



Towerlands Park

B R A I N T R E E

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

June 2020

Prepared and submitted by **David Lock Associates**
and **To Studio**
on behalf of **The Unex Group**





Towerlands Park

— BRAINTREE —

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The vision for Towerlands Park

Towerlands Park will be a new landscape led neighbourhood for Braintree, set on the rural edge of the town. High quality housing will create a new neighbourhood within a green infrastructure corridor, which includes the retention and enhancement of the existing mature trees and hedgerows within it.

Provision for the new community includes a new early year's nursery overlooking the village green, local shops, and a series of play areas, parkland, meadow and community orchard spaces linked by a circular footway/cycleway.

The new neighbourhood will be well connected to existing areas of Braintree through the retained Public Right of Way, footpaths and cycle paths.

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1.0 Introduction

This Design & Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared by David Lock Associates (DLA) and is submitted in support of an Outline Planning Application (OPA) to Braintree District Council (BDC) on behalf of The Unex Group (the applicant) for the redevelopment of the site known as the Former Towerlands Park in Braintree (the site).

The scheme proposed for the OPA comprises:

- Up to 575 homes (Use Class C3) including affordable and market housing;
- A 56 place early years and childcare nursery (Use Class D1);
- Up to 250sqm of local retail (Use Class A1) and up to 250sqm of community facilities (Use Class D1);
- Green infrastructure and open space, including formal play facilities, community growing area, linear park, open meadow, and enhanced planting around the perimeter of the site;
- Two new vehicular accesses from the B1053 and Panfield Lane and closure of existing access from Deanery Hill;
- A network of cycle and pedestrian routes, including a circular footway / cycleway;
- Minor diversion of public right of way (PRoW); and
- Provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other associated infrastructure.

The site is a draft allocation in the emerging BDC Local Plan (Part 2) (2017) as a strategic growth area for new housing. It is allocated for up to 600 homes plus other ancillary uses. The draft policy (Policy LLP 20) is as follows:

- 600 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing as per the Council's requirements
- Primary school or contributions towards new primary school provision in the locality
- A new 56 place stand-alone early years and childcare nursery (D1 use) on 0.13 hectares of land as required by the Local Education Authority through S106 Planning Obligations
- Community facilities, including contributions to local NHS facilities
- Local retail facilities
- Public open space and formal and informal recreation including landscaping to the rural edge

The OPA seeks to provide a scheme in compliance with the emerging policy.

Role of the Design & Access Statement

The DAS supports the application in compliance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (England) Order 2015. It adheres with National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) paragraphs 029 – 034 (2014).

NPPG paragraph 34 states “A Design and Access Statement is a concise report accompanying certain applications for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.”

Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order (2015) states “A Design and Access Statement must:

- a) explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development;
- b) demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account;
- c) explain the policy adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account;
- d) state what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to access to the development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation; and
- e) explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

The DAS will help BDC, consultees and other interested parties to understand the development proposals, and how the analysis and appraisal of the site, its surrounds, and its access opportunities have shaped the OPA.

Structure and content of the Design & Access Statement

The OPA is for 575 houses (including affordable housing), local retail and/or community facilities, early years and childcare nursery, open space, and associated infrastructure. Reserved matters applications (RMA) will be submitted for each phase of development following the grant of planning permission.

To adequately explain the components of the application the DAS comprises the following sections:

- An assessment of the site to understand the site features and surrounding context;
- A review of the relevant planning policy;
- A summary of the community engagement that took place in advance of the OPA submission;
- A site evaluation setting out the site constraints and opportunities to be considered as part of the scheme design;
- A summary of the design proposals, including a review of the design principles which have informed the scheme, the design evolution to reach the proposals of the OPA, and the parameter plans formed as a result of the design work; and
- A summary of the access proposals for the scheme.

Future design work as part of RMAs following grant of planning permission will address layout, appearance, landscape design and internal access within the site. A Design Code has been prepared, looking in greater detail at the key character areas and to help guide future design work.

The proposed development is expressed through different types of plans that play different roles within the application, as explained below.

Parameter plans

The Parameter Plans are formal plans which, along with the Description of Development, fix the strategic parameters of the design which will be approved as part of the OPA. The Parameter Plans address the use and amount of proposed development, movement and access routes to and across the site, provision of green infrastructure, proposed residential densities across the site and proposed building heights.

Illustrative master plan

The Illustrative Master Plan provides a layout in order to illustrate how the Parameter Plans could be interpreted at the detailed design stage by using the Design Principles embedded in the DAS and the Design Code. The Illustrative Master Plan has no formal status within the OPA. It demonstrates that a high quality, sustainable and innovative place can and should be delivered within the parameters which the application seeks to fix.

Access plans

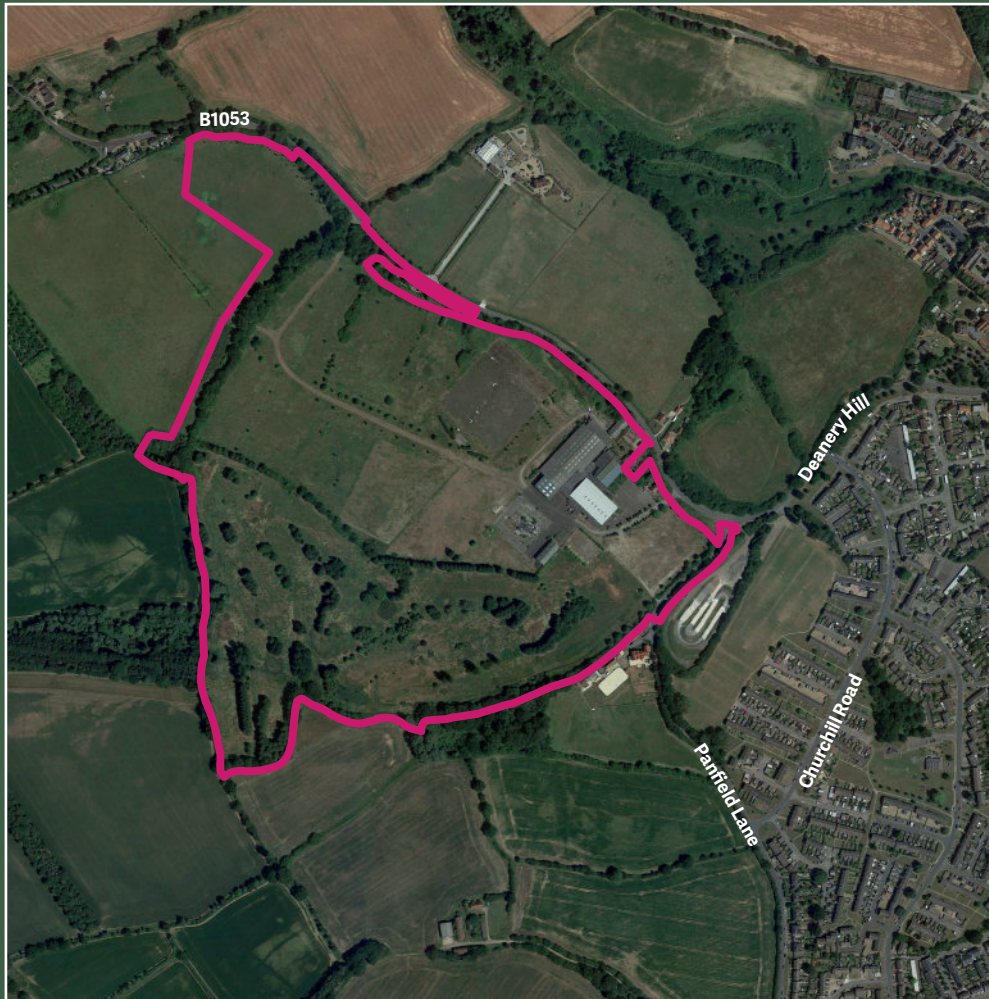
The application seeks detailed planning permission for the two points of access into the site from the existing highway network.

Other illustrative material

The DAS uses a range of perspective sketches, drawings, diagrams and photographs to help illustrate the context, Core Design Principles and ways in which the character of the development might evolve. These images have no formal status in the OPA.



2.0 Assessment



Site location and context

The site is located to the northwest of Braintree between the village of Panfield and Bocking Churchstreet. It is bounded by Deanery Hill/B1053 to the north, Panfield Lane to the east/south-east, a PRoW to the south, and tree and hedgerows to the west. Development at the site will allow for a natural expansion of Braintree town, as well as providing a location for a new rural edge community. The North-West Braintree Growth Area (NWBGA), which is located to the south of the site, further supports this site as a natural expansion of Braintree.

The site covers an area of 35.18ha. The site has remained vacant since the former Towerlands golf, equestrian and conference centre closed in July 2012. The equestrian centre comprised a large outdoor sand arena, indoor arena, stables and ancillary equestrian facilities which have since been largely demolished, although the indoor arena remains, albeit vacant. In addition, a large conference and leisure centre was situated directly off the main entrance and there were extensive areas of tarmac, gravel car parks and hard standings. A large part of the site is therefore 'previously developed' brownfield land.

Beyond the equestrian and conference centre facilities the site is generally open in character with the majority of trees situated along the site perimeter, giving the site a sense of enclosure. Pockets of established trees are located across the site, particularly within the former golf course. The site's landscape character is defined by its gently undulating landform and small irregular shaped field pattern. To the south the site falls towards a stream tributary which runs from west to east, which is in close proximity to the former golf course and an existing PRoW, which provides strong local connections west towards Panfield.

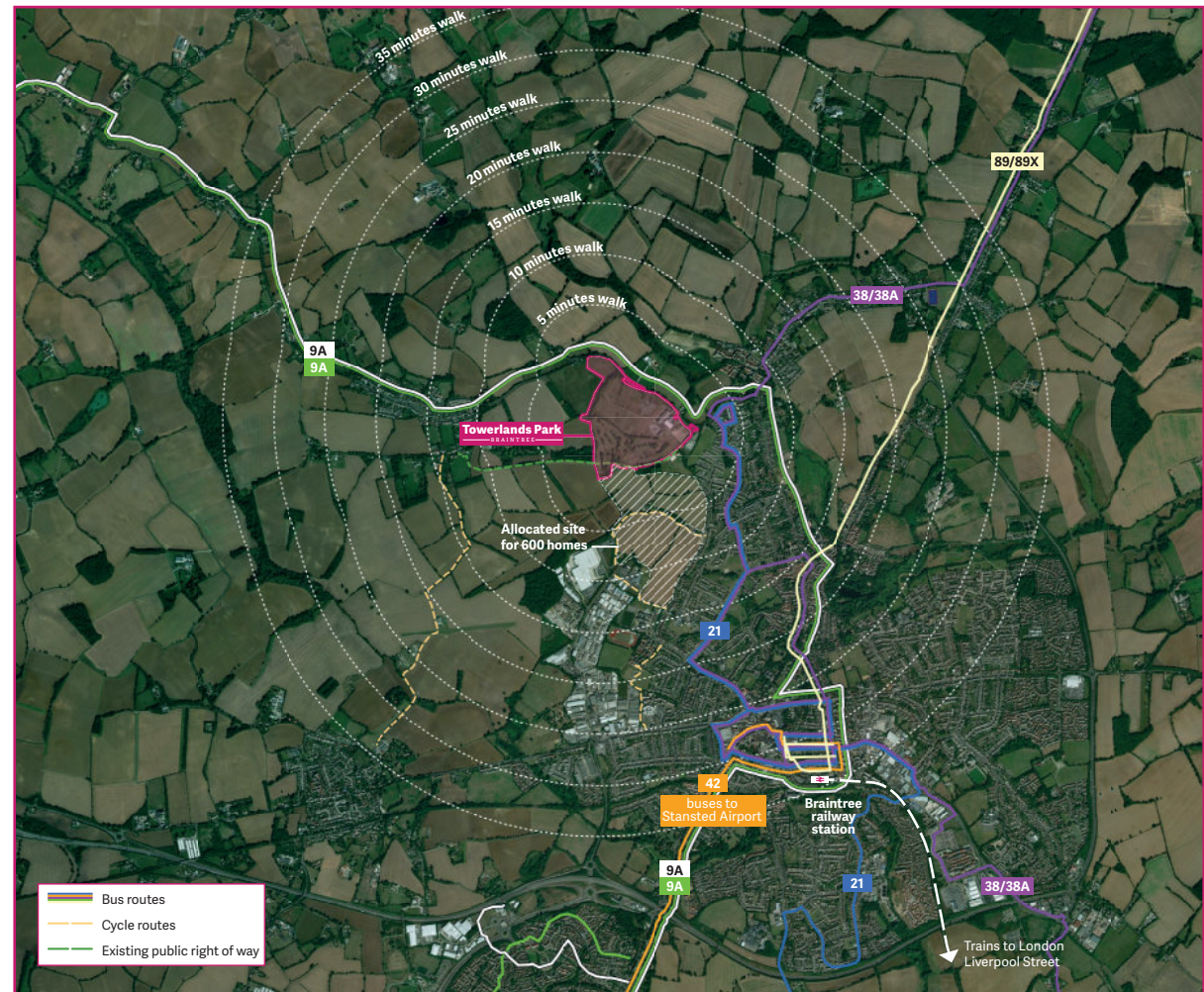
The wider context

Movement and connectivity

Braintree is well located in relation to the established road network, with good public transport connectivity to key regional centres. Key links include the A120 west towards Stanstead Airport and the M11, south via the A131 to Chelmsford, east via the A120 to Colchester and north via the A131 towards Bury St Edmunds.

