

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

## **SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

As agreed between North Hertfordshire District Council  
And Croudace Homes  
Concerning Allocation NS1: Land north of Stevenage

**February 2018**

1. This is an agreed statement of common ground in relation to the identification of Land north of Stevenage as a proposed housing allocation within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan at Policy NS1. The purpose of this statement is to provide the Inspector with a summary of the areas of agreement for the matters to be examined during the hearing sessions scheduled for February 2018.
2. This statement supplements the previous agreement between North Hertfordshire District Council and Croudace Homes that was submitted to the examination in November 2017 (ED32) (the first statement).
3. 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.
4. This supplementary agreement provides additional information on site-specific issues and constraints. The two statements should be read alongside one another. In the event of any conflict between the two statements, this latter statement should take precedence.
5. The contents of this statement are without prejudice to the submission and determination of any future planning application(s) on this land.
6. The Council's own assessments and evidence have been supplemented by ongoing discussion between the parties and the provision of additional information by Croudace Homes. This additional information includes further work and / or assessments in relation to:
  - Highways and transport
  - Flood risk and drainage
  - Landscape and visual impact
7. These reports are appended to the representations submitted by Croudace Homes in response to the Regulation 19 consultation in November 2016 (representor reference 14468).

### **Relationship to proposed development in Stevenage Borough**

8. Site NS1 immediately adjoins the administrative boundary with Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) along its southern edge. The land within SBC is proposed for allocation within Stevenage's Local Plan (ORD6, Policy HO3, pp.109-112). This allocation has been considered and found 'sound' as part of the Inspector's report (ED16, pp.15-16 & 23-25). A planning application for the land within Stevenage Borough (SBC application reference 17/00862/OPM) was submitted in December 2017.

9. Implementation of the allocation within SBC would change the nature of the adjoining land within Stevenage, and the interface between the two sites, from rural to urban. The potential impacts of site NS1 should be considered in the context of this proposed change.

### **Indicative layout**

10. An indicative masterplan has been submitted by Croudace Homes and is attached as Appendix A. This provides high-level detail of a potential layout of this strategic urban extension.
11. This shows a series of proposed residential land parcels separated and / or bounded by hard and / or green infrastructure. Internally, a number of the parcels are separated by potential road links. The north, north-east and eastern site boundaries include proposed trees and vegetation. A public open space corridor is shown extending from the south-east of the proposed allocation in a north-westerly direction connecting a proposed country park within SBC to proposed formal sports provision at the north of the allocation site along the alignment of an existing right of way.
12. Land for primary education and local centre uses are shown complementing equivalent proposed land uses on the opposite side of the administrative boundary. It can be seen that the development within SBC would be able to cater for a neighbourhood centre and primary school in such a way as to allow for these facilities to either be built straddling the border or initially built at a smaller scale in Stevenage and expanding into North Hertfordshire when necessary. Potential surface water attenuation features are shown at the west of the site reflecting the topography. A potential primary vehicle access is shown entering the site along its western boundary at, or close to, the existing B197 Graveley Road / North Road junction, which would require appropriate alterations to cater for the new access. The potential internal road links include connections to the proposed allocation within SBC. Collectively these measures would facilitate the delivery of a coherent extension to the north of Stevenage.
13. 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.
14. The detailed layout of the development will continue to be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and 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 a future planning application.

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

15. 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.

16. 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.
17. 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.
18. 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.

#### Highways and sustainable transport

19. The plan identifies the need to sensitively integrate highway access into the adjoining SBC allocation land and also provide an upgraded junction at the intersection of Graveley Road / North Road.
20. The transport representations submitted by Croudace Homes state that work undertaken to date has concluded that a suitable access junction, likely to take the form of a roundabout, could be constructed within land that is already within the adopted highway or under the control of Croudace Homes.
21. The Council and Croudace Homes recognise that the site location, on the edge of Stevenage, provides opportunities to encourage behavioural change and modal shift in line with the wider aspirations of the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and SBC.
22. 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, it is envisaged that the site will provide opportunities for a new or improved bus link and pedestrian and cycle only 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.

#### Education

23. Based on Hertfordshire County Council's preferred approach, a development of 900 homes as proposed for Site NS1 would generate a peak requirement for 1.8 Forms of Entry (FE) of education provision.
24. For primary education, the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (ED73) identifies at Table 6.3 that a new primary school is required and that an integrated solution with development in Stevenage Borough is sought. The school site as shown on the draft masterplan at Appendix A would be one way of delivering such a primary school.

