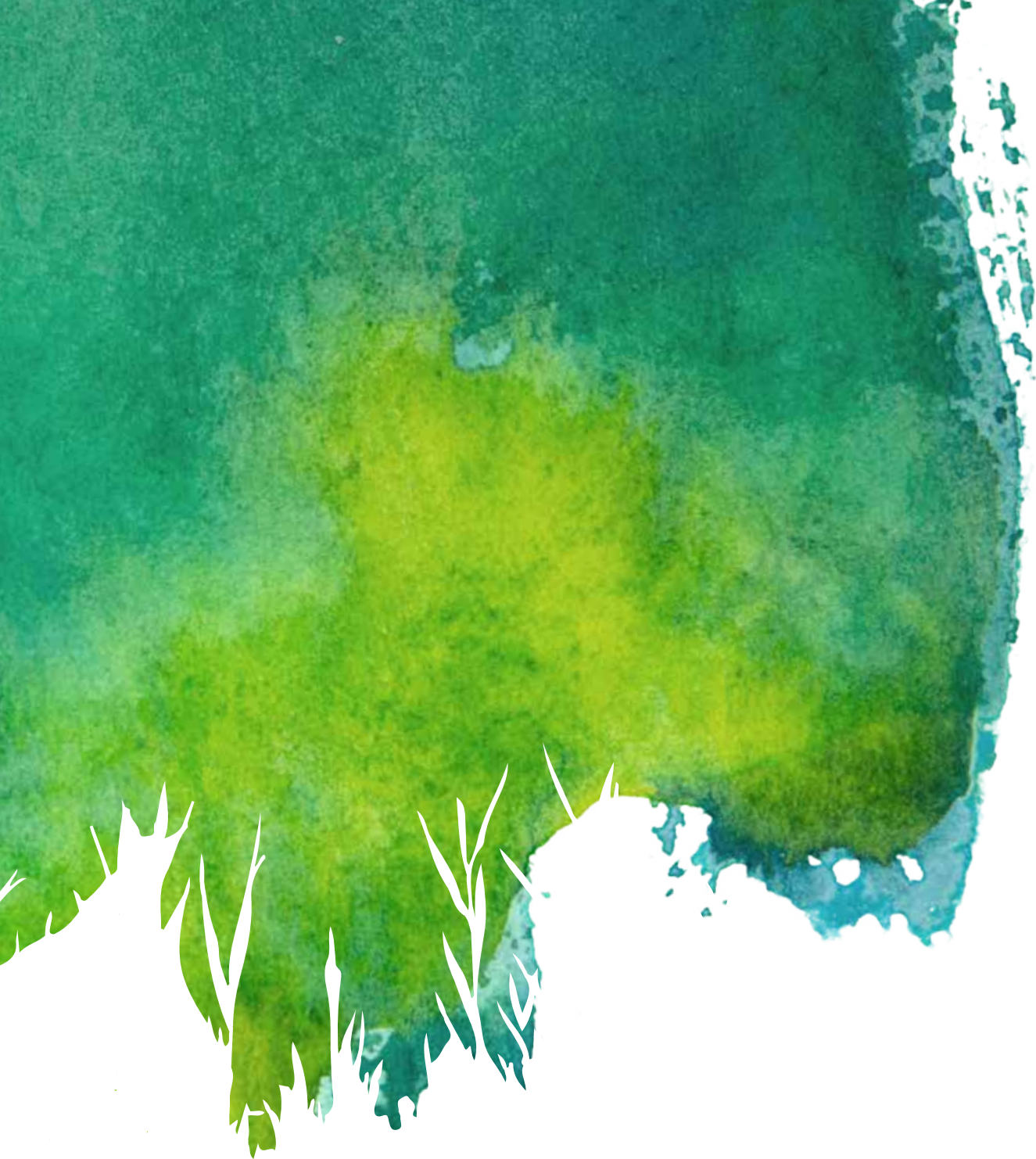




BYFIELD NURSERY

GREAT AMWELL

DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



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Great Amwell\A5 - Reports & Graphics\Graphic
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is submitted as part of the supporting case for the residential redevelopment of Byfield Nursery, on behalf of our client Crest Nicholson.

Crest Nicholson is one of the UK's premier house builders, and have assembled a team of leading advisors including Savills, Barton Willmore and Ardent Consulting Engineers, who will assist with developing proposals for the site. The aim is to make the very best of the unique opportunity to deliver a high quality and sustainable new residential development within Great Amwell, which would contribute towards meeting the settlement and the District's housing needs.





AERIAL PERSPECTIVE VIEW

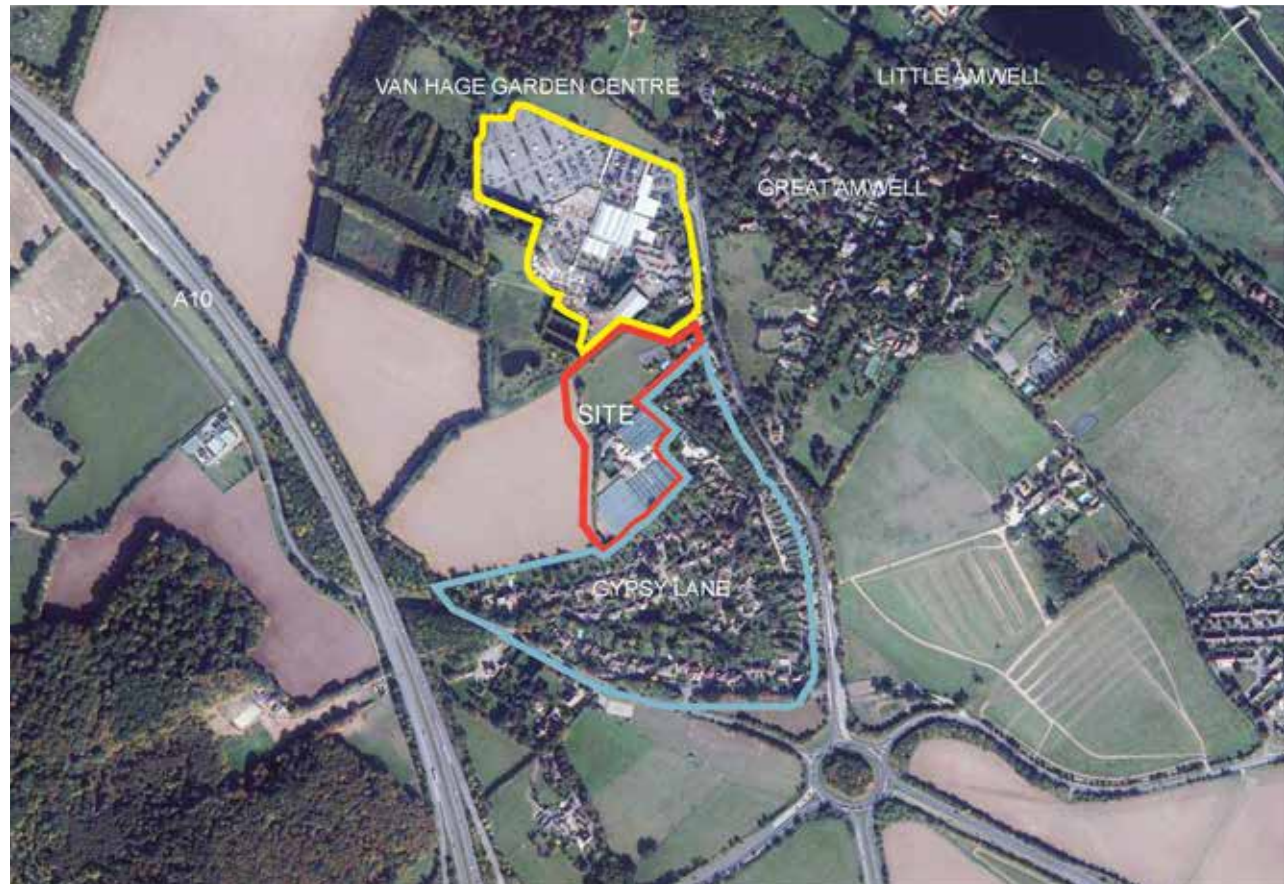
2.0 BACKGROUND

The well-screened site lies within an established residential area to the south on Gypsy Lane and to the east on Pepper Hill. To the north is Van Hage Garden Centre, and to the west is agricultural open fields.

