EVPlanning

St Albans City & District Council's Draft Local Plan 2041 (Stage 1) - Examination in **Public**

Matter 3

The Green Belt

Statement on behalf of BRiCS Development

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Planning | Enforcement | Land Promotion | Sequential Tests | CIL

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement is submitted on behalf of BRiCS Development Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'BRiCS' or 'the Applicant') in relation to Matter 2 (Housing Growth and Spatial Strategy) of the St. Albans City and District Council's ('SACDC') Local Plan 2041 Examination. BRiCS have been promoting 'Land West of Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead' (the 'Site') throughout the plan-making process. The location of the Site is shown in Figure 1. The Site is in a highly sustainable location, located within convenient proximity to Wheathampstead. The Site is currently located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is located adjacent to the existing settlement area of Wheathampstead.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

1.2 There are no other technical or environmental constraints which

would preclude development of the Site. The Site would represent a logical extension to Wheathampstead to the north.

- 1.3 The Site has been previously submitted to the Call for Sites consultations in 2016 and 2021, as well as the Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plan in Autumn 2017. In September 2023, representations for the Site were made to the SALP Regulation 18 consultation, with Regulation 19 representations made in November 2024.
- 1.4 Our Regulation 19 representations provide further background to the Site and its credentials for development, points which are not repeated in this Statement.
- 1.5 The Site has undergone a masterplanning process, details of which were submitted in support of the Applicant's Regulation 19 representations. The outcome of this is that the Site is considered to have capacity for between 98 and 130 dwellings (depending on 30-40dph) alongside 1.3 acres of land dedicated to specialist care housing (Use Class C2). This means the Site could either meet SACDC's definition of a 'medium and small site (5-99 dwellings)' or the lower end of the spectrum of a 'large site (100-249 dwellings). This has relevant to **Issue 4 Q4**.
- In addition, although not specifically related to the Matters contained in the Stage 1 Hearings (and it is currently unclear whether this issue will be discussed at the Stage 2 Hearing sessions), we would like to reiterate to the Inspector the potential effect of the proposed National Landscape extension (which has not been consulted upon, and the details are unknown, **Appendix 1**). Despite the lack of weight to this future consultation, SACDC have deleted 2 proposed allocations in Wheathampstead, which is unwarranted. This is set out in our representations (refer to Section 4) and is raised where relevant in

answer to the Inspectors questions.

- 1.7 Notably, Policy NEB11 of the draft SALP has been drafted on the anticipation of an extension to the boundary of the Chilterns National Landscape into the District. This has resulted in a number of deleted allocations in the Regulation 19 SALP. At this stage, the extent of the proposed boundary variation to the Chilterns National Landscape is unclear, with the first stage of consultation scheduled for Summer 2025. It is therefore not justified for the SALP to pre-determine the boundary changes to the Chilterns National Landscape, as the proposals for the boundary extension are not material and haven't been tested through Examination by the Secretary of State.
- 1.8 The Applicant's Regulation 19 representations conclude that given SACDC's track record of poor housing delivery (linked to the absence of any Plan since 1994), the removed allocations at Wheathampstead should be reinstated, and further allocations should be made at sustainable locations (such as Wheathampstead) in order to ensure the SALP is sound.
- 1.9 Small-medium scale sites that do not contribute to the purposes of the Green Belt should be considered for development in the Local Plan, such as 'Land West of Lamer Lane'. The Site can be delivered in the short-term, is sustainably located adjacent to the existing settlement area of Wheathampstead and is in single ownership, as well as being bounded by existing built development.
- 1.10 Additionally, SACDC's Stage 2 Green Belt Review (June 2023) score for Land West of Lamer Lane (SA-43) confirms that the Site does not make a strong contribution to purposes a), b) and d) of the Green Belt. It is therefore considered the Site would be classed as 'Grey Belt', for the purposes of the new national planning guidance. The Site can therefore help to contribute to meeting the local housing needs of SACDC.

1.11 This Statement (Matter 2) should be read alongside the Matter 3 Hearing Statement submitted by ET Planning on behalf of BRiCS.

2. Response to Matter 3: The Green Belt

Issue 2: Green Belt Review

26. "The approach in the Plan has been informed by the Stage 2 Green Belt Review 2023 (GB 02.02). That followed an earlier Green Belt Review Sites and Boundaries Study in 2013 and 2014 (GB 04.03 and GB 04.04). In response to the Inspectors' Initial Questions, the Council provided a consolidated list of all Green Belt changes proposed in the submitted Plan".

Q3 – Is the methodology by which sites have been assessed in the Stage 2 Green Belt Review sufficiently robust and transparent to support the proposed boundary revisions? If not, what approach should have been used and why?

Q4 - How did the evidence in the Stage 2 Green Belt Review inform decisions about which sites to allocate?

