

LAND TO THE WEST SIDE OF THE HOWBURY HALL ESTATE,  
ADJOINING ASGARD DRIVE, RENHOLD

## **LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR SITES SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF LAND FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  
APPROXIMATELY 300 NEW HOMES (210 PRIVATE AND 90 AFFORDABLE) &  
POTENTIAL OPTION TO INCLUDE A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

AUGUST 2020

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of The Howbury Hall Estate and seeks the allocation of land to the west of Howbury Hall, adjoining the existing residential development as Asgard Drive, Renhold for residential development as part of the current Local Plan Review process.

1.2 The submission includes two indicative options for development of the land.

Option A – 300 new homes (including a policy compliant mix of private & affordable dwellings), vehicular access from St Neots Road and associated open space and landscape planting.

Option B – 300 new homes (including a policy compliant mix of private & affordable dwellings), vehicular access from St Neots Road and associated open space and landscape planting. Provision of 2.3 hectares of land to deliver a new primary school for Renhold.

1.3 These options have been prepared following a careful assessment of the opportunities and constraints which exist within the estate's landholding, in particular the listed status of the hall and the importance of protecting its 'parkland' setting.

1.4 Option A includes housing only whilst Option B includes the potential provision of a new 2.3 hectare two form entry primary school site. This is included as it is understood that Renold Primary school which is located to the north at Church End may be over capacity as a result of Children from Asgard Drive and the newer estate development at Markham Rise now attending and so putting pressure on the village school. This proposed school would serve the new development and also pupils from the adjacent developments as well as providing capacity for additional children from the village should there be a need to accommodate pupils from Renhold itself. Clearly if the Council has alternative plans to ease school capacity issues the school site may not be needed but is offered as an option if required.

- 1.5 A comprehensive assessment of the existing highway conditions and so access options to serve the proposed new development has also been undertaken by TPA consultants. This is submitted alongside this statement as part of this 'Call for Sites' package. This includes two options for the location of a new roundabout junction on St Neots Road with an access running north to the site from that point.
- 1.6 The implementation of this preferred roundabout access Option 1 would result in the loss of some trees at the south western corner of the estate. Therefore, an assessment of the necessary tree works has been undertaken by RGS Arboricultural Consultants and again this assessment accompanies the submission.
- 1.7 This statement also reviews the sustainability credentials of the location in terms of access to shops, services, facilities and public transport opportunities. It is set out as follows:
- 2.0 Site Analysis
  - 3.0 Indicative Site Options
  - 4.0 Ownership & Deliverability
  - 5.0 Conclusions
- 1.8 The statement should be read in conjunction with and provides additional information to that set out in the main 'Call for Sites' response form.
- 1.9 It is recognised that the Council will review site submissions over the coming months. Should a view be taken that further information relating to any particular aspect of the site would be helpful, please do not hesitate to raise this with us.

## 2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

### The Estate

- 2.1 The estate is located to the north east of the main Bedford urban area. It is comprised partly of farmland, (both pasture and crop) and partly Parkland toward the south of the estate. There are a number of buildings within the estate including the main residential property, Howbury Hall, (Grade II Listed) other residential estate properties, barns, outbuildings and stables some of which are also listed.
- 2.2 The overall landholding comprises approximately 186 hectares (460 acres) having been reduced from around 202 hectares (500 acres) as a result of the improvements to the A421 Bedford Bypass which runs (east / west) through the southern portion of the estate.

