

ESQUIRE DEVELOPMENTS

LAND ADJACENT TO THE BULL INN, BETHERSDEN

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT, JULY 2024

OUTLINE APPLICATION


ESQUIRE
DEVELOPMENTS

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Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden : Design and Access Statement

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by On Architecture on behalf of Esquire Developments Limited.

This document has been designed to be printed double sided at A3 (landscape).



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Please note:
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Prepared by	PTW/KY
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Design and Access Statement - July 2024

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01

Proposed Development of Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden

Introduction

This Statement has been prepared by On Architecture, on behalf of Esquire Developments Limited, in support of an outline application for a residential development, comprising of up to 40 new homes, associated parking, and generous open spaces on land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden, west of Ashford in Kent. All matters to be reserved except for access.

The structure and content of this Design and Access Statement has been produced in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 and guidance set out in the government's online National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2014.

This document includes studies of the surrounding area, the site and the proposed development. The purpose of this document is to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and local environment, whilst demonstrating the commitment of the applicant and designers to achieving Good Design and meeting the requirements of planning policy, legislation and good practice guidance.

The statement describes the design ethos and architectural principles underpinning the use, amount, layout and scale and should be read in conjunction with our drawings and the survey information submitted with the outline application.



The historic centre of Bethersden showing The Street and St. Margaret's Church

[Google Maps]

ESQUIRE DEVELOPMENTS

Esquire Developments is a multi-award winning medium house builder based in nearby Longfield and has been established since 2011. It has rapidly grown into one of the leading privately owned property developers in Kent and the South East and established an excellent reputation for building bespoke, high quality homes and build approximately 120 dwellings per annum in Kent.

Combining innovative design, superior materials & skilled craftsmanship, they provide lifetime homes that are distinctive and complement their unique surroundings. Having grown up in Kent, they know their sites like no one else. Meticulous attention to detail produces beautifully designed homes that are built to the highest standards, specification and finish.



ON ARCHITECTURE

On Architecture are a multi-award winning design practice with extensive experience in architecture, planning and property. We operate from two studios located in Kent and London and work on projects across the UK; which include retail, commercial, residential, hospitality, education and range in construction value up to £100m. From the outset, the Practice has established a reputation for exemplar design and consistently high standards of service.

On Architecture understands the commercial realities that come with projects and our aim as Architects is to work within the project specific parameters and to maximise value through high quality and innovative design solutions for both the client and end user.



Images of projects by Esquire Developments

Introduction to site

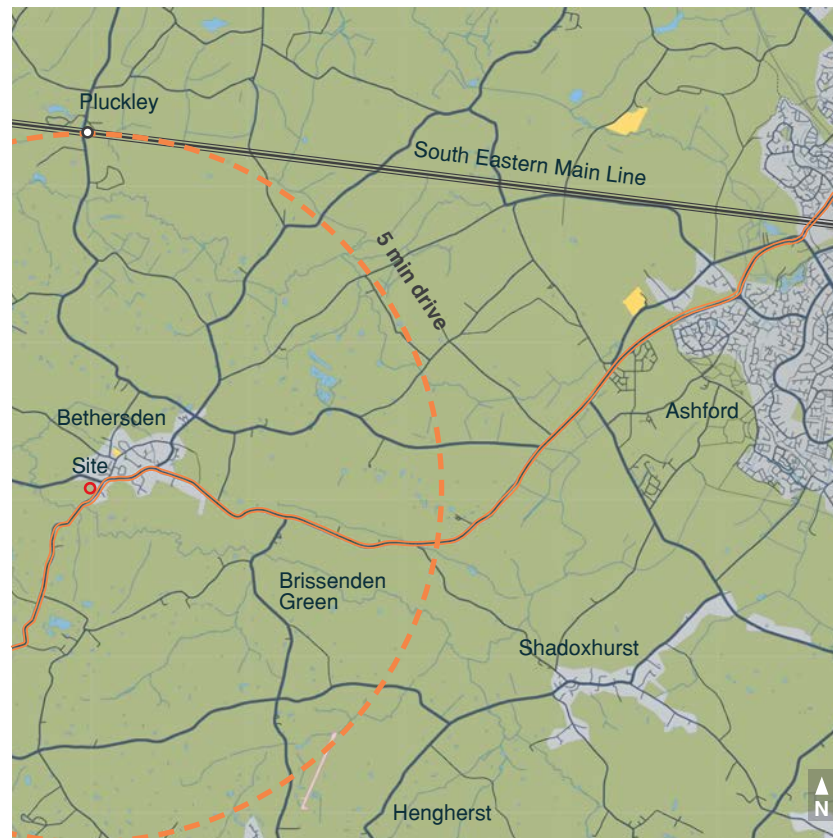
The site is located adjacent to the Bull Inn pub, between Bull Lane and Ashford Road in the southeastern part of the village of Bethersden, west of Ashford.

The area surrounding the site is characterised largely by agricultural land, with wooded boundaries defined by mature oaks, with pockets of residential development to the north forming the main part of the village.

The site is located close to the top of Bull Hill, with a gentle slope southwards along the A28. The geography of the area is typical of the Kent Weald, with many pockets of woodland, streams and largely intact mediaeval field pattern.

The village is well connected to the surrounding area, with bus and road links to Ashford and Pluckley, which offer further rail connections to the rest of Kent, Surrey, and London beyond.

