

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

Matter 11 – The housing allocations and the settlement boundaries: Graveley (including North of Stevenage)

Note: *This Statement relates to sites NS1 and GR1*

11.21 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 landowner of site NS1 confirmed that they support the allocation and its deliverability for housing in their representations to the Regulation 19 consultation on the plan (ED3, p.17).
2. The 2016 SHLAA Update confirms site GR1 as available at the time of its preparation (HOU9, p.35). A planning application for 10 homes was received in November 2017 (NHDC application reference 17/04017/FP).

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

3. No site specific objections to the allocations have been received from the highway authority. Both sites provide opportunities to connect into the existing highway and pedestrian footpath network.
4. Site NS1 adjoins land which is proposed to be allocated for development in the emerging plan of Stevenage Borough Council. It is anticipated that the principal highway access will connect from the site in Stevenage – creating an internal link road through the two sites – and emerge at a reconfigured junction arrangement at, or close to, the current junction of the B197 Graveley Road (LP1, paragraph 4.196, pp.65-66)
5. The baseline transport modelling undertaken to support the plan identifies this junction as requiring highway mitigation to support the proposals of the plan (TI4, Figure 4.6, p.18). This is reflected in the site-specific policy for NS1 which requires an appropriate access arrangement to be agreed (LP1, Policy SP16(c), p.65).
6. A highway mitigation scheme for this junction (Scheme reference HM20, TI4, pp.70-71) has been tested through the transport modelling work and is shown to bring junction

delays down to minimal levels. This mitigation scheme is based upon the existing highway network layout – albeit that the traffic growth associated with NS1 is assumed to occur. The interaction between this and the proposed access arrangements for site NS1 will be explored further through detailed assessments as a scheme is developed.

7. A further mitigation scheme (Scheme reference HM2, TI4, pp.33-34) is identified to address capacity issues at Junction 8. This need for this scheme is triggered under the 'Do Minimum' scenario before the proposed future growth is added. Although NS1 is therefore a contributor to future projected traffic growth in this location, it is not solely responsible for it.
8. Site GR1 adjoins Graveley High Street. No further specific issues are identified in the transport modelling in this location.
9. The above measures need to be viewed in the context of the broader transport strategies being pursued by both North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.
10. 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.
11. For sites around Stevenage, this will also 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).
12. A modification to the supporting text in the Letchworth section of Chapter 13 of the Plan (LP1, para 13.228, p.188) is proposed to more effectively address transport infrastructure and reflect the aims of the transport strategy

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

13. Yes. Both sites have been considered through the SHLAA and are considered suitable locations for development having regard to potential constraints (HOU9, site refs NS [NS1] and 208N [GR1]. See Appendix 3, p.25 & p.27 and Appendix 4, p. 35 & p.48). This is expanded upon in answer to Issue 11.22 below.
14. 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.508, 526, 559-560, 649-652).

15. 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 SP16, pp.65-66 and Site GR1, pp.155).
16. Site NS1 adjoins a proposed housing allocation within Stevenage Borough that is identified in their emerging plan. This allocation has been considered and found 'sound' as part of the Inspector's report (ED16, pp.15-16 & 23-25). A planning application for the land within Stevenage Borough (SBC application reference 17/00862/OPM) was submitted in December 2017.
17. Indicative drawings to date envisage the most likely primary education solution to be a single school that straddles the administrative boundary between the two authorities. The precise format of education provision and / or acceptability of this approach will be contingent on the timing of new development in North Hertfordshire relative to new development in Stevenage and the extent to which the peak yields derived from the relevant sites are likely to overlap.
18. In this context, Policy SP16 takes a flexible approach requiring site-wide solutions to be secured rather than being more prescriptive.
19. Secondary education requirements will be met through contributions to off-site provision. The Council's approach to meeting future secondary education requirements from in and around Stevenage has been set out at Matter 6 and in the Matter 10 and 11 statements for Great Ashby and Knebworth respectively.
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.
21. Modifications to Policy SP16 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.

Question 11.22 Are all of the proposed housing allocations justified and appropriate in terms of the likely impacts of the development?

22. Yes. Both of these housing allocations are justified and appropriate. The appropriateness of the individual allocations is discussed below.
23. In broad terms, each allocation in the plan is justified by (see the Council's Statements on Matters 5, 7 and 9):

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- 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.

24. 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.

25. Graveley is proposed to be a Category A village inset from the Green Belt.

Site NS1

26. Site NS1 lies to the north of Stevenage in an area currently designated as Green Belt. 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.