The A120 and A131 form a bypass around Braintree to the south and east respectively. Two former Roman roads dissect Braintree, including B1256 from east to west, and London Road, Bocking Road and Bradford Street which run south to north. The site itself borders the B1053 which leads from Braintree, through the more rural areas of Essex to Saffron Walden. Links to Braintree also include Panfield Lane and there are also a number of footpath links that provide a choice of connections towards Braintree Town Centre which is approximately 1.8km (20mins walk).

The town centre is the focus for local services, public transport network and shopping facilities. The town's railway station lies to the south of the town centre, some 2.5km from the site where train services run hourly to London Liverpool Street. An established network of bus services connects Braintree to the wider area. Services passing the site include routes 9 and 9A which operate weekdays between 07:30 and 17:00 and provide connections to the town centre and towards Great Notley, Barfield and Blake End. Other bus services operate close to the site, including routes 21 and 38/38A, which serve Black Notley and Halstead respectively.



Landscape character

The landscape is characterised nationally as forming part of the South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands (National Character Area Profile 86). In this context the landscape is described as being a gently undulating landform crossed by small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau.

At a county and district-wide level landscape is characterised in the Essex Landscape Character Assessment and Braintree District Character Assessment which further sub-divides the landscape into a finer grain of areas with more detailed landscape characteristics. In this context the site lies in the Pant River Valley that forms part of the wider Brain River Valley and Upper Blackwater Valley landscape. The valley is described as being shallow, tree-lined with a mix of arable and pastoral fields bonded by hedgerows.

Land to the west of the site is characterised as The Rayne Farmland Plateau, which forms part of the wider Central Essex Farmland. This is described as an undulating landform, with medium and large fields dissected by valleys including the River Pant, River Blackwater and Pods Brook to the west.

To the north and east of the River Pant Valley lies the High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland which forms part of the Gosfield Wooded Farmlands. Like the farmland plateaus, the wooded farmland is characterised as being undulating with medium to large arable fields, but with woodland blocks being a stronger feature.

From the character assessments a number of key features have been identified:

- Woodland blocks and hedgerows are visually linked to form an often-wooded horizon;
- Panoramic views from the tops of hills and views along the valley corridors which are constrained or channelled depending on the frequency or density of trees;
- Settlements outside Braintree that are scattered with farmsteads, hamlets and villages, with many linear in form and featuring narrow green strips and moated farmsteads; and
- The local vernacular of traditional buildings being timber framed with colour wash and thatched roofs. Some development towards the south featuring weatherboarding and brick.

The key issues arising from these assessments that affect landscape character include:

- Braintree's expansion and intrusion of residential and industrial development on the landscape with development that is out of character; and
- Sensitivity of the valley slopes to development which could be visible where there are open views along and across the valleys and river corridors.

The district wide assessment includes a number of recommendations for maintaining and enhancing landscape character, which include:

- Protecting and enhancing features that contribute to local distinctiveness and sense of place;

- Improving the integrity of the landscape and reinforcing its character;
- Considering the visual impact of new residential development and maintaining key views; and
- Ensuring new development is respectful in scale and responds to historic settlement patterns, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles, vernacular and materials.

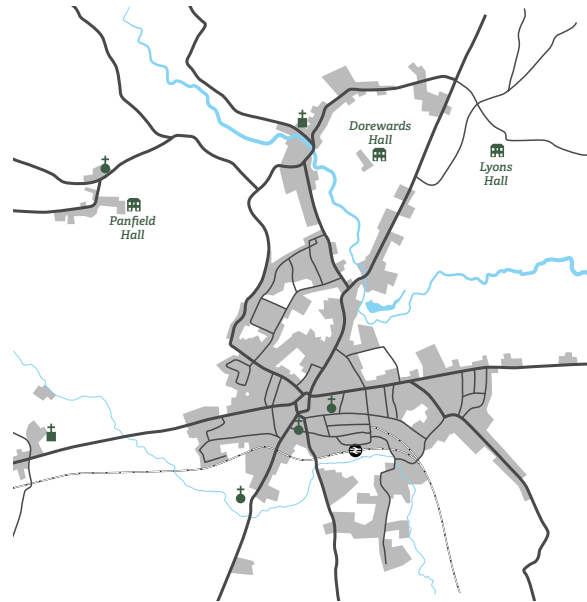


The growth of Braintree

Braintree has grown from being a settlement focussed at the junction of the two Roman roads, to becoming a market town in the 12th century. The gradual expansion of the town then focussed on the steady intensification of development along the radial routes. The growth of the town's textile industry led to an expansion of the town to the south, towards the Braintree Branch Line railway and River Brain. This era of expansion is dominated by terraced residential development mixed with more recent infill development around former textile factories.



1896



1958

Later expansion, particularly in the post war decades, includes more suburban forms of development around a variety of street patterns, including rectilinear blocks, cul-de-sacs and more recent irregularly shaped perimeter blocks. Residential expansion over this time has filled the gaps between the radial Roman roads and has surrounded Bocking.



2019

The Braintree bypass forms a definitive boundary of Braintree to the east and south. The edges to the north and west are less well defined by any such physical boundary and have a more irregular edge formed by areas such as the Springwood industrial estate and residential developments. This edge is set to become more evenly defined with development proposed at the North-West Braintree Growth Area and the OPA site. Development at the site has the opportunity to continue this growth towards Deanery Hill, and without unacceptable adverse impacts on adjacent settlements, key features and the wider landscape which are explored in this chapter.

Local character

Identifying the local character is important to understand how the form of development could evolve. The character of the built environment is therefore an important aspect, not only in the wider sense of the structure and pattern of development but also to a more detailed level of the built form and architectural detailing.

Braintree town centre

Braintree became a market town in the 12th Century, and this is reflected in the compact form of historic development that defines the town centre with an organic layout of narrow streets that are tightly enclosed by a mix of 2-3 storey buildings. Key spaces include the Market Place and Great Square. Key landmarks include prominent corner buildings such as the Town Hall, St Michaels Church and Tabor House. In recent years Braintree town centre has become more pedestrianised, with a one-way system for vehicles moving around the town. Other notable features include the River Brain, which forms the focus of a green corridor through Braintree. There is a wide mix in the architectural styles of buildings, through incremental redevelopments, and infill developments. The architectural styles of buildings include brick, render, and timber framing.





Bocking

Linked to the town centre is the sub-district of Bocking, originally a linear settlement linked to Braintree by the Causeway and Bradford Street. Bocking is defined by a wide mix of buildings that provide a strong sense of continuity and enclosure along Bradford Street, broken by a series of narrow lanes.

The built form is dominated by two storey cottages, some dating back to Saxon times, interrupted with occasional three storey cottages, more formally fronted houses dating to the Georgian period and more recent Victorian terraces. In the lanes there is a wide and informal mix of traditional buildings and more recent infill development, which connect through to more recent development arranged around courts.

The wide mix of buildings is also reflected in the wider range of vernacular treatment, with the more traditional dominated by render finishes, some with timber features and pargetting with other buildings finished with brick or render.

Bocking Churchstreet

Other settlements close to the site include Bocking Churchstreet to the north east of Braintree. Bocking Churchstreet is separated from the edge of Bocking and Braintree by the River Blackwater. Like Bocking, Bocking Churchstreet has a linear pattern with a mix of traditional cottages which are more rural in character and Victorian terraces. The vernacular features reflect the more rural character of the village with some buildings having half-timbered finishes as well as render and brick on others.

This residential area has expanded with ribbon-style housing on deep plots east along Churchstreet, and with more recent development grouped near to the village centre. Development to the west along the River Pant features perimeter blocks that emulate organic growth with mews courts. Efforts to reflect local character in recent developments are shown in architectural features; with a rendered finish on some homes and others with timber boarding.





Glebe

Developed in the 1960s and 70s this area is strongly characterised by local authority-built housing. This housing adopts “Radburn” principles of segregated vehicular and pedestrian routes that extend from residential spine routes such as Churchill Road and Glebe Road. The housing is arranged in link terraces with open plan frontages that address pedestrian links through green spaces, whilst the rears are accessed from garage courts. Open spaces are therefore generous and larger amenity spaces are focussed around the centrally located Glebe Community Hall and to the west of development served by Churchill Road. Vernacular treatments are generally dominated by brick but with some dwellings with upper storey concrete tile cladding.

Bailey Bridge

Developed in the 1950s and 60s this area lies to the south of the Glebe area and focusses on Bailey Bridge Road. This area is characterised by local authority-built housing. These are formed as large, mainly rectilinear blocks developed with linked terraces. The largest blocks enclose garage courts and allotments to the rear. Generous open plan front gardens address the street, with some arranged with greater setbacks to create green spaces which are only distinguishable from front gardens by pavements. Some front gardens have been subsequently enclosed with a variety of boundary treatments. Vernacular treatments are dominated by brick or render finishes.

Some intensification has taken place in this area with the demolition of some blocks and replacement with a mix of higher density development dominated with semi-detached housing with some terraced housing, bungalows and apartments on Warne Avenue, Normandy Way and Oak Tree Gardens. The character differs with less setbacks, additional landscaping, clearly defined boundaries and landscaped open space. Vernacular treatments include timber brick and render.





Panfield

Panfield lies to the west of the site. It is a settlement that was originally structured by a loose pattern of traditional cottages and farmsteads with a church, village hall and public house. Panfield Hall, a Grade I Listed Building, is located on its eastern edge. Residential development has intensified the overall form of Panfield on Kynaston Road, with semi-detached and detached houses and bungalows. To the south, development on Hall Road remains loosely structured and is more rural in character. The vernacular includes a mix of brick and rendered finishes.



Local facilities and services

The local facilities plan opposite shows how the site relates to local facilities and services which are mainly focussed in Braintree town centre. The town centre has a wide retail and commercial offer, civic uses and community facilities which is set to be broadened with a mixed-use development at land off Manor Street.

Other large-scale retail facilities are focussed at the edge of Braintree, adjacent to the A120, including Freeport Braintree and Braintree Retail Park, approximately 5km from the site.

Health facilities are mainly located close to the town centre on Coggeshall Road and adjacent to Braintree Community Hospital which is located on Rayne Road. There is also a surgery at Church Lane, some 2km from the site.

Existing education provision includes Bocking Churchstreet Community Primary School, which is approximately 1.4km east of the site, John Bunyan Infant School and Nursery, approximately 1.8km to the south, and St Francis Catholic Primary School, approximately 2.4km to the south.

Secondary School provision is offered at the Tabor Academy, approximately 1.9km to the south of the site. The Braintree Campus of the Colchester Institute is located 2km from the site on Church Lane.

In terms of employment, other than those associated with the wide mix of activities in the town centre, activity is focussed at employment development at the Springwood Industrial Estate, approximately 2km from the site. Employment development is also focussed on the B1018 corridor to the south east of Braintree Town Centre.

The location for local facilities closer to the site include a limited offer at Bocking Churchstreet, approximately 1km east of the site and at a small retail parade at Queens Road, some 1.5km to the south.

Proposed development at the NWBGA includes the provision of a mixed-use neighbourhood centre with an offer of shops, healthcare, pharmacy, café, community facility and employment uses. The centre is intended to have a strong association with the adjoining employment and housing areas and therefore has the potential to benefit the application site. The illustrative master plan also aims to provide additional education capacity.





The site and local context: topography, landscape character, views and features

Details of the assessment of current landscape features and key views are provided in the accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

In terms of landform the site is raised in the centre and generally falls to the north, towards Deanery Hill and south towards the watercourse and woodland block adjacent to the site boundary. A ridgeline can be identified which generally runs from the middle of the north west boundary to the junction of Panfield Lane and Deanery Hill. Along this ridgeline is a small plateau to the south of the existing equestrian centre. From this point there are panoramic views to the south west and north.

Despite the raised landform, much of the site is visually contained by trees and hedgerows, strongest of which is a belt of trees and hedges along the north west boundary.