The village has a variety of amenities including two pubs, village hall, post office / village shop, butchers and primary school, making it a sustainable community for potential growth.



Location of site west of Ashford

[Not to scale]



Red boundary line indicates application site

[Google maps]



Bull Inn, Bethersden

[Google maps]



Local shops on The Street

[Google Maps]

02

Proposed Development of Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden

Assessment

PHYSICAL NATURE AND CHARACTER OF AREA

The site is approximately 3.98 hectares in size, comprising open grassland and hedgerows - a remainder from its former agricultural use.

The boundaries of the site are defined by hedgerow trees, and other native planting, with a number of notable mature trees. The site is also bisected by a line of trees and planting, dividing the site. These all contribute to screen the site from the surrounding area.

The A28, Bull Lane and adjacent strip development of Oaktree Cottage, Bull Inn, and Rose Cottages characterised by farmstead buildings and country houses form the northern and eastern boundary to the site.

The southern and western boundaries back onto open agricultural land with boundaries marked by streams, ditches, hedgerow and landmark trees.

The land extends southeastwards from the built up area of Bethersden.



Village centre

[Esquire Developments]

There are a number of listed buildings located locally within the village and surrounding mediaeval field pattern. These dictate the architectural character of the area defined by a palette of traditional materials.

The village has seen considerable growth within the last few decades, with expansion to the south and north along main roads. The most successful of these developments respect the local character and expand upon the historic streetscape, field and building pattern of closes, courts and mews with clusters of farmstead buildings and cottages.

These are all within walking distance of the village centre amenities as well as bus stops providing links to further amenities in the surrounding area.



Site Location

[Google maps]



Grade II listed Bridge Farmhouse and Barn

[Google maps]



Grade II listed Vicarage on Whiston Avenue

[Google maps]

PHOTOGRAPHS OF SITE

- A.** View of western boundary of site from Bull Lane
- B.** View across northern part of site from Rose Cottage
- C.** View of northern site from existing agricultural access
- D.** Wooded northeastern site boundary from Bull Inn garden
- E.** View from Oak Tree Cottage on eastern site boundary
- F.** Ashford Road bridge over stream along southern boundary





2-storey house on Bull Lane with red brick walls and chimneys with timber weatherboarding and half hipped clay tile roof



2-storey farmstead house on Whiston Avenue with clay roof tile, red brick, and tile hanging. Characteristic half hipped roofs and chimneys.



Contemporary development at Lovelace Court displaying a mix of traditional materials and forms.

CONTEXTUAL STUDY

The area surrounding the site comprises an eclectic mix of houses, of mixed age and with a palate of traditional materials and architectural style. They are for the most part detached or semi detached with features typical of the local farm-house vernacular. (See photographs below):



The materials which characterise the local architectural identity include red brick, clay roof tiles, hanging tile and black timber boarding. In order to maintain and enhance this identity, the development on the site should reflect these structures by drawing from these materials and features.



Recent development at St. Margaret's Place with a mix of traditional materials and boundary landscaping.



Grade II listed Old Barn with black boarding and large windows, characteristic of the edge of Bethersden.



Farmstead house with black boarding and large barn style windows, characteristic of the field edges south of Bethersden.

EXPANSION OF BETHERSDEN

C.1850

The site boundaries are defined by the likely mediaeval field boundaries characteristic of the Kent Weald. Prior to the 20th century, the village was separated into the primary northern part and secondary southern portion, separated by a green. The site has long been situated at a gateway to the village, between two key routes, connecting the village to the south.



- Application Site
- St. Margaret's Church
- Built up area
- Woodland area
- Historic village extents - approximate conservation area boundary



Early dwellings along The Street [Google maps]

C.1960

Bethersden saw considerable population growth through the 20th century. The majority of development from this time took place in the southern part of the village, leaving the historic centre to the north largely untouched. These developments display some traditional features, however are generally of poorer quality and with less regard for the character of the local area in design and layout.



- Application Site
- St. Margaret's Church
- Built up area
- Woodland area
- Infill development and inward expansion



1960/70s development in the south of the village [Google maps]

C.2020

The village has significantly expanded outwards, away from the centre, along each of the main roads running into the settlement. The majority of this development has taken place in the south western part of Bethersden, where the historic character is less prevalent. The recent developments have sought to strengthen the unique identity of Bethersden and display materials, layouts and designs characteristic of the area.

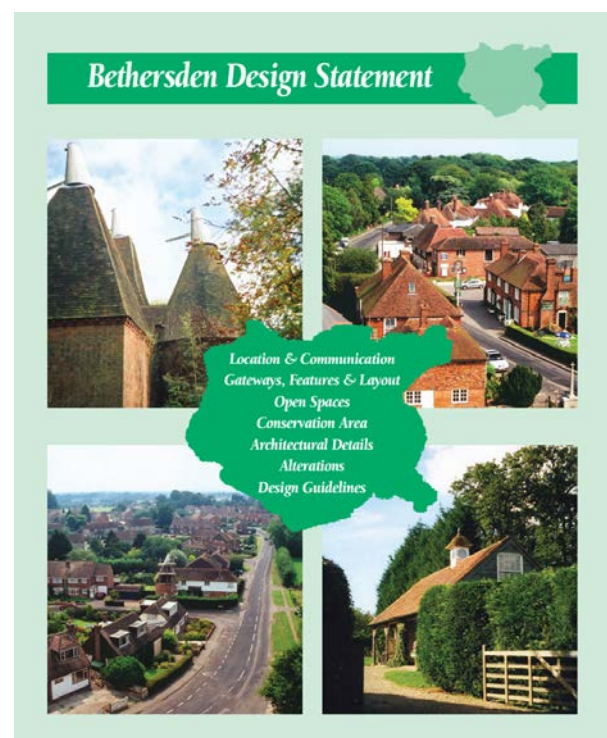


- Application Site
- Conservation area
- Proposed development
- Outward expansion along key roads, especially to southwest
- St. Margaret's Church
- Built up area
- Woodland area



