

Design Development

In the autumn/winter of 2021, an early Illustrative Masterplan (*Illustrative Masterplan Stage 1*) and supporting Vision Document was prepared to demonstrate the initial concept for how the Site could be developed as part of Cherwell's Local Plan Review and Call for Sites process. This took on board the early technical and environmental assessments that had been undertaken. This plan was also utilised in the pre-application discussions held in early 2023 (on-site), with a written response from the Council provided on 12th June 2023.

The initial proposals established key design principles to create an integrated neighbourhood, achieve distinctiveness and identity and establish a strong green and blue infrastructure network. It was proposed that the built development was clustered towards the east of the Site, adjoining the existing

settlement. Properties fronting Fringford Road would follow a similar built edge alignment from the existing properties on the northern side of the road to ensure a continuation of the urban grain.

These initial proposals included the provision of up to 110 homes, a range of green spaces including children's play areas and the potential to redevelop the existing farmhouse into a community hub, forming a central focus for the new community. Reinstatement of the historic track was proposed, and a significant landscape buffer to the north-west protecting the setting of the listed church to the north-west. Green corridors provided north-south and east-west links across the Site.

Following the receipt of comments from the Council, a revised concept sketch plan (*Illustrative Masterplan Stage 2*) was prepared in July 2023 taking on board the comments received. This plan was utilised for discussions within the wider project team.

One of the points raised following the Council's site visit was that the existing farmhouse was considered to have little architectural merit and would not be worthy of retention in the context of the development. Additionally, the cost of conversion to a community building would likely be unviable and the Council may be reluctant to adopt it as a community asset. As such, the decision was made to remove this from the proposals and instead provide a central village green associated with the retention of trees and alongside the historic track as focal point within the development.

The pre-app response noted that overall, the indicative plans appeared to include all the relevant requirements for a development of this scale and would be suitable to support an outline application. As such, the general structure of the proposals remained unchanged, however the concept plan sought to increase landscape buffers, with higher density development along the primary route and lower density edges, to create a softer transition towards the green edges and a sensitive response to the surrounding context. The green links through the development were retained for wider connectivity.

Additionally, pre-app comments noted that future development should promote a connected and legible network of streets with street design responsive to character and location; create enclosure through placement of buildings; integrate traffic calming features; and integrate various elements including trees, signage and SuDS within streets. Ongoing design iterations considered this advice.

