

VINCENT+GORBING

Land at Back Lane Stevenage
**Preliminary site assessment
report**

On behalf of
Hertfordshire County Council

November 2017

Prepared by
Vincent and Gorbings

A large teal graphic occupies the bottom half of the page. It features a diagonal split from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner. The area to the left of this split is a lighter shade of teal, while the rest is a darker teal. In the bottom right corner of the dark teal area, the letters 'VG' are printed in a large, white, sans-serif font.

VG

Preliminary site assessment report

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Land at Back Lane – Technical Note (Phil Jones Associates)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Vincent and Gorbing have been commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), to assess the potential of land at Back Lane Stevenage to accommodate a 6-8 form entry secondary school to provide for education need arising from existing residential development in Stevenage, proposed housing allocations in the Stevenage Borough Plan and proposed housing allocations in the North Herts District Plan.
- 1.2 This preliminary site assessment report has been prepared to inform the statement being prepared by Hertfordshire County Council in respect of Matter 6 Deliverability in respect of the emerging North Herts Local Plan which is the subject of an Examination in Public in November 2017.
- 1.3 Section two of this report describes and assesses the site with reference to the technical studies commissioned to inform the deliverability of the site and other relevant evidence.
- 1.4 Section three sets out the potential site allocation and considers site constraints which have informed a development principles layout showing the broad disposition of land uses for a 6-8FE secondary school including potential access arrangements.
- 1.5 Section four comprises the summary and recommendation.

2.0 SITE ASSESSMENT

SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Stevenage (Plan 5139/150). The site area is currently indicated as 21.85ha (53.99.ac) (plan 5139/151).
- 2.2 The majority of the site area falls within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire District Council. A small part of the site (a parcel adjoining the southern boundary) falls within the administrative area of Stevenage Borough Council.

LAND OWNERSHIP

- 2.3 The site is owned by the current owners of Chesfield Park. The site is located in the southern part of the owner's estate with the house and immediate surrounds of the house being located to the north.
- 2.4 The landowner has entered into discussions with Hertfordshire County Council about the possibility of releasing the site for a potential secondary school. The landowner has identified the area of land that they would be willing to consider for a potential secondary school use.
- 2.5 The landowner regards the availability of this site as being contingent upon a wider development including aspiration housing and care home on land adjoining the site. The site area is shown on plan 5139/151.
- 2.6 It is hoped that the landowner would be willing to enter an agreement to sell the site to the County Council for educational use. If sale by agreement could not be achieved the County Council would need to consider, as a last resort, the exercise of Compulsory Purchase powers on the basis that it is necessary in the public interest that the site be acquired for the provision of education.
- 2.7 The landowner invited interested parties to attend a site visit on 26 September 2017. The site visit was attended by the landowner, officers from North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council, a representative from Vincent and Gorbing and representatives from the landowners' agents.

SITE DEFINITION

- 2.8 The site is bounded (plan 5139/151) to the:
- North by Chesfield Park and Back Lane
 - East by residential development and a green access corridor accommodating overhead power cables
 - South by woodland and residential development beyond
 - West by agricultural land

CURRENT SITE USES

- 2.9 A site visit and photographic appraisal (plans 5139/156-157) was conducted by Vincent and Gorbing (27.03.17). The site is open grassland which has some sheep grazing.

LANDFORM

- 2.10 A topographical survey has not been undertaken but a landform plan (5139/154) has been prepared using LIDAR data (kindly supplied by the landowner). The plan shows that the site is not flat. The land falls from the north-eastern corner of the site to the south west and from the south-eastern corner of the site to the east. This is also replicated on plan 5139/153.

VEGETATION

- 2.11 The eastern boundary to the residential development has a mature tree belt of between 13-60m in depth. Where the site is crossed by overhead power cables the vegetation is less mature and comprises an understorey of self-seeded vegetation.
- 2.12 There are other tree groups on the site which serve to obscure views into the longer distance as shown on plan 5139/154 and accompanying photographic appraisal.
- 2.13 A tree survey has not been undertaken to determine the quality or condition of the trees on the site.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.14 There is no record of any recent planning consents for development on the site itself.

PLANNING POLICIES

- 2.15 Local plan policies are set out on plan 5139/158. This plan shows that the site is currently located in the Green Belt. There are no other site specific designations.
- 2.16 Stevenage Borough Council housing allocation (HO3) is located to the south west of the site. North Hertfordshire proposed housing allocation (NS1) is located to the west of the site and North Hertfordshire proposed housing allocations (GA1 and GA2) are located to the north east of the site.
- 2.17 Within the urban area the access corridor to the east of the site accommodating overhead power lines is a designated green link.

GREEN BELT REVIEW

- 2.18 North Hertfordshire District Council conducted a Green Belt Review (July 2016) which is listed in the local plan evidence base. The site is located within parcel 15 (Jacks Hill) which is a large and significant parcel of land which extends from the northern extents of Stevenage almost to the southern extents of Letchworth.
- 2.19 Within this large parcel the site falls within smaller parcel 15c which abuts the northern settlement edge of Stevenage. It is described as playing a significant role in preventing the expansion of Stevenage northwards, playing a significant role in separating Stevenage/Letchworth/Baldock and protecting the countryside in the gap between Letchworth/Baldock and Stevenage. It provides the context for Graveley village and parkland landscape of Chesfield Park. It has visual links with the northern settlement edge of Stevenage and links into the Green Belt within Stevenage Borough. It is concluded that it is an important part of the gap separating Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth.
- 2.20 Further consideration of Green Belt impacts is set out in section 3 of this report.

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 2.21 North Hertfordshire District Council commissioned a Landscape Sensitivity Study (February 2016) from Lane Use which in the local plan evidence base. The site is located within landscape character area Baldock Gap 219. The site is not located in any areas of nature conservation importance such as a: site of special scientific interest, local nature reserve, district wildlife site, ancient and semi natural woodland or ancient replacement woodland. It is defined in the park, garden, recreation cultural heritage assessment.
- 2.22 The site is located away from Chesfield Park House. The viewpoints plan (5139/155) indicates that the site is not visible from the House due to the enclosure of the house by trees. The site is also well enclosed along its southern boundary to the Conservation Area by a significant tree belt. Views of Manor House and the Lodge are visible. Further viewpoints need to be undertaken.
- 2.23 A landscape and visual impact assessment would need to be completed as part of any planning application.

HERITAGE ASSETS

- 2.24 In the course of preparing new local plans two studies have been completed by Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council. Both of these refer to the wider area within which the site is located and make reference to the site and its context. The relevant matters are considered in the two sections to follow and reference is made to Chesfield Park.
- 2.25 The Heritage assessment of North Stevenage (NS1) was completed by Amec Foster Wheeler on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council in June 2016. The report is submitted in the evidence base for the emerging local plan. The report confirms that Chesfield Park is an unregistered park and garden. The house dates from the 17th century. The Park is an open landscape with belts of trees at the margins, clumps and single specimen trees. The house itself has a belt of trees sheltering it to the north and south west with a walled garden to the north east.
- 2.26 The report identifies the nearest listed buildings as being in Graveley and Chesfield Church. Two archaeological areas of significance at Graveley and Chesfield Church are also noted in the report. The school site, however, would be some distance from either of these areas containing significant heritage assets. The school site is not situated in an area of archaeological significance.
- 2.27 The Heritage assessment completed by Stevenage Borough Council (November 2015) identifies the impact of the potential housing allocation of Land to the north of Stevenage on the Conservation Area within which part of the site is situated. The report identifies that the Conservation Area was extended northwards in 2007 and Plan 5135/158 shows the exact location of the boundary. The school site however would not lie within the Conservation Area and the built form could be contained by the tree belt in the southern corner of the site. Consideration would need to be given to retaining the openness of the south-western parcel of the site to ensure that impacts on the Conservation Area could be minimised. It is considered that with additional mitigation in the form of landscaping the wider landscape effects on the Conservation Area could be mitigated.
- 2.28 This initial heritage assessment demonstrates that existing heritage assets are mostly (other than the northern boundary of the Conservation Area) located some distance from the school site. It would appear unlikely therefore that there would be any significant adverse impacts.

- 2.29 A heritage impact assessment (archaeological and non-archaeological) would need to be submitted with any planning application and mitigation proposed in respect of any unacceptable impacts.

RIGHTS OF WAY

- 2.30 There are no rights of way traversing the site.

ECOLOGY

- 2.31 The site comprises grazed grassland with parkland/scattered trees. It is possible that some of the trees could have bat roosting potential and this would need to be confirmed if any were to be removed. An ecological assessment has not yet been undertaken and this would confirm the presence of any important habitats and protected species. It would also identify any potential development constraints. This would be required to support any planning application.

TRANSPORT

- 2.32 Establishing access to the site (both vehicular and pedestrian) and its location in relation to the potential catchment of the school, is a critical to establishing the suitability (and hence deliverability) of the site for educational use.
- 2.33 Phil Jones Associates were appointed to prepare transport advice and a technical note was produced (20 March 2017) which is attached at Appendix A. This report was supplied to North Herts District Council and Stevenage Borough Council in March 2017. A full transport assessment would be required to support any planning application.

Demand in the locality

- 2.34 The site is well located to meet identified secondary demand in the local area. There is currently 7 forms of entry (f.e) of pupils who would live nearer this school than any other as the crow flies. This does not account for additional pupil yield from proposed residential development which would increase demand by around a further 5fe. The combined secondary aged population of around 12fe living in this defined area is well in excess of the 8fe school provision sought.
- 2.35 The note advises that 68% of secondary aged population would live within a 1km walking distance of the site and 82% would live within a 1.5km distance. A high quality pedestrian/cycle route would need to be provided between site allocations NS1/H03 and the proposed school site. There are good quality pedestrian/cycle connections east from the site towards the residential areas north of Great Ashby Way. There would need to be a controlled pedestrian crossing facility at the Orwell Road/Great Ashby Way junction.

Vehicular access

- 2.36 The principal access to the site would be via a new road through the western section of the Great Ashby linear park which is currently undeveloped to accommodate overhead power lines. The technical note indicates that there are several options for the school access connecting to adjoining roads but all works would be within HCC control. The access would require the relocation or redesign of the drainage features within the linear park. It is also noted that the road would run beneath high voltage power lines and close to an existing mast. Further advice in this respect will need to be sought.

- 2.37 It is noted that the planning permission for the school site at Great Ashby proposed exactly the same arrangements and it is therefore considered unlikely that the presence of the power lines would be an impediment to the access.

Traffic impact

- 2.38 The note sets out the potential traffic impacts arising from the development and concludes that the Great Ashby Way/ Orwell Road priority junction would be at capacity as a consequence of the cumulative impact of the site allocations and proposed school. This could be mitigated through the conversion of this junction into a three-arm roundabout which is deliverable in highway land. The Great Ashby Way/Bray Drive/ Wansbeck Road roundabout would be at capacity with the construction of sites GA1, GA2 and the proposed school site. This could be mitigated through an enlargement of the existing roundabout which could be delivered on land within the linear park controlled by HCC.

