

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 3 December 2014

Report on Staplegrove Framework Masterplan

Report of the Planning Policy Manager Nick Bryant (ext 2425)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mark Edwards (Planning & Transport)

1. Executive Summary

This report is to inform members of proposed consultation to be undertaken on a 'Framework Masterplan' for the proposed site allocation at Staplegrove, Taunton. This consultation would be hosted by the Borough Council, with a final Masterplan to be submitted to the Council later in the year and requested to be agreed prior to any planning applications being made on the land in question.

Whilst no allocation was made at Staplegrove through the adopted Core Strategy, the Plan makes reference to the need to bring forward a 'comprehensive development after 2015'. The Core Strategy Inspector introduced this modification to the Plan as submitted, he also noted that should masterplanning work progress more rapidly than anticipated, any planning application would fall to be determined against the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

To-date the Borough Council has undertaken a number of consultation exercises on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and this has been supplemented by various elements of technical work and consultation carried out by the Site's promoters. This Framework Masterplan seeks to consolidate some of this work into a series of principles and a concept plan which will inform subsequent, more detailed masterplanning, required to support outline planning applications at both eastern and western ends of the allocation.

The Framework Masterplan does not prejudice the outcome of the SADMP process but does represent an important requirement given the general thrust of national policy through the Framework and the Core Strategy and the comments of the Core Strategy Inspector.

The parameters and fundamental requirements of the Framework Masterplan reflect technical work and public consultation already undertaken by both the Borough Council and the Site's promoters.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028 Development Plan Document was adopted in September 2012. This document sets the strategic framework for development across the Borough for the period to 2028.
- 2.2. The Core Strategy recognised Staplegrove as a 'Broad Location' for a mixed-use urban extension for comprehensive development after 2015 for between 500 – 1,500 dwellings. The policy requires a masterplan to co-ordinate development and states that a piecemeal approach to development before a masterplan has been agreed will not be permitted.
- 2.3. Staplegrove is proposed for allocation in the emerging Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP). The SADMP process itself has included two rounds of public consultation on the principle of an allocation at Staplegrove as well as much technical work which has informed the allocation as proposed in the Draft Plan.
- 2.4. Since adoption of the Core Strategy, considerable technical work has also been undertaken by GL Hearn on behalf of PM Asset Management (the site promoters at the eastern extent of the site) and Origin 3 on behalf of Ptarmigan Land (the site promoters at the western end of the site). In addition, there have been a number of public and stakeholder consultations which have informed the position to date.
- 2.5. Both consultants have now approached the Borough Council with a view to agreeing a Framework Masterplan to cover the entirety of the proposed allocation. This Masterplan has been prepared to reflect the requirements of both the Core Strategy and SADMP as well as technical work and consultation undertaken by the Deane and the consultants.

3. Full Report

Framework Masterplan content:

- 3.1 The Framework Masterplan (as attached at Appendix A) represents a comprehensive masterplan as required by Core Strategy Policy SS6 it establishes a number of core principles which further more detailed work relating to the proposed urban extension will have to respond to. Officers have defined the following fundamental requirements which the Framework Masterplan must include or address:
 - A concept plan illustrating the broad parcels of land comprising a total allocation of around 1,500 new homes and the distribution of land-uses within the development including a new local centre, 2 hectares of new class B employment land and a 2.5 hectare site for a 14-class primary school;
 - The requirement for an extension of the existing Green Wedge on either side of Mill Lease Stream, between Corkscrew Lane and the open countryside north of the existing 132kV power lines;

- The need to respond to Taunton Deane Green Space Strategy requirements in respect of open space;
- A new Northern Link Road extending from or near to, the Silk Mills roundabout on the A358 to Kingston Road;
- Sensitive incorporation of the route of the West Deane Way and appropriate structural landscaping to protect the Special Landscape Feature of Rag Hill, which ensures that built development does not breach the skyline;
- Sustainable design principles including measures to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport and the provision of connected streets suitable for both walking and cycling with good connections towards the town centre;
- The Hestercombe House SAC and the need for off-site woodland planting in accordance with the Habitats Regulations Assessment to mitigate the impact of development;
- Diversion or undergrounding of power lines between the A358 and Rectory Road;
- Close of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road, other than for local access;
- A broad indication of site phasing and associated infrastructure as well as the relationship of the Framework Masterplan to subsequent, more detailed masterplans, design codes.

Consultation Approach:

- 3.2 Subject to the views of Community Scrutiny and the agreement of the Council's Executive, the Framework Masterplan will be formally published for public consultation in early 2015 alongside publication of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. As part of the consultation it may well be appropriate for the Borough Council's officers to provide detailed comments upon the draft Plan.
- 3.3 It is advised that the site's promoters and Council officers should present the Framework Plan to both Staplegrove and Kingston St. Mary Parish Councils as well as the Whitmore Road Residents Group early in the new year during the formal consultation period. The wider public will be invited to attend this presentation whilst the plans themselves and supporting information will be published on both the Borough Council's and site promoters' respective websites.
- 3.4 There have already been a number of specific public consultations undertaken by the Borough Council and site promoters (particularly at the eastern end of the site) over the course of the last two years. It is not considered therefore that a further public exhibition style event is appropriate particularly given that the Framework Masterplan is not intended to provide the level of detail which has previously been presented to the community as in particular, PM Asset Management's proposals for the eastern half of the site have evolved.

Next Steps:

- 3.5 Following public consultation, the site's promoters: PM Asset Management and Ptarmigan Land will be expected to refine and revise the Framework Masterplan as necessary taking into account comments received. The Framework Masterplan will then need to be submitted to the Borough Council for final consideration by officers and members.
- 3.6 Since it is not possible for the Council to adopt the Framework Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document ahead of the SADMP being in-place, the Council may wish to adopt the Plan as 'Council policy'. It may also be appropriate for the Deane to ask the site's promoters to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the local authority. This MoU will commit both parties to work to the outline principles established.
- 3.7 The strategic site has, like all significantly sized proposed developments, specific infrastructure requirements associated with it and to this end, quite independently of the masterplanning process, the site promoters will seek to agree with the Borough Council a common set of infrastructure priorities. These priorities will need to be reflected in subsequent decision-making on the use of CIL funding and potentially other public funding streams.
- 3.8 Finally, it should be noted that in addition to the Framework Masterplan, there will be separate, more detailed masterplans prepared for both the eastern and western parcels of the site. These more detailed masterplans are likely to need to be agreed by the Borough Council and communities and are likely to be underpinned by design codes, they must reflect the outline principles agreed through the Framework Masterplan and will be subject to full public consultation.

4. Finance Comments

- 4.1. The timely delivery of the proposed Urban Extension will assist the Council in delivering the new homes set out in the Core Strategy. This in turn, will generate further New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

5. Legal Comments

- 5.1. Whilst the Staplegrove site is not formally allocated in the Core Strategy, there is a commitment through the Plan to its subsequent identification through the SADMP. Moreover, in view of the Core Strategy Inspector's comments, there is a clear need for the Council to work forward masterplanning proposals for the site in parallel to the site allocations (plan-making process).

6. Links to Corporate Aims

- 6.1. The delivery of the proposed Urban Extension closely relates to the Council's growth agenda and it's Corporate Plan and specifically Aim 1: Quality and Sustainable Growth and Development.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 Development of the site will result in the loss of greenfield, un-developed land, it will also result in the loss of habitat used by protected species. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been undertaken for both the Core Strategy and emerging Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The SA identifies likely sustainability implications arising from the proposed development and mitigation measures to limit these impacts.
- 7.2 Any significant planning application addressing the proposed urban extension area is likely to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

8. Community Safety Implications

- 8.1 Masterplans will need to comply with the provisions of proposed policy D8 of the emerging SADMP which requires the design of new developments to incorporate measures to reduce the likelihood of crime which are compatible with the need to create an attractive and sustainable layout.

9. Equalities Impact

- 9.1. A separate Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken one was produced for the Core Strategy, in addition a further EqIA will be completed for the SADMP.

10. Risk Management

- 10.1. Should the Council fail to agree a Framework Masterplan for the proposed urban extension there is a likelihood that its ability to influence more detailed aspects of the development would be diminished. This could result in a less appropriate mix, form and scale of development than envisaged by the Development Plan which could in turn have undesirable impacts upon the local community.
- 10.2. The Core Strategy Inspector in his Report acknowledged the need to bring forward the proposed urban extensions at Staplegrove and Comeytrowe as early as was practicable. To resist an approach to bringing forward detailed proposals in parallel with the plan-making process would appear to be at odds with the Core Strategy Inspector's Report and the spirit of the Framework and could leave the Council vulnerable to challenge at appeal in the event of an application being refused.

11. Partnership Implications

- 11.1 This Framework Masterplan has been prepared on the Borough Council's behalf by those promoting the Eastern and Western parcels of the proposed urban extension. It has however been informed by the principles established in this Report and the emerging Development Plan; as well as the technical work underpinning it.

12. Recommendations

12.1. The Executive is recommended to:

1. Note the content of this information report and accompanying draft Framework Masterplan;
2. Approve the draft Framework Masterplan for six weeks public consultation.

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Framework Plan and Development Brief

November 2014



North 
Taunton
Development

Taunton
November 2014

<http://www.northtauntontdevelopment.co.uk>

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Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Brief

PM Asset Management and Ptarmigan Land have been promoting the site on behalf of the landowners to deliver the broad location for growth at Staplegrove (see image to the right for ownership boundaries), which is identified within the adopted Core Strategy and emerging Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (SADMP).

Core Strategy policy SS6 identifies Staplegrove as a location for:

“A mixed-use urban extension of between 500 – 1,500 dwellings, likely to be commenced after 2015.

A Masterplan will need to be prepared to co-ordinate the development and ensure it provides the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure required.

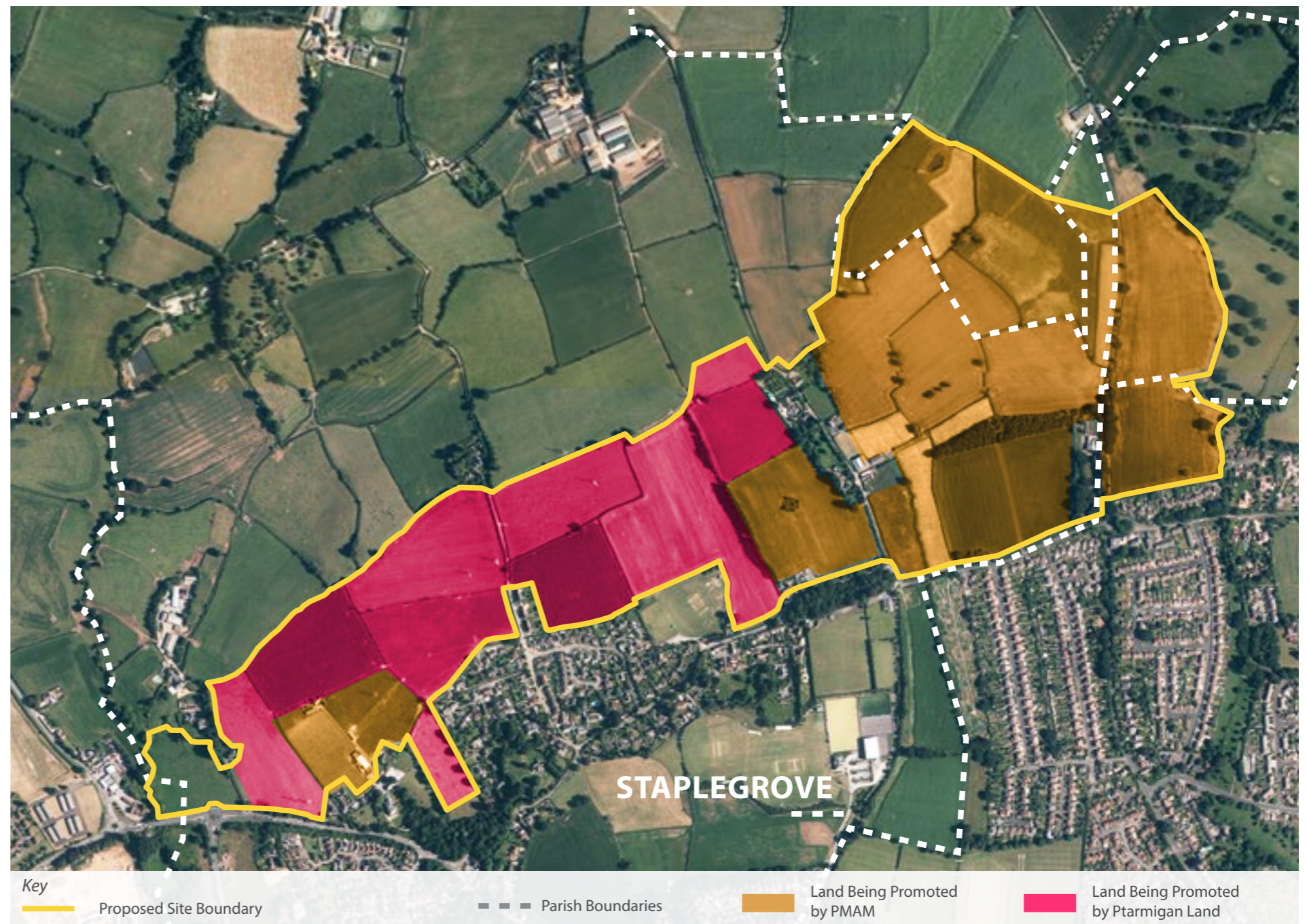
Likely facilities within the extension could include a new local centre; primary school; community hall; doctor’s surgery; affordable housing; employment; and improved bus, cycle and pedestrian facilities.”

