

5. Consultation

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

- 5.3 The design team presented the evolving scheme to the Design South East Review Panel ('DRP') in early May 2024. The review included a site visit, and then discussions on the key principles of the masterplan.
- 5.4 The key recommendations from the DRP were:

1. Clarify the vision for the character, identity, and structure of this new place, informed by contextual analysis, public engagement, and the site's natural assets.

2. Develop a truly landscape-led scheme by reinforcing the existing green corridors and allowing the topographical, ecological, and hydrological features of the site to structure the masterplan layout.

3. Identify opportunities and constraints related to the site's heritage and landscape assets, including views, and ensure that these are embedded in the masterplan so as not to be lost in later stages of design development.

4. Remove the highways-dominated design of the loop road and prioritise the provision of direct and convenient active travel routes to destinations within and beyond the site boundary to improve the connectivity of the site and to encourage sustainable mode shift.

5. Engage with appropriate organisations, such as the wildlife trusts, to develop an active management strategy to retain and enhance the Ancient Woodland while offering appropriate access to the public.

6. Explore how a stronger sense of place could be achieved by densifying the northwestern half of the site and co-locating civic elements to create a 'village heart' that is complemented by the attractive landscape at Dell's Spring.

7. Identify the privacy and function of each proposed green space to clarify the strategy for public recreation across the site, taking account of topography and realistic assessment of the size of required sustainable drainage system (SuDS) features.

8. Retain and protect Dell Spring as an unspoilt landscape area to reduce the impact on the setting of Tilekiln Farm.'
- 5.5 The design team considered the comments from the DRP, and a follow-up meeting was held with the Council to consider the suggestions. Some of the suggestions were not achievable, while others helped to further shape the masterplan to focus on the unique character of the Site. In limited instances we did not agree with the suggestions made by the DRP, as we have the benefit of a very thorough understanding of the Site's technical constraints, as well as other matters such as land ownership and concerns raised by the Council's highways team. Some of the suggestions related to elements which will be considered further and designed in detail at a later stage.

5.6 The final masterplan incorporates much of the comments and suggestions made by the DRP, and the resultant masterplan now better reflects the landscape within which the Site it is located, whilst also ensuring active travel routes are more direct, convenient and attractive.

5.7 Specific design responses include:

• Green corridors strengthened to form the primary structure of the development.

• The spine road corridor has been redesigned, creating more variety in the location of the cycle paths and cycleways, and verges and tree planting, in order to create areas of differing character, while reducing the dominant appearance of the spine street on the plan.

• The northern part of the Site is proposed to be more dense to help create a central area of focus at Dell Spring, the Community Hall, and Primary School.

• The allotments have been moved to the Community Hub, to create a greener heart to the development and to be more accessible.

• The western SuDS basin has been redesigned to serve as an area of usable public open space, with amenity grass in the bottom of the basin.

• The emergency access has been moved away from Dell Spring to protect the landscape character and setting of Tilekiln Farm.

• The proposed landscape treatment of the spaces has been reconsidered, to create more usable amenity areas where one could kick a ball.
-
- ▲ Figure 5.2 - Emerging parameters presented to the Design Review Panel

5. Consultation

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

- 5.8 A public exhibition and consultation event was held at the Great Ashby Community Centre in late May 2024, where the emerging proposals were presented to the public via information boards. Members of the design team were on hand to answer questions and hear comments.
- 5.9 The event was attended by around 109 visitors and 156 feedback forms and email comments were received.
- 5.10 Most of the comments made by the public related to the principle of development, and many had not been aware that the site had been allocated for residential development. Many noted the lack of medical facilities in the area, or the difficulty getting a doctor or dentist appointment.
- 5.11 There were also many comments in relation to the local highway network, and queries on the proposed access design. The design team explained that the scheme was designed to maximise active and public travel, and that the Highways Authority were being consulted at every stage of the design process.

FURTHER STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

- 5.12 The applicant team had written to several community groups and other interested parties, offering them the opportunity to discuss the proposals.
- 5.13 The design team met with members of the Great Ashby Community Council at a meeting in early June 2024, to discuss the proposals and answer questions.
- 5.14 The key concern raised by the Community Council again related to the local highways capacity, and the lack of local services and facilities (such as doctors and hospital spaces).
- 5.15 The design team shared the findings of their preliminary highways and transport assessments with the Community Council, and will continue to respond to any queries ahead of the submission of the planning application.
- 5.16 The design team also noted that the use of the proposed Community Building was not fixed, and that it could be used as a medical centre, should the local NHS Trust deem it a suitable, necessary, and a viable location.



▲ Information on the proposals was shown to the public at the exhibition

5. Consultation

PRE-APPLICATION MEETINGS

- 5.17 A number of pre-application meetings have been held with officers from NHBC and HCC, covering a number of topics including:
- Illustrative Site Layout and Character Areas
 - Green Infrastructure
 - Sustainable Transport
 - Built Form, Sustainability and Energy Strategy and Affordable Housing
 - Site Access
 - Social Infrastructure.
- 5.18 There were a number of comments received during the various meetings that took place. A summary of the key issues raised are listed below:
- the parking strategy for the Site, including garage dimensions and the use of tandem spaces;
 - the location of the community hub;
 - the management of increased pedestrian movement in woodland areas;
 - the relationship between the proposals and neighbouring heritage assets, particularly Tilekiln Farm;
 - providing larger landscape buffers incorporated within bat corridors;
 - play area locations;
 - building heights and typologies;
 - access and road details, including the emergency access.
- 5.19 Updates to the Site masterplan and the provision of further information through additional Parameter Plans and detailed highway access drawings, has allowed for the issues raised to be addressed as part of the ongoing design work in support of the emerging proposals.
- 5.20 The development proposals are in compliance with the GA2 Strategic Masterplan Part 2: Design Framework, that was presented to councillors and endorsed on 29 November 2024.

HERTS AND MIDDLESEX BADGER GROUP

- 5.21 Key members of the design team, including the Ecologist, met with members of the Badger Group in early June 2024, and again in May 2025 to discuss the proposals.
- 5.22 The Group were happy to hear that the Ancient Woodlands would be retained, and also made some suggestions as to how the scheme could be amended to better benefit badgers. The design team explained that, while the badger population on the Site is no doubt important, their concerns in relation to badgers had to be balanced with other ecological concerns and mitigation measures, alongside the need to accommodate the built development.
- 5.23 Nevertheless, the design team took their comments into consideration, including areas of wildflower grass near the badger sets, as well as within the wider development, to benefit badger habitat. Further mitigation measures will be designed into the scheme at the detailed design stage, as set out further on in this document.

CONCLUSION ON CONSULTATION

- 5.24 The submission follows an intensive and wide-ranging public consultation process undertaken over the past 24 months. This has included meetings and correspondence with local stakeholders and community groups, a public exhibition held at the local community centre, and a dedicated project website providing information and online feedback forms. The proposals have also been discussed at Project Board meetings with local members and officers, reviewed by a Design Review Panel of independent experts, and debated at Full Council, which subsequently approved the overall Master Plan for the site.
- 5.25 156 feedback forms have been received through a dedicated live website which gives information on the development proposals, and a response to this feedback is summarised in the Statement of Community Involvement submitted with the Application.
- 5.26 The project team have worked to address concerns and comments raised by community stakeholders in the revised proposals, with measures including:
- Further traffic modelling and surveys to further analyse potential congestion issues, rat running and parking dislocation with identified mitigants – all shown in the traffic assessment that accompanies the planning application;

- Off-site highway improvements to existing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways in the wider area for the benefit of the wider community;
- Means of access corridor – the gateway park concept proposes a safe and enjoyable place with travel blended with attractive amenities and open space, whilst preserving ecological connectivity;
- Community Hub – relocation of allotments next to the Community Hub and preserving flexibility for the community building to host multiple functions from healthcare to retail and sports/recreation, to suit the future needs of the local community – positioned next to the primary school to create a focal point of the development;
- Ecology and habitat mitigations – coordination between our ecologist and the local associations, with all possible impacts carefully addressed in the Environmental Statement;
- Retainment or strengthening of ecological corridors limiting intrusions to the unavoidable;
- Central open space running under existing overhead powerlines providing new habitat corridor in existing arable land, including orchard, trees, SuDS and scrub habitat;
- Landscape treatment of open spaces to make them usable and attractive, and redistribution of play areas, demonstrated in the Masterplan;
- Sustainability targets increased to make the development more environmentally sound and ambitious in adopting new technologies – as shown in the Sustainability Statement accompanying the Application; and
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will include detailed strategies for managing risks such as dust, noise, traffic and waste and provide a specific framework to follow during construction to protect the environment and the local community has been prepared, following concerns about disruption during the construction phase being raised by local residents.

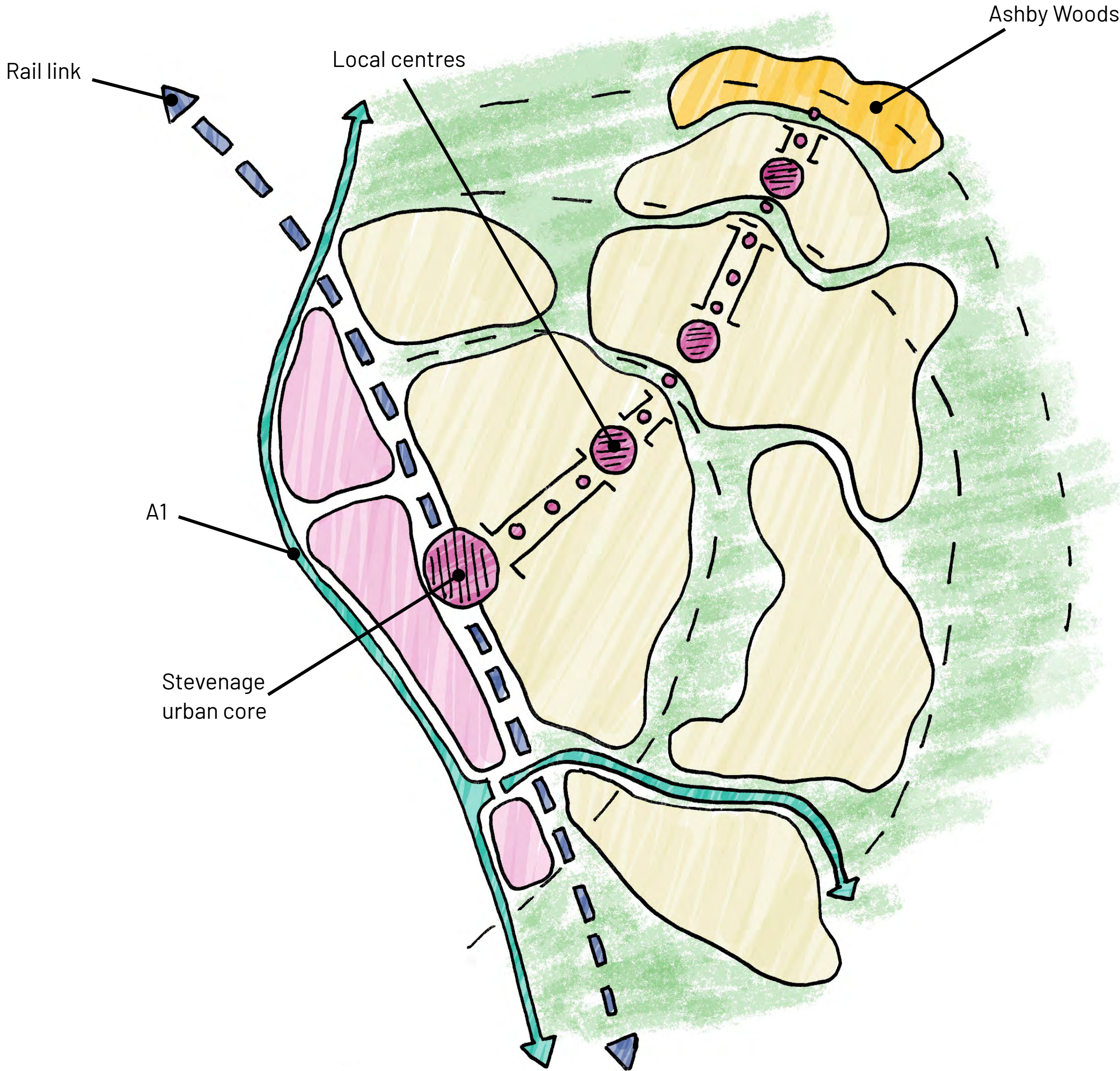
Vision and Principles



6. Vision and Principles

STRATEGIC VISION

- 6.1 The proposal will deliver a rural-edge neighbourhood that will be designed to provide an attractive edge to the built settlement, whilst also forming the gateway to the countryside. It will enhance the existing access and connections to the wider network of footpaths and public rights of way.
- 6.2 Ashby Woods will also continue the settlement form and character of Stevenage, and its well-connected network of neighbourhoods at St Nicholas and Bedwell, providing easy access to Stevenage town centre’s services and railway station.
- 6.3 These neighbourhoods have their own individual character and identity, whilst forming part of the larger settlement. Ashby Woods will therefore offer village living, with the convenience of easy links and access to the wide range of services within Stevenage.
- 6.4 Active travel, including walking and cycling, and public transport, will be prioritised within the design of the development to provide the key links between Ashby Woods and the wider neighbourhoods.

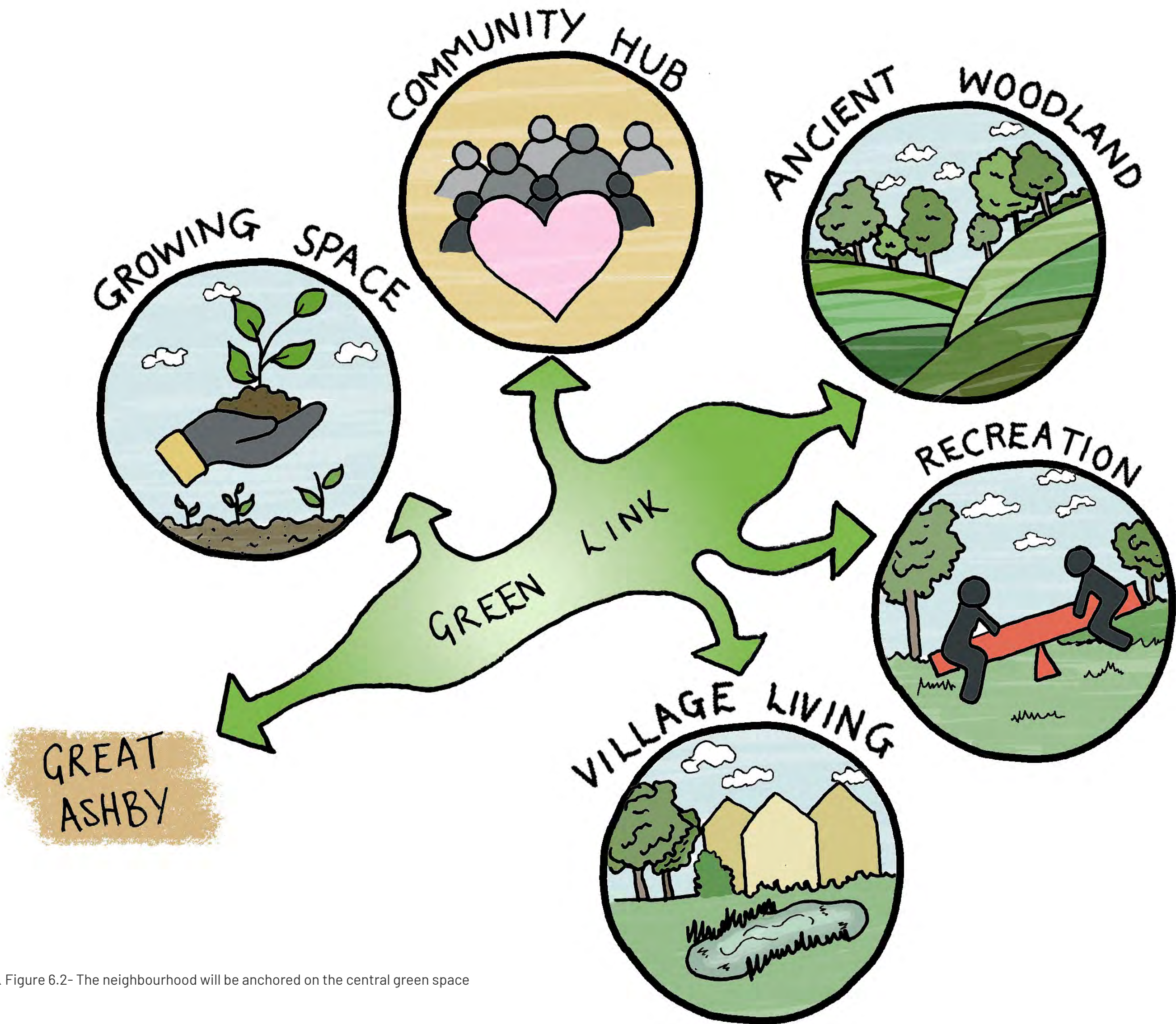


▲ Figure 6.1 - The development will continue the settlement form of Stevenage, forming a further key neighbourhood with it's own character, set within the woodland

6. Vision and Principles

VISION FOR GA2

- 6.5 Ashby Woods will be a landscape-led development, designed around a central green space that will offer enhanced connections between Great Ashby and the open countryside, through a series of activated open spaces and landscape features.
- 6.6 The proposal will deliver a range of dwellings and family homes set within attractive green landscapes and among Ancient Woodland. The Hub of the community will be formed around a new primary school, a community hall, and allotments, attractively located next to the open space at Dell Spring.
- 6.7 The Community Hub and Central Green Space will be connected by green corridors, with further green corridors leading to the various housing areas. All homes will be within a very short walk of public open spaces.
- 6.8 Ashby Woods will be a neighbourhood where nature and green spaces sit side by side with new homes, allowing residents the convenience of proximity to services, whilst also providing the attractiveness of the countryside and open spaces.



▲ Figure 6.2- The neighbourhood will be anchored on the central green space

6. Vision and Principles

KEY PRINCIPLES

6.9 The identified opportunities and influences, alongside the initial consultation with the Council, as well as good design and sustainability principles, have allowed a set of key principles to be identified, which will be incorporated within the proposed development and deliver the vision of the proposed development at the Site. In this section, these key principles are identified, and it is demonstrated how the proposed layout has evolved to incorporate these.

Retention and Enhancement of Landscape Features

6.10 The existing woodland, trees and hedgerows form the framework for the Site, within which the new 'place' will be created. This will be anchored on the open space created within the pylon corridor, which will form the central spine of the development. The removal of areas of woodland under the pylons is necessary, in order to create a suitable access to the Site. Further sections of hedgerow will require removal in order to facilitate movement between the various fields within the Site. The larger, good quality trees will be retained wherever possible, although there is a single pinch point where a higher quality tree will require removal to facilitate proposed movement routes. Some sections of hedgerow are also likely to require removal, although the proposals will incorporate large new areas of on and off-site native planting.

6.11 The Ancient Woodland will be retained with a minimum 15m off-set from the woodland, which will be landscaped to enhance the quality and diversity of the woodland areas. New planting will be incorporated along the north eastern boundary, to create a clear edge to the settlement, and an appropriate transition to the adjoining countryside.

