

# Site Context and Opportunity 02



GREEN ACRES



# Site Context and Opportunity

## 2.1 Local Services and Amenities

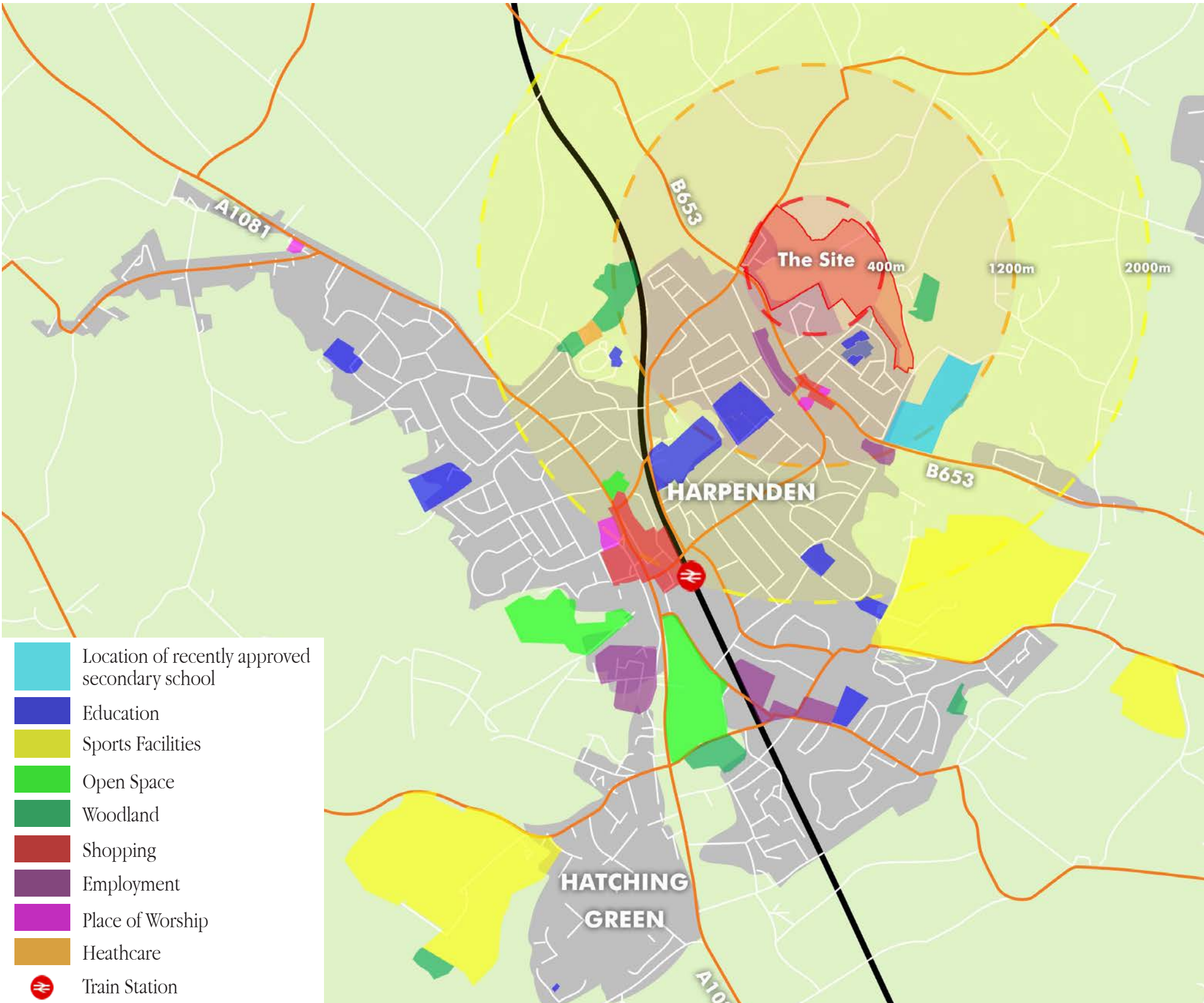
Harpenden is recognised as the second most sustainable location for development in the District and has a good range of services, facilities and employment opportunities available, along with a good range of transport options.