### The Promotion Site

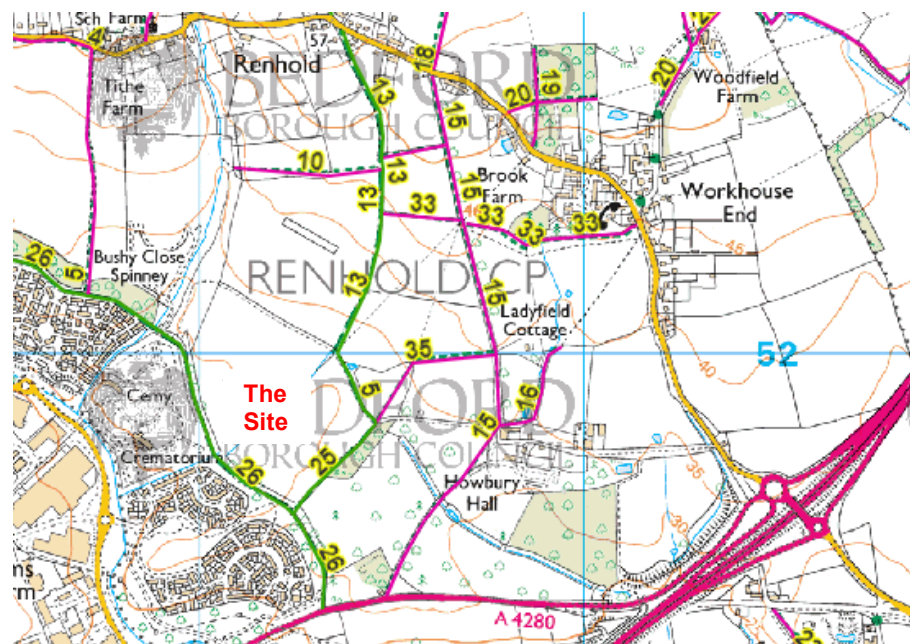
- 2.3 The site which is the subject of this 'Call for Sites' submission is located to the west of the estate directly adjoining the eastern edge of Bedford, just east of the existing residential development at Asgard Drive.
- 2.4 It comprises some 19 hectares of land, largely in agricultural use and a small area of woodland to the south, just north of St Neots Road currently utilised for free range pig rearing.
- 2.5 The site is currently accessed through the internal estate roads. It would not however be practical in terms of the ongoing farming operations nor would it be desirable from a heritage perspective to access a new housing development through the estate utilising existing or improved roads and access points. It is therefore proposed to create a new roundabout access to serve the site taken from St Neots Road. This would be completely separate from and so protect the parkland setting of the hall as well as the wider estate operations.
- 2.6 Save for the loss of some trees to deliver the preferred access Option 1, (which is discussed further in this statement) there are no other physical constraints to the development of the land.

### **Road Connections**

- 2.7 The site would be accessed from St Neots Road / A428 to the south. This provides access into Bedford to the west and onto the A421 (Oxford to Cambridge Expressway) just to the east. It is therefore possible to reach the 'Black Cat' roundabout on the A1 to the east within a six minute drive and Junction 13 of the M1 to the south west within a sixteen minute drive from the site.

### **Public Footpaths, Cycleways & Bridleways**

- 2.8 Public Bridleway No.26 runs along the sites western boundary and so provides direct access to the east side of Bedford and via Asgard Drive to Norse Road. Bridleways 25 and 5 run to the south and east of the site, connecting with various adjacent public footpaths (including Nos 15 and 16) which in turn link to Renhold to the north as shown opposite. There is a dedicated cycleway from the south of the site connecting to the Lidl, Tesco and Waitrose stores to the west without need to cycle on roads. The cycleways also provide excellent access to neighbouring employment areas and through to Bedford Station.



Extract from the Definitive Map for Bedford

### **Public Transport**

- 2.9 There are bus stops on Norse Road at the entrance to Asgard Drive within 600 metres of the site. There is a regular service (Route 5 every 15 minutes during weekdays), into Bedford and also hourly services (Route X5) between Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Buckingham. There is also a local service connecting the area with the nearby villages (Route 27).
- 2.10 The site is therefore very accessible by foot, cycle, public transport and also the private car for longer journeys

