



# LAND TO THE WEST OF HATFIELD

Environmental Statement – Chapter 3: Proposals and Alternatives

Arlington Business Parks GP Limited

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## 3 PROPOSALS AND ALTERNATIVES

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### 3.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application submitted to the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council seeks outline planning permission for:

*'Large-scale mixed-use development for 1,100 new homes and supporting infrastructure including a primary school, local centre and open space.'*

The illustrative masterplan has been prepared by LDA-Design (Appendix 3.1). This has followed an iterative design process, which has been influenced by pre-application consultation with key stakeholders and guided by the various technical assessments that have been undertaken to complete the application submission and the supporting ES.

In addition, ecological designed-in mitigation forms part of the proposals. This designed-in mitigation includes the following avoidance measures:

- Retention of approximately one third of the semi-improved neutral grassland at the Application Site, which is sufficient to allow conservation grazing to continue;
- Retention of the Ellenbrook stream;
- Retention of all mature woodland at the Application Site (i.e. an area of ash woodland in the western part of the Application Site);
- Retention of all mature trees at the Application Site (these are located on the northern and north-eastern boundaries), though there will be some loss of semi-mature and young trees that are of low ecological value; and
- Retention of four ponds at the Application Site (including two ponds that are of high ecological value and support great crested newt), and areas of surrounding terrestrial habitat. The single pond to be lost in the development is of very low ecological value.

The following, in the main, has been taken from the Planning Statement to ensure consistency within the planning application submission and to also expand upon the description of development in terms of the land use ethos as depicted by the masterplan.

#### 3.1.1 Layout/concept

The site sits on a boundary between urban and rural, providing an opportunity to create a new form of urban extension. The proposed development therefore takes a form of a 'Forest Village' concept. The Upper Village is the smallest in size of the three and will primarily consist of residential dwellings.

An area of the development is proposed for a shared village local centre, which will be located within the 'Middle Village', just north of the village green. The exact uses within the local centre will be considered as part of the detailed proposals, but the space allows for business use and small units for local retail which are intended to serve local residents. For quantitative assessments within this ES, the

retail element (Use Class A1) is assumed to be 950 square metres (sqm), which will be on the ground floor and 475 sqm of office space (Use Class B1a) on the upper floor.

This space will also incorporate the primary school and other facilities such as a community building and a cricket pitch. The community building could offer flexible office space available for start-up or small businesses in the local area. The site is not intended to accommodate larger businesses, but instead focus on providing suitable office space for local residents wishing to start up their own business. In terms of the primary school, a two-form entry is proposed (two classes per year group).

The Lower Village will consist of a multi-sports pitch and the pavilion centre, along with the residential dwellings and an area of amenity green space in the centre of the dwellings.

### 3.1.2 Housing type and mix

The Forest Village will include a mix of housing types, including a good provision of family housing and affordable homes. In terms of housing type and mix, the proposal seeks to be fully policy compliant and the exact mix will be agreed with the Council based on latest evidence of housing need and market demand. For the purposes of assessment within this ES, the following working assumption (and based on experience with similar schemes elsewhere), has been used in terms of the housing types and number of dwellings (total 1,100):

- One-bedroom dwelling – 165 (15% of the total);
- Two-bedroom dwelling – 330 (30%);
- Three or four-bedroom dwelling – 605 (55%).

### 3.1.3 Access and parking

There will be two vehicular access points proposed as part of the development. The first access point will be to the north of the upper village, along Coopers Green Lane. This will be in the form of a three-arm roundabout and as part of the design, a section of Coopers Green Lane will be diverted into the site to improve the alignment of the road. The second access point will lie to the south of the site, connecting to Albatross Way by extending the existing east-west section of the road to form a new priority junction, just south of the lower village.

The proposed new primary movement route will run through the site across all three villages and will also allow several bus routes to service the site from within. The development has been designed to enable the existing bus services to be diverted through the site and discussions are currently taking place with operators. Bus stop locations will be coordinated with pedestrian routes and will be designed so that each stop is within 400m (approximately 5-minute walk) of the site.