A review of the available online planning history shows only one application relating to the site since 1983. In March 2008, planning permission (ref: 3/08/0068/FP) was granted for the “change of use of a former packing shed for B1/B8 purposes and of a boiler shed for storage of mobile food vans (ice cream) and associated products”. The Committee Report for the application confirmed the site’s status as previously developed land, and acknowledged that the existing buildings were of a low level of design and in poor condition.

The Green Belt site extends to approximately 3.7 hectares, and is located on the south-western/western edge of the village of Great Amwell. The southern part of the site currently contains large glasshouses, storage units, two residential dwellings (bungalows), and an area of hard standing, including parking. Its periphery is characterised by mature trees.

At present, this part of the site is poorly maintained and has not been in use for a number of years. The northern part of the site, which is well enclosed, contains a detached property and a large rear garden. Access is gained from a private road known as Gypsy Lane, via a simple priority junction on Amwell Hill.



SITE WITHIN EXISTING URBAN CONTEXT FORM



EXISTING SITE PHOTOS

3.0 NPPF COMPLIANCE & SITE SUITABILITY

GREEN BELT

Byfield Nursery is located within the Green Belt. NPPF paragraph 84 states that “when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development” and goes on to state that “Very special circumstances” must exist to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt. The NPPF also states that “A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are...limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously development sites (brown field land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development” (paragraph 89).

Previously developed land, as defined by Annex 2 of the NPPF, does not include buildings for agricultural use. However, as acknowledged in the March 2008 application (3/08/0068/FP), the Officer’s Report confirmed that the site was not in agricultural use, and that the site was indeed previously developed land. As noted above, the same Officer’s Report also concludes that the site is “well screened”, which suggests that a sensitively designed residential scheme could enhance the site’s currently poor environment whilst limiting visual impact on the Green Belt.

HOUSING NEED

The NPPF sets out the Government’s current and future requirements for boosting significantly the supply of housing to facilitate economic growth. The NPPF (paragraph 7) indicates priority towards “providing the supply of housing requirement to meet the needs of present and future generations” and “widening the choice of high quality homes” (paragraph 9). More specifically, Local Plans should “plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community” and reflect “local demand” (paragraph 50). EHDC’s latest housing trajectory (Annual

In September 2012, Savills prepared a settlement specific local housing need assessment report for Great Amwell. In March 2013, NLP prepared

a Technical Assessment of housing need and demand in East Hertfordshire and Great Amwell.

Based on Government figures (ONS datasets) and Valuations Office Agency (VOA) information, the reports both identified a very clear local need for 153 additional dwellings at the settlement between 2011 and 2031. This should be considered a minimum target and does not take into account any existing unmet demand of the area.

Assuming a 70% developable area at 30dph, Byfield Nursery would have capacity for approximately 80 dwellings, which has to potential to make a considerable contribution towards meeting the identified local need.



EXISTING SITE

GREAT AMWELL - GROUP 1 VILLAGE

EHDC's current Local Plan categorises villages into Groups, Group 1 being the most sustainable. However, by not proposing allocations in the Villages to meet settlement specific need, it is considered that the Council is abdicating its responsibility by delegating important decisions to a later date, seemingly through encouraging the production of Neighbourhood Plans, which may not come forward at all. This does not represent a common sense approach, nor does it "provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal" (NPPF Para 154). Suitable and deliverable sites should be allocated as soon as possible. These sites in addition to settlement specific need should inform the level of growth required at each village.

Notwithstanding this, when taking into account the household population (and subsequent level of natural population growth) in addition to EHDC's own accessibility and facilities scores, it is evident that Great Amwell shares the same characteristics as the Group 1 villages currently identified in the Local Plan. In particular, it is considered the second most sustainable village in terms of its accessibility making it entirely acceptable for residential development to meet settlement specific need over the Local Plan period.

Group 1 Village	Approximate Household Population	Accessibility Score	Facilities Score	Average Ranking
Braughing	350 (9th)	17 (6th)	38 (5th)	8th
Hertford Heath	840 (4th)	22 (4th)	28 (8th)	4th
Hunsdon	370 (8th)	16 (7th)	34 (7th)	9th
Much Hadham	540 (6th)	13 (=8th)	45 (4th)	6th
Standon & Puckeridge	1,460 (2nd)	18 (5th)	62 (3rd)	3rd
Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets	1,770 (1st)	36 (1st)	90 (1st)	1st
Walkern	550 (5th)	13 (=8th)	37 (6th)	7th
Watton-at-Stone	920 (3rd)	25 (3rd)	63 (2nd)	2nd
Great Amwell	380 (7th)	30 (2nd)	17 (9th)	5th

ALTERNATIVE SITES GREAT AMWELL

To date, four sites have been promoted for housing development within Great Amwell: Land to the rear of The Brooms; Land surrounding Van Hage Garden Centre, Hillside Farm, and Byfield Nursery. Following assessment of these alternative sites using criteria contained within the NPPF and methodologies used as part of the evidence base to support a number of adopted Core Strategies, Byfield Nursery is considered to present the most sustainable site to accommodate local housing need.