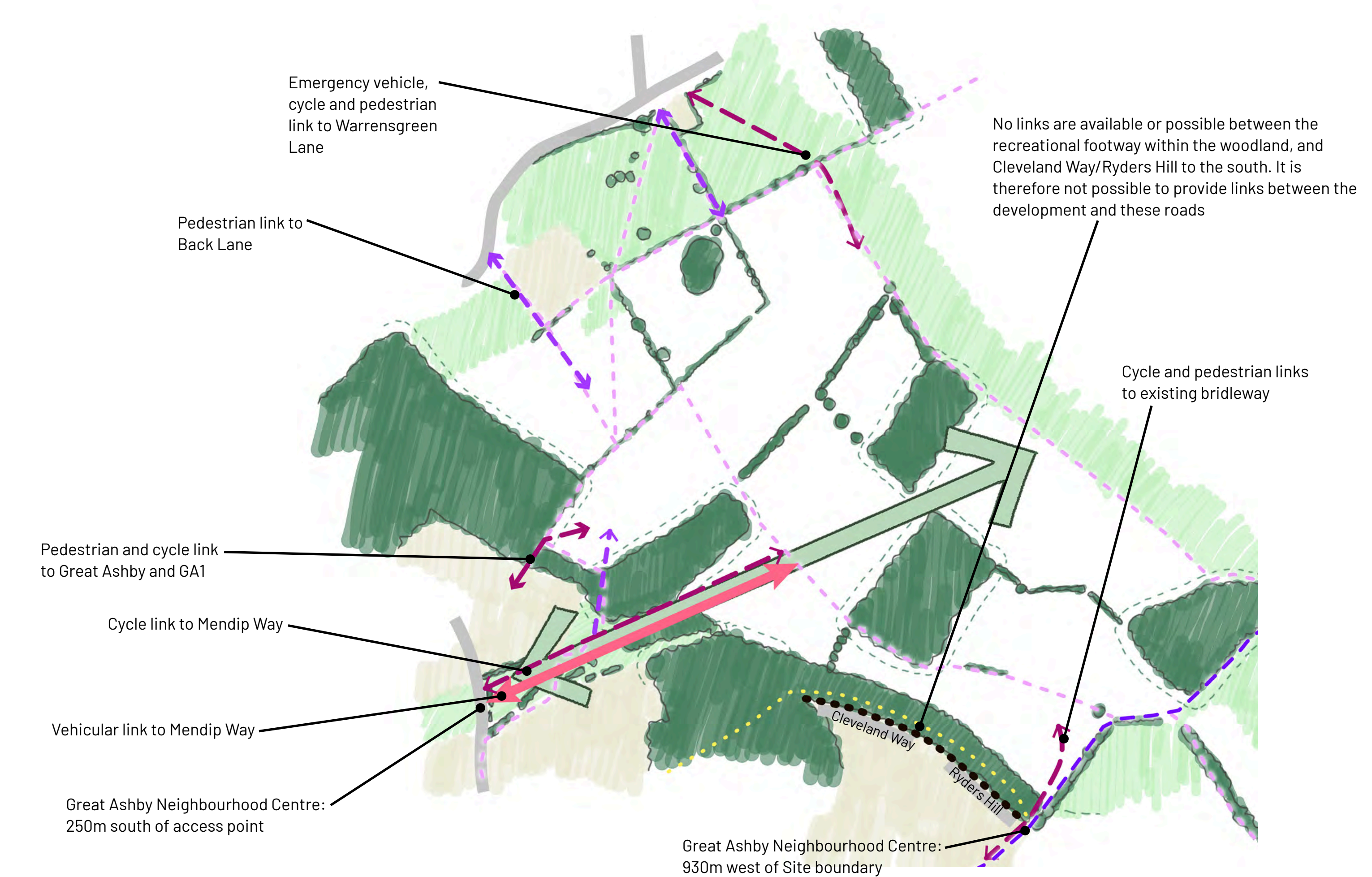


▲ Figure 6.3 - Retention and enhancement of landscape features

6. Vision and Principles

Integration with Great Ashby and GA1

6.12 As part of the sustainable movement network, pedestrian and cycle links will be created between the new and existing areas of Great Ashby. This will allow easy movement for new and existing residents to the school and multi-use centre within the development, as well as easy access to the Great Ashby neighbourhood centre and the facilities within it. It will also encourage the new and existing residents to mix, and for the new development to become a natural part of the wider Great Ashby community. This includes upgrading the existing public footpath to Merrick Close, to become a footpath and cycleway, which will also serve as an active travel route to GA1.



▲ Figure 6.4 - A vehicular link, as well as pedestrian and cycle links will be created to access Great Ashby

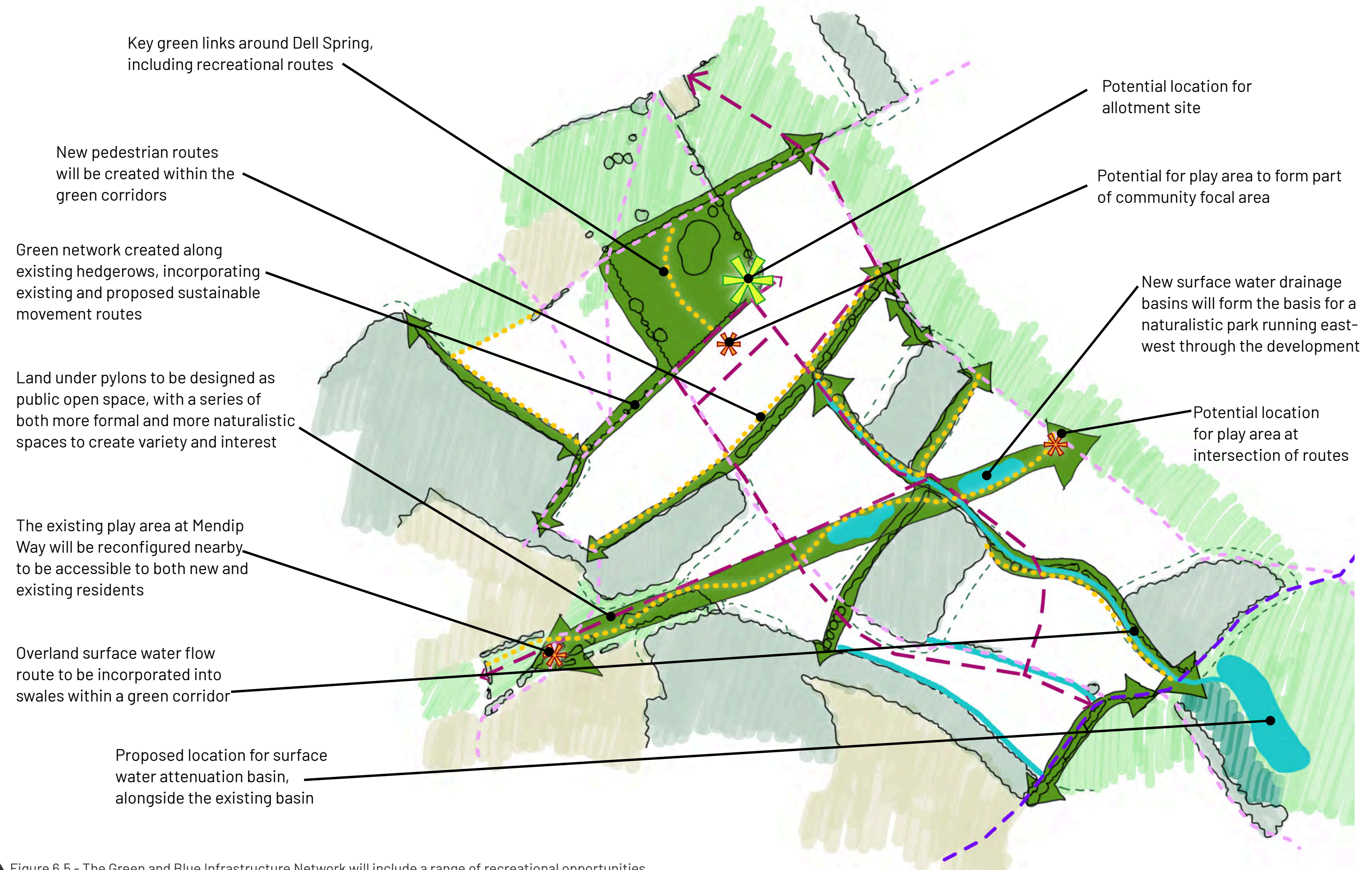
Connected Green and Blue Infrastructure Network

6.13 The existing landscape framework will form the core of a connected network of green open spaces. Within these open spaces and corridors, the proposed surface water drainage features will also be located within the green corridors, as will pedestrian and cycle routes. These corridors will connect the various parts of the development, allowing easy walking and cycling routes alongside green spaces. New planting will also be incorporated in these corridors, to benefit wildlife and to create an attractive environment, ensuring a connected network of habitats as well as movement routes for wildlife.

6.14 The central part of the Site lies under the overhead electricity lines, and will form a key part of this green network. A new community park will be created here, alongside new drainage features to manage the surface water run-off from the development.

Recreation and Play

6.15 The new neighbourhood will offer a range of outdoor recreational areas, for both passive and active recreation. New recreational walking and cycling routes will be incorporated within the development, and equipped children's play areas will be located within easy reach of the new homes. An area of allotments will also be provided to enhance the range of recreational options. New, more formal areas of park will be created, as well as areas which are more natural in character, to allow for a range of uses and experiences by new and existing residents.



▲ Figure 6.5 - The Green and Blue Infrastructure Network will include a range of recreational opportunities

6. Vision and Principles

Social Infrastructure

- 6.16 To ensure the new community have the facilities and services they require on a day to day basis within easy reach, the development includes a site for a new primary school, as well as land reserved for educational uses. It is expected that the primary school will be built relatively early in the development phases, and further adjoining land is to be reserved for potential educational use at a later stage. The exact location of these are considered in more detail later on in this document.

6.17 The proposals also include a site for a mixed-use community building. At this stage, the exact uses within the building are not known, although it could take the form of a Community Hall, which is multi-use, and which could include for some indoor sports uses (table tennis, dance classes, yoga etc.), as well as meeting spaces, performance uses, and coworking space, for example. The building could include a café, or even a small community shop. This building will be located close to the primary school, to create a Community Hub, or focus to the neighbourhood, around which daily life could be centred. Should it prove feasible, the building could also be designed and used as a doctor’s surgery.

Housing Variety

- 6.18 While the proposals are in outline, the development will include a range of house types, sizes and tenures, to ensure a varied and integrated community, with a choice of dwellings to suit. The development will include flats, as well as starter and family homes. A proportion of the dwellings will be Lifetime Standard Homes, to allow people of various ages and abilities to live in the area.

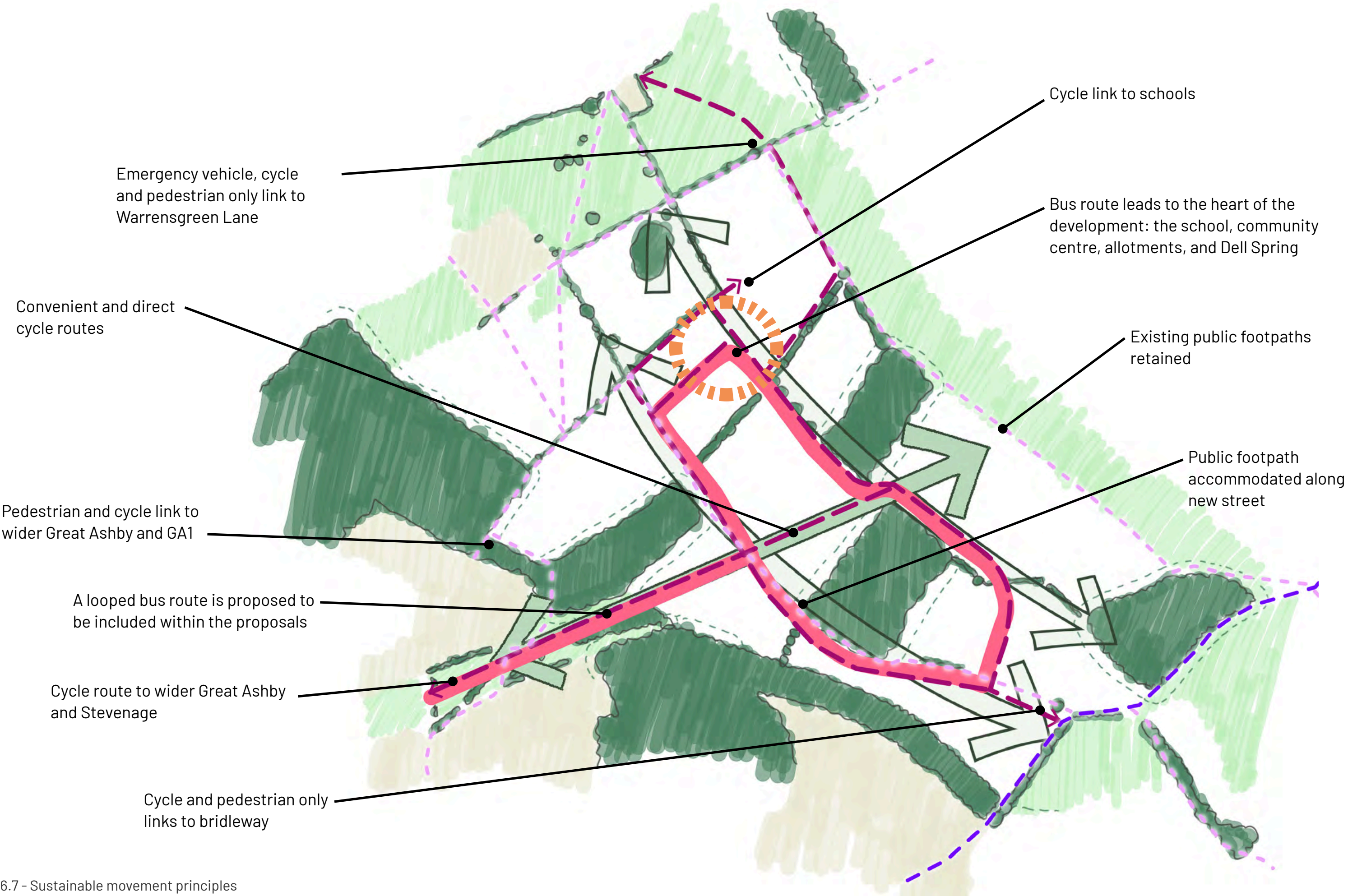


▲ Figure 6.6 - A variety of house types, as well as community facilities will be included within the development

6. Vision and Principles

Sustainable Movement Network

- 6.19 The development will be designed to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, with vehicles accommodated alongside these. To that end, a series of cycle routes and links will be designed into the layout, which will lead to the areas people want to go. These will be safe, overlooked, and direct.
- 6.20 Pedestrian links will also be provided through the Site and to the adjoining areas. New footways will be provided alongside the majority of the streets within the development, and the smaller streets and lanes will be designed to be shared by pedestrians and cars, with pedestrians given priority.
- 6.21 A bus route is proposed to be incorporated within the development, which will lead through the Site to and from Great Ashby neighbourhood centre and beyond. The bus route will form the main movement route within the development, and all the new homes will be within easy access of this main street. Bus stops will be located within three key areas in the development, to ensure that the new homes are within a short walk of the bus stops. The bus route should lead into the heart of the development where the school, Community Hall, allotments and Dell Spring are located, emphasising this area as a core meeting space.

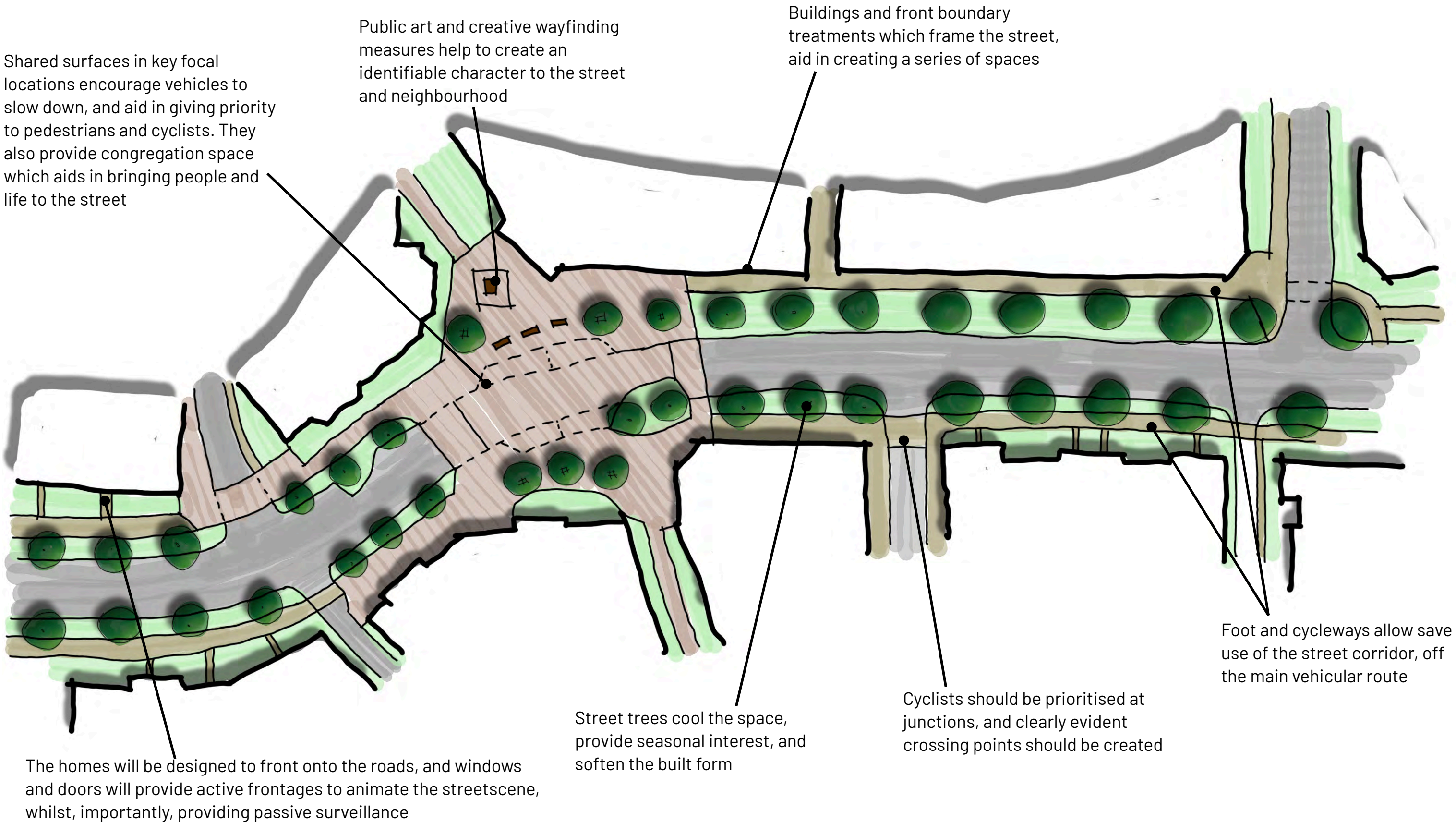


▲ Figure 6.7 - Sustainable movement principles

6. Vision and Principles

Streets as spaces

6.22 As set out earlier, the streets will be designed to allow easy walking and cycling throughout the development. The new houses will front onto the street, providing passive surveillance to create a safer street. Avenues with street trees will be created along the main street, and the street will pass through spaces which have different characters, including shared space squares and pocket parks. The main street will form a core space within the development, where people will move and meet other people within the neighbourhood.



▲ Figure 6.8 - The streets will be designed to form spaces where people feel safe, and which can become attractive congregation and movement areas

6. Vision and Principles

Character Areas

6.23 To ensure a neighbourhood that is easy to navigate and that reflects and respects its context, a variety of character areas will be created within the development. Within the various character areas, the streets, house types, massing, materials and landscaping will be designed to ensure a variety of characters and spaces are created. In some parts of the development, very specific design interventions will be required to respond to landscape or heritage sensitivities, for example. In other areas, the design may be specific in order to create a more civic, shared space. At the detailed design stage, the homes and spaces will be designed to reflect these specific character areas.

