Milton Ernest

Neighbourhood Masterplanning
Final Report

April 2018

Prepared for Milton Ernest Parish Council by AECOM

AECOM

Quality information

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Project coordinator	Sarah Fiddaman	Project Coordinator	Final QA	Sarah Fiddaman	25/04/2018

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Background and Introduction

01

This chapter provides context and general information to introduce the project and its location.

1. Background and Introduction

1.1 Background

Through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Neighbourhood Planning Programme, AECOM has been commissioned to provide Masterplanning support to the Milton Ernest Parish Council. The support is intended to provide design assistance to the group's work in producing a Neighbourhood Plan and is designed to complement the plan-drafting work that is underway.

1.2 Objective

The objective of this report is to advise on the capacity and masterplanning principles for a site previously identified as being potentially suitable for development within Milton Ernest. The selected site is identified as Site 518 in the emerging Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2035. In particular, this report aims to provide:

- A review of the planning policies that affects the site;
- A comprehensive analysis of the site and its surroundings;
- Site masterplanning recommendations and options; and
- Next steps.

These area of focus was agreed with the Milton Ernest Parish Council at the outset of the project.

Fig. 1.1 Aerial view of the sites originally submitted in the emerging Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2035 (source: Google Earth)

1.3 Locational Analysis

The village of Milton Ernest is located in Bedfordshire, 8km north of Bedford. Its current population is about 800 residents, and the village has one voluntary controlled School, Milton Ernest Voluntary Controlled Lower School. Most of the buildings in the village consist in one- and two-storey residential buildings, among which are a number of listed buildings. There are very few flats and commercial buildings. Milton Ernest has two scheduled monuments located east of the village centre.

The main thoroughfares are Rushden Road and Bedford Road, which form part of the A6 that links Rushden and Kettering to the north and Bedford to the south. Most residential streets consist of cul-de-sac roads that feed into the aforementioned roads. Milton Ernest does not have a train station, however buses link the village to Bedford and Rushden via Rushden Road and Radwell Road. Footpaths enable pedestrian connections through residential blocks and into the open countryside.

Located 1km east of the village core are Twinwoods Business Park and Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre.

Fig. 1.2 View of All Saints Church

Fig. 1.3 View of Queens Head Hotel

Fig. 1.4 Listed building on Radwell Road

Fig. 1.5 Listed building on Radwell Road

Fig. 1.6 Junction between Marsh Lane and Thurleigh Road

Fig. 1.7 Footpath south of Rushden Road

1.4 Process

The following steps were undertaken to produce this report:

- Initial meeting and site visit;
- Desktop research and policy review;
- Urban design analysis;
- Preparation of masterplans for the site; and
- Preparation of a draft report, subsequently revised in response to feedback provided by the Milton Ernest Parish Council.

The report builds on work done by the Milton Ernest Parish Council to date. It draws in particular from the April 2017 Bedford Borough Council Local Plan.

1.5 The site

The emerging Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2035 considered four sites for potential development, shown in Figure 1.1 (the site numbers are the same as in that report). The plan also includes all of the sites marked as potential land for development in wider Bedford Borough.

Of the four sites identified in the plan, this report is only concerned with Site 518, as guided by the Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as their preferred site. Note that this report is not commenting on the suitability of the other sites for redevelopment. Rather, it is demonstrating how the selected site might be designed and planned.

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Planning Policy Review

02

This chapter notes the existing planning policy context and highlights the relevant policies to which the development should comply.

2. Planning Policy Review

2.1 General Policies

2.1.1 Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2035

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) is currently preparing a Local Plan that will set out how much growth is required in the borough up to 2035. It will also contain policies on the location of future growth and policies to help shape planning applications. In April 2017, BBC conducted a consultation on the draft strategy. This document does not contain any draft polices, but instead is a draft strategy on where and what future growth could be.

The document states that the borough has a housing need of 19,000 homes up to 2035, which equates to 950 new homes annually. However over half of this target has already been met by existing planning permissions or allocations, meaning that the local plan needs to only allocate land for at least an additional 8,103 homes up to 2035.

Milton Ernest is designated as a Group 2 village, Rural Service Centre, in the consultation paper. These villages will produce a more limited growth to help support existing local services. The amount of development here is limited to between 25 and 50 new dwellings. A new settlement, Twinwoods, was also proposed in the document for 6,000 new homes, also in the parish of Milton Ernest. At the time of finalising this report, it was announced that Twinwoods was not selected by the Borough for development under the current planning cycle.

The map opposite, taken from the consultation paper, sets out the location of the initial four sites and the proposed potential development areas within the sites, including Site 518 which is the sole object of this report.