## **Shops & Facilities**

2.11 The following is a brief summary of the nearby shops and local facilities and their proximity to the site:

### Post Office

- Post Office, 42-44 Hookhams Lane, Renhold, MK41 0JU (*approx. 2 km using footpath network*)
- Post Office, 105-109 Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx 2.2km*)

### Supermarkets

- Aldi, 147 Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx. 2.1km*)
- Co-op, 109 Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx. 2.1km*)
- Iceland, Goldington Square, 95-97 Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx. 2.1km*)
- Lidl, Perkins Road, Bedford, MK41 0GX (*approx. 1.7km*)
- Waitrose, Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 0UE (*approx. 1.8km*)
- Tesco, Riverfield Drive, Bedford, MK41 0SE (*approx. 2.3km*)

### Public Houses

- The Polhill Arms, 25 Wilden Road, Renhold, MK41 0JP (*approx. 1.5km using footpath network*)
- The Orchard Harvester, 1 Riverfield Drive, Bedford, MK41 0UE (*approx. 2km*)
- Toby Carvery, 403 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 0DS (*approx. 2.3km*)
- Anchor, 397 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 0DA (*approx. 2.3km*)

### Community Halls

- Church Lane Community Centre, 147 Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx. 2.1km*)
- Pavilion, Fiona Way, Bedford (*approx. 1.1km*)
- Renhold Village Hall (*approx. 2km*)

### Petrol Stations

- Tesco, Riverfield Drive, Bedford, MK41 0SE (*approx. 2.3km*)

### Sports / Open Space

- Pavilion sports ground Fiona Way (*approx 1.1km*)
- Renhold Village sport ground (approx 900m)

### Education

#### Primary

- Renhold V.C. Primary School, Church End, Renhold, MK41 0LU (*approx. 1km using footpath network*)
- Putnoe Primary School, Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0DH (*approx. 1.8 km*)

#### Secondary

- Mark Rutherford, 79 Wentworth Drive, Bedford, MK41 8PX (*approx. 2.4 km*)

### General Medical Practices

- The De Parys Group – Church Lane Branch, 147A Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx. 1.9km*)
- The Medical Centre, 8 Honeysuckle Way, Goldington, Bedford, MK41 0TF (*approx. 2.4km*)
- Putnoe Medical Centre Partnership, 93 Queens Drive, Putnoe, Bedford, MK41 9JE (*approx. 2.8km*)

### Pharmacy

- Fairleys Pharmacy, 103 Church Lane, Goldington, Bedford, MK41 0PW (*approx. 1.9km*)
- Tesco, Riverfield Drive, Bedford, MK41 0SE (*approx. 2.3km*)

### Dentist

- Tesco, Riverfield Drive, Bedford, MK41 0SE (*approx. 2.3km*)

- Bedford Dental Practice, 8 Honeysuckle Way, Goldington, Bedford, MK41 0TF (*approx. 2.4km*)

#### Accident & Emergency

- Bedford Hospital South Wing, Kempston Road, Bedford, MK42 2DJ (*approx. 6.1km*)

#### Places of Worship

- Church of All Saints, Church End, Renhold, MK41 0LU (*approx. 1.5km using footpath network*)
- St Marys Church, Church Lane, Bedford, MK41 0AN (*approx. 2.5km*)
- Holy Cross RC Church, Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 0DP

#### Employment / Industrial Estates

- Elm Farm Industrial Estate (*approx. 700m*)