A hedgerow forming the northern boundary along Deanery Hill also offers some visual containment from the east and is considered to contribute positively to the semi-rural character of this road. As such it is desirable to retain this feature.



To the south, the sloping land is considered to create a natural enclosure which can be experienced along the PProW that links Panfield Lane to Panfield village. Along this corridor adjacent to the southern boundary is a woodland block subject to a tree preservation order (TPO) comprising trees and hedgerows.

These are assets of the site and should help to address the key issue raised in the Braintree District landscape Character Assessment with regard to the potential visual intrusion of Braintree's expansion. Protecting and enhancing landscape features would make a major contribution in terms of integrating development and using these features to contribute towards a meaningful sense of place.

Landscape capacity analysis

A Landscape Capacity Analysis around settlements in the Braintree District was carried out in 2014 to help determine the most appropriate directions for future development at the edges of settlements in Braintree. Land parcels within Landscape Setting Areas have been assessed around settlements including Braintree town to determine how they could absorb development with appropriate mitigation measures and minimal impact on the landscape.

In the study the site is identified as Parcel 16b, and is considered to have "Medium Landscape Capacity". Key relevant points from the assessment align with the assessment work that accompanies the application:

- Close views into the site are limited to views from the public footpath along the south of the site and from the B1053 at the site's eastern corner where the main vehicle entrance to the site is located;
- Views are available from Panfield Lane where it runs adjacent to the eastern end of the southern boundary;
- The raised topography and vegetation of the northern boundary on the B1053, protects views of buildings on the site and land to their west;
- Longer distance views are available from both public viewpoints on Bovingdon Road and public rights of way on the north-east valley side of the River Pant, and private from housing in Bocking;
- The assessment recommends that existing vegetation on the plateau slopes should be retained and strengthened to help screen views of development on the site from the road and soften the skyline from cross-valley viewpoints;
- Internal hedgerows should be retained as a vegetation framework to maintain and reinstate linked habitats and could inform future development layouts;
- Conifer shelter belts are typical of the local area. This planting pattern could be copied to provide mitigating vegetation to protect views from the PProW in the south of the site; and
- Access to the site should be sensitively treated so that it does not disrupt the existing sense of arrival to Bocking.

Archaeology and historic environment

There are no designated heritage assets located within the site boundary.

Heritage features around the site comprise some Listed Buildings, which are generally clustered around Bocking Churchstreet, along Church Lane towards the town centre and to the west of the site in Panfield. Both Bocking Churchstreet and Bocking have defined conservation areas.

Panfield Hall, a Grade I Listed Building, is located 0.6km to the west of the site. Panfield Hall is described as a great house within a large garden setting.

The Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, carried out by Oxford Archaeology, finds that there are records of remains around the site from different periods. However, the site itself is considered to have low potential for archaeological remains, and the survival of any remains is likely to have been impacted around the large buildings on the north of the site and where earthworks have been constructed on the golf course.

The submitted Heritage Impact Assessment confirms that the site does not contribute towards the setting of Panfield Hall, and therefore the proposed scheme will be unlikely to impact upon the significance and setting of Panfield Hall.

Biodiversity, trees, hedgerows and woodland

There are no statutory sites of nature conservation importance immediately adjoining the site. A Local Nature Reserve is designated at Bocking Blackwater which lies approximately 1.5km to the east of the site beyond the east side of Bocking. Non-statutory sites around the site include Panfield Wood, approximately 0.9km to the south, Cow Wood, approximately 1km to the north west, Bocking Special Roadside Verge, approximately 1.1km to the north of the site, Oxney Wood, approximately 1.4km to the north west of the site, and Oak Wood, approximately 2.7km to the south.

An area of woodland to the southern edge is designated with a group TPO and provides an opportunity to reinforce with additional buffer planting. Within the site is a group of poplar trees adjacent to the southern boundary which can be retained. Single trees towards the south of the site that define the watercourse are considered to be of significant value and should be retained.

Within the site a Tree Survey has been undertaken which finds that there are a wide range of trees of different species, some native and others ornamental associated with the development of the equestrian centre and former golf course. Whilst many of the trees and hedgerows at the edges of the site could play a role in providing visual containment and adding to character, many are considered to be average on quality (being Category C) underpinning a rationale for reinforcing existing trees and hedgerows.

In terms of biodiversity and ecology, there are features in the site that are considered to be habitats that have potential to support protected species. Mitigation measures outlined in the Ecological Assessment relate to habitat retention where possible and adequate mitigation, including working practices for vegetation removal outside breeding seasons.

Hydrological features, drainage & flood risk

Hydrological features within the site include two man-made ponds, one of which was a balancing pond for the external riding arena adjacent to Deanery Hill. The other pond was created to provide irrigation water for the former golf course.

Watercourses include one at the southern edge of the site, which passes through the south west corner and leads towards Panfield Lane, and another that defines part of the western boundary towards the south west corner of the site. Both are offshoots of the River Pant and the River Blackwater.

Flood risk mapping shows that all of the site lies in Flood zone 1 and is therefore at very low risk of river flooding.

A flood risk and drainage assessment has been completed to determine the full extent of flood risk and sets out recommendations for appropriate SuDS measures which have informed the illustrative master plan.



Utilities

There are a number of utilities that cross the site. This includes a high-pressure gas main which is a key consideration for the development. The pipeline runs broadly parallel to the western edge of the site. The gas main has an easement of 6.1m with a 13m access strip each side.

There are also areas that have been identified by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) which have specific development criteria. This includes an inner and middle zone of 82m and an outer zone of 265m as measured from the centre line of the gas main.

With the gas pipe restriction zone being adjacent to the western rural edge of the site, it provides the opportunity for this area to be integrated as a generous soft edge of development. On the advice of the HSE, recreational use of this area should not seek to attract more than 100 people at any given time.

The site also includes water mains including a route that runs through the south western area of the site and crosses through the western boundary. There is also a route that runs centrally through the site from near the northern apex of the western boundary to near the centre of the southern boundary. Other water mains also enter the site at the centre of the southern boundary and head east towards the junction of Panfield Lane and Deanery Hill. The water mains require a 4.5m easement on each side of the pipeline to be free from development.

Policy context

Local policy

The current adopted plan includes the Braintree Core Strategy (2011) and the Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005.

The Braintree Core Strategy is the principal adopted development plan document for BDC which sets out key policies for development across the District. Braintree, the District's largest town, is the main focus for development, where the surrounding landscape has the capacity to accommodate sustainable development and growth. As such the Core Strategy focusses growth in the urban areas and at the edges.

In terms of design, BDC expresses its aspirations to promote and secure high-quality design in all new developments, and to protect and enhance the historic environment in Policy CS9: Built and Historic Environment. This includes respecting local context and creating safe and accessible environments.

The Braintree Local Plan Review includes extant planning policies covering detailed issues that are not covered at the level of the more recent Core Strategy. Relevant key design requirements include:

- Responding well to the existing development context within defined settlement boundaries (Policy RL3)
- Achieving mixed communities with a range of types and tenures of housing that is capable of meeting local needs (Policies RL7 & RL8)

- Undertaking a robust appraisal to inform design and layout and ensuring that the response meets detailed requirements and integrates high quality landscaping and sustainable development features (Policy RLP9)
- Preference for housing development to achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare with flexibility to vary according to context (RLP10)
- Detailed criteria for layout and design (Policy RLP90 & RLP91)
- Promoting public art (Policy RLP94)

Braintree District Local Plan Submission Draft (2017)

A new Local Plan for the District is emerging that will set out local plan policies for Braintree District up to 2033. Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the Local Plan Review (2005) and some of the policies in the Core Strategy (2011). The emerging Local Plan is split into two parts and has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration at an examination.

Part 1 is a shared Strategic Plan for North Essex that has been prepared jointly with Colchester Borough Council (CBC) and Tendring District Council (TDC). Part 2 is specific to the Braintree District and draws on Part 1 to set out a Spatial Strategy and policies and proposals that are specific to the borough whilst also consistent with the shared Spatial Plan. Relevant key design requirements include:

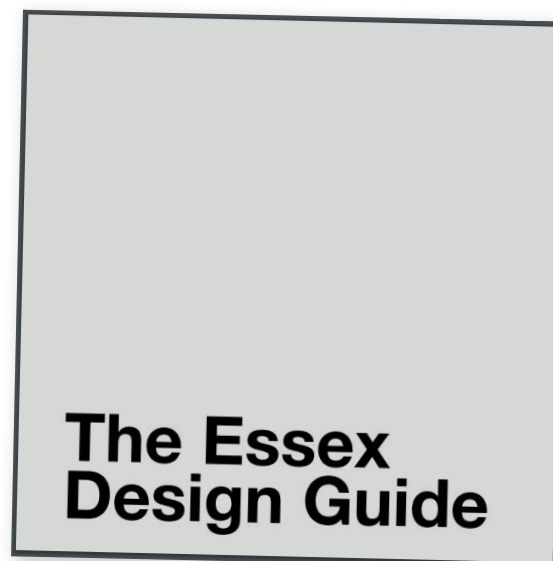
- Using frameworks and master plans to shape strategic scale development and meet the highest standards of urban and architectural design (Part 1, Policy SP6).

- Meeting criteria for the density and massing of residential development and for a housing mix that meets the requirements of the 2015 SHMA update (Part 2, Policy LPP37).
- Meeting national technical housing standards (Part 2, Policy LPP37).
- Securing the highest possible standards of design and layout and protection of the historic environment. (Part 2, Policy LPP50).
- Making developments accessible to all users and flexible and responsive to changing needs (Part 2, Policy LPP51).
- A high standard of layout and design in all developments, which: reaches high standards of architectural quality; is locally distinctive; appropriate in layout, scale, height and massing for enhancing local character; creates a safe and secure environment; and integrates sustainability features to improve water and energy efficiency (Part 2, Policy LPP55).
- Demonstrating that development will not be detrimental to the distinctive landscapes that are identified in the District Councils Landscape Character Assessments and if required maximising opportunities to create new green infrastructure including those that link urban areas to the countryside (Part 2, Policy LPP71).
- Having regard to landscape characteristics, as informed by the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, and demonstrating that development will successfully integrate into the local landscape (Part 2, Policy LPP71).

Sub-regional design guidance

The Essex Design Guide (2005) is the principal guide for residential developments at a sub-regional level, setting out criteria for the creation of successful, well-designed places. These include key principles which are well related to wider urban design principles.

Developers are encouraged to respond to criteria in terms of procedure and content and prepare proposals that are well informed by context.



National planning policy context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published in March 2012 and revised in February 2019.

The NPPF outlines the purpose and role of the planning system. The importance of achieving well-designed places is stressed in paragraphs 124, with design objectives set out under paragraph 127. The importance of considering the design quality through the evolution and assessment of individual proposals is set out in paragraph 128. In paragraph 129 the NPPF encourages the use of appropriate tools and processes for improving the quality of development from the early stages of the design process.

The NPPF in paragraph 189 also requires proposals to assess the potential impact of developments on heritage assets and their significance. In the context of the site this include the Grade I Listed Panfield Hall and its setting.

National design guidance

NPPG: Design

2014 National Planning Practice Guidance: Design (Reference ID: 26-001- 20140306) supports the NPPF. In superseding previous supplementary documents such as "By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice" (2000), and "Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention" it carries over the key design principles contained within these documents.

Manual for Streets

Manual for Streets (MfS) (2007) and Manual for Streets 2 (2010) by the Department for Transport provide guidance for the design of new residential streets with a greater focus on place making and introduce a user hierarchy in which pedestrians and cyclists are considered first in the design process:

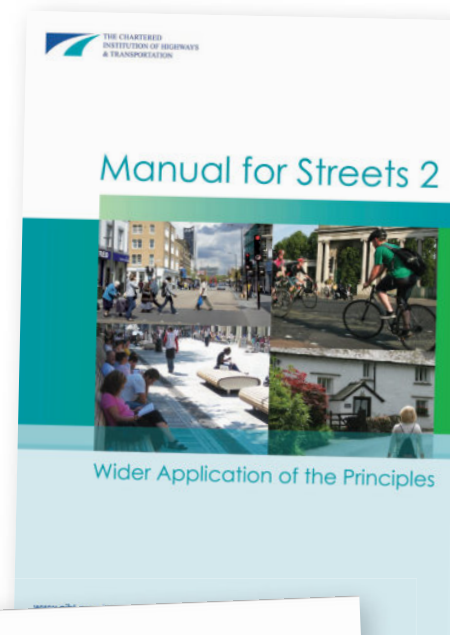
'MfS demonstrates the benefits that flow from good design and assigns a higher priority to pedestrians and cyclists, setting out an approach to residential streets that recognises their role in creating places that work for all members of the community.' (Preface, 2007)

A key aspect of MfS is the promotion of joint working and a change in the approach to street design through following the principles of inclusive design:

'Inclusive design:

- *places people at the heart of the design process;*
- *acknowledges diversity and difference;*
- *offers choice where a single solution cannot accommodate all users;*
- *provides for flexibility in use; and*
- *provides buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone.'* (p.11, 2007)

Good practice in terms of parking arrangements, providing street furniture and road signs are further set out in MfS.



