MASTERPLANNING,
LANDSCAPE AND
ASSESSMENT

BIDWELLS



January 2025

VISION DOCUMENT

LAND AT CHURCH AND HIGH STREETS, GUILDEN MORDEN

Quality Assurance

Site name: Land at Church and High Streets, Guilden Morden

Client name: EW Pepper

Type of report: Vision Document

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01. INTRODUCTION

Located on the intersection of Church and High Streets, the Site has the potential to deliver new homes to the village of Guilden Morden. On behalf of our client, EW Pepper, this Vision Document will demonstrate the Site's inherent development opportunities, and the potential benefit this may bring for the wider village.

Respectful of it's village location, the proposed masterplan form is landscape-led, protecting the inherent features of the Site, respectful of it's historic setting at the centre of Guilden Morden.

In response to Greater Cambridgeshire's call for sites process, this document will demonstrate how the Site can contribute towards the creation of 'sustainable, healthy, and biodiverse places' in line with the Green Infrastructure aims of the emerging Local Plan.

The emerging masterplan contained within this document is informed by the physical, social and economic considerations of the surrounding settlements, and informed by the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth.



Figure 1.01; Regional Location

THE SITE

Located at the centre of Guilden Morden, the Site has two frontages onto Church Street in the north, and High Street in the west. Currently in agricultural use, it's boundaries are defined by mature hedgerows, which have a existing break to on the intersection of Church and High Streets.

Surrounded by predominantly residential usage, the Guilden Morden Community Pub, the Three Tuns, is located to the west of the Site, on the High Street. Elsewhere, the village benefits from a Church of England Primary Academy, the Edward VII Free House, St Mary's Church, a Quaker Meeting House and cemetery, in addition to a number of local businesses.

Strategically, the Site is located between Bassingbourn, Ashwell and Biggleswade, and benefits from bus routes towards Cambridge and Royston.

In addition to the main Site, delivery of housing would unlock a site off Swan Lane, to deliver additional community benefit. This would either be as a dog off lead area, or nature reserve. Either proposal would preserve the existing Public Right of Way located along its northern boundary.



Figure 1.03; Site Location Diagram







Figure 1.02; Site Photos

02. SITE CONTEXT & ANALYSIS

The following provides an overview of the emerging, adopted local and national planning policies relevant to design considerations.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) sets out the government's national planning policies for England. The NPPF sets out a '*presumption in favour of sustainable development'* (par. 10), recognising that sustainable development is underpinned by three over arching, interdependent objectives (economic objectives, social objectives and environmental objectives) which are interdependent and mutually supportive (par.8).

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that '*The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'*

Paragraph 135 requires that planning decisions should ensure that new developments:

'*a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the Site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'

Paragraph 136 states that *'Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.'*

The NPPF at Paragraph 132 requires design quality to be *'considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.'*

Paragraph 86 of the NPPF sets out that '*Planning policies should pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics.'*

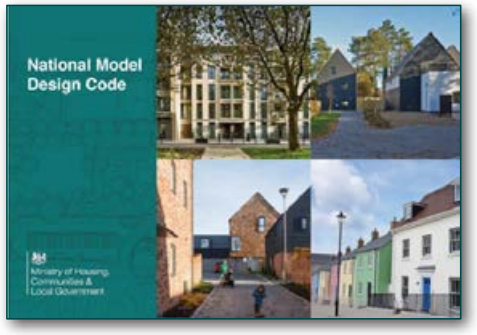
While Paragraph 87 identifies that *'Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for....storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially*

where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation.' While Paragraph 146: *'Stronger emphasis on meeting housing, commercial and other needs in full.'*

A WELL-DESIGNED PLACE (NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODE, 2021)

The development will seek to align with the national and local design requirements whilst responding to the surrounding context to create a well-designed place. The National Model Design Code sets out ten characteristics of a well designed place. These principles are set out under three over arching themes of Climate, Character and Community, and include:

- ***Context***
- ***Identity***
- ***Built form***
- ***Movement***
- ***Nature***



- ***Public spaces***
- ***Uses***
- ***Homes and buildings***
- ***Resources***
- ***Lifespan***

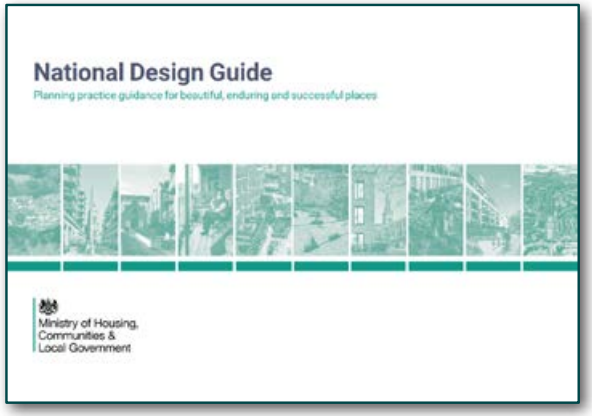


Figure 2.01; 10 Principles of a Well Designed Place

NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE (NDG) (2021)

The National Design Guide further emphasises design process as a way to ensure the delivery of quality places:

- *In a well-designed place, an integrated design process brings the ten characteristics together in a mutually supporting way. They interact to create an overall character of place. Good design considers how a development proposal can make a contribution towards all of them. This applies to proposals of all sizes, including small scale incremental changes (such as highway works), new buildings, infill developments, major developments and larger scale developments such as urban extensions, new neighbourhoods, new settlements and infrastructure. (Para. 13, NDG 2021)*



CAMBRIDGE QUALITY CHARTER

The Cambridge Quality Charter for Growth sets out core principles of the level of quality to be expected in new developments in Cambridgeshire.

