

**Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031)**  
**Examination hearing sessions**  
**Statement of North Hertfordshire District Council**

**Matter 10 – The housing allocations and the settlement boundaries: The Towns - Great Ashby and north-east of Stevenage**

**Note:** *This Statement relates to sites GA1 and GA2*

**10.20 Are all of the proposed housing allocations deliverable? In particular, are they:**

***a) confirmed by all of the landowners involved as being available for the use proposed?***

1. Yes. The landowners of both sites confirmed that they support the allocations and their deliverability for housing in their representations to the Regulation 19 consultation on the plan (ED3, p.15).
2. A revised planning application for site GA1 was submitted to the Council for consideration in July 2016 (Application reference: 16/01713/1)

***b) supported by evidence to demonstrate that safe and appropriate access for vehicles and pedestrians can be provided?***

3. Yes. No site specific objections to the allocations have been received from the highway authority. No objection to the proposed access has been received from the highway authority in response to the current planning application on site GA1.
4. Both sites provide opportunities to connect into the existing highway and pedestrian footpath network.
5. Principle access to site GA1 is anticipated to be taken via Haybluff Drive. Principle access to site GA2 is anticipated to be taken via a new connection to Mendip Way. Both routes have existing footpaths.
6. The baseline transport modelling undertaken to support the plan does not identify any significant issues with the operation of the highway network in the immediate vicinity of the sites (TI4, Figures 4.4 & 4.5, pp.14-15). However, the Council is aware
7. The Council's Transport Strategy (ED14) aims to reduce car traffic volumes below those informing the transport modelling and identifies a broader suite of potential projects and mitigations measures to ensure the continued operation of the highway network for which reasonable contributions will be sought.

8. This will need to include consideration of projects and priorities arising from the Stevenage Mobility Strategy (ORD7). This prioritises the implementation of active travel measures in favour of traditional highway-based solutions. Stevenage's aim is to achieve a more significant degree of modal shift given the contained, urban nature of the town and levels of pre-existing infrastructure. Stevenage's approach has been endorsed by the Inspector examining the Borough Council's Local Plan (ED16, paragraphs 99-108, pp.19-20).

***c) deliverable, having regard to the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services, and any environmental or other constraints?***

9. Yes. Both sites have been considered through the SHLAA and are considered suitable locations for development having regard to potential constraints (HOU9, site refs NES3 [GA1] and 226 / 323 [GA2]. See Appendix 3, pp.26-27 and Appendix 4, pp.47-48). This is expanded upon in answer to Issue 10.21 below.
10. The sites have been subject to consultation with a range of statutory providers. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (TI1), feedback from key infrastructure providers and the Local Plan Viability Assessment Update (TI2) show that these developments are deliverable in infrastructure planning terms and that the development would be profitable such as to support a package of infrastructure measures. The likely significant environmental affects of allocating the site have been considered through the Sustainability Appraisal (LP4, Appendix 6, pp.524-525 & 645-649).
11. No fundamental constraints to development have been identified. Site-specific infrastructure and / or mitigation measures for these sites are identified as policy measures in the plan (LP1, Policy SP18, pp.69-70 and Site GA1, pp.156-157). This includes the provision of land for a new primary school on site GA2.
12. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as the education authority has identified a requirement for the plan to identify an additional 8 forms of entry (FE) of secondary school capacity in the Stevenage School Place Planning Area (SPPA) to ensure the potential needs arising from new development can be met. Great Ashby lies within this SPPA.
13. There is currently no secondary education provision in this part of Stevenage and children travel to schools elsewhere in the town or beyond.
14. As per the evidence heard at the Matter 6 hearings, the precise timing of any new secondary schools in the Stevenage SPPA remains uncertain pending the commencement of the new development anticipated by this plan and the plans of Stevenage and East Hertfordshire Councils. However, the published projections submitted to the examination (TI13, p.29) suggest that any new schools would not be

required until the late 2020s at the earliest once the 8FE of existing capacity identified at existing premises in Stevenage was taken into account.