25. The combined planned dwelling total in the North Stevenage area across the administrative boundary is 1700 dwellings. The school site shown on the appended masterplan is sufficiently large to accommodate a three form entry school
26. More detailed work on phasing and pupil yields is required to establish the peak pupil yield from developments that will not necessarily proceed in parallel in this area. This work will form part of the Development Management process and inform the extent to which temporary or permanent additional provision beyond the indicative 3FE is required.
27. Provision which requires significantly more land than allowed in the indicative masterplan for education purposes would have the effect of reducing the dwelling capacity of the site, which would, in turn, potentially reduce the pupil yield.
28. It is agreed that further discussion will be required to finalise the appropriate level and format of primary education requirement.
29. For secondary education, it is agreed that contributions towards off-site provision are appropriate.

#### *Ecology and green infrastructure*

30. The SHLAA identifies the presence of adjoining priority woodland habitats. However, no apparent fundamental ecological constraint to development has been identified through the preparation of the plan.
31. Ecological issues will be addressed through the completion of appropriate surveys as detailed proposals are developed, including to comply with any requirements arising under the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations. 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 and that the site contributes to net gains in biodiversity.
32. It is considered that any ecological issues arising can be dealt with through the detailed masterplanning exercise and the application of the requirements contained in draft Policy NE6.
33. The provision of structural planting along the northern site boundary will be an essential part of any proposal, providing additional green infrastructure as well as addressing potential Green Belt, landscape and heritage impacts.

#### *Green Belt*

34. Site NS1 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.

35. 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.
36. The provision of additional and / or reinforced planting around the northern site perimeters, as required in Policy SP16 and shown indicatively in Appendix A of the Planning Statement, will help ameliorate impacts and create a permanent and recognisable Green Belt boundary around the site in line with advice in the NPPF.
37. It is agreed that the creation of a new Green Belt boundary feature capable of enduring in the long-term at the north of the site is the optimum solution having regard to the requirements of paragraph 83 and is preferable in planning terms to drawing back the inner Green Belt boundary to align with existing permanent features further to the north.

### Heritage

38. Heritage assets which might be affected by the development are appropriately identified in the Council's assessment (NHE6). These include the adjoining Conservation Areas at Graveley and the Rectory Lane Conservation Area within Stevenage. These Conservation Areas include a number of listed buildings.
39. It is agreed that, in line with the Council's evidence, the west part of the proposal site does not contribute to the significance of heritage assets. However, development in the eastern part of the site has the potential to impact upon the setting of heritage assets and should follow on from any development of the land to the west.
40. The Council's assessment states that any proposals for the wider strategic allocation site should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment to present impacts of any suggested development scheme and enable it to be fully considered (NHE6, pp.11-12, 14).
41. The site owner has submitted a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Appraisal. Although not directly concerned with treatment of heritage assets, it identifies the importance of appropriate boundary treatments and / or open space provision within the site to address the relationship with Graveley village. This issue will continue to be explored through detailed masterplanning, pre-application discussion and any subsequent planning application(s).
42. Heritage and landscape issues are addressed in the policy identified for the site in the plan as submitted (LP1, Policy SP16, pp.65-66). However, Croudace Homes agrees with the Council's proposed Main Modifications strengthening these requirements as set out in the Council's Matter 10 statement and reproduced in Appendix B.

### Landscape

43. The Council's evidence concludes that the site is in areas of low to moderate landscape value. Landscape sensitivity at the west of the proposed allocation is of low to moderate sensitivity while at the east the sensitivity is moderate to high. However, the proposed site would be confined to the very edges of these strategic-scale land parcels minimising impacts on their wider character. The landscape is not considered to be valued in the context of NPPF paragraph 109.
44. Landscape impacts will be considered further as any scheme is developed. As with the Green Belt and heritage issues above, the incorporation of buffers and planting around the site perimeters will help contain the development and reduce wider landscape impacts.

### Water, flood risk and utilities

45. No fundamental constraints are identified in the Council's evidence base. The site is in Flood Zone 1. 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.
46. A Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy has been submitted by Croudace Homes which supports the above points and also addresses potential approaches to wastewater treatment.

### Other issues

47. Croudace has raised policy objections to the level of self-build housing sought from the strategic allocations, and has sought greater clarity from the draft plan on how the affordable housing policies will work in practice and the level of specialist housing and employment development likely to be sought. These matters have already been discussed at earlier examination hearing sessions, and are not considered to be fundamental to the deliverability of this site.

### **Next steps**

48. Croudace Homes will continue to liaise with NHDC, HCC and other relevant stakeholders as proposals for this land are developed.
49. Croudace intends to submit a planning application shortly after the Local Plan is adopted, in the event that the plan remains in a form similar to that currently proposed.

