

## Early Masterplan Proposal

Following the initial technical and environmental studies undertaken, an initial illustrative masterplan was prepared to be used as the basis for further discussions with key stakeholders. The initial masterplan proposals included:

- Provision for up to 200-250 dwellings consisting of a mix of market and affordable housing, accommodating a range of house types and sizes, contributing to the local housing need;
- Development predominantly located in the north-western area of the Site, with a small portion of development in the south-eastern corner, with all development south of the existing Public Right of Way ensuring that development was kept outside of the Local Wildlife Site and Conservation Target Area and the existing hedgerow retained. The extent of development in the north-western area was informed by early noise analysis and flood risk calculations which continued to evolved as the technical work progressed;
- The retention of the PRow and green infrastructure contained within the Site to provide good connectivity with the wider countryside as well as the inclusion of new recreational routes for increased connectivity;
- Vehicular Site access from Gavray Drive, with the development layout adopting a primary looped internal network enabling clear movement through and around the Site. A hierarchy of side streets and lanes would compliment this primary loop;
- Lower density development in the south-east of the Site responding to the proximity to the LWS and landscape character, providing a gradual transition to the open countryside to the east. Extra care housing was considered but it was not deemed suitable in this location nor was there a huge demand for it;
- Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows and trees for amenity and wildlife benefits, including some strategic clearing of scrub in the south-eastern part of

the Site to enable development and enhancement to the LWS. A number of discussions were undertaken to develop a proposal for future maintenance of the site to ensure the protection and longevity of the wildlife asset; and

- The incorporation of a play space to the north of the Site to compliment existing play facilities in Bicester.

The early proposals sought to promote a series of objectives:

### A CONNECTED PLACE

Create a legible, integrated street pattern to ensure good permeability and promote a safe environment for sustainable transport and active travel. The proposed street hierarchy should support connections to existing streets and paths. The structure of the proposed Site should also support convenient access to public transport services, encouraging opportunities for modal shift.

### A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Provide a development of scale and mix of housing that reflects the existing context and supports the continued vitality of the services and facilities within Bicester.

### LIVING AND WORKING

Provide a balance of housing to sustain a strong community. The development should provide a broad range of unit types and tenures to create a mixed community, and responds to the local market requirements.

### DIVERSE LANDSCAPE

Deliver high quality public realm to create a quality place and a strong sense of identity for the development. These spaces should provide play areas and wildflower meadows for both the residents of the new development as well as the wider community.

Street tree planting should also define the hierarchy of streets and contribute to landscape connectivity throughout the Site.







- 1 Site access
- 2 Primary road
- 3 Enhanced native hedgerow boundary planting
- 4 Retained/enhanced Public Rights of Way
- 5 Recreational routes
- 6 Green space
- 7 Play space
- 8 Local Wildlife Site
- 9 Attenuation ponds located in lowest part of the Site



Design Evolution



## Public Consultation

The project team delivered a pre-application engagement programme which included engagement with officers at Cherwell District Council, stakeholders and local residents.

The engagement programme has enabled the project team to gain an understanding of the local context, raise awareness and gather feedback on the initial proposals. Subsequently, the feedback has been fed into the continued evolution of the Site proposals. Further information can be found in the Statement of Community Engagement (SCE) submitted in support of the application.

There were some recurring and consistent comments/feedback that came out as part of the engagement programme. A snapshot of the key comments is depicted opposite.

The main theme that came out of the consultation related to concerns of increased flooding risk to local residents,






and the needs to ensure a respectful and well-maintained harmony between new residents, existing residents in Langford, and the wildlife found within Gavray Wildlife Meadows. There was, however, noticeable praise regarding the proposed recreational paths and management plan of Gavray Meadows, and the benefits of this for the community.

As a result of these comments, and after a more indepth character analysis, some positive changes have been proposed to the final Masterplan presented in the next chapter. From the general street structure, to the specific roof types, it is hoped that these alterations better reflect the desires of residents and complement the surrounding area in a more sensitive manner.



