

Agenda



AGENDA for a meeting of the DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Hertford on THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2018 at 10.00AM.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (10) (Quorum = 3)

D Andrews, S J Boulton, D S Drury, E M Gordon, J S Hale, J R Jones (*substitution for M D M Muir*), A J S Mitchell (*substitution for D J Barnard*), S Quilty, I M Reay (Chairman), A D Williams

AGENDA

AUDIO SYSTEM

The Council Chamber is fitted with an audio system to assist those with hearing impairment. Anyone who wishes to use this should contact the main (front) reception.

PART I (PUBLIC) AGENDA

Meetings of the Committee are open to the public (this includes the press) and attendance is welcomed. However, there may be occasions when the public are excluded from the meeting - for particular items of business. Any such items are taken at the end of the public part of the meeting and are listed below under "Part II ('closed') agenda".

MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee held on 20 December 2017 (*to follow*).

PUBLIC PETITIONS

The opportunity for any member of the public, being resident in or a registered local government elector of Hertfordshire to present a petition relating to a matter with which the Council is concerned, and is relevant to the remit of this Committee, containing 100 or more signatures of residents or business ratepayers of Hertfordshire.

Notification of intent to present a petition must have been given to the Chief Legal Officer at least 20 clear days before the meeting where an item relating to the subject matter of the petition does not appear in the agenda, or at least 5 clear days where the item is the subject of a report already on the agenda.

[Members of the public who are considering raising an issue of concern via a petition are advised to contact their local member of the Council. The Council's arrangements for the receipt of petitions are set out in Annex 22 - Petitions Scheme of the Constitution.]

If you have any queries about the procedure please contact Deborah Jeffery on telephone no. (01992) 555563.

MOTIONS (Standing Order C9)

Motions may be made on a matter relevant to the Committee's terms of reference (other than motions relating to a matter on the agenda, which shall be moved when that matter is discussed).

Motions must have been notified in writing to the Chief Legal Officer by 9 am on the day before the meeting and will be dealt with in order of receipt.

No motions had been submitted at the time of agenda dispatch.

- 1. PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR VARIATION OF CONDITION 2 (PERMITTED PLANS) AND CONDITION 5 (HOURS OF OPERATION DELIVERIES) ON PERMISSION 0/0262-12 TO VARY THE SITE LAYOUT AND HOURS OF OPERATION AT COURSERS FARM, COURSERS ROAD, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE, AL4 0PD**

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

Local Member: Morris Bright

- 2. APPLICATION FOR AN ENLARGED ROUNDABOUT AND SEGREGATED LEFT TURN LANE FROM STEVENAGE TO WARE, AT THE JUNCTION OF THE A602 AND A119, INCLUDING ASSOCIATED CHANGES TO VERGES, LIGHTING, DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING AND ENGINEERING OPERATIONS AT JUNCTION OF A602 AND A119, EAST OF WATTON-AT-STONE, HERTFORDSHIRE.**

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

Local Member: Ken Crofton

- 3. APPLICATION FOR THE REALIGNMENT OF WARE ROAD BETWEEN A POINT WEST OF THE ACCESS ROAD TO HEATH MOUNT SCHOOL, TO THE EXISTING SOUTHERN-MOST STONY HILLS JUNCTION; WITH REALIGNMENTS AT ALL JUNCTIONS WITHIN THIS SECTION; INCLUDING ASSOCIATED CHANGES TO VERGES, LIGHTING, DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING, AND ASSOCIATED ENGINEERING OPERATIONS EAST OF WATTON-AT-STONE, HERTFORDSHIRE.**

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

Local Member: Ken Crofton

OTHER PART I BUSINESS

Such other Part I (public) business which, the Chairman agrees, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

PART II ('CLOSED') AGENDA

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There are no items of Part II business on this agenda but if an item is notified the Chairman will move:-

*"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph ** of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information."*

If you require a copy of any of the reports mentioned above or require further information about this agenda please contact Deborah Jeffery, Assistant Democratic Services Manager on telephone no. 01992 555563 or email: deborah.jeffery@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Agenda documents are also available on the internet
<https://cmis.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings.aspx>

**KATHRYN PETTITT
CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER**

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2018 AT 10.00 AM**

HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR VARIATION OF CONDITION 2
(PERMITTED PLANS) AND CONDITION 5 (HOURS OF OPERATION
DELIVERIES) ON PERMISSION 0/0262-12 TO VARY THE SITE LAYOUT
AND HOURS OF OPERATION AT COURSERS FARM, COURSERS ROAD,
ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE, AL4 0PD**

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

Author: Christopher Martin Tel: 01992 556308

Local Member: Morris Bright

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider application 5/2212-17 (CM0937), for proposed variation of Condition 2 (Permitted Plans) and Condition 5 (Hours of Operation Deliveries) on permission 0/0262-12 to vary the site layout and hours of operation at Coursers Farm, Coursers Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL4 0PD.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Coursers Farm is an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility operated by Agrivert Ltd, which processes 48,500 tonnes of biodegradable organic waste per annum, located on Coursers Road within the Green Belt close to Junction 22 of the M25.
- 2.2 Planning permission was granted by Hertfordshire County Council in 2013, with construction beginning in 2015 and operations occurring from 2016.
- 2.3 The site produces digestate which is used as an agricultural fertiliser, with 70% of this material being used within 6 miles of the site. It also produces gas which is fed into generators and produces 3 megawatts (MW) of electricity for the National Grid per annum.
- 2.4 During construction, in line with technical progression and improved operational understanding, amendments were made to the layout of the facility altering it from the plans previously approved. This application seeks to regularise the amended layout, whilst incorporating some additional infrastructure and allowing an extra hour of deliveries in the morning period.

2.5 The determination of the application should focus on:

- Justification for Development
- Green Belt
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Highways
- Ecology
- Flood Risk
- Neighbour Amenity
- Air Quality

3 Conclusion

3.1 Having considered all the relevant planning matters, it is recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions attached.

4 The Site and Local Area

4.1 The AD facility at Coursers Farm is located between St. Albans and Potters Bar. The site lies within the Green Belt and Watling Chase Community Forest; and is adjacent to the Coursers farm agricultural unit, part of the Tyttenhanger Estate. The site is located approximately 2km north of Junction 22 (London Colney) of the M25 motorway, 2km southwest of Hatfield and less than 1km southwest of the village of the Colney Heath.

4.2 The site measures approximately 5.2 hectares and is bordered to the west by Tyttenhanger Quarry, which is operated by Tarmac. To the east are two large agricultural barns, fields and yards which form the Coursers Farm complex. Coursers Road, forming the northern boundary of the application site, links Colney Heath with the Bell roundabout and the M25.

4.3 Coursers Farm stables are situated directly adjacent to the proposal site. There are three pairs of residential properties, approximately 90m, 140m, and 310m to the northeast of the site along Coursers Road. A Grade II listed building is located approximately 120m east of the site boundary.

5 The Proposal

5.1 In 2013 permission was granted by Hertfordshire County Council for construction and operation of an Anaerobic Digestion facility on land under permission 0/0262-12. The approved development included development of 3 digestion tanks and 5 storage tanks, a waste reception building, site office and welfare facilities, biofilter, weighbridge, gas engine units, transformer, energy crop storage area and feeder, access roads and a car parking area. The hours of deliveries to the site were set at Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm. The AD process is 24 hours a day.

- 5.2 During the construction phase, a number of amendments were made to reflect technical progression, further operational understanding, requirements by the EA and the discovery of a population of Great Crested Newts that required management and relocation.
- 5.3 This application seeks to regularise the following changes, under Condition 2, which were made to the site: reduction in the number of storage tanks with relocation and an increase in size; relocation of the gas flare; relocation of car park, site office and welfare facilities; reshaping of screening mounds; relocation of the energy crop storage area; and resizing of the bio filter. Alongside these regularisations is the inclusion of installing 4 new battery storage units and the proposal to change the hours of deliveries to Monday to Friday 7am to 6pm, Saturday 8am to 1pm and 1pm to 4pm on 6 nominated Saturdays per annum. Each of the changes will be described in the following paragraphs.
- 5.4 Permission 0/0262-12 allowed the development of 8 (3 digestion and 5 storage), 28m diameter tanks; only 5 of these tanks were built at a diameter increase of 4m and height increase of 3m, taking the diameter to 32m and height to 16.5m. The tanks have also been moved further to the south of the development, as a result of the Great Crested Newts being found and the preference to store digestate material offsite, closer to where it will be used.
- 5.5 The onsite gas flare, which is only used when absolutely necessary, requires to be as close as possible to the gas engines but also needs a 10m exclusion zone from any other infrastructure and as a result of the tanks moving, was moved too.
- 5.6 The location of the car parking spaces has been adjusted in order to keep interactions between staff/visitor vehicles and waste delivery vehicles to an absolute minimum. This improves the safety on site of both vehicle groups and was possible with the adjustment of bunds.
- 5.7 The site office consists of three portacabins organised to connect in a straight line, this is in opposition to the originally proposed two storey site office arrangement. It was considered in the detailed design stage that this organisation of the cabins was in fact the best way to provide a site office and welfare facilities, to include kitchen, toilets, shower changing, boot room and a meeting room. The revised site office has been located as close as possible to the approved position, to the south of the relocated car parking facility and the reduction in height was considered to be beneficial.
- 5.8 The original plans had proposed lower screening bunds, which occupied a larger surface area than those that have been built. The decision to re-profile the bunds and increase their height, in particular those to the East of the site, was to impede as little as possible on the activities occurring on the wider Coursers Farm site. By raising the height and adjusting the profile much more usable flat land for the equestrian business was

available.

- 5.9 The location of the energy crop storage area had to be altered in order to facilitate the required co-location of the digester tanks. The relocated position is further to the south than the original proposal.
- 5.10 Prior to commissioning the facility, Agrivert are required to gain a permit from the Environment Agency; as a result of this a biofilter was proposed to condition the air before it is released back into the atmosphere. The proposed biofilter was deemed insufficient to meet the EA's requirements and therefore the biofilter was increased in size, covered rather than open topped and now features two 3m flu stacks.
- 5.11 Aside from the changes which have occurred to the existing proposed infrastructure on the site, as part of this application it is proposed to construct 4 battery storage units. Each of the battery units would be stored within a green shipping container style unit measuring 2.4m x 12.2m x 2.9m. The battery storage units would provide 5MW of storage capacity and will store excess energy from the gas engines, which is not immediately needed by the National Grid, and can be used to provide immediate energy to the grid when required.
- 5.12 The final proposed change with this application under Condition 5 is to amend the hours of deliveries of material to the site. Currently material can only be brought to site between Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm. It is proposed to modify these hours to Monday to Friday 7am to 6pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm and 1pm to 4pm of 6 nominated Saturdays per annum.

6 Policy Considerations

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- Section 3 Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy
- Section 7 Requiring Good Design
- Section 9 Protecting Green Belt Land

6.2 Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2011-2026

- Policy 1 – Strategy for the Provision for Waste Management Facilities
- Policy 1A – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy 3 – Energy & Heat Recovery
- Policy 6 – Green Belt
- Policy 7 – General Criteria for Assessing Planning Applications Outside of Identified Locations
- Policy 9 – Sustainable Transport
- Policy 10 – Climate Change

- Policy 11 – General Criteria for Assessment Waste Planning Applications
- Policy 12 – Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition
- Policy 13 – Road Transport & Traffic
- Policy 16 – Soil, Air and water

6.3 Hertsmere Core Strategy January 2013

- Policy CS13 – The Green Belt
- Policy CS17 – Energy and CO2 Reductions

7 Relevant Planning History

- 0/0262-12: Proposed construction and operation of an Anaerobic Digestion facility – Approved
- 0/1549-17: Construction of an agricultural lagoon capable of storing 30,000m³ of PAS110 compliant digestate fertiliser - Withdrawn

8 Consultations & Representations

- 8.1 Hertsmere Borough Council: has no objection to the regularisation to the layout of the site and extended hours of operation for delivery.
- 8.2 St. Albans District Council: did not formally respond to consultation.
- 8.3 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council: supports the principle of renewable energy sources subject to potential resulting impacts being controlled. Welwyn Hatfield comments that the proposed variations are not likely to result in significant adverse impacts and therefore does not object to the proposal.
- 8.4 Hertfordshire County Council Highways: does not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission.
- 8.5 Hertfordshire County Council Waste Management: Supports the application as the Waste Disposal Authority holds a contract with Agrivert at the site.
- 8.6 Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Officer: has required the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme.
- 8.7 Hertfordshire County Council Ecology Officer: does not object to the proposal but makes recommendations on tree species for landscaping and reiterates that if Great Crested Newts are found that they must be lawfully dealt with.
- 8.8 Lead Local Flood Authority: has no objection to the proposal.
- 8.9 Ridge Parish Council: did not formally respond to consultation.

- 8.10 London Colney Parish Council: did not formally respond to consultation.
- 8.11 Colney Heath Parish Council: did not formally respond to consultation.
- 8.12 North Mymms Parish Council: Object with serious concerns in respect of the proposed additional hour (7am – 8am) of operating for deliveries at the site. The additional requested time is during the morning rush hour and with the site's close proximity to the M25, A414 and A1, when there are problems on these roads, much of the traffic will re-route through the village of Colney Heath and into Welham Green which will then impact on residents of North Mymms Parish. At 7am traffic is already building up and in this rural location even a few more lorries is unacceptable. It should be noted that no facilities are available at the site for waiting if they should arrive early. Coursers Road at this point is very narrow and is unsuitable for any further heavy traffic.
- 8.13 Environment Agency: has no comment to make on the application.
- 8.14 Historic England: has no comment to make on the application.
- 8.15 Highways England: offer no objection to the proposal.
- 8.16 Natural England: has no comment to make on the application.
- 8.17 Local Member: did not formally respond to consultation.
- 8.18 Neighbours / Publicity: Publicity for this application was as follows:
- 1 site notice was erected on the main vehicular access on 9th November 2017. An advert was also placed in the Herts Advertiser on 16th November 2017.
- A total of 57 properties were consulted and 0 responses have been received from neighbours.

9 Planning Issues

- 9.1 The principal planning issues to be taken into account in determining this application are:
- Justification for Development
 - Green Belt
 - Landscape and Visual Impact
 - Highways
 - Ecology
 - Flood Risk
 - Neighbour Amenity
 - Air Quality

Justification for Development

- 9.2 The need and principal for this facility has previously been considered and deemed necessary within the original application 0/0262-12. This view still remains as the AD facility at Coursers Farm deals with a significant proportion of Hertfordshire's green and kitchen waste, and has a contract to do so for the next 25 years. The facility allows green and kitchen waste to be dealt with in a sustainable manner which produces a natural fertiliser, therefore reducing the need for fossil fuel based fertilisers, and biogas which powers electricity generators providing 3 MW of electricity per annum. It is therefore considered overall that the justification for this development still stands.
- 9.3 However, due to the proposed changes under Variation of Condition 2, it must be considered whether these are appropriate. Overall the site still covers the same footprint as previous and has had an overall reduction in total structure size, whilst still providing the same service as before. The alterations have been borne out of ecological factors, best practice improvements and Environment Agency requirements, which ultimately have enhanced the operation and best practice at the site. Therefore it is considered that the principle and overall impact of the site in terms of its built form and purpose are still practically the same as originally approved and continue to be acceptable.
- 9.4 In regards to the proposed addition of battery storage units at the site, this does not significantly change the purpose of the site. The battery storage will allow the sustainable generation of electricity at the site be better managed and assist in the overall energy security of the region. Due to the relatively minor built mass addition the batteries bring and the benefits they provide in assisting sustainable practices, it is considered the addition of the battery storage is acceptable and justified.
- 9.5 The proposed change to the hours of deliveries under Condition 5 is another element of this proposal which must be considered. The original condition was set to comply with Policy 13 of the Waste Core Strategy, which considers the highway impacts of development. In the interim period several of the District and Boroughs have started to further separate the collection of food waste. This means food waste will be delivered directly to the site and as a result an extra hour is needed in the morning to allow these vehicles to arrive. While it is proposed to have the extra hour of deliveries in the morning, the overall number of vehicle movements will not change and Condition 15 from permission 0/0262-12 will be replicated in this permission. The only objection to this proposal has been raised by North Mymms Parish Council on this extra hour for deliveries, which they deem to be unacceptable for the reasons stated in 8.12. Consultations with Hertfordshire Highways and Highways England have not raised any issues with this extension of hours for deliveries and the amount of vehicles that will operate in this time is very few of the overall total. The adjoining Tyttenhanger Quarry already has vehicle movements from 7am which is considered acceptable. It is

therefore considered acceptable to extend the hours for delivery, as this is expected to have minimal impact.

- 9.6 Overall it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Section 3 of the NPPF Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy, as it provides jobs within a rural area, as well as Policies 1 (Strategy for the Provision for Waste Management Facilities), 1A (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development), 3 (Energy & Heat Recovery), 7 (General Criteria for Assessing Planning Applications Outside of Identified Areas), 10 (Climate Change), 11 (General Criteria for Assessing Waste Planning Applications), 12 (Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition) of the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Policy CS17 (Energy and CO2 Reductions) of the Hertsmere Core Strategy 2013.

Green Belt

- 9.7 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt whereby the provision of such a use could constitute inappropriate development as referred to in Section 9 of the NPPF, Policy 6 of the Waste Core Strategy and Policy CS13 of the Hertsmere Core Strategy. Very special circumstances are necessary to be justified to demonstrate that the benefits of the development would clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt due to inappropriate development and any other harm associated with the proposal.
- 9.8 The previous application 0/0262-12 considered that as the proposal would have significant benefits by producing organic fertiliser, reducing the need for chemical fertiliser, as well as producing electricity by sustainably processing waste food that this substantiated very special circumstances.
- 9.9 These identified very special circumstances all remain and the introduction of battery storage, further enhances these circumstances as it allows for the sustainably produced electricity to be better directed and utilised to its maximum potential based on demand.
- 9.10 Further as the development constitutes a reduction in overall built mass, despite the height increase of the storage tanks, this reduces the impact upon the Green Belt, therefore on balance resulting in a more acceptable situation than the previously approved application.
- 9.11 The application will not be submitted to the Secretary of State, despite being in the Green Belt, as it is considered the application would not have a significant impact upon the Green Belt. It is considered the impact is less than the original application, which was referred to the Secretary of State and was not called in.
- 9.12 Overall it is considered that the proposal complies with Section 9 Protecting Green Belt Land of the NPPF, Policy 6 (Green Belt) of the Waste Core Strategy and Policy CS13 (Green Belt) of the Hertsmere Core Strategy 2013.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 9.13 It is considered that the 3m height increase of the storage tanks on the site does have a slightly more adverse impact on the landscape and visual impact of the site; this certainly makes it more difficult to screen the development. The layout changes have also resulted in the proposed landscaping originally permitted being changed. It has therefore been recommended by the Council's Landscape Officer that a detailed landscaping scheme is submitted and implemented, in order to bring the new draft landscaping scheme more in line with the visual impact of the rearranged site.
- 9.14 Despite the changes to the layout of the site, the main visual impact of the site remains as a result of the storage tanks. As previously stated the increase in height does negatively impact the visual impact, however the overall number of tanks has reduced. Therefore it is considered that the proposal is still acceptable in design terms and how it affects the landscape, once a new landscape scheme has been submitted and implemented. Therefore it is considered the proposal is compliant with Section 7 Requiring Good Design of the NPPF.
- 9.15 There is a Grade II Listed building approximately 120m to the east of the site. It is considered that the AD Plant does not affect the setting of this building, as the built form of the AD plant is a sufficient distance away. Further Historic England has not raised any objection to the potential impact of the AD on the listed building.

Highways

- 9.16 The overall highway impact of the Coursers Farm AD is considered to be minimal. Under the previous permission Condition 15 specifies a maximum of 54 (27 in, 27 out) movements will occur per day, which is less than 1% of the total vehicle movements on Coursers Road, it is proposed that this condition would remain with this new permission. The entrance and parking at the site are also considered to be good. While there has been concern raised by North Mymms Parish Council regarding vehicle movements occurring earlier at the site, Hertfordshire Highways and Highways England have not objected. Overall it is considered the highway situation has not and will not change significantly and therefore is acceptable. Therefore it is considered the application complies with Policy 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Policy 13 (Road Transport & Traffic) of the Waste Core Strategy.

Ecology

- 9.17 One of the main reasons for the adjustments which have occurred on site and are the subject of this application are as a result of Great Crested Newts being found on site. Therefore new ponds were produced to enhance the population and protect them from the development. This did however mean structures on site had to be moved from their

originally permitted locations. As a result of these changes the ponds have been implemented and the newt population has been protected. The County Ecologist has not raised any issues with this proposal but has reiterated that if newts are found in any other locations they must be dealt with lawfully.

Flood Risk

- 9.18 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest potential risk to flood. In relation to surface water flood risk the site has numerous retention ponds and storage capacity where water captured can be used in the AD process. The proposals have also seen the amount of impermeable land reduced, therefore slightly lowering the risk of flooding. The LLFA and Environment Agency have not objected to the application on this aspect.

Neighbour Amenity

- 9.19 In terms of noise, anaerobic digestion is considered to have a minimal output. The noise atmosphere in the area is dominated by the M25, Coursers Road and Tyttenhanger Quarry, however the AD does not substantially add to this situation. Despite the increase in hours for deliveries, which could raise the noise level slightly, these are still going to be within prescribed day time hours of 7am to 11pm.
- 9.20 Battery storage has minimal noise outputs, with associated noise generated by cooling fans engaged in the process. Agrivert already have similar cooling infrastructure on site, which were considered as part of the original application and not found to be of significant impact. All noise generating operations associated with the battery storage will be fully contained within the containers, and as such the development will have minimal impact on the sites overall noise production.
- 9.21 Odour concerns are generally very typical at facilities such as this. However all potential odour generating sources are contained within a building under negative pressure with quick closing doors, a biofilter helps to reduce odour and the site has an Environmental Permit from the EA which has specific thresholds that they must meet in order to operate. Furthermore the material produced on site achieves PAS110, which one of the criteria of is the odour of material must not breach certain limits. Complaints related to odour at the site have not occurred and there have been no objections from neighbours on this proposal. Therefore it is considered that the potential impact to neighbours is negligible and will not change as a result of this proposal.

Air Quality

- 9.22 As part of the amendments this application seeks permission for, there

has been both an increase in the size of the sites biofilter and the biofilter has been covered as per the EA's requirements. These amendments have both been implemented in order to further reduce the potential for air quality impact, from that permitted by the original application. The majority of vehicles which will be arriving at the earlier period are not HGV's either as smaller vehicles collect the food waste transferred to the site. Therefore it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy 16 (Soil, Air and Water) of the Waste Core Strategy.

10 Summary

- 10.1 The principle of an AD plant in this location was already determined as acceptable in 2012. A number of amendments were made to reflect technical progression, further operational understanding, requirements by the EA and the discovery of a population of Great Crested Newts that required management and relocation. This has resulted in the submission of this application to regularise the built form.
- 10.2 While there have been quite a few changes to the development, overall the function remains the same and the built form still contains the same structures; albeit in different locations and different sizes. The changes have been considered to not significantly change the impact of the facility and in some instances may reduce the impact.
- 10.3 The application also contains the additional request for implementation of battery storage units and an additional hour of deliveries in the AM period. Both of these have both been considered to be acceptable by improving the overall sustainability or having negligible impact.
- 10.4 Overall having taken the balance of all the issues and policy into account, it is recommended that planning permission should be granted subject to the conditions as follows:

11 Conditions

1. **Time Limit for Commencement of Development**
The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of a three year period commencing on the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Act 1990 (as amended).
2. **Permitted Plans**
The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and documents submitted as part of the application:
 - Biofilter Cover & Duct Arrangement – 1000-B215 Rev4 – 06/10/16

- Energy Storage Container Plan and Elevations – 601 RevB – 06/12/2016
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal – CE-CF1155-RP01- 19/5/2017
- Supporting Statement – October 2017
- Site Elevations – 1000C002 – 03/05/17
- Planning Boundary – 1000P001 – 26/01/16
- Traffic Management Site Layout Plan – 1000C012 Rev4 – 26/10/16

Reason: In order to protect the character, appearance and amenity of the site and the surrounding area and for the avoidance of doubt.

3. **Spreading of Digestate**

At least 70% of the digestate (bio-fertiliser) produced from the AD process at the plant site shall be applied to local agricultural land within a 6 mile radius of the site.

Reason: To avoid transporting the product significant distance and to ensure the sustainability of the proposal.

4. **Hours of Operation during Construction**

Construction activities on site shall only take place between:

Monday to Friday: 8am to 6pm
Saturday: 8am to 1pm

Reason: To comply with Policy 11 of the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy, that seeks to protect the amenity of the surrounding area.

5. **Hours of Operation (Deliveries)**

The site shall only be open for deliveries of waste and collections of digestate between the following hours:

Monday to Friday: 7am to 6pm;
Saturday: 8am to 1pm; and
1pm to 4pm on 6 nominated Saturdays per annum

Reason: To comply with Policy 13 of the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy.

6. **Odour Management**

Measures shall be taken to ensure that any odour that can be substantially attributed to processes being undertaken on site shall not be detected outside the boundaries of the site.

Reason: In the interest of neighbour amenity to comply with Policy 11 of the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy.

7. **Landscaping**

Within six months of the date of this permission, a plan showing detailed landscaping including location and type of planting, shall be

submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved plan shall be implemented in full within the first planting season following approval of the plan.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring land users from the impact of the built form.

8. **Maximum Vehicle Movements**

HGV vehicle movements for waste deliveries to the development shall not exceed 54 (27 in, 27 out) movements per day unless agreed in writing with the Waste Planning Authority or in the event of an emergency.

Reason: To ensure vehicle movements do not exceed the deemed acceptable level.

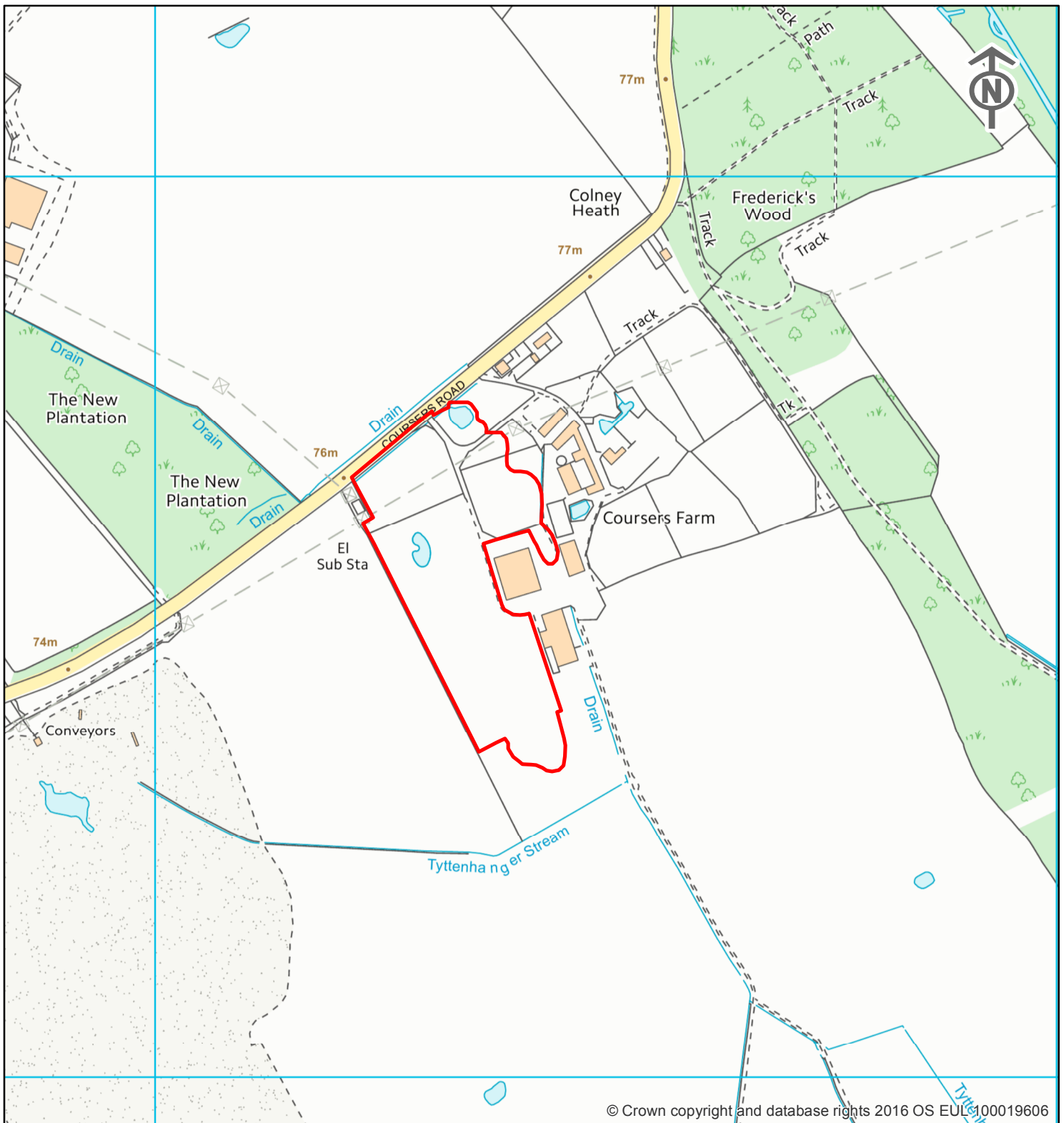
9. **Tonnage of Waste Processed**

The maximum amount of organic waste to be processed in the approved Anaerobic Digester plant shall not exceed 48,500 tonnes per annum.

Reason: In order to avoid the over-intensive use of the site.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

Application documents
NPPF 2012
Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy
Hertsmere Core Strategy
Neighbour representations
Consultee responses



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DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 25th January 2018

Proposed application for Variation of Condition 2 (Permitted Plans) and Condition 5 (Hours of Operation Deliveries) on permission 0/0262-12 to vary the site layout and hours of operation at Coursers Farm, Coursers Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL4 0PD

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HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2018 AT 10.00AM**

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

Agenda Item No. 2

APPLICATION FOR AN ENLARGED ROUNDABOUT AND SEGREGATED LEFT TURN LANE FROM STEVENAGE TO WARE, AT THE JUNCTION OF THE A602 AND A119, INCLUDING ASSOCIATED CHANGES TO VERGES, LIGHTING, DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING AND ENGINEERING OPERATIONS AT JUNCTION OF A602 AND A119, EAST OF WATTON-AT-STONE, HERTFORDSHIRE.

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

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Local Member: Ken Crofton

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider planning application reference number 3/1738-17 for highway works on the A602 at the roundabout junction with the A119 to the east of Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The County Council is seeking to improve the A602 between Stevenage and Ware, through a series of proposals at a total of seven sites along this primary road. This application forms part of that wider scheme, and will deliver highway improvements of its own.
- 2.2 In September 2016 and October 2016, the Development Control Committee granted planning permission for highway improvements work along the A602 at Hertford Road, Stevenage and for a series of works between the village of Tonwell and the A10 junction. The delivery of the approved schemes commenced in August 2017.
- 2.3 This application seeks planning permission for an enlarged roundabout and segregated left turn lane from Stevenage to Ware, including associated changes to verges, lighting, drainage, landscaping and engineering operations at the junction of the A602 and the A119, east of Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire.
- 2.4 The development is also considered under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2011 (updated 2015) and is accompanied by an Environmental Statement. As the Scoping Opinion was sought prior to the adoption of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017, the scheme is considered against the 2011

Regulations which continue to apply under the transitional arrangements set out under Regulation 76 of the 2017 Regulations.

- 2.5 The application site is to the east of the village of Watton-at-Stone. The road moves through a landscape of open fields and farmland in the area adjoining the settlement boundary. The land to the east falls within the Woodhall Park & Watton at Stone Slopes, which provides a more structured parkland vista to the south east, with an extensive red brick wall enclosing the grounds in proximity to the roundabout. The Bramfield-Datchworth Sloping Farmlands landscape character area, further to the east, is characterised by undulating settled upland with meandering lanes. Plans are included at Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.6 Footways are available along the A119 towards Hertford and from Ware Road leading part of the way out of Watton-at-Stone towards the roundabout. There are no footways along the A602 within the site area of this specific planning application.
- 2.7 There are two cottages located approximately 300 metres to the east of the roundabout, with a track leading from the A602 to Bardolphs Farm, which sit just beyond the application boundary.
- 2.8 The application site is washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt. Paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with support from the Green Belt policies of the Local Plan, finds that local transport infrastructure may not be inappropriate development.
- 2.9 The improvements are sought on an existing primary route that has an existing Green Belt location; the Transport Assessment has shown the improvements to be necessary due to the existing constraints on traffic flow and journey time reliability. The development is therefore “needed” in a Green Belt location.
- 2.10 The application site is located to the south east of the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area, and abuts the north-western boundary of the Grade II* Registered Woodhall Park.
- 2.11 There are a total of 14 non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 500 metres of the wider scheme which have been considered in the Environmental Statement. The Watton Spring LWS abuts the south-western quadrant of the roundabout.
- 2.12 The application site is within the confines of the existing, or directly adjoining, the highway boundary. Ordinarily, such works would not require express planning permission, if carried out in isolation of any other road improvements. However, the applicant has a programme of works to make improvements at a further three sections of the A602 between Stevenage and Ware. The County Planning Authority determined that the various sections of the wider proposal are intrinsically linked to each other.

