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Planning. Design. Economics.

**Hertsmere Revised Core Strategy
Examination**

**Further Statement Matter 2 - Distribution
of Housing and Approach to the Green
Belt**

Commercial Estates Group (CEG) and the
Owners of Potters Bar Golf Course

13 April 2012

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1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 This further statement to Matter 2 of the Hertsmere Revised Core Strategy Examination is submitted by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) on behalf of Commercial Estates Group (CEG) and the freehold owners of Potters Bar Golf Course (The Owners). It follows previous representations submitted by NLP in January 2012 which comprised of two documents:
- A report entitled 'Representations on Hertsmere Revised Core Strategy for Submission to Secretary of State'; and
 - An appended report entitled 'Strategic Assessment of the Need for Housing in Hertsmere'
- 1.2 This further statement does not repeat the evidence put forward in the previous statement, but does draw upon and update that analysis where relevant to respond to the specific issues put forward by the Inspector under Matter 2 and of relevance to CEG and owners of Potters Bar Golf Course's interests.
- 1.3 The NPPF outlines that during the examination process a Local Plan must demonstrate that it has been positively prepared, is justified, is effective and is consistent with national policy. Outlined below are our reasons why the Revised Core Strategy's [RCS] distribution of housing and approach to the Green Belt is considered unsound as it currently stands.

2.0

Distribution of Housing and Approach to the Green Belt

Issue 2.1 Distribution of Housing

Is the proposed distribution of new housing based on sound assessment of the most sustainable options?

- 2.1 The distribution of new housing should reflect a range of factors, including the availability of suitable sites to accommodate development as well as the relative needs and demands of each settlement in the Borough, with growth supporting the objectively assessed needs of the population and local economies in each settlement. A distorted distribution or under-provision in a particular area would lead to unsustainable outcomes, including impacting on affordability due to undersupply, undermining the ability of local people to access homes in their local area, as well as limiting growth in local spending to underpin local economies and support services and amenities.
- 2.2 The RCS identifies (para 2.33) that the distribution of new housing has been guided by the Council's own projections of where housing capacity exists in the Borough. The Council through the RCS has not considered Green Belt as a suitable means of delivering housing capacity in the Borough, despite its identification as a suitable means of delivering housing in the previously withdrawn Core Strategy from 2008 [CD/03]. This means the RCS distribution has been wholly based on a constrained supply-led capacity exercise, rather than considering the individual needs and demands of different parts of the borough, and the merits of delivering development in these locations, to inform a sustainable distribution of growth which delivers local benefits. In doing so, it has also artificially constrained housing growth across the borough below the objectively assessed level of need across Hertsmere.
- 2.3 By not considering the release of Green Belt land as an option it leads to a unbalanced distribution of growth as it is excessively focused towards those places where there is identified capacity outside of the Green Belt, as opposed to where there are identified needs for development. The Council has not adequately considered alternative options which might secure a better balance.

Are the broad levels of growth at particular settlements appropriate?

- 2.4 Due to the way the RCS has approached the distribution of growth, as outlined above, this has led to an inappropriate distribution across the Borough. In particular, the level of growth proposed for Potters Bar substantially underplays the scale of existing local need and demand in the settlement.
- 2.5 As set out in NLP's previous representations (para 3.34) the RCS distribution of growth would lead to only c.10% of new housing development being accommodated within Potters Bar; the Borough's second largest settlement and home to 23% of the Borough's population and 21% of the Borough's jobs.

Whilst existing scale of the settlement is not in itself a definitive indication of local needs, need for housing does generally respond to existing housing markets and relate to geographical distribution of population. This is particularly important for Potters Bar as analysis contained within the London Commuter Belt (West) SHMA (April 2010) identifies (Figure 13) that in housing market terms Potters Bar is distinct and separate from both other settlements in the Borough and other markets across the London Commuter Belt, meaning that in order to meet housing needs in Potters Bar, development will be required in or through an extension to Potters Bar itself.