Building for Life

Building for Life 12 (2016) by the Building for Life Partnership (comprising CABE at The Design Council, Design for Homes and the Home Builders Federation, supported by Nottingham Trent University) contains a number of detailed points for consideration to create well-designed development proposals. These focus on the following three areas:

1. Integrating into the neighbourhood:
 - 'Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?' (Point 1);
2. Creating a place:
 - 'Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?' (Point 5); and
3. Street & home, with the creation of inclusive streets with clearly defined spaces:
 - 'Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?' (Point 11).

Active Design

Active Design (Sport England, 2015), supported by Health England, promotes the role of sport and physical activity in creating healthy and sustainable communities. The 10 principles of active design set out in the document are reflected in the design proposals.

3.0 Engagement

Public consultation (November 2018)

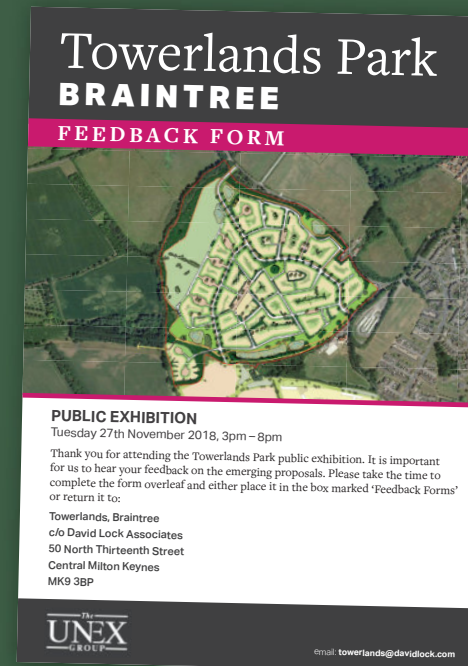
A public exhibition event was held at the Braintree and Bocking Community Association on 27th November 2018. The event was advertised in the Braintree and Witham Times through a formal press-notice, notices put up along the PRow to the south of the site, and a news article a week before the event. Residents in Glebe, Bocking Churchstreet and those living immediately adjacent to the site were delivered a flyer advertising the event.

Feedback (November 2018)

Of the responses received a number of respondents recognised the positive contribution the development would make to supporting Braintree's growth and meeting the housing need in the local area. Others commented positively on the landscape-led, rural edge design for the scheme and the attraction of having a circular footway/cycleway, integrated with the existing and retained PRow network.

The key issues from those that provided feedback were:

- Concerns about traffic and safety along Deanery Hill and Panfield Lane. (currently described as a "racing track") i.e. A reduction in the speed limits was requested for both roads;
- Concerns about further congestion around Braintree;
- The pressing need for enhancements to the local infrastructure network;
- Questions regarding the timing and feasibility of the proposed connection south to Springwood Industrial Estate (a matter associated with the NWBGA); and
- The need for further community space and medical facilities i.e. Dentist and GP services.



The plan opposite was presented at the Public Exhibition in November 2018.

The key elements of this plan which were explained on the banners and directly to attendees were:

- The proposals reflect a landscape-led scheme
- The circular footway/cycleway proposal
- A permeable rural edge to development frontage at the north-west of the site
- A village green located at the centre of the scheme
- The southern linear park complements and enhances the existing PRoW and mature vegetation
- A meadow integrating the built form with the surrounding landscape proposed at the north-western extent of the site.

Following the exhibition, the following key points were noted:

- The level of housing and densities proposed widely accepted
- The provision of open space and permeable green routes positively received
- Look to enhance biodiversity opportunities
- Ensure design of development is in keeping with local characteristics
- Importance of wider highway works to support the development

The feedback received and recorded from this first exhibition fed into the design evolution of the illustrative master plan.



Public consultation (March 2019)

The plan on page 25 was presented at a second Public Exhibition on 5th March 2019, also held at the Braintree and Bocking Community Association. Similarly to the first event, it was advertised in the Braintree and Witham Times through a formal press-notice and notices were displayed along the PRow to the south of the site. Leaflets were again distributed to residents living in close proximity to the site. The scope of the distribution was extended to include Panfield residents closest to the site on Hall Road, Church End/Kynaston Road (up to The Bell Inn), The Bell Inn itself, the village hall, St Mary & St Christopher's Church, and Panfield Parish Council's Chairman William Saward at the Little Priory Barns. This followed requests from the first public consultation to ensure Panfield residents were engaged directly.

An additional banner was prepared by the Project Team to provide further detail on the wider highway works proposed to support the development. This followed concerns raised in the first consultation. The banner highlighted the key junctions where improvements would be made, and where future access links would connect with the existing network.

Feedback (March 2019)

Of the responses received during the second consultation a number of respondents continued to recognise the overall need for housing to support Braintree's growth. The rural edge character and open space design for the scheme continued to be received positively and was well

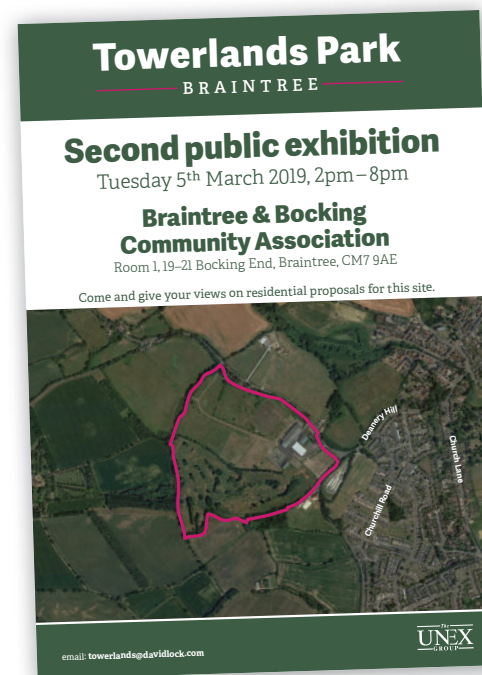
supported by attendees, particularly the circular footway/cycleway and wild flower meadow. Further support was expressed for the local shops proposed and community uses, with many consultees keen for the development to have its own local shop for everyday amenities.

The key issues raised during the event remained largely focused on infrastructure provision, with concerns of the development exacerbating the existing congestion issues around Braintree:

- Concerns about the development adding to congestion along Panfield Lane, currently a problem due to lack of parking spaces forcing traffic down to a single lane;
- A120 access raised as a current infrastructure issue;
- Construction traffic routes and access points were queried due to concerns regarding lorries using local roads and disruption to local residents;
- Need to address grid lock during peak hours along Springwood Drive and Panfield Lane;

Other key points noted following the second consultation included:

- The scale of the development was widely accepted, however Panfield residents were keen to ensure the new development did not encroach on their village;
- Concerns regarding doctor surgery capacity - consultees would like to see healthcare provided as part of either Towerlands Park or the NWBGA;
- The mix of housing typologies and tenures was raised by several attendees, with some preferring fewer affordable units and flats whilst others were



- more supportive of a greater mix and higher level of affordable housing;
- Consultees requested the new bus routes did not divert existing services, but added additional services instead;
- Consultees expressed a preference for smaller primary schools (1–2FE instead of 3FE+);
- Importance of setting a trigger point for ensuring the link road is provided early on in the build out of the development.

The plan opposite was presented at the Public Exhibition in March 2019.

With the overall layout and design of the scheme positively received from the first consultation, the illustrative plan required only limited structural changes. The key changes presented at the second consultation included:

- Alterations to the circular footway/cycleway – extended to connect with wider pedestrian links south into Braintree whilst the northern section of the route realigned to run alongside the edge of the development, providing further connections with the residential parcels;
- Further detail provided regarding the block layout across the scheme with detailed illustrative layouts provided for each key character area.

The feedback received and recorded from the second exhibition fed into the design evolution of the final illustrative master plan.





Towerlands Park, Braintree

Following submission of the OPA a meeting with ECC Highways was held in February 2020 to discuss the southern access into the site from Panfield Lane. As a result the location of this access has shifted approximately 40m north-east. This is in response to a request from ECC Highways team on the grounds of highway safety and the junction is now in a location supported by ECC Highways. The revised illustrative masterplan is displayed here.

4.0 Site evaluation

Summary of constraints and opportunities

This section provides an evaluation of the Assessment and Engagement chapters, summarised through a set of constraints and opportunities that have directed the design of the proposed development of the site.



Constraints

Existing utilities infrastructure and their easements across the site dictate the location of development, particularly within the inner and outer zones associated with the gas main.

Low density development, less than 40 dwellings per hectare and in clusters of up to 30 dwellings are permitted in the outer zone and this provides an opportunity for the emerging illustrative master plan to create a low-density edge. More intensive forms of residential development and neighbourhood facilities are permitted outside of these zones, and this has guided the evolution of the master plan response.

Creating access from the B1035 will require adequate visibility splays which will result in a minor reduction in the extent of the existing hedgerow. This could be mitigated however through hedgerow and tree planting as part of a wider landscape strategy. Further details are explained in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA).

There are existing landscape features such as dispersed trees across the site and the golf course that will be difficult to incorporate into new development.

Landscape features around the site include trees that contribute to the overall landscape quality and immediate amenity. This includes a woodland block to the south of the site adjacent to the southern boundary.

There are features in the site that are considered to be habitats that have potential to support protected species.

Steep gradients towards the southern boundary will require careful consideration to ensure the illustrative master plan can efficiently accommodate the required residential development.

The potential impact of development on the wider setting of Panfield Hall must be carefully considered. Additional planting and screening at the appropriate places should be provided to mitigate any impacts.

Built features immediately adjacent to the site include a traditional thatched cottage and dwellings on Deanery Hill, therefore there is a need to carefully consider the potential impact of development on neighbouring properties.

Opportunities

The site is a proposed allocation in the emerging Local Plan and represents a strategy to continue to focus new homes, jobs and local services in Braintree. Additional housing will provide a boost in catchment for facilities in Braintree and neighbouring areas.

By locating development at Braintree, new homes will be better placed to have access to local employment, services and facilities, reducing the need to travel. Creating good pedestrian and cycle links, and connections to bus routes will also offer a wider modal choice and increase the opportunity to travel less by car.

Much of the site is screened by substantial trees and hedgerows. Retaining these features and seeking to enhance them with additional landscape features would offset the removal of features within the site to facilitate development. The design response has the potential to respond positively to the landscape character features that have been identified at sub-regional and local levels:

- Key landscaping features are concentrated at the edges of the site and through enhancement have significant potential to integrate development into the landscape;
- There is the opportunity to enhance the tree belt / wide hedgerow at the north west boundary of the site, which would also help to further support visual containment, and support the landscape character of the wider area;
- There is the opportunity to enhance the stream and surrounding area along much of the southern boundary as a green corridor and encourage its enjoyment through improvements to the public right of way;
- There is potential to establish green infrastructure linkages with proposed development to the south with pedestrian cycle connections;
- The existing hedgerow on the northern boundary adjacent to the B1053 makes an important contribution to the enclosure of the site and contributes to the semi-rural character;
- Although many of the trees on the former golf course are not worth retaining, there is potential for groups of the most mature trees to be retained to add to the overall character of development;
- The sloping site towards the south creates a natural enclosure and allows for taller development massing at the lower southern levels;
- The central crown of the site provides an opportunity for focussing development with the least mass and height;

- Retaining and enhancing trees and hedgerows at the edges of the site will provide a positive setting for development, interface with the adjacent built and natural environment and minimise potential impacts on the wider setting of Panfield Hall;
- Retaining and enhancing trees and hedgerows at the edges of the site will also make a major contribution to retaining where possible habitats that have the potential to support a variety of species.

Accesses to the site exist from Panfield Lane and the B1053 and can be easily improved to link the development to the existing wider network and bus stops.

The site has good potential to be developed with local pedestrian and cycle links that can maximise connectivity with bus routes, neighbouring existing development, the NWBGA, local schools and wider local services and facilities, as well as the wider countryside.

The screening around the site defines a potential development area that is set back from the edges of the site. This provides an opportunity for creating soft edges that complement existing trees and hedgerows and maintain a semi-rural character.

