

Design and Access Statement



Re Land at Former Brickfields, Darland Farm, North of Pear Tree Lane, Hempstead.

Prepared by Hume Planning Consultancy Ltd on behalf of FD Attwood and Partners

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement supports an outline planning application which seeks to establish the principle of a residential development of up to 44 dwellings with associated works including garages, parking, public open space, access and pedestrian links on land formerly utilised as a brickworks, North of Pear Tree Lane, Hempstead.
- 1.2 All matters are reserved for future consideration with the exception of access, which is fixed. The supporting plan has been prepared for illustrative purposes to demonstrate to the Local Planning Authority a design approach that allows the proposed quantum of development to be accommodated whilst providing a quality level of development.
- 1.3 This Design and Access Statement seeks to explain the influences behind the submission and how it has responded to the constraints and opportunities of the site, taking into account the inputs of the consultancy team and the feedback from Medway Council from the pre-application engagement.
- 1.4 The accompanying Planning Statement explains the overall planning context and the reasons why, given;

- the current planning policy context and weight that should now be attributed to development plan policies;
- the significant 5-year housing land supply shortfall;
- the scale of the housing target for the local plan established by the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) which has been agreed by Medway Council;
- the period of time that it will take before adoption of the emerging plan and the identification of allocations to meet the Council's housing need.

that the principle of residential development in what represents a sustainable location, can be justified.

- 1.5 This document does not repeat the planning justification of the need for residential development or the sustainability of this location and focuses instead on the explanation

of the design approach which lies behind the illustrative layout supporting the submission.

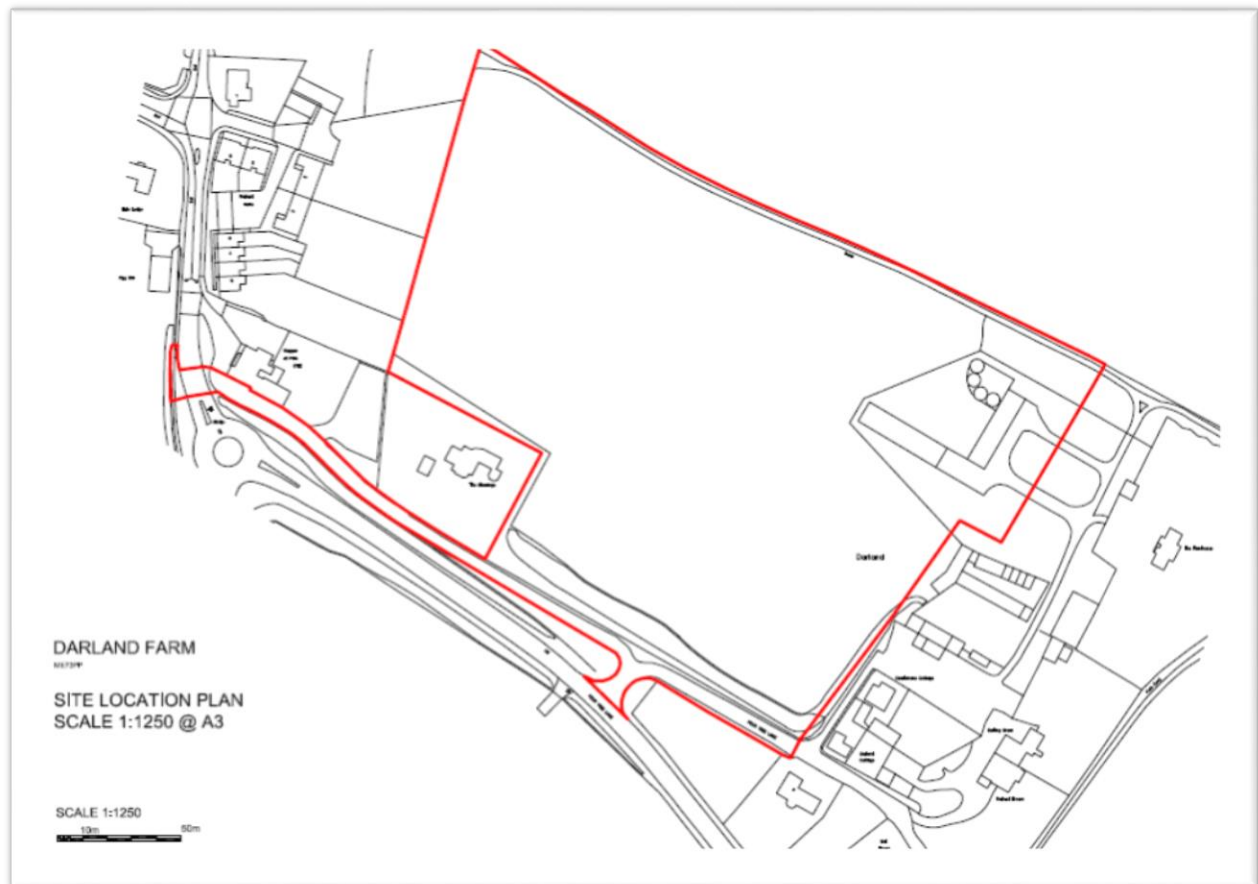
1.6 It will be shown that given the requirement for housing releases to meet the acute need in Medway at the current time (which are justified by the Planning Statement), the key design “drivers” for this proposal have included;

- The desire to provide quality executive housing within a landscaped setting given the unique locational advantages of the site to serve this specialist form of accommodation;
- Landscape considerations and the obligation to mitigate the impact of new housing development through the design process;
- Access considerations, although in this case it will be shown that at an early stage, it was established that there was a single fixed point of access that would significantly reduce environmental impact and technically worked better than the alternatives;
- The surface water drainage strategy which was informed by soakage testing and how the development proposals should avoid the lowest contours of the site for the extreme pluvial event;
- Ecology and Biodiversity enhancement and how the proposals would relate to surrounding green infrastructure;
- The potential for past archaeology at the site to influence the layout was also considered;
- The need to safeguard and strengthen existing trees and to consider the effects of shading;
- The effect of the on-site and surrounding topography and the influence of this factor on the design process taking in to account the visibility of the site from more elevated vantage points (which the supporting Landscape Assessment showed was principally restricted to specific viewpoints from the higher levels of the Darland Bank);
- The need to safeguard the residential living conditions of adjoining occupiers taking into account the proximity and orientation of these properties relative to the site;
- In the wider context taking account of the need for pedestrian and cycleway linkages to bus stops and the wider network.

- 1.7 This Statement forms part of the outline planning application and explains the process of the evaluation of the constraints and the key influences on the design decisions that have shaped the submission including engagement with the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.8 It is noteworthy that the illustrative masterplan has not been influenced by community consultation feedback. This is a result of a combination of factors including the distances of separation from the surrounding residential occupiers and perimeter screening of the site. This meant the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers would be taken in to account by the proposals. Also because of the outline nature of the proposal and the fact that only access was to be fixed (where there was an existing access opening in the tree lined boundary which corresponded technically with the optimal connection point in highway terms). Finally, that community feedback on illustrative design matters was likely to be distorted by concerns about the principle of greenfield releases prior to the finalisation of the local plan process.

2 Site Context and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site lies to the north of Pear Tree Lane and between the settlements of Hale and Hempstead to the south of the urban area of Gillingham and to the west of Rainham.



Site Location Plan

- 2.2 The relationship of the site to surrounding development is shown on the location plan above. The topography of the site shows the land falling, approximately 2 metres from the southern boundary (fronting Pear Tree Lane) towards the northern boundary of the site (adjoining the Darland Bank). Former farm buildings and structures lie close to the north eastern corner of the site and comprise corrugated metal silos and some dilapidated buildings. Beyond these structures to the east is a farm house set within a partially walled garden. This wall screens views from the house to the site.

