

Land at Thieves Lane
Hertford



September 2012

Development Framework Document

Land at Thieves Lane, Hertford

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Development Framework Document has been prepared to outline how land at Thieves Lane, Hertford could be brought forward and developed for approximately 250 dwellings and associated new areas of public open space.

The following pages outline how the site benefits from few physical constraints and how it can be developed to form a logical and sensitive extension to the town.

An Illustrative Framework Plan for the site has been prepared to show initial thoughts on how the site could be developed. The local community will be consulted on the development proposals, and the Framework Plan will be evolved to reflect their desires.

The new development will have a sense of place and provide for a well-designed extension to Hertford.

The new homes will be sustainable, minimising their environmental impacts and providing a high quality of life for the new residents. A mix of dwelling types will be built from 2 to 5 bedroom homes. A proportion of the new homes will be affordable to help meet local housing needs.

The scheme will deliver new areas of public open space for use by both its new residents and the wider community. Green corridors will improve local biodiversity through the creation of new wildlife habitats.



THIEVES LANE

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01 Introduction

Purpose of this Document

CSa Environmental Planning and Woolf Bond Planning have been instructed by Croudace Strategic Ltd to submit this Development Framework Document, detailing the proposals for a housing-led development on land at Thieves Lane, Hertford, to enable the site to be considered for a residential allocation through East Herts Council's emerging District Plan. A flexible Development Framework Plan has been prepared in order to meet the relevant strategic planning requirements, and to show how the site can be brought forward to deliver approximately 250 dwellings during the plan period.

A description of the planning policy context is provided in Section 2 of this document; an analysis of the site context in Section 3 and the site itself in Section 4; a brief description of the Design Opportunities and Constraints in Section 5; a description of the Framework Masterplan in Section 6; an assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the Green Belt and Wildlife Site in Section 7; an assessment of the sustainability and deliverability of the site in Section 8; and a conclusion in Section 9.

The owners are keen to ensure that development of the site meets with the aspirations of the residents of Hertford and East Herts Council ('EHC'), having regard to the requirements of relevant planning policy considerations. As part of the assessment of the site, a series of environmental and technical surveys have been undertaken to inform the masterplanning and to demonstrate its deliverability. The following pages provide a summary of the work undertaken to date.

The Site

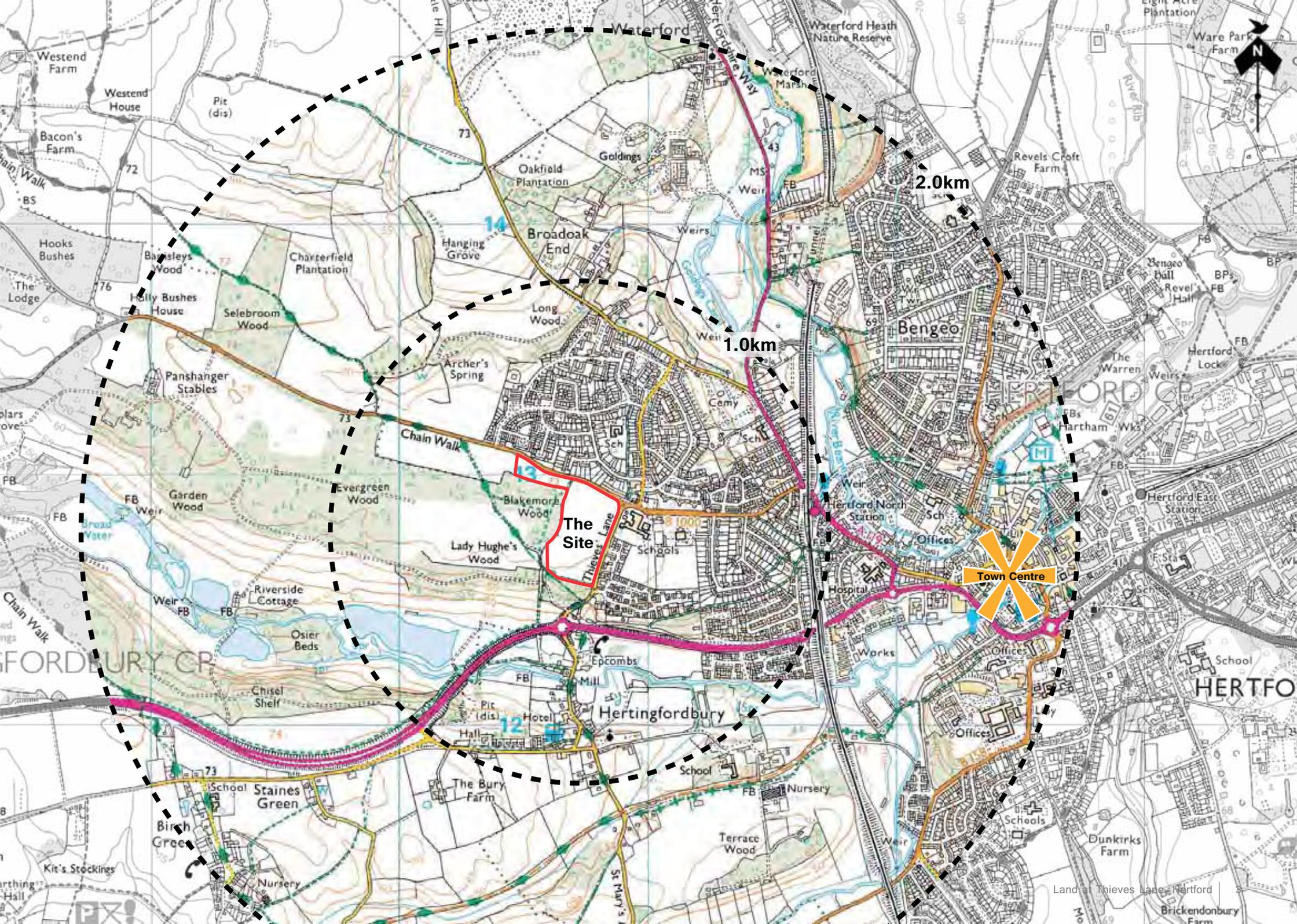
The site lies on the western edge of Hertford, 1.7km (1 mile) west of the town centre, and extends to approximately 9.05 hectares. It comprises an L-shaped arable field.

