



1

Limited vehicular access from country lane

Mature trees and dense hedgerows surrounding site

Figure 2.7: North east edge of the site at Townsend Lane Tree Nursery



Viewpoint location



2

First floors overlook the site

Potential vehicular access from Townsend Lane

Dense hedgerows surrounding site

Figure 2.8: North west edge of the site at Townsend Lane



4

Site sits within perceived settlement edge

Figure 2.9: View from surrounding fields towards site



Viewpoint location



5

Site largely screened

Figure 2.10: View from surrounding fields towards site

# 3

## GREEN BELT AND STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE

Between the three settlements of Luton, Harpenden and St. Albans lie green corridors that connect these areas to the wider strategic green network. The strategic landscape structure shows how Harpenden is well developed on its eastern and southern sides yet there is scope for development on the western edge, where the site is situated, without breaching the existing northern green corridor.

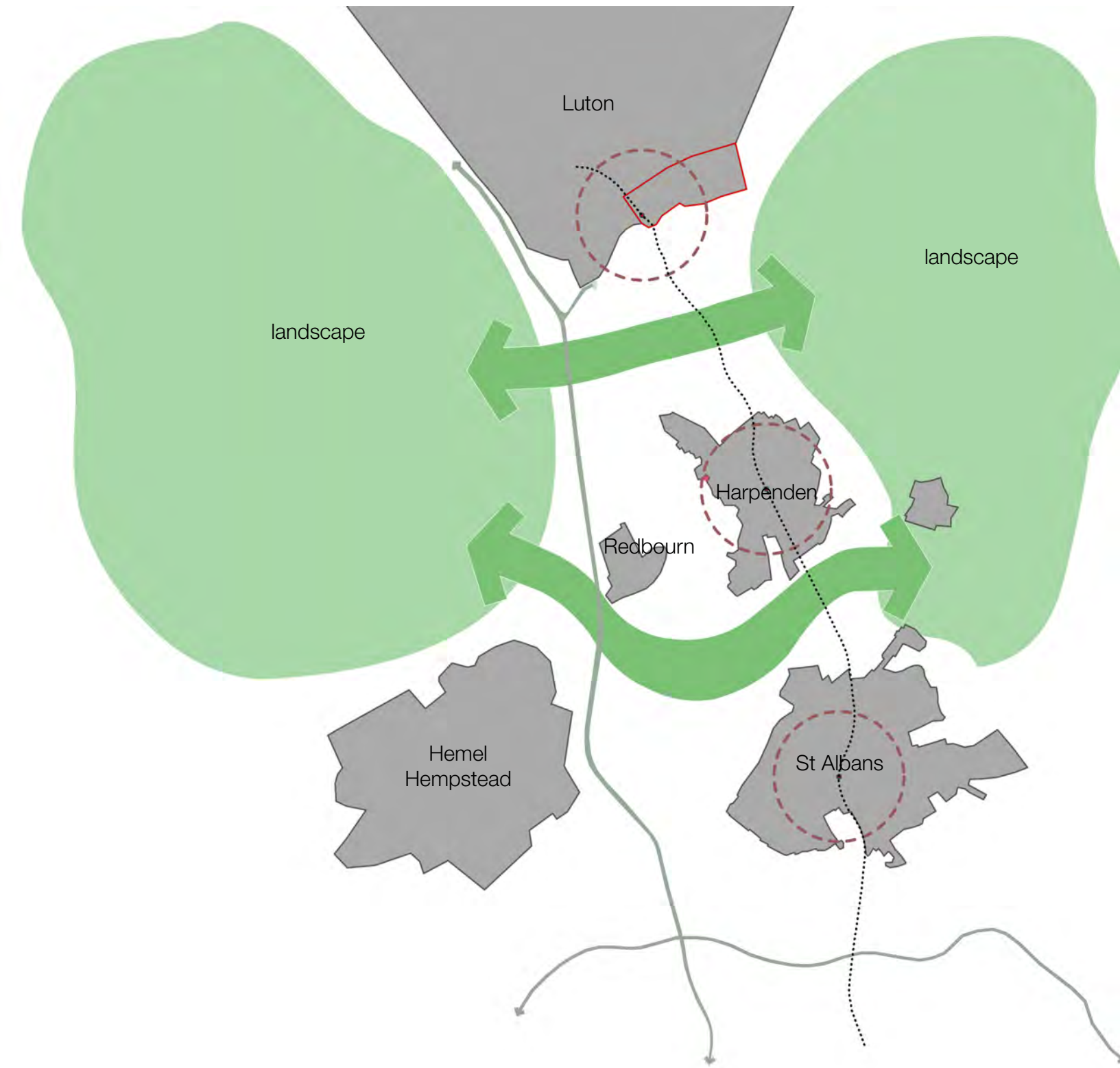


Figure 3.1: Strategic green infrastructure

### 3.1 THE WESTERN EDGE OF HARPENDEN

Given the small size of the site and its envelopment on three sides by built development, new homes can be accommodated without detriment to the settlement edge and without extending the settlement edge further into the countryside. In effect the site could be considered as an 'infill' site. Its small size and the visual containment are positive aspects that mean it can be released from the green belt without harm.