2.12 In summary the site benefits from good accessibility to a range of shops, services and employment opportunities.

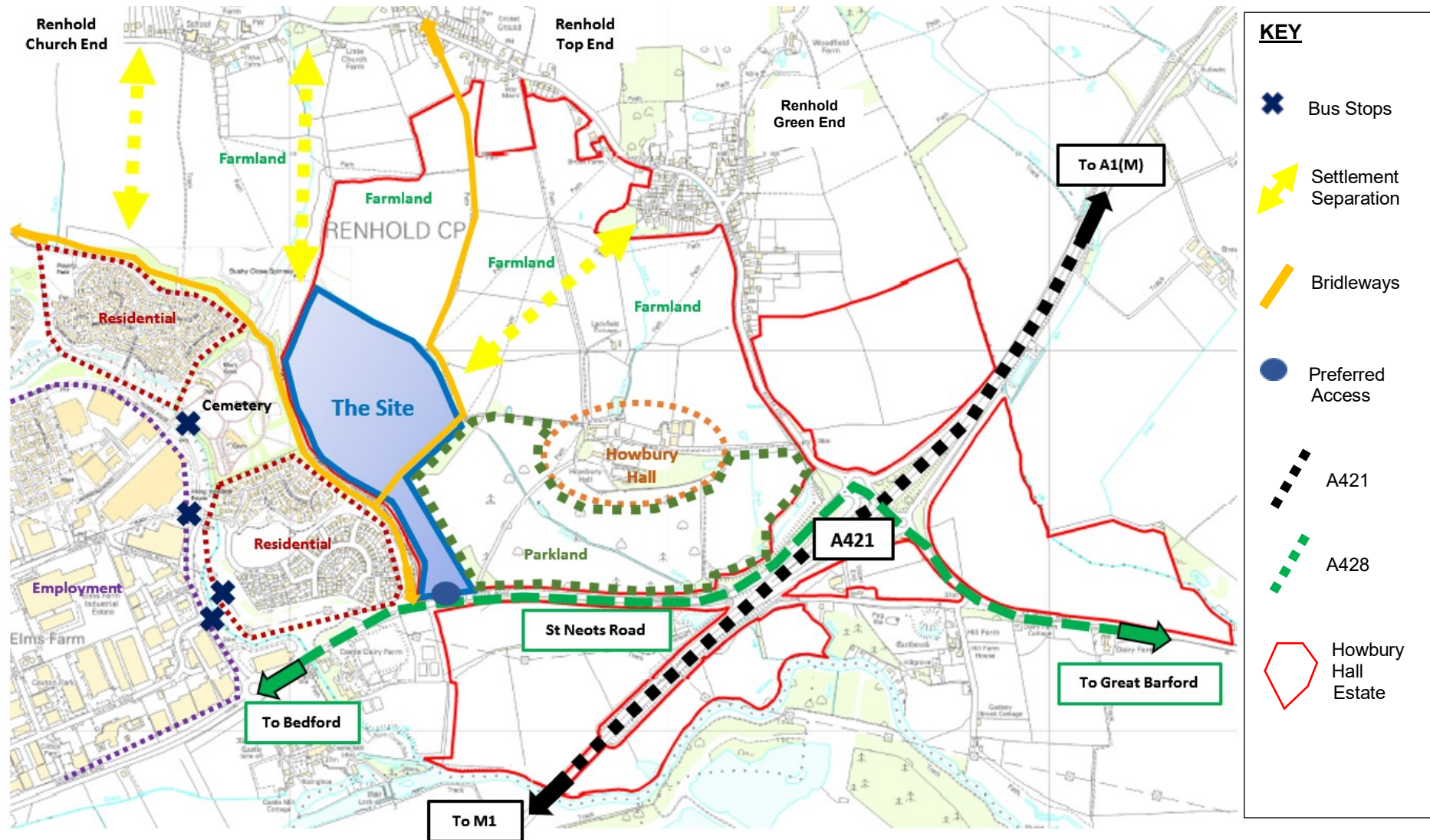
### **Opportunities & Constraints**

2.13 Whilst the site is not subject to major technical or physical constraints i.e. flood risk, adverse noise impacts, contamination etc. there are two elements which do constrain the areas which are best suited to accommodate new development within the estate holding. Firstly, Howbury Hall is a Grade II listed property. It is thought to have originally been of eighteenth century origin but was substantially rebuilt in 1849 after fire. The property faces south looking out across the parkland toward St Neots Road and the A421. Standing just to the north east corner of the main hall is the former dairy and laundry. This building was also listed (Grade II) in 1983. To the rear (east) of the dairy and laundry is a walled garden. This is also separately listed (Grade II). Dower Cottage, again listed in 1983 is located to the north of the walled garden. This was originally constructed in the eighteenth century but has been the subject of twentieth century repairs and alterations.



