

# **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Examination in Public**

## **SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

As agreed between North Hertfordshire District Council  
And Picture Srl

Concerning Allocation GA2: Land north-east of Stevenage

**February 2018**

1. This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared jointly by Picture Srl and North Hertfordshire District Council relating to the proposed allocation and delivery of land at Great Ashby, to the north-east of Stevenage, allocated as site GA2.
2. The pre-submission Local Plan (November 2016) allocated site GA2 for development to accommodate 600 houses and up to four hectares of land for educational purposes, including at minimum a 2FE school. Site GA2 is identified on the plan attached at Appendix A.
3. This statement supplements the previous agreement between North Hertfordshire District Council and Picture Srl that was submitted to the examination in November 2017 (ED29) (the first statement).
4. The first statement set out areas of agreement insofar as they related to broad issues of delivery and infrastructure provision in order to inform the consideration of strategic matters through the examination. The first statement set out the broad parameters of the development proposed for this site.
5. This supplementary agreement provides additional information on site-specific issues and constraints. It sets out the matters that have been agreed between Picture Srl and North Hertfordshire District Council relating to the allocation of the site and the possibility of accommodating 4 Forms of Entry (FE) of secondary school provision.
6. The two statements should be read alongside one another. In the event of any conflict between the two statements, this latter statement should take precedent.
7. The contents of this statement are without prejudice to the submission and determination of any future planning application(s) on this land.
8. The Council's own assessments and evidence have been supplemented by ongoing discussion between the parties and the provision of additional information by Picture Srl. This additional information includes further work and / or assessments in relation to:
  - Ecology
  - Education
  - Flood Risk and Drainage
  - Heritage
  - Traffic and Transport
9. These reports are appended to the representations submitted by Keymer Cavendish on behalf of Picture Srl in response to the Regulation 19 consultation in November 2016 (representor reference 16141) and to the Statements submitted to the examination in response to Matter 10 (Great Ashby).

## Site and indicative layout

10. The proposed allocation site is described as arable farmland on the north-eastern edge of the town of Stevenage. The recently built residential development known as the Great Ashby estate bounds the application site on its south-western edge. Within the proposed allocation site the arable fields are surrounded by hedgerows and small woodlands and copses.
11. An indicative masterplan has been submitted by Picture Srl and is attached as Appendix B. This provides high-level detail of a potential layout of this strategic urban extension. This masterplan has not been fully considered or agreed by the local planning authority and is indicative only for the purposes of the Local Plan examination.
12. This shows a series of proposed residential land parcels separated and / or bounded by hard and / or green infrastructure. Existing areas of woodland are preserved and provide separation between areas of the development. Potential indicative road links help define smaller land parcels. Existing vegetation helps to define site boundaries around much of GA2 with proposed landscape buffers identified where additional planting may be necessary, particularly to the north east and north-west edges of the site. Areas of open space are shown along with a corridor beneath the overhead powerline to be retained free from development to protect residential amenity and ensure safe and appropriate clearances.
13. Picture Srl owns land around the allocation site should further landscape buffers be required to contain the visual impact of the scheme beyond the existing natural containment offered by the topography of the site which contributes to preventing visual encroachment into the broader countryside.
14. The detailed layout of the development will continue to be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and the Local Planning Authority, informed by the findings of Environmental Impact Assessment (as required), pre-application study and / or community engagement. A masterplan reflecting the outcomes of these processes will be presented and secured as part of any future planning application.

## Infrastructure

### Highways and sustainable transport

15. The plan identifies that principal access to GA2 should be taken from Mendip Way. This is shown on the indicative masterplan along with a potential emergency access at the north of the site. This provides the opportunity to connect into the existing highway and pedestrian footpath network.

16. The highway impacts of the proposed allocation, including the potential 4FE secondary-aged schools provision, have been tested through the Council's evidence base. This does not identify any significant issues with the operation of the highway network in the immediate vicinity of the sites (TI4, Figures 4.4 & 4.5, pp.14-15). The landowner's own highway and transportation work, as summarised in Appendix III to their Matter 10 statement, concurs with this view.
17. Potential highway mitigation measures are detailed on the wider highway network, though these need to be viewed in the context of Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC's) proposed approach to future management of highway demand.
18. Detailed measures to promote sustainable transport alternatives, in line with the aims of the Council's Transport Strategy and SBC's Mobility Strategy will be subject to further detailed discussion as a scheme is developed. However, measures to be considered will include the provision of opportunities for new or improved bus links and pedestrian and cycle routes, including connections towards the existing cycle network in Stevenage. Appropriate contributions will be made towards wider schemes within Stevenage and North Hertfordshire to ensure the continued safe operation of the highway network and / or the provision of infrastructure to support travel by sustainable modes.
19. Any further mitigation measures or improvements to the highway network required in connection with the secondary school element of the scheme (or any other infrastructure requirement arising in connection therewith) will be planned for and agreed with the competent authorities at the time said secondary school project will be effectively defined and confirmed.