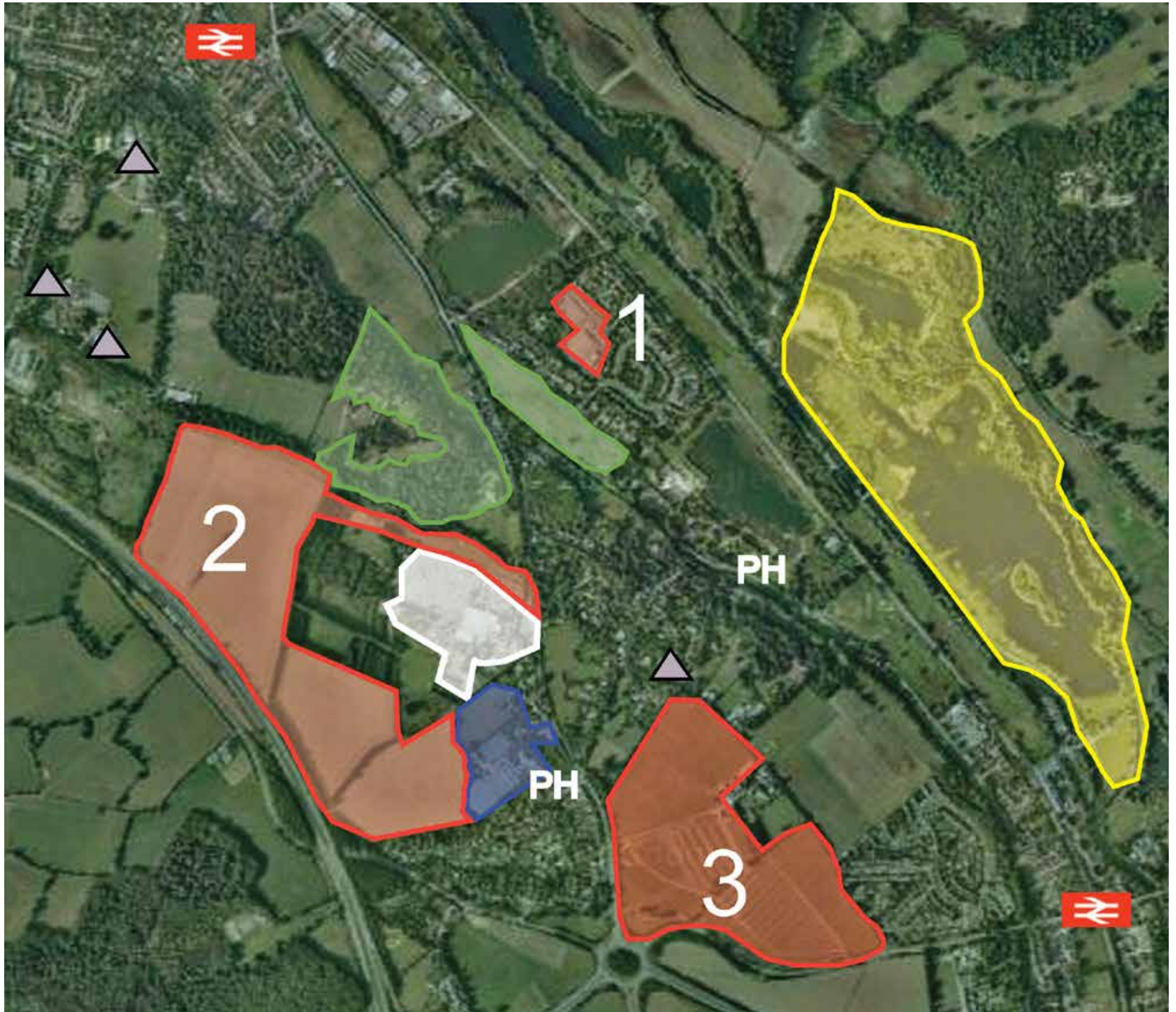
Firstly, residential development at Byfield Nursery would not negatively affect the strategic gaps located to the north and south east of the village (which is not the case for the larger alternative sites, in particular Land surrounding Van Hage Garden Centre and Hillside Farm). Secondly, unlike the other three sites Byfield Nursery comprises a large proportion of previously developed land, in a well-screened location between established residential uses. Indeed, the Council's July 2012 Committee Report states that "the south-western area is close to the A10, the A414 junction and the fast-moving traffic of the A1170. The north-eastern area is close to the railway line and consists of large modern houses. Both areas could therefore be considered to be less rural and village-like... and are therefore considered more able to accept development than a higher quality landscape". Development at this site would form a logical extension to the settlement boundary and represent appropriate infill development along Pepper Hill/Amwell Hill.

Thirdly, development at Byfield Nursery does not have an impact on any environmental designations. The other three sites could all have a greater potential impact on local, national or European environmental designations.

Residential development would also be supported by the availability of good local services and adequate infrastructure. The July 2012 Committee Report acknowledges that with regard to the potential for residential development, Great Amwell has good highways infrastructure, good vehicular and rail access, and good capacity for waste water impact. The proposed Byfield Nursery site will integrate well with the existing pedestrian and cycle routes, coupled with the removal of existing traffic from Gypsy Lane, will ensure there are safe and sustainable routes towards local schools, services and facilities including Van Hage Garden Centre, St Margaret's train station and shops in Stanstead Abbots.

Key:

-  Byfield Nursery Gypsy Lane
- 1** Land r/o The Brooms, Lower Road
- 2** Land surrounding Van Hage Garden Centre
- 3** Hillside Farm, Pepper Hill
-  Amwell Quarry Nature Reserve (SSSI)
-  Amwell Quarry Nature Reserve (SSSI)
-  Nature Reserve or Wildlife Site
-  School
- PH** Public House
-  Van Hage Garden Centre
-  Train Station



ALTERNATIVE SITES IN GREAT AMWELL

4.0 ANALYSIS

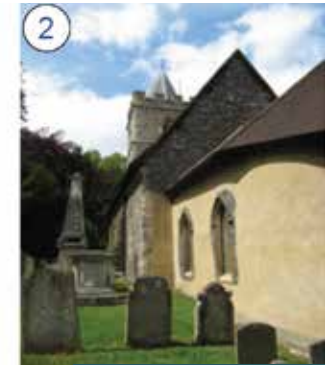
LOCAL LANDMARKS

The site benefits from being within walking distance of many local points of interest, elements of social infrastructure and historical monuments.

The bustling and popular Van Hage Garden Centre is directly adjacent, with extensive facilities and shopping, whilst in Great Amwell itself the story of the village and the engineering behind the New River Path provides both heritage and cultural interest.