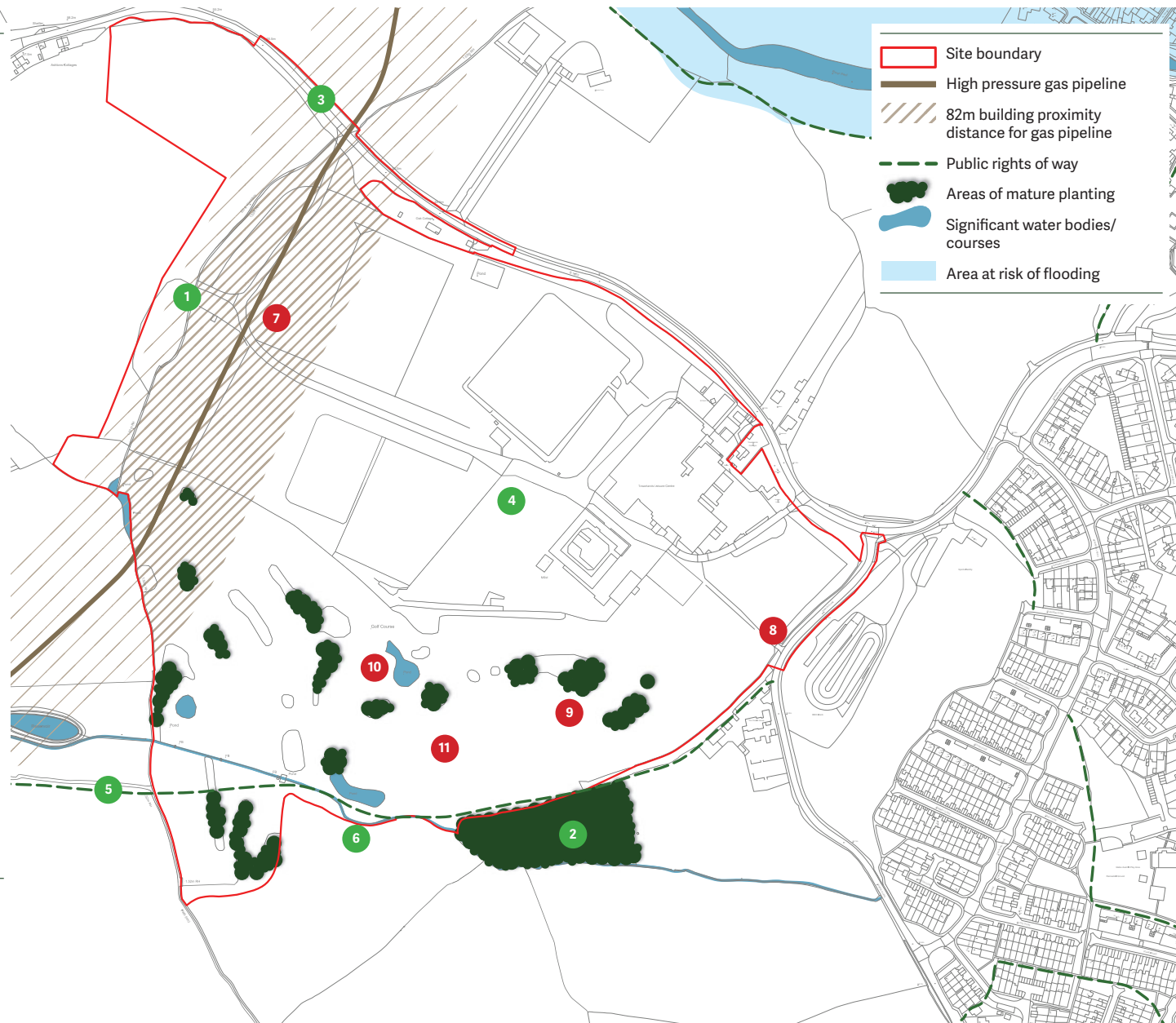
The wide variety in forms of residential development in adjacent neighbourhoods show how Braintree has expanded over the past decades and presents an opportunity to deliver a mix of house types with varying architectural detail.

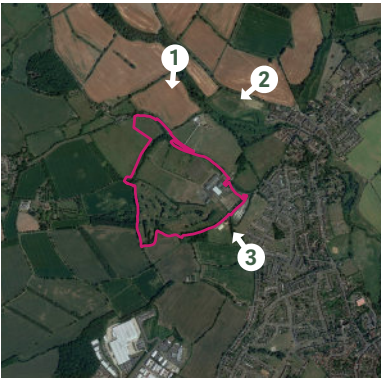
Risks of fluvial and groundwater flooding are low due to the landform. Surface water run-off can be managed through SuDS which could be integrated into a network of green infrastructure and create a well-defined area.

The alignment of the gas main and its associated easement and restriction zones at the north west boundary enables development to be well focussed and set back from the north west boundary providing an opportunity for green infrastructure to integrate natural grassland and meadow features.

The water mains cross the site on alignments that can be integrated into the structure and layout of development.

1. Tree belt/wide hedgerow defines the edge of urban settlement and has wildlife value. Opportunities to enhance with additional planting.
2. Existing woodland (recent TPO), tree groups and stream form green corridor which could be enhanced.
3. Existing hedgerow forms important enclosure and establishes semi rural character of development site.
4. Topography and geology require above ground attenuation features with potential for damp/mesic/wet habitat feature.
5. Site provides direct access to open countryside via footpath and bridleway network.
6. Potential green corridor linkage to adjoining development site.
7. Gas main easement inner and outer zones. Development and public open space provision not generally permitted.
8. Water main easement – 12m wide no build zone.
9. Dispersed tree specimens and small stands from the golf course are difficult to incorporate into the urban plan.
10. Existing ponds and damp hollows are difficult to integrate into urban plan – separation, risk of disturbance, limited space available.
11. Low infiltration of natural geology and soil profile limits direct infiltration for surface water. Attenuation basins require significant land take.







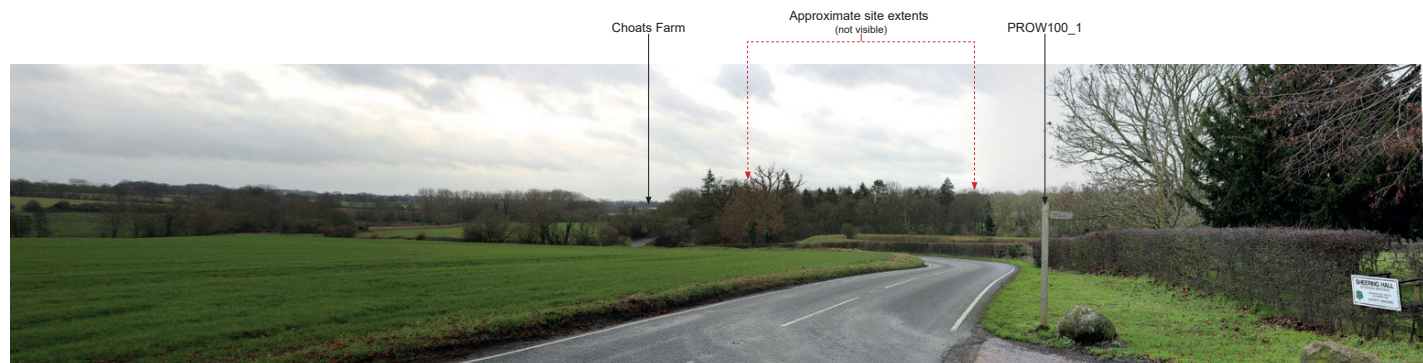
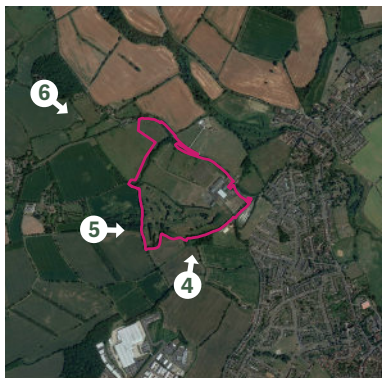
4

View past Park Farm from field south of the site



5

View east into site from Panfield Hall PRoW



6

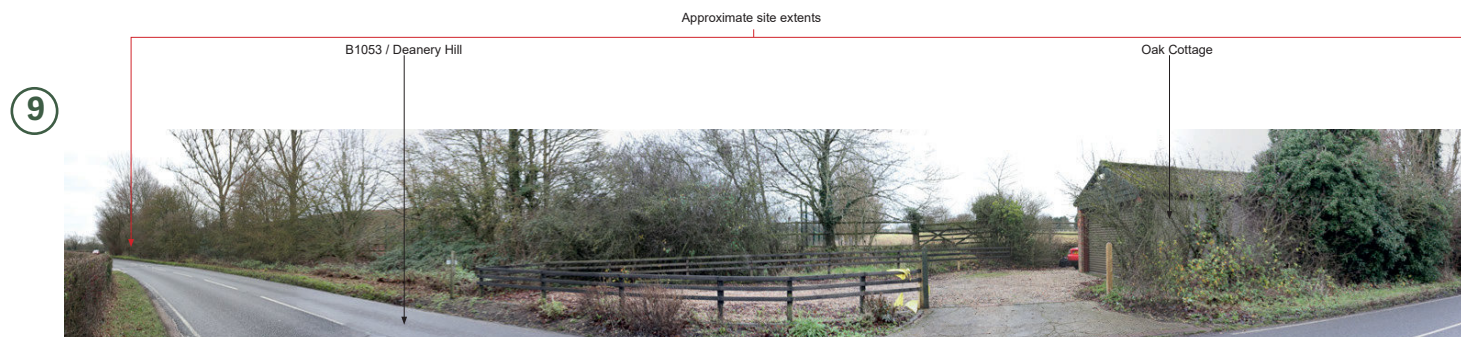
View south east across the wider landscape



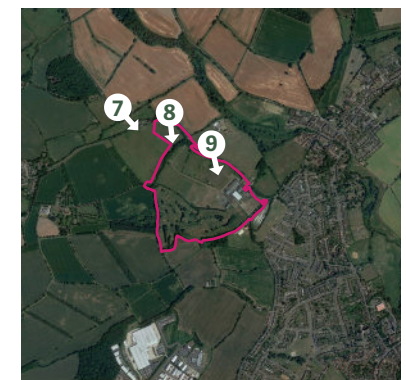
View south east across B1053 & Panfield Road junction



View south from site boundary along Deanery Hill



View south past Oak Cottage into site from Deanery Hill



5.0 Design

Chapter 5 presents the Design Concept and Principles, the Parameter Plans and the Illustrative Master Plan for the site. These have been informed and progressed iteratively through the Assessment, Engagement and Evaluation chapters of this DAS.

The illustrative master plan document submitted as part of the local plan consultation process formed one of the starting points for the overall design work. It provided a benchmark and feedback for the first formal pre-application meeting in July 2017.

The feedback from this pre-application meeting provided a clear steer in terms of density and style of development, particularly to encourage a rural setting. Following the feedback, it was agreed that the site would benefit from taking a landscape-led approach to ensure BDC's aspirations on density, style of development and relationships with the rural characteristics of the site were achieved.

Following the assessment of the site's opportunities and constraints, and the feedback received during engagements with the local community and pre-app discussions with BDC, a set of design principles were established to guide the creation of the illustrative master plan.

Design principles

- To provide generous open space to integrate the development with the rich landscape setting and provide distinctive green infrastructure features with space for informal play, LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs and community gardens;
- To retain and enhance existing boundary hedgerows and tree groups to frame the development in its rural edge setting;
- To create the opportunity to deliver a high-quality range of tenure-blind housing types within a sustainable environment;
- To create multi-functional green links and spaces through the site and residential parcels to contain sustainable drainage features, leisure routes and informal recreational space;
- To create a development with a distinctive identity, supported through legible block layout designs and mix of land uses, with a strong focus on enhancing the rural edge character for the scheme and creating a sense of place;
- To create a development with excellent connectivity with an appropriate approach to street design, prioritising cyclists and pedestrians whilst considering and integrating suitable parking and vehicle access;
- To create a safe and integrated built environment through active frontages, predominantly to address public realm (streets and spaces) and to support the green infrastructure framework;
- To provide a built environment at the detailed stage complementary to the local character of Braintree in relation to appearance, layout, scale and massing whilst also allowing for contemporary design;
- To provide a range of house types to meet the local housing needs with mixed uses to support the residential community, including community uses, nursery and local shops; and
- To create a communal core to the development, with a community function and retail presence, with the built environment structured and key spaces identified through the use of placemaking marker buildings.



Design evolution

Stage 1: Initial concept response to countryside edge

The key concepts behind the plan were:

- To create a permeable fringe to developable areas in the north-west of the site comprising small groupings of courtyard houses;
- To link housing to open space and the countryside setting with a circular footway /cycleway;
- To assess key landscape features to understand how to retain and integrate within the scheme;
- To set housing back from southern boundary to create a green buffer to the existing landscape;
- To locate higher density housing within inner core of the development; and
- To identify potential for internal roads to connect to the North-West Braintree Growth Area.