### Education

20. The plan reserves land at the north of GA2 for education in order to facilitate the provision of two Forms of Entry (FE)<sup>1</sup> of primary-age provision and 4FE of secondary-age provision.
21. The 'Stevenage Education Strategy' submitted by Hertfordshire County Council to the Matter 6 examination hearings suggests additional secondary-age schools provision within the Stevenage School Place Planning Area will not be required until after 2028.
22. Picture Srl contend that, having regard to their own submitted evidence, there is no requirement for any additional secondary education infrastructure to be provided in this, or any other, location around Stevenage during the plan period and reserve the right to make this case at the examination hearings.
23. Notwithstanding this point, the indicative masterplan identifies enough land to provide the education facilities sought by the plan and the landowner would be willing to make

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<sup>1</sup> 1FE represents a single class of 30 children in each year group. A primary school contains seven year-groups (210 pupils per FE).

this land available for this purpose if the overall education strategy of the submitted plan is found sound.

24. To achieve this would require the provision of grass playing pitches on land which NHDC proposes remains beyond the site allocation boundary within land retained in the Green Belt. The landowner considers this land should be included within a wider area of safeguarded land (around the perimeter of the proposed allocation) as set out in their Matter 7 statement. Although the parties do not agree on the proposed policy status of this land, they agree that playing pitch provision could be appropriately made in this area. On the ground, this land is a natural continuation of the site allocation and is well bounded by hedgerows and woodland.
25. A development of 600 homes would, under the County Council's preferred approach to calculating pupil yield generate a requirement for 1.2FE of education provision at both primary and secondary levels. Site GA2 will make reasonable contributions towards the construction of education facilities.

### **Assessment and treatment of potential planning constraints**

26. All parties agree that the assessment of key potential planning constraints, as shown in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (HO9) for this site is accurate.
27. It is agreed that the following issues warrant consideration alongside the Proposed Development. Where necessary, measures to ensure these issues are appropriately addressed may be secured through conditions and / or legal agreements attached to any future planning permission.
28. Any such conditions and / or legal agreements will be subject to any relevant tests or regulations at the time of their imposition and / or agreement.
29. It is agreed that the subsequent list is not necessarily exhaustive and that the Council (or other parties) may require further issues to be investigated and / or addressed prior to the submission and / or determination of any future planning application.

#### *Ecology and green infrastructure*

30. The SHLAA identifies the presence of local wildlife sites and priority woodland habitats. However, subject to appropriate mitigations, no apparent fundamental ecological constraint to development has been identified through the preparation of the plan (ED93).
31. An Ecological Evaluation of the site has been completed by the landowner and is attached as Appendix IV to their Matter 10 statement. This states that the development of the GA2 site is unlikely to result in any significant impacts on important or protected species or habitats although it is acknowledged that some impacts cannot be avoided. However, opportunities exist within the site for considerable amounts of compensation

and biodiversity enhancement which would mitigate potential impacts on important and protected species and habitats and demonstrate a no net loss of biodiversity and a net gain.

32. Ecological issues will continue to be addressed through the completion of further appropriate surveys as detailed proposals are developed. Survey results will help to inform detailed site design, incorporating any necessary mitigation measures and ensure any risks are minimised to the fullest reasonable extent.
33. The provision of landscape buffers around site boundaries will be an essential part of any proposal, providing additional green infrastructure as well as addressing potential Green Belt, landscape and heritage impacts.
34. These measures will be secured through the detailed masterplanning exercise and the application of the requirements contained in draft Policies SP18 and NE6.