25% of the housing will be provided as affordable housing.

The purpose of this document is to provide a high level Framework Plan, setting out the broad location for housing and associated physical, social and green infrastructure, as required by the Core Strategy.

The Framework Plan has been informed by the detailed surveys and work that the project teams have undertaken of the site and the surrounding area with regard to transport, drainage, landscape impact, archaeology and ecology.

The framework plan will be used by the Borough Council as a material consideration when assessing all further planning applications for the site.



The Site, Ownership and Parish Boundaries



1.2 Planning Context

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy for the period 2011 – 2028 was formally adopted by the Council in September 2012. It sets out a vision for Taunton Deane and strategic objectives, spatial strategy and policies for meeting that vision. It also reflects the strategic objectives of the ‘Sustainable Community Strategy’ as well as national planning policy.

The Plan specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough up to 2028 and identifies strategic site allocations, including mixed-use urban extensions, along with broad locations for growth where the actual extent of development had yet to be determined. Core Strategy policy SS6 identifies Staplegrove as ‘a broad location for a mixed-use urban extension of between 500 – 1,500 dwellings, likely to be commenced after 2015. A Masterplan will need to be prepared to co-ordinate the development and ensure it provides the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure required.’ This document has been prepared in response to this requirement.

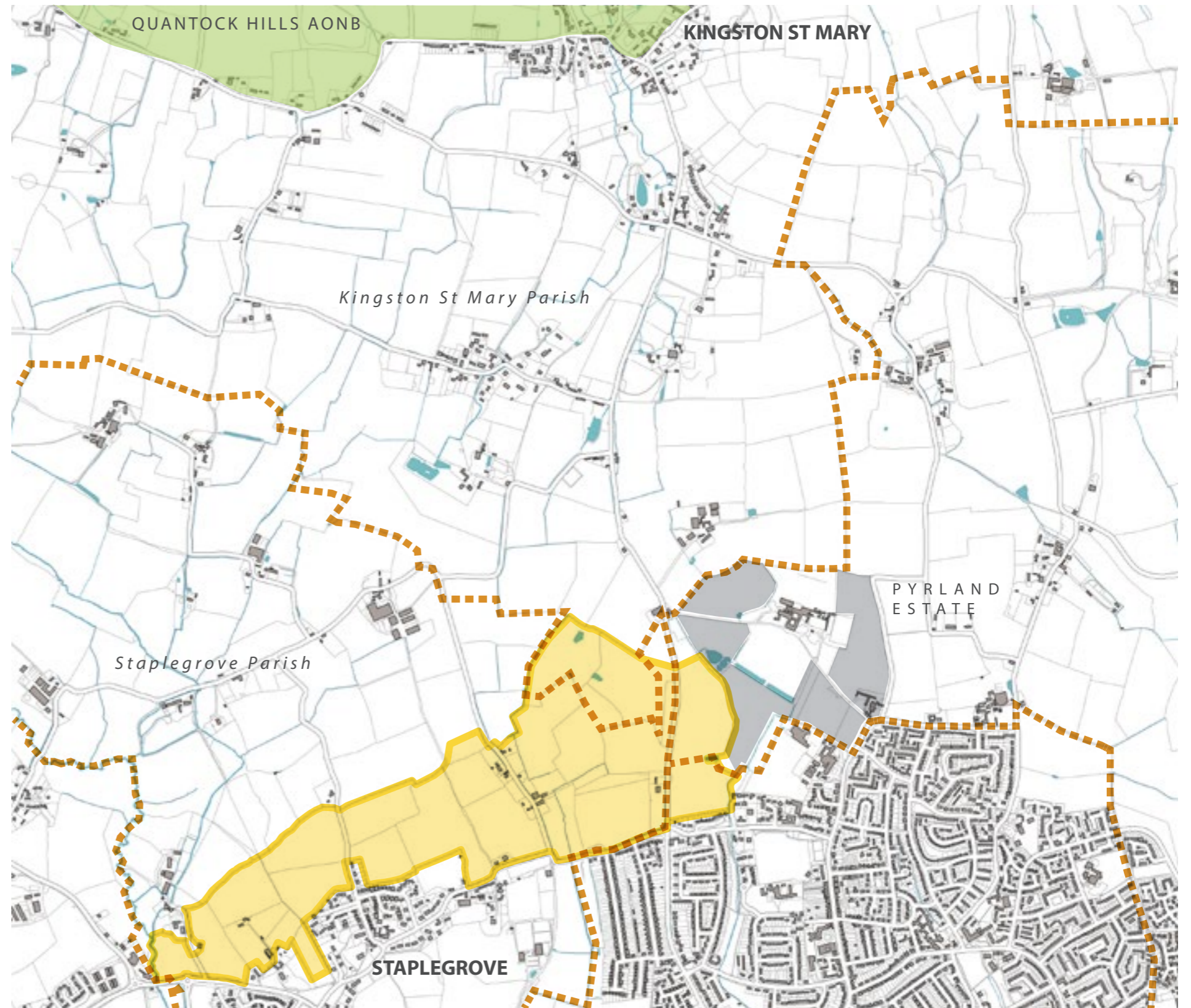
Likely facilities within the extension could include a new local centre; primary school; community hall; doctor’s surgery; affordable housing; employment; and improved bus, cycle and pedestrian facilities.

The Urban Capacity Study has identified the potential for housing development in urban areas, including brownfield land. However, brownfield allocations are not sufficient to meet the development needs set out in the Structure Plan. Accordingly, some greenfield development will be necessary.

Taunton Deane Local Plan, para. 2.5

Taunton Deane Borough Council Site Allocations

Following on from the adoption of the Core Strategy, TDBC has commenced work on a new Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP). The SADMP document will form part of the Council’s suite of statutory plans which comprise the basis for determining planning applications across the Deane. TDBC held a Public Consultation event in November 2013 in Staplegrove, seeking views from members of the public on their emerging SADMP, which includes the Staplegrove Urban Extension Preferred Option.



The Wider Context

Section 2

Community Involvement

2.1 Engagement with the Community

Public Consultations and Workshops

A Pre-Launch public consultation event, for the eastern section of the site, was held by the promoters in July 2013 at Staplegrove Village Hall, to introduce the project team to members of the public within Staplegrove.

A second exhibition was held in December 2013 to inform and seek the views of the Kingston St Mary community in respect of the issues and constraints that may affect the emerging framework plan.

A workshop was also held with representatives from the Whitmore Area Residents Group (WARG) on the 18th December 2013.

At these previous consultation events the local community was asked to identify potential opportunities and constraints of the area.

A further exhibition was held in May 2014 at the Taunton Vale Sports Club to present the community with an update of the findings, and show progress to date.

It is anticipated that this Framework Plan will be published for consultation early 2015 following informal approval of this Plan by the Council's Scrutiny and Executive Committees.

A public consultation event is expected to take place late Spring 2015 prior to the submission of any planning applications and once the scheme have been finalised in more detail.

Full details and analysis of the public consultations undertaken to date and going forward will be provided in the Statements of Community Involvement that will support the respective planning applications in due course.

July 2013

- Pre-Launch Public Consultation at Staplegrove Village Hall

December 2013

- Second Public Consultation in Kingston St Mary
- Whitmore Area Residents Group Workshop

May 2014

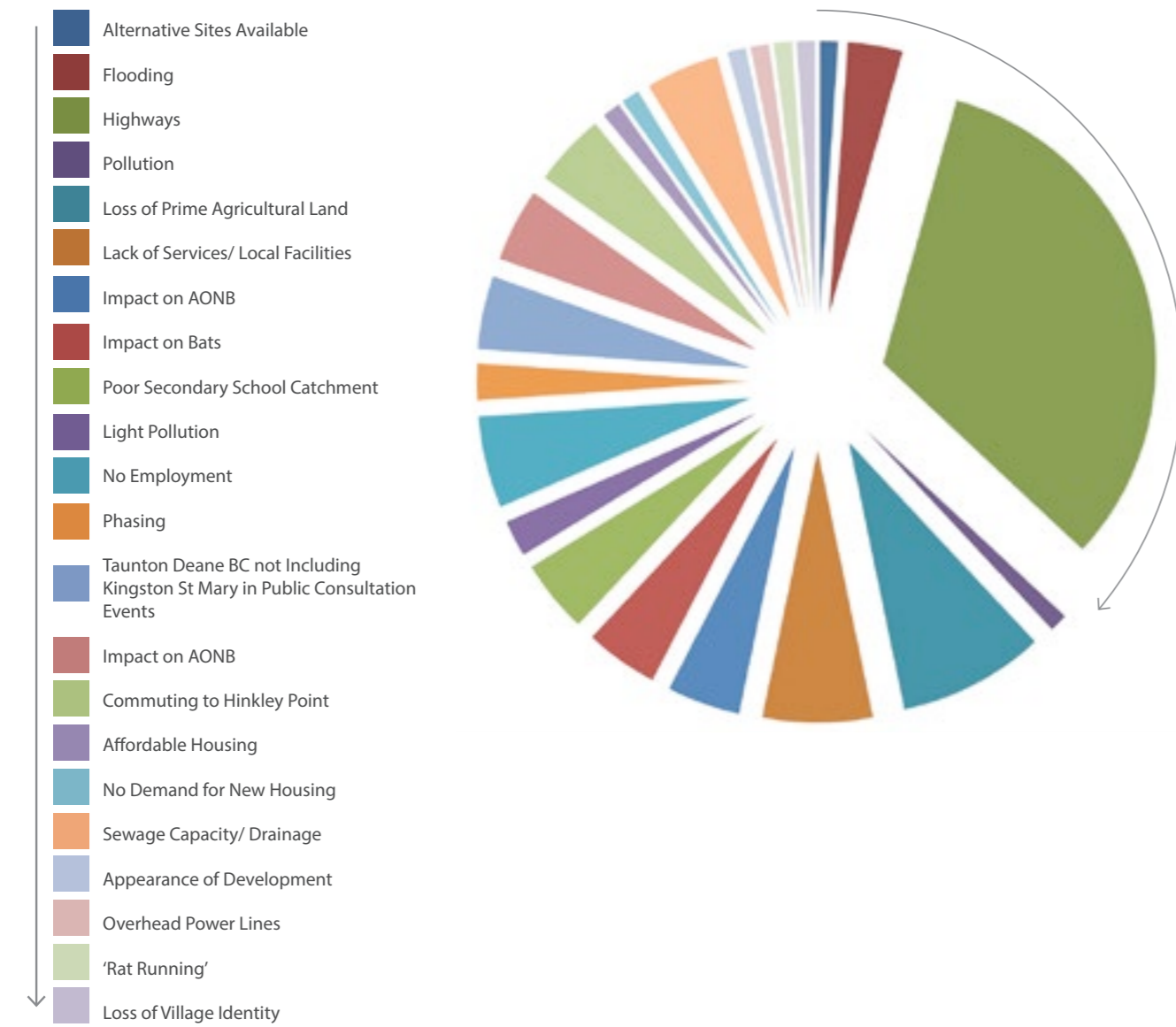
- Third Public Consultation at Taunton Vale Sports Club



2.2 Feedback

At the consultation events the local community was asked to identify potential opportunities and constraints of the area. The current findings are detailed in the pie charts below.

Constraints Identified



Opportunities Identified



2.3 Branding and Website

Branding and website created for the scheme.

The website:

www.northtauntondevelopment.co.uk

allows the public to keep up to date with the progress of the project. It also provides a portal where the public can view consultation boards to date, and notifies of upcoming events.



Logo created for the project



[Home](#) [Background](#) [Analysis](#) [Landscape](#) [Proposals](#) [Team](#) [Feedback](#)



Welcome and thank you for visiting the website for the proposed future development of land between Staplegrove and Kingston St Mary, to the north of Taunton. This site will provide up-to-date information on the emerging proposals for the urban extension.