- 2.3 The application site comprises 4.2 hectares of agricultural land. The land is rectangular and is enclosed by existing trees and the surrounding topography. There are existing buildings beyond the eastern and western boundaries of the site. Other residential properties border the site to the south where “The Gleanings” is located to the north side of Pear Tree Lane but is separated from the site by a tree line that continues along to the southern and western boundaries of the site. This tree belt further separates “The Wagon at Hale” public house (to the south-west corner) and a relatively new residential development to the west in Capstone Road.



Aerial Photo of the site

- 2.4 To the north lies Darland Banks, a 45ha local nature reserve comprising chalk grassland, scrub and woodland on a south facing slope. An informal footpath, used by local people and dog walkers, runs along this tree line linking with other informal footpaths. The nearest public footpath lies some distance from the application site.

- 2.5 The site is not located within any national landscape designations although it does lie within an Area of Local Landscape Importance (ALLI). The local nature reserve of Darland Banks is designated as open access land and Pear Tree Lane is designated as a Rural Lane as defined by saved policies BNE47.
- 2.6 The site is not located within a conservation area and there are no listed buildings or designated heritage assets in the immediate locality of the site. These factors were not considerations during the design process.
- 2.7 Some of the trees to the boundaries of the site are the subject of historic Tree Preservation Orders. No trees are to be lost by this proposal and this statement will demonstrate how advice by the design teams tree consultant has considerably shaped the proposals.
- 2.8 The only existing access to the site (and that proposed as part of the development) is via Pear Tree Lane.
- 2.9 The site's topography, contours and existing trees and landscaping reduce views of the site from wider public vantage points as explained in greater detail in the Landscape Assessment prepared by Lloyd Bore Landscape Architects.
- 2.10 Having described the site, the factors influencing the design approach are now evaluated.

3 Explanation of Design Process

Landscape Considerations

- 3.1 The evaluation of the landscape was recognised at an early stage as a central driver of the design process. For this reason, the consideration of the role of the application site in the wider landscape was the starting point for the assessment of the constraints and opportunities influencing the design team. After focusing on this issue, other factors including technical considerations, are examined.
- 3.2 The assessment required by the NPPF is the balancing of harm with benefits and in this case, the weight to be attributed to landscape change is a central consideration. Paragraph 17 acknowledges that all landscapes have some intrinsic value and Paragraph 109 of the Framework states that more weight is attached to change to “valued landscapes” and “great weight” (paragraph 115) is attached to nationally designated landscapes. It is relevant the application site is not located within a nationally designated so that no “great weight” of the conservation of the landscape and scenic beauty applies.
- 3.3 The supporting landscape evidence of Lloyd Bore acknowledges that the impact of development will be localised and will not compromise the function of the Area of Local Landscape Importance (ALLI). ALLI’s are non-statutory areas of development defined within the Medway Local Plan and designated because of their perceived landscape value and have historically functioned as “green corridors” which contribute to restricting urban sprawl and maintaining the settlement identity of the built up area.
- 3.4 From this context, it was evident that the impact of development upon the separating function of the ALLI will depend on the location of each individual site within it and the scale of the land take involved. The area of the ALLI to be lost is small in this wider context (the application site has a maximum width of 260 metres) and because the application site is visually contained by the topography and perimeter tree screening, the proposals could be designed so that the perceived spatial function of the gap is maintained.

- 3.5 Due to the distance of separation of the application site from the M2 motorway and the rising topography, it was concluded that the proposal would have no direct or indirect impact on the AONB. For similar reasons, whilst geographically closer, existing tree/woodland screening combined with natural topography, it is contended the proposal will not harm the setting of the Capstone Farm Country Park.
- 3.6 There are no heritage designations or listed buildings within the vicinity of the application site. The site is in productive agricultural use and it was established there were no overlapping ecological constraints that should restrict too heavily the design choices for the illustrative layout other than the recommended safeguarding and strengthening of the perimeter trees and hedgerow and the creation of a network of open space within the site.
- 3.7 Key findings from the landscape assessment was that the “visual envelope” is limited because of the topography and the limited number of public footpaths in the locality. The photo below shows a peripheral view of the site from a distant public footpath where the application site was visible because of the elevated ground level at this point.
- 3.8 From most roads and footpaths within the wider ALLI, views toward the site are restricted by topography. The landscape assessment findings influencing the proposals concluded that the visual change arising from potential residential development would therefore be localised.



View of the site from a distant and elevated vantage point from the nearest public footpath at Darland Bank



View of the application site from the west with the application site screened by the existing built form including the Wagon at Hale PH

- 3.9 Notwithstanding the fact that the site was visually well contained, It was recognised at an early stage that development could also bring forward tree planting and landscaping that would assimilate the development within the landscape and from the limited number of elevated vantage points where the site is visible, ensure that roof lines were broken up in a similar way to the clusters of farmsteads that already exist in the area. Landscape practitioners adopt a 15-year time horizon for the establishment of trees and landscaping when assessing the significance of landscape impact. During this period, new planting will reach heights of 8 metres or more. The proposals need to be considered in this context.
- 3.10 Past intensive agricultural cultivation has resulted in a denuded landscape compared with the woodland areas. Extensive tree planting is proposed to create a landscape framework within which the development will be viewed.
- 3.11 Key design assumptions driving the design process that have been informed from the landscape assessment work can be summarised as;
- The site has a strong perimeter tree belt that helps screen the site from public vantage points;
 - The surrounding topography results in the application site having a limited visual envelope;

- The network of public footpaths is quite disjointed in the vicinity of the application site and the nearest formal footpaths are separated by some distance although an informal footpath network exists in the vicinity of the site;
- Views to the site are generally localised but there are some longer distance views possible from elevated positions on the Darland Bank.

3.12 The Framework attaches great weight to the design of the built environment which is recognised as “key aspect of sustainable development.” These landscape findings, combined with the geographical location of the site relative to the denser built up areas of Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham and the desire to provide a bespoke quality housing development have influenced the design process in the following way;

- The geographical location of this site relative to the urban area, combined with the need for greater housing choice and specifically executive housing which serve to underpin wider economic objectives for Medway, enabling lower density housing and greater opportunities to enhance the landscaped setting to be explored;
- Provision of a landscaping strategy which seeks to maintain the landscape character of the area through the retention of existing vegetation and planting of buffers around the site and along Pear Tree Lane;
- The incorporation of woodland planting within the site as well as allowing development to be incorporated within a landscaped setting, would also provide significant biodiversity benefits and serve to retain the sense of separation between settlements which represents an objective of the ALLI designation and (Policy BNE34);
- Whilst views of the site are localised, the supporting landscape evidence identified that elevated and distant views from the Darland Bank should be taken into account in the design process particularly the desirability of preventing a suburban estate being created with continuous roof scape and uniform design. This was reaffirmed at the pre-application meeting with the case officer and Medway's Design Officer.

3.13 These landscape findings at an early stage strongly influenced the choice and mix of housing which have complemented the illustrative design strategy. The focus of the design has been on the provision of quality 4 and 5 bed executive housing where each plot is set within its own secluded landscape at a relatively low density of 10 dwellings

per hectare. The approach to the discharge of policy obligations relating to affordable housing is addressed separately (and offsite) as explained in the Planning Statement. For these reasons the design objective has been to provide quality executive housing at a low density.

- 3.14 The consideration of landscape issues allied to the choice about housing mix together with the drainage, trees and ecology have been the strongest influences on the illustrative layout for the reasons explained in the next stage of this Statement.