Stage 2: Development of open space framework

Following on from the first plan and having reviewed with the applicant team, the key aims of the next iteration of the plan were:

- To create a continuous landscape infrastructure corridor at the perimeter of the site which integrates existing mature trees and hedgerows, and the PRow, with new landscape scheme elements;
- To relocate the circular footway/cycleway to the perimeter landscape corridor to provide a continuous walking and cycling route along the rural countryside edge; and
- To create a village green at the centre of the site to provide a focal point for the site and link to perimeter green infrastructure.



Diagram 1
Linked doorstep
and pocket parks.

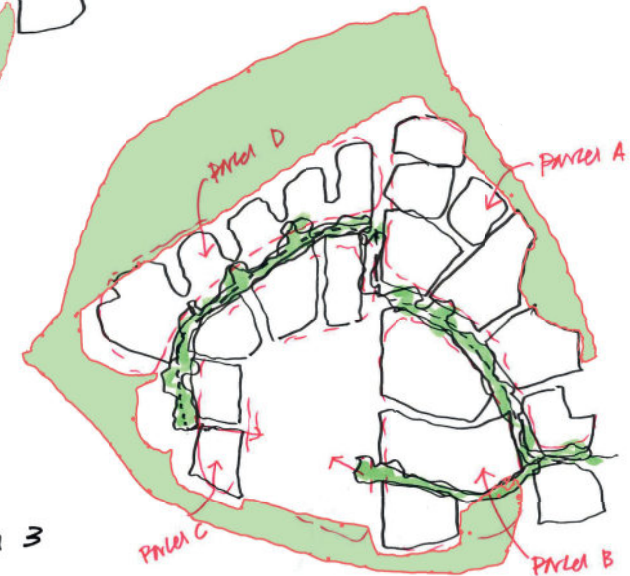


Diagram 2
Inner green street
circuit

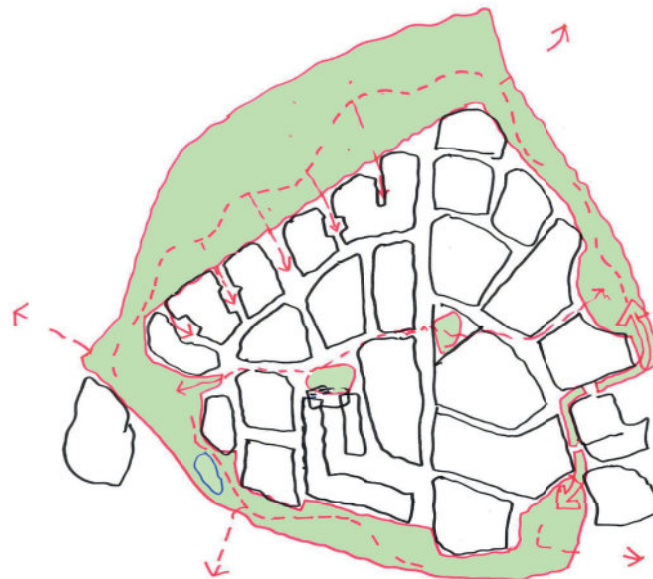


Diagram 3
Continuous
walking route

Stage 3: Development of illustrative layout and road network

The next iteration of the plan sought to combine initial thoughts on site layout and landscape into an emerging site layout. This plan considered the following points:

- New vehicle and bus access points were included to the North West at Deanery Hill and to the south onto Panfield Lane to respond to the outcomes of the transport assessment;
- Development blocks were refined to create a radial street layout to optimise views and connections to and from the countryside;
- Proposed housing was re-orientated to Deanery Hill to provide a continuous active frontage;
- Further design iterations for the green infrastructure to include new planting for: the Community Growing Space, Woodland Play, Deanery Hill East Play Area, Linear Park, the Meadow, Village Green and drainage basins; and
- Providing higher density housing within the inner core.



Stage 4: Outline application scheme

The proposals have evolved and are presented in the illustrative master plan. These take account of the following :

- The Fringe Edge to development has been extended to provide a wider band of the lower density housing to the development edge perimeter;
- The density and height of the inner core housing has been reduced to reflect an edge of settlement location following discussions with BDC;
- A landscape enhancement scheme has been included to strengthen existing perimeter hedgerows;
- The existing main site vehicle access is stopped up as response to findings of the transport assessment;
- An additional area for ecological mitigation is provided to the north of the site to provide replacement wet landscapes and planting following development to the south of the site; and
- The site layout has been revised particularly to allow for additional planting to provide privacy to existing properties on Deanery Hill following consultation with residents.

The above illustrative master plan has been guided by the key design principles and followed an iterative process, as shown through the evolution from the initial concept diagram, development of the open space framework, illustrative layout and road network, and the revisions following engagement with the local community. This concept is to demonstrate the development potential of the site and is indicative only.



Amount and use

The key elements of the concept master plan are:

- Up to 575 residential dwellings.
- 30% affordable dwellings (173 homes).
- 0.13ha 56 place early years and childcare nursery.
- Up to 250sqm of local retail (Use Class A1) and up to 250sqm of community facilities (Use Class D1);
- Vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access from Panfield Lane and vehicular and pedestrian access from Deanery Hill.
- Indicative connective link to the southern North-West Braintree Growth Area.
- Public transport route through the scheme.
- Existing PRow is diverted to integrate with the development, with additional footpaths spurring off this southern boundary route, connecting into the wider local network.
- 4.28ha of Public Open Space, which includes children's play (three LAP's, one NEAP and one LEAP), allotments and other informal open space, and an additional 3.5ha Meadow.
- Existing perimeter trees and hedgerows retained and enhanced to integrate development with the rich landscape setting and enhance biodiversity.
- Drainage attenuation is provided by a series of attenuation ponds and a network of SuDS which are integrated within the development, largely along the southern valley edge forming features of the linear park.

Residential	Up to 575 dwellings
Retail use	Up to 250sqm
Community use	Up to 250sqm
Early years and childcare nursery	0.13ha
Open space	4.28ha
Meadow	3.5ha

The proposals are for up to 575 residential dwellings.

Housing typologies and mix

A mix of homes are to be provided are to meet BDC's requirements. The Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester & Tendring Councils Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), Update – 2015, sets out the projected tenure profile in 2037:

Table 4.2 Projected tenure profile in 2037		
<i>Tenture</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Owner-occupied	217,735	63.7%
Private rented	72,043	21.1%
Shared ownership	2,133	0.6%
Social rent/ Affordable rent	49,990	14.6%
Total	341,901	100%

Source: Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Tendring Councils 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment

The greatest level of growth predicted in new accommodation required over the next 22 years is in owner-occupied (48.7%) followed by private rents (27.4%), and social and affordable rents (22.1%). The remaining growth predicted will be in shared ownership tenures (1.8%). The illustrative masterplanning work establishes a layout which can accommodate a variety of tenures and accommodate the housing growth needed in the local area.

The typologies to be provided are also to complement the character of the local area. The number of homes to be provided furthermore looks to benefit and build a relationship with the nearby facilities and public transport. The precise typologies to be provided will be confirmed at the reserved matters stage.

Other than the residential streets, a network of open spaces incorporates a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP), a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) and three Local Areas of Play (LAPs). The proposal provides for the following land uses:

- Community Growing Area;
- Woodland Play (NEAP);
- Deanery Hill East Play Area (LEAP);
- Linear Park;
- Meadow; and
- Village Green.



Layout

This statement supports an OPA, so the detailed design of the layout, landscaping and buildings will form RMAs at a future date. However, the capacity of the site to accommodate the proposed development and the approximate location of buildings, routes and open spaces included in the development is demonstrated within the illustrative layout, which is based upon the Development Framework Plan.

- The proposal will deliver an average density of 16.3dph (including infrastructure, SuDS and open space) residential lead scheme. The density for the residential parcels taken separately equates to 32.2dph. The density, scale and layout proposed overall will provide for a mixed and balanced scheme that integrates well with the existing community in Braintree. This will include a mix of housing, including affordable housing of different types, sizes and tenures. An early years facility and local retail/community facilities are also proposed, which are proposed to help provide a community focus in the centre of the scheme.
- The approach taken provides permeable village edge conditions, integrating the scheme with the open countryside and groups public open space into a continuous perimeter wildlife and green infrastructure corridor. The green corridor that the circular footway/cycleway sits within retains and connects the main established trees and hedges and links the scheme with the wider countryside.
- The use of courtyard housing typologies and shared surface drives, with sympathetic materials to the edge of settlement creates a permeable edge to the development which is rural in style.
- The radial street network connects the green infrastructure corridors, perimeter parks and play areas, leisure routes and meadow with the village green, which ensures green infrastructure is prioritised throughout the scheme.
- The Design Code submitted with this application has been developed through a process of consultation and design workshops with the local planning authority; and it sets out in detail the layout principles that structure the illustrative master plan.





Built form response to design principles

The Illustrative Masterplan is based on the following design principles:

- The proposed illustrative built form responds to the overall structure envisaged for the scheme; particularly the key streets within the development and the edges of the site where a rural development edge is required.
- To the north and east edges of the development where the proposals are adjacent to open land, a band of low-density housing (25–32dph) is proposed for all rural edges.
- The lowest density development is to the north-western edge of the site towards Panfield, with a density of between 25–30dph to establish a rural frontage to the scheme.
- The Illustrative Masterplan shows how a more discrete area of the site can be developed to create a hamlet, using a Mews Courtyard form in order to reduce the impact on existing landscape features in this ecologically rich south-western corner of the site.
- The south-western hamlet provides a sensitive connection with the existing PRoW, with the low density and well screened development parcel respecting the setting of the nearby Grade I Listed Panfield Hall.
- The highest density of housing (32–37dph) is located in the centre of the site, contained by a continuous band of low-density housing and avenue of trees. All dwellings will be tenure blind, with housing typologies envisaged to be predominantly a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced housing

with some flats located around the non-residential buildings.

- The retail development proposed to border the central high-density housing will benefit from being situated off the edge of the plateau where the contours start to slope away to the northern and southern valleys.
- To the south of the site, adjacent to the existing TPO woodland, at the lowest point of the site, the parameter plans shows how discrete three storey flat blocks could be interspersed within the family housing and successfully integrated with the layout, well screened to the wider setting by the existing woodland and valley levels.

This variety in built form will contribute to a high quality development. The proposal for up to 575 dwellings on 35.18ha of land has a site-wide average density of 16.3dph, which is considered compatible with the locality.



The Development Framework Plan

The formal plan submitted with the planning application to show the proposed uses, areas, access and routes is the Development Framework Plan.

Scale

The existing site topography is defined by gently undulating hillside terrain. The central part of the site forms a shallow plateau between two valley sides; the north edge of the site drops towards Deanery Hill and Church End whilst the south edge falls towards the stream tributary which runs from west to east.

These topographical conditions and responding layout enable the impact of the proposed development upon the countryside to the North, East and West to be minimized and avoid any undue adverse visual or landscape impact. This is addressed in more detail in the LVIA accompanying this OPA.

All development facing the countryside edge is envisaged as being principally two or two and a half storey to reflect the rural edge location.

To the south of the Avenue, the development will be set well back from the edges of the site, and screened by the tree planting. The development is envisaged as being principally two storeys with potential for three storey housing on corners and key locations.

Within the centre of the site, where the levels plateau, and the retail is located, the development is envisaged as being a mix of two and three storey.

Most of the surrounding buildings in the immediate setting are two storey dwellings, situated in isolation or in small terrace blocks along Deanery Hill. A mixture of detached, semi-detached and terrace housing is anticipated as in keeping with the local typologies on

the rural edge of Braintree. The building heights will predominantly be two storeys with the opportunity for some two and a half/three storey blocks in the higher density areas around the village green. Within the lower areas on the site there is scope for small scale flat blocks to be carefully interspersed within the higher density housing.