Harpenden is a highly desirable place to live. The Town is very well positioned in terms of its accessibility to London both by road and rail & has good international connectivity with Luton Airport less than 9km away. Amenities within the Town Centre are excellent, with a thriving High Street supported by a good mix of well-known chain stores as well as local and independent traders and a vibrant café culture.

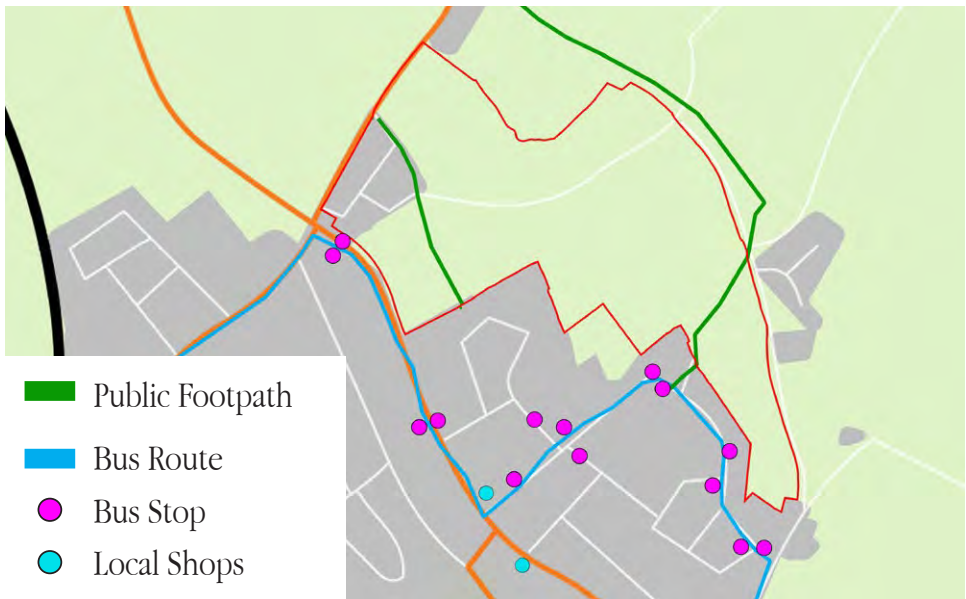
Harpenden is well served by a good collection of desirable schools catering for children of all ages. A number of these schools are close to the Site, such as Sauncey Wood and Manlands Primary Schools and Sir John Lawes Secondary School. An application for the development of a new secondary school on land to the south-east of the Site, on the eastern side of Common Lane and accessed off Lower Luton Road, was approved in February 2018 by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

There are several employment areas around the Town with the Lea Industrial Estate and Allied Business Centre within close proximity of the Site.

There is a sense of community at the heart of Harpenden, which a new development at the Site would strive to support and enhance.



Local Amenities Plan





# Site Context and Opportunity

## 2.2 Katherine Warington School

Plans for the development of a new secondary school on land to the South East of the centre of the Site, on the eastern side of Common Lane were approved in February 2018 by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). The entrance to the school is off Lower Luton Road, approximately 1200m from the western part of the Site, and 500m from the south eastern corner of the site on Common Lane.

The plans are for a 6FE secondary school which would accommodate up to 1,150 pupils.

The Site would provide a critical mass of local school age children for the proposed nearby Secondary School (to the immediate east of the site), allowing a significant proportion of trips to be made by sustainable means, reducing the potential highway impact. The mixed-use nature of the proposals for the Site would also encourage future residents to use on-site facilities and thus reducing the need for off-site/private motor travel.



