



PLACEMAKING & VISION DOCUMENT

LAND AT WOODS FARM, SHIRLEY

Rickett Architects Limited

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Status
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VISION DOCUMENT
LAND AT WOODS FARM

SHIRLEY, SOLIHULL

Document: Vision Document

Introduction

Woods Farm, Shirley

01.1 PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This vision document aims to set out the case for residential development on the Woods Farm site, to demonstrate the social, environmental and sustainability credentials of the location to support the provision of housing in the Solihull Local Plan.

The document will explore the physical and contextual nature of the site, expand on the constraints and opportunities it presents and set out the basic principles of a sustainable and creative housing development that will support the case for up to 750 housing units to be allocated within the Solihull Local Plan.

Thus, this vision document will establish:

- Ability of the site to support the housing numbers proposed and the constraints that will define any future development.
- Series of agreed principles that will guide future development.
- An overarching vision against which planning applications can be assessed.



Introduction

Woods Farm, Shirley

01.2 CONSULTATION

This site has evolved during an extensive consultation period in respect of the emerging Local Plan Review. Prior to that the site was promoted to the Council as a potential development opportunity as part of the Council's 'Call for Sites' and the 'Scope, Issues and Options' consultation in late 2015.

In support of this a full suite of supporting studies was undertaken over the whole site. These were:

- A full tree survey identifying all native and hedge-row trees and vegetation, noting position, canopy and condition;
- A detailed Flood Risk and Drainage Appraisal including a strategy for Sustainable Urban Drainage and for foul water disposal.
- A Traffic Assessment and Access Strategy.
- A detailed Ecological Assessment
- A full Landscape Appraisal.

The results of these studies were distilled into a constraints and opportunity analysis for the site which identified that there are no overriding 'Policy Off' constraints to development.

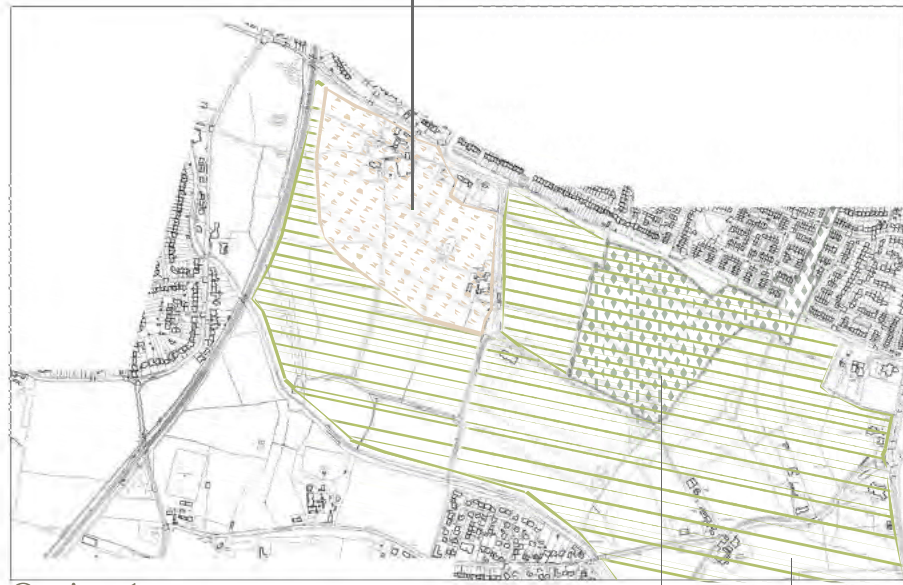
Landscape Appraisal

Ecological Assessment

Flood Risk Assessment

Traffic & Access Strategy

SITE 26 Development Area Option 1
14.6 hectares (36 acres)
circa 525 units

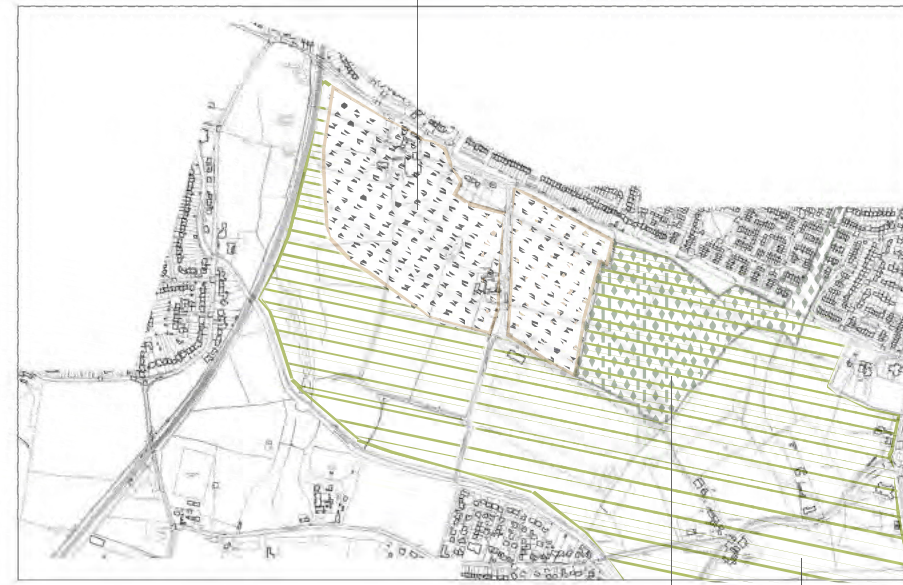


Option 1

open space

green belt

SITE 26 Development Area Option 2
21.3 hectares (52 acres)
circa 756 units



Option 2

open space

green belt

SITE 26 Development Area Option 3
32 hectares (79 acres)
circa 1150 units



Option 3

open space

green belt

Woods Farm, Shirley

01.2 CONSULTATION

Following an initial meeting with SMBC and other landowners/promoters of sites across South Shirley, further analysis was undertaken specifically in respect of highways in order to refine both access and potential development capacity.

This informed the further submission to the Supplementary Consultation in early 2019 which was based upon the Council's revised proposals for the site (Site 26). Three potential development options were put forward at this stage. These were based upon Site 26, an enlarged Site 26 including an element of the previous Site 13 allocation and maintaining a 300 metres

separation to Dickens Heath and, thirdly, a more extensive development with a reduced buffer area to the south.

Subsequent to this and, in part, in response to concerns raised by members of the public during the Supplementary Consultation regarding perceived parking issues in residential roads close to Solihull station, detailed parking and speed surveys have taken place in the surrounding road network. In addition, a full Heritage Assessment has been undertaken in respect of designated and non-designated Heritage Assets within the site, including the Listed Whitlocks Farmhouse.