Given this is an outline planning application, the detail of parking provision has not been finalised and will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage. However, the current intention to provide car parking in line with the adopted car parking standards. It is also the intention to provide car parking either on driveways or in garages associated with the proposed houses.

### 3.1.4 Landscaping

In relation to landscaping, green spaces will surround the Forest Village providing a range of different types of public open space. These include sports pitches, allotments and semi-natural green space. In addition, a series of green links will run from east to west, helping to define the residential areas and

connect to the Ellenbrook corridor. These include a northern green link, a central green link and a southern green link. The northern green link will act as a flood plain for the Ellenbrook whilst providing an area of semi-natural green space. The central green link will incorporate the Village Green and school playing fields. This will also provide a pedestrian/cycle connection to the Town Centre and bus station. The southern green link will allow the retention of existing grassland and provide an interface with the publicly accessible open space to the south. The existing Ellenbrook will be retained as a key landscape feature/green corridor.

### 3.1.5 Amenity space

There are various amenity green spaces proposed throughout the site. Towards the very southern corner of the site by the access point, there will be various sports pitches along with a pavilion centre as part of the sports centre. As confirmed in 3.1.4, a village green/playing pitches also forms part of the proposal, which are located to the right of the Middle Village, adjacent to the existing Ellenbrook Linear Park. This will be available for sports and/or community events. Other amenity spaces include circular pedestrian/cycle routes, water attenuation ponds and informal open spaces.

**Table 3.1: Amenity/green infrastructure uses**

<b>Amenity/green infrastructure uses</b>	<b>Provision (ha)</b>
Allotments	0.34
Amenity green space	3.59
Semi-natural green space (including green corridors)	25.00
Provision for children (provided with amenity spaces)	0.79
Outdoor sports	4.49
Woodland	1.00

Table 3.1 confirms that 35.21 ha of amenity/green infrastructure is to be provided, which equates to over half of the site area (52.16%) of the application red line.

### 3.1.6 Extra care facility

An area of the development is proposed for an extra care facility - a type of retirement housing where residents have their own self-contained home but benefit from on-site communal facilities and care/support.

### 3.1.7 Phasing

The technical studies within this ES have been predicated on the following application timetable and proposed phasing for construction:

- Outline planning application submission – Autumn 2018;
- Outline planning approval - Spring 2019;
- Reserved matters application for Infrastructure and Phase 1 Homes – Autumn 2019;
- Delivery of Infrastructure and Phase 1 Homes – 2020-2021;
- Reserved matters application for Phase 2 Homes – Autumn 2021;
- Delivery of Phase 2 Homes – 2022-2023;
- Reserved matters application for Phase 3 Homes – Autumn 2023;
- Delivery of Phase 3 Homes – 2024-2025;
- Reserved matters application for Phase 4 Homes – Autumn 2025;

- Delivery of Phase 4 Homes – 2026-2027.

The physical areas for the phases and delivery are shown in Section 3 of the Design and Access Statement.

## 3.2 ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with the requirements of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations, it is necessary to describe the reasonable alternatives studied by the Applicant and project team during the process up to the application stage.

The three main scenarios for considering alternatives associated with the site and the proposed development are as follows:

- A 'do nothing' or 'no change' scenario, which considers no development taking place on the subject site;
- An 'alternative sites' scenario, which considers alternative sites for the proposed development (as relevant); and
- An 'alternative designs' scenario, which considers the alternative designs of the proposed development with respect to issues of location, materials, extent, etc. taking into account the environmental effects which influences the design evolution.

The EIA process is one in which the assessment of various environmental issues influences design and mitigation, and in many respects shapes any alternative options associated with such a development.

### 3.2.1 Do Nothing Scenario

It is recognised that as an alternative there is a 'do nothing' or 'no change' scenario, which would mean that the development is not promoted or brought forward at this stage. However, as outlined below, this is not considered to be a suitable alternative for this site.

