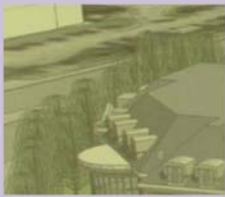




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Date: November 2014

Land off Hilldyke Road,
Wheathampstead

**Initial Landscape and
Visual Assessment and
Green Belt Boundary
Review**

Prepared by
CSa Environmental Planning

On behalf of
Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Report No: CSa/2067/01

Date: November 2014

Land off Hillydyke Road,
Wheathampstead

Initial Landscape and Visual Assessment Green Belt Boundary Review

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On behalf of
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6523

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Appendices

Appendix A: Site Location Plan (Including Photo Locations)

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Appendix D: Extract from MAGIC and Heritage Information

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Appendix F: Green Belt Review Areas

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 CSa Environmental Planning has been commissioned by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd to prepare an initial landscape and visual assessment for the land off Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead, in order to assess the suitability of the Site for residential development and to inform the Council's emerging Strategy Plan. The location of the Site is illustrated on the Site Location Plan at **Appendix A** and on the Aerial Photograph at **Appendix B**.
- 1.2 This assessment describes the existing landscape character and quality of the Site as well as its ability to accommodate development. It also includes a brief commentary on how the development would relate to local topography and other identified landscape opportunities and constraints.
- 1.3 This assessment also considers the impact of releasing the Site from the Green Belt in terms of the functions and purposes of the Green Belt, as well as the nature and durability of the proposed Green Belt boundaries.
- 1.4 Finally, this assessment considers the current Green Belt boundary and the landscape constraints to development on the periphery of the settlement.

Methodology

- 1.5 This assessment is based on site visits undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architects in February 2013.
- 1.6 In landscape and visual impact assessments, a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from any residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with general public access). This report therefore considers the potential impact of the development on both landscape character and visibility.
- 1.7 Photographs contained within this document (**Appendix C**) were taken using a digital camera with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm, to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances images have been combined to create a panorama.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

Site Context

- 2.1 The Site extends to approximately 3.50 hectares and lies on the south eastern edge of Wheathampstead, south of Hilldyke Road. The Site comprises an enclosed field situated on a south east facing slope with tree lined hedgerows along the boundaries.
- 2.2 Wheathampstead is a nucleated settlement, aligned along the High Street (B651)/The Hill with the centre of the settlement focused along the High Street south of Mount Road and north of Church Street. The High Street divides the settlement into roughly equal areas to the west and east and lies around 200m west of the Site. Beyond the settlement is a gently undulating landscape of irregular shaped fields, mainly laid to pasture, interspersed with areas of broadleaf woodland.
- 2.3 Wheathampstead initially developed along what is now the Marford Road and High Street, which runs directly through the town, connecting surrounding settlements such as Welwyn Garden City with Harpenden as well as Wheathampstead with St Albans. According to the 2001 Census, the population of Wheathampstead was approximately 6,000.
- 2.4 Housing to the north of the Site, including those along Davys Close, Hilldyke Road, Beech Crescent and Vale Court adjacent to the Site, comprise terraced properties, many of which have integrated parking, built during the 1970s and 1980s. The area is also marked by the presence of three storey blocks of flats, located in groups of three within the surrounding residential area. The dwellings here do not reflect the local historic vernacular of the area.
- 2.5 Housing along Saxon Road to the north west of the Site comprises semi-detached red brick houses with modest front and rear gardens, dating from the late 1960s.
- 2.6 Agricultural fields with tree lined hedgerows characterise the area south of the Site. Medium sized fields and pockets of woodland link together to create a largely enclosed landscape which separates Wheathampstead from the neighbouring settlements of Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and Harpenden.
- 2.7 The eastern boundary of the Site consists of a mature tree lined hedgerow with a scrubby base which follows the entire length of Dyke Lane.
- 2.8 East of Dyke Lane lies a Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising a late Iron Age 'enclosed oppidum', described as a fortified administrative centre. The Devil's Dyke runs to the east of Dyke Lane, comprising a wooded area with a deep ditch, thought to be part of the fortifications of the oppidum.

- 2.9 Beech Hyde Farm lies approximately 200m south east of the Site. The farm was rebuilt in the 1870s as a Model Farm, based on a distinctive quadrangular plan and containing worker's cottages, brick buildings arranged around a courtyard and several barns.
- 2.10 A continuous line of mature trees defines the southern boundary of the Site and separates it from the arable fields to the south.
- 2.11 Approximately 750m to the south west of the Site lies Nomansland Common Local Nature Reserve ('LNR'). The LNR is a well wooded area in the valley below the Site and an important local recreational resource.

National Landscape Character

- 2.12 'The Character Map of England' (a national assessment of landscape character by the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Agency) and English Nature (now Natural England)) identifies the Site as lying within the Chilterns (Area 110).
- 2.13 The Character Map describes the Chilterns as consisting of a network of scattered villages and farmsteads, some of medieval origin and displaying traditional materials such as brick, flint and clay tiles. The enclosed and intimate character of the valleys contrasts with the open plateau top. The prominent plateau has extensive views and is accompanied by chalk hills, where an extensive dip slope leads to many dry valleys, largely invaded by scrub. The agricultural landscape is dominated by hedges, trees and small woodlands.

Local Landscape Character

- 2.14 Hertfordshire County Council has undertaken a detailed landscape character assessment which divides the county into a series of landscape character areas. It identifies the Site as falling within Area 102, Ayres End Valleys and Ridges local character area. The Site lies in the north of this character area, which is described as having a network of interconnecting dry valleys with a sense of rural seclusion despite the close proximity of larger settlements on the higher ground. Key characteristics include:
- Visual containment enhanced by small and medium sized woodland groups located in the upper reaches of the valleys.
 - Quiet area with few visual detractors except the A1081 and mainline railway to the west.
 - Narrow lanes and numerous recreational facilities related to equestrian activities, community woodland and playing fields which occur around rural settlements.

- Areas served by narrow, winding lanes lined by dense mixed hedgerows with land uses such as mixed arable fields and occasional recreational uses.
 - Locally prominent built edges to adjacent settlements.
- 2.15 The Landscape Character Assessment includes an evaluation which considers the condition and robustness of the area. It concludes that the area has a moderate condition and moderate robustness, and sets the strategy for management as 'improve and conserve'.
- 2.16 Wheathampstead is highlighted as having a 'raw built edge' to the open countryside at the settlements southern boundary. The majority of views from the countryside are screened by woodland belts and ridgelines.

Statutory Landscape Designations

- 2.17 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') (See **Appendix E**) shows that the Site is not subject to any statutory designations for landscape character or quality.
- 2.18 East of the Site lies the Belgic Oppidum, designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, incorporating the fields between Devil's Dyke in the east and the Slad in the west, with the southern extent reaching to the boundary of Beech Hyde Farm.
- 2.19 The map also identifies the extent of Nomansland Common LNR, and an area of Ancient Woodland which lies approximately 1km to the north east of the Site.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

- 2.20 There are no Listed Buildings within the Site, however the Wheathampstead Conservation Area which is focused along the High Street/The Hill to the north west of the Site, contains many Listed Buildings. At its closest point, the Conservation Area lies approximately 200m from the Site, and the closest Listed Buildings to the Site are numbers 76A and 76B The Hill, which are Grade II Listed dwellings. There is no intervisibility between the Site and these Listed Buildings or the Conservation Area.
- 2.21 The Old Beech Hyde and associated barn (Grade II Listed) lie approximately 700 metres to the south east of the Site, along Beech Hyde Lane, from where the existing built-up edge of Wheathampstead is visible.

3.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')

3.1 The Site falls within the Green Belt. Green Belt policy 9 (paragraphs 79 and 80) of the NPPF states that the essential character of Green Belts is their openness, their permanence and their ability to serve the following functions:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Local Policy

3.2 St Albans City and District Council ('SACDC') is currently in the process of preparing its new Strategic Local Plan and Detailed Local Plan. The saved policies in the District Local Plan Review 1994 are only relevant so long as they are consistent with policies in the NPPF.

3.3 The Local Plan Proposals Map shows the Site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, which wraps around the settlement edge of Wheathampstead.

3.4 The Site was covered by Policy 104 Landscape Conservation, which states that permission will only be granted for development proposals which pay regard to setting, siting, design and external appearance in order to preserve and enhance the quality of the landscape throughout the District.

Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment

3.5 A Green Belt review has been undertaken on behalf of the St Albans City and District Council to assess the various functions of different areas of the Green Belt within the District. The Site forms part of the larger study parcel known as GB43A, which covers the land to the south east of Wheathampstead, and which extends to Hatfield Garden Village in the south east and Sandridge to the south. The Site is located within the north west of this parcel, along the existing edge of Wheathampstead.

