

**Merton Street, Banbury**

**Planning Application ref. 16/00472/OUT**

**Proposed residential redevelopment for approximately 200 units**

## **Master Plan Development- Design overview**

### **Justification for proposed Site Layout**



**May 2019**



### Purpose of this document

This design overview has been produced in response to the Local Planning Authority's request to explain and justify the site layout and block orientation that has been developed as part of the outline planning submission.

The question has been raised as to whether a more conventional and traditional built form could provide an alternative to the indicative site layout and whether the buildings could be developed with a more locally distinctive appearance.

The document sets out how the proposed indicative layout has been arrived at and justifies it as the best solution to the challenges and constraints presented by the site. It should be read alongside all of the supporting information, including the Design and Access Statement that has been submitted previously.

### Background

The layout is the product of a lengthy and iterative design process and, over the last three years, it has been refined and improved in consultation with the planners at Cherwell District Council.

The form and layout of the proposed residential blocks is not therefore one option among many but it is considered to be the singular most suitable arrangement of buildings on the site, taking account of the many constraints and influences that have informed the design process.

The planning application, which was validated by Cherwell District Council on 31 August 2016, has been adjusted in detail in response to comments from the Council, the County Highway Authority and the Environment Agency. Although the proposal is in outline only, the site layout plan has been refined as if it were an application for full planning permission.

### Design Rationale

The Masterplan was formulated around the site's connectivity and circulation, the need for on-site amenities, the requirements for car parking, ecology and heritage considerations as well as maintaining key vistas through the site. It takes account of land contamination, flooding, acoustic mitigation, sunlight, landscaping, ventilation, privacy, visual appearance and scale.



### Connectivity to Existing Development

The proposed master plan provides for connections to the neighbouring community to the North-East. New "green links" for pedestrians would open up to the adjacent playing fields, creating new routes into the established urban area. The master plan shows development abutting the Southern playing fields and, through pedestrian links, integrating them within the proposed community. A

Green Link

Access Road

Home / Courtyard Zones

30m Separation Distances

Provide links to adjacent developments

Built form to flank onto railway and provide natural surveillance across communal courtyards

Higher development adjacent railway.

Screening

Undercroft parking to reduce impact of car parking and hardstanding

**PRELIMINARY for discussion purposes only**

**Legend:**

- Proposed Buildings (Blue outline)
- Existing Surrounding Buildings (Brown outline)
- Sun Path (Yellow arrow)
- Vehicular Traffic (Red dashed line)
- Pedestrian Traffic (Red solid line)
- Focal Points (Red circle)
- Courtyards connected by Focal Points (Red dashed line)
- Pedestrian Links (Red solid line)
- Views outwards (Red arrow)
- 3m high Sound Band with 3m high sound screen on top Sound Screen (Blue wavy line)

**Site Plan Details:**

- Buildings: A, B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, D2, E, F, G, H
- Open Space: Central Focal Point, Bridge line with open space, Courtyards connected by Focal Points
- Highway: Higham Way
- Roads: Kings Oak Housing Development, Vennery Way, Barleek Housing Development
- Railway: National Grid (Transco)
- Water: River Churn
- Drains: Existing drain, Passing drain
- Site Access: Site Access

**Project Information:**

- Project: GMRB
- Draw Number: SK-107
- Scale: 1:5000 @ A2
- Date: 1 SEP 2015
- Checked by: [Signature]

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### Site constraints

The principal site constraints include flooding, noise and vibration (from the railway), ecology and land contamination. The analysis of these constraints confirms that residential use would be acceptable in principle. The landscaping of green spaces and the use of screens would act as a buffer for noise and vibration, and the vegetation would also enhance the ecological value on site. The diagram below shows how the blocks at the Southern end of the site are situated in relation to the flood plain.

Blocks are designed with under-croft parking to address potential issues with flooding in some parts of the site. Although the site has not been known to flood, the Environment Agency modelling allows a factor for climate change and this shows that parts of the site are potentially at risk.

Another factor that has influenced the development typology is the need to mitigate any adverse effects of on-site land contamination. The flat block solution reduces the risk substantially with green areas being given-over to communal amenity space, thereby avoiding the increased risk posed by private gardens.



**No ground floor apartments within the flood area to the South**



As the adjacent indicative building section shows, much of the ground floor of the proposed development can be dedicated to parking as this is more readily sacrificed to flooding should such an eventuality occur.