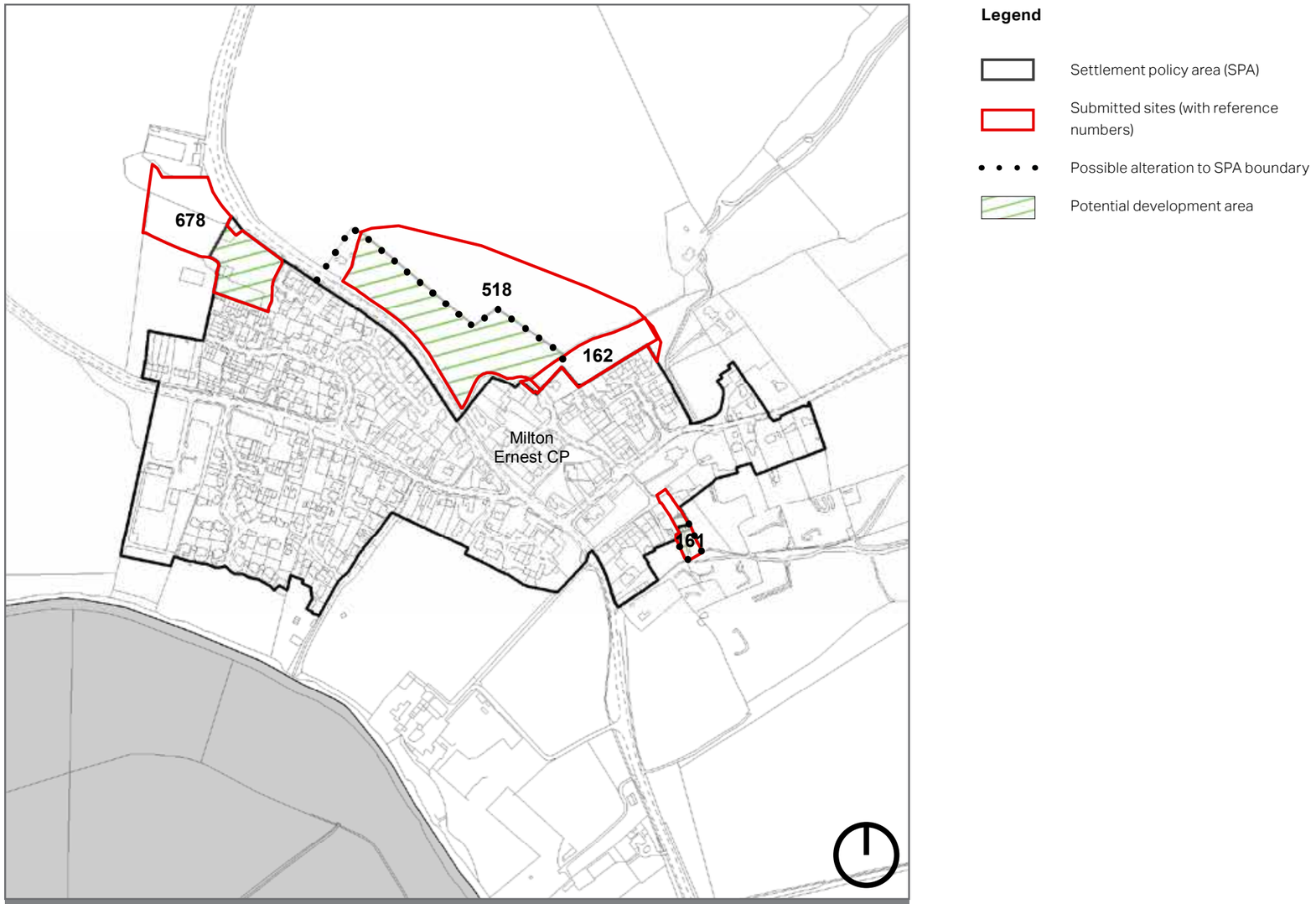

Fig 2.1.1. Location of alternative sites in Group 2 Villages: Milton Ernest (source: Bedford Borough Council, 2017)

The short list of sites set out in the consultation paper for Milton Ernest corresponds to the same sites that are examined for masterplanning within the Neighbourhood Plan. The estimated capacity suggested in the paper is set out below:

Site number	Address	Estimated capacity	Comments
161	Land adjacent to Church Green	5 dwellings	
162	Land at Marsh Lane	16 dwellings	
518	**Marsh Lane**	**30 dwellings**	
678	Rushden Road	(1.39 ha)	Brownfield land. Site proposed for employment uses B1, B2, B8 including live work units. Residential capacity to be assessed.

Table 2.1.1. Sites for consideration, Emerging Local Plan 2035

2.1.2 Bedford Borough Council Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (April 2008)

Policy CP8 Affordable Housing in the Borough

On sites of 15 units and over (or 0.5ha and over) and in villages having a population of less than 3,000 on sites of 3 dwellings or more (or 0.1ha and over) the council will expect the provision of 30% affordable housing.

Policy CP12 Settlement Policy Areas and CP13 the Countryside and Development within it

The Settlement Policy Area boundary encloses the main built-up part of the village. All land outside the Settlement Policy Area is defined as countryside. Development in the countryside will only be permitted if it is consistent with national policy.

Policy CP21 Designing in Quality

All new development should:

1. Be of the highest design quality in terms of both architecture and landscape;
2. Have regard to good practice in urban design;
3. Preserve and, where appropriate, enhance conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments and other important archaeological remains, and listed buildings and their settings; and
4. Be fully accessible to all members of the community.

2.1.3 Bedford Borough Council Allocations and Designations Local Plan (July 2013)

Policy AD24 Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zones

Milton Ernest is within Zone 2, Upper Great Ouse River Valley green infrastructure opportunity zone. This represents an area where there is good potential to maintain and enhance the multi-functional nature of green infrastructure. Where appropriate, development should deliver or contribute to the protection, enhancement and/or creation of green infrastructure in accordance with the following priorities:

- Extend the current green wheel proposals to link Bedford to surrounding villages through a network of green corridors;
- Enhancements to the landscape around Oakley and Clapham;
- Improving walking, cycling and horse riding opportunities upstream from Bedford, including the Ouse Valley Way, Bunyan Trail, and links to and from the western section of the Bedford Green Wheel; and
- Recreate river valley flood meadows and wet woodland, and restore wetlands and grassland for biodiversity benefits and flood alleviation.

Policy AD28 Provision of Open Space and Built Facilities in Association with New Development

The following standards are to be used for open space provision. Where possible, provision should be made on-site. Where this is not possible, practical or preferred, a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision will be required.

Type	Amount	Accessibility
Parks & Gardens	0.5 ha per 1000 people	15 min walk or 1000m straight line distance
Accessible Natural Green Space	0.5 ha per 1000 people	5 min walk or 300m straight line distance
Equipped/ Natural Play Areas	0.25 ha per 1000 people	Pre-teens: 5 min walk or 300m straight line distance Young people: 15 min walk or 1000m straight line distance
Informal & Amenity Green Space	0.5 ha per 1000 people	1-2 min walk or 100m straight line distance
Outdoor Sports Space	1.12 ha per 1000 people	
Allotments	0.35 ha per 1000 people	15mins walk or 1000m straight line distance
Total outdoor open space	**3.22 ha per 1000 people**	

Table 2.1.2. Open Space Standards, Allocations and Designations Local Plan (2013)

Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities: Design and Good Practice (September 2014)

Residential Parking Standards requirements for Use Class C3 are as follows:

Dwelling size	Vehicle space
1 bedroom	1
2/3 bedrooms	2
4+ bedrooms	3

Table 2.1.3. Residential Parking Standards, Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities (2014)

A minimum of 0.4 spaces per dwelling is required for unallocated visitors where over 60% of the total parking provision for a street or block of flats is unallocated or in a Controlled Parking Zone where no additional visitor parking is required.

