all parties to inform the Local Plan and this has been updated with the latest Crest proposals into a Whole Allocation Framework Plan that is included in the submitted Design and Access Statement for context (section 3.07).

Preparation and Submission of Supporting Documents

- 1.12 The Applicant has been promoting the Site through the Local Plan process for over 10 years. The Applicant entered into a Planning Performance Agreement ('PPA') in March 2025 with SADC and HCC to provide for a series of meetings to assist the development / evolution of the proposals for the Site. The Applicant has taken part in detailed pre-application engagement as follows:

- Meetings held with SADC Planning, Policy Housing, Ecology Officers and Urban Design Advisors, as well as Hertfordshire Country Council Planning, Transport, Flood, and Landscape Officers.
- A separate PPA was entered into with Hertfordshire Country Highways Officers.
- Engagement with the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- Crest took part in a Design Review Panel on 17th April 2025 with Design South East
- Public consultation events held on 13 November 2024 and dedicated consultation website set up. In November 2024.
- Ongoing engagement with Harpenden Town Council, District Councillors, local Healthcare providers, and Katherine Warrington School. As well as local groups such as the Batford Community Action Group, The Harpenden Society and Harpenden Greenbelt Society. Full details are within the submitted Statement of Community Involvement.

- 1.13 The engagement and feedback received to date have shaped the parameters of the proposals and the Illustrative Masterplan.

Environmental Statement

- 1.14 Following a Scoping Opinion issued by SADC on 7th November 2024 (LPA reference 5/2024/1602), the Outline Application is supported by an **Environmental Statement** (ES) and technical appendices.
- 1.15 The ES comprises the following:
- Environmental Statement
 - Non-Technical Summary

- Population and Human Health
- Landscape Character and Visual Amenity
- Biodiversity
- Transport and Access
- Noise and Vibration
- Air Quality
- Climate Change
- Waste

Other Supporting Statements/Technical Reports

1.16 In addition to the ES and Non-Technical Summary, the following stand-alone reports are submitted:

Table 1.1: Submitted Reports

Report	Consultant
Cover Letter & Application Forms	Stantec
Planning Statement inc. Dwelling Mix & Affordable Housing Statement, Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement, and Draft s106 Head of Terms	Stantec
Agricultural Land Survey	Reading Agricultural
Air Quality Impact Assessment	Create Consulting
Archaeology Assessment	RPS
Biodiversity Survey and Report	Aspect Ecology
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric	Aspect Ecology
Design and Access Statement inc. Design Brief and Landscape Strategy	IDP
Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy (with separate topographical plans)	JPP
Utilities Statement	GCMCS
Heritage Statement	RPS
Preliminary Geotechnical Report	RPS
Preliminary Land Contamination Report	RPS
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Bradley Murphy Design
Green Belt Review	Stantec / Bradley Murphy Design

Report	Consultant
Tree Survey and AIA	Aspect Arboriculture
Noise Impact Assessment / Acoustic Report	Create Consulting
Statement of Community Involvement	Chelgate
Environmental Performance and Sustainability Assessment inc. Carbon Dioxide Emissions Statement	AES
Site Waste / Waste and Recycling	KaNect
Health Impact Assessment	Stantec

Table 1.2: Submitted Drawings

Drawing Name	Consultant/ Date/ Reference	Drawing Type	Purpose
Site Location Plan	001_01 Rev A	Location Plan	For Approval
Land Use Parameter Plan	PP02 Rev A	Parameter Plan	For Approval
Access & Movement Parameter Plan	PP05 Rev A	Parameter Plan	For Approval
Open Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan	PP04 Rev A	Parameter Plan	For Approval
Storey Heights Parameter Plan	PP03 Rev A	Parameter Plan	For Approval
Works to be delivered within Red Line Boundary	141499/PD02	Access	For Approval
Works to be delivered as part of Section 278 Agreement	141499/PD03	Access	For Information
Proposed Highway Layout	141499/SK20 Rev A	Access	For Information
Illustrative Concept Masterplan	MA001	Masterplan	For Information
Landscape Framework Plan	BMD.24.0039. DR.002 Rev. B	Landscape	For Information

- 1.17 Taken together, these documents provide a full and detailed justification for the Proposed Development.

Scope and Purpose of the Planning Statement

- 1.18 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assess the planning merits of the application, explain the form and content of the application proposals against adopted and emerging policy, guidance and best practice, and to assess the proposals in the light of any other material considerations.

1.19 The structure of this Planning Statement is as follows:

- **Section 2** describes the Site and the main features of the surrounding area;
- **Section 3** summarises the planning history of the Site;
- **Section 4** highlights the relevant planning policy context of the Site and other material considerations;
- **Section 5** identifies the main components and features of the proposed development.
- **Section 6** provides our planning assessment of the proposed development, including overall compliance with the adopted Development Plan policy and other material considerations; and
- **Section 7** provides a summary and our conclusions on the proposed development.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 This section sets out the relevant planning history for the Site and immediate surrounding land.
- 2.2 There are no live planning applications on the Site. No previous applications associated with the residential-led redevelopment of the Site have been submitted. There are numerous historic applications relating to Greenacres Equestrian Centre and the telecommunications mast within the Site.

- 2.3 Other recent relevant neighbouring planning applications:

Land South of Greenacres, Lower Luton Road (5/2025/0362)

- 2.4 An EIA Screening Request was submitted by Miller Homes with SADC adopting a Screening Opinion that the development did not require an EIA (April 2025).

Land South of Bower Heath Lane (5/2024/2214)

- 2.5 An application has been submitted seeking retrospective permission for the material change of use from equestrian use to a residential caravan site for gypsies and travellers comprising siting of one caravan, one touring caravan and one utility building on Land South of Bower Lane, Harpenden. The application reference is 5/2024/2214. The application is due to be considered at Planning Committee on 7th July 2025.

Sauncey View Lodge Common Lane (5/2023/2611)

- 2.6 Permission was refused for demolition of existing buildings and construction of 23 dwellings with associated parking, landscaping and access and relocation of the existing substation. The application was determined on 3/12/2024. The reason for refusal listed on the Decision Notice states:

- The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023. In addition to the in-principle harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, other harm is identified as a result of the proposed development in terms of the visual and spatial impact on the Green Belt, and the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is not clearly outweighed by other considerations; and as a result the very special circumstances required to*

allow for approval of inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist in this case. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 1 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, policy SS1 of Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

- 2. By reason of the increase in traffic as a result of the development and the failure to address the narrow road width to the north of the access on Common Lane, the proposal would have an unacceptable impact upon highway safety. The proposal is contrary to policy 34 of St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, T6 of Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and section 9 of the NPPF 2023.*
- 3. Due to the layout of the site, size and design of the dwellings and apartment block, the proposal is considered to result in a non-landscaped led design and an overly urbanised overdevelopment of the site for this rural location. The building heights are also considered inappropriate in this area which is predominantly two-storey housing on the rural edge. Contrary to policies 69 and 70 of St. Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, policy ESD5 of Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and section 12 of the NPPF.*
- 4. Insufficient external amenity spaces is provided for the flats and for both the 4 bed type A houses and the majority of type B houses. There is also a lack of defendable space for plots 1-4, the flat block and plots 14 and 15 and a lack of separation distance between plot 11 and No. 47 Milford Hill, the closest neighbouring dwelling to the west of the site. These issues would take levels of amenity below that which residents and neighbours could expect to reasonable enjoy, contrary to policy 70 of St. Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, SPD 'Design Advice Leaflet No. 1: Design and Layout of New Housing', policy H9 of Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and section 12 of the NPPF.*
- 5. By reason of the substandard landscape strategy; loss of identified retained view; loss of highway trees with no realistic opportunity to satisfactorily replace and the impact on the visual amenity and rural character of Common Lane, the proposed development would cause harm to highway trees and the landscape character of the site. The proposal is also contrary to Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan ESD14, which states where trees are to be lost as a result of development, a mitigation strategy that includes a ratio of minimum 2 new trees for each tree lost should be achieved. The proposal is contrary to policy ESD10 and ESD14 of Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018, policy 74 of St. Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 and section 15 of the NPPF 2023.*

6. *The affordable housing provision of 35% is below the level set out in Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Policy H6, which expects provision of 40% affordable housing in major housing developments. Contrary to policies H3 and H6 of Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and section 5 of the NPPF 2023.*
7. *Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that a sustainable surface water drainage strategy can be delivered on the site and whether the proposed development will increase flood risk either onsite or elsewhere, as no source control SuDS or multifunctional SuDS and no assessment of water quality, or storage structures for different rainfall events have been provided, along with a lack of evidence of infiltration tests. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 84 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, Policy ESD8 of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.*
8. *In the absence of a completed and signed S106 legal agreement or other suitable mechanism to secure:*
 - *Affordable Housing*
 - *Education contributions including primary, secondary, nursery and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)*
 - *Library Service Contribution*
 - *Waste Service Transfer Station Contribution*
 - *Contributions to public play areas, parks and open spaces and leisure & cultural centres*

The development fails to adequately mitigate its effect upon local services and infrastructure. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 1 (Metropolitan Green Belt) and 143B (Implementation) of the St. Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, Policy SS1 of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

3.0 The Site and Surrounding Area

3.1 This section sets out the site and surrounding areas to the proposed development.

i) The Site

3.2 The Site is located adjacent to the north-east built-up boundary of Harpenden and comprises circa. 32.94 hectares. The Site is primarily agricultural / greenfield land. There is an Equestrian Centre located in the south western part of the Site, a number of the fields are used for horse grazing. A telecommunication mast and Electrical Substation are located near the centre of the Site.

3.3 The Site is bounded by the B653/ Lower Luton Road along the south-west boundary, B652/ Bower Heath Lane adjacent to the western boundary and Common Lane adjacent to the north-east boundary. Porters Hill Park is located to the south east of the Site boundary.

3.4 The Site lies within the administrative boundary of St Albans District Council ('SADC') in Hertfordshire County ('HCC'). The majority of the Site falls within Harpenden Parish boundary and Harpenden East Ward boundary, excluding the eastern Site periphery, which lies within both the Parish and Ward of Wheathampstead.

3.5 An informal single-lane track runs centrally through the Site between the Equestrian Centre and Common Lane.

3.6 The Site is currently designated within the Metropolitan Green Belt. A group of trees on the eastern edge of the site, alongside Common Lane are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The same TPO includes a group of trees on the Site's southern boundary, between Batford Estate and Common Lane.