### Amount and Density

The planning application site has been allocated for housing under the Policy Banbury 19. The adopted policy allocates the site for 150 dwellings, equating to a density of 50 dwellings per hectare (dph). The proposed 200 units equates to a density of 66.6dph. This reflects the highly sustainable location close to public transport and the town centre. It is lower-density than the adjacent “Barteak” development which is in excess of 94dph.

Several masterplan iterations in previous planning applications demonstrate the site is potentially capable of delivering as many as 220 units.

### Scale and Appearance

The proposed mixture of buildings will be of 3, 4 & 5 storeys across the site, closely matching the same scale of nearby buildings. The heights and scale have been carefully thought out to create visual interest through the formation of new road patterns, gateway buildings and to respect the context of existing building forms in the locality.



The scale and height of the proposed buildings can be varied across the site to take account of the surroundings and to provide the tallest four-storey blocks at the centre.

### Access and street Hierarchy

The character of the development has been developed through a variation of street widths, frontages, landscaping, parking arrangements, open spaces and a new access road along the Western boundary of the site, allowing a buffer between development and the railway line. Pedestrian and cycle routes are designed to create a link with the main community destinations; providing an active and safe community. Parking is laid-out and designed according to the council's parking standards with courtyards and under-croft layouts to reduce hardstanding spaces across site allowing green swards to be retained as amenity space between the blocks.

### Landscape and Green spaces

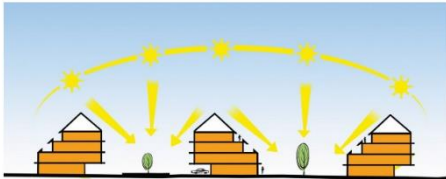
Landscaping and green spaces have been carefully designed so they link into the existing neighbouring spaces. The new landscaping provides amenity spaces, children's play areas, recreation area, drainage, enhanced biodiversity, and connections with the existing landscape structure beyond. The blocks would be softened with trees and other landscaping.



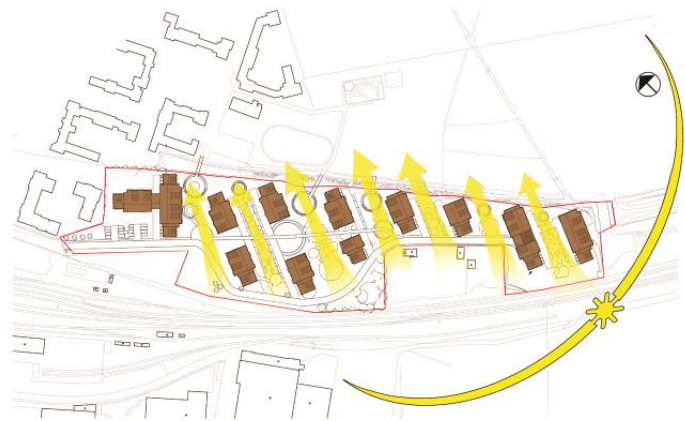
Green Space

### Form & Layout

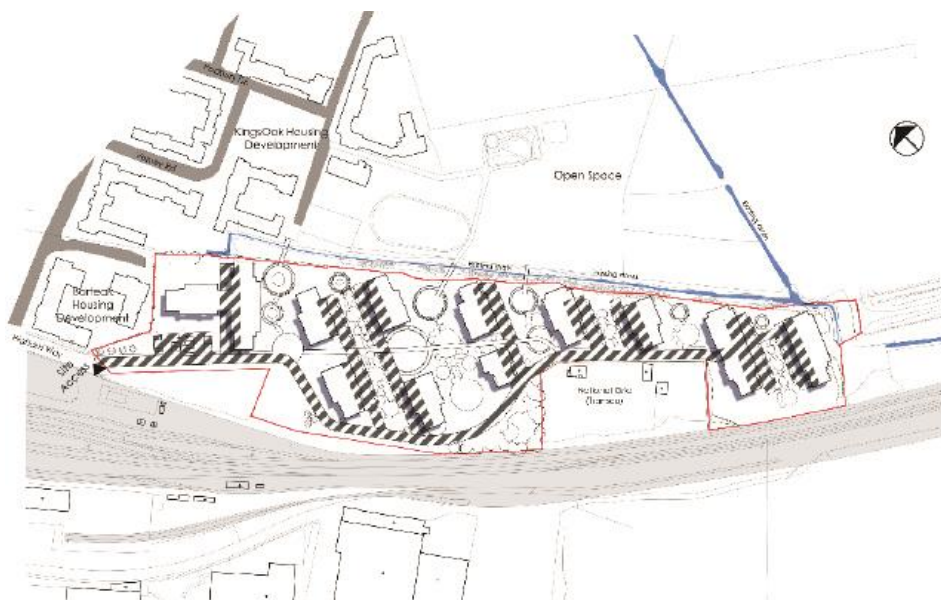
The layout retains important vistas throughout the site maximising sunlight penetration and absorbing railway noise. The orientation of the buildings have been designed to provide double-aspect units that maximise sunlight penetration throughout the day.