These additional studies reveal no constraints to development and that there are no substantive parking issues within the surrounding residential roads - certainly none that provide any concern in relation to development at Site 26. It was also agreed at a subsequent meeting with SMBC to look at Masterplan options based upon a development capacity of up to 750 dwellings across the site.

These options are set out in this Vision Document which will form the basis of further consultation with SMBC and representatives of the local community.

The background of the page is a photograph. On the left, the front of a yellow tractor is visible, showing its cabin and headlights. On the right, there is a large brick building with a blue roof, which has solar panels installed on it. The sky is clear and blue.

VISION DOCUMENT

Strategic Context

Woods Farm, Shirley

02.1 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

Solihull Council has to review its Local Plan to identify updated housing needs and to take account of the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (GBHMA) - Strategic Growth Study (2018). It is not the aim nor the intention of this Vision Document to consider issues relating to housing requirements; it is sufficient to note that the context in which the Vision for this site has been developed is one where SMBC will have to identify land to accommodate a substantial number of additional houses to meet the needs of the local community as well as the wider needs of the GBHMA.

It is accepted that, in order to meet any reasonable assessment of housing needs, there will have to be significant releases of land from the Greenbelt.

Strategic Context

Woods Farm, Shirley

Land at Shirley has been identified as a sustainable location which is capable of delivering a significant number of the Borough's housing needs. Land at Woods Farm (Site 26) forms part of this group of housing sites which are supported by existing social and physical infrastructure and which offer the potential to provide enhanced services to meet the needs of new and existing communities.

Land at Woods Farm is at the forefront of this in that it can deliver a swathe of benefits to the wider community whilst also delivering the sort of sustainable housing that the Borough requires.





Woods Farm, Shirley

The Masterplan demonstrates, for example, that development in this location can deliver housing with excellent links to a range of public transport facilities (including rail) as well as providing enhanced public open space for the wider community.

In terms of the quantum of development, the only constraints will be 'Policy On' constraints arising from the Council's objective of maintaining a degree of separation (300 metres) between Shirley and Dickens Heath. The canal forms a natural northern limit to Dickens Heath (and has always been accepted as such since the Dickens Heath Masterplan was first prepared). Accordingly, any further growth in this area is to be to the south of Shirley with the canal remaining a strong and defensible boundary to Dickens Heath. It is on this basis that this Masterplan has identified and utilises existing hedgerows within Site 26 to create a natural edge to the development area whilst maintaining the degree of separation to Dickens Heath that the Council wishes to see.

This Vision Document is intended to assist SMBC in the next stage of its Local Plan Review and to establish an agreed quantum and form of development.

Site Analysis

03.1 LANDSCAPE CONEXT

The site is situated to the South of Shirley, bordered by the Stratford Upon Avon Canal to the South, the railway line to the West and by the built up extent of Shirley to the North, beyond Bills Lane. The Eastern boundary of the proposed site is formed by a mature hedgerow beyond which lies further open space which is proposed by the council to be retained for community use.

The adjoining development pattern to the north is characterised by inter- and post- war estate housing, long terraces and semi detached units set back from the highways edge by foregardens and parking areas. There is little variety or architectural value in the predominantly 2 storey typology.

The site is currently serviced from Bills Lane to the North, and extends to 60 Hectares (150 acres) which forms part of a larger land holding that is predominantly used for growing, harvesting and distributing Christmas trees.

The topography of the site slopes gently to the canal at the southern boundary. Views into and out of the site are restricted to those from the bridleways that cross the site and from the railway line itself. Bills lane offers some views into the northern extent of the site but this is limited.



03.1 LANDSCAPE CONEXT

The site operations are focussed on the area adjacent to Bills lane which include 2 residential properties and a number of commercial buildings. There are some 20 further residential properties within the site.



03.2 Access, Movement & Public Transport

The site currently benefits from four separate access points onto Bills lane, which serve both the existing commercial and residential developments on the site. Bills Lane runs on an east to west alignment along the site frontage and routes between the junction with Haslucks Green Road to the west and the A34 Stratford Road to the north. Bills Lane fronts the site on the northern boundary and within the vicinity of the site, Bills Lane is a single carriageway road, with a typical carriageway width of approximately 5.5m. The road is lit and subject to 30mph speed limit with a pedestrian footway provided on the northern side of the carriageway. The level of traffic using Bills Lane is relatively low, both within the peak hours and during a typical day, with a daily two-way flow of circa 6,800 vehicles.

To serve future development, a new and an upgraded access point would be provided. The new access would be situated to the north west of the site and will comprise of a ghost island right turn lane. The upgraded access will be situated to the east and will replace the existing priority-controlled junction, situated on the corner of Bills Lane. The upgraded junction would most likely comprise a mini roundabout. The two junctions would be linked through the site via a main residential spine road, from which lower order roads would be provided to serve the development parcels.



Access, Movement & Public Transport

03.3 sustainable connectivity

In terms of sustainable access, the site is well situated to benefit from existing and future infrastructure. Footways are provided along Bills Lane and throughout the surrounding area. Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are present through the site, which provide direct access into Dickens Heath, where several local services and facilities, including schools and bus services can be accessed.

Cycle facilities are provided throughout the local area and include both advisory and traffic free routes, including the Stratford-Upon-Avon Canal tow path and the Cole Valley Cycle Route, which provides access into central Birmingham.

Shirley Railway Station, situated approximately 750 metres to the north of the site, is managed by West Midlands Railway (WMR) and operates services between Kidderminster and Stratford via Birmingham Moor Street and Birmingham Snow Hill, with a frequency of every 20 minutes in both directions at peak times.

In addition to the above, the development site would benefit from the proposed Sprint Bus Service, which is expected to be delivered in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The Sprint Service will provide a frequent, fast and high-quality bus service into the Birmingham City Centre. The route will include the A34 Stratford Road, which is situated approximately 1.5km to the north of the site.

03.4 potential improvements to site connectivity

As part of a future development, there are several improvements that could be made to improve site connectivity, which include, but are not limited to:

- Provision of a new bus service, which would serve the proposed development as well as the immediate residential area to the north of the site, which does not currently benefit from an existing bus service. The service would provide access to both Shirley Railway Station and the A34 Stratford Road, to provide access to the future Sprint service.
- The PRoW to the south of the site, which provides a traffic free connection into Dickens Heath, could be improved, with a new surface (within the confines of the landowners control) to provide an improved leisure link to the local village.
- Access onto local traffic free cycle links, specifically those operating alongside Stratford-Upon-Avon Canal and the Cole Valley Cycle Route will be improved.
- Local junction improvements could also be delivered to ensure the development impact on the local highway network is mitigated and would include improvements to the Bill's Lane/Haslucks Green Road junction, which has been identified as a local opportunity to improve for the benefit of existing and future users.