3.7 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore considered to be at low risk of fluvial flooding. With regard to surface water flooding, the Site lies within an area classified as having a very low probability (less than 0.1% annual chance) of surface water flooding.

3.8 Environment Agency (EA) mapping, which includes allowances for climate change (2040–2060), indicates that the extent of surface water flood risk remains broadly comparable to the current (non-climate change) scenario. Small, isolated areas within the Site are identified as being at low (0.1–1%), medium (1–3.3%), and high (greater than 3.3%) annual probabilities of surface water flooding, both with and without climate change allowances.

- 3.9 These localised areas are likely to represent topographical low spots arising from the resolution of the ground level data used by the EA in producing the mapping. They are therefore considered anomalies and are not indicative of any off-site surface water flow route that would need to be maintained through the development.

ii) The Wider Surrounding Area

- 3.10 Residential development is located to the south and west of the site. Directly south of the Site is the Batford Estate, a residential area which contains a number of local amenities including Sauncey Wood Primary School and Batford Early Years and Nursery School, Co- Op and other local businesses.
- 3.11 Katherine Warrington Secondary School is located to the south east of the Site.
- 3.12 There are no designated heritage assets within the Site. The Red Cow Public House, a Grade II Listed Building, is located within 100m of the south-western Site corner. The Mackeyre End Conservation Area lies circa 600m east of the Site boundary.

4.0 The Proposal

i) Overview of The Proposed Development

4.1 The Proposed Development is for the construction of up to 500 dwellings, a children's home and elderly extra care facility, local centre, sports facilities, primary school with early years provision, public open space and growing space, as well as vehicle, pedestrian and cycle access, landscaping and related infrastructure.

4.2 The full Description of Development is:

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. An Environmental Statement has been submitted with the application under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (as amended). ('The Proposed Development')

4.3 The planning application is in outline with all matters reserved except for access. Therefore, the scale, appearance, layout and landscaping comprise the Reserved Matters and would be specified via future Reserved Matters Applications (RMAs).

4.4 The transport proposals include both active travel and vehicular access arrangements. A number of pedestrian and cycle connections are proposed to integrate the Site with the existing network on Lower Luton Road, including a new signal-controlled crossing, and further non-vehicular links to the Batford estate and surrounding areas for pedestrian/ cycle access. Vehicular access will be provided via a new ghost island priority junction from Lower Luton Road, incorporating a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing to improve safety and reduce vehicle speeds. Following discussions with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), the strategy also includes diverting Bower Heath Lane into the development and closing its southern end to vehicular traffic to reduce conflicting movements on Lower Luton Road.

The proposed junction design, supported by a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, accommodates the full site allocation and allows for potential future connections to adjoining parcels.

- 4.5 Though an outline planning permission would mean that the composition and detailed design are not yet fixed, their future development potential would be dictated by a suite of 'control' documents:

ii) Development Specification:

- 4.6 A series of commitments are made to inform how the scheme would be delivered:

- Demolition of existing buildings and structures
- Up to 500 new residential dwellings (Class C3)
- A minimum of 40% affordable homes (Class C3) across the site
- A 60 – 80 bed Extra Care Facility (Class C2) for elderly residents with ancillary facilities
- One children's home (Class C2)
- 2 Form Entry Primary School (Class F1a), including a Nursery (Class E(f))
- A Local Centre comprising up to 1,200 sqm, that provides a flexible range of uses including retail, café, healthcare and community uses (Class E(a) to E(f) and F2(b))
- Around 15ha of strategic green infrastructure comprising:
 - A minimum of 2.6ha of sports pitches and associated facilities. This would include a pavilion;
 - A minimum of 0.93ha communal parks and gardens;
 - A minimum of 2.46ha for amenity green space;
 - A minimum of 8.30ha natural and semi-natural;
 - A minimum of 0.551ha community growing space; and
 - A minimum of 0.15 ha play space.

iii) Parameter Plans

- 4.7 The submitted Parameter Plans contain details on the proposed land use, access and movement, green infrastructure and storey heights.
- 4.8 The Land Use Plan shows the proposed broad location of the different uses within the Site. The sports pitches associated pavilion building and allotment / orchard / growing area are proposed in the north west of the Site adjacent to the retained green space and within the land remaining in the Green Belt. Directly south of the sports pitches will be the school, local centre and extra care offer, creating a focal point at the heart of the Site and wider allocation. It is proposed to locate the Residential Development

on the south of the Site to complement existing residential development in the local area and ensure connectivity.

- 4.9 Maximum building heights are detailed in the Storey Heights Parameter Plan. The school ridge heights are set up to 12m, the local centre ridge heights are up to 10m. The ridge heights for the residential development are split into three categories to work with the levels of the Site. The central 'Site A' area ridge heights will not exceed 8.5m with an allowable tolerance of +2m in this area only. This area will be generally two storeys. Neighbouring this area to the east and west is the dark blue residential area which allows heights of no more than 9.6m. This area will be generally 2.5 storeys tall. The remaining residential development shown in light blue on the Parameter Plan will allow ridge heights of no more than 11.2m. This area will generally be three storeys. Lastly, the Pavillion 'purple' is shown to have ridge heights of up to 5m.
- 4.10 The Access and Movement Parameter Plan details the connections across the Site. The Primary Street has been designed to facilitate a bus that starts at the Primary Access from Lower Luton Road and provides the key link across the centre of the Site connecting to the south east part of site allocation B2. The Parameter Plan also details the movement hierarchy and shows the indicative secondary and perimeter streets, as well as the active travel routes, and wider pedestrian access points, as well as the Bower Heath PRoW which is to be retained.
- 4.11 The Open Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan shows the overarching approach to green space on the Site and has been informed by Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to mitigate landscape impacts from key close and distant viewpoints. It details the proposed landscape buffer planting within the Site and at the Site boundary to enhance the retained hedgerows. The Green Corridor location is shown through the centre of the site to facilitate access. Indicative locations for the Attenuation Basins and the Play Areas are also detailed. The Play Areas are proposed in the Allotment / Orchard / Growing area and Greenspace to the north of the site as well as adjacent to the Local Centre.

iv) Access Drawings

- 4.12 A number of plans have been prepared by SLR which contain details of the proposed vehicular access from Lower Luton Road. To confirm, approval is sought in detail for the vehicular access from Lower Luton Road. The associated highway improvements including the pedestrian crossing and closure of Bower Heath Lane to vehicles are shown illustratively, with details to be subsequently agreed in consultation with the highway authority.

v) Illustrative Masterplan

- 4.13 An Illustrative Masterplan has been developed and submitted to support the outline proposals. It acts as an informed interpretation as to what the scheme could look like within the parameters. This includes how buildings might be laid out within the overall development envelope set out in the Parameter Plans, including how the access routes and green infrastructure could be delivered. It is important to note that the Illustrative Masterplan is one iteration of how the overall development might be realised and is therefore subject to change through future RMAs.

vi) Consultation

- 4.14 The outline planning application is supported by a separate **Statement of Community Involvement** (SCI), which describes how the local community, key stakeholders and statutory consultees have been consulted on the Development to inform the emerging masterplan proposals for the Site.

vii) Benefits of the Scheme

- 4.15 The Proposed Development offers the following benefits for both Harpenden as well as the wider area:
- Up to 500 modern, high-quality homes providing a mix of units to reflect local needs;
 - At least 40% affordable, offered for intermediate and affordable rent;
 - 60-80 bed Extra Care facility for elderly residents;
 - One children's home (likely to be three-bed plus sleeping space for care staff);
 - 2 Form Entry Primary School, including a Nursery offer;
 - 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;
 - Retention of tree belts and hedgerows, 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; and
 - New homes in an accessible, edge-of-settlement location that is connected to nearby pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, enabling healthy, sustainable transport to local facilities.

- 4.16 The above list is not exhaustive; however, it provides a summary of the principal benefits and opportunities that would result from the Proposed Development. This is explored more fully in the following section of this Planning Statement.

5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 The following section of this report sets out the relevant prevailing planning policy framework pursuant to the assessment and determination of this Application.

5.2 The relevant Planning Policies are listed in Appendix A

Planning Policy Context

5.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004, in conjunction with Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1990 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.4 We set out below the relevant components of the Development Plan, before reviewing other material considerations.

i) The Development Plan

5.5 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 (2019)
- Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2020 – 2035 (2023)

Emerging Local Plan Context

5.6 SADC is preparing a new Local Plan. The Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan comprises:

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

- 5.7 The draft Local Plan was submitted on 29th November 2024 for independent examination which commenced in December 2024. Stage 1 Hearings took place 29th April – 1st May 2025. Stage 2 Hearings are taking place in October and November 2025. The Council is at an advanced stage in preparation thereby, whilst the weight to be attached to the draft Local Plan is a matter of judgement and for the decision maker to determine, we would suggest that weight can be given to the policies and proposals therein. The Plan will gain further weight as it progresses through Examination and on to adoption, full weight will be given to the draft Local Plan once it forms part of the Development Plan.

The draft Local Plan designates the site as part of allocation B2 – North East Harpenden, AL5 5EG. The key development requirements are:

1. One extra-care facility comprising of 70-80 self-contained units (these units are included within the indicative dwellings figure).
2. A site for and appropriate contributions towards a 2FE primary school, including Early Years provision and an all weather sports pitch available for community use.
3. On-site outdoor sports provision (which could be within the part of the site remaining in the Green Belt) to meet the additional needs generated by the development should be provided. An offsite facility may be acceptable where justified by evidence and subject to early delivery of the offsite provision prior to occupation of first home.
4. A new local centre to provide local services, including Medical Centre and commercial development opportunities.
5. Contributions / enhancements to support relevant schemes in the LCWIP and GTPs as indicated in the TIA.
6. Support for improvements to walking facilities along Common Lane to mitigate impacts on this road, especially at school pick-up / drop-off times. This potentially needs to include footway / cycleway from site to Common Lane, then improved crossings and side junction improvements.
7. Support for improved access to Katherine Warington school is required including active travel connections to the school and through the site.
8. Support for links to / from and improvement of the Upper Lea Valley Way into Harpenden and out to Luton.
9. Support for improvements to the Public Rights of Way that link into the wider network to enable recreational use.
10. Development proposals must take appropriate account of all trees protected by Tree Preservation Order and the small area of deciduous woodland Priority Habitat adjacent to the site.
11. Take appropriate account of these Environmental Constraints: Flood Zone 2, adjacent to main river (River Lea) – chalk stream; Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 3; Bedrock Aquifer. There must be no residential development outside of Flood Zone 1.

ii) Other Material Considerations – NPPF and PPG

5.8 The **NPPF (2024)**, **National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)** and **Written Ministerial Statements** are “material considerations” in determining this Application and need to be read alongside the Development Plan.