Site Ownership

The site is owned by Croudace Strategic Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Croudace Homes Group Limited.

Croudace Homes Group Limited is a privately owned house-building group based in Caterham and Letchworth. Founded in 1946, it currently builds approximately 500 dwellings a year in the South East. It has an annual turnover of circa £100 million and a net worth in excess of £85 million. Croudace is committed to building high quality, well designed homes and has won numerous awards for its developments. The Group has developed sites within the locality of Hertford, at Welwyn Garden City, Ware, Harlow and Hunsdon. It has also developed strategic sites nearby at Stevenage and Church Langley, and has the staff and resources to develop large sites. It is the Group's intention to develop the whole of the site if it is successful in obtaining an allocation and outline consent.

Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan



Waterford

Waterford Heath Nature Reserve

Ware Park Farm

2.0km

1.0km

The Site

Town Centre

Hertingfordbury

HERTFORD

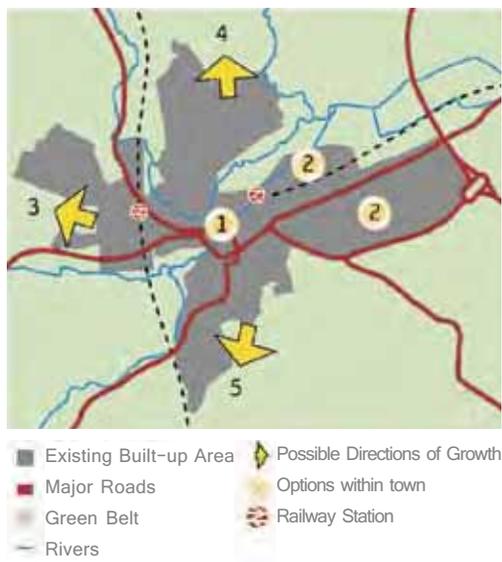


Figure 2.1: Extract from East Herts Council's Core Strategy: Issues and Options Consultation Document 2010, showing the Growth Options for Hertford to 2031.

Emerging Policy

East Herts Council ('EHC') are in the process of producing a Core Strategy document which will provide the locus against which the overall amount and location of growth to be met within the area will be determined. The document is to be known as the District Plan, and will comprise two parts:

- Part 1 – Strategy
- Part 2 – Allocations & Policies

Part 1 of the District Plan, which was recently subject to consultation, sets out a number of strategic options for future growth in Hertford. This includes, inter alia, Option 2 which comprises strategic allocations to the west of the settlement, subject to a Green Belt Review.

EHC are currently preparing a Preferred Strategy document that will set out the Options to be pursued, which will be subject to further consultation in January 2013.

The Development Plan

In the absence of an adopted District Plan, the development plan for EHC currently comprises:

- Saved policies from the East Herts Local Plan (adopted April 2007)
- The East of England Plan (adopted May 2008)

Policy SD2 of the Local Plan sets out that development will be concentrated in the District's main settlements, including Hertford.

Land at Thieves Lane/Welwyn Road lies just outside of the Hertford settlement boundary, within the Green Belt where policy GBC1 of the Local Plan applies.

A small part of the site forms part of the most north-easterly part of the Panshanger Park County Wildlife Site, and is adjacent to Blackmore Wood Ancient Woodland to the west. Policy ENV14 of the Local Plan requires that development that may impact upon Local Nature Reserves or Wildlife Sites be justified by a need which outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site or feature.

The East of England Plan

The Regional Spatial Strategy ('RSS') for the East of England ('EEP') was adopted in May 2008 and sets out the approach to meeting the strategic housing requirements within the District in the period to 2021.

Following the CLG's announcement and accompanying advice notes dated 6 July 2010, Regional Strategies were revoked by the Secretary of State under s79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and were said to no longer form part of the Development Plan for the purposes of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It was advised at that time that the legal basis for Regional Strategies is a matter to be abolished through the Localism Bill.

The 6 July revocation decision was then subject to challenge in the Cala Homes (South) Ltd case (2010 EWHC 2866). This was decided on 10 November 2010 and the outcome was to quash the 6 July revocation. The effect of the decision is to re-establish Regional Strategies as part of the development plan.

EEP Policy H1 sets out a requirement for the delivery of 12,000 dwellings within the District during the period 2001 to 2021.

03 Site Context

Hertford

Hertford is a nucleated town formed around the confluence of four rivers. The settlement was first recorded in the 7th Century and steadily grew as a market and county town. The town rapidly expanded in the late 1700s with the construction of the Lea Canal through the town, and again in the mid-1800s with the arrival of the railway.



Site Location

The site is situated on the western edge of Hertford, approximately 1.7km (1 mile) from the town centre. It comprises a roughly L-shaped field consisting of a rectangular main parcel in the east and a narrow rectangular strip of land extending west from the north western corner of the main field. The site is bound to the north by the B1000 Welwyn Road, with residential development beyond; to the east by Thieves Lane and residential development as well as a school further to the east; to the south by a woodland block 'Chesher's Plantation'; and to the west by a public footpath and Blakemore Wood (an Ancient Woodland) with Panshanger Park beyond. The A414, the main route linking Hertford to Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and the A1(M) to the west and Harlow and the M11 and the A10 to the east, lies approximately 200m south of the site, south of Chesher's Plantation, with the village of Hertingfordbury further to the south.

The Grade II* Registered Park and Garden of Panshanger Park lies to the south and west of the site, encompassing Chesher's Plantation and extending to the western edge of the field to the west of Blakemore Wood. The park was centred around an existing deer park and mansion house and was designed in the late 1700s by Humphry Repton to include a new mansion house, woodlands and meadows along the valley of the River Mimram, and now extends to around 350 hectares. The estate deteriorated after WWI and the manor house and most other built structures were demolished in 1954. Panshanger Park is currently owned by a gravel extraction company and there are current and disused quarries on the site. The park however retains its character of grazing pastures fringed with beech woods, and parts of the park have been enhanced to provide habitat for wildlife.