Dedicated website created for the project

Section 3






























Issues and Constraints

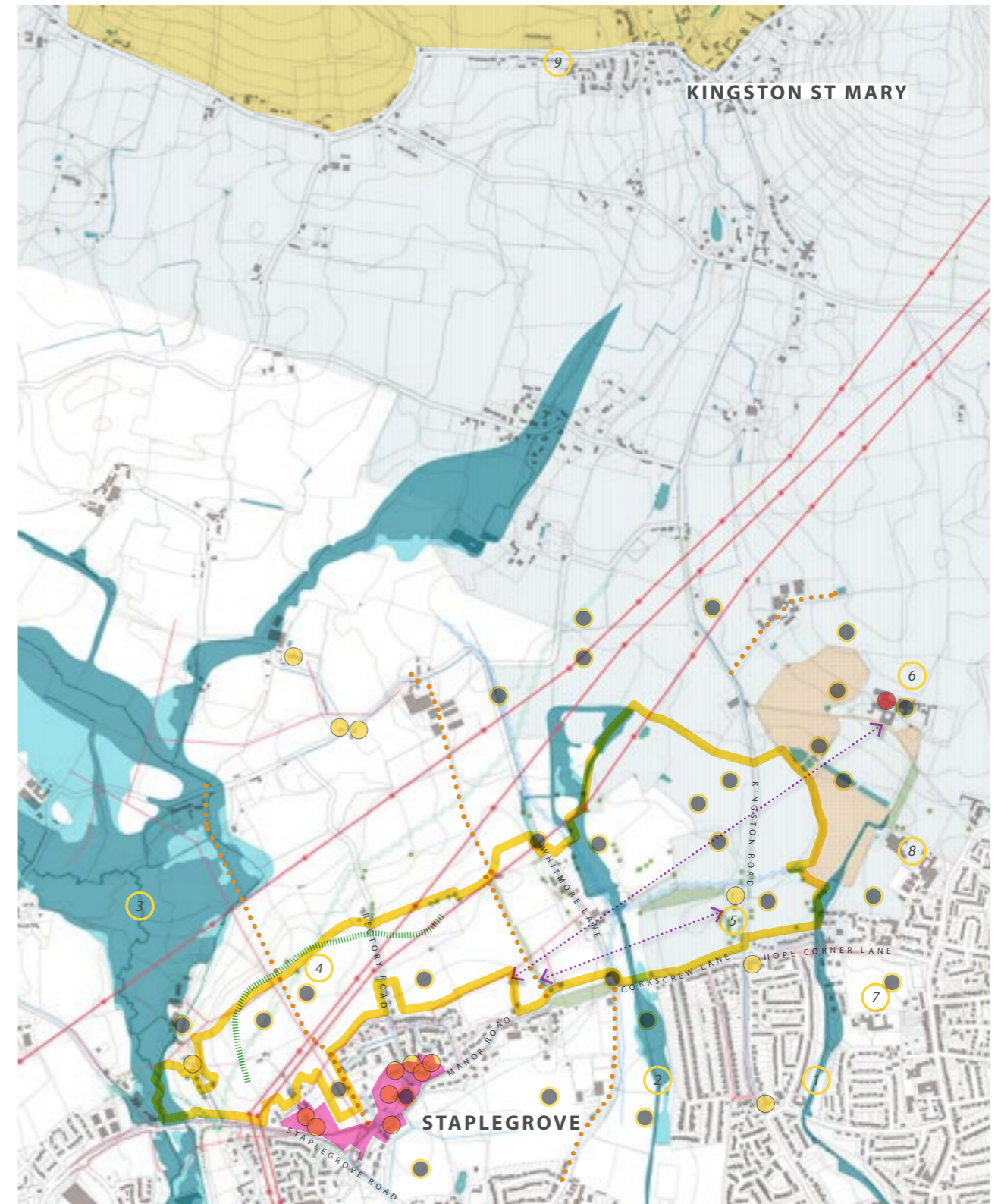
3.1 Constraints and Analysis Introduction

To identify the necessary infrastructure, the project team have started to look in detail at existing and potential opportunities and constraints of the site.

A summary plan of the constraints can be found to the right. However, this chapter also contains a more detailed account of the constraints which have shaped the framework plan.

Key

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Boundaries | | Landscape Features | |
|  | Proposed Site Boundary |  | Tree with Tree Preservation Order |
|  | Quantock Hills AONB |  | Tree Belt with Tree Preservation Order |
| | |  | Ridge Line |
| Services | | Access | |
|  | Gas Mains |  | Public Footpath |
|  | Gas Mains Easement | Heritage Constraints | |
|  | Power Cables High Voltage |  | HER (Historic Environment Record) Asset |
|  | Power Cables Other |  | Conservation Area |
|  | Water Mains |  | Grade II Listed Building |
|  | Water Mains Easement |  | Grade II* Listed Building |
| Ecology | | | |
|  | Approx. Bat Consultation Zone | | |
|  | Local Wildlife Site | | |
| Hydrology | | | |
|  | Flooding Zone 2 | | |
|  | Flooding Zone 3 | | |
-
- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
|  | 1 | Kingston Stream |
|  | 2 | Mill Lease Stream |
|  | 3 | Back Stream |
|  | 4 | Rag Hill |
|  | 5 | Okehills |
|  | 6 | King's Hall School |
|  | 7 | Wellsprings Primary School |
|  | 8 | The Taunton Academy |
|  | 9 | Kingston St Mary Primary School |



Constraints Plan

3.2 Photos



3.2 Photos



3.3 Access and Movement

An aim of this scheme is to develop a sustainable transport strategy providing for safe, efficient and convenient access for all major modes of transport.

This exercise has established the travel conditions of north Taunton in the future and most significantly after the opening of the Northern Inner Distribution Road (NIDR). Other key junctions have been looked at in detail to understand their future operation and the possible impacts of this development.

Delivery of the North Taunton development in its entirety is predicated on provision of the spine road and the phasing of development will be in line with construction of this road.

The phasing of the development will be married with the appropriate level of transport infrastructure, both on and off-site. It is anticipated that early phases of the development would be accessed from Kingston Road and Staplegrove Road. The safeguarding of Manor Road against increased traffic flows, and if possible creating a reduced flow, forms a significant part of the access strategy currently under consideration.

Within the development site a clear hierarchy of road space, influenced by the purpose and setting of the space, will allow safe movement for pedestrians and cyclists.

It is envisaged that bus services will operate through the development serving residents, employees and visitors. Provision will be made to incorporate a bus route along the spine road into the mixed use local centre by putting all parts of the development within a reasonable walking distance of the nearest bus stop (approx. 400m). It is inevitable that new and improved bus services will benefit the wider community as well as serving this development. Direct and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists from the development to nearby key destinations will be provided.

In Summary

- Appropriate vehicular access
- Access to existing road network
- Early phase(s) from Kingston Road and Staplegrove Road
- Safeguarding of Manor Road
- New and improved bus service

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

Maximise permeability of the site for pedestrians and cyclists;
Safe movement for pedestrians to/from and within the development through considerate design;
Bolster, improve and provide new routes to key local amenities;
Connection to public rights of way 'leisure routes'.

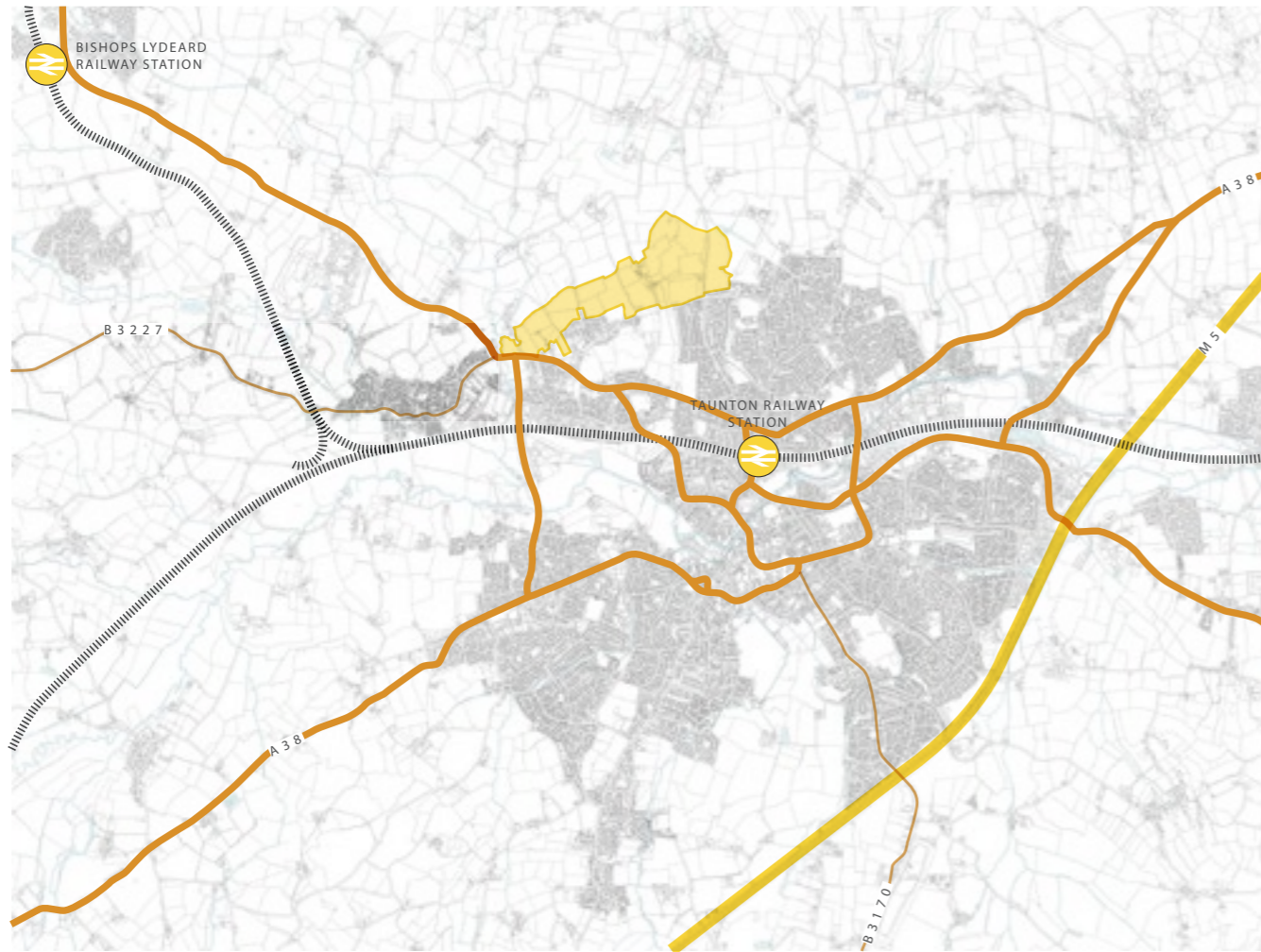
Public Transport Access

Provision for existing and new bus services running through development;
Increased level of bus services benefiting wider community.

Emergency Access

Where necessary additional dedicated emergency access points.

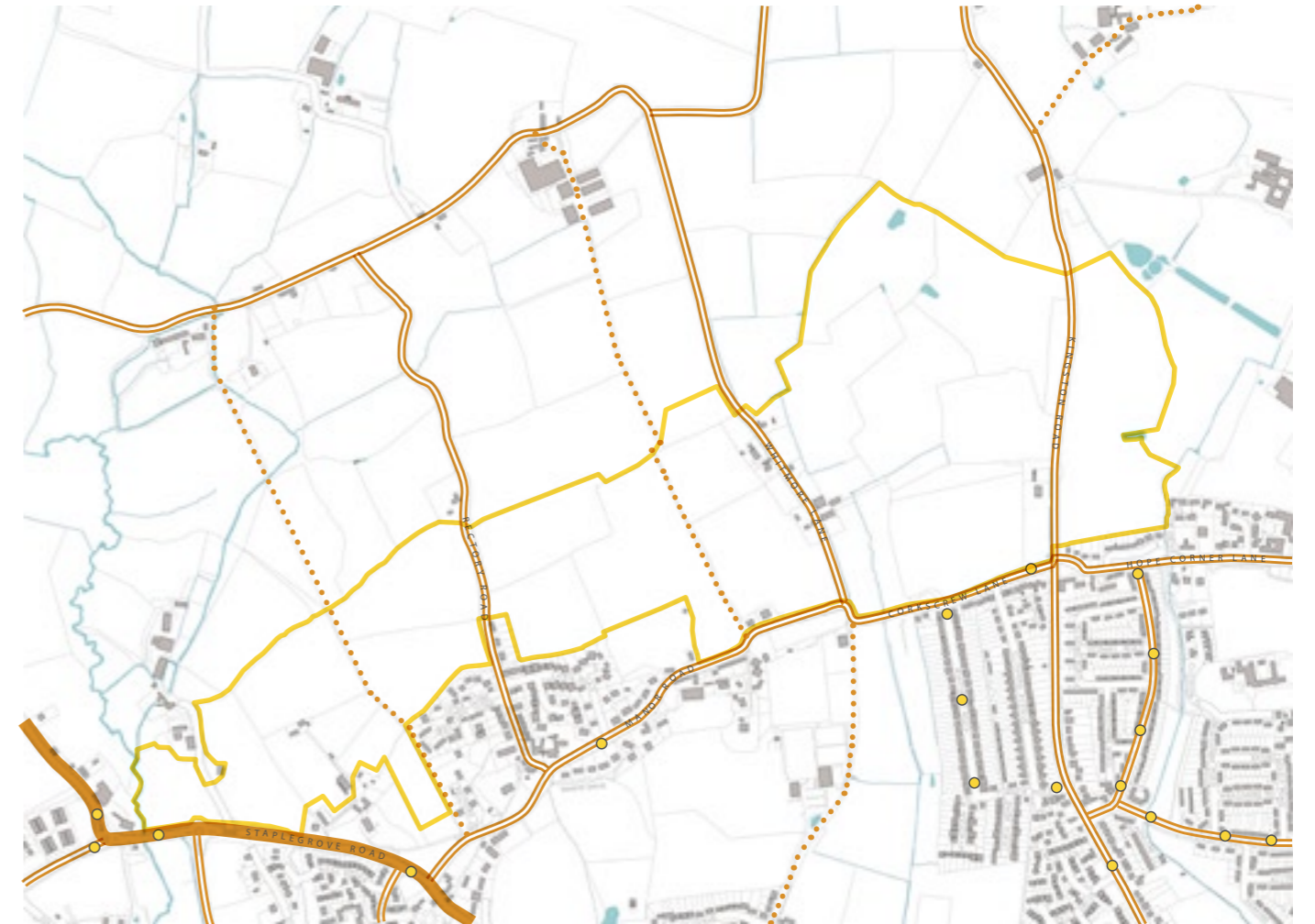
3.3 Access and Movement



Main Access Routes - Taunton

Key

- Proposed Site Boundary
- Motorway
- Railway
- A Road
- Railway Station
- B Road



Main Access Routes - Staplegrove

Key

- Proposed Site Boundary
- A Road
- Road
- Public Footpath
- Bus Stop



3.4 Heritage, Settlement and Archaeology

Cartographic Data

The pattern of fields, watercourses and highways has remained essentially unaltered since c. 1840, the only change being one of amalgamation of fields. Only four of the fields had historically significant names at the time of the Tithes surveys of c. 1839-41.