Table 2.1 Housing Outcomes for Potters Bar

Distribution	Level of Housing Delivery Over Core Strategy Period		
	3,550 dwellings (Core Strategy)	5,250 dwellings (NLP Lower Estimate of Housing Need)	9,000 dwellings (NLP Upper Estimate of Housing Need)
10% In Potters Bar (Core Strategy)	355	525	900
23% In Potters Bar (Population)	816	1,207	2,070

- 2.6 The RCS only makes provision for 355 dwellings to be built in Potters Bar over the 15 year Core Strategy period, 10% of the RCS' total requirement. NLP's objective assessment of development needs contained within our previously submitted report '*Strategic Assessment of the Need for Housing in Hertsmere*' identifies that the need for housing in Potters Bar over this period would sit in the range of 1,200 to 2,070 dwellings. Table 2.1 illustrates this comparison, outlining that even if the current housing target is adopted, the scale of delivery in Potters Bar to meet its local requirements should be over 800 dwellings, a scale of delivery well in excess of the circa 355 dwellings advocated by the Revised Core Strategy. This substantial under-provision of housing against evidenced needs for the settlement is not a justified or appropriate strategy.

Issue 2.4 Need for Green Belt Release

Are there sufficient reasons to conclude that there is no need for the RCS to provide for limited release of sites for housing in the Green Belt?

- 2.7 As outlined in NLP's Further Statement to Matter 1 and NLP's previous representations, the need and demand for dwellings is significantly greater than that for which the RCS is proposing to plan. Therefore there is compelling evidence that there is a need to actively consider (and in NLP's view provide for) release of sites for housing in the Green Belt. The NPPF requires that objectively assessed needs are met and identifies in relation to the Green Belt that Local Planning Authorities should establish their boundaries through Local Plans (para 85). The NPPF goes on to state that when defining these boundaries LPAs should "*ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development.*" Taking the provisions of the NPPF together, it compels LPAs to consider Green Belt boundaries when meeting their requirements for development. If development

requirements are higher than capacity outside of the Green Belt, then to ensure consistency with the Local Plan meeting those requirements, the LPA must define Green Belt boundaries to account for these and/or consider, via the duty to cooperate, that needs can be satisfactorily met elsewhere. The RCS fails to do this.

- 2.8 The Hertsmere SHLAA Update (November 2011) study identifies a gross urban capacity (excluding any Green Belt sites or Broad Locations) of circa 3,400 dwellings over the next 15 years. The RCS puts forward a target of 3,550 dwellings over the same period, with the shortfall being made up by windfalls, identified in the supply as Broad Locations (e.g. urban areas that will deliver many windfall schemes). The Council's evidence base therefore identifies that a housing requirement higher than 3,550 would necessitate release of Green Belt sites (i.e. to meet either the RS requirement or to meet objectively assessed needs). This position was confirmed by the withdrawn Core Strategy from 2008 [CD/03] which identified areas of search in the Green Belt to meet requirements.
- 2.9 The council have not provided an assessment of the fundamental need to protect the Green Belt, in the face of this need for development, with the Council's conclusion on this issue being drawn from the RS which did not advocate Green Belt Review (between 2006 and 2021, the horizons of the RS). However, this is not in itself a sufficient reason to conclude there is no need for the RCS to provide release of sites in the Green Belt.
- 2.10 Of particular relevance to this issue is NPPF para 83, which states:
"Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period." [NLP emphasis]
- 2.11 NLP considers that the objectively assessed scale of housing need and demand during the current plan period to 2027 (and the significant adverse consequences of failing to meet that need) represents exceptional circumstances fully justifying the requirement for Hertsmere to provide for Green Belt release within the current plan period.
- 2.12 Even under the (too low) RCS target, for Potters Bar there are only sufficient non Green Belt sites identified in the SHLAA to deliver c.160 dwellings, which is well below the 355 dwellings from the Borough target that the RCS distributes to Potters Bar. The Council does not provide evidence to suggest there is a compelling justification for making use of a windfall allowance to provide the remaining 210 dwellings that would be required.
- 2.13 Notwithstanding, any consideration of Green Belt boundaries at this time must conclude that even if Green Belt boundary alterations were not necessary now, they must nevertheless be capable of enduring beyond the plan period (i.e. that

they will not need to be altered in a subsequent plan period either). For Hertsmere, this cannot by any logic be the case. As the Council's evidence base on land capacity from the SHLAA identifies, only 3,550 dwellings can be accommodated without altering Green Belt boundaries. As such, the substantial weight of evidence is that any level of housing need in the next plan period must inevitably require a review of Green Belt boundaries. The requirements of the NPPF are, therefore, that such boundaries should be considered now to create permanent and enduring boundaries, and in doing so, provide the opportunity to meet objectively assessed need for development.