A development rich in character can be created by utilising an appropriate design response to the specific opportunities and constraints of the various parts of the Site, such as the nearby heritage assets, or the main movement corridor

The development will gain a specific sense of place, when appropriate design solutions are employed to respect the existing or surrounding character of the Site



▲ Figure 6.9 - Individual character areas will respond to the identified opportunities and constraints of the Site, to create a sense of place which is unique this setting

Development Proposals



7. Development Proposals

- 7.1

The Illustrative Masterplan opposite shows the location and extent of the proposed land uses of the development, the accesses and links to the development, and the retained and proposed structural vegetation. It shows the results of the design development process.
- 7.2

The Illustrative Masterplan shows the key elements of the proposed development:

 - 640 dwellings within 21.3ha of residential development land;
 - A 2.1ha site for a primary school and a further 1.9ha of reserved land for educational uses;
 - A site for a Community Hall, and new allotments;
 - 36.63ha of green infrastructure, including the retained woodland, hedgerows, trees and Dell Spring, as well as large new areas of open space and planting;
 - A Sustainable Drainage System (‘SuDS’) to manage surface water run-off; and
 - Vehicular access off Mendip Way, alongside several cycle and pedestrian links into the Site.
- 7.3

The Illustrative Masterplan shows one way in which the development can be delivered, in line with the Parameter Plans which will fix some principles, and Framework Plans providing additional guidance. The sketches in Section 9 show how the new dwellings, uses and open spaces could be accommodated on the Site, whilst ensuring an attractive and functional development, which achieves the vision and displays the key principles developed through the design process. However, the Illustrative Masterplan shows just one way in which the development could be designed.
- 7.4

Instead, it is the Parameter and Framework Plans which set out the design principles and solutions that need to be adhered to and achieved by the detailed design for the development. The Reserved Matters applications will need to show how they adhere to, or achieve the principles set out in this section.

- Site Boundary
- Housing development
- Potential location for self-build plots
- Open Space
- Proposed Allotments
- Streets, with cycleways and footways
- Shared surfaces/key squares
- Public footpath
- Rerouted section of PF11 across road
- Bridleway
- Potential emergency access
- Pedestrian links
- Pedestrian and cycle links
- Unmade woodland pedestrian routes
- Existing bus route and stop
- Existing woodland, hedgerows and trees retained
- Ancient Woodland
- Existing vegetation to be removed
- Proposed trees
- Proposed native woodland planting
- Proposed native thicket planting
- Proposed hedgerow
- Proposed ornamental planting
- Proposed meadow/long grassland
- Existing drainage basin
- Existing watercourse, ditches and ponds
- Proposed swales and drainage basins
- Wildlife pond
- Children's play area
- Pylons and overhead powerlines
- Existing play areas
- Historic quarry
- Grade II* Listed Buildings



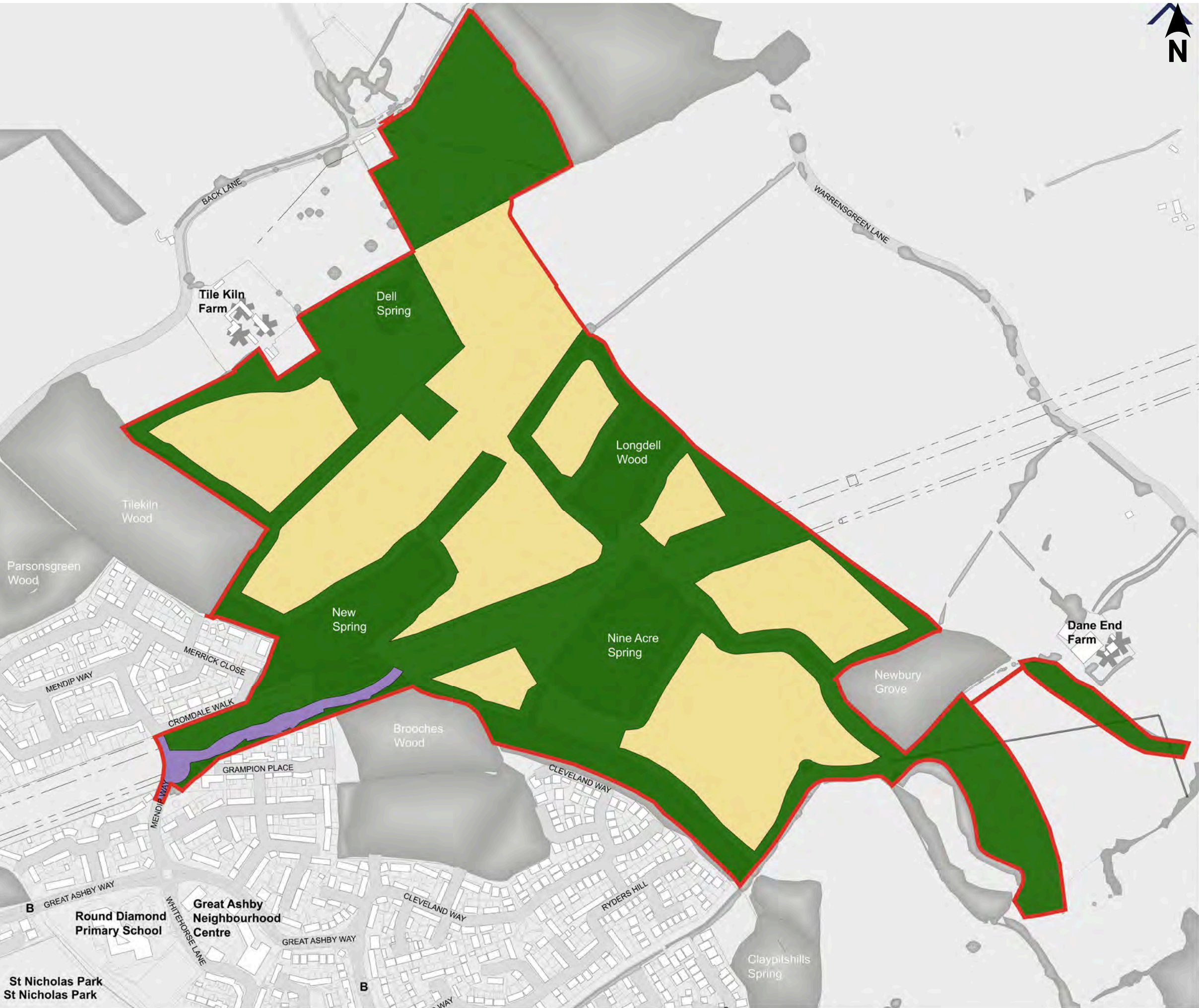
▲ Figure 7.1 - The Illustrative Masterplan

7. Development Proposals

DEVELOPABLE AREA

- 7.5 The proposals will provide built development areas totalling 25.50ha, which will include all physical development across the Site.
- 7.6 Areas of Green Infrastructure can incorporate elements such as access streets, play areas, turning areas, small areas of incidental parking, active travel routes, elements and structures associated with allotments, and drainage basins. No dwellings or garages will be located within the areas of Green Infrastructure.
- 7.7 The Access Corridor forms part of the full application, and is therefore identified on this plan.

- Application Boundary: 62.93ha
- Built development areas: 25.50ha
- Green Infrastructure: 36.63ha
- Detailed Access Corridor: 0.80ha



▲ Figure 7.2 - Developable Area Parameter Plan

7. Development Proposals

LAND USE AND AMOUNT

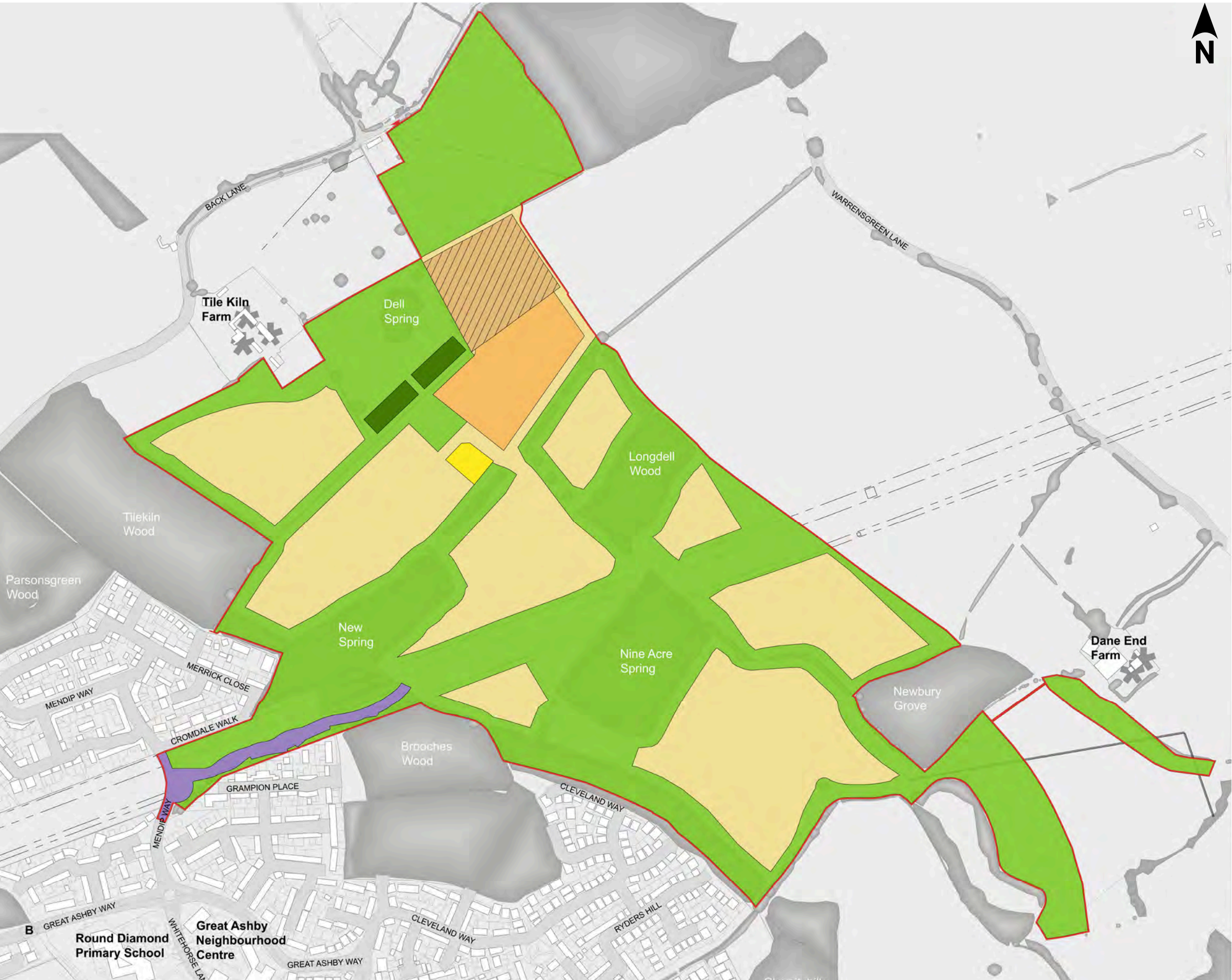
7.8 The proposals are for the following uses:

- Residential development and associated roads: **21.30ha**
- Primary School Site: **2.1ha**
- Reserved land for education: **0.9ha**
- Community Use Area: **0.20ha**
- Green Infrastructure (incl. allotments and movement links): **36.63ha**
- Allotments: **0.43ha**
- Detailed Access Corridor: **0.80ha**

Residential

- 7.9 The proposals are for up to 640 dwellings, which equates to a density of 30 dph. The amount of dwellings proposed is higher than that set out within Policy SP18, which noted ‘approximately 600 dwellings’. However, several of the other allocated development sites within North Hertfordshire are not able to deliver their full allocation of housing, and there will therefore be a need to accommodate that shortfall elsewhere. This Site offers an opportunity to accommodate some of those additional dwellings. The Design Review Panel also recommended higher densities in a site like this given its size, nature and characteristics
- 7.10 The proposals include 40% affordable housing. At the detailed design stage, the development will be designed to provide a range of types and sizes of dwellings, and the exact mix will be agreed with the Council and be in line with policy requirements. Housing is likely to include a mix of flats, terraces, semi-detached and detached properties. Affordable dwellings will be located in small groups scattered across the development, and will be designed to be indistinguishable from the market housing.
- 7.11 At least 50% of the houses will be built to M4(2) Accessible and Adoptable standard, as required by Policy HS5.
- 7.12 The proposals include for 6 self-build plots, the exact location of which will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 7.13 A range of ‘meanwhile uses’ could be accommodated within the development during the building phases, such as temporary tree nurseries located within areas which will be developed at a later stage. This will be considered further during the Reserved Matters stage.

- Residential development: 21.30ha
- Site for Primary School: 2.10ha
- Reserved education use land: 1.9ha
- Community Use Area: 0.20ha
- Green Infrastructure: 36.63ha (incl. allotments and movement links)
- Proposed Allotments: 0.43ha
- Detailed Access Corridor: 0.80ha



▲ Figure 7.3 – Land Use Parameter Plan

7. Development Proposals

Education

- 7.14 Continued consultation with the education authority has confirmed the requirement for a 2-form entry primary school site of 2.1ha, and an area of land of 1.9ha reserved for potential future educational uses. The site for the school will be provided within the first phase of development, to allow the school to be built at any stage of development, as required by the education authority. The Illustrative Masterplan shows how new cycle and pedestrian routes are designed to provide access to the school from both within the development, as well as from the wider Great Ashby area.
- 7.15 In the case that the reserved educational land is no longer required by the education authority, it is proposed to utilise the land for further low density housing, up to 2 storeys in height.



▲ A site for a primary school will be provided

Community Hall

- 7.16 Policy SP18 requires neighbourhood-level facilities to be provided, of approximately 500m² (net) of retail and food and beverage floorspace and other necessary medical and social infrastructure. Through consultation with the Council and other stakeholders, it has been considered that a local shop would not be viable, due to the small-scale of the development and the proximity of the existing shop at the Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre. A multi-use building and site is therefore proposed within the development. This would take the form of a multi-use community hall, which could allow for community activities, meetings, or events. Should it prove feasible and necessary, part of this site and building could be used for healthcare provision purposes, should the NHS trust deem it a suitable location. It is envisaged that the hall will be designed in accordance with the guidance set by Sports England for Village and Community Halls.



▲ A Community Hall will link to a civic space at the school and Dell Spring, creating a central Community Hub

Green Infrastructure

- 7.17 The Green Infrastructure network within the development will be designed to be multi-functional. It includes the areas of retained vegetation, the proposed SuDS swales and basins, new active and recreational travel routes, areas for informal recreation and play, and areas with new planting to benefit wildlife. More information on the Green Infrastructure proposals is set out later in this Statement.

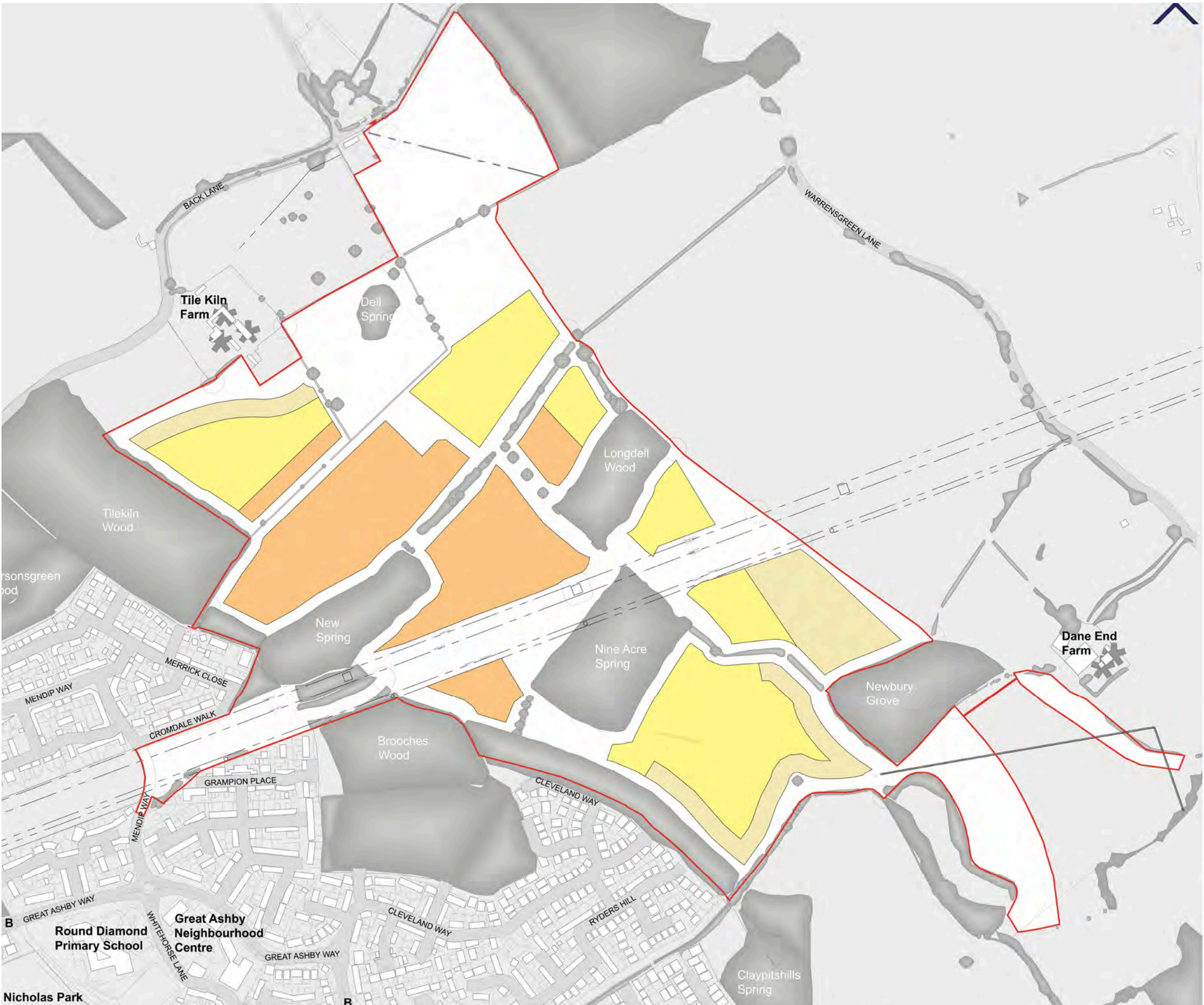
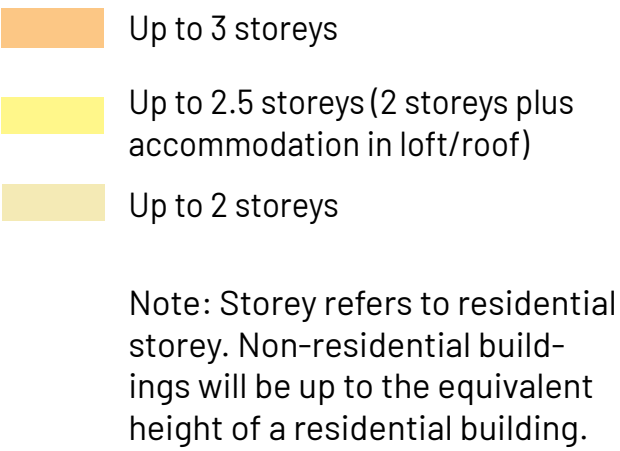


▲ A multi-functional network of green infrastructure will be created in the development

7. Development Proposals

SCALE AND DENSITY

- 7.18 The Local Plan does not set prescriptive density standards and relies on a design-led approach to development. The proposed average density of development on the Site equates to 30dph. This is comparable to the densities within the Site's context, and is considered comparatively low within the context of urban extensions such as this. Within this average density, there will be areas of higher density dwellings located within the heart of the new development, and areas of lower density housing on the peripheries of the Site. This allows for areas of varying character to be created, which reflects and respects the Site and its context, and creates interest and legibility within the development itself.
- 7.19 The proposed housing within the centre of the development and within the northern parts of the Site where the topography is flatter and where there is a higher level of enclosure, will be provided at a higher density, in order to create strong, continuous building frontages which will frame the streets and green spaces, highlighting these areas as the heart of the development.
- 7.20 On the peripheries of the development, the housing will be lower density, in order to allow for more spaces between the dwellings, and for features such as deeper front gardens, which aid in creating a transition between the built form and the open spaces beyond. Low density housing will also be located in the far north of the development adjacent to Tilekiln Farm.
- 7.21 The housing between the higher and lower density areas will create a transition in terms of densities between these inner and outer parts of the development. These areas will be of a density which makes efficient use of the Site, whilst respecting the character of the surroundings.
- 7.22 The sketches in Section 9 shows how housing can be designed within the various building typology parameters, whilst reflecting the townscape character of Great Ashby and ensuring an appropriate layout along the development's interface with the countryside.
- 7.23 The exact housing type, size and mix has not been determined yet, and will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage. However, it is expected that the development will include a range of house types and sizes, although most properties are likely to be family houses with private gardens. The scale and massing of the proposed dwellings will be reflective of those in Great Ashby, and the building heights will not exceed 3 storeys within the higher density areas, and 2 storeys within the lower density areas.



