



Land to the North East of KGV Playing Fields, Cuffley

Planning Statement

June 2015

KGV-PS-2015-001



Lands Improvement

LANDS IMPROVEMENT

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

**LAND TO THE NORTH EAST OF KING GEORGE V PLAYING
FIELDS, CUFFLEY**

PLANNING STATEMENT





CONTENTS

	Page No
1. Introduction	3
2. Site Description and Characteristics	7
3. Description of Development	10
4. Assessment of National Planning Policy	13
5. Assessment of the Proposal against the Development Plan	21
6. Material Considerations	28
7. Planning Considerations	40
8. Draft Heads of Terms and Housing Statement	50
9. Conclusion	53

APPENDICES

1. Letter 18 December 2014 from Marrons Planning requesting a Screening Opinion
2. Screening Opinion 16 January 2015 from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
3. Vectos Drawing No: 141386/A/33, dated 12 May 2015: 'Existing Car Park Access Widening'
4. Vectos Drawing No: 141386/A/34 dated 12 May 2015: 'Village Gateway Improvement'
5. Illustrative Masterplan
6. EFM Education Report



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Marrons Planning on behalf of Lands Improvement (the Applicant) and forms part of their application for outline planning permission for up to 121 dwellings and associated infrastructure on land to the north east of King George V (KGV) Playing Fields, Cuffley. The Site, which in total extends to approximately 5.52 hectares (13.64 acres), is divided into two parcels; one of 4.89 hectares being promoted for houses and the other of 0.63 hectares which forms an extension to the playing fields; all as shown on the Site Location Plan which forms part of the application.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Statement is to provide a description of the proposed development and to show how the development accords with the relevant planning policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the existing and emerging development plan policies for Welwyn Hatfield Borough and any other relevant planning guidance. It also includes draft Heads of Terms to form the basis of the S106 Agreement.
- 1.3 The proposals are in outline, with all matters reserved apart from the vehicular access, the surface water discharge point and levels of the development platforms. The scheme provides for residential development of various types and sizes as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan.
- 1.4 This Statement draws upon evidence that can be found in the following documents which have been prepared as part of the application, as required by the Borough Council and set out in its validation list:
- Design and Access Statement which includes a chapter containing the Energy Statement



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- Draft Heads of Terms including Affordable Housing within Planning Statement (Section 8)
 - Landscape and Visual Assessment
 - Ecological Appraisals, including protected species surveys
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
 - Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and Trial Trenching Report
 - Geo-Physical Survey Report
 - Geo-Environmental Phases 1 and 2
 - Transport Assessment and Green Travel Plan
 - Arboricultural Assessment
 - Geo-Environmental Assessment (Phase 1 and 2)
 - Noise Assessment
 - Air Quality Assessment
 - Services Supply Statement
 - Statement of Community Involvement

1.5 The following plans are submitted as part of the Application and specifically in respect of:

Outline Plans

- Site Location Plan (Drawing No: 2271-A-1100-B)
- Illustrative Masterplan (Drawing No: 2271-C-1005-B)
- Parameters Plans;
 - Land Use (Drawing No: 2271-SK-1403-D)
 - Green Infrastructure (Drawing No: 2271-SK-1402-E)



➤ Storey Height (Drawing No: 2271-SK-1400-D)

- Topographical Survey Pages 1 – 10 (Drawing Nos: 1667_200_1-10)

Detailed Plans

- Site Access (Drawing No: 141386/A/35)
- Ground Levels Plan (Drawing No: 2271-A-1009-C)
- Surface Water Drainage Strategy Option 1 (Drawing No:10316-DR-04);
- Surface Water Drainage Strategy Option 2 (Drawing No:10316-DR-11)

1.6 Initial pre-application advice was provided by the Council. This did not include an assessment of Very Special Circumstances which is required when considering any planning application for development within the Green Belt but instead focused on technical issues and other matters of detail; all of which have been taken into account in the formulation of the proposals for the Site's development except for those detailed points raised which will be determined as part of subsequent reserved matters applications.

1.7 In formulating its proposals for the Site, the Applicant and its advisors have proposed a sustainable development which will create a high quality built environment which is easily accessible to Cuffley's services and facilities. As part of this process, a detailed community engagement strategy has been implemented to enable the local community to be informed of the emerging proposals and have the opportunity to comment on, and influence the content of, the planning application. Further information is provided within the Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Political Developments, which accompanies the Application.



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- 1.8 The Applicant entered into a Planning Performance Agreement with the Borough Council. This enabled a significant number of meetings to be held with various stakeholder interests, all of which were attended by the planning officer, Conor Guilfoyle or his replacement, Mark Peacock.
- 1.9 Following a request for a screening opinion (Appendix 1 refers), Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council advised that it was of the opinion that the development is not EIA development in accordance with the definition set out in the Regulations and would not require an Environmental Impact Assessment. (Appendix 2 refers).



2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Local Context

- 2.1 With a population of about 4,000 people, Cuffley has a good range of services and facilities to serve its population including a supermarket, bank, doctor's surgery, village hall, library, sports facilities and a dental practice. In addition, Cuffley has a local primary school and a train station, which serves a number of locations including Hertford and London.
- 2.2 The village is located in south east Hertfordshire between the towns of Goffs Oak / Cheshunt and Potters Bar. It has excellent transport links with junctions 24 and 25 of the M1 located within a couple miles of the village.

Site Description

- 2.3 The Site is in two parts:
- i. the largest (the Principal Site) is the area for residential development to the north east of the King George V (KGV) playing fields, inclusive of the surface water connection points; and,
 - ii. the smaller, detached site to the south of the Tennis Club will enable an extension to the KGV playing fields to be provided as part of the development.
- 2.4 The Principal Site, which is 4.89ha in size, is located to the south of Cuffley and is currently in agricultural use. It is bound to the north by existing residential development and the grounds of Cuffley Primary School. The railway line and Northaw Road East (B156) form strong eastern and western boundaries respectively. On the opposite side of the road, there are three pairs of semi-detached dwellings which, whilst fronting Northaw Road East, are accessed from Colesdale to the north. The southern boundary is defined by a mature hedgerow



and tree belt lining the Hertfordshire Way footpath. Beyond the footpath to the south west of the Site and fronting Northaw Road East is the KGV Playing Fields, comprising various sports clubs, and including three sports pavilions, a recreation area with hard surfaced MUGA, sports pitches and a small area of formal play equipment.

2.5 The Smaller Site comprises a rectangular parcel of agricultural land, located to the south west of the Tennis Club, which has an area of 0.63 hectares (1.56 acres). Northaw Road East forms the western boundary of the land, on the opposite side of which are a small number of residential properties and buildings associated with agricultural use. Further agricultural land lies to the south whilst tennis courts, sports pavilions and a bowling green are located to the north east and south east of the Site.

2.6 A more detailed description of the Principal Site is set out in the Design and Access Statement. The relevant matters for the purposes of this Statement are:

- This principal greenfield Site extends to 4.89 hectares (12 acres) and comprises a single parcel of arable land.
- The Site has few features of environmental interest; hedgerows and mature trees along some of its boundaries, which will be retained as far as possible and managed as part of the proposed development.
- The Site is well contained by:
 - residential development and Cuffley Primary School to the north;
 - the buildings and ancillary facilities associated with the KGV Playing Fields to the south;
 - boundary vegetation to the west, along Northaw Road East;



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- a hedge along the edge of the school playing field to the north;
 - an avenue of trees either side of a public footpath to the south; and
 - the Hertford loop railway line to the east.
- Vehicular access to the Site is possible from Northaw Road East.



3. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The description of development is set out on the application form as follows:

“Residential development of up to 121 dwellings, associated infrastructure and a change of use from agricultural land to an extension of the King George V playing fields. All matters reserved except for new vehicular access to serve the site, the provision of surface water discharge points and the levels of the development platforms”.

3.2 The proposed development is described in detail in the Design and Access Statement. The relevant matters for the purposes of this statement are:

- The development will provide up to 121 new homes, of which 30% will be affordable dwellings. These will comprise a range of house types, sizes and tenures in order to provide a wide choice of homes, able to accommodate a variety of household types and thereby creating a mixed and inclusive community.
- The density of the development at approximately 25 dwellings per hectare (dph) responds to the existing character of Cuffley whilst making efficient use of the Site and providing a mix of housing.
- With the exception of a small number of bungalows, the scale of the new homes will be 2 and 2½ storey, which reflects the building heights in, and the sensitivity of, the surrounding area.
- The development will retain and protect the mature trees and hedges wherever possible and appropriate, whilst also introducing new planting which will help assimilate the site into the wider landscape, as expanded upon in the Illustrative Landscape Plan (contained within the Design and Access



Statement) and be managed for the benefit of wildlife and the visual amenity of the area.

- The development will be served by a new vehicular and pedestrian access from Northaw Road East.
- A pedestrian link will also be provided through the development between the existing car park to KGV Playing Fields and South Drive. This will provide a safer and more convenient route between the car park and Cuffley Primary School than currently exists, allowing parents to walk their children safely through the development to school.
- The development will provide an extension to the playing fields on land detached from, but close to, the Principal Site to the south of the Tennis Club which, although within the ownership of the Applicant, is closely associated with the existing playing fields' facilities.
- The development will provide financial contributions towards local infrastructure and services, where justified and necessary.

3.3 The proposed development will therefore create a small scale, proportional and sustainable addition to Cuffley, contributing towards the housing needs of the area, as well as improvements to the services and facilities within the village for the benefit of existing and new residents.

3.4 As part of the preparation of the planning application, consideration has been given to the impact of the development on the use of the adjoining playing fields and in particular the northern vehicular access to them from Northaw Road East. Having considered the increased usage of the playing fields and their facilities, arising from the development, and considered various alternatives, it is considered that there is scope to widen the access to enable two cars to pass, thereby improving highway safety. The proposal has

Lands Improvement

Land to the north east of King George V Playing Fields, Cuffley



been discussed with the highway authority and, subject to the County Council's agreement, could be financed from the Sustainable Transport contribution.



4. ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

4.1 This section of the Planning Statement sets out those aspects of national planning policy which are relevant to the determination of the planning application for the proposed development. The subsequent sections, and in particular the various topic areas, expand upon the Development Proposal's compliance with national policy.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') contains the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. It is supplemented by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

4.3 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Framework is a significant material consideration in determining this application.

Sustainable Development and Core Principles

4.4 Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Framework state that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These should not be considered in isolation because they are mutually dependent.

4.5 Development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay – a presumption in favour of sustainable development is the basis for every decision (Ministerial Forward). This is seen as a golden thread running through decision taking (paragraph 14) unless specific policies in the Framework, such as those relating to the Green Belt, indicate development should be restricted. More detailed consideration is given to the Green Belt policy in Section 7 below and the Very Special Circumstances which exist in this instance.

4.6 In delivering sustainable development, paragraph 17 of the Framework includes a set of core land-use planning principles that



should underpin decision taking. These include the following principles, relevant to this application, which state that planning should:

- be genuinely plan-led with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area;
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, and the infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing needs of an area;
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas; protecting Green Belts around main urban areas and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside;
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, giving preference to use of land of lesser environmental value;
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling; and
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

4.7 The policies of the Framework, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice for the planning system and include promoting sustainable transport (section 4), delivering a wide choice of high quality homes (section 6), requiring good design (section 7), promoting healthy



communities (section 8), protecting Green Belt land (section 9), meeting the challenge of climate change (section 10) and conserving and enhancing the natural environment (section 11); all of which have been taken into account in the formulation of the application and have been considered in the following sub-sections in particular the section on Sustainable Development (paragraphs 7.22 – 7.30 refer.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 4.8 These policies require that planning decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised (paragraph 34). Decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the Site can be achieved for all people; and whether improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant effects of development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe (paragraph 32).

Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes

- 4.9 To significantly boost the supply of housing, local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area and identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional 5% or 20% buffer to ensure choice and competition (paragraph 47).
- 4.10 Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing in the Development Plan cannot be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot



demonstrate five years supply of deliverable housing sites (paragraph 49).

- 4.11 To deliver a wider choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (paragraph 50). Local planning authorities should also identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand (paragraph 50).

Requiring Good Design

- 4.12 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development (paragraph 56). Planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments (paragraph 58):

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses, and support local facilities and transport networks;
- respond to local character and history;
- create safe and accessible environments; and,
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

- 4.13 Planning decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural and built environment (paragraph 61).



Promoting Healthy Communities

- 4.14 Planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. They should also ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services (paragraph 70).
- 4.15 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities (paragraph 73).

Protecting Green Belt Land

- 4.16 The importance that the Government attaches to the Green Belt is set out in paragraph 79 and reference is made to the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristic of Green Belts being their openness and permanence.
- 4.17 Paragraph 81 requires that local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt by seeking, *inter alia*, to “provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation”.
- 4.18 Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or review of the Local Plan (paragraph 83). When reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development (paragraph 84).
- 4.19 The construction of new buildings is, for the most part, regarded as “inappropriate” development in the Green Belt (paragraph 89). Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances (paragraph 87); a scenario which it is stated will not exist unless



potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- 4.20 Government policy on Green Belts was reiterated on 6 October 2014 with the publication of additional text to the PPG (insofar as it relates to housing and economic land availability assessments). It emphasises that housing need alone is not likely, of itself, to represent “*Very Special Circumstances*” justifying development in the Green Belt. However, as will be seen in Section 6 below, the development plan process has already demonstrated that some Green Belt loss in Cuffley is necessary and exceptional circumstances justify the release of some Green Belt land.

Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change and Flooding

- 4.21 New development should comply with adopted policies for decentralised energy supply, and take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption (paragraph 96). New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change (paragraph 99). It should ensure that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere and give priority to the use of sustainable drainage systems (paragraph 103).

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- 4.22 Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality (paragraph 112).
- 4.23 Planning decisions should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged (paragraph 118).
- 4.24 Decisions should aim to avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development



(paragraph 123), and limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity (paragraph 125).

Development Viability

- 4.25 When determining applications, the decision maker must have regard to viability and costs. The objective is to deliver sustainable development by ensuring developments can come forward which will still enable competitive returns to be made to a willing land owner and a willing developer (paragraph 173).

Implementation of the Framework

- 4.26 Proposals that accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay. However, where the plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, decision takers should grant permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework or specific policies, such as Green Belt, indicate development should be restricted (paragraph 14).
- 4.27 Due weight may be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (paragraph 215). Some weight may also be given in decision making to emerging plans dependent on the stage of preparation, the extent of unresolved objections to relevant policies and the degree of consistency between those policies and the policies in the Framework (paragraph 216).
- 4.28 In relation therefore to the consideration of this application, relevant saved policies of the Local Plan are only afforded due weight having regard to their consistency with the Framework. Although, the emerging Local Plan is not sufficiently advanced to be afforded more than limited weight at this stage, it does provide a clear direction of travel which is pertinent to the determination of the application. The relevant policies, and the exceptional circumstances justifying a



review of the Green Belt and revisions to its boundaries, are considered in Sections 6 and 7 of this Statement.

- 4.29 The Neighbourhood Plan is at an even earlier stage of preparation than the Local Plan. However, as it will need to be consistent with the emerging Local Plan's policies and proposals, this is not considered to be a factor weighing against the proposals the subject of this application.



5. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.1 Planning law, as contained in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Furthermore, the Framework advises that the Development Plan remains the starting point for decision making.

5.2 The Development Plan for the purposes of the proposal, solely consists of the 'saved' policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, which was adopted in 2005 and covered the period up to 2011. The weight to be afforded to the 'saved policies' must have regard to their consistency with the Framework (paragraph 215).

Strategy and the Principle of Development

5.3 Policy SD1 requires that development proposals demonstrate that the principles of sustainable development are satisfied and that they accord with the objectives and policies of the Plan. To assist the Council's assessment of this important issue, Section 7 below provides a summary of the elements which together constitute a sustainable form of development.

5.4 Land beyond the built up area of settlements within Welwyn Hatfield Borough is for the most part, within the designated Green Belt as defined on the Proposals Map to which Policy GBSP1 refers. Although Cuffley and its built up area is one of the largest settlements within the Borough to be excluded from the Green Belt (Policy GBSP2 refers), all the land surrounding the village, including the Site the subject of this application, is within the Green Belt.

5.5 The Green Belt, and whether its boundaries were adequate to meet development needs up to and beyond 2011, was considered by the Inspector who held the Inquiry into the Local Plan. In 2004, he concluded that in view of the uncertainty regarding the Regional Plan



and the emerging Structure Plan that an early review of the Local Plan was required to ensure that the District could accommodate housing beyond 2011. He agreed that the land at Panshanger Aerodrome, which has been safeguarded for development since at least 1993, would perform poorly against many of the criteria for such sites, as set out in national policy pertaining at that time. He then went onto consider alternative locations for development, such as Cuffley, which he said appeared to be a more suitable and sustainable location for safeguarded land, if it was needed.

5.6 In relation to the absence of housing provision in Cuffley, the Inspector concluded that:

- Cuffley is a large and vibrant village; and,
- If required, the site the subject of this Application appears to be suitable for housing in terms of its accessibility to the Station, local job opportunities, shops, school and recreational facilities.

5.7 The main objectives of the adopted Local Plan in respect of the Borough's Green Belt are set out in paragraph 4.5 of the explanatory text and include:

- (a) to maintain the Green Belt as the principal means of restraining the physical expansion of the District's urban areas; and
- (b) to maintain the existing settlement pattern in the District.

5.8 The Local Plan was only intended to cover the period up to 2011, and therefore, only provided for an adequate number of housing sites to meet the housing requirements for this period, as contained within the now revoked Structure Plan. Consequently, the housing policies are time expired and can only be given "*due weight*" in decision making. The policy is also not consistent with the requirements of the Framework in that it does not make provision for the objectively assessed housing needs of the Borough.



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- 5.9 As the Plan's policies related to the supply of housing between 1991 – 2011, there is no up to date figure for housing land requirements in the extant Development Plan. Regard has been had to the advice within the PPG that where evidence in Local Plans has become outdated and policies in emerging plans are not yet capable of carrying sufficient weight, information provided in the latest full assessment of housing needs should be considered. (Reference: ID: 3-030-20140306). In the circumstances pertaining to Welwyn Hatfield Borough, this is the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA; September 2014) and a calculation based on this requirement has been undertaken in Section 6 below, which shows there is less than five years supply.
- 5.10 As it is not accepted that a five year housing land supply can be demonstrated, the weight to be attached to the time expired housing supply policies in the Development Plan is further diminished and can only be of very limited weight in determining the application.
- 5.11 The Site is not the subject of any other specific designations or policies.
- 5.12 Generic policies, applicable to all development proposals within the Borough, have also been taken into account in the formulation of the Application proposals. The following policies were either specifically referred to in the aforementioned pre-application letter dated 23 April 2014 from the Council or are considered pertinent to the determination of the application:
- **Policy D1 'Quality of Design'** which requires that the design principles and policies contained within the Plan are incorporated into the development, as well as the guidance contained in the **Supplementary Design Guidance**. As set out in the Design and Access Statement, the design and layout of the development, as reflected in the Illustrative Masterplan, will not only be of a very high quality which sits comfortably with the local vernacular but also takes account



of its relationship with neighbouring properties in order to minimise the impact on their residential amenities. This issue will be considered further at the detailed stage. Other features which make a positive contribution to the quality of the development include the mature trees and hedgerows which are to be retained and the public and private amenity space which is to be provided.

- **Policy M5 - Pedestrian Facilities** seeks the inclusion of safe and direct routes within new developments which link to existing or proposed footpath networks and facilities. Developers may also be required to provide or contribute towards off-site pedestrian facilities where this would be necessary to integrate it with surrounding areas. The Hertfordshire Way runs along the southern boundary of the Site and in view of the increased use of this public right of way which can be expected as a result of the development, the Applicant is willing to make a financial contribution towards the cost of surface improvements. Off site pedestrian facilities will be provided for in the form of permissive paths around the agricultural land to the south which is in the ownership of Lands Improvement; all as shown on the Landscape Framework Plan within the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application. These will provide a greater variety of recreational routes and opportunities to connect to the local footpath network of benefit to both existing and new residents within the area.
- **Policy M6 'Cycle Routes and Facilities'** seeks to encourage cycling through the inclusion of safe cycle routes within the development. The principal pedestrian and cycling route, to be provided as part of the development, will connect South Drive to the north with the KGV Playing Fields to the south, thereby providing a safe route to the primary school and the recreational and sports facilities.



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- **Policy M14 ‘Parking Standards for New Development’** requires parking provision in accordance with the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). This has now been superseded by the Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards which is addressed in paragraph 6.29 below.
 - **Policy D8 ‘Landscaping’** requires landscaping to be an integral part of the overall design. Hankinson Duckett has advised on the Landscape Strategy to be pursued in this instance, which as reflected in the Illustrative Masterplan and described in the Design and Access Statement retains the mature trees and hedgerows and the sense of enclosure which they provide, as well as incorporating new planting which will contribute to the visual amenity of the area. Detailed landscaping proposals will be produced as part of subsequent Reserved Matters applications.
 - **Policy R3 ‘Energy Efficiency’** requires that all development includes measures to maximise energy conservation through the design of buildings and site layout. However, it must be recognised that Policy R3 was prepared prior to the publication of the Framework which states that *“when setting any local requirements for a building’s sustainability, do so in a way consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy and adopted nationally described standards”* (paragraph 95 refers). At the present time, this policy is benchmarked to Part L of the Building Regulations. Further details of the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions and energy demand, which will be secured as part of the development, will be provided at the Reserved Matters stage.
 - **Policy R10 ‘Water Conservation Measures’** includes an expectation that new development incorporates water conservation measures, wherever applicable, including



sustainable drainage systems, water storage systems, soft landscaping and permeable surfaces to help reduce surface water run off. All these measures, including sustainable urban drainage measures, have been incorporated into the design of the development as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan and are described in the Flood Risk Assessment accompanying the planning application.