15. It is therefore likely that the need for any new secondary schools provision will not arise until after a future review of this plan, and possibly even beyond the end of the current plan period. However, it is accepted that it is prudent and appropriate for this plan to identify land or sites now that could accommodate the future demands generated by the housing development currently being planned.
16. The Plan identifies two sites – one at Great Ashby and one in Knebworth – which, together, could meet the requirement identified by HCC.
17. The Council's evidence identifies (ED17, pp.18-19) that land within and adjoining the proposed allocation at GA2 would be capable of supporting an 'all-through' school in a variety of formats if required in the future. The built form of the school can be contained within the allocation boundary. Playing field provision would need to extend beyond the allocation boundary to the north-east to ensure a suitably sized site for a 2FE Primary / 4FE Secondary all through school.
18. On the ground, this land is a natural continuation of the site allocation and is well bounded by hedgerows and woodland.
19. Modifications to Policy SP18 and its supporting text are proposed to more effectively address infrastructure provision, particularly in relation to education and sustainable transport provision. These are attached as Appendix A to this statement.
20. These measures will be supplemented by the generic development management policy requirements that apply to all sites in relation to issues including (but not limited to) affordable housing, housing mix, transport, design and heritage.

***Question 10.21 Are all of the proposed housing allocations justified and appropriate in terms of the likely impacts of the development?***

21. Yes. Both of these housing allocations are justified and appropriate. The appropriateness of the individual allocations is discussed below.
22. In broad terms, each allocation in the plan is justified by (see the Council's Statements on Matters 5, 7 and 9):
  - The need to seek to meet the Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) for housing as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF in a district that is currently highly constrained by Green Belt and other considerations;
  - The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and plan-making requirements set out in Paragraph 14 of the NPPF. Potential adverse impacts and specific policies in the Framework which indicate development should be

restricted have been properly considered. Mitigation measures have been identified to address key issues. A balanced planning judgement has been made on the benefits and impacts of each individual site.

- The significant majority of the deliverable and developable sites identified in the SHLAA (HOU9) being required for allocation if the District is to be able to meet the OAN;
- No preferable, deliverable alternative sites existing which would allow OAN to be met over the plan period in a substantively different way;
- There being no reasonable prospect of other authorities in shared housing market areas being in a position to assist under the Duty to Co-operate should North Hertfordshire have resolved not to meet its OAN in full.

23. Stevenage is a town within the district settlement hierarchy where draft Policy SP2 (as proposed to be amended) directs the significant majority of new development over the plan period.

#### Site GA1

24. Site GA1 lies to the north-east of Stevenage in an area currently designated as Green Belt. The site provides an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the District's future housing needs.

25. The justification and impacts in relation to Green Belt are discussed under Issue 10.23 below.

26. The site lies within the Weston Plateau landscape character area as identified in the Council's evidence base (CG16a). The Weston Plateau (pp.125-129c) is considered to be of moderate sensitivity and moderate landscape value. The proposed site is at the very edge of this character area.

27. The site is well contained and screened from the surrounding countryside by strong tree belts to the north and west of the site. It is bounded to the south and east by Back Lane, a rural lane beyond which lies the existing built extent of Great Ashby.

28. Potential constraints identified by the SHLAA include the adjoining priority woodland habitats including a local wildlife site. However, Hertfordshire Ecology consider this site to have only low and locally moderate ecological sensitivity and have identified no fundamental ecological constraint. There is a Public Right of Way along the northern site boundary.

29. Potential impacts upon heritage assets include the setting of the SAM at Chesfield Church. Notwithstanding this point, the established site boundaries above substantially contain this site from wider views and impacts.

30. These issues are all addressed in the site-specific criteria identified for the site (LP1, Site GA1, pp.156-157). These have been guided by responses received from key consultees as the plan has been developed. Any impacts can be managed through the application of these, appropriate detailed design and the application of the detailed development management policies of the plan.
31. The Housing and Green Belt Background Paper summarises the reasons for the selection of site GA1 (HOU1, Appendix 2, p.59). The allocation of site GA1 makes a substantial contribution to the overall housing numbers that are achievable through the plan and is also critical to achievable levels of five-year housing delivery.
32. On balance, the positive opportunities afforded by this site are considered to outweigh harms.
33. The above findings, derived from the Council's own evidence base, have been supplemented by additional work conducted by the site owner to support the current planning application. This work is publically available and provides further reassurance that key issues are being actively addressed.
34. A Statement of Common Ground with the owner of this site is being prepared and, subject to its agreement, will be made available to the examination in advance of the hearing sessions.