2.13 The General Arrangement plan is included at Appendix 1. A plan showing the wider proposals for the A602 is shown at Appendix 2. The non-technical summary of the Environmental Statement is included at Appendix 6.

2.14 The main planning issues of the application can be summarised as:

- Green Belt development
- Need and justification
- Impact on highways and transport
- Quality of design
- Landscape and visual impact
- Impact on ecology and biodiversity
- Impact on residential amenity (noise, dust, light)

2.15 The report concludes that the Chief Executive and Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following ELEVEN conditions and referral to the Secretary of State: -

1. Time limit for commencement
2. Approved plans and documents
3. Landscaping plan; including tree protection and habitat improvements
4. Drainage strategy
5. Infiltration tests
6. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation
7. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (2)
8. Ground Investigations
9. Construction Environmental Management Plan
10. Lighting
11. Fencing/boundary treatment

3 Description of the site

- 3.1 The application site forms part of the A602, which provides the primary road link from junction 7 of the A1(M) on the edge of Stevenage, in the west, to the junction with A10 at Ware, in the east.
- 3.2 The proposed development is for highway improvements at an existing four-arm roundabout immediately to the east of the settlement boundary of the village of Watton-at-Stone. The area is characterised by a landscape of open fields and farmlands, and the more formal parklands of the Woodhall Park Estate.
- 3.3 The A602 is characterised by wildflower grass verges of varying widths, as well as a mix of mature hedgerows and standard trees as it bypasses Watton-at-Stone. There is a concentration of planting between the arms of the roundabout itself, with the Woodhall Park Estate enclosed by a prominent red brick wall.
- 3.4 Public footpath FP011 links into the western edge of the application area onto Ware Road and passes to the east of Watton-at-Stone. The FP007 joins the A602 in proximity to the entrance to Heath Mount School, beyond the application boundary but within the wider proposal area. However, there is a limited network of public footpaths to provide an effective north-south or east-west route for walkers parallel to the A602.
- 3.5 The site is washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt, and abuts the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area at its western boundary. The south-eastern and south-western quadrants of the roundabout fall within the Registered Park and Garden of the Grade II* registered Woodhall Park. The south-western quadrant also includes Watton Springs Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which is characterised by rough grasslands and natural springs.
- 3.6 The proposed compound area, in the north-western quadrant of the roundabout, is located within an Area of Archaeological Significance, which is currently in agricultural use and beyond the existing highway boundary.
- 3.7 The site is identified as being within Flood Zones 1, 2 & 3, and the development site has been subjected to the Exemption Test as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.8 The site is in Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3, the lowest zone for source protection.
- 3.9 Records show that there have been no recent planning applications sought from Hertfordshire County Council, for works in proximity of the A602/A119 to the east of Watton-at-Stone or within the highway boundary. A previous application (3/1914-06) for improvements to the A602 adjacent to Heath Mount School was approved by the

Development Control Committee in November 2006, but was not implemented. This application did not include amendments to the A119 roundabout.

- 3.10 Planning permission was granted by the Development Control Committee in September 2016 for improvements to the Hertford Road in Stevenage, and in October 2016 for improvements between Tonwell and the A10.

4 Description of the proposed development

- 4.1 The proposal is to enlarge the existing A602/A119 roundabout to incorporate two-lane entries on all four arms, and to provide a segregated left turn lane on the approach from the north (from Stevenage towards Ware). The circulatory carriageway around the roundabout would also be widened to two lanes. The land for the proposed development is within, or adjacent to, the highway boundary.
- 4.2 The existing footway from the roundabout towards Watton-at-Stone will be reinstated, and extended by approximately 250 metres along the minor road, Ware Road. The improved southern arm of the roundabout will retain a pedestrian island, to facilitate the use of the footway alongside the A119, to provide an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing.
- 4.3 The lighting columns will be relocated to reflect the revised junction alignment and upgraded to new LED technology which has a lesser spill, in line with current County Council standards. Additional lighting columns are also proposed, although the existing central high mast column would be removed.
- 4.4 A temporary compound is proposed in the north-western quadrant of the roundabout. Such development would ordinarily be permissible under Part 9, Schedule A of the General Permitted Development Order 2015.
- 4.5 The development would require the removal of the existing hedgerows and trees, which are well-established in the location. Like for like replacements can be delivered in the north-eastern and north-western quadrants of the roundabouts, following the enlargement of the roundabout, which could tie-in with the retained hedgerows.
- 4.6 Further, the scrub in the proximity of the LWS in the south-west quadrant would also need to be removed for the duration of the works. This vegetation can be reinstated, along with that in the compound area, on completion of the works. It is noted that the scrub is a hawthorn-dominated verge, and does not include the wet woodland or broad-leaved semi-natural woodland habitat types for which the LWS has been designated.
- 4.7 The works also propose the relocation of the minor access into the field in the north-western quadrant of the roundabout.

5 Consultations

- 5.1 A total of 34 properties were consulted in respect of the application. A press notice was placed in the Hertfordshire Mercury, and site notices were erected on 27 July 2017.
- 5.2 East Herts Council as District Planning Authority did not have any comments on the application.
- 5.3 The Environment Agency initially objected to the application on the basis of insufficient information. This objection was subsequently withdrawn, with the Environment Agency satisfied that the majority of the works fell outside of the flood plain and that there are no changes to the ground level, which would affect the current flood risk.
- 5.4 HCC Flood Risk Management as Lead Local Flood Authority has no objection to the development on flood risk grounds. The LLFA recommends two conditions, requiring works to be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy and mitigation measures as detailed in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and to carry out infiltration tests to inform the proposed surface water drainage strategy.
- 5.5 Herts Ecology has no objection to the proposed development, subject to the inclusions of conditions and informatives to protect the local ecology and ensure best practise. A copy of the consultation response is provided as Appendix 4.
- 5.6 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal. Additional details regarding the scheme are required for mandatory design checks, should planning permission be granted.
- 5.7 Highways England offers no objection.
- 5.8 The Historic Environment Officer from Hertfordshire County Council advises that the development is likely to have an impact on heritage assets as the proposed development is within Area of Archeological Significance No. 126 as identified in the East Herts Local Plan, and includes an area of land which is still in agricultural use. Accordingly, the Officer recommends three conditions to ensure an appropriate level of investigation and protection of any heritage asset.
- 5.9 The Landscape Officer from Hertfordshire County Council is broadly in support of the principles of the findings and recommendations of the Arboricultural Report, the Planting Scheme, and the Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment. However, the Officer challenges the assertion that trees should not necessarily be replaced on a 1:1 basis, and requires a detailed planting plan, schedule and specification. These details can be secured by condition. The full response is included at Appendix 3.
- 5.10 The Traffic Management Unit of Cambridgeshire Police has no comment.

- 5.11 Watton-at-Stone Parish Council has no comment to make on the application.
- 5.12 Cycling UK Stevenage objects to the application due to concerns regarding cyclist safety. The group specifically raises concerns that due to the lack of an alternative, cyclists have to use the right hand turn from Watton-at-Stone towards Hertford and are vulnerable to fast moving vehicles.
- 5.13 South Herts CTC raises concerns on the basis of the risk to cyclist safety, primarily that cyclists should not be forced to use an enlarged two lane roundabout, which may be overcome by the dual use of the existing and proposed extension to the footway. The full response is included at Appendix 5.
- 5.14 Rights of Way has commented that during the initial consultation they were told there would not be enough space available to facilitate a footway/cycleway on either side of the road. They are concerned that this scheme is detrimental to non-motorised users trying to use or cross the A602.
- 5.15 No other statutory consultation responses were received.

5.16 Public consultation

Ten responses were received, which either objected to or raised concerns with regard to the application. The objections can be summarised as follows:-

Objection 1 – Need

- Concern as to whether the proposed scheme addressed traffic issues on the A602
- Query the cost of the scheme to address a problem at the Heath Mount School entrance
- No need for an additional left-turn lane from the A119 into Watton-at-Stone

Objection 2 – Design of the development

- The compound represents a large land take
- The compound will have an adverse visual impact on entering Watton-at-Stone
- Proposal does not promote sustainable transport methods
- The county council has not undertaken a cost benefit analysis

Objection 3 – Provision for cyclists and cyclist safety

- Cyclists should not be forced to use the enlarged roundabout
- The proposed roundabout has not been risk assessed for cyclist safety
- Footway enhancements should allow a shared-use or parallel cycle track from Watton-at-Stone to A119

- Need for an off-road segregated cycle path parallel to A602 Stevenage and Ware
- Scheme does not encourage non-motorised sustainable transport
- Proposals will increase the speed of vehicles on the roundabout
- The footpath from Hertford to Stevenage should be a cycleway; it needs to be wider with vegetation cut back

6 The Development Plan

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of the Act, the development plan comprises of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007, and the saved policies within it.
- 6.2 The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been adopted, and supplements Policy GBC14 of the East Herts Local Plan. Similarly, the Historic Parks and Gardens SPD supplements Policy BH16. These documents are therefore a material consideration to determining planning applications.
- 6.3 The emerging District Plan has been the subject of a public examination by the Planning Inspectorate, which concluded in December 2017. Some weight can be given to the draft policies contained within it. It is noted that the Key Diagram identifies the A602 for road improvements, and it is listed as a strategic infrastructure requirement under Proposed Policy DPS5 – Infrastructure Requirements.
- 6.4 The most relevant planning policies to consider for this application are:

East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007

Policy GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
Policy GBC12	Agricultural Land
Policy GBC14	Landscape Character
Policy TR1	Traffic Reduction in New Developments
Policy TR3	Transport Assessments
Policy TR9	Cycling – Cycle Routes
Policy TR12	Cycle Routes – New Development
Policy ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
Policy ENV2	Landscaping
Policy ENV11	Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
Policy ENV14	Local Sites
Policy ENV17	Wildlife Habitats
Policy ENV18	Water Environment
Policy ENV19	Development in Areas Liable to Flood
Policy ENV20	Groundwater Protection
Policy ENV21	Surface Water Drainage
Policy ENV23	Light Pollution and Floodlighting
Policy ENV24	Noise Generating Development
Policy ENV25	Noise Sensitive Development

Policy ENV27 Air Quality
Policy BH2 Archaeological Evaluations and Assessments
Policy BH3 Archaeological Conditions and Agreements
Policy LRC9 Public Rights of Way

- 6.5 Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2031) sets out the County Council’s vision and strategy for the long term development of transport within the county. The current version is LTP3, and the draft document LTP4 is out to consultation, concluding on 23 January 2018.
- 6.6 These policies are considered alongside national guidance in the form of The National Planning Policy Framework.

7 Planning Issues

- 7.1 The principal planning issues to be taken into account in determining this application can be summarised as:
- Green Belt development
 - Need and justification
 - Impact on highways and transport
 - Quality of design
 - Landscape and visual impact
 - Impact on ecology and biodiversity
 - Impact on residential amenity (noise, dust, light)

Green Belt development

- 7.2 The application seeks development in the Green Belt. Paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. One such use is “local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location”.
- 7.3 The existing route of the A602 passes through the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Transport Assessment submitted in support of the application has demonstrated the need for the improvements, in that there are capacity constraints at the roundabout that cause severe congestion and delays, especially at peak hours. The development would deliver improvements to traffic flow and journey time reliability, and is therefore “needed” in a Green Belt location, with further details set out in paragraphs 7.6 to 7.15.
- 7.4 The scale of the physical development is relatively small, with the relocation and addition of lighting columns, in line with the reconfigured junctions. The proposals do not encroach on the openness of the Green Belt, and are confined to the highway boundary, or the area adjacent to it. Where replacement has not already occurred, the columns will be

replaced with LED technology that has a reduced spill and therefore reduces the impact on the Green Belt.

- 7.5 The proposal does not adversely impact the openness of the Green Belt, or the purpose of including land within it. The development is for local transport infrastructure and is deemed not to be inappropriate in the Green Belt. It is, therefore in compliance with paragraph 90 of the NPPF and with Local Plan Policy GBC1, which also protect against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Need and justification

- 7.6 The application is part of the wider proposals for improvements to the A602, which are considered necessary to reduce overall journey times and reliability on the route between Stevenage (A1(M)) and Ware (A10). This route is considered to be of a low standard for a primary route, within junction and alignment issues, and poor visibility. The wider improvements have been identified as one of the top three scoring schemes against deliverability and achievement of Local Transport Plan goals. It was one of three schemes submitted to the Department of Transport in July 2013, as the Local Transport Bodies' (LTB) priority list of major transport schemes to be delivered from 2015 – 2019. The LTB is tasked to prioritise transport investment.
- 7.7 The traffic flows often exceed the capacity of the major junctions on the route, which is anticipated to come under increasing pressure with major housing growth planned in the draft Local Plan proposals for both Stevenage and East Hertfordshire. Residents and businesses are heavily reliant on the A602 to facilitate movement in and around the county. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has highlighted, within the Strategic Economic Plan¹ (SEP) that the road network is chronically congested, and that this is a major constraint to growth in both housing and jobs.
- 7.8 It is considered that the proposed improvements to the A602 would meet the key objectives of the 2011 Government Transport White Paper², which provides key objectives for future transport investment, namely:
- to create growth in the economy and to tackle climate change by cutting carbon emissions; and,
 - to tackle places where congestion causes slow and unreliable journeys with significant impacts on the economy and environment;
- 7.9 The White Paper also highlights that public transport does not represent a viable alternative to the private car for all journeys. There is limited provision of east-west public transport links between Stevenage and Ware, with the train lines running into the transport hubs of Central London. The scheme is proposed in order to improve the overall

¹ Perfectly Placed for Business: Hertfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan. March 2014

² Department for Transport, 2011, Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon. Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen

standard of the road, ease congestion, reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability along the A602 between Stevenage and Ware.

- 7.10 Journey time surveys have found that road users experience delays in both directions during the morning and evening peaks, with the worst delays occurring on the eastbound (i.e. from Stevenage towards Ware) during the morning peaks. These delays are anticipated to increase with projected housing growth, which is likely to increase traffic on the A602.
- 7.11 The supporting Transport Assessment has been provided on the basis that the road link capacity remains consistent; in that the A602 between Stevenage and Ware will remain a single carriageway road. The proposed improvements are focussed on the junctions along the A602, and the assessment looks to measure the effect of the improvements, largely in terms of junction queue length.
- 7.12 The Transport Assessment finds that the existing roundabout at the junction of the A119 and A602 is operating above its theoretical capacity threshold in the AM and PM peak hours. Whilst there is an issue on all arms of the roundabout, the biggest queues occur on the A119 approach. Further, that without improvements, the capacity issues and queuing would worsen by 2019 and beyond.
- 7.13 The proposed improvements to the roundabout provide a two-lane approach on all four arms, with a segregated left-turn lane for A602 eastbound traffic. The modelling finds that the junction would then operate within its capacity in 2019 and 2024.
- 7.14 Objections have been raised in terms of the need for the development, and whether the enlargement of the roundabout meets the highway concerns of the public, i.e. potholes or a dedicated cycle lane. The Highway Authority, as the applicant, has applied to a specific funding pot that is only available to support major road schemes, rather than, for example, the repair of potholes. The role of the County Planning Authority is to assess the planning merits of the application, rather than overall highway improvement strategy and the allocation of funds.
- 7.15 The proposal is also compliant with the overarching sustainability aims of the NPPF, and addressing Challenge 1.1 of the Local Transport Plan in seeking to deliver a long term solution to economic and social issues, by facilitating housing growth, job creation, and the movement of goods and people, while minimising the additional land take from the development. The proposals are supported by the finding of a Transport Assessment, in compliance with Local Plan Policy TR3.

Impact on highways and transport

- 7.16 The proposal seeks to provide junction improvements that will improve the throughput and flow of traffic, and thereby increase the capacity as compared to the existing junction configuration. The capacity

improvements for the A602/A119 roundabout are stated at paragraph 7.13, and detailed in the Transport Assessment.

- 7.17 The A602/A119 roundabout is identified as operating above its theoretical capacity threshold during peak hours, resulting in delayed and unreliable journeys on this primary route. It is proposed to relieve this constraint through the creation of a two lane approach, and a segregated left turn on the eastbound approach from Stevenage (see paragraphs 4.1 to 4.8).
- 7.18 Traffic in the area is projected to continue to grow, thereby exacerbating existing capacity issues at the A602/A119 roundabout. However, the Transport Assessment found that the proposed widening of the approach arms would allow for significant improvements in traffic flow and reduction of congestion, and that the junction would operate within its theoretical capacity forecast for 2024.
- 7.19 The A602 would remain open during the works and travellers would only be affected during short periods of construction, with some temporary potential for an increase in journey times due to the need for local diversions and traffic management. Once completed, the development would serve to improve the travelling experience for private road users and buses, reduce driver stress, provide more consistent journey times and reduce vehicle emissions. This is consistent with the sustainability considerations as set out at paragraph 7.15, and improves traffic flows through traffic management and (relatively) small scale intervention as set out in the 'Congestion' policy statement of the Local Transport Plan.
- 7.20 Consideration is also given to the effect on other travellers; non-motorised users (NMUs), pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. The rural nature of the A602 means that there is limited use along the length of the road between Stevenage and Ware by NMUs.
- 7.21 Local Plan Policy TR1 seeks to incorporate alternative transport options to the private motor car, with measures that are commensurate with the scale of additional traffic generated. As set out at paragraph 7.11, the development of itself is not anticipated to generate additional traffic movements. The proposal seeks to address the queuing time on the approach to the roundabout, and improve the reliability of journey times along the A602.
- 7.22 However, the development does incorporate a reinstatement of the footway from Watton-at-Stone village to the A119, and a pedestrian splitter island to facilitate crossing of the carriageway. The footway provides pedestrian access to Hertford and the intervening villages, as well as linkage to the Footpath FP011 which runs to east of the settlement fringe, in compliance with Local Plan Policies LCR9 and TR1(a).
- 7.23 The proposals do not include a footway alongside the A602, however, such development would not be proportionate to any increase in traffic.

Further, Policy TP1 asserts that such measures should be appropriate to the individual characteristics of the site; the roundabout abuts the Grade II* Registered Woodhall Park estate, which is characterised by an extensive red brick wall. Whilst there is insufficient carriageway space to include a footway, it is considered that such works would adversely impact the setting of the registered estate.

- 7.24 The proposed scheme across the wider route will maintain all public Rights of Way affected. While there may be a small increase in length of some routes, the significance of the effect is considered to be neutral once the scheme is operational and it is further noted that the number of people using these routes is low. The scheme is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policy LRC9.
- 7.25 Additional guidance is given at paragraph 35 of the NPPF which, inter alia, states that developments should be designed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements where practical (my emphasis). In this instance, an extended footway would not be a practical addition to the highway.
- 7.26 The predominant NMUs are cyclists, this activity is concentrated at weekends and on summertime evenings, reflecting its recreational nature as opposed to a method of commuting. There are no measures specifically to increase cycling as a mode of transport, and this has been the key source of objection in respect of both this specific element of the scheme and the wider A602 project.
- 7.27 A number of cyclists have called for the provision of a segregated cycleway running parallel to the A602, both at the roundabout and along the A602 as a whole. The absence of such a cycleway is contrary to the aims of Local Plan Policies TR1, TR9 and TR12, however each policy recognises the need to adopt a practical and feasible approach. The demand for a cycleway must be balanced against the available land within and adjacent to the highway boundary and the reliability of flow of motorised traffic on the A602.
- 7.28 Further objections have been made on the grounds of cyclist safety, by requiring cyclists to shared access onto a large roundabout, and the need to generate speed uphill both towards Hertford on the A119, and towards Heath Mount School on the A602. Potentially, cyclists would have to cross over a lane of fast moving traffic.
- 7.29 Cyclists raised this concern during the early, pre-application, consultation stages which were carried out by the applicant. The response is included at page 26 of the Statement of Consultation, which is submitted as a supporting document. The applicant has designed the scheme to the current standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. This scheme was subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit in accordance with HD19/15 of the DMRB (Road Safety Audit), and no issues relating to safety for cyclists were highlighted; this is a technical highways document and does not form part of the planning application.

The scheme was reviewed and redesigned to address the issues raised in the audit, prior to the submission of the planning application.

- 7.30 If planning permission is granted, the scheme will be subject to a further road safety audit, to consider safety issues in more detail. The road safety checklist for a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit includes a requirement to ensure that the needs of cyclists have been considered, especially at junctions and roundabouts.
- 7.31 There are likely to be no equestrian flows in the vicinity of the A602/A119 roundabout due to the nature of the carriageway.
- 7.32 A Traffic Management Plan can be secured through condition to minimise driver stress and frustration, and to ensure the appropriate and timely sharing of information regarding works that may impact journey routes or times. This forms part of the submitted Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (Appendix I of the Environmental Statement).
- 7.33 No rail routes would be impacted by the proposed development, or the wider scheme.
- 7.34 The proposed highway improvements at the A602/A119 roundabout are in support of paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Transport Plan, to accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies through more reliable journey times.

Quality of design

- 7.35 The proposed scheme is the applicant's preferred option after the consideration of several high level options. The junction and alignment improvements were taken forward as the only feasible solution within available funding resources and an ability to be delivered within the funding timescales.
- 7.36 A signalised junction at the roundabout was considered to not in keeping with the rural nature of the area.
- 7.37 All elements of the proposed improvements to the A602 have been designed in accordance with the latest guidance set from the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). There are limited opportunities to make a design statement, given that the development relates to highway furniture. However, the proposals provide a cohesive design as relates to the existing highway infrastructure.
- 7.38 The proposed development is therefore consistent with Local Plan Policy ENV1.

Landscape and visual impact

- 7.39 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted

with the application. This considers the effect of the development on landscape and visual amenity during the construction, operation (Year 1) and residual (Year 15) phases.

- 7.40 The predominant regional landscape topology in proximity to Watton-at-Stone and the A119 roundabout are 'Wooded Chalk Valleys', 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' and 'Lowland Village Chalklands'. These landscapes are characterised by arable farming and a rolling landscape. The field sizes are medium to large with some enclosure by hawthorn hedges, with estate farms and areas of ancient woodland, parklands and large country houses. These landscapes are of 'moderate' value and have a 'moderate' susceptibility to change in relation to the proposed development.
- 7.41 Further assessment is available in the form of the Landscape Character Assessment (LCAs), which defines the area around the A602/A119 roundabout as 'Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes'. This is described as "an upland arable landscape, more enclosed by woodland than the open area to the north and with very strong overlying planned parkland characteristics within Woodhall Estate, which makes a strong statement, contained within its extensive brick wall yet visible over a wide area", and the parkland character overrides topography. The landscape is of a 'high' value which should be safeguarded and managed, with a 'high' susceptibility to change in relation to the proposed development.
- 7.42 The overall significance of effect during the construction phase on this landscape is considered to be neutral/slight adverse, at a regional level. The localised loss of woodland and vegetation is acknowledged, but it is not considered that the construction phase will affect the perception of the regional landscape topology. This impact is expected to carry through to the operational phase until the associated planting becomes fully established.
- 7.43 The LVIA finds that the construction phase of the proposed development would have a direct adverse impact on the landscape element and the tranquillity of the Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes LCA, generating a moderate/large adverse impact. Similarly, this is considered to reduce to a slight/moderate adverse impact during the first year of operation, improving to neutral as planting ties in with the existing woodland. This conclusion is supported, in principle, by the HCC Landscape Officer.
- 7.44 The mitigation of landscape and visual impacts during the construction phase can be achieved through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and secured by condition. This can include, but would not be limited to, the control of lighting to construction compounds and haul roads, and the sensitive design of site hoardings. The CEMP should also address how the roots of existing trees will be protected. A draft CEMP has been included within the submitted Environmental Statement.

- 7.45 The LVIA finds that there would be no significant residual adverse effects on receptors from the scheme, and again, a conclusion supported, in principle, by the HCC Landscape Officer. However, as detailed at Appendix 3, there are a number of reports outstanding including, but not limited to, detailed planting plans, schedules and specifications. Such details can be secured and agreed through condition. Further, the detailed plan would require a commitment to provide compensatory planting on a basis of two for one.
- 7.46 The development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies GBC14, ENV2 and ENV11, and the overarching aims of Section 11 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).
- 7.47 The lighting arrangement at the junction will be updated, whereby the number of lighting columns will be increased and LED technology used in compliance with HCC standards, minimising glare and light spillage. The existing central high mast column will be removed, in compliance with Local Plan Policy ENV23.

Impact on ecology and biodiversity

- 7.48 The NPPF states that the planning system should seek to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, and to provide net biodiversity gains. The Environment Statement provides details of the desk studies and field studies which have been carried out across the wider proposed scheme, including the area of the proposed development at the A602/A119 roundabout.
- 7.49 Effects to ecological resources of a district or higher level are potentially significant and may be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application. The Environmental Statement has therefore considered the effects predicted on Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), Great Crested Newts (GCNs), barn owls, bats and other protected species.
- 7.50 The proposed works at the A602/A119 roundabout take place largely within the existing highway boundary and associated verges. The most significant impact would be the temporary loss of 0.115ha and the permanent loss of 0.05ha of secondary broad-leaved woodland and scrub at Watton Springs LWS, mostly comprising of the hawthorn-dominated verges. This area does not include the wet woodland or broad-leaved semi-natural woodland types, which form the basis of the LWS designation. The Environmental Statement finds that the ecological impact of this proposed development as not significant.
- 7.51 This is a view supported in the consultation response of Herts Ecology, with further guidance offered in respect of the location of bat boxes, lighting and best practise measures to ensure the protection of European Protected Species. While sections of hedgerow would be lost to facilitate the development, the draft landscaping scheme proposes like for like replacement. The species composition would either match the existing hedgerows or be species rich, resulting in a permanent

beneficial improvement at a local level, overcoming the significant adverse effect during the construction phase.

- 7.52 There are no issues in respect of GCNs, barn owls or bats in this section of the wider scheme, other than the consideration of the lighting required for night time working so as not to impact the passing routes of bats. This can be included within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and required by condition. The nesting and breeding area of birds can be similarly protected.
- 7.53 The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies ENV11, ENV14 and ENV17, and the over-arching aims of Section 11 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).
- 7.54 The segregated left turn land from Stevenage includes a small area of land which is currently used for agriculture. The positioning of the carriageway will not prohibit the continued use of the remaining field for arable agriculture, in compliance with ENV12.

Impact on residential amenity (e.g. noise, light, air quality)

- 7.55 The Environmental Statement has considered the potential impact of noise and vibration arising from both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development on residential and non-residential receptors within 300 metres of the proposed scheme. The assessment is consistent with the recommendations of BS5228-1:2009+A1:2014 Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites: Part 1 Noise and Part 2 Vibration (British Standards Institution, 2014).
- 7.56 The noise impact of the operational phase of the proposed development has been scoped out through the Environmental Statement, as it is anticipated that there would be no significant increase in traffic due to the capacity limitations set out at paragraph 7.11. The proposed road alignment is either at a similar vertical level or further away from the existing alignments, or in the same location, from the majority of sensitive receptors.
- 7.57 While there are likely to be significant noise or vibration effects during the construction phase of the proposed development, these are anticipated to be short term, taking a total of 25 weeks, and limited to day-time working at the A602/A119 roundabout. The Environmental Statement finds that no adverse effects have been identified at residential receptors in the vicinity of the roundabout. Notwithstanding, noise levels can be regulated through good practise, and where necessary with formal resolution via the statutory Section 61 Control of Pollution Act 1974 procedure.
- 7.58 It is not anticipated that the worse case internal vibration from earthworks will exceed the threshold of adverse effects at residential

receptors.

- 7.59 It will be possible to reduce the scale of the potential noise and vibration impacts by adopting the measures set out in BS5228 including, but not limited to, switching off engines when not in use, minimised drop heights of materials, the use of screening. These measures can be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- 7.60 The Environmental Statement concludes that noise and vibration impacts can be effectively mitigated. The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policy ENV24 and ENV25.
- 7.61 The proposed scheme is not within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and therefore this issue was not assessed further in the Environmental Statement.
- 7.62 There is a small grouping of residential farm properties within 50 metres of the proposed construction area, which means that there is a high sensitivity to dust that may be generated during the construction phase. Dust emissions can be limited by adopted mitigation and control measures, in line with IAQM (Institute of Air Quality Management) guidance, and incorporated into a CEMP. The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policy ENV27.

Environmental Statement

- 7.63 An Environmental Statement has been submitted to accompany the application. This is because the wider proposed scheme to improve the A602 between Stevenage and Ware falls within Category 10(f) Schedule 2 of the Environmental Regulations as the total development, outside of the highway boundary, is greater than the threshold of one hectare.
- 7.64 The characteristics, location and potential impacts are determined to be potentially significant. The Non-Technical Summary is attached at Appendix 6.

Environmental Statement – Cultural Heritage

- 7.65 It was considered that due to the limited nature of the works within and adjacent to the highway boundary in proximity to the A602/A119 roundabout, that setting impacts on designated assets would only be likely to occur within 100 metres of the proposed development. A desk-based study of designated assets was completed on this basis. The review of non-designated assets was widened to a 1 kilometre study area to provide context of potential archaeological remains.
- 7.66 There are 23 Listed Buildings present within 100 metres of the study area, which incorporates the A602/A119 roundabout and the adjoining proposed highway improvements along the A602 towards Tonwell. The Grade II* Registered Woodhall Park is present within the study area, and the Watton-at-Stone Conversation Area lies to the west of the proposed

scheme and beyond the development boundary. There are a further 59 non-designated assets or findspots.

- 7.67 It is considered that the proposed development would have a slight to moderate adverse direct impact on areas of archaeological potential, but that the features in these areas are common in Hertfordshire and therefore considered to be of low importance. The construction activity would have a negligible impact on the setting of Woodhall Park and the Listed Buildings within it, due to the screening offered by existing vegetation. Further, the operation of the development is found not to cause substantial harm to heritage assets as the effect on most is 'neutral'. However, this is balanced against the need to relocate a milestone which has significance specifically due to its location.
- 7.68 Guidance on the mitigation of the potential impacts on archaeology is provided by the Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team. It is advised that the archaeological assets can be protected through investigation, as regulated by the imposition of conditions. The proposed development is therefore in compliance with Local Plan Policies BH2 and BH3, and the guidance in paragraph 141 of the NPPF.

Environmental Statement – Geology, Soils and Materials

- 7.69 The Environmental Statement considers the impact of the wider proposed scheme on the geology, soils and materials of a study area defined as 500 metres either side of the proposed scheme central alignment for both the construction and operation phases. A ground investigation prior to construction can be required by condition. This would identify any unexpected contamination that can be addressed through actions and mitigation to be agreed with the appropriate regulatory body.
- 7.70 There is one historical landfill site which is located approximately 500 metres to the north east of the A602/A119 roundabout, called Rookery Pit. Records indicate that the site received inert waste between 1983 and 1985, and therefore represents a low risk of contamination. The area is now heavily vegetated.
- 7.71 During the construction phase, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) can be required by condition to minimise the risk from accidental spills and leaks to negligible through adopting best practice techniques. The CEMP is to include guidance on the soil stripping, stockpiling and re-use, to ensure that soils can be returned to agricultural use.
- 7.72 During the operation of the wider scheme, there is the potential for risk of accidental spills and leaks, in respect of road traffic accidents. The design of the scheme incorporates pollution interceptors, and a ground investigation can be secured through condition to ensure that an informed technical design protects against the potential for dissolution of chalk.

7.73 It is considered that the scheme will not have significant adverse effects on potential receptors, and is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies ENV20 and ENV21.

Environmental Statement – Community and Private Assets

7.74 There are expected to be no significant adverse effects to the community services in and around the A602, as a result of the wider proposed scheme. While there may be delays in travel times during the construction process, access along the route and to the nearby facilities will be maintained at all time.

7.75 No buildings are affected by the proposed scheme, other than as set out at paragraphs 7.66 and 7.67.

7.76 The adjoining agricultural fields are of the best and most versatile for agricultural use, and are afforded protection under the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is considered that any impacts can be managed through adopting a best practice approach and a soil resources plan. However, the segregated left turn lane from Stevenage to Ware will require the permanent use of agricultural land from the Woodhall Park Estate. This land is limited to the field margins and hedges in Environmental Stewardship Schemes, and so would not be defined as significant in terms of paragraph 112 of the NPPF.

7.77 The Environmental Statement finds that effects on the holdings are negligible.

Environmental Statement – Road Drainage and the Water Environment

7.78 The River Beane is located approximately 100 metres to the south of the A602/A119 roundabout; a section of the river was diverted when the roundabout was originally constructed in 1987.

7.79 The Flood Risk Assessment finds that the proposed works will not affect the existing fluvial flood risk at this location. The overall risk of groundwater flooding is assessed as low and the pattern of surface water flooding is not predicted to change as a result of the proposed development. However, the proposal incorporates SuDS in order to limit the risk of surface water flooding, and to protect the existing sewerage network from additional burden resulting in infrastructure failure.

7.80 This view is supported by the Environment Agency who are satisfied that the majority of the development falls outside of the flood plain, with only a small amount falling within Flood Zone 3, and that there are no ground level changes which would affect the current flood risk.

7.81 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), secured by condition, can be adopted to regulate matters including but not limited to sediment control, controlled storage of materials, restricting the use of

polluting materials near receptors, and local flood control to reduce the potential for adverse impacts on the water environment.

- 7.82 The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies ENV18, ENV19, ENV20 and ENV21.