Bedford SHMA Update (October 2016)

Most of the market housing need is for houses, compared to flats. It is recommended that 3.4% should be 1 bedroom, 13.8% should be 2 bedrooms, 58.9% should be 3 bedrooms, 19.6% should be 4 bedrooms and 4.3% should be 5 and more bedrooms.

2.2 Individual Site Policies: Site 518

Bedford Borough Council Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (April 2008)

The site is adjacent to two listed buildings to the south. Development will be required to protect and where appropriate enhance the character of scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings (Policy CP23 Heritage).

Landscape Sensitivity Study Group 1 and Group 2 Villages (April 2017)

Within Landscape Character Area 3B: Oakley – Great Ouse Limestone Valleys and 2A: Hinwick Wooded Wolds. Character Area 2A requires development to avoid large scale vertical features disrupting views and the conservation of the largely unsettled slopes about the Great Ouse Valley. Character Area 3B requires development to improve village edges where edges form an unsympathetic relationship with the open countryside. In addition development should conserve the natural floodplain landform and long views and conserve views to church towers.

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Urban Design Analysis

03

This chapter analyses the site characteristics and highlighting the main constraints and opportunities which will inform the masterplan design.

3. Urban Design Analysis

3.1 Site Characteristics

Site 518 is a 4.1 hectare field located on a gentle hill outside the northern edge of the current Settlement Policy Area (SPA). It is bound by Rushden Road to the south-west, private residential properties to the north-west and south-east, and open countryside to the north-east. A tall hedgerow screens the south-western edge from Rushden Road and the back of private properties south of the road, and the northern edge opens directly into an open field that slopes north. There are no existing structures on the site, which offers an unobstructed view of the open countryside and the top of the hill.

There are two existing accesses to the site. The first access connects the southern end of the site to Rushden Road and runs along the edge of private residential properties to the east, some of which are listed buildings. Rushden Road has a 30 mph speed limit that carries a significant amount of traffic as part of the A6. The road has footways on both sides that link to the village centre. The second access links the south-eastern side of the site to Marsh Lane, a narrow residential cul-de-sac. Its northern footway would need to be extended into the site, which would potentially require an agreement with the landowner of the field situated immediately east of the site. Both existing site entrances are located at a 2 minutes walk from the nearest bus stop in front of the Queens Head on Rushden Road.

The south-eastern edge of the site, along which runs a drain, is prone to surface water flooding and is adjacent to two listed properties as well as a narrow open field. The western, southern, and eastern edges are visible from neighbouring residences despite being partially shielded by hedgerows. There is also a group of mature trees on the western corner of the site.

The surrounding built environment consists mainly in low-density detached and semi-detached one- and two-storey residential buildings in various architectural styles and construction periods. There are no flats, commercial, and industrial buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site. The two listed buildings near the south-east of the site are only partially screened by walls and vegetation, and are therefore partly visible from the site.

Fig. 3.1.1 Site entrance on Rushden Road

Fig. 3.1.2 Site entrance on Marsh Lane

Fig. 3.1.5 Hedgerow to be retained along Rushden Road (A6)

Fig. 3.1.7 Partial site visibility from neighbouring listed properties

Fig. 3.1.9 Site visibility from houses across Rushden Road

Fig. 3.1.6 Drain and footpath along the south-eastern edge of the site

Fig. 3.1.8 View of a listed building visible from the site

Fig. 3.1.10 View from the site into the open countryside

3.2 Issues and Constraints

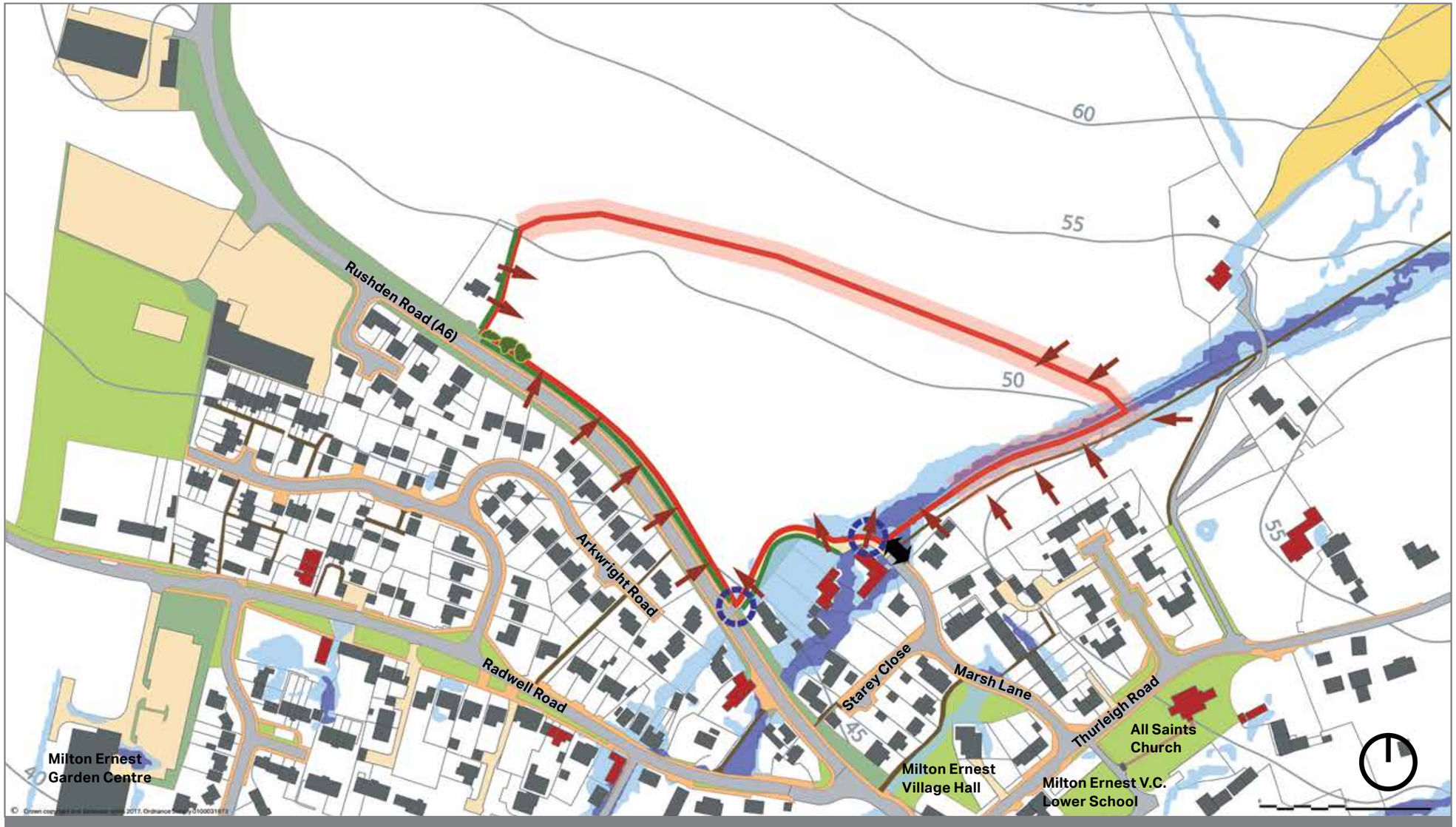
The site presents a number of issues and constraints:

- **Flood zones** - the south-eastern edge of the site adjacent to the existing drain is prone to surface water flooding according to Environmental Agency mapping. Development in this location should therefore be discouraged.
- **Hedgerows and trees** - a tall hedgerow is located along the southern edge of the site delineated by Rushden Road. There are also three mature trees on the western corner of the site. Those features should be retained whenever possible to enhance the landscaping quality of the site and help screen it from neighbouring residences.
- **Rushden Road vehicle access** - the access is located on the south of the site and runs along the western edge of residential properties, two of which are listed. Vehicle traffic along this route would represent a source of nuisance for those properties and expose them to views from the new development. A road running along the edge of the site would also not enable an efficient servicing of dwelling units, therefore a new entrance should be provided farther west on Rushden Road.
- **Marsh Lane vehicle access** - the access on the south-eastern side of the site connects to Marsh Lane, a narrow residential street whose width (5 to 6 metres) is further reduced by on-street parking. Marsh Lane should no be used for vehicular access.
- **Pedestrian access** - there is no footway connection into the site via Marsh Lane. The existing footway on the northern edge should be extended into the site, however this would potentially require an agreement with the landowner of the field south-east of the site.
- **Listed buildings** - there are two listed buildings south-east of the site. The proposed development should provide landscaping enhancements to the listed buildings and screen them from views unsympathetic to their historic character.
- **Views from neighbouring properties** - three sides of the site are fronted by private residential properties, to which the site is partially visible. The heights of new buildings should be restricted, and the new development could be screened by new landscaped buffers to mitigate unsympathetic views.
- **Interface with open countryside** - the north side of the site opens to the countryside on an uninterrupted field. The new development will be required to provide a sympathetic transition between the built area and the remaining open field.
- **Open field** - greenfield development will require new utility connections.

3.3 Opportunities

The following opportunities have been identified:

- **Flood zones** - the flood-prone south-eastern edge of the site can be used as a landscaped area that can incorporate flood attenuation and sustainable urban drainage features. The proposed green space can also provide an attractive transition between the existing settled area with listed buildings and the new development.
- **Hedgerows and trees** - there are opportunities to retain the existing mature trees and incorporate the hedgerows into the landscaping design of the new development.
- **Vehicle access** - the existing access suitable for vehicles to the south provides easy connections to Rushden Road (A6).
- **Pedestrian access** - the site is within close proximity to the village centre and a short walking distance (2 minutes) to nearest bus stop on Rushden Road with public transport connections to Bedford.
- **Listed buildings** - the presence of listed buildings near the site entrance enhances the character of the site, and the new development can provide opportunities to highlight the historic character of the listed buildings with features such as additional vegetation screening.
- **Views from neighbouring properties** - existing hedgerows can be retained to shield the site from view from neighbouring properties, and additional landscaping can be introduced for additional screening.
- **Interface with open countryside** - the site offers a view towards the open countryside situated uphill, and presents easy access to footpaths that connect to the surrounding countryside and the scheduled monument east of the site. A large section of the site can be left undeveloped and retained for agriculture, thus preserving the continuity of the existing field.
- **Open field** - there are no existing structures on the field that could impede the development of the site. The site is therefore free from most development constraints while benefiting from its proximity to the village centre, the Village Hall, and Milton Ernest V.C. Lower School.



KEY

- Site submitted for the emerging Bedford Borough Council Local Plan
- Roads
- Footways
- Footpaths
- Buildings
- Listed buildings
- Scheduled monument
- 60 Contour lines
- Mature trees
- Hedgerows
- Views from neighbouring properties
- Site edge with open countryside
- Existing site accesses
- Missing footway link to Marsh Lane
- Water

Surface water flood risk

- Low
- High

Fig. 3.2 Analysis of existing conditions

Site Layout Options

04

This chapter proposes design approaches for the selected site, providing indicative land use budgets and key points for the second option.

4. Masterplan Options

4.1 Design Options

Two sets of design options were produced for the site. The buildings will consist in a mix of 2, 3, 4, and 5 bedroom homes served by new roads that connects to Rushden Road. Both sets of options would require an extension of the village settlement policy area (SPA) different from the one suggested in the emerging Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (see Fig. 2.1.1 in the previous chapter). Both sets of proposed site layouts and resulting SPA alterations were informed by the design constraints and opportunities already detailed in Chapter 3, most notably:

- The need to locate buildings outside of flood zones;
- The preservation of mature trees and hedgerows wherever possible;
- The creation of a vehicle access on Rushden Road;
- The preservation of Marsh Lane as a quiet residential street, from which the site would be accessible for pedestrians and cyclists only;
- The mitigation of negative impacts on listed buildings by placing new buildings away from existing ones and additional screening with planting buffers;
- The minimisation of unsympathetic views from neighbouring properties; and
- The establishment a sympathetic interface with the open countryside and preservation of the continuity of the remaining open field north of the site.