### **Conclusion**

50. The proposed Local Plan allocation at Site NS1 North of Stevenage constitutes an appropriate and deliverable extension to Stevenage which supports the vision and

objectives of the plan. It would extend Stevenage to the north 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 Croudace Homes:



.....  
Position: Strategic Land Promoter

Date: 22 February 2018

And

Signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council



.....  
Position: Executive Member for Planning and Enterprise

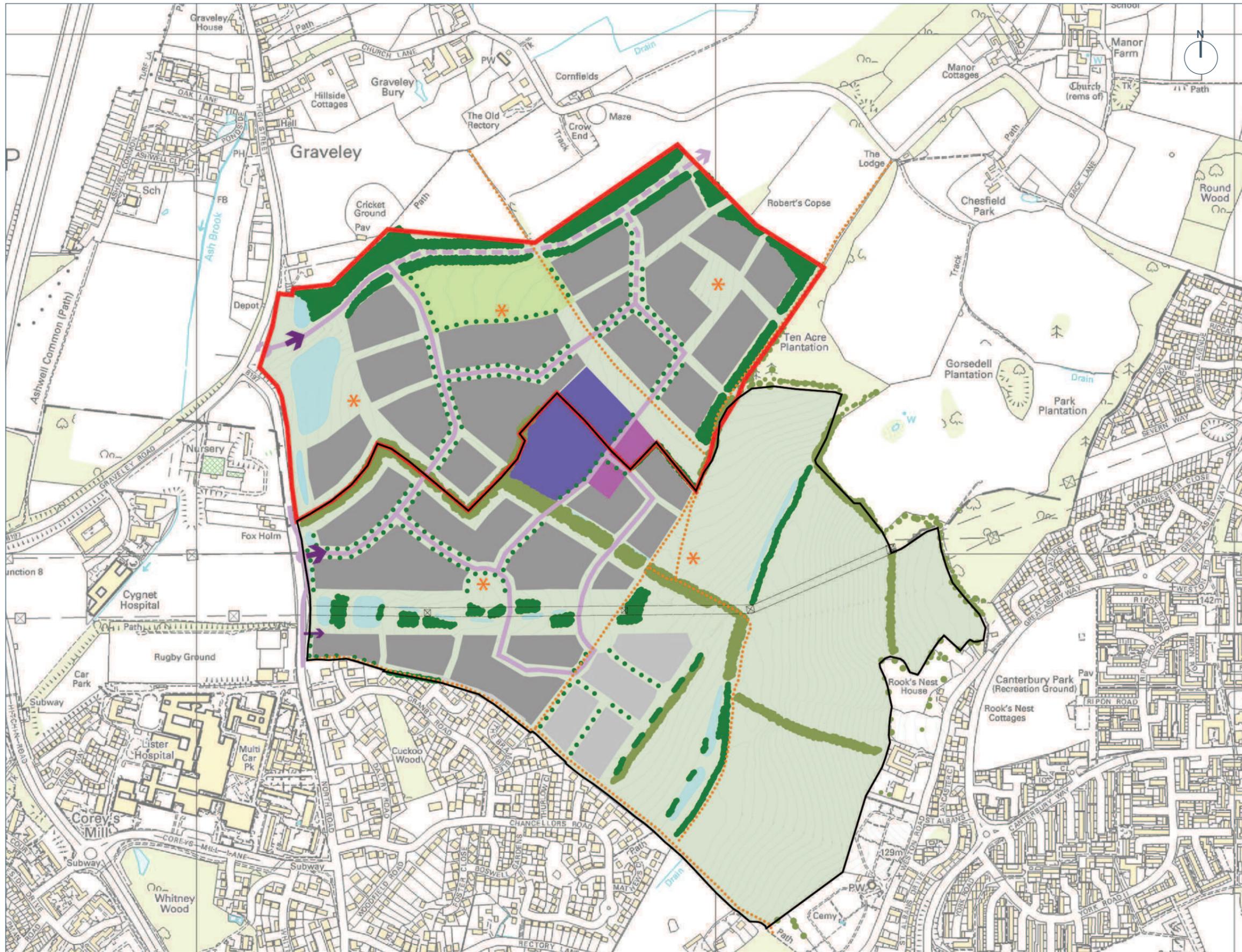
Date: 22 February 2018

**Appendices**

Appendix A: Illustrative Masterplan (SK01, Savills Urban Design for Croudace, Nov 2015)

Appendix B: Proposed main modifications to Policy SP16 / NS1 from NHDC Matter 10 Statement

## **Appendix A: Illustrative Masterplan**



- KEY**
- Proposed North Herts site allocation
  - Draft Stevenage Borough North Stevenage allocation
  - Existing Public Right of Way
  - Existing hedgerow
  - Public open space/ Country Park
  - Formal sports
  - Proposed trees/ vegetation
  - Proposed higher density residential development (35-40dph)
  - Proposed lower density residential development (22.5dph)
  - 3 FE Primary School (3.2ha.)
  - Local centre (1ha.)
  - Primary vehicle access
  - Secondary/ emergency access
  - Primary residential streets
  - Potential surface water attenuation
  - Location of play area/ MUGA
  - Potential roads links