Environmental Statement – Cumulative Effects

- 7.83 Schedule 4, Part 1 of the EIA regulations require that the cumulative effects of a development are assessment as part of the Environmental Statement. Potential cumulative impacts arise from the interaction between environmental impacts identified above, and from the interaction of the proposed development and other development projects.
- 7.84 There are no other committed development projects along the A602 between the A602/A119 roundabout and west of the village of Tonwell, other than the Ware Road realignment, which is the subject of a separate planning application. Therefore, the Environmental Statement has considered the interaction between the identified environmental impacts.
- 7.85 The Statement identifies a cumulative impact during the construction phase on the local landscape and character of Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes. Given the sensitivity of the landscape, and the magnitude of the impact, the overall significance of the cumulative impact is expected to be moderate adverse. The longer term impact is considered to be slightly beneficial, once mitigation and compensatory planting has matured over a 15 year period.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This report has identified a number of impacts that could occur but which can be adequately managed by the imposition of appropriate conditions.
- 8.2 The proposed works in respect of the improvements to the A602/A119 roundabout to the east of Watton-at-Stone are contained within or are directly adjacent to, the highway boundary, and if considered in isolation, the applicant would not have had to seek express planning permission.
- 8.3 The highway improvements will allow the upgrading of a sub-standard primary route, and help to deliver more reliable journey times, meeting a legitimate planning need.
- 8.4 It is deemed that the development is 'local transport infrastructure' for which the need for a Green Belt location can be demonstrated, as required by the Local Plan. The development is therefore not inappropriate in the Green Belt as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purpose of including land in the Green Belt.

- 8.5 The development is compliant with principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and the East Herts Local Plan, and the Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2031 in delivering highway improvements to deliver a safe and resilient transport system. While potential adverse impacts have been identified, the imposition of robust conditions can protect against harm to landscape, visual impact, ecology, biodiversity and residential amenity.

9 Conditions

- 9.1 The recommendation to approve the proposed development is subject to the following ELEVEN conditions and referral to the Secretary of State:-

1. Time limit for commencement
2. Approved plans and documents
3. Landscaping plan; including tree protection and habitat improvements
4. Drainage strategy
5. Infiltration tests
6. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation
7. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (2)
8. Ground Investigations
9. Construction Environmental Management Plan
10. Lighting
11. Fencing/boundary treatment

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

Planning application reference 3/1738-17 including supporting documents and environmental statement

Consultee responses

Relevant policy documents:

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007

Historic Parks & Gardens SPD 2007

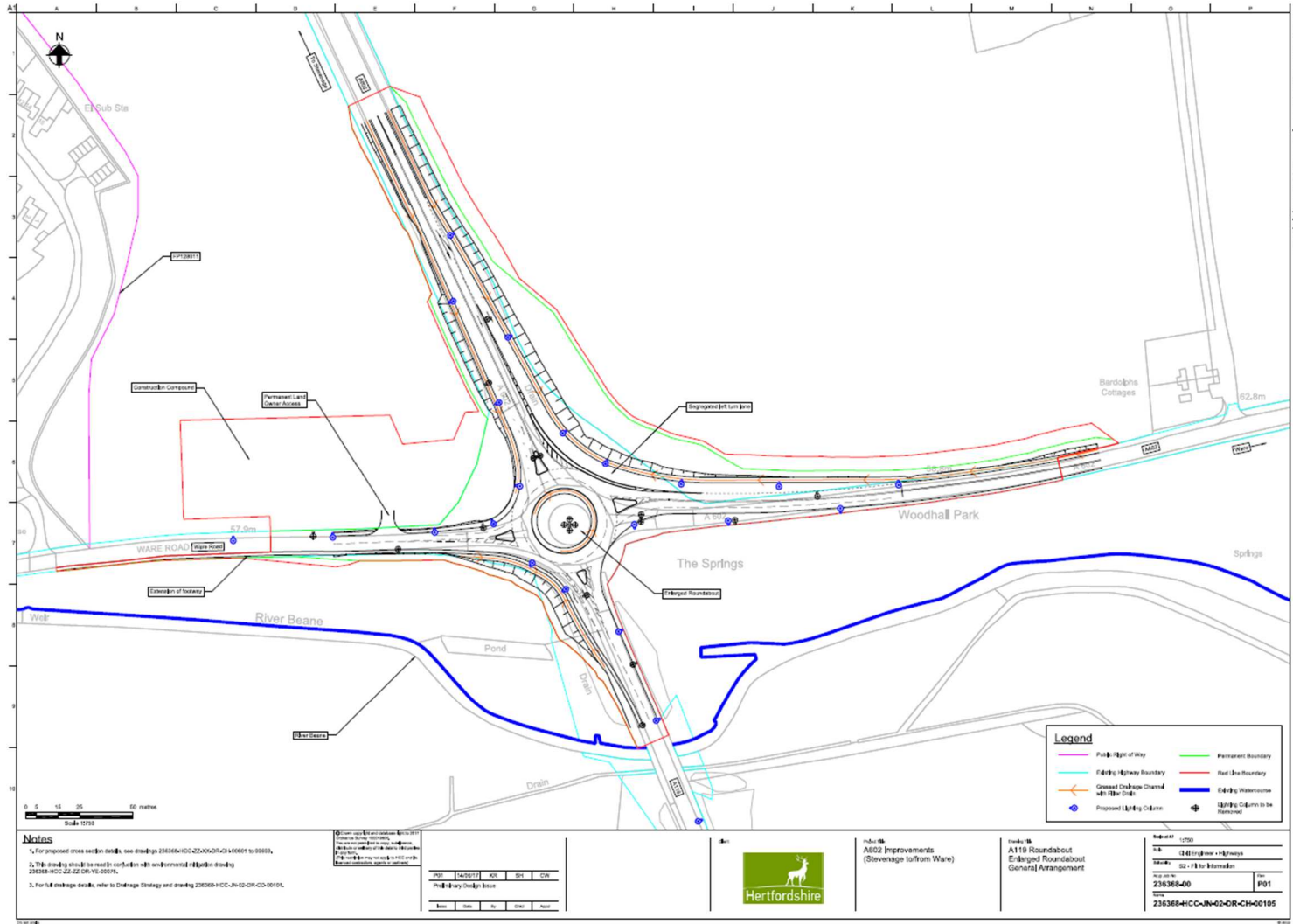
Landscape Character Assessment SPD

Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2031)

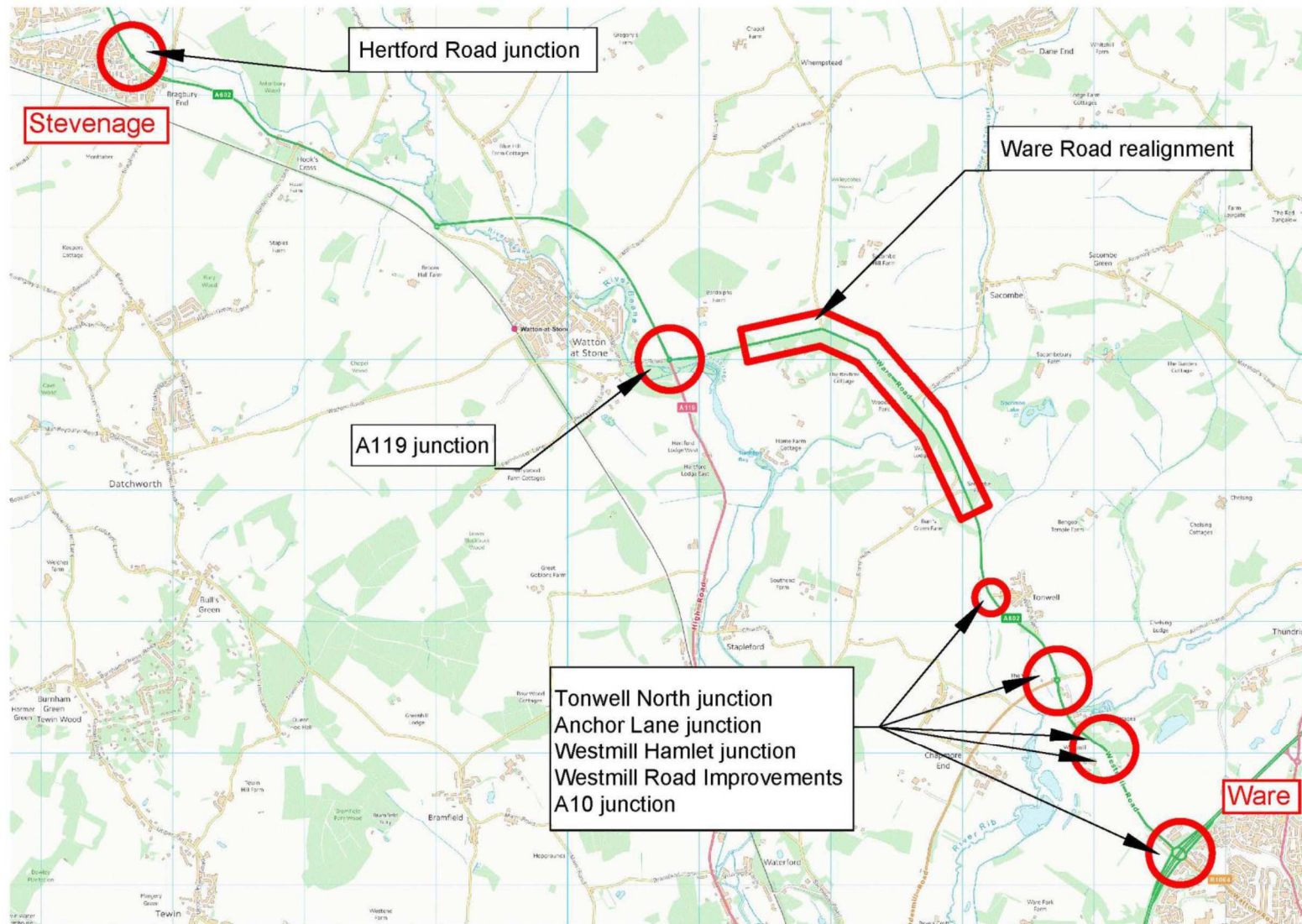
Appendices

1. General Arrangement
2. The Proposed Scheme (A119 junction) within the wider area
3. Consultation response from HCC Landscape Officer
4. Consultation response from Herts Ecology
5. Consultation response from South Herts CTC
6. Environmental Statement: Volume 1 – Non-technical summary

Appendix 1 General Arrangement (do not scale)



Appendix 2 The Proposed Scheme (A119 junction) within the wider area



Appendix 3 Consultation response from HCC Landscape Officer

Landscape Report	17th August 2017
From: HCC Landscape Officer, Natural Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team	To: HCC Planning Officer, Spatial Planning
Application No.	3/1738-17
Location:	Junction of A602 and A119, East of Watton-at-Stone
Proposal:	Application for proposed enlarged roundabout and segregated left turn from Stevenage to Ware, at the junction of the A602 and A119, including associated changes to verges, lighting, drainage, landscaping and engineering operations

Background

The proposed development at the A602 and A119 Roundabout is one of four schemes within a package of works along the A602. Separate planning applications have been approved, or are currently being determined, for the following schemes:

- Hertford Road Roundabout in Stevenage (permitted)
- Northwest Ware (permitted)
- A602 and A119 Roundabout (awaiting determination (subject of this report))
- Ware Road between Heath Mount and Stony Hills (awaiting determination)

The Landscape Officer has previously been consulted on the pre-application proposals. At that stage broad principles were established regarding the approach to the landscape strategy.

Summary & Conclusions

1 Landscape strategy

The proposed planting palette is supported in principle however detailed planting plans, schedules and specifications are required to demonstrate that the location and density of new planting meets the requirement to provide at least 2 new trees for each one removed and sufficient landscape and visual enhancements.

2 Landscape and visual effects

Overall, the proposed construction stage gives rise to significant³ landscape and visual effects. However, the significance of effects is deemed acceptable due to the relatively limited extent of the engineering operations, predominantly within the highways boundary, the screening effect of the existing roadside vegetation,

³ Effects that are moderate or above are deemed significant in EIA terms

and the temporary and short term duration of effects for the construction period of 32 weeks.

On implementation of the landscape mitigation planting and the commencement of the operational stage, the proposed development gives rise to some adverse landscape and visual effects in the short term (0-5 years). The significance of effects is deemed acceptable as they will continue to reduce in the medium term (5-10 years), as the new planting becomes established and provides effective landscape mitigation, becoming neutral in the long term (10 years and over). There are no permanent adverse residual landscape and visual effects.

The proposed development in combination with the proposed package of construction works along the A602 gives rise to some adverse cumulative visual effects. The significance of effects is deemed acceptable, due to the low sensitivity of visual receptors (predominantly motorist) and the transient nature of views, for a temporary and short term period of 164 weeks (approx. 3 years).

Landscape Strategy

3 Arboricultural report

The findings and recommendations of the Arboricultural Report (and accompanying Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan) are broadly supported.

However there is strong objection to the statement that *'The ratio of trees removed to trees replanted should not necessarily be 1:1.'*⁴ Where the removal of any tree is unavoidable its loss should be compensated for with new tree planting. In general it is recommended that for each tree removed, two new replacement trees should be planted within the site. New trees should be medium to large-scale native species that deliver maximum benefits for local character, visual amenity and biodiversity.

It is proposed to remove 7 individual trees (T21-27), and partially remove 2 tree groups (G5 and G6), woodland (W1) and a hedgerow (H2). The proposed quantity of new tree planting is not stated and should be sufficient to adequately mitigate the loss of existing individual trees, tree groups and woodland.

A detailed planting plan, schedule and specifications are required.

4 Planting scheme

With reference to the Landscape Strategy dated May 2017, the proposed planting palette of wildflower grass, hedgerow planting with standard trees, woodland screening hedgerows, and replacement Willow/Hawthorn scrub planting, is supported in principle.

⁴ Landscaping, page 30

However as mentioned above, the layout and density of new planting is critical in order to adequately compensate for the loss of existing vegetation and provide sufficient landscape and visual enhancements in the short term (0-5 years of planting).

Landscape and Visual Effects⁵

5 Construction Stage

The construction stage, which includes 12 weeks of advanced works and 20 weeks of construction works, comprises the following aspects that are likely to result in landscape and visual effects:

- Erection of temporary tree protection fencing
- Erection of temporary construction compound and fencing
- Removal of existing landcover vegetation
- Temporary removal and storage of soils
- Alteration of gradients and levels
- Engineering operations (widening/new left turn lane etc.)
- Environmental aspects (e.g. lighting, vehicular noise and movement)

5.1 Landscape effects

The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment⁶ (LVIA) identifies that the site lies within the Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes landscape character area, and concludes that the construction stage results in large adverse landscape effects.⁷

There is concern for the LVIA methodology that provides an assessment of the proposed construction stage at the A602 and A119 roundabout in combination with the proposed construction stage for the scheme at Ware Road, which is subject to a separate planning application. The construction stages for each area are not timetabled to occur *concurrently*, and therefore will not result in an overall landscape effect.

Despite the intrusive nature of the construction works, including the stripping of soils and landcover and the alteration of gradients and levels, the majority of engineering operations appear to be relatively well contained, predominantly within the highways boundary, with the exception of the large temporary construction compound and some tree protection fencing.

It is proposed to carry out the construction stage for a period of 32 weeks that is considered temporary and short term.⁸

⁵ Comments are given in line with current best practice guidance "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental management and Assessment." (GLVIA3)

⁶ Environmental Statement, Chapter 8 Landscape

⁷ 8.7.1.1. Landscape Effects (It should be noted that this assessment takes account of approx. 1.1km of offline works along Ware Road)

⁸ In a generations experience

Overall it is suggested that the construction stage results in **moderate-large adverse landscape effects**.

5.2 Visual effects

The submitted LVIA identifies a range of viewpoints, VP9 and VP11 are most relevant to the proposed development, and concludes that the construction stage results in **slight adverse visual effects** on viewpoint VP9⁹ and **moderate adverse visual effects** on VP11.¹⁰ This judgement is supported.

6 Operational Stage Year 1

6.1 Landscape effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 1 results in slight-moderate adverse landscape effects.¹¹

There is concern for the LVIA methodology that provides an assessment of the proposed operational stage at the A602 and A119 roundabout in combination with the proposed operational stage for the scheme at Ware Road, which is subject to a separate planning application. At Year 1 operation of the A602 and A119 roundabout, the Ware Road scheme is timetabled to be under construction, and therefore the schemes will not result in an overall visual effect for operation at year 1.

At year 1 operation of the A602 and A119 roundabout, the new hedgerow and tree planting, willow/hawthorn scrub planting, and wildflower grass, will be in the early stages of establishment and offer limited landscape and visual mitigation. The use of standard trees is fully supported and will help enhance landscape character at this early stage.

Despite concerns for the approach to the assessment, it is agreed that the proposed operational stage at year 1 results in **slight - moderate adverse landscape effects**.

6.2 Visual effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 1 result in **neutral visual effects** on viewpoint VP9,¹² and **slight adverse visual effects** on VP11.¹³ This judgement is supported.

⁹ Appendix C: Visual Effects Schedule

¹⁰ 8.7.1.2 Visual Effects

¹¹ 8.7.2.1. Landscape Effects (It should be noted that this assessment takes account of approx. 1.1km of offline works along Ware Road)

¹² Appendix C: Visual Effects Schedule

¹³ 8.7.2.2 Visual Effects

7 Operational Stage Year 15

7.1 Landscape effects

The submitted LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 15 results in **neutral landscape effects**.¹⁴ This judgement is supported.

At year 15 operation of the A602 and A119 roundabout, the hedgerow and tree planting, willow/hawthorn scrub planting, and wildflower grass, will be well established and deliver effective landscape and visual mitigation.

7.2 Visual effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 15 results in **neutral visual effects** on viewpoint VP9¹⁵ and VP11.¹⁶ This judgement is supported.

8 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative landscape and visual effects as a result of the proposed package of works along the A602 is a key consideration.

The proposed development at the A602 and A119 roundabout in combination with the proposed development at Ware Road between Heath Mount and Stony Hills give rise to cumulative landscape and visual effects due to their location next to each other, across neighbouring landscape character areas, and where they appear as elements within the same view.

On completion of the A602 and A119 roundabout, it is intended to start construction works at Ware Road. It is suggested that the sites will give rise to some **negligible to slight adverse cumulative landscape and visual effects** within the first 0-5 years until the new planting at the A602 and A119 roundabout has become established and delivers effective landscape mitigation.

The proposed development at the A602 and A119 roundabout in combination with the proposed package of works along the A602 gives rise to some **adverse cumulative visual effects** for commuters using the A602. Along here, travellers experience transient views of the schemes at various stages of construction and operation, over a period of at least 164 weeks (approx. 3 years).

¹⁴ 8.7.2.1. Landscape Effects (It should be noted that this assessment takes account of approx. 1.1km of offline works along Ware Road)

¹⁵ Appendix C: Visual Effects Schedule

¹⁶ 8.7.2.2 Visual Effects

Appendix 4 Consultation response from Herts Ecology

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on the above application, for which I have the following comments:

1. The impact of the proposals will be to **remove the small area of woodland / scrub and hedgerows** directly affected by the enlargement. It is proposed to **replace these** and **link them in with existing hedgerows** along the carriageway.
2. The majority of the work will be undertaken **within the existing highway boundary**.
3. I consider the ecological impact of the proposals will be **reasonably significant at the site level** given the loss of established vegetation. However this is **limited** at a larger scale given the small extent and nature of the young trees / scrub affected, probably having been planted / developed following the creation of the roundabout and bypass.
4. The arboricultural report is thorough but there is no attached map so it is not possible to directly assess any of the specific data as submitted. Again it relates to the whole road improvement works.
5. In any event the proposals include the replacement of features affected although there are **no details** for this. Some maps have been provided previously and are presumably still valid (Vol IV, Environmental Mitigation - A119 Junction Sheet 2 of 7). This shows woodland screening, hedgerows and wildflower grassland. Whilst this does not appear to provide any increase in habitat resources, this will be provided elsewhere as part of the wider scheme.
6. Bat boxes are proposed as an enhancement but this seems rather inappropriate at this location given there will not be any trees upon which to position them, unless adjacent areas of mature woodland to the south are to be used. Provision of bat boxes next to a road may in any event need re-considering although bats did use this as a flight line route.
7. Vol II of the ES submitted with this application is generic in that it applies to the whole road section proposed for realignment. Consequently much of the information does not apply directly given the direct ecological impact at the junction is relatively limited.
8. This is the only section where **lighting** will be installed, and the designs for the lamps themselves should ensure light pollution – mainly in the form of glare and spill – is kept to a minimum. Such designs should now be standard practice. However, **no details appear to have been submitted with this application**. I am sure designs have been prepared and if so these should have been provided. Consequently I am unable to comment any further on this issue.
9. Great crested newts (GCN) were recorded from this section which is close to GCN ponds. This section also includes Roman snail habitat (Vol IV 2014/2015

Notable ecological survey results - Watton-at-Stone to / from Tonwell Sheet 1 of 3). Generic details of how these species are to be dealt with where appropriate have been provided within Vol II of the ES. In this respect they are satisfactory and recognise that licences for both will be required where necessary. As such, **appropriate information has been provided prior to determination as necessary for European Protected Species**. However I consider the maps in Vol IV should have been submitted in support of this application.

10. Similar guidance for Roman Snails has been provided.

11. However, **no specific details of mitigation works at this location for either of these species** have been presented; whilst I have no reason to believe that the proposals outlined within the ES will not be applied as necessary by the ecological consultants, the LPA may need to seek assurances as to exactly what is going to be undertaken in respect of these species at this Junction in case this issues is raised. Furthermore, there are **no detailed planting proposals** for scrub, trees, hedgerows and grassland as proposed. I would be surprised if these details don't already exist but they do not appear to have been submitted with these proposals.

12. If this information is not provided prior to determination, it should be a requirement as a **Condition of Approval** to ensure that species mitigation and habitat compensation works considered necessary at this location are formally planned for and can be agreed by the planning authority.

13. The planning statement indicates the proposals are designed to minimise the loss of most mature trees. However **vegetation removal should take outside the bird breeding season (March – August inc.) unless checks can demonstrate there is no nesting activity present**. No breeding bird territories were identified associated with the scrub or hedgerows at this location in the original breeding bird surveys (2014), but this can always change. This advice follows best practice and can be provided as an **Informative** to any approval.

14. An Addendum was produced on A602 Improvements (Stevenage to/from Ware) Environmental Statement (30 June 2017 Arup). This states:
*Whilst there are minor alterations in the extents of habitat losses due to changes in the development boundary and elements of the Proposed Scheme, they are limited in extent and do not alter the original impact assessment as described in the 2016 ES. There is negligible potential for the proposed changes to alter the original impact assessment for [most] ecological receptors.
A review of the alterations to the habitat planting in the centre of the Proposed Scheme have potential to impact the following ecological receptors:*

- *Bats; and*
- *Roman snails.*

The potential implications of the relevant design changes are discussed below.

A119 Junction

Changes to the permanent land take at the A119 Junction do not represent any material change to those assessed in the 2016 ES.

I have no reason to dispute these views.

15. No other ecological features or species are known to be affected which cannot otherwise be dealt with following best practice if necessary. This is essentially **confirmed within the provisions of the CEMP** which has been submitted with these proposals.

16. Other than the above issues, I have no reason to believe there are any other significant ecological constraints associated with the development.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,

Martin Hicks MCIEEM

Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology

Appendix 5 Consultation response from South Herts CTC

This response to the planning application for the Junction of A602 and A119, East of Watton-at-Stone, is from South Herts CTC, the local group of Cycling UK. We represent the interests of over 1,000 members living in South Hertfordshire and North London. We have discussed the application with local cyclists and others, including The Forty Plus CC, which has many members in Hertford.

The Junction of A602 and A119 is part of the overall scheme A602 improvements, Stevenage to / from Ware. Although permitted, very few cyclists would want to cycle along much of the A602 due to the amount of fast, heavy traffic on a main road with no segregated cycle track.

Our over-riding concern at this roundabout is to safeguard cyclists using the A119 to and from Watton-at-Stone. This is a crucial link for cyclists travelling between the Hertford and Stevenage areas. In particular, it is essential in our view that cyclists joining the A119 from Watton-at-Stone should not be forced to use this enlarged, two-lane roundabout.

Hertfordshire Council's transport policy for cycling states *"We will promote cycling through infrastructure improvements and softer measures such as campaigns, information and education and ensure that as far as practicable all of its policies and programmes work together to encourage modal shift to sustainable forms of transport including cycling."*

Roundabout design

We refer to drawing: A119 Roundabout Enlarged Roundabout General Arrangement (236368-HCC-JN-02-DR-CH-00105) and to the document 'A119-Application Summary'.

The dangers to cyclists on large roundabouts are well known, yet we can find no evidence of a relevant risk assessment. We believe it would be negligent of Hertfordshire Council to ignore the advice given by the DfT in section 9.7 of the 2008 guidance 'LTN 2-08 Cycle Infrastructure Design'. Section 9.9 of this guidance covers large roundabouts and says **"Can an alternative, relatively direct route be provided for pedestrians and cyclists to avoid the junction altogether?"**

We appreciate the planned extension of footway to link the existing footway on Ware Road in Watton-at-Stone to the existing footway on the east side of the A119. Reference is made to providing an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing at the A119 traffic island, although we note that crossing the A119 will be more difficult, due to an additional left-turn lane being introduced on the approach to the roundabout, and we would challenge the need for this extra traffic lane.

This footway route for pedestrians is the obvious route for cyclists, wishing to bypass the roundabout, when travelling from Watton-at-Stone onto the A119 towards Hertford. As such, this footway route needs to be enhanced to include a parallel cycle track (or to shared-use as a minimum) and it should be constructed using robust design procedures.

DRAFT CONDITIONS

Time Limit

1. The development to which this planning permission relates shall be begun no later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Act 1990 (as amended).

Approved Plans

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the details submitted in the application dated 5 July 2017 (*Plan numbers to be added*).

- Site plan
- Location plan
- General arrangement plans
- Environmental Statement*
- Flood Risk Assessment*
- Landscape Strategy*
- Arboricultural Report*

* shared supporting document

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Landscaping plan; including tree protection and habitat improvements (Landscape Officer)

3. Prior to commencement, a detailed landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority which shall include the following details:
 - The details of those trees to be removed as identified in the submitted Arboricultural Report,
 - Measures for the protection of the retained trees and vegetation during the course of the development in line with the details in the submitted Arboricultural Report,
 - Location of bat boxes,
 - Details of the size, species, density and location of trees, consistent with the tree mix set out in section 3.1 of the submitted Landscape Strategy,
 - Details of wildflower seeding to enhance the open grassland,
 - Protection measures to be provided for new planting,
 - The programme for the implementation of the proposed planting; and
 - The five year programme of management of planting, maintenance and replanting of any trees or shrubs which die, become diseased or are damaged.

The landscape scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved programme hereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity and the habitat enhancement of the area.

Drainage strategy (LLFA)

4. **The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drainage strategy report undertaken by ARUP named A602 Improvements (Stevenage to/from Ware) Flood Risk Assessment, reference 236368-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-RP-XX-00050 issued on 11 May 2017 and the following mitigation measures detailed within the Surface Water Management Strategy (appendix D):**

Implementing appropriate SuDS measures as shown on Drawing number 236368-HCC-JN-02-DRCD-00110 to provide:

- **storage volume of 350 m³ in form of an underground geocellular crates**
- **treatment train in advance of discharge to the River Beane.**
- **control discharge at greenfield runoff rate into the River Beane.**

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site

Infiltration tests (LLFA)

5. **Prior to the commencement of any development hereby permitted, infiltration tests shall be carried out in accordance with BRE Digest 365 to ensure the ground has the capacity to infiltrate the volume of surface water to be intercepted by the cut off ditch from the adjacent land.**

The test results and all final design of the proposed surface water drainage solution shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site.

Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (Historic Environment)

6. **No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:**

- **The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording**
- **The programme for post investigation assessment**

- **Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording**
- **Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation.**
- **Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation**
- **Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.**

The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the approved Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason: To protect the archaeological interests of the site.

Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (2) (Historic Environment)

- 7. The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 6 and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.**

Reason: To protect the archaeological interests of the site.

Ground investigations

- 8. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, ground investigations shall be carried out to establish the chemical and physical properties of the sub soil, and thereby ensure an informed technical design.**

Reason: To protect against the collapse of chalk in the sub soil.

Construction environmental management plan

- 9. The submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (ref: 236368-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-RP-YE-0021 dated 11 February 2016) shall be implemented in full for the construction period of the development. Any amendments will need to be agreed with the County Planning Authority in writing.**

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and to protect ecological assets.

Lighting (Herts Ecology)

- 10. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted details of the lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.**

Reason: To minimise light pollution in the form of glare and spill.

Fencing/boundary treatment

11. **Construction work shall not commence until fencing, of a type to be approved by the County Planning Authority, setting out the boundaries of the development hereby permitted has been erected. The fencing shall be maintained throughout the period of construction and unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing by the County Planning Authority, there shall be no working, storage of surplus material or incursion of construction vehicles outside of the area so defined.**

Reason: To define the permitted area of development and to restrict unauthorised entry to the construction site.

INFORMATIVES

Herts Ecology

Vegetation removal should take place outside the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive) unless checks can demonstrate there is no nesting activity present, in line with best practice.

Hertfordshire Highways

The proposal has been reviewed by the Development Management Implementation team, and is considered to be acceptable on the basis that the following information is provided at the detailed design stage: -

- levels to be shown on the topographical survey
- the following measurements need to be shown: lane widths; entry widths; taper lengths; the ICD of the roundabout; width of traffic islands; radii
- the distance between the proposed lamp columns and the specification of the columns
- hatching to be shown for resurfacing works
- hatching to be shown for full depth carriageway construction

Design to reference the DMRB, Roads in Herts, Manual for Streets and other relevant design guidance

Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team

Alison Tinniswood will be able to provide detailed advice concerning the requirements for the investigations, and to provide information on professionally accredited archaeological contractors who may be able to carry out the necessary work.

Hertfordshire County Council

**A602 Improvements
(Stevenage to/from Ware)**

Environmental Statement:
Volume I – Non-technical
summary

236368-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-RP-YE-00011

Issue | 22 April 2016



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1. Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council is currently progressing plans for an improvement scheme to the A602 between Stevenage and Ware. The scheme will include a number of road realignments, junction improvements and roundabout enlargements in order to cut journey times, increase the capacity of specific junctions and to create a more reliable route along the A602.

The A602 is an important link in Hertfordshire’s primary road network. The road runs north westwards from the A10 junction at Ware to join the A1(M) at Stevenage and then through the centre of Stevenage towards Hitchin.

The road is currently dual carriageway throughout central Stevenage but the rest of the route is a rural single carriageway, as shown in Figure 1. The road is considered to be of low standard for a primary route and drivers experience visibility problems and high levels of congestion especially at peak times. Hertfordshire County Council has wanted to improve this part of the A602 since the 1990s but have been unable to provide funding until now. With the improvements in place, queuing times will be significantly reduced, and journey reliability during peak time will be improved.



Figure 1 - A view of the single carriageway A602 in its rural setting

A planning application package is being made to Hertfordshire County Council Planning Department as the planning authority for the County’s transport system. There are four engineering elements to the Proposed Scheme and a planning application will be submitted for each element.

These planning applications were considered to be a single improvement project which share the same base of evidence, which includes a single Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reported in the form of an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES, prepared to support these applications describes the findings of the EIA for the scheme. This document provides a non-technical summary of the Environmental Statement.

2. The Area

The proposed improvements to the A602 are located within Hertfordshire, England, and for the most part within the district of East Hertfordshire, with one element located in the Borough of Stevenage. The section of the road where the improvements will be made mainly runs through open countryside and agricultural fields. The area is semi-rural in nature with a number of villages/hamlets located along the route including Watton-at-Stone, Tonwell and Westmill.

The scheme can be divided into three main sections in separate geographical areas. Where there is more than one improvement proposed the section is split out further as listed below:

- **Hertford Road junction**
- **Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell**
 - A119 junction
 - Ware Road realignment
 - Stony Hills junction
- **Tonwell to/from Ware**
 - Tonwell North junction
 - Anchor Lane junction
 - Westmill Hamlet junction
 - Westmill Road Improvements
 - A10 junction

Figure 2 shows the locations of each of these improvements.