5.9 Taken together, they reflect the (new) Government's intention to increase the level of overall housing provision in order to help offset the present acute housing crisis.

NPPF (December 2024)

5.10 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, it states:

***Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
For decision-taking this means:***

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or***
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:***
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or***
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.***

5.11 Paragraphs 231 and 225 of the NPPF state:

The policies in this Framework are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication. Plans may also need to be revised to reflect policy changes which this replacement Framework has made.

However, existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given). Where a local planning authority can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78) and where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing is more than 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years, policies should not be regarded as out-of-date on the basis that the most up to date local housing need figure (calculated using the standard method set out in planning practice guidance) is greater than the housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, for a period of five years from the date of the plan's adoption.

- 5.12 The degree of consistency of the Local Plan policies with the Framework will be referenced within Chapter 7: Planning Appraisal of this Planning Statement.

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.13 The **Planning Policy Guidance**¹ (PPG) builds on the principles within the NPPF and provides further detailed technical guidance, with reference to relevant legislation and other guidance.

National Design Guide

- 5.14 The National Design Guide (published 2019, Updated 2021), illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.

Consultation Draft NPPF

- 5.15 A draft NPPF was published for consultation on 16 December 2025 (closing 10 March 2026). This restructures the current version and, inter alia, strengthens the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The provisions in respect of development in the Green Belt remain similar to the current NPPF. Limited weight can be attached to the draft NPPF until formally published, at which time the Proposed Development will be reviewed against the final version and reported to the LPA.

¹ [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-practice-guidance)

iii) Supplementary Planning Documents

5.16 In addition to the above, this Outline Application has had due regard to the following guidance:

- Design Advice Leaflet No. 1 'Design and Layout of New Housing', November 1998.
- Revised Parking Policy and Standards, January 2002.
- Affordable Housing SPG, 2004.
- National Design Guide, January 2021.
- St Albans Strategic Sites Design Guidance, July 2023, which consists of the:
 - Design Principles,
 - Design Toolkit,
 - Masterplan Toolkit,
 - Employment Toolkit.

6.0 Housing Considerations

i) Dwellings Mix Strategy

- 6.1 Policy H3 (Dwelling Size and Tenure) of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan requires all major residential developments to submit a Dwellings Mix Strategy as part of the Design and Access Statement with any planning application. The Policy states that the Strategy must clearly demonstrate how the proposed development addresses the objectively identified need for different sized and types of housing as set out in the latest assessment of housing need carried out by St Alban's City and District Council. Proposals that are not considered to meet an identified size/type need will not be supported.
- 6.2 The proposals are for an Outline Application therefore the detail of the dwellings mix will be determined at Reserved Matters stage, so we would suggest that the Dwelling Mix Strategy is provided to support these future detailed applications.
- 6.3 Nevertheless, an indicative mix has been prepared as part of the work to prepare the Illustrative Masterplan. The latest Local Housing Needs Assessment was undertaken by Iceni in March 2024 for South West Hertfordshire and is part of SADC's evidence base for the draft Local Plan. It states the need is as follows:

	% of Housing Needs			
	Social / Affordable Rented		Affordable Home Ownership	Market Housing
	General Needs	Housing for Older People *		
1 Bed	20	50	20	5
2 Bed	30	50	40	20
3 Bed	35	/	30	45
4+ Bed	15	/	10	30

* To note that the provision for Social / Affordable rented homes for Older People is split 50/50 between 1-bedroom homes and 2+ bedroom homes.

- 6.4 It is noted that Housing Objective HO1 states that proposals should provide a mix of housing that meets current gaps in housing market specifically 1 to 2 bed flats/bungalows and 2 to 3 bedroom family homes. The Applicant has noted this need and will consider it at Reserved Matters stage.
- 6.5 The Outline Application does not include details of the proposed dwelling mix for determination at this stage. The Reserved Matters will work within the requirements of the planning policy and latest housing needs, as well as Crest's market intel, to provide a suitable dwelling mix at this stage.

ii) Affordable Housing Statement

- 6.1 Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Policy H6 (Affordable Housing) states that proposals for major housing developments are expected to provide 40% of affordable housing subject to viability until such time as a new St Albans Local Plan is adopted with a revised target for affordable housing. It continues by stating that on all such schemes, affordable housing will be provided on site as part of the residential development and will be fully integrated within it, other than in exceptional circumstances. Affordable Housing should be provided as both socially rented and intermediate housing in line with the latest assessment of needs undertaken by SADC or a future St Albans Local Plan target.
- 6.2 Draft Local Plan Policy LG1 (Broad Locations) part h states that proposals within the defined Broad Locations are to provide 40% Affordable Housing in accordance with Local Plan policy. Draft Policy HOU2 (Affordable Housing) states that the Council will seek to meet the District's affordable housing needs by:
- a) Requiring residential development proposals (Use Class C3) with a gain of 10 or more homes, or where the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more, to provide:
- i. 40% of homes as on-site affordable housing;
 - ii. A tenure mix of 30% social rented, 30% affordable rented and 40% affordable home ownership, which includes 25% of all affordable housing for any nationally-mandated First Homes requirement, with shared ownership preferred for the remainder;
 - iii. A design approach where affordable housing is indistinguishable in appearance from market housing on site and distributed across the site with affordable housing dwellings to be clustered in groups;
 - iv. Affordable housing to meet required standards and be of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need.

- 6.3 The application seeks detailed approval for access only, all other matters, including the level of affordable housing, are reserved to be determined at detailed Reserved Matters stage. The Parameters provide sufficient flexibility to enable affordable housing to come forward at that stage to meet identified needs.

7.0 Planning Analysis

- 7.1 This section provides an assessment of the key principles when having regard to the Proposed Development with reference to the present Outline nature of this proposal and its physical, environmental and policy context, which are most relevant for the determination of this Application.
- 7.2 A topic-based approach is taken in respect of the prevailing planning considerations and the extent to which the development proposals comply (or otherwise) with the earlier highlighted national and local planning policies.
- 7.3 In compiling this Application, it is considered that the following matters represent the overarching planning considerations:
- i) Principle of Development (incl. Housing Land Supply)
 - ii) Green Belt
 - iii) Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy
 - iv) Delivery of Housing
 - v) Older Persons Specialist Accommodation
 - vi) Children's Care Home
 - vii) School Provision
 - viii) Quality of Design and Impact on Character of the Area
 - ix) Residential Amenity
 - x) Landscape and Visual Impact
 - xi) Strategic Green Infrastructure
 - xii) Arboriculture
 - xiii) Heritage and Archaeology
 - xiv) Loss of Agricultural Lane
 - xv) Ecology and Biodiversity
 - xvi) Sustainability
 - xvii) Highways, Access and Sustainable Transport
 - xviii) Flood Risk and Drainage
 - xix) Noise
 - xx) Air Quality
 - xxi) Contamination
 - xxii) Draft Heads of Term

i) Principle of Development

- 7.4 SADC's latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) published January 2024 sets out the Council's latest published position on housing land supply for 2024/2025 – 2029/2030. It indicates only a 1.9-year supply against a five-year requirement.
- 7.5 The Government has since published the Local Housing Need for each Authority in England, calculated using the new standard method, alongside the revised NPPF (December 2024, latest update February 2025). The updated Local Housing Need for St Albans District is 1,660pa. The Committee Report for the North West Harpenden development (Application Reference: 5/2023/0327) which was recently approved at Planning Committee states that, using the Local Housing Need calculated under the Government's standard method, the Council has a housing land supply of 0.9 years from a base date of 1 April 2023. The Report confirms that this is substantially below the 5 years plus 20% required in the NPPF.
- 7.6 It is highly unlikely that SADC's supply will improve before the draft Local Plan is adopted. In any event, the deficit is so significant that even with improvement a shortfall would remain. In such circumstances paragraph 11d) of the NPPF and the 'tilted balance' are engaged which provides the opportunity for sustainable developments, such as that proposed on the Site, to come forward in advance of adoption of the draft Local Plan.

ii) Green Belt

- 7.7 Once adopted the new Local Plan will be the most up to date development plan document. NPPF paragraph 11c) states that proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay. Until such a time as the new Local Plan is adopted, the Site remains in the Green Belt. Where a local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, NPPF paragraph 155 states that residential and other forms of development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt subject to various provisions – including the development being on 'grey belt' land, there being a demonstrable need for the type of development proposed and it being sustainably located (sub points a-c). The development is also required to meet the 'Golden Rules' (sub-point d). Set out below is each of the requirements and how this is satisfied by the Proposed Development:

NPPF Para	NPPF Requirements	Proposed Development
155	The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:	
a	The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan	Grey Belt is defined as land that is PDL and/ or does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d). Bradley Murphy Design has prepared a Green Belt Review – Technical Note. This assesses the contribution of the Site to purpose (a) to be ‘relatively limited’ with no contribution to purposes (b) and (d). The removal of the part of the Site as indicated in the draft Local Plan with a new Green Belt boundary following the alignment of the existing track and PRoW will provide a more regular edge to the settlement and will not undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt.
	b	There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed
	c	The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to [paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework]

NPPF Para	NPPF Requirements	Proposed Development
d		of existing bus services into the Site. The Proposed Development also includes a primary school (with early years) and local centre (seeking permission for a flexible range of uses including healthcare, community and retail) to reduce the need to travel thus directly addressing the NPPF provisions on sustainable travel.
	Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below	See below.
156	Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the following contributions ('Golden Rules') should be made:	
a	affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below	This is 50% as per NPPF paragraph 157. The Proposed Development is progressing on the basis of the draft Local Plan requirement for 40% affordable housing but expressed as a minimum to reflect this Golden Rule. The final percentage of affordable housing will be agreed with the LPA based on the timing of determination and policy framework in place at that time.
b	necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure	Improvements to local highways infrastructure including the provision of a new signalised crossing of the Lower Luton Road are included in the Proposed Development. Further contributions to local secondary education and other infrastructure will be agreed through the s106 legal agreement in discussions with SADC and HCC.