Bus transport

- 2.39 The nearest bus routes to the site run along Great Ashby Way around 400m from the proposed site although the distance to the nearest bus stop is around 650m. Bus service improvements could be sought but since the majority of the catchment is situated within 1km of the site access so a commercial bus service is not considered essential.

GEO-ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

- 2.40 No ground conditions investigations have been carried out as yet. This would be required as part of any planning application and would be required to support the preparation of a surface water drainage strategy for the proposals.

FLOOD RISK

- 2.41 Plan 5139/159 shows that the site does not lie within Flood zone 2 or Flood Zone 3. A flood risk assessment would be required as part of any planning application and a surface water and foul water drainage strategy would be required in accordance with planning policy and guidance.

SERVICES

- 2.42 A Services investigation report has not been prepared but would be needed as part of any planning application. The services report will need to look specifically at the matter of the overhead power lines.
- 2.43 Existing connections close to the site may need to be retained, upgraded, or relocated to serve the proposed development.

3.0 SITE ALLOCATION

SITE SUITABILITY SUMMARY

3.1 The assessment in section two has identified that the site has a number of advantages.

The site:

- Is not located in a Conservation Area
- Does not contain any listed buildings
- Is not located in any areas of archaeological significance
- Is not located in a wildlife area, area of special scientific interest, local nature reserve, district wildlife site, ancient and semi natural woodland or ancient replacement woodland
- Is not in an area of flood risk
- Benefits from tree belts to the east which separate the parkland from existing residential development
- Benefits from tree belts to the south which enclose the southern part of the site
- Could be served by an access from the existing Green Linear park to the east
- Will serve an area of demand comprising the existing community (7fe) and pupil yield from proposed new residential development (around 5fe)
- 68% of pupils would live within 1km walking distance and 82% would live within a 1.5km distance.
- Has potential connections to good quality pedestrian/cycle connections east from the site towards the residential areas north of Great Ashby Way.

3.2 The site assessment in section two has identified that the site has a number of disadvantages.

The site:

- Adjoins a Conservation area
- Does perform Green Belt functions playing a significant role in; preventing the expansion of Stevenage northwards; in separating Stevenage, Letchworth, Baldock; and in protecting the countryside in the gap between Letchworth/Baldock and Stevenage.
- Provides the context for Graveley village and parkland landscape of Chesfield Park,
- Has visual links with the northern settlement edge of Stevenage and links into the Green Belt within Stevenage Borough
- Is considered an important part of the gap separating Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth
- Contains mature trees which are part of the parkland setting for Chesfield Park

3.3 Any planning application scheme proposals would need to include:

- Provision of a high quality pedestrian/cycle route between site allocations NS1/H03 and the proposed school site.
- Junction improvements to manage additional traffic movements in the existing residential area
- Landscape and visual impact mitigation to minimised impact on the wider landscape
- Disposition of uses to ensure the risk of further encroachment into the Green Belt is minimised

- Habitat loss is minimised
- Strategies are in place for translocation of any protected species

SITE SIZE REQUIREMENTS

- 3.4 Following on from the constraints analysis above a plan has been prepared which shows how a 6-8FE school could be accommodated on the site. The County Council and the ESFA is committed to the use of BB103 as this provides best practice for education provision and as such provides the basis for site selection this being a reasonable and appropriate approach.
- 3.1 The County Council's site area requirements are based on the upper end of the Government's BB103 Site Standards to ensure sufficient site is available to allow for any abnormalities and site specific topography characteristics.
- 3.2 For a 6-8fe secondary school the County Council would seek a site area of 12ha and this has been used as the basis of the site search and used elsewhere across the county, and tested through the town planning process.
- 3.3 The Back Lane site is currently identified as being 21.85ha which is well in excess of the 12ha minimum. However due to the landform constraints and requirement to retain tree belts and potentially groups of or individual trees it is possible that the site area will need to extend beyond 12ha. It remains prudent to consider retaining the whole site for educational use until further feasibility work at the planning application stage establishes how much of the site is required.

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

- 3.4 Plan 5139/160 shows how the land uses for a school could be accommodated on the site. The potential access route is located in accordance with the Phil Jones Technical Note advice. As such this determines broadly where the school building zone might be accommodated.
- 3.5 The building zone would include car parking, potential drop off zone, soft and hard play areas, and buildings. It shows that some vegetation removal would be necessary to accommodate the 4ha area. The vegetation that would be removed in the linear park corridor is mostly self – seeded (see photographic appraisal). There may be a requirement to remove more significant trees but this would be dependent on detailed design. The building zone would then abut the urban area.
- 3.6 However, the extent of the building zone, the extent of vegetation removal would all be subject to detailed feasibility at the planning application stage informed by heritage impact on the adjoining conservation area, the quality and condition of specific trees and tree groups, wider visual landscape impact, the extent of car parking requirements and building form.
- 3.7 A playing field zone is shown extending to the north-east of the building zone. Principally this is currently located as such to avoid extension into the area of open countryside adjoining the site to the south and it would enable the current Green Corridor to remain uninterrupted. If through landscape and visual impact assessment, it was found to be preferable to extend playing fields to the south-west of the building zone then this area could be used. The retention of trees and tree groups could also inform the location of playing fields too. Some may be located as shown and some in the area as shown if detailed feasibility proved that this reduced overall impact on the parkland setting.

- 3.8 In conclusion, therefore, this is a preliminary development principles plan for the purposes of considering a site allocation. It is not a planning application proposal. Further feasibility needs to be undertaken at the detailed planning application stage to prove the impacts are acceptable.
- 3.9 It is considered that the site is suitable for educational use subject to the further feasibility work required to support a detailed planning application.

DELIVERABILITY

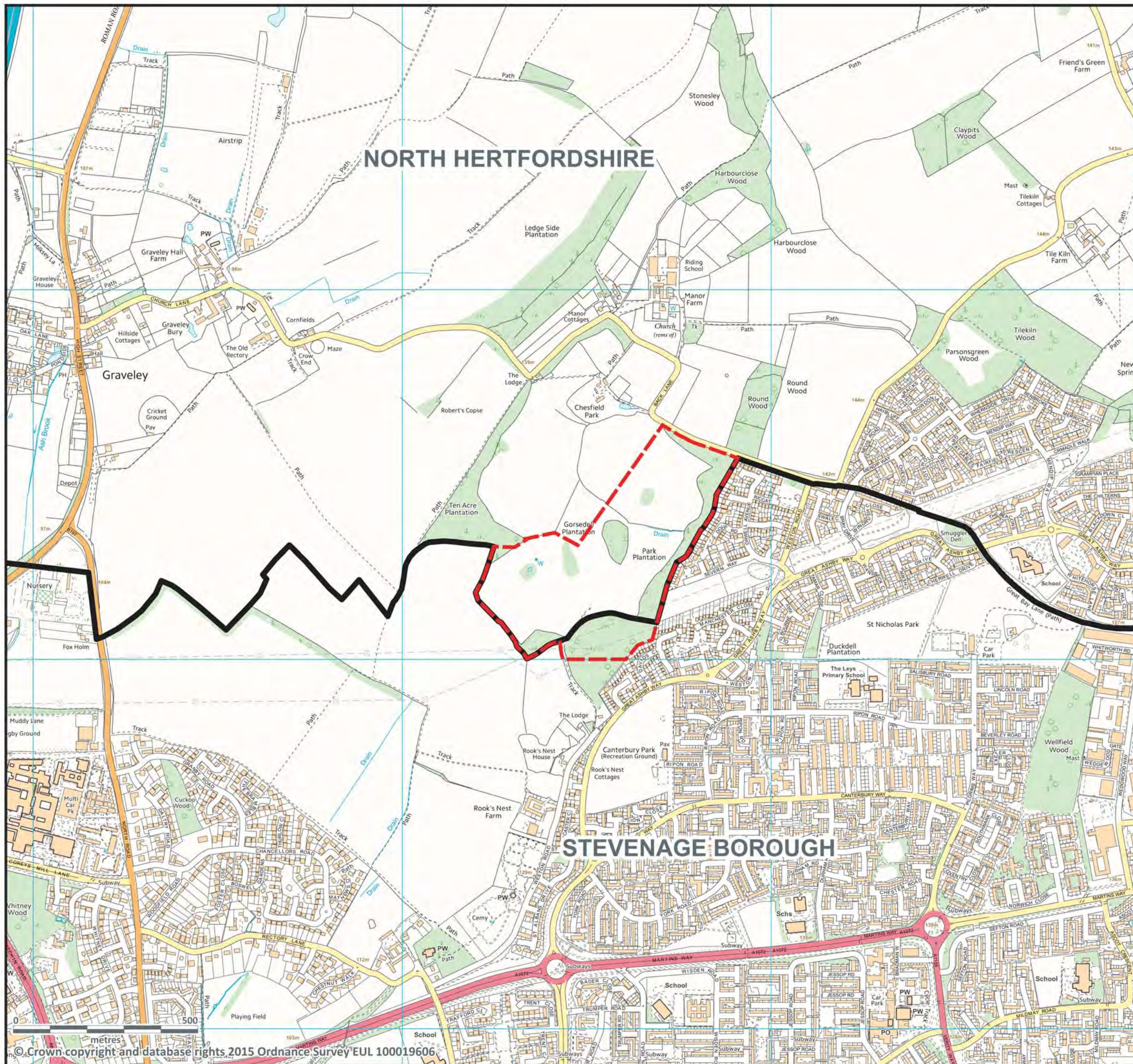
- 3.10 For the site to be deliverable to the public purse it needs to remain in the Green Belt but allocated as a reserve school site to be brought forward during the plan period at the appropriate point. Discussions around housing phasing and education provision will confirm in which part of the plan period the site is required.
- 3.11 The landowner has entered into discussions with Hertfordshire County Council in respect of this site. The County Council would wish to continue those discussions with the landowner once the site has been allocated for educational use.

ALLOCATION

- 3.12 The site should be allocated as a Main Modification to the Local Plan to ensure that the secondary education needs arising from existing and proposed development north of Stevenage can be met through the local plan.