Amwell Marsh Pumping Station



St Johns Parish Church



Hillside Lane Cottages



New River Path



George IV Public House



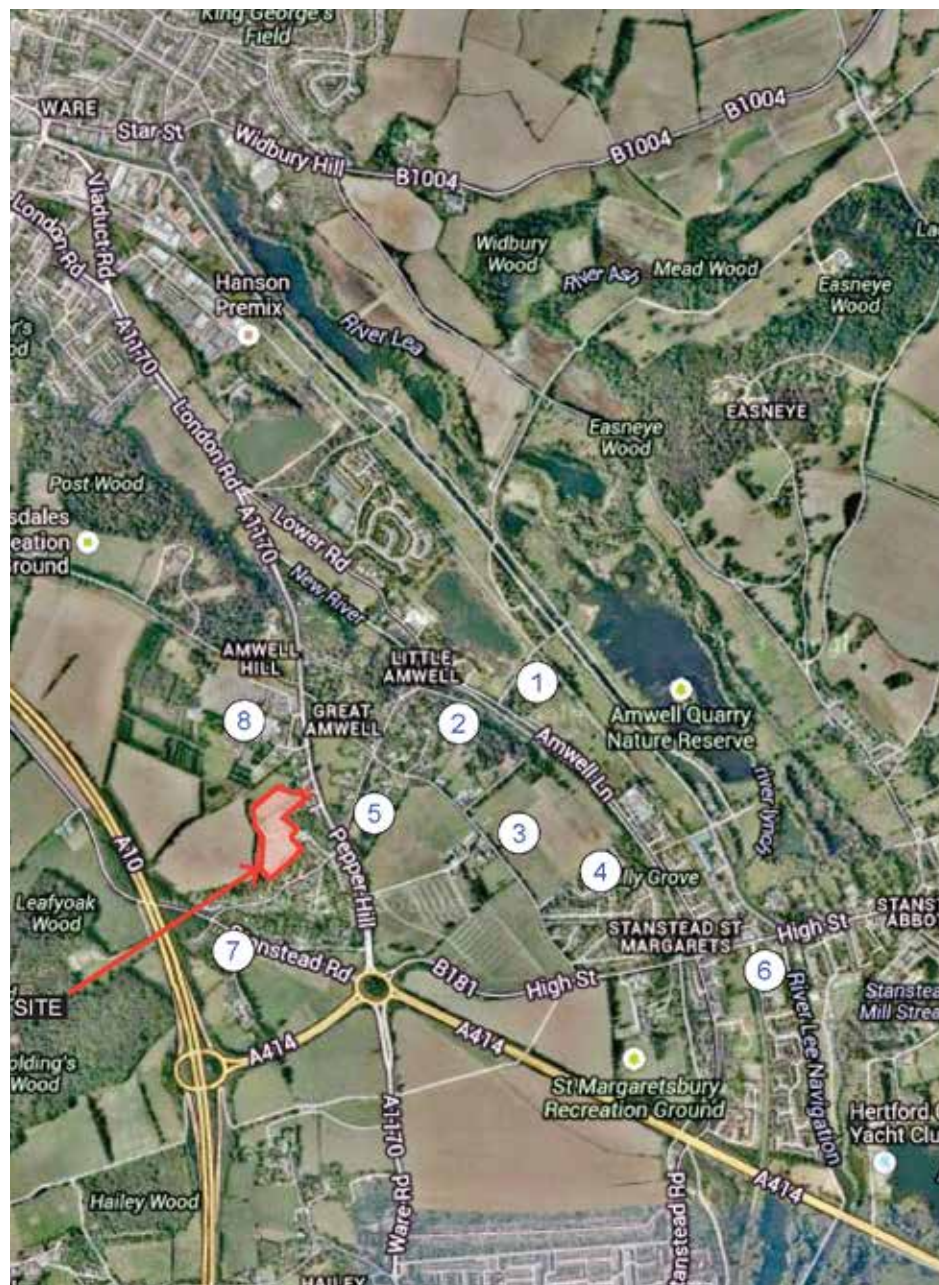
Station Cottages St Margarets



Stanstead Road Property



Van Hage Garden Centre

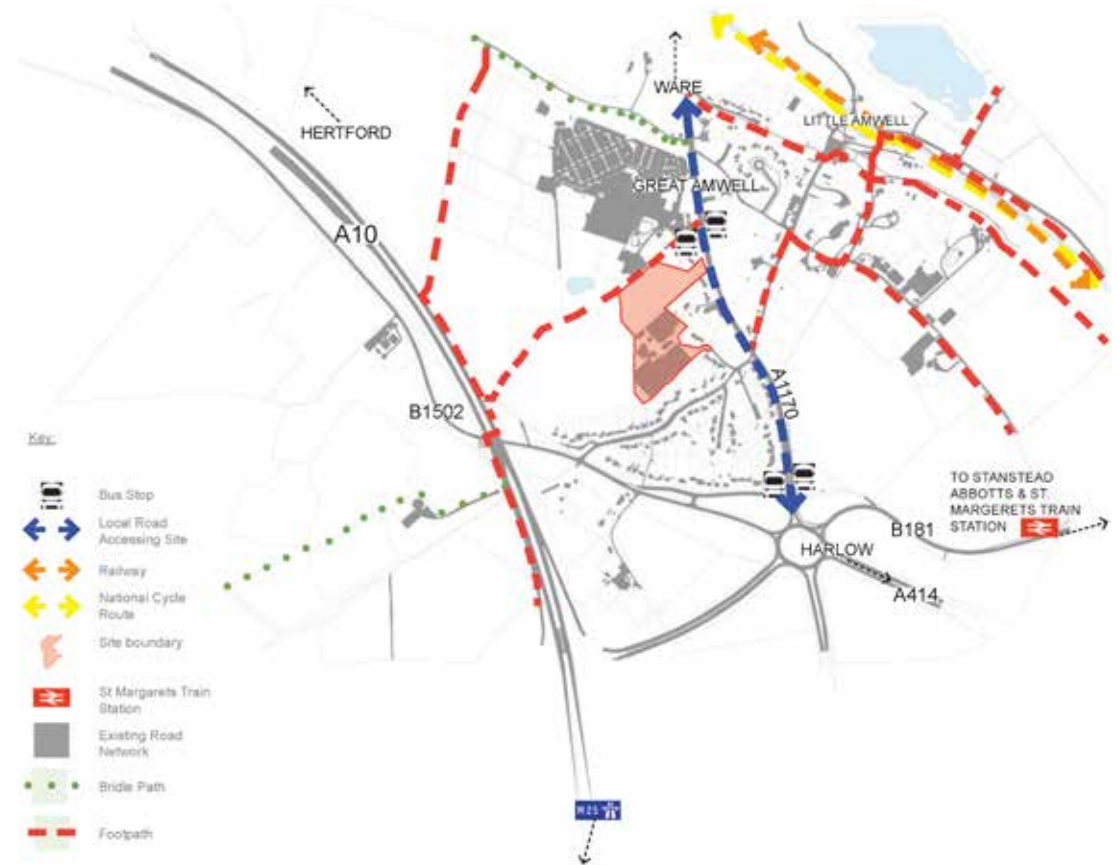


TRANSPORT LINKS & CONNECTIVITY

The site is readily accessible by car, with local roads providing convenient access to the neighbouring larger settlements of Ware, Hertford and Hoddesdon. The site is within a short drive of the Amwell Roundabout, from which convenient access is available to the A414, for Harlow, and A10, for the M25 and London.

Amwell Hill is well served by bus routes, with four frequent weekday services available (the 310, 351, 524 and 724). These routes provide good accessibility to neighbouring settlements and connections to Ware and St Margarets Rail Stations. Both stations are on the Hertford East Branch of the West Anglia Main Line operated by Greater Anglia, and provide half hourly services to London Liverpool Street.

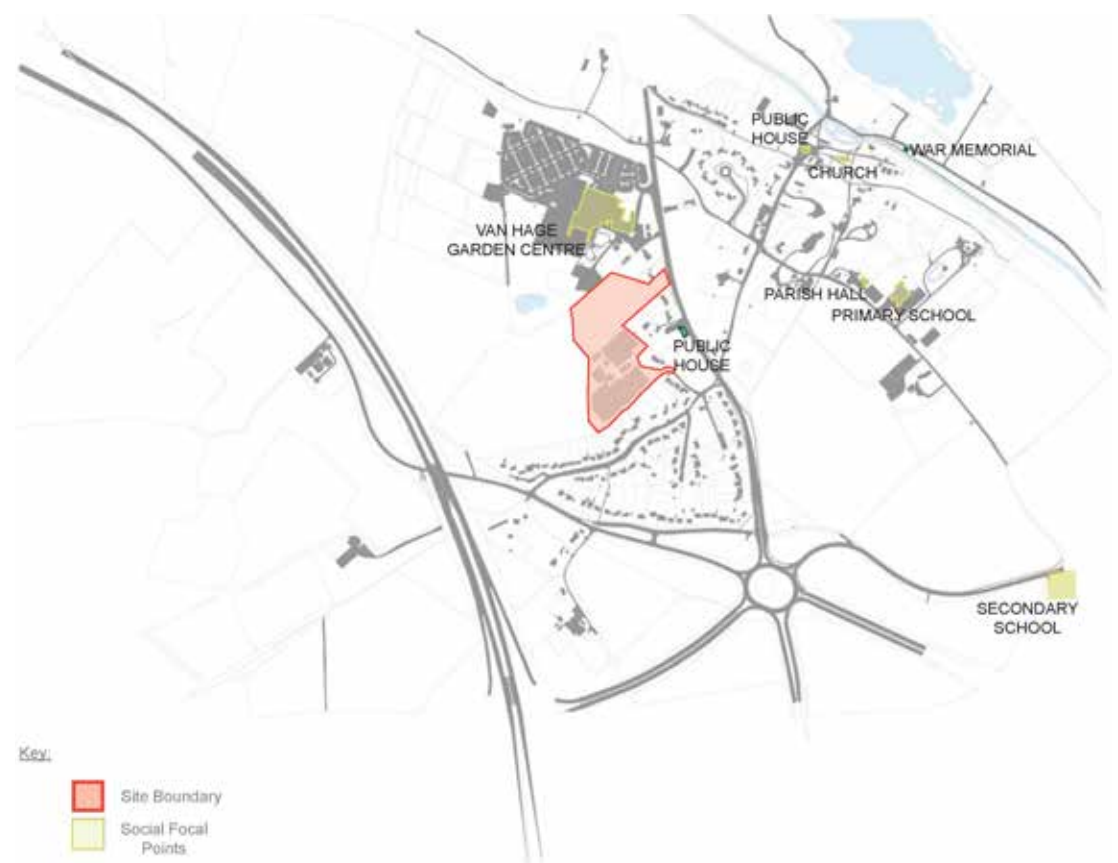
Journeys on foot benefit from lit footways along most roads in the local area, including Amwell Hill. Public footpaths connect to Amwell Hill and feed into a wider network of footpaths and bridle paths that link neighbouring settlements.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ROAD CONNECTIONS

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A new development on the Byfield Nursery site in Great Amwell would be within reasonable walking distance (or short cycling or driving distance) of several important social focal points in the village, including the local Waggon and Horses Pub on Pepper Hill, the Van Hage Garden Centre complex, St John's Parish Church, the George IV public house, as well as the Village Hall and St John the Baptist Primary school on Hillside Lane.