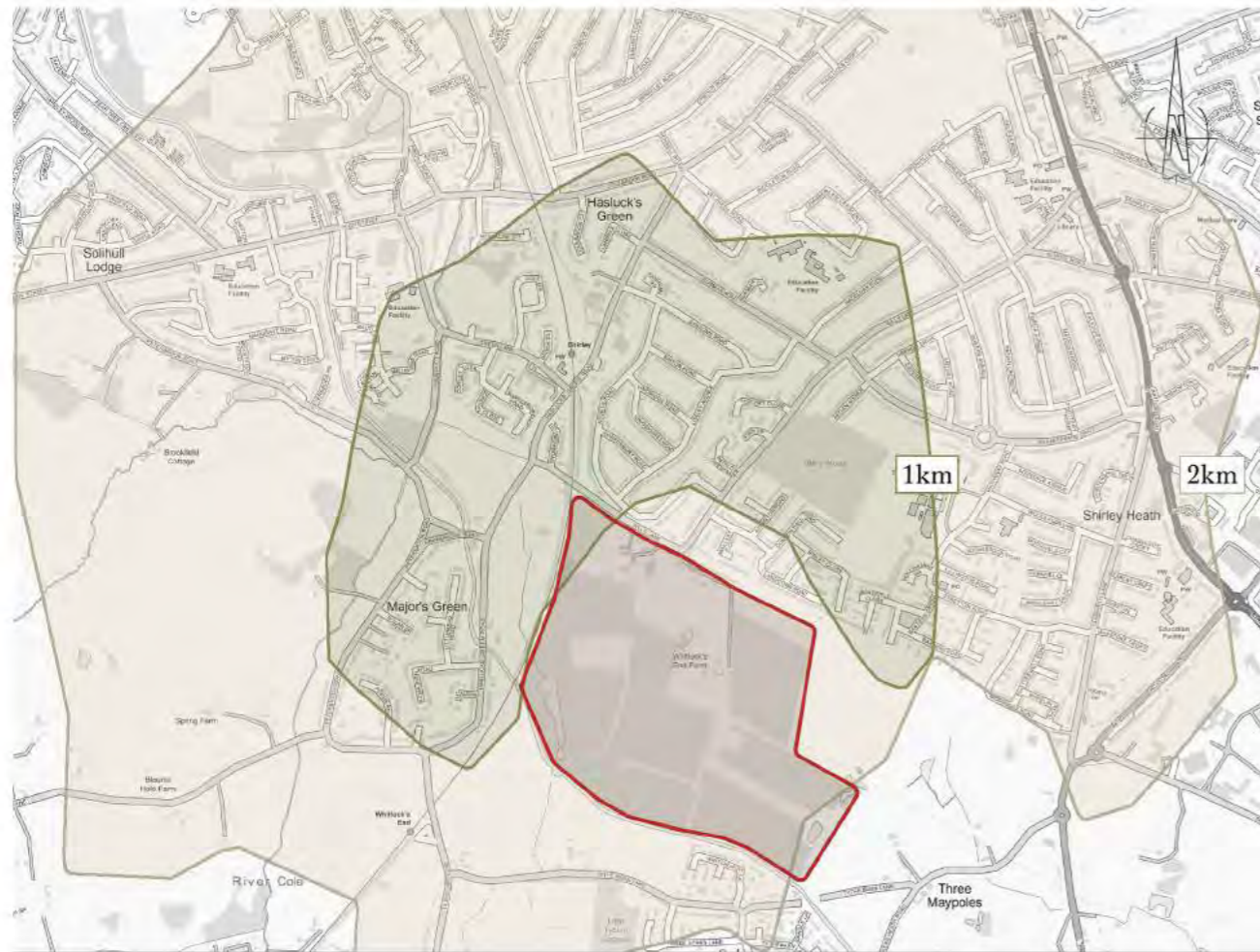
In addition to the above, the site would be supported by a Residential Travel Plan, which would encourage and promote sustainable travel.