Of the buildings within or immediately adjoining the application site, the following were present in c. 1839-41: the pre-20th century buildings at Staplegrove Mills, Staplegrove House, all but one of the pre-20th century buildings at Whitmore Farm, and Okehills. The remainder were all built after 1839 – 41.

Heritage Assets

There are a number of Grade II Listed Buildings and one Grade II* Listed building within the immediate surrounding of the application site. The site also lies to the north and around the Staplegrove Conservation Area.

Pyrland Hall is a substantial mid 18th century 'country house' of Palladian-inspired design, now used as a school (Current OS 25K mapping refers to it as Kings Hall). It is set within extensive and wooded grounds that obscure direct viewing of it from the application site, and vice versa, but those grounds extend westwards to the eastern edge of the application site.

Staplegrove House and Okehills are early 19th century Regency villas. Both are surrounded by high visibility screens that prevent visual appreciation of them from the public highway or from within most of the site. Okehills, alone, is partially visible from the west through a gap in the coniferous visibility screen that also allows sight of the fields to the west of it.

The other buildings, with the exception of St John's parish church in

Staplegrove village, are of vernacular forms of late 17th – 19th century date. Staplegrove Mills is a large building of mixed residential and industrial form set within a modern farm complex at the base of the steep-sided valley of the Back Stream and not, therefore, intervisible with most of the application site. Hope Corner House is a similarly large building, surrounded on all but its northwest sides by 20th century residential developments and screened from the application site to its northwest by a coniferous plantation attached to Okehills.

Slapes and Smoky are modest vernacular roadside dwellings approximately half a kilometre north of the application site and intervisible only with its northern margins, whilst the cluster of buildings at the centre of Staplegrove village and 'Kibby's' further to the southwest of them, are not intervisible with the application site.

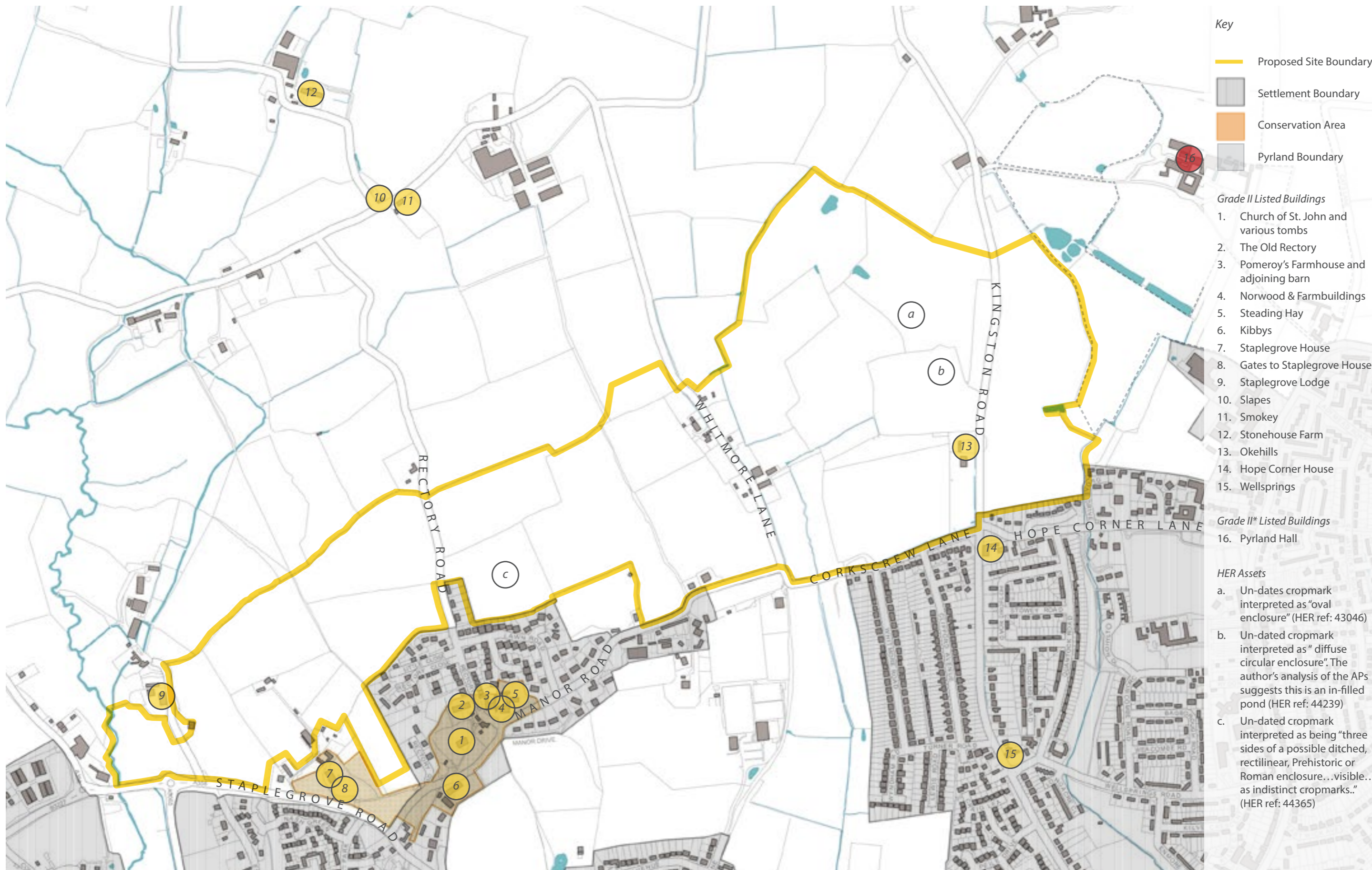
Archaeological Potential and Significance

A full archaeological assessment is currently underway and the results of which will inform the more detailed masterplanning work, which will be prepared in support of any future planning applications.

The prima facie evidence suggests the application site is of modest archaeological potential and that potential is geomorphologically restricted to the better-drained areas of River Terrace deposits. Those three areas are likely to contain the remains of late prehistoric/Romano-British settlement and, possibly, burials. The significance of such remains is largely dependent on their quality and extent, which can be established only through 'field evaluation' (i.e. site investigation), but if the assumptions made above are borne out, they complement recent work at Maidenbrook and Nerrols Farm, as well as at Cullompton in Devon and Corney's secondary analysis of Wiltshire (Corney, 2001), which demonstrate a far denser late prehistoric and 'non-villa' Romano-British rural settlement pattern than has hitherto

been accepted. Understanding that 'non-villa' rural settlement pattern and its late prehistoric antecedents is a key research aim for the archaeology of southwest England (cf. Webster et al, 2008, Research Aim 29) and such archaeological remains might warrant preservation in situ or complete archaeological excavation. Investigation into other possible settlement areas is required.

The historic buildings within or close to the application site are of modest historical significance and would not be materially affected by development. Furthermore, the majority are enclosed by tall hedges or wooded parkland, making assessment of their 'setting' and the contribution it makes to their significance problematic. Only two within the immediate vicinity of the application site have any architectural pretensions - Okehills and Staplegrove House - both of which are enclosed by tall hedges. Staplegrove House is appreciable only from its southern approach – a perspective that would not be affected by development – and Okehills is appreciable only from the west through a gap in its tree screen that also allows the occupants to view the open fields to its west. It is arguable that those fields would be considered part of the setting of Okehills and, more importantly, that they contribute to its significance as a large, architect-designed 'Polite' house of early 19th century date. The others are either too distant from the site to be realistically affected by development of it, or have already been surrounded by 20th century residential developments.



- Key**
- Proposed Site Boundary
 - Settlement Boundary
 - Conservation Area
 - Pyrland Boundary

- Grade II Listed Buildings**
1. Church of St. John and various tombs
 2. The Old Rectory
 3. Pomeroy's Farmhouse and adjoining barn
 4. Norwood & Farmbuildings
 5. Steading Hay
 6. Kibbys
 7. Staplegrove House
 8. Gates to Staplegrove House
 9. Staplegrove Lodge
 10. Slapes
 11. Smokey
 12. Stonehouse Farm
 13. Okehills
 14. Hope Corner House
 15. Wellsprings

- Grade II* Listed Buildings**
16. Pyrland Hall

- HER Assets**
- a. Un-dates cropmark interpreted as "oval enclosure" (HER ref: 43046)
 - b. Un-dated cropmark interpreted as "diffuse circular enclosure". The author's analysis of the APs suggests this is an in-filled pond (HER ref: 44239)
 - c. Un-dated cropmark interpreted as being "three sides of a possible ditched, rectilinear, Prehistoric or Roman enclosure... visible... as indistinct cropmarks.." (HER ref: 44365)



3.5 Topography and Landscape Character

Taunton lies on the River Tone, on the Vale of Taunton Deane, in between three hills: the Brendon Hills, the Quantock Hills and the Blackdown Hills.

'The development area avoids breaching the Rag Hill ridge which was designated as a special landscape feature in the Taunton Deane Local Plan.'

Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028, Taunton Deane Borough Council, 5.70

The application site encompasses a broad ridge oriented SSW-NNE that fans out into a roughly level terrace at its northeast end. Its steepest gradients are at its southwestern end, where it overlooks the relatively wide and flat-bottomed valley of the tightly meandering Back Stream that flows south towards the River Tone and is itself joined by westward flowing tributaries running along the northern edge of the ridge. Of the many surface watercourses that cross the site, the back Stream is the only one flowing through its natural course: the Mill Lease Stream and the Kingston Stream that flow north-south across the eastern half of the site, together with all their tributary drains, flow in artificial channels. The interior of the site is divided into c. 27 irregularly shaped and sized fields and paddocks, bounded by mature hedges, recent fences and a large number of drainage ditches. Many of the fields contain or share ponds but there are no other surface features or earthworks visible.

Topography

Taunton lies on the River Tone, on the Vale of Taunton Deane, in between three hills: the Brendon Hills, the Quantock Hills and the Blackdown Hills.

AONB

Taunton lies in between two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, The

Blackdown Hills, and the Quantock Hills. The site at Staplegrove can be seen from the Quantock Hills AONB, thus it is vital that these views are analysed, and the proposed development complements these views, and provides minimal disruption.

Site Character

The site encompasses parts of three parishes on the northern edge of Taunton in Somerset: Staplegrove, Cheddon Fitzpaine and Kingston St Mary, of which the former is the larger component. These straddle the southern aprons of the Quantock Hills overlooking the broad valley of the River Tone that meanders west-east through the centre of Taunton towards its confluence with the River Parret near Bridgwater. The wider landscape is predominantly one gentle south-facing slopes dissected by the westward and southward-flowing tributaries of the River Tone. In this case, that geomorphological model is augmented by an interrupted ridge running SW-NE along the axis of the application site, cut by the (from west to east) the Back Stream, Mill Lease Stream and Kingston Stream and the thoroughfares that run alongside them.

The geological base is predominantly of Mercia Mudstone, with outcrops of Morte Slate and Otter Sandstone extending towards the site from Kingston St Mary and Cheddon Fitzpaine to the northeast. Within the application site

The geological base is predominantly of Mercia Mudstone, with outcrops of Morte Slate and Otter Sandstone extending towards the site from Kingston St Mary and Cheddon Fitzpaine to the northeast. Within the application site the mudstone is partially masked by localised remnants of River Terrace sands and gravels that form the interrupted axial ridge. That varied geological base supports shallow 'brown soils' typically c. 300mm thick, the characteristics of which will vary between the different parent materials.

The site area is currently divided into c. 27 fields and paddocks delineated by well-established boundaries, drainage ditches, footpaths and public highways, that surround the named farms and homesteads of Hillmeade, Whitmore Farm, Rapshill and Okehills.

