





FIVE THE MASTERPLAN.

This chapter presents the proposed masterplan for Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin and illustrates the various character areas and key features of the proposals.

5.1 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Development Framework Plan (Figure 5.1) builds upon the design principles set out in Chapter Four. It shows the treatment of the Site boundary, the means of access into the Site, the areas of retained and new landscaping, and the location and extent of the proposed residential land.

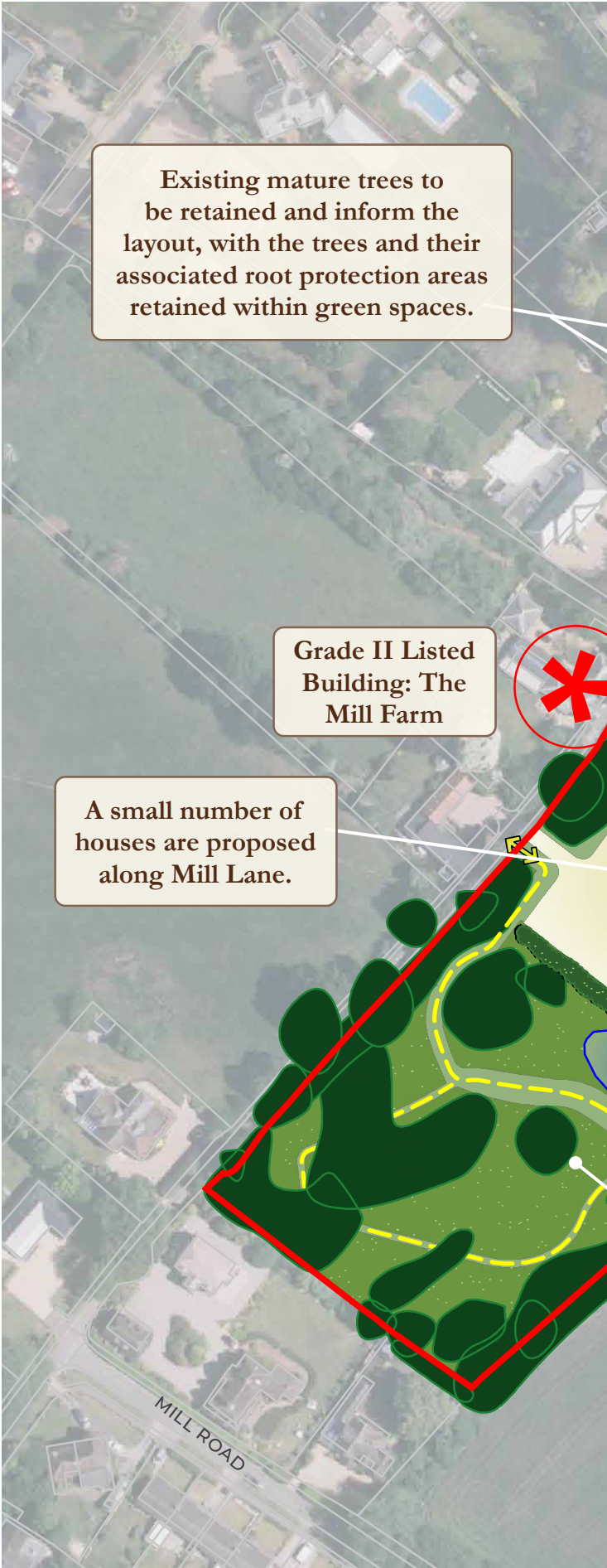


Figure 5.1: Development Framework Plan.

5.2 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

The Illustrative Masterplan (Figure 5.2), which is based upon the Development Framework Plan, has been prepared to demonstrate in more detail the general layout and design principles that will be adopted through the development of the Site.