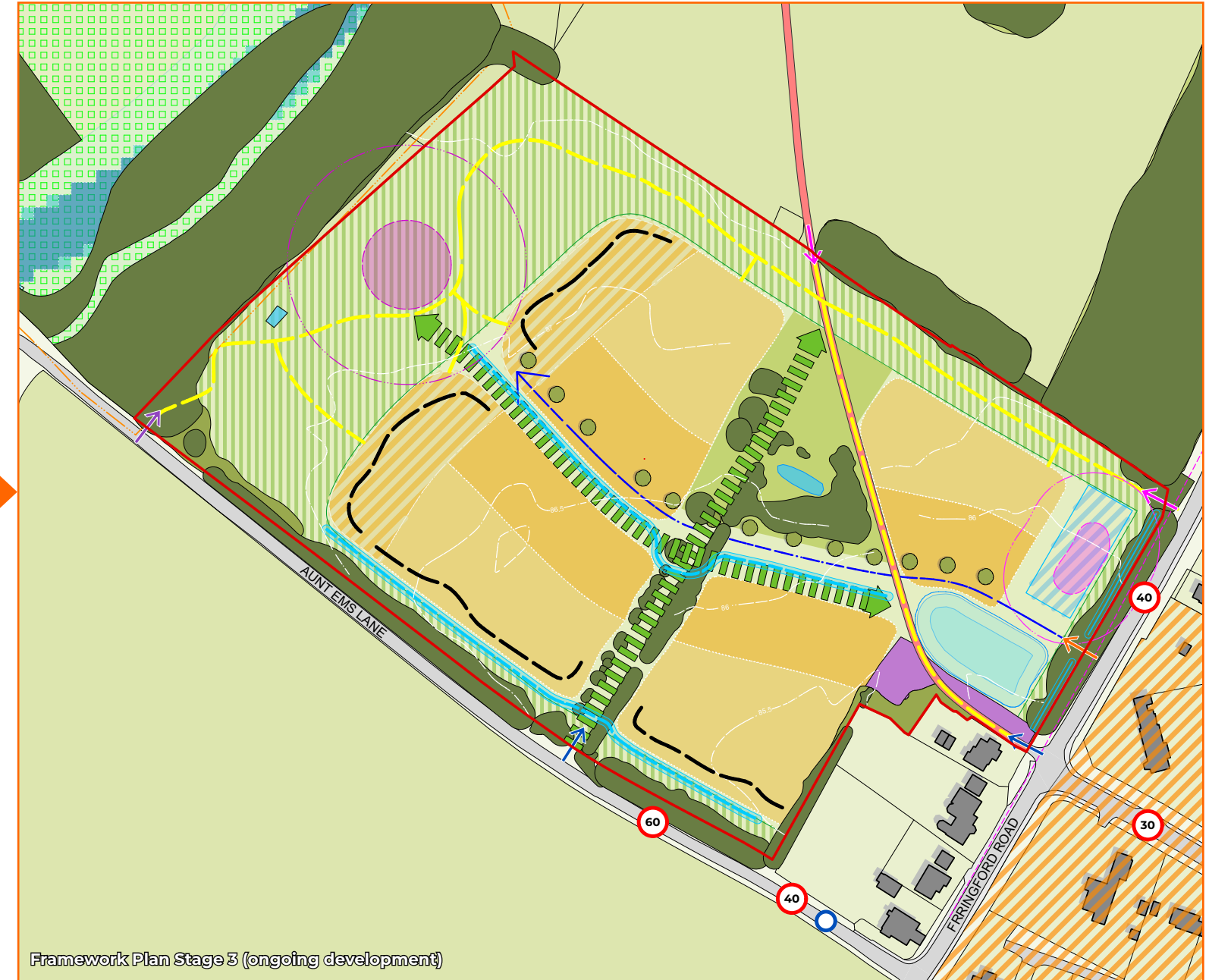
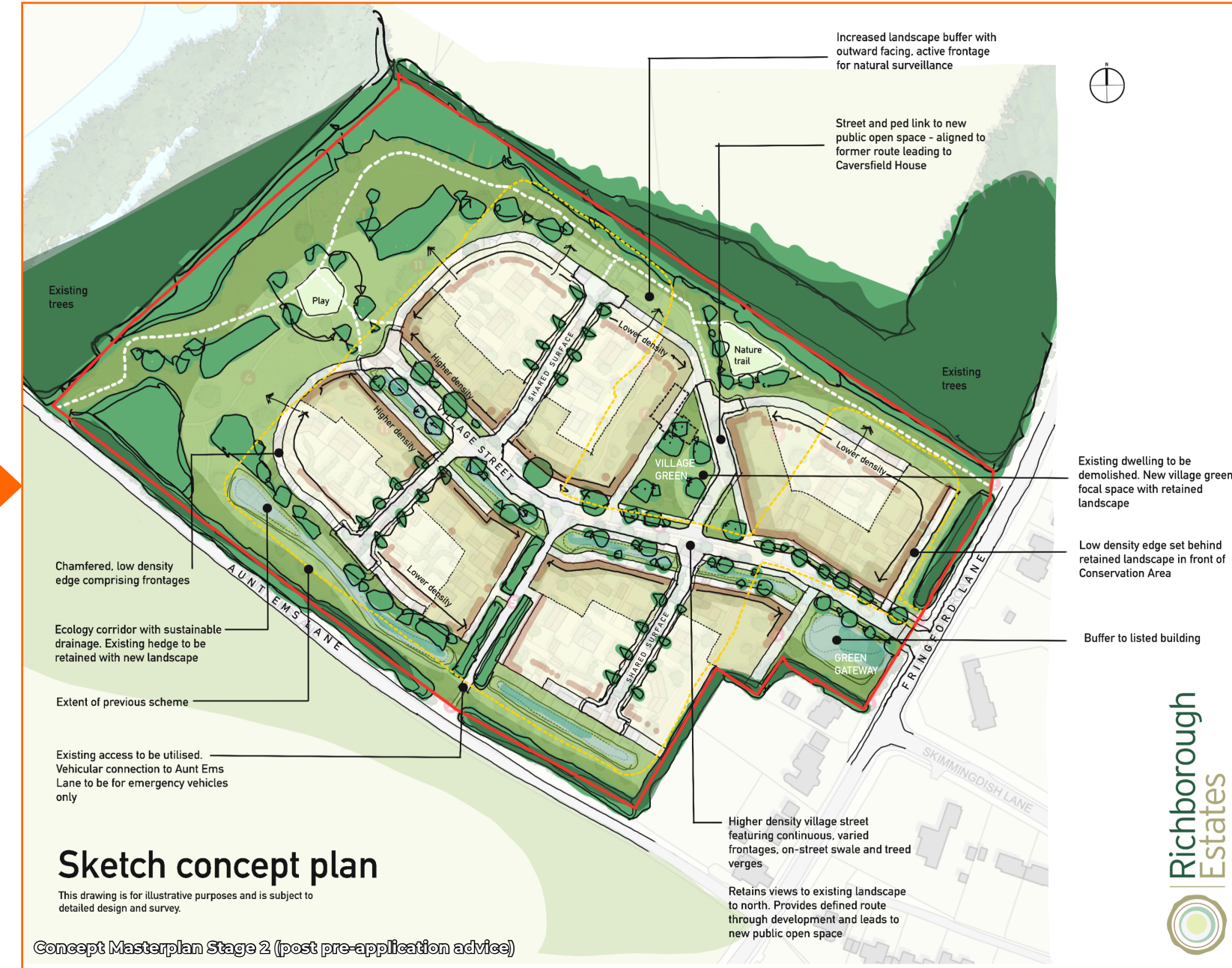
Following the preparation of the concept sketch, further technical and environmental assessments were undertaken to ensure a robust proposal moving forward.