Figure 3.2 shows how the site lies within the general extent of the settlement edge in this part of Harpenden. The development of the site would not cause the urban area to intrude further into the countryside or reduce the gap and openness between Harpenden and Redbourn, or contribute towards their further coalescence.

The combination of structural landscape planting and a site layout that positions new homes away from the countryside edge in the south west would continue the attractive, low key and unobtrusive green edge to the town.

 Site boundary



Figure 3.2: Strategic analysis of a Green Belt between Harpenden and Redbourn

## 4

## EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The council has satisfied itself that there are exceptional circumstances that justify the release of some land from the green belt so that it can meet its full objectively assessed need.

It is our position that the particular circumstances pertaining to the site, including its sustainable location, the very limited harm to the green belt and the supporting investment that development of the site would have in the LEPs number 1 priority constitute 'very special circumstances' that would justify granting permission for the development in the green belt; however, at the current time our clients wish to firstly secure an allocation, following the planned approach.

## 4.1 SUSTAINABLE LOCATION

As set out below in section 5 of this document, Harpenden is a town and is 2nd in the settlement hierarchy for St Albans. The site is within an easy walk/cycle distance to the town centre, schools, shops, Harpenden railway station and other essential local facilities. In developing the site off Townsend Lane, future occupiers would not be reliant on private vehicle and the town centre would benefit from additional footfall.

## 4.2 MINIMISING HARM TO THE GREEN BELT

As detailed in this document in section 3, it is considered that the release of this site would have either limited or no harm to the wider green belt given its visual containment and the fact that it is developed on three sides. Indeed, it is contended that development of the site would present the opportunity for a strong 'green edge' to the western side of the site, adjoining the open countryside, which would strengthen the boundary between the settlement and green belt.

Given the presence of a hedgerow and ridge, and that the settlement would not extend beyond its current extremity, there would be a new defensible and identifiable edge created to the green belt.

## 4.3 SUPPORTING THE LEP'S NUMBER 1 PRIORITY

Rothamsted Research is the oldest agricultural research station in the world. The accumulated research records and soil and crop samples collected over 170 years make it unique. It is an institution of not just national but international significance.

The sphere of biotechnology and biological science has rapidly expanded from a broadly educational and research base to generating an annual turnover of over £50 billion for the UK economy and employing over 167,000 people (Source: UK Government, December 2012). The economic benefits and advantages for 'UK PLC' are widely recognised, as are the regional and local benefits. Rothamsted Research and Hertfordshire County Council are determined to ensure they continue to play a significant role in the Eastern Region Bio-Science cluster, the largest concentration of bioscience research and biotechnology commercial activity in Western Europe, centred on Cambridge. The government has identified AgriTech as one of eight disciplines with the greatest potential in the UK.

Additionally BRE, Rothamsted Research and The University of Hertfordshire have partnered, with the support of St Albans City and District Council and Oaklands College, to establish The Green Triangle with ambitions to create an internationally influential centre of excellence for green technology.

In the 2015 Autumn Statement the Chancellor declared the Green Triangle an Enviro-Tech Enterprise zone with effect from 1 April 2016, demonstrating central government's commitment to supporting and promoting the area nationally and internationally.

A significant public investment has been made in developing this economic enterprise, including funding through the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to help deliver the UK Agricultural Technologies Strategy.

The Hertfordshire LEP's number 1 priority is to maintain global excellence in science and technology. Rothamsted plays a significant role in the Eastern Region Bio-Science cluster, the largest concentration of bioscience research and biotechnology commercial activity in Western Europe.

The Lawes Agricultural Trust is a registered charity that aids the advancement of agricultural science through providing support for Rothamsted Research. In association with this recent growth in interest and profile it is essential that Rothamsted Research continues to look to the future and makes provision wherever possible for sustainable expansion. Economic activity, based on R&D, is growing rapidly and there is fierce international competition to capitalise on new breakthroughs.

Release of this site for development is part of an overarching strategy for the Trust to support the science-based economy Post-Brexit and Post-COVID. Hill considers that, in addition to the reasons already advanced in relation to housing need, sustainability and limited green belt contribution of the site, release of the land will assist the Trust and support its work as part of its wider strategy to support the science-based economy Post-Brexit and Post-COVID and represents an additional 'exceptional circumstances' to release the site.