The Quality Charter has three overriding aims:

- ***To inspire innovation*** *and the pursuit of higher standards by using examples of what works.*
- ***To help communication*** *by crossing professional boundaries and providing a simple common framework.*
- ***To support a genuinely cooperative approach*** *between stakeholders and consequently secure better value from investment by helping investors align their spending plans.*



Figure 2.02; Cover of the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth

The Quality Charter provides a basis for:

- ***helping communication*** *with existing communities, including those who may want to move into the new settlements;*
- ***equipping councillors and officers*** *with a common language, and enabling them to demonstrate their commitment to achieving quality growth;*
- ***securing investment commitments*** *from government agencies and public utilities, and enabling them to align their spending plans with the growth of new settlements;*
- ***encouraging the private sector*** *to develop better masterplans and development frameworks, and to build quality into their design and management.*



GREATER CAMBRIDGE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY MAPPING (2020)

A Greater Cambridge-wide process has been undertaken to inform the forthcoming joint Local Plan.

The document comes as two parts, Part 1 Baseline Report, which details the seven themes for the Green Infrastructure (GI) and Part 2 Opportunity Mapping which builds on the baseline and forms 14 strategic initiatives.

The GI Themes relevant to our site are (Figure 3.02);

- *Theme 3: The water environment;*
- *Theme 4: Access and Connectivity;*
- *Theme 5: Recreation and play*

From the baseline, each themes has been divided into areas for opportunity.

THEME 3, OPPORTUNITY 3D: CHALK RIVER CATCHMENT AND RECHARGE AREA:

'*Protect the East Anglian chalk groundwater resource through GI features within landscape-scale management and the quality of the resource by reducing pollution and contamination. Promote groundwater recharge, mapping these areas to ensure they become a material consideration for planning zones.'*

THEME 4, OPPORTUNITY 4B: ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS - DISPERSED VILLAGES IN THE WEST:

'*Address deficiencies in access to green space using gI to enhance connectivty between open spaces and dispersed villages in the west.'*

THEME 5, ALL 4 OPPORTUNITIES ARE INCLUDED IN ALL AREAS:

5a *'Adopt an overarching vision for green spaces within Greater Cambridge to tackle the deficiency in open space provision and community access to natural greenspace. The opportunity exists to enhance and create pocket parks and village greens within the settlement edge of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire villages.'*

5b '*Key opportunity exists to create or enhance existing sites to alleviate recreational pressures on sensitive locations which exhibit heritage, landscape and biodiversity value or those at visitor capacity within the east and west of South Cambridgeshire. These sites include terrestrial and water based recreation sites which are often at visitor capacity.'*

5c '*Improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of local open space and sports facilities. The opportunity exists to create new green spaces at a range of scales by exploring various alternative funding mechanisms.*'

5d *'Introduce access improvements from local settlements to recreational sites, providing a renewed focus on sustainable modes of transport and a reduced reliance on car travel.*'

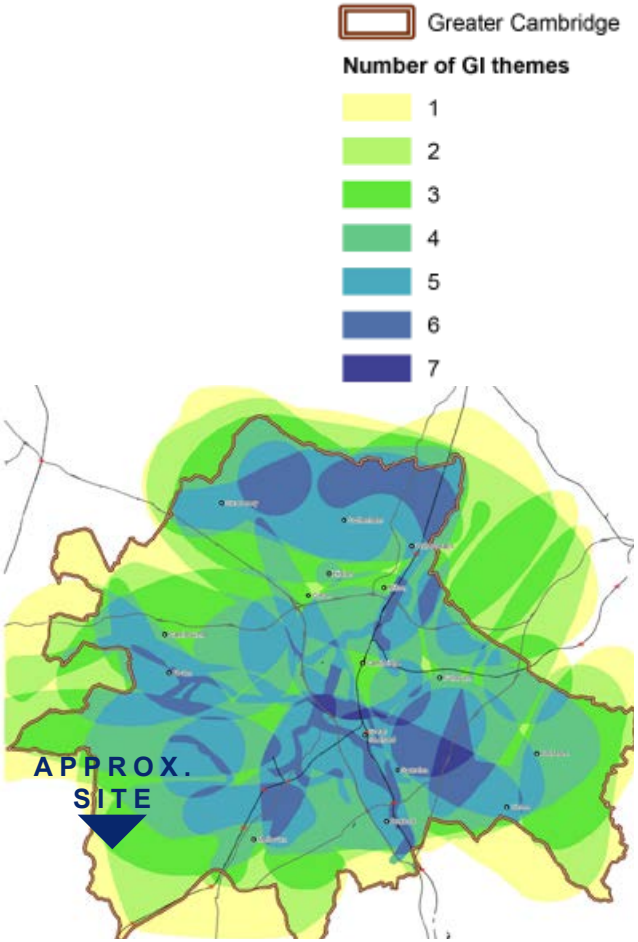


Figure 2.03: Map showing the Combined Broad Opportunities Map

FLOODING

A Flood Risk Technical Note was undertaken by MEC Development Engineers in February 2020. This report identifies the steep gradient on the site with a fall of 6.64m from the eastern corner and western corner of the site. There are no Flood Zones 2 or 3 associated with the site, with the nearest associated with Morden Hall to the East.