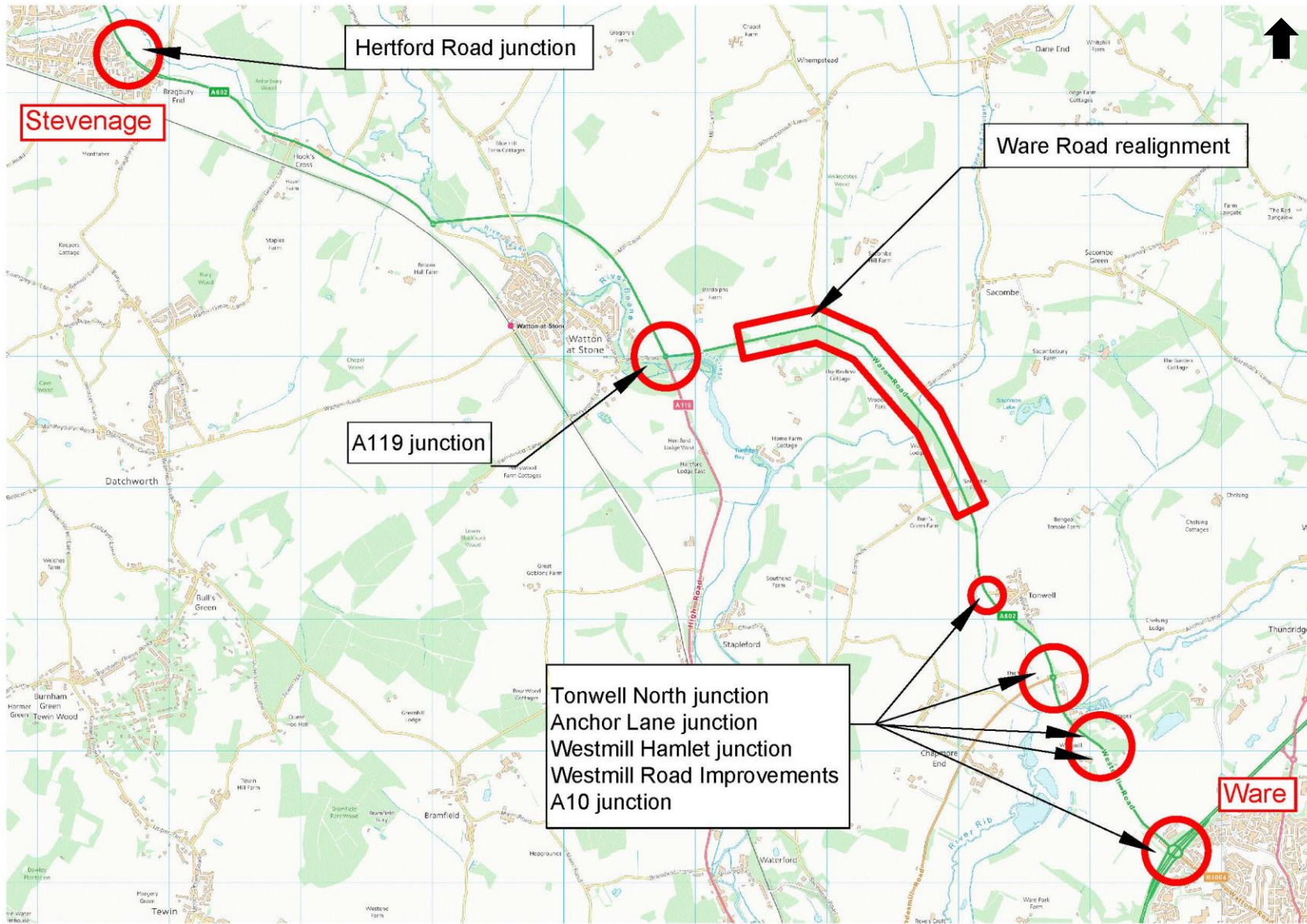


Figure 2- The Proposed Scheme within the wider area (Ordnance Survey license: 100019606)

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2.1 Hertford Road junction

The Hertford Road junction (see Figure 3), is situated on the A602, 5km south-east of the centre of Stevenage, on the south-western edge of Stevenage Golf & Conference Centre. The A602 at this point is a single two-way carriageway meeting a three-armed roundabout (Hertford Road junction).

On the north-eastern side of the A602 lies Stevenage Golf Course & Conference Centre, on the western side is the residential area of Broadwater. Further to the south-west is Harwood Park Crematorium and to the east Astonbury Wood, where several public footpaths are available. Stevenage Brook runs from west of the A602, underneath the road to east of the A602, through the Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre and away to the south-east. Additionally, to the north-east and south-west of the A602 there are a number of agricultural fields.



Figure 3 – Looking towards Hertford Road junction

2.2 Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell

The western end of the Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell Section is situated around 1km south-east from the centre of Watton-at-Stone and runs eastwards on the A602 past the Woodhall Park Estate to the eastern end of the section situated 1km north-west of Tonwell.

Along this stretch the A602 is a two-way single carriageway meeting the four-armed A119 junction at the western end of the section. At the eastern end of the section is a junction on the A602 providing access to Stony Hills.

To the west of the section is Watton-at-Stone, a small town consisting of residential and commercial land uses. To the north of the site land use consists primarily of agricultural fields and woodland, with sparsely dispersed residential units. To the south of the site lies Woodhall Park (see Figure 4), a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden and privately owned estate consisting of residential and commercial property, Heath Mount School with playing fields, large open spaces used for amenity / recreation, wooded areas and the River Beane and the Dane End tributary. The Dane End tributary runs from the east under the A602 at the Sacombe Arches and joins the River Beane within Woodhall Park.



Figure 4 – Looking towards Woodhall Park

2.3 Tonwell to/from Ware

The A10 junction (see Figure 5) is situated at the southern end of the A602 around 1.5km north-west of the centre of Ware, at the intersection between the A602, A10 and B1004. The Westmill Road section of the A602 is situated 0.9km north-west along the A602 from the A10 junction, the Westmill Hamlet junction specifically provides access for residents at Westmill Hamlet, just off the A602. Anchor Lane Roundabout is further north-west (1.5km from the A10 junction) along the A602, and allows an intersection between the A602, B158 and Anchor Lane. Tonwell North junction sits a further 850m north-west of Anchor Lane Roundabout, providing access off the main A602 into the village of Tonwell.

The A602, between the A10 junction and Tonwell North junction, is a single two-way carriageway meeting a four-armed roundabout at the A10 junction. There is a short section of carriageway that includes a crawler lane in the northbound direction, north of the Anchor Lane junction.

agricultural fields and sections of woodland, including Westmill Plantation. The River Rib, which passes underneath the A602 200m south of Anchor Lane junction, has a number of associated tributaries, drains and man-made lakes, at their closest 100m from the A602. Westmill Farm is 100m to the west of the Westmill Road section and there are other sparsely distributed residential properties along the A10 junction to Anchor Lane junction stretch.



Figure 5 – Looking towards the A10 junction

To the south-east of this section is the town of Ware consisting of largely residential, commercial and employment uses, such as Ermine Point Business Park at the A10 junction. Further up the A602, on the Westmill Road section, there is a large gravel extraction works on both the east and west sides of the A602. There are also

3. Alternatives Considered

Options to improve traffic in the area have been considered for several years. The proposals taken forward were made in consideration with the Government's key objectives for transport. These include:

- Safety;
- Environment;
- Economy;
- Integration; and
- Accessibility.

A number of high level options were considered for the scheme including:

1. Construction of an alternative off-line route;
2. Widening the existing A602 to dual carriageway standard;
3. Junction and alignment improvements including a Hook's Cross bypass; and
4. Junction and alignment improvements only.

Of the above only Option 4 (junction and alignment improvements only) was taken forward as this represented the only feasible solution within available funding resources and the time constraints in which the scheme must be completed.

Following transport and economic surveys of Option 4, a preliminary Business Case was prepared and submitted in 2014 identifying a series of improvements that could be undertaken along the corridor. Following acceptance of the Business Case, the following improvements were considered for further analysis:

- **Hertford Road junction** – The Business Case proposed an enlarged roundabout to improve the capacity of the junction. As a result of further assessment it was decided a signalised T-junction was a better solution than the enlarged roundabout originally proposed. This is because it was better able to cater for the main north-south traffic flow, along the A602. It also allows for Hertford Road to have a dedicated traffic signal, to exit the junction.
- **A119 junction** – The signalised junction proposed in the Business Case was ruled out as it was not in keeping with the rural nature of the area. An enlarged roundabout solution was reassessed and taken forward as the preferred solution.
- **Ware Road realignment** – Several options for the realignment works of the A602 to remove the bends at Whempstead Road and Sacombe Pound were considered. The selected option provides a gap between the existing A602 and the realigned A602. This has helped to reduce disruption to the travelling public during construction as traffic management measures such as temporary traffic lights are minimised and lengthy road closures are avoided.
- **Side roads** – Works to the side roads to improve the layout for certain accesses including Heath Mount School, Whempstead Road, Garden House and Beehive Cottages, Sacombe Hill Farm, Sacombe Pound and Stony Hills have all been designed to connect into the option chosen for the Ware Road realignment. The alterations have also taken account of the issues raised at public consultation by incorporating single lane dual carriageway at Sacombe Pound, and the incorporation of a space for cyclists to stop while waiting to cross the live traffic at Sacombe Pound and Stony Hills.

- **Stony Hills** – The business case required significant land take for the realignment of the northern arm of Stony Hills to create a T-junction with the A602. This has now been refined and the environmental impact and land take has been reduced.
- **Anchor Lane junction** – Improvements proposed in the Business Case to Anchor Lane junction have generally not been changed with only minor amendments to improve the flow of traffic.
- **A10 junction** – The segregated left-turn lane that was planned to link Ware and the A10 has been ruled out as too many residential properties and a number of utility cables were affected. The preferred option now includes the installation of part-time traffic signals.

The final proposals for the scheme have come as a result of refining the above options, environmental considerations identified through the EIA, and through consultation with the general public. The proposals that make up the Proposed Scheme included in the planning application are discussed in the next section.

4. The Proposals

The Proposed Scheme involves eight key road improvements along the A602. These will lead to reductions in queuing times, delay and improved journey reliability.

Hertford Road junction

1. Hertford Road junction

The existing roundabout will be replaced with a traffic signal T-junction. The traffic signals would be in operation full time. The road will be widened at the junction to two lanes in each direction, and a third lane added for right turning vehicles in the southbound direction. The existing subways will be widened and the footway/cycleway facilities will be retained. A small number of trees will need to be removed to accommodate the works.

Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell

2. A119 junction

The A119 junction will be widened to two lanes on each approach, and a segregated (allowing free flow of traffic rather than waiting at the junction) left-turn lane in the direction of Stevenage to Ware will be provided. The footway along the A119 will remain where it is and the footway from the roundabout towards Watton-at-Stone will be extended. An uncontrolled pedestrian crossing will be provided at the A119 traffic island.

3. Ware Road re-alignment

a. Ware Road

The A602 (Ware Road) will be realigned by a maximum of 80m to the north (see Figure 6). This new section of road will be single carriageway. Due to the existing undulating landscape, the road will be in cutting for parts of the route and be on embankments for others. A bridge crossing will be provided over the Dane End tributary.

The realignment also requires localised widening to incorporate right-turn lanes at each of the following side roads:

- Access to Heath Mount School;
- Whempstead Road;
- Access to Garden House and Beehive Cottage;
- Sacombe Hill Farm access;
- Sacombe Pound; and
- Stony Hills realigned north junction.

The road will be widened at each of the above side road locations to allow space for vehicles to wait to turn into them without interrupting traffic flow.

b. Stony Hills junction

The northern arm of Stony Hills junction will be realigned to provide a T-junction with the A602. The existing southern section of the junction will be closed to traffic and converted into a Bridleway.

Tonwell to/from Ware

4. Tonwell North junction

A deceleration lane will be added at Tonwell North junction, allowing traffic slowing down to turn left into the junction and move out of the way of traffic on the A602.

5. Anchor Lane junction

The junction at Anchor Lane will be increased in size to allow more vehicles to flow through it. Each entry and exit at the junction will be two lanes. The current footway along the A602 will remain and will be extended south to join the Public Right of Way.

6. Westmill Hamlet

Trees in the vicinity of the Westmill Hamlet junction will be trimmed back to allow for better sight lines for drivers waiting to turn out of the junction. The proposals include for a right turn ban into Westmill Hamlet. This would ensure that the traffic is not delayed by vehicles wanting to turn right into Westmill Hamlet. Vehicles wishing to access Westmill Hamlet would still be able to U-turn at the Anchor Lane roundabout and then turn left into Westmill Hamlet. A deceleration taper (specialised road markings) will be added to allow traffic slowing to turn left into the junction to move out of the way of traffic on the A602.

7. Westmill Road Improvements

The sharp bend on the A602 will be removed. A deceleration lane into the household waste recycling centre will be provided. The deceleration lane will allow extra space for vehicles queuing to enter the household waste recycling centre to move out of the way of A602 traffic.

8. A10 junction

Part-time traffic lights will be installed at the junction at the top of the slip roads. On the eastern approach to the roundabout an extra lane will be added. Some of the grass verge will be removed to accommodate this widening. On the north side of the A10 junction a combined footway/cycleway will be added. Uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points will be provided at all road crossings.

4.1 Construction Timescales

Construction is due to start in late 2016, provided the required planning permissions are granted. It is anticipated that construction will be finished by 2019, as this is a requirement of the funding.

Section	Anticipated construction period
Hertford Road junction	<p>The construction of Hertford Road junction is currently due commence in 2016 with a duration of 26 weeks, with works lasting into 2017.</p> <p>Works will also require 2 months of site preparation before work starts on site, and 3 months of inspection and handovers prior to opening.</p>
Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell	<p>The construction of the A119 roundabout is currently due to commence in 2018 with a duration of 20 weeks. These works will be followed by the Ware Road works lasting 52 weeks.</p> <p>Works will also require 3 months of site preparation before work starts on site, and 3 months of inspection and handovers prior to opening.</p>
Tonwell to/from Ware	<p>The Tonwell North junction, Anchor Lane, Westmill Hamlet, Westmill Road and A10 works are currently due to be constructed following the Hertford Road junction works, with works commencing in 2017 and lasting for 26 weeks.</p> <p>Two months of site preparation are required before work starts on site, and 3 months of inspection and handovers prior to opening.</p>

5. Consultation Process

Throughout the development of the Proposed Scheme a consultation programme has been undertaken to understand the views of local public, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders regarding the potential environmental impacts and to incorporate environmental design and mitigation into the proposals.

5.1 Business Case Consultation

The Local Transport Body (LTB) consulted on the Business Case for the Proposed Scheme during 2014, to consider if there was a sound strategic, financial and economic case for the project. As part of the Business Case, an Environmental Appraisal was undertaken, in line with the Department of Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance. Outcomes of this consultation fed into the decision by the LTB to agree funding in principle for the Proposed Scheme.

5.2 Pre-planning Application Consultation

Consultation on the Proposed Scheme and planning applications took place from May 2015 until 14th June 2015. The aim of the consultation was to gather public views and consider these as part of the refinement of the Proposed Scheme and the EIA prior to submitting the planning application. This process involved:

- Meetings with directly affected landowners;
- Public exhibitions in Stevenage, Watton-at-Stone and at Westmill Farm, which included display panels, technical experts and design team members on hand to discuss the Proposed Scheme;

- Exhibition panels on public view throughout the consultation period at County Hall;
- Feedback forms and information leaflets available from Parish Councils; and
- An online consultation portal which included links to the information available at the public exhibitions and a place to provide comments.

5.3 Scoping Opinion

A formal Scoping Report for the scheme was submitted in May 2015. The Scoping Report provided key statutory and non-statutory consultees and the public with an overview of the Proposed Scheme and set out the existing environmental conditions, a brief summary of likely effects and proposed assessment methodologies that will be followed within the EIA. Comments were invited back from Hertfordshire County Council and a number of other statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to ensure the scope of assessment was agreed between all parties. Responses received were considered and taken into account in on-going work on the EIA.

6. EIA findings

The EIA has been undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011 as amended and with reference to the standards and guidance published by the Highways Agency (now Highways England) titled the '*Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11: Environmental Assessment*'.

The purpose of the EIA has been to identify potential environmental effects¹, both positive and negative, of the proposed road scheme.

The assessment has considered the following aspects of the environment:

- Air Quality;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Landscape;
- Nature Conservation;
- Geology, Soils and Materials;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Effects on all Travellers (Pedestrians, Equestrians, Cyclists, Drivers);
- Community and Private Assets (Agricultural Land);
- Road Drainage and the Water Environment; and
- Cumulative effects (Effects that combine with one another to generate a larger effect).

The findings of the EIA are as detailed below. Key receptors identified in the findings below can be seen on Figure 7.

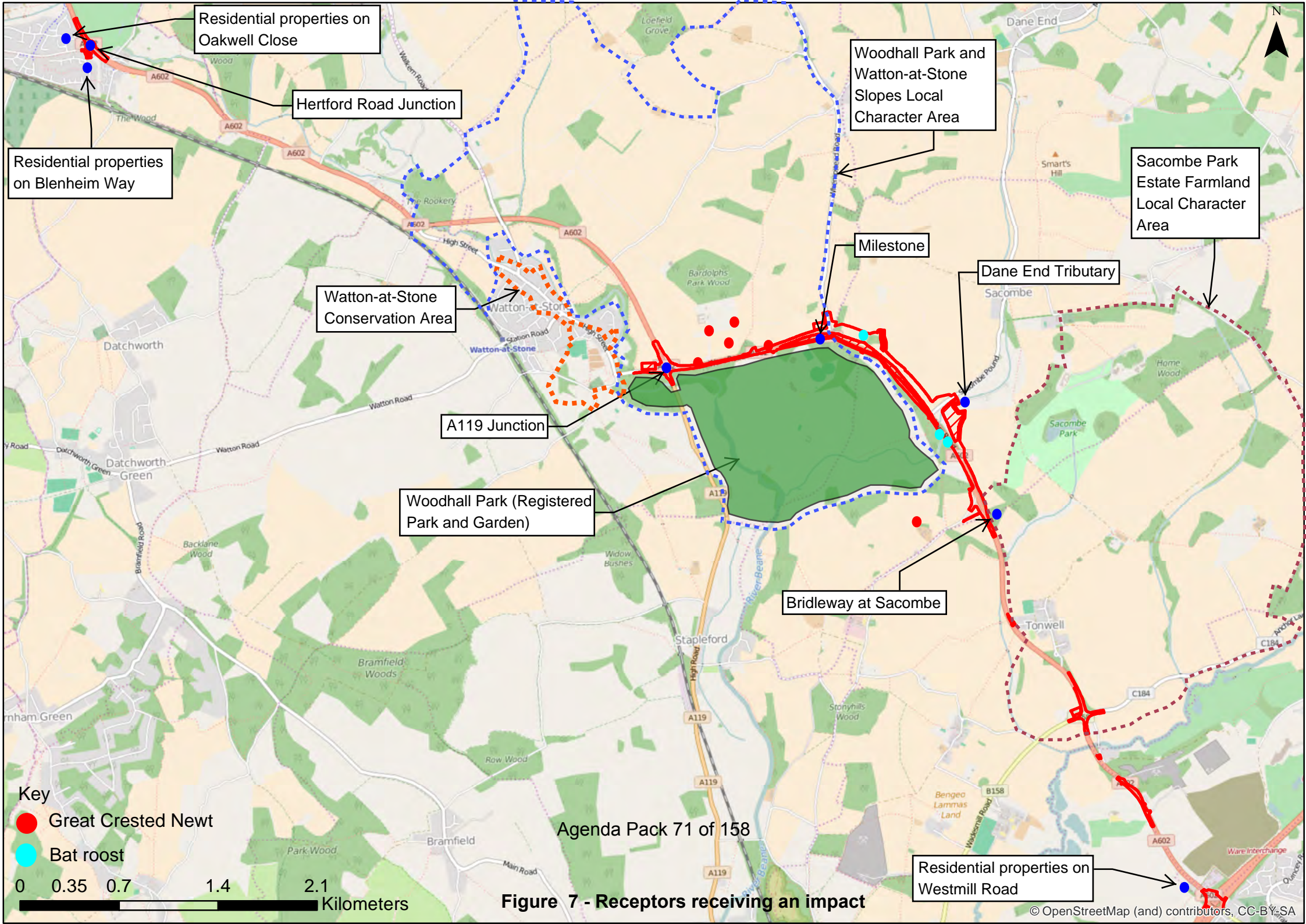
Air Quality

Following the DMRB screening methodology as described in the Scoping Report, the minimal change in traffic flow and realignment that would result from the Proposed Scheme, meant that impacts on air quality from traffic were considered insignificant, and no modelling or further assessment was required.

Following implementation of best practice dust management on the site suggests that there would be no significant negative effects during construction. Best practice dust management measures are outlined in a Construction Environmental Management Plan which the contractor who builds the scheme, will be required to follow in order to minimise emissions to air.

There are no significant negative effects anticipated during operation and therefore no mitigation is required.

¹ A change in the current situation which is a result of the Proposed Scheme. **Agenda Pack 70 of 158**



Residential properties on Oakwell Close

Hertford Road Junction

Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes Local Character Area

Sacombe Park Estate Farmland Local Character Area

Residential properties on Blenheim Way

Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area

Milestone

Dane End Tributary

A119 Junction

Woodhall Park (Registered Park and Garden)

Bridleway at Sacombe

- Key
- Great Crested Newt
 - Bat roost

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 Kilometers

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Figure 7 - Receptors receiving an impact

Residential properties on Westmill Road

Cultural Heritage

A desk-based review of existing historical information within 1km of the A602, geophysical survey and trial trenching have been undertaken within the footprint of the Ware Road re-alignment.

The surveys identified some areas of archaeological potential. Archaeological remains within the proposed footprint of the works may experience slight to moderate adverse effects during construction due to ground disturbance caused by machinery. An archaeologist will be present on site to record any finds during construction. There are no negative effects caused to the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area. There may be a slight negative effect on a milestone which will need to be relocated as a result of the Proposed Scheme.

During operation of the Proposed Scheme there would be no direct negative effect upon heritage assets.

The Proposed Scheme would move away from the Woodhall Park Registered Park and Garden and this is assessed as a slight positive effect.

Landscape

A desk-based review of landscape character areas and a number of site visits by a landscape architect have been undertaken to understand the landscape context within the area.

The Proposed Scheme will have a significant negative effect on the Woodhall Park (Figure 8) and Watton-at-Stone Slope Local Character Area (LCA) during construction as the Ware Road section of the route and associated construction site will cut into this LCA changing the rural land use of the area.

During construction there is also likely to be significant negative effects upon residential dwellings on Blenheim Way, to the north-east edge of Bragbury End, at properties at Oakwell Close on the eastern edge of Bragbury End residential area and at residential properties to the north-west of Ware on Westmill Road, due to views towards construction works. The Bridleway at Sacombe, three public rights of way, and road users at Hertford Road junction and A119 junction, will also have significant negative temporary effects due to views towards construction works affecting those that use the facilities.

The maturing of proposed mitigation planting over the 15 year period from scheme opening will offset negative effects and provide localised benefits, see Figure 9 for an example of this.



Figure 8 - Woodhall Park



Figure 9 - Maturing planting, example from the Dane End Tributary crossing

Nature Conservation

Extensive habitat and protected species surveys have been undertaken between April 2014 and July 2015 for the majority of the central Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell section. All other sections are largely within the highway boundary and would require minimal land take in areas of low ecological value, as identified in initial surveys, therefore no further surveys were required in those sections. Surveys included:

- Phase 1 Habitat;
- Amphibians;
- Bats;
- Badgers;
- Reptiles;
- Otter and Water vole;
- White Clawed Cray Fish; and
- Hedgerows.

Potential negative effects have been identified for Local Wildlife Sites, great crested newts, barn owls and bats, as a result of the Proposed Scheme. Mitigation and enhancement measures will be provided as part of the scheme, including:

- Replanting of grassland and wildflowers on areas cleared for construction;
- Design of the new Dane End tributary to match that of the existing in terms of dimensions, with protection against erosion put in place while habitat establishes. Once vegetation has established, the channel will closely reflect the existing channel;
- Planting of 4.2km of species rich hedgerow, matching the composition of the existing hedgerows, and linking into sections of woodland to facilitate the movement of wildlife across the landscape;

- The installation of a tunnel to allow badgers to pass safely under the new road;
- Review of lighting proposals to prevent light spill affecting bats as they commute between their roosting and feeding sites;
- The installation of bat roost boxes near to lost roosting features such as trees;
- Amphibian exclusion fencing during construction and vegetative cover along Ware Road; and
- Sowing severed strips of land between the new and existing A602 with a wildflower seed mix rather than returning them to arable land, thereby increasing foraging habitat for Roman snail.

The incorporation of the above measures into the scheme design are predicted to result in no significant adverse effects on Nature Conservation.

A significant beneficial impact is predicted, as a result of:

- Provision of 4.2km of new hedgerow to replace that lost and enhance existing provision. A net gain of 2km of hedgerow will result from the Proposed Scheme.
- Provision of Roman snail habitat within all of the severed strips of land between the new and existing A602, positively benefiting the conservation of the species.

Geology, Soils and Materials

Baseline surveys have been used to inform the geology, soils and materials assessment. Potential receptors that may be impacted by the scheme include human health, biodiversity, groundwater and surface waters, and the built environment.

A Ground Investigation (GI) will be carried out prior to construction to obtain further information on the physical and

chemical properties of the ground beneath and around the site and inform the final design of the scheme. Appropriate action will be taken if unexpected contamination is found during the GI.

The scheme will include pollution prevention measures along the route. As a result, the impact of operation of the Proposed Scheme on human health and the built environment is not considered to cause any significant adverse effects.

Noise and Vibration

Following DMRB screening methods, the minimal change in traffic flows and re-alignment of the Ware Road are not expected to result in significant noise effects, therefore, no surveys or modelling of operational impacts was required.

Potential noise and vibration impacts during construction have been identified. Measures to minimise and manage these impacts are described in a Construction Environmental Management Plan which, the appointed contractor who will build the Proposed Scheme will be required to follow during construction. Further detailed assessment will be carried out ahead of construction as part of further planning documentation (Section 61 – Development Orders) preparation. This will help to determine the appropriate compaction methods and avoid any likely significant adverse effects during construction.

Effects on all Travellers (Pedestrians, Equestrians, Cyclists, Drivers)

Desk-based study, site visits and consultation to understand non-motorised user (Pedestrians, Equestrians and Cyclists) and driver activity in the area have been undertaken to inform the design and assessment.

During construction, the A602 will remain open and travellers will only be affected during short periods of time. With the implementation of diversions and traffic management s

journey times may increase. However, this will be temporary and drivers on this route already experience long delays and so the effect is not considered significant.

During operation all existing rights of way and crossings will be maintained. The Proposed Scheme will reduce journey times and congestion and so driver stress is expected to be reduced leading to a significant beneficial effect.

Community

A desk-based study and public consultation were undertaken in order to examine the existing community provision.

Most of the facilities serving the area are within the nearby settlements of Stevenage, Broadwater, Watton-at-Stone, Tonwell and Ware. There are expected to be no significant adverse effects to these services.

It is considered that all possible measures to reduce any effects of the Proposed Scheme on the community have been included in the scheme design. Therefore, no further mitigation is proposed.

Private Assets

No buildings are affected by the Proposed Scheme. A desk-based study was undertaken to establish the likelihood of high quality agricultural land being present along the Proposed Scheme.

The land use of up to 21.2 hectares of agricultural fields, of Grade 2 and 3a quality (considered best and most versatile for agricultural use), will be changed during construction of the Proposed Scheme. However, the implementation of good practice and a soil resources plan will ensure that the soil resource is able to retain its agricultural functions and quality where construction sites are returned to agricultural use (approximately 6.4 hectares), and its other ecosystem functions where land is returned to tree and shrub planting.

No significant adverse effect is therefore expected to Private Assets as a result of the Proposed Scheme.

Road Drainage and the Water Environment

A desk-based study and drainage survey was undertaken in order to inform the design and assessment.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be followed by the contractor who constructs the scheme. Measures included within the plan, such as: sediment control; controlled storage of materials; restricting the use of polluting materials near receptors; and local flood control, reduce the potential for adverse impacts on the water environment. Effects are therefore not considered to be significant.

During operation, mitigation measures will be put in place to reduce the impact of flooding. These include providing additional landscaped areas to control and manage water at three locations along the A602. Floodplain compensation has been provided a Dane End tributary to ensure any change in flood levels is kept low as possible, resulting in a no significant adverse effect being predicted.

Cumulative Effects

Potential cumulative effects arise from the interaction between the various different environmental effects, as described above, as well as from interaction between the construction of the Proposed Scheme and other development projects. As there are currently no other committed developments in the area the cumulative assessment will only focus on the interaction between environmental effects. The following effects are envisaged:

- Significant negative adverse effect on public rights of way due to the combination of visual effects and the temporary diversions during construction. However, it should be noted that these effects would be temporary, localised at the diversion points and not affect en-

routes. There will be no cumulative effects caused during operation as all public rights of way will be maintained.

- Significant adverse effect on the landscape and habitats during construction to Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes and Sacombe Park Estate Farmland as a result of hedgerow removal and the incorporation of manmade features. However, the maturing of proposed mitigation planting, including additional hedgerow, over the 15 year period from scheme opening would offset adverse effects and provide localised benefits. Additionally, a significant beneficial effect would result from the provision of additional habitat, such as 1.8km of extra hedgerow and specific great crested newt and Roman snail habitats, benefiting the wildlife in the local area.
- Residential properties may experience non-significant adverse individual effects as a result of air, noise, vibration, visual and accessibility impacts. However, due to appropriate techniques being implemented through construction, these effects will be managed appropriately, and as a result a combination of effects is not expected to result in a significant adverse effect on any residential receptor.

7. Mitigation

7.1 Design Measures

Throughout the design stage, where feasible, measures to prevent, reduce or minimise potential impacts upon the environment were incorporated into the developing design. Further mitigation measures are recommended and details are provided in the ES. These measures will be required as part of the delivery of the project.

A tunnel is provided for badgers, and hedgerows will be replanted for terrestrial habitat. Mitigation planting is proposed to provide links between severed habitats and to reduce visual impact. Further mitigation, such as bat roost boxes, is also being provided.

All existing footpaths will be retained and there will be improvements made at pedestrian crossing points.

It may be necessary to temporarily close or divert footpaths to allow the construction works and/or ensure sufficient separation between the works and the public; however, it should be noted that these effects would be temporary and localised.

7.2 Construction and Environmental Management Plan

When the scheme enters into the construction stage the appointed contractor will produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) based on recommendations from the Environmental Statement including a draft CEMP. This will describe methods by which they will meet environmental requirements. Implementation of the plan will be monitored by the relevant authorities.

The proposed CEMP will cover:

- Defining responsibilities for the environment;
- Protection measures for nature conservation and biodiversity;
- Noise control and hours of working;
- Traffic management;
- Materials and waste management;
- Air quality protection such as dust management;
- Management of complaints and corrective action processes; and
- Monitoring and reporting processes.

8. Next stage

After the planning application is submitted, the Planning Authority will undertake a period of statutory consultation within the 16 week statutory decision period. During this time the public can provide further comment on the application and the Environmental Statement to influence the decision making process.

9. Contact Information

The Environmental Statement and other supporting planning documents can be viewed at the planning offices for Hertfordshire County Council. They can also be downloaded via their online tool at:

www.hertsdirect.org/planning

If a hard copy of the Environmental Statement is required this can be requested, at cost (reflecting printing and distribution costs), from the address below.

Any comments on the application should be made directly to Hertfordshire County Council either via their online tool (link provided above), or at the address below:

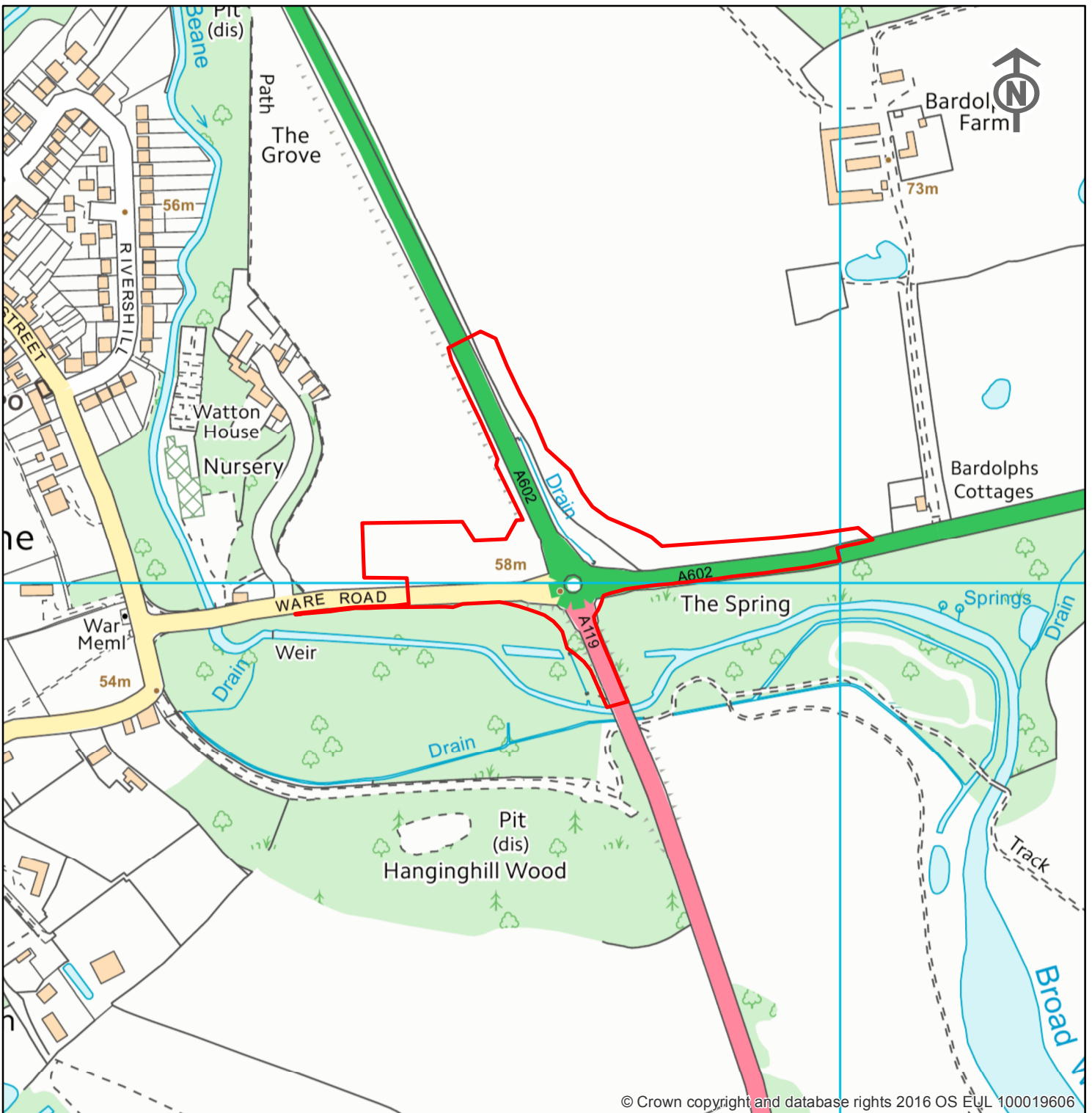
A602 Improvements (Stevenage to/from Ware)
Planning Department
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Pegs Lane
Hertford
Hertfordshire
SG13 8DQ

If you have any queries please email:

A602@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Alternatively you may call:

0300 123 4040



DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 25th January 2018



Application for proposed enlarged roundabout and segregated left turn from Stevenage to Ware, at the junction of the A602 and A119, including associated changes to verges, lighting, drainage, landscaping and engineering operations at Junction of A602 and A119, East of Watton-at-Stone

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HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2018 AT 10.00AM**

Agenda Item
No.