## 4.4 CONCLUSION

If the District's housing needs are to be met, housing affordability issues tackled and the local economy supported there is a need to review the Green Belt. In addition to these representing the exceptional circumstances to justify a review of the Green Belt and the release of land, there are additional exceptional circumstances particular to the context of the site which justify the release of land at Townsend Lane, which are included below:

- The need to deliver new homes in Harpenden, and the wider district
- Inherent constraints on land supply and consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the green belt
- The sustainable location of this site, adjoining the existing shops and services of Harpenden
- The very limited harm to the green belt
- Supporting investment in the LEP's number 1 priorities
- The reinvestment of receipts in Harpenden, to aid the local economy
- The single ownership of the land and the subsequent confidence of delivery
- The benign ownership context that provides a locally based custodian of significant standing to control quality and the future management of the site.

It is considered that the delivery of new housing, the site's sustainable location, the limited role of this site in performing a green belt function, the opportunity to create a stronger defensible green belt boundary and the supporting investment in the LEP's number 1 priorities would outweigh any potential harm to the green belt in this particular location and planning case for 'exceptional' and / or 'very special circumstances' can be made.

As such the council can have confidence that allocating the site for new homes will not harm or undermine the green belt, and that supporting this proposal enables the Trust to plan its future investment in its facilities with certainty, reducing the exposure of the charity to planning risk, and which would ultimately support the LEP's priorities.