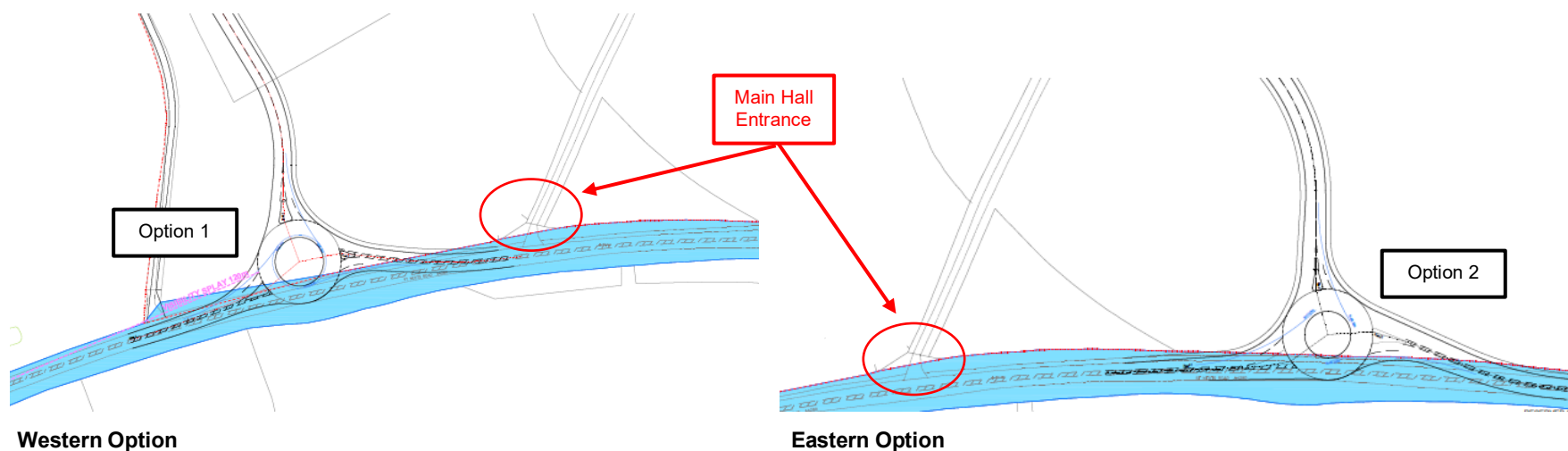
- 2.14 East of the hall is an 'Ice House' (listed Grade II again in 1983), which dates from the early nineteenth century. Finally, to the north of the hall is a stable block complex, again listed Grade II in 1983. The listing description suggests that this was the original stable belonging to Howbury Hall. It is of early eighteenth century timber framed construction.
- 2.15 The setting of the Hall and associated listed buildings is clearly of importance and represents a constraint to significant development in close proximity to the Hall. This is particularly the case to the south of the hall where the land is also historic parkland. This parkland provides a pleasant foreground to the hall and is visible from St Neots Road. A substantial number of mature trees within the parkland area are important to the setting of the hall and subject to a preservation order made in 1967.
- 2.16 The second factor which is important to consider is that the Estate provides physical separation between the built up edge of Bedford and the village or Renhold to the north and east. It would not be appropriate to promote development that would contribute materially to a coalescence of these two distinct settlements.
- 2.17 In the context of these constraints it is considered, (and is proposed by this submission), that land at the western edge of the estate can be appropriately developed for residential purposes without harm to the setting of the hall and / or its parkland and whilst also maintaining an important gap between the edge of Bedford and Renhold similar in width to that which exists and is characteristic of the relationship between Bedford and the various Renhold 'ends' to the north and north west.
- 2.18 The potential for this area to accommodate development is assisted by existing site features including significant mature planting to the east side of the proposed development area which screen it from the hall and parkland and the general topography which is low level. The land to the north and north east then rises up toward Renhold. The proposed development area would therefore be enclosed at lower level (similar to recent development at Markham Rise) and so would in no way appear to advance up the slope toward Renhold. The site therefore provides potential for residential development as promoted.