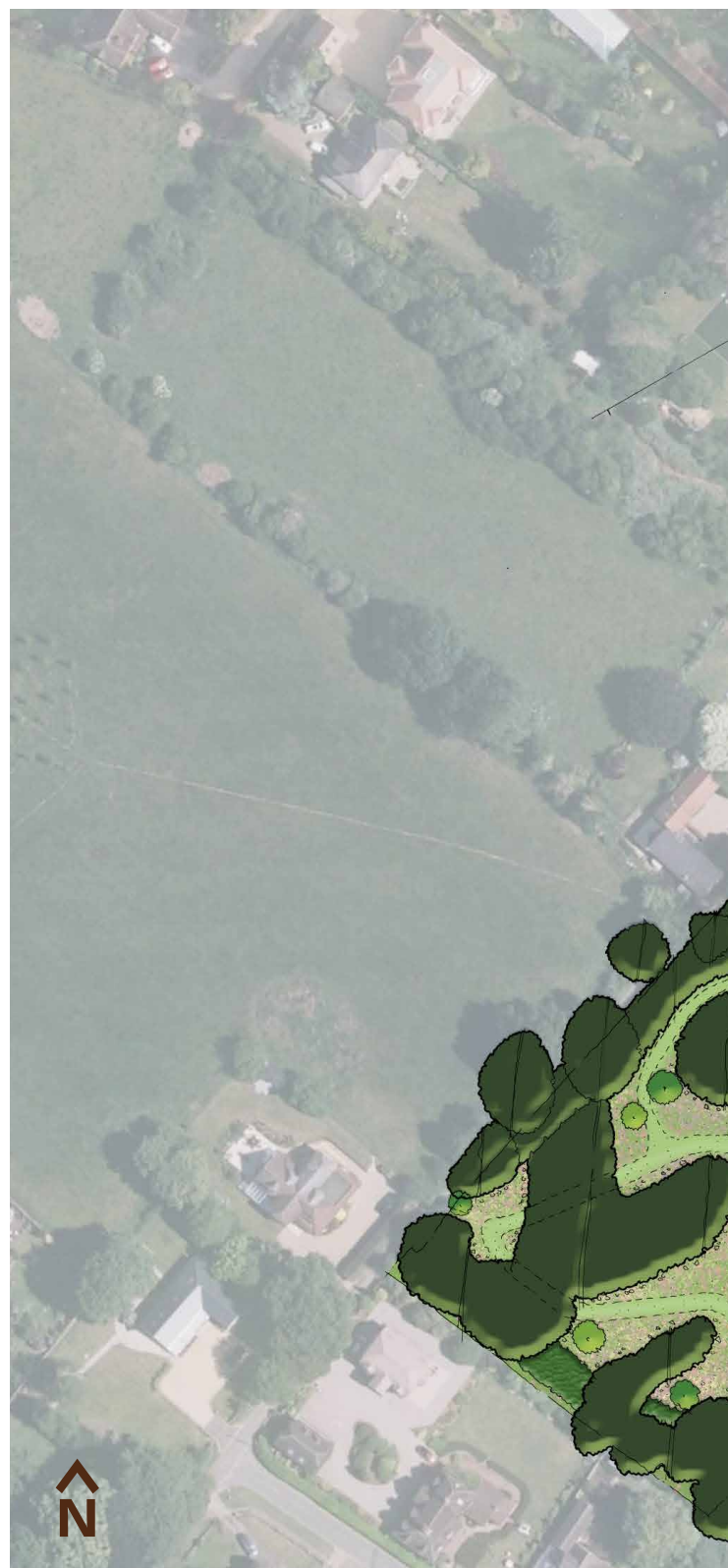
The Illustrative Masterplan provides for up to 41 new homes, including up to 50% affordable homes. The development is set within a strong green infrastructure framework, with the retention of existing vegetation, including trees and hedges, being a key principle behind the layout. Furthermore, new structural landscaping will be provided to assimilate the proposals into the existing landscape framework, and to filter views of the new homes.

The layout has been sensitively designed, with particular consideration taken to ensure that the development closely relates to the existing settlement edge. As previously discussed, the majority of the new homes will be contained to the eastern field, with a small pocket of development located within the western field.

The Illustrative Masterplan also demonstrates how the existing mature trees located within the eastern field will be retained within small pocket parks, which will form 'anchor' features, and give the new neighbourhood an instant sense of maturity.

The western field is primarily utilised for ecological enhancements, and the Illustrative Masterplan shows how some of the new habitats could be delivered, through inclusion of new wildflower meadows and shrub planting.

An area of open space is shown in the southern part of the eastern field, which will be designed to respect the open views from the listed building opposite. Furthermore, the open space will accommodate a new attenuation basin, which will form a key part of the green and blue infrastructure provision.



-  SITE BOUNDARY: 3.37HA
-  PROPOSED NEW HOMES
-  PROPOSED NEW HEDGEROW AND NATIVE TREES
-  PROPOSED FOOTWAYS/RECREATIONAL ROUTES

Figure 5.2: Illustrative Masterplan.



- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|
|  | EXISTING VEGETATION |  | PROPOSED ATTENUATION BASINS |
|  | PROPOSED STRUCTURAL PLANTING |  | PROPOSED CHILDREN'S NATURAL PLAY FEATURES |
|  | PROPOSED MOWN GRASS PATHS | | |
|  | PROPOSED WILDFLOWER MEADOWS | | |



Small cluster of homes
provided off Mill Lane

SuDS basin

Western part of the Site to be used for
ecological enhancements.

Figure 5.3: Bird's Eye Visual.



Existing mature tree to form a focal point to the development.

Access to be taken via a 4th arm off the roundabout to serve Pound Farm Development.

SuDS basin

New homes to aligned to facilitate a key view from the existing listed building.

5.3 CHARACTER AREAS

The proposals at the Site are made up of two development parcels, which, due to their location and context, will exhibit different characteristics.

Character Area 1: The Eastern Parcel

Character Area 1 (CA1) will form the main bulk of the development at the Site, as well as the main access from London Road, and the realignment of Mill Lane. The new homes will be constructed at an average gross density of around 20 dwellings per hectare (dph). Apartment typologies will be used within CA1, but will be sensitively designed so that they do not look dissimilar to the standard house typologies.