NPPF Para	NPPF Requirements	Proposed Development
c	the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces	The land in the northern part of the Site is to remain in the Green Belt. The Proposed Development includes this as a significant public open space including natural/ semi-natural greenspace, community growing space and sports pitches. Additionally there are further parks and play areas throughout the residential development area. This totals c. 15ha, almost 50% of the total site area. Foot/ cycle connections to existing off-site public open space and play space at Porters Hill Park are also included to further improve accessibility for new and existing residents.

- 7.8 The above demonstrates that the Site falls within the definition of ‘grey belt’ and meets the other NPPF provisions such that the Proposed Development can come forward as ‘appropriate development’ in the Green Belt in advance of adoption of the draft Local Plan.

iii) Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

- 7.9 The NPPF requires a spatial development strategy to be made by each local authority, or combined authority where plan-making powers have been conferred (Paragraph 17b). The current St Albans Local Plan notes that Development will generally be concentrated in the towns of St Albans and Harpenden, as defined in Figure 4. The Site is located outside the boundary for Harpenden, however this Local Plan is very outdated and is due to be replaced by the emerging draft Local Plan.
- 7.10 The draft Local Plan identifies that the spatial strategy has been shaped by the need to address the Climate Emergency, and new development will generally be concentrated on the basis of the Settlement Hierarchy. This approach gives priority to the larger urban centres which can provide a greater range of services and facilities and can reduce the need to travel. These larger urban centres also offer greater accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. Paragraph 1.34 states that ‘Development should make efficient use of land by increasing the density and potentially the height of development, where appropriate. This will be encouraged particularly in the most accessible parts of the main urban settlements. This will need to be balanced against constraints such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, protected trees etc.

- 7.11 Harpenden is classified as a Tier 2 Town. The key characteristics are:
- Considerably lower population size compare to City / Large Town (Tier 1).
 - Provision of employment and high order services such as secondary education, retail and leisure.
 - Offers bus route, cycle lane provision and connectivity by mainline train.
- 7.12 Strategic Policy SP1 (A Spatial Strategy for St Alban's District) states that the Settlement Hierarchy provides the basis for allocation and location of growth, locating most growth generally within and adjacent to the larger and most sustainable urban centres that are Tier 1 – St Albans and Hemel Hempstead; Tier 2 – Harpenden, and Tier 3 – London Colney. It also notes that Broad Locations are identified as large urban extensions of 250 or more homes or strategic scale employment. The site is a designated Broad Location located adjacent to Harpenden which is a Tier 2 town, therefore it is in compliance with the emerging policy.
- 7.13 It is noted that Wheathampstead Policy W1 (Location of Development) states that development in the Neighbourhood area will be focussed within the settlement boundary as defined in the Policies Map. The site is located outside of the settlement boundary. The Policy states that proposals will not be supported unless: i. the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area; and ii. it is in accordance with the St Albans District Local Plan Review and National Planning Policy Framework in respect of appropriate uses in the Green Belt; or iii. where relevant, the development brings redundant or vacant historic buildings back into beneficial optimum viable re-use, which is consistent with the conservation of their significance but may require a change of use; or iv. it relates to necessary utilities infrastructure and where no reasonable alternative location is available. Part C. states that inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt will not be approved unless the applicant is able to demonstrate the existence of very special circumstances.
- 7.14 Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan SS1 (The Spatial Strategy) states that planning applications outside the Built-Up Area Boundary must either:
- Be an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, or
 - In the case of what would normally be deemed inappropriate development in the Green Belt, must demonstrate:
 - Very special circumstances for development in the Green Belt.
 - Why the proposal cannot be located within the Built-Up Area of Harpenden.
- 7.15 As identified above, the Site is allocated for development within the emerging draft Local Plan and will result in its subsequent release from the Green Belt. The proposals seek to provide development in accordance with the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy in a suitable location. Therefore, the

proposals will accord with the emerging policy which reflect the latest position in terms of the settlement strategy for the District.

iv) Delivery of Housing

- 7.16 Within the draft Local Plan, one of the key objectives is to provide a sufficient amount of good-quality housing that meets the needs of all sections of society. Strategic Policy SP4: Housing explains that proposals should deliver an appropriate mix of housing types, including affordable and specialist accommodation, to meet identified needs and diversify the local housing market. The scheme will deliver approximately 500 new residential dwellings, with a minimum of 40% provided as affordable homes, contributing to housing delivery in the District. The development will include a variety of housing types and specialist accommodation, supporting mixed and balanced communities in line with the objectives of the emerging Local Plan.

v) Older Person Specialist Accommodation

- 7.17 The scheme includes the provision of a 60–80 bed extra care facility for elderly residents, incorporating a range of ancillary facilities. This element of the development will help to create a genuinely mixed and inclusive community, supporting older people alongside families and younger residents. The proposal responds directly to an identified need within the District for specialist accommodation for older persons. The draft Local Plan recognises the importance of increasing the supply of such housing, not only to meet the needs of an ageing population but also to help release under-occupied family homes in the area. Policy HOU3: Specialist Housing confirms that the Council will support the development of proposals of this nature, subject to meeting the relevant policy requirements. Therefore, the scheme is fully in accordance with Policy HOU3 and contributes positively towards meeting this objective of the Local Plan.

vi) Children's Care Home

- 7.18 The Proposed Development also includes a children's home, aligning with HCC strategy to increase the number of children's homes in the County to allow looked after children to remain close to their communities (where appropriate). A three-bedroom children's home with additional staff accommodation will take the form of a modified standard detached house type that is indistinguishable from others in the development. This element of the scheme was incorporated following pre-application engagement with HCC in response to specific needs and the wider strategy.

vii) School Provision

- 7.19 The draft Local Plan highlights St Albans' growing population and the corresponding need for community infrastructure, including schools. The scheme will deliver a two-form entry primary school along with a nursery, directly addressing this requirement. Strategic Policy SP7 sets out the need for community infrastructure, including education, and emphasizes that significant weight should be given to proposals that create, expand, or alter schools. Policy COM1 further details the requirements for new schools, identifying a high need for primary school provision in the area. Therefore, the scheme contributes positively to meeting these policy objectives.
- 7.20 The school has been located adjacent to the local centre, elderly accommodation and sport pitches, and fronts on to the central public open space and play area, to create a clear 'heart' to the development with compatible and complementary uses co-located. The location of the school in this part of the Site and re-organisation of adjacent uses results from feedback from Design South East at the Design Review Panel.

viii) Quality of Design and Impact on the Character of the Area

- 7.21 A Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared by IDP to be read alongside this Planning Statement. The DAS covers numerous design details, the context of the Site and the development. The Site comprises five distinct character areas, reflecting a diverse mix of urban and semi-rural environments with varied housing types, architectural styles, materials, and landscaping approaches. Across the Site, the residential fabric includes Victorian terraces, post-war semi-detached and detached homes, and more recent suburban-style developments, including apartments.
- 7.22 Higher-density housing is concentrated in Character Areas A, B, and C, particularly along Lower Luton Road and the edge of Batford, with a mix of apartments and smaller dwellings. Character Areas D and E feature lower-density housing, with larger detached homes on more generous plots, notably in Sauncey Wood and Kings Heath Park.
- 7.23 Landscaping is a key element in shaping the character of each area. Character Areas A and B benefit from mature trees along Lower Luton Road, providing natural visual and acoustic buffers, while Area C incorporates hedging and street-side planting to reinforce its residential character. Areas D and E are more rural in nature, with expansive plots, extensive tree cover, and greenbelt surroundings, creating a quieter, semi-rural environment.

7.24 The Site is surrounded by a mix of higher-density urban neighbourhoods and lower-density, landscaped housing at the rural edge. This diversity provides a strong reference for new development, enabling it to respond sensitively to the scale, materials, and landscaping of its surroundings, while creating a cohesive and well-integrated extension to the local area.

7.25 The draft Local Plan places strong emphasis on high-quality and innovative design. Chapter 12 highlights the importance of creating well-designed spaces, while Policy DES1 sets out that new developments should respond positively to the character, pattern, and context of their surroundings. The proposed scheme reflects these objectives by carefully considering the existing urban and semi-rural character, incorporating appropriate materials, scale, and landscaping, and providing a design that integrates seamlessly with the surrounding community.

ix) Residential Amenity

7.26 The Site itself is well contained by existing landscape features, neighbouring properties, and generous separation distances, which collectively ensure that the development will not result in adverse impacts on residential amenity.

7.27 Private amenity space to the front of the dwellings will be defined by edging strips incorporating defensible planting, railings, and variations in surface treatment. Rear gardens will be fully enclosed and separated from the public realm, ensuring privacy for future residents. The proposal also includes the strengthening and extension of existing hedgerow and tree planting along the ridgeline, providing effective screening for the new development located in the eastern part of the Site.

7.28 Furthermore, the scheme accords with the aims of Strategic Policy SP12 of the draft Local Plan, which seeks to secure high-quality design and a high standard of amenity for all users. The proposal meets these requirements through thoughtful layout, landscaping, and boundary treatments.

x) Landscape and Visual Impact

7.29 In relation to provision of new landscaping, Saved Policy 74 (Landscaping and Tree Preservation) of the current St Albans Local Plan states: The Council will take account of the following landscaping factors when considering planning applications: ii) Provision of new landscaping a) where appropriate adequate space and depth of soil for planting must be allowed within developments. In particular, screen planting including large trees will normally be required at the edge of settlements; b) detailed landscaping schemes will normally be required as part of full planning applications. Amongst other things they must indicate existing trees and shrubs to be retained; trees to be felled; the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass; and screening and paving. Preference should be given to the use of

- native trees and shrubs; c) wildlife corridors shall be established in accordance with Policy 75, wherever opportunities occur.
- 7.30 Saved Policy 104 (Landscape Conservation) states that the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the quality of landscape throughout the District.
- 7.31 NPPF Paragraph 135 states of relevance, *‘that planning policies and decisions should ensure that development: ... b) are visually attractive as a result of effective landscaping c) are sympathetic to local character and history including the landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);’*.
- 7.32 Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Policy ESD1(v) states that the Design Brief should show that protection against the loss of or significant harm to ecological or landscape value or in the event of loss or significant harm, the provision of appropriate mitigation to address the loss or harm. If the Local Planning Authority deems that appropriate mitigation cannot be achieved, compensatory measures may be acceptable in addition to (not instead of) the maximum achievable mitigation. Part vi states a proportionate assessment of views to and from the proposed development and key views of townscape, including how views of landmark and gateway buildings, and important landscape features will be retained or enhanced. Visual impact should be minimised through the design of the site layout, buildings and landscape.
- 7.33 Policy ESD2 provides further considerations in relation to local character and heritage including height and scale and impact on heritage assets.
- 7.34 Draft Policy LG1 (Broad Locations) of the draft Local Plan states of relevance: ‘Proposals within the defined Broad Locations (or unallocated windfall development at this scale) must:... p) positively relate and integrate the development to the surrounding buildings and landscape, and be informed by a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which addresses the recommendations of the Council’s Landscape and Visual Appraisal 2024’.
- 7.35 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Bradley Murphy Design and is set out in Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement. It identifies and describes the nature and significance of the effects likely to arise as a result of the Proposed Development on the existing landscape and visual amenity of people, as identified through the LVIA.