5

THE TOWN

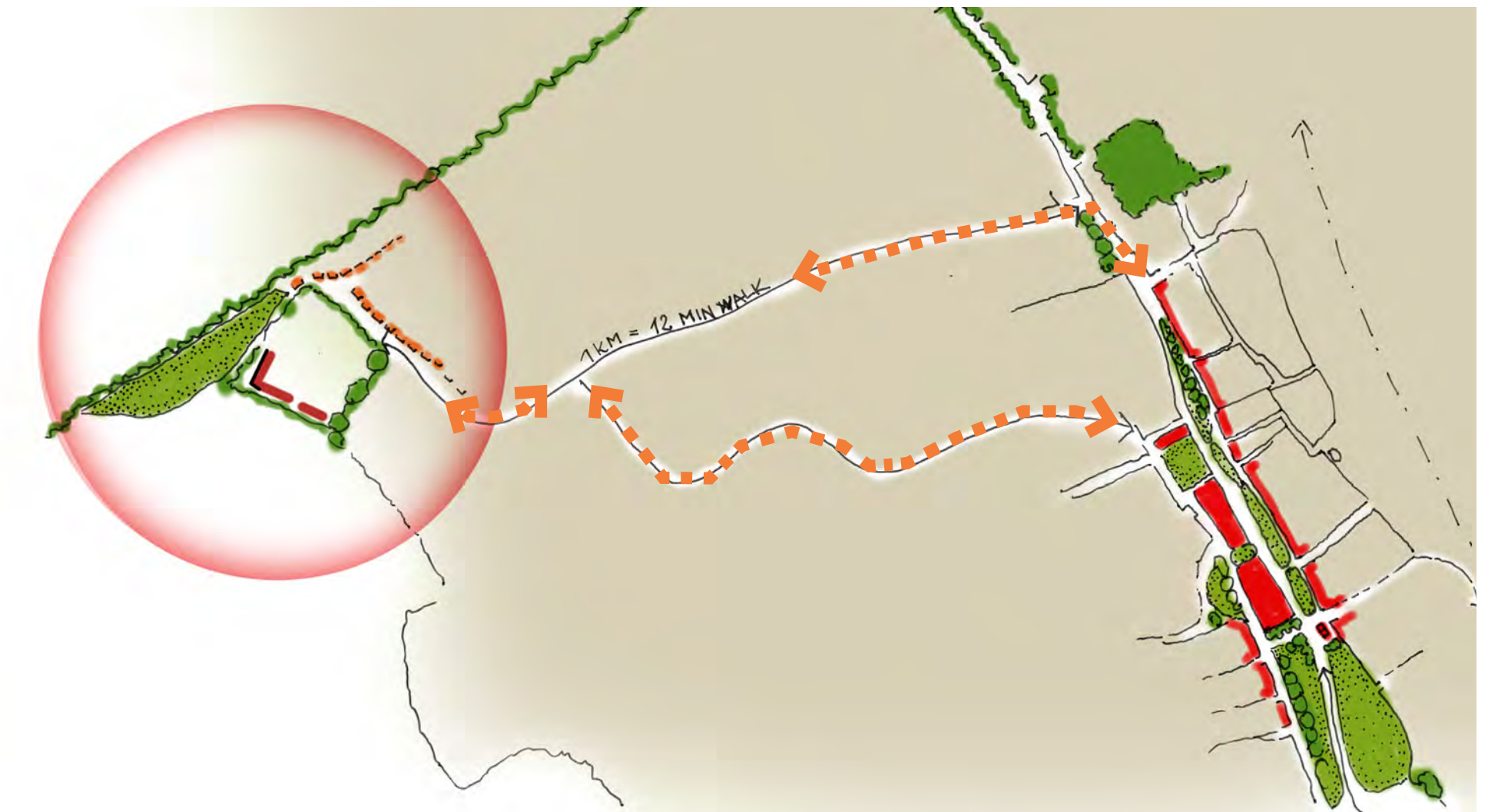


Figure 5.1: Harpenden High Street is within a 12 minute walk of the site

5.1 TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

The site is well integrated with the town. The town centre can easily be reached via pleasant residential streets located within Harpenden's historic conservation area. The diagram illustrates how close the site is to the High Street, which can be reached on foot within 12 minutes.

There is an excellent range of facilities along Harpenden High Street, including banks, a library, churches, GP surgery, restaurants, shops, cafés, pharmacies, florists, a veterinary practice, car dealers and garages and a petrol station.



ATTRACTIVE STREETS TO THE TOWN CENTRE



Figure 5.2: Attractive local vernacular



Figure 5.3: Attractive vegetation and landscaping



Figure 5.4: Attractive tree lined streets

## 5.2 LOCAL FACILITIES

Diagrams to the right present a summary of accessibility from the site to facilities including the town centre, public transport and the nearest schools.

### Proximity to town centre

As mentioned above, the town centre is a walkable distance away from the site, sitting within a 12 minute walking range to the town's core.



Figure 5.5: Access from site to town centre



- The site
- Main footpath, cycle route
- Town centre
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Minor road
- Railway
- Existing bus stop

### Public transport facility

A number of bus routes including the 321, 357 and 366 provide services from near the site to Harpenden town centre, Watford, St Albans, London Colney, Hatfield and Luton.

Harpenden also has a railway station in the town centre, which offers regular services to London and between Luton and Bedford to Brighton via Gatwick Airport.

Figure 5.6: Access from site to public transport

### Proximity to the nearest schools

There are three schools in close proximity to the site. The immediate ones are Roundwood Park High School and Roundwood Primary School just north of site adjacent to Nickey Line. Wood End primary school lies further to the north but is still within an easy reach.



- The site
- Main footpath, cycle route
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Minor road
- Railway

Figure 5.7: Access from site to primary and secondary schools

# 6

## DESIGN INSPIRATIONS

This chapter brings together earlier analysis of the site and its context to establish general design principles that can inform proposed layouts.

### 6.1 LOCAL EXAMPLES

#### Sensitive urban edges treatment

- Retain existing hedgerow where appropriate to keep green boundaries to the development
- Building line on the countryside edge set back and punctuated
- Local scale and style of development - detached and semi detached buildings



#### Building and urban character

An analysis of the area surrounding the site has identified a number of key elements which can inform the character of the new development. Housing located on adjacent streets such as Claygate Avenue, Alders End Lane and Barns Dene is traditional in nature and is typical of 21st century housing. There is a variety of design styles located on the adjacent streets as can be seen from the images to the right. The materials used are predominantly red brick with either concrete or clay tiles. A number of houses have vertical tiles to the external walls responding to the vernacular of older properties in Harpenden.

The character of housing beyond the junction of Townsend Lane and Salisbury Lane begins to change, becoming simpler in form and more limited in the use of materials. Red brick is still the dominant material with a number of homes clad with vertical tiles.

Gables are common along Townsend Lane with houses being set back from the footpath and with grass verges and front gardens forming a 'green' zone between highway and building.

The character of both the built form and urban environment is dominated by the following elements:

- Buildings set back from footpath
- Grass verge often with trees lining highway
- Red brick often with hanging tiles
- Pitched roof with either concrete or clay tile
- Simple casement windows

These are considered the forms and materials upon which to base the design of the new dwellings.

As indicated by the images the character of housing on Townsend Lane leading off Luton Road and towards the junction of Salisbury Avenue has a distinctive style with strong forms and a mixture of red brick, hanging tile and render. Roofs create interesting forms and add to the overall character of the streetscape.