The key findings of the note are:

- *'All development will be contained in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore sequentially acceptable.*
- *Other sources of flood risk to the site are considered to be low to very low.*
- *Groundwater presents a possible flood risk to the site due to an underlying Aquifer. The level of risk from groundwater should be established through a ground investigation.*
- *It is recommended that soakage testing on the site is undertaken to confirm soakage rates*
- *The development will not increase runoff or flood risk downstream by utilising a sustainable drainage system to store runoff and discharge into the ground via infiltration.'*



Figure 2.04; Flood Zones 2 and 3, identified by the gov.uk's Flood Map for Planning

TRANSPORT

A Technical Note has been prepared by MEC Development Engineers examining transport matters pertinent to the residential development of the site, completed in February 2020.

The key findings of the note are:

- *'Local facilities are situated within a 1.6km walking distance of the site including education leisure facilities. The nearest bus stop is located within 226m walking distance of the site and is served by the 127 service which provides access to Royston*
- *The site will be accessed via T-Junction off High Street, footways will be provided to link to the existing footway provision.*
- *Vehicular visibility splays visibility of 2.4m x 52m to the south and 2.4m x 51m to the north are achievable.'*

A copy of the proposed visibility splay location and associated hedgerow removal identifies a localised area on High Street, to serve the proposed dwellings.

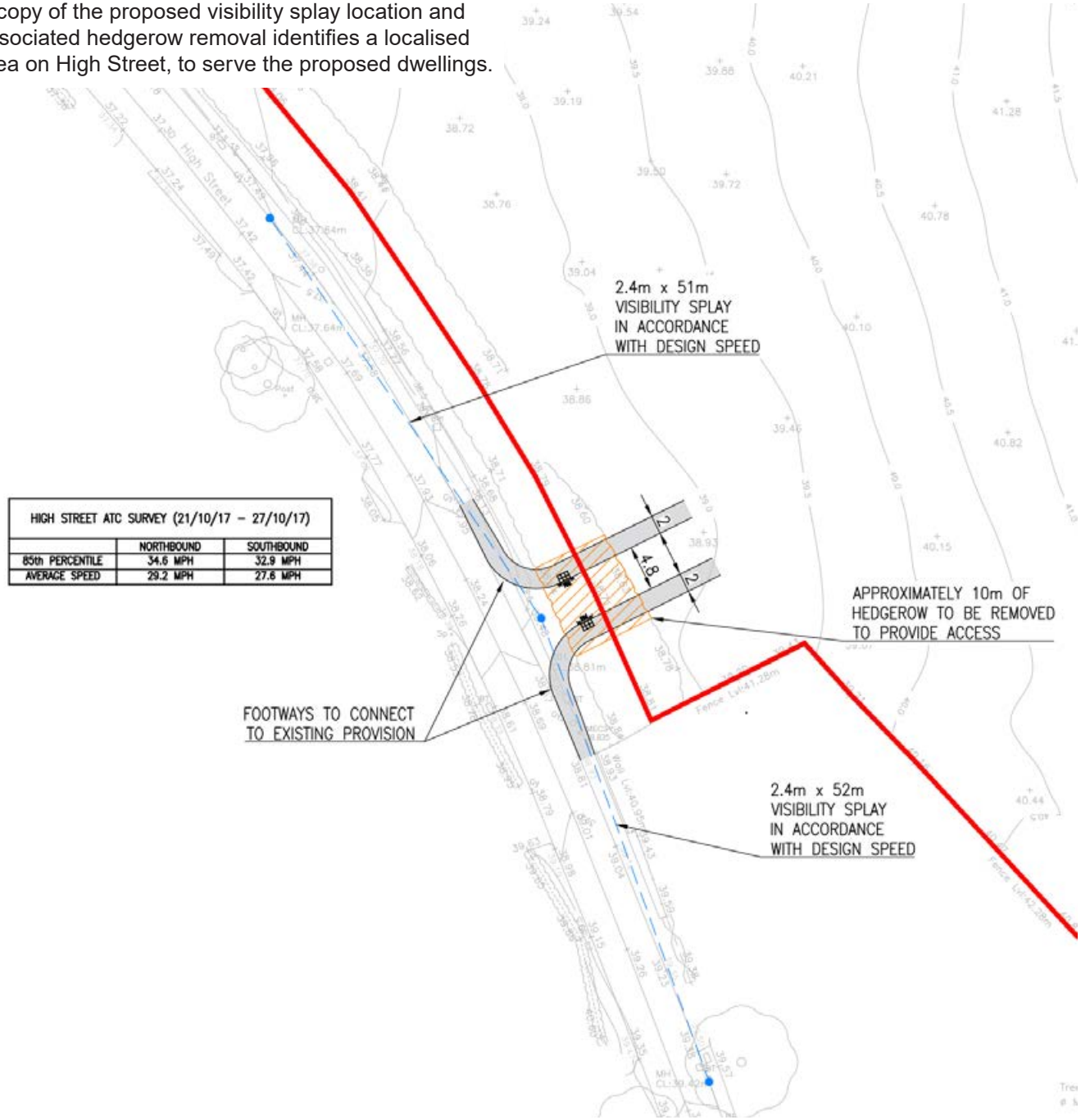


Figure 2.05; Proposed highways access junction, including extent of hedgerow removal and visibility splay.

