

Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Report

March 2021

Prepared by Govresources Ltd
for

Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
and Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

1. SEA in Watton-at-Stone

- 1.1 This report sets out a draft Screening Determination for the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan) and has been prepared for the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group by Govresources Ltd.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for Watton-at-Stone Parish Council (as the accountable body) for the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Area (agreed by East Herts Council on 5th April 2016), which encompasses the whole of the Parish of Watton-at-Stone. It will guide the future evolution of the village and help inform planning decisions to 2033.
- 1.3 The purpose of the screening report is to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects and so require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). More detail is given in the following sections on Legislative Background (section 2), Establishing a Need for an SEA (section 3), and Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan (section 4).
- 1.4 National and Local Policy are reviewed in sections 5 and 6.
- 1.5 An assessment of the impact of site allocations is contained in section 7 and a Screening Assessment table can be found in section 8 followed by a draft Screening Determination in section 9.
- 1.6 A draft summary document containing the Policies Map, all the policies and site plans of each site allocation, prepared in advance of the Regulation 14 consultation, is appended at Appendix A.
- 1.7 Most of the southern part of the village of Watton-at-Stone is within the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area. The conservation area stretches the length of the High Street widening at its western extremity to take in a swathe of the historic landscape of Woodhall Park. The Watton-at-Stone Adopted Conservation Area Appraisal Map (July 2014) is appended at Appendix B.
- 1.8 In addition, resources on flooding, rivers, wildlife sites and other local and national environmental designations have been gathered in the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, including a comprehensive set of maps and descriptions kindly provided by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The Neighbourhood Plan will also benefit from the local specialist knowledge of historic parks and gardens provided by Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and search information from the Historic Environment Record at Hertfordshire County Council. In depth discussions have taken place with the Environment Agency in relation to one of the two main housing site allocations.

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The European Union Directive 2001/42/EC requires an SEA to be carried out for certain types of plans and programmes that could have significant environmental effects. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) transposed this Directive in law for England and Wales.

- 2.2 Neighbourhood plans fall within the scope of this legislation. They are a plan as defined by Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive and Regulation 5 paragraph 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 2.3 Under Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive and Regulation 5 paragraph 6 of the Regulations, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is only required for documents that determine land use in small areas at the local level where it is considered that they are likely to have significant environmental effects.
- 2.4 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended in 2012) transpose the requirements of the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC into English law. The Habitats Directive and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations afford protection to plants, animals and habitats that are rare and vulnerable in a European context.
- 2.5 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a systematic process through which the performance of a plan or project can be assessed for its likely impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, consist of Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Potential Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (pSPA and cSAC); and listed or proposed Ramsar sites).
- 2.6 Under Regulation 9 of the Regulations (2004), the responsible body (local parish or town council or neighbourhood forum) is required to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects. This assessment is carried out through a screening determination, using a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). In accordance with the Regulations, the results of the screening process are set out in this SEA Screening Determination report, which must be publicly available, submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.
- 2.7 Paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 states that "The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site". According to the NPPF, a habitats site is "Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites" (p.67).

3. Establishing a Need for an SEA

- 3.1 Planning Practice Guidance states that "to decide whether a draft Neighbourhood Plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan's preparation according to the

requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004”¹.

- 3.2 The guidance also suggests that “The local planning authority, as part of its duty to advise or assist, should consider putting in place processes to determine whether the proposed Neighbourhood Plan will require a strategic environmental assessment.”² In this case East Herts District Council (EHDC) as the responsible authority will provide assistance by seeking the opinions of the three statutory consultation bodies in undertaking the screening determination.
- 3.3 The Guidance notes that as a general rule, an SEA is more likely to be necessary if:
- a Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development
 - the Neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
 - the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan”.
- 3.4 The Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed in accordance with the criteria outlined in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations taking account of the Planning Practice Guidance in reaching its conclusions.
- 3.5 The three statutory environmental bodies designated in the regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) are to be consulted on the draft Neighbourhood Plan to determine whether an environmental assessment is required. This draft document has been produced to facilitate that consultation.

4. Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.1 Watton-at-Stone is a rural parish located in East Hertfordshire halfway between Hertford and Stevenage which covers an area of about 1416.4 hectares. The parish is nestled in the rolling countryside of the River Beane, has a by-pass on its eastern side and a railway line and station on its western boundary.
- 4.2 The boundary of the parish extends well beyond the village of Watton-at-Stone itself and also includes the hamlet of Whempstead, a number of working farms and large areas of associated farmland. Watton-at-Stone is mostly a residential area. The commercial premises of the parish are concentrated on the High Street.
- 4.3 Census Data shows that in 2011 about 2,340 people lived in Watton-at-Stone (Resident population) and that there were approximately 970 Households. 29.4% of residents were under 24 years old and 15.4% were over 65 years old.
- 4.4 Both the natural and historic heritage of the parish have been carefully considered through the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the policies have been written specifically to take these assets into account.

¹Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 11-028-20150209

² ibid

- 4.5 The Neighbourhood Plan covering the period 2019 to 2033 has been prepared by the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, on behalf of the Parish Council. It was informed by an extensive evidence base which includes the results of public consultations, technical studies relevant to the parish such as flood risk mapping and site assessments, and data from public records such as the census. The qualifying body for the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan is Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.
- 4.6 The Neighbourhood Plan allocates two sites for housing development to deliver up to 60 homes each by 2033. The Housing Site Allocations are covered by policies WAS 3 Walkern Road and WAS 4 Stevenage Road. There are also four brownfield sites which are covered in policy WAS 5 Brownfield Sites.
- 4.7 The Neighbourhood Plan Area does not contain or border any sensitive sites of European significance (Natura 2000), Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks, or World Heritage Sites.
- 4.8 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the village or the Conservation Area but there are two in the parish: a scheduled Roman site near Backlane Wood and another of medieval origins at Well Wood/Chapel Wood. These are sensitive areas as identified in the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations. However, both are in open countryside to the west of the railway line and are not impacted by the Neighbourhood Plan policies. There is an extensive Area of Archaeological Significance that covers most of the built form of Watton-at-Stone village. Policies exist in the East Herts District Plan relevant to the requirements of a development within an Area of Archaeological Significance. We have prepared an assessment of the likelihood of archaeological remains being present on the sites of the two housing allocations, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) advice.
- 4.9 The Parish contains 28 listed buildings including the Grade I listed Woodhall Park (Heath Mount School) located to the east of the A119 and there are no proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan which would impact this heritage asset. There are two Grade II* listed buildings, both in the village, the parish church and Watton Place, currently in use as a medical centre
- 4.10 Woodhall Park is a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden from the late C18 with a lake and pleasure grounds, surrounding the principal building and country house, Woodhall Park, with mid C18 formal gardens. Although a small portion of the park extends to the west of the A119 at the south east corner of the village, the only policy designations in the Neighbourhood Plan which could impact on the setting of the park would do so positively in that they designate three Local Green Spaces (LGS2, LGS3, and LGS4), policy WAS 17 Local Green Space.
- 4.11 The River Beane runs into the village from the north west, between the two housing site allocations and then out into Woodhall Park. The river is closest to WAS 3 and a bridge and footpath is proposed, from WAS 3 through a proposed Local Green Space (LGS6), through WAS 4 and LGS 7 to Watton-at-Stone railway station. There are ongoing discussion with the Environment Agency on this proposal.

- 4.12 The Neighbourhood Plan's overall approach is to support appropriate development which protects the character of the built and natural environment of the parish and reflects its attractive rural character.

- 4.13 The vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is:

Watton at Stone will continue to be a thriving village hub, with a strong and diverse community. It will be well served by green spaces, local amenities, good physical and digital infrastructure, and will support local enterprise. The parish will protect all aspects of its heritage, including the character of its dwellings, its natural environment and rural setting. At the same time, the village will welcome new residents and accept thoughtful, well designed, sustainable development, in line with the needs of existing and future residents and balanced by appropriate additional infrastructure and amenities for the expanded community.

- 4.14 The Neighbourhood Plan contains the following objectives:

Housing Development Strategy

Objective 1: Deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the needs and context of WAS to 2033.

Objective 2: Ensure that brownfield sites are prioritised for new housing developments where possible.

Objective 3: Ensure any new housing is in keeping with the surrounding area, presenting favourable vistas, enriching the area, lying low in the Beane Valley and protecting the village's historic character and rural identity.

Objective 4: Development should be of high-quality design with a mix of house types suitable for the future needs of the village.

Objective 5: New development will have a density that balances the sensitive semi-rural setting with the efficient use of land and preservation of high quality agricultural land

Objective 6: Position development so it is well connected to bus stops, the school, and village facilities.

Objective 7: Promote safe, accessible public streets and spaces.

Objective 8: Seek to reduce traffic impacts of development

Objective 9: Ensure appropriate parking solutions are implemented as a result of new development

Objective 10: Seek on-going improvements to utility infrastructure and digital connectivity including full fibre broadband.

Objective 11: Maintain a clearly defined and sustainable village boundary.