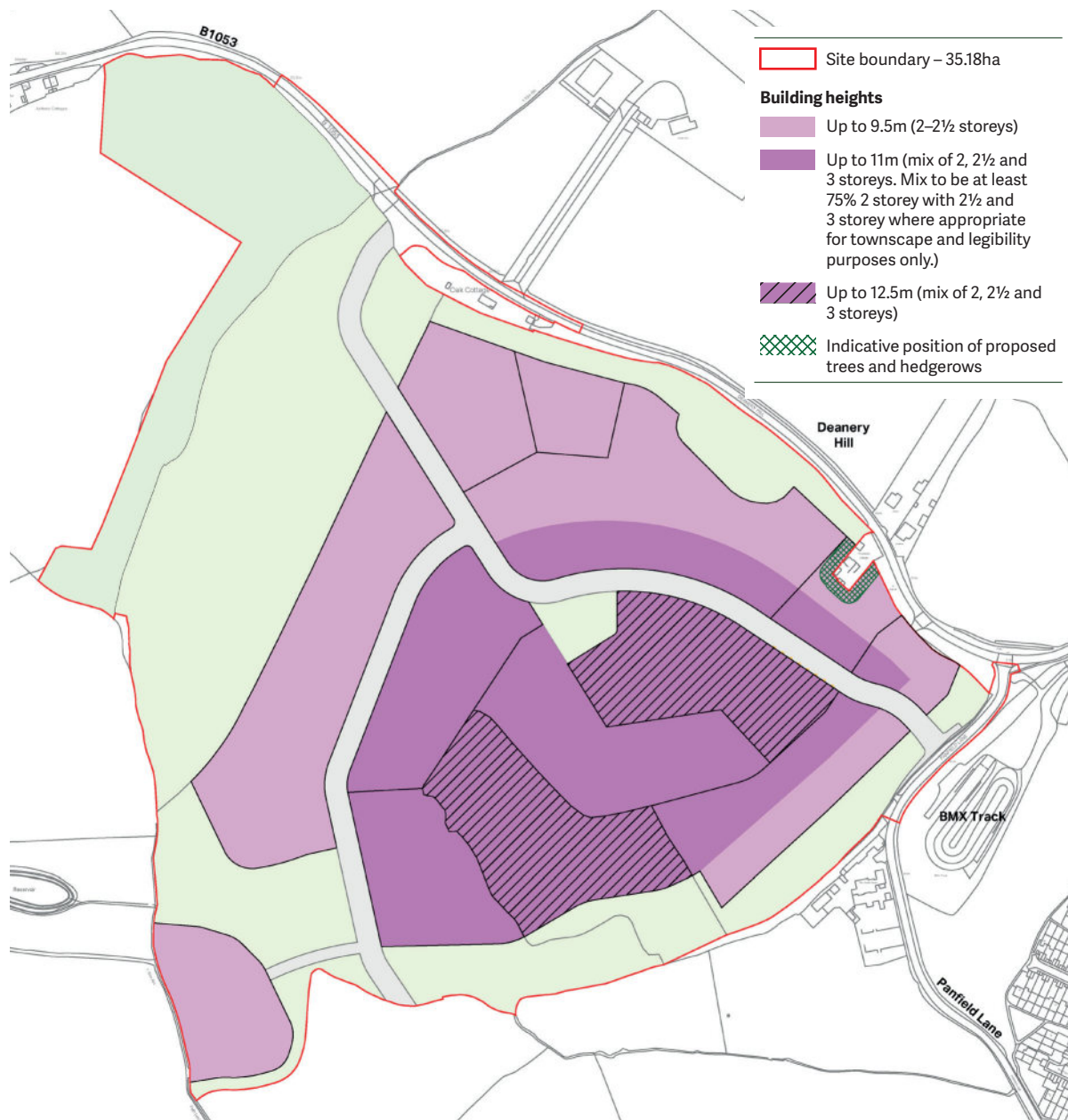




Building heights

The highest buildings are located in the core of the development, with building heights gradually decreasing towards the site boundaries. The building heights respond to existing topography and also support the creation of a sense of place around the community and local mixed use centre through the increase in storey heights around the village green.

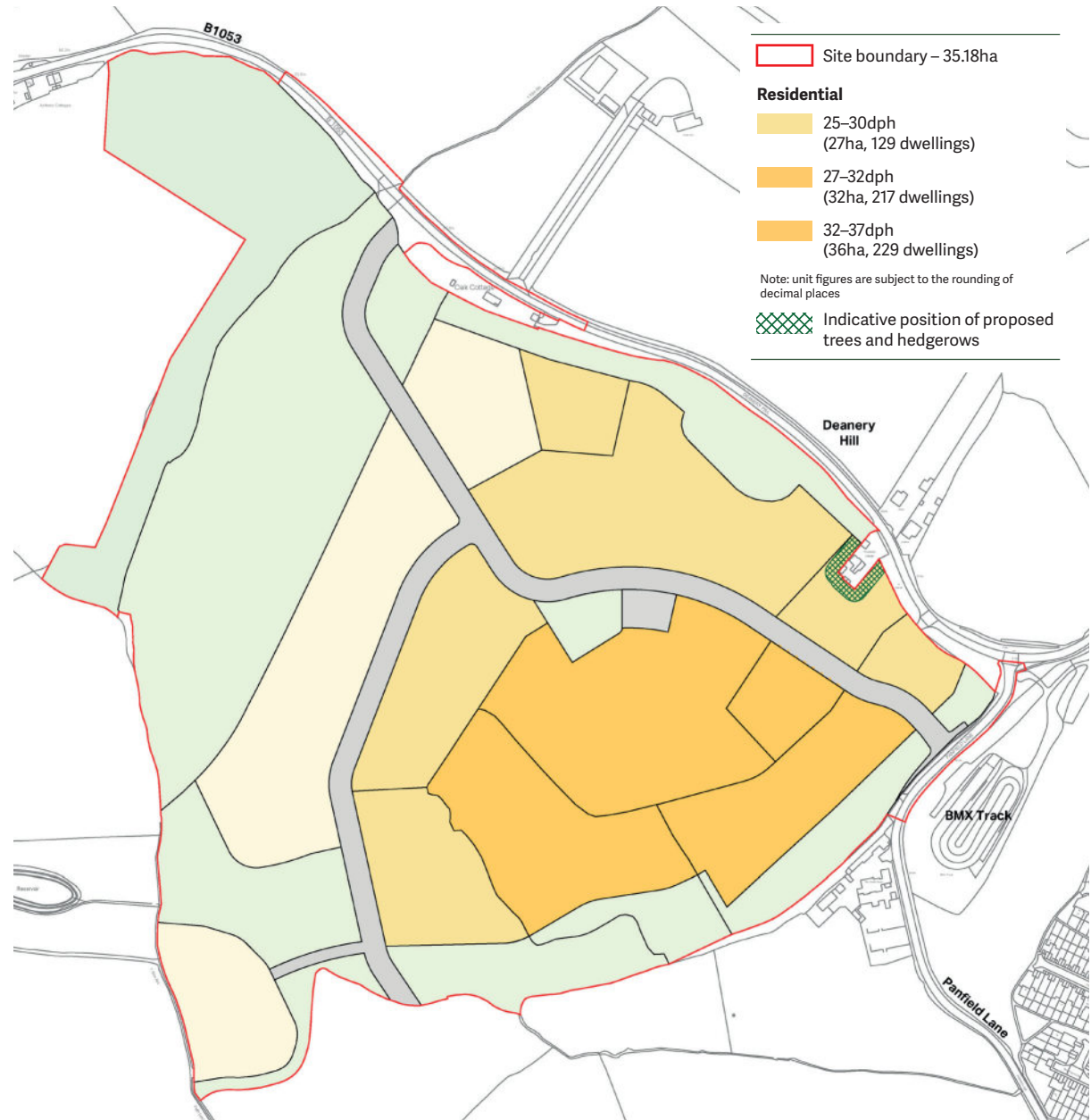
Within the central core there will be a mix of 2-, 2½- and 3-storey dwellings. The 3-storey housing will be primarily located where there is width to accommodate their height: along the spine road, the secondary streets and in some locations fronting the open space on Parklands South.



Building Heights Parameter Plan

Density

As with the building heights, the highest densities are located in the core of the development. There is a gradual decrease in densities towards the development edge, with the lowest densities along the northern and western boundaries with the proposed meadow and open countryside. This aims to provide a gradual transition from the development core to the open countryside, and help tie the built form into the rural edge setting. As with the building heights, the higher densities will help create a strong core to the development, with a distinct sense of place and community centre,



Density Parameter Plan



Landscape design

Landscape impact is the subject of a separate LVIA which accompanies the OPA.

The key points to consider are:

- How the scheme integrates within the wider landscape setting;
- How the development addresses the open countryside edge;
- The approach to retaining trees and hedges to the perimeter of the site and removing lower value (Category C and U) vegetation on the land previously used for the golf course; and
- How the development will provide a net gain in biodiversity.

The development will utilise the existing level changes to sensitively incorporate the development, with low rise housing situated on the higher core zone in order to minimise the visual impact of the scheme. Any three storey apartment blocks or dwellings will predominantly be situated within the southern valley, screened by the level change and the existing woodland block.

The existing terrain and mature vegetation have driven the framework for the green infrastructure proposed as part of the development, as can be seen with the distribution of taller buildings and lower density housing. The existing biodiversity rich southern valley is to be retained and enhanced through the linear park and perimeter planting, connected into the central village green via landscaping along the central avenue routes, and radiating street network.



Landscape Parameter Plan

Where high quality trees have been identified the layout of the development has been sensitively designed to provide the required protection needed, such as with the two Category A English Oak trees situated along the southern boundary of the site. The aspirational road connection to the NWBGA has been located equidistantly between the trees to provide the appropriate buffer required to ensure no damage to the identified landscape features.

The layout is designed to enable an aspect view from as many homes as possible to enjoy the views of the surrounding open countryside from within the development.

Ground conditions are the subject of a separate Ground Contamination Preliminary Risk Assessment provided in the suite of documents accompanying the OPA. The report covers the technical details of the infiltration systems proposed. The existing terrain will be utilised to provide the most suitable locations for the SuDS ponds, largely focused along the southern valley alongside the existing stream tributary.

The landscape framework (see plan below) is based upon the following design principles:

- A centrally located amenity space as a focus for the development, located near community facilities and retail. The new village green will include a lawn, tree planting, seating and a small play space next to the nursery; and

- Creation of a network of open spaces connected via the perimeter and landscaped central avenue combined pedestrian and cycle routes:
 - » Meadow
 - » Circular footway / cycleway
 - » Village Green
 - » Deanery Hill East Play Area (LEAP)
 - » Woodland Play (NEAP)
 - » Linear Park (including LAPs)
 - » Community Growing Space

A tree survey and AIA have been undertaken as part of the OPA which confirms which trees are to be retained and which are to be removed. This sets out selective thinning and restocking measures both for the hedgerow boundary to Deanery Hill and the trees and hedgerow to the western boundary. Areas of low ecological value identified as part of the survey findings are proposed to be removed, including the central areas of grassland from the former golf course and equestrian centre.

The localised ponds within the former golf course were found to be dominated by phragmites sp. and to be of a poorly developed habitat. These therefore are not to be retained. The loss of damp habitat will be mitigated through the attenuation basins proposed in the same location and an additional area of new ponds and ecological mitigation to the north of the site.

The adjacent open water stream is planned to have the channel widened at particular points. Further

improvements to the stream banks are proposed following the detailed survey as well as additional planting. These enhancements will be the subject of a management regime to ensure the improvements are maintained in perpetuity.

The trees to the southern edge of the former golf course are to be retained where possible within the new Linear Park. Selective thinning and restocking is proposed, with new native species planting to enhance the Linear Park corridor. This will increase the width of the corridor with new woodland edge species. Overall this approach to the southern boundary will provide an improved green corridor running east to west.

The woodland area with TPO trees is to be protected via additional buffer planting to the northern edge and will be incorporated as part of an improved ecological corridor.

The grassland within the restricted gas main inner zone was the subject of a detailed survey of species. The management regime proposed is to promote flowering meadow species to create the Meadow proposed as part of the Green Infrastructure network.

Existing trees to the south west boundary are to be retained and inter-planted with additional trees to strengthen the hedgerow.

Any groups of high impact trees are to be retained where possible.

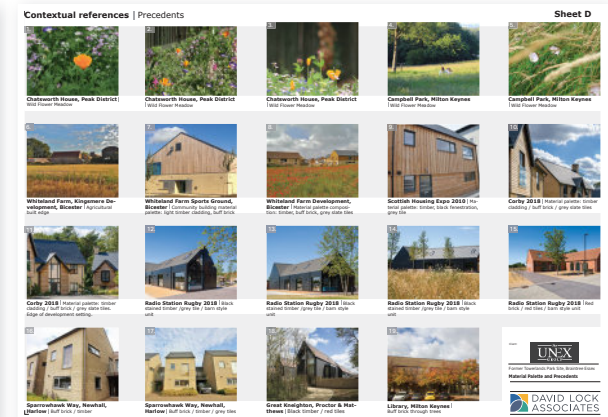
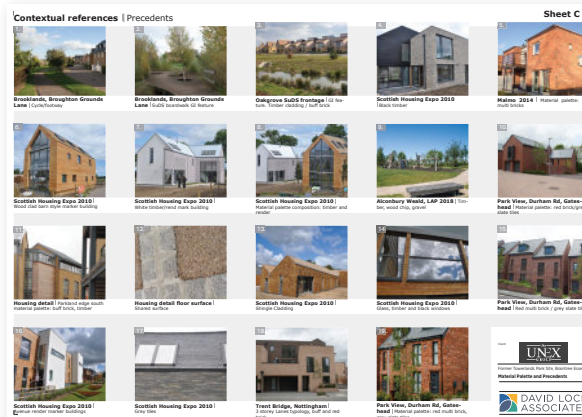
Formal open space

The provision of open space conforms to BDC's Core Strategy requirements with the exception of formal open space. The open space strategy is explained in Section 6 of the Planning Statement. The total provision of open space exceeds the amount required by the Core Strategy (with the inclusion of the Meadow) however due to on site constraints, in particular the gas main easement which restricts the opportunity to provide certain open space types, alternative off site options for sports provision have been sought.