VISION DOCUMENT

Access, Movement & Public Transport

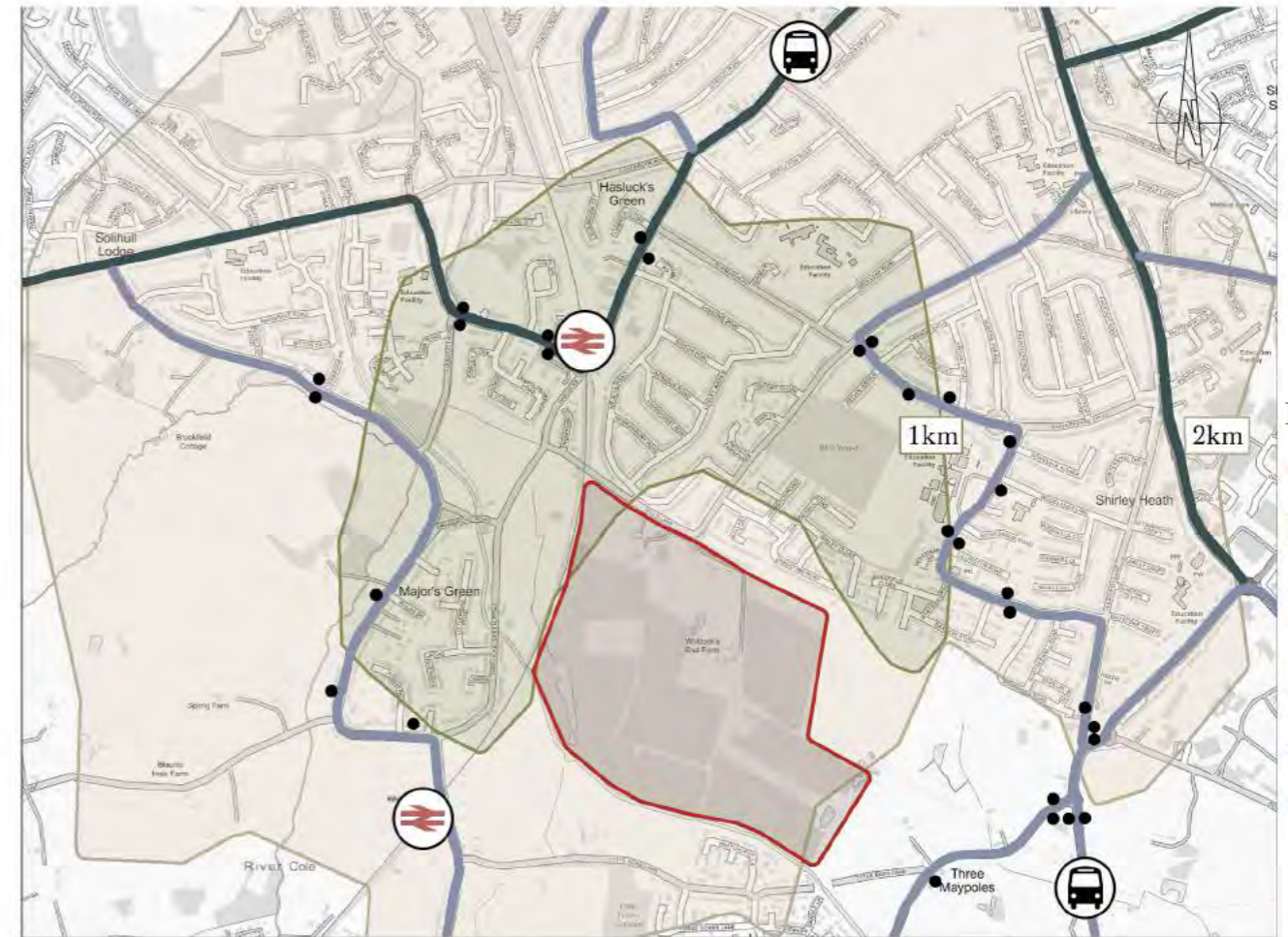
Woods Farm, Shirley

WALKING AND CYCLING ISOCHRONES (BILLS LANE)



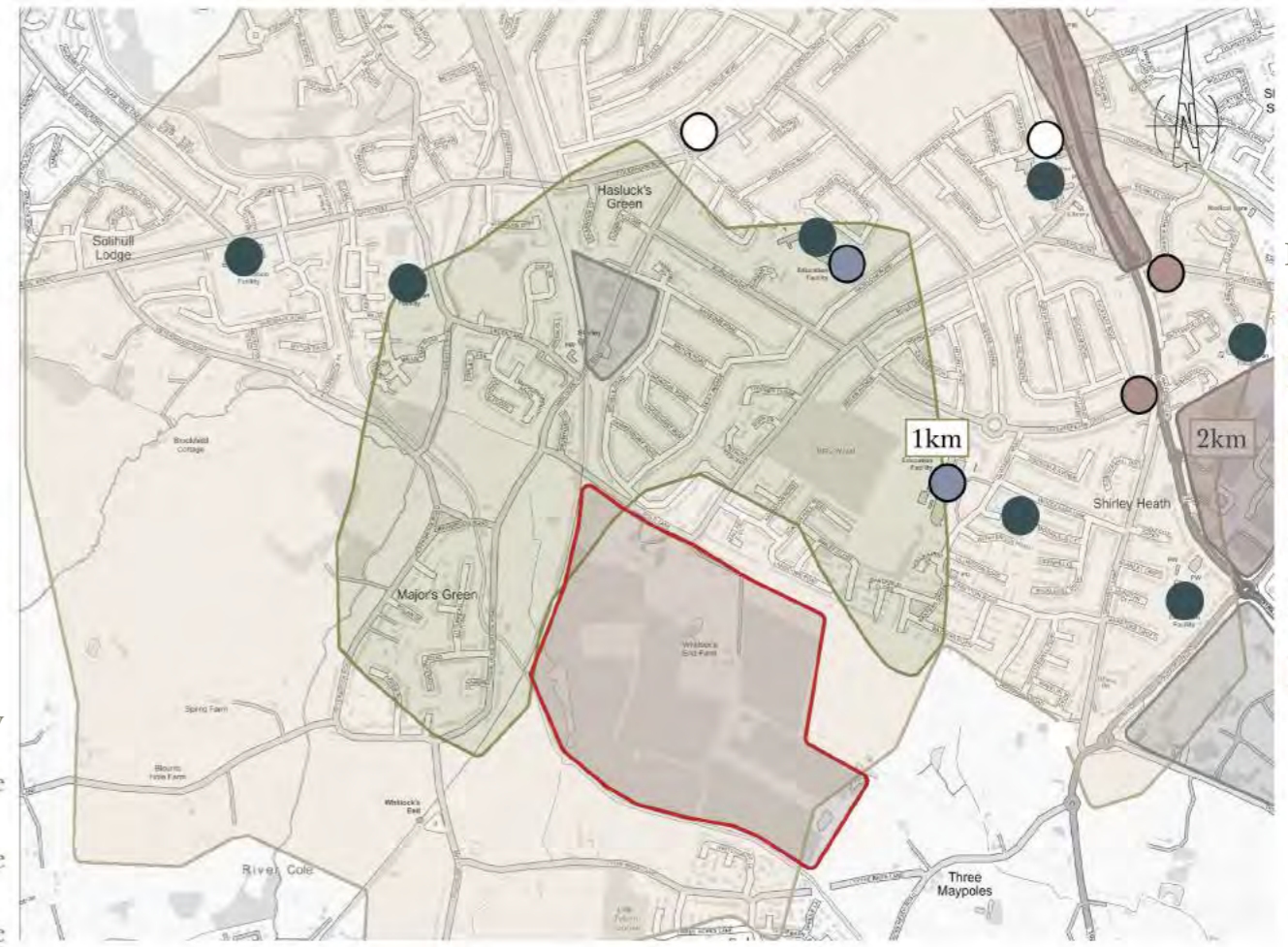
- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - 1km Isochrone
 - 2km Isochrone
 - 3km Isochrone

PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION

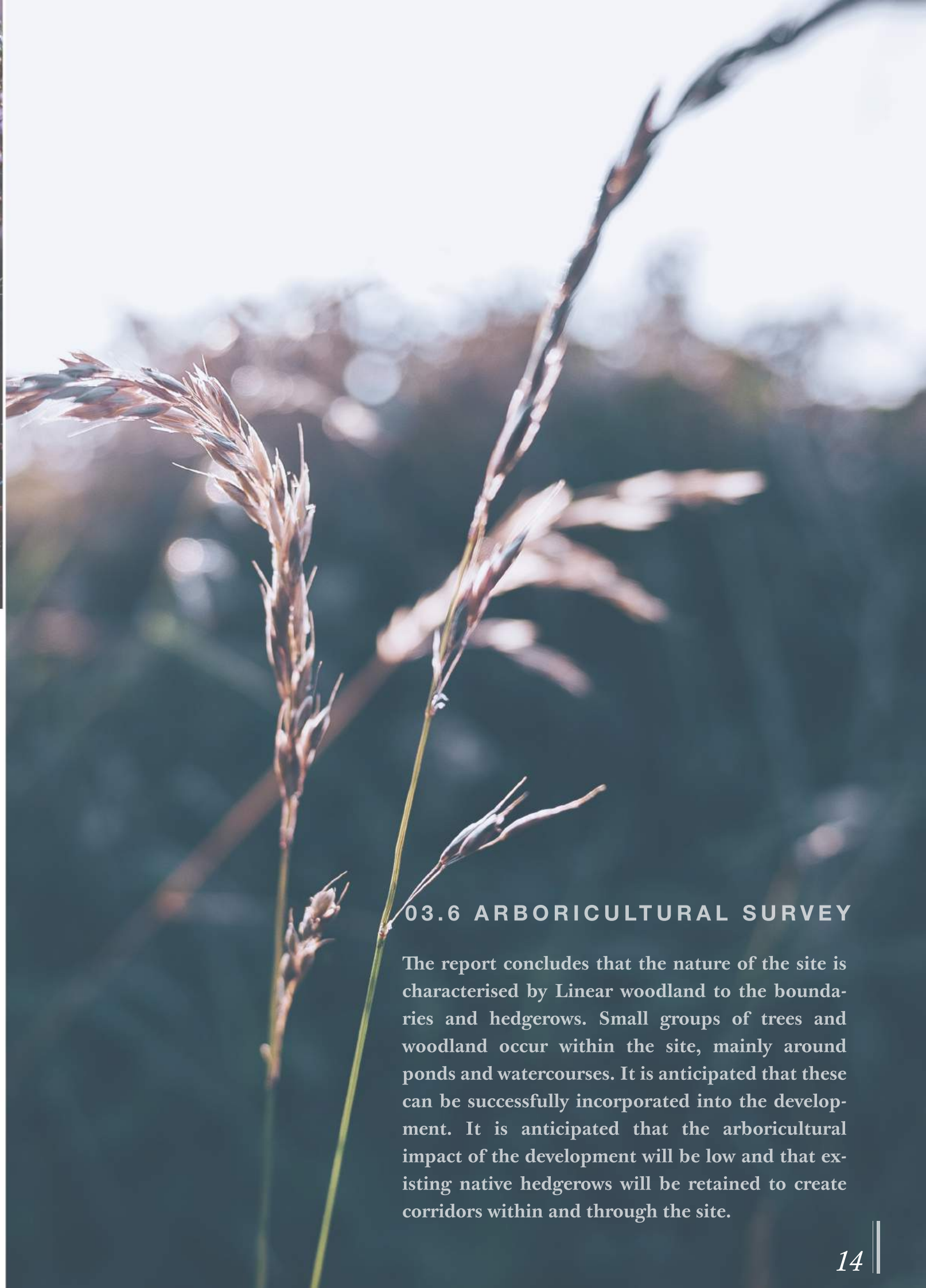


- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - 1km Isochrone
 - 2km Isochrone
 - 3km Isochrone
 - Low freq. bus route
 - High freq. bus route
 - Bus stop
 - Ⓜ Train station

LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - 1km Isochrone
 - 2km Isochrone
 - 3km Isochrone
 - Employment area
 - Shopping area
 - Primary school
 - Secondary school
 - GP Surgery
 - Dentist



03.5 PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

The site presents a series of opportunities to protect and enhance valuable environmental habitats, including:

- Wide variety of boundary types including ditches, hedgerows and lines of scattered mature trees.
- Watercourses have potential to qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England.
- Semi Natural Broadleaved woodland
- Standing water where not stocked with fish.

Habitat enhancement measures could include:

- Planting of habitats which will be of value to wildlife.
- Provision of nesting/roosting habitat.
- Creation of deadwood habitat.
- Creation/maintenance of wildlife corridors throughout the site.

03.6 ARBORICULTURAL SURVEY

The report concludes that the nature of the site is characterised by Linear woodland to the boundaries and hedgerows. Small groups of trees and woodland occur within the site, mainly around ponds and watercourses. It is anticipated that these can be successfully incorporated into the development. It is anticipated that the arboricultural impact of the development will be low and that existing native hedgerows will be retained to create corridors within and through the site.



Listed building

Site Analysis

Woods Farm, Shirley

03.7 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Whitlocks Farmhouse and its immediate setting are highlighted as a key driver for the layout design within the site.

With good layout design the setting has the capacity to retain its character with the setting of the curtilage and outbuildings on the lane retained through green open space.

The heritage assessment suggests an approximate extent of 70m radius is a suitable buffer.

It is noted that the historic settlement pattern is no longer reflected within the current setting. The extension of the modern nucleated settlement pattern into the site would have medium impact on heritage assets, but can be mitigated by the preservation and enhancement of remaining hedgerows and treelines.

A programme of Archaeological works is recommended to record below ground heritage asset