Recent development showing a palate of traditional materials [Google maps]

BETHERSDEN DESIGN STATEMENT



The Bethersden Design Statement has been formulated as part of the parish plan and has been adopted by Ashford Borough Council to supplement the policies of the borough's local plan.

It describes the distinctive character of the village and outlines the main character areas and summarises the unique and defining features of the village.

Landscape Character

The village lies in the Low Weald at the eastern end of the Beult River Valley. The local area is characterised by many small streams between irregular fields with pockets of development often surrounded by wooded boundaries.

The whole village sits within a Special Landscape Area designation which provides some protections under the local plan.

Bethersden retains a strong visual connection to the surrounding rural landscape, with many landmark oaks and wooded boundaries remaining in good condition throughout the settlement.



Conservation area and landmark / gateway strategy of Bethersden

[Google maps]

Conservation area

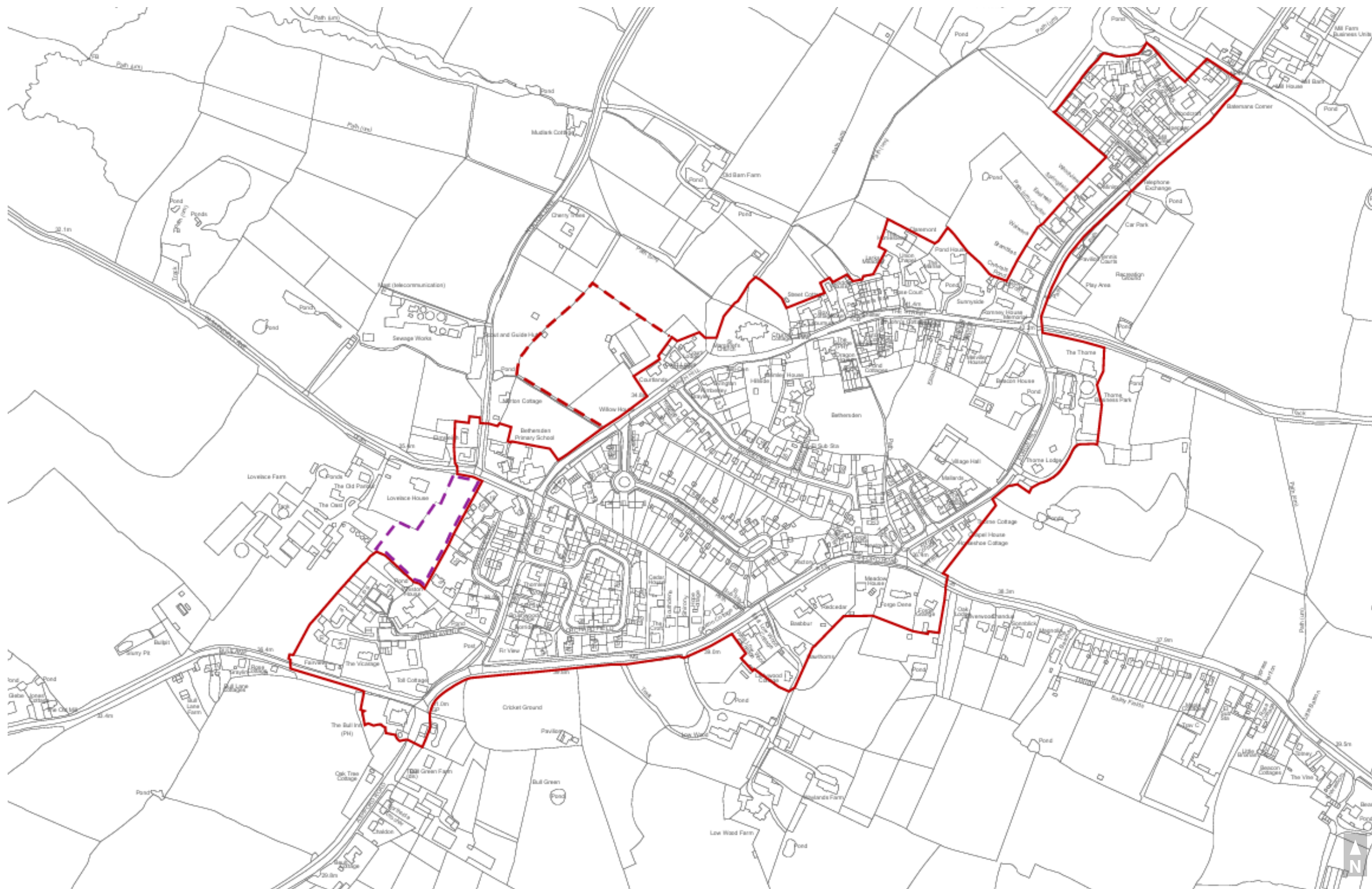
A conservation area covers the older northern part of the site which is identified as being a self contained area with intrinsic green spaces and distinctive character. The buildings here are generally older with many being listed and constructed from local materials. The size, spacing, and set back positions of these buildings are varied, generating an informal and open grain with little backland development. This is in contrast to the southern part of the village outside of the conservation area. There are some newer developments within this area, which draw heavily from the historic character of the village.