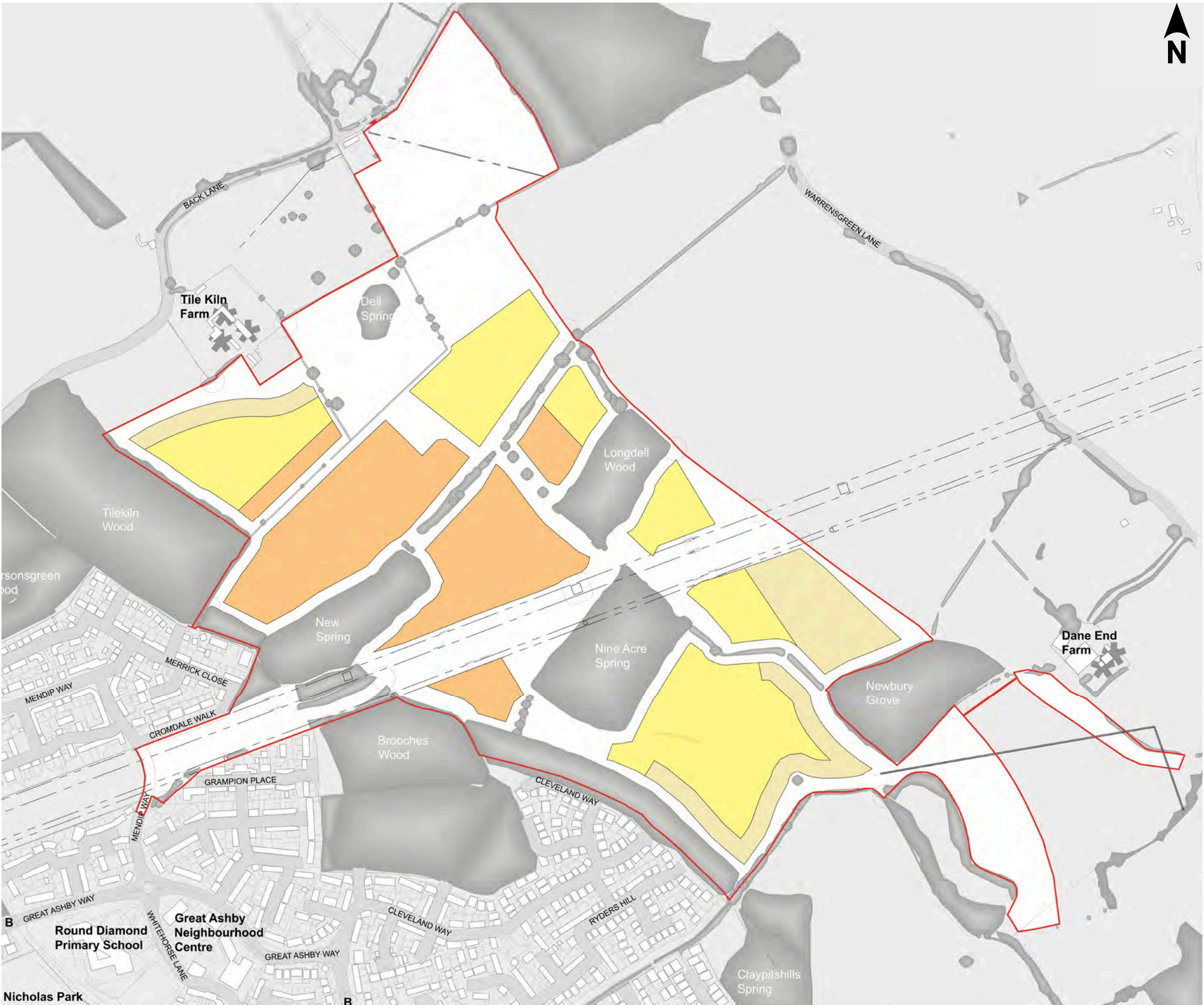
▲ Figure 7.4 - Building Heights Parameter Plan

7. Development Proposals

BUILDING TYPOLOGIES AND MASSING

- 7.24 The proposed building typologies across the development are informed by the desire to create a mix of densities and site character.
- 7.25 The central area of the development is proposed to consist mostly of apartments and terraced units, with a small number of semi-detached properties, creating a tighter urban grain. This aims to establish strong, continuous building frontages to define streets and green spaces, marking this area as the development’s core.
- 7.26 The northern and southern edges, bordering Tilekiln Farm and Dane End Farm, are planned for a looser suburban/rural grain, mainly with detached and semi-detached homes. This facilitates a transition from the development’s edge to the surrounding rural landscape.
- 7.27 The areas in between these zones will generally feature terraces and semi-detached dwellings, along with some detached units, resulting in a looser urban grain that bridges the urban and rural built forms. This creates a transition between the higher density centre and the lower density edges of the development.

- Mostly apartments and terraces with some semi-detached homes, in tighter urban grain (suggested density around 37-45dph)
- Mostly terraces and semi-detached homes with some detached homes, in looser urban grain (suggested densities around 28-37dph)
- Mostly detached and semi detached homes, in loose suburban/rural grain (suggested densities around 20-28dph)



▲ Figure 7.5 - Building Typologies Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

LAYOUT

7.28 The key layout principles which have shaped the proposals are set out in the previous section. However, there are some key good urban design principles which have been incorporated within the Illustrative Masterplan, and which should be carried forward into the detailed design as part of the Reserved Matters applications. The key urban design principles are illustrated on the plan in Figure 7.6 and includes the following elements.

Key frontages

7.29 The layout of the proposed dwellings will, in most cases, follow a perimeter block structure, where private rear gardens are enclosed by the built form of the dwellings which surround them. This allows dwellings to front onto the streets and open spaces, creating an attractive aspect and providing passive surveillance of communal spaces. Rear garden boundaries along public spaces should be avoided where possible. However, even when using perimeter blocks, it is not always possible to ensure building frontages on all sides of the block. The plan at Figure 7.6 illustrates the primary locations for frontages, to ensure that the adjoining streetscenes are attractive and provide passive surveillance over the most important public areas, such as active travel routes and equipped play areas.

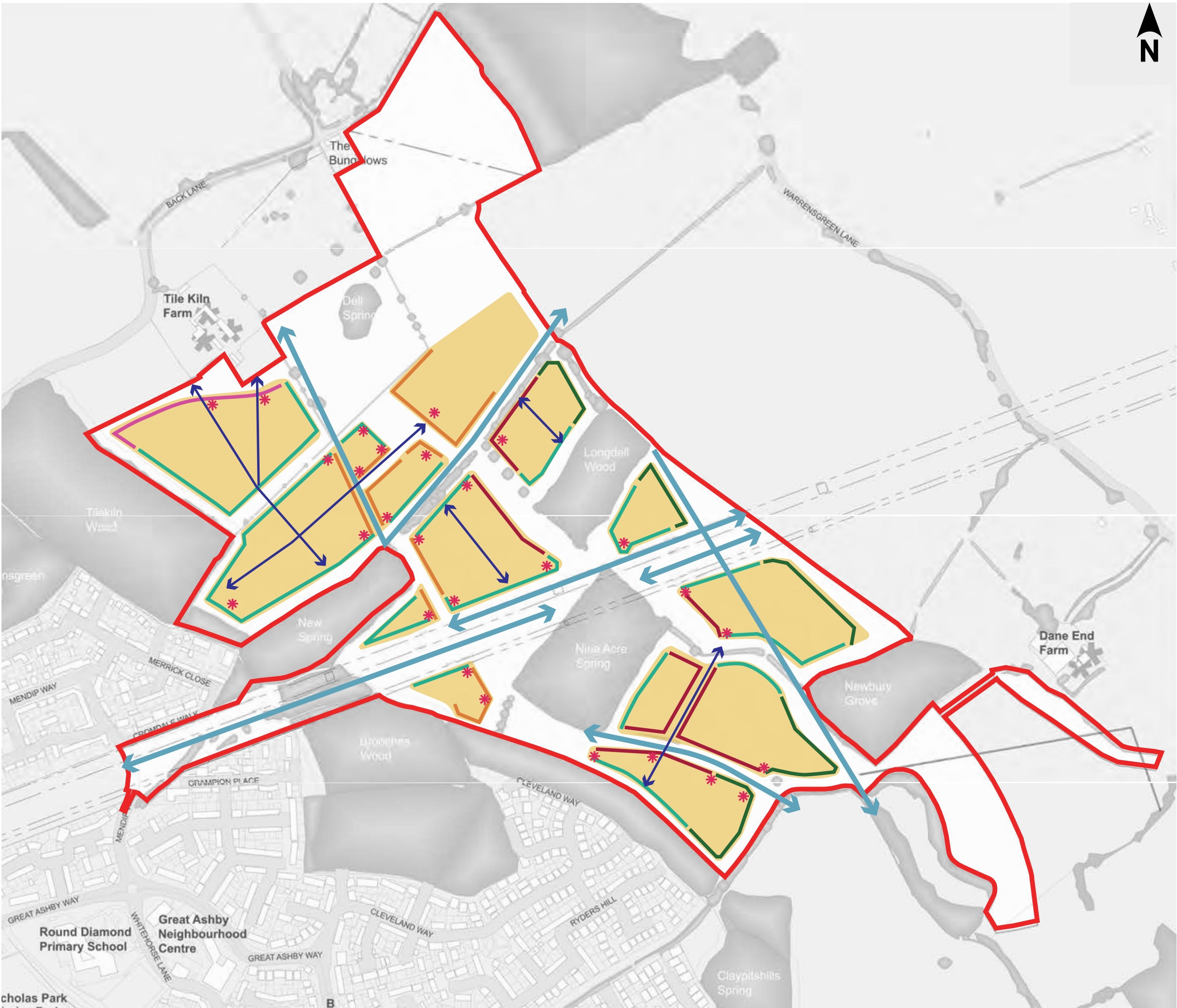
Key spaces

7.30 Key spaces are created throughout the development, to create a variety of character, and to aid legibility and wayfinding. These spaces are often located at the key street junctions, thereby aiding legibility and helping to create a sense of place. These spaces could include paved areas, green incidental open spaces, a variety of building styles, or pieces of public art.



▲ Key spaces mark important areas or junctions, and help with wayfinding

- Primary frontage
- Secondary frontage
- Rural edge
- Woodland/open space frontage
- Frontage to Listed Buildings
- Long views
- Key buildings
- Short views



▲ Figure 7.6 - Built Form Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

Focal buildings

7.31 Focal buildings are used to terminate vistas, aid in legibility and wayfinding, and creating variety and interest in the streetscene. These buildings are often located within the key spaces, indicating that both the built form and the surrounding landscaping should be designed together to create a specific ‘place’. Focal buildings are also proposed at the entrances to the development from along the public footpaths and bridleways. Focal buildings could be the taller buildings within a streetscene, or could have additional detailing to make them stand out within the street. They could incorporate different (but complimentary) materials to other buildings on the street.



▲ Focal buildings could be more detailed than others, to mark corners or important vistas

Views

7.32 A series of longer and open views have been designed into the Illustrative Masterplan, to create variety and interest, and to ensure that the layout reflects its surrounding context. The views and view corridors also aid in connecting the development to the countryside beyond. Many of the streets are orientated to allow views towards the woodland blocks within and around the Site, again aiding in anchoring the development into its setting. While focal buildings are often used to terminate views, they could also be used to frame vistas within and towards the outside of the development. Similarly, structural landscaping can be used to terminate views (such as screening the bottom of the pylon), or to focus views towards and within an area of open space. Views are also proposed to be maintained towards the countryside from the public footpath along the Site’s north eastern boundary.



▲ Views can be terminated by focal buildings, or could be designed to be longer and open

Respecting Tilekiln Farm

7.33 The proposals include an area of informal open space, as well as dwellings of lower density and height fronting northwards towards Tilekiln Farm. This will ensure that some of the effects of the development on the setting of the Listed Buildings are mitigated. As shown on the Landscape Strategy, a community orchard could be included in this open space, to provide some visual screening between the development and Tilekiln Farm. The houses here should be designed to blend into the settlement edge, as opposed to forming a strong edge, and should remain subservient to the built form at Tilekiln Farm.



▲ The Listed Buildings at Tilekiln Farm are also separated from the Site by intervening vegetation



7. Development Proposals

Community Hub

- 7.34 The Community Hub will be a vibrant and welcoming focal point within the development, positioned adjacent to Dell Spring to create a seamless connection with the allotments and surrounding countryside. Designed as a dynamic and inclusive space, it will feature a new primary school with sports pitches, a community hall, green spaces with a carefully integrated play area, and a civic space that encourages social interaction.
- 7.35 The character of the Hub will be defined by well-designed civic space and soft landscape elements. Swales outside the primary school will be densely planted to form attractive rain gardens, enhancing biodiversity while contributing to the site's sustainability. Tree-lined streets and new hedgerows around the school will create a sense of enclosure and structure, while also reinforcing the area's green, community-focused identity.

Woodland and Open Space Edge Development Areas

- 7.36 The Woodland and Open Space Edge areas will establish a distinctive and well-defined transition between the built development and the adjacent Ancient Woodland, shaping a character that is both enclosed and integrated with the natural landscape. The built form will be carefully positioned to respect the woodland setting, creating a sense of enclosure while maintaining visual connections to the surrounding greenery.
- 7.37 The houses should front or side onto these edges, in order to frame the woodland and open space edge, and to provide passive surveillance, whilst creating an attractive backdrop to the open spaces. House types will be more varied, and include larger open spaces between the built form, to create a transition between the built form and the adjoining open space and woodland.

Rural Edge Development Areas

- 7.38 Development along the Rural Edge will be lower density and height, and will have a softer building line and more organic layout of spaces. The settlement's edge should be designed with a more open character, with dwellings set back from newly planted, native vegetation to facilitate visual connectivity between the development and the surrounding countryside, while clearly delineating the settlement boundary.
- 7.39 Development here should be designed to face out towards the landscape, enhancing the sense of place while preserving access to nature and promoting ecological diversity.



▲ The interface between the development and the countryside is designed to be open in places



▲ Housing should be carefully positioned to respect the woodland setting



▲ The proposed community hub will provide a central focal point for the development



▲ The interface between the development and the countryside is designed to be enclosed in places

7. Development Proposals

Primary Frontages

- 7.40 Development along the primary street network should front onto the main streets, establishing a strong, active street scene with passive surveillance and visual interest, particularly at key corners where buildings should feature side elevations with windows and architectural detailing. The buildings will form a relatively continues, closed and formal building line, in order to frame the streets and spaces.
- 7.41 Housing will rise to a maximum of three storeys, with focal buildings at junctions to mark key spaces and create visual landmarks. Compact front gardens and a variety of street planting, including native and ornamental shrub planting and street trees, will enhance the overall streetscape and character.



▲ Development along the primary street network should front onto the spine road

Secondary Frontage

- 7.42 Secondary frontages will be located along the secondary and tertiary streets within the development. The homes will still form a strong frontage along the road, although there may be more and larger gaps between the houses, creating a softer frontage.
- 7.43 The houses here will range between 2 and 3 storeys, and are likely to include a wider range of house types, including terraces, semi-detached, and detached dwellings.
- 7.44 Street trees are likely to be incorporated on at least one side of the street, with native and ornamental shrub planting incorporated in dedicated spaces.



▲ The house types and styles will be more varied along the secondary frontages

Central Pylon Development Edge

- 7.45 The central area adjacent to the pylon will be defined by a well-structured and cohesive development that creates a strong sense of place. Homes of up to 3 storeys will frame the central open space corridor from the north and 2.5 storeys from the south, establishing a distinctive and varied streetscape. Strong building frontages will provide a sense of enclosure, while shared driveways and front gardens will contribute to a welcoming residential character. Parking areas will be carefully integrated within the development, softened by trees and landscaping to ensure they remain both functional and visually appealing. Hedgerows and tree planting will help define private and semi-private spaces, reinforcing a sense of community and privacy.



▲ Homes of up to 3 storeys will frame the central open space corridor from the north and 2.5 storeys from the south

7. Development Proposals

APPEARANCE

7.46 The exact materials and design of the houses is a Reserved Matter, however, it is expected that the homes will be of a similar scale and massing to the existing houses within Great Ashby, although it is expected that a lower form of density is built on the peripheries of the Site which adjoin the countryside. The new houses should reflect the higher quality vernacular evident within Stevenage and the surrounding villages such as Weston and Graveley, although modern, energy efficient materials and designs should be considered alongside more traditional forms and building materials, to create a development which respects and reflects its setting, but is suitable for modern and future living.

7.47 The images on this page illustrate some of the architectural qualities evident within Great Ashby, Stevenage, Weston, and Graveley. These should be used as design cues at the detailed design stage, although a modern interpretation of these elements would also be suitable, provided an overall harmony is achieved between the appearance of the development at the Site and that at Great Ashby.



7. Development Proposals

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Access

- 7.48 The vehicular access to the development is off Mendip Way, and forms part of the detailed application. The layout of Mendip Way will change to provide priority movements into the Site, to the east, with the existing northern extension of Mendip Way now forming a junction with the realigned Mendip Way junction. The access road will lead east under the pylon corridor into the wider development area. The route of the street has been designed to avoid the pylons and their associated off-sets, and most importantly, the areas of Ancient Woodland. The street does incur into the 15m buffer to the Ancient Woodland along its central section, however, the adjoining area of woodland is already compromised due to the overhead powerlines which cross it, and the need for maintenance access for these powerlines. The access corridor does require the removal of the existing play area at Mendip Way, however as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, a new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) will be located west of Mendip Way, south of Cromdale Walk and north of the new road. Areas of existing woodland (not Ancient) will require removal under the pylon corridor in order to create the access, however, much of this woodland is already heavily managed to allow maintenance of the overhead powerlines.
- 7.49 An additional access point for emergency vehicles, as well as pedestrians and cyclists, will be provided off Warrensgreen Lane in the far north of the Site.
- 7.50 Active travel routes will also lead into the Site, including one alongside the new vehicular access point, and one along the existing bridleway in the south of the Site. A further active travel connection will be provided between the Site and the existing street network on Merrick Close, west of the Site, where an existing public footpath will be upgraded to accommodated bicycles as well.
- 7.51 Further information on the access details which form part of the full application and unreserved matters, are set out in Section 8.