Consultation Leaflet

Consultation Website

Design feature	Early Masterplan	Further analysis & technical considerations	Public consultation	Final Masterplan
 <p>1. Diverse street form &amp; hierarchy</p>	Creates a clear road hierarchy, with straight primary streets which replicate the character of Bicester	→ Could provide more shared street surfaces, and install pinch points and rumble strips as found across Bicester	+ The want for traffic calming measures to ensure safe streets which prevents excessive speeding	= Incorporate more curvature to the roads; create rumble strips across junctions; and provide more shared streets
 <p>2. Building form &amp; composure</p>	Provides a diverse mix of semi/detached and terraced dwellings, but results in low densities	→ North-west parcel should benefit from 3 storey apartments to act as noise barriers to the railway	+ The need for more affordable housing, and properties for first-time buyers and the elderly	= Supply a mix of 1-2 bed apartments as well as 1-4 bed dwellings (30% affordable)
 <p>3. Building lines &amp; parking</p>	Offers shallow front gardens with driveways, creating a strong building line	→ Potentially could provide more informal street parking, softened by landscaping features	+ Ensure adequate parking for new residents	= Provide adequate parking that doesn't dominate the street scheme through inclusion of vegetation
 <p>4. Materials &amp; details</p>	Early proposals did not consider roofscapes in detail	→ The addition of forwards-facing gable roofs (especially as landmark buildings) and dormer windows	+ Materials should be soft to ensure that Bicester's Garden City status is retained	= Integration of more diverse roof types and orientations
 <p>5. Public spaces</p>	Strong connections to new Wildlife Meadows, open spaces, and equipped play areas	→ Create more permeable blocks, shared street plazas, and further walking routes	+ Worries about drainage and a possible increased flooding risk	= Establish more attenuation basins and plant a greater amount of vegetation

---

# 4 Masterplan Strategy



# Masterplan Strategy

## The Masterplan

The final masterplan has been prepared to demonstrate one way in which the Site could be developed whilst considering the technical analysis that have been undertaken and consultation feedback that has been received.

We recognise the importance of the Site, with great opportunity to enhance the connections between Bicester's eastern neighbourhoods, with the nearby industrial and commercial estates, Launton village, and the open countryside. It is therefore paramount that residential development and green space are integrated in harmony, and that public space benefits the wider communities upon the direct residents of the Site.

The masterplan concept allows the opportunity to create a vibrant multi-use space for multi-generational enjoyment. This Site should be a place for everyone, anytime, any day and should create new homes for those living and working in the settlement and the surrounding district.

The concept aims to create a legacy - with development becoming a positive gain and complementing its location, setting and landscape context. The Site provides an opportunity to create a new development nestled within the existing landscape which will enhance this area of Bicester. It is therefore important to create a development proposal which builds on what currently makes Bicester a thriving, exciting, and desirable place to live and work.

With a unique mix of housing forms in the area, there is opportunity to create a new character which enhances the traditional built form of Bicester and which fits in with the existing context of the town, as a transition between the town and the wider countryside. To this extent, the proposed overarching concept for the Site is to create a landscape-led place that works with the existing landscape, protecting and enhancing the Local Wildlife Site, the mature trees and hedgerows and visual character. This will create glimpses and excitement in both short- and long-range views, whilst being sensitive to the visual context within the wider landscape setting.

By creating a sustainable, appropriate and design sensitive addition to the town, the development can bring a strong sense of place and offer distinctive green spaces and green infrastructure. To enhance this sense of place, the proposal will integrate landmark buildings and successful streets to provide opportunities for character areas and spaces to be framed with key buildings and landmark architecture created with the Bicester vernacular as a guiding principle.