4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Stevenage and is owned by the current owners of Chesfield Park who have entered into discussions with Hertfordshire County Council about the possibility of releasing the site for educational purposes (meeting the forecast need for secondary education places arising from existing and proposed development in the plan period).
- 4.2 The site is currently within the Green Belt and is used for grazing purposes. It is enclosed by substantial tree belts on the eastern and southern boundaries and its parkland character is marked by groups of trees. The site is not flat and slopes to the south-west. It is not located in a conservation area, has no listed buildings, is not a registered park or garden, is not located in any areas of archaeological significance, is not located in a wildlife area, area of special scientific interest, local nature reserve, district wildlife site, ancient and semi natural woodland or ancient replacement woodland. The site is not in an area of flood risk.
- 4.3 The site does perform Green Belt functions protecting the countryside and preventing settlements from merging. It does provide the context for Graveley village and parkland landscape of Chesfield Park, has visual links with the northern settlement edge of Stevenage and links into the Green Belt within Stevenage Borough. It adjoins the Conservation Area to the south.
- 4.4 A technical assessment has been completed which shows that the site could be accessed through the Green Linear park to the east with junction improvements and pedestrian infrastructure. The access into the site would create a requirement to locate the building zone adjacent to the urban edge but would require the removal of trees in the access corridor and further trees to accommodate the building zone. The playing fields could extend to the north but may need to extend to the west dependent on detailed feasibility in respect of landform and tree retention. Detailed consideration at the feasibility and planning application stage would be needed to ensure that impacts on the Conservation Area to the south, Chesfield Park House and the wider Green Belt are all minimised and that a defensible development is proposed that minimises the potential for further Green Belt encroachment.
- 4.5 It is recommended that a main modification be introduced to the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan to include this site as a reserve secondary school site to remain in the Green Belt and to be brought forward in the plan period when the education need can be demonstrated. This will ensure the site remains deliverable (being affordable to the public purse) and only comes forward when the need for the development is demonstrated. The plan will need to state that this is the preferred location for a new school site.



SITE BOUNDARY
21.85ha 53.99ac

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

STEVENAGE BOROUGH

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PROJECT TITLE
**Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site**

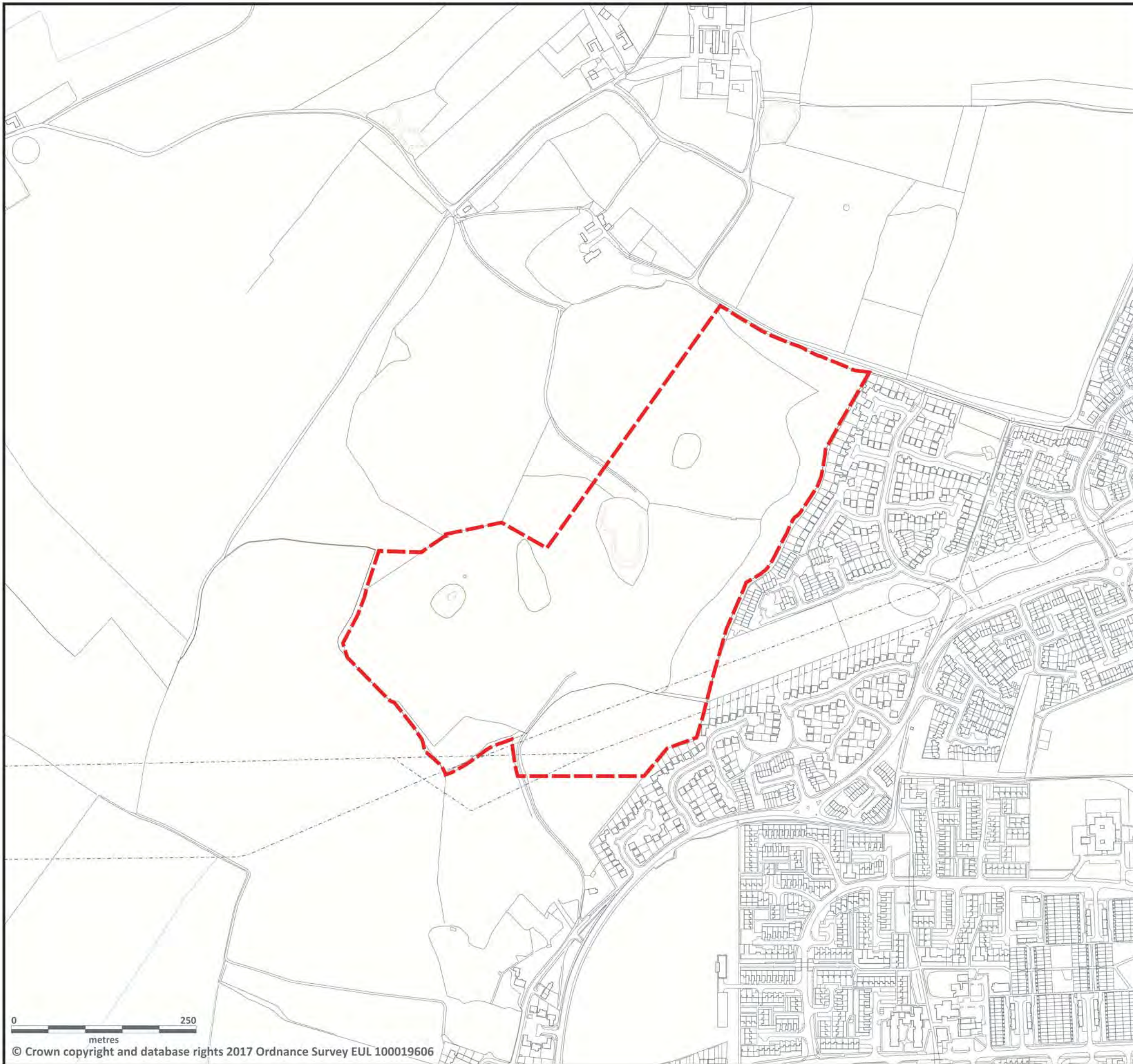
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VINCENT AND GORBING
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS AND TOWN PLANNERS

STERLING COURT NORTON ROAD STEVENAGE HERTS
TELEPHONE: 01438 316331 FAX: 01438 722035



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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Back Lane Stevenage
 Potential school site

DRAWING TITLE
Site identification

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PROJECT No.		151
5139		

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SITE BOUNDARY
21.85ha 53.99ac

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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site

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Aerial photograph
Flight survey date 03-07-2015

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5139		

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0 500
metres
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SITE BOUNDARY
21.85ha 53.99ac

MATURE TREE GROUPS

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Potential school site**

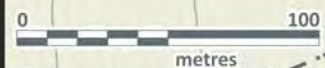
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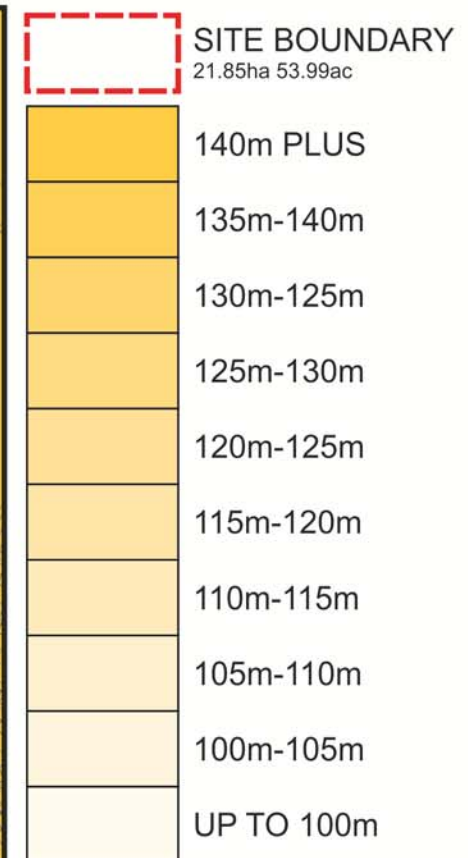
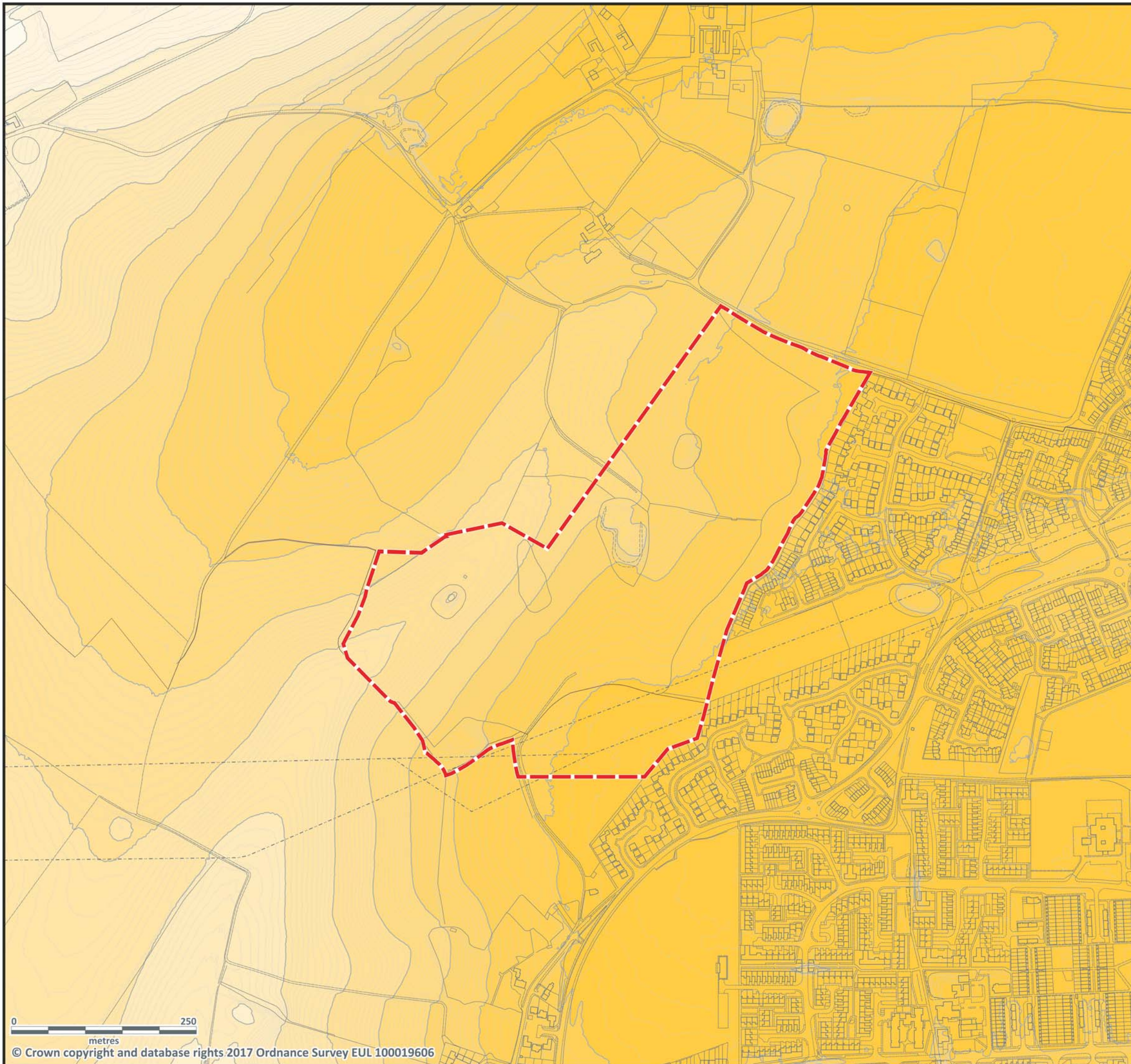
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**Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site**

DRAWING TITLE
Landform

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PROJECT No.	N	154
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- SITE BOUNDARY**
21.85ha 53.99ac
- **VIEWS OF ESTATE AND WIDER AREA**
- ↗ **VIEWPOINTS REQUIRED**