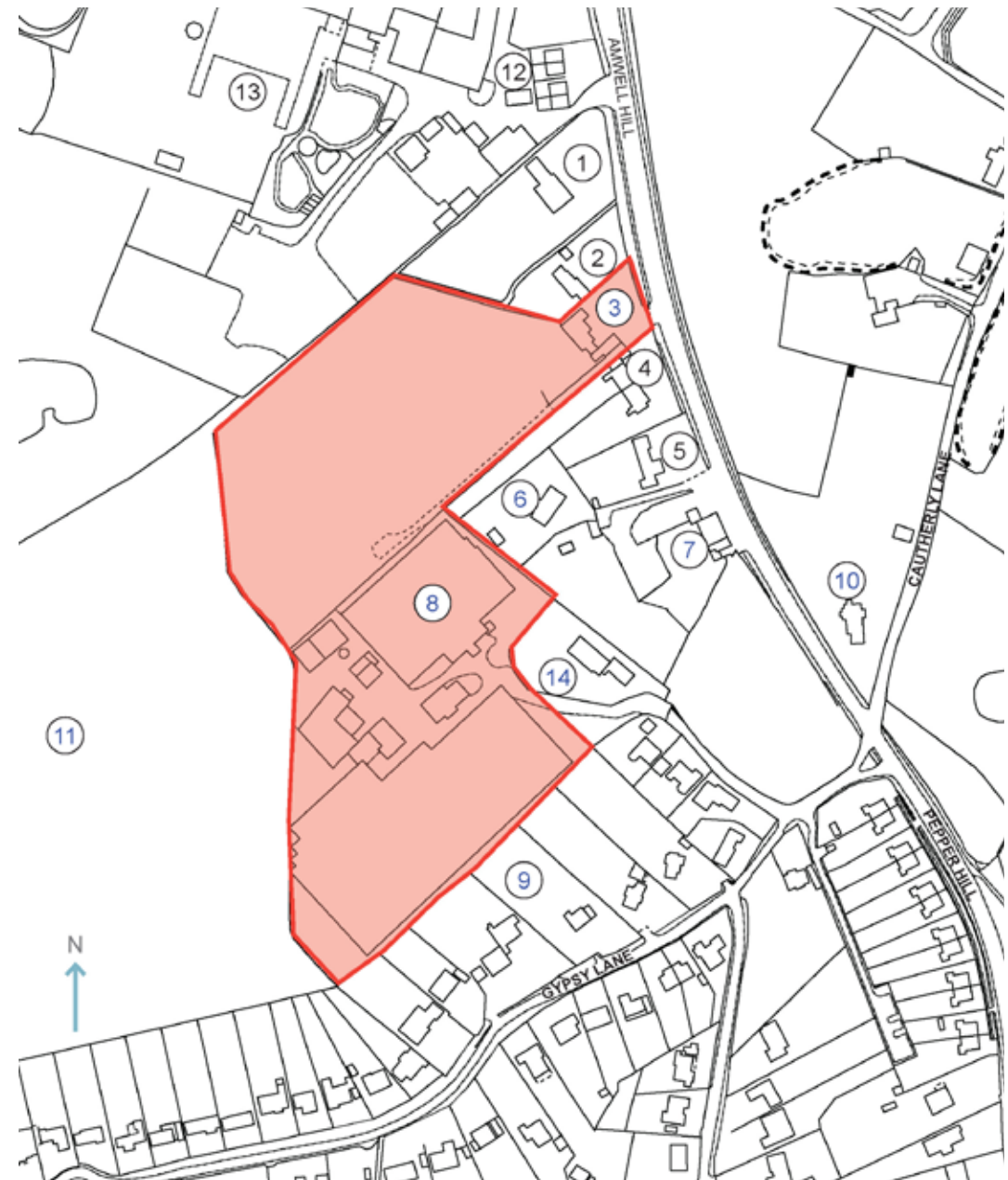
SOCIAL CONTEXT

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The existing built form of Great Amwell in the vicinity of the Byfield Nursery site is shown here in detail, with properties currently surrounding the proposed development site labelled for clarity.

Key:

- ① The Hearn
- ② Flagstones
- ③ Landcroft
- ④ The Firs
- ⑤ Longridge
- ⑥ Heath View
- ⑦ Waggon & Horses Public House
- ⑧ Byfield Nursery
- ⑨ Gypsy Lane
- ⑩ Pepper Hill House
- ⑪ Arable Field
- ⑫ Van Hage Cottages
- ⑬ Van Hage Garden Centre
- ⑭ Byfield House



SITE LOCATION PLAN

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The previously developed Byfield Nursery site is framed to the east and west by strategic 'A' roads. The nursery land is currently only accessible by road via Gypsy Lane, which is a narrow residential lane with no footways and sub-standard driver visibility at its junction with the A1170 Pepper Hill; therefore an increase in vehicle movements on this route should be avoided.

The proposed development would be accessed from a new junction on the A1170 Amwell Hill, on the site of Landcroft House (see page 11, No.3); with Gypsy Lane used for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency access only. The removal of traffic relating to the existing commercial site use from Gypsy Lane would bring about a local highway safety benefit.

The existing buildings and roads within the site drain directly into the underlying soil, the development would continue to drain to the ground wherever possible, using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to improve water quality and mitigate against any future flood risk.

Utilities companies have been consulted and offsite upgrades to serve the development will be limited to works within the footway of Pepper Hill only.

LANDSCAPE & TOPOGRAPHY

At a larger scale it is possible to see the type of natural landscape features which define the character of the site, and should be retained where possible to create a sense of place. For example creative and attractive land features, such as the existing cedar hedgerow which dominates the centre of the site, can be harnessed in the new development's 'greenways' strategy.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS PLAN