- 2.14 As it stands, the RCS is not in conformity with the NPPF. The RCS must make provision for the alteration of Green Belt, to ensure that these boundaries endure. The NPPF identifies that this includes where necessary, identifying areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period (para 85). The RCS has failed to adequately provide sufficient land to meet development needs for this plan period, and in doing so has not satisfied the requirement to evidence that Green Belt release is not necessary in this, or future, plan periods.

Issue 2.5 Flexible Housing Provision and Distribution

Overall, are the proposals for housing provision and its distribution reasonably flexible? Is there adequate regard to uncertainties and risks and are there sufficient measures for contingencies?

- 2.15 The RCS proposals are unjustifiably rigid and its approach to delivery of housing sites places an excessive reliance on predominantly urban sites within one part of the Borough. The distribution of growth, which puts a much greater emphasis on new development in the western parts of the Borough, does not provide a sufficient range of development sites to meet local needs and demand as they arise.
- 2.16 The distribution of development does not provide sufficient sites in Potters Bar to ensure delivery. The SHLAA identifies that only 8% of its identified gross capacity (excluding Green Belt but including commitments) is located within the Potters Bar area, equivalent to just c.270 dwellings. This means that to deliver the RCS' distributed growth of 355 dwellings in Potters Bar would require windfalls of 150 dwellings, taking account of net yields, or over 42% of total supply. If either windfalls or specific sites do not come forward in Potters Bar, there is no flexibility in the land supply position for the RCS to deliver development in the Borough's second largest settlement. The strategy does not identify any contingency to ensure development can be delivered in Potters Bar in the event that anticipated windfalls or sites do not come forward.
- 2.17 When compounded with the prospect of the RCS under-providing against the objectively assessed need for housing within Potters Bar, the strategy substantially undermines one of the RCS' key spatial objective for Potters Bar

of 'managing housing availability and affordability'. These uncertainties and risks are not adequately managed through the RCS due to its rigid approach.

- 2.18 A further risk of the RCS is that by not providing sufficient sites to meet housing needs in this plan period, it increases the likelihood that development in the Green Belt will be required in the future. Even were it concluded that land released from the Green Belt is not required to meet development needs in the short term, the SHLAA evidence indicates that it is inevitable that Green Belt will be required in the medium to long term.
- 2.19 NLP's view, therefore, is that the RCS should be identifying suitable sites or areas of search for Green Belt release within this plan period to provide a range of sites across the Borough to deliver the development necessary to meet needs. However, were it to be concluded that this was not required immediately, it would still be necessary to review Green Belt boundaries to identify 'safeguarded' land between current urban areas and amended Green Belt boundaries to deliver development in the future. This is particularly important for Potters Bar, where the strategy does not adequately respond to needs and objectives for the settlement.

3.0 **Conclusions**

- 3.1 As set out in NLP's Further Statement to Matter 1, based on the objective assessment of housing need contained within NLP's report '*A Strategic Assessment of the Need for Housing in Hertsmere*' it is considered that the appropriate, and properly justified, level of housing provision for which Hertsmere should be planning through its Revised Core Strategy is between 350 and 600 dwellings per annum (5,250 to 9,000 dwellings in total). To meet this objectively assessed housing need, the RCS will need to amend Green Belt boundaries to identify additional suitable land capacity to deliver development. Even with the RCS proposed housing provision of 3,550 dwellings in total, the need for the Council to be satisfied that the boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period means that the Green Belt will require amendment. For Potters Bar specifically, the RCS target (equating to 355 dwellings) is not matched by non-Green Belt SHLAA capacity sites.
- 3.2 There is not sufficient evidence to pursue a strategy that does not include some release of sites from the Green Belt, either for phased allocation or for safeguarding. In this respect, there are sites within the Borough which are suitable for Green Belt release and the SHLAA identifies a range of such suitable development options, with the previously withdrawn draft Core Strategy 2008 including areas of search for Green Belt release as part of the strategy to meet the Regional Strategy housing targets at that point.
- 3.3 Potters Bar is a key settlement in the Borough, with a distinct housing market and its own housing needs, for which the distribution of development fails to adequately plan. There is a need to identify further sites, including those within the Green Belt, to meet the development needs of Potters Bar. Such opportunities have been tested through the evidence base, including the SHLAA, and Potters Bar Golf Course is a site-specific example of a Green Belt site which would deliver a sustainable development to meet needs, but which has unduly been discarded as an option because of the RCS's failure to assess alternative options and arrive at a strategy to meet needs.