27. The justification and impacts in relation to Green Belt are discussed under Issue 11.24 below.

28. The proposed allocation is bounded to the south by land proposed for development in Stevenage Borough’s local plan. This allocation has been found ‘sound’ in the Inspector’s report for that plan (ED16, paragraphs 124 to 134, pp.23-24). It would not be appropriate for development of the proposed allocation in North Hertfordshire to occur without this this proposal. This will change the nature of the adjoining land within Stevenage, and the interface between the two sites, from rural to urban.

29. The site straddles two landscape character areas as identified in the Council’s evidence base (CG16a). The east of the proposed site falls within the Arlesey – Great

Wymondley (pp.103-108d) character area. This is a large parcel that stretches across the entire district and is considered to be of low to moderate sensitivity and low landscape value. The Baldock Gap (pp.120-124c) is considered to be of moderate to high landscape sensitivity and moderate landscape value. However, the proposed site would be confined to the very edges of these strategic-scale land parcels minimising impacts on their wider character.

30. The landscape impacts of development to the north-east of footpath Graveley 007 – which marks the divide between the two character areas - will be more pronounced due to the topography and aspect of this part of the site. However, it is not considered that the adverse impacts of development on landscape grounds alone significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of a strategic scale housing allocation and associated infrastructure to meet identified needs and provided in close proximity to the largest town in northern Hertfordshire.
31. Notwithstanding this point, proposed modifications to the site-specific criteria are attached as Appendix A to address this issue. This follows further consideration of the landscape issues in concert with the potential heritage impacts which are discussed below.
32. Potential constraints identified by the SHLAA (HOU9, p.27) include adjoining priority woodland habitats and the presence of Public Rights of Way within and around the site. No apparent fundamental ecological constraint has been identified.
33. Heritage assets include the adjoining Conservation Areas at Graveley and the Rectory Lane Conservation Area within Stevenage. These Conservation Areas include a number of listed buildings.
34. A heritage assessment of the site has been completed (NHE6). This concludes that the west part of the proposal site does not contribute to the significance of heritage assets (p.10)
35. The assessment advises that development in the eastern part of the site has the potential to impact upon the setting of heritage assets and should follow on from any development of the land to the west. Any proposals for the wider strategic allocation site should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment to present impacts of any suggested development scheme and enable it to be fully considered (NHE6, pp.11-12, 14).
36. The Council considers that, with appropriate assessment and mitigation, any harm arising from the proposed development of NS1 to the significance of these assets would be less than substantial. In pursuing this allocation, this has been weighed against the public benefits of use of the site for predominantly residential development.
37. This approach is consistent with that taken by Stevenage in assessment of the potential allocation within their own administrative area and found sound in the

Inspector's report (ED16, paragraphs 124 to 134, pp.23-24). It is acknowledged that the impact arising from the two sites may be different.

38. Heritage and landscape issues are addressed in the policy identified for the site in the plan as submitted (LP1, Policy SP16, pp.65-66). However, given the importance of securing appropriate mitigation on landscape, heritage and Green Belt grounds (see issue 11.24 below), it is proposed to strengthen these requirements through the proposed Main Modifications in Appendix A.
39. The application of these revised requirements, alongside appropriate detailed design and the detailed development management policies of the plan will ensure that the allocation of the site is justified having regard to any harms.
40. The Housing and Green Belt Background Paper summarises the reasons for the selection of site NS1 (HOU1, Appendix 2, p.64). The allocation of site NS1 is critical to the overall housing numbers achievable. Development at this scale is able to deliver supporting infrastructure to meet needs arising from within site. Site-specific criteria require consideration of key landscape, Green Belt, flood risk and heritage implications and assist in addressing site-specific issues raised through consultation. On balance, the significant positive opportunities afforded by this site are considered to outweigh the harms.
41. 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 14468] and provides further reassurance that key issues are being actively addressed.
42. A Statement of Common Ground with the owner of this site has been prepared and submitted to the examination (ED32). This primarily relates to broad issues of delivery and infrastructure to support earlier hearing sessions.
43. It is intended that a supplementary statement addressing the site specific issues above will be prepared and, subject to its agreement, will be made available to the examination in advance of the hearing sessions.

Site GR1

44. Site GR1 is a small redevelopment and / or infill site at the north of Graveley in a Category A village that it is proposed to inset from the Green Belt. It makes a small contribution to overall housing needs. It is largely screened from surrounding views by existing boundaries and plantings and will have a minimal impact upon the wider landscape.

45. Potential constraints identified by the SHLAA include the adjoining Graveley Conservation Area and a Public Right of Way along the southern site boundary. No apparent fundamental ecological constraint has been identified.
46. These issues are addressed in the site-specific criteria identified for the site (LP1, Site GR1, p.155). 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 the site-specific criteria, appropriate detailed design and the application of the detailed development management policies of the plan.
47. The Housing and Green Belt Background Paper summarises the reasons for the selection of site GR1 (HOU1, Appendix 2, p.59). The allocation of site GR1 provides the opportunity to establish long-term boundaries as part of the proposed 'insetting' of Graveley from the Green Belt as a Category A village. The site-specific criteria and proposed dwelling estimate allow for appropriate mitigation of potential impacts. On balance, the positive opportunities afforded by this site are considered to outweigh harms.