Sustainable, affordable, accessible transport

Objective 12: Encourage the use of sustainable transport; lobby for a better bus service and retaining rail services; promote and maintain the current network of cycle routes footways and public footpaths.

Provision of Amenities

Objective 13: Support the village's key community services and facilities.

Objective 14: Ensure adequate provision for parish children to attend the local school.

Objective 15: Facilitate the development of new football facilities.

Objective 16: Encourage appropriate use of Green Belt for sensitively designed outdoor leisure.

Protect and enhance natural and historic environment

Objective 17: Make the most of WAS's rural aspect and landscape setting protecting key views.

Objective 18: Maintain and enhance nature conservation, wildlife and biodiversity.

Objective 19: Protect the historic fabric, including listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and the Conservation Area and its setting.

Support for business

Objective 20: Support appropriate development for local businesses and employment opportunities, including home working.

5. National Policy

- 5.1 The following paragraphs consider national environmental policy in relation to the Watton-at-Stone neighbourhood plan. Further specific comments in relation to the two main residential site allocation policies can be found in Section 7 below.

Historic Environment

- 5.2 Two paragraphs in the National Planning Policy Framework address the historic environment and heritage assets in local plans and proposals, namely paragraph 185 and paragraph 190. For the purposes of this SEA Screening Report, the Neighbourhood Plan is treated as a local plan.
- 5.3 Paragraph 185 advises that local planning authorities should set out in their local plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
 - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
- 5.4 Paragraph 190 states that "Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset)

taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."

- 5.5 Historic England provides guidance on the prediction and identification of significant effects and mitigation measures. In the context of the Watton-at-Stone village these can be summarised as:
- Loss of or damage to a heritage asset or its setting
 - Conservation and enhancement of a heritage asset
 - Loss or erosion of the historic character of the village
 - Impact on the 'at risk' status of assets or risk to the historic environment
 - Cumulative, secondary or synergistic impacts on heritage assets or the village
- 5.6 The guidance goes on to say that mitigation measures may include historic environment policy guidance and detailed historic characterisation studies. The Conservation Area Appraisal for Watton-at-Stone is a little out of date, so heritage has featured significantly in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, from consideration of impact on Scheduled Monuments to the identification of seven Non-designated Heritage Assets in policy WAS 22 Non-designated Buildings and Structures.

Natural Environment

- 5.7 The NPPF also addresses the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment in plan making. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF refers to the enhancement of the natural and local environment and paragraph 174 refers to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity.
- 5.8 Paragraph 170 refers to providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that make an area more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 5.9 Of particular relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan, paragraph 174 says that plans should identify, map and safeguard wildlife-rich habitats and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 5.10 The Neighbourhood Plan has used the information provided by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (Herts Environmental Records Centre) to identify non-statutory habitats within the Neighbourhood Plan Area in WAS 19 Wildlife Sites and Habitat Enhancements. There are no statutory sites within the parish.

Rivers and Flood Risk

- 5.11 The River Beane is an important feature in the village and the River Beane Restoration Association has helped us with policy WAS 20 Green Corridors and the River Beane which seeks to address over-abstraction locally, public access to the river and the river's ecological value. Access to the river to ensure flood defence maintenance is also protected. Both housing site allocations border

Flood Zone 2 of the River Beane (see Appendix C – East Hertfordshire District Council SFRA extract).

6. Local Policy

- 6.1 The East Herts District Plan was adopted on 23 October 2018. The policies relevant to the protection of heritage assets and the natural environment in Watton-at-Stone are listed as follows:

GBR1 Green Belt
VILL1 Group 1 Villages
HA1 Designated Heritage Assets
HA2 Non-Designated Heritage Assets
HA3 Archaeology
HA4 Conservation Areas
HA7 Listed Buildings
NE1 International, National and Locally Designated Nature Conservation Sites
NE2 Sites or Features of Nature Conservation Interest (Non-Designated)
NE3 Species and Habitats
NE4 Green Infrastructure
WAT3 Water Quality & the Water Environment

- 6.2 All of the above policies were taken into account throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Policies GBR1, VILL1, HA1, DES2, NE1, NE3 are strategic policies. This Neighbourhood Plan is in accordance with the strategic policies in East Herts District Plan and this will be further tested at the Examination of the Plan.
- 6.3 The Sustainability Appraisal for the East Herts District Plan was published in 2016, by AECOM. At that time the preferred approach to growth in villages was similar to the final approach in the adopted District Plan; that 500 new homes would be provided in the larger villages (Group 1 Villages including Watton-at-Stone) over the plan period, equating to a minimum growth factor of 10% based on the 2011 census. The sustainability of this approach in terms of the natural and historic environment and the water environment were fully considered in the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 6.4 In terms of the options considered in the Sustainability Appraisal, Option 1a including the strategy of 500 homes being located in Group 1 villages was shown to have no negative significant effects on the natural or historic environment. The only relevant potential significant environmental effects that were identified for the chosen development strategy were on landscape. Special regard was had to the impact on landscape of the housing options considered during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.5 Natural and historic environment policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are largely discussed above but include:
- WAS 17 Local Green Space
WAS 18 Protected Views
WAS 19 Wildlife Sites and Habitat Enhancements

WAS 20 Green Corridors and the River Beane

WAS 21 Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area and Heritage Assets

WAS 22: Non-designated Buildings and Structures

WAS 23 Archaeology

- 6.6 The two housing site allocation policies include criteria to protect the environment, further general environmental criteria in relation to new built development will be included in the Design Codes once completed.

7. Site Allocation Assessment

- 7.1 For ease of reference, the Site Allocations are shown on the extract from the Policies Map Figure 1 Extract from Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map, and sites from the AECOM report referenced below, Site S1 and S18, can be found as follows: Figure 2 Site S1, Extract from Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment, AECOM 2018 and Figure 3 Site S18, Extract from Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment, AECOM 2018 in Appendix D.

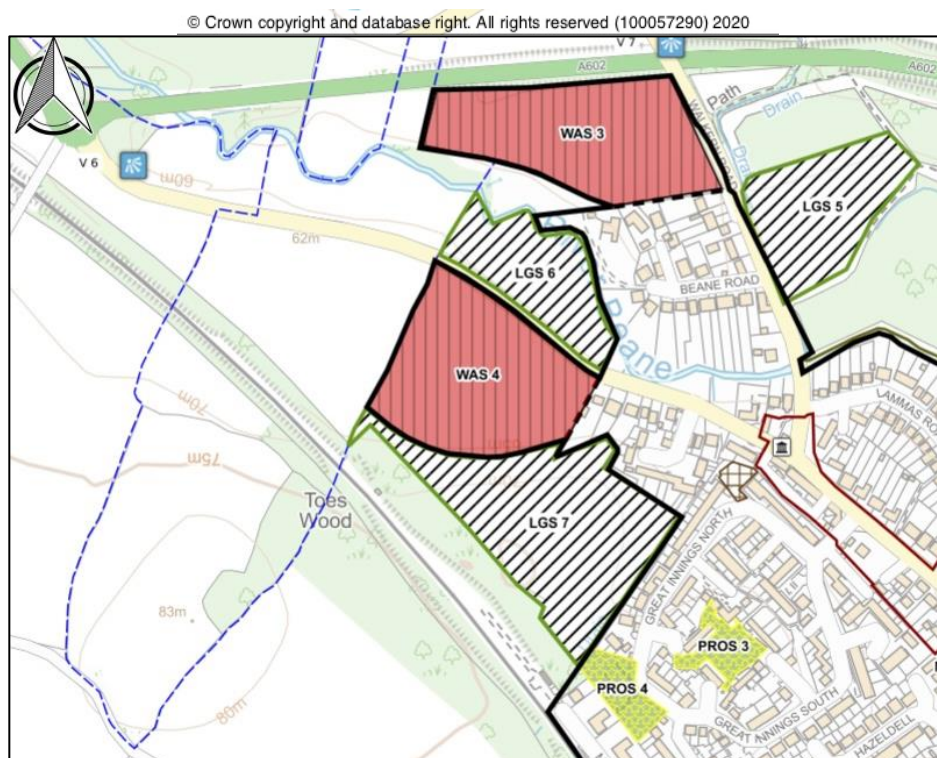


Figure 1 Extract from Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map

- 7.2 The history of the site allocations in Watton-at-Stone stem from:

- the East Herts Green Belt Review 2013
- the Call for Sites exercise carried out by East Herts District Council in the process of preparing the current adopted District Plan,
- East Herts Green Belt Review 2015 in which the Green Belt around the village of Watton-at-Stone was identified as having an overall suitability for development categorised as 'Low',
- Watton at Stone Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment March 2018 produced by AECOM. This looked at 21 sites. The final Green Belt sites chosen are

similar to S1, a very small part of S17 and the larger part of S18 which lies within the parish in this report. Several other sites identified in this study now have planning permission or are identified as Brownfield Sites in the Neighbourhood Plan.