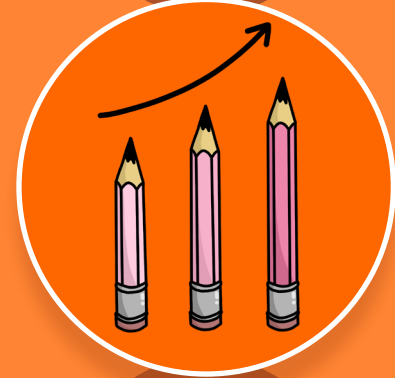
Due to the relatively flat nature of the Site, ongoing drainage calculations established the need to introduce additional SuDS features along the Fringford Road frontage, impacting the development area. It was advised that a combination of an above-ground attenuation basin and below-ground geo-tank were proposed along with a network of swales running alongside the primary street and the south-western boundary to help convey the water.

Taking on board the refined findings, and working with the principles set out within the concept sketch, an initial Framework Plan (*Framework Plan Stage 3*) was prepared in October 2023. The Framework Plan further sets out the principles of the evolving proposals.

Densities across the Site were further considered, along with the principle of incorporating a sinuous built development edge to aid with the transition from more urban form to rural setting. The development proposals continued to demonstrate a capacity for up to 110 dwellings.

The location of a NEAP was retained in the main open space buffer to the north-west, however a further LEAP was introduced at the eastern edge of the development to more evenly distribute play opportunities. The Framework Plan also clearly set out the retention of the historic track to provide pedestrian and cycle access to the Site, whilst serving as a potential emergency access route to the south as well as providing ongoing access to neighbouring properties.