The land under the control of the promoters can be described as follows:

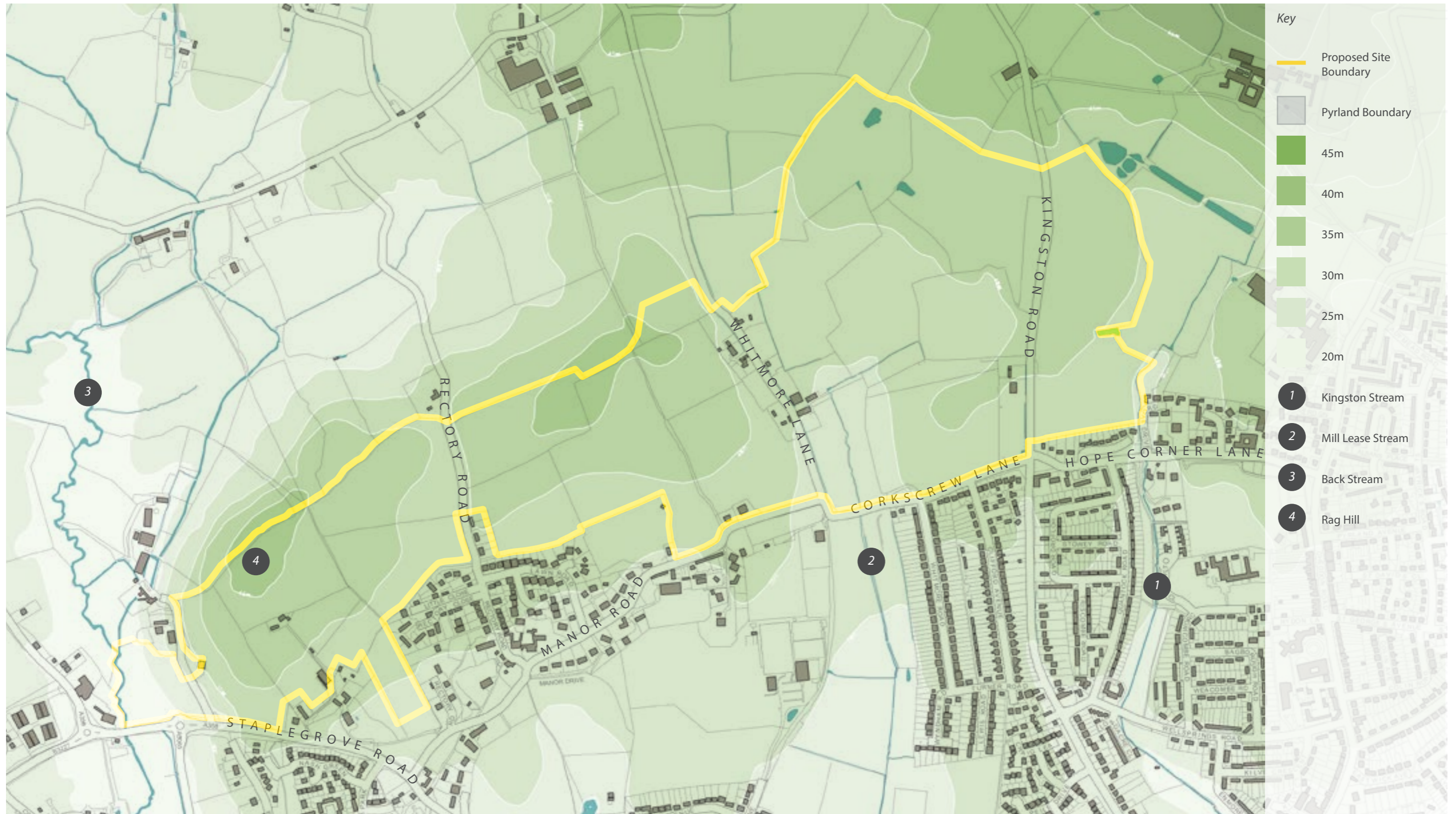
- The landscape character locally is defined by tightly clipped and long established native species hedges, some aligned with seasonal watercourses / ditches. Sporadically located mature oak trees protected under TPO (Tree Preservation Order) are within some hedge lines. Occasional oak trees within the fields mark the lines of former hedgerows.
- The low lying area between Okehills and Rag Hill incorporates subtle topographic undulation which generally declines towards the Mill Lease Stream near to Whitmore road. To the north views to the Quantocks can be gained and to the south the settlement limit of Taunton is in parts visible between treed areas.
- The variety of seasonal crops grown across the site (particularly tall miscanthus) can alter the availability of views out from the site depending on the height of the crop / the time of the year.

Landscape and Visual Effects

The emerging framework plan is informed by the likely landscape and visual effects of proposed development.

- Acknowledging the value of visual amenity, particularly in relation to new public green open spaces associated with development proposals.
- Assessing the intervisibility and visual relationship between the site and the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Historic Pyrland Hall Estate and adjacent neighbourhoods.
- Acknowledgement of historic or interesting views and viewpoints.
- Utilising topography, tree belts and open space to visually integrate development into the landscape.

3.5 Topography



Topography

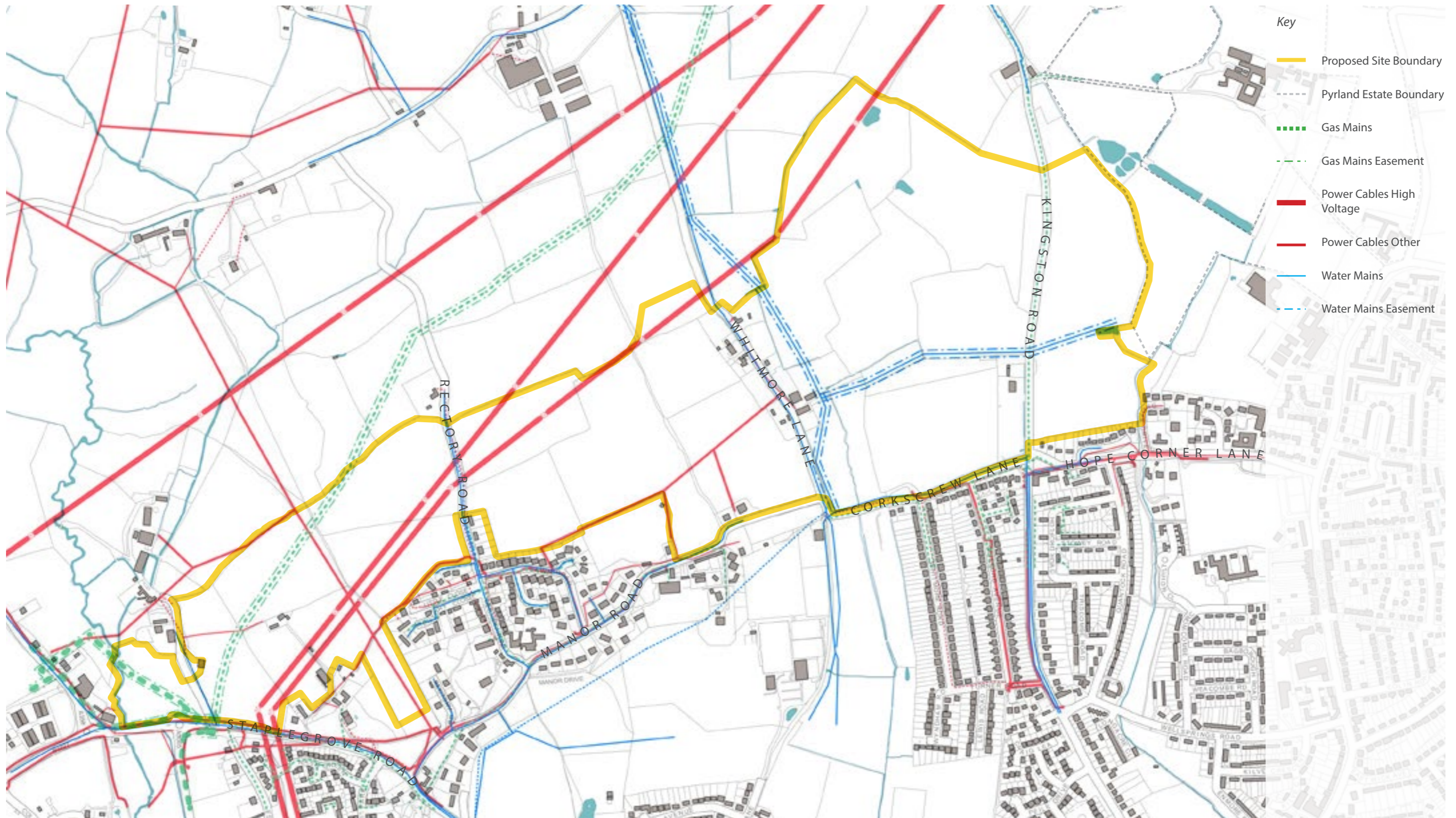


3.6 Flooding



Flooding

3.7 Infrastructure



Infrastructure

3.8 Ecology

Ecology

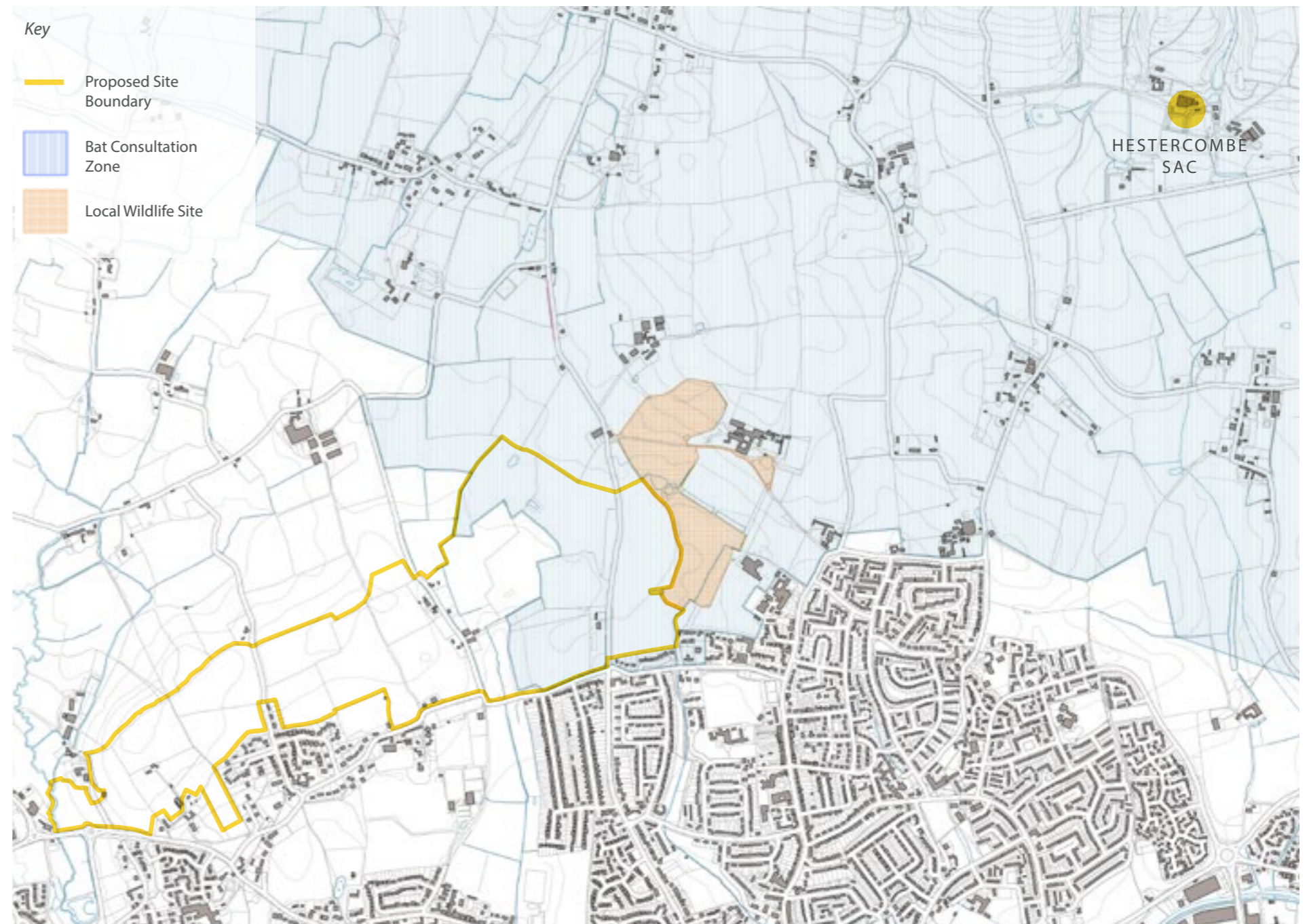
Hestercombe House and Gardens are located to the north-east of the consultation site. Hestercombe is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for its maternity colony of lesser horseshoe bats.

Part of the site lies within a designated bat consultation zone, thus extensive ecological surveys, as well as bat activity surveys have been carried out in order to provide a clear understanding of the bat species using the site.