- The final East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1 concluding that Group 1 villages in the Green Belt could consider meeting the target of a 10% increase outside the village envelope. Such development, particularly if it was additional to the target, should consider the appropriateness of the proposal in terms of wider sustainability objectives and the delivery of community benefits, through the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

7.3 The conclusion of the AECOM report was that sites S1, S17 and S18 could potentially be removed from the Green Belt and that residential use of the sites (or part of the sites) could be appropriate as they do not pose a significant risk to any of the four Green Belt purposes. Site S1 approximates to what is now WAS 3 Walkern Road and a very small part of site S17 (below the 65m contour) and part of S18 up to the Aston Parish boundary together make up site WAS 4 Stevenage Road in the Neighbourhood Plan.

7.4 Individual site assessment proforma were completed for each of these three sites. The site assessment forms for S1 and S18 are attached at Appendix D and summarised in the Table 1 below:

	S1 West of Walkern Road	S17 Stevenage Road East (very small part rest designated as LGS)	S18 Stevenage Road West (Part)
Environmental designations	Green Belt/small part Flood Zone 2	Green Belt	Green Belt/small part Flood Zone 2
Landscape	Medium sensitivity, views filtered by woodland	(Part) High sensitivity but well screened and residential on 2 sides	(Part) High sensitivity but east end adjacent to residential
Agricultural land	No loss of Grade 1-3 agricultural land	Some loss – site within Grade 3	Some loss – site within Grade 3
Heritage impact	Some impact/part of site within area of archaeological significance	Limited or no impact	Some impact/part of site within area of archaeological significance
Access to community facilities	Moderately well located - walking distance of village centre	Well located	Well located
TPO's/wildlife habitat and biodiversity	No TPO's Open land/unknown habitat value	No TPO's Open land/unknown habitat value	No TPO's Open land/unknown habitat value

Table 1: Summary of AECOM Site Assessment 2018

7.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Site Allocation WAS 4 Stevenage Road includes only a very small part of S17, reducing the landscape impact greatly by confining development to below the 65m contour. Only the eastern part of S18 is

included, being land adjoining the Stevenage Road, that falls within the parish boundary, reducing landscape impact entering the village from the west.

- 7.6 Ecological considerations have been taken into account using the data provided by Hertfordshire Environmental Records Office (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust) Ecological Network Mapping. Neither site allocations WAS 3 nor WAS 4 contain mapped existing habitats of any significance (areas coloured orange, cream or yellow on the Map at Appendix E). There is potential for new habitat to be created in these areas to improve biodiversity. This is required in the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

8. Screening assessment

8.1 As mentioned above, the Regulations specify a set of criteria against which the likely environmental effects of any plan covered by the Regulations must be assessed to determine whether it requires a SEA. The table below considers each of these criteria in turn, showing that if there are any significant environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan, they will be positive effects.

Table 1: Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
1 (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	No	The Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Statutory Development Plan and therefore would set a framework for future development projects in Watton-at-Stone. However, the Neighbourhood Plan sits within a wider framework set out by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and East Herts District Plan. In addition, the projects for which the neighbourhood plan contributes to setting a planning framework are very local in nature. The Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan does include two sites allocated for housing (see Section 7 above)
1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or	No	The Neighbourhood Plan will sit alongside the statutory

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
programmes including those in a hierarchy.		development plan and provide a greater degree of detail to illuminate the development plan policies, as they relate to the Watton-at-Stone Parish. However, the Neighbourhood Plan will respond to and align with rather than influence other plans or programmes.
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The Neighbourhood Plan will work to protect and enhance the character, natural environment and landscape of Watton-at-Stone, including statutory environmental designations and Local Green Space designations. A number of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to the social sustainability of Watton-at-Stone and provide socially sustainable development as defined in the NPPF, including a supply of housing which meets the needs of current and future generations, balancing growth with infrastructure provision. Therefore, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan will have a positive impact on local environmental assets and therefore will promote sustainable development.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	None have been identified. There will be an increase in the number of houses in the village as a result of new development. However, the Neighbourhood Plan will help to address wider

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
		environmental problems as highlighted in the NPPF at a local level, such as climate change, air pollution, traffic congestion, loss of biodiversity and flooding; without any negative effects.
1 (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	No	The Neighbourhood Plan complies with the East Herts planning documents and the NPPF which have taken account of existing legislation for environmental protection. The Neighbourhood Plan also contains policies requiring efficient, effective and well-maintained SUDs systems to ensure no pollution run-off flows into the River Beane.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified. The Neighbourhood Plan will result in positive environmental effects through policies that seek to protect rural landscape setting and important heritage assets including views, and limit flood risks; have positive social and economic effects by ensuring ongoing support for leisure and business facilities and promoting walking and cycling. These positive effects are small and low frequency but are likely to be long term.
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified. A combination of the Neighbourhood Plan, which seeks to protect and enhance the character, environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
		<p>and landscape of Watton-at-Stone and wider environmental policy in the East Herts District Plan is likely to have cumulative positive environmental effects and benefits for Watton-at-Stone.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be small scale.</p>
2 (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	<p>The boundaries of the village have been modestly extended in some parts to allocate for housing. This is to meet the specific housing target set by the East Herts District Plan. Every effort was made to find sites within the village boundary, but this was not possible. However, all effects will have negligible or no impacts on neighbouring areas as Watton-at-Stone is contained within roads and the railway line.</p>
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	<p>No significant effects have been identified. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to enhance the environment and to provide the infrastructure required to meet the social needs of Watton-at-Stone's residents.</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
<p>2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan area does contain sensitive features, although the Housing Allocation Sites are all outside the conservation area and do not impact on listed buildings or the historic park. Neither do they propose development in Flood Zone 2 or 3 although small areas of both sites are in Flood Zone 2. Neither site allocation contains habitats of significance. There are no proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects. In addition, design policies, environmental policies and the Design Code will protect and enhance the natural and historic environment.</p> <p>The following specific policies protect sensitive features: WAS 3-5; WAS 6; WAS 16-23.</p> <p>East Herts planning policies and the NPPF will also protect natural assets, listed and unlisted heritage assets and designated assets contained within the boundary of the Parish.</p>
<p>2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status</p> <p>.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan contains policies aimed at protecting local Green Spaces, Local Wildlife Sites, Historic Parks and gardens.</p> <p>The following specific policies protect sensitive features:</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
		WAS 3-5; WAS 6; WAS 16-23.

9. Screening determination

9.1 In conclusion the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this conclusion are:

The Neighbourhood Plan area contains sensitive features, particularly listed heritage features but these are not impacted by development proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan.

A detailed assessment of the two housing site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken (see summary in Table 1 above), in addition to the conclusions of East Herts District Plan Sustainability Appraisal. The unknown factor of ecological importance identified in the AECOM assessment has been followed up by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. An analysis of the Herts Ecological Network Mapping shows no habitats of significance on either of the allocation sites.

The Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan makes adequate provision within its policies to prevent or mitigate any harm that might result from new development. Although the Neighbourhood Plan provides sites for more homes than East Herts District Plan's minimum target, it also ensures that ecological and community benefits will result from these developments.