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

48. The proposed allocation of site NS1 represents the only reasonable alternative for the expansion of Stevenage beyond its existing limits to the north. 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.
49. Site GR1 is the only alternative for providing a small scale addition to Graveley and allowing this Category A village to make a contribution to overall needs.
50. 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.
51. 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

11.24 Sites NS1 and GR1 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?

52. Yes. Exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the allocation of land for housing in the Green Belt at NS1 and GR1. 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.
53. 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.
54. 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 NS1

55. Site NS1 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. The site provides one of the best opportunities in the District to contribute to the sustainable travel aspirations of the District Council and Hertfordshire County Council by providing development in a location where it is possible to connect with sustainable travel infrastructure within Stevenage Borough.
56. There are not considered to be any insurmountable non-Green Belt constraints to development of the site which can not be addressed through the policy requirements of the plan.

Site GR1

57. Site GR1 provides the opportunity for a small addition to the housing stock within Graveley village as part of the broader inseting of the village from the Green Belt. There are not considered to be any insurmountable non-Green Belt constraints to development of the site which can not 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?

58. The strategic land parcel to the north of Stevenage, which includes sites NS1 and GR1, was assessed as making a significant contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt by the 2016 Green Belt Review (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.

59. The assessment found that the contribution of site NS1 was significant for two of the four purposes of Green Belt assessed with an overall moderate contribution (CG1, p.109 assessed as site reference 353).

60. The assessment found that the contribution of site GR1 was significant for one of the four purposes of Green Belt assessed with an overall moderate contribution (CG1, p.109, assessed as site reference 208).

61. These results are summarised in Table A below.

Table A: Contribution of allocations North of Stevenage and at Graveley to the purposes of Green Belt

Site	Green Belt purpose				Overall contribution
	Sprawl	Merge	Countryside	Historic	
Site NS1	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited	Moderate
Site GR1	Moderate	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?

62. Where necessary, actions have been specified as conditions which must be satisfied before the grant of planning permission on the allocated sites.

Site NS1

63. The plan seeks to preserve the setting and separation of Graveley village and its Conservation Area by drawing the Green Belt boundary to the north along a new alignment (LP1, p.66). Policy SP16(f) requires the provision of new structural planting along this alignment to create a long-term defensible Green Belt boundary.

64. The revised site-specific criteria set out in Appendix A require development within the visually more sensitive area to the north west of footpath Graveley 007 to seek to mitigate against landscape and Green Belt impacts.

65. This is broadly in line with advice in the Council's landscape evidence which seeks the use of planting to screen new development and to avoid development in the most visually intrusive areas.

Site GR1

66. This site is generally well contained by existing boundaries limiting views into or out of the site from the wider Green Belt.

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?*

67. Through the actions specified in the allocation criteria as set out above, the adjacent Green Belt to sites NS1 and GR1 will continue to contribute to the purposes of Green Belt.

68. 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).

69. The adjacent Green Belt land would continue to play an important role in, in particular, maintaining the gap between the towns of Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth.

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?*

70. 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.

71. The review and release of land undertaken as part of this plan would extend Stevenage to its logical maximum to the north. Further development in this direction would absorb Graveley village.

72. 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 within 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.

73. 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.

74. 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?*

75. 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.

76. 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?*

77. 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.

78. 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.

79. 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 NS1

80. The boundaries for site NS1 are informed by the proposed Green Belt boundary in adjoining Stevenage which follows the route of the B197 Graveley Road from Junction

8 of the A1(M). It then follows the alignment of Footpath Graveley 006 and the adjoining hedgerow in an easterly then north-easterly direction to the rear of the cricket ground. From here, new planting will be required to establish a new boundary drawn back from Graveley village. This will head broadly east to Footpath Graveley 007 then east-north-east to an existing hedgerow.

81. This hedgerow will be reinforced and extended to link to Ten Acre Plantation, the established woodland which marks the outer boundary of the adjoining Chesfield Park. The new green belt boundary follows the edge of this woodland and the alignment of Bridleway Graveley 008 south-west to the administrative boundary with Stevenage.

Site GR1

82. The site is well bounded by existing features that also make them practical boundaries for the inseting of this part of Graveley village. The northern and eastern boundaries are defined by Graveley Lane and High Street respectively. The western boundary is defined by well established planting and National Cycle Route 15.