Thus extensive bat surveys have been carried out over 2013 and 2014 to provide a clear understanding of the extent of bat activity on the site. Additional ecological surveys carried out include those for badgers, bats, breeding birds, dormice, reptiles and great crested newts.

Surveys carried out to date have identified that the development should incorporate some green corridors and buffer planting where appropriate principally to ensure bat flightlines are maintained where necessary.

New trees and hedgerows would be planted within the open space areas on the site and meadow areas and SUDS introduced which will further enhance additional opportunities for wildlife.



The Hestercombe Special Area of Conservation



Section 4

Access and Spine Road

4.1 Spine Road

Spine Road

The development at North Taunton is predicated on delivery of a spine road from Kingston Road to the east across to a point onto or in close proximity to the Silk Mills Roundabout to the west. This road will be of sufficient width to accommodate buses and will take the form of a local distributor road with some frontage development onto it. The spine road will be provided on a “phased” basis and development of the site will be restricted until such time as the spine road is complete.

It is anticipated that the site will be accessed by a suitable arrangement to the east of Silk Mills roundabout. Further discussion with Somerset County Council as the Local Highway Authority are required to progress this matter. The solution will ultimately be tested as part of the Transport Assessment prepared in respect of any planning application that come forward.

With the spine road providing an east-west link bus services will operate through the development putting all parts of it within a reasonable walking distance of the nearest bus stop. Continuation of new and improved bus services through neighbouring areas will benefit the wider community as well as serving this development.

Within the development a clear hierarchy of road space, influenced by the purpose and setting of the space, will allow safe movement for pedestrians and cyclists.

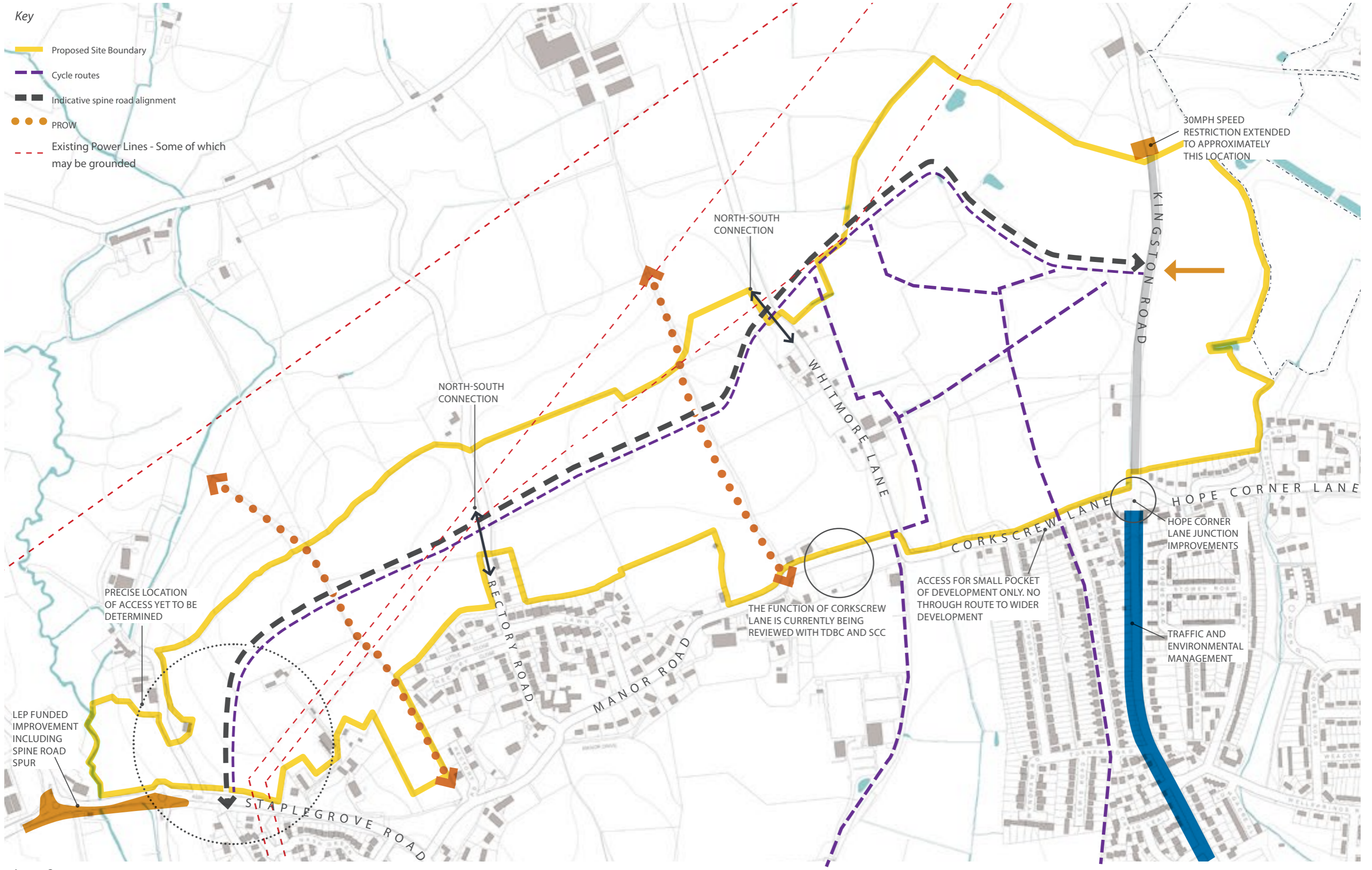
It is intended that the internal roads and footways within the development will comply with the principles of Manual for Streets and that they will be to a standard that will be adopted by Somerset County Council.

Highway Improvements

Significant work has been carried out to evaluate the capacity of the existing road network, including the A3038/A358 gyratory. Measures will be implemented as the scheme develops to mitigate any adverse effects and these could include new public transport links and local junction improvements. A key element of the proposed highway network regime is the status of Corkscrew Lane. The function of Corkscrew Lane is currently being reviewed with TDBC and SCC.

Travel Plan

A travel plan to encourage new residents to use sustainable modes of transport to meet their travel needs will form an important element of the strategy to reduce the number of car movements generated by the development. Measures will encourage walking and cycling for travelling on short local journeys and the use of public transport for journeys to work especially to local employment centres such as Taunton. This travel plan will be developed in conjunction with Somerset County Council.



Access Strategy



Section 5

Green Infrastructure

5.1 Landscape-led Approach

A Landscape-led Approach to Masterplanning

Part of the proposed development area is adjacent to the Pyrland Estate. The promoters will take into account the historic setting of the Pyrland Estate and the surrounding area.

The promoters are taking a **landscape-led approach** to the development at North Taunton in order to ensure that the likely effects on all landscape assets, including the National Trusts' Estates and the Quantock Hills AONB to the north, are fully considered.

In accordance with the adopted Core Strategy, the promoters are in the process of preparing a framework plan to ensure the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure requirements are provided – including the provision of affordable housing, a primary school and a local shopping centre. More detailed masterplans will be prepared in due course as part of any planning applications submitted.

A landscape-led approach to masterplanning will:

- Be based on an understanding and assessment of the key landscape character elements that form the landscape north of Taunton.
- Use Landscape Survey and Assessment approaches to inform detailed masterplan preparation.
- Where possible, allow space for retaining & protecting significant trees, woods & hedgerows for wildlife & amenity value.
- Understand the links between the countryside and the town, and provide a transition between rural and urban landscapes.
- Actively seek opportunities to plant new trees and conserve and enhance landscape features through the development process.

Place Making

The quality of the designed urban realm is vital as the neighbourhoods and places in which we live have an impact on our everyday lives. A high quality design as well as a coherent and integrated design approach will mean that the community can feel safe, can walk around their neighbourhood easily, and will have local facilities nearby such as shops, schools and community facilities. The design will create a high quality urban realm which can be enjoyed by all who live in the new development, as well as by the existing communities of Staplegrove, Kingston St Mary, North Taunton, and the wider surrounding area.

A high quality urban realm can be created through an informed design approach that learns from the existing communities, the history of the place, the drivers for development, and allows for early involvement with the community.

A well-coordinated project team will enable a highly integrated design approach, allowing the harmonisation of a sound transport scheme, a positive landscape design approach, high quality dwellings and spaces, as well as a scheme which responds positively to the environment. Positive urban design will deliver a place which creates social, environmental and economic value.

A positive access strategy for vehicles, buses, cyclists and pedestrians will be vital for a successful scheme. Places will be created out of streets, so as roads are not merely used for transport, but also integrated into the urban design to create a coherent and vibrant setting.

The scheme will be designed with the resident and local community in mind, and will aim to create a special place for current and future generations of Staplegrove, Kingston St Mary, Taunton and the surrounding areas.

5.2 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure, a Green Wedge, Play Areas and Pitches

'Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of natural and semi natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities.'

UK Landscape Institute Position Statement on Green Infrastructure, 2013.

The landscape comprises of various elements of Green Infrastructure, having both functional and aesthetic characteristics:

- Creating green public open spaces, incorporating play areas, playing pitches, walking and cycling.
- Retention and creation of landscape features for wildlife and visual amenity; individual trees, hedgerows, tree belts, wetlands and watercourses.
- Allowing space for the integration of sustainable drainage.
- Re-creation of former orchards, providing opportunities for local food production on allotments.
- Affording opportunity for views to open green space.

The Green Wedge

An extension to the green wedge was outlined in the Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028 for the Broad Location of Staplegrove:

"[...] two development areas separated by an extension to the Staplegrove green wedge to the north on either side of Mill Lease Stream."

The key policy objectives of Green Wedges are to:

- Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods;
- Maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents;
- Bring the countryside into the heart of town;
- Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play;
- Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat;
- Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity; and
- Provide a positive approach to land use.

TDBC Green Wedge Assessment Document, September 2013

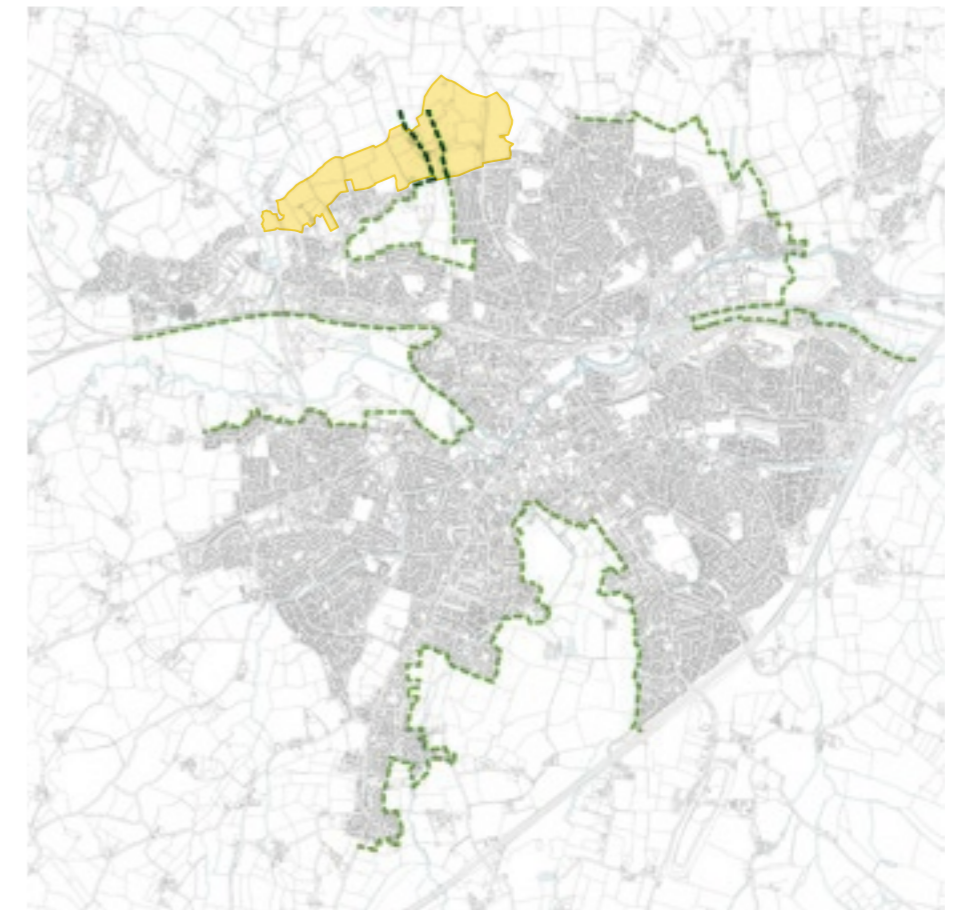
The green wedge could include:

- **Woodland/ hedgerows/grassland**
- **Public open space**
- **Attenuation ponds / reed beds**
- **Allotments**
- **Play areas (formal and informal)**
- **Routes for cycling and walking**
- **Space for wildlife**
- **Space for uniformed organisations and community groups to use**
- **Underground utility corridors**

The green wedge could also include other suitable activities and features that are desirable and acceptable in the context of the local authority planning policy relating to the green wedge.

