



LAND TO THE WEST OF HATFIELD

Environmental Statement – Chapter 2: Site and Surroundings

Arlington Business Parks GP Ltd

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2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

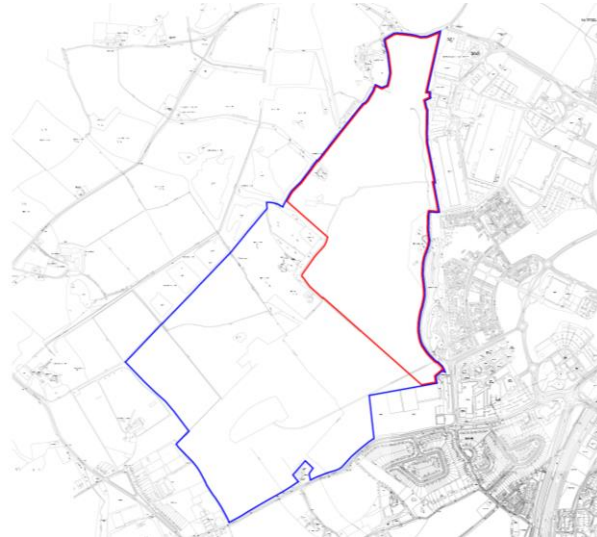
2.1 SITE LOCATION & SETTING

2.1.1 Location

The application site, as shown within the accompany Site Location Plan provided within **Appendix 2.1**, is located to the west of Hatfield between Coopers Green Lane and A1057. Coopers Green Lane forms the northern site boundary; the existing built up area forms the eastern site boundary; the southern boundary is defined by sports pitches and existing open space as part of Ellenbrook Fields; the western site boundary is defined by a combination of woodland, agricultural land, and mineral extraction. The built-up area to the east comprises Hatfield Business Park; University of Hertfordshire De Havilland Campus; and residential areas, all of which were developed by the Applicant in partnership with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

In the wider context, the application site is approximately 2.2km from Hatfield Town Centre and 3.2km from Hatfield Railway Station.

Figure 2.1: Extract of Site Location Plan (not to scale – illustration only)



2.1.2 Existing Site

The site itself, which extends to approximately 67.5 hectares (ha), is located in the northern part of Ellenbrook Fields, and comprises a large area of grassland of varying quality, with areas of scrub, trees and woodland.

The site was home to the previous aerodromes, runway and taxiways as part of the former Hatfield Aerodrome, which closed in 1993. Along the eastern edge of the Site is the Ellenbrook, which was de-culverted as part of the original Hatfield Aerodrome redevelopment.

An open space runs along a section of the Ellenbrook, providing amenity for the Salisbury Village housing development, with housing generally fronting onto the green space. It also encompasses a number of surface water attenuation ponds.

Further north, the Ellenbrook passes through an area of more semi-natural grassland, before becoming culverted. There is mature tree and scrub planting to the east of the brook, along the boundary with Hatfield Business Park.

There is strong boundary vegetation along the entire western Site boundary, including mature tree belts around Astwick Manor (Grade II listed); Home Covert woodland; a further small copse on the western boundary.

There is a network of permissive footpaths, which have been established within the Site. Key routes include a footpath running broadly parallel to the Ellenbrook and running the entire length of the eastern site boundary; and a circular route running between Ellenbrook and Home Covert.

The grassland that is established on the site is maintained by a combination of grazing, cutting and natural regeneration. The area for grazing in within the central part (of the wider Ellenbrook Fields) and cattle fencing is provided around the perimeter of the grazing area.

To the north and south are mineral extraction sites – existing and proposed respectively. Both sites have live planning applications – to the north for an extension and to the south for the establishment of a new quarry. The latter is on land owned by the Applicant. Despite the adjacencies of the existing and proposed extraction sites, the application site subject to this ES has been accepted by Hertfordshire County Council (the minerals planning authority) to be unviable for mineral extraction.

The Design and Access Statement, which forms part of this outline planning application, provides aerial photography of the site and surroundings to assist further.

The site is designated Green Belt by the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council District Plan, which was adopted in 2005. Whilst Green Belt is a planning land use designation, it is not a 'sensitive area' as defined the Interpretation section of Part 1 in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, which directs the assessment process and therefore contents of this ES.

2.2 SITE CONDITIONS

2.2.1 Topography

The site is relatively flat at around 75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) with a slight gradient southeastward towards the Ellenbrook. The site is relatively open, punctuated only by sporadic clumps of scrubby vegetation and young woodland, which allow mainly open views across the site when within it.

2.2.2 Access

There are three pedestrian access points – at the north, a gate from Coppers Green Lane immediately west of the junction with Hatfield Avenue; to the east via a short footpath from Cunningham Avenue; and to the south from Albatross Way opposite the University building.

The site has a number of bus services within proximity, which are shown in Table 12.6 within Chapter 12.