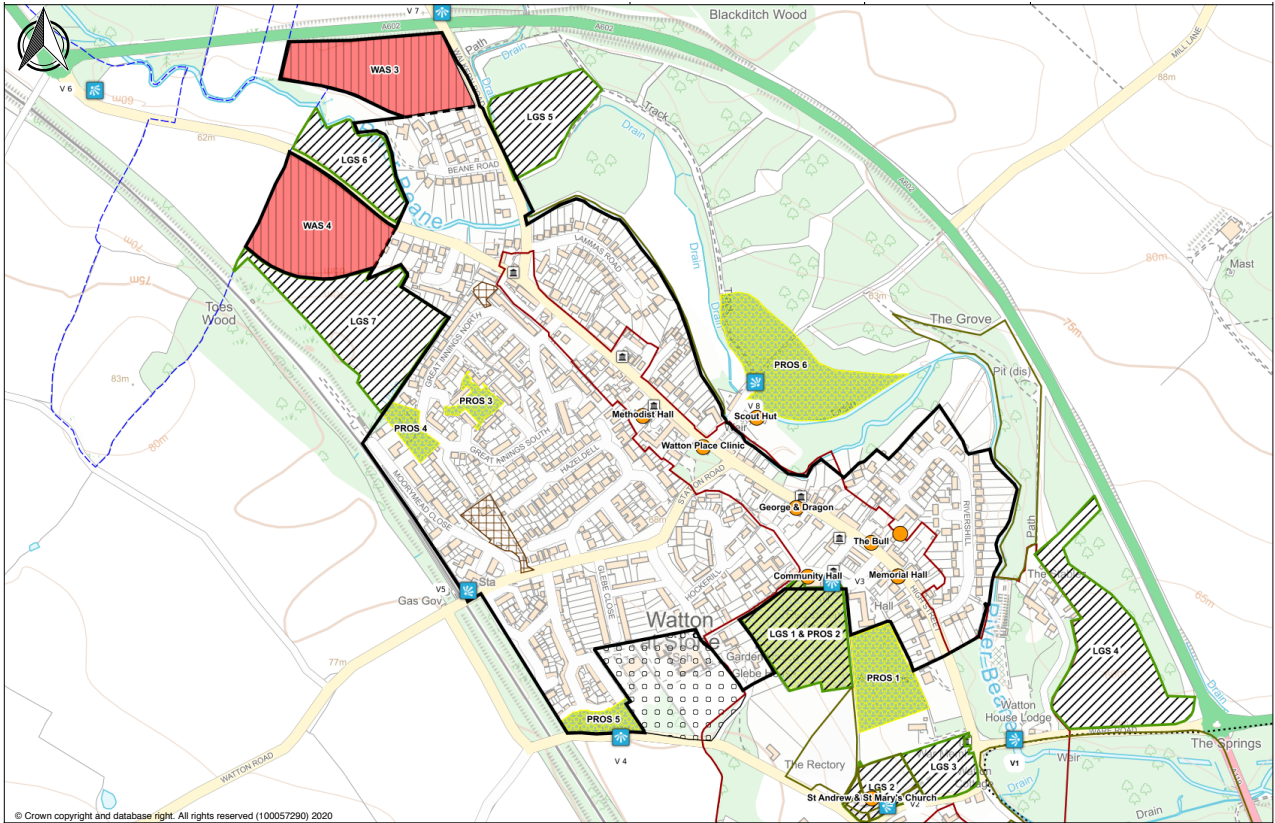
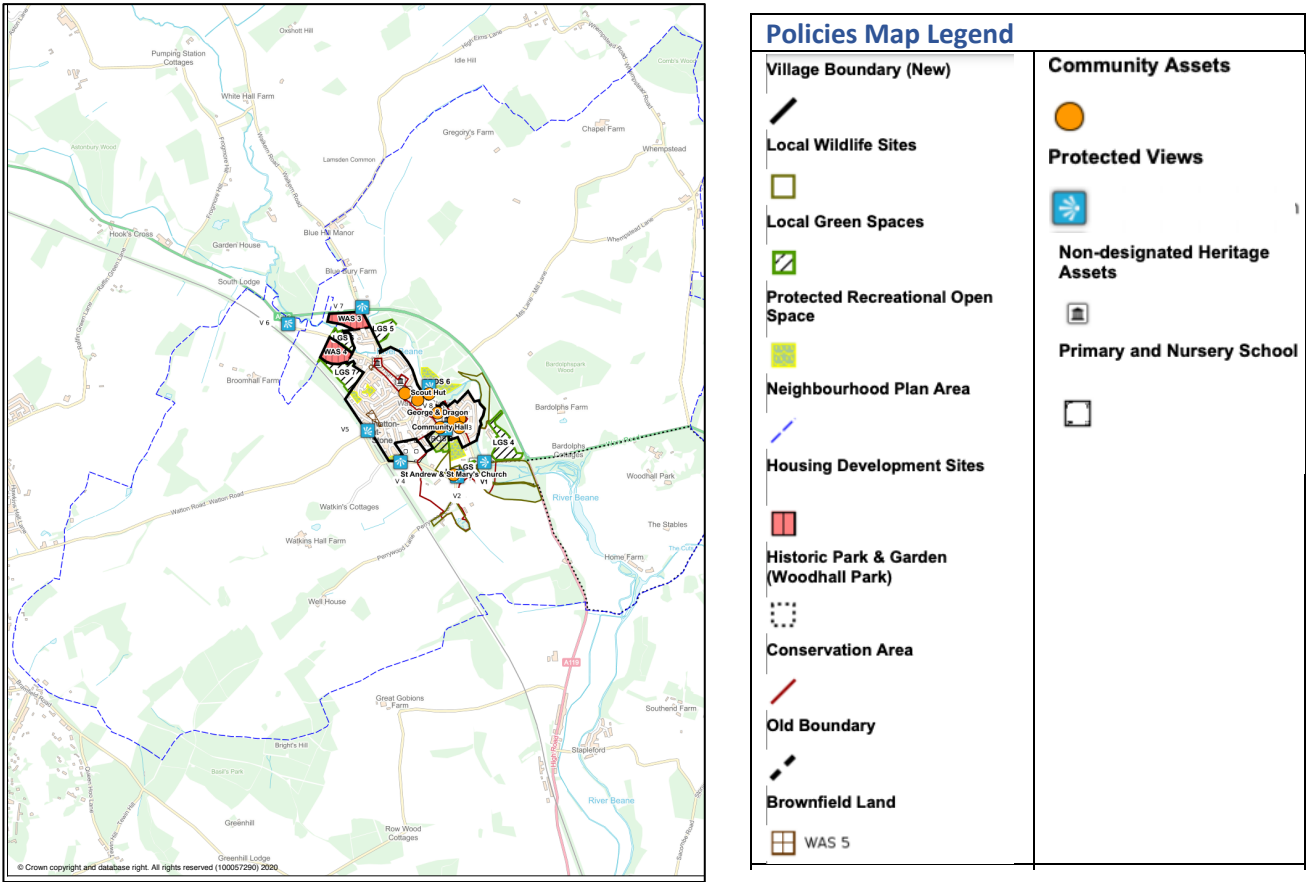
Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan

DRAFT PRE-SUBMISSION SUMMARY

December 2020



Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Area and Policies Map



Background to Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan

The decision to create a Neighbourhood Plan for Watton-at-Stone was taken at a village meeting in November 2015. In January 2016 a Steering Committee was chosen to lead the development of the plan, on behalf of the Parish Council.

The Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan area comprises the settlement of Watton-at-Stone, which is in the Green Belt (see Map, page 2). The Neighbourhood Plan gives us a much greater say in any development in the parish. It allows us to influence where new development is located and what it might look like.

In spring 2016, the Steering Committee held a consultation to collect evidence and ideas from people living and working in the parish. Following this, the Steering Committee hosted an exhibition in November 2016 to ask for views on the emerging themes and policies.

In June 2017 the Committee commissioned a technical site assessment to evaluate the suitability of various locations in the village for further development. In November 2018, the East Herts District Plan clarified that Watton-at-Stone must allow for at least 92 dwellings to be built before 2033. Due to the lack of sufficient brownfield sites, some will need to be built on what is presently Green Belt, which would be released and designated in the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan.

This is summary of the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan. The full document, with a complete set of photographs and maps, and much more information, is available at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

We are now seeking your views on the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The consultation is open from XXXXXXX until midnight XXXXXXXXXXXX. Information on how to respond is given on page 18. When the plan has been assessed by an independent examiner, there will be a public referendum. If the Plan is adopted it will have the same legal status as the East Herts District Plan and will influence planning decisions impacting on the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan area between 2021 and 2033.



Facilities and assets in Watton-at-Stone

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

Housing Development Strategy

Objective 1: Deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the needs and context of WAS to 2033.

Objective 2: Ensure that brownfield sites are prioritised for new housing developments where possible.

Objective 3: Ensure any new housing is in keeping with the surrounding area, presenting favourable vistas, enriching the area, lying low in the Beane Valley and protecting the village's historic character and rural identity.

Objective 4: Development should be of high-quality design with a mix of house types suitable for the future needs of the village.

Objective 5: New development will have a density that balances the sensitive semi-rural setting with the efficient use of land and preservation of high quality agricultural land

Objective 6: Position development so it is well connected to bus stops, the school, and village facilities.

Objective 7: Promote safe, accessible public streets and spaces.

Objective 8: Seek to reduce traffic impacts of development

Objective 9: Ensure appropriate parking solutions are implemented as a result of new development

Objective 10: Seek on-going improvements to utility infrastructure and digital connectivity including full fibre broadband.

Objective 11: Maintain a clearly defined and sustainable village boundary.

Sustainable, affordable, accessible transport

Objective 12: Encourage the use of sustainable transport; lobby for a better bus service and retaining rail services; promote and maintain the current network of cycle routes footways and public footpaths.

Provision of Amenities

Objective 13: Support the village's key community services and facilities.

Objective 14: Ensure adequate provision for parish children to attend the local school.

Objective 15: Facilitate the development of new football facilities.

Objective 16: Encourage appropriate use of Green Belt for sensitively designed outdoor leisure.

Protect and enhance natural and historic environment

Objective 17: Make the most of WAS's rural aspect and landscape setting protecting key views.

Objective 18: Maintain and enhance nature conservation, wildlife and biodiversity.

Objective 19: Protect the historic fabric, including listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and the Conservation Area and its setting.

Support for business

Objective 20: Support appropriate development for local businesses and employment opportunities, including home working.