Illustrative Concept of Sunlight Penetration into Buildings and Green Space



Sun Path and Penetration



Noise Impact Minimisation

### The existing urban grain and local characteristics

The proposed development of 200 units will help the Council in bringing forward a brownfield site that is allocated for development. The proposed density is a function of the highly sustainable location and the need to optimise the opportunity. Development at this density is achievable if the layout and orientation of the blocks is carefully considered. Refining the layout in this case has happened through a long and iterative process.

The question has been asked as to whether the form and layout of the development could be re-shaped in such a way that it better reflects a locally distinctive urban form. This gives rise to the question; what is a locally distinctive form of development?



The urban morphology of this area of Banbury does not follow a traditional form or pattern of development.

The local area is characterised by a very irregular urban morphology. The application site and surrounding land originally served light industrial and commercial uses which grew organically around the railway-side location.

Since the move away from rail freight dependence and the shift in planning policy which now seeks to locate new dwellings in sustainable inner urban locations, many of the brownfield sites have been redeveloped for residential purposes.

Within the immediate context of the site Higham Way is provided with a gateway from Merton Street by tall block buildings including modern flatted development on the north-east side of the street. This recent flatted block development continues along Higham Way leading into the application site.



**Existing Development in Merton Street**



**Existing Development to the North East**

The grain of development to the east of Higham Way, whilst residential, is markedly different, formed by the “inside out” courtyard arrangement of the Cattle Market development. Whilst regular in grain, the individual courtyards are characterised by a hotch-potch of house types which arguably exemplifies a form of development that should not be replicated.

Accordingly, the proposals for the site have been developed with significant influence from the established residential grain of development found along Higham Way and to acknowledge the original block structure of the light industrial / commercial development including the remnants that exists in the wider context.



**Industrial Development block form**

The immediate local area is characterised by a mix of development types whereas other, less central, residential areas might follow a traditional form of perimeter blocks with terraces or tightly-packed Victorian streets on a gridiron layout.

Replicating perimeter-blocks on two/three storeys and on a gridiron-type layout on this site would not be compatible with the requirement to optimise the development potential of the site and, at the same time, meet the constraints listed above.

#### Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the current proposed layout is the best response to the site's constraints and context.

Although the application is in outline only, there has been a lot of attention to detail in order to convince the Council and associated stakeholders/consultees that the development can be made to work. To depart from the agreed layout and form at this stage would involve the need to re-convince the relevant parties that the site will work in terms of highway layout, refuse collection, flood mitigation, residential amenities and space standards and meet all relevant constraints.

The proposed layout will provide an impressive development with high quality spaces between the buildings, good connectivity and accessibility and living accommodation of a high standard. All flats would enjoy a double aspect with good sunlight penetration, privacy, open space and parking. In terms of its form, it will reflect something of the positive qualities of existing development in the area and the historic industrial block dimensions. At the same time it will be on a human scale and could use a traditional typology of pitched roofs and gable ends.

The refined site layout has been shaped in response to comments from Council officers to address all of the points that have been raised to the point where it was suggested that the layout should be "locked-in" as part of the approval, if planning permission is granted. This indicates that there is some consensus that the proposed layout is a good and policy-compliant solution for the site.

In summary, the proposed development layout offers:

1. The best layout to mitigate against noise
2. Sunlight permeating into the site and every one of the proposed units having a dual aspect
3. Clear links for pedestrians to the surrounding area
4. Safe areas where children can play with high levels of natural surveillance
5. A "home zone" environment, relatively free from traffic but permeable to pedestrians and cyclists



6. Provision for areas of managed communal gardens
7. Adequate flood mitigation that allows for climate change
8. Secure management of on-site contamination
9. Vehicular access to the site that meets the requirements for refuse collection and provides an adoptable highway link to land to the South of the site
10. A parking space for each proposed unit
11. An urban form that takes account of the history and character of the area and optimises the potential density of the site



**Proposed development will create a high quality environment on a human scale**