Submitted Landscape Masterplan for Katherine Warington School



# Site Context and Opportunity

## 2.3 Sustainable Transport Network & Linkages

Harpenden is well served with regard to public transport connections to destinations including Luton, Bedford, Watford and London. From Harpenden Railway Station, travel to London (St Pancras) is possible in 26 minutes, with Thameslink trains providing direct access to destinations to the south which include East Croydon, Gatwick Airport and Brighton. Northbound trains offer direct links to Bedford and Luton. Harpenden station is approximately 2km from the site which equates to a 25 minute walk or 5 minute drive from the Site.

The M1 motorway is located approximately 3 kilometres to the west of Harpenden Town Centre, providing access to London and the M25 and destinations to the north . The number 657 bus route runs along B653 Lower Luton Road adjoining the southern boundary of the Site. Bus stops are located within an acceptable walk distance (400-600 metres) of all residential properties within the site, providing access to Harpenden Town Centre, as well as Hatfield, St Albans, Wheathampstead and Redbourn. In addition, Harpenden is served by an extensive network of public footpaths and cycle paths, which link to the facilities and amenities available. The Town centre is approximately 12 minutes away from the site via bike. These routes connect well to Lower Luton Road/ Bower Heath Lane in the vicinity of the Site.

A Public Right of Way crosses a small portion of the Site and connects to the north of Bower Heath Lane, which in turn connects into an extensive network of footpaths & bridleways within the wider Green Belt, offering excellent recreation routes.





# Site Context and Opportunity

## 2.4 Existing Settlement Pattern and Densities

The existing framework of streets in the north-east of Harpenden shows a clear response to the topography of the landscape in this area. Land within the vicinity of the Site drops from the north-east and south-west towards the River Lea, with street patterns either aligning with the contours of the land, or running against the gradient to reach higher ground.

A Residential Density Study undertaken by SACDC demonstrates that comparable sites (i.e previous Greenfield sites developed for a range of flats and housing) have a net residential density of 17dph - 32 dph. Whilst other (more urban) sites in Harpenden are shown to have densities of 60dph - 117dph, these are flatted infill sites within the Town Centre, and therefore not considered comparable.

The proposed development will therefore seek to reflect the general approach to street pattern to be able to circumnavigate the Site and its varying levels successfully, responding effectively to the existing urban grain and density of prevailing residential development in proximity of the Site.



Road Hierarchy Plan



# Site Context and Opportunity

## 2.5 Surrounding Character and Heritage

The origins of Harpenden lie around the High Street with early stages of growth of the town evident on a north-south axis along the main road. Development was then evident towards the east upon the opening of Harpenden (East) Station (located at the eastern end of Station Road and closed in 1965) and the central Harpenden Station which opened in 1868.

Development in the north-east of the town was first evident along Western Road leading to the area known as Cold Harbour, located immediately to the south-west of the Site. The housing estate in Batford, adjoining the south-east boundary of the Site, was built in the 1950's.

Batford is located on the north-eastern side of Lower Luton Road, and is defined on its north and western edges by the Site and its eastern edge by Common Road. This settlement edge will now extend further east after the construction of the new Katherine Warington School.

There are no heritage assets within the Site itself, or within the immediate proximity. A Grade II Listed Public House, known as the Red Cow, is located approximately 100 metres to the south.

There are also three clusters of Listed Buildings to the east, west and north of the Site (Grade I and II), however these are some distance away between 850m and 1,500m, dissected from the Site by roads and wooded areas.

Harpenden Conservation Area is located 600m to the south of the Site, on Ox Lane and beyond.

Materials such as red brick, tile hanging and clay roof tiles are widely used, with architectural features such as prominent chimneys, dormer windows, bay windows and projecting gables evident in much of the local vernacular.