- **Policy D9 ‘Access and Design for People with Disabilities’** requires new development to be designed to allow access, not just for those with disabilities, but also for young children in prams and pushchairs and those who are temporarily disabled as a result of an accident or injury. In view of the change in levels across the site, the Illustrative Masterplan has had particular regard to the gradients of the roads and footpaths within the Site in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discriminatory Act. Approval of the finished levels of the development platforms is being sought as part of the Application.
- **Policy H7 ‘Affordable Housing’** includes a target of 30% for affordable housing to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford to occupy dwellings generally available on the open market. Lands Improvement has agreed with the Council’s Housing Officer that 30% of the new homes will be affordable and of these a large proportion will be two bedroomed dwellings; either flats or houses and possibly a small number of bungalows. On the basis of this mix, it has been agreed that 50% of the dwellings will be provided for affordable rent and 50% as intermediate (shared ownership) properties.
- **Policy H10 ‘Accessible Housing’** requires that all development of five or more dwellings includes a proportion



built to Lifetime Homes standard; the details of which will be provided at the Reserved Matters stage.

- **Policy OS2 – Playing Pitch Provision** states that not only will the Council seek to maintain its current level of playing pitch provision, but where there is a lack of playing pitch provision, sites in excess of 0.4 ha will be expected to contribute towards the provision of new facilities. The proposed development includes the change of use of land to enable an extension of the KGV playing fields, as detailed in paragraphs 7.7 – 7.9 below.
- **Policy OS3 - Play Space and Informal Open Space Provision in New Residential Development** expects new residential development to make a contribution to the provision of children's play space and informal open space, where the increased demands generated by the new households cannot be met by current levels of provision, based on NPFA standards. A large area of public open space for informal recreation is to be provided as part of the development. This will be easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists, and be designed to be a safe and secure environment for all people using the facility.

A children's play area is located immediately adjacent to the Site on land within the KGV playing fields. Although a new facility could be provided as part of the development, following discussions with the Parish and Borough Councils, it is proposed to provide a financial contribution to enable the enhancement of the existing play facilities, thereby providing one excellent facility rather than two average ones.



6. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 It is also necessary to consider if there are any material considerations which indicate whether planning permission should be granted. The consistency of the proposal with emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policy and supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and other planning guidance is therefore considered below.

Draft Local Plan Background Evidence

- 6.2 Following the adoption of the Local Plan Review in 2005, the Council began to produce the requisite evidence base to inform the preparation of its Core Strategy. Consultation was undertaken on the contents of, and options for, the emerging Core Strategy, including the amount and distribution of new homes. In April 2014, the Council decided not to continue with the preparation of its Core Strategy but decided instead to prepare a Local Plan covering strategic and detailed planning policies, as well as showing all new housing and employment land. The technical studies, analysis and reports which had been produced as part of the preparation of the Core Strategy, have continued to be considered and progressed. These include not only the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) but most significantly in the context of this Application, the Stage 2 of the Green Belt Review. Although the evidence base has been prepared to inform the preparation of the Local Plan, it is equally pertinent to the case being made for the development proposed as part of this Application. Consequently, as both the SHLAA and the Stage 2 Green Belt Review have considered the Site the subject of this application, their findings are expanded upon below.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- 6.3 In accordance with Housing and Planning Minister's letter dated 19 December 2014, the SHMA is the first stage in developing a Local



Plan and Councils can then take account of constraints which indicate that development should be restricted. The Minister continued by advising that the SHMA “*should not automatically be seen as a proxy for a final housing requirement in Local Plans. It does not immediately or in itself invalidate housing numbers in existing Local Plans.*” This issue is considered in greater detail in paragraph 6.26 below.

- 6.4 The SHMA has concluded that the full objectively assessed need for housing in the Borough between 2011 and 2031 is in the region of 625 dwellings per annum (dpa), equivalent to 12,500 new homes over the plan period, significantly higher than the figure of 7,200 dwellings identified during the preparation of the emerging Core Strategy.

The SHLAA

- 6.5 Eight sites beyond the settlement boundary of Cuffley were assessed as part of the SHLAA, only two of which were identified as suitable and one of these was the Site the subject of this Application. In reaching this conclusion, the Council stated, inter alia, that:
- It is in close proximity to village facilities; and
 - The sports ground provides a defensible Green Belt boundary to the south reducing the impact on the landscape.

- 6.6 Having satisfied itself that the site was available, as well as suitable, the Council went onto consider whether the site was achievable and deliverable and concluded that it was.

The Green Belt Review

- 6.7 The SHLAA’s findings then informed the sites which were assessed as part of Stage 2 of the Green Belt Review; a review which was prepared on the basis that it is very likely that some land will need to be released from the Green Belt to accommodate housing requirements to 2031 and beyond if the need for housing is to be



met. It included an assessment of the Application Site's contribution to the five Green Belt purposes, as summarised below:

- To check unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas – PARTIAL;
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging – PARTIAL;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – SIGNIFICANT;
- To preserve setting and special character of historic towns – LIMITED or NO
- To maintain the existing settlement pattern - LIMITED or NO.

6.8 It is notable that there is only one purpose which was found to have a “*significant*” contribution and it is questionable whether this is relevant to the assessment of the Site's contribution to the Green Belt, as virtually all land designated as Green Belt will entail an encroachment into the surrounding countryside.

6.9 In the Local Plan Update report to the Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel meeting on 15 October 2014, this assessment was used to categorise sites as ‘more favourable’, less favourable’ or ‘finely balanced’; the score for the Site to the north east of the KGV playing fields being classified as ‘more favourable’ as explained in the Conclusions which state, inter alia, that:

“The site itself is free from nature conservation and heritage designations, although a large Area of Archaeological Significance adjoins the site to the south. It makes a significant contribution to one national Green Belt purpose and a partial contribution to two national purposes. Mitigation measures may be required to address noise pollution from the railway. The site is considered to be more favourable.”

6.10 The findings of the Green Belt Review have been analysed as part of the Landscape and Visual Assessment submitted with the



Application. Paragraph 4.5.1 refers to the site's location within the Theobalds Estate Character Area, and comments that the Site shares some of the key characteristics of the character area including a geometric field pattern, undulating landform and blocks of vegetation and woodland to the east and south. It continues by commenting that the Principal Site is physically and visually separated from the surrounding rural landscape and has urban influences from the settlement edge of Cuffley to the north, the recreation area to the south and from the pylons that cross the south-eastern corner of the Site whilst the site of the proposed change of use is closely associated with the sports clubs and playing fields. As a consequence, the Site does not contribute significantly to the landscape and visual amenity of the local landscape and makes a limited contribution to the openness of the surrounding Green Belt and in particular the openness of the Northaw-Cuffley Gap.

6.11 The report continues at paragraphs 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 by stating that

“Development within this site would be consistent with the existing settlement pattern and could be achieved without affecting the character and openness of the wider landscape. Constraints including the railway line, power lines and the rising landform have been addressed through the design of the development proposals and a landscape strategy has been developed to extend the existing treed character around the site and further reinforce the separation between Cuffley and the rural agricultural landscape to the south and east.

Development on the site, to the south of the village, would form a logical extension of Cuffley as the site forms an isolated agricultural field that falls between the existing edge of settlement and the formal recreational land uses of the King George V playing fields. The site is further separated from the wider rural landscape by existing mature vegetation and the railway line on embankment. The existing clearly



defined boundary to the site provided by the tree belt and existing hedgerow along the Hertfordshire Way would be reinforced with additional planting and would form a clearly defined boundary to the edge of settlement. This would form a robust new boundary for the Green Belt to the south of Cuffley.”

6.12 In summary, it is apparent that the Borough Council:

- has completed its evidence base;
- requires land currently within the Green Belt for residential development; and,
- has identified the Site as ‘more favourable’.

In these circumstances, the Council will need to rely on its evidence base to guide its decision making process as it is only in so doing that it will be possible to redress the chronic shortage of housing.

Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation

6.13 The Council has produced:

- i. An Assessment of Welwyn Hatfield’s Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation (June 2009); and,
- ii. The Welwyn Hatfield Sports Facility Study (March 2011).

6.14 These studies have been carried out in order to assess the quality of and need for additional facilities in Welwyn Hatfield. The findings in respect of Cuffley identified quantitative deficiencies in amenity green space and provision for children and/or teenagers. It was also noted that all of the amenity green spaces are concentrated in northern Cuffley although residents to the south of the village were within walking distance of the KGV playing fields. The Application proposals have addressed these issues as expanded upon in the following sections.



Draft Local Plan Emerging Policies

- 6.15 As explained in paragraph 6.2 above, the Council commenced work on the preparation of its new development plan in 2005. At this time it was intended that the Plan would be in the form of a Core Strategy and, as part of this process, up to 2013, a number of documents were published for consultation purposes. With the introduction of various changes to the planning system, it was subsequently decided to produce a Local Plan rather than proceed with the preparation of the Core Strategy. It is currently envisaged that the Final Plan will be published for consultation purposes at the end of 2015 to enable its examination and formal adoption by the end of 2016.
- 6.16 During the latter part of 2014, a series of reports on the emerging Local Plan were considered by the Council's Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel, culminating in the consideration of the Local Plan Consultation Document at the meeting on 11 December 2014. These include some significant changes to those strategic policies relating to the provision of housing and revisions to the Green Belt as well as the options for site allocations. In so doing, it provides a clear direction of travel and is therefore an important material consideration to be taken into account when determining this Application.
- 6.17 Having regard to the background evidence which has now been completed and is summarised above, the Council has undertaken a detailed review of its potential sources of housing supply within the urban areas and having done so has concluded that ***“exceptional circumstances exist to review the boundaries of the Green Belt”***. (Paragraph 3.6 of the Local Plan Consultation Document (January 2015) refers).
- 6.18 Officers have also carried out various assessments, including a review of the evidence on Green Belt sites. As part of this exercise, a calculation was undertaken of the number of new homes required



for each settlement if distributed on a proportionate basis. For Cuffley, it was calculated that with 4% of the Borough's housing stock, it would need to provide 500 new homes between 2011 – 2031. Allowing for the number of dwellings completed since 2011, urban capacity and outstanding commitments results in a net need of 447 dwellings at Cuffley over the plan period; which will need to be found on sites outside the settlement and thereby currently within the Green Belt.

- 6.19 The potential sites were individually assessed and the conclusions for the site to the north east of the KGV Playing Fields (reference Cuf6) stated, inter alia, that it is “*capable of making a major contribution to the OAN and the provision of affordable housing*”. It continues by advising that the Site is free from nature conservation and heritage designations, although a large Area of Archaeological Significance adjoins the site to the south.
- 6.20 Of the five potential housing sites adjoining Cuffley, which were assessed, only two were considered to be ‘more favourable’ for development; one of which is the application site (with a stated capacity of 110 dwellings), whilst the other has a capacity for only 30 dwellings. In the draft Consultation Document, the Council has then considered the amount of housing which could be provided in the Borough if only those sites which have been assessed as ‘more favourable’ were to come forward and on this basis has concluded that the housing target would be 10,100 dwellings over the plan period; a reduction of 2,400 dwellings on the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure of 12,500. The important consideration in this instance is not just that the Council is positively planning for an increased supply of housing but that in either scenario, the Council is dependent on the ‘more favourable’ sites, including the application Site, coming forward for development.



6.21 Section 19 of the Consultation Document identifies potential sites to be allocated in and around Cuffley for housing and retail. On the basis of:

- 35 dwelling completions between 2011 – 14;
- 7 dwellings on small sites; and,
- 11 dwellings on larger urban sites,

Table 22 shows that sites for a further 447 new dwellings need to be found “outside settlement” of Cuffley. The two identified sites within the existing urban area, which have a total capacity of 11 dwellings, are described as **“evidently not enough to meet the identified need for Cuffley”**. It is then stated at paragraph 19.9 that:

“The Council therefore considers that an exceptional circumstance exists to alter the Green Belt boundary of Cuffley to make necessary future provision for housing.”

