



North Hertfordshire District Council

Heritage Assessments

Heritage Assessment of North Stevenage (NS1)



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Amec Foster Wheeler Environment
& Infrastructure UK Limited



Report for

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Document revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Final Heritage Assessment	31/05/2016
2	Client Comments	27/06/2016



Executive summary

Purpose of this report

This report has been produced for the purpose of providing North Hertfordshire District Council of an appraisal of the potential impacts of a proposed housing allocation site, upon the significance of both designated and undesignated heritage assets. The report makes recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocations, as well as the compliance with planning policy.

North Stevenage is located within North Hertfordshire District, adjoining the boundary with Stevenage Borough Council. The site is to the south of Graveley Village. North Stevenage adjoins a proposed allocation within Stevenage Borough that has been assessed for its heritage impacts. This document considers the results of that assessment.

Subject to the development of the site within Stevenage Borough, it is recommended that an area of the proposed development site within North Hertfordshire can be developed without significantly impacting upon heritage assets within North Hertfordshire District or Stevenage Borough. Development outside this area should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment to enable an objective judgement to be made of the impact of proposals outside the defined area.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Document

North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) is currently preparing a new Local Plan for the period 2011 – 2031. It is anticipated that NHDC will be planning for a minimum of 14,400 additional dwellings over the plan period to meet its own objectively assessed housing needs. North Hertfordshire is unable to accommodate this level of growth on previously developed sites and are having to consider large amounts of growth on greenfield sites in sustainable locations on the edges of urban settlements and larger villages.

In January 2015 NHDC consulted on its Local Plan Preferred Options. A number of representations were concerned with the impact of some of the proposed site allocations on the setting of both designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Of particular relevance is the representation submitted from Historic England with regard to specific sites.

The Council is working towards submitting its proposed Local Plan Submission Draft to its Executive in September 2016.

As a result NHDC have therefore commissioned Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure (Amec FW) to assess the potential impacts of housing allocation upon the significance of heritage assets and make recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocation.

1.2 Planning Policy and methodology

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) provides a policy framework under which heritage assets are protected. Of particular relevant to the scheme are the following:

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises the role of heritage, and the positive enhancement of the historic environment as one of three dimensions to achieving sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that local authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Proposals should also seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Historic England¹ have produced a guidance document to enable the historic environment to play a positive role in identifying allocation sites which are suitable for development and providing advice on policies to ensure proposal sites protect and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

The purpose of this guidance document is to ensure that proposal sites comply with the requirements of paragraph 182 of the NPPF, in that sites are prepared, justified and consistent with national and local policy. This document provides a methodology for site selection and NHDC have made some specific requests for the study:

- ▶ Step one - Identify which heritage assets are affected by the potential site allocation;
- ▶ Step two - Understand what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- ▶ Step three – Identify what impact the allocation might have on that significance, including the setting of heritage assets;
- ▶ Step four – Consider maximising enhancements and avoiding harm through design, layout or contributing to the significance of other heritage assets, mitigation measures;

¹ Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.

- ▶ Step Five – Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness and the site can accommodate residential development without having an unacceptable impact upon nearby heritage assets; and
- ▶ Should the site be considered suitable recommend policy wording to ensure the appropriate protection of heritage assets for the specific sites.

In addition to these requirements Historic England have provided comments about the proposed allocation. Historic England have commented that this strategic site can only come forwards with the development of the site to the south which is within Stevenage Borough. A significant area of the land to the south is within the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area which lies wholly within Stevenage Borough and meets the boundary with North Hertfordshire. The focus of the conservation area in relation to the strategic site is a grade I listed building, The Rook's Nest House Howards, (list entry 1176972). The house is the inspiration for Howard's End in EM Forster's novel, the author having been a frequent visitor. Views from the house across countryside in the west and form a key part of the significance of the listed building. There are other listed buildings south of The Rook's Nest, which are grade II listed and also benefit from a relationship with open countryside. Development beyond the conservation area, within North Hertfordshire, has the potential to impact upon views to and from The Rook's Nest, Historic England specifically reference development north and west of the footpath.

The Graveley Conservation Area lies to the north of the strategic site. The conservation area covers most of the village, specific reference is made to grade I listed St Mary's Church and views of the tower, from the east along Back Lane.