The Railway Station is approximately 3.2km from the northern access to the site, 2.6km to the east and 3km from the southernmost part of the site. There are existing pedestrian and cycleways to the Station in

addition to bus routes. Train routes are operated by Thameslink and Great Northern and include destinations such as London Kings Cross, Moorgate, Finsbury Park, Welwyn Garden City, Cambridge and Peterborough.

2.2.3 Designated Landscapes and Listed Buildings

There are no designated landscapes within the 3km of the study area (Figure 11.1 within Appendix 11.7). Astwick Manor to the west is a Grade II listed building but separated by a mature belt of trees.

2.2.4 Flood Risk

The site is located within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3 as defined by the Environment Agency Flood Maps for Planning. For context, approximately 90% of the site is Flood Zone 1. In the northern part of the site nearest the Ellenbrook, 9% is Flood Zone 2 and <5% is Flood Zone 3.

2.2.5 Ecology & Trees

2.2.5.1 Statutory Wildlife Sites

Designated wildlife sites that are protected by statute present within 5 km of the Application Site are listed in Table 2.1. Statutory wildlife sites beyond this distance were not considered to have any possibility of being significantly affected by the Proposed Development.

Table 2.1: Statutory wildlife sites within 5 km of the Application Site.

Designation	Name	Distance and direction
Ancient Woodland	Symondshyde Great Wood	730 m, NW
LNR	Howe Dell LWS & LNR	2.1 km, E
LNR	Stanborough Reedmarsh LWS	2.3 km, NE
LNR	Oxleys Wood	2.3 km, NE
LNR	Colney Heath	2.6 km, S
LNR	The Wick Wood	3.5 km, W
SSSI, LNR	Sharrardspark Wood	4.1 km, NE
LNR	Wheathampstead Development Centre	4.2 km, NW

2.2.5.2 Non-statutory Wildlife Sites

Wildlife sites that are not protected by statute that are present within 1 km of the Site are listed in Table 2.2. Sites beyond this distance were not considered to have any possibility of being significantly affected by the Proposed Development.

Table 2.2: Non-statutory designated wildlife sites within 1 km of the Application Site.

Designation	Name	Distance and Direction
LWS	Home Covert and Round Wood	Adjacent, W
LWS	Furzefield Wood LNR	2.1 km, NW
LWS	Symmondshyde Great Wood	730 m, NW

LWS	Copse South of Symmondshyde Great Wood	1.0 km, W
LWS	Sleeve Hall Wood	700 m, W
LWS	Copse at Nast Hyde	1.0 km, S
LWS	Hook's Wood	1.0 km, W

2.2.5.3 Habitats

Phase 1 habitats (JNCC, 2010) present within the Application Site are listed and described in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Phase 1 Habitats Present within the Application Site.

Phase 1 habitat type	Summary description
Semi-improved neutral grassland	The grazed semi-improved neutral grassland which dominates the centre and south of the Application Site contains a range of grasses and forb species. Overall it has a moderate species-richness (based on Natural England (2010)). It does not conform to the description of the Habitat of Principal Importance Lowland Meadows (BRIG, 2011) or the criteria for this habitat in Natural England (2010). However, it meets Hertfordshire Local Wildlife Site criteria in at least some areas and its extent increases its overall value.
Poor semi-improved grassland	An area of relatively species-poor grassland dominated by the grasses false oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> and cock's-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> is present in the northern part of the Application Site. This generally has a low species-richness (based on Natural England (2010)). It does not conform to the description of the Habitat of Principal Importance Lowland Meadows (BRIG, 2011) or the criteria for this habitat in Natural England (2010) or meet Hertfordshire Local Wildlife Site criteria.
Scrub	Areas of dense and scattered scrub generally dominated by hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> are present towards the eastern and western boundaries of the Application Site. There is occasional willow scrub in the centre-south.
Semi-natural broadleaved woodland	A small area (0.42 ha) of ash woodland is present in the western part of the Application Site. This appears to be of recent (20 th Century) origin. This woodland conforms to the description of the Habitat of Principal Importance Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (BRIG, 2011).
Broadleaved plantation woodland	Areas of young planted or self-sown trees of native species are present in small parts of the east and west of the Application Site.
Ellenbrook	A stream, the Ellenbrook, emerges from a culvert in the north-east of the Application Site and flows south along much of the eastern boundary of the Application Site. A total of 0.51 km of the stream is within the Application Site.
Hedgerows	Two sections of hedgerow are present on the northern and the north-western boundary of the Application Site. These comprise various native shrub species. The hedgerow on the northern boundary (adjacent to Coopers Green Lane) is species-rich. Neither hedgerow is 'Important' under the Wildlife and Landscape criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Mature trees	Twenty-eight mature oak and ash trees are present on or close to the boundaries of the Application Site. Fifteen of these are in woodland in the west of the Application Site. The remainder are close to the boundary in the north-west and north-east. Two, near the north-eastern corner of the Site, are veteran trees.
Ponds	Five ponds are present within the Application Site. Three are small and shallow and were found to have dried up by June in 2016. One, close to the southern boundary of the Application Site, is larger and has not been observed to dry up during baseline surveys. Marginal and aquatic vegetation within three of the ponds is limited (by shading, grazing or drying). A fourth pond contains abundant aquatic vegetation and some emergent vegetation.
Hardstanding	Small areas of hardstanding, such as asphalt paths are present at the Application Site.