ECOLOGY

A Regulation 18 Ecology Report has been undertaken by Applied Ecology Ltd in February 2020. The key conclusions of the report include:

- *'The Site is comprised of widespread habitats of relatively low biodiversity value that do not represent a development planning constraint.*
- *The Site is considered likely to have limited protected faunal interest that should be straightforward to appropriately manage by adopting standard ecological mitigation and compensation approaches as part of detailed development planning going forward.*
- *The Site is not protected by any statutory or non-statutory wildlife site designations and there are no such sites particularly close to the Site. Significant adverse impacts (either direct or indirect) on nearby wildlife sites as a result of development construction and/or operation, are not predicted to occur.'*

Based on the 41-unit scheme submitted previously, the Site was identified as having the ability to deliver a 23.3% net gain in biodiversity, a quantum similar to that identified within this renewed vision.

03. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Through a process of baseline investigation, Site visits and engagement with stakeholders, a number of Opportunities and Constraints have been identified which provide a framework within which the proposed development will be brought forward.

LAND USE

- The Site is currently in agricultural use, despite it's location at the heart of Guilden Morden.
- The boundaries of the Site are well enclosed by mature vegetation, limiting visual permeability through the site.
- Surrounding the Site is land in residential use, of varying ages of establishment. The scale of these dwellings and their associated gardens feature a large degree of variation.

VEGETATION & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- There is significant vegetation on the boundaries of the Site, which will be protected and retained as part of any scheme bought forward. There is an **opportunity** to reinforce this in any scheme bought forward.
- There are inherent Green Infrastructure **opportunities** both within the main Site, and the Swan Lane Site. These two sites combined have the ability to substantially enhance biodiverse, publicly accessible public open space, well located on the existing, connected footpath network for Guilden Morden. These will provide wellbeing enhancements, alongside substantial biodiversity enhancement opportunities.
- An existing gap in the hedgerow at the intersection of High and Church Streets, should be maintained and preserved, with the **opportunity** to allow for access to the Site's Green Infrastructure,creating a new, publicly accessible view at the heart of the village.
- There is significant **opportunity** to deliver a substantial net gain in biodiversity.
- There is an **opportunity** to provide a new area for play at the heart of the village, complementing the play equipment at Guilden Morden Park in the east of the village. This play area should be designed to be bespoke, to create a range of play opportunities with natural elements, are inclusive, allow for varying ages, while allowing for risk and challenge.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- The northern and western boundaries of the Site are included within the Guilden Morden Conservation Area. This will be respected in proposals brought forward.
- The vegetation along the boundary of the Site is included within the emerging Local Plan as an Important Countryside Frontage. There is an **opportunity** to preserve this frontage, and to use this as a defining feature of the scheme.
- There is an **opportunity** to provide a new publicly accessible open space at the very heart of the Guilden Morden population, providing a 'village green' for the community.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

- There is **opportunity** to create new, biodiverse drainage or attenuation features at the heart of the scheme, bringing people closer to nature, and providing a direct seasonal link.
- There is **opportunity** to ensure proposed drainage features promote infiltration, promoting the themes identified in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping.

PROVISION OF NEW HOMES

- There is an **opportunity** to deliver a number of new homes in this desirable village location, of a variety of sizes and tenure to reflect local need.
- There is an **opportunity** to enhance the existing linear character of the settlement, locating new, sensitively designed homes at the heart of the village, providing a logical Site to provide new homes in the village.