The site is currently in arable use, and lies adjacent to existing houses



Blakemore Wood west of the site is designated as Ancient Woodland

Local Facilities and Services

The site lies approximately 1.7km from Hertford town centre, which offers a good range of services, shops and facilities. A parade of local shops lie less than 700m to the north east of the site on Windsor Drive within the Sele Farm Estate, and there is a public house at the junction of Welwyn Road and Windsor Drive.

There are several primary schools in the vicinity of the site, including: Hollybush Primary School (300m to east); Hertford St. Andrews C of E Primary School (400m to north); and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School (800m to north east). The Sele Secondary School lies adjacent to the site, to the east of Thieves Lane. An equipped play area for children lies approximately 400m to the north west of the site.



There are local shops and a public house close to the site



- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ① Hertford North Station | ⑦ St Joseph's Primary School | 🚶 Public Rights of Way |
| ② Hollybush Primary School | ⑧ Lady Hughes Wood | 🌳 Ancient Woodland |
| ③ The Sele School | ⑨ Cheshers' Plantation | 🌿 County Wildlife Site |
| ④ Local shops | ⑩ Blakemore Wood | 🏡 Registered Park and Garden |
| ⑤ Hertford Saint Andrew's CE Primary School | ⑪ Panshanger Park | 🌳 Tree Preservation Orders |
| ⑥ Hertford Cemetery | ⑫ Golden Griffin Public House | |

Figure 3.1 Illustrates the site's close proximity to facilities and services

Transport Network

Thieves Lane runs from the A414 to the south and the Welwyn Road (B1000) to the north. Thieves Lane itself is a 40mph road, changing to a 30mph speed limit before the roundabout junction with the Welwyn Road. The A414 is part of the strategic highway network and provides links to the A1(M) to the west and the A10 and M11 to the east of Hertford.

Hertford North train station lies approximately 1km to the east of the site and provides direct links into London in the south and Stevenage, Cambridge and Peterborough to the north. Hertford East train station lies around 2.3km east of the site, and also offers direct trains to London.

Both Thieves Lane and Welwyn Road are served by a variety of bus routes, with two bus stops located along Thieves Lane to the east of the site. Bus routes link to Hertford town centre, Ware, Welwyn Garden City as well as to areas further afield including St. Albans, Harlow, Uxbridge and Heathrow.

There are currently pedestrian footways along the eastern side of Thieves Lane and on the northern side of Welwyn Road, with footways on both sides occurring along Welwyn Road to the east of the site. There are no marked cycle lanes within the vicinity of the site, however the town centre is within a 10–15min cycle from the site. In addition, SUSTRANS Route 61 runs within 2km of the site, linking Ware and St. Albans, and is car-free for much of its length.

A public footpaths runs north–south within the eastern side of Blakemore Wood, west of the site, linking Welwyn Road in the north and the A414 in the south. An additional footpath leads east from within Blakemore Wood to link with the recreational Chain Walk route. Within the vicinity of the site, The Chain Walk route follows a bridleyway which connects from Thieves Lane to the south of the site, then runs within Chesher's Plantation in the south to the western edge of Blakemore Wood, passing along the south western corner of the site. The path cuts through Blakemore Wood and the arable field to the north of it, to link to Welwyn Road. In addition to the statutory routes, there are permissive paths within Panshanger Park.