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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site

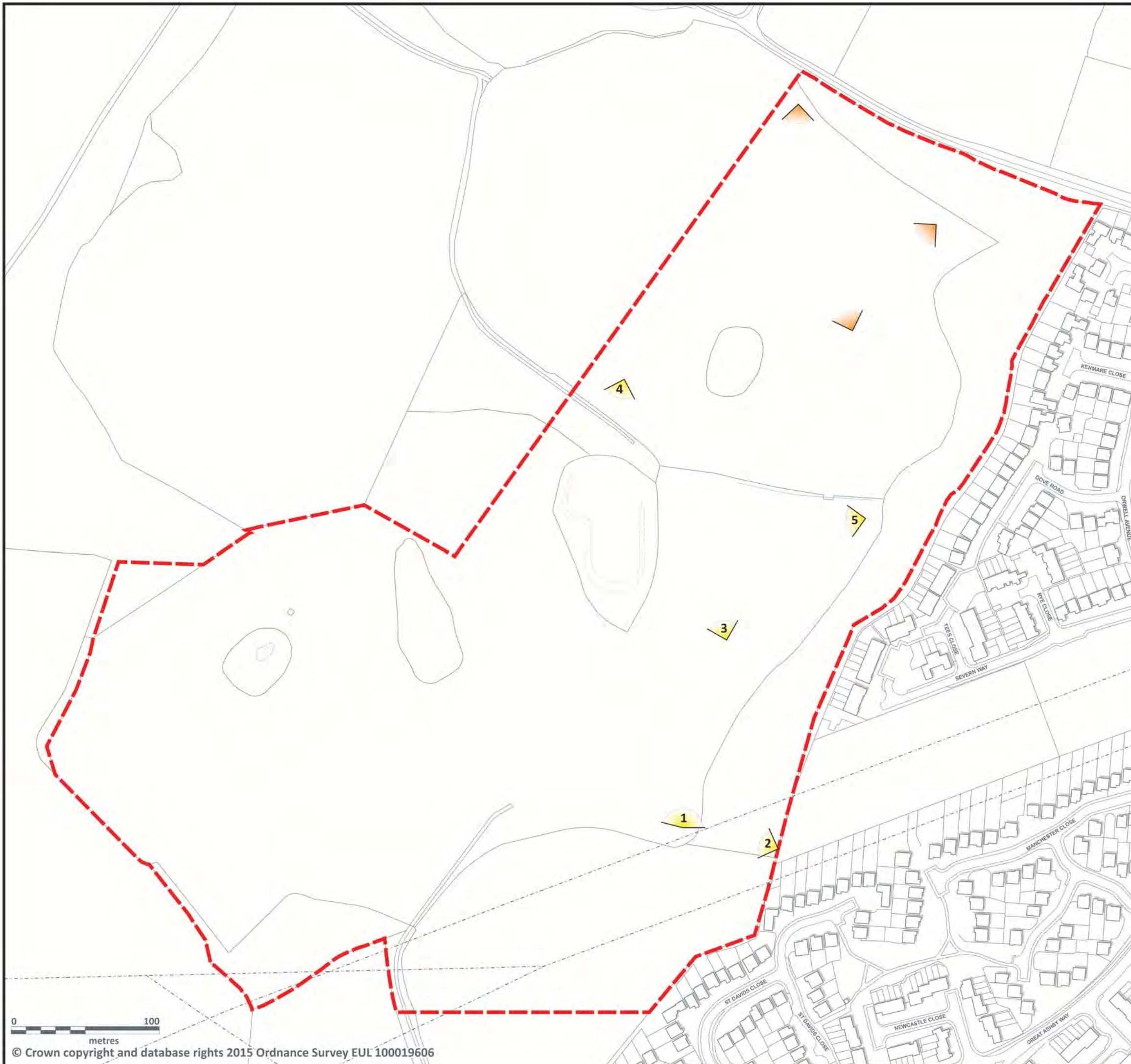
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0 500
metres
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- SITE BOUNDARY**
21.85ha 53.99ac
- VIEWPOINTS:**
PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN
- VIEWPOINTS:**
PHOTOGRAPHS REQUIRED

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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site

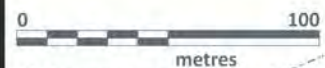
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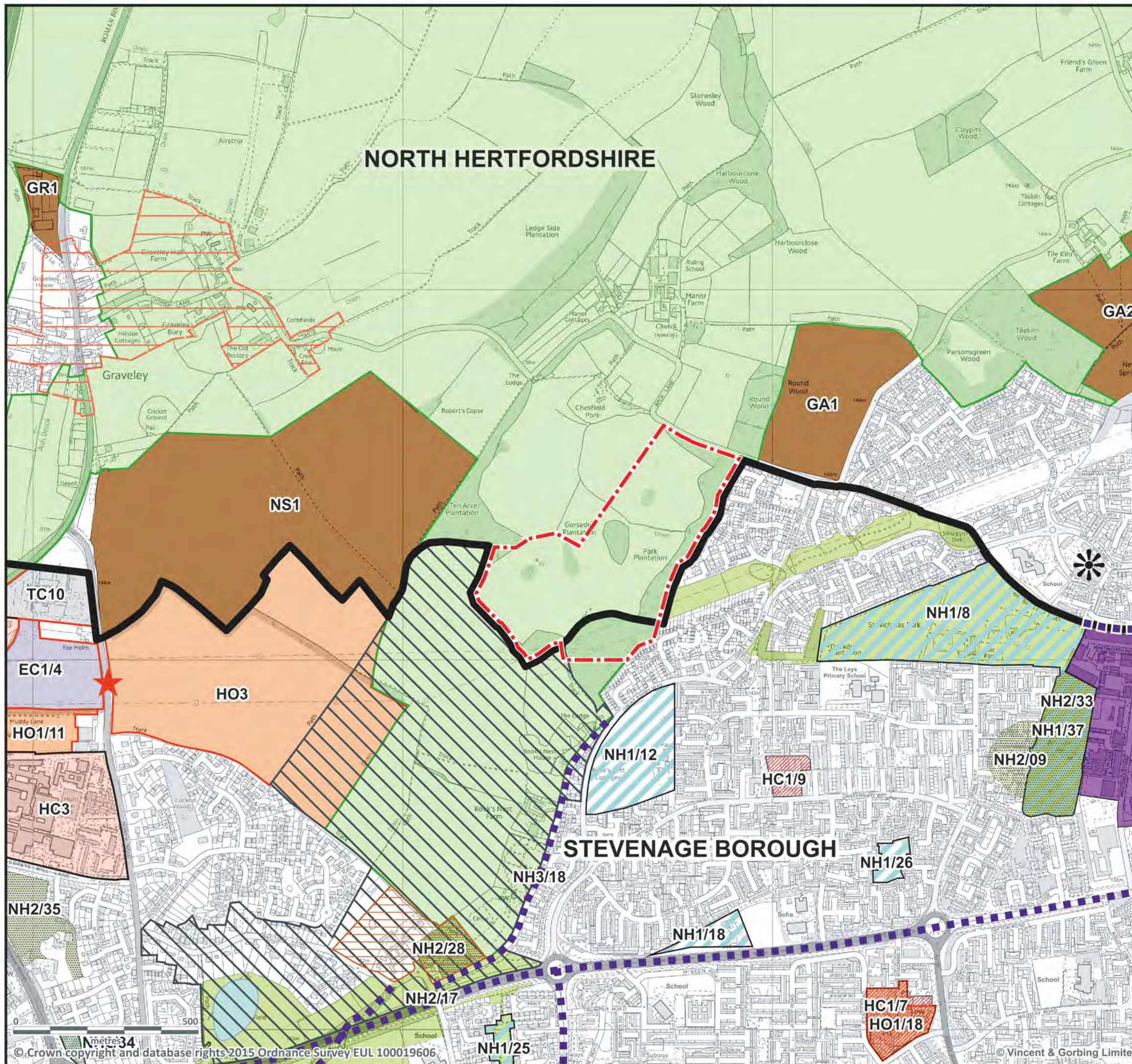
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PROJECT TITLE
 Land at Back Lane Stevenage
 Potential school site

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 Photographic survey: Sheet 1

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PROJECT No.		
5139		157

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- NORTH HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL**
LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031
PROPOSED SUBMISSION PROPOSALS MAP
- GREEN BELT
POLICY SP5
 - CONSERVATION AREAS
POLICY HE1
 - HOUSING SITES
POLICY SP6
 - LOCAL CENTRES
POLICY ETC6
 - SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY
POLICY SP2
- STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**
LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031 DRAFT PROPOSALS MAP
- ALLOCATED SITE FOR EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT: POLICY EC1
 - PIN GREEN EMPLOYMENT AREA: POLICY EC6
 - CONVENIENCE RETAIL: POLICY TC11
 - STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT ACCESS POINTS: POLICY IT1
 - HOUSING ALLOCATIONS: POLICIES HO1, HO3
 - DISTRICT, LOCAL & NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES: POLICY HC1
 - HEALTH CAMPUS: POLICY HC3
 - GREEN BELT: POLICY GB1
 - FLOOD STORAGE RESERVOIRS: POLICY FP2
 - PRINCIPAL OPEN SPACES: POLICY NH1
 - WILDLIFE SITES: POLICY NH2
 - GREEN CORRIDORS: POLICY NH3
 - GREEN LINKS: POLICY NH4
 - ARCHAEOLOGICAL ALERT AREAS: POLICY NH5
 - CONSERVATION AREAS