The location and scale of the green wedge is not "fixed" and will be subject to detailed design.

Informal and formal open space will comply with the Borough Council's open space standards but will respond to a robust evidence base.



Key
— Proposed Site Boundary
— Existing Green Wedge Edge
— Proposed Green Wedge Edge

Taunton - Proposed Green Wedge

Section 6

Community Facilities

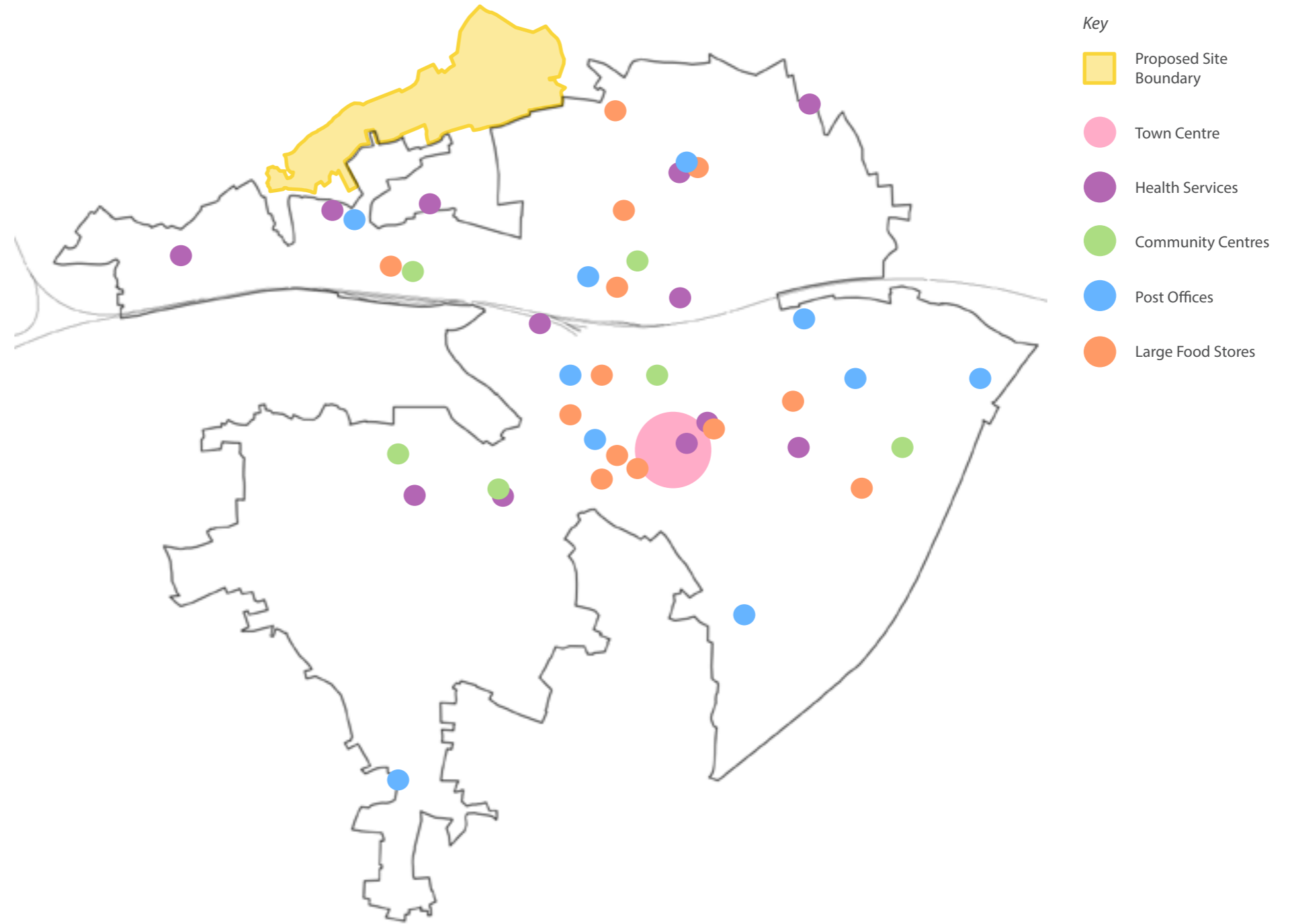
6.1 Community Facilities - Local Centre

A Local Centre

As part of the masterplan area, a local centre will be provided for the community in order to encourage a walk-able neighbourhood, reducing the need for cars.

The local centre could include a variety of facilities, some of which are listed below:

- Retail
- Leisure
- Health facilities
- Employment



Facilities and Amenities

6.2 Community Facilities - Primary School

A Primary School

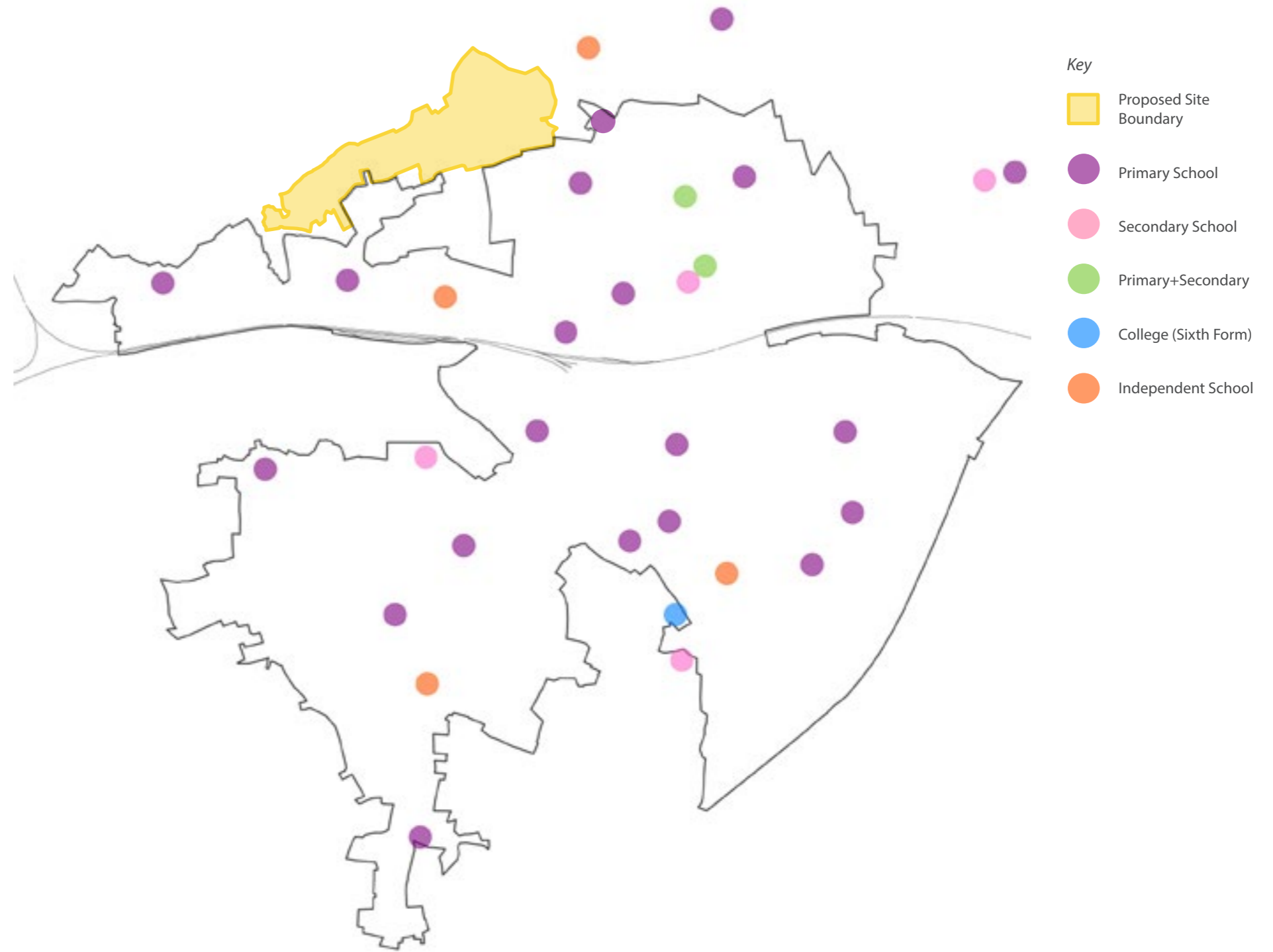
A primary school will be provided within the proposed development. This would be a one-form entry school, with space provided to allow increase to two-form entry as and when required.

The school would also have associated with it all the required facilities, which are listed on the right.

In response to emerging local and County Educational needs, the school site may be provided with:

- One - two form primary school
- Playing pitches
- Soft and hard play areas
- Games courts
- Habitat areas
- Wildlife area
- Bus routes to the school
- Safe routes to school
- Cycle/ scooter parking

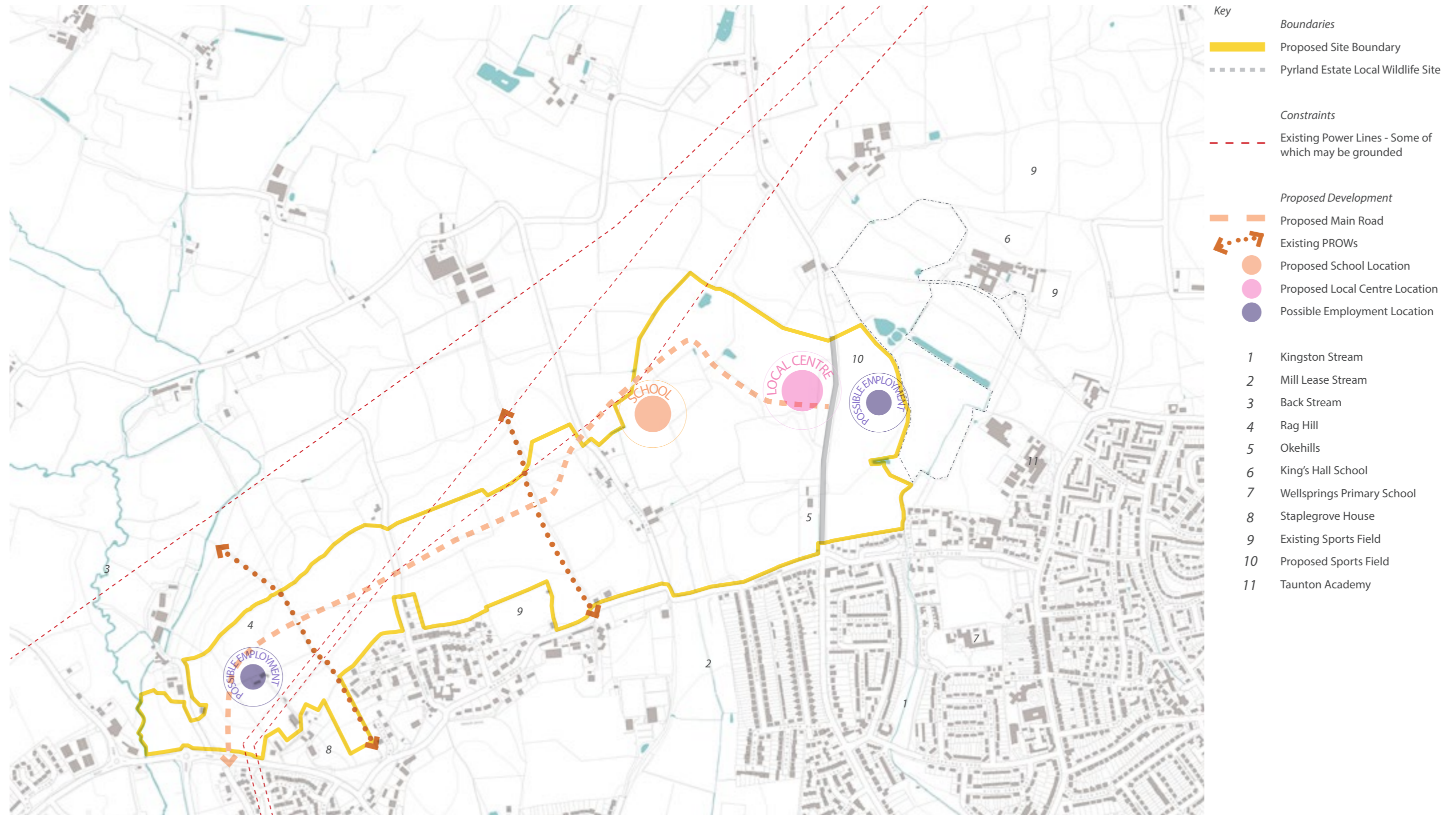
Timing of the provision of the primary school is subject to further discussions with SCC and TDBC. It is anticipated that this will be funded using CIL contributions, with land being provided by the developers.