Braintree is characterised by a variety of architectural periods and styles. The site is defined by its rural edge of settlement location.

The detailed design of the development will be the subject of future RMAs which will be required to confirm compliance with the parameter plans, this DAS and the Design Code.





6.0

Access

Detailed highway access proposals are set out in the accompanying Transport Assessment (TA) submitted in support of this OPA, which demonstrates how these are being addressed in respect of sustainable development and transport objectives.

The TA, through its extensive evidence and survey base data, demonstrates that the application proposals will not have a significant impact on the local road network and that the network has adequate capacity to accommodate the additional traffic movements from the development proposed.

Vehicular and bus access will be taken directly from Panfield Lane and the B1053. A connection to the NWBGA is proposed as an aspirational access in the south west corner, subject to detailed design and discussion with the promoters of the NWBGA. The existing main site access to the south east corner of the site will be stopped up. Pedestrian and cycle access points are also illustrated.

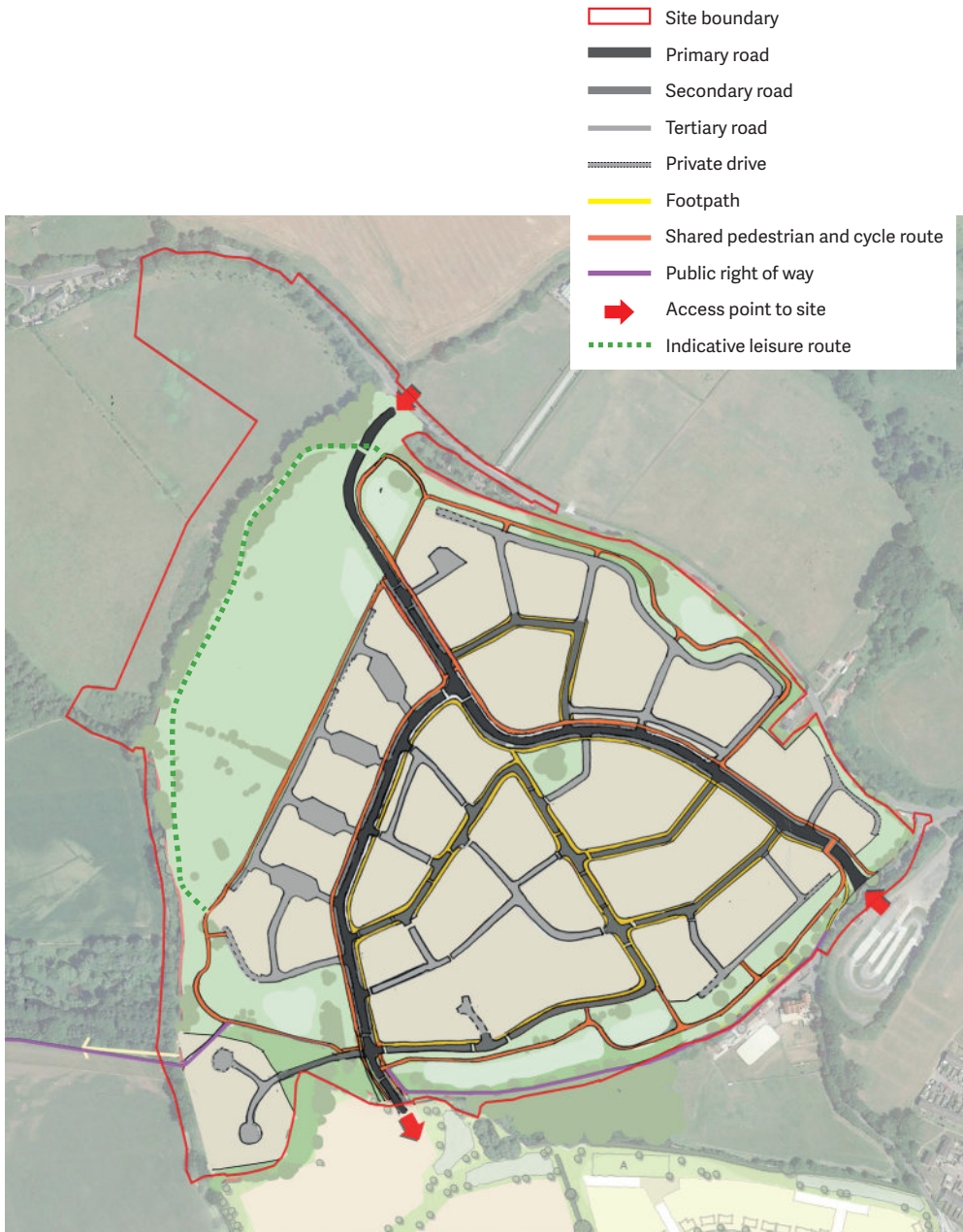
Layout is reserved for the detailed stage; however, the internal streets will be designed to comply with current DMRB, MfS and Essex Design Guide standards to ensure safe means of access for all. The design of the internal roads will be the subject of RMAs but will also comply with the relevant local authority design guidance. The highway elements of the development will be built to an adoptable standard and they will be offered up so they can be maintained by the Local Highway Authority.

The principle in relation to parking is that it should be provided as close to each property as possible and is safe and easy to use. Parking is expected to be provided in spaces on plot, but a variety of solutions may be required in the detailed layout. Parking will be in accordance with ECC parking standards (2009). Cycle parking is proposed to be on-plot for housing.

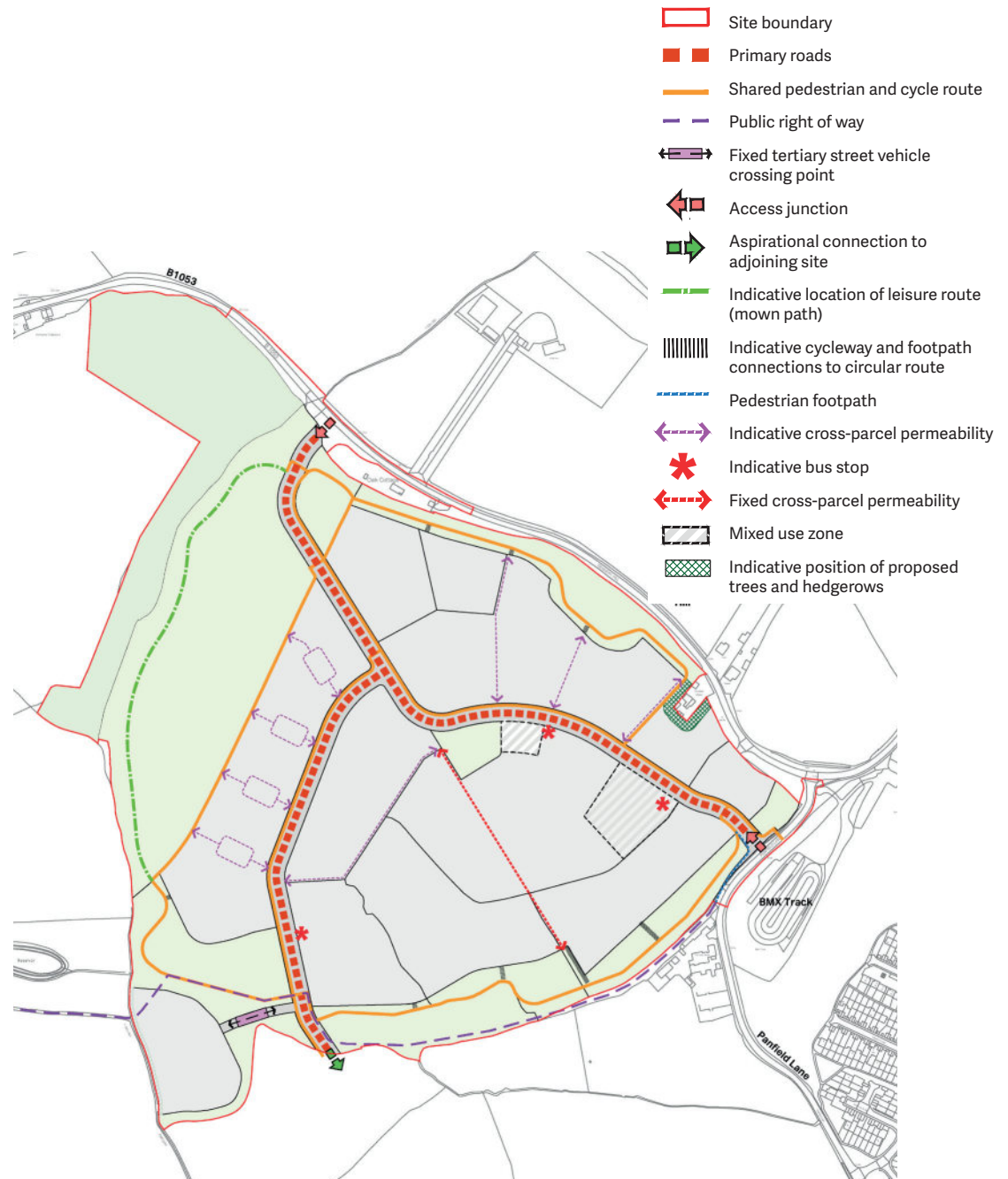
In terms of movement within the site, the following principles have been followed:

- The primary street provides key bus, vehicular, cycle and pedestrian connections across the site, linking new access points and providing capability to link to the adjoining NWBGA;
- Low key access streets, comprising a mix of secondary and tertiary shared surface streets, which are suitable for the scale of development and the character of the edge of settlement development;
- A mix of shared surface courtyards and private drives on the countryside edges of the development;
- A circular footway/cycleway leisure route within a landscape infrastructure corridor linked to the pedestrian and road network;
- Connections to surrounding countryside via the existing PRoW. The proposed alignment and design of the pedestrian/cycle link to the PRoW is contained within the Design Code; and
- Encourage sustainable modes of transport.

These principles are included on the Movement Parameter Plan shown opposite.



Illustrative Movement Diagram



Movement Parameter Plan

7.0

Conclusion

This OPA seeks permission to deliver up to 575 homes, with up to 250sqm of local retail and up to 250sqm of community facilities, associated access, amenity space and supporting infrastructure.

The proposals have been developed in response to the characteristics of the site and its wider context. This will ensure that the proposal will deliver a scheme that is not only of the highest design quality but is sensitive to its locality, integrates well with its surrounding built and natural environment, preserves and enhances the site's existing assets and creates the best possible place for its new community.

As explained in this DAS, the proposal responds to the physical and topographical factors affecting the site.

The physical characteristics of the site were considered from the outset to ensure that any special features of the site's natural context and environment were not only preserved but formed key structuring elements of the scheme's design. As a result the illustrative proposal and supporting plans are considered to be the best design solution for the site and this is demonstrated through a number of key features:

- Creates the opportunity to deliver a high-quality range of housing types, including affordable housing, within a sustainable and inclusive environment that responds to the local housing needs and fosters a balanced, mixed community.
- The edge of town rural location of the site has meant that creating a development that would integrate well with the countryside has been a fundamental consideration in the design process.
- The landscape framework for the proposal provides a substantial green infrastructure network that seeks to protect and enhance the landscape and biodiversity value of the site, whilst retaining and enhancing existing landscape features to frame the development.
- The proposed development seeks to respond to the existing topography of the site, which will help assimilate the development into the landscape and its surroundings.
- The proposal seeks to protect the character of both the open countryside and of the nearby residential areas by restricting building heights and densities to those appropriate to an edge of settlement site location.
- The scale of the development proposed allows some useful contributions to be made towards infrastructure improvements in Braintree as well as improved transport and open space/play facilities which are essential to support the site and the wider area. These are discussed in the Planning Statement.
- The development has good accessibility, which will be improved, and connections to the rest of Braintree will be enhanced, and will ensure the proposal is one that integrate physically and socially with the immediate locality and wider area.
- Provision of community facilities, early years provision and retail located within a central community core, easily accessible to the entire site via green infrastructure and leisure routes, will support new residents without detracting from the established local centres and the town centre.