- 7.36 The LVIA methodology confirms that Major and Substantial effects are considered to be material to decision making and considered significant in EIA terms, with moderate effects having potential to be material to decision making and considered potentially significant in EIA terms. Minor, Negligible and Neutral effects are considered not significant in EIA terms.
- 7.37 Landscape and visual effects have been assessed following three stages: during construction; immediately on completion (Year 0); and during operation after establishment of landscape mitigation (Year 15). Effects on landscape character are considered as Minor Adverse (not significant) during construction and immediately on completion for areas directly adjacent to an up to 500m of the Site, with all other landscape effects considered Neutral in the long term. Effects on the landscape character of the Site are considered Temporary Moderate Adverse (potential to be significant) during construction reducing to Short Term Minor to Moderate Adverse (not significant) on completion.
- 7.38 In terms of visual effects, the LVIA Chapter confirms that at construction stage and on completion (Year 0) have been assessed to be Temporary and Short Term Moderate – Major Adverse to residents that directly about the Site in Batford (directly adjacent to Site Parcel B and C) and on Lower Luton Road (directly adjacent to Site Parcel A), and walkers on public footpath Wheathampstead 060 directly adjacent to Site Parcel C and walkers on public footpath Harpenden 034 passing through Site Parcel B. All other landscape and visual effects during construction would be insignificant, with most effects being Negligible or Minor.
- 7.39 Effects of the landscape character at operation and after establishment of the Landscape Framework and mitigation (Year 15) would reduce to Long Term Negligible Adverse (not significant), where effects on the landscape character of the Site improves to Long Term Minor Beneficial on establishment of the landscape mitigation when enhancements of the Landscape Framework will have matured. Visual effects during operation, following establishment of landscape mitigation (Year 15) have been assessed to be Long Term Minor – Moderate Adverse to walkers that directly pass through Site Parcel B on public footpath Harpenden 034, that would interface with the proposed residential built form, with all other Long Term visual effects considered to be insignificant / most being Minor to Negligible.
- 7.40 The Chapter confirms that the Proposed Development parameters have been developed in consideration of the surrounding landscape and visual context of the Site, particularly its topography, cross valley views and the nature / scale of existing built form in the surrounding context. The tallest built form is located in the least visually sensitive parts of the Site, where the combination of landform and existing vegetation provide a strong level of visual enclosure. The proposed Parameters ensure that the tallest buildings would not be located on the visually prominent ridgeline, where topography transitions from valley slopes to plateau, ensuring built form is restricted to up to two storeys in height.

This ensures that the proposed development will not form a prominent feature on the skyline of existing cross valley views from receptors to the west of the Site.

- 7.41 Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Policy ESD10 (Views in New Developments) states that views along streets and/or new open spaces to the surrounding countryside must be created within new developments where there are opportunities to do so. Development should not have a harmful impact on the townscape or landscape. The Storey Height Parameters Plan reflects the interface with the existing settlement edge, comprising two to three storey residential developments, to provide a sympathetic transition with the northern sub-urban edge of Batford. The Storey Height Parameter Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate building height transition from the valley slopes (within Site Parcel B) to the plateau landform (Site Parcel C and D), ensuring a lower scale and height of proposed development on the ridgeline. It also confirms that through testing of storey height parameters, the AVR wirelines overlaying the Viewpoint photographs, demonstrate the maximum height of proposed built form will not exceed the canopy height of the existing vegetation and woodland along Common Lane.
- 7.42 The proposals will therefore respond to the local character and landscape of the area, complying with Saved Policies 74 and 104 of the Local Plan, ESD1(v), ESD2 and ESD10 of the HNP and Draft Local Plan Policy LG1.

xi) Strategic Green Infrastructure

- 7.43 NPPF Paragraph 96(c) sets out that planning policies and decisions should aim to enable and support healthy lives, through, for example, provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling, amongst others.
- 7.44 Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan Policy ESD8 (Green and Open Spaces and Areas of Ecological and Landscape Value) states that developments must seek to maintain and enhance the quality and character of the varied open and green spaces, river corridors and the natural environment within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Development should not result in the loss of or significant harm to ecological or landscape value of the varied green spaces, river corridors and natural environment. Significant development must include proportionate new public open spaces, including green spaces, which should be linked where possible to create green corridors.

7.45 The proposed scheme will retain significant areas of strategic green infrastructure to the north, along with additional areas of amenity space, communal parks and gardens, community growing space, play areas and sports pitches, as set out within Para 4.6 above. The development will not only protect the important areas of ecological value, but also create large areas of accessible green infrastructure across the development, with active travel routes which will encourage walking and cycling between the spaces, in accordance with the NPPF and Policy ESD8 of the HNP.

xii) Arboriculture

7.46 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment ('AIA') has been prepared by Aspect Arboriculture and is submitted in support of the application. It comprises a Tree Survey, AIA, and preliminary Tree Protection Plan.

7.47 It notes that there are three Tree Protection Order (TPO) on the Site, they are primarily sited on the boundaries; one English Oak is set internally within the Site. The trees that are afforded protection comprise:

- TPO no. 1766: (A2) Affords protection to trees along northern boundary.
- TPO No. 1950: (T3 -T7, W1, G1) Affords protection to trees on the boundary of the application area and a single category A English Oak within the interior.
- TPO No. 1951: ((G1) Affords protection to four Silver Birch (G39) adjacent to Lower Luton Road.

7.48 The proposals will not impact on those trees protected by way of TPO, and the Lower Luton Road junction has been sited to ensure that the Silver Birch (TPO 1951) will be retained.

7.49 A Tree Survey has been prepared in accordance with BS5837:2012 which establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees, in compliance with Policy ESD14 of the HNP.

7.50 Crest has worked hard to reduce the arboricultural impact through an extensive iterative design process. This means that removals will only be made where retention is incompatible with the overall design quality of the site, in accordance with Policy 74 of the Local Plan. The AIA confirms that the parameter plans will result in removals comprising fourteen trees and five groups of trees, alongside sections of nine groups of trees and two hedges. The removals have been reduced as far as possible during the iterative design process, it is focussed on lower quality elements of the tree stock as much as possible and their loss can be compensated for with replacement planting. To confirm there will be no loss of Category A trees. The proposed removals comprise:

- Category B: T1 Wild Service, G38+ (c.17m section of tree group) and G39 Silver Birch group (dead component only).
- Category C: T8, T11 Wild Service, T9 English Oak, T10 Field Maple, T49 Lime, G1+ (c.30m section), G2+ (c.13m section), G3+ (Scrub), G4 Elder and Hawthorn, G6+ (c.4m section), G7+ , G8+ (Scrub) , G9+ (c.70m section), G11+ (c.15m section), G21+ (c.16m and c.12m sections), G28+ (Scrub), G40 Elder and Hawthorn (c.12m section), H3+ and H9+ (c.13m section).

7.51 The removal of trees has been reduced as much as possible, however does require compensation planting. As the application is in outline, the exact quantity and type of planting will not be fixed until detailed design has taken place. Nevertheless, the landscape-led layout has been designed to provide considerable opportunities for incorporating new and replacement tree planting throughout the Site as detailed within the submitted Landscape Framework Plan. For instance, significant areas of open space are proposed where large canopy bearing species can be introduced and publicly appreciable planting can be used within the development parcel itself.

7.52 It is noted that Policy ESD14 of the HNP states where trees must be lost as a result of development, these must be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 within the site; and Draft Policy NEB1 of the Emerging Local Plan notes that development proposals for the Broad Locations must demonstrate the delivery of a minimum of at least 1 semi-mature tree for each dwelling. This will be considered at detailed design stage through the RMAs.

7.53 Ongoing arboricultural input will be imperative as the design progresses at Reserved Matters stage. The AIA recommends that an Arboricultural Method Statement ('AMS') is prepared following detailed design and provides suggested content for this. It is suggested that this is secured via condition.

7.54 It is considered that the proposals accord with Paragraph 136 of the NPPF, Policy 74 (Landscaping and Tree Preservation) of the Local Plan, Policy ESD14 (Trees and Hedges) of the HNP and Policy W3 (Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development) of the WNP. As well as Draft Policy NEB1 (Woodlands, Trees and Landscape Features).

xiii) Heritage and Archaeology

Heritage

7.55 A Built Heritage Statement has been prepared by RPS to support the application. It accords with Paragraph 207 of the NPPF in that it is sufficient to understand the impacts of the proposed development on relevant built heritage assets.

7.56 There are no designated heritage assets on site. Two designated assets are within 1km of the Site and have been identified as relevant to the Proposed Development:

- The Red Cow Public House (Grade II Listed), located c.147m to the southwest of the site; and
- The Mackeyre End Conservation Area, located c.600m east of the site.

7.57 Great weight should be attached to the conservation of the heritage assets, in line with Paragraph 212 of the NPPF. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. This applies to the effect of proposal both on the significance of the heritage assets, and on the ability to appreciate that significance. This requirement is also set-out in Policy ESD2 of the HNP.

7.58 The Site has been assessed as making no contribution to the significance of either of the identified heritage assets, therefore the Heritage Statement concludes that the proposed development will result in no change to the way in which either built heritage asset is experienced or understood, therefore no built heritage impacts or harm is identified in this instance.

7.59 The proposed development is not considered to result in any harm to the significance of any designated built heritage asset and so accords with the provisions of Section 66 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. To confirm the submitted Built Heritage Statement has been completed in line with Draft Local Plan Policy HE1 (Designated Heritage Assets) requirements.