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Housing Development Strategy

WAS 1 Sustainable Housing

I. Sites to accommodate at least 92 homes have been identified, within or adjacent to the village development boundary, in order to enable the delivery of a sustainable housing strategy in accordance with the District Plan and manage housing growth tailored to the needs and context of the parish. These homes may be built between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2033. The target will be achieved through a combination of the following:

- Two sites capable of accommodating at least 60 homes each see Site Allocation Policy WAS 3 Walkern Road and Site Allocation Policy WAS 4 Stevenage Road; and
- Completion of 4 dwellings since 1st April 2017 (3/13/1503/FP, 3/15/0719/FUL and 3/16/1227/FUL);
- Construction of a recent outline permission for 1 dwelling (3/18/2416/OUT);
- Development of Brownfield Sites within the village boundary (see Policy WAS 5).

II. The two site allocations WAS 3 and WAS 4 provide for a greater number of homes than required in the District Plan given the encouragement in Policy VILL1, to accommodate additional development, especially where it contributes to the delivery of community benefits. These benefits will be sought according to Policy WAS 26 (Spending Priorities) and may be:

- in kind;
- as a consequence of providing additional footfall;
- through Section 106 Agreements or other negotiated benefits.

WAS 2 Amendment to Village Development Boundary/Green Belt Boundary

The designated Watton-at-Stone Village Development Boundary separates the village from the Green Belt. District Plan Policy VILL1 allows a Group 1 village preparing a neighbourhood plan to redraw its boundaries to accommodate additional housing development. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF allows neighbourhood plans to make changes to the Green Belt boundary established in the strategic policies, where needed. The Green Belt Boundary is amended in order to extend the Village Development Boundary to include the two Housing Site Allocations WAS 3 Walkern Road WAS 4 Stevenage Road and as detailed on the Policies Map (see page 2).

WAS 3 Housing Site Allocation Walkern Road

Development of this site will be supported, provided that it complies with the general design policies, the Watton-at-Stone Design Code, and other policies in the plan and meets all the following specific criteria:

- (a) The quantum of development will be a maximum of 60 homes;
- (b) Development should be set back from Walkern Road in line with existing homes to the south of the development site;

- (c) Buildings should generally be no more than two storeys in height to safeguard Protected View 7 such that no new dwellings should not project above the horizon (see policy WAS 18) ;
- (d) An efficient, effective and well-maintained SUDs system should be designed to ensure no polluting run-off flows into the River Beane and to provide a multi-functional recreational space, with high ecological value, overlooked by the new homes;
- (e) A S106 agreement will be required to achieve connectivity to the village centre through the provision of a new pedestrian bridge over the River Beane and an adequately lit pedestrian and cycle path that is sensitive to the requirements of nocturnal wildlife, across the field to the Stevenage Road to connect with the pedestrian access to the railway station provided through site WAS 4 Stevenage Road;
- (f) A management plan for the new bridge and pedestrian and cycle path will be put in place before the completion of the development.



Walkern Road Site

WAS 4 Housing Site Allocation Stevenage Road

Development of this site will be supported, provided that it complies with the general design policies, the Watton-at-Stone Design Code and other policies in the plan and meets all the following specific criteria:

- (a) The quantum of development will be a maximum of 60 homes;
- (b) Development should represent a contiguous extension to the village to the west of Motts Close;
- (c) Houses should front onto a street or lane;
- (d) Buildings should generally be no more than two storeys in height to safeguard Protected View 6 (see policy WAS 18);
- (e) A defined green area will form a focus point for the development, which should be overlooked by the new homes;

- (f) Paths and green corridors will connect to existing green areas beyond the development site;
- (g) A new permanent village boundary should be created to form the western edge of the site along the boundary to Aston Parish with appropriate planting of native species to soften the edge of the development;
- (h) The high ground largely above the 65m contour line, between the railway line, the back of Motts Close and the north western boundary of Great Innings North/Moorymead Close shall be retained in the Green Belt in perpetuity.
- (i) A S106 agreement will be required to ensure that lane north and south Mill Lane (PROS X) achieve a linear area of open space incorporating a new safe pedestrian path with minimal low-level lighting that is sensitive to the requirements of nocturnal wildlife, to the railway station. This open space should be included in any calculation of open space requirements.
- (j) A management plan for the new defined green space will be put in place before the completion of the development.



Stevenage Road Site

WAS 5 Brownfield Sites

1. Development of brownfield sites within the village development boundary will be supported, subject to other policies in this plan, including Station Road Depot and the car park site in Great Innings, as shown on the Policies Map (see page 2) as follows:

- Station Road, former Hertfordshire County Council Depot, to accommodate up to 15 homes
- Great Innings car park to provide up to two homes and an overflow car park for Great Innings residents and a parking management plan to improve the safety and parking on street in this location, in accordance with the Action Plan.

II. Two other 'brownfield' sites on previously developed land within the Green Belt have been identified as suitable for development in accordance with paragraph 145(g) of the NPPF, where

the redevelopment of buildings (excluding temporary buildings) will not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing buildings or not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt where that development would contribute to an identified local affordable housing need. These sites are:

- The Mill on Mill Lane for a mixed residential and employment use, which should include a building of exceptional design in this sensitive location adjacent to The Lammas
- Perrywood Lane, former haulage yard, for housing.



Brownfield Sites in Watton-at-Stone

WAS 6 Design Code

The Watton-at-Stone Design Code is relevant to all developments in Watton-at-Stone. The Code forms a statutory part of the Neighbourhood Plan and should be used to prepare applications for planning permission in the parish. The Code can be found at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

WAS 7 Housing Mix

Housing mix, of tenure, types and sizes should be in accordance with current and future local housing need and housing market assessments. The priority for smaller affordable homes, one and two bedrooomed, should be recognised in the housing mix.



Examples of Housing in Watton-at-Stone

WAS 8 Rural Affordable Housing

1. For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, Local Needs Affordable Housing on rural exception sites will be allocated to persons who:

- (a) have been ordinarily resident in the Parish of Watton-at-Stone for the 12 months immediately preceding the date of application for the affordable housing unit or who have at any time previously resided in the Parish for at least five years, or;
- (b) have a strong local connection with the Parish of Watton-at-Stone through a close family connection or being employed within the Parish.

II. If no applicant qualifies under the first set of criteria, those who are resident in, or have a strong local connection with neighbouring parishes will be eligible. In the event that there are no nominations from the rural parishes, then nominations from those in greatest need from within the District will be acceptable.

Sustainable, affordable, accessible transport

WAS 9 Sustainable Transport Provision

I. Maintaining and developing high quality bus, taxi and community transport services should be integral to all developments and should complement the provision of safe walking and cycling routes. These include well designed and located stopping places for existing residents and to serve the new housing developments and better facilities at bus stops such as real time information and raised kerbing.

II. Projects for such developments e.g. extending the provision of bus services to new housing, could be funded through S106 contributions or other funding mechanisms.



Public Transport in Watton-at-Stone

WAS 10 Proposed New Footpath/Cycle Connections

The following three route connections for pedestrians/cyclists have been identified during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and would improve connectivity throughout the village. Proposals that would facilitate the delivery of these links will be considered favourably subject to other policies in this plan. The implementation of these connecting routes could be funded through S106 contributions or other funding mechanisms:

- Pedestrian/cycle route to/from the railway station connecting Moorymead Close/Great Innings to Stevenage Road crossing LGS7, through WAS 4, crossing LGS 6, across the river by a bridge, and through WAS 3 connecting to existing rights of way east of Walkern Road
- Route through the Children's Centre car park – permanent link – Gatekeepers to School Lane
- Link from Gatekeepers to Church Lane.

Provision of amenities

WAS 11 Valued Community Facilities

I. Existing facilities valued by the community are identified on the Policies Map and listed below:

1. George and Dragon public house
2. Londis supermarket
3. Scout hut and land at Mill Lane
4. The Nigel Poulton Community Hall
5. The Memorial Hall (High Street)
6. The Methodist Chapel
7. Watton Place Clinic
8. The Bull public house
9. St Andrew and St Mary's Church

Each facility and the reason why they are valued is set out at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

II. Permission for a change of use of these facilities would need to be supported by evidence that the facilities were unused or their active use was to be replaced elsewhere and would still benefit village residents.



From left, the George and Dragon, Londis and the Scout Hut

WAS 12 Assets of Community Value

I. Applications will be made by Watton-at-Stone Parish Council to list facilities 1 to 3 above as Assets of Community Value through the Community Right to Bid (in accordance with the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)). (See also Policy WAS 13 Maintaining and Improving Health Services)

II. All Assets of Community Value listed by East Herts District Council or facilities identified as community assets in the Neighbourhood Plan, will be retained in community use unless they are:

- (a) No longer needed or
- (b) Acquired by the community to ensure the retention of the facilities in perpetuity, or
- (c) Replaced by better facilities as part of a development proposal.

WAS 13 Maintaining and Improving Health Services

The existing doctors' surgery currently operating from Watton Place Clinic, 60 High Street, also provides an enhanced offer which includes a pharmacist and a private dentist. The provision of these health services should be retained or enhanced. Any loss of the existing facility will be strongly resisted unless new facilities are secured before the closure of the existing surgery premises. Proposals for the GP surgery to relocate to alternative premises will be supported provided it is in a suitable accessible location convenient to the Parish and adequate car parking is provided.