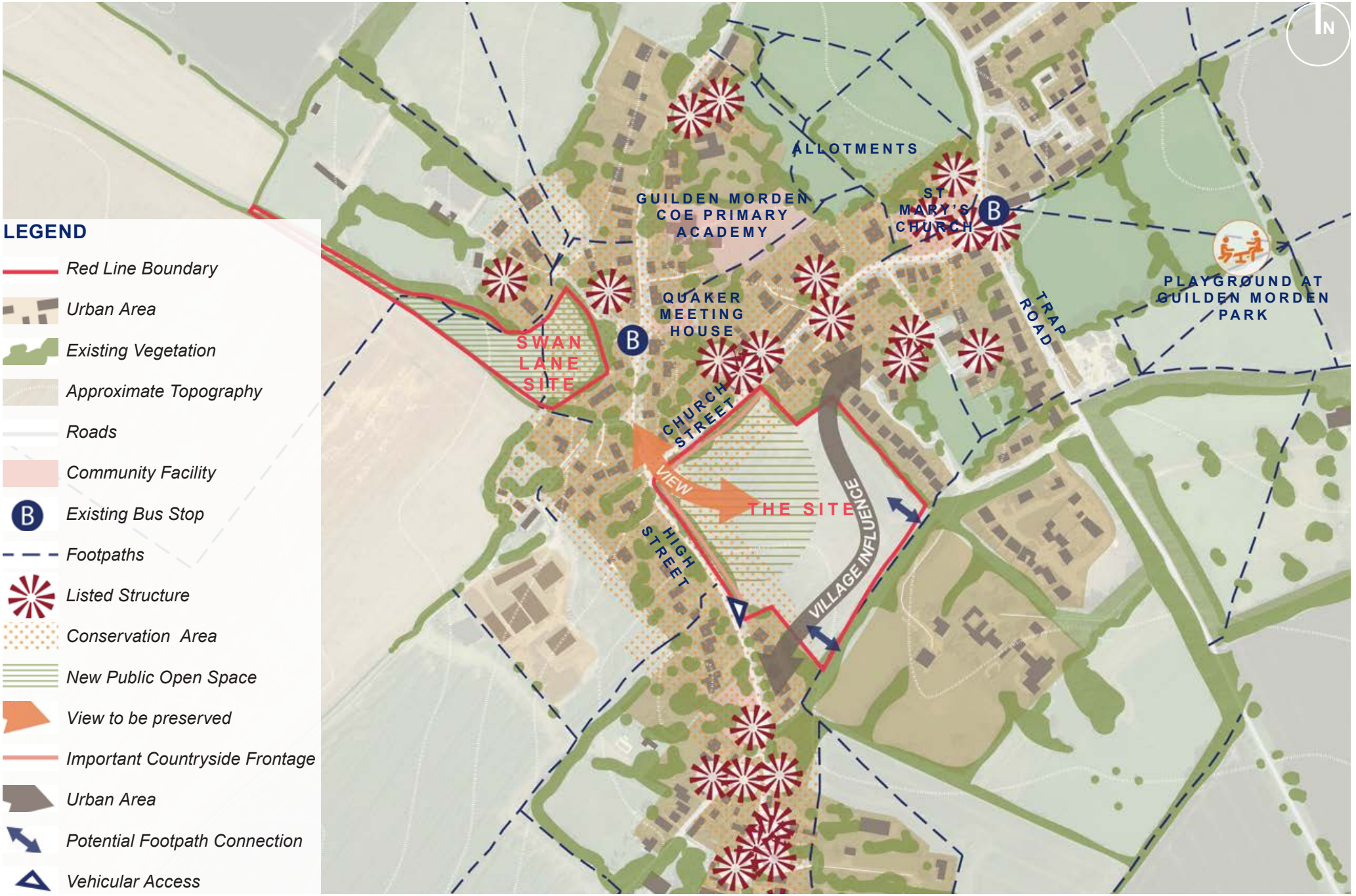
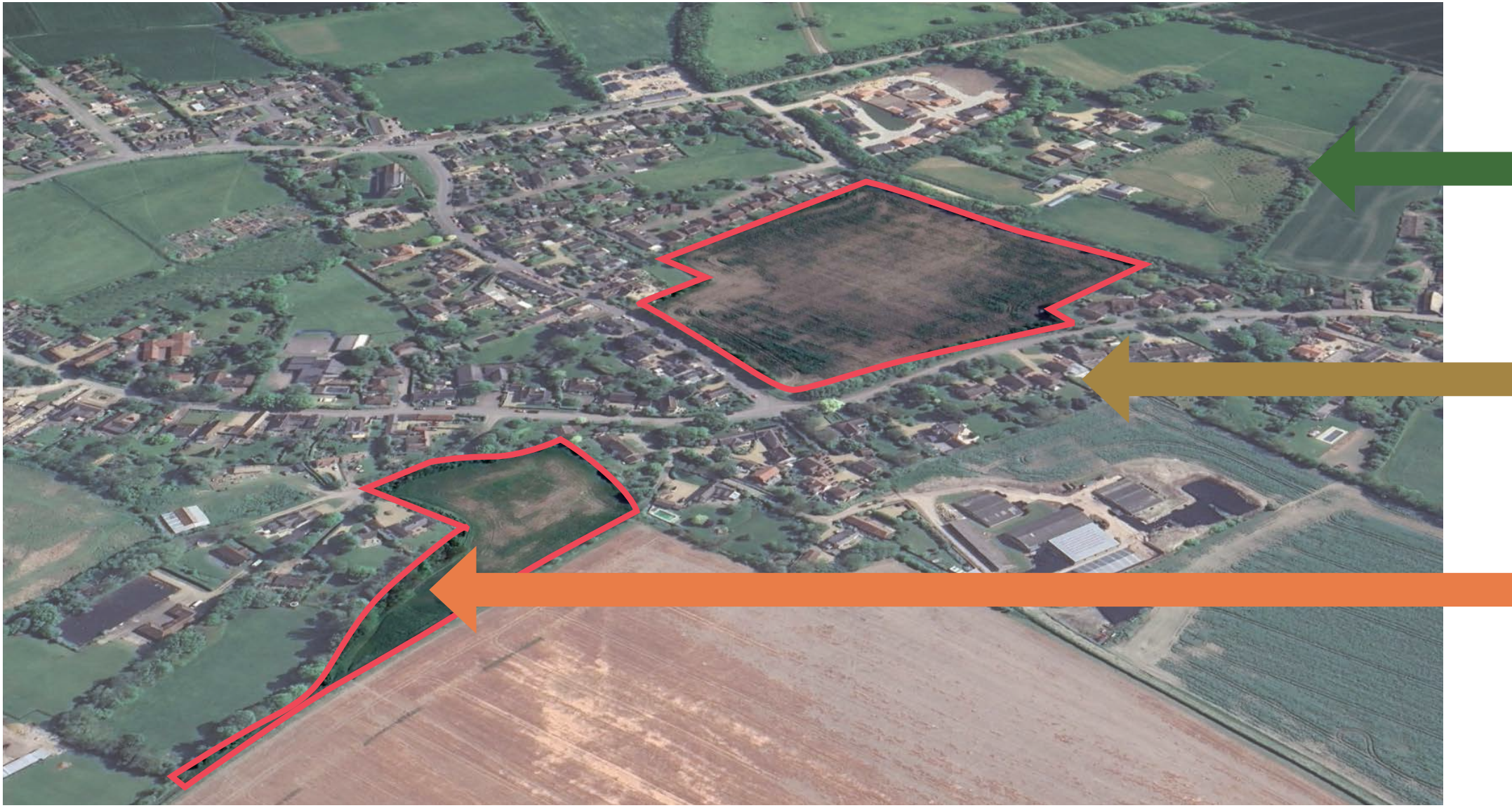