Potters Bar Golf Course

- 3.4 The Potters Bar Golf Course site is an area of land to the North of Potters Bar. It is contained on a wedge of green land, currently within the Green Belt boundary, which extends into the urban envelope of Potters Bar as a settlement. The SHLAA Site Assessments (September 2010) identified The Potters Bar Golf Course site as a 'deliverable' site within 1-5 years, with no significant factors which would fundamentally prejudice its development, if brought forward through the development planning framework. The SHLAA identifies a gross developable area of 16.5ha for the site, with a capacity for 508 dwellings. Additionally, there is the prospect of developer-funded flood alleviation works on the site that would reduce the area of flood risk and potentially increase the area for development, and therefore the developable area of 16.5ha is a minimum baseline for the site currently. The site itself was

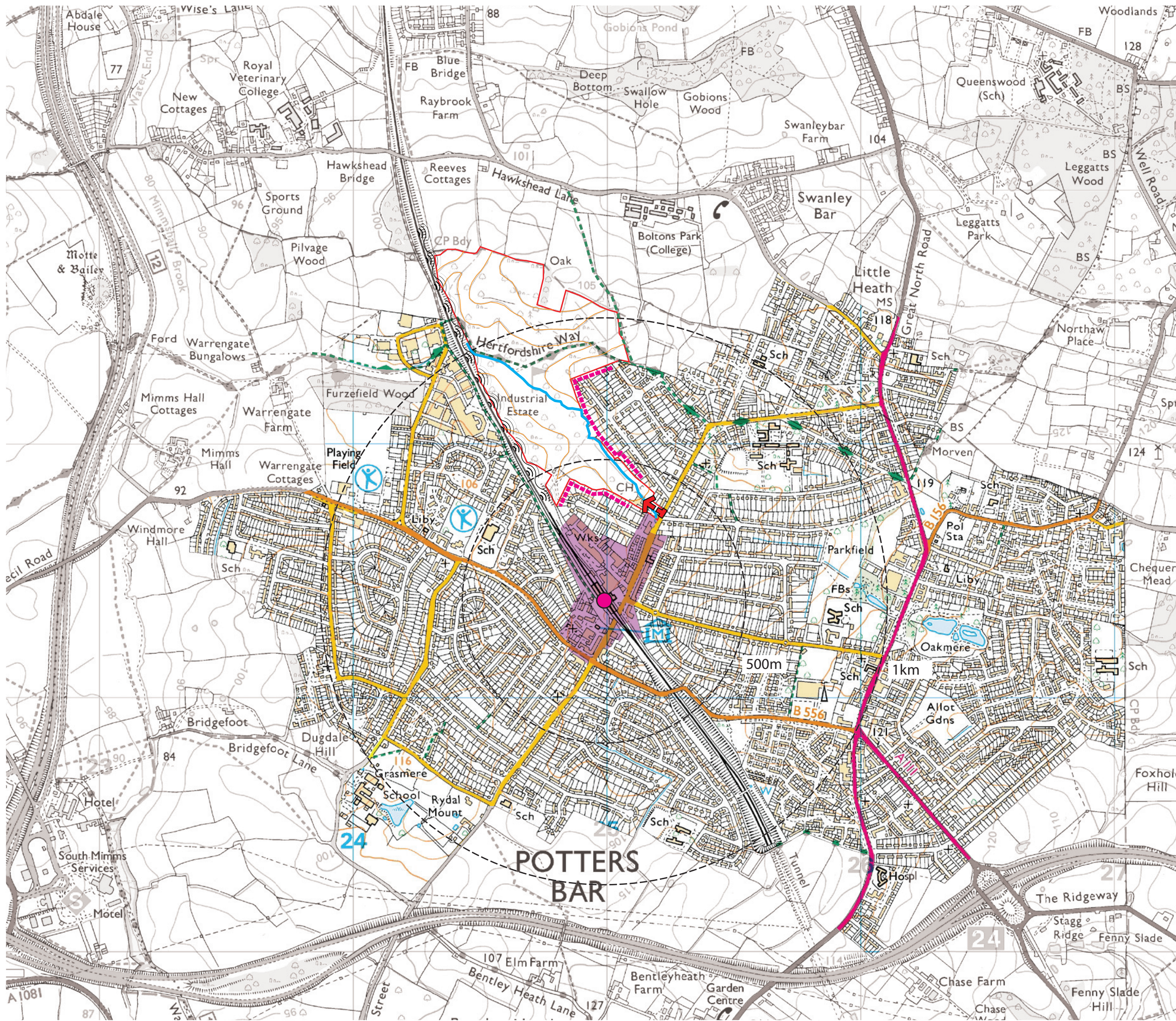
previously identified as an area of search in the Green Belt within the withdrawn draft Core Strategy 2008.