PLACEMAKING & VISION DOCUMENT

Listed Building & Surround Buildings

SHIRLEY, SOLIHULL

Site Analysis

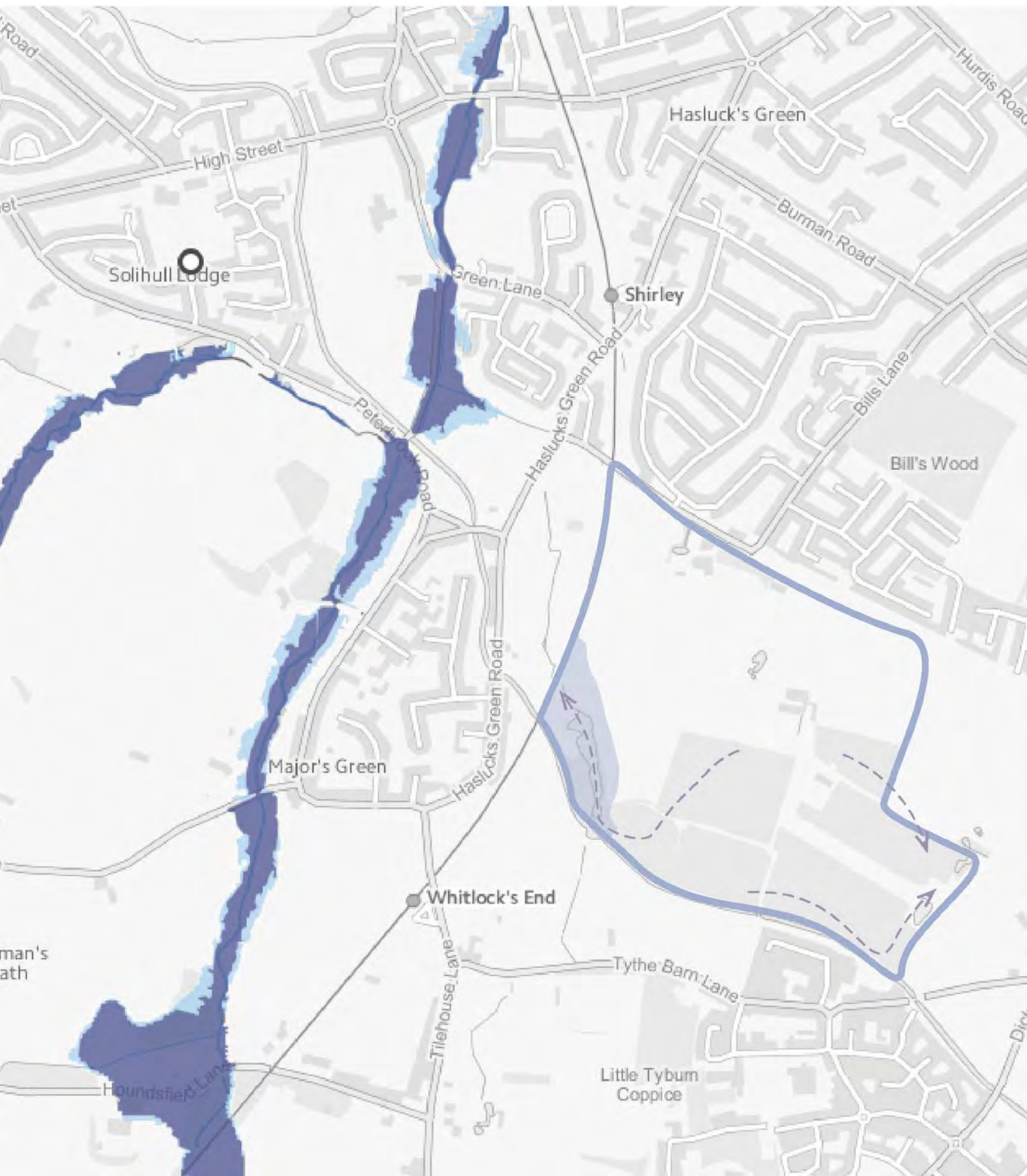
Woods Farm, Shirley

03.8 FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT /DRAINAGE

The site is located in its entirety within Flood Zone 1; as such it is suitable for residential development. There is a small watercourse to the lowest point of the site in the south western corner. This enters the site under the canal and flows out under the railway embankment.

The site has been subject to a full Flood Risk Assessment; this reveals no constraints to development. The south west corner of the site is the preferred location for water attenuation as part of a SUDS scheme supporting the proposed development. Preservation of the existing watercourse and connected attenuation ponds will not only manage drainage/flood risk but will also achieve real benefits in terms of biodiversity. This is in line with the greater emphasis upon biodiversity enhancements set out in the SMBC Green Infrastructure Study and, more recently, the revisions to both the NPPF and NPPG.

The aim, as set out in the FRA, is to secure an exemplar SUDS scheme





VISION DOCUMENT

Site Analysis

Woods Farm, Shirley

03.9 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

The site is visually well contained and resistant to open views from the surrounding areas. Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerow will mitigate even close range visual impact beyond the early phases of the development.

Drawing on the Garden City principles promoted by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) by way of a holistically planned development underpins the landscape strategy set out in this document.

Existing native landscape features and hedgerows will inform and guide the structure of green networks and pathways through the site. They also form the site boundary to present a soft edge to the development area and a sensitive transition to the retained open space and green belt beyond.

Placemaking Concepts

Woods Farm, Shirley

04.1 VISION

The vision for Woods Farm is to create a sustainable, integrated and diverse urban development offering a wide choice of accommodation, a healthy and vibrant place to live with creative recreational opportunities within high quality, well connected green spaces.

The opportunity is to respond to the site specifications, to integrate a robust strategy for protecting the Green belt and successfully integrating sustainable transport and urban design best practice methods to deliver a locally distinctive scheme, offering a positive and diverse living environment. The intention is to integrate varied procurement routes within the masterplanned scheme, catering for self-build, bespoke and housebuilding sectors within a cohesive and vibrant development.

The site owners, as local people, are able to ensure that this vision is delivered - including the full requirements for affordable housing and at least 10% of the houses on smaller sites are suitable for local (not volume) house builders.



Precedents

Placemaking Concepts

04.2 Blythe Valley Park

The Vision Document for the mixed use residential development at Blythe Valley Park (BVP) has been prepared by the landowners in conjunction with Solihull MBC. As such it has been shaped by the placemaking principles and visions established by the Council – and other stakeholders.

These seek to establish a distinct, vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood on the edge of Solihull. Public transport and other connectors have been identified to help shape the form, scale and location of development parcels across the site. Integral to this is the natural environment within which BVP is located, particularly the Greenbelt where the maintenance of a meaningful and effective separation to the nearby village of Illshaw Heath has been a key driver. Other placemaking drivers, at both the strategic and site specific levels, include heritage assets, enhanced habitat biodiversity and the provision of improved public access to open spaces and the countryside.

In terms of placemaking design, a key feature has been the use of natural features to shape the development area and the use of roads and an outward facing development edge to avoid a hard boundary to the development such that there is a soft and sensitive relationship between the development and the adjoining countryside.

These principles have been adopted and applied in the Woods Farm Development Vision and Placemaking Strategy.



Blythe Valley Park Masterplan



Blythe Valley Park Site

04.3 PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS

Woods Farm, Shirely

Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, social neighbourhoods.

Enhance the natural environment by providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network that uses zero carbon and energy-positive technology.





Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.

Homes with gardens to combine the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and provide the opportunity to grow food.










Constraints

-  Listed Buildings
-  Bridleway
-  Surface water flow route
-  Canal
-  Railway line
-  Extent of potential water attenuation area

Opportunities

-  Primary road network
-  Secondary road network
-  Public open space boundaries (proposed and existing)
-  New public footpaths
-  Transport links
- + New recreational areas
- + Biodiversity corridors
- + Improved walking opportunities
- + Improved transport links
- + Improved public open spaces