The 'do nothing' scenario would fail to achieve the objectives of the applicant in terms of providing housing and creating a forest village. As such, this scenario would not bring forward the creation of homes and employment nor would this scenario allow for the provision of truly accessible amenity space and green infrastructure in excess of 35ha.

Whilst the 'do nothing' scenario would result in no corresponding adverse or beneficial effects, it is considered to be entirely inappropriate given the benefits that the site could deliver through redevelopment. As such, the 'do something' scenario and its associated benefits are considered to clearly outweigh the 'do nothing' scenario.

### 3.2.2 Alternative Sites

No alternative sites to the application site have been considered as part of the development process. The applicant owns the land and can bring forward the development of this site in accordance with their development aspirations. As such, it is considered entirely unrealistic for the applicant to have considered alternative sites when the application site is suitable, available and viable.

Given that no other sites have been considered, it is not possible to consider whether this site would have any additional adverse or beneficial effects in comparison to a hypothetical alternative site. As

such, this has not been considered further within the EIA and the associated technical reports contained herein.

### 3.2.3 Alternative Designs

The true consideration of alternatives has focused on the options considered for alternative designs, including the layout and general arrangement of the site in the context of the site constraints and opportunities. The development proposals have also been guided through pre-application consultation with WHBC. As such, the illustrative masterplan must be understood as an iterative one which clearly evolved with the range and depth of information available. The philosophy at the core of the design, which has evolved has highlighted a number of considerations for the design, either as a constraint or opportunity for development. Accordingly, the evolved key design principles are as follows:

- Creation of a Village that contains a number of distinct neighbourhoods, reflecting the existing settlement pattern and morphology.
- Creation of interconnecting east-west green corridors between the neighbourhoods, providing an attractive setting for the residential areas and helping integrate development into the landscape.
- Creation of community facilities within the central part of the Village and orientated along the east-west landscape corridor (already established as part of the original Hatfield Aerodrome redevelopment), where is easily accessible to all existing and future residents.
- Creation of a primary road running through the development, linking the different neighbourhoods and connecting with the existing highway network at the northern and southern ends of the Site. The road will be designed to accommodate bus services.
- Creation of green space along the eastern Site boundary, linking with existing open space provision; incorporating existing grassland, scrub and woodland habitat, and providing a continuous recreational route to the east of the Site.
- Incorporation of a suitable edge treatment along the eastern site boundary, where it adjoins the Hatfield Business Park, to provide noise attenuation and enhance screening function of existing vegetation.
- Creation of a linear green space along the western site boundary, incorporating existing grassland, scrub and woodland habitat, and providing a recreational route. This will also ensure there remains an appropriate buffer between Astwick Manor and the Upper Village.
- Creation of a development structure that ensures that the development fronts onto surrounding open space, thereby providing natural surveillance and creating a positive interaction between the settlement and landscape.
- De-culverting of the remaining piped section of the Ellenbrook, reducing flood risk; increasing surface water drainage capacity; and providing biodiversity and amenity benefits.
- Retention and enhancement of existing woodland through appropriate management and new woodland planting. The local woodland context will also inform the detailed design of the green infrastructure and built environment with new tree planting throughout the Site.
- Potential for mineral extraction to the south and extension of the extant quarry to the north.

### 3.2.4 Alternatives Conclusion

As outlined above, the consideration of alternatives has principally related to the design of the scheme and how this interacts with the site, its surrounds and the adjoining committed developments (Chapter

4). Whilst these considerations have been briefly outlined above, further information regarding the iterative design process is contained within the supporting Design and Access Statement prepared by LDA-Design.

Furthermore, consideration of this iterative design process has been accounted for within the various technical chapters contained within this ES.

Given the above, it is duly confirmed that the consideration of alternatives associated with the development have been outlined in sufficient detail to ensure accordance with the EIA Regulations.