#### Site GA2

35. Site GA2 lies to the north-east of Stevenage in an area currently designated as Green Belt. It is bounded to the south-west by the tree belts which currently define the outer extent of Great Ashby.
36. The site provides an opportunity to make a strategic-scale contribution to the District's future housing needs. Paragraph 52 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies that the supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development including extensions to existing towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities.
37. Site GA2 also provides the opportunity to address wider infrastructure issues, particularly in relation to secondary education provision, and make a positive contribution to the aims of the Transport Strategy and Stevenage Mobility Strategy by enhancing the sustainability of the wider Great Ashby neighbourhood.
38. The justification and impacts in relation to Green Belt are discussed under Issue 10.23 below.
39. The site straddles two landscape character areas as identified in the Council's evidence base (CG16 and CG16a). The south-east of the proposed site falls within the Middle Beane Valley (pp.192-199). This is parcel stretches along the entire eastern

edge of Stevenage and beyond. It is considered to be of moderate sensitivity and moderate-low landscape value. The Weston Plateau (pp.125-129c) is considered to be of moderate sensitivity and moderate landscape value. The proposed site would be confined to the very edges of these strategic-scale land parcels minimising impacts on their wider character.

40. Potential constraints identified by the SHLAA include the presence of areas of surface water flood risk, adjoining priority woodland habitats including a local wildlife site, nearby listed buildings and existence of public rights of way.
41. A fundamental ecological constraint is considered unlikely, provided sufficient green infrastructure connections are retained between the woodlands and from the woodlands to the open countryside. The site specific policy requirements in Policy SP18(i)(ii) ensure key protected species are appropriately considered.
42. A Preliminary Ecological Scoping Survey has been completed by the site owner and submitted as part of their Regulation 19 representations. This identifies a series of measures and further surveys to be completed prior to any planning application to inform site-wide green infrastructure and / or mitigation measures.
43. None of the constraints identified at paragraphs 38 to 40 above are considered to represent a fundamental constraint to development. The policy for this site (LP1, Policy SP18, pp.69-70) includes a range of specific policy criteria designed to ensure that these issues are appropriately taken into account in the detailed design and masterplanning of any future scheme. These requirements are reinforced by relevant detailed development management policies of the plan.
44. The Housing and Green Belt Background Paper summarises the reasons for the selection of site GA2 (HOU1, Appendix 2, p.60). It identifies that GA2 is critical to the overall housing numbers achievable. It provides an opportunity to contribute to five-year land supply. Development at this scale is able to deliver supporting infrastructure to meet needs arising from within the site and potentially make contributions with wider community benefit. Site specific criteria require consideration of key landscape, Green Belt, ecology, flood risk and heritage implications and assist in addressing issues raised through consultation. On balance, the significant positive opportunities afforded by this site are considered to outweigh the harms.
45. The above findings, derived from the Council's own evidence base, have been supplemented by additional work conducted by the site owner to support the allocation. This includes additional studies submitted at Regulation 19 stage [representor reference 16140] and provides further reassurance that key issues are being actively addressed.
46. A Statement of Common Ground with the owner of this site is being prepared and, subject to its agreement, will be made available to the examination in advance of the hearing sessions.

**10.22 Are all of the proposed allocations the most appropriate option given the reasonable alternatives?**

47. The proposed allocation of site GA1 and GA2 represent the only two reasonable alternatives for the expansion of Stevenage beyond its existing limits to the north-east. HOU1 (Appendix 2, pp.62-63) shows that all potential urban extension sites around Stevenage in North Hertfordshire that met the SHLAA tests are being carried forward either for proposed allocation or safeguarding in the plan and no reasonable alternate sites have been discarded.
48. The Council's Matter 5 statement demonstrates there is a lack of reasonable alternatives for an alternate distribution of development between the District's main settlements if the proposed housing requirement is to be met.
49. A review of the sites not proposed for allocation through the plan (HOU1, Appendix 2) shows that these are generally:
- In or adjoining less sustainable village locations; and / or
  - Also within the Green Belt; and / or
  - Subject to flood risk constraints which make them sequentially less preferable for allocation than these sites

**10.23 Sites GA1 and GA2 comprise land in the Green Belt.**

**a) Do exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the allocation of the site for new housing in the Green Belt? If so, what are they?**

50. Yes. Exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the allocation of land for housing in the Green Belt at GA1 and GA2. The sites provide the only reasonable alternatives for the expansion of Stevenage beyond its current limits to the north-east (see *also* Paragraph 45).
51. Under the saved policies of the current District Plan, the outer limits of Great Ashby are tightly surrounded by the Green Belt. The Council's general case for the existence of exceptional circumstances is set out in its response to Matter 7. The objectively assessed need for housing significantly exceeds the level of development which can be met on development opportunities on brownfield land or contained within existing urban areas or in rural areas beyond the Green Belt.
52. The District is highly constrained by Green Belt and many of the most sustainable locations for new development are within or adjacent to existing higher order settlements as set out in Policy SP2.