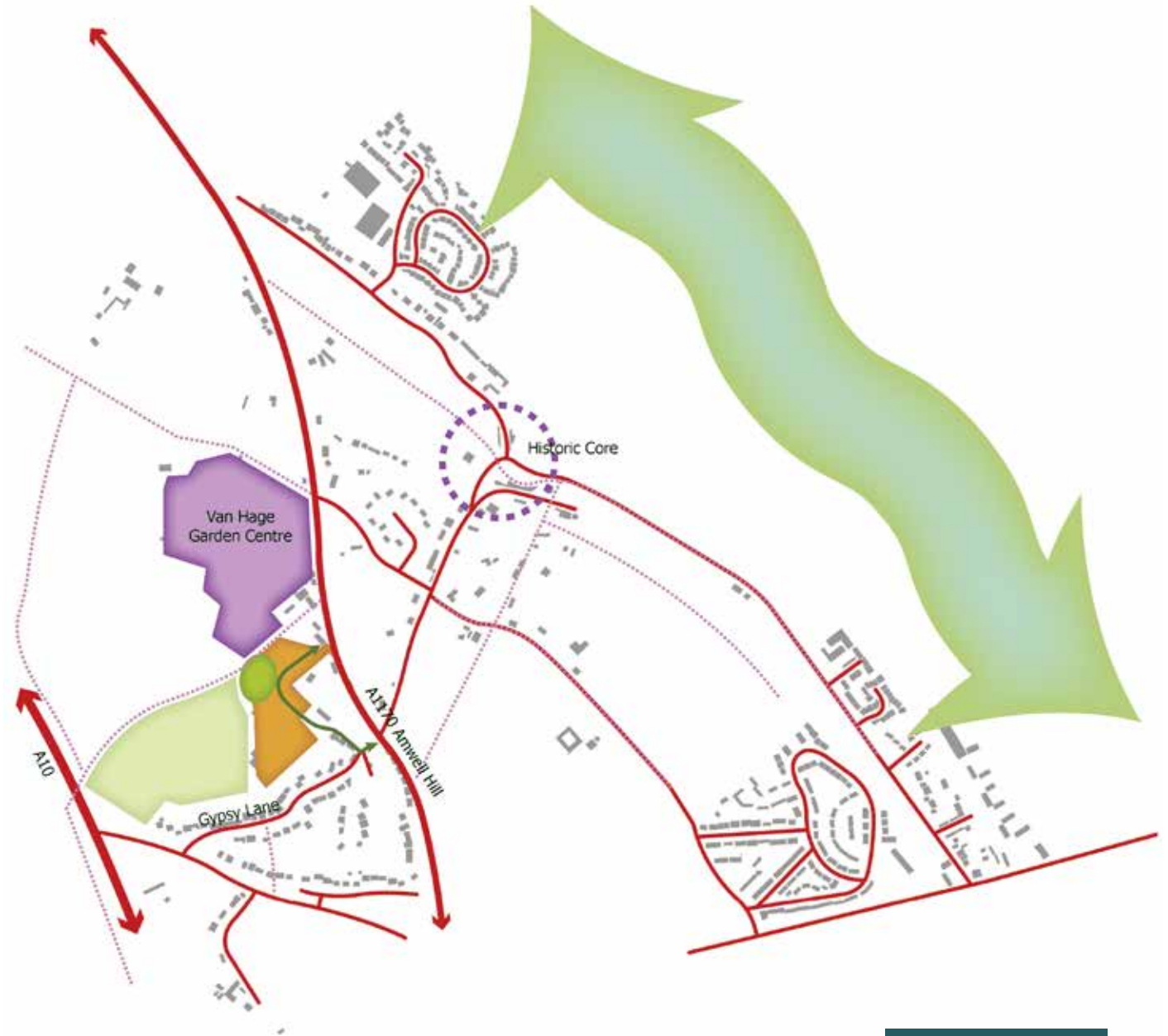
LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.0 CONCEPT

WIDER CONCEPT

The proposed development fills a 'gap' between existing built up areas, naturally rounding off the western boundary of Great Amwell.

It is proposed to create a 'leafy' main route through the Site that connects Amwell Hill with Gypsy Lane, to provide an attractive spine to the development and full pedestrian and cycle connectivity. A new east-west pedestrian link across the site, combined with improved crossing points over Amwell Hill, can establish real connectivity from the fields west of the site, through the site itself, into Little Amwell and beyond to the Lea valley.



WIDER CONCEPT PLAN

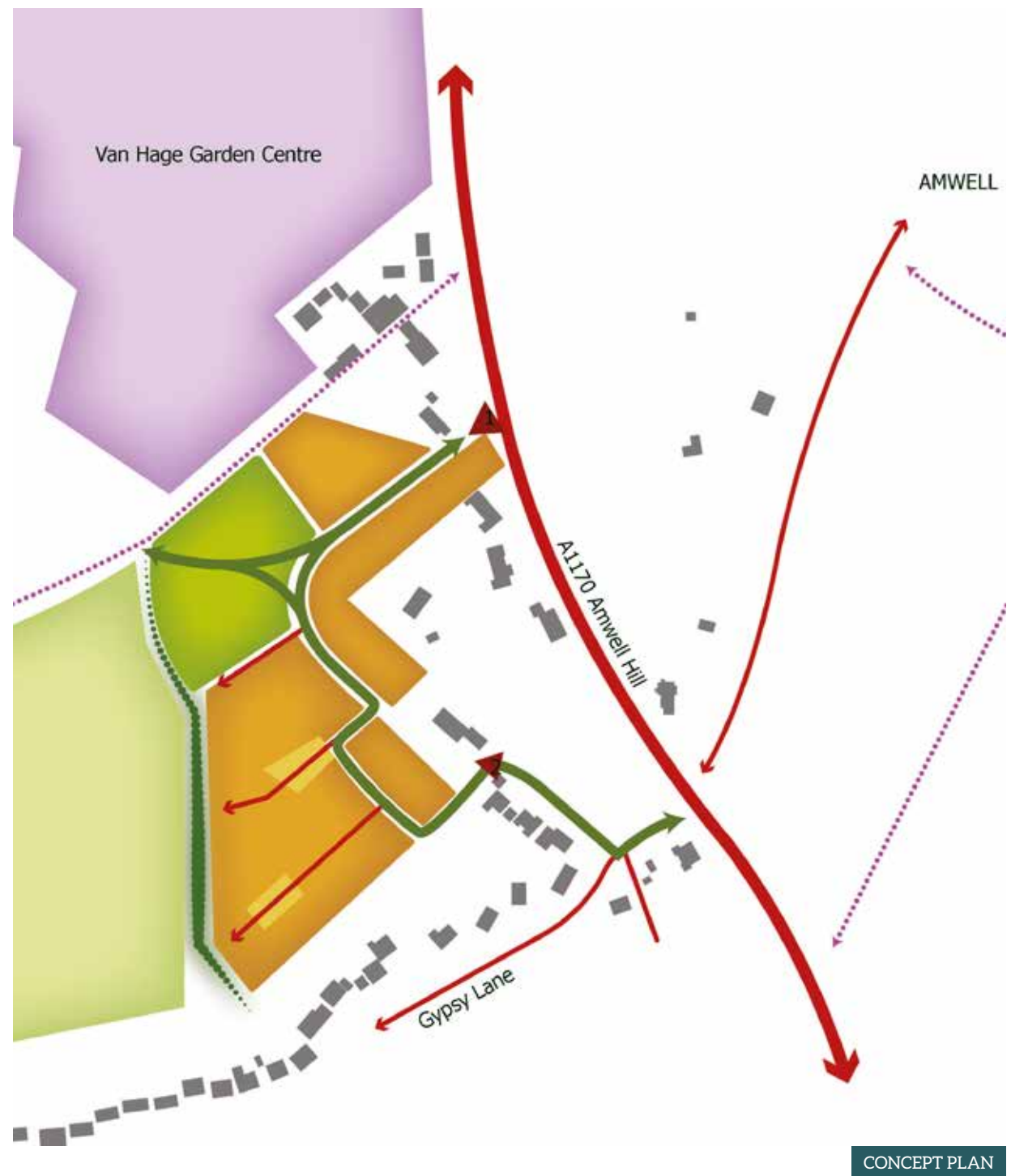
SITE CONCEPT

The site consists of a private house and garden with open views on the northern part and a nursery on the southern part. The land is in a contained location with mixed environments, including the Van Hage Garden Centre to the north; A1170 Amwell Hill to the east; existing development around Gypsy Lane to the south and an agricultural field to the west. Given these mixed environments of the site, there is a clear opportunity to use open space to establish a strong sense of place on site, and a quality of environment that responds to that of Little Amwell.

A key open space is proposed at the northwest of the site, clearly visible from the main site entrance to create a strong sense of arrival. Together with a 'leafy' main route and decent sized gardens it gives the Site a green character, inspired by and complementing the landscape setting of Little Amwell.

A new junction with Amwell Hill (A1170) provides a single vehicular entrance point, with a further emergency access via Gypsy Lane at the southeastern corner of the site. Simple routes lead from the main route to the development blocks at the southwest of the site.

A continuous pedestrian/cycle link is provided from the site entrance to Gypsy Lane, with a connection to the Public Right of Way to the north of the Site.