6.22 As indicated above, the Council has assessed the developability and suitability of each Green Belt site and the extent to which the development of these sites would impact on the purposes of the Green Belt and its boundaries. Having done so, sites have been categorised as **more favourable** for development, **less favourable** for development and those which are **finely balanced** between the two. The land to the north east of the KGV playing fields, otherwise known as Cuf6 East of Northaw Road East’, is one of the two sites at Cuffley which have been assessed as being ‘more favourable’. The reasoned justification states at paragraph 19.12:

“It has a larger capacity of 110 dwellings, and would make a relatively large contribution to meeting Cuffley’s housing need. The site has a significant role in the green belt function of protecting the countryside, but only a partial contribution to the purposes of preventing towns merging and preventing urban sprawl. The site is surrounded on all four sides by existing man-made boundaries (Northaw Road East, existing



*housing, a school, the railway, car parking and a recreation ground). **It would therefore be relatively easy to provide a logical and defensible new green belt boundary around the site.***” (My emphasis).

6.23 The remaining sites were assessed as ‘less favourable’ and therefore it is concluded that *“development of only the more favourable sites would not meet the need for 500 homes within Cuffley”* as a consequence of which *“some of the housing need within Cuffley may therefore need to be met elsewhere within the borough.”*

6.24 On this basis, having accepted that the housing need to be met within the Borough is between 10,100 and 12,500 and that either of these levels of provision will necessitate revisions to the Green Belt’s boundary to enable sites to be allocated for housing, it is reasonable to assume that there will be residential development on the ‘more favourable’ sites in the most sustainable locations such as Cuffley. This is the approach which was the subject of consultation in January – March 2015 and which was broadly supported by Lands Improvement. The Site the subject of this application is clearly one of the limited number of suitable sites which would be able to make a positive contribution to meeting the wider needs of the area and those of Cuffley in particular.

Housing Land Supply

6.25 In the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report 2013/14, published in February 2015, it is stated that at 1 April 2014, the Council had 5.81 years supply of housing. This figure has been derived by use of the housing requirement in the now abandoned Core Strategy of 378 dpa, the use of the Liverpool methodology and the application of a 5% buffer. For the reasons given below, it is considered that this is an over estimate of the 5 year housing land supply position.

6.26 The Minister’s advice quoted in paragraph 6.3 above is based on the assumption that there is a valid housing number in the adopted Local



Plan. This is clearly not the case where a Plan is time expired and in such circumstances it is considered that the SHMA's findings should form the basis of housing supply calculations until such time as these have been tested as part of the Local Plan Examination process. This is the approach which has been adopted in a series of recent appeals in Northamptonshire, where Inspectors have supported the use of the objective assessments of housing needs, emanating from SHMAs, rather than the housing requirement taken from older development plans. Using the emerging housing figures of 12,500 and 10,100 (equivalent to 625 and 505 dpa respectively) and applying the Sedgefield Methodology and a 20% buffer, to determine the current housing supply within the Borough shows that the Council only has between 2.64 – 3.3 years supply.

- 6.27 The annual rate of completions since the beginning of the plan period (2011) has averaged 218 dwellings per annum (dpa), which is between 35% and 43% of the emerging annual requirement. Although it is acknowledged that the need for housing is not, of itself, justification for development on Green Belt sites, there is no doubt that unless suitable sites are granted planning permission before the Local Plan is adopted at the end of 2016 (at the earliest), the under provision of housing within the Borough will increase.
- 6.28 The current growth targets and subsequent Green Belt Review clearly demonstrate that more land is required for development in the area and that there are sites capable of delivering this requirement without harming the primary purposes of the Green Belt. In this context, unless steps are taken now to increase the supply of housing within the Borough by permitting development on suitable sites, where Very Special Circumstances have been shown to exist, the unmet need will increase significantly before the Local Plan's adoption. By permitting the development the subject of this Application a reduction in the shortfall could be secured to the benefit of those who need to live within the area.



Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes

- 6.29 At its meeting on 14 August 2014, the Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel agreed to:
- i. Treat all car parking standards as guidelines rather than maximums; an approach which will be taken into account in the formulation of Reserved Matters applications.
 - ii. Work with applicants to secure new garages which are at least 6 metres by 3 metres wide and sufficiently high to accommodate modern cars. In view of the implications for the density of the development, this interim policy has been taken into account in the preparation of the Illustrative Masterplan which accompanies this Application.

Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.30 At its meeting on 7 October 2014, the Council's Cabinet resolved to adopt the Northaw and Cuffley Neighbourhood Plan Area. This has enabled the Parish Council to progress the preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.31 During the preparation of the Application, a number of meetings have been held with the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Planning Group and others to discuss the need for the provision of some new homes on greenfield sites adjoining Cuffley and the Site's suitability and availability for residential development; all as expanded upon in the Statement of Community Involvement accompanying the application.
- 6.32 In summary this has included:
- Meetings with Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council Planning Committee and Neighbourhood Plan Team, to discuss the Site in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan and associated Development Brief as well as the needs of and proposals for the KGV Playing Fields site;



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- A meeting with officers at WHBC to discuss the appropriate consultation strategy;
 - Setting up a dedicated website, free phone and email address;
 - Two design workshops, including a guided tour of the site, for key local stakeholders which covered the following topics:
 - i. The Character of Cuffley and Local Services;
 - ii. Site Constraints and Opportunities;
 - iii. Access and Movement; and
 - iv. Leisure and Community Benefits.
 - The workshops were followed by a drop-in Feedback Session;
 - All residential and business addresses in Cuffley received an invitation to the public exhibitions which were held on 8th and 9th May 2015. In total, 182 people attended over the two days.
 - The exhibitions were followed by a drop-in Feedback Session at which the Applicant's final Illustrative Masterplan was displayed and more details provided on the key issues of the proposed development. In total 212 people attended the session.
 - Meetings have also been held with the KGV sports clubs and the residents of Greenfields.



7 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 This section addresses two elements of the Planning Considerations:
- i. The ‘Very Special Circumstances’ which apply in this instance and which clearly outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness; and
 - ii. The economic, social and environmental dimensions to sustainable development.

Very Special Circumstances

- 7.2 As explained in Section 6 above, the draft Local Plan Consultation Document has been informed by various technical studies including a SHMA, SHLAA and Green Belt Review. Having done so, the Council has come to the clear conclusion that exceptional circumstances exist to review the boundaries of the Green Belt (paragraph 6.17 above refers). The potential sites have been assessed and the Application Site has been identified as one of the limited number of ‘more favourable’ sites which could be released from the Green Belt to provide for the new homes which the Borough and the village need. It is therefore considered that there is a clear direction of travel in the Council’s consideration of the evidence that provides the basis of the Very Special Circumstances which exist in this instance.
- 7.3 Even if the Council determines that a lower housing figure should be provided for in its Local Plan, it is still dependent upon all of the ‘more favourable’ sites coming forward during the plan period; a period which has already commenced. It is therefore clear that the most suitable Green Belt sites will need to be released for housing if the Borough’s needs are to be met both in the short and longer term.
- 7.4 Whilst recognising that housing need alone is not the only factor to be considered when preparing Local Plans, it is clear that objectively assessed needs should be met unless the adverse impacts of doing



so on land designated as Green Belt would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of fulfilling them. It is apparent from all the evidence which the Council has either obtained or prepared so far that the alteration of the Green Belt is justified to enable some of the need for housing in the area to be met and that the Application Site is not only suitable but will not have an adverse effect on the purposes of the Green Belt, apart from encroaching into the countryside which applies to virtually all such sites. Whilst the review of the Green Belt is progressing through the Local Plan process, this does not alter the fact that when assessed against the most up-to-date evidence of need, the Council has significantly less than a five year supply of land for housing which if it were not for the Green Belt status of the site would trigger the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 7.5 Having established that there are exceptional circumstances to revise the Green Belt boundary as part of the Development Plan process, it follows that an important element of the “*Very Special Circumstances*” for the release of a ‘more favourable’ site have been shown to exist. Consideration therefore turns to the other Very Special Circumstances in support of the release of the land to the north east of the KGV Playing Fields.

The Package of Benefits

- 7.6 Lands Improvement has liaised closely with the Parish Council and local community about the needs of the area and the associated package of benefits. As a consequence, the Very Special Circumstances, described below, and which justify the grant of planning permission in this instance, have arisen as a result of discussions with the local community and can therefore be genuinely described as locally based. The issues and associated benefits raised by individual clubs and groups are set out in greater detail in the Statement of Community Involvement accompanying the Application.



The extension to the KGV playing fields

- 7.7 Meetings have been held with the Head of the Primary School and the various sports clubs about the use of, and need for, sports facilities in the locality. Having done so, it is apparent that there is a need for further playing pitches in Cuffley.
- 7.8 The proposed development, including the change of use of an area of agricultural land to playing fields, will enable the extension of this important sports facility in accordance with saved Local Plan Policy OS2. This stipulates that in areas where there is a lack of playing pitch provision substantial new developments, in excess of 0.4 hectares, such as that the subject of this Application, will be expected to contribute towards the provision of new facilities. The accompanying text at paragraph 10.5 states *“The District Council will also take into account evidence of local demand, accessibility to all user groups and the provision of ‘all weather’ surfaces that have a greater capacity than traditional turfed pitches.”*
- 7.9 The Applicant is in the unique position to be able to facilitate the provision of an enlarged site for the KGV playing fields as they own land to the south west of the Playing Fields which extends to approximately 0.63 ha. It has been included within the Application in order that it can be delivered as part of the proposals for residential development and thereby enable a significant benefit to the local community to be secured, which constitutes part of the Very Special Circumstances, justifying the grant of planning permission in this instance.

Safer Access to King George V Playing Fields

- 7.10 As explained in paragraph 3.4 above, consideration has been given to ways in which the existing access into the northern car park serving the playing fields can be made safer. At the present time, the access is only 3.51 metres wide which is too narrow to enable two cars to pass. Consequently, if a car is waiting to turn out of the



car park, a vehicle seeking to turn in, whether from the north or the south, has to wait thereby causing a potential hazard on this busy road.

- 7.11 An associated issue is the existing congestion on the streets surrounding the Primary School at the beginning and end of the School day. In order to avoid this, many parents and other guardians, currently use the car park at the playing fields and then walk along Northaw Road East to either take and/or collect their children from School. The safety and convenience of the access is therefore not just an issue to users of the playing fields.
- 7.12 Vectos, transport planning consultants, have considered how the access can be improved and as shown on the Drawing, included as Appendix 3 to this Statement have shown that the access could be widened to 4.8 metres thereby enabling two vehicles to pass and avoid traffic waiting on Northaw Road East.
- 7.13 The playing fields and the car park are owned by the Parish Council with whom this proposal has been discussed and who would need to firstly obtain planning permission for the works involved. Having done so, Lands Improvement would be willing to make a financial contribution to enable these works to be undertaken and an improvement in highway safety secured for existing and future users.