- Unreserved areas for Outline Application
- Full Planning Application area
- Location for connection to vehicular and active travel access point
- Location for connection to access point for emergency vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians
- Location for access points for horseriders, cyclists, and pedestrians
- Location for access points for cycles and pedestrians
- Indicative location for access points for pedestrians



▲ Figure 7.7 - Access Parameter Plan

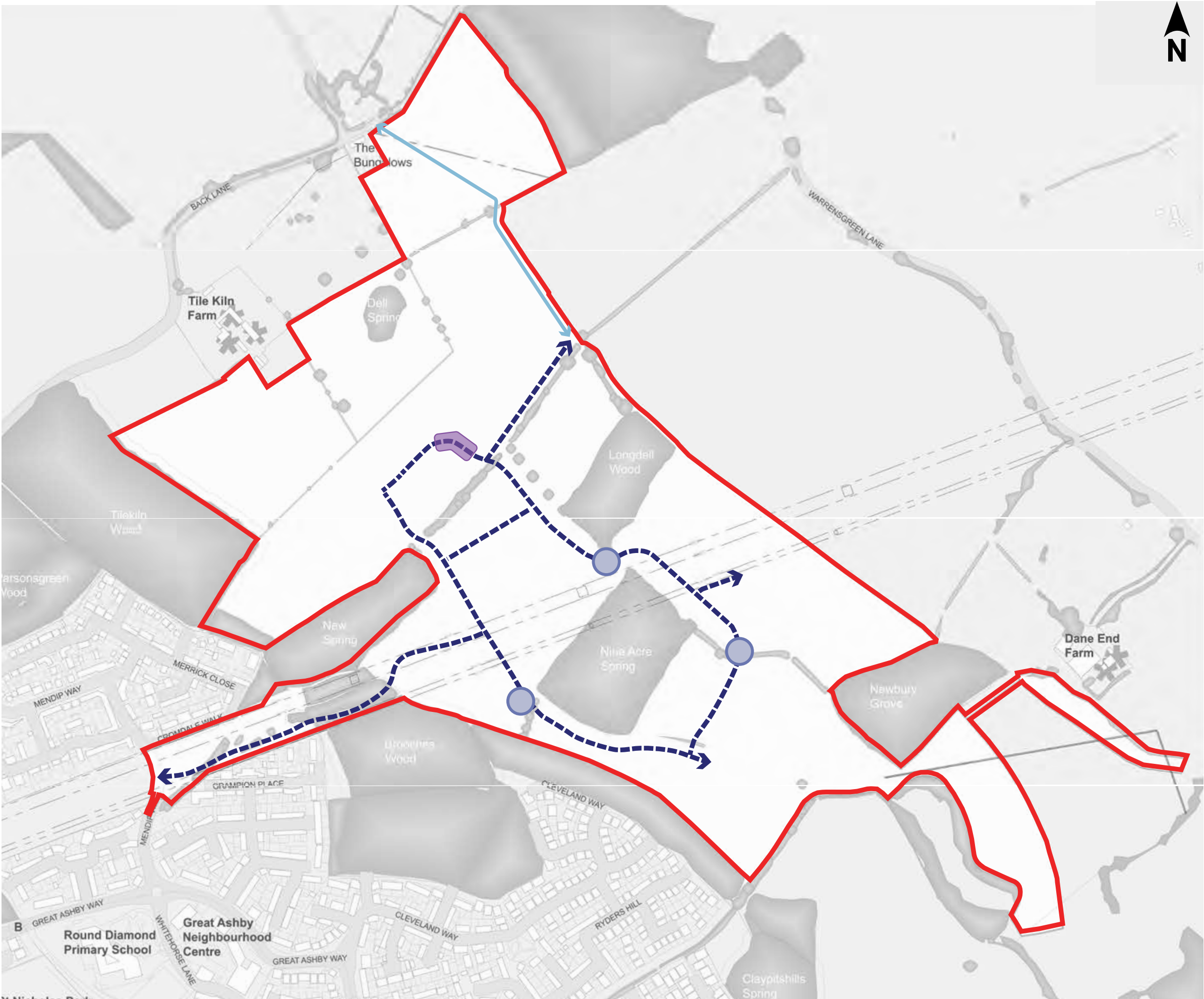
7. Development Proposals

VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

Movement

- 7.52 Vehicular movement within the Site will consist of a primary street formed off the access from Mendip Way, which connects to the northern and southern parts of the Site.
- 7.53 Three identified pinch points along the primary street will be incorporated into the layout design. These locations will feature single lane shuttle points, carefully routed through sensitive ecological corridors, thereby minimising ecological impacts. Mammal crossing tunnels could be incorporated within these pinch points.
- 7.54 The primary street will be able to accommodate the proposed bus route. However, within the Community Hub area, access along the primary street will be restricted to certain vehicles and active travel only (such as emergency and waste disposal vehicles), and there will be no private vehicular link through the civic space in front of the primary school. Instead, a further primary street to the south of the Community Hub and within the centre of the development, will allow east-west connection for other vehicular traffic, and allow a shorter vehicular loop through the development.
- 7.55 Secondary vehicular routes will branch off from the primary street network, strategically serving the various development parcels located across the Site. These secondary routes will be designed to integrate into a cohesive loop network, enhancing connectivity and ensuring smooth traffic flow within the development. Tertiary routes will lead into the residential parcels, and will, alongside private drives, lane and courtyards, provide access to the dwellings.
- 7.56 Constant radii curves on junctions should be avoided, and roads should be designed to create legible crossroads to allow for vistas.

- Primary street
- Emergency access
- Agreed pinch point locations (single lane shuttles running through sensitive ecological corridors)
- Modal filter



▲ Figure 7.8 - Vehicular Movement Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

Vehicular Movement and Parking

- 7.57 The proposals will incorporate a hierarchy of movement routes, ranging from the primary spine street down to private drives and courtyards. This will aid in creating a variety of identifiable characters within the development, and aid in creating a legible development. The sketches in Section 9 illustrate the proposed widths of the streets and the arrangement of verges, and foot and cycleways.
- 7.58 The spine street will form the primary route through the development, and will follow a loop which leads through the development off the new access from Mendip Way. The spine street will be 6.2m wide, and will have at least a 3m wide shared cycle and footway to one side, and a 2m wide footway to the other. For much of the length of the spine street, it will have a separate 3m wide cycleway and 2m wide footway to one side, and an at least 2m wide footway to the other side. There are three areas where the spine street is proposed to be reduced in width to a single lane, where the street passes through the most ecologically-sensitive spaces. The street here will be designed to offer priority to buses (and vehicles moving clockwise), with vehicles moving in the other direction (i.e. anti-clockwise) having to stop and give priority to oncoming traffic.
- 7.59 It will also include green verges with street trees, as well as incidental areas of open space. Key spaces will be created along the spine street, to create interest and aid legibility.



▲ Visitor and shared parking can be provided in dedicated bays along the spine and secondary streets

- 7.60 The new homes will be accessed directly off this spine street via private driveways, although the amount of crossings over foot and cycleways will be limited. Most homes will be accessed via shared access drives to rear parking courts, to ensure a regular, strong built frontage is maintained along the street. Visitor parking can be provided in dedicated bays in places along the spine street.
- 7.61 Secondary streets lead off the spine street towards the outer peripheries of the development. These streets are likely to have a 3m wide shared foot/ cycleway to one side, and a 2m wide footway to the other.
- 7.62 Street tree planting will be incorporated in dedicated verges in certain areas, to create varying characters along the streets.
- 7.63 The new homes will be accessed directly off these streets via private driveways. On-street parking and visitors parking can be accommodated in dedicated bays along these streets.
- 7.64 Tertiary streets provide local access to private drives, mews and courts, and serve lower numbers of dwellings which are more likely to be accessed off cul-de-sacs. These streets will be narrower in width, and could only have a 2m wide footway to one side, with cycling accommodated on street due to the low vehicle numbers on these streets.



▲ Verges and street trees will soften the streetscene

- 7.65 They may have street trees and planting in dedicated areas of open space, or landscaping may be accommodated within the front gardens.
- 7.66 Dwellings will be accessed directly off these streets via private driveways, and a variety of on-plot and on-street parking will be accommodated here to create a varied street scene.
- 7.67 Private drives, mews and courts form the lowest trafficked streets within the development, and only provide access to residential properties. These streets are mostly located on the peripheries of the development where no through-vehicle movement is necessary, but they will also be used within the centre of the development to provide vehicular access to small groups of properties set off the main streets.
- 7.68 These streets will be narrower, and will be shared with pedestrians and cyclists. Trees and other vegetation will be designed into the streets, or incorporated within front gardens or adjoining public open spaces. Although they don't provide vehicular through-links, they should still allow for pedestrian and cycle permeability.
- 7.69 These areas are most likely to be block-paved or incorporate surfacing that is more textured, to slow vehicle speeds.



▲ Private drives will be used on the edges of the development

7. Development Proposals

Car and Cycle Parking

- 7.70 Car and cycle parking will be provided in line with the requirements of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, and will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 7.71 The current minimum requirements are as follows:
- | Dwelling size | Car parking | Cycle parking |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 bedroom | 1 space per dwelling minimum | 1 secure covered space per dwelling. None if garage or secure area provided within curtilage of dwelling |
| 2-3 bedroom | 2 spaces per dwelling minimum | |
- 7.72 Garages will be counted towards meeting the car parking standards only if they are at least 7m x 3m measured internally.
- 7.73 Visitor and unallocated parking space also need to be provided at between 0.25 and 0.75 spaces per dwelling, dependant on the amount of private garages within the development. We assume that some of the properties will have private garages, and that 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling will be unallocated and/or for use by visitors. These spaces will be located and designed so that they could be changed into other uses (such as green spaces) in the future, should private car ownership decline as expected.
- 7.74 At the Reserved Matters stage, parking will be designed to be subservient to the built form and landscaping, and to not dominate the streetscene. Car parking will be located in a variety of spaces near to the new houses, including rear parking mews (rather than courts that are dead ends). Parking should also be designed to, wherever possible, provide one parking space per plot, with the other in a communal space such as parking square.
- 7.75 All new dwellings with dedicated parking spaces will have EV charging points, and communal charging points will be located in most areas of unallocated parking.



▲ Where parking on the street or to the front of housing is used, it will be well landscaped with shrubs and trees to break up the parking spaces and soften the streetscene



▲ A variety of parking solution will be used, including garages (which could have flats over them)

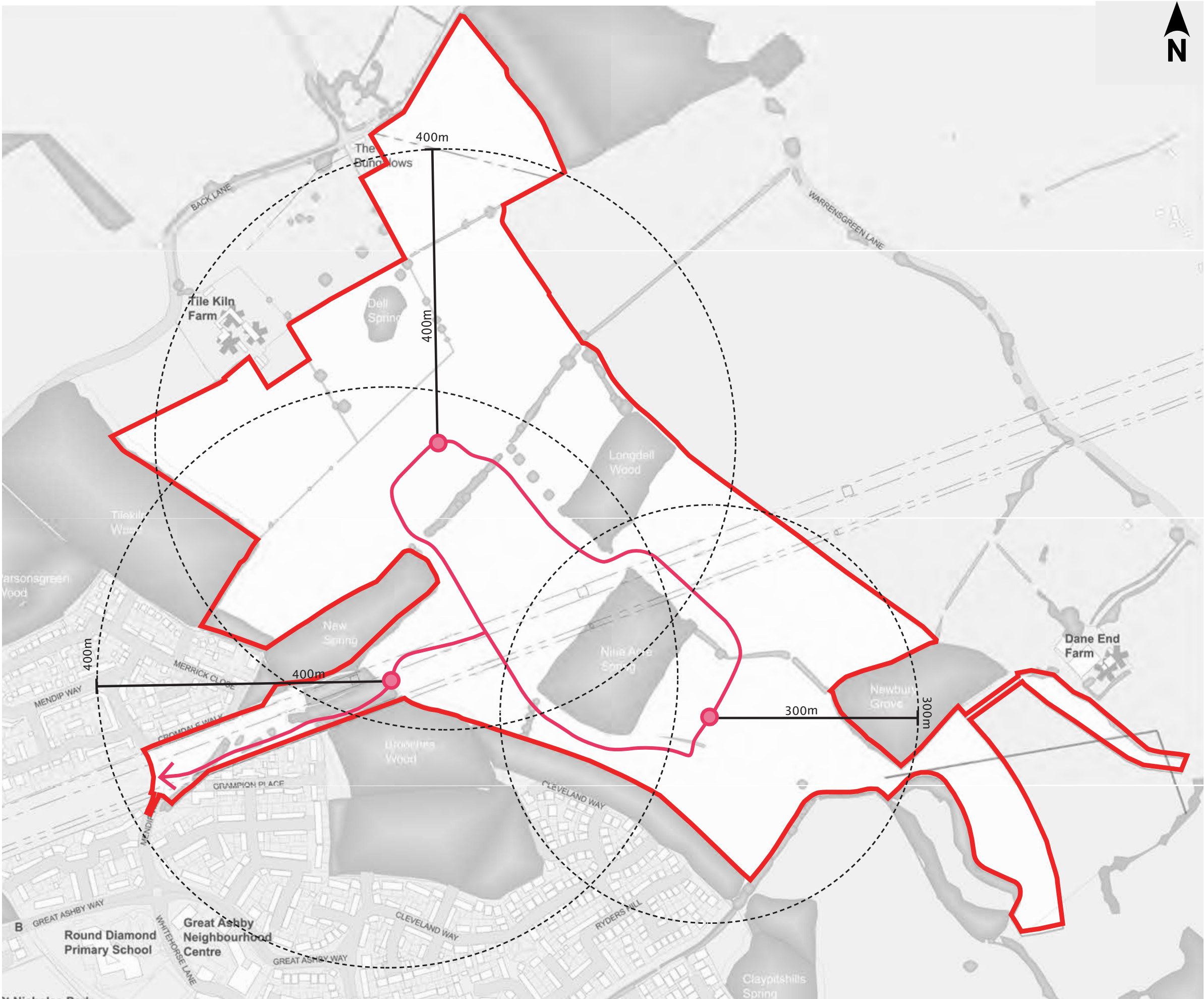
7. Development Proposals

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus route

- 7.76
- The proposals have been designed to accommodate a bus route along the primary street through the development. Consultation with both the Highways Authority and the bus operator Arriva have informed the proposed route. A new bus service is proposed, linking the Site with Stevenage town centre and the railway station.
- 7.77
- The bus operator suggested four bus stops: one within the north, one within the south, and two along the access corridor (one in either direction). This will allow the vast majority of new dwellings to be within 400m of a bus stop, with the houses within the south of the Site within 300m of a bus stop (an important consideration taking into account the topography of the Site in the south). The bus operator would prefer to have a layby for pick up and drop offs at the primary school, however, the other stops could be on the road. It is proposed that part of the bus route, i.e. the section to the primary school, will be delivered in the first phase, and a temporary turning space will be designed into the scheme to the south west of the school to allow the bus to turn and exit the site.

 Indicative bus route and stops



▲ Figure 7.9 - Public Transport Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

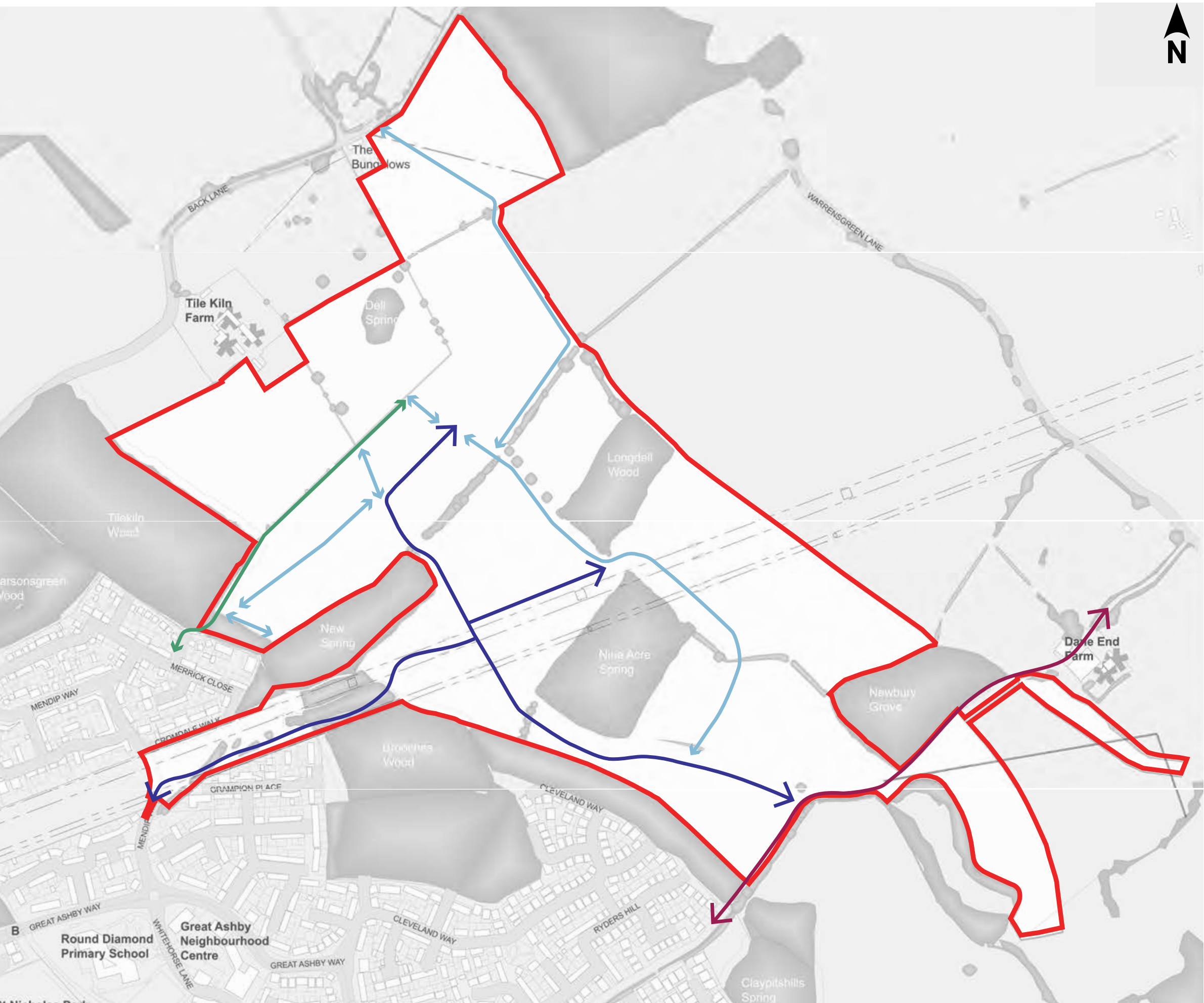
ACTIVE TRAVEL

- 7.78 The active travel framework plan sets out how the proposed primary and secondary active travel links connect into, and enhance the existing surrounding movement network.
- 7.79 The primary active travel route will link onto the existing bridleway, which runs along the southern boundary of the Site, and provides a pedestrian and cycle connection to Great Ashby.
- 7.80 The secondary active travel route will link with the Merrick Close Active Travel Access, enhancing pedestrian and cycle connections with the neighbouring residential area to the west.
- 7.81 The primary links will consist of segregated foot and cycleways whereas the secondary links will be shared.
- 7.82 The proposed active travel routes will link to the existing foot and cycle network within Great Ashby and Stevenage, and further enhancements are proposed to the existing network to allow easy access to the facilities, as illustrated on the plan at Figure 3.18 earlier on.