Southeastern Gateway

The site sits adjacent to the southeastern gateway to the village, marked by the peak of Bull Hill and the Bull Inn. The wide grass verges and boundary woodland are noted as being key features of this area which must be maintained.

The cricket ground is identified as a key open space to be retained, however it is noted that some agricultural land in the area is suitable for limited areas of sensitive development.

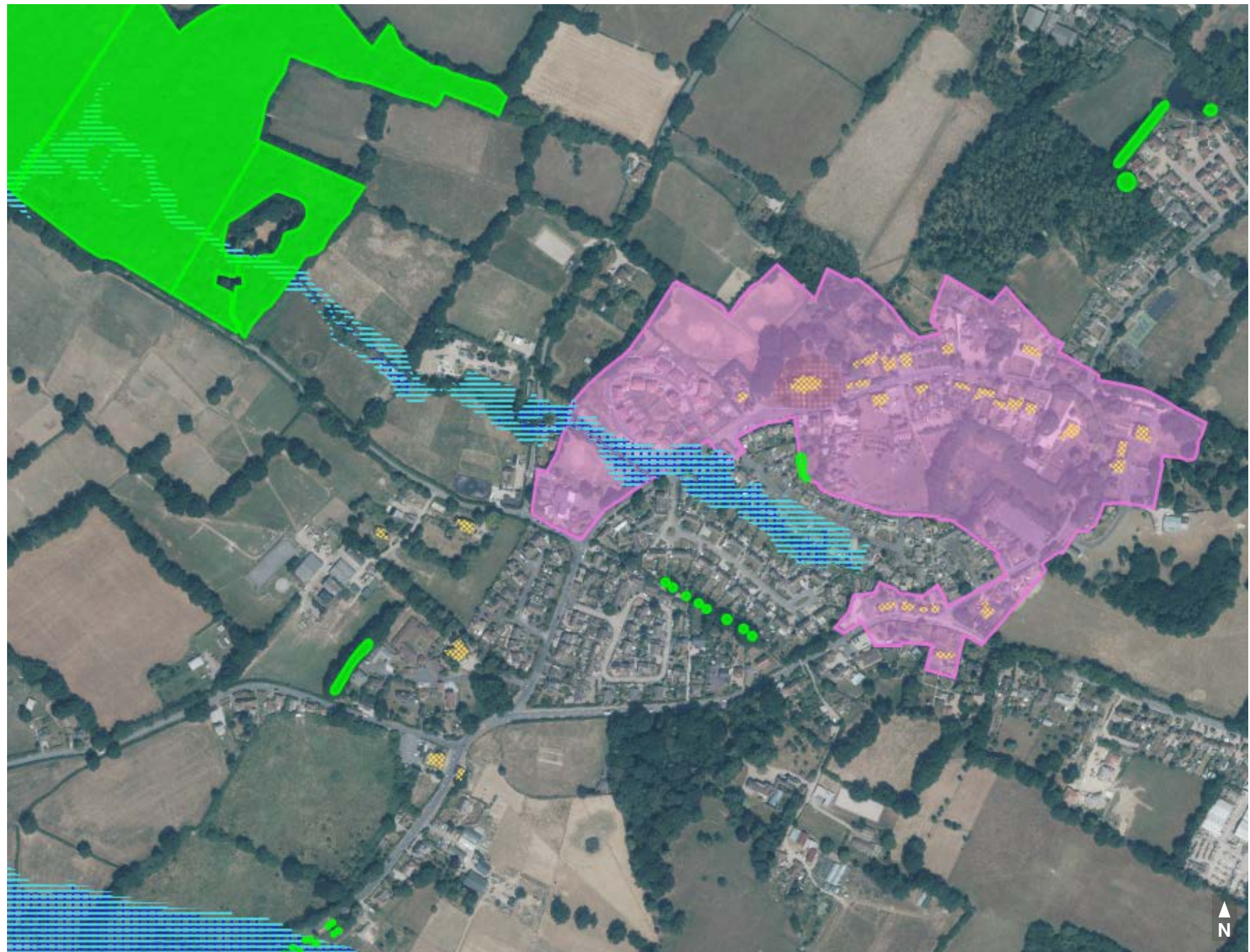
BETHERSDEN SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY



BETHERSDEN CONSTRAINTS MAP

Key:

-  - TPO Area
-  - Conservation Area
-  - Flood Zone 2
-  - Listed Building



LOCAL AMENITIES

The site is located adjacent to a bus route which connects it to Ashford and the wider area. The village centre accommodates a cricket club, school, shops and other local amenities.