- 2.1 There are flaws with how the findings of the evidence base translate into actual outcomes in the Draft Plan i.e. proposed allocations (Question 4). This is complicated further by the methodology used to assess sites, namely how 'Overall NPPF Performance' (Stage 2 GB Review, Section 5.6) flows from purpose 1-4 assessments (Question 3). The above issues are covered by BRiCS' Regulation 19 representations at Chapter 3.
- 2.2 Firstly, in terms of the evidence base, SACDC's Stage 2 Green Belt Review (June 2023) provides a scoring system for the assessment of sites against NPPF purposes a-d (referred to as purposes 1-4 by the LPA). The scoring system is based on a scale ranging from 0-5: where 0 equates to no contribution to the respective Green Belt purpose and 5 equates to a very high contribution.

- 2.3 Green Belt is the main constraint in the District. It has already been established that 81% of District is Green Belt and Green Belt releases will be the main engine for housing delivery. Related to **Q4**, the outcome of the Stage 2 Green Belt Review should therefore be *highly influential* in the site allocation process.
- 2.4 In other words, it would be unrealistic to expect to only allocate sites which score 0 (i.e. 'no contribution') against all four purposes. Indeed of the 172 sites assessed, this scenario only applies to 7 sites (SA-82, SA-87, SA-100, SA-111, SA-130, SA-153, SA-163) across the whole District.
- 2.5 Therefore, in order for the Council to meet housing needs in full will require selecting sites which don't have a perfect score. In other words, sites which may 'fail' one or more of the 4 Green Belt purposes.
- 2.6 For example, the Applicants Site (assessed under reference SA-43) scores as following (NB: this would meet the definition of 'grey belt' under the NPPF 2024):
 - Purpose 1: 0
 - Purpose 2: 0
 - Purpose 3: 5
 - Purpose 4: 0
- 2.7 Noting that the importance of Purpose 3 (or c) would appear to have been watered down in the NPPF 2024 (i.e. it does not feature in the assessment of whether a site qualifies as 'grey belt', as per the NPPF 2024 definition), sites such as SA-43 (which only fail on Purpose 3) would appear as sequentially the next best sites to allocate for development, behind the 7 sites which receive a perfect score.
- 2.8 Whilst this Plan has been submitted under the previous version of the

NPPF 2023, this sequential approach of the 'grey belt' definition in the NPPF 2024 has provided helpful clarification when considering the issue of site selection in the Green Belt.

- 2.9 Finally on **Q3** (which is linked to the above), it is not clear how 'Overall NPPF Performance' (Stage 2 GB Review, Section 5.6) flows from purpose 1-4 assessments.
- 2.10 Stage 2 GB Review (Section 5.6) clarifies the methodology as following:

"As all NPPF purposes are given equal weight, the strongest purpose score for each sub-area dictates its overall performance."

- 2.11 However, as discussed above, for the Council to meet housing needs in full will require selecting sites which don't have a perfect score. In other words, sites which may 'fail' one or more of the 4 Green Belt purposes.
- 2.12 The Councils methodology unfairly penalises sites such as SA-43 which score very well against 3 of the purposes, but get the worst score for the remaining purpose (which then translates into the overall score). This site would then perform worse than a site which has scored moderately against the majority of purposes, for example, which seems illogical.
- 2.13 To have an overall score based on your worst performing criteria is not representative of positive planning in the context of SACDC, which has historic levels of under-delivery. A more representative methodology should be employed such as a score based on an average figure, or rewarding number of criterion with 'no contribution'. Furthermore, it would be prudent to consider weightings (see comments about purpose c above).

Q5 - Where the evidence recommended that areas were not taken forward for further consideration, how did the Council consider this in the planmaking process?

- 2.14 As set out in our response to Matter 2, our view is that SACDC have not allocated enough land for housing in order to meet their Local Housing Need. It is clear that sites that make a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt should be considered for their release in order to meet the identified housing needs across the country. This is part of Labours' reforms to the planning system in order to boost housing delivery to meet the new national target of 300,000 homes per annum and will be important for SACDC as the release of Green Belt sites is necessary for them to achieve their housing targets.
- 2.15 Despite this, it is clear that SACDC did not release any Green Belt land for development surrounding the settlement of Wheathampstead. The Stage 2 Green Belt Review does not justify the reasoning for this. It is also evident that SACDC will rely on large strategic sites, which will likely come forward at the end of the Plan period, in order to deliver housing.
- 2.16 BRiCS consider that the combination of relying on large sites, with the ineffective release of Green Belt land, will mean that the Council will not be able to meet their housing needs. This will also be exacerbated given the 1 July 2026 transitional arrangement deadline in the NPPF 2024 (paragraph 78c) which means that SACDC will be required to provide an additional years' housing land supply (i.e. a 6-year supply of housing sites).

Q6 - Does the evidence consider ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land, as required by paragraph 147 of the Framework?