Figure 3.01; Design Consideration Diagram

04. OUR VISION





LANDSCAPE LED



SYMPATHETICALLY DESIGNED



ENHANCED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Land at Church and High Streets, Guilden Morden presents a unique opportunity to deliver a high-quality, landscape-led development, shaped by its distinctive setting and responsive to local community needs. New homes will integrate seamlessly with a new village green, at the heart of a sustainable and thoughtful approach to Green Infrastructure. Inviting the community in, recreational and social spaces will be provided within an ecologically rich landscape that enhances the existing Important Countryside Frontage.

Proposed dwellings will complement and enhance the established character of Guilden Morden, delivering high-quality, sustainable homes that enrich the village. Biodiverse Public Open Space will provide a direct, off-road link to the well-connected public right of way network, combining access to nature with new community and play facilities to foster a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

05. PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK MASTERPLAN

The Site will deliver a high-quality, sustainable development of up to 45 new homes, integrated within 2.28ha of publicly accessible green landscape in central Guilden Morden, with an additional 1.1ha at the Swan Lane Site.

Existing vegetation around the Site will be retained and enhanced through additional planting. An existing hedgerow gap will frame views into new Public Open Space, featuring a community play area. The Swan Lane Site will provide dedicated public open space, significantly increasing green space and biodiversity opportunities within the village.

New housing will enclose the open space, connecting existing linear residential areas along the southern and eastern boundaries and integrating seamlessly with the village form.

New pedestrian links will improve connectivity with the existing public rights of way network, connecting the village heart with recreational routes and supporting active travel and healthy lifestyles.

The proposals will address climate change through sustainable design and construction, reduced carbon emissions, and resilient infrastructure, creating a distinctive, enduring place for present and future generations.