Archaeology

7.60 A Geophysical Survey has been prepared by RPS to determine archaeological details on the Site. It concludes that a magnetometer survey has recorded magnetic responses that have been interpreted of being of archaeological interest. Ditch-like responses, trends and pit-like anomalies have been detected in the survey. The Survey states that ridge and furrow cultivation has also been detected. Uncertain anomalies have been marked across the Site which are probably due to a combination of natural variations, agricultural processes or buried debris. Former field boundaries and natural anomalies have also been plotted across the data.

7.61 The Geophysical Survey has been shared with Richard Havis, Senior Historic Environment Consultant and St Albans Archaeological Advisor. In an email response, dated 28/5/25 Officers have confirmed that they support the proposal to control further archaeological works by appropriate phased conditions on the planning consent. The Officer also confirms that this would be the advice to SADC. As such, the Geophysical Survey is submitted for consideration as part of the Outline application and confirm

that further work will be carried out as part of a suitable phased condition. The wording of which is to be agreed with Officers during determination of the application.

- 7.62 This approach accords with Draft Local Plan Strategic Policy SP11 (Historic Environment) and Draft Local Plan Policy HE3 (Archaeology), as well as Policy ESD2 (Local Character and Heritage) of the HNP and the NPPF.

xiv) Loss of Agricultural Land

- 7.63 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the local and natural environment by recognising inter alia the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. The NPPF defines best and most versatile agricultural land as land in Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. Footnote 65 of the NPPF states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
- 7.64 Local Plan Policy 102 (Loss of Agricultural Land) and Draft Policy NEB9 (Agricultural Land) states that development involving the loss of high-quality agricultural land will normally be refused, unless an overriding need case can be made. Planning applications for the development of agricultural land must be accompanied by an assessment of the agricultural gradings of the land.
- 7.65 An Agricultural Land Classification and Soil Resources Survey (2024), prepared by Reading Agricultural Consultants has been submitted in support of the application. The Survey concludes that there are two soil types present within the site, with agricultural land quality mostly limited by topsoil stone content to Subgrade 3b, with a small area limited to the same extent by gradient, located to the west. The second soil type is present in the east and comprises profiles which extend to depth over yellowish brown clay. Nevertheless, the Survey concludes that the whole site is classified as Subgrade 3b. Therefore, the site is not classified as best and most versatile land and the loss of the land would comply with policy, i.e. land not classified as Grades 1,2 and 3a, is being utilised for development.

xv) Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.66 This application is supported by a number of ecological reports, including a Baseline Ecological Appraisal, Biodiversity Net Gain calculations and Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement, prepared by Aspect Ecology.

7.67 The Baseline Ecological Appraisal confirms that there are no records of any ancient woodland, priority habitats, notable or veteran trees within the Site. The closest area to the site mapped as priority habitat is Holcroft's Springs LWS which is deciduous woodland. Holcroft's Springs LWS is designated on the basis that it potentially comprises ancient woodland, due to field evidence suggesting an ancient origin; and the fact it is shown on Bryant's map (1822), although it is not included in Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory. The closest area mapped as comprising ancient semi-natural woodland in Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory is Sauncey Woodland, located approximately 0.2km to the east of the site.

7.68 The Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations. The nearest statutory designation is Batford Springs, located 0.5km to the south of the site, and Marshalls Heath is located 1.4km east of the site. There are 21 non-statutory designated sites located within 2km of the search area.

7.69 In terms of habitats, there are no irreplaceable habitats present within the Site. The Baseline Ecological Appraisal sets out the assessment of habitat types and condition of each. It finds that there are two habitats within the Site which are considered to qualify as Priority Habitats and therefore constitute important ecological features:

- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland – Local Level of Importance
- Native Hedgerows – Local Level of Importance

7.70 The Phase 1 Habitat Surveys took place in May 2024 in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the site and identify main habitats and ecological features present. The following results are recorded for the Priority Species:

Bats

7.71 The report states that the species recorded on-site (and deemed likely to be present due to their known presence in the surrounding area), exceeds the 45% threshold required to be considered of county-level importance under the Bat Mitigation Guidance. However, this is considered likely to be an overestimate of the value of the Site itself. All species with the exception of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle were recorded infrequently. These rarer species were recorded most frequently at location 1, which is along hedgerow H9 which connects with woodland W1 and the network of off site woodland. It is considered likely that the majority of the rarer species recorded at the Site predominantly focus their activity on the mosaic of off-site woodland to the north and east of the Site, with their use of the habitats on-site likely limited to occasional use of the boundary vegetation for commuting. On this basis it is considered that the assemblage of bats at the site is considered to be of district level value.

Badgers

- 7.72 See confidential annex.

Other Mammals

- 7.73 The Baseline Assessment advises that the Site is unsuitable for use by Water Voles and Otter. Whilst suitable habitat exists for Dormouse, they are considered likely absent from the Site, and no evidence of any other protected, rare or notable mammal species was recorded from within the site.

Reptiles

- 7.74 Specific survey work for reptiles was undertaken at the Site, no reptiles were found during the surveys carried out, such that these species are considered likely absent from the Site.

Amphibians

- 7.75 One pond was identified within 250m of the Site that may be suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts. Accordingly, this pond was subject to an eDNA survey during June 2024 to confirm the presence or absence of Great Created Newts. The result was negative, whilst there is some suitable habitat, the lack of breeding ponds means it is considered that this species is likely absent.

Birds

- 7.76 Overall, the site is considered to have a modest assemblage, with the species recorded typical of the habitats present on the Site. No Red List declining farmland species were recorded breeding at the Site, whilst all the Red or Amber Listed species recorded breeding with within the vegetation at the Site remain abundant and widespread in a local and national context. On this basis, the assemblage of birds supported by the Site is considered to be of importance at the site level only and not comprise an important ecological feature.

Invertebrates

- 7.77 Overall, it is considered that the Site is unlikely to support an invertebrate assemblage of value outside of a site context, such that invertebrates do not form an important ecological feature. No evidence for the presence of any protected, rare or notable invertebrate species was recorded within the Site. The Site is dominated by heavily grazed pasture which is likely to support only a limited diversity of invertebrates.

7.78 To confirm, the following summary of importance is provided:

Species / Group	Summary	Level of Importance
Bats – Roosting	Confirmed presence on site	Site
Bats – Foraging / Commuting	Confirmed presence on site	District
Badger	See Confidential Annex	
Other Mammals (Brown Hare / Hedgehog)	Potential presence on site	Site
Birds	Confirmed presence on site	Site
Invertebrates	Potential presence on site	Site

7.79 The ES considers the potential effects at Demolition, Construction and Operation stages of the development on ecology, with a summary provided below.

Demolition Effects

7.80 Primary and tertiary mitigation is to be employed during demolition, which comprises safeguards with respect of roosting bars and nesting birds, carried out following grant of Natural England licence, and demolition outside of bird nesting season. Following these measures, all demolition effects are considered to be non-significant. Therefore, no secondary mitigation is required and no residual effects are anticipated during the demolition phase,

Construction Effects

7.81 Primary and tertiary mitigation to be employed during construction comprise the adoption of industry best practice measures during construction, to be detailed with a CEMP, safeguards during Badger sett closure, carried out following grant of a Natural England licence, and clearance of nesting bird habitat outside of the bird nesting season (or following a check by a competent ecologist for presence of nesting birds).

7.82 Following implementation of the mitigation measures set out above, all construction effects are considered to be non-significant. Accordingly, no secondary mitigation is required and no residual effects are anticipated during the construction phase.

Operation Effects

- 7.83 Primary and tertiary mitigation to be employed during the operational phase of development comprise the retention of habitats of elevated ecological value, where possible, and provision of substantial open space. This will be determined at Reserved Matters detailed design stage. Potentially significant effects have been identified in relation to non-statutory designations, habitats and ecological features, bats (roosting and foraging/commuting) and Badger. These effects are largely as a result of habitat losses, together with disturbance and urbanisation effects associated with new development, notably lighting.
- 7.84 Secondary mitigation to address these significant effects comprise the implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme, design considerations for the built development to include siting of buildings away from retained habitats and management of recreational activity. This will either be implemented at detailed design stage or secured via any necessary conditions. Following implementation of compensation as required by Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, residual effects are considered to be reduced to non-significant effects.
- 7.85 The development proposals have identified opportunities to maximise the provision for biodiversity on the design of new builds and this will be considered in more detail at the Reserved Matters stage. In addition the proposals seek to provide new wildlife habitats and features throughout the Site, it is noted that Draft Policy NEB7 (Biodiversity Provision in the Design of New Buildings and Open Spaces) sets out requirements for swift brick provision, and this will be considered at detailed Reserved Matters stage. The proposals seek to protect and enhance the existing biodiversity, and the development proposals seek to protect species through the use of appropriate mitigation in accordance with Draft Policy NEB7 and the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.86 The adopted Local Plan does not include any policies directly relating to Biodiversity Net Gain. However, emerging Policy NEB6 (Biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain) seeks a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% for relevant new developments, alongside the long-term management and maintenance (at least 30 years) for existing and new biodiversity, including net gains.
- 7.87 Policy ESD13 (Biodiversity) of the HNP states that 'efforts to enhance biodiversity, such as through the creation of new habitats...will be supported'. Policy ESD14 (Trees and Hedges) states that "it is important that there is no net loss of trees in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, with any loss counterbalanced with a net gain of appropriate replacement trees. Preferably these should be native or fruit/nut trees due to the biodiversity value brought by these trees." In respect of Biodiversity Net

Gain Assessments, Policy W4 (Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Habitats and Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain) of the WNP states:

- 'c) The appraisal should demonstrate how negative impacts would be minimised and biodiversity net gain achieved, e.g. by redesigning or locating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts.**
- d) The appraisal should demonstrate that where significant harm cannot be avoided, proposed development or other changes should adequately mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the harm. The appraisal must demonstrate a measurable biodiversity net gain by utilising the DEFRA biodiversity metric. Where this is not demonstrated, permission for planning or for the change should be refused, where appropriate.**
- e) The appraisal should also demonstrate that development and other changes should result in a clear and significant net gain to biodiversity of 10%. Where appropriate, net biodiversity impact should be determined by applying the DEFRA biodiversity metric (or as amended). Ecological compensation may be delivered on or off site.**
- f) Measures to achieve biodiversity net gain, mitigation or compensation involving the creation of habitat and/or relocation of species, must be agreed by the Local Planning Authority and must last for at least 30 years. It must include sufficient funding to support at least 10 years of post-development habitat management or land use change'.**

7.88 The submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment concludes that the proposed development will result in a net loss in habitat units amounting to 52.46 units (39.80%), and a net gain of hedgerow units amounting to 1.59 units (10.16%). To achieve a 10% net gain in habitat units, a total of 65.64 habitat units would therefore be required. It is noted that these units would either need to be incorporated into the detailed design or utilising offsite units, the details of securing off-site units is set out in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.