3

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR THE REALIGNMENT OF WARE ROAD BETWEEN A POINT WEST OF THE ACCESS ROAD TO HEATH MOUNT SCHOOL, TO THE EXISTING SOUTHERN-MOST STONY HILLS JUNCTION; WITH REALIGNMENTS AT ALL JUNCTIONS WITHIN THIS SECTION; INCLUDING ASSOCIATED CHANGES TO VERGES, LIGHTING, DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING, AND ASSOCIATED ENGINEERING OPERATIONS EAST OF WATTON-AT-STONE, HERTFORDSHIRE.

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

Author: Sharon Threlfall, Senior Planning Officer
[Tel: 01992 556270]

Local Member: Ken Crofton

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider planning application reference number 3/1770-17 for highway works on the A602 between a point west of the access road to Heath Mount School to the existing southern-most Stony Hills junction, east of Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The County Council is seeking to improve the A602 between Stevenage and Ware, through a series of proposals at a total of seven sites along this primary road. This application forms part of that wider scheme, and will deliver highway improvements of its own.
- 2.2 In September 2016 and October 2016, the Development Control Committee granted planning permission for highway improvements work along the A602 at Hertford Road, Stevenage and for a series of works between the village of Tonwell and the A10 junction. The delivery of the approved schemes commenced in August 2017.
- 2.3 This application seeks planning permission for the realignment of Ware Road between a point west of the access road to Heath Mount School, to the existing southern-most Stony Hill junction; with realignments to all junctions within this section; including associated changes to verges, lighting, drainage, landscaping and engineering operations east of Watton-at-Stone.
- 2.4 The development is also considered under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA) 2011 (updated 2015) and is accompanied

by an Environmental Statement. As the Scoping Opinion was sought prior to the adoption of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017, the scheme is considered against the 2011 Regulations under the transitional arrangements set out under Regulation 76 of the 2017 Regulations.

- 2.5 The application site is from a point west of the access to Heath Mount School to the existing southern-most Stony Hills junction along the A602, approximately 2.65 kilometres (1.65 miles) to the east. The road moves through a landscape of open fields and farmland, and runs parallel to the Woodhall Park Estate, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. The Listed park wall forms the southern boundary of the site area.
- 2.6 The A602 is a single carriageway road, both within the application area itself and from the Bragbury End junction in Stevenage to the junction with the A10 in Ware, which encompasses the wider area of works. It is characterised by a series of sharp turns, is undulating, has restricted visibility and shading from trees that are particularly close to the highway boundary. The road alignment between the junction with Whempstead Road and the Sacombe Hill Farm access does not meet current design standards.
- 2.7 There are no footways along this section of the A602, although there are a number of public Rights of Way that adjoin the highway within the application area.
- 2.8 The application site is on the edge of the Metropolitan Green Belt; designated as in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The local plan policy framework seeks to be no more restrictive than for the Green Belt. Paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with support from the Green Belt policies of the Local Plan, finds that local transport infrastructure may not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and thus also in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.
- 2.9 The improvements are sought on an existing primary route through the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, and the accompanying Transport Assessment has shown the need to address the existing constraints on traffic flow and journey time reliability. The development is therefore “needed” in a Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt location.
- 2.10 The Riding Wood and Grove Wildlife Site abuts the A602 at the eastern end of the application area, and is impacted by the proposed development. There are a total of 14 non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites within 500 metres of the wider scheme which have been considered in the Environmental Statement.
- 2.11 The application includes a 2.65 kilometre (1.65 miles) carriageway realignment that requires existing agricultural land to be brought within the highway boundary. The applicant has sought to make improvements at a further three sections on the A602 between Stevenage and Ware; the County Planning Authority has determined that the separate sections

of the wider proposal are intrinsically linked to each other. It is due to the scale of this off-line development, and cumulative development along the A602, that the application constitutes EIA development for which express planning permission is required. The accompanying Environmental Statement has been prepared on this basis.

2.12 The General Arrangement plans are included at Appendix 1. A plan showing the wider proposals for the A602 is shown at Appendix 2. The non-technical summary of the Environmental Statement is included at Appendix 6.

2.13 The main planning issues of the application can be summarised as:

- Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
- Need and justification
- Impact on highways and transport
- Quality of design
- Landscape and visual impact
- Impact on ecology and biodiversity
- Impact on residential amenity (noise, dust, light)
- Impact on cultural heritage

2.14 The report concludes that the Chief Executive and Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following FIFTEEN conditions: -

1. Time limit for commencement
2. Approved plans and documents
3. Landscaping plan; including tree protection and habitat improvements
4. Drainage strategy
5. Infiltration tests
6. Drainage strategy option
7. Ground investigations
8. Traffic management plan
9. Construction environmental management plan
10. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (1)
11. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (2)
12. Dane End Tributary Realignment (1)
13. Dane End Tributary Realignment (2)
14. Fencing/boundary treatment
15. Lighting

3 Description of the site

- 3.1 The application site forms part of the A602, which provides the primary road link from junction 7 of the A1(M) on the edge of Stevenage, in the west, to the junction with A10 at Ware, in the east.
- 3.2 The application area stretches approximately 2.65 kilometres in length, along which there are currently eight vehicular access points, in addition to three public Rights of Way. The A602 passes to the south of an area that matches the Regional Landscape Character typology 'Wooded Chalk Valley'. This is an area characterised by steep sided, wooded valleys with a surrounding upland plateau. The land has a mixed use of arable farmland and pasture, with patches of ancient woodland, and enclosure patterns defined by mature, species rich woodlands.
- 3.3 The surrounding landscape also includes 'Plateau Estate Farmlands'; an ordered arable landscape characterised by estate farms and small villages. The realigned section of the A602 seeks to take in agricultural land currently in the ownership of the Woodhall Estate. The realignment would move the carriageway away from the extensive red brick wall, which is a strong and visible feature of the planned parkland. The Woodhall Estate is itself a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden, and the Listed wall forms the southern boundary of the application area, demarcating the highway boundary.
- 3.4 Much of this section of the A602 carriageway is shaded by large mature trees and hedgerows, which are sited close to the edge of the carriageway, as it follows through the valley. This strictly constrains the opportunities to widen the single carriageway, either to the dual the road or to provide dedicated non-motorised vehicle lanes.
- 3.5 With the exception of Watton Lodge at the entrance to Heath Mount School, there are no residential properties abutting the carriageway within the application area. A series of small hamlets and isolated properties are set back from the road, although they have limited direct views due to the mature vegetation.
- 3.6 There are a number of public Rights of Way that adjoin the A602, although there is limited linkage to the wider network of public access routes in this area. The Watton-at-Stone FP007 is 250m to the west of Watton Lodge, on the northern side of the carriageway, with no continuation on the opposite side of the road. There are no proposed works in the immediate vicinity of this footpath.
- 3.7 The Sacombe FP013 links into the A602 opposite the Sacombe Pound where significant works are proposed as the main carriageway is to be realigned to the north, and junction improvements are sought to facilitate westbound traffic turning right. This requires the extension of the footpath to join the realigned carriageway. There is no continuation of the footpath to the north, although the footpath links into an extensive

network of public Rights of Way towards Watton-at-Stone, Wadesmill and Hertford, in the south.

- 3.8 The Bengoe Rural 023 Bridleway is at the southern most point of the application area, and shares the access to Sacombe Park. As part of the proposed works around the Stony Hills junction, the highway carriageway is to be removed and the bridleway extended.
- 3.9 The application area is defined as in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.
- 3.10 The proposed development relating to the realignment of Ware Road is distinct from the areas of archaeological interest in and around Woodhall Park, and the estate's land holdings.
- 3.11 The majority of the application site is in Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding). The land around Sacombe Pound forms the Dane End Tributary, which is defined as having a high probability of flooding and is in Flood Zone 3.
- 3.12 The application area passes from Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3 (lowest zone for source protection) through Zone 2 to Zone 1, from west to east along the A602.
- 3.13 A previous application (3/1914-06) for improvements to the A602 adjacent to Heath Mount School was approved by the Development Control Committee in November 2006, but was not implemented. This application did not include amendments to any other sections of the A602.
- 3.14 Planning permission was granted by the Development Control Committee in September 2016 for improvements to the Hertford Road in Stevenage, and in October 2016 for improvements between Tonwell and the A10.

4 Description of the proposed development

- 4.1 The primary element of the proposed development is the realignment to the north and the widening of the A602, from a point west of the entrance of Heath Mount School to the Sacombe Park. The new road will be single carriageway with additional width to include hard-strips, and localised widening to incorporate central right-turn lanes; this will also improve sight lines for road users.
- 4.2 The access to Heath Mount School is to have a physical island on both sides of the junction to prevent overtaking in either direction of approach. Eastbound traffic will have use of a ghost island to turn into the school, and westbound traffic will benefit from a deceleration lane. The egress will only allow traffic to turn left, towards the A119 roundabout, where traffic seeking to travel towards Ware can turn.
- 4.3 The access to Whempstead Road will have a short deceleration taper for

eastbound traffic turning left off the A602. There will be physical islands either side of the entrance to prevent overtaking, and a ghost island for right turning traffic travelling west. It is proposed to include a construction compound to the west of the junction, for the duration of the temporary works.

- 4.4 The access points to Garden House and Beehive Cottage to the south of the realigned A602, and the Sacombe Hill Farm access to the north, are both proposed to have physical islands at either side of the junction, and a ghost island for right turning traffic. It is not proposed to incorporate deceleration lanes at either of these junctions.
- 4.5 The section of the A602 in and around Sacombe Pound incorporates the most significant changes in terms of road reconfiguration. The A602 is to include single lane dualling for right turning traffic in and out of the junction, and a 'jug handle' for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) to cross the A602 into Sacombe Pound. In order to accommodate the realignment of the road, the Dane End Tributary, which is to the east of Sacombe Pound will also need to be realigned and the adjoining land reprofiled for flood compensation. A large drainage attenuation basin is also proposed to the east of the junction of the A602 and Sacombe Pound.
- 4.6 Further significant changes are proposed at the Stony Hills junction, albeit on the existing A602 alignment. The Stony Hills carriageway is to be realigned, to provide an improved left hand turn for westbound traffic that will approach the junction via a new deceleration lane. This will also pull the access to Ware Lodge back from the A602 carriageway. Physical islands are proposed either side of the junction, in addition to a ghost island for right turning eastbound traffic, and a 'jug handle' to allow cyclists to turn right.
- 4.7 It is proposed to close the existing westbound left turn opposite Sacombe Park to motorised vehicles, and remove part of the carriageway, returning it to the landowner. The egress from the A602 is to be re-designated as a bridleway and extended to join the minor road Stony Hills.
- 4.8 The works would require the woodland clearance of the copse between Bardolph's Cottages and Heath Mount School (north side of road), the copse to the east of Whempstead Road, and the copse to the west of Sacombe Hill Farm access. Vegetation will also need to be reduced at junctions along the A602 to improve visibility, thereby improving safety. It is proposed to mitigate the loss of vegetation with the planting of hedgerows, and areas of trees, to include mature specimens.
- 4.9 The road is only lit at the junction with Whempstead Road, and it is intended to remove, and not to replace, the existing lighting with the improvements to the junction.
- 4.10 The area of land between the old and new sections of the A602 carriageway is to be landscaped and returned to the landowner.

5 Consultations

- 5.1 A total of 7 properties were consulted in respect of the application. A press notice was placed in the Hertfordshire Mercury, and site notices were erected on 27 July 2017.
- 5.2 East Herts Council as District Planning Authority has no fundamental objections to the proposal taking into the account the likely benefits.
- 5.3 The Environment Agency originally objected to the application on the basis that the climate change allowances used to calculate the Flood Risk Analysis, with particular concern for the area around the Dane End Tributary. The Environment Agency removed their objection, subject to conditions, following additional analysis submitted by the applicant. A full copy of their final consultation response is provided at Appendix 3.
- 5.4 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal. Additional details regarding the scheme are required for mandatory design checks, should planning permission be granted.
- 5.5 Affinity Water advises that the application site is within the Groundwater Source Protection Zone corresponding to Sacombe Pumping Station. The construction works and operation of the proposed development site should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices, thereby significantly reducing the groundwater pollution risk. It should be noted that the construction works may exacerbate any existing pollution. If any pollution is found at the site then the appropriate monitoring and remediation methods will need to be undertaken.
- 5.6 Hertfordshire Gardens Trust raise no objection as the trust is satisfied with the mitigation measures proposed, and that the realignment of the carriageway and additional planting may enhance the landscape of Woodhall Park.
- 5.7 Herts Ecology finds that the overall ecological value of the proposed development site is low, consistent with roadsides, and that these do not present a constraint. The impact on the ancient semi-natural woodland is stated as low.
- 5.8 The Officer raises concerns at the potential for habitat gain, in respect of the landlocked area between the original and realigned sections of carriageway; this needs to be positively managed to avoid the old section of road degrading into an amenity issue, attracting litter, fly-tipping, and vandalism.
- 5.9 The Herts Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) has no objection.
- 5.10 Historic England do not wish to offer any comments.
- 5.11 Highways England offer no objection as the Highway Act Section 175B is not relevant to the application.

- 5.12 HCC Flood Risk Management as Lead Local Flood Authority has no objection to the development on flood risk grounds. The LLFA recommends three conditions, requiring works to be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy and mitigation measures as detailed in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, to carry out infiltration tests to inform the proposed surface water drainage strategy, and to clarify which drainage layout option will be used.
- 5.13 The Landscape Officer from Hertfordshire County Council finds that the introduction of large scale and intrusive engineered structures will detract from the local landscape character and visual amenity. These adverse impacts will diminish as the planting becomes established. However, it is noted that a more comprehensive package of landscape and visual mitigation is required; a detailed planting plan, schedule and specifications are necessary.
- 5.14 Key concerns raised by the Landscape Officer include a strong objection to the applicant's assertion that 'The ratio of trees removed to trees replanted should not necessarily be 1:1'. The Officer's view is that for each tree removed, two new replacement trees (medium to large native species) are to be planted within the site. Strong concern is also expressed for the potential removal of irreplaceable designated Ancient Semi Natural Woodland.
- 5.15 A copy of the full consultation response is included at Appendix 4, and also identifies the need for more robust planting around the sensitive Sacombe Pound area, a reconsideration of the hard engineered drainage ponds and that the concrete clad panels of the bridge fail to reflect the rural character of the local landscape.
- 5.16 The Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team finds that the application site is an area of known, significant archaeology, including Late Iron Age/Early Roman and Medieval finds. The Team suggests that the proposed development is likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and, accordingly, recommends three conditions to ensure that the features are protected and recorded.
- 5.17 The Traffic Management Unit of Cambridgeshire Constabulary has no comments to make at this stage.
- 5.18 Watton at Stone Parish Council has no comment to make on the application.
- 5.19 The Woodland Trust objects on the basis of damage and loss to Riding Wood, an Ancient Semi Natural Woodland designated as such on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), an irreplaceable habitat.
- 5.20 No other statutory consultation responses were received.

Public consultation

- 5.21 Cycling UK Stevenage submitted concerns with regard to the proposed development. They state that the A602 is a barrier to journeys, and that right hand turns are difficult due to the fast moving traffic, the inconsistent light and that cyclists are required to stop. The group requests a bridge.
- 5.22 South Herts CTC advised that few cyclists would wish to cycle along the A602 due to the amount of fast, heavy traffic on a narrow main road. It states that should a road require 'jug handles' to improve safety that the road should have a cycleway alongside it. It further states that a 'jug handle' would not be able to accommodate a group of club cyclists. Concerns are raised that the narrow width of the road, along with fast moving traffic, double white lines and physical islands will encourage traffic to make close passes to cyclists on the main carriageway. The group also seek that the bridleways are of a standard suitable to road cyclists. A full copy of the response is included at Appendix 5.
- 5.23 A total of 17 responses were received, either objecting to, or raising concerns in respect of the proposed development. One of those responses also sought clarification on some aspects of the improvements.
- 5.24 The objections can be summarised as follows:-

Objection 1 – Cyclist safety

- The bridleway must provide level access to Sacombe Park for cyclists
- Stony Hills to Sacombe Park crossing requires a bridge under the A602 and over the river
- Drivers will be able to travel faster putting cyclists at increased risk
- No safe right turn towards Dane End
- Bollards and traffic islands create pinch points

Objection 2 – Design of the development

- The extended bridlepath at Stony Hills must be a surface suitable for use by cyclists
- The design should include a cycleway alongside the A602
- Insufficient details of handling of old section of A602
- Inadequate provision for cyclists
- The changes make the road more dangerous for cyclists, walkers and runners
- Failure to address the goals and challenges of the Local Transport Plan
- Jug handles require awkward manoeuvres and are not preferred by cyclists

Objection 3 – Landscape Impact

- The foliage will take a long time to grow back

- Extent of tree loss is unclear; it appears to be hundreds
- Insufficient landscaping details in terms of both removal and remediation

Objection 4 – Other

- The Planning Statement does not include a Cost Benefit Analysis
- The proposal is not generally supported by the local community as stated in supporting documents
- Changes are a waste of money

6 The Development Plan

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of the Act, the development plan comprises of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007, and the saved policies within it.
- 6.2 The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been adopted, and supplements Policy GBC14 of the East Herts Local Plan. Similarly, the Historic Parks and Gardens SPD supplements Policy BH16. These documents are therefore a material consideration to determining planning applications.
- 6.3 The emerging District Plan has been the subject of a public examination by the Planning Inspectorate, which concluded in December 2017. Some weight can be given to the draft policies contained within it. It is noted that the Key Diagram identifies the A602 for road improvements, and it is listed as a strategic infrastructure requirement under Proposed Policy DPS5 – Infrastructure Requirements.
- 6.4 The most relevant planning policies to consider for this application are:

East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007

- Policy GBC2 The Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
 Policy GBC3 Appropriate Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
 Policy GBC12 Agricultural Land
 Policy GBC14 Landscape Character
 Policy TR1 Traffic Reduction in New Developments
 Policy TR3 Transport Assessments
 Policy TR9 Cycling – Cycle Routes
 Policy TR12 Cycle Routes – New Development
 Policy TR22 Surplus Transport Sites
 Policy ENV1 Design and Environmental Quality
 Policy ENV2 Landscaping
 Policy ENV11 Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
 Policy ENV14 Local Sites
 Policy ENV17 Wildlife Habitats
 Policy ENV18 Water Environment

Policy ENV19 Development in Areas Liable to Flood
 Policy ENV20 Groundwater Protection
 Policy ENV21 Surface Water Drainage
 Policy ENV23 Light Pollution and Floodlighting
 Policy ENV24 Noise Generating Development
 Policy ENV25 Noise Sensitive Development
 Policy ENV27 Air Quality
 Policy BH2 Archaeological Evaluations and Assessments
 Policy BH3 Archaeological Conditions and Agreements
 Policy LRC9 Public Rights of Way

- 6.5 Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2031) sets out the County Council’s vision and strategy for the long term development of transport within the county. The current version is LTP3, and the draft document LTP4 is out to consultation, concluding on 23 January 2018.
- 6.6 These policies are considered alongside national guidance in the form of The National Planning Policy Framework.

7 Planning Issues

- 7.1 The principal planning issues to be taken into account in determining this application can be summarised as:
- Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
 - Need and justification
 - Impact on highways and transport
 - Quality of design
 - Landscape and visual impact
 - Impact on ecology and biodiversity
 - Impact on residential amenity (noise, dust, light)
 - Impact on cultural heritage

Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt

- 7.2 The application seeks development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The East Herts Local Plan identifies a number of uses which are considered “not inappropriate” in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, and includes “other essential small scale facilities, services or uses of land which meet a local need, are appropriate to a rural area and which assist rural diversification.”
- 7.3 The existing route of the A602 passes through the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The Transport Assessment submitted in support of the application has demonstrated the requirement for the improvements, in that there are capacity constraints and visibility issues between Watton-at-Stone and Tonwell. The development would deliver improvements to traffic flow and journey time reliability, thereby meeting a local need in a Rural Area location. Further details in respect of ‘need’ are set out in paragraphs 7.8 to 7.18.

- 7.4 The scale of the physical development is relatively small, with the realignment of approximately 2.65 kilometres of highway, and reconfigured junctions. The original carriageway is to be reprofiled and returned to agriculture. The small scale of the physical development, in support of the improvements, does not adversely impact on the openness of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt or the purpose of including land within it. The proposals are therefore not inappropriate in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.
- 7.5 There is some concern raised by the Landscape Officer that the proposed development would introduce large scale and intrusive engineered structures that detract from the local landscape character and visual amenity. Specific reference is made to the area in and around the Dane End Tributary with the introduction of a new bridge and large attenuation drainage pond. The full response of the Landscape Officer is included at Appendix 4, and includes recommendations as to how the development could be made more appropriate to the rural area.
- 7.6 Therefore, subject to the imposition of robust conditions to ensure that the impact on the landscape is minimised, it is considered that the proposal represents a small scale development, appropriate to the rural area, meeting a proven need and as such it supports rural diversification by providing a reliable transport link. The development needed in a Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, and is deemed not to be inappropriate in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.
- 7.7 The application is in compliance with Local Plan Policies GBC2 and GBC3, which protect against inappropriate development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

Need and justification

- 7.8 The application is part of the wider proposals for improvements to the A602, which are considered necessary to reduce overall journey times and reliability on the route between Stevenage (A1(M)) and Ware (A10). This route is considered to be of a low standard for a primary route, with junction and alignment issues, and poor visibility. The improvements have been identified as one of the top three scoring schemes against deliverability and achievement of Local Transport Plan goals. It was one of three schemes submitted to the Department of Transport in July 2013, as the Local Transport Bodies' (LTB) priority list of major transport schemes to be delivered from 2015 – 2019. The LTB is tasked to prioritise transport investment
- 7.9 The traffic flows often exceed the capacity of the major junctions, with the worst delays occurring on the eastbound route (i.e. from Stevenage towards Ware) during the morning peaks. Residents and businesses are heavily reliant on the A602 to facilitate movement in and around the county. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has highlighted, within

the Strategic Economic Plan¹ (SEP) that the road network is chronically congested, and that this is a major constraint to growth in both housing and jobs, with major housing growth planned in the draft Local Plan proposals for both Stevenage and East Hertfordshire.

7.10 It is considered that the proposed improvements to the A602 would meet the key objectives of the 2011 Government Transport White Paper², which provides key objectives for future transport investment, namely:

- to create growth in the economy and to tackle climate change by cutting carbon emissions; and,
- to tackle places where congestion causes slow and unreliable journeys with significant impacts on the economy and environment;

7.11 The White Paper also highlights that public transport does not represent a viable alternative to the private car for all journeys. There is limited provision of east-west public transport links between Stevenage and Ware, with the train lines running into the transport hubs of Central London. The scheme is proposed in order to improve the overall standard of the road, ease congestion, reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability along the A602 between Stevenage and Ware.

7.12 The primary need for the realignment of this section of the A602 arises from the number of bends and gradient disparities which restrict driver visibility, particularly at the junction of Whempstead Road and the Sacombe Hill Farm access. This section of the A602 does not meet current design standards, and visibility is particularly impacted by the boundary wall to the Woodhall Estate. This wall forms part of the listing of the estate, and therefore strictly limits changes that take place to the existing carriageway.

7.13 The existing Heath Mount School junction primarily causes problem for eastbound traffic; vehicles currently queue to turn right into the school, causing delay on the carriageway and impacting the A119 roundabout, 750 metres away. The application seeks to address this with a ghost right turn lane. The realignment of the carriageway serves to improve sight lines for vehicles exiting the junction.

7.14 At the junctions adjoining the A602, there are currently no ghost islands to facilitate right turns off the main carriageway. The resultant queues impede the flow of traffic on the A602, which the proposed development seeks to address. The single lane dualling at the Sacombe Pound junction will address the danger posed to vehicles turning off the A602; the downhill gradient and straight alignment of the road encourages eastbound traffic to approach the junction at higher speeds.

7.15 There are several issues with the existing configuration of the Stony Hills

¹ Perfectly Placed for Business: Hertfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan. March 2014

² Department for Transport, 2011, Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon. Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen

junction, which provides access to the A602 at points approximately 400 metres apart on the main carriageway. Both junctions are limited by a poor geometry and the two roads to Stony Hills intersect the A602 at acute angles. This results in vehicles overswinging into the opposing carriageway, and means that vehicles are not at 90 degrees to the A602 when waiting at the give way line, which impacts visibility lines. The necessary improvements can only be delivered through the realignment of the carriageway due to the constraints of the existing vegetation and local topology.

- 7.16 Objections have been raised in terms of the need for the development, and that the available money could be better used on alternative road improvements. The proposal is to provide highway improvements and as a County Planning Authority, the decision has to be made on the merits of the planning proposals as set out in the application. The Highway Authority, as the applicant, has applied to a specific funding pot that is only available to support major road schemes, rather than, for example, the repair of potholes.
- 7.17 The proposed development does not seek to address the capacity constraint imposed by the single carriageway road link; as the road is already busy, it is considered that the likelihood of additional traffic being attracted to the route at peak times is low, as it remains a single carriageway road. The highway capacity improvements are focussed on the junctions, with the aim to reduce queuing.
- 7.18 The proposal is also compliant with the overarching sustainability aims of the NPPF, and addressing Challenge 1.1 of the Local Transport Plan in seeking to deliver a long term solution to economic and social issues, by facilitating housing growth, job creation and movement of goods and people, while minimising the additional land take from the development. The proposals are supported by the finding of a Transport Assessment, in compliance with Local Plan Policy TR3.

Impact on highways and transport

- 7.19 The proposal seeks to provide junction improvements that will improve the throughput and flow of traffic, and thereby increase the junction capacity as compared to the existing carriageway configuration. The Transport Assessment includes PICADY analysis for the Heath Mount School access, Whempstead Road, Sacombe Pound and the Stony Hills (north) junctions, which assesses the junction capacity during the morning and evening peaks.
- 7.20 The analysis finds that with the exception of the Stony Hills junction, the existing configuration means that the junctions are operating over capacity and that the resultant volume of traffic means allows for only limited gaps in traffic flow for vehicles to make turns. The modelled improvements find that the junctions at Sacombe Pound and Stony Hills would both operate within their theoretical capacity at 2024, demonstrating a significant improvement. The results do acknowledge

that some capacity issues would remain for traffic turning out of Heath Mount School in the evening, and that the Whempstead Road junction would continue to operate over capacity, however both these junctions would still benefit from measureable capacity improvements.

- 7.21 Objections have been received on the basis that the realignment of the carriageway will simply allow motorised vehicles to travel faster on the road. However, while it is acknowledged that the wider scheme seeks to improve the reliability of peak time journey times and traffic flow, the realignment also seeks to address the existing design and safety flaws of the existing route.
- 7.22 The redundant section of the A602, resultant from the realignment of the main carriageway will be reprofiled and returned to the landowner. This is compliant with Local Plan Policy TR22.
- 7.23 The A602 would remain open during the works and travellers would only be affected during short periods of construction, with some temporary potential for an increase in journey times due to the need for local diversions and traffic management. Once completed, the development would serve to improve the travelling experience for private road users and buses, reduce driver stress, provide more consistent journey times and reduce vehicle emissions. This is consistent with the sustainability considerations as set out at paragraph 7.18, and improves traffic flows through traffic management and (relatively) small scale intervention as set out in the 'Congestion' policy statement of the Local Transport Plan.
- 7.24 Consideration is also given to the effect on other travellers; non-motorised users (NMUs), pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. The rural nature of the A602 means that there is limited use along the length of the road between Stevenage and Ware by NMUs.
- 7.25 Local Plan Policy TR1 seeks to incorporate alternative transport options to the private motor car, with measures that are commensurate with the scale of additional traffic generated. As set out at paragraph 7.17, the development of itself is not anticipated to generate additional traffic movements, but to improve existing reliability of journey times and address design and safety flaws.
- 7.26 The predominant NMUs are cyclists, this activity is concentrated at weekends and on summertime evenings, reflecting its recreational nature as opposed to a method of commuting. There are no measures specifically to increase cycling as a mode of transport. This element of the scheme does not meet the aims of Local Plan Policy TR9, but this must be balanced against the available land within and adjacent to the highway boundary and the improved reliability of flow of motorised traffic on the A602.
- 7.27 A number of cyclists have called for the provision of a segregated cycleway running parallel to the A602, both within the specific application area and along the A602 as a whole. Specific concern is raised in

respect of the eastbound journey from (the western junction of) Stony Hills to Sacombe Pound. The absence of such a cycleway is contrary to the aims of Local Plan Policies TR1, TR9 and TR12, however each policy recognises the need to adopt a practical and feasible approach.

- 7.28 The scheme does include two 'jug handles' to facilitate right turns from the A602 into Sacombe Pound and to the reconfigured Stony Hills junction, which aim to improve cyclist safety. The extended bridleway at Stony Hills will provide an alternative to the A602 for cyclists wishing to access Sacombe Park; however, the surface for the bridleway has not been confirmed by the applicant, and the statutory requirement is that a bridleway is constructed of a surface suitable for horses rather than specifically for cyclists, although the provision of a surface suitable for cyclists would be encouraged by the planning authority.
- 7.29 Additional guidance is given at paragraph 35 of the NPPF which, inter alia, states that developments should be designed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements where practical (my emphasis). In this instance, a segregated cycleway would not be a practical and proportionate addition to the highway.
- 7.30 Cyclists raised this concern during the early, pre-application, consultation stages which were carried out by the applicant. The response is included at page 26 of the Statement of Consultation, which is submitted as a supporting document. The applicant has designed the scheme to the current standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. This scheme was subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit in accordance with HD19/15 of the DMRB (Road Safety Audit), and no issues relating to safety for cyclists were highlighted; this is a technical highways document and does not form part of the planning application. The scheme was reviewed and redesigned to address the issues raised in the audit, prior to the submission of the planning application.
- 7.31 If planning permission is granted, the scheme will be subject to a further road safety audit, to consider safety issues in more detail. The road safety checklist for a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit includes a requirement to ensure that the needs of cyclists have been considered, especially at junctions and roundabouts
- 7.32 The realignment of the A602 will require two of the public Rights of Way, in proximity to Heath Mount School and opposite Sacombe Pound, to be modified in order that they tie into the new section of road. These works may require the temporary closure of the routes, in order to protect pedestrian and cyclist safety during construction, but the impact is considered to be only slightly adverse given their temporary nature.
- 7.33 The proposed scheme across the wider route will maintain all public Rights of Way affected. While there may be a small increase in length of some routes, the significance of the effect is considered to be neutral once the scheme is operational and it is further noted that the number of people using these routes is low. The scheme is therefore compliant

with Local Plan Policy LRC9.

- 7.34 There are likely to be no equestrian flows along the A602 due to the nature of the carriageway.
- 7.35 A Traffic Management Plan can be secured through condition to minimise driver stress and frustration during the construction period. This would ensure the appropriate and timely sharing of information regarding works that may impact journey routes or times.
- 7.36 No rail routes would be impacted by the proposed development, or the wider scheme.
- 7.37 The proposed highway improvements, incorporating the realignment of the A602, are in support of Paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Transport Plan, to accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies through more reliable journey times.

Quality of design

- 7.38 The proposed scheme is the applicant's preferred option after the consideration of several high level options. The junction and alignment improvements were taken forward as the only feasible solution within available funding resources and an ability to be delivered within the funding timescales.
- 7.39 All elements of the proposed improvements to the A602 have been designed in accordance with the latest guidance set from the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). There are limited opportunities to make a design statement, given that the development relates to highway furniture.
- 7.40 The Landscape Officer has highlighted that the proposal to clad the bridge in concrete panel does not respect the rural landscape character and incorporate local materials. Therefore, while the existing proposals provide a cohesive design as relates to the existing highway infrastructure, improvements to the quality of design can be secured through a pre-commencement conditions in respect of the external materials used in construction. The proposed development is therefore consistent with Local Plan Policy ENV1.

Landscape and visual impact

- 7.41 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted with the application. This considers the effect of the development on landscape and visual amenity.
- 7.42 The predominant regional landscape topologies within the area of the proposed development are 'Wooded Chalk Valleys', 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' and 'Lowland Village Chalklands'. These are all characterised by an gently rolling arable farming landscape, and also

tend to include some mature hedgerows as a form of field enclosure and ancient woodland.