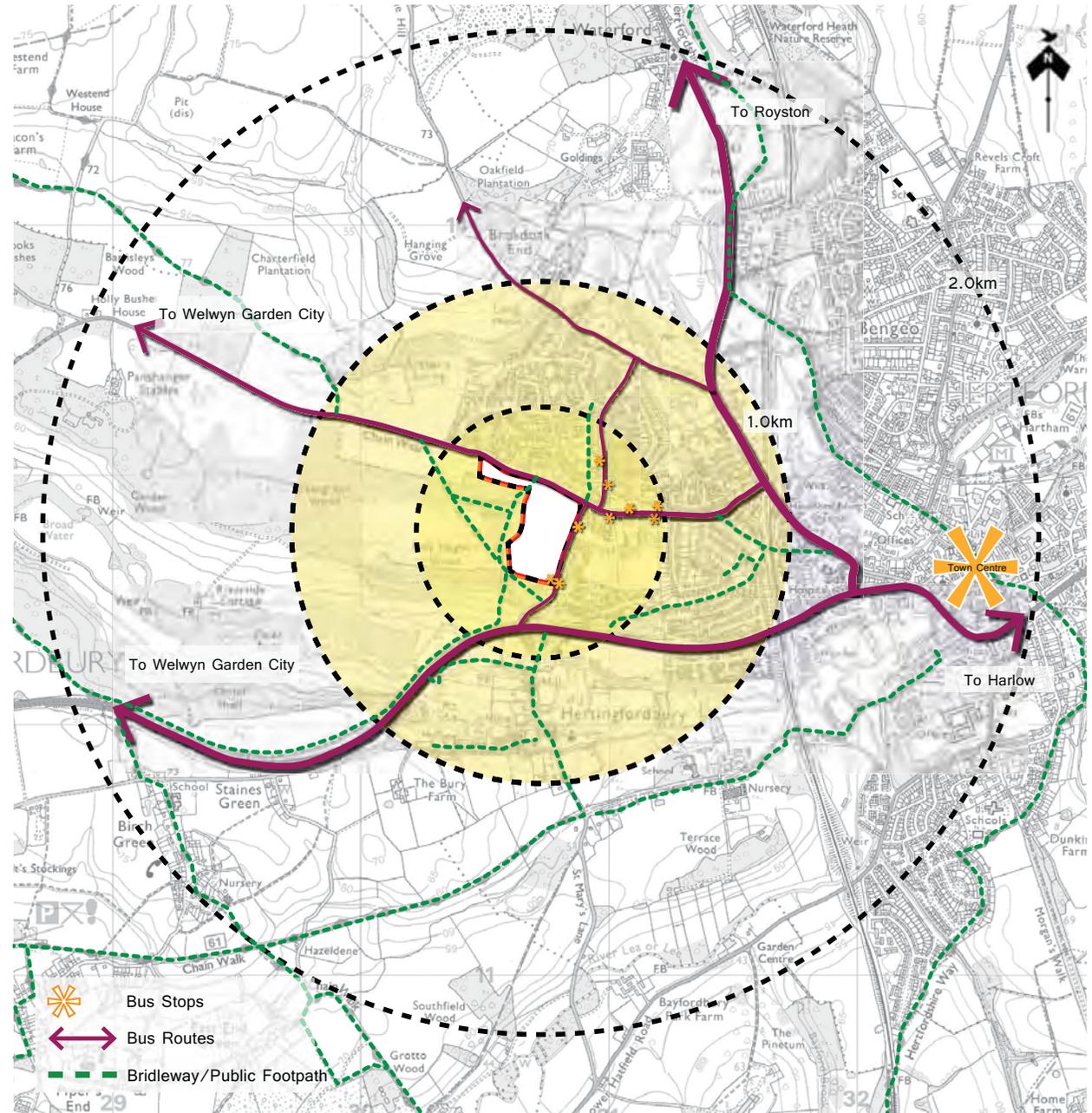


Figure 3.2: The site is well located in relation to existing modes of transport

Historical Growth

Historical maps from the late 1800s show the village of Hertingfordbury to the south of the site, and Hertford along the confluence of the four rivers in the town. The site is shown as agricultural land, as is the land to the north and east of the site. Panshanger Park and its woodlands are evident to the west and south of the site. At the turn of the century the town had expanded to the north and east.

During the 1920s the town continued to expand, mostly to the north and east, but also up to the railway line in the west, and by the 1940s there were blocks of housing development west of the railway line. During the post-war boom, the town did not expand much further west, but maps from the late 1970s show that rapid expansion in the west of the town had occurred, with the Sele Farm Estate north of Welwyn Road and the schools to the east of the site being built. By 1990 the houses to the east of Thieves Lane had been built. In the early 21st Century, the houses along Elizabeth's Close which front the north of the site, were built within the former back gardens of several properties which had backed onto Welwyn Road. On the junction of Welwyn Road and Windsor Drive is a new development of assisted-living flats, which are currently being built on the site of several 1970s bungalows which had recently been demolished.



Figure 3.3: OS map from 1938



Figure 3.5: OS map from 1978



Figure 3.4: OS map from 1960-65

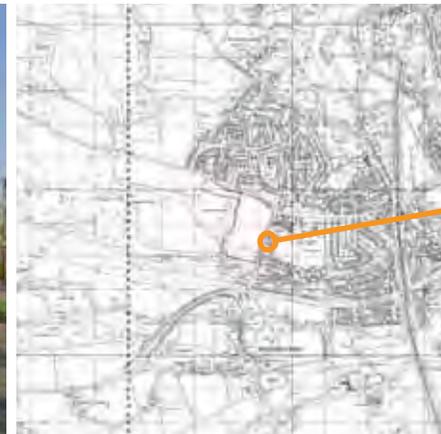


Figure 3.6: OS map from 1980-89





Landscape Characteristics

The site falls within the 'Hertfordshire Plateaux And River Valleys' sub-area of the 'Northern Thames Basin' National Landscape Character Area. The character area is described as a varied landscape characterised by a mix of settlements, woodland and mixed agriculture, with a rural feel interrupted by a few large developed areas. The landform is varied, with wide plateaux divided by valleys. The area is dissected by motorways, railway lines and prominent electricity pylons, which all influence the character of the area. The area is seen as a commuter zone, with new towns and garden cities making up several of the settlements.

The East Herts District Landscape Character Assessment categorises the site as falling within the Panshanger Parkland Character Area, which mostly encompasses the relic historic parkland. The area is characterised by grazing pastures fringed with beech woods, and there are extensive mineral excavations within the Panshanger Parkland character area. The Landscape Character Assessment states that there are not many views into the parkland and that any potential heritage assets are screened from public view.

The site is located adjacent to Panshanger Park, but is well related to the existing urban area of Hertford

Architectural Characteristics

The residential areas surrounding the site were built during the 1960s to 1980s and are not of great architectural merit, lacking architectural characteristics which reflect the local vernacular. The housing areas contain terraces, semi-detached houses and detached units, with some 3 storey apartment buildings also occurring. The built form is clean and simple, but fails to adequately reflect the local vernacular. The roads are wide and uniform in character, with no strong hierarchy of routes evident. The main building materials are yellow and dark red brick, with pitched clay roofs.

The historic core of Hertford contains many buildings of architectural merit, and reflects the local vernacular of the area. Traditional housing materials include a soft local red brick with a small proportion of blue bricks for detailing, with Cambridge Gault brick being widely used in the 19th and early 20th Century buildings. Roofs are steeply pitched with wide eave and verge overhangs, and mostly covered in soft coloured red/brown clay tiles. The roofs often have large gabled dormers and decorative bargeboards.



Houses along Elizabeth Close, built at the turn of the 21st Century



Simple window and door details on terraces



Gable details mark important focal buildings



Rows of terraces with bay window details



Cambridge Gault brick is often used



Modern flat building located north east of the site



Houses on Sele Estate reflect little of the local vernacular



Bay windows create active frontages on both sides of a corner turning building

04 Analysis of the Site

Site Features

The site comprises an L-shaped arable field, bounded to the west and south by woodland blocks.

There is no vegetation of significance within the main body of the site, however there is a gappy mature hedgerow with hedgerow trees along the northern site boundary as well as some isolated stands of scrub and trees along the eastern boundary with Thieves Lane. A public footpath crosses the north of the site, dividing the site into two areas: the large main rectangular field in the east and a thin linear belt of land between Blakemore Wood and Welwyn Road, extending west from the north western corner of the main field. Historic maps show the site as agricultural land. Some of the areas to the west of the site have been quarried and some small gravel pits, sand pits and chalk pits were located close to the site. However there has been no previous excavation or filling within the site.