The proposed masterplan demonstrates how up to up to 250 dwellings can be achieved, 30% of which would be affordable housing. The housing mix is reflective of local housing needs and consists of largely semi detached and terraced dwellings, along with five apartment blocks. It is the intention that the affordable dwellings







- 1 Site access
- 2 Primary road
- 3 Enhanced native hedgerow boundary planting
- 4 Retained/enhanced Public Rights of Way
- 5 Recreational routes
- 6 Green space
- 7 Play space
- 8 Wildflower meadows
- 9 Local Wildlife Site
- 10 Attenuation ponds located in lowest part of the Site
- 11 Apartment blocks (3 storeys) to provide a noise buffer against the railway





would be integrated throughout the development and be tenure blind to create an integrated community.

The 3 storey apartments along the northern edge (closest to the railway lines and Industrial Estates) have been specifically designed with a largely continuous frontage to ensure that noise is adequately mitigated for the private gardens of dwellings behind. Measures with regards to ventilation and glazing within the apartment blocks would be further incorporated to mitigate against noise from the trainline.

Two existing agricultural access points along Gavray Drive will be utilised as the primary vehicular access points for the Site. One of these will serve the south-eastern parcel of development, with a primary road providing ease of access for refuse and emergency vehicles and adequate turning. The second access point will serve the north-western parcel of development. Secondary streets, tertiary streets, and private drives will break down this developable parcel into walkable blocks, reflecting Bicester's existing pedestrian permeable nature. A distinguished road hierarchy helps to create character and identity as well as

serving to slow internal traffic speeds through design rather than signage. Different types and colour road surfaces are proposed to aid in creating character areas as well as break up and provide interest in the hardstanding areas.

The masterplan creates outward looking streets which are enhanced through the integration of front gardens and verdant green edges overlooking the public spaces. This creates activity and safe overlooking within the development.

The existing PROWs will be retained and enhanced, while the integration of a network of pedestrian routes ensures strengthened accessibility to the green spaces and new residential areas, promoting good placemaking, health and wellbeing.

Another key aspect of the Masterplan proposals include the retention and enhancement of the Local Wildlife Site. Part of this enhancement involves the removal of some low-quality scrub, which will contribute to the grassland restoration. This will avoid direct negative impacts upon the most vulnerable habitats and the associated species, and (alongside further vegetation planting

and attenuation pond creation) will offset any potential losses, resulting in a net gain in biodiversity in excess of 10% and secure the future of local ecology.

This combination of natural and urban design techniques has resulted in a scheme which provides Bicester with a vibrant, sustainable, and desirable new neighbourhood.

#### Creating Character

The masterplan provides a scale of development affording the opportunity for a distinct landscape-led housing scheme with the ability to deliver something new and special for Bicester.

Whilst the design of the masterplan and the integration with the existing landscape fits with the context of the settlement, there is also an opportunity to provide enhanced placemaking and an architecture of varying character, unified through the 'consistent rhythm of the plots, scale and materials' of buildings found across the proposal (Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPG, 2018).

A distinguished built form and a strong design hierarchy helps to create character and identity, with opportunities to explore an architectural typology offering something new to the market.

This character could be a contemporary interpretation of the existing character of Bicester or a number of landscape character areas that change and evolve as you move from one area of the development to another.

The masterplan proposes the 'work of many hands' and the concept that the masterplan should create distinguished place that people will want to live, work and play in.

Through the use of landscape, distinct architectural styles and typologies and varying densities within the development, the masterplan will be enhanced through design interest and variety, creating a special place and a sense of belonging.

Illustrative view from one of the proposed recreational routes, looking towards the development





What does the masterplan propose?