▲ Direct links will be created to where people want to go, and these will be overlooked by houses

- Primary active travel links (segregated foot and cycleways)
- ↔ Secondary active travel links (shared foot and cycle ways)
- Existing bridleway (cycle connection to Great Ashby)
- ↔ Active travel link (shared foot and cycle way linking to Merrick Close)



▲ Figure 7.10 - Active Travel Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

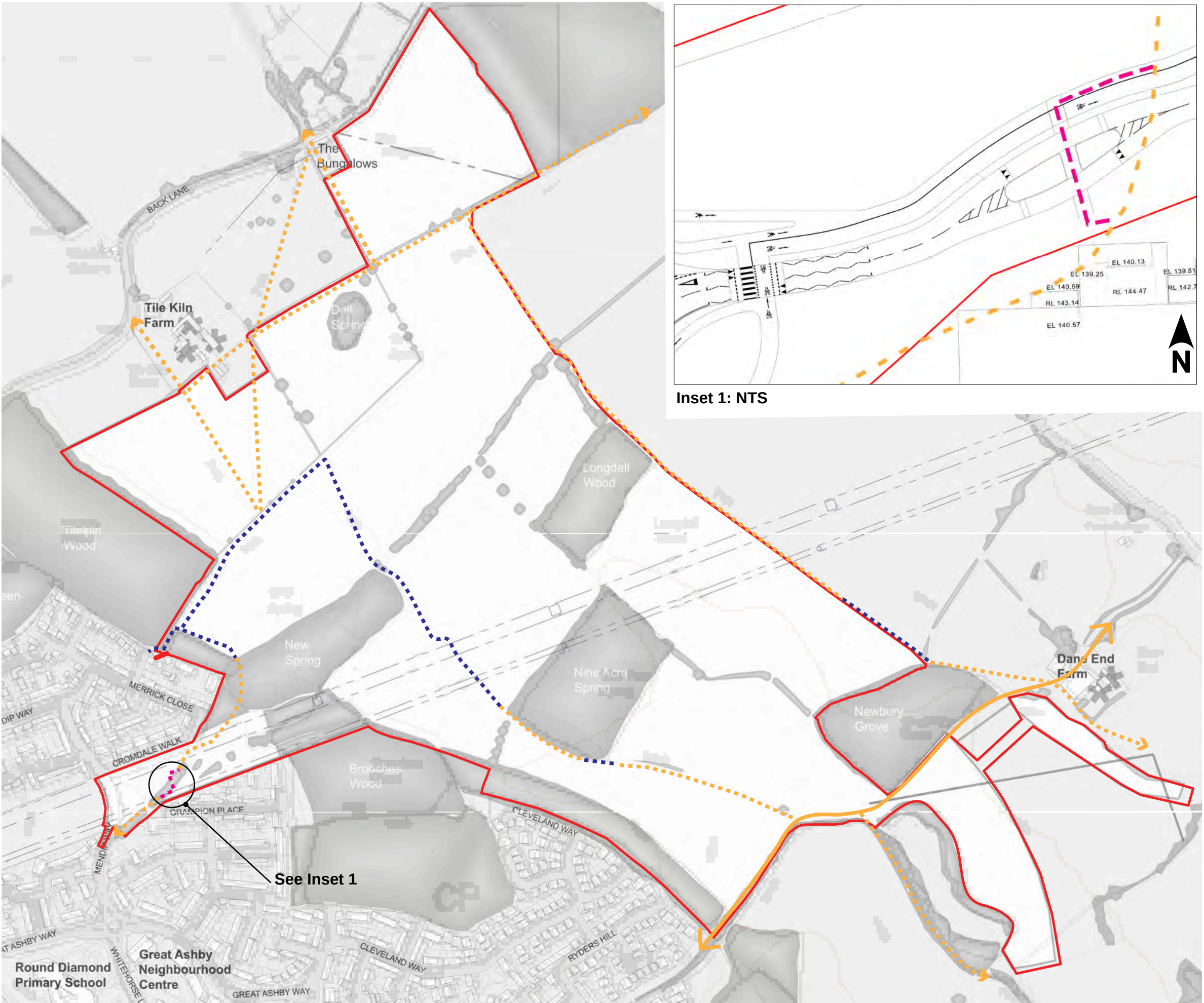
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND LEISURE ROUTES

- 7.83 The development proposals will incorporate a network of recreational and leisure routes designed to enhance connectivity and promote health and well-being for users of the Site. These routes will integrate with the proposed active travel routes, existing footpaths, and Public Rights of Way, including the bridleway located to the south of the Site.
- 7.84 The development will require minor realignment of the existing public footpaths which cross the Site, onto the new footways and active travel routes, however, the overall routes and connections will be maintained and incorporated into the layout. This includes footpath Great Ashby 011 which will be rerouted to follow the new footway and crossing point over the new access road off Mendip Way into the Site.
- 7.85 Public footpath Weston 029 will accessed via the new footway along the spine street, and the footway has been aligned to the definitive route where possible. Similarly, public footpath Weston 026 will likely now be accessed via the new active travel route south of Tilekiln Wood, with this surfaced path located outside of the 15m off-set from the Ancient Woodland. The definitive route of the footpath will remain accessible, but the surfaced route may lie just off this definitive line.
- 7.86 Public footpaths Weston 046 and Great Ashby 011 in the west of the Site are proposed to be retained within the development. Great Ashby 011 is proposed to be bound (with fence or brush piles) where it leads through New Spring, in order to limit public access to the Ancient Woodland. Public footpaths Weston 026 and the northern part of Weston 029 will be accommodated along footways, paths, or verges within the street layout.
- 7.87 Public footpath Weston 044 at the north eastern Site boundary will be retained along its current alignment for most of its length along the Site. It is proposed to be surfaced with hoggin or similar, in order to accommodate an expected increase in use, whilst respecting its location on the edge of the countryside. New active and recreational travel routes will connect to it, allowing a variety of walking options within and around the development. The potential to convert this route to a foot and cycle path will be explored with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage.

- Existing bridleway (cycle connection to Great Ashby)
- Public Right of Way (footpath)
- ...

Sections of PRoW potentially rerouted (subject to detailed design)
- ...

Section of PRoW diverted across new access road as part of application



▲ Figure 7.11 - Public Rights of Way Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

- 7.88 The leisure routes will offer several key benefits, including:
- Promote the health and well-being of residents and visitors by providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and physical activity.
 - Facilitate access to areas of public open space, encouraging community engagement and appreciation of the natural environment.
 - Be designed to ensure safety and accessibility for all users, regardless of age or ability.
 - Be subject to ongoing management and maintenance as part of the broader site management plan, ensuring their long-term usability and attractiveness.
- 7.89 Recreational routes will be created within the new areas of public open space, which will link to the new and existing footways, as well as to the existing public rights of way. The routes will be hard surfaced in most cases, although mown paths and hoggin surfaces are also proposed within areas of open space. These pedestrian links are likely to be 2m wide in most instances.



▲ Leisure and recreational routes through woodland areas can provide health and well being benefits



▲ The public rights of way in the Site will be surfaced to accommodate an expected increase in use



▲ The public footpaths will be incorporated along the new streets in places



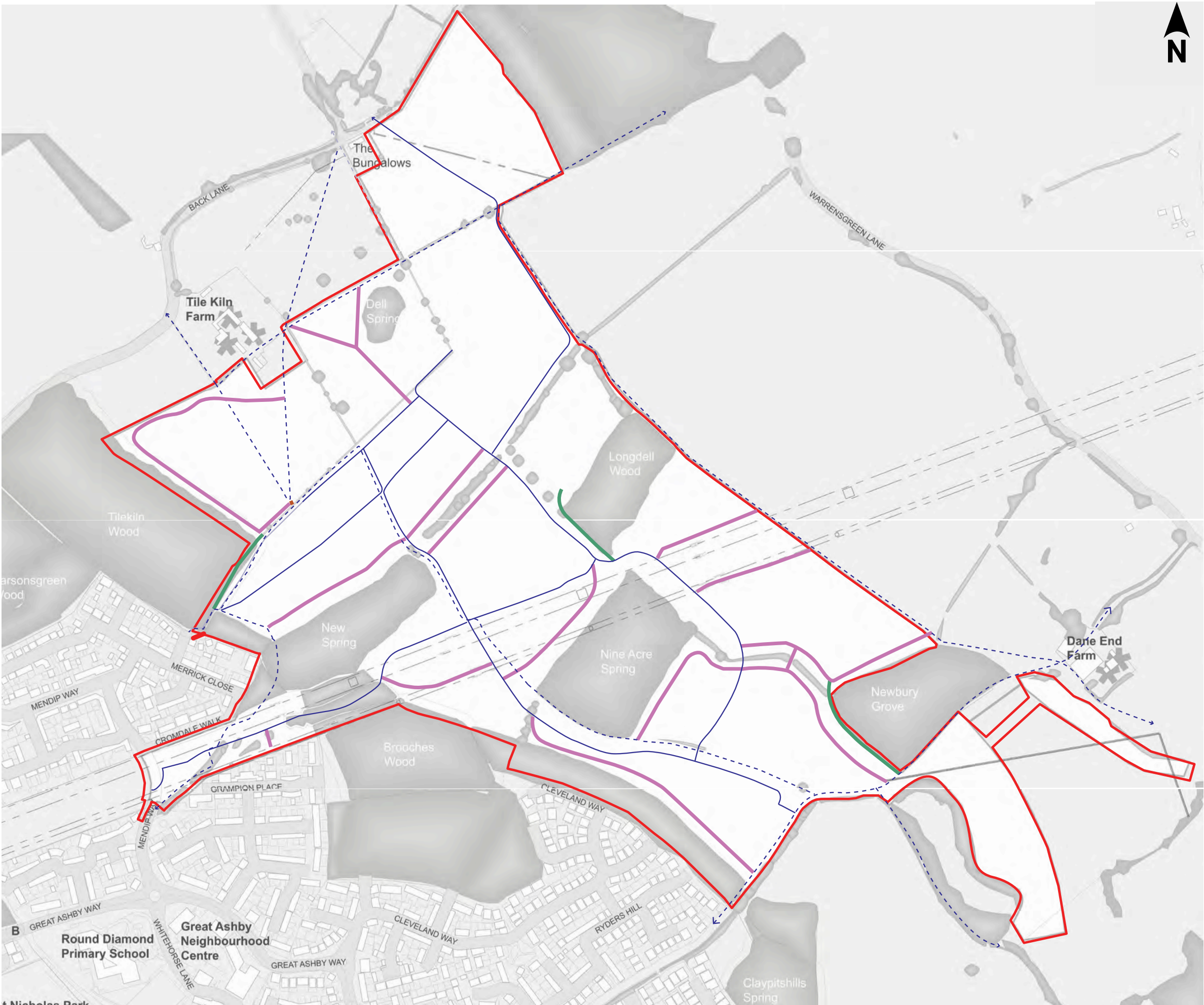
▲ The new homes will front onto the retained public rights of way to provide passive surveillance

7. Development Proposals



▲ The route of existing public right of ways will be retained alongside the woodland area

- Recreational Routes
- Unmade woodland paths for pedestrians
- Proposed Active Travel Routes
- Public Rights of Way

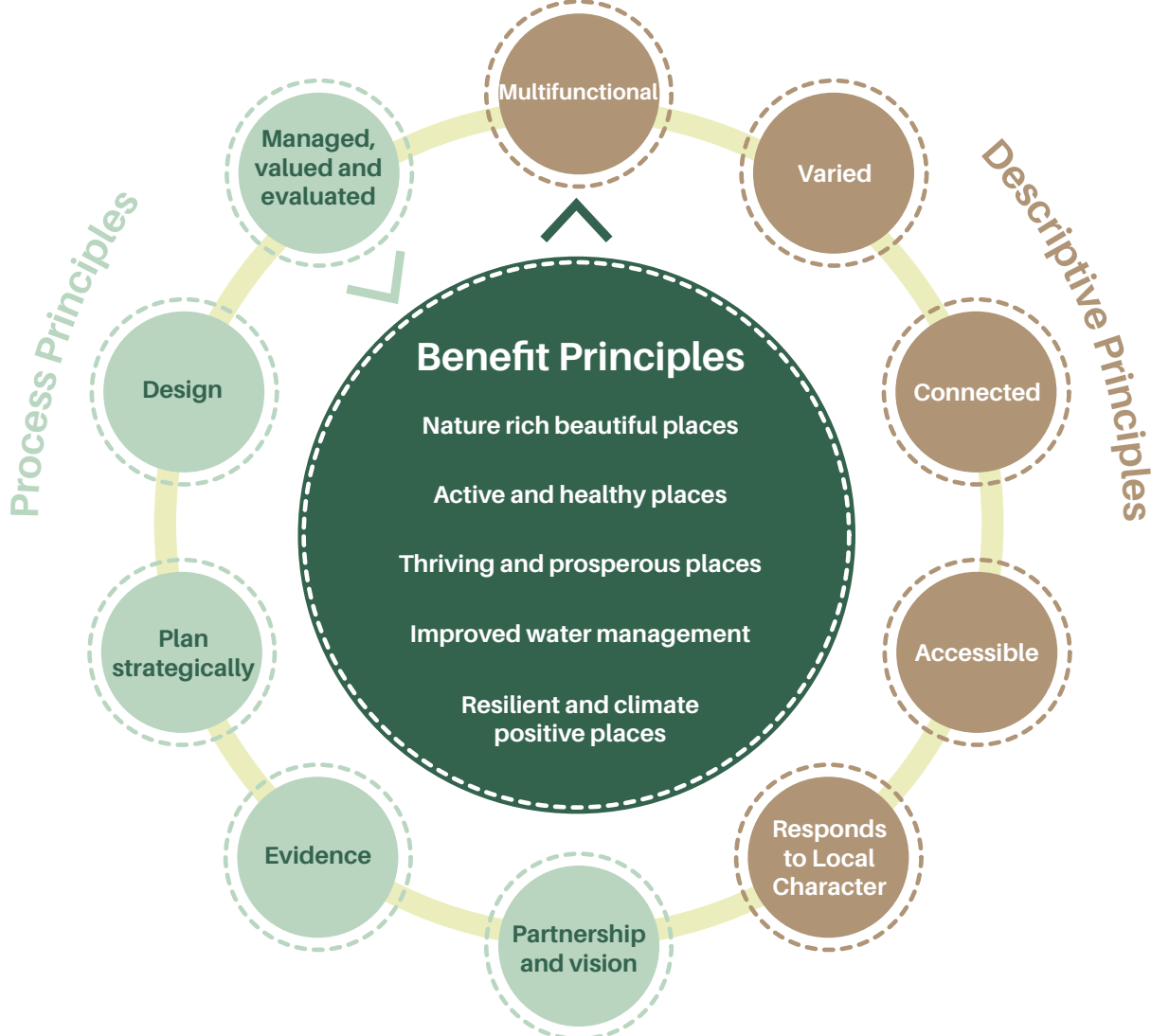


▲ Figure 7.12 - Leisure Routes Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

- 8.90 The Green Infrastructure Plan shows the proposed layout of the Site’s public open space and green and blue infrastructure. It also demonstrates the intended function of these areas, including landscaping which is required as part of landscape and ecological mitigation.
- 8.91 A green and blue infrastructure approach has been taken when designing the Site’s landscape in that the multi-functionality of spaces is the core design principle. Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework is underpinned by 15 principles, which have guided the design of the Site’s green and blue infrastructure. These principles align with the objectives of the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and are shown below.
- 7.92 The key principles upon which the layout has been developed includes the retention of the existing structural landscape elements, as well as the creation of green corridors to link these elements where possible. This network of green spaces and corridors, i.e. the green infrastructure, forms the backbone of the layout of the development.



▲ The 15 principles of Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework

- Site Boundary
- Existing structural vegetation retained
- Ancient Woodland
- 15m proposed complementary habitat adjoining Ancient Woodland
- Proposed structural vegetation to remove
- Proposed allotments
- Accessible open space
- Natural and semi-natural open space
- Incursions into 12m buffer/ 15m Ancient Woodland buffer
- Proposed swales and drainage basins
- Key Woodland planting
- Key thicket planting
- Key boundary hedgerow planting
- Proposed orchard
- Areas mostly long grass/meadows
- Indicative character areas
1. Dell Spring
2. Tilekiln Woodland Edge
3. Mendip Gateway Park
4. Nine Acre Park
5. Longdell Woodland Chain
6. Warrengreen Countryside Edge
7. Newberry Spring



▲ Figure 7.13 – Green Infrastructure Framework Plan (indicative character descriptions are included in Section 9)

7. Development Proposals

7.93 The green infrastructure is designed to be multi-functional, and therefore these spaces aim to accommodate elements for environmental, ecological, habitat, movement, and social benefits. The green infrastructure will include key parts of the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS), as well as active travel routes and other recreational paths. It will include the existing retained and proposed vegetation, and it will also include spaces for active and passive recreation. Key uses within the green infrastructure corridors include the provision of public open space, open space along ecological corridors and existing structural vegetation, ecological enhancement areas, and space for sustainable drainage features as well as active travel and recreational paths.

7.94 Indicative sketches and descriptions of the proposed characters within the various areas of the green infrastructure, are set out in Section 9.



▲ Picnic areas and seating is proposed within the parkland at Dell Spring

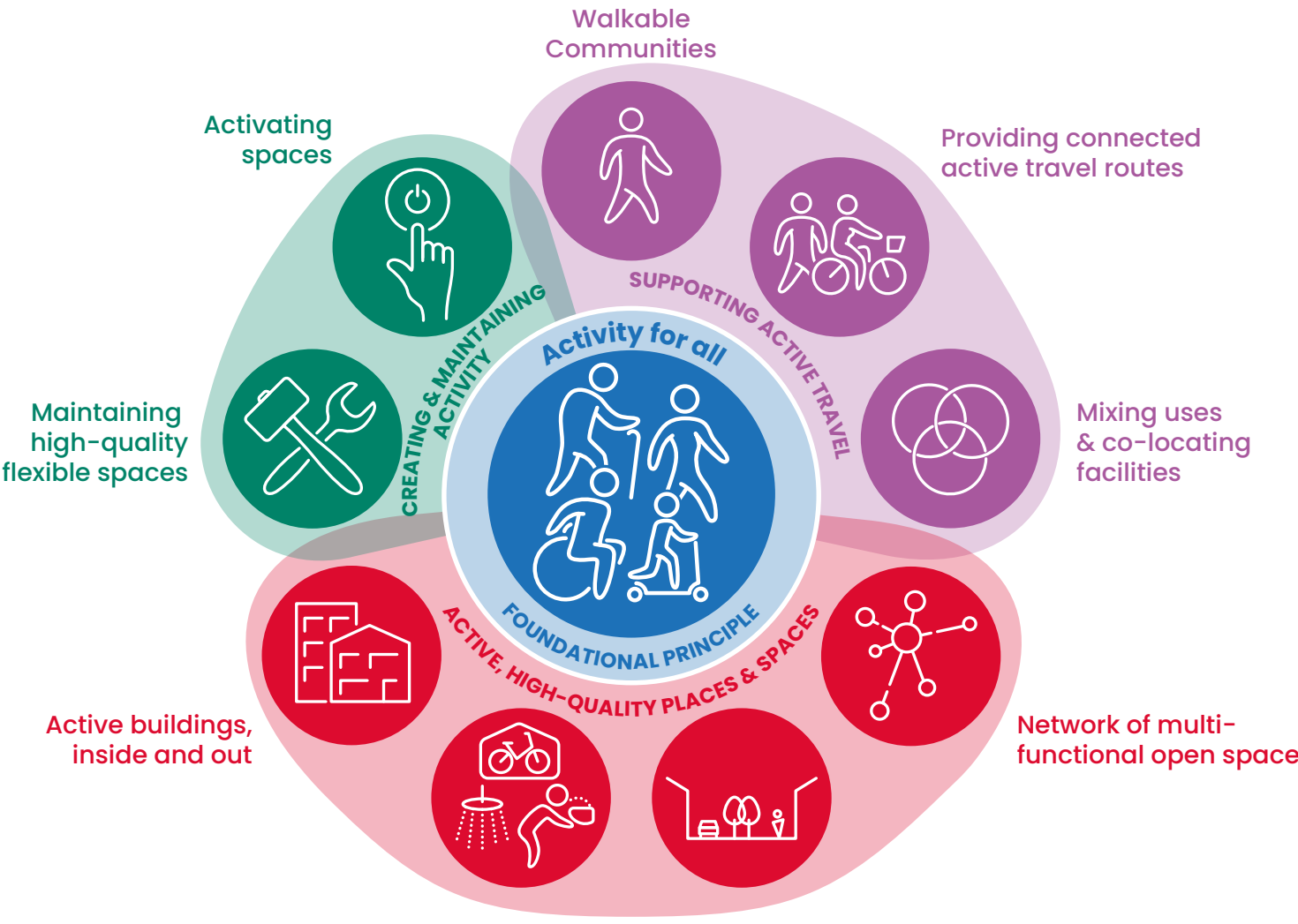


▲ Equipped play areas will be located within the development and will be overlooked to enhance safety

Recreation and Public Open Space

7.95 The areas of public open space as part of the Green Infrastructure proposed is set out into various different open space types, in line with the Fields in Trust guidance (‘FiT’; 2024). The proposed open space types are set out below. The plan at Figure 7.14 shows one way in which the required amount and distribution of open and recreational space could be accommodated within the proposed development, however, the exact location of the open space types and play space types will be agreed with the Council at the Reserved Matters stage.