4 Other (non-landscaping and housing mix) factors Influencing the Design Process

4.1 The following issues were considered by the consultancy team during the design process and discussed at the pre-application meeting with Medway officers;

- Archaeology
- Trees
- Drainage
- Highways and Access
- Biodiversity
- Utility Capacity and Infrastructure

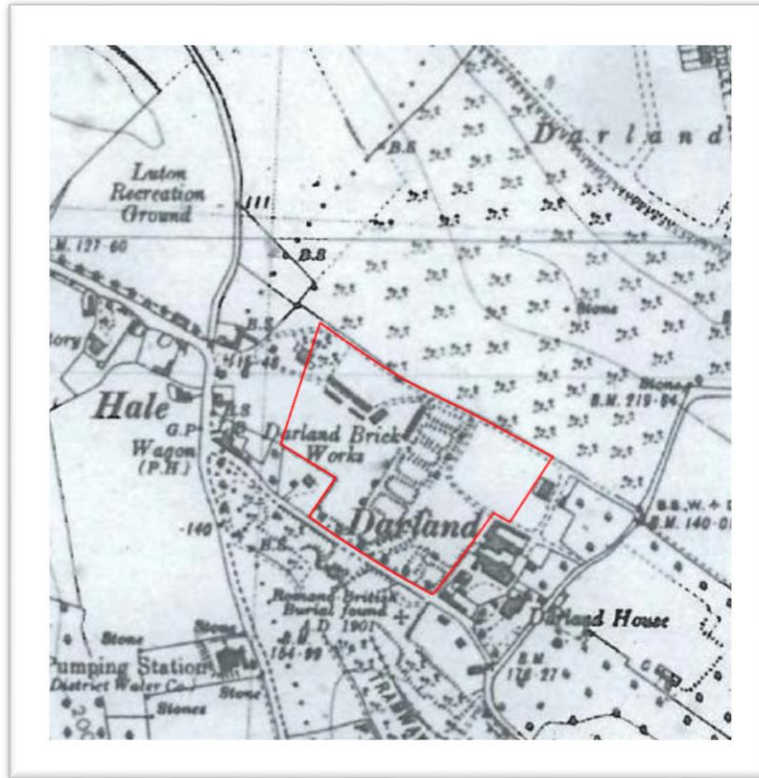
These are addressed below.

Archaeology

4.2 The Archaeological report identified that there are no designated Heritage Assets, Scheduled Monuments nor Registered Parks or Gardens within the locality of the site that could justify influencing the design principles for the site.

4.3 The study concluded that there was low archaeological potential for all periods apart from the Roman Period (AD 43 – 410) where a moderate potential is identified and the Post Medieval Period where a high potential existed and that the archaeological value of the site could be safeguarded by post commencement conditions.

4.4 Historically, the site comprised a woodland plantation as is evidenced by the supporting OS mapping from the 1860's. By 1898, the site was utilised as a brick works and the later mapping identifies 5 quarry pits and 4 buildings after an extension to the brickworks in 1910. The infilling of the quarried area and the import of soil and regrading of the land did not occur to allow agricultural practices again until the 1960's.

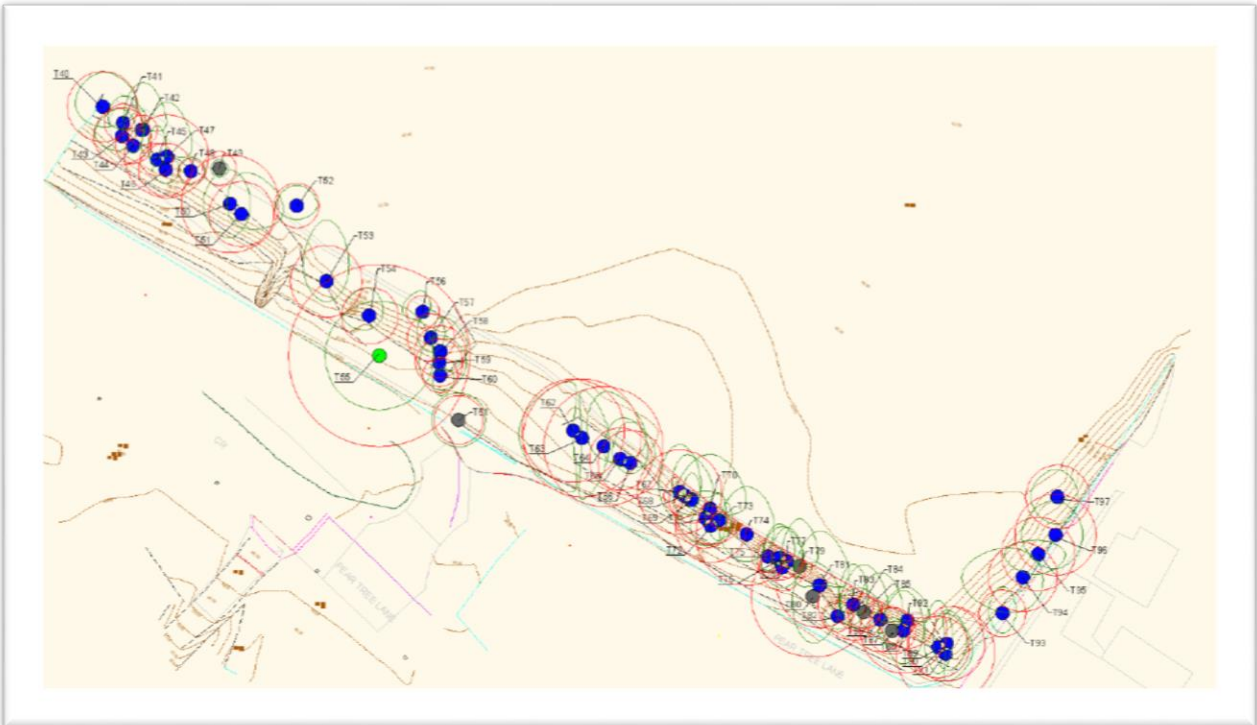


Historic OS from 1950

- 4.5 Paragraph 128 of the Framework requires sufficient accompanying material to the application to review the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset. It is contended that the accompanying report satisfies this requirement and given these findings archaeology has not been an influence on this design process.

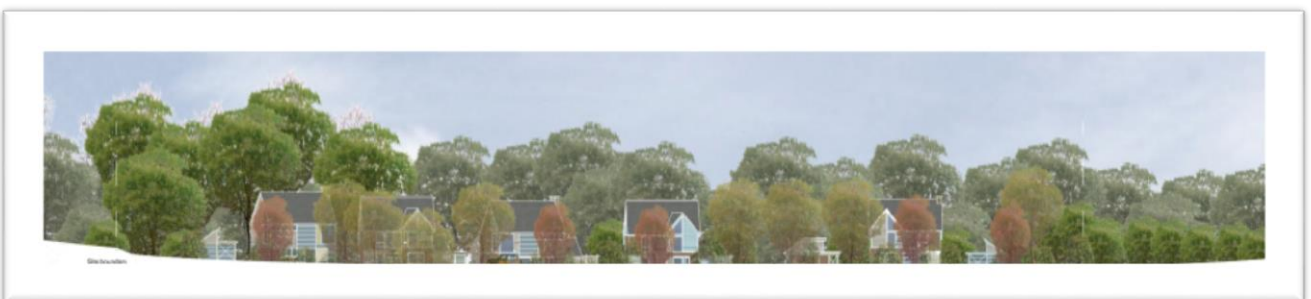
[Influence of Trees on the Design Process](#)

- 4.6 A pre-development tree survey and report was provided by Invicta Arboriculture - a tree and woodland consultancy. This identified that generally, the existing trees displayed good vitality with no significant visible defects within a belt of between 2-3 m of the western edge (comprising of hawthorn, field maple and elder). To the southern boundary, the trees were larger mature specimens comprising mainly ash and sycamore within a belt of around 10m in width. There are some 95 trees and two groups located along the southern boundary which lie to the north of Pear Tree Lane and visually serve as a strong screen of the site from this direction. It was obvious that these perimeter trees should be retained and strengthened and since they already provided a good landscape framework for the site, should be a foundation of the design process.