The Illustrative Layout follows the following key principles:

- Structured along a 'leafy' main route, which loops through the development and connects Amwell Hill with Gypsy Lane. The northern part of this route is proposed as a tree-lined avenue, and the southern part as a shared surface. The trees continue through the open space and 'guide' a footpath, which links up with the Public Right of Way north of the Site.
- Main vehicular access to the Site is proposed as a T-junction from Amwell Hill and a secondary emergency/pedestrian access is proposed from Gypsy Lane.
- The open space is proposed in the north western part of the Site, to positively respond to the open character of the existing garden and the less densely planted boundary in this location.
- The northern part of the open space would contain landscaping to filter views to the adjacent garden centre. The southern part is more open, with pedestrian routes and play facilities encouraging the use of the space, by both new and existing residents of the area.
- Development blocks 'fan' out from the main route and create strong frontage along the open space, main route and shared surfaces.
- The largest detached houses are predominantly located directly adjacent to the open space.
- The housing areas are designed around a series of informal spaces and shared surfaces. A variation of parking solutions is proposed in these locations.
- Improved pedestrian crossing points with Amwell Hill, could increase the connectivity between Great and Little Amwell, the river Lee Valley and the wider countryside.







AERIAL PERSPECTIVE VIEW

7.0 ECOLOGY & ENHANCEMENT

An Ecological Review of Byfield Nursery was carried out by Aspect Ecology. A Phase 1 Habitat survey of the site was conducted in September 2015.

The closest identified statutory ecological designation is Amwell Nature Reserve, which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is also part of the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site and is situated 900m to the east of the site. The proposal would not impact upon the SSSI or SPA given the distance between the site and designated sites.

The report concluded that the habitats present at the site are largely of limited ecological value and represent little in the way of a constraint to development.

Full ecological survey work will be completed prior to any application. The findings of these surveys will be fully and sensitively considered within the proposals for Byfield Nursery to ensure that any mitigation measures can be readily be incorporated such that a net gain for wildlife could be achieved whilst delivering the desired level of residential development. Accordingly, Byfield Nursery should be considered to be readily deliverable in sustainable ecological terms.



AMWELL NATURE RESERVE,
APPROXIMATELY 1 KM FROM THE SITE



THE NURSERY SITE IS BOUNDED ON
THE SOUTH BY LARGE CONIFERS



A VIEW LOOKING SOUTH TOWARDS THE A10, WHICH IS OBSCURED BEHIND THE FIRST LINE OF TREES VISIBLE

8.0 TRANSPORT & ACCESS

TRANSPORT

An appraisal of access opportunities carried out by Ardent Consulting Engineers demonstrates that residential development of around 80 units could be accessed safely from the A1170 Amwell Hill via a new priority junction with right-turn lane, on the site of Landcroft House. The existing site access to Gypsy Lane would be retained for pedestrian, cyclist and emergency use only; with the removal of site traffic from this narrow lane with sub-standard driver visibility at its junction with the A1170 Pepper Hill bringing about a local highway safety benefit.

Primary pedestrian access would be taken direct from Amwell Hill alongside the vehicular access. Amwell Hill has lit footways, with connecting public footpaths feeding into a wider network of footpaths and bridle paths that link neighbouring settlements. The neighbouring town of Ware is around a 2.3km walk, cycle or

bus journey distance north along the A1170, for access to its retail, health and recreational facilities. A primary school is located a 700m (9-minute) walk distance the east of the site, and a secondary school around a 2.1km walk or cycle distance to the west.

The closest bus stops to the site are located on Amwell Hill within a 2-minute walk of the site access, with four frequent weekday services available (the 310, 351, 524 and 724). These routes provide good accessibility to neighbouring settlements and connections to Ware and St Margarets Rail Stations.

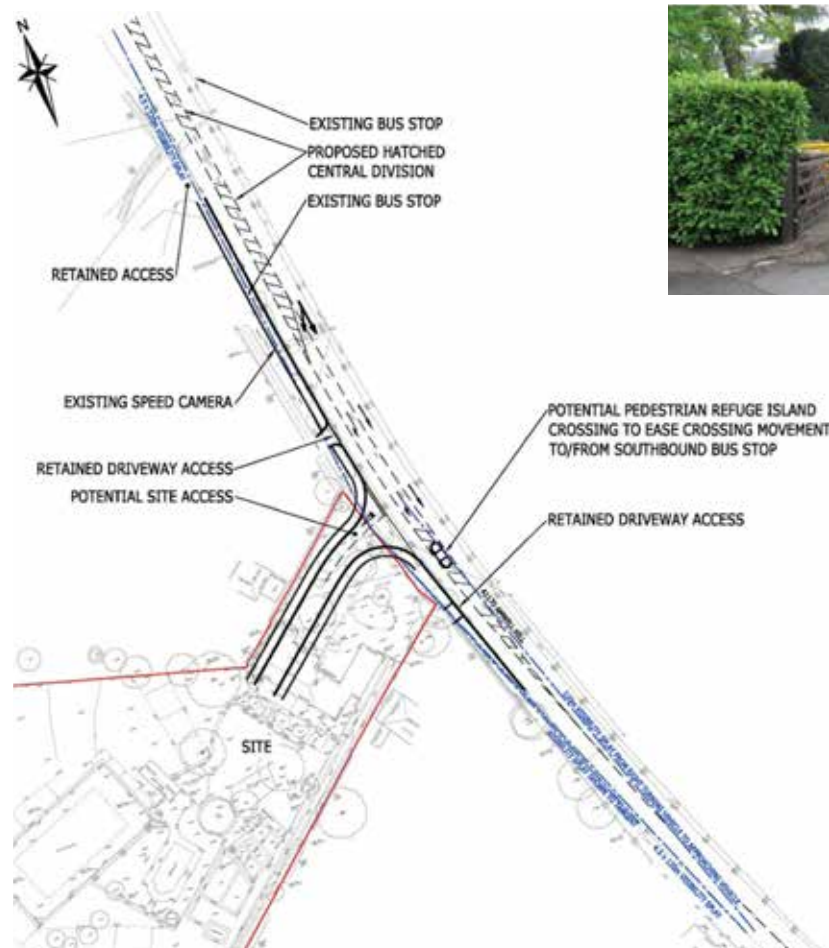
St Margarets Station is closest the site, at around a 1.7km walk, cycle or bus journey distance to the west. Both St Margarets and Ware Stations are on the Hertford East Branch of the West Anglia Main Line operated by Greater Anglia, and provide half hourly services to London Liverpool Street.

The closest cycle route to the site is National Cycle Network (NCN) route 61; the Lee Valley Park route that runs along the canal, connecting to NCN route 1 to the south (near Rye House train station) and continuing south into London and beyond. Locally, NCN 61 extends north to the town of Ware and its rail station.

In view of the above described good level of site accessibility for 'non-car' modes of travel, the site is well suited to residential development and is compliant with current policy guidance on transport and land use planning at both a national and local level.

ACCESS

The plan opposite shows the proposed new site access junction with Amwell Hill as designed by Ardent Consulting Engineers.



A VIEW OF THE PROPOSED SITE ENTRANCE OFF THE A1170

9.0 BENEFITS ARISING FROM THE PROPOSALS

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INVESTMENT

An opportunity currently exists, to not only deliver sympathetically and sustainably to the much needed housing requirement in Great Amwell and East Hertfordshire, but also to inject much needed investment into the site at Byfield Nursery. The glasshouse nursery has been a family run cucumber growing facility for over 40 years, but given advancements in glasshouse technology and the substantial rise in fuel costs, the facility has become unsustainable and increasingly inviable.

The current position of the glasshouse and market garden industry in Hertfordshire was assessed in a 2013 report by neighbouring Broxbourne Borough Council. The report concludes that the sector is making a minimal contribution to the economy and that profit margins in even the most modern glasshouse businesses can be very tight given that the sector experiences issues of price volatility and input price rises. There are also environmental impacts from the continued use of antiquated facilities. Modernisation requires significant investment which local growers, many of which are family run, struggle to implement from their current trading performance, especially given rising energy costs. This investment, without expansion will not provide great returns compared to other uses, given that the industry's profit margins are tight and the value of land for residential development far outweighs the returns from horticultural cropping.