Village Gateway Improvement

- 7.14 The Applicants are aware that local residents have previously sought to extend the 30 mph area on Northaw Road East to the south of the southern access into the playing fields. The Applicants are willing to consider whether there is scope to relocate the 30 mph speed limit at the appropriate time. In any event, there are other methods of influencing driver behaviour and thereby reducing speeds, as shown on the Vectos Drawing (141386/A/34) included as Appendix 4 to this Statement, which show alternative gateway features which could be employed in this instance and which would benefit all the local



community and not just the residents of the new development. The proposal has been discussed with the highway authority and, subject to the County Council's agreement, could be financed from the Sustainable Transport contribution.

Footpath Link to School

- 7.15 In order to provide a safe and convenient route to School and the centre of the village for those who currently walk from the playing fields' car park, it is proposed to provide a footpath and cycleway across the Site which will connect into the footpath at the end of South Drive. Not only will this be a safe and attractive route of real benefit for parents and children walking to school but it will also provide easier access to the sports facilities for existing residents.

Permissive Footpaths on Adjoining Land

- 7.16 Lands Improvement own land to the south of the Application Site which extends around the KGV playing fields. It is aware that there is currently an issue with dog walkers using the playing fields which causes health and safety concerns. In order to address this matter, Lands Improvement is willing and able to provide permissive footpaths around its field boundaries which in association with the provision of wider field margins would provide an attractive route for walkers in that it would enable an off road connection between the Hertfordshire Way either side of Northaw Road East, all as shown on the Illustrative masterplan included as Appendix 5 to this Statement.
- 7.17 In discussion with the Council's Leisure Services Manager, it has been suggested that added benefits of the permissive paths would be provided, if an Information Board was erected. This could set out the various routes available in the vicinity of the site, the distance involved and calories expended at different walking / running rates and be located at an appropriate point.

Improvements to Hertfordshire Way



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- 7.18 This is a well used route for recreational walkers from the village and further afield. It is frequently very muddy and representations have been received that the western section would benefit from upgrading through the provision of an appropriate surfacing. The footpath is within the Application site and Lands Improvement have advised that they would be willing and able to facilitate low key enhancements as part of the development.

Improvements to Station Road

- 7.19 Lands Improvement is aware that the Parish Council is seeking public realm enhancements to Station Road. Its highway consultants, Vectos, are considering the scope of these enhancements in liaison with the Parish Council's consultants and the highway authority. However, on the basis that these enhancements will be of significant benefit to the local community, the Applicant is willing and able to make a financial contribution to the cost of the works.

The Primary 'Forest' School

- 7.20 It is understood that the School is currently applying for 'Forest School' status. This would enable a child led outdoor curriculum to be developed, firstly in the school's own grounds and then in a wider area. The Application Site is ideally positioned to make a positive contribution to the School's aspirations, as pupils would be able to access the Site's open spaces and wetland areas via the public footpath, to the benefit of not only their education but by encouraging healthier lifestyles.

The Needs of the Elderly

- 7.21 By reference to census data, it is apparent that Northaw and Cuffley has the highest percentage of those over 65 of anywhere in the Borough and (the lowest proportion of those under 35). This unbalanced population structure could cause future problems in



terms of support for local services, such as the school, which would be partly rectified by the provision of additional family housing as well as accommodation suitable for smaller households (enabling the elderly to downsize thereby making available family sized accommodation in the existing stock). In this context, the proposed development would make a positive contribution to securing a more balanced age structure within Cuffley.

Larger Sustainable Development

7.22 In accordance with paragraph 49 of the Framework, all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. As relevant policies of the saved Local Plan in terms of housing are out-of-date, this means that decision takers should grant permission unless specific policies in the Framework, such as those in respect of the Green Belt, indicate development should be restricted. As the 'Very Special Circumstances' pertaining in this instance have already been addressed, the remainder of this section solely focuses on the economic, social and other environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

7.23 The proposed development is regarded as sustainable development in contributing towards the three dimensions: economic, social and environmental, through:

- contributing to the economic growth of the area in providing housing for workers, creating construction jobs, investing in local infrastructure and services, and generating additional spend within the local economy and shops and services;
- contributing to the social needs of the village through improving the choice and mix of housing, providing much needed affordable housing for the village, and making financial contributions towards social and community infrastructure where necessary; and,



- contributing to the environment through providing a development of high quality design that adds to the character of the village and its setting within the wider landscape, with high standards of energy efficiency, well connected to the village's facilities, with areas of landscaping and open space enhancing biodiversity and the appearance of the village.

7.24 By reference to the relevant policies set out in the Framework, the following matters are also of particular relevance.

Promoting sustainable transport

7.25 The proposed vehicular access and connections provide safe and suitable access to the Site for all people, as described in the Transport Assessment and Design and Access Statement. The site is also in a sustainable location in transport terms enabling easy access on foot or by bicycle to day-to-day facilities within the village, including the Primary School, the medical centre, the library, the wide range of shops and other services, including the Co-op and Tesco's express store, as well as being within walking distance of bus and rail services connecting Cuffley to London and Hertford and locations in between.

Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

7.26 Local planning authorities are required to "*boost significantly the supply of housing*" which this proposed development will assist with achieving. The proposal can also incorporate a choice of high quality homes which will widen opportunities for home ownership and create a sustainable, inclusive and mixed community.

Requiring good design

7.27 The design of the proposal is described in the Design and Access Statement and demonstrates the proposed layout will deliver a high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants which integrates into the existing built up area, and respects the layout of the surrounding residential areas.



Promoting healthy communities

- 7.28 The proposed homes will have easy access to high quality open spaces, and sport and recreation facilities within the village. The provision of a new footpath and cycle link through the development, connecting the Primary School to the north to the KGV playing fields to the south, will encourage the use of more sustainable modes of travel.

Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding

- 7.29 The proposed development has been designed to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change, and ensures that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere through providing attenuation features within the site. In addition, the SUDs features to be incorporated into the Site will provide ecological benefits for new and existing residents alongside the local primary school who could utilise the ecological features for educational purposes.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 7.30 The proposed development provides opportunities to incorporate biodiversity and enhance the natural environment through planting of native trees and vegetation within the landscaping for the development. In addition, the development can be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape without causing significant adverse effects.

Conclusions on Very Special Circumstances

- 7.31 It is accepted that an unmet need for housing is unlikely in itself to represent Very Special Circumstances justifying development in the Green Belt. However, Very Special Circumstances do not relate to the single issue of housing but need to be considered in relation to the much wider set of circumstances which exist in this instance. In summary these include:



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- firstly, the exceptional circumstances which the Council acknowledges justify a review of the Green Belt not just within the Borough but around sustainable settlements such as Cuffley; and,
 - secondly, the Application has been informed by the numerous and detailed discussions held with the local community and reflects its aspiration to secure various benefits in conjunction with the requisite new homes.

7.32 The development of the Site will help to secure a more sustainable village which meets the local community's needs for environmental, social and economic benefits, including housing.

7.33 It is concluded therefore that there are no adverse impacts arising from the proposed development which outweigh the benefits provided in terms of the delivery of much needed market and affordable homes, the delivery of sustainable drainage, new and improved footpath links, and wider economic benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework. Accordingly, the 'Very Special Circumstances' which exist in this instance should be recognised and planning permission granted in accordance with national planning policy and the emerging Local Plan.



8. DRAFT HEADS OF TERMS AND HOUSING STATEMENT

8.1 The Applicant is willing to enter into an agreement(s) with the Borough and County Councils to provide (unless the matter can be dealt with by condition):

- i. 30% of the proposed new dwellings as affordable homes which on the basis of a total of 121 is equivalent to 36 dwellings. The affordable housing provision has been discussed with the Council's Housing Officer, and having done so it has been agreed that equal proportions of shared ownership / intermediate properties and dwellings for affordable rent would be provided;
- ii. any necessary off-site highway works (under Section 278 of the Highways Act) including a financial contribution towards the provision of a Village Gateway Improvement;
- iii. the provision of additional land for the KGV playing fields;
- iv. a financial contribution towards the alterations to the vehicular access into the northern car park of the KGV playing fields;
- v. a financial contribution towards the enhancement of existing sports facilities at the KGV playing fields;
- vi. contributions towards the enhancement of existing open spaces and play facilities for the village together with a contribution towards the maintenance of any enhancements to open space (in lieu of on-site provision);
- vii. subject to confirmation of need, any necessary contributions towards the improvement of local services;
- viii. subject to confirmation of need, any necessary financial contributions towards improvements to schools that serve the area in which the proposal is located in line with local policy;
- ix. the upgrading of the Hertfordshire Way through the Application site in an appropriate manner;



- x. the provision of permissive footpaths around the land to the south; and
- xi. any other reasonable and directly related requirements as may be shown to be necessary based on detailed evidence of need in line with local policy.

8.2 Insofar as the need for additional school places is concerned, the Applicant is aware of the local concerns that there is insufficient capacity within Cuffley's primary school to accommodate the needs arising from the development. In order to have a detailed understanding of the need and demand for primary school places in the local area, the Applicant sought advice from EFM Ltd; their report being included as Appendix 6 to this Statement. It considered:

- The birth rate amongst the current population in Cuffley and the scope for these pupils to be allocated spaces at the School;
- The propensity of pupils living outside Cuffley to go to school in the village thereby filling the school;
- The scope for some Schools within the Goffs Oak area (where many of Cuffley's pupils live) to expand; and,
- The number of pupils who can be expected to move with their families into the new houses during the time they are being built.

8.3 The issue highlighted in this report is not just the number of pupils from Cuffley who either currently attend the School or can be expected to do so in the future but the number of pupils who live outside the village and who travel, predominantly by car, to the School. To redress the displacement of those pupils from outside the village who would otherwise expect to attend the School, a financial contribution will be made towards the provision of additional School places either in Goffs Oak or elsewhere; a contribution which as indicated above the Applicant is willing to make.



-
- 8.4 This agreement is subject to any obligation being demonstrated to meet the tests as required within paragraphs 203 - 206 within the Framework, and taking into consideration the viability and costs associated with the development in accordance with paragraph 173 of the Framework.



9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The proposals for up to 121 dwellings, associated infrastructure and extension to the adjacent playing fields have been formulated taking full account of the current Green Belt status of the Site and the need to show that Very Special Circumstances for permitting the development exist in this instance, as required by national policy.

9.2 In so doing, it has been acknowledged that the need for up to 121 dwellings (of which 30% will be affordable homes) does not in itself constitute the Very Special Circumstances justifying development in the Green Belt. However, Very Special Circumstances do not relate to the single issue of housing but need to be considered in relation to the much wider set of circumstances which exist in this instance. In summary these include:

- firstly, the exceptional circumstances which the Borough Council acknowledges justify a review of the Green Belt not just within the Borough but around sustainable settlements such as Cuffley; and,
- secondly, the Application has been informed by the numerous and detailed discussions held with the local community and reflects its aspiration to secure various benefits in conjunction with the requisite new homes which can be summarised as follows:
 - i. the provision of additional land for the KGV playing fields;
 - ii. a financial contribution towards the alterations to the vehicular access into the northern car park of the KGV playing fields;
 - iii. a financial contribution towards the enhancement of sports facilities at the KGV playing fields;



-
- iv. contributions towards the enhancement of existing open spaces and play facilities for the village together with a contribution towards the maintenance of any enhancements to open space (in lieu of in-site provision);
 - v. any necessary contributions towards the improvement of local services;
 - vi. the upgrading of the Hertfordshire Way in an appropriate manner;
 - vii. the provision of permissive footpaths around the land to the south;
 - viii. any necessary off-site highway works, including the provision of a gateway feature on Northaw Road East; and
 - ix. other necessary contributions, financial or otherwise, towards the improvement of local services and facilities.