As the frontage with London Road forms the main entrance into this part of Hitchin from the south, it is important that the new homes present an attractive and welcoming entrance to the town. Therefore, the new homes located along the eastern edge of CA1 will be orientated to overlook London Road.

At the Site entrance, apartments will be used as gateway features, which will mark the entrance to the new development, whilst also contributing to traffic calming measures at the new roundabout.

The southern edge of the development parcel within CA1 will see the new homes orientated to overlook the open space to the south, whilst also being set behind new tree planting to soften the visual impact of the built form, particularly in views from the nearby listed building.

Finally, the existing mature trees found within CA1 will be retained within 'pocket parks', and will form key 'anchor features' within the development, assimilating the proposals into the existing context and adding a sense of maturity to the new neighbourhood.

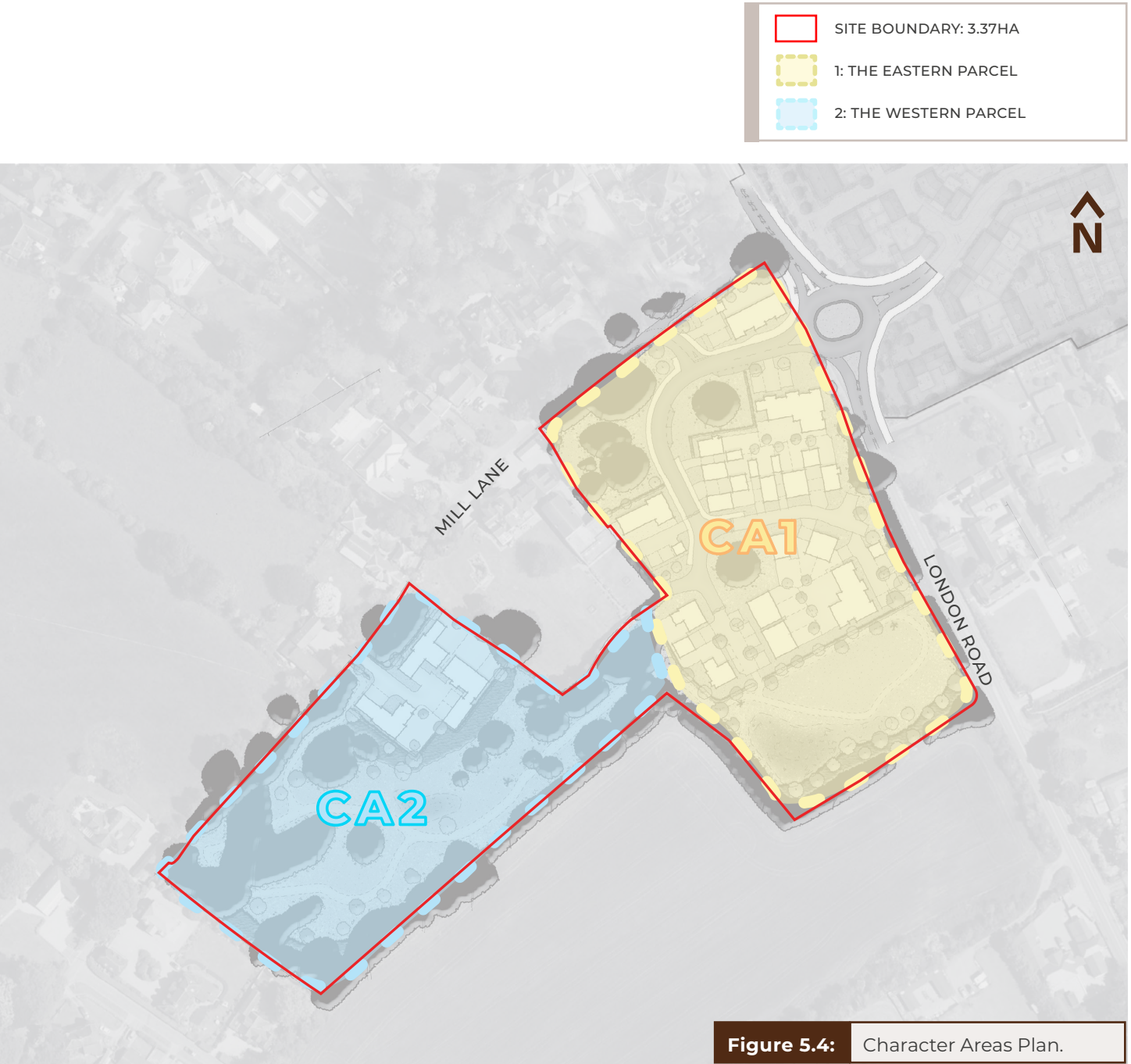
Character Area 2: The Western Parcel

Character Area 2 (CA2) makes up a small pocket of development which is accessed directly off Mill Lane.

A private access road leads to a small cluster of homes, which will be developed in a more rural arrangement that reflects the context of the existing properties along Mill Lane. Each home will possess additional parking spaces above the minimum standards to allow for visitor parking.