7.89 The ecological assessment has been undertaken in accordance with draft Policy NEB6 (Biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain). The BNG report states that efforts to enhance biodiversity, such as through creation of new habitats will be utilised and set out at the detailed design stages where 10% can be achieved in accordance with Policy ESD13 (Biodiversity) of the HNP, and Policy W4 (Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Habitats and Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain) of the WNP.

xvi) Sustainability

- 7.90 An Energy and Sustainability Statement, prepared by AES Sustainability Consultants, accompanies this application and demonstrates full consideration of environmental issues across all stages of the proposed development, from location and site layout to building design, construction, and future use.
- 7.91 The development will be guided by the principles set out in the Hertfordshire County Council Future Sustainable Design Toolkit, ensuring the delivery of high-quality, resilient, and environmentally responsible homes. The scheme will safeguard and enhance the local natural environment and ecosystems, while minimising both carbon and ecological footprints associated with the buildings and their construction.
- 7.92 In line with the energy hierarchy, avoid, reduce, reuse, and recycle, the design enables future occupants to manage resources sustainably. It will promote active and sustainable lifestyles, support healthy and enjoyable indoor and outdoor environments throughout the year, and deliver safe, secure, and inclusive homes that respond to the diverse and evolving needs of households. The development will also contribute positively to the surrounding community and public realm, fostering a strong sense of place.
- 7.93 Building Regulations Part L (2021) provide the appropriate framework for setting standards relating to energy use and CO₂ emissions. The proposed scheme will meet these national standards as a minimum and deliver additional carbon and energy reductions in line with local policy.
- 7.94 Specifically, the scheme complies with Draft Local Policy CE1, which outlines requirements for sustainable design and the efficient use of energy. The development will respond to these requirements through its considered building design and site layout through the Reserved Matter stages, to reduce energy consumption and support long-term environmental resilience.

xvii) Highways, Access and Sustainable Transport

- 7.95 A Transport Assessment prepared by SLR Consulting Ltd demonstrates that the Site is well located in terms of accessibility by walking, cycling, public transport, and car. The Site benefits from proximity to a range of existing and consented facilities, including shops, cafés, and schools, which help reduce the need for car travel.

- 7.96 The assessment includes a robust analysis of traffic impacts, incorporating committed developments and future growth. It confirms that safe and suitable access can be achieved via a priority junction with Lower Luton Road. Junction modelling shows the development will not result in a severe impact on the surrounding highway network. In addition, accident data analysis confirms the local highway network has a good safety record.
- 7.97 The internal road layout will be addressed at Reserved Matters stage, with design principles informed by Manual for Streets and Hertfordshire Highways guidance. The layout will support permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, and accommodate refuse, emergency, service, and bus vehicles. The Access and Movement Parameter Plan demonstrates that Active Travel routes can be accommodated within the Site, with Framework Travel Plans for both the residential development and the primary school to further promote sustainable travel choices, in accordance with Policy T3 (Travel Plans) and T4 (School Travel Plans) of the HNP.
- 7.98 Enhancements to pedestrian and cycle routes, both within the Site and to nearby facilities, have been identified, including a safe route to Katherine Warington School.
- 7.99 Cycle and car parking will be provided in line with adopted standards and local car ownership data, balancing the need for sufficient provision without encouraging car-dominated design through the Reserved Matters process.
- 7.100 Overall, the Transport Assessment demonstrates that the proposed development will not have a severe impact on the highway network or road safety and the Site can promote sustainable travel in accordance with the NPPF, Saved Policy 35, Policies T6 (Integrated Pedestrian Network) and T9 (Sustainable Transport Routes) of the HNP and Draft Local Plan Policy TRA1 (Transport Considerations for New Development).

xviii) Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.101 The NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). It also states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific risk assessment.
- 7.102 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by JPP and is submitted in support of the application. It confirms that the Site is predominantly located within Flood Zone 1 and at low flooding risk from rivers or the sea. There is an area of Flood Zone 2 in the south west corner of the Site, which encompasses the proposed access and areas of Public Open Space. To confirm

the details of the access are being sought as part of the current Outline application, the location of the open space is set out in the Parameter Plans, also being determined as part of this Outline Application. The detail of the open space itself will be provided at Reserved Matter stage.

- 7.103 The Assessment concludes that the Site is shown to be predominantly at a low risk of flooding from surface water, reservoirs and sewers and at a moderate risk of flooding from groundwater. However, soaking testing was undertaken on Site and found no significant groundwater on site. Therefore, from the information available at the time of preparing this report, and the nature of the underlying geology, suggests that groundwater emergence at the surface is unlikely, such that groundwater flood risk does not constitute a constraint in this instance.
- 7.104 Soakage testing has been undertaken for the Site which identifies, Topsoil, Clay and Chalk. The investigation identifies that infiltration is a viable form of drainage for the proposed development.
- 7.105 Policy ESD18 of the HNP requires proposals to incorporate a sustainable and integrated approach to the management of flood risk, surface water (including run off) and foul drainage. The Assessment concludes that surface water from the development will drain via infiltration techniques and will be managed in four separate drainage catchments. Infiltration for each catchment will be facilitated by an infiltration basin. Tanked permeable paving and rain gardens will be incorporated into the drainage design, for the sustainable interception of surface water and to provide a level of surface water treatment.
- 7.106 Due to the nature of levels on Site, the proposed foul drainage strategy centres on two pumping stations, both positioned at low points of the Site. As such, two foul water outfalls are proposed. Points of connection to the existing sewer network have been identified in Common Lane and Lower Luton Road. Thames Water note that the suggested points of connection are suitable in principle, subject to future modelling of the network.
- 7.107 The NPPF details the sequential test requirements and notes that the aim is to steer development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. The Site has been included within the wider draft allocation for North East Harpenden to be brought forward for future development. The draft Local Plan (Reg.19) states that 'the sequential and exception tests have already been applied to sites designated for development in this Plan'. As such, the Site is considered to have passed the sequential test.
- 7.108 The proposals are considered to comply with Saved Policy 84A, Policy ESD18 (Flood Risk) of the HDP and Draft Local Plan Policy NEB8 (Managing Flood Risk).

xix) Noise

- 7.109 Create Consulting has prepared the submitted Acoustic Assessment to support the proposals. The report confirms that Create undertook a site survey on 18 July 2024 and placed two logging sound levels meters on site for a five-day period. During the site visit they also undertook a series of unattended measurements to determine the propagation around the Site and to support the impact assessment. The results provided the ambient day time and nighttime noise levels as follows:

Time of Day	Position 1	Position 2
Daytime	53 – 55 dB	45 dB – 48 dB
Night time	44 – 49 dB	35 – 39 dB
Representative Night Time maximum level	68 dB	55 dB

- 7.110 The results indicate a recommendation for acoustic mitigation to new residential properties in the southwestern part of the Site in proximity to the Lower Luton Road. The remainder of the Site experiences low noise levels during day and nighttime and does not require mitigation. These are all matters to be addressed at the Reserved Matters stage and can also be secured by appropriately worded condition and would comply with Draft Local Plan Policy HW1 (Air and Noise Pollution).

xx) Air Quality

- 7.111 Create Consulting has prepared an Air Quality Assessment to support the proposals and undertakes an air pollution assessment in line with Draft Local Plan Policy HW1. The report considers air quality impacts during construction and operation stages. It concludes that during the construction phase there is potential for air quality impacts as a result of fugitive dust emissions from the Site. It notes that assuming good practice dust control measures are used, the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by earthworks, construction, and trackout activities is predicted to be negligible. Such mitigation can be secured through appropriately worded conditions.
- 7.112 The Assessment notes that the modelled results show that predicted annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} concentrations across the Site boundary and at all human receptor locations are below the relevant AQOs for the proposed operational year, 2036. Additionally, the development will have a negligible impact on all human receptor locations, in line with EPUK-IAQM guidance. Therefore, the development is considered suitable for the proposed use without the implementation of mitigation techniques for air quality and complies with Draft Policy HW1 (Air and Noise Pollution).

xxi) Contamination

- 7.113 RPS has prepared the submitted Preliminary Land Contamination Report (Phase 1 Desk Study) and Preliminary Geotechnical Report for the Site.
- 7.114 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that: a) the site is suitable for its proposed uses taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination. This includes risks arising from natural hazards or former activities such as mining, and any proposals for mitigation including land remediation (as well as potential impacts on the natural environment arising from that remediation); b) after remediation, as a minimum, land should not be capable as being determined as contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and c) adequate site investigation information, prepared by a competent person, is available to inform assessments.
- 7.115 Draft Local Plan Policy HW3 (Contaminated Land) states that any development proposals which would cause harm to the environment or neighbouring land or properties from a significant increase in pollution into the air, soil or any water body by virtue of the emissions of fumes, particles, effluent, radiation, smell, heat, light, noise or noxious substances, will not be permitted.
- 7.116 Draft Local Plan Policy HW4 (Groundwater Pollution) states that the Council supports the prevention of groundwater pollution and the protection of groundwater as a resource. Development must take account of the relevant Source advice with regards to the Protection Zone it lies within.
- 7.117 The Preliminary Geotechnical Report states that the Site's geology mostly consists of a covering of Clay with Flints over bedrock chalk and that this varies in thickness according to topography and evidently weathering/erosion of the underlying chalk bedrock. There are several shallow depressions at the site surface and intrusive investigations suggest these are associated with solution features in the underlying chalk. The full details of the findings of the geophysics report is set out in Appendix E of the Preliminary Geotechnical Report.
- 7.118 The submitted Preliminary Land Contamination Report states that only one trial pit encountered groundwater during the site investigation in February 2025. It was located over a shallow part waste-filled depression in the site surface. The Preliminary Geotechnical Report notes that the water table is likely to be generally at least 10m below the ground surface.
- 7.119 The Preliminary Land Contamination Report concludes that there are a few potential source-pathway-receptor linkages that could be present as a potential risk to future users. These include:

- From fuels or wastes having been released or deposited on the site either by accident or by use of contaminated materials;
- Demolition wastes, including potential for asbestos from buildings in the south-west corner of the Site; and
- The risks to controlled waters associated with possible fuels or oils and to a lesser degree agri-chemicals.