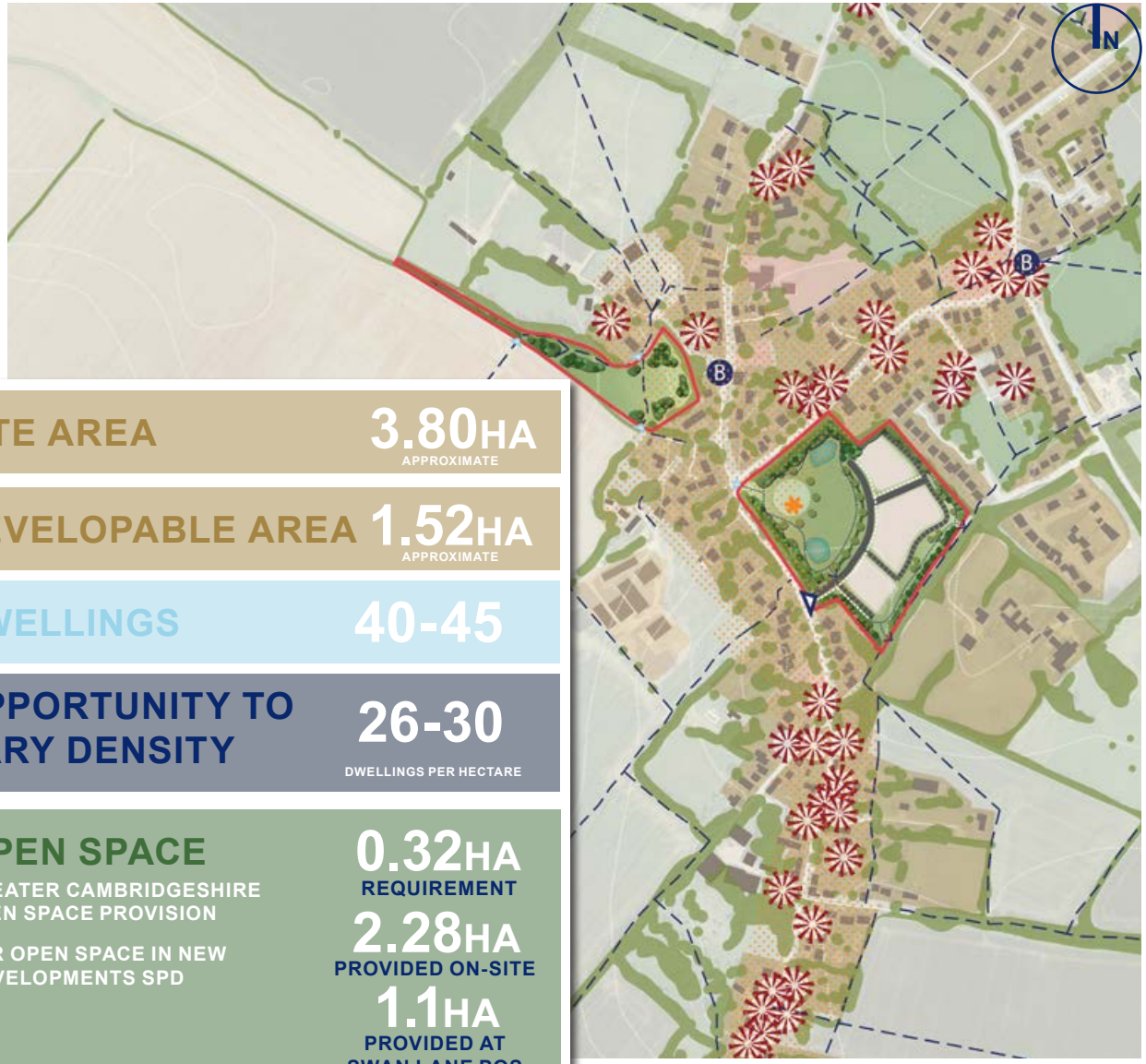


Figure 5.01; Framework masterplan

SYMPATHETICALLY DESIGNED

LEGEND

- Red Line Boundary
- Urban Area
- Existing Vegetation
- Approximate Topography
- Existing Roads
- Community Facility
- Existing Bus Stop
- Footpaths
- Listed Structure
- Conservation Area
- Developable Area
- Primary Road Route
- Secondary Road Route
- Pedestrian Route
- Proposed Play Feature
- Proposed Planting
- Proposed Surface Water Drainage Feature
- Pedestrian and Cycle Access
- Vehicular Access

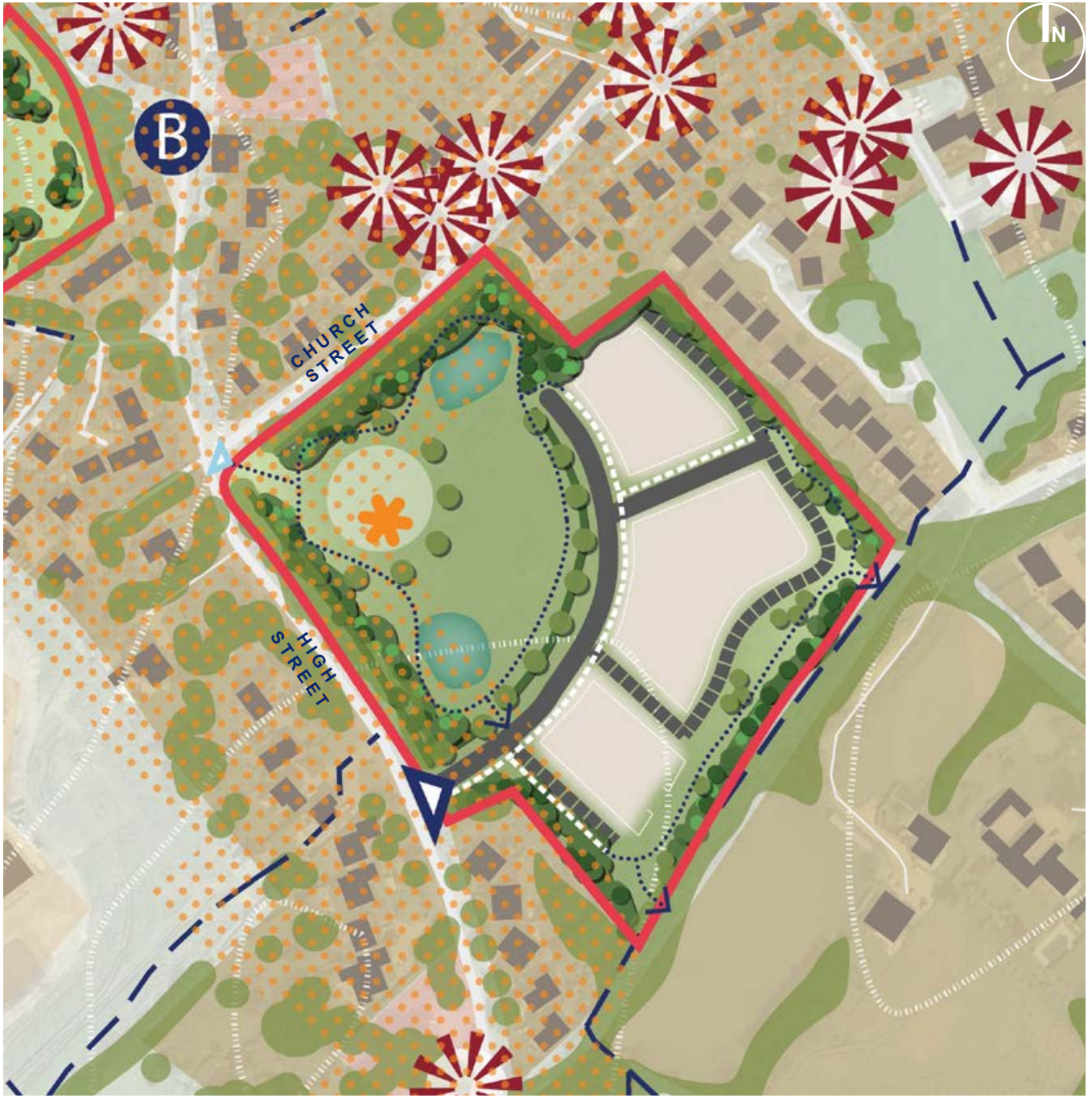


Figure 5.02: Strategic Master Plan

06. OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS

IMPORTANT COUNTRYSIDE EDGE

The boundaries of the Site shared with Church and High Streets are designated within both the emerging and adopted Local Plans as an Important Countryside Edge.