Extract of the Tree Survey showing extent of Root Protection Areas (RPA's)

- 4.7 Trees to the perimeter of the site, especially the southern boundary, have been subject to historic and regular fly tipping and it was recognised the development proposals could facilitate improved maintenance for this area. Given that prospective residential occupiers will walk to the bus stop and cycle along this route, the design process therefore offered the potential to secure improvements to this designated Rural Lane.



Section showing proposed tree planting within the site

4.8 The Tree Report identifies that there are also a number of significant off-site trees which lie in close proximity to the site within the rear gardens of “The Gleanings”. The offsite trees that adjoin the south western boundary of the site have also been taken into account in the preparation of the illustrative layout.

4.9 In summary, the pre-development Tree Survey report identified the points below all of which have assisted the architects in designing the layout. In this regard, the report highlighted:

- That a 12 metre break in the wooded boundary (southern boundary) to Pear Tree Lane is regularly used by tractors and other large agricultural vehicles and that this would be an optimal point for providing the proposed site access albeit at a significantly reduced width of 5.5 metres.
- In places, boundary trees are elevated by 2.5m from the main application site and it was identified that the development layout will need to have regard to the level changes. It was recommended that trees T81, T82 and T83 were reduced in height in order to reduce the effects of wind loading on their root systems. This maintenance work will be of benefit to the long term health of the trees which average around 23m in height along this section of the bank.
- The Root Protection Areas (RPA's) of the perimeter trees should be respected and housing sited beyond the identified zones. It was evident that root severance along the full length of the northern edge of the wooded boundary has occurred as a direct result of ploughing. However, for the worst case scenario, the full extent of the RPA has been assumed. The Tree Report's recommendation that housing is not constructed closer than half the current height of trees, i.e 12m, is reflected in the illustrative layout. In the final masterplan, only 7 dwellings have been sited with rear elevations that face the trees within the tree belt adjoining Pear Tree Lane.
- That owing to the potential for shading, housing should not, as a general rule, be constructed within a distance closer than half the current height of the adjacent trees. The architects have incorporated this design constraint when preparing the final masterplan layout options.
- The arboricultural report addresses the re-profiling of the ground level to provide an appropriate access gradient to the site. The final report concludes at paragraph 4.1 “The raising of the soil level in this area (of the access) is not considered to be

detrimental to the health or stability of the trees given the minimal encroachment that will occur.”

- 4.10 With a view of minimising tree loss and taking into account possible pressures to remove trees by future occupants of the development, the scheme has been designed to take into account the team’s tree consultant’s recommendations.
- 4.11 In establishing a strong sense of place through the creation of an attractive environment which responds to the character of Darland Banks and the recommendations of the accompanying Landscape Report, the scheme will comply with the provisions of Section 7 of the NPPF, particularly paragraph 58 and the overarching provisions of saved Policy S2 of the Medway Local Plan.
- 4.12 It is concluded that the trees have been properly taken into account during the emerging design process and as a result, no perimeter trees are likely to be lost. The creation of open space corridors within the emerging layout was felt to be important in creating a framework for further tree planting and breaking up the roofline of proposed housing.

Drainage

- 4.13 There are no surface watercourses within the site and the land is elevated and geographically separated by a considerable distance from the Medway Estuary. Site levels within the site vary from 37.31m to 47.9m AODN.

Surface Water Drainage Strategy

- 4.14 The site is located on permeable chalk from the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation overlain by semi permeable clay and silt head deposits. Infiltration testing undertaken at the pre-application stage to inform the design has been undertaken to verify assumptions about soakage capacity of the ground. Testing confirmed soakaways will be suitable at this location and groundwater levels are located at a sufficient distance below the surface to enable the use of SUDS. These findings were incorporated within the emerging layout but the disposal of surface water drainage was not considered to be a determining issue influencing siting options of the housing given the relatively low density and size of individual curtilages.

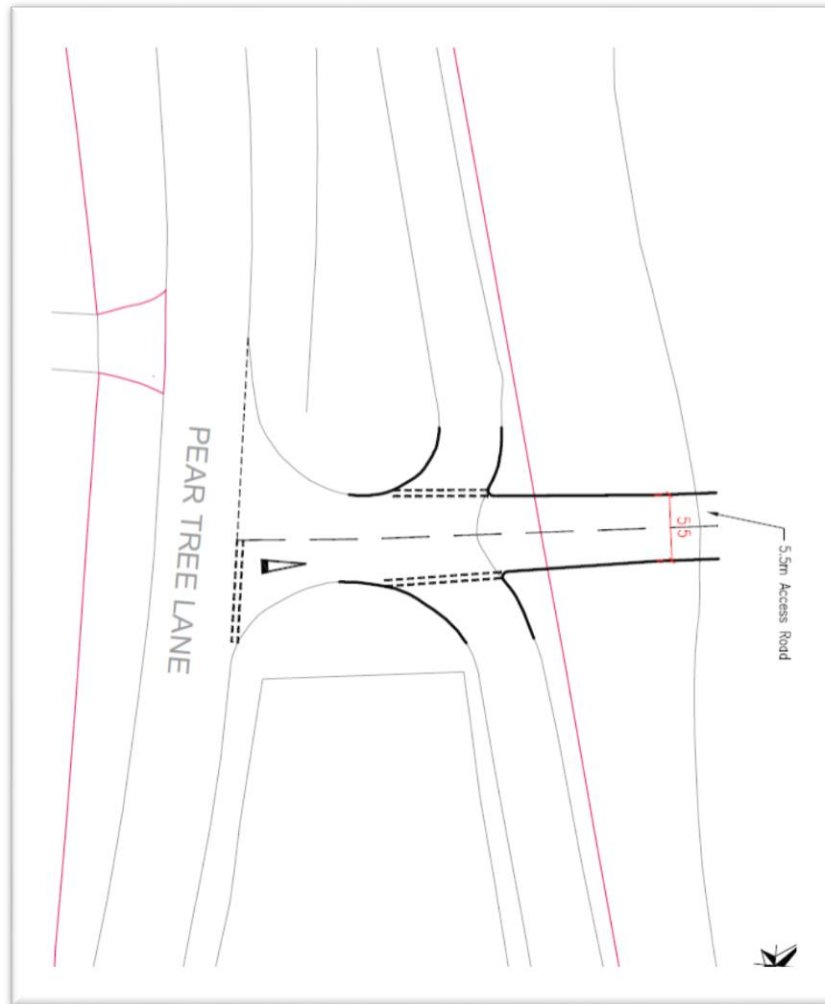
- 4.15 The recommended strategy is a combination of soakaways and permeable paving to discharge the surface water run off via infiltration with potential for Swales and rainwater harvesting as part of the later detailed design approach. The modelling work which accompanies this report demonstrates that peak discharge from the development will be reduced to the greenfield run off rate by the above measures

Flood Risk

- 4.16 The design process was influenced by the existence of a dry valley and an underground flow path which is identified on the generic Environment Agency Flood Risk Plan Zones. There are no watercourses at the site or historic evidence of ground water flows and the design approach has therefore taken a precautionary approach despite the site lying outside the fluvial floodplain.
- 4.17 There is a considerable difference in levels across the site and although there are no watercourses or evidence of above ground flows, the design approach has kept the lowest point of the site (which runs east to west) free of development with housing located on the higher ground on either side of this notional 20 channel.
- 4.18 The design response was therefore influenced by;
- Positioning housing development where it can take advantage of higher ground and avoids the lowest contours of the site;
 - Proposing to raise the threshold of properties by 150mm above ground level to provide sufficient freeboard;
 - Incorporating SUDS initiatives to reduce both the rate and volume that water is passed on downstream;
 - At the later detailed design stage proposals will incorporate flood resilience measures.