- 2.17 Paragraph 1.1 of SACDC's Stage 2 Green Belt Review confirms that the study takes into account the provisions of paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2023. However, the Annex Report to the Stage 2 Green Belt Review does not provide any form of scoring to assess the potential for compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.
- 2.18 The Green Belt Review is silent on this.
- 2.19 Related to 'Land West of Lamer Lane' (SA-43), information was provided to the Council as part of the Applicant's Regulation 19 Representations (in the form of a Vision Document, **Appendix 1** and Illustrative Masterplan, **Appendix 2**).
- 2.20 This Vision Document explained how a 'green lung' was proposed to provide a buffer to the north and east of the proposed development. This 'green lung' of 8.54 acres would act as *remaining Green Belt land* and would be enhanced as part of the developments commitment to provide site wide biodiversity net gain, as well as provide on-site SUDs, in accordance with Draft Plan policy SP10. These features would improve the environmental quality of the remaining Green Belt land. An existing public right of way (PROW) bisects the Site which would be retained and run through the enhanced 'green lung'. Therefore the Site would also meet the *compensatory improvements* to accessibility test given the proposed enhancement of the PROW.
- 2.21 This information on compliance with paragraph 147 of the Framework

was provided to the Council at Regulation 19 stage, and yet it does not appear to have factored into the assessment process prior to the Council submitting their Draft Plan. The Council provide no form of scoring to assess the potential for compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. This flaw with the assessment process should be seen in the context of other flaws, as set out in the answer to **Q3 and Q4**.

Issue 3: Exceptional Circumstances

Q1 - Do exceptional circumstances exist to alter the Green Belt boundary in St Albans and has this been fully evidenced and justified as part of the plan-making process?

- 2.22 As set out in our representations and response to Matter 2, SACDC's latest Authority Monitoring Report (2023) confirms that the Council can only demonstrate 1.7 years of deliverable housing sites. SACDC acknowledge the need to release Green Belt land in order to meet the Local Housing Needs of the District, which is 81% Green Belt. Exceptional circumstances therefore do exist to alter the Green Belt boundary.
- 2.23 However, BRiCS' main concern is the SACDC have been too conservative about the extent of the Green Belt boundary alteration. As set out in Chapter 3 of the Applicants Regulation 19 Representations, the extent of Green Belt land which is proposed to be released hasn't been fully evidenced and justified by the Council.
- 2.24 It is clear that if the SALP is adopted, on 1 July 2026, SACDC will be required to provide an additional years' housing land supply, in accordance with the transitional arrangements set out in paragraph 78c) of the new NPPF.
- 2.25 The NPPF 2023 is clear that the Standard Method should be used to

inform the "minimum number of homes needed". As there is a significant difference between the current Standard Method and proposed Standard Method housing need figures, and SACDC are not providing 80% of the Local Housing Need in their emerging SALP, the Council will be required to review their Local Plan at earliest opportunity to address the shortfall in housing need, as required by paragraph 236 of the NPPF 2024.

- 2.26 It is material to consider SACDC's poor track record of reviewing of their Local Plan (with the current Local Plan more than 30 years old) when considering the particular need for the Draft Plan to be positively prepared (and the risks associated with deferring housing need to a future Plan period).
- 2.27 NPPF 2023 paragraph 145 states that "strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period."
- 2.28 As covered by Q3 and Q4, there are good scoring sites within the Stage 2 Green Belt Review (2023), which have not been proposed for allocation.
- 2.29 In this context, the alterations to the Green Belt boundary are too conservative, and do not meet the tests of soundness (NPPF 2023 paragraph 35) in terms of being positively prepared, justified and being in accordance with the NPPF 2023.

Appendix 1 – Email from Natural England



FW: EXTERNAL FW: Chiltern Boundary Extension Consultation - Dates?

From SM-NE-ChilternsAONBboundaryreview (NE) < ChilternsAONBboundaryreview@naturalengland.org.uk > Date Wed 2025-03-19 10:27 AM

To Tom Ryan <Tom.Ryan@etplanning.co.uk>

Hello Tom.

Thank you for your email. We do not yet have a confirmed consultation date but are still working towards our current timescales of a consultation in Spring/Summer 2025.

Kind regards, Angela Simmons Landscape Designations Project Officer

From: Tom Ryan <Tom.Ryan@etplanning.co.uk>

Sent: 18 March 2025 09:58

To: SM-NE-ChilternsAONBboundaryreview (NE) < ChilternsAONBboundaryreview@naturalengland.org.uk >

Subject: Re: EXTERNAL FW: Chiltern Boundary Extension Consultation - Dates?

Good Morning Angela,

I am just wondering if there is any update on the consultation dates for the Chiltern Boundary Extension?

Kind regards,

Tom Ryan BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Principal Planner | ET Planning



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From: SM-NE-ChilternsAONBboundaryreview (NE) < chilternsAONBboundaryreview@naturalengland.org.uk>

Sent: 15 January 2025 1:56 PM

To: Tom Ryan < Tom.Ryan@etplanning.co.uk >

Subject: RE: EXTERNAL FW: Chiltern Boundary Extension Consultation - Dates?

Good afternoon Tom,

I can confirm that you are now on our mailbox list. There isn't currently anything in the public domain about the planned location of the expansion. This information will become available at the launch of the public and statutory consultation, which will likely run for 12 weeks.