4.2 Option 1 - rerouting the A6

Two site layouts were created for Option 1. Both involve the downgrading of Rushden Road to a residential road, and the re-routing of the A6 north of the site, as per the Parish Council's aspirations. The site would incorporate the land between the new A6 bypass and Rushden Road, with the exception of the Police House. At least one vehicle access to Rushden Road will be created on either side of Butterfield Court, with new houses fronting Rushden Road. The site will incorporate new green spaces to provide a new gathering space in the village and to serve as a buffer to the rerouted A6 road, which will form the new SPA boundary. Additional work to demonstrate the viability of Option 1.

Both Option 1 site layouts would offer the following benefits:

- The redirection of heavy vehicle traffic and associated nuisances away from most of the village;
- An enhanced pedestrian experience with the creation of a new south-facing housing frontage along the southern boundary of the site enabled by the downgrading of Rushden Road;
- The avoidance of an urban built-up "tunnel" effect resulting from the existing linear Arkwright Roads backyard fences on the south side of Rushden Road, and walls or fences from new houses on the north side;
- The physical integration of Butterfield Court and the police house into the village;
- New green spaces serving as gathering places for the village and a buffer against the rerouted A6; and
- A clearer and more coherent SPA boundary along the rerouted A6.

Option 1A (Fig. 4.2.1)

In this layout, the main residential area is clustered around a large central green space along Rushden Road. A narrower planted area along the northern edge will serve as a buffer from the rerouted A6 traffic. Option 1A offers the following benefits:

- A central green space that creates a new focal point for the village and avoids a linear "tunnelling" effect along Rushden Road; and
- A larger residential area with more housing capacity to fund the construction of the A6 bypass as well as more new residential roads.

Option 1B (Fig. 4.2.2)

This layout includes a wider green area along the northern side of the site that provides space for allotments and a wider buffer against the A6 bypass. It also presents a narrower residential area disposed along Rushden Road. The benefits of Option 1B are the following:

- The provision of new allotment gardens;
- The siting of new residences further away from the A6, which further reduces the noise and pollution externalities associated with vehicle traffic; and
- The construction of shorter lengths of residential roads.

Viability

It should be noted that, whilst of clear benefit to the village, it would be expensive to realign the A6. The area for housing shown in figures 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 indiacte that between 25 and 60 homes could be constructed, depending on density. We believe that many more homes would be needed to pay for the road realignment and recommend that further work on viability is undertaken to test this.

Fig. 4.2.1 Master Plan Option 1A

Fig. 4.2.2 Master Plan Option 1B

4.3 Option 2 - north-east of the A6

This masterplanning layout was created for the construction of 25 dwelling units as well as green spaces and landscaped areas on the site. 25 dwellings is the number of homes that was identified by the Parish Council that land needs to be allocated for. This design option was informed by the urban design analysis detailed in the previous chapter. Most houses will front an internal access road running parallel to Rushden Road, with a main cluster on the west of the site to preserve the site of the listed buildings to the east. The new green space would be placed further east along the drain at the edge of the site. This design would require an SPA alteration more different than the one proposed in Option 1. This proposed SPA is driven by the requirement to provide 25 homes on this site, and to protect assets such as the listed buildings to the east and the continuity of the open field to the north. The total developed area would be 1.68 ha, including 0.43 ha for the new green space and an undeveloped area of 2.56 ha. Because Option 2 does not propose a new A6 bypass, it will not require additional viability work and will be deliverable in a much shorter time frame.

The site layout presents the following design features:

- **Main vehicle access on Rushden Road** - the vehicle access would be moved west from its current location for better servicing of the proposed houses, and to minimise nuisance to the properties east of the site. AECOM's transport planning input confirmed the adequacy of the proposed location, nevertheless this should be subject to further safety assessment from transport and highway design to ensure safe access and proper visibility.
- **Pedestrian and cycle access on Marsh Lane** - an access via Marsh Lane will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists only. All motor vehicles will be required to use Rushden Road as a main access due to the reduced width and residential quality of Marsh Lane. A new barrier and/or bollards will prevent vehicle through-traffic and preserve the quiet and residential quality of Marsh Lane.
- **Pedestrian accesses** - the site will be accessible to pedestrians from both entrances. An agreement with the owner of the field immediately east of the site on Marsh Lane will be sought in order to connect the northern footway to the new development. Both pedestrian accesses will be within a short distance from the village centre and the bus stop in front of the Queens Head.
- **New road** - a new road parallel to Rushden Road will articulate the site. It will follow a meandering line similar to the historic streets of the village to provide visual interest, different viewpoints within the site, self-enforcing traffic calming, and an efficient distribution of houses. The road will also accommodate on-street parking.
- **A green space to the south-east of the site** - the flood-prone area near the Marsh Lane entrance could integrate flood attenuation and sustainable urban drainage features. Due to its location at the Marsh Lane entrance it could serve as an attractive gateway into the site and enhance the historic quality of the listed buildings to the south as an additional green buffer. It could also complement the landscaping features of the field located east of the Marsh Lane entrance and provide a frame to the footpath leading east to the open countryside and scheduled monument.
- **A variety of house types** - the new development will provide a mix of two- to five-bedroom detached and semi-detached houses, consistent with the Bedford SHMA (October 2016) projected housing needs (see Chapter 2). Private on-site garages will be located at the side of houses and recessed from the main building line to retain visual emphasis on the main façades. Properties will be aligned to the main road to keep a building line similar to historic parts of the village while presenting some variations with minor recessions and protrusions. Typologies should be mixed to create variety and visual interest, and avoid a monotonous repetition of designs, façades, and patterns.
- **A new housing frontage** - most houses will be distributed along the main road parallel to the southern edge of the site, thus creating a new frontage along Rushden Road to mitigate the existing "tunnel" effect created by backyard fences on the south side. The existing hedgerow on the northern edge of Rushden Road will be clipped to reinforce the frontage and add visual interest for pedestrians travelling to and from the village centre.
- **Gardens** - houses will be equipped with front and back gardens to provide privacy, minimising overlooking from surrounding properties, and softening the transition between the built up area and the open countryside.
- **Landscaping buffers** - the developed portion of the site will be surrounded by a green buffer. A proposed 5 metre thick buffer will screen the new buildings from overlooking residential properties to the west, south, and east. A wider 10 metre thick buffer is proposed to protect the setting of the two listed properties to the south of the site from the new development to preserve their historic character. The landscaping buffers will also delineate the new edge of the built up area from the countryside to the north, in order to ensure the sympathetic village edge transition required by the inclusion of the site within the area designated as Landscape Character Area 3B: Oakley – Great Ouse Limestone Valleys.
- **Undeveloped area** - the remainder of the site will be left undeveloped and will serve as a potential informal green space or left as agriculture. This area will be contiguous to the northern edge of the site to allow continuity with the existing field, should its use for agriculture be maintained.