53. The harms to the Green Belt of the potential allocations have been assessed and weighed against the benefits of development in these locations. Measures to ameliorate or reduce the consequent impacts to the lowest reasonably practicable extent have been identified.

#### Site GA1

54. Site GA1 provides the opportunity to make a contribution to overall housing requirements and a significant contribution to five-year housing land supply adjoining one of the main towns identified by Policy SP2 of the Plan. There are not considered to be any insurmountable non-Green Belt constraints to development of the site which cannot be addressed through the policy requirements of the plan.

#### Site GA2

55. Site GA2 provides the opportunity to make a strategic scale contribution to the District's Objectively Assessed Housing Needs, along with the delivery of supporting infrastructure, adjoining one of the main towns identified by Policy SP2 of the Plan and in accordance with paragraph 52 of the NPPF. Through the reservation of land for long-term secondary education needs there are potential wider community benefits to the Great Ashby neighbourhood which would also contribute to the sustainable travel aspirations of the District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council by reducing the need to travel to other parts of the town or beyond. There are not considered to be any insurmountable non-Green Belt constraints to development of the site which cannot be addressed through the policy requirements of the plan.

#### ***b) What is the nature and extent of the harm to the Green Belt of removing the site from it?***

56. The strategic land parcel to the north of Stevenage, which includes site GA1, was assessed as making a significant contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt by the 2016 Green Belt Review. Land to the north-east of Great Ashby, which includes site GA2, was assessed as making a moderate contribution (CG1, Figure 2.8, p.31). However the Green Belt Review also took a fine grained approach to the assessment, further dividing the parcels into sub-parcels and also assessing individual sites.

57. The assessment found that the contribution of site GA1 was significant for one of the four purposes of Green Belt assessed with an overall moderate contribution (CG1, p.110 assessed as site reference NES3).



58. The assessment found that the contribution of site GA2 was significant for two of the four purposes of Green Belt assessed with an overall moderate contribution (CG1, p.110, assessed as site references 226 and 323).

59. These results are summarised in Table A below.

**Table A: Contribution of allocations at Great Ashby to the purposes of Green Belt**

Site	Green Belt purpose				Overall contribution
	Sprawl	Merge	Countryside	Historic	
Site GA1	Moderate	Moderate	Significant	Limited	Moderate
Site GA2	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited	Moderate

***c) To what extent would the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent?***

60. Actions have been specified as conditions which must be satisfied before the grant of planning permission on the allocated sites.

Site GA1

61. Site GA1 is a visually well contained site bounded on two sides by the existing limits of Great Ashby and by well established woodland and tree boundaries on the remaining sides. The site specific criteria for this site (LP1, p.156) provide retention and sensitive treatment of these tree belts. This mitigates against visual encroachment into the wider countryside and creates a clear physical limit to development.

Site GA2

62. Policy SP18(g) (LP1, p.69) requires “Structural planting along the alignment of footpath Weston 044 as informed by detailed landscape assessments to reinforce the revised Green Belt boundary and mitigate landscape impacts”.

63. This will mitigate against visual encroachment into the wider countryside. The measures are in line with advice in the Council’s landscape evidence (CG16a, p.129c) which seeks the provision of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development.

***d) If this site were to be developed as proposed, would the adjacent Green Belt continue to serve at least one of the five purposes of Green Belts, or would the Green Belt function be undermined by the site’s allocation?***

64. Through the actions specified in the allocation criteria as set out above, the adjacent Green Belt to sites GA1 and GA2 will continue to contribute to the purposes of Green Belt.
65. The assessment of the strategic land parcels and sub-parcels in the Green Belt Review shows that land beyond the proposed allocation boundaries already serve Green Belt purposes (CG1, Figure 2.8, p.31 and Figure 3.6, p.66).
66. The adjacent Green Belt land would continue to play an important role in, in particular, preventing encroachment of the Stevenage urban area into the wider countryside between the town and Weston.

***e) Will the Green Belt boundary proposed need to be altered at the end of the plan period, or is it capable of enduring beyond then?***

67. The extent to which existing settlements might be further expanded in order to meet future need is finite particularly given the dense settlement pattern in existence at the more sustainable locations in the west and central areas of the District.
68. The review and release of land undertaken as part of this plan would extend Stevenage to both the north and the north-east.
69. The layout of Stevenage, whereby the town centre and key facilities are located towards the west of the town, means that the most sustainable opportunities for any further expansion of Stevenage in North Hertfordshire are likely to lie to the west of the town. It is proposed to safeguard this land for potential future development as part of the Green Belt Review conducted for this plan.
70. Notwithstanding this point, each settlement within and adjoining the District will need to be properly assessed for further expansion capacity to inform any future local plan review process.
71. However, it is the intention of the plan that the amended Green Belt boundaries will endure beyond the plan period in order to continue to ensure the Green Belt continues to perform its key strategic functions.