Appendix 2 - Vision Document

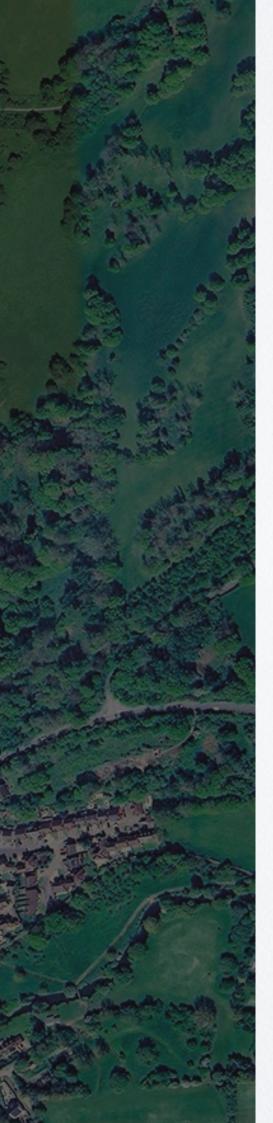




Land west of Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead







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Prepared by

Pegasus Group Ltd

Prepared on behalf of BRICS Development Lmtd

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1.0 The Vision

Our vision is to create a high quality, thriving new residential community, that places a beautifully landscaped retirement village or care home facility at its heart. We will deliver a range of high-quality, sustainable homes and open spaces that stitches naturally into the existing natural landscape and complements the wider Wheathampstead area.



New Homes

We will meet local communities' needs and aspirations with a range of high quality new homes of all types, including affordable homes an specialist accommodation to support people to live a longer and healthier life.







Enhanced opens space and trees

We will deliver an enhanced and more accessible open space, connecting the space and the new residential community via new footpaths, roads and cycle links. As many of the existing trees as possible will be retained and the landscape offering enhanced, with new planting and native species to be incorporated, complementing and supporting the biodiversity benefits of the site.







Retirement Village/Elderly Care

We will deliver an element of retirement housing that will form the centre piece of our masterplan designs, offering a range of accommodation and care needs. This will also offer outstanding onsite facilities with gyms, swimming pool and outdoor activities for positive physical and mental wellbeing.







Sustainability and integration

We will deliver energy efficient and sustainable homes in a landscaped environment that seeks to support, protect and enhance the existing ecological and biodiversity characteristics of the site, whilst delivering much needed residential accommodation in an appropriate location. The site is in a very sustainable location, within a ten-minute walk from Wheathampstead Village amenities, suitable to support all ages and families.







1.1 Care Home Village / Retirement Homes

The Retirement village will offer a comprehensive and balanced approach to senior living, providing a mix of housing options that cater to a range of needs and preferences. This variety is essential for fostering a vibrant, inclusive community where older adults can live independently while also having access to support as their needs evolve. A balanced housing offering—ranging from independent living units to assisted care facilities—ensures that residents can age in place, benefiting from continuity and stability.

Key to this is a focus on promoting an active body and mind. Open spaces, recreational facilities, and thoughtfully designed environments will encourage physical activity, whether it's through walking, gardening, or participating in group fitness programs. These spaces, combined with a range of activities such as educational workshops, hobby groups, and social events, help maintain mental sharpness and emotional well-being. By prioritising quality of living and creating opportunities for both social connection and personal growth, our retirement village will enable older adults to lead fulfilling, independent lives, while emphasising the invaluable contributions of the older generation to the community.