Jameson Road



Red Cow Public House



Ox Lane





Church Green



Church Green



Clarendon Road







# Planning Policy Context 03



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# Planning Policy Context

## Introduction

The site is being considered by SACDC as one of 8No. Broad Locations in the Green Belt as part of the emerging Local Plan. This is addressed in the Regulation 18 “Have Your Say” Consultation document which sets out the need to provide 913 new homes a year over the period (2020 – 2036) within St Albans. Work undertaken by Barton Willmore has indicated that this figure could increase to 1,172 new homes per year in order to address the current acute affordability problem in St Albans. The need to provide new homes in sustainable/Broad Locations is therefore pertinent and we address this below having regard to the evidence base for the Local Plan.

## Evidence base

The Site was assessed as part of the 2014 “Green Belt Review” as well as in the “Development Site and Strategy Options Evaluation”. It was, along with a number of other areas, tested as against the 5 purposes of the Green Belt (National Planning Policy Framework) – this is set out in the Barton Willmore representations. The site and seven other Broad Locations were considered the least sensitive in the Green Belt Review are therefore suitable for development. The concluding comments of the Green Belt Review in respect of this site are as follows:

**Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development, it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the southern and western part of the sub-area (ref. S6 within the Review).**

**This land has clearly defined edges in most directions. The urban edge of Harpenden lies adjacent to the south and west, together with Lower Luton Road (B653). The eastern edge comprises Common Lane. The northern boundary would comprise a track across the agricultural land between Common Lane and Greenacres, together with a short section of Bower Heath Lane.**

**Structural landscape/hedgerow planting along the northern edge of the proposed area would create a clearer and more defensible edge, help to integrate new development and provide more separation from the landscape to the north.**

We support the findings as set out in the evidence base above, and the masterplan for the site has been devised to respond to the parameters contained above. This includes setting development in the southern and western elements of the site and adjacent to the Batford area of Harpenden. The northern extent would be provided as undeveloped open space (including informal and formal recreation) with the existing track forming a defensible boundary to this. The masterplan approach is also landscape-led and it seeks to retain existing hedgerows where feasible. This also includes additional planting in the northern parcels of the site to prevent encroachment to the countryside beyond. Further details regarding the evolution of the masterplan are addressed in the following sections.

## “Have Your Say” Consultation

In general, we support the consultation document which recognises the need to locate development at this Broad Location. The site can also deliver the “right kind of homes” including an appropriate mix of sizes and tenures. The plan identifies the need to protect historic buildings, wildlife sites and areas of Natural Beauty – all objectives we support. Development of the site will not impact upon any of these elements and as addressed above, it can be sensitively designed and accommodated within the Green Belt.



# Planning Policy Context









# Site Appraisal 04



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# Site Appraisal

## 4.1 Landscape and Landform

The site sits across the boundary of the Upper Lea Valley (LCA033) and Blackmore End Plateau (LCA034) landscape character areas.

The Upper Lea Valley LCA is described as “a marked valley form with a narrow river corridor. Arable cropping dominates on the slopes. A good number of estate woodlands create a mature wooded feel to the east. Parklands are a notable feature making use of both slopes and the river valley. Conversion to golf courses has been successful, while there is visual impact from 20th-century settlements.”