The new homes will be generally inward-facing, overlooking the courtyard-like parking arrangement, but also exhibiting active frontages and gable ends, particularly where fronting Mill Lane.

The south eastern edge of this cluster of homes within CA2 will be densely planted to provide a well-landscaped edge to the development. Beyond this planting to the south east and south west, the Site will be open to the public for dog walking and informal recreation, as it is currently (informally) used for.



5.4 LAND USE

1.03 hectares – up to 41 homes

The Site provides for up to 41 new homes. The new homes will comprise a broad range of house types, sizes and tenures to encourage the creation of a balanced community that meets the needs of the local community. The provision of affordable homes will be made at 50%, in line with the NPPF’s ‘Golden Rules’ on affordable housing provision for sites considered to be grey belt. At the detailed design stage, the affordable homes will be designed to assimilate seamlessly with the market homes. The overall residential development area measures 1.03 hectares. Overall, the development achieves an average density of 41 dwellings per hectare, which will provide varied residential environment, as well as making efficient use of land.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Architectural language to take reference from local context, using materials and forms that are recognisable to the area.
- New homes will be designed to positively address streets and spaces to maximise natural surveillance and create attractive aspects.
- A range of homes will be provided from detached and semi-detached homes through to terraces and apartments.
- Innovative designs for homes will allow home working to address work-from-home trends.

5.5 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

2.27 hectares incorporating a range of open space and children’s play typologies

A significant proportion of the Site will remain as green infrastructure to form a connected and accessible network of public open spaces. The green infrastructure equates to 66% of the total site area, and will provide a high quality setting for the Site. The green infrastructure provided on the Site includes Amenity Greenspace & Recreation, Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace, and Provision for Children and Young People.

The level of open space provision exceeds the standards set out within North Hertfordshire Open Space Review & Standards (2016), except for Provision for Children and Young People. 0.03 hectares (300m²) of children’s play provision will be provided for on-site, through the inclusion of a natural play trail through the areas of public open space. The remaining 0.026ha hectares (260m²) will be met byway of financial contribution, in line with Policy NE6 and NE5 part (b)(ii). Chapter 6: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity provides further information on the proposed green infrastructure and landscape strategy for the Site.

TYPOLOGY	STANDARDS (ha/1000 population)	REQUIREMENTS (based on 41 new homes/98.4 population)	PROVISION ON-SITE
Amenity Greenspace & Recreation	2	0.20	2.20 hectares, including SuDS basins.
Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace			
Provision for Children and Young People	0.57	0.056	0.03 hectares (300m ²)/4x natural play areas



- | | |
|--|---|
|  SITE BOUNDARY: 3.37HA |  SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEM FEATURE |
|  RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPABLE AREA |  OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE |
|  GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE |  CHILDREN'S NATURAL PLAY TRAIL |

5.6 SCALE AND MASSING

Building Heights

The Building Heights Plan sets out the upper limits of the proposed building heights at the Site. The building heights shown on Figure 5.6 have been carefully considered to respond to the assessed opportunities and influences of the Site and its context.

Although most of the homes at the Site will comprise 2 storey homes, in order to respect the setting of the Site and the scale of development in the local area, the Building Heights Plan does provide flexibility for some 2.5 storey homes located close to the Site entrance at London Road. It is envisaged that the taller buildings will be sensitively designed to form attractive gateway buildings at the Site entrance.

Elsewhere within the Site, 2 storey homes will be used. This is primarily to reflect the scale of the existing homes along London Road and Mill Lane, but also to minimise the visual impact of the new homes on the surrounding area. Along the southern edge of the eastern development area, the new homes, including the proposed apartment building, will be a maximum of 2 storeys in height, and will be designed so that the eaves of the roofs are along the developable edge, rather than the gables.