Chesfield Park adjoins the strategic site along the south east border. This park is not registered, but contains a scheduled monument and two grade II listed buildings (Historic England report the scheduled remains of Chesfield Church are also grade II* listed, but no list entry is present on the National Heritage List, only the schedule entry).

Within Stevenage Borough an assessment has been made of the impacts of the south strategic site upon heritage assets in this area². This assessment followed the methodology proposed by Historic England in the consultation draft of the Historic England Advice Note³. This assessment concluded that development was possible within the conservation area to the west of The Rook's Nest Howards, but that the higher levels of adjacent land should be left clear of development preserving views of the open countryside. The conclusions reached in this document have considered this adjacent proposed site allocation.

1.3 The Site

The proposal site is located to the south of Graveley Village. Figure 1, Appendix B shows the location of the proposal site together with adjacent heritage assets. The proposal site is designed to adjoin an allocation site within the Borough of Stevenage that will meet the council's boundary with NHDC. The development within North Hertfordshire cannot commence without the adjoining allocation in Stevenage.

² Heritage Impact Assessment: Land to the North of Stevenage, November 2015.

³ Ibid note 1

2. Heritage assets affected by the proposal site

The location of the proposal site is shown in Figure 1, Appendix B. This plan includes locations of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

2.1 Scheduled monuments

Historic England have identified the Scheduled Monument of Chesfield Church (list entry 1003542) as potential impacted by development of the strategic site. Chesfield Church is described, in the list description, as a ruined church of 13-14th century date with a mid 14th century south-east chapel. The church was dismantled under a bishop's licence in 1750 and the ruin consolidated in the 1980s. The walls of the monument are flint rubble with clunch dressing; the building lacks a roof. Plaster remains on some external walls and the internal plaster was painted to imitate masonry on the north and south walls of the nave.

Chesfield Church is included on the national Heritage at Risk Register. Its condition is described as poor, slow decay with no agreed solution, priority C.

Chesfield Church is separated from the proposal site by extensive planning and landscaping within Chesfield Park. The elevation of the site at just above the 140m contour line does mean it is above most of the north west part of the strategic site, the nearest part of which is above the 130m contour line, however the screening offered by the boundary planting for Chesfield Park and The Lodge and planting adjacent to Back Lane would screen the church from the development proposal.

2.2 Registered Parks and Gardens

There are no registered parks and gardens that would be impacted by the proposal. The nearest registered park and garden is the Broadway at Letchworth (list entry 1000908) which is over 4km to the north.

Historic England have identified Chesfield Park, an unregistered park and garden, which is adjacent to the proposal site. The house at Chesfield Park dates from the 17th century. The park is an open landscape with belts of trees at the margins, clumps, and single specimen trees. The house has a belt of trees sheltering it to the north and south west with a walled garden to the north east.

2.3 Listed buildings

Historic England have identified grade I listed The Rook's Nest House Howards (list entry 11766972) which stands to the south east of the strategic site separated by the North Stevenage strategic site, within the Borough of Stevenage. Grade I listed Church of St Mary, Graveley (list entry 1102525) has also been referenced by Historic England.

Within Graveley there are some fine groups of, and individual listed buildings that potentially will be impacted by the proposal site. Grade II listed buildings include:

- ▶ Graveley Hall (list entry 1102565);
- ▶ 2 Barns and Linking Lower Building, 70 metres to south east of Graveley Hall Farmhouse (list entry 1102523);
- ▶ East Range of Farm Buildings at Graveley Hall Farm backing onto Churchyard (list entry 1102524);
- ▶ Wall next to Churchyard and Gateway, at Graveley Hall (list entry 1347401);
- ▶ The Cottage (list entry 1102526);
- ▶ West View Cottage and Kate's Cottage (list entry 1102527);

- ▶ Crow End (list entry 1102528);
- ▶ Graveley Bury (list entry 1102529);
- ▶ East Range of Barns at Graveley Bury (list entry 1102530); and
- ▶ South Barn at Graveley Bury Farm (list entry 1347420).

This group of buildings are to the east side of the conservation area and represent two farm complexes – Graveley Hall and Graveley Bury, and three cottages located at the east extent of the village. The group of listed buildings at Graveley Bury and the house Crow End are particularly considered to be impacted by the proposal.