PROJECT TITLE
Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site

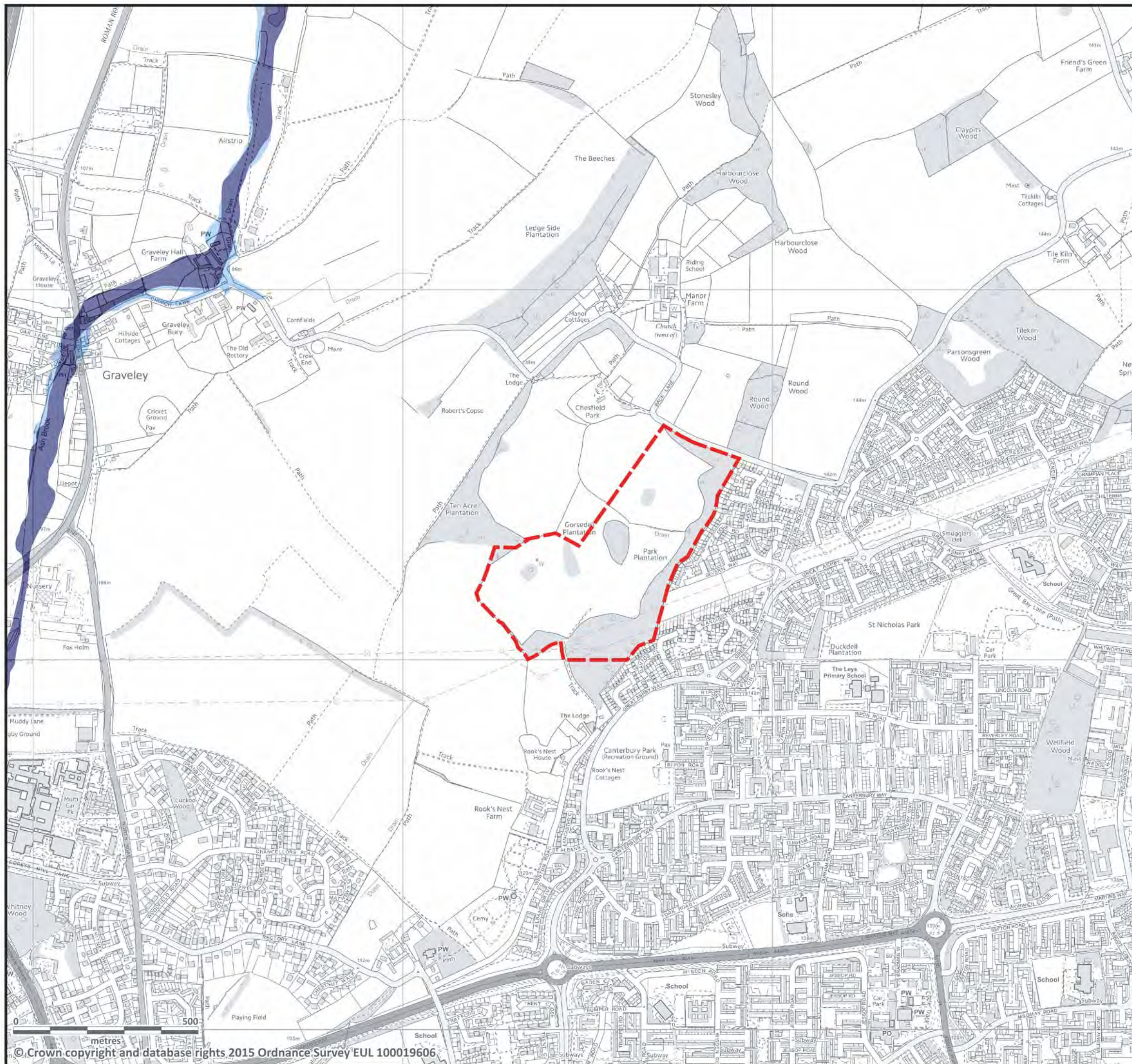
DRAWING TITLE
Local plan policies


SCALE	DATE	CHECKED
1:10000	OCTOBER 2017	
	DRAWN	DATE
	HNA	


PROJECT No.
5139


158

VINCENT AND GORBING
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS AND TOWN PLANNERS
 STERLING COURT NORTON ROAD STEVENAGE HERTS
 TELEPHONE: 01438 316331 FAX:01438 722035



 **SITE BOUNDARY**
21.85ha 53.99ac

 **FLOOD ZONE 3**
Data from Gov.uk website, flood map for planning

 **FLOOD ZONE 2**
Data from Gov.uk website, flood map for planning

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PROJECT TITLE
**Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site**

DRAWING TITLE
Flooding risk

SCALE	DATE	CHECKED
1:10000	OCTOBER 2017	
	DRAWN	DATE
	HNA	

PROJECT No.		159
5139		

VINCENT AND GORPING
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS AND TOWN PLANNERS

STERLING COURT NORTON ROAD STEVENAGE HERTS
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- SITE BOUNDARY**
21.85ha 53.99ac
- BUILDING ZONE**
4.00ha 9.88ac [approximate]
- PLAYING FIELD ZONE**
8ha 19.76ac [approximate]
- POTENTIAL ACCESS**
- VEGETATION MAY REQUIRE REMOVAL**

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PROJECT TITLE
**Land at Back Lane Stevenage
Potential school site**

DRAWING TITLE
Development principles

SCALE	DATE	CHECKED
1:2500	OCTOBER 2017	
	DRAWN	DATE
	HNA	

PROJECT No.	N	160
5139		

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CHARTERED ARCHITECTS AND TOWN PLANNERS
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Technical Note

Project: Stevenage Secondary School Sites – Transport Assessment

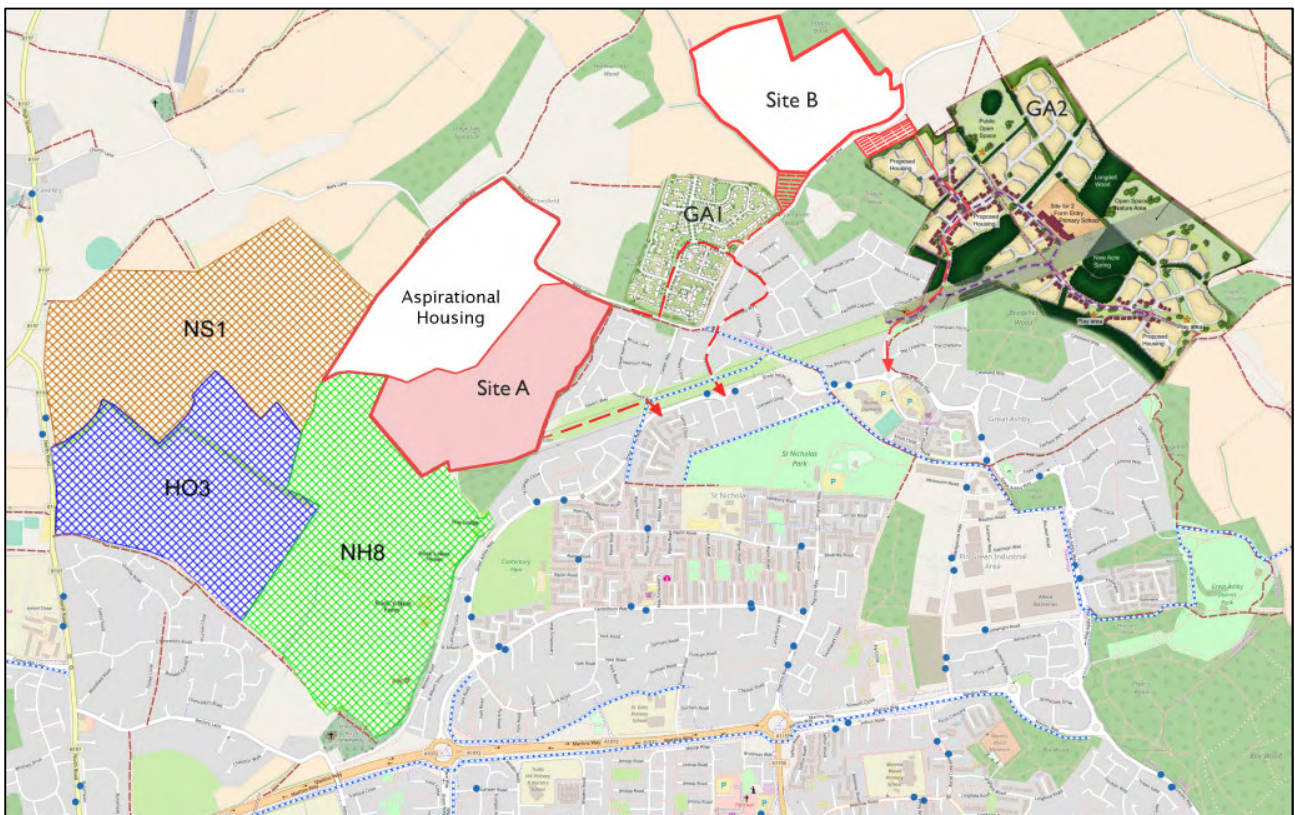
Subject: Land at Back Lane – Technical Note

Client:	Hertfordshire County Council	Version:	A
Code:	2594	Author:	JW
Date:	20 March 2017	Approved:	CS

I Introduction

1.1 PJA has been appointed by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to provide transport advice with regards to two potential secondary school sites north of Stevenage. The school sites are referred to as follows and indicated in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Site Locations



- Site A – Land at Back Lane
- Site B – Land South West of Claypits Woods

1.2 This Technical Note considers the transport and access considerations for Site A to inform the Local Plan process.

2 School Site Catchment

School Capacity

2.1 The capacity of each school site, and its respective catchment, is defined as a number of Forms of Entry (FE). One FE is equal to 210 pupils, and for the purposes of this assessment a maximum capacity of 9FE (1890 pupils) has been agreed.

2.2 The school would draw pupils from existing and proposed residential areas. This area has been defined as a polygon analysis provided by HCC, which forms a line equidistant to other local schools. A drawing of the proposed catchment is provided at **Appendix A**.

Demand - Existing Residential Areas

2.3 There would be 7FE (1470 pupils) within the catchment defined by HCC. This would comprise 5FE (1050 pupils) currently living closest to The Nobel school and 2FE (420 pupils) currently living closest to The Barclay School that would be assumed to divert to the proposed site.

2.4 The existing school demand within the catchment can be split between *Lower Super Output Areas*, weighted based upon their populations.

Demand - Local Plan Site Allocations

2.5 The following sites are allocated within either the emerging Stevenage or North Hertfordshire Local Plans and sit wholly or partly within the catchment for either site.

- Stevenage Site GA1 – 330 Dwellings
- Stevenage Site GA2 – 600 Dwellings
- Stevenage Site HO3 – 800 Dwellings
- North Hertfordshire Site NS1 – 900 Dwellings
- North Hertfordshire Site NH8 – Country Park

2.6 The total secondary demand from the site allocations would be 5.26FE (1104 pupils), although only 4.46FE (937 pupils) would fall within the school catchment.

2.7 The combined secondary place demand within the catchment for Site A is 11.46FE (2407 pupils 1470 from existing residential areas and 937 from site allocations). This exceeds the assumed maximum capacity of 9FE, as such the demand from each LSOA / allocation has been reduced proportionally, as demonstrated in Table 2-1. Further details regarding the school demand

calculations are provided in the previously issued Technical Note and illustrative plans are provided at **Appendix A**.