Topography

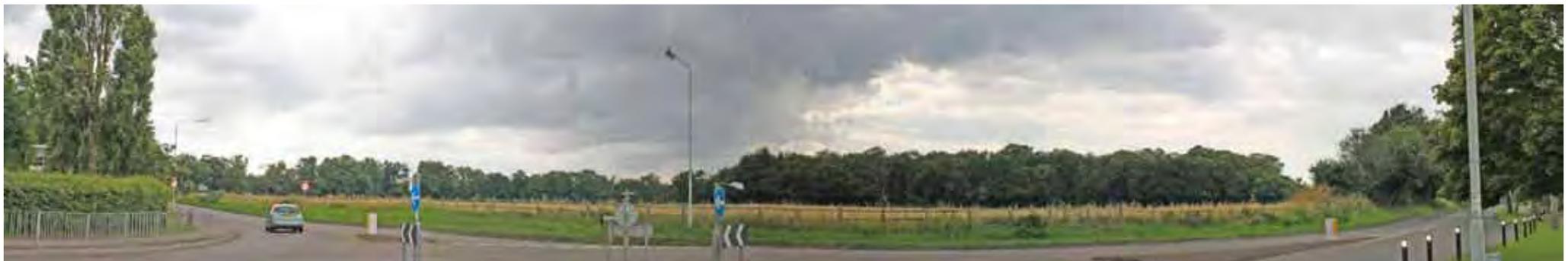
The site slopes down gently from north to south. The land to the west, north and east is generally level with the site, but land to the south within Chesher's Plantation slopes down steeply to the A414 and the River Mimram beyond.



The north western part of the site is bound to the south by Ancient Woodland



The site is well related to the existing houses on Thieves Lane



The surrounding woodland screens the site from views from outside the settlement

Landscape

The site is well contained in views by the woodland blocks to the south and west as well as the existing residential areas to the north and east. There are clear views across the site from Thieves Lane and the houses which front onto it, although many houses here back onto Thieves Lane. Similarly, there are views of the eastern part of the site from Welwyn Road, although most existing houses here either back onto the site or are set behind the closeboarded fence along Elizabeth Close. Houses further west along Welwyn Road front onto the site, however the tall hedgerow along the northern site boundary screens views.

There are glimpsed views of the site through the trees from the public footpaths within the woodland blocks to the west and south.

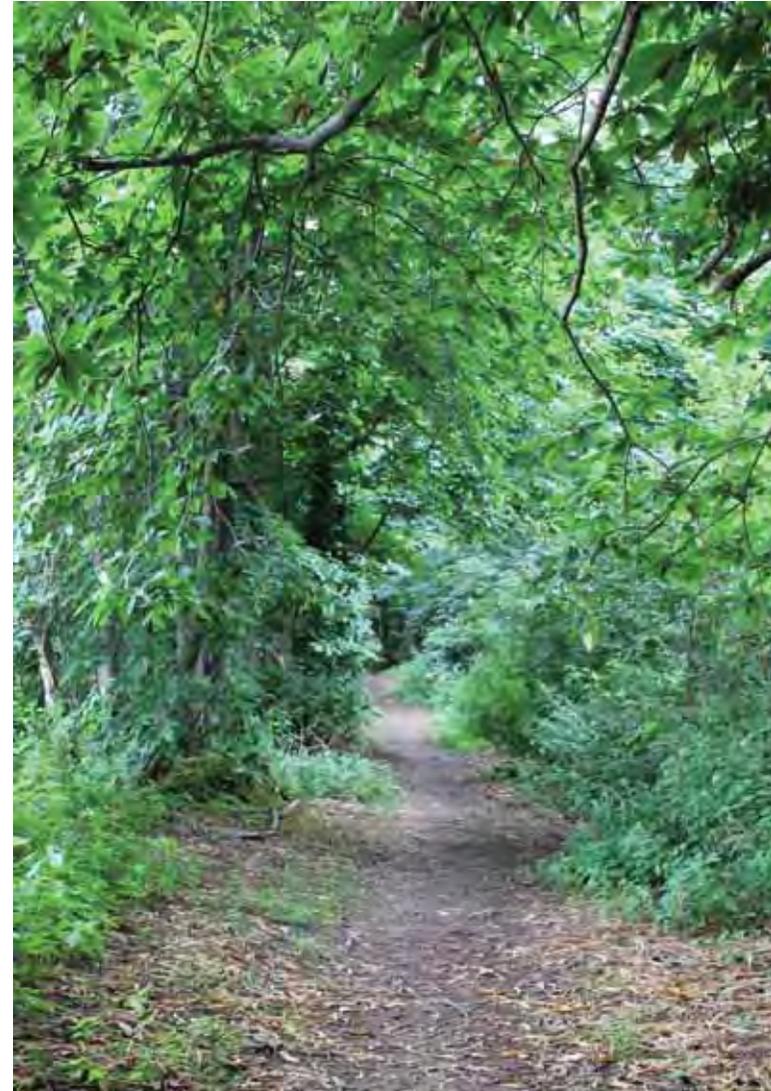
The land south of the site and further west beyond Blakemore Wood forms part of Panshanger Park, a Grade II* Registered Historic Park and Garden, although views in and out of the park are screened by the dense beech woodland surrounding the park.



The existing hedgerow along Welwyn Road screens part of the site



Parts of Thieves Lane are fronted by houses



The trees in Chesher's Plantation are covered by a Tree Preservation Order



The site is relatively level, with a slight slope down from north to south

Trees

There are no trees within the main body of the site, however there are some trees within the hedgerows along the northern and eastern site boundaries. No trees on the site area are covered by Tree Preservation Orders ('TPO'), however the trees within Cheshers Plantation are covered by TPOs. Blakemore Wood is protected under its designation as Ancient Woodland. Both woodlands adjacent to the site, as well as Panshanger Park, contain a high number of Veteran Trees.