7.96 The open spaces, as well as the wider development Ashby Woods, will be designed with reference to the Active Design principles set out by Sports England, in order to create environments that allow people to lead more physically active and healthy lifestyles. The ten principles of Active Design and shown on the diagram below.



▲ Amenity open spaces will include small areas of local open space set amongst the houses



▲ In area of informal parkland will be created at Dell Spring



▲ Amenity open space will include green corridors and recreational walking routes

7. Development Proposals

Playing Pitches and Other Outdoor Sport

7.97 The Site’s topography, alongside the presence of the overhead powerlines on the most level part of the Site, mean that the incorporation of formal playing pitches or other sports land uses (such as bowling greens), is not really a viable option within the Site. It is therefore proposed that a contribution is made to off-site playing facilities. Initial Sport England advice stipulates that the scheme should focus on improving existing sports provision at St Nicholas Park and/or the 3G pitch at Round Diamond School, subject to continued secured community use. The exact use of the contribution will be agreed with the Council as part of the Section 106 agreement.

- Accessible Green Space - Parks and Gardens, and Amenity Green Space: 6.73 ha
- Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space: 28.60 ha
- Illustrative locations for Incidental Open Space within other areas
- Illustrative location for equipped or informal play areas
- 100m from illustrative LAP locations
- 400m from illustrative LEAP locations
- 1,000m from illustrative NEAP locations
- 700m from illustrative larger informal play areas



▲ Figure 7.14 - Illustrative Recreation Space and Play Area Plan

7. Development Proposals

Parks and Gardens, and Amenity Green Space

- 7.98 Parks and gardens are defined as formal green spaces including urban parks, country parks, forest parks and formal gardens. FiT guidance requires the provision of 0.8ha per 1,000 population, of new parks and gardens. For a development of 640 dwellings (at an average of 2.4 people per dwelling), this equates to a need for 1.23ha of parks and gardens.
- 7.99 Amenity green space is defined as informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, and village greens. The provision requires is 0.6ha per 1,000 population, which equates to 0.92ha. These spaces are proposed to be less formal and multi-functional, and will allow for informal recreation as well as providing spaces for people to meet others, such as while out walking, or for informal play (kicking a ball, small children cycling) near the adjoining houses.
- 7.100 The plan in Figure 7.18 shows one way in which the proposed open space typologies could be accommodated on the Site. The exact location and breakdown between Parks and Gardens, and Amenity Green Space, has not yet been decided, but the plan shows that 8.28ha of accessible open space can be provided on the Site, which is significantly more than the FiT requirements. Furthermore, the plan also shows how incidental areas of open space could be incorporated

Natural and Semi-natural Open Space

- 7.101 These spaces are defined as woodland, scrub, grassland, wetlands and open water, amongst others. FiT guidance requires 1.8ha per 1,000 population of natural and semi-natural open space. The Site includes 8.73ha of retained woodland. Most of which is Ancient. However, as they are Ancient Woodlands, they are ecologically very valuable, and also very sensitive to trampling. Therefore, no public access is proposed into the Ancient Woodland on or adjoining the Site. The existing public footpath which leads though the western part of New Spring is proposed to be fenced/delineated, to control and direct public movement to the path only. Fencing/brush piles, informational signage, and structural planting are also proposed to be incorporated around the Ancient Woodland in order to deter public access into them.

- 7.102 At the Reserved Matters stage, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan and potentially a Forestry Management Plan, will be agreed with the Council in order to manage the trees, wildlife, and access into the woodlands on the Site, as well as New Spring, to enhance these habitats, ensure their continued survival, and to prevent harm to the Ancient Woodlands.
- 7.103 Other areas of semi-natural habitat are proposed to be incorporated into the land around the Ancient Woodland, including new areas of thicket or meadow planting. The proposed swales and the western and southern basins are also proposed to be planted with long grass and thicket species, to create semi-natural landscaped areas which benefit wildlife and ecology, but which are also pleasing to look at.
- 7.104 Further areas of long grassland and meadow are proposed within the north of the development, within the land proposed to be planted for biodiversity enhancement.
- 7.105 New woodland is also proposed in places along the edges of the development.



▲ Information signs and naturalistic planting will be incorporated in areas of semi-natural open space

Allotments

- 7.106 Policy requires 0.27ha of allotment provision per 1,000 population, which equates to 0.41ha on the development. This is proposed to be provided in the central core of the development within the south of Dell Spring, where it is can benefit from shared parking and services with the Community Hub. The allotments are proposed to be in a visually prominent location, and it is acknowledged that allotments often appear visually ‘busy’ with sheds and such like. However, new allotments sites are often designed more as community gardens, where a combination of individual growing plots and shared facilities like storage sheds, green houses and shelters, and compost heaps are provided.



▲ Community food growing space in the form of allotments and orchards are proposed within the development

7. Development Proposals

Equipped and Designated Play Space, and Informal Play

7.107 The development requires the provision of 0.25ha per 1,000 population of equipped play space, and a further 0.30ha per 1,000 population of informal play provision (such as a Multi-Use Games Area (‘MUGA’) and a skateboard park). Considering the topography of the Site and the overhead powerlines, as well as the Site’s proximity to the existing large community park at St Nicholas Park, it is proposed to provide the ‘informal play provision’ via a contribution to improvements within St Nicholas Park. St Nicholas Park does not currently have a MUGA, however, space exists to incorporate one. This will also allow easy access to a MUGA for both existing and proposed residents of Great Ashby and Stevenage. At the detailed design stage, the potential for smaller areas or types of informal play provision which could potentially be accommodated more readily on the Site, will be considered and agreed with the Council.

7.108 The proposals for 640 dwellings therefore require 0.38ha of equipped/ designated play areas. While the exact play area types will be decided at the Reserved Matters stage, the plan at Figure 7.14 shows one way in which the proposed development could accommodate a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (‘NEAP’), illustratively shown within the public open space proposed to the north of the new access road and to the south of Cromdale Walk, near to the existing play area which will be removed to accommodate the access. The illustrative proposals also show one manner in which two Local Equipped Areas of Play (‘LEAP’s) could be accommodated, whilst ensuring the vast majority of homes are within 400m walking distance of a LEAP. Indicatively, LEAPs are proposed within the open space in the far east of the development, and one within the Community Hub area. The LEAP in the far east could form part of the wider area of amenity space which is proposed to be created within the SuDS drainage basin, and pedestrian links could be created between the play and amenity space. A LEAP here would be overlooked by the adjoining houses to the north and south, and would be accessible via the active travel routes as well as the existing public footpath on the eastern Site boundary.

7.109 The other LEAP could be centrally located within the Community Hub and opposite the primary school. An area of amenity grass around the LEAP could allow for further informal play, as well as general informal recreational activities, such as picnics.

7.110 A series of more local play and recreation spaces are proposed, in the form of Local Areas for Play (‘LAPs’). The plan at Figure 7.14 shows how LAPs could potentially be located within the development, in order to ensure that the majority of new homes are within 100m walking distance of a LAP. These LAP will be overlooked by the houses, and will form part of wider areas of public open space, or be located within incidental areas of open space amongst the houses.

7.111 The play areas will be designed to offer play opportunities for children of all abilities, ensuring age and ability diversity in equipment, surfaces, and spatial types. They will include new shrub and tree planting, and will be fenced where deemed necessary. They will include a variety of equipment to allow a range of play activities, and will also include benches and litter bins. The various play areas will either be designed to feature modern, metal play equipment, or timber and more natural materials (such as logs, boulders, and earth mounds), dependant on their proposed location and the surrounding landscape/ townscape character.



▲ The NEAP will include play equipment suited to a wide range of ages



▲ The play areas will include equipment to allow all children to play to their abilities



▲ The LEAP near Dell Spring could comprise natural materials to suit the surrounding landscape

7. Development Proposals

- 7.112 Informal play areas include facilities specifically designed for informal recreation such as pump tracks, parkour elements, bouldering walls, social areas for teenagers, ball courts, multi-use games area or skateboard areas which can provide the opportunity for a variety of experiences to young people with differing skill levels.
- 7.113 While we have noted that a MUGA would not be appropriate on the Site, the potential exists to integrate and distribute playful features within the development along active travel routes, within playable streets or open spaces. These could include play trails, sensory routes, playable public art or changes in levels and textures that encourage interaction with nature. These can create joyful and playful routes connecting destination play spaces, schools and local facilities that encourage active lifestyles. FiT guidance notes that informal play spaces should be reached safely by children and young people. Larger games areas for older children should be within 700m walking distance from home and have a minimum area of 1000 square metres.
- 7.114 It is proposed to incorporate a way-marked exercise or trim-trail within the areas of green infrastructure in Ashby Woods, in order to encourage active lifestyles for children and adults alike. A selection of route distances would be identified and way-marked, and trim-trail stations would be spread out along the different routes in order to provide stopping places and instructions for specific exercises to target the whole body.
- 7.115 Further elements, such as boulder walls and teenage social areas could also be incorporated near the NEAP, which would be within 700m walking distance of the majority of houses within the Site. This could be complimented by scattered and play-on-the-way elements which would be located within the other areas of Green Infrastructure.



▲ Informal play allows for more imaginative use of elements, but a wide age range of people.



▲ Elements of pump tracks could be located throughout the development.



▲ Informal play could take the form of play-on-the-way elements.

7. Development Proposals

DRAINAGE

7.116 In addition to ensuring that the development is not at risk of flooding from external sources, it is also important to ensure that the scheme itself does not exacerbate flood risk for others. It is therefore essential that the arrangements for storm and foul water disposal are fully assessed to guarantee that the effects are mitigated and that there will be no impact on the existing land drainage regime.

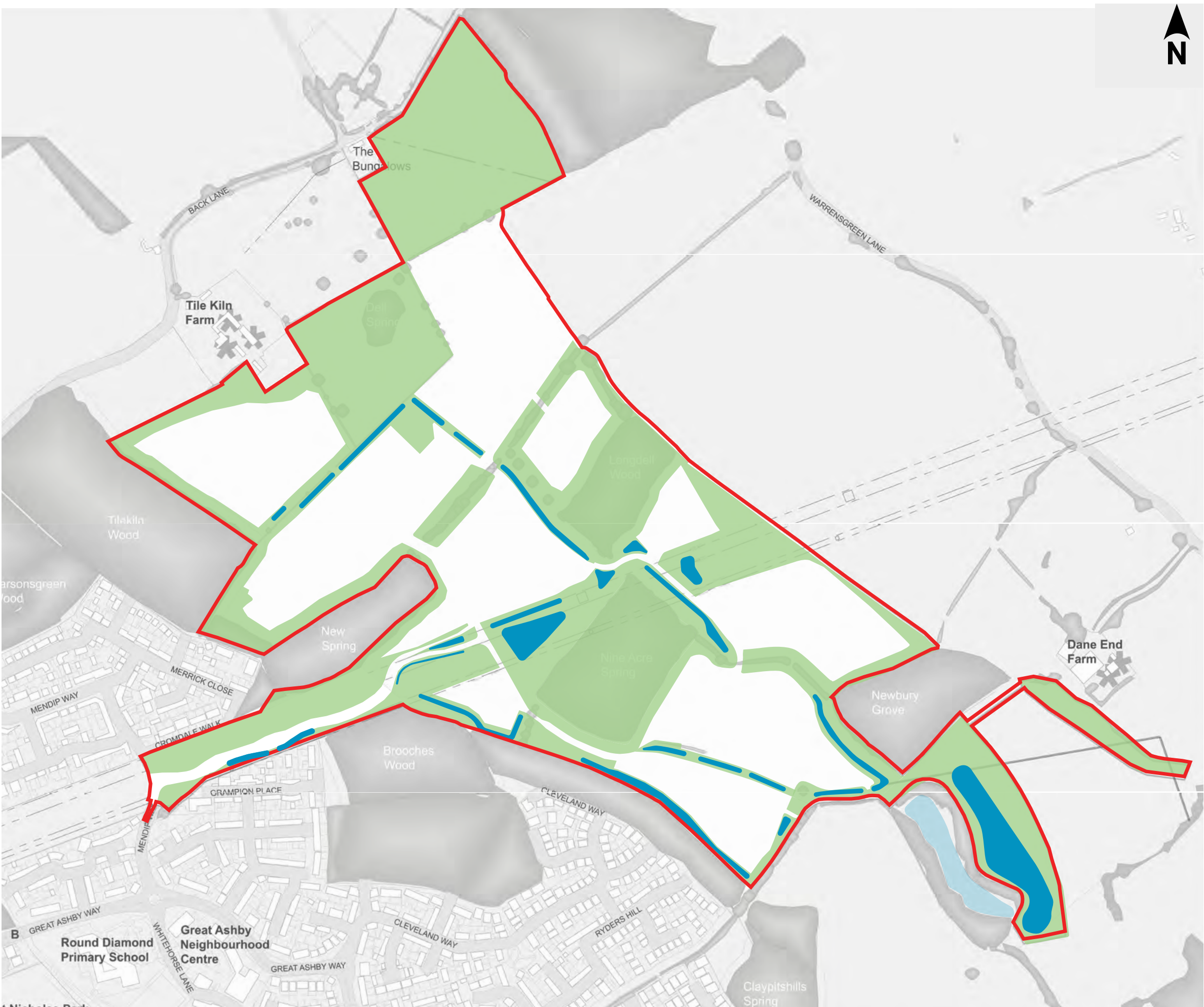
Foul Water Drainage Strategy

7.117 Thames Water acknowledge that there is currently insufficient capacity within the existing sewer network to serve the entire development, however Thames Water are obliged to provide a suitable foul drainage solution to consented development and will therefore ensure that a suitable outfall is available at the time connection is required.

Surface Water Drainage Strategy

- 7.118 All of the recent guidance on the arrangements for storm water disposal from new developments has encouraged the application of a hierarchy for surface water disposal. This has now been formalised in the Building Regulations Part H. The hierarchy is also the basis of the advice on surface water disposal contained within the SuDS Design Guidance for Hertfordshire (March 2015).
- 7.119 The first choice for surface water disposal which should be pursued is via infiltration. Only where it has been determined that the ground conditions are not suitable should the second choice of disposal to a ditch and/or watercourse be considered. If there is no alternative, the third and last choice of disposal to the public sewer can be considered. The results of infiltration testing confirmed that the soakage rates recorded on the Site were generally poor and insufficient to support a fully infiltration-based strategy. It is however considered that infiltration by way of permeable paving can be can utilised in some areas of the Site. This will be pursued where possible.
- 7.120 The Site has been split into three main catchments based upon the Site topography. A series of large attenuation basins will be provided to attenuate the flows for storm events up to an intensity of 1 in 100 years + 40% climatic change. A further allowance will be made for urban creep. The surface water will be conveyed to and between the basins by a combination of landscaped swales and a piped network. Flows will ultimately be discharged to the existing ditch network at the calculated Qbar run-off rate.

- Green infrastructure
- Drainage basins
- Existing drainage basin
- Swales (width shown illustratively)



▲ Figure 7.15 – Drainage Framework Plan

7. Development Proposals

- 7.121 As shown on the sketches in Section 9, the swales and basins are proposed to be attractively landscaped in order to integrate them into the wider landscape and green infrastructure of the development. The basin and swale banks could be designed to be 1:3 gradient, with the swales therefore likely being 1m deep and 7m wide. They will be planted and managed to create wildlife habitat and to be attractive landscape features within the open spaces and street scenes. At the detailed design stage, elements like railings and headwalls will be carefully considered and designed so that the swales and basins do not appear over-engineered.
- 7.122 At the detailed design stage, additional SuDS features such as rain-gardens, roadside swales, and filter strips could be incorporated into the layout within the development areas
- 7.123 There are two main overland surface water flow paths, which both lead roughly north to south within the Site. The flow path within the east of the Site, from Dell Spring, is proposed to be retained within open space within the proposed green infrastructure network along the existing trees and woodland edges. In the west, the flow path which enters the Site via Brooches Wood is proposed to be diverted within a new drainage ditch which will run along the edge of the existing woodland belt to the south west of the Site. The ditch has been located to lie outside of the Root Protection Areas of the woodland, and to form part of the green corridor between the woodland and the new houses. The overland flow will continue to drain into the existing ditch along the south of the Site.



▲ The swales will be planted with suitable vegetation to create attractive landscape elements which benefit ecology and condition the surface water run-off



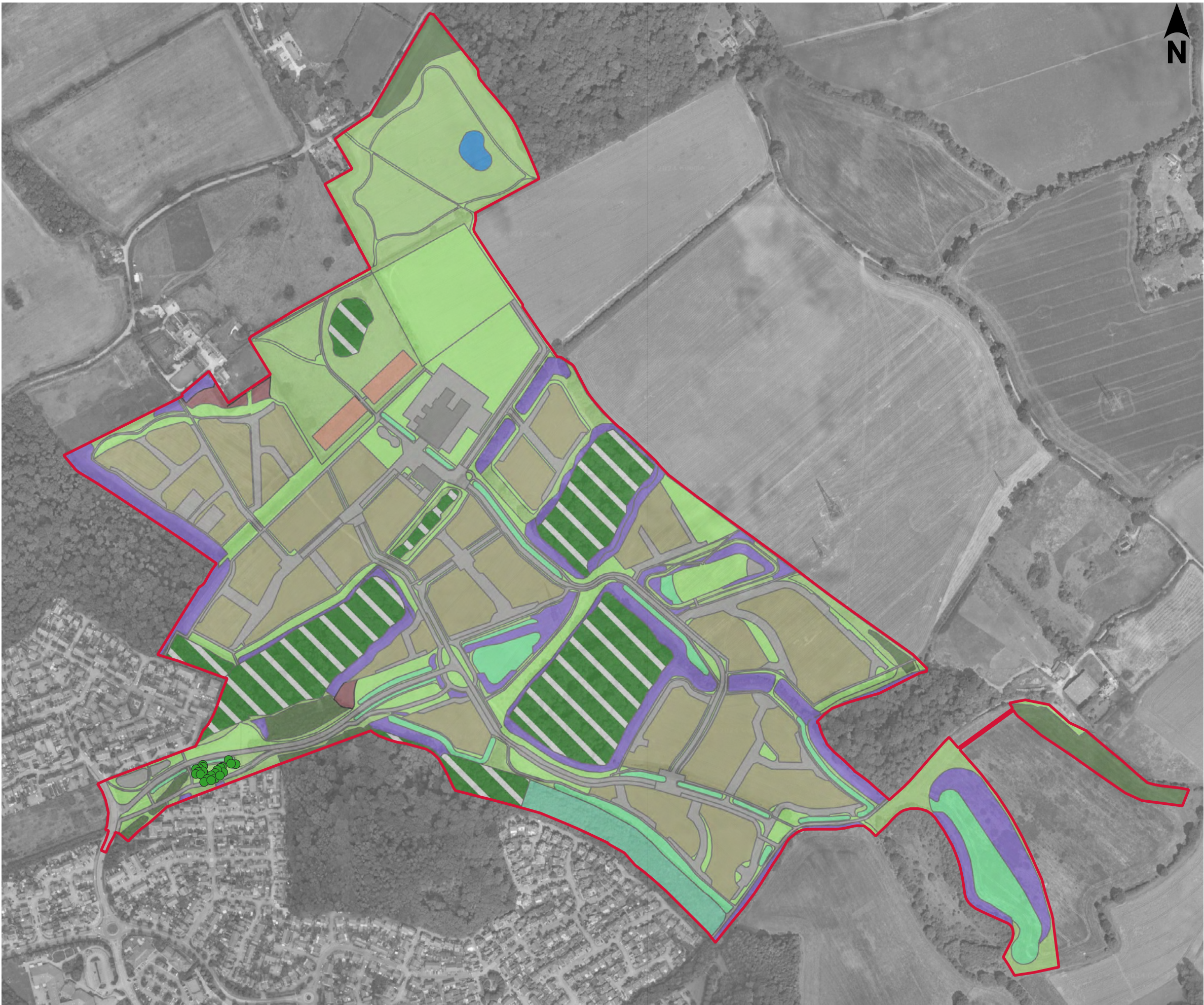
▲ The drainage basins are expected to be dry the vast majority of the time, and will be overlooked by the new homes to provide passive surveillance and to create attractive open spaces

7. Development Proposals

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

- 7.124 The Site has been subject to a full suite of ecological survey and investigations in 2023 and 2024, following previous surveys and investigations. This work included desktop studies, habitat survey and assessment, targeted fauna and protected species surveys, and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations. This work was used to inform the iterative design of the scheme to ensure positive ecological outcomes can be secured. Walkover updates were undertaken in 2025 to consider if the habitats have changed since, and it was confirmed that they still reflect those surveyed earlier.
- 7.125 The ecological interests of the Site are determined largely by its broad habitat composition: large arable fields enclosed by mature broadleaved woodlands with some native hedgerows, mature trees, and smaller areas of grassland.
- 7.126 Arable fields support the least ecological interest, albeit with some notable specialists such as skylark and brown hare. Built development has been largely confined to these areas, seeking to avoid the majority of potential impacts to the Site's ecology.
- 7.127 Woodlands enclose much of the Site and are broadleaved in composition and the majority ancient in origin (present from at least 1650). Typical vegetation includes mature stand of oak, ash, field maple and hornbeam, with some beech and small-leaved lime. The understorey is often well-developed with hazel and hawthorn frequent, along with others such as Midland hawthorn reflecting the age of these woodlands. The ground flora strongly reflects both the underlying soils and ancient status of the woods, with locally abundant bluebell as well as sanicle, wood anemone, and wood meadow-grass. Small areas of recently planted or secondary woodland at the Site provide some lesser habitat interests.
- 7.128 Grasslands at the Site are largely species-poor, but provide important open habitats not well-represented locally. Smaller areas of scrub, hedgerow and mature trees also provide some structural diversity away from woodlands, contrasting with extensive open arable fields.
- 7.129 Faunal interests, with the exception of some farmland birds, are concentrated around wooded habitats and include several badger clans, bat, woodland birds and notable invertebrate species.
- 7.130 The baseline biodiversity value of the site was calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, and subsequently employed to guide good design decisions in respect of biodiversity.