### Opportunities & Constraints Analysis Plan



### 3.0 INDICATIVE SITE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Based upon the review undertaken in Section 2, two indicative site options (A&B) have been developed. In both cases a proposed new access roundabout is to be taken from St Neots Road.
- 3.2 The accompanying statement prepared by TPA includes two potential locations for the new roundabout based upon a requirement to provide appropriate (120 metre) visibility splays on St Neots Road in both directions. Access Option 1, (the western option), is preferred and would be located to the south west corner of the estate, west of the existing entrance to the hall. This access retains the new access drive away from the hall, its setting and the wider Parkland. Some existing trees would be removed to facilitate the access.
- 3.3 Option 2 (the eastern option) is located to the east of the main hall entrance. This access requires the removal of fewer trees but would have a greater impact upon the setting of the hall and the Parkland.



- 3.4 A review of the arboricultural implications of the Western (Option 1) has been undertaken by RGS Arboricultural Consultants. This Highlights that no Category A trees would be lost.
- 3.5 It is considered that the loss of the trees to facilitate the access Option 1 is not a constraint which ought to weigh significantly against the sites allocation, particularly when set against the clear benefits of developing the site and in the context of the estates wider tree planting and general environmental improvement works which it undertakes each year.
- 3.6 By way of example in the autumn of 2020 the estate will plant a further 50 oak trees in field hedgerow boundaries. (This stock is already being brought on in the Howbury tree nursery). Additionally in 2020 and 2021 the estate has / is in the process of planting some 6.58 kilometers of new hedging and renewing 1.09 kilometers of existing hedging.
- 3.7 In addition also in 2020 1.25 hectares of land has been planted for nectar flower (bee and insect) mix as well as 3.3 hectares of flower rich margins and plots and 3.85 hectares of wild bird food mix. A program of similar enhancements has been prepared each year up until 2025.
- 3.8 Both indicative layouts therefore utilise the western access (Access Option1).

### **Option A**

**300 new homes (policy compliant mix of private & affordable dwellings), vehicular access from St Neots Road and associated open space and landscape planting.**

- 3.9 Accompanying this submission is a high level, Option A, Master Plan which proposes the construction of approximately 300 new homes retained within the upper field beyond the parkland to the west / north west of the hall.

3.10 The access running up from the new roundabout would be screened initially by the existing retained trees at the south west corner then by the western woodland boundary and new planting along its eastern edge.

3.11 It is envisaged that the residential development would be a maximum of two and a half storey in scale and low density, set around large areas of good quality open space to reflect the Parkland layout to the east.

3.12 The development would link directly to Bridleway 25 and 26 which provide access into Renhold to the north and also the eastern edge of Bedford (Asgard Drive) and nearby bus to the west.



**Indicative Option A – 300 new homes, access from St Neots Road**

3.13 At a low / medium density of around 18-20 dwellings per hectare the site could deliver 300 new homes.

**Option B**

**300 new homes (policy compliant mix of private & affordable dwellings), vehicular access from St Neots Road and associated open space and landscape planting. Provision of 2.3 hectares of land to deliver a new primary school for Renhold.**

- 3.14 Option B is very similar to A but includes the potential to deliver a new primary school with 2.3 hectares given over for this. This school site is offered as it is understood that Renhold Primary School is now overcapacity as a result of the developments at Asgard Drive and Markham Rise. Figures show a school capacity of 210 with 232 pupils on roll.