9.3 It is concluded therefore that there are no adverse impacts arising from the proposed development which outweigh the benefits provided in terms of the delivery of much needed market and affordable homes, the delivery of sustainable drainage, new and improved footpath links, and wider economic benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework. Accordingly, the 'Very Special Circumstances' which exist in this instance should be recognised and planning permission granted in accordance with national planning policy and the emerging Local Plan.

APPENDIX 1

LETTER 18 DECEMBER 2014 FROM MARRONS
PLANNING REQUESTING A SCREENING OPINION

This matter is being dealt with by
Matt Smith

1 Meridian South, Meridian Business Park,
Leicester, LE19 1WY
DX 710910 Leicester Meridian
T +44 (0) 0116 366 8000

Conor Guilfoyle
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL8 6AE

Our ref: MS.902930.2

18 December 2014

Dear Mr Guilfoyle

**REQUEST FOR A SCREENING OPINION: LAND TO THE NORTH EAST AND SOUTH
WEST OF KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS, CUFFLEY**

I refer to the above site which is being proposed for development. This is a greenfield site located within the Green Belt to the south of Cuffley. Lands Improvement, who own the site, propose to submit an outline application for residential development on this land.

Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, the development would fall within Schedule 2 (10b) where an Environmental Impact Assessment may be required. The relevant test is set out in Regulation 2 where EIA development is defined as:

"Development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location".

It is our opinion that there are no significant effects on the environment as a result of the proposed development.

This letter, therefore, specifically requests a screening opinion from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council under Regulation 5 of the 2011 Regulations. In accordance with the regulations, this letter encloses the following information:

- 1) A plan identifying the land;
- 2) A brief description of the nature and purpose of the development and its possible effects on the environment; and,
- 3) Other relevant Information.

The Development

The development proposed consists of the erection of up to 130 dwellings associated infrastructure and an artificial turf pitch with associated lighting. All matters reserved except for new vehicular and pedestrian accesses to serve the site and existing playing fields, the provision of a surface water discharge point and the levels of the development platforms.

Potential Effects

The potential effects on the environment have been considered as part of undertaking work on the following topic areas:

- Design and Access Statement – Urban Design and Masterplanning;
- Transport Assessment – Transport, Traffic and Sustainability;
- Archaeological Assessment – Cultural Heritage and Archaeology;
- Geo-Environmental Assessment – Land Stability;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy – Flooding and Drainage;
- Ecological Assessment – Ecology and Protected Species;
- Landscape and Visual Assessment – Landscape and Visual Issues;
- Noise Assessment – Noise;
- Air Quality Assessment – Air Quality;
- Lighting Assessment – Lighting; and
- Tree Survey – Trees.

Taking each topic area in turn the following points are made.

1. Urban Design and Masterplanning

The effect of the development of the site in respect of these issues has been carefully considered and evaluated as part of the scheme proposals. The proposals fully address all relevant urban design guidance and advice set out in national and Development Plan policy. As a result, the development will provide a high quality, well designed scheme in an attractive environment to live and work.

These matters, along with the proposals' relationship with existing developments, are fully detailed in the Design and Access Statement and the Illustrative Masterplan that will accompany the planning application. The proposal would not result in any significant effects sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

2. Transport, Traffic and Sustainability

The proposal to develop up to 130 dwellings would result in an increase in the number of vehicles utilising the surrounding road network. This is considered within the Transport Assessment that will accompany the application. It is not considered the proposal would result in any significant effects sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment. The content of the Transport Assessment has been scoped with the Highway Authority and appropriate mitigation measures have been agreed.

4. Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

A desk top study in respect of cultural heritage and archaeology has been undertaken and will form part of the suite of documents accompanying the planning application, alongside a detailed Geo-physical Survey of the site which has not identified any features of significant archaeological interest. It is considered that the

proposals would not result in any significant heritage or archaeological effects sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

5. Land Stability

The effect of the development of the site in respect of land stability has been investigated and ground investigation surveys have been undertaken; the results of which will accompany the planning application. The surveys demonstrate that the site is underlain by bedrock geology comprising clay, silt and sand belonging to the London Clay Formation. In view of this, it is considered the proposal will not result in any effects sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

6. Flood Risk and Drainage

The hydrological impact of the proposed development is considered through the Flood Risk Assessment which will accompany the planning application. The drainage and other infrastructure requirements of the development can be provided to ensure that there is no increase in impact due to the proposed development. Given the site is located within Flood Zone 1, the development's impact in respect of infrastructure and flood risk would not result in any significant effects, sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

7. Ecology

An Ecological Assessment has been undertaken as part of the planning application to demonstrate that the proposals do not have a substantial impact upon the ecological nature of the site. In addition to the Ecological Assessment, a number of Protected Species Surveys have also been carried out; these have also not identified any significant ecological issues which would require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

8. Landscape and Visual Issues

A detailed Landscape and Visual Assessment has been undertaken as part of preparing the planning application. This has considered the impact of the site on the landscape and its location within the Green Belt. This assessment demonstrates that due to the site's location and containment within the wider landscape, its development would have a limited visual impact. In this context, there are no significant impacts which would require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

9. Noise

The submitted planning application will be accompanied by a Noise Assessment which has been fully scoped with the Council's Environmental Health Department. This Assessment has considered the impact existing noise sources will have on the proposed development and the impact the development will have on existing noise receptors. This includes an assessment into the noise levels generated by the proposed artificial turf pitch and the existing railway line to the east of the site. The findings of this assessment demonstrate that there are no significant noise issues resulting from the development which will require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

10. Air Quality

The effect of the development of the site in respect of air quality has been investigated, taking account of all relevant receptors surrounding the site. The results of the assessment will accompany the planning application. It is considered the proposal will not result in any effects sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

11. Lighting Assessment

The proposed development includes the provision of an artificial turf pitch which will require lighting. A Lighting Assessment has been prepared which demonstrates that there are no significant issues arising from the development which will require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

12. Tree Survey

The submitted planning application will be accompanied by a Tree Survey which considers the impact of the development on the existing trees surrounding the site. The proposed development seeks to retain as much of the existing vegetation as possible. As will be demonstrated on the Illustrative Masterplan, the development will provide areas of new tree planting and vegetation which enhance the existing provision around the site boundaries. In this context, there are no significant impacts which would require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

In respect of the application to be submitted, it is therefore considered that whilst there may be an increase in impact on the environment due to the nature of the development, this would not be "*significant*" or sufficient to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Conclusion

The main impacts of the proposed development are addressed through the supporting information to be submitted with the application. It is therefore considered that, since the result of any increased impact is not significant, there is no need for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be provided in respect of any planning application for residential development on this site.

The proposed development is of no more than local importance, is not in an environmentally sensitive or vulnerable location, nor is it unusually complex or potentially hazardous (in terms of environmental effect).

In conclusion, it is requested that you accept this letter as a formal request for a screening opinion under Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

Please will you advise me as soon as possible if there is any further information that you need to order to consider this formal request.

Yours sincerely

Matt Smith

Direct Line: 0116 281 696952

E: matt.smith@marrons-planning.co.uk

APPENDIX 2

SCREENING OPINION 16 JANUARY 2015 FROM
WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL



Reply To: address as below
Our Ref: S6/2013/2638/PA
Direct Tel: 01707 357517
Fax: 01707 357255
Email:
c.guilfoyle@welhat.gov.uk

16 January 2015

Mr Matt Smith
Marrons Planning
1 Meridian South
Meridian Business Park
Leicester
LE19 1WY

Dear Mr Smith

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS)
(ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2011
SITE AT THE NORTH-EAST AND SOUTH-WEST OF KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS,
CUFFLEY**

I am writing with regards to your screening request dated 18 December 2014, received by the Local Planning Authority on 19 December 2014, in relation to the above site.

I note that the development is not contained within Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 ('the Regulations'). However, the development does fall within paragraph 10(b) of Schedule 2 of the Regulations, being an urban development project, the area of which exceeds 0.5ha. The development may therefore constitute 'EIA development' in accordance with the definition set out in the Regulations if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

Your letter states that the proposal will comprise the following elements:

- Up to 130 dwellings, associated infrastructure and an artificial turf pitch with associated lighting - all matters are to be reserved except for new vehicular and pedestrian accesses to serve the site and existing playing fields, the provision of a surface water discharge point and the levels of the development platforms.

For the purposes of assessing whether the proposal requires an Environmental Impact Assessment the Council agrees with the conclusions set out in your letter in points numbered 1-12 in relation to the consideration of the likely environmental impacts of the proposal. Accordingly, the development would not give rise to significant effects on the environment, and I adopt an opinion, on behalf of the Council, that the development is not EIA development in accordance with the definition set out in the Regulations and would not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

In addition to the work undertaken on the twelve topic areas raised in your letter where you state the potential effects on the environment have been considered, I also suggest that you consider

the impacts of how the development would connect to the wider utilities networks. For example impacts on electricity, gas, water and sewerage networks and associated infrastructure impacts or requirements.

For the avoidance of doubt this opinion should not be construed as the Council's agreement with any statements relating to aspects of the proposal that also fall to be considered as part of the formal planning application process. For example, in point number 1 where it is stated that "*the proposals fully address all relevant urban design guidance and advice set out in national and Development Plan policy*". Clearly this is also a matter which will need to be considered in the normal manner in the context of the Development Plan as part of the determination of any future planning application.

I would also like to point out that we reserve the right to consider the impacts of other issues which may arise during the pre-application stages or upon receipt of an application.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Haigh ✓
Head of Planning

APPENDIX 3

VECTOS DRAWING NO: 141386/A/33 DATED 12 MAY
2015: 'EXISTING CAR PARK ACCESS WIDENING'



- Notes:
1. This is not a construction drawing and is intended for illustrative purposes only.
 2. White lining is indicative only.
 3. Based on Topographical Survey 1667_0.

REV.	DETAILS	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE

CLIENT:
Lands Improvement Holdings Limited

PROJECT:
Cuffley

DRAWING TITLE:
Existing Car Park Access Widening

SCALES:
1:100 at A3

DRAWN: JM CHECKED: ID DATE: 12/05/2015



Network Building, 97 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TP
 t: 020 7580 7373 e: enquiries@vectos.co.uk

DRAWING NUMBER: **141386/A/33** REVISION: .