#### Green Belt

35. Site GA2 has been assessed in the Council's Green Belt review as making a moderate contribution to Green Belt purposes. Development of this site is therefore accepted as resulting in moderate harm to the Green Belt.
36. It is agreed that NHDC have demonstrated the necessary *exceptional circumstances* in both general and site-specific terms such as to justify the release and allocation of this site for the reasons set out in the Council's Matter 7 and Matter 10 statements.
37. The provision of additional and / or reinforced planting around the site perimeters, as required in Policy SP18 and shown indicatively in Appendix B of this statement, will help ameliorate impacts and create a boundary around the site capable of enduring beyond the plan period in line with advice in the NPPF.

#### Landscape

38. The Council's evidence (CG16 and CG16a) concludes that the site is in areas of moderate-low to moderate landscape value. The proposed site would be confined to the very edges of the strategic-scale land parcels identified in this study minimising impacts on their wider character.
39. Landscape impacts will be considered further as any scheme is developed as required by criterion g of Policy SP18. As with Green Belt and heritage issues, the incorporation of buffers and planting around the site perimeters will help contain the development and reduce wider landscape impacts.

#### Heritage

40. Tile Kiln Farm lies immediately to the north of the proposed allocation and includes Grade II listed structures. Criterion I of Policy SP18 specifically addresses this issue.

41. A Heritage Impact Assessment was submitted by the landowner in support of their Regulation 19 representations. This states that there are not considered to be any overriding heritage issues that would prevent the allocation of the present site on heritage grounds.

#### Water, flood risk and utilities

42. No fundamental constraints are identified in the Council's evidence base. The site is in Flood Zone 1. There are areas of surface water flood risk generally running west to east across the site. There are no substantive areas of surface water flood risk. These issues are addressed by generic policies in the plan including those relating to SuDS. These issues will be subject to further consideration and consultation with relevant bodies as more detailed proposals are developed.

43. A Flood Risk Assessment, incorporating foul and surface water drainage principles was submitted by the landowner in support of their Regulation 19 representations. This identifies a series of measures and recommendations to be carried out to inform the detailed design of any future scheme.

#### **Other issues**

44. Picture Srl have submitted a number of representations to the plan seeking changes to the detail of Policy SP18 and other policies of the plan. Picture Srl reserves the right to continue pursuing these changes through the examination process.

45. Notwithstanding these points, none of Picture Srl's outstanding objections relate to the fundamental suitability, availability or achievability of site GA2 for allocation and future development.

#### **Next steps**

46. Picture Srl will continue to liaise with NHDC, HCC and other relevant stakeholders as proposals for this land are developed.

47. Following adoption of the Plan, Picture Srl intends to immediately proceed with the preparation and submission of a planning application with a view of meeting the timing targets set in the indicative delivery trajectory shown by NHDC in ED3.

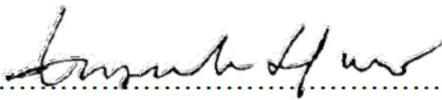
#### **Conclusion**

48. The proposed Local Plan allocation at Site GA2 North-East of Stevenage constitutes an appropriate and deliverable extension to Stevenage which supports the vision and objectives of the plan. It would extend beyond Great Ashby to the north-east and make a significant contribution towards the housing and associated infrastructure needs of North Hertfordshire consistent with proposed settlement hierarchy.

**Declaration**

The content of this document is agreed for the purposes of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination.

Signed on behalf of Picture Srl:

Emanuele Lo Faro (MRICS) ..... 