3.6 The study concludes that Parcel GB43A offers:

- limited or no contribution to checking sprawl;
- partial contribution to preventing settlements merging;

- a significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside;
 - limited or no contribution towards protecting the setting of the settlement; and
 - a significant contribution towards maintaining the settlement pattern.
- 3.7 The strategic study parcels which were judged to contribute least to Green Belt purposes were then further subdivided into 'strategic land' and 'small-scale sub-areas' for further assessment. The land south of Hilldyke Road which comprises the Site for this Initial Landscape and Visual Assessment, is identified as one of the eight small-scale parcels which contribute least to the Green Belt purposes, and is known as site SA-SS7.
- 3.8 The study states that parcel SA-SS7 is a very small area of land, which when assessed in isolation, does not restrict sprawl, prevent merging, preserve setting or maintain local gaps.
- 3.9 From our assessment of the Site in relation to the Green Belt purposes, as set out in Section 6 of this document, we would agree with the findings of the Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment.

Background Studies and Technical Documents to inform the SLP

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ('SHLAA') 2009

- 3.10 The Site has been assessed in the Council's SHLAA and it was concluded that it should be given further consideration for housing development. Although the Site lies within the Green Belt, the report states that this constraint could be overcome by altering the Green Belt boundary in the LDF, and that there are no constraints to development that could not be overcome (based on current surveys). From our initial landscape assessment of the Site we would concur with that assessment.

4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

Site Description

- 4.1 The Site comprises a single rectangular agricultural field, currently in arable use. The north of the Site is bound by a vegetated edge consisting of mature trees and scrub, set alongside Hilldyke Road. The Site boundary to the northeast follows an indentation to accommodate the rear gardens of the properties on Davys Close, and is marked by timber fences and a mature tree and shrub line.
- 4.2 The Site is bound to the west by the rear gardens of the properties on Vale Court and Beech Crescent, and the boundaries are marked by timber fences and a well-established tree and shrub line.
- 4.3 The eastern Site boundary is formed by a line of trees and scrub adjacent to Dyke Lane, while the southern boundary comprises a single line of mature trees.

Tree Preservation Orders

- 4.4 There are no Tree Preservation Orders covering trees within or adjacent to the Site. This was confirmed by the Council's planning department.

Public Rights of Way

- 4.5 No public footpaths occur within the Site. There is a public footpath running from the south west corner of the Site, linking The Hill in the west, across the fields, to Dyke Lane in the vicinity of Beech Hyde Farm in the east. The Hertfordshire Way connects local towns and villages to St Albans and runs north-south along Dyke Lane, following the eastern boundary of the Site.

Topography

- 4.6 The Site is situated along an south-east facing ridge, with a high point of approximately 115m AOD, located at roughly the mid-point of the western Site boundary. The Site slopes down to a low point of approximately 100m AOD along the eastern boundary with Dyke Lane.
- 4.7 The land slopes south and eastwards down to Nomansland Common and Beech Hyde Farm, before rising again to a number of local high points, including the top of the Belgic Oppidum area at 111m AOD along Beech Hyde Lane, the Chalkdell Farm area to the east of the Site at approximately 119m AOD, the area at Coleman Green at approximately 115m AOD and Hillend Farm south west of the Site at approximately 120m AOD.

- 4.8 The River Lea lies to the north of Wheathampstead at 75m AOD, with the majority of the settlement situated on the north facing slope forming the southern valley edge.

Visibility

- 4.9 The nature of the local topography and extent of existing vegetation and built development means that the Site is largely screened from public vantage points. However the Site's location on a south east-facing slope results in the boundary vegetation being visible in middle and long distance views from the south and east. The key views of the Site are considered below.

North

Near distance views

- 4.10 There are glimpsed views of the Site through the intervening vegetation from Hilldyke Road to the north of the Site (Photograph 1). There are some partial views of the Site through the intervening vegetation along the Site boundary from the rear gardens and windows of houses along Davys Close.

Middle and long distance views

- 4.11 Due to the intervening development and the local topography, there are no middle or long distance views of the Site.

West

Near distance views

- 4.12 Views of the Site from the rear windows and gardens of the houses along Vale Crescent and Beech Crescent are largely screened by the mature vegetation along the Site boundary, although there are glimpsed views where gaps in the vegetation occur.

Middle and long distance views

- 4.13 Due to the intervening development, there are no middle or long distance views of the Site.

South

Near distance views

- 4.14 Views of the Site from the public footpath to the south are filtered by the line of trees on the southern Site boundary.

Middle and long distance views

- 4.15 The southern Site boundary is visible in medium and long distance views, as the Site is located on the south east-facing slope of the ridge. The views from the South are however limited in extent by the ridges at Pearman's Spring and Hillend Farm, neither of which have public access.
- 4.16 Views towards the Site from Nomansland Common are screened by the intervening vegetation (Photograph 9).

East

Near distance views

- 4.17 There are glimpsed views of the Site through the boundary vegetation from Dyke Lane (Photograph 5 & 6). The dense vegetation at Devil's Dyke however screens views from further east. Views from Beech Hyde Farm are screened by the intervening vegetation and land form.

Middle and long distance views

- 4.18 Parts of the Site are visible through the boundary vegetation when viewed from the public footpath on the high ground at Coleman Green, although these views diminish as the footpath leads to the lower ground around Beech Hyde Farm (Photograph 8).

Landscape Quality

- 4.19 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape quality.
- 4.20 The character of the Site is largely influenced by the adjoining properties which back onto it, resulting in a raw urban edge. The field itself is undistinguished and not of any significant landscape importance, but the mature tree lined boundaries add some character and quality to the Site, resulting in a moderate landscape quality.

5.0 ABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The following section assesses the ability of the Site to accommodate development and the key landscape considerations that will need to be taken into account in formulating any development proposals. It then goes on to consider the implications of releasing the land from the Green Belt. An Illustrative Masterplan has been prepared, which shows how development can be accommodated on the Site, and this is contained in **Appendix E**.

5.2 From our initial assessment of the Site we have identified a number of factors which need to be taken into account when developing the proposals for the Site, these include:

- Retention of the majority of trees and hedgerows along the Site boundaries;
- Respecting the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument adjacent to the Site by retaining an area of open space in the east of the Site; and
- Strengthening the southern Site boundary to further mitigate any potential views of the development and to strengthen the proposed Green Belt boundary.

5.3 By taking these factors into account, the Site is capable of being released for development without giving rise to any material harm to the character or quality of the surrounding landscape, or the objectives and purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

5.4 In the following section a brief commentary is made on the effects of developing the Site against a series of landscape criteria.

Impact on Landscape Features

5.5 The majority of the trees and hedgerows on the Site boundaries are capable of being retained and incorporated within any development. Some vegetation will however be lost to allow for access to the development although such losses would not be significant and should be capable of mitigation. The quantity and quality of the vegetation that will remain will create a mature and well-established setting for the proposed residential development and provide a strong green edge to the built up area and to the redefined Green Belt.

Relationship to the Existing Urban Area

5.6 The Site is well related to the existing urban area, lying adjacent to the built up areas of Wheathampstead to the north and west, and benefiting from enclosure from Dyke Lane to the east and a mature tree belt to the south.

Visual Change and Effects

- 5.7 The Site is capable of being developed without unacceptable visual impacts if, as suggested, the existing vegetation on the Site boundary is retained and strengthened.
- 5.8 Our visual assessment identified that the Site is well contained in near distance views from the immediate locale by virtue of the surrounding houses and trees and vegetation along the Site boundaries. There are some middle and long distance views of the Site from the east and south, however public vantage points here are limited. A more detailed description of the impact on these key views is set out below.
- 5.9 The dwellings that back onto the Site have limited views into the Site due to the height and density of the vegetation on the boundaries. This vegetation will be retained and strengthened although some fragmented views will be available from the upper floors of dwellings.
- 5.10 There may also be glimpsed partial views from Dyke Lane adjacent to the Site, through the boundary vegetation. There will also be some views of the development from the footpath to the south of the Site, through the existing tree line, however these views will diminish as the proposed additional boundary planting matures.
- 5.11 When viewed from the south and east, the Site is seen against a backdrop of existing built development which currently bounds a significant part of the Site. Development on the Site would thus not appear out of character when viewed from the east or south. The rooftops of the new dwellings will be visible above and between the existing rooflines in views from the north and west through gaps between the existing houses, although such views are not significant.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.12 There are no public rights of way crossing the Site and no public rights of way will be affected by development on the Site. A footpath link could however be created within the development, linking Hilldyke Road to the north with the public footpath south of the Site.