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APPENDIX 4

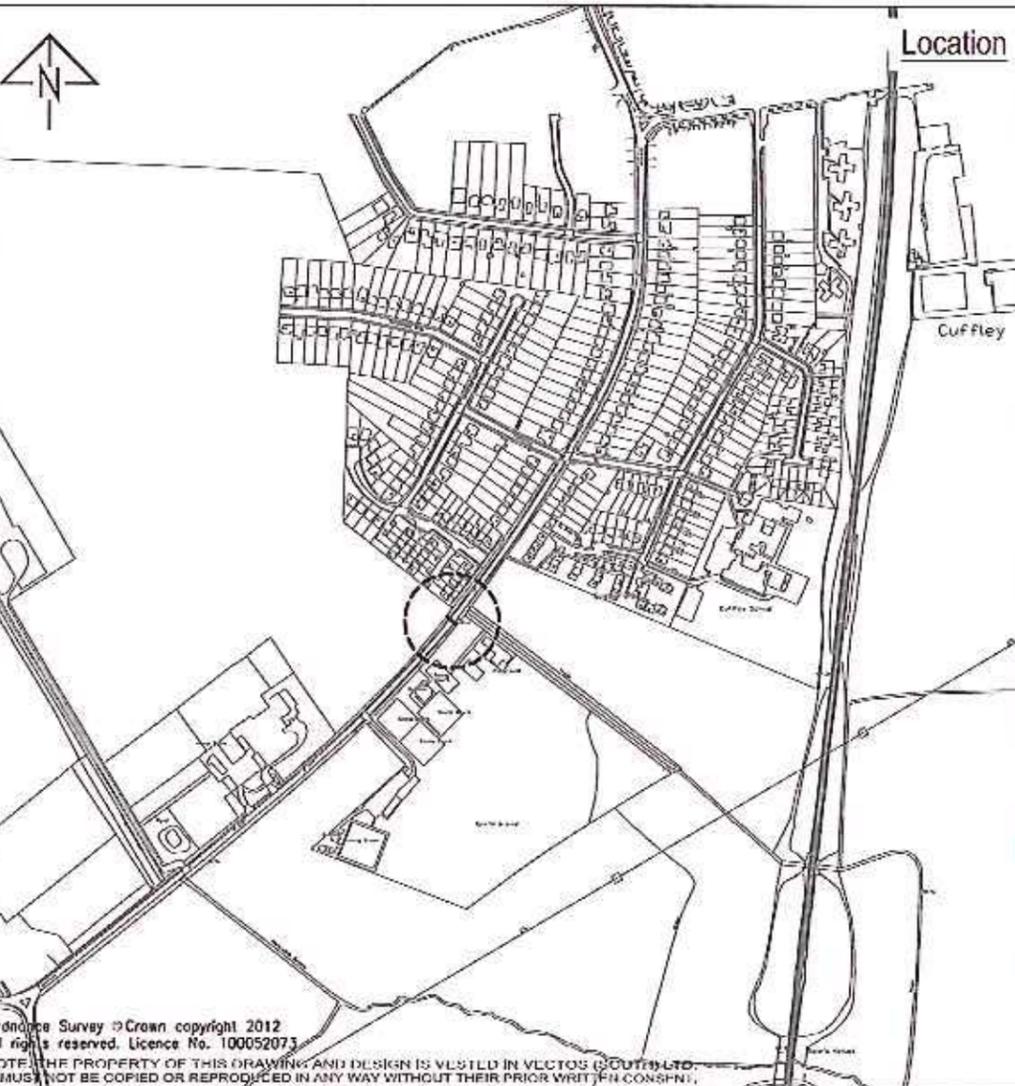
VECTOS DRAWING NO: 141386/A/34 DATED 12 MAY
2015: 'VILLAGE GATEWAY IMPROVEMENT'



Existing



Proposed



Location

Example



Alternative Example



Notes:

1. This is not a construction drawing and is intended for illustrative purposes only.
2. White lining is indicative only.

REV.	DETAILS	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE

CLIENT:
Lands Improvement Holdings Limited

PROJECT:
Cuffley

DRAWING TITLE:
Village Gateway Improvement

SCALE:
NTS at A3

DRAWN	JM	CHECKED	ID	DATE	12/05/2015
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Network Building, 97 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TP
t: 020 7580 7373 e: enquiries@vectos.co.uk

DRAWING NUMBER:
141386/A/34

REVISION:
-

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APPENDIX 5

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN



Lands Improvement

OMEGA

PARTNERSHIP

Omega Partnership Limited, Architects and Urban Designers
Blunston House, 33 Common Road, Claydon, Suffolk, IP10 0DZ
T: 01292 470213 W: www.omegapartnership.co.uk

LANDS IMPROVEMENT

LAND TO THE NORTH EAST OF
KGV PLAYING FIELDS, CUFFLEY

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

1:500@A1

MAY 2015

PLANNING

2271-C-1005-B



N

0 m 10 m 20 m 30 m 40 m 50 m

APPENDIX 6

EFM EDUCATION REPORT

Briefing Note

Land East of Northaw Road
Cuffley

Lands Improvement Holding

Ver 4 (22/06/15)

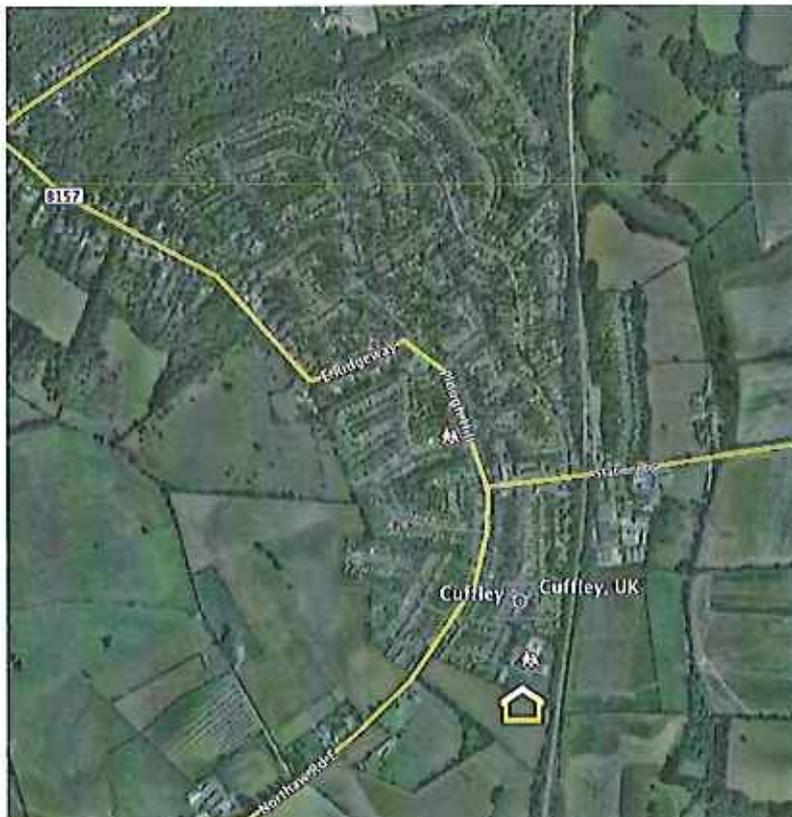
STEPHEN CLYNE
LCP (Dip SMS) Cert Ed MAE



Introduction

1.1 The proposal is for a development of 121 dwellings on land to the east of Northaw Road, Cuffley.

1.2 The proposed development lies within Northaw and Cuffley Ward ("The Ward") and the area of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council ("planning authority"). The education authority (Children's Services Authority) is Hertfordshire County Council ("HCC")



Map 1

Dwellings

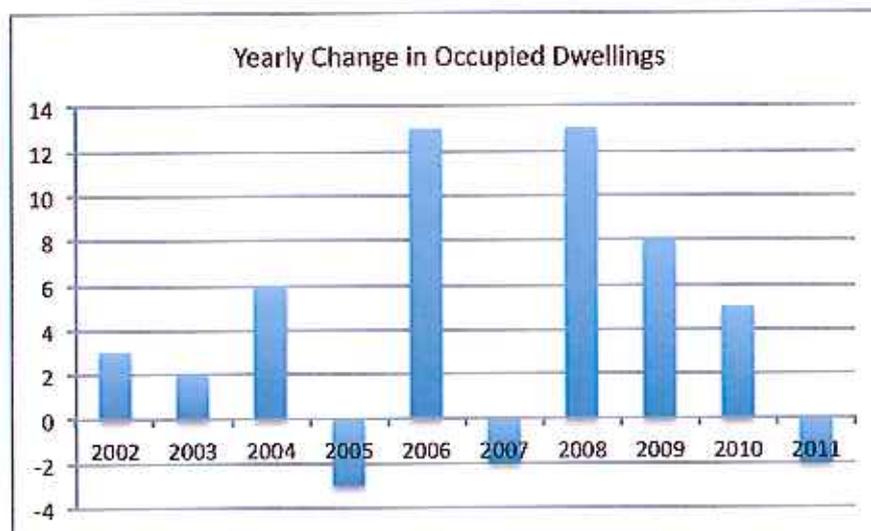
2.1 The ward at the end of 2011 consisted of 2,209 occupied dwellings. There has been an increase of 43 occupied dwellings in the ward over the 11-year period¹ shown below. (A 1.98% increase)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Dwellings	2166	2169	2171	2177	2174	2187	2185	2198	2206	2211	2209
Change		3	2	6	-3	13	-2	13	8	5	-2

Table 1: Dwelling numbers

2.2 The 2011 census gives the total number of dwellings, occupied or not, as 6,011 suggesting a 99.7% occupancy rate. This occupancy rate is very high.

2.3 Development over the last decade has not been regular. (Graph 1)



Graph 1²

¹Council Tax Returns published by ONS from VOA data

² The negative figures for 2005 and 2007 represent an increase in empty properties

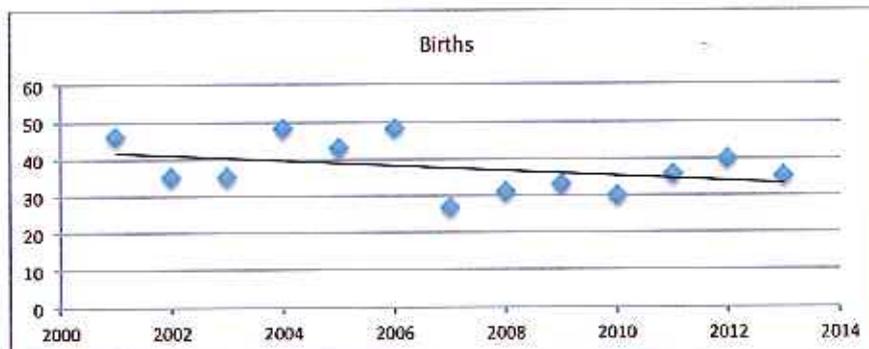
Births

3.1 There has been an average of 38 births per year within the ward during the 13 years shown below. Births peaked in 2004 and 2006 at 48.

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Births	46	35	35	48	43	48	27	31	33	30	36	40	35

Table 2: Birth numbers

3.2 Beneath is a graph charting the births within the ward over the 12-year period. Despite the slight rise in dwelling numbers there is a clear trend of falling births within the ward.