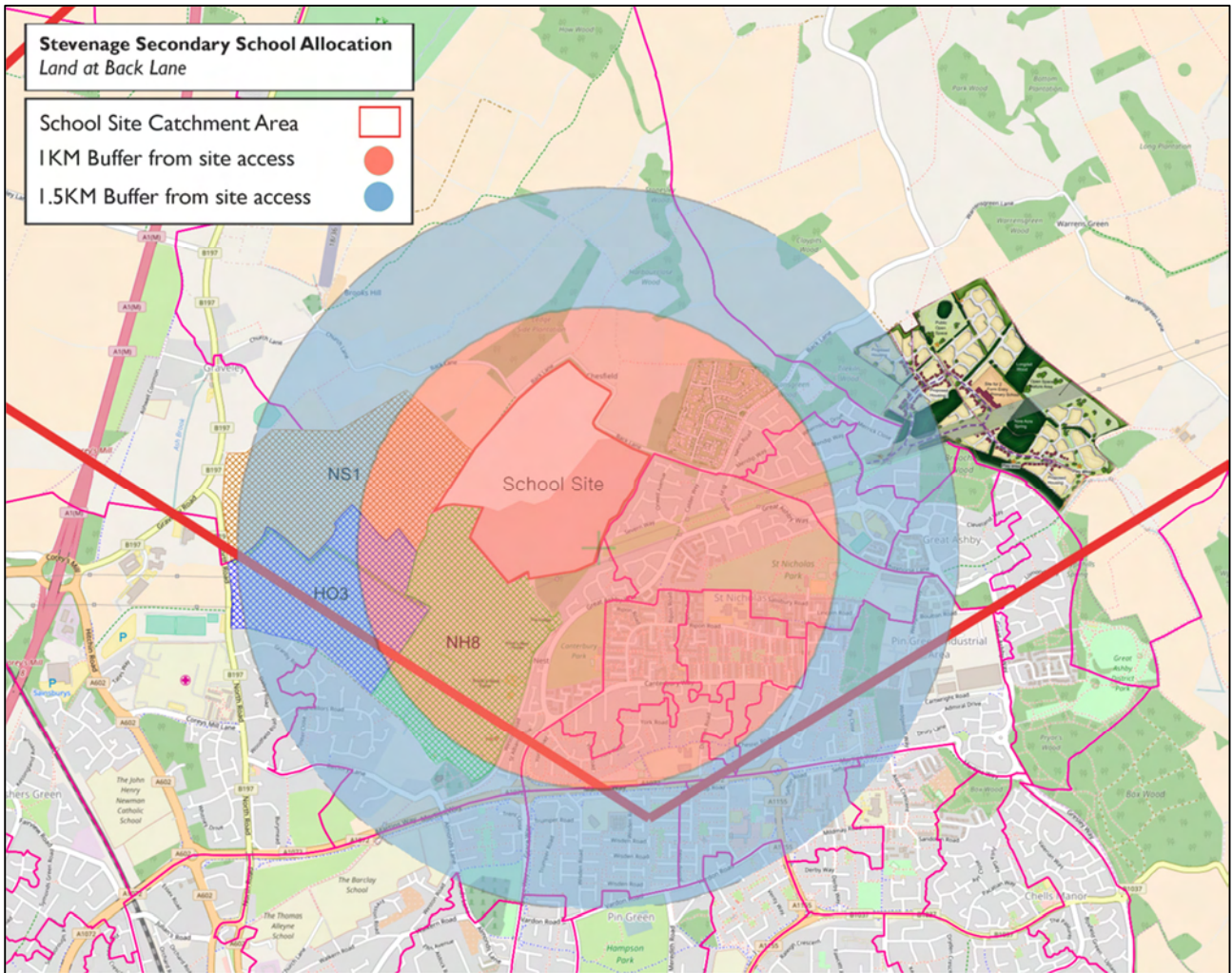
Table 2-1: Total School Demand within Catchment

LSOA / Local Plan Reference	Adjusted School Demand within Catchment (FE)	Adjusted School Demand within Catchment (Pupils)	Percentage of Total
Stevenage 001A	0.48	104	5%
Stevenage 001B	0.54	121	6%
Stevenage 001C	0.13	91	5%
Stevenage 001D	0.59	133	7%
Stevenage 002D	0.47	32	2%
Stevenage 002F	0.41	185	10%
Stevenage 003B	0.57	6	0%
North Hertfordshire 005G	0.71	80	4%
North Hertfordshire 005H	0.55	74	4%
North Hertfordshire 005I	0.04	98	5%
North Hertfordshire 005J	0.52	117	6%
North Hertfordshire 005K	0.50	113	6%
Site Allocation GA1	0.52	109	6%
Site Allocation GA2	0.94	198	10%
Site Allocation HO3	0.63	132	7%
Site Allocation NS1	1.41	297	16%
Total	9.00	1890	100%

3 Pedestrian / Cycle Access

3.1 CIHT guidance recommends an acceptable walking distance for school journeys of 1km and a preferred maximum distance of 2km. As the analysis only provides a straight-line distance, the actual walking distance from within the 1.5km catchment would be up to the preferred maximum of 2km.

Figure 3-1: 1km and 1.5km Walking Catchments



- 3.2 As indicated in Figure 3-1 a high proportion of the school catchment is within a 1km or 1.5km distance of the proposed school site. The figure provides a buffer from the site access, however if appropriate pedestrian linkages are required this would extend significantly to the west to cover the majority of sites NS1 and HO3.
- 3.3 The greatest opportunity for access on foot is within the 1km walking buffer, and 68% (1286 pupils) would live within this distance (considering access via the site’s boundaries with the site allocations to the west and north-east), whilst 82% (1558 pupils) would live within 1.5km.
- 3.4 It can therefore be stated that the site relates well to the surrounding existing and proposed residential areas, with good opportunities to promote access on foot as the predominant mode of travel.
- 3.5 It is considered essential that at least one high quality pedestrian / cycle route is provided between site allocations NS1 / HO3 and the proposed school site. It is likely that this would pass through site allocation NH8 (a country park).

- 3.6 There are good pedestrian / cycle connections east from the site towards the residential areas north of Great Ashby Way. The linear park provides a traffic free pedestrian cycle route and there are no significant barriers to pedestrian movement within the residential estates.
- 3.7 Great Ashby Way acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement to and from the south. There is an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing around 100m to the south west of the junction with Orwell Drive and also at the roundabout with Bray Drive / Wansbeck Road.
- 3.8 It is recommended that included within the mitigation package at the Orwell Road / Great Ashby Way junction, a controlled pedestrian crossing facility is provided at a suitable location to the east of the junction.

4 Trip Generation

- 4.1 The existing mode share of non-faith schools in north Stevenage has been used to estimate the mode share of the proposed school site, as indicated in Table 4-1. The donor schools utilised are The Barclay School, Thomas Alleyne School and The Nobel School which provided an average mode share and subsequent trip generation. These schools are considered to be representative of the proposed site, however the actual mode share is of course site specific relating to a number of factors.

Table 4-1: Mode Share and Trip Generation

Mode	Average Mode Share	No. Trips
Walk	60%	1241
Bus	4%	57
Cycle	12%	183
Car	24%	403
Other	0%	6
Total	100%	1890

- 4.2 The data indicates that the school would generate 403 arrivals and 403 departures by car at the start and end of the school day. This is based upon the example of 24% of pupils travelling by car to school, with 60% walking.

5 Vehicular Access

- 5.1 The principal access to the site would be via a new road through the western section of the Great Ashby Linear Park, which is currently undeveloped to accommodate overhead powerlines.
- 5.2 There are several options for how the school access road could form a junction with Orwell Avenue and tie-in with its adjoining roads of Calder Way, Kennett Way and Severn Way. An example option is provided at **Appendix B**.

- 5.3 As discussed within the following section, an access in this location would require conversion of the Orwell Drive / Great Ashby Way priority junction to a three-arm roundabout, and re-alignment of existing junctions. As demonstrated at **Appendix B**, it is considered that this scheme would be deliverable within land in HCC control.
- 5.4 The works would require relocation or redesign of the drainage feature within the linear park. It is also noted that the road would run beneath high voltage overhead powerlines, and close to an existing mast. It is recommended that professional advice is sought on this matter.
- 5.5 It is also recommended that an access onto Back Lane is provided that would connect to Site Allocation GA1. This would require minor widening of Back Lane.

6 Traffic Impact

- 6.1 The distribution of school development traffic has been calculated by apportionment to each LSOA and site allocation. Traffic was assigned from each LSOA / Allocation to the proposed school site access points using Google Maps. A traffic flow diagram indicating the anticipated development traffic movements is provided at **Appendix C**.
- 6.2 It should also be recognised that not all trips would be new to the network – existing residents within the catchment area are already travelling to schools a further distance away.

Junction Capacity

Table 6-1: Development Traffic at Key Junctions

Junctions	Development Trips	At Capacity?	Mitigation Required	Deliverable/
1. Orwell Road / Great Ashby Way	309 arrivals / 309 departures	Yes	Yes – required by school and deliverable	
2. Bray Drive / Great Ashby Way / Wansbeck Road roundabout	249 arrivals / 249 departures	Yes	Yes – significant scheme required by school and site allocations GA1/GA2	
3. Great Ashby Way / Mendip Way	216 arrivals / 216 departures	No	No – not required by school	

- 6.3 As indicated in Table 6-1, the Orwell Road / Great Ashby Way priority junction would be at capacity as a consequence of the cumulative impact of the site allocations and proposed school. The majority of development traffic would route through this junction and mitigation would be required as a specific impact of the proposed school. As described in Section 5 of this note, a scheme to convert the junction to a three-arm roundabout has been prepared and is deliverable within highway land.
- 6.4 The Great Ashby Way / Bray Drive / Wansbeck Road roundabout would be at capacity with construction of sites GA1, GA2 and the proposed school site. This is a cumulative effect of the

site allocations that could be worsened by additional traffic associated with a school in this location.

- 6.5 To deliver a highway mitigation scheme would require a significant enlargement of the existing roundabout, which could be delivered on land within the linear park controlled by HCC.
- 6.6 The analysis demonstrates that around 50% of the school trips at the junction are directly from site GA1, and is therefore an impact of the site allocation (which is outside of the 1.5km buffer). Therefore the capacity constraints forecast at this roundabout are partly a result of new residential development, rather than the school.
- 6.7 New trips to the school would form a small proportion of the impact at this junction, and as such full delivery by the school would not be commensurate in its impact. The majority of the funding for this scheme's delivery would be required from sites GA1 and GA2.

Network Capacity

- 6.8 Most development trips would arrive along the key local distributor road of Great Ashby Way. This is an appropriate road to accommodate the forecast volumes of development traffic.

7 Public Transport

- 7.1 The nearest bus route runs along Great Ashby Way, around 400m from the proposed site, although the distance to the nearest bus stop is around 650m.
- 7.2 The bus stop serves the SB 7 circular route in an anti-clockwise direction only towards the town centre. The single direction routing means that it is unlikely to offer an attractive service for pupils travelling to and from a home address.
- 7.3 By providing a connection through to site allocation GA1, or potentially a bus only-connection to sites NS1 / HO3 there may be an opportunity for new bus services to become viable to serve the school more directly.
- 7.4 However, given that the majority of the catchment is situated within 1km of the site, access to a commercial bus service provision is not considered essential.

8 Further Considerations

- 8.1 It is noted that the promoter of this site seeks to deliver 'Aspirational Housing' in the north-western section of the site. This could potentially be delivered, subject to policy and relevant transport considerations, with access via the school site, via Back Lane, or via the adjacent site allocations. There are not considered to be major barriers to limited housing development in this location, subject to development of the surrounding areas.
- 8.2 There is potential to deliver a link road between Great Ashby Way and B197 North Road, via the proposed site and Site Allocations NS1 / HO3. This would offer an alternative route between

Great Ashby and the A1 (M), relieving pressure on A1072 Martins Way and the A602. This offers a potential strategic opportunity that should be considered further.