At the west end of the village around the High Street, on the line of the B197 are a second group of listed buildings. This group includes the grade II* listed The Grange (list entry 1175053) and the following grade II listed buildings:

- ▶ Milestone opposite number 9 (Mushroom Cottage) (list entry 1102531);
- ▶ The White House (list entry 1102532);
- ▶ Fife House and linked outbuildings to the north (list entry 1102533);
- ▶ Pondside Cottage (list entry 1102534);
- ▶ Gothic House (list entry 1102535);
- ▶ 24, 26 and 28 High Street (list entry 1175027);
- ▶ George and Dragon Public House (list entry 1175031);
- ▶ Water's Edge and Number 4 (list entry 1175078);
- ▶ 4 and 5 Oak Lane (list entry 1295464);
- ▶ Waggon and Horses Public House (list entry 1347421); and
- ▶ Public Pump on verge in front of number 10 (Holt Lodge) (list entry 1347422).

This group of buildings are to the north west of the proposal site and are separated from it by the topography of the land, housing and field boundaries. The nearest listed building, the milestone is 206 metres north of the strategic site. This group of listed buildings is not considered to be impacted by the proposal.

2.4 Conservation areas

The Graveley Conservation Area is located to the north of the proposal site. NHDC have not published a conservation area assessment on their web site. The conservation area stretches from a group of listed cottages in the east, west to buildings lining the High Street, the core of the historic village.

There are two distinct character areas to the conservation area. The east of the area is focused around two farm complexes at Graveley Hall and Graveley Bury, the grade I listed St Mary's Church and three listed cottages. Other buildings within this area are more recent, and stand within extensive tree covered grounds. Moving west the significant buildings within the conservation area are located to the west side of the High Street. Grade II* The Grange is located behind a tall red brick wall in a garden with many mature trees somewhat divorcing the building from its immediate setting. Other buildings within this part of the conservation area address the street more openly and the broad character is more of a nucleated village with plots focusing on a small green to the west side of the High Street. Between the two groups of listed buildings there are other modern houses, standing within small plots, and adjoining the High Street. West of Graveley Bury there is an area of undeveloped fields which marks the character division between the two character areas of the conservation area.

The east part of the conservation area, east of, and including Graveley Bury, is considered to be impacted visually by the strategic site.



The site also adjoins the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area within Stevenage Borough.

2.5 Archaeology

The strategic site meets the Graveley Village Area of Archaeological Significance. The Historic Environment (Archaeology) Unit at Hertfordshire County Council should be consulted on archaeological matters.

3. The site and heritage assets

3.1 The contribution of the site to the significance of heritage assets

The strategic site appears in long views from grade I listed The Rook's Nest to the north west. Plate 1, Appendix A shows the view towards The Rook's Nest from the south boundary of the proposal site adjacent to Chesfield Park. Plate 2, Appendix A, shows this view zoomed in. The elevation of the site where it is above the 120m contour line provides long distance uninterrupted views of The Rook's Nest in the distance, as shown in Plate 3, Plate 4 and Plate 5 Appendix A. It therefore contributes to views both into, and out of the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area. The Heritage Impact Assessment⁴ for the strategic site within the Borough of Stevenage concluded that the allocation site, to the south of Ten Acre Plantation, the south west corner of Chesfield Park, should be left undeveloped to preserve rural views from The Rook's Nest across the conservation area. The area of the strategic site to the north of the footpath to Graveley contributes a backdrop to these views, contributing to the wider setting of the listed building and conservation area.

The strategic site north and east of the footpath to Graveley contributes significantly to the tranquillity and special significance of the east part of the Graveley Conservation Area. The open area of this part of the strategic site contributes to the setting of the Graveley Conservation Area, when approached from the east, along Back Lane. It also contributes to the setting of grade II listed Crow End and views to and from this grade II listed building from the footpath across the strategic site. Plate 6, Appendix A shows the open views north of Crow End, and the conservation area towards Crow end and Plate 7 shows the view from the public footpath adjacent to Crow End towards the proposal site.

The north east part of the site, in its present form contributes to the setting of Chesfield Park in providing an undeveloped backdrop of agricultural land adjacent to the Ten Acre Plantation.

The west part of the proposal site is not considered to contribute to the significance of heritage assets. The site is distinct and separated from the conservation area and listed buildings at the west of Graveley. Due to the topography, land form and existing field boundaries and divisions, this part of the proposal site will not be visible from The Rook's Nest, so does not contribute to its significance.