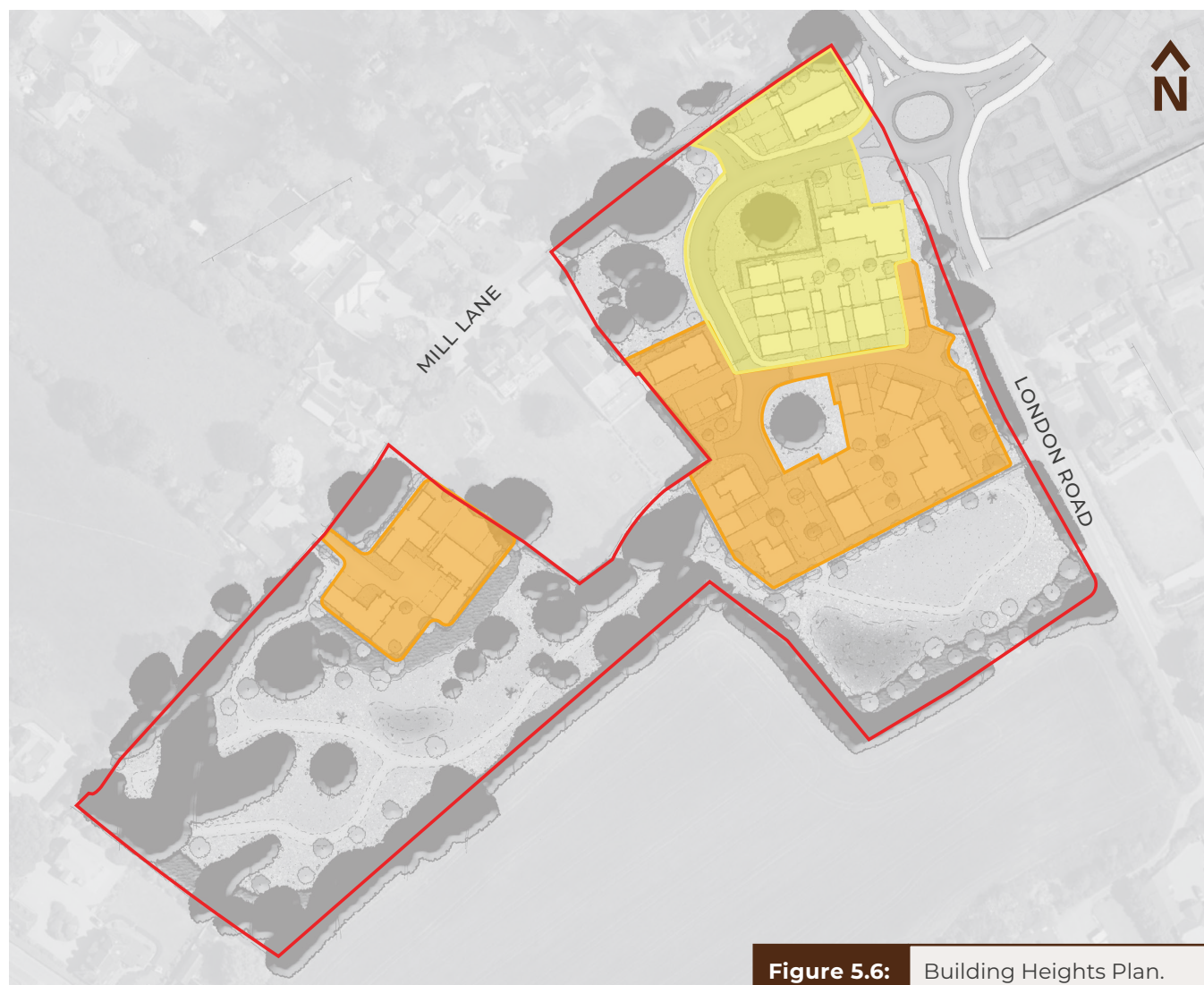
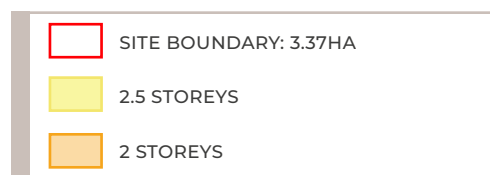


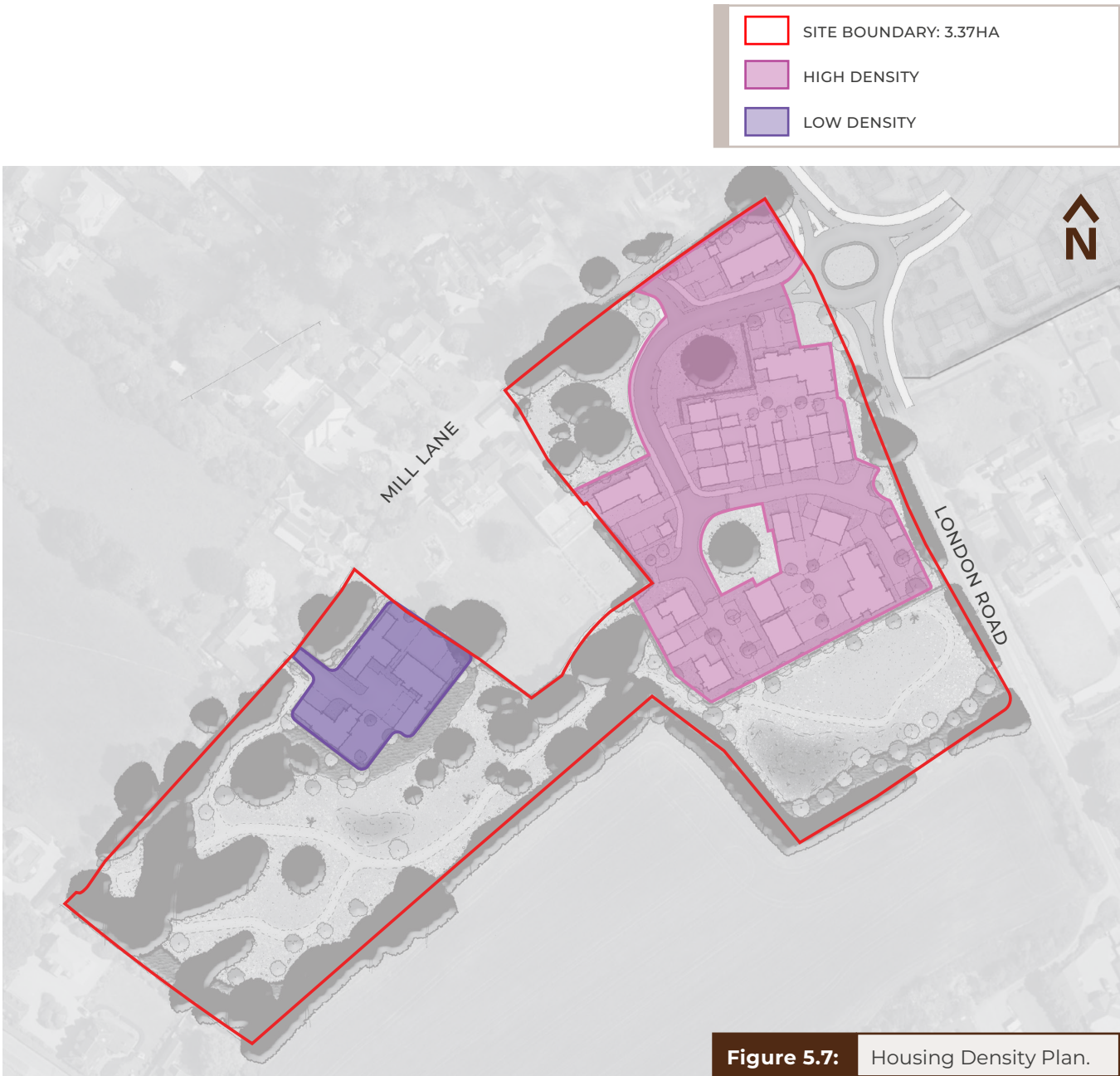
Figure 5.6: Building Heights Plan.