In addition to the aforementioned features, the following chapter of this report provides a set of design guidelines to inform the design of the new development.

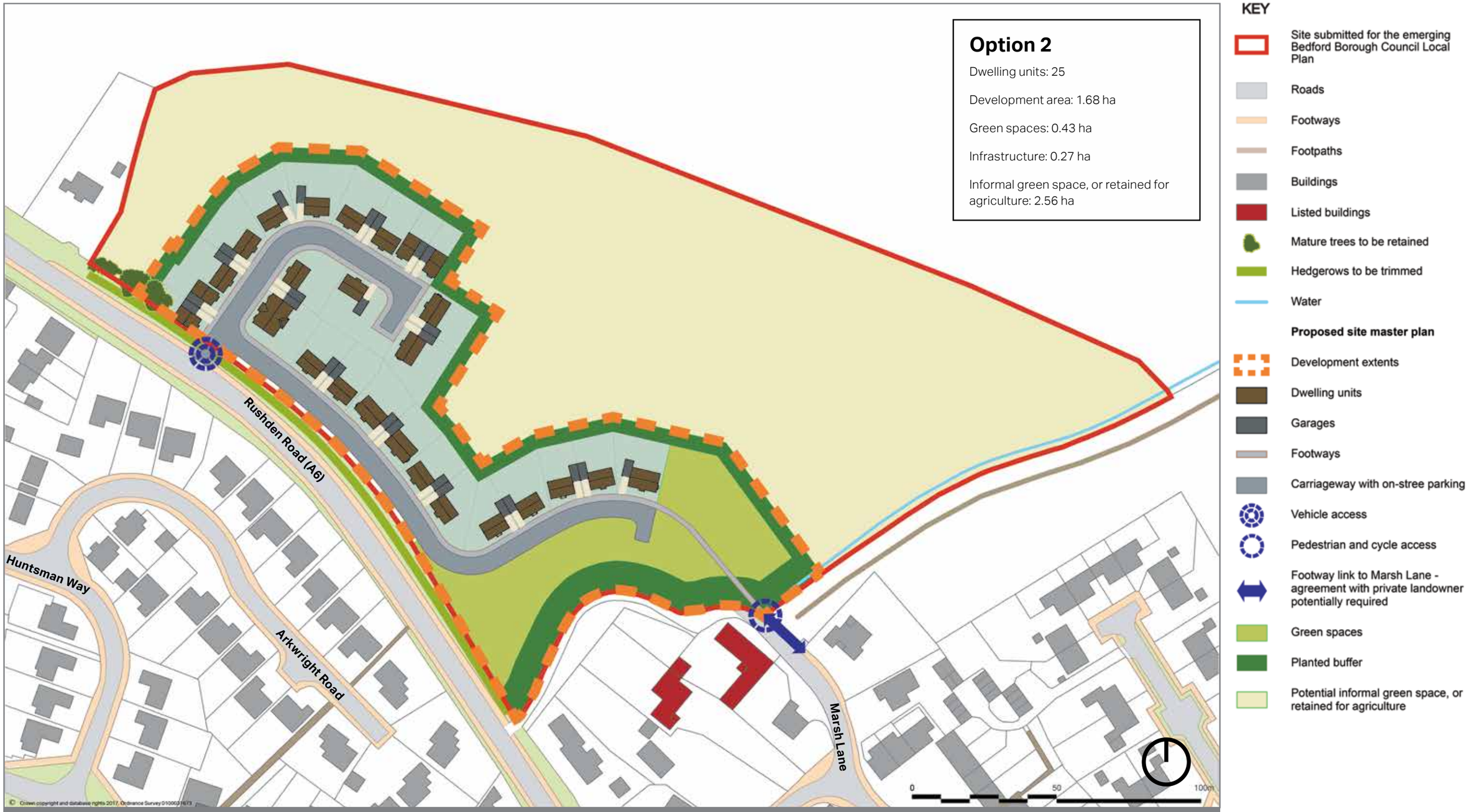


Fig. 4.2.3 Master Plan Option 2

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Design Guidelines

05

This chapter is an outline of design guidelines showing the aspirations of the Milton Ernest Parish Council as well as the built form characteristics observed in the village that are considered important.

5. Design Guidelines

5.1 General questions to ask and issues to consider when presented with a development proposal

This section states a general design principle followed by a number of questions against which the design proposal should be judged. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below.

Not all the question will apply to every development. The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment overview as to whether the design proposal has taken into account the context and provided an adequate design solution.

The Design Proposal should:

A. Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form pattern or movement and land use.

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design?
- Is the proposal within a conservation area?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?

B. Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines.

- Does the proposal harmonise with the adjacent properties?
- Has careful attention been paid to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a proposal is an extension, is it subsidiary to the existing property so as not to compromise its character?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing landscape features?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- How does the proposal affect on the character of a rural location?

C. Reinforce or enhance the established urban character of streets, squares and other spaces.

- What is the character of the adjacent streets and does this have implications for the new proposals?
- Does the new proposal respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Does the proposal positively contribute to the quality of the public realm/streetscape and existing pedestrian access?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area?
- Can any new views be created?

D. Reflect, respect and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness.

- What is the local architectural character and has this been demonstrated in the proposals?
- If the proposal is a contemporary design, are the details and materials of a sufficiently high enough quality and does it relate specifically to the architectural characteristics and scale of the site?

E. Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development.

- What are the important features surrounding the site?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- How can the important existing features including trees be incorporated into the site?
- How does the development relate to any important links both physical and visual that currently exist on the site?

F. Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing.

- Is the scale of adjacent buildings appropriate to the area?
- Should the adjacent scale be reflected?
- What would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Would a higher development improve the scale of the overall area?
- If the proposal is an extension, is it subsidiary to the existing house?
- Does the proposed development compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens?

G. Adopt appropriate materials and details.

- What is the distinctive material in the area, if any?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local material?
- Does the proposal use high quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?

H. Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity.

- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?
- Do the new points of access have regard for all users of the development (including those with disabilities)?

I. Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality.

- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?
- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Are there existing trees to consider?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how will this be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?

J. Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features.

- What effect will services have on the scheme as a whole?
- Can the effect of services be integrated at the planning design stage, or mitigated if harmful?
- Has the lighting scheme been designed to avoid light pollution?

K. Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other, to provide a safe and attractive environment.

- Has the proposal been considered in its widest context?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?
- What are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Have all aspects of security been fully considered and integrated into the design of the building and open spaces?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- Have the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?
- In rural locations has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?

L. Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours.

- Has adequate provision been made for bin storage?
- Has adequate provision been made for waste separation and relevant recycling facilities?
- Has the location of the bin storage facilities been considered relative to the travel distance from the collection vehicle?
- Has the impact of the design and location of the bin storage facilities been considered in the context of the whole development?
- Could additional measures, such as landscaping be used to help integrate the bin storage facilities into the development?
- Has any provision been made for the need to enlarge the bin storage in the future without adversely affecting the development in other ways?

5.2 Design Guidelines

This section provides recommendations on different aspects for the new development to deliver a sensible, sustainable and attractive community. The key preferred characteristics are summarised below:

A. Street Layout

- Main streets and roads should be laid out in a permeable pattern allowing for multiple connections and choice of routes.
- Cul-de-sacs should be relatively short and not discourage walking.
- Streets should tend to be linear with gentle meandering to provide interest and evolving views.
- Access to properties should be from the street unless there is a conflict with highways design due to safety.
- Where possible trees and landscaping should be incorporated in the street design to help with cooling, appearance and biodiversity.
- The building line should be mainly aligned but showing depressions and protrusions adding variety and character.

B. Open Space and Public Realm

- Open spaces should be located in locations easily accessible to all.
- Open spaces should offer a variety of uses related to surrounding activities and buildings.
- New development should design the public realm to meet the necessary standards to allow adoption by Milton Ernest Parish.
- Materials used in the public realm shall be selected to complement the character of the building and street, keeping the number and type of materials to a minimum. Selected materials must be locally characteristic, durable, high quality, and easy to maintain.
- The existing quiet and peaceful atmosphere of Milton Ernest should be preserved.

C. Gateway and Access Features

- The design proposals should consider placing gateway and built elements highlighting the access or arrival to the new developed site.
- The gateway buildings should reflect local character.
- Besides building elements acting as gateways, high quality landscaping features could be considered appropriate to fulfil the same roles.

D. Pattern and Layout of Buildings

- The buildings should show a variety of designs and layouts.
- The use of a repeating type of dwelling along the entirety of the street should be avoided.
- Boundaries such as walls or hedgerows, whichever is appropriate to the street, should enclose and define each street along the back edge of the pavement, adhering to a consistent building line for each development group.
- Properties should aim to provide rear and front gardens or at least a small buffer to the public sphere where the provision of a garden is not possible.
- The existing character must be appreciated when contemplating new development, whatever its size or purpose. Whilst contemporary design is encouraged local heritage and setting must be considered.

E. Building Lines and Boundary Treatments

- Buildings should be placed aligned along the street, with their main façade and entrance facing it.
- The building line could have variations in the form of recesses and protrusions but will generally form a unified whole whilst at the same time adding character.
- Boundary treatments will vary but these should be of high quality materials and standards. These will also reinforce the sense of continuity of the building line.
- Boundary treatments facing the street and public areas, should reflect the best examples in Milton Ernest; for example, they could be low walls made of brick or stone, metal ironmongery or hedgerows or a combination of these. The use of panel fencing in these publicly visible boundaries should be avoided.
- If placed on the property boundary, waste storage should be integrated as part of the overall design of the property. Landscaping could also be used to minimise the visual impact of bins and recycling containers.
- Any boundary treatments adjacent to the open countryside should be soft to enable a sensitive transition between the built area and open countryside.

F. Building Heights and Roofline

- Heights of buildings should not exceed three storeys and in general the average should be two storeys.
- The heights of new developments within each block may vary however, they should not exceed the height and scale of existing buildings in adjacent developments.
- Encourage the use of pitched roofing with a covering to match existing/adjacent roof materials.
- The roof, in conjunction with the position of the building should allow for glimpses of the surrounding countryside.
- The massing and siting of buildings within the development should allow for framed long distance view and visual connection with the open countryside.
- The existing roofline should be respected to create a consistent roofline along the street and more general terms to fully fit within the roofline of the village.

G. Corner Buildings

- Corner buildings should address placing windows and/or entrances facing the streets and or public spaces.
- Corner buildings should have an animated facade with excellent design on both façades of the corner.
- It is not considered good practice to leave blank façades on one side of a corner building.

H. Materials and Surface Treatments

- Materials proposed for use in new development and building extensions shall match or be guided by those used in the existing building or area.
- Boundary walls delineating gardens shall be built from local stone or other locally sourced materials to match the colour of the ones in the existing property.
- New developments shall demonstrate a respect for the existing materials palette used in the area, which is likely to vary subtly by street.
- Architectural detailing shall typically display elements that equate to those on existing traditional buildings which provide interest, scale and texture to form and elevations.
- Proposal for new developments must demonstrate a respect for the existing level of detailing displayed in the original buildings whilst reflecting contemporary architectural detailing.

I. Car Parking Solutions

- Car parking solutions should be a mix of on plot and on street.
- For family homes cars should be placed at the side of the property.
- Front of property car parking should be kept to a minimum. When placing parking at the front, the area should be designed to minimise visual impact and to blend with the existing streetscape and materials. The aim is to keep a sense of enclosure and to break the potential of a continuous area of car parking in front of the dwellings by means of walls, hedging, planting, and use of paving materials.