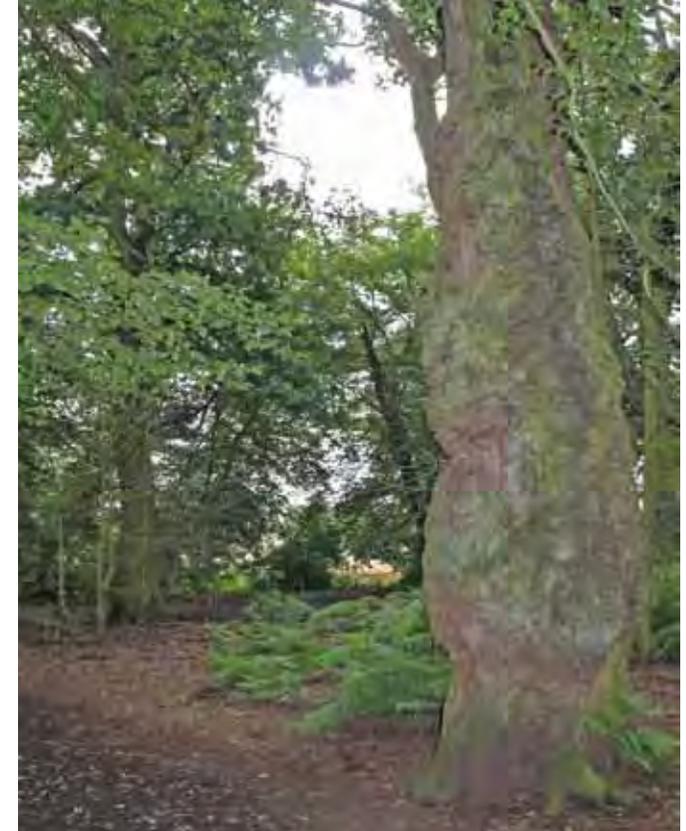
Ecology

The site is dominated by arable fields of relatively low ecological value. However, a species-rich hedgerow is present along the north eastern boundary of the site, with some field margins known to support notable arable plants. Blakemore Wood adjacent to the site is known to be Ancient Woodland and includes mature and veteran trees.

The narrow section of land to the northwest of the site forms part of the Panshanger Park Wildlife Site, which also forms the entire western and southern site boundary. It also includes Blakemore Wood and Cheshers Plantation. This Wildlife Site was formerly a SSSI, designated in part for notable saproxylic invertebrate communities associated with deadwood habitats. Protected species occur within this Wildlife Site, including great crested newts and reptiles, however there is limited potential for these to occur within the development site. The site has some potential to support a range of farmland birds, including both breeding and wintering species. Badgers may use the site to some extent. A bat hibernation roost is known to be present within an icehouse at Panshanger Park estate. Bats are likely to use the hedgerow along the north of the site as well as the woodlands adjacent to the site as flight routes. The mature trees adjacent to the western and southern site boundary also have high potential to support bats.



Figure 4.1: Wildlife Designations



There are a high proportion of Veteran Trees in the woods around the site



Panshanger Park is being enhanced to provide habitat for wildlife



There are public and permissive footpaths in Panshanger Park

Agricultural Land Quality

Under the DEFRA (MAFF) Agricultural Land Classification, the site has been designated as non-agricultural. This land is not of high quality, being prone to drought and is of low fertility.

Archaeology

A desk-based archaeological study has shown there are no archaeological or historically significant finds or monuments on the site. The adjacent Panshanger Park is however a Registered Park and Garden, and Dell Cottage to the south east of Chesher's Plantation is Grade II Listed. Discussions will however be held with the County Archaeology services to determine the extent of any archaeological surveys which may need to be undertaken at a later stage.



There are bus stops along Thieves Lane, east of the site

Services and Utilities

Initial investigations into the availability and capacity of the services and utilities in the area have shown that there is sufficient capacity for the proposed dwellings. Veolia Water has indicated that no reinforcements to the network would be required to serve the new properties, and Thames Water has stated that the foul drainage network in the area would be sufficient to deal with the proposed additional dwellings. Further consultation with the relevant utility providers will be undertaken at a later stage to develop appropriate proposals.

A search has been undertaken and there are no records of underground services within the site.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is not at risk of flooding and lies within Flood Zone 1. The permeability of the site is anticipated to be good and infiltration drainage is expected to be viable. A Sustainable Drainage System ('SuDS') will be incorporated into the development to control the surface water runoff within the site. A hierarchical approach will be taken and a range of solutions will be incorporated into the drainage system, potentially including source control measures, permeable surfaces, filter strips, swales and soakaways. Balancing ponds may also be incorporated if additional storage is required.

A Flood Risk Assessment and the drainage strategy will be developed in consultation with the Environment Agency.

05 Design Opportunities and Constraints

The site provides the opportunity to deliver housing in a sustainable location, close to the town centre.

The following opportunities and constraints have been identified:

Constraints

- The site lies in the Green Belt, albeit emerging policy/ housing requirements will entail a review of the boundaries.
- Respect the setting of the Ancient Woodland, TPO Woodland and Panshanger Registered Park and Garden and Wildlife Site.
- Protect ecological interest of Panshanger Park Wildlife Site, mature hedgerow to the north and Blakemore Wood (Ancient Woodland) to the west.

Opportunities

- Existing bus stops adjacent to the site and the site is approximately 1km from the railway station.
- The site is located close to local shops and schools.
- The site is relatively level.
- Opportunities to create strong landscaped frontages to Welwyn Road and Thieves Lane.
- The opportunity to create a high quality development, including affordable and family homes.
- Create views to Blakemore Wood and Chesher's Plantation.
- Provision of new areas of open space, a play area and recreational routes.
- The site's ecological value can be enhanced through sensitive landscaping and new habitat creation.
- Creation of a development with a distinctive sense of place that respects traditional building styles and materials.