Density

The average density achieved across the Site is 41 dwellings per hectare (dph).

In the eastern part of the Site, the new homes will be constructed at a higher gross density of 20 dph. In order to achieve this higher density, a combination of different housing typologies, such as apartments, terraces, semi-detached and detached homes may be used.

The western parcel will be developed at a lower gross density of approximately 3 dph. As discussed in paragraph 5.3, the western parcel will be designed to achieve a more rural character which reflects the existing built form along Mill Lane. Therefore, the homes located within the western parcel will be larger typologies which are either detached or semi-detached.







SIX GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & BIODIVERSITY.

This chapter illustrates the proposed green infrastructure and landscape for Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin and summarises the approach to promoting biodiversity.

6.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

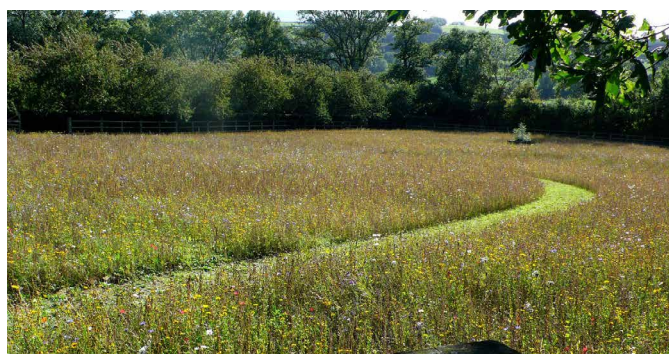
The green infrastructure strategy for the Site will be delivered in accordance with policies SP5: Countryside and Green Belt; SP9: Design and Sustainability; SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity; D1: Sustainable Design; NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure; NE2: Landscape; and NE6: New and Improved Open Space. Furthermore, it will be delivered in accordance with the NPPF's 'Golden Rules', requiring developments to provide accessible, high-quality public open spaces that go beyond local plan requirements.

Key Landscape Objectives

EXISTING TREE COVER: Retention of the majority of the existing trees and hedgerows found on Site. Some of the existing trees and hedgerows found within the north eastern part of the Site will require removal to facilitate the new access point into the Site, and some of the new homes which are located here.

MATURE TREES: The mature trees, such as T3, T15, T25 and T31 (as per Tree Survey: drawing BHA_6580_01) will be retained and will form key anchor features within the development to give it a sense of instant maturity.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE: In the eastern field, the southern extent will be retained as public open space in order to create a green edge to the development, and to retain views from the existing listed building across the field towards the west. Furthermore, new thicket and tree planting will be included along the south eastern Site boundary to provide a robust, well-landscaped edge to the development.



The western field will be largely retained as public open space, and the existing green nature of this part of the Site will be complemented through additional wildflower and shrub planting, along with the retention of the existing trees.

In line with the NPPF's 'Golden Rules' the new areas of public open space will be visually stimulating and attractive, well-designed and will meet the needs of existing and new residents alike.