Landscape Quality

- 5.13 As described in Section 4, the Site is of moderate landscape quality although it is not particularly distinguished, lying adjacent to the existing built-up edge of Wheathampstead.

- 5.14 The majority of the significant vegetation is capable of being retained and enhanced through management and additional native planting. Accordingly, the proposed development can be accommodated at the Site without materially impacting on the character or quality of the adjoining landscape.

Impact on Listed Buildings and Conservation Area

- 5.15 There is no intervisibility between the Site and the Listed Buildings or Conservation Area along The Hill/High Street, and as such there will be no impact on the setting of these heritage assets.
- 5.16 Views from the Listed Old Beech Hyde Farm along Beech Hyde Lane will be limited to the roofs of the new dwellings, but these will be seen against the backdrop of the existing development edge which is currently visible from here, and as such there will be no material impact on the setting of the Listed Building.

Impact on Scheduled Ancient Monument

- 5.17 The Site is separated from the Scheduled Ancient Monument ('SAM') site of the Belgic Oppidum and Devil's Dyke by Dyke Lane. The existing residential areas of Wheathampstead to the north of the Site, similarly extend up to Dyke Lane with the SAM located beyond (Photograph 7). As such, the proposed development would not be any closer to the SAM than the existing settlement edge, and the proposed additional development would not significantly add to the cumulative effects on the SAM.
- 5.18 In developing proposals for the Site, the opportunity exists to set development back from the Site's eastern boundary to further respect the setting of Devil's Dyke and the SAM.

Impact of releasing the Site from the Green Belt

- 5.19 If the Site is allocated for development then the Green Belt boundary would need to be amended to reflect the change. The current Green Belt boundary within the vicinity of the Site is contiguous with the settlement edge in that it runs along the northern Site boundary and continues along the built up edge to the west of the Site. To the east of the Site, the Green Belt boundary runs north along the eastern edge of Dyke Lane.
- 5.20 The Council has recently decided that a review of the Green Belt boundary was necessary before further work on the Strategic Local Plan could continue.

- 5.21 Whilst the exact location of the revised Green Belt boundary would be a matter for the LPA, it would be logical to recast the boundary to follow the tree belt along the southern Site boundary and along Dyke Lane east of the Site. This would be entirely consistent with the way that the Green Belt boundary is currently drawn, as well as compatible and consistent with the nucleated form of the settlement.
- 5.22 From our assessment of the area it can be concluded that the distance between the Site and the surrounding settlements is sufficient to ensure that there is little or no intervisibility, and the distances are sufficient to retain a clear break. It is also pertinent to note that the proposed development would extend no further south or east than the existing built up area adjacent to the Site.
- 5.23 In terms of the other Green Belt objectives, the potential development would represent a planned release of land and as such would not result in encroachment into the countryside. In respect of the fourth purpose, development of the Site would not impact on the historic core of the town. The fifth purpose, regarding urban regeneration, is not applicable in this case.
- 5.24 For the reasons given above, housing development on the Site, in accordance with the Illustrative Masterplan contained in this document and the guidelines set out at the start of this section, could be delivered in a sustainable location and in a form that would be complimentary with the existing pattern of development in the area, and in a way that would not compromise the objectives or purposes of the Green Belt in this location.

6.0 GREEN BELT BOUNDARY REVIEW

- 6.1 This section considers the current Green Belt boundary around Wheathampstead in order to ascertain the landscape constraints to growth.
- 6.2 The functions of the Green Belt as given in the NPPF, are set out in Section 3. The NPPF states that amended Green Belt boundaries should not need further alterations during the plan period; indeed they should be capable of enduring beyond it. When defining boundaries, local authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development and ensure that there would be sufficient safeguarded land outside the Green Belt in order to meet the long term development needs of the area. It goes on to say that Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly along physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
- 6.3 The urban fringes of Wheathampstead have been divided into various areas, as shown in **Appendix F**, in order to assess the potential for the individual areas to accommodate growth. Each area has been considered against the five main functions of the Green Belt, as set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF, and assessed against the criteria set out in paragraphs 79 to 85.

Green Belt Purposes

- 6.4 The Council's background studies conclude that any available brownfield sites and other developable sites within the settlement envelope would not provide sufficient land to accommodate the expected growth for the plan period. As such, releasing land within the Green Belt for a planned urban extension would not prejudice urban regeneration within Wheathampstead and would thus not offend the fifth purpose of including land within the Green Belt.

Area A

- 6.5 Area A lies to the north of Wheathampstead and currently encompasses various land uses, including St Albans High School for Girls and Lamerwood Golf Club, which are well suited to their location within the Green Belt. These uses serve to create a transition between the urban area and the countryside beyond, and thereby protect the character of the countryside from the more urban character to the south.
- 6.6 The nearest settlement to the north of Wheathampstead is Blackmore End, approximately 1.8km away. Due to the distance between the settlements and the intervening landform and vegetation, the release of Area A from the Green Belt would not result in neighbouring towns merging.

- 6.7 The historic core of Wheathampstead is located in the north of the settlement, just to the south of Area A. Area A is well wooded and contains several mature tree belts which, along with the open nature of the land uses, contribute to the setting of the historic town. It therefore contributes to protecting the historic setting and character of the town core and as such its release for development would offend the 4th objective of including land in the Green Belt.

Area B

- 6.8 Area B encompasses the open land to the north east of the settlement, up to the B653 which bypasses the settlement. The nearest settlements to Area B is Ayot Saint Lawrence 2.6km north and Ayot Saint Peter 3.6km east. If Area B were to be removed from the Green Belt, sufficient distance would remain between the settlements to ensure that there was no actual or perceived coalescence.
- 6.9 The Area partly falls within the flood plain of the River Lea, and contains land uses associated with edge of settlement locations, including playing fields, allotments, paddocks and stables (Photograph 10). The recreational uses of Area B are thus compatible with the purposes and potential benefits of Green Belts and the open land within the floodplain plays an important part in the setting of the historic town core and its resultant character, and thus satisfies the 4th purpose.

Area C

- 6.10 Area C lies to the east of Wheathampstead, and the arable land here is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is thus protected from built development by various statutes.
- 6.11 Due to Area C's archaeological importance, it is necessary to keep it permanently open and thus the area should remain within the Green Belt.
- 6.12 Along this settlement boundary is a dense woodland belt which contains the settlement. Development would leap-frog this boundary, resulting in encroachment into the open countryside, and damaging the setting of Wheathampstead.

Area D

- 6.13 Area D comprises arable fields and lies to the south of the settlement. The nearest settlement to the south is the hamlet of Nomansland approximately 0.6km away and Amwell, around 0.4km to the south west. A dense band of woodland occurs along the southern boundary of this Area, providing a visual and physical separation between Nomansland and Wheathampstead, allowing a clear break to be maintained (Photograph 13).

- 6.14 The historic core of Wheathampstead lies in the north of the settlement, with the housing in the south of the town comprising more modern development. The housing north of Area D is not representative of the traditional local vernacular and is not reliant on its surroundings or setting to create or contribute to a specific character. As such, removal of the land to the south of these houses from the Green Belt would not result in harm to the character of the historic town core.
- 6.15 The western half of Area D would however extend development close to the hamlet of Amwell, significantly diminishing the sense of separation of the two settlements.

Area E

- 6.16 Area E comprises an arable field, located on the south western end of Wheathampstead with the nearest neighbouring settlement to the west being Harpenden, located approximately 0.8km to the west. Amwell is however situated adjacent to Area E, to the south.
- 6.17 Although the area is relatively well contained, it does not relate well to the existing settlement edge, as only the north eastern corner lies adjacent to existing houses. Development of this area would significantly narrow the gap between Wheathampstead and Amwell.

Area F

- 6.18 Area F is located to the west of Wheathampstead and comprises arable fields. The northernmost part of the area falls within the River Lea's floodplain and currently contains paddocks (Photograph 11). The nearest neighbouring settlement is Harpenden, which is at its closest point located 1.4km from the existing settlement edge at Area F.
- 6.19 The southern section of Area F, south of the public footpath, is located on a prominent north-facing ridge which is clearly visible in long distance views from the north and north west (Photograph 12). Development here would be conspicuous and have a detrimental impact in the setting of the settlement.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality but does lie within the Green Belt. It is bordered by mature trees and hedgerows and comprises an agricultural field adjacent to the existing settlement edge.
- 7.2 The Site is well contained in near distance views and public views from middle and long distances are limited. It benefits from clearly defined and defensible boundaries. The St Albans City and District Green Belt review found that the Site (parcel SA-SS7) is a very small area of land, which when assessed in isolation, does not restrict sprawl, prevent merging, preserve setting or maintain local gaps, and that it is one of eight small-scale sites which contribute least towards the Green Belt purposes; a view that we concur with.
- 7.3 The Site is an entirely suitable candidate for residential development to meet the housing requirements of SACDC and subject to the landscape recommendations contained within this document being adopted, is capable of being released for development without giving rise to any material impact on the character or quality of the surrounding landscape, the adjacent Scheduled Ancient Monument site or the objectives and purposes of the Green Belt.