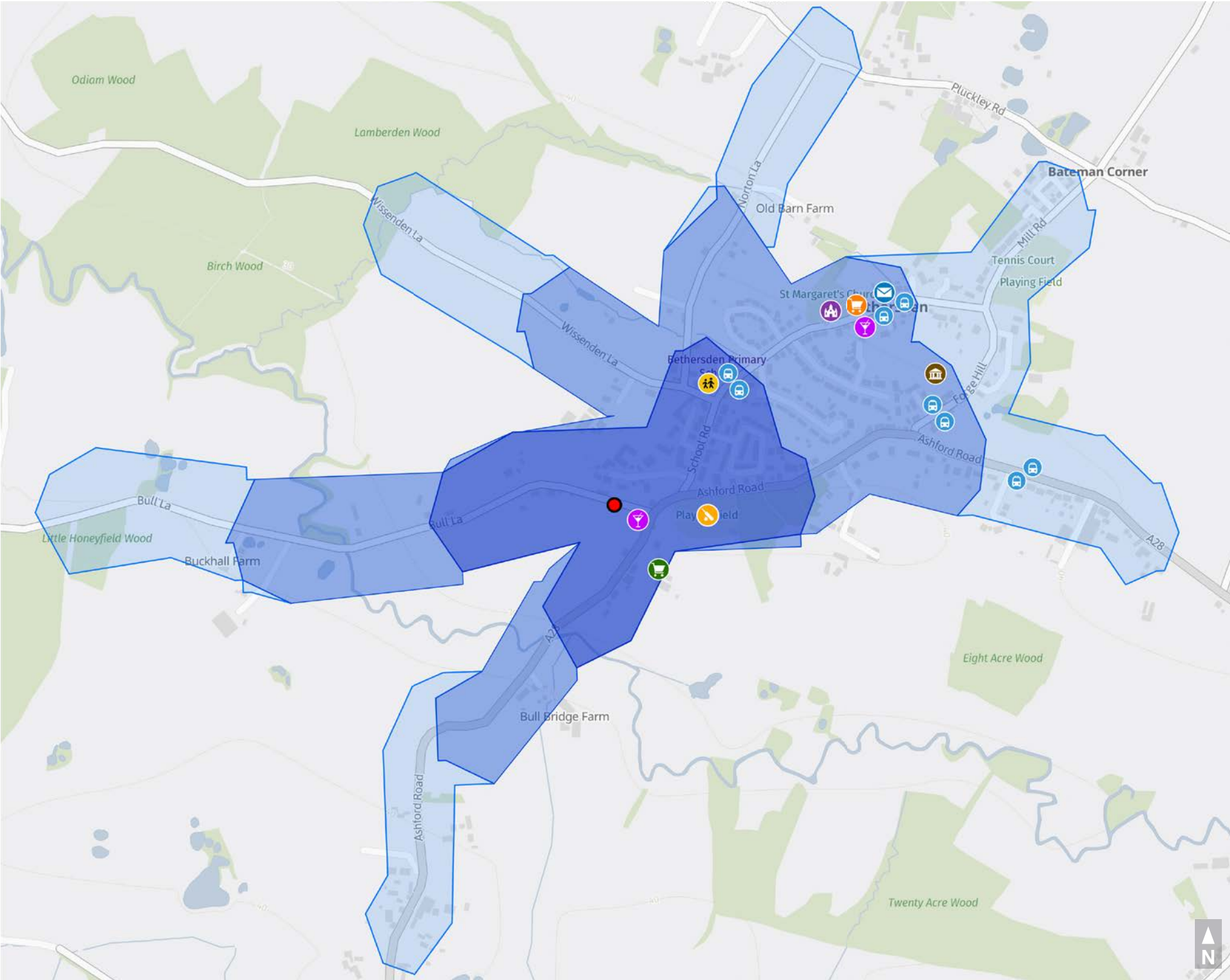
There are similar amenities located in most nearby villages and settlements, with many pubs and schools also in the area.

Ashford is approximately a 15 minute drive North East of the site. The town has abundant amenities including hospitals, schools, universities, supermarkets and other commercial and business hubs.

There is also an international station with high-speed links to London and surrounding towns and the wider area.

Key:

- 15 minute walk time (1200m) from the site access
- 10 minute walk time (800m) from the site access
- 5 minute walk time (400m) from the site access
- Site Access
- Bethersden Primary School
- Bethersden Cricket Club
- Local Shops
- Bull Green Farm Shop
- Bethersden Village Hall
- St Margaret's Church
- Pubs
- Bethersden Post Office
- Bus Stops



Amenities within walking distances of the site

[DHA Transport]

03

Proposed Development of Land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden

Evaluation

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS



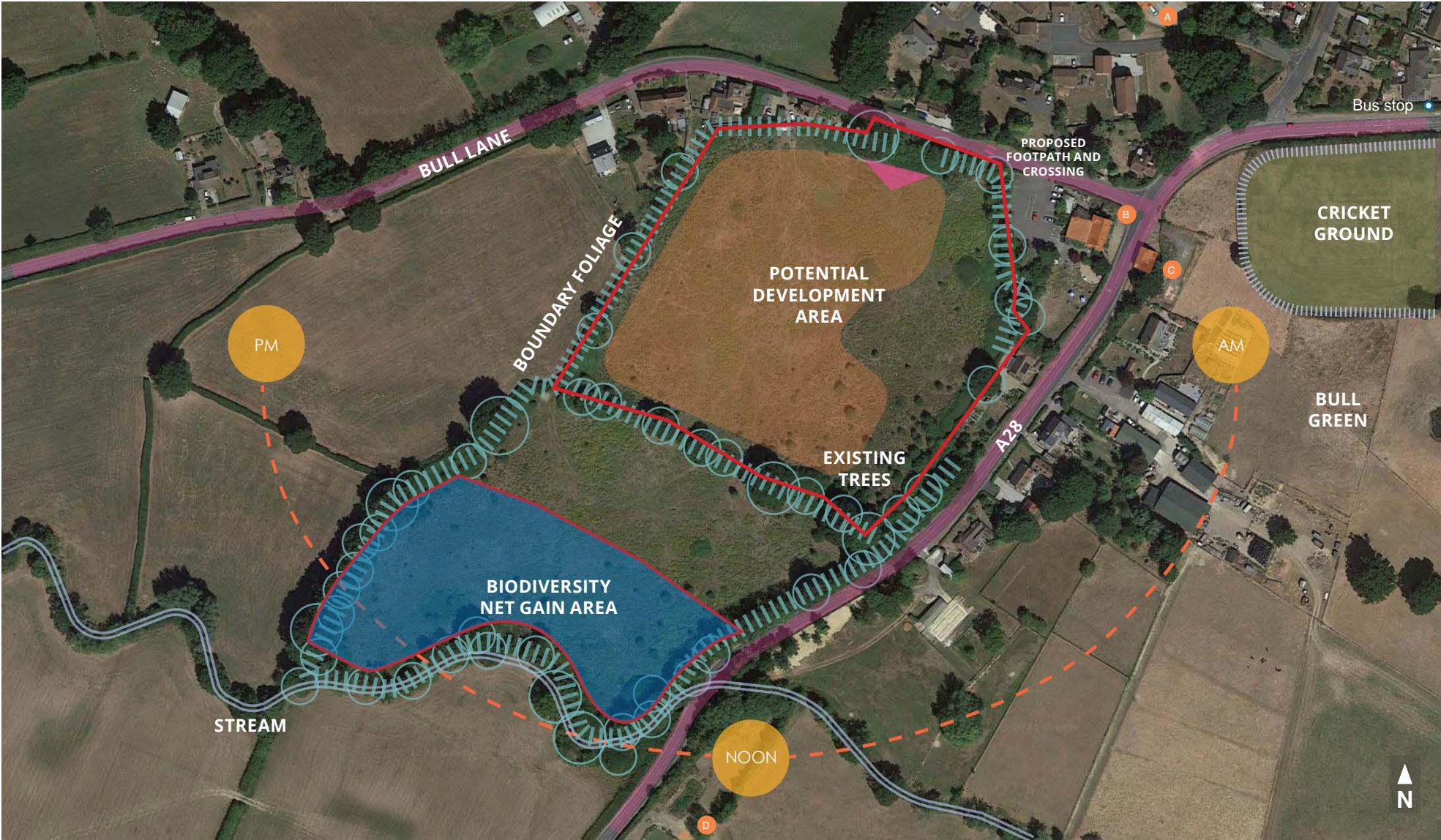
Grade II listed Old Vicarage



Grade II listed Bull Inn and Stables



Grade II listed Bull Bridge Farm



Opportunities and Constraints Plan

Opportunities

- » Opportunity to sensitively provide much needed housing to the area.
- » Produce a well designed development sympathetic to and enhancing the local character and architectural identity of the area.
- » Increase the biodiversity on site through careful landscaping and planting.
- » Create entrance retaining rural dwelling character along Bull Lane.
- » Provide large green space to residents and the local community.
- » Potential footpath and crossing to Bull Lane.

Key

Site boundary

Potential Development Area

Listed buildings

Stream

Boundary planting / trees

Biodiversity Net Gain Area

Constraints

- » Retain all boundary planting to provide screening to heritage assets.
- » Proximity of parts of the site to the surrounding dwellings may incur overlooking if not designed to mitigate against this.
- » Proximity to listed buildings to be respected and settings of areas identified in local design guide to be maintained/enhanced.
- » Scale of proposals to be kept within the local built landscape to ensure sympathetic and seamless link to the existing village.

Primary vehicle route

Cricket Ground

Proposed Site Access

DESIGN GUIDANCE

Bethersden’s design guide and parish plan highlights the area around the Bull Inn as the main southwestern gateway to the village.

The area is defined by the Bull Inn public house and the adjacent cricket ground on Bull Green - an area of open space highlighted as essential for preservation.

The junction between the A28 Ashford Road and School Road is identified in the design guidance as an area with open grass verges, hedgerow and intact tree lines with some oaks. The southern edge of the village is characterised by informal cottages and farmstead buildings overlooking open grassland.



Southwestern gateway looking towards site [Google maps]

The site

The site lies outside of the Bethersden Conservation area and is not identified as a key open space or vista in the local plan. Despite this, however, any development on the site will look to enhance the architectural character of the village and retain the open and farmstead village edge as described in the design guidance.

The site benefits from significant screening from almost all vantage points, however, it will be key to maintain this rural edge and retain and reinforce the wooded boundary.

As an addition to Bull Green, the proposals would seek to offer additional green open space for use by the public and residents alike, retaining the field edge character and enhancing the provision outdoor amenity as well as biodiversity in the area.