***f) Are the proposed Green Belt boundaries consistent with the Plan's strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development?***

72. Green Belt boundaries have been determined with a view to achieving the most sustainable pattern of development. The new Green Belt boundaries have been

established in order to accommodate the reasonable maximum of development that can be accommodated within the District at the present time in accordance with the settlement hierarchy.

73. This seeks to allocate development to higher order settlements in the first instance in accordance with Policy SP2 (as amended) and supported by the Sustainability Appraisal in (LP4, Section 4). This approach to the distribution of development and the establishment of enduring Green Belt boundaries is supported as the most sustainable approach to achieving the development needs over the plan period.

**g) *Has the Green Belt boundary around the site been defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent? Does it avoid including land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open?***

74. Every effort has been made to clearly define the Green Belt boundaries around allocated sites using physical features such as roads and watercourses that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

75. Where no such permanent features exist, or where use of such features would necessitate release of substantial additional land beyond the proposed allocation boundary from the Green Belt, it has been necessary to use semi-permanent existing features such as field boundaries, hedgerows, public rights of way and / or tree belts.

76. Where no features exist the allocation criteria specify that the allocation should seek to establish a landscape feature that will sufficiently contain the site and be identifiable as the Green Belt boundary such as through the establishment of hedgerows or tree belts.

#### Site GA1

77. The site is bounded to the west and north by well established tree belts and planting. These will form the new Green Belt boundary around the site.

#### Site GA2

78. The features that form the proposed boundary around GA2 are presently of varying strength but are capable of reinforcement, where necessary, through additional structural planting.

79. Starting from the south-east corner of the proposed allocation, the boundary follows the alignment of Bridleway West 033 firstly north-east, where existing planting helps

reinforce the boundary, then east, where additional planting is likely to be required, to Newberry Grove.

80. It traces around the outside of this well established woodland and then follows the alignment of Footpath Weston 044 north-west to the northern point of the proposed allocation at the junction with Footpath Weston 027. Further planting is required under the policy. Further reinforcement of planting on the Warrens Green Lane boundary may be required under Policy SP7 to mitigate the potential visual impacts of the development.

81. The proposed boundary then follows Footpath Weston 027 in a broadly south-west direction, with a small deviation around the perimeter of Tilekiln Farm, to the edge of Tilekiln Wood. It then traces around the outside of this established woodland to join with the current Green Belt boundary to the rear of Merrick Close.

**Question 10.24 Is the proposed settlement boundary:**

**a) consistent with the methodology for identifying the settlement boundaries?**

**b) Appropriate and justified?**

82. The approach to establishing Green Belt boundaries and therefore the settlement boundary is discussed in the Council's answer to question 10.23(g) above.

83. Beyond the two proposed site allocations, no further alterations are proposed to the Green Belt boundary in this area.

84. A map showing the existing and proposed extent of the settlement at Great Ashby is attached to this Statement as Appendix B to aid interpretation.

## Appendix A: Proposed modifications to Policy SP18 and Chapter 13 (Great Ashby & north-east of Stevenage)

### Policy SP18: Site GA2 – Land off Mendip Way, Great Ashby

Land to the north-east of Great Ashby within Weston parish, as shown on the -Proposals Map, is allocated as a Strategic Housing Site for approximately 600 homes. Planning permission for residential development will be granted ~~where~~ **provided that** the following site-specific requirements are met:

- a. A site masterplan to be ~~approved~~ **secured** prior to the ~~submission~~ **approval** of any detailed matters;
- b. Neighbourhood-level retail facilities providing approximately 500m<sup>2</sup> (net) of A1-class floorspace;
- c. ~~Up to~~ **Four hectares of land at the north of the allocation site, broadly bounded by Footpaths Weston 044 and Weston 027 and Dell Spring reserved for education purposes use to accommodate** ~~subject to up-to-date assessments of need including, at minimum,~~ **2FE of primary-age provision and 4FE of secondary age provision;**
- d. Principal access from Mendip Way **including provision for sustainable modes of transport in accordance with the Stevenage Mobility Strategy;**
- e. A detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery.
- f. At least 6 serviced plots for self-build development;
- g. Structural planting along ~~the alignment of footpath Weston 044~~ **site boundaries** as informed by detailed landscape assessments to reinforce the revised Green Belt boundary and mitigate landscape impacts;
- h. Address existing surface water flood risk issues, particularly running south-east from Dell Spring to Newberry Grove, through SUDs or other appropriate solution;
- i. Appropriate mitigation, compensation and / or enhancement of key features of biodiversity including:
  - i. Local wildlife sites at Tilekiln Wood, Parsonsgreen Wood, New Spring Wood, Brooches Wood and Claypithills Spring Wood; ~~and~~
  - ii. Identified protected species and priority habitats; **and**
  - iii. **Retention of green infrastructure connectivity and corridors to the wider countryside;**
- j. Integration of existing public rights of way within and adjoining the site to provide routes to the wider countryside including
  - i. Footpaths Weston 027 and Weston 044 and Bridleway Weston 033 as features which help define the perimeters of

- the site; and
- ii. Footpath Weston 029 as a potential green corridor through the site;
- k. Provision of a green infrastructure corridor beneath the current alignment of the pylon lines; and
- l. Lower intensity development and / or green infrastructure provision to the north of the site to minimise harm to the setting of listed buildings.

- 4.209 Great Ashby is a relatively new parish, representing the residential area adjoining Stevenage that has been substantially completed since the turn of the century. For the purposes of our settlement hierarchy it is considered to be a town.
- 4.210 Land to the north-east of the existing settlement limits is identified for the development of approximately 600 homes within the parish of Weston.
- 4.211 Although this site will not generate a requirement for a local centre which forms part of the formal retail hierarchy, it will be necessary to provide neighbourhood-level shops and facilities to ensure that the new development is sustainable.
- 4.212 Great Ashby's existing primary school is significantly oversubscribed. As a consequence, it draws its intake from a very tight catchment area. There is also no local secondary school and Hertfordshire County Council has identified future pressures on secondary-age provision in the Stevenage area as a key concern.
- 4.213 Development of this site provides the opportunity to address these issues. **Reserving sufficient land within this site to deliver 2FE of primary-age and 4FE of secondary-age** provision will ~~exceed~~ **meet** the requirements arising from the site itself and **also** help alleviate pressures arising from existing and planned development in Great Ashby. **Together these will help to create a more sustainable residential neighbourhood at the north-east of Stevenage enabling more short-distance journeys to school.**
- 4.214 **It is currently anticipated that the secondary element of a new school will not be required before the late 2020s at the earliest. To ensure an appropriately sized site, additional school playing fields would be required on land beyond the allocation boundary to the south-west of Footpath Weston 027 and Warrensgreen Wood towards Warrens Green Lane. This land is retained within the Green Belt to ensure appropriate control over any built structures.**
- ~~4.214 We will continue to work with the landowner and County Council to explore options for secondary school provision in this area. A modest level of secondary-age provision, potentially in the form of an all-through school, could provide a local solution for Great Ashby and create a more sustainable residential neighbourhood at the north-east of Stevenage.~~
- 4.215 **Much of** ~~the~~ revised Green Belt boundary has been drawn along the routes of a public rights of way. Although a clearly defined features, parts of ~~its~~ **their** alignments cut across **more** open fields **land**. Structural planting here will reinforce the **new** boundary as well as providing visual containment of the development.

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- 4.216 Distinct areas of woodland lie between the site and the existing development at Great Ashby. These should be sensitively incorporated into the development having regard to their status as local wildlife sites. These woods, **and the connections from them to the wider countryside**, will be integral to the green infrastructure of the site.,~~which~~ **This** will also include incorporation of key rights of way.
- 4.217 A green infrastructure corridor currently runs through Great Ashby following the alignment of the overhead power lines. This should additionally be carried through the new development to provide a continuous link through the neighbourhood to the wider countryside.
- 4.218 The site adjoins a number of Grade II listed buildings at Tile Kiln Farm and care should be taken in the detailed design of any scheme to ensure this area retains an appropriate setting.

## Great Ashby and north-east of Stevenage

### Introduction

13.90 Great Ashby is a relatively new parish, representing the residential area adjoining Stevenage. Formerly part of Graveley parish (and a small strip of Weston parish), the new parish covers the residential estate adjoining the north east Stevenage.

13.91 At the 2011 census the population of the parish of Great Ashby was 5,706 and there were 2,172 dwellings in the parish.