9 Summary and Conclusions

9.1 The findings of this document are summarised in Table 9-1.

Table 9-1: Summary

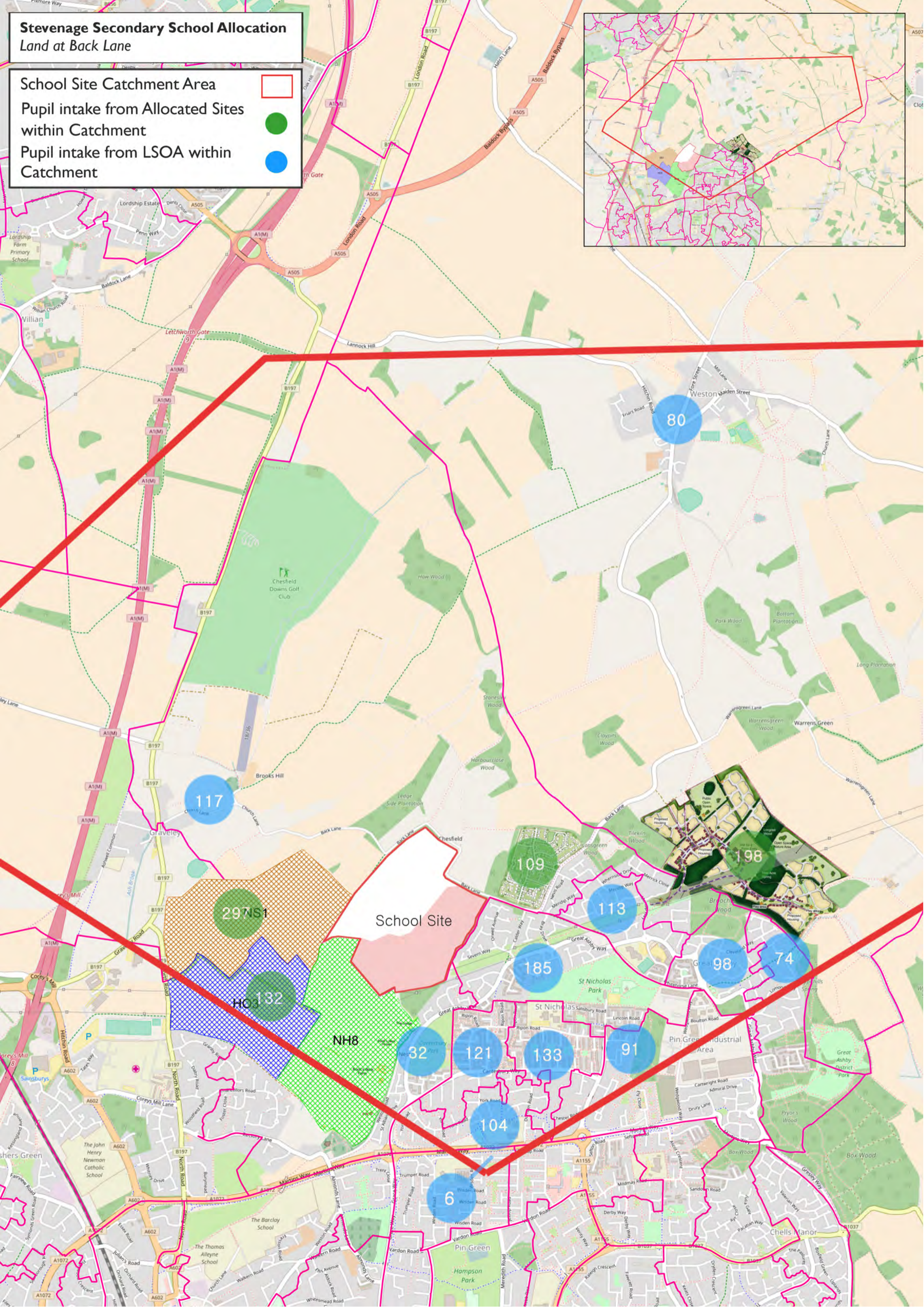
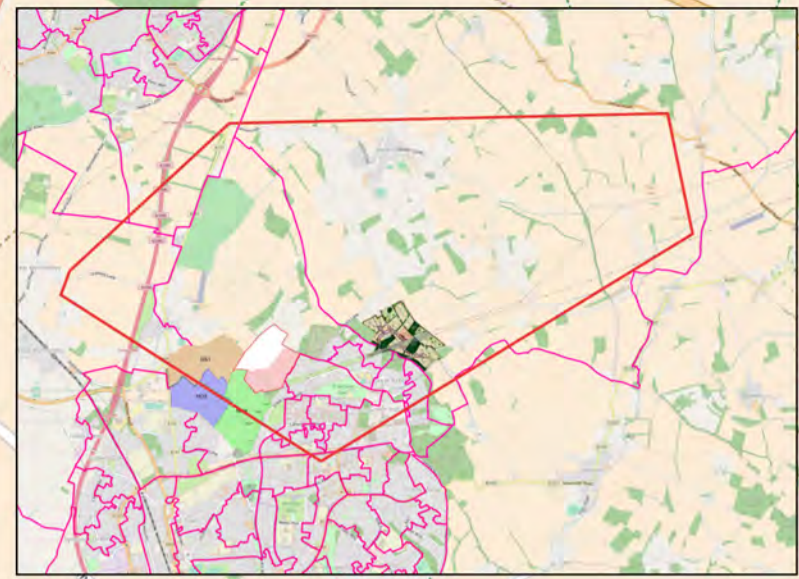
Item	Outcome
Catchment and Demand	There are 11.46FE (2407 pupils) that would live closest to the school in comparison with existing schools. This comprises 1470 pupils in existing residential areas and 937 pupils from local plan site allocations. This would provide sufficient demand for a maximum capacity of 9FE (1890 pupils).
Trip Generation	Based upon data from other schools, there would be 403 arrivals and departures by car at the start and end of the day. This is based upon 24% of pupils arriving by car.
Vehicular Access	<p>Access can be provided via the linear park. This would require alteration of the Orwell Drive / Great Ashby Way junction to create a three-arm roundabout and realignment of existing junctions. A design for this scheme has been prepared and can be delivered within land controlled by HCC.</p> <p>There are potential constraints including overhead powerlines and a drainage feature however it is currently understood that they could be overcome.</p> <p>An additional vehicular access via Site GA1 should be provided onto Back Lane.</p>
Traffic Impact	<p>The Great Ashby Way / Bray Drive / Wansbeck Road roundabout would be at capacity as a result of the site allocations. A mitigation scheme at this location would require a significant highway package to build a new roundabout within the linear park. Funding would be required from the GA1/GA2 site allocations, as these form a larger part of the cumulative impact at this junction.</p> <p>Other junctions on Great Ashby Way would be at capacity as a cumulative impact of site allocations. No further mitigation would however be required by the school.</p> <p>The majority of arrivals and departures would be via Great Ashby Way which is a local distributor road.</p>
Pedestrian / Cycle Access	<p>Pupils living within 1km of the school are most likely to travel sustainably and the majority (68%) of pupils fall within this catchment, whilst 82% of pupils would live within 1.5km.</p> <p>Pedestrian routes to the school in the eastbound direction are direct and attractive with the linear park providing a traffic free route.</p> <p>At least one high quality pedestrian / cycle route would be required from site allocations NS1 / HO3, possibly via the Country Park allocation NH8.</p> <p>A pedestrian crossing would be required on Great Ashby Way.</p>
Public Transport	<p>The school is within acceptable walking distance of an existing bus route although this does not provide an attractive service for school pupils.</p> <p>There may be opportunities for a new bus service routing through adjacent site allocations and the proposed school, although this is not considered essential.</p>
Other Matters	<p>The potential requirement for aspirational housing could be accommodated with one or more access options.</p> <p>There is potential for a link road through the site and allocation NS1 to provide an alternative route between Great Ashby and the A1 (M).</p>

- 9.2 The site is well placed to accommodate demand from existing residential areas and Local Plan site allocations, with 11.46FE (2407 pupils) within its catchment.
- 9.3 The site relates well to the surrounding residential areas and proposed site allocations, with 68% living within 1km of the school.
- 9.4 Access to the site can be gained via a connection through a linear park owned by HCC. This would include conversion of the Orwell Drive / Great Ashby Way priority junction to a three-arm roundabout. An additional vehicular access could also be provided via Back Lane to site allocation GA1.
- 9.5 A significant highway scheme to enlarge the Great Ashby way / Bray Drive roundabout would be required to mitigate the cumulative effects of site allocations GA1 and GA2, as well as that of the proposed school. This is deliverable within land controlled by HCC, however the majority of the impact, and consequently funding, should be provided the site allocations.
- 9.6 The following infrastructure would be required to accommodate development in this location:
- Mitigation at the Great Ashby Way / Orwell Drive priority junction to convert into a three-arm roundabout;
 - A controlled pedestrian crossing on Great Ashby Way, east of Orwell Drive;
 - High quality pedestrian / cycle routes from the site allocations west of the proposed school;
 - Mitigation at the Great Ashby Way / Bray Drive roundabout.