The designation of this edge is considered not appropriate at this location, given that the countryside cannot be said to be sweeping into the village at this location due to it's complete enclosure by surrounding residential properties, preventing a meaningful connection with the countryside beyond.

Regardless, the mature hedgerow boundaries provide an important feature in the structure of Guilden Morden, and are an important contributor to the character of the village, and as such these will be respected and maintained, with additional planting reinforcing their existing sparse condition at ground level.



View of the existing Important Countryside Edge along High Street on the western boundary. The enclosed nature of the Site is evident, even in this mid-winter view.

Figure 6.01; View into the Site

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Site will deliver extensive Public Open Space at the heart of Guilden Morden, creating a new community-focused village center. Formal play facilities will complement open grassed areas for informal play and recreation. Existing vegetative boundaries will be retained and enhanced with additional planting and SuDS features to increase biodiversity and habitat diversity. The Swan Lane Site will adopt a wilder character, delivering targeted biodiversity gains with public access to promote the benefits of connection to nature.



Figure 6.02; Landscape Precedent Imagery

BUILT FORM CHARACTER

The Site's character and materiality will draw from the surrounding Conservation Area to create a varied, sympathetic development palette reflecting the village context.

- Built form will overlook all Public Open Space and comprise predominantly 2 storey dwellings, with instances of 1.5 storey appropriate in select locations.
- Appropriate materials include buff and red brickwork with decorative courses, light-colored render (white or cream), decorative brick lintels, and decorative quoins in stone or brick. Black timber weatherboard on secondary or recessive frontages would reflect the village's rural character.
- Property boundaries will be primarily defined by vegetation and hedgerows, with timber paling fences appropriate for smaller properties where planted front gardens are provided.

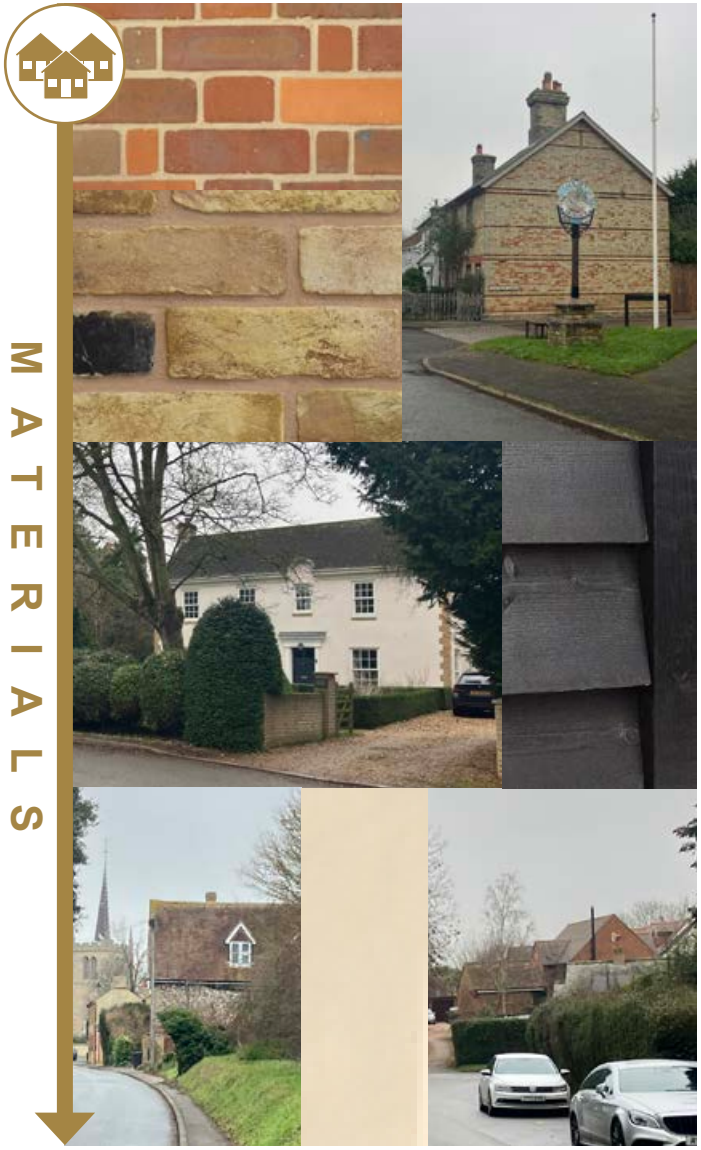


Figure 6.03; Built Form Character

THE BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

The Site offers a landscape-led development, delivering high-quality homes, with character inspired by the character of Guilden Morden, integrated with a public facing village green featuring community facilities and ecological enhancements. Crucially, the residential development on the Church and High Streets site allows the delivery of a significant new public open space at Swan Lane.

Affordable housing, for local people

Sympathetically designed, to reflect Guilden Morden

Creation of two new public open spaces

Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

New centrally located playspace

Opportunity for areas of free play

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