- 3.5 The site is a suitable site for Green Belt release, would help to meet the exceptional level of housing need identified for the Borough, whilst also providing the opportunity to lay out a new Green Belt boundary to create a well-defined and long-term boundary around Potters Bar, which better reflects the shape and scale of the settlement (whilst also accommodating its need for housing).
- 3.6 This is illustrated in the two figures contained within the Appendices which show an opportunities and constraints plan for the area north of Potters Bar, along with an illustrative masterplan showing how the area (which was identified as an area of search for Green Belt release in the 2008 Draft Core Strategy) could respond to the challenges of delivering a sustainable extension, whilst creating a new defensible boundary to the Green Belt that would create an enduring urban edge in line with the NPPF.
- 3.7 These plans are indicative and illustrative only, and are not representative of a specific scheme being proposed for the site. However, they demonstrate that suitable amendments to Green Belt around Potters Bar, along with sensitively planned development in character with the existing settlement, would allow the RCS to deliver growth (on a circa 16.7ha developable area on the site, depending on the revised boundary of the Green Belt, and equivalent to circa 500 dwellings depending on the form of development) which is more consistent with the development needs of Potters Bar. The site itself, although currently in the Green Belt, is well located, within 500m from the centre of the site to the heart of Potters Bar, including its services and transport. This will ensure that the RCS can deliver the key strategic objectives for Potters Bar, without giving rise to substantial and demonstrable environmental harm.

Delivering Growth in Potters Bar to Meet Needs

- 3.8 As set out in NLP's previous representations, a greater proportion of any dwelling requirement across the Borough should be delivered in Potters Bar to respond to its local need and distinct housing market. Policy CS2 should be amended to state that up to 20% of new housing will be sought in Potters Bar, with the level of growth sought in other areas amended accordingly.
- 3.9 Green Belt release in Potters Bar will be necessary to achieve this, with sites and Green Belt boundaries confirmed through the Site Allocations Document or similar. Policy CS12 should be amended to reflect this, with the supporting text to CS2 and CS12 specifically identifying Green Belt amendments around Potters Bar as a priority over any Green Belt amendments in other areas of the District in order to address the imbalance in the current distribution of planned development.

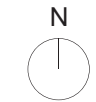
Appendix 1 Site Context



- KEY**
- Site boundary 
 - Site access 
 - Local facilities 
 - Train station 
 - Noise constraint 
 - Sensitive boundary 
 - Footpath 
 - Contour (shown on site only) 
 - Water course (shown on site only) 



Project	Potters Bar Golf Club
Title	Site Features, Constraints and Context Plan
Client	CEG
Date	April 2012
Scale	NTS
Drawn by	PBa
Drg. No	IL12822-001







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Appendix 2 Illustrative Layout



KEY

- Site boundary 
- Site access 
- Emergency access only 
- Potential Green Belt boundary 

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Project **Potters Bar Golf Club**

Title **Illustrative layout V2a**

Client **CEG**

Date **April 2012**

Scale **NTS @ A3**

Drawn by **PBa**

Drg. No **IL12822-005**