Architectural Character of village

The characteristics of high quality and sensitive developments in Bethersden stem from an understanding of the key landscape markers, materials, built vernacular forms, and layouts typical of the historic village.

The village is surrounded by fields with wooded boundaries, many with intact mature trees and oaks. These form the backdrop to many parcels of buildings and extend right into the heart of the village.

These should be preserved and reinforced to enhance biodiversity and provide screening, retaining the irregular field pattern characteristic of the Weald. Vistas across open farmland should be considered, with buildings sitting well into the landscape in terms of form, materials and colour palate.



Backdrop of wooded boundaries are retained as a key feature of developments [Google maps]

Materials characteristic of the local area are shown as:



Bethersden 'marble'



Black timber weatherboarding



Barn-style doors and shutters



Clay tile hanging with detailing



Red brick



Clay roof tiles



White timber weatherboarding



Kentish ragstone

Architectural Character outside village

The design guidance for Bethersden also covers the areas outside of the immediate village, with emphasis on farmstead developments, small parcels of cottages and converted barns.

The material palate for these areas is skewed towards more black timber clad structures with larger windows, barn style shutters and half-hipped clay roofs and cat-slides.

The development pattern is also identified as being less regular, with linear developments along key roads and clusters of buildings situated around courts and yards. Although the proposed development on site seeks to form an extension of the village, the edges will seek to transition to this out-of-village character.



Farmstead houses outside of the village with features characteristic of the area [Google maps]



Barn-style houses outside of the village with features characteristic of the area [Google maps]

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Lloyd Bore conducted a full landscape and visual study of the site at Bethersden and the surrounding area. The investigation comprised of a combination of a desktop survey and site investigation. Initially a zone of theoretical visibility was identified, following which a series of photographs were taken from vantage points within this area in order to assess the impact of any potential development of the site on the surrounding landscape and vista. The desktop survey started by identifying the nature of the surrounding area and it's ecological characteristics.

Ashford Local Character Assessment 2009

The landform is undulating, with the settlement of Bethersden situated on a rise. The grey, shelly Paludina Limestone, which forms the resistant strata of the Bethersden rise, has been used historically for church building, notably the tower of 15th century Bethersden church itself. Bethersden was formerly well known for marble production and was a centre of the Kentish wool trade. Views are restricted by the well treed and undulating landscape, although glimpses of the wooded Greensand Ridge to the north are available from some places.

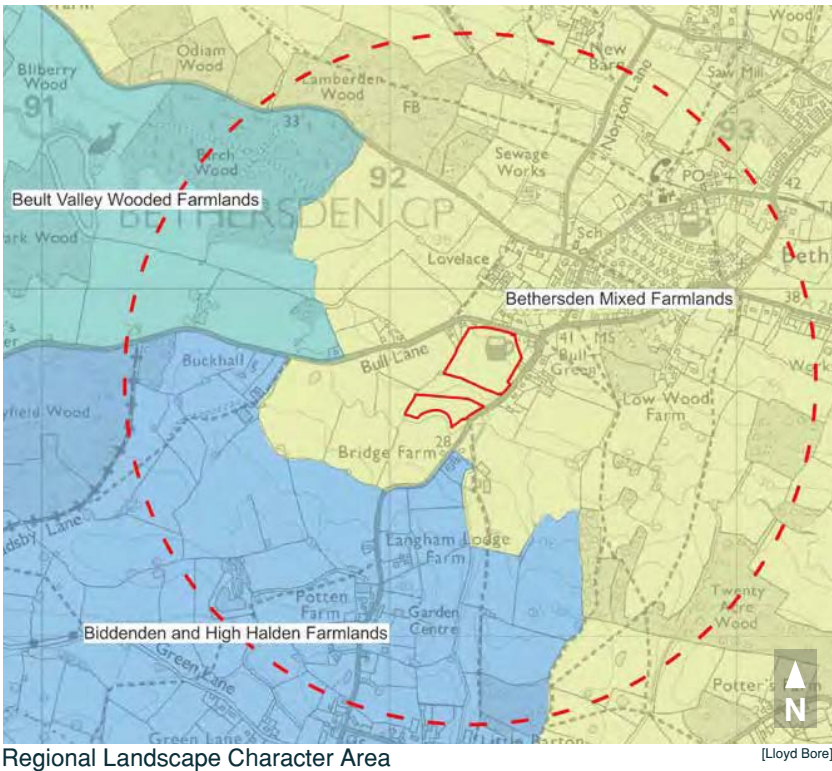
The typical Wealden pattern of small pastoral fields, enclosed by a dense network of native hedgerows and punctuated by small field

ponds, provides a distinct sense of place. Mature oak trees are located throughout the landscape, both as hedgerow trees and within woodland blocks. Native hedgerows are species rich, containing oak, beech, hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and dogrose. Frequent broadleaf woodland blocks are extensive, with woodland names reflecting the size of two plots as 'Twenty Acre Wood'. The abundance of trees, within woodland and hedgerows, provide both a strong sense of enclosure and strong seasonal variation.