- 7.43 This rural and tranquil landscape is identified as being of moderate value, and having moderate susceptibility to change in relation to the proposed development, with a high susceptibility to change in closer proximity to the Grade II* Registered Park and Garden Woodhall Park with the associated wildlife sites and ancient woodlands.
- 7.44 Further assessment is available in the form of Local Landscape Character (LCAs), which defines the area of the proposed realignment of the A602 as including 'Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes', 'Benington/Sacombe Ridge', 'Munden Valley', 'Stony Hills' and 'Sacombe Park Estate Farmland'. While much of these landscapes are of moderate value, the area of 'Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes' is of high value, described as having a strong strength of character that should be safeguarded and managed due to the presence of Woodhall Park and the associated exotic tree species.
- 7.45 The overall significance of effect during the construction phase on this landscape is considered to be neutral/slight adverse, with the exception of the area around Woodhall Park given the significance of the landscape.
- 7.46 The Landscape Officer largely supports the conclusions of the submitted Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, which finds that there are no very large adverse visual impacts for commercial and public receptors during the construction phase due to the screening effects of the existing vegetation and rolling landforms. However, it is acknowledged that recreational users of the public rights of way have a high sensitivity to landscape change. Further, there are more open and elevated views of the Dane End Tributary, as a result of its location within the valley, and so there are likely to be residual impacts from the development while the new landscaping matures.
- 7.47 The landscape effects and visual effects of the development are generally measured as neutral by Year 15, with a slight adverse impact for 'Munden Valley'. The Landscape Officer finds that the significance of the impact for Munden Valley, in proximity to the Dane End Tributary, should be higher. This is due to the open nature of the viewpoint, but this impact can reasonably be minimised by a review of the concrete cladding on the bridge, as set out at paragraph 7.40, and careful consideration of the landscaping around the drainage balancing pond.
- 7.48 The mitigation of landscape and visual impacts during the construction phase can be achieved through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and secured by condition. This can include, but would not be limited to, the control of lighting to construction compounds and haul roads, and the sensitive design of site hoardings. The CEMP should also address how the roots of existing trees will be protected. A draft CEMP has been included within the submitted Environmental Statement.

- 7.49 The LVIA finds that there would be no significant residual adverse effects on receptors from the scheme. The Landscape Officer finds that in order to mitigate the permanent adverse residual landscape and visual effects, a more comprehensive landscape strategy is required. As detailed at Appendix 4, there are a number of reports outstanding including, but not limited to, detailed planting plans, schedules and specifications. Such details can be agreed and secured through condition.
- 7.50 An arboricultural report has been submitted, and provisional mitigation proposals have been submitted, although there is a strong objection to the applicant's assertion that 'The ratio of trees removed to trees replanted should not necessarily be 1:1'. The detailed plan would require a commitment to provide compensatory planting on a basis of two (medium to large native species) for one to be planted within the site, and this can be secured through condition.
- 7.51 The development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies GBC14, ENV2 and ENV11, subject to the imposition of robust conditions as set out above.

Impact on ecology and biodiversity

- 7.52 The NPPF states that the planning system should seek to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, and to provide net biodiversity gains. The Environment Statement provides details of the desk studies and field studies which have been carried out across the wider proposed scheme, including the area of the proposed realignment of the A602.
- 7.53 Effects to ecological resources of a district or higher level are potentially significant and may be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application. The Environmental Statement has therefore considered the effects predicted on the Dane End Tributary, Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), Great Crested Newts (GCNs), barn owls, bats and other protected species.
- 7.54 The proposed works to realign the Ware Road will largely take areas of improved grassland, semi-improved grassland and some scrub and woodland plantation. Such habitats are considered to be of low ecological value and are common across Hertfordshire, reflective of the highway boundary location and it is a view supported by Herts Ecology.
- 7.55 However, there are areas of broad-leaved plantation woodland that are of parish value, and compensatory planting can be secured as set out in paragraphs 7.49 and 7.50. Herts Ecology note that the Ancient Woodland is largely avoided, apart from a thin strip along part of the boundary road edge, and that this impact is so limited that it is insignificant in biodiversity terms.
- 7.56 While sections of hedgerow would be lost to facilitate the development, potentially isolating population of certain species during the construction

phase, the draft landscaping scheme proposes hedgerow replacement. The species composition would either match the existing or be species rich, resulting in a permanent beneficial improvement at a local level, overcoming the significant adverse effect during the construction phase and providing a near continual hedgerow border between the A119 roundabout and Stony Hills, and a net gain of 2 kilometres of hedgerow across the wider scheme.

- 7.57 A 100 metre stretch of the Dane End Tributary is to be realigned during construction, which will require the channel to be closed off and diverted. The new channel is designed to match the existing channel in terms of cross section and longitudinal profile, with erosion protection in place while habitat establishes. It is anticipated that the channel will perform in a manner closely reflecting the existing watercourse.
- 7.58 There are no issues in respect of GCNs in this section of the wider scheme, although all development works would need to be regulated by a mitigation licence from Natural England. The consideration of the lighting required for night time working, so as not to impact the passing routes of bats, can be included within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and required by condition. The nesting and breeding area of birds can be similarly protected.
- 7.59 The proposal to include a tunnel for badgers to pass under the new road, and the bridge at Sacombe Pound will be of sufficient height to allow bats and barn owls to pass through. It is also proposed to install bat roost boxes to replace roosting features lost from existing trees. This is supported by Herts Ecology, in addition to the wildflower seeding which will increase the foraging habitat for the Roman Snail.
- 7.60 The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies ENV11, ENV14 and ENV17, and the over-arching aims of Chapter 11 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).

Impact on residential amenity (e.g. noise, light, air quality)

- 7.61 The Environmental Statement has considered the potential impact of noise and vibration arising from both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development on residential and non-residential receptors within 300 metres of the proposed scheme. The assessment is consistent with the recommendations of BS5228-1:2009+A1:2014 Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites: Part 1 Noise and Part 2 Vibration (British Standards Institution, 2014).
- 7.62 The noise impact of the operational phase of the proposed development on residential receptors and on Heath Mount School has been scoped out through the Environmental Statement, as it is anticipated that there would be no significant increase in traffic due to the capacity limitations set out at paragraph 7.17. Notwithstanding, noise levels can be

regulated through good practise, and where necessary with formal resolution via the statutory Section 61 Control of Pollution Act 1974 procedure. There are no night-time works anticipated within this section of the wider scheme.

- 7.63 In the longer term, due to the positioning of the realigned junctions and carriageway as compared to the existing highway configuration, there is no significant change expected to the traffic flows and speeds that would trigger a noise level change threshold.
- 7.64 It is anticipated that worse case internal vibration from earthworks will exceed the threshold of potential adverse effects at residential receptors at Watton Lodge during the construction earthworks. Watton Lodge is located at the entrance to Heath Mount School, where a deceleration lane is proposed on the westbound carriageway. However, these works are temporary and not anticipated to last more than one week.
- 7.65 It will be possible to reduce the scale of the potential noise and vibration impacts by adopting the measures set out in BS5228 including, but not limited to, switching off engines when not in use, minimised drop heights of materials, the use of screening. These measures can be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- 7.66 The Environmental Statement concludes that noise and vibration impacts can be effectively mitigated. The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policy ENV24 and ENV25.
- 7.67 The proposed scheme is not within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and therefore this issue was not assessed further in the Environmental Statement.
- 7.68 There is a small grouping of residential farm properties on the edge of the proposed construction area, in addition to Watton Lodge, which means that there is a high sensitivity to dust that may be generated during the construction phase. Dust emissions can be limited by adopted mitigation and control measures, in line with IAQM (Institute of Air Quality Management) guidance, and incorporated into a CEMP. The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policy ENV27.

Impact on Cultural Heritage

- 7.69 It was considered that due to the limited nature of the works within and adjacent to the highway boundary in proximity along the Ware Road, that setting impacts on designated assets would only be likely to occur within 100 metres of the proposed development. A desk-based study of designated assets was completed on this basis. The review of non-designated assets was widened to a 1 kilometre study area to provide context of potential archaeological remains.
- 7.70 There are 23 Listed Buildings present within 100 metres of the study

area, which incorporates the A602/A119 roundabout and the adjoining proposed highway improvements along the A602 towards Tonwell. The Grade II* Registered Woodhall Park is present within the study area, and the Watton-at-Stone Conversation Area lies to the west of the proposed scheme and beyond the development boundary. There are a further 59 non-designated assets or findspots recorded in the Historic Environment Records.

- 7.71 It is considered that the proposed development would have a slight to moderate adverse direct impact on areas of archaeological potential, but that the features in these areas are common in Hertfordshire and therefore considered to be of low importance.
- 7.72 The construction activity would have a negligible impact on the setting of the Grade II* Registered Woodhall Park and its constituent elements, due to the screening offered by existing vegetation. In the longer term, Woodhall Park will slightly benefit from the realigned carriageway moving away from the park boundary, in compliance with Local Plan Policy ENV1. However, this is balanced against the impact on the Listed milestone which is within the construction area; this must be moved to protect the asset, yet it derives significance specifically from its location.
- 7.73 Guidance on the mitigation of the potential impacts on archaeology is provided by the Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team. It is advised that the archaeological assets can be protected through investigation, as regulated by the imposition of conditions. The proposed development is therefore in compliance with Local Plan Policies BH2 and BH3, and the guidance in paragraph 141 of the NPPF.

Environmental Statement

- 7.74 An Environmental Statement has been submitted to accompany the application. This is as the wider proposed scheme of development to improve the A602 between Stevenage and Ware falls within Category 10(f) Schedule 2 of the Environmental Regulations as the total development, outside of the highway boundary, is greater than the application threshold of one hectare.
- 7.75 The characteristics, location and potential impacts are determined to be potentially significant. The Non-Technical Summary is attached at Appendix 6.

Environmental Statement – Geology, Soils and Materials

- 7.76 The Environmental Statement considers the impact of the wider proposed scheme on the geology, soils and materials of a study area defined as 500 metres either side of the proposed scheme central alignment for both the construction and operation phases. A ground investigation prior to construction can be required by condition. This would identify any unexpected contamination that can be addressed

through actions and mitigation to be agreed with the appropriate regulatory body.

- 7.77 There are a number of disused pits and quarries along the route which may coincide with earthworks, but many of these predate the formal process of regulation. Aerial photography shows that these former pits are now restored or overgrown, and as their composition is not known, there is some potential for contamination.
- 7.78 During the construction phase, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) can be required by condition to minimise the risk from accidental spills and leaks to negligible through adopting best practice techniques. On this basis, the significance of the risk to surface and groundwater receptors, and to human health is reduced from moderate adverse to negligible.
- 7.79 The CEMP is also to include guidance on the soil stripping, stockpiling and re-use, to ensure that soils can be returned to agricultural use.
- 7.80 During the operation of the wider scheme, there is the potential for risk of accidental spills and leaks, in respect of road traffic accidents. The design of the scheme incorporates pollution interceptors, and a ground investigation can be secured through condition to ensure that an informed technical design protects against the potential for dissolution of chalk.
- 7.81 It is considered that the scheme will not have significant adverse effects on potential receptors, and is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies ENV20 and ENV21.

Environmental Statement – Community and Private Assets

- 7.82 There are expected to be no significant adverse effects to the community services in and around the A602, as a result of the wider proposed scheme.
- 7.83 The adjoining agricultural fields are of the best and most versatile for agricultural use, and are afforded protection under the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is considered that any impacts can be managed through adopted a best practice approach and a soil resources plan.
- 7.84 However, the realignment of the carriageway will require the permanent use of agricultural land from the Woodhall Park Estate. The proposed scheme seeks to minimise and mitigate the risk of severance through the planting of wildflower grass and replacement trees, which are to be secured through an approved landscaping scheme.

Environmental Statement – Road Drainage and the Water Environment

- 7.85 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), secured by condition, can be adopted to regulate matters including but not limited to sediment control, controlled storage of materials, restricting the use of polluting materials near receptors and local flood control to reduce the potential for adverse impacts on the water environment.
- 7.86 The Flood Risk Assessment has considered the crossing of the Dane End Tributary against the Exception Test, as it is not appropriate to consider moving the works to location entirely outside of Flood Zone 1. The realignment of the carriageway requires works to be carried out within Flood Zone 3, which is at the highest probability of flooding. The Exception Test must show that the development provides wide sustainability benefits that outweigh the flood risk, and that there is no increased flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.87 The Environment Agency response is included at Appendix 3, and concludes that subject to the imposition of conditions, changes can be made to the adjacent agricultural land to mitigate changes to fluvial flood risk resultant from the proposed development. Flood levels are returned to within 7mm of their baseline conditions at the 5 year flood event and are reduced for all other flood events. This does not affect the operational levels of any of the pumping stations based on the levels proved to the applicant by Affinity Water. The Environment Agency support the findings of the Flood Risk Analysis that the proposed design will not change the overall fluvial flood risk conditions along the Dane End Tributary as appropriate mitigation measures have been implemented into the design. Similarly, the proposed scheme does not change the groundwater flood risk, and the potential increase in surface water discharges have been identified and mitigated against.
- 7.88 The proposal incorporates SuDS in order to limit the risk of surface water flooding. However, it is acknowledged within the Flood Risk Assessment that the proposed new embankment located near the A602/Sacombe Hill Farm track junction will need to be mitigated against, to ensure that surface water which is known to flood the area does not find a new overland flow route. This is delivered through profiling the land to the north east of the new embankment, to accommodate displaced water.
- 7.89 There is a risk of pollution during the construction phase of the proposed development, particularly from the uncontrolled discharge of sediment and construction related substances, or the spillage or leak of fuels and oils. However, construction activities are to be undertaken in accordance with the relevant Pollution Prevention Guidance (PPG), and secured through the CEMP, with reference to supporting regulatory bodies.
- 7.90 The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local Plan Policies ENV18, ENV19, ENV20 and ENV21.

Environmental Statement – Cumulative Effects

- 7.91 Schedule 4, Part 1 of the EIA regulations require that the cumulative effects of a development are assessment as part of the Environmental Statement. Potential cumulative impacts arise from the interaction between environmental impacts identified above, and from the interaction of the proposed development and other development projects.
- 7.92 There are no other committed development projects along the A602 east of Watton-at-Stone and west of the village of Tonwell, other than the proposed improvements to the A602/A119 roundabout, which is the subject of a separate planning application. Therefore, the Environmental Statement has considered the interaction between the identified environmental impacts.
- 7.93 The Statement identifies a cumulative impact during the construction phase on the local landscape and character of Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes. Given the sensitivity of the landscape, and the magnitude of the impact, the overall significance of the cumulative impact is expected to be moderate adverse. The longer term impact is considered to be slightly beneficial, once mitigation and compensatory planting has matured over a 15 year period.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This report has identified a number of impacts that could occur but which can be adequately managed by the imposition of appropriate conditions, after taking into account the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 8.2 On balance, it is determined that the highway improvements of upgrading a sub-standard primary route, and the delivery of more reliable journey times, outweigh the slight adverse harm caused by residual impacts and thereby meeting a legitimate planning need. It is considered that the residual impacts will continue to reduce during the operational phase of the development as the landscaping matures.
- 8.3 The development is seeking local transport infrastructure improvements for which the need in a Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt location has been demonstrated. The proposals do not adversely impact on openness, or the purpose of including land in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The physical scale of the development is relatively small, and the purpose of the development is to improve traffic flow and journey time reliability, rather than increase the number of vehicles passing through the Rural Area. The development is therefore not inappropriate in the Rural Area Beyond Green Belt.
- 8.4 The development is compliant with principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2031 in delivering highway improvements to deliver a safe and resilient transport

system. While potential adverse impacts have been identified, the imposition of robust conditions can minimise against harm to landscape, visual impact, ecology, biodiversity, residential amenity and cultural heritage.

9 Conditions

9.1 The recommendation to approve the proposed development is subject to the following FIFTEEN conditions:-

1. Time limit for commencement
2. Approved plans and documents
3. Landscaping plan; including tree protection and habitat improvements
4. Drainage strategy
5. Infiltration tests
6. Drainage strategy option
7. Ground investigations
8. Traffic management plan
9. Construction environmental management plan
10. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (1)
11. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (2)
12. Dane End Tributary Realignment (1)
13. Dane End Tributary Realignment (2)
14. Fencing/boundary treatment
15. Lighting

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

Planning application reference 3/1770-17 including supporting documents and environmental statement

Consultee responses

Relevant policy documents:

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007

Historic Parks & Gardens SPD 2007

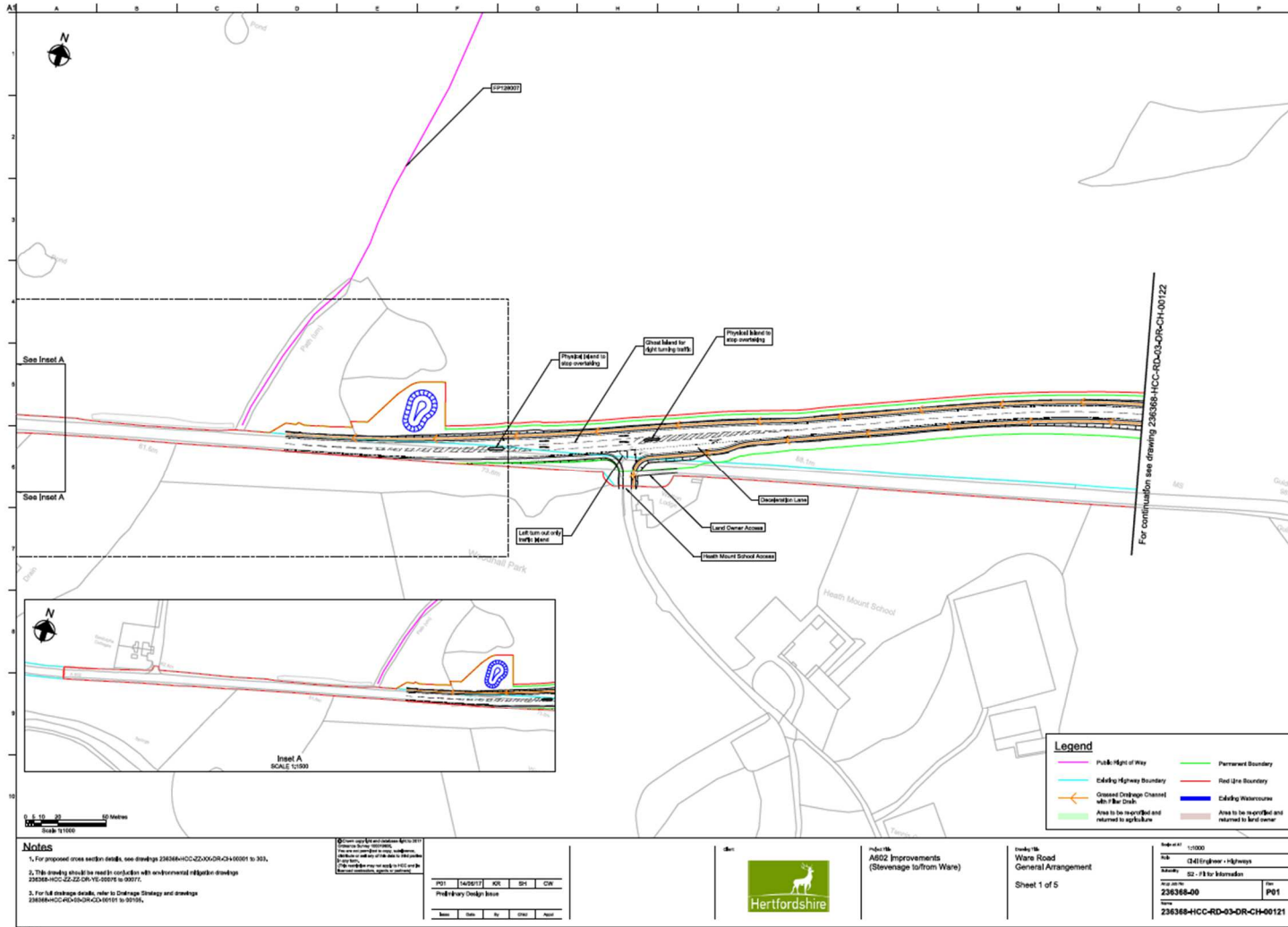
Landscape Character Assessment SPD

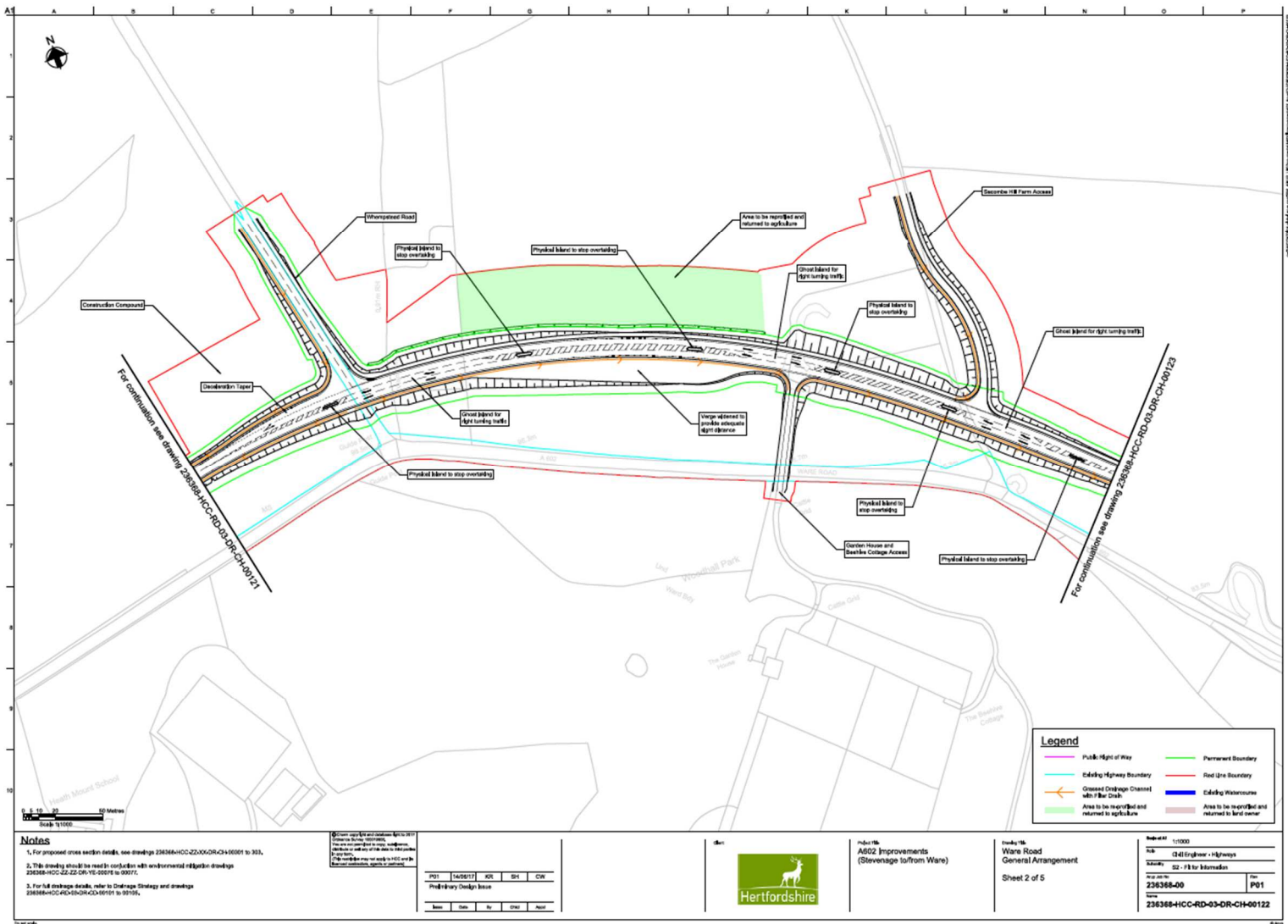
Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2031)

Appendices

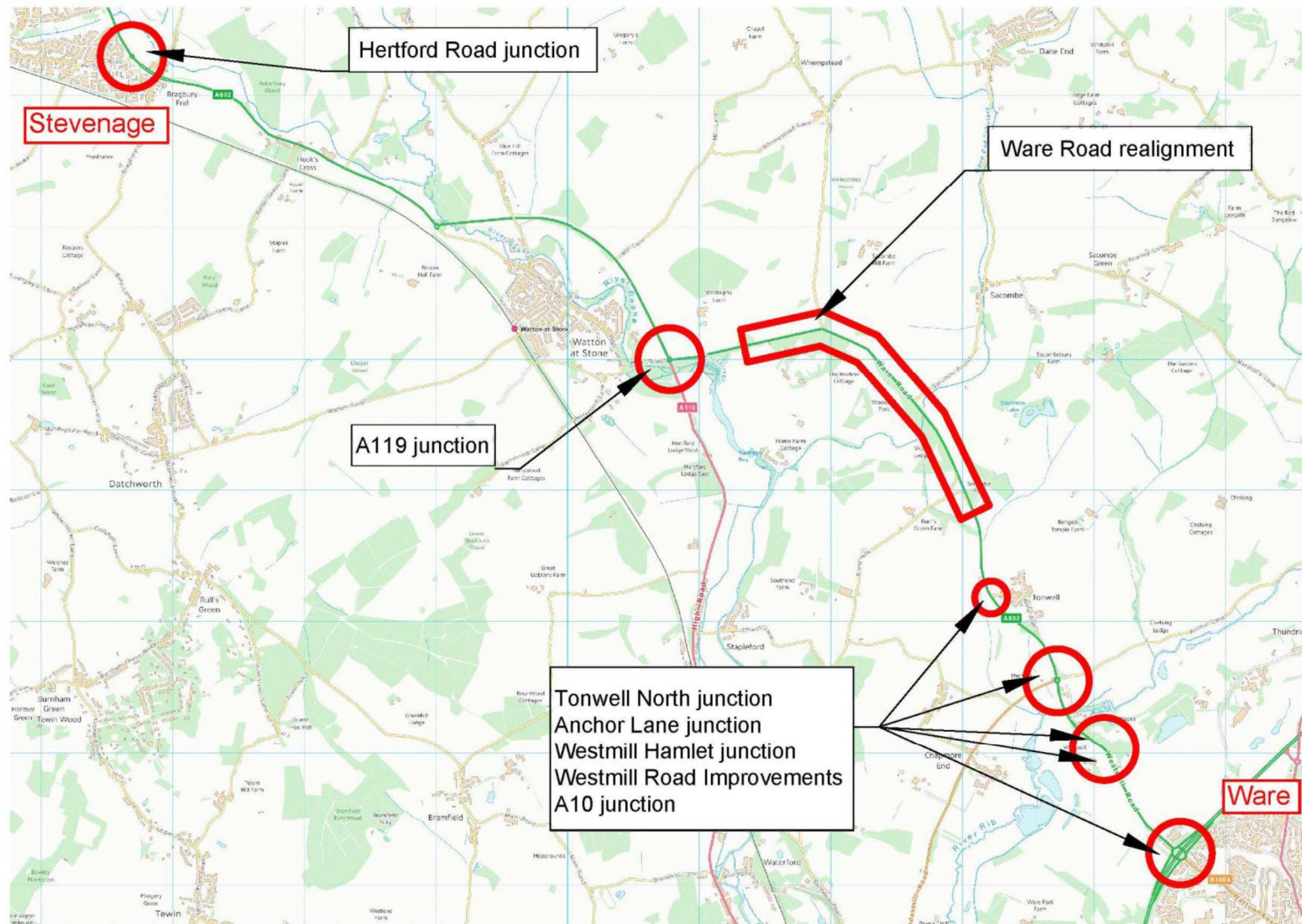
1. General Arrangement (5 plans)
2. The Proposed Scheme (Ware Road alignment) within the wider area
3. Consultation response from the Environment Agency
4. Consultation response from HCC Landscape Officer
5. Consultation response from South Herts CTC
6. Environmental Statement: Volume 1 – Non-technical summary

Appendix 1 – General Arrangement (do not scale)





Appendix 2 The Proposed Scheme (Ware Road realignment) within the wider area



Appendix 3 Consultation response from the Environment Agency

creating a better place



Mrs Sharon Threlfall
Hertfordshire County Council
County Development Unit
County Hall
Hertford
Hertfordshire
SG13 8DE

Our ref: NE/2017/127287/04-L01
Your ref: PL\0852\17
Date: 28 November 2017

Dear Sharon

Application For The Proposed Realignment Of Ware Road Between A Point West Of The Access Road To Heath Mount School, To The Existing Southern-Most Stony Hill Junction; With Realignments At All Junctions Within This Section; Including Associated Changes To Verges, Lighting, Drainage, Landscaping And Engineering Operations

A602, West Of Entrance To Heath Mount School, To Existing Stony Hills Junction In The South-East

Thank you for consulting us on this latest information. My apologies for our late response; this is due to resource pressures in our Sustainable Places team.

We are now satisfied with the findings of the Flood Risk Assessment and are able to remove our flood risk objection. The proposed development will be acceptable if the following planning conditions are included on any planning permission granted.

Condition 1

No development shall take place until a detailed scheme for the Dane End Tributary realignment has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and any subsequent amendments shall be agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

The scheme shall include:

- channel cross sections, in-channel design and planform alignment
- plans showing the extent and layout of the buffer zone
- details of any proposed planting scheme (for example, native species)
- details demonstrating how the buffer zone will be protected during development and managed/maintained over the longer term
- details of any proposed footpaths, fencing, lighting etc.

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Reason

River realignments can have a potentially severe impact on the ecology and geomorphology of the whole river corridor. The applicant needs to demonstrate that the risks posed by the development can be satisfactorily avoided, mitigated or compensated for. Our position is supported by East Hertfordshire's Local Plan policies ENV17 on Wildlife Habitats and ENV18 on the Water Environment.

The Water Framework Directive requires the restoration and enhancement of water bodies to prevent deterioration and promote recovery of water bodies. The proposal could cause deterioration of a quality element to a lower status class, therefore more detailed plans are needed.

This condition is further supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 109 which recognises that the planning system should aim to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF also states that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged. This will contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act requires Local Authorities to have regard to nature conservation. Article 10 of the Habitats Directive stresses the importance of natural networks of linked corridors to allow movement of species between suitable habitats, and promote the expansion of biodiversity.

Condition 2

No development shall take place until a method statement detailing how the realignment will be constructed, and how environmental degradation will be mitigated against and managed, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This shall deal with the treatment of any environmentally sensitive areas, their aftercare and maintenance as well as a plan detailing the works to be carried out showing how the environment will be protected during the works.

Such a scheme shall include details of the following:

- timing of the works
- construction methods
- measures to be used in order to minimise environmental impact of the works (considering both potential disturbance and pollution)
- a map or plan showing habitat areas to be specifically protected
- any necessary mitigation for protected species
- any necessary pollution protection methods

The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason

This condition is necessary to ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat, and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in line with national planning policy. Our position is supported by East Hertfordshire's Local Plan policies ENV17 on Wildlife Habitats and ENV18 on the Water Environment.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 109 recognises that the planning system should aim to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where

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possible. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF states that if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused, and that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive stresses the importance of natural networks of linked habitat corridors to allow the movement of species between suitable habitats, and promote the expansion of biodiversity. River corridors are particularly effective in this way. Such networks and corridors may also help wildlife adapt to climate change.

Do let me know if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

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End

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Appendix 4 Consultation response from HCC Landscape Officer

Landscape Report	22nd August 2017
From: HCC Landscape Officer, Natural Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team	To: HCC Planning Officer, Spatial Planning
Application No.	3/1770-17
Location:	A602, West of entrance to Heath Mount School, to existing Stony Hills junction in the south-east
Proposal:	Application for the proposed realignment of Ware Road between a point west of the access road to Heath Mount School, to the existing southern-most Stony Hill junction; with realignments at all junctions within this section; including associated changes to verges, lighting, drainage, landscaping and engineering operations

1 Background

The proposed development between the entrance to Heath Mount School and Stony Hills Junction is one of four schemes within a package of works along the A602. Separate planning applications have been approved, or are currently being determined, for the following schemes:

- Hertford Road Roundabout in Stevenage (permitted)
- Northwest Ware (permitted)
- A602 and A119 Roundabout (awaiting determination)
- A602 (Ware Road) between Heath Mount School and Stony Hills junction (awaiting determination (subject of this report))

The Landscape Officer has previously been consulted on the pre-application proposals. At that stage broad principles were established regarding the approach to the landscape strategy.

2 Summary & Conclusions

2.1 Landscape and visual effects

Overall, the proposed construction stage gives rise to significant³ landscape and visual effects, due to the large scale and intrusive nature of the works, outside of the existing highway boundary, within the open landscape. However, the significance of effects is deemed acceptable due to the temporary and short term duration of effects for the total construction period of 64 weeks.

On implementation of the landscape mitigation planting and commencement of the operational stage at year 1, the proposed development gives rise to

³ Effects that are moderate or above are deemed significant in EIA terms

significant adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity within the distinct valley landscape of the Dane End Tributary.⁴

This is due to the introduction of large scale and intrusive engineered structures, that detract from local landscape character and visual amenity, and include the highway and junction with single lane dualling on a raised embankment, broad highways verge, attenuation ponds and access tracks, realigned tributary and floodplain, new bridge, and large areas of re-profiled ground.