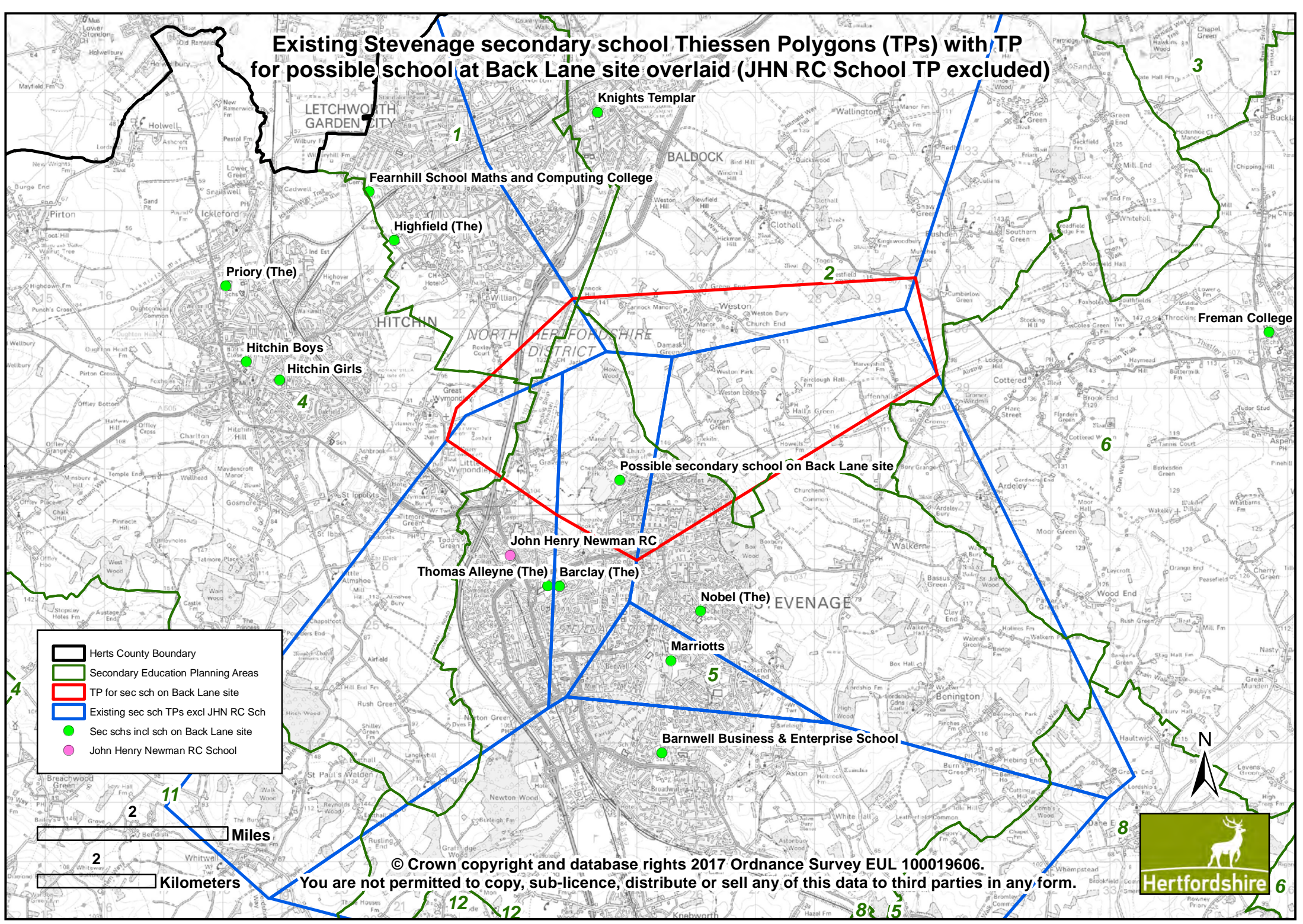
Appendix A School Location and Catchment Plans

Stevenage Secondary School Allocation Land at Back Lane

- School Site Catchment Area ▭
- Pupil intake from Allocated Sites within Catchment ●
- Pupil intake from LSOA within Catchment ●



Existing Stevenage secondary school Thiessen Polygons (TPs) with TP for possible school at Back Lane site overlaid (JHN RC School TP excluded)



Appendix B Potential Site Access Arrangement



Drawing Status:
 These drawings have been produced with reference to the CDM Regulations 2015, Regulation 9.

These Drawings are not to be used for construction purposes. It is the responsibility of the contractor and client to identify risks associated with the construction stage and to design appropriate measures to mitigate. The risks identified on the PJA Scheme Design Risk Assessment are based on the information available at the time of the design (drawing date) Where shown on PJA Design Drawings, the position of services is based on information provided by other parties at the time of the design and is for guidance only. It is the responsibility of the Client and Contractor to verify the exact position of any services before commencing works on site.

Client Duties:
 The client is directed to Regulation 4 of the CDM 2015 Regulations: Client duties in relation to managing projects

Rev / Date	Description	Dm	Chk'd
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Client
 Hertfordshire County Council

Project
 Land at Back Lane

Drawing
 Indicative Layout

Drawn by: PAS 15/03/2017	Scale:
Checked by: CS 15/03/2017	1:1000 @ A1
Drawing No.	Revision
2594A - 01	-

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Appendix C Traffic Flow Diagrams

Site Allocation	Dwelling Estimate (Local Plan)	Secondary Demand (1FE per 500 dwellings)	% of Site within Catchment	Secondary Demand within Catchment
GA1	330	0.66	100%	0.66
GA2	600	1.2	100%	1.2
HO3	800	1.6	50%	0.8
NS1	900	1.8	100%	1.8
Total	2630	5.26	3.5	4.46

Total Existing School Demand within Catchment (FE) **7** Pupils per FE **210** Pupils

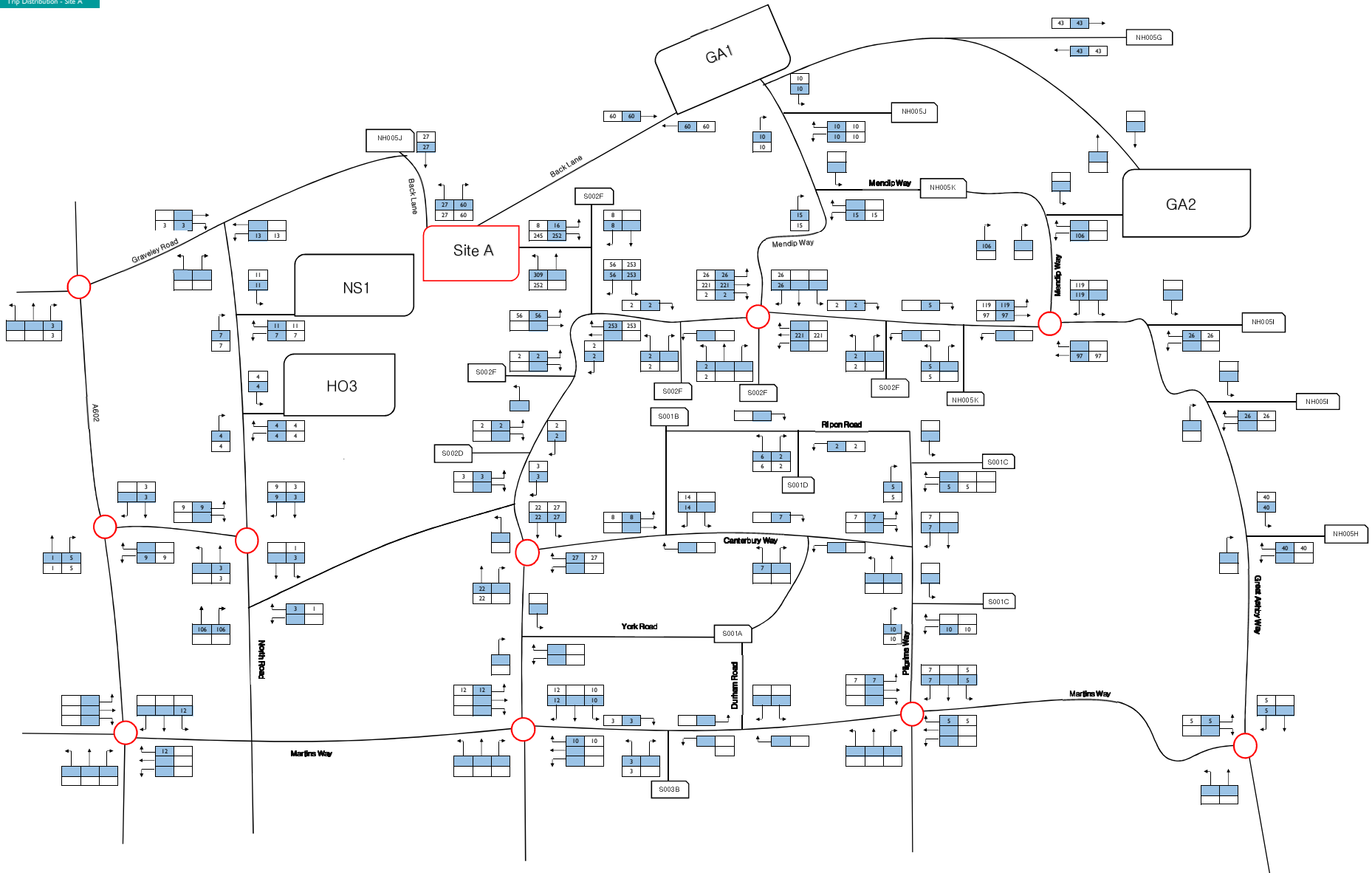
LSOA	LSOA Ref	Population	% of LSOA within Catchment (Estimate)	Population within Catchment	School Demand within Catchment
Stevenage 001A	E01023787	1,425	95%	1353.75	0.63
Stevenage 001B	E01023788	1,582	100%	1582	0.73
Stevenage 001C	E01023789	1,986	60%	1191.6	0.55
Stevenage 001D	E01023790	1,732	100%	1732	0.80
Stevenage 002D	E01023799	1,378	30%	413.4	0.19
Stevenage 002F	E01023801	2,417	100%	2417	1.12
Stevenage 003B	E01023772	1,681	5%	84.05	0.04
North Hertfordshire 005G	E01023663	2,091	50%	1045.5	0.49
North Hertfordshire 005H	E01033024	1,619	60%	971.4	0.45
North Hertfordshire 005I	E01033025	1,286	100%	1286	0.60
North Hertfordshire 005J	E01033026	1,526	100%	1526	0.71
North Hertfordshire 005K	E01033027	1,471	100%	1471	0.68
Total		20,194	-	15,074	7.00

School Capacity (FE) **9**

Ref	School Demand within Catchment	School Demand - Restricted to Maximum Capacity	No. Pupils within Catchment	No. Pupils within Catchment
Stevenage 001A	0.63	0.49	104	5%
Stevenage 001B	0.73	0.58	121	6%
Stevenage 001C	0.55	0.43	91	5%
Stevenage 001D	0.80	0.63	133	7%
Stevenage 002D	0.19	0.15	32	2%
Stevenage 002F	1.12	0.88	185	10%
Stevenage 003B	0.04	0.03	6	0%
North Hertfordshire 005G	0.49	0.38	80	4%
North Hertfordshire 005H	0.45	0.35	74	4%
North Hertfordshire 005I	0.60	0.47	98	5%
North Hertfordshire 005J	0.71	0.56	117	6%
North Hertfordshire 005K	0.68	0.54	113	6%
Site Allocation GA1	0.66	0.52	109	6%
Site Allocation GA2	1.20	0.94	198	10%
Site Allocation HO3	0.80	0.63	132	7%
Site Allocation NS1	1.80	1.41	297	16%
Total	11.46	9.00	1890	100%

Total Car Trips	403	
Car Trips from Within 1km	81	20%
Car Trips from Outside 1km	323	80%

Ref	Pupils within 1km	Pupils outside 1km	Car Trips from within 1km	Car Trips from Outside 1km	Car Trips
Stevenage 001A	104	0	7	0	7
Stevenage 001B	121	0	8	0	8
Stevenage 001C	68	23	4	12	16
Stevenage 001D	133	0	8	0	8
Stevenage 002D	32	0	2	0	2
Stevenage 002F	176	9	11	5	16
Stevenage 003B	0	6	0	3	3
North Hertfordshire 005G	0	80	0	43	43
North Hertfordshire 005H	0	74	0	40	40
North Hertfordshire 005I	0	98	0	53	53
North Hertfordshire 005J	58	58	4	31	35
North Hertfordshire 005K	56	56	4	30	34
Site Allocation GA1	109	0	7	0	7
Site Allocation GA2	0	198	0	106	106
Site Allocation HO3	132	0	8	0	8
Site Allocation NS1	297	0	19	0	19
Total	1286	604	81	323	403



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