- Site Boundary
- Other neutral grassland (g3c)
- Modified grassland (g4)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- Other woodland-broadleaved (w1g)
- Other coniferous woodland (w2c)
- Mixed scrub (h3h)
- Built-up areas and gardens (u1)
- Developed land, sealed surface
- Buildings (u1b5)
- Sustainable drainage system (g 848)
- Traditional Orchard (g 27)
- Allotments (c 616)
- Ponds (priority habitat)(r1 40)



▲ Figure 7.16 - Habitat proposed as part of the development in order to achieve biodiversity net gain on-site

7. Development Proposals

7.131 In respect to delivering a minimum of 10% gain in biodiversity and to strengthen local ecological networks, the masterplan has been progressed to include the following:

- An additional arable field to the north of the Site, which lies strategically between grassland and parkland habitats around Tilekiln Farm, and Warrengreen Wood and further grassland north of Warrengreen Lane, will be utilised as part of the development. Habitat creation here will deliver in respect of Lawtonian principles ('bigger, better, more joined up'). The following habitats will be created here on lime-rich, clayey soil, to deliver in respect of the:
 - Arable reversion to neutral to lime-rich grasslands, including wetter grasslands of clay.
 - New ponds will be excavated in areas known to be subject to surface water flooding, ensuring ponds will fill and fluctuate naturally.
 - New woodland and scrub planting to extend wooded habitats at Warrengreen Wood.
- New woodland planting south of Dane End Farm to the east of the Site to connect Newberry Wood with other wooded habitats further east.
- New hedgerows along the north eastern edge of the development to provide a habitat connection along this boundary.



▲ Tunnels under roads help prevent mammal deaths due to traffic



▲ Brush piles and deadwood along woodland edges create habitat and deter public access to the woods

- Site Boundary
- Existing 'core' habitats
- Habitat corridors (existing, strengthened & created)
- Mammal tunnel / underpass features
- Strategic habitat creation
- Bat 'hop over' vegetation
- Ancient woodland protective fencing



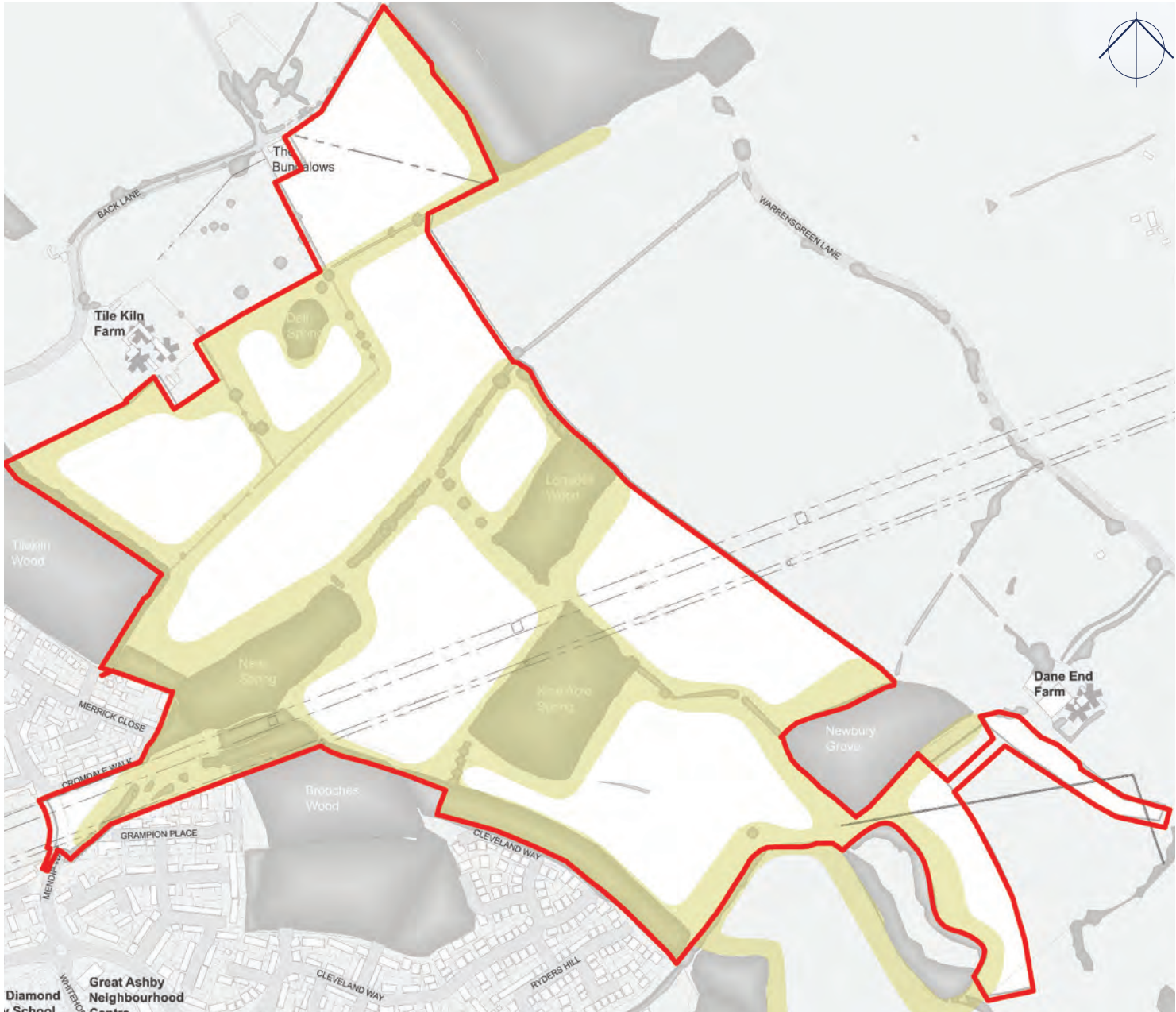
▲ Figure 7.17 - Ecological Mitigation Strategy

7. Development Proposals

Ecological Mitigation Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.132 The scheme has been designed to deliver in excess of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) demonstrated through use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. This takes into account habitat retention, creation and enhancement works as proposed above, as well as the inclusion of tree-lined streets and other landscaping within the built environment. All of the above can be robustly secured through either an appropriately worded planning condition, s106 agreement and/or the control of detailed design at the relevant Reserved Matters stage.
- 7.133 In respect of ecological interests, the proposed development has, through iterative design sought to avoid, minimise, mitigate and ultimately compensate, through the following principles:
- Avoid entirely the loss of any irreplaceable woodland ancient woodland, including for vehicular access.
 - Locate the vast majority of development within arable land of the lowest ecological interest.
 - Reduce the potential fragmentation effects upon habitats, and associated flora and fauna through landscaping and sensitive configuration of open spaces.
 - Mitigate for small scale loss of non-ancient woodland and scrub through new woodland, tree and native shrub planting.
 - Compensate for any unavoidable loss of habitat, or connectivity between habitats, through new habitat creation, including the creation of links between habitat patches in the wider landscape.
- 7.134 The principles will be achieved through the following key ecological measures to be implemented as part of the proposed scheme:
- **Ancient woodland** buffers around all known and suspected broadleaved woodlands, comprising a combination of native shrub planting and woodland edge tall herbs and grasses.
 - **Farmland Birds:** Off-site provision of ground-nesting, feeding and winter forage for a range of farmland species, such as skylark.
 - **Habitats:**
 - Long-term woodland management to counter potential urbanising effects and recreational pressures.

- Design and management of SuDS features, such as swales and basins to maximise their wetland and other habitat interests.
 - Creation of new grassland, scrub, woodland and pond habitats across the Site to deliver a net increase in coverage of all these habitat types.
- **Bats:**
 - Design and management of bat ‘hop-overs’ across key linear habitats (hedgerows, linear woodlands) to maintain connectivity for light-shy bats.
 - Management of woodlands within the Site for bats including the provision of structural diversity and roosting sites.
 - Detailed lighting strategy for the Site to take into consideration nocturnal wildlife, including bats, specifically with regard to the latest Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, with areas which are more sensitive to lighting highlighted on the plan alongside.
- **Badger mitigation**
 - Appropriate use of Natural England derogation licence to close setts that cannot feasibly be retained, or left undisturbed, alongside development.
 - Tunnels with guide walls and sympathetic road design/speed control in close proximity to setts, and known dispersal routes to minimise traffic-related mortality.
 - Defensive thorny planting around known setts which may be subject to disturbance from additional recreation.
- **Invertebrates**
 - Both maintain existing and increase amount of saproxylic (deadwood) resource within the Site through the protection and retention of such resources.
 - Enhance and manage specific features (e.g. chalk pit at Nine Acre Spring Wood) for invertebrates.
 - Generally increase the abundance of calcareous/calicolous plant species at the Site to benefit species associated with this important resource.
 - Provision of wetland and aquatic habitats (e.g. wildlife ponds) not well represented at the Site to encourage aquatic invertebrates.



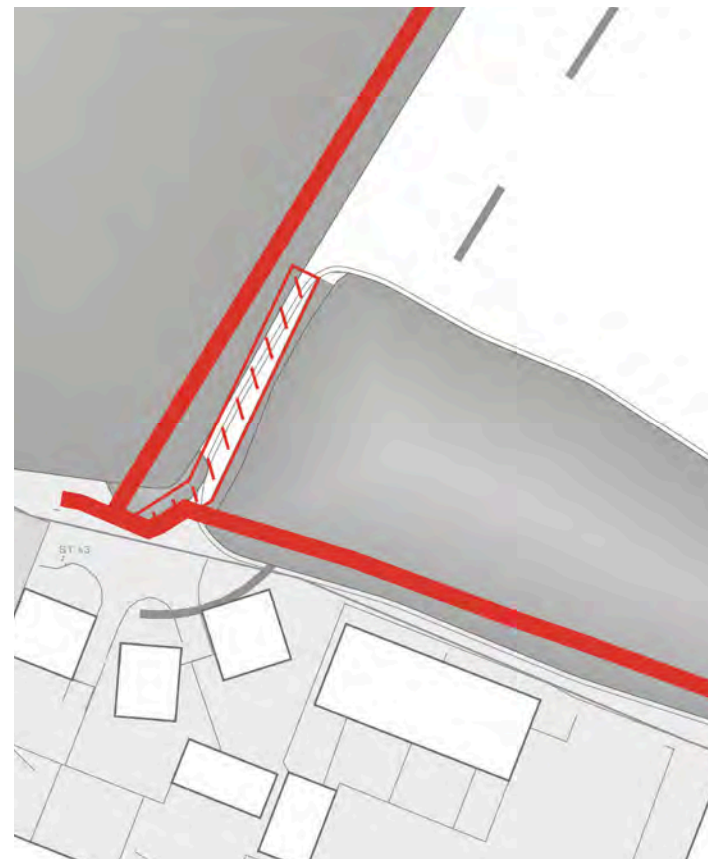
▲ Figure 7.18 - Areas where additional consideration should be given to careful lighting design are highlighted in yellow on the plan

Full and Unreserved Application

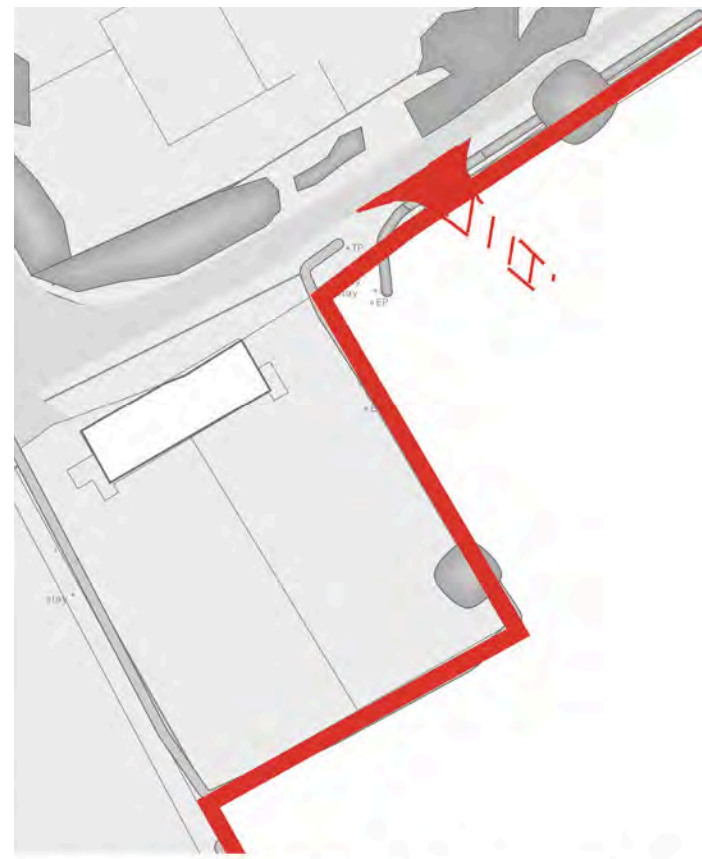


8. Full and Unreserved Application

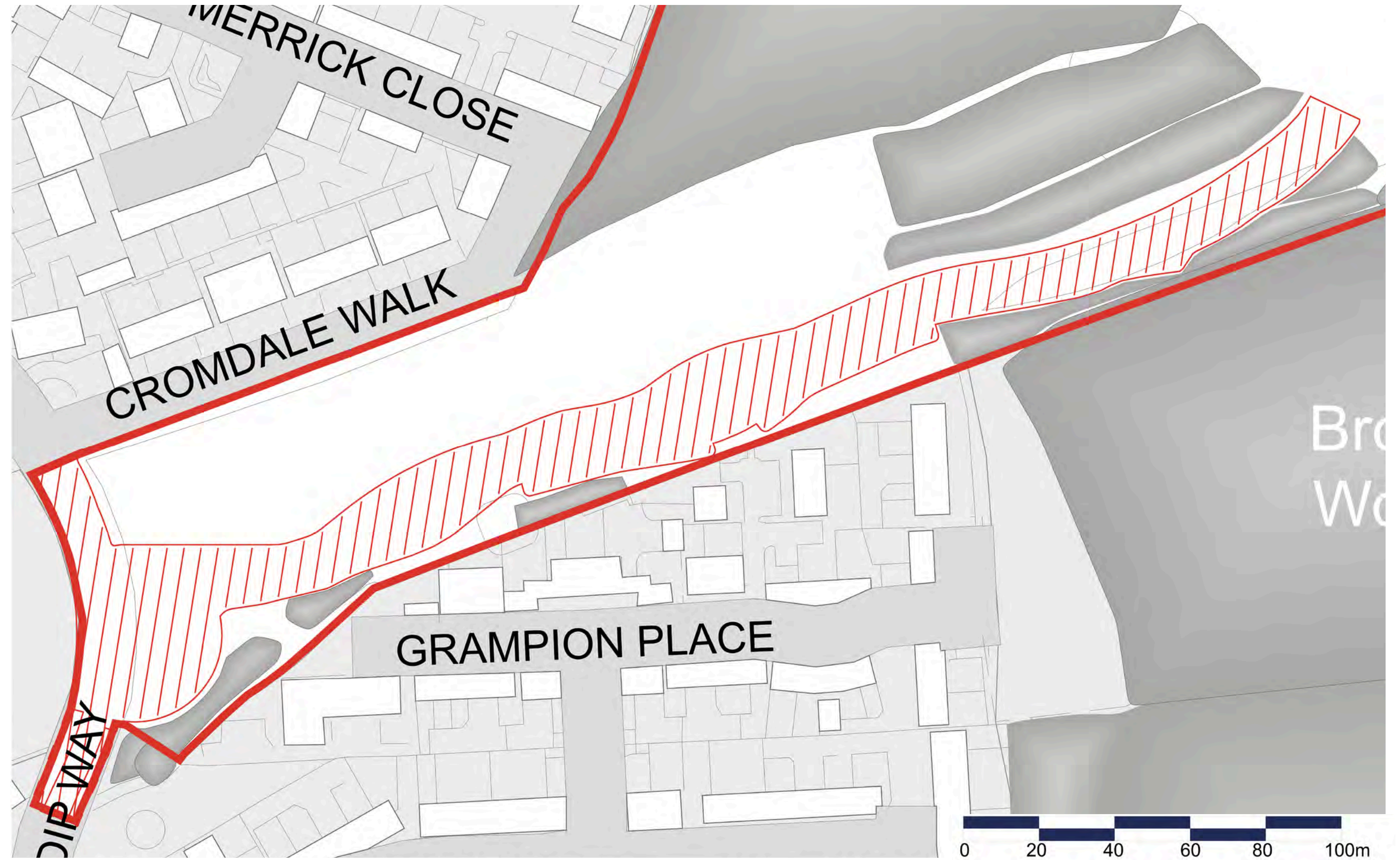
- 8.1 During pre-application discussions with the Council, it was agreed that the primary vehicular and active travel route off Mendip Way would form part of the full application, so that the detailed layout can be considered and agreed at this stage. This will ensure clarity for the various stakeholders.
- 8.2 As part of the access road, the swales serving the road are designed in detail. As the swales could be seen to comprise part of the landscape, it was agreed that the landscaping around the access road will form part of the full application.
- 8.3 In addition, the new junction onto Warrengreen Lane has been designed in detail to illustrate that it can accommodate emergency vehicles, and that access design is therefore an unreserved matter as part of the outline application.
- 8.4 Finally, in order to show that an upgraded pedestrian and cycle access can be provided into the Site off Merrick Close, that access point also forms part of the unreserved matters as part of the outline application.
- 8.5 The plans at Figure 8.1-3 show the location and boundaries of the parts of the Application which are in detail or unreserved.



▲ Figure 8.1 - Merrick Close unreserved access



▲ Figure 8.2 - Warrengreen Lane unreserved access



▲ Figure 8.3 - Mendip Way full application area