Masterplan Concept

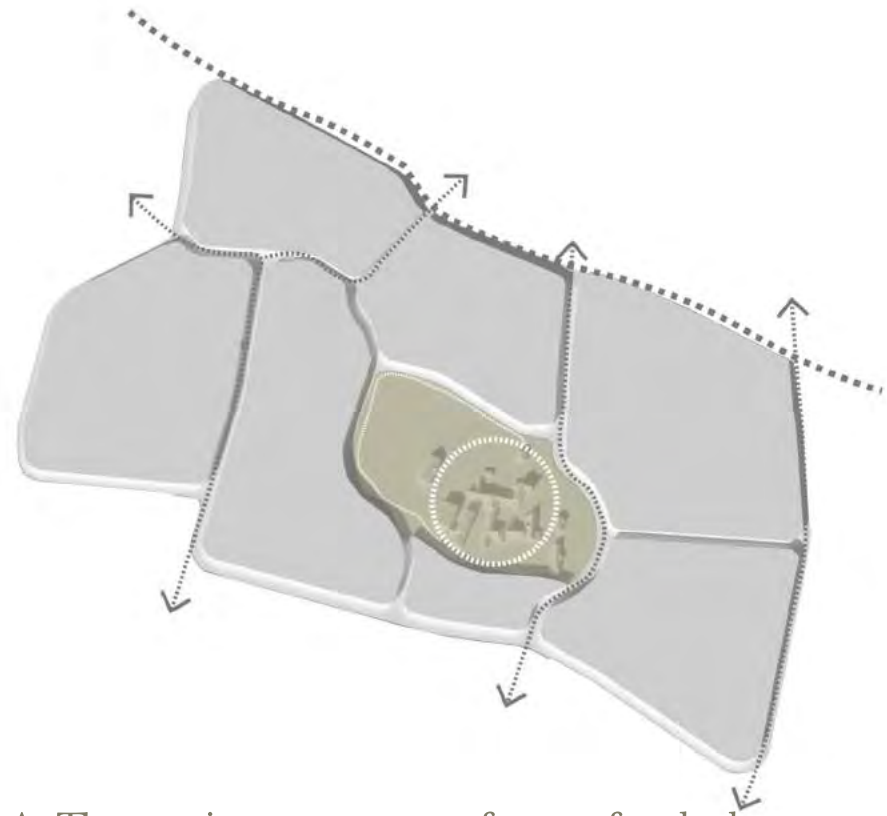
Woods Farm, Shirley

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

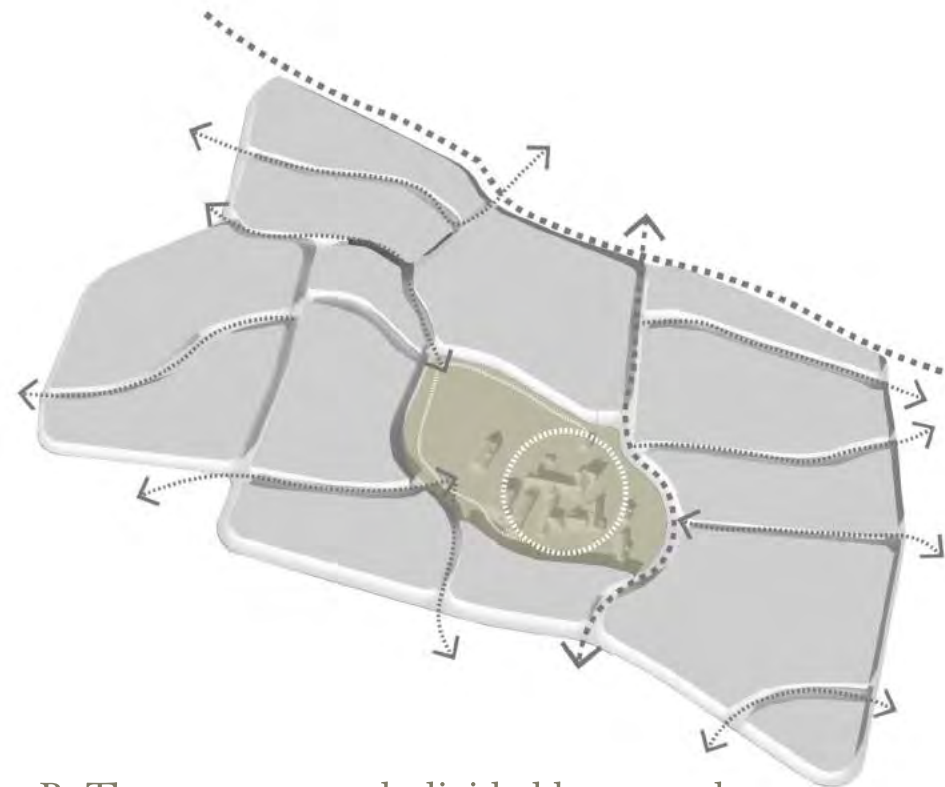
Christmas trees are poor for biodiversity, presenting the opportunity to create and improve biodiversity corridor

MASTERPLAN *Process*

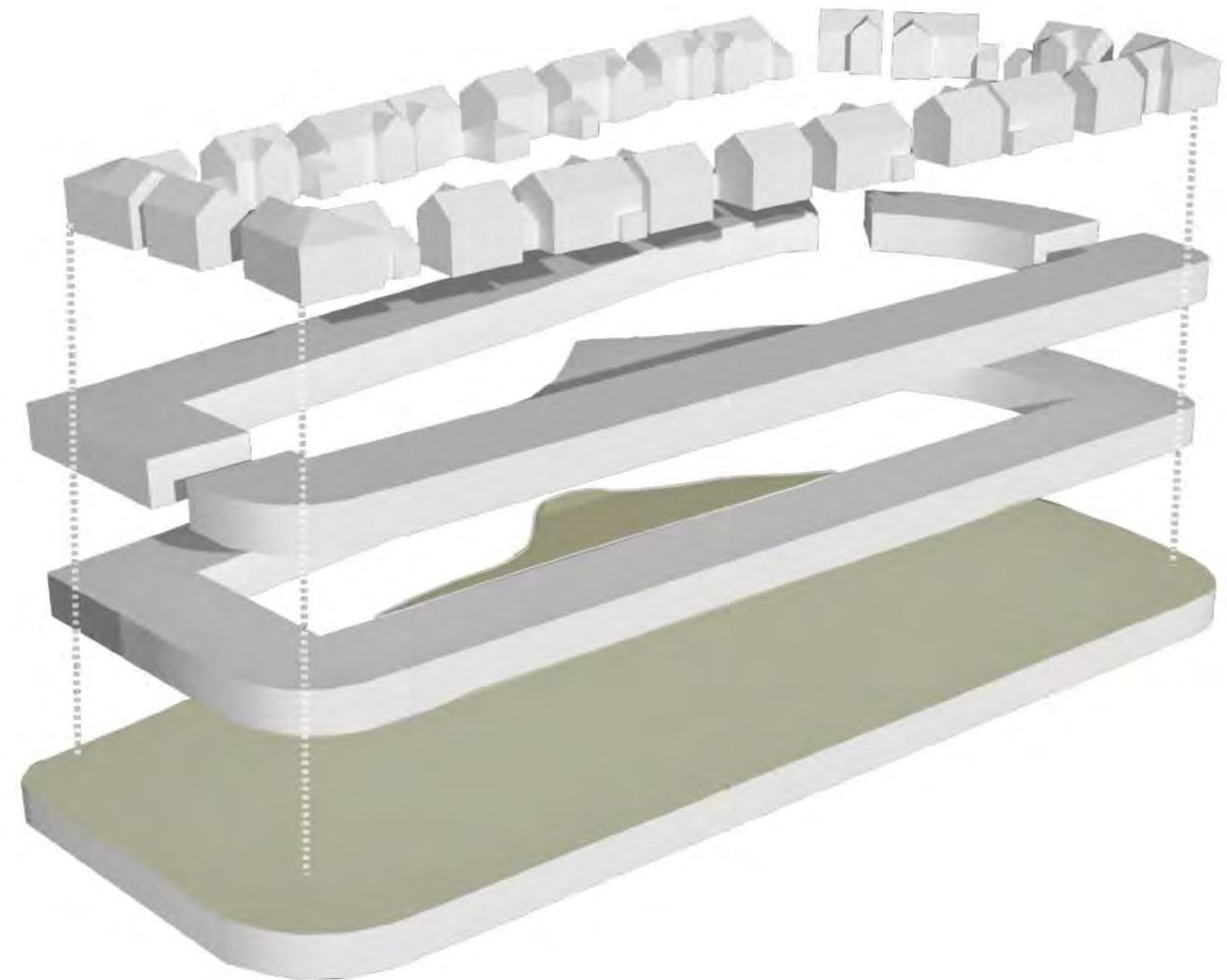
Masterplan: Process diagrams



A: The maximum amount of space for development is divided by the potential access routes