3.2 The impact of allocation to the significance of heritage assets

Subject to the development of the strategic site within the Borough of Stevenage, within the footprint detailed in the heritage assessment of the site⁵, development of the south and west part of the strategic site will not impact upon the significance of heritage assets. Access from this part of the site should be onto North Road only to direct traffic away from High Street.

The development of the north east part of the site has the potential to impact long views from The Rook's Nest and the setting of the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area. The present conservation area, and borough boundary, is marked by a hedgerow running south from Ten Acre Plantation within Chesfield Park. Whilst the hedgerow provides some effective screening, land to the north and west of its line continues to rise, and views into the conservation area, and of The Rook's Nest, to the south east from the public path show development of this site would introduce built forms into the long, rural views across the landscape from The Rook's Nest that are considered to be a significance of the conservation area and grade I listed building.

Development of the site adjacent to Chesfield Park would change the setting of the park by introducing housing to the north west side of the site, as well as the south east. Continued development around the immediate setting of the park and may significantly erode its amenity value and setting.

Development south and east of the group of listed buildings at Graveley Bury is likely to impact upon the setting of these buildings. At present there is no established boundary for the strategic site; it does not follow

⁴ Heritage Impact Assessment: Land to the North of Stevenage, November 2015.

⁵ Ibid.

an existing or historic hedge line or field boundary in this location. Whilst the strategic site is located at a distance from the listed buildings, such as the group at Graveley Bury, the strategic site has the potential to be visible in the backdrop to these buildings due to the elevation and gentle slope. The boundary of the site can clearly be seen in north of Crow End, and is shown in Plate 7, Appendix A. The north east part of the strategic site will impact upon the setting of Crow End by introducing a backdrop of suburban development to the fields rising behind the house, and development north of Graveley Bury will be visible from this site, and from the footpath running along the conservation area boundary between Crow End and Graveley Bury. The small distance between the proposal site and designated heritage assets, 160m at Crow End for example, will leave insufficient land to preserve a rural setting to the building and bring development close enough to ensure the effects of noise, light and activity impact upon the special interest of the listed building.

The development of the north east part of the strategic site will also impact the setting of the Graveley conservation area by affecting the tranquillity of this part of the conservation area and affecting its setting by introducing noise, lighting and activity. The conservation area, at its nearest point, to the strategic site, is only 81m from the strategic site's boundary. A minimal distance such as this, even whilst receiving some aid in restricting views from the land form of the hill, will significantly change the character of this part of the conservation area.

3.3 Mitigation and enhancement potential

No scheme has been presented for the strategic site to enable a detailed assessment of density or landscape impacts of the proposal so some general points are made here.

The primary mitigation for the North Stevenage (NS1) strategic site is to develop the west portion of the site where it can connect to the area already assessed for the strategic site within the Borough of Stevenage. Traffic access to this site should be onto North Road only to reduce potential traffic through Graveley, along the High Street. A suggested initial development area is shown on Figure 2, Appendix B.

Mitigation proposals for the site could include the reconstruction of historic field boundaries, and the maintenance and improvement of existing hedgerows and trees within the hedgerows. The existing hedgerow marking the north boundary of part of the site is shown in Plate 8, Appendix A. The strategic site has the disadvantage of not having existing hedge lines to follow for much of the boundary of the proposed area. The examination of historic maps to provide a framework of fields, rather than the open prairie fields of today, would integrate the strategic site into the wider landscape and provide boundaries and alignments for planting. The north boundary of the strategic site has been adjusted on Figure 2, Appendix B, to follow a field boundary shown on the 2nd edition OS map moving the boundary of the proposal site away from the listed buildings at Graveley Bury.

The boundaries of the strategic site should be reinforced with additional planting to screen the development from the Graveley Conservation Area. The character of the Graveley Conservation Area is enhanced by the volume of trees. Generally, as this is a farming area, the trees are focused upon field and property boundaries, and planting of this pattern should be continued to the strategic site.

Historic England reference the potential for improved access and interpretation within Chesfield Park, and the possibility for the park to be developed as a country park. Developer contributions should be sought from the strategic site to advance this potential and to improve countryside access through the maintenance of the network of footpaths and bridleways to encourage sustainable transport methods and public access to the countryside and the potential country park.

Chesfield Church, the scheduled monument and grade II* listed building is included on the Historic England national Heritage at Risk Register. Subject to negotiating improved public access to the monument developer contributions could be sought to enable the conservation and interpretation of the monument and its removal from the Heritage at Risk Register.