2.2.5.4 Protected and Notable¹ Species

The presence of protected and notable species at the Application Site, based on the results of the baseline surveys, is summarised in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Presence of protected and notable species at the Application Site.

Species	Status	Presence at the site
Plants	Various	Due to the relatively recent origins of the habitats present at the Site, and based on survey results, protected and red data book plant species (i.e. species listed in Stroh et al., 2014) are likely absent.
Badger	Protected in the UK	Badger setts are present outside but close to the Application Site boundary.
Bats	European protected species	The following species use the Application Site for foraging/commuting in moderate numbers: soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> , common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> , noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> , Leisler's bat <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i> , <i>Myotis</i> sp., brown long-eared bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i> , Nathusius' pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i> and (in low numbers) barbastelle <i>Barbastellus barbastellus</i> . Potential bat roost sites are limited to mature trees close to the north and north-west boundary, and in woodland in the west of the Application Site. Of these, nine have high potential, 12 have moderate potential and seven have low potential to support roosting bats.
Dormouse	European protected species	Survey indicated that this species is likely absent.
Water vole	Protected in the UK	Survey indicated that this species is likely absent.

¹ 'Notable species' include Species of Principal Importance in England, species included in the most recent red data lists for England or the UK, bird species listed on the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern list (Eaton et al, 2015), invertebrates meeting the JNCC criteria for scarce and notable species, plants listed in Stewart et al (1994), and species listed by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre as notable in Hertfordshire.

Otter	European protected species	Survey indicated that this species is likely absent.
Brown hare	SPI	Present in low numbers.
Harvest mouse	SPI	Potentially present.
Hedgehog	SPI	Potentially present.
Breeding birds	Protected in the UK, SPI	A range of bird species breed at the Application Site, including Species of Principal Importance in England that are typical of grassland, hedgerow and scrub or water body margins (e.g. linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i> and reed bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>), scrub and woodland (e.g. song thrush <i>Turdus merula</i> and dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>) and extensive open grassland (skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i> and lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>). Barn owl <i>Tyto alba</i> has been recorded from the Application Site, though there is no evidence of current or recent breeding by this Schedule 1 species.
Great crested newt	European Protected Species	A moderate population (i.e. a maximum count between 11 and 100 adults (Natural England,2015)), is present on and around the Application Site. Adults and eggs were found in two ponds in the south of the Application Site and adults were also found in the Ellenbrook in the east of the Application Site.
Common toad	SPI	Abundant at the Application Site. No signs of breeding were found, but two ponds in the south of the Application Site appear to provide suitable breeding habitat. Other ponds at the Application Site are likely too shallow or likely dry out annually, making them unsuitable.
Common reptile species	Protected in the UK	Survey indicated that these species are likely absent.
Invertebrates	Various	Due to the abundance of semi-improved grassland at the Application Site, and the presence of small areas of woodland and wetland, a moderate range of invertebrates is likely to be present. However due to the absence of undisturbed or particularly species-rich habitats (e.g. ancient woodland, species-rich unimproved grassland or long-established wetland habitats), the Application Site does not provide habitat with high potential to support important invertebrate assemblages or protected invertebrate species. The ponds at the Application Site are in poor condition or, based on aerial photographs, are of relatively recent origin (i.e. post 2000).

There are no protected or priority species located on site, nor are there any opportunities for habitats which are likely to support such species.

In addition, there are no trees or hedgerows located on or adjacent to the application site. As such, the site is not subject to any Tree Preservation Orders and the development will not interact with such features.

2.3 SITE HISTORY

As previously stated, the site was used as an aerodrome until 1993 and as such planning records are historic and not overly relevant in 2018. Google Earth images show the infrastructure visible in 2000. Since that time, the site has been greenfield and managed to a certain extent. There is a live planning application on the site, which is as follows (source LPA's website):

Table 2.5: Current Planning Application

LPA Reference	Description	Decision	Date
6/2018/1635/OUTLINE	Outline permission for the change of use of land to airfield with runway and support facilities including a clubhouse, hangar and car park with all matters except layout reserved.	Awaiting decision	Submitted: 21-06-2018

Whilst this application has been recently submitted, it has been done so by a third party without involvement with the Client/Applicant who has no intention of allowing this development to be implemented should planning permission be granted.