Question 11.25 *Is the proposed settlement boundary:*

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

b) *Appropriate and justified?*

83. The approach to establishing Green Belt boundaries and therefore the settlement boundary to the north of Stevenage is discussed in the Council's answer to question 11.24(g) above.

84. Graveley is to be inset from the Green Belt through this plan. The proposed village boundaries are generally well defined using existing property boundaries within the built core of the village, the alignment of National Cycle Route 15 and Graveley Lane.

85. A map showing the existing and proposed extent of the settlements at north Stevenage and Graveley is attached to this Statement as Appendix B to aid interpretation.

Appendix A: Proposed modifications to Policy SP16

Policy SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage

Land to the north of Stevenage within Graveley parish, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated as a Strategic Housing Site for approximately 900 homes. Planning permission for residential development will be granted where 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. Integration with adjoining development in Stevenage Borough including site-wide solutions for access, **sustainable travel**, education, retail, and other necessary social infrastructure;
- c. An upgraded junction at the intersection of Graveley Road / North Road;
- d. A detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery.
- e. At least 9 serviced plots for self-build development;
- f. Structural planting to create a sense of place, integration into surrounding landscape and a long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary to the north ~~as informed by detailed assessments~~;
- g. Integration of existing public rights of way to provide routes through the site to the wider countryside including
 - i. Footpath Graveley 006 and Bridleway Gravely 008 along the perimeter of the site; and
 - ii. Footpath Graveley 007 as a south-east to north-west route through the site and link path from the urban area to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path; ~~and~~
- h. Sensitive consideration of existing settlements, landscape features and heritage assets including:
 - i. Graveley village and Conservation Area;
 - ii. The St Nicholas & Rectory Lane Conservation Area **including the Grade I listed St Nicholas Church and Rook's Nest**; and
 - iii. Chesfield Park.
 - iv. Church of St Etheldreda
 - v. Manor Farm; **and**
- i. **Detailed design and layout of the site to be informed by site-specific assessments to mitigate any landscape, heritage and Green Belt impacts to the fullest reasonable extent.**

4.195 The area north of Stevenage is currently undeveloped farm land in the parish of Graveley. Adjoining land within Stevenage Borough to the south has been identified for development and this provides an opportunity for a coherent extension of the

town to the north¹. A masterplanning exercise for this site will need to consider the implications of these cross-boundary allocations and demonstrate appropriate solutions. This may lead to some facilities which will serve the whole development being located wholly within either North Hertfordshire's or Stevenage's administrative areas.

4.196 It is envisaged that principal access to the site will be in the form of a looped estate road, one end of which will be in Stevenage Borough. The northern end of this road will emerge at, or close to, the existing junction of the B197 at Graveley Road / North Road. A new arrangement, possibly a roundabout, will need to be provided.

4.xxx The site will need to integrate provision for walkers, cyclists and public transport in line with the aims of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy. This will include connections to the wider sustainable travel network.

4.xxx Development at this scale would normally generate a requirement for the on-site provision of a 2FE primary school. The relationship with the adjoining land in Stevenage means that, in this instance, it may be possible to co-locate education provision for the two schemes to ensure the most effective outcome. Any solution must ensure adequate primary school capacity across both sites over the lifetime of the development.

4.197 Existing field boundaries in this area are generally quite well defined. However, in order to preserve the setting and separation of Graveley village and its Conservation Area, it is considered most appropriate to draw back the allocation and Green Belt boundaries to a new alignment. This will require new planting and sensitive design and layout to preserve the setting of the Conservation Area.

4.198 These perimeter areas also incorporate statutory rights of way which should be retained. A further footpath bisects the development and this should be incorporated as a green route from the Stevenage urban area, through the development site to the countryside beyond.

4.199 This route also forms a recognised link to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path (StOOP). StOOP is a 27-mile walking route around the town using footpaths and other routes that are open to the public.

4.200 The site is in close proximity to a number of heritage assets. Sensitive design and layout will be required to ensure that any harm to their settings is minimised. Assessment of any impact upon the historic environment must be comprehensive and should not stop at the administrative boundary. To the south-east of the site, the adjoining land within Stevenage Borough is known colloquially as 'Forster Country' in recognition of author EM Forster. His childhood home **of Rook's Nest** is **Grade I** listed with **a large part of its historic landscape setting protected by a the St Nicholas' and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. This conservation area also contains and provides the setting for a Grade I listed, twelfth century church.**

4.201 To the east lies Chesfield Park. Although not formally recognised through statutory listings or registers, the house and surrounding parkland are important local

¹ Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031:Publication Draft (SBC, 2016)

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features. These are generally well separated from the allocated site by an existing tree belt but the transition between these areas will need to be considered.

Appendix B: Proposed settlement extent of north of Stevenage and Graveley