WAS 14 School Site

The school site identified on the Policies Map will be reserved for any required school expansion, for outdoor activities or additional buildings.

WAS 15 Sports Facilities

Provision of new or improved facilities for football will be supported in accordance with other policies in this plan. The area of the village where it is proposed these facilities, particularly for young people, should be concentrated is on Mill Lane. An indicative drawing showing how the site could be arranged is shown below. The land has been allocated as Protected Recreational Open Space (see also policy WAS 16).

Insert sketch

WAS 16 Protected Recreational Open Space

I. The following sites, shown on the Policies Map (see page 2) are allocated as Protected Recreational Open Space:

- PROS1: The Allotments (School Lane)
- PROS2: The Meadow (School Lane)
- PROS3: Great Innings Green Space
- PROS4: Great Innings Recreation Area
- PROS5: Gatekeepers Green Space
- PROS6: Mill Lane

II. Development that would result in the loss of all or part of these spaces will not be permitted unless they are replaced with better facilities which are as accessible to the local community as the current recreational open spaces.



Protected Recreational Open Spaces

Protect and Enhance natural and built environment

WAS 17 Local Green Space

I. Seven areas within the Parish, shown on the Policies Map, have been designated as Local Green Space. These are:

- LGS1 The Meadow (School Lane)
- LGS2 Cemetery (St Andrew and St Mary)
- LGS3 Church Baulk (field between cemetery and roundabout)
- LGS4 Rye Field (north of Ware Road)

- LGS 5 Great Rolls Mead (field in corner between Walkern Road and bypass)
- LGS 6 Rush Meads (north of Stevenage Road/south of the River Beane)
- LGS 7 Malting House Field (south and west of Motts Close)

II. New development will only be allowed in designated Local Green Spaces where it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and policy CFLR2 of the East Herts District Plan.



WAS 18 Protected Views

I. Eight important views and vistas are identified on the Policies Map (see page 2) and listed below:

- V1: From Road Bridge to St Andrew and St Mary Church (south eastern approach)
- V2: From church of St Andrew and St Mary (eastward)
- V3: From Nigel Poulton Community Hall to church of St Andrew and St Mary (southward)
- V4: From Church Lane before the railway bridge (southward)
- V5: From Watton Road railway bridge (north eastward)
- V6: From entrance to village on Stevenage Road (south eastward)
- V7: From far side of Walkern Road bridge (southward)
- V8: From Mill Lane to The Lammas (northward)

A detailed description and indicative photographs of the above views are available at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

II. Any development proposal in the Parish must where appropriate include an assessment of the impact of the development on the key views and vistas. Proposals where a harmful impact is identified will only be permitted where appropriate mitigation measures can be delivered.

WAS 19 Wildlife Sites and Habitat Enhancements

I. Development should conserve and enhance biodiversity and seek to deliver net biodiversity gains of a minimum of 10% (as quantified by the most recent Defra Biodiversity Impact Calculator*). Biodiversity mitigation or compensation can be situated onsite or offsite. Offsite compensation should be located within the neighbourhood plan area whenever possible.

Mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be definitively stated. All buildings bordering open space or beneficial habitat should incorporate integrated bat and bird boxes.

[*The Defra metric can be found at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224>]

II. The nature conservation value of wildlife sites, and other significant habitats, including the River Beane, will be protected from any harmful impacts of development, in accordance with their status.

III. In particular, the 36 designated Local Wildlife Sites, will be protected and managed. In addition, the fourteen areas of Ancient Woodland identified in the HERC database, will be protected from any harmful impacts of development.

IV. Other areas of the parish coloured green on the Hertfordshire Ecological Network Mapping contain habitats listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act. Development, which would cause significant harm to these areas, should either be refused, or the mitigation hierarchy applied. If permission is granted for development conditions or planning obligations the secure appropriate management regimes will be sought. The existing Local Wildlife Sites and habitats listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act within the village envelope are listed at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

V. Developments located in areas coloured purple on the Hertfordshire Environmental Record Centre (HERC) Ecological Network Mapping for the Neighbourhood Plan Area must deliver net biodiversity gains and contribute towards enhancing ecological connectivity. The existing habitats coloured purple, within the village envelope are listed at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

VI. Proposals to create new natural areas and wildlife habitats, or to expand or enhance existing provision, will be strongly supported. Removal of unprotected trees during development should be accompanied by a tree survey and report. Removed trees will be replaced with native species, in suitable locations.

VII. Proposals for a new nature area where biodiversity can be improved, between the River Beane and the High Street/Stevenage Road to the north west of the village (LGS 6) may be funded by S106 contributions from housing development in the village.

WAS 20 Green Corridors and the River Beane

I. Green corridors should provide permeability for wildlife and access for people. In accordance with the East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan, the green corridors in the parish, which provide networks of biodiversity and public access, will be protected from the impact of harmful development, managed and where appropriate, enhanced to create increased public access that is sympathetic to the biodiversity value of the green space.

II. The most significant green corridor in the parish is the River Beane corridor. Any development that negatively impacts public access to or ecological value of the river will be

refused. Any development scheme adjacent to the River Beane should be designed with a naturalised buffer zone of at least 10m from the top of the bank in order to protect and enhance the conservation value of the watercourse and ensure access for flood defence maintenance.

II. Water efficient new developments that comply with water efficiency standards and development management policies are essential to reduce the impact of slow river flows, caused by over-abstraction of the River Beane.



River Beane at Watton-at-Stone

WAS 21 Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area and Heritage Assets

I. In accordance with policies at district level and the guidance in the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2014, the character or appearance of the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area and its setting will be preserved and where possible enhanced.

II. Proposals for development which have an impact on designated heritage assets in the Parish, including all listed buildings should take account of the historic fabric, the significance of the asset and the contribution of its setting to that significance. Proposals should conserve or where appropriate enhance the asset or its setting.

III. A statement setting out any adverse impacts of the asset and its setting, along with any proposed mitigation measures will be required.

WAS 22: Non-designated Buildings and Structures

I. Seven non-designated buildings and structures have been identified as having local historic or architectural importance:

- 87/89 High Street (Opposite the George and Dragon)
- 96 High Street (Opposite the Bull)
- Club House, School Lane
- 33, 35, 37 and 39 High Street
- War Memorial at junction of High Street/Church Lane/Ware Road
- Methodist Church and Hall, High Street
- Pudding stone at front of no 1 High Street

Descriptions and photographs of these assets are set out at www.was-np.org/the-plan.

II. Development proposals which affect these, and other non-designated heritage assets, including all those unlisted buildings and structures identified as being worthy of protection from demolition, in the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal 2014 and subsequent updates, will take into account the significance of the heritage asset to enable a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

WAS 23 Archaeology

Extensive finds within the village and in the surrounding countryside including the Aston Mirror and the concentration of Roman material near Broomhall Farm indicate a rich archaeological past which should be at least recorded and at best preserved *in situ*. Development proposals in the areas of known archaeological significance should include an evaluation to determine whether site surveys are necessary.

Support for business

WAS 24 Preserving Local Employment Opportunities

Proposals to support the retention of existing shops and businesses will be considered favourably provided that they do not conflict with other policies in this plan. Such proposals may include the provision of off-street parking for customers, covered and secure cycle parking facilities for employees and sustainable energy schemes.

WAS 25 Encouraging Home Working

Where planning permission is required, proposals which enable homeworking, such as improved digital connectivity, will be supported subject to there being no unacceptable impact on local or residential amenities.

WAS 26 Spending Priorities

- III. In line with District Plan Policy VILL1 to deliver community benefits especially where the Neighbourhood Plan accommodates additional development, a number of spending priorities have been identified by the community, through the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, to improve the lives of people living and working in the parish. More details of the projects, their relative priorities, and any maintenance requirements are set out in the Action Plan at www.was-np.org/the-plan. These include:
- Football pitches and facilities
 - Wetland meadow (Rush Meads LGS6)
 - Circular walk
 - Out-of-hours school building
 - Community Hall Car Park extension

II. The Parish Council will request these priorities be reflected in S106 agreements, where appropriate, and will direct funding received from any New Homes Bonus, Community Infrastructure Levy or other funding streams, towards projects which fall within these priorities.

III. Benefits in kind may also be accrued through negotiation, as a consequence of new development proposal. In particular, community benefits will be sought from the development of housing site allocations WAS 3 and WAS 4 and any future housing development where housing provision is additional to the requirements of the District Plan.