Soft and native landscaping with a formal structure of tree planting along the primary road will create a legible hierarchy of streets;



The enhancement of the Gavray Wildlife Meadows will boost ecological values, whilst reinforcing the 'Wooded Estateland' and 'Clay Vale' local landscape characters which surround Bicester (Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPG, 2018);



New wildflower meadows and SuDS features will create new habitats, boosting local biodiversity and promoting the cognitive learning of younger generations;



Accessible play areas to encourage outdoor activity, benefiting from natural surveillance;



New recreational routes will promote access to nature, and encourage walking, jogging, and education within the public realm;



Buildings will partly reflect the local vernacular, whilst offering distinctive architectural styles and typologies and varying densities to help create a special place and a strong sense of belonging;



Incorporating opportunities to reduce energy consumption and enable more efficient use of energy, through the orientation of streets and buildings to maximise solar energy for passive heating and cooling and natural ventilation and scope to install Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure;



Using a range of densities from 30-100 dwellings per hectare (as recommended for Sites near town centres in the Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPG), but only developing on approximately 25% of the Site will minimise any disruption of the Gavray Wildlife Meadows, whilst boosting Bicester's population - thereby helping to maintain the viability and vitality of the town by increasing local spend and using local facilities and businesses;



Apartment blocks which will form new landmark buildings and will form an impressive gateway into and out of Bicester, seen by visitors and commuters on the train. Further landmark dwellings will strengthen the Sites legibility, whilst creating an interesting and varied street scene.





## Housing Strategy

The dwellings will be designed to reflect the character and aesthetic qualities of the wider Bicester area and mirror design features of the settlement. High quality, vernacular materials for homes will aid the integration of this development within the settlement.

The illustrative masterplan proposes a variety of different house types, providing a range of sizes catering for the needs of different people. The internal layouts will all be designed to meet the National Minimum Standards and will consider market preference and modern way of living. Houses will be designed to allow for flexibility and adaptation in order to encourage residents to stay for longer depending on life circumstances, for example, first-time buyers, growing families and downsizers. The scheme will ensure there is a wide choice.

The proposed housing mix would be broadly in line with the recommendations for Cherwell District Council as set out in their Local Plan unless local circumstances at the time of an application justified a different mix.

Building types and heights across the Site reflect those found within the existing residential estate of Langford just south of Gavray Drive. 2-3 storey semi-detached and terraced dwellings are common across the western side of Langford Park, and therefore taller dwellings and apartment blocks have been introduced to the north-western parcel of development on the Site, aiding with noise mitigation.

Buildings across the eastern side of Langford Park however tend not to exceed 2 storeys, and thus dwellings across the south-eastern parcel of the Site reflects this lower-rise nature.

### Affordable Housing Strategy

Policy CP43 requires at least 30% affordable housing which is provided within the masterplan.

### Parking Strategy

The majority of parking spaces will be provided on plot - either in garages or driveway space. Garages and car parking is proposed to be pushed back behind the houses so that vehicles are hidden from view and do not dominate the street scene. In some instances, it may be necessary to provide some on street allocated parking spaces. This will be in close proximity to dwellings for ease of access.

Shared surface car parks will facilitate parking for the apartments, and will incorporate hard landscaping features.

Parking provision will be in accordance with requirements for Oxfordshire County Council. All 1 and 2 bedroom apartments will have 1 allocated space provided with additional visitor parking provided within the shared surface car parks. All 2+ bedroom dwellings will have 2 allocated spaces provided with additional visitor spaces evenly distributed across the development.

There is also the possibility of installing Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure to dwellings which will contribute to the schemes overall sustainability.