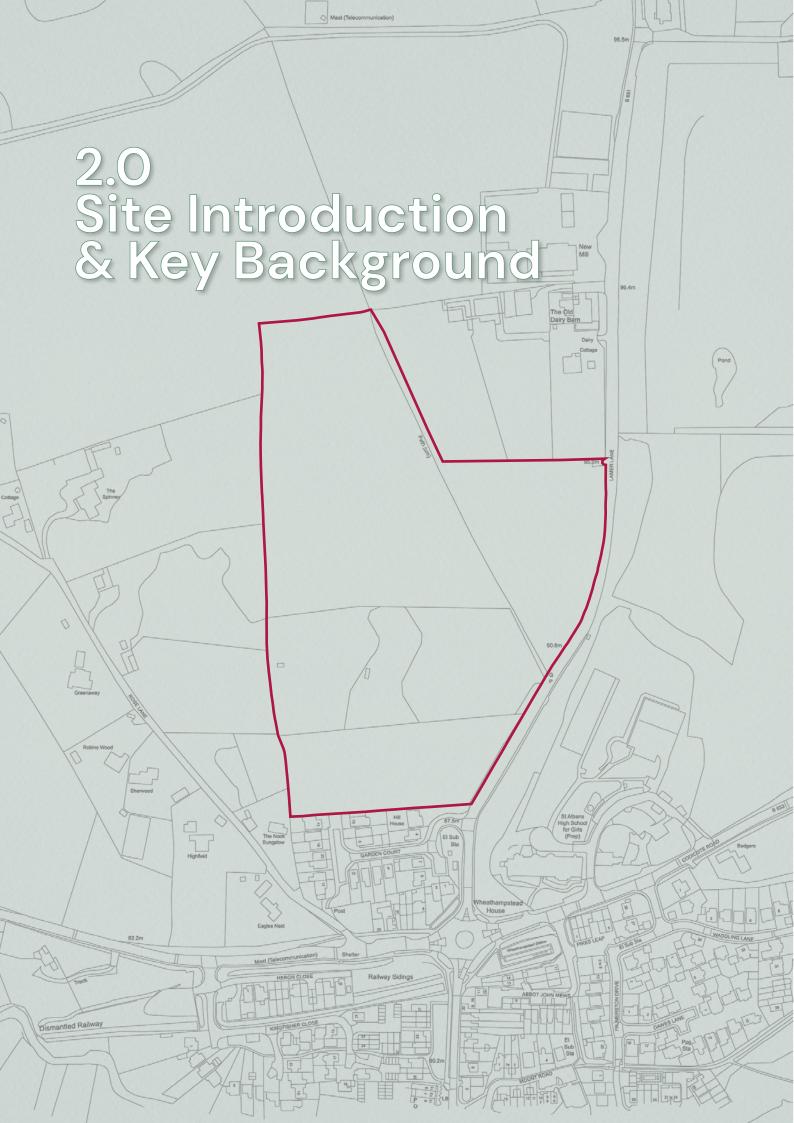












2.1 Purpose of the Document

This document has been prepared in support of development on Land west of Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead. The proposals aim to highlight a significant opportunity to deliver a high-quality residential development, alongside care home facilities and an array of Public Open Spaces and green infrastructure within a sustainable location.

The site falls under the jurisdiction of St Albans City District Council and is not currently identified as a draft allocation however this document sets out the vision for the site and how development could be suitably accommodated.

The site offers an excellent opportunity for development on a sustainable site to help address local housing need. Responding proactively to evolving household compositions and ensuring that the housing supply is aligned with the current and future needs of the community.

Land west of Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead provides:

- » Up to 130 dwellings;
- » Up to 1.3ac/0.52ha of land for Care Home facilities (Use Class C2); and
- » 8.54ac/3.45ha Public Open Space consisting of amenity and recreational space, play facilities, SuDs and swales and ecological mitigation and enhancement.

The site offers the potential to deliver development which is well related to the existing settlement of Wheathampstead whilst helping address local housing need. The site offers the potential to deliver development well related to the village whilst maintaining the village character. The Vision Document therefore seeks to highlight the deliverability credentials of the land and its location and supports the promotion of the site as a high quality development.



2.2 Site Context

The village of Wheathampstead straddles the river Lea, predominantly occupying the lower north-facing slopes of the valley. The site is generally demarcated by mature trees and hedgerows. It is bounded to the west and northwest by farmsteads and hamlets scattered amongst arable farmland, with Lower Luton Road passing through the countryside along the valley floor, lined by housing in long sections. Large houses and gardens extend along Rose Lane, with one property abutting the western site boundary.

To the north, the site is bordered by buildings associated with New Mill and The Old Dairy Barn, with larger houses like Delaport House and Delaport Coach House further north in well-treed grounds along Lamer Lane. Wheathampstead Golf Course, Mid Herts Golf Club, and Gustard Wood Common lie on the western and northern sides of Delaport House, forming part of the Gustard Wood Conservation Area.

To the northeast, the site is adjacent to arable farmland, woodland, and parkland (Lamer Park). To the east, it is bordered by St. Albans High School for Girls, including Wheathampstead House and its well-treed grounds on the eastern side of Lamer Lane.

The southeast and south of the site are bordered by the built-up area of Wheathampstead, with housing at Garden Court abutting the southern site boundary. The historic core of the village, including St Helen's Church, is situated in the lower northern part of the village, with modern housing estates in the southern upper parts.

To the southwest, the town of Harpenden lies approximately 1.5 km west of Wheathampstead, connected by Harpenden Road, which follows the ridge along the southern edge of the valley. The site is well-contained and presents opportunities for small-scale residential development. The surrounding natural and built features act as barriers, isolating the site from the broader countryside.

The site comprises three irregularly shaped fields with internal boundaries marked by timber post-and-rail fencing. The southernmost field is predominantly covered with native scrub and trees, while the two northernmost fields feature semi-improved grassland and several mature oak trees. An area of scrub associated with former quarrying is located in the center of the central field.

The site slopes gently from southeast to northwest, with an approximate 10-meter elevation difference, except for steep slopes along the southern section of the western boundary where adjacent land lies several meters lower.

The southern section of the eastern boundary is defined by a belt of deciduous woodland, a flint-covered embankment, and intermittent mature trees. The flint-covered embankment is part of the Wheathampstead Conservation Area. The northern section of the eastern boundary is marked by a roadside earth bank, now denuded of its tree and hedgerow vegetation.

The western boundary is defined by off-site woodland and/or a field boundary hedgerow, while the southern boundary is marked by a retaining wall, with Garden Court housing situated at a lower level. The eastern section of the northern boundary is defined by timber post-and-rail fencing, and the western section by an immature hedgerow.