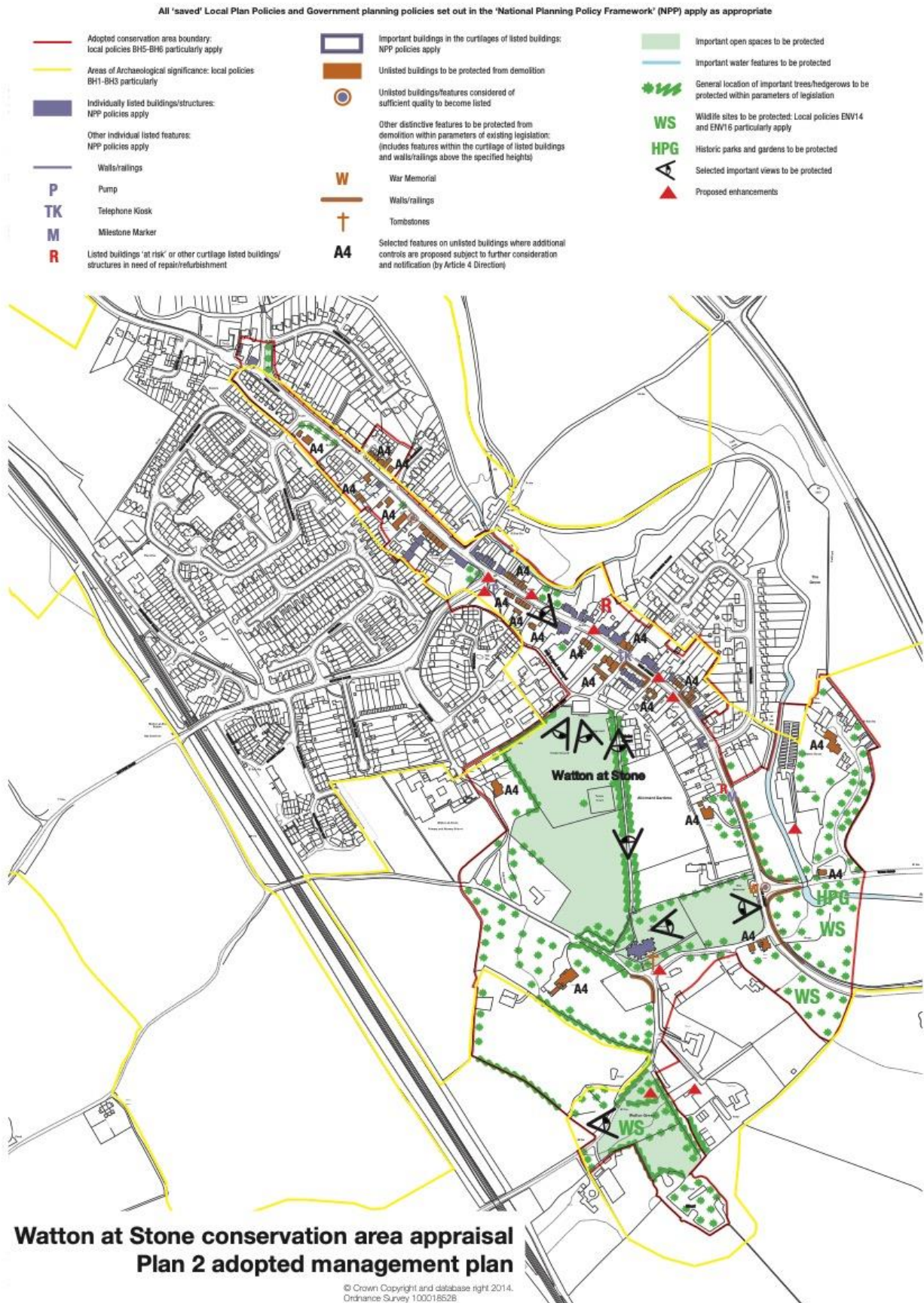
Acknowledgements

Front cover: Jill Abbott (Artist) for her beautiful bespoke illustration

Inside: All contributors who have provided photographs and illustrations

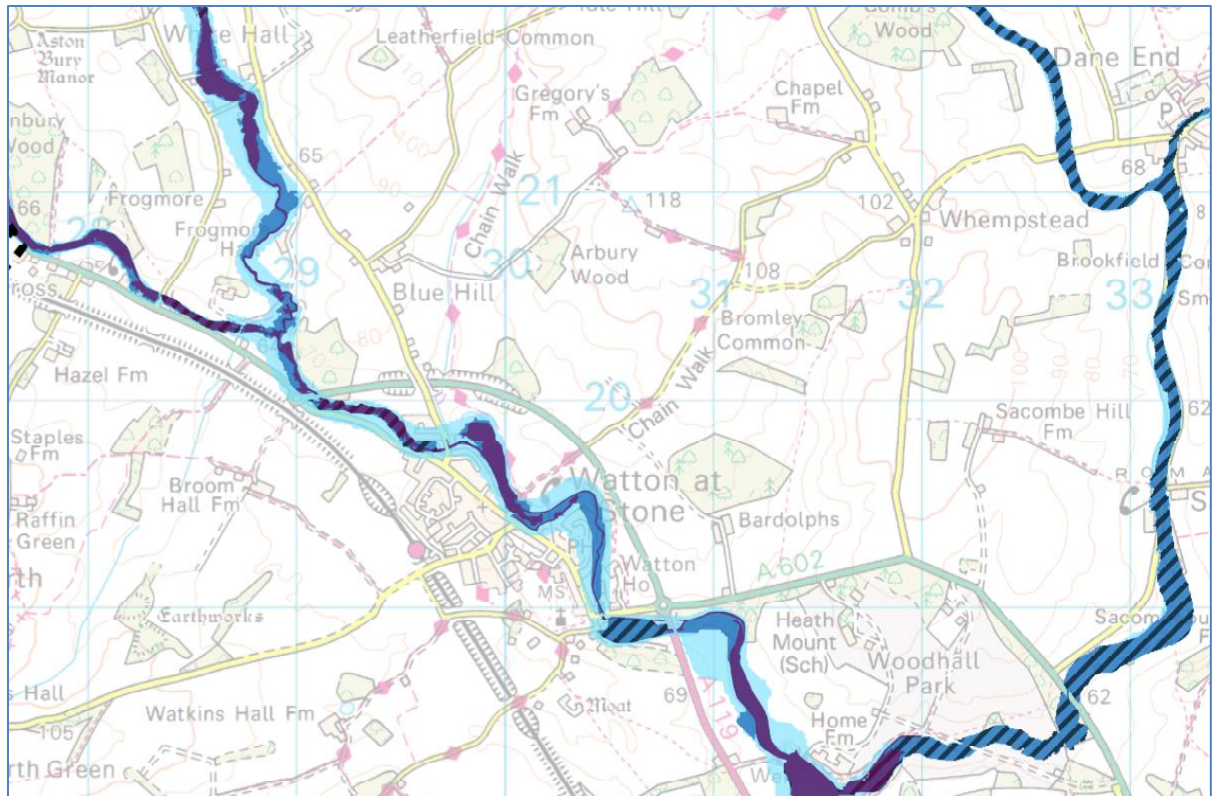
APPENDIX B

Watton-at-Stone Adopted Conservation Area Appraisal Map 2014



APPENDIX C

Extract from East Herts District Council SFRA




APPENDIX D

Figure 2 Site S1, Extract from Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment, AECOM 2018

Site Assessment Proforma

General information

Site Reference / name	S1 West of Walkern Road
Site Address (or brief description of broad location)	Land North of 25 Walkern Road 
Current use	Greenfield
Proposed use (in Neighbourhood Plan)	Housing
Gross area (Ha) Total area of the site in hectares	2.3
SLAA site reference (if applicable)	45/004 (Half of site on the south-eastern corner is within this boundary)
Method of site identification (e.g. proposed by NP group/ SLAA/Call for Sites etc)	SLAA/NP Group
Is the site being actively promoted for development by a landowner/developer/agent ? If so, provide details here (land use/amount)	Promoted in the SLAA Call for Sites by the landowner. Fairview also has an option on this site.

Context

Is the site: Greenfield: land (farmland, or open space) that has not previously been developed	Greenfield	Brownfield	Mixture	Unknown
Brownfield: Previously developed land which is	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated infrastructure.				
Site planning history Have there been any previous applications for development on this land? What was the outcome? Does the site have an extant planning permission?	No			

Suitability

Suitability				
Is the site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within the existing built up area - Adjacent to and connected with the existing built up area - Outside the existing built up area 	Within	Adjacent	Outside	Unknown
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the site have suitable access or could a suitable access be provided? (Y/N) (provide details of any constraints)	Yes No Development would need a new road access off Walkern Road and visibility splays would need to be carefully considered			
Is the site allocated for a particular use (e.g. housing/employment/open space) in the adopted and/ or emerging Local Plan? (Y/N/) (provide details)	Yes No The SLAA suggests it could be proposed for release from the Green Belt through the emerging District Plan and could help enable the delivery of 10% growth within the village.			