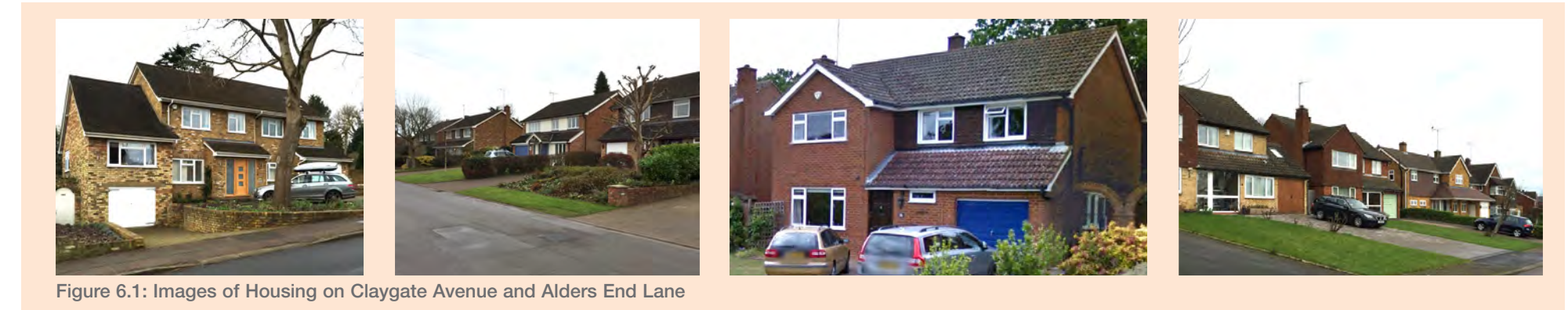


Figure 6.1: Images of Housing on Claygate Avenue and Alders End Lane

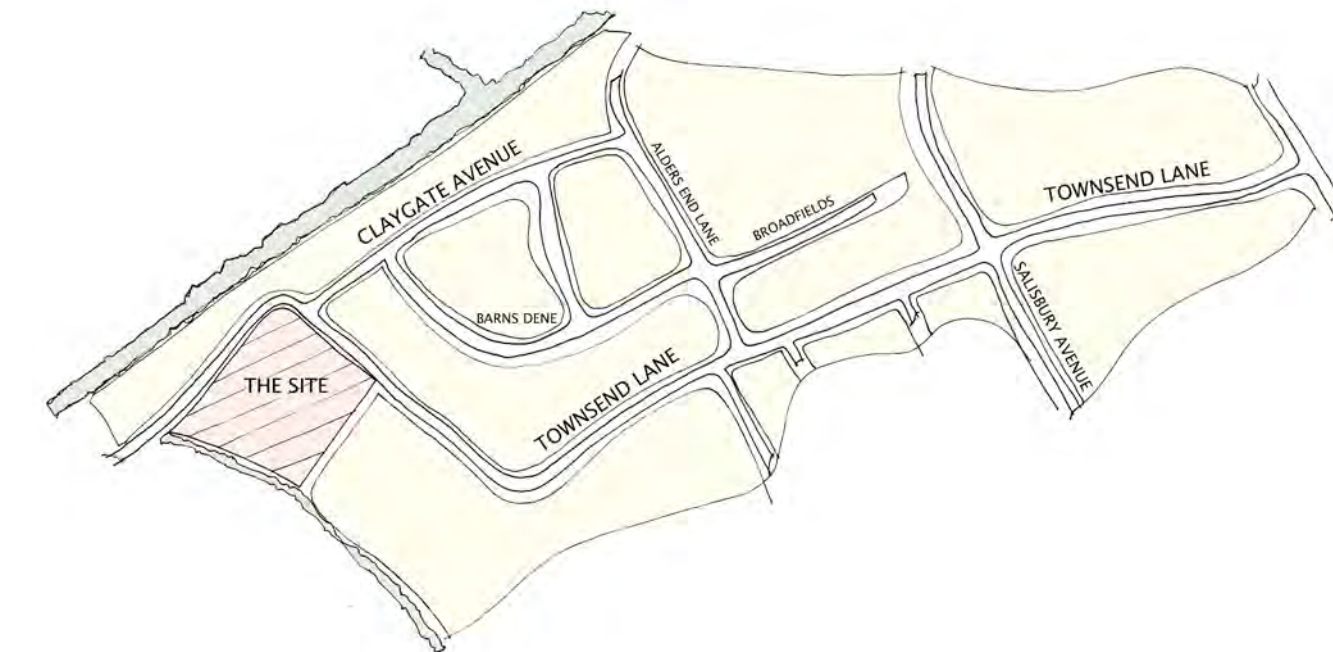


Figure 6.2: Images of housing located on Townsend Lane leading up to Salisbury Avenue



Figure 6.3: Images of houses typical to Townsend Lane beyond Salisbury Avenue leading toward the site

Densities in the neighbouring urban area

Densities in surrounding urban areas vary from 5 to 14 dwellings per hectare. Density is not always a good measure of design quality. The local plan identifies a need for more smaller housing types, especially 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation and that will inevitably drive up density if efficient use is to be made of land. What is important is that in doing so the design reflects existing character, for example, flats can be accommodated into buildings which look like large detached houses. It is therefore considered that a development density in the order of 30dph would be appropriate and could be accommodated in this suburban location. This would make best use of the land but still deliver new housing that would reflect the local context and character.