As the landscape mitigation planting becomes established the significance of effects diminishes to an extent, however many of the detracting features remain apparent within the landscape and views and give rise to **permanent adverse residual landscape and visual effects. It is therefore advised that a more comprehensive package of landscape and visual mitigation is required. See comments regarding landscape strategy.**

2.2 Landscape strategy

In order to mitigate the permanent adverse residual landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, a more comprehensive landscape strategy is required, especially within the section of development towards Sacombe Pound. In addition to providing a more robust landscape framework, to assimilate the scheme within its rural setting and views, the strategy should address the following issues:

- Mitigation measures to avoid/reduce/compensate for the partial removal of irreplaceable Ancient Semi Natural Woodland at Riding Wood (W6)
- Detailed planting plans, schedules and specifications
- Approach to wildflower verge and tree planting between the estate wall and the proposed road
- Enhanced planting to highways embankments and areas of re-profiled ground
- Detailed design and layout of drainage pond compounds and boundaries to provide landscape and visual mitigation
- Detailed bridge design to reflect locally distinct materials

3 Landscape and Visual Effects⁵

3.1 Construction Stage

The construction stage, which includes 12 weeks of advanced works and 52 weeks of construction works, comprises the following aspects that are likely to result in landscape and visual effects:

- Erection of temporary tree protection fencing
- Erection of temporary construction compounds and fencing

⁴ 'Munden Valley' landscape character area

⁵ Comments are given in line with current best practice guidance "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental management and Assessment." (GLVIA3)

- Removal of existing landcover and vegetation
- Temporary removal and storage of soils
- Alteration of gradients and levels, cuttings, embankments and ground profiling
- Highways engineering operations (new highway / junction realignments / new bridge)
- Surface water management engineering operations (Dane End Tributary realignment and floodplain / attenuation basins and access tracks)
- Environmental aspects (e.g. lighting, vehicular noise and movement)

3.1.1 Landscape effects

The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment⁶ (LVIA) concludes that the construction stage results in large adverse effects for ‘Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes’ landscape character area (LCA),⁷ and slight adverse effects for ‘Benington/Sacombe Ridge,’ ‘Munden Valley’ and ‘Sacombe Park Estate Farmland,’ LCAs.

With regards ‘Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes’ LCA, there is concern for the LVIA methodology that provides an assessment of the proposed construction stage in combination with the proposed construction stage for the scheme at the A602 and A119 Roundabout, which is subject to a separate planning application. The construction stages for each area are not timetabled to occur *concurrently*, and therefore do not result in an overall landscape effect.

Despite concerns for the approach to the assessment, the findings are generally supported with the exception of the significance of effects for ‘Munden Valley’ LCA that should be higher.

It is proposed to carry out the majority of the large scale and intrusive engineering works within the ‘Munden Valley’ LCA, within the distinct valley landscape of the Dane End Tributary, that extends between the existing A602 highway and the village of Dane End to the north.

The existing A602 highway runs along the boundary of Woodhall Park and is well assimilated within the wider landscape due to the mitigating effect of the established parkland and roadside vegetation. It is proposed to construct the new highway and associated infrastructure offline, outside of the existing highway boundary, within the open landscape.

The proposed construction stage comprises a number of activities that give rise to significant adverse landscape effects and include the stripping and storage of soils, the excavation and deposition of materials to create embankments, ground re-profiling, the construction of hard engineered structures, plus associated heavy plant machinery.

⁶ Environmental Statement, Chapter 8 Landscape

⁷ 8.7.1.1. Landscape Effects (It should be noted that the assessment for Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes also takes account of the proposed works at the A602 and A119 Roundabout)

With regards duration, it is proposed to carry out the construction stage for a period of 64 weeks that is considered temporary and short term.⁸

Overall the construction stage results in slight adverse landscape effects to large adverse landscape effects.

3.1.2 Visual effects

With regards the assessment of visual effects, viewpoints (VP) 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 are most relevant to the proposed development. The LVIA⁹ concludes that the construction stage results in neutral visual effects for VPs 10, 13, 14 16, 17and 20, slight adverse visual effects for 15 and 18, and large adverse visual effects for 19.

These judgements are generally supported. For the majority of viewpoints the impact of the proposed construction works upon views is generally mitigated by the screening effect of the intervening vegetation and sloping landform. However there are more open and elevated views from within the distinct valley landform of the Dane End Tributary, as demonstrated in VP19.

Overall the construction stage results in neutral visual effects to large adverse visual effects.

3.2 Operational Stage Year 1

3.2.1 Landscape effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 1 results in moderate adverse effects for 'Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes' landscape character area (LCA),¹⁰ and slight adverse effects for 'Benington/Sacombe Ridge,' 'Munden Valley' and 'Sacombe Park Estate Farmland,' LCAs.

With regards 'Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes' LCA, there is concern for the LVIA methodology that provides an assessment of the proposed operational stage in combination with the proposed operational stage for the scheme at the A602 and A119 roundabout, which is subject to a separate planning application. The operational stages for each area at year 1 are not timetabled to occur *concurrently* and therefore do not result in an overall landscape effect.

Despite concerns for the approach to the assessment, the findings are generally supported with the exception of the significance of effects for 'Munden Valley' LCA that should be higher. It is proposed to introduce the majority of the large scale and intrusive engineering works within the 'Munden Valley' LCA towards Sacombe Pound, including the substantial junction with single lane dualling on a

⁸ In a generations experience

⁹ Appendix C: Visual Effects Schedule

¹⁰ 8.7.2.1. Landscape Effects (It should be noted that the assessment for Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes also takes account of the proposed works at the A602 and A119 Roundabout)

raised embankment, attenuation ponds and access tracks, realigned tributary and floodplain, new bridge, and large areas of re-profiled ground.

Landcover

At year 1 operation, the new hedgerow and tree planting, and wildflower grass, is in the early stages of establishment and offers limited landscape mitigation. The use of standard trees is fully supported and will help enhance landscape character to an extent at this early stage.

The existing landcover pattern, within the distinct valley landscape of the Dane End Tributary (DET), is characterised by grassland within the flat valley floor, and arable cultivation across the sloping valley sides. It is proposed to introduce new engineered features and areas of associated grassland, such as the new wildflower verge with tree planting, highways embankments, and attenuation pond compounds, across the arable valley slopes that are at odds with the local landcover pattern.

There is particular concern for the engineered appearance of the proposed attenuation basins, and their open and elevated location on the valley slopes. Water bodies typically occur in low-lying area, such as the flat valley floor, and should have a natural profile that ties in seamlessly with the surrounding landform.

Landform

The proposed development comprises the introduction of several engineered slopes that appear contrived and at odds with the local sloping valley landform. In particular the raised highways embankment cuts across the valley. There are also contrived landforms as a result of the ground re-profiling to the floodplain and the creation of the attenuation ponds.

Overall the operational stage at year 1 results in slight adverse landscape effects to moderate - large adverse landscape effects.

3.2.2 Visual effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 1 results in neutral visual effects for VPs 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20,¹¹ and moderate adverse visual effects for VP19.¹²

These judgements are generally supported, with the exception of VP19 that may be higher.

At year 1 operation, the new hedgerow and tree planting, and wildflower grass, is in the early stages of establishment and offers limited visual mitigation. The use of standard trees is fully supported and will help enhance visual amenity to an extent at this early stage.

¹¹ Appendix C: Visual Effects Schedule

¹² 8.7.2.2 Visual Effects

For the majority of viewpoints the impact of the proposed development upon views is generally mitigated by the screening effect of the intervening vegetation and sloping landform. However there are highly sensitive views from within the distinct valley landform of the Dane End Tributary, as demonstrated in the submitted photomontage for VP19.

From here, there are open and elevated views across the valley towards Sacombe Pound and the cluster of hard engineered features, such as the raised highways embankment and re-profiled ground, attenuation pond compounds and new bridge, which appear contrived within the rural valley setting and detract from visual amenity.

Overall the operational stage at year 1 results in neutral visual effects to moderate - large adverse visual effects.

3.3 Operational Stage Year 15

3.3.1 Landscape effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 15 results in neutral effects for 'Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes,' 'Benington/Sacombe Ridge,' and 'Sacombe Park Estate Farmland,' LCAs, and slight adverse effects for 'Munden Valley.'

These judgements are generally supported with the exception of the significance of effects for 'Munden Valley' LCA that should be higher.

Landcover

At year 15 operation, the new hedgerow and tree planting, and wildflower grass, is well established and delivers maximum potential landscape mitigation.

The establishment of the linear planting strips and hedgerows help to give structure and definition to the proposed floodplain within the flat valley floor. However the open grassland appearance of the wildflower verge, attenuation pond compounds, and some sections of the highways embankments remain at odds with the local landcover pattern.

Landform

The establishment of planting along the toe of the highways embankment, helps assimilate the development with its rural setting to an extent, however the engineered slopes largely remain at odds with the local sloping valley landform

3.3.2 Visual effects

The LVIA concludes that the operational stage at year 15 results in **neutral visual effects** on VPs 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20,¹³ and **slight adverse visual effects** on VP19.¹⁴

¹³ Appendix C: Visual Effects Schedule

¹⁴ 8.7.2.2 Visual Effects

These judgements are generally supported, with the exception of the significance of effects for VP19 that should be higher.

At year 1 operation, the new hedgerow and tree planting, and wildflower grass, is well established and delivers maximum potential visual mitigation.

For the majority of viewpoints the impact of the proposed development upon views is generally mitigated by the screening effect of the intervening vegetation and sloping landform. However there remains strong concern for the impact upon highly sensitive open and elevated views across the valley towards Sacombe Pound and the cluster of hard engineered features, such as the raised highways embankment and re-profiled ground, attenuation pond compounds and new bridge, which appear contrived within the rural valley setting and detract from visual amenity.

3.4 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative landscape and visual effects as a result of the proposed package of works along the A602 is a key consideration.

The proposed development in combination with the proposed development at the A602 and A119 roundabout give rise to cumulative landscape and visual effects due to their location next to each other, across neighbouring landscape character areas, and where they appear as elements within the same view.

On completion of the A602 and A119 roundabout, it is intended to start construction works at Ware Road. It is suggested that the sites will give rise to some **negligible to slight adverse cumulative landscape and visual effects** within the first 0-5 years until the new planting at the A602 and A119 roundabout has become established and delivers effective landscape mitigation.

The proposed development in combination with the proposed package of works along the A602 gives rise to some **adverse cumulative visual effects** for commuters using the A602. Along here, travellers experience transient views of the schemes at various stages of construction and operation, over a period of at least 164 weeks (approx. 3 years).

4 Landscape Design and Layout

4.1 Arboricultural report

The findings and recommendations of the Arboricultural Report (and accompanying Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan) are broadly supported.

However there is strong objection to the statement that *'The ratio of trees removed to trees replanted should not necessarily be 1:1.'*¹⁵ Where the removal

¹⁵ Landscaping, page 30

of any tree is unavoidable its loss should be compensated for with new tree planting. In general it is recommended that for each tree removed, two new replacement trees should be planted within the site. New trees should be medium to large-scale native species that deliver maximum benefits for local character, visual amenity and biodiversity.

It is proposed to remove 7 individual trees (nos. 34, 55-60, 164-167, and 179-183), and partially remove 3 blocks of woodland (W2-W4 and W6) and 1 tree group (G8). It is noted that the Arboricultural Impact Assessment plans show a strip of planting (G9) for partial removal however this has not been included within the tree works summary.

With regards W6 (Riding Wood), there is strong concern for the removal of this woodland that is designated Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and irreplaceable. This approach does not meet the landscape strategy approach, and recognised opportunity to *'Protect the area's ancient woodland cover by ensuring construction works avoid these areas where possible.'*¹⁶

4.2 Landscape strategy

4.2.1 Planting plan

With reference to the Landscape Strategy dated May 2017, the proposed planting palette of wildflower grass, hedgerow planting with standard trees and woodland is supported in principle.

A detailed planting plan, schedule and specifications are required.

4.2.2 Wildflower verge

It is proposed to plant tree groups in the *'wildflower areas between the estate wall and the proposed road, to provide visual screening, tie in with...the wider landscape pattern...'* There is concern for how the informal groups of tree planting will appear in the landscape and views, and deliver effective mitigation, especially for the development towards Sacombe Pound. In this more sensitive area, within the open valley landscape, the proposed planting would benefit from being more robust.

4.2.3 Drainage ponds

The detailed design of the drainage ponds, that will not hold any permanent water, are hard engineered features that lack any response to the landscape setting. Where the actual design of the pond profile cannot be altered, then there needs to be a more considered approach to the landscape design of the compounds and treatment of their boundaries.

¹⁶ Landscape Strategy May2017 Section 2.3 Opportunities and constraints

4.2.4 Bridge Design

From the submitted EIA it is proposed to clad the bridge in concrete panels, this approach does not meet the landscape strategy opportunity for *'Bridge design finishes to respect rural landscape character and incorporate local materials.'*¹⁷

¹⁷ Landscape Strategy May2017 Section 2.3 Opportunities and constraints

Appendix 5 Consultation response from South Herts CTC

This response to the planning application for the Ware Road is from South Herts CTC, the local group of Cycling UK. We represent the interests of over 1,000 members living in South Hertfordshire and North London. We have discussed the application with local cyclists and others on CycleScape, including The FortyPlus CC, which has many members in Hertford.

The Ware Road is the A602, west of entrance to Heath Mount School, to the existing Stony Hills junction in the south-east and is part of the overall scheme A602 improvements, Stevenage to / from Ware. Although permitted, very few cyclists would want to cycle along this length of the A602 due to the amount of fast, heavy traffic on a narrow main road.

Our over-riding concern is to preserve and enhance permeability for cyclists crossing the A602, specifically between Stony Hills and Sacombe Pound. This is a crucial link for cyclists travelling between Hertford and Dane End and beyond.

A secondary concern is the crossing from Stony Hills, directly over the A602, onto the bridleway leading through Sacombe Park to Sacombe Green. This is a crucial link for leisure cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians into an attractive park and beyond, which removes the need to travel along the A602. It also avoids having to climb the steep hill from Sacombe to Sacombe Green.

Hertfordshire Council's transport policy for cycling states *"We will promote cycling through infrastructure improvements and softer measures such as campaigns, information and education and ensure that as far as practicable all of its policies and programmes work together to encourage modal shift to sustainable forms of transport including cycling."*

There is a huge opportunity to improve facilities for cyclists and others to cross the Ware Road and we will address each of our concerns in turn:

Stony Hills – A602 junction

We refer to drawing: Ware Road General Arrangement Sheet 5 of 5 (236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CH-00125).

We welcome the right-turn lane and the protection provided by the physical islands to prevent overtaking.

The use of 'jug handle' turns at busy non-priority crossings was included in the 2008 guidance 'LTN 2-08 Cycle Infrastructure Design' to assist cyclists turning right in two steps. However, we believe that the jug handle treatment is a symptom of poor infrastructure design. If the road is busy (and hostile) enough to merit a 'jug handle', then – in the interests of making cycling genuinely safe and attractive – this road should have a cycleway running alongside it. 'Club cyclists', who are confident enough to cycle along the main road, will not be slowing down to swing into a jug handle in the verge, coming to a complete stop to make a right turn; they will just turn right regardless, avoiding it. It's doubtful whether a group of a dozen or more cyclists would fit into the jug handle anyway. And anyone who

doesn't fancy cycling on this road (the vast majority of people) won't be helped by this new bit of infrastructure, because they won't be cycling here in the first place.

A602 between Stony Hills and Sacombe Pound

Best practice is now covered in the Oct 2016 guidance 'IAN195/16 Cycle Traffic and the Strategic Road Network' by Highways England, which says the minimum provision where the speed limit is 40 mph and over is for cycle tracks. Although the A602 is not part of the strategic road network, we argue there is a very strong case for following the best practice provided in IAN195/16 along the part of the A602 between Stony Hills and Sacombe Pound and that a cycle track should be provided.

A further argument in favour of having a separate cycle track is that LTN 2-08 (table 2.3) says the total width required for a bus/HGV overtaking a cyclist is 5.05 metres. The carriageway width proposed for the A602 is 3.65 metres (as shown on previous consultation drawings). Oncoming traffic, double white lines and physical islands will prevent safe overtaking and traffic flow will be hindered by cyclists having to use the main carriageway. Traffic will be tempted to perform close passes within the lane and this will endanger the lives of cyclists.

We believe that the only alternative to providing a cycle track beside the A602 here, would be to improve the direct crossing into Sacombe Park and to improve and maintain the surface quality of bridleways within the park to a standard acceptable to road cyclists.

Sacombe Pound – A602 junction

We refer to drawing: Ware Road General Arrangement Sheet 3 of 5 (236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CH-00123).

We welcome the right-turn lane and the protection provided by physical islands to prevent overtaking. Our comments on the use of 'jug handle' turns are the same as for the Stony Hills junction above.

Stony Hills to Sacombe Park crossing

We refer to drawing: Ware Road General Arrangement Sheet 5 of 5 (236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CH-00125).

We accept that the southern fork of Stony Hills will be returned to farmland and cyclists will be required to use a new, short bridleway link instead. We seek assurances that the surface quality of this new bridleway will be equivalent to the existing lane and that it will be well maintained.

We are most concerned that no physical traffic islands are shown at the A602 crossing point at Sacombe Park. The overall A602 scheme is designed to speed the flow of traffic and we believe it is an absolutely essential safety requirement to provide a central refuge to allow this busy road, at the brow of a hill, with very limited visibility in either direction, to be crossed in two steps. This is needed for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians to use this crossing. The ideal provision here would be user operated traffic lights (Pegasus Crossing).

DRAFT CONDITIONS

Time Limit

1. The development to which this planning permission relates shall be begun no later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Act 1990 (as amended).

Approved Plans

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the details submitted in the application dated 5 July 2017 (*Plan numbers to be added*).

- Site plan
- Location plan
- General arrangement plans
- Subway extension elevations
- Environmental Statement*
- Flood Risk Assessment*
- Landscape Strategy*
- Arboricultural Report*

* shared supporting document

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Landscaping plan; including tree protection and habitat improvements (Landscape Officer)

3. Prior to commencement, a detailed landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority which shall include the following details:
 - The details of those trees to be removed as identified in the submitted Arboricultural Report,
 - Measures for the protection of the retained trees and vegetation during the course of the development in line with the details in the submitted Arboricultural Report,
 - Location of bat boxes,
 - Details of the hedgerow to be planted along the northern boundary of the A602,
 - Details of the size, species, density and location of trees, consistent with the tree mix set out in section 3.1 of the submitted Landscape Strategy,
 - Details of wildflower seeding to enhance the open grassland,
 - Protection measures to be provided for new planting,
 - The programme for the implementation of the proposed planting; and

- The five year programme of management of planting, maintenance and replanting of any trees or shrubs which die, become diseased or are damaged.

The landscape scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved programme hereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity and the habitat enhancement of the area.

Drainage strategy (LLFA)

4. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drainage strategy report undertaken by ARUP named A602 Improvements (Stevenage to/from Ware) Flood Risk Assessment, reference 236368-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-RP-XX-00050 issued on 11 May 2017 and the following mitigation measures detailed within the Surface Water Management Strategy (appendix D):
 - Implementing appropriate SuDS measures as shown on Drawings :
 - 236368-HCC-JN-02-DR-CD-00101, A119 Roundabout Preliminary Drainage layout
 - 236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CD-00101, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 1 of 5
 - 236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CD-00102, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 2 of 5
 - 236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CD-00103, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 3 of 5
 - 236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CD-00104, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 4 of 5
 - 236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CD-00105, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 5 of 5
 - 236368-HCC- RD-03-DR-CD-00110, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 1 of 5, Alternative outfall option
 - Provision of storage volume of
 - 190 m³ for the first catchment known as western extent immediately east of Bardolphs Cottages, in form of linear SuDS feature and either underground geocellular crates at the roundabout A119/A602 or attenuation basin
 - 462 m³ for the second catchment which extends from Whempstead Road to the northern side of the Danes End Tributary crossing ,in form of attenuation pond and infiltration ditch/trench
 - 220 m³ for the third catchment which extends from the southern side of the Danes End Tributary crossing and includes the proposed works at Stony Hills junction, in form of attenuation pond

- **Ensuring rates of runoff generated by the impermeable area will not exceed the greenfield runoff rate in accordance with the rates in Table 2 by using flow control devices**
- **Ensuring sustainable treatment train in advance of discharge to the ground, to the Dane end Tributary or to the River Beane**

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

Infiltration tests (LLFA)

5. **Prior to the to the commencement of any development hereby permitted, infiltration tests shall be carried out in accordance with BRE Digest 365 to ensure the ground has the capacity to infiltrate the volume of surface water to be intercepted by the cut off ditches from the adjacent lands.**

Tests should be carried out in the specific location where infiltration features are proposed. (Sacombe Pound junction)

The test results and all final design of the proposed surface water drainage solution shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site.

Drainage strategy option (LLFA)

6. **Prior to the commencement of any development hereby permitted the choice to implement either the main option (236368-HCC-RD-03-DR-CD-00101, Ware Road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 1 of 5) or the alternative option outfall (236368-HCC- RD-03-DR-CD-00110, Ware road Preliminary Drainage layout, sheet 1 of 5, Alternative outfall option) at the western extent of the works must be confirmed and supported by technical evidence.**

The proposed surface water management infrastructure at the roundabout A119/A602 should be workable before connecting any pipe from the Ware road section into it.

Or

If the culvert near to Bardolphs Cottages will be used to convey the surface water coming from the new attenuation feature under the A602, its condition and its suitability for purpose should be confirmed.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

Ground investigations

7. **Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, ground investigations shall be carried out to establish the chemical and physical properties of the sub soil, and thereby ensure an informed technical design.**

Reason: To protect against the collapse of chalk in the sub soil.

Traffic management plan

8. **Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a Traffic Management Plan will be submitted for the approval of the County Planning Authority. This shall include the details of the timing and routes of diversions, road closures, and anticipated delays. The traffic management plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan hereafter.**

Reason: To reduce driver stress by clearly setting out the impact of the construction works on journey times and providing alternative routes to limit disruption

Construction environmental management plan

9. **Prior to the commencement of the approved development the applicant shall submit a construction management plan for approval by the County Planning Authority setting out details of the construction compound, storage of construction material, parking of construction vehicles, the duration of construction period, hours of construction, wheel/chassis cleaning etc. and operational mitigation measures in line with BS5228 and IAQM guidance. The construction management plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan hereafter.**

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (1) (Historic Environment)

10. **No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:**

- **The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording**
- **The programme for post investigation assessment**
- **Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording**
- **Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation.**
- **Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation**

- **Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.**

The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the approved Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason: To protect the archaeological interests of the site.

Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (2) (Historic Environment)

- 11. The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 6 and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.**

Reason: To protect the archaeological interests of the site.

Dane End Tributary Realignment (1) (Environment Agency)

- 12. No development shall take place until a detailed scheme for the Dane End Tributary realignment has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and any subsequent amendments shall be agreed in writing with the County Planning Authority.**

The scheme shall include:

- **channel cross sections, in-channel design and planform alignment**
- **plans showing the extent and layout of the buffer zone**
- **details of any proposed planting scheme (for example, native species)**
- **details demonstrating how the buffer zone will be protected during development and managed/maintained over the longer term**
- **details of any proposed footpaths, fencing, lighting etc.**

Reason: River realignments can have a potentially severe impact on the ecology and geomorphology of the whole river corridor. The applicant needs to demonstrate that the risks posed by the development can be satisfactorily avoided, mitigated or compensated for.

Dane End Tributary Realignment (2) (Environment Agency)

- 13. No development shall take place until a method statement detailing how the realignment will be constructed, and how environmental degradation will be mitigated against and managed, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This shall deal with the treatment of any environmentally sensitive areas, their aftercare and maintenance as**

well as a plan detailing the works to be carried out showing how the environment will be protected during the works.

Such a scheme shall include details of the following:

- timing of the works
- construction methods
- measures to be used in order to minimise environmental impact of the works (considering both potential disturbance and pollution)
- a map or plan showing habitat areas to be specifically protected
- any necessary mitigation for protected species
- any necessary pollution protection methods

The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason: This condition is necessary to ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat, and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site.

Fencing/boundary treatment

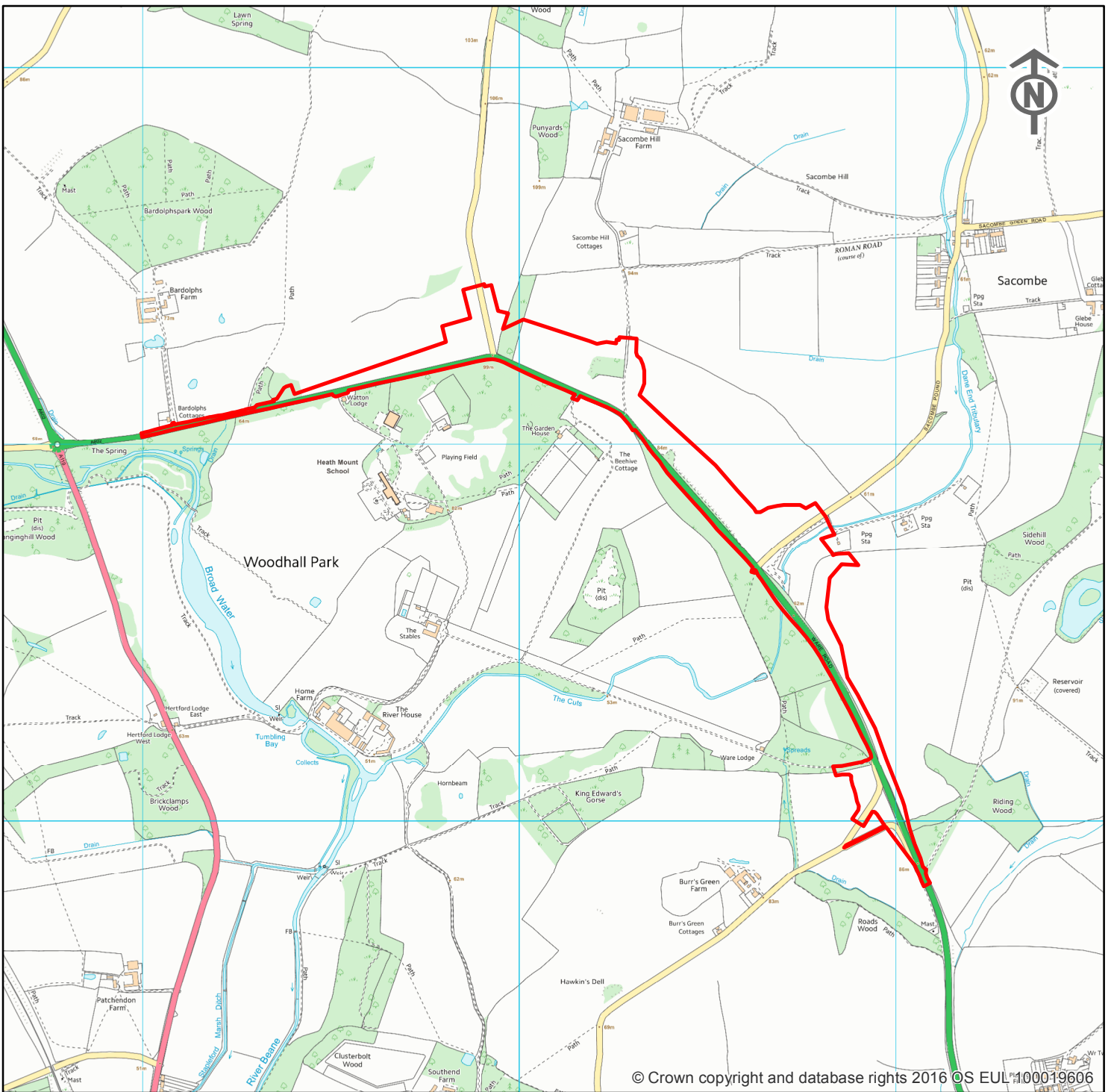
14. Construction work shall not commence until fencing, of a type to be approved by the County Planning Authority, setting out the boundaries of the development hereby permitted has been erected. The fencing shall be maintained throughout the period of construction and unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing by the County Planning Authority, there shall be no working, storage of surplus material or incursion of construction vehicles outside of the area so defined.

Reason: To define the permitted area of development and to restrict unauthorised entry to the construction site.

Lighting

15. No additional lighting will be provided without the prior approval of the County Planning Authority, other than in accordance with the approved plans in Condition 2.

Reason: To minimise light pollution and to minimise the disruption of bat flight lines.



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DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 25th January 2018

Application for the proposed realignment of Ware Road between a point west of the access road to Heath Mount School, to the existing southern-most Stony Hill junction; with realignments at all junctions within this section; including associated changes to verges, lighting, drainage, landscaping and engineering operations at A602, West of entrance to Heath Mount School, to existing Stony Hills junction in the south-east

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Hertfordshire County Council
**A602 Improvements
(Stevenage to/from Ware)**
Environmental Statement:
Volume I – Non-technical
summary

236368-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-RP-YE-00011

Issue | 22 April 2016



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1. Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council is currently progressing plans for an improvement scheme to the A602 between Stevenage and Ware. The scheme will include a number of road realignments, junction improvements and roundabout enlargements in order to cut journey times, increase the capacity of specific junctions and to create a more reliable route along the A602.

The A602 is an important link in Hertfordshire's primary road network. The road runs north westwards from the A10 junction at Ware to join the A1(M) at Stevenage and then through the centre of Stevenage towards Hitchin.

The road is currently dual carriageway throughout central Stevenage but the rest of the route is a rural single carriageway, as shown in Figure 1. The road is considered to be of low standard for a primary route and drivers experience visibility problems and high levels of congestion especially at peak times. Hertfordshire County Council has wanted to improve this part of the A602 since the 1990s but have been unable to provide funding until now. With the improvements in place, queuing times will be significantly reduced, and journey reliability during peak time will be improved.



Figure 1 - A view of the single carriageway A602 in its rural setting

A planning application package is being made to Hertfordshire County Council Planning Department as the planning authority for the County's transport system. There are four engineering elements to the Proposed Scheme and a planning application will be submitted for each element.

These planning applications were considered to be a single improvement project which share the same base of evidence, which includes a single Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reported in the form of an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES, prepared to support these applications describes the findings of the EIA for the scheme. This document provides a non-technical summary of the Environmental Statement.

2. The Area

The proposed improvements to the A602 are located within Hertfordshire, England, and for the most part within the district of East Hertfordshire, with one element located in the Borough of Stevenage. The section of the road where the improvements will be made mainly runs through open countryside and agricultural fields. The area is semi-rural in nature with a number of villages/hamlets located along the route including Watton-at-Stone, Tonwell and Westmill.

The scheme can be divided into three main sections in separate geographical areas. Where there is more than one improvement proposed the section is split out further as listed below:

- **Hertford Road junction**
- **Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell**
 - A119 junction
 - Ware Road realignment
 - Stony Hills junction
- **Tonwell to/from Ware**
 - Tonwell North junction
 - Anchor Lane junction
 - Westmill Hamlet junction
 - Westmill Road Improvements
 - A10 junction

Figure 2 shows the locations of each of these improvements.

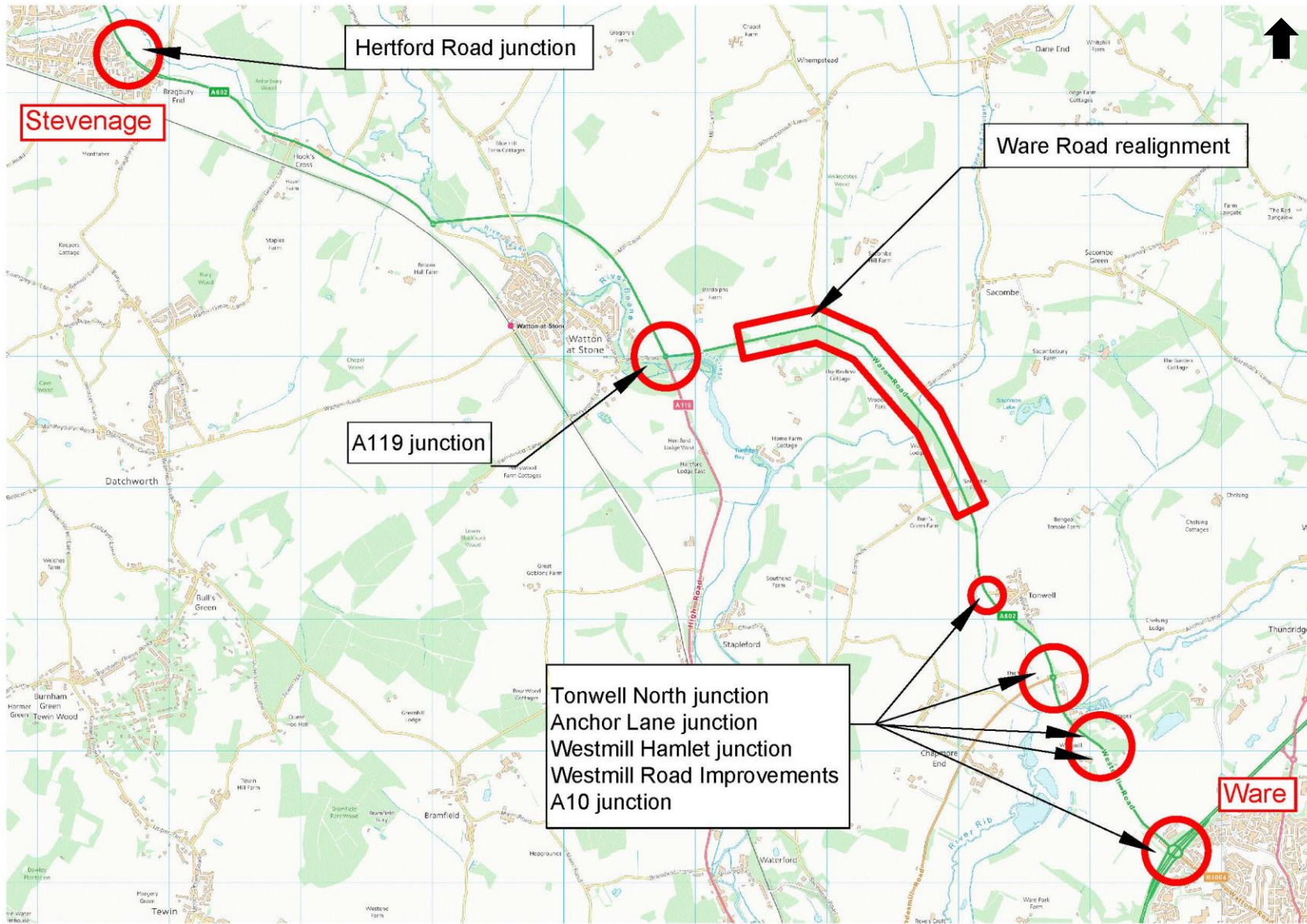


Figure 2- The Proposed Scheme within the wider area (Ordnance Survey license: 100019606)

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2.1 Hertford Road junction

The Hertford Road junction (see Figure 3), is situated on the A602, 5km south-east of the centre of Stevenage, on the south-western edge of Stevenage Golf & Conference Centre. The A602 at this point is a single two-way carriageway meeting a three-armed roundabout (Hertford Road junction).