### Role in settlement hierarchy

13.92 Great Ashby adjoins Stevenage and so for the purposes of settlement hierarchy is considered part of the town.

### Heritage

13.93 There are no Conservation Areas or listed buildings within Great Ashby.

### Housing

13.94 Two sites are allocated in and around Great Ashby for an estimated 930 new homes. There have been no new homes built or granted planning permission within Great Ashby since 2011.

Ref	Strategic Housing Sites	Dwelling estimate
GA2	<b>Land North-East of Great Ashby</b> (Weston parish) (see Policy SP18)	600 homes
Ref	Local Housing Allocations and site specific criteria	Dwelling estimate
GA1	<b>Land at Roundwood</b> (Graveley parish)	330 homes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery.</li> <li>• Sensitive integration into existing settlement in terms of development layout and building orientation;</li> <li>• Principal vehicular access taken from existing residential streets within Great Ashby</li> <li>• <b>Provision for sustainable modes of transport in accordance with the Stevenage Mobility Strategy;</b></li> <li>• Maintain general integrity of Weston Road, including as a through route for pedestrians and cyclists</li> <li>• Retention and sensitive treatment of priority woodland habitats surrounding site to north and west;</li> <li>• Consider and mitigate against any adverse impacts upon</li> </ul>	



	<p>adjacent local wildlife site at Parsonsgreen Wood;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of Footpath Graveley 010 as a perimeter feature around the north of the site;</li> <li>• Sensitive design and landscaping around northern and western peripheries to minimise impacts upon wider landscape and heritage assets, including the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Chesfield Church.</li> </ul>
<b>Total allocated sites</b>	<b>930 homes</b>
<b>Completions and permissions</b>	<b>0 homes</b>
<b>Total allocated, completed and permitted</b>	<b>930 homes</b>

### *Economy*

13.95 The facilities of Great Ashby are designated as a neighbourhood centre under policy SP4. The extent of the neighbourhood centre is shown on the map in Appendix 4. Proposals in this area will be considered in accordance with the detailed policies of this Plan.

### *Infrastructure and mitigation*

13.96 Our Strategic Policies set out the key requirements in relation to the land at north-east of Great Ashby (see Policy SP18).

13.97 School place provision in Great Ashby is a key issue. The existing primary school at Round Diamond was built to serve the original development but is regularly oversubscribed. This results in some children having to travel further afield for their education.

13.98 Hertfordshire County Council (**HCC**) have identified expansion potential at The Leys Primary School within Stevenage as an option for providing additional capacity in the wider north Stevenage and Great Ashby area.

13.99 Our proposals for site GA2 also require consideration of education provision, ~~including a minimum requirement~~ **reserving land** to provide a new 2FE primary / **4FE secondary ‘all through’** school. ~~Between them, t~~These measures should **will** ensure sufficient provision to serve Great Ashby as a whole.

**13.xx The Stevenage Mobility Strategy aims to significantly increase the proportion of journeys undertaking on foot, by bike and by public transport over the plan period. Sites on the edge of Stevenage will need to make appropriate provision for sustainable modes of transport, and appropriate contributions to relevant sustainable travel schemes across the town, to ensure that they meet these aims.**

13.100 Our transport modelling does not identify any specific mitigation scheme requirements for Great Ashby. **There are however local concerns that Back Lane, a narrow minor road which leads to Church Lane in Graveley, could be used by increased numbers of vehicles leaving the new development sites, and that junctions in Graveley itself will suffer from congestion as a result of**

**increased flows . These issues are also part of wider network issues concerning junction 8 of the A1(M) and alternative routeings to this, which are being reviewed by the Council and HCC, and which will propose mitigation measures in the area. These will be reflected in future iterations of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.** However, it is **also** recognised that there are localised highway issues in the area, particularly relating to on-street car parking<sup>1</sup>. These **parking issues** have arisen, in part, as a result of national planning policies in place at the time Great Ashby was developed which restricted the amount of off-street car parking the District Council could require.

- 13.101 **Some elements of potential solutions to these issues** ~~highway management measures~~, such as the use of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) **to deal with parking issues**, lie outside the direct control of the planning system and it is therefore not for this Local Plan to dictate the most appropriate solution(s).
- 13.102 It is recognised that a careful balance needs to be struck between facilitating new development, **encouraging sustainable travel choices**, ensuring safe vehicular access throughout Great Ashby, the provision of parking places and the need to ensure that any measures which might be implemented do not simply displace problems to other **less appropriate** locations.
- 13.103 We will continue to work with the community council, **Stevenage Borough Council** and highway authority to determine the most appropriate solution(s). Sites in Great Ashby will need to ensure that any transport assessments appropriately take these matters into account and contribute reasonably to any necessary mitigation measures, or wider strategies which may seek to address these issues.
- 13.104 Thames Water have identified that additional wastewater infrastructure capacity is likely to be required to support development at Great Ashby. Applicants should provide sufficient detail alongside any applications to demonstrate that these requirements have been understood and addressed.