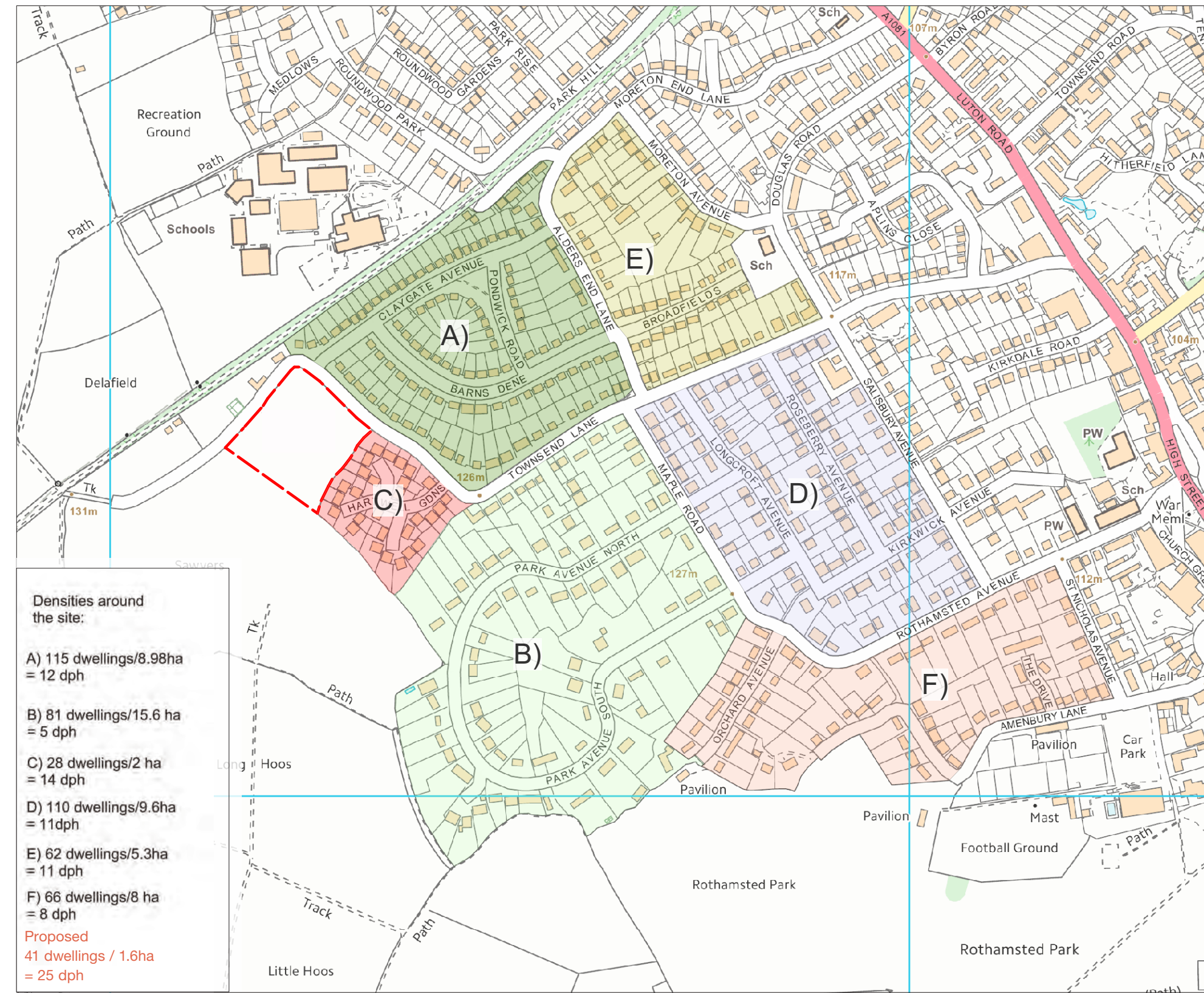


Figure 6.4: Densities in surrounding residential areas

6.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- A strong relationship with existing buildings along Townsend Lane and Claygate Avenue
- Screened backs of the properties at Hartwell Gardens
- Parking that does not dominate public areas
- Permeable site for walking and cycling
- Maintaining a soft, green approach via Townsend Lane to the south west
- Set back of buildings from the south west site boundary
- South west building line punctuated
- Density increasing towards the centre and north east of the site



Figure 6.5: Design principles

# 7 DELIVERY



Examples of new homes built by Hill

## 7.1 Suitability

The site is well located in terms of proximity to the town centre, local amenities, facilities, public transport and schools. There are no environmental, topographical, contamination, geo-technical, or flood risk constraints to the development of the site, and it can provide up to 50 dwellings (including affordable homes) along with generous amenity / play space. It is ideally suited to provide high quality homes in an area of high demand where market and affordable homes are needed to support continued economic growth.