Existing Schools - Taunton wide



6.3 Proposed Local Centre and School Location



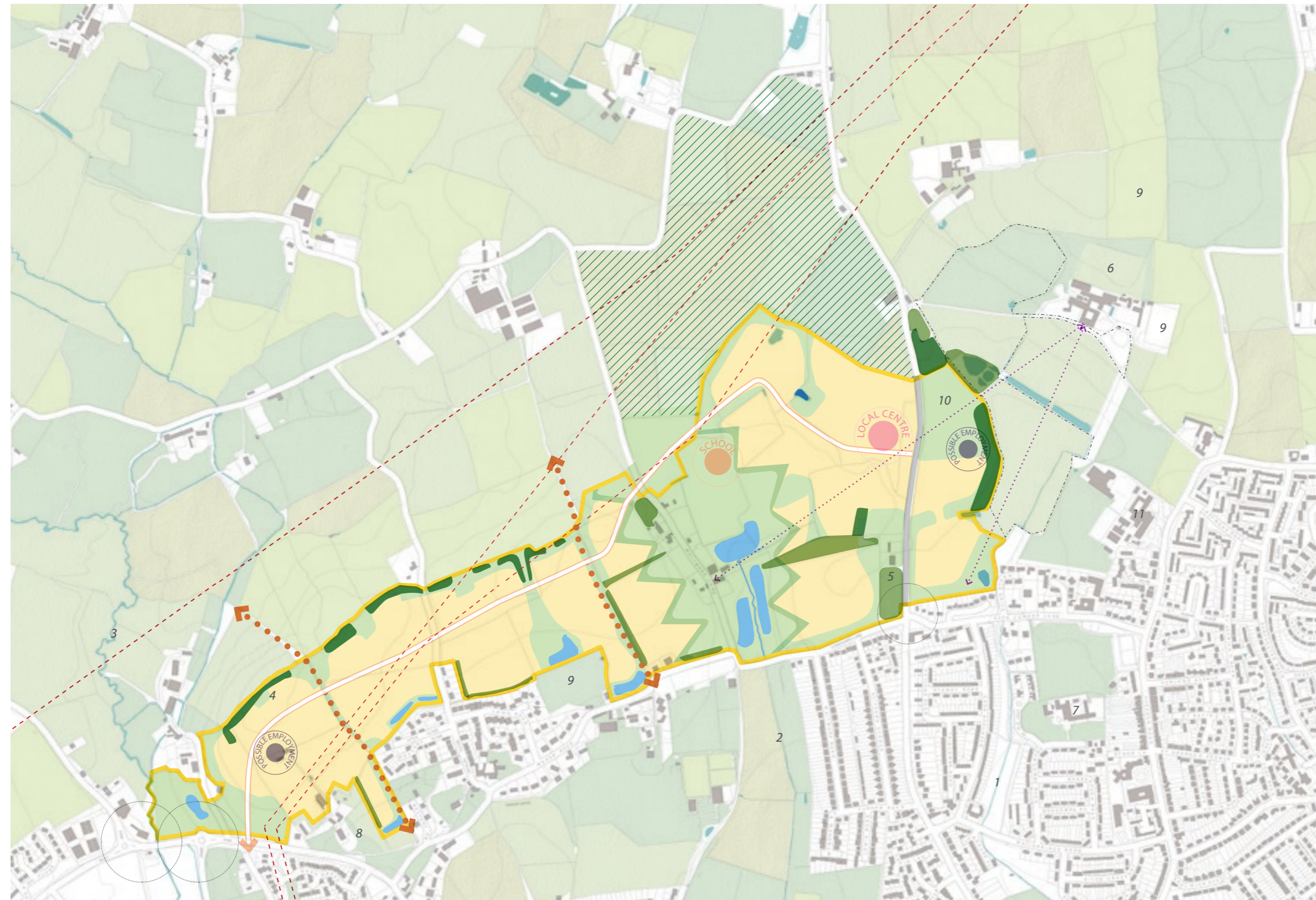
Proposed Location for the Primary School and Local Centre



Section 7

Framework Plan

7.1 Framework Plan



Key

Boundaries

- Proposed Site Boundary
- Pyrland Estate Local Wildlife Site

Constraints

- Interesting Views
- Existing Power Lines - Some of which may be grounded

Proposed Development

- Proposed Development Areas
- Proposed Main Road
- Existing PROWs
- Future Mitigation works to be confirmed

Existing Landscape Features

- Existing Tree Belt
- Existing Hedgerows
- Existing Pond

Proposed Landscape Features

- Proposed Tree Belt
- Proposed Green Space
- Possible area for tree planting/ bat mitigation
- Proposed Pond
- Green Wedge (extent to be confirmed)

- Kingston Stream
- Mill Lease Stream
- Back Stream
- Rag Hill
- Okehills
- King's Hall School
- Wellsprings Primary School
- Staplegrove House
- Existing Sports Field
- Proposed Sports Field
- Taunton Academy

Framework Plan



Section 8

Deliverability / Implementation

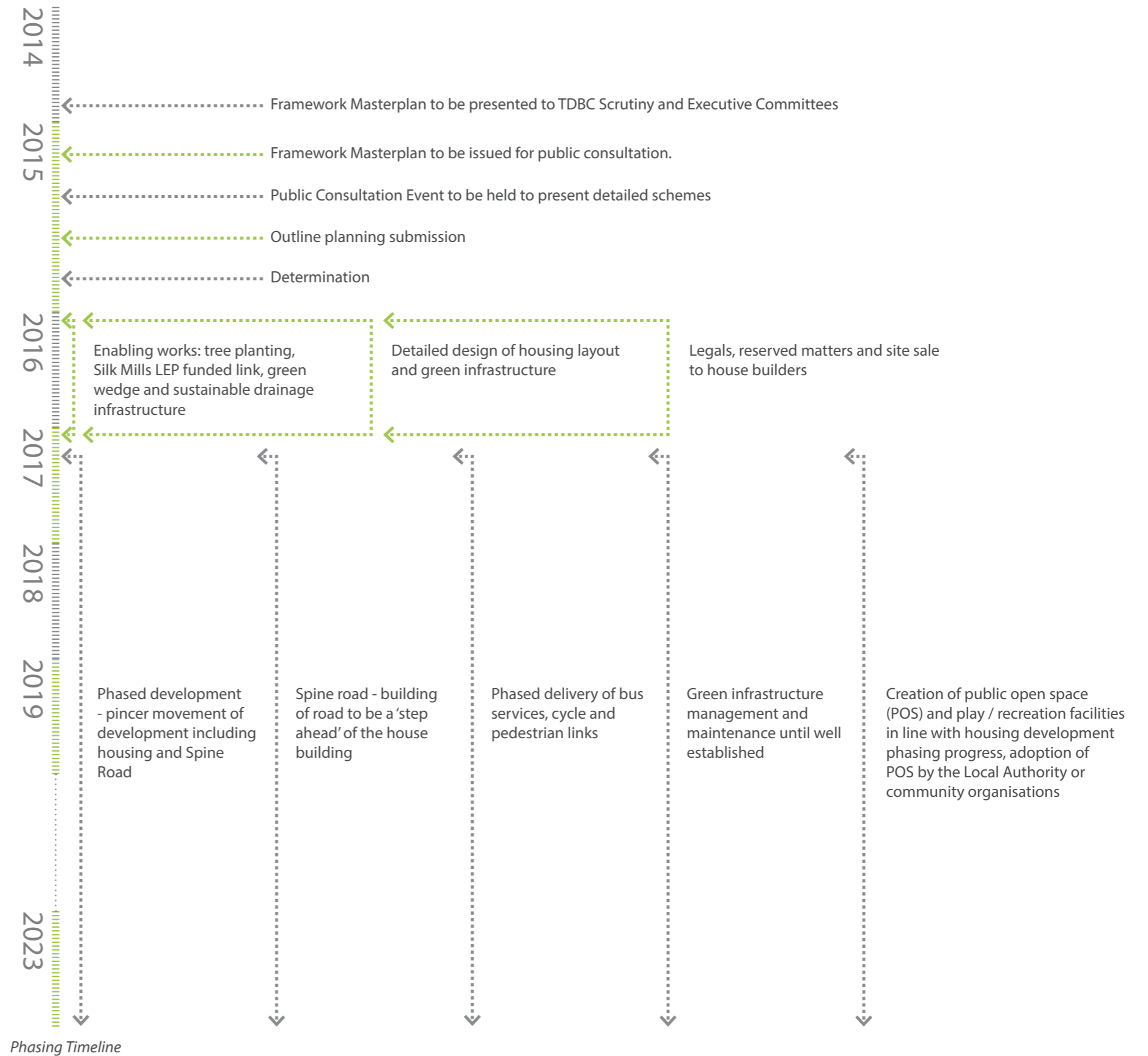
8.1 Next Steps

Next Steps

This document has been prepared with a view to submitting to TDBC for their consideration to Scrutiny and Executive Committees in December 2014. Subject to informal approval by these Committee the document will then be published for public consultation for up to 6 weeks in January 2015.

During the first part of 2015, the consultant teams acting for Ptarmigan and PM Asset Management will be continuing to progress the masterplanning of the site in response to additional survey work to ensure a well-informed scheme. The teams will be then preparing planning applications for submission Summer 2015.

The anticipated timeline for the scheme is shown adjacent.

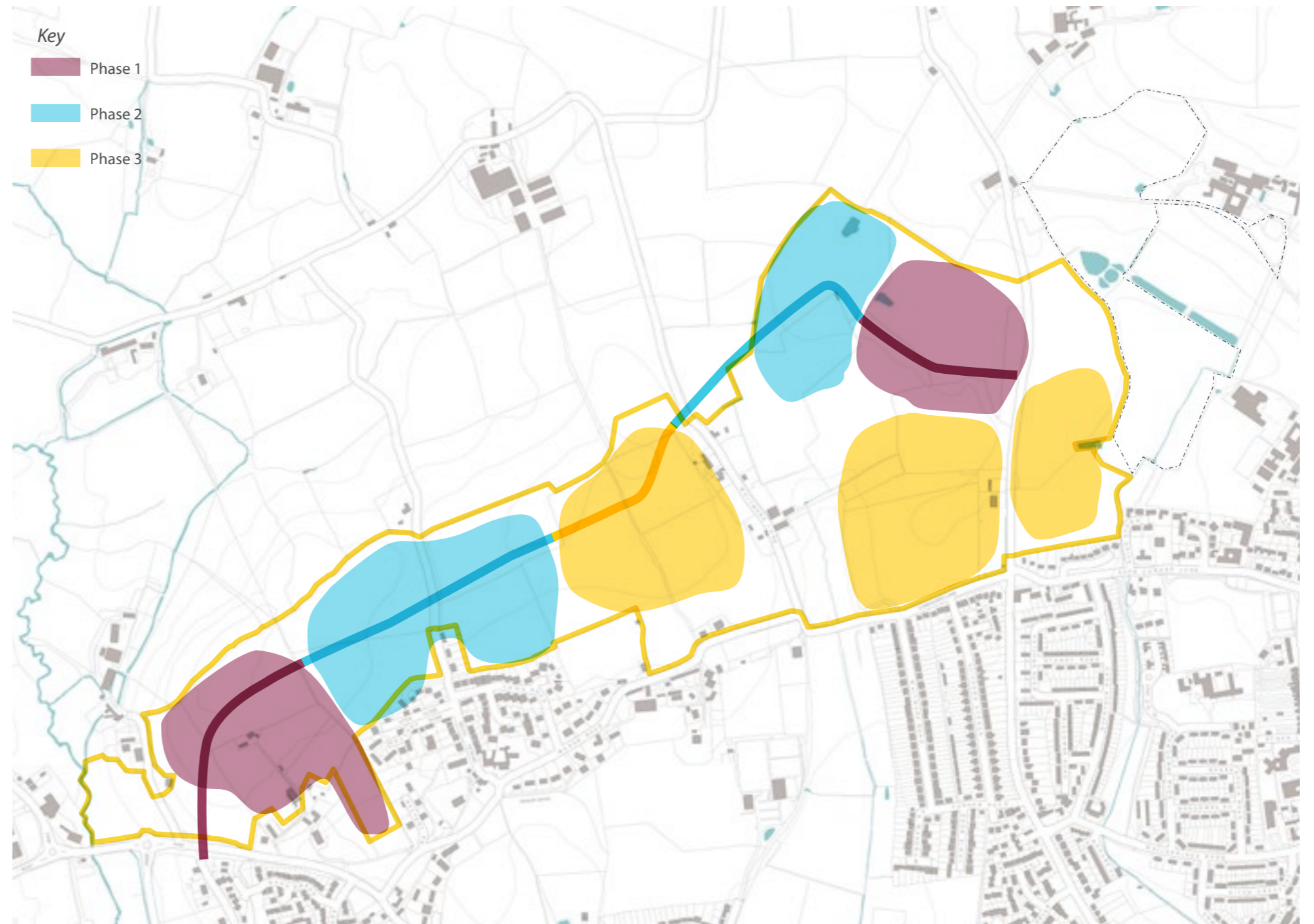


8.2 Delivery

Delivery

The plan adjacent shows indicative and high level phasing of the development.

Phasing will ensure the timely delivery of identified infrastructure such as the Spine Road, the Primary School and the Local Centre. It is anticipated that the majority of the infrastructure will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It is envisaged that residential development will be delivered in tranches in conjunction with the construction of the road.



Phasing Plan