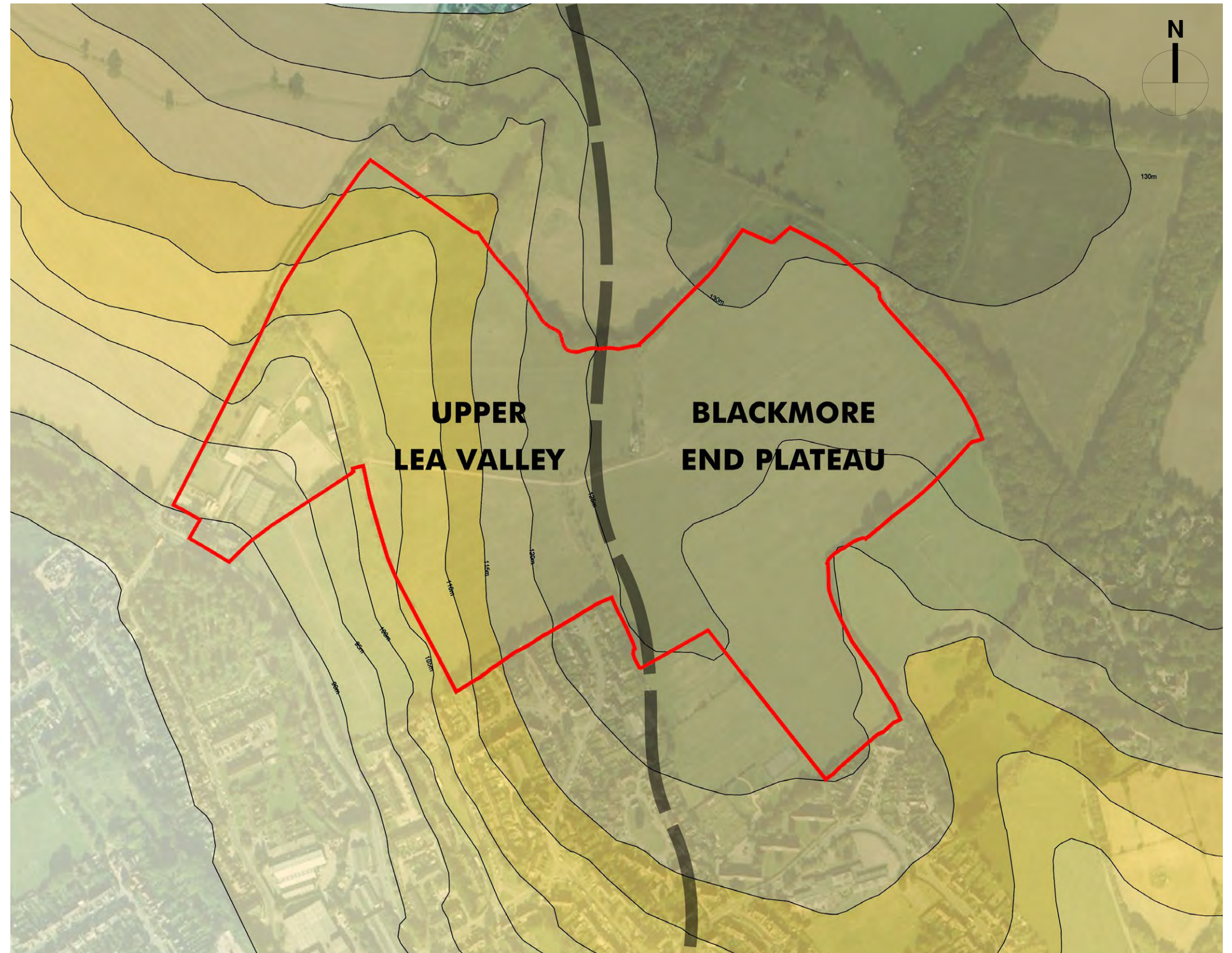
The Blackmore End Plateau LCA is described as “an elevated plateau area with extensive arable fields. Despite recent landscape change there is a strong sense of continuity closer to the settlements and around some of the notable historic houses and parklands. The area has a tranquil and remote feel with good opportunities for informal recreation.”

The site lies on the eastern slopes of the River Lea valley. It rises from 89m AOD in the west to approximately 130m AOD on the plateau at Common Lane. The upper levels of the site are largely flat and visible in part from the wider landscape to the south and north west. The lower western part of the site is on the sloping side of the valley and is visually well contained within the surrounding landscape.

The site is bounded by mature hedges with some boundaries within the site. There is limited tree cover within the site; Sauncey Wood, Bower Heath and Wall Wood provide woodland cover and visual screening to the north and east.