Appendix A

Site Location Plan



Key

 Site boundary

	Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 f 01462 743648 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk	Project Hillydke Road, Wheathampstead	Date February 2013	Drawing Number CSa/2067/101
		Title Site Location Plan	Scale Not to scale	Revision -
	Client Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd	Drawn TB	Checked CA	

Appendix B

Aerial Photograph



Key

 Site boundary



Dixies Barns,
High Street, Ashwell,
Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
f 01462 743648
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead

Title Aerial Photograph

Client Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Date February 2013

Scale Not to scale

Drawn TB

Checked CA

Drawing Number CSa/2067/100

Revision -

Appendix C

Photographs



overlap



overlap

View towards the site from Hilldyke Road Photograph 01



Dixies Barns,
High Street, Ashwell,
Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
f 01462 743648
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Hillydye Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013		Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105	
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG	Revision	-
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.						



overlap



overlap

View east across the Site Photograph 02



Dixies Barns,
High Street, Ashwell,
Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
f 01462 743648
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Hillydike Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013	Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.			Revision	-



View south from the public footpath south of the Site Photograph 03



View north east across the Site Photograph 04

Project	Hillydike Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013		Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105	
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG	Revision	-
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.						



View of Site from Dyke Lane Photograph 05



View west across Site Photograph 06



View north along Dyke Lane Photograph 07



View towards the Site from public footpath at Coleman Green Photograph 08

Project	Hillydyke Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013	Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd			Revision	-



View north from Nomansland Common towards the Site Photograph 09



View of part of Area B Photograph 10

Project	Hillydike Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013		Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105	
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG	Revision	-
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd						



View north from within Area F Photograph 11



View south across Area F Photograph 12

Project	Hillydike Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013	Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd			Revision	-



overlap



overlap

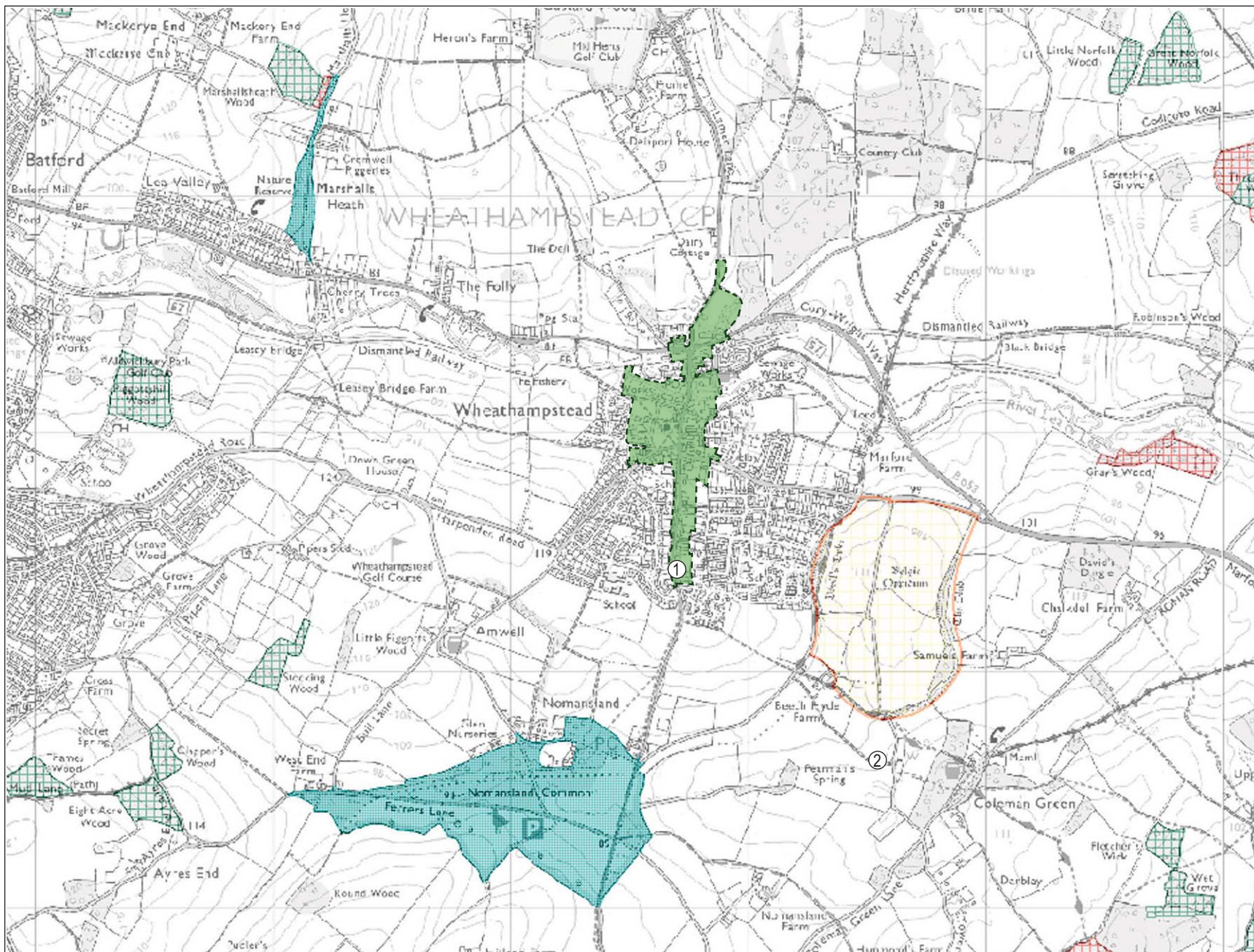
View from Nomansland Common towards Wheathampstead Photograph 13


 Dixies Barns,
 High Street, Ashwell,
 Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT
 t 01462 743647
 f 01462 743648
 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk







Project	Hillydye Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013		Drawing Number	CSa/2067/105	
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	SeM	Checked	SG	Revision	-
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd						

Appendix D

Extract form MAGIC and Heritage Information



Key

-  Site boundary
-  Ancient and semi-natural woodland
-  Ancient replanted woodland
-  Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Conservation Area
- ① 76 A & B, The Hill
- ② Old Beech Hyde and Barn



Dixies Barns,
High Street, Ashwell,
Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
f 01462 743648
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Hillydyke Road, Wheathampstead
Title	MAGIC Map extract & Heritage Map
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Date	February 2013
Scale	Not to scale
Drawn	TB
Checked	CA

Drawing Number	CSa/2067/102
Revision	-

Appendix E

Illustrative Masterplan



Revision	Date	By	Description

CSa
 environmental planning
 environmental planning e. ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk

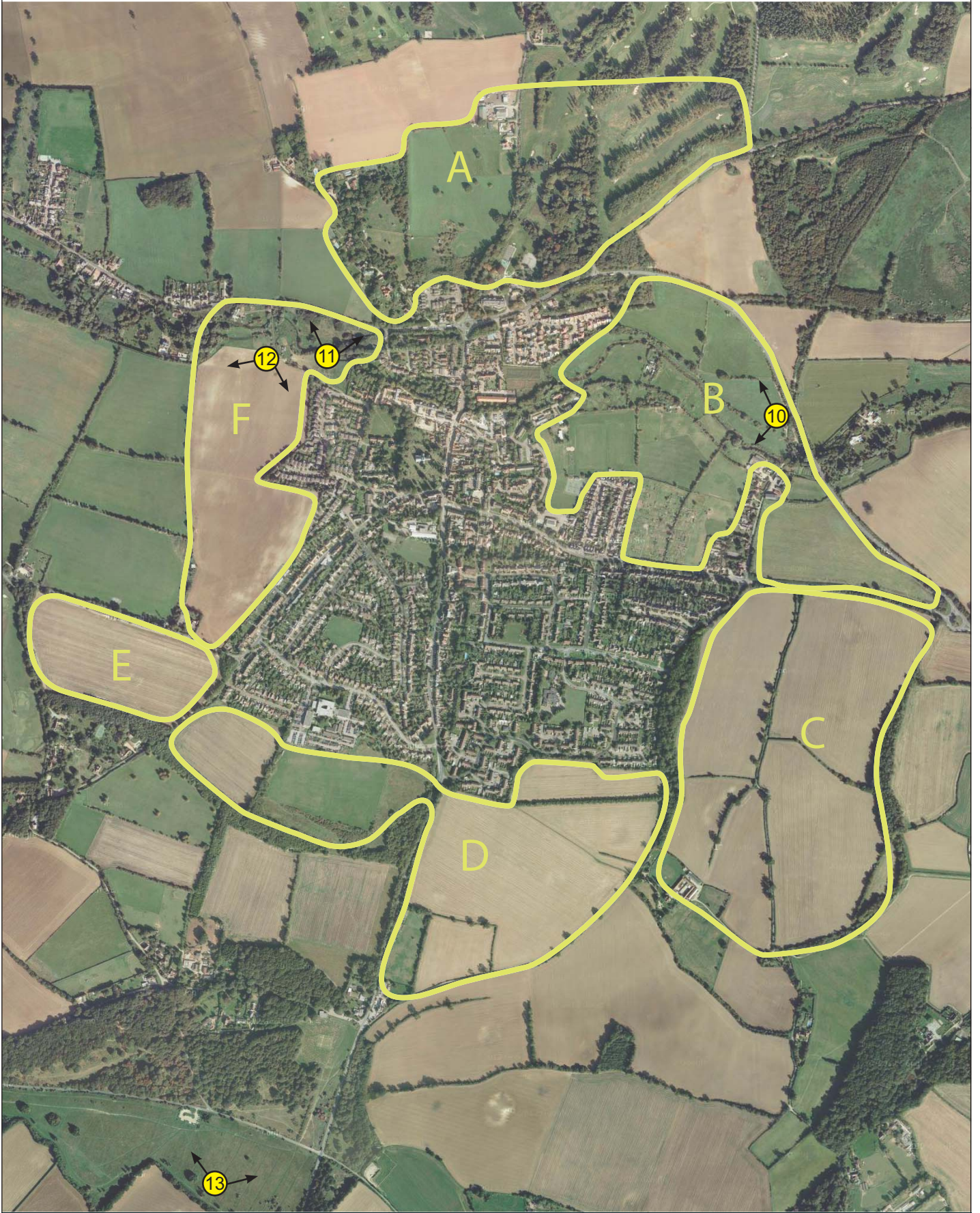
Divies Bams,
 High Street, Ashwell,
 Hertfordshire, SG7 5HT
 t 01462 743647
 f 01462 743648

Project: Hill Dyke Road, Wheathampstead
 Title: Illustrative Masterplan
 Client: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Scale @ Size	1:1000 @ A2	Drawn	HT
Date	August 2014	Checked	SG
Drawing Number	CSa/2067/108	Revision	-

Appendix F

Green Belt Review Areas



 <p>Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 f 01462 743648 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk</p>	Project	Hillydyke Road, Wheathampstead	Date	February 2013	Drawing Number	CSa/2067/104
	Title	Green Belt Assessment Areas	Scale	Not to scale	Revision	-
	Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd	Drawn	TB	Checked	CA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**LAND AT HILLDYKE ROAD, WHEATHAMPSTEAD,
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
(TRIAL TRENCHING AND METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)**

Authors: Gareth Barlow	
NGR: TL 1807 1322	Report No: 4427
District: St Albans	Site Code: AS1631
Approved: Claire Halpin MfA	Project No: 4447
Signed:	Date: 10 October 2013

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Historic building recording and appraisals
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Geophysical surveys
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Post excavation analysis
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- 2 SPECIALIST REPORT***

OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Land at Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead, St Albans</i>		
<p><i>In October 2013 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1807 1322). The evaluation was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd, and was undertaken in support of the promotion of a site for residential development.</i></p> <p><i>In the event only Trial Trench 4 contained features. Ditch F1003 and Pits F1005 and F1007 were recorded. None of the features contained finds, and it was thought on site that Ditch F1003 and Pit F1007 may be natural features. Colluvium, L1009, was present in Trench 11 and may obscure archaeological features, that said only three features were recorded (in Trench 4) and two were thought to be possibly natural. None of the features contained finds, and no finds were recorded during the metal detecting survey. The metal detecting survey did not reveal metal finds. Three struck flints of possible late Neolithic / early Bronze Age date were found during the survey.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>October 2012</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>DBA</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>TBC</i>
P. number	<i>P4820</i>	Site code	<i>AS1631</i>
Type of project	<i>An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>Green belt, Archaeological Priority Area</i>		
Current land use	<i>Agricultural (arable)</i>		
Planned development	<i>Residential</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>Undated ditch and two undated pits</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>Three unstratified struck flints of possible late Neolithic / early Bronze Age date</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>St Albans</i>	<i>Wheathampstead</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire County Council HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>-</i>		
Area of site	<i>c.3.54 ha.</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 1807 1322</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>c.100/115m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Advice from SADC</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Gareth Barlow</i>		
Funded by	<i>Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Land at Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead, St Albans, Hertfordshire. An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Authors	<i>Barlow, G.</i>		
Report no.	<i>4427</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>October 2013</i>		

LAND AT HILLDYKE ROAD, WHEATHAMPSTEAD, HERTFORDSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (TRIAL TRENCHING AND METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)

SUMMARY

In October 2013 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1807 1322). The evaluation was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd, and was undertaken in support of the promotion of a site for residential development.

The site is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising a late Iron Age 'enclosed oppidum'. Therefore the site is within an area with a high potential to contain archaeological remains associated with an extramural settlement or the oppidum. Subsequently settlement at Wheathampstead shifted towards away from the oppidum towards the crossing of the River Lea. In the Roman period settlement appears to have been focussed in the Wick Avenue area overlooking the river to the north-west of the site, before clustering around the river crossing in the medieval and post-medieval periods. In the medieval and post-medieval periods the site appears to have remained as agricultural land, first as part of Wheathampstead common and from at least the 19th century as part of Beech Hyde Farm.

In the event only Trial Trench 4 contained features. Ditch F1003 and Pits F1005 and F1007 were recorded. None of the features contained finds, and it was thought on site that Ditch F1003 and Pit F1007 may be natural features. Colluvium, L1009, was present in Trench 11 and may obscure archaeological features, that said only three features were recorded (in Trench 4) and two were thought to be possibly natural. None of the features contained finds, and no finds were recorded during the metal detecting survey. The metal detecting survey did not reveal metal finds. Three struck flints of possible late Neolithic / early Bronze Age date were found during the survey.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In October 2013 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Hilldyke Road, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1807 1322; Figs. 1 - 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd, and was undertaken in

support of the promotion of a site for residential development. An archaeological desk-based assessment had been undertaken (Peachey 2001).

1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with advice issued by The District Archaeological Officer of St Albans District Council (SADC DAO), and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 29/04/2013) and approved by SADC DAO. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2008), and the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The evaluation provides for the identification of areas of archaeological potential within the site. It also considered the site within its wider archaeological context. The likely extent, nature, condition and importance of the archaeology is described. The context and potential impact of future development proposals for the sites are examined as necessary and areas of significant previous ground disturbance identified.

Planning policy context

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.5 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should

be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The assessment site comprises an approximately rectangular plot of farmland on the southern edge of Wheathampstead. It extends to some 8.74 acres (3.54ha). The site is bordered and accessed by Dyke Lane to the east, and enclosed on its northern and western sides by residential development along Hill Dyke Road. The southern side of the site opens on to arable agricultural land. The site currently comprises arable agricultural land (cereal crop) and is categorised as Green Belt land.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site is situated on the crest of the southern side of the valley of the River Lea, sloping down from c.115m AOD at its western side to c.100m at its eastern side. The solid geology of the assessment site comprises the Upper Cretaceous chalk overlain by clay-with-flints and capped with chalky soils.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken (Peachey 2001). In summary:

The assessment site is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising a late Iron Age 'enclosed oppidum'. Therefore the assessment site is within an area with a high potential to contain archaeological remains associated with an extramural settlement or the oppidum. Subsequently settlement at Wheathampstead shifted towards away from the oppidum towards the crossing of the River Lea. In the Roman period settlement appears to have been focussed in the Wick Avenue area overlooking the river to the north-west of the assessment site, before clustering around the river crossing in the medieval and post-medieval periods. In the medieval and post-medieval periods the assessment site appears to have remained as agricultural land, first as part of Wheathampstead common and from at least the 19th century as part of Beech Hyde Farm.

Previous ground disturbance to the assessment site appears limited to agricultural processes, principally the effects of modern deep ploughing. The assessment site is being promoted for residential development and although no detailed designs have been submitted,

any development of this scale will have a significant impact on archaeological remains, if present.

5 METHODOLOGY (METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)

5.1 A metal detector survey was undertaken across the site in order to characterise the presence of any objects within the ploughsoil.