Environmental Considerations

Questions	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
Is the site within or adjacent to the following policy or environmental designations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • National Park • European nature site • SSSI Impact Risk Zone • Site of Importance for Nature Conservation • Site of Geological Importance • Flood Zones 2 or 3 	Yes Adjacent/nearby No	Site partly constrained by Flood Zone 2 along the south-western boundary from the River Beane.
Landscape Is the site low, medium or high sensitivity in terms of landscape?	Low sensitivity to development Medium sensitivity to development	EHDC's Landscape Character Assessment SPD (September 2007) – states that as a whole, the site is high sensitivity in

<p>Low sensitivity: site not visible or less visible, existing landscape is poor quality, existing features could be retained</p> <p>Medium sensitivity: Site has only moderate impact on landscape character (e.g. in built up area);</p> <p>High sensitivity: Development would significantly detract from the landscape and important features unlikely to be retained- mitigation not possible</p>	High sensitivity to development	terms of landscape (Area 70). However, this seems to be more relevant for the area surrounding the southern part of the village. To the north, potential views are filtered or blocked by woodland.
<p>Agricultural Land Loss of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1,2 or 3a)</p>	No loss Some loss	

Heritage considerations

Question	Assessment guidelines	Comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to one or more of the following heritage designations or assets?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation area Scheduled monument Registered Park and Garden Registered Battlefield Listed building Known archaeology Locally listed building 	<p>Directly impact and/or mitigation not possible</p> <p>Some impact, and/or mitigation possible</p> <p>Limited or no impact or no requirement for mitigation</p>	<p>Eastern part of the site lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance – but was identified in the SLAA as being deliverable subject to a policy change</p>

Community facilities and services

Question	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
<p>Is the site, in general terms, close/accessible to local amenities such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town centre/local centre/shop Public transport School(s) Open space/recreation/ leisure facilities Health facilities Employment location Cycle route(s) 	<p>Poorly located</p> <p>Moderately located</p> <p>Well-located</p>	<p>Within walking distance to the village centre and amenities, and the railway station</p>

Other key considerations

Are there any known Tree Preservation Orders on the site?	<p>Several</p> <p>Few</p> <p>None</p> <p>Unknown</p>	
What impact would development have on the site's habitats and biodiversity?	<p>High/medium/Low/Unknown</p>	Would need to be determined through an ecological assessment

Public Right of Way	Yes/No		
Existing social or community value (provide details)	Yes/No		
Is the site likely to be affected by any of the following?	Yes	No	Comments
Ground Contamination (Y/N/Unknown)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown but not likely
Significant infrastructure crossing the site i.e. power lines/ pipe lines, or in close proximity to hazardous installations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Characteristics

Characteristics which may affect development on the site:	Comments
Topography: Flat/ plateau/ steep gradient	Yes/No Mostly flat
Coalescence Development would result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.	Yes/No
Scale and nature of development would be large enough to significantly change size and character of settlement	Yes/No Fairview estimated 60 homes
Other (provide details)	

Availability

Availability	Yes	No	Comments
Is the site available for sale or development (if known)? Please provide supporting evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The site has been promoted through the Call for Sites by the landowner and is considered to be available.
Are there any known legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a known time frame for availability? 0-5 /6-10 / 11-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

15 years.			
Any other comments?			

Summary

Conclusions


Please tick a box

The site is suitable and available for development ('accept')	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
This site has minor constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site has significant constraints	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The site is unsuitable for allocation in the NP / no evidence of availability ('reject')	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential housing development capacity (estimated as a development of 25 homes per Ha):	SLAA site of 2.08ha suggested 52 dwellings NP site is larger, approximately 2.3ha – at the same density this would suggest 57 dwellings
Key evidence (3-4 bullet points) to explain why site has been accepted or rejected as potential site for allocation in NP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered as unsuitable in the SLAA but notes it could be deliverable if the NP decides it can be released from the Green Belt, if it delivers significant community benefits • Good location in terms of accessibility • Adjacent to the built-up area • Would require new access • Well screened from existing area and contained by roads and vegetation

Figure 3 Site S18, Extract from Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment, AECOM 2018

Site Assessment Proforma

General information

Site Reference / name	S18 Stevenage Road West
Site Address (or brief description of broad location)	Stevenage Road West 
Current use	Agricultural
Proposed use (in Neighbourhood Plan)	Small appropriate development (non-specific)
Gross area (Ha) Total area of the site in hectares	5.25
SLAA site reference (if applicable)	N/a
Method of site identification (e.g. proposed by NP group/ SLAA/Call for Sites etc)	NP group
Is the site being actively promoted for development by a landowner/developer/agent ? If so, provide details here (land use/amount)	Landowner has indicated intention for residential development – same landowner as for S17

Context

Is the site:	Greenfield	Brownfield	Mixture	Unknown
Greenfield: land (farmland, or open space) that has not previously been developed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brownfield: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated infrastructure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Site planning history Have there been any previous applications for development on this land? What was the outcome? Does the site have an extant planning permission?	None
---	------

Suitability

Suitability				
Is the site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within the existing built up area - Adjacent to and connected with the existing built up area - Outside the existing built up area 	Within <input type="checkbox"/>	Adjacent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outside <input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the site have suitable access or could a suitable access be provided? (Y/N) (provide details of any constraints)	Yes – new access could be provided off High Street No			
Is the site allocated for a particular use (e.g. housing/employment/open space) in the adopted and/ or emerging Local Plan? (Y/N/) (provide details)	Yes No			

Environmental Considerations

Questions	Assessment guidelines	Observations and comments
Is the site within or adjacent to the following policy or environmental designations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • National Park • European nature site • SSSI Impact Risk Zone • Site of Importance for Nature Conservation • Site of Geological Importance • Flood Zones 2 or 3 	Yes Adjacent/nearby No	Along High Street on the north-eastern boundary is Flood Zone 2.
Landscape Is the site low, medium or high sensitivity in terms of landscape? Low sensitivity: site not visible or less visible, existing landscape is poor quality, existing features could be retained Medium sensitivity: Site has only moderate impact on landscape character (e.g. in built up area);	Low sensitivity to development Medium sensitivity to development High sensitivity to development	Site is very visible as you enter the village from the north – particularly sensitive at western end, less so at eastern end next to existing dwellings

High sensitivity: Development would significantly detract from the landscape and important features unlikely to be retained- mitigation not possible		
Agricultural Land Loss of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1,2 or 3a)	No loss Some loss	Site within Grade 3

Heritage considerations

Question	Assessment guidelines	Comments
<p>Is the site within or adjacent to one or more of the following heritage designations or assets?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation area Scheduled monument Registered Park and Garden Registered Battlefield Listed building Known archaeology Locally listed building 	<p>Directly impact and/or mitigation not possible</p> <p>Some impact, and/or mitigation possible</p> <p>Limited or no impact or no requirement for mitigation</p>	Part of the site lies in an Area of Archaeological Significance.

Community facilities and services

Is the site, in general terms, close/accessible to local amenities such as (but not limited to):		Observations and comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town centre/local centre/shop Public transport School(s) Open space/recreation/ leisure facilities Health facilities Employment location Cycle route(s) 	<p>Poorly located</p> <p>Moderately located</p> <p>Well-located</p>	

Other key considerations

Are there any known Tree Preservation Orders on the site?	<p>Several</p> <p>Few</p> <p>None</p> <p>Unknown</p>	
What impact would development have on the site's habitats and biodiversity?	<p>High/medium/Low/Unknown</p>	Would require an ecological assessment to confirm this but is currently open land
Public Right of Way	Yes/No	
Existing social or community value (provide details)	Yes/No	

<i>Is the site likely to be affected by any of the following?</i>	Yes	No	Comments
Ground Contamination (Y/N/Unknown)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Significant infrastructure crossing the site i.e. power lines/ pipe lines, or in close proximity to hazardous installations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Characteristics

Characteristics which may affect development on the site:	Comments
Topography: Flat/ plateau/ steep gradient	Yes/No
Coalescence Development would result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.	Yes/No
Scale and nature of development would be large enough to significantly change size and character of settlement	Yes/No
Other (provide details)	

Availability

Availability

	Yes	No	Comments
Is the site available for sale or development (if known)? Please provide supporting evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any known legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies, or operational requirements of landowners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a known time frame for availability? 0-5 /6-10 / 11-15 years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Any other comments?			

Summary

Conclusions

Please tick a box	
The site is suitable and available for development ('accept')	<input type="checkbox"/>
This site has minor constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site has significant constraints	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The site is unsuitable for allocation in the NP / no evidence of availability ('reject')	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential housing development capacity (estimated as a development of 25 homes per Ha):	Up to 131 if completely developed out
Key evidence (3-4 bullet points) to explain why site has been accepted or rejected as potential site for allocation in NP.	<p>In isolation, without S17:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is clearly visible on the northern approach to the village but some limited development could be possible at its eastern end closest to existing development <p>In conjunction with S17:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landowner has indicated the site is available and owns the site to the south which could potentially be released from the Green Belt according to the SLAA Significant number of homes could be generated if wholly redeveloped Site could be directly accessed off High Street and would be well placed for access to the station and village centre 2013 Green Belt Review suggested it could be released to strengthen the Green Belt boundary, but not mentioned in the 2015 Review Development would be bound to the west by the railway line and by A602 and High Street so relatively contained

APPENDIX E

Extract from Ecological Mapping Watton-at-Stone (Map 3), Herts Environmental Records Centre 2016