The site contains little in the way of designated landscape features. The site currently forms part of the Landscape Conservation Area policy.

There are no nature conservation assets of consequence within or adjacent to the site.



Land Form and Topography



# Site Appraisal

## 4.2 Ecology

No identified statutory ecological designations are present within or in close proximity to the Site. Similarly, no non-statutory ecological designations are present within the Site.

The closest non-statutory ecological designation, Holcroft's Springs Local Wildlife Site (LWS) including Deciduous and National Inventory Woodland, is located immediately adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the Site on the opposite side of Common Lane.

The Site is dominated by horse-grazed pasture along with a number of buildings. Few ecological constraints are present and where identified can be readily incorporated into any sensitively designed layout.

In addition, significant opportunities are available for habitat creation and faunal enhancement such that the proposals have the potential to give rise to significant net gains for biodiversity. The opportunity exists to improve boundaries and woodland cover, and open grassland. As such, it is concluded that the proposed development of the Site is highly deliverable in biodiversity terms.

## 4.3 Highways/Access

A preliminary appraisal of the potential site access strategy has been undertaken. It is proposed that the primary vehicular access to the Site will be provided via B653 Lower Luton Road as indicated within the Annotated Framework Plan (Figure 11).

Access to Bower Heath Lane from Lower Luton Road could be closed off, with traffic diverted through the new proposed development access.

A secondary point of vehicular access could be provided via Bower Heath Lane. This access would function primarily as an emergency access but would also provide a direct link to Junction 6 of the A1 (M) via Kimpton Road and the B656.

There are several Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that connect the site with the adjoining residential areas to the south, Common Lane and Bower Heath Lane. A sequence of proposed pedestrian and cycle routes will provide connections to local services, amenities and bus stops and will enhance and complement existing routes.

## 4.4 Drainage

An initial Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been undertaken, which shows that the majority of the Site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore suitable for development.

A small portion of the south-western part of the Site, where it is adjacent to the B653 / Lower Luton Road, is located in Flood Zone 2. Additionally an area outside of the Site on the B653 / Lower Luton Road, is located in Flood Zone 3 which is associated to the River Lea.

The proposed development provides an opportunity to improve the existing situation and will not exacerbate the existing flooding issues, through the detailed design of the proposed access into the Site.

The initial FRA confirms that the Site is suitable for the use of sustainable urban drainage systems, including attenuation basins and soakaway infiltration.

## 4.5 Local Infrastructure

A Preliminary Utilities Assessment has been undertaken on the existing utility services within the area and concludes that the Site can accommodate the proposed development.

The services assessed within the Report include the following:

- Water;
- Foul Drainage;
- Gas;
- Electricity; and Telecommunications.

## 4.6 Archaeology

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has been undertaken and concluded that the Site has remained as largely open or agricultural land throughout the historical periods, with development restricted to the western part of the Site.

The Assessment concludes that the Site is considered to have a “very low” to “low” archaeological potential for all past periods of human activity. Post-Medieval field boundaries set out in the C19th may be present, but are of low intrinsic value.