The Framework Plan was further refined and the next iteration of an Illustrative Masterplan (Illustrative Masterplan Stage 4) was prepared in November 2023 demonstrating how 110 dwellings could be delivered.

The plan aimed to demonstrate a high-quality development with strong placemaking principles at its heart whilst also centred around a landscape-led proposal. All boundary vegetation was proposed to be retained and enhanced (bar what would be needed to facilitate access to the Site from Fringford Road) as well as the majority of trees on Site, forming the basis of the backdrop onto which all properties look onto. This included a village green at the heart of the development, as set out in the sketch concept. A variety of house sizes and types framing a variety of streets and open space to provide variety and interest ensure a development with opportunities of varying character.

The primary street provided a strong east-west movement corridor, as well as integrating street trees and a swale to provide a green connection across the Site. Landscape buffers to the north and south allowed for the inclusion of recreational routes linking to the main pedestrian/cycle connection along the primary street and along the retained historic track.

Following preparation of the illustrative masterplan, ongoing BNG calculations were undertaken and refinements were made to optimise the BNG strategy. As such, further refinements and testing were undertaken before producing the final Framework Plan (see opposite).

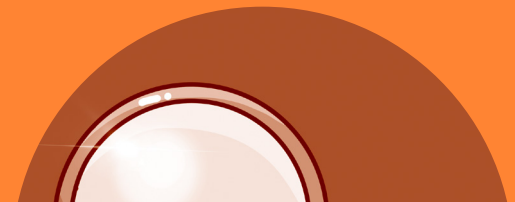


Illustrative Masterplan Option 4

View of the Site looking north-west



The Masterplan



4

The Masterplan

Framework Plan

The plan opposite presents the Framework Plan and the key design principles upon which the outline application is based (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4), having worked through various iterations to arrive at this proposal.

The key change from the Stage 4 Illustrative Masterplan is that development has been pulled back in order to allow for the inclusion of more open space to deliver increased habitat creation and achieve in excess of 10% biodiversity net gain. To achieve this, an area is proposed to be fenced off to the north-west for ecology enhancements with no access to the public, whilst the remaining green space (in excess of open space requirements for a development of this scale) will be publicly accessible and will be made up of a mix of general amenity space as well as wildflower planting. In addition, a number of play spaces have been integrated throughout the development to provide a play trail for the enjoyment of new and existing residents. The reduction in development area has resulted in a proposal for up to 99 dwellings.

The overarching vision for the Site has remained - to create a high-quality landscape-led place that integrates with the existing landscape, protecting and enhancing the mature trees and hedgerows and visual character. The proposals will be sensitive to the existing visual context within the wider landscape setting, whilst delivering new homes, new areas of public open space and retaining and enhancing habitats for wildlife.

The "green" primary street will form the back bone of the development, with views to the existing landscape to the north and providing direct access to all parts of the development as well as the open spaces. This will also have a key pedestrian/cycle route running alongside it, connecting with the historic track and other routes around the development. High densities along the primary route will provide structure, transitioning to lower densities and more sinuous frontages at the edges of the development. A central village green with a play focus will form a meeting point

for the community, with link to the open spaces and play provision around the edges. The entrance to the development will be framed by landscaping, providing a green arrival point and setting the tone for the rest of the development.

The proposals ensures a legacy - with development becoming a positive gain and complementing its location on the western edge of Caversfield. The high quality design fits into the surrounding context, whilst delivering identity and distinctiveness. The Site provides an opportunity to create a new development nestled within the wider growth proposals for the area, whilst enhancing landscape and complimenting this area of the settlement.

Key Design Principles



Increase local **housing choice**



Create a strong framework of **connected and well-overlooked streets and space**



Promote **sustainable modes of travel**



Provide new equipped **play areas**



Provide a range of **green space character areas**



Capture and manage water creatively using swales and attenuation basins



Provide a place for **wildlife** to live and thrive



Incorporate positive features of the Site, such as **existing habitats and established landscaping**