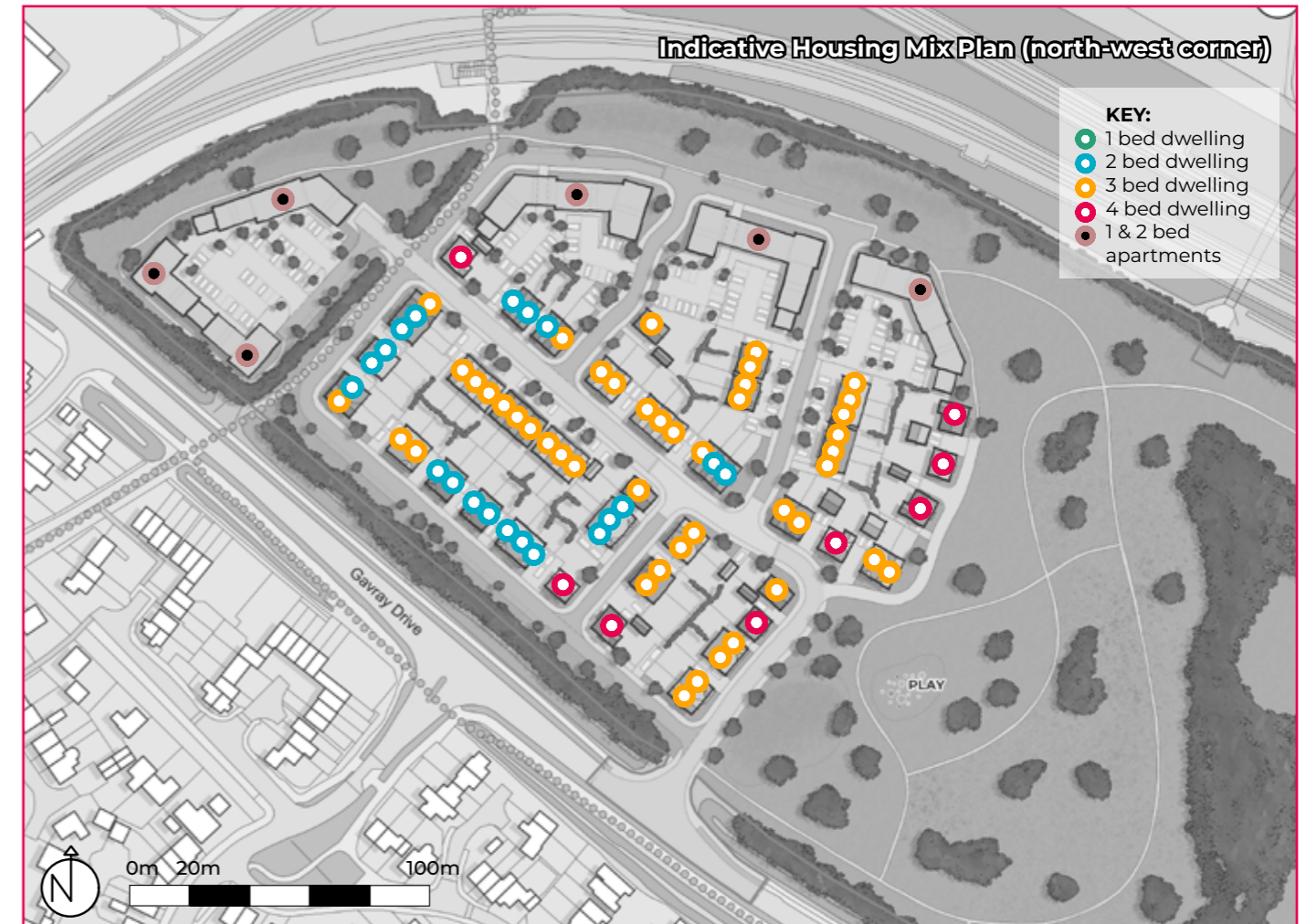
Adequate provision for cycle storage will be made for all properties to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the car.

### Refuse Strategy

Adequate provision for refuse storage will be made in either garages or back gardens of all properties. This will ensure that bins are not left on the streets.

All roads will be designed to adequate widths and turning to accommodate refuse collection vehicles.

Homes should be designed with adequate storage space to encourage recycling and composting to minimise overall waste.





## Placemaking Strategy

(see page 74-75 for the Strategy Plan)

The masterplan demonstrates strong urban design and placemaking principles, delivering a place that people will want to live in as well as creating spaces for informal recreation with safe and liveable streets.

The public open space within the centre of the Site will be publicly available to existing and new residents, providing links to the existing PRow network. The integration of recreational routes throughout the open space ensures that the new neighbourhood integrates into the Local Wildlife Site. This blurs the line between natural and urban landscapes whilst promoting good placemaking, health, and well-being for existing Bicester residents and new community to the settlement.