# Masterplan Context 05



GREEN ACRES



# Masterplan Context

## 5.1 Opportunities and Constraints

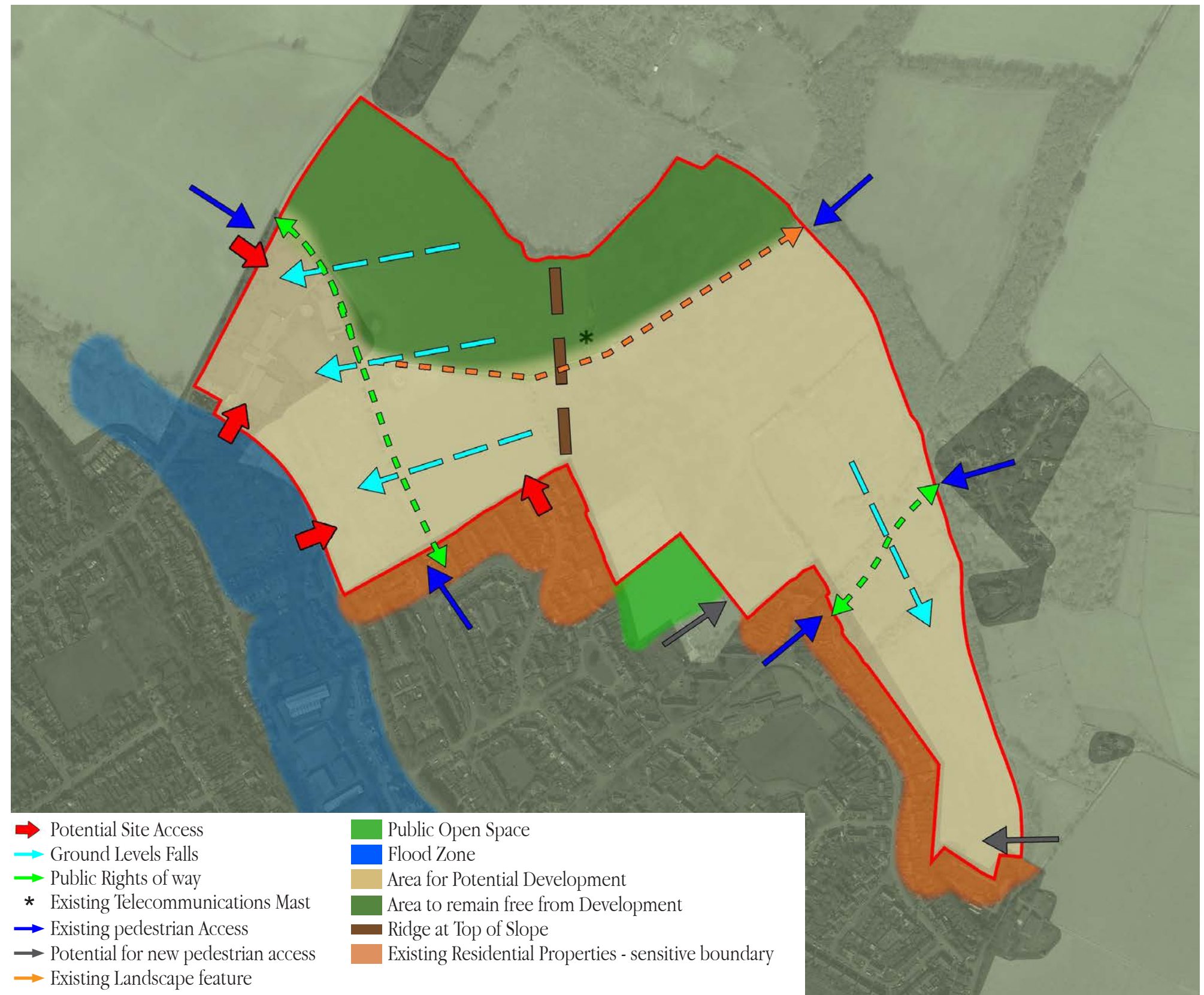
A cohesive overview of the considerations that need to be understood when assessing the Site for new development, and the potential opportunities available through this development, have been conducted.

Potential opportunities presented by developing the Site are as follows:

- Opportunity to provide community facilities and amenities required in the local area, including much needed primary school places;
- Potential inclusion of a Local Centre to supplement existing provisions in nearby Batford;
- Part of site could be assigned for flexi-care development for elderly care assisted living;
- Improve pedestrian connectivity towards countryside to the north of Harpenden;
- Much needed housing within Harpenden, with a critical mass of local school age children for the proposed nearby Secondary School, thus allowing local transport by sustainable means;
- Provide sports pitches for use by local community;
- Provide large areas of publicly accessible open space, linked to existing PRoW networks.