# Graveley, North of Stevenage

on behalf of Croudace Homes Ltd

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drawing no. SK01  
 rev A  
 scale NTS  
 drawn by NT  
 checked by AR

drawing Development framework  
 with potential road links  
 job no. OXUD357328  
 date 25 November 2015



**Appendix B: Proposed main modifications to Policy SP16 / NS1 from NHDC Matter  
10 Statement**

### Policy SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage

Land to the north of Stevenage within Graveley parish, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated as a Strategic Housing Site for approximately 900 homes. Planning permission for residential development will be granted where the following site-specific requirements are met:

- a. A site masterplan to be ~~approved~~ **secured** prior to the ~~submission~~ **approval** of any detailed matters;
- b. Integration with adjoining development in Stevenage Borough including site-wide solutions for access, **sustainable travel**, education, retail, and other necessary social infrastructure;
- c. An upgraded junction at the intersection of Graveley Road / North Road;
- d. A detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery.
- e. At least 9 serviced plots for self-build development;
- f. Structural planting to create a sense of place, integration into surrounding landscape and a long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary to the north ~~as informed by detailed assessments~~;
- g. Integration of existing public rights of way to provide routes through the site to the wider countryside including
  - i. Footpath Graveley 006 and Bridleway Graveley 008 along the perimeter of the site; and
  - ii. Footpath Graveley 007 as a south-east to north-west route through the site and link path from the urban area to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path; ~~and~~
- h. Sensitive consideration of existing settlements, landscape features and heritage assets including:
  - i. Graveley village and Conservation Area;
  - ii. The St Nicholas & Rectory Lane Conservation Area **including the Grade I listed St Nicholas Church and Rook's Nest**; and
  - iii. Chesfield Park.
  - iv. Church of St Etheldreda
  - v. Manor Farm; **and**
- i. **Detailed design and layout of the site to be informed by site-specific assessments to mitigate any landscape, heritage and Green Belt impacts to the fullest reasonable extent.**

4.195 The area north of Stevenage is currently undeveloped farm land in the parish of Graveley. Adjoining land within Stevenage Borough to the south has been identified for development and this provides an opportunity for a coherent extension of the

town to the north<sup>1</sup>. A masterplanning exercise for this site will need to consider the implications of these cross-boundary allocations and demonstrate appropriate solutions. This may lead to some facilities which will serve the whole development being located wholly within either North Hertfordshire's or Stevenage's administrative areas.

4.196 It is envisaged that principal access to the site will be in the form of a looped estate road, one end of which will be in Stevenage Borough. The northern end of this road will emerge at, or close to, the existing junction of the B197 at Graveley Road / North Road. A new arrangement, possibly a roundabout, will need to be provided.

**4.xxx The site will need to integrate provision for walkers, cyclists and public transport in line with the aims of the Stevenage Mobility Strategy. This will include connections to the wider sustainable travel network.**

**4.xxx Development at this scale would normally generate a requirement for the on-site provision of a 2FE primary school. The relationship with the adjoining land in Stevenage means that, in this instance, it may be possible to co-locate education provision for the two schemes to ensure the most effective outcome. Any solution must ensure adequate primary school capacity across both sites over the lifetime of the development.**

4.197 Existing field boundaries in this area are generally quite well defined. However, in order to preserve the setting and separation of Graveley village and its Conservation Area, it is considered most appropriate to draw back the allocation and Green Belt boundaries to a new alignment. This will require new planting and sensitive design and layout to preserve the setting of the Conservation Area.

4.198 These perimeter areas also incorporate statutory rights of way which should be retained. A further footpath bisects the development and this should be incorporated as a green route from the Stevenage urban area, through the development site to the countryside beyond.

4.199 This route also forms a recognised link to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path (StOOP). StOOP is a 27-mile walking route around the town using footpaths and other routes that are open to the public.

**4.200 The site is in close proximity to a number of heritage assets. Sensitive design and layout will be required to ensure that any harm to their settings is minimised. Assessment of any impact upon the historic environment must be comprehensive and should not stop at the administrative boundary.** To the south-east of the site, the adjoining land within Stevenage Borough is known colloquially as 'Forster Country' in recognition of author EM Forster. His childhood home of **Rook's Nest** is **Grade I** listed with **a large part of its historic landscape setting protected by a the St Nicholas' and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. This conservation area also contains and provides the setting for a Grade I listed, twelfth century church.**

4.201 To the east lies Chesfield Park. Although not formally recognised through statutory listings or registers, the house and surrounding parkland are important local

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<sup>1</sup> Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031:Publication Draft (SBC, 2016)

features. These are generally well separated from the allocated site by an existing tree belt but the transition between these areas will need to be considered.