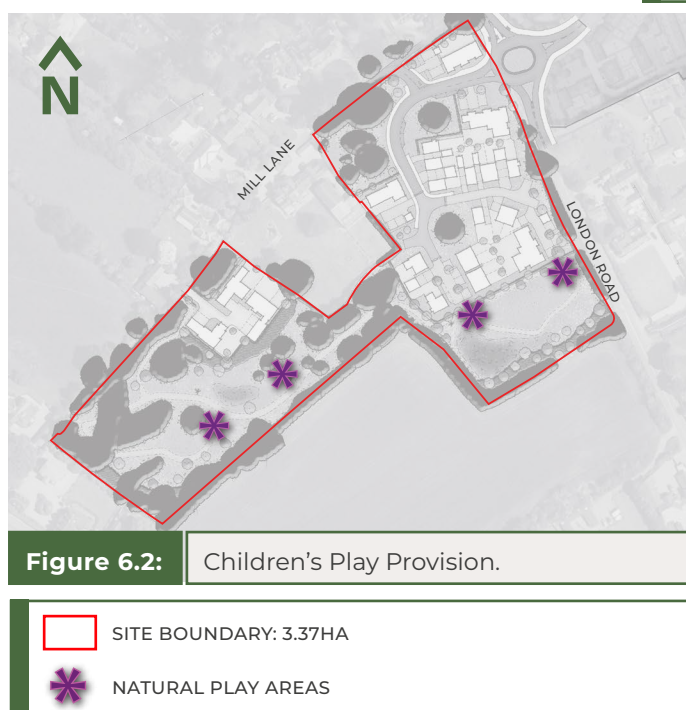
NEW TREE PLANTING: New native tree planting will be incorporated across the Site to enhance the new areas of public open space, and to soften the built form of development.

Along the southern edge of the development parcel in the eastern field, new tree planting will be provided to soften the impact of the new homes on views from the listed building, whilst simultaneously being arranged to facilitate the key views identified across the Site towards the west.

WILDFLOWER MEADOWS: New wildflower meadow planting will be incorporated into the areas of public open space, which will contribute to the development's setting, whilst also creating new habitat for wildlife.

RECREATIONAL ROUTES: As the Site is currently used informally by the public as a place to walk, new recreational routes have been provided which provide a link between London Road and the western end of Mill Lane through the Site. At the detailed design stage, some of these recreational routes may be left simply as mown grassed paths, rather than surfaced routes, particularly in the western field.





Children's Play Area

As discussed in paragraph 5.5, the open space standards for North Hertfordshire sets out that this development generates the need for 560m² of equipped children's play provision. It is considered appropriate, however, to provide a slight reduction in the overall quantitative standard, and meet the remainder of the requirements by way of financial contribution.

Therefore, 4x natural play areas will be provided within the Site's areas of public open space. Two will be located in the eastern field, overlooked by the new homes, and two will be provided in the western field, along the proposed recreational route. The layout of these natural play areas will create a 'play on the way' feature through the new areas of open space.

6.2 LONDON ROAD FRONTAGE

Character and Form

As discussed in paragraph 5.2, and elaborated on in paragraph 6.1, an area of public open space in the southern part of the eastern field will be provided, in order to set the development back and facilitate a key view from the listed building along London Road, Pound Farm.

It is important that when setting the development back, the layout, orientation and architectural detailing of the new homes is appropriate for the sensitive setting, and creates an attractive, outward looking development edge. The new homes should be arranged so that the eaves of the roofs sit adjacent to the open space, and that there is an appropriate level of fenestration on the southern facades of the new homes to ensure that there is natural surveillance over the area of open space.

The facing materials used along the London Road frontage should be reflective and complementary of Pound Farm. Pound Farm is constructed using red brick, with decorative brick panelling, end stacks and triple light casement sash windows and sits behind a red brick wall, and therefore these materials and design features should be reflected upon the new homes, where appropriate.

Finally, whilst the design and layout of the new homes should be sensitively incorporated to ensure it responds well to the setting, it is also proposed that new native tree planting will be provided along the development edge to soften the impact of the new homes, and to filter views of them from the listed building, and upon the approach into Hitchin from the south along London Road.



Figure 6.3: Artistic impression of London Road frontage.

FUNCTION

- Form a gateway into Hitchin from the south.
- Provide a green edge to the development.
- Facilitate a key view from the listed building (Pound Farmhouse) westwards across the Site.
- Provide space for informal recreation and children's play.
- Provide space for new thicket and tree planting, to create a robust, well-landscaped edge to the development.

FEATURES

- New homes to present a positive relationship with the listed building, the open space, and the gateway location into Hitchin.
- New tree planting to filter views of the new homes and soften the built form of the development.
- New natural play areas provide space for informal recreation and 'play on the way'.
- Seating areas to provide space for relaxation and socialising.

LOCATIONS

- Southern part of the eastern field.



6.3 ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY

Objectives

Biodiversity objectives for the Green Infrastructure (GI) proposals have been developed with consideration given to the following:

- Maintain and enhance the nature conservation value of retained habitats
- Mitigate any identified adverse effects of the development on the flora and fauna of the Site and its immediate environs
- Create and maintain new habitats within the development's green infrastructure

The Site comprises two fields of grassland interspersed with small areas of woodland and scrub. Habitats and species recorded within the Site which will be incorporated into the open space include the following.