Considerations that need to be acknowledged are as follows:

- Potential vehicular access points off Lower Luton Road and adjacent junction improvements;
- Potential access points for pedestrian and cycle networks;
- Internal road network and housing framework to address change in ground level across western part of Site;
- Where possible to retain and enhance on-site existing landscape features such as tree groups and hedgerows;
- Respect privacy of adjoining residential properties;
- Understand key locations where views from the wider area may need to be acknowledged;
- Include provision for Surface Water Attenuation facilities in order to respect the existing constraints along the River Lea corridor;
- Acknowledge within the design that development of the Site would create a new northern edge to the settlement of Harpenden. The edge is in accordance with the SKM Green Belt Review produced for this Site.





# Masterplan Context

## 5.2 Concept Design

A concept plan for how the Site could be developed has been generated, building on the work assessing the opportunities and constraints of the Site. The sketch provides a set of design principles that should be included within any layouts for the development of the Site:

- Potential access points off Lower Luton Road including potential redesign to the Lower Luton Road / Bower Heath Lane junction;
- Potential pedestrian and cycle access points into the Site, which link with the surrounding area (roads and footpaths) and also provide access to new potential new amenities provided within the Site;
- Internal street network designed as a 'hierarchy' of routes - primary roads, secondary roads, tree lined residential streets, shared surface areas, private drives etc;
- Internal street network designed to acknowledge the ground level constraints of the western part of the Site;
- Integration of existing Public Rights of Way throughout development, and linking with new public open space to north of the Site;
- Potential location for new Local Centre - ensuring good access with local community in Batford via Noke Shot
- Other uses such as new Primary School and Flexi-care development positioned around Local Centre to ensure higher level of footfall through the space;
- Integration of existing landscape & field boundaries to ensure green corridors are respected and features are made of the landscape setting;
- Potential locations for Sustainable Urban Drainage facilities (SUDs) such as attenuation basins and swales.





# Masterplan Context

## 5.3 Development Masterplan & Potential Capacity

A Development Masterplan has been conceived that includes the design principles outlined by the concept plan, includes the opportunities outlined through the early assessment work, and acknowledges the constraints affecting the Site. Key elements of the design of the masterplan have been outlined as follows:

- 1 Potential access off Lower Luton Road;
- 2 Landscaped green spaces overlooking new residential development;
- 3 Higher density terraced residential development set within existing landscape features
- 4 Large area of public open space parkland
- 5 Local centre comprising community centre, retail opportunity + pharmacy;
- 6 New 2 form entry Primary School;
- 7 Flexi-care development incorporating medical care/GP provisions;
- 8 Area for new sports pitches and childrens play facilities;
- 9 Existing farm track retained as edge of development + reinstated as pedestrian lay route through development;
- 10 New residential development set within existing landscape features;
- 11 Existing public rights of way through site preserved;
- 12 Potential for new pedestrian/cycle access between development and adjacent playing facilities;
- 13 Potential pedestrian/cycle access onto Common Lane,towards new Katherine Warrington School;
- 14 Diversion off Bower Heath Lane through the site to a new improved junction with Lower Luton Road.
- 15 Potential pedestrian/cycle link to Sauncey View Lodge if required

### Potential Capacity

The development parcels indicated on the framework plan (excluding the School and Flexi-Care sites) provide an overall net developable area of just over 17ha. The masterplan could provide the following:

- A landscape-led development comprised of 60% built form coverage and 40% open space/green infrastructure;
- At an average density of 40dph, approx. 680 new homes;
- In line with current policy, 40% of this total allocated as affordable housing could bring forward circa 270 new affordable homes;
- Current aspirations for custom build plots could therefore provide up to 35 plots (5% approx. of the total);
- A new Primary School of up to two forms of entry per year (up to 420 pupils);
- A Flexi-Care development for elderly care, which could provide up to 60 bed spaces.