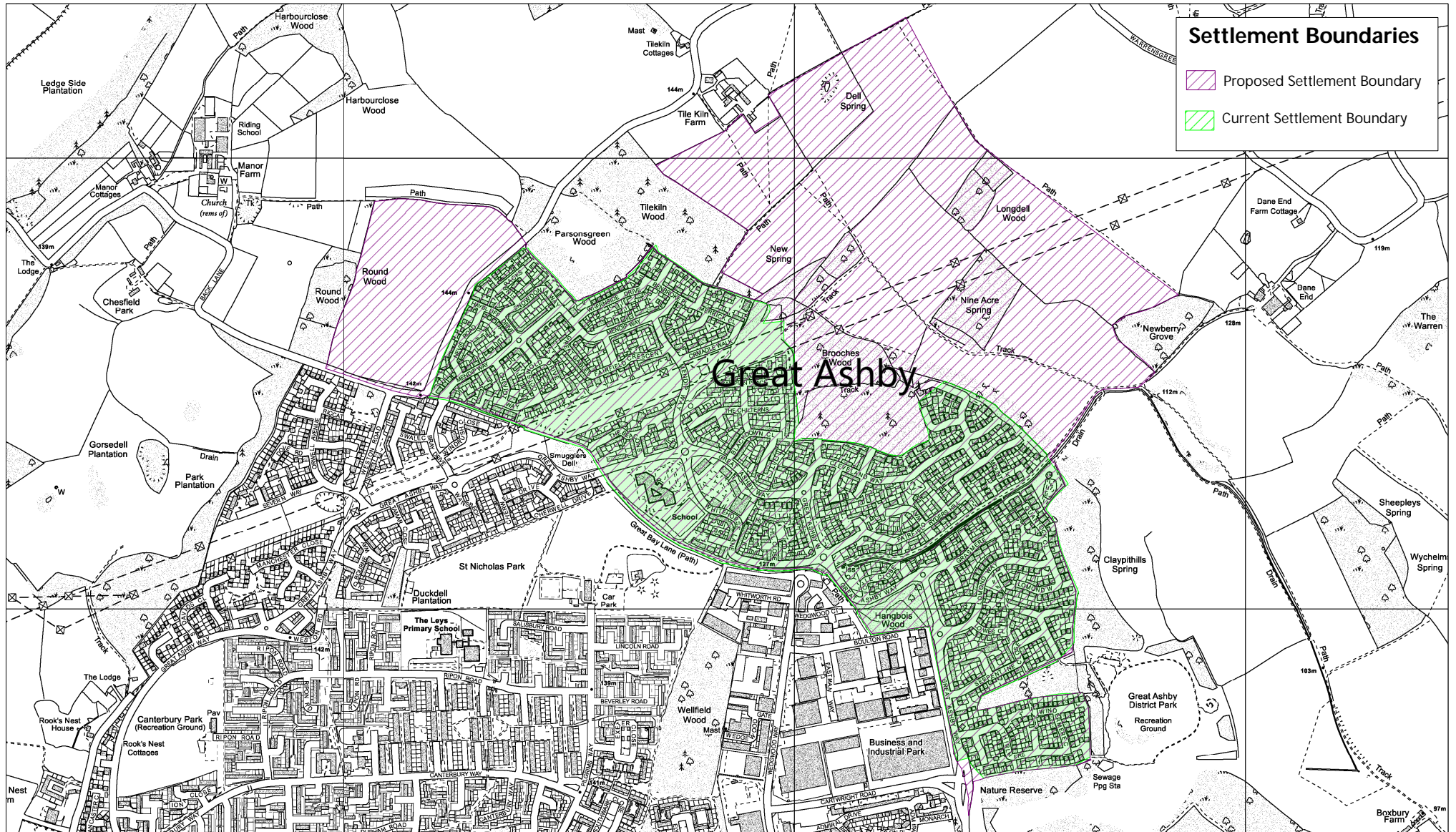
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<sup>1</sup> This also explains why high-level traffic modelling, which will not contain this level of intelligence, considers there to be sufficient capacity.

**Appendix B: Current and proposed settlement extent of Great Ashby**



Great Ashby



Scale: 1:12000  
Date: 10:10:17