On the north-eastern side of the A602 lies Stevenage Golf Course & Conference Centre, on the western side is the residential area of Broadwater. Further to the south-west is Harwood Park Crematorium and to the east Astonbury Wood, where several public footpaths are available. Stevenage Brook runs from west of the A602, underneath the road to east of the A602, through the Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre and away to the south-east. Additionally, to the north-east and south-west of the A602 there are a number of agricultural fields.



Figure 3 – Looking towards Hertford Road junction

2.2 Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell

The western end of the Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell Section is situated around 1km south-east from the centre of Watton-at-Stone and runs eastwards on the A602 past the Woodhall Park Estate to the eastern end of the section situated 1km north-west of Tonwell.

Along this stretch the A602 is a two-way single carriageway meeting the four-armed A119 junction at the western end of the section. At the eastern end of the section is a junction on the A602 providing access to Stony Hills.

To the west of the section is Watton-at-Stone, a small town consisting of residential and commercial land uses. To the north of the site land use consists primarily of agricultural fields and woodland, with sparsely dispersed residential units. To the south of the site lies Woodhall Park (see Figure 4), a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden and privately owned estate consisting of residential and commercial property, Heath Mount School with playing fields, large open spaces used for amenity / recreation, wooded areas and the River Beane and the Dane End tributary. The Dane End tributary runs from the east under the A602 at the Sacombe Arches and joins the River Beane within Woodhall Park.



Figure 4 – Looking towards Woodhall Park

2.3 Tonwell to/from Ware

The A10 junction (see Figure 5) is situated at the southern end of the A602 around 1.5km north-west of the centre of Ware, at the intersection between the A602, A10 and B1004. The Westmill Road section of the A602 is situated 0.9km north-west along the A602 from the A10 junction, the Westmill Hamlet junction specifically provides access for residents at Westmill Hamlet, just off the A602. Anchor Lane Roundabout is further north-west (1.5km from the A10 junction) along the A602, and allows an intersection between the A602, B158 and Anchor Lane. Tonwell North junction sits a further 850m north-west of Anchor Lane Roundabout, providing access off the main A602 into the village of Tonwell.

The A602, between the A10 junction and Tonwell North junction, is a single two-way carriageway meeting a four-armed roundabout at the A10 junction. There is a short section of carriageway that includes a crawler lane in the northbound direction, north of the Anchor Lane junction.

agricultural fields and sections of woodland, including Westmill Plantation. The River Rib, which passes underneath the A602 200m south of Anchor Lane junction, has a number of associated tributaries, drains and man-made lakes, at their closest 100m from the A602. Westmill Farm is 100m to the west of the Westmill Road section and there are other sparsely distributed residential properties along the A10 junction to Anchor Lane junction stretch.



Figure 5 – Looking towards the A10 junction

To the south-east of this section is the town of Ware consisting of largely residential, commercial and employment uses, such as Ermine Point Business Park at the A10 junction. Further up the A602, on the Westmill Road section, there is a large gravel extraction works on both the east and west sides of the A602. There are also

3. Alternatives Considered

Options to improve traffic in the area have been considered for several years. The proposals taken forward were made in consideration with the Government's key objectives for transport. These include:

- Safety;
- Environment;
- Economy;
- Integration; and
- Accessibility.

A number of high level options were considered for the scheme including:

1. Construction of an alternative off-line route;
2. Widening the existing A602 to dual carriageway standard;
3. Junction and alignment improvements including a Hook's Cross bypass; and
4. Junction and alignment improvements only.

Of the above only Option 4 (junction and alignment improvements only) was taken forward as this represented the only feasible solution within available funding resources and the time constraints in which the scheme must be completed.

Following transport and economic surveys of Option 4, a preliminary Business Case was prepared and submitted in 2014 identifying a series of improvements that could be undertaken along the corridor. Following acceptance of the Business Case, the following improvements were considered for further analysis:

- **Hertford Road junction** – The Business Case proposed an enlarged roundabout to improve the capacity of the junction. As a result of further assessment it was decided a signalised T-junction was a better solution than the enlarged roundabout originally proposed. This is because it was better able to cater for the main north-south traffic flow, along the A602. It also allows for Hertford Road to have a dedicated traffic signal, to exit the junction.
- **A119 junction** – The signalised junction proposed in the Business Case was ruled out as it was not in keeping with the rural nature of the area. An enlarged roundabout solution was reassessed and taken forward as the preferred solution.
- **Ware Road realignment** – Several options for the realignment works of the A602 to remove the bends at Whempstead Road and Sacombe Pound were considered. The selected option provides a gap between the existing A602 and the realigned A602. This has helped to reduce disruption to the travelling public during construction as traffic management measures such as temporary traffic lights are minimised and lengthy road closures are avoided.
- **Side roads** – Works to the side roads to improve the layout for certain accesses including Heath Mount School, Whempstead Road, Garden House and Beehive Cottages, Sacombe Hill Farm, Sacombe Pound and Stony Hills have all been designed to connect into the option chosen for the Ware Road realignment. The alterations have also taken account of the issues raised at public consultation by incorporating single lane dual carriageway at Sacombe Pound, and the incorporation of a space for cyclists to stop while waiting to cross the live traffic at Sacombe Pound and Stony Hills.

- **Stony Hills** – The business case required significant land take for the realignment of the northern arm of Stony Hills to create a T-junction with the A602. This has now been refined and the environmental impact and land take has been reduced.
- **Anchor Lane junction** – Improvements proposed in the Business Case to Anchor Lane junction have generally not been changed with only minor amendments to improve the flow of traffic.
- **A10 junction** – The segregated left-turn lane that was planned to link Ware and the A10 has been ruled out as too many residential properties and a number of utility cables were affected. The preferred option now includes the installation of part-time traffic signals.

The final proposals for the scheme have come as a result of refining the above options, environmental considerations identified through the EIA, and through consultation with the general public. The proposals that make up the Proposed Scheme included in the planning application are discussed in the next section.

4. The Proposals

The Proposed Scheme involves eight key road improvements along the A602. These will lead to reductions in queuing times, delay and improved journey reliability.

Hertford Road junction

1. Hertford Road junction

The existing roundabout will be replaced with a traffic signal T-junction. The traffic signals would be in operation full time. The road will be widened at the junction to two lanes in each direction, and a third lane added for right turning vehicles in the southbound direction. The existing subways will be widened and the footway/cycleway facilities will be retained. A small number of trees will need to be removed to accommodate the works.

Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell

2. A119 junction

The A119 junction will be widened to two lanes on each approach, and a segregated (allowing free flow of traffic rather than waiting at the junction) left-turn lane in the direction of Stevenage to Ware will be provided. The footway along the A119 will remain where it is and the footway from the roundabout towards Watton-at-Stone will be extended. An uncontrolled pedestrian crossing will be provided at the A119 traffic island.

3. Ware Road re-alignment

a. Ware Road

The A602 (Ware Road) will be realigned by a maximum of 80m to the north (see Figure 6). This new section of road will be single carriageway. Due to the existing undulating landscape, the road will be in cutting for parts of the route and be on embankments for others. A bridge crossing will be provided over the Dane End tributary.

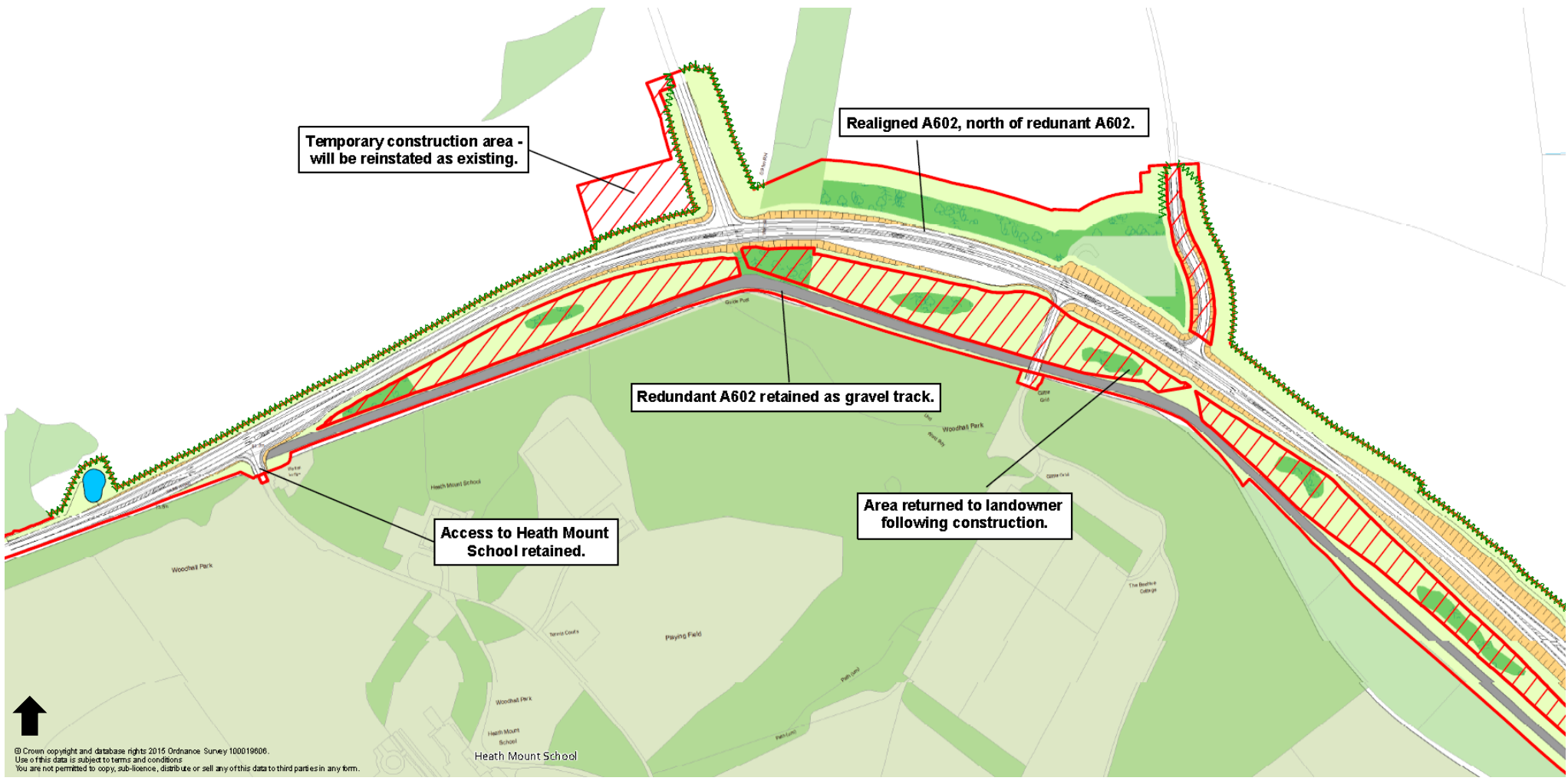
The realignment also requires localised widening to incorporate right-turn lanes at each of the following side roads:

- Access to Heath Mount School;
- Whempstead Road;
- Access to Garden House and Beehive Cottage;
- Sacombe Hill Farm access;
- Sacombe Pound; and
- Stony Hills realigned north junction.

The road will be widened at each of the above side road locations to allow space for vehicles to wait to turn into them without interrupting traffic flow.

b. Stony Hills junction

The northern arm of Stony Hills junction will be realigned to provide a T-junction with the A602. The existing southern section of the junction will be closed to traffic and converted into a Bridleway.



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Figure 6 – Realigned Ware Road (A602), north of existing.

Tonwell to/from Ware

4. Tonwell North junction

A deceleration lane will be added at Tonwell North junction, allowing traffic slowing down to turn left into the junction and move out of the way of traffic on the A602.

5. Anchor Lane junction

The junction at Anchor Lane will be increased in size to allow more vehicles to flow through it. Each entry and exit at the junction will be two lanes. The current footway along the A602 will remain and will be extended south to join the Public Right of Way.

6. Westmill Hamlet

Trees in the vicinity of the Westmill Hamlet junction will be trimmed back to allow for better sight lines for drivers waiting to turn out of the junction. The proposals include for a right turn ban into Westmill Hamlet. This would ensure that the traffic is not delayed by vehicles wanting to turn right into Westmill Hamlet. Vehicles wishing to access Westmill Hamlet would still be able to U-turn at the Anchor Lane roundabout and then turn left into Westmill Hamlet. A deceleration taper (specialised road markings) will be added to allow traffic slowing to turn left into the junction to move out of the way of traffic on the A602.

7. Westmill Road Improvements

The sharp bend on the A602 will be removed. A deceleration lane into the household waste recycling centre will be provided. The deceleration lane will allow extra space for vehicles queuing to enter the household waste recycling centre to move out of the way of A602 traffic.

8. A10 junction

Part-time traffic lights will be installed at the junction at the top of the slip roads. On the eastern approach to the roundabout an extra lane will be added. Some of the grass verge will be removed to accommodate this widening. On the north side of the A10 junction a combined footway/cycleway will be added. Uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points will be provided at all road crossings.

4.1 Construction Timescales

Construction is due to start in late 2016, provided the required planning permissions are granted. It is anticipated that construction will be finished by 2019, as this is a requirement of the funding.

Section	Anticipated construction period
Hertford Road junction	<p>The construction of Hertford Road junction is currently due commence in 2016 with a duration of 26 weeks, with works lasting into 2017.</p> <p>Works will also require 2 months of site preparation before work starts on site, and 3 months of inspection and handovers prior to opening.</p>
Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell	<p>The construction of the A119 roundabout is currently due to commence in 2018 with a duration of 20 weeks. These works will be followed by the Ware Road works lasting 52 weeks.</p> <p>Works will also require 3 months of site preparation before work starts on site, and 3 months of inspection and handovers prior to opening.</p>
Tonwell to/from Ware	<p>The Tonwell North junction, Anchor Lane, Westmill Hamlet, Westmill Road and A10 works are currently due to be constructed following the Hertford Road junction works, with works commencing in 2017 and lasting for 26 weeks.</p> <p>Two months of site preparation are required before work starts on site, and 3 months of inspection and handovers prior to opening.</p>

5. Consultation Process

Throughout the development of the Proposed Scheme a consultation programme has been undertaken to understand the views of local public, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders regarding the potential environmental impacts and to incorporate environmental design and mitigation into the proposals.

5.1 Business Case Consultation

The Local Transport Body (LTB) consulted on the Business Case for the Proposed Scheme during 2014, to consider if there was a sound strategic, financial and economic case for the project. As part of the Business Case, an Environmental Appraisal was undertaken, in line with the Department of Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance. Outcomes of this consultation fed into the decision by the LTB to agree funding in principle for the Proposed Scheme.

5.2 Pre-planning Application Consultation

Consultation on the Proposed Scheme and planning applications took place from May 2015 until 14th June 2015. The aim of the consultation was to gather public views and consider these as part of the refinement of the Proposed Scheme and the EIA prior to submitting the planning application. This process involved:

- Meetings with directly affected landowners;
- Public exhibitions in Stevenage, Watton-at-Stone and at Westmill Farm, which included display panels, technical experts and design team members on hand to discuss the Proposed Scheme;

- Exhibition panels on public view throughout the consultation period at County Hall;
- Feedback forms and information leaflets available from Parish Councils; and
- An online consultation portal which included links to the information available at the public exhibitions and a place to provide comments.

5.3 Scoping Opinion

A formal Scoping Report for the scheme was submitted in May 2015. The Scoping Report provided key statutory and non-statutory consultees and the public with an overview of the Proposed Scheme and set out the existing environmental conditions, a brief summary of likely effects and proposed assessment methodologies that will be followed within the EIA. Comments were invited back from Hertfordshire County Council and a number of other statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to ensure the scope of assessment was agreed between all parties. Responses received were considered and taken into account in on-going work on the EIA.

6. EIA findings

The EIA has been undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011 as amended and with reference to the standards and guidance published by the Highways Agency (now Highways England) titled the '*Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11: Environmental Assessment*'.

The purpose of the EIA has been to identify potential environmental effects¹, both positive and negative, of the proposed road scheme.

The assessment has considered the following aspects of the environment:

- Air Quality;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Landscape;
- Nature Conservation;
- Geology, Soils and Materials;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Effects on all Travellers (Pedestrians, Equestrians, Cyclists, Drivers);
- Community and Private Assets (Agricultural Land);
- Road Drainage and the Water Environment; and
- Cumulative effects (Effects that combine with one another to generate a larger effect).

The findings of the EIA are as detailed below. Key receptors identified in the findings below can be seen on Figure 7.

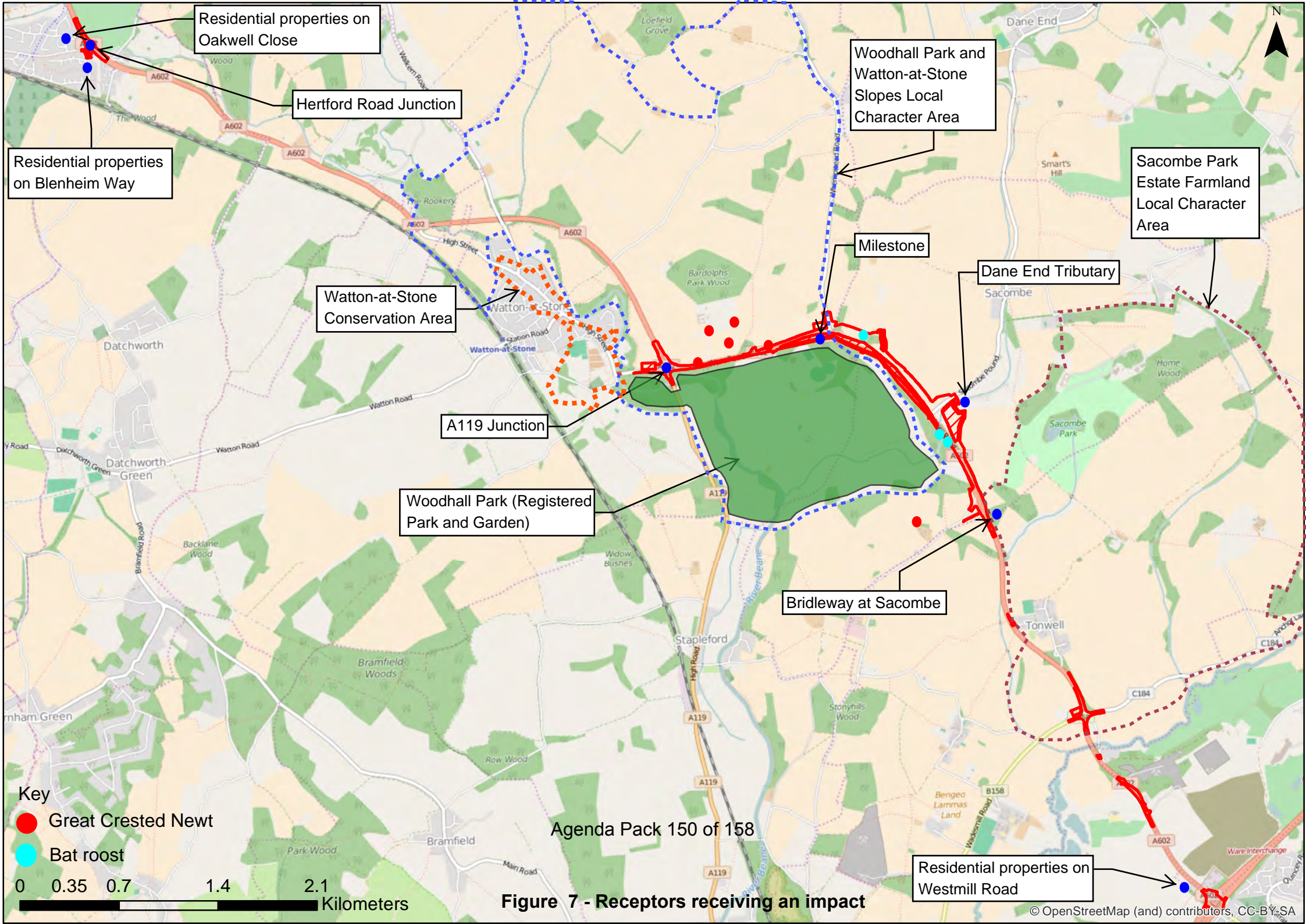
Air Quality

Following the DMRB screening methodology as described in the Scoping Report, the minimal change in traffic flow and realignment that would result from the Proposed Scheme, meant that impacts on air quality from traffic were considered insignificant, and no modelling or further assessment was required.

Following implementation of best practice dust management on the site suggests that there would be no significant negative effects during construction. Best practice dust management measures are outlined in a Construction Environmental Management Plan which the contractor who builds the scheme, will be required to follow in order to minimise emissions to air.

There are no significant negative effects anticipated during operation and therefore no mitigation is required.

¹ A change in the current situation which is a result of the Proposed Scheme. Agenda Pack 149 of 158



Residential properties on Oakwell Close

Hertford Road Junction

Woodhall Park and Watton-at-Stone Slopes Local Character Area

Sacombe Park Estate Farmland Local Character Area

Residential properties on Blenheim Way

Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area

Milestone

Dane End Tributary

A119 Junction

Woodhall Park (Registered Park and Garden)

Bridleway at Sacombe

Key
 ● Great Crested Newt
 ● Bat roost

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 Kilometers

Figure 7 - Receptors receiving an impact

Residential properties on Westmill Road

Cultural Heritage

A desk-based review of existing historical information within 1km of the A602, geophysical survey and trial trenching have been undertaken within the footprint of the Ware Road re-alignment.

The surveys identified some areas of archaeological potential. Archaeological remains within the proposed footprint of the works may experience slight to moderate adverse effects during construction due to ground disturbance caused by machinery. An archaeologist will be present on site to record any finds during construction. There are no negative effects caused to the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area. There may be a slight negative effect on a milestone which will need to be relocated as a result of the Proposed Scheme.

During operation of the Proposed Scheme there would be no direct negative effect upon heritage assets.

The Proposed Scheme would move away from the Woodhall Park Registered Park and Garden and this is assessed as a slight positive effect.

Landscape

A desk-based review of landscape character areas and a number of site visits by a landscape architect have been undertaken to understand the landscape context within the area.

The Proposed Scheme will have a significant negative effect on the Woodhall Park (Figure 8) and Watton-at-Stone Slope Local Character Area (LCA) during construction as the Ware Road section of the route and associated construction site will cut into this LCA changing the rural land use of the area.

During construction there is also likely to be significant negative effects upon residential dwellings on Blenheim Way, to the north-east edge of Bragbury End, at properties at Oakwell Close on the eastern edge of Bragbury End residential area and at residential properties to the north-west of Ware on Westmill Road, due to views towards construction works. The Bridleway at Sacombe, three public rights of way, and road users at Hertford Road junction and A119 junction, will also have significant negative temporary effects due to views towards construction works affecting those that use the facilities.

The maturing of proposed mitigation planting over the 15 year period from scheme opening will offset negative effects and provide localised benefits, see Figure 9 for an example of this.



Figure 8 - Woodhall Park



Figure 9 - Maturing planting, example from the Dane End Tributary crossing

Nature Conservation

Extensive habitat and protected species surveys have been undertaken between April 2014 and July 2015 for the majority of the central Watton-at-Stone to/from Tonwell section. All other sections are largely within the highway boundary and would require minimal land take in areas of low ecological value, as identified in initial surveys, therefore no further surveys were required in those sections. Surveys included:

- Phase 1 Habitat;
- Amphibians;
- Bats;
- Badgers;
- Reptiles;
- Otter and Water vole;
- White Clawed Cray Fish; and
- Hedgerows.

Potential negative effects have been identified for Local Wildlife Sites, great crested newts, barn owls and bats, as a result of the Proposed Scheme. Mitigation and enhancement measures will be provided as part of the scheme, including:

- Replanting of grassland and wildflowers on areas cleared for construction;
- Design of the new Dane End tributary to match that of the existing in terms of dimensions, with protection against erosion put in place while habitat establishes. Once vegetation has established, the channel will closely reflect the existing channel;
- Planting of 4.2km of species rich hedgerow, matching the composition of the existing hedgerows, and linking into sections of woodland to facilitate the movement of wildlife across the landscape;

- The installation of a tunnel to allow badgers to pass safely under the new road;
- Review of lighting proposals to prevent light spill affecting bats as they commute between their roosting and feeding sites;
- The installation of bat roost boxes near to lost roosting features such as trees;
- Amphibian exclusion fencing during construction and vegetative cover along Ware Road; and
- Sowing severed strips of land between the new and existing A602 with a wildflower seed mix rather than returning them to arable land, thereby increasing foraging habitat for Roman snail.

The incorporation of the above measures into the scheme design are predicted to result in no significant adverse effects on Nature Conservation.

A significant beneficial impact is predicted, as a result of:

- Provision of 4.2km of new hedgerow to replace that lost and enhance existing provision. A net gain of 2km of hedgerow will result from the Proposed Scheme.
- Provision of Roman snail habitat within all of the severed strips of land between the new and existing A602, positively benefiting the conservation of the species.

Geology, Soils and Materials

Baseline surveys have been used to inform the geology, soils and materials assessment. Potential receptors that may be impacted by the scheme include human health, biodiversity, groundwater and surface waters, and the built environment.

A Ground Investigation (GI) will be carried out prior to construction to obtain further information on the physical and

chemical properties of the ground beneath and around the site and inform the final design of the scheme. Appropriate action will be taken if unexpected contamination is found during the GI.

The scheme will include pollution prevention measures along the route. As a result, the impact of operation of the Proposed Scheme on human health and the built environment is not considered to cause any significant adverse effects.

Noise and Vibration

Following DMRB screening methods, the minimal change in traffic flows and re-alignment of the Ware Road are not expected to result in significant noise effects, therefore, no surveys or modelling of operational impacts was required.

Potential noise and vibration impacts during construction have been identified. Measures to minimise and manage these impacts are described in a Construction Environmental Management Plan which, the appointed contractor who will build the Proposed Scheme will be required to follow during construction. Further detailed assessment will be carried out ahead of construction as part of further planning documentation (Section 61 – Development Orders) preparation. This will help to determine the appropriate compaction methods and avoid any likely significant adverse effects during construction.

Effects on all Travellers (Pedestrians, Equestrians, Cyclists, Drivers)

Desk-based study, site visits and consultation to understand non-motorised user (Pedestrians, Equestrians and Cyclists) and driver activity in the area have been undertaken to inform the design and assessment.

During construction, the A602 will remain open and travellers will only be affected during short periods of time. With the implementation of diversions and traffic management

journey times may increase. However, this will be temporary and drivers on this route already experience long delays and so the effect is not considered significant.

During operation all existing rights of way and crossings will be maintained. The Proposed Scheme will reduce journey times and congestion and so driver stress is expected to be reduced leading to a significant beneficial effect.

Community

A desk-based study and public consultation were undertaken in order to examine the existing community provision.

Most of the facilities serving the area are within the nearby settlements of Stevenage, Broadwater, Watton-at-Stone, Tonwell and Ware. There are expected to be no significant adverse effects to these services.

It is considered that all possible measures to reduce any effects of the Proposed Scheme on the community have been included in the scheme design. Therefore, no further mitigation is proposed.

Private Assets

No buildings are affected by the Proposed Scheme. A desk-based study was undertaken to establish the likelihood of high quality agricultural land being present along the Proposed Scheme.

The land use of up to 21.2 hectares of agricultural fields, of Grade 2 and 3a quality (considered best and most versatile for agricultural use), will be changed during construction of the Proposed Scheme. However, the implementation of good practice and a soil resources plan will ensure that the soil resource is able to retain its agricultural functions and quality where construction sites are returned to agricultural use (approximately 6.4 hectares), and its other ecosystem functions where land is returned to tree and shrub planting.

No significant adverse effect is therefore expected to Private Assets as a result of the Proposed Scheme.

Road Drainage and the Water Environment

A desk-based study and drainage survey was undertaken in order to inform the design and assessment.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be followed by the contractor who constructs the scheme. Measures included within the plan, such as: sediment control; controlled storage of materials; restricting the use of polluting materials near receptors; and local flood control, reduce the potential for adverse impacts on the water environment. Effects are therefore not considered to be significant.

During operation, mitigation measures will be put in place to reduce the impact of flooding. These include providing additional landscaped areas to control and manage water at three locations along the A602. Floodplain compensation has been provided a Dane End tributary to ensure any change in flood levels is kept low as possible, resulting in a no significant adverse effect being predicted.

Cumulative Effects

Potential cumulative effects arise from the interaction between the various different environmental effects, as described above, as well as from interaction between the construction of the Proposed Scheme and other development projects. As there are currently no other committed developments in the area the cumulative assessment will only focus on the interaction between environmental effects. The following effects are envisaged:

- Significant negative adverse effect on public rights of way due to the combination of visual effects and the temporary diversions during construction. However, it should be noted that these effects would be temporary, localised at the diversion points and not affect engineering

routes. There will be no cumulative effects caused during operation as all public rights of way will be maintained.

- Significant adverse effect on the landscape and habitats during construction to Woodhall Park & Watton-at-Stone Slopes and Sacombe Park Estate Farmland as a result of hedgerow removal and the incorporation of manmade features. However, the maturing of proposed mitigation planting, including additional hedgerow, over the 15 year period from scheme opening would offset adverse effects and provide localised benefits. Additionally, a significant beneficial effect would result from the provision of additional habitat, such as 1.8km of extra hedgerow and specific great crested newt and Roman snail habitats, benefiting the wildlife in the local area.
- Residential properties may experience non-significant adverse individual effects as a result of air, noise, vibration, visual and accessibility impacts. However, due to appropriate techniques being implemented through construction, these effects will be managed appropriately, and as a result a combination of effects is not expected to result in a significant adverse effect on any residential receptor.

7. Mitigation

7.1 Design Measures

Throughout the design stage, where feasible, measures to prevent, reduce or minimise potential impacts upon the environment were incorporated into the developing design. Further mitigation measures are recommended and details are provided in the ES. These measures will be required as part of the delivery of the project.

A tunnel is provided for badgers, and hedgerows will be replanted for terrestrial habitat. Mitigation planting is proposed to provide links between severed habitats and to reduce visual impact. Further mitigation, such as bat roost boxes, is also being provided.

All existing footpaths will be retained and there will be improvements made at pedestrian crossing points.

It may be necessary to temporarily close or divert footpaths to allow the construction works and/or ensure sufficient separation between the works and the public; however, it should be noted that these effects would be temporary and localised.

7.2 Construction and Environmental Management Plan

When the scheme enters into the construction stage the appointed contractor will produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) based on recommendations from the Environmental Statement including a draft CEMP. This will describe methods by which they will meet environmental requirements. Implementation of the plan will be monitored by the relevant authorities.

The proposed CEMP will cover:

- Defining responsibilities for the environment;
- Protection measures for nature conservation and biodiversity;
- Noise control and hours of working;
- Traffic management;
- Materials and waste management;
- Air quality protection such as dust management;
- Management of complaints and corrective action processes; and
- Monitoring and reporting processes.

8. Next stage

After the planning application is submitted, the Planning Authority will undertake a period of statutory consultation within the 16 week statutory decision period. During this time the public can provide further comment on the application and the Environmental Statement to influence the decision making process.

9. Contact Information

The Environmental Statement and other supporting planning documents can be viewed at the planning offices for Hertfordshire County Council. They can also be downloaded via their online tool at:

www.hertsdirect.org/planning

If a hard copy of the Environmental Statement is required this can be requested, at cost (reflecting printing and distribution costs), from the address below.

Any comments on the application should be made directly to Hertfordshire County Council either via their online tool (link provided above), or at the address below:

A602 Improvements (Stevenage to/from Ware)
Planning Department
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Pegs Lane
Hertford
Hertfordshire
SG13 8DQ

If you have any queries please email:

A602@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Alternatively you may call:

0300 123 4040