## 7.2 Availability and deliverability

The site is in the single ownership of the Lawes Agricultural Trust and is immediately available for development. There are no significant enabling or remediation works required and no major investments required in infrastructure that would delay delivery and occupation of the dwellings.

The pictures in this section show the quality of architecture and design delivered by Hill



# 8 CONCLUSIONS

- This document illustrates that there are exceptional circumstances relating to this site, given its sustainable location, very limited harm to the green belt and support for the LEP's number 1 priorities
- Locating new homes on this site would not affect the openness of the landscape character, with a combination of landform, existing buildings and vegetation providing a high level of enclosure
- The new homes would not extend development beyond the general settlement edge in the surrounding area
- From the countryside the site is perceived as being located within the settlement being enclosed on three sides
- Any visual effects would be limited to the immediate locality
- The single landowner is a local charitable trust with a long-term interest in the well-being of the local community and environmental quality of the neighbourhood. The site will therefore be carefully and sensitively developed in a manner consistent with Rothamsted Research and the Trust's ethos and local and international standing
- New homes here will not lead to urban sprawl or the coalescence of Harpenden with Redbourn
- Overall, the site has a very low sensitivity in landscape terms and can be released from the green belt without harm, to provide much needed houses
- Consequently, any potential harm to the purposes of the green belt in this location is clearly outweighed by the urgent need for new homes in the district and the support this particular land release will give to Rothamsted Research and

the wider advancement of UK Agri-Tech and Bio-Science industries. These constitute exceptional circumstances justifying the allocation of this site for new homes

- The site is largely unconstrained, is not within an area of flood risk and it is considered that it can provide up to 50 dwellings in combination with generous amenity space.

The site can therefore accommodate new homes without harm to the green belt, and is immediately available for development. As such this sustainable site should be allocated now for new homes or prioritised for allocation in the new Local Plan.





TERENCE  
O'ROURKE

**London**  
23 Heddon Street Street London W1B 4BQ

**Birmingham**  
Enterprise House 115 Edmund Street Birmingham B3 2HJ

**Bournemouth**  
Everdene House Deansleigh Road Bournemouth BH7 7DU

Telephone 6755  
Email  
[www.tortld.co.uk](http://www.tortld.co.uk)



© Terence O'Rourke Ltd 2021  
Document designed by Terence O'Rourke Ltd

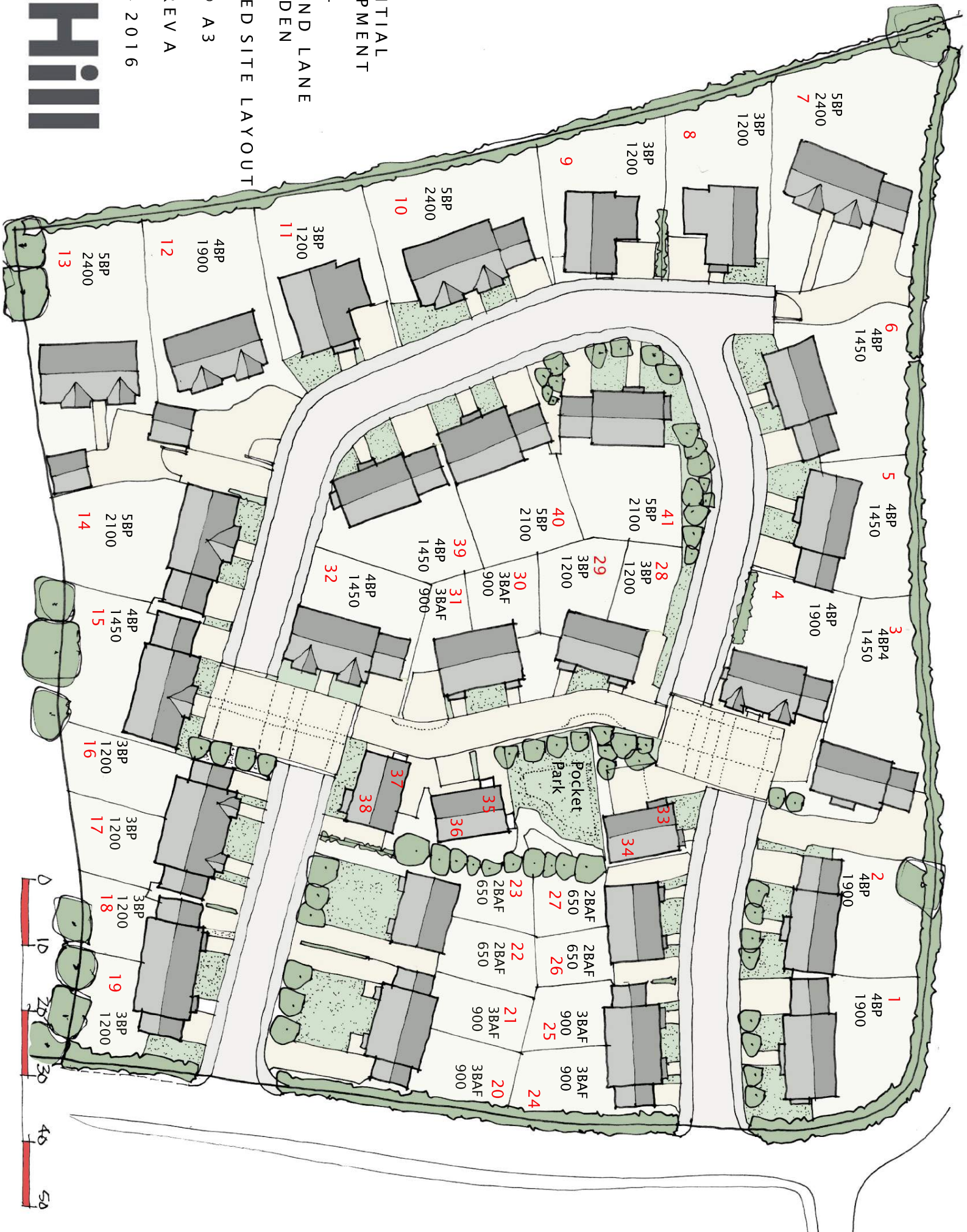
RESIDENTIAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
LAND AT  
TOWNSEND LANE  
HARPENDEN

PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

1 : 5 0 0 @ A 3

SK001 REV A

1 5 - 0 2 - 2 0 1 6



5BP 2400  
7

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

5BP 2400

5BP 2400

3BP 1200

4BP 1900

5BP 2400

5BP 2100

5BP 2400

4BP 1450

4BP 1450

4BP 1900

5BP 2100

5BP 2100

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

4BP 1450

4BP 1450

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

4BP 1450

4BP 1450

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

4BP4 1450

4BP 1900

4BP 1900

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

3BP 1200

4BP 1900

4BP 1900

2BAF 650

2BAF 650

2BAF 650

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

3BAF 900

Pocket Park





TOWNSEND LANE  
HARPENDEN  
INDICATIVE SITE LAYOUT  
JULY 2017  
SCALE - 1:500





**Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd**

78 Beckenham Road  
Beckenham  
Kent BR3 4RH

Tel: 020 8693 2207  
e-mail: [geoinv@btinternet.com](mailto:geoinv@btinternet.com)

**LAND AT**  
**TOWNSEND LANE,**  
**HARPENDEN,**  
**HERTFORDSHIRE**  
**SITE INVESTIGATION REPORT**

**For**

**Hill Partnerships Ltd**

**Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd**  
**78 Beckenham Road**  
**Beckenham**  
**Kent BR3 4RH**

**Job No. 2015/2631**

**October 2015**

Prepared By	Checked By		Status	Date	Issue No
Birgit Schoer BA BSc MSc FGS	Albert Prince BSc MCMI FIDIagE FGS		Final	22.10.2015	1

This is a controlled copy

This site investigation report has been prepared by Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd for the use of Hill Partnerships Ltd; and any duty of care to another party is excluded. Any other party using or intending to use this information for any other purpose should seek the prior written consent of Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd.

This report discusses and assesses published information on local ground conditions and presents the records of an environmental and geotechnical site investigation carried out by Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd in August 2015. The comments given in this report, and the opinions expressed therein, are based on the ground conditions at the time of the investigation, together with any conjectural interpretations of conditions in areas between excavations. There may, however, be other conditions not revealed by the work discussed here, which have not been taken into account in this report. The conclusions reached are those that can reasonably be determined from the sources of information referred to in the report and from our knowledge of current professional practice and standards. Any limitations resulting from the data are identified where possible but both these and our conclusions may require amendment should additional information become available. Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for any data derived from other reports used to produce this report.

The comments made on groundwater conditions are based on observations made at the time of the investigation. It should be noted that groundwater levels may vary due to seasonal and other causes.

This report is limited to the aspects of contamination and the analytes specifically discussed. No liability is accepted for any other aspects of contamination or pollution incidents that may be sudden or gradual in nature. No undertakings can be given as to the possibility of future changes in the conditions at the site.

The report is only intended for use in the stated context. Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd will not be responsible for any use of the information, either in part or as a whole, for any purpose other than for which it was prepared. Copyright in this report is owned by Geo-Environmental Investigations Ltd and it may not be published, reproduced or adapted without their consent.