Position: Director

Date: 22 February 2018

And

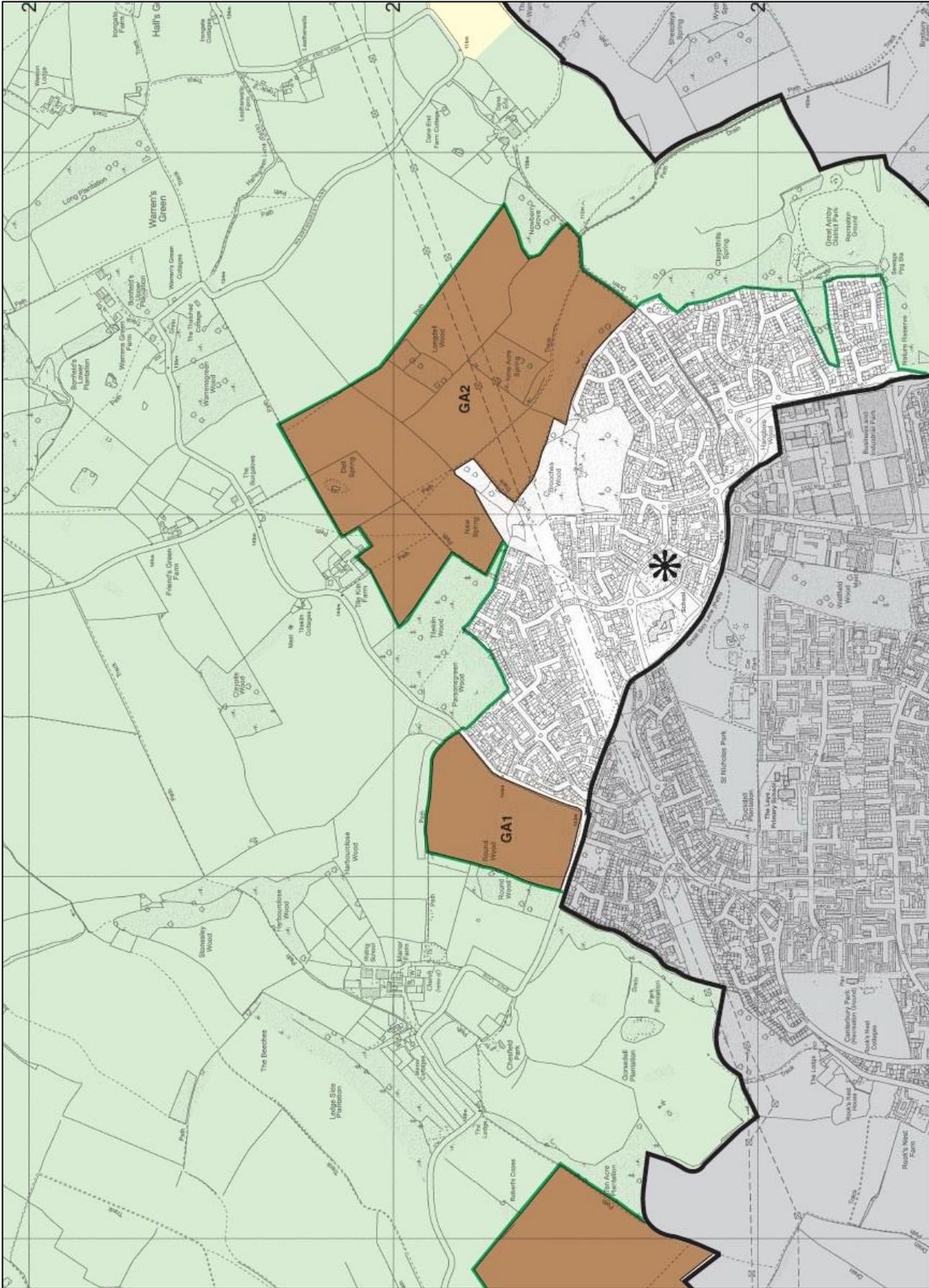
Signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council



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Position: Executive Member for Planning and Enterprise

Date: 22 February 2018

**Appendix A – site location plan**



**Appendix B – Indicative Masterplan**



- Site boundary: **57.38ha**
- Proposed residential development area: **21.50ha**  
**Approx. 645 dwellings @ 30dph**
- Reserved School Site: **3.25ha**
- School playing fields: **3.73ha**
- Potential site for neighbourhood centre: **0.1ha**
- Public open space and meadows: **15.05ha** (excluding existing woodland)
- Shared surface focal squares
- Overhead electricity corridor: **6.10ha**
- Existing woodland, hedgerows and trees
- Proposed tree and structural vegetation
- Main vehicular route
- Potential emergency access routes
- Existing public footpaths
- Existing bridleway
- Proposed SuDS swales and basins
- Equipped children's play areas
- 15m buffer to Ancient Woodland

C	12.01.18	AS	Amended to client's comments
B	10.01.18	AS	Amended to client's comments
A	02.01.18	AS	Amended to client's comments and to reflect new standing advice on Ancient Woodland
Rev	Date	By	Description

**CSA**  
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Project	Land north east of Great Ashby, Stevenage		
Title	Development Framework Plan		
Client	Picture srl		
Scale	1:5000 @ A3	Drawn	AS
Date	November 2016	Checked	SG
Drawing No.	CSA/993/029	Rev	C