B: The spaces are sub divided by secondary access routes



C: The parcels of land are split into volumes which comply with space standards

SITE 26
MASTERPLAN
LAND AT WOODS FARM



SITE 26

MASTERPLAN

LAND AT WOODS FARM



SITE 26

MASTERPLAN

LAND AT WOODS FARM

Document: Green infrastructure pathways



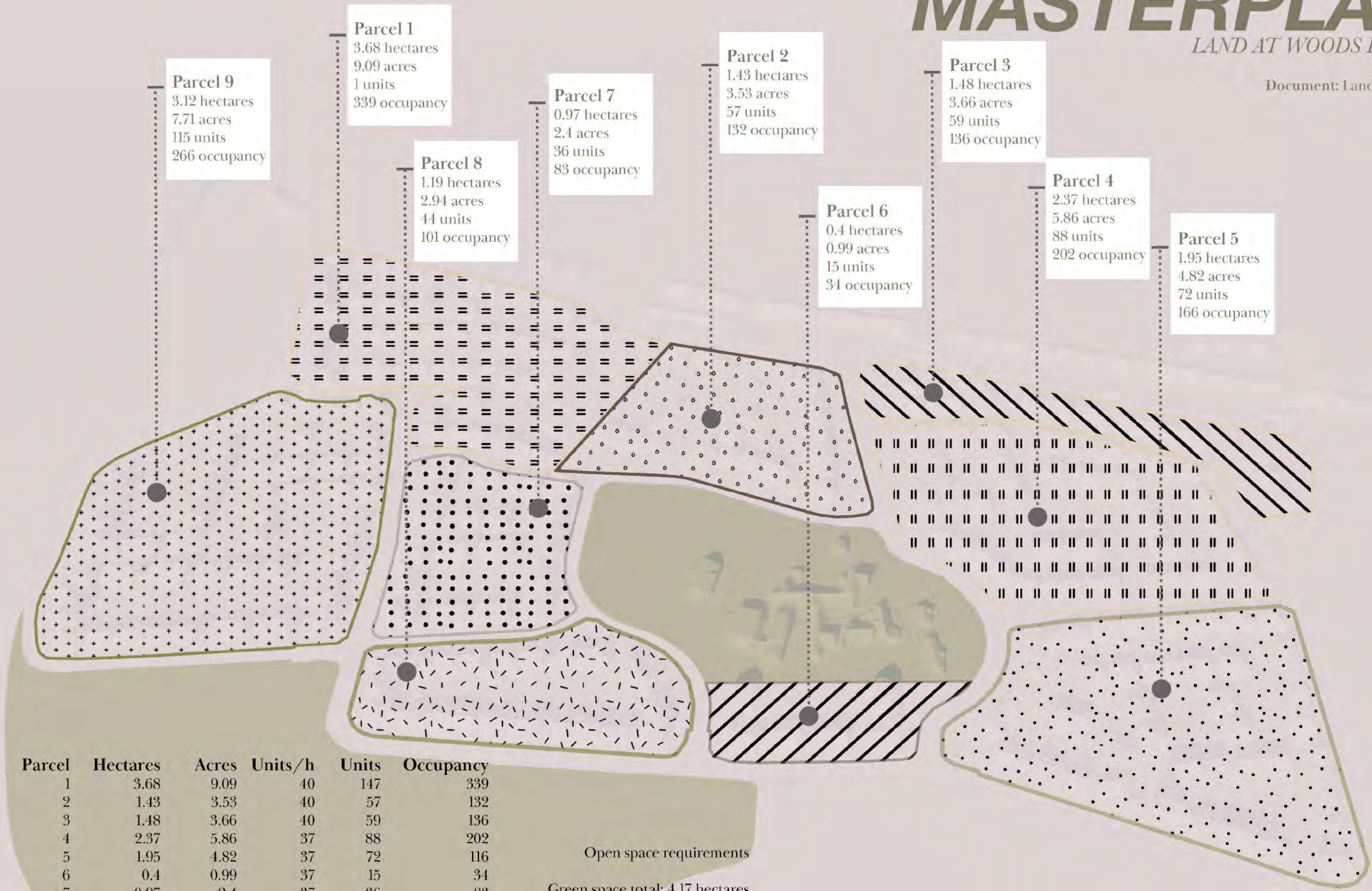
Movement of people through green corridors around the site



MASTERPLAN

LAND AT WOODS FARM

Document: Land parcels



Parcel 1
3.68 hectares
9.09 acres
1 units
339 occupancy

Parcel 2
1.43 hectares
3.53 acres
57 units
132 occupancy

Parcel 3
1.48 hectares
3.66 acres
59 units
136 occupancy

Parcel 9
3.12 hectares
7.71 acres
115 units
266 occupancy

Parcel 7
0.97 hectares
2.4 acres
36 units
83 occupancy

Parcel 8
1.19 hectares
2.94 acres
44 units
101 occupancy

Parcel 6
0.4 hectares
0.99 acres
15 units
34 occupancy

Parcel 4
2.37 hectares
5.86 acres
88 units
202 occupancy

Parcel 5
1.95 hectares
4.82 acres
72 units
166 occupancy

Parcel	Hectares	Acres	Units/h	Units	Occupancy
1	3.68	9.09	40	147	339
2	1.43	3.53	40	57	132
3	1.48	3.66	40	59	136
4	2.37	5.86	37	88	202
5	1.95	4.82	37	72	116
6	0.4	0.99	37	15	34
7	0.97	2.4	37	36	83
8	1.19	2.94	37	44	101
9	3.12	7.71	37	115	266
Totals	16.59	41		634	1457

Open space requirements
Green space total: 4.17 hectares
Green space A: 0.93 hectares
Green space B: 3.24 hectares



RICKETT ARCHITECTS