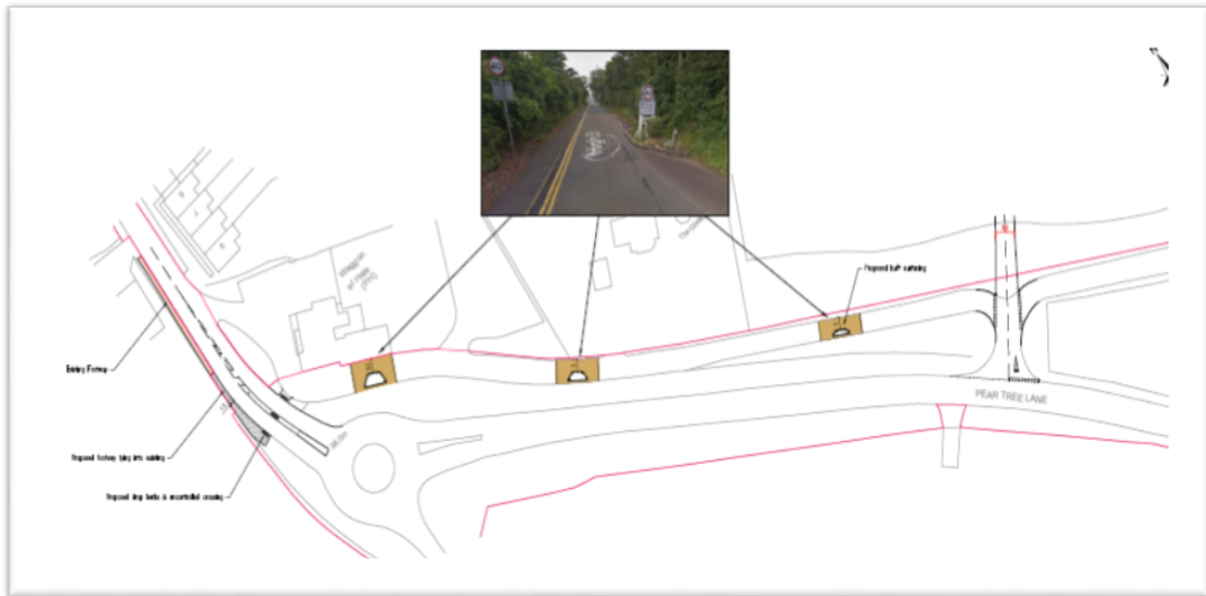
Access

- 4.19 The options to achieve access to the site were limited given the need to connect to Pear Tree Lane and the desirability of avoiding the loss of any trees to this frontage which screens the site from more public vantage points.
- 4.20 It was established at an early stage that a single point of entry and exit only for vehicular access was required to serve the initial quantum of housing numbers (60 in total), therefore the design did not need to consider a second emergency access position.
- 4.21 The team's highway consultants advised that the existing access opening from Pear Tree Lane should be fixed as this access point had the benefits of;
- Not requiring the removal of trees;
 - Utilising an existing opening in use for agricultural purposes;
 - Being well separated from the nearest residential properties;
 - Being optimally located for connecting with Pear Tree Lane and how the access would straddle the division of Old Pear Tree Lane;
 - The single point of access within a break in the perimeter woodland also provided a sense of arrival that was consistent with the design philosophy which was to focus on a lower number of executive houses.
- 4.22 For these reasons, all design options focused on the provision of access at this fixed point, whilst the transport consultants concentrated on the implications of the gradient of the land and the ramping of the access road at the appropriate highway gradient. This emerging work continued to verify the access design at this point and the technical findings of this process support the Stage 1 Safety Audit submission that will be lodged shortly to Medway Council.
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Access Design

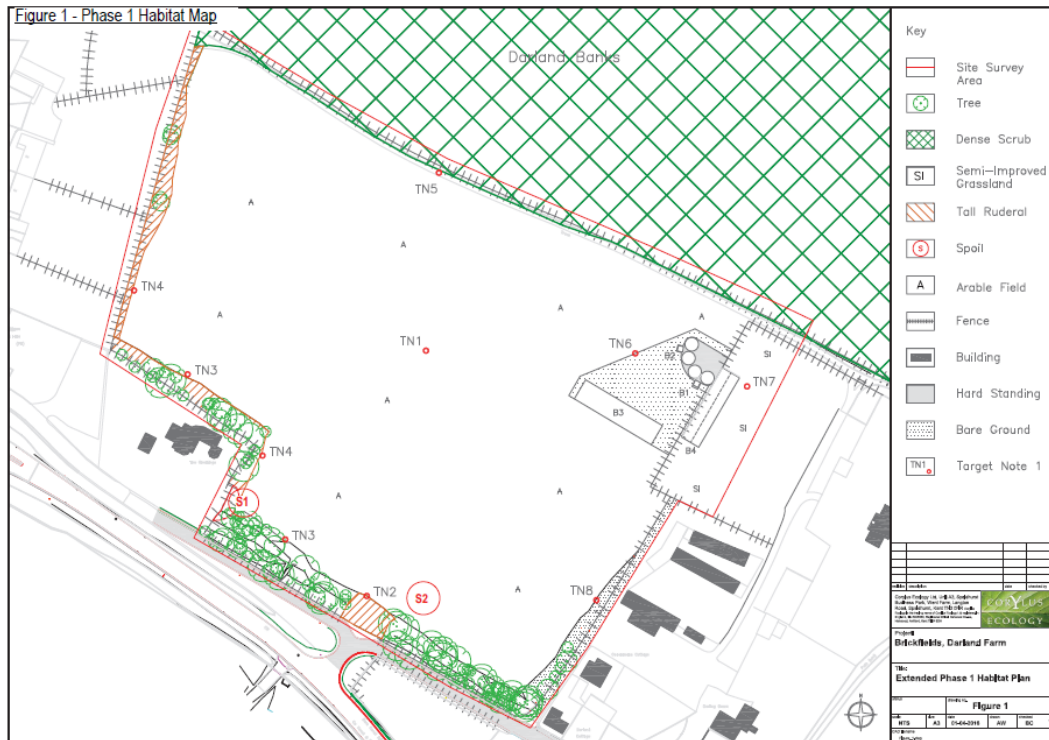
- 4.23 This access road leads to parking on individual plots, with some communal spaces afforded for visitor parking. The level of parking meets the Highway Authority's current guidance.
- 4.24 Connectivity with the bus stop close to the Wagon at Hale PH was taken into account and addressed through consultation with Medway's Transport team with the enhancement of Pear Tree Lane to provide pedestrian refuges with 3 build outs and the extension of the footway across land within the public highway.



- 4.25 The footpath network within the locality of the site is disjointed and the nearest public footways are some distance from the application site. However, there is an informal pathway adjoining the northern boundary of the site and there is evidence of informal route ways through the Darland Banks. The design approach allows for the possibility of improved connectivity with Darland Banks, which needs further discussion at this point with the Kent Wildlife Trust as this has future management and possible ecological (recreational impacts) implications that will be the subject of further discussion with the Kent Wildlife Trust during the application process.

Influence of Biodiversity and Ecology

- 4.26 An extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Bat Building Assessment, was prepared by Corylus Ecology at an early stage of the preparation of the design process. The main findings are set out upon the constraints plan below.



Constraints Plan from Ecological Consultants

- 4.27 No rare or invasive botanical species were identified for these intensively managed agricultural fields. It was acknowledged that the Darland Banks Local Nature Reserve adjoined the northern boundary of the site and that the land was intensively cultivated and had been used as a brickwork before that time.
- 4.28 The ecological findings confirmed that potential for amphibians was low given that the land is intensively cultivated and there are no ponds on site and that the nearest waterbody is located approximately 260m from the site.
- 4.29 With the site's proximity to the nature reserve at Darland Banks (where there are some records of reptiles), Corylus identified that reptile species were likely within field margins at the northern and western boundaries of the site.
- 4.30 Corylus identified that the trees adjacent to the site to the southern and western boundaries provide suitable nesting habitat.