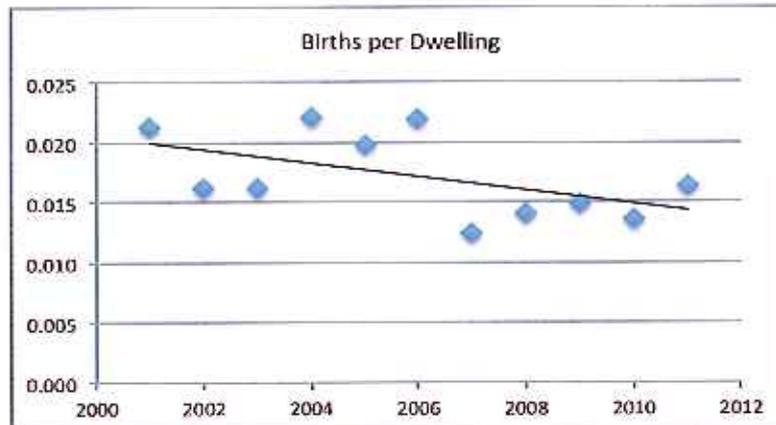


Graph 2: Births

3.3 The number of births relative to the number of dwellings has fallen over the 11 years shown below.

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Birth/dw	0.021	0.016	0.016	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.012	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.016

Table 3 Births per dwelling



Graph 3: Births per Dwelling

Age

4.1 The median age in the ward has risen by 1.17 years in over the 12 years shown below. Over the same period the national average has risen by two years to 39.9 years. The median age within the ward is 3.93 years above the national average.

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
MedianAge	42.66	42.81	42.87	43.02	43.14	43.19	43.33	43.39	43.56	43.62	43.74	43.83

Table 4: Median age

4.2 There looks to be some outward migration of households with children aged 0-4 (between birth and attendance at primary school) but it is not possible at this stage to be certain as to the cause and whether it is a shortage of suitable family dwellings or not.

4.2.1 Whilst the number of births averages 38 per annum, the number of children on roll at the two primary schools that live in the ward at 170 children (census 2011) is just 64% of the total births in the corresponding period. The numbers of pupils at the primary schools (525) that start at a Cuffley primary school move out of the ward but stay at the primary school is unknown (see 6.3 below).

Schools

5.1 In our assessment, we have taken into account all Primary schools within a 2-mile walking distance³, and Secondary schools that lie within a 3-mile walking distance of the development. The 2 and 3 mile⁴ criteria are the distances prescribed beyond which local authorities are required to fund transport where the nearest available school is further away.

5.2 The authority is required to calculate how many pupils are currently on roll in its primary schools and how many are forecast to be on roll each year till 2018/19 in the School Capacity ("SCAP") returns. (For secondary the forecast runs to 2020/21). The SCAP is a DfE template, which each authority fills out with the previous January's school census (taken as being their current school roll). To complete the SCAP return – they enter into the blank column their forecast for each year, net of any additional children covered by S106 agreements. (S106/CIL covered pupils are entered separately). This is how Government allocates its funding for any necessary additional school places that are its responsibility to provide.

Primary Schools

6.1 There are 4 schools in the local planning area: Goffs Oak Ridgeway South. The January 2014 school rolls show the local primary schools to be considered full for planning purposes.

School name	Postcode	Distance	Status	Capacity	Roll	Admission Number	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Cuffley School	EN8 4HS	0.4	Foundation	420	413	60	60	60	59	60	60	55	59
Woodside Primary School	EN7 5JS	1.4	Community School	210	205	30	28	30	30	30	25	30	30
Northaw Church of England Primary	EN6 4PB	1.6	Voluntary Aided	105	92	15	9	16	12	14	13	16	12
Goffs Oak Primary & Nursey School	EN7 5HS	1.6	Community School	210	205	30	30	30	30	30	30	26	29
Total				945	913	135	127	136	131	131	128	127	130
Occupancy (%)					96.61		94.07	100.74	97.04	99.26	94.61	94.07	96.30

Table 5: Primary Schools

6.2 The forecast anticipates the numbers enrolling age 4 (Reception Class) to rise from the current 136 (2013/14 actual) to 139 (forecast 2014/15 - actual)

³ Distances have been calculated based upon the nearest available postcode to the site (as provided). Once the development is built, some parts of the site may be further/closer than shown.

numbers will be available mid-June) and then fall year on year to 100 (2017/18) and rise to 101 in 2018/19. This excludes any impact from new dwellings where additional places are covered by s106 agreements.

6.3 A Freedom of Information request to HCC about out-of-area pupils at Northaw and Cuffley Primary Schools revealed that Northaw Primary School has 92 pupils of which, just 38 live in the Northaw and Cuffley area. Cuffley Primary School has just 251 of its 413 pupils living in the area. Northaw Primary School has 4 pupils with a Goffs Oak home postcode and Cuffley Primary School has 81 with a Goffs Oak home postcode. Of the out of area pupils, Northaw Primary School has 63 pupils who live somewhere other than the Northaw and Cuffley area or the Goffs Oak area. On the same criteria Cuffley Primary School has 88 pupils who live somewhere other than Northaw, Cuffley or Goffs Oak.

6.3.1 A disproportionate number of pupils at the two primary schools live in other areas with their own primary schools. At the last published count (January 2012) 414 of the 556 pupils (75%) travelled to and from the two schools by car.

Secondary Schools

7.1 The development is located broadly equidistant from Mount Grace School and Goffs School.

7.2 As at January 2014, there was some spare capacity at Mount Grace School. Goffs School should be considered full.

School name	Postcode	Distance	Status	Capacity	Nor	Admission Number	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Post 16
Mount Grace School	EN6 1EZ	2.8	Academy Converter	870	761	174	108	162	156	168	167	169
Goffs School	EN7 5QW	2.8	Academy Converter	1050	1038	210	210	210	210	201	207	217
Total				1920	1799	384	318	372	366	369	374	386
Occupancy (%)					93.70		87.81	95.88	95.31	96.09	97.40	

Table 6: Secondary Schools

7.3 For planning purposes the two schools are in different planning areas.

7.3.1 For the SCAP return the HCC places Mount Grace School in the "Potters Bar Secondary" planning area. This area is forecast to see on roll year 7 pupils to rise from the current 522 (2013/14) to 543 (2015/16) and rise further to 571 in 2017/18 and 581 in 2020/21.

7.3.2 Goff's School is in the Cheshunt secondary planning area. HCC forecasts that Cheshunt is going to see a rise of 61 year 7 pupils by 2019/20 and 77 a year later. These numbers exclude the impact of consented planning permissions for which s106 agreements are in place.

Adding Places to Primary Schools

8.1 As a part of our analysis we have looked at the space the schools in Goff's Oak have for expansion. If there were potential for them to expand, they could do so, to accommodate the pupils who currently travel to Cuffley and Northaw schools from Goff's Oak and would be displaced by pupils who arise from this development.

School	Current Capacity	Necessary Site Area	Actual Site Area
Andrews Lane	1	1.2ha	2.14
Flamstead End	2	2.2ha	1.43
Bonneygrove	2	2.2ha	2.64
St Paul's	1	1.2ha	0.75
Fairfields	2	2.2ha	2.24
Goffs Oak	1	1.2ha	1.27

Table 7: Area of Land – Goff's Oak Schools

8.2 The site area estimates are based on a transposition of land registry plans, on to Google Earth for measurement. It is just an indication that there may be scope for expansion at Andrews Lane School.

Interim Arrangements

9.1 This section considers the impact on the Cuffley schools of this development because of families with children of primary school age moving in.

9.2 The development is planned to comprise up to 121 dwellings. The illustrative mix is:

- a. Market: 85 dwellings (6 x 1 bed flats; 18 x 2 bed houses; 6 x 2 bed flats; 38 x 3 bed houses and 17 x 4 bed houses)
- b. Affordable: 36 dwellings (8 x 1 bed flats; 18 x 2 bed houses; 2 x 2 bed flats; 6 x 3 bed houses and 2 x 4 bed houses)

9.3 The social rent dwellings can be discounted because they are allocated on the basis of need by the local housing department and if a school place is needed because of the placement, the school will admit the child, if necessary on appeal. Schools have a 10% tolerance factor built into their teaching space standards for this reason.

9.4 Migrant households (those moving into the District or within the District) in Welwyn Hatfield contain on average 19 primary school age pupils per 100 dwellings (source ONS 2011 Census).

9.5 On the mix given, the migrant households will contain 16 children (spread over the development period).

			Migrant		
			Dwellings	Yield age 4-10	Total Yield
Market	Flats	1 bed	6	0.00	0
		2 bed	6	0.00	0
	Houses	2 bed	18	0.05	1
		3 bed	38	0.27	10
		4 bed	17	0.27	5
			85		16

Table 8

9.6 Welwyn Hatfield migrant households do not have an equal spread of ages of primary school age children. (Source ONS 2011 Census) For 4 - 10 year olds they are typically:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------|-----|--------------|
| a. | 4 year olds | 24% | 3.8 children |
| b. | 5 year olds | 14% | 2.2 children |
| c. | 6 year olds | 18% | 2.9 children |
| d. | 7 year olds | 9% | 1.4 children |
| e. | 8 year olds | 14% | 2.2 children |
| f. | 9 year olds | 10% | 1.6 children |
| g. | 10 year olds | 10% | 1.6 children |

9.7 The 4 year olds can be discounted, as they will be admitted to Cuffley Primary School (if they apply) as part of the normal admissions (provided applications are made at the correct time).

9.8 The CLG National Housing Survey has not reported 'distance moved' recently but the previously published data said:

- a. 19% moved under 1 mile
- b. 16.2% moved between 1 mile and under 2 miles
- c. 22.8% moved between 2 miles and under 5 miles

9.9 Thus we can reasonably conclude that between 35% and 58% will not seek to change their child's school. (For the purposes of this Briefing Note, 35% has been used).

9.10 SUMMARY: Of the 16 children of primary school age that arrive at this development, 24% (3-4) will be admitted in the normal admissions round and a further 35% (5-6) are unlikely to seek to move school. Over the period of construction and first occupation of each dwelling (say 3 years) there will be statistically just 7 or 8 children who may seek a place at Cuffley School and are unlikely to automatically secure a place.

9.11 PRACTICAL REALITY 1: Moving to a new home is a serious matter and generally not undertaken lightly. Invariably research will be carried out from Estate Agents, Development Sales Office, the Internet, Zoopla and Rightmove, etc., and of course Hertfordshire School Admissions. The 'statistical 7 or 8 children' (2 or 3 per annum for a 3 year development period) is going to be zero or close to it.

9.12 PRACTICAL REALITY 2: Despite detailed desktop analysis there will no doubt be an incident of a parent turning up unannounced and seeking a school place. They may be lucky because all schools have some turnover of pupils. In January 2014 Cuffley Primary School had 415 pupils and 420 spaces. By May 2014 it had 414 pupils. So at least in a single term in the middle of the school year at least one pupil left and was not replaced.

Conclusions

10.1 The large number of children travelling in to the Cuffley/Northaw area each day indicates that the area's two primary schools can accommodate more children living in the area to the equivalent of up to an additional 350-375 family dwellings. However because of pressure on primary school places generally, there will need to be added an equivalent number of primary school places elsewhere to accommodate those who in the future live elsewhere and would normally secure a

place at a Cuffley/Northaw primary school.

10.2 There appears to be some scope for adding places elsewhere at Goffs Oak based on the simple assessment of existing school sites but as the FOI response indicates many children arrive each day from elsewhere.

10.3 In school-place-planning terms, the core impact of new development on primary schools is those children under 4 years of age and those unborn. All of the others are on roll at a school. Parents do not uproot their children without considering the consequences. It is suspected that some of the attractiveness of this development is the opportunity for residents of Goffs Oak and other local centres to secure a home in Cuffley and a guaranteed place for their currently pre-school age children to secure a place at Cuffley Primary School. Reality dictates that for older children, it is probably too late to get a place at Cuffley Primary School and parents will know this.