Trees, Hedgerows, and Woodland

Tree cover is high in the Western field, with several areas of woodland, hedgerows, small tree groups, and individual trees, although the largest area of woodland is present in the eastern field. Where possible, these features will be retained, and new tree/hedge planting is planned for within and around the new development.

Birds

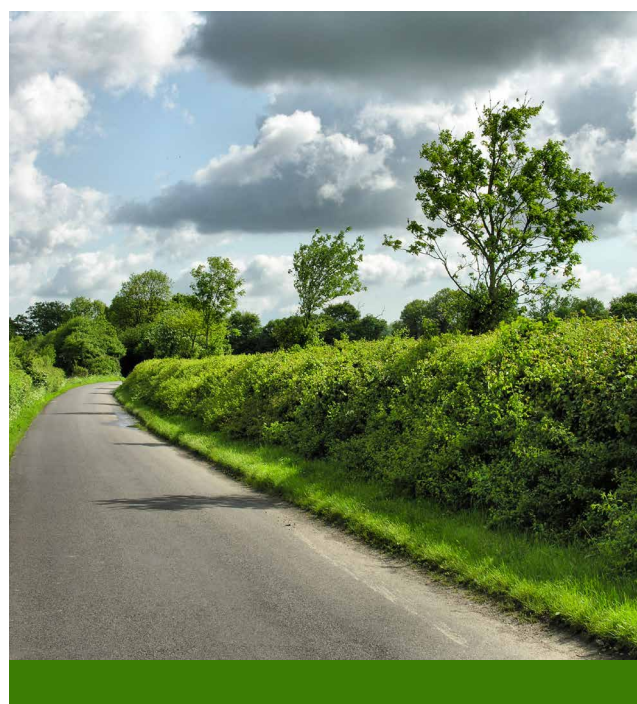
The Site provides nesting and foraging opportunities for a range of birds. The retention of much of the wooded habitats should keep the Site a suitable place for birds to continue to live.

Bats

Mature trees within the Site provide potential places for bats to roost, in addition to the foraging and commuting opportunities given by the hedgerows and grassland. These features aim to be retained as well as maintaining navigational routes through the Site for bats.



SuDS features to provide valuable wildlife resource



New tree and hedgerow planting to strengthen wildlife corridors

Biodiversity Net Gain

In accordance with the Environment Act (2021) and relevant local and national policy, the proposed scheme has been informed by and appraised against the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, making use of the most recently published calculation tools for both area (habitat) and linear (hedgerow) units.

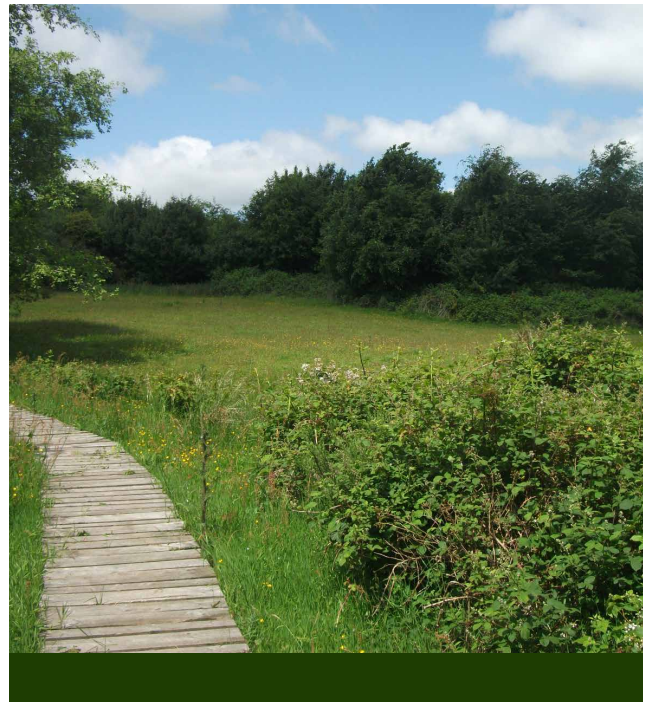
Most of the habitats making up the Site including grassland, woodland, and hedgerows are of medium-high distinctiveness as defined by the Biodiversity Metric, meaning that the baseline value of the Site is high comparative to its size. Losses to these habitats has been limited as far as practicable but offset will be needed off-site as mitigation.

Because there are few low distinctiveness habitats on-Site, most vegetation is planned to be retained in the open space. Some habitat creation is proposed in the new native thicket and tree/hedge planting, however.

Overall, the scheme will deliver in excess of 10% in biodiversity units across the Site and off-Site mitigation and will be appropriately secured by condition and implementation of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).



Retained hedgerows provide navigational features and foraging opportunities for bats



Connected network of open spaces provide wildlife corridors