- 4.31 A Bat Building Assessment was undertaken of outhouses and barns in the north east corner of the site at a more formative stage of the design process. No day roosting bats were found to be present inside the building. Furthermore, no evidence was found that the buildings on site are used as a night roost or a feeding perch. Having surveyed the southern boundary trees, the report concludes that they do not support features suitable for bats and no further surveys are required of the buildings or trees. Two bat transect surveys are recommended between mid-May and early July. These survey results will inform reserved matters application and detailed lighting controls and ecological enhancement and mitigation plan. Any such information would inform a more robust enhanced strategy for the site as part of the reserved matters stage.

Ecological Enhancement Strategy

- 4.32 Measures to enhance the ecology at the site which have influenced the design process include
- 2m buffer to protect and enhance perimeter marginal habitats;
 - Buffer excluded from residential curtilages and recommended ecological buffer zone beyond retained boundary features. These areas would be maintained by a specialist Management Company;
 - Native planting particularly along the eastern boundary where none currently exists, comprising a mix including hazel, oak, beech, holly;
 - The ecological enhancement strategy aims to increase the ecological opportunities for those species known to be present within the LNR;
 - Brash pile and large spoil pile will be dismantled under ecological supervision and new log piles, hedgehog refuse and bat and bird boxes created;
 - Incorporation of a landscaped framework within the site where open areas can be laid out with heavy fruiting and flowering native species which are a benefit to local wildlife. Herbaceous planting includes staggered flowering trees through spring to late summer.
- 4.33 The ecological advice has been met by the design team and the ecological, tree and landscape consultants that have worked closely to ensure findings and design options are consistent between each discipline.

- 4.34 The illustrative layout takes in to account Section 11 of NPPF and shows how the development principles that are incorporated within the layout will conserve and enhance the natural environment providing net gains in biodiversity and establishing a more coherent ecological network.

Infrastructure

- 4.35 A utility infrastructure capacity check was undertaken but the results revealed no apparatus underground and direct points of connection to the mains within the public highway. These findings also identified suitable capacity could be achieved without significant costs or reinforcement. As a result, infrastructure considerations have not influenced the design process to any degree.

Consideration of Other Design Inputs

Agricultural Land Quality

- 4.36 The matter of agricultural land quality is addressed in the accompanying Planning Statement. This was not considered to be an issue that should affect the design process given the pressing housing need that exists in Medway where it is accepted that most agricultural land at the fringes of the urban areas is of comparable quality.

Proximity to Impact Risk Zone of Medway SPA

- 4.37 Anticipating Natural England's consultation response to the application, it is acknowledged that this proposal falls within close proximity to the Medway Estuary and Special Protection Area (SPA) which is a European designated habitat and that as a result, the proposal could increase recreational pressure upon the SPA which in combination with other developments could have a detrimental effect upon the designated habitat. It is therefore proposed to meet the contribution tariff to the Thames Medway and Swale Estuaries SAMMS (Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy). As a result significant effects on the designated habitats would be unlikely to result from this proposal and addressing the issue in this way means that there are no specific design implications arising from the issue. Notwithstanding this point the

design proposals provide a strong landscape framework that will enhance biodiversity in their own right.

Impact on the Living Conditions of Adjoining Occupiers

- 4.38 As the application site is separated by some distance from existing residential occupiers it was considered the residential living conditions of adjoining occupiers could be properly safeguarded with perimeter tree planting and distances of separation that exceed the conventional development control standards. As a result although taken in to account as part of the design process the safeguarding of the living conditions of adjoining dwellings was not a central design 'driver' for the architect in this instance.

5 Central Conclusions of the Design Process

Introduction

- 5.1 The application relates to an outline application with all matters (except access) to be reserved for later consideration. The illustrative layout has taken account of the primary site constraints identified by the consultancy team and has also been informed by the pre-application meeting with officers.
- 5.2 The Design and Access Statement is relied on to demonstrate how the technical constraints and opportunities of this site have influenced the emerging illustrative layout and has led to a realistic assumption about the quantum of housing development that can be delivered via a later detailed permission should the principles established by this permission be approved.

Low Density Executive Revision

- 5.3 The design response in assessing layout options has focused on qualitative aspects of provision to attract executives which will support the wider economic regeneration objectives of Medway Council. It is felt the final landscape masterplan (explained in the next heading of this Statement) demonstrates how the development framework principles for the site have been properly taken in to account and evaluated during this iterative process. The flexibility of the applicant during the design team is exemplified by the fact that the proposals have changed significantly from the plans that indicated up to 60 dwellings which were tabled at the pre-application meeting to the current proposal for 44 dwellings now submitted for consideration.
- 5.4 There is a significant housing need at Medway in the short term and the justification of the principle of development is set out in the supporting Planning Statement. In design terms, It was recognised;
- that the visually contained nature of the site;

- its unique geographical location adjoining the urban area and;
- the existing natural framework

provided an exceptional opportunity for quality housing within a wooded landscaped setting which could be served from a relatively discrete access point that would be attractive to executives, providing housing choice and niche provision that could support wider regeneration objectives for the Medway economy.

5.5 Having justified the principle of the need and the mix and size of the dwellings, because of the specific characteristics of the site it was felt that the land created a unique opportunity for quality housing provision. The decision to meet this objective in itself has set the foundation of the design process as it has influenced;

- the mix of housing which would be focused exclusively upon 4 and 5 bedroom housing;
- that there would be a low density of housing;

and how open space, landscaping and tree planting could add to the character of the area and the quality of overall design and this type of housing provision.

5.6 This design based decision had practical knock on effects given the competing policy objectives which strive to create a mix of housing sizes, optimise the sites development potential to maximise density and meet affordable housing provision on site. These requirements generally drive up density and would render the preferred design philosophy based on the economic and landscape analysis more difficult to achieve.

5.7 It was concluded at an early stage of the design process that the lower density approach should remain the objective given the unique opportunity afforded by the individual characteristics of this site. This approach has been possible because of the design decision to offset affordable housing provision (normally required on site under the policy requirement) via an offsite financial contribution. This is explained in the Planning Statement and for the avoidance of doubt, the proposal meets the full policy compliant requirement for affordable housing via an equivalent offsite contribution secured by the Section 106 Agreement. This approach has allowed for the design concept of low

density executive housing within a landscaped setting to be developed during the design stage.

Key Design Influences

5.8 In summary, the design approach to the design, layout, form and scale of the development in this location, has been shown to have been informed principally by a key decision about the opportunity the site presents to provide niche housing to meet the 'significant' housing need. This Statement has shown that given that the access to the site was a fixed point the emerging design of the layout has been mostly heavily influenced by;

- landscape considerations including the site topography;
- That although there are now watercourses within the site, the desirability of avoiding development at the lowest points of the site connecting the eastern and western boundaries should be taken into account and;
- The desirability of enhancing biodiversity through the strengthening of the existing perimeter tree belt and the landscape strategy within the site.

5.9 This submission relies on the responses of statutory consultees to inform the decision maker in assessing the design decisions of the consultancy team which we believe will reaffirm the level of preparation that has informed the submission.

5.10 The illustrative master plan and supporting material that accompanies the planning application, demonstrates that the number of dwellings can be accommodated on the appeal site when full regard is had to the requirement of saved Local Plan Policy S4. An explanation of the design proposals themselves is described in the next section of this Statement.

6 Explanation of the Masterplan Proposals

Design evolution

- 6.1 The masterplan has been refined during the application process. At the pre-application stage an illustrative layout was tabled for upto 60 dwellings at the site as shown below.



Layout drawing tabled at the pre-application meeting (circa 60 dwellings)

- 6.2 Further, ecological and landscape advice combined with a greater understanding of topographical variations within the site and tree shading information has resulted in the number of dwellings being reduced. This is reflected in the later illustrative layout shown below.