- 3.15 The indicative master plan shows the proposed school to the north and west side of the site to provide ease of access from the Bridleway and the Asgard Drive and Markham Rise developments.



**Indicative Option A – 300 new homes, access from St Neots Road and new two form entry school**

- 3.16 This option therefore accommodates pupil growth from the development but would also assist in easing pressure on the existing Primary School within Renhold. It is unclear whether the Council have any current plans to expand Renold Primary School or have another site which may be available for a new school construction. However, if no such proposals exist it is considered that this site offers an important opportunity to deliver necessary infrastructure alongside new development and is a clear benefit of the scheme.
- 3.17 The School site could be accessed from the St Neots Road roundabout by car, cycle or on foot or on foot or by cycle from Bridleway 26 to the west (Asgard Drive and Markham Rise) and also via bridleway 25 and 5 which link to Renold in the north.

### **Climate Change – Policy 51S**

- 3.18 The Call for Sites form notes that the Council has declared a climate change emergency and seeks to ensure that development which comes forward recognises this matter consistent with the aims of current Local Plan Policy 51S. This states that the Council will require new development to address climate change, adapting to anticipated future changes and mitigating against further change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.19 In the case of development at Howbury Hall, there is significant scope to introduce sustainable features which will assist in mitigating against climate change. This includes the use of ground source heat pumps and due to the low density proposed careful orientation of houses to benefit from maximum solar gain and so the effectiveness of PV.
- 3.20 All new homes could therefore be built to minimise reliance on traditional connections to gas and so to be low-carbon as well as energy and water efficient.
- 3.21 The costs of building to tight specifications continues to reduce and are far cheaper than seeking to retrofit later.

3.22 Again due to the low density proposed there is significant scope to enhance tree planting throughout and to ensure that drainage is wholly sustainable, with above ground transference of water between properties and the main drainage basins which would also include planting and associated biodiversity enhancement.



## **4.0 OWNERSHIP & DELIVERABILITY**

- 4.1 The promotion site is wholly owned by the Howbury Hall Estate. The Estate confirm that the land would be made available for development within six months of any allocation in the Local Plan.
- 4.2 The proposed access roundabout and associated visibility splays that are required are deliverable within the estate ownership and adjacent adopted highway.
- 4.3 There are therefore no land ownership or other technical constraints to the early delivery of development at the site.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This submission seeks the allocation of land at Howbury Hall Estate to provide 300 new homes in the coming plan period. Further, as set out, if deemed appropriate by the Council the site can also deliver a new Primary School to accommodate pupil growth from the site and to ease the pressure being experienced at the local school as a result of recent development to the west.
- 5.2 Appropriate vehicular access to the site can be provided as demonstrated in the accompanying TPA assessment. Whilst this would require the loss of some trees this is relatively minor and must be assessed in the context of the benefits of the delivery of the housing and significant tree, hedge and wildflower planting undertaken within the estate each year as well as other environmental enhancements.
- 5.3 The development of the site as proposed would not adversely impact the setting of the hall or its associated parkland nor would it lead to any material weakening of the open gap between the eastern edge of Bedford and Renhold to the north.
- 5.4 The site would benefit from good access to public transport which runs at a regular frequency providing access into the town centre. It is also well related to existing employment opportunities provided within the nearby Elm Farm and Viking Industrial Estates.
- 5.5 In principle this area has been considered an appropriate and sustainable location for residential development by the Council as evidenced by its support for the Asgard Drive and Markham Rise housing developments in recent years.
- 5.6 The site also lies close to the A421 expressway and so well related to assist and contribute to delivering growth within the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor. Further submissions will be made in this regard as part of the Estate's response to the Issues and Options consultation.

5.7 The site represents a significant opportunity to accommodate sustainable growth close to Bedford and to deliver important local infrastructure in the form of a new primary school if required and so we seek the Council's favourable consideration of this submission.