- 1. Premier Store
- 2. Post Office
- 3. Tesco Express



- 4. The Village Surgery
- 5. Manor Pharmacy
- 6. Wheathampstead Dental Surgery



- 7. Miller & Carter
- 8. The Reading Rooms
- 9. The Swan



10. Wheathampstead Library



11. St Albans High School Prep12. St Helen's C of E Primary School

13. Beech Hyde Primary School & Nursery



14. Butterfield Playing Fields15. River Park



16. Wheathampstead Station



Bus Stop



2.3 Ecology

The site is not designated for ecological value, however we recognise that the key landscape features around the site such as the existing trees and hedgerows, may be of importance to wildlife in terms of providing habitat and foraging routes. Any future application for planning permission would be supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and species–specific surveys.

The layout of the site will respect these key features, allowing for their retention and enhancement, as well as offering significant opportunities for biodiversity enhancement through the introduction of grasslands, native species, tree planting and other measures on areas of open space. The landscape design of the site must ensure that biodiversity gains to the magnitude of 10% can be achieved in line with relevant legislation.

The Masterplan seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity by:

- » Retaining and buffering hedgerows and trees where possible, incorporating them into multi- functional green infrastructure;
- » Creating and restoring ecological networks, by bolstering retained hedgerows with additional planting and providing dark corridors for nocturnal wildlife;
- » Providing appropriate SuDs strategy; and
- » Creating areas of scrub which will be allowed to succeed into woodland, generating new opportunities for a variety of species.

2.4 Hydrology

The proposed development is located within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk from fluvial and tidal flooding and is supported by the NPPF advice that a residential-led development is an appropriate land use to include in Flood Zone 1.

Additionally, with a series of proposed SuDs, swales, bioretention, detention basins and possibly rain gardens and permeable paving the site will be able to sufficiently capture surface water run off whilst offering other environmental, ecological and community benefits. This includes improvements to water quality, biodiversity, landscape, amenity and also to recreational pursuits by contributing to the areas of Public Open Space and to providing a well–connected network of green and blue corridors. With reference to Policy CS18, water quality as well as a number of other areas would be enhanced and protected.

A full Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy would be submitted with any future planning application.

2.5 Accessibility

The site is located within walking distance of a wide range of everyday services and facilities, including public houses, healthcare facilities, leisure and employment opportunities found within Wheathampstead. Residents will therefore have access to a wide range of services and facilities either on foot or by bicycle along high quality routes.

As part of the development proposals, Care Home facilities are proposed to the east of the site, providing much needed social care provision.

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

- » To facilitate safe, convenient and suitable Nonmotorised user routes, it is proposed to provide the following access arrangements;
- » Enhancement of the existing Public Right of Way;
- » Additional permeable routes within residential and open space areas; and
- Existing points of pedestrian access (PRoW) to the site have potential for upgrading so as to provide connections towards the village amenities and facilities.

2.6 Landscape, Visual and Heritage Considerations

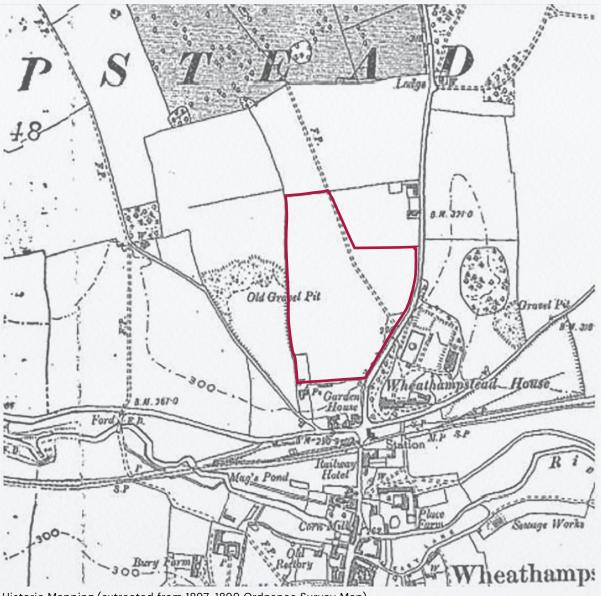
The site has the potential to incorporate approximately 1.4 acres (0.56 hectares) of Public Open Space (POS). This area can accommodate a variety of land uses, including the establishment of a LEAP/ LAP and attenuation basins.

The proposed development aims to preserve the existing vegetation as a wildlife habitat and to create an aesthetically pleasing landscape. This is beneficial for both wildlife and future residents. Additionally, the proposals will enhance the existing landscape, providing additional planting across the site.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Features

Surface water run-off rates will be managed by the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) on-site, to ensure that the development does not impact on the surrounding area.

The site is not covered by any built heritage or landscape designation that would suggest an increased value or sensitivity to change, and is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designation that would prohibit its development for residential purposes.