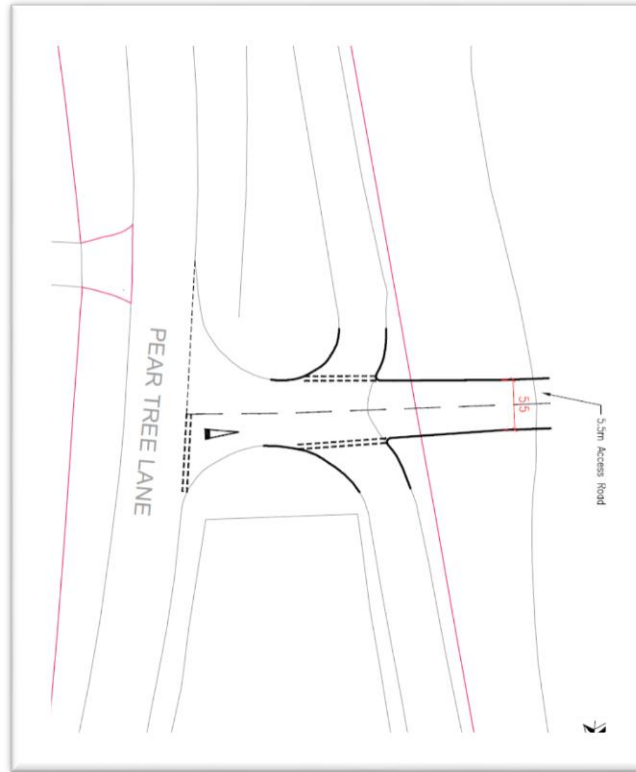


Revised Masterplan Layout with reduced number of dwellings

- 6.3 The application comprises an outline application to establish the principle of up to 44 residential dwellings, together with access, parking, carports/garages and landscaping and open space. The submitted masterplan is for illustrative purposes.

Access

- 6.4 All matters (except access) are reserved for future consideration. The details of the 5.5 m access from Pear Tree Lane are set out in Section 4 of the report and this position has been subject to pre-application discussion with the Highway Authority. The selected access position utilises an existing opening and can be achieved without the loss of trees to provide necessary visibility and will involve minimal engineering to the highway.



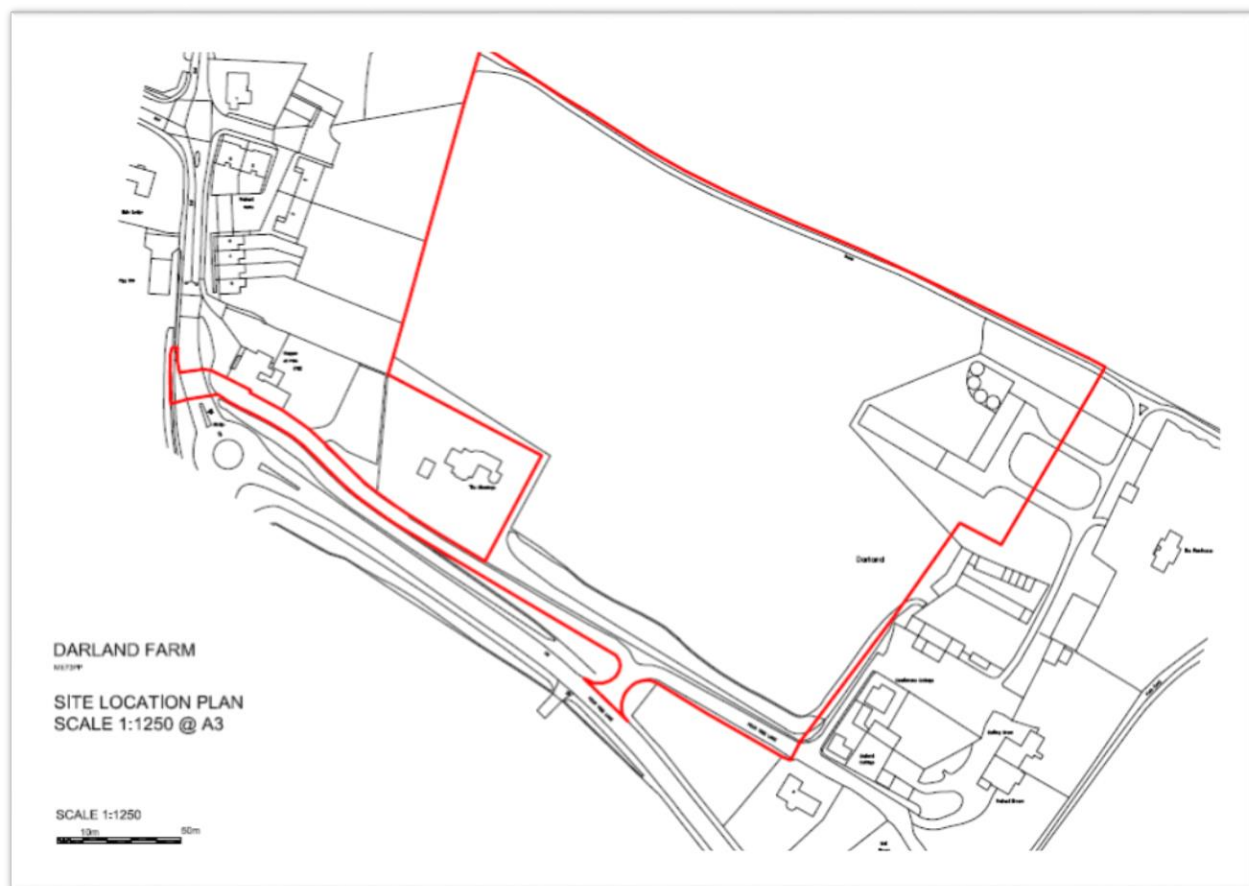
Details of Site Access

6.5 The development parameters which are considered as “fixed” elements to inform future reserved matters submissions include;

- The application site boundaries;
- The proposed land use and the quantum of development;
- The building heights.

Parameter One Application Site Boundary

6.6 The application site measures 4.2 hectares in area and is identified below.



Application Site Boundary

Parameter Two Land Use and Amount

- 6.7 The illustrative masterplan below shows the possible distribution of housing across the site and the existing and proposed strategic planting that will be delivered by the scheme.
- 6.8 The applicant is seeking outline planning masterplan for up to 44 dwellings.
- 6.9 The housing mix comprises 44 x 4 and 5 bed dwellings. As explained earlier in this statement the policy requirements (Policy H3) for affordable housing provision will be met in full via an equivalent agreed offsite financial contribution.
- 6.10 The proposal represents a density of some 10 dwellings per hectare.

- 6.11 Approximately 1.3 hectares of strategic open space/ landscaping is proposed within the masterplan which represents some 30% of the total site area.



Final Illustrative Masterplan

Parameter Three Building Heights



Site Section 1 Showing Variations in Dwelling Height Across the Site

- 6.12 The application is accompanied by a design parameters plan Site Section Plan Ref 712 ;L(--) 02 which shows that the proposed dwellings will be two storey in height throughout the development site;
- the maximum eaves height of the dwellings will be 5.2m from finished floor level and;
 - the ridge height would not exceed 9 m from finished floor level.

- 6.13 There are differences in the levels across the site that have been taken into account during the design process as is evidenced from the site section plan and extract below.



Site Section 2 Showing Illustrative Proposals

Explanation of Masterplan Principles

- 6.14 The access to the site is a logical fixed point that is both technically in the best location for the site, and, in environmental terms, utilises the existing access and existing break in the tree belt thereby minimising the impact of the proposal on the character of the Pear Tree Lane frontage.
- 6.15 The proposed height parameters restrict future housing development to two storey height and the illustrative masterplan shows how the quantum (44 dwellings) and mix (4 and 5 bedroom dwellings) could be accommodated within a landscaped setting.
- 6.16 All remaining aspects of the layout will be refined and the subject of a reserved matters submission. In line with best practice, the overall vision of how the illustrative development principles meet national guidance and the policy requirements is now explained below.