Allowing residents some access through the Local Wildlife Site will also promote education of its importance and ensure the protection and longevity of this area as an important local asset for the wider community.

### Gateways

Both vehicular and pedestrian access points to the Site will be designed to create a landscaped gateways. This creates a change in character and landscape, spatially integrating Gavray Drive to the south with the Site, whilst also signalling a new place and providing Bicester with a complimentary new character area. It will be paramount that the gateways are designed to create interest and set the benchmark for design quality.

### Focal points

It is important to integrate both new and existing communities together spatially, and consequently two green focal points in the form of play spaces and wildflower meadows will provide space for social interaction for new and existing residents.

The larger focal point towards the north-western parcel space is designed as a less formal approach to a traditional village green, where residents can host communal activities and come together in safe, overlooked and generous outdoor space for picnics, parties, leisure

activities. With such large and generous green spaces within the masterplan, the community has the space to grow and expand.

### Transition Nodes

At key nodes throughout the development, there are transitions of character to add interest and variety. Characters can be achieved through the use of different architectural styles, densities, street types or use of materials.

### Landmarks

Landmark buildings and landscapes provide opportunities for streets and spaces to be framed with key, landmark architecture, helping to create identity and interest.

Landmark buildings can be distinguished by being taller than those surrounding or through architectural materiality and design. To create an exciting and interesting development, and to aid in wayfinding, a number of landmark buildings should be placed across the masterplan at key points - for example, at the Site entrance.

The apartments along the north-western boundary will form a series of landmark blocks, collectively creating a distinctive new approach into Bicester for train passengers to identify and admire.

## Green Infrastructure Strategy

(see page 76-77 for the Strategy Plan)

The overarching vision for Bicester is to deliver a high-quality, locally-distinguishable and sustainable addition to this settlement - where people can live, work and play.

In order to achieve this, the proposed landscaping will be soft and native to reflect the Gavray Wildlife Meadows and the Sites. New vegetation planting, wildflower meadows, attenuation basins, and hard landscaping features will contribute to the overall biodiversity and ecological value of the Site, offering enhanced habitats for wildlife whilst softening the visual enclosure for homes from the train line.

The land adjacent to these Wildlife Meadows will provide new publicly accessible informal open spaces in the form of wildflower meadows and green fields, incorporating a series of recreational pathways to be used for nature walking trails and social activities. This will be a community asset for both existing and new residents.

These recreational routes will also form continuous links between urban and natural landscapes, and will better connect Bicester into the countryside to the east.

Two overlooked play areas, benefiting from natural surveillance for nearby dwellings, have been located near the primary Site access points so that they are easily accessible by all new and existing residents. These will be areas of equipped play with further opportunities for incidental play elsewhere in the development.

The integration of front gardens and verdant edges provides for an attractive streetscape and is characterful of Bicester and the wider area.

This landscape-led masterplan will successfully respond to the opportunities and constraints of the Site, creating a strong and positive legacy for the town and its community.

As much as possible, existing trees and hedgerows are proposed to be retained and enhanced with additional native planting, seamlessly integrating the

Site into the historic tree boundary to the north, and the open countryside to the east. Some strategic scrub removal is proposed in the Local Wildlife Site to facilitate its enhancement and ecological value.