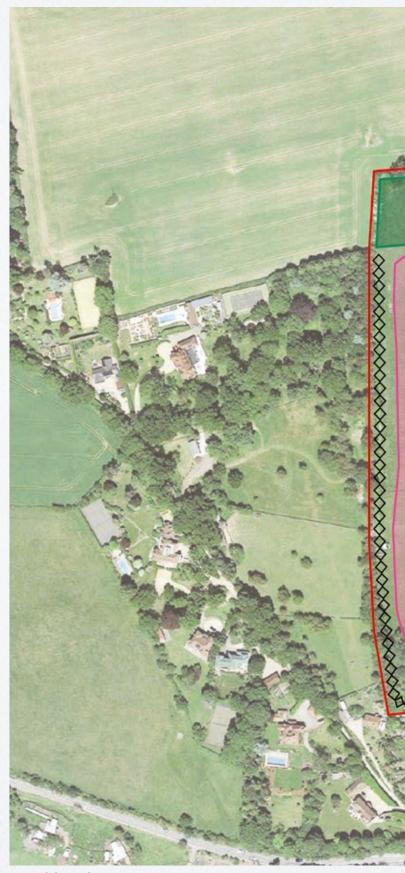


Historic Mapping (extracted from 1897-1899 Ordnance Survey Map)

In support of proposals, Scarp Landscape Architecture Ltd were commissioned in February 2024 to provide preliminary advice on landscape, visual and green belt issues. The advice note identified key landscape and visual sensitivities of the site; and provided guidance for accommodating new housing on the site in landscape and visual terms, concluding:

There is potential for new housing to be accommodated on the site in landscape and visual terms but built form should be off-set from Lamer Lane and from all peripheral parts of the site to provide a physically and visually robust vegetation framework for achieving landscape and visual integration. The landscape and visual analysis has not identified any limitations on the elevation of new housing within the site other than to accommodate an appropriate landscape treatment for the far upper part of the site.

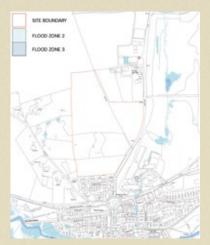
Any housing and associated landscape framework developed on this small-scale site would by visually well-contained by existing and proposed woodland and tree belts. Any housing developed on the site would not conflict with the pattern of the existing settlement. The landscape setting as perceived from most parts of the village, including the approach through the village from the south, would be substantially conserved.'



Potential Development Layout (Source: Landscape and Visual Advice Note)



3.0 Opportunities & Constraints



Flood Zone Plan

Opportunities

The provision of a substantial quantity of open market and affordable housing in a location within walking distance of local facilities and forms a natural extension to the existing settlement.

8.45ac/3.45ha of Public Open Space that could consist of amenity and recreational space, sports pitches, community allotments, orchards, woodland, play facilities (including teens and children) SuDs and swales and ecological mitigation and enhancement.

Capitalise on views within the scheme to the south.

Highway improvements along Lamer Lane to improve the access to the site.

To provide new sustainable drainage feature (SuDs) which will form an integral part of the developments green infrastructure and be designed to maximise the landscape and biodiversity value.

To capitalise on the pedestrian connections adjoining the site and improving permeability further for new and existing residents.

Enhancement of existing and provision of new wildlife habitats.

Create a more subtle development edge than is currently offered.

Enhancement of the existing biodiversity through green buffers, supplementary planting and habitat creation.

Consideration of the existing tree and hedgerow cover of the site.

To provide open market, affordable housing.

Constraints

Provide visual screening of the development where appropriate through a tree-planted woodland buffer.

Existing trees and hedgerows to be retained where possible and supplemented with green buffers, with compensatory planting provided where it is necessary to remove vegetation.

Consideration of the existing residents to the south.

Consideration and buffer from the school on the east of the site

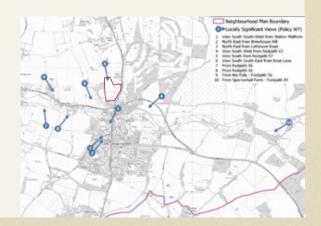
Existing ecological areas to be retained, protected and supplemented with planting/species rich grassland.

Appropriate response needed to density and heights of existing built form.

Creation of an appropriate transition between the settlement and wider setting of farmland to the north.

Consideration the Wheathampstead Conservation Area to the southern section of the eastern boundary.

Consideration of, locally significant views, identified in the Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plate (extract below).





4.0 Design Principles



4.1 Design Vision

The Vision for Land west of Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead

The Vision for the site has been developed to demonstrate site deliverability, having regard to the constraints and opportunities at this location; the pressure to sensitively optimise development, inclusion of care home facilities, and a focus on varied house sizes to reflect locally identified housing need.

The accompanying proposal provides a scheme that is landscape led- and thus provides a large amount of open space and retained greenery, ensuring that the development will be delivered within an attractive landscape setting that provides enhanced leisure opportunities for new and existing residents.

The open spaces, SuDs and play areas located within the scheme will help to establish a legible place with some strong design principles at its heart. The site will also embed healthy living principles by creating active walking and cycle routes that flow through the development and open spaces.



8.0ac/3.23ha of housing (including affordable).



8.54ac/3.45ha of open space with retention of existing landscaping and significant trees.



1.3ac/0.52ha for care home facilities).



Enhanced connectivity across the site.