6 METHODOLOGY (TRIAL TRENCHING)

6.1 The advice from SADC required trial trenching of the site in order to clarify the significance of any below-ground heritage assets. A 2% sample of the c.3.84ha site was required. Eleven trenches, each 40m x 1.8m, were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2).

6.2 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

7 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (METAL DETECTOR SURVEY)

7.1 The metal detecting survey did not reveal metal finds. A struck flint was found during the survey.

8 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (TRIAL TRENCHING)

Individual trench descriptions are presented below:

Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 1A</i> <i>E end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 114.90m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.23m	L1000	Topsoil. Mid orange grey brown, friable, sandy clay with frequent small – medium sub angular and rounded flint.
0.23m +	L1002	Natural. Mixed patches of mid orange brown, firm, silty clay with occasional angular flint and rounded chalk, and slightly darker mid orange brown, firm, silty sand with frequent sub angular and rounded flint and occasional flint nodules.

<i>Sample section 1B</i> <i>W end, S facing</i> <i>0.00 = 115.00m AOD</i>		
---	--	--

0.00 – 0.25m	L1000	Topsoil. As above
0.25m +	L1002	Natural. As above.

Description Trench 1 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 2A</i> <i>S end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 114.90m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.23m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.23 – 0.33m	L1001	Subsoil. Dark orange brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small – medium sub angular and rounded flint.
0.33m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 2B</i> <i>N end, E facing</i> <i>0.00 = 115.00m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.26m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.26m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 2 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 3 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 3A</i> <i>W end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 114.60m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.23m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.23m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 3B</i> <i>E end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 113.47m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.21m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.21m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 3 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 4 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 4A</i> <i>W end, S facing</i> <i>0.00 = 114.10m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.30m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 4B</i> <i>E end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 112.95m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.22m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.22m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description. Trench 4 contained Ditch F1003 and Pits F1005 and F1007. None of the features contained finds, and it was thought on site that Ditch F1003 and Pit F1007 may be natural features.

Ditch F1003 was linear (2.25+ x 0.80 x 0.29m), orientated NW/SE. It had steep sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1004, was a mid brown, compact, sandy silt with frequent small sub angular and sub rounded flint. It contained no finds. The may be a ditch or a natural periglacial feature.

Pit F1005 was oval (3.90 x 1.15 x 0.08m). It had moderately sloping sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1006, was a mid orange brown, firm, sandy silt with moderate small sub angular and sub rounded flint. It contained no finds.

Pit F1007 was subcircular (0.50 x 0.48 x 0.10m). It had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1008, was a light greyish brown, friable, sandy silt with moderate small sub angular and sub rounded flint. It contained no finds. This feature was possibly a root hollow.

Trench 5 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 5A</i> <i>W end, S facing</i> <i>0.00 = 112.75m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.28m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 5B</i> <i>E end, S facing</i> <i>0.00 = 111.43m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.25m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.25m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 5 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 6A</i> <i>N end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 112.02m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.21m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.21 – 0.29m	L1002	Subsoil. As above Tr.2.
0.29m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 6B</i> <i>S end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 111.97m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.30m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 6 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 7 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 7A</i> <i>W end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 111.70m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.27m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.27m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 7B</i> <i>E end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 110.70m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.25m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.25m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 7 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 8 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 8A</i> <i>W end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 109.46m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.21m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.21m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 8B</i> <i>E end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 107.94m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.22m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.22m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 8 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 9 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 9A</i> <i>N end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 108.66m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.26m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.26m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 9B</i> <i>S end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 108.77m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.28m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 9 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 10 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 10A</i> <i>W end, S facing</i> <i>0.00 = 107.52m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.30m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

<i>Sample section 10B</i> <i>E end, N facing</i> <i>0.00 = 105.72m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.22m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.22 – 0.58m	L1001	Subsoil. As above Tr.2.
0.68m +	L1002	Natural. As above Tr.1.

Description Trench 10 contained no archaeological features or finds.

Trench 11 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 11A</i> <i>S end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 104.68m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.
0.30 – 1.20m+	L1009	Colluvium. Pale orange brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small – medium sub angular and rounded flint.

<i>Sample section 11B</i> <i>N end, W facing</i> <i>0.00 = 104.66m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.29m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1.

0.29m +	L1009	Colluvium. As above.
---------	-------	----------------------

Description Colluvium, L1009, was present and it may obscure archaeological features, that said only three features were recorded (in Trench 4) and two were thought to be possibly natural. None of the features contained finds, and no finds were recorded during the metal detecting survey.

9 CONFIDENCE RATING

9.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds excepting Trench 11 which contained colluvium.

10 DEPOSIT MODEL

10.1 The site was commonly overlain by Topsoil L1000, a mid orange grey brown, friable, sandy clay with frequent small – medium sub angular and rounded flint (0.20-0.30m thick). It overlay Subsoil L1001, a dark orange brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small – medium sub angular and rounded flint (0.05 – 0.36m thick).

10.2 The natural, L1002, was present at 0.21 – 0.68m below existing ground level excepting in Trench 11 (1.20m+). It comprised mixed patches of mid orange brown, firm, silty clay with occasional angular flint and rounded chalk, and slightly darker mid orange brown, firm, silty sand with frequent sub angular and rounded flint and occasional flint nodules.

11 DISCUSSION

11.1 The site is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising a late Iron Age 'enclosed oppidum'. Therefore the site is within an area with a high potential to contain archaeological remains associated with an extramural settlement or the oppidum.

11.2 In the event only Trial Trench 4 contained features. Ditch F1003 and Pits F1005 and F1007 were recorded. None of the features contained finds, and it was thought on site that Ditch F1003 and Pit F1007 may be natural features.

11.3 Colluvium, L1009, was present in Trench 11 and may obscure archaeological features, that said only three features were recorded (in Trench 4) and two were thought to be possibly natural. None of the features contained finds, and no finds were recorded during the metal detecting survey.

11.4 The metal detecting survey did not reveal metal finds. Three struck flints of possible late Neolithic / early Bronze Age date were found during the survey.

12 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

12.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at St Albans Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd for funding the project and for their assistance (in particular Nigel Agg).

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Simon West of St Albans District Council.

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APPENDIX 1 CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

AS1631, St Albans

Concordance of finds by feature

Feature	Context	Description	CBM (g)	A.Bone (g)	Other
1000		Topsoil			Str. Flint (3) - 33g

APPENDIX 2 SPECIALIST REPORT

The Struck Flint

Andrew Peachey MifA

Three flakes (33g) of struck flint were recovered from Topsoil L1000 in a slightly patinated and rolled condition, suggesting they have been subject to soil movement and weathering. The flakes are entirely hard-hammer struck with rippled dorsal scars and slightly irregular profiles. They include a single side scraper with abrupt retouch along the entirety of one lateral edge. These characteristics suggest the flint originated in the later Neolithic or early Bronze Age, but the low quantity of flakes limits any conclusions.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1 Trench 4 looking west