Access and Movement Strategy

- 6.17 A single point of access is necessary from the existing connection point to Pear Tree Lane. No emergency access is required for this level of development. The ramped access, which achieves an appropriate gradient to meet highway requirements allows landscaping to be provided on the sloping embankments either side of the access. Because of these level changes few properties front the main access serving the site.
- 6.18 The design has sought to minimise the length of the main road spine and 3 main connection points are served off this access. Closer to the northern boundary, and beyond the open space corridor running east to west across the site, (which averages around 20 metres in width) two private drives serve two small clusters each of 5 (number) dwellings.

6.19 Key design features of the masterplan include;

Central Spine Road

- A 5.5m carriageway for the main access;
- A 20mph design speed;
- Tree lined verges on either side of the main access spine which is elevated relative to surrounding ground levels to achieve the gradient requirements of the Highway Authority;
- 3 secondary access routes off the main spine road – one of which is a private drive serving 5 dwellings. The other roads are proposed to be designed as shared surface routes serving 20 dwellings (west side of the spine) and 19 (east side of the road spine).

Walking and Cycling

6.20 Footways and cycleways will be provided on site as part of the development scheme. Three pedestrian refuges are to be constructed to Pear Tree Lane and a footway extension provided on the opposite (west) side of the Wagon at Hale Public House to improve the link with the existing bus stop.

Character Areas

6.21 Because of the outline nature of the application to establish the principle of development, the materials, layout and architectural styling is not fixed at this stage. The character of the area has been carefully assessed and whilst there is evidence of clusters of farmsteads beyond the existing settlement area, in the context of the need for housing it has to be recognised that the site is adjacent to a major urban area and is visually enclosed. The design philosophy has been to create 2 main clusters of development of 20 dwellings (west) and 19 dwellings (east) on either side of a central fixed landscaped access corridor.

6.22 Within each “cluster” of housing within the layout, there is an informality to the layout. On the western side, the dwellings have been sited to create 3 clusters (2 x 6 dwellings and 1 x 8 dwellings). These dwellings are each orientated in varying directions and staggered which will create a varied roofline between the established tree framework when viewed from the distant elevated positions from Darland Bank.

6.23 The tree/woodland framework is provided by;

- The strengthening of the existing perimeter boundary;
- The creation of a central band of open space of some 0.7ha in the area running east-west which also corresponds with the lowest point of the site;

- The third key tree/landscaped element is provided either side of the central spine road where the road gradient requires a graded bank on either side. The road and tree lined avenue created measures some 20 metres in width. This will create a view of a tree lined avenue from the break in the existing tree belt to the southern boundary.

6.24 The housing within the illustrative layout are arranged as 3 different character areas;

Character Area 1 Lower Western Portion of the Site

- Lower western portion of the site (illustrative capacity 20 dwellings).
- This area is itself served by a single point of access from the central portion of the site.
- This character area comprises 3 sub areas arranged in individual clusters;
 - a) 7 dwellings in the western portion of the character area arranged with a north to south axis. Each of these properties are provided with large curtilages including an average front garden depth of 10 metres;
 - b) 7 dwellings in a cluster orientated along an east-west axis either side of the shared surface and
 - c) 6 dwellings arranged in a cluster in the southern portion within more of a courtyard arrangement.



Character Area 1

- 6.25 The variation in the clustering of these dwellings, within this sub area, follows pre-application feedback from Medway officers and allows varied rooflines which together with the tree lined woodland framework is a design response functioning to assimilate the development within the landscape, particularly where visible from the elevated viewpoint on Darland Bank.

Character Area 2 Lower Eastern Portion of the Site

- 6.26 Fourteen dwellings in total are shown upon the illustrative layout plan in this area served from a single point of access from the central spine road. This character area has 2 sub character areas;
- a crescent of up to 6 dwellings which provide outlook across the open space running across the east-west open space/landscape access.
 - The remaining 8 dwellings within this sub character area form a cluster with no more than 3 dwellings orientated along a similar axis. There is also variation in the plot dimensions and staggering of dwellings within this area as shown on the masterplan.



Character Area 2

Character Area 3 Land adjoining the Darland Bank

- 6.27 The capacity of this area as shown on the masterplan extract is 10 dwellings arranged in two separate sub areas of 5 dwellings individually served from a private drive. This area is located on the rising ground north of the east-west woodland/open space area. These dwellings are separated from the northern boundary by a buffer area following ecological recommendations. This buffer area will not be included within the curtilage of any property and will be managed by a separate management company. 10% of the dwellings within this area are orientated at 90 degrees to the northern boundary.



Character Area 3

Benefits of the Proposal

6.28 The design proposals incorporate significant benefits including;

- Quality designed housing;
- Provision of an improved footway linkage with bus stops which will benefit the wider community;
- Provides a financial contribution to provide much needed affordable housing provision elsewhere in Medway;
- Development is proposed at a low density of 10 dwellings per hectare;
- Has been shown to offer ecological benefits;
- Will provide strategic buffer tree planting.

7 Summary

7.1 A number of technical studies were commissioned during the preparation of the application to audit the emerging layout as it progressed. The following studies accompany this outline submission and the findings of these reports have been taken into account in the design process leading to the illustrative masterplan.

- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment;
- Flood Risk Assessment which includes soil soakage test results and a drainage strategy;
- Transport Assessment;
- Extended Phase I Habitat Survey and Bat Building Survey
- Tree Survey and Report;
- Landscape Appraisal.

7.2 In conclusion, the following assumptions have been made during the design process which have informed the evolving masterplan;

- the site represents a sustainable and accessible location;
- the proposal has no impact on national or county level landscape designations and is not a designated “strategic gap” or “Green Belt”.
- development of the site would not affect any heritage consideration and the proposed layout will have an acceptable impact on the living conditions of the limited number of neighbouring occupiers that adjoin the site;
- The proposals can have a positive impact on biodiversity and derives from a landscape led design approach that has created a framework that maintains the existing perimeter features and creates new connecting green routeways through the site;

7.3 From conception, a number of development principles were established:

- The need for the development to integrate itself in to the landscape setting;

- The provision of a high quality development which seeks to meet Medway's regeneration aspirations by providing housing choice within the plan area;
- The desire to incorporate extensive areas of open space, providing a development which is appropriate to its context at the edge of the urban area;
- The provision of "character areas" establishing a strong sense of place and the creation of an attractive and comfortable place to live;
- The appropriate provision of car parking, acknowledging the size of the units but without providing a car dominant set of street scenes, and
- A development which promotes a safe, accessible and healthy environment with clear pedestrian routes and high quality spaces.

7.4 Saved Policy BNE1 "General Principles of Built Development requires the design of development to be appropriate in relation to the character and quality of an area and the way it functions." It is concluded these objectives are met by the illustrative proposal which has carefully considered the constraints and opportunities afforded by this site.

7.5 The proposal follows a thorough review of the site context and is underpinned by a desire for the layout to make a positive contribution to the environment through the delivery of the scheme. The vision includes;

- Strategic open/space tree planting to break up the roof lines from elevated positions;
- To strengthen and enhance the perimeter woodland buffer on all sides of the development;
- To maintain an informal route way at the bottom of the Darland Bank;
- To provide an improved ecological network of open green spaces and tree planting and potential connectivity of the development with the Darland Bank;

- To create a low density development of 44 dwellings (at a density of 10 dwellings per hectare) where each individual dwelling will be sited within its own significant curtilage which will be heavily landscaped;
- Creation of an integrated network of sustainable urban drainage and the safeguarding of the lowest points of the site from east to west which would allow for underground surface flow in the eventuality of an extreme pluvial event.

7.6 During the design process a number of reports and surveys were undertaken to ensure that the proposal was well designed, sustainable and would achieve quality place making that respected the character of the local area. The NPPF places great emphasis and importance on planning proposals to ensure that they are sustainable and that they have a positive impact upon the quality of life of everyone. These objectives are considered to be satisfied by the proposed development principles that are reflected in the illustrative masterplan accompanying this submission.