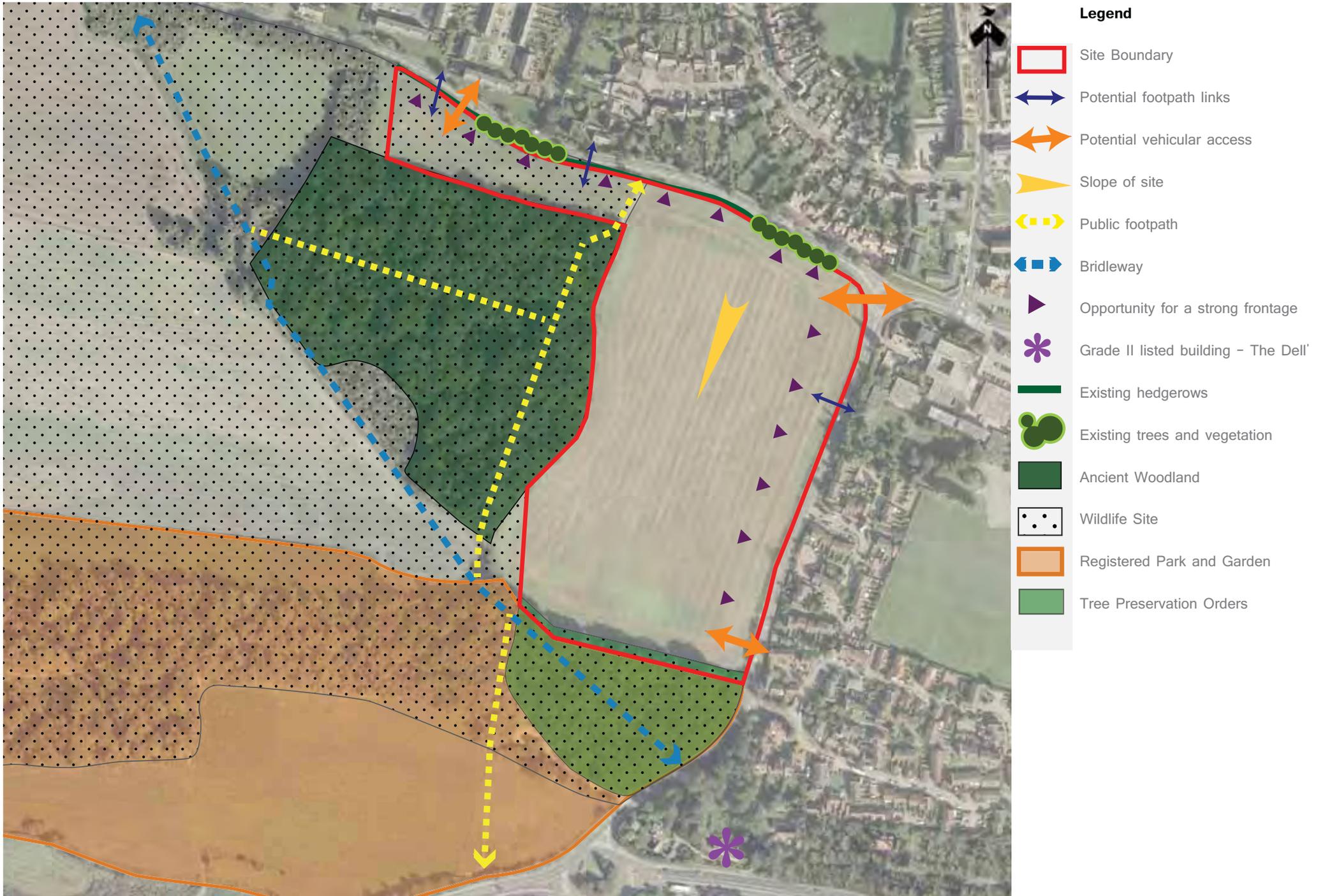


Figure 5.1: Opportunities and Constraints Plan

06 Illustrative Framework Plan

Illustrative Framework Plan

The Indicative Framework Plan establishes initial proposals for the site. It is recognised that these proposals should be subject to appropriate public consultation processes to give the local community a say on how the development of the site should be shaped.

The plan opposite proposes a robust urban design framework for approximately 250 dwellings with appropriate open spaces, which could include a new children's play area and a circular walk around the site that links with the existing public footpaths running across and adjacent to the site.

The proposed development has been structured around the creation of a principal street and the creation of some principal view corridors. These view corridors will be terminated by the impressive backdrops of Blakemore Wood and Chesher's Plantation.

An area of open space in the heart of the housing area is proposed to create a community focal point for the new homes.

The location of the new homes, together with the site's boundary relationships have created logical locations for an 'outward' looking development that addresses the new open spaces and Thieves Lane and Welwyn Road. The new houses overlooking the northern and eastern boundaries will create new landmark buildings that address the important entry points to the town.

Density

The density of the development will make an efficient use of the site whilst providing a balanced approach to the provision of new landscaping and public open space. A range of dwelling densities will be employed to create different areas of recognisable character. For instance, higher density forms will frame the site entrance and the principal routes, whilst lower density built forms can be located towards the site's woodland edges.

Dwelling Mix and Affordable Housing

A range of house types, sizes and tenures will be provided in order to widen opportunities for home ownership and create a sustainable, inclusive and mixed community. Provision will be made for affordable housing on the site as part of the overall development.

Movement and Connections

The development's new streets will be designed to create an environment where priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists. The new circular walk links into the existing network of public footpaths and bridleways, and provides direct links to the bus stops on Thieves Lane. This pedestrian-friendly approach is supported by a permeable street network to encourage walking to the nearby schools and the Sele Farm shops.

Landscape and Ecological Strategy

An appropriate buffer will be provided between Blakemore Wood and Chesher's Plantation from houses and hard landscaping. This buffer will form part of the development's public open space and will allow retention and enhancement of habitats within northwest parcel of the site that falls within Panshanger Wildlife Site. The Indicative Framework Plan has been designed to retain a linear open space around the perimeter of the site, within which the new circular walk will be located. The linear open space creates the opportunity for landscaping to be provided along the site's edges, especially along the Thieves Lane frontage. The development's open spaces will also provide wildlife corridors, permitting the movement of wildlife through the site, as well as protecting the adjacent Wildlife Site. This green corridor will include new planting to encourage wildlife in general.

At the detailed masterplanning stage, a landscape and ecological management plan can be drawn up to ensure existing landscape features are protected and enhanced, which would provide opportunities for wildlife, maintaining local biodiversity.



Figure 6.1: The Illustrative Framework Plan

07 Assessment of Potential Impacts on the Green Belt and Wildlife Site

Green Belt

As part of the proposals to allocate the site for housing development, it is proposed that the Green Belt boundary be amended in order to exclude the development site from the Green Belt. The current Green Belt boundary within the vicinity of the site runs along Thieves Lane to the east and Welwyn Road to the north of the site.

The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') states that local planning authorities have to consider the need to promote sustainable development patterns when drawing or reviewing Green Belt boundaries. As has been shown in this development framework document, the site offers a sustainable location for housing growth, and as such, the site should be excluded from the Green Belt.