4.2 Design Principles

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

The site's existing vegetation will be supplemented by landscaped buffers inclusive of additional planting, as well as natural and amenity green space. In addition, the eastern edge will be development free and therefore provides opportunity for woodland planting, to screen the site from Lamer Lane. The site is not subject to a tree survey, but the proposals will seek to retain all trees and hedgerows, though removal may be necessary to facilitate access and movement. These areas have been supplemented with green buffers which are extended along the southern and western edges and the site, creating ecological buffers and facilitating pedestrian movement. The Masterplan considers the key principles of Building with Nature to ensure that green infrastructure is embedded throughout the scheme.



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Movement & Connectivity

The proposed development would offer the provision of a single vehicular access point into the development, with additional pedestrian accesses forming part of a permeable network of streets which assists in dispersing traffic (vehicular and pedestrian) and create a clear movement hierarchy. Providing easily recognisable routes which balances the street as a space alongside its function as a movement corridor.

The site is already established within the existing movement network with an existing Public Rights of Way crossing the site. This has been retained and enhanced along the proposed green infrastructure grid with additional recreational routes for residents through POS areas. Pedestrian permeability will therefore be encouraged and enhanced by the delivery of the scheme.

Vision

The vision is for a new development that integrates well with context providing an attractive living environment for residents and which enhances permeability across the site.

The proposal would deliver a significant quantity of housing interlaced with a network of green corridors and attractive green spaces along with care home facilities. The development would comprise an arrangement of perimeter blocks that have been shaped around the existing site contours and retained green infrastructure which will be enhanced and consolidated to provide extended wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities.

The positioning and orientation of potential buildings has been considered carefully so as to avoid amenity issues where bounding existing residential areas; and to avoid placing buildings too close to the existing southern and western boundaries of the site which border open land to the former and existing development to the latter.

The framework is founded on the principles of townscape and legibility, and the development will embrace and perpetuate the character of Wheathampstead, including use of appropriate materials and detailing as part of creating a locally distinct development with a strong sense of place.



4.3 Vehicle Access

It is considered that access could be taken to the site from the eastern edge of the site, from Lamer Lane. This access would be delivered via a priority junction access arrangement, where suitable visibility splays can be achieved in line with Manual for Streets Design Guidance and Local Highways Authority standards to ensure safe access and egress to the site. Vehicular routes within the site will look to minimising potential junction capacity issues and maintain clear non-motorised routes which will promote sustainable travel.

In terms of pedestrian connectivity, it is considered that a footway could be constructed within the site and highway verge to provide a connection to existing pedestrian links.

Any development will ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport are taken up, including limiting the need to travel and maximising opportunities for walking, cycling and effective access to public transport. Development should protect and enhance the existing Public Right of Way footpath through the site, which crosses from the north east.

Overall, it is considered that there are no insurmountable constraints on Lamer Lane for the purposes of access of the site.







View looking south across site from location near northern site boundary Source: Landscape and Visual Advice Note)









5.0 Design Proposals & Key Benefits

Economic support for local businesses in Wheathampstead from new residents.



Mix of **family homes**, ranging in sizes including affordable homes, increasing opportunities for home ownership and rental in the local area.



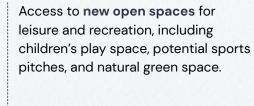
Employment opportunities including full time and supply chain jobs during the construction period.



Care home facilities.



Excellent walking & cycling connectivity to town centre.



The protection and enhancement of existing landscape features and biodiversity habitats.







6.0 About BRiCS

6.1 About BRiCS

We specialise in creating high quality, sustainable new communities in the South and South East of England. Our forte is designing each scheme to be a unique place of its own. With thoughtfully designed architecture, landscaping, streetscapes and character that respect the local setting. And each home carefully designed for how we live today. Places and homes that people can be proud to live in. We strive to give our buyers the experience they expect from a new home – high quality, thoughtful design of spaces, low energy costs, and a place that feels lovely to live in. All backed up by the level of care and support we'd expect if we were buying a home for our own families.

6.2 Places we're proud of

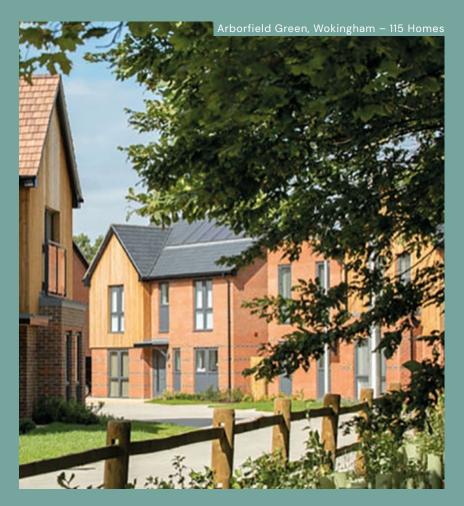
Here are some of the schemes the BRiCS team have personally delivered, currently at BRiCS and previously





BRICS







No matter the project, no matter the challenge, you can rely on us to find solutions, to get things done, to get things



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Expertly Done.



Appendix 3 – Framework Masterplan





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