To ensure the necessary density of planting, and its visibility within the landscape careful consideration should be made of the scale of buildings within the site. The Stevenage allocation site has proposed less dense, large scale housing within the conservation area, with the housing increasing in density to the west, outside the conservation area. A similar approach should be taken for the NS1 allocation site with less dense

properties in the blocks towards Graveley, to enable a more dense planting scheme, and a focus of housing density around the access to North Road.

Development within the strategic allocation site outside the area recommended in Figure 2, Appendix B, has the potential to impact upon the setting of heritage assets. Development in this area should follow on from development within the initial site. Any proposals for the wider strategic allocation site should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment to present impacts of any suggested development scheme and enable it to be fully considered.

4. Does the allocation meet the NPPF tests of soundness?

Paragraph 182 provides details of the NPPF test of soundness. The local plan should comply with the following tests:

- ▶ **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- ▶ **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- ▶ **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- ▶ **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

The strategic site NS1 contains an area of land which, in compliance with the NPPF, can positively be recommended as an initial strategic housing site. The changes to the boundaries, policies relating to planting, traffic access, areas of density and boundary treatments present a positive scheme which will provide housing without significantly impacting upon heritage assets.

The reduced strategic area minimises impacts upon heritage assets and their settings. The area proposed for NS1 corresponds to and connects with the area assessed within the Borough of Stevenage, and subject to that site coming forwards is deliverable and consistent with national policy. Without the adjacent land coming forwards within Stevenage the site within NHDC should not be developed.

Within the wider strategic allocation site development has the potential to impact upon the setting of heritage assets. Proposals within this area should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment to ensure impacts are adequately presented and assessed.

5. Policy recommendations

The proposal site offers the potential for additional housing within the area adjoining the Borough of Stevenage allocation site. This assessment has demonstrated the possibility to develop the site and avoid harm to heritage assets.

- ▶ North Hertfordshire District Council should review the boundaries of the Graveley Conservation Area;
- ▶ North Hertfordshire District Council should prepare, consult upon and adopt a conservation area appraisal for the Graveley Conservation Area;
- ▶ Hedgerows, existing trees and other planting should be maintained and reinforced to conserve existing historic environment land forms;
- ▶ Existing public paths and bridleways should be maintained through the strategic site;
- ▶ North Hertfordshire District Council should consider designating a conservation area based upon Chesfield Park and Chesfield Church to adjoin the St Nicholas/Rectory Lane Conservation Area in Stevenage and preserve the significance of Chesfield Park;
- ▶ Undeveloped land within the allocation boundary should be secured as open space by legal agreement or similar methodology;
- ▶ Development within the proposal site towards Graveley should be of a lower density, with larger properties and plots to enable more extensive landscaping and tree planting;
- ▶ The proposal site should only come forwards in conjunction with the adjacent site in Stevenage, and the development of the two sites, whether concurrent or in sequence should be secured by legal agreement; and
- ▶ Development within the wider strategic site should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment.

Bibliography

Letter from Historic England to North Hertfordshire District Council dated 6 February 2015 reference HD/P 5255.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Annex 2: Glossary.

Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.

Heritage Impact Assessment: Land to the North of Stevenage, November 2015.



Appendix A

Photographic Gazetteer



Plate 1: Photograph from the allocation site south east towards The Rook's Nest Howards taken from the hedgerow adjacent to Ten Acre Plantation in Chesfield Park.



Plate 2: Zoomed photograph from the hedgerow adjacent to Ten Acre Plantation south, south east towards The Rook's Nest, Howards.



Plate 3: View of The Rook's Nest Howards taken from the footpath to Graveley from a point above the 120m contour line to the south east



Plate 4: Long distance view from the footpath to Graveley showing The Rook's Nest Howards visible over long distance views to the south east



Plate 5: Photograph taken at the north most extent of the proposal site from the Graveley footpath in a south east direction showing the trees flanking Rook's Nest Howards are visible from this point over the bowl of the hill



Plate 6: View north towards Crow End along the north boundary of the allocation site



Plate 7: View south west from the public footpath adjacent to grade II listed Crow End. The allocation site would start to the left of the tree belt in the centre of the picture and would be visible from this point to the left and right of the photograph, across the landscape



Plate 8: Photograph looking north showing the hedgerow making the north boundary of the site and the tree line adjacent to the path from Stevenage to Graveley



Appendix B Figures