7.120 All other risks from hazardous ground gases, contaminants migrating from the site, and risks to buried services and buildings materials appear to be low.

7.121 The report recommends further investigations once the layout has been finalised and when proposed ground levels have been designed at Reserved Matters stage. Any further investigations required could be secured through suitably worded condition, however the proposals would ensure accordance with Draft Local Plan Policy HW3 (Contaminated Land) and HW4 (Groundwater Pollution) through mitigation where relevant.

xxii) Draft Heads of Terms

7.122 The final Heads of Terms for the section 106 legal agreement will be discussed and agreed with the Council during the determination stage. Based on the Heads of Terms for other similar developments in St Albans District, the following draft Heads of Terms are put forward as a starting point for discussion:

- Education - contributions towards primary (commensurate reduction based on provision of land within the Site), secondary, childcare and SEND provisions/services;
- Library Service contribution;
- Youth Service contribution;
- Waste Service Transfer Service contribution;
- Fire and Rescue Service contribution;
- Highways – contribution and travel plan;
- HCC monitoring fees;
- Affordable Housing and Self-Build provisions;
- Extra Care Housing provisions;
- Leisure and Cultural Facilities contribution;
- On-site delivery of Sports Pitches and supporting facilities;
- Outdoor Sports Facilities contribution;
- Biodiversity Net Gain;

- Open Space Provision – including provision of children’s play space, allotments, green infrastructure, and their stewardship, management and maintenance strategy; and
- NHS – GP and ambulance contributions

7.123 Where the Site is providing land to facilitate delivery of infrastructure/ facilities that serve the wider NE Harpenden allocation (draft Policy B2), it is expected that the other parcels within the allocation contribute proportionately. Moreover, that where Crest delivers infrastructure that other parcels within the allocation rely upon (for example, access and/ or utilities/ services), that there is a mechanism for apportionment/ recovery of costs.

8.0 Summary and Planning Balance

- 8.1 The Proposed Development will deliver a significant number of new homes in an area of notable housing need and an acute shortfall in five-year housing land supply. This will include much-needed affordable homes and a children's home alongside extra care accommodation as part of a high-quality, residential-led scheme. It will provide a logical and well-connected, sustainable extension to Harpenden that is supported by the emerging spatial strategy and draft allocation within the emerging Local Plan.
- 8.2 The proposals have been informed by the landscape setting and revised throughout the pre-application period in response to feedback received from the LPA, HCC, Design Review Panel and local residents and stakeholders including adjacent landowners/ promoters within the allocated area. The result is a development that has evolved collaboratively and provides for a well-conceived, place-specific proposal.
- 8.3 A new primary school and local centre form part of the proposals. These will serve the Proposed Development and the site allocation as a whole, in addition to the wider local area, providing additional benefit to those within north Harpenden.
- 8.4 In defining sustainable development, the NPPF requires development proposals to be sustainable in terms of economic, social and environmental objectives. The Proposed Development addresses all of these objectives providing new homes in an area of acute need/ shortage including at least 40% of them as affordable alongside other types of much needed accommodation (extra care and children's home) located in a sustainable area that makes effective use of land and is well-designed.
- 8.5 This Planning Statement and the suite of accompanying technical reports and Environmental Statement show how the benefits significantly and demonstrably outweigh any potential adverse impacts. Moreover, that such impacts can be appropriately mitigated. Further discussion on planning conditions and obligations to enable this application to be favourably determined are welcomed.

Appendix A Planning Policy

St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994

POLICY 1	Metropolitan Green Belt	POLICY 2	Settlement Strategy
POLICY 8	Affordable Housing in the Metropolitan Green Belt		
POLICY 23	Business Use Development		
POLICY 34	Highways Consideration in Development Control		
POLICY 35	Highway Improvements in Association with Development		
POLICY 36 A	Location of New Development in relation to Public Transport Network		
POLICY 39	Parking Standards, General Requirements		
POLICY 40	Residential Development Parking Standards		
POLICY 43	Elderly Persons Dwellings and Residential Homes/hostels, Parking Standards		
POLICY 47	Food and Drink Establishments Parking Standards		
POLICY 48	Surgeries and Clinics Parking Standards		
POLICY 62	Community Care		
POLICY 65	Education Facilities		
POLICY 65A	Day Nurseries and Creches		
POLICY 69	General Design and Layout		
POLICY 70	Design and Layout of New Housing		
POLICY 74	Landscaping and Tree Preservation		
POLICY 84	Flooding and River Catchment Management		
POLICY 84A	Drainage Infrastructure		
POLICY 85	Development in Conservation Areas		
POLICY 86	Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest		
POLICY 91	Location of Leisure Facilities		
POLICY 96	Medium Intensity Leisure Uses in the Green Belt		
POLICY 97	Existing Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways		
POLICY 102	Loss of Agricultural Land		
POLICY 104	Landscape Conservation		
POLICY 106	Nature Conservation		
POLICY 143B	Implementation		

Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2032 (2019)

POLICY SS1	The Spatial Strategy
POLICY SS2	Infrastructure Zones
POLICY ER1	Supporting Harpenden's Economy
POLICY ER6	Supporting Local Centres
POLICY ER8	Adaptable, Innovative and Up to Date Retail and Employment Centres
POLICY ESD1	Design Strategy
POLICY ESD2	Local Character and Heritage
POLICY ESD4	Streets As Social Spaces That Are Pleasant To Be In
POLICY ESD5	New Car Parking Design
POLICY ESD6	Refuse and Recycling
POLICY ESD8	Green and Open Spaces and Areas of Ecological and Landscape Value
POLICY ESD10	Views in New Developments
POLICY ESD11	Access to the Natural Environment
POLICY ESD12	Allotments
POLICY ESD13	Biodiversity
POLICY ESD14	Trees and Hedges
POLICY ESD15	Sustainability and Energy Efficiency
POLICY ESD16	Carbon Dioxide Emission
POLICY ESD18	Flood Risk
POLICY ESD19	Water Conservation
POLICY ESD20	Pollution
POLICY H1	Housing Strategy
POLICY H3	Dwelling Size and Type
POLICY H4	Residential Density
POLICY H5	Higher Density Development

POLICY H6	Affordable Housing
POLICY H7	Lifetime Homes
POLICY H8	Specialist Accommodation
POLICY H9	Private Outdoor Space for Residential Development
POLICY SI1	School Development
POLICY SI3	Venues for Community Use
POLICY SI4	Provision of Sports and Leisure Facilities
POLICY SI7	Accessible GP Practices
POLICY SI11	Utilities Infrastructure
POLICY T1	Transport Assessments
POLICY T2	Proposals Affecting the A1081, B653 and B652
POLICY T3	Travel Plans
POLICY T4	School Travel Plans
POLICY T5	Road Layouts
POLICY T6	Integrated Pedestrian Network
POLICY T8	Bus Stop Layouts
POLICY T9	Sustainable Transport Routes
POLICY T11	Residential Parking Standards
POLICY T12	Access for All

Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2020 – 2035 (2023)

POLICY W1	Location of Development
POLICY W2	Dwelling Mix
POLICY W3	Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development
POLICY W4	Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Habitats and Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain
POLICY W9	High Quality Design of Development
POLICY W10	Incorporating Sustainable Design Features
POLICY W11	Attractive Village Street Scene
POLICY W12	Primary Local Access Routes
POLICY W13	Longer Distance Cycle Routes
POLICY W14	Off-Street Car Parking in Wheathampstead
POLICY W15	Bus and Community Transport Provision
POLICY W17	Education Provision
POLICY W18	Health and Wellbeing
POLICY W19	Community Growing Spaces
POLICY W20	Sports and Recreational Facilities
POLICY W23	Encouraging Businesses to come to Wheathampstead

St. Albans District Draft Local Plan 2041 (as submitted under Regulation 22):

POLICY SP1	A Spatial Strategy for St Albans
POLICY SP2	Responding to the Climate Emergency
POLICY CE1	Promoting Sustainable Design, Construction and Building Efficiency
POLICY CE2	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
POLICY SP3	Land and the Green Belt
POLICY LG1	Broad Locations
POLICY LG5	Green Belt
POLICY LG6	Green Belt Compensatory Improvements
POLICY SP4	Housing
POLICY HOU1	Housing Mix
POLICY HOU2	Affordable Housing
POLICY HOU3	Specialist Housing
POLICY HOU4	Accessible and Adaptable Housing
POLICY HOU5	Self-build and Custom Housebuilding
POLICY HOU6	Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People
POLICY EMP5	Employment Skills

POLICY SP6	City, Town and Village Centres and Retail
POLICY SP7	Community Infrastructure
POLICY COM1	Education
POLICY COM3	Community, Leisure and Sports Facilities
POLICY SP8	Transport Strategy
POLICY TRA1	Transport Considerations for New Development
POLICY TRA2	Major Transport Schemes?
POLICY TRA4	Parking
POLICY SP9	Utilities Infrastructure
POLICY UIN1	Broadband
POLICY SP10	Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Green and Blue Infrastructure
POLICY NEB1	Woodlands, Trees and Landscape Features
POLICY NEB6	Biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain
POLICY NEB7	Biodiversity Provision in the Design of New Buildings and Open Spaces
POLICY NEB8	Managing Flood Risk
POLICY NEB9	Agricultural Land
POLICY NEB10	Landscape and Design
POLICY NEB12	Green Space Standards and New Green Space Provision
POLICY SP11	Historic Environment
POLICY HE1	Designated Heritage Assets
POLICY HE3	Archaeology
POLICY SP12	High Quality Design
POLICY DES1	Design of New Development
POLICY DES2	Public Space
POLICY DES3	Efficient Use of Land
POLICY DES5	Residential Amenity Standards
POLICY DES6	Building Heights
POLICY DES7	Servicing of Development
POLICY SP12	High Quality Design
POLICY SP13	Health and Wellbeing
POLICY HW1	Air and Noise Pollution
POLICY HW2	Light Pollution
POLICY HW3	Contaminated Land
POLICY HW4	Groundwater Pollution
POLICY HW5	Health Impact Assessment
POLICY SP14	Delivery of Infrastructure
POLICY IMP1	Additional Infrastructure Requirements for Strategic Scale Development