J. Architectural Details

- It is beyond the scope of this document to provide a comprehensive set of architectural detail solutions, yet it is expected that design proposals make reference to local buildings considered of merit.
- Architectural detailing in terraced or semi-detached houses should typically display a cornice at the eaves, door surrounds or porches and occasionally parapet wall at eaves.
- Proposed building façades should indicate the importance of each storey through combination of composition of building elements and the level of architectural detailing used.
- It is recommended that there should be a tentative towards contemporary architecture, nevertheless it should be combined with local traditional architectural forms.

Fig. 5.2.1 Local example of representative building typology.

Fig. 5.2.3 Local example of representative building typology.

Fig. 5.2.2 Local example of representative building typology.

Fig. 5.2.4 Local example of representative building typology.

Next Steps

06

This chapter concludes the report with recommendations on how to embed findings in the Neighbourhood Plan.

6. Next Steps

The recommended next steps for how to use the outcomes of this design options study are to:

1. Embed the masterplan and guidelines in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan;
2. Engage with the Council to develop policies supporting the proposals;
3. Engage with developers and to seek support for the proposals; and
4. Explore viability.

1. Embed the masterplan and guidelines in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The objective of this report is to develop a series of design guidelines based on an illustrative masterplan for the area known as 'Site 518.' The neighbourhood plan can only include land use policies that guide applications that constitute 'development'[1]. Where public realm improvements require planning permission the neighbourhood plan can include criteria-based policy and principles that guide future change within the neighbourhood area. The design guidelines can form part of such criteria.

The report can be used as evidence to support the forthcoming neighbourhood plan (and its draft policies) where the analysis highlights relevant issues and opportunities that can be influenced by land use planning interventions. The site options presented (and other recommendations and figures contained herein) can be used in the plan to aid consultation and then later decision making as part of a made plan.

The plan's vision and objectives could be refined to include some of the aims and ideas contained in this report. The masterplanning study has drawn out an illustrative masterplan showing a future of the area. Where there is public support for some of the ideas, the steering group should consider weaving the outputs into the neighbourhood plan vision and objectives so that they then act as the touchstone for policy making and decision taking moving forward. For example: introducing greater design quality and guidelines to preserve the character of Milton Ernest is a clear aim for the area.

The focus of this report has primarily been on urban design interventions. These suggestions should be considered alongside other non-design interventions, such as exploring opportunities for supporting or restricting certain types of development/land uses and allocating the key sites identified for development. Any policies put forward must be capable of meeting the basic conditions[2] (e.g. having regard to national policies and general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan).

Specific proposals could include:

- **Urban design guidelines** - The neighbourhood plan can include urban design policy where specific local circumstances demand a neighbourhood approach propounded in the masterplan. The plan could transpose many of the urban design guidelines within this document into statutory land use planning policy where the Local Plan or National Planning Policy Framework does not provide a similar or sufficiently detailed steer on design matters.
- **Land uses** – The plan could specify what uses would be preferred in particular locations or set out design-based policies such as a general residential design guidelines, which could provide a hook to a more detailed residential design guide that sits within the plan as an appendix. The appendix could detail the basic principles and criteria that would be expected within the neighbourhood area.
- **Open spaces/local green space designations policy** – The masterplanning work provides an indication of where landscaping and open space would be appropriate. Existing green space should also be considered for the Local Green Space Designation where they are locally valued and can be incorporated into future redevelopment of the area; ensuring sufficient green infrastructure is delivered.

1 Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 2014). Accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum

2. Engage with the Council to develop policies supporting the proposals.

The inputs from the Council's policy and development management specialists would be invaluable in advance of formal consultation and submission. The steering group should consider how our recommendations can be transposed into policy through discussions with the Council and use the best practice guidance from Locality to prepare daft policies for consultation. Locality's 'Writing Planning Policies' 33 guidance sets of how different planning policies are designed to achieve different things. The guide describes the three most common as:

- **Generic** – a simple policy which applies universally to development across the entire neighbourhood plan area;
- **Criteria based** – a policy with a series of requirements that should be met by development proposals. These can be set out as separate bullet points; and
- **Site specific** – this is where a policy applies to particular areas of land. One of the most powerful tools for a neighbourhood plan is to allocate land for a particular type of development. As well as allocating land you can use your plan to set out the principles which need to be followed in developing a particular site. This might include specifying what needs to be covered in a design brief to accompany any planning application. If you have site specific policies then you need to include a clear map showing the location and boundaries.

Site specific allocations are the hardest to do well. They would normally include associated policy related to land uses, quantum of development, configuration and design. The steering group should request a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening opinion from the Council as soon as the objectives and nature of the plan are firmed up. SEA is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a plan before it is made. Masterplanning and allocating sites will typically trigger a requirement for SEA. An SEA will provide objective information for local residents and businesses on the positive and negative environmental effects of your plan and wider policy proposals.

In addition, the steering group should check with the Local Planning Authority that their emerging preferred options are planning matters (i.e. suitable for inclusion as land use planning policy). Those that are not can be considered as community projects or neighbourhood infrastructure to be included within a delivery and implementation section of the neighbourhood plan.

3. Engage with developers to seek support for the proposals.

In order for the neighbourhood plan to be effective, the policies put forward in support of the masterplan will require close liaison and cooperation with the Local Authority, landowners, and developers. Related to Section 1 the cooperation of these bodies can be used initially to ensure the proposed policies and strategy are robust and future proofed. At a later date these discussions will to help refine proposals leading to future planning applications.

Consulting with these key stakeholders in advance of formal consultation will help to establish buy-in to the broad objectives.

4. Explore viability

It is understood that the neighbourhood plan could be supportive of a level of housing growth that enables a by-pass to be constructed. It would be useful for work to be undertaken that defines how many homes should be planned for to meet this aim.

3 Writing planning policies: A guide to writing planning policies which will address the issues that matter to your neighbourhood plan (Locality, 2014) Accessed at: http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/writing-planning-policies.

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