The Green Belt boundary in this area is proposed to be moved from its location along Welwyn Road and Thieves Lane, to exclude the site and the two school sites to the east. The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries need to be defined clearly along physical features that are permanent and readily recognisable. The proposed Green Belt boundary will cut south from Welwyn Road, along the eastern side of the woodland belt which extends north east from Blakemore Wood. It will then follow the northern and eastern edge of Blakemore Wood, and then run east along the northern edge of Chesher's Plantation to rejoin the line of the existing Green Belt along Thieves Lane. The proposed boundaries thus follow permanent woodland edges which are easily recognisable.

Furthermore, the NPPF states that redrawn Green Belt boundaries should not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period. The woodland blocks adjacent to the site do not provide a suitable location for development, but instead serve as a logical, permanent and defensible settlement edge to Hertford. The Green Belt boundary will thus not need to be altered again in this location.

The NPPF in paragraph 80 states the five purposes of Green Belts are:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The proposed new Green Belt boundary follows permanent features which provide a robust development edge to the built-up area of Hertford, and as such, the exclusion of the site from the Green Belt will not result in unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area.

Welwyn Garden City is the closest settlement to the east of Hertford. It is located over 3km west of the site and Panshanger Park occupies the intervening land. Hertingfordbury lies around 350m south of the site, but Chesher's Plantation and the A414 occupy the intervening land. The proposed development will not extend further west into the countryside than the existing built development north of the site, nor will it extend further south than the existing housing which lies to the east of the site. As such, the development of the site and its exclusion from the Green Belt will have no significant effect on the function of the Green Belt in preventing neighbouring towns merging.

The site is physically and visually well related to the built-up area of Hertford, with the surrounding woodland blocks forming dense, permanent physical and visual barriers between the settlement and the countryside. As the woodland blocks form a boundary between the settlement and the countryside, development on the site and its exclusion from the Green Belt will not result in harmful encroachment into the countryside.

The residential areas surrounding the site are of limited historic or architectural merit, and as such, development on the site and its exclusion from the Green Belt will have no impact on the setting or character of the historic town core.

East Herts Council recognises that there is insufficient brownfield land to accommodate the housing requirements within the district, and as such, some greenfield sites within a sustainable location will need to be developed. The site is within a sustainable location and its release from the Green Belt will not result in any harm to the aims of the Green Belt policies.



Figure 7.1: Current and Proposed Green Belt Boundaries

Wildlife Site

The north western area of the proposed development site falls within the Panshanger Park Wildlife Site. This Wildlife Site has been designated due to the presence of grassland indicator species, fen and swamp habitats, ancient woodland with woodland indicator species, veteran trees and certain notable species (including water vole, bats, great crested newts, badgers and invertebrates). The part of the site which is covered by the Wildlife Site designation includes primarily arable habitats. In isolation this arable habitat is not considered to be of significant ecological value. However, this area forms part of the wider mosaic of habitats at the Wildlife Site. At the detailed design stage consideration will need to be given to the provision of appropriate habitat buffers and provision of public open space and thus will ensure the integrity of the wider Wildlife Site will be maintained. Veteran trees, woodland, hedgerows and field margins bounding the north-western area of the site would need to be protected in order to avoid impacting these components of the Wildlife Site.

08 Sustainability and Deliverability

Sustainability

The NPPF identifies sustainable development as the core principle underpinning planning.

The site lies on the western edge of Hertford, about 1.7km from the town centre and approximately 1km from Hertford North rail station. Buses currently run along Thieves Lane and Welwyn Road adjacent to the site, and the potential exists to incorporate a bus route within the new development. More sustainable movement patterns for local trips will be encouraged with the provision of safe and direct pedestrian/cycle routes. These will provide links to the existing school and shops as well as to the existing public footpaths and to the adjacent built-up areas of the town.

The need for social cohesion and inclusion is recognised and the detailed layout for the proposed development should make provision for a range of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to cater for a diverse mix of residents and provide for local housing needs. This will include the provision of affordable housing. However, to address the relative lack of larger homes in the town, the new housing will provide a proportion of family homes.

The environmental sustainability of the new homes will be a key measure of the development's success. The homes will therefore be built to meet the relevant regulations at the time of detailed technical design and construction, albeit the achievement of higher level ratings may impact on the ability of the scheme to meet all of the S106 or other contributions sought by EHC from the development. The issue of development viability must be paramount if the proposals are to proceed in a satisfactory manner.

Deliverability

Croudace Homes Group Limited has the technical and financial resources to design and build the whole site. Site management is undertaken by employed staff and its subcontractors are required to meet the high standards of health and safety and quality of build. On all its development sites, the Group is conscious of the impact on the local community and aims to minimise the impact of its activities on them.

Suitability

As demonstrated in this document, the site is a suitable location to accommodate residential growth and can provide much needed local homes in Hertford. Initial work carried out to date shows that there are no technical or environmental constraints that would preclude development of the site.

Public Consultation

The site promoters are committed to ensuring there is full engagement with the public in bringing forward the scheme for the site. It is intended to ensure that there are good opportunities to enable local residents and those in the wider area to comment on the emerging proposals in accordance with a methodology to be agreed with EHC.



09 Conclusion

East Herts Council are in the process of producing a Core Strategy document which will set out the spatial strategy in helping meet future identified growth-related needs. The document is to be known as the District Plan and was recently subject to consultation. The District Plan sets out a number of strategic options for future growth in Hertford, including strategic allocations to the west of the town, subject to a Green Belt review.

In response to the District Plan's strategic options, this document sets out how the development of the site could be brought forward and developed for approximately 250 dwellings and new areas of public open space.

The 9.05 hectares site is located just to the north A414 and represents a sustainable location for new housing. The site is well-served by a number of existing bus routes and benefits from two sets of adjacent bus stops on Thieves Lane. Hertford North railway station is within walking distance of the site.

The site is well located to the existing built edge of Hertford and benefits from being within convenient walking distance of a number of schools, the Sele Farm shops and the Golden Griffin public house. A public footpath cuts across the northern part of the site linking Welwyn Road to Blakemore Wood. A number of other public rights of way exist to the west of the site and the opportunity exists to provide links with these key local assets.

The site benefits from very few physical constraints, although an appropriate buffer is required between Blakemore Wood and the new houses. This document has also shown how development on the site would not have material effects on the Green Belt or the adjacent Wildlife Site.

In addition to providing much needed housing, the site can also deliver new public open space and enhancements to local biodiversity.