2 F1003 looking north-west



3 F1005 looking west

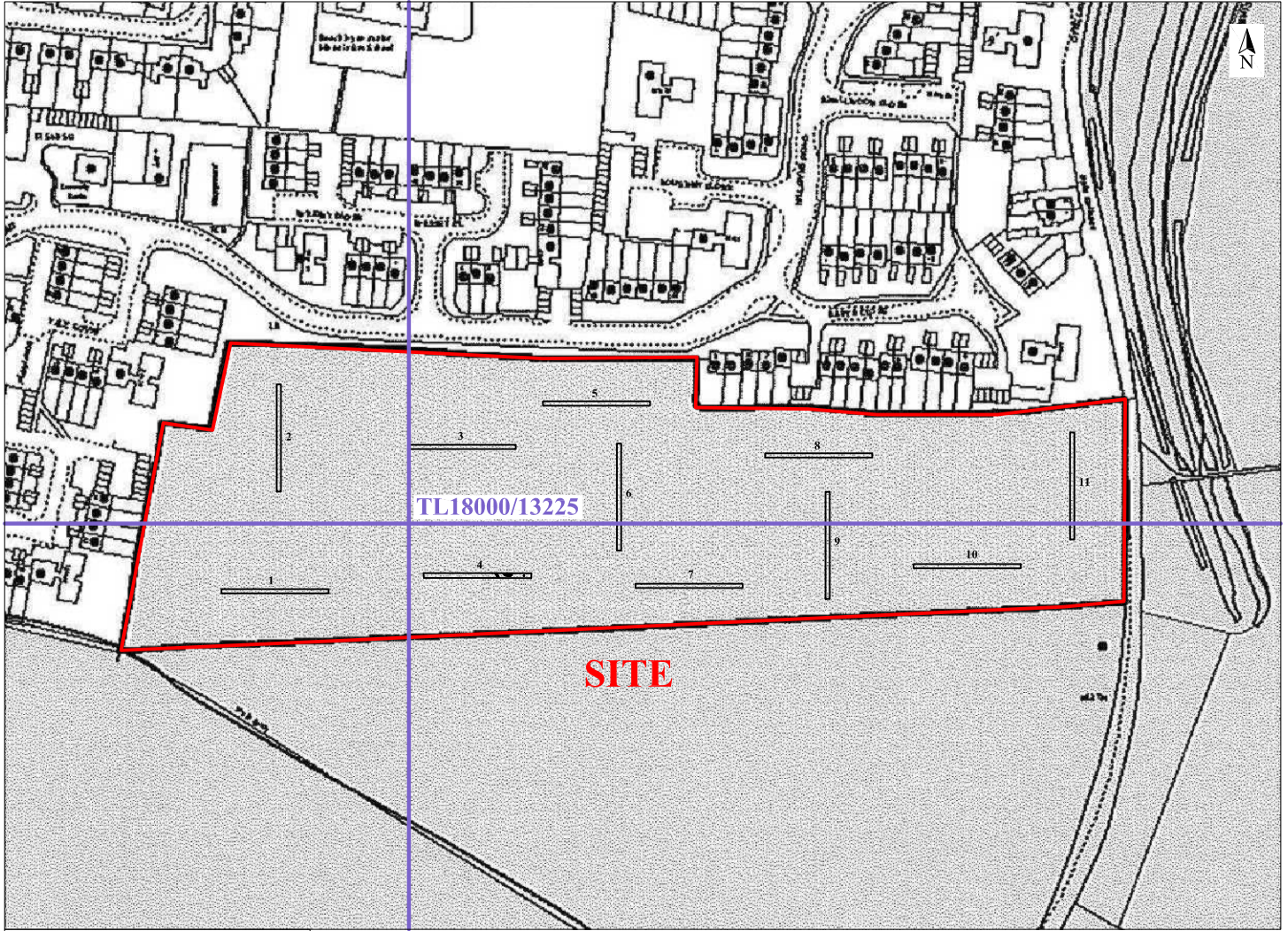


4 F1007 looking west



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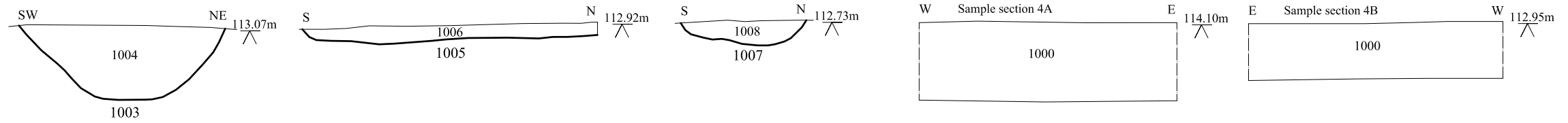
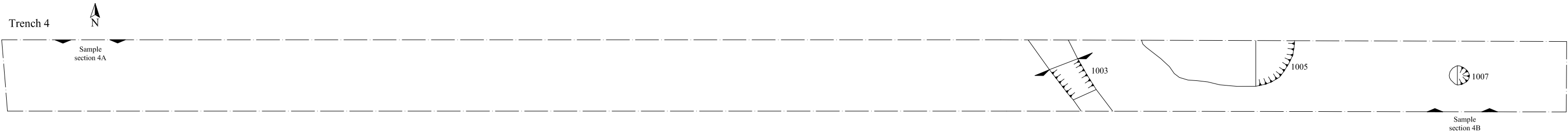
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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0 150m

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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:2500 at A4



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Fig. 3 Trench plan and sections

Scale Plan 1:100, sections 1:20 at A3



Phase 1 Habitat Survey

of


Land South of Wheathampstead

on behalf of

Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.

December 2012

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Revision	Purpose	Originated	Checked	Authorised	Date
		SD/SP	MD	OR	12/2012
Job Number: JBA 12/294		Title: Phase 1 Habitat Survey of Land South of Wheathampstead			

Disclaimer

James Blake Associates have made every effort to meet the client's brief. However, no survey ensures complete and absolute assessment of the changeable natural environment. The findings in this report were based on evidence from thorough survey: It is important to remember that evidence can be limited, hard to detect or concealed by site use and disturbance. When it is stated that no evidence was found or was evident at that point in time, it does not mean that species are not present or could not be present at a later date: The survey was required because habitats are suitable for a given protected species, and such species could colonise areas following completion of the survey.

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0 Non-technical Summary

Site:	Land South of Wheathampstead
Grid Reference (from the centre of the site)	TQ 180 132
Report Commissioned by:	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd.
Date of Survey	5 th December 2012

Considerations	Description	Timings and potential impacts
Statutory and non-statutory sites within 2km:	Wheathampstead Local Nature Reserve (LNR). 17 Hertfordshire Wildlife sites within 2km.	No impacts are predicted to either statutory or non-statutory sites
SPA, SAC and RAMSAR sites within 7km:	None	N/a
Precautionary measures:	Precautionary clearance of grassland	To be carried out prior to any works impacting the grass margins.
	Removal of trees or hedgerows	Recommended that this is carried out outside the main bird nesting season (March to September)
Additional Phase 2 surveys which may be required, dependent on layout:	Hedgerow survey	Should be carried out between April and October.
	Dormouse surveys	Carried out between April and November but more effective May to September.
	Roosting bats in trees	Between May and September though can be assessed by bat licenced tree climber at any time of the year.
	Badgers in woodland adjacent to Hill Dyke Road	At any time of the year but more effective in spring, autumn and winter
	Arable weed survey to determine if any of the species identified by the desk study are present.	Between May and June
Habitat types:	Arable 90% Semi improved grassland 5% Hedgerows 5%	Impacts are predicted to the majority of the arable land. A section of hedgerow/grass margin is likely to be impacted through construction of an access route.

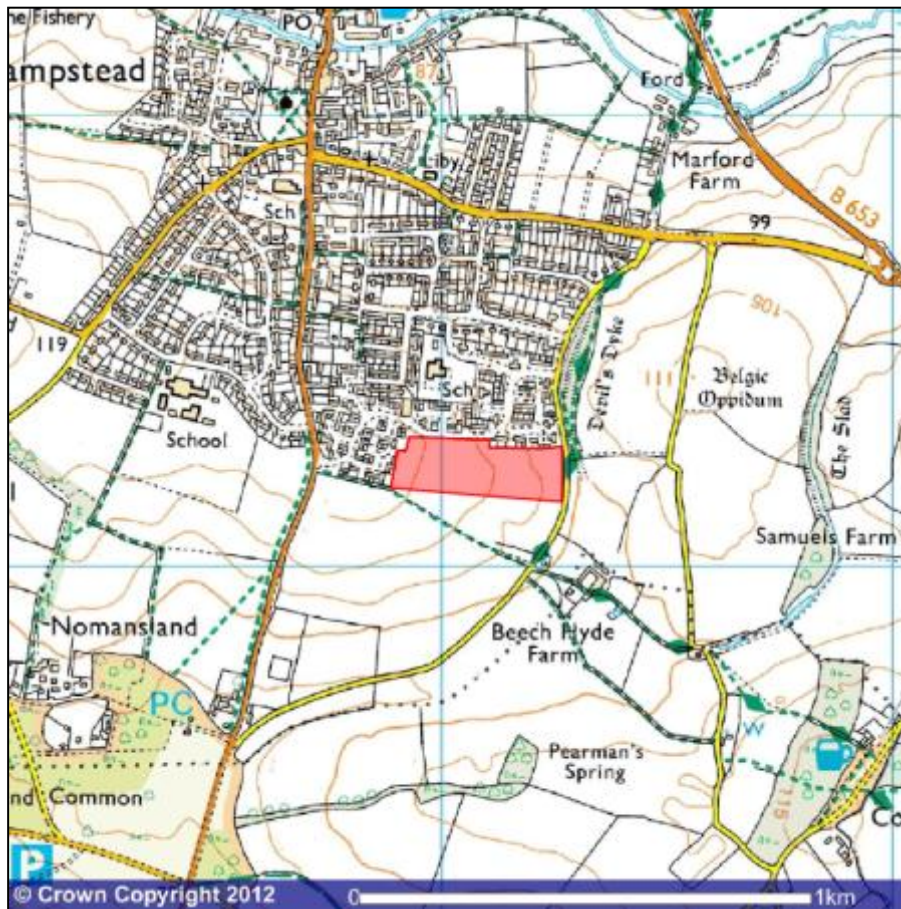
1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 James Blake Associates were commissioned by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd to undertake a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Protected Species Scoping Survey of land south of Wheathampstead. Grid ref: TQ 180 132 (taken from the centre of the site).
- 1.2 The assessment was required to accompany a planning application to develop the site: Residential housing with associated infrastructure is proposed.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this report, protected species are taken to be those which are protected under European Legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended) and UK legislation (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Protection of Badgers Act 1992); and other priority species and habitats which are a consideration under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012, which places responsibility on Local Planning Authorities to aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to encourage biodiversity in and around developments.