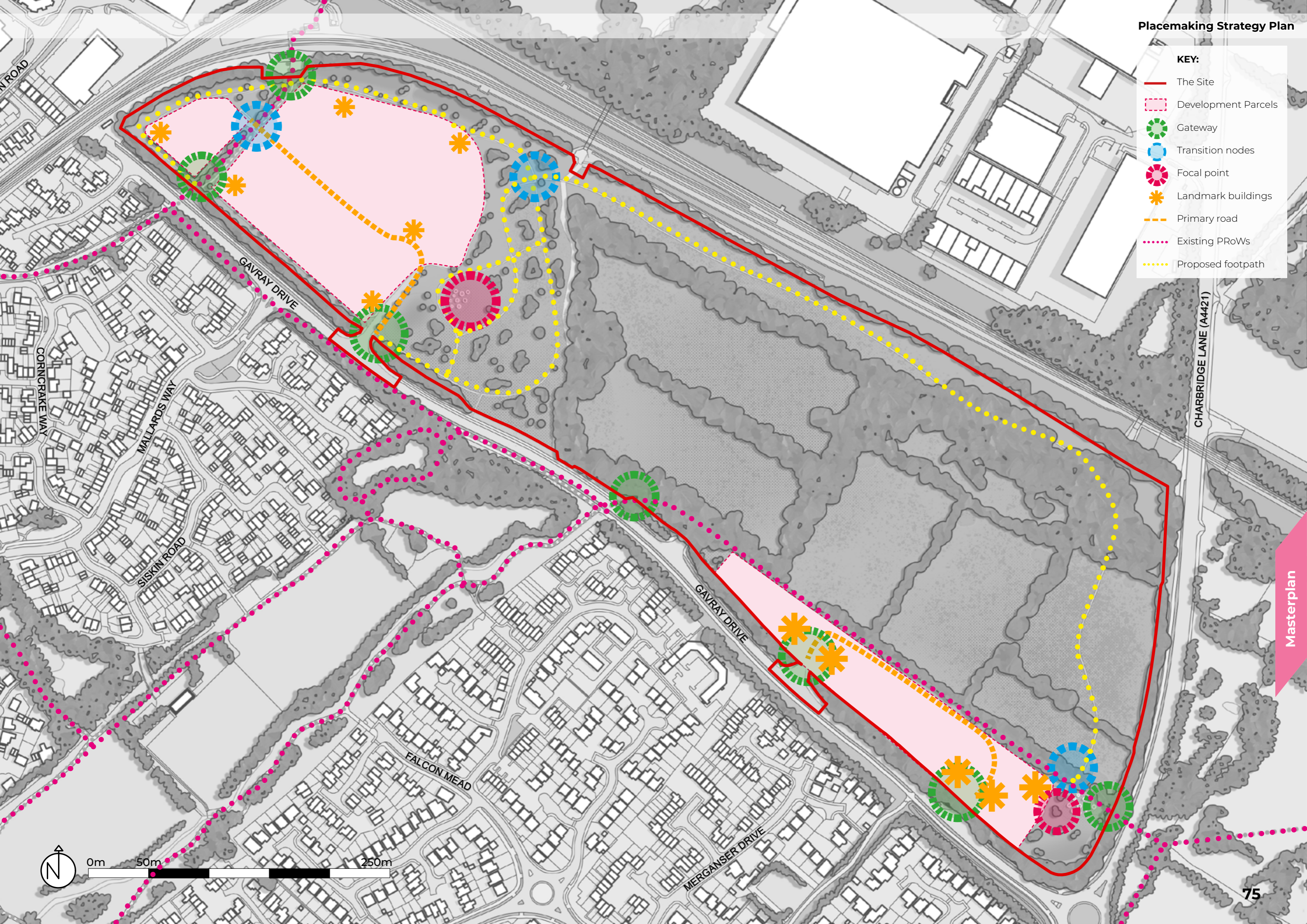
It is proposed that existing boundaries will be strengthened with additional planting, providing the opportunity for diversifying the overall Green Infrastructure palette of the Site.

The attenuation basin forms part of the SuDS strategy for the development, whilst also providing an attractive space for enhancing the green and blue infrastructure of the Site. Hedgerow planting, tree groupings/copses will be incorporated, in keeping with the landscape character of the area and to soften views of the development from the railway line and Gavray Drive.



**KEY:**

- The Site
- Development Parcels
- Gateway
- Transition nodes
- Focal point
- Landmark buildings
- Primary road
- Existing PRowS
- Proposed footpath





KEY:

- The Site
- Development Parcels
- Enhanced & new boundary planting
- Key green spaces
- Play Spaces
- Attenuation Basin
- Enhanced Local Wildlife Site
- Existing PRowS
- Proposed footpath