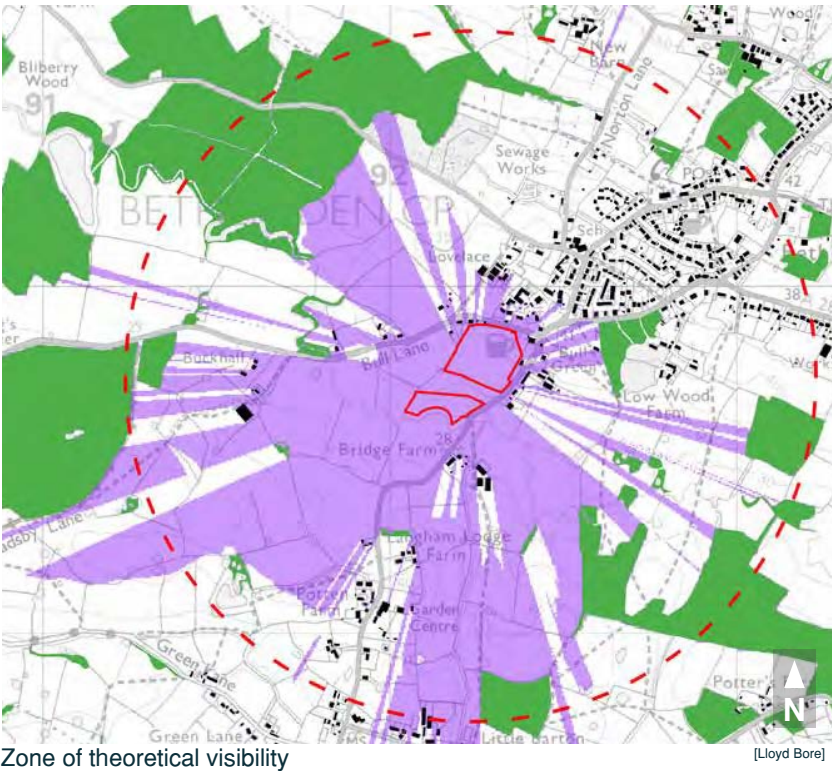
The vernacular village centre of Bethersden is focused around the large church. Chequered brickwork and white weatherboarding are frequent building materials used on the more traditional buildings. Much 20th century development has extended out from the traditional core of Bethersden, and recent residential development spills out along the A28. Within Bethersden, traditional buildings are scattered amongst the modern infill development of red brick, hanging tiles and exposed aggregate concrete finish. Recreational facilities including playing fields, tennis courts and a cricket pitch along the busy A28 provide a slightly sub – urban character to the village. Converted oast houses and black weather boarded barns are strewn about the landscape. Scattered farmsteads and clustered traditional development at Wissenden support the wider rural character of the Wealden landscape.

A network of narrow hedgerow enclosed lanes run through the landscape, and are most concentrated around Bethersden to the north of the A28, which forms a busy route between Ashford and Tenterden.' The key characteristics of this LCA are identified as comprising:

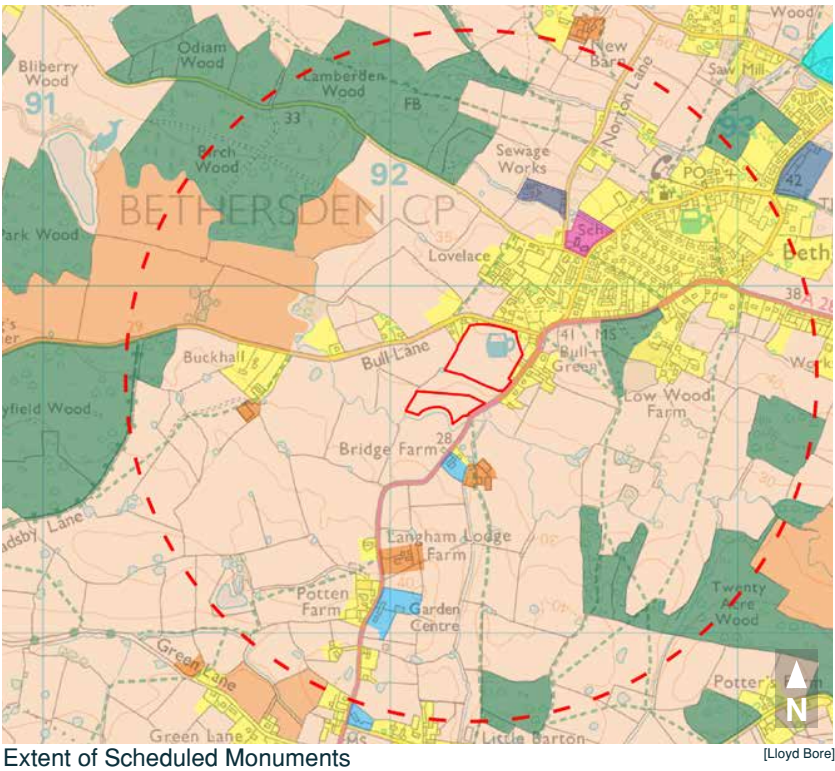
- » Undulating landscape
- » Wealden pattern of small pastoral fields
- » Dense native hedgerows with oak hedgerow trees
- » Frequent extensive broadleaf woodland blocks
- » Frequent field ponds punctuate the landscape
- » Strong sense of enclosure provided by well treed and undulating landscape
- » Scattered farms
- » Much 20th century housing development around Bethersden



Regional Landscape Character Area [Lloyd Bore]



Zone of theoretical visibility [Lloyd Bore]



Extent of Scheduled Monuments [Lloyd Bore]