Site Description

- 1.4 The site was located on the southern edge of the town of Wheathampstead to the south of Hill Dyke Road. Hill Dyke Road and a number of residential properties lay adjacent to the northern and western boundaries of the site. Agricultural land dominated the landscape to the south and east (see Figure 1 below).
- 1.5 The site itself was an arable field; a volunteer broadleaved crop, likely oil seed rape, (*Brassica sp*), had started to grow. Mature hedgerows with occasional standards were present to the northern, eastern and western boundaries. A line of semi-mature trees bordered the southern boundary.

Figure 1: Site location:

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Aims and objectives

1.6 The aim of the survey was to:

- Identify the presence, or potential presence, of any protected or notable species or habitats on, or adjacent to, the site;
- assess the potential impact of the proposed works on any protected or notable species and/or habitats present including nature conservation sites on, or adjacent to, the site;
- make recommendations for further surveys and/or mitigation following the survey (if necessary) and provide suggestions to enhance the wildlife value of the site post-development.

2 Methods

Desk study

- 2.1 A 2km radius search for statutory designated wildlife sites, and a 7km search for Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and RAMSAR sites either on the proposed development site or in the surrounding area, was conducted using "MAGIC", the Multi-Agency Geographic Information system for the Countryside.
- 2.2 The Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC) was consulted for records of non-statutory sites and protected and rare species within a 2km search radius (HBRC data provided on the 10th December 2012).
- 2.3 The site is covered by the Local BAP for Hertfordshire (<http://www.hef.org.uk/nature/index.htm>)

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.4 The survey was undertaken by Mary Davies BSc (Hons) MSc MIEEM (great crested newt class licence WML-CL08; bat licence number 20123291). During the survey, the temperature was 3°C, there was no wind (Beaufort scale 0), 5% cloud cover and good visibility.
- 2.5 The survey methodology followed JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) Guidelines (JNCC, 2007) and included mapping habitat types and identifying all plant species observed on the site, including Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 9 invasive plant species, such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*,
- 2.6 The site was also assessed for signs and evidence of protected, BAP and rare species in accordance with approved guidelines, as follows:
- 2.7 **Amphibians:** all known ponds within 500m of the site (unless ecologically separated from the site by significant barriers, such as major roads or rivers) were assessed for potential to support breeding protected amphibians, such as great crested newts. A Habitat Suitability Index for breeding great crested newts was undertaken on all suitable water bodies.
- 2.8 **Bats:** Mature trees adjacent to the site boundary, were surveyed externally, from the ground, for their potential to support roosting bats, under the following criteria.

Table 1: Bat Survey Protocol for Trees: (potential bat roosting features were identified in order to categorise trees, as below):

Bat Roost Potential	Field signs
Roost Confirmed	Confirmed bat roost in tree: Field evidence of the past or current presence of bats, e.g. droppings, staining.
High roost potential	Splits or cracks in major limbs which develop upwards, smooth surface around entry point, dense ivy-covering, woodpecker/rot holes, significant lifting bark, artificial bird or bat boxes. Ancient or over mature trees where the canopy cannot be fully inspected from the ground.
Medium roost potential	Splits in branches, dense ivy-covering, small cavities, dense epicormic growth, flies around entry point.
Low roost potential	Splits in minor branches, sparse ivy, limited loose bark. Young, healthy tree with good visibility to the top of the canopy.
No roost potential	Trees with a negligible potential to support bat roosts (not supporting any of the above features)

- 2.9 **Dormice:** A visual survey for the presence of suitable habitat (woodland/suitable hedges with good under-storey/shrub layer and a range of food plant species, such as hazel, bramble and honeysuckle) was carried out, to assess if dormice were likely to be present.
- 2.10 **Reptiles:** A visual survey for the presence of suitable habitat was carried out according to the criteria given in the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Gent and Gibson 1998).
- 2.11 **Invertebrates:** The site was scoped for significant rotting deadwood, and high quality aquatic or other habitats which could be used by significant assemblages of invertebrates, or by any of the invertebrates highlighted in the data search.
- 2.12 **Flora and habitats:** All habitats and plant species which were identifiable at the time of the survey were recorded.

- 2.13 **Badgers:** A visual survey for setts, hair, latrines, prints, snuffle marks or other signs of badgers was undertaken within the site boundary. Wooded areas adjacent to Hill Dyke Road within 30m of the site boundary were also surveyed for signs of badger activity.
- 2.14 **Birds:** A visual survey of bird activity and suitable nesting habitat was carried out, to determine if any areas would be suitable for WCA Schedule 1 birds, Birds of Conservation Concern or other common and widespread nesting birds.
- 2.15 **Adjacent Habitat:** Habitats close to the site were identified, using aerial maps and field observation, so that the ecological impact of the proposed works on the wider landscape could be assessed.
- 2.16 There were no water courses within 50m of the site boundary marked on OS maps or observed during the site visit, so no assessment for protected species associated with aquatic habitats (water vole, otter, white-clawed crayfish) was necessary.

3 Results

Desk Study

Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

- 3.1 There was one statutory designated site within 2km of the site: Wheathampstead Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The site is detailed in Table 2 and shown in Figure 2. A 7km radius search was carried out for SPAs, SACs and RAMSAR sites: none were identified.

Table 2: Statutory conservation sites within 2km of the site

Site Name	Designation	Distance from Site	Description
Wheathampstead Local Nature Reserve	LNR	750m south west	Habitats on the nature reserve include neutral unimproved and species diverse grassland, a chalk bank, scrub, secondary woodland and ancient hedges. A wide variety of plants including grass vetchling, bee orchid, ox-eye daisy, black knapweed, heath bedstraw, cowslips, and ragged robin are present.

Non-Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

- 3.2 There were 18 non-statutory conservation sites within 2km of the site, all listed as Hertfordshire Wildlife Sites (HWS). These are listed in Table 3 and shown in Figure 2.

Table 3: Non-statutory conservation sites within 2km of the site

Site Name	Designation	Distance from Site	Description
Coleman Green Green Lane	HWS	1km SE	A green lane of interest for its hedgerows.
Pearman's Spring and Long Spinney	HWS	700m S	Ancient woodland with a semi-natural canopy and field evidence suggesting an ancient origin.
Fletcher's Wick	HWS	2km SE	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) and hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>) woodland, areas of coppice.
Titnol's Wood	HWS	2km SE	Part ancient pedunculate oak and Hornbeam coppiced woodland and old semi-natural woodland.
Stocking Wood, Cross Farm	HWS	1.9km W	Ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak and hornbeam and wild cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)

			coppice-with-standards woodland.
Water End Meadows (E. of Wheathampstead)	HWS	850m NE	Extensive meadows within the flood plain of the River Lee on alluvium gravels overlying chalk.
Nomansland Common	HWS	750m SW	Large area of open land within a shallow dry valley on acid gravel soils with chalky and clay exposures.
Colemangreen Spring and Kents Dell	HWS	1km SE	Two areas of ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak and hornbeam woodland and scrub.
Sprite Field Spring	HWS	1.4km SE	Small area of ancient semi-natural acidic pedunculate oak and hornbeam woodland with hornbeam standards dominant and some old coppice.
Little Piggotts Wood, Cross Farm	HWS	1.6km W	Small area of ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak and hornbeam coppice woodland.
Coleman Green Grassland & Scrub	HWS	1km SE	Mosaic of neutral to somewhat acid grassland with areas of scrub and secondary woodland on either side of a minor road.
Water End adjacent Meadow	HWS	1.9km NE	Species-rich rough grassland on a steep, south facing slope with, to the east, an area of pedunculate oak woodland with hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) below.
Nomansland Common Buildings	HWS	900m SW	Building and environs important for protected species.
East Mount, Willow Dale	HWS	900 SW	Building and environs important for protected species.
Pasture by River Lea	HWS	700 N	Three riverside pastures with a good mix of grasses and some herbs.
Piper's Farm	HWS	2km W	Building and environs important for protected species.
Ayot Greenway	HWS	1.2km NNE	Disused railway line supporting rough grassland, scrub and some old secondary woodland with a semi-natural character.