It follows that land designated for residential development is far more valuable than for horticultural activities. This effect is double sided. Firstly, acquiring new sites for glasshouse expansion is made difficult because the price demanded for the land is too high for glasshouses. Secondly, the 'hope' that a site will be given planning permission for housing or another financially beneficial use dampens the viability of the active businesses and the possibility of attracting investment for growth. The industry needs significant investment to move forward, however, the scale of the required investment is unsustainable when considering possible alternative uses of sites of less than 5 acres, such as Byfield Nursery.

The ageing facilities and lack of opportunity for investment that have contributed to the viability issues surrounding the glasshouse industry have resulted in the diversification of the Byfield Site use. The proprietors of the site are now using the hard standing and vacant commercial buildings on the site to house ice cream vans and provide a facility for replenishing their stocks. This has increased the volume of large commercial vehicles using Gypsy Lane on a daily basis, supplementing the large articulated vehicles delivering fertiliser and fuels and removing produce from the nursery site.

This increased use of the narrow lane not only creates disruption to local residents but also causes safety concerns along a lane that's character suggests should not be used by commercial vehicles and via a junction with Pepper Hill that has sub-standard driver visibility. The proposed redevelopment of the site would cease the continued use of Gypsy Lane and its junction with Pepper Hill by commercial site traffic with the exception of emergency use only.

The proposals for development would also result in the demolition of unappealing chimney stacks and oil tanks, ageing glasshouses and the safe removal and disposal of asbestos.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The proposed development of approximately 80 new homes at Byfield Nursery offers the opportunity to stimulate local economic growth and creates significant financial incentives for East Hertfordshire District Council. These are summarised overleaf in the infographic prepared by socio-economic experts NLP.

The Economic Benefits of Housing at Landcroft & Byfield Nursery, Great Amwell

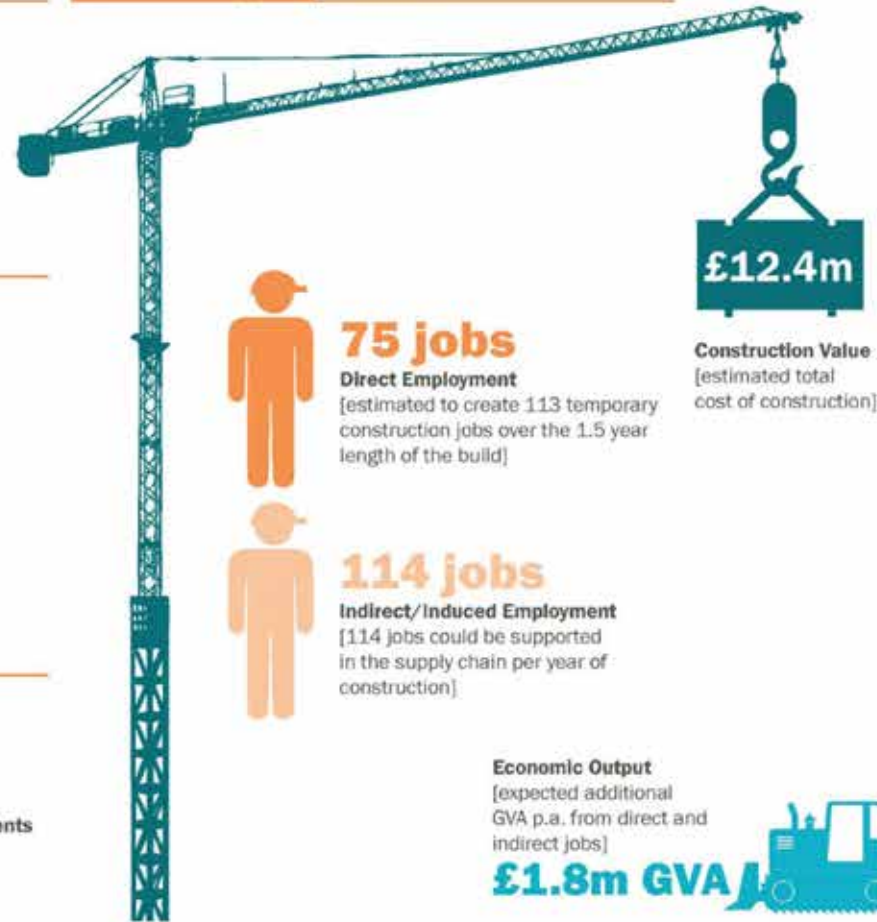
The proposed development of approximately 80 homes on land at Landcroft & Byfield Nursery in Great Amwell, East Hertfordshire offers the opportunity to stimulate economic growth and help reduce the impact on local authority budget cuts.

HEADLINE ECONOMIC IMPACTS

1. Housing Impacts



2. Construction Impacts



3. Expenditure Impacts



£1.8m

Estimated Additional Resident Expenditure within local shops and services [p.a.]



£410,000

First Occupation Expenditure on goods and services to make a house 'feel like home'



10 New Operational Jobs supported by increased resident expenditure in the local area

4. LPA Revenue Impacts



£0.9m

New Homes Bonus payments to Council [over a 6 year period]



Additional Council Tax Payments [p.a.]



£0.7m

£106 Payments

Crest Nicholson and the whole project team are committed to helping Great Amwell grow in the most sustainable and suitable manner. We appreciate that new homes are not always welcome in rural villages and there are issues of great importance to the residents of Great Amwell. We want to ensure that the evolving proposals are informed by local knowledge and deliver towards the needs and aspirations of the local community.

In developing our proposals, we want to develop close links with the community and local representatives to best understand their needs, aspirations and concerns for the area. This will include organisations such as Great Amwell Parish Council, the Amwell Society, local churches, community groups and businesses.

As well as influencing the proposals, new development can create significant opportunities for the local community, both existing and new. We're interested to hear how development can help enhance in Great Amwell and the surrounding area.

The proposed development at Byfield Nursery will be accompanied by Section 106 contributions by the developer to East Hertfordshire, and Crest Nicholson will work with the local community to identify local need.

Crest Nicholson have appointed a specialist community consultation company, to undertake a comprehensive and fully inclusive consultation programme with locally elected representatives, community stakeholders and local residents. This will ensure that the local community have a real, genuine opportunity to help shape proposals. The approach fully meets, and indeed exceeds, the requirements of the East Hertfordshire Statement of Community Involvement, the Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework.



11.0 CONCLUSION

1. The site could sustainably deliver around 80 much needed new homes (in the context of a significant housing shortfall, both at district and settlement specific levels);
2. Green Belt land release is likely to be required to meet this significant local housing need. Byfield Nursery offers the opportunity to deliver this on a site that is predominantly previously developed land;
3. The proposals will lead to the removal of ageing facilities, unappealing chimney stacks, oil tanks and asbestos. As a result, the existing environment will be significantly enhanced.
4. Redevelopment will result in the removal of large commercial vehicle traffic.
5. The site is considered to be the most sustainable location within Great Amwell;
6. The site has good links to existing transport networks and infrastructure (as acknowledged by EHDC);
7. The site is well screened, with defensible boundaries, ensuring that visual impact from the proposals will be minimal, and considerably less than other promoted sites.
8. Byfield Nursery is located within an area of established residential character, that presents itself as a logical extension to the existing settlement boundary;
9. No ecological constraints have been identified on the site that would prevent its development for residential use, and Crest are committed to ensuring that mitigation measures can be utilised to achieve a net gain for wildlife across the site; and
10. The proposals would provide socio-economic community benefits.

